

CHARACTERISATION IN VIRGIL'S ECGLOGUES

A lecture to the Virgil Society, March 1976

by

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In spite of the large amount that has been written recently on the Eclogues, very little has been said about either the characters of or methods of characterisation in the Eclogues. This omission is all the more surprising in view of the dramatic form of over half the Eclogues¹ and the considerable evidence that at one time they were actually produced as plays.² Yet not merely has the matter never been systematically discussed, but there is still a good deal of uncertainty even about the most basic issues: did Virgil mean us to regard each name as denoting one character from beginning to end of the cycle of poems or did he wish us to imagine a series of different shepherds from one poem to the next, merely fortuitously called by the same names?³ In either event — and both would be in their different ways, puzzling, — what could his purpose possibly have been for the constant repetition of such names? Finally to what extent may Virgil have wished us to identify any or all of these shadowy figures with either his contemporaries or himself?⁴ It is at the very least somewhat surprising that after all this time and so many discussions so very little is known for certain about any of these matters. At the risk of perhaps a little oversimplification, it is rather as though for four hundred years we had had a fine series of articles on the concepts of blood ties and crime in Hamlet, but nobody at the end was quite sure whether the Hamlet and Claudius who meet their violent ends in Act Five of Hamlet were the same people as the two characters of that name in Act One or two other gentlemen of the same name. As an initial step towards clarifying this position, I should like in this paper to discuss three issues: firstly to what extent Virgil thought of each of the names of his shepherds as denoting one person throughout the cycle; secondly how and to what extent each of these names is given a character of its own; thirdly what, if anything, Virgil may have wished to achieve by giving each of these figures characters and achievements and sufferings of their own.

Firstly, then, to what extent is each of these names meant to denote one person throughout the whole series of poems? Now on the one hand it is immediately striking to anyone at all conversant with modern fiction that by comparison the characters of the Eclogues are very thinly portrayed: where are those startling visual pictures we get in the novels of Dickens or characteristics of behaviour or speech? On the other hand, one has only to read the poems over several times to become increasingly convinced that, shadowy as the people in the Eclogues may seem to us — and perhaps we have been spoiled — nonetheless Virgil was concerned to build up each name as a separate and unified person.

The first and most obvious sign of this is the mere repetition of the names themselves. In any context, whether of literature or life, if one hears the name Tityrus used over and over again, especially by the same people, one is going to suppose that the same Tityrus is meant unless there is positive evidence to the contrary. One would need to have some meeting between the two, or one of the two mentioning the other or, at the very least, as with the two Ajaxes in the Iliad, some further identification to be given (and, to make it absolutely watertight, identification of both would perhaps need to be given), to make it clear beyond all doubt that the same person was *not* meant. Yet all of these are totally lacking in the Eclogues. Although the shepherds meet and discuss many people, none ever either meets or mentions anyone of the same name as himself. And there are not even any of those descriptive phrases, which are so familiar to us from the Iliad, appended to the names of any characters in the Eclogues in such a way as to rule out any other occurrence of that name referring to the same person. Indeed such few descriptive adjectives as Virgil does use with the names of his shepherds seem to me to prove the very opposite of this: Virgil's anxiety to make us identify two widely separated instances of the same name. Thus in line 1 of Eclogue II, the slave boy with whom Corydon is in love is called *formosum Alexim* as though perhaps to distinguish him from some hitherto unspecified *turpem Alexim*. Yet when Alexis is referred to again also by Corydon in Eclogue VII line 55 he is again called — what? — *formosus Alexis*. Similarly the adjective *Nerine* applied to Galatea by Corydon in line 35 of the same poem seems to me, in spite of the firm belief of Professor Mynors, in the index to the Oxford

Text of Virgil, in two different Galateas, one terrestrial and one aquatic,⁵ to do little more than make explicit what has been hinted at in a number of different ways from Eclogue III lines 64 to 65, the marine nature of this elusive maiden.⁶ There is then no evidence from the names themselves, only the contrary, that Virgil thought of any name as representing more than one person.

And we are forced I believe to the same conclusion if we introduce a statistical comparison between the names in the Eclogues and those in the Idylls of Theocritus.⁷ Now statistics are, I believe, always a fallible guide and especially so in an author as creative as Virgil, who, rather than deploying the same verbal material over and over again in the same mechanical manner, prefers to cut it into a unique shape before setting it in its individual context. All the same it is perhaps interesting that, whereas Theocritus introduces no fewer than 51 different pastoral characters in his Idylls, Virgil uses a mere 34. And what is more interesting still is that, whereas Theocritus only uses 10 out of his 51, a fifth in all, in more than one Idyll, Virgil uses no fewer than 20 out of his 34, that is more than half of his own pastoral characters and double the number Theocritus employs in this way.⁸ And as though that were not difference enough, he used some of the names in a very great number of poems indeed: Phyllis, Meliboeus and Galatea in 4 poems, Amaryllis and Menalcas in 5 and Tityrus and Daphnis in no less than 6 of the Eclogues. To put it mildly, this is not, surely, the behaviour of a man indifferent to the names he is using. Surely what it points to is the very opposite: a conscious desire to give us a smaller number of more familiar names than Theocritus does. And one – if not the only one – explanation of that could be that he wished them to be more like real people to us.

And this ties in well with another feature which we can discover from a comparison with Theocritus and that is that Virgil seems to have wished us to think of many of his characters as being the same as the people of the same names in the Idylls. It is interesting that of the 17 names borrowed from Theocritus, 13 are at least at one point given something to identify them with their Theocritean exemplars. His Daphnis has died amidst universal mourning; his Tityrus is repeatedly ordered about by the other shepherds; his Menalcas is tending his own parents' flocks whereas his Corydon, by contrast, is either a hired hand or slave; his Amaryllis is beautiful and his Galatea a sea-nymph; one of his shepherds meets a certain Lycidas whilst on a journey; his Damoetas sings in a song contest and makes a draw; his Amyntas is handsome and his Aegon a cattle owner; his Micon owns a vineyard, his Nais is beautiful and his Thestylis pounds herbs. Now in all this they are all only doing and being and suffering what has already befallen them in the Idylls of Theocritus.⁹ And once again it shows us just how careful Virgil is in his use of names. Indeed it is perhaps not going too far to speak of the almost reverential way in which Virgil handles them all, making just as sure that they do not act out of character with their Theocritean originals as he does later in the Aeneid with the heroes and gods he has inherited from Homer. Now if this is true of his characters in relation to their Theocritean equivalents, does it not seem likely to be *a fortiori* still more true of their relationship to themselves? At all event it would be very remarkable if Virgil were to be so scrupulous about this side of the characters and to be totally indifferent to the way they behave within his own poems. And it would certainly require a great deal more explanation than the thesis I am concerned to prove.

However there is no evidence for this. In fact if we now confine ourselves to the Eclogues we find that even in the case of comparatively minor characters there are a number of traits which seem deliberately meant to confirm or explain each other. To illustrate the extent to which this is done, I propose to begin with comparatively minor or peripheral characters and work round towards some of the more important ones. Now I shall begin by saying that there are just a few characters in whose case there does not seem to be any cross-referencing: Lycidas for instance, Micon, Mopsus and Alpheisiboeus. This does not prove, of course, that they are not meant to be the same person from one context to another – the absence of any mutually contradictory evidence shows that Virgil did not wish us to think that. All it may mean is that Virgil may wish to highlight different rather than similar aspects of these (mostly) minor figures in such contexts as they appear (something he does from time to time with some of the major figures, too, not just in the Eclogues but also in the Aeneid) and that, given this, it would seem artificial deliberately to drag in things to link them to other contexts. For, these apart, the striking thing is how far he is prepared to go to link one appearance of a character with another.

We see this even in such a minor character as Moeris. The first time he appears is in the song of Alpheisiboeus in Eclogue VIII 95ff, where he is described by the anonymous girl whose song Alpheisiboeus is singing as a powerful wizard able to transform himself into a wolf. Now in Eclogue IX where he appears again there is no mention of either this or any other magical powers. The Moeris we meet here is a forgetful old man who has forgotten all the old *carmina* and who explains – in one mordant touch – that the wolves must have seen him first.

This is only one example and a very minor one. Similar cross-referencing is to be seen in a whole host of characters. Iollas, for example, appears twice, in Eclogues II and III. In Eclogue II he is the *dominus* of the shepherd Corydon: it rests on his decision whether Corydon gets his Alexis, Corydon tells us in line 57:

nec si muneribus certes, concedat Iollas.

Interestingly enough the same is true with a different person, Phyllis, in Eclogue III. Damoetas has to ask Iollas here for his Phyllis

Phyllida mitte mihi: meus est natalis, Iollas.

Again Phyllis is always spoken of as desirable every time she is mentioned, desirable alike to shepherds, men like Cornelius Gallus and even the King of the Gods himself.¹⁰ She is obviously the village beauty. The town lad Alexis is always imagined against the background of the mountains and the forests by the dotting shepherd, Corydon. In both of the poems in which Damon appears mention is made of his goats and his musical powers. Eclogue V line 11 suggests that Codrus was a controversial figure, note the phrase

iurgia Codri¹¹

and it is interesting in view of this to find the differing assessments of him by Corydon and Thyrsis in Eclogue VII, the latter of whom actually supplies us with some *iurgia* of him. Again it is interesting that in Eclogue I Meliboeus, unlike every other major pastoral figure in the Eclogues, never speaks of any loved one, either male or female and in Eclogue VII 14 actually explicitly says

neque ego Alcippen neque Phyllida habebam.

And more interestingly still, perhaps, – for the Eclogues are not often thought of as giving a picture of the shepherds based realistically and carefully upon the differences in status then operative – in Eclogue I line 71 Meliboeus suggests that unlike Tityrus he is a full Roman citizen, which would perhaps suggest that he was a master rather than man and this fits in remarkably with the possibility scouted at the beginning of Eclogue III that it was his flocks that the hired hand Damoetas was looking after. Again it is interesting that, on more than one occasion and by two different people, Amaryllis is spoken of as sharp tempered. She is first described in these terms by Corydon in Eclogue II lines 14 to 15

nonne fuit satius *tristes* Amaryllidis *iras*
atque *superba pati fastidia*

and then Damoetas in Eclogue III 81 speaks of the same side of her nature

Amaryllidis *irae*

as though to underline the characteristic as the key to her nature. Now this characteristic is never mentioned once in Eclogue I but it is notable that Tityrus had dated the change in his fortunes from the day he had taken up with Amaryllis instead of the easy going and extravagant Galatea. Could the temper one wonders have been relevant here, too? Had he improved perhaps because he was *scared* of Amaryllis? Another interesting case, amongst what one might call the minor characters, is provided by Amyntas. At a merely superficial reading this much praised young man might seem to be merely another Alexis, except that he is dark, we are told in Eclogue X lines 38 and 39, and Alexis, as Eclogue II makes abundantly clear, is fair. His attractiveness, although it is not explicitly stated, is amply attested by Menalcas' repeated recurrence to him as a theme for his love poems in the song contest in Eclogue III (see lines 66-7; 70-1; 74-5; 82-3) as well as his unnecessary dragging in of his name in Eclogue V 8, not to mention Gallus' awareness of his charms in Eclogue X 37-41. But unlike Alexis, Amyntas is not just a pretty face. In fact he has some musical pretensions of his own. And these are referred to by a whole series of people, by Corydon with contempt in Eclogue II 34ff, by Menalcas with appreciation in Eclogue V 8, by Mopsus with irritation in the same poem and by Gallus in Eclogue X who dreamily imagines Phyllis making garlands for him and Amyntas singing. But he is not merely a lad with musical pretensions of his own, it is also suggested that there is a cutting edge to his ambition which other people found annoying. Note Corydon's exhilaration in II 39 at having beaten him:

haec eadem ut sciret quid non faciebat Amyntas?

and notice the surely significant echo of *certare* in Eclogue V 8 and 9, the latter example with *superare*:

- montibus in nostris solus tibi *certat* Amyntas –
- quid si idem *certet* Phoebum *superare* canendo –

Considering that Amyntas never appears in person, we can I think, if we care to, form a remarkably clear and precise picture of him. And this is true not just of Amyntas and the secondary figures in the Eclogues, but of the major characters, too, who are also given shape, as we shall see, by a series of cross-references.

Finally there are just a few stylistic links knitting together some of the characters. However before I go into these I had better make one or two generalising but essential remarks about Virgil's use of style in characterisation, lest what I should say in what follows be misunderstood. The difficulty with us is that at least since the time of Shakespeare, and more particularly since the time of Dickens, style of speech has been one if not the principal element in characterisation. One has only to think of the sententiousness of Polonius for example or the cockney of Sam Weller. Now in this sense Virgil does not use speech patterns at all in the Eclogues. Even where one finds strongly marked linguistic traits, as in the vivid immediacy of Meliboeus' speech in Eclogue I – think of the use of the demonstrative *hic*, the exclamation *ah*, the self-address, the ostensive *en* (used three times), the verb *miror* (used three times) – this is meant to portray *not* the personality of Meliboeus but his emotional state at that moment. And it is noticeable that *none* of these traits reappear when Meliboeus himself reappears in Eclogue VII whereas at least *some* of these features are to be found in the Corydon poem. But to say this is not to say that there is no characterising function in Virgil's diction. However, because diction is used situationally, to bring out common or contrasting features of situations rather than people,¹² the element with which we are concerned may appear not merely in the words of the characters themselves but also in other people's addresses to them or descriptions of them. One of the clearest cases of this is Tityrus. Tityrus, as Eclogue I makes clear, has been a slave. And this is subtly underscored in the large number of cases where other characters refer to him doing things for them or, more characteristically still, actually address him in the vocative and follow this with the imperative. There is Menalcas' recollection of having given him orders at III 20:

Tityre, coge pecus.

In the same poem even the hireling Damoetas shouts at line 96:

Tityre, pascentes a flumine reice capellas.

In Eclogue V line 12 Menalcas assures Mopsus that, whilst they are singing:

pascentes servabit Tityrus haedos

and in Eclogue IX 23, as though to make sure we do not miss the point, he is actually given a treble order by the same master:

Tityre, dum redeo – brevis est via – pasce capellas
et potum pastas age, Tityre, et inter agendum
occursare capro – cornu ferit ille – caveto

Here the style as an indicator of character – and it is fascinating to see how much there is in common between these passages – is given in a series of orders by *other* people. But they still provide as economical a picture of Tityrus' place within the community of the shepherds as if Tityrus had spoken himself. Another unobtrusive cluster of material probably meant to give some unity to Tityrus' character occurs in connexion with the beginning of Eclogue VI, where, in spite of the fact that Virgil uses the name Tityrus, it has been customary to regard the introduction as introducing Virgil himself.¹³ Apart from the explicit citation of the name Tityrus, there are two touches which show us we are meant to see the same shepherd as in Eclogue I. The first is the use of the word *ludere* in line 2, which is a word that has not been used to describe poetic activity since Tityrus last used it at line 10 of Eclogue I and is only ever to be used again in that meaning by Meliboeus, also a figure from Eclogue I, in Eclogue VII line 17, and there in the noun form, and which points to a much lowlier vision of the poetic craft than the usual *cano* and *canto*.¹⁴ The other case is line 8 where Tityrus describes himself as

agrestem tenui meditabor harundine musam

which plainly echoes the situational description of him by Meliboeus, also in Eclogue I, line 2 as

silvestrem tenui musam meditaris avena.

Now even if we maintain our view that correspondences of style such as this are essentially descriptive of a situation rather than a person, even still they surely help us to identify the Tityrus here in Eclogue VI with the Tityrus of Eclogue I. For although they certainly would not if they did not have the name in common – any more than Menalcas' echo at Eclogue IX 50 of Meliboeus' bitter cry at Eclogue I 73 means that we are to identify Menalcas here with Meliboeus – this would also be true of the other adventitious features of the characters which we have been discussing: without the name in common they would prove very little; but repeated more than once with the *same* name they surely show that Virgil wishes us to regard these as, so to speak, a hallmark of that particular person. Here again then we find Virgil attempting to construct a unity beyond that merely of name between the different appearances of the same person.

The other main character in whose case style seems to be used to establish a unity between his different appearances is Corydon. The technique here is a little different, perhaps corresponding to the difference in Corydon's character: for Virgil, like many other great writers, seems to have adapted the devices he used to characterise people to the characters of the people themselves. Corydon appears in two poems – Eclogues II and VII – and of course one finds the same obvious connecting links between these two appearances as with the other characters we have been discussing so far: the most obvious one is the affection for Alexis, which is the dominant feature of Eclogue II and is again briefly revealed in one quatrain of Eclogue VII – lines 53 to 56 – in which once again he pathetically tries to imagine the town lad, again characterised as *formosus Alexis*, against the background of the woods and the hills. But to leave a consideration of the identity of the two Corydons at this point is to leave it at its most superficial level. For the interesting thing about all the quatrains which Corydon sings in Eclogue VII is how typical they are of the concerns of the Corydon in Eclogue II. Even so minor a detail as the repeated stress on the laurel and the myrtle in two of the lines of the last quatrain, lines 62 and 64, remind one of their conjunction in Eclogue II 54:

et vos, o lauri, carpam et te, proxima myrte.

Similarly the address to the Nymphs in the first quatrain remind one of Corydon's intimacy with them at Eclogue II 46 – note the *ecce* – something not all that common in the Eclogues. The hunting gift which he offers to Diana through the mouth of Micon reminds us that Corydon had dreamt in Eclogue II 29 that Alexis would go hunting with him – again not a common idea in the Eclogues – and had promised him two dappled fawns which he had picked up on one of his hunting trips. The fourth stanza contains a large number of key images from the Second Eclogue: we have springs, shade, the colour green, the sunlight, the swelling vinestocks, not to mention the summer and the heat.¹⁵ All these are notable enough on their own, but lest we should miss the significance of it all, Virgil makes Corydon come out with a few plaintive lines from the poem that is undoubtedly his greatest source of inspiration in Eclogue II, the Song of Polyphemus to Galatea from Idyll XI:

Nerine Galatea, thymo mihi dulcior Hyblae
candidior cycnis.

And these are not just an address to Galatea, but almost a translation of the very opening lines of the Cyclops' song:

ὦ λευκὰ Γαλάτεια...
λευκοτέρα πακτᾶς ποτιδεῖν

even to the retention of the *schema etymologicum*, the connection of the name Galatea with the whiteness of the girl who bears the name, whiteness also being an important concept in Eclogue II, symbolising as it does the infinite distance between Corydon and his beloved. In view of all this the explicit address to Alexis in the fifth quatrain seems to do little more than to put the final signature, a handwriting which the graphologist of style should by now have long recognised, namely the Corydon of Eclogue II.

In all this I think it can be seen that, with the exception of a few peripheral characters, Virgil is concerned to establish some degree of unity between the various manifestations of his characters. This then answers the first of

the three questions I set myself to address. And I think that in answering it we have already begun to deal with the second question, too, namely by what means does Virgil establish his characterisations? However, although I may have begun this, it is certainly not true that the whole or even the main part of Virgil's characterisation is given in the ways I have discussed. For granted it may be true that a minor character like Amyntas is built up in this way, though even in the case of Amyntas we are given stray pieces of information from time to time which are designed rather to give him substance in that context than to unify his total character (for example his taking Menalcas along with him to mind the nets whilst he does the actual hunting at III 74-5): but with the main characters, Meliboeus, Corydon, Tityrus, and Menalcas, it is certainly not true that the only characterisation is in the links establishing their unity as people.

This can be seen in the characters I have already discussed. Thus, to take Corydon again, no one could infer from that his poetic affiliations, his respect for the controversial Codrus, his rivalry with Thyrsis or the precise tone of his poetry, sonorous, well unified, modest, polite and idealistic, which has to wait for a juxtaposition against the very different poetry of Thyrsis for these features to become clear. And again no one could have inferred from Eclogue VII alone either his status amongst the shepherds or the precise and differing nature of his relationships to the Galatea and Alexis whom he mentions in the third and fifth quatrains. Each of his appearances throws a new light upon him and almost seems to invite us to bear this in mind when we consider the other one. And this is perhaps most clearly of all to be seen in relation to Menalcas, a shepherd I have not so far discussed and perhaps the most important of all the shepherds, as is shown by his appearance in no less than five Eclogues, in three of which he is, whether present or absent, a main figure (Eclogues III, V and IX). Now with Menalcas we find many of the characterisation devices we have noticed before. He already appears in the Idylls of Theocritus and it is noticeable that Virgil scrupulously adheres to his character there. Thus, unlike Damoetas, in Eclogue III, he is herding for his parents and, again unlike Damoetas in the same poem, when he sings in a song contest his love songs are all addressed to the same person, a young boy of whom he is fond (the fact that this is a different boy from the one of whom the Menalcas in the Idylls is fond is not, perhaps all that significant).¹⁶ Again there are the same cross-references between the various appearances of Menalcas as we have found with other characters: the implied description of himself as a *dominus* at III 16 which would seem to tie in with the relationship of Moeris and the other *coloni* to him in Eclogue IX 4ff,¹⁷ not to mention the repeated confident orders to Tityrus I have mentioned before;¹⁸ the suggestion of homosexual practices in Eclogue III 7ff, which may tie in with the description of Menalcas as a handsome boy by Corydon in Eclogue II 15-16 – note that it is *Corydon* who sees him in this light – as well as his own obsession with Amyntas in Eclogues III and V;¹⁹ above all, his greatness and self-confidence as a musician, which is shown by his aggressive bearing to Damoetas in Eclogue III, Mopsus' explicit attestation of his abilities in Eclogue V 4 as well as the whole shape of that poem, to which his contribution forms the climax, a greatness further confirmed by the retrospective admission that he was the composer of Eclogues II and III (Eclogue V 86-7) and the special position which his songs hold amongst the shepherds in Eclogue IX. There are even stylistic links between the various Menalcas's even in addition to the repeated orders to Tityrus. It is very noticeable that out of all the shepherds in the sequence, Menalcas is the only one able to promise deification through his own songs: not even the anonymous singer of Eclogue IV can promise that. However in Eclogue V 51-2 Menalcas promises:

Daphnimque tuum tollemus ad astra
Daphnim ad astra feremus.

And not merely does he promise this, he actually fulfils his promise in the superb lines that follow. Now it is interesting that in Eclogue IX, after we have had the first of Menalcas' songs, one full of orders to Tityrus, which establishes his identity with the Menalcas of Eclogues III and V, we have an address to Varus full of concern about the fate of Mantua. At first sight this looks a very different Menalcas – Menalcas never elsewhere speaks to Varus or expresses concern about Mantua – it looks like a new side to him. But it is noticeable that here too we have the same promise of deification

Vare, tuum nomen
cantantes sublime ferent ad sidera cycni

and not merely that the words are almost identical, with the slight modification that swans occasionally used allegorically to stand for poetry²⁰ – a relevant substitution in the case of Menalcas – are used instead of the poet himself. Here, too, then we find a series of attempts to give substance and unity to the name, Menalcas.

However, even a rudimentary consideration of the richness and the diversity of the contexts in which Menalcas appears will show that in having established this we have still done no more than drawn the merest silhouette of the character's outlines and that if we wish to see the character of Menalcas in depth we shall have to examine all the various contexts in which Menalcas appears, something which will require the most detailed scrutiny of the three poems in which he plays a major role and conceivably some examination, too, of the two poems in which he makes only a fleeting appearance. And this will apply not merely to Menalcas but to all the other major characters in the Eclogues.

Now in the limited scope of this paper I cannot hope to give anything so complete as this. But it is perhaps interesting that, if we so wish, we can see in the successive appearances of Menalcas, not just a series of different pictures, but, as in the panels at which Aeneas gazes in Aeneid I, something like a story, and perhaps a sad one. The first time he appears in Eclogue II, it is notable that he is seen by Corydon as merely being a boy like Alexis, a dark alternative to him; there is no mention of any musical abilities. In the dialogue at the beginning of Eclogue III, by contrast, where the characterisation as often in Virgil is established by contrast, though he is still a youngster – note both the contemptuous use of *vir* by Damoetas in line 6 and the use of *pueri* by Palaemon in line 111 – and a youngster still considered attractive enough to be made love to, we already get the same aggressive and professional musicianship as I have had cause to mention in connection with Amyntas, notice the – in fact unjustified – contempt for Damoetas in lines 25ff. Side by side with this we get a more detailed picture of his social background: unlike Damoetas (a mere hireling shepherd), as well as Tityrus and Corydon in Eclogues I and II (also underlings), he is not managing someone else's stock but his own family's, as he tells us in line 32ff; Now at first sight this may seem to be no more than a bit of adventitious colour to distinguish him from the other shepherds. But nothing could in fact be further from the mark, for if we go into the poem and its bearing on Menalcas' character, what we find is that, again and again, the whole nature of Menalcas' responses seems to be dictated by this difference in social positions. One might notice as early as line 3 his feeling for and concern with the animals unfortunate enough to be in the charge of an outsider, his contempt for hired labour so brutally expressed in lines 5 and 6, his allegation against Damoetas, so characteristic to this day of the property owner (that Damoetas has been a vandal in lines 10 and 11, that Damoetas has been actually thieving in line 16ff and that he, Menalcas, has been trying to stop him in lines 19-20), his at least initial hesitation about staking one of his own flock – contrast Damoetas with his hired one – until terror lest Damoetas should get away scot free, makes him throw caution to the wind and follow suit himself and finally, (a touch so superbly Virgilian in its symbolic subtlety!) his characteristic self-identification with the figure of Iollas the master in lines 78-9, when Damoetas, the underling, has been pleading with him to let him have Phyllis for the day. One might mention other details of the Third Eclogue no less subtle, the differing attitudes to the cups, for example, but time alas, forbids. In the Fifth Eclogue we find another stage in the development of Menalcas. Still the master of Tityrus and still giving him orders and still the self-confident musician (see line 2), Menalcas is now recognised by Mopsus as in a category superior to his own (see line 4) and with this acknowledgment has come a new gentleness and courtesy. This, like the features we have noticed in Eclogue III pervades the poem. Notice the politeness and diffidence of his opening question, his thoughtful acknowledgment of Mopsus' strong point, as pipe player, his effort to please Mopsus by comparing him to Amyntas, who, as we know, means so much to Menalcas and has musical potential of his own, and then, when this irks Mopsus, his instant withdrawal of the comparison and his placatory statement that he is better than Amyntas, his allowing of Mopsus to dictate where they should sing in spite of his own preference expressed in line 3, the beautiful lines of praise to Mopsus after he has completed his threnody to Daphnis and finally the generous and unsolicited gift of his own pipes to Mopsus.^{20a} If we compare this with Eclogue III we could almost be in a different world – this is a song competition without the competition. This is a much mellower and more mature Menalcas than we have seen before, and corresponding to this, there is a much greater sureness about his musicianship. In his poem sanctifying and deifying Daphnis we are almost out of the world of the Pastoral altogether: there are few if any echoes of Theocritus. Such reminders of earlier writing as there are cast our minds back to the Alcestis of Euripides and the introduction to the Fifth Book of *De Rerum Natura* by Lucretius, both in their ways religious contexts.²¹ And it is probably significant that in the lines of tribute which Mopsus pays to Menalcas after this great song, the images, in contradistinction to those in the lines of praise by Menalcas for him earlier, are not at all pastoral, but almost elemental in character, themselves evoking something of the spirit of the *De Rerum Natura*. By now then Menalcas is a Meistersinger.

The next poem in which Menalcas is involved is Eclogue IX. Once again we have, as I have pointed out earlier, the typical links to establish the unity of his personality: the suggestion of ownership of property, not to say overlordship in the local community, the orders given once again to the sorely pressed Tityrus, the same highly professional musicianship. But once again this is only a part of the story. In the brutal world of this Eclogue, the same brutal world as in Eclogue I, the shepherds have been driven off their ancestral lands, amongst them Menalcas and his *coloni* – note the exact economic and sociological reference of this word. Through the fragmentary recollections of two close friends we infer that Menalcas as Masterpoet has made an attempt to become the spokesman for his community in appealing to one of the powerful men involved, Varus; hopes have been expressed for a new stability under the protection of the newly deified Divus Iulius – all to no avail. The hopes expressed in these randomly remembered fragments are all negated by the context in which they appear. The handsome young man who by dint of effort had made himself the master craftsman has failed, has lost his all, almost his life. The high hopes are all ending in failure: and the treatment of Menalcas makes this as clear as anything else. For what is Menalcas' character in this poem? He has no character at all. He is merely a fading memory by now amongst the forgetful old and the unsure young.

After all this one might perhaps have thought that this was the end of Menalcas. But there is to be one more turn of the screw. Menalcas makes one final appearance – in Eclogue X line 20 – fleetingly, an almost diminutive figure half lost amongst the shepherds and swineherds who precede him and eclipsed by the gods who follow:

uvidus hiberna venit de glande Menalcas.

Now here, unlike all the previous cases not merely with Menalcas but all the major characters, there is nothing but the name to connect it with the old Menalcas, but I hope we have passed the stage at which it is necessary to argue that Virgil meant to refer to the same person every time he employed the same name. After all if he had meant to say someone else he could always have said so and if he had wished to use the name merely to stand for shepherds in general it is hard to see why he did not keep to the general names for the different types of herdsmen as in the lines before. So granted, then, that it is Menalcas here, in that case why did he bring him in? Well we can only speculate, but might it not be that this marks the last sad act to the whole pathetic story. Here for all his old brilliance in days of yore, we have the great shepherd poet forced, in the absence of either flocks or land of his own, to follow the farmer to be envisaged in Georgics I 157-8:

heu magnum alterius frustra spectabis acervum
concussaue famem in silvis solabere quercu.

In this short paper I have only had time to suggest one or two of the possibilities perhaps opened up to us by the simple device of taking the characters and characterisation of the Eclogues seriously. I might just as easily have taken up the characters of other shepherds²² instead of or perhaps as well as Menalcas. And perhaps it would have been more satisfactory if I had done so. For this leads me to the last of my three questions: what Virgil may have wished to achieve by his use of characterisation in the Eclogues. For it seems to me that one of the most important elements in characterisation in Virgil – and this perhaps applies not merely to the Eclogues but also to the Aeneid – is the element of balance and contrast which it provides between alternative viewpoints on poetry and life.²³ One seems to be invited by the very structure of the Eclogues to weigh not merely the contrast – and balance – between Menalcas and Damoetas in Eclogue III, but the contrast – and balance – between that contrast in its turn and the different contrast between Corydon and Thyrsis in Eclogue VII, and so on and so on until one has built up a huge contrast between the story of one shepherd as opposed to another. It is all not unlike oddly enough, Hegel's Phenomenology of Mind in which one thesis and antithesis after another build up at last to form a vast panorama of different viewpoints and fates, the final synthesis being the dispassionate, and yet perhaps sympathetic mind of the attentive reader.

NOTES

1. Eclogues I, III, V, VII, VIII and IX.
2. Suetonius Virgil 26 (see also Tacitus *Dialogus* 13, Servius ad Ecl. VI 11, Donatus 27 and 39).
3. For a few cases recently see E.V. Rieu's 'Virgil, the Pastoral Poems' (London 1972) pp 175-192; M.C.J. Putnam 'Virgil's Pastoral Art' (Princeton 1970) p.293 in particular the following sentence: 'Is Moeris in Eclogue 9 to be a magician or is the identity of name coincidental, as often in the Eclogues?' See too the attempt by E.W. Leach in 'Virgil's Eclogues' (Ithaca 1974) p.201 to distinguish between the Corydon of Eclogue II and the one in Eclogue VII.
4. This particular issue had already begun in antiquity. By the time that Servius was writing it had already reached its modern dimensions. In the course of his commentary, Servius successively identifies Virgil with the Tityrus of Eclogue I, the Corydon of Eclogue II, the Tityrus of Eclogue VI, the Chromis of Eclogue VI, the Corydon of Eclogue VII, the Menalcas of Eclogue IX as well as Lycidas in the same poem, in two cases it will be noted with two different people in the course of the same poem. He also, for good measure, identifies Julius Caesar with the Daphnis of Eclogue V. Some or all of these views are still extant (see note 13).
5. See the O.C.T. of Virgil, Index Nominum p.434, where we read of 'Galatea nympha' and then 'Galatea puella'.
6. Galatea is so problematic a figure that perhaps one should publish a short paper on her alone. For the purposes of this particular short paper, it will be perhaps sufficient to point out that from Ecl. III onwards all references point to the Sea Nymph. Thus III 64-5 is already based on the address to the Sea Nymph, Galatea, in Theocritus VI 6ff and it is interesting that the shepherd who makes the address to her, both here and in III 72-3 is the same shepherd as sings to the Sea Nymph in Theocritus VI 21ff. The song in Ecl IX 39-43 is indisputably to the Sea Nymph, as is shown by the aquatic imagery, and this too is underscored by its Theocritean pedigree, being little more than a restatement of the address to Galatea at the beginning of Polyphemus' Song (Idyll XI 42ff). The address 'Nerine' does little more than make explicit what is hinted in these four other passages. The only difficulty is then the position of Galatea in Eclogue I. And it is worth reminding ourselves that if Corydon is on friendly terms with the nymphs in Eclogue II as well as Galatea herself in VII 37ff there is nothing to stop Tityrus having been on friendly terms with the same Galatea in Eclogue I. Only aprioristic reasoning of the most arbitrary kind would in fact attempt to distinguish the two.
7. This may be irritating to some, but so as to avoid constantly having to huff and puff my way through one vast caveat and qualification after another I propose to use the term 'Theocritus' to apply to the collection of poems regarded by Virgil as having been composed by Theocritus. This will exclude all poems after Idyll XI, and, for most purposes, Idyll II, but will include Idylls VIII and IX.
8. The following are used by Theocritus in more than 1 poem: Daphnis, Tityrus, Menalcas, Corydon, Amaryllis, Galatea, Aegon, Philondas, Milon and Comatas. (10 in all). Virgil uses the following in more than 1 poem: Daphnis, Tityrus, Menalcas, Corydon, Amaryllis, Lycidas, Galatea, Damoetas, Amyntas, Aegon, Micon, Meliboeus, Alexis, Iollas, Damon, Phyllis, Mopsus, Codrus, Alphesiboeus and Moeris (20 in all, the last 9 names not being found in Theocritus).
9. The death of Daphnis amidst universal mourning is found in Ecl. V 20ff and Idyll I 64ff. Orders to Tityrus to deputise in looking after the stock occur in Ecl. III 19-20, III 96, V 12 and IX 23ff and Idylls III 1-5, where, however, it appears to be asked as a favour. Menalcas' tending of his parents' stock occurs at Ecl. III 32ff and Idylls VIII 15-6. Corydon's position as slave or hired hand is made clear by Ecl. II 1ff — *dominus* meant anyone in authority over one, see Oxford Latin Dictionary ad loc. — and Idyll IV 1ff, on which see Gow. Amaryllis' beauty mentioned at her first appearance in Eclogue I 5 is derived from references to this at both her appearances in Theocritus, Idyll III 5 and VI 38. Galatea's status as a Sea Nymph, hinted in Ecl III 64ff and 72ff and made explicit in VII 37ff and IX 39ff is derived from the position she always holds in Theocritus, that of Sea Nymph, see Idylls VI and IX passim. The encounter with Lycidas on a journey in Ecl. IX comes from an encounter with the same person in Idyll VII. Damoetas' holding his opponent to a tie in a song contest at Ecl. III 108ff seems to be suggested by his doing the same in Idyll VI 46 (where, it is

worth noting, he had also sung of Galatea!) The good looks of Amyntas though not explicitly stated are surely implied by both Menalcas' obsession with him and Gallus' singling him out as a companion with the beautiful Phyllis in Ecl. X 41ff and are presumably derived from the reference to his looks in Idyll VII 132. Aegon's position as a cattle owner may be inferred from a combination of Ecl. III 2 and 29 (unless anyone thinks names can actually change their reference *inside* the same poem!) and is obviously derived from Idyll IV. Micon's ownership of a vineyard, implied at Ecl. III 10, is derived from Idyll V 112-3. Nais' beauty mentioned at Ecl. II 46 is derived from Idyll VIII 43. Thestylis, who is still pounding herbs at Ecl. II 10ff, seems to have been doing so since Idyll II 59ff.

10. She is desired by Damoetas in III 76ff, Iollas in III 78ff, Mopsus, by implication, in V 10, both Thyrsis and Jupiter in VII 57ff, Corydon in VII 61ff, and regarded by Gallus as an alternative to his present girl in X 37ff.
11. All the editions take this as an objective genitive on the analogy of the two previous genitives and doubtless they are right. But even if it were a subjective genitive – and I do not think there is anything to say that it cannot be – my contention will still stand.
12. The situational use of verbal formulae or tricks of style, even in the Eclogues, would again almost require a paper to itself. Perhaps I can just use the following as illustration of what I mean and in proof. The famous echo of I 72 at IX 50 does not equate Daphnis and Meliboeus as people: it points to a common feature in their situations, the way on the one hand 'the best laid schemes o' mice and men gang aft agley' and on the other the long term nature of planning and growth required by the land, an element in both Eclogues. Again IX 32, which should be the start of a song contest – the fact that this cannot take place is another important element in Eclogue IX – is made of a combination of another two such invitations, Eclogue III 52 and V 10, which do lead to song contests. The affinity between V 62 and VI 84 is not meant to suggest that both are composed by Menalcas, because we are told by Virgil himself that one poem is by Menalcas and the other by Tityrus, but to bring out the magical nature of what is going on on both occasions. Other examples that might be investigated include the similarities and dissimilarities between II 3, III 12 and IX 9, IV 54 and VIII 8, V 13 and IX 26.
13. The first extant statement of this view is made by Servius on line 5 of Eclogue VI: '*quidam volunt hoc significasse Vergilium* etc'. And since then the heresy has flourished like the bay tree. If I were to list all the people who have made it, the note would extend to several pages. I shall content myself with quoting just the following: Gordon Williams 'Tradition and Originality in Roman Poetry' (Oxford 1968) p 308: 'In Eclogue VI 4 Apollo addresses Virgil as Tityrus, using the name as general name for shepherd' and M.C.J. Putnam 'Virgil's Pastoral Art' (Princeton 1970) p 96: 'Tityrus . . . here represents Virgil himself.'
14. *Canere* occurs at Ecl. II 31, IV 1 and 3, and V 9; *cantare* occurs at II 23, III 21, III 25, V 54 and V 72. The only other occasion on which *ludo* is used in relation to poetry apart from Ecl I 10 and here, is in Ecl. VII 17 where it is used in noun form by Meliboeus, also a character from Eclogue I.
15. The quatrain is as follows:

Muscosi fontes et somno mollior herba,
et quae vos rara viridis tegit arbutus umbra,
solstitium pecori defendite: iam venit aestas
torrida, iam lento turgent in palmite gemmae.

Fontes are found at II 59, *umbra* at II 8, *viridis* at II 9, *solstitium* is paralleled by *sole sub ardente* at II 13, *pecus* appears as *pecudes* in II 8 and then as *pecus* in II 20, *aestas* appears first as *aestus* in II 10 and then as *aestas* in II 22, the vine has already been dealt with in II 70. No one could say there was any verbatim echo of any phrase and if there were only one or two of these words they would prove nothing. However the fact that such a high proportion of the *key* words in the little quatrain already appear in Eclogue II, and in particular the part of it around line 8, suggests to me a conscious attempt to create a pastiche of the poem, in preparation, now that we have had Galatea material again, for the re-emergence in the next quatrain of the key figure of Eclogue II in person – Alexis.

16. One slight difference from Theocritus is that in Theocritus Menalcas is merely a shepherd (see Idylls VIII 2, 9, 15, 34, 45ff, 49ff, 63ff and IX 17) whereas in Virgil he is obviously herding not merely goats, too, but cows (see Eclogues III 29ff, 49, 109) something that equates him with Daphnis not merely in Idyll VIII but throughout the Idylls where from I 86 onwards he is frequently called 'the cowherd' to distinguish him from the others. Is this then some kind of promotion? For the differences between at least goatherds and cowherds in terms of dignity see Idyll I 86f.
17. The total context makes the overlordship of Menalcas clear enough, especially the reference to the *coloni* in line 4, which from the time of Cicero onwards often means a tenant farmer. See the entry under *Colonus* in the Oxford Classical Dictionary 2nd Edn. (Oxford 1970) with bibliography. But see also line 10:

omnia carminibus vestrum servasse Menalcan

and perhaps *cum venerit ipse* in the last line of the poem. For the use of *ipse* to mean the master, see Oxford Latin Dictionary 'Ipse' 12.

18. See Eclogues III 19-20; Ecl V 12; Ecl IX 23-5.
19. Just how deep the characterisation in Virgil may be is shown by making the musician Menalcas dote on Amyntas, who, as I have mentioned before, is not just a pretty face, but an ambitious musician in his own right, whose superb voice is recognised by none other than Cornelius Gallus in Ecl X 41.
20. A complete list of the various different ways in which swans are used to symbolise high poetry in the long tradition of Graeco-Roman verse would require a long article to itself. Here I shall confine myself to citing Leonidas of Tarentum in the Palatine Anthology VII 19 and Horace Odes IV 2.25, in both of which cases the swans are identified with the poet. Two other cases in the Eclogues where the poet is compared (or not compared) with swans are Eclogue VIII 55ff and Eclogue IX 36, in both cases to that poet's disadvantage.
- 20a. I am indebted to the article by E. Adelaide Hahn 'The Characters of the Eclogues' TAPhA Vol. 75 (1944) p.196 for some of the views here.
21. The lines are Euripides Alcestis 1003-5 and more particularly still Lucretius V 8:
- deus ille fuit, deus, inclute Memmi
- of which the magical line 64 is about as close an echo as we ever get
- ipsa sonant arbusta, Deus, deus ille, Menalca.
22. There is a good discussion of Daphnis in W. Berg, Early Virgil (London 1974) p 115ff.
23. The role of this has been seen most clearly by V. Pöschl in 'Die Hirtendichtung Virgils' (Heidelberg 1964). See in particular his comments on Contrast in p. 72ff and again on p. 150ff from which the following sentence is worth citing yet again: 'Die Corydon-und Thyrsisstrophen zusammen machen wieder ein grösseres Ganzes aus.'