THE PASTORAL IN BYZANTIUM

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The revival of the genre of the ancient novel in 12th-cent. Byzantium (after a hiatus of some eight centuries) brought with it evidence of a continued and sophisticated readership of ancient bucolic/pastoral.¹ Four novels represent that revival for us—Theodorus Prodromus’ *Rhodanthe and Dosicles*, Nicetas Eugenianus’ *Drosilla and Charicles*, Constantine Manasses’ *Aristandros and Callitheia*, and Eustathius Macrembolites’ *Hysmine and Hysminias*.² Only fragments remain of Manasses’ novel; the other three novels are extant in their entirety, and of these Eugenianus’ draws on the bucolic/pastoral tradition most pervasively, with numerous references and allusions.³ Yet the bucolic/pastoral tradition figures in the other novels as well and offers a lens through which to view the novels responding to one another and to the tradition. Scholars have written much on cultivated gardens in the Byzantine novel,⁴ but the use of the bucolic/pastoral tradition (as linked with rural landscapes and herdsmen) has received little attention. This paper explores the intertextual innovation and sophistication of the 12th-cent. Byzantine novels’ play with classical bucolic/pastoral themes and imagery.

Scholars often remark on the paucity of bucolic/pastoral literature among Byzantine writings, and indeed our two chief examples of free-standing Byzantine bucolic/pastoral poetry were composed only late in the Byzantine period.⁵ From the 13th century, the century also of our first manuscripts of Theocritus,⁶ we have a hexameter poem in mime form (a dialogue between a farmer and his friend), written by Maximus Planudes, a Byzantine scholar who also produced a commentary on

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¹ Cf. Baldwin (1985) 235: “the strong bucolic element in their [the Byzantines’] romances can be seen as something of a surrogate [for Byzantine pastoral]”.


³ The Greek texts used for this essay are Marcovich (1992, 2001); Conca (1990). On Eugenianus’ use of bucolic/pastoral, see Milazzo (1985), Burton (2003).


⁵ See also Hunger (1978) vol. 2, 148.

Theocritus; from the 15th century, an anonymous hexameter poem in mime form (a dialogue between a herdsman and his friend).\(^7\)

Yet Byzantine literature from early on reveals strong interest in Theocritean poetry as well as familiarity with bucolic/pastoral themes and imagery. Literary allusions, particularly to Theocritean poetry, appear throughout the Byzantine period. For example, Nonnus’ 5th-cent. Dionysiaca includes a ‘pastoral’ lament modeled largely on Daphnis’ song in Theocritus’ Id. 1 (Nonnus 15.370–422).\(^8\) An epigram by the 5th-cent. poet Cyrus (AP 9.136) includes the familiar bucolic theme of a shepherd playing music for solace.\(^9\) Epigrams by the 6th-cent. writer Agathias echo phrases from Theocritean bucolic poems.\(^10\) The 10th-cent. writer Ioannes Geometres’ “second encomium of the apple” offers a later, extended example of easy familiarity with Theocritus’ poetry.\(^11\) In Byzantine literature, allusions to such authors as Moschus and Bion as well as Longus are more scarce than to Theocritus, yet they too figure in the construction of continued Byzantine interest in bucolic/pastoral themes and imagery.\(^12\) A 5th-cent. translation of Theocritus into iambic

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\(^7\) For the Greek text of the poem, with commentary, see Holzinger (1893); Pontani (1973); for discussion see also Nissen (1936). On the Planudean edition of Theocritus, see Fryde (2000) 231–232; also Gallavotti (1993) 315–327.

\(^8\) For the Greek text, with commentary, see Sturm (1901); see also Baldwin (1985) 235–241; who calls this poem “a Byzantine Pastoral” and remarks: “I am not disposed to blame the Byzantines too much for not being prolific in this vein [the pastoral]” (quotation from p. 235).

\(^9\) On this lament see Harries (1994) 72–76 and this volume, pp. 530–536 (with attention also to models in Bion and ps.-Moschus’ Epitaph for Bion).

\(^10\) For discussion see Cameron (1982) 230–235, who stresses the epigram’s “unmistakable bucolic flavour”, which he finds “the more interesting in that (excluding drama) pastoral is the one major Hellenistic genre that is conspicuous by its absence in early Byzantine times” (quotation from p. 231).

\(^11\) E.g. AP 5.296.1–3 (cf. Theocr. 3.28–30; see Gow (1952) vol. 2, 71, on ll. 29–30), 299.9 (cf. Theocr. 1.134; Averil Cameron (1970) 22), 292.1–6 (cf. Theocr. 7.135–142; Elliger (1975) 426 and n. 4). Unfortunately we do not possess Agathias’ nine-book Daphniaca (cf. AP 6.80).

\(^12\) For the Greek text, with discussion, see Littlewood (1972) esp. 19–20, 78–80 (citing Theocr. Id. 5, 6, 8, 12, 15); as Littlewood observes, the carelessness of Geometres’ quotations “suggest[s] that he knew Theocritus at first hand and not from a hand-book of quotations” (p. 78, on 19.23–25).

\(^13\) On a parallel to Longus, Proem 3 in AP 6.80, see Hunter (1983) 41–42 (who cautions that “only a greater knowledge of the Δαιμονίακα than we possess would enable us to discover whether Agathias has here been influenced by Longus’ prologue”). On linkages between an anacreontic poem by the 9th-cent. author Constantine of Sicily and Longus’ novel as well as Mosch. 1 (Runaway Eros), see McCail (1988). On allusions to Bion’s Epitaph for Adonis and ps.-Moschus’ Epitaph for Bion (as well as to Theocrit. Id. 1) in Nonnus 15.370–422, see Harries (1994), esp. 74–75, and this volume, pp. 532–534.