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***MA VE PU* AGAIN: KILL CAESAR! (*GEORG. I 424-471*)¹**

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Abstract: This article deals with the Virgilian onomastic in *Georgic I* 429-433: some fresh considerations are advanced. In particular this *sphragis* would seem to endorse an overlooked acrostic: “Kill Caesar!”

Keywords: acrostic, etymology, Julius Caesar, Virgil

“Hope you guess my name,
But what’s puzzling you
the nature of my game...
Kill[ed] the Czar!”
(Rolling Stones: “Sympathy for the Devil”)

“Particularly fascinating” is the term applied recently by Joshua Katz to acrostical *MA VE PU*.² The *status quaestionis* on this acrostical onomastic has been set out equally recently by Jerzy Danielewicz.³ It would seem however that more can be said. A start may be made with a hitherto unidentified acrostic at the beginning of this passage, which opens as follows:

Si vero solem ad rapidum lunasque sequentis
425 *ordine respicies, numquam te crastina fallat*
hora, neque insidiis noctis capiere serena.
luna revertentis cum primum colligit ignis ... (Georg. I 424-427)

The first letters of these first lines read s-o-[h]o-l, i.e. *sōl*.⁴ In the first two lines the words *si ... solem ad ... / ... respicies* might accordingly be taken as a sub-

¹ Citation follows *Oxf. Lat. Dict.* 2nd ed. Oxford 2012 (“Authors and Works”: xviii-xxix); material not found there is cited according to *Thesaurus Linguae Latinae: Index librorum scriptorum inscriptionum*. 2nd ed. Leipzig 1990, and its online *Addenda*.

² Katz 2013, 5. He notes that this acrostic is “widely (though certainly not universally)” accepted.

³ Danielewicz 2013, where very thorough treatment is also given to the pertinent secondary literature.

⁴ For such “epigraphic” “Doppelschreibung langer Vokale” in an acrostic cf. Koster 1988, 103. For inscriptional *geminatio* of such long “o” in particular cf. Vine 1993, 271-272; 282. For the widely held belief that “h” is not a *littera* cf. *Thes. Ling. Lat.* 6,3 col. 2391,26-48 (s.v. *h*).

textual invitation to “look back” at acrostical *sōl* at the left edge of these lines.⁵ In *solem ad ... / ... respicies* the anastrophe of *ad* highlights dependent *solem*, which is thereby also subjected to *ecthlipsis* of inflectional *-em*: since residuary *sōl-* in this first hemistich of the first line of the acrostic exactly matches acrostical *sōl*, the result is a species of gamma-acrostic.⁶

Other lexemes in these lines are likewise acrostically “loaded”. *Respicies* is immediately preceded by line-initial *ordine*, which is in turn immediately preceded by line-final *sequentis*: these two terms, both of which require *éclaircissement*,⁷ are both invested with acrostical “resonance”.⁸ After these hints in the first and second lines, the all-important third line⁹ then starts with emphatically enjambed [*h*]ora, which is highly problematic.¹⁰ If however [*h*]ora here is meteorologically inapt, it is acrostically pat: on the one hand it provides the long “o” of acrostical *sōl*, while on the other [*h*]ora in “edge” position is a homonym of *ora*, “edge”.¹¹ *Ora* (“edge”) can be shown to be used by Virgil as a pointer to an acrostic.¹² If in the present passage amphibolous [*h*]ora, which is

⁵ For “to look back (w. *ad*)” as the primary sense of *respicio* cf. *Oxf. Lat. Dict.*² 1799 (s.v.; sect. 1a). Somerville 2010, 204 thinks that *respicies*, which he renders simply as “look” (not in *Oxf. Lat. Dict.*’s 21 sections s.v.), refers instead to ensuing *MA VE PU*. He expresses himself thus: “I would suggest ...”. However the same suggestion had already been made by Feeney, Nelis 2005, 645, who in turn had expressed themselves as follows: “It has not been noted, to the best of our knowledge ...”. However a putative reference to *MA VE PU* in *respicies* had in fact been “noted” already by Claus 1997, 277.

⁶ The point may also be made that acrostical *sōl* is framed by line-initial *si*, which occurs both at the start of the acrostic (l. 424) and again in the same opening *sedes* immediately after it (l. 428).

⁷ On *ordine* cf. (e.g.) the gloss in Serv. ad loc.; on *sequentis* cf. (e.g.) the extensive attempt at elucidation in *Brev. expos.* ad loc.

⁸ For “acrostical” *ordo* cf. Adkin 2014, 61. For similarly “acrostical” use of *sequi* and its compounds cf. Adkin 2014, 62, where in most of the instances *sequi* is positioned in the “first” line of an upward acrostic, just as this verb occupies the first line in the present acrostic.

⁹ On the importance of the third line in an acrostic cf. Adkin 2014, 47, n. 11; 51, n. 44; 59, n. 107.

¹⁰ Serv. ad loc. feels obliged to gloss the whole unit *numquam te crastina fallat / hora* thus: *hyperbole est: ne hora quidem* (cf. *Brev. expos.*: *nec hora una quidem*) *te decipiet*. *Thes. Ling. Lat.* itself is puzzled: while it begins by assigning to *hora* here the very rare sense “i.q. dies” (6,3 col. 2964,26), it then wonders in parentheses (l. 29) “an i.q. ‘tempestas’?”. Among modern commentators, while Erren 2003, 229 asserts “*hora* hier Metonymie für *caelum eius horae*”, Williams 1979, 153 offers us the nubilous gloss: “*hora*: ... ‘hour’ means ... the weather”.

¹¹ *Hora* is frequently written without the aspirate; cf. *Thes. Ling. Lat.* 6,3 col. 2952,76-84 (“*scribitur ‘ora’*”). For “outside edge” as the basic meaning of *ora* cf. *Oxf. Lat. Dict.*² 1389 (s.v. *ora*!; sect. 1a).

¹² Cf. Adkin 2014, 47-48, where attention is drawn to two instances. Firstly, at *Ecl.* VIII 7 the words *sive oram ... legis* (subtextually “if you read the edge”) point to the unidentified acrostic (6-13) *tu si es, ac[c]i[pe]* (cf. *accipe* in l. 11; for acrostical “Einfachschröbung von Geminaten”

emphatically juxtaposed over line-end with *fallet*, is read in conjunction with the foregoing clause, we have *si ... solem ad ... / ... respicies, numquam te ... fallet / [h]ora*, which gives the subtextual sense “If you look back at (acrostical) *sōl*, the “edge” will never deceive you: this edge-positioned acrostic is certain.

Acrostical *sōl* is followed immediately by *MA VE PU* (429-433).¹³ The sentence which concludes *MA VE PU* is followed in turn by one that starts thus: *sol ... / signa dabit; solem certissima signa sequuntur* (438-439). The second of these lines is problematic. On the one hand *solem ... signa* immediately after *sol ... signa* might be deemed battological. On the other *solem ... signa sequuntur* is not true: what Virgil really means is instead *sol quae sequuntur significat*.¹⁴ It might therefore be thought that kittle *solem ... signa sequuntur* is in fact a subtextual hint that acrostical “*sōl*” is “followed” by onomastical “*signa*”, viz. *MA VE PU*.¹⁵ *Signum* can denote “a sign by which one recognizes a ... person”.¹⁶ In particular, attention may be drawn to the sub-literary employment of *signum* to mean “a name by which one is familiarly known, nickname, etc.”,¹⁷ since this usage exactly fits Virgil’s “nickname” of “Parthenias”, which is here evoked in the *virgineum* of l. 430.¹⁸

The subtextual reference of *signa* to *MA VE PU* would seem to be further signposted by Virgil’s use of *certissimus*. This superlative is applied to *signa* itself (439: *certissima signa*).¹⁹ The same superlative is also employed in the penultimate line of *MA VE PU* (432: *namque is certissimus auctor*): these words, which have no correlate in Aratus, were first identified by Brown as a

cf. Koster 1988, 103): “If it’s you, accept!” (The *vexata quaestio* of this poem’s dedicatee – Octavian or Pollio – accordingly turns out to be a fool’s errand: the ambiguity is prepenne; cf. Adkin [forthcoming]). Secondly, at the start of the next *Georg.* (II 44) the phrase *lege ... oram* (subtextually “read the edge”, addressed to dedicatee Maecenas) is placed *fingerzeighafi* in the first line of acrostical *fias* (44-47): “Become!” (sc. what you have just been said to be already: *o decus, o famae merito pars maxima nostrae* [40]).

¹³ This onomastic is separated from the *sōl* acrostic by only a single line (428), which starts with the *si* that frames acrostical *sōl* (cf. n. 6 above).

¹⁴ So Erren 2003, 236.

¹⁵ The point may be made that in the present line (439) post-trihemimeral *solem* and final *sequ-* are repeated from the first line of the *sōl* acrostic (424), where both words occur in the same *sedes* and in the same lexical form: *solem ... sequ-*.

¹⁶ So *Oxf. Lat. Dict.*² 1939 (s.v.; sect. 3a).

¹⁷ *Oxf. Lat. Dict.*² 1939 (s.v.; sect. 3d).

¹⁸ This *virgineum* was first associated with the Virgilian nickname by Brown 1963, 103. Here *virgineum* (430) is placed precisely 10 lines before *solem ... signa sequuntur* (439), where the reading *sequuntur* (instead of the variant *sequentur*) would seem to receive support from the assumption that *signa* is a hypotextual reference to the foregoing onomastic that “follows” (pres.) acrostical *sōl*.

¹⁹ The use of this epithet here was felt to require elucidation; cf. *Gloss.*^L I Ansil. CE 507: *certissima: manifestissima*.

pointer to the onomastic.²⁰ This superlative *certissimus* “raro invenitur”:²¹ it is found nowhere else in the *Georgics*.²² Such application of such a rare and strikingly polysyllabic superlative in so short a compass to both *auctor* and *signa* would seem to tip the wink that the *signa* subtextually *are* the *auctor*, i.e. *MA VE PU*.²³

Here Virgil’s subtextual use of *signa* to denote an acrostical onomastic would seem to have been influenced by Aratus. In the lines spanned by *MA VE PU* Virgil does not have his eye just on *Phaenomena* 783-787, but also on 802-804.²⁴ The acrostically Argus-eyed Virgil will, like modern scholarship, have noticed that the second of these Aratean passages starts a pair of acrostics:²⁵ π(άντη)-π(άντα)-α-σ(ήματα)²⁶-α (i.e. πᾶσα; 802-806), followed by σ(ημαίνει)-ξ²⁷-μ-ει²⁸ (i.e. σημει-; 808-811).²⁹ This acrostical σημει- in 808-811 could be taken as either fem. sing. σημεία or neut. pl. σημεία. The standard gloss for σημεία is *signa*.³⁰ Evidently Virgilian *MA VE PU*, which corresponds to Aratean λεπτή (783-787), is being flagged by language (*signa*) which corresponds piquantly to Aratus’ other acrostic: σημει[α] (808-811).³¹

The line (432) that starts acrostical s-u-a-m also contains the phrase *ortu quarto*. Servius’ note on these words points out that here Virgil has changed

²⁰ Brown 1963, 103.

²¹ So *Thes. Ling. Lat.* 3 col. 899,59 (s.v. *certus*).

²² The only other occurrence of *certissimus* in the whole of Virgil is at *Aen.* VI 322.

²³ For Virgil’s use elsewhere of *certus* in such an acrostical context cf. Adkin 2014, 57, n. 91.

²⁴ Cf. (e.g.) Haslam 1992, 202.

²⁵ They were first registered by Levitan 1979, 57-58. The issue of their intentionality is not *ad rem* in this context.

²⁶ This line (805) also contains pre-caesural πᾶσιν and penultimate πάντα.

²⁷ This “e” is long by position.

²⁸ The element that forms the beginning or end of an acrostic may consist of such a two-letter word (here εἶ); cf. n. 12 above for *tu* in *Ecl.* VIII 6. This Aratean line (811) also contains pre-caesural πᾶσαν.

²⁹ The further point may be made that in l. 805 σήματα), which is glossed by Σ as σημεία, starts a gamma-acrostic: σ-ᾶ-μ (805-807; for Doric σᾶμα cf. [e.g.] Theoc., *Id.* VII 10, directly imitated by Virgil at *Ecl.* IX 59-60); for such truncation after the third line of an acrostic cf. Adkin 2014, 47, n. 11; 51, n. 44; 59, n. 107. The gamma-acrostic at issue here (805-807) is followed immediately (808-811) by similarly gammatic and similarly σημ-stemmed σ(ημαίνει)-ξ-μ-ει.

³⁰ Cf. Loewe, Goetz 1901, 266. It may also be noted that σημείον can, like *signum*, mean “second name”; cf. *LSJ: Rev. Suppl.* (1996), 274 (s.v.; sect. IV).

³¹ The other possible interpretation of σημει- (viz. σημεία; cf. *LSJ* 1593 [s.v.; sect. III: “token by which any one’s identity ... was certified”]) would seem to have influenced an unidentified acrostic that goes up (like anabatic *MA VE PU* itself) from the penultimate line of Virgil’s onomastic (432; ib. *certissimus auctor*) to its first line (429: *MA*), viz. s-u-a-m (sc. σημείαν): the “author” gives “his own” “token of identity” (viz. *MA VE PU*; for the accusative [s-u-a-m] cf. similarly accusative *signa* in similarly line-initial position [439]).

Aratean “third” to “fourth”. Since *ortu quarto* is directly juxtaposed with *namque is certissimus auctor*, this reference to “four” would seem to be a subtextual hint at the “four” parts of the onomastic, viz. *MA VE PU* plus *virgineum* (= Parthenias): these “four” nomenclative nudge-nudges make “the author” “most certain”. *Quarto* (432) is used with specific reference to *PU* (433), which is the “fourth” and clinching element in this onomastic.³² At the same time *quarto* would also seem to hint at *virgineum* (430), which connotes the “fourth” component of Virgil’s name, the adscititiously monikeresque “Parthenias”. *Virgineum* and *quarto* each occupy the interstitial lines between *MA VE PU*: both of these epithets end with the end of the first hemistich. Unlike monosyllabic *MA VE PU*, the two syllables of *virgi-* make a close match for “Virgil”, who thereby becomes truly *certissimus auctor*.

Virgil would appear to have inserted a puckish reference to this question whether the onomastic consists just of his acrostical *tria nomina* or of a quaternity including his nickname, which is not part of the acrostic proper because not line-initial. The passage immediately before the one containing this onomastic deals with bird-signs (404-423), where Virgil is again imitating Aratus (1003-1009).³³ Here Virgil says (410-411): *tum liquidas corvi presso ter gutture voces / aut quater ingeminant*. In Aratus the same ravens instead *caw δισσάκις* (1004). Virgil’s alteration of Aratean “twice” to *ter ... aut quater* would seem to be a subtextual allusion to the arithmetic of the ensuing onomastic, which consists either of three elements (*MA VE PU*), or, if the nickname be added (*virgineum*), four (*quater* = *quarto* [432]). This *quater* (411) is positioned exactly 20 lines before the *virgineum* to which it evidently refers (430).³⁴ Whereas moreover Aratus merely employs a multiplicative adverb (*δισσάκις*), Virgil instead uses the specific terms *liquidas ... voces*, which are both open to

³² *Quarto* qualifies *ortu*, which is acrostically loaded; cf. *Thes. Ling. Lat.* 9,2 col. 1068,39-70 (s.v.: “accedit respectus primordii, initii sim.”). For *ortus* applied specifically to the start of a line of poetry cf. ib. col. 1068,61-62. In this connection the point may also be made that *ortu quarto* occurs in the “fourth” line (downwards) of acrostically upward s-u-a-m. Virgil will have noticed that the “fourth” letter of Aratean *λεπτή* (786) is *τ(έτρατον)*.

³³ At the end of 1009 hapactic *ἀπτερόνται* is a *zetema* (*ἀ-* *privativum* or *intensivum*?). Virgil’s support for the second alternative is indicated by the unidentified acrostic in 409-414: *pin[n]ati* (cf. confirmatory *pinnis* [409]; for single “n” cf. Koster 1988, 103). On this acrostic cf. further Adkin 2017.

³⁴ For a similarly numerical wink-wink (*bis quinos* [*Aen.* II 126]) that is similarly just 20 lines from the text it glosses cf. Adkin 2014, 59-60, where it is argued that this Virgilian hapax is a hypotextual hint at the “two quinqueliteral” *pithi(πειθει)*-acrostics at *Aen.* II 103-107 (=106; 76 is spurious) and 142(=141)-146. These unidentified acrostics (first up, then down; both re Sinon) are confirmed by the twofold numerical correspondence with *Od.* II 106 and XXIV 141 (both re Penelope), where the same verb is used in the same rare sense of “deceive”.

hypotextual application to such an acrostic, since they can bear the meanings “unmistakable” and “words” respectively.³⁵

The *virgi-* which forms the fourth part of Virgil’s onomastic would seem to warrant further inquiry. Virgil’s recourse to such an onomastic when imitating Aratean *λεπτή* was evidently due to Aratus’ own onomastic at *Phaenomena* 2: *ἄρρητον*³⁶. It would seem possible to show that Aratean *ἄρρητον* has also influenced a passage less than 100 lines from *MA VE PU*. The very next book of the *Georgics* begins with puzzling *virgulta* (II 3),³⁷ which exactly matches *ἄρρητον* by occupying the same initial *sedes* in the same “second” line.³⁸ It would accordingly appear that here Virgil is engaging in *aemulatio* of Aratus’ *jeu onomastique* by indulging in a comparable play on his own name: “Virgil” was etymologized from *virgule*,³⁹ while *virga* was in turn the etymon of *virgultum*.⁴⁰

Virgil’s *virgulta* as onomastical *imitatio* of Aratus’ *ἄρρητον* would seem to have generated a pawkily corroborative echo later in the same book. This text runs:

salsa autem tellus et quae perhibetur amara
(frugibus infelix ea, nec mansuescit arando
240 *nec Baccho genus aut pomis sua nomina servat) ... (Georg. II 238-240)*

Here O’Hara’s definitive study of Virgilian etymologizing states: “This passage has the look of etymological wordplay, but I cannot claim with confidence that wordplay is actually taking place”.⁴¹ In particular O’Hara observes that “in 238 *quae perhibetur amara* resembles the etymological signpost ... and seems to call attention to *amara* at the end of 238”. He also notes that to see *perhibetur* as instead merely a reference to the traditional term for such soil is made prob-

³⁵ Cf. *Oxf. Lat. Dict.*² 1139 (s.v. *liquidus*; sect. 8); ib. 2320 (s.v. *vox*; sect. 10a). Virgil’s use here of *liquidus* was thought to need explication; cf. *Schol. Bern.* ad loc.: *liquidus: apertas puras*. The final point may be made that *liquidus* ... *voces* frame the line (410) containing *ter*, which is in turn ringed by *presso* ... *guttur*, opposite of *plena* ... *voce* (388). This phrase *presso gutture* (“with half-hushed utterance” [Page 1898, 232]) is subtextually suited to the first syllable of two “half-hushed” disyllables (*VE[ntus]*; *PU[ra]*) and of a trisyllabic superlative (*MA[ximus]*) whose positive (*magnus*) is similarly disyllabic.

³⁶ So Bing 1990, 284-285.

³⁷ For the arboricultural problem entailed by use of this term cf. Mynors 1990, 100.

³⁸ Virgil’s supernumerary “first” line merely sums up the antecedent book. In this same Aratean line (2) *μεστὰι ... πᾶσαι* is imitated by *omnia plena* in Virgil’s next line (4).

³⁹ Cf. Maltby 1991, 637 (s.v. *Vergilius[Virg-]*), where *virgulta* is a mistake for *virgula*.

⁴⁰ Cf. Maltby 1991, 648 (s.v. *virgultum*). *Virga* itself was etymologized from *vis*, which was regarded as the etymon of *vir*, from which were derived *virgo* and hence the *virgineus* that complements *MA VE PU*; cf. Maltby 1991, 647-648 (s.vv. *vir*; *virga*; *virgo*).

⁴¹ O’Hara 2017, 271.

lematical by the fact that such cloddy use of *amarus* is first found here. It would in fact seem that *perhibetur* is a “signpost” to Virgil’s cognomen *Maro*, evoked by predicatively adjacent *amara* (238), which is then glossed by similarly line-end *amaro* positioned exactly 10 lines later (247).⁴² *Amara* (238) is then matched by *arando* in similarly final *sedes* in the very next line (239).⁴³ as *amara(-o)* suggests *Maro*, so *arando* calls to mind this verb’s past participle: *Aratus*.⁴⁴ The very next line (240) is then framed by *nec ... sua nomina servat*: the last three words fill the line from the hephthemimeres to the end. Here *sua nomina* is highly problematic: whereas *Brev. expos.* feels constrained to gloss with *idest suas naturas et nomina*, the *Schol. Bern.* instead propose elucidatory *species*, while Servius himself offers us *propriam generositatem*. It would seem however that this “failure to keep their own names” is in fact a subtextual reference to the “names” evoked in the two immediately foregoing lines: in the onomastical *Wechselspiel* at the start of the book Aratean ἄρρητον is exchanged for Virgilian *virgulta*.⁴⁵

The just-discussed allusion at *Georgic* II 238-240 to *virgulta* (II 3) as a *jeu onomastique* on “Virgil” is followed less than 100 lines later by a further instance of the same play. At *Georgic* II 321-327 Brown pointed out an onomastical acrostic that with two-line interspace reads *P(ublius; 321) VER(gilius; 324) MA(ro; 327)*.⁴⁶ Brown failed however to observe that the next line (328) contains *virgulta*, which accordingly matches the etymologically cognate and similarly onomastical *virgineum* of *Georgic* I 430⁴⁷ in occupying the line immediately after acrostical *MA*, which on each occasion is formed by the positive

⁴² For another instance of *amaro* as an onomastical pointer to cognominal *Maro* cf. Carter 2002, 616 (re *Aen.* XII 588). In the passage currently at issue (*Georg.* II 247) the onomastic shows *amaro* to be the right reading against variant *amaror*.

⁴³ For such vertical juxtaposition at the end of successive lines as a locational marker cf. O’Hara 2017, 86-88.

⁴⁴ For an earlier case of such Virgilian use of *arare* to evoke *Aratus* cf. Springer 1983/4, 132 (re *Ecl.* III 42).

⁴⁵ At the end of this same second book of the *Georgics* attention may be briefly drawn to another passage in which Virgil would again appear to be engaging in onomastical play on Aratus’ *Phaenomena*. In 11. 473-474 Virgil echoes Aratus’ description of the decampment of Dike (*Phaen.* 100-136). Here Virgilian *Iustitia* (474) corresponds to Aratean Παρθένος (136) in same first foot in same last line. It is therefore noteworthy that in the same initial *sedes* in the very next line (475) Virgil should employ the “startling” (Mynors 1990, 166) *me*, which in such vertical juxtaposition with “suppressed” Παρθένος is evidently meant to suggest his moniker Parthenias. The same onomastical nudge-nudge would seem to be given a mere dozen lines later (487-488) by the same *me*, this time vertically juxtaposed (at same second diaeresis) with semantically and syntactically problematic (cf. Erren 2003, 525) *virginibus*.

⁴⁶ Brown 1963, 105-114.

⁴⁷ For the derivation of both *virgultum* and *virgineus* from *vis* cf. n. 40 above.

and superlative respectively of the same adjective.⁴⁸ The line containing *virgulta* (328) reads in full: *avia tum resonant avibus virgulta canoris*. This line is then echoed by l. 430:⁴⁹ *sanguineisque inculta rubent aviaria bacis*.⁵⁰ This line (II 430) evinces an exact numerical correspondence with the line (I 430) containing afore-mentioned *virgineum* in *MA VE PU*.⁵¹ This line (I 430) that contains *virgineum* also contains *ruborem*, which has been seen as a reference to rubrication of the onomastic.⁵² It would therefore seem to be significant that II 430 should begin with *sanguineis*, which can likewise bear the subtextually rubricatory sense of “blood-red, crimson, ruddy”.⁵³ The only other Virgilian instances of *sanguineis* are to be found in *Eclogue* VI 22 and X 27, where on each occasion this epithet is used in conjunction with an acrostic.⁵⁴ *Sanguineis* at *Georgic* II 430 would accordingly seem to be a “long-distance” hint⁵⁵ at the similar rubrication of the acrostical onomastic at II 321-327.⁵⁶

The sentence that brings *MA VE PU* to an end comes to an end itself with the notable line (437): *Glauco et Panopeae et Inoo Melicertae*. Here Virgil is imitating a line of Parthenius, but he changes Parthenian *Νηπεϊ* to *Panopeae*. Thomas accordingly asks: “Whence Panopea?”⁵⁷ The answer would in fact appear to be connected with etymology: Panopea was etymologized as “all-seeing”.⁵⁸ Hence the choice of this name is evidently a hint to “see all” of

⁴⁸ *MA(gnus; II 327)* matches *MA(ximus; I 429)*.

⁴⁹ Cf. (e.g.) Erren 2003, 498.

⁵⁰ This line is noteworthy because of the Virgilian hapax *aviarium*, which is here employed in the unusual sense of “a haunt of wild birds” (*Oxf. Lat. Dict.*² 235 [s.v.; sect. b]); cf. Serv. ad loc.: *aviaria: secreta nemora, quae aves frequentant*.

⁵¹ For such line-correspondences cf. n. 34 above.

⁵² Cf. Habinek 2009, 131.

⁵³ So *Oxf. Lat. Dict.*² 1861 (s.v.; sect. 4a). Here Servius has to gloss *sanguineae bacae* as *poma silvestria*.

⁵⁴ At *Ecl.* VI 14-24 the unidentified acrostic *laesis* (“for those who have been hurt”) goes first up (14-19), then down (19-24). This acrostic, which is placed immediately after “praise” of land-confiscator Varus (6-12), would appear to be endorsed by the acrostical *sphragis* at *Ecl.* X 15-23 (upward, with trilinear interspace; line-correspondence with *laesis*): *MA(ro; 15) VE(rgilius; 19) P(ublius; 23)*. On these acrostics in *Ecl.* VI and X cf. Adkin 2015.

⁵⁵ For such “long-range” glossography cf. Adkin 2014, 52-54.

⁵⁶ If II 430 corresponds to l. 430 in the poem’s first book, it would be unsurprising to find a similar correspondence with the same line-number in the last book (IV 431 = 430 [338 is spurious]), viz. *rorem late dispergit* (sc. a seal-herd) *amarum*, where *amarum* hints at *Maro*; cf. n. 42 above. Here Thomas 1988, II, 223 observes that Virgil has “suppress[ed] the Homeric reference to odour” (*Od.* IV 406). Since however Virgil is alluding to himself, he naturally suppresses mention of B.O.

⁵⁷ Thomas 1988, I, 141. His own suggestion of a source in Callimachus is dismissed by Erren 2003, 233.

⁵⁸ Cf. Forcellini 1940, VI, 424 (s.v. *Panope*).

this tripartitely *décousu* acrostic.⁵⁹ A similar cue to “see all” of a similarly antecedent and similarly trichotomous onomastical acrostic (*MA VE P*; *Ecl.* X 15-23)⁶⁰ would seem to be given by *Pan ... vidimus* (ib. l. 26).⁶¹ The other *Eclogue*-text containing *sanguineis* is the two-way *laesis*-acrostic (*Ecl.* VI 14-24)⁶², which likewise ends with a hint to “see” it (l. 24): *solvite me, pueri; satis est potuisse videri*. This enigmatic verse⁶³ is clarified by identification of the acrostic, which here is subtextually made to speak: “Solve me, boys; it is enough to have been able to be ‘seen’”⁶⁴.

Virgil’s departure from the *Νηρεϊ* of his Parthenian source alerts the reader to the acrostical clue in “panoptic” *Panopeae*. In so departing in such an acrostically wink-tipping context Virgil would also seem to be incorporating a nod to his other source, Aratus, since the latter’s acrostical *πᾶσα* (803-806; confirmed by grammatic *πάντα*) matches the *Pan-* of the selfsame *Panopeae*.⁶⁵ The *Pan-* of this *Panopeae* would also seem to find a counterpart three lines earlier (434) in the *totus* positioned in the line immediately after *PU* in the same line-initial locus. This epithet (*totus et ille dies ...*) is without parallel in the Aratean source.⁶⁶ Since the onomastic (*MA VE PU*) is now “complete”⁶⁷, this line as far as the 2nd-foot caesura (*totus et ille*) invites the onomastically hypotextual

⁵⁹ It may be observed that in the last line of this six-line period (437) *Panopeae* occupies the same pre-caesural *sedes* as the first line’s *quarto* (432), which would seem to be a subtextual pointer to all “four” elements of the onomastic (acrostical *MA VE PU* plus *virgineum*); cf. the text preceding n. 32 above.

⁶⁰ On this acrostic cf. n. 54 above.

⁶¹ For *Pan* etymologized from adnominal *πᾶν* cf. Maltby 1991, 446 (s.v.). On this line (*Ecl.* X 26: *Pan ... , quem vidimus ipsi*) cf. Clausen 1994, 301 (ad loc.): “Surprisingly, the poet intervenes in his own fiction”. Metafictionally, “we have seen all” the acrostic. The next word is rubricatory *sanguineis* (l. 27; cf. nn. 53-54 above).

⁶² Cf. n. 54 above.

⁶³ Cf. Egan 1980, 379 (“an enigma ... over the centuries”).

⁶⁴ If *Panopeae* is a wink to “see all” the acrostic, shortly afterwards (443) paraprodocetic *suspecti (tibi sint* to penthemimeres; “st. *expectati*” [Erren 2003, 237]; cf. *Loeb*’s weasel-worded “beware of” [Fairclough, Goold 1999, 131]) would appear to be a nudge to “look upwards” (so *Oxf. Lat. Dict.*² 2084 [s.v. *suspicio*¹; sect. 1a]), when reading this “upward” acrostic. For such acrostically clueful use of *suspicio* (and *despicio*) à propos of such anabatic (and catabatic) acrostics cf. Adkin 2014, 50-52.

⁶⁵ Aratus’ acrostical *πᾶσα* is followed after the space of just one line by acrostical *σημεῖα*] (808-811), which it was argued above corresponds to Virgil’s *signa*, which subtextually denote the multifold onomastic (*MA VE PU*), to which “see-all” *Panopeae* is a pointer. *Πᾶσα* and *σημεῖα*] could moreover be spliced to mean “all the identity-token”, i.e. the onomastic.

⁶⁶ Cf. Erren 2003, 232.

⁶⁷ For this nuance of *totus* cf. *Oxf. Lat. Dict.*² 2153 (s.v.; sect. 5a).

sense “he too is ‘complete’”.⁶⁸ The same subtextual purpose of signalling the “completion” of the onomastic would seem to be served by *exactum*⁶⁹ in the same initial *sedes* in the very next line (435), where *exactum ad mensem* is “eine durch nichts gerechtfertigte Behauptung”.⁷⁰

The line (436) between this *exactum* (435) and *Panopeae* (437) would also appear to merit attention: *votaque servati solvent in litore nautae* / [... *Panopeae*]. Virgil employs *litus* in connection with acrostics.⁷¹ *Litus* is also a synonym of *ora*, which Virgil has just used (l. 426) with the same subtextually acrostical reference.⁷² In the present passage *in litore* is juxtaposed with *solvent*. Synonyms were available for *solvo* in this sense of “discharge”.⁷³ However *solvo* could also bear the subtextual meaning “solve”.⁷⁴ Such was the case in the afore-mentioned last line of the *laesis*-acrostic (*Ecl.* VI 24),⁷⁵ where *solvere* is linked to *videre* (*solvite me, pueri; satis est potuisse videri*): once the acrostic has been “seen”, it can be “solved”. This same hypotextually hintful combination is found in the present passage, where *solvere* likewise precedes *Panopea* (“see-all”) in the same position at the end of the acrostic.

This *Panopeae* is directly juxtaposed with *Inoo* (*et Inoo Melicertae*; 437). Virgil has substituted this *Inoo* for Parthenius’ *εἰναλίω*. Thomas accordingly asks once again: “Whence ‘son of Ino?’”⁷⁶ Again the key would appear to be etymology. Ino also bore the name *Λευκοθέα*,⁷⁷ which in the present acrostically charged context naturally invites etymologization as *λευκός* (“clear”)⁷⁸ and *θέα* (“view”):⁷⁹ when “all” the acrostic is “seen” (*Panopea*), one has a “clear view”.⁸⁰ The *λευκ-* of *Leucothea/Ino* (437) is placed exactly 10 lines after anti-

⁶⁸ For *ille* “indicating a person or thing which has just been mentioned or implied” cf. *Oxf. Lat. Dict.*² 908 (s.v.; sect. 2a). Here it may be recalled that “Virgil’s Roman reader read aloud, read slowly” (Clausen 1994, xxiii).

⁶⁹ Cf. *Oxf. Lat. Dict.*² 705 (s.v. *exigo*; sect. 5a: “to complete”).

⁷⁰ So Erren 2003, 232.

⁷¹ Cf. *Ecl.* II 25 (with Adkin 2014, 47, n. 11); *Georg.* II 44 (with Adkin 2014, 47-48).

⁷² Cf. n. 12 above.

⁷³ Cf. in particular metrically equivalent *reddo*, which had been used by Virgil at *Ecl.* V 74-75 (*vota / reddemus Nymphis*).

⁷⁴ Cf. *Oxf. Lat. Dict.*² 1971 (s.v.; sect. 16: “to solve [a problem]”).

⁷⁵ Cf. n. 63 above.

⁷⁶ Thomas 1988, I, 141. His own surmise of a Callimachean source is again pooh-poohed by Erren 2003, 233.

⁷⁷ So (e.g.) Cic., *Tusc.* I 28.

⁷⁸ So *LSJ* 1042 (s.v.; sect. I 1).

⁷⁹ So *LSJ* 786 (s.v.; sect. I 1a).

⁸⁰ It may be noted that Homer’s only reference to *Leucothea* significantly involves the verb “to see” (*Od.* V 333-334): *Τὸν* (sc. *Oysseus*; in line-initial position, like *MA VE PU*) *δὲ ἶδεν ... Ἴνώ, / Λευκοθέη*.

thetic *nigrum* in the line (428) immediately before the start of the acrostic, which starts off “dark” but ends up “clear”.⁸¹ This same Leucothean *λευκ-* also calls to mind Homer’s celebrated *λευκή*-acrostic (*Il.* XXIV 1-5), which inspired Aratus’ *λεπτή*-acrostic, which is in turn the inspiration for Virgil’s acrostical *MA VE PU*.

Virgil’s reference to Panopea and Leucothea/Ino (437) is followed immediately by *sol ... / signa dabit; solem certissima signa sequuntur* (438-439). It was argued above that these *certissima signa* allude subtextually to the *MA VE PU*-acrostic to which the Panopea and Leucothea/Ino of the immediately foregoing l. 437 are likewise a subtextual allusion. The phrase *sol ... signa dabit* is then repeated exactly 25 lines later at 463, where it again signals an acrostic. This time *sol ... signa dabit* is immediately followed by *solem quis dicere falsum / audeat?* (463-464), which matches the similarly sequent *solem certissima signa sequuntur* of l. 439.⁸² It was argued above that the *sol* (439) which these *certissima signa* “follow” is a subtextual allusion to acrostical *sōl* (424-427), which is in turn signalled by concomitant *numquam te ... fallet / [h]ora* (425-426). Here *fallet* matches aforesaid paronymous *falsum* (463) in same final *sedes*.⁸³ Virgil’s three semantically parallel cues ([*numquam*] ... *fallet* [425]; *certissima* [439]; [*quis*] ... *falsum?* [463]) accordingly tell us that the three acrostics to which they point are all “certain”.

The acrostic signalled by *solem quis dicere falsum / audeat?* (463-464) begins in the next line but one (466), which opens the catalogue of portents marking the murder of Caesar: *ille (sc. sol) etiam extincto miseratus (sc. est) Caesare Romam*. Whereas Virgil’s actual text expresses abhorrence for the assassination, this overlooked acrostic applauds it: “Strike Caesar with a sacrificial axe!”. The acrostic is made up of two parts. The first consists of acrostical *i-c-i-t-o* (466-470):⁸⁴ the object of this *icito* (“Caesar”) is to be supplied from the first line’s *extincto ... Caesare*, where pre-caesural *extincto* generates a species of gamma-acrostic. The last line of *icito* then supplies the second half of the acrostic: the “o” of *icito* is provided by *o-[b]scena[e]*, which should be

⁸¹ The same subtextual point re the crescive perspicuity of this acrostic would also seem to be made by the contrast between *obscurum ... cornu* (same line as *nigrum*; 428) and *neque obtunsis ... cornibus* (last line of acrostic; 433); for such use of *cornu* with reference to an acrostic cf. Adkin 2014, 48, n. 18.

⁸² The point being made in both texts is the same, though the form of expression is inverted: for *certus* as the opposite of *falsus* cf. *Thes. Ling. Lat.* 3 col. 923,12 (s.v. *certus*).

⁸³ Plenty of synonymous alternatives were available for both *fallo* (cf. *Thes. Ling. Lat.* 6,1 coll. 190,81-191,2) and for *falsus* (cf. *ib.* col. 200,21-25).

⁸⁴ The end of *icito* is marked by the next line’s (471) line-initial *signa dabant*, which picks up similarly line-initial *sol tibi signa dabit* (463), which in turn introduces the *ille* (sc. *sol*; 466) that starts *icito*.

read horizontally as a species of L-acrostic. *Obscenus*, which here needed to be glossed (cf. *Brev. expos. ad loc.*), had in the previous decade been etymologized by Varro from *scena* (viz. “stage”),⁸⁵ which is an *ad amussim* homonym of *scena* (viz. “sacrificial axe”).⁸⁶ Livius’ *ictus scena* exactly matches Virgil’s *icito [b]scena*.⁸⁷ This Virgilian “Strike Caesar with a sacrificial axe!” accordingly evinces precisely the same “sacrificial” language that is also found in Plutarch’s use of *κατάρχομαι* with exactly the same reference to Caesar’s assassins.⁸⁸

Whereas Virgil normally inserts clear nudge-nudges to his acrostics,⁸⁹ in the present case the political TNT precludes a strong and unambiguous prod; it also necessitates the indirection of etymological horizontality in *o-[b]scena*. Virgil has nonetheless embedded long-range clues *à sa façon*. The first of these hint-dropping passages is placed at the very centre of the poem in the exordium to the next *Georgic* but one.⁹⁰ The start of this proem’s l. 14 (*propter aquam*), where Mynors sees only an “irrelevant picture of the Mincio”,⁹¹ would in fact appear to be a pointer to the line-numerically equivalent “l. 14” that in *Eclogue* VI starts the *laesis*-acrostic re those “hurt” in the land-confiscations round “water”-logged Mantua.⁹² On this proem’s next line but one (*Georg. III 16 in medio mihi Caesar erit*) Williams comments:⁹³ “Caesar ... is to be the god to whom this temple of song will be dedicated”. It is therefore noteworthy that the sole occurrence of *scaena* (M: *scena*) in the entire *Georgics* should be found in l. 24, which corresponds line-numerically with the conclusion of the *laesis*-acrostic (*Ecl. VI 24*): this *sc[a]en-* in *Georgic III 24* is also positioned in precisely the same first *biceps* as aforesaid *[ob]scen-*.⁹⁴ Furthermore this *sc[a]ena* at the start of *Georgic III 24* is tellingly put side by side with “sacrificial” *caesosque videre iuencos* at the end of the immediately foregoing line (23). Here *sc[a]ena* is itself problematic (cf. *Serv. ad loc.*); the problem is exacerbated by

⁸⁵ *Ling. VII 96: obscenum dictum ab scena.*

⁸⁶ Cf. *Fest. p. 318 M.: scena ... dolabra pontificalis.* Festus repeats this scholium shortly afterwards (p. 330 M.), where he also quotes *Liv. Andr., Com. 2: corruit quasi ictus scena.*

⁸⁷ For *o[b]scenus* spelt with no “b” cf. *Thes. Ling. Lat. 9,2 col. 158,66 (s.v.)*. This orthography (*oscenus*) is found in some MSS of the present Virgilian text; cf. Conte 2013, 142.

⁸⁸ Cf. *Caes. 66, 11; Brut. 10, 1.* For *icere* used “speciatim de hostiis i.q. mactare” cf. *Thes. Ling. Lat. 7,1 col. 160,8-13.* For Virgil’s (non-sacrificial) use of *icere* as an acrostic elsewhere cf. Adkin 2012, 426.

⁸⁹ Cf. Adkin 2014, 52-54; 59-62; 65-68.

⁹⁰ This proem to *Georgic III* is Virgil’s “most extensive, and most complex, programmatic statement” (Thomas 1988, II, 36).

⁹¹ Mynors 1990, 181.

⁹² On this acrostic cf. n. 54 above. For such line-correlations cf. n. 34 above.

⁹³ Williams 1979, 179.

⁹⁴ The correspondingly placed first word of afore-mentioned *Ecl. VI 24* is significantly *solvite* (hypotextually “solve!”).

cheek-to-cheek *caesosque videre iuencos*, “denn Opferaltar und Theaterbühne können in Wirklichkeit nicht vom selben Standort aus sichtbar sein, ja nicht einmal über einen kurzen Fussweg nacheinander ins Gesichtsfeld treten”.⁹⁵ All this problematality would accordingly seem intended to spotlight this *sc[a]ena* as a gloss on acrostical *o-[b]scena*].

The other acrostically wink-tipping passage is found later in the *Georgics*’ same book III, where it is located in the lines that tally numerically with those of the acrostic itself in book I (466-470). This passage of *Georgic* III deals with the signs of ovine indisposition. The line that matches the first line of the acrostic (III 466) starts with *extremamque sequi*, which has to be explained by Williams thus:⁹⁶ (the sheep) “following last”. Since however *extremam* is preceded by *procul* (464; “afar”) and followed by *solam* (467; “alone”), such a mere term for “last”⁹⁷ may here be felt to be not just superfluous, but downright anticlimactic. This supererogatory epithet, which is conspicuously placed in acrostically “initial” position, does however bear the subtextual sense of “edge”,⁹⁸ which is highly suitable as a pointer to an “edge”-positioned acrostic. *Extremam* is moreover put cheek by jowl with *sequi*, which likewise is acrostically charged.⁹⁹ The next line (III 467: *serae solam decedere nocti*) reprises the *De morte* of Varius Rufus (fr. 4, 6: *serae meminit decedere nocti*). This work would seem to have had to do with the assassination of Caesar.¹⁰⁰ The aforementioned fragment of Varius’ poem may describe the “insistenza invincibile” of Caesar’s assassins themselves.¹⁰¹

The following line (III 468), which is the acrostically *bedeutungsschwer* third line,¹⁰² then gives an order: *culpam ferro conpesce*. Here *culpam* has mystified scholarship ever since Servius, who himself proffers the following hard-to-swallow exegesis: *atqui habere morbum culpa non est. sed hoc dicit, occidendo eam tuam culpam conpesce, id est vita crimen, in quod potes incidere, si, dum uni parcis, fuerit totus grex eius contagione corruptus*. The problem of *culpam* is further accentuated by the anacoluthon: “cum enim Vergilius sic incepisset *Quam* (sc. ovem) ... *videris* ... *decedere nocti*, v. 468 non sequi debebant verba *Continuo culpam conpesce*, sed potius: hanc continuo

⁹⁵ So Erren 2003, 572.

⁹⁶ Williams 1979, 198.

⁹⁷ *Extremam* is highlighted by post-caesural *medio*.

⁹⁸ Cf. *Oxf. Lat. Dict.*² 726 (s.v.; sect. 1b).

⁹⁹ For Virgil’s use of *sequi* as a tip-off to an acrostic cf. n. 8 above.

¹⁰⁰ Cf. (e.g.) Wimmel 1983, 1569-1585. This view of the poem is corroborated by Virgil’s echo in the present “assassinative” context.

¹⁰¹ So Alfonsi 1943, 249.

¹⁰² For the particular importance which Virgil attaches to such “third” lines in connection with acrostics cf. n. 9 above.

macta vel tale quid".¹⁰³ If however this oddly anacoluthic and strangely moralistic *culpam* does not befit a blameless baa-baa, it does become a culpably czar-like Caesar. Virgil's language here (*culpam ferro compesce*) in fact evinces an exact correlation with the similarly imperatival phrasing of his acrostic: *Caesare(m) icito scena*.¹⁰⁴ Virgil's juxtaposition of this "assassinous" *culpam ferro compesce* with the previous line's echo of Varius' similarly "assassinous" *De morte* is highly piquant.

The last two lines of this passage in *Georgic* III (469-470) would also appear to call for comment: they correspond to the last two lines of the acrostic (I 469-470). In the first of these lines (*Georg.* III 469: [*priusquam*] / *dira per incautum serpent contagia vulgus*) *incautum ... vulgus* is again problematic: "Aber wie könnte sich die Schafherde vor Ansteckung hüten?"¹⁰⁵ In this political context however *incautum ... vulgus* readily takes on a similarly political subtext with reference to Caesar as champion of the common people. In the last line of this passage (*Georg.* III 470: *non tam creber agens hiemem ruit aequore turbo* / [*quam multae pecudum pestes*]) *turbo* is similarly *difficile*. Here Peerlkamp ejaculates:¹⁰⁶ "Mira et insolita comparatio! Non memini me unquam huic similem legere: non sunt tot tempestates maritimae, quot morbi pecudum". Peerlkamp therefore proposed to athetize the line. It would seem however that the oddity is meant as a heads-up: *turbo* was applied as a term of opprobrium to politicians – like Caesar.¹⁰⁷ Here *turbo*, which is emphatically placed at the end of the line that matches the last line of the acrostic, is clearly marked off from what follows by the bathetic start of the next line: *quam multae pecudum pestes*.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰³ So Forbiger 1872, 442.

¹⁰⁴ The note on *ferro compesce* in Mynors 1990, 249 points out that in Just., *Epit.* VII 3, 6 the same wording ("ex Nostro fortasse"; Cerda 1608, 460) is significantly used "of an assassination".

¹⁰⁵ So Erren 2003, 747-748.

¹⁰⁶ Peerlkamp 1861, 264.

¹⁰⁷ Cf. *Oxf. Lat. Dict.*² 2196 (s.v. *turbo*²; sect. 2b).

¹⁰⁸ The acrostic would also appear to have been signalled by two lexemes placed immediately after it. The first (*vidimus*) is positioned at the start of *Georg.* I 472, where it follows the similarly line-initial finger-post *signa dabant* (I 471; cf. n. 84 above). For *videre* as a pointer to an acrostic cf. the text preceding n. 64 above; in the present case the perfect (*vidimus*: "we have seen") is particularly appropriate to an acrostic that has just ended. The second of these words to the acrostically wise (viz. *infandum*) is placed at the start of I 479 exactly 10 lines after the end of the acrostic. This *infandum*, which is highlighted by oxymoronic juxtaposition with *locutae*, is invested with a doubly subtextual sense: while an acrostic is *ipso facto* "not to be spoken", this one is all the more so because of its politically dynamic content.

Such political acrostics can be shown to occur elsewhere in Virgil.¹⁰⁹ In the case of the present “assassinous” acrostic the antecedent onomastic *MA VE PU* would accordingly appear to serve as an endorsement of the acrostic and of the assassination of Caesar which it enjoins. Such use of an onomastic to underwrite a political acrostic can likewise be shown to be characteristic of Virgil.¹¹⁰ The Donatan *Vita Vergilii* (27) reports that Virgil read the *Georgics* with its “assassinous” acrostic to Augustus, Caesar’s heir and avenger, on his return from Actium: an acrostic, which can be neither “spoken” nor “heard”,¹¹¹ allows one to get away with “murder”. A similarly political acrostic *à propos* of Caesar occurs in *Eclogue* V, where l. 20 (*extinctum Nymphae crudeli funere Daphnin / [flebant]*) calls to mind the first line of the present acrostic (*Georg. I 466: ille etiam extincto miseratus Caesare Romam*). The Daphnis of this fifth *Eclogue* evokes Julius Caesar.¹¹² It may therefore be noted that the aforementioned *flebant* starts an unidentified upward acrostic: f-e-s-[s]-i (*Ecl. V 18-21*).¹¹³ “Rome is sick of Caesar’s tyranny”.¹¹⁴

Politics is combined with etymology in the *Georgics*-acrostic at issue in this article. *Obscenus* was an etymological *zetema*.¹¹⁵ An alternative to *scena* as etymon of *obsценus* was *Osci*.¹¹⁶ Virgil is evidently alluding to this alternative etymology in an ascendant acrostic that “starts” a dozen lines before the acrostic that ends with *obsценae*:¹¹⁷ o-s-c-i p-[h]o¹¹⁸-t-[h]e (448-455: “*Osci*” *pote*, i.e. “*Osci* is possible”, sc. as etymon of *obsценus*).¹¹⁹ This acrostic is signalled by use of *videre*¹²⁰ in the same final *sedes* in the same “first” line of each of its

¹⁰⁹ Cf. Adkin 2014, 45-48; 50, n. 35; 67-68. For a detailed examination of an acrostic which, as in the present case, negatives the concomitant text, cf. Adkin 2014, 57-58.

¹¹⁰ Cf. n. 54 above; Adkin 2014, 46, n. 3.

¹¹¹ Cf. n. 108 above on Virgil’s impish use of *infandum* (I 479) in this connection.

¹¹² On this question cf. Cucchiarelli 2012, 281-283 (with lit.).

¹¹³ Confirmed by horizontal *fessis* (l. 46). For single “s” cf. Koster 1988, 103. On this acrostic cf. further Adkin 2014, 52.

¹¹⁴ Thus Wilson Knight 1931, 54, but re the Swan of Avon, not of Mantua. For this sense of *fessus* (“sick of”) cf. *Oxf. Lat. Dict.*² 761 (s.v.; sect. 5b).

¹¹⁵ *Georg. I 470* is the first occurrence of *obsценus* in Virgil and his sole use of the word outside the *Aeneid*. In the present passage *obsценus* is set off by enallage: *obsценaeque canes importunaeque volucres* instead of *obsценae volucres, importunae canes* (so Erren 2003, 251).

¹¹⁶ Cf. Maltby 1991, 421 (s.v. *obsценus*).

¹¹⁷ On Virgil’s penchant for such etymological alternatives cf. O’Hara 2017, 92-93.

¹¹⁸ For non-letter “h” cf. n. 4 above. Here the reference of acrostic-forming *hoc* is unclear (cf. [e.g.] Conington, Nettleship, Haverfield 2007, 216-217): the acrostic has taken precedence over clarity.

¹¹⁹ For *pote* = *possibile est* cf. *Thes. Ling. Lat.* 10, 2 col. 337,74-75 (s.v. *potis*). For “unpoetical” lexemes like *pote* in Virgilian acrostics cf. Adkin 2014, 49.

¹²⁰ Cf. n. 108 above.

two halves.¹²¹ Since this etymonic *Osci* conveniently gets rid of the “b” in *obscenus*, it clears the ground for derivation from *scena*. Besides *scena* and *Osci* a third etymon of *obscenus* was *cano*,¹²² which had in turn been posited by Varro as etymon of *canis* (*Ling.* V 99; VII 32), which Virgil here qualifies with *obscenus*, which would have been more appropriate to ensuing *volucres*:¹²³ here Virgil’s *obscenaque canes* is evidently meant as a nod to this third etymology of *obscenus* – from *cano*.¹²⁴

Some concluding remarks may be made about the particular wording of this passage. Shortly after *MA VE PU* (429-433) Virgil had employed the words *sol ... / signa dabit; solem certissima signa sequuntur* (438-439). It was argued above that here *certissima signa* is a subtextual allusion to aforesaid *MA VE PU* (429-433) that “follows” acrostical *sōl* (424-427). Shortly before the “assassinous” acrostic (466-470) this same statement (viz. 438-439: *sol ... / signa ...*) is then repeated (463-464): *sol tibi signa dabit: solem quis dicere falsum / audeat?* In comparison with the earlier passage (438-439) this later one does however evince some lexical divergences which would appear to be significant. In the first place the later passage adds a *tibi* to the previous one’s simple *sol signa dabit*. This 2nd-person sing. dative pronoun (*sol tibi signa dabit*) is now positioned directly before a similarly 2nd-person sing. acrostical imperative: *icito*. It may therefore be noted that *signum* can mean “a (usu. prearranged) sign for action, signal (audible or, more rarely, visible)”.¹²⁵ If then the *signa* of 439 was just a subtextual reference to acrostical *MA VE PU*, this time *signa* is a subtextual reference to acrostical *icito*: the sun gives “you” a “signal” – “Kill Caesar!”.

The second point regarding Virgil’s modification to the wording of the earlier passage (438-439) concerns its second half, which now reads (463-464): *solem quis dicere falsum / audeat?*¹²⁶ Since *falsus* can mean “wrong”,¹²⁷ Virgil is here providing subtextual confirmation that the sun’s “signal” to kill Caesar was “right”. Two final observations may be made about the wording of this section. Firstly *solem ... falsum* is immediately preceded by *sol ... dabit*, which

¹²¹ Viz. *videmus* (451) and *videbis* (455). The second of these lines is framed by “hyperbolic” (so Erren 2003, 240) *omnia ... videbis*, which matches the cluefully “all-seeing” *Panopeae* of l. 437: subtextually speaking, when you reach this l. 455, “you will see all” of this two-part acrostic.

¹²² Cf. Maltby 1991, 421 (s.v. *obscenus*).

¹²³ Cf. n. 115 above.

¹²⁴ For such “coupling” as an etymological marker cf. Cairns 1996, 33.

¹²⁵ So *Oxf. Lat. Dict.*² 1940 (s.v.; sect. 8a), providing examples with *dare* and plural *signa*, as in the present passage.

¹²⁶ This wording “verwirrt” (Erren 2003, 242).

¹²⁷ So *Oxf. Lat. Dict.*² 739 (s.v.; sect. 2a).

ends the sentence beginning with *quid Vesper serus vehat* (461), which is an allusion to Varro's like-named *Menippean Satire* on dinner-parties. This allusion is "an extreme oddity, the effect of which verges on the humorous".¹²⁸ This "oddity" is made even odder by juxtaposition with the "unhumorous" order to kill Caesar: tyrannicide and table-manners as equally part of the sun's brief is very Virgilian impishness. The second and last observation pertains to the first line of the acrostic itself (466): *ille* (sc. *sol*) *etiam extincto miseratus* (sc. *est*) *Caesare Romam*. Here *miseratus*, which is highlighted by "auffällige, ja störende Brachylogie",¹²⁹ prompts Page to the following *dictum*:¹³⁰ "Notice how by the use of this word ... the sun is endowed with a living personality". This "living personality" enables the sun to utter an acrostical word of command whose purport contrasts pointedly with bleeding-heart *miseratus*: "Kill Caesar!"

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¹²⁸ Thomas 1988, I, 144.

¹²⁹ Erren 2003, 249.

¹³⁰ Page 1898, 237.

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