

Liberating Tityrus: Freedom and Slavery in Vergil's *Eclogue* 1

Scholars assert that Vergil portrays Tityrus as a slave in *Eclogue* 1 and that the purpose of Tityrus's trip to Rome (ll. 27-45) is for Tityrus to receive manumission (e.g. Galinsky, Wright, Schmidt, Du Quesnay). The interpretation of Tityrus as a slave, furthermore, has led to extended discussion regarding Tityrus' legal status and why he would need to go to Rome for his freedom (cf. Galinsky, Schmidt, Du Quesnay). I suggest here that *libertas* (l.27) is misinterpreted when it is construed in relation to literal slavery and that *libertas* refers rather to the liberty that is won when Tityrus leaves his home and thereby escapes the metaphorical slavery of his mistress, Galatea. It is because Tityrus' liberty has gone misunderstood, I argue, that scholars have suggested, "a bewildering variety of conflicting and incompatible reconstructions of Tityrus' story" (Du Quesnay 1981, 30).

Virgil refers to Tityrus' *libertas* and *servitium* in the context of Tityrus' problematic relationship with Galatea and his *libertas* and *servitium*, accordingly, should be read within that context. Tityrus emphasizes his slavery to his mistress in many respects. First, he refers to Galatea as having had the power to 'relinquish' him (*Galatea reliquit*, 30). The verb that positions him in the slavery of Galatea most clearly, however, is *tenebat* (l.31). With the imperfect indicative, Tityrus stresses the ongoing control that he was subject to while 'Galatea was holding him' (*dum me Galatea tenebat*, 31). This leads Tityrus to assert that 'there was no hope of liberty' (*nec spes libertatis erat*, 32) at this time. The second use of *libertas* at line 32, then, clarifies for the reader what Tityrus meant when he first used *libertas* at line 27. After using two verbs that construct himself as under the control of Galatea (*tenebat*, *reliquit*) and explaining that he accordingly had no hope of liberty, Tityrus further clarifies his inability to take action

during his tenure under Galatea by referring to it as slavery (*neque servitio me exire licebat*, l.40).

The image of male slavery to a mistress, the *servitium amoris* trope (cf. Copley 1947, Lyne 1979), is particularly associated with the Augustan elegists, but I argue here that Vergil introduces the trope into Latin via an allusion to Theocritus' *Idyll* 14, in which males similarly leave town to find respite from their stressful relationships with women; I thereby follow in the footsteps of other scholars who have already recognized that Vergil engages heavily with *Idyll* 14 in *Eclogue* 1 (cf. von Albrecht; Du Quesnay). Vergil, then, reworks a specific Theocritean source text, as he does time and time again in the *Eclogues* (on Vergil's reworking of Theocritean source texts, cf. Saunders 2008, 15, Garson, Posch), when he has Tityrus leave home to find respite from Galatea.

The introduction of 'slavery' to a particular mistress appears to be Vergil's peculiar innovation, since neither does previous Greco-Roman literature construct the image of a man being enslaved to a particular woman (cf. Copley, Lyne) nor does the Theocritean source text use the language of *servitium*. Vergil, then, as an intermediary between the Greek bucolic and Latin elegiac tradition, introduces the vocabulary of *servitium* to a mistress in *Eclogue* 1, but the *servitium* is still, following the Theocritean tradition, something that should be fought against. It will be an innovation for Propertius and the other Roman elegists to turn Vergil's *servitium amoris* into something to celebrate. This paper has considerable repercussions for the interpretation of *Eclogue* 1, for the interpretation of the historical development of the *servitium amoris* trope, and for the interpretation of Vergil's poetics in relation to the *Eclogues* as a poetry book as well as in relation to Hellenistic poetry and Augustan elegy.

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