A Study in Epicurean Poetics: Virgil's *Eclogues*

by

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Abstract

In this thesis I propose a reading of Virgil's *Eclogues* which draws heavily on the author's background in Epicurean philosophy. My aims are twofold: firstly to illuminate the literary complexities of Virgil's bucolic poetry, a poetry which is highly allusive and whose meaning rests on knowledge of a wide range of both literary and philosophical sources; and secondly to substantiate a more general theory of Epicurean poetics by observing how such a theory can be seen to unfold in Virgil's poetic practice. Beginning with the available biographical sources on Virgil's life, I review the evidence for his adherence to Epicureanism and attempt to provide a rough chronology of his philosophical conversion and early literary output, including the *Eclogues*. In addition to this historical context I give an overview of Epicurean ethical teachings as they relate to poetry and literature, in order to arrive at a better understanding of the discursive and ideological *milieu* which would have informed the *Eclogues*' composition. The remainder of the thesis traces the interaction between Virgil's literary and philosophical inheritances across the textual fabric of the *Eclogues*. I isolate the shared concerns of Epicurean philosophy and bucolic poetics to regulate their engagement with the ancient poetic genres of epic and elegy, compositional modes which are associated with frustration and moral danger. Finally I show how in the *Eclogues* Virgil engages with a third poetic genre, (cosmological) didactic, and how this engagement reflects both an Epicurean interest in the ethical benefits of natural philosophy (*physiologia*) and a tendentious literary program which seeks to innovate on the generic conception of bucolic poetry that Virgil takes over from his bucolic predecessor, Theocritus.

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Acknowledgements

I would like to begin by acknowledging the Lekwungen-speaking peoples, the Songhees, Esquimalt, and W̱SÁNEĆ nations, on whose unceded, traditional territory I have lived and worked during my research for this thesis. I would secondly like to thank my supervisory committee, Cedric Littlewood and Cliff Roberts, for their patient and acute oversight throughout the past year. Hélène Cazes, Greg Rowe, Michael Chase, and Doug Hutchinson, directly and indirectly, all offered useful suggestions and commentary at various points throughout the project. I am also very grateful to the generosity of Philip Hardie, who kindly read and provided detailed feedback on the drafts of two chapters. Further recognition is due to my family, friends, and fellow students in Victoria and elsewhere whose continual support has greatly eased the laborious experience of bringing this thesis to completion. Nor would the process of my research have been what it was if not for the reliable help and general affability of the staff at the McPherson Library. I would especially like to recognize the assistance I received from Carol Gordon in procuring several items not held in the University's collection. Last but very far from least, I am indebted to the seemingly inexhaustible patience, tolerance, and goodwill of Carolyn, Jacqueline, and Dave in the McPherson Library's Inter-Library Loans Office. *Sine quibus non*.

Note on Translations

All translations are my own unless otherwise noted. Where I have quoted a separate translation, I have usually referred to the English versions available in the standard editions of the Loeb Classical Library. The three exceptions are, in no particular order, Anthony Verity's (2002) translation of Theocritus, which I have consulted for some passages of *Idylls* 1 and 7, Annette Harder's (2012) translation of Callimachus' *Aetia* (fr. 1), and Cyril Bailey's (1947) translation of Lucretius.

INTRODUCTION

What follows is an attempt to arrive at a better understanding of Virgil's *Eclogues,* as poetry, from the point of view of Epicurean philosophy. The division between poetry and philosophy that is today entrenched in many institutional and practical contexts is of course mostly an artificial one; if this dichotomy is often reflected in the way people actually go about doing poetry or philosophy, this is in large part due to the assumptions that the poet or the philosopher bring to their respective occupations in our modern world. For the ancient Greeks and Romans the distinction was by no means so determinant, nor so tidy. It was a commonplace in antiquity for writers to reflect on philosophy's poetic origins in the legendary works of early figures such as Orpheus, Musaeus, and Linus.[1] This strain of philosophy-*cum*-poetry was continued by important Presocratic thinkers, such as Empedocles and Parmenides. In Virgil's day it acquired a distinguished representative in the didactic poetry of Titus Lucretius Carus – or simply Lucretius – whose *magnum opus*, the *De rerum natura*, comprised a far-reaching survey of the philosophical 'discoveries' of Epicurus of Samos, a pre-eminent thinker of the Hellenistic period and the founder of the Epicurean school. Next to the achievements of these major poet-philosophers, even apparently unphilosophical works like the Homeric poems became subject to searching philosophical analysis, as scholars tried hard to harmonize their contents with this or that philosophical system. The result was that, during the Hellenistic period, literature became irreversibly imbricated with nascent critical theories spanning the fields of aesthetics, linguistics,

1 See for instance Diog. Laert. 1.3.

ethics, and natural philosophy. In turn this affected the practice of poets, who found themselves unable to compose without reference to or engagement in these broader currents of discourse.[2]

And this is as true for Virgil as it was for his Hellenistic predecessors – Theocritus, Callimachus, Aratus, and Apollonius, to name but a few. We know from a variety of different sources that as a young adult Virgil espoused Epicureanism, and it therefore seems worthwhile to explore the ramifications of this early philosophical conversion for his early poetic output. One of Virgil's documented associates, the Epicurean philosopher Philodemus of Gadara, is notable for writing extensively on the topic of literary theory and criticism, in what amounted to a large-scale and concerted effort to outline the dimensions of an orthodox Epicurean stance towards poetic creation. Such theoretical work, in some form or other, would almost certainly have been known to Virgil. The present thesis will be an exploration of the consequences of this type of familiarity for the structure and meaning of the *Eclogues*. Moreover, it is hoped that by presenting a coherent Epicureanizing interpretation of the *Eclogues* a measure of solidity may be added to our understanding of Epicurean poetics, independent of the textual embodiment of any such poetics in Virgil's bucolic poetry.

As we move forward, a central concept for our study of the *Eclogues* will be that of literary genre. Modern literary theory has emphasized the role which formal constructs such as genre play in defining the 'literarity' of literature – the aspects of poetic and literary texts which signal their participation in larger structural and formal patterns.[3] Without this type of structural referentiality it would be difficult to say what makes a literary text 'literary', what makes a novel a 'novel', or what makes a poem a 'poem' as opposed to, say, a grocery-list. In such an

2 For a more detailed history of all these developments, see Pfeiffer (1968).

3 Genette (1982).

understanding of literature, genre of course plays a critical part. Genres may be conceived of as loose arrangements of distinguishing formal features and traits which assist the reader of a given literary text in the construction of a horizon of expectations for measuring the significance of that text's form and content, thereby helping to make it comprehensible as literature. To speak of any kind of taxonomy, classification, or 'this-here-ness' or 'that-there-ness' with respect to a piece of literature is thus to speak of genre. In all of this, literary allusion or, more broadly, 'intertextuality' is of cardinal importance; in most cases a text's formal features and its meanings are isolable and meaningful only with reference to those of *another text*.[4] Intertextuality thus lies at the heart of genre and indeed of 'literarity' itself, being the basis on which literary interpretation becomes possible. A poetic work's belonging to a particular genre is at bottom a function of its manifold intertextual relationships, which together constitute a kind of genetic (*viz.* generic) code signifying the work's position in relation to one or several antecedent textual lineages or *traditions*.[5]

So what? I shall be arguing in the upcoming pages that this quite abstract theorization is more than simply a critical apparatus or *grille* to be imposed on the *Eclogues* in order to extract some special meaning from them. On the contrary I hope to show that something like the conception of genre laid out above is immanent in the *Eclogues* themselves, and that this is also the case in Theocritus' *Idylls,* on which the *Eclogues* principally draw. As a whole, the *Eclogues* evince a kind of consciousness of their generic status and the conditions for their generic and literary affiliation to Theocritean bucolic genre, itself also highly self-aware of its position within a poetic tradition. Theocritean bucolic's consciousness of a descent from and debt to the earlier

4 On the pervasive intertextual dynamics of Latin literature, see esp. Hinds (1998); also Pasquali (1968) pp. 273-82.

5 My conception of a literary tradition is substantially indebted to that of Eliot (1975 [1919]).

genres of epic and elegy is thus replicated in the structural and semantic organization of Virgilian bucolic. But Virgil is also aware of his position as necessarily a 'second-order' bucolic poet who is further indebted to the bucolic productions which have preceded him; he is therefore equally conscious of a consequent pressure put on him by tradition to innovate in some way. I argue further along that he does so by introducing (or perhaps heightening) an additional element in the poetic matrix from which the *Eclogues* take their form: that of natural-philosophical didactic poetry, as practised above all by his Epicurean poetic predecessor, Lucretius.

In this respect, Virgil brings the bucolic genre closer in line with the Epicurean philosophy which influenced him in his young adulthood. The didacticism of Lucretius' *De rerum natura* is, as any reader of the poem will quickly see, an essential part of his poetic project to give a formally attractive and alluring veneer to the ethical salvation offered by Epicureanism. He aims to instruct by mixing, as Horace would say, the *utile* and the *dulce.* Virgil, we may imagine, was deeply impressed by this project, and so has thought to pay homage both to his literary hero and to their common philosophical path through life.

But Epicureanism informs Virgil's generic maneuverings in other ways as well. Epicurus appears to have been strongly ambivalent about the possible benefits of any literary education, or even recreation. For an Epicurean to compose poetry thus entailed a set of considerations relating to how one might do so while simultaneously ensuring the preservation of one's rational calm or *ataraxia*, the final goal (*telos*) of the Epicurean life. For reasons we have just seen, any such engagement with poetry can be conceptualized as a function of literary genre, and so I propose that there is a certain overlap between the generic concerns of an Epicurean theory of poetry and those of bucolic poetics as practised by both Theocritus and Virgil. In this way the close

intersection of literary and philosophical traditions in the *Eclogues* can be thought out in literary-generic terms.

In Chapter 1 I begin with an overview of the historical and biographical evidence for Virgil's adherence to the teachings of the Epicurean school and offer a revised chronology for the *Eclogues* composition which places them close in time to Virgil's Epicurean period. I argue further that a few of the pieces from the so-called *Appendix Vergiliana*, nowadays usually thought to be apocryphal, are in fact genuine and that they offer us valuable insights into Virgil's philosophical orientation. *Catalepton* 5, the *Culex,* and the *Ciris*, are all more overtly Epicurean than the *Eclogues* and can therefore help us to see why an Epicureanizing approach to the *Eclogues* should be important and justified. My somewhat revisionary dating, based initially on external sources, places the Virgil's work on the *Eclogues* somewhat earlier than is usual, in the period 45-42 BC, therefore requiring me to show how such a theory remains consistent with the internal evidence of the *Eclogues* themselves.

Chapter 2 undertakes to draw a picture of 'Epicurean poetics' in broad strokes. I start off by looking at the few bits of testimony we have from known Epicureans that relate to the practice of poetry. My conclusion is that, while generally licit, the composing of poetry in an Epicurean context would have involved keeping to themes and styles that did not threaten *ataraxia*. In particular, I identify three potential perils of poetic composition having to do with (1) the acceptance of false belief and mythological/religious content, (2) the affective exacerbation of negative passions such as *erôs*, and (3) over-investment in futile and frustrating artistic projects. In the second part of the chapter I briefly trace these preoccupations in the available work of the Epicurean poets, Philodemus, Lucretius, and Horace, before concluding

with a discussion of the ancient distinction between *poiêma* and *poiêsis*, which can be seen to represent a division between epic and non-epic poetic genres.

In Chapter 3 I show how the Epicurean concerns regarding poetry which I discussed in the previous chapter can be integrated theoretically with the generic preoccupations of Theocritean bucolic to distance itself from epic and elegy. I begin with a quick look at Virgil's combination of bucolic and Epicurean themes in the early *Culex*. I then offer a reading of two of Theocritus' *Idylls* which are widely considered to encapsulate his poetic program, and show how this program demonstrates a conscious debt to, but also repudiation of, epic and elegy. The chapter concludes with an analysis of several *Eclogues*, intended to map both the influence of Theocritus' anti-epic and anti-elegiac conception of bucolic on the *Eclogues* and the ways in which Virgil amalgamates this conception with an Epicurean ethical world-view. Ultimately I hope to show how the bucolic and the Epicurean stances towards epic and elegy run parallel to one another both in theory and in Virgil's poetic practice.

Chapter 4 investigates Virgil's tendentious renovation of Theocritean bucolic via the incorporation of generic elements from natural-philosophical didactic poetry. I view this part of Virgil's program as centrally motivated by an interest in the Epicurean concept of *physiologia*, which means something like 'natural philosophy' and which was instrumentally important within the Epicureanism as a technique for securing a calm and rational outlook on the world. However, Virgil does not limit his intertextual borrowings to those that come from Epicureanism (Lucretius), but rather advertises his knowledge of a whole tradition of didactic poetry ranging back to Hesiod and Orpheus. In a programmatic *ekphrasis* in *Eclogues* 3, which is modelled on a parallel programmatic *ekphrasis* in *Idylls* 1, Virgil indicates the didactic component of his version of bucolic with a series of allusions to the astronomer, Eudoxus, and the didactic poets,

Aratus and Orpheus. *Eclogues* 5 evokes the theme of *physiologia* in the person of the deified Daphnis, a character composed of pieces taken from both traditional pastoral literature and Lucretius' sublime 'physiological' experience in *De rerum natura* 3. I end with an analysis of the 'Song of Silenus' in *Eclogues* 6, which in many ways marks the *pièce de résistance* of Virgil's didactic-bucolic *contaminatio*.

I

> Quoi qu'on fasse, on reconstruit toujours le monument à sa manière. Mais c'est déjà beaucoup de n'employer que des pierres authentiques...
> Ce qui ne signifie pas, comme on le dit trop, que la vérité historique soit toujours et en tout insaissisable. Il en est de cette vérité comme de toutes les autres: on se trompe plus ou moins.
>
> – M. Yourcenar

VERGILIUS MINOR

As with many scholarly projects, this one begins from certain premisses. On what rational basis are we entitled to make Virgil's *Eclogues* the subject of a study in Epicurean poetics? Who is to say that the poetics of the *Eclogues* must be regarded as in any essential sense 'Epicurean'? The answer I propose to give to this line of questioning is in part a historical one. In spite of there already existing a substantial degree of consensus around the matter of the historical Virgil's professed Epicureanism, I have thought to spend this first chapter in regrouping the evidence for his philosophical views, along with a few other biographical *data*, in order to make plain how I am grounding my approach and the main pillars of my argument in subsequent sections. To be clear, this argument is not meant to depend on a detailed factual account of the Life of Virgil, which is a project fraught with practical as well as methodological difficulties. My objective in trying to make sense of the biographical tradition is not to establish any detailed correspondences

between the contents of the *Eclogues* and the lived experiences of their author, but rather to gain a more accurate idea of the discursive context and intellectual climate in which they were written. The account which I offer is necessarily historicizing: Virgil's poems belong to a tradition of literature and philosophy whose transmission was and is a historical process. It is my hope that a fuller appreciation of this context, especially where Epicurean philosophy is concerned, will help justify an approach to the *Eclogues* informed by philosophical as much as by literary concerns.

It is right to begin by emphasizing the good cause that modern chroniclers of Virgil's life have had to exercise circumspection.[6] The two thousand years of his posterity have allowed both his *admiratores* and his *obtrectatores* ample time for biographical and literary-historical invention. Even from very early on, in the first and second centuries after his death, his life and work were hedged about with wild speculation of the type still visible in the so-called *Vita Suetonii vulgo Donatiana* (*VSD*), a biographical text preserved in Donatus' commentary on Virgil (4th cent.) but usually attributed to the imperial grammarian Suetonius (*c.* AD 69-122). There we find narrated such miraculous events as Virgil's mother's premonition of her unborn son's future literary fame and the supernatural growth of the 'tree of Virgil', alongside a number of obvious extrapolations from his poetic works. Notwithstanding these dubious points of detail, however, the *Vita* is still relied upon by most scholars (perhaps even unconsciously) to provide a rough timeline for Virgil's life. Few are those, for instance, who doubt that Virgil was born on

6 See Horsfall (1995), who may be cited as perhaps the most extreme example of this tendency: 'It may now be apparent that very little external information indeed may legitimately be used in the understanding of Virgil and his works' (p. 24). See also the scepticism of Don and Peta Fowler in their article on Virgil in *OCD* (3rd ed.): 'Much (but not all) of the information in [the biographical tradition] derives from interpretation of the poems (including the spurious ones in the *Appendix Vergiliana*), and few details, however circumstantial, can be regarded as certain'. It is true that a great deal that these biographical texts contain (above all the content of the *VSD*) has been justly impugned as either fantastical or as an allegorization of narrative details and situations in Virgil's best-known works (in addition to Horsfall (1995) see also Peirano (2017). Still there is a limit to how far such an account can be pressed; see the remarks of Powell (2017) pp. 73-4.

October 15th 70 BC, as the *Vita* informs us, or that his place of birth was somewhere in the environs of Mantua or Cremona in the Transpadane region of Italy.

I will therefore dispense with any further protestations (regular enough in Virgilian studies) of how little we can know about Virgil's actual life and will concern myself rather with some of the more solid *data* provided by the *VSD* and other sources – in particular, the poems contained in the *Appendix Vergiliana*. It is my view, as it was the view of Augusto Rostagni in the first half of the last century, that these documents have more to tell us concerning the life of our poet than has traditionally been acknowledged in contemporary scholarship. They therefore deserve a more even-handed appreciation than the abrupt dismissal they have often received since the nineteenth century, when doubt about their authenticity first became widespread.[7] I will not be entering into the complicated debates over the authenticity of the *Catalepton* or other portions of the *Appendix* thought to be apocryphal, except where the resolution of these questions touches on the theme of Virgil's Epicureanism.[8] But, on the whole, I am in agreement with Rostagni that the genuineness of at least some of the contents of the *Appendix* can be vindicated and that a synoptic and holistic approach to the evidence, analyzing its cohesion (or lack thereof) as an *ensemble,* has many fruits to offer those who adopt it.

As mentioned above, it is commonly agreed that Publius Vergilius Maro was born at or near Mantua on October 15th 70 BC, in the year of Pompey and Crassus' first joint consulship (*VSD* 2). In all probability, he came from a propertied family of rural land-owners, one of many from the Transpadane region who were indebted to the patronage of Julius Caesar and who

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7 See the general remarks of Rostagni (1933) pp. xi-xii.

8 For a useful review of scholarship on the *Catalepton*, see Richmond (1981). It should be noted that what we refer to as the *Appendix Vergiliana* only became known as such after the edition of J. J. Scaliger in 1572. Before that the contents of the *Appendix* simply appeared in the manuscript tradition of the works of Virgil, alongside the *Eclogues, Georgics,* and *Aeneid*. On the other hand the *Catalepton* does seem to have been a conscious grouping of Virgil's epigrams, possibly arranged by the poet's posthumous editors, Varius and Tucca.

would, thanks to Caesar's efforts, receive the Roman franchise in in 49 BC. We may guess that Virgil's family were well-off enough to send their son away to school; we are told that he spent much of his youth at Cremona, where he may have received the rudiments of his education. Sometime later he found himself at Rome, presumably moving there in order to further his studies. As was common for young Italian men of his age and social rank, he would have learned the usual rhetorical syllabus in preparation for a life of upper-class civic involvement. It is said, however, that he did not excel as an orator and defended only one case in the law-courts before abandoning the profession (*VSD* 15-6). According to *Catalepton* 5 – the least controversial piece in the *Appendix* and one which many scholars now concur in accepting –[9] the young Virgil soon became disenchanted with his teachers and the stuffy and oppressive literary culture of Rome, departing perhaps around the year 47.[10] In the poem, which takes the form of an epigram after the Catullan manner, he disavows them harshly and declares his plans to relocate to the relative calm of the Bay of Naples in order to pursue Epicurean philosophy under the tutelage of the 'great' Siro[11] (*Catal.* 5):

> ite hinc, inanes, ite, rhetorum ampullae,
> inflata rhoezo non Achaico verba,
> et vos, Selique Tarquitique Varroque,
> scholasticorum natio madens pingui,
> ite hinc, inanis cymbalon iuventutis.
> tuque, o mearum cura, Sexte, curarum

9 See, for example, the approval of the ordinarily sceptical Richmond (1981) pp. 1143-4. Aside from *Catal.* 5, it may be that various other pieces from the same collection also antedate Virgil's departure from Rome: *Catal.* 4 and 11, which are addressed to Virgil's friend and compatriot Octavius Musa, the writer of a Roman history and probably an acquaintance from Virgil's schooldays; *Catal.* 13, a scathing iambic composition, which appears to vindicate Virgil's military service with Caesar's forces along the Illyrian coast in 49-48 BC and his subsequent discharge on grounds of ill health against the attacks of a personal enemy dubbed 'Luccius' (*Cat.* 13.35); and perhaps 3, if as Rostagni argues the focus of the epigram is the defeated Pompey. On all of which see Rostagni (1933). Cf. Richmond (1981) p. 1144, who accepts *Catal.* 1-8, 10-12, and 16.

10 It is to around this time that Rostagni (1933) p. 150 dates the events recorded in *Catal.* 5. DeWitt (1932) p. 91 places Virgil's departure later, assigning it to 45.; Frank (1920b) p. 107 opts for 47-46. I think a departure sometime between 48 and 45 is probable, but in the interest of brevity will not speculate further on a precise dating. *Catal.* 5 could of course have been composed before or after the relocation to which it refers.

11 For a review of what is known about Siro and his Epicureanism, see Gigante (1990).

> vale, Sabine; iam valete, formosi.
> Nos ad beatos vela mittimus portus,
> magni petentes docta dicta Sironis,
> vitamque ab omni vindicabimus cura.
> ite hinc, Camenae, vos quoque ite salvete,
> dulces Camenae, nam fatebimur verum,
> dulces fuistis, et tamen meas chartas
> revisitote, sed pudenter et raro.
>
> Away, empty bombast of the rhetoricians! Away with you, speech inflated with an un-Attic shrillness! And you, Selius, Tarquitius, and Varro – tribe of schoolmen dripping with unguent, empty clamour of our youth – get you hence! And farewell to you, Sextus Sabinus, care of my cares; farewell, pretty ones! We set sail for happy harbours, seeking the learned sayings of the great Siro, and will redeem our life from all care. Go forth from here, Muses – farewell to you also, sweet Muses; for, if truth be told, you have been sweet. You may yet revisit my pages, but rarely and with due modesty.

Of all the available evidence for Virgil's youthful conversion to Epicureanism, this is perhaps the most reliable.[12] If accepted, it also carries the further merit of illustrating in no uncertain way how Virgil was aware of the constrictive ramifications which adoption of an Epicurean philosophical ideology would have for his practice of poetry. These ramifications form the principal object of my second chapter and so I will not say more about them here. Suffice it to observe that poetry, like other arts, was not unproblematic from an Epicurean standpoint, as Virgil emphasizes with his break from the Muses and his concluding *pudenter et raro* ('rarely and with due modesty').

The other key testimony for Virgil's Epicureanism during the 40's is furnished by a fragment of a Herculaneum papyrus (*PHerc.* Paris 2) connecting him with the Epicurean philosopher Philodemus, who seems also to have been resident in the region of Naples and in communication with Siro.[13] Scholars have attributed the text of the papyrus to the end of

12 It is supported to some extend by *Catal*. 8, which seems to refer to a *villula* that Siro left Virgil after his death. See also Servius' mention of Siro as Virgil's Epicurean teacher in his comment on *Ecl.* 6.13.

13 This association is corroborated by Cicero, who mentions Philodemus and Siro together in his *De finibus* (2.35) as respected authorities on Epicurean philosophy. Cf. *Ad fam.* 6.11.2.

Philodemus' book on the vice of *kolakeia* (flattery) from the larger work *On Vices and Their Opposing Virtues.*[14] It comprises a final address to Philodemus' intended readers, 'Plotius, Varius, Vergilius, and Quintilius' (*PHerc.* Paris 2, 279a):

> ταῦτα μὲν οὖν | ἡμῖν ὑπέρ τε τούτων καὶ κα|θόλου τῶν διαβολῶν ἀρέ|σκει λέγειν ὦ Πλώτιε καὶ Οὐά|ριε καὶ Οὐεργιλίε καὶ Κοιντί|λιε...
>
> And so, Plotius, Varius, Vergilius, and Quintilius, it pleases us to say these things about these people and on the subject of slanders more generally...

Interlinkage between Virgil, Philodemus, and Siro is further established by a second Herculaneum papyrus (*PHerc.* 312), also attributed to Philodemus, in which the author speaks of an excursion to Naples on a visit to the philosophical circle gathered around Siro:[15]

> ...ἐδ]όκει δ'επ[α-|νελθεῖν] μεθ' ἡμῶν εἰς | [τὴν Νεά]πολιν πρὸς τὸν | [φίλτατο]ν Σίρωνα [κ]αὶ τὴν | [κατ' αὐτ]ὸν ἐκεῖ δίαιταν | [... καὶ φι]λοσόφους ἐνεργ[ῆ|σαι ὁμι]λίας Ἡρκλ[ανέωι | τε μεθ'έ]τέ[ρων συζητῆ|σαι]
>
> And it occurred to him to go up with us to Naples and to our most beloved Siro and his abode both to hold a philosophical gathering [and to discourse with others at Herculaneum...]

However one is inclined to construe the precise relationship between Naples and Herculaneum or between Philodemus and Siro in this passage, it seems clear enough that friendly exchange took place between the two philosophers and locales. On the basis of our other sources, we can be fairly well assured that it was into this possibly wider network of Epicurean practitioners that Virgil inserted himself after his departure from Rome. Indeed, on some accounts he made Naples more or less his home for the rest of his life.[16] One may doubt whether his commitment to

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14 See Gigante (2004).

15 I reproduce the text from Gigante (1983) p. 36, with his conjectures. Gigante suggests the possibility that the unknown associate to whom Philodemus is writing is in fact Virgil, although we have no way of corroborating this claim. What is more important is that a direct link is shown between Philodemus and Siro, both of whom are known from other sources to have been in contact with Virgil.

16 Compare, for instance, the *sphragis* at the end of the *Georgics* (4.559-66) indicating that it was at Naples (*Parthenope*) that they were composed.

Epicureanism lasted as long, but it seems to have endured for at least the early to middle years of the 40's BC, if not for the greater part of that decade.

How then does this commitment to Epicureanism overlap with the composition of the *Eclogues*? Typically, scholars have chosen to date Virgil's collection to the very end of the 40's, when a series of expropriations of Italian farmland were being conducted by Octavian as a means of settling Roman veterans after the Battle of Philippi (42 BC). These expropriations seem to be evoked by Virgil in *Eclogues* 1 and 9, which focus on the consequences of a parallel scenario unfolding in Virgil's fictional pastoral world. It is therefore argued that Virgil must have begun composing the *Eclogues* no earlier than would have allowed him to incorporate references to this historical moment: 42 BC is when he would have set to work. On the other hand, as we have seen, it is likely that Virgil's conversion to Epicureanism occurred a number of years earlier. There is thus the possibility of some temporal disjunction between what one might call his 'Epicurean period' and the period during which he wrote the *Eclogues*. Without seeking complete precision in the matter, I think it is possible to date the composition of the *Eclogues* earlier than 42, fixing this year as a *terminus ante quem* rather than a *terminus post quem* for their 'publication'. If nothing else, this altered dating increases the likelihood of Virgil having still been under a strong Epicurean influence when he produced his collection of bucolic poems, which one would accordingly expect to bear the imprint of his engagement with Epicurean philosophy. Of course there is also much about the *Eclogues* themselves, as texts, that I take to demonstrate an Epicurean orientation on the part of their author, but any such interpretation will only gain in credibility if it can be shown to be historically more plausible than might otherwise be the case.

Our soundest evidential basis for placing the composition of the *Eclogues* earlier in the 40's is provided by the biographical tradition of the Virgilian 'Lives'. The date supplied by the Lives for Virgil's birth is rarely contested and, in other respects as well, the chronology they offer is remarkably consistent. One point of agreement in particular regards the date and duration of the *Eclogues*' composition, which two of our sources report as having been finished in Virgil's twenty-ninth year – that is to say, by sometime in 42. According to the commentary attributed to Probus, Virgil was *annos natus VIII et XX* (Prob. 323.13-14 Thilo-Hagen: 'twenty-eight years old') when the *Eclogues* were published and we are later told that this detail is to be taken on the authority of the early imperial critic, Asconius Pedianus (*c.* 9 BC – AD 76), who wrote a work *contra obtrectatores Vergilii* (Prob. 329.6-7 Thilo-Hagen; *VSD* 46: 'Against Virgil's Detractors'). The commentary by Servius gives the same account, saying in the preface to its section on the *Eclogues* that it is 'known certainly' that 'Virgil wrote the *Eclogues* at the age of twenty-eight' (*sane sciendum...Vergilium XXVIII annorum scripsisse bucolica*). 'Known certainly' (*sane sciendum*) is strong affirmation and we may rest fairly well assured that a witness as early as Asconius, whose life nearly intersected with Virgil's own, would have had a good basis on which to record the chronology of Virgil's work. As is generally admitted, then, the year 42 seems to be of some significance where the date of the *Eclogues* is concerned; our sources also appear to concord in the view that work on them lasted three years – a *triennium* (*VSD* 89-90; *Vita Servii* 24-5). If any ambiguity subsists, it is in the vocabulary used by the different commentators to describe the *act* of the *Eclogues'* composition. Several of the relevant texts use some conjugation of the verb *scribere* ('to write'), which several interpreters have read as lacking the finality needed to imply that it was in 42 that the *Eclogues* 'had been written';[17] although the verb does

17 *E.g.* Coleman (1977) pp. 14ff.

appear universally in the perfect tense (*scripsisse* at Serv. *Vita* 24-5 and *ad Buc. prooem.* 3.26-7; *scripsit* at Prob. 323.13-14 Thilo-Hagen). To this unanimity Probus' commentary adds an unequivocal *edidisse* (329.13-14 Thilo-Hagen: 'published') and where the *VSD* mentions the *Eclogues*' composition, albeit without specifying a date, the verb used is *perfecit* (*VSD* 89-90: 'finished'). In the Servian *Vita*, we find the verb *emendasse* accompanying *scripsisse*, which hardly seems determinant beyond confirming the state of completion already signified by the perfect tense. Overall, the consistency of the verb tenses – and especially the use of the perfect *edidisse* in Probus' citation of Asconius – tells more heavily in favour of an interpretation according to which Virgil would have finished the *Eclogues* by 42.

On the grounds of the biographical tradition we thus have the year 42 BC, Virgil's twenty-ninth, as a *terminus ante quem* for the bulk of the work on the *Eclogues*. We may go further and say that, since the tradition is concordant in presenting the time needed for the *Eclogues* composition as three years, Virgil began work on them around 45 BC, which puts their beginning not long after what I suppose to have been the earliest period of their author's Epicureanism. Admittedly, all of this leaves out the problem of the land-reallocations of 42-1 BC, widely believed to have supplied the basis for *Eclogues* 1 and 9. For the moment, however, I propose to leave this issue to one side, in order to approach it instead from the vantage of the Virgilian *Culex,* which I hope will provide some help in addressing the difficulty that it presents.

THE *CULEX* AND THE *CIRIS*

The *Culex,* accepted without question by the ancients as a product of Virgil's pen,[18] has elicited among its modern readership a much greater degree of scepticism than the *Catalepton*. In the nineteenth century, and well into the twentieth, it was popular to discredit the *Culex* as a rough-hewn and imperfect work, possessing a style inferior to that befitting the author of immaculate genius responsible for the *Eclogues*, *Georgics*, and *Aeneid*.[19] But while the philological and text-critical scepticism of early modern critics, animated at its height by the powerful spirit of *Wissenschaft*, may have been healthy in its time, we are today graced with the possibility of a more guarded – and equally salutary – attitude towards the gods of Objective Method.[20] We must recognize that the majority of approaches to assessing the authenticity of the *Culex* do not and cannot attain the objectivity to which they pretend and, ultimately, must rely on one kind of subjective judgement or another. In recent years Glenn Most has demonstrated this point decidedly in his thorough census and critique of previous studies of the *Culex,* to which any future students of the poem will undoubtedly find themselves indebted.[21] And yet Most, so far from abandoning the course which would appear from his discussion to have led so many to no certain end, seeks to supplant the impotence of previous methods with the promise of one even more quantitative, and therefore even more objective.

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18 Suet. *Luc.* 2; Stat. *Silv.* 1 (*prooem.*), 1.7.73f.; Mart. 8.56.19-20, 14.185. Cf. *VSD* 57. Notable among modern critics who accept the authenticity of the *Culex* are Frank (1920a-c), Rostagni (1930), Berg (1974), Salvatore (1994), and Chambert (2004).

19 An appraisal no doubt partly due to Martial (8.56.19-20): *protinus Italiam concepit et 'Arma uirumque'* | *qui modo uix Culicem fleuerat ore rudi* ('He who had just lamented the *Culex* with an unformed mouth straightaway conceived "Arms and the man"'). Cf. Peirano (2012) pp. 60ff.

20 Although mention deserves to be made of R. B. Steele's (1930) wonderfully meticulous and methodical work on the *Culex*'s authenticity, rendering in this case a positive attribution to Virgil.

21 Most (1987) pp. 199-204.

The result, although appealing at first glance, unfortunately finds itself open to much the same criticism as provided its point of departure. Most's argument is briefly this: the *Culex* is divided structurally into four distinct sections, which, following the first section (a dedication to 'Octavius', *Cul.* 1-41), are marked off by a series of poetic adversions to the time of day, placed at regularly larger intervals throughout the rest of the poem. The three final segments thus demarcated are then made to correspond to the principal three works of the Virgilian *oeuvre*, which neatly follow the same ascending order of magnitude in chronological succession.[22] The correspondence is confirmed by the presence of important intertexts between each section and his related work, the *Eclogues*, the *Georgics,* or the *Aeneid*.[23] It would seem, then, that the *Culex* has been designed on the model of Virgil's total literary output, and if this is the case, Most argues, then the epyllion must necessarily be the imposture of a later writer familiar with Virgil's whole career. It could not have been written by Virgil himself.[24]

Indisputable though the existence of Most's parallels may be, it is only when we focus narrowly on those that he has selected for emphasis that they appear to substantiate his theory. When we acknowledge that they are by no means the *only* Virgilian intertexts present in the poem, they begin to lose their aspect of high relief and their structural significance. As an example of what I mean: while the diction employed by the poet of the *Culex* at lines 47ff. is, as Most observes,[25] undoubtedly reminiscent of Virgil's vocabulary in the *Eclogues* (or *vice versa*),

22 In Most's schema the divisions occur at *Cul.* 42, 101, and 202, sectioning off 59 lines for the 'bucolic' portion (42-100), 101 for the 'georgic' portion (101-201), and the remaining 212 for the 'epic' tour of the underworld conducted by the eponymous *culex* (202-414). See the second part of Most's article (1987) pp. 204ff.

23 Cf. in particular *Cul.* 51-5 with *Ecl.* 1.75-7, *Cul.* 164-7 with *Geo.* 3.425-39, and *Cul.* 361-2, 370-1 with *Aen.* 6.824-5, 843-5. For further details see Most (1987) pp. 206-8.

24 We are of course not obliged to view the *Culex*' intertexts as looking backward at Virgil's works and referring to them. As Most (1987) himself admits, it is equally possible that in such cases Virgil is alluding back to his own artistic beginnings in the *Culex.* This kind of self-referential intertextuality is a well recognized feature of Virgilian poetics; compare, for instance, *Aen.* 2.471-5 with *Geo.* 3.425-39.

25 See previous note.

this does not necessarily mean that the section to which they belong must represent Virgil's bucolic poetry, since it can be just as easily demonstrated that the extended soliloquy immediately following (*o bona pastoris,* 58ff.) bears a striking affinity to an important passage of *Georgics* 2 (*o fortunatos nimium*, 458 ff).[26] Upon consideration of this additional intertext, the neatness of Most's partitioning begins to evanesce, and the effect only grows stronger the more one explores the character of the poem's other intertextual relations. Take, for instance, *Culex* 141-4, which comes in Most's 'georgic' section:

> umbrosaeque monent fagus **hederae**que ligantes
> bracchia, fraternos plangat ne populus ictus,
> ipsaeque escendunt ad summa cacumina **lentae**
> pinguntque aureolos viridi **pallore corymbos**.
>
> The shady beeches give warning and the ivy that binds the poplar's arms, lest she mourn her brother with self-inflicted blows, climbs slowly to the tree-top and adorns its golden clusters with pale green.

These lines serve to remind us that, despite the imminent arrival of a homicidal snake such as the one featured in *Georgics* 3, we are still very much in a pastoral setting, as they recall (or are recalled by) *Eclogues* 3.38-9:

> **lenta** quibus torno facili superaddita vitis
> diffusos **hedera** vestit **pallente corymbos.**[27]
>
> ...which a wandering vine, cut with a fine chisel, adorns, spreading its pale ivy clusters.

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26 As Berg (1974) p. 95 notes, the theme of Orpheus' loss of Eurydice treated at *Cul.* 268-95 makes a striking re-appearance at the end of *Georgics* 4, further complicating Most's schematism.

27 Compare also *Ecl.* 8.87, ***propter aquae rivum viridi*** *procumbit in ulva*, and *Cul.* 390, ***rivum propter aquae viridi*** *sub fronde latentem*, which occurs in the *Culex*'s 'epic' part. Like the soliloquies at *Cul.* 58 ff. and *Geo.* 2.458 ff., which take inspiration from Lucretius, *DRN* 2.14 ff., both lines harken back to *DRN* 2.30. Obviously the Lucretian source was an important one for whoever composed the three works here concerned. For further uses of Lucretius in the *Culex*, see the exhaustive list of Steele (1930) p. 38 ff, which concludes in the comprehensive statistical evidence for metrical similarities between the two authors.

There is, in the end, nothing that distinguishes Most's picture absolutely from the kind of subjective reasoning he denounces – he is still offering an *interpretation* of the *Culex*'s composite intertextual character.

As it happens, all of the parallels advanced by Most as indications of the *Culex*'s inauthenticity were already remarked on by Rostagni fifty years before him, the only difference being that Rostagni, who of course realized the threat they posed to his theory, was still inclined to incorporate them into a vision of the poet already looking forward to the epic verse that would culminate his career.[28] Indeed, Virgil does seem to have had epic aspirations in mind when he began the *Culex*, which opens with a dedication to 'Octavius', promising him a more serious and lofty work once the poet's talents have had time to ripen (*Cul.* 8-10):

> posterius graviore sono tibi Musa loquetur
> nostra, dabunt cum securos mihi tempora fructus,
> ut tibi digna tuo poliantur carmina sensu.
>
> Later on, our Muse shall speak to you with a graver tone, when time shall give me securer fruits so that songs may be refined that are more worthy of your sensibility.

Most's objection that it is improbable that Virgil had any notion in his younger days of the kind of poetry he would eventually produce, and on what scale, seems a little strong.[29] Moreover, as we shall see, the *Ciris,* which can be dated to 45 BC and whose authenticity is generally less susceptible to attacks on the basis of internal evidence than is that of the *Culex,* also gestures to the author's future attempts at didactic verse (*Cir.* 12 ff.). If the author is Virgil, as I believe, then this would indicate the striking degree of premeditation he invested in planning the arc of his poetic career. Perhaps vague notions of the *Georgics* and the *Aeneid* as the poetry he would

28 Rostagni (1933) p. 140.

29 Most (1987) pp. 208-9.

compose after the *Eclogues* circulated in Virgil's mind from the beginning, at least in the form of interest in didactic and epic works. Who is to say they did not?[30]

I think, then, that we are free to follow Virgil's ancient successors in taking the *Culex* as his work, *pace* Most. This leaves us with the question of its date. Frank was the first to propose that the *Cirim et Culicem cum esset annorum XVI* [*fecit*] (*VSD* 18: '[he wrote] the *Ciris* and the *Culex* when he was twenty-six') of the biographical tradition be emended, not to *XXVI*, as many editions now print it, but to *XXI*, which seems both more realistic than *XVI* and paleographically as likely as *XXVI*.[31] It is, as Rostagni points out, a simpler scribal error to account for if the bottom of second 'X' was not clearly executed, or if it was obscured for some other reason, than if an entire character somehow dropped out. We are thus presented with a probable date of approximately 49 or 48 BC. If it is true that Virgil served in Caesar's legions on the Dyrrachian campaign in early 48, as *Catal.* 13 suggests,[32] then it seems to me unlikely that he would have finished the *Culex* in 49, before setting out for war, and before the perturbations of military service and ill health must have disrupted its composition. It seems better to assume it was finished late in the following year, 48, after the commotion of the civil war had died down. It was perhaps also around this time that work on the *Ciris* was begun.

There is another argument to be made in support of a rough date for the *Culex* around the year 49-48 BC. Significantly, the epyllion's opening section comprises a dedication to a patron, here addressed as 'Octavius' (*Cul.* 1). Could this Octavius be none other than the young

30 It is true that the ascending order of *Eclogues* (low style) *Georgics* (middle style) and *Aeneid* (high style) already has the appearance of a planned upward trajectory, from humbler topics treated in a more modest style to grand themes related in fittingly grandiloquent language. The resulting pattern, known familiarly as the *Rota Vergilii*, has constituted an important aspect of Virgil's posterity and has informed reception of his work since antiquity. See further Theodorakopoulos (1997).

31 Frank (1920a) pp. 26-7; followed by Rostagni (1933) pp. 87-8.

32 On which, see Rostagni (1933) pp. 50ff. (esp. 53).

Octavian, who was not known by the name 'Octavian' until after Caesar's death in 44 BC, when it was revealed that Caesar had adopted him in his will? By way of confirming this hypothesis we should first consider the appellation *puer* (*Cul.* 26), which indicates that the addressee is a young person, younger indeed than Virgil if he was 21 at the time of writing. Octavian was born in 63 BC, 7 years Virgil's junior, and would therefore have been of an appropriate age in 48 to be referred to as *puer*. Secondly, Octavius is not merely *puer*, but *sancte puer* (*Cul.* 26, 37: 'sacred boy') and *venerande* (25: 'revered'), religious language that is extended in Virgil's mention of the boy's *sospes vita* (39-40: 'auspicious life'), which he seems to expect will inaugurate 'years of happiness' (40: *felicis memoretur per annos*). Such reverence, along with a hypothetical date of 48, accords too well with the circumstance of Octavian's precocious pontificate in 48[33] for there to remain much doubt that he must have been the dedicatee. That Virgil should have been acquainted with Octavian is not surprising, given that they are said to have had the same teacher of rhetoric at Rome, Epidius.[34]

So far, I am in charted territory. But it seems to me that these conclusions can be taken further and be used to corroborate the view that Virgil was to return to the elevation of the *sanctus puer* at a later date: that is to say, in *Eclogues* 1. With a few notable outliers,[35] it is usual nowadays to accept the identification of Tityrus' *deus* at *Ecl.* I.6 ff. (also 42ff., 63) with the young Octavian. By implication, Octavian is thus praised for his magnanimity in restoring or

33 Caesar, *pontifex maximus* at the time, appointed the *puer* Octavius to the pontifical college in late 48, following the death of the pontiff L. Domitius Ahenobarbus in the fighting at Pharsalus. Caes. *BC* 3.99; Nicol. Dam. *De vita Caes. Aug.* 4; Vell. Pat. 2.59.3. Velleius in particular takes note of the new pontiff's *pueritia*: *pontificatus sacerdotio puerum honoravit* [*sc*. Caesar] ('Caesar honoured the boy with the pontifical priesthood'). See further Rostagni (1933) p. 77.

34 *Vita Bern.*: *ut primum se contulit Romae studuit apud Epidium oratorem cum Caesare Augusto* ('when first he came to Rome he studied under Epidius with Caesar Augustus'). Cf. Suet. *De gramm.* 28: *Epidius... ludum dicendi aperuit et docuit inter ceteros M. Antonium et Augustum* ('Epidius... revealed the game of speech and taught, among others, Marcus Antonius and Augustus').

35 Perhaps most notable is Cairns' case for reading the *deus* in *Eclogues* 1 as corresponding to Virgil's patron, Asinius Pollio, dedicatee of *Eclogues* 4. See Cairns (2008) pp. 70-4.

preserving the property of those who, like Tityrus in the poem, were threatened with dispossession by state-initiated land confiscations.[36] In particular, it is often suggested that Virgil himself benefitted from the young dynast's clemency, and that the poet here allegorizes himself and his gratitude in the figure of the shepherd Tityrus, who, by contrast with his forlorn comrade Meliboeus, has happily retained possession of his humble farmstead. Such a view, at any rate, is presented by the author of the *VSD,* who claims that during the second round of civil wars in the late 40's Virgil's property was exempted from government expropriation by the kind intervention of Asinius Pollio, Alfenus Varus, and Cornelius Gallus, all three acting as Octavian's commissioners in charge of overseeing land redistributions to Roman veterans (*VSD* 65-70). This would, conveniently enough, explain the prominence of these men in the various dedications of the *Eclogues.*[37] However, the view given by the Life is not unproblematic, for it remains quite possible that, following an observable pattern, the biographer has simply extrapolated his information from details given in the *Eclogues* themselves.

A more tenable solution may be arrived at by casting our gaze farther back in time, to an earlier set of land confiscations. When Caesar successfully concluded his campaign against Pompey in 48 and assumed sole command of the Roman state as dictator, among his first orders of business was the settlement of his legions of veterans, weary from long service.[38] He was faced with the task of providing arable land to a veritable horde of expectant troops – in excess of twenty-thousand men – who quickly became mutinous at the prospect of Caesar's reneging on his obligation to them.[39] Tracts were drawn up for re-allotment in disparate regions near Rome,

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36 On the identification of Tityrus' *deus* with Octavian, see esp. Rundin (2003) and Bing (2016).

37 Pollio at *Ecl.* 4.12, Varus at *Ecl.* 6.7-12, and Gallus at *Ecl.* 6.64 and 10.2.

38 For the recoverable details of this difficult process and discussion of the pertinent sources, see Brunt (1971) p. 319 ff.

39 The figure is again Brunt's (1971) p. 32. The mutinous temperament of the legions is mentioned by Dio 42.52-5 and Appian *BC* 2.92-4.

in Campania, Picenum, Etruria, and in Cisalpina. Although Caesar seems initially to have promised a peaceful and frictionless execution of his plan,[40] it is uncertain whether in practice he was able to hold true to his word. The lands listed for re-appropriation included for the most part *ager publicus* (Roman 'public land') and estates seized from defeated Pompeian enemies; but in each case there would have been the potential necessity of evicting innocent tenants or navigating a grey area of unclear political allegiances and recent inheritances. Even if Caesar's intentions were just, such complications were undoubtedly worsened by the impossibility of his managing the transactions himself, and those enlisted as his agents must, at least to some extent, have taken the opportunity to serve their own interests and to employ their own expedients in accomplishing their assigned task.[41]

In these conditions, it is not impossible (or even improbable) that Virgil's friends and relatives in the Cisalpine region were threatened with being turned out of their homes at the hands of an implacable commissioner. Nor is it impossible that Virgil used his acquaintance with Caesar's heir apparent to garner an intercession on behalf of his luckless familiars (if not, of course, on his own behalf). In the general anxiety that seems to have characterized the political moment, many no doubt made their way to Rome to plead in person before the civic authorities – much as Tityrus claims to have done in the eclogue (*Ecl.* 1.19ff.). A further coincidence deserving of mention is that precisely at the time of the uncertainty surrounding the commencement of Caesar's agrarian policies, in 47, the young Octavian, who by this point had donned the *toga virilis* and was known as *iuvenis*,[42] was made *praefectus urbi feriarum*

40 Appian *BC* 2.94.

41 *E.g.* Q. Valerius Orca, the recipient of letters from Cicero beseeching him to spare the holdings of the Volaterrans in his land divisions; on which see Brunt (1971) p. 323.

42 Cf. *Ecl.* 1.42, *hic illum vidi* ***iuvenem*** ('here it was that I saw that youth').

latinarum causa (‘urban prefect for the occasion of the Latin *feriae*’) by his absent uncle, whose military affairs had taken him away from Rome and prevented him from presiding in person at the Latin festal days. Nicolaus of Damascus records that many came to Octavian on legal business during his brief incumbency,[43] as was conventional on the days of the *feriae*, which were a time of rest when the farmer and the labourer in the field could leave off their toil and visit the city.[44] Only certain varieties of legal case were permitted to be heard during the *feriae*: those commanding a certain urgency or concerning the livelihood and freedom of the plaintiff – his or her *fortuna* and *libertas*.[45] Macrobius informs us of the governing principle, *licet quod praetermissum noceret* (‘that is allowed which, if it were overlooked, would cause harm’),[46] which can be supplemented by Servius’ analogous *quae amissa nocent, vel quae ad honorem deorum pertinent, et quidquid sine institutione novi operis potest* (Servius on *Geo.* 1.272: ‘that which, if dismissed, would harm, or that which pertains to the honour of the gods, and whatever can be done without instituting any new form of work’). The occasion of Octavian’s prefecture thus presented a highly suitable opportunity for those afflicted by the imminent confiscations to evade dispossession, and, accordingly, an appropriate subject-matter for an obliged poet.

To be clear, in identifying Octavian with the *deus* of *Eclogues* 1 I do not wish to intimate that at the time of the poem’s composition Virgil belonged to any political faction led by him. The political question, it appears to me, is not of any importance unless the historical confiscations referred to are decided to be those of the late 40s, when the stakes of invoking Octavian’s presence or power would have been quite higher. Until the triumviral pact of 43,

43 Nicol. Dam. *De vita Caes. Aug.* 5.

44 On the *feriae,* see Daremberg and Saglio’s entry in their *Dictionnaire des Antiquités grecques et romaines* (1877-1919) pp. 1042 ff..

45 Cf. *Ecl.* 1.27: ***libertas*** *quae sera tamen respexit* ***inertem*** (‘liberty, which came late but nevertheless looked back on me when I was inactive’).

46 Macrob. *Saturn.* I.16.11.

however, Octavian seems not to have been popularly recognized as a serious player on the Roman military-political stage, and Virgil's allusions to him, whether in the *Eclogues* or in the *Culex*, need be no more than a gesture of gratitude and personal *amicitia*.

Another important document of Virgil's Epicureanism appearing in the *Appendix* is the 541-line hexametric *Ciris*, which offers some intriguing generic and discursive parallels to the *Culex.* Like the *Culex*, the authenticity of the *Ciris* has been the subject of prolonged and inconclusive debate. Moreover, dating is made more difficult in the case of the *Ciris* than in that of the *Culex*, by the absence of any external testimony prior to its mention along with the list of Virgil's other *juvenilia* in the *VSD* (57). We are thus reliant almost exclusively on internal criteria and the poem's intertextual relations. Of course this cuts both ways. Those wishing either to prove or to disprove Virgilian authorship of the work must employ a method of 'priority criticism', arguing that one later author or another has imitated verses from the *Ciris* or that the *Ciris* has imitated them, thus determining its relative priority in time.[47] But such an approach is very rarely (if ever) conclusive and its weaknesses have been amply demonstrated by Most in his article on the *Culex*. This being the case, I believe that our most solid support in affirming the *Ciris*' date must be the Suetonian tradition of Virgilian attribution preserved by Donatus.[48] It is true that no author whose writing we possess appears to speak explicitly about the *Ciris*' existence until Donatus, but the notion of its being unknown to the ancient tradition is of course untenable if its chronological priority is supposed and all its intertexts with post-Virgilian literature accepted as source-texts rather than as imitations.

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47 A useful review of the points of contention is given by Lyne (1978) in his introduction to the text, although he favours the negative view of Virgilian authorship (as does Peirano (2012)). However see more recently Kayachev (2016), who argues *contra* Lyne for a pre-Virgilian date, but not for its authenticity as a work by Virgil. Virgilian authorship is accepted by Salvatore (1994).

48 Discussed by Rostagni (1933) pp. 3-29.

For our purposes, there are two important points of resemblance between the *Ciris* and the *Culex.* Both are addressed to a named aristocratic patron and both give indications of Virgil's Epicureanism at the time of their composition. I will be turning in later chapters to certain philosophical expressions in both poems, where we will see how the Epicurean sensibility that they display is enmeshed in a larger spiritual dialogue between poetry and philosophy. But it seems appropriate here to give at least an outline of how the *Ciris* may be seen to fit into Virgil's life as it emerges from the sources that we have already looked at. As with the biographical significance of the *Culex*, this concerns primarily the identity of the *Ciris*' addressee, M. Valerius Messalla Corvinus.

Messalla appears in the *Ciris* at line 54 in a similar capacity to that of Octavian in the *Culex.* His exact dates are uncertain, but he would have been roughly Virgil's age, if a little younger, and could easily have moved in the same circles as Virgil while the latter dwelt at Rome. His later fame as a poet and patron of the literary arts under Augustus renders the idea of his early friendship with Virgil even more fitting.[49] In addition to praise of Messalla the Ciris' dedicatory proem comprises an extended description of the offering of the *peplos* to Athena (here Minerva) at the Athenian Panathenaia (*Ciris* 21-35), a detail which has led scholars to link the poem to Messalla's time in Athens during the mid-forties BC.[50] We gather from a letter of Cicero's dated to 45 that Messalla had gone there in order to pursue studies in Greek culture (*Ad. Att.* 12.32.2).[51] Those who accept the *Ciris* as Virgil's have accordingly seen Messalla's departure for or return from Greece as the occasion when Virgil would have presented him with

49 According to Servius, Maecenas wrote a *Symposium* which featured fictional dialogue between Messalla, Virgil, and Horace, possibly attesting to a later real-life relationship between the three (or four) of them (Serv. on *Aen.* 8.310).

50 So Frank (1920b).

51 See further Rostagni (1933) pp. 201f.

the. In view of the fact that Messalla's return from Athens was prompted by the tumult following Caesar's assassination and that he was quickly proscribed by the Caesarian faction on account of his Republican sympathies, the latter possibility may be doubted. Moreover, according to the chronology which I have suggested above for the composition of the *Eclogues*, in 44 BC Virgil would already have been engaged in his bucolic project, which would seem to diminish the chances of his composing the *Ciris* around that time as well. Along with Rostagni, I would therefore prefer the earlier occasion.[52] We may then conclude with a measure of confidence that the *Ciris* must have been finished by 45 at the latest, in order to be presented to Messalla before he left, making Virgil about 25 when he put down the pen.

The *Ciris* thus opens an enlightening window onto Virgil's early poetic development. It appears to have been composed, or at least finished, at Naples after his conversion to Epicureanism and attests to his aspirations to write a Lucretian-style didactic poem, failing which he has again resorted to the form of the epyllion and adopted a mythological subject-matter (*Ciris* 12 ff.).[53] The piece's Epicurean orientation is revealed almost immediately in line 3 with a reference to Epicurus' *Cecropius hortulus* (*Kêpos*) in Athens and the evocation of Wisdom (*Sophia*) and natural philosophy (4-8). Its philosophical outlook is then confirmed in lines 14ff. where Virgil aspires to an ethical detachment which will enable him to look from afar upon the *errores* of humankind, just as the Epicurean Lucretius had done at *DRN* 2.7-10. All this takes place under the auspices of the 'four ancient heirs of reason', language which designates the four

52 The *Ciris* can thus be conceived as a *propemptikon*, much like the one dedicated by Cinna to Asinius Pollio in 56 BC for the similar occasion of his departure for studies in Greece; on which see André (1949) p. 11. It is worth noting the generic affinity between the *Ciris* and Cinna's *Propemptikon*, both of which fall under the category of Neoteric *epyllia.* There is also the association attested between Virgil and Pollio, who was in all probability the dedicatee of *Ecl.* 8, a poem which again can be read as form of *envoi* (see below). It seems a strong possibility that Virgil took the idea for the *Ciris* from the well-known poem previously dedicated to the man who would figure as the patron of the *Eclogues.*

53 See further pp. 116-8 below.

founder-figures of the Epicurean school: Epicurus, Metrodorus, Polyaenus, and Hermarchus.[54] Of further interest is the fact that the same Epicurean ambivalence towards poetry that can be seen in *Catalepton* 5 resurfaces here in verses characterizing the poet's inspiration as something of which he would like to disburden himself (*Cir.* 9-10) and his art as a form of 'play' which is only occasionally permitted to him (*Cir.* 19-20). Taken together, these features speak to Virgil's continuing Epicureanism at the time of the *Ciris*' composition and help to fill out the picture of him as an adherent of the school during the mid 40's BC.

VIRGIL AND POLLIO

A final but I think not insurmountable difficulty confronts anyone who would push the date of the *Eclogues* back before the land-confiscations of 42. This difficulty arises from the apparent involvement of C. Asinius Pollio, consul in 40 BC, in Virgil's creative process during their composition. Pollio's name occurs multiple times in the *Eclogues* as an object of praise, and it is to him that *Eclogues* 4 and 8 seem to be dedicated.[55] A prominent feature of Virgil's prophecy of the coming Golden Age in *Eclogues* 4 is that the new era will begin in the year of Pollio's consulship (*Ecl.* 4.11ff.) and many have referred to Pollio's patronage of the whole collection, basing their arguments in large part on *Eclogues* 8.11-13:

> a te principium, tibi desinam. accipe iussis
> carmina coepta tuis atque hanc sine tempora circum
> intra victrices hederam tibi serpere lauros.
>
> From you I took my beginning, for you I shall desist. Accept these songs, begun at your command, and let this vine of ivy creep about your brow, between the laurels of victory.

54 Lyne (1978) *ad loc.*

55 In addition to his appearance in *Ecl.* 4 and 8, he shows up at *Ecl.* 3.84-7 as a poet and poetic connoisseur.

If Pollio is to be recognized as the one addressed by these lines, then the implication is clear that the *Eclogues* were in some way motivated by his encouragement. Virgil is rendering him the 'songs begun on his orders', evoking a traditional poet-patron relationship with roots in the ancient tradition as far back as Pindar. The problem comes when readers take into account the historical date of Pollio's (only) consulship in 40 BC and the historical setting of his triumph over the Dalmatian Parthini in 39, which may be implied by Virgil's brief encomium of his military success at *Eclogues* 8.6ff. Such considerations appear to require us to date at least *Eclogues* 4 and 8 in or after 40 BC and thus to view the *Eclogues* as a whole as having been completed only after 39 BC.

How might one respond to these claims? In the first place there is the question of *Eclogues* 4. At first glance it would seem possible simply to argue that although the eclogue refers to Pollio's consulship in 40 this need not mean that it was composed either during or after his time in office. It could of course have been written *before* his consulship in anticipation of his appointment; and indeed this is what the prophetic, future-tense language of the poem appears to indicate (*Ecl.* 4.11-2):

> Teque adeo decus hoc aevi, te consule, **inibit**,
> Pollio, et **incipient** magni procedere menses...
>
> And this glory of the age **shall commence**, Pollio, when *you* are consul, and the great months **shall begin** their procession...

How long before Pollio's consulship might the eclogue have been written? Conceivably as early as 43, when Pollio's appointment would have been arranged at the first meeting of the Triumvirate in that year. Prior to the triumviral accord between Antony, Octavian, and Lepidus, Pollio had joined Antony's faction and was meant to hold the office of consul as Antony's

partisan, along with Cn. Domitius Calvinus, the representative of Octavian.[56] There is so far no inconsistency in assigning *Eclogues* 4 to a date before 42, since Pollio's future position would have been known well in advance, in 43.

What complicates this picture is the additional mention in the eclogue of a semi-divine boy whose birth, it is said, will inaugurate the renewed cycle of the ages. This 'messianic' proclamation has no clear object – at least not one that can be identified based on the details of the poem – and it has invited a wide range of speculation on who the miraculous child that Virgil has in mind could possibly be. Very soon after Virgil's death, there was apparently already a degree of uncertainty on this point: we are told by Servius that Asconius once heard Pollio's son, Asinius Gallus, declare that the *Wunderkind* was none other than himself.[57] Other potential candidates have been a second son of Pollio's, 'Saloninus',[58] the child expected from Antony's marriage to Octavia, Octavian's sister, and the son hoped for from Octavian's parallel betrothal to Scribonia.[59] Both of these marriages were arranged in 40 BC (and thus at the time of the *Eclogues* dramatic date) in order to cement the political situation around the pact of Brundisium, which was sealed as a renewal of the alliance between Antony and Octavian and enabled their co-operation in confronting the problem posed by the rebel Sextus Pompey. Pompey's naval force had been plundering Roman shipping lines in the south and Octavian had contracted a marriage with his relative, Scribonia, so as to forge an advantageous political alliance with the pirate.

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56 See André (1949) pp. 19-22. On Domitius Calvinus, see *CIL* I² pp. 50, 64; his allegiance to Octavian is discussed by Syme (1939) pp. 189, 227.

57 Serv. *ad Ecl.* 4.1. That the child was intended to be Asinius Gallus may well be doubted; the related hypothesis, given by the scholiasts (Serv. *ad Ecl.* 4.1; Philarg. *ad Ecl.* 4.1, 4.4; *Schol. Bern. Ecl.* 4 *praef.*), that the child was supposed to be another of Pollio's sons, one 'Saloninus', is convincingly refuted by Syme (1937).

58 See previous note.

59 A son who would in fact turn out to be no son at all, but rather Octavian's only child, Julia the Elder.

The details of these different identifications for Virgil's miraculous *puer* and their relative probabilities need not detain us here. No conclusive argument has been offered in support of any one theory, although considering Pollio's role in mediating the treaty of Brundisium and the result of that treaty in the marriage between Antony and Octavia, the notion that the child would be theirs is perhaps most plausible. But whatever the case, if these are the options available, then they would again seem to suggest a date of composition for the eclogue around the year 40, prior to which none of the matrimonial and political arrangements concerned would have been known about. I would therefore like to propose yet another potential identification, one which will harmonize with an earlier date and which may also have the merit of allowing our poet some chronological distance from events whose emergence and outcome it would have been awkward for him to write about in the way that he seems to some to have done.

Let me state my alternative theory plainly: the *puer* was intended to be the eventual offspring, not of any matrimonial alliance contracted in 40, but of an alliance contracted shortly after the creation of the Triumvirate when Octavian married Claudia, the daughter of Antony's wife Fulvia from her previous marriage to P. Clodius Pulcher.[60] The marriage on this occasion had a similar motive to that of the later betrothals and would have corresponded, roughly, with the announcement of Pollio's expected consulship. Moreover, the three-year gap that was to elapse between the compacting of the Triumvirate in 43 and the realization of Pollio's appointment for 40 would have seemed to provide ample time in which Octavian and his new spouse might be expected to bear children – possibly a son. We are thus also spared the chronological complications that are necessarily entailed by placing *Eclogues* 4 in or after 40 BC, which would require us to imagine Virgil either writing a seriously nebulous poem *ex eventu*

60 Recorded by Suet. *Div. Aug.* 62.1. See also Syme (1939) p. 189.

or composing a work whose 'prophetic' predictions were liable to be falsified almost as soon as they had been made. On the other hand, a notional date in or slightly after 43 allows the eclogue to retain some of its prophetic character, free from charges of absurdity, and makes it more appropriate as a *pièce d'occasion* celebrating the peace solidified by the recent triumviral agreement rather than a rash *vaticinium* foretelling imminent and contingent historical events.

Without further ado, I turn now to *Eclogues* 8. The conventional understanding of this poem's dedication, which occupies lines 6-13, has been that it is directed towards Pollio, on whose orders the *Eclogues* must therefore have been conceived (*Ecl.* 8.11-2). Identification of the addressee with Pollio is consonant with his privileged place in *Eclogues* 4 and also with Virgil's mention in line 10 of his 'songs worthy of the Sophoclean buskin' (*Ecl.* 8.10). Pollio's high reputation in his time as a Latin tragedian is well-established by external testimony from both Horace and Tacitus.[61] However not all have been content to accept this identification of the eclogue's dedicatee, who is not named, and some have elected instead to interpret Virgil's words as meant for Octavian returning home from his Illyrian campaign in the mid-thirties BC.[62] Of course, even if Pollio is not the one addressed here, his importance for the composition of the *Eclogues* remains substantiated by his presence in the third and the fourth; but it will readily be seen that the decision between Pollio and Octavian as alternative recipients of Virgil's praises in the eighth is of critical significance for dating the poems. If Octavian's return from Illyria in the thirties is the event referenced in lines 6-7, where Virgil wonders aloud when he will have the opportunity to celebrate his addressee's military achievements in verse (*Ecl.* 8.7-8), then the

61 Hor. *Serm.* 1.10.42-5, *Carm.* 2.1.9.10; Tac. *Dial.* 21.7. See further André (1949) pp. 31ff.

62 Notably, Bowersock (1971). Octavian's campaign is documented by Appian, *Ill.* 16. The detail about the addressee's tragic poetry can also be made to agree with Octavian's life-story; according to Suetonius he was at one point working on an *Ajax*, although it seems he never brought the project to completion. Bowersock is followed by Mankin (1988) and Ross (1975) p. 18, among others. Opposed to his position are Tarrant (1978), Thibodeau (2006), and Cairns (2008).

poem manifestly cannot have been written in the late forties, when Octavian was just at the beginning of his political ascendency.

The argument in favour of Octavian's candidacy is largely concerned with geographical particulars. In an important article published in 1937, Ronald Syme pointed out that the mention of the Timavus River, near modern day Trieste, and the Illyrian coast (*Ecl.* 8.6-7) does not accord with the facts of Pollio's Macedonian campaign in 39, to which *Eclogues* 8 has often been thought to gesture.[63] Pollio, Syme found, had not in fact gone to Illyricum at all, but had remained farther south, within the province of Macedonia, for the purpose of suppressing the rebellious Parthini. Keeping to the notion that Pollio must be the dedicatee of *Eclogues* 8, he suggested that Virgil was alluding to the general's return via Trieste, which, although roundabout, was not impossible. The validity of Syme's geographical deductions has since been upheld by Bowersock, who proposes, however, that the details of the itinerary described in the eclogue cannot fit Pollio's campaign and must therefore be attributed to the adventures of Octavian.[64] For the rest, although Virgil's mention of his addressee's tragic verse would seem more appropriately to apply to Pollio, whose proficiency and output as a tragic writer was widely recognized, it could nevertheless conceivably also correspond to Octavian's modest efforts in that genre.[65]

All this presupposes, of course, that the poet had definite knowledge of the route his addressee would take, either on his departure to his province or on his return. But I see no reason to make any such presupposition necessary. Practically speaking, it would make little sense for

63 See Syme (1937), esp. pp. 47-8. His argument rests on the claim that Pollio's assigned province was not Illyricum but Macedonia. But cf. Bosworth (1972), who attempts to revive the theory that Pollio did in fact campaign in Illyricum.

64 Bowersock (1971).

65 See above n. 62.

Virgil to have composed his eclogue while Pollio or Octavian was already away at war, foretelling either by some timely intelligence or else by paranormal prescience the route he would take back to Italy, and to have then presented the returning war-hero with a poem wondering openly about when the chance to *fête* his martial glory might present itself, at a moment when that chance was evidently already at hand. By contrast, a poem composed in advance of its addressee's departure – even well in advance – looking forward eagerly to his opportunities for military distinction, would make a great deal more sense. It therefore seems to me the reasonable course to view *Eclogues* 8 as pre-empting the historical events to which it refers; and this obviates our geographical difficulties considerably. Virgil could simply be *conjecturing* or making a *best guess* on available information as to where his addressee's command might take him. Considering that Pollio's consulship in 40 BC was already appointed at the formation of the Triumvirate in 43, it seems equally possible that his proconsular command was determined, at least provisionally, at the same time. Our *terminus ante quam* of 42 for the composition of the *Eclogues,* then, still holds. Virgil can have composed the eighth eclogue after 43, having had the news of Pollio's appointment. This would suit the expectant tone of the dedication very well. To ask *erit umquam ille dies* – 'will there ever come a day?' – even rhetorically, would seem to indicate an extended interval expected between the time of posing the question and any concrete answer. In our case, that interval would have been about four years.

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Before moving on, it may be helpful to make a quick fly-over of the material covered thus far in order to see the emergent shape of Virgil's life during the period with which we have been concerned. I began from the relatively secure chronological information contained in the

biographical tradition, which puts Virgil's birth somewhere near Mantua on the 15th of October, 70 BC. From there we are told that he relocated to Rome, probably during the mid-to-late fifties, where he studied rhetoric, as was customary for young men of his age. During this time, he became fascinated by the philosophy of Epicurus, which was somewhat in vogue among Roman aristocrats, and in 47 or so abandoned the traditional *cursus* in favour of philosophical studies in Naples with the Epicurean master, Siro. There he also fell in with Philodemus and a few other fellow Romans who had similarly heard the call of Epicureanism. According to *Catalepton* 5, Virgil had already been writing poetry when he lived in Rome, but was obliged to curtail his poetic pursuits after his philosophical conversion, due to the ethical concerns which poetry raised within the Epicurean school. Nevertheless, the succeeding years saw him at work on the *Culex* and the *Ciris*, both of which may have been begun before he left Rome and contain evidence of having been finished with a dutiful Epicurean conscience regarding the prescribed limits of poetic practice. The *Culex* was complete and presented to Octavian some time around 48, while the *Ciris* was presented as a *propemptikon* to Messalla in or just before 45. It was roughly at this point that Pollio set Virgil the task of writing the *Eclogues*, which were presumably undertaken with the support of his patronage. There is little reason to suppose that Virgil was not still under the formative influence of Epicurean philosophy when he went to work on his bucolic *libellus*, which he finished three years later, perhaps as late as 42. Some of the poems – *Eclogues* 4 and 8 in particular – show signs of having been completed after 43, when Pollio's political and military career over the next five years began to take shape. Other poems, such as *Eclogues* 1 and 9, look back to the agrarian policies of Julius Caesar during the early 40's and the young Octavian's role in intervening on behalf of some of those who had been threatened with expropriation, possibly including Virgil himself. During the period of the *Eclogues*' composition it is possible that Virgil

began to move away from the Epicureanism that he had espoused when he started on them, but, as we shall see, Epicurean influence is nonetheless an important component in the construction of their meaning, and helped to shape the poetic outlook that they embody. So much, I think, can be stated with confidence in its historical viability and plausibility, and should suffice to set the stage for the more literary analysis with which I shall be occupied from here on in.

II

EPICUREAN POETICS

The question of an Epicurean poetics is one which has been posed repeatedly over the years, yet often with the sole view of determining whether or not, and to what extent, it is in fact possible to speak of such a thing. Few attempts have been made to synthesize the material at our disposal into a more or less comprehensive account of what an Epicurean poetics, if it existed, would have entailed for poets practising in accordance with its tenets. And those studies that have materialized have done little beyond outlining (and of course contesting) the ground where Epicurean teachings would seem to have threatened the very possibility of a genuinely Epicurean poetry in the first place.[66] As is often the case where modern scholars endeavour to bring clarity to topics that even in antiquity were ridden with philosophical controversy, the discussion is not helped by the several indubitably hostile sources on which we must rely in order to reconstruct the 'authentic' Epicurean position, since these have in some sense barred the way to fruitful debate on issues beyond that of a categorical acceptance or rejection of poetry. In what follows I do not propose to fill in this gap completely. Undoubtedly there will be nuances – I am thinking

66 This issue has been addressed numerous times in Italian, notably by Rostagni (1920, 1923-1924); Giancotti (1960); Ronconi (1972); and Pace (1995, 2000). As might be expected, much of their discussion concentrates on the manifold technical difficulties and doctrinal obscurities presented by Philodemus' *On Poems,* driving Pace in the end to confess himself unable to go beyond '*alcune osservazioni generiche*' (2000) p. 79. In English, worth mentioning are the treatments by Asmis (1991, 1995) and Wigodsky (1995), two of which appear in the very handy volume edited by Obbink (1995). Again, however, the main focus is on interpreting the apparent Epicurean prohibition against poetry, with little emphasis on what an Epicurean poetics would have looked like in practice.

especially of those connected with Epicurean natural language theory –[67] which are either too technical to be treated here as they deserve or less essential to the task at hand than those features on which I will be focusing. Rather I wish to sketch in broad strokes what seem to me to be the more integral aspects of an Epicurean approach to poetry, making some general observations that I hope will then find greater specificity in the reading of certain poetic texts by known Epicureans – centrally of course the *Eclogues* of Virgil. First, however, it seems inevitable that something should be said about the supposed literary philistinism of the Epicurean school, the degree of its severity, and what might conceivably have motivated it.

Among the reported prejudices and points of doctrine for which Epicurus was commonly derided by his ancient critics a favourite object of scorn was his apparent rejection of poetry and his interdiction to his followers against practising the poetic arts. The best known statement of this teaching is given us by Diogenes Laertius, according to whom Epicurus held that only the wise man (*sophos*) would be able to speak correctly about poetry and music but that he would compose neither (Diog. Laert. 10.120 = frr. 568-9 Us.). From others we receive similarly bald and summary testimony: such as Heraclitus the Allegorist's hostile characterization of Epicurus as the cultivator of 'ignoble pleasure' who thought to 'purify himself of the pollution of all poetry alike', and alleged that it represented 'the dangerous lure of myth' (Heracl. *Quaest. Hom.* 4.2 = fr. 229 Us.); or Plutarch's blanket attribution to the Epicureans of a dismissive attitude to the 'babbling of the poets' and Homer's 'foolish talk' (Plut. *Non posse* 1087A.). It must be

67 A serviceable introduction to Epicurus' linguistic theory remains De Lacy's article (1939), although he later revised some of his views in his edition of Philodemus' *On Signs* (De Lacy (1978), esp. p. 206 ff). Important technical problems regarding poetry are represented by Philodemus' controversy with the 'euphonists' and by his views on the practice of 'metathesis' (the stylistic re-arrangement of word order) and the connected question of the relation of original thoughts to the language in which they are expressed; a further question concerns Lucretius's so-called 'atomistic poetics' (Cf. *DRN* 1.901-20). For a general overview of these matters with bibliography, see Kennedy and Innes (1995) esp. pp. 214-219.

admitted that these testimonials receive a measure of confirmation from Epicurus' own words in what is preserved of his correspondence. On one occasion, he congratulates his disciple Apelles for having successfully avoided a traditional education (*paideia*) in which poetry would have figured prominently, thus enabling himself to come to philosophy with a 'pure mind' (Athen. *Deipn.* 12.588A = fr. 117 Us.).[68] On another occasion he advises Pythocles to 'flee all *paideia*, hoisting sail', just as Odysseus escaped aboard his ship from the ensorceling siren's song (Diog. Laert. 10.6 = fr. 163 Us.).[69] To judge from this scanty evidence, it might well appear that poetry had no place in the Garden.

And yet our evidence, small as it is, is not without its difficulties. One of these difficulties may be illustrated straight away by the fragment cited above from a lost letter to Pythocles. If Epicurus' rejection of the poets was so total as our later sources would have us believe, then how are we to explain the passing reference here to the story in Homer of Odysseus' flight from the sirens? Other *loci* in the ancient literature indicate conclusively that this was not an isolated instance and that such citation was a practice employed by Epicurus in other cases as well.[70] Most notable among these literary references was Epicurus' famous corroboration of his hedonistic thesis that pleasure is the highest good with the opening lines of *Odyssey* 9, in which Odysseus praises the consummate enjoyment to be derived from feasting in good company.[71]

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68 Cf. Cic. *De fin.* 1.71-2 and Sext. Emp. *Adv. math* 1.1 = fr. 227 Us.

69 See also Plutarch's identification of the Homeric reference at *De poet. aud.* 15D and *Non posse* 1094D. The expression is reprised by Quintil. *Inst.* 12.2.24. For a modern discussion of the fragment addressed to Pythocles, see esp. Clay (2004) with his intriguing attempt to correlate it with Virgil's farewell to the Muses in *Catalepton* 5. On the possibility that this letter contained a more extended attack on Homer, see Asmis (1995) p. 18 n. 20. The traditional connection between the Sirens and literature is discussed by Hunter (2018) pp. 194ff.

70 See the examples collected by Sextus Empiricus (*Adv. Math.* 1.273), who declares that Epicurus φωράται τα κράτιστα των δογμάτων παρα ποιητών ανηρπακώς ('he has been detected as having stolen his most powerful doctrines from the poets'). Cf. Diog. Laer. 10.137 = fr. 66 Us..

71 Attested by Heracl. *Quaest. Hom.* 79 = fr. 229 Us.; Athen. *Deipn.* 12.513A-C; *Schol. in Od*. 9.28; Ps. Plut. *Vita Homeri* 2.150. The lines in question are *Od.* 9.5-11 and lend themselves admirably to Epicurus' purpose, owing to their already quasi-teleological message.

Indeed his use of this passage earned Epicurus a widespread reputation in antiquity as the 'Phaeacian' philosopher, after the mythical kingdom of Phaeacia where the Odyssean scene unfolds.[72] The Epicureans, we are told, justified this style of citation on the grounds that the philosopher was simply 'starting from' examples (*aphormai*) adapted from the literary canon that would have been well known and accessible to his audience. He was thus giving his own rational account (*apodeixis*) of them without necessarily invoking the authority of the poets to sanction his theories.[73] In the later tradition, Philodemus demonstrates a far more elaborate implementation of this same method in his *On the Good King According to Homer*, where successive passages from Homer are scrutinized with respect to their portrayal of political leadership, sometimes with the commentator's approval and sometimes not.[74] While it is true that this approach to poetry does seem to reflect an ambivalence to its content, it is decidedly not the product of an uncompromising hostility.[75]

A second complication arises from the poetic compositions which are attested for a non-negligible number of Epicureans in the centuries after Epicurus. The most salient example of this phenomenon is of course the Roman Epicurean Lucretius whose didactic poem in six books, the *De rerum natura*, is arguably the best known Epicurean text today. Philodemus, who in addition to his theoretical and doxographical writings was also a talented epigrammatist, furnishes a

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72 Heracl. *Quaest. Hom.* 79 = fr. 229 Us. Further sources are listed in the previous note; also Sen. *Ep.* 88.5 and others collected by DeWitt (1954) p. 365 n. 12. See too the disussion of Gordon (1998) pp. 189-98. Philodemus plays a variation on the theme in his *Invitation to Piso* (*Epigr.* 27 Sider = *Anth. Pal.* 11.44), promising his distinguished guest that at a proposed banquet he shall hear things 'far sweeter than the land of the Phaeacians' (Φαιήκων γαίης πουλὺ μελιχρότερα). On the Odyssean reference points of this poem, see Bettenworth (2012).

73 ἀφορμή is used in this sense by Philodemus at *De bono rege* col. xlvii, with which compare Sext. Emp. *Adv. Math.* 1.270. The argument made by the Epicureans (and others) in support of the necessity of philosophical *apodeixis* is stated in brief at Sext. Emp. *Adv. math.* 1.279.

74 See esp. the edition of Dorandi (1982) and his introduction.

75 Epicurus is transparent about his opinion regarding the use of literary citation in a fragment of his *On Nature* (*Nat.* 14 col. xxix 18-22 Vogliano): ὥστε ἔοικ' ἐπάγειν καὶ ποιητὰς καὶ σοφιστὰς καὶ ῥήτορας, οἵ γε πᾶν τὸ <μ>ην ὀρθὴν ἔχον ἐπιφοράν ('so that it is proper to call to witness poets and sophists and rhetors, and indeed those with anything that makes the correct contribution').

second prominent specimen. Beside these two, the Epicurean allegiances of both Virgil and Horace are well documented, along with those of a small number of their poetic *confrères* including Quintilius Varus, Plotius Tucca, and Lucius Varius Rufus.[76] The possible discrepancy between theory and practice represented by this short list of figures did not go unnoticed by Cicero, who was able to remark in one of his speeches on what he considered to be the unusual Epicureanism displayed by Philodemus. The urbane Greek retainer of the Roman aristocrat L. Calpurnius Piso was, according to the orator, 'most accomplished, not only in philosophy, but even in the other fields of study which most other Epicureans are said to neglect' (Cic. *In Pis.* 70: *non philosophiam solam sed etiam ceteris studiis quae fere ceteros Epicureos neglegere dicunt perpolitus*). Moreover Philodemus himself in his *On Rhetoric* gives evidence that this was an issue contested between branches of the Epicurean school. He and his teacher Zeno, who was for some time scholarch of the *Kêpos* in Athens, seem to have belonged to a group of Epicureans with a more liberal attitude to literary artistry than their purportedly less cultured predecessors, condoning as they did the practice of a purely 'sophistic' rhetoric (rhetoric concerned exclusively with style and form over forensic content) in spite of the Epicureans' general antipathy to public oratory.[77] Philodemus, not wishing to depart from Epicurean orthodoxy, claims that his view of rhetoric is consonant with the foundational texts of the school;[78] although owing to the circumstances of reception, we have only his word to go on, and it is thus impossible to say to

76 *PHerc.* Paris 2, fr. 279a. Cf. *Vit. Prob.* 323.11-3 Thilo-Hagen.

77 According to Philodemus (*On Rhetoric* 1 col. xxiv Sudhaus = fr. 49 Us.), this 'sophistic rhetoric' was defined in the writings of early Epicureans as τέχνην... τ[οῦ λ]όγους <σ>υγγράφειν καὶ ἐ[πιδε]ίξεις π[οι]εὶσθαι ('the art of writing out arguments and giving explanations'), as distinguised from δίκας λέγειν καὶ δ[ημγ]ορεῖν ('to speak in court or address the public'). Sedley (1989) p. 107 ff. gives a detailed exposition of the debate in which Philodemus and Zeno were engaged. On the general development within Epicureanism represented by them see Tait 1941, p. 88 ff.; similarly Grube (1965) p. 194. Cf. Diog. Laert. 6.35; Cic. *De nat. deor.* 1.59. See also Pace (1995).

78 *On Rhet.* I col. vii Sudhaus = fr. 49 Us.

what extent his theories represented an innovation. Yet for our purposes it matters only that such theories were current in the climate within which Virgil came to the study of Epicurean philosophy and consequently that he would not necessarily have been subject to the more exclusionary strictures supposed to have been in force at other times or in other places where Epicureanism was practised.

Where poetry in particular is concerned, Philodemus' at least partial recuperation seems to be based on a theory according to which a poem's poetic-ness is thought to be derived from its purely formal characteristics. In a now oft-cited dictum from the fifth book of *On Poems,* he informs us of his view that a poem, insofar as it is a poem, cannot benefit (and thus, presumably, cannot harm) the reader: κἂν ὠφελῇ, καθὸ ποήματ' οὐκ ὠφελεῖ ('even when poems benefit, they do not do so in their capacity as poems', *On Poems* 5 col. xxix 17-19 Mangoni).[79] The implication is that poems, as such, are morally neutral in respect to their form and only bring harm or benefit via their content, which might just as well have been expressed in prose as in verse. This excepting of poetry *qua* poetry from moral criticism on the grounds of an implicit separation of content and form (in ancient terms, *logos* and *lexis*)[80] indicates that the philosophical objections of the Epicureans revolved more around its content than anything else. However, it should be noted that this distinction is to some extent problematized by Philodemus' insistence elsewhere that form and content are in fact not so easily separable and necessarily

79 Asmis (1995) p. 29 suggests that this doctrine may have been a teaching of Zeno's, whom Philodemus can be seen to follow in many of his opinions on poetics. Thus also Sedley (1989) p. 103.

80 The distinction originally formulated by Plato (*Rep.* 386A ff.) and observed by the majority of subsequent critics during the Hellenistic era. It reappears in an important passage of Philodemus' *On Poems* 5 (col. xxv 14 - xxvi 20 Mangoni), where he argues for an objective and empirical standard for the evaluation of both a poem's *logos* and its *lexis*.

hang together in their common representation of a single thought.[81] Epicurean objections to poetry on the grounds of a specifically *poetic* content might therefore retain some of their weight, as we shall see further along.[82]

Philodemus' neutralization of *poiêmata* should thus not necessarily be taken to mean that wariness of poetry among those Epicureans who were also poets must have been entirely relaxed. In an Epicurean *milieu*, the content of poems could – and did – come under moral scrutiny. In order to determine what an Epicurean poetics, once permitted, might have allowed for in this regard, it is important to look at the motivations which earlier members of the school appear to have had for their rejection of the poets. On our available evidence, these motivations may be conceptualized as threefold. Here, however, I should stress that this theoretical tripartition is employed for the sake of convenience, as a useful way of isolating general poetic features which may thus more easily be identified in particular Epicurean poems and poets. As may be come apparent in the course of my discussion, all three prongs of this conceptualization can ultimately be related back to Epicureanism's primary moral imperative of right thinking in accordance with empirically verifiable truths and to the state of tranquillity (*ataraxia*) which Epicureans believed to accompany freedom from the forms of false belief that otherwise threatened to lead one astray.

But to return to our three points: first, Epicurus' criticism of poetry seems to have been directed overwhelmingly at its traditional, mythological, and potentially religious content.[83] This is what comes through most forcefully in the comment made by Heraclitus that Epicurus

81 *On Poems* 5 col. xv 10-13 Mangoni: ἀλλ' [ἴδι]ο[ν το]ῦ συνκεῖσθαι [τὴν] λέξιν τὸ [συ]νκεῖσθαι <τὴν> [πρᾶξ]ιν εἶ[ν]αι φαίνεται μ[οι] ('rather it seems to me that the composition of the action is a feature of the composition of the diction'). See further Porter (1995).

82 See below pp. 60ff.

83 So Gale (1994) pp. 14-15.

regarded poems as the 'dangerous lure of myth', and his sceptical attitude towards myth in general is easily substantiated by his communications to his disciples.[84] Myth, according to Epicurus' natural-philosophic outlook, posed a threat to the kind of clear understanding of the natural world which he considered to be instrumental for the attainment of *ataraxia* and freedom from misleading superstition. It is thus regularly associated with *alogia* (unreason) and *kenê doxa* (empty opinion), spectres that are to be banished from the mind by the purificatory application of correct inferential reasoning from empirical *data*.[85] The view that myth was in some sense the special preserve of poetry as opposed to the un-poetic rational discourse of the scientist appears in a fragment from the work of Epicurus' student Colotes of Lampsacus, who attacked Plato for including the Myth of Er in the final book of his *Republic*: ὅτι τὴν ἀλήθειαν ἀφεὶς τὴν ἐπιστημονικὴν περὶ τὸ ψεῦδος διατρίβει μυθολογῶν ὡς ποιητής, ἀλλ' οὐκ ἀποδεικνὺς ὡς ἐπιστήμων ('because having left scientific truth aside he wastes his time with lies, mythologizing like a poet instead of demonstrating the truth like a scientist', Procl. *In rem pub.* 105.24-6 Kroll). Given Colotes' proximity to his master and the authority ascribed to him by the later Epicurean tradition, it seems safe to understand the distinction operating here as reflective of a more broadly Epicurean position that connected poetry closely with myth.

A second objection, in certain ways connected to the first, stems from the fact that poetry was regarded as potentially harmful because of its way of accentuating undesirable emotions or aggravating pre-existing passions in its audience. This was in part the argument which Plato had put forward in the *Republic* when he criticized the tendency of poetry containing myths about the after-life to provoke an unnecessary and irrational fear of death, and on account of which Colotes

84 For instance: *Ep. Men.* 134, *KD* 12.

85 See *Ep. Pyth.* 87 and 104**.**

accuses him of inconsistency in writing the Myth of Er. Other passions which on the Epicurean view were susceptible to poetry's exacerbating effect included erotic distress and the grief of bereavement. Philodemus makes this clear in a passage of his *On Music*, where he is engaged in a polemic against an earlier (probably Stoic) theorist whose discussion seems to have focused on the affective influence of music on the listener. Contesting both the notion that it is the music rather than the poetry that produces an emotional effect in the audience during the performance of songs of love and mourning and the idea that such performances could function therapeutically, Philodemus emphasizes that for the majority of people the majority of erotic and threnodic verse in fact serves to enflame the negative feelings often involved.[86] For the Epicureans, who were concerned primarily to cultivate ataractic tranquility of mind, this would of course have been seen as a less than desirable outcome.

Thirdly, as with music and oratory and the other skills considered by the Epicureans to be more or less useless,[87] the practice of the art of poetry was deemed unworthy of serious study or the investment of concerted effort. The trouble one might take to learn its rules and compose poems according to an arbitrary set of standards dictated by the vagaries of taste was unwarranted and might serve as a distraction from the pursuit of more important virtues, or worse, as an inducement to unnecessary perturbation.[88] It is for this reason, we must imagine, that Philodemus was a practitioner of light verse and epigram in particular, both of which required little elaboration, accommodated an easy-going, conversational tone, and called for a

86 Philod. *On Mus.* 4 col. vi. And see Asmis (1995) p. 26.

87 Thus actually disqualifying it from consideration as an art (τεχνη), which the Epicureans defined as a practice necessarily contributing to life (*Schol. ad Dion. Thrax* 108.27 = fr. 227b Us.: τέχνη ἐστι μέθοδος ἐνεργοῦσα τῷ βίῳ τὸ συμφέρον ['an art is a method of actively bringing about what is beneficial for life']).

88 Compare Epicurus' characterization of writing as a burden upon those who aim at an intrinsically variable stylistic *kritêrion,* quoted by Dionysius of Halicarnassus at *De comp. Verb.* 24 (= fr. 230 Us.): οὐκ ἐπίπονου τοῦ γράφειν ὄντος, ὡς αὐτος Ἐπίκουρος λέγει, τοῖς μὴ στοχαζομένοις τοῦ πυκνὰ μεταπίπτοντος κριτηρίου ('writing not being a burden, as Epicurus says, to those who do not aim at a constantly shifting standard').

simple style.[89] Further solidity may be added to this understanding of the Epicurean position by the aforementioned testimony of Diogenes Laertius who is our only source to relay an explicit condemnation of poetic practice on Epicurus' part. In Diogenes' words, as recorded in the manuscript tradition, Epicurus stated that the wise man would not compose poems (Diog. Laert. 10.120): ποιήματά τε ἐνεργειν οὐκ ἂν ποιῆσαι. The ungrammatical occurrence of ἐνεργειν ('to practice actively') in this phrase has led modern scholars to emend the text to ἐνεργειᾳ ('in actuality') or ἐνεργῶς ('actively'), or else to elide the word as an accidental intrusion of a gloss on ποιῆσαι from the *marginalia*. While the first of these three options, suggested initially by Usener in the nineteenth century, preserves the basic sense of the construction – that the wise man should not compose poems 'in actuality' –the other two readings, advanced recently by Elizabeth Asmis, permit a more nuanced interpretation of Diogenes' meaning according to which the prohibition would be qualified as one targeting only an overly busy and vexatious practice of poetry. [90] This is true whether we take ἐνεργειν as a later gloss on ποιῆσαι ('to make') and thus as a clarification of Diogenes' simplistic report or rather as a corruption of ἐνεργῶς which would originally have stood as an adverbial specification of the kind of composition that was being excluded.[91]

Bearing these points in mind, we may begin to form a picture of the kind of self-awareness that an Epicurean poet such as Lucretius, Philodemus, or Virgil was likely to have

89 Similarly, Sider (1997) p. 32; Snyder (1973) p. 353.

90 Usener (1966 [1887]) p. 331. His gloss: *copia et facultas poeseos non minus in sapiente est, etsi carmina non facit* ('the force and ability necessary for poetry resides no less in the wise person, even if he or she does not write poems'). Asmis (1995) pp. 32-3.

91 Some have suggested that in view of Epicurus' naturalistic linguistic theory and his insistence that words be used in accordance with their primary and 'natural' meanings his objections to poetry would also have extended to its figures of speech, including poetic diction, metaphor, symbolism, and so forth. But it is unclear whether his demand for simplicity and lucidity of language was meant to encompass forms of discourse outside of a strictly explanatory or philosophical context. See further Gale (1994) p. 14 n. 28.

had. He (or potentially she)[92] would have employed myth in a highly self-conscious manner, if at all, being aware of its status as a vehicle for falsehood and vain forms of knowledge. He would have refrained from the emotional indulgence often involved in love poetry and songs of mourning, preferring a calmer emotional tenor and treating the subject-matter of personal distress with a certain detachment designed to preserve a peaceful state of mind. And finally, he would not have embarked on overly elaborate or needlessly engrossing poetic projects, keeping his art as a form of recreation to be pursued at leisure and for the enjoyment or benefit that it might afford him and his friends.[93]

EPICUREAN POETRY

At this point, it may be useful to turn momentarily to the poetry of Philodemus and Lucretius, Virgil's two main Epicurean predecessors in the ancient poetic tradition, for illustration of these summary conclusions. Horace, although he is later than Virgil, also offers an instructive example.

Philodemus' poems are not explicitly connected to his philosophical beliefs and it has sometimes been claimed that they bear no relation at all to his Epicureanism. Even so, some conformity of poetics and philosophy may be observed.[94] His output, as far as we know, consisted exclusively of short epigrams which are written for the most part in elegiac couplets

92 The Epicurean school was notable among ancient philosophical sects for freely admitting women and slaves to its numbers. Female participation in Epicurean schools is attested by Diogenes Laertius (10.7). See further Caster (1982) and Erler (1994).

93 At least three of the specific dangers I have identified were also noted by Sextus Empiricus: irrational fear of death (*Adv. Math.* 285-286), false and damaging portrayal of the gods (*Adv. Math.* 1.287 ff.), and indulgence of the passions (*Adv. Math.* 1.298). Sextus informs us that τὰ μὲν οὖν ὑπὸ τῶν ἄλλων λεγόμενα κατὰ τὸν τόπον, καὶ μάλιστα τῶν Ἐπικουρείων, ἐστὶ τοιαῦτα (*Ad. math.* 1.299: 'the things said by others on this subject – and above all by the Epicureans – are these').

94 For a more detailed treatment of this topic than I offer here, see the introduction to Sider's edition of the epigrams (1997) p. 32 ff.. All numberings hereinafter refer to his ordering.

and follow the traditional erotic topics of their genre, eschewing mythological material[95] and embracing the commonplace vicissitudes of love in day-to-day life. As I have suggested above, we may imagine that Philodemus' motives for choosing the genre of epigram in particular lay in its smallness of scale and its appropriateness for expression in a plain style. The conventional themes of much epigram, however, would likely have presented themselves as problematic to an Epicurean moral outlook which counted erotic desire as a harmful state of mind whose poetic cultivation should not be encouraged. For the purpose of resolving this complication, it is important to note that the Epicurean aversion to love was not one that necessarily extended to all forms of sexuality. Ordinary sexual desires, according to the classification developed by Epicurus, fall within the realm of desires that are 'natural' but 'unnecessary', meaning that, while they arise naturally from the body, their fulfillment is not necessary to the philosopher's happiness.[96] More severe was Epicurus' attitude to the passionate desire for another person which the Greeks designated by the term *erôs* and which he viewed as inherently disruptive of catastematic contentment and the freedom from pain encapsulated in the all-important Epicurean concept of *ataraxia*. We might expect then for Philodemus' treatment of sexual themes in his epigrams to reflect this divided understanding of erotic desire – and indeed this is what we find. Many of the thirty-odd compositions that survive of his work deal with sexual love in a markedly ambivalent or ironic fashion, often seeming to recommend a philosophic indifference or openly mocking uncontrolled sexual impulses.[97] Salient examples of this pattern are epigrams 16 and

95 The one important exception being *Epigr.* 34, which takes the form of a prayer to various divinities, requesting that they oversee Philodemus' sea-voyage to Athens. The poem seems to be early and was likely written before Philodemus' definite conversion to Epicureanism. See the dicussion of Sider (1997) *ad loc.*

96 On the Epicurean classification of desires and the place of love and sex within it, see Brown (1985) pp. 105 ff. Cf. Rudd (1966) pp. 24f; *Gnom. Vat.* 51.

97 Further discussion of Philodemus' peculiarly Epicurean treatment of erotic themes, particularly in relation to the institution of marriage, is provided by Sider (1987) See also Snyder (1973).

17, in the first of which Philodemus anticipates the future beauty of an adolescent girl, advising potential lovers to escape 'while the arrow is off the string' (*Epigr.* 16.5), and in the second praises the looks of a *hetaira* before assuming an air of detachment as he prays to Aphrodite that he may love her only as long as it takes to find another who is more attractive (*Epigr.* 17.6). Other poems are more generally illustrative of the ironic attitude of Philodemus' epigrammatic *persona*: such as 2, which is constructed as a dialogue between a man indulging in an effusive description of the charms of his female companion and asking that she recite for him a 'sweet song' about the tragic inevitability of death, to which she replies with an abrupt and admonitory couplet that is anything but the maudlin performance requested (*Epigr.* 2). Or such as epigrams 4 and 5 in which the speaker is an old man reluctantly renouncing the revelries of youth and laying hold, as he says, of 'loftier thoughts' (*Epigr.* 5.6). To be sure, these few samplings can provide only a taste of Philodemus' total poetic output (of which indeed we possess only a small portion) and the sceptical reader may remain doubtful of the degree to which they are truly representative of Philodemus' work overall.[98] Fortunately such doubts can to some extent be allayed by examination of a passage from Horace's *Satires* which attests the immediate reception of the epigrams. In the second satire of his first book, Horace mentions Philodemus by name as a figure whose conduct in erotic matters is to be considered exemplary (*Serm.* 1.2.111-122):

> nonne cupidinibus statuat natura modum quem,
> quid latura sibi, quid sit dolitura negatum,
> quaerere plus prodest et inane abscindere soldo?
> num, tibi cum fauces urit sitis, aurea quaeris
> pocula? num esuriens fastidis omnia praeter
> pavonem rhombumque? tument tibi cum inguina, num si
> ancilla aut verna est praesto puer, impetus in quem
> continuo fiat, malis tetigine rumpi?
> non ego: nam parabilem amo Venerem facilemque.

98 Our knowledge of Philodemus' poetry is greatly supplemented by a list of 175 incipits discovered on an Oxyrhynchus papyrus (*P.Oxy.* 3724) and first published in 1989. See Sider's text and commentary (1997) pp. 203ff.

> illam ‘post paulo’, ‘sed pluris’, ‘si exierit vir’,
> Gallis, hanc Philodemus ait sibi quae neque magno
> stet pretio neque cunctetur cum est iussa venire.
>
> Does it not profit one more to inquire what limit nature sets upon desires, what she brings herself, and what will cause her pain if it is denied; and thus to separate the ‘empty’ from the ‘solid’?[99] When thirst parches your throat, do you seek cups made of gold? Or when you are hungry, do you disdain all but the peacock and the turbot? Or when your loins swell and some housemaid or slave-boy is to hand upon whom you may expend your impulse straightaway, do you prefer to burst with lust? Not I: for I love a Venus that is easy and attainable. The woman who responds ‘in a little while’, ‘another time’, or ‘if my husband goes out’ is for the *Galli.* Philodemus says that, for himself, he desires the one who gives herself at no great price nor delays when she is called to come.

Although on the face of it this passage is about varying sexual preferences, readers familiar with the ancient tradition of love poetry are bound to pick up on a latent literary-theoretical undercurrent which is signalled above all by the use of *Gallis* (usually taken as meaning either ‘Gauls’ or priests of Cybele known as *Galli*)*,* an unmistakable allusion to the figure of the famed Roman elegist, Cornelius Gallus. As Kirk Freudenberg has remarked,[100] the kinds of love being contrasted here correspond also to contrasting kinds of erotic verse represented by the passionate, lovelorn elegy of Gallus on the one hand and the self-aware, ironic verse of Philodemus on the other. Moreover, Horace emphasizes Philodemus’ peculiar stance within his tradition by the use of the plural to designate ‘Galluses’ who, generically speaking, may be taken as standing in for elegists at large. From this we gather that already for Philodemus’ near contemporaries his erotic poetry had a reputation for its unusually practical approach to sex, informed as it was by the doctrines of his philosophical school.

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99 *Inane* and *soldo* seem to refer to the famous Epicurean theory according to which the universe is composed of ‘atoms and void’. Thus Gowers (2012) *ad loc.*, ‘Horace’s appeal to realism is couched in the language of Epicurean physical theory’; her comment is largely based on the longer discussion of Rudd (1966) pp. 24f.

100 Freudenberg (1992) p. 196; followed by Gowers (2012) *ad loc.*

Lucretius' major work, the *De rerum natura*, is at once more straightforward and more complex than Philodemus' poetic *nugae*. We are assured of its Epicurean tenor and credentials by its very explicit orientation as a didactic text intended to expound the full range of Epicurus' philosophy to an uninstructed aristocratic addressee, G. Memmius (*DRN* 1.42).[101] Yet the fact of so ambitious a project being undertaken in verse and its simultaneously owing much to a tradition of quasi-religious epic poetry poses its own theoretical problems.[102] While we shall not have to struggle to detect Epicurean inflections in Lucretius' poetry, reconciling its evidently philosophical contents with its other characteristics should not be treated as a simple matter. In particular there are two points of controversy that would seem to require some explanation: first, Lucretius' decision to cast his philosophical thought in several thousand lines of hexameter verse; and second, the numerous occurrences throughout the poem of themes and figures drawn from mythology.

Luckily for us, Lucretius does give the reader some indication of the reasoning behind his preference for poetry as a medium of discourse. Late in the first book of the *De rerum natura*, in a famous aside concerning the fusion of poetry and philosophy (*DRN* 1.921-50), he compares his poem to a cup of medicinal wormwood whose rim has been smeared with honey in order to sweeten the administration of the vessel's unappetizing contents. The bitter pill of Epicurean philosophy, which Lucretius admits may at first appear *tristior* ('a bit harsh'), is thus made palatable by the addition of the *musaeus lepos* (the 'muse-like pleasantness') of poetry. It should

101 On this elusive historical figure and his possible adherence to the Epicurean sect, see now Morgan and Taylor (2017).

102 In what follows I pass over the issue of the 'Lucretian sublime', which some have interpreted as a deliberately epicizing tendency (for example Hardie (1986), esp. pp. 169ff.; cf. Hardie (2009)). It does not seem to me that the aesthetic ideal of the sublime (however one chooses to define this shadowy concept) is alien or inimical to Epicurean theory, even if it is generically important to epic style. On the integration between sublimity and Epicureanism, see esp. Porter (2007).

be pointed out, however, that this repurposing of poetic form is by no means a full rehabilitation of poetry and remains within certain bounds determined by the Epicurean system. Lucretius is careful to stress that his *carmina* are 'lucid' (*DRN* 1.932-3), adhering to the Epicurean precept that clarity and transparency are the primary virtues to be sought in cultivating a literary style.[103] This is opposed, for instance, to the 'obscure tongue' (*obscuram linguam*) of the Presocratic philosopher Heraclitus, who features earlier in Lucretius' text as a paradigm of seductive opacity and ambiguity, qualities which are said to appeal to the 'foolish' who like to discover hidden meaning beneath enigmatic diction (*DRN* 1.638-42).[104] Significant here is Lucretius' application of the same principle of poetry's charm to a form of discourse whose claims to truth are ultimately unfounded. According to Lucretius, Heraclitus' philosophical pronouncements seem to be true because they 'fall pleasantly upon the ears and are coloured with an agreeable sound' (*DRN* 1.643-4: *quae belle tangere possunt auris et lepido quae sunt fucata sonore*) in a way undeniably reminiscent of the way he enlivens his own dry theoretical material. Thus we see how Lucretius' mobilization of poetry in the service of his Epicurean cause is not in itself unproblematic and remains subject to certain conditions of clarity and content that act to authenticate it. Regarding content, Lucretius presents the material contained in the *De rerum natura* specifically as a *ratio* (*DRN* 1.943-8): we are to understand the argument of his poem as strictly a form of reasoning, equivalent to the Greek *logos* and accordingly divorced from the *fabula* or *mythos* more characteristic of (for instance) a Heraclitean style of philosophic gnosis. This observation may also help us further in providing a justification for the extended scope of

103 See Boyancé (1947) pp. 96 f., who underlines how clarity becomes an essential trait of Lucretius' art. Compare also Diogenes Laertius on Epicurus' rhetorical theory (10.13): ἐν τῷ Περὶ τῆς ῥητορικῆς ἀξιοῖ μηδὲν ἄλλο ἢ σαφήνειαν ἀπαιτεῖν ('in his *On Rhetoric* he thinks fit to demand nothing else besides clarity').

104 See further Craca (2000) pp. 14-15, 142ff. She suggests that Lucretius polemic against Heraclitus is also a veiled polemic against Stoic poetic-theorists, comparable to Philodemus' attacks on Stoicism in his *On Poems*. On the connection between Heraclitus and the Stoics see Bailey (1947) vol. 2 p. 711.

Lucretius' work. Because the material which he is treating is philosophical, protreptic, and propaedeutic in character, because it follows a relatively clear logic, and is therefore in a sense 'safe', a prolonged poetic treatment does not risk the same ethical or intellectual perils as might the composition of a traditional narrative poem of equal length. In other words, the consideration of length is roughly the same as it might be in the case of a comparable prose treatise.[105]

Still it cannot be denied that Lucretius' poem, for all its explicitly 'rational' posturing, retains elements of a quasi-religious and epic flavour that would seem to require their own further explanation. The *De rerum natura* begins, for example, with a mysterious invocation to the goddess Venus (*DRN* 1.1-49) which, as many scholars have noticed, appears to fly in the face of the heartily Epicurean denunciation of religion that follows soon after in the text.[106] And that is to say nothing of other references to traditional divine figures scattered throughout the succeeding books, such as the frequent personifications of Nature and the Earth and the mention of Ceres and Liber (along with the related aetiologies of baking and wine) in the poet's proclamation of the divinity of Epicurus at the beginning of book 6 (*DRN* 6.14-15).[107] Again, however, Lucretius has thought to equip himself with a rationale for his ventures into mythological vocabulary, which he gives most substantively in his second book as part of a digression on the well-known ancient cult of the *Magna Mater* (*DRN* 2.600-60). Here we are presented with a synopsis of the various Greek religious practices gathered around the Great Mother, followed by a rejection on Epicurean grounds of the significations attached to them. Having introduced his digression with an affirmation of the logic in referring to the earth as the

105 Such as Epicurus' lengthy and detailed work *On Nature*, for instance, which was likely the source for the lion's share of material in the *DRN*. See Sedley (1998).

106 Sedley 1998, p. 16. More focused discussion of the *DRN*'s proem and its problems is given by Schrijvers (1970) pp. 174-91; see also Asmis (1982), Courtney (2001).

107 Important treatments of this question include Gale (1994), Gigandet (1998), and Craca (2000).

'mother' of living things (598-9), Lucretius closes the passage with a return to his starting theme of metonymy:

> hic siquis mare Neptunum Cereremque vocare
> constituet fruges et Bacchi nomine abuti
> mavult quam laticis proprium proferre vocamen,
> concedamus ut hic terrarum dictitet orbem
> esse deum matrem, dum vera re tamen ipse
> religione animum turpi contigere parcat.
>
> On this point, if anyone insists on calling the sea Neptune or grain Ceres and prefers to misuse the name of Bacchus rather than uttering the appropriate term for the liquid, let us concede that this person may proclaim the earth to be the mother of the gods, so long as he holds the real thing in mind and refrains from polluting his soul with religious belief.

It is permissible, we are told, for someone to refer to an object or substance by a name drawn from religion or mythology, provided that he or she refrain from credulity respecting the religious connotations of the term.[108] In this way use of mythical figures and lore is allowed but only if it is guarded by a rational circumspection.[109] As Monica Gale has put it, Lucretius can thus 'have his cake and eat it: myth is disposed of as a serious answer to the questions about the nature of the universe but can still be exploited for poetic and rhetorical effect'.[110]

With this admittedly quite cursory review of the Epicurean poetics of Philodemus and Lucretius I hope to have shown, if not how these two authors have managed a definitive reconciliation of their poetry with their philosophical allegiance, at least how they demonstrate themselves to be alive to the concerns that emerge from an Epicurean understanding of poetic art. Of course important exceptions may be found and more subtle readings proposed, but, on the

108 Lucretius' terminological practice in this respect may be derived from that of Empedocles, who can be seen to employ a similarly loose and mythicizing vocabulary in discussing natural phenomena. See Sedley (1998) pp. 44-5.

109 Cf. the theory of Craca (2000), who views the *Mater excursus* as an example in practice of Lucretius mixing the 'bitter' medicine of philosophy with the 'honey-sweetness' of poetry. He thus manages to instruct '*divertendo e meravigliando*' (Craca (2000) p. 6).

110 Gale (1994) p. 32.

whole, what matters for our purposes is less whether, strictly speaking, our poets have kept within the limits of Epicurean orthodoxy, than the terms in which those limits are articulated and tested by them. I have identified three features of the Epicurean system as it relates to poetry – namely its aversion towards consuming erotic passion, its scepticism towards traditional mythological accounts of the world, and its rejection of intense artistic pursuit as largely futile and unconducive to a pleasant life. To a lesser or a greater extent and in different ways, both Philodemus and Lucretius indicate a consciousness of these points of tension and a desire to alleviate or circumvent them. For Philodemus, this is especially true as regards the frequently ironic tenor of his erotic epigrams; but his choice to work in a poetically 'small' genre can also be read as a mode of adherence to Epicurean teaching. Lucretius, on the other hand, undertakes a significantly grander poetic project on an epic scale, and thus confronts a separate set of difficulties relative to his work's form and content. In particular, the *De rerum natura* demonstrates an interest to justify both its status as poetry by an appeal to its rationalistic content and its incorporation of traditional myths by the expression of open mistrust of religious belief patterns. In their separate ways, Philodemus and Lucretius can thus both be seen to confront the problems inherent in being at once a poet and an Epicurean. The bounds of our current discussion being what they are, however, the nature and full extent of their success in this must be reserved for later judgement.

Finally, a word should be said about Horace, whose influence on the *Eclogues* is likely to have been minimal, but who nonetheless stands as another useful example of an Epicurean poet continually cautious of not overstepping the bounds of an ethically viable poetics.[111] These

111 Horace signals his Epicureanism at various places throughout his work and with various degrees of transparency. Much of his *Satires* is informed by an Epicurean sensibility, which appears most strongly at *Serm.* 1.5.101-3, where he espouses the Epicurean doctrine according to which the gods do not intervene in terrestrial affairs and are therefore not to be feared. At *Ep.* 1.4.16, in a much later composition, he famously characterizes

boundaries can be seen in a handful of instances to coincide neatly with Philodemus' and Lucretius' generic negotiations with the conventional themes of elegy and epic. In practice, Horace's lyric *Odes* locate themselves beyond the domains encompassed by these two alternative genres: in *Odes* 2.9, for example, where Horace admonishes his friend, the elegist Valgius, to leave off his *flebilibus modis* (*i.e.* elegiac couplets, *Carm.* 2.9.9) and to dissolve the rigid constancy of his unrequited love for Mystes, replacing it with an enthusiasm for the virtuous, martial themes of epic, albeit contained by an unpresumptuous lyric mode.[112] Elsewhere, Horace turns his criticism upon epic itself, making an implicit comparison in *Odes* 1.3 between Virgil's newly begun epic project (the *Aeneid*) and mythic forms of *nefas* rooted in the overweeningness of the human race, or preferring Apollonian lyric to martial epic in *Odes* 1.6 and 4.15.[113] The *Epistles*, where we find some of Horace's most explicit and sustained discussion of poetics, continue this pattern with a further epic *recusatio* near the end of 2.1 (250ff.). *Epistles* 2.2 even seems to reject poetry wholesale, stressing the practical use Horace has made of his poetic output over the course of his career and suggesting that on its own this work would be incompatible with a truly philosophic disposition (*Ep.* 2.2.49 ff.).

This last passage may appear something of a crowning statement intended to cap Horace's trajectory as a poet and proclaim his total conversion, *à la* Philodemus, to 'loftier

himself as *Epicuri de grege porcum* ('a pig from Epicurus' sty'). I am in agreement with Nisbet and Hubbard (1989) that *Carm.* 1.34, Horace's mock renunciation of Epicureanism, is just that – a pretense (although cf. Mayer (2012) *ad loc.*; Hardie (2007) p. 111). It is interesting to note, as they do, that this reading has the distinguished support of John Dryden and Dr. Johnson. It also enjoys that of Moles (2007) p. 172, who dubs the ode a 'spoof recantation of Epicureanism'; see his article for a useful survey of philosophical material in Horace and the place of Epicurean philosophy in his poetic career. And see Armstrong (2004).

112 See further Oliensis (1998) p. 113f. And cf. her discussion (pp. 118-9) of the equally un-elegiac *Carm.* 4.1, which this time concentrates on containing the desires of Horace himself.

113 Oliensis (1998) p. 151. To these examples may be added *Carm.* 3.25 in which Horace speaks of a future epic-style project (17-8): *nil parvum aut humili modo | nil mortale loquar. dulce periculum est...* ('I will not speak anything moral or in a humble style. Danger is sweet...'). His emphasis on size, grand style, and an 'immortal' content correspond nicely to the problems with epic poetry, as seen from an Epicurean perspective, that I have identified above. All the same, *dulce periculum est...*

thoughts'. However, more comprehensive analysis of Horace's *oeuvre* as a whole reveals a poet concerned even from the beginning with the definitional limits of poetry proper and one who often takes care to emphasize the space he occupies outside those limits. So much is clear from a programmatically important passage of *Satires* 1.4, where Horace problematizes the grouping of his satires together with other, more conventional poetry (*Serm.* 1.4.39-44):

> primum ego me illorum, dederim quibus esse poetas,
> excerpam numero: neque enim concludere versum
> dixeris esse satis; neque, si qui scribat uti nos
> sermoni propiora, putes hunc esse poetam.
> ingenium cui sit, cui mens divinior atque os
> magna sonaturum, des nominis huius honorem.
>
> I would remove myself first of all from the number of those whom I would grant to be poets; for you will not say that it is enough to finish a verse; nor would you think that he was a poet who, like us, writes things closer to prose. Rather you would give the honour of that name to whoever is possessed of genius, and has an inspired mind and a mouth ready to utter greatness.

Horace's *sermones* are too prosaic to count as real poetry in the estimation of any reasonable person, for they lack the essential, and perhaps ineffable, quality that elevates truly inspired verse above mere versification.[114] The poet proceeds in the following lines to contrast the example of his own 'lowly' satiric compositions, influenced by the earlier satires of Lucilius, with a snippet of a more sublime strain of epic-style hexameter, arguing that any rearrangement of the words so that they are no longer metrical will obtain a different kind of result in each case (*Serm.* 1.4.56-62):[115]

> his, ego quae nunc,
> olim quae scripsit Lucilius, eripias si
> tempora certa modosque, et quod prius ordine verbum est,
> posterius facias, praeponens ultima primis,

114 The ancient 'sublime' perhaps? See above n. 102.

115 An example of *metathesis*, on which see Oberhelman and Armstrong (1995), alongside the general treatment of Armstrong (1995).

> non, ut si solvas ‘postquam Discordia taetra
> Belli ferratos postis portasque refregit’
> invenias etiam disiecti membra poetae.
>
> If you were to subtract from what I am now writing – what Lucilius once wrote – the fixed time and metre, and if you were to place that word which comes earlier in order later, putting the last before the first, you would not even discover in it the dismembered parts of a poet, as you might if you were to decompose ‘After hideous Discord broke down the doors and iron posts of War’.

Whereas the freeing of satire from its metrical form will yield only unexceptional prose, something is retained in the jumbling of the epic verses which will continue to mark them as somehow ‘poetic’. Horace declines to go any further into the matter than this, apparently satisfied that he has successfully demonstrated his *sermones* to be unpoetic; but what has already been said nevertheless invites reflection on the more precise delimitation of poetry at work here. The insistence that true poetry is to be identified according to its content is at any rate not what one might have expected from an Epicurean, after Philodemus’ apparent belief (adverted to above) that the poetic-ness of a poem resides in its form. As I hope to show in the following section, however, this tension is to some extent an artifact of our own conventional vocabulary for referring to poetry and poetic-ness, which tends to be one-dimensional in a way that confuses a key distinction made by ancient poets between the terms *poiêma* and *poiêsis*.

POIÊMA AND *POIÊSIS*

Before I go on to examine the status of bucolic poetry and that of Virgil’s *Eclogues* in particular, a final theoretical point is in order concerning the wider Hellenistic literary context within which all four of Philodemus, Lucretius, Horace, and Virgil lived and wrote. Although there is reason to think that, overall, matters of literary criticism played a rather minor role in the philosophical

activities of Epicureans and that they were not likely to have elaborated a distinctive Epicurean literary theory as such, we do have evidence that members of the school intervened from time to time in broader literary debates going on around them – not least of which is Philodemus' extensive *On Poems.*[116] This theoretical treatise in several books consists for the most part of epitomes of the views of earlier Hellenistic critics paired with counter-arguments given from an Epicurean standpoint. Careful sifting of the work's mainly fragmentary contents can thus shed light on an Epicurean theory of poetics that draws frequently on more mainstream currents of literary-theoretical discourse.

Of special interest in the context of our recent discussion is one instance of this embedding of Epicurean thought in Hellenistic criticism that involves the terminological distinction made between *poiêma* and *poiêsis*.[117] According to this distinction, a *poiêma* is a verse composition of any size and on any subject, while the term '*poiêsis*' functions as a more specific designation for poetic works of longer length which treat a certain kind of narrative content such as may be found in Homeric epic. A concise formulation of the two ideas and their relation is to be found in a fragment of Varro's *Parmeno* (fr. 14 (15) Riese):

> Poema est lexis enrythmos, id est verba plura modice in quandam coniecta formam. Itaque etiam distichon epigrammation vocant poema. Poesis est perpetuum argumentum ex rhythmis, ut Ilias Homeri et Annalis Enni. Poetice est ars earum rerum.
>
> A *poema* is metrical 'form', that is, multiple words set together according to some measure into a particular form. Thus even a two-line epigram is considered to be a *poema*. A *poesis* is a continuous subject-matter presented rhythmically, such as the Iliad of Homer or Ennius' Annals. *Poetice* is the art dealing with these things.[118]

116 Available in the recent editions of Janko (2003, 2011) and Mangoni (1993)

117 On the history of the use of this terminology in the Hellenistic era and its appearance in the text of Philodemus, see esp. the study by Greenberg (1961), which remains unsurpassed as a focused discussion of this question.

118 Compare also Lucilius, *Sat.* 9.338-47 Marx. Like Varro, Lucilius cites Homer and Ennius as the two cardinal examples of a *poiêsis*, which is distinguished from a *poiêma* chiefly by its length, but also by its unity. At *Sat.* 9.342 he employs the term Θεσις (which I take to mean something like Varro's *argumentum*) thereby denoting

On this definition we can see that the sole criterion for a piece of writing to be regarded as a *poiêma* is formal: it must conform to some kind of meter. By contrast in order for a written work to merit the status of *poiêsis* it must possess, in addition to metrical form, a drawn-out and continuous subject-matter, a *perpetuum argumentum,*[119] as exemplified by the canonical Greek and Latin epic poems of Homer and Ennius. Beyond this, it must be admitted that Varro's presentation of the concepts is unhelpfully perfunctory and lacks the precision which an inquiring reader might wish for. Most importantly, how exactly are we to understand the specificity of *perpetuum argumentum* here? Is a *perpetuum argumentum* any kind extended discourse in general, or is it to be understood as peculiar to the genre of poetry evoked by the *Iliad* and the *Annals*? We are assisted in navigating this uncertainty by a scrap of Posidonius, handily quoted by Diogenes Laertius, which gives a somewhat more complete account of the *poiêma-poiêsis* scheme (fr. 44 Edelstein = Diog. Laer. 7.60):

> ποίημα δέ ἐστιν... λέξις ἔμμετρος ἢ ἔνρυθμος μετὰ <κατα>σκευῆς τὸ λογοειδὲς ἐκβεβηκυῖα... ποίησις δέ ἐστι σημαντικὸν ποίημα, μίμησιν περιέχον θείων καὶ ἀνθρωπέιων.
>
> A *poiêma* is... a form that is metrical or that possesses a rhythm, with a certain construction that departs from prosaic expression... A *poiêsis* is a *poiêma* consisting of signs that comprises a representation of gods and humans.[120]

Indeed, after comparison of the two passages and their remarkably similar diction, it seems distinctly possibile that it was on this passage related by Diogenes that Varro was drawing for his

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the essential cohesion of a *poiêsis* around a unitary plot or narrative. See also the discussion of Mangoni (1993) pp. 230f.

119 On the literary-theoretical definition of *argumentum* as a single subject-matter underlying a given work, see Quint. 5.10.9-10. Cf. Cic. *Inv.* 1.19.

120 I understand σημαντικὸν as a qualification delimiting the sense of *poiêsis* to poems that represent their action narratively or indirectly as opposed to directly and dramatically, thus excluding drama.

own work. Although Posidonius is equally laconic in his expression, he nevertheless furnishes us with a few further precious details bearing on *poiêma*'s close relationship to 'prose' (*logoeides*) and on the precise content of a *poiêsis*. From him we learn more clearly what was only implied by Varro in his mention of Homer and Ennius: that a *poiêsis* must offer an imitation, through verbal signs, of human and divine action. In other words, the definition of *poiêsis* that takes shape from consideration of our passages – which together give us, as it were, both an intensional and an extensional definition of the category designated by the term – begins to look rather like a generic definition of (heroic) epic poetry.[121]

Finally – and herein lies the greatest importance for us – the terminology of *poiêma* and *poiêsis* resurfaces in the fifth book of Philodemus' *On Poems* in a passage where Philodemus reveals his theoretical acceptance of the distinction. Combatting the purportedly specious theory put forward by Neoptolemus of Parium of the trilateral relationship between *poiêtes*, *poiêma*, and *poiêsis*, Philodemus invokes the conventional literary-critical understanding of *poiêma* and *poiêsis* to challenge his adversary's proposed definitions (col. xiv 1-30 Mangoni):

> θ[α]υμα[στὸ]ν δ' αὐτοῦ καὶ [τὸ] τῆ[ς] ποήσ[ε]ως εἶναι τ[ὴ]ν ὑπόθεσιν [μ]όνον, καὶ τοῦ ποήματο[ς καὶ] παντῶν ὅλως τῆς ποήσ[ε]ως ὄντων. ἡ μὲν [γ]ὰρ πόησις καὶ π[οήμά γ' ἐστιν], οἷον ἡ Ἰλι[άς], οἱ δ[ὲ πρῶτοι] στίχοι πρι[άκ]οντα τα[ύ]της πόημα μ[έ]ν, οὐ μέντοι ποησις. καὶ τὸ ποή[ματος μό]νον τὴν [σύνθεσιν τῆς] λέξεως μ[ετέχειν . . . . .]ΝΑΣ διανοί[ας . . . . .] καὶ πραξεις καὶ [προσω]ποποιί[ας]. εἰ δ' ἐν [τῆι] λέξει πε[π]οιῆσθαι [τι λε]γει, κἀνταῦθ[α νή Δί' οὐ]κ ἔστι τι πεποι[ῆσθαι το]ύτων χωρίς, ἀλλ' [ἴδι]ο[ν το]ῦ συνκεῖσθαι [τὴν] λέξιν τὸ [συ]νκεῖσθαι <τὴν> [πρᾶξ]ιν εἶ[ν]αι φαίνεται μ[οι].
>
> And it is surprising of him to say that the subject-matter belongs only to the *poiêsis*, when all that belongs to the *poiêsis* also belongs to the *poiêma*. For a *poiêsis* is also a *poiêma*, such as the *Iliad*, yet its first thirty lines are a *poiêma* but not, however, a *poiêsis.* Or that only the composition of the diction constitutes a part of the *poiêma* [but not...] the thoughts and the action and the portrayal of characters. If he says that something is worked out poetically (*pepoiêsthai*) in respect to its diction, then – by

121 Hinted also by Horace, whose rejection at *Carm.* 1.7.6 of an epic *carmen perpetuum* is remarkably close to Varro's *perpetuum argumentum*.

> Zeus – in the next place this cannot happen without those things; rather, it seems to me that the composition of the action is a feature of the composition of the diction.

Without delving too deeply into the textual *minutiae* of this obviously mutilated passage or the intellectual background represented by Neoptolemus' thought, it is easy enough to see that Philodemus subscribes to a conception of *poiêma* and *poiêsis* akin to the one which we have already witnessed, and wishes to hold his opponent to it as well. For Philodemus, a clearly essential criterion in delimiting the class of *poiêsis* is size (large), since he claims that the first thirty verses of the *Iliad* do not on their own constitute a *poiêsis*, whereas the whole twenty-four books undoubtedly do. Again, we should note that it is the *Iliad* in particular that is adduced as an example of the kind of poetry in question, reinforcing the link made by our other sources between *poiêsis* and epic. That Philodemus does not consider size to be the sole defining feature of *poiêsis* is indicated obliquely by a later passage of the same work, during a discussion of different notions of poetic excellence (col. xxxvii 2 – xxxviii 15 Mangoni):

> [ἐι δ' ἔ]φη [τ]ις ἀρ[ετὴ]ν εἶναι ποιητοῦ τὸ δύ[ν]ασθαι πᾶν ποίη[μ]α σ[υν]θεῖν[αι] καλῶς, [τὰ ζ]ητούμ[εν' ἀ]νθωμολογεῖτο. τ[ῆι] γὰρ δυνάμει ζητοῦμεν, ἐπειδὰν τίς ὁ σπουδαῖός ἐστιν ποιητὴς ἐξετάζωμεν, ὅπως τὰ [π]οιήματα συντιθεὶς καλῶς συντίθησιν· ὁ δὲ τὸν καλῶς φησιν. εἰ δὲ καὶ τὸ πᾶν γένος ποιήματος ἀξιοῖ [[κα[λῶ]ς]], παντελῶς ἀγένητον καταλέι[π]ει τὴν ἀρετήν. οὐθεὶς γὰρ ἐδυνήθη πᾶμ ποῆσαι καλῶς. ὡς δ'ἐγὼ πείθομαι, καὶ ἀδύνατον· οὐδὲ γὰρ δύναιτ' ἄν. ἄλλως μὲν τοῦτ' οὐδ' ἐν μοναχῶι γένει διωμάλικέν τις ποιητής. εἰ δὲ τὸ δύνασθαι συ[νθε]ῖναι ποίησιν ἀρετὴν ἔχουσα[ν], ἧττομ μὲν ἀτόπως, ἀλλὰ προγινώσκειν ἡμᾶς δεήσει [τος ποτ'] ἀρετὴ ποιήσεῶς, ἧς θεωρηθείσης φανερὸς [ὁ ταύ]την π[οι]ῶν ὅτι σπ[ουδα]ῖος, καὶ τελείου ποιητοῦ φή[σα]ι[μ]ε[ν] ἂν ταύτην ἀρετήν... κοινῶ[ς δ]ὲ τῆς π[ο]ιήσεως [ὑ]πακουομένης, ὡς καὶ τῶν ἐπιγραμματοποιῶν καὶ Σαπφοῦς, ἐ[κεῖνο]ς ταὐ[τ]ὸν ἐρεῖ τῶι ποητὴν ἀγαθὸν εἶναι τὸν ποιημάτων καλῶν συνθέτην, ὅ καὶ 'πρὶν Θέογνιν γεγονέναι' κατείχομεν.
>
> And if one says that the excellence of the poet is to be able to compose any poem beautifully, he is begging the question. For when we inquire 'who is a good poet?', in effect we are asking how it is that the one who composes poems composes them beautifully: but this person simply replies 'he who composes beautifully'. And if further he should deem the good poet to be one who composes every kind (genre) of poetry beautifully, then he leaves us with a poetic excellence that is altogether non-existent. For there is no one who is capable of composing every kind of poetry

> beautifully. Indeed I do not believe that this is possible, for no one ever could. Moreover, even within a single kind of poetry no poet is able to maintain this level of consistency. But if it should be judged that the good poet is the one who composes *poiêsis* possessing excellence, then this is less absurd, but it is necessary for us to know first what the excellence of *poiêsis* is; and once this has been seen then clearly the one who manifests it is a worthy poet and we could even say that this excellence is that of the perfect poet... But if *poiêsis* is understood in the common sense, as including the works of the epigrammatists and Sappho, then [saying that the good poet is he who composes *poiêsis* beautifully] amounts to the same thing as saying that the good poet is the composer of beautiful poems, which we have understood 'since before Theognis was born'.

The interest of this passage, apart from its being one of the very few early indications of a Hellenistic consciousness of genre, lies in the specifically generic valence given to the term *poiêsis* which here implicitly denotes one particular kind (*genos*) of poetry among others. Philodemus' initial objection to the absurdity of defining poetic virtue as an impossible mastery of all genres is tempered by the specification of mastery in one particular genre that, owing to its character, seems to occupy a privileged place in the division of poetic kinds. There is, we must deduce, something essentially and over-archingly poetic about the genre of *poiêsis* (etymologically unsurprising), proficiency in which is treated by Philodemus as at least a plausible (if provisional) definition of poetic excellence generally. Nevertheless it remains definitionally distinct from the genres practised by, for example, Sappho and the epigrammatists, as Philodemus soon informs us.

We are thus, I think, entitled to infer, in spite of the regrettable absence of any complete and authoritative explication of *poiêsis* dating from ancient times, that the notion represented by the word was approximately equivalent to the notion we might ourselves form of the ancient genre of epic poetry in the style of Homer. The consequence of this inference for a reconstruction of the Epicurean theorization of poetry is to provide us with a term and conceptual classification accepted by ancient critics that corresponded to what I have argued independently the Epicureans

would have regarded as a kind of poetry off-limits to the philosopher. Furthermore the evident insistence of Philodemus, an Epicurean, that this idea of *poiêsis* which we have been tracking be observed in the prosecution of literary argument offers us some assurance that the correspondence between the theoretical sense attached to *poiêsis* and the ethical boundaries placed around composition of poetry within the Epicurean school was not ignored by its members. It is probably not by accident that, in the context of a discussion of the genre signified by *poiêsis*, Philodemus presents Sappho and the epigrammatists as alternative examples of poetry embraced by the constrastive grouping of simple *poiêmata*. In juxtaposing these other poetic types with *poiêsis*, he has encapsulated two further dimensions of the Epicurean attitude to poetry that are of paramount importance to his own artistic output: *viz.* the concern for avoiding an overly passionate strain of erotic verse (as manifested by Sappho *par excellence*)[122] and the 'safe' alternative of epigram (his preferred genre) as opposed to more demanding or troubling modes of composition. Tentatively, then, we might read the above passage of *On Poems* as containing the traces of Philodemus' overall poetic orientation, which turned away from the grandeur of epic and the self-serious desire of a tortured Sapphic persona towards the 'smaller' and more restrained discourse of epigram.

Precise analysis of this variety is not available in the case of Lucretius, whose ideas on poetics are both less sophisticated (at least from what we can tell) and expressed less forthrightly than those of Philodemus. However, it does not seem unreasonable to me to see in his programmatic self-positioning, as outlined above, the same awareness of some such category as the *poiêsis* of Philodemus and other thinkers, even without their technical terminology. Of course there is some likelihood that Lucretius *was* aware of the *poiêsis-poiêma* structure in particular,

122 *E.g.* fr. 39 Lobel-Page.

considering that evidence of its presence in the Latin tradition survives from as far back as Lucilius,[123] but here – alas – we stand upon the brink of pure speculation. More concretely, it may be argued on fair grounds that Lucretius' poem, lengthy though it may be, is not a *poiêsis* in the sense construed by our other sources and therefore poses few problems for the adoption of the *poiêsis-poiêma* structure into our working framework of Epicurean poetics. A more fruitful line of argumentation may be available in the case of Virgil's *Eclogues*, as I hope to show further along, whose author was demonstrably familiar with Philodemus and his thought and displays exactly the kind of ambivalence towards epic *poiêsis* that we might expect of someone influenced by the Epicurean approach to poetry. But leaving this branch of our discussion for its due occasion, I would like to turn for the time being to the place occupied by the bucolic genre in the scheme which I have been developing.

123 See above n. 118.

III

VIRGIL'S EPICUREANISM AND BUCOLIC GENRE

I have just sketched out, albeit somewhat cursorily, certain aspects of an Epicurean poetics to which one might reasonably expect an ancient Epicurean poet to have adhered based on the foundations laid by his philosophical school. Indeed, we saw that these aspects could be observed to translate into specific features of particular poetic works produced by self-professed Epicureans such as Philodemus, Lucretius, and Horace. In numerous instances during my discussion, I had recourse to a vocabulary of literary genres which allowed me to express more easily the boundaries circumscribing the practice of poetry in an Epicurean context: the elegiac and epic (hexametric) traditions within which Philodemus and Lucretius were composing could be seen to some degree to dictate their respective poetic preoccupations. Philodemus' chosen genre of erotic epigram in elegiac couplets presented him with the problem of managing the risks associated with the expression, and thus also the intensification, of a detrimental erotic passion that was thematically essential to much conventional elegy; on the other hand Lucretius' decision to write an extensive work in hexameters – a style of poetry indebted to an epic tradition going back to Homer – entailed its own complications *vis-à-vis* the philosophically questionable inheritance of that tradition and the monumental effort demanded by the task. Thus Philodemus and Lucretius, as poets, stand within their generic traditions, while, as Epicureans, they are careful to position themselves as in a sense outside of them. Moreover, I argued that this literary-

generic tension should be taken as more generally distinctive of the ambivalence of their philosophical school towards poetry.

In composing the *Eclogues*, Virgil too was visibly writing in a generic tradition of poetry, but one that is *prima facie* discrete from those participated in by his two predecessors. The original Latin title of the *Eclogues*, the *Bucolica* (from Greek τὰ βουκολικά), announces his poetic *libellus* to be, from its inception, a contribution to a lineage of 'bucolic' poetry, conventionally thought to have been inaugurated by the Hellenistic poet Theocritus and continued by a small number of Greek pastoral successors.[124] The question then that I would like to pose and that I hope to present a satisfactory answer for in the upcoming pages is: how does Virgil's consciousness of the genre which he has selected reflect the same manner of concerns with which we have seen other Epicurean poets to be preoccupied? And further: in what way might his preference for bucolic poetry have been motivated by such concerns?

It may help to lay the ground for our discussion of the *Eclogues* if we consider first the Virgilian *Culex*, which, although not as thoroughly bucolic as the *Eclogues*, nonetheless owes a great and palpable debt to 'pastoral' poetry.[125] One section especially stands out as suggestive in this regard. At line 58 and following, a moralizing apostrophe on the uncorrupted beatitude of rustic *pastores* lends an undeniably ethical tint to Virgil's choice of subject-matter. Modelled on the proem to the second book of Lucretius' *De rerum natura*,[126] the passage opens with an

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124 Those known by name are Moschus and Bion. Aside from the remaining fragments of these authors, 'pastoral' motifs recur in many pieces included in the *Anthologia Palatina* (see Laurens (2012) pp. 83ff.). On the development of Greek bucolic after Theocritus, see Fantuzzi and Hunter (2004) pp. 167ff. Although Virgil's version of bucolic poetry seems to go back principally to Theocritus, he is also indebted to such post-Theocritean poems as the anonymous *Epitaph for Bion*, on which see Paschalis (1995) and Kania (2012).

125 Of one kind or another. I am not certain that the bucolicism evinced by the *Culex* can be attributed to the influence of Greek bucolic poets themselves so much as to the obvious pastoral strain present in certain key episodes of Lucretius' *De rerum natura* (2.14-33, 4.580-94, and 5.1379-1411; see further pp. 118-9 below).

126 *DRN* 2.14 ff.: *o miseras hominum mentis, o pectora caeca!....* On the unmistakable parallelisms between the two passages see esp. Salvatore (1994) pp. 257- 285. The Lucretian hypotext supports the manifestly Epicurean direction Virgil gives to the passage.

invocation of the *bona pastoris*, the simple, unmixed pleasures of the herdsman, whose sheltered life in the countryside guards him from the vain cares that beset others of less humble origins (*Cul*. 58-97):[127]

> O bona pastoris, si quis non pauperis usum
> mente prius docta fastidiat et probet illis
> omnia (luxuriae spretu) incognita curis
> quae lacerant avidas inimico pectore mentes:
> si non Assyrio fuerint bis lota colore
> Attalicis opibus data vellera, si nitor auri
> sub laqueare domus animum non angit avarum...
>
> O the blessings of the herdsman! – If one should not, having a mind previously instructed, disdain the way of the poor and should esteem (scorning luxury) all things that know not those cares which rend greedy minds in conflicted breasts. If fleeces twice washed in Assyrian dye have not been given for Attalician wealth, if the gleam of gold beneath a house's coffered roof does not vex the greedy soul...

Here the *bona pastoris* (the 'herdsman's blessings') are equated with the freedom from anxiety enjoyed by the mind uncorrupted by culture and traditional learning – in other words by the mind kept pure and disposed to enjoy only those things in life that do not bring unnecessary perturbations in their train.[128] Happiness, it is implied, consists in the adoption of the *pauperis usum*, the lowly way of life to which shepherds are accustomed and from which the state of inner tension and disquiet evoked by Virgil's juxtaposition of *avidas mentes* ('greedy minds') with *inimico pectore* (a 'conflicted breast') is blissfully absent. After his brief statement of this principle of humility, the poet launches into a catalogue of opulence and finery representing the riches which the wise person should hold in disdain. Several lines later, he returns to the serene condition of the herdsman, whose natural joys receive further elaboration (*Cul.* 68-88):

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127 I print the text of Salvatore (1957), with my emendation of his *pretiis* in line 60 to *spretu*, a conjecture based on the reading *spretis* in one of the manuscripts. Lines 59-60 appear to be corrupt and some emendation is necessary in order to get a viable reading.

128 Just as Epicurus said one was better off coming to philosophy with mind untainted by *paideia*; see p. 40 above**.** Contrastingly Chambert (2004) p. 46-50 takes *mens docta* the other way, as representing the mind that 'does not disdain the way of the poor' *because* it has been exposed to Epicurean teaching.

> ...at pectore puro
> saepe super tenero prosternit gramine corpus,
> florida cum tellus, gemmantis picta per herbas,
> vere notat dulci distincta coloribus arva;
> atque illum, calamo laetum recinente palustri
> otiaque invidia degentem et fraude remota
> pollentemque sibi viridi cum palmite lucens
> Tmolia pampineo subter coma velat amictu;
> illi sunt gratae rorantes lacte capellae
> et nemus et fecunda Pales et vallibus intus
> semper opaca novis manantia fontibus antra...
> illi falce deus colitur non arte politus,
> ille colit lucos, illi Panchaia tura
> floribus agrestes herbae variantibus adsunt.
>
> And with a pure heart he often stretches out his body on the soft grass while the flowering earth, adorned by glittering herbage, marks out with sweet spring-time the fields of different colours. And as he, happy at the whistling of the reed in the marsh, takes his leisure far from envy and deceit and enjoys a strength all his own, the Tmolian brush, radiant with fresh sprouts, veils him beneath its clinging vines. His beloved goats drip with milk as if with morning dew and he has too a grove and fertile Pales and, deep in the valleys, shadowy grottoes always putting forth fresh springs... He worships a god not shaped by art but by the sickle; he worships groves; he sets forth Panchaean incense and country plants with varied flowers.

Nature's daedalic beauty, a pure heart, a bountiful flock, and the leisure to make music at one's ease – the several features of the herdsman's idyllic situation contribute to his unalloyed happiness, which in lines 89 to 93 becomes expressly Epicurean (*Cul.* 89-93):[129]

> illi dulcis adest requies et pura voluptas,
> libera, simplicibus curis: huc imminet, omnis
> dirigit huc sensus, haec cura est subdita cordi
> quolibet ut requie victu contentus abundet
> iucundoque liget languentia corpora somno.
>
> His are sweet rest and pure pleasure – free and accompanied by simple cares. To this he tends, here do all his senses direct him. This concern is laid up in his heart: that, being content with any fare, he might abound in rest and still his weary body with welcome sleep.

129 Other quasi-Epicurean features are noted by Chambert (2004) p. 49.

In ideal Epicurean fashion, the *pastor* enjoys *dulcis requies* ('sweet rest') and *pura voluptas* ('pure pleasure'), being content with whatever sustenance will satisfy his hunger; indeed it is to this end that all his attention is directed. More than anything else the construction *omnis dirigit sensus* (90-1) should alert us to the strong Epicurean tenor of these lines:[130] our herdsman is quite literally 'guided by his senses' away from the phantasmagoria of false beliefs and towards a 'static' pleasure (*i.e. ataraxia*) which marks his highest goal in life. In the final four verses Virgil concludes by aligning the philosophical outlook he has been elaborating with a definitively pastoral poetics derived from the foundational example of the herdsman-poet Hesiod, whose *Theogony*, as is well known, began with the Muses visiting him amid his flock on the slopes of Helicon (*Cul.* 94-7):

> o pecudes, o Panes, et o gratissima Tempe
> fontis Hamadryadum, quarum non divite cultu
> aemulus Ascraeo pastor sibi quisque poetae
> securam placido traducit pectore vitam.
>
> O flocks, O Pans, and O most pleasant Tempe, fountain of the Hamadryads, in whose modest cult each herdsman, rivaling the Ascraean bard, leads a care-free life with a tranquil heart!

Virgil prescribes the Ur-pastoral of Hesiod as a form of poetry that is 'safe' for the *pastor* to practise while preserving his peace of mind and the security of his lifestyle undiminished.[131] The effect is in a sense to authorize Virgil's own poetry, which proceeds under the protective auspices of Hesiod's pastoral muse and remains in line with an Epicurean ethical world-view. I will return

130 The case and number of *omnis sensus* here (nominative singular) may be thought ambiguous, since the accusative plural ending in *-is* is one often employed by Virgil elsewhere. We should therefore note that in the three other places in the *Culex* where this spelling occurs (*Cul.* 4, 188, 357) it is always as a nominative singular subject. Moreover at *Cul.* 188 we find the parallel construction, *cui dissitus* ***omnis*** | *spiritus et cessit* ***sensus***, with *omnis* and *sensus* in the same metrical arrangement (*et cessit* Housman's conjecture for MSS. *excessit*). Some manuscripts report *omnis* at line 360, but here again it must be of the nominative form. For another example of *sensus* as a subject acting on a human agent, cf. Cic. *Ad fam.* 5.2.10, *meus enim me sensus admonet* ('for my sense warns me').

131 The earlier importance of the Hesiodic model for Virgil's pastoral forerunner Theocritus has been well discussed by Van Sickle (1975), esp. pp. 60-63, and Serrao (1971).

later to the importance of Hesiod as a (didactic) model for Virgil's bucolic poetry, but for now what is important is that we see how Virgil has already begun to formulate a generic affinity between bucolic poetics and Epicurean philosophy early on, even before embarking on the composition of the *Eclogues*. It is in light of this observation, I contend, that his later, more dedicated concentration on bucolic poetry must be read.

THEOCRITEAN BUCOLIC

A full account of Theocritus' bucolic program as it is represented at various moments in his collected *Idylls* would occupy us for longer than is practical within our present scope. The possibility of achieving completeness and coherence in such an account, already complicated by the unavoidable circumstances of reception and interpretation, is rendered even more remote by the difficulty of segregating the bucolic material contained in the *Idylls* from their other diverse contents. Theocritus was not at all times a 'bucolic' poet, although it is the 'bucolic' or 'pastoral' element in his surviving works for which posterity has most remembered him. Therefore, instead of undertaking the complex labour of a systematic or comprehensive statement of Theocritus' bucolic poetics, I wish to attend more narrowly to two particular passages of the *Idylls* which have often been recognized for their programmatic significance and their archetypally bucolic contexts. The two passages I have in mind, although appearing apart in Theocritus' text, can nevertheless be seen to engage with one another in intratextual dialogue and are mutually supportive in expressing a more or less unified poetic program. Their common purport will, I hope, prove illuminating relative to the special compatibility of the bucolic mode with the Epicurean themes I have already touched on.

The texts in question are from *Idylls* 1 and 7, two poems that are often reverted to by scholars in their attempts to excavate some authoritative ancient notion of 'bucolic' genre.[132] Quite reasonably, this interest is due in the first place to the presence in both poems of a recurrent and explicit bucolic terminology, stamping them, it is often thought, with a kind of generic seal. In *Idylls* 1 especially, the repeated invocation of βουκολικαὶ Μοῖσαι ('bucolic Muses') at the beginning (20) and throughout Thyrsis' enframed Lament for Daphnis (64, 70, *etc.*), calls attention to the poem's overtly bucolic thematics. Similarly *Idylls* 7, in which a poet identified as Simichidas narrates a singing match he once participated in with the mysteriously folkloric shepherd Lycidas, also employs the language of 'bucolic' to describe the poetic activity of the central *agon*: βουκολιασδώμεσθα ('let us bucolicize'), enjoins Simichidas (46), using what seems to have been a neologism coined by Theocritus to denote his characters' singing and, by extension, his own compositional style.[133] Whether the presence of this diction is *ipso facto* sufficient to legitimate a theory of Theocritus' *Idylls* as generically 'bucolic' can of course be contested, as can the eligibility of all poems in the collection for such a label. However, as analysis of the *Idylls* that I have chosen to focus on will show, there is good reason to construe the poetry represented in at least these two cases as fundamentally informed by generic considerations – and thus to regard them as participating in their own genre, which, if only for lack of a better term, we may call 'bucolic'.

My first passage comes from *Idylls* 1 and comprises a famous *ekphrasis* dwelling over the ornamentation of a finely-wrought wooden cup which one of the idyll's two bucolic

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132 Notable attempts to give an account of ancient bucolic genre which place emphasis on these poems are those of Van Groningen (1958), Serrao (1971), Van Sickle (1976), Halperin (1983), Cairns (1984), and Gutzwiller (2006). Cf. the Derridian scepticism of Goldhill (1991) pp. 223-83. *Id.* 1 and 7 also appear to have been especially important to Virgil as models for his *Eclogues*, on which see Hardie (1998) pp. 7-8.

133 On this 'bucolic terminology', see Hunter (1999) pp. 5ff., and esp. Gutzwiller (2006).

protagonists offers to the other in exchange for an *impromptu* performance of his (apparently popular) Lament for Daphnis. A detailed description of the vessel occupies some 33 verses from line 27 to line 60 of the poem:

> καὶ βαθὺ κισσύβιον κεκλυσμένον ἀδέι κήρῳ,
> ἀμφῶες, νεοτευχές, ἔτι γλυφάνοιο ποτόσδον.
> πῶ ποτὶ μὲν χείλη μαρύεται ὑψόθι κισσός,
> κισσὸς ἐλιχρύσῳ κεκονιμένος· ἁ δὲ κατ' αὐτόν
> καρπῷ ἕλιξ ἐιλεῖται ἀγαλλομένα κροκόεντι.
> ἔντοσθεν δὲ γυνά, τι θεῶν δαίδαλμα, τέτυκται,
> ἀσκητὰ πέπλῳ τε καὶ ἄμπυκι· πὰρ δέ οἱ ἄνδρες
> καλὸν ἐθειράζοντες ἀμοιβαδὶς ἄλλοθεν ἄλλος
> νεικείουσ' ἐπέεσσι· τὰ δ' οὐ φρενὸς ἅπτεται αὐτᾶς·
> ἀλλ' ὅκα μέν τῆνον ποτιδέρκεται ἄνδρα γέλαισα,
> ἄλλοκα δ' αὖ ποτὶ τὸν ῥιπτεῖ νόον· οἱ δ' ὑπ' ἔρωτος
> δηθὰ κυλοιδιόωντες ἐτώσια μοχθίζοντι.
> τοῖς δὲ μετὰ γριπεύς τε γέρων πέτρα τε τέτθκται
> λεπράς, ἐφ' ᾇ σπεύδων μέγα δίκτυον ἐς βόλον ἕλκει
> ὁ πρέσβυς, κάμνοντι τὸ καρτερὸν ἀνδρὶ ἐοικώς.
> φαίης κεν γυίων νιν ὅσον σθένος ἐλλοπιεύειν,
> ὧδέ οἱ ᾠδήκαντι κατ' αὐχένα πάντοθεν ἶνες
> καὶ πολιῷ περ ἐόντι· τὸ δὲ σθένος ἄξιον ἄβας.
> τυτθὸν δ' ὅσσον ἄπωθεν ἁλιτρύτοιο γέροντος
> περκναῖσι σταφυλαῖσι καλὸν βέβριθεν ἀλωά,
> τὰν ὀλίγος τις κῶρος ἐφ' αἱμασιαῖσι φυλάσσει
> ἥμενος· ἀμφὶ δέ νιν δύ' ἀλώπεκες, ἃ δ' ἐπὶ πήρᾳ
> πάντα δόλον τεύχοισα τὸ παιδίον οὐ πρὶν ἀνησεῖν
> φατὶ πρὶν ἢ ἀκράτιστον ἐπὶ ξηροῖσι καθίξῃ.
> αὐτὰρ ὅγ' ἀνθερίκοισι καλὰν πλέκει ἀκριδοθήραν
> σχοίνῳ ἐφαρμόσδων· μέλεται δέ οἱ οὔτε τι πήρας
> οὔτε φυτῶν τοσσῆνον ὅσον περὶ πλέγματι γαθεῖ.
> παντᾷ δ' ἀμφὶ δέπας περιπέπταται ὑγρὸς ἄκανθος...

If you sing as once you did in the match with Libyan Chromis, I'll give you three milkings of a goat that suckles twins, yet has enough left to fill two pails. I'll give you too a deep cup, sealed with a layer of sweet wax, two-handled, newly made, still smelling of the knife. At its lip winds an ivy pattern, ivy dotted with golden clusters; its tendrils twist this way and that, glorying in their yellow fruit. Inside the plant's frame is carved (Truly god's craft) a woman resplendent in a dress and circlet. She stands between two men with fine long hair, who compete in alternating song, but do not touch her heart. She smiles, glances at one, then turns to look at the other, while they, their eyes long swollen with love, keep on their useless toil. Next to them is carved an old fisherman, who stands on a jagged rock. Urgently he gathers up his great net for the cast, the image of a man straining his back to a task. You'd think he

> was at his strength's limit, so do the sinews swell all around his neck as he fishes. Grey-haired he may be, but his strength is the strength of youth. Not far from this sea-beaten old man there is a vineyard, heavily laden with dark ripe grape-clusters. A little boy watches over it, perched on a drystone wall. Two foxes lurk nearby; one prowls down the vine rows, stealing the ripe fruit, while the other pits all her cunning against the boy's satchel. No respite for him, she reckons, till he has nothing left for breakfast but dry bread. But he is twisting a pretty cricket-cage of asphodel, plaiting it with rushes, with never a thought for satchel and vines, absorbed as he is in his weaving task. All round the cup's base spreads pliant acanthus, a wonder for goatherds to see and a marvel to strike your heart. (Verity trans.)

On the cup are depicted three separate scenes of human endeavour. The first (32-38) features a beautiful woman beset on both sides by two insistent male lovers who contend in turn for her affections while she remains coy and aloof; stress is laid on the frustration of the lovers' assiduous pursuit and its negative consequences for themselves, the futility of their desire having rendered them, as Theocritus says, 'hollow-eyed' (38: κυλοιδιόωντες). The second scene (39-44) is of an old fisherman casting his net and exerting himself to the limit of his capacities; his advanced age is pointedly contrasted with the demands of his laborious task (44: καὶ πολιῷ περ ἐόντι) which, Theocritus concludes, might be more fitting for a younger person (44: τὸ δὲ σθένος ἄξιον ἄβας). The third and final vignette (45-54) sees a young boy perched atop a vineyard wall, engrossed in weaving a delicate cricket-trap out of rushes and asphodel; unnoticed by the inattentive guardian, two foxes proceed to plunder the fruit growing on the vines and to pilfer the contents of the boy's nearby pouch, yet he remains unperturbed, taking, as Theocritus tells us, more pleasure in his pastime than care for his possessions or the crops under his charge.

Developing a suggestion first made by William Berg, David Halperin has argued at some length that, as a whole, this *ekphrasis* stands in a privileged relation to the conception that Theocritus has formed of the genre within which he is writing.[134] In support of his thesis

134 Halperin (1983) p. 161 ff.; following Berg (1974) pp. 13-14.

Halperin cites the structural equivalency that Theocritus establishes between the cup and bucolic song in general, which he sees as determined on the one hand by the cup's role in the fictional pastoral economy, where it is accepted as equal compensation for Thyrsis' Daphnis lament (*Id.* 1.64ff.),[135] and on the other by the set of traditional themes conjured up by the word κισσύβιον, a *recherché* piece of Homeric vocabulary that is associated with lowly characters and country life and serves to mark the cup as a typically bucolic artifact. Halperin writes,[136]

> the structure of Idyll 1, with its symmetrical balance of song and dramatic frame, divides the leading roles in this chorus of praise between the ode about Daphnis (the perfect example of bucolic poetry) and the goatherd's description of the ivy-cup (the figure and emblem of the new "genre"). Whether the relation of cup to song is interpreted as one of parallelism, expansion, or contrast, there can be no doubt that Theocritus intended each artifact to be set against the other as complementary illustrations of the bucolic genre.

We are therefore urged to read the three distinct vignettes cumulatively, as symbolizing certain central themes of the 'bucolic' *Idylls*: these being love, humble occupation ('*Kleinleben*'), and undisturbed play. As Halperin shows, all three images are based on hypotexts from previous epic *ekphrases* in Homer and Hesiod, but alter their sources in such a way as to effect what he calls an 'anti-epic inversion' of subject-matter. The transformation in the first vignette of a scene of litigation displayed on Achilles' shield (*Il.* 18.497-506) into one of erotic contest introduces the theme of love in place of the heroic strife of the battlefield, while in the second vignette the transposition of a fisherman featured on the Hesiodic *Scutum* (*Scut.* 211-215) to a bucolic context leaves but 'a muted echo of Homeric battle' in Theocritus' poem.[137] Likewise, the third scene of

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135 So also Hunter (1991) *ad loc.*: 'In the bucolic world of reciprocal exchange rather than financial transaction, cup is to be exchanged for song: both are of equal value'. Cf. Cairns (1984) p. 106. As Halperin makes clear, the Daphnis lament can itself also be read as an idealized representation of bucolic verse (likewise Cairns (1984) p. 96), rendering the equivalency as much textual as metaphorical. Compare *Id.* 1.20 where Thyrsis, in performing the lament, is said to have reached the 'pinnacle of the bucolic Muse' (τᾶς βουκολικᾶς ἐπὶ τὸ πλέον ἵκεο μοίσας).

136 Halperin (1983) p. 163.

137 Halperin (1983) pp. 177-81.

the boy in the vineyard draws on both the Iliadic shield *ekphrasis* and the ecphrastic *Scutum* in its portrayal of a humble, anti-epic subject (cf. *Il.* 18.525-6, 561-72; *Scut.* 292-300).[138]

Halperin's reasoning is mainly sound and his ideas suggestive, yet it is not necessarily clear that in alluding to his epic sources Theocritus is so decisively setting the material he has selected apart from its epic contexts as Halperin thinks. Love and courtship were, after all, themes so essential to the Homeric poems – one need only recall the passionate love between Helen and Paris or the role of the suitors in the *Odyssey* – that Sappho, for example, could insinuate that the *Iliad* was not so much a song of war as one of love (fr. 16). On the other hand, in the case of the fisherman, the most striking modulation between the Hesiodic original and the Theocritean imitation consists in the added focus which Theocritus places on the fisherman's toil, to the exclusion of the wildlife around him – an effect which hardly seems to create the desired contrast between the modest pretensions of bucolic and the grandeur of epic and would seem rather to elevate the fisherman's labour to a quasi-heroic status.[139] Moreover, it could not be said that the work of the fisherman falls outside the purview of Hesiodic *epos* taken as a whole, whose distinctively didactic content, at least in the *Works and Days,* embraces a variety of other equally menial employments.[140]

Of the third component in Theocritus' triptych, Halperin offers a more compelling analysis. The little boy, he asserts, is a stand-in for the Alexandrian poet, and more particularly

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138 See Hunter (1991) on *Id.* 1.27-61 and 45-54. *Il.* 18.525-6 depicts a pair of care-free herdsmen delighting in music and gives, as it were, a miniaturization of bucolic which Theocritus has taken and expanded, minimizing in turn the martial epic context of the Homeric poem.

139 Halperin (1983) p. 179 writes 'Only a muted echo of Homeric battle can be heard in the Theocritean passage... where the struggle is confined within the homely conditions of the old fisherman's world'. One might object that there is very little that is homely about the rugged rock where the fisherman is poised, and that Theocritus' emphasis of his physical exertion seems rather to introduce struggle where, in Hesiod's version, there was none. As Hunter (1991) *ad loc.* notes, the construction at *Id.*1.42, φαίης κεν, is a Homerism used by Theocritus only here and thus serves to enhance the fisherman's epic proportions.

140 Working people of various kinds also appear on the Homeric Shield. See further Hunter (1991) on *Id.* 1.39.

for the composer of bucolic verse. Theocritus thus exploits a Hellenistic *topos* figuring the poet as a 'child' and his work as 'child's play' which is perhaps most famously exemplified by Callimachus' words in the prologue of his *Aetia*: ἔπος δ' ἐπι τυτθὸν ἑλ[ίσσω | παῖς ἅτε, τῶν δ' ἐτέων ἡ δεκὰς οὐκ ὀλίγη (fr. 1.5-6 Harder: 'I turn my verse little by little, like a child, although the decades of my life are not few).[141] The boy's plaiting a cricket cage would accordingly represent the activity of composing bucolic poems – a reading given further weight by consideration of the role of the cricket (or grasshopper or cicada) in the Hellenistic tradition as a symbol of pure and spontaneous song, beautiful in its proximity to nature.[142] In other words, the woven cricket-trap is a suitable metaphor for the work of the bucolic poet, who in weaving his verses together from the traditional poetic material at his disposal seeks to capture something of the originary quality of the cricket's song. At the end of *Eclogues* 10, Virgil appropriates this metaphor in lines describing the poem's narrative *persona* as he 'sits and weaves a little basket out of the slender hibiscus' (*Ecl.* 10.71: *dum sedet et gracili fiscellam texit hibisco*), thus providing a measure of confirmation relative to the passage's reception in antiquity.

A key difficulty confronting interpreters of this final set-piece turns on how one ought to understand the contrasts (or similarities) set up between the triptych's three parts. Accepting that the cup does indeed symbolize Theocritus' conception of the genre or mode in which he is writing, we are still left with the puzzling question of how this obviously complex conception is

141 The Hellenistic idea of poetry as 'play' is also represented in the title of Philitas' *Paignia*, which was a term later applied to Theocritus' *Idylls* as well (see Hunter (1991) p. 11), and would also give rise in Latin of the neoteric emphasis on *lusus*. Callimachus similarly employs the image of the cicada (or grasshopper) in developing his poetic program for the *Aetia* (fr. 1.29-30 Harder: ἐνὶ τοῖς γὰρ ἀείδομεν οἳ λιγὺν ἦχον | [τεττίγων, θ]όρυμβον δ' οὐκ ἐφίλησαν ὄνων ['for we sing among those who carry the clear sound of the grasshoppers and do not love the braying of the asses']). See further Harder (2012) on *Aet.* fr. 1.30.

142 So also Fantuzzi and Hunter (2004) pp. 142-5. An example of this role given to the cicada may be found in a pair of epigrams by Meleager, 12-3 Gow-Page = *Anth. Pal.* 7.195-6. Cf. *Id.* 5.110-1, 7.41. Meleager's twin epigrams are also an important source for Virgil's *Eclogues*, on which see *e.g.* Roche (2014) and further n. 158 below.

structured. I hope to have shown, if only in summary form, that Halperin's attempt to resolve this issue can be considered inadequate in light of the intertextual relations pertaining to the passage at hand. According to him, the separate images on the cup can be unified in their common divergence from the themes of Homeric epic, each representing an element of the bucolic genre counterposed against a corresponding constituent element of heroic verse. But the distinctions involved cannot be so tidily drawn, and the passage as a whole seems rather to be suspended between both representation and repudiation of epic precedent. We may also diagnose an additional weakness in Halperin's argument which has to do not so much with the *ekphrasis*' intertextual parentage as with its *intra*textual coherence. The plain fact is that Halperin does very little by way of attempting to understand what is significant about the juxtaposition of just these three images, seeming instead to suggest that the passage's coherence resides entirely in their derivation from a common Homeric-Hesiodic model.

More satisfactory on this point is Kathryn Gutzwiller's reading, which, like Halperin's, views the cup *ekphrasis* as presenting 'a set of experiences that seem to delimit the cultural phenomenon known as bucolic', but which differs from his in that Gutzwiller posits a significant dissonance immanent in the opposition between the lovers' frustration in the first scene and the alternatives of 'hard work or the enchantment of song' proposed by the second and third.[143] Contrary to Halperin, Gutzwiller thus sees the three pieces as symbolizing, through their contrast, the ironic or deceptive quality of 'bucolic' imparted to it by the conventional use of the verb βουκολεῖν as a metaphor for beguilement. And yet this reading too, although preferable for its perception of an intratextual matrix, nevertheless works its own effacement of the significant intratextual contrast obtaining between the second and third vignettes. Can it really be suggested

143 Gutzwiller (2006) pp. 398-99.

that 'hard work' and 'the enchantment of song' are equal but different responses to the pain and frustration of erotic longing, here rejected? And if this solidarity is challenged, then what becomes of their mutual opposition to the themes represented in the first image of the lady and her two lovers?

In answer to these dilemmas I would like to propose a solution that takes into account both the cautionary element detected by Gutzwiller and the generic affinities so well documented by Halperin. I suggest that in the *ekphrasis* of the cup Theocritus undertakes a negotiation of the bucolic genre at once more polemical and more specific than these two readers have found. In order to do this, I wish to invert the critical armature of two-to-one on which Gutzwiller builds her interpretation, isolating the third scene instead of the first as Theocritus' point of focus.[144] I am motivated in making this shift by the importance, highlighted above, of the little boy and his cricket-trap as a signifier of the bucolic genre, which may thus stand at odds with the pictorial and metaphorical content of the two previous frames. These I take to represent modes of generic composition opposed to Theocritus' bucolic mode: specifically, I believe they can be shown to allude to erotic elegy and heroic epic as avenues of composition repudiated by Theocritus for a mixture of ethical and poetical reasons. Such a repudiation, however, is not unequivocal, as Theocritus' relation to the elegiac and epic genres is as much one of acknowledged and active inheritance as it is one of polemical distancing.

My last point can be illustrated by analysis of our second passage, drawn from *Idylls* 7, where the herdsman Simichidas – often regarded as a representative of the author –[145] makes a

144 A comparable move is made by Fantuzzi and Hunter (2004) p. 142, who see in the boy 'an ideal opposition to the psychological and physical suffering of the protagonists of the other two scenes depicted on the cup (the lovesick men and the toiling fisherman)', although they stop short of exploring the complexities of this relationship.

145 Discussion of Theocritus' *persona* can be found in Gow (1950) pp. 127-9 and Hunter (1991) p. 146. The identification between Theocritus and Simichidas was made as early as the Theocritean *scholia*; see further

quite explicit statement of his modest proclivity for erotic poetry, followed by an equally explicit expression of contempt from his bucolic interlocutor, Lycidas, for poets who set out to imitate Homeric epic (*Id.* 7.37-48):

> ‘καὶ γὰρ ἐγω Μοισᾶν καπὺρον στόμα, κὴμε λέγοντι
> πάντες ἀοιδὸν ἄριστον· ἐγὼ δέ τις οὐ ταχυπειθής,
> οὐ Δᾶν· οὐ γάρ πω κατ’ ἐμὸν νόον οὔτε τὸν ἐσθλόν
> Σικελίδαν νίκημι τὸν ἐκ Σάμω οὐτε Φιλίταν
> ἀείδων, βάτραχος δὲ ποτ’ ακρίδας ὥς τις ἐρίσδω.’
> ὥς ἐφάμαν ἐπίταδες· ὁ δ’ αἰπόλος ἁδὺ γελάσσας,
> ‘τάν τοι’, ἔφα, ‘κορύναν δωρύττομαι, οὕνεκεν ἐσσί
> πᾶν ἐπ’ ἀλαθείᾳ πεπλασμένον ἐκ Διὸς ἔρνος.
> ὥς μοι καὶ τέκτων μέγ’ ἀπέχθεται ὅστις ἐρευνῇ
> ἶσον ὄρευς κορυφᾷ τελέσαι δόμον Ὠρομέδοντος,
> καὶ Μοισᾶν ὄρνιχες ὅσοι ποτὶ Χῖον ἀοιδόν
> ἀντία κοκκύζοντες ἐτώσια μοχθίζοντι.’
>
> ‘Men call *me* the best of singers, though I’m not one to be quickly persuaded, I assure you. I certainly don’t believe I am yet a rival to mighty Sicelidas of Samos in song, nor to Philitas. I’m but a frog competing with grasshoppers.’ All this was to draw him on; and he in turn replied with a cheerful laugh, ‘I can see you’re of the stock that Zeus creates to speak the truth, so look, I’ll stake you my stick. I hate the craftsman who strives to build his house as high as the topmost peak of Mount Oromedon, and I hate those Muses’ cockerels who crow vainly to no effect against the singer who comes from Chios. (Verity trans.)

Sicelidas of Samos (known better by the name Asclepiades) and Philitas were both renowned writers of erotic elegiac verses, and both poets belonging to the generation of *litterateurs* that had come before Theocritus.[146] Here Simichidas professes a strong attachment to their work, but in a way that is significantly self-deprecatory. Although his admiration is palpable, he does not consider himself equal to the task of composing poems of comparable refinement to those of his models: he is but a croaking frog next to elegant, chirruping grasshoppers. Lycidas responds to

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Farrell (2016) who notes that Virgil’s composition of the *Eclogues* seems to have been influenced by the scholiastic interpretative tradition on the Idylls; and cf. Peirano (2017).

146 Asclepiades’ numerous erotic-elegiac epigrams can be found in Gow and Page (1965) pp. 44-56. Very little survives of Philitas, but he is mentioned as an elegiac model by Propertius (*Eleg.* 3.1.1). See further Hunter (1996) pp. 14-28.

this confession by first commending Simichidas' frank modesty and then communicating his distaste for those who, devoid of a humility like Simichidas', 'strive vainly' (ἐτώσια μοχθίζοντι) to compose heroic epic after the Homeric example. Much like Simichidas with respect to the elegiac poets he reveres, these poetasters are consigned to the secondary *stratum* of a figurative animal hierarchy where Homer is accorded the pre-eminent rank of nightingale and they appear as mere farm birds (ὄρνιχες).[147]

The mixed attitude of Theocritean poetics toward epic and elegiac paradigms is formulated here in the words of the two conversing swains who by turns elevate and renounce these alternative compositional modes. We should note that, however much Simichidas may venerate his elegiac forbears, he does not design to follow in their footsteps; just as Lycidas strongly suggests his respect for Homeric epic and in the same breath denounces those who waste their efforts attempting to imitate its grandeur. Above, I have thought to include the Greek terms in which this denunciation is articulated between parentheses, because, as careful readers will have noticed, they replicate exactly the words which Theocritus earlier employed in the opening frame of the *kissubion ekphrasis* to describe the vanity of the lovers' pursuit: ἐτώσια μοχθίζοντι (*Id.* 1.38: 'they strive vainly'). With these two words Theocritus has left us a self-reflexive allusive marker whereby he deftly refers our attention back to the initial statement of his poetic program in *Idylls* 1, signalling an affinity between the two passages. The lines from *Idylls* 7 thus function as a gloss on the subliminal content of the *kissubion ekphrasis* and

147 The term ἀοιδόν ('singer') used possesses a close etymological and phonetical affinity with the Greek word for nightingale, ἀηδών, an affinity here brought into relief by the ornithological metaphor employed to refer to the Hellenistic epicists and its parallelism with Simichidas' earlier naturalistic analogy. I remain sceptical, although sympathetic, towards J. M. Edmonds' emendation of ἀοιδόν to ἀηδώ in the Loeb edition; but even without the emendation the implication is strong enough. Hunter (1991) *ad loc.* mentions the further possibility that the contrastive bird is not a nightingale but a swan, as at *Ecl.* 9.36. Cf. *Id.* 5.136-7: οὐ θεμιτόν, Λάκων, ποτ' ἀηδόνα κίσσας ἐρισδειν | οὐδ' ἔποπας κύκνοισι· τὺ δ', ὦ τάλαν, ἐσσι φιλεχθής ('it is not lawful, Lacio, for the jays to compete with the nightingale or for the kinfishers to vie with the swans: and you too, o wretch, are quarrelsome').

elucidate what before had been allegorically suppressed: namely, Theocritus' oppositional self-fashioning as a poet of bucolic instead of erotic-elegiac or heroic-epic song.

But, it may be asked, what evidence do we have that this oppositional structure is already contained in the *ekphrasis*? Granted that the conventions of hexametrical composition often invite the recycling of formulaic patterns, irrespective of their contextual meaning, might this not be an arbitrary readerly superimposition of *Idylls* 7 onto *Idylls* 1? By way of responding to such scepticism we would do well, firstly, to remember how both passages here concerned, in virtue of their programmatic quality, are *a priori* likely to exhibit some of the same traits, assuming (as seems probable) that the poetic program with which they are inscribed is substantially the same. And secondly, we should reflect on the significance of ἐτώσια μοχθίζοντι, not simply as a conjunctural point of contact between texts, but as itself declarative of what these two passages share in common.

As a catchphrase for the style of poetry that Theocritean poetics – and indeed Alexandrian-Callimachean poetics at large – seeks to avoid, we must admit that ἐτώσια μοχθίζοντι appears rather serviceable.[148] It is characteristic of the *leptotês* espoused as a poetic virtue by the likes of Theocritus and Callimachus that it excludes the vain elaboration of material indulged in by Lycidas' *Homerici* and denotes instead an unpretentious simplicity of

148 Cf. Pfeiffer (1968) p. 139: 'Callimachus regarded Homer with the same devotion and affection as Aristotle had done... For that very reason he esteemed Homer inimitable, even unapproachable. It would be vain ambition to vie with him and the other great poets of the past; if poetry lived on it was bound to follow principles quite different from those inferred by Aristotle from the ancient poems.' Cameron (1995), esp. pp. 339ff., has notoriously defended the provocative view that in Callimachean poetics there was no such disavowal of epic, despite what may appear from fr. 1.3-4. All turns on how one takes Callimachus' ἕν ἄεισμα*,* which to my mind (*pace* Cameron) refers to a notion similar, if not identical, to the technical idea of *poiêsis* that I have tried to define in the previous chapter (see above pp. 60-66). In Latin, Callimachus' attitude towards Homer as an inimitable model is taken up by Horace (*Serm.* 10.50ff.) with respect to Lucilius as a model for his *Satires*, where the parallel with Homer is made explicit.

form that remains comfortably cognizant of its own limitations.[149] This ideal of contented restraint is realized towards the end of Theocritus' *ekphrasis* in the picture of the little boy, whose unassuming project delights him in a way that the activities occupying the other personalities displayed on the cup decidedly do not delight them.

With regard to the initial scene of the lady and her lovers, little argument seems required to support this view; the suitors pose a clearly defined example of the poet's idea of ἐτώσιος μόχθος. Moreover their 'contending speech' (νεικείουσ' ἐπέεσσι, 35) suggests that poetry is the form their utterances take, ἔπος being a common word for 'verse' (dactylic verse in particular). Our first frame would appear, then, to encapsulate a paradigm of erotic-elegiac verse cast in the unfavourable light of 'love's labour lost'.

Interpretation of the second frame is made somewhat more problematic by the absence of any clear pronouncement from the poet on the moral of its contents. Although in all likelihood we shall not find ourselves envying the old fisherman's situation – bitter, wet, and cold as it is made out to be – there is nonetheless a possible note of admiration in Theocritus' portrayal of his mighty toil, which one could as readily qualify as heroic as wince at its discomfort. Any desire to fit the fisherman into the scheme I have already diagrammed on the evidence of *Idylls* 7, a desire which would require that some kind of equivalency be demonstrated between the frustration of the latter-day bards there evoked and the physical strain depicted here, would thus seem to be thwarted, at least in part.[150] But if Theocritus is not obviously pointing a moral, neither is he painting a picture free from incongruity. It remains the case that in working up the

149 The awareness of the limits of poetic art gives its importance to the Alexandrian key-word ἐκπονέω (*e.g.* at *Id.* 7.85, *Anth. Pal.* 7.212; cf. Thuc. 3.38), which connotes a consummate polish made possible by realistic ambition.

150 Although compare Theocritus' fisherman with the fishermen portrayed in the pseudo-Theocritean *Id.* 21, where their habitual labour is characterized by the author as thankless and unremitting.

two lines from the Hesiodic *Scutum* on which the set-piece has been modelled, Theocritus' contribution consists mainly in the added attention he gives to the arduousness of the fisherman's task and in a focalization of the disparity between the age of the fisherman (old) and the demands of his work (appropriate for youth). Such incongruity contrasts noticeably with the seemliness of the child at play in the next frame and should also make us remember the similar theme of age difference invoked by Callimachus in the *Aetia* prologue, where the discordancy is between the poet's advanced years and his playful, small-scale poetry – quite a different matter from the feat of youthful vigour shown here. That Callimachus was directing his polemic towards contemporary writers of epic who had criticized him is widely accepted;[151] that Theocritus here imagines an equation between his fisherman and an epic poet may perhaps be confirmed by the occurrence of the unusual word ἐλλοπιεύειν (meaning 'to fish'), a *hapax legomenon* which he seems to have coined on the basis of the similarly rare archaic adjective ἔλλοψ ('scaly', 'fish-like') at *Scut*. 212, in order to allude to the archaizing practice of the *Homerici*.

In sum, then, it seems safe to conclude that in Theocritus' *kissubion ekphrasis* the poet creates a meaningful distance between his conception of bucolic genre on the one hand and his contrasting ideas of erotic elegy, with its difficulties of subject, and heroic epic, with the challenges it poses in regard to scale and form, on the other. This figurative distance is meaningful, not only because it emphasizes Theocritus' 'new' genre as different from those that came before it, but also because it constitutes a simultaneous recognition of the debt he owes to his epic and elegiac models. In the resulting 'interplay of difference', Theocritus presents his

151 The so-called *Telchines*, among whom numbered Asclepiades, if we are to believe the Florentine *scholia*; Hunter (1996) p. 19. This makes Asclepiades' appearance alongside the poets whom Theocritus will *not* imitate in *Id.* 7 suggestive of the latter's apparent artistic allegiance to the same Alexandrian movement to which Callimachus belonged (if indeed he did not lead it).

own personal formulation of the Hellenistic pattern of *oppositio in imitando*, whereby the poet must perforce pursue his artistic individuality in the pre-existing terms set by the tradition which inspires him.

As an inheritor of this same poetic tradition, now renovated by Theocritus' bucolic annexations, Virgil has his own successorship to negotiate and, as I shall endeavour to demonstrate in Chapter 4, brings to the table his own innovations and cross-contaminations for this purpose. At the same time, in taking Theocritus as his model and electing to write self-professedly bucolic verse, Virgil has been much more conservative than his predecessor: as was fashionable among Latin poets of a certain age, he takes over a Greek genre instead of inventing his own. What motivated this predilection for bucolic as it had earlier been defined by Theocritus, I hope may already have suggested itself to the reader in the course of my analysis of the generic self-fashioning latent in the Theocritean passages discussed above. Spelled out, it is that the strongly ambivalent generic stance of Theocritean bucolic towards elegy and epic displays a remarkable affinity to the relations maintained by Epicurean philosophy with poetry. Accordingly, I propose to devote the remainder of this chapter to taking a closer look at how these structural similarities can be seen to play out through Virgil's own Epicurean-inflected bucolic poetry.

VIRGILIAN BUCOLIC I: THE *ECLOGUES* AND EPIC

On even the most surface-level reading of the *Eclogues* it should be apparent that elegy and epic are two of the poetic genres with which Virgilian bucolic engages most openly. To see this, one need only turn to the programmatically important epic *recusatio* that opens *Eclogues* 6 or to the

epic aspirations expressed in *Eclogues* 8 (6-8); or again to the mysterious and recurrent presence of the elegiac poet Gallus in *Eclogues* 6 and 10, or to the distinctly elegiac colouring of the amatory speeches of Corydon, Damon, and Alphesiboeus in *Eclogues* 2 and 8. In this section and the next I shall be examining these two underlying generic connections in order to see what can be made of them in light of the various conclusions that have been arrived at along our itinerary thus far.

A convenient point of departure for this fresh venture is constituted by the opening lines of *Eclogues* 6, which together form what scholarly parlance has come to know as a *proemio al mezzo* (a 'proem in the middle'), after the terminology coined by Gian Biagio Conte.[152] At the beginning of his sixth eclogue, the geometrical midpoint of the collection, Virgil proclaims in no unclear terms his anti-epic bucolic program (*Ecl.* 6.1-12):

> prima Syracosio dignata est ludere uersu
> nostra, neque erubuit siluas habitare, Thalia.
> cum canerem reges et proelia, Cynthius aurem
> uellit, et admonuit: 'Pastorem, Tityre, pinguis
> pascere oportet ouis, deductum dicere carmen.'
> nunc ego (namque super tibi erunt, qui dicere laudes,
> Vare, tuas cupiant, et tristia condere bella)
> agrestem tenui meditabor harundine musam.
> non iniussa cano. si quis tamen haec quoque, si quis
> captus amore leget, te nostrae, Vare, myricae,
> te nemus omne canet; nec Phoebo gratior ulla est
> quam sibi quae Vari praescripsit pagina nomen.
>
> My Muse first deigned to sport in Sicilian strains, and blushed not to dwell in the woods. When I was fain to sing of kings and battles, the Cynthian plucked my ear and warned me: "A shepherd, Tityrus, should feed sheep that are fat, but sing a lay fine-spun." And now—bards in plenty will you find eager to sing your praises, Varus, and build the story of grim war—now will I woo the rustic Muse on slender reed. Unbidden strains I sing not; still if any there be to read even these my lays—any whom love of the theme has won—'tis of you, Varus, our tamarisks shall sing, of you all our groves. To Phoebus no page is more welcome than that which bears on its front the name of Varus. (Fairclough trans.)

152 Conte (1980) pp. 121-33. This technique is also used by Virgil in the *Georgics* (3.1-48) and the Aeneid (7.37-45), and was probably adapted from Callimachus' *Aetia*.

Opening with an autobiographical reference to his quasi-bucolic *Culex*, Virgil gives a round-up of his poetic development thus far.[153] After his initiatory piece of *juvenilia* – which, as we have seen, was written with a firm Epicurean bias – he claims to have set his sights on epic *poiêsis* (*reges et proelia* ['kings and battles']),[154] but was promptly admonished by the god Apollo who instructed him to write instead a *deductum carmen* (a 'reduced' or 'refined', *i.e.* 'slender', song) in the Alexandrian manner of Callimachus. The presence of Callimachean influence in the resulting bucolic project is made clear by Virgil's imitation in these lines of the famous programmatic fragment from the Alexandrian poet's *Aetia* prologue, where he tells the story of a similar admonition received from the god to compose in a more modest style than that of epic (fr. 1.3-24 Harder):

> εἵνεκεν οὐκ ἓν ἄεισμα διηνεκὲς ἢ βασιλ[η
> .....]ας ἐν πολλαῖς ἤνυσα χιλιάσιν
> ἢ.....].ους ἥρωας, ἔπος δ' ἐπὶ τυτθὸν ἐλ[ίσσω
> παῖς ἅτε τῶν δ' ἐτέων ἡ δεκὰς οὐκ ὀλίγη
> ...
> καὶ γὰρ ὁτε πρώτιστον ἐμοις ἐπὶ δέλτον ἔθηκα
> γούνασιν, Απ[ό]λλων εἶπεν ὅ μοι Λύκιος·
> '.....]...ἀοιδέ, τὸ μὲν θύος ὅττι πάχιστον
> θρέψαι, τὴ]ν Μοῦσαν δ' ὠγαθὲ λεπταλέην.
>
> Because I did not complete one single continuous song (on the glory of) kings... in many thousands of lines or on... heroes, but turn around words a little in my mind like a child, although the decades of my years are not few... For when I put a writing-tablet on my knees for the first time Apollo Lycius said to me: '...poet, feed the

153 Compare *Ecl.* 1.1-2 with *Cul.* 1, ***lusimus**, Octavi, gracili modulante **Thalia***. Thus Frank (1920a) p. 31 n. 3; Rostagni (1933) p. 92; Berg (1974) pp. 94-5. Tempting though it may be to read *prima dignata est nostra Thalia* as 'our Thalia was the first to deign', as Coleman (1977) *ad loc.* points out., the temporal sequence implied by *canerem* (3) and *nunc* (6) indicates that the primary meaning must be 'it was in Syracusan verse that my Muse first deigned to play'. Virgil is referring to events before the composition of his *Eclogues*; this does not exclude readings of a claim to poetic primacy in the bucolic genre, since the bucolic element in the *Culex* was already pronounced. The parallels adduced by Clausen (1994) *ad loc.*: *DRN* 1.926-30, 4.1-4; *Geo.* 3.10-1; Hor. *Carm.* 3.30.13-4; Prop. 3.1.3-4) thus still hold good, even if it is not the *Eclogues* themselves that, properly speaking, mark Virgil's pastoral *début*.

154 Cf. Hor. *AP* 73-4, *res gestae regumque ducumque et tristia bella | quo scribi possent numero, monstrauit Homerus* ('Homer demonstrated in what meter harsh wars and the deeds of kings and generals could be written down').

> sacrificial animal so that it becomes as fat as possible, but, my dear fellow, keep the Muse slender. (Harder trans.)

Callimachus' unassuming, slender style is recommended to him by Apollo over the 'single continuous song' (ἓν ἄεισμα διηνεκὲς) which the poet renounces. By this expression Callimachus certainly means epic song, as becomes clear from his mention of heroes and kings, and the precise construction is strikingly reminiscent of the *perpetuum carmen* or *perpetuum argumentum* we have already seen deployed in Latin literary-theoretical discussions of *poiêma* and *poiêsis*.[155] Thus, Virgil's adoption of an anti-epic Callimachean poetics for his *Eclogues* can be read at the same time as a declaration of his intention to remain within the confines of a compositional mode sanctioned by Epicurean philosophy, from which *poiêsis* was categorically excluded. It may further be remarked that the *tenui harundine* (*Ecl.* 6.8: 'slender reed') of Virgil's poetic project is also in harmony with Epicureanism's characteristic concern for clear and simple language.[156] Indeed, the Epicurean affiliation of this, Virgil's central programmatic statement, is gestured to in the same line by the appearance of a Lucretian intertext encoded in the words *agrestem musam*, which allude to *DRN* 5.1398 and Lucretius' Epicurean account of the origins of pastoral music amid the primitive joys and *otia dia* ('godly leisure') of early humans (*DRN* 5.1379-1411).[157]

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155 See above pp. 60-66**.**

156 For a good discussion of Virgil's stylistic choices, see Frank (1920c). The *tenuitas* espoused by Virgil must be a Latin translation of Callimachus' *leptotês*, but also evokes the conventional distinction made by ancient rhetorical theory between the 'grand' (*grande,* μεγαλοπρεπές) and the 'plain' (*tenue,* ἰσχνόν) styles (in Latin cf. Cic. *Or.* 20ff.). In the *Culex,* the *Ciris,* and the *Eclogues* Virgil deploys a bundle of signifiers – *tenuis, gracilis, facetus, mollis* – which operate together to define a style that is simple, minimal, elegant, and polished (beside the present passage of *Ecl.* 6, set *Cul.* 35-6 and *Cir.* 20-1). Horace recognizes as much at *Serm.* 1.10.36-40, where he describes the Virgilian manner as *molle et facetum* in contrast to the ampler and less polished styles of poets like Alpinus (an epicist) and Fundanus (a comic playwright); see further Gowers (2012) pp. 323ff. The preference for economy and simplicity was, among orators, a feature of Attic style, which Virgil ostensibly favours in *Catal.* 2 and 5.

157 On the central importance of Lucretius here, see Hardie (1998) pp. 10-12.

On the literary side of things, Virgil's recycling of this particular passage of the *Aetia*, which we have already seen embedded in *Idylls* 1, signals his awareness of continuity with the generic self-definition of his immediate bucolic model. His opening remarks alluding to the Theocritean *Syracosia versu* of the *Culex* declare that this awareness was already in place early on and serve to introduce an element of the epyllion's youthful Epicurean pastoralism in addition to the more mature generic sophistication present in the proem. The emergent complex of allusion thus constructed gathers together Virgil's sources and their various generic co-ordinates into a single cohesion, suggesting the planned dimensions of his literary edifice: here at the heart of the collection fragments of the *Aetia*, the *Idylls,* the *De rerum natura*, and the *Culex* conspire together to define the architextual contours of an Epicurean-bucolic blueprint for the *Eclogues* as a whole.

As many readers have observed, a parallel process is underway at the very beginning of the *Eclogues,* in the opening lines of the first poem. There the unfortunate Meliboeus, victim of a cruel dispossession, encounters his fellow herdsman Tityrus, who lies piping idly in the shadow of a nearby beech. The scene is resumed in Meliboeus' exordium (*Ecl.* 1.1-5):

> Tityre, tu patulae recubans sub tegmine fagi
> silvestrem tenui Musam meditaris avena;
> nos patriae fines et dulcia linquimus arva.
> nos patriam fugimus; tu, Tityre, lentus in umbra
> formosam resonare doces Amaryllida silvas.
>
> You, Tityrus, lie under the canopy of a spreading beech, wooing the woodland Muse on slender reed, but we are leaving our country's bounds and sweet fields. We are outcasts from our country; but you, Tityrus, at ease beneath the shade, teach the woods to resound with 'fair Amaryllis'.

Just as was the proem of *Eclogues* 6, these lines are dense with allusion, principally to Theocritus and Lucretius, although hints of more various influence have also been detected.[158] An intratextual linkage between the two programmatic passages is established both by the common presence of a character named Tityrus, who in the latter eclogue is vaguely identified with Virgil himself,[159] and by the parallel allusions to Lucretius' *musa silvestris/agrestis* next to the varied *tenui avena/harundine*. The *musa silvestris* of Meliboeus' address is derived from *DRN* 4.588-9, not from book 5 as before, but the common source in Lucretius and the evident commonality of the expressions inevitably invite comparison. A further Lucretian intertext is contained in the tail end of line 1, *sub tegmine fagi*, words which echo Lucretius' *sub tegmine caeli* (*DRN* 2.633). Virgil's other principal source, Theocritus, perhaps supplies the cadence of the first line,[160] but definitely the detail of the final line, where Tityrus' song is revealed as a replication of *Idylls* 3.6 and 4.38: ὦ χαρίεσσ' Ἀμαρυλλι ('O graceful Amaryllis').[161]

What is most notable about the structure of this set of allusions is the way in which they dominate Meliboeus' description of Tityrus while seeming to have no influence over the one and a half lines he devotes to his own miserable condition. Effectively framing Meliboeus' personal complaint, Virgil's intertextual references define a curious contrast between the archetypically pastoral Tityrus and his companion, who appears for his part to be invested with no obvious programmatic significance. Yet it would be premature to conclude from this that Meliboeus is

158 Such as that of Meleager, whose ἀρουραίη Μοῦσα (12.2 Gow-Page) and ἀγρονόμιαν μοῦσαν (13.2 Gow-Page) are Latinized in Virgil's *silvestrem Musam* (cf. above n. 19); but also Plato and Cicero (Van Sickle (2000)).

159 An identification apparently supported by the *sphragis* to the *Georgics* (4.563ff).

160 Hunter (2006) p. 115. Cf. Wills (1996) p. 19 n. 13.

161 Thus Breed (2000) p. 6: 'Virgil's allusion to this Theocritean context plays an important structural, not to say programmatic, function at the beginning of *Eclogue* 1, signaling the start of a collection in the Theocritean mode.'

divested of all literary-generic significance whatsoever; it may simply be that we must look elsewhere for the appropriate point of reference.

Such a point of reference, I believe, may be found in the heroic epic tradition of the Homeric poems. In particular, Meliboeus' fixation on *patria* and his *dulcia arva* recalls the frequent repetition, especially prominent in the *Odyssey*, of the formulaic (φίλην) πατρίδα γαῖαν ('dear native land') in expressions of nostalgia and estrangement from home.[162] Furthermore, the adjacency of *dulcia* with *patriae* in line 3 evokes *Odyssey* 9.34-5 (ὣς οὐδὲν γλύκιον ἦς πατρίδος οὐδὲ τοκήων | γίγνετα ['for nothing has ever come to be that is sweeter than one's fatherland and one's children']),[163] while the neighbouring presence of *arva* in the same line echoes the Odyssean construction, πατρὶς ἄρουρα (*Od.* 1.407, 10.29, 20.193: 'native earth'). The use of *patriam fugimus* in the following line also seems to hearken back to a Greek epic context and to the repeated instances in the *Iliad* of the formula, φεύγωμεν σὺν νηυσὶ φίλην ἐς πατρίδα γαῖαν (*Il.* 2.140, 9.27; cf. 2.158, 2.174, 9.47: 'we flee with the ships to our dear native land'). More to the point, however, are lines 117-20 of *Odyssey* 23, which describe the case of a man banished from his home for the charge of murder: φεύγει πηούς τε προλιπὼν καὶ πατρίδα γαῖαν (*Od.* 23.120: 'he is going into exile and leaving his kin and native land'). Robert Coleman notes that if we are to understand the full sense of *fugimus* in *Eclogues* 1.4 then we must take into account the wider meaning possessed by its Greek cognate φεύγειν*,* as employed in the Odyssean passage,

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162 The full expression φίλην πατρίδα γαῖαν occurs twelve times in the *Odyssey*: 1.290, 2.21, 5.37, 5.204, 10.562, 11.455, 14.333, 15.65, 19.290, 19.298, 23.340; cf. comparable constructions with πατρίδα γαῖαν and some other morphological variant of φιλ- at 9.533 and 14.322. Similar formulae without φίλην are attested in forty-three more places (3.117, 4.476, 4.454. 4.558 *etc.*). In the *Iliad* the formula occurs almost exclusively in the form πατρίδα γαῖαν, with sixteen instances of this type (2.140, 2.158, 2.174, 2.454, 4.180, 5.687, 7.460, 9.27, 9.47, 9.414, 11.14, 15.499, 16.832, 18.101, 23.145, 23.150) and five further instances missing the epithet φίλην (7.335, 13.645, 15.505, 15.706, 24.557). Frequent repetition indeed!

163 Cf. Clausen (1994) *ad loc.*

which can denote cases of banishment and exile as well as flight.[164] Meliboeus is thus not simply 'fleeing' his homeland, which on its own might carry connotations of a voluntary departure, but is being forced into exile, as could be said of someone to whom the Greek verb applied.

A strong case can therefore be made that this constellation of Homeric precedents constitutes Meliboeus' language as analogous to that of heroic epic *poiêsis*. The impression of an epic style of speech might even be said to be strengthened by the doubling of the word *patriae/patria* accompanied by a verb in the first-person plural (*linquimus*, *fugimus*), which works to simulate the repetitiousness of epic's traditionally formulaic diction.[165] If such a claim can be validated (as I believe it can), then it seems inevitable that we should see the structure of Meliboeus' five-line exordium as determining an oppositional relationship between Virgil's two interlocutors which lends itself to definition in literary-generic terms. What these generic terms are should be sufficiently clear from the foregoing discussion: on the one hand we have Tityrus, who embodies a complex of bucolic, quasi-bucolic, and Epicurean influences; and on the other we have Meliboeus, whose situation is characterized by a separate complex of distinctly epic phraseology. It remains to be seen whether such an opposition holds good throughout the eclogue we are considering, for if it does not then its programmatic force in the opening lines must necessarily be diminished.

Moving beyond these initial lines, we might begin by noting that at least the specifically Epicurean character of Tityrus persists for the remainder of the poem, as John Rundin and others have documented.[166] After the Lucretian resonances of the exordium, Tityrus' immediate

164 Coleman (1977) *ad loc.*
165 See above n. 162.
166 Rundin (2003); so also Castelli (1966-7), Davis (2004), and Bing (2016).

response to Melibeous' address continues a pattern of reference to the *De rerum natura* (*Ecl.* 1.6-10):

> 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, it is a god who gave us this peace—for a god he shall ever be to me; often shall a tender lamb from our folds stain his altar. Of his grace my kine roam, as you see, and I, their master, play what I will on my rustic pipe. (Fairclough trans.)

It has often been remarked that the *deus* in these lines, who is probably to be identified with the young Octavian,[167] has a second and perhaps more important referent in Lucretius' Epicurus at *DRN* 5.8:[168]

> dicendum est, deus ille fuit, deus, inclute Memmi
> qui princeps vitae rationem invenit eam quae
> nunc appellatur sapientia, quique per artem
> fluctibus e tantis vitam tantisque tenebris
> in tam tranquillo et tam clara luce locavit.
>
> For if we must speak as this very majesty of nature now known to us demands, he was a god, noble Memmius, a god he was, who first discovered that reasoned plan of life which is now called Wisdom, who by his skill brought life out of those tempestuous billows and that deep darkness, and settled it in such a calm and in light so clear. (Rouse trans.)

Common to both passages, besides their markedly similar diction, is the idea of a divinized human being by whose grace Lucretius and Tityrus now enjoy a form of tranquil *otium*. Identification of Tityrus' *deus* with Epicurus seems further to be suggested by his monthly sacrificial ritual which we learn about at lines 42-5, in the description of his encounter with the unnamed benefactor at Rome:

> hic illum vidi iuvenem, Meliboee, quot annis

167 See above pp. 21-6.

168 The same point is made by Hardie (1998) p. 12, among others. Cf. *Ecl.* 5.64: *deus, deus ille, Menalca!* ('He is a god, Menalcas! A god!')

> bis senos quoi nostra dies altaria fumant,
> hic mihi responsum primus dedit ille petenti:
> ‘pascite ut ante boves, pueri, submittite tauros.’
>
> Here, Meliboeus, I saw that youth for whom our altars smoke twice six days a year. Here he was the first to give my plea an answer: ‘Feed, swains, your oxen as of old; rear your bulls.’ (Fairclough trans.)

A well known fixture of Epicurean communal life and an important instance of Epicureans’ partial adoption of conventional cultic practices was the monthly celebration of Epicurus’ birthday.[169] This functioned as an occasion on which to recognize the invaluable boon he had bestowed on his followers in the form of his teaching, and to keep in mind the ethical example he had set by his mode of life.[170] Moreover, as Peter Bing as argued, the use of the word *iuvenem* (‘youth’, ‘young man’) in line 42 may have been employed advisedly by Virgil as an etymological gesture to a perceived relation with the Latin verb *iuvare* (‘to help’), which parallels a similar etymological connection drawn in Greek antiquity between κοῦρος (‘youth’, ‘young man’), ἐπικουρεῖν (‘to help’), and Ἐπίκουρος.[171] Although somewhat convoluted, in light of the other unmistakable references to Epicureanism in the eclogue, Bing’s theory of an indirect assimilation of Tityrus’ *iuvenis* to Epicurus presents itself as quite cogent. Further hints of Tityrus’ Epicureanism have been discovered in the final lines of the poem, which comprise his consolatory invitation to Meliboeus to stay with him for the night and partake in a humble meal of fruit, nuts, and cheese.[172]

Having observed the details of Virgil’s consistently Epicurean characterization of Tityrus, let us now double back briefly to the two passages encompassed by lines 6-10 and 42-5, both of

169 Rundin (2003) p. 163 (with bibliography).
170 Rundin (2003) pp. 166-7. Cf. *Ec.* 1.59ff., where Tityrus seems to consider the *deus* as an object of meditation,
171 Bing (2016)
172 Davis (2004). Cf. Rundin (2003) pp. 169-70.

which share another important theme in common. In both places Tityrus' benefactor is portrayed as having had a direct and positive influence on his ability to sing and play pastoral music. So much is quite obvious in the first passage, where the *deus* is credited with permitting Tityrus to rehearse his pastoral songs to his heart's content: *ludere quae vellem calamo permisit agresti* ('he allowed me to play whatever I wish on a country reed'). At least in a figurative sense the *deus* is presented as the patron of Tityrus' bucolic art, enabling it by his generous dispensation. Regarding the second passage, in order to determine its full meaning, we must once again take stock of its intertextual relations. In particular, we should recall a line from the proem of Hesiod's *Theogony* – the most canonical of poetic initiations – where in the process of receiving the gifts of poetic inspiration Hesiod is anomalously addressed by the Muses in the plural (Hes. *Theog.* 24-26):

> τόνδε δέ με πρώτιστα θεαὶ πρὸς μῦθον ἔειπον,
> Μοῦσαι Ὀλυμπιάδες, κοῦραι Διὸς αἰγιόχοιο,
> 'ποιμένες ἄγραυλοι...'
>
> And this speech the goddesses spoke first of all to me, the Olympian Muses, the daughters of aegis-holding Zeus: 'Field-dwelling shepherds...' (Most trans.)

The strange use of *pueri* and *primus* in lines 44 and 45 mirrors Hesiod's own unconventional use of πρώτιστα and the plural ποιμένες ἄγραυλοι, thus appearing as a wink to this famous scene of the visitation of the Muses and drawing an implicit parallel between the Muses' role in Hesiod's pastoral world and that played by the *deus iuvenis* in Tityrus'.[173] Directly and obliquely the beneficence of the *iuvenis* is linked with Tityrus' continued ability to sing songs whose specifically bucolic nature is at once implied by Tityrus' occupation, intimated by the *calamo agresti* of line 10, and the archetypically pastoral context of the beginning of Hesiod's

173 Cf. Clausen (1994) *ad loc*. and (1964)

Theogony.[174] We are in this way presented with renewed formulations of the community between Epicureanism and bucolic poetry that has already been projected upon the figure of Tityrus in the eclogue's opening lines.

But what of disconsolate Meliboeus? We have already seen his ostensible alignment with epic *poiêsis* in lines 3-4. Can we follow the traces of this association any further? A second indication of Meliboeus' opposition to the brand of poetics embodied in Tityrus may be discovered in his feeling of wonder at the latter's happy state: *non equidem invideo*, *miror magis* ('I do not envy you; rather I wonder at you'), he says in line 11, betraying his ignorance of the conditions which have granted Tityrus his privileged repose.[175] This lack of comprehension is then crystallized in his request to know the identity of Tityrus' mysterious benefactor: *sed tamen iste deus qui sit da, Tityre, nobis* (*Ecl.* 1.18: 'but still, do tell us, Tityrus, who this god may be'). Such a reading would seem to support Brian Breed's interpretation of Meliboeus' 'decidedly limited perspective on the nature of Tityrus' music', whose Epicurean and bucolic tenor he is unable to grasp fully.[176] The complex, allusive character of Tityrus' superficially simple song defies Meliboeus' attempts to understand it, as he persists to lament his loss in the more emotive register of epic *pathos*.[177]

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174 A considerably more elaborate statement of this claim is made by Wright (1983) pp. 114ff., who connects the place of the *iuvenis* in this scene with that of Apollo in *Ecl.* 6 and Callimachus' *Aetia*, as well as that of the Nymphs in *Idylls* 7.

175 Perhaps to be understood with his superstition at *Ecl.* 1.14-15. Meliboeus is again caught with wonderment at line 36 (*mirabar*) and 69 (*mirabor*).

176 Breed (2000) p. 17.

177 Perkell (1990) offers a reading somewhat contrary to that of Breed, but herself admits that Meliboeus' lamentation presents itself to the reader as pathological. Barchiesi (1994) argues that the pathetic voice is for Virgil a quintessentially epic voice, and traces a similar ambivalence towards epic suffering in the *Aeneid*. Notably he connects Virgil's portrayal of human and divine suffering with Philodemus' Epicurean-based theological criticism of the Homeric poems (p. 113). Cf. Breed (2006) p. 105.

It is in the same register expressive of suffering that Meliboeus' gives his final speech. Here the epic inflection of his discourse is sharpened by further expansion on the themes of estrangement and relegation to a foreign land (*Ecl.* 1.64-69):

> at nos hinc alii sitientis ibimus Afros,
> pars Scythiam et rapidum cretae veniemus Oaxen
> et penitus toto divisos orbe Britannos.
> en umquam patrios longo post tempore finis
> pauperis et tuguri congestum caespite culmen,
> post aliquot, mea regna, videns mirabor aristas?
>
> But we must go hence—some to the thirsty Africans, some to reach Scythia and the chalk-rolling Oaxes, and the Britons, wholly sundered from all the world. Ah, shall I ever, long years hence, look again on my country's bounds, on my humble cottage with its turf-clad roof—shall I, long years hence, look amazed on a few ears of corn, once my kingdom? (Fairclough trans.)

Meliboeus anticipates a long separation from his home; indeed he doubts whether he will ever return. Much like that of Homer's Odysseus his eventual *nostos* is uncertain and there is the possibility that he may never again look upon the beloved earth of his 'kingdom' (*mea regna*). His reference to the 'barbaric' regions of Africa, Scythia, and Britain also represents something of an epic *topos,* at least within Latin literature, as is indicated for example by Horace in his epic *recusatio* at the end of *Epistles* 2.1 (250-253):

> nec sermones ego mallem
> repentis per humum quam res componere gestas,
> terrarumque situs et flumina dicere, et arces
> montibus impositas et barbara regna...
>
> And for myself, I should not prefer my "chats," that crawl along the ground to the story of great exploits, the tale of distant lands and rivers, of forts on mountain tops, of barbaric realms... (Fairclough trans.)

The specifically epic and military connotations of the passage are further suggested by the immediate historical context of Caesar's conquests on both the eastern and western borders of

Europe down to 47 BC, the dramatic date of the eclogue.[178]Tentatively one might even guess that Meliboeus' forced departure involves his conscription into the ranks of a Roman legion destined for foreign wars. This would provide a continuity of theme with the following lines in which he laments the imminent arrival of an *impius* and *barbarus miles* to take over his well tended farmlands (*Ecl.* 1.70-1) and blames his ill fortune on civil war (*discordia civium, Ecl.* 1.71).

Overall then Virgil appears to present us in *Eclogues* 1 with a pastoral *tableau* that is structurally divided between the two opposed poetics of bucolic-Epicurean contentment and epic *pathos,* embodied by the figures of Tityrus and Melibeous respectively. The alignment of Tityrus with the bucolic singer of the epic *recusatio* in *Eclogues* 6 further suggests the partiality of our author for his variety of simple, ataractic song-making. By contrast, Meliboeus' unrelentingly impassioned and agonizing speeches, coupled as they are with a set of discursive markers referencing the linguistic world of traditional epic *poiêsis*, suggest the frustration, vanity, and ultimately the inadvisability of undertaking the project of a heroic *carmen perpetuum*. As I have argued, this pattern accords more generally with a theory of 'Epicurean poetics', which rejected the composition of traditional epic for a number of ethical reasons involving the cultivation of true understanding and rational calm (*ataraxia*). A second point of friction between poetry and Epicureanism within the framework that I outlined was represented by the alternative poetic genre of love elegy, and it is to the textual embodiment of this other tension in Virgil's *Eclogues* that I turn my attention in the next section.

178 Similarly Hardie (1998) p. 5: 'Meliboeus foresees an exile as far distant as Britain (1.66), the limit of Julius Caesar's adventuring...' Compare also Hor. *Carm.* 1.35.29-30: *iturum Caesarem in ultimos | orbis Britannos* ('Caesar, who will go to Britain, the ends of the earth'); and Catullus 11.1-12.

VIRGILIAN BUCOLIC II: THE *ECLOGUES* AND ELEGY

We have now seen some of the most substantial evidence for Virgil's polemical engagement with epic genre in the *Eclogues*, particularly in the programmatic *Eclogues* 1 and 6. In one of these two poems, *Eclogues* 6, that engagement is overt and incontrovertible, taking the form of an openly declarative *recusatio* of epic *poiêsis* and opposing to it the more slender, manageable genre of bucolic poetry. In contrast, the literary-genealogical debt of the *Eclogues* to elegiac genre is more opaque: after all, at no point does Virgil explicitly declare his elegiac intentions as he does his (lack of) interest in epic. Yet upon closer inspection of the text, consciousness of such a debt can easily be demonstrated. The best known and perhaps the clearest instance of this phenomenon occurs in Virgil's tenth and final eclogue, which features the famous mid-first-century elegist Gallus, a friend of Virgil's (or so we gather) who has been transplanted into a bucolic wilderness where he attempts to reconcile his erotic-elegiac verse with his generically pastoral surroundings. Another important example is *Eclogues* 2, which may better show the peculiarly Epicurean affinities of Virgil's engagement with elegy than the more exclusively literary-historical thematics of *Eclogues* 10. Reviewing briefly the significance of the latter poem, it is with a more detailed discussion of the prior eclogue that I would like to conclude this chapter.

A useful and authoritative account of *Eclogues* 10 is Gian Biagio Conte's now classic discussion of the structural opposition Virgil mobilizes in the poem between the elegiac figure of the dying Gallus and his literary-historical exemplar, Daphnis in *Id.* 1.[179] Conte shows quite convincingly and in considerable detail how the fictive Gallus portrayed by Virgil attempts to

179 Conte (1980) pp. 30-40. Contrast Perkell (1996).

escape from the pains of his unrequited love by modulating the content of his brooding and depressive elegiac poetry into an idyllic, bucolic form, but ultimately is frustrated in his designs by the generic boundaries that separate the two. He concludes:[180]

> However, this is not to say that bucolic renounces its own literary individuality; but rather that the tenth eclogue founds its specific meaning on the difference displayed between the two genres. In order to make itself more obvious, this difference presents itself as irreconcilable to the point of becoming an opposition: on the one hand elegy, on the other bucolic. The specific individuality of each of the two elements placed in contrast is measurable in its entirety only on a terrain delimited by a shared space: only the possibility of intoning the same songs in either of the elegiac or bucolic registers draws attention to the 'formative' function that each register possesses. The metaliterary dimension itself of the eclogue (the fact, that is, that the discourse has as its object its own specific literary quality, its precise encoding within the language of literature) allows for a realization within the eclogue, as it were, of an exploration of the limits of a poetic genre, of the traces which – bordering on those of another genre – are nonetheless proper to and distinctive of it: the different genres of a literary culture are definable each in relation to each other, precisely in their reciprocal and systematic relations.

Conte is, in my opinion, quite right to stress the metaliterary and generic implications of Gallus' vain efforts to cure himself, although in light of the avowed debt of Theocritean bucolic to Alexandrian elegy he may be putting too much stress on generic segregation at the cost of ignoring the traditional-generic conditions which make the 'bucolic modulation' that Gallus undertakes possible or appropriate in the first place. The general assimilation of Gallus to the archetypal pastoral figure of Daphnis that is operative throughout the poem suggests that the environment of bucolic poetry is already in some sense hospitable to an elegiac figure such as him. Certainly, elegy's literary-genealogical priority to bucolic, as formulated in Theocritus, would seem to inform the progression of Gallus' poetry from an elegiac to a bucolic mode in verses 50-1, *ibo et Chalcidico quae sunt mihi condita versu | carmina pastoris Siculi modulabor avena* ('I will go and what songs I have arranged in Chalcidian verse I will modulate upon the

180 Conte (1980) pp. 38-9.

Sicilian reed'), where the invocation of elegiac and pastoral aetiologies betrays a sensitivity to the respective genres' literary origins. Moreover, the view of bucolic as a 'refinement' of elegy is indicated earlier on by Pan – the presiding deity of pastoral – where he admonishes Gallus for his immoderate addiction to elegiac sentiment (*Ecl.* 10.28-30):

> 'ecquis erit modus?', inquit, 'Amor non talia curat,
> nec lacrimis crudelis Amor nec gramina rivis
> nec cytiso saturantur apes nec fronde capellae.'
>
> 'Will there be any measure?', he spoke, 'Love does not heed such things; neither is cruel Love sated by tears, not the grass by running streams, nor the bees by cytisus, nor the goats by foliage.'

Modus, we must remember, can mean poetic 'metre' just as well as ethical moderation, and it is not out of the question to read an allusion here to the metrical difference between regular bucolic hexameters and the less stable fluctuation of elegiac couplets.

The emphasis that falls in these last lines on the prospect of a kind of ethical conversion is something that Conte also picks up on, stressing the way in which the literary choice between bucolic and elegy that is dramatized in *Eclogues* 10 further represents the choice of an extra-textual mode of life to which the text is implicitly subscribing itself. To quote his article once more:[181]

> Here, in sum, the poetry intends to mediate a prescribed way of life; and the literary genre (a functional delimitation of a structure within a system of reciprocal delimitations) is the rhetorical *analogon* of an ordering (that is, of a form and of a sense) projected onto life and onto the world... An Epicurean world, not governed by men: in this world there is pain, but it is not overcome by insensible endurance, nor by resistance against the Other, but rather by acceptance, by a sense of limits that is the consciousness not so much of one's own powers as of one's own human frailty. It is a tolerance, a docile consolation. But already the slight contemporary allusions betray the intrusion of reality…

181 Conte (1980) pp. 40-2.

Needless to say, Conte's reading is strongly sympathetic to the claim that Virgil's engagement with elegiac poetry in the *Eclogues* is conditioned by an Epicurean outlook on the world and a person's place within it. However, as I have already mentioned, the peculiarly Epicurean character of this outlook is difficult to substantiate from the textual evidence of *Eclogues* 10 alone, where the underlying literary debate is articulated in principally literary terms. For more convincing corroboration of the thesis of Epicurean influence on Virgil's reception of elegy in the *Eclogues* we should look rather to other poems in the collection.

Beside *Eclogues* 10, *Eclogues* 2 is also regularly taken as a model case of Virgil's 'pastoral elegy',[182] and in many ways it offers us a purer *contaminatio* of the bucolic world with traditionally elegiac themes. The poem has been the subject of several important studies focusing on Virgil's elegiac sensibility, including analyses from Alfonsi, Traina, DuQuesnay, Kenney, and Davis.[183] These scholars and others have identified important sources for the eclogue in Lucretius and Theocritus (as one might expect), but also in Callimachus' elegiac treatment of the story of Acontius and Cydippe in his *Aetia*.[184] As in the case of *Eclogues* 1, each of these literary models makes an essential contribution to the structural sense of the poem and must be taken into account in any serious interpretation of its meaning.

At the centre of *Eclogues* 2 is the pastoral figure of Corydon, who is depicted as labouring alone in the wilderness under the burden of an unrequited love for the slave-boy Alexis. As a palliative for his tormented mental state, he returns habitually to the same spot in the woods to sing of his futile longing (*Ecl.* 2.1-5):

> formonsum pastor Corydon ardebat Alexin,
> delicias domini, nec quid speraret habebat.

182 Or 'elegiac pastoral' – so for instance Coleman (1977) p. 109.
183 Alfonsi (1961); Traina (1965); DuQuesnay 1979; Kenney (1983); Davis (2012) pp. 99-120.
184 On the relationship between *Ecl.* 2 and the *Aetia,* see esp. Kenney (1983).

> tantum inter densas, umbrosa cacumina, fagos
> adsidue veniebat. ibi haec incondita solus
> montibus et silvis studio iactabat inani…
>
> Corydon, the shepherd, was aflame for the fair Alexis, his master's pet, nor knew he what to hope. As his one solace, he would day by day come among the thick beeches with their shady summits, and there alone in unavailing passion fling these artless strains to the hills and woods… (Fairclough trans.)

The eclogue continues with an extended fragment of direct discourse put into the mouth of the lover Corydon as he bemoans the injustice of his fate and attempts to make sense of his situation; but even before this its elegiac colour is signalled in the opening line, which is reminiscent of an early fragment of Callimachus' *Acontius and Cydippe* (fr. 67.1-3 Harder = 67.1-3 Pfeiffer):

> Αὐτὸς Ἔρως ἐδίδξεν Ἀκόντιον, ὁππότε καλῆι
> ἤιθετο Κυδίππηι παῖς ἐπὶ παρθενικῆι,
> τέχνην – οὐ γὰρ ὅγ' ἔσκε πολύκροτος – ὄφρα λέγο..[
>
> Eros himself taught Acontius, when the boy burned with love for the girl Cydippe, his tricks – for he was not very cunning – in order that… (Harder trans.)

The *naiveté* of Acontius also mirrors that of the other, more pervasive model for Corydon's character, Theocritus' Polyphemus in *Idylls* 11 and 6, whose speeches provide the basis for Corydon's lines at several points throughout his soliloquy.[185] In *Idylls* 11, Theocritus had inverted the theme of *erotodidaxis* privileged by Callimachus, making his poem not about learning how to obtain the object of one's erotic desire, but rather about learning how to counteract that desire, namely through the therapeutic effect of song. Ultimately, however, it is not clear in *Idylls* 11 that Polyphemus has been successful in this endeavour, and in addition to his transformation of the didactic component of erotic experience Theocritus may also be ironizing the bumbling cyclops' misplaced efforts to cure himself of his besetting passion.[186]

185 Compare *Ecl.* 2.20-3 with *Id.* 11.34-6, *Ecl.* 2.25f. with *Id.* 6.34-8, and *Ecl.* 2.70-3 with *Id.* 11.722-9.

186 Thus Gow (1950) on *Id.* 11.13: 'The whole content of the song... shows Polyphemus very far from cured.' Cf. Goldhill (1991) pp. 249-72.

Indeed, Simon Goldhill has drawn attention to the ways in which Theocritus' portrayal of Polyphemus is basically a parody of conventional erotic verse, 'an amusing fantasy of what happens to the standard *topoi* of love poetry in the mouth of such a bucolic grotesque',[187] and the gentle mockery of the idyll culminates in the ambiguous effect of Polyphemus' benighted poetic efforts.[188]

A similar *naiveté* thus seems to infect Virgil's Corydon, who contracts his ingenuousness and rustic simple-mindedness from his literary precursors – Acontius and Polyphemus, but also the two Theocritean Corydons, who receive less than complementary reviews from their pastoral colleagues.[189] For his part, Virgil stresses the continuity of character between Corydon and his intertextual relatives by proclaiming his verses to be *incondita* ('disordered') and by foregrounding the vanity of his *studio inani* ('vain pursuit').[190] Like Theocritus' Polyphemus, when the poem opens Corydon is already in the habit of spending his time pining away, although he is clearly unable to satisfy his yearning (*nec quid speraret habebat* ['what he hoped for he did not have']).[191] The note of optimism on which Theocritus begins to relate the cyclops' song (*Id.* 11.17: ἀλλα τὸ φάρμακον εὗρε ['but he found the *pharmakon*']) is thus transposed to a minor

187 Goldhill (1991) p. 249. The comic figure of Polyphemus features in a wider history of comic *cyclopes* inaugurated by Philoxenus' early-fourth-century *Cyclops*, which appears to have given a satiric treatment of the myth of Polyphemus and Galatea reworked by Theocritus for *Idd.* 6 and 11. See further Hordern (1999).

188 As Goldhill (1991) p. 255 notes, the fact that Theocritus concludes by saying that Polyphemus 'shepherded' his desire (ἐποίμαινεν τὸν ἔρωτα, *Id.* 11.80) strikes an ironic note, since the activity of shepherding is in actuality a mode of *caring for* something (a flock). If Polyphemus is 'tending' his love in the same way as he might 'tend' sheep, then is the implication truly that the love is thereby diminished? Moreover, Gutzwiller (2006) has amply shown how the vocabulary of *poimainein* and *boukolein* carries connotations of deceit and beguilement, suggesting that Polyphemus' song is a form of self-deception. Goldhill (1991) pp. 255f. also points to the double-meaning of the term *pharmakon* which Theocritus uses to refer to Polyphemus' singing (*Id.* 11.1, 17); a *pharmakon* can be both a cure and poisonous drug, just as the Cyclops' verses can be regarded as either curing or prolonging his erotic distress.

189 At *Id.* 4.13 Battus describes Corydon as a βουκόλος κακός ('a bad herdsman'); at *Id.* 5.5-7, a homonymous herdsman's musical abilities are put into question by Comatas.

190 Compare the lovers on the cup in *Id.* 1, whose 'striving in vain' is emphasized, as we have seen.

191 It is worth noting the generalizing, almost philosophical tendency of this half-line, which presents Corydon's love in the same terms as virtually all forms of unattainable desire.

key, and the reader is alerted from the beginning that Corydon's singing will likely be of no avail.

Corydon's ignorance and the related futility of his song take a noticeably Epicurean turn at lines 25 – 27, where he boasts vainly to the absent Alexis that he has recently had the chance to admire himself in the calm surface of a nearby pool, and that he was not at all unimpressed with his own looks:

> nec sum adeo informis; nuper me in litore vidi
> cum placidum ventis staret mare. non ego Daphnin
> iudice te metuam, si numquam fallit imago.
>
> Nor am I so unsightly; on the shore the other day I looked at myself, when, by grace of the winds, the sea was at peace and still. With you for judge, I should fear not Daphnis, if the mirror never lies! (Fairclough trans.)

Deprived of any visual point of reference for Corydon's self-congratulatory claim, the reader might well wonder whether the shepherd is in fact a fair judge of his own appearances, but the extravagance of his challenge to the quasi-divine Daphnis and the structural presence of a compromising Polyphemean hypotext would seem to confirm that he is exaggerating.[192] Such, at any rate, was the conclusion of Alfonso Traina, who notes that the intrusion at the end of Corydon's Polyphemean preening of a secondary intertextual reference to Lucretius reframes the episode in terms of an Epicurean theory of sense-perception. On Traina's reading, the conditional clause *si numquam fallit imago* ('if never an image deceived') points back to *DRN* 4.98 ff., where Lucretius affirms the accuracy of our visual perception of objects shown by reflective surfaces (mirrors, the surface of water, etc.). Corydon is thus correct to trust the accuracy of his

192 With these three lines compare *Id.* 6.34-8: ἦ γὰρ πρᾶν ἐς πόντον ἐσέβλεπον, ἦς δὲ γαλάνα | καὶ καλὰ μὲν τὰ γένεια, καλὰ δέ μευ ἁ μία κώρα | ὡς παρ' ἐμὶν κέκριται, κατεφαίνετο, τῶν δέ ὀδόντων | λευκοτέραν αὐγὰν Παρίας ὑπέφαινε λίθοιο ('The other day, when there was a calm, I was looking into the sea, and in my judgement my beard seemed fair, and fair my single eye, and it reflected the gleam of my teeth whiter than Parian marble' [Hopkinson trans.]). On Corydon's self-deception and its Theocritean model, see also Breed (2012) p. 33.

reflection, but he errs in his judgement of its comeliness: '*il sorriso di Virgilio cela quello che il poeta sapeva e che il pastore non poteva sapere: che cioè, se i sensi non ci ingannano, ci ingannano i giudizi che noi formuliamo sulle sensazioni* ('the smile of Virgil hides that which the poet knew and which the herdsman could not: that is, that if the senses do not deceive us, then the judgements that we form from them do').[193] Our love-struck hero, it turns out, is something of an imperfect Epicurean, somewhere along the way to grasping Lucretius' phenomenology, yet unable to comprehend it fully.

Traina's reading is compelling and, as he himself points out, harmonizes tellingly with an analogous pattern of Lucretian allusion occurring later in the same eclogue. In lines 63 – 65 Virgil presents us with another Theocritean intertext punctuated by a Lucretian gnomon:

> torva leaena lupum sequitur, lupus ipse capellam
> florentem cutisum sequitur lasciva capella,
> te Corydon, o Alexi: trahit sua quemque voluptas.
>
> The grim lioness follows the wolf, the wolf himself the goat, the wanton goat the flowering clover, and Corydon follows you, Alexis. Each is led by his liking. (Fairclough trans.)

These verses unquestionably evoke *Idylls* 10.30-1, where a similar naturalistic metaphor compares the love of Bucaeus for Bombyca with other appetitive animal behaviours:[194]

> Ἁ αἴξ τὰν κύτισον, ὁ λύκος τὰν αἶγα διώκει,
> ἁ γέρανος τῶροτρον · ἐγὼ δ'ἐπὶ τὶν μεμάνημαι.
>
> Goats yearn for clover, the wolf pursues the goat. Cranes follow the plough, and I am mad for you. (Verity trans.)

193 Traina (1965) p. 73. He cites *DRN* 4.464 for the latter part of this formulation.
194 Cf. Traina (1965) p. 74.

But again Corydon adds an Epicurean flourish with the final clause, *trahit sua quemque voluptas* ('each man's desire leads him along'), which is borrowed from Lucretius' discussion of free will at *DRN* 2.256-8:

> libera per terras unde haec animantibus exstat,
> unde est haec, inquam, fatis avulsa voluntas
> per quam progredimur quo ducit quemque voluptas...
>
> Whence comes this free will for living things all over the earth, whence, I ask, is it wrested from fate, this will whereby we move forward, where pleasure leads each one of us... (Bailey trans.)

By this second allusion to Lucretius, Corydon shows himself once more to have an incomplete understanding of the philosophical system which (perhaps unwittingly) he invokes, for in suppressing the connection of *voluptas* ('pleasure') with *voluntas* ('will') and the freedom of the will, he at once overlooks the possibility of choosing not to suffer as he does – that is, of choosing the real pleasure that Epicurus opposed to the distress of the erotic condition. As I noted in the previous chapter,[195] Epicurus was careful to distinguish between a harmless sexual pleasure that could be classified as 'natural but unnecessary', and a destructive *erôs* which he condemned and advised his followers to avoid. In Corydon's assimilation of his erotic experience to the natural patterns of animal life, this important distinction seems to break down, as he seeks to justify his love by an appeal to nature. The figure of a myopic Epicurean citation is thus repeated: just as before Corydon had erroneously brought an Epicurean principle of empiricism to bear on his misjudged appraisal of his own looks, he now cites a different Epicurean doctrine out of context in order to explain his dominating passion.[196]

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195 See above p. 49.

196 Contrast Traina's interpretation (1965) p. 74, which sees Virgil as himself subscribing to the tragic union of ἡδονή and ἔρως, in defiance of the separation between the two that was called for by Epicureanism.

Yet in the end Corydon is able to break the spell of his desire. His reflection on the power of *voluptas* seems to prompt a reconsideration of his situation and a recognition of the interminability of *amor*. In the final lines of the poem he returns his attention to his immediate surroundings, where evening is drawing on and the teams of cattle are leaving the fields (*Ecl.* 2.66-8). *Quis modus amori* ('what measure is there for love'), he asks, echoing Pan in *Eclogues* 10 and realizing his mental state to be a form of *dementia* (69: 'insanity'). The acknowledgement of *erôs*' destructive effect accompanies Corydon's abandonment of his song, and he breaks off with a turn to a saner mode of desire which confers equal value on alternative love-objects: *invenies alium, si te hic fastidit, Alexin* (73: 'you will find another Alexis if this one disdains you'). Virgil thus seems to link Corydon's recovery from erotic consternation, not with the cathartic or therapeutic performance of a love song, but with a minor philosophical conversion initiated by a Lucretian intertext. It is not by continuing to sing that Corydon arrives at a solution to his unhappy state, but by the apprehension that other tasks demand his attention, that love need not be so consuming. As Gregson Davis has remarked, 'instead of ascribing an inherently therapeutic value to song, Vergil appears to champion the acquisition of *philosophical insight* as the operative component of the content of the performed verse.'[197] The frustrated Epicurean snatches of lines 27 and 65 now turn into something more like a full embrace, causing an interruption in Corydon's unhealthy poetic fixation.

We have now come to the end of *Eclogues* 2, but at this point I would like to go abit beyond the predominantly ethical evaluation of Corydon's progress offered thus far and to insist on the interrelated metaliterary significance of Virgil's text.[198] That the eclogue itself invites such

197 Davis (2012) p. 103.

198 Besides being hinted at by the reminiscence of Callimachus at *Ecl.* 2.1-2, the generically elegiac character of Corydon's words is substantiated by an intertext in lines 26-7 (***non ego*** *Daphnin* | ***iudice te metuam****, si numquam fallit imago*) referring to Gallus (fr. 145.8-9 Hollis = 4.3-4 Bl., ***non ego,*** *Visce,* | *...Kato,* ***iudice te***

a reading is, I think, signalled in lines 70 – 72, which suggest as an alternative to Corydon's song the occupation of weaving, *detexere*:

> semiputata tibi frondosa vitis in ulmo.
> Quin tu aliquid saltem potius, quorum indiget usus,
> viminibus mollique paras detexere iunco?
>
> Your vine is but half-pruned on the leafy elm. Nay, why not at least set about plaiting some thing your need calls for, with twigs and pliant rushes? You will find another Alexis, if this one scorns you. (Fairclough trans.)

Corydon chastizes himself for neglecting his viticultural duties and considers whether his energy might not be better spent on some more useful employment. However, that other employment is recommended in language which Virgil has left vague enough to suggest that Corydon does not necessarily mean to give up poetry altogether. The restrictive particle *saltem* in line 71 can be read with *aliquid detexere* as meaning that if Corydon is going to insist on composing verses, then he should *at least* compose something of benefit (*usus*).[199] *Detexere* is rendered an appropriate metaphor for poetic composition by the conventional association of poetry with weaving, as evidenced in Theocritus' first idyll and at *Eclogues* 10.71, as well as by the significant prepositional prefix *de-* which connotes the finished refinement of the final product and is shared by the programmatically important *deductum carmen* of *Eclogues* 6.5.[200] Moreover,

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vereor). It seems to me possible that Corydon's catalogue of flowers and rural foodstuff at *Ecl.* 2.45-55 also has a metapoetic import; see further Prioux's (2014) discussion of the metaliterary valences of garden produce in ancient writing.

199 Equivalent to the Greek ὠφέλεια or χρῆσις. It will be remembered from Chapter 2 that in Philodemus' Epicurean poetic theory it was the content of a poem that determined its use value and that, formally, a poem *qua* poem could not harm or benefit. *Quorum indiget usus* ('those things which utility requires') can be interpreted accordingly as stipulating that the poem Corydon will compose should abide by philosophical standards of what is useful, or at least what is not harmful.

200 Cf. *Cir.* 9, *non tamen absistam coeptum detexere munus* ('Nevertheless, I will not desist from weaving out the gift I have begun'). Servius observes the association of the term *deductum* with the practice of weaving in his comment on *Ecl.* 6.5: *translatio a lana quae deducitur in tenuitatem* ('a usage derived from the practice of reducing wool to slender thread'). In their entry on the prefix *de-* (II.2c) Lewis and Short note its use 'with reference to the terminus of the action' where it signifies something like 'to the uttermost', 'throughout', 'thoroughly' *etc.* This must also be the sense of *de-* in the compounds *de-ductum* and *de-texere*, with which compare the corresponding Alexandrian use of *ek-ponein* (see above n. 149).

the idea that the poet's work is somehow situated *in ulmo* is also re-iterated in Gallus' words at *Eclogues* 10.67, *cum moriens alta liber aret in ulmo* ('as, dying, the bark [or book] dries upon the elm'), where the bark (*liber*) of the elm-tree functions as a homonym for the elegist's book of poems. After Virgil, Tibullus can be observed to pick up on these associations at *Elegies* 2.3.15, *tunc fiscella levi detexta est vimine iunci* ('then the basket is woven from the slender stalks of rushes'), where he allusively integrates the *fiscella* of *Eclogues* 10 with the poetic materials (*vimine, iunci*) mentioned in *Eclogues* 2. This constellation of inter- and intratextual allusions structures Corydon's situation at the end of his poem in terms of an opposition between harmful elegiac song (see Gallus) and poetry whose content is circumscribed by due ethical care and the requirements of *usus*. Setting the stage for Corydon's poetic and philosophic *détournement* by his mannered allusion to Lucretius' *De rerum natura*, Virgil marks his composition as encapsulating a distinctively Epicurean teaching about love and desire.

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Bucolic genre is a slippery concept. The difficulty the literary critic faces in attempting to pin it down is due not least to the theoretical provisionality of any discussion of genre as such, these discussions having in no way the character of an exact science. But in our case it is also due to bucolic's shifting character over time. It seems safe to speak of bucolic genre's inception in the writing of Theocritus, who promotes himself in several ways as a conscious inventor and literary innovator. At the same time, it would be wrong to credit him with the production of some originary generic essence, afterwards passed down to Virgil and so on. This is because Theocritus' notion of bucolic can already be seen to situate itself diachronically within a poetic tradition that foreshadows it in time. Theocritus, like many of his contemporaries, realized that to create poetically was a matter of bringing forth into being something that was already latent in a

traditional literary matrix made up of previous works going back as far as the Greek archaic period. If one was to claim 'newness' one could only do so by defining one's position in relation to the old. Indeed, the production of the new was inextricably linked with the handling and manipulation of the old so as to effect a fresh kind of synthesis or *contaminatio* of pre-existing materials – hence the Hellenistic penchant for the practices known by the mass of today's scholars as *oppositio in imitando* and *Kreuzung der Gattungen*. It was by mixing and inverting the poetry of one's predecessors that one achieved one's artistic individuality, escaping the fate of second-rate imitators and rule-bound hacks. And thus it comes about that Theocritus has developed his bucolic genre in both conscious imitation of and conscious opposition to his epic and elegiac models, which represent two strains in his poetry that are cross-bred and simultaneously disavowed as governing paradigms.

It is this hybrid genre the Virgil adopts his *Eclogues*, and he does so with much the same understanding of his literary activity as that which informed Theocritus' work. Only this time the stakes are different and in addition to a literary inheritance Virgil is also working with a philosophical inheritance which he has come by through his subscription to the Epicurean way of life. His relations with epic and elegy, based in the first instance on those of Theocritus, are therefore grounded in set of ethical teachings as well, which stand in their own structural relationship to the traditional features of these two genres. Virgil's own theory and practice (or theory-in-practice) of bucolic certainly incorporates elements of both epic and elegy, just as Theocritus' had done, and he is just as interested in distancing himself from epic and elegiac traditions. But his attitude is further conditioned by the influence of an Epicurean philosophical orientation, which adds a new moral and spiritual dimension to Theocritean bucolic's literary self-fashioning. We can thus begin to see how Virgil's bucolic project finds itself located at the

intersection, not just of two literary vectors defined by epic and elegy, but at the intersection of three vectors defined by epic, elegy, and bucolic itself. He is faced with the task of staking out his ground in a genre whose identity is already relatively stable and therefore invites innovation. One important way in which Virgil makes bucolic genre his own involves the integration of philosophical beliefs that we have surveyed in the previous two sections of this chapter. Practically speaking, much of the material for this process of transformation has come from Lucretius – the most eminent Epicurean poet – and it should therefore be unsurprising that Lucretius in many ways provides the impetus for another key component in Virgil's bucolic renovations: his tendentious appropriation of cosmological and didactic poetry.

IV

VIRGIL, LUCRETIUS, AND *PHYSIOLOGIA*

Throughout the *Eclogues* Theocritus' poetic influence can usually be felt to dominate, as we have now had occasion to observe in a small number of cases. Yet, as we have also seen, the story does not end there, and it is often through a novel 'enrichment' or *contaminatio* of his base Theocritean material with influences drawn from elsewhere that Virgil gives form to the originality of his own bucolic project, establishing its difference from that of his predecessor.[201] In the examples I analyzed in the previous chapter, the material for this enrichment is regularly supplied by Lucretius' masterpiece of Epicurean didactic poetry, the *De rerum natura*. Virgil's fascination with Lucretius' poem seems to have taken root during his younger years, informing his first forays into poetry. Whether or not traces of the *De rerum natura* can be genuinely identified in authentic portions of the *Catalepton*, Lucretius is already of obvious importance for the composition of both the *Culex* and the *Ciris*, the latter of which Virgil begins with a prolonged didactic *recusatio*, lamenting his inadequacy to the demands of Lucretian natural philosophical poetry. This interest in didactic poetry – and in cosmological or cosmogonic poetry especially – may begin with Lucretius, but in the *Eclogues* it extends to other notable purveyors of the didactic genre as well, such as Hesiod, Aratus, and the mythical cosmic poet Orpheus.

201 For more on the concept of generic 'enrichment', see Harrison (2007).

With this chapter, I would like to explore how Virgil manages to expand the range of the Theocritean bucolic mode by his original emphasis on didactic and cosmological themes. It is my view that this expansion is not simply motivated by literary concerns arising from an 'anxiety of influence', but is also fundamentally implicated in the *Eclogues*' ethical orientation, which, as I have argued above, is sourced in large part from Virgil's early contact with Epicureanism. In particular, I hope to show that the didactic dimension of the *Eclogues* derives its ethical significance from the Epicurean notion of *physiologia*, a therapeutic form of natural reasoning which, for the Epicureans, was instrumental to the practice of dispelling false belief and empty opinions about the world.

Physiologia is treated in two of Epicurus' extant letters and also figures in two of the forty *Principal Doctrines (Kuriai Doxai*) attributed to him.[202] Together, these sources convey the Epicurean idea that *physiologia,* or reasoning about natural causes, should be first and foremost a practical enterprise which aims at the attainment of ethical composure and *ataraxia*. In fact, Epicurus suggests that, were it not for the utility of *physiologia* in this domain, then we should have no need of it at all, the objective resolution of scientific questions being otherwise pointless and unprofitable. This much is clear from *Kuriai Doxai* 11, which states that 'if our suspicion of celestial phenomena and death did not carry us away... then we would have no need of *physiologia*' (Εἰ μηθὲν ἡμᾶς αἱ τῶν μετεώρων ὑποψίαι ἠνώχλουν καὶ αἱ περὶ θανάτου... οὐκ ἂν προσεδεόμεθα φυσιολογίας), and from a passage of the *Epistle to Herodotus* where Epicurus sums up *physiologia*'s contribution to our ethical 'blessedness' (*to makarion*; *Ep. Hdt.* 78):

> Καὶ μὴν καὶ <τὸ> τὴν ὑπὲρ τῶν κυριοτάτων αἰτίαν ἐξακριβῶσαι φυσιολογίας ἔργον εἶναι δεῖ νομίζειν, καὶ τὸ μακάριον ἐν τῇ περὶ μετεώρων γνώσει ἐνταῦθα πεπτώκεναι

202 *Ep. Hdt., Ep. Pyth.,* and *KD* 11-2.

> καὶ ἐν τῷ τίνες φύσεις αἱ θεωρούμεναι κατὰ τὰ μετέωρα ταυτί, καὶ ὅσα συγγενῆ πρὸς τὴν εἰς τοῦτο ἀκρίβειαν.
>
> And, moreover, one must consider that it is the function of *physiologia* to discover precisely what the cause is of the most determinant facts; and that our blessedness in this respect consists in knowing the celestial phenomena and knowing what the natures observed in these very celestial phenomena are and all that is of a similar kind in relation to the precision necessary for this.

This passage occurs in the context of a discussion of the proper attitude to be maintained *vis-à-vis* the potential influence of the gods on the natural world, and specifically on the behaviour of the stars and other heavenly bodies (*Ep. Hdt.* 76-77). *Physiologia,* Epicurus says, is an essential tool for establishing the exclusively material and mechanical nature of celestial phenomena; in practising it we obviate all forms of astronomical explanation built on the premiss of a divine will and therefore free our minds from harmful superstition and fear of the gods. But it is not only in this particular area that *physiologia* can assist us, for there exist other matters of equal importance for our blessedness which are equally subject to the 'precision' (*akribeia*) of 'physiological' reasoning.[203] Epicurus goes on to describe how accurate astronomical knowledge is in itself not necessarily of any benefit to us, so long as it leaves room for supposing that the nature of heavenly bodies and the cause of their movements are anything other than mechanical and material (*Ep. Hdt.* 79). Moreover, it makes no difference for our happiness whether we entertain the different possibilities of multiple causes for natural phenomena or posit only one, provided that all such causes are possible 'under circumstances permitting *ataraxia*' (*Ep. Hdt.* 80: ἐφ' οἵοις ὁμοίως ἐστὶν ἀταρακτῆσαι).[204] The '*akribeia*' then that is required in the practice of *physiologia* represents merely a form of empirical rigour

203 For example, Epicurus earlier deals with the natural evolution of human language, which we are to understand as a gradual and somewhat random process in which divine decree (*thesis*) played no formative part (*Ep. Hdt.* 75).

204 Compare *Ep. Pyth.* 92ff. On this peculiarity of Epicurean science see Wassertstein (1978).

exercised in strict accordance with what is observable. It is important because it excludes all belief in unobservable supernatural causes and thereby liberates the wise person from groundless fears. Indeed, at the beginning of the *Epistle to Herodotus*, Epicurus offers himself as an example of the impassive ethical perfection thus achieved, reminding Herodotus that he 'commends continual engagement in *physiologia* to others', since it is in this way that he 'finds the greatest serenity' in his own life (*Ep. Hdt.* 37: παρεγυῶν τὸ συνεχὲς ἐνέργημα ἐν φυσιολογίᾳ καὶ τοιούτῳ μάλιστα εγγαληνίζων τῷ βίῳ...).

As one might suspect from the title, *physiologia* is central to Lucretius' *De rerum natura.* It is on the *natura* (*physis*) of things that the poem focuses its attention, and one of Lucretius first orders of business is to promise a thorough exposition of Epicurus' theory of nature. Partway through the long proem to the first book, in lines 50-61, the poet gives a 'compendious syllabus'[205] of his poem's subject-matter, undertaking to provide its dedicatee, Gaius Memmius, with a survey of the nature of celestial and terrestrial phenomena, including discussion of the gods and Epicurean atomic theory. All this is encapsulated in the term *ratio*, which Lucretius stresses in this passage (52, 54, 59), as elsewhere, to indicate his intention of expounding the *ratio* of *natura* – in other words the Latin equivalent to the Greek *logos* of *physis* (*physiologia*).[206]

Lucretius' characteristically Epicurean concentration on *physiologia* left a deep mark on the Virgil of the *Ciris*, who commences his epyllion with a profession of his new Epicureanism and a statement of his frustrated ambition to compose a poem, much like that of Lucretius, 'on the nature of things'. Early in the *Ciris* we are told that its author is one 'hugged by the verdant

205 Bailey (1963) *ad loc.*

206 *I.e.,* in Epicurean terms, an atomistic and mechanistic account of the natural world. On Lucretius and *ratio* see pp. 53-4 above.

shade of flowering Wisdom' (*florentis viridi Sophiae complectitur umbra*) within the pleasant confines of the *Cecropius hortulus*, which occurs as an unmistakable allusion to the 'Garden' of Epicurus located in 'Cecropian' Athens (*Cir.* 3-4). Virgil follows up this initial portrait of his Epicureanism with a string of verses heavily influenced by Lucretian imagery, in which he deprecates his present poetic project when compared with the *dignum carmen* for which his mind has been preparing itself by the study of natural philosophy and the pursuit of virtue (*Cir.* 5-11):

> mensque, ut quiret eo dignum sibi quaerere carmen,
> longe aliud studium inque alios accincta labores,
> altius ad magni suspexit sidera mundi
> et placitum paucis ausa est ascendere collem:
> non tamen absistam coeptum detexere munus,
> in quo iure meas utinam requiescere musas
> et leviter blandum liceat deponere amorem.[207]
>
> And my mind, equipped for a far different pursuit and other labours, dared to gaze up at the stars of the great world on high and, little by little, to ascend the peaceful hill, so that it might seek out a song worthy of itself. Nevertheless, I will not desist from weaving out the gift I have begun, in which I pray that my Muses may rightly come to rest and I be allowed gently to put down my alluring love.

This passage is riddled with Lucretian diction, from the *dignum carmen* of line 5 and *suspexit* of line 7, to verse 8, *ut leviter blandum liceat deponere amorem* ('so that I be allowed gently to put down my alluring love'), which is modelled on Lucretius' description of his love for poetry at *DRN* 1.924 (*et simul incussit suavem mi in pectus amorem* ['and at once it struck into my breast an agreeable love']) and the love that Venus inspires in animals at the beginning of the same poem (*DRN* 1.19: *omnibus incutiens blandum pectora amorem* ['striking into the breasts of all an alluring love']).[208] Virgil hopes that, before moving on to the didactic poem he has planned,

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207 I accept and print the text of Lyne (1978).

208 With *dignum carmen* compare *DRN* 5.1-2: *quis potis est dignum pollenti pectore carmen | condere pro rerum maiestate hisque repertis?* ('who is capable of composing with a mighty breast a song worthy of the majesty of things and of these discoveries?'). Lucretius makes similar use of *suspicere* at *DRN* 2.1039. See further Lyne

he may first expend the desire presently actuating him to compose a more conventional mythological piece on the metamorphosis of Scylla.[209] Next to the Lucretian cosmological themes evoked in line 7,[210] where Virgil's *mens* directs its gaze to the stars spread across the high heavens, the image of the *placitum collem* also has a didactic pedigree, deriving as it does from the situation of Virtue at the top of a hill in Hesiod's *Works and Days* (287-92).[211] Virtue's serene (*placidum*) beatitude is thus juxtaposed, in common Epicurean fashion, to the pursuit of natural knowledge, and the Lucretian-style poetry which blends these two themes is linked back to Hesiod, the traditional founder-figure of the didactic genre.[212]

Although Virgil did not get around to composing his intended didactic poem until the *Georgics* – and even then he seems to have remained diffident about his capacity for cosmological poetry –[213] his interest in Lucretius and natural-philosophical verse does not appear to have abated during the intervening time, when the *Eclogues* were composed. Much work has been done to map the influence of the didactic Lucretius on the bucolic Virgil, especially where this influence concerns a handful of Lucretian passages illustrating the

(1978) *ad loc.,* who also notes of the Ciris' proem more generally that 'the style is very Lucretian, both in its elaborate hypotaxis as well as in smaller and more tangible details' (p. 95).

209 Cf. *Cir.* 44-53.

210 The implication of *physiologia* becomes explicit later on, in lines 35-41, which see Virgil expressing his wish to immortalize Messalla 'among red suns and the moon's bright white stars' (*purpureos inter soles et candida lunae | sidera*) in the context of a great poem on the *natura rerum.*

211 So Lyne (1978) *ad loc.*

212 Compare, for instance, Callimachus' characterization of the style of Aratus' didactic *Phaenomena* as Hesiodic: Ἡσιόδου τό τ' ἄεισμα καὶ ὁ τρόπος (*Anth. Pal.* 9.507: 'the song and the style are those of Hesiod'). See further Cameron (1995) 374ff.

213 *Geo.* 2.475ff. Similarly, Frank (1920b) p. 104. Virgil's distancing himself from cosmological didactic poetry in these lines is ambiguous in the context of the didactic *Georgics*. Thomas (1988) *ad loc.* argues that Virgil intends to set up an opposition between didactic (*tout court*) on the one hand and pastoral poetry on the other; Gale (2000) p. 42 takes the perhaps more cogent view that Virgil has in mind a contrast between different types of didactic – the cosmological and the agricultural.

primitive existence of early humans: *DRN* 2.14-33, 4.580-94, and 5.1379-1411.[214] All three of these passages have already come up in some capacity during my discussion of the *Culex* in the last chapter and in my arguments regarding the incorporation of Lucretian pastoralism into Virgil's bucolic program in *Eclogues* 1 and 6. *DRN* 2.14-33, which underlies Virgil's apostrophe to the pastoral world in the *Culex*, presents us with a picture of natural pastoral *otium,* a state of humble and uncomplicated satiety, contrasted with the unnecessary cares born of greed and the thirst for power. *DRN* 4.580-94 and 5.1379-1411, it may be recalled, were the inspiration for Virgil's programmatic *silvestris*/*agrestis musa* and give aetiologies for pastoral myth, brought into being as way to explain strange woodland noises, and pastoral music, which results from man's attempts to mimic these same mysterious sounds.[215] A set of interlocking intratextual references put in place by Lucretius create a solidarity between the three passages,[216] which Virgil evidently recognized and of which he made use in crafting his own bucolic settings.

So much may be stated uncontroversially. However, I hope that it will have been apparent from my foregoing discussion that in appropriating material from Lucretius Virgil is not simply mining earlier Latin poetry for its fortuitously pastoral content. Rather the Lucretian vein which Virgil has tapped in his various intertextual borrowings runs much deeper than a surface pastoralism and is rooted in profound and determinate spiritual principles. There is, as a number of readers have noted, a subterranean Epicureanism informing the bucolic poetry of the *Eclogues*, which breaks out from time to time in bursts of philosophical enthusiasm.[217] Three

214 The ground-work for this line of inquiry was firmly laid by Castelli (1966), most of whose points remain valid. See also Giesecke (1999), Mizera (1982), Hardie (2009) pp. 13-40, and Kronenberg (2016). On Lucretian pastoral, see Gillis (1967).

215 See above p. 89.

216 *DRN* 5.1392-6 almost exactly replicates 2.29-33, *DRN* 5.1385 repeats 4.585, 5.1407 resembles 4.588 *etc.*

217 Again Castelli (1966-7) is foundational; see more recently Rundin (2003) and Davis (2012).

such occasions are constituted by scenes from *Eclogues* 3, 5, and 6, where didactic poetry is invoked and represented in different ways – all of which, as I hope to show in the following sections, have something to do with the Epicurean theory of *physiologia*.

VIRGILIAN BUCOLIC III: THE *ECLOGUES* AND DIDACTIC

In the last chapter, I devoted a part of my discussion to interpretation of a prominent *ekphrasis* in *Idylls* 1, which I argued was meant to embody a composite conception of Theocritus' bucolic genre. Pieced together from elements of epic and elegy, among other poetic models, Theocritean bucolic nevertheless stood back from its generic ancestors, taking a distance that was measured both by certain ethical concerns and by an ambition to create something poetically new. My ensuing argument then explored the ways in which these same concerns were adopted by Virgil into an Epicurean poetic framework whose governing presence in the *Eclogues* was signalled in large part by the inclusion of a number of carefully deployed allusions to the Epicurean didactic poetry of Lucretius. Virgil's engineering of a synergy between the bucolic repudiation of both epic and elegy on the one hand and a generally Epicurean approach to poetry on the other indicated his tacit acceptance of Theocritus' tendentious poetic program, as formulated in the *kissubion ekphrasis* of *Idylls* 1, but also gestured to his own original understanding and augmentation of that program.

With this context in mind, I propose now to look at Virgil's re-working of Theocritus' central *ekphrasis* in *Eclogues* 3. Just as Theocritus' cup had emblazoned on its surface a tendentious, allegorical representation of the poetic tradition within which the poet was writing, the cups which the shepherds Damoetas and Menalcas wager against one another in *Eclogues* 3

have their own tendentious statement to make about what Virgil is doing with the genre he has picked up from Theocritus. To be more specific, the didactic themes displayed on Virgil's cups point emphatically to the new generic direction in which he is taking his 'neobucolic'.[218]

Eclogues 3 sees two herdsmen, Damoetas and Menalcas, come together to match their powers of versification in an amoebaean poetic *agon,* as is conventional in the pastoral genre. Before the competition can begin, however, they must set the stakes (*Ecl.* 3.28-48):

D. vis ergo inter nos quid possit uterque vicissim
experiamur? ego hanc vitulam—ne forte recuses,
bis venit ad mulctram, binos alit ubere fetus
depono; tu dic mecum quo pignore certes.
M. de grege non ausim quicquam deponere tecum.
est mihi namque domi pater, est iniusta noverca,
bisque die numerant ambo pecus, alter et haedos.
verum, id quod multo tute ipse fatebere maius,
insanire libet quoniam tibi, pocula ponam
fagina, caelatum divini opus Alcimedontos,
lenta quibus torno facili superaddita vitis
diffusos hedera vestit pallente corymbos.
in medio duo signa, Conon et—quis fuit alter,
descripsit radio totum qui gentibus orbem,
tempora quae messor, quae curvus arator haberet?
necdum illis labra admovi, sed condita servo.
D. et nobis idem Alcimedon duo pocula fecit
et molli circum est ansas amplexus acantho
Orpheaque in medio posuit silvasque sequentis;
necdum illis labra admovi, sed condita servo.
si ad vitulam spectas, nihil est quod pocula laudes.

D. So shall we see, between the two of us, what each can do? I lay down this heifer – unless you should decline – this heifer who comes to the milk-pail twice daily and with her udder nurtures twins. Come, what will you stake against me?
M. I would not dare lay down any animal from my herd. For at home I have a father and an unjust step-mother, who together count the herd twice daily, and he the goats as well. However, since this insanity pleases you, I shall wager something that even you will admit is much better: a pair of beechen goblets, the carved work of the divine Alcimedon, which a wandering vine, cut with a

218 The term 'neobucolic' is used by Van Sickle (2017); Cf. Hunter (2006) pp. 115-40, who thinks similarly that the *Eclogues* should be read as 'second-order' bucolic.

> fine chisel, adorns, spreading its pale ivy clusters. In the middle there are two figures: Conon and – who was the other? The one who described the whole world for mankind and indicated the times when the crop must be sown and harvested? I have not touched my lips to them, and keep them as new.
>
> *D.* The same Alcimedon made for me also a pair of cups and wrapped the handles with delicate acanthus, and in the middle placed Orpheus and the woodlands following him. I have not touched my lips to them, and keep them as new. But if you look at the heifer, you will not praise the cups at all.

Damoetas' and Menalcas' encounter is very obviously modelled on the encounter between Thyrsis and the unnamed swain in *Idylls* 1, but with a few divergences that are significant for Virgil's transformation of Theocritean bucolic poetry. Damoetas, copying Thyrsis' interlocutor in Theocritus (*Id.* 1.25f.), first wagers a prized heifer that has borne twins and produces milk in such abundance as to be milked twice daily. Menalcas, wary of the close watch his parents keep over the number of his herd, is not so forthcoming with his livestock and prefers instead to risk a pair of ornate goblets intricately carved by the artist Alcimedon – an offering he nonetheless deems superior to Damoetas' cow. The goblets in question are noticeably similar to the Theocritean *kissubion* (*Id.* 1.29-31), each being ornamented with a frame of snaking ivy that encased on one the figure of the astronomer, Conon,[219] and on the other a different astronomer who remains frustratingly anonymous.

In late antiquity the list of candidates to fill the shoes of Menalcas' *quis alter* had grown to be a long one: the *Scholia Veronensia* list as many as seven, including Eudoxus, Aratus, Archimedes, Hipparchus, Euctemon, Hesiod, and Euclid (in that order).[220] Modern scholars have pared down this lineup significantly and these days opinion tends to waver between only the first three nominees. More recently, a quite convincing case has been made in favour of Aratus,

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219 Cf. Catull. 66.1-7, where a Conon is identified as he who, among other things, *stellarum ortus comperit atque obitus* ('who disclosed the risings and the settings of the stars'). See Coleman (1977) *ad loc.*

220 Thilo-Hagen pp. 394-5.

grounded on the punning *arator* of line 42 (*tempora quae messor, quae curvus* ***arator*** *haberet* ['the times which the reaper and those which the plower should have']) – although, as I shall suggest, this case is not an unassailable one. Moving from a suggestion first made by Léon Herrmann[221] for an identification of Aratus with the *arator* and therefore also with the *alter*, Carl Springer and Roger Fisher have both argued that Virgil confirms the identity of Aratus by allusions to his astronomical poem, the *Phaenomena*, both in lines 40-42, where the riddle is first posed and at later junctures in the same eclogue.[222] And if for no other reason, such an identification does indeed seem to be confirmed by the close similarity between the planting and harvest seasons evoked by verse 42 of the eclogue and a parallel mention at *Phaenomena* 742 of 'the season to plow the fallow land and the season for planting' (ὥρη μέν τ' ἀρόσαι νειούς, ὥρη δὲ φυτεῦσαι).[223] However, the complication with this view arises from the fact that Aratus' *Phaenomena* was not an original work of astronomy, but was rather a poetic rendering of the previous discoveries of Eudoxus of Cnidus (the *scholia*'s first candidate) which he had earlier registered in a prose work with the same title. It is this complication that Springer seeks to circumvent (perhaps correctly) by pointing out Virgil's further allusions to the *Phaenomena* in *Eclogues* 3, at lines 60-1[224] and 104-5. We shall come to this point presently. For his part, Fisher, in addition to adducing one of Springer's Aratean allusions, gives the somewhat weak argument that Eudoxus' astronomical treatise was not as well known in antiquity as Aratus' poetic version

221 Herrmann (1930) p. 149: 'ce savant ne peut être qu'Aratos'.

222 Fisher (1982); Springer (1984). See also Campbell (1982-3) and Kayachev (2017).

223 And cf. the topically related verses in Aratus' proem, *Phaen.* 8-13. It should probably be noted that Aratus was an Alexandrian contemporary of Theocritus and in fact figures at two points in the *Idylls* (6.2, 7.98), making his potential presence here even more appropriate. It is also commonly believed that the *Phaenomena* influenced the imagery of Virgil's fourth eclogue. Virgil's mysterious *Virgo* (*Ecl.* 4.6) seems to be based on Aratus' Lady Justice, who left the earth during the transition from the Silver to the Bronze Age. See Coleman (1977) *ad loc.,* and on *Ecl.* 3.60, 4.32, and 8.11. Aratean influence is also present at the end of *Georgics* 2; see Thomas (1988).

224 So also Boyancé (1958) p. 234.

of it, and that the likelihood was therefore low that Virgil was at all familiar with it.[225] But of course, even if Virgil had not read Eudoxus, this does not preclude him from having known Aratus' poem to be derived from his work and from thus having been capable of a reference to Eudoxus all the same.

I would argue that, while the reasoning behind Springer's and Fisher's common position is undeniably strong, its weakest point is in its total exclusion of Eudoxus from any possible place in the scheme of Virgil's intertextual play. Accepting that *Eclogues* 3.42 is indeed an allusion to Aratus, I suggest nevertheless that neither scholar has fully understood Virgil's game here, which is precisely to gesture to Eudoxus as the astronomer whose discoveries Aratus popularized with his poetic rendition. Hence it was Eudoxus who 'described the times' (*descripsit tempora*) of the year for the *arator* (*i.e.* Aratus) to 'have' (*haberet*). The logic of the passage is not one of simple proximity, inviting the equation of the *arator* with the *alter* just because of their close coincidence in the text, but is rather more complex, signifying the transitive relationship of inheritance between the astronomer Eudoxus and Aratus, his poetic representative. On this view, Menalcas' hesitancy to name the character on his second cup may be construed, not as an instance of memory-lapse or rustic ignorance, but as a pointed uncertainty about just *who* the true author of the *Phaenomena* really was.

Restoring to Eudoxus a rightful place in Virgil's *ekphrasis* is made an even more appealing move by the fact that, as even Springer concedes, there is an obvious concordance between the roles of Conon, the first astronomer pictured, and Eudoxus in the Hellenistic poetic tradition.[226] For it was Conon who famously had named the constellation known as the 'Lock of

225 Fisher (1982) p. 812.

226 Springer (1984) p. 133 n. 18. He again objects to the identification of Eudoxus because if it is granted then 'the pun is overlooked'. But as we have just seen, this is not so.

Berenice', which was to furnish a theme for Callimachus in the fourth book of his *Aetia*. Both astronomers thus stand as Greek scientists notable for their surprising influence on later Alexandrian poetry.[227] A second important detail recommending Eudoxus is that, besides his contributions to the study of astronomy, as a philosopher he had upheld the hedonic thesis that pleasure is the ultimate *têlos* of humankind.[228] This, paired with his life-long interest in natural science, makes of him a distinctively proto-Epicurean figure, who conveniently marries the two Epicurean truths of the overriding importance of pleasure for one's ethical well-being and the benefits of a spiritual commitment to *physiologia*. Unsurprisingly, Virgil's apparent interest in didactic poetry in this passage thus receives a specially Epicurean inflection.

But that is only half the intrigue of Virgil's ecphrastic adaptation. Responding to Menalcas' wager of his pair of curiously astronomical goblets, Damoetas at once dismisses them, indicating that he is already in possession of his own pair of Alcimedon's precious cups. Damoetas' cups, however, are decorated with images of a more mythological type: by contrast with the scholarly figures of Conon and Eudoxus they display the legendary poet Orpheus enchanting the woodlands with his song. This contrast deserves to be noted and is certainly not insignificant, but it should not be allowed to occlude a key continuity that exists between Orpheus and the astronomers: namely that all have an important part to play in the tradition of didactic poetry.

Although Orpheus has been variously associated with tragedy, elegy, and even epic – in large part owing to Virgil's own later telling in the *Georgics* of Orpheus' descent to the underworld on a rescue-mission for his dead wife Eurydice –[229] that is not the role given to him

227 Thus Campbell (1982-3).
228 Eudoxus' philosophical position is transmitted to us by Aristotle. See *NE* 1.13 [1101b] and 10.2 [1172b].
229 On which, see Bowra (1952) and esp. Conte (1998).

here. Here, rather, he appears in his mythical role as a master-poet capable of taming the wildness of nature and leading the *silvae* in his train: *Orpheaque in medio posuit silvasque sequentis* (*Ecl.* 3.46: 'and in the middle he placed Orpheus with the woods following him'). This is roughly the same part given him by Horace in the *Ars poetica*, where, alongside Amphion, he appears as a culture hero famed for helping mankind along the road towards civilized society (*AP* 391-401):

> silvestres homines sacer interpresque deorum
> caedibus et victu foedo deterruit Orpheus,
> dictus ob hoc lenire tigris rabidosque leones;
> dictus et Amphion, Thebanae conditor urbis,
> saxa movere sono testudinis et prece blanda
> ducere quo vellet. fuit haec sapientia quondam,
> publica privatis secernere, sacra profanis,
> concubitu prohibere vago, dare iura maritis,
> oppida moliri, leges incidere ligno.
> sic honor et nomen divinis vatibus atque
> carminibus venit...
>
> The holy Orpheus, interpreter of the gods, deterred the wild woodland men from slaughters and foul fare, and is said for this reason to have tamed tigers and rabid lions; it is said too that Amphion, founder of the Theban town, moved the rocks by the sound of his cithern and with soothing entreaty led them where he wished. Once upon a time this was Wisdom: to separate the public from the private, the sacred from the profane, to prohibit wanton intercourse and prescribe rites of marriage, to build towns and carve laws in wood. Thus did honour and renown accrue to the divine *vates* and their songs.

Stories about Orpheus taming wild tigers and lions through the persuasive power of his music are kind of allegory for his teaching human beings the impiety of murder and cannibalism and thus lifting them out of a natural state of savagery. Similarly, Amphion is credited with a supernatural power over inanimate stones due to his function as the founder of the city of Thebes. Horace seems to link both heroes to the development of civilization by indicating that each is an example

of how the *honor* and *nomen* of an inspired poet (*vates*) followed individuals responsible for establishing the base conditions of political life – laws, religion, settlement, and so forth. The roles of Orpheus and Amphion are thus in a sense *didactic* roles, involving a form of basic instruction in the ways of peaceful, communal living.

Horace's work is inevitably at a certain remove from the *Eclogues,* owing to the different arcs and chronologies of his and Virgil's poetic careers; it may therefore be argued that its evidential value for interpreting Virgil is somewhat attenuated. Fortunately, there is a second example, somewhat closer to home for Virgil, which can be adduced to support the reading of *Eclogues* 3.46 that I propose. In the fourth book of his treatise *On Music*, Philodemus also addresses the particular myth of Orpheus with which we have been concerned in the preceding paragraphs, giving an allegorical interpretation that is significantly like Horace's (*On Music* 4, col. viii Neubecker = col. 122 Delattre):

> ἀλλ' οὐχ ὅτι κ[[ε]]ι|νεῖ καὶ παρίσταται τὰ μέ|λη πρὸς τὰς πράξεις οὔτ' [ἐ]φισ|τάνουσιν οἱ παρ[έ]χο[ντ]ες | τὴν μουσικήν, οὔτε τ[ό]τε συν|τελοῦσιν οἱ πράττοντες, ἄν|ευ δὲ μουσικῆς ἧ[τ]τον [δύ]|νανται, τῶι δ' ἀνει[μέ]ν[ους] | ἐπὶ τὸν πόνον γίνεσθαι καὶ | κουφότερον πο<ν>εῖν τῆι [πα]||ραμείξει τῆς ἡδονῆς. κ[ἂν]|τὸν Ὀρφέ[α μὴ δ]ιὰ [τ]ὴ[ν ἐξο]|χὴν τῆς ἐμ[μ]ελ[είας ὑπ]ακ[ού]|ωμεν μεμυθ[ε]ῦσθ[αι] καὶ | τοὺ[ς] λίθους καὶ [τὰ δένδ]ρα θ[έλ]||γειν, ὡς καὶ ν[ῦν ἡμεῖς] εἰ|ώθαμεν ὑπε[ρ]βο[λικῶς] λέ|γειν, αλλὰ τοῖς πριηρα[ύ]λαις, | ὥσπερ ὁ στωικός, ἀνα[λό]γως | [ἐ]φ[ε]στῶτα ποιῶμεν [ο]ἰκο|δόμοις, διὰ ταῦτα φήσομεν, | [οὐ δι]ὰ τὰ τούτου ληρήματα.

> However, it is not because melodies move or set things in action that those who make music attend to it, or that, when there is music, workers accomplish their work, but are capable of less without it. Rather the reason is this: that they become more at ease in their labour and toil more lightly because their work is mixed with pleasure. Even if we understand that it was not on account of the pre-eminence of his harmonies that Orpheus was traditionally said to have charmed the stones and the trees (as even now we are wont to say in exaggeration), and we make him instead the overseer of a team of builders, just as the Stoic does, by analogy with the pipers on a trireme, it is on account of these things that we speak thus, and not on account of the Stoic's absurdities.

Philodemus is in the middle of contesting the Stoic Diogenes' assertion that 'from the beginning music has had a natural capacity to set things in movement and to encourage action' (*On Music* 4, col. vii Neubecker: ἄνωθεν φύσει τὸ μέλος ἔχειν τι κινητικον καὶ παραστατικὸν πρὸς τὰς πράξεις), and that it is for this reason that music is played to oarsmen and builders while they work. At the end of his counter-argument, Philodemus invokes the story of Orpheus charming the woodlands as a commonly cited instance of such animating power, explaining however that the correct rationalization of the Orpheus myth should not follow the Stoic theory, but rather should cohere with the Epicurean position that, if music helps labourers at all, then it is only by distracting them from their labour and lightening it with an admixture of aural pleasure. In other words we (as Epicureans) can reason analogically (ἀναλόγως) that people have passed on the story of Orpheus' musical powers as a record of his leadership in building human settlements (and, indeed, that it is licit for us to continue this tradition). And this is more or less just the same thing that Horace says about Orpheus and Amphion.

Orpheus' role as a teacher-poet seems also to be evoked by Virgil at *Eclogues* 3.60, which marks the beginning of the expected amoebaean exchange between Damoetas and Menalcas. Here Damoetas starts off with the fittingly inaugural line, *ab Iove principium, Musae, Iovis omnia plena* ('the beginning is from Jove, Muses, and everything is full of Jove').[230] Remember that I referred to this line in passing as one of the supports brought forward by Springer and Fisher for reading Aratus into the design on Menalcas' cup. Their contention was that the whole verse points to the first verses of the proem of Aratus' *Phaenomena*, which sacerdotally begins (1-4):[231]

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230 On the wider significance and ambiguous punctuation of this line (*principium Musae* or *principium, Musae*?) see Morelli (2010).

231 Springer (1984) pp. 132-3; Fisher (1982) p. 812. The first on record to identify Virgil's allusion to Aratus is Macrobius, who observes that the line was 'borrowed from Aratus by other poets' as well (*Somn.* 1.17.14: *hinc*

> ἐκ Διὸς ἀρχώμεσθα, τὸν οὐδέποτ' ἄνδρες ἐῶμεν
> ἄρρητον· μεσταὶ δὲ Διὸς πᾶσαι μὲν ἀγυιαί,
> πᾶσαι δ' ἀνθρώπων ἀγοραί, μεστὴ δὲ θάλασσα
> καὶ λιμένες· πάντη δὲ Διὸς κεχρήμεθα πάντες.
>
> Let us begin from Zeus, whom we men never let go unnamed: full of Zeus are the highways and all the gathering-places of the human race; the sea too and the harbours are full of him. For in all things we all have need of Zeus.

And a sturdy contention it is. But again there is another possibility and one which again does not require us to disregard Aratus so much as to see past the *Phaenomena* into the poetic influences that were already working on Aratus when he wrote it. In particular, it seems quite likely that when Aratus began his poem in the way that he did, he did so as a conscious gesture to a much older poem that itself had been attributed to Orpheus.[232] Thanks to the felicitous discovery in 1962 of the Derveni Papyrus in a Macedonian tomb,[233] we now have some small fragments of this poem, which provide strong evidence that it was the object of Aratus' prefatory allusion and even stronger evidence that Virgil had it in mind when he wrote his eclogue. The Derveni Papyrus preserves an ancient commentary on the so-called 'Orphic Cosmogony', what seems to have been a highly cryptic and mythologizing narrative of the genesis of the cosmos. In the course of proposing various allegorical interpretations of the text the Derveni commentator has left us precious quotations of the poem itself, several of which contain snatches of hieratic praise

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illud est.. quod de Arato poetae alii mutuati sunt). Another such borrower appears to have been Theocritus (*Id.* 17.1), whom Virgil certainly had in mind. On widespread imitation of this line of Aratus, cf. *schol. ad Theoc.* on *Id.* 17.1, Strat. *AP* 12.1.1, Cic. *Rep.* 1.36, Quint. 10.1.46. See further Kidd (1997) on *Phaen.* 1.

232 It is possible that Aratus also had in mind Cleanthes' *Hymn to Zeus* or that his reference to 'Orpheus' is mediated by Cleanthes, who was himself alluding to the Orphic Cosmogony; see Thom (2005). Cf. Philod. *De piet.* col. xiii (p. 80 Gomperz) = *Dox. Graec.* 547.16-26 = *SVF* 1.486.

233 Dated on archaeological evidence to the fourth century BC. See further Funghi (1997).

directed towards Zeus, father of the gods. Four hexameter lines in particular stand out for our purposes:[234]

Ζεὺς πρῶτος [γέν]ετο, Ζεὺς ὕστατος ἀργικέραυνος	fr. 15: col. xviii.12-13 + col.xvii.6
Zeus came first into existence, Zeus of the bright lightning will be last	
Ζεὺς κεφα[λή, Ζεὺς μέσ]σα, Διὸς δ'ἐκ [π]άντα τέτ[ηκται]	fr. 16: col. xvii.12
Zeus is the head, Zeus is the middle, of Zeus is everything made	
Ζεὺς πνοιὴ πάντων, Ζεὺς πάντων ἔπλετο μοῖρα	fr. 17: col. xviii
Zeus is the breath of all things, Zeus came to be as all things' allotment	
Ζεὺς βασιλεύς, Ζεύς δ' ἀρχὸς ἀπάντων ἀργικέραυνος	fr. 18: col. xix.10
Zeus is king, and Zeus of the bright lighting is the origin of everything	

The potential parallels between this style of characterizing Zeus and that employed by Aratus should be obvious: compare, for instance, πάντα, πάντων, and ἀπάντων in fragments 16-18 with *Phaen.* 4, πάντη δὲ Διὸς κεχρήμεθα πάντες; or compare the use of the preposition ἐκ in fragment 16 and ἀρχὸς in 18 with *Phaen.* 1, ἐκ Διὸς ἀρχώμεσθα. But even more striking is the remarkable similarity between the words of 'Orpheus' and those of Virgil. *Iovis omnia plena* is roughly equivalent to fragment 17, Ζεὺς πάντων ἔπλετο μοῖρα, and *ab Iove principium* has clear analogues in all of fragments 16, 17, and 18, putting *ab* in place of ἐκ and *principium* in place of πρῶτος and ἀρχὸς. In light of such evidence, it must be conceded that the case for an allusion in Virgil to the Orphic Cosmogony – even to the tattered scraps that have survived – can be much

234 All such quotations have been extracted and numbered by the Greek editors of the papyrus (Kouremenos *et al.* (2006) p. 21). For reference I give both the number assigned to each particular fragment by them, as well as the number of the column where each fragment appears in their text.

more firmly argued than the case for an allusion to Aratus. Which is of course not to say that there is *no* allusion to Aratus, nor that Aratus himself is not also alluding to the same text as Virgil. It seems most probable that, just as in the iconography on Menalcas' cup (indeed partly *because* of that iconography), so here Virgil is signalling his consciousness of a diachronic *tradition* of cosmological didactic poetry of which Aratus is but a later instantiation.

The Orphic Cosmogony's membership of this tradition is admittedly difficult to substantiate, due to our very sketchy knowledge of the poem's contents. But from the parts of the commentary on it that have been preserved we can at least glean some kind of insight into the status that it was accorded by ancient writers and thinkers. From what we can tell, the author of the Cosmogony undertook to rehearse the divine origins of the world in the form of a theogony, probably not unlike Hesiod's *Theogony*, in which, as we have seen, Zeus played the lead role as 'the Beginning of Everything'.[235] According to the Derveni commentator, however, all this mythological material has been intended as a set of riddles (*ainigmata*) masking a quite sophisticated natural philosophy which he makes it his business to puzzle out for the sake of our edification.[236] We are told in fact that this allegorical approach is urged on us by 'Orpheus' himself, who meant to speak 'mystically' and in this way supposedly addressed himself to the wise few, not to the many (col. vii):[237]

> ἔστι δὲ ξ[ένη τις ἡ] πόησις | καὶ ἀνθρώ[ποις] αἰνι[γμ]ατώδης, [κε]ἰ [Ὀρφεύ]ς αὐτ[ὸ]ς | [ἐ]ρίστ' αἰν[ίγμα]τα οὐκ ἤθελε λέγειν, [ἐν αἰν]ίγμασ[ι]ν δὲ | [μεγ]άλα.
> ἱερ[ολογ]εῖται μὲν οὖν καὶ ἀ[πὸ το]ῦ πρώτου | [ἀεὶ] μέχρι οὗ [τελε]υταῖου ῥήματος.
> ὡ[ς δηλοῖ] καὶ ἐν τῶι | [εὐκ]ρινήτω[ι ἔπει· 'θ]ύρας' γὰρ 'ἐπιθέ[σθαι' κελ]εύσας
> τοῖ[ς] ['ὡσὶ]ν' αὐτ[οὺς οὔτι νομο]θετεῖν φη[σιν τοῖς] πολλοῖς...
>
> It is a strange kind of poetry and obscure for human beings, even though Orpheus himself did not mean to express uncertain riddles but rather great things in riddles.

235 See the detailed attempt at a reconstruction from the available fragments in Kouremenos *et al.* (2006) pp. 21-8.
236 The cosmology constructed by the commentator is also surveyed by Kouremenos *et al.* (2006) pp. 28-41.
237 This idea of the 'few' and the 'many' recurs again at col. 23.

> Indeed he speaks mystically from the very first up until the very last utterance. This he makes clear in his pronouncement: for, commanding them to 'set doors to their ears', he says that he does not give laws for the many...

Thus whether or not we agree with the commentator's specific points and mode of exegesis, it appears that his approach to the text as expressing *ainigmata*[238] is at least justified and solicited by features of the text itself. Indeed it has been suggested that in antiquity the text acted as a key instrument for conducting initiations into the Orphic mysteries and that correct exegesis of its contents was a necessary corequisite for such initiation.[239] Therefore Virgil, like others, would probably have been familiar with the tradition of the Cosmogony's interpretation and its reputation as at bottom some type of natural-philosophical tract, even if this character was not immediately plain to the 'multitude'. And we may guess that certain, although perhaps not all, elements in the cosmological theory expounded by commentators such as the Derveni commentator would have struck a chord with Virgil's already established Epicurean inclinations.

I will limit myself to one example. In column 21 of the papyrus, the commentator offers an allegorical interpretation of the myth of the goddess Aphrodite, which he says refers to the natural process whereby the small particles (*ta eonta*) that compose the world collide randomly with one another, mixing together. This process is commonly referred to as *aphrodisiazein,* 'aphrodisianizing', a word that also tends to be used of intercourse between a man and a woman. The copulative power of molecular motions thus theorized should remind readers of the hymn to Venus placed at the very beginning of Lucretius' *De rerum natura*, where Venus (*sc.* Aphrodite) seems to be praised in a similarly allegorical fashion, as representing the generative processes of

238 Cf. col. ix, where the commentator, while ellucidating a particular detail concerning Zeus' hands, reminds us that here Orpheus ἠινίζετο ὥσπε[ρ τ]ἆλλα τὰ π[ρὶν μὲν ἄδηλα φαι]νόμεν[α, ἀλλ]ὰ [β]εβαιότατα νοηθ[έντα.... ('[he] speaks in riddles, just as with the other things that at first were unapparent but are now most securely understood').

239 Obbink (1997); cf. West (1997) p. 84.

nature in an atomic world (*DRN* 1.1-23).[240] There is perhaps not much more to be said on this front, at least so far as Virgil is concerned, but the parallel between the Derveni commentary and Lucretius, paired with the demonstrable importance of both the Orphic Cosmogony and the *De rerum natura* for Virgil's *Eclogues*, is extremely suggestive and only serves to strengthen the conviction that the Orpheus of the *Eclogues* is indeed somehow a didactic or cosmological Orpheus.

What then is to be made of Orpheus' appearance on Damoetas' cups? I hope that the answer should by now be intuitive enough. As I have attempted to show, we are confronted at *Eclogues* 3.46 with Orpheus as a kind of cosmological poet and therefore akin in a way to the figures of Conon and Eudoxus. Schematically, one might say that Orpheus contributes more of a 'poetic' component to didactic poetry, while the two astronomers contribute a more 'didactic component', but I think that what is clear is that together all three are meant to symbolize didactic as a poetic genre, or alternatively as a tradition involving both poets and 'physiologists'. If we recall the significance of Virgil's framing allusions to Theocritus' programmatic *ekphrasis* in *Idylls* 1, then the relevance of such symbolism for Virgil's bucolic project becomes more clearly defined. Whereas Theocritus had used his *kissubion* as a complex emblem of his bucolic genre's situatedness within a tradition constituted by other poetic genres, thereby highlighting its novelty and difference, Virgil has replaced Theocritus' generic iconography with an innovatory iconography of his own, this time affirming the new place of scientific didactic poetry in his compositional repertoire. This tendentious expansion or 'enrichment' of Theocritean bucolic, so I have suggested, is motivated by Virgil's engagement with the Epicurean practice of *physiologia*.

240 On which see Sedley (1998) pp. 1-34; also Gale (1994) pp. 208-24. Betegh (2004) p. 226 observes that it is debatable whether the theory being expounded by the Derveni commentator is strictly an atomic theory, although some attempts have been made to treat it as such. Nevertheless the theory's at least partial affinity to ancient atomistic systems is evident.

In the final parts of this chapter, I would like to point to some ways in which this new conception of didactic bucolic plays out and how some of its manifestations are observably laden with Epicurean natural-philosophical theory.

DAPHNIS *PHYSIOLOGOS*

Virgil's interest in *physiologia* comes to the fore again in *Eclogues* 5, whose central segment consists of two complementary eulogies of the arch-pastoral poet, Daphnis, sung by another pair of herdsman, Mopsus and Menalcas. The quasi-epicurean tenor of Menalcas' part in proceedings has attracted especial notice from scholars, at least since Giovanni Castelli's seminal discussion of the eclogue in the late 1960's.[241] More recently, Suzanne Mizera and Leah Kronenberg have built upon Castelli's arguments, proposing a more nuanced reading of the Lucretian and Epicurean motifs to be found in Menalcas' song.[242] At the centre of their analyses, of course, stands the figure of Daphnis, who is the object of Menalcas' praises and whose posthumous catasterism he describes in language taken over from the *De rerum natura* and the cosmic sublimity which Lucretius claims to experience in his contemplation of nature at *DRN* 3.18ff. Under the present heading of 'Daphnis *Physiologos*', I wish to examine once more this peculiar blending of originary pastoral hero and Epicurean *physiologos*, with the goal of linking it to the bucolic program which we have already seen Virgil pursuing in various other ways.

To experienced readers of ancient bucolic poetry, any character named Daphnis must inevitably recall the sufferings of Daphnis which form the subject-matter of Thyrsis' lament in

241 Castelli (1966-7).
242 Mizera (1982); Kronenberg (2016).

Idylls 1. But even more generally, the name must also evoke the traditional attribution to a mytho-historical Daphnis of the invention of bucolic poetry as such.[243] Commentators on *Eclogues* 5 have repeatedly observed Virgil's suppression in his poem of the erotic background given by Theocritus, drawing different conclusions as to the significance of his silence.[244] Yet whatever the importance of Daphnis' putative love-life (or significant lack thereof), it is sufficiently clear that Virgil does mean to conserve Daphnis' reputation as master-poet of the bucolic tradition – or at least this is how Mopsus appears to regard Daphnis, extolling him as the bulwark and crowning-jewel of the pastoral world, in whose absence all nature goes awry and Pales and Apollo *Nomios*[245] 'quit the fields' (*Ecl.* 5.32-9):[246]

> vitis ut arboribus decori est, ut uitibus uuae,
> ut gregibus tauri, segetes ut pinguibus aruis,
> tu decus omne tuis. postquam te fata tulerunt,
> ipsa Pales agros atque ipse reliquit Apollo.
> grandia saepe quibus mandauimus hordea sulcis,
> infelix lolium et steriles nascuntur auenae;
> pro molli uiola, pro purpureo narcisso
> carduos et spinis surgit paliurus acutis.
>
> As the vine graces the trees and the grapes grace the vine, as the bulls are to the herd and the corn shoots to the fertile fields, you are the ornament of all of your folk. After the fates bore you off, Pales and Apollo himself quit the fields. Often in the furrows where we have sown great barley only fruitless tares and barren oats spring up; instead of the delicate violet and the purple narcissus the thistle and the thorn-bush sprout with prickly barbs.

Mopsus' admiring view of Daphnis is then seconded by Menalcas, who applauds his companion's eulogy, telling him that he 'equals the master in both singing and playing the pipes' (*nec calamis solum aequiperas, sed voce magistrum*) and pronouncing him *alter ab illo* – a

243 This *aition* is recorded by Athen. *Deipnosoph.* 14.619A-B, Diod. 4.84, Aelian *VH* 10.18; cf. Parth. *Erot.* 29.

244 Davis (2012) p. 85; Kronenberg (2016) p. 34; Gagliardi (2018) p. 50.

245 On the relevance of this epithet see Coleman (1977) *ad loc.*, who notes tha there is a parallel at *Geo.* 3.1-2, where Apollo again appears next to Pales but is referred to as the *pastor ab Amphryso* (the 'herdsman from Amphrysus').

246 Mopsus is here revisiting Thyrsis' comparable treatment of the same theme at *Idylls* 1.32-6.

second Daphnis (*Ecl.* 5.48-9).[247] Kronenberg has argued that this elevated treatment of Daphnis is not limited to *Eclogues* 5, but extends to virtually all other allusions to him in the collection.[248] In *Eclogues* 3, for example, Damoetas mocks Menalcas for his envy of another *puer* to whom Daphnis passed on his poetic implements after his death (*Ecl.* 3.12-15):

> aut hic ad veteres fagos cum Daphnidis arcum
> fregisti et calamos: quae tu, perverse Menalca,
> et cum vidisti puero donata, dolebas,
> et si non aliqua nocuisses, mortuus esses.[249]
>
> Or when here by the old beech trees you broke Daphnis' bow and reeds: when you, perverse Menalcas, saw them given to the boy, then you grieved and would have died if you had not found some way to harm him.

In addition to this passage, Kronenberg adduces two further instances of Daphnis' role as an authoritative judge in matters pastoral, citing his appearance in this capacity at *Eclogues* 2.26-7 and 7.1ff. Admittedly, her case regarding these other eclogues is perhaps not as clear-cut as one might wish it to be; but the archetypal pastoralism of Daphnis agreed on by other mythographic sources should also be kept in mind in explicating and interpreting his appearance at these different junctures. Such an understanding, when paired with the obvious eminence of Daphnis among his peers in Virgil, does nothing but support the reading of Daphnis as master-poet in *Eclogues* 5 with which I am principally concerned for the moment.

Notably, however, it is not just as a bucolic exemplar that Daphnis is lauded by his two admirers. Already in Mopsus' eulogy there are indications of another side to his character bearing

247 Presumably it is to Daphnis that the title *magister* attaches. For another instance of this type of bucolic succession, which appears to have been a generic trope, compare *Ep. Bion.* 95-6. See further Hubbard (1998) pp. 19-44.

248 Kronenberg (2016), esp. pp. 31-3 and 42-3.

249 Kronenberg (2016) p. 32 acknowledges that 'there is some ambiguity in this passage... regarding the identity of the *puer* in question', but ultimately follows Hubbard (1998) pp. 70-1 in arguing, on the basis of a comparison with the similar situation at *Ecl.* 2.35-9, that the *puer* must not be Daphnis himself but rather an anonymous third party.

mysterious religious connotations – he is hailed as effectively an avatar of Bacchus, tamer of Armenian lions[250] and introducer of the Dionysian *thiasos* (29-31). But in Menalcas' reply these sacred attributes become even more pronounced, as Daphnis' ascent to heaven is described and rites are prescribed in honour of his new godhead (*Ecl.* 5.56-68):

> candidus insuetum miratur limen Olympi
> sub pedibus uidet nubes et sidera Daphnis.
> ergo alacris siluas et cetera rura uoluptas
> Panaque pastoresque tenet Dryadasque puellas.
> nec lupus insidias pecori, nec retia ceruis
> ulla dolum meditantur: amat bonus otia Daphnis.
> ipsi laetitia uoces ad sidera iactant
> intonsi montes; ipsae iam carmina rupes,
> ipsa sonant arbusta: 'Deus, deus ille, Menalca!'
> sis bonus o felixque tuis! en quattuor aras:
> ecce duas tibi, Daphni, duas altaria Phoebo.
> pocula bina nouo spumantia lacte quotannis,
> craterasque duo statuam tibi pinguis oliui...
>
> Bathed in pure light, Daphnis stands wondering at Olympus' unfamiliar threshold and sees the clouds and stars beneath his feet. Wherefore a keen pleasure seizes the woods and the outlying fields, along with Pan, the shepherds, and the Dryad girls. The unshorn mountains themselves raise their jubilant voices to the stars, the groves themselves call out: 'A god! He is a god, Menalcas!' May you be good and bring good fortune to your people! Behold four altars: here are two for you, Daphnis, and here are two for Pheobus. Each year I shall set out two foaming cups of fresh milk for you and two bowls of rich oil...

Rejoicing in Daphnis' passing as a sacred event to be celebrated rather than lamented, these lines come as a surprising reversal of the melancholic and mournful spirit of Mopsus' speech. What is most curious about them, however, is the quantity of Lucretian material that has been recycled in their composition. At face value, the overt religiosity of the passage sits ill at ease with the undeniably Epicurean undertones imported from different parts of the *De rerum natura*. But this tension is much attenuated once we explore these themes in relation to the Epicurean theory of

250 Cf. *Aen.* 6.805, Tib. 3.6.15-6.

theology and the nature of the gods. For one thing, the invocation of Daphnis as a *ille deus* at line 64 echoes the Lucretian construction, *dicendum est, deus ille fuit, deus* ('it must be said, he was a god, a god!'), in reference to Epicurus at *DRN* 5.8. In Chapter 3 we saw similar language being applied to Tityrus' *deus* at *Ecl.* 1.6ff., and the implications here are analogous:[251] Daphnis' beatitude is somehow linked to Epicurus' god-like stature as *rerum inventor* and paragon of *ataraxia*. For another thing, the whole setting recalls the opening of *DRN* 3, where Lucretius praises Epicurus for having brought a revelatory light to lift the shadows darkening nature's truth, and describes the exalted vision of the cosmos which the master's *aurea dicta* have enabled him to achieve (*DRN* 3.1-30).[252] Intertextually speaking, this reminiscence is most tangible at lines 57-8 of the eclogue,

> **sub pedibus**que videt nubes et sidera Daphnis.
> ergo alacris silvas et cetera rura **voluptas**...

which exhibit an identical framing structure to that employed by Lucretius at *DRN* 3.27-8:[253]

> **sub pedibus** quaecupque infra per inane geruntur
> his ibi me rebus quaedam divina **voluptas**...

Mizera also notes that in the preceding line of the eclogue, *candidus insuetum miratur limen Olympi* ('bathed in pure light, Daphnis stands wondering at Olympus' unfamiliar threshold'), there may be an allusion to the scene of divine bliss among the habitations of the gods which immediately precedes lines 27-8 in Lucretius' text.[254] Her theory is supported by the fact that Lucretius' model in those earlier lines (18-22) seems to be *Od.* 6.42-6:

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251 See above pp. 94-6.

252 Compare *Gnom. Vat.* 10 and Euseb. *Praep. Evang.* 14.27.9. Both passages are discussed in connection with *DRN* 3 by Warren (2000) pp. 251ff.

253 Mizera (1982) p. 368.

254 Mizera (1982) p. 368. Two further parallels observed by Mizera occur at *Ecl.* 5.77, *pascentur apes*, which follows *apes... depascimur* at *DRN* 3.11-12, and 5.62-3, ***voces ad sidera iactant*** | *intonsi* ***montes***, with which compare *DRN* 2.327, *clamoreque* ***montes*** | *icti re****iectant voces ad sidera*** *mundi*.

> Οὔλυμπόνδ', ὅθι φασὶ θεῶν ἕδος ἀσφαλὲς αἰεὶ
> ἔμμεναι. οὔτ' ἀνέμοισι τινάσσεται οὔτε ποτ' ὄμβρῳ
> δεύεται οὔτε χιὼν ἐπιπίλναται, ἀλλὰ μάλ' αἴθρη
> πέπταται ἀνέφελος, λευκὴ δ' ἐπιδέδρομεν αἴγλη:
> τῷ ἔνι τέρπονται μάκαρες θεοὶ ἤματα πάντα.
>
> To Olympus, where they say the immovable seat of the gods stands for eternity. The winds do not shake it, nor is it drenched by any storm, nor ever touched by winter, but rather cloudless air encircles it and a bright light overspreads it: and in this place the blessed gods spend every day in perfect bliss.

Homer's description of the seat of the gods is bounded by the name 'Olympus' (Οὔλυμπόνδε) on the one side and by 'bright white light' (αἴγλη) on the other. Virgil replicates this pattern in inverse form at *Ecl.* 5.56, which rather begins with *candidus* and ends with *Olympi*. He thus annotates his allusion to Lucretius by demonstrating his knowledge of the latter's source-text, and perhaps also observes Lucretius' Epicurean 'inversion' of Homer's mythological themes. Finally, Menalcas' promise at *Ecl.* 5.79-80 to revere Daphnis as he does Bacchus and Ceres concludes his eulogy with yet another Lucretian allusion, this time to *DRN* 5.14, which compares Epicurus' benefactions to the human race with the inventions of Ceres and Bacchus, responsible respectively for having discovered the gifts of bread and wine. The Epicurean tone of Daphnis' divinization at *Ecl.* 5.64, taken over from *DRN* 5.8, would thus seem to be confirmed by another verse drawn from the same passage in Lucretius.

What all of these Lucretian hypotexts have in common is their special reference to Epicurean theology and to the connection between Epicurus' supposed godhood and the spiritual benefits of the 'physiological' technique which he devised. We saw at the beginning of this chapter how this practice of *physiologia* was related instrumentally to Epicurean ethical theory, a theory which aimed above all at eradicating the ethical perturbations that come from ill conceived or benighted opinions about natural processes. Notoriously, Epicurus also claimed that the state of *ataraxia* defined by the freedom from all such perturbations was equivalent to the

condition enjoyed by the immortal gods and that in achieving *ataraxia* the philosopher was in fact assimilating to this divine condition (*homoiôsis theôi*).[255] Hence arises the close collocation in the proem to *DRN* 3 of a summary of the power of Epicurus' natural philosophy with a beatific vision of the gods' heavenly abode. In the initial lines of both the third and fifth books of the *De rerum natura*, Epicurus' divine character is attributed to his revelatory *ratio* (*DRN* 3.14-5, 5.8-12). And in the earlier case a quasi-divine status seems to be transferred via Epicurus' philosophy to Lucretius himself, whose inspired gaze pans across the cosmic void and fixes on the *quietus* of the gods (*DRN* 3.17ff.). By venerating the god-like Epicurus and following his natural-philosophical precepts, Lucretius accomplishes his own *homoiôsis theôi*, maintaining this ataractic condition by further contemplation of the perfect *ataraxia* of other divine beings. In this there is no contradiction of Epicurean doctrine, which in fact sanctioned and occasionally encouraged such worship, provided of course that it was detached from any mistaken assumptions about what, materially speaking, one might hope to receive in return.[256]

The intertextual traces of Lucretius' third and fifth proems impart to Virgil's portrayal of Daphnis a comparable set of implications. Daphnis views the celestial phenomena of the clouds and stars in the sky *sub pedibus* (*Ecl.* 5.7), implying his mastery of their secret causes, just as Lucretius sees the universe for what it really is: a mixture of atoms and void (*DRN* 3.27). Moreover, both of their elevated situations reflect Epicurus' overcoming of *religio* at *DRN* 1.72-9, where it is 'cast under foot' and the enlightened portion of the human race 'is raised to heaven'

255 On this '*homoiôsis theôi*' see esp. Erler (2002.) The most famous statement of this belief comes at the end of Epicurus' *Epistle to Menoeceus*, where Epicurus exhorts Menoeceus to 'live like a god': ζήσεις δὲ ὡς θεὸς ἐν ἀνθρώποις. οὐθὲν γὰρ ἔοικε θνητῷ ζῴῳ ζῶν ἄνθρωπος ἐν ἀθανάτοις ἀγαθοῖς (*Ep. Men.* 135: 'live like a god among humans, for in no way does a human living among immortal goods resemble a mortal creature'). See also Gale (2013) p. 283, who gives a more abbreviated reading of *Ecl.* 5 than I have, but supplies a fuller bibliography on the philosophical tradition of *homoiôsis theôi* in antiquity.

256 Festugière (1946) pp. 71-100.

by reason's victory over nature. An Epicurean *voluptas* appears in both passages as the direct consequence of this exaltation: in Virgil it seizes all the natural world, Pan, and the Nymphs (*Ecl.* 5.58-9), while in Lucretius the poet experiences a 'divine pleasure' and trembles with awe (*divina voluptas... atque horror*, *DRN* 3.28-9). *Amat bonus otia Daphnis* ('the good Daphnis loves leisure'), continues Menalcas, further adding to the complex of philosophical themes by ostensibly relating Daphnis' ethical propriety (*bonus*) to his appreciation of leisure (*otium*). It was precisely as a form of *otium* that Lucretius had described the ideal existence led by primitive *pastores* in the early days of human history (*DRN* 5.1385), and, as we have seen at an earlier juncture, Virgil has already redeployed its associations with Epicurean *ataraxia* at *Ecl.* 1.6, where Tityrus enjoys the *otia* granted him by his *deus iuvenis*.

In view of these points, one might suggest a correspondence between the four altars that Menalcas promises to consecrate to Daphnis and Apollo (*Ecl.* 5.65ff.) and the four cardinal doctrines of Epicureanism articulated in the so-called *tetrapharmakos*: (1) that the gods care nothing for terrestrial affairs and are therefore not to be feared; (2) that death is a complete dissolution of the body and soul and is therefore nothing to us; (3) that pleasure is easy to attain; and (4) that pain and suffering are easy to endure.[257] These four teachings can be neatly divided between the first two, which concern beliefs in the mythical or supernatural, and the latter two, which relate more simply to assumptions about immediate human experience. Similarly, Menalcas distinguishes the two altars (*aras*) for Daphnis from the two promised to Apollo (*altaria*), apparently on the basis that, while Daphnis is a deified man, Apollo is a true Olympian god.[258] The religious observance which Menalcas envisages in honour of Daphnis would thus

257 *KD* 1-4; *PHerc.* 1005, col. iv 9-14.

258 For this distinction, see Coleman (1977) *ad loc*; and cf. his note on *Ecl.* 1.43. In commenting on this passage Servius Danielis cites Varro's opinion, *diis superis altaria, terrestribus aras, inferis focos dicari* ('*altaria* are said to be for the heavenly gods, *arae* for the terrestrial, and *foci* for the infernal deities').

symbolize the Epicureans' reverent meditation on the key tenets of their philosophy and the cult which they paid Epicurus as its founder.

A final confirmation of the nexus of Daphnis' deification, Epicureanism, and *physiologia* in this passage seems to be provided in *Eclogues* 9, where Lycidas asks Moeris to recite for him a song with Daphnis again as its subject. Although most of the words to the song elude him, Lycidas can still recall its beginning (*Ecl.* 9.46-9):

> Daphni, quid antiquos signorum suspicis ortus?
> Ecce Dionaei processit Caesaris astrum,
> astrum quo segetes gauderent frugibus et quo
> duceret apricis in collibus uua colorem.
>
> Daphnis, why do you watch the age-old risings of the stars? Behold, the star of Dionaean Caesar is out, the star under whose sign the cornfields rejoice in their produce and the grapes redden upon the open hills.

Daphnis is pictured here as a kind of amateur astronomer, watching the movements of the stars in an attempt to measure the change of the seasons. Moeris replies that, unfortunately, he has forgotten the rest of the verses, responding with a bitter and materialistic apothegm, *omnia fert aetas, animum quoque* ('age takes all things, even the soul'); but he gives Lycidas the intriguing assurance that Menalcas will be able to complete the performance for him (*Ecl.* 9.55). It seems, therefore, inevitable that one should make an identification between the pair Daphnis and Menalcas in *Eclogues* 5 and the pair Daphnis and Menalcas in *Eclogues* 9, whose relationships mirror one another: in both poems Daphnis is the subject of a bucolic song that is or will be sung by Menalcas. If indeed these personages are identical – nor need they be even strictly identical for the suggestion to arise – then we are further justified in reading Daphnis in *Eclogues* 5 as an exemplar of effective *physiologia*.

I began this section with the proposition that in the person of Daphnis Virgil has integrated a traditional bucolic ideal with an Epicurean ethical ideal, that we are meant to detect

in him two intertwining thematic strands which are not specific to this eclogue but which traverse other eclogues as well. Having now described the contours of these two dimensions to his personality, I hope also to have given an adequate demonstration of how this integration has been achieved in practice. Based on what we have seen previously of Virgil's poetic self-fashioning in the *Eclogues*, it should be apparent how the significations with which his treatment of Daphnis is inscribed are at home in the overarching literary-generic economy of his bucolic project. The different threads representing the didactic and bucolic poetic traditions and the Epicurean philosophical tradition are here woven together in an episode that is both figuratively and literally central to the *Eclogues* as a whole, exemplifying the harmony between poetic and philosophical interests that Virgil has sought to achieve. This concluding point can be illustrated by one last couplet drawn from *Eclogues* 5, which is as close as we get to Daphnis' own words. At the end of Mopsus' song, we are told what the deceased bucolic hero's first-person epitaph will be (*Ecl.* 5.43-4):

> Daphnis ego in silvis, hinc usque ad sidera notus,
> formonsi pecoris custos, formonsior ipse.
>
> I am Daphnis among the woods, known from here all the way to the stars, guardian of a comely flock, but comelier myself.

This embedded epigram, as Brian Breed notes, is modelled in the first place on Daphnis' words at *Id.* 1.120-1.[259] But it is possibly also contaminated by a Lucretian intertext referring back to *DRN* 6.7-8.[260] In any case certainly looks forward to Menalcas' Lucretian song, with which he similarly proposes to extol Daphnis *ad astra* (*Ecl.* 5.51-2: 'to the stars'). We can therefore read

259 Breed (2006) pp. 62-3
260 Gale (2013) pp. 281-3.

the collocation of *silvis* (‘woods’) with *sidera* (‘stars’) as summarizing emblematically the two sides to Daphnis’ character as both bucolic poet and *physiologos*.

THE SONG OF SILENUS

We come now to my final example, the ‘Song of Silenus’ in *Ecl.* 6 (26ff.), which has for a long time presented scholars with something of an enigma. Dispensing with detailed analysis of the mythological vignettes which comprise the central part of Silenus’ song, I wish instead to concentrate on the opening strain of cosmological-didactic poetry (31-40) and the later scene of Gallus’ poetic initiation (or *Dichterweihe*) at lines 64-73, two sections which critics have rightly seen as outlining the main ‘philosophical’ and ‘literary’ aspects of Silenus’ performance.[261] I shall first briefly state my view and then attempt to meet an important objection which might be made against it.

The occasion for Silenus’ song, Virgil tells us, is brought about by the design of two mischievous boys, Chromis and Mnasylus, who conspire to bind a hung-over Silenus while he is sleeping off a night of Bacchic revelry. Assisted by the Naiad, Aegle, they succeed in their ambition and leverage Silenus’ compromised position in order to extract from him the performance of a song which he has apparently often promised but never delivered. Now without any choice in the matter, he begins at once (*Ecl.* 6.26-40):

> tum uero in numerum Faunosque ferasque uideres
> ludere, tum rigidas motare cacumina quercus.
> nec tantum Phoebo gaudet Parnasia rupes,
> nec tantum Rhodope miratur et Ismarus Orphea.
> namque canebat uti magnum per inane coacta
> semina terrarumque animaeque marisque fuissent

261 Viarre (1990).

> et liquidi simul ignis; ut his exordia primis
> omnia, et ipse tener mundi concreuerit orbis;
> tum durare solum et discludere Nerea ponto
> coeperit, et rerum paulatim sumere formas;
> iamque nouom terrae stupeant lucescere solem,
> altius atque cadant submotis nubibus imbres,
> incipiant siluae cum primum surgere, cumque
> rara per ignaros errent animalia montis.
>
> Then you would have seen the Fauns and wild beasts out playing in great numbers, then you have seen the tops of sturdy oaks sway. The Parnasian did not rejoice so much at Phoebus' coming, nor did Ismarus and Rhodope wonder so greatly at Orpheus. For he sang how the seeds of earth, wind, and sea were thrown together in the great void – and those of fire as well; how in them lay the first beginnings of all things and how the unstable mass of the world grew out of them. He sang then how the earth became firm and unveiled Nereus out upon the ocean and how it gradually assumed the forms of things. Then the land stood amazed at the newness of the blazing sun and rain fell from on high where the clouds gathered, as the woodlands first began to grow and here and there animals wandered among the nameless hills.

A short prologue of four lines introduces the subject-matter of Silenus' *carmen* in terms which draw a parallel between the crapulous satyr and the poet Orpheus, whose importance for Virgil's own poetic program we have already seen. Besides the invocation of Orpheus' name in line 30, the responsiveness of Silenus' natural surroundings to his song, as described in lines 27-8, indicates that he is possessed of the same vatic power as was Orpheus when his poetry produced a similar effect on the Thracian woodlands (*Ecl*. 30: *nec tantum Rhodope miratur* ['nor did Rhodope wonder so much']). Furthermore this reference to Orpheus does not end where line 31 begins, as the succeeding verses, which begin as a cosmological song on the origins of the world, constitute an intertextual allusion to an earlier passage in Apollonius' *Argonautica* where the character Orpheus sings a song on just the same subject (*Arg.* 1.496-502):

> Ἤειδεν δ' ὡς γαῖα καὶ οὐρανος ἠδὲ θάλασσα,
> τὸ πρὶν ἐπ' ἀλλήλοισι μιῇ συναρηρότα μορφῇ,
> νείκεος ἐξ ὀλοοῖο διέκριθεν ἀμφὶς ἕκαστα·
> ἠδ' ὡς ἔμπεδον αἰὲν ἐν αἰθέρι τέκμαρ ἔχουσιν
> ἄστρα σεληναίη τε καὶ ἠελίοιο κέλευθοι·
> οὔρεά θ' ὡς ἀνέτειλε, καὶ ὡς ποταμοὶ κελάδοντες

> αὖτῇσιν νύμφῃσι καὶ ἑρπετὰ πάντ' ἐγένοντο...
>
> And he sang how the earth and the sky and the sea, which at first were compacted together in a single form, through deadly strife became separate from one another; how the stars and the moon and the paths of the sun always follow a fixed course through the aether; and how the mountains rose up and how the echoing rivers with their nymphs and all the animals who walk on land came to be.

Ecl. 6. 31-3 very obviously mimic *Arg.* 1.496-8, in both the introductory *namque canebat uti* ('for he sang how'), which translates Apollonius' Ἤειδεν δ' ὡς ('and he sang how'), and the arrangement of themes, beginning with the formation of the earth, the air, and the seas, and ending with particular features of the natural landscape (*silvae* ['woods'], *montis* ['mountains'], οὔρεά ['mountains'], ποταμοὶ ['rivers']) and the evolution of animal life (*animalia*, ἑρπετὰ).[262] Virgil, however, modifies the elemental theory of Apollonius' version by inserting a preliminary stage of cosmological order in which matter exists as a set of primordial atoms (*semina* ['seeds']) floating in the void (*inane*) before they are 'forced together' (*coacta*) into the four elemental substances of earth, air, water, and fire. In doing so, he also adds a small number of Lucretian reminiscences, showing that his motive for altering Apollonius' cosmogony is rooted in Epicurean atomism.[263] Virgil thus presents Silenus as a cosmological poet in the tradition

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262 *Mundi* at *Ecl.* 6.33 should be taken to mean 'spherical world' in general (Coleman (1977) *ad loc.*), encompassing all the parts of the cosmos. The epithet *tener* thus describes the unstable, fluid state of the world before matter settled into the distinct groupings of 'earth' and 'sky'. On this reading, the first phase of the cosmos' acquiring a definite form is marked by the solidification of the earth and the rising of the ocean (*Ecl.* 6.35: *tum durare solum et discludere Nerea ponto* [then the earth became firm and unveiled Nereus out upon the ocean']). It is only after the formation of the earth at line 35 that the sun seems to come into being at line 37: *iamque **novom** terrae stupeant lucescere **solem*** ('Then the land stood amazed at the newness of the blazing sun'). Virgil's order of events thus accords perfectly with Lucretius' Epicurean cosmogony as set out at *DRN* 5.416-509.

263 Stewart (1959) pp. 183-6 contests the Epicurean philosophical allegiance expressed in these lines. He argues that *Eclogues* 6.31-40 cannot be Epicurean in tenor (1) because they appear to subscribe to a theory of the four elements that is foreign to Epicurean atomism and (2) because the order of events in the formation of the world that they present is also un-Epicurean (cf. Boyancé (1958) pp. 233-4). In response it may be noted that the Epicureanism of the cosmological theory expounded in this passage was already accepted by Servius on *Ecl.* 31-2, who adopts the common-sense approach of assuming that the four elements mentioned by Virgil should not be considered elements *per se* but rather 'composites' – *syntheta, composita* – made up of atomic *semina.* Indeed, Virgil describes the *semina* explicitly as *semina terrarumque animaeque marisque et liquidi ignis* ('the seeds of earth, wind, and sea were thrown together in the great void, and those of fire'), which would appear to

inaugurated by the Orphic Cosmogony, a tradition which in its latest instantiation in Lucretius has been 'corrected' by the application of Epicurus' natural philosophy.

Just as Apollonius had done (*Arg.* 1.503ff.), Virgil follows this initial focus on cosmogony with a catalogue of mythological topics, filling out the bulk of Silenus' reported subject-matter. After a few quick nods to the tales of Pyrrha and Deucalion, Prometheus, and Hylas, a more lingering account of the bestiality of Pasiphae, and then a couple further gestures to the myths of Atalanta and Phaethon, Virgil abruptly turns his attention to a subsequent part of Silenus' song which, we are told, focused on the contemporary Roman elegist Gallus and his imaginary consecration as a poet in the didactic tradition of Hesiod (*Ecl.* 6.64-73):

> tum canit, errantem Permessi ad flumina Gallum
> Aonas in montis ut duxerit una sororum,
> utque uiro Phoebi chorus adsurrexerit omnis;
> ut Linus haec illi diuino carmine pastor,
> floribus atque apio crinis ornatus amaro,
> dixerit: 'hos tibi dant calamos, en accipe, Musae,
> Ascraeo quos ante seni; quibus ille solebat
> cantando rigidas deducere montibus ornos.
> his tibi Grynei nemoris dicatur origo,
> ne quis sit lucus quo se plus iactet Apollo.'
>
> Then he sang of Gallus straying by the river Permessus and how one of the Sisters came and led him up into the Aonian mountains; how all of Phoebus' choir rose to greet the man and how Linus, the herdsman of divine song, with flowers and bitter parsley adorning his hair, said to Gallus: 'Come, take these reeds – a gift from the Muses which once they gave to the old Ascraean and with which he used to bring down the sturdy ash-trees from the mountains. May they accompany you in singing the origin of the Grynaen Grove, so that no other wood may be more favoured by Apollo.

The scene opens with Gallus 'straying' (*errantem*) by the river Permessus, which flowed down and around the base of Mount Helicon in Greece. One of the Muses, perhaps Calliope,[264]

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be an assertion of the priority of *semina* to earth, air, water, and fire in the cosmology being proposed. *Semina* is also a term used by Lucretius to refer to atoms, on which see Sedley (1998) p. 38.

264 In Propertius' own personal *Dichterweihe* in *Elegies* 3.3 (where Silenus also makes a cameo appearance) it is Calliope who presides over his consecration as Philetean elegist.

stumbles across him there and leads him up the mountain (*Aonas in montis*) to join the chorus of Apollo on the heights. Upon his arrival a pastoral Linus, festooned with spring flowers and parsley, welcomes him and hands over the reed pipes of Hesiod, a gift from the Muses.[265] This procession of events appears to symbolize Gallus' elevation from the status of simple love-elegist to that of a learned Alexandrian writing aetiological elegies in the Callimachean mould.[266] The identification of his starting position at the base of Helicon with his role as love elegist is attested by Propertius, who ends one of the elegies with an allusion to the present passage and an admission of being uninitiated in the mysteries of the 'Ascraean founts' (Prop. 2.10.25-6):

> nondum etiam Ascraeos norunt mea carmina fontis,
> sed modo Permessi flumine lavit Amor.
>
> For my songs have yet to known the Ascraean founts – it is only in the river Permessus that has Love washed them.

Gallus' new poetic calling is given a specific content in lines 71-3, where it is implied that the poems he will compose with the aid of Hesiod's sacred *calami* ('reeds') will be a kind of mythological didactic in the vein of Orpheus, whose charming of the natural environment is reflected in Hesiod's ability to 'bring the ash-trees down from the mountain'. They will be concerned primarily with aetiologies like the 'origin of the Grynaean grove' of Apollo. A contrast is thus set up between love elegy, associated with Gallus' *error* on the banks of the Permessus, and the higher poetic form of instructional, aetiological elegy, which Virgil suggests that he adopt as an alternative.[267] In *Eclogues* 10, as we have seen, Virgil addresses a kind of poetic protreptic

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265 On Virgil's portrayal of Linus here, see Ross (1975) pp. 21-3. As both he and Hardie (1986) p. 13 note, Linus was also associated with instruction and didactic poetry. In Theocritus' *Idylls* Linus appears as the preceptor of the young Hercules (*Id.* 24.105-6) and Diogenes Laetius refers to him as an early cosmologist (1 prol. 3ff.).

266 Some others who take this view are Seider (2016), Davis (2012) pp. 121-40, and Harrison (2007) pp. 55-6. Gallus' trajectory up the mountain and his arrival among the Muses recalls a famous literary dream of Callimachus' in which he was likewise privileged to join the company on Helicon (*Anth. Pal.* 7.52).

267 So Saint-Denis (1963) p. 33, who follows the earlier interpretation of Bardon (1956) vol. 2 p. 35. As far as we can know with relative certainty, Gallus only ever composed erotic elegiac verses; it is exclusively as an elegiac poet that he is listed in Quintilian's catalogue of poetic genres and their practitioners (*Inst. or.* 10.1). Servius'

to Gallus, advocating for a turn away from the passionate elegiac project that consumes him.[268] Similarly, here Virgil seems to be recommending to his friend a 'safer' and more dignified compositional form in order to save him from his self-destructive behaviour.

In all of this we can see various aspects of Virgil's literary-generic undertaking come together in a more or less unified way. Of foremost importance is the theme of didactic poetry, which recurs throughout both of our passages from *Eclogues* 6: Silenus' song begins as itself a species of cosmological didactic informed by Lucretius' mediation of Epicurean atomism, and culminates in a scene of Gallus' conversion to a similar, although perhaps not identical, form of instructional poetry. Moreover, Gallus' conversion is itself motivated by an Epicurean ethical concern to avoid the snare of obsessive *erôs*, as we have seen also to be the case in *Eclogues* 2 and 10. Remember too that Silenus' song is unfolding under the sign of Apollo's admonition to the would-be epic poet at the opening of *Eclogues* 6 (3ff.) and that the Callimachean anti-epic program declared there must also be informing the complex of generic interactions dramatized here.[269] Hence the *deductum carmen* of the opening *recusatio* (5) is echoed by the use of *deducere* to characterize the effect of Hesiod's poetry at line 71, and the *reges* and *proelia* of heroic epic *poiêsis* are cancelled out by Virgil's alternative focus on didactic *epos* as practised by Orpheus, Hesiod, and Lucretius, among others.

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comment on *Ecl.* 6.72-3 to the effect that Gallus was responsible for a translation of Euphorion's aetiological hexameter poetry into Latin and that this is where the *Grynaeum nemus* featured is in all likelihood derived from Gallus' association with Euphorion at *Ecl.* 10.50. At any rate it is debatable whether we are, as Ross (1975) p. 31 has put it 'reliably informed' by Servius about the situation. Cf. Coleman (1977) on *Ecl.* 6.72-3, 10.50; also Seider (2016) p. 9 n. 22. Seider suggests that the poetry which Gallus is exhorted to compose may also be expected to contain pastoral overtones and may therefore prefigure the pastoral crossover of his character in *Ecl.* 10.

268 See above pp. 100-102.

269 As Seider (2016) p. 8 notes, the narrative of Gallus' initiation at lines 6.64-73 mirrors that of Virgil's persona, Tityrus, in the proem, implying a community of design between Apollo's initial injunction and Gallus' poetic conversion.

One important objection is possible to this reading of *Eclogues* 6 and was advanced cogently by David Ross in the mid 1970's.[270] Before wrapping up my discussion I should therefore take a moment to respond to him. The difficulty in this case arises from the complexity of the tradition around Gallus' troubled relationship to the elegiac genre. Ross claims that Gallus' appearance in Silenus' song should be interpreted as no more and no less than a token of praise for his pioneering poetic output and his historic contribution to a lineage of poets stretching all the way back to Apollo himself. Ross grounds this interpretation on the further determinative claim that there can be no opposition between Gallus' status when he is 'wandering by the banks of the Permessus' and his later station among the choir of the Muses, because in fact no such opposition exists in Propertius, despite what at first glance might seem to be revealed in the couplet quoted above from *Elegies* 2.10 (25-6).[271] Relevant to this argument is a second passage from Propertius where the elegist appears to conflate the two terms of the opposition he has previously established between love-elegy and Permessus on the one hand and 'Ascraean' (*viz.* Hesiodic) poetry on the other (Prop. 2.13.3-8):

> hic [Amor] me tam gracilis vetuit contemnere Musas,
> iussit et Ascraeum sic habitare nemus,
> non ut Pieriae quercus mea verba sequantur,
> aut possim Ismaria ducere valle feras,
> sed magis ut nostro stupefiat Cynthia versu:
> tunc ego sim Inachio notior arte Lino.
>
> Love forbad me to disdain such slender Muses, and commanded me thus to inhabit the Ascraean Grove – not so that the Pierian oaks might follow my words or so that I might lead the beasts from the Ismarian vale, but rather so that Cyntha should be struck with amazement at my verse. Then I should be even more renowned for my art than Inachian Linus.

270 Ross (1975) pp. 18-38, esp. 31ff.

271 Prop. *Eleg.* 2.10.25-6; quoted on p. 149 above.

Straightaway, it may be pointed out that it is not a total conflation that Propertius has achieved in this passage, since he is careful to distinguish the goal toward which his elegy is oriented from that which one might expect to belong to poetry of the 'Ascraean grove'. Propertius, like Gallus in *Eclogues* 6 (and, for that matter, Virgil, or 'Tityrus'), is admonished to compose in the polished (*gracilis*) Alexandrian style, influenced by Hesiod's manner of composition, but crucially *not* with intention of continuing a tradition of didactic-like poetry represented here, as in Virgil, by the responsiveness of the local wildlife on Helicon.[272] Rather Propertius' enrichment of his amatory elegy with themes drawn from mythography will still aim at winning the heart of his beloved, serving as only so much poetic ammunition to be spent on achieving his original erotic ambitions. Besides the parallels I have just noted with *Eclogues* 6, Propertius' polemical stance toward Virgil's anti-erotic program is put beyond doubt by his adversarial one-upmanship with regard to Linus. Linus, it will be remembered, was the figure responsible in *Eclogues* 6 for ministering at Gallus' consecration and commanding him to follow a new course in his art. Propertius thus rejects the spirit and content of Linus' instruction while nevertheless adopting the Hesiodic form in which that content is to be presented.

Admittedly, this puts the reader in a bit of an awkward position *vis-à-vis* Propertius' overall elegiac program in the second book of his *Elegies*, which includes both poems I have cited. How is it that Propertius describes a supposedly unified project in contradictory terms on two separate occasions within the scope of that same project? In *Elegies* 2.10 he appears to assert that his elegy is purely love-elegy, hitherto uncontaminated by the *fons Ascraeus*; but very shortly afterwards, in 2.13, he embraces Hesiodic influence in a quite substantive way. The

272 Propertius' 'Ismarian vale' in line 6 of his elegy acts once again to include Orpheus in the tradition of didactic poetry that he is in process of repudiating (cf. *Ecl.* 6.29: *nec tantum Rhodope miratur et **Ismarus Orphea*** ['nor did Rhodope and **Ismarus** wonder so greatly at **Orpheus**'])

solution to this problem, I think, is that *Elegies* 2.10 and 2.13 originally come from two *separate* books of Propertius' writings. Editors of his works have long been puzzled by Propertius' mention at *Elegies* 2.13.25 (the same poem from which the programmatic passage above has been drawn) of his *tres libelli*, which clashes with the apparent truth that when one reads this line one is at the same time reading only the *second* of Propertius' book-length publications. Some scholars have responded to this conundrum by proposing that *Elegies* 2 should in fact be divided into *Elegies* 1 and 2, with the book currently known to us as *Elegies* 1 standing apart as simply the *Monobiblos*.[273] In particular Theodor Birt suggested that the division should come precisely at *Elegies* 2.12, a point which does seem to mark a convenient break between the epigrammatic finality of 2.11 and the obvious programmatic significance of 2.13.[274] The discordant programs of 2.10 and 2.13 can thus be neatly discriminated; and if so then Ross' objection crumbles and the interpretation that I have proposed remains viable.

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With that we have followed the thread of Virgil's 'didactic enrichment' in the *Eclogues* as far as I wish to go in the present study. The several instances we have reviewed where Virgil contaminates his pastoral verse with augmentations drawn from the ancient tradition of didactic poetry have all shared a certain propensity toward the Epicurean natural-philosophical version of cosmology and ethics. In *Eclogues* 3 this was apparent in the central place given to the proto-Epicurean philosopher and astronomer, Eudoxus, in Virgil's tendentious re-working of Theocritus' programmatic *kissubion* ecphrasis. Our discussion of that eclogue also enabled us to see how Virgil proposes to build on the conception of bucolic genre he has inherited from

273 For a review of this theory and some of its variants see Butler and Barber (1933) pp. xxviii-xxxv.
274 Birt (1882) pp. 413-26.

Theocritus, by incorporating new elements from cosmological poetry such as that of ‘Orpheus’, Hesiod, Aratus, and – most importantly – Lucretius. In *Eclogues* 5 we saw how this novel didactic dimension of Virgilian bucolic has a special connection to the Epicurean ethical practice of *physiologia* and the quasi-divine spiritual benefits that it was thought by members of the Epicurean school to confer. A suite of Lucretian interexts embedded in the fabric of the eulogies that *Eclogues* 5’s two shepherds, Mopsus and Menalcas, sing for the deceased Daphnis served further to substantiate the more literary side of the project, which we saw outlined in the ‘neobucolic’ ecphrasis of *Eclogues* 3. Lastly I set out to show how Virgil’s literary-generic project culminates in the pervasive didactic elements present in the ‘Song of Silenus’ in *Eclogues* 6. More than any other eclogue in the collection, *Eclogues* 6 stands as a firm statement of Virgil’s poetic program and the key example of his efforts to annex the territory of didactic poetry to his bucolic domain.

CONCLUSION

We began in Chapter 1 with a look at the available biographical *testimonia* on Virgil's life. From what evidence there is, we were able to see that Virgil became an Epicurean relatively early in his adult life – sometime during the early 40's BC – and that he reveals his philosophical beliefs in his first poetic works, the *Catalepton*, the *Culex*, and the *Ciris*. These pieces, I argued, are not spurious, as they have often been thought to be, but are genuine Virgilian productions whose inauthenticity has never been conclusively proven. I proceeded to show how the composition of the *Eclogues* can be dated to the period 45-42 BC, placing them close in time to Virgil's early Epicurean poems and suggesting that they too participate in the ancient current of Epicurean thought.

In Chapter 2, I went on to show what such participation might entail for the poet and his poetry, based on a range of Epicurean sources, including the fragments of the Epicurean school and poems in both Greek and Latin by other Epicurean practitioners (Philodemus, Lucretius, and Horace). This enabled us to see how an 'Epicurean poetics' might have positioned itself in opposition to the generic conventions of ancient heroic epic and erotic elegy. To make the terms of such literary-generic conceptualization historically more concrete, I finished by tracking the use of the categories of *poiêma* and *poiêsis* in Hellenistic and Roman poetics, especially in the theoretical work of Philodemus, where *poiêsis* appears to have a meaning very close to what we would call 'epic genre'.

Contextual discussion of, 'Epicurean poetics', led in Chapter 3 to an analysis of the ways in which Epicureanism can be seen to cohere with the bucolic poetics of Theocritus' *Idylls*,

which similarly reject epic and elegiac compositional modes. The synergy between Epicureanism and bucolic poetics is an important thread in Virgil's pastoral poetry, and I spent the remainder of the chapter following this thread through a handful eclogues: *Eclogues* 1, 2, 6, and 10.

In the last chapter, Chapter 4, we saw how Virgil moves past the pre-existing generic concerns of Theocritean poetry and effects a tendentious innovation of the bucolic tradition continued in his *Eclogues*. He does this mainly by giving increased emphasis to cosmological and didactic themes throughout the poetry-book, an emphasis which I argued was spurred by the paramount important of *physiologia* and natural philosophy in Epicureanism. The *Eclogues*' development and poetic identity are thus once again a product of both philosophical and literary forces impacting their author.

Through all these twists and turns, the foregoing analysis of Virgil's *Eclogues* has necessarily been selective. In modern treatments of the poem, as indeed of the *Eclogues* as a whole, it has become something of a commonplace to divide the various layers of meaning according to whether they bear more or less directly on different themes such as philosophy, poetics, religion, political ideology, or on the thematic divisions of some other *ad hoc* categorical scheme. Of course, such partitioning of the sense of Virgil's poetry is contrived, but in many cases it carries the practical benefit of enabling the critic to deal more effectively with this or that feature of the work under inspection. In my discussion I have said very little, for instance, about the social and political context of civil war and agrarian expropriation informing the subject-matter of the *Eclogues*, except where it seemed to support an argument about Virgil's more literary interests throughout the collection. And it might be pointed out that the same goes for the themes of Orphism, 'Golden Age' cosmology, Dionysian and Apollonian poetics, or a range of other issues that, in the interest of simplicity, I have not touched on except tangentially. All these

are areas where much remains to be done. At a few points in the thesis I have also mentioned the possibility that at some moment Virgil began to grow apart from Epicureanism. In light of his later work and its direction, I think that, generally speaking, this must be true, although the matter obviously does not admit of precision. However, that is not to discount to formative effect of Epicureanism on the *Eclogues*, or even on the *Georgics* and the *Aeneid*. Some tendencies introduced into Virgil's poetry and thought by his engagement with Epicureanism way well have remained throughout his life and career. I would therefore like to conclude by expressing the hope that studies of the integration of Virgil's Epicurean interests with the other diverse aspects of his poetry that scholars have observed may proceed apace, and that they not limit themselves by thinking of Virgil as either wholly in agreement with or in opposition to Epicurean doctrines. For present purposes, I have of course stressed the continuities between the *Eclogues* and Epicureanism, but further work might point out ways in which Virgil goes beyond the philosophical outlook with which I have been operating. I will therefore rest content if what I have written may be accounted as at least some small progress towards unravelling the vastly complex Virgilian *ainigma*.

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