

## ON ECLOGUE 1.79–83

CHRISTINE PERKELL

Emory University

In his interesting study of the *Eclogues*, Paul Alpers points to a crucial problem in *Eclogue* 1.<sup>1</sup> He observes that while many current critics view Tityrus as being of pedestrian imagination, callous, evasive, and morally insensitive,<sup>2</sup> it is he, nevertheless, who speaks the splendid final verses of the poem, verses which, in their haunting and melancholy beauty, essentially characterize Virgil's poetry:

et iam summa procul villarum culmina fumant  
maioresque cadunt altis de montibus umbrae.

With their "vespertinal mixture of sadness and tranquillity,"<sup>3</sup> these verses are model expressions of Virgil's dissonant sensibility and exemplify the emotive power of his pastoral voice.

Yet, to return to Alpers' point, these verses are out of character, if the generally accepted negative evaluations of Tityrus' previous utterances are valid. Alpers tries to solve this problem, in a lengthy, difficult, and often shifting discussion,<sup>4</sup> by denying that dramatic consistency is an essential feature of the pastoral mode in general or of this poem in particular. As a consequence he can also, therefore, deny that the identity of the speaker of any given verse need have significance. Rather he argues that pastoral is lyric or expressive to a great degree ("the peculiar poetics of the *Eclogue*, somewhere between drama and lyric," p. 84), that it seeks to create a certain mood—with no necessary correlation between parts (e.g., p. 81), and that it is the character of the utterances which signifies, not the speaker. Extrapolating from some views of Klingner, he argues

<sup>1</sup> Paul Alpers, *The Singer of the Eclogues: A Study of Virgilian Pastoral* (Berkeley 1979), e.g., 65–71. This and the following texts will hereafter be cited by author's last name alone: A. J. Boyle, *The Chaonian Dove* (Leiden 1986); K. Büchner, "P. Vergilius Maro," *RE* 8A1 (1958); Robert Coleman, ed., *Virgil: Eclogues* (Cambridge 1977); F. Klingner, *Virgil: Bucolica, Georgica, Aeneis* (Zurich 1967); E. W. Leach, *Virgil's Eclogues: Landscapes of Experience* (Ithaca and London 1974); Annabel Patterson, *Pastoral and Ideology: Virgil to Valéry* (Berkeley 1987); Viktor Pöschl, *Die Hirtendichtung Virgils* (Heidelberg 1964); Michael C. J. Putnam, *Virgil's Pastoral Art: Studies in the Eclogues* (Princeton 1970); Charles P. Segal, "Tamen Cantabitis, Arcades: Exile and Arcadia in *Eclogues* One and Nine," *Arion* 4 (1965) 237–66; J. G. Wright, "Virgil's Pastoral Programme: Theocritus, Callimachus, and *Eclogue* 1," *PCPhS* 209 (n.s. 29) (1983) 107–58. For Latin citations I have used Coleman's text.

<sup>2</sup> E.g., Coleman ad 11, 19, 59, 79 and p. 90; Boyle 16, 17n. 5, 18–19; Segal 275–76; Leach 118; Putnam 39.

<sup>3</sup> Alpers 67n. 3, citing Erwin Panofsky, "Et in Arcadia Ego: Poussin and the Elegiac Tradition," in *Meaning in the Visual Arts* (Garden City, NY 1955) 300.

<sup>4</sup> Alpers 65–95.

that readers who are troubled by Tityrus' speaking the conclusion fundamentally mistake the mode of the poem, misread its tensions, and hence fall into interpretive errors, among which he would include negative moral judgments about Tityrus. When Alpers says that "the static, undramatic view of the poem, though not wholly adequate, at least enables us to avoid some misleading commonplaces about it" (p. 81), he refers to negative judgments about Tityrus by such critics as Putnam (or Boyle or Coleman). If one relaxes one's requirements for dramatic consistency and logical, linear coherence,<sup>5</sup> one can see, he argues, that the poem's conclusion is appropriate to pastoral, regardless of who speaks it. (An extreme statement of this view is Wright's, who asserts that the poem proper really ends at 77–78 and that the conclusion is merely a pastoral tag, a "poetic sleight-of-hand," to obtain a serene and peaceful conclusion.<sup>6</sup>) I quote Alpers now at some length in order to avoid suspicion of misrepresenting him: "In the most subtle and convincing of such ["essentially nondramatic"] readings, Tityrus' *adynata* (59–62) are interpreted as a breakthrough to the sublime *for the whole poem* (Alpers' italics)<sup>7</sup> [i.e., despite the apparent deficiencies of Tityrus as a character]; the ironies are to be referred not to the speakers and their relations, but to the situation as a whole and the tensions inherent in it. *By the same token, the final lines are taken as a powerful conclusion to the poem as a whole; they are attributed, so to speak, to Virgil, rather than to Tityrus*" (p. 71). (Italics here and material in brackets supplied by present author.)

Alpers' argument for the "essentially nondramatic" nature of the *Eclogue* and the consequent irrelevance of the individual speaker, although provocative, seems not, finally, convincing. Most basically, it *feels* wrong; it is counter-instinctive and requires us to deny that we feel what we feel in reading, namely that the characters do have identity and that the ending is, therefore, inappropriately dismissed as merely impersonal or pastoral. Less subjectively, one might also argue that no speech in *Eclogue* 1 should, as Alpers suggests, be "attributed above all to Virgil himself;" for while the *Eclogue* poet (perhaps to be identified with Virgil)<sup>8</sup> does speak in other poems, here he does not. Rather he allows all issues to emerge from the interaction between the two speakers.

<sup>5</sup> Such a relaxed reading fits well with Pöschl's concept of the "lässige Spannung" of the Roman classic (82). It is to this loose structure that Pöschl attributes, e.g., Tityrus' forgetting to answer the question of the god's identity. Cf. 35.

<sup>6</sup> Wright 112.

<sup>7</sup> He takes this thought from Klingner 25–26, who argues that l. 62, by evoking the fate of Rome, completes the poem's "Durchbruch zum Erhabenen."

<sup>8</sup> Leach is most interesting on the subject of the *Eclogue* poet, whom she considers the unifying figure of the *Eclogues*. His own ideal "is the search for a viable form of poetic expression, a self-critical search that gives ultimate unity to the collection by its relinquishment of pastoral poetry" (50). He speaks directly in *Eclogues* 2, 4, 6, 8, and 10. Leach cautions that "neither the *Eclogue* poet nor any other character in the *Eclogues* is to be taken as a definitive spokesman for Vergil, or as a representative of his personality or ideas" (262). Patterson conceives of authorship as a "strategy" and adds, "And by throwing into structural and linguistic question the location of his own voice throughout the ten poems, Virgil effectively demonstrated how a writer can protect himself by dismemberment, how he can best assert his ownership of a text by a wickedly shifting authorial presence" (4).

The reader must respond to the poem's pressures without authorial authentication of either speaker in the drama.

I use the term "drama" deliberately, for I wish to argue, against Alpers, that the poem is, in fact, precisely a miniature drama. It is conceived with careful attention to consistency of speaker and suggestive of character in so much detail as to belie the irrelevance of the individuality of the speakers. Tityrus' speaking of the final verses is an organically motivated climax to the miniature drama enacted in the poem. Tityrus is drawn out of his self-absorption and made responsive, I suggest, by the power of Meliboeus' pastoral voice; and the demonstration of this power is a climax and major purpose of the *Eclogue*. This proposed reading of the poem's conclusion and of Tityrus' appropriateness for speaking it will be seen to make possible some new perspectives on the poem's tensions and achievements.

To begin, we can establish consistency of dramatic characterization by considering several different features of the speakers' utterances. For example, a great difference in values between the two speakers emerges from a comparison of their attitudes towards the country. For Tityrus, the country signifies the realities of physical labor and financial worry (31–32, 34, 40). "For him it is a place of work and hard-earned savings (*peculi*, 32) and frustrations (*pinguis et ingratae premeretur caseus urbi*, 34)."<sup>9</sup> Tityrus is represented, in his responses to country life, as concerned with practical and material realities. In Meliboeus, on the other hand, although he sees its difficult reality:

et tibi magna satis, quamvis lapis omnia nudus  
limosoque palus obducat pascua iunco (47–48),

the country sparks a creative imagination, which, quite indifferent to material reality, transforms and transfigures brackish marsh into a pastoral ideal, into the very quintessence of the pastoral vision:

fortunate senex, hic inter flumina nota  
et fontis sacros frigus captabis opacum;  
hinc tibi quae semper, vicino ab limite saepes  
Hyblaeis apibus florem depasta salicti  
saepe levi somnum suadebit inire susurro;  
hinc alta sub rupe canet frondator ad auras,  
nec tamen interea raucae, tua cura, palumbes  
nec gemere aeria cessabit turtur ab ulmo. (51–58)

This transforming imagination emerges, then, as the defining characteristic of Meliboeus as pastoral poet and seems, thus, to set him apart from Tityrus. In this "most famous piece of pastoralism in the poem,"<sup>10</sup> Virgil gives us to see that it is Meliboeus' imagination which creates the pastoral vision—an idyllic vision which never existed historically anywhere or had any substance except in the poet's imagination, as is clearly implied by the juxtaposed descriptions of unlovely reality (46–47) and imagined ideal (51–58).<sup>11</sup> The pastoral vision is

<sup>9</sup> Segal 275. Cf. Coleman ad 3–4 and 34.

<sup>10</sup> Alpers 84.

<sup>11</sup> Putnam attempts to resolve the inconsistency between the real character of the land and the ideal by translating: "Fortunate old man, and so your lands will

revealed as an individual act of imagination and spirit (not of nostalgia or memory).

Related aspects of Meliboeus' pastoral imagination are reflected in his repeated empathetic identification with others—people as well as figures of nature. For example, he apostrophizes the absent Amaryllis, addressing her directly, as if he imagined her present:

Mirabar quid maesta deos, Amarylli, vocares,  
quoi pendere sua patereris in arbore poma. (36–37)

So immediately does he recreate, interpret, and identify with her response to Tityrus' absence. Or again, Meliboeus endows nature with sentience, imagining that the pines, springs, and hedges called and longed for the absent Tityrus:

Tityrus hinc aberat. ipsae te, Tityre, pinus,  
ipsi te fontes, ipsa haec arbusta vocabant. (38–39)

Although Alpers and Putnam think that Meliboeus imagines Tityrus as some sort of Daphnis figure, a rural divinity upon whose well-being nature depends,<sup>12</sup> I think it easier to propose that his imagining of rural responsiveness to Tityrus' absence is a characteristic feature of his empathetic sensibility and imagination. Verses 4–5 show this same vision of nature as responsive to man:

tu, Tityre, lentus in umbra  
formonsam resonare doces Amaryllida silvas.

(Cf. also 55.) Similarly, Meliboeus' attribution of capacity for happiness to his flock further suggests his particular quality of imagination:

ite meae, felix quondam pecus, ite capellae. (74)

All these verses contribute to a sustained representation of a particular fluid, poetic sensibility which focuses on nature, endows it with sentience and responsiveness, and which allows multiple empathetic experiences. In comparison, as we have seen, Tityrus' attitudes appear material and practical. He shows consistently greater attentiveness to external realities.

As Tityrus and Meliboeus differ in their attitudes to the country, so they differ in their attitudes to the larger outside reality. Although he describes himself as *iners* (27), Tityrus was nevertheless realistic, energetic, and resourceful enough to venture into the larger world in an attempt to resolve his problems and to secure the material bases of his way of life. In Meliboeus, by contrast, one senses an inattentiveness to material reality (16–17) and perhaps a disinclination to struggle, an easy resignation to defeat and loss—which conditions have, in fact, been the very inspiration in this poem of his most haunting, powerful poetry. His loss of and anticipated longing for home, transfigured into song, have a painful beauty, in which he luxuriates (67–78) with pathetic and

remain. And for you they are large enough, even were naked rock and swamp with marshy reed to cover all the pasture." This translation, I believe, obscures the creative climax of the poem, Meliboeus' transfiguration of barren reality into pastoral idyll.

<sup>12</sup> Putnam 41 and Alpers 89–90 and n. 33.

melancholy drama.<sup>13</sup> (This dimension of Meliboeus will be pursued further, below.)

Another deft stroke of dramatic characterization is the consistency of Meliboeus' and Tityrus' attitudes towards religion. While Meliboeus is identified with traditional rural piety:

saepe malum hoc nobis, si mens non laeva fuisset,  
de caelo tactas memini praedicere quercus (16–17)

and grieved at the advent of a *miles* whom he thinks to term *impius* (70), Tityrus is ready to worship a new, private, urban god, for reasons of expediency:

O Meliboe, 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. (6–10)

Quid facerem? neque servitio me exire licebat  
nec tam praesentis alibi cognoscere divos.  
hic illum vidi iuvenem, Meliboe, quotannis  
bis senos quoi nostra dies altaria fumant,  
hic mihi responsum primus dedit ille petenti:  
'pascite ut ante boves, pueri, submittite tauros.' (40–45)

The dispensations of this god, materially significant as they are, seem to be independent of moral merit, at least as far as the reader can see.<sup>14</sup> One misses in Tityrus' narrative a dimension of genuine awe for the numinous and mysterious. Tityrus seems neither superstitious nor reverent, but, above all, pragmatic.

Even subtle details in this brief poem suggest two consistently conceived characters. Virginio Cremona points to the characters' different concerns with space, time, and focus of identity. While Tityrus speaks of distant space, uses verbs primarily in the past tense, and founds his present identity on the relationship between *ille* and *mihi*; Meliboeus speaks of present space (*hic*), uses verbs

<sup>13</sup> Cf. Alpers 83 and Leach 123 on the exaggerations and melodramatic inclinations of Meliboeus. Cf. Segal 275 and note 24 below. Pöschl: "Aus seinen Worten spricht 'le sombre plaisir de la mélancolie (La Fontaine)'" (57). One should also note Meliboeus' many self-conscious and/or neoteric rhetorical tropes, which suggest a more deliberate and refined poetic technique than that of Tityrus. Examples are: postponed *namque* (4), neoteric *a* (15), *tricolon abundans* (38–39), accusative with passive past participle (54), onomatopoeia (55), pathetic/disjointed utterance (67–69), pathetic repetition of *post* (67 and 69), triple rhyme of *-os* (72). Cf., e.g., T. E. Page, *P. Vergili Maronis Bucolica et Georgica* (London 1893, repr. 1965) and R. D. Williams, *Virgil: The Eclogues and Georgics* (New York 1979) ad loc.

<sup>14</sup> Contrast Pöschl, who thinks the climax of the poem is the merciful act of the divine youth, who secures peace and freedom for poetry to the shepherd (85). I argue that this putative act of "grace" is represented as without moral content.

mostly in the present or future, and sees essential contrasts between *tu* and *nos*.<sup>15</sup>

From such differences as these, which range from obvious to subtle, one may infer that the dramatic characters of Tityrus and Meliboeus are consistently conceived and that, therefore, Alpers is probably wrong to suggest that the identity of the speaker of any given sequence of verses is immaterial or without significance. Given the demonstrated consistency and coherence of characterization in the poem, I suggest that it is insufficient to qualify a speech which is apparently out of character as, essentially, "lyric" or merely appropriately "pastoral" in mode and attribute it to a speaker external to the poem, even if that speaker is Virgil himself.

How, then, to read the conclusion? I propose that verses 79–83 can make *dramatic* sense (and not only pastoral—if beautiful—nonsense) if Tityrus is seen as responsive, ultimately, to Meliboeus' vision and as sympathetic, consequently, to his plight. Drawn out of his complacency and self-absorption by the beautiful power of Meliboeus' song, Tityrus comes finally to answer Meliboeus' loss with new-found pastoral generosity, thus moving to his own vision of nature and community.<sup>16</sup> This outcome is the climax of the miniature drama enacted in *Eclogue* 1, a moment of communication and communion. Tityrus' responsiveness beautifully and ironically proves the power of the pastoral vision—even as its principal speaker is exiled—to move the listener and to forge shared and humane values. As Alpers himself well observes, Tityrus' final verses have a tonality different from those which he apparently initially sang (1–5).<sup>17</sup> To be more precise, we may observe that he has internalized Meliboeus' bittersweet esthetic, his haunting union of pathos and beauty, and comes finally to sing a song much like his. Therefore I would see Tityrus' invitation both as more sincere and also as more significant than Coleman's perhaps trivializing "belated offer of hospitality."<sup>18</sup> Neither, I think, is it quite so grand as Pöschl proposes when he finds it, along with the young god's grace to Tityrus, the exalting proof that the poem's theme is humanity.<sup>19</sup> Rather it has an ambiguity in its diffidence which is harmonious with Meliboeus' mood.<sup>20</sup>

If it is the case that Tityrus has been moved, convinced, converted, that he speaks from internal, organic cause and not merely as the vehicle of a necessary pastoral tag, what is it in Meliboeus' song that brings about this result? I suggest that he is moved, just as certain (not all) readers are, by the peculiar beauty and pathos of Meliboeus' voice. When we consider the totality of Meliboeus' utterances in the poem, we see that they suggest a striking and somewhat problematic portrait of a very particular poetic and creative inclination. We have noted already Meliboeus' empathy, how he humanizes and/or apostrophizes

<sup>15</sup> Virginio Cremona, "Distrazioni critiche e unità poetica della prima bucolica," in *Atti del Convegno Virgiliano sul Bimillenario delle Georgiche* (Naples 1977) 287–308.

<sup>16</sup> Community is an important theme of Alpers' study throughout. See, e.g., 118, 125–27, 162, 221, 225–26.

<sup>17</sup> E.g., Alpers 95.

<sup>18</sup> Coleman ad 79.

<sup>19</sup> Pöschl 86.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. Leach 137–38, who calls the invitation "curiously tentative."

people, pines, goats. We have noted also that the pastoral vision derives from his imagination, not from his memory. And we have proposed that there is a deep, if subtle, relationship between loss and beauty in his song. We can further corroborate these observations.

Let us consider first the poem's opening:

Tityre, tu patulae recubans sub tegmine fagi  
 silvestrem tenui Musam meditaris avena;  
 nos patriae finis et dulcia linquimus arva.  
 nos patriam fugimus; tu, Tityre, lentus in umbra  
 formonsam resonare doces Amaryllida silvas. (1–5)

Although most readers assume these verses to be an objective description of Tityrus' posture and thought, the fact is that they are Meliboeus' expression, vision, and interpretation of what he sees.<sup>21</sup> When he speaks the poem's opening verses he defines pastoral values for (as it came to be) the whole Western tradition. *Lentus*, *tenuis*, *umbra*, and the quintessential pastoral tree sign or define the enchanting quality of bucolic life. As Patterson puts it, the selfhood of Tityrus (and, therefore, one may add, the pastoral vision itself) is associated with reflection, with echoes, with song, with literary allusion, with leisure, and with protection.<sup>22</sup> She neglects to observe, however, that it is *Meliboeus* who makes this association. As commentators have noted, Meliboeus speaks in the tradition of Theocritus here (cf. *Id.* 1.1ff. and 7.88f.). He projects his own pastoral vision onto the largely mundane circumstances of Tityrus, a vision which Tityrus corroborates only in limited ways (as in 6, 9–10). It is Meliboeus who personifies the woods and imagines them as responsive to Tityrus' song (5). It is Meliboeus whose emotional depth and fine sensitivity are reflected in his love for home (the *arva* are *dulcia* to him) and attachment to his *patria*. He feels widely and diffusely bonded with his environment, while Tityrus expresses no such flights on his own behalf. Most problematically, I would observe, Meliboeus finds a certain unhappy pleasure in pathetic song. He experiences with intensity, drama, and depth the pain of exile because he so intensely, so responsively finds his fields sweet. It is he who thinks to voice the exquisite pathos of parting.<sup>23</sup> Even in his most idyllic vision (53–58) a touch of sadness enters with the moaning of doves (58), whose cooing sounds mournful to human ears. Not without reason, but yet with intense drama, does Meliboeus translate his exile into an aria of high emotion. Verses 67–69 with their pathetic *en umquam* and fractured syntax artfully express distraction and despair, with Meliboeus himself as the central figure of a tragic scene. Is there not perhaps some gratuitous, luxuriant self-torture in his imaginations of an *impius/barbarus* defiling his land, in the bitter irony of his having labored for alien intruders (72–73)? In

<sup>21</sup> Alpers 81 and 81n. 4 notes that it is wrong "to think that Tityrus views his life the way Meliboeus does." (The reader might note that in this comment Alpers assumes coherent dramatic characters.)

<sup>22</sup> Patterson 2.

<sup>23</sup> Apparently he is not attached to any female figure, as Tityrus is. His love is, diffusely, the land and its creatures (cf. *hic amor, haec patria est*).

this, significantly, the *longest* speech of the poem, Meliboeus envisions what he will never see and never do again.<sup>24</sup>

In his fine sensibility and intense capacity for sorrowful song Meliboeus is parallel to the Orpheus of Virgil's fourth *Georgic*. Orpheus, the archetypal poet, has power to move not only animate and inanimate nature, but also even the dead. Yet Orpheus has as well a predilection for the tragic.<sup>25</sup> Though, for example, Hades contains all the dead, Orpheus' vision fixes on youths and girls unwedded and children dead before their parents (475–77). Eurydice, once lost, becomes the obsessive subject of his song. As Meliboeus failed to heed a warning (16–17) and failed to take such action as Tityrus did in going to Rome, so Orpheus cannot make accommodation to imperfect reality, but wanders lonely woods in hopeless song, even his severed head continuing the lament. Ovid makes a mockery of Orpheus' extravagant mourning;<sup>26</sup> but Virgil sees in it something authentic and true as he compares Orpheus to the nightingale, nature's paradigmatic singer, whose beautiful song is interpreted, at least by human auditors, as sorrowful, as a lament on the irremediable loss of her offspring:

qualis populea maerens philomela sub umbra  
amissos queritur fetus, quos durus arator  
observans nido implumis detraxit; at illa  
flet noctem, ramoque sedens miserabile carmen  
integrat, et maestis late loca questibus implet.  
(G.4.511–15)

The hypothetical explanation of the melancholy of the nightingale's song illuminates the intimate and necessary relationship between tragedy, beauty, and powerlessness. These are inextricably connected in the esthetic to which both Meliboeus and Orpheus adhere. This correlation does not detract from the beauty and value of their song. Rather the irony—if it is that—is that tragic circumstances give song its subject and focus. Aristaeus in the *Georgics* and Tityrus in *Eclogue* 1 are both more successful in the world and more practical in resolution of their problems than are Orpheus and Meliboeus. Their sensibilities are less fine and their griefs, accordingly, less intense. Therefore, while Boyle, for example, wholly idealizes Meliboeus,<sup>27</sup> I suggest that the portrait of him is complex and problematic. The *Eclogue* poet is perhaps implying that the sensibility and imagination which create beautiful song are not fundamentally compatible with success in the world. Perhaps such a sensibility would, in the

<sup>24</sup> Such verses as these Alpers (92) terms "frank self-dramatization," citing René Waltz, "La Ire et la IXe Bucolique," *Revue Belge de Philologie et d'Histoire* 6 (1927) 36.

<sup>25</sup> I treat this topic in *The Poet's Truth: A Study of the Poet in Virgil's Georgics* (Berkeley 1989) 82–85. Cf. also my "A Reading of Virgil's Fourth *Georgic*," *Phoenix* 32 (1978) 220–21 and "On the Corycian Gardener of Vergil's Fourth *Georgic*," *TAPA* 111 (1981) 175–77.

<sup>26</sup> Cf. W. S. Anderson, "The Orpheus of Virgil and Ovid: *fleBILE nescio quid*," in John Warden, ed., *Orpheus: The Metamorphoses of a Myth* (Toronto 1982) 36–50.

<sup>27</sup> Boyle 17.



deepest way, not even wish for success, for success would eliminate the subject of its song, which is loss.

*Eclogue* 1 deals most fundamentally with different qualities of imagination and value, and with the power of pastoral (both Meliboeus' and Virgil's) to move, to bring together, and continually to transcend in spirit the unpalatable reality of crushing external circumstances. Pastoral poetry in this *Eclogue*, as spoken by Meliboeus, has emotive power and effects a community of longing for shared ideals. The poetry of Meliboeus, with its particular vision and values, converts Tityrus, just as it moves any reader who responds to its idealizing, to its mysterious nostalgia, and to its sadness.<sup>28</sup> Meliboeus' poetry ultimately brings him together with Tityrus and brings responsive readers together with both of them, for it creates a shared longing, a shared esthetic, and consequently shared values. Tityrus' last action, therefore, is the appropriately humane one of reaching out to aid and solace another, even if inadequately. For Meliboeus exile is postponed and mitigated by the offer of lodging, apples, chestnuts, and cheese. And in the largest sense, to have one's suffering postponed or mitigated is all that any of us can hope for. Tityrus' sympathy for Meliboeus is marked by his taking Meliboeus' esthetic and tone. He comes to close with the same haunting music of loss and serenity which earlier had characterized Meliboeus, as night is both a natural—and hence reassuring—close, and yet somehow ominous as well.<sup>29</sup>

If this reading of the last verses of the *Eclogue* is legitimate, it affects the meaning of the poem as a whole. Putnam and Boyle, for example, have read the poem as depicting the tragic collision of individual and empire, with the ascendancy of Rome signalling the loss of creative freedom. Meliboeus, the true poet, is lost to the country and will, as he says, no longer sing (77). Remaining are Tityrus, pedestrian and without moral sensibility, and the *impius miles*—a dark picture. If, however, Tityrus' final speech does reflect moral development and esthetic responsiveness, then the tragedy of Meliboeus' exile and of the loss to the country of his voice is somewhat mitigated by Tityrus' awakened sensibility. Pastoral would have a new voice.

This reading allows us to see a fine balance between the opening and the closing of the poem. Initially Tityrus, apparently indifferent to others' suffering and loss, plays his own song; but the conclusion finds him reaching out, in a gesture of pastoral community, to share with another. Thus the power of pastoral to effect response and to change values is subtly suggested,<sup>30</sup> even as Meliboeus' own pastoral voice is stilled. This interpretation allows a fine balance also between the tragedy of Meliboeus' exile and the birth of Tityrus' beautiful new tone, and would thus corroborate, if for different reasons, Segal's

<sup>28</sup> Cf. Leach for another perspective: "...the garden is not an end in itself but an opportunity. Its function is not to satisfy but to breed a restlessness that impels man toward some higher end" (36).

<sup>29</sup> Similarly Pöschl sees the end as both peaceful and dark: "Man kann also vielleicht von einem offenen Schluss reden. Die Mischung von Melancolie und Serenität, die das ganze Gedicht bestimmt, wäre dann auch hier fühlbar" (63). Cf. Putnam 65ff.

<sup>30</sup> This *eclogue*, then, would be more positive than *Eclogue* 9.

insight that the poem concludes with an "atmosphere of suspension amid contraries...[which] sets the tone for the *Eclogues*."<sup>31</sup>

Finally, I would like to consider the relationship between Meliboeus' pastoral vision and that of the *Eclogue* poet, the composer of the whole poem, Virgil. That is to say, does the substance, vision, or esthetic of Meliboeus' song differ from that of the poem as a whole? I would argue that it does. Meliboeus' pastoral vision, as expressed in 1-2, 4-5, and 53-58 does have a genuinely escapist and idyllic focus as Meliboeus imagines an ideal, an alternative to reality, although he does not openly acknowledge it to be such. It is Meliboeus' vision which, I believe, led Bruno Snell to see Virgil's pastoral as purely escapist.<sup>32</sup> Meliboeus' capacity for melancholy and his intense observations of unhappy realities seem at variance with his fantasies and longings. Possibly there is no mere, material reality with which he would be content. Virgil's pastoral, on the other hand, as reflected in the substance of the poem as a whole, has a fuller and more complex vision. Although he too sees a beauty in pathos and loss (as reflected in Meliboeus' songs), he also suggests something positive as well in Tityrus' invitation and in the birth of his beautiful new tone. Tityrus' (putative) experience of the pastoral idyll (1-5) and his lovely last words literally surround Meliboeus' sorrow. This movement parallels that of Theocritus' first *Idyll*, where Daphnis' death is bracketed by the mutual esteem of the shepherd-singers, which opens the poem, and the vigorous vitality of frisking goats, which concludes it.<sup>33</sup>

From its opening to its close Virgil's poem is dialectical, containing tense oppositions which compel the reader to questions of justice, politics, humane value, and the arbitrary nature of experience.<sup>34</sup> These oppositions are susceptible of no easy resolution. Virgil's poetry tends to illuminate and multiply ambiguities rather than to simplify complexities. *Eclogue* 1 expresses a tension in experience and also apprehends a certain, perhaps even promising, balance within it. Thus Virgil is grander in vision than either Meliboeus or Tityrus, each of whom is more limited by his individual perspective and less subtle, less

<sup>31</sup> Segal 243-44. *Eclogue* 10 concludes with a comparably paradoxical tension between hope and despair. Gallus, as the *Eclogue* poet "quotes" him, has failed to find solace or sustaining value in pastoral. His *amor* and the effect of the larger world on him are destabilizing and destructive. Yet even as this is so, the poet's/Virgil's natural and positive love for Gallus is expressed in this poem for him and continues to grow. At the same time as he bids farewell to pastoral and clearly reveals its deficiencies, Virgil makes—in the pastoral mode—the finest statement of its positive values and a moving demonstration of its power. (Interestingly Putnam (373) finds the idea of growth in *Eclogue* 10 menacing since, he observes, pastoral confines and orders all things and requires limits for its survival.)

<sup>32</sup> Bruno Snell, "Arcadia: The Discovery of a Spiritual Landscape," in *The Discovery of the Mind: The Greek Origins of European Thought*, trans. T. G. Rosenmeyer (New York 1960) 281-310. For further references to Snell and Klingner envisioning Arcadia as "a refuge from the violence of history" see Leach 21 and 21n. 6.

<sup>33</sup> Cf. note 31 above for comparable mixing of tone in *Eclogue* 10.

<sup>34</sup> Patterson (6): "Virgil bequeathed to us...a dialectical structure, an ancient poetics no less elliptical than those of Plato and Aristotle, and one that has been, I would argue, at least as influential."

nuanced. Simultaneously present in *Eclogue* 1 are ideal and real in many forms and in unresolved tension.<sup>35</sup> Therefore the reading sketched here, plausible or even compelling as it may seem to some, cannot resolve definitively the questions which absorb readers of this poem. Much discussed questions, for example, about the timeliness, sincerity, and efficacy of Tityrus' invitation, all of which reflect importantly on the moral direction of the poem as a whole, elude resolution because Virgil has left the conclusion open, the future actions of both characters unrevealed.<sup>36</sup> This lack of clarity, this real impossibility of uncomplicated and definitive moral judgment, is Virgil's hallmark and informs, I would argue, the movement of the *Georgics* and *Aeneid* as well.

<sup>35</sup> Leo Marx in *The Machine in the Garden: Technology and the Pastoral Ideal in America* (Oxford 1964, repr. 1981) 25 calls this intrusion of the real the "counterforce" in the pastoral design. Marx' entire study is of great interest for those working on pastoral of any period.

<sup>36</sup> Indeed, Patterson argues that "what people think of Virgil's *Eclogues* is a key to their own cultural assumptions, because the text was so structured as to provoke, consciously or unconsciously, an ideological response" (p. 7).

This essay is a revised version of a paper initially presented at the 1988–89 APA Annual Meeting. I would like to thank Professors Wendell Clausen, Edward Courtney, and the Editor and anonymous readers of *TAPA* for their helpful comments.