Vergil Redux: Transitional elements from Vergil's *Eclogues* and *Georgics* adapted by 21st century poets

By

Abigail Siegel

A Thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies of
The University of Manitoba
in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

Department of Classics

University of Manitoba

Winnipeg

Table of Contents

Abstract

This thesis examines the ways in which three 21st century poets adapt Vergilian themes and text. There has been scant study of 21st century Vergilian poets, and so I take this opportunity to discuss such poets as a supplement to studies of previous poets in previous centuries. I analyze the 21st century poets' uses of Vergil's transitional themes from the *Eclogues* and *Georgics*, specifically ideas of the Golden Age, uses of transitional characters, and decline of the pastoral. The first chapter discusses Vergil's uses of both the agricultural and Hesiodic Golden Ages, which the modern poets adapt and make relevant in 21st century contexts. The second chapter highlights three characters from Vergil's *Eclogues* and *Georgics*, Alexis, Orpheus, and Hermes, and analyzes how they are adapted from Vergil as heralds of either the Golden Age or decline. The third chapter focuses on the decline of the pastoral, and specifically how the modern poets use Vergil's imagery of the evicted farmers of the *Eclogues* to illustrate the decline of the 21st century landscape in socio-political and agricultural terms, as well as the decline of pastoral literature. I conclude this thesis by discussing the future of Vergilian pastoral literature in the contexts of other transitional themes and authors.

Acknowledgments

First I would like to thank my advisor, Professor Egan, whose expertise of Vergil set me out on the path to writing about Vergil's idylls. I would also like to thank Professors Nau and Calder, the members of my defense committee, who have given me unending support and advice through their knowledge of Latin epic and ecological poetry respectively.

I would like to thank Sarah Legendre for her unfailing friendship, as well as the countless edits and comments she gave me on this thesis. I would also like to thank my partner Matt Driedger for his edits and comments, but especially for his love and support.

And finally I give thanks to my mother and my sister, who have encouraged me and pushed me to do my very best at what I love.

Introduction

Recent decades have seen a significant rise in English-language poetry that uses Vergil's *Eclogues* and *Georgics* as models in one way or another. Poetry of the 21st century, however, has not yet been extensively studied by scholars or critics. To address this lack of study concerning recent works and reception of Vergil, the function of this thesis is to provide a short survey of 21st century Vergilian poetry to build upon previous research conducted on the reception of the *Eclogues* and *Georgics* in English-language poetry. While there are many Vergilian poets and works in other languages that could be studied in similar contexts, this thesis provides a window into contemporary English -language poetry, while focusing on a particular Vergilian theme these specific contemporary poets adapt.

This thesis is the continuation of a long history of Vergilian reception, which I will briefly survey in this introduction. Most scholarly works on the English-language reception of Vergil's *Eclogues* and *Georgics* cover the range of time from the Late Medieval period to the late twentieth century. Scholarly works that conclude with studies from the late 20th century include works by Michael Paschalis et al. (2007), Charles Martindale et al. (1997), Theodore Ziolkowski (1993), and others that will be listed in the bibliography. Most of these only cover works through the 1990s, if even that far. *Pastoral Palimpsests* (Paschalis) is slightly more up-to-date than the others, but only because scholar Richard F. Thomas writes about Bob Dylan's later Vergilian works in his chapter in *Pastoral Palimpsests* called "Shadows are Falling: Virgil, Radnóti, and Dylan, and the Aesthetics of Pastoral Melancholy". Thomas has also written extensively about Bob Dylan and Vergil in his recent book *Why Bob Dylan Matters* (2017). Thomas

is one of very few scholars who has conducted in-depth study of 21st century Vergilian reception, which is why I do not include a discussion of Bob Dylan in this thesis. However, as a popular lyricist and American Nobel Laureate, Dylan is an important figure to remember when going forward with Vergilian reception.

While this thesis provides a survey of Vergilian reception, the focus will be on a specific theme: transition. Vergil "is often invoked at moments of personal or historical transition,"[1] and this rings especially true for the *Eclogues* and *Georgics*. In Late Antiquity and the Medieval period, Christian writers such as Augustine (*De civ. D.* 10.27) and Lactantius ("Of The Renewed World" in *The Divine Institutes*) studied and interpreted the fourth *Eclogue* as a presaging of the coming of Christ by interpreting the *puer* of Vergil's poem as Christ. This is one example of historical transition.

An example of personal transition is expressed in the journeys of Dante and his own interpretation of Vergil, as "a guide who cannot himself complete the course towards which he points his imitators, and who needs the benevolent reinterpretations of later readers to complete what in him is only suggested."[2] This quote refers to Vergil being unable to finish the *Aeneid* due to his untimely death. For Dante and Vergil, the transition never actually takes place; they are stuck on the edge of transition, and Vergil's position as a transitional poet makes him, as a character, the perfect guide for the fictional Dante. Dante's adaptation of Vergil is also transitional in and of itself in that "[t]he [Vergilian] tradition was rather inactive until Dante revived it in the fifteenth

---

[1] Burrow, Colin. 1997. "Virgils, from Dante to Milton." *The Cambridge Companion to Virgil*. Ed. Charles Martindale. Cambridge University Press.

[2] Burrow 1997, 81.

century."[3] As a result of Dante's influences, adaptation of Vergilian texts and themes increased.

In the late Renaissance — also a transitional period in scholarship due to the revival of the Classics — writers like Edmund Spenser and John Milton composed their own versions of Vergilian pastoral. Spenser's poetic series "The Shepheardes Calender" takes Vergil's structure of the *Eclogues* and appropriates similar pastoral themes, such as Corydon's forlorn love in *Eclogue* 2 which appears in "The Shepheardes Calender: January."[4] Spenser, like Vergil, uses the decline in the pastoral landscape — as presented by infertile earth, dead plants, and unfavorable weather — to reflect the loss and sorrow of the forlorn lover. Milton's "Lycidas" references *Eclogue* 5, using the landscape to reflect the grief of the shepherds at the loss of the youth Lycidas, also a shepherd from Vergil's *Ninth Eclogue*.[5]

Next I will discuss transition in the Vergilian poetry of the 20th century — itself a time of transition — not only in terms of scholarship, but also in terms of the conflict experienced (such as World War II) and proximity to the new millennium. A particularly reliable source is Theodore Ziolkowski's *Virgil and the Moderns*, in which he surveys Vergilian reception mainly within the 20th century. Included among the poets whom he mentions is the southern American poet Allen Tate, who wrote during the transitional period of WWII, evoking and adapting the text and themes from the *Aeneid* in his poem

---

3 Norton, Rictor. 2008. "The Homosexual Pastoral Tradition." Rictornorton.Co.Uk. 2008. http://rictornorton.co.uk/pastor00.htm.

4Spenser, Edmund. 1579. "The Shepheardes Calender: January by Edmund Spenser." *Poetry Foundation*, Poetry Foundation, https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/53208/the-shepheardes-calender-january.

5Milton, John. 1697. "Lycidas by John Milton." *Poetry Foundation*, Poetry Foundation, https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/44733/lycidas.

"Ode to Our Young Pro-consuls of the Air" (1943). Other 20th century poets are especially notable. Vita Sackville-West, who was certainly aware of Vergil even if she did not formally study his works, wrote *The Land* (1926), which, according to Cecil Day-Lewis and her own husband, included many themes and images tied to the *Georgics*.[6] Specific references and themes include the "sense of the humanity and dignity in the farmer's struggle with the soil," i.e. Vergilian agricultural *labor*.[7] Day-Lewis himself is famous not only as the Poet Laureate of the United Kingdom, but also for his artful translations of the *Georgics*.[8]

One of the most transitional authors in terms of Vergil's academic reception was T.S. Eliot. Eliot had undertaken a classical education, learning both Latin and Greek, though he was more at ease with Latin.[9] Significantly, Eliot became the first president of the Virgil Society in 1943.[10] Having been founded during a time of war, the Virgil Society, according to Jackson Knight, was supposed to "'link Virgil to the growing problems of the modern world'".[11] In other words, the Society was to use the transitional aspects of Vergil's works to understand the tumultuous times in which these scholars lived. Other Vergilian projects of Eliot's which had transitional aspects include his radio talk "Virgil and the Christian World" (1951), in which he discusses "not [*Eclogue* 4] itself, but the Christian 'Messianic' reading of the poem, which legitimized Virgil as

---

6 Ziolkowski, Theodore. 1993. *Virgil and the Moderns*. Princeton University Press. 106.

7 Ziolkowski p.109

8 Ziolkiwski p.110

9 Ziolkowski p.120

10 Ziolkowski p.130

11 Ziolkowski p.129

'suitable reading for Christians.'"[12] In his poetry series *Four Quartets* (early 1940s), there are "passages… that are reminiscent of the *Georgics*."[13]

The end of the 20th century marks a stopping point for many of the surveys conducted on Vergilian reception. The reason why, however, is unclear. Since the 21st century is well under way, there should be no reason why extensive studies have not yet been done. Ziolkowski may have an answer. In 1993 he stated that "we do not live in Virgilian times".[14] He believes that Vergil had lost authenticity for modern writers. He claims that Vergil survived up to the 90s because many writers and scholars of the early 20th century had a classical education. Furthermore, the 20th century was overflowing with events that provided fodder for poetry, such as the two World Wars and other major crises such as the Troubles - the sectarian conflict between the Catholics and Protestants in Ireland.[15]

However, new sources suggest that Ziolkowski's claim is untrue in contemporary contexts. Seamus Heaney himself was a transitional poet, not only in the contexts of the Troubles, but into the 21st century.[16] Heaney was one of the most prominent Vergilian poets in the 20th century. He was, and is, famous not only for his translations of Vergil's *Eclogues* and the *Aeneid*, but also for writing his own Vergilian pastoral poems using similar pastoral themes to reflect the hardships of the Troubles. His poem "Bann Valley

---

[12] Ziolkowski p.120

[13] Ziolkowski p.128

[14] Ziolkowski p.235

[15] Ziolkowski p.236

[16] 2013. "Obituary: Heaney 'the Most Important Irish Poet since Yeats'." The Irish Times. The Irish Times. https://www.irishtimes.com/culture/books/obituary-heaney-the-most-important-irish-poet-since-yeats-1.1510684.

Eclogue" is a direct adaptation of Vergil's *Fourth Eclogue*, in which he adapts the idea of Vergil's *puer* to his own hope for the new generation after the conflict of the Troubles. Because of the Troubles' large impact on his poetry from the late 1960s to the early 2000s and because of his prominence in the world of literature as Nobel Laureate and translator of ancient poetry, most of the scholarly studies of Vergilian pastoral in English have ended with Heaney. However, even Heaney has transitioned between the centuries, and there have been other transitional Vergilian writers who have yet to be studied.

In addition to prominent poets like Heaney who have helped transition the 20th to the 21st century, political and social circumstances have manifested in the 21st century that do in fact make these "Virgilian times". Climate change and land commodification have brought out more ecocritical poets, and the political chaos happening in places such as the United States has inspired new poetry discussing such tumultuous changes. Other poets have simply found Vergil's works to be good models for the themes they wish to convey, whether it is political turmoil, or feelings of love and loss. This thesis assesses the way in which contemporary poets adapt Vergilian themes to understand and interpret the struggles and changes occurring in recent decades.

The three modern poets I have chosen to survey are as follows. D.A. Powell is an American poet who lived through the AIDS crisis as a queer man in Northern California. A prominent poet, he earned his MFA at the Iowa Writers' Workshop.[17] Much of his poetry is focused on his experiences with the AIDS epidemic and his later collections

[17] From his bio on the Poetry Foundation.

have pastoral themes. While he has adapted Vergilian themes before - his work *Tea* (1998) references the Underworld from *Aeneid* book 6 - this thesis focuses on his 2009 collection *Chronic* (2009). The bulk of his collection addresses "consumerism, HIV, and homosexuality; there are poems that deal with military culture; there are themes and tropes lifted from [Vergil]'s *Georgics* and other literary sources."[18] While many of the poems in *Chronic* do indeed adapt Vergilian themes and text, this thesis focuses on two of his poems, which are direct adaptations of Vergil's second *Eclogue*, and what Daniel E. Pritchard calls "[t]he most accomplished fusion of [Vergil]'s bucolic mode and Powell's brilliant lyricism."[19]

Poet and anarchist philosopher Peter Lamborn Wilson wrote his own version of the *Eclogues* in 2011, titled *Ec(o)logues*, to give these bucolics a more modernly environmental flair. The poems of this collection adapt Vergil's *Eclogues*, as well as employing other adaptations of Vergil, such as Spenser's "Shephearde's Calender," in order to interpret poetically the negative effects of progress and development of the landscape which Wilson so adamantly opposes.[20] Vergil's pastorals are appropriate for Wilson to adapt on a personal level; he lives in the more pastoral Hudson Valley and so has been able to see the negative effects on the landscape, the "turning [of] nature into a

---

[18] From the interview with Powell "Turning The Paper Sideways". 2000; Pritchard, Daniel E. 2009. "Budding, Bucolic, D.A. Powell." Critical Flame. 2009. http://criticalflame.org/verse/0709_pritchard.htm.

[19] Pritchard, 2009.

[20] See Wilson, Peter Lamborn. 2004. "Take Back The Night: Ban Electricity." *Fifth Estate*, no. 365. https://theanarchistlibrary.org/library/various-authors-reconsidering-primitivism-technology-the-wild.
and Wilson, Peter Lamborn. 2014. "The New Nihilism | The Anarchist Library." *The Anvil*, no. 5: 21–27. https://theanarchistlibrary.org/library/peter-lamborn-wilson-the-new-nihilism.
.

source of profit for the managerial caste in the Hudson Valley."[21] As will be discussed more thoroughly in Chapter 3, Vergil experienced the same commodification and abuse of the landscape ca. 42 BCE.[22]

I discovered Los Angeles poet Gail Wronsky through some deep digging on the internet, as her work has not been discussed at length in any scholarly text. Specifically, I found her mentioned in an interview with author Diane Seuss — a good friend of Wronsky's — in *The New England Review*.[23] Wronsky follows a long line of nature writers, from Vergil himself to Thoreau to modern poets such as Brenda Hillman, and indeed follows a tradition started by mythological figures, such as Orpheus, whom she refers to as "the original poet".[24] Like Vergil, Wronsky writes about civil turmoil that disrupts the landscape, based on her own experiences for which she uses Vergil to poetically interpret the effects on the land. The poems in her collection *Imperfect Pastorals* (2017), "[take] their titles from [Vergil]'s *Georgics,*" and "[signal] allegiance to a pastoral tradition situated on the Pacific Rim,"[25] while adapting the lamentations and

---

[21] Bleyer, Jennifer. 2004. "An Anarchist in the Hudson Valley: Peter Lamborn Wilson with Jennifer Bleyer." *The Brooklyn Rail*.

[22] Before I discuss Wilson further, I must recognize the claims that he has advocated for pedophilia in some of his works through his alter-ego Hakim Bey. According to Michael Knight, "[a]s Hakim Bey, Peter creates a child molester's liberation theology and then publishes it for an audience of potential offenders." Knight, Michael. 2012. William S. Burroughs vs. The Qur'an. Berkeley: Soft Skull Press. P.86.

This may shed some light on the contexts of some of his poems, especially the ones focusing on childhood and Orpheus. However, this topic is not discussed at length in this thesis.

[23] Barot, Rick. 2017. "Diane Seuss: Behind the Byline." New England Review. http://www.nereview.com/2016/02/03/behind-the-byline-5/.

[24]Gail Wronsky, interview by author, Los Angeles, June 21, 2019.

[25] Kevorkian, Karen. 2018. "'Shimmering Bits of Thought': Gail Wronsky's 'Imperfect Pastorals.'" *LA Review of Books*. https://lareviewofbooks.org/article/shimmering-bits-of-thought-gail-wronskys-imperfect-pastorals/.

memories of the natural and pastoral world of Vergil, also creating her own *Eclogues*, supported by the didactic *Georgics* featured in their titles.

This thesis will analyze the adapted themes and texts of these three modern poets in relation to specific Vergilian themes of transition. Chapter 1 discusses Vergil's ideas of the transition into the Golden Age, specifically his use of two versions: the Golden Age of agricultural *labor* and the leisurely and fantastical Hesiodic Golden Age. This chapter discusses why Vergil depicts both Golden Ages in his *Eclogues* and *Georgics*, and then muses on which Golden Ages the modern poets adapt and why. Powell tends towards the Hesiodic Golden Age of Corydon's fantasy in *Eclogue* 2. Wilson looks upon the Golden Age as looking back on a better time, seen in both the Hesiodic and agricultural Golden Age. Wronsky favors the agricultural Golden Age that separates civil conflict from the idyll. I will also discuss how both Wilson and Wronsky adapt, in some way, the *puer* from *Eclogue* 4, a figure that represents the coming Golden Age - Wronsky's *puer* figure is her own daughter, while Wilson's *puer* is more vague, until the discussions of the following chapter.

Chapter 2 analyzes the use of transitional figures adapted from Vergil by the modern poets. Powell adapts Alexis from *Eclogue* 2 to show the liminality between the fantastical Hesiodic Golden Age and the realities of agricultural decline. Both Wilson and Wronsky adapt Hermes as a herald for the future, in place of the *puer*. Wilson and Wronsky again both adapt the figure of Orpheus as a herald of the future, but more in the sense that Orpheus is like Vergil, or indeed like the modern poets themselves.

Chapter 3 looks at the ways Vergil transitions from the Golden Age into decline, specifically decline in the physical pastoral landscape, decline in identity and memory as the landscape declines, and the decline of the pastoral tradition. Powell depicts the loss of love, the landscape of his body, and the decline in pastoral literature through representations of a declining landscape, speaking through the perspective of Vergil's Corydon. Wilson uses Vergil's depictions of the declining landscape as a result of civil unrest to depict his own experiences with the decline and commodification of the 21st century landscape. Wronsky adapts Vergil's depictions of identity in the landscape and how even those connections to the landscape are in decline while she savors as much of the pastoral as she can in her Topanga Canyon home.

The conclusion of this thesis will look at the future of the Vergilian pastoral tradition. The future of pastoral as experienced by the three modern poets is left uncertain in the previous chapter. However, ideas gleaned from the modern poets, my interview with Wronsky, and my own literary experiences indicate that the future of Vergilian pastoral is not as uncertain as things seem, though it does deserve more attention.

Chapter 1: Transition into the Golden Age

An important transitional aspect in Vergil's idylls is the idea of the Golden Age. The Golden Age as a theme, literary or otherwise, "functions to create a structure in history and therefore an understanding of the context and meaning of present experience;"[26] i.e. as a landmark event to note the transition from the worst of times to better of times. The "present experience" is often a transition from a time of struggle to a more peaceful and prosperous time. For Vergil, this was either the transition into the new reign of Augustus in Rome, or a transition back to an age of pastoral *labor* after the decline of the pastoral due to unwanted changes. During Vergil's time, that of the early Augustan and imperial period, the theme of a Golden Age was popular, starting especially "after Antony's victory at Philippi over Brutus and Cassius."[27] This was a time of transition for Rome, from the Republic and dictatorship of Julius Caesar to the new age ruled by Augustus. No one was certain if the new age would end up being a Golden Age or not, but the poets and writers of the time were optimistic, either because they were trying to impress the new emperor, or because hopeful thinking was all that existed. Vergil was just one of several Roman authors that wrote about a Golden Age at this time. For example, the poet Horace wrote about the hope of a Golden Age in his *Sixteenth Epode*, "where the poet… urges escape with him to the *arva beata*, a blessed retreat where the privileges of the [G]olden [A]ge are reserved for pious men."[28] And

---

[26] Perkell, Christine. 2002. "The Golden Age and Its Contradictions in the Poetry of Vergil" *The Vergilian Society,* 48: 3–39. P. 10.

[27] Johnston, Patricia. 1980. *Vergil's Agricultural Golden Age: A Study of the Georgics*. Leiden, Netherlands: E. J. Brill. P. 1.

[28] Johnston 1980, 1.

Sallust "as his two letters show" also had hope that the new rule of Augustus would bring about the Golden Age, anticipating specifically "the [Vergilian] and Horatian idyl[l] of a new Golden Age."[29]

For Vergil there were two options for the Golden Age. The first is an idea taken from Hesiod, that of the wild pastoral, in which the gods provide everything to give humans and animals a reprieve from work and struggle. The second Golden Age of Vergil's is the farmer's paradise of pastoral *labor*, in which the hard work of the farmers provides for all, and the ideal landscape is a cultivated one, free from hardship and interferences of war. Why does Vergil write about two opposite ideas of an ideal Golden Age? And, as Perkell asks, "is it possible to discern a unified vision [of the Golden Age] throughout [Vergil's] texts?"[30] The answer is no; there is no unified vision for each Golden Age; rather, Vergil uses each idea for different purposes. The different uses of each Golden Age informs the adaptations of the modern poets as well. The following section discusses how and why Vergil chose to write each Golden Age in different poems, after which there will be an analysis of the modern poets' adaptations of each Golden Age.

I will first discuss the wild, Hesiodic pastoral, in which "the earth poured forth abundantly with no labor on man's part."[31] It is called "Hesiodic" because scholars like Perkell define the "Hesiodic Golden Age" as a time "in which such defining Iron Age pursuits as agriculture and trade have vanished, and the uncultivated earth offers

---

[29] Reckford, Kenneth J. 1958. "Some Appearances of the Golden Age." *The Classical Journal* 54 (2): 79–87. https://www.jstor.org/stable/3294223. 81.

[30] Perkell 2002, 4.

[31] Perkell 2002, 3.

everything in abundance."[32] Hesiod describes a similar Golden Age in his *Works and Days*, in which "mortals were free… of all care… since the earth spontaneously supplied all their needs."[33] According to Hesiod, the Golden Age took place in an earlier time, when humans were "impious and degenerate," before they became civilized through agriculture and hard work.[34] This is also tied to the idea of the transition from blissful primitivism to civilization, which in turn can be linked with the transition from childhood to adulthood, indicating also "the idea that bucolic poetry [the *Eclogues*] originates in the infancy of mankind" and leads then to the more mature, didactic *Georgics*.[35] This Hesiodic Golden Age appears in Vergil's 2nd and 4th *Eclogues*. The 4th *Eclogue* is entirely about this Golden Age, in which Vergil addresses a young *puer* (either referring to Augustus, the potential descendants of Augustus, the child of Pollio [one of Vergil's well-known patrons], or even the historical leadership of Pollio himself) who is helping to bring in this new age. In *Eclogue* 2, the shepherd Corydon talks to his love Alexis of a similar Golden Age in which everything is provided by the land and also by the mythical Nymphs who reside in this fantasy.[36] However, Vergil, through Corydon, reveals that this Hesiodic Golden Age is but a fantasy in contrast to the reality of both

---

[32] Perkell 2002, 3-4.

[33] Johnston 1980, 50.

[34] Reckford 1958, 79.

[35] Hardie 2006, 280.

[36] *Ecl.* 2.45-50:
Huc ades, o formose puer, tibi lilia plenis
ecce ferunt Nymphae calathis; tibi candida Nais,
pallentis violas et summa papavera carpens,
narcissum et florem iungit bene olentis anethi;
tum casia atque aliis intexens suavibus herbis
mollia luteola pingit vaccinia caltha.

pastoral *labor* and potential decline if one dwells too long inside such a fantasy. In contrast, Vergil expands the fantasy world of *Eclogue* 2 into the entirety of *Eclogue* 4, in order to emphasize the ideal world which the reign of Augustus (and all that comes with it) promises. However, because of this connection between the Golden Ages of *Eclogues* 2 and 4, the reader recognizes that even *Eclogue* 4's Golden Age is a fantasy.

In opposition to the Hesiodic Golden Age is Vergil's agricultural Golden Age. This Age of pastoral *labor* consists of "a period of simple rural life dedicated to farming."[37] In addition, "[f]or Romans, agriculture signified not only the cultivation of the soil, but all the other activities of the self-sufficient farmer as well," including the leisure they take while making music and song.[38] According to Patricia Johnston, the *Georgics* solely favor this idea of agricultural *labor*, which she calls an "agricultural Golden Age."[39] Vergil emphasizes this agricultural Golden Age in the *Georgics* by filling these epic poems with didactic lists of instructions on how and when to farm well. *Eclogues* 1, 5, and 9 also reference the agricultural Golden Age. In *Eclogue* 1.6-10, the shepherd Tityrus describes such agricultural activities as his Golden Age:

> *O Meliboee, deus nobis haec otia fecit.*
> *namque erit ille mihi semper deus, illius aram*
> *saepe tener nostris ab ovilibus imbuet agnus.*
> *ille meas errare boves, ut cernis, et ipsum*
> *ludere quae vellem calamo permisit agresti.*

---

37 Perkell 2002, 3.

38 Johnston 1980, 3.

39 Johnston 1980, 3.

Oh Meliboeus, a god made this leisure for us.

And for me he will always be a god; often a tender lamb

From our sheepfold will wet his altar.

He allowed my cattle to wander, as you see,

And allows me myself to play what I wish on the rustic pipe.[40]

In *Eclogue* 5.56-61, the singing shepherds describe the agricultural Golden Age during the life of the late shepherd Daphnis:

Candidus insuetum miratur limen Olympi

sub pedibus videt nubes et sidera Daphnis.

Ergo alacris silvas et cetera rura voluptas

Panaque pastoresque tenet Dryadasque puellas.

Nec lupus insidias pecori, nec retia cervis

ulla dolum meditantur: amat bonus otia Daphnis.

Bright Daphnis wonders at the strange threshold of Olympus

And sees the clouds and stars under his feet.

And so cheerful pleasure holds the woods and remaining farms,

Both Pan and the shepherds and the Dryad girls.

The wolf intends no ambush for the flock, nor any nets

Deceit for the deer: good Daphnis loves peace.

---

[40] All Latin translations are by me.

An aspect of the Golden Age that fits into both the Hesiodic Golden Age and the idea of pastoral *labor* is looking back on childhood as a golden time. In this idea, the life of the shepherds corresponds to childhood. Of course, *Eclogue* 4 portrays childhood more than any of the other *Eclogues*; however, the idea of pastoral song and all parts of pastoral life represent the agricultural Golden Age, while the figurative youth of the newly risen Roman empire represents the Hesiodic Golden Age.[41] At other times Vergil portrays the idea of childhood as agricultural Golden Age through the memories of the shepherds, as they describe their youth as singers and working in the fields. In *Eclogue* 9, Lycidas and Moeris are lamenting the loss of their lands, and look back on their boyhood as a Golden Age:

Moeris: (51-54)

saepe ego longos

cantando puerum memini me condere soles:

nunc oblita mihi tot carmina, vox quoque Moerim

iam fugit ipsa[.]

Often I recall singing to spend time through the long days as a boy:

Now so many songs are forgotten to me, and already the very voice

Flees Moeris[.]

Earlier in the *Eclogue*, Lycidas recalls the beauty of such songs of their youth, noting some Hesiodic primitivism with mythological references to nature:

---

[41] Hardie 2006, 282.

Lycidas: (17-20)

Heu! Cadit in quemquam tantum scelus? Heu! Tua nobis

paene simul tecum solacia rapta, Menalca?

Quis caneret Nymphas? Quis humum florentibus herbis

spargeret, aut viridi fontis induceret umbra?

Alas! Can such wickedness[42] fall upon anyone? Alas!

Has your solace almost been snatched away for us at the same time with you?

Who would sing the Nymphs? Who would scatter flowering herbs

On the ground, or introduce the fonts to green shade?

In *Eclogue* 2, Corydon uses Alexis as a figure to link him back to the carefree days of youth. While Alexis in *Eclogue* 2 is the love interest of Corydon, he is described as *puer* and evokes images of childhood in the sense that it is a time of plenty and paradise (*Ecl.* 2.17 and 2.45). As a *puer* figure, he is the one responsible for making the fantastical pastoral paradise of Corydon what it is, which is described in a very similar way as the paradise of *Eclogue* 4. Even though Corydon views Alexis as a lover, it is almost as if Alexis as a boy is the gateway for Corydon back to his own youth.

Daphnis also, in *Eclogue* 5, is a figure who brings together the associations of childhood and the pastoral Golden Age. A few times in the midst of this singing contest, Mopsus and Menalcas call Daphnis *puer* (*Ecl.* 5.19, 5.49, 5.54), so it is likely that he is the same age as Alexis, and is seen by others in similar ways (as a lover in one

---

42 Referring to the farmers' evictions.

circumstance, and child in another).[43] Because Daphnis has died, the shepherds are not only mourning him but also the loss of the happy pastoral Golden Age that went away with him.

While he uses both definitions of the Golden Age in his poems, the agricultural Golden Age is more important for Vergil. Much of his poetry discusses pastoral *labor*: the *Georgics* are more didactic in terms of farming descriptions, and the *Eclogues* are more of a lamentation. The lamentation is due to the displacement of the farmers, and the Golden Age in contrast to this displacement is the life of the simple farmer and pastoral *labor*. The agricultural Golden Age stands in contrast with Hesiodic ease and abundance, and is in fact "achieved by agricultural [*labor*]."[44] The lament for the Age of *labor* is shown especially in *Eclogues* 1 and 9, in which the shepherds, whose flocks and crops are in decline, remember the pastoral that filled their lives before.

Vergil uses these two Golden Ages to represent the different hopes he has for the future. Vergil had to curry favor with Augustus and so wrote the Hesiodic Golden Age in tribute to him. The explanation for the agricultural Golden Age is put very well by Perkell: accounts of the Golden Ages "may enrich readers' understandings of the ambiguities of the world that they and the poet share," especially during times of crisis.[45] For this very reason, modern poets still look to Vergil for an understanding of transitional periods, and to imagine and adapt what the ideal Golden Age could be. The

---

43 *Ecl.* 5.19: *Sed tu desine plura, puer*; 5.49: *fortunate puer, tu nunc eris alter ab illo*; 5.54: *Et puer ipse fuit cantari dignus*.

44 Segal 1981, 265-70; Perkell 2002, 4.

45 Perkell 2002, 11.

majority of this chapter will examine how modern poets adapt and reimagine aspects of Vergil's Golden Ages, and will examine why they adapted one Golden Age or the other.

Powell's Golden Age

Powell favors the Hesiodic Golden Age in his poems "Corydon & Alexis" and "Corydon & Alexis Redux," but uses this Golden Age to contrast the hopeful fantasy with the harsher reality of agricultural decline.[46] In Vergil's *Eclogue* 2, Corydon attempts to woo the boy Alexis by tempting him with such a Hesiodic Golden Age. Corydon's ideal fantasy world with Alexis' love is a fertile and flourishing countryside; singing his love song in *Eclogue* 2.28-30, Corydon attempts to "convert [his] beloved to an appreciation of the countryside" though this countryside is a fantasy:[47]

O tantum libeat mecum tibi sordida rura
atque humilis habitare casas et figere cervos
haedorumque gregem viridi compellere hibisco!

O so much should it be pleasing for you to live
With me among the humble farms and
Humble houses and to pierce the deer
And to drive goat herds with green mallow!

---

[46] Chronic 2009, 77; 79.

[47] Leach 1966, 429.

Having described their perfect life, Corydon then tempts Alexis with promises of grander and more fantastical wonders that take place in Corydon's fantasy world (*Ecl.* 2.45-50):

> Huc ades, o formose puer, tibi lilia plenis
> ecce ferunt Nymphae calathis; tibi candida Nais,
> pallentis violas et summa papavera carpens,
> narcissum et florem iungit bene olentis anethi;
> tum casia atque aliis intexens suavibus herbis
> mollia luteola pingit vaccinia caltha.
>
> Come to this place, oh beautiful boy,
> Behold for you nymphs bring baskets
> Full with lilies; for you the bright naiad,
> Plucking pale violets and the tallest poppies,
> Joins well the narcissus and the flower of fragrant dill;
> Then weaving soft/pliant cinnamon also with other
> Sweet herbs decorates yellow marigold
> with huckleberry.

This idyllic world Corydon dreams of is "more fantastic than real," with the inclusion of nymphs and naiads.[48] These mythological beings are common in fictional pastoral settings (c.f. The nymphs who reside on Mt. Ida found in the *Homeric Hymn to*

---

[48] Leach 1966, 430.

Aphrodite and others[49]), and are creatures of fertility and beauty, though they do not exist in the reality Corydon refuses to acknowledge.

Powell has experienced such Hesiodic illusions himself. Powell grew up in Northern California during the 1970s and 80s, when "there was… a huge flourishing of gay culture in the United States," at least until the AIDS crisis. Powell has written about the AIDS crisis in most of his collections in some form or other. In his 2009 collection, *Chronic,* Powell uses rural imagery to illustrate the effects of his and others' experience with AIDS and the queer community overall. He and many others were blind to the reality of the AIDS crisis, sheltered in the fantasy "resort area" of Sonoma County.[50] When the epidemic first began "few people had it" and people, including Powell, thought that those few would die out and it would "just be over."[51] However, like Corydon's untamed fields, the uncontrolled disease raged on. In reflection of this raging disease, Powell describes Corydon's obsession with the fantasy world and blindness to reality as "a kind of savage caring that reseeds itself / and grows in clusters", untamed foliage that overgrows and overwhelms not only the landscape, but Corydon himself. Powell himself was diagnosed with HIV in the late 80s or early 90s.

Unlike Vergil, Powell focuses on the reality of things early on in "Corydon & Alexis". Only near the end of the poem does he explain his efforts to build the fantasy world, recalling lines in *Ecl.* 2.28-30 and 45-50 (translated above): "Shepherdboy, do you see the wild fennel bulbs I gathered for you/ olallieberries, new-mown grass, the

---

49 *Homeric Hymn to Aphrodite* 97-98, 217-218.

50 Durkin and Witt, 2000.

51 Durkin and Witt, 2000.

tender fruits of the coastal fig".[52] Here Corydon's hard work is directed toward Alexis, instead of towards his fields. Rather than the nymphs gathering all the beautiful things for Alexis in the fantasy world, Corydon himself does it, putting in more effort for love than Vergil's Corydon. Powell concludes his fantasy to come back to the reality of his poetry, just as Corydon comes out of his own fantasy to recognize the reality of his fields — it is in this way that both characters turn from the Hesiodic back to either the agricultural Golden age or agricultural decline.

Wilson's Golden Age

Wilson also has two ideas about the Golden Age: a Golden Age is either the Age that he thinks is the most happy for humankind, or it is the Age that others believe is most happy for mankind. Wilson argues that the latter often results from Capitalism and the illusions that come with it, as under such a Capitalistic clime, "most people - in order to live at all - seem to need around themselves a penumbra of 'illusion.'"[53] This idea of "illusion" not only surrounds the modern interpretation of the Hesiodic Golden Age, but uses aspects of the agricultural Golden Age as well.

In his essays and interviews, Wilson clearly favors the agricultural. For Wilson, this agricultural Golden Age includes the idea of a sort of anti-progress. According to Perkell, the idea of pastoral *labor,* "may appear as a sign of material progress... or as a sign of moral decline."[54] Wilson takes both of these ideas as a singular unit of decline in

---

[52] *Chronic* 2009, 78.

[53] Wilson, Peter Lamborn. 2014. "The New Nihilism | The Anarchist Library." *The Anvil*, 5: 21–27. https://theanarchistlibrary.org/library/peter-lamborn-wilson-the-new-nihilism.

[54] Perkell 2002, 3.

order to illustrate that both ideas of the Golden Age face decline. Using the example of electricity to represent progress, Wilson claims that if one lives with progress "you live face-to-face with a TomorrowLand that never quite arrives."[55] The idea also is that of a more primitive, simpler time, with no progress or transition to anything less than a Golden Age. In his poetry, Wilson favors the descriptions of the Hesiodic Golden Age (with few references to the agricultural) rather than focusing on his views on reality. Through the following analysis, I will examine why this is the case.

One way Wilson interprets the Golden Age is by referring to it as though he is looking back to old days of childhood; other authors, such as Heaney when he writes about the times before the Troubles, also adapt Vergilian themes in this way. Often those involved in a struggle or hard times will yearn for older times they believe were simpler and better. Wilson's poem, "Comix Eclogue," starts by linking Vergilian pastoral with childhood thus: "Given Virgilian pastoral consists largely / of lounging about in the shade any / ten-year-old on the lawn in August's / precious boredom balm would be / drawn to the Classics".[56] Here Wilson compares a bored ten-year-old turning to the Classical texts of the *Eclogues* and Vergil's shepherds. For Vergil, these shepherds working as well as "lounging about in the shade" is the ideal for much of the *Eclogues*. This is akin to the more restful parts of the agricultural Golden Age. Wilson acknowledges this Golden Age by replacing the Classical pastoral locale with Classics as literature and a study. Wilson notes that this pastoral time of "the Classics gave us / permission / not to grow up." In the same way the paradise of Never-Neverland allows

---

55 Wilson, Peter Lamborn. 2004. "Take Back The Night: Ban Electricity." *Fifth Estate*, 365. https://theanarchistlibrary.org/library/various-authors-reconsidering-primitivism-technology-the-wild.

56 *Ec(o)logues* 2011, 32.

children to remain children forever, Wilson is describing the Classics as a Golden Age pastoral paradise where children are free and do not have to grow up and struggle. This theme of childhood refers to *Eclogue* 9.51-53 when Moeris laments,

> *Omnia fert aetas, animum quoque; saepe ego longos*
> *cantando puerum memini me condere soles:*
> *nunc oblita mihi tot carmina.*
>
> the age carries away all things, the mind also;
> often I remember myself as a boy spending long days in singing:
> now so many songs are forgotten to me.

But is (or was) everything provided for in this childhood pastoral as in the Hesiodic Golden Age of *Eclogue* 4? At first glance the answer is no, because this idea of childhood resembles the agricultural childhood experienced by Moeris and Lycidas. However, Wilson could be saying here that the Classics as literature provides for everything (in terms of knowledge and development, and creation). The rest of the poem describes the antics of youth as well as references to the *Eclogues* — the "bee-haunted meadow" and "the / grotto of Silenus in Eclogue VI" and all of the *puer* references including Hermes and Orpheus — in order to tie together the idea that the Classics informs the freedom of youth found in the agricultural Golden Age, and gives permission "not to grow up".

The *puer* of *Eclogue* 4 is identified similarly in other poems of Wilson's as the child referenced in Comix *Eclogue*. While none of Wilson's poems center around the

puer in the way that Vergil's *Eclogue* 4 does, the *puer* character is dispersed in several of the poems in *Ec(o)logues* as a figure of childhood and transition either into the Golden Age, or looking back upon it. While Wilson mentions *puer* so sparingly, it gives readers a sense overall of some Golden Age as the figure is mentioned sparsely throughout the poems.

First among the remaining references to the *puer* is Wilson's term, "Green Messiah".[57] For Wilson, this figure is a savior of the pastoral environment. The messianic aspect mirrors *Eclogue* 4's reputation as a messianic poem; this is an interpretation of the *Eclogue* by Christian readers in order to link the *puer* with Jesus; however, the messiah more generally refers to a divine savior, which is how Wilson has adapted the character of the *puer*. The "green" part refers to all of the plants that bloom and flourish on account of the *puer*'s coming from *Eclogue* 4: the wandering ivy, the blooming and smiling acanthus, cyclamen, and bean (lines 18-20); the *puer*'s cradle pouring out sweet flowers (line 23); and the *amomum* (line 25). All flourishing plants that spring forth from the now fertile earth are there because of the care of the *puer*, the "Green Messiah." Indeed as well in *Eclogue* 2, Alexis acts as the "Green Messiah" of Corydon's Hesiodic world. The "Green Messiah" here is the one who will bring forth a thriving pastoral landscape without need for *labor*. For Wilson, as we can see, this "Green Messiah" is completely mythological. However, Wilson's poems call for this anti-labor, or rather anti-progressive pastoral. In a way, Wilson is recognizing the fantasy of this pastoral in the same way as Vergil. We know it was needed for Vergil because of the new age that came with Augustus, and the hope for those who had lost so much. Wilson

---

57 Found in the following poems: "Pantisocratic Idyll" and "Ten Golden Apples".

employs this fantasy in his poems because he is trying to get readers to recognize that it is indeed an illusion, in order to contrast it with the reality of decline. There is one poem that contrasts his idea of "illusion" with his own, personal Golden Age, and that is "Pantisocratic Idyll." Sometimes Wilson's Hesiodic idea hints at the decline of what Wilson's actual Golden Age is: "Another America that might have been", indicating that there is something beyond this fantasy of a Golden Age.[58] Wilson is also trying to recall the theme in order for readers to start thinking about the struggles the environment has in general, which was the function of Vergil's poems as well.

The first poem of Wilson's that mentions the "Green Messiah" is "Pantisocratic Idyll." This poem discusses the idea of an "Arcadia," and mentions the "Green Messiah" figure again: "Orpheus is the Green Messiah / just for a summer," taking place in "Another America that / might have been." Orpheus is not a character that is usually portrayed as a young boy, or a savior for that matter, but he is a figure of transition: his love life is transitional with the death of Eurydice; the transition of his songs from love songs to songs of mourning; the transition from loving women to loving only men, "rejecting women for boys"; and there is the direct reference to Orpheus in *Eclogue* 4 which sets his role in the transition to the Golden Age:

> *non me carminibus vincat nec Thracius Orpheus*
> *nec Linus, huic mater quamvis atque huic pater adsit,*
> *Orphei Calliopea, Lino formosus Apollo.*
>
> Let Thracian Orpheus not conquer me with songs

---

[58] "Pantisocratic Idyll," *Ec(o)logues* 2011, 22.

Nor Linus, the former mother helps and the latter

The father. (55-57)

Here Orpheus is not a savior of the Golden Age, but one who heralds the transition into the Golden Age with his song, as Vergil does. Therefore, even though Wilson hails Orpheus as the "Green Messiah" in Pantisocratic Idyll, this messianic role may not be as a savior, rather as the one who calls in the age as a figure of transition.[59]

Vergil's puer is on the edge of transition, in that childhood itself is a liminal stage, the learning period on the way to adulthood. Certainly childhood is paradise for Wilson, as his mentions of the *puer* figure and childhood all take place in the summertime, which is a time of ease. This is shown through the character of Hermes, who is discussed at length in Chapter 2.[60] To briefly mention him, however, Hermes represents childhood much in the same way as the *puer*, born into a time of learning in abundance.

Wilson's ideas on domestication and agriculture explain more fully what his poetry is trying to say regarding the wild pastoral (vs. pastoral labor), and why the adaptations of *Eclogue* 4 fit most perfectly. He believes that "domestication of plants and animals… [is] the first step toward separation [from nature] and ultimately the State."[61] Interestingly, however, in *Eclogue* 4 the wild pastoral is what leads to the Golden Age in terms of leadership and government — not exactly what Wilson has in mind. And yet it is still the wild pastoral which Wilson believes is the most natural and

---

59 Orpheus' transitional role will be discussed further in Chapter 2, also as adapted by Wronsky.

60 See transitional Chapter 2 for more detail.

61 Wilson 2004.

right state for humans in relation to nature. Wilson also speaks of the wild pastoral as a garden, particularly like the Garden of Eden, an "earthly paradise," i.e. that same illusion of pastoral paradise which we see in *Eclogue* 4 and through Corydon in *Eclogue* 2.[62] This paradise is not necessarily feasible, as seen with Corydon — it is very much a fantasy. And yet, Wilson believes the transition into the wild pastoral will bring about the Golden Age. Wilson believes that America has been using the land for agriculture in all the wrong ways, in an idea of progress that is not actually good for the land, similarly to Vergil's criticism of the use of the landscape not for farmers but for soldiers.[63] Using the land in the right way is almost an alternate universe for Wilson, as he says in his poem "Pantisocratic Idyll" in which the transitional figure of Orpheus returns in "[a]nother America that might have been."

In his poems, Wilson compares the wild pastoral in which all is provided and the days are the summer days of youth. While for Vergil, the summer days of youth are also intrinsic to the Golden Age of agricultural *labor*, Wilson separates the two. His poetic Golden Age is the wild pastoral of the summer, whereas his real idea of what the Golden Age is is stuck in a fantasy which "might have been" but is unattainable now. It seems that Wilson believes that the Golden Age of *labor* that Vergil favors is unattainable now. Overall, Wilson has not been able to fully reconcile the two Golden Ages of Vergil, though he has adapted both separately to recognize the ideas as nearly unattainable.

---

[62] Wilson, 2004.

[63] Wilson, 2004.

Wronsky's Golden Age

Gail Wronsky is far less nihilistic and socio-politically anarchistic than Wilson, but she also adapts Vergil's Golden Ages into her own poetry to express a wish for improvement in the landscape, whether pastoral or socio-political. She also adapts elements from Vergil's 4th *Eclogue*, though this time the *puer* figure is her daughter. Wronsky hopes that the education of her daughter surrounded by nature will lead to a new age, much in the same way that Seamus Heaney puts the hope of the new generation onto his soon-to-be-born niece in "Bann Valley Eclogue". To conclude, I will define what Wronsky's Golden Age actually looks like. This analysis compares Wronsky's poetry with *Eclogues* 2, 4, and 9, but especially 4, as she puts most of her definitions of the Golden Age onto the outcome of her daughter's, the *puer* figure's, pastoral experience. The titles of her poems, taken from the more didactic *Georgics*, subliminally hint at an ideal of pastoral *labor*, contrasting the reality that is before Wronsky's eyes.

First I will discuss the adaptations Wronsky has made from *Eclogue* 4. In her poem "The Light and Shade upon the Globe", she takes lines directly from *Eclogue* 4.[64] The first reference is seen in the line "We're garlanding an entrance / to the future… a mirrored tortoise shell"; "garlanding an entrance / to the future" recalls the *puer's* cradle in *Eclogue* 4, which *blandos fundent…flores,* "will pour out lovely flowers."[65] The cradle pours garlands of flowers, the cradle which is, in a way, an entrance to the future in that it is what first holds the *puer*. "[A] mirrored tortoise shell" references a figure

---

64 *Imperfect Pastorals* 2017, 14.

65 *Ecl*. 4.23

that Wilson names several times in his work: Hermes. Again, Hermes is a figure of transition, making way for a brighter future, or at least a future of change. The reference to the tortoise shell recalls the Homeric Hymn, in which the first thing Hermes does when he leaves his own cradle is find a tortoise and make a lyre out of its shell. Again there is the reference to childhood, and the prominence of music and song. Hermes is the figure in mythology who made such music possible, and he paved the way for this future as only an infant. So does the *puer*, and it seems that with this garlanding of the future, Wronsky is hoping that her daughter's generation will also pave the way for a brighter future through education, art (including music), literature, et cetera.

In the poem "So Much Effect has Habit on the Young,"[66] Wronsky more specifically compares the figure of her daughter with the figure of the *puer*. Even in the title, Wronsky pointedly notes the effects on the youth by the environment and vice versa. This whole poem emphasizes the idea of learning from nature: "she," representing Wronsky's daughter, "wants to play with / some ur-word… a contingently configured / field of… potential on the page." Here the child is experiencing the acquisition of language and the potential of words which she learns from the natural world around her, just as the shepherds who were learning to write their songs (*Eclogue* 9). In this point of view, Wronsky adapts the idea that childhood is a Golden time. Indeed she makes mention of this also when she says "so she goes it solo… from the stony bottom / of the well… of solipsism… reading / as when we were children." Here she is saying that

66 *Imperfect Pastorals* 2017, 21.

childhood is when one gets to know themselves, to read and learn as Wilson's boy in the summertime,[67] and so remembering nature and childhood as a period of self-discovery.

When Wronsky talks about the "field of … potential on the page", she is emphasizing two things: the first is the potential of the literary tradition, how it will evolve and whether or not it will prosper in the hands of the future generation. Because she says "potential," there is the idea that the tradition and the art will continue to thrive if the future generations prosper along with the pastoral. If the youth is able to prosper then so will the literary tradition. The "field" here is the thriving pastoral landscape, both in reality and on the page. It is the same for Vergil. When the shepherds recall their youth of singing songs,[68] they also recall the potential they had to learn from each other and become great poets like Menalcas,[69] as well as referencing the actual fields in which they cultivated and played their songs.[70] In this case there is the potential for young shepherds and for the lands that they farmed. For both Wronsky and Vergil, the loss of the physical pastoral landscape means the loss of the literary landscape. Without the fields for their songs, the agricultural and literary traditions cannot survive.

The second theme which Wronsky emphasizes in terms of this "field" (or landscape) refers back again to *Eclogue* 4. Throughout the *Eclogue*, Vergil is praising the potential of the *puer*, which includes the idea that, upon his birth, everything will be provided by nature.[71] From this nature, too, the *puer* can reach his full potential. It is the

---

[67] "Comix Eclogue".

[68] *Ecl.* 9.51-52.

[69] *Ecl.* 9.7-10; 9.17-20.

[70] *Ecl.* 9.2-6.

[71] *Ecl.* 4.18-25; 4.28-30.

same for her daughter as well, playing with language, and in nature with the oak tree in their yard, which Wronsky mentions in her poems "Pitch-Pines or Guilty Yews or Dark Green Ivy" and "In These Latitudes of Indeterminate Waves" as metonymy for the pastoral as a whole. Here the depiction is more of the Hesiodic Golden Age, with nature providing everything, in this case knowledge. While Wronsky's preferred Golden Age is agricultural, the importance of having one's needs, in this case experience and education, provided for by the pastoral still stands.

Besides the *puer* figure represented by her daughter, Wronsky also adapts the idea of the Hesiodic Golden Age as an illusion and a fantasy, contrasting with a declining reality. In the poem "Pitch-Pines or Guilty Yews or Dark Green Ivy,"[72] Wronsky recalls the fantasy of *Eclogue* 4's Hesiodic Golden Age, and Corydon's fantasy in *Eclogue* 2 with these lines: "These will make your soil black and you might then / mistake it for rich soil soil in which anything could / grow and you could feed a whole nation of people / with it." Here Wronsky recalls the deceptive and toxic plants that are no more in *Eclogue* 4.[73] However, here they affect the soil in such a way that it deceives the farmer into thinking that such a Hesiodic abundance as found in *Eclogues* 4 and 2 is possible. However, Wronsky also notes the reality in contrast to this Hesiodic fantasy, in the lines continuing: "but not if the blackness comes from one of / these then you're finished then you're washed up / as a farmer." She notes that if one follows the deception and becomes lost in the illusion, the agricultural reality will suffer just as Corydon's in *Eclogue* 2. Likewise, in her poem "And the Wild Willow-Bed Demands

---

[72] *Imperfect Pastorals* 2017, 47.

[73] *Ecl.* 4.24-25.

Attention," she recognizes that chasing a dream is ideal but recognizing reality is the real hardship ("Pursuing is pleasure and parting is grief"). The rest of this poem focuses on the agricultural reality, more akin to a life of hard work and a lack of the fantastical, Hesiodic abundance that, according to Wilson, many wish to see in what he calls a "Green" landscape.

Wronsky seems to favor both Golden Ages in her poetry for different reasons, and, just like Vergil, disperses and intermingles them throughout her poems. She uses the Hesiodic Golden Age to highlight her daughter's experiences learning and growing with the use of whatever nature provides, whether that be language for songs, or a desired view of the future. She also uses the Hesiodic to contrast the fantasy of abundance with that of the reality of the agricultural and mourn the loss of such prosperity even in her own landscape of Southern California. Still, in depicting her daughter and herself as the Vergilian poet,[74] she has hope for a more prosperous future, for both the agricultural landscape, and the literary tradition that goes with it.

---

74 "It will be as enchanting as a wandering orphic singer…" from "Let Thought Become Your Beautiful Lover" p.53.

Chapter 2: Vergil's Transitional Figures

In each Golden Age, there is always at least one figure who represents transition, either because they cause transition in some way, or because they are experiencing transition themselves. In *Eclogue* 4 the transitional figure is the *puer*, but also it is the mother of the *puer*, who instigates the transition through the act of birth. In *Eclogue* 5 the figure is Daphnis, whose death brought an end to the Golden Age. Orpheus' story in *Georgic* 4 is told to mark a transitional period from life to death, from happiness to mourning. Shepherds and singers are symbols of the Golden Age, though they do not become transitional figures until their way of life is disrupted, as in the case of Meliboeus and Tityrus in *Eclogue* 1. Because the 21st century has and is continuing to experience intense times of transition, whether it be decline or positive progress, the modern poets make reference to such figures who represent and herald transitional movements in Vergil's pastorals, either to have a symbolic figure heralding positive progress, or one that stands on the brink of decline.

There are three other figures who represent such liminality, and whom the modern poets adapt from Vergil as their own symbols of transition: Alexis, Orpheus, and Hermes. Alexis is the young shepherd boy in *Eclogue* 2, who rejected the shepherd Corydon's offers of love in favor of another farmer. He acts as the liaison between the real world of agricultural *labor* and the fantasy world of Corydon's unhealthy obsession.

In *Georgic* 4, Vergil tells the mythical story of Orpheus' loss of Eurydice, and his own subsequent death. In general, the Orphic cults were based on Orpheus as a founder

of the cults of Dionysus.[75] These cults, according to some sources, were based on the transitional idea of rebirth,[76] also attached to the ideas of life and death in Orpheus' story from *Georgic* 4. Another Orpheus character is mentioned in *Eclogue* 4, who is a symbol of the singing shepherd found in times of pastoral harmony.

Hermes is primarily known as a trickster god, and as the god of thieves, who as a baby stole Apollo's cattle in an act of mischievous revenge. However, Hermes represents more than just thievery — Hermes is the god of flocks, the god who guides souls into the Underworld, the god of pastoral music-making, all seen in the very beginning of his Homeric Hymn:

> Muse, sing of Hermes, the son of Zeus and Maia,
>
> **lord of Cyllene and Arcadia rich in flocks**,[77]
>
> the luck-bringing messenger of the immortals whom Maia bare,
>
> the rich-tressed nymph, when she was joined in love with Zeus.[78]

He is not a figure that is mentioned in Vergil's pastorals, though there are several references that relate Vergil's figures of youth to the young Hermes.

Each of the modern poets uses these figures to mark some sort of transition: Powell with the transition to and from Hesiodic fantasy; Wilson and Wronsky with

---

75Apollodorus, *The Library, with an English Translation by Sir James George Frazer, F.B.A., F.R.S. in 2 Volumes. 1.3.2.* Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press; London, William Heinemann Ltd. 1921. Accessed June 2020 from the Perseus Digital Library.

76 "Orphic Religion." Encyclopædia Britannica. Encyclopædia Britannica, inc., June 10, 2008. https://www.britannica.com/topic/Orphic-religion; Durant, Will. 1966. *The Life of Greece; The Story of Civilization, Vol. II.* New York: Simon and Schuster.

77 Emphasis is mine.

78 Anonymous. The Homeric Hymns and Homerica with an English Translation by Hugh G. Evelyn-White. Cambridge, MA.,Harvard University Press; London, William Heinemann Ltd. 1914. Accessed from the Perseus Digital Library. Lines 1-5.

figures who herald the transition into the Golden Age; and Wronsky's liminality between life and death.

Alexis

Alexis, in *Eclogue* 2, represents the liminality between the Hesiodic Golden Age and the realities of decline. He unknowingly decides whether the former or the latter will take place: we see in his rejection of Corydon that it is the latter option that he chooses, pushing Corydon back into reality. Alexis would have the power to transition the setting into the Hesiodic Golden Age, if only he accepted Corydon as a lover.

As seen in the previous chapter, D.A. Powell concentrates most on the adaptation of Alexis as a transitional pastoral figure. In his poems "Corydon & Alexis" and "Corydon & Alexis Redux" Powell depicts the result of Corydon's love on his physical person as well as on the landscape. Powell depicts Alexis in "Corydon & Alexis" as "a montana man, though no good shepherd / rather: a caveman, came spelunking into that grotto I'd retreated to / what light he bore illuminated such a small space."[79] Alexis is coming into Corydon's dark world of decline and bringing him out to a brief Golden Age of light. However, Alexis' character moves away from this also, standing "back from the edge of things"[80] and revealing the illusion. The fact that Alexis moves away from this bliss, beyond the liminal "edge of things" means that the Corydon character must also leave the illusion of the Golden Age to face an age of decline.

---

79 *Chronic* 2009, 77.

80 *Chronic* 2009, 77.

While Wilson does not specifically adapt the character of Alexis into his poetry, he does adapt queer characters and themes that give impressions of an Alexis character. More specific to the theme of Corydon and Alexis, he also talks about how "sterile love / generates progeny in the Unseen World."[81] While the "Unseen World" is not defined specifically, he does describe it thus: "[j]ust to have an aesthetics of Nature therefore is already queer in itself - non-fecund - non-reproductive - pure imagination in the dirtiest sense of the Pathetic Fallacy."[82] We can interpret this "Unseen World"[83] as the pastoral paradise that Corydon imagines with Alexis, marked especially by the mythological Nymphs and Naiads that provide all in this Hesiodic fantasy, though filled with his "sterile love".[84] While Wilson describes this paradise as "queer" — seemingly favorable to queer couples like Corydon and Alexis — he admits that it is all "pure imagination" and "non-reproductive", parallel to Corydon's infertile fantasy. Corydon must leave this fantasy when the rejection of Alexis transitions him out and into the declining reality:

> Ah Corydon, Corydon, what madness seized you!
>
> Your vine on the leafy elm is half-pruned.
>
> Why not at least rather do you not prepare to weave

---

[81] *Ec(o)logues*, "Green Orpheus" 2011, 17.

[82] *Ec(o)logues*, "Green Orpheus" 2011, 17.

[83] *Ecl.* 2.28-30: *O tantum libeat mecum tibi sordida rura*
atque humilis habitare casas et figere cervos
haedorumque gregem viridi compellere hibisco!
The "Unseen World" of Wilson's can be compared to this imaginary home where Corydon wants Alexis to join him.

[84] *Ecl.* 2.45-50:
Huc ades, o formose puer, tibi lilia plenis
ecce ferunt Nymphae calathis; tibi candida Nais,
pallentis violas et summa papavera carpens,
narcissum et florem iungit bene olentis anethi;
tum casia atque aliis intexens suavibus herbis
mollia luteola pingit vaccinia caltha.

Something, of that which use requires,

With twigs and soft rushes?

You will find another Alexis, if this one scorns you.[85]

Wronsky also has no explicit reference to Alexis, though her poem "Leading The Solemn Procession Joyfully" bears the impressions of Corydon and Alexis characters. The narrator of "Leading The Solemn Procession Joyfully"[86] can be interpreted as Corydon since the perspective is of a rejected lover in a pastoral environment. In the beginning of the poem, Wronsky's Corydon bluntly states that Alexis "make[s] a lukewarm wooer", commenting on Alexis' lack of interest in Corydon's advances. Referring back to the liminality presented in Powell's Alexis, Wronsky's Corydon scolds Alexis when he doesn't notice the pastoral fantasy that Corydon has set up for him: "Ok then don't notice the straight shape of the / cypress, a damned icon of amazement / that waits to hasten us toward vision or wound. / Just keep moving." Instead of choosing one or the other, as depicted by Powell, Alexis refuses his liminal role, choosing neither the "vision" (the fantasy) nor the "wound" (the reality). Here Wronsky's Corydon wants Alexis to pick one way or the other, to cease becoming the transitional figure and to choose Corydon's pastoral life, but Alexis seems to reject his transitional role.

---

[85] *Ecl.* 2.69-73

[86] *Imperfect Pastorals* 2018, 25.

Orpheus

Orpheus is depicted in two ways by Vergil: he is the herald of the Golden Age in *Eclogue* 4, but a more liminal figure on the edge of life and death in *Georgic* 4. Wilson adapts the former in "Pantisocratic Idyll"[87] and the latter in "Green Orpheus".[88] In "Pantisocratic Idyll," which discusses the idea of an "Arcadia," he mentions the "Green Messiah" figure as Orpheus: "Orpheus is the Green Messiah / just for a summer," taking place in "Another America that / might have been." Here Orpheus is compared to the *puer*, the Messianic figure of *Eclogue* 4, using his role as a herald more intensely.[89] Like Vergil, Wilson compares himself to the godlike singer, depicting Orpheus as a reflection of himself, in the role of the shepherd singer who heralds the transition into the Golden Age with his song. Therefore, even though Wilson hails Orpheus as the "Green Messiah" in "Pantisocratic Idyll", Wilson is acknowledging this messianic role not as a savior, rather as the one who calls in the age as a figure of transition. The more liminal figure of Orpheus is depicted in "Green Orpheus" in order to show a more realistic view of transition relating to the liminality of the pastoral itself. His love life is transitional with the death of Eurydice, after which he must leave her in the darkness of the underworld

---

87 *Ec(o)logues* 2011, 21.

88 *Ec(o)logues* 2011, 15.

89 *Ecl.* 4.55-57:
non me carminibus vincat nec Thracius Orpheus
nec Linus, huic mater quamvis atque huic pater adsit,
Orphei Calliopea, Lino formosus Apollo.
Let Thracian Orpheus not conquer me with songs
Nor will Linus; the former mother helps and the latter
The father, Calliope Orpheus, beautiful Apollo Linus.

as he transitions back to the light of life;[90] the transition of his songs from love songs to songs of mourning; the transition from loving women to loving only men, "rejecting women for boys."[91] All of these transitions are negative, showing a transition into the decline that Wilson is seeing firsthand in the Hudson Valley, the pastoral on the brink of Golden Age and decline.

Wronsky focuses more on the liminal Orpheus that appears in *Georgic* 4, though there are some hints at the Golden Age Orpheus. Her poem "His Eyes Ablaze With Sea-Green Light"[92] depicts a conversation between herself and an unknown male figure, who, at the end of the poem, we realize is very much like Orpheus in terms of transition and liminality. The main ideas of the poem are about the transition from the past to the future, or perhaps even looking back to the past in terms of declining progress. The last five lines of the poem illustrate this idea: "What is yesterday / What is tomorrow? / Which are we moving toward? Sometimes I think, / like Orpheus, we're halting on the very brink of light and looking back. Other times / I think we're done with pentameter and grieving." Wronsky addresses the idea that during these times of decline in the landscape, we, like Orpheus, ponder the darkness of the present and the uncertainty of the future. Do we die in pieces like Orpheus, or do we stride forward as a herald of the future, just as the man in this poem, who experiences such a vision of the future: "One

---

[90] G. 4.490-491:
Restitit Eurydicenque suam iam luce sub ipsa
immemor heu! victusque animi respexit.
Both Orpheus and Eurydice are at this point *luce sub*, under the light, literally on the edge between light and dark, life and death, the underworld and the world of the living.

[91] "Green Orpheus" Wilson.; Segal (1989, 26) argues that this idea comes more from Ovid than from Vergil, in which Ovid's Orpheus "has shunned 'female Venus' in favor of young boys".

[92] *Imperfect Pastorals* 2017, 37.

day the mysteriously reappearing / semi-truck of his dreams overturned and all / its liberated penguins tottered back to / Kangaroo Island." "Kangaroo Island" is a possible reference to the Australian nature preserve of the same name, and Wronsky uses this landscape as a modern example of the possible future of the wild pastoral that is heralded in *Eclogue* 4, the paradise which may have occurred for himself had Orpheus not turned back to look at Eurydice. According to this comparison, Wronsky desires to be such a herald of the future, and not to stand like Orpheus, uncertain on the brink of life and death.

Wronsky adapts the lines from *Eclogue* 4, in which the poet (i.e. Vergil) compares himself to Orpheus, and adapts them to compare herself to roles of both poets. In her poem "Let Thought Become Your Beautiful Lover", she says "It [i.e. poetry] will be as enchanting as a wandering Orphic singer in her little boat / surrounded by attentive birds."[93] As the writer of such pastoral poetry in this collection *Imperfect Pastorals*, Wronsky is herself the Orphic pastoral singer, the Vergilian poet heralding the future of pastoral both in reality and in literature, just like Vergil and the mythological Orpheus.

Hermes

Hermes' character is not mentioned in Vergil's bucolics, but his traits are so similar to the *puer* that his references by the modern poets are hard to ignore. Vergil's *puer* is on the edge of transition, in that childhood itself is a liminal stage, seen as the learning period on the way to adulthood. Certainly childhood is paradise for Wilson, as his mentions of the *puer* figure and childhood all take place in the summertime, which is

---

93 *Imperfect Pastorals* 2017, 53.

a time of ease. Wilson adapts the pastoral themes of the *puer* and places them upon Hermes. In "Endarkenment" Hermes is called "the world's first pastoralist / social bandit baby."[94] In "Ten Golden Apples," Wilson describes "the green fuse / of Maya the month of May & mother of Hermes."[95] Mentions of Hermes with his mother refer to the myth of his birth and first activities as a baby who stole cows, but also recall the appearance of the *puer* and his own mother in *Eclogue* 4.60-61:

> Begin, small boy, to recognize your mother by her laughter;
>
> Ten months bring long care for the mother.

Hermes' cattle theft in the *Homeric Hymn to Hermes* (lines 69-78) creates a transitional stage for Hermes as he learns about the pastoral world. The mention of "Maya the month of May" sets the scene in May which is the month that comes right before the transition into summer. This time of summer recalls the summer boredom of childhood "Comix Eclogue" as well, tying together the idea of Hermes and summertime as keys to the golden time of childhood.[96]

There are several obscure similarities between Hermes and the *puer* in Wilson's poems. The line above from "Endarkenment" refers to the myth from the *Homeric Hymn to Hermes*, in which the newborn Hermes escapes his cradle in order to steal Apollo's cattle. He does this act of thievery because he deems it unfair that he and his mother, Maia, must live in a dark cave apart from the other gods. However, Hermes may have committed this act of thievery in order to bring himself and his mother closer to

---

94 *Ec(o)logues* 2011, 19.

95 *Ec(o)logues* 2011, 27.

96 *Ec(o)logues* 2011, 32.

the pastoral and natural world. Indeed, the whole *Homeric Hymn* is filled with pastoral imagery and allusions, such as the following besides the cattle themselves (the bold is my emphasis):

> But an old man **tilling his flowering vineyard** saw him as he was hurrying down the plain through grassy Onchestus. So the Son of Maia began and said to him: "Old man, digging about your vines with bowed shoulders, **surely you shall have much wine when all these bear fruit**,[97] if you obey me and strictly remember not to have seen what you have seen, and not to have heard what you have heard, and to keep silent when nothing of your own is harmed."[98]

> ...through many **shadowy mountains and echoing gorges and flowery plains** glorious Hermes drove [the cattle].[99]

> And from heaven father Zeus himself gave confirmation to his words, and commanded that glorious Hermes should be lord over all birds of omen and grim-eyed lions, and boars with gleaming tusks, and over dogs and **all flocks that the wide earth nourishes, and over all sheep.**[100]

Because of the last of these examples, Hermes is known as a god associated with nature and transition (travel, business venture, etc.). Associated also with this pastoral

---

97 Hermes has the power either to make crops grow or make them decline.

98 Homeric Hymn to Hermes 87-93. Evelyn-White, Hugh G. 1914. "Hymn 4 to Hermes." In *The Homeric Hymns and Homerica with an English Translation*, Taken from the Perseus Digital Library. Harvard University Press. http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=HH 4&lang=original.

99 *Homeric Hymn to Hermes* 95-96.

100 *Homeric Hymn to Hermes* 568-571.

Hermes is his son, Pan, the god of nature, who is mentioned several times in Vergil's *Eclogues* and *Georgics*.[101] Because, like the *puer*, Hermes as a pastoral god can be seen as a herald of the pastoral future, Hermes is an appropriate figure for Wilson to compare to Vergil's child messiah of *Eclogue* 4.

Wilson continues the pastoral themes of Hermes as an infant messianic figure in "Ten Golden Apples," with the lines "the green fuse / of Maya the month of May & mother of Hermes." Hermes, here, is the "green fuse," that transitions Maia from the cave to the brighter pastoral. This is a similar transition to Wilson's own allusion of Maia as the month of May, a month that is a transitional point from Spring to Summer, which both Wilson and Vergil celebrate as a time of childhood. It is also the time in Vergil's *Eclogues* (*Ecl.* 9.51-55) when the shepherd Moeris remembers happily singing his songs.[102]

As for Maia being the mother of Hermes, she is not necessarily associated with nature, apart from being a nymph that lives in a cave. However, she is a transitional figure in terms of agricultural seasons. Maia is one of the Pleiades (i.e. daughters of Atlas and Pleione), also known as the Seven Sisters in astronomy. Vergil mentions the setting of the Pleiades, using Maia as metonymy, in *Georgic* 1.225 as the time when certain agricultural plants are growing.

Wronsky also sees childhood as a Golden Age, depicting the pastoral paradise through representations of her daughter. Wronsky writes her own adaptation of Hermes

---

[101] Ecl, 2.32-33; 4.68-69; 5.59; 8.24; 10.26. Georg. 1.17; 2.494; 3.392.

[102] Moeris in *Ecl.* 9.51-55.

as the *puer* figure in "The Light and Shade upon the Globe."[103] A major adaptation of the pastoral *puer* is depicted in the following line: "We're garlanding an entrance / to the future… a mirrored tortoise shell"; "garlanding an entrance / to the future" recalls the *puer's* cradle in *Eclogue* 4.23, which *blandos fundent…flores,* "will pour out lovely flowers." The cradle pours garlands of flowers, indicating that the child is bringing a flourishing pastoral with them. This makes the cradle, in a way, an entrance to the future.

"[A] mirrored tortoise shell" references Hermes directly. Hermes is an appropriate figure for Wronsky to reference as well, portraying a figure of pastoral transition, making way for a brighter future, or at least a future of change. The reference to the tortoise shell recalls the *Homeric Hymn to Hermes* (lines 39-61), in which Hermes first leaves his cradle and finds a tortoise, with whose shell he invents the lyre.[104] This reference to his invention of the tortoise-shell lyre shows that childhood is a time of learning and of progress, which is how Vergil depicts the *puer* from *Eclogue* 4 and how Wronsky refers to her daughter's experience with nature. Wronsky, as with the other modern poets, references the prominence of music and song, as Moeris mentions in *Eclogue* 9. In mythology Hermes made such music possible, and he paved the way for this future in his infancy. It seems that with this garlanding of the *puer's* cradle of the future, Wronsky is hoping that her daughter's generation will also pave the way for a brighter future through education, art (including music), literature, and all other pursuits that she represents through Hermes' tortoise shell.

---

[103] *Imperfect Pastorals* 2018, .14.

[104] Richardson, Nicholas, ed. 2010. *Three Homeric Hymns: To Apollo, Hermes, and Aphrodite*. Cambridge University Press. Lines 39-61.

Chapter 3: The Pastoral in Decline

The Golden Age is often seen as an older, better way of life compared to the realities of pastoral decline. Sometimes the Golden Age follows decline, but in Vergil's poetry, decline tends to follow the Golden Age. This is also the case for this thesis' three modern poets. For poets like Wronsky and Wilson, this decline can be portrayed as leaving the time of childhood and happier days into a time of conflict; for Powell it is leaving the early days of love and freedom to days of disease and regret. And for all three, there is the potential decline of the pastoral literary tradition. For Vergil the decline of the pastoral represents all of these ideas in addition to the physical leaving of the cultivated landscape, including his own movement "on to a different genre [of poetry]" when he moves from the pastoral landscape to the court of Augustus.[105] Vergil's experiences with decline are caused not only by this movement, but also the eviction of farmers due to the "land confiscations [in the rural areas of Italy] that occurred following the Battle of Philippi in 42 BC[E]," with Augustus' settling of "some 100,000 demobilized troops on the land."[106] Vergil responds to this turmoil by depicting the decline in the landscape as a result of this confiscation and lack of cultivation, as well as pathetic fallacy representing the emotions felt by the evicted farmers. Here, the Roman government has taken the lands for uses that Vergil believes are not right for the landscape. He expresses this idea in the following passages from the *Eclogues* and *Georgics*.

---

[105] Heiny, Stephen. 2018. "'Puny in My Predicaments': Seamus Heaney's Readings of Virgil's Ninth Eclogue." *Vergilius* 64: 53–70. https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2307/26542625. 57.

[106] Heiny 2018, 55; Knight 1966, 61.

There are no other poems that delve deeply into the ideas of the changing landscape as much as the *Georgics*. In *Georgics* 1, Vergil writes about the "declining fertility of the natural world as a whole" as well as the need for more and more difficult work as the landscape goes into such a decline.[107] According to Gale, *Georgic* 1 transitions from a Hesiodic Golden Age landscape to a landscape that is "worn out… since it can no longer produce crops and living beings spontaneously, as the first plants and animals were produced."[108] In this landscape, *labor* is the good way of life, the life of cultivation. However Vergil then takes up the Lucretian idea that the landscape has a natural and consistent decline, and human progress is necessary.[109] Nevertheless, Vergil does differentiate what kind of progress is most beneficial for the landscape — the land confiscations are not beneficial to the land, leaving it uncultivated and causing it to decline faster than the lands' supposedly (Lucretian) natural declination. In the midst of his agricultural instructions, Vergil implies these socio-political causes of decline by describing a storm which "anticipates the storm of civil war at the end of the book" as well as the resulting confiscations:[110]

> vicinae ruptis inter se legibus urbes
> arma ferunt; saevit toto Mars impius orbe[.] (*G.* 1.510-511)
>
> The neighboring cities bear arms, with the laws

---

[107] Gale 2004, 59. , Monica. 2004. "The Gods, the Farmer and the Natural World." In *Virgil on the Nature of Things: The Georgics, Lucretius and the Didactic Tradition*, 58–112. Cambridge University Press. p.59

[108] Gale 2004, 60.

[109] Gale (2004, 64-65) speaks of *G.* 1.150-154.

[110] Gale (2004, 70), referencing Geor. 1.328-333.

between themselves having been broken; impious Mars
Rages through the whole world.

The *Eclogues* depict the conflict of the confiscations in a more personal way. In *Eclogue* 1, the shepherd Meliboeus bemoans his misfortunes to Tityrus, who symbolizes pastoral leisure, sitting lazily under a tree and playing a shepherd's pipe (*Ecl.* 1.1-5). Meliboeus shows the result of decline from Tityrus' Golden Ages through not only his lament at having to leave the land, but also the physical aspects of decline in the agricultural landscape:

en ipse capellas
protenus aeger ago; hanc etiam vix, Tityre, duco.
hic inter densas corylos modo namque gemellos,
spem gregis, a, silice in nuda conixa reliquit.
saepe malum hoc nobis, si mens non laeva fuisset,
de caelo tactas memini praedicere quercus. (*Ecl.* 1.12-17)

Indeed I myself lead the goats onward, ill;
I scarcely even lead this one, Tityrus.
Here among the dense hazel trees just now twins,
The hope of the flock, ah! having brought them forth
She left behind on a bare rock.
Often I remember this evil, if my mind is not unfavorable,
Predicted to us, the oak having been touched from the sky.

Then, Meliboeus laments the result of the displacement in the following lines, depicting the conflict resulting from the evictions that Vergil felt so deeply:

impius haec tam culta novalia miles habebit,
barbarus has segetes. en quo discordia civis
produxit miseros; his nos consevimus agros! (*Ecl.* 1.69-72)

An impious soldier will have these cultivated lands,
A stranger these crops. Behold for what did
Conflict produce miserable citizens; we
Sowed the fields for them!

In the clause *his nos consevimus agros*, Meliboeus points out that famers like him shaped the pastoral landscape, thus literally carving an identity for themselves attached to the landscape. Along with this identity comes the songs and poems of the shepherds, and the leisure time they take in cultivation. Having to leave their lands in *Eclogue* 1, the shepherds, represented by Meliboeus, are no longer able to successfully cultivate the land or drive their flocks, the basis of the shepherds' livelihood. Tityrus represents the other aspect of a shepherd's identity, which is the music and verse the shepherds make in their times of leisure. Here Tityrus "teaches the woods to echo beautiful Amaryllis" on his slender pipe (*Ecl.* 1.5). The meeting of Meliboeus and Tityrus are these two aspects of rural life coming together. However, as the shepherds leave the pastoral life, these aspects of their identity get pushed to memory, and even these memories start to fade.

Eclogue 9 discusses such a link between the decline of pastoral identity and memory in the following lines. Moeris first laments the fact that he, Lycidas, and the other shepherds must leave their lands (*Ecl.* 9.2-6); Moeris, later in the poem, discusses the toll and decline that results from this displacement:

Omnia fert aetas, animum quoque; saepe ego longos
cantando puerum memini me condere soles:
nunc oblita mihi tot carmina, vox quoque Moerim
iam fugit ipsa: lupi Moerim videre priores. (*Ecl.* 9.51-54)

Time carries all things, the mind also; often I remember
That I spent long days of singing as a boy :
Now all my songs are forgotten, the voice itself
Also flees Moeris: the wolves see Moeris first.

The memories of the songs of his childhood are fading from Moeris' memory as his departure removes traces of his identity as a shepherd. Losing the memories of his childhood also means the loss of the Golden Age, if not in the pastoral landscape, then in the very minds of those who try to remember back to those times. This indicates as well that as Vergil himself moves away from the countryside of Italy (both physically and in his poetry) and moves closer to the court of Augustus physically and in the tributes featured in much of his poems (*Eclogue* 4, the *Aeneid*, etc.), that he too is losing some of his own identity formerly linked to the pastoral landscape.

Within this identity also is linked the idea of the pastoral literary tradition. As Vergil and the shepherds are forced to leave the pastoral landscape, they are forced to

leave their pastoral songs behind as well, meaning that the tradition of pastoral poetry begins to fade, pushed back into memory. While it is not absolutely certain that the tradition will disappear, and *Eclogue* 9 "foresees the possibility of further song" and verse, this potentiality depends on a return to an older way of life, which for many is also simply memory, no longer a tangible reality.[111]

In other poems, Vergil writes the loss of the landscape not in terms of the historical displacement of the farmers, but in the loss of certain pastoral aspects, including the decline of herds and crops, the songs as above, and also in the loss of specific people. In *Eclogue* 5, the shepherds Mopsus and Menalcas have a singing contest, both praising and lamenting the loss of Daphnis and the resulting loss of the pastoral. Mopsus sings (*Ecl.* 5.34-39):

Postquam te fata tulerunt,
ipsa Pales agros atque ipse reliquit Apollo.
Grandia saepe quibus mandavimus hordea sulcis,
infelix lolium et steriles nascuntur avenae;
pro molli viola, pro purpureo narcisso
carduus et spinis surgit paliurus acutis.

After the fates have taken you,
Pales herself and Apollo himself have left behind the fields.
Often in those furrows we entrusted the greater barley,
Unhappy darnel and sterile oats spring up;

[111] Heiny 2018, 55.

Instead of soft violet, instead of the purple narcissus

The thistle and the paliurus rise forth with sharp thorns.

After Mopsus, Menalcas sings of all the pastoral and Golden Age prosperity that Daphnis brought when alive. Daphnis serves as a symbol of declining pastoral identity as well: upon his death, the pastoral Golden Age gets pushed into memory, replaced with the decline of beneficial crops and the rise of harmful plants, as in the lines above.

The three modern poets have adapted these aspects of Vergil's representation of pastoral decline, putting themselves in Vergil's position in relation to whatever conflict caused the decline, and comparing their experiences with his. These include the transition from a pastoral, agricultural use of the land to various wrong uses, such as commodification by the government; the decline of pastoral identity into mere memory; the loss of key aspects of the pastoral that lead to harmful plantlife; and the potential of the pastoral tradition. As in *Eclogues* 1 and 9, there is potential for the tradition to continue, however even the modern poets have some uncertainty. In the following sections, I discuss how each poet adapts the themes and texts from the *Eclogues* and *Georgics* to better depict their own relationships to the declining pastoral.

Powell's Decline

In *Eclogue* 2, Vergil follows the Golden Age by having Corydon realize in the latter portion of the *Eclogue* that his distraction and obsession of Alexis has caused decline in his own, real pastures in the following passages:

Alas, alas, what did I wish for miserable me?

I, ruined, sent in Auster[112] to my flowers

And boars to my liquid fonts. (58-59)

He, as the cultivator, has neglected his duties, letting in the destruction of Auster and the boars. As a result of his leaving behind cultivation for infertile fantasy, his farmlands suffer and decline:

Ah Corydon, Corydon, what madness has seized you!

For you the leafy vine on the elm is unpruned. (70-72)

However, before he realizes his own fault in the decline and lack of cultivation, he projects the idea of such a decline on Alexis himself out of anger and jealousy:

Oh beautiful boy, do not trust too much in your complexion;

The white flowers fall, black hyacinths are gathered.(17-18)

Just as the plant life does not survive outside the fantasy world, neither will Alexis' beauty.

D.A. Powell mirrors this realization in his own two poems, "Corydon & Alexis" and "Corydon & Alexis Redux." Powell's Corydon is likely a reflection of himself; though based on his life, the character could represent anyone who went through similar losses. Through the character of Corydon, Powell begins his poem "Corydon & Alexis" by referencing shepherds from Vergil and other modern works, like the modern, pastoral film *Brokeback Mountain*. Unlike Vergil, Powell focuses on the reality of things early on in "Corydon & Alexis". Powell's poem recognizes the harshness of reality due to neglect and immersion in the fantasy world. The poet asks, "*and did he go back to his fields and*

---

[112] The South Wind.

caves?"[113] If the "he" in this line is Corydon, this quote is a reality check for him concerning what has happened to the landscape without his care and attention. If the "he" is Alexis, it just shows the stark contrast between the fantasy world and reality. Either way, when "he" returns, the answer is, "yes, but they were gone / strip-mining, lumber, defoliant, sterile streams: you *knew* what was / coming".[114] This indicates the consequences of such neglect, whether it is taken literally to mean the development of the landscape that others like Wilson depict, or it is metaphorical, concerning the body or lifestyle.

For Powell the latter idea is more of a personal reality, relevant to the terrible reality of the AIDS crisis. The landscape left to its own devices, without the care of cultivation, is toxic and overrun with harmful plant life, such as that mentioned in *Eclogue* 4.24, and infertile land. Both Powell and Vergil use the symbolism of the fields and farms turning savage to illustrate how this unhealthy obsession of Corydon's is reflected by the environment, which is caused, as Vergil says, by Corydon's distractions and blindness to reality. Powell has dealt with similar neglect, but on his own person. Powell was diagnosed with HIV in the late 80s or early 90s, though when the AIDS crisis first occurred, Powell "never got tested" and, just as Corydon's neglect left his farmlands overrun, so did Powell's body because he did not care for it until later.[115] He and many others were blind to the reality of the AIDS crisis, sheltered in the fantasy "resort area"

---

[113] *Chronic* 2009, 78.

[114] *Chronic* 2009, 78.

[115] Witt and Durkin, "Turning the Paper Sideways".

of Sonoma County.[116] When the epidemic first began "few people had it" and people, including Powell, thought that those few would die out and it would "just be over."[117] But it wasn't over, and so, like Corydon's untamed fields, the uncontrolled disease raged on. In reflection of this raging disease, Powell describes the obsession of Corydon as "a kind of savage caring that reseeds itself / and grows in clusters", untamed foliage that overgrows and overwhelms not only the landscape, but Corydon himself.

Indeed, to Powell's Corydon also, this obsessive infatuation with the Alexis character is almost physically harmful, extending the harm from his fields to his very person: "that guy with the sideburns / and charming smile / the one I hoped that, as from a sip of hemlock, I'd expire with him/ on my tongue".[118] Perhaps this line of Powell's also uses the symbolism of the deadly hemlock to represent his experience with HIV and the fantasy world. In *Eclogue* 2 Vergil describes the reed made of hemlock stalks that the shepherd Damoetas had given him (*est mihi disparibus septem compacta cicutis/fistula, Damoetas dono mihi quam dedit olim/et dixit moriens: 'te nunc habet ista secundum'* [*Ecl.* 2.36-38]), boasting to Alexis about his skill with music and verse. The word for "hemlock" used here is *cicuta*, which is the same term that is used for "the hemlock given to criminals as poison."[119] Peter L. Smith also confirms the usage, claiming that "[t]he Roman *cicuta* was probably poison hemlock (*Conium maculatum*)

---

[116] Witt and Durkin, "Turning the Paper Sideways".

[117] Witt and Durkin, "Turning the Paper Sideways".

[118] *Chronic* 2009, 79.

[119] "Cicuta." logeion.uchicago.edu. Accessed November 17, 2019. https://logeion.uchicago.edu/cicuta. From the Lewis & Short Dictionary.

rather than cowbane or water hemlock (*Cicuta virosa*)."[120] Vergil only uses *cicuta* to mean a shepherd's pipe made out of hemlock stalks, though Powell uses it to refer to both pastoral music and the poison. Therefore, it is possible to glean a double meaning in Powell's usage. To "expire with him" not only indicates death, but also living together in the fantasy world until death comes. In this case, hemlock indicates death at the end, but hemlock can also indicate the shepherd's pipe and song, the standard of the fantasy world that Vergil's Corydon uses to tempt Alexis.

While both poets discuss what does not endure due to the ravages of disease and time, they also describe that which, by their own doing, causes the fantasy and love to last in a sort of reality: the literary tradition. For Vergil's Corydon, "a continuous literary tradition compensates for failed love;"[121] by singing to the beech trees, to which "he was coming regularly… throwing disorderly thoughts to the… woods," (*Ecl.* 2.3-5) he is unwittingly putting his song to the trees, metonymy for the paper used in the literary tradition. For Powell, his own addition to the pastoral, literary tradition does not compensate for failed love; instead, it looks back at what has caused love and the fantasy world to go wrong. Still, Powell's Corydon tries to make even this last with his own grove of trees, in his case "an old-growth stand of redwood" to represent the groves found in California. In the end, though, the literary tradition prevails due to the simple fact that the landscape is in decline, lost to "strip-mining, lumber," et cetera; the old pastoral of redwoods must now be replaced with paper: "instead I put that man, like so many

---

[120] Smith, Peter L. 1970. "Vergil's Avena and the Pipes of Pastoral Poetry." *Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association*, 101: 497-510.

[121] Fredericksen, Erik. 2015. "Finding Another Alexis: Pastoral Tradition and the Reception of Vergil's Second Eclogue." *Classical Receptions Journal* 7 (3): 422–41. https://doi.org/10.1093/crj/clu024. p.426

others, on paper - / a tree already gone from sight where once it had drawn the eyes / upward: the crest of a mountain. crumpled thoughts, crumpled love."[122] "[L]ike so many others" refers to both his lovers and to the poets of this pastoral tradition, whom both Corydon's character and Powell himself join in the writing of this idyll. At the very end, Powell also acknowledges the fragility of the tradition itself: "I put them on paper, too, so fragile. for nothing is ever going to last." If, however, there are more poets like him, such verses will be passed down and rewritten by other pastoral poets.

This also addresses one major issue of this chapter: whether the pastoral tradition itself is in the process of being lost or continues to endure. Because of poets like Powell, the latter seems to be true. The pastoral genre continues to be relevant, especially relating to issues like global warming, deforestation, and the harmful decisions of political leaders. Particularly, though, the representation of homosexuality keeps the pastoral thriving. This idea will be discussed further in the concluding chapter.

Wronsky's Decline

Gail Wronsky's collection, *Imperfect Pastorals*, also adapts Vergil's ideas of decline, and she too has Vergilian ties to the land. The title of the collection itself notes a sense of decline, imperfect in opposition to the perfection of the Golden Age. Like Vergil's shepherds, Wronsky had to move due to some sort of conflict that led to the decline of the environment, whether natural or socio-political. Briefly, she moved in the early 1990s from her home in the urban Venice, CA to the more rural Topanga Canyon

---

[122] *Chronic* 2009, 78.

to get away from the chaos caused by the police brutality received by Rodney King. However, as Wronsky tells us, even this pastoral paradise in Topanga Canyon has the too-real potential of decline. Not only do the the political struggles similar to those of Venice that threaten Topanga, but the potential decline due to the progression of commodification of the land and climate change in general. The following sections will analyze a small number of her poems from *Imperfect Pastorals* that align with Vergil's particular themes of decline: realities of abuse vs. the paradise of pastoral; the decline of the conditions of the land for proper pastoral landscapes; the decline of identity and memory through song and verse as tied to the pastoral landscape.

In her poem "Clearer than amber gliding over stones"[123] — the title of which is taken from *Georgic* 3.521-522, describing the sadness of a farmer and the decline of the landscape in pathetic fallacy — Wronsky emphasizes the necessity for and decline of fertile land. Like Vergil, Wronsky distinguishes between the fantastical and hopeful future of pastoral nature, which she describes as "the crisp fiction of wildness," from the harsher realities of decline caused by "[p]roduction, [and] consumption." This is a different production to Vergil's *labor*, which is the simple life of hard work and the cultivation of the landscape; here it is the over-production and consumption that leads to the exhaustion of the land. Here she looks forward to a Golden Age that is necessary for a thriving, agricultural pastoral. The line saying, "[s]oil is necessary. Perhaps we could agree on that," looks to how the landscape should be if not in decline. The "we" in this line represents, presumably, those who live off the land in some form or another, whether it is agriculturally, consumerist, or by those learning from the landscape like

---

[123] *Imperfect Pastorals* 2017, 13.

her daughter. The turning of attention back to how the land should be in opposition to decline is found in the perspectives of characters like Corydon, who realize the harsh realities of the decline in the pastoral landscape, having turned away from the alluring, fictional paradise of the Hesiodic Golden Age. The particular focus on the soil, however, resembles the patterns found in the *Georgics*. In *Georgic* 1, Vergil discusses the proper times and weather patterns for the healthiest and most fertile soil:

> *Vere novo, gelidus canis cum montibus umor*
> *liquitur et Zephyro putris se glaeba resolvit,*
> *depresso incipiat iam tum mihi taurus aratro*
> *ingemere et sulco attritus splendescere vomer*.[124]

> In new spring, when icy moisture leaves the mountains
> And the crumbling soil loosens itself in the west wind,
> Already then my bull may begin to groan over the plow
> And the plow begins to shine, worn from the furrow.

This is the perfect time and weather condition for the first plow in Vergil's landscape. Weather is key for Wronsky, too. It is inferred from the following line in "Clearer than amber gliding over stones" that there has not been rain for a long time, as is common in the California droughts: "and stop cupping our hands beneath the dry sky as if we knew what we wanted." No rain means unhealthy soil, and no rain combined with overconsumption of the land means no production at all.

---

[124] *Geor.* 1.43-46

Wronsky's line about soil also references *Georgic* 2, in which Vergil uses lines 177-225 to discuss "the qualities of various soils,"[125] which soils are good for planting, and which are unhealthy and infertile. Page summarizes what soil is best for optimal farming: "...soil, which has moisture but exhales it freely and is well covered with grass, produces olives, cattle, and corn equally."[126] Moisture is key for healthy soil. Because of the changes in the soil, or indeed lack of healthy soil in general, people cannot cultivate the landscape in a healthy way, resulting in a loss of their connection with nature, and thus part of their identity. California, which has a lot of agricultural production and less rain each year, suffers especially, and the agricultural and natural identity gets lost. As a Californian, and specifically an Angeleno, I too have experienced the shift that comes with the droughts, the loss of nature. It is an ongoing feeling of loss and decline that Wronsky has depicted well using Vergilian themes.

For Vergil's shepherds in *Eclogue* 9, loss of the connection to nature results in loss and decline of all the shepherds' way of life, including their songs and verses they sang in youth, when faced with harsh reality of decline. Wronsky's "An acre or two of land that no one wanted" expands on this sense of loss.[127] For both Vergil and Wronsky, fertile land and a tradition of song and verse is what defines the agricultural Golden Age. In the first half of the poem, Wronsky comments on the neglect of reality, as Corydon does in *Eclogue* 2 and D.A. Powell's "Corydon & Alexis." For Wronsky the neglect of reality leads to the ravages of harmful plant life and neglect without cultivation, "letting

---

[125] Page, T.E. 1965. *P. Vergili Maronis: Bucolica et Georgica, with Introduction and Notes by T.E. Page, M.A.* New York: S.t Martin's Press. P. 260, note on lines 177-225.

[126] Page commentary 1965, 260: note on lines 177-225.

[127] *Imperfect Pastorals* 2018, 19.

them go to seed, to pot, to hell to waste, a fate which is / in some ways worse than death. And they respond to our / neglect." In the second half of the poem, the neglect has taken its toll. Wronsky mourns the loss, not only of the land, but of the self in connection to the land, making herself the character of Moeris as Vergil does in 9. Having this perspective Wronsky adapts this particular sense of loss thus: looking back on the decline of her own pastoral place, Wronsky finds herself "thinking we were born for no reason but to die and be forgotten." Here Wronsky does not speak of songs, but because verse is so inherent in the identity of Vergil's shepherds and the life among nature, Wronsky is saying the same thing: those who found themselves in the land, their identities are being forgotten and lost with the decline of pastoral.

Wronsky's poem "And mend the wreckage of a ruined home"[128] also deals with the loss of song and memory due to the effects of civil conflict. In *Eclogue* 9, Moeris mourns the fact that he must leave the pastoral and his farmlands, that all his hard work has been given instead to the soldiers who are moving in, and the fact that he can no longer remember his songs as he moves further and further away from the pastoral. Wronsky shows a similar disruption, echoing Moeris' ideas in the following lines: "as when losing / there was music but it's breaking / up amid the mending / bruised and buried under a once / bright winter sun." The songs are breaking up with the physical breaking up of the landscape, with the decline of a nourishing sun, and are forgotten as a result of such loss. In this poem as well, Wronsky notes the decline of song as the decline of the pastoral literary tradition. For Moeris and Lycidas, Vergil makes this a reality, as the tradition lies in the tradition of shepherds in the pastoral landscape. In the

---

[128] *Imperfect Pastorals* 2017, 22.

beginning of Wronsky's poem, she says, "laughter as when / alone at night reading aloud / the sea, the clacking sound of oars;" "reading aloud" can refer to the oral tradition of verse which the shepherds pass on, and of which Vergil is a part. Said theme recalls such epic poems originally passed down orally, like the *Odyssey* and other Homeric works, and Wronsky reflects this in the line "the sea, the clacking sound of oars," referring to the sailing of Odysseus' ships, or, more relevantly, to the sailing of Aeneas' ships in Vergil's own epic. There is conflict in these old epics, but especially the *Aeneid,* and the rest of Vergil's poems are transitional both in and of themselves and in the context of the time that they were composed. There are no epics of such a kind in the 21st century when Wronsky is writing, though the transitional themes are no less relevant, and have these poets look upon times when identity in the landscape was not just found in memory.

Of all her poems that adapt Vergil's theme of loss of verse and song, "Flame-color means east winds" is most pertinent.[129] Wronsky refers to a time past, presumably during the days of pastoral and peace in nature, "[i]n the old days when something used to be at stake / a cusp of wisp meant all music had to run amok." This line introduces the songs and verses that result from a time of cultivation in the agricultural Golden Age. However, she describes the present time of decline as such: "[t]here was an ethos of neither / when the sun went black. We gushed and ruminated because crows had / savaged the burlap." There are a few interpretations that follow this line. In *Georgic* 1 Vergil talks about the patterns of the sun and how they can tell a farmer what the weather conditions will be for planting and farming (424-460). For Wronsky, however,

---

[129] *Imperfect Pastorals* 2017, 28.

"the sun went black," not only indicating unfit conditions for agriculture, but also an unknown future for the pastoral. "[C]rows had / savaged the burlap" indicates the start of disruption in the pastoral. She remembers back to a more pastoral time, as when Moeris refers to the planting and the singing of the shepherd Menalcas in *Eclogue* 9: "[w]hen travelers, interlopers, added frivolity / to the mix the sun / as foretold, came back, / grass breathed, / windows blinked / and I could hear my ancestors calling me." This line recalls *Eclogue* 1, when Meliboeus is lamenting the gradual loss of their landscape to the soldiers.[130] Here Wronsky brings in the people, the shepherds, back in to restore the old pastoral way of life, when "grass breathed" in the sun, not like the black sun in earlier lines. She ends the poem with "who could've asked for better weather," recalling the descriptions of ideal weather patterns that Vergil from *Georgic* 1.

Wronsky's poem "Let not the spangled lizard's scaly back"[131] discusses the decline of the Hesiodic Golden Age. In the first few lines of the poem, Wronsky establishes an Arcadian atmosphere, though instead of on ancient pastoral mountains like Arcadia or Mt. Ida, it is set in California: "Let not the spangled lizard's scaly back / distract you while you scale these boulders / or you'll miss the otherworldly doe and young / fawn picking their way through the ragged / archipelago of rocks toward Big Bear Lake with / its soft rim of marsh and burnt cedar." While Wronsky sets up this pastoral fantasy, she mentions ideas of *labor* and conflict that distract from this fantasy: "I miss them / routinely because I'm watching a / bee war sometimes because I've been standing / in the funerary line of humanity." The "bee war" is a direct reference to Vergil's *labor*

---

[130] *Ecl.* 1.3-4: *nos patriae fines et dulcia linquimus arva./ nos patriam fugimus. Patria* can be translated as "ancestral homes", and thus Wronsky has taken from the text directly.

[131] *Imperfect Pastorals* p.44.

metaphor of bees from *Georgic* 4. “[T]he funerary line of humanity” can refer to the decline of humanity’s connection with nature and the pastoral — because of the decline and effects of conflict, the pastoral is not only lost, but no longer seen due to distractions like war (represented by the metaphorical bee war) and other socio-political issues. In the last four lines of the poem, Wronsky depicts decline and the illusion of the Hesiodic Golden Age through the same lens: “if I try to picture my thoughts / they look like souls in Botticelli’s Hell like flames / some of them with buds of minuscule human faces / which is also what they look like in Paradise.” As Wilson will show, the fantasy of the Hesiodic Golden Age only blinds one to the reality of decline, and for Wronsky the images of the Hesiodic Golden Age and reality begin to blur.

Wilson’s Decline

Peter Lamborn Wilson’s views on pastoral decline are much more straightforward than he presents them in his Vergilian poems. To get a sense of why he adapts certain Vergilian themes, I would first like to expound upon his philosophical views. Wilson is an anarchist and a nihilist, who believes that current progress in America relating to the pastoral environment is a bad thing. In his essay “Take Back the Night,” Wilson views progress as living with “face-to-face with a TomorrowLand that never quite arrives," a constant struggle for something better.[132]

The progress of domestication is also a sort of negative progress for Wilson: he views the "domestication of plants and animals as the first step toward separation [from

[132] Wilson, 2004.

nature] and ultimately the State,"[133] which indicates that Wilson prefers a more Hesiodic version of the pastoral. Wilson would rather look back upon an earlier, Golden time than have modern progress, which he describes as "green tourism."[134] Expanding on this idea, Wilson says, "[i]t's fashionable to be green, but it's not at all fashionable to wonder about the actual working class and farming people and families that you're dispossessing." According to him this leads to a decline in the artistic pastoral tradition as well, saying "the fact of the matter is that America doesn't produce anything anymore." While this is an exaggerated statement, he does illustrate the fear he and others (poets, artists, environmentalists, etc.) have that the environment and all the art that results from it is being lost. As will be discussed in the following section, Wilson has created his own *Eclogues* in order to take his more philosophical ideas and interpret them in the Vergilian pastoral tradition, adding himself to a tradition that he believes is in decline.

Wilson's poetic views of decline focus on the negative effects of the fantastical Hesiodic Golden Age. As with the other poets, the following are the specific themes of decline that Wilson also adapts. The first theme of decline is commodification and negative aspects of progress. For Wilson, the idea of progress in general in the 21st century is anti-pastoral — it leads to an illusion of the Golden Age, but in reality the landscape declines from such interference. In his poem "Endarkenment"[135] Wilson uses this theme, or rather the dislike for this idea, to define Neo-Pastoralism and those

---

[133] Wilson, Peter Lamborn. 2004. "Domestication." *Fifth Estate,* 365. https://fifthestate.anarchistlibraries.net/library/365-summer-2004-domestication-charles-fourier.

[134] Bleyer, Jennifer. 2004. "An Anarchist in the Hudson Valley: Peter Lamborn Wilson with Jennifer Bleyer." *The Brooklyn Rail*. https://brooklynrail.org/2004/07/express/an-anarchist-in-the-hudson-valley-br-pet.

[135] *Ec(o)logues* 2011, 19.

involved in it, the modern version of Vergil's shepherds, "chanting Down With Progress — Ban Electricity." Wilson uses Electricity as metonymy for progress both in this poem, and in his prose essay "Take Back the Night." Wilson goes on in "Endarkenment" to show the results of the use of electricity and other proponents of progress and commodification: "Arcadia re-designed … to replicate an eternal shopping mall" — here Wilson references the illusions of Vergil's Hesiodic Golden Age, pleasant to think about and hope for, but in reality not beneficial at all for the pastoral. The "eternal shopping mall" is the modern illusion which commodification of the land provides. First Vergil's Arcadia declines to the 21st century shopping mall, and as a result the agricultural aspects of the landscape suffer: "Farms always already foreclosed" with the shepherds singing "[g]ive us back / our sunk Atlantis our lost Arcadia," referencing Moeris' lament in *Eclogue* 9.2-6.

In the poem "Ten Golden Apples"[136] Wilson continues this theme of production and progress as having a negative effect on the pastoral landscape. While in relation to the Golden Age there is much in this poem to discuss concerning the messianic figure of *Eclogue* 4, Wilson slips little bits of the reality of the declining pastoral. He references the contrasting discussion of Meliboeus and Tityrus in *Eclogue* 1 in the following lines: "together among willows / cool springs & soft meadows / *lentus in umbra* / down in Arcadia the / poorest rural county in the State." The first three lines here refer to Tityrus' Golden Age of pastoral leisure. The latter two lines echo Meliboeus' lament of the landscape — poor in crops, declining flocks, uncultivated. "[P]oorest rural county in the State" also indicates land that has not been developed yet, considered poor by those

---

[136] *Ec(o)logues* 2011, 27.

who would cause such gentrification, but to those who sit "together among willows", i.e. the shepherds, it is still the metaphorical Arcadia. Wilson later in the poem comments "[w]hat's good for the crops is good for America." There are two interpretations of this statement. The first is the illusion of the Hesiodic Golden Age, which is taken over by gentrification in the 21st century; the other is that Wilson is saying this literally, that what will actually make America better is good cultivation rather than abuse.

The poem "Pastoral Roadkill" comments on what would happen if the decline caused by gentrification and commodification were to overcome the pastoral.[137] In this landscape, pastoral is almost a crime, and Wilson also acknowledges that writing this poem himself is an act of protestation in the following lines: "How many / petty crimes make up the Idyll — grazing / on Government land." Wilson is commenting on Vergil as well, saying that since the displacement of the farmers, Vergil's idylls of lamentation can be interpreted as protestations against Augustus' rule of eviction. Wilson then comments on the effects on the shepherds, with "the coming Depression as the sum of / all our depressions / an anti-pastoral zone for little zeks."[138] Wilson refers to a "Depression" both of the shepherds and of the landscape itself, now "anti-pastoral", with the shepherds reduced to working on an abused landscape (thence becoming the "zeks"). Overall, Wilson is saying that there is no good pastoral that comes out of gentrification, commodification, and development by the government, or whatever powers that be, and takes Vergil's more subtle protestations as affirmation of this idea.

---

[137] *Ec(o)logues* 2011, 86.

[138] "'zeks' (prisoners)." I.E. Prison laborers in the Russian gulags.
Rothberg, Abraham. 1971. "One Day—Four Decades: Solzhenitsyn's Hold on Reality." *Southwest Review* 56 (2): 109–25.

Thence, there are the effects upon the identity and memory of the shepherds and all others who are tied to the pastoral landscape, one way or another. Much of Wilson's depictions of loss of memory and identity echoes Vergil's of Moeris and Lycidas in *Eclogue* 9 and the link of two times presented in the conversation between Meliboeus and Tityrus in *Eclogue* 1.

The poem "Pantisocratic Idyll" begins with a view of the leisure time of shepherds, referencing the singing contests that make up much of Vergil's *Eclogues*:[139] "It's true that shepherds simply have / more spare time / for poetic contests …". After the first section of this poem, he continues, saying, "[t]here must be at least two shepherds / for transhumance to transpire with grace." Saying "[t]here must be at least two shepherds" after a paragraph about singing contests is fitting, as there are usually three involved in a singing contest, two to sing and one to judge. Making this statement, Wilson is implying that there aren't at least two shepherds anymore and thus an end to the singing contests. This recalls the lament of Lycidas and Moeris on the death of Menalcas, who is a common character in Vergil's singing contests. In addition, Wilson depicts mythological singers like Orpheus in "Pantisocratic Idyll" also referenced by Vergil in order to establish a past of pastoral song, now left in myth and memory.

Wilson also discusses the decline of song towards the end of "Ten Golden Apples", and makes reference to other works of Vergil as well. With the following lines, he references the songs and tales of Silenus in *Eclogue* 6: "They [shepherd boys] discovered Silenus asleep in a cave / grotesque in his grotto all pink on / yesterday's plonk / tied him up with / the very garlands they'd slipped from his head / sweet

---

139 *Ec(o)logues* 2011, 21.

vinculi". Silenus is a symbol of pastoral verse and leisure, and Wilson follows this portrayal of him with more depictions of the Golden Age — however, he then describes the Golden Age as the "last age of Sibylline song". Referencing this "Sibylline song" in addition to Silenus also recalls the tradition of epic poetry that predates Vergil, though this particular recollection refers to Vergil's own epic, the *Aeneid*, now also in the collective memory of the fading pastoral tradition.

In "Pastoral Roadkill," Wilson makes a vague reference to the loss of Daphnis seen in the singing contest of *Eclogue* 5. While, as discussed above, this poem depicts what happens when the government interferes and takes the pastoral landscape away, commodifying the land for un-pastoral use, the poem begins with "Shepherd's Funeral," indicating the death of Daphnis (perhaps also the death of Menalcas, but that is another interpretation). Putting this "Shepherd's Funeral" at the beginning is a signpost or turning point which results in all of the loss and "Depression" in pastoral decline.

"Comix Eclogue," most of which recalls the Golden days of childhood, also comments on the landscape and literature of the pastoral tradition. Here he also references "the / grotto of Silenus" to add to the pastoral and literary time of Golden Age leisure that encompasses Wilson's view of childhood. However, he notes what is happening to the pastoral, particularly in America: "Pastoral slides / into elegiac inevitability recalling lost / intensities in Illinois or Bumfuck Idaho / or Iowa flattened by Memory's / Antaean weight / its sour two-dimensional funk of regret." "[E]legiac inevitability" refers to both the lament for the landscape itself and also what the pastoral poems turn into; instead of happy, nature poems with singing contests and nymphs and all else that is included in the pastoral, the literature becomes somber and full of

mourning of what has been lost, much like *Eclogue* 9. "[I]ntensities" could mean the intensity of nature in America, which Wilson has a lot of experience with, now gone or commodified. The "two-dimensional funk of regret" is his mourning of the loss of the landscape and the tradition (and very likely the face of "green tourism" that authorities put on when trying to appeal to the protesting masses).

Overall, Wilson regrets the decline of the pastoral tradition that results from the decline in the landscape, just as Vergil does through Moeris and Lycidas in *Eclogue* 9. The question that must be answered forthwith is, what will become of the pastoral tradition?

Conclusion: The Future of Vergilian Pastoral

This thesis has examined how three 21st century poets have adapted Vergilian pastoral into their own poetry, focusing on themes of transition. Powell relates his experience with AIDS and the resulting loss to the infertile realities of *Eclogue* 2, adapting both characters of Corydon and Alexis to mirror himself and an unnamed lover. Powell transitions Corydon and Alexis from the Hesiodic fantasy to the realities of decline that are not only occurring in the physical landscape of the US (mainly presented by the region of Sonoma in Nor-Cal), but in the landscape of Powell's own body. Powell gives us the imagery of the harmful plant-life and decline of good crops that plagues Corydon and the realities of Vergil's Italian landscape to represent the ravages that AIDS has had upon its victims.

Wronsky adapts Vergil's themes of a tumultuous landscape caused by conflict in order to poetically interpret her own experiences with civil conflict in Los Angeles County. While she and her daughter have been able to somewhat escape that specific civil turmoil in the more idyllic setting of Topanga Canyon, Wronsky still notices the decline of the landscape due to the ravages of climate change (especially with the effects of the California droughts) as well as destructive development of the land. Using Vergil's transitions of life and death and vice versa; Golden Age and decline; figures who represent such changes such as her daughter in the role of the prophesied *puer*; and didactic descriptions of the pastoral landscape taken from the *Georgics*, Wronsky creates her own version of Vergilian pastoral. In Wronsky's pastoral Golden Age, pastoral peace reigns and the next generations, which includes her daughter, are able to learn from the landscape and bring forth a more peaceful age. Not only does this Golden

Age recall the *puer*, but it also recalls the peaceful childhood of the shepherds, as represented by Moeris in *Eclogue* 9. Like these shepherds, Wronsky hopes her daughter's generation will learn and make art and poetry, continue the literary pastoral tradition, and maintain the tangible pastoral.

Wilson's *Ec(o)logues* depict the childhood days of summertime as the Golden Age, adapting the springtime Golden days of childhood that Vergil's shepherds long for. Like Wronsky, Wilson represents the *puer* of the coming (Hesiodic) Golden Age through different mythological figures; he puts in other Vergilian and mythological figures to represent the heralded (or even heralding) *puer*, such as Hermes and Orpheus, both figures of transition and change.

Wilson's philosophical ideas are more concerned with the commodification of the landscape due to negative progress, and he reflects this by adapting Vergil's own lamentations of the declining landscape. While Vergil's ideas of land development are not exactly the same as ours now, they help Wilson to interpret the contemporary turmoil of the declining landscape. Both share the idea that without the pastoral, one's childhood, one's very identity, is lost.

The education that Wronsky hopes for her daughter, that the shepherds glean from Vergil's Arcadia, are lost if the progress which Wilson dreads comes to pass. According to Wilson, it already has, and unlike Vergil, who even through his mourning hopes for a brighter future, Wilson does not seem to believe that there is a bright future without a complete turnaround. However, they both agree that nothing is being produced in terms of the artistic and literary tradition, and that the pastoral tradition is in decline.

From the Golden Age to decline, Vergil's themes of such transitions help modern poets interpret modern times of transition to this day. But what about a transition into the future beyond what the three poets have used? All four poets view the future of pastoral, both the physical landscape and the literary tradition, with some uncertainty. The three modern poets have indeed adapted their uncertainty from Vergil: the shaky divide between the pastoral leisure of Tityrus and the declining landscape of Meliboeus in *Eclogue* 1; the clear liminality between the fantasy world with Alexis and the declining pastoral of Corydon in *Eclogue* 2; the mere fact that *Eclogue* 4 takes place in the illusion of a fantastical Hesiodic Golden Age; the death of Daphnis in *Eclogue* 5 as a symbol of pastoral uncertainty and decline; the unknown future that awaits shepherds like Moeris and Lycidas in *Eclogue* 9 after the land confiscations. Even the more didactic *Georgics* have levels of uncertainty: ending lines of instruction with a hope for a Hesiodic future; and the liminality of life and death that Orpheus experiences in *Georgic* 4.

The poems about children representing the *puer* look to the future, but even this is uncertain, as it does not tell what kind of future the children/future generations will bring, only that it will be better.

Vergil wrote his pastorals in uncertain times, and so have the modern poets. The only certainty each poet gives is in itself an uncertainty: the Hesiodic Golden Age is presented by each poet, adapted from Vergil's so certain *Eclogue* 4. In this poem, Vergil had to present some certainty not only in order to anticipate the new Augustan government, but also to give himself some hope in his own uncertainty of his position and the country in general. I do not know if the modern poets have felt uncertainty in their position as poets, but they have felt uncertainty with their positions in the world in

general, especially in a world in decline. While these poets, too, project what they want for the future, unlike Vergil they never say with certainty what the pastoral future will be. Even now in the year 2020, the future of the pastoral landscape is unknown, due to the effects of climate change and the fickle nature of humanity itself. But what about the pastoral literary tradition? Does Vergilian pastoral influence poets even beyond the three discussed in this thesis? Does it continue to influence those poets?

From my observations, it does. While most contemporary poets who write pastoral poetry do not specifically adapt Vergilian pastoral, there continues to be a niche for Vergilian poets. For the modern poets of this thesis, it is the uncertainty of the physical landscape itself fuels the pastoral tradition. That is the case for others who use Vergil's pastorals in their poetry. Unfortunately, with the decline of Classics as a mainstream program of learning, the adaptation of Vergil is much more niche now — one will not find those adaptations as often as with Renaissance (Dante, Spenser, Milton), Romantic (Wordsworth), and 20th century poets (Radnóti, Sackville-West, Day-Lewis, Elliot, Heaney, Hodgins). This then begs the question: which poets has Vergilian pastoral transitioned to and why? Most of the poets who adapt Vergil have studied him in school or upon scholarly recommendation. An essential role of the poets then is to spread this knowledge of Vergil's works through their poetry so others may relate to such themes in times of change or crisis.

One such poet to make use of Vergil's themes in times of crisis is myself. In my collection *Loss And Other Landscapes* I have adapted Vergil directly, as well as adapting his texts and themes through what I have learned from the poets and research of this

thesis. I include a poem titled “The Poet’s Words" in which I imagine myself going down to the underworld to speak to Vergil, tending his bees in an eternal meadow, about an uncertain future; Ursula LeGuin does something similar in her novel *Lavinia* (2008), in which the titular figure speaks to the shade of Vergil about her own uncertain future, sitting in the pastoral setting of the shrine of Faunus (Pan). In my poem “Days of Cultivation” I compare myself as a scholar to one of Vergil’s pastoral farmers. Like Meliboeus worried about his unproductive flocks in *Eclogue* 1, I worry about cultivating an infertile or unproductive landscape, uncertain what my fields (whether career or study) will look like.

There is another thematic aspect of Vergil’s pastorals that the modern poets, and indeed myself, have adapted, which transitions Vergilian pastoral further to a new future: queer themes. According to the LGBT historian and writer Rictor Norton, “[i]n its origins, homosexual love was an integral part of the pastoral tradition,”[140] and the use of queer themes in the pastoral is still active today. We find queer themes in *Eclogue* 2 with Corydon and Alexis, *Eclogue* 5 with the shepherds’ love for Daphnis, *Georgic* 4 with Orpheus’ transition from love for Eurydice to love for boys, and others that will take further analysis. For centuries queer relationships in pastoral has been not an uncommon theme, and have indeed been adapted from Vergil (or else related back to his work). In D.A. Powell’s “Corydon & Alexis” makes a reference to the film *Brokeback Mountain*, a 21st century love story about two shepherds, whose relationship is as dramatic as the pair from *Eclogue* 2.

---

[140] Norton, 2008.

I include three poems with queer themes adapted from Vergil in my collection. I adapt the queer themes of Orpheus from *Georgic* 4 in my poem "Orpheus' Elegy." The titular figure laments that he "cannot stride gayly forward" into a new future because of infertile love both on the part of the deceased Eurydice, and on the part of shepherd boys like Corydon, who "was too busy dealing with Alexis' damage / to make love to [him]". "The Shepherdess To Her Love" recalls the infertile love of Corydon for Alexis. The last poem in the collection "Sea Idyll" takes the story of Proteus, the sealherd, from *Georgic* 4 and turns it into a more nautical pastoral version of the queer themes found with Orpheus and Corydon.

I think it is important to transition to such themes in order for the younger generations to be able to relate to the literature. This is why the reading of Vergil's pastorals is so important, not only for those poets who adapt his text, but anyone who looks to the past in order to understand the present and their place in a changing world. And this world is constantly changing: even so very recently have we seen changes in the landscape due to issues like COVID and the climate crisis. This is again why the reading and studying of Vergilian pastoral is so important. As Powell has written about his own plague harming the landscape, we now are experiencing another plague, and we look at the effects on the environment just as the modern poets do.

This thesis should give scholars the foundations for studying Vergil's pastorals in 21st century contexts, and provide the encouragement to read more contemporary Vergilian works. In addition, this thesis will encourage scholars to look at modern themes within the contexts of Classical works, such as queer themes and climate change. Because the themes of this thesis are so very rooted in the 21st century, students and

younger scholars have a chance to relate more to Vergil and other classical texts. Perhaps works like these will encourage students to delve into Classics at a higher rate than is taking place now.

Bibliography

Modern Poets

Powell, D.A. 2009. *Chronic*. Minneapolis: Graywolf Press.

Wilson, Peter Lamborn. 2011. *Ec(o)Logues*. Barrytown: Station Hill Press.

Wronsky, Gail. 2017. *Imperfect Pastorals*. Los Angeles: What Books Press.

Ancient Authors

Apollodorus. Apollodorus, The Library, with an English Translation by Sir James George Frazer, F.B.A., F.R.S. in 2 Volumes. 1.3.2. Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press; London, William Heinemann Ltd. 1921. Accessed June 2020 from the Perseus Digital Library.

Evelyn-White, Hugh G. 1914. "Hymn 4 to Hermes." In *The Homeric Hymns and Homerica with an English Translation*, Taken from the Perseus Digital Library. Harvard University Press. http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=HH 4&lang=original.

Virgil. 1999. *Eclogues*. Edited by H. Rushton Fairclough and G. P. Goold. Loeb Classical Library.

Works Cited

Anon. *"D.A. Powell." n.d. Poetry Foundation. https://www.poetryfoundation.org/ poets/d-a-powell.*

Anon. "An Interview with D.A. Powell." 2011. *Nashville Review*. https:// as.vanderbilt.edu/nashvillereview/archives/4277.

Barot, Rick. 2017. "Diane Seuss: Behind the Byline." *New England Review*. http:// www.nereview.com/2016/02/03/behind-the-byline-5/.

Bleyer, Jennifer. 2004. "An Anarchist in the Hudson Valley: Peter Lamborn Wilson with Jennifer Bleyer." *The Brooklyn Rail*. https://brooklynrail.org/2004/07/express/ an-anarchist-in-the-hudson-valley-br-pet.

Burrow, Colin. 1997. “Virgils, from Dante to Milton.” In *The Cambridge Companion to Virgil*, edited by Charles Martindale, 79–90. Cambridge University Press.

“Cicuta.” logeion.uchicago.edu. Accessed November 17, 2019. https://logeion.uchicago.edu/cicuta. From the Lewis & Short Dictionary.

Durkin, Sean and Sam Witt. 2000. “Turning the Paper Sideways: An Interview with D.A. Powell.” *Poetry Flash*, February/March 2000, https://web.archive.org/web/20030414172527/http://www.poetryflash.org/archive.284.Witt.html.

Earnest, Jarrett. 2014. “Living Under Sick Machines:” *The Brooklyn Rail*. https://brooklynrail.org/2014/06/art/hakim-bey-with-jarrett-earnest.

Fredericksen, Erik. 2015. “Finding Another Alexis: Pastoral Tradition and the Reception of Vergil’s Second Eclogue.” *Classical Receptions Journal* 7 (3): 422–41. https://doi.org/10.1093/crj/clu024.

Gale, Monica. 2004. “The Gods, the Farmer and the Natural World.” In *Virgil on the Nature of Things: The Georgics, Lucretius and the Didactic Tradition*, 58–112. Cambridge University Press.

Hardie, Philip. 2006. “Cultural And Historical Narratives In Virgil’s Eclogues And Lucretius.” In *Brill’s Companion to Greek and Latin Pastoral*, 275–300. Brill.

Heiny, Stephen. 2018. “‘Puny in My Predicaments’: Seamus Heaney’s Readings of Virgil’s Ninth Eclogue.” *Vergilius* 64: 53–70. https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2307/26542625.

The Irish Times. “Obituary: Heaney ‘the Most Important Irish Poet since Yeats,’” August . https://www.irishtimes.com/culture/books/obituary-heaney-the-most-important-irish-poet-since-yeats-1.1510684.

Johnston, Patricia. 1980. *Vergil’s Agricultural Golden Age: A Study of the Georgics*. Leiden, Netherlands: E. J. Brill.

Kevorkian, Karen. 2018. “‘Shimmering Bits of Thought’: Gail Wronsky’s ‘Imperfect Pastorals.’” *LA Review of Books*. https://lareviewofbooks.org/article/shimmering-bits-of-thought-gail-wronskys-imperfect-pastorals/.

Knight, Michael. 2012. *William S. Burroughs vs. The Qur’an*. Berkeley: Soft Skull Press.

Knight, W.F. Jackson. 1966. *Roman Vergil*. Penguin.

Leach, Eleanor Winsor. 1966. “Nature and Art in Vergil’s Second Eclogue.” *The American Journal of Philology,* 87 (4): 427–45

Milton, John. 1697. “Lycidas.” *Poetry Foundation*. https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/44733/lycidas.

Norton, Rictor. 2008. “The Homosexual Pastoral Tradition.” Rictornorton.Co.Uk. http://rictornorton.co.uk/pastor00.htm.

Page, T.E. 1965. P. Vergili Maronis: Bucolica et Georgica, with Introduction and Notes by T.E. Page, M.A. New York: S.t Martin’s Press. P. 260, note on lines 177-225.

Perkell, Christine. 2002. “The Golden Age and Its Contradictions in the Poetry of Vergil” *The Vergilian Society,* 48: 3–39.

Pritchard, Daniel E. 2009. “Budding, Bucolic, D.A. Powell.” *Critical Flame*. http://criticalflame.org/verse/0709_pritchard.htm.

Reckford, Kenneth J. 1958. “Some Appearances of the Golden Age.” *The Classical Journal* 54 (2): 79–87. https://www.jstor.org/stable/3294223.

Richardson, Nicholas, ed. 2010. *Three Homeric Hymns: To Apollo, Hermes, and Aphrodite*. Cambridge University Press. Lines 39-61.

Rothberg, Abraham. 1971. “One Day—Four Decades: Solzhenitsyn’s Hold on Reality.” Southwest Review 56 (2): 109–25.

Saunders, Timothy. 2013. *Bucolic Ecology: Virgil’s Eclogues and the Environmental Literary Tradition*. Bloomsbury Academic.

Segal, Charles. 1989. *Orpheus: The Myth of the Poet*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press.

Segal, Charles. 1981. “Pastoral Realism And The Golden Age: Correspondence And Contrast Between Virgil’s Third And Fourth Eclogues.” In *Poetry and Myth in Ancient Pastoral: Essays on Theocritus and Virgil*, 265–70. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press.

Smith, Peter L. 1970. “Vergil’s Avena and the Pipes of Pastoral Poetry.” *Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association*, 101: 497-510.

Spenser, Edmund. 1579. “The Shepheardes Calender: January.” *Poetry Foundation*. https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/53208/the-shepheardes-calender-january.

Thomas, Richard F. 2007. “Shadows Are Falling: Virgil, Radnóti, and Dylan.” In *Pastoral Palimpsests: Essays in the Reception of Theocritus and Virgil*, 191–213. Crete University Press.

Thomas, Richard F. 2017. Why Bob Dylan Matters. New York: Harper Collins.

Wilson, Peter Lamborn. 2014. “The New Nihilism | The Anarchist Library.” *The Anvil*, 5: 21–27. https://theanarchistlibrary.org/library/peter-lamborn-wilson-the-new-nihilism.

Wilson, Peter Lamborn. 2004. “Take Back The Night: Ban Electricity.” *Fifth Estate*, 365. https://theanarchistlibrary.org/library/various-authors-reconsidering-primitivism-technology-the-wild.

Ziolkowski, Theodore. 1993. *Virgil and the Moderns*. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press.