A TRANSLATION AND COMMENTARY ON CLAUDIUS MARIUS VICTOR'S ALETHIA
3.1-326

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DISSERTATION
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ABSTRACT

Of all the Biblical epics that survive from antiquity, Claudius Marius Victor’s *Alethia*, a poem based on Genesis and written in Gaul in the fifth century, is one of the more obscure and difficult. The poem was never part of the medieval curriculum and has attracted little interest until recently. This dissertation focuses on *Alethia* 3.1-326. In this part of the *Alethia*, Victor describes life after the Flood. After Noah’s death, the poet inserts a long, extrabiblical digression on the gradual corruption of knowledge, the development of mantic and magic arts, and (with the exception of the Jews), mankind’s descent into idolatry. There follows God’s punishment at Babel and, finally, the Jews’ embrace of idolatry.

Chapter 1 provides an introduction to the poem, Chapter 2 marshals the meager biographical evidence of the *Alethia*’s author; Chapter 3 treats the manuscript and printed editions of the *Alethia*; Chapter 4 is an excursus on the complicated history of the 16th century editions of Jean de Gagny and Guillaume Morel and includes an analysis of Gagny’s rewriting of the text; and Chapter 5 describes Victor’s poetic style.

Chapter 6 presents the Latin text and apparatus of *Alethia* 3.1-326. It is based on P.F. Hovingh’s *Corpus Christianorum Series Latina* edition of 1960. I have only lightly revised it. An English translation of *Alethia*, 3.1-326 follows. Chapter 7 is a commentary on textual, philological, and exegetical matters.
For my parents

and

for Amy, sine qua non
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION TO THE ALETHIA

Of all the Biblical epics that survive from antiquity, Claudius Marius Victor’s *Alethia*, a poem based on Genesis and written in Gaul in the fifth century, is one of the more obscure and difficult. The poem was never part of the medieval curriculum and has attracted little interest until recently. Readers of Conte’s *Latin Literature: A History* will hardly be enticed by its summary, quoted in full: “Claudius Marius Victorius (or Victor), from Marseille, who died sometime between 425 and 450, wrote in hexameters an *Alethia* (‘The Truth’), a paraphrase of Genesis, the first book of the Old Testament.” Readers of Michael von Albrecht’s *A History of Roman Literature: From Livius Andronicus to Boethius* will find an even sparer entry with a drive-by criticism of the poem: “Genesis was rendered in verse by Claudius Marius Victor (*Alethia*), but above all expertly by Avitus.” If from these judgments they seek to read the *Alethia*, they will find there is no reliable translation.

I. General Outline / Narrative Form of the Alethia

This is a shame, as the *Alethia* has much to recommend it: descriptions of Paradise, the Flood, the Tower of Babel, and the destruction of Sodom and learned digressions, full of unusual details, on the origins of metallurgy and idolatry. It is the longest poetic treatment of Genesis from antiquity, even though it does not cover the entire book. The poem starts with a prefatory

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1 Juvenecus, Sedulius, Arator were. Herzog 1975, xix, calls them the “canonical epicists.” See the recent work of G.E. Kreuz 2014.
2 Conte 1994, 709.
3 von Albrecht 1997 2:1316.
4 An unreliable Italian translation exists (Papini 2006). Extracts have been printed in anthologies of Christian poetry (most recently by White 2000).
5 Two other poems treat some of the same material at length. The *Alethia* was followed (as Jakobi 2010 has demonstrated) by the version of “Cyprianus Gallus” (referred to in this dissertation as the Heptateuch poet), ca. mid-5th c., which covers the entire Genesis narrative in 1498 verses. Toward the end of the 5th c., Avitus of Vienne
prayer that gives a programmatic statement of faith, a summary of the main themes of the
Alethia, and Victor’s aims. A selective retelling of Genesis 1-19 in three books (2020
hexameters) then follows. The broad outline of the Alethia is as follows: Book 1: Creation until
the expulsion of Adam and Eve from Paradise; Book 2: life after Paradise, a digression on
metallurgy, Cain and Abel, the degeneration of mankind, and Noah and the Flood; Book 3:
Noah’s sacrifice and death, a digression on the origins of idolatry, the building of the Tower at
Babel, the calling of Abraham, and the destruction of Sodom.

The poem as it survives is probably incomplete. Did he intend for it to end where it does,
with the destruction of Sodom? Or did he intend for it to end with the death of Abraham, as
Gennadius’ (see Chapter 2) notice suggests? Or did he intend to go further, perhaps covering all
of Genesis, as Schenkl (1888, 349) wonders? It is possible that there were four books (so
Gennadius, perhaps) but that it has not survived, or perhaps Victor for whatever reason did not
finish the poem. Each book ends with a typologically-significant material (wood, water, fire).
What would have been the material which closed Book 4? It would make sense if Book 4
culminated in Isaac being depicted as the prefiguration of Christ, and I am inclined to agree with
Cutino 2009 that there were in fact, four books. Cutino’s argument is based on the fact that the
work falls into three distinct sections (origin = Book 1; Decline = Books 2 and 3.1-326; and
Restoration, 326-789), with the restoration section considerably shorter than the other two

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composed his De spiritualis historiae gestis, which covers Genesis 1-3:24 (Books 1-3) and 6-9:17 (Book 4); Book 5
covers Exodus 1-15:1. Avitus’ poem shows that he knew the Alethia, and it shares the same soteriological focus, but
it displays an even greater selectivity with respect to the Genesis narrative.
6 As, for example, Ambrose does (De Isaac 1.1).
sections. The fiery destruction of Sodom is a spectacular ending, to be sure, but not one in keeping with Victor's desire to highlight, above all else, God's mercy.

The *Alethia* is no simple paraphrase of Genesis. It rather provides the root upon which Victor grafts his own material and his concerns, some of which are nearer to the Genesis material, and some rather distant indeed. Victor has two main concerns: the moral corruption and descent into cultural diversity of mankind, and the soteriological aspect of creation. Victor outlines these concerns in his prayer (*prec. 103-111*):

… da nosse precanti
dum teneros formare animos et corda paramus
ad verum virtutis iter puerilibus annis,
inclita legiferi quod pandunt scrinia Moysis
quae sit origo poli vel quae primordia mundi,
arcanamque fidem qui toto excusserit aucta
pestis et in mores penitus descenderit error,
quaque iterum redeat verum ritusque profanes
pellat et aeternae reseret sacra mystica vitae.

[Grant knowledge to me, the one supplicating you, while I prepare to shape young minds and hearts in their youthful years [105] for the true path of virtue, which Moses’ illustrious books reveal: the origin of Heaven and the first beginnings of the world, how the swollen pestilence cast out mysterious faith everywhere and how error has penetrated deeply into customs [110] and by what path truth may return and drive out impious rituals and uncover the sacred mysteries of eternal life.

The narrative thrust of the *Alethia* corresponds to the themes expressed in vv. 106-110: the first part, the *origo poli vel quae primordia mundi* is treated in the first book: 1.1-210 cover Creation; vv. 211-304 describe Paradise; vv. 305-395 depict the carefree life of Adam and Eve.

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7 Cutino 2009, 55-56.
8 Though one should recall that Lucretius’ poem, an important text when considering the *Alethia*, ends with a plague.
The second part begins at 2.394 with the serpent’s successful seduction of Eve. Adam’s downfall soon follows, and the race to the bottom begins.

It is not quite a free-fall. Victor, in due course, does mention virtuous men like Abel, Seth, Seth’s son Enos, and Enoch. But these are so quickly passed over (Abel is introduced at 2.209, Cain duly dispatches him at vv. 225-226; Victor covers Seth to Enoch at vv. 319-338) that one gets the impression that Victor only mentions them only out a sense of duty to the Genesis narrative. Had he been so inclined, he might have digressed for a moment on, for example, the nature of Enoch’s visions, but he quickly moves on to Noah.9

Noah’s appearance (2.382) obliges Victor to present him not simply as the one just man God deemed worthy of saving from the Flood, but as a second Adam who will possess a second world (2.398-399: ut, cum iusta mali luerint, tunc dignius a te / incipiat mortale genus summumque parentem and 528, dominus [sc. Noah], mundi sortitus regna secundi). Mankind gets a second chance, and Noah sets the example (2.528-3.98). As the inheritor of a renewed world, Noah does everything right, but he is no more than a speed bump on the road to perdition. The descent of man into total wickedness, a foregone conclusion because of original sin, proceeds at an even faster pace after Noah’s death as the pestis, now revealed to be idolatry, claims all of mankind as its victim (3.99-326).

The third part of the Alethia begins at 3.326 with the birth of Abraham, a "man worthy of heaven” (vir dignus caelo). It is his task to lead his people, and indeed all mankind, back to the true god. The Abraham narrative begins in earnest, but the ultimate success of Abraham’s task is predicted. As noted above, the poem ends with the fiery cataclysm at Sodom.

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9 Victor was certainly aware of some biblical apocrypha and pseudepigrapha (see below, p. 9).
If this summary of the *Alethia* ended here, the poem would be mischaracterized. It is true that Victor’s narrative of mankind’s descent into sin is perhaps the most striking aspect of the *Alethia*, especially in an age of iron. And it is true that, like Dante and Milton after him, Victor finds it easier to describe what is evil than it is to describe what is good. Yet throughout the *Alethia*, for all the wicked, sinful impulses and actions of mankind, stands the great majesty of God, “who is always merciful and good” (3.13: *qui mitis semperque bonus*).

God, according to Victor, is unwilling to visit mankind with a punishment that matches its crimes, and there is no punishment that is not, in fact, a gift in disguise. So Cain’s punishment is a *munus* for himself and his parents (2.284: *hoc quoque munus habet*), as is the punishment of Babel’s builders (3.285-286: *nec tamen hoc sacri, cum sit sua poena nocentum / muneri est vacuum*). Victor also tends to underemphasize God’s role in carrying out his punishments in favor of focusing on some other aspect of the punishment. For example, when Adam and Eve are banished from Paradise, Victor describes the winds whirling them out (vv. 530-536), with the spirit (*spiritus*, v. 532) in control of Nature. Victor does not omit God’s decision to banish the pair, to be sure, but neither does he make it the focus of the narrative. This tendency is apparent throughout the poem.

Even after the most drastic events (Adam and Eve’s expulsion from Paradise, the Flood and its aftermath, and the destruction of Sodom), the hope of salvation is dangled before the reader in epigrammatic refrains with clear typological significance (1.545-547: tree of

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10 Nodes 1989 compares the use of “benevolent winds” in Dracontius’ *De laudibus dei* (Victor’s depiction is briefly discussed on p. 284). Victor use of the word *spiritus* to describe the divine power suggests either God or angels (for angels as winds) protect Adam and Eve during their expulsion. For angels as winds, see, e.g., Ps. 103:4: *qui facis angelos tuos spiritus.*
knowledge and wood of the cross; 2.557-558: the flood prefigures baptism; 3.787-789: fire and water prefigure the Last Judgment).

II. Formal Aspects

At a formal level, the *Alethia* is a hybrid work that cannot be neatly classified. It is a Biblical epic, inasmuch as the poem’s meter is dactylic hexameter and derives its subject and content from the Bible. It is a didactic epic, inasmuch as Victor’s stated intention of the poem is *teneros formare animos et corda paramus* and to polemicize against pagan errors. It is a work of exegesis, inasmuch as it seeks to interpret and explain the Biblical text.¹¹ In truth it is all of these things, and this is reflected in the poem's architecture – Victor has used different a number of different materials to create his poem.

The best way to understand these materials is to see them in use. But a brief description may be helpful. Genesis is the foundation of the *Alethia*. Victor used both the Vulgate and Vetus Latina versions of the text.¹² In composing his poem, Victor follows Genesis' temporal structure, starting at Genesis 1:1 and crafting the *Alethia's* narrative in a linear fashion. This does not mean that Victor adheres slavishly his foundation text. He has recourse, as Michael Roberts has shown in great detail, to the typical paraphrastic techniques used in rhetoric: abbreviation, omission, and transposition.¹³ Victor is explicit about this (1.144-146): *hinc iam fas mihi sit quaedam praestringere, quaedam / sollicito trepidum penitus transmittere cursu, / mutata quaedam serie transmissa referre*.

¹¹ Nodes 1993.
¹³ Roberts 1985, 98-99. The literature on these techniques is vast Robert’s work is fundamental. For Victor, see esp. Martorelli 2008, 53-103.
Thus Victor can omit elements of Genesis that are not conducive to poetry, most notably genealogies but also repetitive or confusing elements and minor details. He amplifies material through description (e.g. his description of Paradise in Book 1, the Flood in Book 2, the Tower of Babel in Book 3), the details for which he derives from the traditional epic repertory. He uses transposition to reorder material for logical consistency and narrative concision.¹⁴

During or following discrete episodes in the narrative, Victor offers an interpretation of the episode. For example, Noah’s drunkenness is interpreted as a chance for Noah’s sons to display filial duty towards their father. This interpretation, implicit in the original, is made explicit by Victor. In a direct apostrophe, the poet chastises Ham: (3.80-81, 84-85: fratrum melior sententia dignum / officii putat locum... et palmam fratri rapuit pietatis uterque / sublatum medio). The situation is an “opportunity for dutiful action” and by their actions, Shem and Japheth cover themselves with glory while Ham is diminished.

Not that Victor has all the answers. He makes occasional use of alternative interpretations (e.g. on the issue of the precise manner and order of man’s creation: 1.163-165: dixerat haec et factus homo, seu corpore toto, / sive anima ac specie, forsan / quo more futura, quo facienda facit...). He sometimes uses the protreptic first person plural (e.g. 2.307: o bona maiestas, quid non sperare queamus!) or deploys rhetorical outbursts and questions and climactic points in the poem (e.g. 2.227, after Abel’s murder: heu facinus! quid non miserōs furiosa libido / quid non ira recens, odium vetus, improba cogant...).

¹⁴ Roberts 1985, 121-122.
The poem has few speeches in direct discourse.\textsuperscript{15} God speaks the most (fifteen times), while the serpent, Adam, Eve, Noah, and the anonymous \textit{iuventus} at Babel each speak once. Interestingly, Abraham does not speak at all. With perhaps the exception of the \textit{iuventus}' speech in Book 3, the speeches add little by way of characterization. God speaks above all as a judge (handing down sentences, establishing covenants), though he speaks as an exegete (!) to explain himself (e.g. at 3.59-60 interpreting what the rainbow means) and even as a dream-interpreter (3.532-544).\textsuperscript{16} Adam delivers a prayer to God (2.41-89) that focuses above all on the loss of knowledge occasioned by original sin; Adam closes his prayer by begging God to grant him and Eve knowledge that will allow them to survive. Victor plants this speech in Adam to set up a digression. Noah's speech in Book 3 (88-94), nearly identical to the biblical original, also sets up a digression.

These digressions are important. The \textit{Alethia} contains two long, learned, and extrabiblical digressions. Both concern the development of human society.\textsuperscript{17} In Book 2, a spark starts a fire that melts rocks, revealing metal to Adam and Eve. This leads to a digression on the development of metallurgy. The death of Noah in Book 3 prompts a digression on the genealogy of idolatry and the mantic arts, and this allows him to step out of biblical prehistory and into his own time.\textsuperscript{18} Victor uses digressions not only to explain aspects of human civilization’s origins

\textsuperscript{15} Roberts 1985, 145; he notes that in Old Testament biblical epics “the general tendency to avoid direct speech is compensated for by a persistent trend…to work up biblical speeches into rhetorically elaborated compositions, which often take little but the point at issue from the original. The poets’ preference for long speeches of some rhetorical complexity is characteristic of late epic.”
\textsuperscript{16} See Cutino 2007.
\textsuperscript{17} See Roberts 1985, 213-214.
\textsuperscript{18} Victor puts in poetic garb the explanations Firmicus Maternus, Arnobius, and Lactantius (\textit{inter al.}) put in prose.
and developments that are absent from Genesis, but to argue that in some cases, what are regarded as human advancements have led man astray into sin.¹⁹

III. Sources

Studies of the Alethia have that Victor was very familiar (as a good rhetor might be expected to be) with both sacred and profane literature. He knew, of course, his Virgil, Ovid, Lucan, and Statius. But he also knew Lucretius; his influence is most apparent in the first two books (i.e. Victor’s description of creation and the development of human civilization), but the digression on knowledge in Book 3 is also influenced by Lucretius.²⁰ Some of his verses suggest Victor knew Prudentius and Paulinus of Nola.

Previous commentaries have clearly demonstrated that Victor knew the hexameral literature well (most notably Ambrose’ Hexaemeron and Augustine's De Genesi ad litteram). His polemicizing is cut from the same cloth as that of Arnobius and Lactantius. All of this is fairly unsurprising. But Victor used more recondite sources as well. He seems to have known Philo, not through Ambrose, who was fond of plagiarizing Philo and was his chief conduit to a western audience. He knew pseudepigrapha such as 1 Enoch, Jubilees, 1 Enoch, Pseudo-Philo, Clementine literature (Homilies, Recognitiones), possibly others.²¹ He even incorporates a Persian myth into his account of the origins of metallurgy.²²

Victor displays knowledge of basic philosophical doctrines (most evident in the hexameral part of the Alethia; his cosmological ideas seem mediated through the hexameral

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¹⁹ His commentary on human development is not limited to digressions: he uses Gen. 11:1-9 (the Tower of Babel/dispersal of nations narrative) to explain not the origin of languages, but the origin of distinct gentes.
²⁰ On Lucretius and Victor in general, see especially Smolak 1973 and Weber 2013.
²¹ Shanzer 2009.
²² Krappe 1942.
tradition). But philosophical references show up here and there (e.g. 3.121-122, *quidam... / corporeum dixere deum*, perhaps referring to the Stoics), though these references do not suggest V. had a deep knowledge of the finer points of philosophy.

IV. Nachleben

With the exception of the *Heptateuchos* poet, Avitus and perhaps Dracontius, the *Alethia* seems to have had little influence on later poets. No significant *loci similes* have been identified in later medieval poetry so far. Closer examination of the poetry of medieval authors active in areas where the manuscript(s) of the *Alethia* may have existed (on which see Chapter 3), i.e., around Lyon in the 9th century (e.g. Florus) and, earlier, in Spain (Eugenius II, Severus of Malaga, perhaps others) may be fruitful.

It is not impossible that the obscurity of language and content led to its neglect, but this explanation, while it may account for the silence of the past four hundred and fifty years, can hardly suffice to account for the silence of a millennium before the first printed edition appeared. The obscurity of the wretched poetry of Paulinus of Périgueux or Ennodius did not fail to find readers. Their poems are nearly, if not more, stylistically and syntactically obscure than the *Alethia*, and yet they survive in more manuscripts and appear in monastic catalogs. The same cannot be said for the *Alethia*.

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24 I follow Roberts 1985, 95 in referring to poem by the title *Heptateuchos* and abbreviating it hereafter to *Hept*.
25 Rainer Jakobi has convincingly shown that the *Hept*. poet knew Victor.
26 Orchard 1994, 217-218, rightly doubts that Aldhelm or Bede knew the *Alethia*. Gärtner 2000 has attempted to show that Alan of Lille knew the *Alethia* based on *loci similes*.
27 So Green 2010, 54. He speculates on reasons for the *Alethia*’s neglect before settling on the poem’s obscurity.
28 Nodes 1993, 39, n. 48, states that the *Alethia* is “listed…in two monastic catalogs of the tenth century” but, despite extensive searching, I was unable to find any entry in any monastic catalog I consulted that suggested Victor’s poem was on its shelves.
Of course one might argue that the fact that since these writers were bishops, their works commanded greater respect and so were more likely to be preserved. But this fails to account for the bad transmission of someone like bishop Severus of Malaga. 406 verses survive from his New Testament epic.29

V. A (Very) Brief Survey of Scholarship on the *Alethia*

The first monographs appeared in 1883 (Bourgoin) and 1884 (Gamber); both are to be used with caution since they used Jean de Gagny’s edition (on which see Chapters 3 and 4). The first critical edition of the poem (Schenkl) appeared in 1888. In 1890 Lejay established that the notes of the hand designated \(m^3\) by Schenkl (= Hovingh’s \(P^4\)) was in fact Morel’s.30 Maurer’s 1896 dissertation added many *loci similes*, some valuable, many not. Two Italian monographs appeared in 1912.31

The primary focus of the monographs mentioned above was source criticism; they were chiefly concerned with the first two books of the *Alethia* because of the hexaemeral tradition. Textual criticism was limited. Thereafter very little appeared until the 1950s, when two dissertation-commentaries appeared (Staat 2.1-202 in 1952; Hovingh *prec.* and 1-170 in 1955). These commentaries cover slightly less than a quarter of the poem, and only Hovingh’s provides an adequate introduction.

The next major work came in 1972 with H.H. Homey’s 1972 Bonn dissertation. He examined the *Alethia* with a focus on its philosophical and exegetical content. Michael Roberts’ 1978 Illinois dissertation devoted a chapter to Victor’s poetic techniques (a much shorter and

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29 See the edition of Bischoff et al. 1994.
30 This discovery was anticipated already by Dümmler 1879, 301: “Ich glaube nach der Uebereinstimmung einzelner Lesarten zu schliessen, dass dies der erste Herausgeber Wilhelm Morel gewesen sein muss...”
31 Falcidia Riggio 1912 and Ferrari 1912.
much-revised version was published as *Biblical Epic and Rhetorical Paraphrase in Late Antiquity* in 1985). Roberts’ chief value lies in his close readings of texts. In 1993, Daniel Nodes’ work focused on the exegetical aspects of Genesis poetry.

Since the beginning of the 21st century, there has been increasing interest in the *Alethia*, particularly among European scholars. Manfred Wacht published a concordance to the poem in 2001. Simona Papini published the first complete translation of the *Alethia* in 2006 (not always reliable). Ugo Martorelli analyzed, in a very similar fashion to Roberts but in greater detail, the poetic techniques of the *Alethia* in his 2008 study. 2009 was an *annus mirabile* for studies on the *Alethia*. Isabella D’Auria completed a dissertation-commentary in 2009 on the prayer and Book 1, the first full commentary of any book in the *Alethia*.32 Michele Cutino published three articles and in addition, a very important monograph analyzing the relationship between biblical paraphrase and exegesis. Danuta Shanzer showed Victor’s use of Philo independent of Ambrose.

Few scholars, until very recently, saw fit to translate Victor’s Latin into a modern language. Since it is difficult to read and understand, and especially since there is no reliable translation presently available, the value of past scholarship on the *Alethia* is lessened. Of the major scholarship on the poem, only Cutino regularly (but not always!) provides a translation.

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32 D’Auria informs me (*per litteras*) that a revised version of her dissertation is in press and will appear in Fall 2014.
CHAPTER 2

REALIA


I. External Evidence

Two pieces of evidence offer all that is known about the author of the *Alethia*: the subscriptions of the sole known manuscript of the poem, Par. lat. 7558 (hereafter referred to as P), and an entry in Gennadius’ *De viris illustribus*. Neither the manuscript nor Gennadius offers unproblematic evidence. Scholars have tried to extrapolate from this evidence in an attempt to flesh out the author and his poem. 34

The manuscript records his name six times, none of them entirely identical:

Marii Victori* (s eras.) oratoris Massiliensis  
Claudi Mari Victoris oratoris Massiliensis  
Claudi Marii Victoris  
Claudii Marii Victorii

33 I provide here and elsewhere references to works I have found most useful. These references are not, of course, exhaustive.

34 Unless one wants to invent details out of whole cloth. Gamber 1884, 8-9, reports some of these invented details. But note his own remark (p. 8), “pour nous, il nous semble difficile d’entendre le mot massiliensis dans un autre sens que celui de né à Marseille, et jusqu’à preuve du contraire nous nous croyons autorisé à conserver à Victor un titre qui nous est si cher.”
Gennadius, also of Marseille (fl. mid- to late-5th c.), records the following details about a certain Victorinus or Victorius in his *De viris illustribus* (manuscript variations are in brackets):

Victorinus [Victorius *PR*], rhetor Massiliensis, ad filii sui Aetherii personam commentatus est [*RV*; *commentatur P*; commentatus omissō est *C*] in Genesi, id est, a principio libri usque ad obitum Abrahæ patriarchæ quattuor [*PR*; tres *VC*] versu edidit libros Christiano quidem et pio sensu, sed utpote saeculari litteratura occupatus homo et nullius magisterio in divinis scripturis exercitatus, levioris ponderis sententiam [*PV*; sententias *RC*] figuravit. Moritur Theodosio et Valentiniano [*PR*; Valente *VC*] regnantibus.36

Victorinus [Victorius], a *rhetor* of Marseille, commented [comments, ---] on Genesis for his son Aetherius, that is, from the beginning of the book up to the death of the patriarch Abraham. He wrote four [three] books in verse, with pious feeling, to be sure, but since he was a man immersed in secular literature and trained by no instruction in divine writings, he produced thought [thoughts] of little weight. He died during the reign of Theodosius and Valentinian [Valens].

From this entry, one can see that the most important information that would help pin our author down (his name, the title of his poem, and a more precise idea of its nature), is not securely established by the manuscripts of Gennadius’ text or indeed by the entry as a whole itself.37 Each element of the manuscript and of Gennadius’ testimonies must be subjected to scrutiny.

The correct form of his name is uncertain. *P* uses Victor (twice) and Victorius (twice). I remove from consideration the first incipit (f. 44v) which offers Victori(s), the *s* having been erased, because it is impossible to know when and for what reason this was done. Gennadius

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35 Staat’s ingenious (if fanciful) emendation suggested in his *Stellingen* deserves to be mentioned here: “*ad filii sui, Etherii, personam* . . . leze men in plaats van de gecursiveerde woorden: Alethias poema.” Given the trouble with Prudentius’ Greek-titled works in the Gennadius manuscripts, one wonders if Staat might be right after all!

36 Cap. 60 in Richardson’s edition, 61 in others. I use the text printed in Hovingh 1960A, 118. *C* = Vercell. bibl. cap. 183; *P* = Parisinus 12161 (Corbiensis); *V* = Veronensis bibl. cap. 22; *R* = Vaticanus Reginensis 2077. *C* = 8th-9th c.; *P* = 7th c.; *R* = 7th c.; *V* = 6th c.

37 Weber 2013, 193-197 is right to complain that Gennadius does not tell us much more than *P*, and where Gennadius differs from *P* it is troubling (the number of books, the dedication, scope of poem).
calls him Victorius or Victorinus (an assimilation to the more famous Marius?), never Victor. Since the only place where agreement between P and some Gennadius manuscripts is in the form Victorius, most scholars, since Hovingh’s edition, now prefer the name Claudius Marius Victorius or hedge and print (Victor) or (Victorius) beside their respective preference. Either form, Victor or Victorius, would be an acceptable addition to the name Claudius Marius. The names Claudius and Marius are gentilicia, but possessing two gentilicia was not uncommon in Late Antiquity. The third part of his name, Victorius, might at first glance seem to be another gentilic, but it is in fact a cognomen, as the suffix –ius was frequently added to cognomina in Late Antiquity.38

Some scholars silently change the order of his name to Marius Claudius Victor (Victor), presumably on the model of a name like Tiberius Claudius Donatus where Claudius is the second element of the name.39 It is possible that the first part of his name is missing. If nothing else, it should alert us to the fact that the issue of the author’s name cannot be settled simply by counting up the different forms of his name and awarding the palm to the most frequent form.40 I prefer to call him “Victor” in this dissertation.

His profession is given as rhetor by Gennadius, orator by the manuscript. The disagreement here is not a problem, however: orator can mean rhetor.41 He also states that Victor was active at Marseille, and that he dedicated the poem to his son, Aetherius. This

dedication does not survive. Dorothea Weber speculated that the name Aetherius may not be functioning as a proper name but as an adjective and synonymous with spiritualis, and so the Alethia may have been dedicated to a spiritual son.\textsuperscript{42} This is not impossible, but it would not be at all unusual for a father to dedicate a work to his son; in the fifth century Macrobius and Martianus Capella do so.\textsuperscript{43} Weber also pointed out that Aetherius is never mentioned in the Alethia and finds it somewhat contradictory to the idea of a dedication to a single person that Victor in v. 110 in the Precatio Victor writes dum teneros formare animos et corda paramus.\textsuperscript{44} I find this unconvincing: a dedicatee is not the sole intended audience of a work. The manuscripts of Gennadius also disagree on whether the poem consists of three or four books. Victorius died during the reigns of Valentinian III and Theodosius II (i.e. between 425-455).

This is the information that Gennadius offers. The agreement between the information provided by the manuscript and by Gennadius is limited; only the name (in some form), occupation, and place of residence (I presume that Gennadius here means Victor practiced as a rhetor in Marseille, and not necessarily that Victor was a Marseillais by birth) are the same.

Despite the unsatisfactory nature of the sources, most scholars have accepted that Gennadius’ Victor(inus/-ius) is the author of the Alethia.\textsuperscript{45} I am inclined to accept it as well. Schenkl was inclined to doubt the some details of Gennadius’ report, but not the identification of the author of the Alethia with Gennadius’ Victor(inus/-ius).\textsuperscript{46} Czapla argued for the positive identification, vigorously defending the accuracy of Gennadius’ report against Schenkl.\textsuperscript{47} Czapla

\textsuperscript{42} Weber 2013, 196 and n. 44 (for the synonym; she cites Zeno Ver. 2.19.3; Jer. epist. 108.24).
\textsuperscript{43} See Lemoine 1991.
\textsuperscript{44} Weber 2013, 195.
\textsuperscript{45} Dissenters to this identification are few. Only G. Wissowa 1889 dismisses it outright based on the discrepancies between Gennadius' entry and the manuscript of the Alethia and the fact that there were so many people named Victor-Victorius-Victorinus in the period that one cannot be sure that Gennadius’ Victor(inus-ius) is the poet.
\textsuperscript{46} Schenkl 1888, 346-349.
\textsuperscript{47} Czapla 1898, 122-125.
suggested that Gennadius had access to oral tradition in Marseille. He also suggests that Gennadius knew Victor’s right name because Gennadius was also from Marseille, but that a copyist who knew of the famous rhetor Marius Victorinus might have mistaken the two. Czapla’s views, although unprovable, are not unreasonable.

Homey and Weber were troubled by the fact that Gennadius' criticism (sed utpote saeculari litteratura occupatus homo et nullius magisterio in divinis scripturis exercitatus, levioris ponderis sententiam) is similar to Jerome's criticism of Marius Victorinus (sed quod occupatus ille eruditione saecularium litterarum omnino sanctas ignoraverit). It is possible, as Weber suggested, that Gennadius had little information on "our" Victor and so used the information from the manuscript of the poem he had at hand and Jerome's comment to flesh it out.

But the similarity in the name may have triggered Gennadius' memory of Jerome's judgment, and since it seemed appropriate for Victor too, he penned a similar description to Jerome's. I think Green is right in his explanation of Gennadius' remark: "The influence of secular letters of which Gennadius seems to complain can also be seen to some extent in the poems of Juvenetus, Sedulius and Avitus, and the criticism may be just a simplistic explanation of his perceived 'lightweight' opinions, as if to say that because he was a rhetor his theology was bound to be a bit dubious." Indeed, Gennadius’ sometimes praises those who were educated in secular literature: he finds no fault with Prudentius, whom he describes as a vir saeculari

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49 Weber 2013, 195-197. Gamber 1884, 12, seems to have been the first to notice the similarity between the remarks of Jerome and Gennadius. One should note that Gennadius uses the term occupatus only in his entry here.
50 Green 2010, 54.
litteratura eruditus, and Augustine is described as a vir eruditione divina et humana orbi clarus, fide integer, vita purus.\(^{51}\)

In any case, even if the manuscript evidence and Gennadius’ entry are describing two different people, there is no candidate waiting in the wings to replace the Victor(ius) who was the author of the Alethia. This is not to say that the Victor of the Alethia must be the same as Gennadius’ Victor. Victorius was a common name, especially in late antique southern Gaul in the third through sixth centuries, as Mathisen’s survey of “Victores, Victorii, and Victorini” demonstrates.\(^{52}\) The best one can do is to echo Mathisen’s remark: “Claudius Marius was probably related to some fourth-century literary men bearing similar names.”\(^{53}\) Now it is clear that tight-knit literary circles flourished at this period in Gaul, but absent additional evidence, this must remain speculation.\(^{54}\)

II. Internal Evidence

The internal evidence that the Alethia provides does not contradict Gennadius’ evidence. A reference to the movement of Alans into Gaul (3.192: uti nunc testantur Alani) and the worship of Apollo by the Leuci (3.205-306: post falsus Apollo / imposuit sedesque dehinc mutare coactus / Leucorum medicus nunc Gallica rura / transmittens profugus Germanas fraude nocente / sollicitat gentes et barbara <pectora> fallit) provides a terminus post quem of 406 for the poem.

\(^{51}\) Gennadius, Vir. Ill. cap. 13 and 39 (ed. Richardson).

\(^{52}\) Mathisen 1979, 151-159. Scholars (e.g. Manitius 1891, 181 and n. 1, Martorelli 2008, 16 and n. 27) also point out that Sidonius Apollinaris mentions a Victorius in Ep. 5.21, addressed to the brothers Sacerdos and Justin, Victorius patruus vester, vir ut egregius sic undecumque doctissimus, cum cetera potenter, tum potentissime condidit versus. Sidonius’ provides evidence for a second Victorius as well. In Ep. 5.10, Sidonius praises a rhetor whose style surpasses that of a number of other people, including the dulcedo Victorii.

\(^{53}\) Mathisen 1979, 153

\(^{54}\) See Mathisen 1981; 1989.
Hovingh 1955, 35-36, saw a connection between five verses in the *Alethia* and a letter of Pope Celestine from May 431, and thus dated the poem to around that time.\(^{55}\) This is based on linguistic parallels. Celestine writes, *tanta est enim erga omnes homines bonitas dei, ut nostra velit esse merita*, quae sunt ipsius dona, et pro his quae *largitus* est, aeterna praemia sit *donaturus* to which Hovingh compares *pecr. 118: et vires sensumque animis meritumque dedisti* and 1.328-331: … *pro quanta* dei indulgentia magni est! / nostrae laudis opus fieri, quod sponte benigna / *largitur* famulis, *nostri cupit esse laboris* / et se quod *donat* mavult debere videri. But the idea is not uncommon, e.g. Augustine’s remark in *De gratia et libero arbitrio*: *prorsus talia cogitanti uerissime dicitur: dona sua coronat deus, non merita tua; si tibi a te ipso, non ab illo sunt merita tua*; the work is dated to 426-427. There are similar statements in his sermons as well.\(^{56}\)

\(^{55}\) Hovingh 1955, 35-36.

\(^{56}\) Cutino 2009, 75-99, would fix the date of the poem to sometime between 435-450 because of syncretistic elements and sees Victor attempting to find a middle ground in the post-Pelagian debate in Provence.
CHAPTER 3

THE MANUSCRIPT AND PRINTED EDITIONS OF THE ALETHIA


The Manuscript

I. Date and Provenance of the Manuscript

The Alethia is preserved in a single known manuscript, the celebrated Parisinus latinus 7558 (hereafter referred to as P, as previous editors of the Alethia have designated it), which is now housed at the Bibliothèque nationale de France in Paris. This manuscript, written in rather legible Caroline minuscule script, has been dated to second quarter of the 9th c.; Tour, Lyon, and the Loire Valley have been named as possible places of origin. It consists of 168 parchment leaves, most of which preserve grammatical treatises and some poems of Florus of Lyon (†c. 860). But it also preserves works of a different kind: poems from 4th and 5th century Gaul: the Alethia; the Epigramma Sancti Paulini; some letters and poems of Paulinus of Nola and Ausonius; the Laudes Domini; the Oratio attributed to Paulinus of Pella; and Latinius Drepanius Pacatus’ De cereo paschali.⁵⁸

⁵⁷ Editors of Ausonius use the siglum Π for lat. 7558, while editors of Paulinus of Nola use the siglum N, and Dümler, the editor of Florus, uses the siglum C.
⁵⁸ Turcan-Verkerk 2003 makes compelling, but ultimately unconvincing, attempt to place it at Lyon in the 9th c.
II. Hands

Hovingh carefully examined the characteristics of the hands in P.\textsuperscript{59} Hovingh’s conclusion about the number of hands and the time of their activity are based on his own examination of P and the careful work of Paul Lejay, who proved in his 1890 article that Guillaume Morel, a 16\textsuperscript{th} c. publisher, wrote directly on P in preparing his edition of the \textit{Alethia}.\textsuperscript{60} I follow Hovingh’s attributions of hands here; my own examination \textit{in situ} of the manuscript gives me no reasons to doubt his conclusions. The hand of the main scribe (P) is 9\textsuperscript{th} c. and uses a dark-brown / blackish ink. The hand of a second scribe (P\textsuperscript{2}), likewise dated to the 9\textsuperscript{th} c. and using black ink, has made corrections. A third hand (P\textsuperscript{3}), active at some point between the 9\textsuperscript{th} and 11\textsuperscript{th} c. and using reddish-black ink, has also made corrections. P\textsuperscript{2} and P\textsuperscript{3} are especially important because they may have collated \textit{Par. lat. 7558} against another exemplar.\textsuperscript{61} Morel’s extensive corrections, in red ink, on the manuscript itself\textsuperscript{62} are noted with the siglum P\textsuperscript{4}.

III. Orthographic Habits

Since this is the only known text of the \textit{Alethia} that survives, the most common orthographic habits must be kept in mind when one reads the text of the poem as they may help establish a sounder text. Hovingh provides a useful list of these habits, which I reproduce here without the examples: \textit{ae} or \textit{ę} for \textit{e}; \textit{oe} for \textit{e}; \textit{e} for \textit{ae} (very frequent); \textit{ti} for \textit{si} or \textit{ci}, \textit{ci} for \textit{ti}, \textit{i} for \textit{y}, \textit{y} for \textit{i}, \textit{y} for \textit{u}, \textit{qu} for \textit{c}, \textit{f} for \textit{ph}, \textit{h} omitted or included, \textit{p} omitted between \textit{m} and \textit{t}, \textit{p} added after \textit{m}; inconsistent assimilation of prefixes \textit{com} or \textit{in} with verbs beginning with labial (\textit{com} or

\textsuperscript{59} Hovingh 1960B.
\textsuperscript{60} This had already been suggested by Dümmel (1879, 301), but Schenkl rejected Dümmel’s opinion (Schenkl 1888, 341-342).
\textsuperscript{61} Lejay 1890, 76.
\textsuperscript{62} There are still traces of fingerprints and Morel’s printed text on the manuscript.
con, im or in); single consonants where it should be a double and vice versa; unvoiced instead of voiced consonants: d for t, t for d; and most frequently of all, the interchange of e and i.

IV. Errors and Corrections in P

The manuscript of course has the usual errors manuscripts have: dittography (1.34, 1.351, 1.534, 2.202, 3.204), homeoarchy (3.151), non-forms (3.180 irans), metathesis (1.371 stolidisima, 2.186 scpecies, 3.754: tronitrus), but these kinds of errors are not very common. These errors are noted in the apparatus and, when significant, in the commentary. While the text itself is subject to correction “on the line” (that is, letters are re-shaped or erased, etc.), other methods of correction are uncommon, such as expunction (2.139; 3.466) and signes-de-renvoi with the correct reading in the margin. It is perhaps worth noting that there are only a few marginal notes to the poetry preserved in P: five in the Alethia and only four in all other poems combined.

V. Printed Editions

Scholarship: Schenkl 1888; Mayor 1889; Bonanni 1997; Turcan-Verkerk 2003; Kreuz 2006; Jammes and Barker 2010

Printed Editions before Schenkl’s

The editio princeps (in name only) of the Alethia is the heavily interpolated edition Jean de Gagny published in Paris in 1536. He claims he found a manuscript, now lost, the forced him to heavily rework the text. Guillaume Morel published his edition of the Alethia in Paris in

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63 Christiana et docta divi Alchimi Aviti viennensis archiepiscopi, & Claudii Marii Victoris Oratoris Massiliensis, poëmata, aliaque non poenitenda. Per Ioannem Gaigneium Parisinum Theologum è vetustis. librariis in lucem asserta, suoque nitori restituta. quorum catalogum proxima pagella indicabat., Lugduni, 1536.
1560. He used P as the basis of his edition. I examine Gagny’s and Morel’s editions at length below in an excursus.

It was Gagny’s version of the *Alethia* that was reprinted in the subsequent variorum editions of Christian poets:


**Schenkl’s Edition**

**Reviews**  Haverfield 1888; Manitius 1888; Wissowa 1889; Pollmann 2002 (general appraisal)

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65 In his notes (*In poetarum...*) he shows that he knows both Gagny’s and Morel’s edition: “Editus est primum Lugduni, e bibliotheca insulae Barbarensis...a Joanne Gagneio: deinde Parisiis, e bibliotheca Turonensi: sed ita inter se dissentient exemplaria, ut vix unius esse auctoris deprehendas.” See Schenkl’s censure of Fabricius’ preface, pp. 345-346.

66 p. XVII shows that the editor knew Daum’s judgment of Gagny’s edition.
Karl Schenkl published the first critical edition in 1888. He sets out his ratio edendi:

“Cum libro Turonensi unico in recensendo fonte utamur, omnes eius scripturas etiam levissimas in commentario propsui singulis manibus diligenter distinctis.” The result is a cluttered apparatus. The reason for this cluttered apparatus is that Schenkl did not believe that Guillaume Morel wrote directly on the manuscript. This means that Schenkl dutifully records, for example, every correction of a lower case letter to an uppercase letter and every orthographic correction, no matter how minor.

Schenkl argues that there were five hands: that of the copyist, to which he did not assign a siglum, but this is not quite correct. Schenkl uses the siglum m¹ in places where it seemed to Schenkl that the copyist corrected himself or wrote something in the margin. For the other hands, Schenkl designates as m² a hand that is contemporaneous with the copyist(s), and he designates m³, m⁴, and m⁵ as hands active in the 16th century. Schenkl dismissed Dümmler’s idea that Morel wrote on the manuscript on the following grounds: in Morel’s edition, corruptions, uncorrected in the manuscript, are corrected; some corruptions are corrected but Morel does not print either the corruption or the correction, but something else entirely; and sometimes Morel neglected good corrections in the manuscript.

Be that as it may, Schenkl was a fine editor, and many of his conjectures are sound. Schenkl’s edition is enriched with the conjectures of Wilhelm Brandes and above all of Michael Petschenig. He also includes the conjectures recorded in the margin of a copy of Morel’s edition in the Bodleian. In his lengthy preface, Schenkl provides a detailed overview of the poet and his

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67 *Claudii Marii Victoris oratoris Massiliensis* Alethia (Vienna 1888) = CSEL 16. Reviews: Wissowa (not critical, but he does consider the Gagny issue); Manitius provides parallels.

68 Schenkl 1888, 357

69 Schenkl 1888, 358: “Scripturae, quibus adiecta non est, sunt manus principis.”

70 Schenkl 1888, 340-342.
poem, the manuscript, and occasionally offers parallels (both in the preface, in the text, and in the index). He also printed the text of Jean de Gagny’s edition and carefully distinguished between where P and Gagny’s text agree and where they do not.

Schenkl also provided two indices, one grammatical and one metrical. These are very often helpful, but the needs of 21st century readers are different from those of Schenkl’s time. He often provides an explanation for the citation (e.g. *labi* III, 326 *lapsus* (*i.q. mortuus*) *more patrum est*), but other times he simply lists a word or phrase without explaining why it is worth noting; evidently Schenkl expected his readers to know what the issue was. This is particularly frustrating in instances where one would like an explanation (e.g. for the Victor’s usage of the genitive case, Schenkl prints *genitivi usus*: I, 395 *sq. veneno maioris mali*).

It is perhaps ungrateful to fault Schenkl for his indices. He was not, after all, writing a commentary. Scholars after Schenkl made extensive use of his indices, but aside from sporadic notes in commentaries and the articles of Hudson-Williams, no work that I know of has treated, in prose, Victor’s syntactic and stylistic habits and irregularities at length. I have attempted to fill this gap to some extent in Chapter 4.

Schenkl also printed Gagny’s edition, distinguishing the differences between Gagny’s text and what P preserves by printing Gagny’s changes in italics and noting omissions and additions. One is grateful for this, as it makes it much easier to examine Gagny’s handiwork. Gagny’s edition does not distinguish his changes from the text of his exemplar, nor does it provide line numbers.

**Hovingh’s Edition**

**Reviews**  Hudson-Williams 1961; Schetter 1962
Pieter Franz Hovingh reproduced, in large part, Schenkl’s text in 1960. Hovingh’s text of the *Alethia* differs too little from Schenkl’s edition for it to be regarded as a new critical edition. His changes are almost entirely superficial (usually orthographic in nature) and have little bearing on the meaning of the text, e.g. Schenkl prints unassimilated prefixes, Hovingh does not; third declension accusatives ending in –es Hovingh changes to -is. Where Hovingh does depart from Schenkl’s text, it is in most instances to restore the MS reading. In the case of Book 3, Hovingh’s text only departs from Schenkl’s in five places: 79 *disce quid exposcat quod <laeta>rere cachinno (Hov) ….† rese cachinno (Schenkl, who suggested *sic laetere cachinno*); 150 quid (Hov) qui (Sch); 168 venerator (Hov) venerator (Sch, who later favored *venator*); 236 quod (Hov) quom (Sch); 715 *generis* (Hov) *generi* (Sch). Hovingh even reproduces Schenkl’s indices, adding very little to either. Hovingh also criticizes Schenkl for relying on Gagny’s edition too often.

Hovingh’s edition is not without merit, however. Schenkl’s messy apparatus has been sensibly pared down by the removal of Morel’s orthographic corrections and the attributions to the various hands have been modified. Hovingh also prints a trove of *auctores et imitatores*, derived from Schenkl, Maurer, and others. While many of these do no more than show that other Latin poets used the same words and are not what we now call “intertextual allusions,” it can be useful in the case of a badly transmitted text like the *Alethia*. These are the chief merits of his edition. It has the added merit of being in print, though Schenkl’s edition, now in public domain in the United States, is available online.

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71 Hudson-Williams 1961, 234.
72 Approved by Schetter 1962, 364-365.
73 See the remarks of Green 2010, 56-60.
VI. Conjectures

**Scholarship**  Châtelain 1888; Petschenig 1888; Weyman 1926, 120-121 and 178; Shackleton Bailey 1952, 327; Hudson-Williams 1963 and 1964; Green 2010

After the appearance of Schenkl’s edition in 1888, those eager to make conjectures on this poem were few in number, fewer still their conjectures. This holds true for the fifty-five years since Hovingh’s edition appeared.
CHAPTER 4

EXCURSUS ON THE HISTORY OF THE TEXT\textsuperscript{74}

Jean de Gagny, Guillaume Morel, and the Text of the Alethia in 16\textsuperscript{th} Century France

In 1681, the German classical philologist Christian Daum complained that there was no decent edition of Claudius Marius Victor’s poem, the Alethia. He had found the edition of Jean de Gagny “shockingly interpolated” and Guillaume Morel’s, even though it was not interpolated, still “riddled with faults.”\textsuperscript{75} For over three hundred and fifty years, scholars such as Daum had to rely on the editions of these two 16\textsuperscript{th} century French editors. Their principles and as a result their editions of Claudius Marius Victor’s poem were radically different.

Jean de Gagny was born sometime in the 1490s and died in 1549. He was, at various points in his life, the chief almoner to the king of France, a manuscript hunter, a cleric, a printer-publisher, a connoisseur of type, an editor, a commentator, a poet, and a chancellor.\textsuperscript{76} According to Leopold Delisle, he had the idea of centralizing all the libraries of France.\textsuperscript{77} He was thus in a position to seek, acquire, edit, and publish whatever manuscripts he found. Gagny used more care in acquiring and publishing than he did in preserving them, as all the manuscripts he used are lost.\textsuperscript{78}

\textsuperscript{74} I have placed the Latin texts at the end of this chapter.
\textsuperscript{75} Benedicti Paullini Petrocorii de Vita B. Martini Libri sex...cura et studio Christiani Daumi. Leipzig 1681. Daum’s remark is on p. **5. Daum had already complained about Gagny’s edition of Avitus in 1653 in a letter to Thomas Reinesius: Thomae Reinesii medici ac polyhistoris excellentissimi, Epistolæ, ad Cl. V. Christianum Daumium (Jena 1660), 110-111.
\textsuperscript{76} On Jean de Gagny, see Farge 1980, entry 199 (pp. 177-183). See also NBG v. 19 (Paris 1857), coll. 165-166; Armstrong 1954, 179-181; Renouard 1965, 161; Hunt 1982, 365-371 and 367-368; Carley and Petitmengin 2004, 195-223; Jammes and Barker 2010.
\textsuperscript{77} Delisle 1868-1881, 1:162-163.
\textsuperscript{78} Hunt 1982, 369, n. 10.1
In 1535, Gagny, armed with a royal permit that granted him access to France’s monastic libraries, set out to find manuscripts of ancient Christian authors that might be moldering in France’s monastic libraries. He found in Dijon a manuscript containing the poetry of Avitus, a sixth-century bishop of Vienne and sent it to press. Soon after that, Gagny claimed that he had discovered a manuscript of Victor’s poem at Île-Barbe. He writes in his address to François I an account of this discovery [text 1]:

And so after receiving these treasures [the manuscript of Avitus’ poetry and other things he discovered at Dijon] from the bishop of Vienne and returning to Lyon, I heard while Alcimus [i.e. Avitus] was in press that there was an outstanding library at Île-Barbe, and the rumor was not untrue. Indeed I therefore set out for the place and was admitted into the library. I found over twenty “coins” and “statues” of rather distinguished and unalloyed metal; then indeed the singular monument of a certain noble victor. It is the Commentary on Genesis of Claudius Marius Victor, orator of Marseille, clearly treating the same subject and in the same style as Alcimus [Avitus], which, after it had smiled upon me, I thought it would be of no small use to literature if both works should go into the light.

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79 Huius ego tam egregiae sponsionis tuae accept in pignus diplomate publico, quo universas mihi patere regni tui librarias iuberes, atque inde quotquot e re philologiae viderentur monumenta, describendi potestatem faceres, coepi omnium coenobiorum, quae iter in comitatu tuo facienti occurrerunt, librarias verrere (Primasius p. *3r*).
80 Earlier in his preface Gagny has referred to ancient literary works variously as coins, medals, and portraits. François I had a keen interest in material remains, so Gagny writes at length to liken literary remains to material remains.
81 Lowercase in Gagny’s edition. A cheap pun, I suspect (i.e. out of all the wonderful things I found, this was the “victor”).
Gagny’s edition was printed in Lyon by Melchior and Gaspar Trechsel in 1536.\textsuperscript{82} He had it reprinted, with no changes except that of the title and date, at Paris in 1545 by Pierre Drouart.\textsuperscript{83} It was further reprinted in various collected editions of Christian-Latin texts.\textsuperscript{84}

Nearly twenty-five years after Gagny’s first edition, Guillaume Morel printed his own edition of Victor’s poem at Paris in 1560. Like Gagny, Morel provided an account of his discovery of a manuscript of the poem. Morel found his manuscript at the church of Saint-Julien of Tours. In his address to Simon de Maillé, the bishop of Tours who had allowed Morel to search through the manuscripts in the church’s library, he wrote [text 2]:

And so from the library of Saint-Julien of Tours, behold before you the recovered three books of Marius Victor on Genesis, an author who is as learned as he is devout, and no less ancient. For Trithemius says that he was famous (\textit{claruisset}) in A.D. 430. But the ancient book does not indicate by which author or rather authors (for they seem to be different) the anonymous [sc. poems] that follow [sc. Victor’s poem] are, unless we are to attribute to Victor these as well.\textsuperscript{85}

Morel’s edition seems to have gone relatively unnoticed, though Fabricius knew of it and, tellingly, only made use of several of Morel’s readings.\textsuperscript{86} It was not reprinted.

Why was Morel’s edition, for all the care he took in presenting what he believed Claudius Marius Victor wrote, passed over by readers in favor of Gagny’s, especially given his frank

\begin{footnotes}
\item[82] \textit{Christianæ et docta divi Alchimi Aviti Vienensis archiepiscopi, & Claudii Marii Victoris Oratoris Massiliensis, poëmata, aliæque non poenitenda. Per Ioannem Gaigneium Parisinum Theologum è vetustis. librariis in lucem asserta, suoque nitor restituta. quorum catalogum proxima pagella indicabit.}
\item[83] The 1545 edition seems to be extraordinarily rare. I have only found two copies: one at the Folger Shakespeare Library and one at the Bibliothèque nationale de France. I examined both copies; the text of the poem does not seem to be at all changed. The title is changed to \textit{D. Alchimi Aviti Vienensis archiepiscopi, & Claudij Marij Victoris Oratoris Massiliensis Poemata, Aliæque luce dignissima, quorum index est proxima pagina. Quae omnia e tenebris eruit Io. Gagneius, Parisinus Theologus: cuius etiam carmen accessit de sacro Christo corpore in Eucharistica.} The same typographical errors in the 1536 edition appear in this edition (see n. 92 below)
\item[84] See p. 23 above.
\item[85] Morel, p. 2*.
\item[86] Schenkl 1888, 345-346.
\end{footnotes}
admission that he considerably altered the text of the Alethia? For this the text of both editors must be examined.

From Gagny’s prefaces, one can get an idea of his conception of “the ancients” and their value to society. In his address to François I, he speaks of the “ruins” of antiquities, meaning not only physical monument from the ancient world, but literary ones as well. As Gagny explains, one takes pleasure in these ruins because of their age, and one takes pleasure in looking upon them. What one sees with one’s eyes, when it comes to literature, is the very souls of men. These were learned and religious men, so it is edifying for one to read them. Thus Gagny was inspired to seek them out. Gagny then recounts his experience in looking for manuscripts. The picture he paints is a common one for the time: manuscripts are kept in bad conditions and guarded by lazy or corrupt men (in one preface he likens them to the dragon that guarded the Garden of Hesperides).  

Gagny provided a detailed account of the state of the manuscript and his editorial principles. From the preface [text 3]:

No one would believe how much labor I expended in restoring these [authors], having found the manuscripts not only consumed by antiquity but also corrupted by the unskilled and incompetent laziness of the copyists. I am, at last, allowing them to go out, restored (restitutos) in more than a thousand places and with nearly five hundred verses altered (immutatos).

87 From the preface to his edition of Primasius of Uticensis (Lyon 1537), pp. a3r-a3v. The passage is a typical expression of Gagny’s attitude toward monks and monastic libraries: “Hic ego sanctissimum tuum institutum, ac plane regiam voluntatem qualicunque mea opera adiuturus, quum dicerem eiusdem te materiei sylvas habere in regno tuo, quamplurimas, sed barbararum aliquot nationum custodia inaccessas, obstinate librarias suas occludentibus coenibitis aliquot, illarumque ingressu sibi | ac ceteris tanquam  Vestae adytis interdicentibus: te statim mihi viam facturum pollicitus es, vel si (quod de hortis Hesperidum fabulantur) draconum vigilantia observarentur iugi ac perpetua.”
Indeed the book was crawling with so many errors that it was not possible to find a copyist, partly because of the injury of time, partly because of the carelessness of the one who had copied it, And so when, compelled, I had applied mind and hand to copying it, I necessarily had to divine in many places rather than read. For since the traces of letters barely remained in many places, [and] many [vestiges] also had been so changed through the fault of the copyist that I was not even able to sniff out any sense from the very places which I was able to borrow from the sacred books [= compare?] and from the account of Genesis: with whatever skill I had, I took care to repair the injury of time and the ignorance of the copyists. The things which were more distant from the historical sequence of Genesis (as the author digresses often, not ineptly), in some places, compelled, I omitted, because one could neither understand (much less read) them, nor on the other hand was it permitted to look for sense from elsewhere, it seemed these things would in no way harm the remaining account if they were omitted. In other respects, I tried to restore some things (which were relevant to and pertained to the narration of the account, if ever neither a place nor skill for reading the decayed remains) very closely to the order of Holy Scripture, with verses made anew; if ever I find a more correct manuscript, I will restore the author (autorem). I wanted you, kind reader, to be advised of these things, lest you think that I have rashly either mutilated or changed the author (autorem).

Gagny’s detailed account of his editorial principles is seems clear. He uses typical humanist technical terms to describe them: restoration (restituere), conjecture (divinare), and alteration (immutare). Gagny is also seemingly clear about the state of the manuscript. The

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88 What does he mean? That he could find no one there to make a copy for him? Or that the book was so corrupt no one was able to copy it?
89 Rizzo 1973 treats the meanings of these terms.
manuscript was difficult to read because of its age and damage, full of errors, and copied by an incompetent scribe.

Gagny’s complaints are not, of course, unique to him. It had long been customary for editors to complain about the condition and quality of the manuscripts they used in preparing their editions. But what is unusual is his frank admission of the fact that he omitted or altered verses as he saw fit. For all his words on the splendor of decaying antiquity, Gagny presents a patched-up text that is indeed mire interpolatus as Daum claims. Gagny’s disclaimer at the end of the address to the reader suggests that he anticipated readers’ outrage as a possible response to his practices. I now turn to his edition.

Gagny’s edition is sparse. He seems to have come up with the title (Commentarii super Genesin). Before the text of Avitus and Victor, he printed a table of contents, an index, and provides biographical and historical details culled from earlier sources (Gennadius, Trithemius, and others). There are brief marginal notes that provide biblical citations and summarize particular lines, but there are no annotationes. There is a list of errata, but a number of errors remain, perhaps suggesting that the edition was published hastily. Most importantly, the printed text does not betray any evidence of the manuscript problems that Gagny writes about, nor does Gagny indicate where he has diverged from the manuscript. Thus a reader of his edition is nowhere able to discern whether a line, a word, or even a letter is from Victor’s or Gagny’s pen.

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90 Gagny probably derived it from Gennadius’ description in De viris illustribus c.60: Victorinus (Victorius al. mss.) commentatus est in Genesì.
91 Particularly noticeable are the headers. The most common header on the verso pages is CL. MARII VICTORIS; on the recto pages, LIBER followed by the book number. p. 170: the header reads CLAV. MARII VICTORIS; p. 176: the header reads SVPER GENE. COMMEN; p. 178: the header reads HOMILIA; p. 253: the header reads LIBER TERTIVS.
If one starts with the premise that the manuscript that Gagny claims to have copied was similar to what is preserved in *Par. lat. 7558*, then it is reasonable to assume that, in places where there are significant differences between Gagny’s text and *Par. lat. 7558*, these places offer fruit from Gagny’s garden.

In the following examples, I use P to designate the reading of *Par. lat. 7558* and G to designate what Gagny prints. Note that the line numbers will often differ between P and G because of Gagny’s various changes: Gagny’s *Alethia* totals about 1846 lines, the manuscript about 2020. Note also that I underline letters (or words) where Gagny’s text has a reading identical to *Par. lat. 7558*. For example: Gagny’s text of prec. 109 reads *inclita legiferi iam pandito scrinia Mosi*. Thus all but *iam* and the ‘i’ in *Mosi* are found in *Par. lat. 7558*.

Even though one cannot be entirely certain that what Gagny prints is not what he read in the manuscript, one may doubt readings that are inconsistent with Victor’s known practice, e.g. in meter: the scansion of certain words, e.g. *Nōe* (P) *Nōe* (G) and frequent use of elision, the use of motifs that are anachronistic, e.g. the smoke of Cain’s and Abel’s sacrifices reaching God, which first appears in the 9th century; and the use of words and phrases that are redolent of medieval Latin, e.g.: *quinimo* (prec. 35); *superinductis* (1.20); *humectans* (1.115); *perbella* (1.141) *operam navare* (1.153); *pedetentim* (2.391); *demeritum* (3.90; 447); *iudicis immoti* (3.269).

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92 By significant differences, I mean partial or complete phrases and verses. I exclude differences that can be regarded as Gagny’s conjectures or manuscript variants.
93 I take the phrase *Gagnei hortulo* from Schenkl 1888, 343.
94 Schenkl 1888 prints Gagny’s text distinguishing Gagny’s text from his own text on 437-482.
95 In Gagny’s own original Latin poems he employs elision very often.
96 Hovingh 1956.
97 This is not to say that these words are only found in medieval Latin, but that their use in this context is suspect and in some cases unparalleled in verse.
Gagny’s other interventions are more complex, but on the whole they are meant to make the text more readable. They may broadly be classed into the following groups: clarification (of narrative, grammar, or expression), elaboration, and omission.98

Gagny very frequently normalizes unusual grammar or phrases, such as: (G. 3.93) *vero\ benedictus\ erit* ("truly he will be blessed") instead of (P.3.93) *benedicite*99 *deo vives* ("you will live, o blessed to God"); for Noah’s death he uses the prosaic *in pace quievit* ("Noah rested in peace") (G.3.97) for the unusual (P.3.95-96) *cum iam decurreret*100 *annis / mille minus deicies*101 *quinos, quos [sc. annos] summa recusat* ("when he had run through a thousand years less fifty, which the sum total of [all his years] denies"); the easier-to-grasp expression of the Trinity (G.\*prec.\* 5-6) *in tribus esse Deum, sed tres sic credimus unum / unica personas ut tres substantia reddat* ("We believe that you are a God in three, so that one distinct substance renders three distinct persons") for Victor’s obscure (P.\*prec.\* 5-6) *in tribus esse Deum, sed tres sic credimus unum / ut propias generis species substantia reddat* ("We believe that you are God in three, but that the three are such that the essence renders individual persons of one kind").

Gagny also clarifies the narrative by changing Victor's pronouns into proper nouns. Sometimes a generic noun, e.g. the anonymous *genitor* who laments his son’s untimely death (P.3.176) Gagny changes to *Nemroth* (G.3.133), a decision not supported by Victor’s text. Other clarifications can include exegetical notes, too, as in the case of Victor's handling of Abraham's reward to Melchizedech (Gen 14). For Victor is content to mention that Abraham bestowed upon Melchizedech *mystica...libamina* ("mystic offerings"), an oblique reference to the sacraments.

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98 Elaboration and omission can be understood as clarification in some instances.
99 Emended to *benedicite* by Morel.
100 Emended to *decurrerat* by Schenkl and Petschenig.
101 Emended to *decies* by Morel.
Melchizedech brings not "mystic offerings" but vinumque et panem (G.3.434). Gagny then adds an exegetic gloss on the phrase mystica...libamina:

\[\textit{Mystica praemisit summi libamina Christi:}\]
\[Cuius de manibus sumens ecclesia corpus\]
\[Vivificum panem, coelesti pota cruore est.\]

Gagny sometimes elaborates where Victor's narrative is sparse. Consider G.2.170-185

Victor devotes one verse to God’s speaking to the angels (= Gen 11:6-7): cum pater haec propriis regni consortibus infit (“When God spoke these [words] to his partners in the kingdom”) (P.3.246). Gagny fills this out with the following addition (G.3.196-198):

\[\textit{Tum pater omnipotens caelesti voce senatum}\]
\[congregat angelicum: turbaeque insana superbae\]
\[facta stupens, isthaec regni consortibus infit.\]

Gagny has adds dignity to the scene: instead of merely “speaking to the consorts of the kingdom,” God now “with a heavenly voice gathers together the angelic senate” – and gives context to God’s action: God is “amazed at the outrageous deeds of the mad crowd.”

He similarly extends Victor’s treatment of Gen. 18:23-33 (P.3.669-682; G.3.611-624), where Abraham pleads with God not to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah, if there are just people in those cities. In Victor’s version, Abraham’s conversation with God is narrated in the third person. There is no back and forth between God and Abraham: the decreasing number of potential just people concisely expressed with dehinc percunctatio blanda / deducens sensim numerum, "then there is a gentle inquiry, / [sc. Abraham], gradually lowering the number…” (P.676-677), and Victor only cites the numbers fifty and ten. God merely says Non perdam ("I
would not destroy [sc. a city with X just people in it]”) (P.3.676). In contrast, Gagny’s version attempts to convey the drama by having Abraham decrease the number from 50 to 45 to 40 to 30 to 10, mostly in direct speech (G.3.616-623; God does not speak). Gagny undoubtedly found these bare verses insufficiently dramatic. Even with his extensions, Gagny’s Alethia is still some 200 lines shorter.

In some cases, Gagny may have understandably found Victor’s Latin difficult. This is suggested by a number of omitted verses that have troubled modern editors and commentators. A few examples from the third book will suffice here: 3.37-38: hoc legis servare loco iurisque severi / praescriptis vinctos semper meminisse iubemus (“I order [you], bound by precepts of a strict law, always to remember to maintain the following as a law” – G. simplifies to imperium ecce damus vobis res prorsus in omnes (“Behold, I grant you power over everything entirely”); 3.256: inpunita ferant tam vani damna laboris – G. omits because of ferant, which is difficult to explain. Even a competent Latinist, as Gagny was, would find these lines puzzling, and if he were rushing to publish his text, it should come as no surprise that he might consider them hopelessly corrupt and solve the problem by omitting them altogether.

The long and complicated digression on the genealogy of idolatry (P.3.99-209) is condensed into G.3.98-159. He omits the references to ancient speculation on the nature of the universe. It is curious that Gagny also chooses to omit from this digression the only clear historical references in the Alethia: P.3.192: ut nunc testatur Alani (the Alans had entered Gaul in the late 4th–early 5th c.) and P.3.207-209: Leucorum factus medicus [sc. Apollo] nunc Gallica rura / transmittens profugus Germanas fraude nocenti / sollicitat gentes et barbara <pectora>

fallit. But he does not purge the text of “pagan” words (e.g. Tartara, Olympus, though he does not capitalize them). He retains the mention of mendax Graecia (G.3.145-146=V.3.194-195) and Apollo (G.3.156).

Interestingly, Gagny does not seem to have been driven by any theological or ideological motivations in his reworking of the text. Despite being a conservative theologian who polemicized with the nascent Protestant movement and was concerned with different forms of heresies, Gagny did not modify the text to support his own points of contention or undermine those of his opponents. This is particularly apparent from the prefatory prayer, Victor’s profession of orthodoxy, where one might reasonably expect any differences of religious belief might have occasioned an alteration by Gagny. It may well be simply that he found a difficult-to-read manuscript, full of what he thought were gross errors, and did what he could with the text.

But some scholars, most notably Schenkl, suspect that Gagny lied about that nature of the manuscript he found at Île-Barbe. Schenkl writes, “we should not put faith in [Gagny] when he speaks of the wretched condition of the Lyon codex, which he says he used, especially since he proceeded with the same capriciousness in the books of Alcimus Avitus” and suggests that he may have used Par. lat. 7558. I share Schenkl’s suspicion of Gagny, but my attempts to prove that Par. lat. 7558 was indeed Gagny’s manuscript have thus far failed. An account of his editorial activities is a desideratum.

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103 It is worth noting that according to Johann Heinrich Zedler’s Universal-Lexikon, vol. 9, p. 39 (Halle and Leipzig 1735), 39, Fabricius abhorred Christian poets who included the names of pagan gods in their poems.
104 According to James K. Farge, Orthodoxy and Reform in Early Reformation France: The Faculty of Theology of Paris, 1500-1543 (Leiden 1985), p. 231, Gagny was the author of the censure of Thomas Cajetan, Epistola theologorum Parisiensium ad Carinalem Coetanum reprehensoria (Wittenberg 1534).
105 Schenkl 1888, 339. See also the doubts expressed by Bonanni 1997.
106 Schenkl 1888, 344.
107 The works cited in n. 10 above do not focus on this aspect of Gagny’s career.
The text of Guillaume Morel’s 1560 edition is very different from Gagny’s. A younger contemporary of Gagny, Morel was a successful printer, who served as the imprimeur du Roi pour le grec to the king in 1555 until his death in 1564. He was also a scholar in his own right. Morel believed (and in essence he was) that he was printing the poem for the first time. Like Gagny, he described the manuscript he discovered as corrupt. But his editorial principles were markedly different from Gagny’s [text 5]:

The exemplar (the sole one which I used) was corrupt and confused in many of its parts, with the result that, it is hardly surprising that some places do not lack corruption[s]: I put all the effort I could into ensuring that it be free [of corruptions]: nevertheless I preferred to present [those] places untouched and such as the book preserved for them to be settled by others, rather than to present those places contaminated by any emendation of mine.

Aside from the text of the poem, Morel prints little else that relates to the Alethia. He includes a notice on Victor from Trithemius and annotationes that run to one and a half pages; lines marked with an asterisk to signify that something has dropped out (p. 45, 47) and nothing has been supplied to restore it. Unlike Gagny, Morel does not print the Sancti Paulini Epigramma. This led Schenkl to assert (quite without justification) that Morel did not know Gagny’s edition since if Morel had, he surely would have printed the S. Paulini Epigramma.111

109 Morel must be referring to Par. lat.7558 and the other poems from the manuscript, not the manuscript he used for Hilary, Cyprian, and Dracontius. Cf. Lejay, 1890, 71. It appears that some scholars have understood Morel to have meant the manuscript containing Hilary, Cyprian, and Dracontius (=Par. lat.14758), since that manuscript is also considered very corrupt. Even if Morel is referring to Par. lat. 14758, the practices he mentions he used on 7558 are the same.]Morel (or his foreman) did not write on Par. lat.14758.
110 [C]odex quatuor libros inscribit: cum tres tantum habeat, nisi quartum esse velis, qui epigrammata, psalmos, et alia ea continet, quae libro terto subnexui. (p. 147)
111 Schenkl 1888, 347. Morel may have intended to print it, since he made some corrections to the first several lines of the poem.
I find it difficult to believe that Morel was unaware of Gagny’s edition (it is not particularly rare, and there was a second printing), but I am only speculating. Morel had an interest in, and also published, Christian literature; how likely is it that he would not have known that a prominent man in Paris put out an edition of two Christian authors in 1536 (printed in Paris) and reprinted 1545? I prefer to see Morel’s statement on his editorial principles, with its emphasis on presenting what the manuscript presents rather than contaminating it with his own conjectures, as an oblique attack on Gagny’s own editorial practices. Moreover, Morel might have had a personal reason to pass over Gagny’s edition: his friend, Robert Estienne, ended up in 1550 as an exile in Geneva, and he considered Jean de Gagny as one of the men ultimately responsible for his exile.

In the case of Morel, the manuscript he used is still extant. Paul Lejay long ago showed, by careful comparison of the manuscript with Morel’s edition, that Morel wrote directly on the manuscript, making it a printer’s copy. Thus one is in a position to test Morel’s statements in his preface against his actual practice (on the manuscript).

Many of Morel’s corrections are unobtrusive. He capitalized proper nouns, added punctuation, joined or separated letters in ill-formed words, and made basic corrections to orthography. These kinds of corrections evidently do not constitute fixing “corruptions” for

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112 He put out editions of the works of Basil, Gregory of Nyssa, Hippolytus of Rome, and others. His final publication was the works of Cyprian, including the poetry then ascribed to him. A list of all his publications is found in Michael Maittaire, *Historia Typographorum aliquot Parisiensium vitas et libros complectens* (London 1717), vol. 2, pt. 1, pp. 42-50.
113 Farge, *op. cit.*, n. 30 supra, 80. Morel was sympathetic to religious reform.
114 Par. lat. 7558 at the Bibliothèque nationale de France.
Morel but rather the sort of non-intrusive copyediting that he thought an editor needed to make—they are not radical conjectures.\textsuperscript{116}

Morel’s brief \textit{annotationes} seem to have been written while the book was in press. He makes corrections to misprints (to restore the text to the manuscript reading and hazards conjectures (\textit{legendum videtur; vide num}).\textsuperscript{117} Morel’s notes are mostly confined to the \textit{precatio} (there are just two notes for the first book, and none for the second or third). We see here a diligent scholar-editor at work. Morel’s edition stands in stark contrast with Gagny’s.

The two editors of Claudius Marius Victor’s poem are men who differed in their beliefs about the editor’s duty, duty toward the text, and duty to his readers. It would be easy to dismiss Gagny as a throwback to the sort of creative editing that saw every problem as something that could and needed to be solved \textit{ope ingenii}. In Gagny’s case, there is a tension between his ideal (as he explains in his preface) of unvarnished antiquity and the text of Victor as he found it. Rather than attribute some fault to Victor as modern commentator would, he (perhaps understandably) attributes it to the “injuries of time and scribes.” We may fault Gagny for his interpolations, but he does present a more readable, understandable text.

Indeed, this is what led Auguste Bourgoin to base his dissertation on Gagny’s edition.\textsuperscript{118} He found himself in the same situation that Christian Daum had been in two hundred years earlier, needing to choose between two texts, neither of which was satisfactory [text 6]:

\textsuperscript{116} Perhaps the most major change (really an addition) Morel makes is foisting an \textit{incipit} upon the second book (one is lacking on the MS) that includes a Graecized title of the work (ΑΛΗΘΕΙΑΣ, f. 59r; the Latinized form is used elsewhere).
\textsuperscript{117} Morel 1560, 159-160.
\textsuperscript{118} Bourgoin 1883.
I avoided attempting this comparison, because I was studying not so much the work’s appearance (*forma*) as its subject matter (*materia*). All the same, it pleased me to look a little more closely at the difference between the editions of Fabricius and Morel, and I noted the following differences: Fabricius’ is shorter, Morel’s draws out the work’s digressions. Fabricius’ sheds light on the meaning because it is brief, not abridged and lopped off, in such a way that one does not need to search after the necessary meaning of the sense or words; Morel’s edition, granted that it enlarges the work, is somewhat obscure. Be that as it may, it is not so different that I should think that Marius Victor’s poem is better expressed and represented by Morel’s edition; indeed that Jean de Gagny and Fabricius are bolder than Morel and perhaps more learned, so that Victor’s poem, *emended* and cleansed, is indeed pleasing to religious ears. For one is vexed by the many faults of Morel’s edition (however one cleans and restores it), so it is no surprise that everyone always uses Fabricius’ edition.120

Bourgoin’s choice in 1883 to base his dissertation on Gagny's (mediated by Fabricius) *Alethia* is easy to censure in light of the significant advances that the study of classical philology made in the 19th century, especially in Germany. And I suspect that his complaints about Morel’s faults are the same sort of “faults” that Gagny found in Victor’s language. So too for Daum’s criticism of Morel.

All of this is not to condemn Jean de Gagny, nor to condemn his edition. Here was a man who took an obscure, difficult text, and made it much more readable. Victor’s subsequent editors

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119 I understand Bourgoin to mean by *forma* the history of the text, i.e. what Victor wrote, how it was transmitted, and how editors decided to present it.

120 Bourgoin 1883, 42-43
may have provided the world with more critical editions, but Victor is the less readable because of it. For Gagny’s virtue, if it may be so called, is that he tried to conjure up Victor’s ghost by doing the same thing Victor did with his source: Adding, subtracting, refining, and thus improving, in his mind, the original.

This is what was expected of editors of this time: “they were not scholars but men of letters, and their editions were meant to serve other men of letters. They wished to present their public not with a text that was sound, but one that was elegant and readable – in other words, a vulgate with the rough places made smooth.”121 Jean de Gagny was an interpolator, but one should not let the negative connotation obscure the fact that interpolation “is a means of dealing with defects or obscurities in the text, and the reader who employs this it for this end may be said to perform the task of editor or commentator.”122

Guillaume Morel's edition is, of course, more rigorous in its presentation of Victor's text. It, and not Gagny, should be regarded as the editio princeps of the Alethia. His desire expressed in his preface, that the text be presented as he found it, is pleasing to our critical sensibilities. But it must be said, with Bourgoin, that the Victor he reveals is not

Texts

Text 1: Jean de Gagny on His Discovery of Claudius Marius Victor's Poem123

Acceptis itaque his a Vienensi archiepisco [sic] divitiis Lugdunum reversus, cum in praelo Alchimus, audivi in insula Barbarensi insignem esse librariam, nec fallax rumor. Profectus enim eo loci et in bibliothecam admissus supra viginti insignioris monetae ac purioris metalli statuas

121 Grafton 1977, 172.
122 Tarrant 1989, 126.
123 Schenkl 1888, 337-338.
reperi: tum vero victoris cuiusdam nobilis monimentum egregium. Is est Claudii Marii Victoris oratoris Massiliensis in genesim commentarius, idem plane cum Alcimo atque eodem dicendi genere argumentum tractans, qui cum mihi arrisisset, existimavi non parum rei literariae profuturum, si eadem opera uterque in lucem exiret.

**Text 2: Guillaume Morel on His Discovery of Claudius Marius Victor's Poem**


**Text 3: Jean de Gagny on His Editorial Principles**

Nemo vero crediderit quam in restituendis illis laborandum mihi fuerit, codices nacto tum vetustate exesos, tum inerti et imperita exscriptorum ignavia depravatos, quos tandem plus mille locis restitutos ac quingentis paene versibus immutatos…abire sinimus.

**Text 4: Jean de Gagny on his Editorial Principles – Additional Details**

Tot vero partim vetustatis iniuria, partim eius qui descripsarat incuria mendis liber scatebat, ut nullum plane descriptorem invenire potuerit. Itaque cum illi describendo animum manumque coactus adiecissem, necesse habui divinare plerisque in locis magis quam legere. Nam cum vix locis non paucis literarum superessent vestigia, multa etiam sic descriptoris culpa immutata essent ut ne sensum quidem ulla subodorari possemus nobis ex ipsis, quod potuimus ex sacris

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124 Morel 1560, p. *2*.
125 Schenkl 1888, 337-338.
126 Schenkl 1888, 338.
bibliis et Geneseōs historia mutuati: qualicunque nostra minerva temporis injuriam
descriptorumque sarcire curavimus inertiam. Quae autem ab historicā Geneseōs serie remotiora
erant, (ut plerumque non ineptē autōr digreditur) ea locis aliquot compulsi omisimus, quod quum
neque intelligere quispiam posset sed ne legere quidem, neque rursum aliunde sensum venari
liceret, nihil visa sunt si omitterentur reliquae historiae nocitura alioqui quae ad rem faciebant, et
ad historiae pertinebant narrationem, si quando cariosa monimenta legendi neque locus daretur,
neque facultas, factis de integro versibus aliquot proxime ad scripturae sancte ordinem restituere
conati sumus, si quando emendatiorem nacti erimus codicem integrum autōrem reddituri. Horum
te lector optime admonitum voluimus ne nos temere autōrem aut mutilasse crederes aut
immutasse.

**Text 5: Guillaume Morel on his Editorial Principles**127

Exemplar quo usi sumus unico, multis sui partibus perturbatum atque confusum erat, ut haud
mirum videri queat, si qui loci labe non careant: quo carerent autem, omnem quam potui
diligentiam adhibui: malui tamen locos integros et quales liber habebat, aliis diiudicandos, quam
mea emendatione ulla contaminatos exhibere.

**Text 6: Auguste Bourgoin on his Edition Preference**128

Hanc igitur comparationem tentare refugiebam, quippe qui non tamen operis formae quam
materiae studerem. Mihi tamen libuit paulo altius scrutari quid intersint Fabriciana et Moreliana
editio; sequentia autem notavi. Adstricta prior, posterior vero operis digressus dilatat. Sensibus
illa lucem dat, quippe quae brevis, non circumsa et amputata sit, ita ut aliquid rei aut verborum

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127 Morel 1560, p. *2*.
128 Bourgoin 1883, 41-42.
intellectum necessarium requirere non opus sit; haec vero, licet in longius ducta, subobscura est. Quidquid id est, haud multum abest ut putem Moreliana editione ad vivum melius exprimi ac repraesentari Marii Victoris poema; Joannem vero Gagneium aut Fabricium Morelio audaciorem et forsan doctoriem nimis operam dedisse ut Victoris poema emendatum atque tersum vel religiosis auribus placeret. Pluribus enim mendis Morelianae editionis offendaris, quam ut illam teras referasque, ideo non mirum si Fabriciana usque ab omnibus versetur.
CHAPTER 5

THE POETIC STYLE OF CLAUDIUS MARIUS VICTOR


I. Critics on Victor

Literary critics give V. mixed marks when it comes to style, if they remark on it at all.¹³⁰ For Max Manitius, V. is an author "Verfasser [der] eine wirklich poetische Veranlagung besass."¹³¹ Manitius considered V.’s poem, because of its “Frische und Lebendigkeit” to be one of the “besten Produkten der frühchristlichen Dichtkunst” and ranked it with the works of Claudian and Ausonius.¹³² The polymath Jack Lindsay deems V. “perhaps the finest of these [sc. Biblical poets]” but notes, if not faults, that, “[i]ts rhetorical approach is not concerned with dramatic action; it seeks to entangle and unravel the events in its arguing and suggestive web of thought… it lacks cohesive structure and philosophic unity; but the poet's mind plays over the surface of his theme, at moments writing mechanically, at moments striking deep, at moments expanding with a delicate insight.”¹³³ Raby dams Victor with faint praise by calling him a “poet of a higher order” than Pseudo-Hilary.¹³⁴

¹²⁹ I have omitted from consideration the judgments of scholars, most notably Adolf Ebert, who used a text derived from Gagny’s edition.
¹³⁰ Very often they do not.
¹³¹ Manitius 1891, 180.
¹³² Cf. Ferrari 1912А, 3: "[N]oi cercheremo di ricostruire…la figura di questo poeta, che è certo fra più belle e caratteristiche della letteratura cristiana del V° secolo."
¹³³ Lindsay 1948, 178-179.
¹³⁴ Raby 1953, 77.
More recently, Jacques Fontaine has claimed that V.'s profession had a negative influence on his poetry. According to Fontaine, V. oscillates between prolixity and obscurity, and is incapable of arranging his material. Yet Fontaine grants him "le mérite d'une certaine originalité poétique."\(^{135}\) It is Fontaine's assessment that represents the consensus of most scholars, and rightfully so.\(^{136}\)

V. is perhaps most often prolix at those points in the poem where God is being described or is speaking, but it is also a general feature of his poem (see examples of synonymic amplification below). This prolixity is a result of V.'s failure to discern the difference between pomposity and majesty. Prolixity, though tiring, need not be a barrier to understanding a poet's thought (Statius is a good example).\(^{137}\) To his credit, V. very rarely descends into the word-hoard and returns with an enumeratio of which other Late Antique poets are so fond.\(^{138}\) But prolixity combined with obscurity can be fatal to the poet's long-term chances of finding an audience and influencing subsequent poets. It also deters would-be interpreters and commentators. Critics besides Fontaine have pointed out V.'s obscurity, but they have not adequately explained why he is obscure.

V. is hard to understand, harder to translate. One has nothing but empathy (and, it must be said, sympathy) for those who read his poem. R.P.H. Green’s remark that V.’s neglect over the centuries has been due to “the difficulty of reading him, the effect of a style often syntactically difficult and, to some extent, the deficiencies of the one manuscript” may well be

\(^{136}\) E.g. Schenkl 1888, 353: “ceterum dum brevior esse laborabat, factum est, ut interdum obscurior fieret.” Hudson-Williams 1964, 296, “In regard to language the poet is sometimes anything but clear.”
\(^{137}\) Alain of Lille is another. Petrarch, Invectives 92 (against a Frenchman claiming Italian poets as his own) Sufficit sibi Anticlaudianus Alani sui, paulo minus tedious Architrenio. Poete ambo barbarici multum pariter se diffundunt, multum frustra se torquent, mirum nisi multum etiam sudent.
\(^{138}\) Exceptional are 1.259-261 and 1.353: the former describes abstract qualities with which God endows the human body, the latter describes the protective features with which God endows animals.
true.\textsuperscript{139} Sometimes the manuscript is indeed the culprit (e.g. 2.315, \textit{Syrum} is unintelligible, Petschenig’s conjecture, \textit{serum}, must be right),\textsuperscript{140} but V.’s style is too consistently obscure to put all the blame on the manuscript. Pity the \textit{teneros...animos et corda} (prec. 104) that V. aimed to instruct! V.'s difficult for the following reasons (this list is not exhaustive):

1. He is obscure because he often treats subjects that lend themselves to obscurity, such as philosophy, biblical exegesis, natural phenomena, and he draws on sources rather recondite or non-extant.
2. He is obscure because he often fails adequately to signal the subject of a sentence.
3. He is obscure because he sometimes uses hyperbaton grotesquely.
4. He is obscure because he often subordinates clause after clause (“runs on”).
5. He is obscure because words and phrases are often vague (abstract words and concepts, see I above).
6. “Synonymic amplification,” as Roberts calls it,\textsuperscript{141} adds more words than are necessary to express a thought; sometimes it is difficult to understand how to construe a word because either could stand alone (dangling, so to speak) or could be used in a construction (see, e.g., on 3.112, \textit{memor}).
7. He is obscure because he often switches between “modes” (narrative, interpretative, etc.; compare Claudian in this regard) without indication.

The most notable characteristics of V.’s poetic style are easier seen than described. The following two passages represent V. at his best and at his worst.

\textsuperscript{139} Green 2010, 54.
\textsuperscript{140} 2.315: \textit{ultorem admonuit Syrum docuitque perire}. Cutino defends Petschenig’s conjecture.
\textsuperscript{141} Roberts 1985, 148-160.
II. Locus Amoenus

Victor is at his best in his descriptions.\textsuperscript{142} Consider the following excerpt from his description of Paradise in Book 1, a locus amoenus passage (1.227-236).\textsuperscript{143} It is not without obscurity, but it is overall a clearer passage than many others in the \textit{Alethia}.

\begin{verbatim}
227 Hic, ubi iam spatiis limes discernitur aequis
228 solis et aeternum paribus ver temperat horis,
229 illic quaeque suis dives stat fructibus arbor
230 pomaque succiduis pelluntur mitia pomis,
231 quae sunt blanda oculis et miri plena vigoris
232 membra animosque fovent pascunt sapore et odore.
233 Tellus sidereos vibrat distincta colores
234 semper flore novo, quaeque arida tegmine sicco
235 iam fragiles solvunt calamos, animata vigore
236 muneris ambrosii, spirantia cinnama fundunt.
\end{verbatim}

It is here where the boundary is already marked by equal spaces and (sc. where) an eternal springtime is mild because of the equal hours of sunlight. It is here where each tree stands rich in its own fruits. Ripe apples are struck by falling apples, apples pleasant to the eyes and endowed with a remarkable power. With their taste and scent they nourish and feed bodies and minds. The land sparkles with flowers in perpetual bloom, adorned with starry colors, and dry areas now release tender shoots from their dry husks, brought to life by the ambrosial gift, [sc. the husks] pour forth fragrant cinnamon.

\textsuperscript{142} The description of paradise continues until v. 254.
\textsuperscript{143} (1.224-236; the description runs to v. 304) Homey 2008 has recently analyzed this section with regard to the aromas Victor describes but fails to translate. Cutino 2009, 129-136 provides a translation and analysis.
There is much in these verses that typical of V.: the penchant for leonine rhyme (v. 227, *spatiis...aequis*; v. 234 *novo...sicco*); alliteration (230: *poma...pelluntur...pomis*); and interlaced word order (v. 228: *suis dives stat fructibus arbor*). Indeed, v. 230 *poma succiduis pelluntur mitia pomis* is tricked out with all these adornments. v. 233 (*tellus sidereos vibrat distincta colores*), surely one of the most beautiful in the entire poem: Paradise is depicted as an earthly mirror of the heavens.

This excerpt is relatively clear except in two places. First is the *hic-illlic* unit (v. 227 and 229). *hic*, “here” is picked up by *illlic* “(over) there” – except by *illlic* V. really means *hic*! More serious is v. 234, where a subject change occurs (it changes from *tellus* (v. 233) to *arida*. But it is not at all clear to what *arida* refers. It could refer to the dry land or to the stalks. If V. knows anything about how cinammon is obtained, it probably refers to the stalks.¹⁴⁴ These sins are pardoned in this section, however.

### III. Locus Horridus

The following passage (2.252-269) is Victor's retelling of Gen. 4:9,12, on the punishment and destiny of Cain. After Cain's murder of Abel, God speaks (in oratio obliqua) to Cain:

252 …………………Tali tunc caede madentem
253 non aspernatur (tanta est clementia) dignum
254 affatu censere deus facinusque negantem
255 arguit et tanto leviter pro crimine punit
256 mensuram poenae facti de parte petendo,
257 ut, quia praemonitus facinus committere dirum

¹⁴⁴ Papini 2006, 52 ("le zone aride"). Homey 2008, 76 does not translate but states "Subjekt ist zunächst in 234f. die das Aroma hervorbringende Klimazone"; Cutino 2009, 130 n. 4 ("le zone che, aride dalla secca copertura").
At that time, God (so great is his mercy) did not disdain to deem [Cain], though dripping with slaughter, worthy of address, and [God] accused [Cain who was] denying his crime and punished him lightly for so great an offense by seeking the measure of the punishment from the kind (?) of the deed, so that, since [Cain], even though [he was] forewarned, did not fear to commit a dreadful crime, would tremble: the offense that he did not wish to exist would become a punishment, [that] what the mind, refusing to take into itself, would have considered a light matter, his agitated limbs would prove a serious one, and that, with his mind struck, by which inner torturer [= conscience] every wicked act punishes itself, the horror at the crime would break the body as well and violently move into his limbs, and the limbs, moved, would be seized by headlong whirl, as when water hemmed in by bowls breaks the rays that strikes them with refracted light, a swiftly moving flash [of light] enters the atria, and wandering all over the place
is everywhere and nowhere, and when it trembles, the a line gradually interwoven with a dim flickering light endlessly flashes amid the green-blue shadows.

There are numerous difficulties that the reader must face: v. 253, the main verb *(aspernatur)* is interrupted (the caesura notwithstanding) by an interjection (cf. 3.453; 630); v. 254 *affatu censere deus*, a prolix and pompous parenthesis (*= deus non aspernatur censere madentem* (v. 252) *dignum affatu*); v. 256 *mensuram poenae facti de parte petendo* (i.e. *lex talionis*, Homey 1972, 136-138); v. 257 *ut, quia* (a second subordinate clause directly after the first, cf. 2.390; 398); v. 257 *praemonitus* (subject switches to Cain); v. 258, *tremeret* (a reader who knows the Vulgate would not recall this. In the Vulgate (Gen. 4:12), God says to Cain: *vagus et profugus eris super terram*; but V. is not inventing here, rather he is using the reading in the Vetus Latina, *gemens et tremens in terra*); v. 258, *meritum quod noluit esse*, what does this mean? Schenkl thinks it means *delictum* (crime, sin) – does V. mean Cain wished he had not committed the crime? v. 259, *quod mens haurire recusans*, “unwilling to accept” (?); v. 261, *animo* (one first thinks “mind” but with *profundo* V. means *conscientia* (TLL 10.2.1750.41-43); v. 262 *omne nefas* (subject or object?)); v. 264 (hyperbole?); v. 265, *labris* (metonymy for *vas vel sim.*); v. 265 *cum* with *ut* (*ut…cum* is not unusual, e.g. *Georg*. 2.279, but the string of subjunctives prior and the post-position of *cum* (followed by an ablative) disorients, v. 267, *lubricus*, how is *fulgor lubricus*? The TLL cites this line and compares it to one other use (by Sidonius). The adjective more naturally is used with liquid, of course, but it is here a transferred epithet; v. 267 *perlustrans nusquam et ubique est*, what does this oxymoron mean? That the light now flickers, now not?; v. 268, *cumque tremit* (subject is unexpressed, presumably it is *fulgor* (v. 266)); v. 269 *intermicat* is intransitive and with the dative instead of transitive and with the accusative.
Most of the difficulties mentioned above are easily resolvable by the patient reader, but the end result is that one is *tired* jumping through all V.’s hoops. And V.’s treatment of God’s punishment of Cain is likely to trouble the modern reader. As punctuated in both Schenkl and Hovingh, it is one long sentence. Without knowledge of the Vetus Latina translation or of writers like Ambrose who used it (where Cain is punished, much of the meaning of God’s punishment (as V. tells it) is lost. The simile at the end is rather obscure, too: why does V. use this simile? It seems ill chosen. He likens Cain’s trembling to flickering rays of light that pass through water. The simile is derived from *Aen.* 8.22-25, but the borrowing is not at all appropriate (there the simile is applied Laomedon’s thoughts, here is applied to the physical trembling of Cain’s limbs.

**IV. Vocabulary and Diction**

V.’s poetic lexicon is derived from Latin epic koine that had built up over the centuries. A reader familiar with Lucretius, Virgil, Statius, Lucan, and Claudian would find few words unknown to him in the *Alethia*. There is one hapax legomenon (*vocitamen*, 1.342), and at least one word not found in verse before V. (*perfectio*, 3.264). His use of words with meanings different from their usual meanings is limited (Schenkl cites *amens*, *praeserere*, and *succiduus*; add *exire*, 3.321). Words used primarily in Christian literature are likewise rare (I note only *holocausta*, 3.12) with the exception of proper names.

V. very rarely uses archaisms – or should they be called Virgilianisms? Or post-classicisms? It is difficult to tell. For instance, at 3.246, *pater (sc. deus) infit* is probably not for V. a conscious archaism, but a Virgilianism (or Ovidianism, take your pick): *infit* is just the epic word that suits the moment. There is no reason why *infit* here should be more solemn or dramatic than *inquit* or *dicit*. Are God’s remarks elsewhere less solemn (e.g. *ait*, 1.160 and *dixerat* 163, of God deciding to create man)? The same doubt goes for other so-called archaisms: V. uses *circes*
thrice (1.69; 2.480; 3.53) in describing the natural world, and pos instead of post in dramatic moments (3.82; 3.727; 1.60 perhaps not). 1.406 fas fuat (fiat MS) is Gagny's emendation.

Characteristic of V.'s style are the following:

Alliteration: V. uses alliteration very frequently, so it would be otiose to list more than a few examples: 3.238-39: *contemnit cautes et quicquid monte reciso*; / caeditur; 3.424: *praecepere animis casuros clade repente*; 3.623: *milia multa virum, valido cum stemmate gentes.*

Anaphora: V. is addicted to anaphora and rarely misses an opportunity to use it, often in the service of a catalog. 1.237-241: *quod...quod...quod...quod*; 2.15-16: *quibus...quo...quorum* (with polyptoton); 2.19-22: *nunc...nunc...nunc...nunc* (with asyndeton); 2.447-450: *quod...quod...quod*; 2.469: *quod...quod...quod* (with tricolon abundans); 2.505-509: *quantus...quantus...quantus*; 2.524-527: *pars...pars...pars...pars*; 3.8-9: *quos...quos*; 3.300-301: *quos...quos*; 3.735-37: *quas...quas...quas...quas...quas*; 1.153-154: *iam...iam...et...que...et...que*

Assonance: 2.477: *aquas, aucto quas*; 3.213 Senaar arctos

Asyndeton: 1.111-12: *praecipitisque poli numeros uice redire, / ire semel iussus*; 2.27-28: *hic vitae perit almus amor, penuria rerum / insinuat iam dulce mori*

Hyperbaton: V.'s use of hyperbaton is grotesque; I list here the greatest offenders:

3.154-155: *congrua...sententia* (five words intervene); 3.17-18: *ultio...parva* (five words); 733-735 *solitas...nebulas* (11!); 711-719; 1.149-151: *sanctusque...spiritus* (8); 1.411-412: *credula...Eva* (5); 2.420-421: *densas...silvas*
(9); 3.101-102: deus...spiritus (spiritus in apposition, 5); 3.170-172: cupidis
nimium...curis.

Pleonasm (or “synonymous amplification”): V.’s reputation for prolixity derives
from his tendency to fill out lines by stating the same thing in different words,
often with conjunctions:

A. Verbs: 3.722: cunctantem pigras moras sine fine trahentem (!); 3.45:
repetam...requiram; 1.29-30: solvunt / atque abolent; 2.315:
admonuit...docuitque.

B. Nouns: 1.446: silvas umbrosaque lustra; 3.462 praedamque et praemia
belli; 2.500: cella claustrisque; 2.378 vitam lucemque

C. Adjectives: 3.99 vacuis...remotis; 2.35-36: egenos / atque inopes

V. Figures

As one would expect of a rhetor-poet, V. makes constant use of rhetorical figures.
Indeed, so constant is his use of figures that as often as not it seem that V. is using them for their
own sake, rather than in the service of his verse.

Antithesis: 2.28: ira recens, odium vetus; 2.259-260: quod mens haurire recusans
/ duxisset leve, membra grave exagitata probarent

Apostrophe: 3.76-80 (narrator addresses Ham); 1.449 (narrator addresses Adam)

Antithesis: 2.28: ira recens, odium vetus; 2.259-260: quod mens haurire recusans
/ duxisset leve, membra grave exagitata probarent
Enumeratio: 1.259-261 (enumeratio): gloria, simplicitas, studium, vigilantia, somnus / cura, salus, terror, facundia, gratia motus; 1.353: armavitque manu, cornu, pede, dente, veneno

Hendiadys: 3.37: legis...iurious severi; 3.98: orbem natis curasque relinquit
[Schenkl adds: 3.373: thalamosque et foedera; 2.378: vitam lucemque]

Hypallage (transferred epithet): 3.86: divini nuntia sensus; 3.152 falsi commenta veneni

Oxymoron: 1.543: fine perenni; 2.23: absenti...odore (Staat); 3.224 viva morte; 2.131 siccus liquor; igne gelato; 3.82 sensim properante; 3.225 festinante senecta; [Schenkl adds: 3.224: viva morte; 3.767: sicco liquore; 1.108; 3.448]

Rhetorical questions: 1.155-158 (ni spectator adest...quid possint conferre deo?); 1.460 (cur ubi sis quae...fatetur...cecidisse sacro?); 2.294-298; 2.307 (exclamation coupled with rhetorical question); 3.256 impunita...?

Sententiae: 2.97: auctorem leti leto dare; 2.155: materies recipit studium, sed decipit usum; 2.194-195: si quae primum agnoscre credit, / quisque recognoscit; 1.157-158: possessio nulla est, si rerum possessor abest

Similes: 2. 265-269 (light); 2.270-274 (body condition); 2.505-510 (town is liberated); 3.276-284 (birds); 3.310-318 (plague)

VI. Meter / Versification

Something should be said of Victor's handling of the dactylic hexameter, both his general tendencies and noteworthy usages. Victor is a competent composer of dactylic hexameter by classical standards, but not a perfect one. Indeed, Victor begs pardon for any metrical infelicities he may have committed (prec. 119-122). Schenkl provides a helpful index of metrical
phenomena in his edition, and George Duckworth has analyzed Victor's metrical practice and set it context with other Latin dactylic poetry. Giuseppe Flammini has provided a more comprehensive analysis of the *Alethia*'s metrics.

Of the 16 possible combinations of the first four feet, Victor avails himself of all. He has a marked preference for 3rd and 4th foot spondees (687 verses SS, 612 verses DS, 1299 verses total).

Selected features to note:

I. Lengthening of first syllables in various words
   
   1.91: virescere
   1.518: miseriis
   2.287: parentibus
   2.315: Syrus
   3.736: Aponus

II. 1st declension ablatives in –ā
   
   1.387: una
   3.436: prima
   3.712: dissimulata

III. Spondaic lines
   
   1.428; 3.600, 603

IV. Synizesis
   
   dēhinc: 3.162, 206; a monosyllable at 3.529, 676
   derat: 2.201
   eādem: a disyllable, 3.630
V. has a tendency to begin lines with monosyllables (649 times in the *Alethia*, 34.32%); the nearest competitor is the dactyl (271 times, 14.33%). The second word in a line is often a monosyllable as well (389 times, 20.57%); the nearest competitor is a pyrrhic (161 times, 8.51%). There is less of a difference in what metrical form constitutes the penultimate word of the line. Is most often a dactyl (531 times, 28.08%); the nearest competitor is the trochee (405 times, 21.41%).
CHAPTER 6

TEXT AND TRANSLATION OF ALETHIA 3.1-326

The Latin text printed here is a very light revision of Hovingh’s edition. I have changed punctuation and adopted a different reading here and there. These are noted where they occur in the commentary. I have printed Hovingh’s apparatus with some additions (usually from Morel or Gagny).

The translation follows the Latin text. I have, to some extent, attempted to make Victor more readable in translation than he is in his original language. However, I have tried to remain as close to the Latin in those places where it did not produce a grotesque result. Readers should be able to use this translation to aid in their reading of the original. Translations are commentaries, too.
SIGLA AND SYMBOLS

**P** = Par. lat. 7558 (9th c.) – I do not use this siglum unless to distinguish its text from corrections or conjectures

**P^2** = hand of a contemporaneous corrector, black ink

**P^3** = hand of a corrector (ca. 9-12th c.)

**P^4** = corrections of Morel (written on the MS itself)

**G** = Gagny's reading (or conjecture) in his ed. 1536.

**M** = Morel's conjectures in his ed. 1560.

**B** = conjectures found in the margins of a copy of Morel's edition in the Bodleian

**Sch** = edition and conjectures of K. Schenkl in his 1888 ed.

**Pet** = conjectures of M. Petschenig in Schenkl's ed.

**Hov** = edition and conjecture (sg.) of P.F. Hovingh (CCSL 128, 1960)

**HudW** = conjectures of A. Hudson-Williams (CQ 14.2 (1964), 296-310)

**Shanzer** = conjectures of Danuta R. Shanzer (per coll.)

**Smolak** = conjectures of Kurt Smolak (per litt.)

* = erasure of 1 letter

† = corruption

<> = insertions of various editors

s.v. = supra versum
LATIN TEXT

Talia mente gerens venturaque saecula cernens
non prius officii quicquam mortalis inire
prisca Noë quam sacra deo gratesque rependat
constituit. niveo surgunt altaria saxo;
undique diffusi convexo tramite caeli
templum mundus erat. septenis hostia praeceps
affluat e gregibus, mollis quos sustinet aër,
quos generat terrae . . . . . . . . . .

. . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . sternuntur Eois

aut Arabum silvis. ignis demissus Olympo
libat odoratos quos crine exedit honores
ambrosiumque deo fragrant holocausta vaporem.
Qui mitis semperque bonus pro munere nostro
accipiens quicquid recipit gaudensque piorum
officiis hominum, quorum non indiget usu,
sed quis nos redimat, placido sic numine fatur:
“Etsi parva fuit tanto pro nomine poenae
ultio vindicibus pluviis et gurgi
tot scelerum damnasse reos sedemque nocentum
terras diffuso potius renovasse profundo,
non tamen offensi feriere verbere tali
ulterius mortale genus, quamvis ruitor
per varium facinus, per crimina pristina rursus
humanas mentes videam gentesque profanas.

Nam quia mortales plectenda ammittere numquam
cessabunt, meritis semper condigna referre
nos cessare decet. laeti vos crescite alumni,
crescite securi fecundaque prole replete
arva novosque greges cunctis di
terris.

Servabunt elementa vices cunctisque diebus

CLAUDII MARII VICTORI ORATORIS MASSIL: EXPLICIT ALETIAS (ΑΛΘΕΙΑΣ
supra lineam add. P4) LIB. II. INCIP. III 3 gratesque] gratisque (corr. P4) 7 septenis] septinis
(corr. P4) 8 affluat] affuit G 9 terrae] Sch aer P (e alt. exp.) post terrae lacunam significavit
Sch, qui susp. scribendum quos generant terrae solidae] 9 sternuntur] sternuntur (o ex e) 10
silvis] Pet silitis (c supra t P4) [ demissus] Sch dimissus 12 fragrant] M flagrant 15
hominum] M hominis | usu] (u alt. ex a) 16 quis] Sch quod | numine] B nomine 19
nocentum] Sch nometem 20 potius] [Sch: “fort. penitus”] 25 Nam] Sch num mortales] M
seminibus propriis reddetur debita messis.  
Curret opus mundi compar discordibus horis:  
aestati certabit hiems ac tempora librans  
veris et autumni fugiens replicabitur annus.  

Vosque, quibus regnum solidi permisimus orbis,  
quos tremit et dominos sentit genus omne animantum,  
hoc legis servare loco iurisque severi  
praescriptis vincatos semper meminisse iubemus:  
inter tot species rerum, quas sponte moventes  
membra animis vestros bis iam largimur in usus,  
lurida ne quisquam permixto sanguine turpis  
membra cibos faciat, quod crimine non secus acris  
olim iudicii plecet sententia quam si hauriat humanum quisquam ferus ense cruorem,  

quem semper repetam vindex adeoque requiram  
util mihi non solus pendat rationis abundans  
supplicium, sed bruta quoque: cruar omnibus aequo  
sit sacer humanus, nostra quae luce fruuntur.  
Et sint signa, quibus caelo radiante remissas  
diluviis testemur aquas; quippe aëre denso  
cum levis in tenuis nebulas supenditur umor  
et nigras iam cogit aquas in concava nubis,  
effundam radios et pulchrum circumque  
arcum curva mihi decorabit solis imago  

pingentem convexa poli, qui luce caloris  
exsiccat pluvias et in aëra dissipet imbres  
usque adeo ut possit mundi pars altera poenae  
hoc sibi venturi specimen praesumere signi,  
quod plus ignis habet rutilans et iam minus imbris.”

35 Vosque…regnum] G iussue (a supra u alt. P⁴) quibus regnu- (in mg. uos quib;& rgN)  
Sch rerumq; P rerum quae M 40 membra animis] membranmis 41 lurida] (r ex e) |  
turpis] (e supra i. P⁴) 42 cibos] cibus (corr. P⁴) 46 rationis] (i alt. ex e) 49 signa] Sch digna  
50 testemur] Sch teximus denso] (s ex t) 51 in tenuis] Sch intenis P intensis P⁴  |  
M imbr& 57 mundi] Sch mundo 59 ignis] P⁴ s.v. iguis (i alt. s.v.; gu ex ll) | imbris] M imbres
Talibus attoniti imperii, quae cuncta tremiscunt, promissisque piis alacres, quibus omnia gaudent, certatim limo dulciue uligne laeta arva Noë natique simul, quis firmius aevum, infindunt rastris et semine rura maritant.

Iam vero effusis late densissima campis herba cibi ex calamis in frugem lacte gelato reddit multiplicem cumulato fenore messem; et nova praegravido iam palmite vinea diti luxuriat fructu, quem dulci nectare tendens parturit ac duro nascuntur pocula ligno. Forte Noë domini celebrat dum laetus honores indulgens epulis et dulcia pocula libans, persensit vivos latices somnoque gravante victus membra toro posuit neglecta fidelis: et revoluta simul vestis secreta rexit corporis et risum tibi, Cham deterrime, movit fons et origo tui, fratreque aspergine culpae Sem primum summumque Iaphet miscere parasti. Disce quid exposcat quod <laeta>rere cachinno tu solus: fratrum melior sententia dignum officii putat esse locum; nam tegmine rapto et pos terga dato sensim properante recessu aversi patrium manibus texere pudorem et palmam fratri rapuit piety uterque sublatam medio. nam postquam libera somno corda Noë repetunt, divini nuntia sensus, natorum meritum tali mercede rependit:
"Cham maledicte, tuo dubius servire parenti fratrum servus eris, sancto tu, maxime natu
Sem, benedicte deo vives fratremque minorem <semine iam> dominus multo distendet in orbe
donec et in fratris domibus numerosa propago constituat sedem populisque admixta propinququis
impleat adiunctas et quas construxerit urbes."

Haec fatus senior, cum iam decurserat annos
mille minus decies quinos, quos summa recusat,
conscia venturi resolutus pectora leto
cessit et hunc orbem natis curasque relinquit.
Quippe datum culpa vacuis
et post peccatum, prima quod morte piatur,
cum deus electae penitus
atque remotis et post peccatum,
prima quod morte piatur,
cum deus electae penitus
sacraria mentis
implesset pectusque rigasset
quia fugiens rapuit quaeque est quaeque afferet
saecula venturis carpenda nepotibus
et aetas, quodque hominum usuarios
fundit in usu
terra gravis, liquidum pelagus,
vegetabilis aër
atque avidus nimio quod fomite
gignit et ignis.
Sed postquam tantum munus damnata
propago perdidit et miseris nil praeter scisse
maiores arcana suos, revocare parentum
quisque memor secum monitus et cuncta revolvens,
quae quibus apta modis,
quae rerum parte iuvaret
condere in hoc,
fixis olim sermonum elementis
aut signis, solida mandantes verba figura.
Hinc artes traxere caput, quas littera servans
priscorum in tardos misit commenta nepotes

91 semine] supplevit Pet | iam] supplevit Sch | distendet] Sch distendit P distendat M | orbe|
[orbe* (* adiecit P\textsuperscript{4})] 92 donec] donec (d in ras.) 93 constituat] M constituit 94 et] Sch sed
urbis] urbis (corr. P\textsuperscript{4}) 95 decurserat] SchPet decurreret 97 venturi] M ventura 98 hunc] (h s.v.)
| orben] B ommem 102 rigasset] B regasset P rogasset (o supra e. pr. P\textsuperscript{4}) 103 coramque] Sch
109 munus] mus*nus (s eras.) 110 perdidit] (p ex q) 112 revolvens] (u alt. s.v.) 113 iuవaret
iuuarent 115 mandantes] mandats (corr. P\textsuperscript{4}) 117 nepotes] P\textsuperscript{4} nepotest ē
et veterum studii miscens inventa novorum spem dedit attonitis vanaque cupidine motos

traxit ad inlicitum praeceps indago futuri: sive dedit mundo, quem quidam errore caduco corporeum dixere deum, quod solus habebat conditor omnipotens sparsitque per omnia membra rerum signa movens venturi nuntia saecli,

ut se per totam molem testetur alumnis semper et auctorem fateatur mentis imago sitque palam rebus positum, quando et mendacia mundi prodidit anticipans et post fingenda notavit?

seu simplex potius mundi fert omnia motus, seu gravis inventor leti cessare capacem fraudis materiam non passus cuncta malign subdidit arbitrio, quo fatum induceret orbi. Nam dum dinumerat cursus variosque recursus

astrorum et miro fruitur discrimine caeli, tempora sic dubii posuit sibi certa favoris atque facultatem pronam metasque nocendi effectus varios variis conventibus edens, spargat <ut> invidiam stellis et crimina sacro

adleget caelo mundumque ornantibus astris, cum fingat populis quicquid facit ipse futurum hinc ars est, quod fibra tremit, quod pinna coruscat, nubibus elisis quod fulmina nuntia signant. Nam quia praecipites motus cunctosque sagaci

cunctosque | praecipites [corr. P4] | praecipitus | M cunctusque

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amplexus casus studio quid publicus hostis praepet... is reddat meminit, divina putare persuasit populis falsi commenta veneni. Haud secus Aethiopum canibus, <quis> regna, tyrannis libertas regitur: cum rebus congrua certis

corporis ignari petitur sententia motu
et casum praecpta putant. nec signa minora haec prave valido praesumit opinio sensu; nam gemmam Pyrri Galbae Fortuna refutat; qui potuit quippe statuam tot fingere lustris,
et lapidem simulare potest. His fraudibus usus

inlusit captis noscendi ardore future vincendique dehinc fati; stimulante timore sollicitis studio magicae scelus intulit artis, qua semet potius coherent arisque dicatis

impia tura darent, cum prodita turba parente. Moxque parum sano genitus de stemmate Nembrod, mole et mente gigans, Babylonis praeditus aulae, Persarum capiens animos venerator iniquus a veri sacris domini transduxit ad ignem.

Nec tantum cupidis nimium sic arte sagaci ille, caput scelerum, mundi reus et suus hostis

inlusit curis hominum, sed mentibus ipsis inruit et sensus penitus descendit in omnes, mox et in affectus. nam cum patris unica proles

spem generis leto secum traxisset acerbo, infelix genitor, lacrimis noctesque diesque continuans hebetique trahens plagore querelas dum furit et raptum quaerit per singula natum exuviasque tenet dulces puerilibus annis

aut trans fata pius solatur imagine luctum,
sic desideriis accensum pavit amorem,
ut totam Pario statuens de marmore formam
crediderit demens inclusu vivere sensu
et questus audire suos arisque dicatis
185
auctoris summi cultum transferret ad umbras.
Omnibus iste reis gravior transcendit et illum
doctorem scelerum, magicas qui condidit artes.
ille palam furiis reus est et mente profana,
hic pietate nocens. facinus plus inquinat istud,
190
quod speciem virtutis habet; nam protinus omnes
amplexae gentes scelus hoc sine fine litantes
manibus inferias, uti nunc testantur Alani,
pro dis quaeque suis caros habuere parentes,
post etiam reges, quorum sub nomine mendax
195
Graecia, dum veris falsa insinuare laborat,
addidit obscuras vanis rationibus umbras,
excusans tumultos et condita nomina bustis,
donec per species etiam dementia cunctas
tenderet et rebus minimis membrisque pudendis
fingeret esse deos; quippe assistebat in oris
talibus erosque fovens responsa ciebat
inventor leti miris in partibus orbis,
usus ad insidias aut igni aut fonte calenti
aut anris. ventos terra spirante loquacis
200
lusit et ante Themis, populis post falsus Apollo
imposuit sedesque dehinc mutare coactus
Leucorum factus medicus nunc Gallica rura
transmittens profugus Germanas fraude nocenti
solicitit gentes et barbara <pectora> fallit.
205
Sed redeo ad summam, qua sum digressus, ad istam
maiorum seriem. cum multiplicata creando
cuncta Noë suboles terras implesset Eoas

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182  totam] (o in ras. P2)
183  crediderit] crediderat (corr. P4)
185  cultum] cultu (corr. P4)
190  quod] quo (corr. P4)
193  dis] diis
194  regis] regis (corr. P4)
196  vanis] Pet uariis | umbras] in mg. umbrae P4
197  tumultos] tumultos (corr. P4)
200  oris] aris Shanzer 201 erosque]
(corr. P4) 207 nunc] nuno (corr. P4)
209  pectora] add. s.v. P4
210  ad summam] M assumá | digressus] (i supra e pr. P4)
et Sennaart agros, decrescere cernerat agros, per varias orbis partes spargenda iuventus
rupit in haec maestas tristissima verba querelas: “Heu quam non certus vitae status ordine coepit fert homines factamque fideum sic prospera fallunt per varios cursus, ut voti summa petiti tendat in adversum. iam nos, si dicere fas est, quod sperata patrum precibus numerosa nepotum crevit turba, piget; spargenda est quippe per orbem exilio generata manus: peritura propinquis et pariter perdens (quod sit magis acre dolori) viva morte suos referat. quod funere tristi
damnamur miseris, quod festinante senecta denos centenos, quos prisca exesset aetas, vix ter centenos iam fessi accedimus annos, ne patria extorres nuda et sine nomine membra ignotis demus passim tumulanda sepulcris.
Quare agite, o iuvenes, dum vires turba ministrat, quae vobis superesse queat finemque severum nesciat, aeternam factis extendite famam. Urbem condamus, cuius sub nomine turrem tanto attollamus, donec pingentia mundum sidera et excelsi convexa inrumpat Olympi, ut nos posteritas, terras quod liquimus istas, in caelum migrasse putet." sic mota iuventus constringit igni lateres operisque future materiam proprio malunt debere labori. Hanc interstratum sic vincit utrimque bitumen, ut solidas simulent circumdata moenia cautes. Iam turris properata subit, iam vertice nubes transilis et fruitur caeli propiore sereno,

cum pater haec propris regni consortibus infit:
"En terrena phalanx! quid non furiosa resignet,
mortali quae structa manu contingere celsos
credat posse polos et ad aethera ducere nostrum?

Nullus terreno vestitus corpore caelum
ascendit, nisi qui caelo descenderit alto.
Sed quia gens una est eadem quoque forma loquendi,
ad sensu cupido suadentes prava secuta est
turba nec excussit, quid fas permitteret, audens
ardua, quae fieri per se natura vetaret.
Impunita ferant tam vani damna laboris?

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turba nec excussit, quid fas permitteret, audens
ardua, quae fieri per se natura vetaret.
Impunita ferant tam vani damna laboris?
quas gregibus mixtis errare et quærere victum
persuasit secura dies, cum nocte propinqu
frondea tecta petunt, extemplo congrege turba
vulgus quaque suum sequitur rapi-doque volatu
miscentur, similis qua duxerit aut color aut vox:
sic tunc in partes populus se dissicit unus
et species fit quaque genus longeque remotis
considunt terris atque orbem gentibus implent.

Nec tamen hoc sacri, cum sit sua poena nocentum,
muneris est vacuüm; nam quamvis ultio iusta
haec fuit, ut quos non tetigit reverentia caeli,
quaedes propria est mundi rerumque parenti,
nec se cognoscant, plus est quod praestat alumnis
talis poena reis: ne quod persuasio culpae
paucorum intulerit rursum contaminet omnis
et faciat commune nefas, ne bella cruenta
sit semper, cives et alumnis liniq ue pulsi s

cognatos grave sit. nam ne desideret umquam
turba suos, opus est uel ut oderit ultro;
atque ideo hoc varia procurat lingua,
quorum ne quisquam meminisse velit. Mansit tamen oris
Hebraei sonitus in illis,
qui culpae expertes pars non iniusta fuerunt
natorum, quos Sem genuit, quos sacra parentis
cura iuvat tangit<que dei> reverentia veri.
Sed postquam toto dementia percita mundo,
ut taceam magici scelus intestabile monstr i,
in truncos et saxa etiam durique metalli
arte cavas species et cassas luce figuras
impegit mortale genus mentisque superna
spectantes fregit terraeque addixit inerti,
hos quoque convolvit foedae contagio labis.

310 Non secus Aethiopum ferventibus excita terris
nubila morborum corrupto tramite caeli
implicere auida victoris peste lacunas,
cum quisque celeri percussum fulmine leti
ingemuit, simul ipse ruuit, quicumque cadentem
conspeexit, cecidit, congetaque funera passim
dira luis stravit campis bellumque peregit:
sic tunc praecipiti complexus mole furoris
et quos praeterit repetens, comprenderat error,
donec succiduis gradibus decursa propago,

315 fons et origo cui Sem clarum praestitit ortum,
in Tharan exiret, summa qui sede relict
Chaldaei generis cuncta cum stirpe suorum
urbem aliarem moresque novos sedemque requires
mansit in Assyriis demum novus accola Carris.

320 Et cum quinque super bis centum exegerat annos,
lapsus more patrum est.
Bearing such things in mind and foreseeing the ages to come, Noah decides not to begin any human task before performing the ancient rites and giving thanks to God. Altars rise from snow-white rock; [5] since the sacred space of the sky, its arching path spread out everywhere, surrounded itself with no fixed boundaries, the world was their sacred precinct. A sacrificial victim from each of the seven herds quickly comes in abundance, which the gentle air sustains, which ... produces ... of the land ... are felled in Eastern ... , [10] or from the forests of the Arabians. A flame sent down from Olympus tastes the sweet-smelling honors which it has devoured with its tail and the burnt offerings emit the hot scent that smells sweet to God. God - who is always gentle and good, taking whatever he receives as our offering and rejoicing in the [15] ceremonial rites of pious men, which he needs not, but for which he redeems us - speaks thus with his calm will:

“Even if it was small retribution (in comparison to so great a reason for punishment) to have condemned those guilty of so many crimes with an avenging downpour and a mild flood, [20] and rather to have renewed the criminals’ dwelling, the earth, by spreading the deep upon it, all the same, even though I am displeased, I will not afflict the human race further with such a scourge, even though I see that human minds and impious peoples once more will fall through various wicked acts, through their original crimes.

[25] Since mortals will never stop committing acts that ought to be punished, it is right that I delay forever to inflict punishments fitting their desserts. Flourish, happy offspring! Flourish free from worry! Fill the fertile fields with descendants! Spread your new flocks over all the earth! [30] The elements will preserve the natural order of things and the due harvest will
forever be paid back to its own seeds. The work of the world run on, adapted to the different seasons: winter will vie summer, and the fleeing year, balancing the seasons of spring and fall, will be repeated. [35] And you, to whom I have entrusted control of the globe of the earth, at whom every kind of living creature trembles and [at whom] it recognizes as its master, I order [you], to maintain the following as an ordinance, and, bound by precepts of a strict law, always to remember it: among the many kinds of creatures that move [40] their bodies of their own accord with life, [that] now for the second time I grant for your use: let no one turn deathly pale limbs into vile food containing blood. For a sentence of severe punishment will punish this act no differently than if a savage man should drink in human blood with a sword. [45] Such a man I, as an avenger, will always seek out and pursue to such an extent that not only will mankind, abounding in reason, pay the penalty to me, but beasts, too: let human blood be equally sacred to all that enjoy my light.

And let there be signs by which, when the sky is shining, [50] I may attest that the flood-waters have withdrawn. For, in the dense air, when light moisture is hung on high [and] turns into fine clouds, and a cloud forces now-dark waters into an arch, I will pour forth rays of light and a curved reflection of the sun will decorate my beautiful rainbow in a lofty circle, [55] painting the vault of heaven in such a way so as to dry out the rains with its warm light and thus dissipate the showers into the air to such an extent that the next generation of mankind may be able to discern this for themselves as a proof of a coming sign of punishment, because the sky, glowing red, now has more fire and less rain.

[60] Thunderstruck by these commands, at which all things tremble, and heartened by the merciful promises in which all things rejoice, Noah, together with his younger and stronger sons, eagerly striving in competition, break up with drag-hoes the fields fertile with mud and the sweet
natural moisture of the earth and wed them to seed. [65] Already the most luxuriant verdure far and wide on the sprawling fields offers up a multifold harvest with compound interest, as sap, taken up from the stems [was turned] into fruit. And the young vine, its tendrils already heavily pregnant, abounds with rich fruit, [70] which it gives birth to with its sweet nectar and cups are born from hard wood.

It so happened that Noah, while he celebrated joyfully the honors due to God, indulging in feasts and tasting sweet draughts, felt the effects of the strong wine and overcome by heavy sleep, carelessly laid down his limbs to rest on his usual bed. [75] And in the process his clothing, rolled back, revealed the hidden places of his body, and - your font and origin made you laugh - most worthless Ham! You tried to embroil your brothers, firstborn Shem and Japhet, the youngest, with the stain of guilt! Learn what the fact that [80] you alone laughed demands!

The better judgment of your brothers think it a worthy opportunity for dutifulness. For, after seizing a covering, placing it behind their backs, and turning themselves away, gradually but hastily retreating, they covered their father’s shame with their hands. Each took the palm of piety [85] denied the middle son and seized it for himself. After his senses re-enter his heart (as it is the messenger of the divine), now free from sleep, Noah recompenses the service of his sons with the following reward: “Cursed Ham, because you were failed to serve your father, you will be a slave to your brothers; you Shem, the oldest, [90] will live, blessed in the eyes of holy God, and the Lord will spread the younger brother [Japhet] on the earth with many offspring until [Japhet’s] abundant line establishes a seat even in the homes of [his] brother, mixed with neighboring peoples, the abundant offspring fills the adjoining cities and those which [they, the progeny] also will have built.
The old man spoke these words, [and] when he had at last run through a thousand years less fifty, which the sum total [of Noah’s years] denies, let go his heart privy to the future, yielding to death, and left behind this world and its cares to his sons. For indeed it was granted to men free from guilt and removed from vice [100] even after the sin that is expiated by the first death, when God as spirit had completely filled the shrine of a chosen mind and had watered his loyal breast, to know all things at once and to look upon them as if present before his eyes: those things which time in its flight has snatched away, what the present age [now] devours, [105] the ages it will bring to be seized by descendants still to come; whatever the weighty earth, the liquid sea, the life-giving air, and also what greedy fire produce, conceived for the various uses of men, and also what fire, greedy for its abundant kindling, brings forth. But after the progeny, [110] condemned, lost this gift and for these wretches nothing remained except that their ancestors had known hidden things; each [was] mindful, recalling to himself his ancestors’ injunctions and, turning them all over what things, fitted together how, in what way they could be useful, with letters or signs of speech at some time established for this purpose [115] entrusting words with a permanent shape. From here the arts derived their origin, which the letter that preserves passed on as accounts of the ancients to their distant descendants and rash investigation of the future, mixing the discoveries of the moderns with the efforts of the ancients, gave hope to the awestruck [people] and led those driven by empty desire [120] to [what is forbidden], whether the all-powerful creator granted to the universe (which some men, through mortal error, have called a “corporeal God”), because an omnipotent creator alone held [it] and sowed through its parts the signs of things, setting in motion the prophecies of an age to come, [125] so that through its entire mass it might bear witness of him to his offspring and the image of his mind might always disclose its author and there should be displayed in plain sight: what the bountiful
ruler can bestow upon his people, what he can remove, what at any [130] time he forbids his servants, for whom the kingdom of Heaven is prepared, to know. That this is true an agate, Pyrrhus’ gem, bears witness, which was brought into existence along with the world itself with the Muses and Apollo enclosed in it, – why should we not think God sent meaningful things throughout all of nature, since he both exposed the lies of the world in advance, and noted what would be fashioned subsequently? – [135] or whether instead a simple motion of the heavens carries along all things, or whether the inventor of harsh death, not allowing matter conducive to fraud to lie idle, subjected all things to his wicked will, in order to bring death upon the world. For while he reckons the courses and return-courses of the stars [140] and delights in the remarkable variability of the heavens, he thus established for himself fixed times for differing fortunes, and declaring favorable opportunity and limits of harming, declaring divergent influence [and] by diverse celestial conjunctions, in order to cast aspersions on the stars and [145] attribute wicked acts to sacred heaven and the stars adorning the universe, when he in fact invents whatever future he creates for people.

Hence we regard as an art the fact that entrails quiver, the fact that the wing flutters, the fact that herald-thunderbolts presage when the clouds have been struck. For since, having embraced swift motions and all events [150] with eager zeal, he recalls why the public enemy gives to [lacuna] ... [he] persuaded the people to regard the fabrications of poisonous deceit as divine. In the same way liberty is controlled by the dogs of the Ethiopians, who possess kingdoms and tyranny: a belief in accord with reality [155] is sought in the movement of a senseless body and they mistake chance for commands.

And, despite sound judgment, mere fancy falsely understands the following [signs] as important signs. For Galba’s statue of Fortuna disproves Pyrrhus’ gem: the one [Satan] who was
able to fake a statue for so many years [160] could also fake a stone. By using such tricks, Satan duped those ensnared with the desire of knowing the future and thereby overcoming fate: he introduced crime, through zeal for the magical art, to those who were anxious because of the prickings of fear, so that by this art they might instead worship him and so [165] that they might offer wicked incense on altars consecrated [to him], a crowd betrayed along with its [first] parent. And soon Nimrod was born from an unhealthy stock, a giant in mass and mind, ruling the court of Babylon, an unjust idolater, capturing the minds of the Persians, he led them from the sacred rites of the true Lord to worship fire.

[170] And that one, [Satan,] the fount of wickedness, guilty for the fate of the world and his own enemy, did not thus only deceive the over-greedy desires of men with cunning skill, but rushed into their very minds and made his way deep down into all their thoughts, soon even their feelings. For when a father’s only son had by premature death carried off along with himself [175] the hope of descendants, the unfortunate father, joining nights and days in incessant tears and dragging out bitter laments with senseless breast-beating, while he rages and everywhere seeks his son [who had been] snatched away and holds the sweet childhood mementos [180] or beyond death he devotedly consoles his grief with a likeness, he fed his love inflamed with desires in such a way that, making and erecting a full-length statue made from Parian marble, he – the madman! – believed it to be alive and in possession of its senses and that it heard his laments. [185] He transferred the worship of the highest author from consecrated altars to the shadowy ghosts. Worse than all other guilty men, he exceeded even that famous teacher of wickedness who established the magical arts. That one [the teacher] plainly is guilty in his rages and in his profane mind, this one [the father], harmful in his piety. That evil pollutes more, [190] since it has an appearance of virtue; for all peoples forthwith embraced this crime, endlessly
making offerings to the spirits of the dead, – witness now the Alans – and those [peoples] who regarded their beloved parents as their gods, afterwards even their kings [as gods], under whose name [195] lying Greece, while she strives to introduce lies into truths, added dark shadows to empty philosophizings, devising explanations for the mounds and the names buried in the tombs, until the madness even extended to all beings and [200] pretended that there were gods were in the smallest things and shameful members. Of course the inventor of death was present at such places and, fostering errors, was provoking responses in the wondrous places of the earth, using for his tricks either fire or a hot spring or caves. [205] Themis too deceived them first, as the earth breathed forth loquacious breezes, then lying Apollo imposed upon and deceived people, and later on he was forced to change his seat, he became a doctor to the Leuci. Now travelling the Gallic countryside as an exile, he troubles the German peoples with harmful deceit and deceives barbarian <minds>.

[210] But I return to my chief point from which I digressed: to the line of ancestors. When all Noah's stock, increased through procreation, had populated the Eastern lands and saw the land of Shinar's crowded fields decreasing, the younger generation, that will and must be scattered throughout the world, [215] bursts out with these bitter words of sad lament:

"Oh! How the uncertain condition of life, once in train, bears men along! Prosperous circumstances so cheat our settled confidence in various ways, so that the outcome of our long-sought vow leads to misfortune. We already (if I dare say so) [220] regret that the population (the abundant multitude of descendants hoped for in our fathers' prayers) has grown; for this group, begun for exile, must be scattered across the world: destined to be lost to the eyes of our relatives and equally destroying them, †repaying [our dear ones] with a living death (a thing even more painful).†
[225] Since we wretches are punished with a wretched death, since with old age coming
upon us we do [not] reach a thousand years of age, which an earlier generation had surpassed,
but we, exhausted, now scarcely achieve three hundred, let us not, as exiles from our country,
offer our bodies, stripped naked and nameless, to be heaped indiscriminately in unknown tombs!
[230] So come, young men, while our numbers provides us with strength, extend, by your deeds,
an eternal reputation, able to outlast you and knows not that harsh boundary [of death]. Let us
build a city, let us raise up a tower in its great name until [235] it bursts its way into the stars that
paint the heavens and the curved vault of lofty Olympus, so that posterity will think that we left
these lands to immigrate to Heaven."

Inspired by this speech, the youth scorn rocks and whatever is hewn from mountain
quarries. [240] They fire bricks made from the subjugated earth’s innards and they prefer to owe
the raw material for the coming work to their own labor. Alternating layers of pitch bind this
material in such a way that the circular walls resemble solid rock. Already the tower is quickly
rising, already with its top [245] it overleaps clouds and is enjoying the nearer calm of Heaven,
when the Father speaks these words to his consorts in the kingdom:

"Lo! What would the earthly battalion in its madness not attempt, if it thinks that things
built by mortal hands can touch the lofty heavens and extend to our skies? [250] No one clothed
with an earthly body ascends to Heaven except He who could came down from lofty Heaven.
But since the people are one and their language is the same, the crowd with eager assent has
obeyed those persuading them to commit wicked acts and did not consider what lawful action
was allowed, [255] rashly embarking upon lofty undertakings that Nature herself forbids. Are
they to bear an unpunished punishment for so vain a labor? Yet nonetheless, so that they may
know that what cannot be accomplished is also forbidden, let us go down and confuse with
words from different languages their minds that are puffed up by haughty unity, [260] so that [the sin] which the people committed in accord a more fitting discord of confused language may punish.”

He spoke, and even as they were intent on their task and raising the structure, an infused forgetfulness first overcomes them, their minds thunderstruck, and they acquire fluency in a language [previously] unknown. [265] The foremen bark at their hesitating workers as their eagerness for work flags, but no one responds to words he cannot understand, and if anyone tries open his mouth, he hisses or pants in a roar of broken speech or shrieks and mimics threats with a shrill groan. [270] Thus baffled hands abandon a vain labor undertaken at the instigation of a wicked thought: now no one obeys his neighbor, no one his father. Each man associates with and joins to himself someone he understands. Blood relationships perish entirely. It is language that makes a people. People are scattered into equal groups and [275] they seek distant lands under a different star. No differently do birds, whom a carefree day has persuaded to wander in mixed groups in search of food among gentle flat fields, seek their leafy homes as night draws near. As soon as the flock gathers together, [280] each bird follows its own kind, and they are united in swift flight wherever like coloring or song may lead them: in such a way, at that time, does one people divide itself into parts, and each kind becomes a race and they populate the world with peoples. [285]

And yet this, even though it is a punishment for the guilty, nonetheless it is not without a holy gift. For although indeed it was a just vengeance that those untouched by reverence for Heaven (the rightful seat for the Parent of the world and of nature), do not even recognize each other, [290] such a punishment offers more to their descendants than it offers to the guilty: that what a few men’s inducement to wrongdoing had introduced should not once more contaminate
all people and make the offense general; that bloody wars and death not always be visited upon people with wild fury; [295] that it not be a grievous thing for banished descendants to leave behind their kinsmen and fellow citizens. Indeed, in order that the exiled group never long for their relatives, it must also spontaneously hate too; a difference in language therefore brings this, too, about: that no one [even] wants to remember his relatives.

Yet the sound and ancient language of Hebrew remained in them [300] who, blameless, formed a just portion of the children, whom Shem begot, who rejoice in the sacred care for their Parent helps <and> whom reverence for the true <God> touches.

But after the madness [of idolatry], stirred up throughout the world (to say nothing about the detestable wickedness of the monstrosity of magic), forced the mortal race [305] to [worship] tree-trunks and rocks and even statues skillfully carved out of hard metal and shapes deprived of life, and struck minds contemplating celestial things and condemned them to the lifeless earth, the contagion of foul plague coiled around them, too. [310] No differently did clouds of diseases in the corrupted region of the sky, stirred up in the burning lands of the Ethiopians, engulf water reservoirs with plague eager †for victory. At that time, whoever groaned in anguish at someone [else] struck by death’s swift thunderbolt, at the same instant dropped dead. [315] Whoever saw someone [else] falling, he himself fell. The dreadful pestilence scattered corpses everywhere [and] heaped [them] on the plains and brought the war to completion. In the same way, at this time, the false doctrine [of idolatry], seized them, having embraced them with its headlong weight of madness, and going back to those it had passed over, until with successive steps the offspring [320] (upon whom Shem, their font and origin, bestowed a noble ancestry), had run its course, resulted in Terah. He left the chief seat of the Chaldean people with the entire stock of his family, seeking another city, new customs, and a home. He at last dwelled as a new

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inhabitant in Assyrian Haran. [325] And when he had completed two hundred and five years he died in the manner of his fathers.
CHAPTER 7

COMMENTARY ON ALETHIA 3.1-326

Note on the Format of the Commentary

It is not always a pleasant thing to use commentaries. One has to constantly flip back and forth between the text and the commentary. It is much easier, I think, to print the text and the commentary on the same page. I was unable to present the text, apparatus, translation, and brief notes on facing pages (more detailed notes were to be exiled to the end) because of thesis format requirements.

I have included the text of the Latin that corresponds to each section of the commentary and the text of Genesis that Victor is paraphrasing. I have also included verse references to other poets, usually the Hept. Poet and Avitus, who paraphrased the same material. All citations of Genesis are from the Stuttgart Vulgate edition.
Abbreviations Used in the Commentary

**BT** = Biblical text (of Genesis)

**CIL** = *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum*

**KS** = Kühner and Stegmann, *Ausführliche Grammatik der lateinischen Sprache*

**LHS** = Leumann, Hofmann, and Szantyr, *Lateinische Grammatik 2 (Lateinische Syntax und Stilistik)*

**LL** = Late Latin

**LLT** = *Library of Latin Texts*

**NLS** = Woodcock, *A New Latin Syntax*

**OLD²** = *Oxford Latin Dictionary*, second edition

**Sch** = Schenkl’s critical text or his indices on grammar, expression, and metrics

**SchHov** = instances in which Schenkl’s and Hovingh’s critical texts agree (i.e. Hovingh prints what Schenkl prints)

**TLL** = *Thesaurus Linguae Latinae*

A fuller entry for each of the works abbreviated here is given in the bibliography.
1-98: After the Deluge

Outline

A. 1-16: Noah builds an altar and sacrifices to God, who receives the offerings favorably.

B. 16-59: God promises not to flood the Earth again and renews his covenant with mankind.

17-27: God reflects on the Flood's ineffectiveness in correcting humans, and decides that he will not try that method again.

27-34: Creation will be predictable again (= Gen 9:1; 8:22)

35-47: Kosher prohibition (= Gen 9:2-6)

48-59: The sign of the covenant: the rainbow (= Gen 9:11-17)

C. 60-70: Noah and his sons till the earth.

D. 71-94: Noah becomes drunk and falls asleep. He wakes up, curses Ham, and blesses Japhet and Shem.

E. 95-98: Noah dies.

Scholarship


Comparanda

Hept. poet, Genesis 325-362
Avitus, *Carm.* 4.404-417 (a digression on slavery, tracing its origin to Ham’s actions); 590-638 (Gen. 8:20-9:20)

Book 3 opens with a transitional formula [A] (v. 1) that both links it to the beginning of the post-diluvian world, with Noah, a second Adam, pondering the holy gift (2.540-41) that allowed him and his family to survive the Flood and the brilliance and fecundity of the world which he has come to possess (2.528). It also foreshadows the long digression (99-209) on the origins of idolatry. Noah stands as a Janus-like figure, looking both to the past and to the future.

Noah’s first action, unbidden, is to build an altar to God and offer sacrifices. The world is responsive to Noah’s intentions, as “altars arise” (4, *surgunt altaria*) and sacrifices “come in abundance” (7, *affluit*) as if of their own accord and not due to any effort by Noah. The sacrifice is pleasing to God (10-12). An *interpretaio* follows: God redeems men because of their sacrifices, though he has no real need for them (13-16). [B] God then delivers the longest speech in the poem (43 verses), a conflation (as elsewhere) of his speeches to Noah in Genesis (8:21-22, God’s promise to not flood the Earth again and to preserve the natural order; 9:1-7 and 9-17, his covenant with Noah).

In Genesis, God speaks directly to Noah (9:1; 8; 17), but in Victor’s recasting, Noah there is no explicit mention of Noah after v. 4 until v. 63 when he becomes a planter. God’s speech has a universal tone – he is speaking to no one in particular, and so he is speaking to all humanity. As in his other speeches, God’s language is marked by the use of legal. God promises not to flood the earth despite mankind’s continuing inclination to sin (vv. 17-27). God commands Noah (and mankind) to be fruitful and multiply (vv. 27-34), because the natural order of things will be preserved. God’s announces a new covenant (vv. 35-48); God seals it with the sign of his
rainbow, which will also serve as a reminder of his future punishment of man (vv. 49-59). Victor describes the rainbow not in terms of its color, but in the natural process that creates it.

[C] Victor uses four verses to present Noah and his sons as planters. After their initial astonishment (60-61), they set to work (62-64). Once again Victor shifts the narrative focus away from Noah to focus on the responsiveness of the natural world (65-70). [D] Noah’s drunkenness, self-exposure, and Ham’s reaction are described (71-76) before the narrator apostrophizes Ham (76-80). Victor resumes the narrative and adds an interpretatio of Shem and Japhet’s behavior in contrast to Ham (80-85). Noah wakes up and in his sole speech, he prophetically curses Ham and blesses Shem and Japhet (86-94). [E] Noah then dies (95-98). There is no mention of time between Noah’s prophetic utterance and his death; Victor omits Gen. 9:28, where Noah is said to have lived for 350 years after the flood. But this is an extraneous detail, and, in any event Victor is keen to use Noah’s prophetic ability as a platform to launch his digression in v. 99.

The World-Temple (1-7)

1 Talia mente gerens venturaque saecula cernens
2 non prius officii quicquam mortalis inire
3 prisca Noë quam sacra deo gratesque rependat
4 constituit. niveo surgunt altaria saxo;
5 nulla quibus saeptis cum se circumdaret aedes,
6 undique diffusi convexi tramite caeli
7 templum mundus erat.


1 Talia…cernens  Book 2 ends with Noah reflecting on the return of the natural world and its fecundity after the flood and God’s mercy in preserving him, his family, and the animals in the
ark. Book 3 begins with a transitional formula that links it closely to Book 2 (\textit{talia} = Noah’s thoughts, 2.527-558) and sets the tone for this section in the narrative by emphasizing Noah’s special status as prophet (\textit{venturaque saecula cernens}). V. has already shown that Noah is worthy of receiving knowledge of the future directly from God, who revealed \textit{arcana} (2.384) to Noah and he describes Noah as using his \textit{capax mens} (2.529) to survey the landscape after the deluge. The phrase \textit{mente gerens} is elsewhere used only of God: (prec. 52: \textit{mente gerebas}; 1.206 \textit{mente gerebat}).

\textbf{3 rependat} “to pay or give as due” (OLD\textsuperscript{2} s.v. 4.c) The force of the prefix \textit{re} underscores the notion that Noah is acting “appropriately” or “duly” (see Williams’ note on \textit{Aen.} 3.333); the verb is used often in contexts of praise or blame (used in both senses at 87 below). cf. Juvenc. 1.96: \textit{magnificas laudes animus gratesque rependit}; Alcim. Avit. \textit{Carm.} 5.125-126: \textit{adtollunt animos palmasque ad sidera tendunt / concipiuntque fidel votis grotesque rependunt}.

\textbf{2-4 non prius officii...quam...rependat / constituit} The formula echoes V.’s description of Adam’s first actions after he is expelled from Paradise: 1.196-198: \textit{Adam / nullum aliud prius officium quam coniuge dignum / egit}. In both instances the protagonist is beginning what amounts to a new life in a new world. Noah is indeed a second Adam whose offspring will repopulate the world (2.398-400: \textit{ut, cum iusta mali luerint, tunc dignius a te / incipiat mortale genus summumque parentem / te numerent populi}). For Noah as a second Adam, see Stone 1999.
4 constituit  The enjambement emphasizes Noah’s agency. V. has Noah decide to (rather than simply) build an altar, while the BT merely has aedificavit autem Noe altare Domino. Both Ambrose (Noe 2.78: iustus (sc. Noah) eam intellexit veram actionem grattarum esse, quae non iuberetur, sed deferretur) and Philo (QG 2.50) emphasizes that Noah’s sacrifice was voluntary – he did not need to be ordered to do so, even after God had harshly punished mankind. Noah’s devotion to God makes him worthy of the role he plays. Cf. Hept. poet, Gen. 325 exstruitque libens sacraria festa tonanti. Josephus, AJ 1.96-98 had explained that Noah offered the sacrifice because he feared a second flood! There is a play on the meaning of constituit here ("to decide" but also to “establish, set up” and “make [a sacrificial victim] stand [at an altar].” For this last meaning, cf. Aen. 5.236-237. cindentem in litore taurum / constitutam ante aras voti reus.

4 niveo…saxo  A metamorphosis of sorts. V. uses saxum appropriately in this primitive context. No other notes the color of Noah’s altar, but presumably it may signify the purity of Noah and the world, cf. 2.216 niveo…litat agno of Abel’s sacrifice. The adjective niveus is often used to describe luxury items such as pearls (Hor. Sat. 1.2.80, Sen. Phaedr. 391; Drac. Laud. Dei 1.319; Boeth. Cons. 3.m4.2) but note Ov. Met. 15.41-42, where white pebbles were used in trials to denote innocence: Mos erat antiquus niveis atrisque lapillis, / his damnare reos, illis absolvereculpa, and Catull. 68.148 where white stones are used to mark happy days.

4 surgunt altaria  cf. Hept. poet, Ex. 783 aggere de terrae congesta altaria surgant; Sil. 7.747: caespite de viridi surgunt properantibus arae.  V. depicts the altars as rising of their own accord
and not, as in the BT, as being built by Noah. This places emphasis on the Earth's natural inclination to reflect God's will (see vv. 30-34 below).

5 quibus  Dative. The antecedent seems to be *altaria* in v. 4. “Since no *aedes* marked its boundaries *over/for the altars.*”

5 saeptis  Since, as revealed in v. 7, the universe is the temple, there are no enclosures to define its boundaries.

5 cum  Postpositive (as often, e.g. *prec.* 41 etc.). Causal.

5 aedes  Often a synonym for *templum* in post-Augustan poetry. *aedes* means lit. “building” or “house” (for a god). Egelhaaf notes-Gaisser 2007, 205-206, notes that a “temple is a ritually defined area; it could refer to a section of the sky, selected by the augur for the observation of the auspices from the flight of birds, etc. The *aedes sacra*, on the other hand, refers to the temple building as the seat of the gods, which could be erected in the cult precinct.”

6 convexo tramite caeli  *trames = semita.* V. is probably referring to the orbits of the stars (Le Bouffle 1987, no. 1114).
**7 templum mundus erat** Homey 1972, 18-22, carefully analyzes vv. 1-8; I summarize his most important points here: Homey points out that this is a philosophical commonplace in Hellenistic religious speculation, both pagan and Jewish, but is rare in early Christian writings. V. does something original with the topos: instead of the cosmos being the temple (so Hellenistic speculators), the temple is the cosmos, and blends, with considerable skill, the philosophical topos onto the Genesis narrative: "the philosophical statement is part of the plot."

This is the only occurrence of the word *templum* in V. Before Creation, God was his own Temple: 1.13-14: *immensum mole beata / regnum erat ipse suum.*

**Noah’s Sacrifice (7-12)**

7 … septenis hostia praeceps
8 affluit e gregibus, mollis quos sustinet aër,
9 quos generat terrae . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . .
. . . . . . . . . sternuntur Eois
10 aut Arabum silvis. ignis demissus Olympo
11 libat odoratos quos crine exedit honores
12 ambrosiumque deo fragrant holocausta vaporem.

**7 septenis hostia** V. is probably referring here to the clean animals of Gen. 7:2-3 (= 2.443-444), but the animals have already left the ark and returned to their usual haunts (2.524-527). One must imagine that the animals come, automata-like, to be sacrificed.

**7 hostia** Collective singular.
8 praeceps affluit  The sacrificial animals "quickly come in (abundance)" (TLL 1.1242.55; syn. fundo, abundo). Gagny emends to to affuit, "were present." But the the presence of praeceps (often paired with verbs denoting motion) nearly guarantees affluit. It is worth noting, however, that affuit is sometimes used in contexts similar to this one, and in the first metrical seat: Calp. Ecl. 2.10-11: affuit omne genus pecudum, genus omne ferarum / et quaecumque vagis avium ferit aera pennis; Mart. Spec. Lib. 24.5: affuit immixtum pecori genus omne ferarum. At 2.445, the animals are described as coming to enter the Ark without delay (nec mola fit), so if praeceps = statim, affuit is not a bad conjecture and would fit the automaton idea noted above.

9 quos...Eois  The line is hypermetric; clearly something has dropped out. P reads quos generat aere sternuntur Eois, which is nonsense. Schenkl emends aere to terrae in his text, and suggests in his apparatus that quos generant terrae solidae is what V. might have written. Whether or not that is the case, what has fallen out included more anaphoric clauses, at least one line, perhaps two, if V. intended to include the remaining elements (water and fire; he uses two lines to list the four elements at vv. 107-108 below), but this is unlikely: cf. 2.441, an important parallel to this passage, since it describes where the animals that come to the Ark in a single line and omits water and fire: quae [sc. animalia] sua tellus alit, quae non sua sustinet aër. What follows, sternuntur Eois / aut Arabum silvis, suggest that, as Homey 1972, 21, points out, V. imagines the animals coming from the four compass points. This is probably correct, since V. does exactly that in 2.445-449: nec mora fit: quicuid convexo cardine caeli / nascitur, ignotum diversis partibus orbis, / quod stupet Eous, quod pallidus horret Hiberus, / australis Hyperboreas miro quod lumine noctis. Given these considerations, the lacuna does not amount to the loss of roughly one full line (as SchHov indicate) but ± 2-6 lines, possibly more – presumably
something more has fallen out after *Eois* because *aut Arabum silvis* suggests not a compass point but incense (see note on v. 10 below).

9 sternuntur  The lacuna makes it difficult to be certain of the meaning of this verb (Papini 2006, 91, translates it as “sono abbattuti”). If it refers, as Schenkl suspects, to *quos* [sc. greges], then it may mean that the animals that make up the sacrifice "are slaughtered, are strewn upon [sc. altars].” V. uses it with the more common meaning "to kill" at vv. 316, 422, and 445. v. 515 (= Gen. 15:11) Abram *dispositam…stravisset seriem* (Papini 2006, 112: "aver steso a terra la serie degli animali") but it is not clear if a sacrifice is being described at Gen. 15:11 (so commentators on Genesis), and in any case, as Tarrant 2012 (on *Aen*. 12.944, citing *Aen*. 8.719, *ante aras terram caesi stravere iuvenici*) notes, *sternere* "does not appear to be a technical term of sacrifice.” Here *sternuntur* probably is used in the context of tree-felling (note how Noah and his sons are described when gathering resources for the ark (2.420-421): *adgreditur densas natis…ferro prosternere silvas*). Perhaps V. described tree-felling in a manner similar to *Aen*. 6.179-182, emphasizing the felled instead of the fellers?

9 Eois  The first syllable is short (also at 3.212), but long at 1.224 and 2.447. Not a metrical infelicity, as Virgil's use of the word shows the same metrical mutability (at *Georg*. 1.288 the first syllable is short, but long at 1.221, 2.115.

10 aut Arabum silvis  The Romans associated Arabia with production of incense and perfume. Since the context here is sacrifice (note the words related to smells and smelling in vv. 11-12), *Arabum silvis* would seem to suggest that something has fallen out in the line(s) following v. 9,
and that what has fallen out included a reference to incense. Loci similes are plentiful: Tib. 2.2.3-4: *odores* | *quos tenere terra divite mittit Arabs*; Manil. 4.752-753: *Taurus habet Scythiae montes Asianque potentem / et mollis Arabas, siluarum ditia regna*; Sen. *Oed.* 121-122: *cinnami silvis Arabas beatos / vidit*; *Phaedr.* 66: *Arabs divite silva*, and above all [Lact.] *Phoen.* 79-80: *colligit huic sucos et odores divite silva / quos legit Assyrius, quos opulentus Arabs*. In his description of the “smells” of Paradise, V. explicitly mentions incense in connection with the inhabitants of Palestine: 1.241-242: *quodque Palaestinus lacero flet vulnere ramus / aëra diverso cessant infundere sensu.*

**11 honores** The sacrificial victims, as at v. 70, below, and also 3.356 where Abram sets up new altars and 3.502, where God identifies the animals he wishes to be slaughtered in his honor.

**11 quos crine exedit** A parenthetical insertion. The fire devours (*exedit*) with its point (*crine*, more commonly used to describe comets, but in some LL authors = *apex*, as it does here and at 3.547: [clibanus] *emicuit raptim crinemque in prona retorsit*; TLL s.v. *crinis* 1205.9-15) Noah's sacrifice. V. likes this word: he uses in his description of the sun rising at 1.99: *fundataque semina lucis puniceos roseo sparserunt fomite crines*; at 2.206 where a spark has grown into a flame: *flamma fuit crinita incendia late*; and at 3.552-553 of a shooting star: *crinemque rubentem / mendax stella trahit.*
12 ambrosium…vaporem  Synonymic amplification and variatio (equivalent to odoratos…honores). Used of the smell of cinnamon (1.236: muneris ambrosii spirantia cinnama fundunt).

12 fragrant  Morel emends P's flagrant to fragrant, not recorded in Schenkl or Hovingh’s apparatus. This is a clear example of liquid metathesis; the two words are likewise confused at 1.238; see TLL s.v. 6.1.846.25).

12 holocausta  The word at Gen 8:20 is imported here. Rare in poetry (Prud., Apoth. 537; Psych. 784; Ennod. Carm. 2.34.2; Ven. Fort. Mart. 4.572).

Interpretatio on Sacrifice (13-16)

13 Qui mitis semperque bonus pro munere nostro
14 accipiens quicquid recipit gaudensque piorum
15 officiis hominum, quorum non indiget usu,
16 sed quis nos redimat…

13-16  A relative clause with interpretatio with a protreptic first person plural pronoun (nos) (Roberts 1978, 335, n. 68). V. explains why people make sacrifices to God, even though he is complete, i.e. needs nothing. Martorelli (p. 135) points out that God receives human offerings
“as our gift” (pro munere nostro) even though he granted [whatever constitutes the offerings] them to man in the first place; this permits V. to underscore “l'infinita bontà del Signore lo assegna comunque a merito redentivo dell'uomo.” Cf. the similar expression at vv. 680-682: et, se ne totam domini clementia mitis / prodere, in medio famulum sermone reliquit / tendentem ulterius seque in sua regna recepit.

15 officiis…non indiget V. has already emphasized the fact that God stands in need of nothing whatsoever (prec. 41-44, esp. 42: nil horum, quae gignis, eges); the idea is common in both pagan (already in Plat. Tim. 33D-34B) and Judeo-Christian thought, e.g. Ambr. Parad. 1.2: quis est enim qui potuit fingere paradisum nisi omnipotens deus, qui dixit et facta sunt, numquam indigens eorum quae generari vellet? Norden 1956, 13-14, traces the development of this idea.

16 quis Causal ablative. The antecedent is officium (“but because of which [duties, i.e. sacrifices]), he redeems us.”

God Establishes a New Covenant with Man, Part 1 (16-24)

16 … placido sic numine fatur:
17 “Etsi parva fuit tanto pro nomine poenae
18 ultio vindicibus pluviis et gurgite molli
19 tot scelerum damnasse reos sedemque nocentum
20 terras diffuso potius renovasse profundo,
21 non tamen offensi feriemus verbere tali
22 ulterius mortale genus, quamvis ruituras
23 per varium facinus, per crimina pristina rursus
24 humanas mentes videam gentesque profanas.

V. omits Gen. 9:1 (*benedixitque Deus Noe et filiis eius et dixit ad eos Vulg.)*; while it is implied in God's speech here that he is speaking to them, the omission of this small detail gives God's speech a universal tone: God's covenant is not with Noah, but all mankind.

16 placido…numine  For the phrase, cf. Paul. Nol. *Carm.* 27.508: *obsequia placido descendet numine Christus*. The phrase must also recall Neptune in *Aen.* 1.126-127: *et alto / prospiciens, summa placidum caput extulit unda*. God is in the same position as Neptune, the former having calmed the weather after the Flood and the latter after a sea-storm. The majesty of both gods is amplified by the contrast between their calmness and the violence of the water. Roberts 1978, 307, with n. 37, points out that “[s]uch introductory remarks preface a number of speeches in the *Alethia* and the *Hept*. They typically contain a preview of the content of the speech, often accompanied by a description of the mental state of the speaker.” In addition to vv. 14-16, he cites 1.395-97; 1.474; 2.384; 3.87; 3.399; and 3.603-605.

17 etsi parva fuit…ultio  Is God being ironic? The *parva ultio* he speaks of destroyed all life on Earth! It also magnifies God's power in human eyes (what was a small thing for God was an enormous thing for humans) and the scope of pre-Flood sins.

17 tanto pro nomine poenae  Not the standard expression with *poena*, which is *pro crimine* (e.g. Luc. 8.781 *quam metuis, demens, isto pro crimine poenam*. Here *nomine* = *causa*. God is
stating that the punishment he has meted out for mankind is not commensurate with what the reason for punishment (i.e. sins) calls for. (for this meaning of nomen, cf. OLD² s.v. 25, “a ground for accusation or complaint, score (usu. abl.) and 26, “a reason or purpose (perhaps always abl., with pron. adj or with gen.). Ramsey² on Cic. Cat. 35.4 (hoc nomine): “on this account.” Not common in poetry (see Sil. 13.691 for OLD² 25 and Catull. 29.11 for OLD² 26). This precise iunctura seems to be unique to V. He also uses it at 2.235: …mortem pro nomine poenae / inductam mundo vix dignum est dicere. An alternative, but related, interpretation is that tanto pro nomine poenae means “compared to a word of such importance, ‘penalty’.” Aen. 8.472: nobis ad belli auxilium pro nomine tanto.

18 ultio Construe with parva (v. 17; hyperbaton). I understand parva fuit ultio to be the predicate of the infinitive phrases that follow (v. 19 damnasse; v. 20 renovasse); the infinitives are epexegetical.

19 tot scelerum damnasse reos This line recalls 2.427-432, where V. laments that when God granted to humanity one hundred years to repent of their sins, humanity sinned even more.

O nimium miseri, tam iustae quos mora poenae plus facit esse reos: iam non pro crimine tantum plectentur, veniae quis copia larga petendae est, sed quod plectentur, quot tartara dira subibunt temporis indulti spatio, cum parcere cunctis testetur se malle deus.
18 vindicibus pluviis  All kinds of inanimate things can be avengers: fire (Ov. *Met.* 1.230; Prud. *Perist.* 10.823), booty (Catull. 64.192); more abstractly, penalty (Petron. 119.50; Ps. Damas. [AL] 102.3); the use of rain here is unique. *vindicibus* is probably to be explained as an ablative, used adjectivally for *vindicante* (see Baehrens on Catull. 64.192) although it could be construed as a dative with *damnasse* (TLL 5.1.15.66-72), i.e. “to have condemned the guilty to rainy avengers with a gentle whirlpool.”

18 gurgite molli  i.e., it could have been much worse – even though it destroyed all living creatures outside the ark! The concept is paradoxical for mankind, but from God’s perspective, *molli* is precisely how the Flood would seem. The phrase here is pointed, in keeping with the tone of the present speech; God describes the Flood as a *gurgite praecipiti* (2.477) in announcing the Flood, but reduces its severity to *molli* here.

19 sedemque nocentum  V. freq. uses the adjective *nocens* (14 times). God plans to *abolere nocentes* (2.388; 3.644) through the Flood and destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, respectively. God instructs Abraham to depart from his *sedes patrias terrasque nocentes pollutamque domum* (3.334f.). *nocens* is a term borrowed from the legal sphere (Berger 1953, s.v. “to do physical, economic, or moral harm”).

20 terras  *terras* is in apposition to *sedemque nocentum.*
20 renovasse  Suggesting a cosmic baptism (cf. e.g. Tert. De bapt. 8: quemadmodum enim post aquas diluvii quibus iniquitas antique 5a purgata est, post baptismum ut ita dixerim mundi, pacem caelestis irae praeco columba terris adnuntiavit dimissa ex arca.

21 Non tamen offensi  tamen is to be taken closely with offensi ("But, although I am displeased, I will not...").

21 verberae tali  i.e. God will not use a flood to punish mankind with "this kind of blow" (2.538-539: fremeret cum verberae saevo / pontus); he has fire in store for the next punishment (see vv. 50-59 below).

23 per...facinus  cf. 2.350: in varium facinus sacro deserta favore; Prud. Peristep. 14.103 per varium nefas

23 crimina pristina  cf. Stat. Theb. 1.266: quod si prisca luunt auctorum crimina gentes. There the context is Juno’s response to Jupiter’s… God refers to sins committed before the Flood.

24 humanas...profanas  Note the assonance. What is the significance of gentesque profanas? Does this “distinguish” the Jews and “pagan peoples”? What God sees is, in fact, what V. will narrate: in the digression (vv. 99-209), where corrupt knowledge leads to corrupt practices, extending from the period right after Noah’s death up to V.’s own time; the arrogance of Babel’s
builders (vv. 210-298); the spread of wickedness even to Shem’s line (vv. 303-326); and the various crimina in the Abraham narrative (vv. 326-789), culminating in the fiery storm that destroys Sodom.

24 videam The chiastic word order highlights the importance of this remark. videam (note the tense and the fact that it is not provideam) is entirely appropriate here, because God sees everything (past, present, future) and stands outside of it (1.10-13).

God Establishes a New Covenant with Man, Part 2 (25-34)

25 Nam quia mortales plectenda ammittere numquam
26 cessabunt, merits semper condigna referre
27 nos cessare decet. laeti vos crescite alumni,
28 crescite securi fecundaque prole replete
29 arva novosque greges cunctis distendite terris.
30 Servabunt elementa vices cunctis diebus
31 seminibus propriis reddetur debita messis.
32 Curret opus mundi compar discordibus horis:
33 aestati certabit hiems ac tempora librans
34 veris et autumni fugiens replicabitur annus.

Gen 9:1: benedixitque Deus Noe et filiis eius et dixit ad eos: crescite et multiplicamini et replete terram; 8:22 cunctis diebus terrae sementis et messis frigus et aestus

25 nam num (P). Morel thought this good and printed it; it would thus make the statement a question: “Is it right that I cease to render entirely appropriate punishments against those who
will forever be deserving of them?” But this would rob the logical transition to the new part of the speech, God does not deliberate openly elsewhere in the Alethia. He may, however, ask an indignant question (see v. 256 below).

25 ammittere OLD$^2$ 13, "to become guilty of, commit, perpetrate."

26 condigna A substantive plural adjective for supplicia (TLL 4.141.70-74; V. uses it also at l. 73).

26 cessabunt…27 cessare decet Man will not cease to sin, but God will cease to punish them with with a flood. Wordplay.

26 meritis = delictum 2.258; 314; 3.26 (Sch), see Staat on 2.24.

27 decet God refuses an arms race with man. It is “fitting” because God can manifest his clementia.

27 laeti Better “prosperously” in case of humans, but laetus of course has an undertone of “fertile, teeming” (as at Georg. 1.1) and underscores God’s command to mankind to be fruitful and multiply. God’s speech and the verses immediately following (vv. 60-70) describes God’s
desire as being the same for both humans and other living things: God wants humans to repopulate the earth and promises that he will see to it that the natural world does its part to aid humanity.

28 *fecunda* Schenkl suspects that there is a corruption of a / ā, and so *fecunda* modifies *prole*, perhaps rightly.

30 *elementa vices* cf. prec. 29 *alternas seruare uices iugemque recursum*; the idea and expression is common; see Hovingh 1955 on prec. 29-31 for loci similes.

30 *cunctisque diebus* Schenkl would prefer *certis* for *cunctis* (he states in the apparatus "*malim certis*; cunctis *fort. ex u. 29 profectum est*"), but Hudson-Williams disagrees, citing the Vulgate, which reads *cunctis* (Pollman, *Philologie* p. 224 agrees with Hudson-Williams). Though one wonders if the BT is the trump card for settling textual issues in biblical epics.

31 *seminibus propriis* Like produces like, i.e. an olive tree will always produce olive seeds, etc.

32 *curret opus mundi* i.e. Creation. God has set the universe in motion, and it will continue to move, producing regular results. Cf. Hovingh 1956 on prec. 42-44 who compares Prud. CSymm 2.826: *artificis quia patris opus discrimine nullo / influit in medium nec auaro munere currit.*
But V. is probably recalling Ambr. Hex. 6.3.9: *Currit enim in constitutione mundi per omnem creaturam dei verbum, ut subito de terris omnia quae statuit deus animantium genera producantur et in futurum lege praescripta secundum genus sibi similitudinemque universa succedant, ut leo leonem generet, tigris tigridem, bos bovem, cygnus cygnum, aquila aquilam. Semel praeceptum in perpetuum inolevit naturae, et ideo ministerii sui obsequium praebere terra non desinit, ut priscae animantium species reparaibili generis succession in novas reparentur aetates.* Ambrose pilfered this idea from Basil, as Gnilka 2005 demonstrates.

32 compar discordibus  “as a companion to discordant seasons." An antithetical iunctura, as Roberts terms it (1978, 338, n. 89).

**Prelude to the New Covenant (35-38)**

35 Vosque, quibus regnum solidi permisimus orbis,
36 quos tremit et dominos sentit genus omne animantium,
37 hoc legis servare loco iurisque severi
38 praescriptis vincetos semper meminisse iubemus:

**Gen 9:2:** et terror vester ac tremor sit super cuncta animalia terrae et super omnes volucres caeli cum universis quae moventur in terra omnes pisces maris manui vestrae traditi sunt

35 vosque…orbis  cf. 1.197-199: *nunc, quod homo factus est, solidoque hoc intimat orbi: omnia, quaeque movent anima, generata iubente, / vos operante deo.*
37 legis...iurisque severi  A similar phrase is used at 1.418: *sed quia legis in his suberant praescripta severae*. A hendiadys, cf. Cic. *Leg.* 1.16, *fons legum et iuris* (an expression which Dyck 2004, 103, calls "a virtual hendiadys").

**Kosher Prohibition (39-48)**

39 inter tot species rerum, quas sponte moventes
40 membra animis vestros bis iam largimur in usus,
41 lurida ne quisquam permixto sanguine turpis
42 membra cibos faciat, quod crimen non secus acris
43 olim iudicii plectet sententia quam si
44 hauriat humanum quisquam ferus ense cruorem,
45 quem semper repetam vindex adeoque requiram
46 ut mihi non solus pendat rationis abundans
47 supplicium, sed bruta quoque: cruor omnibus aequ
48 sit sacer humanus, nostra quae luce fruuntur.

**Gen 9:3-6:** et omne quod movetur et vivit erit vobis in cibum quasi holera virentia tradidi vobis in cibum 4 excepto quod carnem cum sanguine non comedetis 5 sanguinem enim animarum vestrarum requiram de manu cunctarum bestiarum et de manu hominis de manu viri et fratris eius requiram animam hominis 6 quicumque effuderit humanum sanguinem fundetur sanguis illius ad imaginem quippe Dei factus est homo

40 membra = *corpora*: TLL s.v. 8.634.39-72 and Staat on 2.38.

40 quas... vestros  cf. 1.170: *imposita est cunctis, quae per se viva moventur*. Hov. 1956 ad loc. cites this line, 1.138 (*omne animal, ratio vegetat quod sola movendi*), and Tertull., *Adv. Herm.*, 36: *omnia denique moventur aut a semetipsis, ut animalia, aut ab aliis, ut inanimalia.*
40 animis  Either from *animus*, “by natural instinct,” or more probably, *anima*, “with life” (animal from *anima*).

41 lurida…faciat  The Noachic prohibition. TLL s.v. (7.2.1862.70) cites this line as meaning pale "with death" (*morte*) and *lurida membrea* also at: Juvenc. 1.738: *adactu solo purgavit*; Ov. M. 14.747: *lurida que arsuro portabat membrea feretro*; Paul. Petric. Mart. 1.345: *et cutis exesis dudum iam lurida membris*.

43 olim  V. uses *olim* in its very weak sense ("at some point in time"), as he does at at vv. 104 and 114 below.

46 repetam…requiram  Pleonasm. The verbs are dervied from the legal sphere.

46 vindex  cf. above v. 18, *vindicibus pluiis*; 2.243: *vindice ferro* (punishing criminals). OLD\(^2\) s.v. 3. “A person who punishes (an offence) or takes vengeance for (a wrong).” V.’s use of *vindex* here depicts God as actively seeking out violators.

46 pendat  OLD\(^2\) s.v. 4b. “(w. *supplicia*, etc., as obj.) to suffer (punishment, etc.).”
46 rationis abundans  Used here to underline the distinction between mankind and bruta in v.

47. Cf. 1.212: prudens rationis.

48 nostra quae luce fruuntur  V. also uses the phrase at 2.400: nostra qui luce fruuntur (note the future tense; God’s words then are now realized here). God refers to all creatures as enjoying “his light,” i.e. living. luce = life is a very common topos, but V. is perhaps drawing attention to the fact that God as the true divine ruler, not apotheosized rulers, is the true divine star. Emperors might shine light, but God provides life and light. See Dewar’s note on Claud. 6 Cons. Hon., v. 23 for the idea, its ancestry, and its popularity in Late Antiquity.

The Sign of the Rainbow (49-59)

49 Et sint signa, quibus caelo radiante remissas
50 diluvii testemur aquas; quippe aëre denso
51 cum levis in tenuis nebulas supenditur umor
52 et nigras iam cogit aquas in concava nubes,
53 effundam radios et pulchrum circite summo
54 arcum curva mihi decorabit solis imago
55 pingenem convexa poli, qui luce caloris
56 exsiccet pluvias et in aëra dissipet imbres
57 usque adeo ut possit mundi pars altera poenae
58 hoc sibi venturi specimen praesumere signi,
59 quod plus ignis habet rutilans et iam minus imbris.”

Gen 9:11-16: statuam pactum meum vobiscum et nequaquam uultra interficietur omnis caro aquis diluvii neque erit deinceps diluvium dissipans terram 12 dixitque Deus hoc signum foederis quod do inter me et vos et ad omnem animam viventem quae est vobiscum in generationes sempiternas 13 arcum meum ponam in nubibus et erit signum foederis inter me et inter terram 14
cumque obduxero nubibus caelum apparebit arcus meus in nubibus 15 et recordabor foederis mei vobiscum et cum omni anima vivente quae carnem vegetat et non erunt ultra aquae dilivii ad delendum universam carnem 16 eritque arcus in nubibus et videbo illum et recordabor foederis sempiterni quod pactum est inter Deum et omnem animam viventem universae carnis quae est super terram

49 sint signa  The signa (plural for singular) of God’s covenant with Noah is the rainbow. V.’s description is among longest and most detailed in Latin poetry (only Avitus’ is longer; cf. the shorter descriptions of Lucr. 6.524-526; Claud. Rapt. Pros. 2.98-100); it is also the most colorless. Even the shortest description, that of Hept. poet, is more colorful, Gen. 333-334: sed croceum tantum curvandum in nubibus arcum / candida cum sudo praerorant sidera nimbo. Indeed, Avitus’ description (4.627-634) includes a color catalog: v. 631: sapphirusque virens, maculosus, caerulus, albus. V. focuses instead on the physical process that creates the rainbow.

50 quibus…testemur testemur has two meanings here: God both produces the rainbow as a witness to the covenant (OLD² s.v. 1), he also is certifying the covenant by producing it (OLD² s.v. 2c).

50 quippe  God, channeling V., as natural scientist.

50 aère denso  Air that is dense with moisture (cf. Cic. Nat. Deor. 2.101: aer... tum fusus et extenuates sublime fertur, tum autem concretus in nubes cogitum umoremque colligens terram
auget imbribus). Pease 1958 adduces numerous of similar ancient explanations. The region of the aer is between the earth and the aether.

51 levis…umor “slight moisture.”

52 nigras…aquas The waters are black from the moisture.

52 in concava nubis P nubes. Smolak’s emendation is printed here nubis (the e<-i shift is common in P) and it makes more sense: the subject of cogit is levis…umor (v. 50). The "slight moisture rises into soft mists and compels black waters into the shape of a cloud." Cf. German. Frag. Prog. 45: concava quos reddunt incluso nubila vento.

51 in tenuis nebulas P transmits intenis; Gagny emends the line to quum levis in nebula
 pendens se vererit humor; Morel prints intensis; SchenkI's conjecture, in tenuis, is to be preferred (cf., e.g., Manil. 1.152: proximus in tenuis descendit spiritus auras; Sil. 4.10: in tenues tandem nubis dare terga coegit because there are no examples of intentis/intensis. Morel’s nebulis makes more sense given the presence of suspenditur (itself a correction).

51 suspenditur suspenditur is middle.
52 nigras...aquas  Object of cogit. cogit = co(a)git.

52 in concava nubis  Paul. Petric. Mart. 4.178: vergeret effusos in concava subdita nimbos
(also in a description of rainbow); concava is plural for singular and refers to the shape of the clouds (« the curvature of a cloud ») that form from the levis umor (v. 51).

53 circite  Dative. An archaism/post-classicism. With summo also at 2.480 (undique litoribus
summo se circite iungat).

55 pingentem convexa poli  The closest V. comes to mentioning color. V. is fond of the participial form (pingentia 1.103; 3.234; picta 3.482) of pingere.

55 caloris  P has calores. Gagny prints colores. SchHov print Schenkl’s conjecture (calorans), but this is a hapax, and neither record in their apparatuses Morel’s fine conjecture, caloris (as Hudson-Williams 1963, 176-177 already noted). Hudson-Williams 1963, 177, classifies caloris as a defining genitive (= genitive of quality) and restores it. Martorelli 2008, 94, accepts Morel's conjecture and notes that luce caloris = enallage. The use of a noun genitive in place of adjective is common in LL.

56 pluvias...imbres  pluvia refers to rain generally, imber to heavy rain (showers). This rain originates in the aër, distinguished from the water that is in the aether (2.463-464: ...nubibus effluit imber: / antiquae laxantur aquae iamque aethere.)
56 exsiccet…dissipet  The rainbow will dry up (exsiccet) and evaporate (dissipet) the rain.

57 mundi…altera  (mundo P) Schenkl’s note in the index (p. 487) is terse: altera pars mundi (post diluvium)… verbis altera pars rerum significantur mala, opp. optima and citing 1.404 (rerum / altera pars per cuncta docens arcana peritos, of the knowledge of good and evil), but this does not make sense unless we understand that the phrase here means “the other half of mankind,” i.e. the wicked men who will be judged at the Last Judgment (Matt. 25:41) and not the good men like Noah.

58 venturi specimen praesumere signi  As the text stands, this phrase seems to mean almost “to anticipate an anticipation,” in other words, “to understand [the rainbow] as anticipation (specimen)” of a future punishment. The sign is the Son of Man (Matt. 24:30) who will appear in the clouds to judge the living and the dead.

59 quod…imbris  A rather feeble line that makes somewhat clearer what the preceding lines mean, namely, that sometime later, people will know that God is punishing them when the rainbow has more red (= ignis), symbolizing punishment / Hell, and less blue (= aqua).

Victor’s interpretation of colors of the rainbow as prefiguring punishment is found in a number of later sources, including Greg. Mag. Hom. in Ezech. 1.8.28.7-11: Unde et in arcu eodem color aquae et ignis simuul ostenditur, quia et ex parte est caeruleus et ex parte rubicundus, ut
utriusque iudicii testis sit, unius vide licet faciendi, et alterius facti, sed iam non ul terius faciendi, et alterius facti, sed iam non ul terius faciendi, quia mundum quidem iudic ii igne cremabitur, sed aqua iam diluvi non deleter. Isid. Rer. nat. 31: Alii ex duobus coloribus eius, id est aquoso et igneo, duo iudicia significari dixerunt: unum per quod dudum impii perierunt in diluvio, alterum per quod postmodum peccatores cremandi sunt in inferno. I have been unable to find an earlier instance of Victor’s interpretation.

Fertility of the Earth, Agriculture, Wine (60-70)

60 Talibus attoniti imperiis, quae cuncta tremiscunt
61 promissisque piis alacres, quibus omnia gaudent,
62 certatim limo dulcique uligine laeta
63 arva Noë natique simul, quis firmius aevum,
64 inflindunt rastris et semine rura maritant.
65 Iam vero effusis late densissima campis
66 herba cibi ex calamis in frugem lacte gelato
67 reddit multiplicem cumulato fenore messem;
68 et nova praegravido iam palmite vinea diti
69 luxuriat fructu, quem dulci nectare tendens
70 parturit ac duro nascuntur pocula ligno.

Gen 9:20: coepitque Noe vir agricola exercere terram et plantavit vineam

Comparanda

Hept. poet Gen. 347-348
An amplification that V. uses to depict the natural world’s return to regularity after the Flood; vv. 65-70 show that God’s covenant is in full force. In 10 lines V. describes the entire agricultural process: plowing, sowing, harvesting. V. cannot present Noah as the inventor of agriculture (Adam in Book 2 is technically the first human planter (2.77-84). Nor does he emphasize that Noah is the inventor of viticulture (as the Hept. poet does).

60 talibus…imperiis Similar transitional formulae elsewhere in V. (2.90: talibus orantes falsi serpentis imago; 3.531: talibus attonito visis non defuit almus). Reactions to God’s speeches are always met with astonishment.

60-61 cuncta…omnia Though the subject of attoniti must be Noah and kin, V. emphasizes God’s total dominion over the universe and in whom all Creation (omnia) delight.

60 quae cuncta tremiscunt Either "at which all things tremble" (quae [imperia] acc. obj. of tremiscunt) or "which cause all things to tremble" (quae [imperia] nom. subj.). The latter understanding is perhaps less likely, because omnia is the subject of gaudent. The Hept. poet, Ex. 1014 (quem cuncta tremiscunt) uses tremiscunt transitively, suggesting that the first option is correct.

61 piis "merciful" (TLL 10.1.2242.22-39) as at 3.345: promissisque piis credat [Abram], but piis must retain the sense of "faithful in discharging one's religious obligations, devout, etc." or
"faithful in the discharge of one's family or social obligations, devoted, loyal" (OLD² s.v. 2 and 3).

**62 dulcique uligine laeta** A direct quote from *Georg.* 2.184: *dulcique uligine laeta* (the context is the best types of soil). The quotation is appropriate: Virgil, in his catalogue of soils, describes the best kinds of soil, and the best kind for growing olives and grapes is moist soil (cf. Colum. 3.1.3-10 and 3.11.6-10, esp. 3.11.8).

**63 Noë natique simul** cf. 2.420-421: *adgreditur densas natis...ferro prosterne silvas.* As Noah's sons help him build the Ark, so now they help him farm. An extrabiblical detail that explains how Noah could accomplish what he does (i.e. building of the Ark and farming) – he had help.

**63 firmius aevum** cf. Stat. *Theb.* 4.335 for the phrase (*exspecta dum maior honos, dum firmius aevum*). “Noah and his sons, in whom there was sturdier age” – i.e. old Noah works with his younger and therefore stronger sons. This and similar expressions are common in verse (e.g. Virg. *Ecl.* 4.37: *ubi iam firmata virum te fecerit aetas*; Luc. 2.631: *cui firmior aetas* [of an elder son]; 10.133-134). V. uses a similar expression at 2.207-208: *quorum qui maximus aevo / arva Cain duris vertebat pinguius rastris.*
64 infundunt…maritant  Chiasmus. *infindo* means to “cut into” (TLL 7.1.7.1422.81) is used in poetry for either plowing (as here, cf. Virg. *Ecl.* 4.33, *telluri sulcos*; Juven. 4.171: *iugera...infindent*) or sailing.

64 maritant  cf. Claud. *rapt. Pros.* 2.89: *glaebas fecundo rore maritat*, on which Hall 1969 points out, “[t] he use of *maritare* with objects such as *glaebas* in the sense of ‘to fertilise’ is a predominantly Late Latin idiom.” He cites (among many others) Alcim. *Avit. carm.* 1.278: *lympha maritavit sitientis viscera terrae*.

65 iam vero  Hovingh prints *vere* ("spring" or adv.) (P), but *iam uero* (SchPet in the apparatus) is much more common. Papini translates *vere* ("gia a primavera"), but the transition (*iam vero*) is appropriate here: the planting has already occurred (vv. 61-64).


65 ex...gelato  The sap (*lacte*) is taken up from the stems (*calamis*) and is changed into fruit (*infra frugem*). *lacte gelato* seems to mean something like “coagulated sap.”

66 herba cibi  *cibi* = genitive of definition.
67 reddit...messem The first harvest is successful: it pays back (reddit) Noah and his sons’ toil with an increased crop (multiplicem...messem).

67 cumulato faenore Pleonasm. Maurer adduces Hex. 3.8.34: ut...frugem possit multiplicem sustinere … and 35: foeneratum terra restituit quod accepit et usurarum cumulo multiplicem. cf. Boldrer 1996 on Colum. 10.142: ut redeant nobis cumulato fenore messes: “Fenus indica in contesto agricolo il guadagno rispetto all’investimento iniziale in semi.”

68 praegravido Used to describe plants that are laden with fruit; the image is that of pregnancy given the verbs (parturit and nascuntur v. 70). A rare word (Liv. 44.4.9: Romanus imperator, maior sexaginta annis et praegravis corpore; Mart. 4.18.4: decidit hiberno praegravis unda gelu; Curt. 9.10.26: Ipsum convivas que currus vehebat creterris aureis eiusdem que materiae ingentibus poculis praegravis, used to describe the “pregnancy” of the Ark – the seeds of life in the renewed world are contained within: (praegravidam...arcam, 2.455; cf. Alcim. Avit. Carm. 4.489 praegravis...arca); Hept. poet, Ex. 553: libantes longe iaciunt; quia praegrauis unda / Ennod. Carm. 7.187: non tamen ita aristis praegravidum aut dotatum pascuis aut arbusitis conpositum aut fluminibus laetum. Green 2010, 63, notes the resemblance of this line to Ov. Fasti 1.152: et nova de gravido palmite gemma tume.

69 tendens  “swelling, increasing in size” (cf. Blaise s.v. 5, “entendre, distendre, augmenter”),

70 duro pocula ligno  A paradox that underscores the miracle of the transformation of grapes into wine. *duro ligno* = the grapevine by metonymy; *pocula* = *vinum* by metonymy.

**Noah's Drunkeness, Cursing of Ham and Blessing of Shem and Japheth, and Death (71-98)**

71 Forte Noë domini celebrat dum laetus honores
72 indulgens epulis et dulcia pocula libans
73 persensit vivos latices somnoque gravante
74 victus membra toro posuit neglecta fideli:

*Gen 9:21:* bibensque vinum inebriatus est et nudatus in tabernaculo suo

**Comparanda**

*Hept.* poet, *Genesis* 347-360;

Avitus 4.406-417
71 forte Transition. V. uses this episode to provide an aetiology of the descendants of Noah’s three sons (Green 2010, 56).

71 celebrat...honores Noah got drunk, but he was not sacrificing when he did, thus Philo (De plant. 163); similarly Ambr. Noe 1.29.111. The phrasing is similar to Aen. 5.58 laetum cuncti celebremus honorem, where Aeneas encourages his men to celebrate the memory of Anchises. honores must refer to sacrificial victims (cf. v. 11 above).

72 indulgens...74 victus Generic poeticizing of drunkenness (cf. 3.444, where Abraham ambushes the Sodomites who are somno vinoque sepultos). V. does not exculpate Noah, as other writers do, by producing a typological interpretation, e.g. as prophetic of Christ’s passion in Aug. doctr. christ. 3.21.

72 indulgens V. uses the noun indulgentia (1.328: pro quanta dei indulgentia magni est) in its usual, positive, and Christian sense. Here, however, the verb indulgeo is used in its negative sense (e.g. Aen. 9.165: indulgent vino, Ambr. Abr. 1.6.57: nesciunt quid loquantur qui nimio vino indulgent, iacent sepulti; Aug. Ep. 36.5.27: quid est autem alogia... nisi cum epulis indulgetur, ut a rationis tramite devietur?; Min. Fel. Oct. 31.5.30: nec enim indulgemos epulis aut convivium mero ducimus). Ambrose exculpates Noah (Noe 111: et "bibit" inquit "vino et inebriatus est." Non dixit: vinum bibi, neque iustus vinum eбит, sed de vino, hoc est de eius portione libavit.)
73 **vivos latices**  A curious expression (“forceful wine”). Servius on *Aen.* 1.686: *latex proprie aqua est fontium ab eo quod intra terrae venas lateat, sed et vinum latet intra uvam, unde nunc dixit late* (ed. Thilo-Hagen). Maltby 1991, 328, s.v. *latex* on one ancient etymology (< *latere*): the strength of wine is *hidden* from Noah because he has not experienced intoxication before.

73 **persensit**  Noah senses the physical effect of the wine on his body (TLL 10.1.1686.30-31, citing this line), but the word can have the sense of perceiving things hidden (TLL s.v. 10.1.1685.74-75-1686.1-25), and perhaps we are meant to understand "Noah did not know the strength of wine until he sensed his limbs growing heavy." Cf. *Hept.* poet, Ex. 552-553: *undantes cernunt latices, quos pectore fesso / libantes longe iaciant.*

73 **somnoque gravante**  A Virgilian tag (*Aen.* 6.520, derived from Ennius).

74 **membra…neglecta**  Noah is described as “dead drunk.” Cf., e.g., *Stat. Theb.* 10.7: *funeraque orba rogis neglectaque membra relinquunt,* Catull. 63.6: *relictा sensit sibi membra sine viro; Luc. 8.58-60: obvia nox miserae caelum lucem que tenebris / abstulit atque animam clausit dolor; omnia nervis / membra relicta labant, riguerunt corda, diuque / spe mortis decepta iacet.* Green 2010, 63, notes the resemblance to *Aen.* 6.520 *somnoque gravatum* and 6.220: *membra toro defleta reponunt.*
74 toro…fideli  *fideli* is rather unexpected. It may mean "usual, customary, trusty" bed," but its connection with fidelity and chastity is present. The phrase occurs in Ennod. *Ep*. 7.29: *quae servat meritis torum fidelem*.

**Noah’s Uncovered (75-80)**

75 et revoluta simul vestis secreta retextit
76 corporis et risum tibi, Cham deterrede, movit
77 fons et origo tui, fratresque aspergine culpae
78 Sem primum summumque Iaphet miscere parasti.
79 Disce quid exposcat quod <laeta>rere cachinno
80 tu solus:

**Gen 9:22**: quod cum vidisset Ham pater Chanaan verenda scilicet patris sui esse nuda nuntiavit duobus fratribus suis foras

**Comparanda**

*Hept*. poet, *Genesis* 350-357

Avitus *Carm*. 4.404-417

76 risum  One of the many interpretations of Ham’s actions in Gen 9:22. That Ham laughs at Noah has its origin in Jewish tradition, e.g. Philo (*QG* 2.71; *De sobrietate* 32) and Ambrose (*De Noe* 1.30.115) have Ham laughing (likewise the *Hept*. poet and Avitus).

76 Cham deterrede  Wordplay (Ham = *malum*, Ambr. *De Noe* 2.3) The indignant narrator breaks in (apostrophe). At v. 88 below Noah also addresses Ham in the vocative.
77 fons et origo  Pleonasm. The same phrase is used at 320 below of Shem and his descendants. The phrase is meant to illustrate the moral depravity, equivalent to our expression “flesh and blood.”

77 aspergine culpae  Cf. Prud. Apoth. 937: fraude carens, omni culparum aspergine liber; Amart. 948: terribilem, qui me maculosum aspergine morum.

78 Sem primum…summumque Iaphet  Nomina omina for Noah’s other sons: Shem = bonum (Noe 2.3). Japhet = indifferent. The adjectives, ABBA word order and the solemn spondaic rhythm all highlight the virtuous characters of Shem and Japhet in contrast with Ham. Shem is Noah's first son, Japhet his third (and last, summum). Ham is Noah's second son.

79 disce quid exposcat quod… "Learn what the fact that… demands" (noun clause).

79 <laetar>ere cachinno  P reads: Disce quid exposcat quod †re-secatino. Gagny rewrites, Morel prints resecatino but asterisks the line. Schenkl prints . . . † rese cachinno and conjectures sic laetere in his apparatus. I print Hovingh’s emendation. The form laetarere is not attested elsewhere in the LLT, but laetarer is in mostly late authors, and as diagnostic conjecture for the nonsense P offers, it works. v. 80 tu solus shows that the missing verb must refer to Ham alone, and that it must refer to his reaction when he saw Noah naked. cachinno is Schenkl's conjecture for catino (P), and must be correct. Avitus uses cachinno in the same metrical
position in his retelling of this episode: 4.407 huius natorum medius, qui forte cachinno.
(Pollman 1992, 224 approves).

Ham’s Failure, Shem and Japhet’s Victory (80-85)

80 … fratrum melior sententia dignum
81 officii putat esse locum; nam tegmine rapto
82 et pos terga dato sensim properante recessu
83 aversi patrium manibus texere pudorem
84 et palmam fratri rapuit pietatis uterque
85 sublatam medio.

Gen 9:23: at vero Sem et Iafeth pallium inposuerunt umeris suis et incendentes retrorum
operuerunt verecunda patris sui faciesque eorum aversae erant et patris virilia non viderunt

80 fratrum melior sententia  cf. Aen. 2.35 quorum melior sententia, describing those Trojans
who wanted to cast out the Trojans from Troy.

81 officii…locum  Here “an opportunity for duty.” OLD² s.v. locum 14 (+ gen.); with the
phrase, V. highlights the sons’ agency.

82 pos terga  An archaism or post-classicism that gives this line a solemn air. V. uses it at 1.60:
et medias obiecit aquas fugiens que sequentis / mox pos terga fuit. Nomen sic meta diei. Note
also pos se at 3.727: pos se [sc. Lot’s wife] respiciat cautus male;
82 sensim properante recessu A clever oxymoron that nicely captures the scene. Japheth and
Shem, like Ham, find the situation uncomfortable. Having covered Noah, they now retreat as fast
as they can without disturbing their father in the process.

83 aversi Shem and Japhet enter Noah’s tent with their backs facing him. (retrorsum in
Vulgate, aversi in Vetus Latina).


84 palmam…pietatis rapuit A metaphor from the games. V. once more draws attention to the
fact that Ham has failed in his filial duty. For the expression, cf. Ambr. In Lucam 5.1221:
rapimus enim ex hoc mundo palmam salutis.

84-85 fratri…medio i.e. Ham. V. completes the birth order of Noah's sons (see v. 79).

Noah’s Awakes and Curses Ham, Blesses Shem and Japheth (86-95)

86 … nam postquam libera somno
87 corda Noë repetunt, divini nuntia sensus,
88 natorum meritum tali mercede rependit:
89 "Cham maledicte, tuo dubius servire parenti
90 fratrum servus eris, sancto tu, maxime natu
91 Sem, benedicte deo vives fratremque minorem 90
92 <semine iam> dominus multo distendet in orbe
93 donec et in fratris domibus numerosa propago
94 constituat sedem populisque admissa propinquis
95 impleat adiunctas et quas construxerit urbes."

**Gen 9:24-27:** evigilans autem Noe ex vino cum didicisset quae fecerat ei filius suus minor 25 ait maledictus Chanaan servus servorum erit fratribus suis 26 dixitque benedictus Dominus Deus Sem sit Chanaan servus eius 27 dilatat Deus Iapheth et habitat in tabernaculis Sem sitque Chanaan servus eius

**Comparanda**

Avitus, *Carm.* 4.404-417

86 **divini** Transferred epithet (cf. Lucr. 6.77: *in mentes hominum divinae nuntia formae*).

86 **natorum meritum** cf. prec. 57; 76; 118. V.'s use of *meritum* here is pointed.

87 **mercede** = *praemium*. (3.473: *pretium fidei, mercesque laborum; 588 merces virtutis*).

87 **rependit** See note on v. 3.

88 **Cham maledicte** See note on v. 76 above for the etymology of Ham’s name. Here V. sidesteps the exegetic challenge of explaining Gen 9:26, where Noah curses Ham’s son Canaan and not Ham himself. cf. *Hept.* poet, *Gen.* 359-360, *germanis faciens ut sit postremus* [i.e., Ham] *et acro / subditus imperio; Avit.* 4.412: *natum germanis famulum dedit.*
88 dubius  Morel’s conjecture of *dubius* is to be preferred to P’s *dubium* (adverb). The same construction of *dubius* + infinitive is found at 1.541-542: *dubii* [sc. Adam and Eve] *culpae hoc adscribere primae / et poenae*, “uncertain if they should ascribe this to their first sin and punishment”) and v. 3.499: *quod quia cunctaris dubiusque ita credere peccas* (“but because you hesitate, and by hesitating to believe you thereby sin”). For the adjective with a “prolative” infinitive in poetry and post-classical prose, see KS §125.6, esp. p. 686. Ham hesitated, and therefore failed to serve Noah.

89 fratrum servus eris  Noah's curse entails that Ham be a slave to his brothers, but V., unlike Avitus (4.412-417), does not use this event to explain the origin of slavery.

94 quas construxerit urbes  V. changes the homely *tabernaculis* to the more stately *urbes* here

94 impleat  A clear link to v. 212 (*implesset*) below.

Noah’s Death (95-98)

95 Haec fatus senior, cum iam decurrerat annos
96 mille minus decies quinos, quos summa recusat,
97 conscia venturi resolutus pectora leto
98 cessit et hunc orbem natisque curas relinquuit.
Gen 9:28-29: vixit autem Noe post diluvium trecentis quinquaginta annis 29 et impleti sunt omnes dies eius nongentorum quinquaginta annum et mortuus est

95 cum iam decurrerat annos  decurrere = percurrere (TLL s.v. decurrere 5.1.232.52-77, this line cited at l. 74).

96 quos…recusat  A curious phrase, though the meaning is clear: the sum total of his years do not add up to 1,000. The death formula here ("X lived a total of Y years, but not reaching a total of Z years") may be adapted from metrical epigraphic practice, cf. CIL 6.12652: nondum bis denos aetas mea viderat annos and the similar formulations, CIL 6.23135, 21151, 37412. Less probably, V. may be using a formula akin to Jubilees 4:30 (Adam's death) and the Zohar 1:168b.

97 conscia…pectora  Noah is depicted as having knowledge of the future, just as he was at v. 1 above. By emphasizing Noah’s knowledge, V. reinforces the digression that follows, where people like Noah are contrasted with later generations who no longer are conscia.

97 resolutus pectora  The phrase is similar to descriptions of the effect of sleep and wine, e.g. Lucr. 4.908: animi curas e pectore solvat; Sen. Ag. 73: somnus domitor pectora solvit; Stat. Ach. 1.228: resolutum pectore; Gell. 5.1.1 (soluto pectore); Ennod. Carm. 1.17: solvunt caducis pectora vinculis; Coripp., Just. 138: non in segnes solverunt pectora. resolutus governs the ‘Greek’ accusative (pectora), "loosened with respect to his breast" (LHS §44).
98 *hunc…relinquit* Zeugma ("He left behind the world and earthly concerns to his sons") and pleonasm (with *cessit*). SchHov print a semicolon after *relinquit*, but a full stop makes more sense. The digression that follows amounts to a separate unit, clearly delineated from what has come before and what comes after (see note on v. 210).

**99-209: Digression: The Genealogy of Idolatry**

**Outline**

A. 99-115: The loss of knowledge after the death of Noah.

99-108: Men like Noah, chosen by God because of their purity, were able to know past, present, and future and the uses of the elements.

109-115: Noah’s descendants do not have this gift, and try to recall, with only partial success, what their ancestors knew; writing is invented for the purpose of storing this (corrupted) knowledge.

B. 116-160: The introduction of the astrological and mantic arts.

121-134: Speculation 1: There are signs of the future that God embedded in the natural world. This is proved by Pyrrhus’ gem, which shows the Muses and Apollo enclosed, since it came into the existence with the world, before the creation of man.

135: Speculation 2: The simple motion of the world created signs of the future.

136-146: Speculation 3: The devil subjected the material world to his will. Example: astrology.
147-152: The mantic arts derive from the kind of thinking depicted in 121-146.

153-156: Refutation 1: The ridiculousness of the mantic arts is exposed by V.’s example of the Ethiopian dogs.

157-160: Refutation 2: Satan could have faked Pyrrhus’ gem! Galba’s statue of Fortuna proves this.

C. 160-165: Man’s fear of the unknown (future) allows Satan to introduce magic. He is worshipped.

D. 166-169: Nimrod introduces idolatry to the Persians. They begin to worship fire instead of God.

E. 170-209: The westward spread of idolatry.

170-174: Satan not only mocks the cares of men, he mocks their emotions, too. Example: an infelix pater who makes a statue of his dead son and offers sacrifices to it.

174-190: Other people follow him.

190-209: The Greeks rationalize this behavior and eventually transmit it to the barbarians.

There are two extended digressions in the Alethia, each totaling about 110 lines. Both are concerned with the theme of human progress: The first is on the discovery of metallurgy (2.90-202); the second is on the origins and development of idolatry (3.99-209). Both digressions are concerned with the development of society.
The digression in Book 3 is prompted by Noah’s death (vv. 95-97; Gen 9:29), but V. has had his mind on the topic before: at 1.405-411, where he reflects on the nature and progress of original sin:

… hic nunc excurrere paulum
fas fuat et turpes veterum deflere ruinas.
A nimium miseri gentiles, quos furor egit
in varios ritus! patet, in qua morte profani
funditus occiderint. nomen plural deorum
serpentis primum sonuit vox impia diri,
qui mortis tunc causa fuit....

At this point, may it be right to digress (excurre) for a moment and to weep for the wretched destructions of [our] ancestors. Ah pagans, wretched beyond measure, whom madness compelled into various rites! It is clear that the impious have utterly perished. The impious voice of the dreadful serpent (who was then the cause of death) uttered the plural word ‘gods.’

The digression is only loosely linked to Genesis 10, which is entirely devoted to the genealogy of Noah’s descendants: V., aware of the limited poetic potential of a list of names, omits (with one exception, Nimrod, v. 166) Genesis 10 and replaces it with a genealogy of a different sort: idolatry.

V. begins [A] with how pure men like Noah, even after original sin, possessed perfect knowledge of the past, present, and future and the things the natural world provides for human purposes. Men lost this gift of perfect knowledge after the Flood, but the memory that their ancestors possessed secret (i.e. unknown to them, the descendants) knowledge remained. Writing was invented to preserve and transmit this knowledge to descendants. It is from the preserving and accumulation of subsequent knowledge that artes developed.
[B] The recollected knowledge, joined with new knowledge, produced a desire to know the future. V. gives three speculations that these descendants had: one, God scattered signs in the natural world that foretell future events, like Pyrrhus’ gem; two, the motion of the universe produces signs that foretell the future, these can be understood through (e.g.) divinatory arts like astrology, and three, Satan subjected all matter to his malign influence.

[C] By using such tricks, Satan caused man to fear the future. This permits him to introduce magic [possibly necromancy] and be worshipped by man.

[D] Nimrod introduces idolatry to the Persians.

[E] Satan was not content just to attack man’s mind, but he uses his emotions too. a father who lost a son to death makes a statue of his son and transfers his worship from God to the dead. This kind of idolatry catches on. The Greeks provide it a philosophical framework, giving it more legitimacy, and soon kings a worshipped. V. refutes this by using a Euhemeristic approach to the so-called tombs of the gods. His account of the genealogy of idolatry, and its spread, ends close to home: with the contemporary idolatrous practices of the barbarians in Gaul and Germany.

**Scholarship**

de la Ville de Mirmont 1906, 125-126; Falcidia Riggio 1912, 103-104; Ferrari 1912^A^, 30-33; 1912^B^, 60-62, 71; Martorelli 2008, 173-185; Cutino 2009, 156-167

**Comparanda**

Avitus, *Carm.* 2.277-325

99 quippe datum culpa vacuis vitioque remotis
100 et post peccatum, prima quod morte piatur,
101 cum deus electae penitus sacraria mentis
102 spiritus implesset pectusque rigasset amicum,
103 omnia nosse simul coramque oblata tueri:
104 quae fugiens rapuit quaeque est quaeque afferet olim
105 saecula venturis carpenda nepotibus aetas,
106 quod hominum varios conceptum fundit in usus
107 terra gravis, liquidum pelagus, vegetabilis aër
108 atque avidus nimio quod fomite gignit et ignis.

99 cum…102 amicum  V. is thinking of men like Noah and Enoch, who were chosen as worthy conduits of divine knowledge. V. must be drawing on apocryphal sources such as 1 Enoch and Jubilees for this material. For example, at Jub. 4:17-19, Enoch is said to be the first man to learn writing and astromony and to be granted knowledge of the past and future. However, at 1 Enoch 69:9-16, the fallen angel Penemue this one demonstrated to the people the bitter and the sweet and revealed to them all the secrets of their wisdom. Furthermore he caused the people to penetrate (the secret) of writing and (the use of) ink and paper; on account of this matter, there are many who have erred from eternity to eternity, until this very day. For human beings are not created for such purposes to take up their beliefs with a pen and ink. For indeed human beings were not created but to be like angels, permanently to maintain pure and righteous lives. Death, which destroys everything, would have not touched them, had it not been through their knowledge by which they shall perish; death is (now) eating us by means of this power” (trans Isaac in Charlesworth 1985).

100 piatur  What does the present tense mean here? The sin that was (and continues to be) expiated by the first death (i.e. the death of the body; the second death is eternal punishment). Perhaps emend to piatum (cf. 2.316: qua forsan caede piatus; also Avit. Carm. 4.1-3, where God announces to Noah his plan to flood the earth: infectum quondam vitis concordibus orbem / legitimumque nefas laxata morte piatum / diluvio repetam, but note Hept. poet, Ex. 840: morte piatur).

101 electae…sacrarum mentis  cf. Stat. Theb. 3.246 (of Jupiter) mentis sacraria nostrae, on which Snijder remarks, "'the holy seat of our mind'. The (sic) Olympus is the seat from which Jupiter's mind governs the world. We again notice the influence of Stoic doctrine, in which Jupiter was often identified with the Logos, the rational principle that governs the world."

101 penitus  Sets up a contrast with the non-elect humans below (v. 173) whom Satan deceives.

102 spiritus  Predicative of deus.

103 nosse…teueri  nosse is a perfect infinitive with present sense (LHS §193); cf. 1.464: fas dixisse mihi, fas sit...probasse. The infinitives are the subject of v. 99, datum est. I place a colon after teueri (SchHov place a comma), as vv. 104-108 explain what omnia in v. 103 means.

104 quae fugiens rapuit quaeque est quaeque afferet olim  Past, present, and future were known to the elect. Noah (note on v. 1 above) and Enoch (Jub. 4:17-19; 10:17). Cf. Hom. Il 1.70: (Chalcas) ὃς ἦδη τά τ’ ἑόντα τά τ’ ἑσσόμενα πρό τ’ ἑόντα.
104 quae...saecula  each quaeque is a direct object of fugiens...aetas (vv. 104-105).

104 est  From sum or edo? Cutino, Martorelli, and Papini all understand it to be from sum, Schenkl from edo. V. commonly uses est (< esse) with the syllable lengthened by position. The presence here of carpo (TLL 3.494.80-495.5) and affere (TLL 1.1202.74-1203.11) prove that est here does not mean "what fleeing age exists [at present]" but rather "what fleeing age devours" (est < edo). The sentence is much more forceful – otherwise the past is "snatched away" (rapuit) and the future will be "carried off" (afferet), but the present merely "exists" (est < esse). And aetas with ēdit is found in poetry, thought not in this form (ēst) (TLL 5.2.105.82-85): Sil. 4.22 retractant turris, ēdit quas longior aetas and Anth. Lat. 416.7-8 (Riese) dies...carpet edetque magis.

The idea is common. Cf. tempus edax rerum, Ov. Met. 15.234. V. might have Kronos (= Chronos) / Saturn in mind: Macrob. Sat. 1.8.6 summarizes mythographic interpretations of Kronos: (physical scientists on the castration of Uranus and the birth of Venus) ex quo intellegi volunt, cum chaos esset, tempora non fuisse si quidem tempus est certa dimensio quae ex caeli conversione colligitur. [tempus coepit] inde ab ipso natus putatur [Gk. Kronos] qui, ut diximus, [Gk. Chronos] est. 9...falcem ei quidam aemignant attributam quod tempus omnia metat exsecet et incidat. 10 hunc aiunt filios suos solitum devorare eosdemque rursus evomere, per quod similiter significatur un tempus esse, a quo vicibus cuncta gignatur absumenturque et ex eo denuo renascantur. [ed. Kaster]
104 olim  See note on v. 43 above.

105 saecula venturis carpena nepotibus  A neat expression. Note the transferred epithet: one would expect *ventura* with *saecula*, as in v. 1 above.

105 carpena  Lit. "will be plucked" (Hor. *Carm.* 1.11.8: *carpe diem*; for other examples, see TLL 3.494.80-495.1-4), i.e. "will be lived." Schenkl (p. 490, s.v. gerundivum) cites this of an example of a gerundive with the more limited force of a future passive participle. Cf. below, v. 214, *per varias orbis partes spargenda iuventus*.

106-108 fundit in usus…et ignis  The traditional Empedoclean elements, much subject to philosophers’ speculations and so germane to V.’s purpose. Common in Christian apologetics, e.g. Clement Al. *Paed.* 3.100.1 and Firm. Mat. *Err.* 1.2: *quattuor elementa esse <et in omni rerum natura> inueniri quis dubitet, id est ignem, aquam, aerem et terram?* V. here emphasizes it is from God, not from human *indagines* (cf. prec. 2-3, where humans cannot understand God through *subtili indagine rerum*), that progress comes.

106 in usus  (cf. prec. 33 *per te venit in usus*; v. 40 above *largimur in usus*) – Prop. 4.2.63: *potuisti fundere in usus*. The idea that nature / god provides all necessary things via the four elements, very common, e.g. Orient. *Comm.* 1.137-138: *nec modo terreno tantum servire iubetur / per varios usus subdita terra homini*; Alcim. Avit. *Carm.* 3.230: *quod pelagus, quod terra creat, quod flumina gignunt. in expresses purpose here (KS §107.d; NLS §151.6).
108: *vegetabilis* “enlivening” or “vivifying.” cf. prec. 16 (*te vegetet motus, quia totus semper ubique es*), with Hovingh 1955’s note. The word itself is rare (in this form only Ammian. 22.8.28 and Paulinus of Nola, *Carm.* 27.165: *vegetabilis aura* (of smell) in 27.163; Prud., *Contra Symm.* 2.802 (*aura volat tenuis, vegetatur mobilis aër*).

109 *avidus…ignis* Fire is very often characterized as greedy: (TLL s.v. *avidus* 2.428.32-48).

Martorelli 2008, 174, n. 65, suggests that *avidus* “riflesso delle fiamme infernali: col successive v. 109 il discorso passa alla *damnata propago*, la cui conoscenza è opposta a quella dei puri di cuore.”

109 *nimio…fomite* I understand *nimio fomite* as an ablative of source. Fire, able to consume so much that exists, has a superabundance of kindling available to it (for this idea, see Isidore’s remark in the following note).

109 *gignit et ignis*] *et = etiam.* Note the etymological wordplay in *gignit...ignis.* Lucretius more than once puns *ignis* with *lignis* and also links *gignis* and *ignis* (see Snyder 1980, 42 and 132-133). Cf. also Varro *Ling.* 5.70: *ignis a gnascendo, quod hinc nascitur et omne quod nascitur ignis se indit.* and Isid. *Orig.*19.6.5: *Ignis autem dictus quod nihil gigni potest ex eo; est enim inviolabile elementum, adsumens cuncta quae rapit.*

109-115: The invention of writing allows knowledge to be passed down through the generations.

109 sed postquam tantum munus damnata propago
The syntax of vv. 109-115 is very contorted and obscure. Their gist seems to be as follows: men like Noah possessed the gift (munus) of knowledge of past, present, and future and to what use matter could be put. But sin continued to operate in man, and indeed got worse (I suppose this must be supplied), which caused this gift of knowledge to be lost to humanity. V.'s meaning then becomes garbled: humanity recalled that their ancestors knew things hidden from them, the epigoni.

109 sed postquam  sed postquam is a strong break with what has come before. V. outlines the gradual corruption of knowledge. This use of a "post-lapsarian" sed postquam is found elsewhere on momentous occasions, a slip on the rope-ladder that leads to destruction: at 2.40, where Adam comes to his senses after his expulsion from Paradise and v. 303 below, where idolatry spreads even to the Hebrews. As a transition formula, sed postquam is used to distinguish narrative sections and show chronological consistency (see Martorelli 2008, 43-44, 175).

109 damnata propago  Given that Noah has just cursed Ham and blessed Japhet and Shem (vv. 88-94), damnata propago might at first glance seem to be a reference to Ham's descendants. But
as the digression unfolds, it is clear that it must refer to mankind in general (cf. August. Civ. 15.1.31 unde unusquisque, quoniam ex damnata propagine exoritur, primo sit necesse est ex Adam malus atque carnalis).

110 praeter scisse A preposition with an infinitive object (LHS §132.c; NLS 27), found in poetry (e.g. Ov. Her. 7.164 praeter amasse meum; Ven. Fort. Carm. 4.26.32 omnia praeterunt praeter amare deum) and rather more common in LL. scisse is the verb in indirect statement; its subject is maiores…suos and its object is arcana in v. 111.

111 arcana arcana does not denote "things imperfectly known" (as it does at 2.1, see the Staat 1952) but rather "unknown and therefore mysterious things" (TLL 2.436.45).

111 revocare A historic infinitive according to Schenkl 1888, 491, s.v. infinitivus, but memor is tricky: an infinitive can be an object of memor (LHS §192). Plaut. Pseud. 1104, Ov. Am. 3.14.48 sit modo "non feci" dicere lingua memor, Stat. Silv. 2.4.18f. memor penitus dimittere voces / sturnus, Val. Fl.6.241: immemoresque mori. On the one hand, a historic infinitive would not be unusual here given the context. But on the other hand, a richer reading is possible if one understands that V. is pointing out the imperfect transmission of knowledge: they have to “remember to remember.”

112 quisque sc. erant (quisque not uncommonly takes a plural verb, e.g. Aen. 8.661: duo quisque Alpina coruscant, Ov. Pont. 1.10.44: vestros quisque rogate deos ([KS§9.2]). Supplying
erant would then explain the plural mandantes (Schenkl's correction of P’s mandats) in v. 115.

The force of quisque here emphasizes the individual. "Each one," i.e. of the miseris.

112 secum Construe with revocare, i.e. each person recalls to his mind the monitus.

112 monitus Here monitus has the meaning of "advice, teachings" (TLL 8.1422.29-43). At 1.508 God uses monitus nostros to refer to his warning to Adam not to eat from the tree. It is not impossible that the other, more common, meanings ("prophetic utterances, warnings") may be present as well (TLL 8.1422.7-22).

114 condere A historic infinitive, joined with et (v. 111). It governs v. 113.

114 in hoc fixis in hoc "for this purpose, therefore" (LHS §346.II; cf. Hor. Epod. 17.63-64: ingrato misero vita ducenda est in hoc, / ... ut) = correlative for a consecutive (final) clause. hoc is accusative, the syllable is lengthened by position. in hoc fixis (hysteron proteron), “with letters and signs of speech at some time established for this purpose.”

114 olim See note on v. 43 above.

114 elementis The letters of the alphabet (TLL 5.2.341-342).

115 aut signis aut (disjunctive or conjunctive?) signis is to be taken with the preceding line (elementis aut signis in parallel), the trihemimeral caesura nearly guaranteeing it (thus SchHov
place a comma after *signis*), but Morel seems to have understood it as a dative indirect object depending on *mandantes*: "or entrusting words with solid figure to signs" since he does not print a comma after *signis* but rather after the final word, *elementis*, in v. 114.

**115 solida mandantes verba figura** One would expect to find a dative here, perhaps *nepotibus* ("passing down words with solid [or fixed] form to their descendants"). Does V. mean "handing (*elementis aut signis*) down as words with solid form"? i.e. they invented words and passed them on. Cutino translates as if *solidis figuris*: "dando alle parole solida forma," Papini (p. 95) conjures "others" in her translation “affidando agli altri le parole dotate di certa forma.”

One wonders if V. has hieroglyphs in mind when he uses the term *figuris*: cf. Tac. *Ann.* 11.14.1 *primi per figuras animalium Aegyptii sensus mentis effingebat, ea antiquissima monimenta memoriae humanae impressa saxis cernuntur et litterarum semet inventores perhibent*).

Note Martorelli’s perceptive observation (p. 175, n. 71) that this is "una sentenza antitetica… oppone infatti all natura parlata dei verba, proverbialmente effimera, la duratura concretezza della figura solida."

**116-120: Tranmission of knowledge, now through writing, continues.**

116 hinc artes traxere caput, quas littera servans
117 priscorum in tardos misit commenta nepotes
118 et veterum studiis miscens inventa novorum
119 spem dedit attonitis vanaque cupidine motos
120 traxit ad inlicitum praeceps indago futuri:

**Comparanda**

Prosper, *Carm. de Prov.* 591-593

140
116 hinc  “It is from here…” (OLD² s.v. 7) Cf. 1.126: hinc volucres quoque, molle genus, 
traxere vigorem [ab eo] and v. 147 below.

116 traxere  in the sense "to derive" (Servius on Aen. 8.511: sic dixit 'traheret' quomodo dicitur 
originem ducere).

116 caput  = initium, origo (TLL 3.0.415.81-82).

116 littera servans  "The letter that preserves" knowledge. One thinks of 2 Cor 3:6, littera enim 
occidit, but there Paul is contrasting Mosaic law with the spiritual law of Christ. littera servans is 
ironic, since the (corrupted) knowledge that is preserved eventually leads to idolatry (= death).

117 priscorum commenta  commenta has the meaning of things “invented, fabricated, feigned, 
contrived” and is quite common in apologetic literature. In poetry, cf. Alcim. Avit. Carm. 4.94: 
quam propter deinceps commentis Graecia fictis. Cf. v. 152 below. Hept. poet, Gen. 956: sed 
fraudis commenta dolens concepta Iacobus; Ex. 1082: multaque praeterea rerum commenta 
novarum.

117 tardos…nepotes  tardus seems unusual here. I take it to mean "slow in coming" (= 
descendants distant in time); note the similar expression, Georg. 2.58: tarda venit seris factura 
nepotibus umbram. Papini (p. 96) translates tardos as "stolti," Cutino 2009, 157, n. 57, translates 
tardos as "tardi". "Stolti" is too strong, and is not the primary meaning of tardos here, but the 
meaning "dull-witted, slow to learn" is present, marking a contrast between the intelligent elect
and the distant descendants who have fallen deep into error. Avitus describes the *sensus* of Adam and Eve’s descendants, trying to gain access to lost knowledge, as such (*Carm. 2.279: arcanisque sacris tardos inmittere sensus*).

117 *misit* The transmission of knowledge is often a unwanted event, e.g. Jub. 8:3: (of Cainan, Enoch’s son, who copies an ancient inscription and sins in so doing) τῷ βφπε’ ἔτει Καϊνᾶν διοδεύων ἐν τῷ πεδίῳ εὑρε τὴν γραφὴν τῶν γιγάντων καὶ ἐκρυψε παρ’ ἑαυτῷ and above all, as de la Ville de Mirmont 1906, 125-126 pointed out (and Cutino 2009, 158-159) a passage in John Cassian, *Coll. 8.21*, where Ham is described as passing on knowledge of evil things by writing them on stones (a link here with *solida forma*) to survive the Flood: *Cham filius Noe, qui superstitionibus istis et sacrilegis ac profanis erat artibus institutus, sciens nullum se posse super his memorialem librum in arcam prorsus inferre, in qua erat una cum patre iusto ac sanctis fratribus ingressurus, scelestas artes ac profana commenta diuersorum metallorum lamminis, quae scilicet aquarum conrumpi inundatione non possent, et durissimis lapidibus insculpsit. quae peracto diluvio eadem qua celaverat curiositate perquirens sacrilegiorum ac perpetuae nequitiae seminarium transmisit in posteros.*

118 *inventa* "discoveries" with a negative connotation (cf. V.’s use of *inventor* below vv. 136 and 202 below).

118 *veterum…novorum* Note the word order (ABBA). Who are the *veterum*? Do the *veterum* mean people like Noah? Or just the people after the flood, the degraded?
121 sive dedit mundo, quem quidam errore caduco
122 corporeum dixere deum, quod solus habebat
123 conditor omnipotens sparsitque per omnia membra
124 rerum signa movens venturi nuntia saecli,
125 ut se per totam molem testetur alumnis
126 semper et auctorem fateatur mentis imago
127 sitque palam rebus positum, regnator abundans
128 quid praestare queat populis, quid tollere possit,
129 quid quandoque suos, caeli quis regna parantur,
130 scire vetet famulos, quod verum testis achates,
131 Pyrri gemma, probat, Musis et Apolline clauso
132 edita cum mundo – quid non per cuncta putemus
133 significasse deum, quando et mendacia mundi
134 prodidit anticipans et post fingenda notavit:

121 errore caduco  TLL s.v. caducus (3.34.70; V. cited at 36.7-8) suggests that this word has the meaning infirmus, but this is too weak (weaker still is “subsequent”). The adjective is derived from cado (“to fall” > die). I think V. is using this in a pointed sense, perhaps in the sense "mortal error,” since such a belief is fatal to the believer because not Christian.

122 quem corporeum dixere deum  quem (= mundus) dixere is best understood as a present perfect, as the philosophical debate was still ongoing. Maurer 1896, 15 adduces Ambr. Hex. 1.1.4 Inter has dissensiones eorum quae potest veri esse aestimatio, cum alii mundum ipsum deum esse dicant, quod ei mens divina ut putant inesse videatur, alii partes eius, alii utrumque?

123 membra  = partes (TLL 8.643.55-73).
124 rerum signa movens ventrii nuntia saecli  cf. v. 97 above and 3.522: nuntia iussa ferens venturaque saecula formans. (Abraham's dream). Trans. movens…nuntia as "setting the nuntia of the future in motion."

125 testetur alumnis  cf. 2.452 det brutis sensum, quo se testetur alumnis.

126 mentis imago  V. uses similar expressions: cf. prec. 22-24: a te principium traxit quodcumque repente / ex nihilo emicuit tantoque auctore repletum / vel vim mentis habet vel formam in mente recepit and 30-31: mentis imagine plenum / aethere mota tibi iam saecular volvere mundum.

129 quandoque  = aliquando (Sch).

131 Pyrri gemma  Pyrrhus' gem was thought to possess the likenesses of Apollo and the Muses. The story is reported in Pliny, Nat. 37.5: regis alterius in fama est gemma, Pyrrhi illius, qui adversus Romanos bellum gessit. namque habuisse dicitur achaten, in qua novem Musae et Apollo citharam tenens spectarentur, non arte, sed naturae sponte ita discurrentibus maculis, ut Musis quoque singulis sua redderentur insignis and Solinus 5.25 (derived from Pliny): anulus Pyrrhi regis…cuius gemma achates erat, in quo novem Musae cum insignibus suis singulae et Apollo tenens citharam videbantur, non impressis figuris sed ingenitis. Cf. Dionysius Periegetes (tr. Priscian) 504, hanc simulacra vides venis ostendere gemmam. V. cites this gem as evidence (for his opponents' claim, not his) that God put the signs of things to come within the natural world. Apollo represents cosmic harmony.
130 verum  Sc. esse (Sch).

132 edita cum mundo  The gem is coeval with the world. The use of comitative *cum* with *mundus* is found in other Christian authors, e.g. Ambrosiast. *Quaest. Vet. et. Nov. Test.* 107.2: *ubi enim aeternitas est, cessant haec nomina, quia cum mundo coeperunt*; Aug. *C. adv. leg.* 1.9.12: *ita intellegendus est deus de materie quidem informi fecisse mundum, sed simul eam concreasse cum mundo.*

132 per  = in (Sch).

**135-146: Second and Third Alternatives**

135 seu simplex potius mundi fert omnia motus,
136 seu gravis inventor leti cessare capacet
137 fraudis materiam non passus cuncta maligno
138 subdedit arbitrio, quo fatum induceret orbi
139 nam dum dinumerat cursus variosque recursus
140 astrorum et miro fruitur discrimine caeli,
141 tempora sic dubii posuit sibi certa favoris
142 atque facultatem pronam metasque nocendi
143 effectu vario variis conventibus edens,
144 spargat <ut> invidiam stellis et crimina sacro
145 adleget caelo mundumque ornatibus astris,
146 cum fingat populis quicquid facit ipse futurum.

135 simplex...motus  Cutino 2009, 162-163, understands this line as "la casualità dei moti che regolerebbero il mondo." Cf. Marius Victorin. *Gal. 4.3-4* (ed. Gori): *Elementa uero mundi simul habent secum et motus suos et quasi quasdam ex motibus necessitates, ut in sideribus, quorum conversione hominum uita uel in necessitatem ducitur; et sic servient elementis homines, ut*
astra iussisset, ut mundi cursus imperauerit. Quibus omnibus soluitur quisque, in Christum fidel habens. At 1.83-84 V. describes God as controlling (incomprehensi ratione) the movement of the universe (Hovingh adduces Aug. Lit. 5.20: move itaque occulta potentia creaturam suam).

136 inventor leti  i.e. Satan (Sch; TLL 7.2.15724). The phrase also at v. 202 below; inventor

137 materiam  for the word, cf. 2.176; 3.241 (materies) (also 1.360, 2.155, 416). Equivalent here to Greek ἀλή (OLD² s.v. 3.b (phil.) the basic substance of the universe, matter)


139 dinumerat  An adynaton. God alone is/ought to be capable of this: cf. Gen. 15:5: (deus) ait illi: "Suscipe caelum, et numera stellas, si potes. Et dixit ei: Sic erit semen tuum.") and V.'s rewriting of the verse, 3.482-483: ...quantis congesta premantur / sidera sideribus numerumque obiecta recusent. ("by how many [other] stars the crowded stars are pressed, and though put before one's eyes (obiecta), refuse to be numbered.") Cf. Ps. 146:4 [qui numerat multitudinem stellarum et omnibus eis nomina vocans]. de la Ville de Mirmont 1904), 125-126 discusses this passage (with translation), unhelpfully.
139 cursus variosque recursus  Riggio 1912, 177, adduces Aen. 5.583: cursus aliosque recursus; and Man. 1.475: variosque recursus. Le Boeuffle 1987, 108-109, n. 359. The phrase refers to the pro- and retrograde motion of the celestial bodies.

140 miro fruitur discrimine  The word discernen, in astrological contexts, can refer to the intervals of the zodiac (Le Boeuffle 1987, 122, n. 434), but here it might simply mean "the remarkable variability" of the heavens. fruitur: this verb can mean "derives profit from," possibly its meaning here, Satan “derives profit” from those fooled by astrology.

141 tempora dubii…certa favoris  “Fixed times for different fortunes.” Note the synchysis and antithesis mimicking the thought. favoris = fortunae.

141 sibi  Papini 2006, 97, translates as if sibi is dependent on certa: "stabilì così, per sé certi i tempi, di un incerto favore.”

142 metasque  Hudson-Williams 1964, 306, "'bounds', 'limits', does not mean much more than tempora" citing 1.60: nomen sic meta die / inposuit lucis spatiis and TLL 867.29-34. -que is disjunctive.

143 effectus varios  So P. SchHov print Petschenig's conjecture, effectu vario. I understand this to mean "by means of divergent influence [and] diverse celestial conjunctions." But V. rarely uses asyndeton and in any case the transmitted reading effectus varios is perfectly

145 adleget B’s conjecture. P has *ableget*, clearly wrong given the context. If B’s conjecture is right, it would be a striking metaphor: Satan "elects, selects, appoints" a spot in the heavens for crimes. The metaphor is from the practice of *adlectio*, the selection of people to be added to the senate or other corporate body. Or perhaps one should read *deleget*: OLD² s.v. 2c "to ascribe (credit, blame, etc.), attribute, pass on" and citing Tac. *Ann.* 13.43.4: *ubi pretia scelerum adepti scelera ipsa aliis delegent.* Cf. Cic. *Pro M. Fonteio* 18: *si hoc crimen optimis nominibus delegare possimus*.

146 cum Causal.

146 fingat The subject is Satan.

147-156: Satan’s Deceptive Practices, Pt. 1

147 Hinc ars est, quod fibra tremit, quod pinna coruscat
148 nubibus elisis quod fulmina nuntia signant.
149 Nam quia praecipites motus cunctosque sagaci
150 amplexus casus studio, qui publicus hostis
151 prae…is reddat, meminit, divina putare
152 persuasit populis falsi commenta veneni.
153 Haud secus Aethiopum canibus, <quis> regna, tyrannis
154 libertas regitur: cum rebus congrua certis
155 corporis ignari petitur sententia motu
156 et casum praecepta putant.

147 hinc ars est  See note on v. 116.

147-148 quod…quod…quod  Substantive clauses, "the fact that…” Catalogs of mantic arts:

147 fibra tremit  Divination by extipicy.

147 pinna coruscat  Divination by augury. *pinna* = *avis* by metonymy. The wing flutters in rapid movement when a bird flies (TLL s.v. *corusco* 4.1074.51-56).

148 nubibus elisis  In his comment on Sen. Ag. 495 (*et nube dirum fulmen elisa micat*), Tarrant 1976 notes that "[i]n most poetic and scientific descriptions it is the *fulmen* which is squeezed (*elisum*) from the clouds, and not the clouds which are crushed together." For this inversion, he cites this line, and Sen. Nat. 6.9.1 *ignis ex hoc collisu nubium cursusque elisi aeris emicuit*, Stat. Theb. 5.394-395: *elisit nube Iove tortus ab alto / ignis*.


150 publicus *hostis* = *diabolus* (so Sch and TLL 10.2.2466.18-19). A legal term for state enemies (such as Gildo and Stilicho, declared as such in the year 397). V. uses it at 2.240-242 to
describe Cain as the archetype for criminals (at tu [Cain] auctor primus eris caedis. te publicus hostis, te latro privatus sequitur, tibi crima, etc.).

153 Aethiopum canibus  V. uses the example of the dogs of Ethiopians to show how absurd it is to ascribe meaning to matter. Schenkl and subsequent scholars have cited Aelian, Nat. animal. 7.40 as V.'s source. The dogs either whimper (good) or bark (bad) depending on their mood, and from the dogs' disposition they act accordingly. V. makes no mention of whimpering or barking but he does mention their movement (motu), presumably tail-wagging. It has not been noticed that his source likely was either Pliny, Nat. 6.192: at ex Africae parte [sc. Ethiopia] Ptonebati, Ptoemphani qui canem pro rege habent, motu eius imperia augurantes or Solinus 30.5: His proximi summam regiae potestatis cani tradunt, de cuius motibus quidnam inperitet augurantur (cf. 52.27: Megasthenes per diversos Indiae montes esse scribit nationes capitis caninis, armatas unguibus, amictas vestitu tergorum, ad sermonem humanum nulla voce, sed latratibus tantum sonantes rictibusque).

153 canibus <quis> regna, tyrannis  Schenkl supplies quis [= quibus] and understands tyrannis as being < tyrannus, equivalent to rex and not < tyrannis. canibus...tyrannis is dative of agent with regitur in v. 154. <quis> is dative of possession.

153 regna...] 154 regitur  Pleonasm (Sch).

154 libertas  The Ethiopians’ free will, as opposed to the lack of it in dogs.
154 rebus…certis  State decisions that are in line with reality because based on rational thought
(rebus…certis = secure, not false) as opposed to casum praeccepta (such as oracles or a dog, an
irrational creature, wagging its tail) in v. 156. This is part of V.’s polemic against Epicureanism.

154 congrua  Modifies sententia in v. 155.

155 sententia petitur motu  A decision on some course of action is sought through the dogs’
bodily movements, presumably tail-wagging. Martorelli 2008, 180, n. 98, notes the use of horses
in similar divinatory practices, adducing Herodot. 3.84 (practice of the Persians) and Tac. Germ.
10.3-4: proprium gentis equorum quoque praesagia ac monitus experiri...quos pressos sacro
curru sacerdos ac rex vel princeps civitatis comitantur hinnitusque ac fremitus observant.

156: casum praeccepta putant  praeccepta  "commands." V. has already touched upon this same
idea at 2.163-165: Forsitan et cunctos quos fingit opinio casus / artifices summos operum
percurrere versu / possit nostra chelys.


156 … nec signa minora
157 haec pro se valido praesumit opinio sensu;
158 nam gemmam Pyrri Galbae Fortuna refutat:
159 qui potuit quippe statuam tot fingere lustris,
160 et lapidem simulare potest. His fraudibus usus
161 inlusit captis noscendi ardore futuri
162 vincendique dehinc fati stimulante timore
163 sollicitis studio magicae scelus intulit artis,
164 qua semet potius co ferent arisque dicatis
165 impia tura darent, cum prodita turba parente.
156 nec signa minora Litotes.

157 haec: sc. signa, “the following (as) signs: …”

157 prave I adopt Smolak’s conjecture prave (“falsely”), qualifying praesumit, and notes that prave is often used in circumstances where there is a miscarriage of justice. P’s pro se is probably corrupt; if sound it must mean that the people interpret “in their own interest.”

157 valido…opinio sensu Probably an ablative absolute, “despite sound judgment.” A paradox of sorts: the people are capable of rational judgment, but fancy leads them to make a foolish judgment. opinio: cf. 2.163-164: forsitan et cunctos quos fingit opinio casus / artifices summos operum percurrere. opinio there, as here, denotes a false belief. valido…sensu is a paradox: according to Tertullian, De Anima 17, an opinio is derived from the senses, not the other way around.

158 nam…refutat V. now explains why these signs are falsely considered important. The gem of Pyrrhus, supposedly representing cosmic harmony, is not man-made but a work of nature (that could act as a divine message to the future) refutes Galba’s statue of Fortune. Fortune represents arbitrariness of fate, while the gem represents cosmic harmony. The arbitrariness of Fortune refutes the order suggested by the gem that depicts Apollo. V. considers both objects to be the work of the devil (as indicated in vv. 159-160).
Galbae Fortuna  The story of Galba and his statue of Fortuna is found only in Suetonius, Galb. 4: *Sumpta virili toga, somniavit Fortunam dicentem, stare se ante fores defessam, et nisi ocius recipieretur, cuicumque obvio praedae futuram. Utque evigilavit, aperto atrio simulacrum aeneum deae cubitali maius iuxta limen invenit, idque gremio suo Tusculum, ubi aestivare consuerat, avexit et in parte aedium consecrato menstruis deinceps supplicationibus et pervigilio anniversario coluit.*

potuit…potest  Satan is the subject.

quippe  The second syllable is long (cf. v. 47 above and v. 297 below).

captis  cf. Nimrod, capiens (v. 168).

noscendi ardore futuri  cf. Claudian, *In Ruf.* 145-146: *namque mihi magicae vires aevi que futuri / praescius ardor inest; novi quo Thessala cantu;* Luc. 5.129: *absterrere ducem noscendi ardore future.* KS §85.2b (v. 1, pp. 437-439) on the genitive dependent on adjectives denoting fullness (including knowledge).

stimulante timore | sollicitis  “to those vexed by (the) goading (of) fear”. The catalog of mantic arts above (note on vv. 147-148) and this phrase suggest that V. is thinking of Lucan, 6.423-430, and 423-424 especially: *qui stimulante metu fati praenoscre cursus, / impatients que morae venturis que omnibus aeger.*
Semet  Papini 2006, 98 translates “se stessi” (direct reflexive, i.e. the people worship themselves), but this is not right: the devil causes people to worship him through the magical art.

Cum turba prodita parente  Problematic. If cum a preposition, then it must govern parente, but the hyperbaton is cause for concern. If cum is a conjunction, then it is possible something has dropped out. Papini 2006, 98 understands cum as a conjunction “quando quella gente fu abbandonata dal Padre.”


Nimrod

As a descendant of Ham, Nimrod is born of an unhealthy (parum sano) stock. “Insane” seems too strong here; note the opposite expression at 3.623 about Ishmael's line, descended from Abraham, valido cum stemmate gentes.

Mole et mente gigans  cf. 2.364-365: monstra hominum, celsa membrorum mole gigantes / mente feri tumida. Note the ancient etymology (< Gk. ge-geneis, earthborn; Maltby 1991, 259).
In both instances, V. mentions their minds. Nimrod is a giant in size (mole) but also in his disposition (mens), as Homey 1972, 94-95, because he rebels against God. Avit. 4.19: nec meritis sed mole potens (and Hecquet-Noti’s comment there).

167 praeditus aulae  
praeditus = praepositus (Sch). aulae i.e. power, by metonymy.

168 venerator  
The manuscript reads venerator, as does Hovingh; SchenkI adopted B’s emendation, venator, but soon retracted it in corrigenda to his edition, p. [511 - not paginated], citing (inexplicably) Arnobius, Adv. Nat. 7.31: [deorum sublimitas]...cui legem venerator imponit. But there Arnobius is mocking pagan worshippers who render conditional honor to the gods, and Arnobius does not mention Nimrod. A more compelling case adopting venator can be made.  1. Nimrod is a venator in Genesis (and related texts), and is not called a venerator elsewhere.  2. There is a hunting metaphor in v. 168 (capiens).  3. In Prudentius' Hamartigenia (vv. 142-148), Nimrod (associated with the devil here) is also depicted as preying on souls: hic ille est venerator atrox, qui caede frequenti / incautas animas non cessat plectere, Nebroth.

But does the evidence cited above and the fact that this would be a slight emendation (after all, it is only the subtraction of two letters; the meter would still be correct) justify altering the text? 1. It is easier to imagine the scribe writing what probably was more familiar to him (venator) than the unusual venerator. 2. V. proceeds to write about the development of idolatry, and some scholars. 3. Adopting the common epithet venator takes the force out of the line: the reader, having already heard the other usual details about Nimrod (the giant, the ruler of Babylon), would likely be surprised at the unusual epithet venerator, which V. has reserved for the last
possible moment before the key line that places Nimrod in the context of the digression (v. 169).

4. The hunting association is present even if *venerator* is retained (v. 168, *capiens*).


169 *transduxit* Homey 1972, 95, n. 10, links this with the etymology of Nimrod (“transgressor”), citing Jer. *Nom. hebr.* 72.69.5.

169 *veris sacris domini* *veris* is a transferred epithet (Sch).

170-174: *Satan Establishes his Influence over Men*

170 Nec tantum cupidis nimium sic arte sagaci
171 ille, caput scelerum, mundi reus et suus hostis
172 inlusit curis hominum, sed mentibus ipsis
173 inruit et sensus penitus descendit in omnes,
174 mox et in affectus. …

170 *cupidis nimium* Modifies *curis* (v. 172). A rather grotesque hyperbaton (twelve words)!

171 *ille, caput scelerum* Genesis does not narrate Satan’s post-Edenic activities, but Jubilees does, where Satan appears in the guise of Mastema, the chief demon. At Jub. 10.1-11 and 17.16 he tests Noah’s sons and Abraham respectively.
The line is identical to 2.58. Staat 1952, explains *suus hostis*: “Satan’s action ends in his own destruction.”

174-185: A Grieving Father Invents Idolatry

The invention of idolatry has as its immediate cause a father’s grief. It is not any particular father. There is a long tradition in Greek and Roman (pagan) literature of statues in for dead or absent dear ones (Laodamia and Protesilaus, for example) or of statues coming alive (Pygmalion’s Galatea). But V. is drawing on Wisdom 14:15-16: *acerbo enim luctu dolens pater cito sibi filii rapti faciens imaginem illum qui tunc homo mortuus fuerat nunc tamquam deum colere coepit et constituit inter servos suos sacra et sacrificia 16 deinde interveniente tempore convalescente iniqua consuetudine hic error tamquam lex custodita est et tyrannorum imperio colebantur figmenta.*

175 acerbo  Trans. “premature” (TLL 1.368.17-36).

176 infelix genitor  A father’s grief at the death of his son leads to idolatry, the final result of the transmission of corrupt knowledge. For the idea, see Wisdo Some scholars (Gamber 1884, 39; Ferrari 1912^A, 71; Falcidia Riggio 1912, 104; Homey 1972, 96, n. 12) have understood the infelix genitor to be none other than Nimrod. But I have found not been able to find evidence of this tale being associated with Nimrod, though V. could have invented it or used a source now lost to us. Moreover there is no clear link in the Latin that would lead one to suspect that he’s talking about Nimrod as a father at v. 174, and the Nimrod episode is self-contained. The subject has changed to Satan in v. 170 – note the identical line at 2.58 used there for Satan (caput scelerum, mundi reus, and suus hostis, etc.). Finally, as Martorelli notes (p. 182 n. 110), “[i]n realtà le due figure non coincidono: la nuova scenè separata dal cammeo su Nimrod dai vv. 170-174, ove il poeta pone in scena il Maligno, accantonando Nimrod; i due personaggi hanno inoltre diverso carattere, protevero Nimrod e miserabile il padre.”

177 continuans…noctesque diesque  Schenkl 1888 (488 s.v. continuans) compares Tac. Germ. 22.2: diem noctemque continuare, add Claud. 9.4 epulis continuare.V. depicts the father as grieving too much and too long.

178 raptum…natum  Manil. 5.310: tunc iterum natum et fato per somnia raptum; Ov. Fast. 6.487: intumuit Iuno, raptum quod paelice natum. Note the leonine rhyme.
178 per singula  cf. Drac. *Orest.* 309: *orbatum per singula quaerit.* This passage may suggest Dracontius knew V. Claud. *IV Cons.* 565: *per singula cernens.*

179 exuviasque  i.e. the child’s belongings, perhaps toys or clothes (TLL 5.2.2132.29-30). The word is used sometimes in reference to those things left behind which are used in constructing a funeral pyre: e.g. *Aen.* 4.496, 507.

180 aut  = et (Sch; LHS §269ß).

180 trans fata pius  Morel corrects P’s *irans lata* to *translata* and retains P’s *prius*, but it is not clear how he understood the line, even if one grants some metrical license for *translata*. Schenkl emendations are probably correct: *lata* to *fata* and corrects *prius* to *pius*. The usual expression in epic is *post fata* (e.g. *Aen.* 4.20: *post fata Sychaei*). The father was dutiful toward his son while he was alive and continues to be even after his (the son’s) death.

184 arisque dicatis  “on consecrated altars,” see v. 164 above for the same expression. In both instances the phrase refers to non-Christian worship.

185 auctoris summi cultum  cf. 1.194, where the phrase is applied to God. *umbras* = *manes.* People now worship the human beings. (Idolatry has gone from worship of Satan to worship of themselves).

186-209: Idolatry in the Present Day
186 Omnibus iste reis gravior transcendit et illum
187 doctorem scelerum, magicas qui condidit artes.
188 ille palam furiis reus est et mente profana,
189 hic pietate nocens. facinus plus inquinat istud,
190 quod speciem virtutis habet; nam protinus omnes
191 amplexae gentes scelus hoc sine fine litantes
192 manibus inferias, uti nunc testantur Alani,
193 pro dis quaeque suis caros habuere parentes,
194 post etiam reges, quorum sub nomine mendax
195 Graecia, dum veris falsa insinuare laborat,
196 addidit obscuras vanis rationibus umbras,
197 excusans tumulos et condita nomina bustis,
198 donec per species etiam dementia cunctas
199 tenderet et rebus minimis membrisque pudendis
200 fingeret esse deos; quippe assistebat in oris
201 talibus erroresque foyens responsa ciebat
202 inventor leti miris in partibus orbis,
203 usus ad insidias aut igni aut fonte calenti
204 aut antris. ventos terra spirante loquacis
205 lusit et ante Themis, populis post falsus Apollo
206 imposuit sedesque dehinc mutare coactus
207 Leucorum factus medicus nunc Gallica rura
208 transmittens profugus Germanas fraude nocenti
209 sollicitat gentes et barbara <pectora> fallit.

187 magicas…artes Not Zoroaster (Pliny, *nat.* 30.2 *sine dubio illic orta in Perside a Zoroastre, ut inter auctores convenit*). As Shanzer has shown, V. is using Ps. Clem. *Recogn.* 1.30.4: *ex maledicta progenie quidam*. Shanzer also adduces *Recogn.* 4.27 and Greg. Tur. *DLH* 1.5 where Ham is said to be the founder of magic, but she is less sure. For the phrase (*magica ars*), see the article by Rives 2010 (classical Latin only).

188 ille The *infelix genitor* of v. 176 above.

188 mente profana A link back to v. 24: *humanas mentes videam gentesque profanas*.

192 inferias Funeral offerings (TLL 7.1.1368.78).

192 uti Scanned *ūtī* (Sch).

192 Alani A contemporary reference without judgment (as Bachrach 1973, 32 points out). But why would we expect judgment? V. is not, like other biblical epicists (e.g. Avitus) keen to criticize other groups, such as the Jews. The reference to the Alans does not allow us to date the poem more securely. Alemany 2000, 44-45, n. 2.20): "The fact that this statement does not seem
to relate to any previous source has suggested that [V.] is describing a practice that he himself was able to verify among Alan bands South of Gaul, perhaps in the Rhône Valley (sources)...[I]n the *inferiae*, one can recognize the series of funeral offerings usual among the Ossetes of the last century, which involved expenses that could be the ruin of a whole family home. The function of this cult was to feed the deceased, as people were convinced that the latter gave the earth abundance, and the worst possible way of insulting someone was to say that his dead were hungry."

193 pro diis…suis Perhaps best understood as meaning both "instead of their (usual) gods" and "as their (own) gods."

193 quaeque quisque before sui or suus (Sch). quaeque = the gentes from v. 191.

193 pro…parentes "each (gens) regarded their beloved parents as their gods.” This is clear illusion to the Euhemeristic tradition: e.g. Varro, *Antiquitates rerum divinarum*, 32 (Carduans): *deos alios esse, qui ab initio certi et sempiterni sunt, alios qui immortales ex hominibus facti sunt; et de his ipsis alios esse privatos, alios commune; privatos, quos unaquaeque gens colit*; Lact. *Div. inst.* 1.11.44 (derived from Ennius) on Zeus' tomb in Crete: *et sepulchrum eius est in Creta in oppido Gnasso, et dicitur Vesta hanc urbem creavisse; inque sepulchro eius est inscriptum antiquis litteris Graecis ZAN KRONOY*. See also Cic. *Nat. Deor.* 3.53; *Tusc.* 1.13.29.
194 mendax / Graecia  cf. falsus Apollo below, v. 205. A topos in Roman writers. The classic expression is found in Juv. Sat. 10.173: quicquid Graecia mendax / audet in historia. The enjambement of Graecia stresses the word.

195 insinuare  cf. 1.27 (penuria rerum).


197 excusans  So P. Schenkl (p. 489, s.v. excusare) understands it as meaning “praetendens tumulos ad sese excusandam (si scriptura sana)” and notes Petschenig’s conjecture, excutiens. Hudson-Williams 1964, 306-307, rejects both excusans (“[i]t is hard to squeeze out of excusans anything sensible”) and Petschenig’s excutiens (“not close enough to the manuscript”), suggesting excussans (“searching out”), and noting that this error (i.e. single consonant pro double) occurs also at 1.471 excusa (for excussa). But excussans not read elsewhere; the citation Hudson-Williams adduces is a conjecture (as he concedes). I think this phrase means “coming up with explanations for why a god, presumably immortal, has a tomb.”

197 condita nomina bustis  "(well-known) names (sc. regum?) inscribed (or: laid to rest) on the tombs.” For the phrase, cf. Aus. Parent. praef. B.1: nomina carorum iam condita funere iusto; [Seneca] Epigr. 414: nomina uix ullo condita sunt tumulo. Nomina here reinforces the fact that these are not true numina. V. elsewhere uses numen only when referring to God.
oris = regio (Sch), as it does at 2.156, 2.283, and 3.747. But Shanzer’s suggestion of aris is attractive. 1) adsto + aris/altari(bus) is well attested in secular and religious authors (e.g. Ov. Met. 8.480: (Althaea) ante sepulcrales infelix adstitit oris; Sen. Thy. 705: adstitit aris, torvum et obliquum intuens. 2) “[Satan] was present at such altars” is more forceful than “at such places.” 3) P does not normally confuse o/a, but perhaps the scribe’s eyes skipped to orbis two lines below? 4) It is a slight emendation.

responsa Oracles (OLD² s.v. 2a).

inventor leti See note on v. 136 above.


ventos… fallit Duval 1969 notes that the arrangement of vv. 204-209 is in four parts: 1) the origin (ante), an oracle of Themis; 2 (post) Apollo as replacement for Themis; 3 (dehinc) Apollo, forced from Delphi, migrates to Gaul as a healer-god to the Leuci; 4 (nunc) he passes through as an exile, deceiving the Germans. He offers two possible interpretations for vv. 204-209: Apollo installs himself among the Germans now because he has been exiled from the now-Christian Leuci; (2) in exile from Greece, he has his oracle(s) in the Gallic countryside and among the Germans. Duval prefers the first because it adds a fourth point and develops the third point further. Duval cautions against seeing this a description of a literal translatio oraculi from
Greece to Gaul to Germany, stressing the poetic nature of the account. V. "demonstrates that the in the first half of the 5th century, the great oracular cult of Apollo, healer of Gaul, was said to have been established among the Leuci" and this is confirmed by archaeological evidence: there is a sanctuary of Apollo (of the Leuci) in Toul, Naix, and Grand; Apollo Grannos: and there are various pieces of evidence (coins, etc.). V. adds that this cult had spread elsewhere in the countryside. [Nixon and Rodgers, p. 248, has a note with references to more recent work]

205 Themis A learned detail that highlights the mutability of pagan gods, in contrast with the eternal Christian god. For the fact that Themis was worshipped at Delphi before Apollo, see Aesch. *Eum.* 1-8; Eur. *Iph. Taur.* 1233-83; Ov. *Met.* 1.316-21; Luc. 5.79-85 (Martorelli 2008, 183, n. 122).

206 imposuit This verb has two meanings here: Apollo "imposed" himself upon the people (sc. *se*) as a god, but he, *falsus*, also "deceived" them (TLL 7.1.659.71-660.15).

206 sedesque dehinc mutare coactus A reference, perhaps, to the decline of Delphi under Christian emperors in the fourth century (see *Cod. Theod.* 16.10.13 (issued in 395), which forbade people to enter pagan shrines. The first syllable of *dehinc* is short (Sch).

209 pectora The line is hypometric. Morel supplies *pectora*, based on v. 370 below where *barbara pectora* is in the same metrical position.
210-302: The Descent of Man at Babel

Outline

A. 210: Narrative resumes. 211-214: Noah’s descendants have filled the land to the point of overcrowding.

B. 215-237: An unnamed iuventus speaks: life is uncertain, our numbers are too great, and we must disperse. But before we disperse, let us do something for people to remember us by. Let us build a tower.

- 237-243: The crowd agrees and begins to build the tower.

- 244-246: The tower is already nearing Heaven when God notices it.

C. 247-261: God speaks: mortals will try everything, but no mortal can reach Heaven except through Jesus. Since they speak one language, they think they can do anything. I will punish them, gently.

- 262-269: Punishment of the builders: the confusion of tongues. Attempts to communicate now fail.

D. 270-275: The builders separate into groups based on shared language.

E. 275-284: Bird simile. One people has become many and are dispersed across the world.

F. 285-298: V interprets the Babel episode: it is a punishment that comes with a gift.

G. 298-302: Shem’s descendants do not help build the tower and are not punished.

Scholarship
The structure is simple: Noah’s descendants notice that there are going to be too many people in one area to be supported by the land, and so they realize that they must disperse (A in the outline above). An anonymous iuventus, in a long speech that Michael Roberts describes as “the most rhetorically elaborated speech, and the one that departs the furthest from the biblical text” (Roberts 1985, 145) encourages people to build the tower, and they agree to do so (B). God notices them building the tower, makes a speech condemning their intentions, and punishes them with the confusion of tongues. (C). The people separate into groups that speak the same language (D). He adds a simile and an interpretation of the punishment at Babel (E-F). The addition of all this epic machinery has taken the Babel narrative in the Latin version of Genesis from around 150 words of Genesis (Vulgate) to about 610 words in Victor’s retelling, a considerable amplification.
210-215: The Narrative Resumes; A Population Problem

210 Sed redeo ad summam, qua sum digressus, ad istam
211 maiorum seriem. cum multiplicata creando
212 cuncta Noë suboles terras implesset Eoas
213 et Sennaar artos decrescere cerneret agros,
214 per varias orbis partes spargenda iuventus
215 rupit in haec maestas tristissima verba querelas:

Gen 11:2: cumque proficiscerentur de oriente invenerunt campum in terra Sennaar et
habitaverunt in eo

210 sed redeo…digressus Common in rhetoric. The phrase is a return formula which marks
the resumption of the narrative after a digression. Quintilian (9.3.87) does not seem to consider
this a true figure, but notes that others did and referred to it with the term aphodos. Cf. Paul. Pell.
113: Sed redeo ad seriem decursaque illius aevi / tempora; Sulp. Sev. Chron. 2.41.4: de reliquis
nihil memoria dignum traditur, sed redeo ad ordinem. For digressus: Quint. Inst. 2.4.15: Sed ut
eo revertar, unde sum digressus: narrationes stilo componi quanta maxima possit adhibita
diligentia volo. cf. Jer., Vita Pauli Thebaei 7.22: sed ut ad id redeam unde digressus sum,
cum…Oros. Hist. 1.2.12: At Romae, ut ad id tempus redeam unde digressus sum… Roberts
1985, 97, n. 145, sees the “poet’s conscious literary artistry…revealed in his acknowledgement
of digressions and his careful handling of transitions.”

210-211 istam / maiorum seriem The maiorum series, i.e., the genealogy of Noah’s
descendants (Gen. 10). As Roberts 1985, 121, points out “[o]nly genealogies are systematically
excluded, but in every case the poet indicates in general terms the content of the omission,”
citing vv. 210-212 and vv. 319-321. The descendants are only alluded to in this section, though
Nimrod has figured in the previous section. Sulpicius Severus’ remark on (Chron. 1.3.1,
referring to Gen. 10) is apropos here: *Plerisque etiam oppida ea tempestate condita memorantur, quae nominatim persequi animus non fuit.*

**212 implesset** The first of the key words in this section, it appears here at the beginning and again at the end (v. 284). At v. 27-29 above (=Gen 9:1), God instructs Noah and his sons (=mankind) to grow (in number) and populate (v. 28 *replete*, v. 29 *greges cunctis distendite terris*) the entire earth. Noah's descendants, have only fulfilled God's command to the extent that the "Eastern lands" are (quite literally) overpopulated. This is how V. explains the Babel episode, and it is unusual. God has his way, however, because at the end of the episode, his order is realized (v. 284): *considunt terris atque orbem gentibus impleunt.*

**213 Senaar artos** Schenkl's emendation of P's *Sennę aractus*. The cacophony of -ar ar is ugly, but it may well be right: *artos* is proleptic and note, as Martorelli 2008, 52, n. 31, has, the ancient etymology in Jerome, *nom. Hebr.* (ed. Antin, p. 72): *Sennaar excussio dentium sive foetor eorum*. The non-word *aractus* or *arcatus* could easily have been *artos* originally. Otherwise one might emend to *Senaar* to *Sennaarum* (cf. *Hept.* poet, *Gen.* 388 for the same form of the genitive), but this would make the line rather lifeless.

**213 decrescere cerneret** An etymological pun. Varro *Ling.* 6.81: *dictum a cerno a cereo, id est a creando; dictum ab eo quod cum quid creatum est, tunc denique videtur*. Paul. Fest. 53: *cresco et cerno...cuius unius origo ex Graeco trahitur, quod illi krainein dicunt perficere*. The fields are "shrinking" in the sense that there are fewer and fewer left to be allotted to an increasing population.

**214 varias** The second key word of this section. Repeated for emphasis throughout this section (218, 259, 297).
214 spargenda  The third and final key word in this section. The gerundive has the force of a simple future (common in LL: LHS §175B) but may also express necessity: the problem is that there are so many of them that they must separate (see Roberts 1985, 187, n. 72).

The builders decide to remain in Shinar despite knowing that, with fewer natural resources, overpopulation would become a problem and that they would have to leave. That they are being stubborn in their refusal to leave is made all the more apparent by Victor’s use gerundives that have both a sense of futurity and necessity: so spargenda is used twice: here and at v. 221 the speaker for the iuventus says that “our band...will be scattered,” spargenda again). But the iuventus remain. The future becomes the present after God’s punishment at v. 274: sparguntur.

214 iuventus  The younger generation. V. does not explicitly ascribe the idea of building the tower to anyone in particular.

215 rupit  (OLD² 5b. to break forth into (utterance), to cause (cries, etc.) to break forth). Note the use of rumpo here, and at v. 268 below, rupti fremitus sermonis.

215 haec maestas, tristissima verba, querelas] Parenthetic apposition (or the “schema Cornelianum” of Skutsch 1956, 198-199) and pleonasm. For the former, the usual citation is Ecl. 1.57: raucae, tua cura, palumbes. Its use continued in LL poetry: Paul. Nol., Carm. 18.262: deseris? amisi caros, tua dona, iuvencos. Auson., Cup. Cruc. 49: auratis fulgentia cingula bullis. Roberts 1985, 145-146 notes that vv. 214-215 form a sort of preface to the speech that serves to inform the reader of its general “mode” (lament) and of the speaker’s state of mind.
216-224: Life is Uncertain

216 “Heu quam non certus vitae status ordine coepto
217 fert homines factamque fidem sic prospera fallunt
218 per varios cursus, ut voti summa petiti
219 tendat in adversum. iam nos, si dicere fas est,
220 quod sperata patrum precibus numerosa nepotum
221 crevit turba, piget; spargenda est quippe per orbem
222 exilio generata manus: peritura propinquis
223 et pariter perdens (quod sit magis acre dolori)
224 viva morte suos †referat.

216 incertus vitae status  The “circumstances of life” are uncertain because subject to change in the post-Edenic world.

216 ordine coepto  Cf. 3.584-5: *qui cum bis senas unam super ordine coepto / adderet aestates...* The phrase means “from the beginning” or “once life has started”. V.’s use of it in this sense may be unique. Ennod. *Carm.* 1.9.164: *cum mea vota deus produxerit ordine coepto. Cassian, *Conl.* 9.7:* sed ne forte sub huius quaestionis indagine a coepto narrationis ordine longius evagantes expositionem propositam super orationis statu diutius retardemus...; Inst.* 4.15:* coepto narrationis ordine.*

217 fert... 218 fallunt  The alliteration is striking, even for V. God has commanded man to multiply and fill the land with offspring, and further to extend the flocks upon the world's land.
It seems that v. 217 expresses the sentiment that God instructed them to be fruitful and multiply, and so they have. Yet in so doing, they have come into their present misfortune.

217 factamque fidem “our settled confidence.” *fidem facere* is an idiom meaning “to induce belief; to persuade, convince” (OLD² s.v. *fides* 11).

218 voti...petiti “of our long-sought prayer” What is this prayer? Is it the desire of their ancestors that their descendants should flourish?

220 quod… | crevit turba *quod* is causal.

220 patrum precibus: What prayers does V. have in mind? I understand this to be a reference to Adam’s statement (to God) at 1.86-89, *Eva...saevumque experta creandi / supplicium parit populos, qui crimine nostro / plectantur, purgetque patrum peccata nepotum / mortibus aeternam faciens successio poenam.*

221 spargenda Cf. Luc. 10.22: …*sacratis totum spargenda per orbem / membra viri posuere adytis* (of Alexander the Great). The builders decide to remain in Shinar despite knowing that, with fewer natural resources, overpopulation will become a problem and that they will have to leave. That they are being stubborn in their refusal to leave is made all the more apparent by
Victor’s use gerundives that have both a sense of futurity and necessity: so *spargenda* is used twice: at v. 214, the *iuventus* are *spargenda*; at v. 221 the speaker for the iuventus says that “our band…will be scattered,” *spargenda* again). But the *iuventus* remain.

222-224 Papini 2006, 100, translates: “destinata a perire all’affetto dei parenti e ugualmente perdendoli (e questo addolori in modo più pungente), riproduca i suo con una viva morte.” But V. means that relatives will destroy each other because of hate. The same idea is found in Ps. Philo’s *Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum* 6.1: *alterutrum erimus expugnantes nos* (noted by Jacobson 1996, 1:354).

223 *magis acre dolori* Perhaps *dolore* (abl. comparison or respect)? Hudson-Williams 1964, 307, rightly points out that this refers to the main clause (224: *viva morte suos referat*).

224 *viva morte* Oxymoron / antithesis. This paradox is a commonplace.

224 *referat* Hudson-Williams 1964, 307 places a full stop here instead of Hovingh/Schenkl’s comma. The subjunctive here is difficult to explain, and the meaning of the verse is unclear.
224-229: If We Must Die, Let Us Be Remembered

224 … quod funere tristi
225 damnamur miseri, quod festinante senecta
226 denos centenos, quos prisca excesserat aetas,
227 vix ter centenos iam fessi accedimus annos,
228 ne patria extorres nuda et sine nomine membra
229 ignotis demus passim tumulanda sepulcris.

224 quod…| 225 quod  Both quod’s are explanatory, “inasmuch as” (Hudson-Williams 1964, 307).

226 denos centenos  sc. non accedimus from v. 227 (Hudson-Williams 1964, 307).

228 extorres  A pun on turris and also an apt word for the context. The word has both legal and religious connotations, both of which are at work here: Babel's builders are building the tower because of their fear of being pushed out of their native land due to overpopulation. Because of their intention, God will make this a reality. Their intention also makes them exiles from God's kingdom.

228 sine nomine membra  Cf. Aen. 2.558 (of Priam, sine nomine corpus) on which Horsfall 2008 notes, "[t]he nomen may suggest both ‘dignitas’ and a funerary inscription.” membra = corpora (see note on v. 40 above).
230-237: Encouraging the Builders

230 Quare agite, o iuvenes, dum vires turba ministrat,
231 quae vobis superesse queat finemque severum
232 nesciat, aeternam factis extendite famam.
233 Urbem condamus, cuius sub nomine turrem
234 tanto attollamus, donec pingentia mundum
235 sidera et excelsi convexa inrumpat Olympi,
236 ut nos posteritas, terras quod liquimus istas,
237 in caelum migrasse putet."

Gen 11:4: et dixerunt venite faciamus nobis civitatem et turrem cuius culmen pertingat ad caelum et celebremus nomen nostrum antequam dividamur in universas terras

230 quare…iuvenes V. dresses up the BT’s plain *venite* with an epic tag.

232 aeternam factis extendite famam Cf. Aen. 6.806: *et dubitamus adhuc virtutem extendere factis* and above all 10.467-468: *stat sua cuique dies, breve et inreparabile tempus / omnibus est vitae; sed famam extendere factis / hoc virtutis opus*. V.’s borrowing is appropriate, as the exhortation here is for men to do something bold to secure their everlasting fame before their all-too-short life comes to an end. The same motivation for building the Tower is found in Ps. Philo’s *Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum* 6.1: *faciemus nobis nomen et gloriam super terram* (noted by Jacobson 1996, 1:354).

234-235 pingentia mundum / sidera et excelsi convexa Cf. v. 55 above.
235 **inrumpat** OLD\(^2\) s.v. "to force one way's into, burst into, invade." The likening of the younger generation to an army is picked up by God's use of the word *phalanx* at v. 247 below. The verb reminds one of the beginning of the episode, v. 215, *rupit*.

236 **liquimus** = *relinquimus*. Simplex pro composito, as at v. 294 below.

### 237-243: The Building Begins

237 … sic mota iuventus
238 contemnit cautes et quicquid monte recisо
239 caeditur: edomitae fictos de viscerе terrae
240 constringunt igni lateres operisque futuri
241 materiam proprio malunt debere labori.
242 Hanc interstratum sic vincit utrimque bitumen,
243 ut solidas simulent circumdata moenia cautes.

**Gen 11:3**: dixitque alter ad proximum suum venite faciamus lateres et coquamus eos igni habueruntque lateres pro saxis et bitumen pro caemento

238 **contemnит cautes** Victor presents the use of bricks as a mark of arrogance. The use of natural material has been the norm: recall for Noah Victor presents the world as simply responding to his needs: *niveо surgunt altaria saxо* (v. 4). V. seems unique in interpreting the use of bricks (i.e. man-made material) in this way. von Rad 1972, 149 notes that bricks and mortar were used in Mesopotamia and that the “narrator, for whom the use of stone for larger buildings was a matter of course, has a special purpose in mentioning it: the material that men used for their gigantic undertaking was perishable and unsatisfactory.” Victor’s regards the
builders' use of materials created through man-made means as a sign of arrogance. The builders "regard stones and whatever is hewn from a mountain quarry in contempt” and prefer to use materials gained by their own labor (vv. 238-241). Genesis 11:3 simply has *venite faciamus lateres et coquamus eos igni habuerunte lateres pro saxis et bitumen pro cemento*. But in showing the builders’ contempt for natural material, Victor wants us to think of Daniel 2:34-35. There Daniel describes how Nebuchadnezzar, in his dream, saw a statue representing the four kingdoms destroyed. He says: 2:34 *Videbas ita, donec abscissus est lapis de monte sine manibus: et percussit statuam in pedibus eius ferreis, et fictilibus, et comminuit eos*. 2:35 *Tunc contrita sunt pariter ferrum, testa, aes, argentum, et aurum, et redacta quasi in favillam aestivae areae, quae rapta sunt vento: nullusque locus inventus est eis: lapis autem, qui percusserat statuam, factus est mons magnus, et implevit universam terram.”

Christian exegetes understood that the stone mentioned in the Daniel passage represents Christ. Compare also a verse from Psalm 118:22: *lapidem quem reprobaverunt aedificantes hic factus est in caput anguli*, a passage much cited in the New Testament (e.g. Acts 4:11; 1 Cor. 10:4, Eph. 2:20). Victor may also be alluding to Noah’s altar at the beginning of Book 3, where “altars rise from the snow-white rock” (v. 4) of their own accord. The point here is that in their contempt for rock, the builders not only show contempt for the natural world but, by extension, God. They choose something that has to be mixed and cooked to use – they choose their own handiwork over God’s.

239 *edomitae…terrae*  *dominari* (1.500); *domare* (2.274). Perhaps to be understood as a negative thing here, though not clear why since natural world subservient to man. V. likes this metaphor (1.215; 1.483). It is frequently used in both pagan (e.g. Ovid *Met.* 1.137, Silius,
Statius) and Christian writings (both prose and verse). Cf. Avit. 1.277: *lympha maravit sitientis viscera terrae*; Boethius, *Cons. 5.M2.4: qui tamen intima viscera terrae.*

**239 viscera terrae** V. likes this phrase (he uses it at 1.213 of the earth giving up its dead at the Resurrection and 1.487 of the food of snake). V. is perhaps drawing a connection to Hell, as the phrase in classical poets is often used to describe the Underworld. But I wonder if he’s not thinking about Ov. *Met. 1.125-142,* where Ovid describes the men of the iron age. These men are the first to allocate land in parcels, sail, and dig up the earth’s wealth, an *inritamenta malorum* (Ov. *Met. 1.140).* V. here is drawing attention to the fact that these men are engaging in just the sort of behavior that produces all sorts of problems, e.g. war – mentioned in the *interpretatio* below, vv. 285-298.

**240 constringunt** The builders “bind bricks to fire,” i.e. they fire the bricks to bake them (*coquamus Vulg.*) (TLL 4.542.68-543.53).

**242 interstratum** < *intersterno.* A rare word (only two other citations in the TLL), probably a technical term. Note Justin 1.2.7: *Haec [sc. Semiramis] Babyloniam condidit murumque urbi cocto latere circumdedit, arenae vice bitumine interstrato, quae materia in illis locis passim inventur e terra exaestuata.* The men coat the bricks with bitumen to fasten them together.
243 solidas simulent...cautes Matter, capable of deceit, once again makes for an illusion. In their arrogance, the workers at Babel fake nature. [see note(s) on vv. 136-137 (capacem / fraudis materiam); note also that simulare is used of Satan: lapidem simulare potest, v. 159]

243 circumdata moenia circumdata is usually used with an ablative, "walls surrounded with". It is not a true participle here, cf. properata in v. 244.

244-246: The Tower Draws Nearer to Heaven

244 iam turris properata subit, iam vertice nubes

245 transilit et fruitur caeli propiore sereno,

246 cum pater haec propriis regni consortibus infit:

244 iam...iam The repetition of iam and the presence of properata suggests the quickness of the tower’s construction and its near completion.

244 caeli propiore sereno Lit. "the nearer calm of Heaven"

245 transilit The use of transilio in describing the violation of the earth-Heaven boundary bring to mind the most famous boundary crossing in Roman history: Liv 1.7.2: fama est, ludibrio fratris Remum novos transiluisse muros.
246 cum Cum inversum.

246 haec...infit haec is the object of infit. infit more commonly takes the ablative in poets of the classical period (TLL 7.1.1447.72-79).

246 propriis regni consortibus infit V. supplies God with a heavenly an audience, unlike the BT, where he speaks to no one in particular. infit is an archaism.

247-261: God’s Speech

247 "En terrena phalanx! quid non furiosa resignet,
248 mortali quae structa manu contingere celsos
249 credat posse polos et ad aethera ducere nostrum?
250 Nullus terreno vestitus corpore caelum
251 ascendit, nisi qui caelo descenderit alto.
252 Sed quia gens una est eadem quoque forma loquendi,
253 adsensu cupidio suadentes prava secuta est
254 turba nec excussit, quid fas permitteret, audens
255 ardua, quae fieri per se natura vetaret.
256 Impunita ferant tam vani damna laboris?
257 ut tamen et vetitum norint, quod posse negatum est,
258 iam descendamus tumefactaque corda superbo
259 consensu varii turbemus vocibus oris,
260 ut quod peccavit concors in crimina vulgus
261 confusae damnet melior discordia linguae.
Gen 11:6-7: et dixit ecce unus est populus et unum labium omnibus coeperuntque hoc facere nec desistente a cogitationibus suis, donec eas opere conpleant 7 venite igitur descendamus et confundamus ibi linguam eorum ut non audiat unusquisque vocem proximi sui

247 I have changed the punctuation to reflect God's indignation.

247 terrena phalanx  This *iunctura* is inspired by Prud. *Pysch.* 816: *nam quid terrigenas ferro pepulisse falangas.* Gärtner 2001, 125 suggests that the phrase *terrena phalanx* "dürfte nichts anderes sein als eine preziose Umschreibung des Begriffs homines" – but this is wrong. The phrase is used to liken this particular human endeavor to an assault.


251 nullus...alto  *nullus = nemo,* as often in LL. V. here inserts a reference to John 3:13: *Et nemo ascendit in caelum nisi qui descendit de caelo, Filius hominis qui est in caelo.*

252 gens...loquendi  I follow Hudson-Williams 1964, 307, who removes Hovingh’s dashes and places a comma after *loquendi.*

255 ardua  Wordplay. The tower is a "lofty" and "bold" undertaking (*TLL* 2.495.46-57).
255 quae fieri per se natura vetaret i.e., the builder’s task is doomed from the start because it is physically impossible. Even if God had not intervened, the task could never be completed.

255 per se In LL, per se often is equivalent to ipse (Hudson-Williams 1964, 308).

256 inpunita…laboris I follow Hudson-Williams (1964, 307) in seeing this line as an indignant question and punctuate it accordingly.

256 impunita ferant…damna The subject has become plural. God has described the people at Babel as a phalanx (v. 247), a gens (v. 252), a turba (v. 254), and in v. 260 a vulgus, all used as singular subjects. These collective nouns can take a singular or plural, to be sure, but it is difficult to explain the reason for the change here. V. has depicted the people acting as a single entity up to this point (and after it, v. 260).

256 vani laboris Foreshadowing the inevitable frustration of the Babel builders’ ambition.

261 discordia linguæ Note the pun with v. 260: concors in crimina. V. very much has Lucan in his mind here: in book 6 of the Bellum Civile, the poet describes Erichtho, in preparing to as beginning to speak not in human sounds, but in animal sounds:

685 Tum vox Lethaeos cunctis pollentior herbis
excantare deos confudit murmura primum
dissona et humanae multum discordia linguæ.
Latratus habet illa canum gemitusque luporum,
quod trepidus bubo, quod strix nocturna queruntur,
690 quod strident ululantque ferae, quod sibilat anguis;
exprimit et planctus inlisae cautibus undae
silvarumque sonum fractaeque tonitrua nubis:
tot rerum vox una fuit.

262-269: The Metamorphosis at Babel

262 Dixit et intentos operi molemque levantes
263 mentibus attonitis oblivio subdita primum
264 intrat et ignotae subiit perfectio linguae.
265 Increpitant operis studio cessante magistri
266 cunctantes socios; sed vocem nemo remittit
267 non intellectis, et si quis temptat hiare,
268 sibilat aut rupti fremitu sermonis anhelat
269 aut stridit gemituque minas imitatur acuto.

Gen 11:8-9: atque ita divisit eos Dominus ex illo loco in universas terras et cessaverunt aedificare civitatem 9 et idcirco vocatum est nomen eius Babel quia ibi confusum est labium universae terrae et inde dispersit eos Dominus super faciem cunctarum regionum

263 subdita Construe with attonitis mentibus: “oblivio, thrust upon their astonished minds,” as Papini 2006, 102 does (“l’oblio, insinuatosi nelle menti stordite”).
264 perfectio  According to the TLL (10.1352.7-8), perfectio first occurs in verse here. The idea seems to be that the language of the workers changes (into different languages) immediately, and that they have fluency in it (cf. Acts 2; Arator Act. 1.119-38).

The sudden transformation is Ovidian (as Roberts 1985, 188 has noted). For some examples of Victor’s debt to Ovid, see Pascal 1909; Ferrari 1912B. Ferrari does not mention this passage. Meyers 2009, 75 notes that losing speech is a “prominent feature of Ovidian metamorphos, often … as a punishment for the misuse of speech.” This is precisely what is going on in Victor’s metamorphosis. The builders at Babylon have misused their shared language for wicked acts, and so God punishes them There is a parallel, not quite exact, in Luc. 5.1052-1055: nec ratione docere ulla suadereque surdis, / quid sit opus facto, facilest; neque enim paterentur; / nec ratione ulla sibi ferrent amplius auris / vocis inauditos sonitus obtundere frustra. Gale 2009, 189, notes that "early humans are 'deaf' in the sense that the 'unknown' (or, more literally, 'unheard', i.e. not previously experienced) sounds of language cannot convey any meaning to them."

265 magistri  "Foremen." V. is perhaps here influenced by Exodus 1:11 where foremen (magistros) are set over the Hebrews tasked with making bricks: praeposuit itaque eis magistros operum, ut affligent eos oneribus: aedificaveruntque urbes tabernaculorum Pharaoni, Phithom et Ramesses.

266 nemo  nēmō, as always in V.
The poet develops the metamorphosis further. People now sound to one another not like humans speaking languages, but animal-like sounds, “and if anyone tries to open his mouth, he hisses or gasps with a roar of broken speech or he shrieks and simulates threats with a shrill groan” (vv. 267-269). The vocabulary Victor uses for these actions to my mind seems calculated to remind one of animals: *hiare*, especially of fish and birds (v. 267), *sibilat*, especially of snakes (verse 268), *fremitus*, especially of mammals such as the lion (v. 268), *anhelat* (v. 268), and *stridit* (v.269) of various animals generally. At the very least he presents humans as being temporarily incapable of something many ancients argued was unique to humans: speech. Isidore expresses it well in *Etymologies* 9.1.10:

> Cum autem omnium linguarum scientia difficilis sit cuiquam, nemo tamen tam desidiosus est ut in sua gente positus suae gentis linguam nesciat. Nam quid aliud putandum est nisi animalium brutorum deterior? Illa enim propriae vocis clamorem exprimunt, iste deterior qui propriae linguae caret notitiam.

I do not think that my view that Victor is intentionally making the builders (temporarily) become like animals is *too* far-fetched, because one finds that in some Jewish accounts of the Tower of Babel, the builders are turned into animals, such as apes (Sanhedrin Talmud 109a). In 3 Baruch, as part of a heavenly journey, Baruch sees the builders who look like dogs and have the feet of deer (3 Baruch 2). Philo records a story about how man and animals once shared a common language and lived in harmony. When they noticed that the serpent was immortal, they sent an embassy to the god(s) to seek immortality for themselves. They were punished with the confusion of tongues (*Confusio ling. 405.6-406.8*). In any case, the builders refuse to follow what is natural. From animals they could have learned! In V.’s retelling of Babel, the builders have temporarily become like beasts.
270 Sic vanum prava susceptum mente laborem
271 destituit frustrata manus: iam nemo propinquum,
272 nemo patrem sequitur; quem quidque intellegit <aptat>
273 adglomeratque sibi; perit cognatio tota,
274 gentem lingua facit; sparguntur classibus aequis
275 diductasque petunt vario sub sidere terras.

271 frustrata manus  A vivid image. The workers’ hands are “thwarted” or “baffled” by the sudden change. One can almost see the grubby hand reaching for a trowel or a brick and suddenly falling limp.

271 propinquis  Relationships break down between first between foreman-worker and worker-worker, now between blood relations.

272 nemo patrem sequitur  This phrase might suggest nemo venit ad patrem nisi per me (John 14:6). For sequitur, “obey” see OLD² s.v. 9.

272 <aptat>  Morel’s conjecture (Gagny has addit). In the MS there is nothing written after intellegit. This conjecture may be doubted; the TLL cites one instance of this usage (Aug. Gen. c. Manich. 2.13.19: aptavi vos uni viro virginem castam exhibere Christo), but as a diagnostic conjecture it works, each man must “associate with” another man who speaks the same language.
[OLD² s.v. 5b. to adapt mentally, bring into a suitable frame of mind]. Perhaps addit? Aen. 2.339 (addunt se socios Rhipheus...et...Iphitus...341 lateri adglomerant nostro)

**273 periit**  Perfect tense for present tense *metri causa*.

**273 cognatio**  Note the use of the word *cognatio*, which is very rarely applied to animals. This transformation, in fact, makes mankind, if only for a moment, even less than animals.

**274 gentem lingua facit**  A sententia. Contemporary writers generally use similar criteria (Ammianus, Augustine, Orosius). But note Isidore’s view: Quia ex linguis gentes, non de gentibus linguae exortae sunt (Etym. 9.1.14). If I may digress for a moment, Victor’s sententia may strike the modern reader as banal, but it is an unusually bold statement for the period: language was often seen as one of the more important factors that distinguished one *gens* from another, but not the decisive one. As Hans Werner-Goetz 2003, 44-46, has shown, language was often seen as one of the more important factors which distinguished one *gens* from another, but not the decisive one. Other criteria used by contemporaries of Victor include law, origins, and customs.

This is the only line from the *Alethia* that has been quoted outside of specialist studies.

**274 sparguntur**  The future becomes the present after God’s punishment: sparguntur – a present passive aptly underscoring the fact that the builders are being separated not of their own
accord. But the builders are not only being stubborn, they are also not using their ratio and so act contrary to nature.

271-275 The end result of the metamorphosis: normal human relations are broken, “now no one follows his neighbor, no one his father; the man whom one understands, to this man one fits and joins himself. Blood relationships perish entirely” (vv. 271-273). Note the use of the word cognatio, which is very rarely applied to animals. This transformation, in fact, makes mankind, if only for a moment, even less than animals: in the simile that follows, one sees that animals can at least recognize their own group and find protection in it. There is now a new criterion for social cohesion: “language makes a people” (v. 274).

276-284: Birds of a Feather Simile

276 Haud aliter volucres campi per mollia plana
277 quas gregibus mixtis errare et quaeerere victum
278 persuasit secura dies, cum nocte propinquaque
279 frondea tecta petunt, extemplo congrege turba
280 vulgus quaeque suum sequitur rapidoque volatu
281 miscentur, similis qua duxerit aut color aut vox:
282 sic tunc in partes populus se dissicit unus
283 et species fit quaeque genus longeque remotis
284 considunt terris atque orbem gentibus implent.

276-284 haud aliter...gentibus implent V. uses a bird simile to explain the changes that happen to man at Babel. V. likens the effects of God’s punishment of the builders to the
experience of birds of different species, which by day seek food together but by night seek the protection of their own kind – note, by the way, in v. 281, his use of the word *vox* (a synonym for *lingua*) as one of the two defining characteristics of birds. The dispersal of nations, like the genesis of *gentes*, is cast in biological terms (vv. 282-284). Now the “birds of a feather flock together” idea is not at all new – it was already proverbial in Aristotle’s time (*Nich. Eth.* 1155a32-35) but its use in this simile is significant in underscoring Victor’s amplification of the Babel episode. The simile shows how mankind, in refusing to disperse and in attempting to cross the earth-heaven barrier, violates the natural order of things (recall God's comment (v. 255) that the builders are “daring lofty things that Nature herself would have forbidden to be accomplished”). The birds settle with their own kind and with those who have a similar language (*vox*). Man has to be, in a sense, dehumanized, to become like birds. Martorelli 2008, 150-151 is surely right in his analysis of this simile. He sees the example of the birds as showing how mankind, by trying to build the tower, has acted against the divine project of populating the world. But Martorelli does not go far enough in his analysis. Man, in his attempt to cross the earth-heaven barrier, is arrogant; birds are not. It is the natural project of birds to fly and to cross that barrier, not man For as God said (vv. 250-251) “No one clothed with an earthly body ascends to Heaven except He who came down from lofty Heaven.” The only way for one to make it to Heaven is to shed his earthly body, and that can only be done through faith. Man cannot cross that barrier through any other way, so the builders were doomed from the start to fail.

281 *similis qua duxerit aut color aut vox*  V. uses the proverbial expression to hammer the point home. *color* = appearance *vox* = “(bird) song.”
283 species...genus  Each “kind” (species) becomes a “race” (genus).

284: implent  God's command (vv. 27-29 above) can now be fulfilled, with his help

285-298: Interpretatio

285 Nec tamen hoc sacri, cum sit sua poena nocentum,
286 muneris est vacuum; nam quamvis ultio iusta
287 haec fuit, ut quos non tetigit reverentia caeli,
288 quae sedis propria est mundi rerumque parenti,
289 nec se cognoscant, plus est quod praestat alumnis
290 talis poena reis: ne quod persuasio culpae
291 paucorum intulerit rursum contaminet omnis
292 et faciat commune nefas, ne bella cruenta
293 et rabido populis mors arcessenda furore
294 sit semper, cives et alumnis linquere pulsis
295 cognatos grave sit. nam ne desideret umquam
296 exul turba suos, opus est et ut oderit ultro;
296 atque ideo hoc varia procurat lingua, suorum
297 ne quisquam meminisse velit.

Victor interprets the punishment at Babel as bestowing a sacred gift – this is one of Victor’s favorite manoeuvres: he takes God’s punishments as gifts in disguise (e.g. at 2.284-291, Cain’s exile is interpreted as a gift: v. 284: *hoc quoque munus habet, ne...*). Because the overpopulation issue is solved by the dispersion, and because social relations break down between speakers who do not understand one another, a civil war over resources and the grief of losing one’s nearest
and dearest does not hurt so much. In other words, V. interprets the punishment at Babel as a gift because it prevents mankind from uniting in committing some monumental sin.

There may be a link here with God’s instructions to Noah on how to arrange the animals in the ark (vv. 2.413-415): *Sic discernantur propriis animantia nidis, / ne violent permixta genus commissaque pugnet / confundantque cibos.*

288 *sedes propria…mundi rerumque parenti*  *propria* is a jab at the builders of Babel; it underscores the fact that heaven is God’s domain, not man’s.

289 *commune nefas*  Luc. 1.6; Sen. *Thy.* 139; Stat. *Ach.* 1.668; Arat. 1.420; Drac. *Or.* 232

289 *nec*  = *ne…quidem*, as often in LL (LHS §241.Bb). (Sch)

289 *plus est quod praestat alumnis | talis poena reis*  Sense obscure; it seems to mean that this punishment prevents yet worse sin. Papini 2006, 103 missed the hyperbaton in *alumnis…reis.* She translates “il vantaggio è più importante che siffatta pena dei colpevoli procura ai figli.”

290 *persuasio*  The TLL notes that this does not occur in verse before Prudentius (*Perist.* 2.331, *persuasionis vanitas*). [What does this mean, precisely? TLL: used often of the seduction of the
devil, etc. – but I like inclination. At 1.397 the devil suasisset fraudibus Evam, so perhaps "seduction" of a few to sinning? The [devil] too persuasit people to believe commenta, 3.152]


294 linquere = relinquere.

298-302: Shem's Descendants Retain Hebrew Language

298 … mansit tamen oris
299 Hebraei sonitus et sermo antiquus in illis,
300 qui culpae expertes pars non iniusta fuerunt
301 natorum, quos Sem genuit, quos sacra parentis
302 cura iuvat tangit<que dei> reverentia veri.

298-302 V. highlights the moral righteousness of Shem’s descendants so the contrast with what follows is more dramatic. Note the anaphora.

299 sermo…illis Hebrew as the oldest language: Cf. e.g. Aug., Civ. 16.11; Isid. Orig. 9.1.1.
See Rubin 1998 for a discussion of the issue, with sources.
299 sonitus -us lengthened by position. A strange word to find here (sonitus can mean "sound" but it often is associated with the noise of arms and animals). Lucr. 5.1028-1029: at varios linguae sonitus natura subegit / mittere of the beginning of language.

300 culpae expertes Cf. v. 99 above. Juvenc. 2.578: non iam saepe viros damnasset factio sacros, / expertes culpae.

302 <que dei> P reads cur adiuvet arguit reverentia veri. Morel’s conjecture is based on the similar expression in v. 287.

303-309: Idolatry Eventually Envelops the Jews, Too

303 Sed postquam toto dementia percita mundo,
304 ut taceam magici scelus intestabile monstri,
305 in truncos et saxa etiam durique metalli
306 arte cavas species et cassas luce figuras
307 impegit mortale genus mentisque superna
308 spectantes fregit terraeque addixit inerti,
309 hos quoque convolvit foedae contagio labis.

303 sed postquam See note on v. 109 above for post-lapsarian postquam. Again, the chronology is not what is important here, but the progression of sin is.
303 ut taceam  The poet breaks in here with a *praeteritio*. He passes it over now because he has addressed it (vv. 99-209) earlier, though he cannot help himself and says a little anyway.

304 intestabile  A hapax in this form, but Pliny uses it in his discussion of magic. Victor may have gotten it from there.

305 in truncos et saxa  Dendrolatry and litholatry.

306 figuras  V. is referring to idols, not ghosts.

307 impegit… | 308 fregit  Two very powerful lines; note the meter of 308 (SSSS) no doubt V. giving metrical weight to the line to reflect the sentiment. *impegit* and *fregit* are violent: V. presents the disease of idolatry as not only subduing the minds of men, but even breaking them.

308 terraeque addixit inerti  The earth “senseless” or “lifeless” (cf. *Georg.* 1.94: *rastris glaebas qui frangit inertes*; *Sen. Nat.* 2.14 [*terra*] *animal sit an iners corpus et sine sensu* [other examples cited by TLL, s.v. 7.1.1311.53-63], and earth is what is used to make idols [the *figuras* of v. 306] (Arnob. 1.38: *qui [sc. Christiani], quod Omnia superavit et transgressum est munera, ab religionibus nos falsis religionem transduxit ad veram: qui ab signis inertibus atque ex vilissimo formatis ludo ad sidera sublevavit et caelum et cum domino rerum deo supplicationum fecit verba atque orationum conloquia miscere*). *addicere* used at 2.508: *cum iudice missa*
modesto / addictos rursum vitae sententia reddit – used of Noah and his family in the Ark; 3.569

vir iustississimus Abram / coniugis addixit (used of Abraham when he hands Hagar over to Sarah). Mankind is “condemned” to idolatry; their gaze upon the celestial sphere is now forced downward, like that of beasts. [The idea is extremely common in pagan and Christian authors. The most famous is in Ov. Met. 1.76-86, esp. 84-86: pronaque cum spectent animalia cetera terram / os homini sublime dedit caelumque videre / iussit et erectos ad sidera tollere vultus.]

309 hos quoque i.e. the Hebrews / Shem’s descendants.

309 foedae contagio labis The final syllable of contagio is shortened as elsewhere in the Alethia.

309 convolvit V. has used this word before to describe the operation of wickedness: 2.379: causaque nocentum criminis expertes animas convolvere mallet; 2.293: implicitosque homines et quicquid vivere iussi causa hominum tumidi convolvat labe profundi.

310-316: Idolatry as a Plague

310 Non secus Aethiopum ferventibus excita terris
311 nubila morborum corrupto tramite caeli
312 implicuere avida †victoris peste lacunas,
313 cum quisque celeri percussum fulmine leti
314 ingemuit, simul ipse ruit, quicumque cadentem
315 conspexit, cecidit, congestaque funera passim
316 dira luis stravit campis bellumque peregit:

**310 non secus**  *haud secus* elsewhere (3.42; 153)

**310 Aethiopum**  V. returns again to the Ethiopians (see above, v. 153, but also 1.287, where the Nile has a tempering effect on Ethiopian winds).

**311 corrupto tramite caeli**  *corrupto* is not a true participle (TLL s.v. 4.1049.46-64, citing *Aen*. 3.138 *corrupto caeli tractu* and other. Ablative of origin.

**312 †victoris**  Schenkl prints, Hovingh and Papini obelize. Petschenig conjectures *vitales*.

Cutino 2009 p. 45 n. 35 claims that it is not corrupt at all, understanding *victoris* as a metonym for *victoriae*; he translates v. 312 "avvolgono con la peste avida di vittoria i bacini d'acqua." In support of his view, he cites Staat's comment 2.5: *ingressum fas sit veris miscere poetam*, where *poetam* = "de dichter, d.i. dichterlijke gedachten, met waarheid mengen" (p. 30), and compares 3.556: *accelerare patrem cupit Abram*. The personification of *pestis* is striking and perhaps makes *victoris* doubtful, but v. 316 *bellum* supports a military metaphor.

Martorelli (p. 151 n. 208) accepts Petschenig’s conjecture, on grounds that “l'epidemia ha ‘sacche vitali’, contingenti di popolazione non ancora contagiata, che viene poi colpita; l'immagine delle *vitales lacunas* è del resto ardita, come anche l'accostamento ossimorico *vitales peste*: ciò fa apparire *vitales* come attendibile ricostruzione della lezione originaria banalizzata in
victoris." I do not think that *vitaes lacunas* can mean “pockets of people.” Rather, I think V. here is using *lacunas* to mean “wounds” (cf. Paul. Nol. *Carm.* 19.216-218: *ut saniem suffusa labe coactam / exprimeret sinibus ruptis ac deinde lacunam / vulneris expleret*...).

312 *implicuere*  OLD² s.v. 8 (of a disease or sim.) To take hold of, catch in its toils (usu. in pass.); (also of a source or cause of infection). *implicuere* picks up on *convolvit* in v. 309 above.

316 *dira luis*  Cf. Endelechius (ed. Riese) 21 *haec iam dira lues serpere dicitur*.

316 *bellumque peregit*  i.e. the war the *pestis* (= idolatry) began. Now, with the Hebrews worshipping idols, the *entire* world is given over to the devil, as explained in the next two verses.

317-326: Shem’s Line Eventually Infected

317 sic tunc praecipiti complexus mole furoris
318 et quos praeterit repetens, comprenderat error,
319 donec succiduis gradibus decursa propago,
320 fons et origo cui Sem clarum praestitit ortum,
321 in Tharan exiret, summa qui sede relictam
322 Chaldaei generis cuncta cum stirpe suorum
323 urbem aliam moresque novos sedemque requirens
324 mansit in Assyriis demum novus accola Carris.
325 Et cum quinque super bis centum exegerat annos,
326 lapsus more patrum est.
Gen. 11:31-32: tulit itaque Thare Abram filium suum et Lot filium Aran filium filii sui et Sarai nurum suam uxorom Abram filii sui et eduxit eos de Ur Chaldéorum ut irent in terram Chanaan veneruntque usque Haran et habitaverunt ibi. 32 et facti sunt dies Thare ducentorum quinque annorum et mortuus est in Haran

**317 complexus** (dep. *complecti* used only here): the punctuation is important: "In the same way, at this time, the false doctrine of idolatry had seized them, embracing them with its headlong weight of madness and going back to those it had passed over, until in continuous descent the line…resulted in Terah."

**319 succiduis gradibus decursa propago** Lineal and moral descent. *succiduus* = *qui succedit* (Sch), used at 1.42 (*succiduis vicibus*) and 2.230 (*pompa succiduis pelluntur mitia pomis*).

**320 fons et origo** See note on v. 77 above.

**320 clarum…ortum** A possible pun (noted by Roberts 1985, 121, n. 46). Shem is once again (see v. 90 above) distinguished from Ham and Japhet as the most noble of Noah’s sons.

**321 exiret** An unusual use of the word, the TLL (5.1366.83-1367.2) cites just one example, *i. q.* per generationes redire, ascendere: Aug. cons. euang. 1, 2, 4 p. 4, 19 *Lucas ad … David non regium stemma secutus ascendit, sed per eos qui reges non fuerunt, exit ad Nathan filium David*.

**321 Tharan** Terah, Abraham's father. Terah was not only an idolator but an idol-maker.
324 Assiriis…Carris  Haran in the bible. Ref. in Acts 7:2. Martorelli 2008, 100 n. 173 cites Luc. 1.105: Assyrias Latio maculavit sanguine Carrhas and notes that Victor adds the detail Assyriis to make the location less “generic.” What he means to say is that he adds Assiriis to remind his readers that they know where this place is: “Assyrian Carrhae,” i.e. the famous Carrhae where the battle took place.

326 lapsus more patrum est  There is a double meaning in this phrase: Tharan "died" but also "went astray." See Cutino 2009, 47, n. 45. This is the end of the second phase of the work, as Cutino 2009, 54 points out. With Terah’s death, V. can emphatically begin the new section of the Alethia, the redemptive mission of Abraham, with a very forceful transition: huius sed filius Abram / vir dignus caelo.
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Abbreviations

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CSEL: Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum

DPAC: Dizionario Patristico

EV: Enciclopedia Virgiliana

NP: Der Neue Pauly, Enzyklopädie der Antike

RAC: Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum

TLL: Thesaurus linguæ Latinae

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