

(Un)Seeing Augustus: *Libertas*, Divinisation, and the *Iuvenis* of Virgil's First *Eclogue**

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ABSTRACT

This article argues that Virgil's First Eclogue naturalises the power discourse of the future Augustan Principate. Throughout the poem, Virgil not only presents the iuvenis as a libertas-restoring benefactor who is treated as a god by his beneficiaries, but even imagines his elevated status as crucial to maintaining social cohesion and civic stability, and idealises the beneficiaries' dependence on his efficacious authority. The poem thus produces the grammar of the discourse of authoritarianism, subtly articulating what will eventually become the central tenets of Augustan ideology. I suggest that it is precisely this process of naturalisation which has led readers since antiquity to identify the iuvenis of Virgil's First Eclogue as the future Augustus. However, in this paper I am interested in transcending this question of individual identification to focus instead on how Virgil's poetic anonymisation is no simple pastoral obfuscation, but rather does the hard graft of 'soft launching' a new political system.

Keywords: Virgil; *Eclogues*; Octavian/Augustus; anonymity; *libertas*; ideology

When Virgil published his First *Eclogue* in 35 B.C.,¹ in which a young man (*iuvenis*, 1.42) is deified for having restored freedom (*libertas*, 1.27) to Tityrus and released him from enslavement (*servitio*, 1.40), the poet could not have foreseen that some fifty years later Augustus, on the verge of divinisation, would open his *Res gestae* with the sentence:

annos undeviginti natus exercitum privato consilio et privata impensa comparavi, per quem rem publicam a dominatione factionis oppressam in libertatem vindicavi.

Aged nineteen years old I mustered an army at my personal decision and at my personal expense, and with it I liberated the state, which had been oppressed by a despotic faction.

It is striking that in both texts the liberation from slavery is tied up to the intervention of a single individual as liberator. While there is no compelling reason to think that Augustus

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¹ The composition of individual poems of the *Eclogues* may have started as early as 42 B.C.; see Coleman 1977: 14–21, though his attempt to ascertain the date of each poem proves inconclusive. The *Eclogues* probably underwent continuous modification until the moment of their publication as a single volume in 35 B.C.; see Clausen 1994: 125–6 on the revision process, and Bowersock 1971 on the date of publication. Cucchiarelli 2012: 15–16 proposes an earlier publication date of c. 37 B.C.

had in mind Virgil's poem when he looked back on the achievements of his life,² the correspondence between the opening of the *Res gestae* and the First *Eclogue* underlines how the official history of a regime can cast a retroactive pall over earlier literary representations³ and, conversely, how poetry can express what would eventually become the central tenet of a master narrative.

Taking this bi-directional interaction as its cue, this paper argues that the frequent identification of Virgil's *iuuenis* with the future Augustus has much to do with the poem's naturalisation of the power discourse of the Augustan Principate. This naturalising process is most discernible in the poem's conceptualisation of *libertas* and its idealisation of the figure of the benefactor. Virgil's poem not only frames *libertas* as a kind of peaceful ease mediated exclusively by the intervention of a powerful *iuuenis*, but even implies that this benefactor's elevated status and the community's dedication to him are crucial to maintaining civic harmony. In this way, the pastoral drama centred around Tityrus' worship of his benefactor creates a discourse whereby *libertas* and dependence on extraordinary power — or to put it another way, freedom and subjection — are notionally compatible,⁴ thereby foreshadowing the defining ideological character of the Augustan Principate.

My argument falls into three parts. In Part I, I will show that the First *Eclogue* from its outset attempts to associate the benefactor's power with pastoral stability, and that, as the poem proceeds, *otium* is conflated with *libertas*. In Part II, I shall consider these aspects of Virgil's poem in connection with the discourse of *libertas* and the politics of divine self-representation in the triumviral period. It will be argued that the poem's conflation of *otium* and *libertas* serves to disembody *libertas* from its contemporary political context, reframing it evasively as a condition which only an extraordinary benefactor can guarantee, thus sanctifying the concentration of power in one man's hands. This reading will be expanded upon in Part III, where I tackle head-on the question of who the *iuuenis* is. Here I will suggest that Virgil does not so much invite the reader to identify the deified *iuuenis* with Octavian (or anyone else, for that matter)⁵ as create an image of a political system with a single powerful 'liberator' at its centre — an image that comes remarkably close to the Augustan Principate. It is this prefigurative instantiation of the Augustan regime that has played a large part in persuading readers to see the *iuuenis* as Octavian. In closing (Part IV), I will contextualise my reading of the poem more broadly within the *Eclogues*.

In focusing on the issue of *libertas* and its connection to Octavian's image in the late 40s and early 30s B.C., my work builds on a large body of scholarship that has argued compellingly that the poetry of the triumviral period was particularly alive to the political struggle for *libertas*. The studies of Du Quesnay, Kennedy and Henderson,

² The opening passage of the *R.G.* does, however, appear to echo the *Philippics*, where Cicero frequently turned to the theme of the young Caesar's liberation of Rome (cf. Cic., *Phil.* 3.3, 3.5, 4.2, 4.4); see Cooley 2009: 109 for further discussion. The notion of political liberation is a prevalent motif in the political writing of the late Republic: see also Lepidus' speech in Sall., *Hist.* 1.

³ See esp. Galinsky 2006: 6–8, who argues that the Virgilian *libertas* in *Ecl.* 1 correlates precisely with the later Augustan concept of *libertas* as *securitas*.

⁴ A later expression of this compatibility can be found in Tac., *Agr.* 3.1: 'Nerva Caesar res olim dissociabilis miscuerit, principatum ac libertatem' ('Nerva Caesar has united things once incompatible, the Principate and liberty').

⁵ Numerous alternative candidates have been proposed. Liegle 1943: 219–26 argues that the *iuuenis* is L. Antonius, brother of the triumvir and leader of one side in the Perusine War. Grisart 1966 thinks that the *iuuenis* is Virgil himself. Berkowitz 1972: 26 n. 26 makes the case for Varus, or Gallus, or Pollio, with the latter gaining further support from Cairns 2008: 70–4. Wright 1983 suggests that the *iuuenis* resembles Apollo. Critics interested in the Epicurean tenets of *Eclogue* 1 argue that the poem's image of the deified benefactor brings to mind Epicurus (see esp. Bing 2016; but also Rundin 2003; Hardie 2006: 290–1; Papanghelis 2006: 376–7; Karakasis 2011: 176–7; Davis 2012: 79–98; Scholl 2014: 493–4). Relatedly, Kronenberg 2016 draws attention to the presence of Lucretius in Virgil's depiction of the *iuuenis* and Daphnis in *Eclogues* 1 and 5, respectively.

among others, have shown that in *Satires* Book 1 (a near-contemporary of the *Eclogues*), Horace repeatedly sought to suggest that Maecenas and Octavian — and not the defeated enemy of Octavian — were the true protectors of *libertas*.⁶ In the case of Virgil's First *Eclogue*, critics have long thought that Tityrus' attainment of *libertas* indirectly casts a positive light on Octavian. For example, Clausen has argued that the poem 'deliberately confuses the private with the public sense of *libertas*' in order to produce a coded praise of Octavian.⁷ In a similar vein, but more teleological in his presentation, Galinsky has suggested that the Virgilian notion of *libertas* as 'freedom from interference and oppression' was precisely the concept of liberty that was later operative under Augustus.⁸

The present study takes the position that something more — and far more insidious — is at play in the First *Eclogue*. In an illuminating study of the poetic language of patronage, Bowditch has argued that, by assimilating the social discourse of benefaction to the conventions of bucolic voluntarism, Virgil's *Eclogues* naturalise the triumviral political structure in which power lies in the hands of the oligarchic few.⁹ In this paper, I take a similarly suspicious view of the First *Eclogue*'s apparently sanguine attempt at fostering a connection between the unnamed benefactor and *libertas*.¹⁰ Whereas Bowditch's study ultimately finds that the First *Eclogue* reproduces and reinforces the framework of the triumvirate, this paper argues that the poem's portrayal of the relationship between Tityrus and the *iuvenis* implicitly endorses the idea that *libertas* cannot be achieved without accepting a *new* system of power. Furthermore, I wish to make the case that the anonymity of the *iuvenis* should not be treated as a riddle to which Octavian is the answer.¹¹ Rather, this act of pastoral obfuscation does the hard graft of subtly laying out a new political ideology.

I BENEFACTION, OTIUM AND LIBERTAS

Both the volatility of the triumviral period and the disruption to rural life caused by Octavian's settlement of veterans after Philippi (Suet., *Aug.* 13) can be detected in the opening exchange of the First *Eclogue*.¹² Meliboeus' song (1.1–5), which discloses that he is about to face exile (1.3–4) while his companion Tityrus somehow manages to hold on to pastoral security (1.1–2, 4–5), already hints at the idea that the shepherds

⁶ Du Quesnay 1984: 27–32; Kennedy 1992: 29–33; Henderson 1994: 81. Later in *Epode* 9, Horace implicitly assimilated Octavian's victories at Nauclous and Actium, and strongly implied that they were wars of 'liberation' and not civil wars ('Neptunius | dux... | minatus Urbi vincla', 'the Neptunian leader threatened to put the City in chains', 7–9; 'Romanus ... | emancipatus feminae | ... miles et spadonibus | servire rugosis potest', 'a Roman, enslaved to a woman ... and, a soldier no less, is capable of serving wrinkled eunuchs', 11–14).

⁷ Clausen 1994: 31–2.

⁸ Galinsky 2006: 6, original emphasis.

⁹ Bowditch 2001: 121–3.

¹⁰ As with Bowditch, my 'suspicious' approach is informed by the notion of 'negative hermeneutics', which was first discussed by Paul Ricoeur (1965: 33–44) and developed further by Fredric Jameson (1971). As Jameson 1971: 119–20 explains: 'We must ... distinguish between what Paul Ricoeur has called negative and positive hermeneutics, between the hermeneutics of suspicion and the hermeneutics of a restoration of some original, forgotten meaning [...]. For Ricoeur, of course, the latter cannot be imagined as anything other than the sacred [...]. Negative hermeneutic, on the other hand, is at one with modern philosophy itself, with those critiques of ideology and illusory consciousness which we find in Nietzsche and in Marx'.

¹¹ Even among critics who do not identify the *iuvenis* as Octavian, the approach is generally one of candidate-searching, as shown above in n. 5. One exception is Mayer 1983: 20–6, who treats the *iuvenis* as a symbol of Rome's power for the good.

¹² On the dissatisfaction of both the veterans and the threatened landowners, see App., *B Civ.* 5.12–13; Dio 48.6–12. While ancient biographies of Virgil claim that the poet's farm was confiscated and returned to him (cf. Donat., *Vit. Verg.* 19), it is patently clear that this story was extrapolated from the poem itself. See esp. Farrell 2002: 24–6; Korenjak 2003; Laird 2009.

themselves are not in control of their lives.¹³ Tityrus' reply, while confirming that he is indeed more fortunate, highlights further the shepherds' lack of agency (1.6–10):

T: O Meliboee, deus nobis haec otia fecit.
 namque erit ille mihi semper deus, illius aram
 saepe tener nostris ab ovilibus imbuet agnus.
 ille meas errare boves, ut cernis, et ipsum
 ludere quae vellem calamo permisit agresti.

Tityrus: O Meliboeus, it is a god who gave us this peace — for a god he shall ever be to me; often shall a tender lamb from our folds stain his altar. He allowed my oxen to roam, as you see, and I myself to play what I wish on my rustic pipe.

The verbs *fecit* (1.6) and *permisit* (1.10) make clear that the pleasures of pastoral life, namely singing and herding (1.1–2, 4–5, 9–10), which Tityrus generalises as *otia* (1.6), are possible only because a 'god' had granted them.¹⁴ The shepherd himself had no hand in procuring his present condition. Since Tityrus' explanation rests firmly on his conviction that this good fortune has been mediated exclusively through divine agency, it follows that he implicitly recognises its inherently contingent nature.¹⁵ By expressing his gratitude in this way, Tityrus' words underscore the extent to which the livelihood of these shepherds is dependent on the whim of a single benefactor.

What also stands out from this opening exchange is the way Tityrus engages with Meliboeus' language of contrasting experience (cf. *tu* and *nos*, 1.1–4), appropriating it to insinuate that his benefactor can transform not only his own fortune but the lives of many. In his response to Meliboeus, Tityrus quickly asserts that he is one of a number of shepherds who have benefitted from the god (*nobis*, 1.6), even though the shift from *nobis* to *mibi* in the next line (1.7) indicates that the decision to treat this benefactor as a god is Tityrus' own.¹⁶ In the next two lines, Tityrus repeats the same trick: 'nostris ... ovilibus' (1.8) creates the impression that a community of shepherds is making sacrifice to this provider of *otium*, but 'meas ... boves' (1.9) makes one wonder who else other than Tityrus has seen such a good turn of fortune. Thus in his response to Meliboeus' suggestion that the shepherds are suddenly divided into those who have and those who have not, Tityrus repeatedly tries to pass his individual blessing off as a shared positive experience, thereby countering any claim that this benefactor could have sown division in the pastoral community. Combined with his usage of the time-defying adverbs *semper* (1.7) and *saepe* (1.8), Tityrus conjures up an idealised image of a patron–beneficiary relation, whereby an act of benefaction will restore long-lasting peace and common satisfaction. For Tityrus, the honouring of his benefactor as a divinity is no mere personal expression of gratitude, but a unifying societal ritual.

¹³ On the exilic connotation of *patriam fugio*, cf. OLD s.v. *fugio* and Coleman 1977 on *patriae* at 1.3. See also Ov., *Tr.* 1.5.65–6 (clearly reacting to the opening lines of *Eclogue* 1): 'ille suam laetus patriam victorque petebat: | a patria fugi victus et exul ego' ('He was seeking his native land in joy and as a victor; I have fled mine, defeated and an exile').

¹⁴ Note the contrast between efficacy (*fecit*, 1.6) and the frivolousness of Tityrus' action (*ludere*, 1.10). *Ludere*, of course, can also be read metapoetically as the production of Callimachean poetry.

¹⁵ Davis 2012: 20.

¹⁶ See Coleman 1977 on 1.7; Du Quesnay 1981: 104; Clausen 1994 on 1.7. The plural *nobis* (1.6) also disputes Meliboeus' suggestion that Tityrus' good fortune is a case of individual blessing (cf. the repetition of *tu* at verses 1 and 4). Of course, plural pronouns can equally well refer to an individual as to a collective, cf. Lucr. 5.19 (Lucretius on Epicurus), 'quo magis hic merito *nobis* deus esse videtur' ('for which reason he more rightly seems to be a god to us'), where *nobis* could refer to the poet himself or both Lucretius and Memmius, the latter mentioned a little earlier in the text (Lucr. 5.11); for further discussion, see Bing 2016: 175.

Perplexed by Tityrus' good fortune, Meliboeus then asks him about his 'god' ('sed tamen iste deus qui sit, da, Tityre, nobis', 'But still, tell me, Tityrus, who is that god?', 1.18). At first, Tityrus avoids answering the question by telling Meliboeus that he went to Rome (1.19–20).¹⁷ However, when Meliboeus presses him on why he had visited the city, Tityrus finally offers a proper reply, but still keeps the nature of his *deus* elusive (1.26–35):

M: Et quae tanta fuit Romam tibi causa videndi?

T: Libertas, quae sera tamen respexit inertem,
 candidior postquam tondenti barba cadebat,
 respexit tamen et longo post tempore venit,
 30 postquam nos Amaryllis habet, Galatea reliquit.
 namque (fatebor enim) dum me Galatea tenebat,
 nec spes libertatis erat nec cura peculi.
 quamvis multa meis exiret victima saeptis,
 pinguis et ingratae premeretur caseus urbi,
 35 non umquam gravis aere domum mihi dextra redibat.

Meliboeus: And what was the great occasion of your seeing Rome?

Tityrus: Freedom, who, though late, yet cast her eyes upon me in my sloth, when my beard began to whiten as it fell beneath the scissors. Yet she did cast her eyes on me, and came after a long time — after Amaryllis began her sway and Galatea left me. For — yes, I must confess — while Galatea ruled me, I had neither hope of freedom nor thought of savings. Though many a victim left my stalls, and many a rich cheese was pressed for the thankless city, never would my hand come home money-laden.

It appears that Tityrus went to Rome in order to free himself from the psychological and emotional captivity caused by his amatory encounters (1.30–2), as well as to procure some kind of alleviation from unrewarding labour (1.33–5). The terms *libertas* (1.27; *spes libertatis*, 1.32) and *cura peculi* (1.32), both set within the context of economic exchange and poverty (1.33–5), have generally encouraged scholars to view Tityrus as a literal slave and interpret his quest for 'freedom' as manumission.¹⁸ At the same time, since amatory themes are frequent in Theocritus' *Idylls* and here Virgil's shepherd is recounting his love life, the language of entrapment in Tityrus' speech ('me Galatea tenebat', 1.31) may suggest that his slavery is also to some extent metaphorical, and that *libertas* for him is not just manumission, but also the freedom from *servitium amoris* (specifically from Galatea).¹⁹ The ambiguity of *libertas* cannot be solved by the poem's opening image of Tityrus' pastoral security either. There, he may be construed as both a freedman who has managed to retain his possessions and a lover who is untroubled by his amatory life (cf. 'formosam resonare doces Amaryllida silvas', 'you teach the woods to resound "fair Amaryllis"', 1.5). In fact, Tityrus' earlier designation of these delights in his life as *otia* (1.6) blurs the distinction between economic and political stability and the contented ease of an individual, thereby conflating 'freedom' with 'pleasure'. *Libertas* understood as manumission or the status of non-subjection

¹⁷ This conceit recalls the convention of naming the *sedes* of the *laudandus* in a hymn for a deity; see Du Quesnay 1981: 113; Davis 2012: 23.

¹⁸ See e.g. Coleman 1977: 89–91; Du Quesnay 1981; Clausen 1994: 30–1; Wimmel 1998; Galinsky 2006.

¹⁹ Eckerman 2016: 262–3; anticipated by Clausen 1994: 44–5. Eckerman convincingly identifies an allusion to Theoc., *Id.* 14.52–5 in Tityrus' account of how he found emotional alleviation by leaving home and his mistress. Note later at 1.40 ('servitio ... exire'), it is still not clear whether Tityrus' servitude is literal or metaphorical.

implies the attainment or reassertion of agency, control and self-governing authority. However, by conflating *libertas* with the return of pleasant pastoral life, the term is stripped of its acute political meaning and anti-authoritarian resonance. Instead, as we approach the midpoint of Virgil's poem and with the presence of the benefactor looming, *libertas* appears to be framed as something akin to an untroubled life, but which can only be mediated through external intervention.

II DIVINE SELF-IMAGING AND *LIBERTAS* IN THE TRIUMVIRAL PERIOD

This evasive re-conceptualisation of *libertas*, set against the backdrop of Tityrus' idealisation of his benefactor as a 'god', brings to mind the use of divine impersonation and the fluid meaning of *libertas* during the triumviral period. Recent scholarship on the cultivation of divine associations by prominent figures of the late Republic — commonly referred to as 'divine imaging' — has drawn attention to how this practice constituted and shaped the political discourse of that time.²⁰ As Cucchiarelli puts it succinctly, 'the confrontation between the various political leaders took shape in part as a confrontation between different models of divinity'.²¹ In fact, all the evidence we have of divine self-imaging in this period points to it being used as a way of articulating political scenarios — tensions, rivalries, allegiances — in suggestive and animated terms. For example, Octavian's self-presentation as the *Divi filius* was a way for him to stake his claim to Caesar's legacy and announce his arrival as a genuine political force.²² The mutual distrust between Octavian and Antony in the early years of the triumvirate was reflected in the infamous story of Octavian masquerading as Apollo at an 'Olympian' banquet (Suet., *Aug.* 70) — an event that was probably exaggerated (or invented) and circulated by Antony's faction.²³ By the mid-30s, divine impersonation as political discourse appears to have gathered pace. Soon after Sextus Pompey's defeat at Naulochus in 36 B.C., Octavian and Antony separately adopted Sextus' Neptunian designs on their own numismatic issues as a means of asserting their maritime supremacy.²⁴ The appropriative and dialogic character of their practice strongly

²⁰ The most informative recent works on the interaction between 'divine imaging' and contemporary poetry are those of Miller 2009: 15–53; Cucchiarelli 2011: 155–60; Pandey 2018: 36–50. Earlier studies, such as Weinstock 1971, Pelling 1988 and Gurval 1995, remain important. Cole 2013 has shown that divinisation and divine impersonation were already an important element of elite discourse by 44 B.C.

²¹ Cucchiarelli 2011: 157.

²² It is tempting to think that Octavian's choice to portray himself as a 'son' may have something to do with the fact that he was once disparagingly referred to as a mere *puer* by some in the Senate (Cic., *Phil.* 13.24; App., *B Civ.* 3.43.176; Suet., *Aug.* 12; Dio 46.30.1). Octavian also appropriated the star iconography following the confirmation of Caesar's deification (1 January 42). See e.g. *RRC* 535/2 (42–39 B.C.): the obverse shows Octavian's head with the legend DIVI·F and a star. The reverse of some earlier issues (*RRC* 525/1–2; 526/1–3) shows Octavian's head with the legend DIVI IULI·F; for further discussion, see Weinstock 1971: 399–401. In addition, the design of the gilded equestrian monument voted to Octavian in January 43 B.C. is said to have undergone modification to make its subject resemble a divinity more closely (Cic., *Ad Brut.* 1.15.7; Vell. Pat. 2.61.3; App., *B Civ.* 3.51; Dio 46.29.2). The change of design can be seen by comparing the images on *RRC* 490/1 and 3 (marked S·C) with those on a later coin, *RRC* 518/2 (marked POPVL·IVSSV); see Zanker 1988: 37–9; Osgood 2006: 117. On Cicero's designation of the young Caesar as *puer*, see Manuwald 2007: 194–5.

²³ On the interpretation of the 'Olympian' banquet, see Charlesworth 1933: 175; Scott 1933: 30; Gagé 1955: 487; Weinstock 1971: 15; Gurval 1995: 96–8; Miller 2009: 16–18. There is sufficient evidence to suggest that prior to Philippi (42 B.C.) it was Brutus, and not Octavian, who had the strongest public Apolline profile; see Miller 2009: 24–6.

²⁴ Miller 2009: 24. See Pollini 1990: 344–5 on Antony's Neptunian iconography on *BMCR* East 149–53 (36–35 B.C.). See Zanker 1988: 97 on the cameo of 35–30 B.C., which depicts a nude Octavian standing in a chariot holding a trident. Note also that both Horace in *Epode* 4 and, later, Augustus in *R.G.* 25 portray Sextus' faction as slaves-turned-pirates (cf. 'latrones atque servilem manum', Hor., *Epod.* 4.19; 'mare pacavi a praedonibus. eo bello servorum ...' Aug., *R.G.* 25).

indicates that divine self-representation was no mere ‘role play’. Rather, the image of a ‘god-man’ captures how different factions of the triumviral period competed for legitimacy and sought to identify themselves with useful political values.

Chief among these contested political values was *libertas*. While ‘liberty’ for Romans could be broadly defined as a condition of non-domination,²⁵ in the late Republic *libertas* became an extremely polysemous notion that ‘meant different things to different people’ as various political factions competed to be associated with it.²⁶ Following the assassination of Julius Caesar, Brutus and Cassius naturally identified themselves as the *liberatores*, thus giving the term *libertas* an anti-Caesarian dimension. But after their defeat at Philippi, Octavian and Antony each claimed to be protecting the *libertas* of the state.²⁷ Later, when the relationship between these two men broke down, the new Caesar, as we saw above (cf. *R.G.* 1), asserted that he protected *libertas* by keeping Antony — the unnamed *factio* in the opening of the *Res gestae* — away from Rome. The Dionysiac identity cultivated by Antony in the Greek East was weaponised against him by Octavian, who portrayed his rival as a morally bankrupt, disorderly and foreign force that threatened Roman *libertas*.²⁸

With this in mind, let us turn our focus back to the depiction of benefactor-worship and *libertas* in Virgil’s First *Eclogue*. Set against a contemporary political climate where the meaning and ownership of *libertas* were fluid and constantly appropriated, the poem’s dissociation of *libertas* from its immediate Roman context is no accident. I would suggest that Tityrus’ evasive aestheticisation of his ‘liberty’, along with the shepherd’s enthusiastic worship of his *iuvenis*, translate the factional political competition for *libertas* into a quest to find the benefactor who could bring about a better way of life. In doing so, the First *Eclogue* creates a new discourse of *libertas* that not only presumes the subject’s lack of agency, but even idealises external intervention as salvific power.

III WHO (OR WHAT) IS THE *IUVENIS*?

This particular discourse of *libertas* is exactly what we find when Tityrus finally reveals how he met his benefactor (1.40–5):

- 40 T: Quid facerem? neque servitio me exire licebat
 nec tam praesentis alibi cognoscere divos.
 hic illum vidi iuvenem, Meliboee, quotannis
 bis senos cui nostra dies altaria fumant.
 hic mihi responsum primus dedit ille petenti:
 45 ‘pascite ut ante boves, pueri; summittite tauros.’

²⁵ Arena 2012: 8 defines *libertas* as a status of ‘non-subjection to the arbitrary will of either a foreign power or a domestic group or individual’. Arena’s thinking is critically informed by the works of Skinner 1998; Ando 2011; Pettit 2012, among others. See also earlier studies by Wirszubski 1950; Klein 1969: 1–22; Hellegouarch 1972: 542–59; Brunt 1988.

²⁶ Brunt 1988: 283. Arena 2012: 244–57 shows that, in the lead-up to the battle of Mutina (43 B.C.), claiming to support *libertas* became a convenient way of gaining political legitimacy for opposing sides.

²⁷ See Tatum 2020: 208–9 on Antony’s attempt to associate himself with *libertas* in the immediate aftermath of Philippi. Prior to that, in 44–43 B.C., Antony positioned himself as the true *libertatis vindex* in response to Cicero’s allegation that he threatened republican freedom; see Tatum 2020: 189–207.

²⁸ On Antony’s self-identification with Dionysus, see esp. Brenk 1995; also Pollini 1990; La Rocca 1992. It is worth noting that Antony’s Dionysian impersonation may have had a mixed reception even in Greece and the east: see Plut., *Ant.* 24.4–5, with a recent discussion by Mac Góráin 2020: 21.

Tityrus: What was I to do? I could not quit slavery nor elsewhere find gods so ready to aid. Here, Meliboeus, I saw that youth for whom our altars smoke twelve times a year. Here he was the first to give my plea an answer: 'Feed your oxen as before, boys; rear your bulls'.

In this account, *Tityrus* emphasises again his inability to take action for himself through the impersonal construction 'me ... licebat' (1.40).²⁹ His instinct, as the next verse shows, is to find help from greater authorities (*divos*, 1.41).³⁰ However, the most remarkable aspect of this report is that, instead of elucidating what happened during his encounter with the *iuuenis*, *Tityrus* rather obfuscates what his benefactor actually did. While it is clear that *Tityrus*' condition has been transformed from a state of *servitium* to *libertas*, the quoted injunction of the *iuuenis* (1.45) suggests not so much a liberation, but rather a restoration (*ut ante*, 'as before', 1.45). To be sure, the attainment of new liberty and the return to pastoral vocation are not necessarily mutually exclusive; but *Tityrus* ostensibly conflates *libertas* with *otium* again, or at least fails to make any meaningful distinction between the two. For this grateful devotee of the *iuuenis*, freedom, peace, and pleasure mean much the same thing.

Even though both the identity of the *iuuenis* and the precise nature of his intervention are concealed by Virgil's poem, critics have not stopped trying to ascertain who the *iuuenis* is.³¹ As mentioned above, ancient commentators and modern scholars have frequently suggested Octavian as the candidate, since he carried out the land confiscations and claimed the title *Divi filius* during this period. Moreover, given that he was the only triumvir in Rome at the time of the *Eclogues*' composition (whereas Antony was in the east and Lepidus was exiled to Circeii after the battle of Naulochus), and Virgil's poem underscores Rome as the site of the perceived divine intervention (cf. *hic*, 1.42 and 44), Octavian's presence in the city makes him even more likely to be the historical person behind Virgil's *iuuenis*.³² Indeed, the depiction of Octavian as a salvific, divine young man has a precedent in Cicero's Fifth *Philippic* (delivered on 1 January 43 B.C.). The orator paints a bleak image of life starved of hope and freedom under Antony ('nondum ullos duces habebamus, non copias; nullum erat consilium publicum, nulla libertas', 'we did not yet have any leaders, nor forces; there was no public council, no freedom', *Phil.* 5.42), and he welcomes the arrival of Octavian (5.43):

quis tum nobis, quis populo Romano obtulit hunc divinum adulescentem deus? qui, cum omnia ad perniciem nostram pestifero illi civi paterent, subito praeter spem omnium exortus prius confecit exercitum quem furori M. Antoni opponeret quam quisquam hoc eum cogitare suspicaretur.

²⁹ Eckerman 2016: 262.

³⁰ Modern scholars generally agree that *divus* (1.41) here is just a variation of *deus*. Note also its appearance in Hor., *Carm.* 3.5.2–4 in connection with Augustus: 'praesens divus habebitur | Augustus adiectis Britannis | imperio gravibusque Persis' ('Augustus will be held a god in our midst when Britons and dread Persians are added to the empire'). Outside the poetic context, however, there is a significant distinction between *divus* and *deus*. As Price 1984: 83 points out, from the cult of the deceased Julius Caesar onwards, *divus* in official terminology referred exclusively to former emperors and members of their family. But whether some kind of distinction had already existed when the deceased Julius Caesar was given the title *divus* remains unclear. Varro's attempts to define these two terms (Serv. ad *Aen.* 12.139 = Varro, *Ling. fr.* 2. Goetz–Schoell; Serv. ad *Aen.* 5.34 = Varro fr. 424, *Grammaticae Romanae Fragmenta*, ed. Funaioli) are considered unsatisfactory by modern critics; see Weinstock 1971: 29; Koortbojian 2013: 7–8; Gradel 2002: 63–6.

³¹ There is, I think, a subtle but important difference between active concealment (what Virgil does here) and leaving the details of a high-stakes situation vague (e.g. what Horace does in *Sat.* 1.5 with regard to the purpose of his trip and the whereabouts of Octavian).

³² See also Cucchiarelli 2011: 159–60.

What god then presented to us and to the Roman people this godlike young man? When every road to our destruction lay open to that baneful citizen, suddenly, to the surprise of all, *he* arose: he got together an army to oppose Marcus Antonius' madness before anyone suspected him of such a thought.

Cicero's young Octavian is a *divinus* liberator, whose appearance is sudden, whose help unexpected and whose action emphatically effective.³³ This depiction of the *Divi filius* is similar to that of the *iuvenis* in the First *Eclogue*. Tityrus' suggestion that the Roman youth was more *praesens* (1.41) than divinities from elsewhere,³⁴ and the shepherd's claim that he had 'seen' (*vidi*, 1.42) his saviour,³⁵ whose oracular injunction (*responsum*, 1.44) he could vividly report,³⁶ combine to create the impression that Tityrus' encounter with the *iuvenis* was surprising, timely, and close to the experience of a divine epiphany.

However, this correspondence between the Ciceronian Octavian and the Virgilian *iuvenis* should not necessarily be adduced as further evidence for Octavian being the candidate. Elsewhere in the *Eclogues*, Virgil mentions contemporary Roman political figures without any ambiguity: the names of Pollio, Varus, Julius Caesar, and Gallus appear explicitly in *Eclogues* 4, 6, 9 and 10.³⁷ Therefore we must infer that the undisclosed identity of the divine benefactor in *Eclogue* 1 is a salient artistic choice, and that this choice is not an obstacle to interpretation, but has a bearing on it.³⁸

The point of this act of anonymisation, I would suggest, is twofold. Firstly, the anonymity of the deified *iuvenis* helps to distance the image of the 'god-man' — perhaps especially Octavian's image as the *Divi filius* — from the suffering and strife described in the poem, and to re-connect it with positive change. The poem's decidedly vague conceptualisation of *libertas* as a condition which only the 'god-man' can provide not only turns the triumviral contest for political legitimacy into an apparently noble process of civic emancipation, but also reframes divine impersonation as a practice rooted in securing peace and stability. At the same time, as Tityrus insinuates that even the worship of an unidentifiable benefactor could have a unifying effect on a community (cf. 1.6–8), the First *Eclogue* transforms the 'god-man' into a personification of political cohesion, which in turn rehabilitates the image of the *Divi filius* among the poem's contemporary audience.

Secondly, with this act of anonymisation Virgil makes it difficult for the reader to identify the *iuvenis* with any one particular figure or tradition of divinisation. This pointed avoidance of specificity, I argue, foreshadows Augustus' self-representation and the political language of the Augustan Principate. As critics have noted, Virgil's depiction of the worship of the *iuvenis* is informed not only by contemporary political usages of divinising imagery, but also by several other traditions including Hellenistic ruler cult, Epicurean philosophy, Roman republican hero worship, as well as the poetry

³³ In Cicero's speech, the overlapping of political and religious discourses is encapsulated in the word *exortus*, which elevates Octavian's status and evokes the emergence of a celestial divinity (further connecting Octavian to the apotheosis of Julius Caesar).

³⁴ *Praesens* evokes the Hellenistic concept of a sovereign as θεός ἐπιφανής; see Cucchiarelli 2012 on 1.41. On divine rulers as 'present' deities in the Hellenistic world, see Koenen 1993: 65; Clauss 1996, esp. 406–7; Chaniotis 2011: 174–6. Note also that Cicero records Hercules as a benefactor of mankind with the description 'tantus et tam praesens' (Cic., *Tusc.* 1.28), which further suggests that *praesens* is used of those who are semi-divine or deified for their earthly acts of salvation.

³⁵ Note also Tityrus' promise later in the poem, that he would never forget the 'face' of his saviour ('*illius... vultus*', 1.63).

³⁶ OLD s.v. *responsum* 1b, 2a; Du Quesnay 1981: 134; Davis 2012: 27.

³⁷ Pollio: 4.12. Varus: 6.7–12 and 9.26–7. Julius Caesar: 9.47. Gallus: 6.64 and 10 *passim*. In addition, the names of the poets Varius and Cinna appear in 9.35.

³⁸ For a recent critical reconsideration of the significance of anonymity in Latin literature, see Geue 2019, esp. 1–20.

of Theocritus, Hesiod and Callimachus. To be precise, the appearance and reported speech of the *iuvenis* recall the Hesiodic Muses in the *Theogony* (Hes., *Theog.* 24–6) and Callimachus' Apollo in the *Aetia* (Callim., *Aet.* fr.1.21–4), thereby suggesting that Virgil's *iuvenis* is likewise an initiator of poetry.³⁹ Meanwhile, the idea of a 'present' god-man (*praesentis*, 1.41) suggests the possible influence of the language and practice of Hellenistic ruler-cult on Virgil's poetry (above, n. 34). In terms of the ritual details of Tityrus' worship, they appear to be modelled on the sacrifices which Ptolemy II Philadelphus and Arsinoe are said to have offered to Ptolemy I Soter and Berenice in Theocritus' *Idyll* 17 (especially verses 124–30),⁴⁰ as well as the monthly celebrations of Epicurus held by his followers.⁴¹ Furthermore, it is also possible that the offerings given to the *iuvenis* are drawn from the practice of republican hero cult, such as the ones offered to Gaius Marius and Marius Gratidianus.⁴² This amalgamation of different traditions attests to the First *Eclogue*'s varied dialogues with its poetic predecessors and the lively debate surrounding divinisation during the late Republic.⁴³ On the other hand, by combining a number of figures and traditions in his depiction, Virgil avoids making his *iuvenis* look too much like one thing or the other, thus implying that the *iuvenis* is both the θεὸς ἐπιφανής of Greek ruler cult and the Muse-like figure of Greek poetry (and a whole bunch of other things). In other words, the indecipherability of the status of the *iuvenis* is part of the point. That the exact nature of this revered *iuvenis* is not clearly recognisable, but also not entirely unfamiliar, suggestively epitomises the ambiguous position Augustus will come to occupy in the Principate. What is more, the conflation of *libertas* and *otium* in Tityrus' speeches culminates in the dissolution of difference between emancipation (from *servitium*) and restoration (cf. *ut ante*); and this discursive evasiveness of Virgil's poem bears the hallmark of the language of the later Augustan Principate, which pointedly refuses to define whether Rome has been transformed or restored by the new Caesar.⁴⁴ In short, the divine young man of the First *Eclogue* most probably 'is' Octavian; but when this poetic portrait is consumed within a cultural milieu shaped by and responding to the politics of *libertas* and divine self-imaging, the *iuvenis* is certainly more than *just* Octavian. Reading deep into this image of a deified Roman benefactor who (somehow) heralds both transformation and

³⁹ This Hesiodic-Callimachean double-allusion lies in the combination of *primus* (1.44) and *ut ante* (1.45); see Wright 1983: 118–20 and Cucchiarelli 2012 on 1.44–5. The instruction of the *iuvenis* about dealing with animals also contains etymological plays that connote bucolic composition (cf. βουκολέω, Theoc., *Id.* 7.92; βουκολιάζομαι, 7.36, 9.1); see Wright 1983: 114–17.

⁴⁰ Hunter 2001: 160. The fact that the *iuvenis* is placed in the exact centre of Virgil's poem is similarly reminiscent of a well-known Theocritean encomiastic motif from the same idyll: ἀνδρῶν δ' αὖ Πτολεμαῖος ἐνὶ πρότοισι λεγέσθω | καὶ πύματος καὶ μέσσοις (*Id.* 17.3–4). See Wright 1983: 119; and also Octavian's appearance at the halfway point of the prologue to the *Georgics* and in the so-called 'proem in the middle' of *Georgics* 3.

⁴¹ Diog. Laert. 10.16–22, with further discussion by Davis 2012: 28. Bing 2016: 176 also points out that the Varronian etymology of *iuvenis* from *iuware* brings to mind Epicurus, whose name means the one who 'comes to aid' of another (ἐπίκουρος).

⁴² Marius received offerings of food and libations along with the gods for his victories over Jugurtha and the Germans: Plut., *Mar.* 27.9; Val. Max. 8.15.7. Lesser offerings of incense and candles were awarded to Marius Gratidianus in 85 B.C.: Cic., *Off.* 3.80; Sen., *De ira* 3.18.1; Plin., *HN* 33.132. While republican hero worship did not always involve animal sacrifice in the manner of the cult of Tityrus' benefactor, the kind of outburst of popular support for a political leader resulting in the institution of his cult is ostensibly reflected in Tityrus' fervent devotion to his Roman *iuvenis*. See Beard *et al.* 1998: I 143–4 for further discussion of the cult of republican politicians.

⁴³ On the Romans' interest in and scepticism surrounding divinisation, see Beard *et al.* 1998: I 140–9. On Cicero's contribution to Roman thinking on divinisation, see Cole 2013.

⁴⁴ Geue 2013: 56 also points out that the expression *ut ante* (1.45) functions as a means of naturalising change via a discourse of continuity; and so the *iuvenis* appears simultaneously as the guarantor and inventor of tradition, much like Augustus himself. On interactions between oppositional ideological constructs (such as tradition and innovation) in the Augustan age, see esp. Galinsky 1996.

restoration, it might just be possible to see the silhouettes of the discursive operation of the Augustan Principate.

IV POETRY, POLITICS, AND THE (AUGUSTAN) GOLDEN AGE

In this final section, I would like to return to the idea that the *iuvenis* of the First *Eclogue*, like the Hesiodic Muses and the Callimachean Apollo, is a kind of poetic initiator. Given that Virgil's poem opens with an image of Tityrus singing freely and without worry (1.1–4), the implication that the *iuvenis* can influence the production of poetry demands further attention. By assimilating the intervention of the *iuvenis* to the inspiration provided by poetic divinities, Virgil may well be drawing on the literary tradition of depicting one's patron as a god.⁴⁵ However, the *iuvenis* of the First *Eclogue* appears to have more control over the shepherds' artistic output than an ordinary patron: as Tityrus implied, this young man exclusively granted him the permission to sing (*permisit*, 1.10). If creative productivity and artistic *libertas* are subject not only to divine inspiration and patronal support, but also to obtaining permission from a figure of authority, it then raises questions about how free Tityrus' poetic speech really is.⁴⁶ Notably, Meliboeus, who has not encountered a powerful benefactor, announces later in the poem that there would be no more songs from him ('carmina nulla canam', 1.77). Pastoral poetry, and the fictional world it generates, is conventionally built on the premise of an organic exchange of songs between shepherds. However, by subjecting this creative process to the whim of a benefactor, through which the framework of exchange is replaced by an economy of permission-and-obligation, the First *Eclogue* hints at the poetry's transition into an aesthetic product of a new ideological system.

Indeed, the final scene of *Eclogue* 1 goes even further by suggesting that social cohesion too relies on this new system of benefaction (1.79–83):

T: Hic tamen hanc mecum poteras requiescere noctem
80 fronde super viridi: sunt nobis mitia poma,
castaneae molles et pressi copia lactis,
et iam summa procul villarum culmina fumant
maioresque cadunt altis de montibus umbrae.

Tityrus: Yet this night you could rest here with me on the green leafage. We have ripe apples, soft chestnuts, and a wealth of pressed cheeses. Even now the housetops afar are smoking and longer shadows fall from the mountain heights.

A lot hangs on how one construes the verb *poteras* (1.79). The form of the imperfect can be hypothetical (i.e. 'you might have/could have rested here with me'), in which case Tityrus is not really offering hospitality, but rather gesturing towards the end of the old dispensation under which it would have been normal for Meliboeus to spend the night at his.⁴⁷ But if the *poteras* is supposed to introduce a genuine invitation, then Tityrus' offer of temporary accommodation (1.79) and personal produce (1.80–1) puts *him* in the role of the benefactor. Through this promise of aid, which is delivered in the form of a song-reply (just like the richly poetic speech-act of the *iuvenis*), security and community spirit are

⁴⁵ This motif in Roman literature appears to have its origin in comedy, where parasites refer to their benefactors as divinities or *genii* (see e.g. Plaut., *Mer.* 138).

⁴⁶ Roman poets were particularly alive to the idea that certain genres enjoyed more 'freedom' than others, cf. Hor., *Epist.* 2.1.145–55, *Ars P.* 281–4; and Gowers 2012: 148–51, 154–5 on Hor., *Sat.* 1.4. On the poets' sensitivity to the issue of 'free speech' under the Principate, see Feeney 1994.

⁴⁷ I thank Tom Geue for bringing this important point to my attention.

thus restored, albeit for one night only ('hanc ... noctem', 1.79). Bowditch has argued that here pastoral song succeeds in 'assimilating the social and historical discourse of benefaction to the conventions of bucolic generosity and community', which in turn 'dramatizes the ideological potential of pastoral song [...] to overcome historical division and provide a shared set of values'.⁴⁸ By closing his poem with an idealised image of pastoral song mediating social cohesion, Virgil leaves the door open for readers to construe the First *Eclogue* as a text that is complicit in implementing a socio-political system that relies on and privileges the agency of an empowered individual. It is in this respect that the First *Eclogue* appears to produce the grammar of authoritarianism, articulating what will eventually become the central ideological tenets of the Augustan Principate.

Of course, the *Eclogues* are not short of moments where Virgil displays profound sympathy for those who have become victims of the triumvirs' struggle for power. The voice and suffering of Meliboeus in *Eclogue* 1 counteract the poem's discourse of idealised authoritarianism. In *Eclogue* 9, which is widely considered a companion-piece to *Eclogue* 1 (and possibly the earlier of the two), we find another example of this dynamic.⁴⁹ Here the shepherd Moeris is forced off his land, just as Meliboeus is in the opening poem; and Moeris' account of the new landowner's tyrannical brutality paints a stark picture of authoritarian power ('haec mea sunt; veteres migrate coloni', 'these are mine; move on, old tenants', 9.4). In the ensuing exchange between Moeris and Lycidas, we learn that the shepherds had hoped that their song-master Menalcas would come to their rescue in the land dispute, like the *iuuenis* of the First *Eclogue* ('audieram ... | omnia carminibus vestrum servasse Menalcan', 'I had heard that your Menalcas had saved everything with his songs', 9.7–10). But this turns out to be false ('audieras, et fama fuit', 'you had heard it, and that was the story', 9.11), and the failure of Menalcas makes clear that he is no *iuuenis*.

Indeed, *Eclogue* 9 appears to undercut the notion that a powerful figure of authority could make things better. In parallel to the anonymous *iuuenis* who comes to the aid of Tityrus in a moment of crisis, *Eclogue* 9 ends with Moeris appealing for help from a figure of authority identified only as *ipse* (9.66–7):

M: Desine plura, puer, et quod nunc instat agamus;
carmina tum melius, cum venerit ipse, canemus.

Moeris: Say no more, boy, and let us get on with what is pressing now. We shall sing our songs better, when he himself has come.

Commentators are surely right to identify *ipse* (9.67) as Menalcas, but the vagueness of the final line is troubling. *Venerit* anticipates the arrival of the song-master, but we are not told when that will be. 'Melius ... canemus' looks ahead to the resumption of pastoral singing,⁵⁰ but that seems unlikely when Menalcas has already failed to save the shepherds with song (9.7–11, above). Indeed, Virgil's poem appears to cast doubt on both the efficacy of song and the prospect of pastoral recovery. Earlier in the poem, Lycidas tries to console Moeris by reciting a song he had once heard from his friend — a song about a blessed age heralded by the star of Caesar (9.44–50; especially, 'ecce

⁴⁸ Bowditch 2001: 129.

⁴⁹ *Eclogue* 9 depicts a pastoral world in the aftermath of the post-Philippi land confiscations; but this does not necessarily mean that it was composed in late 42 B.C. However, the tone and political outlook of *Eclogue* 9 do seem to point to an earlier date than *Eclogue* 1, which, as some have argued (e.g. Clausen 1972; Coleman 1977: 17–18; Perutelli 1995: 30–1), may well be one of the latest in the collection.

⁵⁰ Cucchiarelli 2012: 478 reads this line as the final 'rilancio' of pastoral poetry in the book, before Virgil announces his intention to 'go up' a genre in the final poem (cf. *surgamus*, 10.75).

Dionaei processit Caesaris astrum, | astrum quo segetes gauderent frugibus', 'see the star of Caesar, born of Dione, has risen — the star by which the fields rejoice with corn', 9.47–8).⁵¹ However, Moeris immediately says that he cannot remember singing it (9.51–5). By distancing himself from a song about peace under the deified Caesar, Moeris' reaction not only underlines the fragmentation of shared cultural memory and the breakdown social cohesion in contemporary Rome,⁵² but also punctures the idealism that the pastoral world can depend on the power of a benefactor for stability. Set against this backdrop where the power of song is repeatedly dismissed in the face of crisis, any optimism in the poem's final line is undercut.

Furthermore, the absence of Menalcas' name in final line of *Eclogue* 9 contrasts sharply with the ending of *Eclogue* 5, which has *Menalca* as its last word (5.90). In that poem, Menalcas not only knew songs like those of *Eclogues* 2 and 3 (5.86–7), but was even able to divinise Daphnis and reinvigorate the pastoral community with song (5.56–80).⁵³ The absence of Menalcas' name at the end of *Eclogue* 9 therefore hints at the elusiveness of pastoral recovery. If the unknown identity of the salvific *iuuenis* of *Eclogue* 1 adds to his powerful mystique, then the absence of Menalcas' name here does precisely the opposite. Far from signalling that change is under way, the anonymity of *ipse* gestures at the unlikelihood of the shepherds' salvation and the intangibility of hope. As the poem ends, we are left with no secure idea of what help this vaguely identified *ipse* will bring, or when, or how. The poetics of anonymity cuts both ways: it may be used either to open up salvific possibility (all the more potent and appealing for being undefined), or to undermine this potential altogether.

The tension between the *Eclogues*' naturalisation of authoritarian ideology and the poems' sympathy and despair for the victims of despotic forces cannot be resolved. Nor does it need to be. This irresolvability is what makes the pastoral world of the *Eclogues* so pertinent to its contemporary readers: it is through this tension that these poems speak to reality. In other words, to get a better sense of the *Eclogues*' political inclinations, we need to find moments where Virgil lets go of tension and enters instead the realm of idealism. Luckily, there is one such instance: *Eclogue* 4.

In this poem, Virgil envisages the return of the Golden Age inaugurated by the birth of a miraculous *puer*. The poem's unhindered optimism was probably generated by the temporary reconciliation between Octavian and Antony following the Treaty of Brundisium (40 B.C.), brokered by G. Asinius Pollio.⁵⁴ If so, the *puer* at the time of the poem's composition most likely represented an anticipated offspring of Antony and Octavia (whose marriage sealed the alliance), or a symbol of hope for peace in the Roman world.⁵⁵

In its sketch of Rome's Golden Age, *Eclogue* 4 strikes a parallel with *Eclogue* 1 by integrating the idea of willing subjection into its discourse on *libertas*. The poem

⁵¹ Following most modern scholars, I attribute lines 46–50 to Lycidas (rather than Moeris) and identify Moeris as the 'original singer' of this recited song. For further discussion of these textual issues, see Perzell 2001: 73–4.

⁵² Meban 2009: 112–15; see also Davis 2012: 42 on the poem's performance of 'consolation of poetic memory'.

⁵³ Cucchiarelli 2012: 478. On the efficacy of Menalcas' poetic performance, see Lowrie 2009: 145–6. Already by the time of Servius, Virgil's Daphnis was seen as an allegory for Julius Caesar (Serv. ad *Ecl.* 5.20, 'alii dicunt significari per allegoriam C. Iulium Caesarem'). Modern scholarship has expanded on the Daphnis–Caesar correspondence: Leach 1974: 182–6; Coleman 1977: 173–4; Dobbin 1995: 32–3; Lowrie 2009: 145 n. 9; Meban 2009: 118–24; Cucchiarelli 2011: 164; Gale 2013: 280.

⁵⁴ Pollio's consulship is portrayed in *Eclogue* 4 as the incubating period for the Golden Age: 4.11–12.

⁵⁵ Coleman 1977: 150–2 offers a summary of the *puer*-identity hypotheses proposed by ancient and modern commentators. Broadly speaking, the *puer* has been variously thought to represent an anticipated offspring of Antony and Octavia (e.g. Du Quesnay 1976: 31–8), or of Pollio (e.g. Cairns 2008: 54–63), or of Octavian (e.g. Harrison 2007: 39–44). A number of scholars insist on identifying the *puer* with Octavian himself (e.g. Leclercq 1996: 198–206 and Snijder 2010) despite the obvious representational awkwardness. More plausibly, some have suggested that the *puer* could represent Virgil's hope for Octavian (e.g. Cucchiarelli 2012: 240), or the poet's hope for a global transformation from bad fortune to universal peace and prosperity (e.g. Davis 2012: 65). On the cultural origins of the poem's idea of a temporal mega-cycle synced to the birth of a child, see Norden 1924, Rose 1942, and Nisbet 1978, amongst others.

imagines the forthcoming glorious age first and foremost as a time in which the Roman world will be freed from fear and ancestral sin ('si qua manent sceleris vestigia nostri, | inrita perpetua solvent formidine terras', 'if some traces of our sin remain, they will be nullified and free the lands from lasting fear', 4.13–14); and we know from the later works of Virgil and Horace that the imagery of the Romans' past sins often operates as a metaphor for the civil war.⁵⁶ However, as soon as Virgil proclaims this forthcoming liberation and age of peace for his fellow Romans, the poet makes the anonymous *puer* their ruler (4.15–17):

ille deum vitam accipiet divisque videbit
permixtos heroas et ipse videbitur illis,
pacatumque reget patriis virtutibus orbem.

He shall receive the gift of divine life, shall see heroes mingled with gods,
and shall himself be seen by them, and shall rule the world to which his
father's prowess brought peace.

The expression 'reget ... orbem' (4.17) unmistakably carries the connotation of the authoritarian rule of a single man;⁵⁷ but in Virgil's formulation of Rome's Golden Age, this form of domination happily coexists with the return of *libertas*. In addition, as Hunter has noted, these lines of *Eclogue* 4 allude to the divinisation of the Ptolemies in Theocritus' *Idyll* 17.13–22.⁵⁸ By assimilating the *puer* to Hellenistic monarchs, Virgil conflates the beginning of Rome's journey towards a Golden Age of liberty with the introduction of a new, un-republican, system of power.

Furthermore, just as the First *Eclogue* relies on the conventions of bucolic generosity to naturalise a system of benefaction and inequality, here in *Eclogue* 4 the idea of Golden-Age voluntarism is used by Virgil to romanticise consent to autocratic rule. In this passage, the *puer* is depicted as eventually 'accepting' (*accipiet*, 4.15) a life amongst the gods as if he were receiving a gift. The implicit characterisation of his divinisation as an honour conferred upon a benefactor implies that the reign of the *puer* was something that people gratefully consented to and celebrated. Later in the poem, even the natural world appears to be responding enthusiastically to the boy's reign, as the earth happily produces 'little gifts' for him ('nullo munuscula cultu ... tellus ... fundet', 4.18–20). By the end, socio-economic exchange ceases to exist and is replaced by agricultural voluntarism ('nec nautica pinus | mutabit merces; omnes feret omnia tellus', 'nor will the pine ship trade goods; every land will produce everything', 4.38–9).⁵⁹ This shift from reciprocity to unidirectional and spontaneous production, glossed here as utopian fecundity, aestheticises the onset of a hierarchy based on willing submission. By imagining Rome's future in this way, *Eclogue* 4 — much like *Eclogue* 1 — creates a conceptual framework wherein the advent of autocratic power would be embraced.

However, in not giving this authoritarian system a 'recognisable face', Virgil makes an important point about contemporary Roman politics and the nature of power. Both *Eclogue* 4 and *Eclogue* 1 present an unidentified individual as being more significant than other established forms of power; yet in both instances, Virgil pointedly refuses to identify this one entity that matters. In *Eclogue* 4, the entire Roman world pins its hope on the *puer*, while traditional deities barely feature: they show up when the boy is born

⁵⁶ Cf. Virg., *G.* 1.501–2; Hor., *Epod.* 7; *Carm.* 1.2, 1.12.

⁵⁷ Bowditch 2001: 135.

⁵⁸ Hunter 2001: 160. Verse 16 in particular evokes the Theocritean image of Alexander and Herakles (to whom the Ptolemies traced their ancestry) joining the company of the Olympian gods (*Theoc.*, *Id.* 17.20–2).

⁵⁹ Bowditch 2001: 135–7, who offers an excellent discussion of the theme of voluntarism in the poem, reads the *munuscula* as symbol for poetry. See also Stöckinger 2016: 9–10, 30.

(‘iam redit et Virgo’, ‘now too the Virgin returns’, 4.6), politely give their support (‘tu modo nascenti puero ... | casta fave Lucina’, ‘only do you, chaste Lucina, smile on the birth of the child’, 4.8–10), and wait for him in heaven (4.15–16, above). The *puer* clearly overshadows the importance of the Olympian pantheon. In *Eclogue* 1, Tityrus draws a sharp contrast between the absence and insufficiency of traditional *divi* (1.41) and the presence and power of the singular *iuvenis*. Indeed, one gets the impression that the pastoral world simply would not function without him. Virgil’s emphasis on the efficacy of one-ness, I would suggest, mirrors the way that the triumvirate (three men competing for power) is moving towards the Principate (one man in power). In fact, the way in which all the wannabe one-man rulers of the triumvirate period identify themselves with *one* particular divinity — and wear these identities as masks that conceal their own — further underscores this movement towards a new, depersonalised one-ness. Against this background, Virgil’s strategy of not identifying the actual figure of authority subtly constructs one-man rule as a deeply anonymised form of government, wherein the one person who matters the most is so removed from ordinary mortal men that the locus of power is ultimately unknowable.

Later in *Aeneid* 6, Virgil redeploys imagery from *Eclogues* 1 and 4 in a eulogy of Augustus (*Aen.* 6.791–4):

hic vir, hic est, tibi quem promitti saepius audis,
 Augustus Caesar, divi genus, aurea condet
 saecula qui rursus Latio regnata per arva
 Saturno quondam.

Here is the man — here he is — whom you so often hear promised to you:
 Augustus Caesar, son of a god, who will bring back the golden years to the
 fields of Latium once ruled over by Saturn.

Virgil’s Augustus — here introduced with the words *hic vir* (6.791) — answers not only the *puer* of *Eclogue* 4, but also the description of the *iuvenis* as *iste deus* in *Eclogue* 1 (line 18); and this act of literary self-referentiality, as Geue well notes, is highlighted by the words ‘tibi quem promitti saepius audis’ (6.791): we have indeed heard all about him before.⁶⁰ By presenting the arrival of Augustus as something that has long been anticipated, Virgil frames political transformation as predestined history, thus naturalising the emergence of the Principate.⁶¹ That Augustus appears so compellingly as the eventual manifestation of the unnamed saviours of *Eclogues* 1 and 4 is precisely because in the earlier poems Virgil makes the power of an supreme individual not merely compatible with, but the defining feature of, a new age of peace and prosperity. However, the poet’s ‘demystification’ of earlier anonymous characters does not render Augustus any closer. The evocation of the *puer* and the *iuvenis* creates the sense that Augustus emerged from the unknown to become the ruler of Rome right in front of our eyes (cf. *hic ... hic*, 6.791). Virgil’s de-anonymisation is not just for dramatic effect: it hints at how autocratic power can dazzle and take hold before you even know it.

V CONCLUSION

Virgil’s First *Eclogue* translates the harsh reality of citizens’ disempowerment amid the triumvirate contest for political legitimacy into a narrative of liberation, whereby the

⁶⁰ Geue 2013: 67–8.

⁶¹ For further discussion, see Geue 2013: 64–8.

oligarchic few, and Octavian in particular, are framed as the only party capable of restoring 'liberty' and bringing positive change. In so doing, the poem not only redefines *libertas* as a condition of security and peacetime pleasure which can only be activated by those who already have political agency, but also naturalises the idea of political benefaction, which necessarily entails subjection and dependence. Combining this particular interpretation of 'liberation' with a story of a benefactor's divinisation, Virgil's poem sanctifies a political structure headed by an overwhelmingly influential individual. It hardly matters who this individual is, because Virgil's poem manages to naturalise a *system* of power. The anonymity of the poem's *iuvenis* is part of this naturalising strategy, as it allows anyone — Octavian or some other charismatic leader — to be placed in the role of society's saviour. Seen in this light, the divinisation of the *iuvenis* in *Eclogue* 1 is far more than an expression of gratitude for the benefactor or a flattering depiction of the patron's higher social status. Rather, by glorifying the idea that beneficent power rests with a singular charismatic man, and by idealising one's total dependence on an influential benefactor, the First *Eclogue* gives expression to what will become the central ideological tenets of the Augustan Principate.

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