Genre and Rhetoric in the Reception of Virgil's *Georgics*: Poliziano's *Rusticus* as
Didaxis and Epideixis

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ABSTRACT

TEDD A. WIMPERIS: Genre and Rhetoric in the Reception of Virgil's *Georgics*:
Poliziano's *Rusticus* as Didaxis and Epideixis
(Under the direction of James J. O'Hara.)

In this thesis I examine the generic and rhetorical underpinnings of Angelo

Poliziano's Latin hexameter poem *Rusticus* (1483), an imitative introduction to agrarian

didactic poetry that takes Virgil's *Georgics* as its primary source. To provide an account

of how Poliziano utilizes his classical influences and their generic attributes in this work,

I present in the first chapter a brief survey of the author's life and scholarship to establish

context, and proceed, in the second chapter, with a close reading of the poem itself,

paying special attention to its use of Greek and Latin models. In the third chapter I argue

that to facilitate his exposition of agrarian didactic, Poliziano turns to conventions of

epideictic rhetoric, and thus introduces the genre by combining its defining features into

an epideixis of the rustic life. In the last chapter, I explore the generic admixture of

bucolic and didactic elements that pervades the poem, analyzing its tradition in Virgil and

later Roman literature, as well as its role in Poliziano's epideixis.

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INTRODUCTION

The *Silvae* of Angelo Poliziano (1454-94) have dual identities. On the one hand, they are works of poetry, verse creations in Latin inspired by the Greek and Roman classics; on the other, they are practical pedagogical tools, meant for recitation to an audience of students as an introduction to ancient authors through direct imitation of their works. They are *praelectiones* in verse, each composed and delivered as a foreword to Poliziano's annual series of lectures at the Florentine Studio: the *Manto*, on Virgil's *Eclogues*; the *Rusticus*, on Hesiod's *Works and Days* and Virgil's *Georgics*; the *Ambra*, on Homeric epic; and the *Nutricia*, on poetic inspiration and ancient poetry in general. Inasmuch as these verse *praelectiones* are conceived as teaching texts, they may rightly be called "didactic" poems.

Yet the nature of these pieces as pedagogical texts affords them a certain flexibility in genre: according to what subject(s) Poliziano chose for a given *praelectio*, each of the *Silvae* reflects the features of the authors or works treated, in motifs, themes, and aspects of generic composition, all refined and refashioned into an original work of poetry. Poliziano's introduction to Homer in the *Ambra*, for instance, exemplifies many defining traits of Homeric epic, from diction and *topoi* to actual narrative content. In this facet of the *Silvae*, we discern a fundamental discrepancy between function and form, as the poem's didactic intent employs the material of a genre for expressly pedagogical purposes. The purpose of the poems is above all to teach poetry, and generic conventions

within each piece are invoked only to be illustrated and defined in and of themselves. The poetic genre in which Poliziano composes his verse *praelectio* therefore assumes a superficial role, a mode that is taken up to express through demonstration what comprises the distinguishing features of a given genre.

To explore further the generic complexities that the *Silvae* represent, in this paper I examine the second of these verse *praelectiones*, the *Rusticus*, delivered in 1483 as an introduction to his lectures on Hesiod and Virgil. This poem is doubly interesting from the standpoint of its generic makeup, since the *praelectio* constitutes a treatment of didactic poetry itself. In providing an account of how Poliziano utilizes his classical sources and their generic attributes in this poem, I present first a brief survey of Poliziano's life and scholarship as context for the present study, and proceed with a close reading of the poem itself. I then argue that to facilitate his exposition of didactic poetry in the *praelectio*, Poliziano turns to rhetorical categories for a framework within which to set the generic material he brings to bear. The *Rusticus* thus introduces Hesiod and Virgil's agrarian didactic poems by constructing an epideixis of their rustic world, combining their diction, imagery, motifs, and other defining features into a rich encomium of the country life.

Encomiastic elements in the poem have been observed by Attilio Bettinzoli in his volume on Poliziano's poetry,[1] but the full scope of the *Rusticus*' epideictic character remains to be explored: the relation of Poliziano's rhetorical program to his use of the agrarian didactic genre, his influences in combining genre with rhetoric in poetry, and the aspects of encomium traceable through the *Rusticus*' key sources. Similarly, the poem's

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[1] Bettinzoli, *Daedaleum Iter*: *Studi sulla Poesia e la Poetica di Angelo Poliziano*, pp. 273-374, on the *Rusticus*; he reads in these features an idealization of humanist cultural florescence (*la celebrazione dell'utopia umanistica*, p. 312).

pervasive admixture of agrarian didactic material with distinctly bucolic features has been acknowledge in criticism,[2] but not fully located within the tradition of Poliziano's Roman sources, nor reconciled with the poem's epideictic agenda. This study therefore builds upon previous work on the *Rusticus* (which has, in general, not attracted a great deal of scholarly attention), and aims to provide a fuller account of how Poliziano is engaging with his generic sources, and utilizing them in innovative ways.

As a product of the Renaissance humanist revival, the poem is a mosaic of numerous individual sources reflecting the breadth of a two thousand-year literary tradition: Greek, Roman, medieval, and contemporary vernacular influences stand side by side, and Poliziano is engaging with all of them in some meaningful way. I am, however, examining in depth only two groups of sources: first, Virgil's *Georgics* and *Eclogues*, Poliziano's most important models for the *Rusticus*, and second, those literary sources that belong to the agrarian didactic or bucolic genres more broadly. Poliziano draws from a wide range of authors, across time periods and generic boundaries, whose work is in some way relevant to the agricultural and pastoral themes he is treating, and a paper of this scope could not hope to give adequate attention to their full presence in this poem. I shall highlight at some points the breadth of the spectrum from which Poliziano is deriving his material, and call attention to important sources in individual passages, but these will be, by necessity, mere glimpses of a far wider field.

The poem is also a distillation of centuries of literary development: while Poliziano's professed sources and most pronounced intertexts are classical in origin, one cannot ignore the intervening thousand years between the end of Late Antiquity and the first movements of the Renaissance in Italy, and the impact that those years would have

[2] *Ibid.*; Bausi, *Angelo Poliziano*: Silvae, pp. xxiii, xxxvii.

had on how fifteenth-century scholars read, interpreted, and imitated the classics. Standing at the end of a long tradition, Poliziano was not encountering the ancient texts as a Greco-Roman reader, but as a Florentine of the Quattrocento. While the living medieval tradition that moved and shaped Poliziano's education should by no means be disregarded in considering his poetry and scholarship, I am limiting the present study to a focus on his Greek and Roman sources, inasmuch as those are the texts which he is explicitly treating in his *praelectio*, a text designed to instruct students in the works of ancient authors.

Before we begin our examination of the *Rusticus* itself, it is useful to provide some brief grounding in Poliziano's life and career as background for its composition.[3]

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[3] More comprehensive treatments of Poliziano's scholarly career can be found in Grafton, 'On the Scholarship of Politian and Its Context', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 40 (1977), pp. 150-188; Godman, *From Poliziano to Machiavelli: Florentine Humanism in the High Renaissance*, pp. 31-133; Fantazzi, *Silvae*, pp. vii-xii; Galand, Les Silves *d'Ange Politien*, esp. pp. 24-54; Schönberger, *Poliziano*: Rusticus, pp. 11-14.

CHAPTER 1

Angelo Poliziano: Philologist and Poet

Born Angelo Ambrogini in the Tuscan town of Montepulciano (whence he

acquired the surname he would use throughout his career), Poliziano was a prodigious

student from a young age: already in 1469, his fifteenth year, he presented Lorenzo de'

Medici, the *de facto* ruler of Florence who would become his patron, with a translation of

Book 2 of Homer's *Iliad* in Latin hexameters.[4] In his youthful training in the Florentine

Studio, he studied philosophy under Marsilio Ficino, an important member of Lorenzo's

intellectual circle who headed a revival of Neoplatonic philosophy in Florence, and John

Argyropoulos, a teacher of Greek language and philosophy who had emigrated west from

Byzantium. At nineteen years of age, in 1473, he was invited by Lorenzo to work in his

palace as his secretary and as a tutor to his son, Piero, in which capacities he served until

1478.

After a brief falling out with the Medici family and some time spent among the

humanist centers north of Florence, Poliziano was invited back to the city by Lorenzo to

hold the chair of *ars poetica et rhetorica* at the Florentine Studio, which he occupied

from 1480 until his death in 1494. It was during his tenure there that he edited and

lectured on a wide variety of classical authors, including Virgil, Statius, Quintilian, and

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[4] Fantazzi, *Silvae*, p. vii; Leuker, *Angelo Poliziano*, p. 1. Poliziano's father, Benedetto Ambrogini, had been a major supporter of Lorenzo's father Piero in Montepulciano, for which he was murdered by political enemies there. This provided the connection that granted Benedetto's son a certain intimacy with the House of Medici.

Terence, as well as on philosophy and dialectic. In 1489 he published the *Centuria prima* of his compendious *Miscellanea*, a wide-ranging collection of essays about his observations on ancient literature, critical emendations to transmitted texts, and other fruits of his study. This work, which in many ways defines the character and innovations of his scholarship, is credited with helping to establish, in large part, the range, scope, and approach of classical philology.[5]

One of Poliziano's defining characteristics as a philologist was his incorporation of lesser-studied authors into his program, stepping outside of the conventional canon to apply his energies to a wider array of material, ranging from archaic literature of the Roman Republic to that of Late Antiquity, works which had had a long tradition in medieval scholarship, and those which were just recently being recovered.[6] In his first lectures at the Florentine Studio (1480), he treated Statius and Quintilian, authors he held in high regard, whom other humanists tended to pass over in favor of the great names of Virgil (in poetry) and Cicero (in prose and rhetoric).[7] The following year, when he did lecture on Virgil, he chose to focus not on the more popular *Aeneid*, but rather on the *Eclogues*. Widening further the purview of his scholarship, he was noted for his mastery of Greek language and literature, and as a philologist and translator he took his

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[5] Reynolds & Wilson, *Scribes and Scholars*, pp. 127-29; see also Grafton, 'On the Scholarship of Politian and Its Context', pp. 150-188, and Godman, *From Poliziano to Machiavelli*, pp. 80-133.

[6] Godman, *From Poliziano to Machiavelli*, pp. 37-45, 51-56; McLaughlin, *Literary Imitation in the Italian Renaissance*, pp. 187-88; Fantazzi, *Silvae*, pp. viii-ix. Wilson-Okamura posits that Poliziano's interest in Virgil's *Georgics* may have stemmed from this taste for variety: *Virgil in the Renaissance*, p. 97-98, and, on the *Georgics* as a text that to Renaissance readers epitomized the diversity of Virgil's poetry, pp. 93-100.

[7] McLaughlin, *Literary Imitation in the Italian Renaissance*, pp. 193-96; Godman, *From Poliziano to Machiavelli*, pp. 38-45, and 'Poliziano's Poetics and Literary History', *Interpres* 13 (1993), *passim*; Grafton and Jardine, *From Humanism to the Humanities*, pp. 94-95; Fantazzi, *Silvae*, pp. viii-ix; Leuker, *Angelo Poliziano*, p. 4. For a full analysis of the lecture on Statius and Quintilian and its place in humanist dialogue at the time, see Godman, 'Poliziano's Poetics', pp. 128-47.

involvement with the range of Greek texts further than other humanists of his day. [8] This engagement with an extensive array of authors and works reflects, on a more general level, his holistic conception of ancient literature, expressed nowhere more clearly than in his fourth *Silva*, the *Nutricia*.[9] The *Rusticus* too joins together a substantial assortment of authors both Greek and Roman, early and late.

A talented poet as well as scholar, he produced works in Latin (elegies, odes, epigrams), Greek (epigrams), and his native Tuscan (among others, a musical drama, *Orfeo*, and the unfinished *Le Stanze per la Giostra*), and several translations from Greek, notably Homer and the Hellenistic poets.[10] It is his ability as a poet, combined with his academic profession, which brings us to the *Silvae*.

Poliziano's curriculum during his tenure at the Florentine Studio comprised an annual lecture series, begun in the fall of each year, on a certain ancient author or set of authors, and one or more of their texts. Part of his program for introducing the subject(s) of each lecture series was the composition of a *praelectio* (also called *praelusio*) that outlined the major points of the specific authors and texts that were to be treated, and was recited to students as a primer for the main content of the lectures. A practice among the humanists that seems to have originated in the medieval *accessus ad auctores*, these introductions were typically written in prose, functioning both as a lesson on the works

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[8] Reynolds and Wilson, *Scribes and Scholars*, pp. 136-37; Grafton, 'On the Scholarship of Politian', pp. 172-75. Useful summaries of Greek studies in his period are provided by Grafton and Jardine, *From Humanism to the Humanities*, pp. 99-121 and Reynolds and Wilson, *Scribes and Scholars*, pp. 130-42.

[9] Godman, *From Poliziano to Machiavelli*, pp. 70-72. Godman, 'Poliziano's Poetics', *passim*, esp. 182-84.

[10] See McLaughlin, *Literary Imitation in the Italian Renaissance*, pp. 187-91, 209-16. Poliziano's collected works (excepting his vernacular poetry) were most recently published in 1976: Angelo Ambrogini Poliziano, *Prose volgari inedite e poesie latine e greche edite e inedite*, ed. Del Lungo.

addressed and as an exhortation to read them.[11] While Poliziano did compose more

traditional *praelectiones* in prose,[12] the four verse examples in the *Silvae*, all treating

ancient poetry, utilized the form to serve new ends. Applying his literary abilities, he

crafted *praelectiones* that treated their subject matter not by commentary, but by direct

imitation in verse, adapting their diction, style, imagery, themes, and subject matter to

original poetic works.

He wrote and delivered four such pieces, all composed in Latin dactylic

hexameters.[13] The first was the *Manto* of 1481, introducing lectures on the poet Virgil.

Nominally an introduction for Poliziano's lectures on the *Eclogues*,[14] the *praelectio* treats

Virgil's entire corpus in 373 verses (preceded by a preface of another 30 verses). The

majority of the poem is performed as an oracle by the figure of Manto, the daughter of

Tiresias who gave her name to Mantua,[15] Virgil's birthplace. In a long prophetic

utterance, she praises the illustrious future of that city and the poet who will bring it

glory, foretelling briefly his early attempts at verse (the *Appendix Vergiliana*, vv. 81-95),

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[11] The standard features of a *praelectio*, which Poliziano follows only loosely in the *Rusticus*, were first a *laudatio* of the author being treated, and then an *exhortatio* encouraging the listeners to read the author's original works and emulate their style; Fantazzi, *Silvae*, p. xiii, Galand, *Les Silves*, pp. 22, 54-55; Leuker, *Angelo Poliziano*, p. 4. On the tradition in the Middle Ages, see Quain, *The Medieval* Accessus Ad Auctores.

[12] Besides his inaugural lecture on Statius and Quintilian, these include prefaces on Plautus' *Menaechmi* and Persius' *Satires*, the *Panepistemon* (on Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*) and the *Lamia* (on Aristotle's *Prior Analytics*); see McLaughlin, *Literary Imitation in the Italian Renaissance*, p. 196, 198-200; Celenza, *Poliziano's* Lamia.

[13] Most recent editors and commentators of the *Silvae* are Bausi (*Silvae*, 1996), Galand (*Les Silves*, 1987), and Fantazzi (*Silvae*, 2004). Bausi's edition has the added virtue of providing detailed accounts of intertextuality in a running apparatus to each poem. In addition to the overviews provided in these editions, for commentary on the *Silvae* as a whole see Bettinzoli, *Daedaleum Iter*, pp. 67-151; Leuker, *Angelo Poliziano*, pp. 134-59.

[14] *Angeli Politiani silva in Bucolicon Vergili enarratione pronuntiata*.

[15] The personage of Manto would have been especially familiar to Poliziano's Florentine audience through her appearance in Dante's *Divine Comedy*: *Inferno*, Canto 20.52-93.

and then his works of immortal fame, the *Eclogues* (110-57), *Georgics* (158-98), and *Aeneid* (214-99) in turn. Manto's descriptions of these works are delivered as a series of brief literary imitations that conjure up the hallmark features of diction, style, and register proper to each work, and even offer plot synopses, especially of the *Aeneid*, which receives the longest treatment.[16]

The second poetic *praelectio* he produced, in 1483, was the *Rusticus*, the subject of this study, of which a more thorough overview is offered below. Following the *Rusticus*, in 1485 Poliziano composed the *Ambra*, introducing the works of Homer in 625 verses. Named for the splendid home at Poggio a Caiano that Lorenzo was having built during the time of composition (the subject, along with the surrounding countryside, of an exuberant ekphrasis at the end of the poem, vv. 590-625), the *Ambra* combines traditional elements of Homeric epic with structural aspects of the rhapsodic hymn to narrate the birth, youth, and achievements of the poet Homer. The *Iliad* and *Odyssey* are introduced through the device of ghostly visions that appear to the young Homer, first of Achilles (260-98), then of Odysseus (405-31), which inspire the poet and initiate summary treatments of the key events, characters, themes, and locales of each epic.[17]

The fourth and last of Poliziano's verse *praelectiones* is the *Nutricia* of 1486, the longest of the poems (790 verses). The *Nutricia* is the clearest exposition of Poliziano's approach to ancient poetry as a whole. Indeed, the subject of this *praelectio* is not any particular set of authors or texts, but poetry itself, and the driving forces behind its

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[16] On the *Manto*, see Bettinzoli, *Daedaleum Iter*, pp. 153-272; Fantazzi, *Silvae*, pp. xiii-xiv; Galand, *Les Silves*, pp. 55-60, 127-30.

[17] Andrew Laird offers an excellent analysis of the poem in his article 'Politian's *Ambra* and Reading Epic Didactically', *Latin Epic and Didactic Poetry*, ed. Gale, pp. 27-47; see also Leuker, *Angelo Poliziano*, pp. 261-81; Fantazzi, *Silvae*, pp. xv-xvi; Galand, *Les Silves*, pp. 231-32. Poliziano himself wrote a commentary on this work, printed in 1994 as *Un commento inedito all'"Ambra" del Poliziano*, ed. Alessandro Perosa.

composition through the ages. After an opening invocation to Poetry herself (1-138), which narrates the historical role of song as a civilizing force for mankind, the author gives an account of poetic inspiration, exemplifying this *furor* not only in Greco-Roman *vates*, but also in the Hebrew prophets of the Old Testament (139-338). The narrator then embarks upon a grand catalogue of poets, moving through a range of genres and historical periods to join and juxtapose authors side-by-side, highlighting their commonalities, differences, rivalries, and interrelations in an allusive and intricate presentation.[18]

These four *praelectiones* were later published together under the name of *Silvae* (after Statius' collection of the same name, in which Poliziano took great scholarly interest[19]). The first edition was produced in Venice by the Aldine Press in 1498, after the author's death, as part of Poliziano's *Opera Omnia*. The individual *praelectiones* had been in circulation prior to that, some printed not long after Poliziano delivered them.[20] In succeeding generations, the *Silvae* enjoyed an afterlife of their own: they were reprinted frequently and utilized in schools across Europe for the same pedagogical purposes to which Poliziano had first applied them. Beyond educational use, they gained the status of

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[18] This poem has generally received the most critical attention of all the *Silvae*. On the *Nutricia*, see Godman, 'Poliziano's Poetics', *passim*, and *From Poliziano to Machiavelli*, pp. 69-79; Leuker, *Angelo Poliziano*, pp. 160-260; Fantazzi, *Silvae*, pp. xvi-xix; Galand, *Les Silves*, pp. 291-92.

[19] Godman, 'Poliziano's Poetics', p. 114. His inaugural lecture series treated Statius and Quintilian; see above, p. 6, note 7. For Poliziano's commentary on Statius' *Silvae* culled from his lectures and notes, see Poliziano, *Commento inedito alle* Selve *di Stazio*, ed. Lucia Cesarini Martinelli, discussed further below, pp. 39-42.

[20] For a full account of the publication of these works, see Bausi, *Silvae*, p. xxxv, and Galand, *Les Silves*, pp. 115-16. The *Rusticus* was published three times individually, twice in Florence (Antonio Miscomini, 1483 and 1492), and once in Bologna (Platone de' Benedetti, 1492).

important literature in their own right, and became themselves the subjects of scholarly

commentaries.[21]

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[21] For an account of the *Nachleben* of the *Silvae* in Western Europe, see Coroleu, 'Some Teachers on a Poet: the Uses of Poliziano's Latin Poetry in the Sixteenth-Century Curriculum', in *Poets and Teachers*, ed. Haskell and Hardie, pp. 167-181, and 'Angelo Poliziano in Print: Editions and Commentaries from a Pedagogical Perspective', *Les Cahiers de L'Humanisme* 2 (2001), pp. 191-222.

CHAPTER 2

Poliziano's *Rusticus*

Poliziano delivered the second of his verse *praelectiones*, the *Rusticus*, in the fall of 1483 to inaugurate his lectures on Hesiod's *Works and Days* and Virgil's *Georgics*. Its generic focus is thus on literature of the land, and beyond its titular poetic sources, much is also drawn from the prose farming manuals of Cato the Elder, Varro, and Columella. Just as Virgil's *Georgics* includes reminiscences of Lucretius and Aratus in discussing natural science, so too does Poliziano incorporate those authors into his pool of literary influences, alongside elements of the elder Pliny's *Naturalis Historia*. Moreover, in keeping with his notably diverse approach to ancient literature, there are further intertexts and allusions to a wide array of other authors, including Theocritus, Horace, Tibullus, Ovid, Seneca, Calpurnius Siculus, Statius, Nemesianus, and Claudian, among others.[22]

The outline of the poem's internal structure provides a view into the points of emphasis and influences at work in the *Rusticus*:[23]

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[22] All authors whose corpus, to some extent, contains some treatment of rustic matters, or elements of interest to Poliziano's *praelectio*: Bettinzoli, *Daedaleum Iter*, pp. 313-14. For a rich account of intertextuality in the *Rusticus*, see the apparatus provided by Bausi in his edition: *Silvae*, pp. 45-99. As stated in the introduction, in this paper I am not engaging in depth with the full range of this poem's intertextual sources, but focusing on its most immediate agrarian didactic and bucolic sources, in particular Virgil.

[23] Bettinzoli, *Daedaleum Iter*, p. 277, 281 also feature schematics of the *Rusticus*, in his discussion of the poem's structure (pp. 274-87), and its marriage of symmetry and variety.

Proemium (1-16)

Farmers (17-282)

    Blessed life of the farmer (17-83)

    Attributes/activities, work through summer-autumn-winter (84-171)

    Springtime and its abundance/ekphrases, scenes of animals (172-282)

Shepherds (283-447)

    Blessed life of the shepherd (283-332)

    Attributes/activities, work through summer-autumn-winter (333-365)

    The abundant stores of the farm/ekphrases, scenes of animals (366-447)

Natural Science: "Days", Prognostica (448-550)

Conclusion (551-556)

Sphragis (557-569)

      The topics and motifs that comprise the poem show the scope of the didactic

tradition that Poliziano is distilling into the *praelectio*. We can observe elements from

Hesiod and Virgil at play: the exposition of the farmer's life and work, and the discussion

of the heavenly bodies and proper days for tasks, as well the distinctly Virgilian *sphragis*

at the end, reflecting the one that concludes the *Georgics* (4.559-66). Within those

notably Hesiodic-Virgilian sections, material is imported from an array of other didactic

authors as well, such as Aratus, Lucretius, and Manilius.[24]

      More striking, and less clear in its connection to the didactic theme of Poliziano's

praelectio, is the long excursus on the lives and activities of shepherds in the middle of

the poem, conveyed with all the commonplaces and conventions of bucolic poetry. This

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[24] See note 22 above.

juxtaposition of agrarian didactic and bucolic is one of the most intriguing issues of the poem, and merits further analysis in the latter half of this study.

The connection of these two generic influences highlights an important facet of the *Rusticus'* structure. The construction of the poem owes much to the internal correspondence of its parts:[25] the two large cycles that comprise the poem's first half, the first focusing on the farmer, the second on the shepherd, well illustrate this principle. Besides the macro-level apposition of these two groups (farmers and shepherds), the subsections within their respective treatments are virtually the same, a matching sequence of topics and descriptions applied to both, heightening the relationship between the two cycles on a more minute level of construction. These structural repetitions- which in fact feature a good deal of variety within their matching components- overtly delineate the two generic halves, didactic and bucolic, that Poliziano is conflating in this composition.

The two parallel cycles also contain in their structures a view to one main focus in Poliziano's treatment of the rustic life. Within these two movements, the sequence of themes is the same: after illustrating the character and tasks of the farmers and shepherds, there follows an explanation of their work through summer, autumn, and winter; then, with the change of the season into spring, the narrative embarks on a new, extended section that stands on its own, a culminating set-piece of vibrant imagery and ekphrases, relating to spring itself in the first cycle, and the farm's material abundance in the second. A place of prominence (at the end of each cycle) is provided to these ecstatically descriptive passages, and the parallel structure of the poem's first half allows for the reinforcement of these crescendos through repetition. Given this clear and twofold point

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[25] Bettinzoli, *Daedaleum Iter*, pp. 278-81. The *Georgics* is also noted for its internal correspondences; see Wilkinson, *The* Georgics *of Virgil*, pp. 71-75, 327-29; Hardie, *Virgil*, pp. 48-49.

of emphasis, we might surmise that the poem centers, in large part, around the theme of abundance, and a closer reading of the text enlarges upon this notion. And it is to a close reading of this text that we now turn for a more comprehensive account of the themes and content, influences and intertexts that drive Poliziano's *praelectio*.

Proemium (1-16)

The *Rusticus* opens with an introductory section that establishes the literary landscape in which the poem operates, and formally announces the work as an "Ascraean song" (6), invoking the didactic tradition of Hesiod and Virgil. The first two lines provide a "table of contents" modeled on the beginning lines of the *Georgics* where Virgil outlines the subject of each of his four books (*Geo*. 1.1-5). In the *Rusticus*, the poet names three topics (1-2): the abundance of the country (*ruris opes saturi*), the duties of the farmer (*gnavoque agitando colono / munera*), and the reverence of the earth (*omniferae sacrum telluris honorem*). At first glance these "topics" appear notably more abstract that the four subjects Virgil outlines for his treatment (agriculture, viticulture, animal husbandry, and apiculture), but they do evoke in their wording Virgil's less concrete, more poetic descriptors (*quid faciat laetas segetes*, *Geo*. 1.1), which reflect the contrast between the *Georgics*' apparent status as a farming handbook and its artistic character.

The *Rusticus*' poet then expresses his wish to sing these subjects with the seven-reeded pipe (*ludere septena gestit mea fistula canna*, 3). This pipe was entrusted to him by the shepherd Tityrus, whom the poet recounts meeting near Mantua, on the banks of

what is presumably the Mincius (4-5).[26] Handing over his pipe to our poet, the shepherd

bids him to "renew the Ascraean song" ('*Hac, puer, Ascraeum repete,' inquit, 'harundine*

carmen', 6): with this exhortation the poem is defined as belonging to the didactic

tradition of Hesiod and Virgil, the two nominal subjects of the *praelectio*.[27] But the

context of this delivery is very striking indeed, as it introduces into the didactic imitation

elements that are markedly characteristic of the bucolic tradition. Not only is the

shepherd Tityrus a staple of bucolic poetry, appearing in Theocritus' *Idylls* and Virgil's

Eclogues, as well as subsequent works,[28] but the instrument with which Poliziano

undertakes to sing his "Ascraean song", the reed pipe (*fistula*), belongs squarely to

bucolic convention.[29] The presence of a prominent bucolic character and the prescription

of a bucolic instrument to sing a Hesiodic song signal, from the very start of the poem,

that a significant admixture of the two genres is at play.

Before continuing, more must be said here about Tityrus' gesture towards the

poet, for it has deep implications for Poliziano's mimetic approach. The motif of handing

over an object as a symbol of granting authority and ability to produce song is well-

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[26] For the Mincius as a bucolic setting, see Jones, *Virgil's Garden*, pp. 57-60. Bausi suggests in his commentary on this poem that the recent meeting with Tityrus near Mantua signifies the *Manto*, Poliziano's earlier *praelectio* of 1481; Bausi, *Silvae*, *ad Rusticus* 4.

[27] The phrase *Ascraeum carmen* has a twofold significance that points to both Hesiod and Virgil: Hesiod by allusion (*Ascraeum*), and Virgil by intertext (*Ascraeumque cano Romana per oppida carmen*, *Geo.* 2.176). Hesiod himself is also referred to as *Ascraeus* in *Eclogues* 6.69-70: *hos tibi dant calamos…Musae, / Ascraeo, quos ante seni.*

[28] Tityrus appears in *Eclogues* 1, and is mentioned in *Ecl.* 3, 5, 6, 8, and 9; in Theocritus, his name appears in *Idylls* 3 and 7, though as a character he does not receive a speaking role, as he does in *Eclogue* 1. He is also invoked in the *Eclogues* of Calpurnius Siculus, as discussed below. Later poets writing pastoral throughout the Middle Ages and early Renaissance featured Tityrus as a character, most notably Dante, Petrarch, and Boccaccio; see Hubbard, *The Pipes of Pan*, pp. 213-246; Grant, *Neo-Latin Literature and the Pastoral*, pp. 77-110.

[29] The word *fistula* does not appear in the *Georgics*, while it occurs six times in the *Eclogues*: 2.37, 3.22, 3.25, 7.24, 8.33, and 10.34.

attested in ancient literature, originating with Hesiod's *Theogony* (22-35), where the poet

narrates his encounter with the Muses while shepherding on Mt. Helicon: granting him a

laurel staff, they invest him with the ability to compose poetry. Following the Hesiodic

original, the motif of poetic investiture was picked up by later poets, Greek and Roman.[30]

Callimachus' *Aetia* fr. 2 narrates a dream that appears to retell the story of Hesiod's

investiture on Mt. Helicon; Theocritus' *Idyll* 7 features an evocation of the same story,

when the goatherd Lycidas agrees to give a staff as a prize to Simichidas after a contest in

song (7.43-44).[31] Roman poets adapted the investiture narrative in new ways, starting

with Ennius (fragmentary, *Annales* 1.1-14), whose story was also related by Lucretius

(*DRN* 1.117-18), and later authors.[32]

Drawing from the Hesiodic narrative and the setting of Theocritean bucolic,

Virgil's *Eclogues* incorporate this motif: in *Ecl*. 2.36-37, the shepherd Corydon recalls

the pipe that the dying Damoetas had given him; in *Ecl*. 6.64-73, Silenus recounts how

the singer Linus summoned Gallus to poetry by giving him reeds to play, just as the

Muses had given them to Hesiod (*hos tibi dant calamos, en accipe, Musae* / *Ascraeo quos

ante seni*, 6.69-70). The latter scene is one of Poliziano's two immediate sources for the

investiture scene in the *Rusticus*, recalling the setting on a riverbank (commonly invoked

as a liminal space) and the reeds as the objects of gift.

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[30] For a summary account of such scenes, see Coleman, *Vergil:* Eclogues, *ad* 6.64.

[31] The staff in Hesiod is a σκῆπτρον (30), while in Theocritus' poem Lycidas' gift is first called a κορύνη (43); when the competing songs are sung, the staff given to Simichidas is identified as a hare-killer (λαγώβολον, 128).

[32] In the elegiac context, Propertius also features the investiture scene in poem 3.3 of his *Elegies*, which combines material from Hesiod's narrative in *Theogony* with Callimachus' *Aetia* fr. 1.

The other direct influence on Poliziano's scene is the fourth eclogue of Calpurnius Siculus, a later writer of bucolic inspired by Virgil.[33] He too employs the investiture scene (*Ecl.* 4.58-63), recalling how Iollas had given him to play the pipe once used by Tityrus himself. The following lines in the same passage (4.64-72), along with lines 4.160-63, are the *locus classicus* for the identification of Virgil with the bucolic personage of Tityrus, a tradition elaborated in Servius' commentary on the *Eclogues* and alive through Poliziano's time.[34] Calpurnius' investiture scene is thus a metaphor for his own emulation of Virgil's *Eclogues*: the pipe signifies the bucolic genre itself, and "Tityrus" is the master whose work he is taking up.

Much the same can be said of Poliziano's investiture scene that initiates the *Rusticus*, taking the figure of Tityrus as a literary double for Virgil himself. In poetic terms, as in Calpurnius' case, the *Rusticus*' investiture scene announces Poliziano's imitative program in his verse *praelectio*, utilizing a type of scene specially associated with Hesiod and Virgilian bucolic. The poet identifies Virgil specifically (through Tityrus) as his primary model,[35] and through receiving the reed, the instrument of song production, expresses the place of his own composition within the generic range of Virgil's poetry (didactic and bucolic), all in terms that harken back to the generic traditions within whose conventions he is operating.

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[33] Calpurnius' dates are not certain, but most scholars agree that he wrote during the time of Nero: Conte, *Latin Literature: A History*, pp. 435-36; *Minor Latin Poetry*, ed. Duff and Duff, pp. 209-11; Keene, *Calpurnius Siculus: The* Eclogues, pp. 2-14. Hubbard disagrees with a Neronian date: *The Pipes of Pan*, pp. 150-51.

[34] Coleman, *Vergil:* Eclogues, p. 89; Hubbard, *The Pipes of Pan*, p. 178 n. 57; *Minor Latin Poets*, ed. Duff and Duff, p. 251 n. *d* (*ad* Calp. 4.63), p. 259 n. *b* (*ad* 4.161). Poliziano cites Calpurnius' competition with "Tityrus" in his *Nutricia*, 556-57.

[35] Close reading attests that, of the *praelectio*'s two nominal subjects, Virgil's *Georgics* is more prevalent as a source for the *Rusticus* than is *Works and Days*. For a comprehensive list of correspondences between the *Rusticus* and the *Georgics*, see Bettinzoli, *Daedaleum Iter*, pp. 344-50 (appendix B).

Let us return, then, to the *Rusticus'* narrative. The remainder of the poem's introductory verses (7-16) continues in the bucolic strain: the poet summons Pan to his aid,[36] and there ensues a resplendent scene of the unspoiled countryside, a *locus amoenus*. After this introductory section that establishes the *Rusticus'* literary context and approach, Poliziano embarks upon the first major division of the poem, an extended praise of farmers.

The Farmer's Life and Work (17-171)

The poet begins with a declaration of the farmer's bliss (*felix ille*, 17) that evokes the double *makarismos* of *Georgics* 2.490-93,[37] and proceeds with a eulogy of the rustic life. This opening laudation assumes an encomiastic tone that is sustained throughout the poem, and defines Poliziano's approach to the agrarian didactic subject matter treated in this *praelectio*.[38] The end of *Georgics* 2 (458-540), with its famous praise of an idealized country life and vituperation of the city, plays a significant role not only in this passage,[39] but functions as a key model for Poliziano's entire poem.

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[36] Pan is also invoked in the beginning of the *Georgics* in similar terms as here: *Pan ades, Rusticus* 7, *Pan…adsis*, *Geo*. 1.17-18. The bucolic personage of Pan combined with the intertextuality with the *Georgics* again reinforces the generic mixture.

[37] *felix qui potuit rerum cognoscere causas*, *Geo*. 2.490; *fortunatus et ille deos qui novit agrestes*, 2.493; also *o fortunatos nimium…agricolas*, 2.458-59.

[38] In the closing lines of the *Rusticus*, we learn that Poliziano composed the poem at the Medici villa in Fiesole (557). Galand reads the poet's laudatory attitude as a gesture towards the peace and prosperity of the Florentine countryside under Lorenzo, a feeling that also characterizes the closing remarks in the *Ambra* on the Medici's new estate at Poggio a Caiano: Galand, *Les Silves*, pp. 175-76; see also Bausi, *ad Rus*. 557.

[39] A role also evident on the intertextual level: *huc illuc vanos ostentans purpura fasces*, *Rus*. 29, *illum non populi fasces, non purpura regum*, *Geo*. 2.495; *casuro…solio*, *Rus*. 29, *perituraque regna*, *Geo*. 2.498; *nec ducit hiantem*, *Rus*. 29, *hunc plausus hiantem*, *Geo*. 2.508.

The larger structure of this section on the farmer is broken down into three main segments: the first, from 17-37, praises the country life over and against the ambition and excess of city life; the second, from 38-65, deals with the specific benefits that the country life provides, especially in physical prowess and endurance; the third, from 66-83, asserts that a person raised in the country, through the virtues and benefits that such a life confers, makes the best soldier. This division of subtopics within the larger passage loosely reflects the structure of its immediate source text in *Georgics* 2.490-540: the first section reflects the security of the farmer and the evils of the city in *Geo*. 2.495-512; the second, the farmer's diligent and successful work in *Geo*. 2.513-31. The third division resonates with the last section of Virgil's praise passage, when he calls to mind the Sabines and the Romans (Romulus and Remus) whose contributions made Etruria strong and Rome the most splendid city of all (*Geo*. 2.532-40),[40] but is rooted in observations made in the manuals of Cato, Varro, Columella, and Vegetius.[41] Outside of Virgil, the portrayal of the farmer as self-sufficient, virtuous, peaceful, and spurning worldly riches owes much to Lucretius and the Epicurean ideal (esp. *De rerum natura* 2.24-33), Horace (e.g. *Odes* 3.3), and the *metra* of Boethius' *Consolatio Philosophiae* (e.g. Bk. 1, *metrum* 4), to name but a few influences.[42]

With the description of the farmer's life concluded, the narrative turns to different aspects of his labors, introduced as a comment on the farmer's *industria* (84) and

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[40] In particular, the last lines of Poliziano's treatment echo that Virgilian source: *his adiuta viris, se Romula tellus / imposuit mundo*, 82-3).

[41] Bettinzoli, *Daedaleum Iter*, pp. 299-300.

[42] Bettinzoli also names Seneca's *Phaedra* (483-564) and Boccaccio's prose *Elogia di Madonna Fiametta* (5) as direct sources: *Daedaleum Iter*, pp. 334-44 (appendix A).

experientia (85).[43] After the cold has settled in, the farmer must craft new implements

with the wood he has prepared (90-92); when the months have passed and the proper time

has come, he must yoke up his bullocks and plow the field anew, sowing the new seed

(104-113). He plants trees and other produce, prunes branches and vines, and transplants

young growth (125-39). In this section the presence of Hesiod is felt more strongly,

alongside the references to the *Georgics* which are more common throughout the poem.[44]

      In lines 140-71, the various tasks of farmers through summer, autumn, and winter

are taken up. Addressed first are the summer months, the time for grafting and threshing,

when the soil loosens and the water for irrigation flows freely, then the harvesting of

vineyards in autumn, and finally the chores during winter, the time for gathering myrtle

berries and acorns, for repairing and refurbishing equipment, and fashioning new vessels

and tools.[45]

      The Praise of Spring (172-282)

      The cycle of the seasons leads into one of the two major set-pieces of the poem, a

study of the farmer's leisure that becomes an ecstatic evocation of spring, hailing the

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[43] *Nunc age, quae studia agricolis industria sollers / extudit atque operum quanta experientia dicam*, *Rus*. 84-85: *varias usus meditando extunderet artis*, *Geo*. 1.133, *quis deus hanc, Musae, quis nobis extudit artem*, *Geo*. 4.315, *pecudum custodia sollers / omnia temptanti extuderat*, *Geo*. 4.327-28, *apibus quanta experientia parcis*, *Geo*. 1.4. More generally, the discussion of the farmer's implements recalls *Georgics* 1.160-75. Commentators on this section have noted that the some elements in this passage reflect farming life in Poliziano's contemporary Tuscany: see Schönberger, *Rusticus*, *ad* 84, 101; J. Burckhardt, *Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy* (trans. Middlemore), p. 228. Later in this same part of the poem, the reference to silk (122-24), a major trade in Florence, may be another example of this contemporizing perspective.

[44] *Rus*. 98-99, *Works* 448-50; *Rus*. 101-103, *Works* 536-46; *Rus*. 111-13, *Works* 469-71.

[45] Cf. *Georgics*: grafting (2.76-77), the gathering of harvested crops in the storehouse (1.49), the loosening up of soil after winter (1.44), flowing water for irrigation (1.108-10), and the crafting of stakes (1.264) and baskets weaved with twigs (1.266, 2.241).

birth of new life and the splendor of the season. The Virgilian antecedent is the Praise of

Spring in *Georgics* 2.323-45,[46] but its influence here is minor; the scene in the *Rusticus*

engages in numerous mythological allusions, and intertextuality is shared principally

among Lucretius, Ovid, Columella, and Claudian, utilizing their vernal imagery.[47]

After a vividly descriptive catalogue of flowers, crops, vines, and trees

blossoming and bearing fruit (181-209), together with vernal deities rejoicing at the

coming of the season (210-29), the motif of spring and the creation of new life is carried

through a following section on animal mating, birth, and rearing of young (230-53).

The description of animals culminates in two juxtaposed ekphrases: a heifer,

mourning the loss of her calf, wanders the countryside in sorrow; a stallion, vigorous and

resplendent in physical form, thunders over the countryside. The image of the heifer

seeking her calf (254-262) echoes a similar passage in *Eclogu*e 8 (8.85-89, comparing

Daphnis with the heifer), but more significantly the famous description in Lucretius

(*DRN* 2.355-66) of the very same scene, as the mother seeks in vain for her young, a

victim of sacrifice. The juxtaposed passage that vividly and vibrantly describes a young

horse (263-82), on the other hand, is based mostly on material from the *Georgics*. The

steed, racing freely over the countryside, is described in each aspect of its physique, and

much is borrowed verbally from the description of the ideal horse found in *Georgics*

3.79-88, and related imagery in that book.[48]

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[46] Besides the Praise of Spring in *Georgics* 2, another Virgilian source for this passage is *Geo*. 1.338-350, encouraging the worship of Ceres at the coming of spring; the images of richness and revelry in those lines have some bearing here, but are more influential in the later section on shepherds (esp. 333-65).

[47] See Bausi, *Silvae*, *ad Rusticus* 172.

[48] E.g. *prata…fuga*, *Rus*. 263-64, *carpere prata fuga*, *Geo*. 3.142; *cui pulchro micat acre caput*, *Rus*. 266, *illi…argutumque caput*, *Geo*. 3.79-80; *vibrant aures*, *Rus*. 267, *micat aures*, *Geo*. 3.84; *spiritus amplis / naribus ita fervens*, *Rus*. 268-69, *fremens volvit sub naribus ignem*, *Geo*. 3.85; *cervix ardua*, *Rus*. 269,

The Shepherd's Life and Work (283-365)

With the conclusion of the cycle on farmers, another cycle on shepherds begins, structurally homologous to its antecedent. The praise motif returns in 283-365, this time treating the blessings of shepherds (*O dulces pastoris opes*, 283), in a passage whose main source is again *Georgics* 2.458-540, and that shares many aspects of the previous passage in 17-83.[49] Like the earlier passage of the *Rusticus* praising the life of the farmer, this too is divided into three main sections: the first (283-304) glorifies the rustic life and condemns the vices of the city; the second (305-32) looks at specific aspects of the shepherd's lifestyle, exhibiting the ease and purity of his existence; the third (333-65) follows the activities of the shepherd through the seasons, a sequence that recalls the similar treatment of the farmer's activities in 140-71.

The first part of this larger division, extending from 283-304, follows *Georgics* 2.458-75 most closely, and combines, like its earlier relative in *Rus*. 17-37, a eulogy of the rustic life-- emphasizing its contentment and freedom from cares-- with a vituperation of the city and its gross excesses of wealth. The statements of the shepherd's virtue and self-sufficiency again evoke Poliziano's earlier passage, but here the condemnation of the city specifically echoes *Georgics* 2.458-75, describing the superfluous decoration of urban homes, decked with expensive and exotic materials. Many of the individual

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ardua cervix, *Geo*. 3.79; *spinaque depressos gemino subit ordine lumbos*, *Rus*. 274, *at duplex agitur per lumbos spina*, *Geo*. 3.87.

[49] The sources for that earlier passage and this one are largely the same, especially the Lucretian passage (*DRN* 2.24-33) contrasting the rustic existence with the excess of a mansion; see above, p. 19, note 39.

elements of material wealth mentioned in this passage of the *Rusticus* have antecedents throughout the *Georgics*.[50]

The following section (305-32) highlights specific scenes from the shepherd's life that exemplify the calm and wholesomeness of his existence. He lives at one with nature, his shelter not a grand mansion but the rustic outdoors (305-14); he wants for neither food nor necessities, enjoying the free abundance of the earth (315-18); he is surrounded by the spirits of nature, gods, goddesses, creatures, and cultic worshippers all connected with the land and its produce (319-28); love and song are always in his heart, as he lives by the nourishment of all-sustaining Venus (329-32).

The third part (333-65) treats the shepherd's activities through summer, autumn, and winter. In the summertime, the shepherds rest at leisure during the heat of the day, enjoying the rich produce and the natural beauty the season brings (333-41); with autumn comes the grape harvest, and the shepherds revel in the pressing of new wine (342-51). As the hearth blazes during the wintertime, villagers come together to celebrate with song, drink, and merriment (352-65). Poliziano derives some of this material from Hesiod (the description of summer, cf. *Works and Days* 582-96), and much from Virgil: the festivities on winter nights recall *Georgics* 1.300-304 and 3.379-80, while the villagers' competition in song (*carmina certatim cantant*, 361) calls to mind the shepherds' contests in the *Eclogues*.[51]

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[50] *Pulchrae testudinis orbis*, *Rus*. 295, *pulchra testudine postes*, *Geo*. 2.463; *aut bis in Herculea Milesia vellera concha / versantur*, *Rus*. 298-99, *quamvis Milesia magno / vellera mutentur Tyrios incocta rubores*, *Geo*. 3.306-307, *eam circum Milesia vellera Nymphae / carpebant*, 4.334-35.

[51] For the winter as a time for *otium* and its relevance to the *Eclogues* and *Georgics*, see Kettemann, *Bukolik und Georgik*, pp. 21-37. Lucretius provides an intriguing intertext for this passage: Poliziano's lines 361-64, describing the music at the winter gathering, strongly resemble Lucretius' description of the music accompanying ritual sacrifice (*DRN* 2.618-20).

The extended digression on the blessed life of shepherds, which so closely

parallels the previous passage on the life of the farmer, brings us back to the generic

crossover between didactic and bucolic so marked in the *Rusticus'* opening verses. While

shepherds are mentioned in the *Georgics*, they are not treated in any "bucolic" way.[52] By

contrast, Poliziano's portrayal of the shepherds here has much in common with their

bucolic representation: the typical creatures and deities of the genre inhabit the

shepherd's world, such as nymphs, fawns, satyrs, Pan, and Silvanus (319-28),[53] and the

shepherd himself, in whose heart is "always love, always song and the reed pipe" (*semper

amor, semper cantus et fistula cordi est*, 329), fits the character of Theocritean

convention as a singer of songs that are often erotic in nature.[54] This long section on

shepherds thus reinforces the generic admixture evident earlier in the poem; Poliziano's

praelectio blends the pastoral with the agrarian, conflating the worlds of the shepherd and

the farmer.

The Land's Abundance (366-447)

On the heels of this exuberant study of the shepherd's life comes another

catalogue of the countryside's wealth and abundance, structurally analogous to the

previous treatment of springtime and its cornucopia (172-282). The first half of this

section treats the bounty in produce that the farmer possesses: such profusion is there that

storehouses and vessels cannot contain it all (367-78). Then ensues a litany of the

farmer's yield, a bounty in meats, fruits, nuts, oils, wine, honey, milk, and vegetation

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[52] Hornsby, 'The Pastor in the Poetry of Vergil', *The Classical Journal* 63 (1968), pp. 146, 152.

[53] These figures also appear in the *Georgics*; see below, pp. 48-49.

[54] Hornsby, 'The Pastor in the Poetry of Vergil', pp. 145-46.

from the garden (379-82); the items mentioned in this long list correspond with the topics

discussed in Book 12 of Columella's *De re rustica*, the main source for this passage.[55]

The second half of the section attends to the fowl and other animals of the

countryside, through a series of vignettes that begins with a scene of affectionate doves

nurturing their young (383-88) and extends to warring roosters (389-417), hens laying

eggs to be collected by the farmer's wife (418-25),[56] geese and other birds (426-37), and

then various animals like rabbits, boars, bees, and fish (437-42). The centerpiece of these

smaller scenes is the vibrant ekphrasis of a triumphant rooster who rules the barnyard

(396-417), structurally parallel to the earlier description of the stallion (263-82), and

based upon Pliny the Elder's account of cocks vying for superiority in *Naturalis Historia*

10.47.[57] Pliny's Book 10 is a source for the other birds catalogued in this section as well,

as the contents of that book also treat the various kinds of fowl appearing in this passage

of the *Rusticus*. Antecedents for these scenes are generally not found in the *Georgics*,

except that the mention of the small animals on the farm (437-40) resonates to some

extent with Virgil's description of creatures that make homes in the threshing floor (*Geo*.

1.181-86). While there Virgil emphasizes the destruction they can cause to the farmer's

store, in Poliziano's adaptation there is an underlying sense of the vivacity that these

animals lend to the setting, a point in keeping with the overarching theme in this section

of positive abundance, and characteristic of the *Rusticus* as a whole. Concluding this

section on the farmer's riches is a brief coda of five lines (443-47) that turns attention

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[55] Bausi , *Silvae*, *ad Rus*. 366.

[56] The collecting of eggs by the farmer's wife is discussed in Cato the Elder's *De agri cultura* 143, which may be Poliziano's inspiration for these lines: Bausi, *Silvae*, *ad Rusticus* 366.

[57] For the identification of Pliny's passage as the source, and further use of the *Naturalis Historia* in this section, see Bausi, *Silvae*, *ad Rusticus* 396ff.

back to the farmer himself: he nourishes himself with the wealth he possesses, and nature will not fail to produce for him all that his hard work rightly deserves.[58]

Natural Science and the Farmer (448-550)

The remainder of the poem takes off from the scientific elements in didactic poetry: these include the days of the month appropriate for certain labors, close observation of the heavenly bodies, meteorological patterns of winds and rain, and other signs by which the farmer orients his work. Poliziano's main sources here are Hesiod, Virgil, Aratus' *Phaenomena*, and Pliny's *Naturalis Historia*.[59]

The entire section on these topics, running from 448-546, nearly to the end of the poem, comprises three parts. The first, lines 448-63, introduces this new subject with a series of rhetorical questions that outline the farmer's uses for scientific knowledge and what it can offer; the succession of questions echoes *Georgics* 1.351-55, where the natural phenomena established by Jupiter are enumerated, and is akin to the poem's opening lines, 1.1-5, where Virgil defines the contents of the poem's four books with indirect questions.

The second section (461-80) treats the days proper for certain tasks to be performed by the farmer, a subject which follows most closely the discourse on days in Hesiod's *Works and Days* 765-828, as well as the briefer discussion in *Georgics* 1.276-86, itself inspired by Hesiod. Some of the Hesiodic prescriptions and observations for specific days are repeated here: for instance, the seventh as the birthday of Apollo (*Rus.*

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[58] On the Golden Age resonances present here and elsewhere in the poem, see below, pp. 52-54.

[59] Fantazzi, *Silvae*, p. xv; Bausi, *Silvae*, *ad Rus*. 448.

464-65, *Works* 770-71), and the chores best undertaken on the eleventh and twelfth (*Rus.* 466-70, *Works* 774-79).

From this begins the third and last section of the poem's scientific segment, extending from 504-46, on meteorology and the signs that accompany weather patterns, both in the heavens and among the animals on earth. Into this passage Poliziano integrates material from three main sources: the *Georgics*, Aratus' *Phaenomena* 758-1154, and Pliny's *Naturalis Historia* Book 18. The poet addresses first the study of the heavenly bodies: described here are the various appearances of the sun and moon and what they portend, then shooting stars, constellations, and other astronomical occurrences (481-503). Then, illustrating the ways in which the diligent farmer can read meteorological signs, the poet catalogues an array of small vignettes of animals, inspired by both agrarian and non-agrarian sources, whose behavior portends a coming storm. Various birds indicate the changing conditions with their flight and their cries; the actions of the dolphin, the ant, the dog, the crab, and other creatures all foretell an impending storm to the careful witness (504-27). Coal and ashes will cling to the bottom of the pot, and glow; leaves will be tossed by the wind, and flame will flicker (528-32). Shepherds are to keep watch of the signs among their flocks (533-46).

A coda of four lines (547-50) rounds off this part of the poem, which recapitulates the great boon these signs offer to the worker of the land, for his vigilance is rewarded with knowledge of things to come. The treatment of the scientific aspects of the didactic genre thus ends with another statement of the blessings conferred by nature on the farmer that inspire the poet's admiration.

Conclusion and Sphragis (551-569)

The penultimate portion of the *Rusticus* (551-56), which stands as a formal conclusion to the main content of the poem, recapitulates the idyllic vision of the country life sustained throughout in an enthusiastic wish of the poet to receive such a life himself. Recurrent themes and images are restated here: the delights of farming and the pleasure that working the land affords (552), the ease with which the diligent farmer reaps abundance (553), and the rejection of selfish ambition (553-54). In a final denial of worldly riches, the poet prays never to receive the cardinal's red hat *(galero*, 555), nor the three-tiered papal crown (*tergeminaque…mitra corona*, 556); these two opulent images call to mind the earlier vituperations of the city and its excesses, and also gesture towards Poliziano's incorporation of contemporary subject matter into his Renaissance adaptation.[60]

Following this, the *Rusticus* closes with a brief afterward (557-69), a first-person statement by the poet that functions as a *sphragis* analogous to Virgil's at the very end of the *Georgics*, 4.559-66; here, as does Virgil in his passage, Poliziano discusses the composition of the poem and praises his ruler-patron, Lorenzo de' Medici.

The place where he claims to have composed his verses, the "cave at Fiesole"[61] (*Faesuleo…in antro*, 557), echoes the cave setting recurrent in the pastoral context of the *Eclogues*,[62] where it is sometimes related to poetic song: in *Ecl*. 5.19, Mopsus and Menalcas choose a cave as their venue to sing together, and in *Ecl*. 6.13-14, Silenus is

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[60] See note 43 above.

[61] Actually the Medici's country estate at Fiesole; see Bausi, *Silvae*, *ad Rus*. 557, and note 38 above.

[62] *Eclogues* 1.75, 5.6, 5.19, 6.13, 9.41; also prevalent in Theocritus' pastoral settings. See Jones, *Virgil's Garden*, pp. 72-73.

lying in his cave when he is captured by Chromis and Mnasyllos, and produces his grand

song. The *Georgics* reinforces this connection between caves and poetry: of the four

times Virgil uses the word *antrum*,[63] two of them describe the abode of poets. Proteus,

who is described as a *vates*[64] (4.387, 450), lives in a cave (4.429), and the famed singer

Orpheus, having lost Eurydice, issues his song from a cave (4.509). Also significant in

this Virgilian context is the verb Poliziano uses for his act of composition in the same line

(*talia Faesuleo lentus meditabar in antro*, 557): *meditabar* also resonates with the

Eclogues, where Virgil employs the verb in the context of producing song, a usage that

does not appear in the *Georgics*.[65] Thus in his choice of that setting for his poem's

composition, and the language describing it, Poliziano situates his own work within

Virgil's poetic universe.

In his capacity as the poet's patron, Lorenzo de' Medici appears in the role

occupied by Virgil's Octavian at the close of the *Georgics*, and his presence is magnified

by the three-fold repetition of his name (*Laurens*, 561-62). Yet at the same time as his

political sovereignty is acknowledged, the portrayal of Lorenzo here as a man of peace

and culture, a "glory of Apollo" and "anchor for the Muses" (561-62), also puts him in

the guise of Maecenas, a supporter of the poet's craft who is himself a man of letters.

Lorenzo was a poet and scholar in his own right, and this combination of identities would

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[63] All in Book 4: *Georgics* 4.44, 152, 429, 509.

[64] The identification here is more nuanced, as Proteus is an actual *vates*, in the prophetic sense; but his role in *Georgics* 4 as the key frame narrator within the Aristaeus epyllion, recounting the fates of Orpheus and Eurydice, strengthens the association of his verse narration with the work of the poet.

[65] *Eclogues* 1.2, 6.8, 6.82. The verb *meditor* does appear in the *Georgics* (1.133, 3.153), but is not used of producing music or song.

have been well suited to his public image, and the image of Florence as a capital of humanist learning.[66]

Poliziano further invokes Lorenzo as the benefactor who, by establishing peace in the land, will enable the poet to be "inspired by a greater god" (563-64; *afflabor maiore deo*, 564). If his ruler-patron should enable such inspiration, the poet will proceed from writing poetry of the land (utilizing the image of forests and rocks echoing his song, a pastoral trope[67]) to subjects worthy of Florence herself, his home city.[68] This final gesture seems to reflect the notion, commonly held throughout his *Nachleben*, that Virgil's life provides the model for a poetic career, in starting first with lighter genres, such as bucolic, then advancing to the sterner stuff characteristic of didactic, and culminating in the most illustrious of all genres, epic.[69] In light of the investiture scene by Tityrus, Virgil's literary double, which inaugurated the *Rusticus*, and its implications for Poliziano's imitative poetics in the poem, this seems one more expression of his assuming the Virgilian mantle. In the beginning of the poem, the Tityrus of the *Eclogues* enjoined the poet to sing an *Ascraeum carmen* (6) modeled on the *Georgics*; now at its conclusion, the poet anticipates the crafting of his finest work, a national song worthy of

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[66] On Lorenzo and his influence on Florence, see *Lorenzo the Magnificent: Culture and Politics*, ed. Mallett and Mann. Also Burckhardt, *The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy*, pp. 145-46; Bolgar, *The Classical Heritage*, pp. 286-88; Godman, *From Poliziano to Machiavelli*, *passim*, esp. pp. 17-19.

[67] In Virgil, *Eclogues* 1.5, 5.28.

[68] The language describing Florence here is reminiscent of Virgil's describing the muse Parthenope in the *sphragis* of the *Georgics* (4.563-64): Florence is Poliziano's *blanda altrix* (*Rus.* 567), while Pathenope "sweetly nourished" Virgil (*dulcis alebat / Parthenope*, 4.563-64). There may also be wordplay between Poliziano's vocative *Florentia* (568) and Virgil's *florentem* (4.564). Lucretius' invocation of Venus in *DRN* Book 1 may also provide an intertext: Poliziano's Florence is the *magnorum genetrix…vatum* (568), while Lucretius's Venus is the *Aeneadum genetrix* (*DRN* 1.1).

[69] Wilson-Okamura, *Virgil in the Renaissance*, pp. 87-91; G. B. Conte, *Latin Literature: A History*, pp. 289-90.

his illustrious city, his own imagined *Aeneid*, inspired by the divine and fostered by a

renowned ruler-patron.

CHAPTER 3

Poetics, Genre, and Epideictic Rhetoric

As we have discussed previously, the *praelectiones* crafted by Poliziano were innovative in their approach; rather than simply commenting on the authors treated by his lectures, they imitated their style, diction, and subject matter, refashioning their distinctive ingredients into works of poetry in their own right. They are thus, in a sense, both original works and a meta-literary commentary on their own assimilation of sources. There are many layers at work beneath the surface of these poems, rooted in their pedagogical intent and their self-conscious use of sources and genres. Indeed, how precisely to categorize these poems in terms of genre is a question faced by scholars studying the *Silvae*.[70] Here we take up this fundamental issue, and attempt an answer at what kind of poem the *Rusticus* really is, and how Poliziano is manipulating the agrarian didactic genre into a form that suits his purpose.

On the level of function, the *Silvae* are "didactic" poems, inasmuch as they are designed to teach the listener; the *praelectio*, is, after all, an introduction to university lectures, presented to students to impart knowledge of the authors and works treated. What, then, is the precise "knowledge" or "skill" imparted? To say that it is merely knowledge about the authors or works handled in the poem is only part of the answer.

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[70] Galand, *Les Silves*, p. 17-20.

Poliziano's *praelectio* is not merely a commentary on these authors; it is an assumption of their poetic mantle, the sort that we have seen at work in the opening and closing scenes of the *Rusticus*, as Poliziano takes on Virgil's poetic corpus. This assumption takes the form of imitation, adapting the words, imagery, and themes of the authorial subjects of the *praelectio* into a new poetic creation. As imitative poetry, it is an *in persona* treatment, exploring the poetics of the authors treated by entering their poetic universe and writing, as it were, in their hand; thus Poliziano composes the poem *in antro Faesuleo* (557), in a setting evocative of Virgil's own pastoral landscape. In that sense, the *Silvae* are not only vehicles for information about the authors imitated, but about the art of imitation itself, exemplifying through direct demonstration the skill of synthesizing language, content, and generic patterns from ancient literature, and reforming those constituent parts into a literary work that is distinctly one's own.[71]

The art of imitating the language of Latin (and, to a lesser extent, Greek[72]) authors was central to the concerns of Renaissance Humanism. Italian humanists of Poliziano's day advocated the rigorous study of ancient literature as the means of receiving culture, and an essential part of this literary education was the close reading and emulation of the Latin style exemplified by the greatest Roman writers.[73] This ideal of literary emulation bred, in some cases, a strict adherence to the Latin style of a single author or set of

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[71] As Galand puts succinctly in her introduction to the *Silvae*, "le discours sur la poésie se fait *dans* et *par* la poésie même" (*Les Silves*, p. 23).

[72] We have already noted Poliziano's familiarity with a wide range of Greek literature, prodigious for a time in which Greek texts and linguistic training had only recently gained a real foothold in Italy. His program of mastering Greek as well as Latin sources is expressed in the *praelectio*'s treatment of Hesiod alongside Virgil as an exemplar of agrarian didactic (though Virgil's presence in the *Rusticus* is still greater). See above, pp. 6-7, note 8.

[73] Grafton and Jardine, *From Humanism to the Humanities*, pp. 3-22; Bolgar, *The Classical Heritage*, pp. 265-82; Reynolds and Wilson, *Scribes and Scholars*, pp. 108-10.

authors (in particular, the "Ciceronianism" typified by Pietro Bembo and others). Poliziano, as we have already seen, espoused a wider view of classical literature, one that embraced equally the famous and the lesser-known, and, in keeping with this, he rejected the superficial aping of just one author, on the grounds that it would produce a lifeless and artificial product.[74] He believed in an organic, unique, and personal style that grew naturally from an individual's wide reading of Latin literature. In his own words, *Non enim sum Cicero. Me tamen, ut opinor, exprimo*.[75]

Thus we see in Poliziano's *Silvae*, his verse commentaries on poetics, the same plurality of influences and intertexts: the "lesson" he imparts in these *praelectiones* through direct demonstration reflects his own views on the subject of imitation.[76] In the *Rusticus*, which introduces lectures nominally focusing on *Hesiod*'s Works and Days and Virgil's *Georgics*, we find an assortment of material drawn from an impressive range of authors, both prose and poetry, from Latin and Greek, from early and late time periods. And for all of the many strands that weave his poem, Poliziano's piece is arguably something fresh, new, and unique in its own right.

Although these *praelectiones* fit the functional parameters of didactic in their use as teaching tools, there is more at work in defining the genre of the poems that comprise the *Silvae*. The complexity arises in their assimilation of the genre(s) that each piece is

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[74] In this he followed Quintilian, with whose work he was well acquainted; *Institutio Oratoria* X.II.4-28.

[75] The quotation is found in a famous letter of Poliziano written to a fellow scholar of the "Ciceronian" camp, Paolo Cortesi, on the occasion of his presenting Poliziano with a set of letters in Cicero's style; Poliziano's reaction against Cortesi's practice is well illustrated by his epistolary response. He rejected the gift, and exhorted Cortesi to abandon his mere aping of Cicero, with a letter comprised of elements ranging from Plautus to Seneca and Tacitus, exemplifying his own style. The letter is reprinted and discussed in Godman, *From Poliziano to Machiavelli*, pp. 49-51, and Green, *The Light in Troy*, pp. 149-51; see also McLaughlin, *Literary Imitation in the Italian Renaissance*, pp. 202-206.

[76] Fantazzi, *Silvae*, p. ix-x.

meant to imitate, turning generic delineations into something fluid and flexible. The *Manto* is a prime example of this. In the poem's engagement with Virgil's entire career, we see not only a treatment of the subject matter of Virgil's corpus, but a mimetic adoption of Virgil's genres that are now picked up, now left behind. In treating the *Eclogues* (110-57), Poliziano's hexameters enter the bucolic world of Theocritus, Virgil, and Calpurnius, utilizing familiar tropes, visualizing the standard characters, and recalling the words, phrases, and images that most characterize bucolic, fashioning in forty-seven verses a miniature replica of the genre. In the following section the poem suddenly morphs again; we have entered the universe of the *Georgics* (158-98), again signaled by the tropes, language, and style of agrarian literature from Hesiod through Varro, Virgil, and Columella. After forty verses, with another turn, we enter the epic world of the *Aenied* (199ff.), rising to a grander register. This generic play is at work in the rest of the *Silvae* as well. The *Rusticus* sets the scene of agrarian didactic, combined, as we have seen, with a presence of bucolic; the *Ambra* assumes the epic muse to sing of Homer, borrowing structures of the rhapsodic hymn in surveying his wondrous birth, youth, and immortal achievements; the *Nutricia*, with its multiplicity of voices, at first assumes the philosopher's inflection to trace the civilizing effect of music on mankind and the nature of *poeticus furor*, then launches into a protean sequence of inspirations in naming off a host of authors from Homer to Dante. The use of genre in these poems is not something fixed; rather, the genre becomes simply a voice, a mode that the poet can slip into and out of according to his design. Each *Silva* does not operate within any one category, but takes on the trappings of one or more genres according to Poliziano's desired effect in introducing the works and authors represented to his audience.

Given the acknowledged generic fluidity of the *Silvae*, to what extent can they even be called didactic poems, beyond in their capacity as educational vehicles? Even a cursory comparison of these works with any of the chief exponents of didactic poetry-- Hesiod, Aratus, Lucretius, Virgil, Manilius, and so on-- exposes the decidedly non-didactic feel of Poliziano's *Silvae*. While these are poems used for teaching, they stand apart from what is conventionally referred to as the body of ancient didactic.

If we are to set up these *praelectiones* against the four defining features of the didactic genre outlined by Katharina Volk-- explicit declaration that the poem intends to teach a subject, a relationship between the authorial *praeceptor* and a student addressee, an expressed self-consciousness on the poet's part that he is composing poetry, and an interaction between the structuring of the poem and the progression in which subjects are treated[77]-- we find that not one of these traits is significantly and consistently visible, if at all, in the four *Silvae*. The poet's authorial presence is certainly evident at certain points, at times slipping into the first-person, but the poet is no *praeceptor* in the manner of Lucretius, or Ovid in the *Ars Amatoria*. There is no student addressee, like Hesiod's Perses or Lucretius' Memmius. While the art of reading and emulating ancient literature is the "lesson" of the *praelectiones*, their educational aim is implicit; there is no open declaration of intent to teach. In generic terms, it is clear that these pieces do not belong to the category of didactic poetry.

This recognition leaves an analysis of the *Rusticus* in a peculiar situation. If the *Silvae* tend to adopt loosely a given genre based upon the works treated in the lecture, then we would expect this poem to assume the didactic voice to achieve its imitation. But this is not the case. From the outset, the poet of the *Rusticus* does not purport to be

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[77] Volk, *The Poetics of Latin Didactic*, pp. 36-40.

passing on any particular knowledge, not even about agriculture, as his choice of source

works would most suggest. While throughout the poems there are descriptions of

activities familiar from the stock of agrarian didactic, they are not delivered as precepts,

as instructions; rather, they are descriptions, often tinged with a certain admiring tone that

frequently bursts into open praise of the laborers, the animals, and the countryside. While

the speaker retains the first-person voice, and reflects on his material in his own capacity,

there is no sense at all of the teacher-student relationship that characterizes didactic.

Looking, by comparison, to the brief appearance of the *Georgics* in the *Manto*, there we

see far more of the typically didactic features evident in Hesiod and Virgil's poems than

we do in this extended treatment of their genre.[78]

Clearly, there is something else at work in the *Rusticus* than a straightforward

imitation of the agrarian didactic genre. The key to understanding the poem's type lies in

its sustained tone of admiration and praise, which we have already noted as having much

affinity with the praise passages in *Georgics* 2. In the *Rusticus*, we are not dealing with

an imitation in genre; here the agrarian didactic tradition is applied more as a set of

conventions that provide the basic setting, *topoi*, imagery, and subject matter. To

determine the real category into which this poem fits, we must shift from generic types to

rhetorical types, and analyze the *Rusticus* in terms of rhetoric, specifically epideictic.

To provide some grounding for this notion, a few words should be said about

Poliziano's approach to genre and rhetoric. In this connection a foundational place cannot

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[78] *Manto* 158-98; there we see the tone of practical advice-giving, with a primarily second-person address to the audience in a syllabus of topics.

be denied to Quintilian, a chief influence on Poliziano and his scholarship.[79] The tenth book of his *Institutio Oratoria* contains an overview of literature in categories: by poetry and prose, in Greek and then Latin, and under those headings a variety of types. Poetic genres are divided largely by meter: Homer, Hesiod, and Theocritus occupy a single category by virtue of their hexameter verse; the same is true of the Latin side, where Virgil and Lucretius hold the same category.[80] In his own thinking about genres, Poliziano begins from Quintilian's divisions, and from there reaches into the field of rhetoric.[81]

A key influence on Poliziano's understanding of rhetoric's relation to genre, especially as regards his verse *praelectiones*, is another author with whom he was well acquainted, the poet Statius.[82] Beyond the obvious debt to the Roman author's *Silvae* for the name of his own collection, Poliziano owes especially to Statius his notion of how ancient authors blended poetry with the principles of epideictic rhetoric, a mixture apparent in Statius' *Silvae*.

The very name of Statius' collection, *Silvae*, connotes works that were produced for a particular circumstance, occasional poetry. The title comes from the usage of the noun meaning not 'wood(s)', but 'raw material' (reflecting the Greek equivalent ὕλη); it is this usage that Quintilian uses in X.III.17 to describe a draft of something produced in

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[79] His esteem for Quintilian is evident in his inaugural lecture at the Florentine Studio (see above, p. 6, note 7), and his own ideas on literary imitation, which reflect much of Quintilian's thinking in *Institutio Oratoria* X.II.4-28 (see above, p. 35, note 74).

[80] *Institutio Oratoria* X.I.46-55, 85-87.

[81] For Quintilian's conception of genre, its influence on Poliziano, and the *Nutricia*, see Godman's discussion, *From Poliziano to Machiavelli*, pp. 64-72.

[82] See p. 6, note 7 above. Poliziano's commentary (from lectures and annotations) on Statius' *Silvae* has been collected into a single volume: Poliziano, *Commento inedito alle* Selve *di Stazio*, ed. Lucia Cesarini Martinelli.

haste, a spur-of-the-moment composition, and Poliziano agrees with this understanding of the term.[83] In the context of poetry, this would indicate a sort of occasional literature, produced for day-to-day situations as they arose, a characterization that fits with the variety of situations for which Statius produces his individual poems. The occasional character of this poetry, intended for delivery to an audience in the milieu of poetic competitions and recitations in which Statius worked, yielded a special connection with the practices of epideictic rhetoric.[84]

To be sure, the connection between poetry and encomium goes back much further than Statius, through earlier Roman poetry, at least as far as Classical Athens,[85] after which time the trend of poetic encomia only became more developed, through the expansion of rhetorical theory and the increased prevalence of display speeches in the Hellenistic period; Theocritus 17 is cited as a prime example of this development.[86] The preferred meter for such poetry was dactylic hexameter, stemming in large part from the heroic spirit of epic, and its natural affinity with rhetoric of praise and blame.[87] Much of

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[83] *Commento inedito alle* Selve *di Stazio*, ed. Martinelli, p. 8, ll. 13ff.- p. 9, ll. 1-2. For discussions of the title see Newmyer, *The* Silvae *of Statius*, pp. 3-9; *Silvae*, ed. Shackleton-Bailey, p. 5; Hardie, *Statius and the* Silvae, p. 76, offers a more nuanced account. For Statius, the name may also owe a debt to Lucan's earlier collection titled *Silvae*. Collections of Latin occasional poetry in the Renaissance often had this title, presumably after Statius; Grant, *Neo-Latin Literature and the Pastoral*, p. 43.

[84] Newlands, *Statius*: Silvae *Book II*, pp. 2-3, 19-20; Hardie, *Statius and the* Silvae, pp. 76-78, 91-92. The resonance of Statius' poetry with rhetorical teaching extends beyond just the *Silvae*: for features of rhetoric in the Thebaid, see Dominik, *Speech and Rhetoric in Statius'* Thebaid.

[85] Hardie, *Statius and the* Silvae, pp. 92-93; Russell and Wilson, *Menander Rhetor*, pp. xiii-xxv; Cairns, *Generic Composition in Greek and Roman Poetry*, pp. 34-69. Menander Rhetor ascribes the origin of genres to Homer: Russell and Wilson, *Menander Rhetor*, p. 200 (Treatise II, 434, *ll*. 11-12; cited and discussed in Cairns, *Generic Composition*, pp. 34-36).

[86] Cairns, *Generic Composition*, pp. 100- 112; A. Hardie, *Statius and the* Silvae, pp. 87-89; P. Hardie, *Virgil*, p. 8.

[87] Hardie, *Statius and the* Silvae, pp. 85-91.

epideictic rhetoric developed for "occasional" use;[88] the various type-speeches indicated by rhetoricians include wedding speeches (*epithalamia*), farewells to friends departing on a journey (*propemptika*), funereal speeches (*epikedia*), speeches of thanksgiving (*eucharistika*), birthday speeches (*genethliaka*), and others.[89] It is according to these same rhetorical subgenres that Statius composes many of the poems in his collection, often according to precepts for the various types that originated during Hellenistic times (and even earlier) which are reflected in the detailed assessments found in the late-antique handbooks of Pseudo-Dionysius of Halicarnassus and Menander Rhetor.[90] The conventional Greek terms applied to the established rhetorical types become the titles for a number of Statius' *Silvae*, and the poet himself refers to certain pieces by those names in the prose letters that introduce each book.[91]

Poliziano was cognizant of the rhetorical elements in Statius' *Silvae*, as his collected commentary on the poems demonstrates.[92] In his comments on *Silvae* I.1 he embarks upon an extended cataloguing of genres[93] that in many ways recalls Quintilian's catalogue, but which differs in sequence of genres, its lack of a major separation into Greek and Latin authors, its division of broader groups into more specific types, such as

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[88] Cairns, *Generic Composition*, *passim*; Hardie, *Statius and the* Silvae, pp. 76-85.

[89] Russell and Wilson, *Menander Rhetor*, *passim*; Cairns, *Generic Composition*, *passim*, esp. 70-75; Newmyer, *The* Silvae *of Statius*, pp. 15-44; Hardie, *Statius and the* Silvae, pp. 85-91, 99-102.

[90] Hardie, *Statius and the* Silvae, *passim*, esp. 74-102; Newmyer, *The* Silvae *of Statius*, pp. 15-44; Newlands, *Statius*: Silvae *Book II*, p. 3. The surviving treatises of Pseudo-Dionysius and Menander have been published together in Russell and Wilson, *Menander Rhetor*, which contains a valuable introduction to many of the topics addressed here.

[91] Hardie, *Statius and the* Silvae, pp. 98. For instance, *Silvae* II.7, *Genethliacon Lucani ad Pollam*; from the book's introductory letter from Statius to Melior: *cludit volumen genethliacon Lucani* (*ll*. 23-24).

[92] Poliziano, *Commento inedito alle* Selve *di Stazio*, ed. Martinelli.

[93] *Ibid*., p. 51, *ll*. 20ff.- p. 61, *l*. 16. See also Godman, *From Poliziano to Machiavelli*, pp. 64-71 for an insightful discussion of Poliziano's views on genre.

bucolic and epigram, and its consideration of stylistic matters, including what Poliziano refers to as *artificium*,[94] here indicating rhetorical category. Building on this, in another section of his commentary on the same poem,[95] Poliziano examines the composition from a rhetorical standpoint (*nunc artificium poetae consideremus*, p. 66, *l.* 11), and identifies *Silvae* I.1 as epideictic: *haec prima Sylva in demonstrativo genere, quod ad ostendationem compositum solam petit audientium voluptatem* (p. 66, *ll.* 11-13).

In his treatment of *Silvae* I.2, he also provides a rhetorical analysis,[96] identifying the poem as an *epithalamium*, a species of epideictic rhetoric (*Versatur autem epithalamium in genere demonstrativo,* p. 191, *l.* 10). Here he briefly discourses on judicial, deliberative, and epideictic rhetoric in turn, describing their hallmark approaches, and their delineations in terms of occasion and intended effect on the audience. These passages of analysis are preceded by long excerpts from the Greek handbooks of Pseudo-Dionysius and Menander Rhetor which discuss the notable features of *epithalamia*;[97] Poliziano was thus familiar with these handbooks, and with the rhetorical precepts they contain.

From this evidence it is clear that Poliziano conceived of a close relationship between rhetoric and poetry; given his interest in Statius, and the fact that he published his collection of verse *praelectiones* under a title inspired by Statius, we can well expect that rhetoric has a part to play in the composition of his *Silvae*. Analysis of the *Rusticus* as a specimen of epideictic poetry yields telling correspondences with the features of

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[94] *Ibid.*, p. 61, *ll.* 13-14: *quae ad artificium pertinerent exequamur.*

[95] *Ibid.*, p. 66, *ll.* 11-20.

[96] *Ibid.*, p. 190, *ll.* 10ff.- p. 192, *l.* 29.

[97] *Commento inedito alle* Selve, ed. Martinelli, p. 185, *ll.* 4ff. – p. 190, *l.* 14.

encomia outlined in the ancient rhetorical handbooks and in Poliziano's own observations on Statius' *Silvae*. We have already noted that the dominant motif of the poem is praise, a sustained and pervasive attitude towards his subject matter expressed throughout the poem: praise of the rustic lifestyle, its peace, and its virtues, praise of nature's abundance, the richness of the land, and those abiding in it. This tone reflects a conception of epideictic rhetoric that Poliziano himself communicates, in agreement with the ancient critics who aligned epideixis with the mode of praise: *id vocant demonstrativum sive laudativum a meliore parte, graece* ἐγκωμιαστικόν *sive* ἐπιδεικτικόν *appellatur*.[98] The principle of epideictic rhetoric as especially directed towards both praise and blame, a view going back as far as Aristotle,[99] is also reflected in the *Rusticus*, where praise of country life is contrasted with vituperation of the oppressiveness of the city and material wealth (especially at 17-37 and 283-304, and again at 554-56).[100]

Ekphrasis is also a common feature of epideictic rhetoric,[101] and the *Rusticus* is endowed with splendid examples of description, especially the subjects of the young horse (263-82) and the victorious rooster, master of the barnyard (398-416). Descriptions of bounty also characterize the work, expressed most richly in the panoramic and

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[98] *Ibid.*, p. 191, *ll*. 16-19, also *ll*. 25-27 and p. 66, *ll*. 17-20. For the tradition of epideictic oratory and literature as essentially laudatory, see Hardie, *Statius and the* Silvae, pp. 85-102; Hardison, *The Enduring Monument*, pp. 26-32; Russell and Wilson, *Menander Rhetor*, *passim*; Kallendorf, *In Praise of Aeneas*, pp. 9-15.

[99] Russell and Wilson, *Menander Rhetor*, pp. xix-xx; Hardison, *The Enduring Monument*, pp. 29-30;*Commento inedito alle Selve*, p. 191, ll. 16, 25-27. The principle of epideictic rhetoric as pertaining to praise and blame was in coin during the Renaissance, very much so in connection with Virgil's *Aeneid*: see Kallendorf, *In Praise of Aeneas*. Kallendorf's treatment does not address Poliziano's poetics, nor the *Georgics* in any detail, concentrating on the reception of the *Aeneid*. On the *Aeneid*, see also Hardison, *The Enduring Monument*, pp. 32-34.

[100] A contrast common in ancient literature, and in this case inspired by its most immediate source in *Georgics* 2.458-540; for the relation of the *Georgics* with epideictic rhetoric, see below.

[101] Russell and Wilson, *Menander Rhetor*, *passim*; Hardie, *Statius and the* Silvae, pp. 128-36.

dynamic imagery of spring, the time for blossoming flora and animal mating (172-253) and the scenes of storehouses bursting with cornucopia (366-82). These infuse the poem with a highly visual quality that taps the *genus demonstrativum*'s capacity as a vehicle for the vibrant display of a subject.

Furthermore, a pervasive attention to what is aesthetically pleasing and delightful-- in language, in images, in subjects-- is at work in practically every part of the *Rusticus*, going hand-in-hand with the poem's laudatory treatment of rustic life. Taking after the rhetorical handbooks, Poliziano identifies this concern with the aesthetic delight of the audience as a defining feature of epideixis: *tertium, quod ad delectationem solam conveniat, a quo demonstrativum genus exoritur.*[102] In the *Rusticus*, not only does this intent to delight manifest itself in the elegant composition of the poem, its variety, and its vibrant scenery, but the poet himself declares his own pleasure at the splendor of what he is describing; besides a number of exclamatory expressions (e.g. 283-85, 366-67), he proclaims his desire to live for himself the rustic life he envisions (*Hanc…concedite vitam*, 551), and refers to that life in aesthetic terms (*Sic mihi delicias, sic blandimenta laborum, / sic faciles date semper opes*, 552-53). This element of the *Rusticus'* presentation tracks well with its author's conception of epideictic conventions.

These epideictic features apparent in the *Rusticus* are not fully absent from its classical influences. Turning to Poliziano's primary source, Virgil's *Georgics*, we have observed earlier that much of the *Rusticus'* tone and subject matter is inspired by *Georgics* 2, a book which is itself characterized by three encomiastic passages: the Praise

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[102] *Commento inedito alle Selve*, p. 191, *ll*. 24-25; see also p. 192, ll. 11-29. See also Russell and Wilson, *Menander Rhetor*, *passim*.

of Spring (2.323-45), the Praise of Italy (2.136-76),[103] and the *Rusticus'* closest

antecedent, the Praise of Country Life (2.458-540).[104] The coupling of praise with blame

is likewise evident in Book 2, in the vituperation of wine (2.454-57, identified as such by

Servius, *ad* 2.458) and the city (2.495-512). Without pressing the case too hard here (a

fuller exploration of epideictic features in the *Georgics* would surely be worthwhile),

other encomiastic elements seem to be at play in Virgil's poem. The "proem in the

middle" that initiates Book 3 recalls the *epinikia* of Pindar and Callimachus, assuming a

mode of athletic praise related to epideictic encomium.[105] We have already noted the

prevalence of ekphrasis in the *Rusticus'* epideictic program, and here too we find such

extended descriptions as the piece-by-piece illustration of the plow in Book 1 (1.169-75)

and the visualization of the ideal horse in Book 3 (3.77-94, which motivates Poliziano's

similar passage).[106] Additional analysis of such elements present in the *Georgics* and the

other main literary sources of the *praelectio* may further elucidate the inspiration behind

the *Rusticus'* epideictic character.

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[103] Harrison links this passage with a larger nationalistic encomium of Italy under Octavian: *Generic Enrichment in Vergil and Horace*, pp. 138-49.

[104] If we are to believe the story recounted by Servius (*ad Ecl.* 10.1, *Geo.* 4.1), *Georgics* 4 was supposed to include a Praise of Gallus, which was replaced by the Aristaeus episode after Gallus' disgrace and suicide: Hardie, *Virgil*, pp. 44-48; Thomas, *Virgil:* Georgics (vol. 1), pp. 13-16. While this would lend further evidence of encomium in the *Georgics*, the story is too doubtful to be taken into real consideration.

[105] Thomas, *Virgil:* Georgics (vol. 2) *ad* 3.17; Wilkinson, *The* Georgics *of Virgil*, pp. 165-72; P. Hardie, *Virgil*, pp. 40-41. The *epinikion* itself is another kind of encomium: A. Hardie, *Statius and the* Silvae, p. 90. For this passage's place in the *Georgics'* program of praising Octavian, and its affinities with epic, see Harrison, *Generic Enrichment in Vergil and Horace*, pp. 149-56.

[106] In poetry, ekphrasis is a feature most strongly associated with epic, and its presence in the *Georgics* may be attributed to its affinities with that genre (affinities noticeable in other Roman didactic poetry as well). Yet epic poetry and epideictic rhetoric are traditionally thought to share a close relationship: epic was historically considered the most 'epideictic" of genres, and epideixis took much of its character, elevation, and themes from epic. This relationship also clarifies Statius' choice of hexameters and epic resonances for his rhetorically-influenced *Silvae*. See Hardie, *Statius and the* Silvae, pp. 84-86, and above, p. 40, note 87.

The conclusion that emerges as to the *Rusticus*' type is that rhetoric, not genre, provides the principles of its approach to and treatment of its subject matter, and thus underpins its classification. The generic attributes of its models (that is, the distinct features of agrarian didactic poetry and related literature that most define them) are fashioned together within a structural framework provided by epideictic rhetoric: the *Rusticus* is an epideixis on the country life enacted through the commonplaces, gestures, and patterns that comprise the literary sources of the *praelectio*. The ease with which the *Silvae* shift into and out of generic modes makes clear that the unifying principle behind these poems is not found in literary genre. It is the rhetorical function of the piece that defines its character; as a poetic encomium of the country life, the *Rusticus* assumes the diction, imagery, sensibilities, inflections, and subject matter of agrarian didactic-- in other words, all the elements that make up the genre as such. Poliziano utilizes everything except the authentic "voice" of the genre; while it adopts all of its trappings, there is nothing truly didactic (in a literary sense) about the *Rusticus*. The recognizably characteristic features of the poet's sources are stripped from their generic bedrock and reinstalled in the context of an encomiastic address.

That Poliziano's *praelectiones* can be classified as pieces of epideictic rhetoric seems fully appropriate for their use; they were meant to be recited to an audience, and as university lectures were intended not only to showcase certain authors and works, but also to exhort students to study and emulate them. In correspondence with these two intentions, the *Rusticus* is, in effect, an encomium on two levels: internally, it is a resounding praise of the idealized country life conjured up by the Greek and Roman authors, performed through a survey of inspiring scenes extracted from their generic

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stores; externally, it magnifies the objects of its literary imitation through an epideixis of the ancient texts themselves. The *Rusticus*, like all of Poliziano's *Silvae*, is both didactic and protreptic, simultaneously teaching and encouraging the imitation of classical literature through first-hand demonstration; and in this poem both purposes are accomplished through the epideictic mode and its conventions.

CHAPTER 4

Between Georgic and Bucolic

On the topic of genre in the *Rusticus*, we have one further issue to explain: the

infusion of material from bucolic poetry into this *praelectio* on agrarian didactic. The

mixture of genres is announced nowhere more clearly than in the opening scene of the

Rusticus, in which the bucolic character Tityrus, handing over his reed pipe, bids the poet

to sing an *ascraeum carmen* (6). The portrayal of the shepherd who lives among Pan,

Silvanus, the nymphs, and other bucolic entities, and the idealization of the natural world

(especially in the *locus amoenus* description of 7-16) that pervades the poem highlight a

side of the *Rusticus* that has more in common with the Theocritean tradition than with the

Hesiodic. In discerning what underlies this blending of generic material, an

understanding of the role of epideictic rhetoric in the poem's composition will provide an

answer. But before we address that connection, it is worthwhile to briefly review the

tradition of agrarian and bucolic admixture that Poliziano would have inherited from his

classical sources.

An investigation of his influences must begin with Virgil; and we find that the

Georgics themselves contain a certain amount of bucolic elements in and among the

more straightforwardly agricultural material. Given that his composition of the *Eclogues*

preceded his work on the *Georgics*, it is not surprising that he makes occasional reference

to his former bucolic world-- even directly to his own poetry, in the case of the *Georgics'*

closing line.[107] From the very beginning of his didactic poem, in his invocation of twelve

patron divinities (following Varro's convention, *De re rustica* 1.1), Virgil invokes the

pastoral realm alongside the agricultural: among the deities and creatures he names are

Pan (1.17), Silvanus (20), Fauns (10-11), and Dryads (11), all of whom come from the

pastoral milieu; Arcadian locales connected to Pan and familiar from the *Eclogues* are

also called to mind, Lycaeus (16), Maenalus (17), and Tegea (18).[108] *Georgics* 2 contains,

in addition to the passages of praise that are so important for Poliziano's poem, the poet's

reflections on his own choice between poetry of natural science, in the manner of

Lucretius, and poetry of the land (2.475-494). Deliberating on the latter path, he describes

an idealized nature that evokes the bucolic *locus amoenus* (2.485-89), and, affirming the

value of abiding by the rustic gods (*fortunatus et ille*, 2.493-4), again invokes the bucolic

personages of Pan, Silvanus, and the Nymphs (2.494). Lastly, *Georgics* 3, which begins

with another invocation of Arcadia (*silvae amnesque Lycaei*, 3.1-2), and later, of the

Dryads in their idyllic setting (*Dryades silvas saltusque sequamur / intactos*, 3.40-41),

has been singled out by critics as a natural location for pastoral influences, given its focus

on flocks and herd animals, the territory of bucolic poetry, and its affinities with that

genre are particularly evident in Virgil's use of descriptive language and the depictions of

locations, especially in the excurses on Africa and Scythia.[109]

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[107] *Geo*. 4.566: *Tityre, te patulae cecini sub tegmine fagi*: *Ecl*. 1.1: *Tityre, tu patulae recubans sub tegmine fagi*.

[108] Ketteman, *Bukolik und Georgik*, pp. 50-68; Thomas notes that some of these figures seem out of place in an agricultural poem: *Virgil:* Georgics (vol 1), *ad* 1.10. On the bucolic pedigree of the places and figures named in this passage, see Jones, *Virgil's Garden*, pp. 48-49, 85-87.

[109] Ross, *Virgil's Elements*, pp. 167-77; Hardie, *Virgil*, pp. 42-43; see also Ross, 'The Pastoral in the *Georgics*' *Arethusa* 23 (1990), pp. 59-75. For deeper analysis of certain bucolic trends in the *Georgics*, see Ketteman, *Bukolik und Georgik*.

Virgil's immediate successors in agrarian and bucolic literature, Columella and Calpurnius, evidently picked up on this mixing of elements from the *Eclogues* with his agrarian didactic program, for we see it incorporated into their own writings. Columella dedicates the tenth book of his *De re rustica* to a treatment of gardens, an homage to Virgil's *Georgics* in dactylic hexameter inspired by *Georgics* 4.147-48. Following his predecessor, Columella also invokes bucolic personages in the context of his didactic treatment, here amidst an energetic portrayal of springtime (10.255-310, a clear inspiration for the *Rusticus*' own passage on spring). Within this passage, among the figures and locations the poet invokes are Dryads, Nymphs, and the Arcadian locales of Maenalus, Cyllene, and Lycaeus (10.264-66). Later on appear open references to Virgil's *Eclogues*: an allusion to Corydon and Alexis that harkens back to the second eclogue, *ne Corydonis opes despernat Alexis* (10.298), followed by a line adapted from *Eclogue* 5.44, *formoso Nais puero formosior ipsa* (10.299).[110]

Calpurnius Siculus, as an author of eclogues, approaches the mixture of these two genres from the other side. As Hubbard has pointed out, Virgil's *Eclogues* feature explorations of other genres within the framework of individual bucolic poems (most notably in the wide-ranging song of Silenus in *Ecl*. 6), perhaps as a reaction to the diversity of Theocritus' oeuvre.[111] The fifth eclogue in Calpurnius' collection exploits this generic flexibility to introduce didactic content, framed as a long address by the speaker Micon to his ward Canthus on the proper techniques of farming: it is a full

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[110] *Ecl*. 5.44: *formosi pecoris custos, formosior ipse*.

[111] Hubbard, *The Pipes of Pan*, pp. 46, 99-108, 152-54.

imitation of agrarian didactic poetry, with Virgil's *Georgics* as the clear antecedent.[112]

Bequeathing his flocks to Canthus, the aged Micon, taking on the role of the didactic *praeceptor*, instructs his young listener in a second-person address that outlines the proper care and feeding of the animals through the seasons of the year. As Keene's commentary says of the poem, it is "to be classed with the *Georgics* of Virgil rather than with his *Eclogues*."[113]

We can see from these two examples of Virgil's successors in the agrarian didactic and bucolic genres how already the mixture of genres evident in his original work had become a feature of its imitations. It is the tradition first established by those authors that Poliziano engages with in the *Rusticus*. Now it remains to say a few words about how this blending of genres plays into his goals in the *praelectio*.

As already noted, some encomiastic features are visible in the *Georgics* themselves, like the laudatory tones recurrent in the second book and the triumphant epinician scene that begins the third. But the primary contributions from agrarian didactic, as we have seen, are its generic material: the setting, the images, the motifs, the tasks and character of the farmer. The *Rusticus*' function as a *praelectio* on Hesiod and Virgil accounts for this genre's role as the main substance of the epideictic address. Its engagement with bucolic elements adds coloring to that material, most significantly by effecting the poem's idealization of the agricultural world. In contrast to the harsh reality of farm labor (which in large part informs the approach of *Georgics* 1), the bucolic

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[112] Grant, *Neo-Latin Literature and the Pastoral*, pp. 72-73; Karakasis, *Song Exchange in Roman Pastoral*, p. 42; Bausi, *Silvae*, p. xxvii n. 34. Along with the fifth eclogue, Ketteman also sees the influence of the *Georgics* in Calpurnius' second eclogue, which features a gardener: *Bukolik und Georgik*, pp. 99-111; also Karakasis, *Song Exchange*, pp. 42-43.

[113] Keene, *Calpurnius Siculus: The* Eclogues, p. 117.

tradition conjures up a world of *otium*, of simplicity, of the *locus amoenus*; such an idealization contributes to the glowing veneer that Poliziano applies to the rustic life in this *praelectio*, rendering the farmer's world a kind of earthly paradise.[114]

Bucolic poetry also has well-attested connections with rhetoric of praise, perhaps through the response of Theocritus' generic successors to his panegyric poem 17. Virgil's *Eclogues* extol various patrons and friends of the poet, from Octavian to Varius and Pollio,[115] and the riddling fourth eclogue reaches a high register to celebrate the birth of the anonymous *puer*.[116] Calpurnius Siculus' first, fourth, and seventh eclogues are courtly poems that exalt the emperor.[117] Given these affinities, the bucolic identity of the *Rusticus* is well poised to add to the encomiastic resonance of Poliziano's epideixis.

A further way in which both of the *Rusticus*' generic identities contributes to the encomium lies in their evocation of the Golden Age, whose myth pervades both Virgilian works, and originates in Hesiod's *Works and Days* (109-126), thus marking out a strong presence in both of the *praelectio*'s named subjects. Before Virgil incorporated the Golden Age motif into his *Eclogues* and *Georgics*,[118] the Hesiodic myth was picked up by Aratus in his *Phaenomena* (100-136), and later on by Lucretius, who incorporates aspects of it into his account of primitive man (5.925-87), two more of the *Rusticus*' didactic inspirations. On the bucolic side, Calpurnius' first eclogue contains a rapturous

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[114] Bettinzoli, *Daedaleum Iter*, pp. 287-88.

[115] Wilson-Okamura, *Virgil in the Renaissance*, pp. 56-66; Harrison, *Generic Enrichment in Vergil and Horace*, pp. 43-44. Donatus and Servius claim that Virgil's composing of the *Eclogues* was motivated by his desire to praise Octavian and the others who had restored his property: Wilson-Okamura, *Virgil in the Renaissance*, p. 57.

[116] Harrison, *Generic Enrichment in Vergil and Horace*, pp. 43-44; Hubbard, *The Pipes of Pan*, p. 76; Grant, *Neo-Latin Literature and the Pastoral*, pp. 69-70.

[117] Karakasis, *Song Exchange*, pp. 41-42; Grant, *Neo-Latin Literature and the Pastoral*, p. 73.

[118] For the motif in these two works, see Ketteman, *Bukolik und Georgik*, pp. 69-98.

prophecy of a new Golden Age (1.33-88). The vision of an idyllic agrarian age of peace, abundance, and *otium* that is evoked in various contexts throughout these and other works provides the subtext for an idealized view of nature and man's relation to it, and, in Poliziano's use, the wonder and admiration aroused by this utopian vision lend themselves well to encomium.

We see some familiar elements of the Golden Age motif at play in the *Rusticus*.[119] The earth readily brings forth a rich bounty for its workers (153-63, 443-47), and spring, the time of greatest natural abundance, which holds a prominent place in Golden Age representations (e.g. *Georgics* 2.149, *hic ver asiduum*), is afforded a replete and exhilarating set-piece in Poliziano's vision (172-229). The farmer is described in terms reminiscent of the Golden Age's primitive customs: he sleeps under the open sky (51), goes barefoot (52), satisfies himself with acorns (53), and engages with wild animals (57, 61); his physical strength and stature are remarkable (62-65). The shepherd too, living off the nourishment that the land provides for him (315-18), reclines on the grass in his *locus amoenus* (305-308) and builds his *casa frondea* from reeds, sticks, and leaves (308-309). These individual echoes of the ancient motif help construct Poliziano's encomium of country life through the idealization of the rustic world; the tropes and imagery of the Golden Age offer a classical vocabulary for his construction of an idealized nature. Seen in this way, the pervasive allusion to the Golden Age myth facilitates the poem's rhetorical encapsulation of agrarian didactic by building a poetic world that meets the demonstrative purpose and encomiastic tone of the epideixis. In so doing, Poliziano

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[119] For a comprehensive list of Golden Age motifs and their literary sources, see the appendix to Campbell, *Lucretius on Creation and Evolution*, pp. 336-53. On the *Rusticus'* Golden Age imagery as an idealization of Lorenzo's rule, see Galand, *Les Silves*, pp. 175-79, and note 38 above.

brings together some of the *praelectio*'s key literary sources, and explores a significant

motif that they hold in common.

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