Rowing Strokes: Tentative Considerations on 'Shifting' Objects in Virgil and Elsewhere

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Summary. To denote the activity of rowing in Latin prose, as a rule a single specific verb is used: *remigare*. In poetry, more general verbs (*pellere* and its compounds) governing appropriate syntactical objects are preferred. Mostly it is the ship that is 'impelled', but the same may be said of the oars, of the sea (it is 'struck' by the oars, 'displaced' or else — by optical illusion — 'shoveled by'), and even of the rowers' breast (which is 'impelled' = struck by the oars' handles in heavy rowing). All such phrases, being more copious than the specific verb, come near to an effect of alienation; this is most obvious where one of the less conventional objects is chosen.

The objects employed may be classified as follows: oar = (immediate) 'tool', ship = 'vehicle' (indirect 'tool'), sea = 'field of action'. An analogous set occurs with analogous activities, e.g. ploughing and horse-riding: what is 'pressed' (*premere*) is the handle of the plough or the plough or the land ploughed; the horseman 'tosses' (*quatere*) the bridle, the horse or the land stamped on. The potential syntactical objects 'shift' from the 'tool' at hand to the more remote 'area' where the action is going on; again it is by using a less familiar type of object that we are invited to see things anew. But it is also brought home to us that all parts involved are factually and causally linked, so an all-embracing picture emerges.

The verbs discussed (*pellere*, *premere*, *quatere*, etc.) are notoriously poor in semantic content. In poetry this is a clear inconvenience (and indeed visual vividness is due to the nouns only). But Virgil and others often turn it into an advantage.

Functional and colourless verbs may serve as a common denominator of a variety of activities and thus convey a general message. In *Aen.* 8.3 *impellere* (*arma*) and *concutere* (*equos*) both carry the idea of violent motion; not incidentally, the verbs are virtually interchanged. A more elaborate example of what effects may be brought about by functional verbs interplaying is Numanus' speech *Aen.* 9.603–20 (general idea: the hardness of the old Latins). None the less there is full graphic force in all details. It is largely by 'shifting' and varying the objects in the way hinted at that the same wording can convey both a colourful description and a symbolic sense.

I REALIZE THE above title sounds rather enigmatic. This is not due to eccentricity nor to the wish to attract attention. The title simply explains from where I started. Quite accidentally I happened to notice that the activity of rowing can be described in Latin by a range of significantly different modes of expression. When 'rowing strokes' are mentioned in English, there is, I take it, general agreement as to what is actually 'struck': it is clearly the water. Not so in Latin. The apposite verb is 'pellere' or its compound 'impellere'. They have basically two meanings, not always neatly distinguished: (a) 'to beat', 'to strike'; (b) 'to set in motion'. Hence it is not really surprising that, when applied to rowing, '(im)pellere' may have various objects: the oars are 'set in motion', so is the boat, and it is the sea that is 'struck' or 'beaten'; a fourth type of object is rather unexpected; in heavy rowing the rower's breast is 'struck' by the handle of the oar.

It seemed that such a range of object types might be a more general syntactical scheme; and indeed a largely analogous spectrum of direct objects is to be found with some other verbs. Apparently the phenomenon has not been noticed so far, and it is the primary aim of this chapter to draw attention to it. In default of an established or a more fitting term it has seemed justifiable to call it a syntactical 'shift'. A further aim is to give the reader some idea of what semantic and poetic effects may be brought about by the scheme. But note the qualification in the subtitle: the following reflections and interpretations are preliminary and indeed tentative. They should not by any means be considered a chapter of a definitive syntax of Latin poetical diction; they are just meant to give a first impulse and to stimulate further discussion.

I

Let us look first at '(im)pellere' and rowing in detail. Here and in the following section completeness is aimed at as to the basic verbs in question.[1] It has proved helpful to consider synonyms as well. So quite a bit of lexical information has been collected, which is hardly conducive to easy reading. But a fairly general view seemed necessary to make it clear that the shifts we are dealing with are the exception rather than the rule, and also to find out whether our scheme is a specific feature of poetry at all.

1.   The oars are 'set in motion'. As far as I can see the only example is Virgil, *Aen.* 4.594 (Dido addressing her men, when she has realized Aeneas and the Trojans are about to leave) 'ferte citi flammas, date tela, impellite remos!'[2] In Vitruvius 10.3.6 'remi . . . cum manibus impelluntur et reducuntur . . .' 'impellere' clearly has the restricted technical sense of moving the oars backward (outside the water), whereas the 'pull' driving the boat ahead is expressed by 'reducere'. There are several more or less synonymous verbs: Ovid, *Met.* 1.294, *Pont.* 1.5.40 'ducere remos'; Virgil, *Aen.* 8.689f., Ovid, *Met.* 11.461f. 'reducere remos' (see above on Vitruvius 10.3.6), *Trist.* 4.1.9 'referre remos' (compare Zwierlein (1986: 145), Hillen (1989: 227) on Seneca, *Med.* 366f.), Seneca, *Ag.* 437f. 'adducti remi', cf. *Aen.* 5.141 'adductis . . . lacertis'; Ovid, *Am.* 3.8.43 'remum demittere', Silius 14.359 'remos mergere', (Livy 36.44.8 in a different sense: to stabilize the ship); Seneca, *Oed.* 540 'movere remos' (see Hillen 1989: 265), Manilius 4.284 'remos agitare' (cf. *Aen.* 5.211 'agmen remorum'); Valerius Flaccus 1.340 'remum concutere' (see also below pp. 280 on 'shaking' a ship, on 'shaking' horses pp. 281).[3]

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[1] In addition to the dictionaries (including *TLL* and the PHI CD-ROM data bank) de Saint-Denis (1935) has proved most helpful; see also Jal (1861), Segebade (1895), Mohler (1948), Bonjour (1984), Gianfrotta (1987).

[2] With the deverbative nouns 'pulsus' (Cic. *De or.* 1.153 'impetu pulsuque remorum', Laberius frg. 53 Ribbeck (67 Bonaria) 'palmularum pulsus') and 'impulsus/-io' (Vitr. 10.3.6 '[remi] impulsu vehementi protrudunt . . . navem'; Cassianus, *Conl.* 6.14.1 'remorum impulsione' (cf. Ov. *Met.* 3.662 'remorum in verbere'); Sidonius, *Epist.* 2.2.17 'impulsu') it cannot be decided whether the sense is that the oars are (passively) 'struck' or that the oars (actively) 'strike' the sea. Other verbs: Virg. *Aen.* 5.136 'intentaque bracchia remis' (just before starting the race), Silius 14.358 'tonsis aptare lacertos'.

[3] Some verbs emphasize the specific two-time rhythm of rowing (see n. 2 on Vitr. 10.3.6): Virg. *Aen.* 5.15, 8.108, 10.294 'incumbere remis' (after Homeric ἐμβαλέειν, *Od.* 9.489), *Aen.* 5.198 'procumbunt' (cf. *Aen.* 3.668 'proni'; note the charioteer's analogous posture *Georg.* 3.103, *Aen.* 5.147) = 'bend forward to the oars', clearly in moving the oars back outside the water. When 'drawing' (pulling) the oars the rowers 'rise' backwards: Virg. *Aen.* 3.207, 3.560, 5.189 'remis insurgere', *Aen.* 10.299 'consurgere tonsis' (*Aen.* 5.120 'terno consurgunt ordine

2. It is also the boat that is 'set in motion' or 'impelled': *Aen.* 5.119f. (the ship Chimaera) 'triplici pubes quam Dardana versu / impellunt'; Propertius 3.21.11 'propellite in aequora navem' (by rowing); Ovid, *Epist.* 3.153 'impellere remige classem'; *Met.* 8.102f. 'classis retinacula solvi / iussit et aeratas impelli [recc., edd.: *impleri* codd.] remige puppes'; Lucan 3.527 'impulsae tonsis tremuere carinae'; Silius 1.568 'ite citi, remis velisque impellite puppim' (modelled after *Aen.* 4.594?); metaphorically Cicero, *Tusc.* 4.9 '[orationem] dialecticorum remis propellere'. For 'navem [etc.] propellere' see further Ovid, *Epist.* 21.41f., *Trist.* 1.10.33, Lucan 3.1, 5.430f., Valerius Flaccus 1.494. Presumably it is just by chance that the simplex 'pellere' is nowhere found in this sense. Other verbs: Virgil, *Aen.* 5.116 'velocem Mnestheus agit acri remige Pristim', Ovid, *Epist.* 12.7f. (~*Met.* 4.706f.) 'iuvenalibus acta lacertis ... arbor' (the Argo), Livy 33.30.6 (~45.35.3) '[regiam navem] sedecim versus remorum agebant' (cf. 24.34.7), Lucan 3.535f. 'puppis / verberibus senis agitur', Florus 1.18.35 'classis ... remis quasi habenis agebatur'; Varro *Men.* frg. 49 Bücheler, Astbury (Nonius p. 533) 'nautae remivagam movent celocem', Virgil, *Aen.* 5.280 'tali remigio navis se tarda movebat', 10.195 'ingentem remis Centaurum promovet', Ovid, *Epist.* 13.101 'remoque move veloque carinam'; Vitruvius 10.3.6 '[remi] impulsu vehementi protrudunt ... navem'; Caesar, *B. G.* 3.14.6 'navigio remis incitato'; Valerius Flaccus 2.429 'iam remi rapuere ratem'; Virgil, *Georg.* 1.201f. 'qui adverso vix flumine lembum / remigiis subigit'.[4]

3. The grammatical object of 'pellere/impellere/propellere/pulsare' is the sea: Ennius, *Ann.* 377 Skutsch 'caeruleum spumat sale conferta rate

remi' may well have this meaning, 'remi' standing for 'remiges', but is generally assumed to mean 'there are three rows of oars, one above the other'), Val. Flac. 1.450 'insurgit transtris et remo Nerea versat', 2.13 'vela legunt, remis insurgitur'. The final phase of this backward move is meant in Enn. *Ann.* 218 Sk. 'poste recumbite', 219 'pone petunt', and in Luc. 3.543 'in transtra cadunt' (pace Maurenbrecher, *TLL* s.v. *cado* col. 22. 12f.). In Virg. *Aen.* 3.384 'lentandus remus in unda', the physical resistance of the water is stressed: the oars will be 'bent' (and therefore rowing will be 'slow': a play on the ambiguity of 'lentus'); similarly Catul. 64.183 'lentos incurvans gurgite remos' (cf. *Ciris* 461; Ov. *Trist.* 4.1.9), Sen. *Ag.* 437f. 'properat iuventus omnis adductos simul / lentare remos' (cf. Virg. *Aen.* 7.28 'in lento luctantur marmore tonsae', 8.89 'remo ut luctamen abesset').

[4] At times the rowers' activity is described as 'lifting' the ship: Virg. *Aen.* 10.294f. 'validis incumbite remis; / tollite, ferte rates', Luc. 3.526f. 'remige classis / tollitur', Val. Flac. 1.340 'ratem ... tollere remo', cf. Silius 14.379f. 'exsurgens ictibus alnus / caerula ... findit.' *Aen.* 10.207f. 'it gravis Aulestes centenaque arbore fluctum / verberat adsurgens' deserves special attention: 'adsurgens' goes with (king) Aulestes, but he clearly does not row himself, so his ship must be meant (on this type of ambiguity see Hahn (1958: 249–52); Harrison (1991: ad loc.)). Virgil makes us see the rowers' drawing up when pulling and the ship being 'lifted', carrying its captain, as one single move. For an analogous 'rising' of chariots see *Georg.* 3.108f. (modelled after Hom. *Il.* 23.368f.).

pulsum'; Cicero, *Acad.* frg. in Nonius p. 162 'eius (maris) unda, cum est pulsa remis, purpurascit'; Catullus 64.58 'iuvenis fugiens pellit vada remis'; Virgil, *Georg.* 1.254 'infidum remis impellere marmor'; Tibullus 2.5.33f. 'ire solebat / ... pulsa [abl.] per vada linter aqua'; Propertius 3.22.11 'propellas remige Phasim', 4.2.8 'remorum auditos per vada pulsa sonos'; Ovid, *Met.* 3.657 'impellit properantibus aequora remis'; *Trist.* 4.1.10 'pulsa bracchia iactat [varia lectio: pulsat] aqua'; *Pont.* 3.1.1 'aequor ... pulsatum remige'; *Pont.* 4.10.33 'remus iter pulsis ... fecerat undis'; Lucan 2.702 (not explicitly about rowing) 'impulsum rostris sonuit mare' (cf. Petronius 89 v. 34 'pulsumque marmor abiete'); *Octavia* 315 'resonant remis pulsata freta'; Isidorus, *Orig.* 19.2.7 'palmula est extrema latitudo remi ... qua mare impellitur'.[5]

As may be seen from more specific synonyms three different meanings should be distinguished:

(a)   To 'beat' the sea, to 'churn it up'. This is a means and an effect of rowing, not however its purpose proper[6]. This meaning clearly prevails in Ennius, *Ann.* 377, Cicero, *Acad.* frg., Lucan 2.702 and *Octavia* 315, where attention is drawn to the visible and audible effects of rowing. Synonyms are 'quatere/percutere', 'ferire', 'verberare', 'icere', 'verrere'; more general: 'agere', 'sollicitare', see e.g. Silius 13.241f. 'tonsae / percussere fretum'; Virgil, *Aen.* 3.290 = 5.778 'feriunt mare'; *Aen.* 10.207f. (the ship) 'Aulestes centena ... arbore fluctum / verberat'; Ovid, *Met.* 3.662 'remorum in verbere perstant'; Lucan 3.535f. 'puppis / verberibus senis agitur'; Silius 11.490 'centeno fractus spumabat verbere pontus'; 14.360f. 'verberibus torsere fretum, salis icta frequenti / albescit pulsu facies' (cf. [Ovid], *Epist.* 18.23 'dare verbera ponto', of swimming, cf. Statius, *Silv.* 1.3.73f. 'natatu / plaudit aquas'); 'ictus' = 'rowing stroke': Virgil, *Aen.* 5.198, Ovid, *Am.* 3.6.3, *Met.* 11.463; Silius 6.361, 13.243, 14.379; Valerius Max. 3.2.10; Pliny the Younger, *Paneg.* 82.1; Ennius, *Ann.* 377 Skutsch

[5] See further Ov. *Epist.* 3.65 'canescant aequora remis'; Silius 14.360f. 'salis icta frequenti / albescit pulsu facies'; Sidonius, *Epist.* 2.2.17 'spumoso canescit impulsu'. In Tac. *Ann.* 2.23.2 'aequor mille navium remis strepere aut velis impelli' the second verb may be understood 'in common' of both rowing and sailing. Goodyear (1981: ad loc.) expresses his doubts as to the soundness of the textual transmission, as others have done before him: ' ... a freakish expression ... I am much inclined to print *inpleri* or to obelize'. Sen. *Ag.* 161 'maria pigro fixa languore impulit' is different: Iphigenia has 'released' the sea's standstill in an abstract sense. There are remarkable 'hypallagai' (syntactical inversions) in Luc. 9.319f. 'remis actum mare [nom.] propulit omne / classis onus [acc.]' instead of 'remi classis onus per mare [or mari] propulerunt', and in Ov. *Met.* 6.512 'admotum ... fretum remis' (see Bömer (1969: ad loc.), Görler (1982: 78)).

[6] Note that 'verberare' can also mean futile 'beating' of the air ('sawing the air') and fluttering: Virg. *Aen.* 5.377 (the boxer Dares) 'verberat ictibus auras', *Aen.* 10.892f. (a wounded horse) 'tollit se ... et calcibus auras / verberat', *Aen.* 11.756 (an eagle attacking a snake) 'simul aethera verberat alis'.

'verrunt ... mare'; Virgil, *Georg.* 3.201 'aequora verrens' (not explicitly about rowing), *Aen.* 3.208 = 4.583 'caerula verrunt' (in *Aen.* 5.141 'adductis spumant freta versa lacertis' and *Aen.* 10.208 'spumant vada marmore verso' the past participles are more likely to be derived from 'vertere'); Lucan 9.319 'remis actum mare'; Valerius Flaccus 2.77 'remis agitur mare'; Virgil, *Georg.* 2.503 'sollicitant ... remis freta' (on the moral undertone see below p. 284 n. 23). In Lucan 1.370f. (Caesar's soldier) 'Oceani tumidas remo compescuit undas, / fregit et ... Rhenum' the meaning comes near to 'subjugation'. With some verbs the idea of 'turning up' prevails, and thus the image of 'ploughing' is evoked: 'vertere', 'versare', 'convellere', 'fodere', 'torquere', 'eruere', 'subigere': Virgil, *Aen.* 3.668 'vertimus ... aequora remis'; 5.141 'spumant freta versa'; 10.208 'spumant vada marmore verso' (but the past participles may be derived from 'verrere' see above); 5.119f. (the ship Chimaera) 'triplici pubes quam Dardana versu / impel-lunt'[7]; 5.143, 8.690 'convulsum remis ... aequor' (imitated *Anthologia Latina* 388ᵃ = 384 Shackleton Bailey 15); Silius 14.359 'fodit aequora remis'; Catullus 64.13 'torta ... remigio ... unda'; Ovid, *Fast.* 5.644 'remis ... torsit aquas' (cf. Virgil, *Aen.* 3.208 = 4.583 'torquent spumas'); Silius 14.360 'verberibus torsere fretum'; Ovid, *Epist.* 5.54 'remis eruta ... aqua'; *Am.* 3.8.43 'freta ... eruta remo'; Valerius Flaccus 1.471 'pontum remo subigit'. The image of ploughing is even more obvious when the sea is said to be 'furrowed' (not so much, of course, by the oars as by the boat rowed); typical verbs are 'sulcare', 'scindere', '(in)findere', 'secare': Ovid, *Met.* 4.706f. (the sea-monster) 'velut navis ... / sulcat aquas, iuvenum ... acta lacertis'; Silius 14.379f. 'alnus / caerula nigranti findit spumantia sulco'; Ovid, *Met.* 11.463 'ictu scindunt freta'; *Ars* 2.671 'mare remigiis findere'; *Fast.* 3.586 'findite remigio ... aquas'; [Ovid], *Epist.* 18.146 (Leander) 'findam corpore (aquas)'; Virgil, *Aen.* 5.142 (the rowers) 'infindunt pariter sulcos'; Valerius Flaccus 1.688f. 'pinus / infindit ... salum' (not on rowing); Virgil, *Aen.* 5.218f. (on rowing) 'secat ... [the ship] Pristis / aequora'.

(b) To 'displace' the water. This technical meaning seems dominant in Ovid, *Am.* 2.11.5 'ne quis remo freta ... moveret' (but see below), *Pont.* 4.10.33 'remus iter pulsis ... fecerat undis', Lucan 5.448f. 'classes ... tonsis / aequora moturae'. A more specific verb is 'dimovere'; in the extant texts it is used only with reference to swimming (which may be due to chance): [Ovid] (on Leander) *Epist.* 18.80 'dimotae corpore ... aquae', 19.48 'lentaque dimotis bracchia iactat aquis', *Met.* 4.708 (the sea-monster threatening Andromeda) 'fera dimotis impulsu pectoris undis [sulcat aquas]'; compare Tibullus 1.4.12 'placidam niveo pectore pellit aquam',

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[7] 'Versus' = action of 'turning', it is often taken to mean 'tier of oars', but here the primary meaning clearly prevails; cf. Val. Flac. 1.450: 'versare' = to row.

[Tib.] 3.5.30 'pellitur unda manu'; Ausonius, *Mos.* 344 'flumen pepulisse natatu'.

(c) In some instances the idea may be that by rowing the sea is 'set in motion' (the second basic meaning of 'pellere/impellere'). This sounds like a paradox, but when there is no land in view to serve precisely as a fixed base this may be a credible subjective impression. 'Impellere marmor' (Virgil, *Georg.* 1.254) may well point to the relativity of the ship's movement[8]; likewise, when rowing against the wind, one may wonder whether the ship is actually moved or whether the sea is 'shovelled' by the boat.[9] See further Ovid, *Am.* 2.11.5 'ne quis remo freta longa moveret' (i.e. the sea in all its width, not just the stretch beaten by the oars), *Met.* 3.657 'impellit properantibus aequora remis'.

4. The fourth type of object is rather unexpected: Ennius, *Ann.* 218 Skutsch 'poste recumbite vestraque pectora pellite tonsis', Lucan 3.543 'remis pectora pulsant'.[10] At first sight, it sounds odd that the rowers should 'strike' or indeed 'shake' their own breasts. But it is a realistic feature; in the 'pull', the oars are in fact 'drawn' towards the breast: Ennius, *Ann.* 219 Skutsch (not necessarily the same context as 218) 'referunt ad pectora tonsas', Ovid, *Met.* 11.461f. 'reducunt / ... ad fortia pectora remos', *Trist.* 4.1.9 'refert ... ad pectora remos', Silius 13.241 'revocatae ad pectora tonsae', and when 'pulled' forcefully they will touch the chest.[11] Of course, 'pectora pellere' is hyperbolic, a symbol for fast

[8] This is, however, hardly true of the alleged Homeric model Il. 7.5f. ἐλάτῃσι/πόντον ἐλαύνοντες. David West has suggested in the discussion and in subsequent correspondence 'marmor' in *Georg.* 1.254 might have connotations of marble proper, smoothness, colour, above all rigidity: 'It seems to hint at the perversity of man in daring to attempt to set "*infidum marmor*" in motion.' Virgil does indeed in some passages stress the unnatural character of navigation (see below p. 284 n. 23). But 'to set marble in motion by rowing' amounts to an outright adynaton, and one may wonder whether this fits in with the context.

[9] See Lucr. 4.389f. ' ... fugere ad puppim colles campique videntur,/ quos agimus praeter navem ...'. Tränkle (1960: 84f.) may well be right on Prop. 3.22.11: 'propellas remige Phasim', 'das Schiff erscheint stehend und das Wasser fortgestoßen'; Fedeli (1985: ad loc.) thinks of the water 'displaced'. It is tempting to assume an analogous notion of relativity in Catul. 61.14 'pelle humum pedibus': could not the dancer give the impression of actually 'pushing' the soil under his feet? See further Ov. *Met.* 4.711f. (Perseus) 'pedibus tellure repulsa / arduus in nubes abiit', 6.512 'admotum ... fretum remis [see note 5] tellusque repulsa est', 2.786 'inpressa tellurem reppulit hasta'.

[10] Possibly an echo of Ennius, G. B. Conte (1970: 135), but see O. Skutsch ad *Ann.* 218. Compare Val. Flac. 1.369 'percusso pectore tonsa', Silius 11.489f. 'adductis percussa ad pectora tonsis'.

[11] In a paper of 1982 (Würzburger Jahrbücher für die Altertumswissenschaft, Neue Folge 8, p. 77 n. 25) I had quoted with modified approval G. Maurach (1975: 480) who had taken 'pectora pellite tonsis' to be a 'Figur der Umkehrung'. Otto Skutsch, in a letter of 25 Feb. 1983, protested: ' ... eines verstehe ich nicht: was soll denn poste recumbite vestraque

rowing (just as 'churning up the sea' may be indicative of the rowers' effort, see above p. 274).

It is worthwhile to try a systematic (and, for that matter, somewhat pedantic) classification. Rowing, as opposed to running, for example, is a complex procedure. Motion is brought about indirectly. First a 'tool' (the oar) is moved (object type 1). Thereby the 'vehicle', an 'indirect tool', is set in motion along with the rower (type 2). Type 3 may be called 'field of action'. This label is no more than a stop-gap expedient, as three different aspects are meant. In rowing, the sea is the place where the operation is going on and which is traversed by rowing. The sea is also affected by the rowers' activity; it is 'beaten' by the oars; sometimes the second meaning of 'pellere' seems to prevail and the idea is that the sea is 'set in motion'. These aspects cannot always be kept apart, so a general term has been chosen. Object type 4 may be described as 'parts affected secondarily' (one might also say κατὰ συμβεβηκός); it is in no sense a purpose of rowing that the rowers' breasts are beaten. 'Beating' the breast is a secondary or side-effect. But being a highly typical side-effect it may stand symbolically for rowing itself.

II

Looking at this classification, analogous cases come to mind, for instance ploughing and horse-riding; further candidates are flying[12] and charioteering[13].

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pectora pellite tonsis fuer eine Figur sein? Ein alter Ruderknecht wie ich weiss, dass man sich hintenueberlegt und dann die Stange an die Brust zieht. Ich habe Maurach nicht zur Hand und kann mir nicht denken, was er will; nur scheint mir sicher zu sein, dass er nie in einem richtigen Ruderboot gesessen hat (Vergnuegungskaehne zaehlen nicht mit).' In a seastorm, the oars may 'fall uselessly onto the breast' (Stat. *Theb.* 5.375 'remi . . . cadunt in pectus inanes') or, worse, break and then strike ('percutere' in a more literal sense) the chest (Val. Flac. 3.477 'percussit . . . deceptum fragmine pectus').

[12] See e.g. Catul. 66.53 (Zephyrus?) 'impellens nutantibus aera pinnis' (cf. Virg. *Georg.* 1.254 'remis impellere marmor'). Flying is frequently compared to rowing: Aesch. *Ag.* 52 πτερύγων ἐρετμοῖσιν ἐρεσσόμενοι, Lucr. 6.743 (birds approaching Lake Avernus) 'remigi oblitae pennarum vela remittunt', Virg. *Aen.* 1.301, 6.19 'remigium alarum'. For details see Luck-Huyse (1996: 205–9, 213–15).

[13] Typically, 'flectere' is used with the reins (e.g. Virg. *Aen.* 12.471, Ov. *Met.* 2.169 (Bömer: ad loc. 'habena i.q. currus'), Val. Flac. 5.436), with the horse (e.g. Virg. *Aen.* 1.156, 9.606, 10.577; Ov. *Pont.* 2.9.58 'colla . . . velocis flectere doctus equi'), with the 'vehicle' (e.g. Ov. *Met.* 10.447 'plaustrum'), and with a 'field of action' (Ov. *Ars* 2.428 'iter'); cf. Cic. *Fin.* 5.49 (translation from Homer) 'quin puppim flectis', Virg. *Aen.* 5.28 'flecte viam velis'. There is a remarkable sentence with 'regere' in Virg. *Aen.* 12.624: 'currumque et equos et lora regebat' — a 'vehicle', a 'secondary tool' (if the horses may thus be called), and an 'immediate tool' governed by one and the same verb. See now Dingel (1997) on *Aen.* 9.402,606,590,776.

Ploughing: what is 'pressed' ('premere') is (1) the handle, a 'direct tool': Ovid, *Fast.* 4.825 '[Romulus] premens stivam designat moenia sulco'; compare *Met.* 8.218 'stiva ... innixus arator'; (2) the plough, 'indirect tool' or 'vehicle' as it were: Lucretius 5.209 'terram pressis proscindere aratris', Virgil, *Georg.* 2.203 'presso ... sub vomere', 2.356 'presso ... vomere' (*Georg.* 1.45 'depresso ... aratro') etc.; (3) the 'field of action': Virgil, *Aen.* 10.78 (Juno, denouncing the Trojan's hostile behaviour) 'arva aliena iugo premere atque avertere praedas'. This is my only example for this type of object[14], and I am aware it is a disputed case. It has been argued that 'iugo premere' should not be taken in the literal sense (e.g. by Eva Baer, *TLL* s.v. *iugum* 641.26f. classifying the passage under the heading 'in imagine et translate, praevalente vi subigendi', and by Harrison (1991: ad loc.)). In fact, the Trojans had not had much opportunity for ploughing so far (excepting the 'sulcus primigenius' mentioned in *Aen.* 7.157). But Juno clearly overstates her case (as Aeneas does in *Aen.* 8.118); note also that she, to an extent, echoes, with reversed premises, the boasts of Numanus (*Aen.* 9.608, 612f., see also below p. 285) '[iuventus] ... aut rastris terram domat aut quatit oppida bello ... semperque recentis / comportare iuvat praedas et vivere rapto'; thereby, she (and the poet, we may surmise) counterbalances the conception of the Trojans being effeminate. Moreover, 'iugum', to the best of my knowledge, is not used elsewhere in Virgil in the alleged metaphorical sense (for 'iugum' = plough see *Ecl.* 2.66, 4.41). So there is good reason to keep to the plain literal sense: 'the Trojans plough other people's soil'.

Horse-riding: the relevant verb is 'quatere'. It is (1) the reins that are 'shaken' (a 'tool'), (2) the horse (a sort of 'indirect tool' or 'vehicle'), and (3) the field stamped on (for details see below p. 280).

There seem to be no strictly analogous instances of object type 4: parts affected as a side-effect, neither with 'premere' nor with 'quatere'. But Virgil, *Georg.* 1.43-6 may well be compared: 'vere novo ... depresso incipiat iam tum mihi taurus aratro / ingemere et sulco attritus splendescere vomer'. Virgil would hardly have been satisfied with a farmer who made his oxen groan for nothing and who had simply polished his plough in a furrow suited to this end. But both the groans of the draught-cattle and the shine of the share are easily understood as a symbol, and a highly

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[14] In *Aen.* 10.295f. a furrow ('sulcus') is 'effected' object of 'premere': 'inimicam findite rostris / hanc terram sulcumque sibi premat ipsa carina' (modelled after or imitated by an unknown poet, quoted Isid. *Orig.* 1.37.3 = Morel/Büchner inc. 35 'pontum pinus arat, sulcum premit alta carina'). This is a peculiar case. Ships are often said to 'furrow' the sea, but here a real furrow is in mind, to be drawn in the enemy's soil. There is a strong connotation of violence, and by the conflation of images the reader is reminded that both seafaring and agriculture are original sins (see also below p. 284).

graphic picture of heavy ploughing emerges. Just so, in Horace *Epod.* 1.26, a 'good number of oxen put to shining ploughs' symbolizes assiduous tilling. *Georg.* 2.211 'rudis enituit impulso vomere campus' reads like an 'inversion' of 1.45f. 'incipiat . . . / . . . sulco attritus splendescere vomer'. In fact, the friction is mutual and fresh (wet) clods do shine; there is a common notion of freshness and brightness, brought about by hard work.[15]

The semantic and syntactical findings are basically the same; one given verb may govern a variety of objects which may be classified as in the case of rowing.

	1 (immediate) 'tool'	2 'vehicle' ('indirect tool')	3 'field of action'	4 'parts affected secondarily'
Rowing *(im)pellere*	oar	boat	sea	the rowers' breast
Ploughing *premere*	handle (*stiva*)	plough	land ploughed	(the oxen, the ploughshare)
Horse-riding *quatere,* *concutere,* *quassare*	bridle, reins	horse (see below p. 281)	(battle-) field, hostile towns	(see below p. 281)

Presently, some typical passages will be examined in detail. But let us begin with a general consideration. What happens in making either the oars or the ship or the sea syntactical objects of '(im)pellere' may be called a shift. 'Shifting objects' are a well known phenomenon; quite a few Latin verbs take different types of direct objects, i.e. in the accusative case. Most prominently, a group of verbs denoting some sort of adding or detracting (as the grammarians put it) may govern both the movable thing added or detracted, and the unmoved, i.e. the person or thing to which the movable is given or from which it is taken away: 'murum oppido circumdo', 'oppidum muro circumdo'. At first sight, our examples, too, may seem to belong to this same group, as the oars, being the smaller and more movable thing, appear both as direct object and as the instrument. But our type of shifting is different. That is most obvious in the passive forms: 'donatur' has not the same meaning in 'liber donatur' and in 'amicus donatur'. In the first case it means: 'the book is moved from one possessor to another'; in the second 'the friend is enriched by a gift'; in the city-wall example 'circumdatur' means either 'is built' or 'is walled in'. Not so in our examples. Be it the oar or the boat or the sea, 'impellitur' means 'is

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[15] On other connotations of 'terere' see below p. 285.

beaten', 'is pushed or impelled' throughout; the handle of the plough ('stiva'), the plough itself, the field are all 'pressed down'; the bridle, the horse, the battlefield are 'shaken' or 'battered'. In all these instances the objects are acted upon the same way, there is no change in meaning. In the grammatical sense they are all direct external objects. The 'shifting' occurs in that the handle, both of the oar and of the plough, and the bridle are literally in the hand(s) of the acting subject, whereas the sea 'is impelled' and the battlefield 'is shaken' indirectly. It is a shift from nearness to distance. And that is why the latter expressions are suited to metaphorical use as well, — and some of our examples have, indeed, been read as such (see above p. 277, below p. 285). On the other hand, when what is physically near functions as syntactical object, the description, as a rule, seems more vivid and graphic.

III

But let us not rashly generalize. The respective currency of the single modes of expression has to be taken into account as well. Some of the verb-object phrases we have looked at are frequent and widespread, nay stereotypes. These, evidently, like familiar and thus faded metaphors are of small interest; they are inconspicuous and with them hardly any graphic quality is felt. It is when the poet has 'shifted' to a less familiar object that interesting effects may be brought about.

The most common syntactical object of 'pellere' is the ship: 'to set' or 'to keep the ship in motion'. To 'impel the oars' and to 'impel the sea' are unusual, and so the procedure of rowing, familiar to most readers, is alienated; it is brought to our attention that the oars have to be moved first, and laboriously so, to get a ship into motion. In *Aen.* 4.594 (see above p. 271) this contrasts with 'citi' in the same verse, and thus we come to realize that Dido's men have little chance to catch up with Aeneas and the Trojans. In *Georg.* 1.254 'remis impellere marmor', as has been remarked, the direction seems inverted: it is not the ship that is 'impelled' across the sea, but the sea by the ship, 'impelled' by the oars. There may be a connotation of moral reproach: seafaring comes near to a reversal of nature (see below p. 284). But it carries also much visual quality. Primarily, it is the ocean the poet makes us see, and the oars 'pushing it aside' or even 'setting it in motion'. But indirectly — and quite irresistibly — the rowers and their efforts are 'viewed' as well.

Here a typical feature of the shifts in hand may be noticed. All parts involved in rowing (the rower, the oars, the ship, the sea) are factually and causally linked; hence whatever part functions as the syntactical object,

the description will still, as a rule, work up to an all-embracing picture. To be sure, the actual stress may vary greatly, there are shades and nuances, and indeed it is the essential function of our phenomenon to shift the point of view. In *Aeneid* 4.594 all attention is focused on the rowers' immediate task, to 'move the oars'; in *Georgics* 1.254, on the other hand, the act of rowing is seen as if from a distance, at the widest angle possible and in a very general sense, 'mankind challenging the sea', as it were. But no aspect of the activity in question has ever totally faded out.

That is also why in Ennius, *Ann.* 218 Skutsch the 'parts affected second-arily' (object type 4) can carry particular expressive weight; the coxswain's command 'pectora pellite tonsis' should be read as 'try your best', and we get a full picture of hard rowing. A more complex example of a symbolic side-effect is *Aeneid* 5.197–200 ' . . . olli certamine summo / procumbunt; vastis tremit ictibus aerea puppis / . . . tum creber anhelitus artus / aridaque ora quatit . . .'. Obviously, the 'trembling' of the ship is brought about by the 'vasti ictus', i.e. by the rowers' efforts. Yet it is not their primary goal to make the ship tremble. It is by a sort of repercussion that the ship quivers and rocks. What follows is no less telling. The rowers are 'shaken' by their own accelerated breath. It goes without saying that the rhythm coincides with the 'vasti ictus' (compare Lucan 3.527f. 'impulsae tonsis tremuere carinae / crebraque sublimes convellunt verbera puppes'; Valerius Flaccus 1.340 'concusso . . . ratem . . . tollere remo'; Silius 14.379 'anhelatis exsurgens ictibus alnus'). In the poet's eyes, all this is basically the same: various aspects of one homogeneous, concerted operation, a true symphony of tossing and rocking, preceded and indeed prompted by an analogous symphony from the spectators' part (*Aen.* 5.148–50). The Trojans' 'plausus fremitusque' makes the groves resound; it is then 'spread rolling' along the 'sheltered shores'; even the surrounding hills re-echo the cheering.

As to horse-riding, 'quatere' and its cognates often govern the reins ('lora', 'habenae') as their syntactical object: Virgil, *Aen.* 5.146f. 'immissis aurigae undantia lora / concussere iugis', 6.100f. (metaphorically, Apollo 'breaking in' his priestess) 'frena furenti / concutit', Ovid, *Am.* 2.16.50 ' . . . per admissas *concute lora iubas*' (note the hypallage: what is to be 'set loose' ('admittere') is clearly the reins ('lora'), not the horse's mane), Seneca, *Phaedra* 1006 'acer . . . habenis lora permissis quatit' (see Hillen (1989: 107)), Silius 16.439 'quatiuntur inania lora', 17.541 'largas Poenus quatit asper habenas', Statius, *Theb.* 10.218 'quassat habenas'.

Elsewhere it is the field that is 'shaken', i.e. stamped on: Ennius, *Ann.* 242 Skutsch 'totam quatit ungula terram' (compare 263, 431), Virgil, *Aen.* 8.595 'it clamor, et agmine facto / quadripedante putrem sonitu quatit ungula campum'. Here, it is primarily physical noise and vibrations that

are depicted, albeit with hostile undertones. In the following passages the connotation of 'upsetting' and 'overthrowing' prevails, but it is still strongly supported by the basic (physical) component: Lucretius 2.329f. 'circumvolitant equites mediosque repente / transmittunt valido quatientes impete campos', Virgil, *Aen.* 11.511–13 'Aeneas . . . / exploratores . . . / praemisit, quaterent campos', 9.608 'quatit oppida bello' (see below p. 285 for the context)[16]. Both are picturesque but also rather familiar poetical expressions, and so comparable to faded metaphors. Now Virgil, in three instances, applies 'quatere'/'concutere' to the horse: *Georg.* 3.132 (the horse-breeders) 'saepe etiam cursu quatiunt et sole fatigant [sc. equos]'; *Aen.* 8.3 '[Turnus] ut . . . acris concussit equos . . .'; *Aen.* 12.337–40 'equos alacer media inter proelia Turnus / fumantis sudore quatit, miserabile caesis / hostibus insultans: spargit rapida ungula rores / sanguineos mixtaque cruor calcatur harena'. In a way, the horse is the 'vehicle', so these passages may rightly figure in column 2 in our table. On the other hand, it is clearly not the rider's primary goal to 'shake' his horse (just as the rowers do not primarily labour to hit their breasts nor to make their boat tremble). The rider's true aim is to set the horse in motion; 'shaking' the horse is a side effect of fast riding. And if so, our texts might bette come under column 4. But no clear-cut decision is asked for. The horse's rocking is brought about by the fast movement; there cannot be one without the other. The poet, typically, has given preference to the expression which carries the stronger visual impact. The unusual and presumably newly coined verb-object phrase makes us realize that horse-riding is all shaking and tossing: the reins, the bridle, the horse, all are moved simultaneously and rhythmically, the horseman no less, and it is in the same rhythm that the soil is beaten, covered, in *Aen.* 12.337ff., with enemies slain in the battle. The details are gruesome, and they are forced upon us in full visual strength. This may be seen with 'insultans': the verb is frequently used in the extenuated metaphorical sense of 'taunting' — here, inescapably, the grim literal meaning comes to mind first.

To sum up: 'shifting' from a familiar to a less common syntactical object, without, of course, changing the general sense, is an effective

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[16] It is not by horses but by his ships that Caesar has 'shattered' the hostile coastline of Epirus in 48 BC (Luc. 5.489 'percussi medias alieni iuris harenas', a passage strongly reminiscent of Virg. *Aen.* 10.295 'inimicam findite rostris / . . . terram', see n. 14). Heyne points to a rather wild variation in Claud. 15.491: 'quassatis cupio tellurem figere rostris', the land is to be 'speared', as it were, by the shattering 'rostra'. In Stat. *Theb.* 5.409f. the sea and towns are shattered by turns: 'quatiunt inpulsibus illi / nunc freta nunc muros'. The general idea is hostility and violence, throughout; see below p. 283 for the manifold connotational links between the verbs we are dealing with ('pellere', 'premere', 'quatere' etc.).

stylistic device. Like a fresh metaphor, it makes us see things anew; so it may contribute a notable degree of precision and impact to a poetical text. It is a special case of what we are now accustomed to call 'effect of alienation'.

IV

But that is not yet the whole story. There is some sort of paradox in the technique we are discussing. The effects just mentioned, i.e. precision and pictorial vividness, cannot be brought about by the verbs. 'Pellere', 'premere', 'quatere' etc. are all remarkably poor in semantic content. Necessarily so: verbs more specific and graphic govern, as a rule, a limited range of objects, and vice versa: if a verb admits of a great number of objects, it is of necessity colourless and of a general character. This is clearly an inconvenience, but Virgil has turned it into an advantage — and this brings us to another feature of his art. He makes the more general and colourless verbs serve a specific poetic purpose. Being applicable to a variety of fields, they may function as a sort of common denominator and thus express a general idea. First, a short example (Virgil, *Aen.* 8.3): '[Turnus] ut ... acris concussit equos utque impulit arma ...'. Fordyce (1977: ad loc.) paraphrases: 'threw his mettlesome horses into violent motion', and takes 'impulit arma' to mean 'struck his shield with his spear'. This is probably correct, but none the less the wording is peculiar. If just fragments of the line had been preserved, the two verbs plus the two objects, and we were free to assign them, it is a safe bet that many would give the horses to 'impellere' and the weapons to 'concutere'.[17] True, it is not an outright syntactical exchange as in *Aeneid* 6.847f.: 'excudent alii spirantia mollius aera / ... vivos ducent de marmore vultus ...'. This is a notorious case: 'excudere' fits the marble, 'ducere' only and exclusively the bronze.[18] Here, 'concutere equos' may be explained as a 'shifted object'. It has been noted that 'concutere equos' gives a lively impression of horse-riding when seen within the range of 'quatere habenas, iubam, terram' etc.; there are also some vague parallels for 'impellere

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[17] See e.g. Silius 2.71 'cornipedem impellere', 7.697 'equum impellere'; Ov. *Met.* 1.143 (War personified) 'crepitantia concutit arma', 7.130 'concutit arma', 12.468 'arma ... concussit'. Virg. has 'quatere/quassare hastam' etc., but the meaning is different: to 'brandish' a spear, an axe, a firebrand or the like *Aen.* 9.521f., 10.762, 11.656, 11.767, 12.442.

[18] See Bömer (1952, 1965, 1967); a more general discussion of the phenomenon may be found in Görler (1985: 276); to the examples quoted there add Lucr. 2.1161f. 'conterimus ... boves et viris agricolarum,/ conficimus ferrum ...'.

arma'.[19] But it is still true that Virgil's first readers will have been puzzled just as we are.

Virgil must have been aware of this, and it may be taken for granted that he has not unreasonably preferred the verb-object relations as they stand. In fact he did not twist his language:[20] Both verbs are general in semantic content; so they can serve as a link. What Virgil, exchanging the objects, wants us to see is the common denominator which may be paraphrased as 'to set in violent and threatening motion'.

The phenomenon is widespread. It may have been noticed that the three verbs from which we started are not limited to the specific activities indicated in the above chart (p. 278); on the contrary, they are next to interchangeable: Turnus 'impels' horses, not oars or a boat, boats are 'shaken' no less than horses and the battlefields stamped on, and there is no need to prove that many things can be 'pressed' other than the plough and its handle. Indeed, there is a common denominator for 'impellere', 'quatere' and 'premere'. It is physical force and violence.

A highly telling example of what effects may be brought about by general verbs co-operating and interplaying is the speech of Numanus Regulus, Turnus' brother-in-law, praising the Old Latins' toughness and roughness (*Aen.* 9.603–20):

	durum a stirpe genus, natos ad flumina primum
	deferimus saevoque gelu duramus et undis;
605	venatu invigilant pueri silvasque fatigant,
	flectere ludus equos et spicula tendere cornu.
	At patiens operum parvoque adsueta iuventus
	aut rastris terram domat aut quatit oppida bello.
	omne aevum ferro teritur, versaque iuvencum
610	terga fatigamus hasta, nec tarda senectus
	debilitat viris animi mutatque vigorem:
	canitiem galea premimus, semperque recentis
	comportare iuvat praedas et vivere rapto.
	. . .

[19] *Aen.* 8.528f. 'arma . . . vident pulsa tonare'. Luc. 7.16 'quaecumque fugax Sertorius impulit arma', may be modelled after *Aen.* 8.3 (*TLL* s.v. *impello* col. 537.84), and seems of more abstract character. Virg. *Aen.* 12.856 'nervo impulsa . . . sagitta', Ov. *Met.* 11.325 'nervo sagittam (impulit)', and Silius 1.318 'impulsa levi torquetur lancea nodo' are different: to 'launch' an arrow or a spear. Claud. *Rapt. Pros.* 1.210 'impellere ensem' seems fairly unique.

[20] Generally speaking, a poet is bound to comply with the rules of his language; to use de Saussure's well-known opposition, whatever he says ('parole') must conform to the linguistic system ('langue') employed. But there are degrees. An author may, deliberately, prefer a very rare or obsolete way of expression; he may also actualize what had been just a potentiality, so far, latent in the 'langue' and unnoticed, and in doing so, he (and his eventual followers) may gradually contribute to minor changes within the 'langue'.

620   ... sinite arma viris et cedite ferro.'[21]

The leitmotif of vv. 603–13 is hardness; 'iron', taken up most impress-
ively at the very end of Numanus' speech,[22] stands out as an obvious
symbol. There can be no doubt that allusion is made to the Age of Iron
in contrast to the Golden Age of the past. Agriculture and war, the two
basic activities Numanus boasts about are peculiar features of 'Jupiter's
Age' and had not been practised before mankind had been made worse
by iron: Virgil, *Georg.* 1.125 'ante Iovem nulli subigebant arva coloni';
Ovid, *Met.* 1.141–4 'iamque nocens ferrum ... / prodierat; prodit bellum ...
vivitur ex rapto' (compare *Aen.* 9.613). But it would be rash to gather
from the speaker's hateful tone and from his exaggerations that Virgil
himself disapproves unequivocally of the way of living praised by Numanus
(see *Aen.* 7.749 on Ufens). From *Georg.* 1.125–46 (and other passages) it
emerges that he, in fact, gives a dignity of its own to the laborious life in
the Age of Iron; agriculture, navigation, and warfare are not just original
sins as they appear in Ovid, *Met.* 1.121–44. None the less, what the human
race has been compelled to invent and to do under Jupiter's reign relates,
largely, to violence and force. Typically, in Numanus' list, warfare and
agriculture are put closely together and indeed interwoven (609–11); note
that the (iron!) 'hasta' serves both purposes.[23]

Again, the leading idea, hardness and violence, is conveyed by verbs
of general and interchangeable character, and indeed some of them seem
to have been interchanged. Strictly speaking, it is not the arrows that are
'bent' but the bow ('tendere', v. 606); 'flectere' fits the bow ('cornu', v.
606) no less than the horses (v. 606); 'domare terram' is a bold metaphor.
Again, if the rest had been lost and we had but a list of verbs and nouns

[21] For details see the comprehensive interpretations of Schweizer (1967: 14–22), Horsfall
(1971), and Dingel (1997: ad loc.).

[22] Most commentators and translators take 'cedite ferro' to mean 'renounce iron' (Hardie
1994: ad loc.), 'ferro' being ablative of separation. This is perfectly possible, but slightly
pleonastic after 'sinite arma viris'; so 'yield to iron' should at least be considered (R. A.
Schröder in his translation of 1952 ' ... weichet dem Eisen'; see Dingel (1997: ad loc.)).

[23] See also Thomas (1988) on *Georg.* 1.160 and 174. Elsewhere ploughing is equated to
'wounding the earth' by 'cutting in furrows' (e.g. *Ecl.* 4.31–3 'priscae vestigia fraudis ... quae
iubeant ... telluri infindere sulcos'). Numanus does not (nor could he) boast of seafaring,
the third original sin; but it is frequently described by Virg. as 'furrowing the sea' (e.g. *Aen.*
5.142 'infindunt sulcos', 158 'longa sulcant vada salsa carina', ~ 10.197; on *Aen.* 10.295f. see
n. 18) and thus closely approached ploughing and its connotations. *Georg.* 1.50–2 (about
ploughing) is almost ambiguous: 'ac prius ignotum ferro quam scindimus aequor [here: the
soil], / ventos [!] et varium caeli praediscere morem / cura sit.' Navigation in general is
sometimes thought of as 'violating' and 'inverting' nature: *Georg.* 1.136 'tunc [in the Iron
Age] alnos primum fluvii sensere cavatas', 2.503 'sollicitant alii remis freta caeca' (on *Georg.*
1.254 'remis impellere marmor' see n. 8); see further Hor. *Odes* 1.3.21–4; Tib. 1.3.37f.; Ov.
Met. 1.132–4.

we might easily have given the horses to 'domare'. We have just noticed that 'quatere' is typically said of horses and horse-riding. Now it is towns that are 'shaken' ('quatere', remember: boats are rocked by the rough sea, oars are shaken, the Argonauts 'shatter by their strokes' now the sea, now city-walls).[24] 'Fatigare' governs two very different objects: 605 'silvas', 609f. 'iuvencum terga', and so functions as a link, the idea being: 'we never get tired, neither by hunting in the woods nor by ploughing — it is "the others" who get tired by our activity'.[25] 'Premere', typically used of ploughing, in Numanus' speech (v. 612) governs 'canitiem'.

   Here it becomes imperative to ask a question put off so far. Are we to read 'canitiem galea premimus' as a literal description, i.e. are we to imagine a helmet pressed upon a white-haired head, or are we to understand metaphorically: 'Old age cannot harm us, as we simply go on fighting'? Similarly in v. 609 'omne aevum ferro teritur': does Virgil want us to understand 'Latins of all ages are in steady physical contact with iron', 'rub with iron', or is the meaning rather: 'All life is passed [a well attested sense of "terere"] under hard conditions'?[26] It has also been suggested that 'oppida quatere bello' (v. 608) is just a metaphor, 'to worry, to disquiet the enemies' towns'; similarily *Aen.* 10.78 'arva aliena iugo premere', adduced above p. 277 as an example for a 'shift' from 'tool' to 'field of action', has been read as 'suggesting not so much the literal yoke of ploughing as the metaphorical one of oppression'.[27]

   True, in no case can a metaphorical meaning be ruled out, nor should it be. If our common-denominator hypothesis is correct, there is indeed a metaphorical and general meaning in the passages discussed. And it can hardly be denied that symbolic sections of the kind may add up to what is sometimes called the poet's message. But it would be silly to conclude that the verses just cited should be read as abstract metaphors only; even more than that, it would be disastrous for our understanding of Virgil. It is a gross error to make this an either/or decision — it is possible, indeed essential to appreciate both, the full vivid graphic force of a description and the more abstract idea behind it. If there is any doubt, the literal sense and the live description should be seen first and in all details.

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[24] *Georg.* 3.132 (the horse-breeders) 'saepe etiam cursu quatiunt' (the horses); *Aen.* 9.91 'cursu quassatae [naves]'; Val. Flac. 1.340 'concusso ... remo'; Stat. *Theb.* 5.409f. (the Argonauts) 'quatiunt impulsibus illi / nunc freta nunc muros'.

[25] *Aen.* 8.94 'olli remigio noctemque diemque fatigant' is even bolder; cf. *Aen.* 7.582 'Martem fatigant' and Fordyce (1977: ad loc.).

[26] Looking at *Georg.* 4.114 'ipse labore manum duro terat' it is fairly clear that 'ferro teritur' is physical rubbing as well.

[27] Harrison (1991: ad loc.); in the reprint (1997) the literal meaning is given equal weight.

'Shifting objects' as hinted at may help to explain how and why the same wording can convey both a colourful description and a symbolic sense.

Let us finally ask whether we have really dealt with a specific feature of poetical art, rather than with a general syntactical scheme common to both poetry and prose. In this regard, first of all, the relative figures of the lexical material presented in sections I and II speak for themselves. Prose authors have been taken into account as well as poets, but the number of examples from prose has turned out to be almost negligible; rowing, ploughing, horse-riding etc. are not normally expressed in prose by a general verb governing a specific object. This should not come as a surprise. To mention rowing by calling it 'moving the oars' or 'moving a ship by oars' and to call ploughing 'pressing the plough' is not the most obvious and easiest way to do so; there are specific verbs which serve the purpose better: 'remigare', 'arare', 'equitare'. Consequently, whenever a verb-object phrase of the type we are looking at occurs in prose readers tend to be struck as if by something unfamiliar, and attention is drawn to the mechanism and to the details of the procedure, e.g. in Caesar, *B. G.* 3.14.6 'navigio remis incitato' (a skilful artifice in a naval battle) and in Vitruvius 10.3.6 (see above p. 271). This, as is manifest from the above lists, does not happen very often. Prose tends to be plain and straightforward.

Nearly all our examples have been found in poetry, more precisely in epic, i.e. in narrative texts. The latter restriction will be largely due to the semantic fields of the activities and verbs considered, and the picture may change with further research. That it is poetical texts is not due to chance. Far be it from us to attempt a definition of what are 'the' specific features of poetry. But it can hardly be disputed that graphic vividness, subtle focusing, changing perspectives from significant details to all-embracing tableaus are to be included, as well as a certain ambiguity and messages conveyed indirectly and by symbols. And if so, it should be clear from the above sections III and IV that the 'shifts' we have pointed to are very much in their right place in poetical texts.[28]

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[28] I have greatly profited from the discussion after the talk and from subsequent criticism by the editors and anonymous referees; to Nicholas Horsfall and to the editors I am also indebted for emending my English in this chapter.

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