

THEOCRITUS OF SICILY



**“NARRATIVE HISTORY” AMOUNTS TO FABULATION,
THE REAL STUFF BEING MERE CHRONOLOGY**

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300 BCE

It would be during this 3d Century BCE that the Greek poet [Theocritus](#), first of the pastoral poets read by [Henry Thoreau](#), would flourish.



We actually know approximately nothing about him, other than what we can gather from those writings that still survive, and it is necessary to be careful, since some of the idylls attributed to him seem implausible. We infer that he lived on the island of Sicily, and that for awhile he was at [Alexandria](#). It has been speculated that he was born in Syracuse, a son of Simichus, and lived on the island of Kos and was in [Egypt](#) during the time of Ptolemy II.

(I will insert on the following screen a fragment of his poetry — as a graphic illustration of just how difficult and chancy this sort of interpretation can become.)

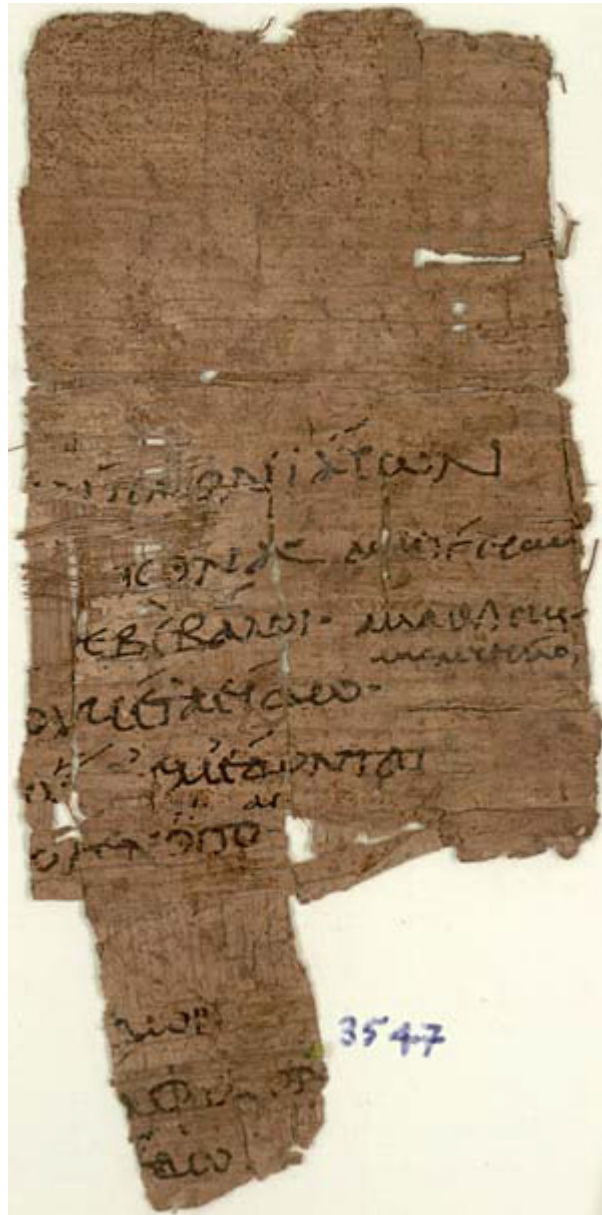
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During this 3rd Century BCE, the Hebrew scriptures would (allegedly) be being rendered into Greek by 72 “clean room” translators working simultaneously but independently in [Alexandria](#), creating what became known as the LXX (SEPTUAGINT).¹ The ancient Hebrew *tappauch* used in the GENESIS story of Eden for the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil was an indiscriminate term for the various familiar fruits such



as orange, peach, quince, and apricot. When *tappauch* was rendered as *malus*, that Latin term was also a generic category, designating merely that the raw edible in question was a fruit which grew on a tree. It wouldn't be until after the first English translations of the BIBLE that the term would begin to get more specific, let alone to specify a Northern fruit then unknown in the Levant, and in the time of King James I when Eve was made to take a bite out of an apple, the term “apple” still included among other things pears.



During [Thoreau's](#) *florut*, [apples](#) and pears were still being lumped together, in the genus *Pyrus*, the apple being *Pyrus malus*, although, because the stems of the pistils of the pear are free and separate at the base, the apple is now assigned its own genus, *Malus*. In effect, although the distinction between a species and a genus is hardly more precisely defined now than it was then, since Thoreau botanists have raised the term *Malus* from species rank to genus rank. This splitting tendency is recent, against a lumping tendency of very long standing. This trajectory of the Old-World apples spreading through the Levant had little to do with the trajectory of New-World apples. Each of the seven native American species of apple is a smallish tree with smallish fruit, green and sour and commonly termed a crabapple, and, since only one of our seven species is a West Coast species, it seems plausible that these little green dudes were survivors of an earlier configuration in which

1. But this is not history, it is mythology. Textual analysis demonstrates that the translations were made not only by different persons, but in different timeframes and at different places.



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some northern landmass was adjacent to what is now the eastern seaboard of the North American continent.

If you have driven through western Pennsylvania in late May, you have seen the beautiful masses of pink flowers of *Malus coronaria* dotting the hills, or farther west, from Minnesota down the Mississippi Valley, those of *M. ioensis*. These are our natives, which must have come many centuries ago from Siberia to Alaska and down, or perhaps even more remotely down from some more eastern north land mass, when the Greenland area was semi-tropical. There are several species in the eastern United States, only one in the West, and this might indicate the more eastern origin. They are beautiful small trees, more or less round headed in shape, like hawthorns, and their flowers are large, but they are all pink. There is none of the color range of the European-Asiatic crabapples. The fruit is green, rather large for a crabapple, and not attractive on the tree. The early settlers used it for jelly. The American crabapples all blossom about two weeks later than their Oriental relatives... so far as I can find out they have never hybridized with any of the Oriental species.

— Lape, Fred. APPLES & MAN.
“WILD APPLES” NY: Van Nostrand Reinhold,
1979, pages 110-11.

NOBODY COULD GUESS WHAT WOULD HAPPEN NEXT





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1650

[Abraham Cowley](#)'s "Of Agriculture":

The first wish of Virgil (as you will find anon by his verses) was to be a good philosopher, the second, a good husbandman: and God (whom he seem'd to understand better than most of the most learned heathens) dealt with him just as he did with Solomon; because he prayed for wisdom in the first place, he added all things else, which were subordinately to be desir'd. He made him one of the best philosophers and the best husbandmen; and, to adorn and communicate both those faculties, the best poet. He made him, besides all this, a rich man, and a man who desired to be no richer

"O fortunatus nimium, et bona qui sua novit!"²

To be a husbandman, is but a retreat from the city; to be a philosopher, from the world; or rather, a retreat from the world, as it is man's, into the world, as it is God's.

But, since nature denies to most men the capacity or appetite, and fortune allows but to a very few the opportunities or possibility of applying themselves wholly to philosophy, the best mixture of humane³ affairs that we can make, are the employments of a country life. It is, as [Columella](#) calls it, "Res sine dubitatione proxima, et quasi consanguinea sapientiae," the nearest neighbour, or rather next in kindred, to philosophy. Varro says, the principles of it are the same which Ennius made to be the principles of all nature, Earth, Water, Air, and the Sun. It does certainly comprehend more parts of philosophy, than any one profession, art, or science, in the world besides: and therefore [Marcus Tullius Cicero](#) says, the pleasures of a husbandman, "mihi ad sapientis vitam proxime videntur accedere," come very nigh to those of a philosopher. There is no other sort of life that affords so many branches of praise to a panegyrist: the utility of it, to a man's self; the usefulness, or rather necessity, of it to all the rest of mankind; the innocence, the pleasure, the antiquity, the dignity.

The utility (I mean plainly the lucre of it) is not so great, now in our nation, as arises from merchandise and the trading of the city, from whence many of the best estates and chief honours of the kingdom are derived: we have no men now fetched from the plow to be made lords, as they were in Rome to be made consuls and dictators; the reason of which I conceive to be from an evil custom, now grown as strong among us as if it were a law, which is, that no men put their children to be bred up apprentices in agriculture, as in other trades, but such who are

2. "O fortunate exceedingly, who knew his own good fortune." Adapted from Virgil, "Georgics," II., 458.

3. Human.



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so poor, that, when they come to be men, they have not wherewithal to set up in it, and so can only farm some small parcel of ground, the rent of which devours all but the bare subsistence of the tenant: whilst they who are proprietors of the land are either too proud, or, for want of that kind of education, too ignorant, to improve their estates, though the means of doing it be as easy and certain in this, as in any other track of commerce. If there were always two or three thousand youths, for seven or eight years, bound to this profession, that they might learn the whole art of it, and afterwards be enabled to be masters in it, by a moderate stock, I cannot doubt but that we should see as many aldermen's estates made in the country, as now we do out of all kind of merchandizing in the city. There are as many ways to be rich, and, which is better, there is no possibility to be poor, without such negligence as can neither have excuse nor pity; for a little ground will, without question, feed a little family, and the superfluities of life (which are now in some cases by custom made almost necessary) must be supplied out of the superabundance of art and industry, or contemned by as great a degree of philosophy.

As for the necessity of this art, it is evident enough, since this can live without all others, and no one other without this. This is like speech, without which the society of men cannot be preserved; the others, like figures and tropes of speech, which serve only to adorn it. Many nations have lived, and some do still, without any art but this: not so elegantly, I confess, but still they live; and almost all the other arts, which are here practised, are beholding to this for most of their materials.

The innocence of this life is the next thing for which I commend it; and if husbandmen preserve not that, they are much to blame, for no men are so free from the temptations of iniquity. They live by what they can get by industry from the earth; and others, by what they can catch by craft from men. They live upon an estate given them by their mother; and others; upon an estate cheated from their brethren. They live, like sheep and kine, by the allowances of nature; and others; like wolves and foxes, by the acquisitions of rapine. And, I hope, I may affirm (without any offence to the great) that sheep and kine are very useful, and that wolves and foxes are pernicious creatures. They are, without dispute, of all men, the most quiet and least apt to be inflamed to the disturbance of the commonwealth: their manner of life inclines them, and interest binds them, to love peace: in our late mad and miserable civil wars, all other trades, even to the meanest, set forth whole troops, and raised up some great commanders, who became famous and mighty for the mischiefs they had done: but I do not remember the name of any one husbandman, who had so considerable a share in the twenty years' ruine of his country, as to deserve the curses of his countrymen.

And if great delights be joyn'd with so much innocence, I think it is ill done of men not to take them here, where they are so



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tame, and ready at hand, rather than hunt for them in courts and cities, where they are so wild, and the chase so troublesome and dangerous.

We are here among the vast and noble scenes of nature; we are there among the pitiful shifts of policy: we walk here in the light and open ways of the divine bounty; we grope there in the dark and confused labyrinths of humane⁴ malice: our senses are here feasted with the clear and genuine taste of their objects, which are all sophisticated there, and for the most part overwhelmed with their contraries. Here, pleasure looks (methinks) like a beautiful, constant, and modest wife; it is there an impudent, fickle, and painted harlot. Here, is harmless and cheap plenty; there, guilty and expenceful luxury.

I shall only instance in one delight more, the most natural and best-natured of all others, a perpetual companion of the husbandman; and that is, he satisfaction of looking round about him, and seeing nothing but the effects and improvements of his own art and diligence; to be always gathering of some fruits of it, and at the same time to behold others ripening, and others budding: to see all his fields and gardens covered with the beauteous creatures of his own industry; and to see, like God, that all his works are good:

— Hinc atque hinc glomerantur Orcades; ipsi Agricolaë tacitum pertentant gaudia pectus.⁵
On his heart-string a secret joy does strike.

The antiquity of his art is certainly not be contested by any other. The three first men in the world, were a gardener, a plowman, and a grazier; and if any man object, that the second of these was a murderer. I desire he would consider, that as soon as he was so, he quitted our profession, and turn'd builder. It is for this reason, I suppose, that Ecclesiasticus forbids us to hate husbandry; 'because (says he) the Most High has created it.' We were all born to this art, and taught by nature to nourish our bodies by the same earth out of which they were made, and to which they must return, and pay at last for their sustenance.

Behold the original and primitive nobility of all those great persons, who are too proud now, not only to till the ground, but almost to tread upon it. We may talk what we please of lillies, and lions rampant, and spread-eagles, in fields d'or or d'argent; but, if heraldry were guided by reason, a plough in a field arable would be the most noble and ancient arms.

All these considerations make me fall into the wonder and complaint of Columella, how it should come to pass that all arts or sciences (for the dispute, which is an art, and which a science, does not belong to the curiosity of us husbandmen) metaphysic, physic, morality, mathematics, logic, rhetoric, &c. which are all, I grant, good and useful faculties, (except only

4. Human.

5. "On this side and on that gather the Orkneys; joys pervade the silent breast of the farmer." - A parody of Virgil's "Æneid", I. 500, 503.



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metaphysic which I do not know whether it be anything or no;) but even vaulting, fencing, dancing, attiring, cookery, carving, and such like vanities, should all have public schools and masters, and yet that we should never see or hear of any man, who took upon him the profession of teaching this so pleasant, so virtuous, so profitable, so honourable, so necessary art.

A man would think, when he's in serious humour, that it were but a vain, irrational, and ridiculous thing for a great company of men and women to run up and down in a room together, in a hundred several postures and figures, to no purpose, and with no design; and therefore dancing was invented first, and only practised antiently, in the ceremonies of the heathen religion, which consisted all in mummery and madness; the latter being the chief glory of the worship, and accounted divine inspiration: this, I say, a severe man would think; though I dare not determine so far against so customary a part, now, of good-breeding. And yet, who is there among our gentry, that does not entertain a dancing-master for his children, as soon as they are able to walk? But did ever any father provide a tutor for his son, to instruct him betimes in the nature and improvements of that land which he intended to leave him? That is at least a superfluity, and this a defect, in our manner of education; and therefore I could wish (but cannot in these times much hope to see it) that one college in each university were erected, and appropriated to this study, as well as there are to medicine and the civil law: there would be no need of making a body of scholars and fellows with certain endowments, as in other colleges; it would suffice, if, after the manner of halls in Oxford, there were only four professors constituted (for it would be too much work for only one master, or principal, as they call him there) to teach these four parts of it: First, Aration, and all things relating to it. Secondly, Pasturage. Thirdly, Gardens, Orchards, Vineyards, and Woods. Fourthly, all parts of Rural Economy, which would contain the government of Bees, Swine, Poultry, Decoys, Ponds, &c. and all that which Varro calls villaticas pastiones,⁶ together with the sports of the field (which ought to be looked upon not only as pleasures, but as parts of housekeeping), and the domestical conservation and uses of all that is brought in by industry abroad. The business of these professors should not be, as is commonly practised in other arts, only to read pompous and superficial lectures, out of Virgil's Georgics, Pliny, Varro, or Columella; but to instruct their pupils in the whole method and course of this study, which might be run through perhaps, with diligence, in a year or two: and the continual succession of scholars, upon a moderate taxation⁷ for their diet, a lodging and learning, would be a sufficient constant revenue for maintenance of the house and the professors, who should be men not chosen for the ostentation of critical literature, but for solid and experimental knowledge of the things they teach; such men, so industrious and public-spirited, as I conceive Mr.

6. The keeping of farm animals, etc.

7. Charge



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Hartlib to be, if the gentleman be yet alive: but it is needless to speak further of my thoughts of this design, unless the present disposition of the age allowed more probability of bringing it into execution. What I have further to say of the country life, shall be borrowed from the poets, who were always the most faithful and affectionate friends to it. Poetry was born among the shepherds.

Nescio qua natale solum dulcedine Musas
Ducit, et immemores non sinit esse sui.
The Muses still love their own native place;
'T has secret charms, which nothing" can deface.

The truth is, no other place is proper for their work; one might as well undertake to dance in a crowd, as to make good verses in the midst of noise and tumult.

As well might corn, as verse, in cities grow;
In vain the thankless glebe we plow and sow;
Against th' unnatural soil in vain we strive;
'Tis not a ground, in which these plants will thrive.

It will bear nothing but the nettles and thorns of satire, which grow most naturally in the worst earth; and therefore almost all poets, except those who were not able to eat bread without the bounty of great men, that is, without what they could get by flattering of them, have not only withdrawn themselves from the vices and vanities of the grand world,

- pariter vitisque jocisque Attius humanis exerere caput,⁸

into the innocent happiness of a retired life; but have commended and adorned nothing so much by their ever-living poems. [Hesiod](#) was the first or second poet in the world that remains yet extant (if Homer, as some think, preceded him, but I rather believe they were contemporaries); and he is the first writer too of the art of husbandry: "and he has contributed (says Columella) not a little to our profession;" I suppose, he means not a little honour, for the matter of his instructions is not very important: his great antiquity is visible through the gravity and simplicity of his stile. The most acute of all his sayings concerns our purpose very much, and is couched in the reverend obscurity of an oracle.

The half is more than the whole.⁹ The occasion of the speech is this: his brother Perses had, by corrupting some great men (great bribe-eaters he calls them), gotten from him the half of his estate. It is no matter (says he); they have not done me so much prejudice, as they imagine.

Unhappy they, to whom God ha'n't reveal'd,
By a strong light which must their sense controul,
That half a great estate's more than the whole.
Unhappy, from whom still conceal'd does lye,
Of roots and herbs, the wholesome luxury.

This I conceive to be honest Hesiod's meaning. From Homer, we must not expect much concerning our affairs. He was blind, and

8. "They have raised their head above both human vices and vanities." - Ovid, "Fasti," I. 300.

9. Hesiod, "Works and Days," 40.



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could neither work in the country nor enjoy the pleasures of it; his helpless poverty was likeliest to be sustained in the richest places; he was to delight the Grecians with fine tales of the wars and adventures of their ancestors; his subject removed him from all commerce with us, and yet, methinks, he made a shift to shew his goodwill a little. For, though he could do us no honour in the person of his hero Ulysses (much less of Achilles), because his whole time was consumed in wars and voyages; yet he makes his father Laertes a gardener all that while, and seeking his consolation for the absence of his son in the pleasure of planting, and even during his own grounds. Ye see, he did not condemn us peasants; nay, so far was he from the insolence, that he always stiles Eumaeus, who kept the hogs, with wonderful respect, $\upsilon\lambda\omicron\omega\ \upsilon\pi\omicron\text{Π}\text{Β}\omicron\omega$, the divine swine herd; he could ha' done no more for Menelaus or Agamemnon. And [Theocritus](#) (a very antient poet, but he was one of our own tribe, for he wrote nothing but pastorals) gave the same epithete to an husbandman. The divine husbandman replied to Hercules, who was but ulos himself. These were civil Greeks, and who understood the dignity of our calling!

Among the Romans we have, in the first place, our truly divine Virgil, who, though, by the favour of Maecenas and Augustus, he might have been one of the chief men of Rome, yet chose rather to employ much of his time in the exercise, and much of his immortal wit in the praise and instructions, of a rustique life; who, though he had written, before, whole books of pastorals and georgics, could not abstain, in his great and imperial poem, from describing Evander, one of his best princes, as living just after the homely manner of an ordinary countryman. He seats him in a throne of maple, and lays him but upon a bear's skin; the kine and oxen are lowing in his court-yard; the birds under the eaves of his window call him up in the morning, and when he goes aboard, only two dogs go along with him for his guard: at last, when he brings Aeneas into his royal cottage, he makes him say this memorable complement, greater than even yet was spoken at the Escorial, the Louvre, or our Whitehal:

— Haec (inquit) limina victor Alcides subiit, haec illum regia cepit:
Aude, hospes, contemnere opes: et te quoque dignum
Finge Deo, rebusque veni non asper agenis.
This humble roof, this rustic court, (said he)
Receiv'd Alcides, crown'd with victory:
Scorn not, great guest, the steps where he has trod;
But contemn wealth, and imitate a God.

The next man, whom we are much obliged to, both for his doctrine and example, is the next best poet in the world to Virgil, his dear friend Horace; who, when Augustus had desired Maecenas to persuade him to come and live domestically and at the same table with him, and to be secretary of state of the whole world under him, or rather jointly with him, for he says, "ut nos in epistolis scribendis adjuvet,"¹⁰ could not be tempted to forsake his Sabin, or Tiburtin mannor, for so rich and so glorious a

10. "That he may assist us in writing letters."



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trouble. There was never, I think, such an example as this in the world, that he should have so much moderation and courage as to refuse an offer of such greatness, and the emperor so much generosity and good-nature as not to be at all offended with his refusal, but to retain still the same kindness, and express it often to him in most friendly and familiar letters, part of which are still extant. If I should produce all the passages of this excellent author upon the several subjects which I treat of in this book, I must be obliged to translate half his works; of which I may say more truly than, in my opinion, he did of Homer.

Qui, quid sit pulchrum, quid turpe, quid utile, quid non,
Planius et melius Chrysippo et Crantore dicit.¹¹

I shall content myself upon this particular theme with three only, one out of his Odes, the other out of his Satires, the third out of his Epistles; and shall forbear to collect the suffrages of all other poets, which may be found scattered up and down through all their writings, and especially in Martial's. But I must not omit to make some excuse for the bold-undertaking of my own unskillful pencil upon the beauties of a face that has been drawn before by so many great masters; especially, that I should dare to do it in Latine verses, (though of another kind), and have the confidence to translate them. I can only say that I love the matter, and that ought to cover many faults; and that I run not to contend with those before me, but follow to applaud them.

“Be your own palace or the world's your gaol.”

But for artificial evils, for evils that spring from want of thought, thought must find a remedy somewhere. There has been no period of time in which wealth has been more sensible of its duties than now. It builds hospitals, it establishes missions among the poor, it endows schools. It is one of the advantages of accumulated wealth, and of the leisure it renders possible, that people have time to think of the wants and sorrows of their fellows. But all these remedies are partial and palliative merely. It is as if we should apply plasters to a single pustule of the small-pox with a view of driving out the disease. The true way is to discover and to extirpate the germs. As society is now constituted these are in the air it breathes, in the water it drinks, in things that seem, and which it has always believed, to be the most innocent and healthful. The evil elements it neglects corrupt these in their springs and pollute them in their courses. Let us be of good cheer, however, remembering that the misfortunes hardest to bear are those which never come. The world has outlived much, and will outlive a great deal more, and men have contrived to be happy in it. It has shown the strength of its constitution in nothing more than in surviving the quack medicines it has tried. In the scales of the destinies brawn will never weigh so much as brain. Our healing is not in the storm or in the whirlwind, it is not in monarchies, or

11. “Who says, more plainly and better than Chrysippus and Crantor, what is beautiful, what base, what useful, what the opposite of these.” Horace, “Epist.” I. 2. 4. Chrysippus and Crantor were noted philosophers.



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aristocracies, or democracies, but will be revealed by the still small voice that speaks to the conscience and the heart, prompting us to a wider and wiser humanity.



**LIFE IS LIVED FORWARD BUT UNDERSTOOD BACKWARD?
— NO, THAT’S GIVING TOO MUCH TO THE HISTORIAN’S STORIES.
LIFE ISN’T TO BE UNDERSTOOD EITHER FORWARD OR BACKWARD.**



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1843

November 1, Wednesday: [Joseph Smith, Jr.](#) republished, in the [Times and Seasons](#) of which he was editor, a previous condemnation of adultery: “Thou shalt not lie; he that lieth and will not repent shall be cast out. Thou shalt love thy wife with all thy heart, and shall cleave unto her and none else; and he that looketh upon a woman to lust after her, shall deny the faith, and shalt not have the spirit, and if he repents not he shall be cast out. Thou shalt not commit adultery; and he that commiteth adultery and repenteth not, shall be cast out but he that has committed adultery and repents with all his heart, and forsaketh it, and doeth it no more, thou shalt forgive; but if he doeth it again, he shall not be forgiven, but shall be cast out. Thou shalt not speak evil of thy neighbor, nor do him any harm. Thou knowest my laws concerning these things are given in my scriptures: he that sinneth and repenteth not, shall be cast out.”

[Henry Thoreau](#) wrote from Staten Island to [H.S. McKean](#) of the New-York Mercantile Library. The piece of paper is now torn but this is what we make of it:

Mr McKean

[Would you] *be kind* [and let] *me take* [your “C]hapman’s
*Trans[lation] of the Greek Pastoral [Poets]” & “Ossian’s Genuine
Remains”?*

Yrs resp[on]dy

Henry D. Thoreau.

The first book Thoreau referred to above was THE GREEK PASTORAL POETS: [THEOCRITUS](#), [BION](#), AND [MOSCHUS](#). DONE INTO ENGLISH BY M[atthew] J[ames] CHAPMAN (London: J. Fraser, 1836).

THEOCRITUS BION MOSCHUS

THE FUTURE IS MOST READILY PREDICTED IN RETROSPECT





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1862

April: [Waldo Emerson](#) read Bronson Alcott's quasi-obituary "The Forester"¹² to [Henry Thoreau](#). Thoreau commented

*The blue birds and robins are charming my solitary room
bringing their music to my dulled senses – but this
brings light and love, almost revives my life.*

THE FORESTER.

Then bless thy secret growth, nor catch
At noise, but thrive unseen and dumb,
Keep clean, bear fruit, earn life, and watch
Till the white-winged reapers come. –Henry Vaughan

I had never thought of knowing a man so thoroughly of the country as this friend of mine, and so purely a son of Nature. Perhaps he has the profoundest passion for it of any one living; and had the human sentiment been as tender from the first, and as pervading, we might have had pastorals of which Virgil and [Theocritus](#) would have envied him the authorship, had they chanced to be his contemporaries. As it is, he has come nearer the antique spirit than any of our native poets, and touched the fields and groves and streams of his native town with a classic interest that shall not fade. Some of his verses are suffused with an elegiac tenderness, as if the woods and fields bewailed the absence of their forester, and murmured their griefs meanwhile to one another, –responsive like idyls. Living in close companionship with Nature, his Muse breathes the spirit and voice of poetry; his excellence lying herein: for when the heart is once divorced from the senses and all sympathy with common things, then poetry has fled, and the love that sings. The most welcome of companions, this plain countryman. One shall

- Note that this article for [The Atlantic Monthly](#) which was being read to [Henry](#) approximated an obituary. Also, this term "forester" deserves some explanation as it does not mean what you are probably thinking. It did not, in this period, mean "forest ranger" as in the US Forest Service with a Smokey-the-Bear hat. Note that in the Reverend [Timothy Dwight](#)'s TRAVELS, at approximately the turn of the 19th Century, the first English settlers of the interior of the continent were referred to as "foresters." Ethan Allen would be a type case. These people which the Reverend Dwight denominated "foresters" of the frontier were characterized as lacking the time and the wherewithal for the niceties of life, in contrast with the people who followed who were able to benefit from their industry and struggle and adventure in the semi-savage life. The first "foresters" were people who had "met with difficulties at home." The next wave was made up of "the discontented, the enterprising, the ambitious, and the covetous." But it was good stock and the bloodlines held true. Eventually their descendants were able to use the wherewithal which had been produced in New England, and the guidance of the civic and spiritual leaders who had sprung up among them, to transform themselves into the earnest, responsible types we see about us today.



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not meet with thoughts invigorating like his often; coming so scented of mountain and field breezes and rippling springs, so like a luxuriant clod from under forest-leaves, moist and mossy with earth-spirits. His presence is tonic, like ice-water in dog-days to the parched citizen pent in chambers and under brazen ceilings. Welcome as the gurgle of brooks, the dripping of pitchers, –then drink and be cool! He seems one with things, of Nature's essence and core, knit of strong timbers, most like a wood and its inhabitants. There are in him sod and shade, woods and waters manifold, the mould and mist of earth and sky. Self-poised and sagacious as any denizen of the elements, he has the key to every animal's brain, every plant, every shrub; and were an Indian to flower forth, and reveal the secrets hidden in his cranium, it would not be more surprising than the speech of our Sylvanus. He must belong to the Homeric age, –is older than pastures and gardens, as if he were of the race of heroes, and one with the elements. He, of all men, seems to be the native New-Englander, as much so as the oak, the granite ledge, our best sample of an indigenous American, untouched by the Old Country, unless he came down from Thor, the Northman; as yet unfathered by any, and a nondescript in the books of natural history.

A peripatetic philosopher, and out of doors for the best parts of his days and nights, he has manifold weather and seasons in him, and the manners of an animal of probity and virtues unstained. Of our moralists he seems the wholesomest; and the best republican citizen in the world, –always at home, and minding his own affairs. Perhaps a little over-confident sometimes, and stiffly individual, dropping society clean out of his theories, while standing friendly in his strict sense of friendship, there is in him an integrity and sense of justice that make possible and actual the virtues of Sparta and the Stoics, and all the more welcome to us in these times of shuffling and of pusillanimity. Plutarch would have made him immortal in his pages, had he lived before his day. Nor have we any so modern as he, –his own and ours; too purely so to be appreciated at once. A scholar by birthright, and an author, his fame has not yet travelled far from the banks of the rivers he has described in his books; but I hazard only the truth in affirming of his prose, that in substance and sense it surpasses that of any naturalist of his time, and that he is sure of a reading in the future. There are fairer fishes in his pages than any now swimming in our streams, and some sleep of his on the banks of the Merrimack by moonlight that Egypt never rivalled; a morning of which Memnon might have envied the music, and a greyhound that was meant for Adonis; some frogs, too, better than any of Aristophanes. Perhaps we have had no eyes like his since Pliny's time. His senses seem double, giving him access to secrets not easily read by other men: his sagacity resembling that of the beaver and the bee, the dog and the deer; an instinct for seeing and judging, as by some other or seventh sense, dealing with objects as if they were shooting forth from his own



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mind mythologically, thus completing Nature all round to his senses, and a creation of his at the moment. I am sure he knows the animals, one by one, and everything else knowable in our town, and has named them rightly as Adam did in Paradise, if he be not that ancestor himself. His works are pieces of exquisite sense, celebrations of Nature's virginity, exemplified by rare learning and original observations. Persistently independent and manly, he criticizes men and times largely, urging and defending his opinions with the spirit and pertinacity befitting a descendant of him of the Hammer. A head of mixed genealogy like his, Franco-Norman crossed by Scottish and New-England descent, may be forgiven a few characteristic peculiarities and trenchant traits of thinking, amidst his great common sense and fidelity to the core of natural things. Seldom has a head circumscribed so much of the sense of Cosmos as this footed intelligence, -nothing less than all out-of-doors sufficing his genius and scopes, and, day by day, through all weeks and seasons, the year round.

If one would find the wealth of wit there is in this plain man, the information, the sagacity, the poetry, the piety, let him take a walk with him, say of a winter's afternoon, to the Blue Water, or anywhere about the outskirts of his village-residence. Pagan as he shall outwardly appear, yet he soon shall be seen to be the hearty worshipper of whatsoever is sound and wholesome in Nature, -a piece of russet probity and sound sense that she delights to own and honor. His talk shall be suggestive, subtile, and sincere, under as many masks and mimicries as the shows he passes, and as significant, -Nature choosing to speak through her chosen mouth-piece, -cynically, perhaps, sometimes, and searching into the marrows of men and times he chances to speak of, to his discomfort mostly, and avoidance. Nature, poetry, life, -not politics, not strict science, not society as it is, -are his preferred themes: the new Pantheon, probably, before he gets far, to the naming of the gods some coming Angelo, some Pliny, is to paint and describe. The world is holy, the things seen symbolizing the Unseen, and worthy of worship so, the Zoroastrian rites most becoming a nature so fine as ours in this thin newness, this worship being so sensible, so promotive of possible pieties, -calling us out of doors and under the firmament, where health and wholesomeness are finely insinuated into our souls, -not as idolaters, but as idealists, the seekers of the Unseen through images of the Invisible.

I think his religion of the most primitive type, and inclusive of all natural creatures and things, even to "the sparrow that falls to the ground," -though never by shot of his, -and, for whatsoever is manly in man, his worship may compare with that of the priests and heroes of pagan times. Nor is he false to these traits under any guise, -worshipping at unbloody altars, a favorite of the Unseen, Wisest, and Best. Certainly he is better poised and more nearly self-reliant than other men.

Perhaps he deals best with matter, properly, though very adroitly with mind, with persons, as he knows them best, and



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sees them from Nature's circle, wherein he dwells habitually. I should say he inspired the sentiment of love, if, indeed, the sentiment he awakens did not seem to partake of a yet purer sentiment, were that possible, –but nameless from its excellency. Friendly he is, and holds his friends by bearings as strict in their tenderness and consideration as are the laws of his thinking, –as prompt and kindly equitable, –neighborly always, and as apt for occasions as he is strenuous against meddling with others in things not his.

I know of nothing more creditable to his greatness than the thoughtful regard, approaching to reverence, by which he has held for many years some of the best persons of his time, living at a distance, and wont to make their annual pilgrimage, usually on foot, to the master, –a devotion very rare in these times of personal indifference, if not of confessed unbelief in persons and ideas.

He has been less of a housekeeper than most, has harvested more wind and storm, sun and sky; abroad night and day with his leash of keen scents, bounding any game stirring, and running it down, for certain, to be spread on the dresser of his page, and served as a feast to the sound intelligences, before he has done with it. We have been accustomed to consider him the salt of things so long that they must lose their savor without his to season them. And when he goes hence, then Pan is dead, and Nature ailing throughout.

His friend sings him thus, with the advantages of his Walden to show him in Nature: –

“It is not far beyond the Village church,
After we pass the wood that skirts the road,
A Lake, –the blue-eyed Walden, that doth smile
Most tenderly upon its neighbor Pines;
And they, as if to recompense this love,
In double beauty spread their branches forth.
This Lake has tranquil loveliness and breadth,
And, of late years, has added to its charms;
For one attracted to its pleasant edge
Has built himself a little Hermitage,
Where with much piety he passes life.

“More fitting place I cannot fancy now,
For such a man to let the line run off
The mortal reel, –such patience hath the Lake,
Such gratitude and cheer is in the Pines.
But more than either lake or forest's depths
This man has in himself: a tranquil man,
With sunny sides where well the fruit is ripe,
Good front and resolute bearing to this life,
And some serener virtues, which control
This rich exterior prudence, –virtues high,
That in the principles of Things are set,
Great by their nature, and consigned to him,
Who, like a faithful Merchant, does account
To God for what he spends, and in what way.
Thrice happy art thou, Walden, in thyself!



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Such purity is in thy limpid springs, –
In those green shores which do reflect in thee,
And in this man who dwells upon thy edge,
A holy man within a Hermitage.
May all good showers fall gently into thee,
May thy surrounding forests long be spared,
And may the Dweller on thy tranquil marge
There lead a life of deep tranquillity,
Pure as thy Waters, handsome as thy Shores,
And with those virtues which are like the Stars!”

“MAGISTERIAL HISTORY” IS FANTASIZING, HISTORY IS CHRONOLOGY



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"It's all now you see. Yesterday won't be over until tomorrow and tomorrow began ten thousand years ago."

- Remark by character "Garin Stevens"
in William Faulkner's INTRUDER IN THE DUST



Prepared: August 8, 2014



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ARRGH AUTOMATED RESearch REPORT

GENERATION HOTLINE



This stuff presumably looks to you as if it were generated by a human. Such is not the case. Instead, someone has requested that we pull it out of the hat of a pirate who has grown out of the shoulder of our pet parrot "Laura" (as above). What these chronological lists are: they are research reports compiled by ARRGH algorithms out of a database of modules which we term the Kouroo Contexture (this is data mining). To respond to such a request for information we merely push a button.



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Commonly, the first output of the algorithm has obvious deficiencies and we need to go back into the modules stored in the contexture and do a minor amount of tweaking, and then we need to punch that button again and recompile the chronology – but there is nothing here that remotely resembles the ordinary “writerly” process you know and love. As the contents of this originating contexture improve, and as the programming improves, and as funding becomes available (to date no funding whatever has been needed in the creation of this facility, the entire operation being run out of pocket change) we expect a diminished need to do such tweaking and recompiling, and we fully expect to achieve a simulation of a generous and untiring robotic research librarian. Onward and upward in this brave new world.

First come first serve. There is no charge.
Place requests with <Kouroo@kouroo.info>. Arrgh.