

The Elements of Bucolic Poetry

Theocritean and Alexandrian

- pleasures of the countryside
- sorrows of love
- joys of a legendary character
- untimely death
- epyllia
- contrast of large and small (emphasis on the 'λεπτότης' of Alexandrian poetry)

Vergilian

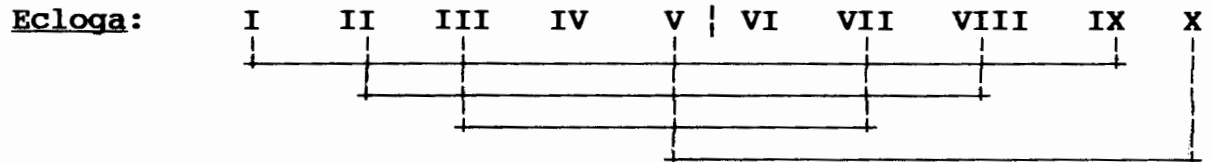
All of the above, and

- the intrusions of urban life/civilization (including war)
- responses to political situations
- references to friends (often 'laudes') in high places (Pollio, Gallus, Caesar)
- the confusion of genres
- 'contaminatio'
- literature about the composition of literature

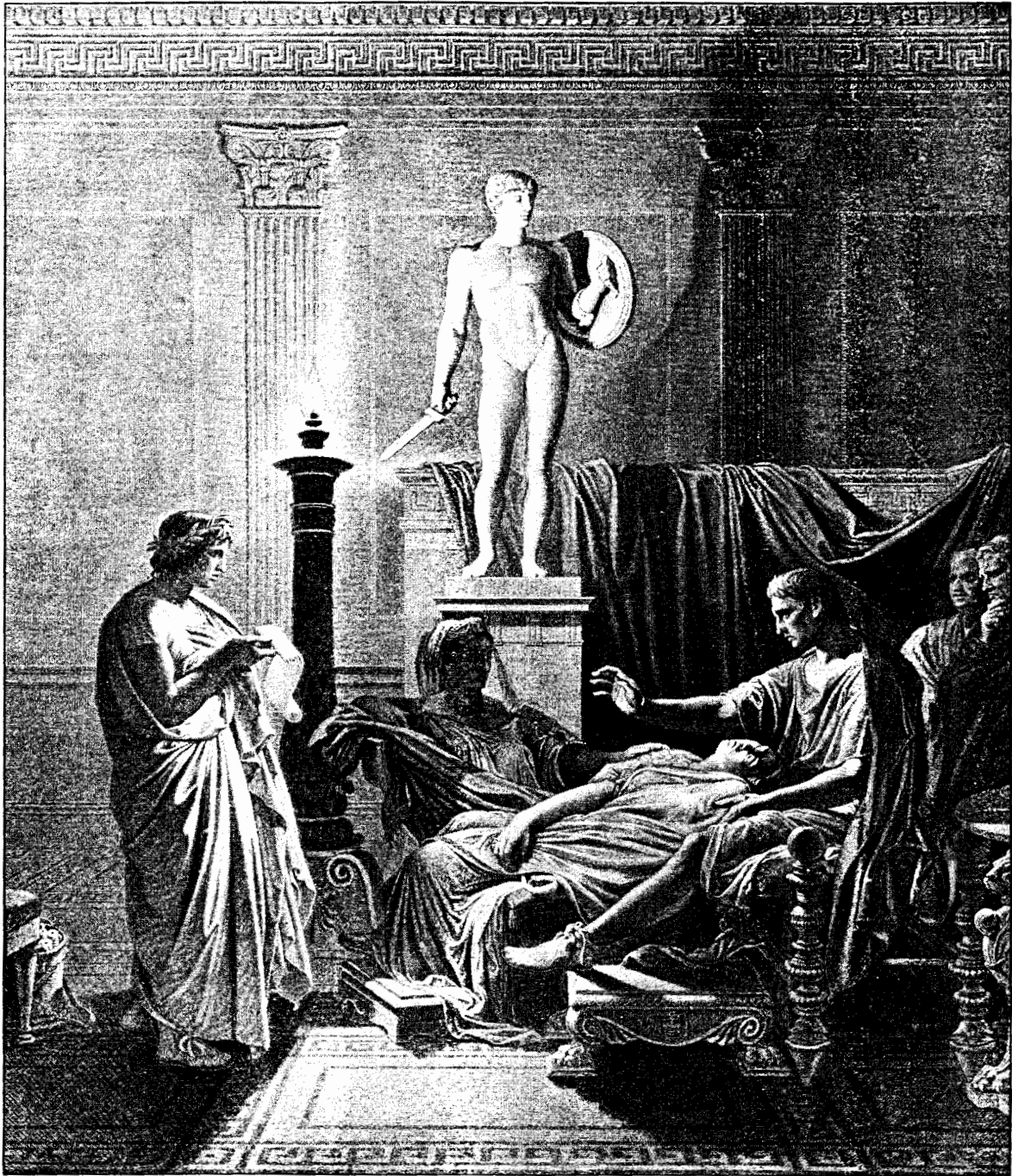
Why did Vergil select this genre/model in the post-Caesarean chaos?

The Architecture of Vergil's Eclogae

I. Our initial scheme: (Clauss)



- I & IX:** Shepherds, intrusion of Roman army into the country, land expropriations.
- II & VIII:** Theocritean: the failure/success of poetry to accomplish its aim, the sufferings caused by love.
- III & VII:** Modelled on Theocritus, contests.
- V & X:** The laments of Daphnis and Gallus



INGRES PINXIT.

OCTAVIA OVERCOME BY VIRGIL'S VERSES.

II. The arrangement of the poems (Otis).

A. Grouping of the poems:

- direct use of Theocritean models: 2, 3, 7, 8
- Roman adaptation of Theocritean models: 5, 10
- non-Theocritean poems: 1, 4, 6, 9

B. Arrangement by theme: (Otis, p.129, credits Paul Maury with first working out this scheme)

----- I	Roman: loss and recovery of a homestead
----- II-----	Love (Corydon) narrative
----- III-----	Amoebean dialogue
----- IV	'non arbusta...iuvant...humilesque myricae'
V-----	Daphnis -- Caesar
----- VI	'te, Vare, nostrae myricae, nemus...canet'
----- VII-----	Amoebean dialogue
----- VIII-----	Love (Damon, Alphisiboeus) narratives
----- IX	Roman: loss and recovery of a homestead
X-----	Gallus -- Daphnis

C. The division into halves and emphases of the contrasting poems: (Otis, p.130, credits Carl Becker with this scheme)

- | | |
|---|--|
| <p>I. Exile revoked: praise of the new god; bitterness assuaged by hospitality; complete fusion of bucolic and Roman-Augustan themes.</p> | <p>IX. Exile revoked, then reimposed: pointed juxtaposition (without fusion) of Roman-Julian and bucolic themes; the future is in doubt.</p> |
| <p>II. The cure of unworthy love by the recovery of reason.</p> | <p>VIII. Death worked by unworthy love. Daphnis bound by a spell.</p> |
| <p>III. Amoebean contest starting in crude abuse and ending in a peaceful non-decision by an umpire.</p> | <p>VII. Amoebean contest ending in defeat of the harsh Thyrsis, victory of the mild Corydon.</p> |
| <p>IV. The new age: return of the 'Saturnia regna.'</p> | <p>VI. The former age: passing of the ancient 'Saturnia regna' into a series of unnatural 'amores' and 'metamorphoses.'</p> |
| <p>V. Death and transfiguration of Daphnis-Caesar.</p> | <p>X. Gallus as Daphnis of Idyll I (wasting away from unworthy love).</p> |

The general picture: **Eclogae I - V** are forward looking, peaceful, conciliatory, patriotic. In contrast, **Eclogae VI - X** are neoteric, ambiguous or polemic, concerned with the past and emotively dominated by 'amor indignus,' love which is destructive and irrational and is implicitly inconsistent with/hostile to a strong Roman-patriotic orientation. Otis concludes that **Eclogae VI - X** were written to contrast with **Eclogae I - V** and to complete the design of the Book which had emerged prior to Vergil's composition of all the poems.

III. The 'Unity of the Eclogues:' The Book shows a progression from the Sicilian toward the Arcadian; poems IV, VII, and X, set at equal intervals, provide the framework: (Van Sickle)

IV The poet begins with talk of going beyond the Sicilian Muses.

VII The narrator is no longer the poet of the fourth and a cohort of the Sicilian Muses, but a figure from an earlier Eclogue who represents the internal memory within the Book, recalling the first Arcadians.

X Gallus dies in the Theocritean myth of a poet's death. The presence of Pan is a crucial element in the new, Arcadian reading of Theocritus.

For Van Sickle, Arcadia is a poetic symbol, poetics of gradually realized, carefully proportioned, deeply felt relations within poems.

IV. The length and arrangement of the poems: (Griffin, Clausen)

A. The format: monologue or dialogue (Griffin)

Dialogue:	I	III	V	VII	IX
Monologue:	II	IV	VI	VIII	X

N.B. Griffin does not acknowledge that VII and VIII are reported dialogues.

B. The Book seems to fall into two halves: *Eclogae* I - V has 420 lines, *Eclogae* VI - X have 410. Each half has at its center the longest poems of the collection *Eclogae* III and VIII, which each contain 8 lines in praise of Pollio.

Chart 1: the length of the poems.

Ecloga:	I	II	III	IV	V	VI	VII	VIII	IX	X
lines:	83	73	111	63	90	86	70	110	67	77

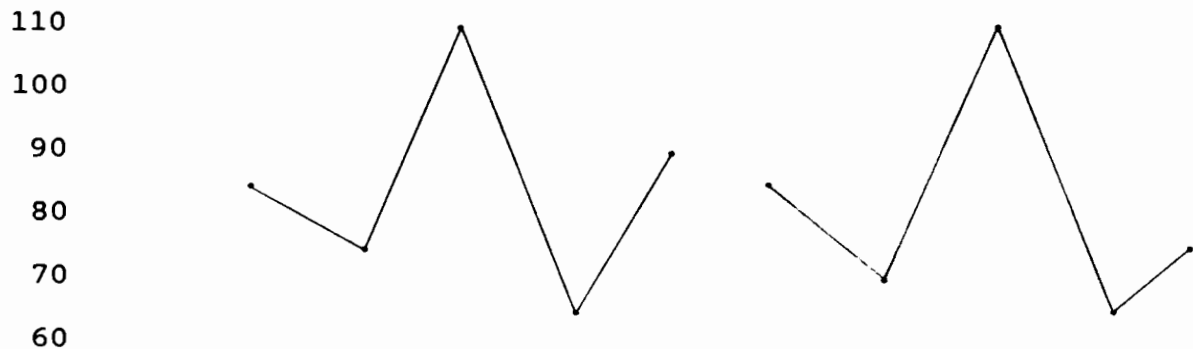
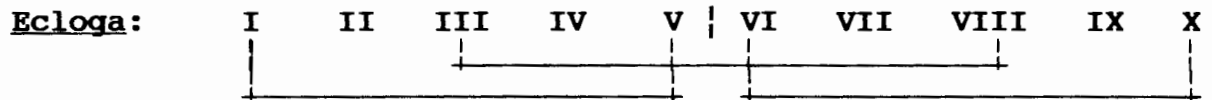


Chart 2: the arrangement of the poems.



Gallus figures prominently in *Eclogis* VI and X, which frame the second half of the Book. The three poems which are the least pastoral in character are clustered in the center of the Book (*Eclogae* IV - VI). (Griffin, Clausen)

First half: Vergil begins I.1 with 'Tityre' and ends V.90 with 'Menalca', thus framing the first half with his 'personae.' Vergil does this also within a single poem, II, framing the poem with 'Alexin' as the last word of the first and last lines. (Clausen)

Second half: VI.1 begins with 'Prima', thus suggesting a new portion of the poem, yet the first half is recalled by 'Tityre' (v.4) and 'agrestem tenui meditabor harundine Musam' (v.5) which evoke I. Clausen also suggests that Vergil fashioned the *Eclogae* into 10 poems because he was working with an edition of Theocritus which contained 10 poems.

V. A compilation of the schemata. The *Eclogae* are about the writing of poetry. (Quartarone)

A. First half: Setting the stage for composing poetry: The theme of judgement.

Someone is either represented as providing or called upon to give a judgement of the poetry or the poet (shepherd):

<u>Ecloga</u>	<u>'iudex'</u>	<u>provides 'iudicium' over</u>
I	'deus'	freedom/slavery of Tityrus 'mihi responsum..dedit ille petenti,' 44
II	Alexis	beauty/ugliness of Corydon 'te iudice,' 27
III	Palaemon	verse of Menalcas & Damoetas 'audiat haec tantum,' 50
IV	Arcady	verse of the poet 'Arcadia iudice,' 58
V	Menalcas	verse, Amyntas vs. Mopsus 'nostro iudico,' 18

I.6 reads 'deus nobis haec otia fecit': this 'deus' (Octavian?) has provided the proper circumstances for the writing of poetry. This word occurs again in the *Eclogae* only at V.61, thus opening and closing the first half of the Book.

Ecloga V also recalls each of the poems in its portion:

I: Tityrus is mentioned at v.12, Meliboeus at v.87.

II: There is a reference to Corydon at v.86.

III: Menalcas reappears as a character in V; the 'pocula' from III.36 & 44 are elicited by the 'pocula bina' at V.67; and Damoetas is mentioned at v.72.

IV: There is a contrast between the birth of poem IV and the death of V.

It is interesting to note that each of the 'iudices' is a significant "critic" of a poet and his work. After the 'deus' makes the writing of poetry possible, he, of course, would be the poet's most important critic. Following him, we have the poet's beloved, a fellow poet (shepherd), the poetic landscape/arena/audience of the poet, and finally, the poet himself.

B. Second half: Composing poetry. In this section we see a movement of disintegration in the abilities of poets to compose and in the success of their verse:

VI Silenus is roused from sleep, yet is able to recite intricate poetry with clarity.

VII A competition of happy poets in the Arcadian spirit, with a decision (there is a winner). The speaker recites this contest verbatim from memory.

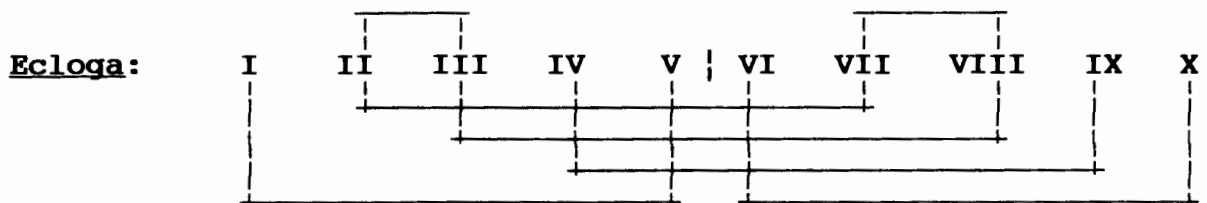
VIII Another competition between poets, this time the political/contemporary intrudes (Pollio). The ending is ambiguous: no winner is named, and we are not certain that the poetry accomplishes its aim (we are not certain that Daphnis returns).

IX Lycidas and Moeris have difficulty remembering the verses of a fellow poet.

X Gallus is unable to write poetry.

While poetry remains 'ludus' (ludere, I.10; ludere, VI.1; ludo, VII.17; also appearing with a non-poetic meaning at VI.28 and IX.39) throughout the book, it finally becomes 'labor' in X.1 & X.64. Significantly, the word 'labor' appears nowhere else in the *Eclogae*.

Hence, my arrangement of the Book:



- I & V: Framing the first half (see above).
 VI & X: Framing the second half (Gallus).
 II & VII: Heavily modelled on Theocritus.
 III & VIII: Longest; Pollio; Theocritean.
 IV & IX: Anticipate the advent of someone (the child/ Menalcas) who will usher in a change (historical/ literary).

C. The spirit of poetic competition: a note on Vergil's symmetry.

Where poets compete, the contests allow each poet an equal number of verses: Menalcas and Damoetas each have 24 verses in III; Menalcas and Mopsus each have 25 verses in V; Corydon and Thyrsis each have 24 verses in VII; Damon and Alpheisiboeus each have 46 verses in VIII.

D. Some final thoughts: The *Eclogae* are about the writing of poetry. The following elements inspire or affect poetry:

- The Muse (*ingenium*, *otium*)
- personal experience (hence the many attempts at reading these poems biographically)
- literary antecedents (*inspiration*, *models*, *allusion*, *contaminatio*)
- competition/rivalry (poets in circles)
- occasions (birth, death, political events)
- requests (hence *dedications*, *recusationes*)
- creativity (stretching boundaries, combining elements of different genres)

Vergil's Ecloga:
A Synopsis of Significant Elements

Ecloga I:

Characters: Tityrus, Meliboeus

Major themes & contrasts: Land expropriations; the ideal bucolic man/landscape; city/country; slavery/freedom; gratitude/bitterness; humor/pathos; present/future.

Literary predecessor(s): Theocritus, Idyll 7.

Primary questions: Are we to identify Tityrus with Vergil?

Is the 'deus' of v.6ff. to be identified with Octavian?

Are Meliboeus and Tityrus the two ambivalent sides of Vergil?

Significant elements: Tension between artificial 'locus amoenus' and the particular place, fiction and historical reference.

The cost of civilization: exile, loss of population/land, confused social status.

Ending: ominous ('umbrae') and hopeful ('poteras requiescere noctem'): that Vergilian ambiguity!

Ecloga II:

Characters: Corydon, Alexis

Major themes & contrasts: City/country; sophistication/naive; delusion/self-awareness; the failure of art/music (Corydon's song).

Literary predecessor(s): Theocritus, Idylls 3, 6 & 11.

Significant elements: The destructive power of love; the mind of the rejected lover.

Corydon = a combination of the pastoral and elegiac lovers: he recalls Polyphemus, but is human and a victim of 'servitium amoris.'

Ending: Corydon fails to bring back Alexis; the failure of art, self-realization, hope to find another.

Ecloga III:

Characters: Menalcas, Damoetas, Palaemon

Major themes & contrasts: The perfection of the pastoral world/ the dangers of nature; art vs. science for the control of nature (the cups).

Literary predecessor(s): Theocritus, Idylls 1, 4, 5 & 8

Primary questions: What are we to make of the intrusion of a contemporary, political figure like Pollio (vv.84-91) into this very Theocritean, pastoral scene?

Significant elements: The collapsing of several poems of Theocritus into one poem.

The pastoral world is never threatening in Theocritus, but love causes the trouble.

The format of the contest is quick repartee, 12 sets of vying couplets, 24 lines per poet.

Ending: ambiguous: both deserve to win because both have suffered in love.

Ecloga IV: the "Messianic" Eclogue

Characters: Pollio, the child

Major themes & contrasts: Civilization/bucolic world; historical & political world/ 'locus amoenus'; epic/pastoral poetry; the Golden Age.

Literary predecessor(s): Sibylline Books; Isaiah chapters II, XI, XXXII, XXXV, LV.

Primary questions: Who/se is the child?

Is the Virgo the mother of the 'nova progenies'?

Where exactly do the Fates speak?

Significant elements: What exactly does 'paulo maiora canamus' mean?

'Oppositio in imitando': in three major models (Hesiod, Aratus, Lucretius), the gods abandon human association.

Epic vs. pastoral poetry: are vv.54-7 a 'recusatio'?

Ending: the exhortation for a smile: a warning or a request? Is this ending hopeful or apprehensive?

Ecloga V: "The Lament of Daphnis"

Characters: Menalcas, Mopsus

Major themes & contrasts: Young/old; open shade/cave; competition; death; worship of divinities; verse, contest and prizes.

Literary predecessor(s): Theocritus, Idylls 1, 7 & 8

Primary questions: Are we to identify Daphnis with Julius Caesar?

Are we to identify Menalcas with Vergil?

Significant elements: The architecture of the poem: the matching songs of the poets comprise 25 lines each, and surrounding framework, 4 sets of 10 lines each.

The focus is on the aftermath of Daphnis' death, not the death itself.

Ending: Menalcas and Mopsus exchange gifts.

Ecloga VI: "the Song of Silenus"

Characters: Chromis, Mnasyllus, Silenus

Major themes & contrasts: Humans and nature; love; metamorphosis; wandering; play and humor; capture; the Ages of Man (including the Golden Age).

Literary predecessor(s): Callimachus, Hesiod, Lucretius

Primary questions: How much has this to do with the current neoteric movement?

How does the initiation of Gallus (vv.64-73) fit into the whole?

Are we to identify Silenus as the sleeping Callimachus? Do the four phases of his song parallel the four books of the Aetia?

Significant elements: The 'recusatio', vv.1-9.

Theogonic song (supposed to resolve quarrels, restore harmony), vv.31-40.

The tale within a tale (Pasiphae frames the Proetid epyllion), vv.45-60.

Ending: Silenus sings until nightfall when the flocks need to be tended.

Ecloga VII:

Characters: Meliboeus, Corydon, Thyrsis

Major themes & contrasts: Song and competition.

Literary predecessor(s): Theocritus, Idylls (several)

Significant elements: Meliboeus appears from Ecl. I, Corydon from Ecl. II. In these earlier appearances they are both unhappy, whereas here they are both happy.

Both shepherd are Arcadians. Arcadia is not a real place; rather, to be Arcadian is to possess a certain spirit (poetic).

The contest consists of six rounds of four verses each, totalling 24 lines per poet.

Ending: Corydon wins the match.

Ecloga VIII:

Characters: Damon, Alphesiboeus

Major themes & contrasts: Song and competition; sorcery; city/ country; science (sorcery) vs. art (poetry).

Literary predecessor(s): Theocritus, Idylls I & II.

Primary questions: Who is the speaker?

Are we to identify Damon with Vergil and Alphesiobeus with Theocritus? Is this really a contest between Vergilian and Theocritean bucolic verse?

Significant elements: The introduction features a dedication to Pollio (vv. 6-14), although he is unnamed.

Note the architecture of the contest: Damon's and Alphesiboeus' first 7 verses (including refrains) are exactly parallel in length, being 5,4,4,3,5,6,4. The last three are slightly altered, being 5,6,4 for Damon and 6,4,5 for Alphesiboeus. Therefore, the singers once again recite an equal number of lines, and the formats are nearly parallel.

Ending: Does Daphnis really return at the end? Is the incantation successful?

Ecloga IX:

Characters: Lycidas, Moeris

Major themes & contrasts: The failure of poetry to alter historical/political events; the failure of poetry to confer immortality.

Literary predecessor(s): Theocritus, Idylls IX, III & XI.

Primary questions: Do the hard to remember fragments of poetry indicate that the bucolic world (i.e., pastoral poetry) is doomed? Does the ending indicate the advent of a new bucolic world, or of a different kind of poetry?

Are we to identify Menalcas with Vergil?

Ending: Will Menalcas appear? (He does in X!)

Significant elements: Vv. 1-16, 27-9 and 50 pair Ecloga IX with Ecloga I.

Ecloga X:

Characters: Gallus, Lycoris

Major themes & contrasts: Elegy/pastoral poetry; 'saturae'; 'amor'; 'furor'; time: passing in elegy, still in pastoral.

Literary predecessor(s): Callimachus, Aetia, Gallus (?), Theocritus, Idylls 1, 5 & 7.

Primary questions: Why does Vergil put an elegist in a bucolic setting?

Is Gallus renouncing elegy and wishing he had been a bucolic poet?

Are we to understand a homosexual relationship between Gallus and Vergil?

Significant elements: Ring composition, v.1 with vv.63-4.

Eclogae are no longer 'ludi' but 'labores'.