

The Early Development of Bucolic Poetry

Master of Arts Thesis

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For Professor R. Egan

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The Early Development of Bucolic Poetry

BY

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Abstract

My intention here is to give an overview of the current state of scholarship concerning ancient bucolic poetry, with particular focus on the tradition as it was passed from Theocritus to Virgil. This overview will include discussion of the nature of the genre; its metre; brief biographies of the poets discussed; the philosophical beliefs that may underlie the poems; the characters who appear in Theocritus' *Idylls* and Virgil's *Eclogues*; and the somewhat different tradition which was passed from Virgil to the later Roman, mediaeval and later pastoralists.

These things having been, I hope, accomplished, I will move on to an analysis of the elements of that tradition which existed prior to Theocritus' organization of those elements into the form which became the pastoral genre. Of particular interest here will be the influence of a "folk tradition" which, following only a few scholars, I have detected to have been a major influence on Theocritus' bucolic *Idylls*. In this regard, there are several reasons to be convinced that the *Idylls*, and particularly the singing contests which are perhaps their most famous feature, were closely based on the songs of the authentic Sicilian (or Coan) shepherds with whom he must have had contact.

Introduction

This thesis is intended to investigate the nature of the bucolic poems, or *Idylls*, of the Hellenistic poet Theocritus. Theocritus, according to tradition, was from Syracuse on the island of Sicily. For reasons which are unclear, he apparently spent some time on the eastern Aegean island of Cos before earning the patronage of Ptolemy II Philadelphus, at whose court in Alexandria he must have composed many of the *Idylls*.

These poems, written in the early decades of the 3rd century B.C., either launched the pastoral genre, or definitively gathered together the pre-existing elements of it and inspired the Roman poet Virgil to refine it into the form which became conventional for the genre; the choice between the two depends largely on which definition of the pastoral genre one should choose to accept¹.

There are 30 poems and some fragments of his work extant (some of which are not pastoral by any definition), but some of the preserved poems are certainly spurious and the authenticity of several others is far from agreed upon.

¹ Geoffrey Chew, in *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* entry for "pastoral" (v.19, 217), notes in regard to the difficulty of definition: "The philosophical oppositions in pastoral have been a preoccupation of the secondary literature ... and encourage very general definitions of pastoral that very often transcend limitations of subject matter, genre, or medium."

At the beginning of this study, it may prove instructive to define a few key terms. This is of particular importance when the investigation of a literary genre is involved; genres are, of course, the artificial constructions of critics. As such, they are subject to revision by each successive generation of critics at best, or, at worst, by each individual critic². That said, the ancients identified genres mostly by metre. This contrasts with the modern tendency to classify by subject matter. Bucolic poetry, for example, was classed as *epos*, the tradition to which Homer and Hesiod belonged. This does not mean that the ancients could not see bucolic as a separate, if connected, tradition, and indeed they seem to have usually done so. Modern critics have often retained this separation by referring to a bucolic or pastoral 'mode' within *epos*. Since the time of Theocritus (and perhaps before, as we shall see), bucolic poetry has been a recognized tradition, however it is classified.

David Halperin remarks in his introduction:

Ancient bucolic poetry is a field of study in which one is counted lucky to have convinced oneself, and successful if one is able to persuade one's friends, of the essential rightness of any particular

² See Halperin, *Before Pastoral*, 7.

hypothesis. No wider agreement is to be hoped for (*Before Pastoral*, x).

Halperin seems to exaggerate, but one familiar with the literature is reminded of the extraordinary venom with which, for example, A.D. Knox could argue for the change of a couple of letters in the text of *Idyll 1* ("The Fox and the Grapes", 1931). Halperin's point, which can be applied to the very definition of the genre, is made.

'Pastoral' is the most general term of those defined here. The word *pastoral* is derived from the Latin noun *pastor*, which means either 'herd', or, more commonly, 'shepherd'. The word should, then, be taken to mean something like 'of, or relating to, shepherds or their flocks'. In the most basic way, this is true of pastoral poetry — it is poetry concerning shepherds. If, however, there is one point on which I fancy that the "wider agreement" despaired of by Halperin might be achieved, it is that pastoral poetry is a great deal more complicated than that.

'Bucolic' is the term both Virgil and Theocritus used to refer to at least some of their poems. There has been debate over which aspects of those poems make them 'bucolic', but the overall character of the poems has almost always been understood. The term probably originates from the Greek βουκόλος, 'cow-

herder', although this is somewhat confusing given that Theocritus' characters are typically shepherds or goatherds, and not cowherds (or, as early English pastoralists rendered the word, 'neatherds')³. Much scholarship has been devoted to the difference between the two words ('bucolic' and 'pastoral,' that is), the main thrust of which is that while βουκολικός seems, in antiquity, to have referred to a recognizable genre of poetry, *pastoralis* was an adjective meaning something like 'of, or relating to, the activities of shepherds and flocks,' and so on. The two words have been used more or less interchangeably in English for some time, and it is rather difficult to correct this entrenched practice⁴. The amount of time scholars have devoted to this problem may be taken as an indication of the difficulty involved in defining the genre. For the purposes of this study, I have endeavoured, with at least partial success, to use the two terms with some discretion. Where my intention is to encompass the

³ The word βουκολικός and its derivations have given rise to some complicated but very interesting theories regarding the nature and origin of the bucolic genre. These are discussed below, in the chapter dealing with the 'beginnings' of the genre.

⁴ Halperin discusses the contrasting definitions of the key terms at great length in *Before Pastoral*. In fact, he spends nearly one quarter of his book defining pastoral. It is certainly a difficult matter to keep in mind the difference between Theocritus and the (more) modern ideas about pastoral poetry.

entire genre up to and including modern times, I have written *pastoral*; where a strictly ancient meaning is intended, I have preferred *bucolic*.

'Idyll' is the title commonly applied to Theocritus' bucolic poems. The word seems to derive from the Greek εἰδύλλιον, which is the diminutive of εἶδος, a word familiar to readers of Plato, where it is conventionally taken to mean 'form.' A consultation of LSJ will reveal that the word εἶδος has a wide array of possible meanings, the most common being 'shape,' 'figure,' or 'that which is seen'. Other definitions in LSJ include 'comeliness,' 'constitution,' 'pattern,' 'kind,' 'nature,' 'plan of action,' 'policy,' 'state of things,' 'type,' 'sort,' 'class,' 'essence,' and 'wares.' Of more interest to my purposes, LSJ also notes that Aristotle used the word with the apparent meaning 'style of writing' (*Rh.AL*. 1441b9). A later meaning, possibly stemming from its use in Theocritus, is given as 'definite literary form'. Isocrates (15.74) uses it with the meaning 'example of a style,' and a scholiast to Pindar used it to mean 'single poem.' The use of a diminutive form of the word could indicate that Theocritus was affecting humility. More likely, it seems to me, he thought the term appropriate because of his use of dactylic hexameter, which, as we will discuss further below, was normally reserved for very serious epic poetry. An 'idyll', then, by this line of reasoning, might be some thing like 'a little experiment in a literary form'.

`Eclogue' and `idyll' have similar meanings in translation. `Eclogue' is a Latin word which means `excerpt' or `selection,' while `idyll' has usually been taken to mean something like `little form,' which definition can be understood also to imply `excerpt' or `selection.'

The *Brill's New Pauly* uses the terms `bucolic' and `pastoral' interchangeably, even in the entry for `Greek bucolic' (Fantuzzi, "Greek Bucolic" 800-804). Fantuzzi identifies the characteristic markers of the genre, the use of which, in the Greek context, is limited to certain of the *Idylls* "and several other poems of the *Corpus Theocriteum*" (800):

All except *Id.* [8], 33-60 (elegiac distichs) are written in hexameters, marked in varying degrees by Doric linguistic colouring, most of them in the form of dialogue (3 and 11 are monologues)... which are embedded in rural surroundings and have (cow)herds as protagonists...(800)

Fantuzzi notes that not all of the *Idylls* are bucolic, and further that even the *Idylls* which *are* bucolic

are just a particular variation of the `mimes' of the corpus, which otherwise take place in urban (*Id.* 15) or in indeterminate surroundings (*Id.* 2, 14) or have fishermen as protagonists (*Id.* [21]).

The pastoral poems are therefore subject to the more wide-ranging plan to elevate the lives of lowly people to poetry. (*ibid.*)

The *New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* (2nd ed.) is a good place to start looking for a music-based definition of pastoral; the poems inarguably contain a very central musical element, the importance of which is discussed below:

The pastoral song was first elevated to a considerable literary genre by Theocritus (3rd century BCE) in his *Idylls*, which were probably intended for semi-dramatic public recitation. The pastoral *Idylls* include laments, strophic songs with refrains and singing matches, and the protagonists often play the syrinx as a literary device.

(Chew, *Pastoral*, 19: 217)

Metre is also a consideration in the definition of the genre: Virgil and Theocritus both wrote in hexameters, which the ancients certainly considered essential to the genre, if less so for the (more) modern one. Another feature of Theocritus' *Idylls* that is considered representative is the fact that he wrote in the Doric dialect. The significance of Theocritus' choice of both the Doric dialect and dactylic hexameter is explored in further detail below, in the section on "Metre and Language".

The protagonists mentioned are typically rustic characters of some sort: shepherds, or goatherds, or cowherds. A mythological rustic like the Cyclops Polyphemus⁵ may take the place of otherwise unknown figures (e.g. Tityrus and Corydon). There has been controversy for centuries concerning the extent to which the portrayal of the rustic life can be taken as authentic. Poets and scholars stood on both sides of the issue when Alexander Pope published his *Pastorals* in 1709. Andrew Crozier remarks in his introduction to the works of Pope:

The *genre* of pastoral was the focus of a contemporary critical controversy of 'Ancients' and 'Moderns', which turned on the questions of how closely classical writers should be followed and how realistically shepherds might be portrayed. (VIII)

Marinelli's discussion of the pastoral genre is both comprehensive and insightful:

...the fact that it [pastoral] is used in both the singular and plural leads to a final complication. By pastorals we mean a particular type of poem: the idylls of Theocritus, the eclogues of Virgil and

⁵ His character in bucolic is quite different from the man-eating lout in the *Odyssey* of Homer—as it would have to be for him to fit into the pastoral landscape.

Spenser, the Pastorals of Pope, are all poems of the same formal type, 'mixed' poems of description and dialogue, part-narrative, part-dramatic, and usually but not always in either hexameter or pentameter verse. For critics of the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries, pastoral in this sense means a particular kind of literature, like Tragedy, Comedy, Satire or Epic, possessing like them its own decorum. More broadly, however, when we speak of pastoral in the singular, we mean really a view of life, an *ethos* or informing principle which can subsist either in itself, as in the poets enumerated above, or which can animate other forms of literature...whether they be wholly pastoral... or only partially so.

(8)

The *ethos* to which Marinelli refers, we can say with certainty, did not originate with Theocritus, even if the "particular type of poem" did. To be more precise, most scholars *think* it did, on the basis of a lack of any extant earlier works (or ancient references to such works). The ancients certainly believed that Theocritus was the inventor of the form, although they recognized, as we should also, that, like any other writer, he was influenced by writers who had come before him, as well as by his contemporaries. These writers will be discussed in detail below.

The Augustan poet Virgil, who clearly acknowledges his debt to his Hellenistic predecessor (that is, to Theocritus), gave it the form which was to be so influential on subsequent literature. The *New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, while skirting the debate as is customary in a reference book of this sort, puts it well in few words: "The pastoral song was first elevated to a considerable literary genre by Theocritus" (Chew, "Pastoral", 19: 217). This is perhaps the safest statement one can make regarding the origins of the pastoral genre.

The *ethos* of which Marinelli wrote will, I trust, become clearer in the following pages. What will also become clear, and is a matter that is nearer to the problem addressed herein, is the fact that the informing principle of pastoral has not always been understood the same way by every writer who ventures into Arcadia. For example, Frank Kermode has written very eloquently concerning his understanding of what pastoral is⁶. He notes that "the first condition of pastoral poetry is that there should be a sharp difference between two ways of life, the rustic and the urban...the first condition of pastoral is that it is an urban

⁶ Frank Kermode (ed.), *English Pastoral Poetry: From the Beginnings to Marvell*, 1952. London: George G. Harrap & Co. Ltd. The lengthy editorial introduction contains useful insight into the nature of pastoral.

product" (14). By implication, this means that a certain familiarity with both ways of life is required for proper understanding or appreciation of these types of poems. He goes on to indicate that the poet and his intended readers are city-dwellers, or at least are "the product of its schools and universities" (14). These statements are quite accurate in reference to English pastoral, but they do not necessarily apply to other pastoral in general, or to Theocritus in particular⁷.

Poggioli (1) adds that

the psychological root of the pastoral is a double longing after innocence and happiness, to be recovered not through conversion or regeneration but merely through a retreat. By withdrawing not from the world but from 'the world,' pastoral man tries to achieve a new life in imitation of the good shepherds of herds, rather than the Good Shepherd of the Soul.

Again, it should be clear from the Christian reference that Poggioli has later poets than Theocritus and Virgil in mind, but the 'longing' remains the same.

⁷ Nor, in fairness, does Kermode claim this specifically. I merely wish to demonstrate that Theocritus should not be read the same way as an English pastoralist.

Kermode further specifies, in regard to utopianism⁸ in pastoral:

Townsman and rustic alike may consider the idea that at a remote period in history, nature gave forth her fruits without the aid of man's labour and worship. Perhaps, somewhere, she still does so. This idea that the world has been a better place and that men have degenerated is remarkably widespread; the idea is a regular feature of pastoral poetry. We have abused Nature, by breaking its laws or falling into sin, and we are therefore steadily deteriorating so that our only hope is for a fresh start, after some kind of redemption. The restoration of the Golden Age is a theme of Virgilian Pastoral, and was naturally taken over in the pastoral of the Christian era.

(14)

One of Kermode's themes throughout his discussion is the opposition of "townsman and rustic". With regard to the Golden Age, he remarks that both parties may have a similar belief in this Golden Age, but that "this should not deceive us into thinking that there can be primitive Pastoral" (14). Again, his observations are quite true of English pastoral, but I would rather disagree with

⁸ Kermode does not use the word *utopianism* in his discussion—I use it here as a convenient way to summarize his ideas concerning the relation of a Golden Age to pastoral.

anyone who would project these conditions back to apply to the origins of the genre⁹. My intention is certainly not to claim that Theocritus' poems were "primitive", but that, as I will argue in further detail below, the connection between "townsman and rustic" is closer than scholars have usually thought, and the nature of that relationship has not entirely been anticipated, either.

It would seem from Kermode's thoughts (and the thoughts of a great many others besides) that the Augustan poet Virgil had a greater influence on the pastoral tradition than Theocritus himself. That the *Idylls* are a product of the city, insofar as they were intended for an educated urban readership, can hardly be doubted. The utopianism which Kermode further stipulates as part of the informing principle of the genre was, however, a Virgilian addition. It is possible that Theocritus also wished to imply that there had once been a Golden Age in which the easy pastoral life was common to all, and that a return to that Golden Age was to be desired; if this is so, however, he certainly did not make it as central to his poetry as Virgil did.

Theocritus is generally considered the first pastoral poet—there are many reasons to doubt this fact, as we shall see, but the fact remains that there are no

⁹ Kermode is not as far off as I may have made him seem here; he will have something positive to contribute to my thesis in the section concerning pastoral origins below.

earlier extant pastoral poems (depending, as so many points do, on one's definition of what constitutes pastoral) than those of the Hellenistic poet Theocritus—but it is certainly quite arguable that Virgil has, in fact, done more to shape the genre. Indeed, it would be quite possible to propose an accurate modern definition, by which Theocritus' poetry would not be considered pastoral at all. Any investigation into the beginning (or end) of a genre cannot hope to have a precise clarity; as I have noted, genres are the creations of critics, not of writers. Furthermore, no two critics are likely to understand a genre in exactly the same way.

While, as we have noted, Virgil may have been the biggest single influence on the pastoral genre, it is certainly beyond debate that Theocritus was the biggest single influence (though certainly not the only influence) on Virgil's *Eclogues*¹⁰. It is unlikely, although admittedly possible, that the creation or reformation of a (sub-) genre was on either poet's agenda. Both men, I submit, would have considered themselves to be writing firmly within an established tradition. The successful poet of the Hellenistic and Greco-Roman periods was

¹⁰ Giesecke is on shaky ground when she insists on a "Lucretian framework" for the *Eclogues*, as important an influence as Lucretius undoubtedly was. My chapter on the individual eclogues investigates the influences in further detail.

able to do exactly what it is that both Virgil and Theocritus have done: that is, to demonstrate their ability by writing in such a way that the intended audience (in both cases a very learned and literate one) would recognize reference to the work of previous poets (or possibly even prose or drama writers, as we shall see), but with different treatment in some way. It is in this different treatment that a poet would show his acumen. It was widely felt in Theocritus' time that the best literature had already been written¹¹, and any attempt to compete directly with Homer, Hesiod, Aeschylus, Sophocles and the like, would only cause the embarrassment of the imitator.

A genre which perhaps only shares many characteristics with pastoral (but not with ancient bucolic, or at least not to the same extent) is satire. Satire,

¹¹ Virgil was writing in Latin, not Greek, but he clearly considered himself to be writing within the Hellenistic Greek tradition, as many Latin writers did; the literary history within which he sought to place himself was the same, but his more distant relation to that history allowed him somewhat greater flexibility. For the clearest example of what I mean, consider that it would have been thought ridiculous for a Greek poet, whatever his ability, to attempt to write a grand national epic like Virgil's *Aeneid*, which of course is one of history's great works of literature. Homer could be referred to, but not imitated on such a scale. It was still risky for Virgil to attempt such a thing, but the detachment of a different language lessened the risk, compared to what it would have been for a Greek poet.

in Kermode's view, is very nearly related to English pastoral. This is something which, it seems to me, was only hinted at in Theocritus, but with Virgil's contributions, came to be central to the genre. Kermode's lines on the subject bear quotation:

In the heyday of English Pastoral the satirist, with Juvenal never far from his thoughts, is always at hand, flogging away with his scourge of untrimmed decasyllables; never to be reconciled to the loss of virtue always entailed in wresting a metropolis out of the gentler countryside. Pietas, gravitas, virtus- these are the qualities which wither in acquisitive communities; leisure increases, and with it the arts and the vices ... Obviously there is common ground between Pastoral and Satire; but Pastoral ... flourishes at a particular moment in the urban development, the phase in which the relationship of the metropolis and country is still evident, and there are no children (as there are now) who have never seen a cow. (17)

Pastoral, whether the term designates an "ethos" or a "particular type of poem," is an escape. For Virgil and his contemporary readers, it may have been an escape from the domestic upheavals of the first century B.C. in Italy. Perhaps Theocritus intended his *Idylls* as an escape from court politics and the 'big city' of

Alexandria. Pastoral remembers a simpler time or place. Marinelli observed of pastoral "that it is written when an ideal or at least more innocent world is felt to be lost, but not so wholly as to destroy the memory of it" (9), an observation which certainly recalls Kermode's statement above about "children who have never seen a cow." Perhaps this observation can explain the apparent creation of a new genre at a stage in Greek history where the other accepted genres had long been established, and the 'creative momentum' had long run out—a fact which has puzzled some modern critics¹². Poggioli (3) rightly recognizes that pastorals are "not a Hellenic but a Hellenistic product...the birth of the pastoral coincided with the decline of the ancient *polis* or city-state and with the appearance of a quasi-modern metropolis, which, as Rutilius Namatianus later said of imperial Rome, was more of an *orbis* than an *urbs*."¹³ In the case of Virgil and Theocritus, it is difficult to categorize many of the *Idylls* and a couple of the *Eclogues* as truly pastoral in the modern sense. What defines these poems is their setting, which is 'pastoral' in the original, Latin sense; their characters, who are also 'pastoral' in the same way; and the interaction of these characters, which could be called 'unpastoral' by the same measure.

¹² Rosenmeyer's thoughts on this are quoted in a subsequent section of this investigation.

¹³ *De Reditu* 1.65-66: *dumque offers victis proprii consortia iuris; Urbem fecisti, quod prius orbis erat.*

It has long been recognized that it is only a few of the *Idylls* which are pastoral (or indeed, bucolic), and that these are (mostly) the ones which were imitated by Virgil. That this distinction is artificial and probably not intended by Theocritus is obvious. Of greater concern is the extent to which Theocritus would have intended his poems to be read together, as pieces of a whole. There is reason to believe¹⁴ that he viewed his own corpus of poems as a whole, to a much greater extent than has often been recognized (Fantuzzi 800, quoted above). In other words, it is unlikely that he would have distinguished between the 'pastoral' and 'unpastoral' poems, aside from the fact that some contain shepherds and some do not. Bearing this in mind, however, it is primarily the poems which have been traditionally considered pastoral (including some of dubious authenticity) with which I am here concerned.

Music is another important aspect of bucolic. It is an aspect of the ancient world to which little attention has traditionally been paid. West¹⁵ notes that "the most pervasive sign of the average classicist's unconcern with the realities of music is the ubiquitous rendering of *aulos*, a reed-blown instrument, by 'flute'", and further (2) that "it must be allowed that those wishing to inform themselves

¹⁴ This topic will be discussed further below.

¹⁵ *Anc. Gr. Mus.* 1

about Greek music have not found things made particularly easy for them.”

What the ancient sources do tell us about music is unfortunately rather limited to that produced by professional musicians for festivals and competitions and to the musical theory behind this sort of music; that is to say, information concerning ‘folk’ music, which would be of great interest to readers of bucolic poetry, is limited, outside of the poems themselves, to vague passing references.

There are many references in ancient literature to the playing of music on the syrinx (σύριγξ), which is more commonly known as the panpipes. The syrinx has been associated with shepherds at least since the time of Homer: Shepherds playing the syrinx appear in the *Iliad* (xviii: 525-6)

...δύω δ’ ἀμ’ ἔποντο νομῆες

τερπόμενοι σύριγχι δόλον δ’ οὐ τι προνόησαν.

...and two herdsmen went along with them

playing happily on the pipes, and took no thought of treachery.

(Lattimore)

McKinnon’s entry for “syrinx” in the *New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* is instructive:

[Syrinx is a] Greek term for the type of instrument (aerophone) generally referred to as panpipes, that is, a row of hollow pipes sounded by blowing across their tops. Originally it was made from

cane pipes of equal length, joined together, to produce a rectangular raft-like shape. Changes in pitch were achieved by filling part of the pipe with material such as wax (a process described in Pseudo-Aristotle's *Problems*, xix.23).

(McKinnon, "Syrinx", 24:867)

The instrument was modified into its more familiar wing-like shape by the Romans and the Etruscans; changes in pitch were accomplished by the differing lengths of the pipes or canes, so the pipes no longer needed to be filled (which must have been a painstaking process indeed). McKinnon further remarks that

The cane pipes came to be replaced by wood, clay, or bronze, and sometimes the instrument was made from one piece in which the holes were bored. Greek and Roman iconography shows the syrinx with from five to 13 pipes, approximately eight being the norm.

The pipes were short, so the pitch was always high (ibid.).

The instrument had a long association with Pan, who is of course the god of shepherds. McKinnon notes that Hermes (who, not at all coincidentally, is Pan's father) had sometimes been depicted with the $\sigma\upsilon\rho\iota\gamma\chi$ in the Archaic period, "but by the classical period it had become exclusively his [Pan's]" (ibid.). In mythology, the $\sigma\upsilon\rho\iota\gamma\chi$ had an appropriately pastoral origin, which is related

in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* (1.689-712): Pan pursues a nymph, who naturally is named Syrinx:

...Arcadiae gelidis in montibus inquit
inter hamadryadas celeberrima Nonacrinas
naias una fuit; nymphae Syringa vocabant.
Non semel et satyros eluserat illa sequentes
et quoscumque deos umbrosaue silva feraxque
rus habet. Ortygiam studiis ipsaque colebat
virginitate deam. Ritu quoque cincta Dianae
falleret et posset credi Latonia, si non
corneus huic arcus, si non foret aureus illi.
Sic quoque fallebat. Redeuntem colle Lycaeo
Pan videt hanc pinuque caput praecinctus acuta
talia verba refert—restabat verba referre
et precibus spretis fugisse per avia nympham,
donec harenosi placidum Ladonis ad amnem
venerit. Hic illam cursum inpedientibus undis,
ut se mutarent liquidas orasse sorores,
Panaque, cum prensam sibi iam Syringa putaret,

corpore pro nymphae calamos tenuisse palustres.

Dumque ibi suspirat, motos in harundine ventos

effecisse sonum tenuem similemque querenti.

Arte nova vocisque deum dulcedine captum

'hoc mihi concilium tecum' dixisse 'manebit!'

atque ita disparibus calamis compagine cerae

inter se iunctis nomen tenuisse puellae.

...A famous Naiad dwelt

among the Hamadryads, on the cold

Arcadian summit Nonacris, whose name

was Syrinx. Often she escaped the Gods,

that wandered in the groves of sylvan shades,

and often fled from Satyrs that pursued.

Vowing virginity, in all pursuits

she strove to emulate Diana's ways:

and as that graceful goddess wears her robe,

so Syrinx girded hers that one might well

believe Diana there. Even though her bow

were made of horn, Diana's wrought of gold,

yet might she well deceive.

Now chanced it Pan
Whose head was girt with prickly pines, espied
the Nymph returning from the Lycian Hill,
and these words uttered he: "--But Mercury
refrained from further speech, and Pan's appeal
remains untold. If he had told it all,
the tale of Syrinx would have followed thus:--
but she despised the prayers of Pan, and fled
through pathless wilds until she had arrived
the placid Ladon's sandy stream, whose waves
prevented her escape. There she implored
her sister Nymphs to change her form: and Pan,
believing he had caught her, held instead
some marsh reeds for the body of the Nymph;
and while he sighed the moving winds began
to utter plaintive music in the reeds,
so sweet and voice like that poor Pan exclaimed;
"Forever this discovery shall remain
a sweet communion binding thee to me." --
and this explains why reeds of different length,

when joined together by cementing wax,

derive the name of Syrinx from the maid. (trans. More)

Other traditions name Hermes as the inventor of the syrinx. Hermes was also credited with inventing the lyre, so this does not seem unusual, particularly considering that Hermes was also closely associated with shepherds.

McKinnon notes quite correctly that "In keeping with its mythology the syrinx has always had a strongly pastoral connotation" (McKinnon, "Syrinx", 24:867). As an example, he notes that in the *Republic* (399d: 4), Plato forbade his theoretical citizens to enjoy the syrinx, but admitted it was appropriate for shepherds in the field¹⁶. He notes further examples from the Near East, such as the appearance of the instrument in the "idolatrous orchestra" described in the book of *Daniel* (3:4-15)¹⁷, and its further appearance on some Parthian pottery

¹⁶ With regard to Plato's position in the pastoral tradition (which is discussed elsewhere in this study) it is notable that Taylor, a major authority on Plato, reads this section of the *Republic* to be a reflection of the authentic views of Socrates, and somewhat at odds with Plato's own views.

Taylor's views about the historical Socrates are not widely accepted, however.

¹⁷ The story is that King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon had set up a giant golden statue, and commanded that all people fall down immediately and worship the statue upon hearing this musical ensemble, on penalty of being thrown into a furnace.

depicting Dionysian ceremonies. Both of these examples likely date to around the second century B.C., but unfortunately add little to our understanding.

Regarding other musical instruments which appear in the *Idylls*, Anderson and Mathiesen have this to say:

When Theocritean shepherds play any other instrument [besides the syrinx] it is a single reed, pierced with finger-holes but lacking a mouthpiece (e.g. *Idyll* 5.7). This was probably a simple form of the *surinx monokalamos*, like the oat-straw *avena* in Italy ... The mention of a double *aulos* and of a transverse flute (*plagiaulos*) in *Idyll* 20.29 is one of many indications that this poem is not Theocritean.

(Anderson and Mathiesen, "Theocritus", 25:353)

In Roman contexts, the association of the panpipes with shepherds and Pan continued, but in a diluted form. The famous *avenus* from Virgil's *Eclogues*, a type of simple reed flute, became more often used for performance of and within bucolic poetry, while the syrinx gathered other associations, becoming important in the production of pantomime.

The panpipes are certainly not the only musical element to be found in bucolic poetry. Indeed, singing is perhaps the single most important element of the genre. The extent to which singing was connected with poetry in the ancient

world in general is much debated, and probably depended in large part on the type or genre of poetry, but it is well-known that many types of poetry, if not intended to be sung, were often recited with musical accompaniment. This fact should not, however, be allowed to lessen the importance of music in Theocritean bucolic. Indeed, the poems themselves were often referred to as "songs" by both Virgil and Theocritus. Again, I have consulted the *Grove* for vocal performance in bucolic:

The professional performance of music is illustrated in the *Idylls* by the singing of an elaborate lament (*ialemos*) for Adonis (xv.100-44), and by several references to playing on the double reed pipes by an *aulētris*, a flute-girl. Theocritus reserved his most detailed comments for the sphere of amateur music-making, as in the description of fine panpipes (i.128ff.) and the praise of a singing harvester who 'skilfully measured out the shape of the tune' (*idean harmonias*; x.39). Singing and piping do not occur simultaneously in the *Idylls*; this apparent assumption of alternation was a literary convention that did not correspond to reality, as Homer's description of the Linus song shows. (Anderson and Mathiesen, "Theocritus", 25:353)

The singing matches (there are two different types of singing contests in Theocritus) which are central to the *Idylls* will be discussed in greater detail in my section concerning the origins of the genre.

To summarize, there are many specific characteristics which are typical of ancient bucolic poetry, but generally, the poems are written about shepherds, written by educated men of the city (although ones with direct knowledge of the lives of real shepherds), and written with an educated (urban) readership in mind.

Metre and Language

Metre is an important aspect of bucolic poetry. Both Theocritus and Virgil used dactylic hexameter. Metre in Greek and Latin poetry is based on the number of syllables in a line, and the length (either long or short) of those syllables (whereas English metre is based on a pattern of stressed and unstressed syllables). There are different rules for determining the length of a syllable in the two languages, but the metres used are the same.

Both Theocritus and Virgil, as we have noted, wrote in hexameters. A line of hexameter poetry consists of six feet, or metra. A metron, in hexameter, is either a spondee, which is two long syllables, or a dactyl, which is a long syllable followed by two short syllables. In hexameter, the fifth foot is usually a dactyl, and the sixth is a spondee, the last syllable of which is anceps; it can be either short or long.

The significance of hexameters is that they were previously used as the standard metre for *heroic* epic poetry, which would have been (and indeed, still is) considered a much 'higher' form of poetry. To clarify, I would remind the reader of the hierarchy of genres established in Aristotle's *Poetics*. It is certainly true that for the most part, the ancients did not theorize about genres to the same extent that is common today; that notwithstanding, the *Poetics* was the most

definitive examination of genre available at Theocritus' time. The type of metre was the most common classifier for the ancient Greeks; by this classification Theocritean bucolic belongs to the same 'genre' (to use the term a bit more loosely) as the heroic epics. That is to say, *epos* was commonly defined as poetry in dactylic hexameter. Aristotle, of course, makes no mention of bucolic in the *Poetics*: Theocritus had yet to combine the elements which would make bucolic, for those who followed Theocritus, a distinct 'mode' of *epos*, if not an entirely separate genre. There was, at least in later times, a metre which was considered bucolic, by virtue of the so-called bucolic diareaesis¹⁸. Van Sickle (106) investigates this at length:

More than Callimachus he placed himself in the tradition of Homer and Hesiod and invited comparison directly with them; for he wrote by far the greatest portion of his work in dactylic hexameter, and the epic allusions and transformations abound. Besides this implicit testimony, Quintilian [10.11.55] classed him with Aratus and Apollonius among the writers of *epos*, led by Homer. Within this ample generic frame, however, Theocritus experimented in various directions, mingling his *epos* with attributes drawn from

¹⁸ The details of this metrical classification can be found in Bassett.

other genres. Perhaps the most characteristic of these generic mixes was the use of Doric dialect in 12 poems, bringing a feature of choral tragic lyric and Syracusan mime to *epos*. In turn, within this Doric group, it has been argued, he further distinguished some poems by more frequent use of Homeric forms and words.

Doric is the dialect (mostly) used for Theocritus' *Idylls* (or more accurately, a learned approximation of the Doric dialect¹⁹); the effect, according to the *Oxford Classical Dictionary*, is one of "rustic flavour" (Griffiths 1119). The dialect's combination with dactylic hexameter has made his verses seem "artificial from the start" (Griffiths 1119). The Doric dialect has not been a feature of subsequent pastoral; it would have been impossible to duplicate in another language. Its effect, however, has been adapted in the various languages in which pastorals have been written. That effect is one of colloquial rusticity; duplication of the effect in English has often involved a conventionally rustic accent (which is, of course, relative, but some English poets have written with a Scottish accent to that end) and perhaps vulgar slang.

¹⁹ Fantuzzi, in the entry for "Bucolic, Greek" in *Brill's New Pauly* (800) doesn't go so far as to call the language of the *Idylls* a 'dialect'; he refers to "Doric linguistic colouring".

Perhaps no one will be surprised that the *Idylls* have the "linguistic colouring" that they do: Sicily, after all, was part of the Dorian-speaking area of the ancient Mediterranean. There are, however, certain factors which make the choice of Doric more interesting.

The wording of the previous sentence will have predicted one of these factors; the dialect used was, in fact, a *choice*. This is particularly true for an educated Alexandrian poet of Theocritus' cosmopolitan era, but earlier writers, as we shall see, equally had the capability to choose the dialect in which they wrote. Theocritus demonstrates this ability by writing some (*Idylls* 28-31) "poems in the manner and metre of Alcaeus, in the obsolete Lesbian dialect of 350 years earlier... [an] artificial *tour de force*." (Griffin 139). So Theocritus had the ability to write the *Idylls* in a different dialect, but this fact alone does not make his choice significant.

More interesting to the readers of bucolic has been the further fact that the ancient Greeks, as a consistent habit, wrote in the dialect they felt was appropriate to their subject matter (or genre). Just as certain metres were appropriate to (or even defined) certain genres, dialects too were chosen because of their suitability for the subject, rather than correspondence to the 'home town' of the author. An early example of this is the historian Herodotus, who wrote in the middle of the 5th century B.C. Herodotus, who lived in the Dorian city of

Halicarnassus²⁰, wrote in the Ionic dialect, which was felt to be appropriate for this type of prose.

So if Theocritus had the ability to write in other dialects, and if the dialect had historically been chosen to be 'appropriate' to the content of the composition²¹, then what motive can be attributed to Theocritus' choice of Doric? It seems possible, if not likely, that Theocritus chose one dialect over another for the same reason that he (presumably) chose his metre: that is, to alert the reader to the tradition he wished to follow, and to invite comparison with other works in a specific context. It seems as though Theocritus is experimenting with the combination of genres; the genre suggested by the Doric dialect may be *mime*, which has been associated with the development of bucolic for reasons of the latter's content as well (Fantuzzi 800, quoted above).

Mime was set in dialogue form (and has been taken as influencing the form of Plato's dialogue²²), intended, although perhaps not always, for public performance, and written in "Dorian rhythmic prose" (Beare 982). Mimes were

²⁰ Halicarnassus, as noted by John Manuel Cook and Simon Hornblower in the *OCD* (664), had a large Ionian population by the Classical period, but Herodotus himself was of Dorian descent (Dover, "Classical Historians" 89).

²¹ No one, to my knowledge, has ever denied either of these points.

²² See Murley.

written in Doric (the dialect of the Syracusan Sophron, with whom their origin is associated), and presented realistic scenes from daily life. Theocritus has combined the metre of epic with the language of mime; the effect of this combination must have seemed like a rather sharp juxtaposition to a Greek reader.

Tradition

The first paragraph of the entry devoted to Theocritus in *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* provides a clear historical perspective on the poet.

[Theokritos] (*b* Syracuse, c308 BCE; *d?* Syracuse, c240 BCE). Greek poet. A Sicilian by birth, he apparently spent most of his life outside Sicily, and much of it in Alexandria. His surviving works (including some false ascriptions) consist of 27 epigrams and 30 longer poems; the latter, composed almost entirely in hexameters, came to be called idylls (*eidullia*) and contain some of the first and most perfect surviving specimens of 'pastoral poetry', later imitated in Virgil's *Eclogues*. The shepherds of the *Idylls* usually play the syrinx (panpipes). (Anderson and Mathiesen, "Theocritus," 25:353)

Theocritus was probably born in Sicily, and later may have lived in southern Italy and Cos before taking up residence in the court of Ptolemy Philadelphus. Most scholars seem to agree that his invention of bucolic poetry was intentional. That is to say, Theocritus was consciously creating a new species of poetry²³. By his time, the other genres of Greek literature (i.e. epic,

²³ As I have hinted above, I don't entirely share this conviction.

tragedy, comedy, etc.) had long been established. Theocritus apparently (Ogilvie 115) created bucolic by combining a minor genre called mime with an artificial version of the Doric dialect, and putting it into hexameter verse. Rosenmeyer refers to some of the *Idylls* as “city mimes” and confirms the influence of the mimographer Sophron, who is discussed below.

The singing contests between shepherds that Theocritus made central to the *Idylls* may have been inspired by an actual practice among the shepherds on Sicily or Cos, although there is no consensus on this point²⁴. The content of the songs and conversations of the shepherds, however, is far from what would generally be expected of authentic shepherds. Theocritus’ herdsmen bear more resemblance to educated men of the city disguised as shepherds than to actual shepherds. This apparent lack of faithfulness to his inspiration²⁵ did not, in the eyes of later pastoralists, detract from the aesthetic value of his poetry, and was perhaps the most influential aspect of it.

The *Idylls* are neither written for, nor written by, shepherds. With that admission, however, one must consider that Theocritus was not writing in a

²⁴ The debate is well-covered by Halperin, *Before Pastoral* 118-37.

²⁵ The extent to which Theocritus was influenced by actual Sicilian (or Coan) rustics cannot be taken as established—it is still debated, and is indeed a central component of the present study.

vacuum. His debts to other poets are considerable, as was the case with any good poet of his time. Sophron and the other pre-Theocritean contributors to the genre are discussed below, in the section entitled "Origins." However, the notion maintained by some scholars—that the actual shepherds of Sicily and Cos, with whom our author was surely familiar, have no bearing on the *Idylls*—cannot be maintained. If Sophron was indeed as much of an influence on his fellow Sicilian as I hope to demonstrate, then the purported realism of his mimes seems likely to have applied to the *Idylls* as well. There is some evidence to support the idea that Theocritus was influenced not only by the activities of actual Sicilian shepherds, but also by their folk beliefs and traditions. 'Christianized' remnants of some of these beliefs and traditions are still evident among Sicilian country folk. As we shall see, however, there are many better reasons than this to support a heavy folk influence on Theocritus.

Interestingly, it is a common mistake in interpreting Theocritus to read him as a pastoral poet; there is, of course, no evidence that any such thing as pastoral poetry existed in Theocritus' own time. Distinctions, moreover, are often drawn between the different types of *Idylls*; some are pastoral, and some are not. It does not seem likely that Theocritus himself would have made the distinction. The *Idylls* of Theocritus which had the greatest influence on Virgil happened to be (mostly) those that we would think of as pastoral poems.

As for the poets who followed the bucolic example of Theocritus, the most famous of course is the Augustan poet Virgil (Publius Vergilius Maro), who was born in Mantua in 70 B.C. Virgil, it hardly needs to be said, is among the most influential poets of any period, in any genre. What concerns us here, however, is Virgil's position as the foremost pastoral poet, owing to his collection of 10 *Eclogues* published early in his career. While it is possible to weigh the *Eclogues* against the *Idylls* and prefer the work of the Greek poet (though most would acknowledge that Virgil's verse is more cleverly worked), that is not what I intend to do; any evaluative comparison between the two is ultimately reduced to a matter of taste. It is beyond argument that Virgil's *Eclogues* are responsible for the survival of a pastoral tradition through the Roman period and into the European Renaissance. It may indeed be more accurate to say that Virgil's *Eclogues* were the model for all subsequent pastoral, right into modern times. It is not Theocritus' concept of bucolic that has defined the genre—rather it is Virgil's adaptation that set the mould. This is, of course, not to say that Virgil did not understand Theocritus—he certainly did, and likely better, I should say, than modern critics are likely to—but that, as was the habit of Hellenistic poets, he readjusted him enough to invite comparison by his learned readers, without being slavish in his imitation. He took the subject-matter and style of Theocritus, and changed the meaning.

Virgil's stature as a poet was (and is) unassailable, and it is likely that Virgil's reputation is largely responsible for the preservation of Theocritus' work; that there continued to be interest in Theocritus' poems (reduced though it was through Mediaeval times, when knowledge of the Greek language nearly disappeared in western Europe) is attributable solely to his long-recognized influence on Virgil. The Roman poet composed the *Eclogues*, it appears, mostly between the years of 42 B.C. and 38 B.C., although some of them were either written or rewritten later. The collection was probably not published until later than 31 B.C.

In the centuries intervening between Theocritus and Virgil, there were other Greek pastoral poets²⁶. The best-known of these are Bion and Moschus. To say that they are the best-known is not, in this case, to say that they are at all well-known. They are little discussed, and only very few of their verses have survived.

²⁶ The contributions of these poets, along with those of Virgil's Latin influences, will be discussed in the analysis of the *Eclogues* below.

Moschus²⁷ (fl. c.150 B.C.) was a Greek poet from Syracuse. He was generally credited with the *Lament for Bion* (*Epitaphios Bionos*), but it is unlikely that he wrote it since he seems to predate Bion. He has five other extant hexameter poems, one of which may be called bucolic; it compares the life of the country man (favourably) to the lot of the fisherman. Moschus is usually associated with the Theocritean tradition in spite of the fact that most of his poems have more in common with other poets. Schmiel (266-270), for example, sees imitations of, or references to, Homer, the Homeric Hymns, Aeschylus, Callimachus and Apollonius Rhodius. Like his near-contemporary Bion, Moschus likely influenced Virgil to a greater degree than we are able to know for certain. The potential contributions of both Bion and Moschus to the genre adopted by Virgil are unclear on account of the incomplete preservation of their works.

Bion, who dates to the end of the second century B.C., is the last known Greek bucolic poet of antiquity. He is credited with the *Lament for Adonis*. His work is extant only in 17 fragments, some of which may be complete poems,

²⁷ In addition to Schmiel, my sources for the life and works of Moschus include Alan H. Griffiths' *OCD* entry, Gow's *The Greek Bucolic Poets*, Fantuzzi's *DNP* article, and Michael Paschalis. Full information on these sources is listed in my bibliography.

which reveal that he wrote in hexameters employing the Doric dialect. His poems are less pastoral than “playfully erotic,” according to his entry in the *Oxford Concise Companion to Classical Literature* (Howatson and Chilvers 85). It is generally agreed that Virgil was likely more aware of Bion than we are able to discern from the sorry remnants of his poetry which have come down to us.²⁸ A problem one has in researching the works of Bion and Moschus is that their “critical reception, with the exception of Moschus’ *Europa*, has not always matched their importance” (Hunter 105). Although the poems of these two writers, as well as the ‘pseudo-Moschus’ who composed the *Lament for Bion*, “represent crucial evidence for Greek poetry between the high Alexandrian period and the Roman neoterics” (ibid.), it is a difficult task to put them “on the map for those who used to leap rejoicing straight from Theocritus to Vergil” (ibid.).

Meleager of Gadara in Syria was a Greek poet who lived c. 100 B.C. He wrote short elegiac poems on love and death, many of which are extant in the anthology of epigrams called the *Garland*. His poetry has always been highly

²⁸ In Addition to Howatson and Chilvers, my sources for Bion include Gow’s *The Greek Bucolic Poets*, C.A Trypanis, Giffiths’ article “Bion of Smyrna” in the OCD, Fantuzzi’s *BNP* article, Richard Hunter, and J.D. Reed.

regarded both for its technique and for its emotional effects. Meleager himself compiled, and wrote the partially extant preface to, the *Garland* (Στέφανος)²⁹, which is a collection of epigrams by various poets, each of whom he considered to be a flower of his 'garland'. The poems are arranged by thematic links, allowing the reader to compare the treatment of a subject by different poets. Some of his lines were imitated by Virgil³⁰.

Latin writers, too, had an influence on the shape of future pastoral through their influence on Virgil. These writers were either contemporary with Virgil or only predated him slightly.

Lucretius (Titus Lucretius Carus), c. 99-c.55 B.C., was a poet and philosopher whose work was heavily influenced by, and can indeed be said to be an exposition of, the principles of the Greek philosopher Epicurus. His only known work is *De Rerum Natura*, which is a didactic poem in six books of hexameters, and is the fullest exposition we possess of the principles of Epicurus.

²⁹ Most of the extant portion of the *Garland*, including Meleager's preface, is preserved within the *Palatine Anthology*.

³⁰ Williams (96), for example, sees that *Eclogue 2* was heavily influenced by Meleager; Virgil's use of the name "Alexis", which occurs in Meleager (*Anth. Pal.* 12.127) but not in Theocritus, is an acknowledgment of his debt to Meleager.

The purpose of Epicureanism is to encourage men to rid themselves of all of the superstition, worry, and guilt which accompany the worship of gods.

Lucretius allows that god or the gods may exist, but contends that even so, he (or they) have no interest in our mortal world, and certainly do not intervene in it; the world operates according to natural laws, and is not subject to the dictates of some interested higher power. There is no afterlife, and no reincarnation; the soul is *not* immortal, but perishes with the body. Therefore, there is no reason to fear death, nor punishment in the afterlife.

Lucretius devotes much of the *De Rerum Natura* to explaining the atomic theory, which had originated with the pre-Socratic philosophers Democritus and Leucippus. Their atomic theory, adopted by Epicurus, can be described briefly as the belief that an infinite number of 'unsplittable' particles ('atoms') collide and combine with each other in various forms and densities to form all matter (they recognized that everything, even the air, was matter). An apparent contradiction with the idea of the free will of men was refuted by Lucretius; he explained that atoms can swerve out from their individual paths of their own accord.

Lucretius also touches upon Epicurus' moral theory that pleasure is the aim of life; with no afterlife for which to prepare, what is left for man but to enjoy himself in this life? It should be mentioned that it is not exactly hedonism which

Epicurus advocates, though he is often thought of as a hedonist in modern times. A simple life, enriched with the company of good friends, is the sort Epicurus and Lucretius recommend. Epicureanism, then, is an excellent fit for pastoral poetry. Virgil is often thought to have had strong Epicurean leanings, but Rosenmeyer suggests that it may be the tradition, not the poet, which is Epicurean (45). He does not identify Theocritus as an Epicurean, but suggests that the teachings of the moral philosophers played a large part in the new Greek culture based in Alexandria, of which Theocritus was a part. Epicureanism is discussed further below, in the chapter on "Philosophy".

Gaius Asinius Pollio³¹ (76 B.C. - A.D. 4) was an historian, a statesman, and patron of the arts. Virgil praised Pollio in *Eclogues* 4 (lines 11-14) and 8 (lines 6-13) with reference to his consulship in 40 B.C., in which he campaigned in Illyria and helped broker a truce (the Treaty of Brundisium) between Antony and Octavian. Pollio seems to have been one of Virgil's earliest supporters, and apparently came to his family's aid with regard to the land confiscations after the Battle of Philippi in 42 B.C. In addition to erotic poems and tragedies he composed a history of the civil wars, covering the period from the consulship of

³¹ The contributions, however indirect, of Pollio and Gallus to the pastoral genre will be explained in the examination of the *Eclogues* which is to follow below.

Metellus in 60 B.C. to the Battle of Philippi in 42 B.C., and perhaps later. His writings, unfortunately, have not survived. His *History* was highly thought of in antiquity, and was used as a source by Appian and Plutarch, and was also praised by Horace³².

Gaius Cornelius Gallus (c. 69-26 B.C.) was a prominent Roman soldier and poet, and a friend of Augustus and of Virgil. In his political life, he sided and fought with Octavian in the civil wars. Through Octavian's patronage, he was one of the appointed commissioners sent to north Italy to confiscate land for Augustus' veterans in 41 B.C., after the battle of Philippi. This position was his initial link to the *Eclogues*. Gallus was sent to Egypt by Octavian in 30 B.C. to serve as its first prefect. After four years at this post, he seems to have committed some serious offence, the nature of which is not clear. Octavian, who by this time was called Augustus, recalled Gallus and renounced his friendship with him. Gallus committed suicide. Virgil, according to tradition, rewrote the second half of the fourth *Georgic*, which had been a eulogy of his friend. Very little survives of his poetry, of which the most notable component was the four books of love-elegies which he dedicated to his mistress Cytheris, whom he

³² McDonald and Spawforth's *OCD* article (192) and Pavan and della Corte's *EV* article (3:172-7) are my sources for the life of Pollio.

refers to in his poems as Lycoris (Virgil, in the Tenth *Eclogue*, follows his friend's lead and refers to her as Lycoris). These poems, addressed to a lover under pseudonym, belong to a genre which Gallus seems to have invented. His poetry was influenced by the Hellenistic Greek poets Callimachus and Euphorion. According to Servius, in his *Eclogue* 10, which casts Gallus as Daphnis, dying of love for 'Lycoris', Virgil worked some of Gallus' own lines into the poem (*Eclogue* 10: 72-4); Edward Courtney (395), however, points out that Gallus "apparently wrote no hexameter verse", and that Virgil "adapts" Gallus' lines into hexameter³³. The modern reader can only assume that Servius, who must have been familiar with Gallus' work, is correct here; the idea makes sense and is consistent with Virgil's methods, and is accepted by Pavan and D'Anna in the *Enciclopedia Virgiliana* ("Cornelio Gallo" 1:895).

Gallus and Pollio, as we see, influenced the pastoral tradition in a different way than did Lucretius. It is not so much their verses which influenced the genre, but Virgil's open inclusion of them within the *Eclogues* which changed the genre's direction. It has been proposed that several of Theocritus' friends and

³³ A somewhat confusing comment, given that elegy can contain hexameter as well as pentameter; Virgil need not have necessarily "adapted" the lines before incorporating them.

even Theocritus himself appear discreetly in the *Idylls*, much as Julius Caesar does in *Eclogue* 5³⁴.

There is a very distinct difference here, however: Gallus and Pollio appear without disguise. The intrusion of the 'real world' into the pastoral one (presumably to sharpen the comparison of the two) does not occur so openly in Theocritus. As my analysis of the individual *Eclogues* details, there is more 'real world' intrusion into the pastoral arbour than the appearance of these two poets; the juxtaposition of the real world with the pastoral one, to often jarring effect, becomes, after the *Eclogues*, a defining feature of the pastoral genre.

³⁴ It has often been thought, even from ancient times, that the dying Daphnis in *Eclogue* 5 was intended to represent Julius Caesar. It is not certain that Caesar is intended: the point has been much debated. The general consensus is that it *is* Caesar, but that Virgil has intentionally clouded the matter so that a "clean" identification is impossible. I prefer this explanation mainly because this apparently intentional ambiguity seems typically Virgilian. The question is well-covered by Sirago in the *Enciclopedia Virgiliana* (1:753-6). Williams, in his notes on *Eclogue* 5, (110) admits that "it is very possible that the death and deification of Caesar influenced Virgil's thoughts on the nature of mortality."

Origins

While it hardly needs to be said that Virgil's *Eclogues* are inspired in large part by the *Idylls* of Theocritus, it is much less certain to whom Theocritus is indebted. He is widely thought, and indeed has been since Virgil's time, to have invented the pastoral genre (whether deliberately or by accident is another question). This was the view in antiquity, and while we may remain sceptical, the fact that there is no real evidence to the contrary has been enough for most, but not all, scholars to assume that Theocritus was the first. This is not to say that Theocritus was subject to no influences, but that the nature of those influences has long been debated. There are numerous theories concerning the origin of pastoral³⁵ which, while mostly unconvincing, do warrant a discussion.

According to what Rosenmeyer calls an "anthropological reconstruction" (33), the Arcadian people founded the bucolic tradition. The main evidence for this theory is a pair of passages: one from Polybius (4.20) in which the historian mentions that the Arcadians challenge each other to singing contests; and a passage from Pausanias (8.5.7) which mentions a man named *Bukolion* as an Arcadian prince, a supposed origin for the somewhat confusing term

³⁵ My discussion of the various theories is based on Rosenmeyer's, pp. 33-42. I do not, however, agree with his conclusions regarding the validity of the various theories.

βουκολικός which Theocritus applied to at least some of his poetry. However, as Rosenmeyer is quick to point out, both Polybius and Pausanias are later than Theocritus and so cannot be trusted to be reporting an authentic tradition which existed *before* Theocritus. The rest of the evidence supporting this theory is the fact that herdsmen in modern times *do* often sing with each other in competition. Rosenmeyer is equally quick to dismiss this fact, noting that these songs

...consist mainly of boasting, invective, and repartee, along with some love poetry. It is true that name-calling is one of the ingredients in the developed bucolic tradition; but it is merely one of many, and certainly not the most significant. It is better to disregard this possibility, at least until we have more information about the ancient practices. (34)

Rosenmeyer is much too quick to dismiss this idea. First of all, Arcadia as the generic pastoral setting is a Virgilian innovation; Theocritus' poems are set in a variety of places, primarily Sicily and Cos, without any particular emphasis on Arcadia³⁶. It cannot be denied that Polybius was historically later than Theocritus, as Rosenmeyer notes, but to say that the former was influenced by

³⁶ That Arcadia would have had a reputation as a "pastoral" place (in the original sense of the word; that is, "of, or relating to shepherds") both before and after Theocritus is admitted.

the latter into putting amoebaeon verse into the mouths of Arcadian shepherds seems to me quite unlikely. I am inclined to think that the relative date of Polybius to Theocritus had no impact on Polybius' reporting of folk traditions in Arcadia. It bears mention in this connection that both Polybius and Pausanias predate Virgil by nearly one hundred years. Surely Rosenmeyer did not mean to imply that it was the Arcadian shepherds who, having read Theocritus, began a tradition of singing contests based on the creations of an Alexandrian poet. I would further cite Anderson and Mathiesen against Rosenmeyer in this context:

Impromptu singing matches between shepherds are the most celebrated element of Theocritean pastoral; such 'flyting' has been noted even in the 20th century as a feature of gatherings of Greek and Sicilian country people. However, the evidence of ethnomusicology and details of the *Idylls* suggest that Theocritus was not describing a universal folk practice but drawing on a specific and strong local tradition. (Anderson and Mathiesen, "Theocritus", 25:353)

With the word "local", however, Anderson and Mathiesen have also given me something to disagree with; there is no reason to suppose that Theocritus was familiar with the traditions of shepherds in Arcadia (a region seldom visited by other Greeks, as Pausanias claims) and applied them to herdsmen in his native

Sicily. My interpretation, then, is that while Polybius and Pausanias may be correct in attributing the origin of the singing contests to Arcadia, it must have become more widely spread, even well before Theocritus. To his credit, Rosenmeyer does admit that it is impossible to dismiss a folk pastoral influence entirely, for the same reason, i.e. lack of evidence:

...we simply do not know enough to be able to subscribe to Schwartz's ridicule of the picture of Theocritus "climbing up to the desolate mountain pastures of his island home, to find inspiration in the monotonous tones and whistles of the herdsmen; the raw desperadoes ... in the wilderness were not likely to furnish him with poetry."³⁷ (34)

Rosenmeyer briefly notes the existence of a similar theory concerning the "invention" of pastoral. His description of the theory, at a glance at least, seems fairly convincing, which makes his dismissal of the theory (without discussion, no less) a bit puzzling:

Another "primitivistic" theory ... asserts that pastoral was not invented at a particular time, but has always existed in a certain class of people. Each generation, we are told, has its peasants and

³⁷ E. Schwartz, *Charakterkoepfe aus der Antike* (Stuttgart 1943; 1st edition 1902), 163.

herdsmen who sing the songs of the countryside. Andrew Lang impatiently brushes aside the sophisticated skepticism of Fontenelle, and claims that Theocritus' songs "are all such as he might really have heard on the shores of Sicily,"³⁸ citing examples of modern Greek folk poetry to confirm his point. Similarly Frank Kermode³⁹ and Dimitrios Petropoulos⁴⁰, among others, look on Theocritus as a collector and imitator of folk material. (32)

It should be noted that Rosenmeyer does caution against dismissing the notion of a folk pastoral tradition entirely, citing a lack of evidence. His approach, for reasons which will become clear, is never to dismiss a theory entirely, even when he apparently discards it without much discussion.

Another theory, which Rosenmeyer calls the "ritual hypothesis", is based on Aristotle's well-known ideas about the origins of drama. According to this theory, bucolic derives from the worship of Artemis⁴¹. Rosenmeyer says that this hypothesis is supported by three different stories, which "all stipulate singing as

³⁸ *Theocritus, Bion, and Moschus* xix ff.

³⁹ *English Pastoral Poetry from the Beginnings to Marvell*, 18.

⁴⁰ Θεοκρίτου Ειδύλλια υπό λαογραφικὴν ἔποψιν ἐρμηνευόμενα, 5-93.

⁴¹ This theory, of which there are three variants, is as Rosenmeyer notes, "best studied in the ancient commentaries" (34). This is to say, there are no modern proponents of this theory.

a cult activity; and this explains nothing about early pastoral poetry, which is secular, recited rather than sung, and rarely encomiastic" (34). I would agree with Rosenmeyer in dismissing this hypothesis, but not for quite the same reasons. His objections are valid, but a more obvious objection can be raised: Artemis' unsuitability for the role of presiding deity. While Artemis can certainly be considered a rustic goddess, she makes little sense as a presiding deity for bucolic poetry; her associations are very different from those of pastoral poetry, certainly different enough that it is difficult even to imagine that her worship could have been an early starting point for something which evolved into the *Idylls* of Theocritus. Poggioli (7) notices how ill-suited Artemis/Diana is for the pastoral world, although he does not seem to have the origin of the genre in mind when he makes his observation:

The shepherd...lives a sedentary life even in the open, since he prefers to linger in a grove's shade rather than to wander in the woods. He never confronts the true wild, and this is why he never becomes even a part-time hunter. Venatical attitudes consistently oppose the pastoral: on one side they resemble too closely martial exploits; on the other, they are connected with Diana, the goddess of chastity, whom shepherds, unlike the hunter Hippolytus, neglect in favour of Venus.

The casual, leisurely feel which is associated with Theocritus' (and Virgil's) bucolic poems is definitely not something that one can imagine having evolved from the worship of a very "serious" goddess like Artemis. On the other hand, Pan, with his wild fearsomeness, might also be considered unlikely. Of course, we are far removed from the worship of either of these gods, so our (my) ideas about their character and the worship of them have likely been obscured by Christian hostility.

The word βουκολιάδεσθαι, which Theocritus uses to refer to the singing contests, has given rise to other ideas concerning the origins of pastoral. Richard Reitzenstein in 1893, and later I. Trenschenyi-Waldapfel in 1966, thought that the term referred to the activity of a group of *poets* called βουκόλοι (hence 'bucolic' poetry), as opposed to herdsmen. These poets, apparently based on Cos (where Theocritus would have encountered them), took the name because it was used by initiates in some cults of Dionysus; they considered themselves, in Rosenmeyer's words, "ritual celebrants". Reitzenstein further speculated that the figure of Daphnis, central to pastoral poetry, may have been a βουκόλος of Artemis. According to this theory, the *Idylls* of Theocritus reflect the "ceremonial performances" of his friends on Cos. The shepherds, then, are various Coan poets who would possibly have been known to Theocritus' Alexandrian readers, and who are "hiding profound intentions under the cloak of rusticity" (35).

Rosenmeyer admits that βουκολιάδεσθαι is a difficult word to account for, and that there may be some merit to this idea, but dismisses Reitzenstein's theory as too complicated. I might add that it is too speculative, in addition to being too complicated, but it must be admitted that Reitzenstein's idea has the appeal of clarifying some confusing issues, as Rosenmeyer admits (36).

A different interpretation of the origin of βουκολιάδεσθαι was proposed by B.A. von Groningen in 1958. He speculated that βουκολικός may have been a word used by Apollonius Rhodius (c. 295-215 B.C.) and his circle to deride the works of Callimachus (c. 310-240 B.C.) and his friends, with whom Theocritus was associated. The tradition upon which this theory is based relates that there was a feud between the supporters of Callimachus and those of Apollonius in the Alexandrian court of Ptolemy II Philadelphus, who was king of Egypt from 285 to 246 B.C. Apollonius, whose epic *Argonautica* is extant, favoured heroic epic against Callimachus, who is reported to have often said that "a big book is a big evil"; he thought poetry ought to aim at perfection on a smaller scale. In any case, responding to this apparently pejorative (βουκολικός) term by embracing it (and perhaps inadvertently inventing a genre from it) would have been a clever response on Theocritus' part to the supposed criticism of Apollonius and his

circle, but our sources for this feud are late and not entirely reliable⁴². This explanation does make good sense if there really was such a feud, but it is still pure speculation on von Groningen's part; Rosenmeyer, justifiably it might seem, barely takes notice of this theory, concluding that "it is best to acknowledge that at this point we do not know why Theocritus' poems about herdsmen came to be called bucolics, or why Theocritus uses *boukoliadesthai*." This statement seems like a clear example of a scholar making something more difficult than it needs to be. I see no reason that "bucolic" cannot be interpreted simply as "rustic"⁴³;" Rosenmeyer allows the fact that many of Theocritus' characters are goatherds or shepherds and not cowherds to complicate the matter unnecessarily. A parallel in English (although the word has quite different connotations) might be "cowboy:" one need not (and likely would not) think only of duties relating to cows.

⁴² P.J. Parsons, in the *Oxford Classical Dictionary* (3rd Ed. Revised) admits that "the story of his [Callimachus'] quarrel with Apollonius Rhodius ... is now generally discounted" ("Callimachus" 277).

⁴³ This reading is supported by LSJ.

Philosophy

It is generally agreed that there is a distinct Epicurean flavour to Virgil's *Eclogues*. Annette Lucia Giesecke has written an excellent article on the underappreciated influence of Lucretius, and Epicurus through him, on Virgil⁴⁴. This discussion is closely based on her article. Giesecke's description of the nature of Epicureanism is worth repeating:

Epicurus's philosophy had itself been developed in direct response to the political instability and private disillusionment attending the demise of the city-state as the guarantor of political and personal identity in the wake of Alexander's conquests. His was a philosophy which focused directly on the alleviation of human misery, and as such Epicurus addressed "issues of daily and urgent human significance, the fear of death, love and sexuality, anger and aggression" (Nussbaum 3). Far from being merely academic students of his philosophy, Epicurus' most committed followers were men and women dedicated to a specific style of life. Theirs was an austere yet fulfilled life; a life that was lived in accordance with the dictates of Nature. For his disciples Epicurus forged a

⁴⁴ "Lucretius and Virgil's Pastoral Dream", in *Utopian Studies* 10:2, 1999, pages 1-15.

community, the Garden, which was an alternative community of friends "living in accordance with common principles in retreat from civic life" (Long 15). What made this distinctly utopian community unique was its inclusion of persons of every social standing, women and slaves included. (2)

Lucretius' poem is one of the only good (and non-hostile) sources on Epicureanism extant, the other being the *Life of Epicurus* by Diogenes Laertius. The peace of mind which he and his followers sought is commonly described in Greek as "*ataraxia*", a word which is closely associated with bucolic poetry. Giesecke notes that the place in which the freedom of mind from worry, fear, yearning for fame and the like, can be

a locus amoenus which is not specifically located (and thus it may be described as ou-topos), but it is clearly a good place, eu-topos. (3)⁴⁵

"Ou-topos" is a reference to the etymology of "utopia", reflected in the title of the journal for which she is writing (*Utopian Studies*); the Greek word, as she infers, means "no place".

⁴⁵ For further elaboration of this point see the discussion of *Eclogue 1*.

In Theocritus, Epicureanism and Stoicism are not promoted or explained.

Rosenmeyer notes that Theocritus

...has no philosophy; he does not allow his own likes and dislikes and commitments to come through at all. It is the poem rather than the poet that conjures up the spirit of Epicurus. (45)

If this is true, it is possible that Virgil's contribution of Epicureanism to the 'genre' has been over-emphasized: the Roman may indeed have been simply clarifying the Epicureanism which he saw was already there in the pastoral genre. The Epicurean philosopher and poet Philodemus, however, may have been personally known to Virgil, and some lines from his epigrams are alluded to or imitated by Virgil, among other Roman writers such as Horace and Varius Rufus⁴⁶. Some of his prose writings have been recovered from the "Villa of the Papyri" at Herculaneum (and continue to be published), where Philodemus may in fact have died. In any case, this relationship (or acute awareness) between Virgil and Philodemus makes it unlikely that any Epicureanism found in the *Eclogues* was not intentionally placed there by the poet.

⁴⁶ See the entries for Philodemus by Gigante in the *EV* (524), and by Treves and Obbink in the *OCD* (1165-6).

Virgil is often recognized as a utopian theorist, and the same designation may apply to Theocritus. The new thing about Theocritus' work, from the standpoint of his overall vision, was the attitude—he certainly seems to have a different approach to his material. According to Rosenmeyer, central stillness, ἡσυχία, *otium* (and, we might add, ἀταραξία), is the central hope of Stoicism and Epicureanism. All of these features are clearly present in all pastoral poetry—indeed, they might be called the animating principles of the genre. It seems to me that Rosenmeyer reads non-existent motives into Theocritus' bucolic poems, but he is certainly right about the Epicureanism present in the *Eclogues*; something which, it should be mentioned, has long been recognized almost universally⁴⁷.

Virgil also agrees with Lucretius in his condemnation of war. *Eclogue* 9 is as strong a condemnation as Lucretius' plea to Venus that she seduce Mars "away from his warlike pursuits." Love, on the other hand, is an important aspect of life in the pastoral and bucolic worlds. Giesecke compares the view of Virgil (at least, as it is expressed in the *Eclogues*) on love to that of Lucretius:

Lucretius' so-called diatribe against love in the fourth book of his poem is one of the best known passages in the *De Rerum Natura*

⁴⁷ The topic is covered by Luigi Alfonsi in the *EV* article "Epicureismo", 2:328-31.

(4.1037-287). Here he describes the folly of the *exclusus amator*, "spurned lover," in his desperate attempts to lay hands on the ultimately unworthy object of such intense and physically debilitating infatuation. What is called for in place of such an obsession is a love based on compatibility and the practical need for a spouse and a family. As for Virgil, love was part and parcel of the pastoral existence, a force that certainly "animates all of nature, (but is a thing which) must be freely given and taken, never indulged or exploited" (Lee 68⁴⁸). Otherwise, love may become a source of unspeakable distress and even destruction. (8)

Giesecke's point is the similarity between the two views, i.e. the need for boundaries in love, but the differences can certainly be stressed as well. Epicurus' solution (given through Lucretius) is certainly not compatible with the pastoral world; nothing is so overtly philosophical in Arcadia. This love, animating nature, being freely given and taken, is a defining feature of pastoral, both before Virgil's *Eclogues* and after.

Ogilvie (81) identifies Virgil, or at least the young Virgil who composed the *Eclogues*, as an Epicurean, along with Julius Caesar and the Golden Age poet

⁴⁸ This reference is cited by Giesecke.

Horace. However, Ogilvie states, with regard to the aspect of Epicurus' doctrine relating to involvement in politics (Epicurus opposes personal involvement), that Virgil accepted the version of Epicureanism taught by Philodemus (fl. c.75-35 B.C.), who is now known to us through the scrolls discovered at Herculaneum. Philodemus had maintained that involvement in politics was acceptable for the "higher good of freedom of speech and freedom from tyranny" (Ogilvie 81).

Even Giesecke admits, however, that there is "much in the *Eclogues* which contradicts Lucretius" (9). Her last paragraph is worth quoting:

We have seen that passages which imitate Lucretius on the dictional level may at the same time run contrary to Lucretius's purpose on the level of meaning. What is un-Epicurean in Virgil is the fact that his pastoral landscape is peopled with gods and nymphs who mingle freely with the shepherds. Un-Epicurean too is the notion that humanity can exercise some control over nature rather than be controlled by it. Still, like More's Utopian philosophy, there is a strong Epicurean flavor to Virgil's outlook in the *Eclogues*, and that Epicurean strain depends in a large part on the model of the *De Rerum Natura*. Virgil has appropriated Lucretius in order to help him suggest how humankind can achieve happiness which, in their eyes, is the goal of our existence.

Lucretius' poem, like Virgil's *Eclogues*, are [sic] pointed at a Roman situation, but they are also universal in application. They are works which vividly promulgate the Epicurean view that the road to Utopia is paved by modesty and restraint in all things. (9)

A defining feature of pastoral poetry that can be credited almost entirely to Virgil's invention is the setting. Arcadia, post-Virgil, has taken on a special significance. The place would have been immediately thought of as a rather backward, rustic place by the ancient Greek or Roman who came across a reference to it. Its remoteness, we can speculate, would have lent it an almost mythical quality—the paucity of visitors to the region made it seem almost unreal, and so Virgil's geographic 'flexibility' seems entirely appropriate. Sicily, the primary (but not only) setting for previous bucolic, was entirely too well-known to the Romans to allow such a romantic portrayal of it. To the Alexandrians for whom Theocritus was writing, Sicily was likely unfamiliar, and so may indeed have held a similar mystique. Giesecke describes the *Eclogues'* setting:

With Lucretius as a guide, Virgil created the tenuous pastoral world, or worlds, of the *Eclogues*. The geography of the poems has been described as "unstable," for it is inconsistent and varied from

poem to poem (Jenkyns 155⁴⁹). The setting is neither Arcadia, nor Mantua, nor Cremona, nor Hyblaea; it is all and none of these. (8)

The description of Lucretius as a “guide” to Virgil in his creation of the pastoral world is understandable, given that Giesecke’s thesis is that Virgil was more influenced by Lucretius than is generally recognized, but it is certainly an exaggeration. Lucretius’ contribution seems to be his “extraordinary sharpness of visual perception.”

⁴⁹ Cited by Giesecke.

Daphnis, Menalcas et al.

Virgil uses many characters found in Theocritus. That is to say, the names for the characters in the *Eclogues* are almost entirely taken from the *Idylls* of Theocritus. The significance of this is expressed by Van Sickle (93-94):

When images, situations, or characters recur, their similarities and differences provide an important index of sense. In this way...Arcadian images yield an idea of the general coherence and development in the book, from the challenge to the 'Sicilian Muses' to pull themselves together for the ultimate contest with Pan (E.iiii 1-3, 58-59), through the teasing and confusing memory or Arcadians near Mantua with Sicilian Daphnis (E.vii), to the final Arcadian mise-en-scène (E.x).

One of the most conspicuous names in both the *Idylls* and the *Eclogues* is that of Daphnis. In *Idyll* 1, Thyrsis sings a lament for Daphnis. Virgil replies in *Eclogue* 5. Daphnis has long been regarded as a sort of exemplification of pastoral poetry. Indeed, he was said to have been the creator of it. Daphnis is a legendary Sicilian herdsman whose father is sometimes said to be Hermes, while his mother, a nymph by most accounts, exposed him under a laurel bush (δάφνη). The legends concerning Daphnis were already in existence when

Theocritus wrote about him—Rosenmeyer names Stesichorus, a lyric poet of the sixth century B.C., as a possible starting point for the Daphnis legends, but concedes that there may have been a folk tradition prior to Stesichorus' time (33). He seems to have been fully mortal, whatever his parentage.

The story of Daphnis is, in the most common version, that he fell in love with, and pledged fidelity to, a nymph who later blinded him when he was unfaithful (he had been made drunk, of course). In Theocritus, he seems simply to have died of love. Perhaps the best (concise) description of Daphnis is in the *Oxford Concise Companion to Classical Literature*:

Daphnis epitomises the musician-shepherd, the ideal inhabitant of the idyllic pastoral world, his life and death powerfully signifying that even in such a world there is no escape from the pangs of unhappy love and death. (Howatson and Chilvers, 159-160)

Chew, in the *New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, adds more detail to his story:

Mythical Sicilian shepherd and singer. According to the ancient sources, he was the son or favourite of Hermes. Found by shepherds and educated by nymphs, he was taught to play the syrinx by Pan; this and his singing won him the favour of Artemis,

with whom he hunted, and either he or the shepherds who sang about him invented bucolic poetry. But he broke a vow of fidelity to the nymph Echenais and was blinded; after his death he was raised to Olympus. (Chew, "Daphnis", 7: 7)

Chew (7:7) further notes that the early myths concerning Daphnis are preserved in Stesichorus, and also in Aelian (*Varia Historia* 10:18), in Diodorus Siculus (*Bibliotheka* 4:84), and in a fragment of Parthenius.

Daphnis appears in Theocritus' *Idyll* 1, in which he is already set up as the hero of the bucolic world through the song of Thyrsis. The fact that this is the first of Theocritus' bucolics is certainly not unintentional—our understanding of Daphnis' place in the bucolic world is important to a reading of the subsequent idylls where he is either mentioned or plays a dramatic role. As in the case of Virgil's *Eclogues*, it is unlikely that the *Idylls* were written in the order in which they have been preserved, but the first poem of each collection is clearly programmatic.

Daphnis appears 'in person' in *Idyll* 6, where he and Damoetus sing about Polyphemus and Galatea. Daphnis is mentioned, again this time as an absent

hero, in the song of Lycidas in *Idyll* 7. In a poem of dubious authenticity⁵⁰, *Idyll* 8, Daphnis is immediately present. In this instance, he sings against Menalcas, whom he defeats. Daphnis and Menalcas are again singing to each other (and to another nameless person, the narrator) in *Idyll* 9⁵¹. *Idyll* 27, which is generally agreed to have been written by someone other than Theocritus⁵², features Daphnis as the seducer of a shepherdess.

⁵⁰ Gow (pp. 170-1), in summary concerning the authenticity of the poem: "Externally there is nothing to be said against the poem. Neither mss nor scholia breathe a word of doubt against its authenticity, and it is much imitated by Virgil. These things are however true also of *Id.*9, which it is impossible to accept as T.'s, and they cannot be regarded as authenticating *Id.*8. That it passed for T.'s in early times is shown not only by its inclusion in the commented collection but by its presence in D1, a papyrus fragment of the second century A.D. The evidence against it cannot be considered conclusive, and there is no impropriety in regarding it as T.'s- perhaps an early work."

⁵¹ The same objections which are raised concerning the authenticity of *Idyll* 8 are repeated for *Idyll* 9, with the additional objection that the latter poem is of noticeably inferior quality. The question is discussed in detail on pages 185-6 of Gow's commentary. By the time of Halperin's *Before Pastoral*, the question seems to have been settled—he dismisses both 8 and 9 without discussion, adding only that they were "probably composed by a near contemporary" (17).

⁵² Gow, on 485 of his *Commentary*, notes that the ascription to either Bion or Moschus, both of whom have been suggested as possible authors, is not based on any evidence other than some slight verbal similarities."

Menalcas seems to be a disguise for Virgil, as Simichidas was for Theocritus in *Idyll* 7. Menalcas appears in Theocritus, *Idyll* 8 (but see notes 50 and 51) where he challenges Daphnis to a singing-match. Menalcas is defeated in the match, which makes him a somewhat surprising choice for Virgil (Hellenistic poets not usually being noted for their modesty). Williams (ix) dismisses the idea capably.

The intrusion of real people and events into the imaginary pastoral setting has led many students of the *Eclogues* to search for allegorical equations (in addition to the figures actually named), so that Daphnis in 5 becomes Julius Caesar, Menalcas in 9 becomes Virgil, and so on. But this type of interpretation runs into such difficulties as to suggest that it is not Virgil's method to indulge in masquerade, and it is better to speak of the impact of the poet's personal experience upon his poems than to see hidden allegories.

Menalcas appears again in the probably spurious *Idyll* 9, again singing with Daphnis.

Amyntas, mentioned in *Eclogue* 2, appears in company with Simichidas/Theocritus in *Idyll* 7. Lycidas, who is featured in *Eclogue* 9, also appears in Theocritus' *Idyll* 7, where he sings in opposition to Simichidas. He appears to be

beaten in the competition, though little is said of it. Of interest in his song are mentions of Tityrus and Daphnis. Tityrus appears in *Idyll 3*, although he is not central to it. He is also mentioned in Lycidas' song in *Idyll 7*. Corydon appears in *Idyll 4*, in which he tends a herd of cattle while conversing with a certain Battus. Critics have not been particularly impressed with *Idyll 4*. Amaryllis is the object of the goatherd's affection in *Idyll 2*, in which he serenades her from outside her cave. Another Virgilian borrowing, Damoetas appears with Daphnis in *Idyll 6*, where their singing-match concerns Polyphemus and Galatea.

The most obvious reason that Virgil might borrow names from Theocritus is to acknowledge Theocritus as his inspiration and to invite comparison with the Greek poet. A certain sense of continuity is gained from Virgil's borrowing of these names. This is particularly important given that Virgil was not writing in the same language as his predecessor. However, the language difference raises another interesting feature of Virgil's pastoral work: the names that he borrows, obviously, are Greek names (although some Roman names do appear in the *Eclogues*). It is difficult to appreciate the flavour this must have lent to the *Eclogues*; to an English speaker, the Roman names hardly seem any less exotic than the Greek ones. To a Latin speaker, however, names like Damoetas or Amaryllis must have provided a certain sense of separation from the characters. They would have seemed more distant in time or space. This is not to say that

Theocritus' Greek-speaking readers were intended to identify very closely with the inhabitants of the pastoral arbour—certainly there were many other things reminding his readers that their lives were very different from those of his characters—but the additional separation provided by the foreign-sounding names was another long-term contribution to the genre on Virgil's part.

Eclogues

A deeper understanding of the nature of bucolic as it was passing from Theocritus to Virgil will certainly be gained by a closer look at the *Eclogues*.

According to Williams, the earliest *Eclogues* (2, 3, 5, 7, and 8) depend on Theocritus but "in varying degrees aim for different impact" (VIII). The later poems (1, 4, 6, 9, and 10) are unlike Theocritus in subject matter, but retain "echoes of Theocritus' phrases" (VIII). Some of the more interesting aspects of each of the ten *Eclogues* are discussed below, in the order in which the poems were preserved.

I have not, for reasons of space and time, made any attempt to be comprehensive in my coverage of the *Eclogues*, a topic which could, I am certain, be the focus of several theses; they are very complex little poems, as I hope to establish. I have focused on only a few modern sources for two reasons: firstly and primarily that my research is limited to a manageable number of sources in this area; but also that this study does not become unreadable through a maze of references, something which is prone to happen to works which concern themselves with Virgil's texts.

Eclogue 1- The immediate shock to the reader of Theocritus is that Roman politics are at work in Arcadia; at issue is the confiscations of land to settle

veterans after the battle of Philippi in 42 B.C., where Anthony and Octavian defeated Caesar's assassins. Meliboeus is on his way into exile when he meets Tityrus, who has been exempted from the confiscations by a young man in Rome. That this eclogue was intended by Virgil to be programmatic to the collection is likely, and most subsequent readers have thought so. The first four lines of the poem are a forceful reminder of Theocritus; Tityrus, at ease in the shade, plays "Lovely Amaryllis" on his pipe. Tityrus, as we saw above, appears in *Idylls* 3 and 7, and Amaryllis is, of course, the object of the goatherd's serenade in *Idyll* 3. Meliboeus is not of Theocritean origin; Van Sickle (119), citing Wendel, thinks that Meliboeus may have been the name of the peasant who raised Oedipus⁵³. Meliboeus' name may mean something like 'sweet singing'. The effect of recent Roman political events on Meliboeus in the following lines, however, is unparalleled in Theocritus. This is the program Virgil has provided his reader. Giesecke (6) sees reference to Lucretius in the opening lines (1-2):

Tityre, tu patulae recubans sub tegmine fagi

silvestrem tenui Musam meditaris avena;

Tityrus, you, reclining under the cover of a spreading beech,

rehearse the woodland Muse on a slender oaten pipe;

⁵³ The source of the identity, namely the *Suda*, is very much later than Theocritus.

Giesecke sees in the phrase *silvestrem Musam* a reference to Lucretius' description of the farmers and their belief in Pan (4.588-9)⁵⁴. Giesecke notes a further reference (6) to Lucretius in lines 4-5:

tu, Tityre, lentus in umbra

formosam resonare doces Amaryllida silvas.

You Tityrus, at your ease in the shade,

are teaching the woods to echo lovely Amaryllis.

She maintains the phrase *resonare doces silvas* is meant to remind the reader of Lucretius 4.577-579:

sex etiam aut septem loca vidi reddere voces,

unam cum iaceres: ita colles collibus ipsi

verba repulsantes iterabant docta referri.

even six or seven have I seen places give back,

when it was one you uttered; thus did the hills themselves,

dashing them back from hill to hill, repeat the words trained to

return. (trans. Giesecke)

⁵⁴ This passage in Lucretius is quoted fully in the discussion of *Eclogue 2*.

It is worth noting that it is this passage in *De Rerum Natura* which leads into Lucretius' reflections on Pan discussed above. Giesecke summarizes her thoughts on this passage:

...the resonance of Lucretius in Virgil's poem is unmistakable and of particular significance because, appearing as it does in the first strophe of the first poem of the collection, it must possess some degree of programmatic content....By introducing a Theocritean name, Amaryllis, into this Lucretian framework, Virgil has in essence specified that his poetry will be indebted to both Lucretius and Theocritus. He is indebted to the latter for content, or rather genre, for it is to Theocritus that the origin of pastoral as a genre is attributed; to the former, Lucretius, he is indebted for a means of expression. (7)

A "Lucretian framework", in reference to the *Eclogues*, seems like a rather glaring overstatement, but Lucretius has certainly left his mark on Virgil. The presence of Lucretian and Theocritean echoes in the first few lines of *Eclogue 1* may indeed have been intended as programmatic, assuming that Virgil was responsible for the order in which the *Eclogues* are preserved. Most scholars do seem to accept that Virgil intended *Eclogue 1* to be an introduction to the series (though this cannot, of course, be known for certain), but whether it was written

to be so, or was chosen for the task after it was written, is debatable⁵⁵. Van Sickle (122-123) sees a real importance in Virgil's transforming of the myth in *Idyll 7* in his first eclogue:

Not some Callimachean elegy or short epic or bucolic mannerism but Theocritus' own declaration of status recommends itself to Virgil, not however, like Theocritus to confirm a position at the bottom of the stylistic hierarchy but to prepare for new growth, back up in the direction of history and higher epic modes. The implication of Virgil's audacity is twofold. Not only does he claim for himself the role of second founder in the bucolic mode, by reinterpreting Theocritus' myth of origin for himself as none of the Greek bucolic mannerists had done, but he also reopens the question of the relations between bucolic and other modes of *epos*, since growth once undertaken need not necessarily be confined to the boundaries of Theocritean bucolic, which in any case the first eclogue has already grown beyond.

⁵⁵ Rosenmeyer (p. 298) remarks in a footnote that it is "uncertain" whether or not Virgil intended the *Eclogues* to be a whole, but that it is "plausible".

Giesecke notices (7), correctly, that the fact that Tityrus is “teaching” the woods is a departure from the Epicurean idea that Nature cannot be controlled by men: the man who accomplishes a “contemplative integration” with Nature is happiest. Lucretius, in Giesecke’s words, contended that

The highest form of accord with nature which an Epicurean could achieve was arrived at by gaining an understanding of the workings of the natural world. As a result of this, one could come to realize that one is governed by these same forces and allow oneself to become one with them. (7)

Virgil’s concept of nature, the reader can immediately see, is markedly different from the Epicurean’s.

The question now is whether Virgil, who imitates Lucretius with some frequency and often seemingly in an “adversarial” way, at any point actually concurs with the sentiments of the latter. Let us consider some further potential points of contact between Lucretius and Virgil, beginning with the concept of *otium*, which may be translated as ‘leisure,’ ‘ease,’ ‘repose,’ and ‘peace.’ It may also be interpreted as a Latin translation of the Epicurean concept of *ataraxia*. In the first *Eclogue*, Tityrus describes his good fortune as *otium* (6-10):

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.

“O Meliboeus, a god bestowed this repose upon me.

For to me he will always be a god, and his altar

often will be stained with a tender lamb from my folds.

It was he who made possible for my cattle to roam, as you see,

and for me myself to play what I wish on my rustic pipe.”

Giesecke comments on this passage: “That is, a life undisturbed by the horrors attendant upon the civil wars, the land redistributions in particular, a life in which one may live in harmony with nature, is a life of *otium*” (7). Giesecke sees a parallel between Tityrus’ life and Lucretius’ description of mankind’s happiest time (*De Rerum Natura* 5.1386-96). Tityrus can live undisturbed by the civil wars; he has ease of time to play on his pipe, and has abundant food without the attendant labour (as we see at the end of the poem). In Lucretius’ poem, men in the early times, the times of the birth of poetry and music, lived a similarly easy, peaceful life. Giesecke further notes that shelter from the “intense Mediterranean heat” is also necessary for *otium* to be realized; in summary, she

writes that “(*otium*) depends on the possibility of immersing oneself in the delights of the *locus amoenus*” (7).

Eclogue 2- The second *Eclogue* is influenced by, or modelled on, Theocritus’ *Idyll* 3 and *Idyll* 11. Virgil also borrows from Meleager for the opening theme. The ‘topic’ for *Eclogue* 2 is Corydon’s unrequited love for Alexis. In *Idyll* 3, a goatherd (whose name is not given) leaves his flock with Tityrus, in order to go and serenade Amaryllis. The fact that the beloved is a young boy in Virgil’s poem⁵⁶ need not give us any pause. In *Idyll* 11, Polyphemus discovers that song is the only remedy for his famous love of Galatea. It has been often noted (e.g. Gow, *Commentary*, 208) that Polyphemus does not seem to differ in any important way from the other ‘rustics’, except perhaps that his presence removes the bucolic world a little further from the city. The difference is hardly noticeable.

On the influence of Lucretius in this poem, Giesecke writes:

The present generation, Lucretius remarks in his fourth book, is so far removed from the primeval age of true enlightenment that Pan, a fictional mythological creature, is credited with having invented

⁵⁶ The ‘beloved’ for the goatherd in *Idyll* 3 is the (female) Amaryllis, and for Polyphemus in *Idyll* 11 it is the (female) nymph Galatea.

the flute (570-94). In his account of the origins of music, the setting Lucretius provides is essentially the same pastoral *locus amoenus*, pleasant place, which he described in the opening of the second book... (5)

Virgil imitates in opposition; for example, he uses similar language regarding Pan and the invention of the flute, but Lucretius asserts that Pan had nothing to do with the invention of anything, being only a figure of rural myth. Virgil praises the rustic god, giving him an important place in Arcadia. I have placed the two passages (of Virgil and Lucretius, that is) below for comparison. Corydon to his beloved Amyntas (31-35):

mecum una in silvis imitabere Pana canendo

(Pan primum calamos cera coniungere pluris instituit,

Pan curat ovis oviumque magistros),

nec te paeniteat calamo trivisse labellum;

haec eadem ut sciret, quid non faciebat Amyntas?

Together with me in the woods you shall mimic Pan in song

(Pan it was who first taught us to fasten together several reeds with

wax,

Pan it is who watches over sheep and shepherds),

nor will you regret having chafed your lip on the reed;

to learn this very art, what did Amyntas not do?

Compare Lucretius 4.586-92:

loquitur et genus agricolum late sentiscere, cum Pan
piea semiferi capitis velamina quassans
unco saepe labro calamos percurrit hiantis
fistula silvestrem ne cesset fundere musam.
cetera de genere hoc monstra ac portenta loquuntur,
ne loca deserta ab divis quoque forte putentur
sola tenere.

It is said that farmers far and wide listen while Pan
shaking the pine covering his half-bestial head,
often runs over the open reeds with curved lip
so that the pipe may never cease to pour forth its woodland song.
And they tell of other prodigies and marvels of this sort,
lest, perchance, they be thought, abandoned even by the gods,
to inhabit solitary places. (trans. Giesecke)

Virgil gives almost the same information about Pan and the rural inhabitants as Lucretius, but to the opposite end. This, it should be noted, was a common occurrence in the heavily inter-referential genre of Hellenistic poetry

(see Barber 272). Virgil, one imagines, picked up where his predecessors had left off.

Eclogue 3- This *Eclogue* is set around a singing match between Damoetas and Menalcas, with Palaemon playing the part of judge. The detailed description of the prize cup is modelled on *Idyll 1*, which in turn is modelled on the long descriptive passages which are peculiar to epic poetry (the “Shield of Achilles” passage in Homer’s *Iliad* is the most famous example, but the description in *Idyll 1*, as Gutzwiller [1986] noticed, seems to be modelled on the Homeric Hymn to Dionysos). Reimer Faber (411) sees a special significance in the description of the cup, and particularly in Virgil’s use of the word *caelatum*. The description, based on the ivory bowl of *Idyll 1*, is intended to invite comparison to the digressive descriptions common to epic poetry, as was its model (see Hardie 530).

T. Keith Dix proposes solutions to the riddles exchanged between Damoetas and Menalcas at the end of their contest, in lines 104-107:

(Damoetas): Dic quibus in terris- et eris mihi magnus Apollo-
tris pateat caeli spatium non amplius ulnas.

(Menalcas): Dic quibus in terris inscripti nomina regum
nascantur flores, et Phyllida solus habeto.

(D): Tell me where on earth—and you’ll be greater than Apollo

to me—the sky stretches no more than three arm lengths.

(M): Tell me where on earth are flowers grown with inscribed names of kings, and you shall have Phyllis alone. (my translation)

Dix suggests that Menalcas refers to the hyacinth growing in the Grynean grove (258), and that Damoetas refers to the shield of Achilles, which also hangs in the grove (261). He sees that Virgil has used Euphorion of Chalcis' description of the grove of Apollo at Gryneion, and also borrowed from Gallus' *Amores*.

Eclogue 4- *Eclogue 4* is perhaps the best known of Virgil's bucolic poems. It is commonly referred to as the 'messianic' *eclogue*. It is often thought to have been written after the treaty of Brundisium in 40 B.C. between Anthony and Octavian. The poem speaks of a coming 'Golden Age' to be ushered in by the birth of a child. The child in question has been variously interpreted as a child of Pollio, of Anthony and Octavia, of Octavian and Scribonia, Octavian himself, Christ, or merely a symbol of the forces which Virgil hoped would bring about a new age. Williams (105) conciliates the different views of the child's identity: "It seems best to conclude that Virgil did have a particular child in mind who could act as a symbol of his optimistic hopes for the future, but for the purposes of his poem did not wish to narrow his range by being specific." There is no known Greek (or Latin) predecessor for this poem; Williams (105) notes that, along with only *Eclogue 6*, this poem contains almost no echoes of Theocritus. Giesecke

names *Eclogue* 4 as the one which has always received attention for its utopianism, misunderstood as it has often been. Her assessment of the poem is typical of scholarship on the matter:

This poem takes the form of an epithalamium (“marriage hymn”) composed in the wake of the political settlement between Antony and Octavian, the so-called Pact of Brundisium concluded in 40 B.C., and it evinces Virgil’s hope for an end to the seemingly endless cycle of violence, an end to limitless ambition and greed. In this poem Virgil combined Hesiod’s notion of a golden race with Aratus’ Age of the Maiden, Justice, who in the distant past lived on earth and mingled freely with the men of the golden race. He foretold the renewal of a reign of peace to be inaugurated by the birth of a son to Antony and Octavia, through whose marriage the pact was sealed. (2)

Anthony and Octavia had a daughter instead. This poem has usually been seen by scholars as anomalous among the *Eclogues*, but Giesecke’s point of departure is that she sees it as very much a part of the whole:

...it has escaped notice that this poem is not a utopian anomaly amid a collection of purely entertaining pastoral reveries. The

fourth *Eclogue* is in fact but a small component of the subtler social theorising which emerges from the *Eclogues* as a whole when they are read against the scenic and textual backdrop of Lucretius's Epicurean didactic poem, the *De Rerum Natura* (*On the Nature of Things*). Oddly enough, modern scholarship continues to ignore the importance of Lucretius as an influence upon the *Eclogues*. So, for example, Richard Jenkyns has stated in his very recent book on Virgil that "Lucretius was known to Virgil when he wrote the *Eclogues*, but does not yet seem to affect him in more than a superficial way."⁵⁷ (3)

The poem may, indeed, be "a small component of the subtler social theorizing", but this, taken as fact, does not make *Eclogue* 4 much less anomalous; the poem stands out among the *Eclogues* (and also among the *Idylls*) structurally as well as thematically.

Eclogue 5- The fifth *Eclogue* is concerned with the death and deification of Daphnis, a theme perhaps not invented by Theocritus, but certainly closely associated with his name. The dying Daphnis is the subject of *Idyll* 1. There are hints of Julius Caesar in Virgil's Daphnis; consistent with the Roman poet's

⁵⁷ Jenkyns 211, cited by Giesecke.

way⁵⁸, however, the identification will not stand up to close scrutiny. Menalcas, in conversation with Mopsus (lines 86-87), reveals himself as the composer of *Eclogue 2* and *Eclogue 3* (and so represents Virgil perhaps more directly than other allegories which are hinted at in the *Eclogues*); this identification is an echo of Theocritus' appearance as Simichidas in *Idyll 7*⁵⁹. Van Sickle (82-83) is less impressed with the equation of Menalcas with the poet, and thinks it much more important that

the nearly verbatim repetitions of the first lines of the second and third eclogues sufficed to make it clear to all that here Virgil meant to think (and us to think) of previous pieces in relation to the fifth...<but> so much depended on the expectations of the reader. The legions who expected poetry to be autobiography read Virgil's gesture as a sign that he was personally to be identified with 'Menalcas' and that he had written those eclogues earlier, and so on.

⁵⁸ As with the identity of the child in *Eclogue 4*, and of the 'young god' in *Eclogue 1*, Virgil avoids being specific, particularly with regard to political matters. Again, it is better to speak of the events of Virgil's lifetime influencing his thoughts.

⁵⁹ The best evidence for the identification of Simichidas with Theocritus himself is in lines 36-41.

Van Sickle suggests that Virgil is not trying to convince the reader to associate Menalcas with himself as much as to tie together the preceding four eclogues, as a development of themes; the second and third through the development of the Menalcas character (from a peripheral boy in *Eclogue 2* to "elder statesman, sage, protagonist to be sure" (83) in the fifth); and "his song of Daphnis' apotheosis picks up principal themes of the first eclogue and the fourth, such as *otia*, the 'ease' the god established for Tityrus (i 6), and nature's exultant joy at a new heroic-divine presence" (ibid.). It is interesting to note that Van Sickle (108) sees the same sort of 'program' in *Idyll 7*, the same idyll in which Simichidas appears to represent Theocritus. Van Sickle does not, however inexplicably, take this as added weight to his 'programmatic' view of *Eclogue 5*.

David Halperin refers in passing (*Before Pastoral*, 136) to the possibility that lines 32-34 may have been modelled on *Idyll 18*, lines 29-31. The two passages are compared below.

Vitis ut arboris decori est, ut vitibus uvae,
ut gregibus tauri, segetes ut pinguibus arvis,
tu decus omne tuis.

As vines adorn the trees, as grapes adorn vines,
as bulls adorn their flocks, as corn the rich tilled fields
so you (Daphnis) adorned all of yours. (my translation)

πιείρα μεγάλα ἄτ' ἀνέδραμε κόσμος ἀρούρα
ἢ κάπῳ κυπάρισσος, ἢ ἄρματι Θεσσαλὸς ἵππος,
ᾧδε καὶ ἁ ῥοδόχρως Ἑλένα Λακεδαίμονι κόσμος·
As some tall cypress adorns the fertile field or garden wherein it
springs, or Thracian steed the chariot it draws,
so rosy Helen adorns Lacedaemon. (trans. Gow)

Idyll 18 is not a *pastoral* idyll by the conventional modern use of the term, as is clear from the passage quoted, but it may indeed have been read by Virgil as *bucolic*, as Halperin clearly suggests⁶⁰.

Eclogue 6- This *Eclogue*, which is dedicated to Varus and is told in the voice of Tityrus, is commonly referred to as the 'Song of Silenus'. The poem has an obscure background: it is not very pastoral in our usual sense (which sense, of course, didn't exist in Virgil's time), nor does it resemble any of the poems of Theocritus. The poem consists of captured Silenus singing allusive myths in the manner of Lucretius. The two boys who have captured Silenus and made him sing are named Chromis and Mnasyllus. Virgil seems to be Tityrus in this *Eclogue*, again defying simple identification of characters or events.

⁶⁰ For further discussion of this point, see the observations on *Eclogue 8* on pages 97-98 of this investigation.

Giesecke, although I have qualified (p. 77 above) her claims above about a "Lucretian framework" for the *Eclogues*, is standing on firmer ground when she asserts Lucretius' influence on this poem (4). With regard to lines 31-40, where Silenus begins his description of the origin of the world, Giesecke is quite correct in her assertion that the language here is purely Lucretian; there is talk of atoms (*semina*), liquid fire, and the like, which are as Lucretian as the phrase *magnum per inane* (through the great void) in line 31. She notes also that the "word order, tense and construction of verbs, and the articulation of the passage are, it is true, derived from Orpheus's cosmogonic song in the first book of Apollonius Rhodius's *Argonautica* (496-594)" (4).

On the poem as a whole, Giesecke's comments are interesting:

Virgil's philosophy is not, however, purely Lucretian and owes something to Empedocles as well. In fact, Lucretian language has been employed not to promulgate Epicurean natural philosophy but to create a passage of a distinctly scientific and didactic nature. What Virgil has done, with Silenus as his mouthpiece, is demonstrate his virtuosity and adaptability as a pastoral poet.

While remaining true to the pastoral theme as he had promised at the opening of the poem, he was able to diversify his medium with a wide range of themes normally associated with other genres of

poetry, epyllia ("short epics") of mythological content and lyric poetry included. (4)

She lists allusions to Lucretius that have to do with the "production of music/poetry" as the most sustained and important (4). Compare the bucolic "tone" to what Lucretius wrote in 5.780-1457 about the invention (or discovery) of music:

The invention of music and song belonged to the primeval age of relative innocence, the time before ambition, greed, and superstition grew rampant. Humans were still willing to be taught by nature then. Nature inspired them to imitate the singing of birds and to imitate the melodious whistling of the wind through the reeds. Thus it came to be that the first pipe was fashioned (1379-411), and the tunes produced at Nature's urging provided a welcome comfort... (trans. Latham)

Van Sickle (88-98) also notes the Lucretian resemblances:

Tityrus' 'country muse' recalls the well-known passage where Lucretius speaks of the simple and satisfying art of primitive man—*agrestis enim tum musa uigebat* (v 1398); and Meliboeus' mention of 'woodland muse' recalls the passage where Lucretius

debunked pastoral mythology as a mere self-deceiving fiction by anxious rural folk—*fistula siluestrem ne cesset fundere musam* (iiii 589).

There is further discussion of the connection between Virgil and Lucretius above on *Eclogue 2*. *Eclogue 6* is interrupted by “Gallus accepting his vocation as a poet in language reminiscent of Callimachus in the *Aitia*” (Howatson and Chilvers, 194). We have seen that there is allusion to Apollonius in this eclogue, so reference to Callimachus is not unexpected. Van Sickle (90) has a good understanding of what is at play here:

...we also know of course that Tityrus’ poetic program forms part of the response to a famous Alexandrian poetics—the prologue added by Callimachus to his *Aitia* in his old age, justifying his life-long practise of slightness in style. The generic similarity between the programs is obvious.

There are, as ever, layers to consider in Virgil’s imitation of Callimachus. Van Sickle notes a significance in the placement of the ‘program’:

Callimachus placed his program at the beginning (*sic insigniter*) but Virgil placed his echo of Callimachus in the middle (*minus insigniter*), although opening the second half-book. Here we have to draw our inferences for poetics from a difference in general

designs: clearly Virgil is giving a special programmatic importance to the beginning of the second half by echoing such a famous program; on the other hand, this also demotes the Callimachean idea from its original predominance; evidently Callimachus was not Virgil's primary authority on poetics (ibid.).

Michael Paschalis (1995) suggests that Virgil may have had the *Lament for Bion*, attributed in antiquity to Moschus (who is unlikely to have actually composed it), in mind when composing *Eclogue 6*. He gives four parallels between the two poems: first, the poet is identified with a herdsman (617); second, both poems invite comparison with epic poetry (618); third, there are Orphic elements in both poems (618-19); and finally, there are thematic similarities, i.e. themes of death, mourning, and metamorphosis (619-20). The article is unconvincing largely because none of these elements are peculiar to these two poems; indeed, all four could be considered pastoral commonplace.

Eclogue 7- *Eclogue 7* is a singing match between Corydon and Thyrsis, as remembered by Meliboeus. This is the first reference to Arcadia in pastoral poetry, but the contest is staged on the banks of the Mincius in Italy; this detachment from any particular landscape is to be of special importance to the genre (see e.g. Rosenmeyer 179-203). The poem is closely modelled on

Theocritus' "*Idyll* 8, an amoebaeon contest; there are also echoes of other *Idylls*, especially 6, 7, 9, 11" (Williams 118).

S.J. Harrison (110-11) indicates that 'corydon' is also the Greek name of a songbird (the lark). Corydon is eventually victorious, and Harrison sees in the repetition of his name at line 70 an indication that Corydon has lived up to his name. The last line (70) "ex illo Corydon Corydon est tempore nobis," is perhaps best translated "from that time, Corydon is a lark to us."

Raymond J. Starr (128-36) writes that while most modern scholars seem to think that *Eclogue* 7 is a poem about poetry, the ancients⁶¹ interpreted it more allegorically. Each character was believed to represent a real person, with the identifications shifting from line to line. One is reminded of Williams' (ix) warning, quoted above, that "it is better to speak of the impact of the poet's personal experience upon his poems than to see hidden allegories."

David Halperin (*Before Pastoral*, 136) notices a similar construction to *Idyll* 18, lines 29-31, in lines 65-68 of this *Eclogue*⁶²:

⁶¹ In this case, he refers to Servius' commentary, the *Explanatio in Bucolica Vergilii*, the Berne Scholia, and the Verona Scholia.

⁶² These are the same few lines to which he noticed a parallel in *Eclogue* 5, lines 32-34, as discussed above.

(Thyrsis): Fraxinus in silvis pulcherrima, pinus in hortis,
populus in fluviis, abies in montibus altis;
saepius at si me, Lycida formose, revisas,
fraxinus in silvis cedat tibi, pinus in hortis.
Ash queens it in the woods, and stone-pines in gardens,
by streams the poplar, on heights the fir-tree:
If Lycidas only were with me more often,
Ash tree and pine would be nothing to me. (trans. Lewis)

The reason(s) for Corydon's victory continue to be debated, although it seems mysteriously clear to Meliboeus. It is perhaps true that there is a bit more depth to his verses, or that they seem "more attractively pastoral and his lyricism more gentle; there is a harsher and even arrogant air about Thyrsis which accords less well with the pastoral world and the aim of sheer beauty in song" (Williams 119). These criteria, it must be admitted, are rather subjective, but there is perhaps no objective way to judge a song. At any rate, these points are well made, but the apparent decisiveness of the victory is still a favourite topic for scholars⁶³.

⁶³ See, for example, Rory B. Egan's excellent article on the subject.

Eclogue 8- *Eclogue 8* is dedicated to Pollio, with reference to his campaigns of 39 B.C., or, according to Servius, to Octavian, with reference to his campaigns of 35 B.C. (Williams 121-2). It is modelled on *Idylls 1* and *2*. *Eclogue 8* consists of a singing match between Damon, who laments his faithless mistress, and Alpheisiboeus, who sings of a girl's incantations to win back her lover. Halperin notes that "the speaker of Alpheisiboeus' song in *Eclogue 8* instructs her maidservant (lines 101-102):

fer cineres, Amaryli, foras riuoque fluenti
transque caput iace, nec respexeris.

Take out the ashes, Amaryllis, and throw them behind you into a running stream, and don't look back. (my translation)

This injunction recalls Tiresias' advice to Alcmena in *Idyll 24* (lines 93-96):

ἤρι δὲ συλλέξασα κόνιν πυρὸς ἀμφιπόλων τις
ῥιψάτω, εὖ μάλα πᾶσαν ὑπὲρ ποταμοῖο φέρουσα
ῥωγάδας ἐς πέτρας, ὑπερούριον, ἄψ δὲ νεέσθω
ἄστρεπτος.

In the early morning let one of your handmaids collect the ash from the fire and, when she has brought all of it across the river to the broken rocks, well beyond our boundaries, cast it away, and then come back without turning to look behind her." (trans. Halperin)

Halperin's point is that Virgil's borrowing from an *Idyll* which is clearly unpastoral by modern standards (as the presence of Alcmena and Tiresias is enough to indicate) indicates that if it is not *pastoral*, the *Idyll* may yet be *bucolic*. What Halperin means here is that Theocritus' and Virgil's conception of *bucolic* was different from the (more) modern concept of *pastoral*; *bucolic* encompasses more of the *Idylls* than does *pastoral*. By not "insisting on a peculiar coherence among the bucolic landscapes" (*Before Pastoral*, 136) the definition of *bucolic* is broadened considerably. Halperin wonders (*Before Pastoral*, 135) whether Virgil read more of Theocritus' *Idylls* as bucolic than modern readers do, which is a question well worth considering; one might, bearing this question in mind, find Virgil's *Eclogues* to be rather more of a departure from Theocritus' precedent.

Eclogue 9- There is mention of Varius and Cinna in *Eclogue 9*. Roman politics, i.e. land confiscations, are again the theme. Moeris is evicted, and Lycidas recalls how Menalcas tried to save the district with his poetry. Menalcas is clearly Virgil in *Eclogue 5*; even if this poem is not autobiographical, which it may well be, we are reminded of Virgil again in *Eclogue 9*. Whether or not one admits the autobiographical nature of this *Eclogue*, Virgil's moral position in this context seems clear. Giesecke gives an adequate overview of the poem's tone and message:

The sad portrait of Moeris, which is a lament for the rape of the Italian countryside and the ruin of the small farmer generally, is different from but not less powerful than Lucretius's impassioned prayer to Venus that she seduce Mars away from his warlike pursuits. (8)

Eclogue 10- This poem is usually thought to have been written in 37 B.C., which makes it the last *eclogue* written (but see Servius' thoughts on the dedication of *Eclogue 8*). Gallus is dying of hopeless love for his absent mistress Lycoris. The reader is clearly invited to compare the dying Daphnis in Theocritus' *Idyll 1*. The Arethusa addressed in the opening line is a sea nymph who was turned into an undersea river connecting Arcadia with Sicily (the association of those two places making her particularly appropriate to the genre) by the goddess Artemis. Christine Perkell (1998) proposes that the comparison of the two figures is intended as ironic (*aemulatio*, as opposed to *imitatio*). Of course, Daphnis is a figure of legend, while Gallus was a poet contemporary with Virgil; that is an obvious difference. Further to that, however, she sees their fates as opposite rather than parallel, creating a somewhat different reading of the poem as a whole (131). This *Eclogue* is the boldest comparison of the real world with the Arcadian. For this reason in particular, it was very influential on later pastoralists.

Mixed origins?

Rosenmeyer dispenses with most of the conventional theories regarding the origins of the pastoral genre (or at least finds none of them entirely satisfactory), but he is still puzzled that this apparently new genre of literature suddenly appeared when it seemed that all of the other genres had long been established, and the creative momentum of previous centuries had run itself out⁶⁴. Rosenmeyer then looks at some of the other genres in existence at the time of Theocritus' supposed creation of bucolic poetry, and finds the various elements which Theocritus would combine to form pastoral already in existence, but dispersed through the other literary forms.

The first genre Rosenmeyer considers to have contributed to bucolic poetry is Old Comedy ⁶⁵(37). He notes several comedies which have some bearing on Theocritus' bucolic poetry: Aristophanes' *Peace* stages a "rustic

⁶⁴ I am not entirely certain why Rosenmeyer seems to believe that new genres can only appear in groups. It seems to me that looking for "creative momentum" unnecessarily complicates matters. Lang, in the preface to his translation, is also surprised by this sudden creativity. Unlike Rosenmeyer, however, he is at great pains to use this fact to augment, rather than detract from, Theocritus' creative genius.

⁶⁵ The relation of pastoral to Old Comedy, Rosenmeyer writes, was first observed by Thomas Wharton in 1770, and more recently supported by J. Lavinska in 1963.

picnic"; Eupolis, an Attic writer contemporary with Aristophanes whose work has only survived in papyrus fragments and quotations, has a list of the various things eaten by goats (frag. 14 Kock), all of which are "ubiquitous" in Theocritus, in a comedy called *Goats*; Cratinus, the third of the (relatively) well-known Attic comic poets who is no better preserved than Eupolis, also offered lists of plants and herbs (the examples he gives are οἱ Μαλθακοί, frag. 98 Kock; Χείρωνες, frag. 239 Kock).

Rosenmeyer also sees in the comic *agon* a possible forerunner of the singing contests which became a feature of pastoral poetry (37): "The comic institution of the *agon*, exemplified by the debate between the Just and the Unjust Postulate in the *Clouds*, is an instructive forerunner of bucolic contests." Rosenmeyer is unimpressed with the contributions of Old Comedy, as he should be; I might even suggest that he lends too much credence to these feeble parallels.

Euripides' satyric drama *Cyclops*, which is the only complete specimen of this sub-genre extant, has several things in common with bucolic: the characters of Polyphemus and Silenus, as well as an address to a goat and references to other pastoral items and activities like milking, suckling, breezes, a spring, a

cave, and a meadow. Rosenmeyer notes, however, that a class system is prevalent in the *Cyclops*, while reference to it is rare in Theocritus⁶⁶.

The bucolic elements Rosenmeyer found in Old Comedy, it must be said, are less convincing than some of the theories he dismissed. The satyr play is more attractive as a possible source of some inspiration; Chew and Jander, for instance, admit that "the closest thing to pastoral drama in antiquity was the satyr play" ("pastoral", 19:218), although they have conspicuously ignored mime in this context.

In tragedy, also, Rosenmeyer sees elements later used in pastoral (37-8). Euripides, in particular, employs some characters that Rosenmeyer considers pastoral: Amphion in the *Antiope* is a "shepherd-philosopher-musician", which should make him an ideal inhabitant of the pastoral world, although he wouldn't quite fit as a character in the more "pastoral" of Theocritus' *Idylls*. Euripides' non-extant *Alexandros* likely portrayed Paris/Alexander in a similar role.

The similarities Rosenmeyer finds between tragedy and pastoral are remarkable only for how *unremarkable* they are. The presence of a shepherd in a play does not seem worthy of any note, since there were, in fact, a good many real shepherds in classical Greece. This connection seems exceedingly strained,

⁶⁶ A class system does appear conspicuously in the *Eclogues*, however.

and it is unclear why Rosenmeyer wished to clutch at such straws. That Theocritus was influenced by previous literature is obvious, and no one would claim otherwise; but Rosenmeyer's desire to prove that his bucolics were influenced by *all* previous literature is as illogical as it is inexplicable.

Rosenmeyer is following Gilbert Lawall concerning the variety of influences at play in Theocritus' bucolic⁶⁷:

All the poets of the age clearly realized that the old genres of epic, lyric, and dramatic poetry belonged to the political and social conditions of the past, and were wholly out of place in the contemporary world. Instead of working within the limits of the classical types, poets created new forms by artfully combining several traditional genres and sometimes blending these with types of popular song which had never been given literary form. This typically Hellenistic experimentation with mixture of genres may be observed in Callimachus, in Herondas, in the epic *Argonautica* of Apollonius, and of course in Theocritus.

Greek pastoral poetry as it takes shape in Theocritus' work is thus a composite or eclectic form. *Idyll* 1 is an excellent example. The

⁶⁷ *Theocritus' Coan Pastorals*, 1967, pages 2-3.

small-scale dramatic form of the poem as a whole is in the literary tradition of the mime. The use of stanzas and refrains in Thyrsis' song derives from popular folk songs. The description of the cup is reminiscent of Homer's epic description of Achilles' shield. Some of the formulaic language of Thyrsis' song comes almost directly from the *Homeric Hymns*. The myth of Daphnis may be adapted from a lyric poem of the archaic poet Stesichorus. And, most importantly, Daphnis' character and predicament are patterned after the Euripidean *Hippolytus*, and the narrative-dramatic technique of Thyrsis' song is adapted from Aeschylus' *Prometheus*.

(2)

...And Theocritus apparently produced and published as a single poetry book a group of poems which were mostly rustic in subject matter and which, like the first *Idyll*, drew on many literary and popular poetic traditions. It was this group of poems (*Idylls* 1 through 7, all written, there is reason to believe, while the poet was residing on the island of Cos) which established for all time his identity and reputation as a pastoral poet. (3)

This is Lawall's central theme. He reads the harvest in *Idyll* 7 to stand for a collection of poetry, and sees deliberate arrangements in *Idylls* 1-7. Lawall on

the whole is a great deal more convincing than was Rosenmeyer, and he is certainly correct about the connection between the ivy cup in *Idyll* 1 and the shield of Achilles in Homer's *Iliad*, for example. I don't think that one need see the influence of Aeschylus in the "narrative-dramatic technique", but his observations regarding mime, Stesichorus, popular folk songs, and the *Homeric Hymns* are all quite astute.

Rosenmeyer's general agreement with Lawall on this issue did not dissuade the latter from criticizing the work of the former; he disagrees with some of Rosenmeyer's most central ideas. Lawall wrote an article in 1975 about Rosenmeyer's book⁶⁸. Whereas Rosenmeyer insists on the "isolation of the pastoral character from the world around him" (Lawall, *The Pastoral Design* 7), Lawall counters that "it is the tension between reality and dream that creates the pastoral design and makes Theocritus' pastorals 'complex' rather than merely 'sentimental'" (*ibid.* 9). He finds Rosenmeyer's methods, as well as his conclusions, to be flawed:

He concentrates on a small number of passages from a limited number of texts to show what he regards as central in Theocritean

⁶⁸ "The Green Cabinet and the Pastoral Design"

pastoral: a restricted world of simplicity, freedom, and leisure (*otium*) that finds its closest corollary in the garden of Epicurus.

The incorporation of elements from the more "classic" genres was, as Lawall quite rightly observes, a defining characteristic of Hellenistic poetry as a whole. Lawall recognizes this line of reasoning but fails to follow it through: if we accept that there is (and was) a pastoral genre and not simply an Alexandrian genre, then it must have had more to its origin than a clever recombination of existing genres.

That Theocritus demonstrated his knowledge and skill by incorporating aspects of other genres into his poems is admitted, but the idea that the origin of the genre is in these combinations must be rejected. The means of expression (or the several means of expression) may have been found in the "classic" works of epic, tragedy, and comedy (etc.), but the inspiration, which seems to me rather more important, was not in the existing literary genres but in the authentic shepherds with whom Theocritus surely had some acquaintance and in their folk traditions.

There were two types of singing contests in Theocritean bucolic: the full-length songs and a type called 'amoebaeon', which consisted of the antagonists alternating two-line stanzas. Rosenmeyer found a precursor to the amoebaeon

contests in 'skolia', the "crooked" songs often sung at symposia. These were short songs, accompanied by the lyre, sung by individual guests in random order ("crookedly"). There is a collection of Attic skolia from the late sixth and early fifth centuries B.C. collected by Athenaeus (e.g. 15.694C ff.). These comment on some event or personal sentiment. Rosenmeyer notices the mockery and cockiness that would become a feature of the amoebaeon contests in some of the skolia. These aspects had existed even in some of the earliest iambic poetry; Archilochus is particularly noted for invective. Rosenmeyer notes particularly among the writers of skolia a poetess named Praxilla of Sicyon, about whom he writes

Some of her work, only a small portion of which has come down to us, shows the delight in nature and a certain charming naiveté that are not found again until almost two hundred years later when we come to Theocritus. (38)

Rosenmeyer also names the choral poets Alcman (c.650-c.600 B.C.), Stesichorus (c.600-c.550 B.C.), and Pindar (518-c.445 B.C.), all of whom "evidence similar formal and thematic antecedents" (38). Rosenmeyer moves on without further elaboration, but for clarification I will note that the "antecedents" to which he refers seem to be nothing more than the "delight in nature and a certain charming naiveté" which he had earlier attributed to Praxilla (38).

Rosenmeyer names many other relatively obscure ancient writers as possibly contributing to the creation of pastoral, though he generally downplays their importance: Eriphanis (named by Clearchus of Soloi), Lycophronides (named by the same Clearchus), Anyte, Sositheus, and Hermesianax.

Rosenmeyer summarizes their contributions:

All this makes it likely that there existed, perhaps as early as the fourth century B.C., semi-operatic pieces in which actors dressed up as herdsmen performed skits and perhaps played on pipes. The plots were taken from local legends... But whether these skits, with their masquerades and their pathos, should be regarded as the first pastorals is highly questionable. For the most part, pastoral does not seem to rely on legend, local or otherwise, nor does it concern itself with living personages, but presents a scene that is virtually anonymous; it does not revel in intrigue and violence, but glances at little people in a setting of leisure and calm. The presence of herdsmen and their loves should not startle us; the theme is as old as Hesiod and Homer. (40)

Another name dismissed by Rosenmeyer as a possible forerunner of pastoral is Philitas (or Philetas) of Cos. Philitas is mentioned by name in *Idyll 7*, but Rosenmeyer believes his reputation as a forerunner of pastoral is based on a

reference in Longus to a person named Philitas as the teacher of Daphnis. It is commonly accepted⁶⁹, however, that Philitas (his name is also spelt Philetas) was the tutor of Ptolemy II Philadelphus, as well as Zenodotus, Hermesianax, and Theocritus himself. His own poetry has only survived in very small fragments, which make an assessment of its character impossible, but it is clear from the references to him in later writers that his work was admired. If he was in fact the tutor of Theocritus on Cos (a fact which cannot be established, but the timelines give us no reason to doubt this), it is not only reasonable but likely that his work was a great influence on Theocritus, and the reference to him in *Idyll 7* can hardly have been accidental.

Rosenmeyer certainly is of the opinion that Theocritus' invention of bucolic was influenced more by earlier literature than any folk tradition. Perhaps the most interesting genre he considers to be a contributor to the pastoral tradition is philosophical prose. Indeed, he suggests that the earliest instance of a pastoral line occurs in Plato's *Phaedrus*, at 241D1:

Wolves love the lamb; so lovers crave their boy. (trans.

Rosenmeyer)

Rosenmeyer's discussion of the line is interesting and insightful:

⁶⁹ See Frederick John Williams, in the OCD entry for 'Philitas', 1164.

If the Greek scans as a hexameter, which is made plausible by Socrates' subsequent remarks- "Haven't you noticed, my friend, that I have taken to intoning epic verse?" - and if it is in imitation of a contemporary statement about love, then we must be prepared for the possibility that there was, in the fourth century, some poetry that contained lines like Theocritus' *Idyll* 10, lines 30-31:

The goat pursues the clover, the wolf pursues the goat,

The crane pursues the plough, and I burn for you.

But even if the similarity of wording is an accident, and the Platonic statement is the prose reflection of a pithy Attic remark about the senselessness of lovers, there is much else in the *Phaedrus*, particularly in the first half and near the end, that puts us in mind of Theocritus: a heightened but economical sensitivity to the surroundings, whether rural or not; a wavering between two modes of experiencing the country, realistic and mythological (the legend of Boreas and Orithyia); and of course the repeated references to Pan and the Nymphs as emblems of a vitality that cannot flourish in the ordinary pursuits of citizens. There is also Plato's fascination with herdsmen as the perpetuators of civilization in times of stress. (41)

Rosenmeyer further sees similarities between Socratic dialogue and the amoebaeon singing contests in the *Idylls*, particularly in the "careful symmetries," a point on which he does not elaborate. The *Phaedrus* is also unique in that it has its setting in the countryside outside of Athens (the other dialogues are set within the city), and Plato goes to unusual lengths to draw attention to the surroundings of Socrates and Phaedrus while they talk.

Clyde Murley had noticed the similarities between the *Phaedrus* and Theocritean bucolic in 1940. Murley eloquently and convincingly states the case for a link. He sees Plato as a critic:

Plato, like other men, issued from his environment. Being a critic of that environment, he was plainly disposed to show that in the first place he understood it. He seemed to be at pains to free himself from a common criticism against critics, that they are not willing to make the effort to grasp some idea or system, or are incapable of doing so, and therefore take the easier course of disparaging it⁷⁰ (281).

⁷⁰ Cf. W. Lutoslawski, *The Origin and Growth of Plato's Logic* (London, Longmans, Green and Co., 1897), 346: "It would not suit his artistic intention to despise writing if he had not already proved that he is a master in it, and that his contempt is not a consequence of impotence."

Murley supposes that there is a pastoral tradition already in existence in Plato's time, and that is what he is criticizing in the *Phaedrus*. He cites a large number of antecedents for both Plato and Theocritus (Sophron, of course, but also the *Song of Solomon*, Daphnis, Stesichorus, Linus, Homer, Hesiod, Alcaeus, Euripides, Sophocles, Philoxenus, Aristophanes, Philemon, Sappho, and Epicharmus).

Plato presents a certain technique for nature description as a background for formal and artificial conversation, a technique which was later elaborated by Theocritus into a distinctive literary form which was to become stereotyped. I suggest that, as in the other circumstances cited, he was probably reflecting some current vogue of thought and expression a hundred odd years before the *floruit* of Theocritus. But he has Socrates say in depreciation of it that "river and trees can teach him nothing (239D)." There are no "books in the running brooks, sermons in stones" for him (282).

The "other circumstances cited" (in which Plato demonstrates his ability in an area so as to qualify him to criticize it) are: the poem of Simonides in *Protagoras* (347E); contemporary "unscientific etymological ingenuity" in the *Cratylus* (406C); the "elaborate logical antinomies" of the *Parmenides* (136E, 137B); the funeral oration in the *Menexenus* (235D); and the pre-Euhemerus Euhemerism of the early part of the *Phaedrus* (229D). Murley goes on to give examples of

Plato's 'fairness' to his opponents (because most of his opponents have left little or none of their own writings, we can only judge Plato's 'fairness' from his own perspective). He suggests that while Theocritus may or may not have been influenced by the *Phaedrus* directly, "Plato dealt with and perhaps improved on certain literary fashions which must have influenced Theocritus". On Sophron's influence, he cites Lane Cooper⁷¹ who calls the *Phaedrus* "an extended mime".

Van Sickle sees the influence of epigram as well: "...references to Philetas, and to Cos, as well as Simichidas' song of love in an urban setting not only recall urban motifs and poetic forms but also seem to suggest affinities between this 'bucolic song' (Id. vii 49) and epigram".

If Theocritus, then, is responsible for the creation of pastoral, he certainly did not create it from nothing. He was also part of the Alexandrian tradition. The many poets of Hellenistic Alexandria have at least one thing in common: their awareness of each other and of earlier literature. Indeed, the poets seemed to write their poems for each other, or at least for an intellectually elite group. Their awareness of each other's work shows quite clearly in many of the extant poems, and it is generally agreed that many more subtleties are in the poems

⁷¹ Lane Cooper, *Plato* (New York, Oxford University Press, 1938), xx, xxix.

than we in the 21st century are able to appreciate; the temporal distance is great, and our collection is far from complete.

There are two pre-existing genres which made a clear contribution to Theocritus' mode of expression, and yet are barely mentioned by Rosenmeyer, perhaps because their influence is more obvious than the others mentioned. The first of these is epic, which contributed the hexameter. The second is mime, particularly that of Sophron. Sophron is generally acknowledged to be the creator of the mime as a genre. He wrote in Syracuse in the 5th century B.C. As one would expect from a Syracusan⁷², he wrote in the Doric dialect. He was perhaps admired by Plato (and indeed may have influenced the form of the dialogues) and certainly influenced Herodas and Theocritus. His influence on Virgil is probably indirect—Sophron, as far as we can tell from what we know of his work, was likely a major influence on Theocritus; this being the case, we suspect that echoes of his phrases may have found their way into the *Eclogues*. On a slightly digressive note, regarding Plato's *Phaedrus*: it has long been noticed that this dialogue seems to have a lot in common with bucolic poetry, which is particularly unusual given that Plato predated the earliest known bucolic (that is, Theocritus) by quite some time. It seems plausible to propose that this

⁷² But cf. my comments above in the "Metre and Language" section.

resemblance is the result of a common indebtedness to Sophron on the parts of both Plato and Theocritus⁷³.

An interesting similarity between Theocritus, Herodas and Aristophanes has been noticed by Lloyd W. Daly. The points of similarity he puts forth are between *Idyll 2*, *Mime 7*, and the *Frogs*, all of which may owe a debt to Sophron.

He writes:

No one, so far as I know, has been so misguided as to suggest that Theocritus, perhaps even less Herodas, drew any inspiration in these cases from Aristophanes. In fact we are told by the scholiast on the *Pharmaceutria* (*Idyll 2*) that Theocritus was basing the *Idyll* to some extent on Sophron, and A.S.F. Gow in his commentary allows that "T. may have borrowed some hints from Sophron" at least. And, whether Herodas wrote mimes in iambics or wrote iambics on subjects appropriate to the mime, such scenes as that at the opening of the *Dream* (*Mime 7*) must owe something to Sophron (86-7).

⁷³ I have elsewhere in this study elaborated Thomas Rosenmeyer's interesting thought about the connection between the *Phaedrus* and bucolic.

It should be mentioned here that Rosenmeyer does, in fact, impute an Aristophanean influence on Theocritus (and did so before Daly's article), but only in general terms—there is no reference to this passage in the *Frogs*. Daly wonders if Sophron could have influenced Aristophanes, but notes that there are chronological problems⁷⁴, and eventually backs away from his idea entirely:

I should not like to pursue the argument beyond this point and certainly cannot say that I am convinced by my own chain of evidence. All I can say is that the scenario in *Frogs* 1341-1363 seems to me un-Euripidean, that it is reminiscent of mime literature, and raise the question of the possible significance of this (88).

Gow, whose text of Theocritus is still the standard, questioned the importance of Sophron's influence on Theocritus in a 1933 article⁷⁵. With reference to the scholia of Theocritus' *Idyll II*, which

assert, at l. 69, that Theocritus has borrowed from Sophron τὴν τῶν φαρμάκων ὑπόθεσιν, and, in the preface, they criticize as

⁷⁴ Sophron's mimes were reported by Diogenes Laertius to have been first brought to Athens by Plato (i.e. too late to have influenced *Frogs*), which is possible given the philosopher's well-known trips to Sicily, as well as his reputed debt to Sophron for much of the "setting" of the *Dialogues*.

⁷⁵ Gow, A.S.F. "Sophron and Theocritus." *The Classical Review* 47.4 (1933): 113-115.

'tasteless' (ἀπειροκάλος) his transference of the maid Thestylis from the same author (113).

Gow analyzes the available fragments of Sophron (which are, sadly, very few) and compares them to *Idyll 2*, which, as we have noted above, is not properly bucolic. Simaetha's song, however, certainly seems to fit with Theocritus' scheme (if we accept Fantuzzi's appraisal of that scheme⁷⁶).

Gow concludes: "...the [new] fragment, so far as it goes, confirms the conclusion, already probable on other grounds, that Theocritus's borrowings [from Sophron] were superficial" (115). This should not be taken as Gow downplaying Sophron's influence in general on Theocritus, but rather minimizing it with regard to *Idyll 2*. His arguments in any case are largely unconvincing: if Theocritus does, as the scholia assert, borrow a character from Sophron, such a borrowing might well be taken as an acknowledgement by Theocritus of his debt to Sophron. A parallel to Virgil's 'borrowing' of characters from the *Idylls* seems clear.

It is clear that Theocritus was influenced by the other Alexandrian poets as well as by the earlier literature discussed above. It should be obvious, though

⁷⁶ In the *Brill's New Pauly* entry for "Bucolics, Greek" (802), Fantuzzi writes that both the poems of Theocritus that we would consider pastoral, and the other poems (the "urban mimes"), are "subject to the more wide-ranging plan to elevate the lives of common people to poetry."

it apparently is not to Rosenmeyer, that nothing is written in a vacuum; every author is invariably influenced by what he has already read, whether consciously (as in the case of the Alexandrian poets, it would seem) or not. This being the case, no genre can be created without influence from other, pre-existing genres. The fact that other genres (or even just other writers) had some influence in Theocritus' means of expression does not mean that their contributions went beyond that means of expression.

Rosenmeyer has spent a great deal of energy to make the argument that Theocritus brought together aspects of many different genres to create bucolic poetry, a point that Theocritus himself would hardly have contested.

Rosenmeyer fails to acknowledge that the most evident defining characteristic of Theocritus' bucolic poetry is not the metre, the characters, the setting, nor the inclusion of lists of things eaten by goats (though all of these, save the last, are certainly important aspects of his verse). Indeed, the one feature that stands out of Theocritus' poetry is the *feel* of it: the love of nature, and of the simple life.

Folk Origins

We have seen some evidence already which points toward authentic 'rustics' as inspiration for important aspects of bucolic, and this section will investigate this further. Scholars have been separating the *Idylls* into pastoral and non-pastoral types for centuries—a distinction that would have been quite arbitrary, I think, in the eyes of the author. There *is* an often unrecognized unity to his poems (some of the poems preserved in Theocritus' corpus are clearly by another hand; these spurious poems most often do not quite capture the joyous mood of the genuine pieces, although they have often been rejected for linguistic or other reasons).

Rosenmeyer discusses the pastoral poems without much notice of the rest, and his conclusions are often valid, but there is an element of *realness* to the poems which sets them apart. The characters may be fictional or semi-mythical, and the setting imprecise (although certainly less so than with Virgil and the other later pastoral poets), but the *joie de vivre* embodied in the works has often been understood to be an authentic representation of the pastoral life. As Fantuzzi notes, a city dweller in Hellenistic times would have taken the representation of shepherds as authentic; not, of course, in every aspect, but in some important ones:

The work of the shepherd, which demanded constant presence rather than exhausting effort (the contrast of shepherd and brutalized fisherman is obvious in Theoc. 1.39-54, cf. also [12]), supposedly left much time for entertainments: from the time of Homer poetry emphasized the singing and playing of the syrinx (Hom. Il 18.525f.; then, e.g. Soph. Phil. 212f.). Additionally, work of this kind involved long periods of isolation for shepherds in uninhabited places, which in the urban view was linked with the possibility of meeting divine beings (cf. Theoc. 1.15-18) and being divinely inspired in poetry and knowledge (examples: Hesiod and Epimenides)... Remnants or 'effects' of reality are preserved above all in the genuine poems of Theocritus: before or after singing, the shepherds also perform their duties as such, cf. Id. 1.14 and 151f.; 3.3-5; 5.141-150 (here, however, the mention of Melanthius is a reminder of the literary dimension); 11,12f.; also Id. [9], 3-5.

("Bucolics, Greek" 802)

Theocritus took more than this general feeling from his knowledge of authentic Sicilian shepherds (or cowherds, or goatherds). Many have doubted that real Sicilian or Coan rustics would have been capable of the type of conversations and musical contests in which Theocritus involves them.

Theocritus, having the luxury of writing his verses down at his leisure, was able to infuse his words and verses with more subtlety of meaning than we might imagine anyone, let alone uneducated peasants, to be able to accomplish by improvisation. Critics have expressed scepticism, some in very strong terms, that the types of singing contests described in Theocritus could have existed at all. I have two arguments to the contrary.

First, there have been, as late as the 19th century, documented cases of these singing contests among Sicilian "peasants" (the monumental work of Guiseppe Pitre documents this in detail); they may exist to this day. It seems extraordinarily unlikely that Theocritus gave them the idea. If they are as rustic as Fontenelle believes, they would certainly not have read his poems. The amoebaeon verses may indeed have an ancient history. West (388) recognizes that

we can see...the use of antiphonal or responsorial song in certain cults and ritual settings that are, or may well be, either oriental or pre-Hellenic ('Aegean') in origin. A solo singer leads off, and a chorus answers, either with ritual cries or with more articulate lines of song. The *Linos* is one example; others may be found in the dithyramb and paeon, in dirges and wedding songs, and in the cult of Adonis. It is an arrangement employed from ancient times in

Jewish liturgy (and hence by the Christian Church), and almost certainly through the Near East.

There may be an affinity between these early responsorial songs and the singing habit of the Sicilian shepherds. Second, that there really is a heavy folk influence on the *Idylls* seems obvious, but I would take this a slight step further: there is not simply an element of folk influence, but rather the whole collection of poems is a folk *inspiration*. This should not, of course, detract from Theocritus' poetic accomplishment. Frank Kermode is interested in the relationship between pastoral and the folk tradition:

It may be that the cultivated poet at a very early date learned his themes from the rustic primitive. In Ancient Greece and in the Europe of the Middle Ages the women at the corn-mills sang their *cantilænae molares*, songs which told of a former Age of Gold, under the reign of a peaceful king whose sudden death brought it to an end; they dreamed of rest as a hungry man does of food. Another theme of the peasant singer was the encounter of rustic and courtier, in which the rustic triumphed. This was a kind of song which certainly had its origin in sheep-country, as modern French scholars have shown. Both of these themes, sophisticated and

given a new orientation, belong to the stock of the pastoral poet.

(108)

Kermode notes that the elements of pastoral may go back even further in time than Homer:

There are extant very old songs concerning shepherds, which may be connected with pastoral poetry. One dates from the early (i.e., Sumerian) civilization of Mesopotamia; in it a girl prefers a farmer (socially superior because economically more highly organized) to a shepherd:

Never shall the shepherd marry me;

Never shall he drape me in his tufted cloth;

Never shall his finest wool touch me.

Me, the maiden, shall the farmer,

And he only, take in marriage-

The farmer who can grow beans,

The farmer who can grow grain.

(From Frankfort, Frankfort, Wilson, and Jacobsen, *Before*

Philosophy, Penguin 1949, p.180)

The shepherd spurned here is quite like the rejected swain in the Twentieth *Idyll* of Theocritus. The simplicity which accompanies the poverty of the shepherd is celebrated in many pre-pastoral myths. (109)

The ancients themselves speculated on the origins of the pastoral genre. The association of shepherds with music, as we have seen, dates as far back as the *Iliad*, and an early name associated with pastoral songs is that of Stesichorus:

Pastoral music, as a subject of interest in its own right, may have first appeared with Stesichorus (6th century BCE): according to Aelian, Stesichorus was the first to compose 'pastoral songs' (*boukolika melē*; see *Varia Historia*, x, 18), and he may have composed a lament for Daphnis (Bowra, *Greek Lyric Poetry*, 84-5).

Conclusion

Virgil's *Eclogues* drew on many different poets and poetic forms to improve upon the bucolic genre as he inherited it. This has long been recognized, but in the case of Theocritus, it may be equally true. What Theocritus inherited, however, was not an established literary genre. Theocritus inherited the traditions which had not previously been assembled on paper (or at least had not been assembled in quite the same way).

The songs, and perhaps also the lifestyles, of Sicilian shepherds are among the elements which were combined by Theocritus into *bucolic*; the other important elements are the epic metre and the language and style of the Sicilian mime.

Virgil added new elements to the genre. Among his important innovations are the intrusion of the 'real' world into the pastoral one; the increasingly fictitious setting; and an additional philosophical element. These elements were either absent or less pronounced in the work of Theocritus. As we have seen, both of these poets contributed considerably more than these few things to the future concept of the genre. In the time between the lives of Theocritus and Virgil, other poets contributed to the early development of bucolic, some of them consciously, and others through their influence on Virgil.

The amazing complexity of these little poems is easily overlooked in the *ἀσυχία*, the *otium*, the feeling of peace and ease which they foster.

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