

QUESTIONING VIRGIL:

Poetic Ambition and Religious Reform in Erasmus Lætus and Baptista Mantuanus



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*The main focus of this paper is the Neo-Latin work *Bucolica* (Wittenberg 1560) by the Danish humanist poet Erasmus Lætus, and in particular the introduction to his third eclogue. Lætus's *Bucolica* is permeated by a striving both after a loftier genre and for career advancement on behalf of the poet. However, at the beginning of the third eclogue the reader is presented with a metadiscursive passage in which a first-person narrator (Lætus?) hails and celebrates the validity of bucolic poetry and challenges the imperative to strive after nobler genres. Comparing Lætus's work with Baptista Mantuanus's *Adolescentia* (1498), which also renders an inversion of similar ambitions as a metadiscourse, the paper examines the questioning of poetic ambition in Lætus's work and attempts to reconcile it with the seemingly contradictory ambition for epic that is also expressed.*

This paper examines metadiscourse on poetics, style and content in a passage staged as a Muse invocation: that is, in a passage where the narrator/poet reflects on his narrative and its form. *Metadiscourse* is here understood as reflection within a work on the work itself and its code, where code is understood as genre or poetics.¹ This kind of metadiscourse may also be defined as *metapoetics*:² poems reflecting on their own poetic nature. The investigations are especially directed towards the poems' reflections on their own genre and on genre decorum.

The main focus is a bucolic collection of Neo-Latin eclogues: Danish Erasmus Lætus's *Bucolica*, printed in Wittenberg in 1560. Lætus's

¹ For instance, this complies with Roman Jakobson's definition of the metalingual language function as communication about code: "A distinction has been made in modern logic between two levels of language: 'object language' speaking of objects and 'meta-language' speaking of language [Jakobson refers to Alfred Tarski]. But metalanguage is not only a necessary scientific tool utilized by logicians and linguists; it plays also an important role in our everyday language. . . Whenever the addresser and/or the addressee need to check up whether they use the same code, speech is focused on the code: it performs a *metalingual* (i.e. glossing) function." Jakobson 2010, 1150.

² For a general definition see e.g. Beardsley & Raval 1993, s.v. "Metacriticism."

introduction to the third eclogue will be the core of the study. In this poem we are presented with a metadiscursive passage in which the narrator states that the bucolic form should be considered as valid in its own right, and that, in spite of traditional views, such genres as tragedy and heroic epic should not necessarily be the object of the poet's ambitions. In view of the overall design of the work, this statement seems peculiar, since there is a general movement towards heroic epic in the work, especially towards the end, where the poet recommends himself as capable of loftier genres.

The paper has three parts. After an initial presentation of the metadiscourse in question and its role in bucolic poetry, the introduction of Eclogue 3 will, first, be treated with regard to intertextuality to see how it relates to Virgil, the most important classical model in this period. The aim is to show how Lætus inverts his classical model so as to present an alternative statement. Secondly, Lætus's passage will be compared to *Eclogue 5* of the influential work, *Adolescentia*, 1498, by the Carmelite poet Baptista Mantuanus (Mantuan), where we also find an unusual rejection of poetic ambition presented as a metadiscourse. The analysis of Mantuan is contextualized in the paper's third part, where the circumstances and immediate *fortuna* of the work are considered and compared to the political and religious circumstances of Lætus's *Bucolica*. In this light, an interpretation of Lætus's metadiscourse is suggested that will allow the seemingly contrasting statements about poetic ambition in his work to be reconciled.

Bucolic poetry and metadiscursivity

A frequent theme of metareflections in bucolic poetry is tension between form and content. From its very origin, one of the core elements of this genre has been the tension between low and high style. In Theocritus's *Idylls*, simple shepherds converse in rustic Doric dialect, but their lines are organized in effortless hexameters, the epic metre, and many of their stories and descriptions of pastoral events and objects are intertextual and based on Homeric sources or *hypotexts*, to use Genette's term.³ Virgil too employs the tension between simple and complex, low and high in his *Eclogues*. At the beginning of his fourth eclogue, this tension is verbalized by the narrator as he admits to transgressing the limits of the humble bucolic universe in order to describe the coming of the Golden Age:

³ Genette 1997, 5: "By hypertextuality I mean any relationship uniting a text B (which I shall call the *hypertext*) to an earlier text A (I shall, of course, call it the *hypotext*), upon which it is grafted in a manner that is not that of commentary." In this text, *intertextuality*, the term coined by Julia Kristeva, is used to designate the imitative relationship between texts on a general level. Genette has suggested the alternative term *transtextuality*.

Sicelides Musae paulo maiora canamus
Non omnis arbusta iuvant humilesque myricae;
Si canimus silvas, silvae sint consule dignae.

(Sicilian Muses, let us sing a somewhat loftier strain. Not all do the orchards please and the lowly tamarisks. If our song is of the woodland, let the woodland be worthy of a consul. Virgil, *Eclogue* 4. 1–3)⁴

The Muses are invited to inspire a slightly more elevated song to please those who do not favour the low style. They will still sing of rural matters, but in a way refined enough to please distinguished people accustomed to urbane poetry in the high style. The Sicilian Muses are the Muses of Theocritus of Sicily: they inspire and cherish bucolic poetry and style; and the trees and tamarisks, although they have figurative meaning, may evoke associations with the woodland Muse addressed at the beginning of the collection: “Tityre tu patulae recubans sub tegmine fagi/ silvestrem tenui Musam meditaris avena;” (You, Tityrus, lie under your spreading beech’s covert, Wooing the woodland Muse on slender reed: Virgil, *Eclogue* 1.1–2).⁵ The invocation to the Muses in Virgil’s *Eclogue* 4.1–2 can, consequently, be read as a metadiscourse, a verbalized reflection on the decorum of the bucolic genre in which Virgil’s narrator voice is discussing the code of the poem he is introducing by considering the relationship between code, content, and receivers.

For the Renaissance humanists, it was not only Virgil, but the Late Antique understandings of his life and works that influenced the conception and orchestration of Latin poetry in the Virgilian genres.⁶ In the prefaces to the Late Antique commentaries, the conventional intratextual tension between bucolic and epic poetry is associated with Virgil’s literary career. Donatus’s preface to the lost commentary on the *Eclogues* assigns the three levels of style to the three Virgilian genres:

aut cum tres modi sint elocutionum, quos χαρακτήρας Graeci uocant, ἰσχνός qui tenuis, μέσος qui moderatus, ἄδρός qui ualidus intellegitur, credible erit Vergilium, qui in omni genere praeualeret, Bucolica ad primum modum, Georgica ad secundum, Aeneidem ad tertium uoluisse conferre.

⁴ Tr. Fairclough, see Virgil 1935.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ The popularity of the works by Servius and Donatus is reflected in the amount of editions of the commentaries circulating in the Renaissance. Servius tops Wilson-Okamura’s list of “Virgil commentaries ranked by number of printings”. He has registered 119 editions of the commentary on the *Eclogues* printed between 1469 and 1599 with 119 editions. Donatus’s *Vita* is second on the list with 107 editions. Wilson-Okamura 2010, 31–35 & 268.

(or, since there are three styles [*modi*] of speech – what the Greeks call *charaktêrai: ischnos*, which is understood to mean “meagre” [*tenuis*]; *mesos*, “moderate” [*moderatus*]; and *hadros*, “powerful” [*validus*] – one might think that Virgil desired to devote his *Bucolics* to the first mode, his *Georgics* to the second, and the *Aeneid* to the third, in order to distinguish himself in every kind [genus] of poetry. Donatus, *Vita Virgilio* 58–59)⁷

This passage may seem to force a label of low or simple style on the *Eclogues*, but at the same time it underlines the link between that poetic genre and the higher literary styles, because the three genres – bucolic, didactic and heroic epic poetry – are presented as a coherent hierarchy. This means that engagement in the composition of Virgilian eclogues inherently prompts the reader to envision his progression towards didactic and heroic epic; and this same expectation arises for the poet who subscribes to the traditional understanding of Virgil.

For the humanists, this way of reading and understanding Virgil was so well established that it is expressed in the humanistic bucolic poems proper. The conception of bucolic poetry as a stepping stone, working in parallel with the conception of Virgil’s poems as autobiographical allegories, makes way for metadiscourses about how and with what purpose bucolic poetry is to be composed. Petrarch can serve as example: in the first eclogue of his *Bucolicum Carmen*, Petrarch’s poetic persona is presented with a simple pastoral life in the religious orders, which he rejects in favour of a more troublesome secular path. He chooses Homer and Virgil as his role-models in preference to the David of the Old Testament, who is presented as an alternative model, and his endeavours to pursue his ideal are what drive the general plot of the work forward. This choice leads to the presentation of a journey shaped after the Virgilian career model, leading from Vaucluse to Italy and from bucolic poetry towards heroic epic.⁸ Petrarch’s use of Virgil as model not only for his poetry but for the description of his career thus

⁷ Tr. Wilson-Okamura, see Donatus 2008. Servius has the same classification, but uses the following terms for the three *genera dicendi*: *humile, medium, grandiloquum* (Servius, *In Vergilio Bucolicum Librum*, Pr. l. 16–21).

⁸ For an introduction to *Bucolicum Carmen*, its themes and general plot, and a reading of the twelve eclogues as an allusion to the twelve books of Virgil’s *Aeneid*, see Carrai 2009. Hass 2013b treats Eclogue 11 of *Bucolicum Carmen* as a key to the fictionalization of Petrarch’s poetic career in order to make it match the Virgilian model. This text also considers Petrarch’s notations in Ambr. S. P. 10/27 where both Virgil’s text and Servius’ commentary is annotated. Laird 2010 investigates the role of Virgil’s career for Petrarch and confirms how Petrarch displays his works as following Virgil’s model although that is a fictionalization of reality (esp. Laird 2010, 145–47).

confirms how dependent he is on the conception of the Virgilian genres that goes back at least to Late Antiquity. In this context, his work functions as an example of what develops into a tendency: one, however, that is directly opposed by Mantuan's work and seemingly questioned by Lætus's Eclogue 3, as we shall see in the following.⁹

Erasmus Lætus's Eclogue 3

Bucolica is a collection of seven Neo-Latin eclogues written by the Danish theologian Erasmus Lætus (ennobled in 1563), published in Wittenberg in 1560.¹⁰ Lætus was an important intellectual and poetic figure in sixteenth-century Denmark. In 1559, the year before he published the *Bucolica*, he was made professor of theology at the university in Copenhagen. In 1560, Lætus was in Wittenberg to obtain the doctorate degree in theology required to take up the office of professor. Lætus actually managed to imitate Virgil's literary career. He wrote several other extensive works of Latin poetry. Among them are a didactic poem, *De Re Nautica* (Basel 1573), dedicated to the city council of Venice, and two epic poems, *Margaretica* (Frankfurt am Main 1573), dedicated to Queen Elizabeth of England, and *Res Danicae* (Frankfurt am Main 1574) dedicated to Danish King Frederik II.

Current research agrees that Lætus's *Bucolica* is permeated by personal and poetic ambition.¹¹ The work has a dedicatory letter by none other than Philipp Melanchthon, addressed to none other than the Danish king, Frederik II (r. 1559–1588), and although only two of its seven eclogues explicitly treat matters of kings, these two poems take up half of the total number of verses in the work: 1,607 of 3,215 verses.¹² Lætus's poetic persona is staged as a main character in the work, while he himself does not figure as interlocutor until the last eclogue. This poem begins with the classical Muses being translated to Denmark in the sense of a *translatio studii*. The poem is set just outside Copenhagen, indicating that Lætus is ready to enter the city and take up the urbane poetic genres. The ending of the work should be seen as an offer to the Danish King: Lætus offers his services as court poet, as he offers King Frederik the poetic fame and praise of a Renaissance prince; Lætus can make Frederik into a Danish Augustus if the King supports him and allows him to become a Danish Virgil, and

⁹ For a survey of Neo-Latin pastoral see e.g. Marsh 2014, s.v. 'Pastoral,' who confirms the above-described tendency.

¹⁰ An account of Lætus's life in English can be found in Skovgaard-Petersen & Zeeberg, 1992, 399–400.

¹¹ See especially Skaftø Jensen 1984 & 2004, and Zeeberg 2010.

¹² This division is identified by Skaftø Jensen 2004, 27–36.

together the two of them can turn Copenhagen, and Denmark, into a new Rome.¹³

However, this ambition, which otherwise seems to tie the work together, is questioned by the narrator in another central location of the work, Eclogue 3, which is the centrepiece of the first part of the collection. Eclogue 3 opens with a dedication to Philipp Melanchthon in v. 1–22 which will be discussed below. First, we shall see how Lætus addresses Melanchthon (v. 1–6); and then there follows an analysis of how the key passage at v. 7–22 is shaped after Virgil's Eclogue 4.

The beginning of Eclogue 3 reads as follows:

Pastorum Musam Iustique et Thyrsidis, æquo
Certatam studio, lepidisque relatibus auctam,
Dicemus. Tu nostra, dijs accepte Melanthon
Plectra moues, folijsque animam uiresque dicatis,
5 Et placidus confers, et uotis ritè uocatus
Agricolis, humilesque casas et rura tueris.

(Let me tell of the Muse of shepherds Iustus and Thyrsis, for whom they competed with equal keenness and whom they enriched with their pleasant recitals. Melanchthon, you who have the gods' ears, you are moving our plectra, you are kindly turning your attention and energy to the pages dedicated to you, and solemnly called by the rustic prayers you are guarding the humble cottages and the fields.)¹⁴

The dedication is not graphically demarcated from the rest of the text: it is in dactylic hexameters like the rest and thus only stands out from the remaining text by virtue of the direct address to Melanchthon. The dedicatee is referred to by his actual name, not as a bucolic persona. In this way Lætus makes use of what Genette terms a metalepsis as he lets his (extradiegetic) narrator address a person of the extrafictional world without adapting this person to the diegetic universe by fictionalizing him.¹⁵ The metalepsis can

¹³ Zeeberg 2010, 845 and Skafte Jensen 2004, 63–64.

¹⁴ Unless otherwise indicated, translations are my own.

¹⁵ “Any intrusion by the extradiegetic narrator or narratee into the diegetic universe (or by diegetic characters into a metadiegetic universe, etc.), or the inverse [. . .]” (Genette [1972] 1980, 234–35), quoted from Pier 2016 who explains the narratological metalepsis as “a paradoxical contamination between the world of the telling and the world of the told” (ibid.) and goes on to quote a further characterization by Genette of narrative metalepsis as creating “deliberate transgression of the threshold of embedding [. . .]: when an author (or his reader) introduces himself into the fictive action of the narrative or when a character in that fiction intrudes into the extradiegetic existence of the author or reader, such intrusions disturb, to say the least, the distinction between levels,” (Genette [1983] 1988, 88, quoted from Pier 2016).

be seen as an effective way of marking a break in the fictional plot of the narrative and introducing a metadiscourse without leaving the artful world of fiction entirely. On the one hand the real name and person suggest that this passage is not on the same figurative level as the rest of the work, but on the other hand Melanchthon is placed side by side with fictional shepherds and addressed in the bucolic metre.

Melanchthon's status is briefly and naturally established from the beginning: he has the ear of the gods, he is the inspiration and drive of the singing shepherds, and he cares about the rustic environment and its inhabitants. Melanchthon thereby takes the place of the Muse in this poem, in a passage drawing on the well-established form of an invocation of a Muse.¹⁶ The narrator is not concretized, but presented in the first-person plural. This means that the sender of the message can be read not only as the poet or narrator, but also as a conflation of the narrator and the evoked Muse, as is typical in invocations of the Muse.¹⁷

The respectful addressing of Melanchthon creates a contrast to the *agricolae*, for whom he is an inspiration and even a patron. In the description of their *casae* we find the term *humilis*. This word is a value-laden term in the discourse of bucolic decorum: it is Servius's synonym for Donatus's *tenuis*, used in his preface to designate the modest bucolic genre.¹⁸ As I shall argue in the following, *humilis* can be seen as a marker of what will be the theme in the rest of the metadiscursive passage.

Here follow vv. 7–22 where the core of the metadiscourse unfolds. The underlining marks intertextual references to Virgil. My analysis of the relationship of Lætus's text to Virgil's aims to show how Lætus in his use of Virgil expands from what Genette would define as *hypertextuality*¹⁹ to *metatextuality*, a presentation of critical commentary on the hypotext.²⁰

¹⁶ Cf. Skafte Jensen 1993, 141: "The third eclogue has an introductory address to him, an invocation, as it were, in which the poet declares that Melanchthon is the one who has inspired him, having taught him to sing to the shepherd's lute ('Tu nostra... plectra moues')."

¹⁷ E.g. Lucan, *Bellum Civile* 1.1–2: "Bella per Emathios plus quam ciuilia campos/ iusque datum sceleri canimus." (Of war I sing, war worse than civil, waged over the plains of Emathia, and of legality conferred on crime, tr. Duff, see Lucan 1928). The division of labour between singer and Muse is a debated matter. For a discussion, see e.g. De Jong 1987, 45–53.

¹⁸ Servius, *In Vergilii Bucolicum Librum*, Pr. 1. 16–21.

¹⁹ Defined in note 3.

²⁰ *Metatextuality* is one of Genette's five types of transtextuality which he defines as one text critically commenting on another: "it unites a given text to another, of which it speaks without necessarily citing it (without summoning it), in fact sometimes even without naming it." Genette 1997, 4.

Haud omnes excelsa iuuant Elea, superbis
Sæpe quidem pulsata iugis, ubi Dædala tellus
Ardua præcipiti statuit certamina cursu,
10 Et quinquennales palmæ dedit orbita ludos.
Nec semper, quæ magna placent, grandique cothurno
Scripta, Pelethronijs permixta laboribus ardent,
Alcidæue ferunt calamo spumante labores:
Sæpe etiam extremas, despectaque culmina, Diui
15 Intrauere casas, latuitque obscurus arenis
Iuppiter hercæis, stagnisque Tridentifer actus
Exercet ualidas gyrata per æquora uires.
Oblectant arbusta igitur, segnesque myricæ,
Et conferre iocos, alternaque condere dicta
20 Pastorum, liceat: mollique retexere uersu
Quam medias inter corylos, umbrasque cadentes
Personuit facilem mihi rustica tibia Musam.

(Not all men love advanced Elean matters like those often beaten in the proud acres where the hard, Daedalic ground raised competitions in rapid race, and the victory track gave the quinquennial games. And it is not always so that grand material is pleasing, that material written for the grave boot of tragedy and writings mixed with Pelethronic efforts shine, or that the labours of the Alcide can tolerate when the reedpipe is spluttering. The gods have also often looked down from their mountaintop and visited low cottages: Jupiter has hidden secretly in the sand as protector of the house, and the trident-bearer exercises his mighty powers in lakes when the surface is put into circular motion. Orchards and rustic tamarisks are, consequently, pleasing, and it must be allowed to make jests and construct alternating pastoral lines, and to renew the Muse in mellow verse, the easy Muse to whom my rustic flute gave voice where shadows fall among hazels. *Lætus* 3.7–22, my emphases).²¹

²¹ *Elea*, ‘of Elis,’ I take to mean ‘Olympian’ (Lewis & Short, s.v. ‘Elis, II. A. Eleus, a, um, adj.’), as *quinquennales palmæ* must refer to the Olympic Games held with four-year intervals. The *gravis cothurnus* represents tragedy and elevated style as in Horace, *Ars Poetica* v. 80: “hunc socci cepere pedem [*i.e. iambum*] grandesque coturni” (this foot [*i.e. the iambus*] comic sock and high buskins alike adopted, tr. Fairclough, see Horace 1926) and on the connection of tragedy and high style: “Aeschylus ... docuit magnumque loqui nitique cothurno” (Aeschylus ... taught a lofty speech and stately gait on the buskin. Tr. Fairclough, see Horace 1926). Chiron taught Achilles to play the lyre, which accompanies heroic songs like those reported to be sung by Achilles in *Iliad* 9, in a cave in Pelethron (cf.

To begin with the formal aspect, this entire passage builds on an intertextual model; it is an amplification of the second verse of Virgil's Eclogue 4:

Sicelides Musae, paulo maiora canamus.
non omnis arbusta juvant humilesque myricae
Si canimus silvas, silvae sint consule dignae.

(Sicilian Muses, let us sing a somewhat loftier strain. Not all do the orchards please and the lowly tamarisks. If our song is of the woodland, let the woodland be worthy of a consul. Virgil, Eclogue 4.1–3, my emphasis)²²

Virgil's statement is made in very general terms. He creates an image using various components from the semantic sphere of flora and two adjectives designating low and high value. With very few words, Virgil's narrator states how the simple environment of pastoral is not to everyone's taste, and how he consequently hopes that the Muse will bestow dignity on the present poem and its attempt at a treatment of loftier material.

In his passage, Lætus has three references to Virgil's v. 2: v. 7, 11, and 18 (underlined in the quotation above). The three references divide Lætus's argument into three parts. The first reference comes close enough to the famous hypotext for the reader to recognize the model: it begins with a negation and repeats *omnis* (Lætus has *omnes*) and *juvant*. But then Lætus substitutes Virgil's brief and general statement, the *arbusta* and *humiles myricae*, with multiple examples extending over several lines, all the way down to v. 13. First he describes what can be interpreted as lyric poetry, exemplified with Pindaric Olympian odes (v. 7–10). Then Lætus recalls his version of the Virgilian premise again in v. 11, this time using entirely his own words. This second part exemplifies lofty poetry – tragedy (v. 11) and epic (v. 12) – and becomes as concrete as introducing a theme of this kind of poetry, namely the Labours of Heracles (v. 13).

V. 14–17 is a bridge to the third part. After arguing that the greatest of gods are present in the smallest things and the most modest environments, Lætus refers to Virgil's Eclogue 4. 2 for the third time in v. 18: "Oblectant arbusta igitur, segnesque myricæ." The last reference is a conclusive statement that is followed up by a final appeal to Melanchthon and (or as) the Muse.

On a formal level, we can see how Lætus weaves his own text into Virgil's. There is a movement from a partial re-use of Virgilian words to a

e.g. Servius on Virgil, *Georgica* 3. 115). V. 13 probably refers to *The Shield of Hercules*, the didactic epic attributed to Hesiod.

²² Tr. Fairclough, see Virgil 1935.

completely original phrasing, and lastly a return to Virgil's choice of words as Lætus mentions the *arbusta* and *myrica* in his v. 18. The expansion of Virgil's argument by a catalogue of genres suggests that Lætus reads his model as a statement about poetic hierarchy and genre decorum. However, the most conspicuous aspect of his use of the model is that in spite of returning to its wording, Lætus is not confirming the statement, but inverting it; in Lætus's argument, it is the loftier genres that are not pleasing to everyone. His reversion to Virgil's wording in the third reference highlights the contrast between his statement and that in his hypotext, whereby the relationship to Virgil's text transgresses from *hypertextuality* to *metatextuality*: Lætus is not merely building his text on Virgil's, he is presenting a critique of it. Lætus is not moving away from, but rather speaks in favour of modest bucolic poetry, and he uses Neptune's and Jupiter's care for modest places and people as his argument.

In v. 18 Lætus has replaced the genre term *humilis* with *segnis*.²³ This shows both that the argument is considered strong enough and that the model it is based on is familiar enough to stand alone without an explicit statement of what tradition conceives of as a keyword in the determination of style. *Humilis* is moved out of its original context and away from the noun it modifies in Virgil's text, and placed as early as v. 6 in the initial address of Melanchthon in order to present this leitmotif. Each of these three reworkings of Virgil's Eclogue 4. 2 presented, and especially the last, confirms *humilitas* to be the centre around which the introduction and its argument revolves. The repeated use of Eclogue 4. 2 as a hypotext thus demonstrates how Lætus embeds his argument in that of Virgil; but just as the hypotext is interwoven into Lætus's words and phrases, so he takes over the argument and transforms and adapts it to his particular context.

The opening of Virgil's Eclogue 4 contains a metadiscourse regarding bucolic decorum. The narrator acknowledges that the poem will deviate from the style and practice elsewhere in the collection, because the subject

²³ According to the contemporary lexicon by Danish Henrik Smith, *Hortulus synonymorum*, *segnis* works as a synonym of *humilis*. *Segnis* is found among the following synonyms at the entry "v høuesk eller bonachtegh" (un-courtly or rustic/peasant-like): "Inurbanus, rusticus, leuis, inconditus, impolitus, indoctus, rudis, segnis, inefficax, tardus, obtusus, imprudens, stolidus, incomptus, horridus, incultus, sordidus, abiectus, vulgaris, humilis, barbarus, barbasculus, inquinatus, contaminatus, corruptus, inflatus, ventosus, vanus, inanis, spurcus, difficilis, dirus, illiberalis, angusti animi, abiecti animi." Smith 1974, 89, s.v. "segnis." I have used a digitized version through the database www.renaissance-sprog.dk published by the Danish Society of Language and Literature. On Smith's thesaurus, see the subpage <http://xn-rencesprog-2ib.dk/ordbog/om-ordboegerne/henrik-smith-1520>. There are no indications as to whether Lætus used *Hortulus Synonymorum* or not.

requires it to. In the Virgilian tradition, these statements are connected to the ideas of bucolic decorum and the hierarchal division between the Virgilian genres. Servius describes Eclogue 4 as one of three eclogues that are not “entirely bucolic” in the proem of his commentary on the *Eclogues*:

sane sciendum, vii. eclogas esse meras rusticas, quas Theocritus x. habet. hic in tribus a bucolico carmine, sed cum excusatione discessit, ut in genethliaco Salonini et in Sileni theologia, vel ut ex insertis altioribus rebus posset placere, vel quia tot varietates implere non poterat.

(It is well-known that there are seven entirely rustic eclogues. Theocritus has ten of them. Virgil moves away from bucolic poetry in three eclogues, but he has an excuse like in Saloninus’s birthday poem and in the theology of Silenus, either that he attempts to please by introducing certain higher subjects, or that he was unable to vary his material to that extent. Servius, *In Vergilii Bucolicon librum*, Pr. 1. 64–67)²⁴

Servius describes how the major part of the work is in a strictly rustic style corresponding to the ten bucolic idylls of Theocritus’s corpus. Three poems, however, for various reasons adopt a higher style, whereby they can be seen to transgress the category of *humilis* introduced in the beginning of Servius’s text.²⁵ This serves to signal that the *Eclogues* are to be understood as containing the ambition or progression entailed in the Virgilian *rota*.

Servius identifies the child in Virgil’s Eclogue 4 as the son of Asinius Pollio, a boy named Saloninus. This means that he exemplifies the deviation from *eclogae merae rusticae* with Eclogues 4 and 6. The first reason suggested for the deviations – to please by introducing higher subjects – must apply here. Pollio was instrumental in introducing Virgil to Augustus and thus in his recovery of his estates in Mantua, as explained in the biography.²⁶ The idea expressed by Servius is, consequently, that in order to flatter influential men close to his prospective patron, Virgil has broken with the simplistic framework of the rustic bucolic poems.²⁷

Lætus making the opposite point to Virgil draws extra attention to his statement that he is formulating his argument using this particular hypotext, and the fame of the hypotext – the ‘messianic’ eclogue – ensures that no

²⁴ I follow Schiebe 1998, 54, who interprets the slightly obscure last part as meaning “not being able to form his (bucolic) material in a varied way so many times” (my translation).

²⁵ Servius, *In Vergilii Bucolicon librum*, Pr. 1. 16–21.

²⁶ Donatus, *Vita Virgilii* 63 & Servius, *In Vergilii Aeneidos libros 1*, Pr.1. 13–21.

²⁷ See also Donatus, *Vita Virgilii* 65 for a similar explanation of the exposition of Eclogue 4.

reader will miss Lætus's innovation. Like Virgil, he celebrates an important supporter of his own work and career but Lætus also argues in favour of the quality of bucolic poetry, not necessarily in preferring it to other genres but as a valid alternative. The simplicity is not excused, but is recognized as valuable in its own right.

The desire to progress to more advanced genres is frequently found in humanistic bucolic poetry, as stated in my introduction and exemplified in Petrarch. For that reason it is remarkable that Lætus questions it in Eclogue 3, the more so since the rest of the work clearly displays an aspiration towards epic poetry and ensuring the king as his patron. However, if Lætus presents us with a coherent work yet does not intend us to read Eclogue 3 as an entirely separate entity with its own logic, he must be using the discussion of genre poetics and ambition as vehicle for a different theme. It may provide some insight into this seeming conflict to explore a parallel that may have been a source of inspiration for Eclogue 3.

Mantuan and the bucolic ambition

Lætus's conceptual model for this inversion of Virgil's introduction to Eclogue 4 may well be Baptista Mantuanus, the Carmelite monk whose bucolic work, *Adolescentia*, first printed in 1498, was more successful north of the Alps than in Italy: 165 editions of the work were printed between 1498 and 1600, only ten of them in Italy.²⁸ The work made its way into many school curricula, and a number of school commentaries appeared at the beginning of the sixteenth century.²⁹ In this work, Mantuan makes a point of not adhering to the tradition of ambition. He insists on rusticity and simplicity, to such a degree that Scaliger criticizes *Adolescentia* for being entirely rural and not containing anything urbane.³⁰ Mantuan explicitly makes this point in Eclogue 5, which will be my focus in the following. The core of this section is an analysis of the metadiscourse in Eclogue 5; but before that analysis, I will present the work and its central themes.

Adolescentia appears to have influenced Lætus's *Bucolica*. The most visible sign is Lætus's use of the name Myrmix. The name is used by Mantuan in his Eclogue 10, but does not predate it, and does not become a typical name after him in the bucolic tradition.³¹ In Lætus's collection, a shepherd by the name of Myrmix plays an important role on the narrative level in the first part of the collection. Myrmix is the subject of Eclogues 2

²⁸ Piepho 2009, Introduction 15.

²⁹ Coroleu 2014, 24–37 surveys and discusses the commentaries.

³⁰ Scaliger, *Poetices libri septem* 1561, 6. 4.

³¹ Mustard 1911, 150. On Mantuan, Eclogue 10. 3.

and 5, where he is described as a wise shepherd who learned divine secrets from the natural world around him in the Danish setting. There are various kinds of additional parallels and similarities between the two works: for instance, Lætus's last eclogue is entitled Faustus, just like Mantuan's first eclogue, and both works consist of a longer first part and a shorter second part with a slightly different theme.³² However, the extent to which Mantuan's work can be said to have influenced Lætus's *Bucolica* still needs to be explored. The present suggestion of Mantuan's text as a source of inspiration for Lætus's metadiscursive passage in Eclogue 3 is based on conceptual intertextuality rather than straight textual, but the surrounding presence of eclogues telling Myrmix's story makes the comparison relevant.

Mantuan's collection consists of ten eclogues. He treats aspects of morality, love, and religion, and he presents both the story of his own calling to the religious life and a contemporary conflict within his own religious order over a major question touching its orientation and purpose. The collection can be divided into two parts which, according to the dedicatory letter written by Mantuan himself,³³ reflects the composition process. He wrote the first eight eclogues when he was young, before he became a monk, but revised and published them as *Adolescentia* in 1498, on which occasion the dedicatory preface was composed. Mantuan included two new eclogues, which he described as appropriate to and reflecting his current status as a Carmelite monk. The first part of *Adolescentia* ends with his entering on the religious life.

That the original work has been revised in the published work is directly visible in Eclogue 5. Here we meet a shepherd by the name of Candidus, although this persona does not fit into the part of the work containing the youthful poems since Candidus is the mask used by Mantuan for himself in Eclogues 9 and 10, that is, after he has become a monk. He uses this particular name because the word *candidus* (white) refers to the original uncoloured Carmelite habit, and because this marks his position in the Carmelite conflict.³⁴ But since the author's calling to the religious life is not described until Eclogues 7 and 8, Eclogue 5 (and 6) pause and disrupt the chronology of the overall trajectory of the collection.³⁵ Eclogue 5 treats the fate of poets and the role of patronage; and although in Eclogue 6 the interlocutors have changed, the considerations of city versus country life

³² These are presented in Hass 2011, 199–200 and Hass 2013a.

³³ "Frater Baptista Mantuanus Carmelita Paridi Ceresario dicit salutem," Severi 2010, 241.

³⁴ More about this in the following section.

³⁵ Hass 2012, 181 presents an alternative analysis of the work structure based on this observation.

found here can be seen as a continuation of the discussions in Eclogue 5. As will be demonstrated in the following, I read Eclogue 5 as a metadiscourse, because it explicitly discusses not only the work itself but also the bucolic genre.³⁶

Eclogue 5 is introduced by Candidus's interlocutor, Silvanus, who asks Candidus why he is no longer grazing his flock in the company of Silvanus and his fellow shepherds. Candidus replies that he is unable to make a living and sing at the same time. He could do both when he was younger, but now he has become more fragile and he has more obligations. Silvanus suggests a solution to Candidus' problem:

Candide, vidisti Romam sanctique senatus
pontifices, ubi tot vates, ubi copia rerum
tantarum? Facile est illis ditescere campis.

(Candidus, have you seen Rome and the prelates of its holy court where there are so many poets, so much abundance? 'Tis easy to grow wealthy in those fields. Mantuan 5. 111–113).³⁷

This quotation shows how Mantuan relies on Virgil's ancient model: going to "urbem quam dicunt Romam"³⁸ to find security with the help of divine patronage is a topos known from Virgil's first eclogue. This model becomes important for the genre's success in the Renaissance as it includes the convention of applying for patronage. In Mantuan's work the potential patrons of Candidus's song are members of the *sanctus senatus*, an elegant adaption of the *deus* who provided Tityrus's *otium* in Virgil's text.³⁹ The traditional reading of Virgil's poem interprets the *deus* as Augustus, who restored Virgil his land, so the Pope and his court function nicely as a contemporary analogy. But when Candidus answers, we see that the nature of the references has changed, and that the distinction between fiction and reality is challenged as a consequence:

Deciperis me velle putans ditescere. Vesci
115 et lupus omne animal crudis existimat escis,
tuque putas alios quo tu pede claudere passum.

³⁶ I read Eclogue 6 as a continuing the themes and discussions, but only Eclogue 5 will be treated here.

³⁷ Tr. Piepho 2009.

³⁸ Virgil, Eclogue 1. 19.

³⁹ Virgil, Eclogue 1. 6–8: O Meliboe, deus nobis haec otia fecit:/ namque erit ille mihi semper deus; illius aram/ saepe tener nostris ab ovilibus imbuet agnus. (O Meliboeus, it is a god who wrought for us this peace – for a god he shall ever be to me; often shall a tender lamb from our folds stain his altar. Tr. Fairclough, see Virgil 1935).

Non ego ditare cupio, sed vivere parvo.
Fac habeam tenuem sine solitudine victum,
hoc contentus eam. Romana palatia vidi,
120 sed quid Roma putas mihi proderit? O Sylvane,
occidit Augustus nunquam rediturus ab Orco.
Si quid Roma dabit, nugas dabit; accipit aurum,
verba dat. Heu Romae nunc sola pecunia regnat!
Exilium virtus patitur. Sperare iubemur
125 undique et in toto vates spe pascimur orbe.
Sylv.: Dic pugnas, dic gesta virum, dic proelia regum,
vertere ad hos qui scepra tenent, qui regna gubernant;
invenies qui te de sordibus eruat istis.
Can.: Inveniam qui me derideat et subsannet.
130 Tempestate ista reverentia tanta poesi
quanta lupanari; (...)

(You are deceived in thinking I want to grow wealthy. The wolf thinks that all animals devour their food raw, and indeed you believe that other men frame their songs by the measure you have allowed. I don't desire to become rich but to live with little. Give me a slender diet without care, with this I will live content. I have seen Rome's palaces. But why do you suppose Rome will help me? Oh Silvanus, Augustus has perished, never will he return from Orcus. If Rome will give anything, it will give me baubles. It takes gold but gives only words. Alas, wealth alone now rules in Rome. Virtue is banished. We are bidden to be hopeful, and indeed all round the whole world poets are fed on hope. *SIL:* sing of battles, sing of men's deeds, sing of the strife of kings. Turn your thoughts to those who wield the sceptre and govern kingdoms. You will find someone to rescue you from your squalor. *CAN:* nay, I'll find only men to deride and mock me. In that tempest poetry has as much respect as a bawdyhouse. (...). Mantuan 5. 114–131)⁴⁰

Candidus here underlines that he is not striving to become rich; what he wants is enough to be free from cares. Furthermore, he is able to make a qualified evaluation of Silvanus's suggestion. Like Virgil's Tityrus, he has been in Rome. He also has knowledge of the suggested patrons. In reference to them, Virgil's *deus* is reworked, as it was in Silvanus's line. Mantuan here uses a metalepsis: he allows Candidus to refer to Augustus, thus transgressing the fictional universe and displaying an unexpected sense of

⁴⁰ Tr. Piepho 2009.

historical reality.⁴¹ As in Lætus's poem, the metalepsis introduces a metadiscourse on the poetic norms and standards of the work.

The mention of Augustus who will never return to the living deprives Candidus/Mantuan and his fellow *vates* of the possibilities that had been open to Tityrus/Virgil and his colleagues: Rome has changed, and so have the patrons. Now they are focused on gold and on wealth; so their poets must be so too if they wish to win their support.

Although he is poor and needy, Candidus is not willing to compromise on the nature of his poetry. He rejects singing of heroes and wars to please those who have money; he desires *tenuis victus* (118), a modest way of life. *Tenuis* is the term used by Donatus to designate bucolic poetry in his categorization of Virgilian styles.⁴² It is a synonym for Servius's *humilis* and the Latin equivalent to the Callimachean ideal *leptos*, slender poetry. The term is used by Horace in *Ars Poetica* v. 46 and is frequently found in poems that encourage metapoetic readings – for instance Tityrus plays his *tenuis avena*, his slender reedpipe, in Virgil's Eclogue 1. 1–2. The use of this poetologically laden term supports a reading of Mantuan's passage as an explicit evocation and renegotiation of poetic norms. I read the quote as Candidus's insistence on composing rustic poetry, rejecting the advance to urbane poetry in the high style to please his potential patrons. Like Lætus, Mantuan shapes his statement with a metatextual use of Virgil, here the first eclogue. Mantuan's Eclogue 5 must be considered as standing in a metatextual relationship to Virgil's Eclogue 1, as Lætus's text did to Virgil's Eclogue 4, as it discusses whether its example should be followed. Like Lætus, Mantuan rejects the suggestion in Virgil's text.

Mantuan's rejection of poetic ambition is more emphatic than Lætus's. As stated initially, the insistent rusticity expressed directly in Eclogue 5 permeates the work. Mantuan sticks to truly rustic poetry, renders his character with an otherwise unknown realism, and allows episodes from the shepherd's daily life and work to interfere with the narratives of the poem.⁴³ This he does in order to make a point in the aforementioned conflict. This will be unfolded in the next section, since it connects Mantuan's work to Lætus's.

⁴¹ Another example of this conflation of literal and fictional levels is found in v. 96, where Candidus refers to the riches of Cosimo de' Medici (1389–1464): "Non ego divitias Cosmi, non Serica posco/ pallia (...)" (Mantuan 5. 96 & Severi 2010, 282 n96).

⁴² Cf. Donatus, *Vita Virgilio* 58–59, quoted above.

⁴³ On the rustic style of *Adolescentia* see also Severi 2010, 47–48 (with references to works by Cardini, Coppini, Zabughin and Fabbri).

Reform discourse

As argued above, Mantuan is inverting the standard thrust of Virgilian bucolic poetry in which the Virgilian career path is an exemplary point of reference. For that reason I consider Mantuan's Eclogue 5 to be more than "complaints against the niggardliness of patrons," as Piepho describes it in his notes.⁴⁴ The complaints challenge one of the conventionally understood implications of bucolic poetry by directly rejecting the Virgilian model presented by Silvanus. In spite of his age (v. 33), Candidus refuses to give up his rural life and pastoral song and move on with his career, even if bucolic poetry is thought to be only for the poet while young. In so doing he rejects the Virgilian career path and challenges poetic expectations. Candidus's rejection of Rome and his devotion to rustic bucolic poetry is followed up in Eclogue 6, where city and country dwellers are compared and once again city dwellers are criticized. The statements in Eclogues 5 and 6 must be read together, and they must also be understood in connection with the conflict in the Carmelite order, as already stated. In order to unfold his analysis further the conflict will be explained in more detail here.

The conflict originated as a consequence of a revision of the foundations of the Carmelite order, the rule of St. Albert, by Pope Innocent IV in 1247. The revision gave the originally hermitic Carmelites the status of religious mendicants and allowed Carmelite monasteries to be established in cities. The revision caused a division: for centuries some Carmelites continued to opt for a solitary life in agreement with the original rule, while others opted for community life corresponding to the 1247 (and later) moderation. The colour of the habit was itself a part of the conflict: originally it seems to have been made of undyed wool, but over time the use of a black habit had become the norm and was confirmed in a papal bull of 1483, a development considered by Mantuan to be a sign of decay. Mantuan had an important voice in the order: he was elected to the office of vicar-general of the congregation at Mantua five times between 1489 and 1513, and in 1513 for the entire Carmelite order. Pleading with Pope Sixtus IV, he managed to get the undyed grey habit reinstated.⁴⁵ The name Candidus in *Adolescentia* thus refers to the bright, undyed habit of the observant Carmelite, as well as to the preference for a return to the original ways of the order. The conflict over the habit is dealt with explicitly in Eclogue 10, while Eclogue 9 deals with the view of piety that the order is in need of reform, and expresses a

⁴⁴ Piepho 2009, on Mantuan, Eclogue 3. 17–27.

⁴⁵ Piepho 2009, Introduction 3.

critique of the papal curia as corrupt.⁴⁶ The observance of the original hermit status of the order and its origin in the desert on Mount Carmel are treated in Eclogues 7 and 8. It seems very plausible that the aversion to the city and the preference for the country life in Eclogue 6, as well as the aversion to Rome and the insistence on rustic poetry in Eclogue 5, should be seen as allegorical statement about Mantuan's attitude towards the Carmelite conflict.⁴⁷

Mantuan was not the first to criticize the papacy and religious ways in bucolic poetry. Petrarch famously did so in his Eclogues 5 and 6, but the call to reform is new and important. Although Mantuan's extensive treatment of the conflict over the colour of the habit could seem quite particular, it ties into a general, strongly felt insistence on the reform of corrupted religious ways and a return to the true and original ways of the past. Mantuan's order was known to be furthering reforms in this period.⁴⁸ It is for his Christian morality, his call for religious reforms and his critique of the papal curia that Mantuan became famous and his writings popular in the north. He was read as a 'proto-reformer': an encourager of a modest and truly Christian life. Luther credits him, describing Mantuan as the first contemporary poet he read, and quotes several of his works including Eclogue 1.114 in his comment on Hebr. 3:14.⁴⁹ Consequently, when he uses his metadiscourse in Eclogue 5 to express himself on the conflict in the Carmelite order, Mantuan connects the rejection of poetic ambition and the insistence on bucolic poetry to a discourse on Christian reform. Bucolic poetry represents true and honest Christianity, which does not compromise for the convenience of the preacher or to flatter the patrons. In so doing he offers a model for bucolic poets to express a discourse of religious reform.

The formal grip, the rejection of the Virgilian bucolic ambition, is unusual. This means that we must consider the possibility of influence from or an intended reference to Mantuan's Eclogue 5 and its discussions when Virgilian ambition is rejected in later poems, especially taking account of Mantuan's success. As already stated, there are signs of direct influence from Mantuan's *Adolescentia* in Lætus's *Bucolica*, so we know that the

⁴⁶ Piepho 2009, Introduction 24. The problem of the colour of the habit is treated in Eclogue 10.

⁴⁷ Piepho 2009, *ibid.* On Eclogue 6, which he describes as "il più pericoloso ricettacolo di concezioni dissidenti" (Severi 2010, 48) Severi concludes: "Siamo evidentemente di fronte ad un filone del radicalismo contadino che il movimento della Riforma contribuirà a far emergere in tutta la sua virulenza, per poi tragicamente soffocarlo nel sangue." (*ibid.*, 49).

⁴⁸ Watanabe 1987, 44.

⁴⁹ Luther's Works, Weimar Edition 57 III, 151, 12 (reference from Watanabe 1987, 45).

work functioned as a point of reference in some cases. We now therefore turn our attention to Denmark, and the political and theological landscape of Lætus's work, in order to examine how the reform discourse conveyed by Mantuan's rejection of Virgilian ambition may inform the interpretation of Lætus's Eclogue 3.

The Kingdom of Denmark adopted Evangelical Lutheran Christianity in 1536, when Christian III ascended the throne. It was the first kingdom to adopt the new branch of the Christian faith in its entirety. Christian III was a dedicated Lutheran. He carried out a Reformation of the Church and of the educational system (including the university), in close collaboration with the reformers in Wittenberg. On New Year's Day 1559, Christian III died. His son Frederik II, the dedicatee of Lætus's work, succeeded to the throne. The Evangelical Lutheran church was still young in Denmark, and the death of its foremost Danish advocate and protector might have caused a crisis if the new King had not been like-minded and as invested as his father. For that reason, there was a natural eagerness in Wittenberg to maintain a close relationship with the Danish throne. This may have motivated one of the key figures of the Reformation, Philipp Melanchthon, to compose the dedicatory letter of Lætus's bucolic work. In fact, that dedication is the fourth composed by Melanchthon to Frederik II since the death of Christian III.⁵⁰ All four dedications celebrate the deceased Christian and more or less explicitly encourage Frederik to follow in his footsteps as protector of the Lutheran Church and Lutheran education.

Treatments of Lætus's *Bucolica* have mostly explored its use of classical models and its ambitious discourse, but Melanchthon focuses just as much on the work as a theological communication. In his presentation, Lætus is characterized above all as a competent Evangelical Lutheran theologian who, with his God-given poetic talent, will praise God and work for the advancement of good ways. If we follow Melanchthon's lead and consider Lætus's voice to be first and foremost the voice of a theologian, he is comparable to Mantuan in that respect as well. That means we have two

⁵⁰ The first, dated 23 March 1559, functions as the preface to the work *Librorum Moisi* by renowned Danish theologian Peder Palladius. The work aims to explain the books of Moses, and the preface can be considered as an obituary of Christian III. The second, dated 1 April 1559, functions as the preface of the work *Historia Regum Israelitarum* by German humanist Hieronymus Osius. This is a didactic epic about Israeli kings. In the third text, Melanchthon dedicates volume 12, the last volume of the Wittenberg edition of Luther's works in German (published 1539–1559), to Frederik II. Another volume of this work had been dedicated to Christian III, so in this respect, too, Frederic follows in his father's footsteps. In the preface, Christian III is presented as a mirror of all Christian and royal virtues, both in his public and private life. Schwarz Lausten 2010, 293–297.

metadiscursive passages narrated by (masks of) theologians in favour of reform who argue in favour of bucolic poetry by questioning or directly rejecting poetic ambition. Lætus's passage can be analysed as a parallel to Mantuan's: Lætus's narrator would be taking the role and view of the observant Candidus. He would be insisting on bucolic poetry as the pure and true Evangelical Lutheran theology. In his case, that implicates considering bucolic poetry as original poetry, consistent with the *ad fontes* principle of the Reformation, since the eclogue continues to discuss education.

Lætus's rhetoric is not as sharp as Mantuan's, perhaps because Lætus's situation is not entirely the same as Mantuan's. Lætus is not calling for a theological Reformation, because Denmark has already undergone this. This may also explain why Lætus's work can contain both the desire for poetic ambition and the problematizing of it: Lætus is appealing to Frederik II, who he hopes will be the patron of his future, more advanced poetry. Frederik II is a Lutheran, he is virtuous, and if he follows in the footsteps of his father he will be a model for all to follow. Mantuan, on the other hand, dedicates his work to a fellow humanist, Paride Ceresara (1466–1532), rather than a higher-ranking person, a logical move considering the discussion of patrons in Eclogue 5. Candidus's problem with his potential patrons – who were so corrupt and so concerned with themselves and their worldly wealth that he would have to compromise with his poetry in order to gain their support – is absent in Lætus's case. The problematizing of poetic ambition in Lætus's Eclogue 3 can thus be seen as an emphasis on the values of the Reformation, both theological and educational, because of the connotations created by Mantuan. Lætus can reconcile his emphasis on the bucolic or on reform with advancing towards a more ambitious genre of poetry because his potential patron shares the values implied by the discourse of religious reform.

Conclusion

In his Eclogue 3, Lætus presents a metadiscourse that problematizes poetic ambition. The article has demonstrated that he does so by using Virgil Eclogue 4. 1–2 as a hypotext in order to create metatextuality as he problematizes Virgil's statement in his own text. However, the message of the metadiscourse – that bucolic poetry is a valid alternative to genres normally considered more advanced – seems to contradict the overall direction of the work, which strives towards heroic epic and appeals quite explicitly to King Frederik II to take the role of patron for a future epic.

Suggesting how the contradictory tendencies in Lætus's work can be reconciled, a similar metadiscourse in Mantuan's *Adolescentia* was presented. Here, the problematizing of poetic ambition following Virgil's

example is linked to a discourse of religious reform: bucolic poetry comes to represent the true, original practice of Christianity. This was a new development in the genre. It is consistent with the Northern conception of Mantuan as *Christianus Maro*, whose eclogues were read in schools and considered expressions of true Christian values suitable for educating young people. It is Mantuan's connection between bucolic poetry and Christian reform, combined with its particular formal expression as a metadiscourse rejecting the Virgilian career pattern as a model that is suggested as the key to a reconciling Lætus's opposing attitudes to poetic ambition.

The problematizing of poetic ambition in Lætus's Eclogue 3 highlights the author's status as a Lutheran theologian voicing the principles of the Reformation. Lætus is not only a successor of Mantuan in a chronological sense, but also in the sense that he is practising and upholding the values of a reform that Mantuan advocated but did not live to experience. That puts Lætus in a very different situation. He has no reason to complain about the successors of Augustus or about being expected to direct his work towards the city; his local prince is not corrupt, his city is not decayed. On the contrary, if Frederik II stands firm on the Lutheran values and follows in his father's footsteps, as Melanchthon and Lætus hope and advocate, he may become the Augustus redivivus for whom Mantuan found no reason to hope.

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