

Virgil: the eclogues (penguin classics) translated by guy lee

Literature



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Virgil: The Eclogues The Eclogues, also identified to as Bucolic are adroitly artificial poems, intimately based on Greek originals in a pastoral tradition which makes use of an idealized social order of herdsmen in arcadia as a medium for a broad array of speculation and fantasy. The poems have been written in strict and precise dactylic hexameter verse, the majority of them being in the form of conversations or dialogues between characters with names such as Tityrus, Meliboeus, Menalcas and Mopsus.

The poems are populated on the whole with herdsmen and their imagined dialogues and songs in a predominantly rural setting. The bucolic also embodies dramatic and mythic interpretations of a number of the revolutionary changes that were occurring during that period. The rural personas are shown suffering or accepting revolutionary change, or living through happy or unhappy love. The forth eclogue, Pollio, is conceivably the best known of the Eclogue as it brings about the theme of political mythology. It shaped and amplified a new political mythology, reaching out to envisage a golden age shepherd in by the birth of a boy.

In the eclogues, Virgil uses the pastoral as representative of the life of imagination and thoughts and of the individual person's struggle to identify his or her standing within society and nature. The Eclogue bring about a feature of pastoral which is a genre in literature, art or music that depicts shepherd life, usually in an idealized manner and for urban audiences.

Pastoral as a genre in literature is represented in poetry where the subject of the poem is set in the countryside and involves dialogue between herdsmen. The Eclogues presents a more idealized vision of rural life as it was also set in arcadia. Through the use of pastoral poetry, the poem was able to use

humble characters to talk about public figures and current affairs (Levis). It can be noticed that the first Eclogue is a meeting and dialogue between two shepherds. Virgil constructs a strong sense of dichotomy and exchange by means of the repetitive employment of “ you” and “ we”. This repetition successfully explicates the significant differences between the two shepherds. This opening to the eclogue juxtaposes the herdsmen, one of whom is experiencing very good fortunes while the other one is a victim of misfortunes and brings out an anguished monologue typical of elegy. In classical literature an elegy was plainly any poem written in the elegiac metre (alternating lines of dactylic, hexameter and pentameter) and had a love element. Pastoral elegy in particular is a common style in Virgil’s Eclogue whereby the subjects have been represented as idealized shepherds’ in an idealized pastoral background and follows a formal pattern that starts with an articulation and expression of grief and misery and an invocation to the muse to aid the poet in expressing his suffering (Donoghue). Another theme that is central to most of the Eclogues is the theme of love, particularly Eclogues two, eight and ten. However, in most instances it is expressed in terms of lamentation and wooing. Virgil also incorporated some aspects and specks of humour into these often sombre poems to bring out light moments and remove monotony in the conversations.

The Eclogues have been regarded as patent paradigm. They represent an unconcealed concern with contemporary moral and social issues, with human possibilities and human anguish and misery with the influence to effect and change. The Eclogues present the most insightful perception of

the anxieties that were present during that period. They were meant to make the audience at the time to ponder, think and question, “ Does progress necessarily entail and justify human suffering?” can art minister to that suffering?”

Other themes explored by the Eclogues include that of piety and the bliss and contentment of the countryside and the themes of passion and violence, especially so in Eclogue Six.

Cited Works

Donoghue , Steve . Virgil’s Book of Bucolics, the Ten Eclogues, Translated into English Verse: Framed by Cues for Reading Aloud and Cues for Threading Texts and Themes. 6 September 2011. 29 April 2012.

.

Lee, Guy. Virgil: The Eclogues . revised, illustrated, reprint. Penguin, 1984.

Levis, Richard . ALLEGORY AND THE ECLOGUES. Ed. Terry Papillon and Andrew Becker. October 1993. April 2012. .