

Bad and Good Teachers in Persius' *Satires*: A Divided Allusion to Vergil *Georgics* 1

In a seminal article on Vergil's imitative technique, Wills (1998) persuasively argues that the poet often divides and distributes a reference, recalling his model at different points in his narrative to weave together separate scenes. I suggest that Vergil's extensive use of the "divided allusion" is noticed and appreciated by Persius, who employs the same strategy in his *Satires* when he evokes the Vergilian text. Thus, his interplay works on two levels: not only thematic and formal, as he reappropriates Vergil's ideas and images, but also poetic, as he resorts to an eminently (although not exclusively) Vergilian artistic device.

Studies of Persius' engagement with Vergil focus almost exclusively on the *Aeneid*. Satire and epic can be regarded as two sides of the same coin, for although they share the same meter, they portray two opposite narrative universes: anti-heroic and heroic, respectively. Satirists often allude to epic poetry either to raise the tone of their writings, or, more commonly, to create a comic effect. Persius is no exception. Considering that in the Neronian age the works of Augustan literature are canonized as classics, which later poets must inevitably take into account (Mayer 1982), it is natural for Persius to choose Vergil as his main epic reference (Bellandi 1988: 123-34; Connors 2005). But it should not be forgotten that Persius' satire is unanimously regarded as the most pedagogical, as it aims to teach the main tenets of Stoic ethics (Martin 1939; Henderson 1991; Mayer 2005; Bartsch 2015). Therefore, a didactic poem like the *Georgics*, also written in hexameters, certainly makes an appealing intertext.

In this paper I show that Persius alludes to the well-known passage at *Georgics* 1.145-49, where Vergil states that the lack of resources forced men to acquire different skills, at two key didactic moments in his collection: in the choliambic (lines 10-11) he reverses it to imply that

hunger, and so the body, is a bad teacher that urges men to engage in flattery, whereas in *Satire 5* (lines 37-40) he evokes it to present Cornutus, who symbolizes reason and Stoic philosophy, as a good teacher of morals.

Works Cited

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