SEVENTEENTH CENTURY PASTORAL POETRY: OPITZ AND NICANDER

Studies dealing with Opitz and pastoral poetry have almost always regarded Opitz as the father of the German pastoral, a genre which began in Germany with his Schäfferey von der Nimfen Hercinie (1630). No scholar seriously questions that hypothesis, nor is it the aim of this paper to do so. Rather we hope to show, in one singular instance, the influence of Opitz on that genre.

While on a research trip in the German Democratic Republic, I found, in a “Sammelband”, a short, uncatalogued work with the title: NicAndeRs unverhoffte Freude und Lust über den frohen Nahmens=Tag Herrn Georg Marchens/ Seines vielwerthen Gönners. 1651. Upon closer inspection, the forty-page work turned out to be a pastoral one, reminiscent of Opitz’ Hercinie. This paper will subject to some scrutiny Nicander’s work in order to show the degree of influence which Opitz had as well as to show how Nicander goes beyond Opitz in writing his own pastoral work.

“Nicander” is quite obviously not the author’s real name; however, to date all efforts to solve the riddle of authorship have been unsuccessful. It is not one of the persons listed in Holzmann and Bohatta’s Pseudonymen-Lexikon, and no references to ano-

2. The trip was made possible by a grant from IREX (International Research and Exchanges Board), to whom I express my gratitude. A special note of thanks is also due to my mentor in the GDR, Prof. G. Hartung (Halle), and to the Director of the Library in Zwickau, J. Werner, both of whom were very helpful during my stay.
3. Located in the Ratsschulbibliothek, Zwickau (call no: 5. 3. 26/66).
ther Nicander can be found in Goedeke, Faber du Faur, or other major bibliographical works. On the other hand, we do know that Georg Marche, to whom the work is dedicated, lived in Dresden and had a position as "Hof-Apotheker."\(^5\) We know, too, that the writer of this pastoral was employed by Marche for some sixteen years prior to 1651, i.e., from about 1635-1651, and perhaps remained in his service for some time after that.\(^6\) Because of the manner in which the name "Nicander" appears throughout the work (it is always written as "NicAndeR"), it is reasonable to assume that the initials of the author are "AR." However, a search of the usual biographical and bibliographical works for an author in Dresden around the middle of the century whose initials were "AR" has, thus far, yielded no positive results.

In any case, Nicander seems to have responded to Opitz' desire, as expressed in the dedication to the *Hercinie*:

> Also wirdt sie [die *Hercinie*] doch zum wenigsten anderen/ denen beßere gaben vnndt mehr zeit als mir verlihen sindt/-hoffentlich anlaß reichen/ vssere sprache/ || darinnen sich vormals keiner dergleichen zue erdencken/ bemühet hatt/ auch mit dieser nicht weniger nutzbaren als lustigen art schriften mehr vnndt mehr zue bereichern. (pp. 5-6)

A brief sketch of the content of Nicander's pastoral which was not among those dealt with by Meyer in his study on the seventeenth-century pastoral,\(^7\) reveals the following. After an introductory description of the geographic area and some thoughts on the season (end of winter, in order to coincide with the nameday celebration on 23 April), and a few poems interspersed to balance the prose, we meet Nicander, the author and chief shepherd, who is in a melancholic state and all alone except for the "echo" of his own voice. Suddenly his two friends, Lycidas and Acron appear.


6. "indeme er dir [i.e., Nicander] und denen Deinigen/ fast sechszehen Jahr nummehr grosse Wohlthaten/ Gunst und Liebe erwiesen" (leaf E4r).