The Intertwining of Community and Poetry in Virgil's Eclogues
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My research this summer took me down a different path than anticipated. While I was originally drawn to analyzing the rural and urban landscapes in Theocritus's Idylls and Virgil's Eclogues, I ended up focusing on the intersection of community and poetry in the Eclogues. Throughout my research I began to notice that both a strong pastoral society and poetic pursuits were of the utmost importance to the poet-shepherds inhabiting the world of the Eclogues. Therefore, I began more closely to explore the intricate connection between these two central motifs by the culmination of my research project.

The journey to this end result involved an extensive amount of reading and translating so as to gain a proficient amount of familiarity with the two texts I chose to study. Since the Idylls of Theocritus serve as the main source of inspiration for the Eclogues, I naturally decided to research the two poems in tandem. Every week I translated two eclogues (there are ten in all) and the poem (or poems) from the Idylls, associated with each eclogue. Additionally, I read an assortment of books and articles found mainly through the Bowdoin Library, the Interlibrary Loan system, JSTOR, Project Muse and Google Scholar, pertaining to the poems analyzed that week, or to various themes and motifs apparent in the two works as a whole. I also met with my faculty mentor, Professor Barbara Boyd, on a regular basis to discuss the readings and translation completed that week. In this way, I created a stable foundation for addressing and understanding the major issues evident in the Idylls, and especially, the Eclogues. Moreover, I was careful to produce a compiled bibliography of all the readings that I completed during the summer months; this list will be particularly useful as I continue my research into the school year. Though I have attached my full bibliography of secondary literature to this document, I wanted to highlight some of the more significant articles and books that I read, including Pastoral Inscriptions: Reading and Writing Virgil’s “Eclogues” by Brian Breed, “The Characters of the Eclogues” by E. Adelaide Hahn, The Pipes of Pan: Intertextuality and Literary Filiation in the Pastoral Tradition from Theocritus to Milton by Thomas Hubbard, Poetry and Myth in Ancient Pastoral: Essays on Theocritus and Virgil by Charles Segal and “The Discovery of a Spiritual Landscape” by Bruno Snell.

After establishing the appropriate groundwork, I then started to concentrate on certain themes of the greatest interest to me. One topic, which fit into my summer research, was the link between poetry and community as accentuated by Virgil. I proceeded to write a 17-page research paper investigating this subject. In the paper, I showed that within the Eclogues, Virgil manages to fashion a tightly knit, interwoven rural community through his emphasis on homeland (patria) and his repeated use of character names. Having fostered the impression of a strong pastoral society, Virgil draws a connection between community and poeticism, emphasized in Eclogue 9 and 1, in which loss of community equates with loss of song, and in Eclogues 3, 5 and 7, which depict the quintessential pastoral pursuit of the amoebean singing contest. I demonstrated that in the realm of the Eclogues, shepherds share their songs with the expectation—even desire—that other shepherds become inspired by, adapt and elaborate on the original poem. This attitude of the shepherds towards poetry is suggestive of the fact that Virgil himself, who heavily alludes to the work of a variety of Hellenistic poets, also believed that poetry should be utilized and enjoyed by others. Therefore, in my cumulative paper, I attempted to reveal that Virgil establishes
poetry as a shared entity and a source of inspiration to fellow poets, in the process perhaps highlighting his own use of other writers’ poems.

I believe that my research this summer, and especially, the composition of a longer paper have set me up well for pursuing an independent study and potential honors project, also focusing on the *Eclogues* of Virgil. However, I hope to incorporate the *Idylls* of Theocritus more thoroughly into my coming work.

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