

## Thyrsis' Arcadian Shepherds in Vergil's Seventh *Eclogue*

In Vergil's seventh *Eclogue*, Meliboeus relates a singing contest that Corydon and Thyrsis undertook. Upon beginning their songs, Corydon invokes the Libethrian nymphs (21), and Thyrsis invokes 'Arcadian shepherds' (25-6). Scholars interpret Thyrsis' Arcadian shepherds as people (cf. Cucchiarelli, 2012, 384, Papanghelis 1997, 149, Jenkyns 1989, 30, Fantazzi and Querbach 1985, 359, Coleman, 1977, 214, 226, Frischer 1975, 90, 92, Waite 1972, 122, Putnam 1970, 232, Wülfing-v. Martitz, 1970, 382, Hornsby 1968, 145, Beyers 1962, 44; Clausen does not comment on their identity 1994, 221), but I suggest that they should be interpreted as divinities. In support of this assertion, I rely on the expectations of the capping style, Vergil's description of the setting and the characters present, an epigram by Erucius (an intertext for this poem), the Greek and Roman literary tradition, as well as Thyrsis' statement after his invocation.

Given the way that Vergil describes the setting and the characters present, he does not encourage his reader to imagine that there are any Arcadian shepherds that Thyrsis can call on for aid. The suggestion that Thyrsis invokes divinities explains why Thyrsis calls on the shepherds as Arkadians: he invokes the gods by their appropriate *sedes*, so that they will hear his prayer. As Vergil sets the scene, then, only Corydon and Thyrsis are Arkadians, and, given that Arkadian Corydon is Thyrsis' competitor, there are no Arkadians present to aid Thyrsis.

*Eclogue 7* shares striking similarities with an epigram by Erucius (*AP* 6.96) (cf. Cucchiarelli 2012, 378, Clausen 1994, 215.). Perhaps the most important similarity for the argument made here, however, is Erucius' reference to Pan as a 'herding/pastoral god' (νομῖω...θεῶ, 6) in the context of 'the two Arkadians,' since this resonates with Vergil referring to Pan, I suggest, as a *pastor* in *Arcades pastores*. Readers familiar with Erucius, or the 'common

source' on which Virgil and Erucius draw, would know that the 'two Arkadians' (Ἀρκάδες ἀμφοτέρου/*arcades ambo*) are closely linked with 'pastoral' Pan (νομίω...θεῶ) in literary history.

There is considerable evidence within the literary, material, and linguistic record that constructs Pan as a shepherd. As Jost notes (1996, 1103), "his usual attributes of syrinx and *lagobolon* (a device for catching hares) mark him out as a shepherd," and, as Beekes observes (2010, 1149), πᾶν "is often identified with Skt. *Pūṣ-án-* [m.] 'god who protects and augments the herds.' As a god who protects and augments the herds, Pan is the 'divine' *pastor*, who oversees and furthers the functions of 'human' *pastores*. Pan's Greek name, "certainly derived from the root \**pa(s)* and mean[ing] guardian of the flocks," (Jost, 1996, 1103.) is cognate with the Latin *pascere*.

Vergil expects his readers to recognize Pan in *pastores* for several reasons: thanks to the reference to Arkadia, thanks to the cognate *pastores*, thanks to the necessities of the capping genre, and thanks to the subject matter of Thyrsis' songs. Vergil, moreover, closely links Pan and Arcadia in multiple eclogues (4.58-9, 8.22-4, 10.26, 31).

Given that Vergil uses the plural (*arcades pastores*), he encourages his audience to understand another personage, in addition to Pan, that Thyrsis calls upon for aid, and many readers will link the second *pastor* with Hermes. As Coleman remarks, "In traditional mythology Arcadia was the homeland of Hermes, the inventor of the lyre and the shepherd pipe (*h.Hom.* 4.2, 39-67, 511-12) and father (at least in some accounts) of Pan, the patron of shepherds and their music. It is in association with Pan and Hermes that we find the earliest hints of an idealization of the Arkadian region" (cf. Coleman 1977, 208, and Jost 1996). Furthermore, in the eponymous *Homeric Hymn* (491-4), Hermes is fashioned as a cowherd and shepherd. Hermes, then, should be the second *pastor* that most readers assume that Thyrsis calls upon for aid.

## Bibliography

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