

it? . . . Surely God created it with his bare hand, to astonish Nature." Descriptions of beautiful men and women are obligatory in courtly poetry and were turned out in accordance with recipes which we need not discuss here.<sup>37</sup>

<sup>37</sup> Ecphrasis of a beautiful man: *Stud. med.*, IX (1936), 38, No. 30.—Chrétien's term for ecphrasis is *devisé* (*Perceval*, 1805).—Description of human ugliness derives from the *vituperatio*. In its treatment of epideixis antique rhetoric made "blame" the opposite of praise. This had consequences for medieval poetry, into which it is impossible to go here. Sidonius' description of Gnatho (*Epistles* III, 13) was the model for the style.—In medieval Latin: Vitalis' *Amphitruo*, ll. 235 ff., Geta in *Alda*, ll. 171 ff., Davus in the *Ars versificatoria* of Matthew of Vendôme, I, §53 (Faral in *Stud. med.*, IX [1936], 55). Cf. *supra*, p. 69, n. 17.

## 10

## The Ideal Landscape

1. *Exotic Fauna and Flora* / 2. *Greek Poetry* / 3. *Virgil*
4. *Rhetorical Occasions for the Description of Nature*
5. *The Grove* / 6. *The Pleasance* / 7. *Epic Landscape*

THE CLASS ideals and human ideals of late Antiquity, the Middle Ages, and the Renaissance were given expression in the schemata of panegyric topics. Rhetoric conveys the picture of the ideal man. But for millenniums it also determines the ideal landscape of poetry.

1. *Exotic Fauna and Flora*

Medieval descriptions of nature are not meant to represent reality. This is generally recognized in respect to Romanesque art, but not in respect to the literature of the same period. The fabulous animals of the cathedrals stem from Sassanian textiles. Whence stems the exotic fauna and flora of medieval poetry? The first requisite would be to catalogue it. That cannot be done here. We shall take only a few random samples.

Ekkehart IV of St. Gall has left a series of versified graces on various foods and beverages (*Benedictiones ad mensas*), which have hitherto been held to possess "great value for the history of culture" since it was believed that they contained "a complete monastery menu." The order of the graces was supposed to correspond to the order in which the several courses were served. This produced the following picture of the eating habits of our forefathers: "First they filled their bellies with various kinds of bread, with salt, after which came at least one course of fish, fowl, meat, or game (all without sauces, vegetables, or other side dishes), after which came milk and then cheese. Then a dish containing the most pungent spices and sauces, together with honey, flat cakes, and eggs, after which vinegar was happily drunk (l. 154: "sumamus leti gustum mordentis aceti"), presumably as an apéritif for the following courses, which consisted of at least one dish each of legumes, native fruit, southern fruit, and fresh edible roots. Thirst was quenched first with divers wines, next with beer, and finally with water."<sup>1</sup> It is now proved that in general the *Benedictiones* refer to dishes which Ekkehart found in Isidore's *Etymologiae*, that, in short, they are

<sup>1</sup> Ernst Schulz in *Corona quærnea*, 219 ff.

"versified lexicography." Among Ekkehart's graces there is one for figs, on which the editor, Egli, remarked: "Although the fig has been cultivated in Germany, it has never become a familiar or popular article of diet. In any case, the monastery of St. Gall obtained this fruit too from the South."

But what are we to say when a poet from Liège announces that spring has come: The olive, the vine, the palm, the cedar are in bud? <sup>2</sup> Olive trees were extraordinarily abundant in the medieval North. They appear not only in Latin love poems of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries <sup>3</sup> but also, by the hundreds, in the old French epic. Whence do they come? From the rhetorical school exercises of late Antiquity. But in medieval Europe there are also lions. A poetical epistle by Peter of Pisa describes the mood of mid-day: The weary shepherd takes refuge in the shade "and sleep enraptured men and tawny lions" (*Poetae*, I, 53, 4):

*Cingebatque sopor homines fulvosque leones.*

Here a historian of the feeling for nature is bewildered by "the entirely meaningless mention of the lion." <sup>4</sup> But the feeling for nature—a concept which has never been clarified—has nothing to do with the case. It is a matter of literary technique. The lion, that is, figures in Roman poetry. The "fulvi leones" are taken from Ovid (*Her.*, X, 85). Writing in verse, Alcuin hopes that a traveler will not be attacked by lions and tigers on his road (*Poetae*, I, 265, 7). A Frenchman complains that the inroads of the Saracens have left the relics of the saints a prey to birds and lions. <sup>5</sup> English shepherds are warned to beware of lions. <sup>6</sup> Only exceptionally are these animals not dangerous; for example, in the district where the new Salisbury cathedral was begun in 1219: "There the fallow deer fear not the bear, nor the red deer the lion, nor the lynx the snake . . ." <sup>7</sup> The French epic swarms with lions. One, which a king received from Rome as a gift, is called "un lion d'antiquité" (*Aiol*, 1179). How rightly! Siegfried too, of course, kills a lion. "His delight in Siegfried's exploits leads the poet to tell tall stories," Bartsch commented. Hardly! It is a case of epic stylization, after the model of Antiquity and the Bible. All of these exotic trees and animals were in fact like Ekkehart's figs, imported from the South—not, however, from gardens and menageries, but from antique poetry and rhetoric. The descriptions of landscape in medieval Latin poetry are to be understood in the light of a continuous literary tradition.

<sup>2</sup> Sædulus Scottus, *Poetae*, III, 171, 45 ff.

<sup>3</sup> Walter of Châtillon 1925, p. 30, st. 2.—*Carmina Burana*, ed. Schumann, No. 79, st. 1.—Marc Bloch (*La société féodale*, I [1939], 155) is of the opinion that merchants and pilgrims had described "la beauté de l'olivier méditerranéen" to the minstrels. But the olive appeared in Latin poetry before it did in vernacular poetry.

<sup>4</sup> W. Ganzmüller, *Das Naturgefühl im Mittelalter* (1914), 78.

<sup>5</sup> Adalbero of Laon, ed. Hüchel, p. 142, 127.

<sup>6</sup> Bede, *Vita Cuthberti metrica*, I, 135.

<sup>7</sup> Henry of Avranches, ed. Russell and Heironimus, p. 114, 149.

How long did its influence last? In Shakespeare's Forest of Arden (*As You Like It*) there are still palms, olives, and lions.

## 2. Greek Poetry

With Homer the Western transfiguration of the universe, the earth, and man begins. Everything is pervaded by divine forces. The gods are they who "live at ease." They may quarrel among themselves, outwit one another, cover one another with ridicule (as Hephaestus does Ares and Aphrodite). But this strife among the Olympians is to the advantage of the heroes: Odysseus is persecuted by Poseidon's wrath, and protected by Athena. Only one dark shadow hangs over this happy world: the doom of death. This world does not yet know the chthonic—or does not speak of it; nor the demonic with its intricate and terrible toils, to the weaving of which "the gods themselves lend a hand, tangled skeins of horror which in turn produce fresh horrors, situations in which brother slays brother, the son his mother." <sup>8</sup> The tragic as the basic aspect of existence, the view which dominates Attic tragedy, is rejected by Homer. <sup>9</sup> He reflects the view of life of a knightly ruling class. But the heroic ideal is not conceived tragically, heroes are allowed to feel fear, like Hector, and war is an evil. This the Christian-Germanic Middle Ages will no longer allow.

Nature shares in the divine. Homer prefers the more amiable aspects of Nature: a cluster of trees, a grove with springs and lush meadows. There dwell the Nymphs (*Iliad*, XX, 8; *Odyssey* VI, 124 and XVII, 205) or Athena (*Od.*, VI, 291). A ravishing bit of scenery in this tonality is the uninhabited goat island near the land of Cyclops (*Od.*, IX, 132 ff.): "Here are meadows on the banks of the gray sea, moist, with soft soil; here vines could never die; here is smooth ploughing-land; a very heavy crop, and always well in season, might be reaped, for the under soil is rich. . . . Just at the harbor's head a spring of sparkling water flows from beneath a cave; around it poplars grow." \* Here fertility is made an element of the ideal landscape. The most elaborate variant is afforded by the Gardens of Alcinoüs (*Od.*, VII, 112). Here there are fruits of the most various kinds: pomegranates, apples, figs, pears, olives, grapes. The trees bear all through the year, for it is always spring and the west wind always blows—the island of the Phaeacians is indeed a land of faery. Two springs water the garden. Another fabulous place of heart's desire is the grotto of Calypso (*Od.*, V, 63). It is surrounded by a forest of alders, aspens, and cypresses. Four springs water the meadows, in which violets and parsley grow. The entrance to the

<sup>8</sup> Alfred Weber, *Das Tragische und die Geschichte* (1943), 240.

<sup>9</sup> *Od.*, I, 32 ff. Zeus here rejects the imputation that the gods inflicted woe upon men. He had sent Hermes to warn Aegisthus. Had Aegisthus heeded the warning a series of tragic horrors (the murders of Agamemnon and Clytemnestra, the madness of Orestes) would have been avoided. There would have been no *Oresteia*.

[\* G. H. Palmer's translation (replacing R. A. Schröder's).]

grotto is overhung by a luxuriant grapevine. In Ithaca there is a wondrous grotto sacred to the Nymphs (*Od.*, XIII, 102): "Just at the harbor's head a leafy olive stands, and near it a pleasant darksome cave, sacred to nymphs, called Naiads. Within the cave are bowls and jars of stone, and here bees hive their honey. Long looms of stone are here, where nymphs weave purple robes, a marvel to behold. Here are ever-flowing springs. The cave has double doors: one to the north, accessible to men; one to the south, for gods. By this, men do not pass; it is the immortals' entrance." \*

The *Odyssey* tells too of blessed shores which are free from ills and where the pains of death are unknown. On the island of Syria, rich in grapes, there is neither hunger nor sickness (*XV*, 403). When people grow old, "Apollo and Artemis come with silver bow and slay them with their gentle arrows."

It is promised to Menelaus that he will not die but instead be borne to "the ends of the earth" where lies Elysium: there is perpetual spring, refreshed by the blowing of the west wind (*Od.*, IV, 565); and it is the same on the heights of Olympus (*Od.*, VI, 42 ff.). And when the gods embrace in love, a magical nature takes part too. Zeus and Hera hide on the topmost crest of Ida in golden clouds (*Iliad*, XIV, 347 ff.): "And beneath them the divine earth sent forth fresh new grass, and dewy lotus, and crocus, and hyacinth, thick and soft, that raised them aloft from the ground." †

From Homer's landscapes later generations took certain motifs which became permanent elements in a long chain of tradition: the place of heart's desire, beautiful with perpetual spring, as the scene of a blessed life after death; the lovely miniature landscape which combines tree, spring, and grass; the wood with various species of trees; the carpet of flowers. In the hymns to the gods ascribed to Homer we find these motifs elaborated. The flowery mead of the Hymn to Demeter displays roses, violets, irises, crocuses, hyacinths, and narcissuses. The "Homeric" flowers are still used by Moschus in his epyllion *Europa* (ca. 150). Another procedure in the *Iliad* is the use of trees to identify epic scenes. In Aulis the sacrificial altar stands under a beautiful plane (II, 307). The battlefield before Troy displays a beech. Sarpedon is made to rest under it (V, 693). It stands by the Scaean gates (VI, 237), and serves as a meeting place for Apollo and Athena (VII, 22). They perch on it together in the form of vultures (VII, 60). Hector stands near it (XI, 70); and so on. There is a wild fig-tree too (VI, 432 and XI, 167). Later we shall again encounter this technical device for marking a scene.

As in Homer, so in all the poetry of Antiquity nature is always inhabited nature. It makes no difference whether the inhabitants are gods or men. Abodes of the Nymphs are also places where man delights to sit and rest. What are the requisites of such a spot? Above all, shade—of great importance to the man of the South. A tree, then, or a group of trees; a spring or

brook for refreshment; a grassy bank for a seat. A grotto can serve the purpose too. Socrates encounters Phaedrus outside the gates of Athens. Socrates: "Look round for a place where we can make ourselves comfortable." Phaedrus: "Look over there behind that tall plane. There are shade and a breeze and grass to sit down on, or, when we please, to stretch ourselves out." The praise of the plane fills all Antiquity (Victor Hehn). Under planes the ancients wrote verse and prose, philosophized.<sup>10</sup>

To write poetry under trees (cf. p. 208, n. 14 *infra*), on the grass, by a spring—in the Hellenistic period, this came to rank as a poetical motif in itself. But it demands a sociological framework: an occupation which obliges him who follows it to live outdoors, or at least in the country, far from towns. He must have time and occasion for composing poetry, and must possess some sort of primitive musical instrument. The shepherd has all of these at his disposition. He has ample leisure. His tutelary deity is the spirit of the flocks, Pan, inventor of the shepherd's pipe of seven reeds. Beautiful shepherds (Anchises, Endymion, Ganymede) had been deemed worthy to be loved by gods. The Sicilian shepherd Daphnis, who scorned the love of a goddess for the sake of a mortal woman, had already been celebrated by Stesichorus in the seventh century. But Theocritus of Syracuse (first half of the third century) is the true originator of pastoral poetry. Of all the antique poetical genres, it has had, after the epic, the greatest influence. There are several reasons for this. The shepherd's life is found everywhere and at all periods. It is a basic form of human existence; and through the story of the Nativity in Luke's gospel it made its way into the Christian tradition too. It has—and this is very important—a correlative scenery: pastoral Sicily, later Arcadia.<sup>11</sup> But it also has a personnel of its own, which has its own social structure and thus constitutes a social microcosm: neatherds (whence the name bucolic), goatherds, shepherdesses, etc. Finally, the shepherd's world is linked to nature and to love. One can say that for two millenniums it draws to itself the majority of erotic motifs. The Roman love elegy had a life span of but a few decades. It was little capable of development or renewal. But Arcadia was forever being rediscovered. This was possible because the stock of pastoral motifs was bound to no genre and to no poetic form. It found its way into the Greek romance (Longus) and from thence into the Renaissance. From the romance, pastoral poetry could return to the eclogue or pass to the drama (Tasso's *Aminta*; Guarini's *Pastor Fido*). The pastoral world is as extensive as the knightly world. In the medieval *pastourelle* the two worlds meet. Yes, in the pastoral world all worlds "embrace one another":

<sup>10</sup> Documentation in A. Nowacki, *Philitae Coi fragmenta poetica*, Münster dissertation (1927), 81.

<sup>11</sup> Bruno Snell, "Arkadien. Die Entdeckung einer geistigen Landschaft" (in *Antike und Abendland, Beiträge zum Verständnis der Griechen und Römer, herausgegeben von B. Snell* [Hamburg, 1945], 26 ff.).

[\* G. H. Palmer's translation (replacing R. A. Schröder's).]

[† Lang, Leaf, and Myers' translation (replacing R. A. Schröder's).]



Die Quelle springt, vereinigt stürzen Bäche,  
Und schon sind Schluchten, Hänge, Matten grün.  
Auf hundert Hügeln unterbrochener Fläche  
Siehst Wollenherden ausgebreitet ziehn.

Verteilt, vorsichtig abgemessen schreitet  
Gehörntes Rind hinan zum jähen Rand;  
Doch Obdach ist den sämtlichen bereitet,  
Zu hundert Höhlen wölbt sich Felsenwand.

Pan schützt sie dort, und Lebensnymphen wohnen  
In buschiger Klüfte feucht erfrischem Raum,  
Und sehnsuchtsvoll nach höhern Regionen  
Erhebt sich zweighaft Baum gedrängt an Baum.

Alt-Wälder sind's! Die Eiche starret mächtig,  
Und eigensinnig zackt sich Ast an Ast;  
Der Ahorn mild, von süßem Saft trüchtig,  
Steigt rein empor und freut sich seiner Last.

Und mütterlich im stillen Schattenkreise  
Quillt laue Milch bereit für Kind und Lamm;  
Obst ist nicht weit, der Eben reife Speise,  
Und Honig trieft vom ausgehöhlten Stamm.

Hier ist das Wohlbehagen erblich,  
Die Wange heitert wie der Mund,  
Ein jeder ist an seinem Platz unsterblich:  
Sie sind zufrieden und gesund.

Und so entwickelt sich am reinen Tage  
Zu Vaterkraft das holde Kind.  
Wir staunen drob; noch immer bleibt die Frage:  
Ob's Götter, ob es Menschen sind.

So war Apoll den Hirten zugestaltet,  
Dass ihm der schönsten einer glich;  
Denn wo Natur im reinen Kreise waltet,  
Ergreifen alle Welten sich.

(Springs bubble out, brook joined with brook runs streaming,  
Already gorge and slope and mead are green.  
Where the plain heaves into a hundred hillocks,  
The woolly sheep in scattered flocks are seen.

Beyond, with step as careful as 'tis certain,  
The horn-browed herds toward the cliffside graze;  
There could they shelter every one, for there  
The stone is hollowed in a hundred caves.

There Pan protects, there vivifying nymphs  
Dwell in the dripping, green-clad crevices—  
And there aspire to higher airs forever  
The intertangled ranks of branchy trees.

Ancient those woods! The oak's unyielding power  
Casts each branch in a stubborn mold—its own.  
The softer maple, running with sweet juices,  
Shoots heavenward, rejoicing in its crown.

In that still circle of maternal shadow  
The frothy milk streams warm for child and lamb;  
Close by hangs fruit, ripe bounty of the lowlands,  
And honey trickles from the hollow stem.

Here sweet content descends to son from sire,  
And glowing cheek responds to cheerful lip,  
And each who is at home here is immortal,  
Where happiness and health are given to each.

So down the lighted days the child develops  
Till through him too the strength of manhood floods.  
And we, we wonder; still we feel the question—  
These blest ones, are they men or deathless gods?

So like Apollo's self to shepherd's favor  
That one most fair among them seemed his brother.  
For there where Nature rules with none to stay her  
All worlds do mingle and embrace each other.)

Goethe's *Faust* is a "restitution of all things" (Acts 3:21) in the continuity of the world's literature—hence a bringing back of pastoral poetry too. Theocritus decorated his poetry with the riches of a southern summer: "High above our heads waved many a poplar, many an elm tree, while close at hand the sacred water from the nymphs' own cave welled forth with murmurs musical. On shadowy boughs the burnt cicadas kept their chattering toil, far off the little owl cried in the thick thorn brake, the larks and finches were singing, the ring-dove moaned, the yellow bees were flitting about the springs. All breathed the scent of the opulent summer" \* (VII, 135 ff.). In an epic hymn, the poet conducts the Dioscuri to a wild mountain forest with trees of every kind. At the foot of a sheer cliff there is a spring of clear water. Its pebbles glitter like crystal and silver; pines, white poplars, planes, cypresses, fragrant flowers beautify the spot (XXII, 36 ff.). If there is to be a contest in song between two shepherds, each first proposes a favorite place: The shepherd Thyrsis: "Sweet, meseems, is the whispering sound of yonder pine tree, goatherd, that murmureth by the wells of

[\* Andrew Lang's translation.]

water." The goatherd: "Beneath yonder elm let us sit down, in face of Priapus and the fountain nymphs, where is that resting-place of the shepherds and where oak trees are" \* (I, 1 ff.). Variation on the motif: one shepherd decries the other's favorite place. Lacon: "More sweetly wilt thou sing, if thou wilt sit down beneath the wild olive tree, and the groves in this place. Chill water falls there, . . . here grows the grass, and here a leafy bed is strewn, and here the locusts prattle." Comatas: "That way I will not go! Here be oak trees, and here the galingale, and sweetly here hum the bees about the hives. There are two wells of chill water, and on the tree the birds are warbling, and the shadow is beyond compare with that where thou liest, and from on high the pine tree pelts us with her cones <sup>12</sup>" † (V, 31 ff.).

As the two last examples show, the motif of the bucolic contest between singers and poets ramifies organically to produce the description of a delightful spot—descriptions far more detailed than the corresponding passages in Homer, but still saturated with actual observation.

### 3. Virgil

Pastoral poetry could become a permanent part of the Western tradition only because Virgil took it over from Theocritus and at the same time transformed it. Sicily, long since become a Roman province, was no longer a dreamland. In most of his eclogues <sup>13</sup> Virgil replaces it by romantically faraway Arcadia, which he himself had never visited. Theocritus had sometimes introduced himself and his friends as shepherds (Idyl VII); Virgil brings into his pastoral world not only his own life, but also the figure of Octavian and Caesar's star—in other words, Roman history; and, beyond this, the religious ideas of the Saviour and the new era. <sup>14</sup> Thus in his earliest work he precludes his masterpiece. To know only the *Aeneid* is not to know Virgil. The influence of his eclogues on later times is hardly less important than that of his epic. From the first century of the Empire to the time of Goethe, all study of Latin literature began with the first eclogue. It is not too much to say that anyone unfamiliar with that short poem lacks one key to the literary tradition of Europe.

It begins:

*Tityre, tu patulae recubans sub tegmine fagi  
Silvestrem tenui musam meditaris avena;  
Nos patriae fines et dulcia linquimus arva:  
Nos patriam fugimus: tu, Tityre, lentus in umbra  
Formosam resonare doces Amaryllida silvas.*

[\* Andrew Lang's translation (slightly altered).]

<sup>12</sup> Pine seeds were eaten. [† Andrew Lang's translation.]

<sup>13</sup> Virgil's "pastoral poems" (*Bucolica*) consist of ten "eclogues." *Ecloga* means "selected composition," but later becomes the generic term for pastoral poetry.—Fontenelle, *Poésies pastorales, avec un Traité sur la nature de l'Éclogue et une Digression sur les Anciens et les Modernes* (1688).

<sup>14</sup> Friedrich Klingner, *Römische Geisteswelt* (1943), 154 ff.

(Thou, where this beech doth spread her close-leaved tiers,  
Liest outstretched, O Tityrus, and woost  
The sylvan muse with that slim reed of thine;  
We from our country's bounds, her dear, dear fields,  
We from our country's self must fly; while thou  
Dost idle here in shade, teaching the woods  
To echo "Amaryllis beautiful.")

Here the very first line introduces the "motif of bucolic repose," which engendered an innumerable progeny; all that was needed was to substitute for the Virgilian beech a poplar, elm, willow, or merely "a certain tree" (*arbore sub quadam* <sup>15</sup> . . .). I give two of Virgil's own variations (*Buc.*, III, 55 ff. and V, 1 ff.):

*Dicite, quandoquidem in molli consedimus herba.  
Et nunc omnis ager, nunc omnis parturit arbor;  
Nunc frudent silvae; nunc formosissimus annus.*

(Begin, since now we sit upon soft grass.  
Yes, now each field and every tree brings forth,  
Now leaf the woods, now is the year at fairest.)

*"Cur non, Mopse, boni quoniam convenimus ambo,  
Tu calamos inflare levis, ego dicere versus,  
Hic corylis mixtas inter consedimus ulmos?"  
"Tu maior; tibi me est aequum parere, Menalca,  
Sive sub incertis Zephyris motantibus umbras,  
Sive antro potius succedimus. Aspice, ut antrum  
Silvestris raris sparsit labrusca racemis."*

("Why, Mopsus, since we both are well agreed  
That thou wilt blow the pipes, I raise the song,  
Sit we not here, where elm and hazel meet?"  
"Thou art the elder; make then thou the choice,  
Menalcas, all is one to me—whether  
Beneath these shades that shift as Zephyr blows  
We halt, or seek that cave. Look, the wild grape  
Already hangs her first few bunches there.")

The close connection with Theocritus is obvious. But Virgil makes no attempt to match his model in visual richness, in the full scale of sounds and odors. Augustan Classicism does not tolerate Hellenistic colorfulness.

<sup>15</sup> Some examples of "arbore sub quadam": *Florilegium Gottingense*, No. 108 (*RF*, III, 292).—*SB München* (1873), 709.—"Arbore sub quadam protoplastus corrui Adam": *NA*, II, 402.—*Degering-Festschrift*, p. 313, No. 44.—"Arbore sub quadam stetit antiquissimus Adam": Baudri of Bourgueil, No. 196, 115.

Not until late Antiquity is color in demand again—and then it is the color of a kaleidoscope.

The pictures of nature in the *Georgics* would require an analysis which we cannot permit ourselves to undertake. And from the *Aeneid* we shall take but two ideal landscapes. In an "age-old," "immeasurable" forest pines, holm oaks, ashes, and elms are felled for Misenus' funeral pyre (VI, 179 ff.). The making of it is a pious duty for Aeneas and one condition of his entrance into the underworld. The other condition is that he must break the golden bough that grows on the sacred tree in the midst of a close grove set in a shadowy valley. The felling of the trees reminds him of it, and he finds his way to the miraculous branch. Thus Virgil's forest trembles with *numen*, the pervading presence of deity; it is the way to the other world, as it is in Dante; Virgil's wild forest is in a valley too (*Inf.*, I, 14). Virgil's golden bough, as we know, served Sir James George Frazer (1854–1941) as a key to the magic of primitive times.<sup>16</sup>

On his journey through the other world, Aeneas comes to Elysium (*Aen.*, VI, 638 ff.):

*Devenere locos laetos et amoena virecta  
Fortunatorum nemorum sedesque beatas.  
Largior his campos aether et lumine vestit  
Purpureo, solemque suum, sua sidera norunt.*

(To joyous sites they came and lovely lawns,  
Blest seats, in woods which no misfortune scathes;  
Fields clothed in ampler air, bathed in new light,  
Purple—their own sun sheds it, their own stars.)

In the first line the word *amoenus* ("pleasant, lovely") is used. It is Virgil's constant epithet for "beautiful" nature (e.g., *Aeneid*, V, 734 and VII, 30). The commentator Servius connected the word with "amor" (the same relationship, that is, as between "love" and "lovely"). "Lovely places" are such as only give pleasure, that is, are not cultivated for useful purposes ("loca solius voluptatis plena . . . unde nullus fructus exsolvitur"). As a *terminus technicus* the *locus amoenus* appears in Book XIV of Isidore's encyclopedia. This book treats of geography in accordance with the schema: earth, orb, Asia, Europe, Libya (the only part of Africa then known; Egypt was accounted part of Asia). Then follow islands, promontories, mountains, and other "names for places" ("locorum vocabula"), such as gorges, groves, deserts. Next in the list come "loca amoena," interpreted as Servius interprets the term. For Isidore, then, the *locus amoenus* is a geomorphological concept. But as early as the time of Horace (*Ars poetica*, 17) it was a technical term of rhetorical ecphrasis and was considered such by the commentators on Virgil. But this does not exhaust Virgil's contribution to the constitution of the ideal landscape. Antiquity accepted his authorship of

<sup>16</sup> *The Golden Bough*.

the minor works which modern criticism has, on more or less adequate grounds, stricken from the canon. In the mock epic on the death of a gnat (*Culex*), there is a mixed forest with nine kinds of trees, a stretch of grass with eighteen kinds of flowers (in *Bucolica*, II, 45 ff. Virgil had restrained himself to eight).

If now we look back at Homer, Theocritus, and Virgil and ask ourselves the question: What types of ideal landscape could late Antiquity and the Middle Ages get from these poets?—we cannot but answer: the mixed forest and the *locus amoenus* (with flowery meadows *ad libitum*). This heritage was twice subjected to conceptual schematization: in late antique rhetoric and in twelfth-century dialectics. Both processes worked in the same direction: toward technicalization and intellectualization. A series of clearly distinguished nature topoi was developed.

A complete analysis could set forth this development in detail. We can only sketch some of its principal lines.

#### 4. Rhetorical Occasions for the Description of Nature

Richard Heinze in his *Virgils epische Technik* (1903) rejected any influence of rhetoric upon the *Aeneid*. Eduard Norden, on the contrary, in his commentary on Book VI, which also appeared in 1903, remarked on VI, 638 ("Devenere locos laetos . . ."), that Virgil had "described the Elysian grove with all the devices of that graceful λέξις which, in artistic prose, was customarily employed precisely in descriptions of ἄλση and παράδεισοι." The passage, then, would be a poetical description stylistically dependent upon rhetorical prose. Hence, for all that follows it is important for us to discover which of the systematized divisions of rhetoric might afford rules for describing landscape. In this search we come first upon judicial oratory. Since the time of Aristotle the doctrine of proof distinguishes between "inartificial" proof (i.e., such as the orator finds ready to hand and has only to use<sup>17</sup>) and "artificial" proofs. The latter the orator himself produced, he had to "discover" them. They rest upon reflection; or, in the language of Aristotle, upon "syllogisms" (trains of reasoning). The rhetorical syllogism is called an *enthymema*, in Latin *argumentum* (Quintilian, V, 10, 1). For the discovery of such proofs rhetoric provides general categories or "localities." The *loci* are divided into those of the person and those of the thing. The former ("argumenta a persona") are: birth, country, sex, age, education, etc. The topoi of the thing ("argumenta a re," also called "attributa") answer the questions: Why? where? when? how? etc. These topoi of the thing are again very elaborately subdivided. What is of interest to us is that the question Where? gives rise to an "argumentum a loco," the question When? to an "argumentum a tempore." The former (V, 10, 37) is concerned with discovering proofs in the character of the

<sup>17</sup> Laws, witnesses, contracts, confessions, oaths, etc.



place where the matter in question occurred. Was it mountainous or level? by the sea or inland? cultivated? frequented? lonely? etc. Of much the same nature is the "argumentum a tempore." When did the thing occur? In what season? and at what time of day? etc. It is true that both forensic and political eloquence were almost entirely supplanted in late Antiquity by epideictic eloquence: but their system was carried on by tradition, and from this there naturally resulted a blurring and mingling of the several oratorical genres. Accordingly, we find the *argumenta a loco* and a *tempore* recurring in medieval arts of poetry. But the description of landscape could also start from the rules of *inventio* for epideictic oratory. For the principal business of this genre is eulogy. Among things that can be praised, places form one category. They can be praised for their beauty, for their fertility, for their healthfulness (Quintilian, III, 7, 27). The New Sophistic later especially developed the description (*ἔκφρασις*, *descriptio*) as well as applying it to landscape.<sup>18</sup>

We conclude: Descriptions of nature could start from the topics of either judicial or epideictic oratory, and specifically from the *topoi* of place and time. In medieval theory<sup>19</sup> the technical terms *argumentum a loco*, a *tempore*, which stem from the forensic topics of proof, are transferred to the rules for nature description—certainly a historically fascinating episode in the great recasting process to which the Nordic West subjected the heritage of Antiquity.—But antique rhetoric dealt with the description of places elsewhere too. This third treatment occurs in its discussion of the figures—in the division, then, devoted to diction (*elocutio*, *λέξις*). Of this, more later. But first we must examine the ideal landscapes of post-Virgilian poetry.

### 5. The Grove

In Virgil the "ideal" or idealized "mixed forest" was still poetically felt and was harmonized with the composition of the epic succession of scenes. In Ovid, however, poetry is already dominated by rhetoric. In his work and in that of his successors, descriptions of nature become bravura interludes,

<sup>18</sup> A particular genre of style was enjoined for it, the *ἀθηρὸν πλάσμα*, the "flowery style" (Proclus, *Chrestomathia* in R. Westphal, *Scriptores metrici graeci*, I, 229). Further particulars in Erwin Rohde, *Der griechische Roman*, p. 335 and p. 512, and in Norden, 285. Now, among things which can be praised, and hence "described" are the seasons. The *ἔκφρασις χρόνων* is treated, to name only one technographer, by Hermogenes (ed. Rabe, 22, 14). Applications of this schema are found in late antique poetry, for example in Nonnus (*Dionysiaca*, XI, 486) or in Corippus (*In laudem Iustini*, I, 320) or in the *Anthologia latina* (Buecheler-Riese, No. 116, Nos. 567–578, No. 864). Frequently, however, spring is treated alone, for example by Meleager (*A.P.*, IX, 363), by Ovid (*Fasti*, I, 151, and III, 325), later by Pentadius (*Anthol. latina*, No. 235), in Greek prose by the sophist Procopius of Gaza (ca. 500), and others. Such descriptions of spring frequently comprise but a few lines, especially as digressions in a longer poem (Ennodius, ed. Hartel, p. 512, 13; Theodulf in *Poetae*, I, 484, 51; *Carm. cant.*, No. 10, st. 3).

<sup>19</sup> E.g., in Matthew of Vendôme (Faral, p. 146, §106 ff.).

in which poets try to outdo one another. At the same time they are reduced to types and schematized. Ovid presents the motif of the "ideal mixed forest" in an elegant variation: the grove is not there from the beginning, it comes into existence before our eyes. First we see a hill entirely without shade. Orpheus appears and begins to play his lyre. Now the trees come hurrying—no less than twenty-six species!—and give shade (*Met.*, X, 90–106). The younger Seneca offers—in passing as it were—a grove with eight species (*Oedipus*, 532). The groves and forests of Statius (*Thebais*, VI, 98) and Claudian (*De raptu Proserpinae*, II, 107) are more plenteously supplied. The former mentions thirteen species of trees, the latter nine. From late Greek poetry, finally, we must mention the Garden of Emathion in Nonnus (*Dionysiaca*, III, 140). Clearly, what we are dealing with is a standard *topos*. These bravura pieces have as little to do with observation of nature as Ekkehart's graces have to do with monastery cooking. Whether the species enumerated could all occur together in one forest, the poet does not care, and does not need to care—despite the protests of a Julius Caesar Scaliger in his *Hypercriticus*.<sup>20</sup> The ideal of this late rhetorical poetry is richness of décor and an elaborate vocabulary. In the twelfth century Joseph of Exeter (*De bello Troiano*, I, 507) put together another such forest, with ten species of trees. His countrymen Chaucer, Spenser (*The Parlement of Foules*, 176 and *The Faerie Queene*, I, 1, 8), and Keats (*The Fall of Hyperion*, I, 19 ff.) follow his example. The "mixed forest" can also be considered a subspecies of the "catalogue," which is a fundamental poetic form that goes back to Homer and Hesiod.

### 6. The Pleasance

The *locus amoenus* (pleasance), to which we now pass, has not previously been recognized as possessing an independent rhetorico-poetical existence. Yet, from the Empire to the sixteenth century, it forms the principal motif of all nature description. It is, as we saw, a beautiful, shaded natural site. Its minimum ingredients comprise a tree (or several trees), a meadow, and a spring or brook. Birdsong and flowers may be added. The most elaborate examples also add a breeze. In Theocritus and Virgil such scenes are merely backgrounds for the ensuing pastoral poetry. But they were soon detached from any larger context and became subjects of bravura rhetorical description. Horace already disapproves of this tendency (*A.P.*, 17). The earliest example I have found of this sort of ecphrasis in Latin poetry is in Petronius, *carm.* 131:

*Mobilis aestivalis platanus diffuderat umbras  
Et bacis redemita Daphne tremulaeque cupressus  
Et circum tonsae trepidanti vertice pinus.  
Has inter ludebat quis errantibus amnis*

<sup>20</sup> I.e., Book VI of the *Poetices libri septem* (1561).

*Spumeus, et querulo vexabat rore lapillos.  
Dignus amore locus: testis silvestris aëdon  
Atque urbana Procne, quae circum gramina fusae  
Et molles violas cantu sua rura colebant.*

(A moving plane cast summer shadows, so too the laurel crowned with berries, and the tremulous cypresses, and, all around, the shorn pines with their swaying tops. Among them, in wandering streams, played a foamy brook, fretting the pebbles with complaining waters. The place was fit for love: Witness the wood-haunting nightingale and the town-haunting swallow both, who, flitting over the grass and tender violets, beautified the place with their singing.)

The most beautiful presentation of the *locus amoenus* in late Latin poetry is found in a poem of Tiberianus, of the Constantine period:

*Amnis ibat inter herbas valle fusus frigida,  
Luce ridens calculorum, flore pictus herbido.  
Caeruleas superne laurus et virecta myrtea  
Leniter motabat aura blandiente sibilo.  
Subtus autem molle gramen flore pulcro creverat;  
Et croco solum rubebat et lucebat liliis.  
Tum nemus fragrabat omne violarum spiritu.  
Inter ista dona veris gemmeasque gratias  
Omnium regina odorum vel colorum lucifer  
Auriflora praeminebat flamma Diones, rosa.  
Roscidum nemus rigebat inter uda gramina:  
Fonte crebro murmurabant hinc et inde rivuli,  
Quae fluentia labibunda guttis ibant lucidis.  
Antra muscus et virentes intus hederæ vinxerant.  
Has per umbras omnis ales plus canora quam putes  
Cantibus vernis strepebat et susurris dulcibus:  
His loquentis murmur amnis concinebat frondibus,  
Quis melos vocalis auræ musa zephyri moverat.  
Sic euntem per virecta pulchra odora et musica  
Ales amnis aura lucus flos et umbra iuverat.<sup>21</sup>*

(Through the fields there went a river; down the airy glen it wound, Smiling mid its radiant pebbles, decked with flowery plants around. Dark-hued laurels waved above it close by myrtle greeneries, Gently swaying to the whispers and caresses of the breeze.

<sup>21</sup> Text after Buecheler-Riese, *Anthol. latina*, I, 2, No. 809.—L. 10 is corrupt. I have emended *forma dionis* following H. W. Garrod, *The Oxford Book of Latin Verse* (1912), p. 372.

Underneath grew velvet greensward with a wealth of bloom for dower,  
And the ground, a gleam with lilies, coloured 'neath the saffron-flower,  
While the grove was full of fragrance and of breath from violets.  
Mid such guerdons of the spring-time, mid its jewelled coronets,  
Shone the queen of all the perfumes, Star that loveliest colours shows,  
Golden flame of fair Dione, passing every flower—the rose.  
Dewsprent trees rose firmly upright with the lush grass at their feet:  
Here, as yonder, streamlets murmured tumbling from each well-spring fleet.  
Grottoes had an inner binding made of moss and ivy green,  
Where soft-flowing runlets glided with their drops of crystal sheen.  
Through those shades each bird, more tuneful than belief could entertain,  
Warbled loud her chant of spring-tide, warbled low her sweet refrain.  
Here the prattling river's murmur to the leaves made harmony,  
As the Zephyr's airy music stirred them into melody.  
To a wanderer through the coppice, fair and filled with song and scent,  
Bird and river, breeze and woodland, flower and shade brought ravishment.)\*

In this sensuously fascinating poem, Tiberianus has painted a *locus amoenus* with all the vivid color of late Antiquity. At this day, someone is sure to come up with the word "impressionism"—but quite unjustifiably. The poem has a strict structure. The author works with six "charms of landscape." They are the same six which Libanius (314-ca. 393) enjoins: "Causes of delight are springs and plantations and gardens and soft breezes and flowers and bird-voices" (ed. Förster, I, 517, § 200). The theme and the enumerative schema are, then, ready to hand. The last line, with its résumé, emphatically indicates this. In addition, the scene is divided into "above-below." Finally, the poem has twenty lines, in other words a "round number." This points to the principle of "numerical composition" (*Excursus XV*). The surging wealth of sensual perceptions, then, is ordered by conceptual and formal means. The finest fruit ripens on espaliers.

In the Middle Ages the *locus amoenus* is listed as a poetical requisite by lexicographers and writers on style.<sup>22</sup> We encounter a great number of such pleasantries in the Latin poetry which flourished from 1070 onwards.<sup>23</sup> Model examples are also to be found in the arts of poetry which began to appear in increasing numbers from 1170. We have one such example by Matthew of Vendôme (Faral, p. 148). It is a rhetorical *amplificatio*, to

[\* Trans. J. W. and A. M. Duff.]

<sup>22</sup> In Papias' lexicon (ca. 1050): "amoena loca dicta: quod amorem praestant, iocunda, viridia."—Ekkehart IV enjoins: "delitiis plenus locus appelletur amenus" (*Poetae*, V, 533, 10).

<sup>23</sup> Wido of Ivrea, ed. Dümmler, p. 95, 43 ff.—Baudri of Bourgueil describes (Abrahams, p. 191) a garden, making much use of Virgil (*Bucolics*, II, 45; *Georgics*, IV, 30; *Culex*, 390; *Copa*, 10). In his garden there are fifteen species of flowers and many species of trees (including laurel and olive). I have discussed this and other passages in RF, LVI (1942), 219-56. Walter Map (*Poems*, pp. 237 ff.) should be added.



which an air of novelty is imparted by a strong dose of dialectics, expressed in the driest conceptualistic terms. The description takes sixty-two lines, each idea being subjected to several variations. The means employed is the school exercise of grammatical permutation. Thus we first have: "The bird twitters, the brook murmurs, the breeze blows warm"; next, "The birds give pleasure by their voices, the brook by its murmuring, the breeze by its warmth," and so on. By the inclusion of fruit, the total number of "charms of landscape" is raised to seven. They are distributed first among the five senses and then among the four elements. The logical jargon of dialectics has made its way into the writer's vocabulary.

The philosophical epic of the latter part of the twelfth century incorporates the *locus amoenus* into its structure and develops it into various forms of the earthly paradise. In his *Anticlaudianus* Alan of Lille describes the dwelling place of Natura: a towering castle surrounded by a grove which represents the height of natural beauty (SP., II, 275). It is the "place of places" ("locus ille locorum"), hence the optimum of the *locus amoenus*. John of Hanville takes us to the fabulous island Thule, where the philosophers of Antiquity are gathered in a scene of perpetual spring (SP., I, 326). The pleasance has here acquired a new bit of luxury: a circular piece of smooth ground ("planities patulum lunatur in orbem"). This stems from a description of a villa by Pliny (Ep., V, 6, 7); it is adopted by Geoffrey of Vinsauf (Faral, 274, 5), who, however, adds porticoes.<sup>24</sup> One of the last poet-rhetoricians of the twelfth-century flowering, Peter Riga (d. 1209), makes the *locus amoenus* the theme of an entire poem, *On Earth's Ornaments* (*De ornatu mundi*—printed among Hildebert's works, PL. CLXXI, 1235 ff.). Here dialectical analysis and symmetry (the sources of pleasure particularized according to the several senses, etc.) are again strongly apparent. The "delights" ("deliciae") of the pleasance are greatly increased in number—spices, balsam, honey, wine, cedars, and bees are added. Mythological decorations appear. The pleasure grove is the rose of the world. But it fades: Turn ye to the heavenly rose.

I believe that, in what precedes, I have established the *locus amoenus* historically as a clearly defined topos of landscape description. Certain further problems in the history of topics and of style are connected with it. In Theocritus' poem in praise of the Dioscuri (XXII, 36 ff.) we are given a description of a *locus amoenus* which—most surprisingly—lies in a "wild wood." Such a union of contrasts was offered by nature in a famous region of Greece, the Vale of Tempe. "The Vale of Tempe, an ideal example of landscape beauty as the ancients understood it, singularly combines the charm of a river valley with the wildness and grandeur of a deep rocky gorge. Here, in the course of a walk of an hour and a half, the river Peneus passes

<sup>24</sup> In l. 11 *serta* (Faral) should read *septa* (from Martial, II, 14, 5). The porticoes also passed into CB, 59, st. 2: "In hac valle florida / Floreus flagratus, / Inter septa lilia, / Locus purpuratus."—Gervase of Melkley's *locus amoenus* (*Studi medievali* [1936], 34) should also be mentioned here.

through a gorge formed by the steep slopes of Ossa and Olympus, which almost reach its bed. The cliffs on both sides form almost vertical fissured walls, picturesquely overgrown with greenery. The slopes of Olympus make a sheer descent almost all the way; but on the right bank there is generally a narrow fringe of fertile soil, often broadening into small plains which are refreshed by countless springs, covered with luxuriant grass, and shaded by laurels, planes, and oaks. The river flows steadily and quietly, making a small island here and there, now wider, now forced into a narrow bed by jutting cliffs, under a roof of plane leaves through which the sun cannot penetrate."<sup>25</sup> Antiquity has left us descriptions by Theopompus, the elder Pliny<sup>26</sup> (*H.N.*, IV, 8 and XV, 31), and Aelian (*Var. hist.*, III, 1). Tempe had long since become the generic name for a variety of *locus amoenus*<sup>27</sup>—a cool wooded valley between steep slopes.<sup>28</sup> In his praise of country life Virgil had said (*Georg.*, II, 467) that countrymen lacked the luxuries of the city, but:

*At secura quies et nescia fallere vita,  
Dives opum variarum, at latis otia fundis,  
Speluncae vivique lacus, at frigida Tempe  
Mugitusque boum mollesque sub arbore somni  
Non absunt . . .*

(But peace secure, life without disappointments,  
Manifold riches, ease amid wide domains,  
Caverns and living lakes, coolness of vales,  
Lowing of herds, soft sleep beneath the trees—  
These fail them not . . .)

Servius had commented on this passage that Tempe was properly a *locus amoenus* in Thessaly, but stood by catachresis for any charming place ("abusive cuiusvis loci amoenitas"). We must, nevertheless, assume that the specialized Tempe motif, as we found it in Theocritus (pleasance in a wild wood) also passed into the rhetorical tradition. Theon, in his *Preliminary Exercises*, refers to Theopompus' description. We shall find this motif again in Romance poetry.

As we have seen, the *locus amoenus* also formed part of the scenery of

<sup>25</sup> L. Friedlaender, *Darstellungen aus der Sittengeschichte Roms*, I<sup>o</sup>, 469.

<sup>26</sup> In Pliny's description the high mountains which shut in the valley are mentioned. Then: "intus sua luce viridante allabitur Peneus, viridis calculo, amoenus circa ripas gramine, canorus avium concentu." This description is already tinged with the colors of poetry. Tiberianus' "luce ridens calculorum" recalls Pliny's "viridis calculo."

<sup>27</sup> Cf. the examples in Pape's *Wörterbuch der griechischen Eigennamen*. Also: F. Jacoby, *Fr. Gr. H.*, 115, F 78–80. Burgess, 202, n. 1.

<sup>28</sup> Medieval Latin poetry takes this over. Fulco of Beauvais (d. after 1083), prologue to *vita s. Blandini* 15: "Dum fontes, saltus, dum Thessala Tempe reviso."

pastoral poetry and thus of erotic poetry. Hence it was also taken over by the so-called "Vagantes."<sup>29</sup> We find it in the *Carmina Burana*.<sup>30</sup>

Virgil's description of the Elysian Fields was employed by Christian poets for Paradise.<sup>31</sup> The *locus amoenus* can also enter into the poetical description of gardens.<sup>32</sup>

### 7. Epic Landscape

As we have already indicated, nature description is also discussed in the rhetorical treatment of the figures of speech. The orator, the poet, the historian might find it necessary to sketch the scene of an event—that is, to "situate" a place, be it real or fictitious. The Greek for this is *τοποθεσία* or *τοπογραφία* (the "situation" or "description" of a place). In Latin "positus locorum" (Stattius, *Silvae*, V, 3, 236) or "situs terrarum" (Horace, *Epi.*, II, 1, 251)<sup>33</sup>—still used in the same sense by Hohenstaufen poets.<sup>34</sup> The medieval epic is always ready to impart topographical and geographical information. The poet of the *Waltharius* begins with disarming candor:

*Tertia pars orbis, fratres, Europa vocatur.*

(The world's third part, brothers, is known as Europe.)

<sup>29</sup> On the concepts *Vagant* and *Vagantendichtung* ("Goliard," "Goliardic poetry") cf. Otto Schumann, commentary on CB, I, 82\* ff.

<sup>30</sup> Schumann No. 77, st. 3, 1: "in virgulto florido stabam et ameno."—No. 79, st. 1: the poet rests under an olive tree. St. 2: "Erat arbor hec in prato / Quovis flore picturato, / Herba, fonte, situ grato, / Sed et umbra, flatu dato," etc.—No. 92, st. 7 and 8.—No. 137, st. 1.—No. 58.—No. 145, etc.

<sup>31</sup> Sedulius, I, 53.—Prudentius, *Cath.*, III, 101, and *Genesis*, II, 8 ff.—Dracontius, *De laudibus Dei*, I, 180 to 250; I, 348; III, 752.—*Poetae*, I, 573, No. LXXIV.—Gibuin of Langres (SB Berlin [1891], 99).—Peter Riga (PL, CLXXI, 1309 D).—*Commendatio mortuorum* in the Roman Ritual: "Constituatur te Christus inter paradisi sui semper amoena virentia."—Boniface calls Paradise "amoenitatis locus" (RF, II [1886], 276).—When Paradise was to be represented on the stage, there were stage directions such as those at the beginning of the Anglo-French play of Adam: "Sint in eo (in paradiso) diversae arbores et fructus in eis dependentes, ut amenissimus locus videatur." In Virgil's Elysium there are no fruit trees. For the Christian Paradise they were indispensable, because of the forbidden fruit.

<sup>32</sup> Flora's garden in Ovid (*Fasti*, V, 208).—Garden of love with eternal spring in Claudian (*Epithalamium de nuptiis honorii*, 49).—*Poetae*, III, 159, No. XI, st. 4.—Since Paradise is a garden, a garden can, by transposition, be called a paradise (*Poetae*, V, 275, 411).—Hence also the atrium before the narthex of Romanesque cathedrals (E. Schlee, *Die Ikonographie der Paradiesesflüsse* [1937], 138).—O. Schissel, "Der byzantinische Garten und seine Darstellung im gleichzeitigen Roman," SB Wien, CCXXI [1942], No. 2.

<sup>33</sup> *topothesia*: Cicero to Atticus, I, 13 and I, 16.—*topographia*: Halm, 73, 1.—Lucan, X, 177: "Phariae primordia gentis Terrarumque situs volgique edisserere mores." Here topography broadens to embrace ethnography. Similarly in the elder Seneca: "Locorum habitus fluminumque decursus et urbium situs moresque populorum . . ." (*Contr.*, II, *praef.*).—The fact that the description of localities is treated in three different sections of the system is still reflected in the twelfth-century arts of poetry. Matthew of Vendôme refers to the "locus naturalis" under the "proprietates quae a Tullio attributa vocantur" (Faral, p. 119, § 41), again under the "attributa negotio" (p. 143, § 94 and p. 147, § 109), and finally (p. 148, § 111) as "topographia."<sup>34</sup> *Ligurinus*, II, 57.

But Walter of Châtillon, for all his artistry, uses the same schema (*Alexandris*, I, 396 ff.), which goes back to Isidore's chorography (*Et.*, XIV, 3, 1). But though distinguishing the world's "three parts" did not come amiss to the epic poet, he must have been more concerned with indicating the successive scenes of his action by topography. The turning points and climaxes of his epic must be made plain by summary scenic indications, just as dramatic performances demand a stage set, however primitive—let it be no more than a sign reading "This is a wood." We have already found such "epic adumbration of landscape" in the *Iliad*. In the *Song of Roland* trees and hills are used for battle scenes and death scenes. A council of war is held "under a laurel tree that stands in the midst of a field" (2651). We find the same laurel tree on a hill in a battle field in Walter of Châtillon.<sup>35</sup> It is marked as a *locus amoenus* by the addition of a spring, a brook, and grass, and is derived from the Spanish *Libro de Alexandre* ("un lorer anciano": ed. Willis, 169, 936). Another indispensable piece of epic stage setting is the orchard or plantation ("verger": *Song of Roland*, II, 103, 501). But with the rise of the courtly romance in verse, the primitive landscape requirements of the heroic epic are far exceeded. The new genre is a creation of France and first appears about 1150. One of its principal motifs is the wild forest—"una selva selvaggia ed aspra e forte," as Dante will later put it. Percival grows up in the forest. Arthur's knights often pass through wild forests on their journeys. But in the midst of the wilderness there is frequently a *locus amoenus* in the form of a verger. Thus in the Romance of Thebes:

- 2126 *Joste le pié d'une montaigne*  
*En un val entre merveillos*  
*Qui mout ert laiz e tenebros . . .*  
 2141 *Mout chevauchent a grant peine,*  
*Quant aventure les ameine*  
*A un vergier que mout ert genz,*  
*Que onc espice ne pimenz*  
*Que hon peust trover ne dire*  
*De cel vergier ne fu a dire.*

<sup>35</sup> *Alexandris*, II, 308:

*Adscendit tumulum modico qui colle tumebat*  
*Castrorum medius, patulis ubi frondea ramis*  
*Laurus odorifera celebrat crinibus herbas.*

That epic prefers the laurel tree is explained by medieval rhetoric. This distinguishes three styles, to which certain occupations, trees, and animals correspond, and which were based upon Virgil's *Bucolics*, *Georgics*, and *Aeneid* respectively. The *stilus humilis* treats of shepherds and its tree is the beech. The *stilus mediocris* treats of farmers and calls for fruit trees (*Georgics*, II, 426). The *stilus gravis* treats of warriors. The trees provided for it are the laurel and the cedar (RF, XIII [1902], 900).—The system was worked out from Aelius Donatus' commentary on Virgil. Cf. Schanz, IV, 12, p. 165. In the Middle Ages it was known as "rota Virgilio" (*infra*, p. 232).



(Close to the foot of a mountain he entered a wondrous (wooded) valley which was very hideous and darksome. They rode long and hard, when adventure brings them to a verger most charming, and no spice sweet or sharp that men can find and name was lacking in that verger.)

We find the same thing in the epic of the Cid. One of the climaxes of the poem is the shame which the Infants of Carrión put upon the Cid's daughters in the forest of Corpes. The poet uses appropriately atmospheric scenery:

2698 *Los montes son altos, las ramas pujan con las nuoves,  
E la bestias fieras que andan aderredor.  
Fallaron un vergel con una limpia fuont.*

(The mountains are high, the branches reach to the clouds,  
And wild beasts wander there.  
They found a verger with a clear spring.)<sup>36</sup>

Ariosto shows us Angelica fleeing through a wild forest (I, 33):

*Fugge tra selve spaventose e scure,  
Per lochi inabitati, ermi e selvaggi.*

Lo and behold! in the midst of these terrifying woods, there is "un boschetto adorno" (I, 35), with a gentle breeze, two clear brooks, lawns, shade . . .

In these three examples from Romance poetry<sup>37</sup> the *locus amoenus* is embedded in the wild forest of the romance of chivalry.

This combination was foreshadowed in the ancient Tempe motif. All "harmonies of opposites" (*puer senex*, and the like) are emotive formulas and as such have especial vitality.

The ideal landscape can always flower again in a new spring.<sup>38</sup>

<sup>36</sup> In the vicinity of Corpes there was and is no mountain. According to Menéndez Pidal *monte* would here mean "wild wood," "arbolado o matorral de un terreno inculto." And the verger? Menéndez Pidal comments somewhat constrainedly: "Sin duda significa una mancha de floresta (álamos, fresnos, etc.) con pradera o verdegal; desconozco otros textos que usen la palabra en esta acepción." We avoid these difficulties when we realize that we are here dealing not with a passage of realistic description but with the same epic landscape topos as that cited from the Romance of Thebes.

<sup>37</sup> The ideal landscape of Romance poetry deserves to be studied. It would of course exhibit very numerous connections with Latin poetry, as well as attempts to add something new. Berceo, for example, describes a pleasance whose springs are cool in summer and hot in winter (*Milagros de Nuestra Señora, Introducción*, st. 3). But this novelty comes from Isidore (*Et.*, XIII, 13, 10) and Augustine (*PL*, XLI, 718). Guillaume de Lorris translates *locus amoenus* as "le lieu plaisant" (*Roman de la Rose*, 117). He adheres to the precepts of Matthew of Vendôme, as a medieval reader already observed (Langlois's note on l. 78). He has a mixed forest (1323-64), and so on.

<sup>38</sup> It would be fascinating to compare the flower flora of the ancients (*supra*, pp. 186, 193, 197, n. 23) with that of the moderns. C. Ruutz-Rees covers the ground from Sannazaro to Milton (*Mélanges Abel Lefranc* [1936], 75). Keats and Wilde continue the line.

## 11

### Poetry and Philosophy

1. *Homer and Allegory* / 2. *Poetry and Philosophy*
3. *Philosophy in Late Pagan Antiquity*
4. *Philosophy and Christianity*

#### 1. *Homer and Allegory*

TO THE QUESTION as to the poet's significance in the world, Goethe has Wilhelm Meister answer: "Innate within his inmost heart, the beautiful flower of wisdom grows, and if other men dream awake and are terrified out of their wits by monstrous imaginings, he lives the dream of life as one awake, and what befalls, no matter how strange, is to him at once past and future. And so the poet is at once teacher, soothsayer, friend of the gods and friend of men." There are echoes of antique thought here. All Antiquity sees the poet as sage, teacher, educator. To be sure, Homer himself does not know this concept. The Homeric bard, who recites his poems in the princely courts of Ionia, entertains his hearers and holds them "spellbound" (*Od.*, XVII, 518 and XI, 334). Is there an echo in this word of the original kinship of poetry and magic?<sup>1</sup> But even if the "spell" is meant metaphorically, the word designates the purest effect of all poetry and points to a timelessly valid truth which stands above any pedagogical concept of poetry.

But it was precisely the pedagogical concept which the ancients cherished. Should poetry only give pleasure, or should it be useful too? Horace concentrated much previous discussion of the subject in the humdrum dictum: It should do both. But was Homer useful? Was Homer true? These came to be basic problems of antique literary theory. They had immense historical consequences. The first attack on Homer was made by Hesiod. He addresses himself to the lower stratum of Boeotian society, denounces the degenerate nobility, sets himself up as the advocate of moral and social reform. While he was keeping his father's sheep on Helicon the muses consecrated him a poet and said to him: "We know how to tell many lies that resemble truth; but we know how to tell truth too, when we wish." Hesiod's "truths" are not only concerned with the creation of

<sup>1</sup> E. E. Sikes, *The Greek View of Poetry* (1931), 3.