Vergil, in the fourth *Georgic*, gives us a delightful glimpse of an old man and his garden. Conington calls these lines 'a graceful interposition, sketching the plan for what might have been a fifth *Georgic*, and connecting the subject with his own personal observations.'

I do not see this passage as an 'interposition'—which, by the way, Page misquotes as 'interpolation'—but rather as part of a natural train of thought. After an imaginative description of a battle of the bees, Vergil instructs the beekeeper to avoid apian warfare by plucking the wings from the 'kings', thereby rendering the swarms leaderless. He then suggests the bees be encouraged to work by planting a garden near their hives with their favourite flowers and trees. To this end the beekeeper (cui talia curae) should, with his own labour (ipse), transplant thyme and pine trees from the mountains. At this point it is natural that Vergil's thoughts should turn, with graceful ease, to gardens. While he recognises in horticulture a theme worthy of poetical expression, he can find no place for it in his scheme for the Georgics, which he has so expressly laid down at the beginning of the poem:

\[\text{quid faciat laetas segetes, quo sidere terram} \\
\text{vertere, Maecenas, ulmisque adiungere vites} \\
\text{conveniat, quae cura boum, qui cultus habendo} \\
\text{sit pecori, apibusque quanta experientia parcis,} \\
\text{hinc canere incipiam.}\]

Nevertheless he permits this dalliance at the wayside, not so much as a disruption of, as an adornment to, his thought.

From the description that follows, as much as from the words 'memini me . . . vidisse', we realise, as Conington says, that here Vergil is drawing on his own experience. The old Corycian of the green fingers, by his labour and his skill, has transformed his few acres of infertile ground (nec fertillis illa iuvencis nec pecori opportuna seges nec commoda Baccho) into a flourishing garden and orchard. We read of lilies, roses, hyacinths, vervain and poppies;

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of produce that graces his table and fruit that loads his trees. He is the first to gather honey from his hives, and in his garden he has lime trees and luxuriant pines.

The picture is carefully and artistically contrived, the adjectives expressly and aptly chosen—alba lilia, vescum papaver, dapibus inemptis, tristis hiemps, mollis hyacinthi, aestatem seram, apibus fetis, spumantia mella. Scarcely anywhere is Vergil's mastery of words more apparent than in his choice of expressive adjectives, and so far we cannot fault him.

Unexpectedly, however, we find ourselves confronted with the phrase, 'illi tiliae atque uberrima pinus', and the imagination shies at the seeming incongruity. The adjective ube (etymologically connected with Sanskrit udhar, Greek oδοοε, Old High German utre, and English udder) inevitably conjures up an image of luxuriance, abundance, lushness and fertility that marries ill with the stiff, dark foliage and uncompromising starkness of any of the conifers.

Under the heading PINUS, Sargeaunt has the following entry: 'It is clear that at least two species are included under this generic name. One is a tree of the South and the lowlands, the other of the North and the hills. The first is the stone or parasol pine (Pinus pinea), a familiar object in the scenery of central and Southern Italy, but not coming much north of the famous forest which it makes near Ravenna. This is the tree of our first passage (pulcherrima pinus in hortis. Ec. VII. 65). The other is our own Scotch fir (P. silvestris), which is chiefly an Alpine, but occurs in the Genoese Apennines and as far south as the Parmesan district. This must be the tree of the Vesulan woods which concealed the wild boar (Ae. X. 708) and also that which the beekeeper is enjoined to bring from the high hills (Ge. IV. 112).' It matters not whether the Corycian has imported his pines from the hills, like the beekeeper, or whether his are the indigenous stone pines of the South. The extravagant ube is inappropriate to either. That Vergil was aware of the unhappy combination is hinted by Philargyrius: ipsius autem manu duplex fuit scritura 'pinus' et 'tinus'. Dare we suggest that the poet was unwilling to abandon ube and was searching for an alternative to the pine tree? Unfortunately 'tinus' is a palliative rather than a cure. The garden Laurus-tinus (Viburnum tinus12 has only a slightly better claim to luxuriance than the pine tree.

Ube is not a term favoured by the poets for arboreal description. The only other example, to my knowledge, is to be found in Ovid's arbor ibi niveis uberrima pomis; but here we have a mulberry tree, covered in snow

8. ibid. 141.
9. Lewis and Short, and Ernout.
13. Ovid. Metam. 4, 89.
white berries (later to be stained purple by the blood of the dead lovers), and further the adjective is modified by an adverbial phrase. It is not a description of the growth of the tree, but of the abundance of the berries, and therefore provokes an appropriate and satisfying image.

In common usage the adjective *uber* referred to the fertility of the land\(^{14}\), to the richness of the crops\(^{15}\), to the copious flow of water\(^{16}\), and, metaphorically, to the ornateness of style\(^{17}\). And it is in this sense that Vergil uses it in the only other context in which it is to be found in his writings:\(^{18}\) *centum urbes habitant magnas, uberrima regna*.

There is, however, the possibility, which Conington\(^{19}\) favours, that by *uberrima* we are to understand *plurima*. In the ancient commentary we read: *illi uberrima* scilicet: nam per naturam et tiliae et pinus steriles esse dicuntur. et aliter: subaudiendum *abundare*—and on the reading *tinus*: 'uberrima' hic pro *plurima*: fructum enim *tinus* nullum fert, sed multa semina facit.\(^{20}\) It is to be remarked that the first significance to be attached to the word is the literal sense of productive. But to make *illi* a dativus commodi and so elevate the whole affair to the near-miraculous is unnecessarily forced. The substitution of *plurima* is unsatisfactory. Are we to suppose Vergil so inept that, if he had meant to convey that the trees grew in great profusion, he could not, in fact, have written *plurima pinus*? He has given himself a precedent, in parallelled circumstances, by writing *oleaster plurimus*\(^{21}\), and the alliteration is not unpleasing. A metrical change in the fourth foot would not be an insuperable difficulty. For the verse:

\[
\text{mella favis; illi tiliae atque uberrima pinus}
\]

we might, for example, write:

\[
\text{mella favis; illi tiliaeque ac plurima pinus.}
\]

There is evidence of *que* followed by *atque*\(^{22}\) in Vergil's own works, and the form *ac* before the consonant *p* is not infrequent\(^{23}\). The spondaic fourth foot with one elision might well be considered more elegant than the original with its two. But this is presumption. Vergil is an acknowledged master of the techniques of his craft.

\(^{14}\) Umbria me genuit terris fertilis uberibus, Prop. 1,22,10; in uberi agro, Liv. 29,25,12.

\(^{15}\) seges spicis uberibus et crebris, Cic. Fin. 5,30,91; fruges, Hor. Carm. 4,15,5.

\(^{16}\) gravis imber et uber, Lucr. 6,290; aqua profuens et uber, Cic. Q.Fr. 3,1,2,3; rivi, Hor. Carm. 2,19,10.

\(^{17}\) uberiores litterae, Cic. ad Att. 13,50,1; motus animi, qui ad explicandum ornandumque sint uberes, Cic. de Or. 1,25,113.

\(^{18}\) Aen. III 106.

\(^{19}\) Conington, op. cit., p. 337.

\(^{20}\) Servii Commentarii, p. 331.

\(^{21}\) Georg. I 182.

\(^{22}\) This usage is similar to the Greek τε καί; Georg. I 182; ibid. III 434; Aen. VIII 486.

\(^{23}\) celeberrimum ac plenissimum, Cic. Imp. Pomp. 12,33; Phil. 2,15,39; Tusc. 1,17,49; et al.
That Vergil wrote *uberrima* is not in question; that he meant *plurima*, is. I believe that he intended to convey that our gardener's trees were particularly fine, well-grown, sturdy specimens—healthier and more flourishing than those of the surrounding countryside; and that he was well aware of the inappropriate nuances of the descriptive word he selected. The difficulty lies not with the poet's powers of expression but with the restrictions of the Latin language—that *egestas patrii sermonis* of which Lucretius more than once complains.

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