

Cameron's Mythographus Vergilianus: A Reconsideration  
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Over the past ten years or so I have grown increasingly interested in the way in which the Roman elite encountered Greek myth, in particular in relation to their major poetic texts. While working on the late-antique commentary to Statius' *Thebaid*, I was constantly brought into contact with Statius' own relationship to Greek myth that served as the stuff of his poetry. This, in turn, has led me to a broader project investigating whether, and to what degree, the Roman poets of the early empire and Flavian period looked to prose mythographic works not only for mythological details, but also for the overall frameworks of their mythographical poems. As one might imagine, Alan Cameron's impressive *Greek Mythography in the Roman World* has had a great deal to do with the way I have thought about and approached this topic, and I've found myself returning to that book not only for its erudition, but also in the overall approach to a difficult subject.

The difficulty is owed, in part, to the complexity, obscurity and uncertainty surrounding mythographic texts. But it is also a function of a general indifference toward the value and ubiquity of these subliterary documents when set beside the literary masterpieces which have, so to speak, dominated criticism of Roman poetics for nearly a hundred years now. As it happens, we know so very little, apart from general comments about the role of the *grammaticus* as a teacher of mythological stories found in poetical texts, about how elite Romans were exposed

to the massive corpus of Greek myth. This goes not only for poets, who are readily acknowledged as authorities on myth, but also their readers, who were faced with some pretty heady mythological allusions, and as time went on in the empire, the allusions kept on getting more challenging. As Andrew Zissos, the most recent commentator of Valerius Flaccus' *Argonautica* puts it, Flavian poets have a tendency to "enact a partial shift of the burden from the *doctus poeta* onto the *doctus lector*" (2008: xlv). Or as Summers put it more simply ninety years ago (1894: 65), Flavian poets showed "a growing dislike to putting a thing simply."

This Flavian mannerism is simply a radical extension of the basic fact that poets rarely narrate full versions of myths, but rather allude to them. But what does a mythological allusion actually refer to? Does it necessarily refer to a specific literary version (i.e. an earlier poet)? Or does it signify to a more generalized version of "the myth," or even to a specific version of a myth that has been divorced from its literary source and can be viewed, to use a modern term, as common use? We can even see debates on mythological subjects lurking behind certain allusions. Consider the following passage from Valerius Flaccus' catalog of Argonauts below (1.363-5):

Nelidesque Periclymenus, quem parva Methone  
et levis Elis equis et fluctibus obvius Aulon  
caestibus adversos viderunt frangere vultus.

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And here is his model, Apollonius' *Argonautica* (1.156–60):

“And with them Neleian Periclymenus set out to come,  
eldest of all the sons of godlike Neleus who were born at Pylos;  
Poseidon had given him boundless strength and granted him  
that whatever shape he should crave during the fight,  
that he should take in the stress of battle.” 160

Valerius frequently recasts his model, sometimes omitting material, sometimes adding considerably to his predecessor. In the *Argonautica* Apollonius offers a single location for Neleus' son (and so Nestor's brother) Periclymenus, Pylos. Yet Valerius includes not just one location, but three: Methone, Elis, and Aulon. The three locations, seemingly random, reflect a scholarly debate in antiquity, reported by Strabo among others, as to the location of Nestor's hometown Pylos. Strabo notes that there were three towns that laid claim to being Nestor's Pylos: one in Messenia, one in Elis, and one in Triphylia. Methone is located in Messenia; Elis in NW Peloponnese; and Aulon in all probability lies in the southern area of Triphylia. Thus the allusion is not to a specific version or variant of the myth, but to a debate that is presumably mediated by mythographic documents that assemble and compare competing traditions. Valerius is being a *doctus poeta*, but the sort of learning that makes a poet *doctus* may come from many possible sources, including prose documents.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> As I argue elsewhere (*Mnemosyne*, forthcoming), Statius is likely reflecting the same sort of mythographic debate in assigning a second Pylos to Amphiaraus at *Thebaid* 4.224.

Although perhaps less enigmatic in his presentation of mythical material, Vergil likewise referred allusively to a number of names and stories that might not have been immediately familiar to his readers more than 100 years earlier. The status of Vergil as Rome's most important poet—indeed, the Roman Homer—naturally prompted a continuous industry of exegesis meant to explain, clarify, and sometimes defend the poet's works. We know of at least 20 critics and commentators who wrote before Servius, and there were doubtlessly more. Most of our information about Vergilian critics come from offhanded statements in later sources and so we are not always in the position to know exactly what form this exegesis took, whether a line-by-line commentary, a series of questions, or a monograph on a particular aspect of Vergil's poetry. For instance, Gaius Julius Hyginus—the Augustan head of the Palatine library and a well-known *grammaticus*—wrote either *commentaria in Vergilium* and/or *libri de Vergilio*. Quintus Asconius Pedianus wrote *contra obrectatores Vergilii*. Cornutus, Velius Longus, and Aemilius Asper are all credited with *commentarii* on Vergil, and Aulus Gellius cites, in addition to Cornutus and Hyginus, an anonymous *commentarius* (6.20.1) on Vergil's *Aeneid*.

Gellius' involvement with these works on Vergil center on a textual problem or a question of the appropriateness of an image that Vergil uses. Much later, Augustine enigmatically tells us that Aemilius Asper's commentary—which was also known to Jerome when learning under Donatus—was among the necessary

tools so that a “certain poet” could be understood. Such language suggests that Asper’s work, which was certainly used by Donatus himself in his mid fourth century *variorum* commentary, contained textual, rhetorical, interpretative and encyclopaedic information. But the evidence for earlier scholarly activity on Vergil is almost entirely lacking.

Ten years ago Alan Cameron hypothesized that at some point, probably in the late first or more likely the first half of the second century AD, that a scholar composed a specifically mythological companion to each of Vergil’s works. According to Cameron’s theory, this companion was then “embedded” into later commentaries of the *variorum* type; the numerous stories, or *historiae*, preserved in Servius, in Donatus as preserved in the additional material in the so-called Servius Auctus, and in other scholiastic material, most importantly the Pseudo-Probus commentary, go back to a single hand (or three hands, one for each work).

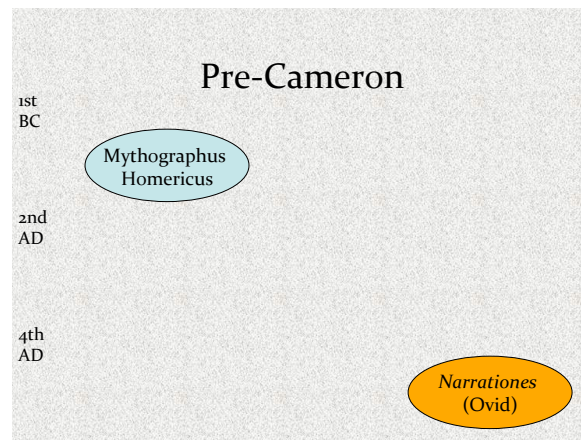
Cameron dubbed this collector the Mythographus Vergilianus on the model of the Mythographus Homericus. Even though he put forward his study as somewhat speculative, the idea has been accepted as fact by a number of scholars, not least Jan Bremmer and later Fritz Graf in the *Companion to Greek Mythology*.

Although there is nothing immediately objectionable about the idea that there was a mythological commentary keyed to Vergil’s works, the theory remains untested. Today I would like to offer a fresh but preliminary look into the matter, keeping in

mind that a full-scale treatment remains to be done. But first we must take a close look at Cameron's argument to see exactly what he is saying, which I break down into four points.

### 1) Code Model (Conte)

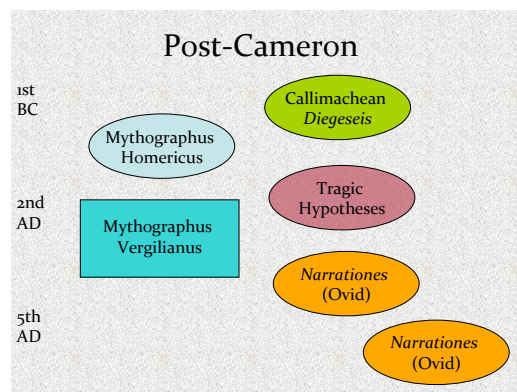
Before you is a schematic diagram of what scholars "understood" about mythological companions to poetic texts prior to Cameron's study:



Notice that there are only two featured. The first is the *Mythographus Homericus*, the existence of which has been surmised based on the mythological narratives in the D-Scholia and confirmed by eight separate papyrus finds that show a continuous commentary of almost exclusively mythological exegesis. The second is the Ovidian *Narrationes*, which contains summaries for virtually every story in the *Metamorphoses*. Until Cameron's study the *Narrationes* was considered to be a late document, perhaps the 6th century, culled from earlier learned commentaries.

Other mythological exegesis on poems were seen as part of the scholarly, not mythographic, tradition.

Cameron's study has fundamentally reshaped the landscape in our understanding of ancient mythological companions to Greek and Latin poetic texts. Rather than seeing mythological exegesis mainly or only as part of scholarly activity on par with textual and interpretative criticism, he advanced the argument that mythological exegesis was a separate activity that only later became integrated with other forms of criticism. The post-Cameron landscape now looks something like this, with the Ovidian *Narrationes* now placed in the late imperial period:



There were, then, a number of works of just this type that would make the existence of a *Mythographus Vergilianus* plausible.

I should point out that despite similarities, the only true code model, to use Conte's helpful term, is the *Mythographus Homericus*. As papyrus finds have shown, it was a continuous running mythological commentary, providing a lemmatic note keying it to the Homeric text, a nuts and bolts narrative story, and

usually (but not always) a specific reference to a single author, or very occasionally two authors. Because of the importance of this model, we will return to it below.

### **Point 2: Ancient Literary Criticism and the *Grammaticus***

Early on Cameron makes the statement that (p. 189) “The few scholars who have paid any attention at all to those mythographic notes as a corpus have taken it for granted that they derive from the same sources as all the other notes in the surviving Vergilian commentaries.” He counters by suggesting that although both philological exegesis and mythological explanation belong to the sphere of the *grammaticus*, our ancient sources distinguish between these activities.

Incidentally, by citing the activities of the *grammaticus* Cameron reveals that, in his view, the Vergilian *scholia*, as well as their Homeric counterparts, had primarily an educational function. Indeed, since most of the mythographical content in the *Mythographus Homericus* is irrelevant to explicating Homer, Cameron is doubtlessly right that its main purpose was to educate readers in the ways of myth—precisely one of the principal educational goals of the *grammaticus*. By extension, the *Mythographus Vergilianus* would presumably have operated on similar lines. Cameron, however, offers a stark division of labor on the part of critics, one that suggests that one could focus on philological matters or mythological *historiae*, but not both, and that it was only later that the twin forms of exegesis were merged into a single, *variorum* type of commentary.



### Point 3: Source Citations as Evidence

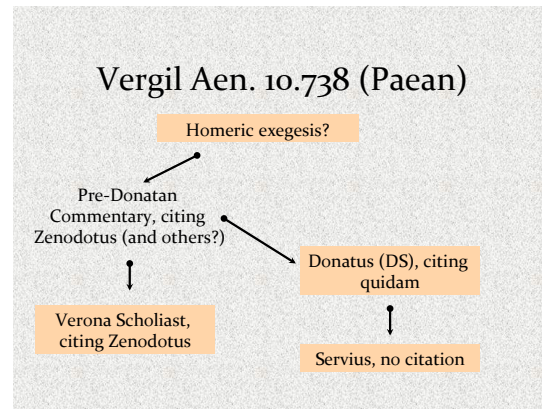
One of Cameron's most important points is that mythographers of the Imperial Age insistently offered a source for their stories. As he himself demonstrates, these citations cannot be trusted as representations of what those sources actually said, but they are an index of the importance that mythographers ascribed to providing a source for their story. For instance, the papyrus fragments from the *Mythographus Homericus* nearly always tell a mythical story, then attribute the story to a single source with a formulaic phrase; The *historiae* in the D-Scholia show similar tendencies.<sup>2</sup> Cameron argues that the limited number of scholarly citations in the Servian corpus, and the more frequent ones in other scholia to Vergil's works, are the traces of the *Mythographus Vergilianus*. It stands to reason that, if the MH is the model for the MV, then the original pattern would have been similar: lemma, followed by the *historia*, followed by a source citation.

One of the methodological problems in analyzing the citations in the Servian corpus is that Servius and Donatus culled and modified their source material in a variety of ways—including the omission of source citations. We know from the life of Donatus that he excerpted from a number of sources. Donatus preferred to preserve the actual words of his sources, but he, like Servius, had a tendency to

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<sup>2</sup> *P.Hamb.* 3.119 (= van Rossum-Steenbeek 48, Story of Tenedos) *houtos Myrtilos kai H[ellanikos]*. *P.Oxy.* 61.4096 (= van Rossum-Steenbeek 53.1, Story of Phocus), *he d' historia para Theo[pompōi]*. *P.Oxy.* 61.4096 (= van Rossum-Steenbeek 53.10, Story of Sacrifice of Achilles hair), *he d' historia para [tois Thett]alika suggrapsasi*. D-Scholia ad *Il.* 18.486 Van Thiel (Story of Orion), *he d' historia para Euphoriōni*.

remove or make anonymous the citations they found in their sources. We can firmly document this tendency from the exegesis on *Aeneid* 10.738:



Cameron's overall argument runs thus: once there was a mythographical companion that, like the MH, provided narrative material and source citations; these have been lost or altered when integrated and modified by subsequent commentators. Put simply, just because there are not many citations in Servius, that does not mean that they weren't once there. In fact, Cameron implies that nearly every *quidam* or *alii* would have once had a specific citation.

#### **Point 4: Modestus and Scaurus**

Cameron hypothesized that the Mythographus Vergilianus must have been composed no later than the second half of the second century AD because of his failure to use Hyginus' *Fabulae*. This latter collection of stories can be dated, in some form, to before 207 AD, when they were excerpted for a schoolbook.<sup>3</sup> This

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<sup>3</sup> The *Hermeneumata Pseudodositheana Leidensia* (ed. Flammini). See Smith-Trzaskoma 2007 for translation.

excerptor called Hyginus' work "world famous," which is presumably the basis for Cameron's claim. The fact is, however, that despite its supposed fame, Hyginus' work seems to have exerted only minimal influence on later texts. However that may be, Cameron offers two candidates from the early second century, Scaurus and Modestus, who in his view each composed a mythographical companion to Vergil's *Aeneid* and *Georgics*, respectively. It will be worthwhile to take a close look at these suggestions as a starting point for questioning the existence of the MV.

First, Scaurus, the Hadrianic *grammaticus* advanced by Cameron as the putative author of the mythographical companion to the *Aeneid*. In the probably fifth-century Verona Scholia we find the note (*ad* 4.144-46 *Apollo...Cretesque Dryopesque fremunt*):

**Scaurus:** 'Cretes', quia responso accepto ex insula Creta profec[ti esse] | et ducem secuti Delphum Phocidam tenuisse dicuntur adque ab eo se Delphos nominasse, ut Philarc[hus ait]

As is typical, Cameron sees the irrelevancy of the note as a strong indication that this story was taken from a mythographer in order to introduce a story for educational consumption, and the subscription to Phylarchus at the end of the notice led Cameron to suggest that it was Scaurus who had composed a collection of stories taken from mythographers.

At first blush, this is not impossible. But deeper reflection on the note seems to me to expose the flaw in this reasoning. First, although the note in its current form seems irrelevant, there is a reason why this unique variant, which looks a lot like a compressed version of a longer *historia*, would be present at this point in the text. The Vergilian lines here are part of a simile, one that likens the radiant Aeneas appearing before the infamous hunt to Apollo appearing at Delos to inaugurate a choral song. The Cretans, then, must somehow linked to Apollo, and importantly they are joined to the Dryopes, who are the legendary inhabitants of northern Phocis and so near Delphi. Vergil is forming a sort of anthropology of Phocis, and thus a commentator might feel compelled to explain the reason why Cretans are mentioned here. Surely the most apropos story would be a version as found in the Pythian part of the Homeric Hymn to Apollo, where Apollo hijacks a boat of Cretan sailors in the form of a dolphin and takes them to Delphi to act as his priests. Thus, I would imagine that the original note—and I realize this is completely speculative—would have contained a reference to the story of Apollo and the Cretans, to which was added this unique variant from an unexpected source:

4.146 CRETESQUE (*story of Apollo hijacking the Cretans, thus explaining Cretan presence in Phocis*); aliter: ‘Cretes’, quia responso accepto ex insula Creta profec[ti esse] | et ducem secuti Delphum Phocidam tenuisse dicuntur adque ab eo se Delphos nominasse, ut Philarc[hus ait]

Thus it seems to me that the presence of this note is owed to the fact it offers an *alternative* to the more common story. More to the point, I think, is that this story is meant to explain the text of Vergil, not to provide a basic version of a mythological story as typically found in the MH.

Another point that Cameron neglected to take fully into consideration is that there are two other references to Scaurus in the Scholia Veronensia one from book 12 which is in too fragmentary a state to be of help, and one from book five (5.95–96), where he is said to remark on the phrase *incertus geniumne loci famulumne parentis | esse putet: Scaurus: erudite. Nam ait ex medullis corporum anguis nasci, ut equorum* (gibberish follows). Here the appearance of a serpent at Anchises' tomb has stunned Aeneas. It is hard to understand what Scaurus exactly was trying to say, but there is no mythological story anywhere to be found in this Vergilian passage. That, and the comment *erudite*, indicate that Scaurus' commentary was more than a mere summary of stories and contained interpretative and philological material as well. The one citation of Scaurus in Servius shows that he had an interest in textual variants.

The same goes for Modestus, the Flavian scholar whom Cameron judges to be the author of the mythological companion to the *Georgics*. Based on the similarities seen in the notes on *Georgics* 1.378 in Servius, the Bern Scholia, and Ps.-Probus—the last two of which name Modestus specifically—Cameron argues that Modestus

was responsible for adding this story to Vergilian exegesis for the *Georgics*. He is persuasive in seeing the additions in Ps.-Probus as hinting at a tradition related to the probably second-century AD mythographer of metamorphoses, Antoninus Liberalis, who names the spring Leto visits as *Melite*. I have no doubt that Modestus may have been responsible for introducing this *historia* into Vergilian exegesis, but again, when we consider what other kinds of exegesis Modestus was responsible for, we find that he too had various interests. From DS on *Georgics* 2.497 (cf. Brev. Exp. ad loc.), where Vergil uses the obscure phrase *coniurato Dacus Histro*, Modestus is cited as having read, presumably in some history, that the Dacians customarily took an oath while drinking the waters of the Danube, swearing not to return until their enemies were killed. Elsewhere DS tells us that Modestus glossed *tenuis* at *Georg.* 3.53 with *fine*. In *Brevis Expositio* he is cited twice as providing an etymology, once for the word *buris* (*ad G.* 1.170), and once for the city of Ardea (*ad G.* 1.364). It could not be clearer that both Scaurus and Modestus were active in philological, interpretative, and mythographical aspects of Vergil's poem.

It is time to take a closer look at the source citations that Cameron views as the signs of a mythographical companion to Vergil's works. According to Cameron, these are vestiges of the source citations that would, on the model of the MH, have originally been cited after a *historia* was narrated. I provide below the citations of full *historiae* found in Ps.-Probus, where we see that specific works are mentioned:

- Parthenius, in *volumine quod ei de amantibus compositum est*, reporting an accurate version of Parth. 15 (Daphne), with omissions (Ps.-Probus ad E. 3.62)
- Palaephatus' *apiston*, providing an accurate summary of Palaeph. 1 (Ps.-Prob. ad G. 3.115)
- Asclepiades' *Tragodoumena*, offering a summary of Aeschylus' *Glaucos Potnieus* (Ps.-Prob. ad G. 3.267)
- Asclepiades (no book given), with short summary of a unique version of Cyparissus. (Ps.-Prob. ad G. 2.84)
- Ps.-Probus ad G. 3.19, after providing *historia* of Molorchus ends *sed Molorchi mentio est apud Callimachus in Aition libris*.

From a formal structural perspective, they differ from what we find in the MH. In the first four cases the author and work *precede* the *historia*. Only in the last instance does the source citation come after the story, and that case is not as clear as it could be. Of all these authors, the rationalizer Palaephatus would have seemed out of place in the MH, since nowhere in that body of work do we find a rationalized or allegorized version of myth. Palaephatus for his part is cited twice elsewhere in the Servian corpus, both times as a *variant* to a primary narrative. Callimachus is likely cited in the Scholia Veronensia and Servius for other non-narrative details, but not full stories. The six citations of Euphorion, of which Cameron makes a great deal, are not homogenously of the same kind; some are

attached to *historiae* and some only to a specific mythical detail. All of them are employed to make sense out of Vergil's text, not to provide a basic story of the myth itself.

Two more examples, this time of citation clusters, will suffice. At *Ecl.* 10.18 Vergil mentions Adonis. The Ps.-Probus commentator cites a number of alternative genealogies, citing Hesiod, Panyassis, Antimachus, and Philostephanus, even hinting at the nature of this last author's work.

(*ad Ecl.* 10.18) ADONIS: Ut **Hesiodus** ait, Phoenicis et Alpheisiboeae; <Ut **Panyassis**> Agenoris Thiantis, qui Histriam Arabiam tenuit imperio, ut **Antimachus** ait, regnavit in Cypro; ut **Philostephanus** libro, quo quaestiones poeticas reddidit, ex Iove sine ullius feminae accubitu procreatus. Hunc venandi studiosum fuisse et ab apro interisse, atque ita plurimis cognitum.

Cameron is right in seeing the origin of this coming from a mythographer, but this is *not* the sort of thing that we find in the MH, which typically offers one or more rarely two authorities. It is of a completely different type, a cluster of genealogical information. We see a similar cluster in the DS additions to the discussion of the allusion to *monstrator aratri* at *G.* 1.19, which clearly sparked a debate as to who was responsible for the creation of farming. The other scholiastic texts offer only a summary of the debate, but DS cites four earlier works for authorities on one side



of the debate or the other: Varro and Nigidius support the claim of Greek Triptolemus, while Philostephanus' *peri Heurematon* shows Osiris is the originator of farming, and Aristotle is called in as an authority for Buzyges:

*uncique puer monstrator aratri* (Serv.) alii Triptolemum, alii Osirim volunt (DS) *historia* of Ceres at Eleusis + Triptolemus, [followed by] **Varro** de scaenicis originibus vel in Scauro Triptolemum dicit, **Nigidius** sphaerae barbaricae sub virginis signo aratorem, quem Horon Aegyptii vocant, quod Horon Osiridis filium ab hoc educatum dicunt. ergo Osiris significatur, ut **Philostephanus** *Peri Heurematon*; vel Epimenides, qui postea Buzyges dictus est secundum **Aristotelem**.

Let us see how Ps.-Probus offers us insight into the full claim that may have been found in Philostephanus' research into Osiris:

quidam putant Triptolemum Atticum dici, quem in volucris curru tradunt poetae fruges terris credidisse; quidam Buzygen, qui primus iunctis (iumentis) existimatur ad arandum usus. Sed constat multis annis ante et fruges in Aegypto inventas esse et arasse primum Osirim duobus bubus, quorum nomina nunc sunt sacra sub eis, qui religionis causa eodem vocabulo appellati coluntur, Apis et Mnevis, quorum alterum Memphitae colunt, Apim, alterum Heliopolitae, Mnevim.

In any case, the story of Triptolemus found in the DS is not repeated in any measure by the other commentaries, but stands out in isolation. If the MV was as influential as Cameron suggests, we would suppose that the story would be represented in at least the *Brevis Expositio* or the Ps.-Probus commentary. But this is an argument from silence.

Cameron is right that these sorts of clusters come from a mythographical text, and the first example has affinities to the *Zitatenneste* in the Library of Apollodorus. But these examples that I have been dwelling on concern *debates* around Vergil's text. Who are the parents of Adonis? Who first figured out farming wheat? These are not simple narratives summarizing stories. In other words, if the source citations are indicative of the work of a single scholar compiling a mythographical compendium to Vergil, then that scholar has departed radically from his model; instead of providing a series of stories with source references at the end for educational purposes, he included various sorts of material, catasteristic data, genealogical debates, scholarly arguments concerning human history, multiple variants for narrative material, and only occasionally simple narrative material. In other words, it looks very much like this MV, if he ever existed, remained firmly in what we might call the commentary tradition.

So where do we go from here? I would suggest that a point of departure would be to do a careful study of the *historiae* in the various scholiastic texts on Vergil available to us. First, we could plot where the stories are told to see if we can identify a repetition of stories told at the same place, taking into account cross-references and their implications. If there is a consistency among the three or four witnesses, then we can possibly hypothesize a homogenous body of stories at least back to Asper in the 2nd century. As a preliminary measure, I've plotted out what we have for the first book of the *Georgics*, and while there is a consistency to the places where the stories are told, there are some peculiar gaps. Doing this for the rest of the *Georgics* may help us better understand the whole. Second, there remains a great deal of philological work to be done on the various manifestations of *historiae* in Vergilian exegesis.

In closing, I'd like to point to the story of Aristaeus as alluded to in *Georgics* 1.14 to explore the *lack* of a simple *historia/fabula* at a crucial juncture. Here Vergil mentions a *pastor nemorum*, "for whom three-hundred snow-white sheep nibble on the lush thickets of Cea," an appropriate image for an invocation of an agricultural poem. Vergil is, of course, referring to the story of Aristaeus, who after the death of his son Actaeon migrated to Ceos. This is an allusion that most ancient readers, I think, would have needed help in understanding, but we find in each of the extant commentaries a variety of citations:

(**Serv.**) **Hesiod** cited for epithet (a) (*Apollinem pastoralem*); **Sallustius** (b) is given as source for variant for his going to Ceos after death of Actaeon, and then on to Sardinia (see Paus. 10.17.3 for this)

(**DS**) “This [i.e. Servius’ explanation] is wrong. **Pindar** cited for version where Aristaeus goes from Ceos to Arcadia.

(**Brevis Expositio**) Follows Servius’ account, adds history of Ceos in terms of name: first Hydrussa, then named Ceos after the Ceos from Naupactus.

(**Ps.-Probus**) Story focused on Cea, where there occurred a pestilence “because of Actaeon’s death.” He builds temple to Jupiter Icmaeus and creates rites that stop pestilence. Called Nomios and Agreus because he established pasturing practices. (see schol. AR 2.506–7, Clement *Strom.* 6.3.29)

When we turn to the citations in Servius, we find a quick reference to Hesiod for the term *Apollinem pastoralem*, then Sallustius is invoked for the variant for migrating to Ceos, which he found barren, and then moving on to Sardinia. This information follows our ancient sources (especially Pausanias), but Servius has left out the crucial story of what happened on Ceos, which is key to understanding Vergil’s allusion. This is provided by the fuller version in Ps.-Probus, where we learn that Aristaeus stops the drought by building the temple to Jupiter Icmaeus (god of rain) and establishing rites to make the land lush. Then Ps.-Probus offers us two epithets he received “Nomios” and “Agreus” (pastures and hunter). Where did these come from? The Ps.-Probus commentary cites the *Argonautae* of Varro

Atacinus, and this is not impossible, but the DS addition to Servius (though completely erroneous) points to Pindar, who indeed calls Aristaeus “Nomios” and “Agrios” in *Pythian* 9.

If this kind of variation found in different strands of Vergilian exegesis is common, then it looks as if different commentators independently sought to explain allusions to myth in Vergil, and that they did not have recourse to a single, uniform *Mythographus Vergilianus*. The multiple sources cited in the different commentaries—Hesiod, Sallustius, Varro Atacinus, Pindar—indicate either independent research or an *Ur*-commentary that had already assembled clusters of variants with source references—which is expressly *not* what the MH aimed at. The case for the *Mythographus Vergilianus* is not clear-cut at all, and the evidence does not seem to support a single-authored collection of narrative myths that explain every allusion in Vergil’s works.

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