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Elegiac Discourse in the *Eclogues*: The Meaning of *Libertas* in the First Eclogue

The relationship between Vergil's *Eclogues* and Roman love elegy has proved to be a fertile ground for discussion by several scholars (Zetzel 1977, Conte 1986, Alpers 1996). Vergil himself invites the analysis of *Kreuzung der Gattungen* (Kroll, 1924) by introducing into his pastoral world the familiar elegiac *topoi* usually not associated with the pastoral genre as it was conceived by Theocritus. One of these *topoi* is *servitium amoris* which stands at the center of "elegiac ideology" (Conte, 1994). In the *Eclogues* the theme of *servitium amoris* is present in the several *Eclogues* but the critics have allowed only the Gallus of the Tenth Eclogue to be a singer of elegiac love within the pastoral setting (Ross 1975, Lyne 1979, Veyne 1988, Perkell, *Classical Philology*, 1996). These critics also have asserted that the introduction of Gallus into the pastoral landscape signifies Vergil's dissatisfaction with pastoral as a genre and pays homage to Gallus the elegist.

However, the elegiac element is apparent in the earlier *Eclogues* where shepherds in love speak the language of elegy. This essay focuses on *Ecl.* 1.27-32 and offers an interpretation of Tityrus' words addressed to Meliboeus and specifically the interpretation in the context of the word *libertas*. I argue that the meaning of these lines can be better understood in the context of elegiac discourse. *Libertas* then should not be interpreted as the opposite of merely *servitium* but rather of *servitium amoris*. Tityrus depicts his previous existence in words evocative of the plight of the elegiac lover who lost his freedom to his *domina* and who always complains that he does not have any savings to entice his beloved. Tityrus also states in these lines that his long awaited *libertas* became possible only when he became an old man, a very elegiac turn of events since the elegiac lover is always a *iuvenis*, not a *senex*.

I also offer several points of comparison with the use of the concepts of *servitium* and *libertas* in Propertius (1.1.28, 1.4.4, 2.23.23), Tibullus (2.4.1-3), and Ovid (*Amores* 2.17.1-2) where the idea of freedom is treated as hostile to the existence of the elegiac protagonist and *servitium* is welcome and desired. Vergil's Tityrus, despite the fact that he speaks the language of elegy, welcomes his "liberty" both in literal (freedom from slavery) and elegiac sense (freedom from the subjugation to the beloved). The life of *assuetum servitium* offered by Propertius (1.4) is rejected by the pastoral Tityrus still conditioned by the limitations of the pastoral landscape and genre.

Subsequently, Tityrus adherence to *libertas* prepares the reader for the appearance of Gallus who becomes a foreign element in Vergil's Arcadia. In conclusion the essay offers some brief suggestions how the elegiac reading of the First Eclogue sheds some light on understanding why Vergil inserts Gallus in his pastoral narrative: not as a harbinger of the new genre of poetry but as an intruder into the realm where he does not belong. Thus Vergil asserts the superiority of his poetic choice over Gallus' under the disguise of paying homage to his fellow-poet.

