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THYRSIS' ARCADIAN SHEPHERDS IN VIRGIL'S SEVENTH *ECLOGUE*

In Virgil's seventh *Eclogue*, Meliboeus relates a singing contest that Corydon and Thyrsis undertook. Upon beginning their songs, Corydon invokes the Libethrian nymphs (21), and Thyrsis invokes 'Arcadian shepherds' (25–6). Scholars have previously interpreted Thyrsis' Arcadian shepherds as people,[1] but here I suggest that they should be interpreted as divinities.[2] In support of this assertion, I rely on the expectations of the capping style (which requires that Thyrsis 'cap' Corydon's invocation of Libethrian nymphs),[3] Virgil's description of the setting and the characters present, an epigram by Erucius (an intertext for this poem), the Greek and Roman literary tradition that developed especially in relation to gods associated with Arcadia, and Thyrsis' quatrains, which can be profitably interpreted if we assume that Arcadian gods have heard Thyrsis' prayer and are now inspiring his song.

Given his depiction of the setting and the characters present, Virgil does not encourage his reader to imagine that there are any Arcadian shepherds that Thyrsis can call on for aid. Daphnis is present in line one, and, within the bucolic tradition, he is not an Arcadian. Excluding Daphnis and the competitors, moreover, the only person present that Meliboeus mentions is himself. Meliboeus does not mention his ethnicity, but there is no reason to assume that he is an Arcadian, since Virgil situates this poem in northern Italy (13). Meliboeus probably stresses the ethnicity of Corydon and Thyrsis because 'he' (that is, Virgil's construction of him) thinks that the people to whom he speaks, his internal audience (unmentioned), as well as we readers, his external audience, will find it surprising that Thyrsis and Corydon are Arcadians, since the competition is set in northern Italy.[4] As Virgil sets the scene, only Corydon and Thyrsis are Arcadians, and, given that Arcadian Corydon is Thyrsis' competitor in this contest,

[1] Cf. A. Cucchiarelli, *Publio Virgilio Marone: Le Bucoliche* (Rome, 2012), 384; T. Papanghelis, 'Winning on points', in C. Deroux (ed.), *Studies in Latin Literature and Roman History*, vol. 8 (Brussels, 1997), 144–57, at 149; R. Jenkyns, 'Virgil and Arcadia', *JRS* 79 (1989), 26–39, at 30; C. Fantazzi and C. Querbach, 'Sound and substance: a reading of Virgil's seventh *Eclogue*', *Phoenix* 39 (1985), 355–67, at 359; R. Coleman, *Vergil Eclogues* (Cambridge, 1977), 214, 226; B. Frischer, *At tu aureus esto: eine Interpretation von Vergils 7. Ekloge* (Bonn, 1975), 90, 92; S. Waite, 'The contest in Vergil's seventh *Eclogue*', *CPh* 67 (1972), 121–3, at 122; M. Putnam, *Virgil's Pastoral Art: Studies in the* Eclogues (Princeton, 1970), 232; P. Wülfing-von Martitz, 'Zum Wettgesang der Hirten in der siebenten Ekloge Vergils', *Hermes* 98 (1970), 380–2, at 382; R. Hornsby, 'The *pastor* in the poetry of Vergil', *CJ* 63 (1968), 145–52, at 145; J. Savage, 'The art of the seventh *Eclogue* of Vergil', *TAPhA* 94 (1963), 248–67, at 256; E. Beyers, 'Vergil: *Eclogue* 7—a theory of poetry', *AClass* 5 (1962), 38–47, at 44; W. Clausen, *Virgil Eclogues* (Oxford, 1994), 216.

[2] Virgil refers to the god Apollo as a *pastor* at *G.* 3.2; see Hornsby (n. 1), at 146.

[3] On the capping style, see Cucchiarelli (n. 1), 373; Fantazzi and Querbach (n. 1), 357; Beyers (n. 1), 40.

[4] Jenkyns (n. 1), 32 also stresses this point.

there are no Arcadians present to come to the aid of Thyrsis. The suggestion that Thyrsis invokes divinities, then, explains why Arcadian Thyrsis calls on Arcadian shepherds: he invokes the gods by their appropriate *sedes*, so that they will hear his prayer, and, since Thyrsis is an Arcadian, Thyrsis expects that his native gods will come to his aid.

As previous scholars have noted, *Eclogue* 7 shares striking similarities with an epigram by Erucius (*Anth. Pal.* 6.96).[5] Just as one of Erucius' characters is named Corydon, so too is there a Corydon in Virgil's eclogue. Just as Erucius' epigram is in a bucolic setting, so too is Virgil's eclogue. Just as Erucius uses the phrase 'both Arcadians' (Ἀρκάδες ἀμφότεροι, 2), so too does Virgil (*Arcades ambo*, 4). Just as Erucius' Glaucon and Corydon sacrifice an animal and dedicate its head and horns to a divinity, so too Virgil's Corydon, via Micon, sacrifices the head of a boar with long antlers to a divinity (29–32).[6] The most important similarity for the argument made here, however, is Erucius' reference to Pan as a 'herding/pastoral god' (νομίῳ … θεῷ, 6) in the context of 'the two Arcadians', since, I suggest, this resonates with Virgil referring to Pan as a *pastor* in *Arcades pastores*. Readers familiar with Erucius, or the 'common source' on which Virgil and Erucius draw, would know that the 'two Arcadians' (Ἀρκάδες ἀμφότερου/*Arcades ambo*) are closely linked with 'pastoral' Pan (νομίῳ … θεῷ) in literary history.[7]

Although we may think of Pan primarily as a god who accompanies shepherds, considerable evidence within the literary, material and linguistic record shows that the Greeks and the Romans constructed Pan as a shepherd himself. As M. Jost notes, 'his usual attributes of syrinx and *lagobolon* (a device for catching hares) mark him out as a shepherd',[8] and, as R. Beekes observes, πᾶν 'is often identified with Skt. *Pūṣ-án-* [m.] "god who protects and augments the herds"'.[9] As a god who protects and augments the herds, Pan is the 'divine' *pastor*, who oversees and furthers the functions of 'human' *pastores*. Pan's Greek name, 'certainly derived from the root **pa(s)* and mean[ing] guardian of the flocks',[10] is cognate with the Latin *pascere*. Virgil expects his readers, then, to recognize the presence of Pan in *pastores* for several reasons: the reference to Arcadia, the cognate *pastores*, the necessities of the capping genre (in other words, the audience expects Thyrsis to call upon gods greater than Corydon's Libethrian nymphs) and the subject matter of Thyrsis' songs (that is, in comparison with Corydon's quatrains, Thyrsis' quatrains are crass and their relative crassness encourages the audience to infer that Pan, being less refined than the Libethrian nymphs, has heard Thyrsis' prayer and is now inspiring Thyrsis' song).

[5] Cf. Cucchiarelli (n. 1), 378; Clausen (n. 1), 215.

[6] As Clausen (n. 1), 222 notes, Micon's offering reverberates with another bucolic epigram (which has Pan as its dedicatee) that would have been available to Virgil in Meleager's *Garland*: Rhianus 6 G.-P. (= *Anth. Pal.* 6.34).

[7] Jenkyns (n. 1), 34 considers the connections between Erucius' epigram and Virgil's seventh *Eclogue*, and concludes: 'I suspect that Pan had a part to play here [i.e. in *Eclogue* 7, shortly after Thyrsis invokes *Arcades pastores*]; but if we reflect upon the subtlety and wit of Virgil's allusive technique in other places, we shall realize that it is vain to seek for an accuracy of appreciation which we have not the power to attain'. According to the argument made here, Jenkyns was correct to presume a reference to Pan in *Eclogue* 7. Pan is simply somewhat hard to find, since, as I suggest, he is latent in Virgil's *Arcades pastores*.

[8] 'Pan', in S. Hornblower, A. Spawforth and E. Eidinow (edd.), *The Oxford Classical Dictionary* (Oxford, 2012[4]), 1072.

[9] *Etymological Dictionary of Greek* (Leiden and Boston, 2010), 1149.

[10] Jost (n. 8), 1072.

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Virgil closely links Pan and Arcadia in several of his *Eclogues.* In the fourth *Eclogue*, the narrator claims: *Pan etiam, Arcadia mecum si iudice certet, | Pan etiam Arcadia dicet se iudice uictum* (4.58-9). As Jenkyns notes, 'Arcadia is mentioned [here] because it is the region traditionally associated with Pan.'[11] In the eighth *Eclogue*, Arcadian Mt Maenalus appears closely linked with Pan (22–4), and, as Jenkyns further notes, Maenalus appears here because of Pan and his invention of reed pipes in Arcadia.[12] In *Eclogue* 10, Apollo, Silvanus and Pan come to check on Gallus, as he wastes away from lovesickness, and *Pan, deus Arcadiae* (26), addresses Gallus, who replies to Pan and his fellow Arcadians with the vocative *Arcades* (31). On multiple occasions, then, Virgil closely links Pan, *Arcades* and Arcadia in his *Eclogues*.[13]

Given that Virgil uses the plural (*Arcades pastores*), he encourages his audience to understand another personage, in addition to Pan, that Thyrsis calls upon for aid, and many readers will link the second *pastor* with Hermes, given the close connection between Hermes and Pan with Arcadia. As Coleman remarks, '[i]n traditional mythology Arcadia was the homeland of Hermes, the inventor of the lyre and the shepherd pipe (*h.Hom.* 4.2, 39-67, 511-12) and father (at least in some accounts) of Pan, the patron of shepherds and their music. It is in association with Pan and Hermes that we find the earliest hints of an idealization of the Arcadian region.'[14] Furthermore, in the eponymous *Homeric Hymn*, Hermes is already fashioned as a cowherd and shepherd.[15] Hermes, then, would likely be the second *pastor* that Virgil's intended Roman audience would assume that Thyrsis is calling upon for aid.

Thyrsis uses language that further connects him with divinities by asking for protection from the *mala lingua* of Codrus (28), and by referring to himself as a *uates futurus* (28). The reference to a *mala lingua* refers to the magical power of cursing,[16] and Thyrsis hopes to be protected against Codrus' *mala lingua* by being crowned with *baccar*.[17] Human beings would not be in a position to provide aid to Thyrsis against Codrus' *mala lingua*, but divinities would be. Moreover, humans would not be 'invested' in protecting Thyrsis from Codrus' *mala lingua*, but Thyrsis assumes that his invoked divinities would, since, as he sees it, he is a *uates futurus* and, as noted above, he is their fellow Arcadian.[18] As Coleman notes, '[t]he Greek loan words *poiētēs* and *poiēma* were already established in Latin before Ennius (*Ann.* 6 V). *uates*, the native Latin word (Var. *L.* 7.36), like its Celtic and Germanic cognates, had religious and prophetic as well as poetic associations … Hence the more prestigious connotations that *uates* sometimes has in contrast to *poeta.*'[19] By referring to himself as

[11] Jenkyns (n. 1), 28.
[12] Jenkyns (n. 1), 28.
[13] See also F. Jones, *Virgil's Garden: The Nature of Bucolic Space* (London, 2011), 48–50 and B.W. Breed, *Pastoral Inscriptions: Reading and Writing Virgil's* Eclogues (London, 2006), 127–9, both with further bibliography.
[14] Coleman (n. 1), 208, with references to further discussion.
[15] *Hom. Hymn Merc.* 491–4.
[16] Cf. Catull. 7.12 *mala fascinare lingua* and Clausen (n. 1), 222.
[17] Cf. Coleman (n. 1), 214: '*mala lingua* refers not to the evil eye but specifically to a verbal spell or curse'. The identity of the plant *baccar* is unknown. Servius notes on this passage *herba est ad depellendum fascinum*, presumably basing his statement on how Virgil uses *baccar*. On *baccar* see Clausen (n. 1), 222, who notes that Virgil here attributes 'magical properties' to *baccar*, and Coleman (n. 1), 214.
[18] At *Ecl.* 9.33-4, Lycidas similarly boasts of his pre-eminent poetic status, which derives from divinities.
[19] Coleman (n. 1), 214. See also Cucchiarelli (n. 1), 388.

a *uates futurus*, an arrogant phrase according to T. Page,[20] and by hoping to ward off Codrus' curses, Thyrsis further positions himself in relation to divinities.[21]

It is somewhat recherché for Corydon to invoke the Libethrian nymphs,[22] and whether the reader conflates them with the Muses or not, the Libethrian nymphs' Heliconian voices win out over the voices of Thyrsis' *Arcades pastores*. As R. Egan remarks, at the end of the poem, 'the sequence of tenses, with the perfect participle *uictum* followed by the present infinitive *contendere*, suggests that Thyrsis continued to compete even *after* he was defeated'.[23] Perhaps it was obvious to Meliboeus from the beginning of the competition that a singer who calls upon Pan would be vanquished by a singer who calls upon Heliconian goddesses, and thus Meliboeus says that Thyrsis was contending in vain (*frustra*, 69).[24] Thyrsis' 'problem' is that Corydon is simply a better singer, when the two are judged by the expectations of classical bucolic poetry. The presence of Daphnis within the poem and the presence of this competition within Virgil's *Eclogues* encourages the competition to be judged within that frame. Next time, presumably, Thyrsis should invoke more refined divinities to aid him in his competition, but, given that Virgil has named him Thyrsis,[25] it would be out of his character to do so.[26] Recognizing that the *Arcades pastores* are gods, then, does much to clarify the argument of the poem.

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[20] T. Page, *P. Virgili Maronis Bucolica et Georgica* (London, 1963 [1897]), 151.

[21] Page (n. 20), 155 suggests that 'the inferiority of Thyrsis is marked in the arrogance of lines 25–28'.

[22] Frischer (n. 1), 86 refers to Libethrian as an 'abstruse Wort'.

[23] R. Egan, 'Corydon's winning words in *Eclogue* 7', *Phoenix* 50 (1996), 233–9, at 234.

[24] As Putnam (n. 1), 252 notes, 'the poem is more than a study in decorum. It is a meditation, in dialogue form, on the idealism of pastoral song and what is appropriate to it'.

[25] On the importance of Thyrsis' and Corydon's names as 'speaking names', see S.J. Harrison, 'The lark ascending: *Corydon, Corydon* (Vergil, *Ecl.* 7.70)', *CQ* 48 (1998), 310–11; M. Sullivan, '*Et eris mihi magnus Apollo*: divine and earthly competition in Virgil's seventh *Eclogue*', *Vergilius* 48 (2002), 40–54. On the symbolic importance of names in the *Eclogues*, see J. O'Hara, *Virgil and the Alexandrian Tradition of Etymological Wordplay* (Ann Arbor, 1996), 44.

[26] E. Beyers, 'Vergil: *Eclogue* 7—A Theory of Poetry', *AClass* 5 (1962), 38–47, at 40, refers to him as having a 'bad character'.

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