POLITICAL AUDACITY AND ESOTERICISM
IN THE NINTH ECLOGUE*

By G. Cipolla
(University College for Indians, Durban)

Three main points emerge for the attention of the scholar after a searching study of the Ninth Eclogue:

1. It contains more symbolism and allusions than its shortness would suggest.
2. It has an esoteric substratum.
3. It is anti-Augustan.

Apart from the much vexed question of chronological precedence, both the First and the Ninth Eclogues, because of their autobiographical nature, are most important for an understanding of Vergil, man and poet. They give a clue to the historical events that directly affected him and record his reactions to them. Both are songs of departure prompted by unjust ejection: the First of the poet's countrymen,1 the Ninth of the poet himself.2

The historical events on which the attention of the reader should be focused are: the battle of Philippi (42 B.C.) and the ensuing division among Caesar's veterans of the lands of 18 municipia in Italy including Cremona near Vergil's home town of Mantua; and then the War of Perusia (41 B.C.) and the substitution of Asinius Pollio by Alfenus Varus in the government of the Transpadana.

Varus was very much in favour with Octavianus after the War of Perusia and the Sixth Eclogue was in all probability written during this time when Vergil still hoped to find in him a protector as worthy as Pollio, and moreover was assuring the eager young politician that a poem 'with Varus' name at its head' would be most acceptable to Phoebus (Ecl. VI.12).3

* This article is an adaptation of a longer paper discussed at a Seminar on Vergil's Eclogues held in Pretoria during 1961 in the Classical Department of the University of South Africa.

1 Ecl. I, 3-4.
2 Ecl. IX, 4; although appeals and vague hope are mingled and linger in vv. 27-29 and v. 67.
3 Servius' dating (ad Ecl. 6.11) of this Eclogue before Cicero's death in 43 B.C. is probably incorrect. E. Paratore (Letteratura Latina, 1950, Virgilio, p. 368) finds it difficult to accept such a 'legend' and attributes it to scholiastic tradition. (La tradizione scolastica è stata sempre portata a costruire schemi secondo i quali si venisse a costituire un nesso continuo tra le figure maggiori della letteratura classica.) But H. Wagenvoort (Vergilius Ecloga I en IX, Med. Kon. Vlaamse Acad., XV, 3, 1953, pp. 5-11) vindicates Servius' story and dates Ecl. VI before I and IX. His dating of the collection to the years 45/4-42/1 B.C. though, falls far beyond Asconius' period of three years. Ecl. VI (vv. 1-5) presupposes (i) a period of 'sucolic compositions, and (ii) a second period in which Vergil tried his hand at epic poetry. In view of Ecl. V (vv. 86-87) it would be necessary then to date Eclogues II, III, V and the 'epic' interlude before Ecl. VI with the result that all four these eclogues would appear to have been written by 43 B.C. On the other hand Ecl. VIII (vv. 6-13) would seem
But either because Varus was unable or possibly because he did not want to interfere with the veterans, the hopes of Vergil were dashed. His disappointment was even greater because Varus was apparently a native of Cremona and a fellow student of Vergil.  

If we are to take into consideration what Valerius Catullus writes about his friends, there is a slur cast upon Varus' character in the complaint of poem XXX:

\[
\text{Alfene immemor atque unanimis false sodalibus}
\]
\[
\text{iam te nil miseret, dure, tui dulcis amiculi?}
\]

Varus is branded here as *immemor, falsus, durus*: quite serious accusations at a time when the writer was probably in great distress and had asked for help. Catullus is a most sensitive and perceptive poet and it is quite possible that his description of Varus is true. We should note that the rest of the poem is even more vituperative than the two lines quoted.

As it happened, by the end of the year 40 B.C. or the beginning of 39 B.C., the veterans took Vergil's farm by force. Encouraged by the promise of Octavianus (*Pescit, ut ante, boves, pueri, submittite taurus* I, 45), the protection of Pollio and, perhaps his friendship with Varus, the poet resisted the invasion either with words or deeds, or both. In consequence, as Moeris recounts (*EcL* IX, 6) the poet was exposed to a grave danger the circumstances of which are not completely clear. The Ninth Eclogue is motivated by these last events and bears a veiled description of the danger incurred by Vergil in his final dispossession.

The chronological precedence of the First Eclogue is an all important point in the subsequent argument of this article since a number of new interpretations are presented which could not possibly be accepted without presupposing this interdependence of the two eclogues.

I am convinced that the First Eclogue is anterior to the Ninth or that, even if composed after the Ninth, it refers to facts that precede the Ninth. My to have been written in 39 B.C. (cf. also Hor. *Od.* 2.1.15) and *EcL* X (v. 23 and v. 46ff.) in 37 B.C. Wagenvoort's dating is open to speculation at both ends. Moreover there seems to be a clear chronological reference to the wars of 42 and 41 B.C. in vv. 6-7 of *EcL* VI. The alternative interpretation for *tristia bella* would have been the wars of the years 49-45 B.C., but there is no evidence that Alfenus Varus fought for Caesar.

\[\text{Pseudacro ad. Hor.} \text{ Serm. I. 3.130; Serv. Ecl. 6.13.}\]

\[\text{I take it that here Menalcas is Vergil.}\]

\[\text{Probus (EcL praef., p. 327, 30ff.), Servius (EcL praef., 9.1) and Serv. Daniellis give different versions of the episode but they all agree on the gravity of the danger. See E. Diehl} \text{Die Vitas Vergilianae}, \text{Bonn 1911, p. 58.}\]

conviction is based on several historical and literary inferences. I do not take into consideration Catalepton 8 (Ad Villam Sironis), since there is reasonable doubt as to whether this poem is by Vergil. Nevertheless its contributory support should not be underrated.

The main inferences are:

1. It nowhere appears that after the year 38 B.C. Vergil ever returned to Mantua or North Italy. If he had been given back his farm, we should have expected him to have returned, at least on occasion, to his home town and farm to which he was greatly attached. As things were, he had no reason to go back.

2. It is clear that he received generous compensation from Maecenas and Octavianus and other friends for the lands he had lost in the north. He accepted a house in Rome (on the Esquiline), a villa in Nola, another near Naples, a third in Sicily and possibly another near Tarentum. If we are to believe Donatus he also accumulated a fortune of nearly ten million sesterces ex liberalitate amicorum. Apart from his merits as a poet it would be difficult to account for so much generosity unless we are to suppose that this was in effect a reparation for the wrongs he had suffered.

3. Vergil had not yet lost the hope of getting back his lands by the time he had completed the Georgics—that is, by the year 30-29 B.C.—because this work in several passages reveals his sadness at losing his farm and expresses the hope that one day he may return there. At the beginning of Georgic III, expressing his hopes for the glory that he would attain by the completion of his work, Vergil writes: "Primus Idumeas referam tibi, Mantua, palmas" (G. III, 12). He would bring the palms of glory to Mantua, not to Rome or sweet Parthenope. And then, imagining the building of a temple to Octavianus, he states that he would like to erect it

Tardis ingens ubi flexibus errat
Mincius et tenera protexit harundine ripas (G. III, 14-15).

4. In the Ninth Eclogue, lines 7-10, when Lycidas is told by Moeris that Menalcas has been dispossessed of his farm, he emphatically exclaims:
certe equidem audieram . . .
onmia carminibus vestrum servasse Menalcam (vv. 7-10)
where the reference to the contents of the First Eclogue seems clear. The same thought is repeated in Moeris’ emphatic words:
Audieras et fama fuit. (v. 11)
Here fama should be interpreted as common talk, as well as renown for the poet who had managed with his verses to keep his own farm and those of his countrymen.

5. At line 27 of the same Eclogue, Moeris, singing one of the unfinished poems of Menalcas, says:
Vare, tuum nomen, superet modo Mantua nobis,
Mantua vae miserae nimium vicina Cremonae,
cantantes sublime ferent ad sidera cycni. (vv. 27-29)

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Vita Donati § 13. I take it that the sessus in question were country retreats owned by the poet. Cf. Hor. Ep. II. 1.246.
Here is the promise of a eulogistic poem on condition that Mantua and Vergil’s farm be spared. But Mantua was not spared, and there is no poem by Vergil or any other poet where Varus’ name is exalted to the stars despite the fact that Varus became a consul suffectus in 39 B.C.

6. Vergil’s loss belongs to a pattern of events concerning a number of unfortunate poets who lost properties either in part or in toto after 42 B.C.: Horace (paupertas impulit audax ut versus facerem, Ep. II. 2, 51), Tibullus (Felix quondam, nunc panter ager, I. 1, 19-23), Propertius (nunc tua cum multa verserent rura invenit, abiatut exultas fertica tristis opes, IV. 1, 129). If there had been an exception in the case of Vergil’s farm we should surely have heard of it more explicitly.

7. The epitaph on Vergil’s tomb, either his own composition or that of one of his friends, who ought to have known, clearly states:

Mantua me genuit, Calabri rapuere
nunc tenet Parthenope . . .

from which I understand that he was domiciled in Campania and was buried there. If he had owned a farm, a home or had relations in Northern Italy, considering his attachment to his birthplace, I should have expected him to have expressed in his testament the wish to be buried there. As fate had willed, he was an exile, like pius Aeneas: he had been ejected from the country of his birth and had been given a burial place in the land of his adoption.

* * *

Absurd as it may seem, Vergil modelled the situation and framework of his sad Ninth Eclogue on a joyful and famous poem, the Seventh Idyll of Theocritus, the Thalysia. From beginning to end this Idyll is a rapturous song of humour, love, beauty, and the bounty of nature. It tells how the poet Symichidas walks briskly in the noontide towards a farm where a cheerful festival is taking place, the harvest offerings (Thalysia) to the goddess Demeter. On the way, he comes across a fellow poet, the goatherd Lycidas. They sing in turn two exquisite love poems and then part their ways. Symichidas reaches the farm and settles down to the enjoyment of a bucolic paradise.

But why should Vergil have taken the inspiration and the general situation from this particular Idyll in composing his Ninth Eclogue, which is so short, so broken, so contrasting in its harsh realism with Theocritus’ ideal beauty? This cannot be the result of mere chance. There must be a reason, a deeper meaning that is worth while investigating. Vergil shows himself to be a great artist in the writing of the Eclogues, not only for what he says but more so, in my opinion, for what he does not say, that is, for that wealth of subtle suggestions of poetic pathos that he leaves entirely to develop in the mind and the phantasy of the reader. A clue to this interesting bucolic contrast is given by Vergil himself in the last four lines of the Georgics:

* * *

Ecl. VI cannot possibly be the reward poem. It is in fact a tactful recusatid of Varus’ bidding (vv. 6-8).
Illo Vergilium me tempore dulcis alebat
Parthenope, studiis florentem ignobilis oti,
carmina, qui lusi pastorum audaxque iuventa,
Tityre, te patulae cecini sub tegmine fagi. (vv. 563-566)

These lines are typical of the complex and secretive way in which the poet’s mind works. The Georgics, a deserving poem, is completed; ten years have elapsed since the loss of his farm, and now Vergil thinks that the time has come to apologise. An analysis of the above lines reveals in fact that they contain two signatures and two apologies: Vergil’s signatures to both the Bucolics and the Georgics, and an apology for not having taken up arms in the civil war to help Octavianus, and a second apology for having been ‘audacious’ when writing the songs of the shepherds. *Audaxque iuventa* cannot mean anything else but ‘audacious on account of my youth’, signifying that had he been older he would have been more careful about what he wrote when composing the Eclogues.¹⁰

The interpretation accepted by many scholars¹¹ that the poet was bold because he was the first to introduce bucolic poetry into Latin literature is, in my opinion, inexact. Jean Hubeaux (*Le Thème Bucolique dans la Poesie Latine*, Brussels 1930, especially in Ch. I) has clearly proved that this theme was well established before Vergil undertook to write the Eclogues. Moreover, considering the natural modesty of the poet, it would have been hardly possible for him to make such a claim.¹²

If, for once, we were to take Vergil literally, at his own words, we would then obtain from himself one of the main keys for the interpretation of his pastoral allegories. We should then see how bitter and sarcastic,¹³ for all its sweetness, this Eclogue is, especially if we read it after the First, as it is meant to be read.

The Seventh Idyll was familiar to every cultured Roman of Vergil’s time (Pliny the Elder records that Theocritus had been translated into Latin by Catullus),¹⁴ and a poem based on it but with a contrasted theme, for those who were in the know, would amount to a literary protest and revolt against the iniquities of the age—a protest that, because of the gentle and reticent nature of the poet, was sad, bitter and sweet at the same time. He was fully justified: he had obtained the assurance of his Thalysia from Octavianus himself (Ecl. I), and then, suddenly, this bucolic paradise had cruelly crumbled before his eyes; not only so—but he had nearly lost his life in the process (Ecl. IX. 16)!

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¹² In fact he nowhere made it in his Eclogues, though some wrongly interpret *prima* in Ecl. VI. 1 as such a claim.
¹³ H. J. Rose, op. cit., p. 90: ‘Vergil had come ... as near spitefulness as was in his gentle and forgiving nature’.
¹⁴ Ettore Paratore, op. cit., p. 367.
Over and over again, in ancient and modern times, Vergil has been labelled an Epicurean. Some contemporary scholars have gone so far as to explain his art as a ‘conflict between his Epicurean self and his Roman ideal’. But if one compares and contrasts him with such admittedly Epicurean poets as Lucretius and Horace, one can easily observe how different he is from either of them. Lucretius’ conception of this philosophy is principally that of a weapon in his militant fight against the traditional superstition of religion. Horace on the other hand was interested in the more earthly tenets of the doctrine. Vergil, because of his upbringing and sensitiveness, was mainly inclined towards its ideals of contemplative otium, moral uprightness, simplicity, love for nature. In actual life he might have studied and followed Epicureanism as he might have studied other philosophical systems, yet his is far too complex and universal a mind to be classified as Epicurean, short of over-simplification. It should be observed that the Ninth Eclogue is essentially a covert poem of wrath. How can this be made compatible with the doctrine of árpaçía?

Even when one studies the structure of this Eclogue (a product of youth, when Epicurean influences should have been stronger in the poet) one comes across a seemingly unfathomable substratum of esotericism which cannot be simply described as Epicurean.

Admittedly he follows in general the traditional bucolic technique of amoebaean versification: a perfect balance of lines. But he achieves this balance with uncanny complexity and subtlety. He is a wizard in the use not only of words but of numbers as well. A cursory examination would show that the Eclogue seems to be divided into two parts. The first part (vv. 1-29) would appear to be confused and disarranged, while the second part (vv. 30-67) displays a perfect numerical architecture. But a more careful study will show that of the first 29 lines, taking out the veteran’s solitary and evil line (v. 4), 14 belong to Lycidas and 14 to Moeris.

The overall pattern is thus: 1-5, 4-6, 9-4 in the first part, and 7-7, 2-10, 10-2 in the second part. Altogether, one line from the veteran, 33 from Lycidas and 33 from Moeris (66+1).

15 G. Highet, Poets in a Landscape, p. 76 (Pelican ed.).
16 Hor. Epist. I. 4, 15-16.
17 Paratore, ibid. p. 367, states that the poet’s personal interpretation was ‘un limitare e deviare il carattere essenziale della dottrina’.
18 Catal. 5.9-10, Vita Probi I. 11, Serv. Æd. 6.13.
21 But some MSS. (Mediceus, Mediolanus, Gudianus) assign vv. 46-50 to Lycidas, and Perret (ed. 1961) follows them. This destroys the amoebaean balance and violates the sense of v. 45. Nor is this in keeping with the psychological mood of the poem: the invitation to singing comes from Lycidas.
22 Cf. O. Weinreich, Triskaidekadische Studien, 1916 (RGVV xv. 1).
But the play of numbers does not stop here, for the short poems, which they sing in turn, also display a mathematical order: to 3 lines sung by Lycidas, Moeris answers with 3 and, again, after 5 lines on Galatea, Moeris follows on with another 5 on Daphnis. And this is not all: for if one does away with Menalcas’ songs and the veteran’s line (v. 4) there still remains a perfect numerical pattern: 1-4, 4-6, 6-1, that is to say, out of the 29 lines of the first part, strictly speaking, 11 belong to Lycidas, 11 to Moeris, 3 plus 3 to Menalcas and 1 to the veteran. Finally, one should also observe the ternary arrangement of 3 questions—3 answers for the first part and 3 questions—3 answers for the second part as well.

This is rather astonishing. I would recall here that not without reason later Latinity, and the Middle Ages in particular, bestowed upon Vergil the appellative of ‘magician’. In this regard, it is interesting to observe that another great poet and scholar of Vergil, Dante Alighieri, followed a similar pattern of numbers when composing the Divine Comedy. In fact one introductory canto is succeeded by 33 cantos for the Inferno, 33 for the Purgatorio and 33 for the Paradiso. The total sum is 100: a cabalistic number, but the arrangement 1-33-33-33, too, contained a composite religious meaning.

But I should recall here that numbers in traditional pastoral poetry—old and modern—embody a profound esoteric meaning that borders on mysticism. No doubt the cult of the number is very ancient: it can be traced back to Homer and before him. Yet Pythagoras’ doctrines have a lot to do with it. These doctrines were particularly widespread and practised in southern Italy and Sicily during the last four centuries before the Christian era. In the conception of this philosophic and religious reformer, the universe, in its infinite order, was a symbol of the mysterious power of numbers.

This ideal of numerical symmetry and perfection became a common belief and found its way into popular poetry and was adopted by learned authors as well. Numbers like 1, 2, 3, 4, their addition and their multiples, had special significance. The number 10 in particular, the Pythagorean tetraktus (the sum of 1, 2, 3, 4) was the most important of these figures, and at this point I must emphasize that it is no mere chance that the total number of the Eclogues is 10. It follows that just as there is symbolism in Vergil’s words, there is symbolism in the number of his lines as well. More I cannot say on this subject here, but I would like to point out that scholars have overemphasized Vergil’s Alexandrian influences without paying much attention to traditional pastoral poetry and Orphic-Pythagorean influences, which to a certain degree were evenly spread across the central and eastern Mediterranean countries.

24 It is customary in Homer to invoke or to group deities in threes. In invocations to single gods divine attributes are commonly grouped in threes. Cf. *Il. I. 37-42 and Ed. VIII. 74-76.
25 Compare in this connection Hor. *Carm. I. 24, 9-10; Sat. II. 6, 63; Epist. II. 1, 52.*
27 Empedocles, Georgias of Leontini, Theocritus.
at the time of Vergil. We should note that the pattern 1-3-3 is also common in ancient Hebrew tradition and prayers: in fact, even the Lord’s Prayer displays the same pattern (1 invocation, 3 requests on behalf of God, and 3 requests on behalf of man).

The preference for allegory and allusions in verse making comes naturally to shepherds, old or modern as they may be. Perhaps the reason for this predilection may be found in their living conditions. Their life is very near to nature: they dwell in the open expanses amid mountains and plains, streams and woods, away from the multitudes and man-made artificiality. In these environments they acquire an uncanny tendency to transform into symbols anything they see or think. As a consequence they express themselves by symbols. This is their own language. After all, what are all our human languages if not a mass of symbols? Perhaps one can argue that this symbolism is primitive. In a way we can grant that. But not in the sense of banality and simplicity because a shepherd’s brain is a very sharp and subtle instrument with the innate knowledge and experience of ages. D. H. Lawrence, during his sojourn in Dorian Sicily, commented upon the singleness of the peasants he met on the mountains of the island and observed that ‘they were subtle and portentous like the wanderers of the Odyssey’ (Phoenix, essay on Mastro Don Gesualdo by G. Verga).

Of course symbolism came naturally to Vergil too. He was the son of a farmer, grew up among rustics and understood their language. It is also possible that his philosophical education may have influenced him, although in this case more than the Epicurean λήθε βουίων, one should speak of λήθε φήας. But his choice to write in the pastoral vein must be attributed to a considerable extent to the troublesome and dangerous age he lived in. It was just a little while before that Cicero’s obtruncated head and hands had appeared on the rostra. In the circumstances the songs of the shepherds were an ideal medium in which to express his mind in freedom.

If we read this Eclogue with the enlightening clue of Vergil’s political audacity, we shall unravel many subtle meanings and shall catch nuances that hitherto have remained unnoticed. We shall then understand the fine sarcasm of his pastoral allusions. Here are some of them to prove the point:

M. O Lycida, vivi pervenimus, advena nostri
quod numquam veriti sumus, ut possessor agelli,
diceret: ‘haec mea sunt; veteres migrate coloni.’
nunc vici tristes, quoniam fors omnia versat,
hos illi—quod nec vertat bene—mittimus haedos. (vv. 2-6)

Here is the first instance of Vergil’s audacity. The realistic abruptness of these verses comes like a shock. They state boldly the unjust dispossession with a

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28 There is no hint here that Vergil was a Pythagorean. But read J. Carcopino’s penetrating work, Virgile et le Mystère de la IV Eclogue, éd. revue, Paris 1943, where many Vergilian concepts of this Eclogue are explained as having a source in Pythagoreanism.

29 Geor. IV, 565.
painingly contorted construction, and the poignant and allusive *vivi pervenimus, victi iris, advena nostri... possessus agelli* are concluded with a curse: *nee veriat bene!*

*Quod numquam veriti sumus* (v. 3) is a revelatory expression: they had believed Octavianus' promise and had relied on it!

*sed carmina tantum

nostra valent, Lycida, tela inter Martia quantum

Chaonias dicit aquila veniente columbas. (vv. 11-13)*

The merits of a poet avail naught against the arms of Mars: brute force is more effective than verses! Here is irony and sarcasm. The simile between verses and doves is most beautiful. But it goes further. The doves are Chaonian, i.e. sacred doves of Dodona, where in the name of the gods *vaticinia* were given under the venerated oak-tree. So the simile is precisely between the sacred doves of Dodona and the eagle on the one hand, and the sacred *vates* (see also v. 34)—not just poet—Vergilius, who had already written the Fourth Eclogue,30 and the predatory Roman eagle in the person of the veteran who occupied his farm, on the other hand. The indirect blow against the powers that be is far too evident to need emphasis.

As we have seen before,31 vv. 7-11 and vv. 27-29 of this poem show quite clearly the interdependence between the First and Ninth Eclogues. Now *novas lites* (v. 14) gives further evidence that the dispute had lasted for some time and that there had been previous altercations (enough to explain some of the events of the First Eclogue) until things came to a head: Vergil himself was nearly killed (*nee viveret ipse Menaleas*, v. 16). Here follows the indignant interrogation of Lycidas shocked by the enormity of the crime that nearly came to pass (*heu, cadit in quemquam tantum seclus?* v. 17).

The pastoral allusions increase in vigorous crescendo until we come to the biting climax:

*Daphni, quid antiquos signorum suspicis ortus?

eece Dionaei processit Caesaris astrum,
astrum, quo segetes gaudenter frugibus et quo
duceret apricis in collibus uva colorem.

insere, Daphni, piri: carpent tua poma nepotes. (vv. 46-50)*

The song of Moeris breaks down bitter and sarcastic. *Dionaei Caesaris astrum* is not only literally 'the star of Dionaeus Caesar', but also implies Octavianus himself at whose advent to power after the civil wars the cornfields should have been joyous with produce, but they are not; and the grapes should obtain their colour on the sunny hills, but they do not ripen for the lawful owners.

The grandchildren of Daphnis (the prototype of bucolic poets: Vergil?) will

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30 It is commonly assumed that this Eclogue was written in 40 B.C. mainly on the strength of vv. 11-12. I have previously argued that Vergil's ejection took place by the end of 40 B.C. or the beginning of 39 B.C. assuming, therefore, that *Eel. I* and *IV* are anterior to *Eel. IX*. Hence the poignancy of the latter poem is furthered and Vergil's contrast on the theme of the Seventh Idyll is better justified and understood.

31 See the arguments at Nos. 4 and 5 above.
not gather the fruits of the trees tended by their grandfather, but a stranger, an 'impious soldier', will.

Here in pastoral allegory is the ironic and tragic situation of Italy after the War of Perusia. Octavianus is no more the benign and protecting god of the First Eclogue. He appears rather like the evil star that has risen to the sky on the trail of Caesar and from that high position sheds upon mankind its malign influence inflicting tragedy and havoc.

vox quoque Moerim
iam fugit ipsa; lupi Moerim videre priores. (vv. 53-54)

To the unsuspecting reader these lines would appear to refer to a harmless piece of bucolic superstition. But they are allusively biting. The lupi in fabula (?) are in reality the veterans who were prowling around, preying on farms of friends and relations of Moeris. It was they who made him lose his voice!

Moeris is too sad to sing, yet Lycidas does not understand and asks for songs, more songs.

M. Desine plura, puer, et quod nunc instat agamus:
carmina tum melius, cum venerit ipse, canemus. (vv. 66-67)

The Eclogue is finished: it has been cut short by Moeris. And as the two figures tread on the road to town and disappear from our sight, again, in true Vergilian suspense we are left with our question unanswered: will Menalcas come back? Will he?

I know that he never did, and the last line of this poem seems to lead back to the First Eclogue (v. 77ff.):
carmina nulla canam; non me pascente, capellae, florentem cytisum et salices carpetis amarás . . .

Amaras is indeed the last word: for it is the bitterness of a great soul.

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32 The parallelism between Ec. IX. 50 and Ec. I. 73 (insere nunc, Meliboea, piros, pone ordine vites) has been explained in chronological terms. Rose (p. 91), Büchner (p. 166.20ff.), Wagenvoort and Holzoff (ad loca) antedate IX. 48-50 without further ado. In reality context and contents are very similar in both lines: they are sarcastic, realistically bitter peasants' banter. The only difference is that here Vergil's language is more guarded and subtle. For in the First Eclogue he was dealing only with soldiers, here with Augustus himself.

33 Ec. I. 70.
34 Ec. I. 6.
35 Cf. Theocr. XIV. 22.
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