

ECLOGUES THROUGH THE AGES:  
THE EVOLUTION OF PASTORAL POETRY

By

REBECCA MAGALI NAYLOR-SANCHEZ

---

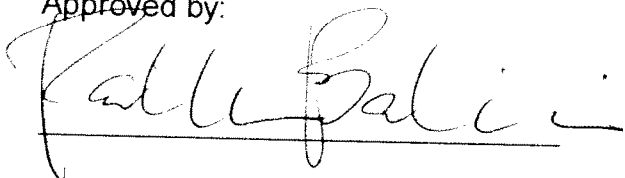
A Thesis Submitted to The Honors College  
In Partial Fulfillment of the Bachelors degree  
With Honors in

English

THE UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA

MAY 20 11

Approved by:

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Patrick Baliani", written over a horizontal line.

Professor Patrick Baliani  
English Undergraduate Department

The University of Arizona Electronic Theses and Dissertations  
 Reproduction and Distribution Rights Form

Name (Last, First, Middle) <i>Naylor-Sánchez, Rebecca, Magali</i>	
Degree title (eg BA, BS, BSE, BSB, BFA): <i>BA</i>	
Honors area (eg Molecular and Cellular Biology, English, Studio Art): <i>English</i>	
Date thesis submitted to Honors College: <i>May 4, 2011</i>	
Title of Honors thesis: <i>Eclogues Through the Ages: The Evolution      of Pastoral Poetry</i>	
<b>:The University of          Arizona Library Release</b>	<p>I hereby grant to the University of Arizona Library the nonexclusive worldwide right to reproduce and distribute my dissertation or thesis and abstract (herein, the "licensed materials"), in whole or in part, in any and all media of distribution and in any format in existence now or developed in the future. I represent and warrant to the University of Arizona that the licensed materials are my original work, that I am the sole owner of all rights in and to the licensed materials, and that none of the licensed materials infringe or violate the rights of others. I further represent that I have obtained all necessary rights to permit the University of Arizona Library to reproduce and distribute any nonpublic third party software necessary to access, display, run or print my dissertation or thesis. I acknowledge that University of Arizona Library may elect not to distribute my dissertation or thesis in digital format if, in its reasonable judgment, it believes all such rights have not been secured.</p> <p>Signed: <u><i>Rebecca Naylor-Sánchez</i></u>          Date: <u><i>5/4/11</i></u></p>

In order to understand the evolution of pastoral poetry it is important to have a firm grasp on how the form began and what sort of effect this literary mode had on both scholars of the time and the writers of subsequent eras. Over the ages, the term “pastoral” has evolved to accommodate more contemporary settings, but is fundamentally “a deliberately conventional poem expressing an urban poet’s nostalgic image of the supposed peace and simplicity of the life of shepherds and other rural folk in an idealized natural setting” (Abrams 240). Also known as an “idyll”, an “eclogue”, or “bucolic poetry,” pastoral poetry places characters in an ideal world that often echoes that of the classical “golden age” described by Ovid in his famous work, *Metamorphoses* (Abrams 240).

According to pagan belief, this age was immediately following Creation and in many ways was the height of human existence. During the golden age men “did what was right and trust prevailed.” The Earth was “equally free and at rest, untouched by the hoe, unscathed by the ploughshare, supplying all needs from its natural resources. Content to enjoy food that required no painful producing, men simply gathered arbustus fruit and mountain strawberries...” (Ovid 1. 98-103). It is in a similar setting that the Greek poet Theocritus wrote some of the first known bucolic poems in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century B.C. His most famous collection entitled *Idylls* represents the fictional life of Sicilian shepherds that reveals a “nostalgia for the country and for the simple life of the countryman” (Gow xvii).

Perhaps this nostalgia stemmed from the radical changes occurring in the Hellenistic world at the time and was a “revolt against the complex and over-cultivated

life of the great new cities, in which rich and jaded patrons” thought they would be happier as “simple rustics” (Gow xvii) From these emotions sprang “a demand for more or less idealized pictures” of a life that, from afar, seems more desirable. Although this nostalgic attitude was common throughout Greece, Theocritus’ *Idylls* is the first time the feeling was encapsulated in a work of literature (Gow xvii). The beauty of the pastoral is that it is neither fully in the world of myth or reality (Payne 1). Shepherds are free to lounge under a tree or engage in a singing competition without the real responsibility of tending sheep.

We see this in one of Theocritus’ most famous idylls called “The Harvest Festival”, or simply Idyll 7. Strangely enough, this is his only poem that actually records a personal experience. In the idyll he goes by the name of Simichidas, and is walking through the island of Cos with his two companions Eucritus and Amyntas (Theocritus 1-2). They are traveling to the house of an aristocratic friend because he is “holding a feast for fair-robed Demeter, giving firstfruits of their abundance; for in full-rich measure has the goddess piled their threshing-floor with barley” (Theocritus 32-34). On their way they encounter a shepherd (also known as a goatherd) by the name of Lycidas who could not be mistaken for anything else. On his shoulders he wears “the tawny skin of a thick haired, shaggy goat reeking of fresh curd”, an “aged tunic,” and in his right hand holds “a crooked club of wild olive” (Theocritus 16-18).

This is a rather idealized image of a shepherd, because although he is of the lower classes, he is perfectly content and fits the prototype of a free-spirited countryman. There

is something both organic and wholesome about his appearance that would have appealed to Theocritus' sophisticated urban audience. After the three men encounter the goatherd, Simichidas says "the way and the day are thine and mine to share; let us make country song, and each, maybe, shall profit the other" (Theocritus 35-36). This sort of friendly singing contest between travelers is a common convention of pastoral poetry (Abrams 240). It would become even more pronounced in the following centuries, but we can certainly see that Theocritus has established a strong foundation.

As Simichidas and Lycidas continue their journey they take turns singing about love and the love affairs of others (Gow 29). Lycidas tells of his love for a boy named Ageanax who has recently sailed for Mitylene and hopes that the gods will save him from the "furnace of Aphrodite" which is giving off a love so hot that Lycidas believes it will "consume" him (Theocritus 54-55). Homosexual relationships were quite common in ancient Greece and were even viewed as part of a healthy upbringing. In some ways they were thought of as more pure than heterosexual relationships because men were superior to women in society. In the perfect world represented by pastoral poetry, it makes sense that such an idealized form of love would be present throughout.

After Lycidas, Simichidas takes his turn singing about his friend Aratus who also finds himself in a passionate relationship with a boy. During his song he speaks of the god Pan, who is closely related to the pastoral because he is the god of shepherds and flocks, of mountain wilds, hunting and rustic music ("Pan"). Once each man has had a turn to sing, Lycidas gives Simichidas his shepherd's crook as "friendship's token in the

Muses” (Theocritus 128). During this time period, appealing to the Muses was extremely important before undertaking any sort of creative activity. This was common throughout society and popular literature, so it comes as no surprise that the new bucolic poems developed by Theocritus followed the same convention.

The Idyll concludes with the men arriving at the feast and admiring all of the wonderful things around them that nature has to offer. Poplar and elm trees hang overhead and sacred water from a cave splashes down the rocks. Simichidas explains,

All things were fragrant  
of rich harvest and of fruit-time. Pears at our feet and apples  
at our side were rolling plentifully, and the branches hung down to the ground  
with their burden of sloes (Theocritus 138-142).

This is very similar to Ovid’s description of how man would acquire food during the golden age. Perfect fruit would always be ripe for the picking and all man was asked to do is enjoy his surroundings and leave the worrying to the gods.

It is no wonder this ideal world that Theocritus created influenced so many writers and poets after him. One such Roman poet by the name of Virgil would come two centuries after Theocritus and write his own collection of bucolic poems known as the *Eclogues*. Although this is an imitation of the *Idylls*, Virgil “established the enduring model for the traditional pastoral” that would be used by writers for centuries to come (Abrams 240). He took some of the themes already present in Theocritus’ work and made

them more pronounced, thus developing standard conventions such as “a shepherd reclining under a spreading beech tree and meditating on the rural muse, or piping as though he would ne’er grow old, or engaging in a friendly singing contest, or expressing his good or bad fortune in a love affair, or grieving over the death of a fellow shepherd” (Abrams 240).

One of the greatest changes Virgil made to Theocritus’ version of the pastoral is to alter the setting from Sicily to Arcadia. Arcadia is a region in Greece that is comprised of valleys and mountains. At the time, its inhabitants “were known to be rather primitive herdsmen of sheep, goats and bovines, rustic folk who led an unsophisticated yet happy life in the natural fertility of their valleys and foothills” (Weismann). Soon they became directly associated with Pan and the singing and pipe playing they used to pass the time while herding sheep (Weismann). As a result, Arcadia became the perfect setting from which to base the *Eclogues*. The themes of sheep herding, singing, and love that were present in Theocritus’ *Idylls* are still seen in Virgil’s work, but apart from that they also “make several crucial references to the political situation” of the time (Weismann). Many critics insist that references to Julius Caesar and Octavian are present all throughout the ten eclogues (Weismann).

Virgil’s Eclogue 7 is noteworthy because the situation is so similar to Theocritus’ “The Harvest Festival”. In this poem, a shepherd named Meliboeus describes a singing contest he heard between two other shepherds named Corydon and Thyrsis. In this competition the first singer must present a theme, and the second singer is expected

to “exaggerate the idea presented by the first” (DeVeau 117). The second singer must therefore be careful not to “fall into unpleasant arrogance” and present ideas which could “pass from the clever into the ridiculous” (DeVeau 117).

Corydon begins by saying that he hopes he can rival the great singer Codrus with his music, for if not he will stop devoting himself to the flute (Virgil 1-4). Thyrsis counters this by boldly saying, “You shepherds, crown me your budding singer—let Codrus burst with jealousy” (Virgil 5-6). Then Corydon vows to give Diana the head of a boar and a marble statue, to which Thyrsis says he will offer a golden statue (DeVeau 116). They exchange verses in this manner, touching on the subject of farm chores, and the beauty of summer versus that of winter. Finally they come to compare lovers, and Corydon says that “All nature smiles, but if handsome Alexis goes from these hills, even the streams may run dry” (Virgil 35-36). Thyrsis then insists that “when my Phyllis comes here, green shall the woodlands be, and many the shower” (Virgil 39-40).

Like in the *Idylls*, the proclamation of love in homosexual relationships is still a large part of the pastoral conventions seen in Virgil’s poetry. Some scholars have even argued that Virgil is Corydon (who ultimately ends up winning the competition) and that Alexis represents a young slave named Alexander that Virgil was rumored to have been attracted to. At the end of Eclogue 7, Meliboeus reports that after Corydon defeated Thyrsis, “it has been all Corydon, all Corydon, for us” (Virgil 50). This would not have been far from the truth considering how immensely popular Virgil’s poetry proved to be. Although it seems rather arrogant of him to praise himself, he was able to take the



foundation of pastoral poetry provided by Theocritus and elevate the form to provide a stepping-stone for the eclogues that were to follow.

Although Theocritus and Virgil pioneered the pastoral tradition during the third and first centuries B.C., it seems it greatly diminished in popularity after Virgil's time and was not resurrected until the beginning of the Italian Renaissance. During the fourteenth century, Italian humanists worked to revive this long lost tradition. Most notably, poets such as Petrarch, Boccaccio and Mantuan published Latin collections of bucolic poetry, while others followed in the Italian vernacular ("Pastoral"). This return to the classical quickly spread to Spain and throughout Europe and remained popular for several centuries.

Francesco Petrarca (July 20, 1304 - July 19, 1374) is perhaps best known as the "Father of Humanism" and the creator of the Petrarchan sonnet, which later influenced the Elizabethan sonnet. His style of writing was so admired that when Pietro Bembo created the model for modern Italian in the 1600s he based it on works by Petrarch, as well as Boccaccio and Dante ("Pastoral"). It may seem odd that there was such a span between the pastoral poetry of Virgil and that of Petrarch, but that may have been due to the intellectual climate of the centuries leading up to the Renaissance (Bergin 17).

The Middle Ages "lived with its eyes raised to the world of eternity, and heaven was not only its destination but its pattern" (Bergin 17). It was a world built on a rigid class system and human institutions that were relentlessly focused on salvation. The arts reflected this attitude, and writers and artists worked to keep their pieces cohesive with

the current social climate (Bergin 18). Thomas G. Bergin refers to the fourteenth century as a transitional period when instead of looking to religion for comfort, intellectuals were “now vigorously and enthusiastically studying the world about them, finding beauty in the transitory world of nature, and putting the delights of liberty above the security of order” (Bergin 18).

This created the perfect environment for a return to the pastoral. Now that artists were at liberty to admire nature and life’s simple pleasures instead of worrying about eternity, the country setting once again proved to be the ideal backdrop for poets wishing to escape urban life and write in this classical tradition. Petrarch’s collection of pastoral allegories takes after Virgil’s *Eclogues* and is called the *Bucolicum carmen* (published in 1374) (Bergin 142). Although it uses the *Eclogues* as a guide, Petrarch’s *Bucolicum* is much more allegorical in nature and covers a variety of different topics ranging from the Black Plague to the “wickedness of the Papal court” (Bergin 140).

Out of the twelve eclogues in the *Bucolicum*, the most “obscure” and the one “to which he devoted most attention, is the tenth, describing the death of the laurel” (Mann 21). Throughout the poem, Petrarch talks about both classical poetry and the love he had for a woman named Laura (Mann 21). Petrarch’s love affair with Laura, although never reciprocated, had a tremendous impact on him and his poetry. Upon seeing her in church he fell deeply in love with her and her mere presence caused him “unspeakable joy” (“Petrarch”). His love was never returned because she was a married woman, but he wrote numerous poems to her in what is now known as *Il Canzoniere*. Tragically, Laura

died of the Plague in 1348 and it is during Petrarch's mourning of her that he wrote the tenth eclogue in the collection (Mann 52).

Although Petrarch may have given pastoral poetry new life with his publication of the *Bucolicum carmen*, he was certainly not the only one to embrace this tradition during the fourteenth century. Giovanni Boccaccio, a well known "friend, student, and correspondent of Petrarch" also wrote his own series of bucolic poems known as the *Eclogues* ("Boccaccio"). Petrarch, like Dante and Virgil, had a tremendous influence on the young Boccaccio, and upon Petrarch's death in 1374, Boccaccio said he was "cui quantum habeo tantum debeo" (to whom I owe all that I have) (Smarr xxi). Ultimately, these two great poets "had the same goal at heart: to revive the glory of ancient literature in their own time" (Smarr xv). They did not, however, have similar ways of attempting to do so.

At this point it may seem like every collection of bucolic poetry that has been discussed, no matter who writes it, must follow a strict set of guidelines in order for the poem to be considered "pastoral." Most of the collections have gone by the name of "Eclogues" or some variation of the word "bucolic," and consisted of ten to twelve poems that follow the lives of the same mythical shepherds. Those are certainly some important aspects of the genre, and authors have been essentially using Theocritus and/or Virgil as a template, but it is what they do beyond this template that makes each collection unique to the author.

Boccaccio was almost certainly inspired to write his collection of eclogues after having read Petrarch's *Bucolicum carmen*, but one can see the similarities and differences between the two poets. Although they do share similar content, Boccaccio made a conscious effort to distinguish his pastoral from Petrarch's. As he puts it, there are "three types of eclogue, Theocritus' superficial idylls, Vergil's occasionally but not persistently allegorical verses, and Petrarch's thoroughly allegorical poems in which every figure represents something else" (Smarr xxvi). Boccaccio saw himself more in tune with the Virgilian approach and explains that sometimes "a name has no special meaning, that a servant or a girl is simply that" (Smarr xxvi).

Boccaccio, unlike Petrarch, usually wrote in the vernacular, and began by writing two experimental eclogues in his native Italian. Petrarch "disavowed the vernacular as an appropriate vehicle for great literature" and wrote all of his eclogues and epics in Latin. In later times, writing in Latin was seen as a way of "putting some parts of the audience at a distance" but perhaps what Petrarch intended was for his work to be remembered throughout the world, for a "man of letters in Italy could not be expected to be understood in Germany or Sweden, or Portugal, if he was writing in his own vernacular" (Slavitt ix). Boccaccio must have been either swayed by this reasoning, or felt compelled to adhere to the traditional style of eclogues, for when he published his collection they were all in Latin.

The contents of several of the poems directly mirror those of Petrarch or Virgil. One such poem is called "The Laurel Wreath". Like Petrarch, Boccaccio is defending

poetry as an art form and does so through the classical pastoral convention of a singing contest between shepherds. In this poem, the shepherd Daphnis represents any poet, “for poets were honored with laurel, which is what Daphne became” (Slavitt 107). He is competing against the merchant Stilbon who believes that any man who “adores the Muses” is foolish for he will almost always end up poor (Slavitt 108-109). Stilbon then alludes to Virgil when he rather cynically says, “Tityrus sang by the Tiber of the Tyrian shepherds who struggled against the Argolian bulls, but what good did that do him? He could not fill his belly with the cool waters that flow from the Muses’ lofty fountain” (Slavitt 109).

Throughout the poem, Boccaccio is clearly trying to address some of the negative comments that have been directed at poets and writers throughout time. He answers through the voice of Daphnis when he says,

You paint a dismal picture of a life that is not so bad.

We have on our tables olives, apples, and other fruit,

and our beds are strewn with leaves that rustle agreeably

as we shift our positions in sleep while Nursia plays her nocturnes.

Throughout the contest, Stilbon and Daphnis continue to argue the merits of poetry and Stilbon attempts to belittle Daphnis by saying, “The sailors will sing of the love of sea nymphs and the sirens wile all you poets molder in silence in unmarked graves” (Slavitt 114). To this Daphnis quickly replies, “We poets sing of heroes and valiant deeds. A rock can undo all your sailors’ plans and bring them to grief” (Slavitt 114).

In the end, neither singer wins the contest, but Daphnis makes a strong, although somewhat exaggerated, point about the artistic lifestyle. The close parallel between the pastoral imagery of this scene and the life of poets would clearly have resonated with Boccaccio's audience. If the reason they are attracted to pastoral literature in the first place is because it offers them a chance to escape reality and return to a simpler age, then the work of poets should not only seem appealing, but admirable for trying to explore the beauty of nature in a way that average people cannot. By employing the Virgilian tradition as well as the Petrarchan, Boccaccio is able to justify the importance of not only classical literature, but poetry in general.

After Boccaccio, another man to make his mark on the pastoral tradition was Baptista Spangnolo, more commonly known as Mantuanus or "Mantuan". Although he comes from a Spanish family, he received this name because he was born in the northern Italian city of Mantua on April 17, 1447 (Piepho vx). During his early years he studied in Padua, but eventually went on to enter the Carmelite order and devote his life to God because of a near death experience that he believes he survived thanks to prayer and the Virgin Mary (Piepho xxi).

The story of how Mantuan came to write his collection of eclogues, known as *Adulescentia* (meaning "adolescence"), is an interesting one. The earliest version consisted of eight poems and was written during the deep spiritual crisis which resulted in Mantuan's entrance into the Carmelite order. As a young man he did things that were so shameful "he had been unable even to face the paintings in the churches" (Piepho xxi). In

order to atone for these sins he tried to join a monastery, but the monastery denied his entrance. This rejection is the reason he went on to study in Padua. During his time at school however, he “fell into a life of poverty and servitude” and he decided to return home to his family (Piepho xxi). Unfortunately, his father grew suspicious of his activities and banished him from the house (Piepho xxi).

This was a low period in Mantuan’s life, and as he describes it, since the world hates him, he “resolved to hate the world” (Piepho xxi). Luckily, this negative outlook was not destined to last and he had an epiphany after he almost lost his life to the plague. He “vowed eternal service” to the Virgin Mary if she would rescue him from his dire situation. He did not follow through right away with this vow however, and that quickly came back to haunt him. While out at sea he received a reminder from the Virgin Mary in the form of a giant tempest, from which point he decided to obey her wishes (Piepho xxi).

This period of uncertainty is reflected throughout Mantuan’s *Adulescentia*. There are references to the cruelty of the main character’s parents, which gives us an indication of what Mantuan’s life was like while he was writing the eclogues. Unfortunately, Mantuan revised the original copy of his work several years later and it is almost impossible to find the original manuscripts. Since he had first written the *Adulescentia* while he was a student, he was surprised to stumble upon a copy of his own work while passing through Bologna (Piepho xx). He ordered the originals to be destroyed, but also decided to revise them because he knew there were too many in circulation to destroy

them all. The emotion present in the originals is toned down in the revised version and it “clearly reflects the religious spirit and many of the traditions of the Carmelite order that Mantuan had subsequently entered” (Piepho xxii).

Altered or not, it is important to understand Mantuan’s eclogues because they went on to inspire future English pastoralists. Eclogue VII is loosely autobiographical in nature and should be studied in order to comprehend how an author can combine his personal life with pastoral conventions in order to produce a successful poem that is both meaningful to the writer and thought provoking for his audience. Eclogue VII presents us with a conversation between two shepherds named Alphus and Galbula. They are discussing the fate of a third shepherd named Pollux who has recently been “touched by some god” and has “forsaken his pipe, coat, herds, and companions” for a life in the “ascetic’s cloisters” (Mantuan 1-5).

Alphus asks what Galbula thinks of the situation, and Galbula replies that gods often favor shepherds because the first shepherd was “never harsh towards his fellows” and “often with a lamb he made his sacrifice and with great offerings solicited the favor of the gods” (Mantuan 16-20). Since he paid such respects to them, tending sheep is “most pleasing to Heaven” and shepherds like Paris, Moses, and Apollo have since been blessed (Mantuan 28-33). God even calls himself a shepherd and allowed fellow shepherds to attend the birth of his only Son (Mantuan 33-42). Therefore, Galbula concludes that it is no wonder Pollux saw a divine spirit for “the gods love cottages,



sheep, and sheepfolds. God is present to the simple of heart, is offended by cunning” (Mantuan 48-51).

Thus far we see Mantuan’s feelings about religion spoken through Galbula. The life of shepherds, which often represents that of poets, is elevated to suggest that it is clearly a lifestyle that would be favored by all gods. Throughout the first fifty-five lines we see that there could be a connection between Mantuan and Pollux, but this connection becomes certain when Alphus goes on to ask Galbula what sort of “apparition” appeared to Pollux (Mantuan 53-55). Galbula begins his story by saying that Pollux’s “stern, harsh father and domineering stepmother” caused him to “attempt his escape” and leave those he knew behind (Mantuan 59-70). That we know about Mantuan’s preexisting hostility with his family adds a degree of reality and emotion to this scene that would not be known otherwise.

After Pollux decided to enter into exile, he found himself sitting under “Hercules’ leafy boughs...wearyed by mourning” (Mantuan 88-89). At this time a figure much like the Virgin Mary appears described as “a virgin crowned with a girl’s coronet, her face, hands, eyes, and manner most like a nymph” (Mantuan 89-91). Like Mantuan’s own personal experience, this apparition steals Pollux away from danger. She says,

This path, when you have crossed that hill there, leads into a shady wood, the cruel hospice of wild beasts, a hideous place of decay and darkness. Whoever, deceived by this way, depends on it is forbidden to return. First his eyes are

covered by a pitch-black band and then, dragged through all the grove, through thorny thickets, he is changed into the likeness of a monster (Mantuan 105-110).

This may be an allusion to the kind of life Mantuan would have lead had he not experienced a spiritual intervention. He knows that in his youth he was not exactly a moral person, and that he owes the change in his ways to the Carmelite order.

Pollux's vision references this when she speaks of "Mount Carmel" that "raises high in the air its head wreathed in green leaves" (Mantuan 123-124). It is well known that early members of the Carmelite order had "forsaken the city to live in caves on the slopes" of this mountain, and Pollux's vision further alludes to this when she says he must retreat into the "wilderness" or "desert" that is a monastery (Piepho xxx). Pastoral poetry has always idolized the countryside over the city, but Mantuan is the first to display a "fierce antagonism" towards cities and generally condemns them on "moral and spiritual grounds" (Piepho xxxi).

Despite his aversion to them, however, Mantuan's *Adulescentia* was tremendously popular in cities all throughout western Europe (Piepho xxv). It perhaps made the biggest impact on England where "quite early the collection established itself as a textbook" (Piepho xxvii). This may have been due to the "correctness of Mantuan's Latin," but it most likely had to do with the English Reformation (Piepho xxvii, Piepho 623). Several of the eclogues criticize the Papal court and this greatly appealed to Martin Luther and "Protestant polemicists" who pushed to popularize it in schools (Piepho 623). The fact that Mantuan was so universally taught in England would have a huge influence

on future generation of English writers (Ward). Next to Petrarch, Mantuan was known as the “most famous Italian writer of new Latin eclogues” and was praised even more highly than Virgil and Theocritus (Ward). It is therefore no wonder that Alexander Barclay gathered inspiration from Mantuan and became the first British pastoral poet.

Although we know that Alexander Barclay was born in 1476, his birthplace is less certain. Some say that he was born a Scotsman, while others swear he was born in England (Alexander Barclay Biography). His education is also under debate and it is uncertain whether he studied at Oxford or Cambridge. We do know, however, that he graduated because he uses the title “Syr” in one of his translations and his will says he was a doctor of divinity (Alexander Barclay Biography). During his youth he spent some time abroad before becoming the chaplain of the college of St. Mary Ottery in Devonshire (Alexander Barclay Biography). Once the man who had appointed him chaplain died, he went on to become a monk in the Benedictine monastery of Ely (Alexander Barclay Biography). Due to his religious background, we can see why he was so inspired by Mantuan. In fact, it was during his time at the monastery that he composed his collection of pastoral poems called the *Eclogues* (Alexander Barclay Biography).

Alexander Barclay’s *Eclogues* are most commonly known for introducing the “pastoral convention to English language,” but what makes them even more intriguing to scholars is the structure in which the collection is written (Cawood xx). It is difficult to categorize Barclay’s work as either original text or a translated piece because the form falls somewhere in between. The first three poems in his collection are based on *Miseriae*

*Curialium* by Aeneas Sylvius and the final two poems are an interpretation of Mantuan's eclogues (Shultz 550). What makes this idea rather complicated is that Barclay is not trying to translate these Latin poems verbatim into the vernacular, instead he "selected whatever seemed desirable to him, placed it in an English setting, and adapted it for English readers" (Shultz 549).

Evidently, Barclay has used his artistic interpretation on the texts because his *Eclogues* have three times the number of words when compared to the Latin originals (Shultz 551). He also manages to turn Sylvius' prose into an "English poem of eclogue structure," by taking his original work and dividing it into three separate poems (Shultz 550-551). As John Richie Shultz explains in his article, "The Method of Barclay's Eclogues," Alexander Barclay was "no servile translator with a sense of obligation to make his finished work as nearly as possible like that of his author" (Shultz 552). Instead, he translates in whichever manner suits him, "interpolates long passages at will, and by word or phrase modifies the work of the older writer until it has become a new, English poem" (Shultz 552).

Since Barclay is writing for an audience that is unfamiliar with the pastoral tradition, many of the classical allusions which were originally in the Latin poems have been removed, and those that remain are carefully explained (Schultz 554). Barclay even elaborates on any "unfamiliar aspects" of the rural lifestyle he is describing in order to make his poems more approachable (Shultz 554). He does this through the use of prologues, which is an addition to his collection not seen in previous examples of the

pastoral (Shultz 555). He starts with a general prologue to the *Eclogues*, then writes a prologue for the first three poems adapted from Sylvius, and includes two more for his fourth and fifth.

These prologues work to “give the setting, to characterize the speakers, and to indicate the subject matter” that is to follow (Shultz 555). In the case of the first three eclogues which were adapted from a single work of prose, this opening passage is necessary in order to “account for the presence of the shepherds together and their choice of this particular subject of conversation” (Shultz 555). Even though pastoral poetry has evolved to include political and contemporary commentary, the convention of two shepherds holding a conversation must be maintained. Since Silvius’ *Miseriae Curialium* is about courtly life, it is all the more essential to have an adequate prologue and introduction to the first three eclogues.

In the general prologue to the collection, Barclay tells us that the first three poems “conteyne the miseryes of Courtiers and Courtes of all princes in generall” (Barclay 1). He goes on to praise any poet who is inspired by the Muses to write “heroicall” poems, Comedies, Tragedies, Satires, or “sweet songes” because they are more “fruitfull” than men who cannot write (Barclay 1-14). This line already contains an echo of Mantuan, who is mentioned by name later on in the prologue. First, however, Barclay gives a brief history of the pastoral since most of his audience would not have known the genre’s background. He begins by speaking of “Theocrite” who was “First in Siracuse attempted

to write/ Certayne Egloges or speeches pastorall,/ Inducing Shepheres, men homely and rurall” (Barclay 19-22).

He follows this by acknowledging another founder of the tradition when he says, “Moste noble Uirgill (Virgil) after him longe while/ Wrote also Egloges after like maner stile./ His wittes prouing in matters pastorall,/ Or he durst venture to stile heroicall” (Barclay 27-30). After this he touches on other greats such as Mantuan and Petrarch, before saying a few lines about how his own work came to be published. Here too we see a strong resemblance to Mantuan because Barclay admits that he started this collection early in his youth but did not return to it for several years.

Now that the first prologue has served as both an introduction to the genre and an introduction to the author himself, “The Argument of the First Eclogues” follows, which is essentially an individualized prologue that works to give the reader “knowledge of the speakers, and the subject on which they are to talk” (Shultz 556). In this particular argument, a “well aged” shepherd named Cornix is introduced (Barclay 142). Clearly he lives a humble lifestyle since he wears clothing made of “threadbare kendall grene,” has boots that barely reach his knees, and he carries a wooden spoon, or “spone of tree” in his hat (Barclay 148-150). We are then introduced to a second shepherd named Coridon who is known as “the stoutest of them all” and who no longer wishes to endure such “wretched labour” and poverty (Barclay 165-169). Instead he hopes to move to the City or to the Court “till time that fortune would better life prouide” (Barclay 170-171). This sets the preface for the next three eclogues, which is a somewhat contemporary discussion of courtiers and courtly life.

The prologues to eclogues four and five are somewhat similar in nature. They are both about two unlikely shepherds coming together to share their opposing viewpoints. In “The Argument” for the fourth eclogue, we meet Codrus who is “a shepheard lusty, gay and stoute” who has all the food, gold, and worldly possessions he could want, but lacks “wisdom” and understanding (Barclay 1-22). Minalcas, on the other hand, always goes hungry and hardly has any sheep to call his own, but he is cunning (Barclay 24-30). This is not too far off from the fifth eclogue which introduces us to Amintas who has a “londes stomake and a beggers pouche” (Barclay 21). He insists on living in the city and falling into debt, which is the opposite of Faustus who is “content with his estate” even though he is just a country shepherd (Barclay 34). Both of these sets of men engage in earnest conversations about the most rewarding way to live life. This seems to reflect a kind of innate curiosity present in man, which leads one to always question what life is like for others.

In many respects Alexander Barclay was the Theocritus of the English pastoral tradition. By translating Latin classics into the vernacular, he was able to introduce the English-speaking world to a style which had been nonexistent. If Barclay was considered the English Theocritus and was responsible for setting the foundation, than Edmund Spenser was the modern Virgil. He wrote in almost all forms of poetry and was said to be the “the prince of poets” during his lifetime (Edmund Spenser Biography). He wrote a vastly influential collection of twelve eclogues in 1579 known as *The Shepheardes Calender*. Unlike previous collections, these poems introduce a shepherd by the name of

Colin Clout and the various eclogues follow him throughout the twelve months of the year (“Shepherd’s Calendar”).

It is no coincidence that Spenser chose to contribute to a tradition that had attracted so many classical poets before him. While growing up in London, Spenser was among the first students at The Merchant Taylor School, where he received a humanist education from a writer named Richard Mulcaster (Edmund Spenser Biography). At the new school, the boys studied Latin, Greek, and even some Hebrew while reading the works of Cato, Caesar, Horace, Lucan, and Homer, among others (Edmund Spenser Biography). Spenser admits that it was in this environment that he was first encouraged to write verse by his professor and classmates. Although this period ignited his interest in poetry, his later years at Pembroke Hall in Cambridge proved to be the most productive (Edmund Spenser Biography).

While at Pembroke, Spenser met some of the most influential men of his youth, many of whom proved to be important contacts later on in his career. Perhaps his greatest influence was a man named Gabriel Harvey who became his closest friend and also worked to introduce Spenser to other connections and potential patrons (Edmund Spenser Biography). During this time, the young poet also came in contact with Lancelot Andrewes who went on to become the Bishop of London, and a man named John Young, who became the Bishop of Rochester. This is important because it was Young who gave Spenser his first job as his personal secretary in Kent. This move to Kent was a noteworthy one because during this time Spenser wrote *The Shepherd’s Calendar* (Edmund Spenser Biography). The various poems throughout the *Calendar* seem to



exhibit a landscape similar to that of Kent and many of the characters are based on Spenser's own friends and acquaintances, such as Harvey and Young. Some critics even believe that Spenser himself is represented throughout the poems by the shepherd Colin Clout (Edmund Spenser Biography).

Edmund Spenser certainly utilized the character of Colin Clout to make his opinions known to the public, but perhaps more importantly, he divides the twelve different months of *The Shepheardes Calender* into three distinct types of poems. By manipulating the structure of the collection he is able to influence the overall meaning and the effect it had on his readers. Spenser deliberately wrote *The Calender* in a form of Chaucerian English, which would have appeared old fashioned even to his contemporary readers. To some, this style of writing may seem as “deliberately and needlessly anachronistic” as composing a shepherd's calendar in the first place (Johnson 181). In reality, by writing this way, Spenser is simultaneously paying homage to one of his favorite authors, and creating a sharper contrast by using antiquated language to discuss current social issues throughout the poems.

The twelve different months in *The Shepheardes Calender* generally represent the stages of life through the progression of the seasons, but they are also divided into three subcategories known as the Moral Eclogues, the Plaintive Eclogues, and the Recreative Eclogues (Hoffman 10). The poems titled “Februarie,” “Maye,” “Julye,” “September,” and “October” are known as the five moral eclogues which deal with “matters related to the well-being of the body politic” (Johnson 53). Throughout these poems, Spenser is able to explore “the conflicts inherent in the institutions and relationships of his own day,

drawing on a variety of poetry and poetic devices that his readers would have linked to figures such as Chaucer, Mantuan, and Skelton, as well as to the ethical concerns of moral philosophy” (Johnson 53). These poems deal with topics such as the difficulties men must face when trying to coexist, the conflicts and inequities of priests, and lastly the duties that a poet has to society (Johnson 53).

Since Spenser was greatly influenced by Chaucer, these eclogues resemble *The Canterbury Tales* in the way that stories within stories are used to present issues of morality among characters (Johnson 98). This is vastly different from the way the four Plaintive eclogues are told because they are more in line with soliloquies than tales. The poems “Januarye,” “June,” “Nouember,” and “December” tend to move away from ethical concerns and focus on “more metaphysical subjects like alienation, destructive love, friendship, the nature and value of poetry, and, most importantly, the force time exerts on all human efforts” (Johnson 97).

These eclogues all revolve around Colin Clout because Spenser uses him as “a figure for his own poetic ambitions” (Johnson 97). The Plaintive poems are written in a considerably more sophisticated style than the moral eclogues as they discuss an elegy for dead Dido in November and a monologue throughout December and January in which Colin “laments the waste of his own ill-spent year, for he faces winter with regret as he looks back upon the barren harvest of his life” (Johnson 97). A large part of why he regrets the year he has spent is the fact that he is a shepherd boy who “complaineth him of his unfortunate love, being but newly (as semeth) enamoured of a cuntrye lasse named Rosalinde” (Spenser 14). This unrequited love which torments Colin is rather different

than the love Spenser refers to in the three remaining eclogues (“March,” “August,” and “Aprill”).

These three poems, known as the Recreative eclogues, differ from the plaintive in that they treat love as an abstract idea instead of as a tangible emotion like in Colin’s unfortunate love affair with Rosalinde. This subcategory of poems moves “from the contemplative to the pleasurable life” (Johnson 141). These three poems do not deal with current affairs or the metaphysical; instead, they go from “the concerns and techniques of the Virgilian pastoral and Latin poetry to those of even more ancient pastoral sources, the Greek idyll and the biblical epithalamium” (Johnson 141). During these poems, Spenser writes about traditional singing contests between shepherds and their encounters with a rural Venus in the way he imagines Theocritus himself would have written them.

Throughout *The Calender* Edmund Spenser takes Chaucer’s English, Virgil’s talent for social commentary, and Theocritus’ whimsical treatment of classical gods and combines them all into one collection of poetry. According to Nancy Jo Hoffman, author of *Spenser’s Pastorals: The Shepherdes Calender and “Colin Clout,”* part of what makes him unique is the fact that “we recognize that he did not merely assert to tradition, but, rather, performed a dialogue with it, enriching, molding and creating a new pastoral” (10). This new pastoral is a realm where the concept is free from any attachment to a real geographical location, as it appeared in Theocritus’ early poems. Instead, it is an “integral, inclusive landscape,” one where to be a shepherd is not simply a physical description, but an “abstract state of being” (Hoffman 11, 5).

This new concept had a tremendous impact on the entire genre and revolutionized the way future writers interacted with the mode. By expanding the concept of “the rural shepherd” into a state of being, the pastoral gained both versatility and popularity.

Following Spenser it “evolved into new, hybrid forms,” including the pastoral elegy (Murfin 370). A pastoral elegy is “a serious formal poem in which a poet grieves the loss of a dead friend (often another poet)” and the author “figures himself and the individual mourned as shepherds who have lived their lives in a simple, rural setting” (Murfin 371).

One such poet often associated with the pastoral elegy is John Milton, who wrote *Lycidas* in 1638. He is most commonly known for his epic poem *Paradise Lost*, but “like Edmund Spenser, Milton saw mastery of the pastoral mode as the first step in a great poetic career” (Lewalski 1805). He received classical training in various languages from an early age, and began his first attempts at poetry while attending Cambridge. It seems Milton was a devoted student, but also a highly emotional one since he was known for getting into an argument with his tutor and being temporarily suspended from school (Jokinen). Perhaps it was this intensity of feeling that led Milton to compose *Lycidas* following the untimely death of his friend Edward King (Lewalski 1805).

Pastoral elegies are known for being “highly conventional” and generally “opening with an invocation that is followed by a statement of the poet’s great grief and a subsequent description of a procession of mourners” (Murfin 371). One should keep in mind that throughout the poem Milton is drawing from his predecessors and from the classical traditions that have been present in literature throughout history, but applying them to a contemporary situation and personal moment of grief. After his invocation of

the muses, Milton keeps in line with convention and describes how nature itself mourns the loss of Lycidas. He says:

But O the heavy change, now thou art gone,  
Now thou art gone, and never must return!  
Thee, shepherd, thee the woods and desert caves,  
With wild thyme and the gadding wine o'ergrown,  
And all their echoes mourn (37-41).

This adds tremendous importance to Lycidas' death because apart from his fellow shepherds' grief, nature itself feels a loss. Following this statement, Milton goes on to blame supernatural forces such as nymphs for allowing someone so loved as Lycidas to die (Milton 50-63).

After scolding Lycidas' guardians Milton then lists the various gods who attend his funeral and "raises questions about the justice of fate, or else of Providence, and adverts to the corrupt conditions of his own times" (Abrams 93). These questions may be partly raised by the fact that Milton wrote this when he was only twenty-nine, and King's death forced him to examine his life and "recognize the uncertainty of all human endeavors" (Lewalski 1805). He is moved because King's death "posed the problem of morality in its most agonizing form: the death of the young, the unfulfilled, the good seems to deny all meaning to life, to demonstrate the uselessness of exceptional talent, lofty ambition, and noble ideals of service to God" (Lewalski 1805).

In part, this poem serves as a critique of the corrupt members of the clergy who do not look after their congregations the way God intended. Milton refers to them when he says,

Blind mouths! That scarce themselves know how to hold

A sheep-hook, or have learned aught else the least

That to the faithful herdman's art belongs!

What recks it them? What need they? They are sped;

And when they list, their lean and flashy songs

Grate on their scrannel pipes of wretched straw (119-124).

His obvious resentment towards holy men trying to ignore their responsibilities is ultimately subdued, however, and the poem ends with another typical convention where the “elegist comes to realize that death in this world is the entry to a higher life” (Abrams 93).

Milton follows this convention by moving past the initial feelings of anger and sadness that he exhibited towards Lycidas' death in the beginning of the poem and instead reaches out for closure by saying:

Now, Lycidas, the shepherds weep no more;

Henceforth thou art the Genius of the shore,

In thy large recompense, and shalt be good

To all that wander in this perilous flood (182-185).

Whether or not this truly calmed Milton's fears about dying young and never being able to live the life he had envisioned, is uncertain, but the idea that Lycidas is somehow keeping watch over his fellow travelers is a comforting one.

We have seen this internal fear of death and failure to fulfill one's poetic potential before. In Spenser's *Plaintive Eclogues*, the idea that time will inevitably weigh on human endeavors is an important theme communicated by Colin Clout. More than just mourning the death of a beloved friend, pastoral elegies such as Milton's seem to also be about expressing a fear that might otherwise have remained hidden. Exceptionally talented men such as Spenser and Milton who feel they have so much left to give to the world are shaken by death and forced to deal with their emotions by returning to what they know, and producing a work of art that is based in tradition and a set group of conventions. In *Lycidas*, by communicating his anxiety and creating something beautiful, Milton is able to regain control of this situation and, for a short time at least, conquer the death that has taken his friend.

Although *Lycidas* boldly marked a new direction for the pastoral, Milton's elegy was certainly not the only one to reach critical acclaim. More than one hundred years later, a poet by the name of Thomas Gray would write his version of a pastoral elegy named, *Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard*. The elegies that were published before Grey's traditionally followed the form of *Lycidas* by beginning with an invocation, discussing shepherds and gods seen at the funeral, and most importantly, mourning a particular friend who had passed away. Although Thomas Grey was partly inspired to

write this poem by the death of his friend Richard West in 1742, he was certainly no stranger to death and the inevitable sadness which accompanied it.

Born in London in the year 1716 to parents Philip and Dorothy Gray, Thomas Gray was the only one out of his twelve siblings to survive past infancy. This, coupled with the fact that he and his mother were forced to leave his abusive father, made for an extremely unhappy childhood (“Thomas Gray”). It seems his only happiness came from attending Eton College where his uncle was one of the professors. While away at Eton, Gray became close friends with Thomas Ashton, Horace Walpole, and Richard West, his friend who later passed away (Lipking 2862). Gray then spent four years at Cambridge, where he left without finishing his degree in favor of taking a grand tour of France and Italy with Horace Walpole (Lipking 2863).

This tour, along with the shock of West’s death motivated a change in Gray and he began writing poetry seriously. He also created a “self-imposed programme of literary study” which led him to become one of the “most learned men of his time” (“Thomas Gray”). The experience he gained through his travels and studies in Cambridge no doubt familiarized him with the Latin tradition and conventions commonly associated with the pastoral and pastoral elegies. When he began writing, Gray believed that “the language of the age is never the language of poetry” and therefore chose to use “archaic words and a word order borrowed from Latin” in much of his poetry (Lipking 2863). *Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard* is somewhat different from his other work, however, because it manages to balance “Latinated phrases with living English speech, and the learning of a scholar with a common humanity that everyone can share” (Lipking 2863).



Common humanity is one of the major themes in *Elegy*. The poem begins by describing a small country town during sunset. The narrator is making his way through the town on his way to the local cemetery where he will be forced to look upon the face of death and take a moment to think of those who have died, both rich and poor. This is one of the major differences between Gray's elegy and Milton's *Lycidas*. Instead of mourning the loss of a single friend, Gray chooses to acknowledge all the men who have been forgotten. He arrives at the churchyard and says:

Beneath those rugged elms, that yew tree's shade,  
Where heaves the turf in many a moldering heap,  
Each in his narrow cell forever laid,  
The rude forefathers of the hamlet sleep (13-16).

Although these men may not have known fame throughout their lifetimes, the narrator understands that without a past there would be no present.

The narrator then takes a moment to describe the life that these men will no longer be able to enjoy. They will not know the pleasure of a "blazing hearth" or a housewife and children who express their love (22-25). Even the humble joy of harvesting and working their land has been taken away from them by death. The narrator makes it very clear that just because many of the men buried in the churchyard were farmers, this does not give wealthy people or those who fancy themselves more ambitions the right to look down upon them. He says:

Let not Ambition mock their useful toil,  
Their homely joys, and destiny obscure;

Nor Grandeur hear with a disdainful smile

The short and simple annals of the poor (29- 32).

He explains that although these men may seem simple, no one truly knows their potential, just as “many a flower is born to blush unseen, and waste its sweetness on the desert air” (55-56). It is impossible to know whether any of the men who have been forgotten in the cemetery could have been “some mute inglorious Milton” or a “Cromwell guiltless of his country’s blood” (59-60). In death there is no difference between the privileged and the humble.

The fact that Thomas Gray chose to acknowledge the deaths of common men instead of someone in particular is only one of the differences between *Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard* and the conventional features of a pastoral elegy. The poem also does not begin with an invocation to the Muses and it does not at any point blame mythical nymphs or guardians for the death of a beloved friend or fellow shepherd. While Gray did choose to eliminate these conventions, he does, however, follow some of the most important ones. Many pastoral elegies begin with all of “nature mourning the shepherd’s death” (Abrams 93). Although *Elegy* does not mourn a single shepherd, the deaths of the townspeople are echoed by the descriptions of nature surrounding the churchyard.

When the narrator first walks through the town, the sun is setting and the “lowing herd wind slowly o’er the lea” as the last of the farmers make their way home leaving “the world to darkness and to me” (1-4). This sets the tone for the rest of the poem because it seems like the world is only fading into darkness in order to mirror the

narrator's thoughts of mortality. The air holds "a solemn stillness" and the only things that can be heard are a beetle making "his droning flight" and "the moping owl" that "does to the moon complain" (6-10). Gray never outright says that nature is mourning for the dead, but he is able to subtly suggest it by describing the various animals in this way.

Throughout the poem he also follows the conventions of raising "questions about the justice of fate" and ultimately coming to the conclusion that "death in this world is the entry into a higher life" (Abrams 93). There is an epitaph present near the end that reads:

Here rests his head upon the lap of Earth  
 A youth to Fortune and to Fame unknown.  
 Fair Science frowned not on his humble birth,  
 And Melancholy marked him for her own (117-120).

After explaining that the man who is buried was neither lucky nor unlucky, the epitaph concludes by saying that one should not look into the "merits" or "frailties" of his life because he is with God now (125-128).

Overall, *Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard* is an excellent example of how the pastoral elegy evolved from the 1600s to the more Romantic era of Thomas Gray. While it still preserves some of the features of the traditional elegy, it applies them to a wider, more realistic view of humanity. Even Samuel Johnson, who was not typically a fan of Gray's poetry, knew that *Elegy* would be successful because it "abounds with images that find a mirror in every mind, and with sentiments to which every bosom returns an echo" (Lipking 2863). Gray understands the complicated emotions associated with loss, and instead of focusing on an individual, he is able to explore the theme of

death as the ultimate equalizer, and the idea that talented men are also subject to the laws of nature.

Gray's preoccupation with death is reminiscent of the pastoral elegists that came before him such as Spenser and Milton. In many ways, this contemplation of mortality within a pastoral elegy becomes its own convention because it is also present in many poems written in more recent times. Perhaps one of the best examples of this can be seen in some of the poetry written during World War I. Some of the finest war poetry ever published was written by soldiers facing life in the trenches and the horrors of the front line. Although this environment may seem like the opposite of what the pastoral traditionally represented, several of the poems hark back to a simpler time when the soldiers were free to experience the beauty of nature.

Over the years, as the popularity of conventional pastoral elegies and poems has decreased, what we think of as the "pastoral" has evolved into more of an overarching idea. In more modern poems and other literary works, it "represents a withdrawal to a place apart that is close to the elemental rhythms of nature, where the protagonist gains a new perspective on the complexities, frustrations, and conflicts of the modern world" (Abrams 241). These feelings no longer need to be those of a shepherd herding his sheep, but can be those of a child, the working man, or in the case of World War I poetry, a soldier longing to return home (Abrams 241).

Throughout the poem *I Have a Rendezvous with Death* written by Alan Seeger, we see the juxtaposition of the pastoral world with the realities of the war. Seeger was born in 1888 and died at the battle of the Somme in the year 1916, one year before this

poem was ever published (McErlean). Seeger wanted so badly to be a part of the war effort that shortly after graduating from Harvard in 1910, he moved to Paris and joined the French Foreign Legion in order to be at the front line. He wrote *Rendezvous* while he was in the hospital recovering from bronchitis and says he lived during this time as though he were “saying good-bye to life” (McErlean). This unfortunately proved to be true because he was mortally wounded when he resumed fighting (McErlean).

*I Have a Rendezvous with Death* was the “most popular and widely-quoted American poem of the war” and it is easy to see why (McErlean). Throughout the poem Seeger contrasts pastoral images of springtime with those of “disputed barricades” and “flaming” towns (2-21). The first stanza reads:

I have a rendezvous with Death  
 At some disputed barricade,  
 When Spring comes back with rustling shade  
 And apple-blossoms fill the air- (1-4).

The idea that young men are dying as the rest of the world is coming to life is certainly shocking, and the calm manner in which the narrator says this only adds to the eeriness of the tone. Also unsettling is the way Seeger plays off the word “rendezvous” by personifying Death and turning it into a lover who has come to take him away.

He says, “It may be he shall take my hand/ And lead me into his dark land/ And close my eyes and quench my breath—” (7-9). This “dark land” is described as “some scarred slope of battered hill” but then we are immediately reminded that this hill is still in the midst of the “meadow-flowers” that appear during Spring (14). In the final stanza

Seeger further contrasts these two images and strengthens the idea of a rendezvous by saying that God knows it would be better to be “deep/ Pillowed in silk and scented down,/ Where Love throbs out in blissful sleep” (15-17). He describes two lovers waking up side-by-side, but then shatters this image by saying,

But I have a rendezvous with Death  
 At midnight in some flaming town,  
 When Spring trips north again this year,  
 And I to my pledged word am true,  
 I shall not fail this rendezvous (20-24).

This contrast between the wonderful things the narrator wishes he could be doing and the reality of his situation create a powerful juxtaposition between the pastoral world and the modern world of man.

*I Have a Rendezvous with Death* uses an extended metaphor to express a young man’s feelings of helplessness when presented with the inevitability of death. This sense of powerlessness is a theme that has carried on into more contemporary elegies. As the elegy has evolved over time, it has started to emphasize broader feelings of “loss and metaphysical sadness” in addition to the author’s personal situation (Poetic Form). We can see this in Andrew Hudgins’ 1991 poem, *Elegy for My Father, Who Is Not Dead*. At first the title seems like a contradiction, but the poem succeeds in exposing deep-rooted feelings of sadness and an inability to cope with death in modern relationships, even when it has not yet occurred.

Much of the poem's content is influenced by the poet's upbringing. Andrew Hudgins was born in Killeen, Texas on April 22, 1951 to parents Andrew J. and Roberta Hudgins (Hudgins Biography). His father was an Air Force Officer and as a result the family found themselves constantly on the move (Hudgins Biography). This did not prevent Hudgins from developing a strong Southern identity, however, and he is still known for using images and idioms taken from Southern living in many of his poems (Poetry for Students). This military upbringing ultimately affected more than Hudgins' physical location. Apart from being an officer, his father was a West Point graduate and "a man of uncompromising moral uprightness and religious discipline" (Hudgins Biography). It seems that the relationship between Hudgins and his father may not have always been a happy one, and we get a sense of this in *Elegy for My Father, Who Is Not Dead*.

The poem begins, "One day I'll lift the telephone and be told my father's dead" (1). This line immediately sets a somber tone of reflection, and Hudgins goes on to discuss his father's faith. He says that his father is ready for death and that "in the sureness of his faith, he talks about the world beyond this world as though his reservations have been made" (3-6). Hudgins claims that his father wants to die and has an "itch to see fresh worlds. Or older ones" (8-9). These first few lines illustrate Hudgins' religious skepticism, but the ones that follow hint at the damage this has caused in his relationship with his father. He says,

He thinks that when I follow him  
he'll wrap me in his arms and laugh,

the way he did when I arrived  
on earth. I do not think he's right.  
He's ready. I am not (10-14).

We can almost imagine the previous arguments that have erupted between the two, and even in this hypothetical scenario, the resentment continues to form a gap in their relationship, even when one of them has died.

Part of what makes this poem so interesting from the conventional sense is the fact that in traditional pastoral elegies, the narrator typically experiences a reversal of emotions, and grief turns to assurance at the end of the poem as the narrator “comes to realize that death in this world is the entry to a higher life” (Abrams 93). *Elegy for My Father* does the opposite, however, and the idea of a higher existence is discussed at the very beginning, and instead of offering the narrator any sort of comfort, it seems to only heighten his anxiety.

The end of this elegy does not make a reference to heaven or to the wonderful times the narrator has shared with his father, instead he imagines himself on a ship out at sea and says,

I see myself on deck, convinced  
his ship's gone down, while he's convinced  
I'll see him standing on the dock  
and waving, shouting, Welcome back (18-21).

This final line demonstrates the fact that the grief expressed in this poem is rather different from the one expressed in classical elegies. Instead of mourning the loss of a



good friend, *Elegy for My Father, Who Is Not Dead* attempts to capture the narrator's manifold feelings of anger, of resentment, and subsequently of guilt for feeling that resentment.

As this poem illustrates, the idea of the pastoral and the pastoral elegy has certainly come a long way since the days of Theocritus in ancient Greece. Time and again authors have been inspired by this mode, and although it has taken on a much broader meaning in recent decades, it is essential to understand what continues to draw us to it in the first place. In its most basic form, the pastoral will always be about returning to a simpler time. The idea of escaping into a "golden world" or a mythical Arcadia where shepherds are free to live their lives surrounded by Nature is still one that appeals to us today.

This concept does not encompass the complexities of our attraction, however, and it would be a disservice to the genre to stop here. Originally, the pastoral took place in a pristine world, one without serious misfortune or death. Over time, authors like Spenser included some of the darker aspects of life in his eclogues, and Milton, among others, introduced death into Arcadia. Now throughout these elegies, even Nature itself mourns the loss of promising young men who have died before their time. Apart from providing a means to remember those who are gone, classical pastoral elegies serve as a way of coping with the idea of mortality. Since so many of these famous poets feared not living up to their potential and failing to produce work that would be remembered, the act of writing in a highly conventionalized poetic form as a way to deal with the loss of a loved one, provides poets with a feeling of control over death and that which is unpredictable.

This need for escape and control is one which we can all relate to on a subconscious level. The pastoral poems thus far have involved escaping into a more perfect environment in which the daily stresses of modern society have been removed and the narrator is free to live a life unhindered by outside obstacles. By eliminating the factors which often cloud perspective, the narrator attains a sharper image of what is fundamentally important in life. As a result of this new outlook, the author can gain a better understanding of the deep-rooted problems present within himself, and transform into someone who is living the most perfect version of his life and achieving his greatest potential.

This introspective contemplation illustrates that the pastoral is not simply about the past. The very concept of writing in the present implies that we are straddling both the past and the future, and this must be taken into account. The “return” to a golden age, although outwardly traditional, has inspired change throughout the centuries. The pastoral is a mode in which authors may simultaneously gather inspiration from previous writers and become an inspiration to future writers. This form is not simply made up of strict conventions. On a deeper level the pastoral represents the collaborative effort of some of the greatest writers of the last two millennia, and is ultimately a living, breathing, genre.

As something “living,” the pastoral is inevitably influenced by certain truths about humanity. As humans we all share a curiosity for what others have accomplished before us, and alternately we feel that same curiosity about what we will pass on to others. This curiosity is what has inspired authors to merge tradition with innovation and has greatly fueled the evolution of the form. It is this fundamental aspect of pastoral poetry which

will undoubtedly continue to propel the mode forward and inspire writers for generations to come.

Works Cited

- Abrams, M.H., and Geoffrey Galt Harpham. *A Glossary of Literary Terms*. 9th ed. Boston: Wadsworth Cengage Learning, 2009. Print.
- "Alexander Barclay Biography." *Biography Base*. N.p., 2004. Web. 5 Dec 2010. <[http://www.biographybase.com/biography/Barclay\\_Alexander.html](http://www.biographybase.com/biography/Barclay_Alexander.html)>.
- Barclay, Alexander. *Eclogues*. 1515. Print.
- Bergin, Thomas G. *Petrarch*. New York: Twayne Publishers, Inc., 1970. Print.
- Boccaccio, Giovanni. *The Latin Eclogues*. Trans. David R. Slavitt. Baltimore: The John Hopkins Press, 2010. Print.
- Cawood, John. *The Eclogues of Alexander Barclay*. London: Oxford University Press, 1928. Print.
- DeVeau, Frederic J. *The Bucolics of Vergil*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1935. Print.
- "Edmund Spenser Biography." *The University of Cambridge Faculty of English*. N. p., 2011. 6 Feb 2011. <<http://www.english.cam.ac.uk/spenser/biography.htm>>
- "Elegy for My Father, Who Is Not Dead Author Biography." *BookRags and Gale's for Students Series*. Thomson Corporation, n.d. Web. 30 Apr 2011. <<http://www.bookrags.com/studyguide-elegyfather/bio.html?gwoRedirected=1>>.
- "Elegy for My Father, Who Is Not Dead: Author Biography." Poetry for Students. Ed. Marie Rose Napierkowski. Vol. 14. Detroit: Gale, 1998. eNotes.com. January 2006. 4 May 2011. <<http://www.enotes.com/elegy-father/author-biography>>.

Gow, A.S.F. *The Greek Bucolic Poems*. London: Cambridge University Press, 1953.

Print.

Gray, Thomas. "Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard". *The Norton Anthology of English Literature*. 8th ed. C. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 2006.

Print.

Hoffman, Nancy Jo. *Spenser's Pastorals: The Shepheardes Calender and "Colin Clout"*.

Baltimore and London: The John Hopkins University Press, 1977. Print.

Hudgins, Andrew. *Elegy for My Father, Who Is Not Dead*. 1991. Print.

Johnson, Lynn Staley. *The Shepheardes Calender: An Introduction*. University Park and

London: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1990. Print.

Jokinen, Anniina. "Life of John Milton." Luminarium.

21 June 2006. N.p., n.d. Web. 10 Mar 2010.

< <http://www.luminarium.org/sevenlit/milton/miltonbio.htm> >

Lewalski, Barbara, and Katherine Eisaman Maus. *The Norton Anthology of English Literature*. 8th ed. B. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 2006. Print.

Lipking, Lawrence, and James Noggle. "The Restoration and the Eighteenth Century."

*The Norton Anthology of English Literature*. 8th ed. C. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 2006. Print.

Mann, Nicholas. *Petrarch*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984. Print.

Mantuanus, Baptista. *Adulescentia*. 1498. Print.

- McErlean, Rich. "Alan Seeger: Brief Biography." *American Volunteers in the French Foreign Legion, 1914-1917*. Poetry of the First World War, n.d. Web. 12 Apr 2011. <<http://www.scuttlebuttsmallchow.com/alanse2.html>>.
- Milton, John. "Lycidas". *The Norton Anthology of English Literature*. 8th ed. B. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 2006. Print.
- Murfin, Ross, and Ray Supryia. *The Bedford Glossary of Critical and Literary Terms*. 3rd ed. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2009. Print.
- Ovid, *Metamorphosis*. Trans. David Raeburn. London: Penguin Books, 2004. Print.
- Payne, Mark. *Theocritus and the Invention of Fiction*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007. Print.
- Piepho, Lee. *Adulescentia: The Eclogues of Mantuan*. New York and London: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1989. Print.
- "Poetic Form: Elegy." *Poets.org*. The Academy of American Poets, n.d. Web. 29 Apr 2011. <<http://www.poets.org/viewmedia.php/prmMID/5778>>.
- Putnam, Michael C. J. *Virgil's Pastoral Art: Studies in the Eclogues*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1970. Print.
- Seeger, Alan. "I Have a Rendezvous with Death." *The Penguin Book of First World War Poetry*. Ed. George Walter. London: Penguin, 2006. 105. Print.
- Shultz, John Richie. "The Method of Barclay's Eclogues." *Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 32.4 (1933): 549-571. Web. 15 Feb 2010. <<http://www.jstor.org/pss/27703831>>.

Smarr, Janet Laverie. *Giovanni Boccaccio: Eclogues*. New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1987. Print.

Spenser, Edmund. *The Shepherds Calender*. 1579. Print.

Theocritus. *Idylls*. Tran. J. M. Edmonds. N.p., n.d. Web. 20 Oct 2010.

<<http://www.theoi.com/Text/TheocritusIdylls2.html#7>>

Virgil, *The Eclogues of Virgil*. Trans. C. Day Lewis. Oxford: The Alden Press, 1963. Print.

Ward & Trent, et al. "Barclay and Skelton." *Cambridge History of English and American Literature: An Encyclopedia in Eighteen Volumes* 3. New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1907–21; New York: Bartleby.com, 2000 n. pag. Web. 30 Apr 2011.

<<http://www.bartleby.com/213/0405.html> >.

Wiesmann, Marc. "Classical Arcadia." *Skidmore College 1998 Orientation Study Guide*. N.p., n.d. Web. 20 Oct 2010.

<<http://www.skidmore.edu/academics/lsi/arcadia/classic.html>>.

Wikipedia contributors. "Boccaccio." *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*. Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia, 28 Nov. 2010. Web. 7 Dec. 2010.

Wikipedia contributors. "Pan (god)." *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*. Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia, 1 Nov. 2010. Web. 30 Nov. 2010.

Wikipedia contributors. "Pastoral." *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*. Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia, 25 Nov. 2010. Web. 9 Dec. 2010.

Wikipedia contributors. "Petrarch." *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*. Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia, 22 Nov. 2010. Web. 9 Dec. 2010.

Wikipedia contributors. "The Shepheardes Calender." *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*.

Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia, 13 Jan. 2010. Web. 5 Feb. 2010.

Wikipedia contributors. "Thomas Gray." *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*. Wikipedia,

The Free Encyclopedia, 21 Feb. 2010. Web. 10 Apr. 2011.