

Copa's Urban and Bucolic Arcadia

The pseudo-Vergilian *Copa* is a fundamental piece for understanding Arcadia in antiquity, as it attests another comic use of bucolic tradition (as common in elegy and satire), and also reinforces the close relationship between bucolic landscape and Arcadia already in ancient times. In this poem, a dancing girl invites a tired low class traveler to stay at an inn. In order to convince him, she describes the place, its products and its surrounding bucolic landscape (naming only key elements, such as a cool bower, line 8; a river, l. 12; flowers, ll. 13-16; chirruping cicadas, l. 27), with multiple intertextual references to Theocritus' *Idylls* and Vergil's *Eclogues* (Merkle 2005). This bucolic garden is specifically located around the Arcadian mount Maenalus (l. 9), showing the use of Arcadia as the ideal bucolic space soon after Vergil. This comic reading of Vergil's bucolic landscape poses a challenge for previous scholarship that denied Arcadia's role on the *Eclogues*, attesting that other poets in antiquity identified it as an important space in Vergil.

Snell (1953) saw Vergil's *Eclogues* landscape as a unit through all poems: Arcadia, a long-lost realm. A few years later Schmidt (1972) and Jenkyns (1989) did not consider space in the *Eclogues* as a unity, and completely denied the importance of Arcadia in ancient bucolic poetry. Both visions are complementary, and must be connected to show the complexity of Vergil's *Eclogues*. Only recently modern scholarship (e.g. Jones, 2010) is reconsidering Arcadia's role on Roman literature, though some critics still assume that Arcadia is the landscape par excellence in the *Eclogues* (e.g. Larmour and Spancer, 2007, p. 50-51). Other genres (such as elegy) can help understanding whether ancient literature identified in Vergil the predominance of Arcadian landscapes, as they attest ancient readings of bucolic landscape scenes. Minor poetry should also be considered, since it shows which features minor poets and even *personatus* considered most prominent in Vergil's bucolic

work. *Copa* may even have contributed to the ancient literary image of Arcadia, as it was probably read by later bucolic poets, such as Nemesianus (e.g. *Eclogue* 4).

In *Copa*, the main function of landscape is to convince the traveller to join the innkeeper (similarly to Theocritus' *Idyll* 11 and Vergil's *Eclogue* 2). Landscape is portrayed as a refuge from a warm road (a potentially difficult place in bucolic poetry, as it defined the relationship between city and countryside), and therefore the poem reinforces the interpretation of the bucolic as an escape alternative, something common in elegy (Breed, 2012). On the other hand, *Copa* portrays neither the landscape features nor Arcadia as inaccessible, since the traveller may go into the inn if he wants (or, perhaps, if he has money). More than this, the poem sets bucolic landscape in the city (since taverns are urban establishments), closely relating gardens and bucolic landscape, now accessible also to obscure mule riders. At the same time, it mixes oddly real and fantastical representations (cheap wine, cheese, fruits, instruments vs. a Siren, the Maenalus), possibly resembling Hellenistic and Roman *topia*, landscape decorations used by the elite. Urban and bucolic space coexist in the same environment, something traditional in Roman culture (Jones, 2016).

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