

The "Bucket List": Virgil and Cicero on Gardening and Old Age  
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In a recent Rob Reiner film, two ailing old men make a list of worthy things to accomplish before they die. Poignantly, one completes this "bucket list" for the other. With his Corycian gardener (*G.* 4.125-48), Virgil resumes and completes characterization developed by Cicero. Virgil creates a person who lives bountifully, like the zealous old men (*studiis flagrantes*) about whom Cicero speaks through Cato in *De Sen.* 50 (so LaPenna briefly, *Atti* [1977] 56; 61-3). Old men can work the land, which yields its crop with interest (51.3-7). They desire to thrive, to learn something new each day and to find pleasure in farming.

"We see such old men," Cato says, whom he specifically recalls (*commemoravi... uidemus*, 50.9f.), just as Virgil recalls that he saw (*memini ... uidisse*, 125-7) the aged gardener (v. Landolfi, *Studi G. Monaco*, vol. 2 [1991] 908; 918). Virgil's earlier admonition to work long days (*primus ... primus ... primus*, 2.408-9) is fulfilled by his gardener, who is "first" in fruit picking (134) and beekeeping (140), a role normally reserved for *G.* 4's main character, Arcadian Aristaeus (Crane, *Beekeeping* [1999] 204; cf. Clay, "Old Man in the Garden," in Falkner and de Luce, *Old Age* [1989] 183-93). Geographically, the philosopher/author of a Περὶ ἀρουρίας, Aristaeus of Croton, would be more local, although he can be only metonymically associated with *G.* 4's beekeeper (*RE* 2.1, 'Aristaios,' 5.7, 859; cp. the Corycian's harmonious tillage, *in uersum*, 144; cf. Clay, 189; Cato, *De Agricultura* 46). Better known and even more proximate to the *niger Galaesus* (126) was Archytas of Tarentum, who also wrote on harmony (*RE* 2.1, 'Archytas,' 3, 600). Cicero portrays Cato visiting Tarentum where he hears Archytas' speech against sensuality (*De Sen.* 39-41). Virgil's Tarantine is too industrious for sensuality (134-46), though he does enjoy his meal (*seraque reuertens / nocte domum dapibus mensas onerabat inemptis*, 132f.). His delight is redolent of the description of the festivity at the end of *G.* 2 (Nappa, *Reading After Actium* [2005] 173).

Perkell's notion that the Corycian pursues "not so much the simple life as the esthetic life" (Perkell, *TAPhA* 111 [1981] 168) is not incompatible with Cato's description of the *uoluptates agricolarum* (*De Sen.* 51.1). In Virgil, the gardener's land, though lacking innate fertility, yields an abundant crop; such fruitfulness is comparable to the "greater interest" Cato says the earth returns (*De Sen.* 51.6f.; cf. *G.* 4. 133). Next Cato describes viticulture (51.17f.), which Virgil also recounts in the Corycian's planting (cf. Mynors' note ad 144-6). Cato then mentions grafting (54.11f.), as does Virgil (*spinos ... pruna ferentis*, 145f.), and fittingly so, for Virgil's adaptation of Cicero's text could be viewed as an intertextual graft.

*G.* 4's noble old man reveals Virgil's debt to Cicero, comparable to his use of Theophrastus, Varro, and other prose writers (Thomas, "Prose into Poetry," *HSCP* 91 [1987] 229-60; Burck, "Der korykische Greis," *Fest. Jacoby* [1956] 159-64). The Corycian exemplifies individual contentment (Richter, *Vergil: Georgica* [1957] ad 125-48) and the transformative wisdom of a philosopher (Klingner, *Virgil* [1967] 309-10). His is not *labor improbus* (1.145f.); rich in his own mind, he is free of the forum's vanity (*regum aequabat opes animis*, 4.132; cf. 2.501-4). His satisfaction is found in simple abundance, contentment springing from satiety rather than greed. He embodies the values Cato speaks of in the *De Senectute*.

If Virgil's gardener is a mélange of the Tarantine Archytas, and Aristaeus the beekeeper, and possibly, if only by metonymy, the philosopher of that same name, he owes yet more to Cicero's Cato, whose words in the *De Senectute* Virgil's text echoes. Though lacking terrain suitable for farming, the Corycian brings to his table rich produce beyond what even Cato could have cultivated. Ultimately, Virgil's skillful allusion to Cicero's text reveals this farmer to be not merely another upright Cato or philosophical Archytas, but a new character, one skillfully grafted from Cicero's text, adapted with simplicity and dignity in such a way as to complete the "bucket list" of virtuous behavior that the *De Senectute* inscribes.