Document Analysis

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| **Student Number:** 826860 |
| **Subject:** HPSC20002, Summer Semester 2019 |
| **Subject Name:** A History of Nature |
| **Lecturers:** John Wilkins/Morgan Saletta |
| **Tutor/ Tutorial Time:** Victoria/12:00 PM |
| **Essay Title:**      Eclogue 4, Virgil  **Word Count:** |

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Signed:   Aneesh      [Typed] Date

# Document selected:

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# Document details:

## Who wrote it? Who read it? Date. Place. Who was intended (and possibly unintended) audience? What do we know, if anything, of actual readership/audience? Eclogue 4, also known as the Fourth Eclogue was composed by the talented Publius Vergilius Maro or usually known as Virgil. He was a famous Roman poet during the reign of Augustus, the first Roman emperor. The Eclogues are considered to be the Roman version of the Greek pastorals poetry created by Theocritus. Vergil composed the Eclogues during the second Roman Triumvirate that was led by Mark Anthony, Octavian and Lepidus between 44-38 B.C. ages. The Eclogues are based mainly around the shepherds in the rural settings and the events happening around the time.

# Interpretation:

## What is the topic? Write a one sentence summary The document to be analysed is Virgil's Eclogue 4. This Eclogue indicated the coming golden age with the birth of a child, and with it all the discomforts upon the people of Rome will be lifted.

## Why did the author write it? Quote evidence from the document to back this up. Over the years, there have been many speculations as to why and what Vergil meant by writing this Eclogue. These issues have arisen because of the different interpretations by many scholars now and also around that time. Since this document was written after the treaty of Brundisium it indicates how peace and stability was returning to Rome and because of this he portrayed an image of the arcadian vision in his poem which he believed that Rome could achieve.Eclogue IV in a way was to comfort the people and give them hope.

## "The goats will come home themselves, their udders swollen with milk, and the cattle will have no fear of fierce lions: Your cradle itself will pour out delightful flowers:And the snakes will die, and deceitful poisonous herbs"will wither: Assyrian spice plants will spring up everywhere."

## There are three significant possibilities to this. In One of the interpretations it is believed Virgil wrote the fourth Eclogue to honour Augustus who at that time was known as Octavius and was soon to become the first Emperor of Rome but since the poem was written around 42 B.C. and published later around 38 B.C. it is highly unlikely. This interpretation was made because of his later famous works the Aeneid, in which he is believed to be a part of an propaganda because some scholars considered him to be a simpering sycophant who just wanted imperial sponsorship while some thought his views regarding ancient Rome and political ideas were aligned with Augustus, who wanted to bring Rome back to its full glory by embracing their roots. In another interpretation it is believed he wrote it to address Gaius Asinius Pollio and to congratulate him in his consulship as the consuls excercised the hisghest judicial power and also because he was patron to Vergil who helped him in saving Vergi's family farm from confiscation."For, Pollio, in your consulship, this noble age begins, and the noble months begin their advance: any traces of our evils that remain will be cancelled, while you lead, and leave the earth free from perpetual fear." Another possibility to be considered is that Vergil could have been influenced by Hebrew texts and the prophecies in it, since there are some similarities between them like regarding the child to be born who will be the saviour of humanity. This is a possibility since he mentioned Sybilline verses.

## What did you learn from this document that you did not know from elsewhere? This document has been a part of many controversies over the years and one aspect regarding ancient history I have learned is that it can never be certain and there are always going to be speculations around it until strong evidences to back up a certain supposition are discovered. This has been been proven in the previous question.

## What was the author hoping to achieve through the production of this source? Already discussed in the second question.

# Historical context:

## What relevant events were happening at the time and place the document was written? Has the document’s influence or importance changed with time? How so? Were there multiple editions with different information or influential forewords, for example? Was the document lost and rediscovered (and what were the circumstances)? Just before Virgil started with his Eclogues in 42 B.C Caesar had been assassinated by a group of Roman senators in 44 B.C. The Battle of Phillipi had just ended between the armies of Marc Antony and Octavian (Second Triumvirate) and the assassins of Julius Caesar, Brutus and Longinus. The civil war over the decade had cause a lot of devastation and chaos everywhere. The second triumvirate had caused many revolutionary changes which in all caused suffering for the farmers, shepherds and other rural workmen, this was all represented in a dramatic way in these poems. With the end of these wars and the clouds of chaos lifting ,Virgil predicted or just out of excitement wrote this Eclogue which talked about the coming of the golden age, which would end all the sorrows of people. This Arcadian vision described in the Eclogue is extremely vivid which sounds to good to be true. The document with time has had various interpretations and one of the early Christian era interpretations in which many believed him to be a prophet of Christ was widely accepted. Constantine called Virgil " the prince of latin poets" and honoured his fourth Eclogue in his speech De Vita Constantini. Constantine believed that Virgil on purpose did not reveal the identity of the child as Christ because he feared the ruling powers. Another poet who was influenced by Vergil's work was Dante who is well known to be fascinated by his work. Dante in his work Purgatorio says ""Through you I was a poet, through you a Christian.'when you said: "The centuries turn new again. Justice returns with the first age of man, new progeny descends from Heaven."" This indiactes that Vergil's work was so influential he made Dante convert to Christianity. In the modern world critics are more rational and focus on all the possibilities into account. While some still believe because of their faith the eclogue to be a prophecy, others disapprove it. The document was never lost as Virgil was one of the most notable and influential poets of his time, this is the reason why his works had been preserved over the years.

## What was the relationship between the document and similar documents at time of composition/publication etc. – is it representative of a debate/discussion within a particular field or within society more broadly, for example? The fourth eclogue is part of the broad ten eclogues which are divided into two sets with each set having five eclogues. The fourth eclogue is forward-looking, promising and giving hopes to the Roman people. It is created in a dactylic hexameter structure which provides the poem a neat format and gives it a beautiful unity of purpose. The poem stands out compared to the other Eclogues because it has a prophetic tone to it.

## How, by whom, and for what purpose, the document may have been used? What is the broader cultural impact or influence etc., of this document? This document was very instrumental in changing the political and social environments in Rome. It might have been a symbolic representation of the poor governance which prevailed in Rome, and how under the governance of Pollius it was all going to improve. It might have been translated and later perceived as imperial propaganda by Augustus, under whose rule everyone will benefit. This document but in ways did instil hope into the hearts of the people suffering at the time and promised a better tomorrow. This document could have been used by followers of Christ to instil faith in people in the early Christian era. In the modern world, this document can be used as a symbol never to lose hope and assure themselves that better times are ahead. There might come leaders who can listen to them and help them unlike Donald Trump and Kim Jong-un.

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