CHAPTER 4

Theocritus and the bucolic genre

1 THEOCRITUS AND THE ‘REALISM’ OF EVERYDAY LIFE: IN SEARCH OF NEW WORLDS FOR POETRY

Within the panorama of Hellenistic literature, Theocritus of Syracuse reflects, as much or more than any other author of his period, the taste for polyeideia ‘writing in many literary genres’. Like his contemporary, Callimachus of Cyrene, he is a courtly encomiastic poet (Idylls 15, 16 and 17) and also a poet of ‘epyllia’ (Idylls 13, 22, 24); there is also a group of short poems in the Aeolic metre and dialect (Idylls 28–31), the last three of which are paederastic in character and clearly imitate Aeolic lyric of the archaic period, rather as Callimachus composed both Iambi, which partly recall the spirit, metre and dialect of the poetry of Hipponax, and also other poems in lyric metres, which probably reflected models drawn from archaic lyric poetry.

Furthermore, Theocritus also wrote a significant number of poems with ‘realistic’ urban (Idylls 2, 14, 15) or rural (Idylls 1, 3–7, 10–11) settings, which describe scenes of daily life, for the most part in dialogue form.

It is very likely that the roots of Theocritus’ description of and opposition between urban and rural environments lie in the Sicilian mime, to which, as the scholia inform us, Theocritus was indebted for two urban mimes, Idylls 2 and 15. Through the representation of typical humble characters and their daily occupations, rather than strikingly defined individuals, the Sicilian mime gave the countryside and those who lived in it a literary prominence which they had not enjoyed before. Epicharmus wrote a comedy entitled

1 Cf. above, Chapter 2.
2 On the question whether Callimachus’s Μίλη were included in the book of Iambi, cf. above, p. 29 n. 111.
3 Cf. Th. Reinhardt, Die Darstellung der Bereiche Stadt und Land bei Theokrit (Bonn 1988).
4 Two introductory scholia on Idyll 2, which are probably the remains of an ancient hypothesis, state that Theocritus derived the character of Thystyls crudely (ἀπειροκολάσσ, cf. Wendel 1920 70) from the Mimes by Sophron and that (the author) derives the plot of the spell from the Mimes by Sophron (cf. pp. 269–70 Wendel); the first scholium on Idyll 15 states: ‘(the author) has formed the poem by analogy with Sophron’s Women Attending the Isthmian Games’ (p. 305 Wendel).
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Land and Sea (PCG 20–9, see also frs. 158 and 162), where he probably imagined a competition for supremacy between the two elements, in which each boasted of the different products for which they were responsible. This contrast between different types of environment was probably no less significant in Sophron’s mime entitled The fisherman to the farmer (PCG 42–44, see also fr. 96). An analogous interest in the humble members of the town population was shown in roughly the same period as Theocritus by Herondas, and the taste for the description of the countryside and its characters also finds parallels in other poetry of the period, particularly the epigrams of Leonidas and Anyte. However, what most sets the bucolic poems of Theocritus apart is the detail and consistency of the new world for ‘high’ poetry in hexameters which he creates; this new world is principally based in an emphasis on bucolic music and song, which, on the contrary, remain a wholly marginal element in, for example, the ‘bucolic’ epigram.

The relative prominence of bucolic poems within the extant Theocritean corpus does not say much, in itself, in favour of a specific preference by Theocritus for this type of poetry; this prominence may have been the result, at least partly, of the popularity that pastoral poetry subsequently enjoyed and which saw what for Theocritus may have been still only one of the possibilities of mimic poetry transformed into a separate literary genre. It is rather the image that Theocritus chooses to give in Idyll 7 of his own personality as a poet that tells us something more certain about his own bucolic poetics.

Idyll 7 is a first-person narration by ‘Simichidas’. Even if this is not the name of the author (Theocritus), and even if, at times, especially in the early stages of their encounter, the other protagonist of the poem, Lycidas, seems to regard Simichidas with a certain superior detachment and humour (cf. esp. vv. 21–6), it is clear that Simichidas represents, in many respects,

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1 It cannot be a coincidence that this type of Sicilian mime plot reappears in Moschus and Bion. Moschus fr. 1 concerns the relative merits of sea and land (cf. the comedy of Epicharmus), and Bion fr. 2 the relative value of the seasons.

2 The accepted chronology of both Leonidas and Anyte has recently been questioned by Bernsdorff (2001) 104–26. Anyte’s bucolic epigrams are, in any case, not many (two dedications to Pan, APlan. 231 = HE 713ff.; and 291 = HE 672ff., and two invitations to take refuge from the heat under a tree, AP 9.331 = HE 726ff., APlan. 228 = HE 734ff.); as for Leonidas, there are a dozen epigrams which have shepherds or farmers as their protagonists, or contain descriptions of the countryside, but these should be considered alongside the large group of epigrams whose subjects are other humble workers (fishermen, carpenters, musicians, spinning-women, hunters, woodcutters, etc.), which are at least as numerous.


4 The irony applied at times to the figure of Simichidas (cf. Hunter (2003a)) is, however, not such as to suggest that the author does not identify with him at all, as has been claimed by B. Effe, ‘Das poetologische Programm des Simichidas: Theokrit. Id. 7, 37–41’ WJA 14 (1988) 87–91; see also Simon (1990) 77–82.
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the author himself. Simichidas presents himself as a ‘town poet’ (cf. vv. 2, 24), who appears to be invested as a bucolic poet by the expert, perhaps semi-divine, poet Lycidas; he undoubtedly demonstrates that he has thoroughly mastered the magic of the countryside when he enthusiastically describes the locus amoenus at the end of the poem.\(^9\) The implicit self-reference in the first-person narration led many ancient scholars into fanciful biography – some went so far as to imagine that Theocritus was a native of Cos, the island where the Idyll is set,\(^10\) in spite of the fact that elsewhere he makes two distinct references to his Syracusan origins.\(^11\) Be that as it may, if the ‘I’ of Idyll 7 is interpreted as an ‘ideal image’ of the poet (and one which at least evokes Theocritus himself), we discover that Simichidas/Theocritus chooses to present himself (vv. 39–41) as one who was previously a ‘town poet’, and as such owed a poetic debt to, or was at least full of admiration for, Asclepiades of Samos, who is most famous for erotic epigrams, and the scholar-poet Philetas of Cos; the setting of the idyll on Cos is probably an act of homage to Philetas’ native island, and it is important that Philetas too wrote love poetry. Furthermore, the example of song that Lycidas offers to Simichidas appropriates for the bucolic world the motifs of symptotic love poetry:

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\text{ἔσεσται Ἀγεάνακτι καλὸς πλῶς ἐς Μιτυλήνην, χώταν ἐφ’ ἐσπερίων Ἐρίφου νότος ὑγρὰ διώκῃ κόματα, χόριοι̇ν ὀδ’ ἐπὶ ὄκεανοῦ πόδας ἱσχει, αἱ καὶ τὸν Λυκίδαν ὄπτεύμενον ἐς Ἀφροδίτας ἱστηται. θερμὸς γὰρ ἔρως αὐτῷ μὲ καταίθει. χάλκυναις χτυπεῖνται τὰ κόματα τὰς τὰ δόλασσαν τὸν τε νότον τὸν τ’ εὐρον, δ’ ἐσχάτα θυκία κινεῖ, ἀλκυναις, γλαυκαις Νησισία τας τε μάλιστα ὅρνιξίς ἐφιλήθεν, δόσεις τε πέρ ἐξ ἄλος ἀγρά. Άγεάνακτι πλῶς διζημένῳ  ἐς Μιτυλήνην άριστα πάντα θεοντα, καὶ εὐπλοῖος ὅρμον ἱκοῖο. κῆγω τήνα κατ’ ἄμαρ ἄντιγνυν ή ῥοδέντα  ἢ καὶ λευκοῖσαν στέφανον πέρι κρατὶς φιλάσσαν  τὸν Πτελεστικὸν οἶνον ἃττ’ ἄρατὰς ἀφυξό πάρ τυρὶ κεκλιμένος, κύσαμον δὲ τὶς ἐν τυρὶ φρέζει. χά στιγμὰς ἔσεσται πεπυκαhope there is a term 'companion' for the Syracusan wife of his friend Nicias (cf. vv. 16–48), and he jokingly calls Polyphemus ‘the Cyclops from our area’ (11.7).

\(^9\) Cf. further below.

\(^{10}\) Cf. Suda B 166 (II p. 687; 18–9 Adler) Συρακούσιος, οἱ δὲ φασὶ Κῦμον ἀπὸ Φιλήτας; but some say from Cos.

\(^{11}\) In Idyll 28 Theocritus uses the term ‘companion’ for the Syracusan wife of his friend Nicias (cf. vv. 16–48), and he jokingly calls Polyphemus ‘the Cyclops from our area’ (11.7).
Ageanax will have a good sea-crossing to Mytilene, even if the south wind drives
the moist waves, while the Kids are in the west, and if Orion places his feet on
the Ocean – if he frees Lycidas, burnt by the fire of Aphrodite, for I am consumed
by a hot love for him. The halcyons will calm the waves and the sea, and the
south and south-east wind, which ruffles even the deepest sea weeds, the halcyons,
favourites of the sea-green Nereids and of all who catch their food in the sea. May
every moment be propitious for Ageanax in his navigation to Mytilene, and may
he arrive at the port after a good voyage. On that day, I will wear a garland of anise
and roses and white stocks around my head, and lying beside the fire, I will draw
some wine of Ptelea from the bowl, while someone toasts the broadbeans over the
fire. I will have a bed padded with fleabane and asphodel and curly celery, one
cubit high, and with the memory of Ageanax, I will drink the wine longingly to
the dregs, pressing my lips to the cups. Two shepherds will pipe for me, one from
Acharnae and the other from Lycope, and close by, Tityrus will sing of the time
when the cowherd Daphnis fell in love with Xenea, and the mountain suffered for
him, and the oak-trees lamented him, etc. (Theocritus 7.52–74)

Lycidas’ song begins with what appears to be a propemptikon to his beloved
Ageanax, but already in the fourth line we discover that this propemptikon
is subject to a rather unusual condition: Ageanax is to arrive safe and sound
at Mytilene only if he ‘frees’ (φυστικα) Lycidas from Aphrodite (vv. 55–6).
The meaning of this condition has been much discussed: does Ageanax
have to free Lycidas from his passion by gratifying him, or by leaving him
for ever (perhaps the likeliest alternative), or at least for a long enough
period for his love to die down? Even if, however, φυστικα is taken to mean
‘satisfies’, it is a fact that the song that Lycidas looks forward to is no longer
dedicated to Ageanax: once the latter has gone, Lycidas will be able to devote
himself to the serene joy of a symposium in the countryside, where the sweet
memory of his beloved will undoubtedly remain in his cups (vv. 69–70),
but the beloved, or Lycidas’ passion for him (whether still burning or now
finished), will no longer be the theme of the song. To the accompaniment
of two shepherds’ pipes, Tityrus will sing of Daphnis and Comatus, semi-
mythical heroes who were the founders of bucolic poetry; he will sing a
song somewhat similar to the one that Thyrsis sings in Idyll 1 about the fate
of Daphnis, and then he will evoke the happy lot of Comatus, a mythical

So Y. Furusawa, Eros und Seelenruhe in den Thalysien Theokrits (Würzburg 1980) 36–40; in this case,
the chronological details of vv. 53–4 would communicate the idea that Ageanax should leave as soon
as possible. Continent, with equal vigour, Stanzel (1995) 270–75, for whom vv. 53–4 offer Ageanax the
possibility of delaying his departure as long as possible, without any consequent problems.
shepherd who had been saved from death by poetry, because the Muses had arranged for him to be nourished with honey by bees when his cruel master had closed him inside a chest to die of hunger. The stories of Daphnis and Comatas take the place of the amorous discourse on the beloved which the first section of Lycidas’ poem had led the reader to expect. Thus, after starting as a love poem – a *propemptikon* for his beloved, rich in allusions to the atmosphere of archaic poetry13 – Lycidas’ song puts aside the theme of love as a subjective experience,14 even if it subsequently resumes the traditional sympotic framework of archaic love poetry and describes it with a skill and a wealth of detail worthy of Xenophanes’ descriptions of the symposium.15

Simichidas’ song, which is characterised by a looser structure and the use of ‘lower’ iambic models than the poetry to which Lycidas alluded,16 moves in the same direction: the opening proclaims his happy and contented love for Myrto, and contrasts it with that of his friend Aratus, to whose unhappy love the rest of his song appears to be dedicated. Simichidas, however, does not appear to be very interested in the question of love itself: he does not even know who the object of Aratus’ desire is: ‘whether it is the delicate Philinus or someone else’, v. 105. What Simichidas wants, right from the beginning, is to release Aratus from his situation of erotic distress: consequently, instead of the love poem that we might have expected, we find a ‘magic prayer’ to the god Pan, in an attempt to obtain the love of Philinus for Aratus.17 After trying to eliminate Aratus’ sufferings by using magic, the simple mention of Philinus (vv. 118–121) leads Simichidas to solve his friend’s suffering in a different, more radical way. The traditional appeal to the beloved to yield, because youth is not eternal (vv. 120–1) becomes in Simichidas’ song the starting-point for the final refusal of *eros* and the poetry associated with it: Philinus is passing his prime, it is no longer worthwhile courting him, and it is time to stop freezing in the cold in order to offer him *paraklausithyra*; instead we should only seek ἀσύχεια ‘tranquillity’ (vv. 122–27).18 At the end of the poem, Simichidas describes, in terms of an idealised *locus amoenus*, the natural riches of the symposium organised by Phrasidamus, which seem to exemplify this same need for ‘serenity’, materialised in a rustic form, and to be the first real performance of the new bucolic poet.19

14 As Stanzel (1995) 275 also admits (for his interpretation see above n. 12).
15 See vv. 63–70; cf. e.g. Xenophanes fr. 13 Gent.–Prato.
17 On this point, see below, pp. 158–60.
18 The pastoral element in Lycidas’ song is seriously underestimated by Halperin (1983) 120–25. Both Lycidas and (more superficially) Simichidas appropriate erotic motifs for their ‘bucolic’ poetry.
19 Cf. below, pp. 145–8.
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The poetic choices of Simichidas/Theocritus and his bucolic ‘master’ Lycidas enact some of the choices by which Theocritus constructs his bucolic poetics in other idylls. Thus, the whole of *Idyll 3*, for example, is made up of a parodic adaptation of a *paraklausithyron*, while the song of the Cyclops in *Idyll 11* and the song of Bucaeus in *Idyll 10* (vv. 24–37) are parodies of serenades; a more serious dramatisation of love – in the manner of the ‘subjective’ love poetry of archaic lyric and elegiac poetry – is to be found in the urban poems 2 and 14. Moreover, the celebration of a semi-mythical singer who is the example and prototype of the bucolic poet, analogous to the song of Lycidas, is the theme of *Idyll 1*, and the ideal of *hasychia* and rural beauty as prerequisites for bucolic poetry are among the most basic and pervasive themes of Theocritus’ bucolic works.

This is not, of course, to say that when Theocritus elaborated the possibility of hexameter bucolic mime, taking off from the pre-existing literary mime, he realised that he was ‘inventing’ a ‘new’ literary genre; nevertheless, he was bound to be aware that few, if any, precedents existed for his combination of rustic contents and epic metre, and thus some of his poems do indeed inaugurate the pastoral genre.

In the second chapter of the *Poetics*, Aristotle distinguishes three possible levels at which the objects of artistic imitation are situated, in terms of moral worth, with respect to our daily experience: such objects are ‘better, or worse, or exactly the same’. Hexameter poetry offered him both subjects which are more serious than daily life (the heroic epics of Homer) and subjects ‘worse’ than daily life, such as the parodies of Hegemon and the *Viliad* of a certain Nicochares. The little that we know of Nicochares depicts him as a comic poet; almost nothing is known of the *Viliad* (the ‘Viliad?’), but

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21 The characters of *Idyll 14* are plainly townspeople, even if their party is held ‘in the country’, cf. Stanzel (1995) 19–31.
22 Cf. below, pp. 145–7.
23 Ancient scholarship identified pre-Theocritean bucolic in the popular song which characterised rustic rituals for country divinities (above all, Artemis; cf. schol. Theocritus, *Proleg.*, pp. 2 and 7–9 Wendel); mythical bucolic poets were also found: Daphnis (cf. Diodorus Siculus 4.84, who may have been influenced by Timaeus, *PGH* 566FB); Hermesianax, *CA* ii 2; Diodemus, *Gramm. Lat.* i. 487–8–10 Keil); Dionysus (cf. Athen. 14.619a–b), a character already mentioned by Epicharmus (*PCG* 4 and 104), and Menalces, for whom Erphanas, a lyric poetess who was in love with him, is supposed to have written poems (Athen. 14.619c–d). Aelian (*Var. hist.* 10.38) suggests that the initiator of bucolic μισθός was the Sicilian poet Stesichorus, to whom Crates of Mallos had already ascribed a short poem about Daphnis: *PMGF* 279–80. Whether or not this attribution is reliable (cf. L. Lehman, *SCO* 24 (1973) 191–6, O. Von, *Befrager* 41 (1986) 311–17), the very fragility of this tradition shows how widespread the reputation of Theocritus was as the initiator of the genre.
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the title itself, with its pun on ἰτές, suggests a parodic contrast between grand Homeric language and low subject-matter: we may perhaps compare the gastronomic poetry of Matron of Athens. As an example of poetic works which represent objects ‘exactly the same as us’, Aristotle is only able to name a single author, Cleophon, a tragedian who inappropriately lowered the level of his works by using words and/or characters that were too humble and common, thus obtaining an effect bordering on comedy (Poetics 1458a18–20, Rhetoric 3.1408a10–15). The representation of daily life is thus reduced, in the Aristotelian system of literary genres, to little more than a faux pas of tragedy, consisting in the use of the wrong lexical register by a single author. Any suspicion that this Cleophon might have gone considerably beyond the well-known ‘bourgeoisification’ of language and of certain tragic situations, initiated by Euripides, is quashed by a consideration of the titles that are listed in the Suda, which are almost all of a mythological nature (TrGF 77T1). Aristotle himself does not seem to pay much attention to this apparent one-off: at the end of the second chapter of the Poetics, when he moves from theoretical discussion to the subject of drama, which is of course his principal preoccupation, he completely ignores the middle term of his trichotomy and limits himself to speaking about tragedy (with subjects that are ‘higher’ than everyday life) and comedy (with subjects that are ‘lower’ than everyday life).24

Poetry in hexameters, on the other hand, even in the time of Aristotle, had never witnessed ‘accidents’ of this kind: there was epic poetry, which represented characters and situations of the utmost seriousness, the glorious deeds (κλέος) of heroes or the acts (ἔργα) of heroes and gods (cf. Iliad 9.189 and Odyssey 1.337–8, 8.73),25 and there was parody which used heroic language for non-serious subjects, such as the gastronomic poetry of Matron and the pseudo-Homeric Margites, with its buffoonish anti-hero. Poetic contents could be related to the real world in a variety of ways (τρόποι), and some Hellenistic thinking on the matter is probably available in a scholium to Iliad 14.342–51. According to this text, one possibility is that poetic subject-matter ‘imitates reality’ (ὁ μιμητικὸς τοῦ ἀληθοῦς) another

24 It is a great pity that we cannot be sure of the origin of the definition of mime as an ‘imitation of life which includes both lawful and unlawful things’ (schol. Aristophanes, Proleg. xxiv.3.16–7 Koster). If it really goes back to Theophrastus, as is often claimed, this would have important consequences for the scholastic background to Theocritus’ mimes.

25 One of the specific aims of epic poetry, according to scholars, was ἐκτασία ‘astonishment’, and the relations between gods and men were crucial to this effect; cf. scholia on Homer, Il. 13.695, 16.459, 20.61–2, and Feeney (1991) 42–56. On the hexameter as a particularly suitable verse-form for mythical-heroic, or at least sublime, material, cf. Aristotle, Poet. 1449a26–7, 1459b34–37; Rhet. 1404a34–5; Demetrius, Eloc. 5 and 42.
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is that subject-matter derives ‘from imagination based on reality’ (κατὰ φαντασίαν τῆς ἀληθείας), and a third one is achieved ‘by going beyond reality and by imagination’ (καθ’ ὑπὲρθεσιν ἀληθείας καὶ φαντασίαν); this last is exemplified in the scholium by means of characters like the Cyclopes or the Laestrygones and ‘facts about the gods’ (τὰ περὶ θεῶν). There are undoubtedly traces of all three categories in Homer (as the scholium to Ἰλίαδ 2.478–9 reminds us), but the extraordinary world of heroes and gods remains by far the most dominant in epic poetry, and this separates it radically both from the imitation of daily life which we find, for example, in New Comedy, and from fiction, in the sense of φαντασία based on the real world. Epic remained the vehicle for the transmission of the stable, structural truths to be found in the mythical deeds of gods and heroes, truths which transcended the precarious, non-permanent truths of everyday life. The everyday world of humble people, very largely excluded from epic, had found expression almost exclusively in the mime and in Sicilian comedy. Moreover, the mimes of Sophron, who, as we have seen, supplied Theocritus with models for two of his urban mimes, were composed in a kind of rhythmic prose which was so marginal in the system of literary genres that it did not even deserve a name to distinguish it from prose.

If Theocritus did not specialise in any particular genre, his poetry as a whole in some ways challenged the traditional system of genres, in which the hexamer had regularly been combined with ‘high’ subjects and heroic-divine protagonists (or, for parodic purposes, with their exact opposite). It has, for example, long been noted that Theocritus’ mythological ‘epyllia’ tend to humanise or ‘normalise’ the mythical heroes who are their protagonists. Moreover, the two poems dedicated to encomium (Idylls 16 and 17) both begin with forceful proems, in which the traditional gesture of mythological recusatio in the face of the limitations of human knowledge (cf. Ἰβυκσ, PMGF 515.10–31, Simonides, IEG 11.15–22) is reshaped with a new pride in the dignity of hexameter poetry about human subjects. 

Idyll 16.1–4 is particularly striking:

αιὲν τοῦτο Δίος κούρας μέλει, αἰὲν ἀδιδὼς,
ὑμνεῖν ἄθανάτους, ὑμνεῖν ἁγάθων κλέα ἀνδρῶν.
Μοίσαι μὲν θεία ἑντι, θεοὺς θειὶ δείδωνι:
ἀμεῖ δὲ βροτοὶ οἶδε, βροτοὺς βροτοὶ δείδωμεν.

26 For the kind of ‘truth’ to be sought in myth cf. Diodorus Siculus 4.8. Aristophanes, Βιτρυς 1174–80 is enlightening here.
It is always dear to the heart of the daughters of Zeus and always to poets to celebrate the immortals, to celebrate the deeds of valiant men – but the Muses are goddesses, and goddesses sing of gods; we who are here are mortals, and as such let us mortals sing of mortals!

This proud confidence in a ‘division of domains’ between the Muses and the poets who are inspired by them, on the one hand, and the class of poets in which Theocritus includes himself, on the other, is in perfect, and perhaps programmatic, harmony with the spirit of his bucolic and urban poems, which take the hexameter in quite new directions.

In creating a new kind of hexameter poetry as an alternative or complement to ‘high epos’, Theocritus succeeded in creating an organic, coherent structure, a ‘possible world’, for the characters and the settings of his poetry, which stand halfway between the ‘imitation of the real’ and ‘imagination based on the real world’ (cf. above), and are therefore inevitably more precarious and unstable than those of the mythical world, which were traditionally seen as offering paradigmatic models for the understanding of the real world.

This new and coherent world which his poetry creates, a world which, for all its differences, is no less coherent than the heroic-mythological world of epic, is Theocritean bucolic’s most noticeable difference both from the mime, which was based, in all probability, on the more or less direct mirroring (and of course distortion) of the real world, and from the simple ‘imagination based on the real world’ of comedy, with its paradoxical internal logic which changed from play to play.

2 Verisimilitude and coherence

The search for internal coherence is most obvious in the bucolic poems, perhaps because the urban mimes already had well-developed models in the long para-literary tradition of the Sicilian and other contemporary mimes (cf. above pp. 133–4). Theocritus’ bucolic poetry is based on the unrealistic presupposition that the ‘professional’ requirements of a shepherd’s life, connected with the activity of looking after the flock, are but a minor distraction from the principal pastimes of music and singing, particularly song contests. This same selective stylisation is enshrined in the use of the verb θουκολίασθομαι, which never means ‘I am a cowherd (or a shepherd)’, but always and only ‘I sing bucolic songs’, mainly in the


33 Cf. e.g. Griffin (1992) 198–9.


35 Properly speaking, the term θουκολίασθομαι designated the cowherd, but the broader meaning is already presupposed in Homer (Il. 20.221).
context of an agonistic or friendly exchange of songs (5.44 and 60, 7.36);36 so too, the adjective βουκολικός is found in Theocritus only as an attribute of the words δοιοῦ 'song' and Μοῖσις 'Muse'.37 This stylisation has its roots in a traditional vision of the shepherd and of rustic life, familiar in literature as early as the archaic age;18 besides the shepherds on Achilles’ shield, who already delight in playing the syrinx (cf. below), in the Philoctetes of Sophocles, the Chorus says of someone who has been heard making a noise, but whose identity they do not know: ‘He does not have the melody (μολυπή) of a syrinx, like the shepherd wandering through the fields’ (ll. 213–14). The modern suggestion that βουκολικασμός was a term going back before Theocritus, and one which specifically indicated a form of popular singing said to have been invented by a certain Diomus, a Sicilian shepherd already referred to by Epicharmus (see above, n. 2319), is therefore not unreasonable.

This same transference is seen in the description of the boy guarding the vine in the ekphrasis of the cup in Idyll 1 (ll. 45–54). The boy is regularly seen as an image of the bucolic poet:40 he is so taken up with ‘weaving’ reed-cages (or traps) for grasshoppers that he neglects both the vine and his own lunch, in an ideal opposition to the psychological and physical suffering of the protagonists of the other two scenes depicted on the cup (the lovesick men and the toiling fisherman):41

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\text{τυττόν δ} \text{ δοσσον ἀπωθεὶν ἀλιτρύτοιο γέροντος}
\text{περναῖσι σταφυλαίσι καλὸν βῆβριθέν ἀλώα,}
\text{τὰν ὀλυγὸς τῶν κώρος ἐφ' αἰμασθαίσι φυλάσσει}
\text{ἡμεσοι' ἀμφι δὲ νῖν δὺ' ἀλόπεκες, δὲ μὲν ὁν' ὀρχωσ}
\text{φοιτή συνομένα τὰν τρόξινον, δὲ ἐπὶ πῆρα}
\text{πάντα δόλον τευχοίσα τὸ ταιδίον οὐ πρὶν ἀνησεῖν}
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36 Even the song of Thyrsis in Idyll 1 is presented as a re-performance of a song already sung by Thyris himself in a competition with Chromis of Libya (vv. 23–4).
37 Cf. 1.20, 7.49, and the refrains of Thyris’ song.
40 As Hunter (1999) 82 notes, the boy is the image of the bucolic poet because, just like the latter, he ‘constructs something beautiful from “natural materials”’. It should not come as a surprise that the boy is a guardian of a vineyard, and not a shepherd: ‘the cup is not a simple representation of the bucolic world – there are, e.g., no flocks – because the ekphrastic relation here constructed between a described object and the poem in which it occurs is not that of “original” and “copy”’ (Hunter (1999) 77). This image is taken up by Longus in Daphnis and Chloe, where, on the contrary, its pastoral value is made explicit: ‘Chloe was gathering some branches of asphodel and was weaving some cages, and as she was wholly taken up by this work, she lost sight of her lambs’ (1.10.2).
41 The three scenes on the cup are presented in such a way as to form a priamel that brings out the superiority of the life of the pastoral poet, as a life concentrated on a τοίος, which is at the same time the greatest delight; cf. F. Cairns, ‘Theocritus’ First Idyll: the Literary Programme’ WS 18 (1984) 103–5.
A little further on from the old man worn by the sea, there is a vineyard laden with dark bunches of grapes, guarded by a boy sitting on a little wall; beside him there are two foxes, one of which is prowling between the rows of vines to steal the ripe grapes, while the other is plotting all kinds of attacks against the boy’s lunch-bag, thinking that he will not leave the boy without (?) stealing his lunch from him (?). But the boy is weaving a pretty trap (var. lect. cage) for crickets, using asphodels combined with reeds, and he has less care for the lunch-bag or the vines, than the joy he takes in his weaving. (Theocritus 1.45–54)

Like the bucolic poet who weaves a web of words and sounds, the boy is totally dedicated to his task, capable even of disregarding the most basic need for food. Theocritus may here have been borrowing from a famous passage in Plato’s Phaedrus, the dialogue which foreshadows so many bucolic motifs; the passage in question is the aetiology for the love for singing and the peculiar diet (i.e. dew) of cicadas, whose chirping characterises the natural music of the countryside, in the Phaedrus no less than in Theocritus and the poetic tradition. At a certain point of their conversation beside the Ilissos, Socrates and Phaedrus start discussing how people write well, or otherwise, both in poetry and in prose (cf. 258d), and Socrates finds it particularly suitable that they are dealing with this difficult subject under the auspices, and also the protection, of the cicadas. The cicadas would mock them if they let themselves fall asleep in the afternoon heat, like sheep or slaves seduced (κηλοκυμένους) by the insects’ song; on the contrary, if the cicadas saw that they were wide awake and ready (like them) for a discussion, they would ‘be pleased to give them what it is their prerogative to give to men’ (258e–259b), in other words the inspiration of the Muses (259b–c).

42 The text of this verse is quite uncertain, but the sense seems to be that the fox will not stop its attacks until it has eaten the boy’s food.
It is narrated that the cicadas were once men, in a period when the Muses had not yet been born; when the Muses were born, and singing was invented, some men of that time were so overwhelmed by the pleasure that derived from it, that they started to sing, disregarding food and drink, and thus without realising it, brought about their own death. The race of the cicadas was thus born from them, and they received this gift from the Muses: from their birth, they do not need to feed themselves, but immediately start singing, without eating or drinking until they die; afterwards, they go and tell the Muses which of the men down here venerate each of them.

In Theocritus too, ἀκριβεὺς 'crickets/grasshoppers', which are traditionally connected with music no less than were cicadas,\(^{47}\) and τέττιγες 'cicadas' are the habitual accompaniment of the shepherds' song, and also the standard term of comparison both for the song itself and, in general, for the sounds of the world of nature.\(^{48}\) If the boy guarding the vine is an image of the bucolic poet, then there might be a particular significance also in the imminent loss of his lunch, due to his lack of attention for the material necessities of life, compared with the pleasure (γοηθεί, v. 54) that he derives from weaving cages; we might compare, on one hand, the little attention for the external world shown by the shepherds depicted on Achilles' shield in Homer, Iliad 18.525–6 ('... they were followed by two shepherds who were taking their delight in the syrinx, without suspecting an attack') and, on the other, the shepherds accused by Hesiod's Muses (Theogony 26) of being γοηθεῖς ὅλον 'pure stomachs', that is to say, oblivious to anything apart from their simple need for food. Theocritus' boy is an example of the total dedication to singing which Plato had used as an aetiological explanation for the frugal diet of the cicada,\(^{49}\) a diet known to the poetic tradition at least since the pseudo-Hesiodic Shield (vv. 393–95) and one which appears to have been extended at times also to crickets (ἀκριβεὺς).\(^{50}\)

The Platonic link between the cicadas' love for singing and their special diet has another importance for Theocritus' image. The habit of catching crickets and keeping them in a cage in order to listen to their singing is well attested in Hellenistic epigram,\(^{51}\) but in light of the fact that it was not rare

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\(^{47}\) Cf. e.g. Anyte, AP 7.190.1 = HE 7.42. Leonidas, AP 7.198.3–4 = HE 2086–7. Meleager, AP 7.195.1–2 = HE 4058–9. [Aristotle], audib. 804a had already linked ἀκριβεὺς with cicadas and nightingales as animals that were endowed with a λύρα τοῦ 'resonant' voice.

\(^{48}\) Cf. 1.148, 2.28–9, 7.41, 7.118. In this last passage, Theocritus speaks of the cicada's song as a τῶνος 'toil', a word resonant in Theocritean and Hellenistic poetics, cf. above, p. 5 n. 15, Berger (1984) 18–20.


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for the origins of poetry to be traced to the imitation of bird song, and in particular in the light of Plato’s comment that the cicadas had received from the Muses the prerogative of mediating between men and the Muses themselves, it is tempting to imagine that this complete absorption in catching crickets is a sort of metaphor for the birth of bucolic poetry itself. The myth of the Phaedrus and the Iliad’s shepherds, who pay no attention to their surroundings but concentrate on their musical activity, lead us into this image and help us to interpret it.

Equally idealised is the Theocritean countryside. It is never a really wild countryside, a place of dangers and hardships, one quite inhospitable to humans; on the contrary, the Theocritean countryside is always peacefully under human control. Furthermore, there is, for the most part, sympathetic harmony between the countryside and the shepherds. The beauty of the countryside reflects and guarantees the sweetness of the music of the syrinx and of the context in which the shepherds listen. The opening of the first Idyll has a particular importance, 

O goatherd, sweet is the murmuring created by that pine-tree over there, near the springs, and sweetly do you play the pipe...

Note also the rival places for singing suggested by Lacon and Comatas in Idyll 5, vv. 31–4 and 45–9 (respectively):

You will sing more sweetly here, sitting under the oleaster and these trees: here the water gushes cool, here the grass grows, and there is this place to lie down, and here

52 Cf. e.g. Alcman, PMGF 39, Democritus, VS 68 B154; Gentili (1988) chapter 4.
53 For the history of this cultural paradigm cf. Gutzwiller (1991) 23–79.
55 Traditionally ἡ δόξα cf. e.g. Euripides, El. 703.
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The crickets are chirruping [. . .] I will not come there. Here there are oak-trees, here there is galingale, here the bees buzz sweetly round the hives, here there are two springs of fresh water, the birds are twittering on the tree, and the shade is totally different from what you have got around you; the pine-tree sheds its cones from on high, as well . . .

Theocritus will certainly have found more than one parallel in previous literary tradition for the sympathetic sweetness of the countryside as a premise for song, and he undoubtedly found at least one in another passage from Plato’s *Phaedrus* (230b–c):

A lovely place for us to stop! This plane-tree is very leafy and tall; the height and the shade of the agnus are ideal, and fully blossomed as it is, it fills the place with fragrant scents. And then under the plane-tree flows a beautiful spring, with very cool water, as you can feel with your foot. From the images and the statues, it looks like a place sacred to certain Nymphs and to Achelous. And, if you like, feel how pleasant and gentle the breeze is in this place. A summer murmur answers the chorus of the cicadas. But the sweetest thing of all is this grass, which slopes gently down, and is made for one to lie down on, resting the head very comfortably.

In Theocritus, however, descriptions of the pleasures of the countryside normally remain within the bounds of the plausible. In only one case do we find an extensive description of a *locus amoenus* which culminates in a radically idealised, and therefore unrealistic, representation of the sympathetic participation of the world of nature; the passage comes at the end of *Idyll 7*:

Many poplars and elm-trees were swaying over our heads, and nearby, there was the babble of the sacred stream, which flows down from the grotto of the Nymphs. On the shady branches, the smoky-coloured cicadas toiled at their chirping: the tree-frog could be heard in the distance among the close-packed briar thorns; larks and finches were singing, the turtle-dove was moaning, and the bees were buzzing around the springs. Everything smelled of a rich harvest and ripe fruits: pears at
our feet, apples rolled plenteously alongside us, and boughs laden with sloes hung down to the ground. (Theocritus 7.135–46)

In this single case, a primitivist idealisation suggestive of the Golden Age, in which the fruit automatically dropped off the trees for the men, is achieved in the ritualised atmosphere of a rural harvest festival. The idealising imagination grows from rural reality – there is indeed a superabundance of fruit in the season of the harvest – and from the logic of religious thought. Phrasidamus and Antigenes were descendants of the noble family of Merops, the legendary king of Cos, who were said to have given hospitality to Demeter, while she was wandering in search of her lost daughter; the story is reported by one scholiast on vv. 5–9, and had probably already featured before Theocritus in Philetas’ Demeter.57 The exceptional nature of this setting is emphasised by the narrating Simichidas, who in all probability wants to present the setting created by Phrasidamus for the Thalysiae as equal to the one where Phrasidamus’ forefather, Chalcon, had performed the natural miracle of opening up the Bourina spring with a kick (ll. 4–7), in a sort of parallel to Hesiod’s Hippocrene.58 ‘Theocritus’ intention, then, would be to contrast a modern ‘miracle’ of the bucolic world, of which Simichidas has just been appointed the singer, with a true miracle of the mythological past; the countryside, which Phrasidamus has organised into an idealised locus amoenus, then enters into competition with the mythical deeds of his forefathers.59 Moreover, the enthusiastic interpretation that the ‘town poet’ Simichidas gives of the closing locus amoenus is a demonstration of the positive influences exerted on Simichidas, both by his meeting with Lycidas and, more generally, by the landscape and the presence of the Nymphs;60 the place celebrated by Simichidas appears to be consecrated to the Nymphs, and Simichidas had acknowledged their inspiration (vv. 91–93), in offering himself as a new Hesiod, but one taught by Nymphs, not Muses (see below, p. 154).

In the Phaedrus, too, the spot on the banks of the Ilissos, where the dialogue between Socrates and Phaedrus took place, was sacred to the

58 Cf. Krevans (1983) 209–12. The Bourina spring may be identical with the spring of the Nymphs at the end of the poem, cf. Puelma (1960) 162 n. 58, Sbardella (2000) Appendix I. Nevertheless, there is no clear indication of this, and the different symbolic values connected with the two springs (mythological characters versus living figures; Hesiodic influences versus bucolic poetry; Muses versus Nymphs) suggest rather that they embody an opposition between two different atmospheres.
59 Cf. Berger (1984) 28–9 and Hunter (1999) 192, for whom ‘the technique is similar to that whereby Pindar suggests that the achievements of his victor-patrons recall and replay the achievements of their ancestors [. . .] the legendary past is not merely replayed in the near past of Simichidas’ memory, but that near past is already itself mythic’.
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Nymphs (230b), as was the spring overlooking that locus amoenus; Socrates himself stated several times that he was inspired by the Nymphs (cf. below, pp. 151–2). Moreover, Phaedrus put down the naivety of Socrates’ description of the locus amoenus to the sense of initial ‘discovery’ of the countryside by the town-dwelling philosopher (230c–d):

‘O most excellent Socrates, you seem to me to be a truly odd man. As you say, you are like a stranger led by a guide, and not like a native of this place. It seems to me that you never go beyond the limits of the town, or even outside the walls.’

The Phaedrus allows us to understand that Simichidas’ unrealistic idealisation of the locus amoenus is motivated by the enthousiasmos conferred by the Nymphs of the spring on the first performance of this new bucolic poet, or, in more prosaic terms, by the enthusiasm of the ‘town poet’ on first discovering the countryside as a theme of poetry.

Selective, rather than complete, idealisation, is then Theocritus’ preferred mode, even in the locus amoenus of Idyll 7. Not uncommonly, however, this is combined with more realistic elements drawn from the bucolic world of the shepherds, often indeed to make the artifice of selection and partiality, the ‘fictional’ character of his bucolic world, less evident. Thus, for example, there are exchanges between pairs of shepherds, in which the one who is about to sing or play is careful to ask the other one to look after his flock in the meantime, or sometimes the companion who declares his readiness to do so in advance, or again, before singing, both shepherds take care to leave their animals in a safe place, so as to have more freedom for their song. So too, when the song is over, the shepherds may remember their flocks and their individual duties, and sometimes they start to speak again in crude, concrete language. It is this selective mixture of idealisation and reality that distinguishes Theocritean ‘realism’ from the idealised and/or imprecise description of the countryside and pastoral life that we find in the poems of his Greek imitators and in Virgil’s Eclogues: for them, the world of shepherds is merely an apparatus of objects, images and forms of expression, codified, for the Greek poets, in a now recognisable literary genre, and, for Virgil, as a sentimental alternative to town life.

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61 Cf. 1.12–14, 3.1–5. On the contrary, the Cyclops, a parody of the shepherd, entirely forgot his flock while he serenaded Galatea (11.12–13).

62 Cf. e.g. 1.191–2, recalling the crude naturalness of animal sex, immediately after the conclusion of the drama of Daphnis, 4.44–49, and 5.141–50, where the allusion to the Homeric Melanthius reminds us that these shepherds are Theocritus’ shepherds, who know their Homer; for such mixed effects in Theocritus, cf. W. G. Arnott, ‘Lycidas and Double Perspectives’ Eclis 26 (1984) 333–46.

63 On imprecision and scarce attention to realism in the spurious works of the corpus, cf. Rossi (1971b), and in general W. Elliger, Die Darstellung der Landschaft in der griechischen Dichtung (Berlin–New York 1975) 319–64.
2 Verisimilitude and coherence

Just as there is at least one case in which Theocritus describes an idealised locus amoenus – for the ritualised, mythologised atmosphere of the Thalysiae – so there are some exceptional cases in which he suspends the selective ‘realism’ with which he habitually presents his characters, and allows the world of nature and the world of human activity and suffering to flow into each other. The exceptions are Daphnis (7.72–7 and 1.64–145) and the ‘divine’ Comatas of 7.78–85, both of whom are figures belonging to the mythical past of bucolic poetry, and are in a certain sense its hero-founders. They therefore have a special claim to the highly mythologised atmosphere which Theocritus creates for them. Nature is humanised by the ‘pathetic fallacy’ which attributes to it a sentimental participation and interaction with human affairs: the bees feed Comatas, who is closed inside a chest; all nature mourns for Daphnis, both tame animals and wild ones, including a highly improbable Sicilian lion, in a scene which breaks down the otherwise habitual separation between wild nature and domesticated herding (cf. 1.71–5 and 115–17). Moreover, as in heroic epic, in the story of Daphnis a direct participation in human affairs is imagined for the gods, both Olympian (Hermes, Aphrodite) and other (Pan, Priapus). The gods seem to have been part of the legend of Daphnis before Theocritus (according to Diodorus Siculus 4.84.3–4, Daphnis was a member of the musical entourage of Artemis), but otherwise they have no interaction with his herdsmen, who are imagined as Theocritus’ living contemporaries.

The coherence of Theocritus’ bucolic world can also be seen in the different characterisation of the ‘contemporary’ Daphnis of Idyll 6 and the mythical Daphnis of Idylls 1 and 7. The relationship between the Daphnis of Idyll 6 and the mythical figure has been much debated, but whether or not he is a different character, called ‘Daphnis’ as a tribute to his poetic ability, the Daphnis of Idyll 6 is undoubtedly presented in a ‘realistic’ environment, in which the everyday needs of pastoral life make themselves felt. He engages in a singing competition (ἐπισδέειν, v. 5) with a shepherd friend of his, in terms that are perhaps more amicable, but otherwise not very different from those of the ‘realistic’ shepherds of Idyll 5.  

64 It is not clear whether these verses all refer to the goatherd Comatas, or first to a goatherd who suffered the same fate as Comatas and then to Comatas himself; cf. Hunter (1999) 175–6.
65 Diodorus Siculus 4.84.1 describes the region of Sicily where Daphnis lived (the Heraean mountains) as a lush locus amoenus, in terms which may themselves be influenced by the myth of Daphnis.
66 Cf. Legrand (1898) 151.
67 Verses 1–2 ‘they gathered the herd together in a single place’ allude to the harmony of the two shepherds (cf. Bernsdorff (1994) 43), but also has an obvious effect of realism for two shepherds about to engage in a song contest; cf. 1.11, where Thyris asks the goatherd to play his syrinx, assuring him that he will pasture his goats in the meantime.
poems, there is 'sally and riposte', though these are multiple in *Idyll 5*, whereas there is only a single exchange of lengthier songs in *Idyll 6*; in this latter poem, Daphnis imagines that he is the friend and advisor of the Cyclops, and Damoitas, Daphnis's companion, assumes the rôle of the Cyclops to answer Daphnis. Much of the irony of *Idyll 6* derives from the fact that this living Daphnis warns Polyphemus not to be too difficult with Galatea by ignoring her, because in that way he would be destined to be unhappy in love (Δούσθηκας; in other words, Daphnis warns him about the very unhappiness of which Priapus accused the mythical Daphnis in 1.82–88. However, the Cyclops, as interpreted by Damoitas, seems to adopt the stubbornness of the mythical Daphnis, although he interprets this in his own way: he pretends to ignore her, so he claims, as part of a strategy to win Galatea as his wife (cf. vv. 32–3).

*Idyll 6* is thus an interpretation in a facetious key of the tragic story of the Daphnis of *Idyll 1*, and at the same time an interpretation in a more or less serious key of the comic clumsiness of the Cyclops of *Idyll 11*: it is as if the representation of the stories by two living, contemporary shepherds, and the assimilation of those stories to their own rustic scheme of logic, could moderate the tragic or parodic dimensions implicit in the two 'heroes' of the bucolic world *par excellence*, Daphnis and Polyphemus. How far Theocritus (and his Damoitas) took the Cyclops' marriage strategy seriously, or whether the whole of the Cyclops' song in *Idyll 6* is a cruel manifestation of the self-deception suggested at the end of *Idyll 11* (ll. 76–9), depends, in part, on the question of whether Theocritus knew and expected his audience to know the version of the myth which included the birth of a son to the Cyclops and Galatea, and thus the consummation of the Cyclops' dream of love. Be that as it may, the bucolic mask of the lovesick Cyclops in *Idyll 6* has none of the parodic features which characterise the versification of *Idyll 11*: the hexameters of the Cyclops's love song in *Idyll 11* are as clumsy as the song itself, but the hexameters of *Idyll 6* are fully in keeping with the

69 As the introductory scholium b to *Idyll 1* already calls him, to distinguish him from the mythical character.

70 In 1.83 and 6.7 this term, whose precise meaning is controversial, probably implies an inability to love the persons who could actually reciprocate the love, cf. R. M. Ogilvie, *JHS* 82 (1962) 106–10 and F. W. Williams, *JHS* 89 (1969) 122–3. For a different view, i.e. 'deeply affected by the bitterness of love', cf. Schmidt (1987) 57–66.


72 The version was known already to Timaeus (*FGrHist* 566F69). For later references cf. Propertius 3.2.9–10 and Nonnus 39.257–64, 40.553–57.
principles of harmony to which Theocritus’ other bucolic poems, like the hexameters of Callimachus, aspire.\(^73\) Analogously, the Daphnis of *Idyll 6*, the pragmatic advisor in questions of love, whose advice is not to play hard to get but rather to seize the opportunity and who lives in perfect (perhaps even erotic\(^74\)) harmony with his shepherd friend Damoitas in a natural ‘realistic’ setting, is to be seen as an exemplary contrast to the Daphnis of *Idyll 1*, who was the victim of his tragically δυσερής character and who was in contact with the gods in an unreal, mythologised setting.

Theocritus’ bucolic world not only has its specific natural setting and its specific heroes, but it also has its specific gods. One of the important ways in which Theocritus gives coherence and credibility to the setting and to the bucolic characters is through the specialisation of their pantheon. For the Greeks, there was of course a real division in the areas of responsibility and competence among the various gods, and this was true of rustic deities, no less than any others. In his *Cynegeticus* (chap. 35), Arrian explicitly notes that different activities require the attention of different gods:

those who sail the seas commence from the gods whose concern is human safety, and when they are rescued, they offer thanksgiving sacrifices to the sea gods, Poseidon, Amphitrite and the Nereids; those who till the land offer sacrifices to Demeter and her daughter and to Dionysus; those who practise crafts, to Athena and Hephaestus . . . so also keen hunters must be sure not to neglect Artemis the Hunter, and Apollo, and Pan, and the Nymphs, and Hermes, god of journeys, and Hermes the Guide, and all the other divinities of the mountains.

Long before Arrian, and before Theocritus, this specialisation of the rustic pantheon is clearly seen not only in the two writers of epigrams who pay the greatest attention to the rustic world of humble people, Leonidas and Anyte,\(^75\) but also in Plato’s *Phaedrus* and Menander’s *Dyskolos*, in which the rural setting plays a prominent role. In the *Phaedrus*, Socrates explains his choice to hold the discussion in the first real *locus amoenus* of Greek literature (230b–c, cf. above) by pointing out that the place is sacred to the Nymphs and to Achelous (230b8–9) and that Pan and the Nymphs, the daughters of Achelous, are the divinities who will inspire the discussion\(^76\).

\(^73\) Cf. Fantuzzi (1995b), and above, pp. 34–7.


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(cf. 238d, 241e, 263d). At the end of the dialogue, Socrates addresses his salutation and final prayer to Pan and the other ‘gods of the place’ (279b). A few decades later, in the Dyskolos, a comedy by Menander which is, most unusually, not set in town but in the countryside, the god who presents the prologue is Pan and the chorus might be composed of ‘followers of Pan’. At the end of the dialogue, Socrates addresses his salutation and final prayer to Pan and the other ‘gods of the place’ (279b). At the centre of the stage, moreover, there is the door of the temple of Pan and the Nymphs; the action will come to a head during a sacrifice at this temple, and Pan plays a very important rôle throughout the whole drama. It is Pan who causes Sostratus to fall in love with the daughter of Cnemon while she is paying honour to the Nymphs (vv. 39–52), and he also causes the mother of Sostratus to have a dream, in which he reveals indirectly to her what he had already told the spectators in the prologue (vv. 407–18).

Theocritus’ bucolic mimes carry the specialised narrowing of the rustic pantheon even further, but in other poems too he pays particular attention to the specialisation of the divinities that inspire poetry. The Muses had been the most common divine inspirers of poetry in all literary genres, but for the archaic hexameter epos of Homer and Hesiod they have a particular importance; as divinities, they can function as particularly trustworthy ‘witnesses’ of stories about the deeds of gods or heroes in a remote past (cf. e.g. Iliad 2.484–86 and Odyssey 8.487–91) and as guarantors of the ethical and theological truths presented by Hesiod. In his two encomiastic poems, Theocritus too appears to make a distinction between the Muses and other divinities who inspire song, based on the status of the protagonist of the song. In the case of the semi-divine laudandus of Idyll 17, Ptolemy II Philadelphus – a βροτός ‘mortal’ (v. 4), who is also a contemporary άνήρ άγαθός, namely a contemporary ‘hero’ – Theocritus contrasts his personal choice of this theme with the habitual thematic choice of the Muses (the gods) and the habitual choice of the ancient bards inspired by the Muses (the heroes); he thus adopts as a term of comparison – both for similarity and difference – archaic hymnody and epic. In the course of the poem he explicitly presents encomiastic poetry for Ptolemy as a new possibility for inspiration by the Muses: ‘the spokesmen (υποφηται) of the Muses celebrate Ptolemy for his benefactions’ (vv. 115–16). In Idyll 16, however, which is a promise of an encomium for a laudandus whose

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77 If we accept the emendation of πανοστός, which is metrically difficult, to πανοστός, v. 230.
78 The combined worship of Pan and the Nymphs was widespread, cf. above n. 75, Ch. M. Edwards, Greek Votive Reliefs to Pan and the Nymphs (Diss. New York 1985) 20–7.
79 Cf. e.g. Finkelberg (1998) 71–3.
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virtues fall entirely within the field of human characteristics and capacities (Hieron II of Syracuse), Theocritus at times evokes the Muses (vv. 1–3, (for the polemical tone here, see above, p. 140–1), 29, 58, 69, 107), and at times the Graces (vv. 6–12, 108–9); in this way, he continues a tradition typical of epinician poetry, which saw the Muses and the Graces united as guarantors of the beauty which enhances the deeds of the laudandus and attracts the favour of the public for the song, thus ensuring a lasting continuity for the latter and glory for the laudandus himself. 81

In Idylls 1 and 3–7 by Theocritus, which we may call the ‘serious’ bucolic idylls (in opposition to the agricultural Idyll 10 and the bucolic-parodic Idyll 11), 82 we find that the Muses play an utterly marginal rôle. Rather, it is the Nymphs who, as the inspirers of pastoral poetry, very often occupy the place which in poetic tradition had always been occupied exclusively by the Muses; it is as if the Muses can no longer be up-to-date and effective ‘witnesses’ for the new bucolic world, which is, if anything, now the realm of the Nymphs. Thus, for example, the Muses are almost completely absent from the perspective of the two herdsmen of Idyll 5, the most ‘realistic’ of Theocritus’ song competitions; on the contrary, they believe that they owe their inspiration to the Nymphs, to whom they gratefully offer sacrifice at the end of their songs (cf. vv. 140, 149). The opposition between the Muses and the Nymphs is also very clear in Idyll 7. At the beginning of the poem, the protagonist, Simichidas, presents himself as a town-dweller (v. 2) and as an ἔσπαρτος whom public opinion considers to be a ‘resonant mouth of the Muses’ (v. 37); unlike Simichidas, Theocritus’ shepherds never call themselves ἔσπαρτοι, though Komatas in Idyll 5 applies the term to the mythical Daphnis (5,80–1, cf. below, p. 154–6), nor do they ever describe their singing as ἐκχειρία, a verb perhaps a little too closely associated with heroic epic, the poetry of the Muses par excellence. In his first speech, Lycidas speaks of Simichidas as a person tied to the urban world and its habits (vv. 24–5: ‘are you hurrying off to a dinner without being invited, or are you racing to some townsman’s winery?’), though Simichidas explains that he considers himself currently to be ‘on loan’ to the pastoral world, on the occasion of the journey which he is making to take part in the rural celebration of the Thalysiae for Demeter (vv. 31–36); this authorises him to think that he can vie with Lycidas in singing (v. 30) and, specifically, in pastoral song (vv. 35–6). Later, however, in the spirit of

81 For the combination of the Muses and Graces in a poetic context cf. e.g. Pindar, Nem. 9,53–5; Bacchylides 5,3–14, 9,1–5; Euripides, HF 673–86; B. MacLachlan, The Age of Grace (Princeton 1993) 87–123.

82 Further evidence for considering Idylls 1 and 3–7 as a ‘group’ is metrical, cf. Fantuzzi (1995a).
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the rustic song that Lycidas had introduced in vv. 50–1 (‘see, my friend, if you like this little song that I composed recently on the mountainside’), it is to the Nymphs that Simichidas makes reference as his teachers (vv. 91–3) in an obvious rewriting of Hesiod’s inspiration (Theogony 22–3) by the Muses:

... Λυκίδα φίλε, πολλὰ μὲν άλλα
Νύμφαι κήμε δίδαξαν ἀν’ ἄμεα βουκολέουντα

My dear Lycidas, the Nymphs have also taught me many other good songs, while I was herding on the mountains...

The turn to Hesiod perhaps suggests the tradition in which Simichidas places not only his own poetry, but bucolic poetry as a whole. Finally, when at the culmination of the description of the locus amoenus, which sets the seal on the idealisation of the pastoral world, he seeks inspiration in order to magnify by means of mythological paradigms the excellence of Phrasidamus’s wine, Simichidas does not invoke the Muses, even on a mythological subject; rather, he invokes the Nymphs – ‘Nymphs of Castalia, you who inhabit the cliffs of Parnassus’ (v. 148) – where it is not by chance that he chooses to name, as the home of the Nymphs, a mountain and a spring which were already (or were in the process of becoming) closely connected with the Muses. Moreover, he also chooses to imitate the Iliadic epithet with which Homer had regularly invoked the Muses, Οὐλώμπια δώμος ἔχουσαι ‘whose habitation is on Mount Olympus’, whenever he had to ask for their help at points of particular difficulty.

The Muses resume the full exercise of their function as ‘witnesses’ of a remote past, unattainable for men of the present, and as goddesses with the task of singing of the gods (cf. Idyll 16.3), when the scene does not present shepherd-singers imagined as living, contemporary figures, but rather when the singer or the theme of the song is one of the semi-mythical hero-founders of bucolic poetry, or at least one of its leading exponents, who is therefore in a certain sense mythologised (like Lycidas). For this reason, both the ‘divine’ Comatas, whose feats as a bucolic hero are sung by Lycidas in Idyll 7 (cf. v. 82: ‘the Muse poured sweet nectar on to his lips’), and Daphnis, who appears to have been celebrated as a hero-founder of bucolic poetry at least

84 Cf. Il. 2.484, 11.218, 14.508, 16.112. The first certain reference to a connection between the Muses and Parnassus is in a fragment of one of the epigraphic Hymns from Delphi (p. 71 Crusius); cf. further J. Schmidt, RE 18.1654–8.
as early as Stesichorus and thus already had a place in literary tradition and mythology before Theocritus, are connected with the Muses. This is consistent with the fact that, unlike Theocritus' 'ordinary' herdsmen, these two 'heroes' of bucolic poetry are placed in a fable-like setting outside time, characterised by the 'pathetic fallacy' (cf. above, p. 149) and by the participation of the gods in human affairs. The Daphnis of Idyll 6, however, remains untouched by the inspiration of the Muses, and his world has not the slightest trace of the mythologised or the unreal; so too, the Comatas of Idyll 5 is not the mythical hero of bucolic poetry, but rather is presented in a low, 'hyper-realistic' manner, and it is only momentary hyperbole that leads him to claim that 'the Muses love me much more than Daphnis, the singer' (vv. 80–1), for he too has the Nymphs and Pan as leading figures in his pantheon (vv. 17, 58, 70, 149). By way of contrast, the Muses are at the heart of Thyrsis' song about the mythical Daphnis in Idyll 1: the goatherd states in his opening encomium of Thyrsis that Thyrsis' song will be second only to that of the Muses (v. 9), though on the contrary Thyris himself compares the goatherd to Pan, in view of his ability at playing the syrinx (v. 3); so too, the refrains that punctuate Thyrsis' song are addressed to the Muses, as are the envoi and promise of libations which close the song (vv. 144–5). As for Lycidas, he is a semi-divine singer, who has the authority to invest Simichidas as a pastoral poet, or perhaps even a god in disguise: Pan, a satyr, and Apollo Lykios have all been suggested. Simichidas introduces his song by calling Lycidas 'dear to the Muses' (v. 95), and subsequently he says that the stick given to him by Lycidas was a 'gift of friendship from the Muses' (v. 129), just as the encounter with Lycidas was, as he tells us, ‘with the Muses’ (v. 12); these details are recognitions of the higher nature of Lycidas himself and reinforce the idea that we are witnessing a poetic investiture of a Hesiodic kind. This counterpoint between the Nymphs and the Muses finds expression also in the description of Daphnis in Idyll 1.141 as ‘the man dear to the Muses, and not hateful to the Nymphs’: the semi-divine Lycidas is ‘dear to the Muses’ (7.95),

85 Cf. above n. 23.
86 Myrinus, AP 7.703 = GPh 257ff. has Thyris asleep and besieged by Eros; the epigram attributes to the Nymphs, not to the Muses, the task of taking care of Thyris’ safety, presumably as a result of the importance of the Nymphs in Theocritus’ bucolic poems, cf. Bernsdorf (2002) pp. 152–3.
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but Daphnis is a mythical hero-poet of the past (and, as such, a follower of the Muses), but also one in whose story the Nymphs played a major rôle.\footnote{According to the best-known version of the legend, both Daphnis' mother and lover were Nymphs; Diodorus Siculus 4.8.4 has him also brought up by the Nymphs.}

The internal coherence of the Theocritean system is not only revealed in his choice of the divinities that haunt the landscape and inspire pastoral poems, but there is also a more general specialisation of the bucolic pantheon. Apart from the omnipresent Nymphs, the pastoral idylls feature almost exclusively Pan, Apollo Paean, and Priapus, and this 'specialisation' is in fact dramatised by Theocritus in \textit{Idyll 1}. Whatever might have been Daphnis' behaviour towards Aphrodite, about which Theocritus is notoriously elusive, the opposition between the two is an essential element in the heroic stature given to Daphnis in this poem that celebrates him; nevertheless, Thyrsis creates a sharp contrast between the, at least initially, hostile Aphrodite and the series of rustic gods – Pan, Hermes, Priapus – who come to offer advice and mourn for Daphnis. Hermes even echoes the famous words of Aphrodite (!) to Sappho in a scene (fr. 1 Voigt) of epiphany and consolation: Aphrodite had appeared to Sappho with her usual divine smile, \textit{μειδιασι’ ἀδαναστὼ προσώπῳ ‘with a smile on her immortal face’} (l. 14), whereas she comes to Daphnis \textit{ἀδεία... γελόσια, | λάθη μὲν γελόσια, βαρύν δ’ ἀνά θυμόν ἔχοσια ‘smiling sweetly, rejoicing internally, but displaying anger’} (ll. 95–6).\footnote{For this passage, whose meaning is much disputed (cf. G. Tarditi, ‘Il sorriso di Afrodite’ in \textit{Filologia e forme letterarie: studi offerti a F. Della Corte} (Urbino 1987) 1.347–53), I follow the interpretation offered by G. Zuntz, ‘Theocritus I, 91f.’, \textit{CQ} 10 (1960) 37–8.} Sappho's Aphrodite (vv. 18–20) had asked \textit{τίνα δεῦτε πείθω | δις σ’ άγνης ἐς σάν φιλότατα; τίς σ’ ὅ | Ψάτφ’ ἀδικήσει, ‘who shall I persuade to lead you back to her love? Who is wronging you, O Sappho?’ In Theocritus, on the contrary, it is Hermes who proves to be a \textit{σύμωσις} of Daphnis (cf. Sappho vv. 27–8), and asks him, in the reverse order, \textit{Δάφνι, | τίς τι καταστρύχει; τίνος, ὠγαθε, τόσσον έρασι; ‘Who is tormenting you, Daphnis? With whom are you so in love?’} (vv. 77–8). Thus, Theocritus inverts the rôle of Aphrodite, and Hermes plays for Daphnis the rôle that the benevolent Aphrodite had played for Sappho.

Theocritus' shepherds are equally coherent in swearing only by Pan, the Nymphs, or Apollo Paean; there is hardly a place for the traditional guarantors of oaths in Greek literature, such as Zeus and Heracles.

\footnote{Cf. above, n. 91.}
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The few exceptions are placed in the mouth of rather dubious characters. In *Idyll* 4.50, the character who utters an oath by Zeus is Battus, who throughout that poem is repeatedly ridiculed for his pathetic excesses, and who is also characterised linguistically by exaggerated, para-tragic forms of expression.97 His interlocutor Corydon, the example of the good shepherd who possesses a clear sense of reality, swears by the Nymphs (v. 29) and Pan (v. 47). When Lacon swears by Zeus at 5.74, this must be read against Comatas’ immediately preceding oath by the Nymphs (v. 70) and immediately following exclamation: ‘O Paean!’ (v. 79); Comatas will win the song contest, and it is easy to understand whose form of oath is the more ‘correct’. So, too, the parodic Cyclops swears by Zeus (11.29), but by Pan and Paean in 6.21 and 6.27, in a scene in which he is being represented by the shepherd Damoitas and thus now conforms to bucolic norms (cf. above, pp. 150–1).

A certain specialisation, aimed in this case at an effect of realism, can be observed also in the way in which religious celebrations are presented. The great traditional celebrations for Demeter and Adonis which dominate respectively the final parts of the bucolic *Idyll* 7 and the urban *Idyll* 15 become central to and emblematic of the poetic contexts in which they are presented. Thus, the Thalysiae of *Idyll* 7 become the opportunity for a mise en abîme of the broader, idealised *locus amoenus* of Theocritus’ bucolic poetry, and the Adonia raises to its highest peak of magnificence the urban setting which had been presented at the beginning of the poem in the parodic tones of mime. Prayer is another area in which traditional practice involving the Olympian gods gives way to expressions invoking good luck and forms of popular superstition – like the apotropaic spitting of 6.39 and 7.126–798 or the ‘sieve-divining’ of the κοσκινώματισσις Agroio in 3.31–2.99 It is magic, not – with few exceptions, such as the Thalysiae – the traditional Olympian religion, which now dominates, whether it be the song of Simaitha in the urban *Idyll* 2, or that of Simichidas in the bucolic *Idyll* 7. Magical practice had, of course, featured occasionally in high literature before – the έφεσας δέσμιος ‘binding song’ of Aeschylus’ Erinyes (*Eumenides* 307–96)100 is an obvious example – but it is in Sicilian mime and Menander that we should look for Theocritus’ immediate forebears. Sophron is claimed by the ancient scholars as the model both for the magical rite of *Idyll* 2 and, specifically,

Idyll 2 is a magical ἁγγαγή, a spell to 'draw' the beloved one into one's arms. 102 So, too, though of a rather different kind, is the request to help Aratus which Simichidas addresses to Pan in *Idyll* 7:

> τὸν μοι, Πάν, Ομόλας ἑρατόν πέδου ὀστεί λελόγγας, διάλητον τίμιον φίλος ἐς χεῖρας ἔρισσαις
eiτ' ἐστάρας Φιλίνος ὁ μαλακός ἐπί τις ἄλλος,
κελ μὲν παύτ' ἔρδοις, ὦ Πάν χῖλε, μὴ τι τοιάδες
Ἀρκαδίκοι σκύλλαισιν ὑπὸ πλευράς τε κοι ὡμος
tαυνίκα μαστίζοιν, ὡτε κρέας τυτόθα πορείη;
ei δ' ἄλλος νείσσαις κατά μὲν χρόα πάντ' ὄνυχεσαι
dιακνύμενος κυνάσσαι καὶ ἐν νυκτίσι καθεῦδοις,

O Pan, you who have received by lot the lovely plain of Homole, press him [the beloved], without the need for any invitation, into the loving arms of that man [his friend Aratus] – whether it is really the delicate Philinus or another. If you do this, dear Pan, may the boys of Arcadia never scourge you with squills on your sides and your shoulders, when there is insufficient meat. But if you do not give your consent, may you scratch the bites all over your body with your nails, and sleep among stinging nettles and stay out on the mountains of the Edonians in mid-winter . . . (Theocritus 7.103–11)

The combination of prayer and threats is typical of the prayers found in magical texts; 103 particularly close to Simichidas’ poem is the following magical text, in which the practitioner threatens to throw the demons that he invokes into the flames, if they do not bring his beloved into his arms: 'If you bring Euphemia to me [. . .] I will give you Osiris Nophriōt

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and he will revive your spirits. But if you do not do what I am asking you, Eōnebyōth will burn you. I swear it to you, demons that are here present’ (Suppl. mag. 1, 45.11–15 Daniel–Maltomini). It is obvious that Egyptian traditions had an important influence on the practice and spread of magical prayers, but there was, in all probability, already an example of a threatening prayer in an erotic situation in Greek literary tradition. In a fragment of Anacreon (PMG 445), the poet apostrophises the naughty Erotes (‘insolent and irresponsible, you who do not know who you will strike with your arrows’), and Himerius (Or. 48.4) introduces his quotation of this fragment as follows:

Now I would have needed the songs from Teos [Anacreon’s birthplace], now I would have needed the lyre of Anacreon, which he knew how to use even against the Erotes themselves, when he was spurned by pretty boys . . . Perhaps I, too, would have pronounced the threat (ἠτείβησα τὴν ἀπείλην) that Anacreon uttered against the Erotes: once when he had fallen in love with a beautiful youth and saw that the youth was not interested in him, he tuned his lyre and threatened (ἤτείβης) the Erotes that if they did not strike the youth at once, he would never again sing a song in their praise (μηκέτι μέλος εὐφημον εἰς αὐτούς ἄνακρουσασθαι).

Himerius might, of course, have exaggerated a merely playful gesture by Anacreon, under the influence of the magical practice of the Hellenistic and late antique worlds. Nevertheless, in Poem 11 of the Anacreontea, which expands or varies Anacreon’s themes and language, the poet has bought a wax statue of Eros from a boy in the street and therefore imagines that he has the god under his control (‘Now light the fire of love for me immediately! If you do not obey, you will melt amid the flames’); it is therefore reasonable to suppose that the song from which Himerius quotes, or some other song by Anacreon, really was a magical prayer, or at least could be interpreted as such, and not only by Himerius.

One echo of Anacreon may be heard in Simichidas’ request to the Erotes to strike (βόλλαισι) the boy that Aratus loves (vv. 117–19): this invitation might recall the exhortation to the Erotes to τιτρώσκειν ‘wound’ the unwilling youth with love, which Himerius leads us to suppose was present in Anacreon. If so, the literary operation is of a particularly sophisticated kind. Theocritus writes for Simichidas a ‘realistic’ prayer-threat, but ‘bucolicises’ it by having him apostrophise one of the most important gods of the bucolic pantheon, Pan, and by describing him as a shepherd (cf. v. 113: ‘and in spring may you pasture your flocks among the Aethiopes’) who sleeps in

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the open air (v. 110). Pan is also the homosexual god par excellence, and he is therefore the ideal recipient for this homosexual prayer;\(^{105}\) the two aspects of the god, the bucolic and the sexual, are thus seen as mutually complementary, just as Callimachus (fr. 689) united the two specialisations of the god by calling Pan Maleietes τρύπανον σαίπολικόν ‘goatherd screwer’.\(^ {106}\) By referring to the Erotes immediately afterwards, Theocritus may cap the magical prayer with an allusion to one of the very few literary precedents for such a prayer; moreover, as this precedent comes from the world of sympotic lyric, it appropriately matches Lycidas’ song and his ‘bucolicisation’ of the symposium.\(^ {107}\)

Mythology, too, plays its part in Theocritus’ creation of a coherent bucolic world. Mythological exempla, the stories of gods and heroes, were the vehicle of positive and negative paradigms for human behaviour in archaic and classical literature of all levels, and Theocritus wrote against the background of the popularity in the fourth and third centuries of mythological ‘catalogue’ poetry. In such poems, episodes from the stories of gods or heroes were presented as exemplary portraits with an application to the real world and the situation of the poet; we know of such poems on love, both heterosexual (Lydê by Antimachus, Leontion by Hermesianax, and perhaps Apollo by Alexander Aetolus) and homosexual (Erotes or the Beautiful Ones by Phanocles), for which the principal (real or claimed) archaic models were Minnermus’ Nanno and the Hesiodic Catalogue of Women, and also ‘curse poems’, catalogues of exemplary sufferings and terrible fates, to be used as paradigms with which to curse one’s enemies (the Arai ‘Curses’ by Moiro, the ‘tattoo poem’ (cf. Huys (1991)), the Ibis by Callimachus, and the ‘Thracian’, the ‘Cup stealer’ and the ‘Chiliads’ by Euphorion).\(^ {108}\) For the characters of Theocritus, however, paradigms of comprehensibility and truth are to be found rather in everyday, rustic proverbs. In Idyll 5 alone, where the effect of pastoral realism is perhaps strongest, we find five proverbs which are identified as such by the scholia;\(^ {109}\) at least three also occur in the opening dialogue of Idyll 10 (‘The harvesters’), which is the other poem where realistic effects are most strongly felt.\(^ {110}\) In this second case, all the proverbs are in the mouth of Milon, the hard-working labourer whose ‘Hesiodic’ perspective leaves little space for erotic fantasy; the lovesick Bucaeus, poet of a very clumsy serenade

\(^{105}\) As the schol. on v. 103 already noted.

\(^{106}\) It is possible that the ritual mentioned by Theocritus was connected with hunting, as some ancient scholars thought, cf. schol. on vv. 106–8a.


\(^{109}\) Cf. scholia on vv. 23, 26–7, 31, 38, 65.

\(^{110}\) Cf. scholia on vv. 11, 13, 17; also vv. 54–5.
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(cf. Milon’s ironic comment, vv. 38–40), can no more utter rustic proverbs than he can concentrate upon his work: his proverbial truth, one which he himself should heed, is rather about the unpredictability and injustice of Eros: ‘Wealth is not the only blind god, blind also is reckless Eros’ (vv. 19–20).

The use of proverbs is mimetic of the illiterate simplicity typical of the logic and language of bucolic characters, and is thus a technique of rustic realism. Aristotle, perhaps the first thinker to give serious attention to proverbs, considered them as ‘residues of ancient philosophy which had been lost in the great catastrophes of humanity, saved thanks to their brevity and acuteness’ (fr. 463 Gigon), — a very noble origin, and one analogous to the one offered for the traditional belief of ancient thinkers in the divine character of nature (cf. Metaph. 12.1074b1–14). Aristotle designated farmers as the social group most inclined to use proverbs (they are γνωμοσύνοι: Rhet. 2.1395a6–7); so too, the use of proverbs was suitable for the old, but not for the young or those lacking in experience, for whom proverbial speech revealed a lack of culture.

It is thus significant that proverbs are wholly naturalised in the language of the characters of the bucolic or rustic idylls, without ever being signalled by the context, whereas they are often introduced by expressions which mark them as proverbs (‘as the saying goes’ etc.) in the urban mimes, Idylls 14 and 15.

Theocritus’ humble characters, whether bucolic or urban, employ mythological paradigms only sparingly. The only mythological passage of any extent — the exempla in the song of the goatherd of Idyll 3 (vv. 40–51) — is marked by ‘errors’, which betray both the limited familiarity of this character with the world of mythology, and a certain lack of faith on the part of the

113 Aristotle’s attention to proverbs was an attitude which aroused perplexities in some quarters (cf. Aristotle fr. 464 Gigon) — which may perhaps suggest its novelty.
114 ‘One must regard this as an inspired utterance, and reflect that, while probably each art and science has often been developed as far as possible and has again perished, these opinions, with others, have been preserved until the present like relics of the ancient treasure’ (Metaph. 12.1074a9–13, trans. Ross).
115 On proverbs as an element of popular (βουθοτίκα) knowledge, cf. also Demetrius, Elac. 232. There was a lively interest in paroemiography in the fourth and third centuries, in the wake of Aristotle’s collection Παρομοιώματα (frs. 463–4 Gigon), on the part of both the peripatetic school (Theophrastus, Dicaearchus, Clearchus) and Chrysippus (SVF III p. 202). The scholia show that the identification of proverbial expressions was one of the subjects that received most attention from the ancient commentators of Theocritus, cf. Wendel (1920) 142–7.
116 Cf. 14.43, 14.51, 15.77. In Idylls 11, 13, and 29 an opening proverbial maxim is presented as an opinion shared by the author, which motivates the following narration.
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author in the security of meaning of mythological paradigms (cf. below). In *Idyll* 7 Simichidas, a character with whom Theocritus at least partly identifies, cites a couple of mythological paradigms when he magnifies the sublime nature of the *locus amoenus* at the end of the poem (vv. 148–55). The song of the lovesick Cyclops in *Idyll* 11 is presented as a exemplum for the truth that 'singing brings healing from love' (vv. 1–2), and the alleged love of Galatea for the Cyclops is said by the cowherd Daphnis in *Idyll* 6 to illustrate the truth that 'love often considers beautiful that which is not so' (vv. 18–19). In all of these paradigms, there is a kind of 'breakdown of exemplarity': the stories offer an excess of meanings, some of which are far from exemplary, and which therefore subvert the univocal paradigmatic value for which the story itself is quoted. This phenomenon was, of course, already known to fifth-century tragedy, which made a serious, genuinely paradigmatic use of mythological *exempla*,\(^\text{117}\) but in Theocritus this 'breakdown' represents the form in which mythological paradigms are regularly presented: mythological–heroic material is radically foreign to the literary world created by bucolic poetry, even when it is apparently functioning as exempla.

In the course of the *paraklausithyron* of *Idyll* 3, the goatherd believes at a certain point, on the basis of a rustic omen, that Amaryllis is about to yield to him; he thus tries to facilitate her surrender to love by listing a series of mythical stories in which a period of courting finally led to marriage. However, in virtually every case the 'happy end' was followed by wretched fates for one or both partners (Atalanta and Hippomenes, Adonis and Aphrodite, Endymion and Selene, Jason and Demeter), and in the case of Bias-Melampus-Pero (vv. 43–7), the love relationship was sealed, not in favour of the one who had carried out the courting (Melampus), but rather a third party (Bias) who enjoyed the fruits of the sacrifices that the courting had involved.\(^\text{118}\) The validity of these *exempla* therefore depends on whether we share the limited perspective of the goatherd and are prepared to forget a large part of the meaning that the *exempla* would have had as complete stories, or not to consider alternative versions which did not have a happy ending. Neither ancient nor modern readers will, however, ignore the gap between the story as a whole and the specific narrative segment (or the specific version) which the goatherd chooses; this gap might underline the clumsiness of the goatherd in his inability to master the polysemy of


mythical stories, or it might suggest an (unconscious) pessimism about his hopes of success, for his exempla are overshadowed by an aura of death. We may also wish to fall back on the explanation of authorial irony at the expense of the characters; but it may rather be that mythological paradigms and the secure interpretations which classical poetry had offered for them are simply foreign to the new world of bucolic poetry.

A similar conclusion may be drawn for Idyll 7, not as a result of the rustic clumsiness of any character, but rather from the astute rhetorical questions of Simichidas himself, which explicitly raise the issue of the relevance of mythological paradigms. The locus amoenus of vv. 135–46, which, as we have seen (cf. above pp. 137–8), represents the idealisation of bucolic ἀσύριακ and, partly by means of the extreme refinement of the figures of speech used in it, emblematises how the poetics of Theocritus superimposes itself on the real world of shepherds and the countryside to create a new poetic world, leads to a sublime finale of almost Pindaric grandeur:

He took the four-year-old seal off the top of the wine-jars. O Nymphs of Castalia, who inhabit the peak of Parnassus, did ever old Chiron offer Heracles such a cup in the rocky cave of Pholus? Was ever that shepherd who lived close to the Anapus, the mighty Polyphemus who flung mountains at ships, persuaded to dance in his sheepfolds by a nectar like the drink that you mixed for us, O Nymphs, beside the altar of Demeter of the Threshing-Floor? (Theocritus 7.147–55)

Simichidas apparently calls on the testimony of goddesses who inspire and preserve the memory of mythic material, as if exhuming the traditional

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119 Cf. e.g. G. Lawall, Theocritus’ Coast Pastoralis (Cambridge, MA 1967) 40–1 and Dover (1971) 118.
121 Against a pan-ironic interpretation of Theocritean poetry cf. Stanzel (1995) 104–44, who, however, goes too far in the other direction.
122 Cf. Hunter (1999) 103: ‘the overt artifice of the passage matches the artifice of the locus which Phrasidamus and his family have created; both pleasures are man-made [. . .] this passage thus establishes the dialectic of art and nature which was to dominate all subsequent “pastoral” literature, which claims to describe the “natural”, but does so in overtly artificial ways’.
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gesture of calling the Muses to one’s aid at the beginning of a particularly taxing mythological telling (cf. Iliad 2.484–6, Ibycus, PMGF S151, Apollonius Rhodius, Arg. 1.20–2 etc.). Here, however, we have not the Muses, but the pastoral Nymphs, and the myths that follow have settings and characters that are clearly pastoral; the Nymphs, therefore, here offer a guarantee of reliability equal to that which the Muses traditionally offered. Elated by the excellent wine served during the rustic symposium, Simichidas-Theocritus seeks, in the finest Pindaric manner, a parallel in myth for this wine, and so he asks the Nymphs if the wine mixed with the water that poured from their spring (v. 154; cf. also v. 137) was the same as the wine of two famous episodes of the mythical past. This passage raises this rustic symposium to the sublime level of myth.223 Every ancient and modern reader, however, also knows what it meant for Polyphemus to drink the extraordinary wine224 that Odysseus offered him, and the reference to the Cyclops who ‘flung mountains at ships’ (v. 152) skilfully evokes the whole Homeric episode, including the monster's blinding. Chiron too got no joy from offering the marvellous wine of the Centaurs to Heracles:225 in this story, the Centaurs swarmed towards the bouquet; in the following skirmish, poor Chiron was wounded (accidentally) by Heracles’ poisoned arrows and died a horrible death. Thus, whereas the traditional use of mythological paradigms would have suggested an affirmative answer to Simichidas’ questions, knowledge of the whole story of the Cyclops and of Heracles and Chiron suggests a quite different answer: ‘Let’s hope not, for the sake of Phrasidamus’ guests . . . ’. The contrast between the bloody consequences of these two mythical symposia and the peaceful atmosphere of Phrasidamus’ celebration emphasises once again the ideal of bucolic ἄσυχία.

As for Idylls 6 and 11, the very existence of the two poems undermines any alleged univocality of meaning in the story of the Cyclops’ love. Parallel to the inversion of Daphnis in this poem (cf. above p. 149), Idyll 6 presents a sort of overturning of the tragicomic Cyclops of Idyll 11 with his delirious, passionate love. Leaving aside questions of the relative chronology of the two poems, it is clear that each casts humorous light on the paradigmatic nature of the other. In Idyll 11 the song of Polyphemus is supposed to

223 Cf. G. B. Miles, Ramus 6 (1977) 158: ‘[the rhetorical questions of vv. 148–55] express the narrator’s heady exaltation, his feeling on this occasion of being something more than his normal self – a feeling which is in keeping with the Golden Age setting.’
225 The story was familiar in Sicilian literature before Theocritus, in the Geryones of Stesichorus (PMGF[519]), a comedy of Epicharmus (Heracles, PCG 67), and another Sicilian comedy of uncertain authorship, the Chiron (Epich. PCG 289–95); Aristophanes dramatised the myth in Dramata or the Centaur, PCG 278–88.
illustrate the maxim that singing is the medicine for love (vv. 1–3), but was it really in the Cyclops’ best interests to cure himself? Might it not have been better for him to wait for a while, particularly if we remember the version of the myth already described by Timaeus, according to which Polyphemus succeeded in making Galatea fall in love with and marry him? Was he, in any case, really cured (cf. vv. 75–79)? As for Idyll 6, are we really to believe that Polyphemus is an example of the fact that even the ugliest person may appear desirable to someone in love (vv. 18–19)? Did Galatea really consider the Cyclops handsome? Is this statement not rather in tune with the Cyclops’ self-deception (vv. 75–79)? As for Idyll 6, are we really to believe that Polyphemus is an example of the fact that even the ugliest person may appear desirable to someone in love (vv. 18–19)? Did Galatea really consider the Cyclops handsome? Is this statement not rather in tune with the Cyclops’ self-deception (vv. 75–79)?

The Cyclops is used as a paradigm in so many different ways that any attempt to impose univocality of meaning is doomed to failure. Moreover, the whole of Idyll 11 is coloured by an irony arising from the ambiguous definition of the Cyclops’s song as a ἐπώδης ‘magical charm’ (AP 12.150 = HE 1047ff., below pp. 343–4), probably with reference to the Cyclops of Theocritus rather than that of Philoxenus (PMG 822). Thus, this song-spell of the Cyclops may truly have dispelled love, but it may also have propelled him towards the far more terrible drama of his blinding, which is clearly evoked by vv. 30–3, 50–3, and 60–2:

γινόσκω, χαρίσσα σάρα, τίνος οὐνέκα φεύγεις:
οὐνέκα μοι λασίεα μὲν ὄφρος ἐπὶ παντὶ μετόπῳ
εἰς ὀντός τέταται ποτὶ θώτερον ὡς μία μακρά,
εἰς δ’ ὀφθαλμός ὑπεστή, πλατεία δὲ ρίς ἐπὶ χείλει

126 See above, p. 150 and n. 72.
127 The schol. on 11.78 already commented that ‘perhaps the girls laugh at him’.
Fair maiden, I know why you flee from me: because along my forehead there is one long shaggy eyebrow, which stretches from one ear to the other, and beneath this there is only one eye, and the nose above my lip is broad [. . .] If you think that I am too hairy, I have got oak logs and ever-burning fire under the ashes: I would put up with being burnt by you, even in my soul, even in my single eye, which is the most precious thing I have . . . But now straightaway, my girl, I want to learn how to swim, if some stranger arrives here with his ship, so that I can understand what pleasure you take in living in the depths of the sea.

No reader will be unaware that the Cyclops’ desire for the arrival of seafaring was indeed satisfied (cf. Odyssey 9.252–5, 273), as was his claim that he could endure having his eyebrow thinned by ‘undying fire beneath the ashes’, for it was indeed in his own fire in the cave that Odysseus hardened the stake to put out the Cyclops’ eye (cf. Odyssey 9.375–6 and 389–90).

Polyphemus’ song was thus not only a dubious protection against love, but also a disturbing anticipation of, and thus in magical terms, a dangerous invitation to, the far more dramatic mishaps described in the Odyssey. The use of Homeric expressions as formulas for spells is in fact well attested in the Roman imperial period: for example, to combat gout, Iliad 2.95 τετρήχει δ’ ἀγορῇ, ύπο δὲ στεναχίζετο γαία (sc. λαοῦ ἱζόντων) ‘the assembly was astir and the earth resounded beneath them (as the people sat down)’ had to be written on a tablet made of gold; as a spell against anger’, Empedocles is said to have recited, to the accompaniment of a relaxing piece of music, Odyssey 4.221: (εἰς οἶνον βόλε φάρμακον) νηπενθές τ’ ἄχολον τε, κακῶν ἐπιλῆσθαι ἀτάντων ‘(he served the wine, a medicine) which puts pain and anger to flight, and causes all troubles to be forgotten’, and so forth. The danger for the Cyclops in even mentioning his eye was understood by those who praised the Cyclops of Philoxenus for the skill with which, in singing of the beauty of Galatea, he had praised various parts of her (a pretty head, golden locks, a graceful voice), but had avoided mentioning her eyes: speaking of the eyes of the loved one,

comments a character in Athenaeus (13.564e–f = PMG 821), is normal, but for the Cyclops this would have meant ‘a premonition of his blinding’.

3 BUCOLIC POETRY AFTER THEOCRITUS: BETWEEN IMIATION AND STYLISATION

The distinction between the ‘real’ contemporary herdsmen called Daphnis and Comatas of Idylls 5 and 6 and the mythical Daphnis and Comatas of Idylls 1 and 7 is, as we have seen, central to the nature of Theocritus’ bucolic poetry. It seems, however, that this distinction was not always fully appreciated, and we can see in the post-Theocritean Idyll 833 a move towards a more radically sentimental idealisation of the bucolic countryside.334 The clearest sign of this is the long elegiac ‘pathetic fallacy’ of vv. 33–52:

(ME) ἀγκας καὶ ποταμοὶ, θεῖον γένος, αἱ τι Μενάλκας πτήτως ὑπερβολίδες ἄσε μέλος, βόσκοι ἐκ ψυχῆς τᾶς ἀμάνδας ἢν δὲ ποτε ἑνή Ἀδάνης ἔχοι δαμάλας, μὴ δὲν ἠλλασον ἔχοι.

(ΔΑ) κράναι καὶ βατάναι, γλυκρῶν φυτῶν, αἰτή ποιμόν μοισίθει Δάφνις ταῖσίν ἄψωσαι, τοῦτο τὸ βουκολίων πιαίνειτε κῆν τιν Μενάλκας τεῖν ἀγάτη, χαιρών ἄφονα πάντα νέμωι.

(ME) ἐνθ δις, ἐνθ αἴγες διδυμάτοκε, ἐνθά μειλίσσαι σμήνεα πληροῦσιν, καὶ δρύες ψυγέταιραι, ἐνθ ὁ καλὸς Μίλων βαίνει ποσών: αἱ δ’ αν ἀφέρπτη, χώ ποιμήν ἤρος τηνόθα χαὶ βοτάναι.

(ΔΑ) παντὰ ἱππαρ, παντὰ δὲ νομοὶ, παντὰ δὲ γάλακτος οὐθάτα πιδᾶσιν, καὶ τὰ νέα τράφεται, ἐνθα καλὰ Ναις ἐπινίσσαται: αἱ δ’ αν ἀφέρπτη, χώ τὰς βοῦς βόσκοντι καὶ βοῖς ἀὐτέραι.

(ME) ὡς τράγῳ, τάν λευκὰν αἴγων ἄνερ, ὡς βάθος ὁλας μυριν—αἱ σιμαὶ δεῦτ’ ἐβ’ ὀδορ ἐριφοι—ἐν τίνως γάρ τίνως: Ιῆ, ὡς κόλα, καὶ λέγε, “Μίλων, ὁ Πρωτεύως φώκας καὶ θεός ὅλε ἐνεμεῖν”.

(Δάναλκας) Valleys and rivers, O divine race, if ever the syrinx-player Menalcas played a melody that you appreciated, give sustenance graciously to his lambs; and should Daphnis come here with his heifers, may he find no worse a welcome. (Daphnis) Springs and pastures, sweet plants, if Daphnis is equal to the nightingales.


in music, fatten this herd; and if Menalcas should drive a flock of animals here, may he pasture them joyfully in all plentifulness. (Me.) There do sheep, there do goats bear twins, there are bees that fill their hives and the oak-trees are tallest there where the handsome Milo passes. But if he goes away, both the shepherd and his flock are parched. (Da.) It is spring everywhere, there are pastures everywhere, the udders are bursting with milk and the young animals grow fat, where the beautiful Nais moves; but if she goes away, both the cowherd and his cows are wasted. (Me.) Billy-goat, husband of the white goats, go where the forest is thickest – here, flat-nosed kids, to the water – for he’s in there: go in, broken horns, and say: ‘Milon, Proteus, who was also a god, pastured seals!’

It is difficult to say whether the author of the poem is aware that he is altering the balance of ‘realism’ implied in the distinction that Theocritus maintains between his two Daphnises, or whether he (wrongly) felt authorised by the identity of name to synthesise the countryside and the animals that take part in the mourning for Daphnis in *Idyll* 1 with those that surround the contemporary herdsman Daphnis in *Idyll* 6. Certainly, the extensive pathos of the participation of nature in the mourning and love life of the two shepherd-singers sounds a new, non-Theocritean note, even if the passage could indeed be considered little more than a light-hearted and positive version of the participation of nature in the tragic mourning for Daphnis in *Idyll* 1 (cf. esp. vv. 71–5, 115–18), perhaps filtered through a sentimental reading of the end of *Idyll* 6 (vv. 44–5):

σύλι Δαμοίτας, σύρισθε δὲ Δάφνις ὁ βοῦτος, ὀρχεύντο ἐν μαλακῇ ταῖς πάρτις συντίκα ποίσ

Damoitas played the *aulos*, Daphnis the oxherd played the syrinx, and immediately the heifers jumped on the soft grass.

Athenaeus explicitly observed (1.21a) that ‘the word ὀρχεύεσθαι was used for any kind of movement, whether physical or of the mind’, and Theocritus’ ὀρχεύντο may simply have meant ‘jumped’, in a sense not very different from σκιρτάν πάντα (σῦ μὴ σκιρτάσῃ τε ἄκα τονούν), the heifers jump around happily while Damoitas and Daphnis play, not necessarily because they are playing. Nevertheless, taking his cue from συντίκα at once’, the author of *Idyll* 8 may have read the end of *Idyll* 6 as meaning that

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136 As confirmation, Athenaeus quotes a passage from the tragedian Ion (*TrGF* 19F50), where the verb refers to movements of the heart.

137 The two verbs are found together to describe dancing movements in Aristophanes, *Pl.* 761: ὀρχεύσθε καὶ σκιρτάσθε καὶ χορέυσθε ‘dance, jump and form choruses’.
the heifers literally ‘danced’ to the sound of the music, just as Longus in *Daphnis and Chloe* imagines that Daphnis’ goats ἑσκίρτων φριμασσάμεναι ‘danced around snorting’ when they joyfully celebrated their owner’s safe return (1.32.3); for Longus as well, these animals are, after all, μουσικαί (4.14.3). Thus the requests to nature which Menalcas and Daphnis make in *Idyll* 8 may be based on a ‘sentimental’ reading of the end of *Idyll* 6 as showing how readily nature responds with joy to the sound of music; the precedent of Theocritus would be made to offer a textual guarantee for the plausibility of this appeal to nature to share human emotion.

The poet of *Idyll* 8 would have found a further legitimisation for the sympathy of nature with man in *Idyll* 4. In this poem, the departure of Aegon to follow the famous athlete Milon is seen as the cause of the demoralisation and decline of Aegon’s herd: ‘these heifers that are bellowing here miss him [. . .] poor things, and they don’t want to eat any more’ (vv. 12–14). That *Idyll* 4 was well known to the author of *Idyll* 8 is clear from the use that he makes of the character of Milon, which is the name he gives to Menalcas’ lover in *Idyll* 8. The choice of name opposes Menalcas, a paradigm of a good herdsman, to the Aegon of *Idyll* 4, presented as the wicked, wretched herdsman (τάξας, v. 26), who abandons his animals and his syrinx in order to follow Milon to the athletic games; Menalcas’ Milon, on the contrary, seems in the past to have come to him, rather than vice versa, and now Menalcas tries to repeat Milon’s entry into the bucolic world through the agency of the billy-goat (vv. 47–52). The historical figure of the athlete Milon also connects *Idylls* 4 and 8 in another way.

The scholiast on *Idyll* 4.6 had already identified the Milon of that poem as the famous athlete from Croton (a town within the setting of the idyll), who had been victorious some thirty times in the Panhellenic games of the sixth century. In fact, it would be more precise to speak of a historical allusion to, rather than an identification with, the athlete, because *Idyll* 4 is set in the Hellenistic present, as witness the mention of Glauce, a female aulos-player loved by Ptolemy II (v. 31). Nevertheless, after a series of observations about the shameless malice with which Milon has convinced Aegon that he possessed athletic talent, Battus sarcastically comments (v. 11): πεισθάκα (Ahrens: τοι codd.) Μίλων καὶ τῶς λύκος αὐτίκα λυσθήν ‘Milo would even convince wolves to go rabid in a moment’. The verse and its relevance to the context have been very variously explained, but we should probably see here a sarcastic allusion to a detail in the life of the

As (respectively) by Ameis, Ahrens, Gow and Dover: ‘this is the moment when Milo should unleash rabid wolves on the herd (because now there is no-one to protect it)’; ‘now Milo would cause the wolves to become rabid (for hunger, because the herd is reduced to nothing)’; Aegon’s athletic
historical Milon, recorded as early as Aristotle: Milon is said to have been savaged to death by dogs or wolves in a wood when, in a demonstration of his strength, he used his hand as a wedge in a split tree-trunk and was trapped fast.\footnote{Cf. Aristotle, fr. 5231.4 Gigon, Strabo 6.1.12, Pausanias 6.14.8, Aulus Gellius 15.16.3–4, Valerius Maximus 9.12.9, schol. on Ovid, Ibis 609, Suda \(1066\) Adler.} Battus is thus wishing that as a punishment for the harm he has done to Aegon’s herd ‘his’ Milon as well may end up savaged by rabid wolves \(\sigma\varepsilon\tau\iota\kappa\alpha\) ‘there and then’. As for \textit{Idyll} 8, in vv. 49–51 Menalca\(s\) asks the billy-goat to carry his message of love for Milon \(\omega\ \beta\varepsilon\theta\iota\sigma\varsigma\ \varsigma\lambda\omicron\sigma\upsilon\iota\sigma\nu\iota\omicron\nu\) ‘where the forest is thickest’ \([\ldots]\), \(\epsilon\nu\ \tau\iota\nu\nu\circ\ \gamma\varsigma\sigma\tau\rho\ \tau\iota\nu\nu\circ\ ‘for he’s in there’\). The verses are puzzling,\footnote{Gow on 51–2, for instance, sceptically commented: ‘Milon \ldots is not a goatherd; what he is doing in the wood we are left to conjecture’. For a recent but unconvincing explanation cf. White (1981).} but perhaps the poet of \textit{Idyll} 8 understood Battus’ allusion to the fate of the historical Milon, and was not to be outdone. All the sources for Milon’s death place it in the woods, and one source (Strabo 6.1.12) notes explicitly that the idea for his fatal act of bravado came to him while he was walking \(\delta\iota\upsilon\omicron\lambda\iota\sigma\upsilon\beta\sigma\theta\epsilon\iota\alpha\varsigma\ ‘through the thick of the wood’\). With a kind of intertextual foreshort, therefore, Menalca\(s\) is anxious to attract his Milon to the peaceful world of shepherds, which is not to be disdained (cf. vv. 51–2), and away from the heart of the forest, which Milon loves, but which carries terrible dangers for a person with his name . . .

\section*{4 \textsc{Bucolic and Non-Bucolic Love}}

For the writers of bucolic who came after him, the text of Theocritus offered a philological ‘pretext’, that is to say, a repository of ideas which could be codified into substantially new patterns. Of particular interest is the development of the Theocritean pattern\footnote{As Zanker (1987) 14 noted, ‘the basic rationale of some of the Alexandrian poets in their deployment of love seems to have been that love is the emotion which everybody can experience – and wants to – and that the judicious use of it will interest people and help them to relate to the world of poetry from their own experience of life’.} of bucolic song in its function as mythological paradigm in the erotic poetry of Moschus and Bion.

The mythological songs of \textit{Idylls} 6, 11, and 13, the last two both addressed to Nicias, are introduced by brief frames, which both provide the poems with the fiction of a ‘real’ performative context and introduce the songs as illustrations of maxims exchanged between friends; this pattern places

ambitions are madness, and have incidentally inflicted as much damage on his father’s flocks (namely the loss of twenty sheep) as if the wolves in the neighbourhood had been seized with rabies and run among them’; ‘if Aigon has been persuaded by Milon to go off in pursuit of a useless ambition, taking twenty sheep, Milon might as persuade wolves well . . .

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Theocritus in the tradition of archaic lyric, iambic and elegiac poetry, which then continues in Hellenistic epigram.\(^{142}\) As we have seen, the clumsy love song of the Cyclops illustrated the maxim that poetry heals the sufferings of love; Heracles’ loss of Hylas, on the other hand, illustrated the idea that it is not only mortals who are struck by love for the beautiful. In both cases, the initial statement of the maxim in v. 1 (repeated at the end of *Idyll 11*) and the apostrophe to the friend in v. 2 suggest an informal setting, which emphasises the occasional nature of the composition. This pretence of an occasional character could not be created by the statement of the maxim itself, and so it is the apostrophe, not the maxim, which was the basic element of Theocritus’ compositional structure. This is confirmed by *Idyll 6*, where a variation of this strategy isolates the apostrophe by itself in the narrative frame at the beginning of the poem (v. 2), which is addressed to one Aratus, possibly the same person mentioned by Simichidas in *Idyll 7* (v. 102). It is then not the author in the frame, but rather one of the shepherd-singers, Daphnis, who at the end of his song pronounces what is, in effect, the maxim–theme of the poem: ‘O Polyphemus, love often considers the not beautiful beautiful’ (vv. 18–19).

The extant fragments of Moschus and Bion develop this Theocritean pattern in non-Theocritean directions. Gone is the critical-ironic approach to the very use of a mythological paradigm, replaced now by a straightforward emphasis on the positive correspondence between opening maxim and mythological illustration, as in *Idyll 13*, a poem which certainly has bucolic touches, but which does not adopt the attitude of distance from myth which we have seen to be central to Theocritus’ bucolic poems.\(^{143}\) Neither Moschus nor Bion use Theocritean apostrophe, and thus they do not present their poems as stories told ‘by chance’ to a friend. Furthermore, while Moschus does make use of two short mythological stories as illustrations of aspects of love, and Bion too does something similar at least once, both of them promote Eros (generally in company with Aphrodite) to the protagonist of short ‘epyllia’ about the nature of love. Theocritus shows nothing comparable, and the new form is to be connected with erotic epigram (cf. below, pp. 173–4). Moreover, Bion reflects an approach to love and love poetry, which is at least partly in opposition to bucolic poetry and is substantially different from what we find in both Theocritus and third-century epigram.

\(^{142}\) For a different interpretation of *Idylls 11* and 13, as contaminations between the poetic epistle and, respectively, the bucolic genre and the epyllion, cf. L. E. Rossi, ‘L’Illa di Teocrito: epistola poetica ed epillo’ in *Studi classici in onore di Q. Cataudella* (Catania 1972) II 279–93.

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Moschus fr. 2 lists a series of unrequited and painful loves between mythical-bucolic figures (Pan loved Echo, Echo loved a satyr, the satyr loved Lyde) and then concludes: ‘This is the lesson that I expound to all those who are resistant to love: love those who love you, so that, when you fall in love, your love will be required.’ Fragment 3 tells how, for love of Arethusa, the river Alpheus opened up a pathway through the sea to bring his gifts to his beloved spring; the poet’s final comment is ‘that rascal of a boy, the wicked teacher of terrible actions, Eros, even used his charms to teach a river how to swim’. Bion fr. 12 is analogous to Moschus fr. 2, though its ambitions are much greater. The maxim ὁ δὲ θάνατος ἐπὶ τὴν ἀνθρώπον ὑπέτειν ἔτη ὅσον θανατάσκοιται, ‘Fortunate are those who love, when their love is returned in the same measure’, introduces exempla of three reciprocated homosexual loves, in which the mythical lovers were ‘fortunate’, even in the most painful situations: Theseus was ‘fortunate’ because Pirithous ‘stood beside him’, even when he descended into Hades; Orestes was ‘fortunate’, even among the savage Taurians, because Pylades ‘had chosen to share his journey with him’; Achilles was ‘fortunate’ because he died shortly after Patroclus, as he desired. Bion’s maxim appears to overturn the exclamation ὁ δὲ θάνατος ἐπὶ τὴν ἀνθρώπον ὑπέτειν ἔτη ὅσον θανατάσκοιται, ‘wretched are those who love’, with which the poet’s voice had sententiously intervened during the description of the sad wanderings of Heracles in search of the lost Hylas (Theocritus 13.66). With a more idealised and romantic conception of love, Bion not only overturns Theocritus’ specific exclamation at the beginning of the fragment, but at its end he overturns Theocritus’ exemplum (Heracles) by three (probably already topical) exempla appropriate to this more positive view. What Bion stresses, the perfect mutuality and inseparability of lovers, had also been applied by Theocritus to the original happiness of Heracles and Hylas (13.10–15). In actual fact, however, Bion corrects Theocritus radically, for his point is that anyone who is requited in his love is happy in any situation, because not even death can destroy the ‘good fortune’ of a pair of lovers who are really united: Achilles, who had been μάρακαρ ‘happy’ when Patroclus was alive (v. 6), continued to be ‘fortunate’, even after his friend’s death, because he was able to satisfy the desire for death that he had famously expressed in the Iliad. Indeed v. 7 ὁ δὲ θάνατος ἐκ τοῦ πάθους ὅσον ὁ ἰός ὁ μόρον ὀλυνθὸν ἀνέμεθεν ‘he was fortunate to die, because he had not averted

144 The same triad was already present in Xenophon, Symp. 8.31.
145 Bion’s exempla are found several times in Ovid – once the same three as in Bion (in Pont. 2.3.41–6), more often with the Latinising addition of the further couple, Euryalus and Nisus (Tr. 1.5.19–24, 1.9.27–34), and always with a certain emphasis on the element of inseparability. See also the simplified versions of Tr. 5.4.23–6 and Pont. 2.6.25–6.
the sad fate from him” is to be interpreted in the light of *Iliad* 18.98–9: οὐτίκα τεθανήν, ἔτει οὐκ ἔμελλον ἑταῖρο | κτεινομένο ἐπαυνάι

‘may I die immediately, because I was not destined to defend my companion when he was killed’. It is, of course, possible that, in the complete poem from which this fragment comes, this romantic position was sarcastically overturned by an interlocutor who reverted to the traditional unhappiness of lovers, as expressed in *Idyll* 13.66. Nevertheless, we will see that fr. 12 is in harmony with idealising attitudes that Bion also expresses elsewhere, whereas nowhere does Bion seem to express ironic or negative comments about love.

One important novelty of Moschus and Bion are ‘micro-epyllia’ about Eros, which seem to combine the Theocritean custom of talking about love by means of *exempla* with the ever more common technique of dramatising the unforeseeable and irresistible quality of love through its personifications, Eros and the Erotes; these powerful, but capricious little boys both confirm the power of love, and also partly exorcise it by miniaturising and reducing it to small fragments. This practice of speaking about love by speaking of Eros and the Erotes had been widespread ever since the lyric poets, and in particular Anacreon, though it is above all in Hellenistic epigram and the *Anacreontea* where these figures triumph.

The pseudo-Theocritean *Idyll* 19 and Moschus 1 fit comfortably into this tradition. *Idyll* 19, ‘The honeycomb thief’, describes the reactions of Eros to being stung by a bee while stealing honey; he protests to his mother that even if it is a tiny insect, the bee still produces painful stings, whereupon Aphrodite answers that he himself is tiny, but he provokes terrible sufferings. This poem of only eight verses finds a fairly precise parallel in *Anacreontea* 35, but the topos of the arrows and wounds of Eros occurs throughout Greek epigram. In Poem 1 by Moschus, ‘Eros the fugitive’, Aphrodite announces a reward on the head on Eros, who continues to be naughty and disobedient; she now cannot find him, and so she must give a detailed identikit of the boy’s physical appearance and character. The poem can be considered a compilation of the best-known *cahiers de doléances* of

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Meineke’s correction of διτ οι ι η δορον to δ α η δορον is unavoidable, despite the rather clumsy sound and prosody which result. Reed (1997) 179 defends the transmitted text by interpreting δανειασθειν as ‘avenged’, but when δανειασθειν is constructed with the accusative and dative, it means idiomatically ‘to avert something from someone’, whereas in the meaning of ‘to avenge’/’to punish’ (for which the middle voice is almost always used), the verb takes the accusative of the person and the genitive of the thing.

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Aphrodite about Eros, and in particular it is perhaps to be understood as presenting the facts preceding the scene of 'Eros in chains', a well-known epigrammatic (cf. *APlan.* 195–99), Anacreontic, and iconographic topos (cf. *LIMC* iii.1, 88f.). Another work which is close to the tradition of poems in which the description of the behaviour of Eros leads to reflections about the peculiar nature of love is Bion’s ‘micro-epyllion’ fr. 13. As he is wandering through the wood, a young fowler finds Eros perching on the branch of a tree and sets to work with his birdlime, thinking that his prey is a large bird; as he does not succeed, he runs to the old ploughman (ἀρστεύς πρέσβυς) who had taught him the technique of bird-catching to ask for help; the old man tells him to stop hunting the bird and not to chase after it any more, but rather to keep at a distance from it: ‘You will be lucky, as long as you do not catch it; but if you arrive at adulthood (ὅταν δὲ ἄνευς ἕστης), this same bird that now flies and hops away will come to you of his own initiative, and will settle on your head.’ The emphasis is clearly on love as a fact of life, but a term like ὕππηλθεν, with all its metaliterary significance, or the figure of the old master-ploughman may suggest that the opposition between the different occupations of the two periods of the boy’s life may also be interpreted as a statement of poetics: love poetry belongs to maturity, and it follows a phase of bucolic poetry which is alien to the theme of love. Be that as it may, both in this fragment and in the apostrophe to ‘kind Aphrodite’ in fr. 14, another passage in which Bion inveighs against the reprobate, dangerous child Eros, Bion’s main emphasis is on the idea of the inevitability of Eros, and this is the idea, as we shall see, which is the keystone of reflections about love poetry in his poetry.

More original and ambitious is the metaliterary ‘micro-epyllion’ of Bion fr. 10:

> ἀ μεγάλα μοι Κύπρις ἔθηνόντων παρέστα
> νηπίασον τὸν Ἐρωτα καλὸς ἢ χειρός ἄγοισα
> ἐς χέβανα νευσάζοντα, τόσον δὲ μοι ἔφρασε μύθον:
> “μέλπειν μοι, φίλε βοῦτα, λαβὼν τὸν Ἐρωτα δίδασκε”.
> ὅς λέγε· χὰ μὲν ἀπῆλθεν, ἐγὼ δ᾿ ὡς βουκολισάμεν,
> νήπιος ὡς ἐθέλοντα μαθεῖν, τὸν Ἐρωτα δίδασκομεν,

150 Cf. F. Lasserre, *La Figure d’Eros dans la poésie grecque* (Lausanne 1946) 192–4, Rosenmeyer (1992) 184–5, W. Fauth, ‘Cupido cruciatur’ *GB* 2 (1974) 39–60. It is impossible to establish whether the idea of Aphrodite’s proclamation or the scene of the imprisonment took shape first: one of the epigrams that present Eros in chains is attributed by the Planudean Anthology (196) to Alcaeus of Messene (second century bc), but Cameron (1993) 42 n. 37 points out that the epigrams *APlan.* 195–97 all begin with the same letter (τ), and may thus correspond to the alphabetical criterion of anthologisation followed in Philip’s *Garland;* he therefore emends the attribution ‘of Alcaeus’ to ‘of Alphaeus’ (Alphaeus of Mytilene, first century bc; however, cf. *HE* 2.7).
The great Cypris came close to me while I was still sleeping, leading with her beautiful hand the little child Eros, whose head was hanging down, and said to me: 'Take my Eros, dear herdsman, and teach him to sing.' Thus she spoke. She went away and I taught all my bucolic songs to Eros, foolish as I was, thinking that he wanted to learn them: how Pan invented the flute, Athena the aulos, Hermes the lyre, and sweet Apollo the cithara. These things I taught him, but he paid no attention to what I said, but he was the one who sang love songs to me, and taught me the passions of mortals and immortals and the deeds of his mother. So I forgot what I was teaching Eros, and learnt all the poems of love that Eros taught me.

This fragment belongs to the Hesiodic tradition of divine initiation into poetry, and may be compared to the dreams of Callimachus at the head of the Aitia (frs. 3–4 Massimilla, cf. above pp. 6–7) and of Ennius at the head of the Annales (frs. 2–10 Skutsch, cf. below, pp. 462–3). Aphrodite, leading the child Eros by the hand, appeared to the narrator 'while he was still sleeping', and she asked him to teach Eros how to sing. Eros is described as υἱός ‘a little child’ or ‘an infant’ (v. 2), whereas it was in fact the narrator, as he himself admits in v. 6, who was νήπιος ‘naive’, the same epithet which Hesiod had repeatedly applied to Perses, the addressee of the oldest and best-known Greek didactic poem, Hesiod’s Works and Days. The narrator tries to teach Eros how to compose the bucolic songs that he himself usually composed, starting ab ovo from aetiological stories about the relevant musical instruments, as Hesiod had started from myths about the origin of pain, good and evil, and so forth in order to teach Perses about proper behaviour and social morality. Eros does not, however, pay the slightest attention, but rather himself starts to instruct his supposed teacher all about love, with the result that the narrator forgets what he had tried to teach Eros, i.e. bucolic poetry, and allows himself to be instructed in ἐρωτύλα ‘love poems’.

We cannot, of course, assume that this fragment is to be interpreted autobiographically, as marking Bion’s passage from bucolic to erotic (or, rather, erotic-pastoral)\(^5\); nor can it be established with certainty to what kind

\(^5\) As I argued in ‘Bion , fr. 10 Gow’ MusCrit 15–7 (1980–2) 159–60; also cf. e.g. E. A. Schmidt, Poetische Reflexion: Vergils Bukolik (Munich 1972) 87–9 and Nauta (1990) 134.
of erotic poetry Bion refers, whether perhaps bucolic-erotic poetry with pastoral protagonists (as in Bion frs. 9 and 11 and the pseudo-Theocritean Idylls 20 and 27), or erotic-mythological epyllia with an extremely limited pastoral frame, like the Epithalamion of Achilles and Deidameia (= [Bion] 2). What is clear, however, is the opposition between poetry concerning ‘bucolic’ inventions (cf. fr. 5) and poetry with an erotic-bucolic content (cf. fr. 9); for the ‘short poem with erotic content’, for which no previous generic definition is attested, Bion uses the term ἔρωτύλον, and his witness to the overwhelming, irresistible nature of love poetry also finds very few parallels in Greek literary tradition; we may, however, compare Anacreontea 1, which opens with a visit of Anacreon and Eros to the poet in a dream, and terminates with a declaration of faithfulness to love and to love poetry (καὶ δέθην ὄρχη καὶ νῦν ἔρωτος οὗ πέπαιμαι ‘and truly until now I have never abandoned love’).

Love is one of the themes that Theocritus’ shepherds discuss most frequently, and the contrasting opposition between unhappy, tormented love (and love poetry) on the one hand and bucolic life (and poetry) on the other could be read as already present in his poetry. Thus, the ekphrasis of the cup in Idyll 1 had contrasted the restless distraction of a woman’s two lovers with the peacefulness of rustic life, and in Idyll 7, the invitation of Simichidas to Aratus to abandon for ever his desperate passion and opt for ἀνυχία (vv. 122–27) is immediately followed by Simichidas’ description of the locus amoenus (above pp. 137–8), with the implicit effect of contrasting the song of unhappy love with the bucolic serenity which involves the abandonment of love. Moreover, Bucaeus’ clumsily parodic song of love in Idyll 10 (vv. 24–37) is contrasted with Milon’s work song, and the opposition between love and rustic life is made explicit in the concluding verses (vv. 56–8):

ταῦτα χρή μοχθεύνασα ἐν ἄλῳ ἄνδρας άείδειν,
τὸν δὲ τεόν, Βουκαία, πρέπει λιμνόν ἔρωτα
μυθίσειν τῇ ματρὶ κατ’ εὐνὰν ὄρθρευσισα.

Men who toil in the sun should sing songs like this. As regards your starveling love, Bucaeus, you should tell it to your mother when she gets up at dawn.

152 The Epithalamion takes off from Idyll 11: the shepherd Myrson exhorts Lycidas to sing a ‘sweet, melodious love song’ (μόλις [. . .] ἰμαρέον γλυκόθνους ἐρωτικούς), like the one the Cyclops Polyphemus sang on the beach to Galatea, but then Lycidas sings of the attempt by Achilles to seduce Deidamia – a story with mythological characters and an urban setting. For the Epithalamion and Idyll II cf. E. Sistakou, Η ἀφομηγή τοῦ ἔτους (Athens 2004) Γ.4.


154 See above.

155 The ancients were uncertain about the attribution of the last three verses: cf. schol. on vv. 56–8.
The opposition between the ‘pastoral’ life and the life of love was explicitly thematised in a fragment of the (? fourth-century) lyric poet Lycophronides (PMG 844), where a shepherd dedicates his work tools to a god because his mind is now utterly given over to love; it can also be found in various later epigrams which either contrast love with the rudely elementary nature of the world of shepherds and their flocks (familiar, of course, from Theocritus) or assert, as Theocritus had never clearly done, a separation between pastoral life and love. In AP 7.196 (= HE 4066ff.), Meleager revives the old topos of poetry and music as a medicine for love, but specifies bucolic music in this rôle:

O chirping cicada, you who get intoxicated by the dewdrops, you sing the rustic Muse of those who dwell in solitary places, and sitting high amidst the leaves with your rough-edged legs you produce from your sun-baked body a music like that of the lyre. But now, my dear, sing a new song for the Nymphs of the trees, playing a music which will act as a counterpoint to that of Pan so that, having escaped from Eros, I may come and seek my rest at midday, lying here under a shady plane-tree.

Relevant also is the matching epigram AP 7.195 = HE 4058 ff.:

O cricket, you who beguile my passions and lead me to sleep; O cricket, rustic Muse with your resonant wings, a natural imitation of the lyre, sing me a song of desire, striking your chattering wings with your legs, so as to drive away from me the anxiety of sleepless nights, O cricket, creating a tune that will turn love away . . .

In these poems, there is a clear opposition between the song of the cicada and the cricket (ἀγρόνομον μούσαν ἔρημολάλον, a clear metaphor for

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156 Cf. e.g. Mnasalca, AP 9.324 = HE 2666ff. and Myrinus, AP 7.703 = GPh 2368ff.
pastoral poetry) and the love that this music allows the poet to escape (φυγών τὸν Ἐρωτα), and between the rest that this same music allows for those who ‘escape from’ Love and the tormented vigils (παναιρύττονος μερίμνης) which were traditionally, and often in Meleager himself, the lot of those in love.158

These passages of Bion and Meleager, who were probably contemporaries and lived not long before Virgil wrote the Eclogues,159 demonstrate the poetic currency in the first century BC of an opposition between the bucolic and the erotic, and it may be that we should also interpret in the light of Greek precedents the recurrent concern with the relationship between love (poetry) and bucolic poetry and life, which runs through Latin poetry of this period. Virgil attributed considerable importance to the precedent of Meleager, AP 7.196 (cited above), for he echoes this epigram twice in the opening verses of Eclogue 1, patulae recubans sub tegmine fagi <...> siluestrem tenui musam meditaris auena <...> The contrast in Bion and Meleager between bucolic poetry and love also helps us understand why in Eclogue 10 Virgil imagines that his friend, the elegiac poet Gallus, sees the possibility of pastoral life (and poetry) as the only alternative to his love for Lycoris, as well as to his previous mythological or erotic poetry. The wreck of his love (cf. vv. 22f.) leads Gallus to regret that he had not joined the shepherds previously, to find in their world the love of some Phyllis or Amyntas who would have yielded without the dramatic rejections and unfaithfulness of elegiac loves, or that he had not enjoyed the love of Lycoris herself in those pleasant rustic places (vv. 35–43). Gallus seems to be going to decide to change his life and his poetry, or rather to rework in Theocritean style his previous poetry (written in the ‘verse of Chalcis’, vv. 50–1),161 and to reformulate the idea of love and love poetry in a bucolic manner (teneris [...] meos incidere amores arboribus – crescent illae, crescentis, amores ‘to carve my loves on the tender trees: the trees will grow, and you loves will grow’, vv. 53–4).162 In the meantime, Gallus dreams of distracting himself by hunting in the mountains and thus finding the medicina for his furor

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158 Cf. e.g. Plato, Phaedrus 251e; Theocritus 10.10, 30.6; Crinagoras, AP 5.119 = GPh 177ff. etc.
159 Although the relative chronology remains uncertain, it appears probable that Virgil alluded explicitly, at least once, to a ‘bucolic’ epigram: see Ecl. 7.4 and Erycius, AP 6.36.2 = GPh 2201, on which cf., most recently, Bernsdorf (2003) 95f., with references.
161 It cannot be established whether Chalcidico . . . uersu evoked Gallus’ love elegy (from Theokles of Naxos or Eretria, a town close to Chalcis, who was credited with the invention of elegy) or his mythological-erudite poetry in the manner of Euphorion of Chalcis; cf. Citroni (1995) 267.
162 See also o mihi tum quam molliter ossa quiescant, | vestra meos enim si fistula dicit amoris ‘Oh, how sweetly my bones could rest, if one day your pipes sang of my loves’, vv. 33–4; amores indicates
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Subsequently, however, the dream collapses: the new idea of a pastoral life (and love) gives way in the face of the inescapable labores of ‘elegiac’ love (and elegiac poetry), to which in the end Gallus is forced to surrender (‘Love triumphs over everything: we, too, must surrender to Love’), as Propertius was later to yield to the servitium amoris. It is not that ‘bucolic love’ is weaker than ‘elegiac love’, but that Gallus fails to understand the rhetoric of pastoral erotic discourse, so, too, in Eclogue 2, Corydon tries to transform the beloved in accordance with the vision of the bucolic world, but the radical separation between love and pastoral life makes this impossible.

For the motif of bucolic love in Latin elegiac poetry, Ovid, Heroides 5 is particularly important. In this poem the Nymph Oenone remembers the tender moments of love spent in the countryside with Paris before his departure for Greece and Helen; she contrasts Paris’s new and dangerous love for the adulterous Helen with the alternative possibility of a ‘love without risks (tutus amor)’ (v. 89) with her, who had only ever belonged to him. The connection of Eclogue 10 with Heroides 5 is clear, though both also look back to the lovesick Acontius’ rustic roamin when in Callimachus’ Acontius and Cydippe (above pp. 60–61) and both reflect also the idealising and escapist longings for rural συνοικία and tranquil reciprocated love which are a prominent feature of late Hellenistic thought. Oenone unsuccessfully begs the ex-shepherd Paris to go back to doing what the Virgilian Gallus had briefly dreamed of doing, but Ovid appears to suggest that the erotic and bucolic worlds are reconcilable only in a past that is now forever gone, or in the unachievable Utopia of Oenone’s imagination, and so he attributes to his female character a despair not very different from the final situation of Gallus. For the possibility of a satisfied bucolic love in which erotic pathos is regulated and controlled, we must look rather to Tibullus, though even here this optimism concerns the future, not the present (see in particular 1.1 passim and 1.5.19–36).

The relative optimism of the Roman poets that a happy pastoral love was possible may have had precedents in post-Theocritean bucolic. Greek primarily Gallus’ love elegies rather than his experiences of love, cf. F. Skutsch, Aus Vergils Frühzeit (Leipzig 1901) 23–4 and Ross (1975) 89.


Cf. fr. 73 Pfeiffer; in Propertius 1.18 the poet identifies with both Callimachus’ Acontius and the Gallus of Eclogue 10. Tree-carving also occurs at the close of Idyl 18, but the context is there not erotic.
erotic poetry is regularly about love that is unhappy because not (yet) reciprocated, but the pseudo-Theocritean *Idyll* 27 represents an exception, in that it seems to marry the sentimental approach to the countryside typical of post-Theocritean bucolic with the long poetic tradition of the rustic *locus amoenus* as the ideal setting for scenes of seduction and sexual satisfaction.\(^{170}\)

The poem takes the form of an amoebean exchange, in which Daphnis seeks to seduce a country girl, who does eventually consent to their mutual pleasure; it is in fact a literary version of a form of popular literature which was later to lead to the Provençal *pastourelles* and the Italian *villanelle*.\(^{171}\)

Features of language and versification, however, lead the majority of scholars to consider the poem a very late work, quite possibly from the imperial period, and so we must suspend judgement about the possibility that it was known to Augustan poets. More promising signs, however, may perhaps be found in Bion’s poetry. There seems to be, for example, an obvious joyfulness in the way in which Bion speaks about his composition of love poetry for Lycidas in fr. 9, and the name of the beloved leaves no doubts that this must have been bucolic-erotic poetry. This fragment includes an explicit generic choice in favour of love poetry, but there were at least two contemporary traditions of love poetry familiar to Bion – erotic epigram and the *Anacreonta* – which had taken very different positions on the possibility of a peaceful relationship between the Muses and Eros. Bion appears to distance himself clearly from the former of these two positions, and to be rather in agreement with the optimism of the *Anacreonta*.

Hellenistic erotic epigram shared with many contemporary philosophers an intellectualising condemnation of the passion of love (cf. below, pp. 341–9); poets composed erotic poetry, in which they also declared that love was a sort of illness, a fall into the irrational. In particular, Posidippus and Callimachus explored, with a new intensity and frequency, the paradoxical fact that intellectuals, such as themselves and their friends, could fall prey to the irrational passion of love, thus suggesting that they shared the view that the intellectual could or should be less exposed than others to the risks of love. They were thus forced to confront the contradiction that they were both poet-intellectuals and love poets who were in love, and to seek ways around this double bind. Among the most obvious was the plea that poetry cures love, most familiar from Theocritus’s *Idyll* 11 (above pp. 164–7) and Callimachus, *AP* 12.150 = *HE* 1047ff.:


What a fine charm Polyphemus found for people in love: yes, by the Earth, the Cyclops was not stupid. The Muses, O Philippus, reduce love to size: poetry is a medicine which cures all evils...

This ideology of love as something to be cured (and which is cured by talking about it) continues to dominate the erotic epigram of the first century BC, and so it may be this from which Bion wishes to distance himself, by an allusion at the head of fr. 9 to the ‘manifesto’ in v. 3 of this epigram of Callimachus:

The Muses are not afraid of the wild Eros, but love him with all their heart and follow him closely. And if someone sings with a soul that knows not love, they flee away, and refuse to act as teachers for him. If, on the contrary, someone sings sweet songs with his mind set awhirl by Eros, lo, they all hurry towards him in great haste. I am a witness of the fact that this affirmation is true for everybody: if I sing of another mortal or one of the immortal gods, my tongue stutters and does not sing like before; but if I sing a song for Eros or for Lycidas, then my voice runs joyously through my mouth. (Bion fr. 9)

By this same opening, Bion may also have taken a position against another text, Moschus’ Eros the Fugitive (above pp. 173–4) which began α Κύπρις τὸν Έρωτα, and which offered a compendium of topical motifs of invective against Eros; however that may be, another defence of Eros, Anacreontea 19 (below p. 183), certainly begins with another variation on this formula.

The Muses ‘weaken’ love, Callimachus had said, and both he and Theocritus had followed Philoxenus in presenting poetry as a φάρμακον

172 Reed (1997) 159 recognises the parallel with Callimachus, but denies that it carries programmatic force in the debate about the relation between poetry and love.
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‘medicine’ against love. The relationship between the Muses and Eros as presented by Bion is different: if we accept, as all modern editors do, the emendation of ἆ φοβεόνται to ὀφοβεόνται in v. 1, Bion would be claiming that the Muses ‘are not afraid’ of Eros, not because they are like a drug that weakens love (as Callimachus had said) or because the soul of a person who has endured the labours of the Muses is better prepared to face Eros courageously (as Posidippus had said, cf. below, pp. 342–3), but because, on the contrary, they love Eros and always accompany him everywhere. If, however, we keep the transmitted text, the Muses would always be close to Eros, either because they have a reverential fear of him, or because they love him. The remainder of the poem stresses the positive influence of love on poetry, and does so by revisiting two of the most famous passages in Greek poetry which had placed the emphasis, rather, on the disturbing power of love. In v. 5 νόσον... ‘ἔρωτι δοκεύμενος ’his mind set awhirl by Eros’ recalls, though with a positive connotation, Sappho’s destructive Eros: ‘Ερός διηντέ μ’ ἐλυσιμέλης δόνει ‘Eros who relaxes the limbs sets me whirling again’ (fr. 130.1 Voigt). On the other hand, βουβάσει μοι γλώσσα καὶ ὄς πάροσ σῦκέτ ἄειδει ‘my tongue stutters and does not sing like before’ (v. 9) attributes to the absence of erotic inspiration that inability to speak which Sappho (fr. 31.7–9) had described as the effect rather of the presence of the beloved, ὃς γὰρ ἔσχατος ὤ με φώναι—| ἄλλα ᾐκέμον γλώσσα ἠγαγεί ‘as soon as I look at you for a moment, I can no longer speak, but my tongue is broken (?)’. Bion’s positive evaluation of love is also strengthened by an echo of Theognis: μάρτυς ἔγων ὅτι μῦθος δὲ ἐπλέθο τάσιν ἀληθής ‘I am a witness that this story is true for everybody’ (v. 7) derives from Theognis 1225–6, οὐδέν, Κύριν’, ἀγαθής γυνικέωτερον ἐστὶ γυναικός. | μάρτυς ἔγω, σὺ δ’ ἐμοὶ γίνοι ἀληθοσύνης ‘there is nothing sweeter than a good woman: I am a witness, and you acknowledge this truth’.

Bion’s poem concludes with a recusatio of any poetry in praise of any man or god except the beloved Lycidas or Eros himself, because it is only in these cases that μοι χαῖρονται διὰ στόματος ἥλθε οὐδή ‘my voice runs joyfully through my mouth’. In the Theogony Hesiod had stated that in the case of those who were loved by the Muses, γυνικέρι οἱ ἀπὸ στόματος ἥλθε οὐδή ‘his voice runs sweetly from his mouth’ (v. 97), and Hesiod’s Muses inspired their protégés to sing of κλεία προτέρων ἀνθρώπων...[...] μάκαιρας τε θεὸς ‘the glorious deeds of the men of the past...and the blessed gods’ (vv. 100–1), that is to say, roughly the themes that the Bion of

†† Cf. Reed (1997) 159.
fr. 9 rejects. Bion’s affirmation of the impossibility of composing poetry which is not erotic becomes, as is well known, a very common motif in Latin elegiac poetry of the first century BC, but it is not at all widespread in Greek poetry. Perhaps the only real parallel is *Anacreontea* 23:

\[
\text{θέλω λέγειν Ἀτρείδας,}
\text{θέλω δὲ Κάδμουν ἤδειν,}
\text{ὁ βάρβιτος δὲ χορδαῖς}
\text{ἔρωτα μούνον ἥχει.}
\text{ἡμεῖς νεῦρα πρώην}
\text{καὶ τὴν λύρην ὑπασσάν·}
\text{κάγω μὲν ἡδὸς ἄθλους}
\text{Ηρακλεός, λύρη δὲ}
\text{ἔρωτας ἀντεφώνει.}
\text{χαῖροιτε λοιπὸν ἡμῖν,}
\text{ἡρωῶς ἤ λύρη γάρ}
\text{μόνους ἔρωτος ἤδει.}
\]

I want to sing of the Atreidai, I want to sing of Cadmus, but the barbitos with its strings only plays love for me. Yesterday I changed the strings, and even the whole lyre, and I started to sing of the deeds of Heracles, but as answer the lyre gave back love. So, farewell, heroes. My lyre sings only of love.

Relative chronology cannot be established, as very few of the *Anacreontea* are datable, but we may surmise that the *Anacreontea* poets recognised a kindred spirit in Bion. Bion’s programmatic opening to fr. 9, ταὶ Μοῖσαι τὸν Ἐρωτα, reappears as the introduction to *Anacreontea* 19, another text which defends the compatibility of Eros and the Muses: the Muses have chained Eros and handed him over to the custody of Beauty, and even when Aphrodite goes to free him with a ransom, Eros does not want to leave, because he has learnt how to become a slave (δουλεύειν δεδιδακται) of the Muses themselves and of Beauty. For the poet of this poem, the Callimachean (and Bionean?) tag was already a crucial programmatic marker, which has been decisive on the very shape of the poem. Rhythmically, the phrase, which occupies the opening of a hexameter up to the feminine caesura, is very rare in the hemiambics or anaclastic Ionic dimeters of the *Anacreontea*, but here it conditions the versification of the whole poem, which is entirely composed of such stichic lengths and therefore in clear contrast with the polymorphous metrics of most of the *Anacreontea*.176

Another passage of Bion also seems to look forward to Latin elegy. Fr. 16 picks up the Theocritean theme of the love of the Cyclops for Galatea, but it presents a new kind of behaviour and a new psychology. Here, the Cyclops declares:

οὐδ’ ἡγόνεται ἵππον ᾠδῆν ἐς τὸ κάταντες
τῆν ποτὶ ψάμμαθον τε καὶ δἰόν ψιθυρίσδων,
λιβασμένες Γαλάτειαν ἀπημενής τάς δὲ γυλκείας
ἐπιθέουσα ὑστατίων μέχρι γῆρας οὐκ ἀπολείψει.

But I will go along my way towards the slope down there to the sandy beach, murmuring a song and pleading with cruel Galatea: I will not abandon my sweet hopes until extreme old age. (Bion fr. 16)

This short fragment presents incurable passion in an innovatory way: the Cyclops proposes to go down to the seashore and to whisper his love song for Galatea to the sea; here, the lover never abandons hope, and love poetry nourishes, rather than extinguishes, that hope.\(^{177}\) What followed this fragment we do not, of course, know – another Cyclopean serenade and more self-deception perhaps –\(^{178}\) but, in itself, this declaration of eternal faithfulness to hope and to the courting of only one woman finds very few parallels in Greek poetry. Of irony there is no obvious sign,\(^{179}\) and this Cyclops appears very different from the grotesquely parodic monster of Theocritus;\(^{180}\) if anything, Bion’s Cyclops seems closer to the earnest Corydon of Eclogue 2, whose principal model is, of course, the Cyclops of Idyll 11. Indeed, Bion’s Cyclops, at least in this fragment, is even more earnest than Corydon, because Corydon, far from expressing undying faithfulness, echoes the Theocritean model with an attitude that is anything but elegiac: inuenies alium, si te hic fastidit, Alexin ‘you will find another Alexis, if this one does not accept you’ (v. 73).

The attitude towards love of fr. 16 finds a parallel at the level of poetics in fr. 3, which has sometimes been thought to belong to the song of the Cyclops and Galatea.\(^{180}\)

177 Reed (1997) 190–1 detects a connection between the last line of our fragment and Theocritus 2.164 ἐγὼ δ’ εἶπον τοὺς ἄστρους ὑπέπλεθον ‘but I will endure my passion, just as it has come upon me’. If Bion did have this passage in mind, then he has substituted the positive idea of eternal hope for the ‘endurance’ of a burdensome passion.


179 W. Arland, Nachtheokritische Bukolik bis an die Schwelle der lateinischen Bukolik (Leipzig 1937) 46–7 already insisted on the greater ‘seriousness’ of Bion’s Cyclops.

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Let Eros call the Muses, and may the Muses bring Eros. May the Muses give me – to me, always in love – the sweet song, than which there is no more pleasant medicine. (Bion fr. 3)

Here, Bion combines two traditional topoi, Eros the teacher of poetry (cf. Euripides, fr. 663 etc.) and poetry as a cure for love (Philoxenus, PMG 822, Theocritus, Idyll 11 etc). The two motifs had probably already been combined by Nicias in the verses (SH 566) which, according to the Theocritean scholia, he wrote ‘as an answer to’ the Cyclops of Theocritus:

\[ \text{οὐδὲν δὲ αὐτῷ τὸ τοῦτο, Θεόκριτε, οὐ γὰρ έρωτες ποιῆται πολλοῦς ἐδίδοσαν τούς πρὶν ἀμοῦσους.} \]

This then was true, Theocritus: the Erotes have taught many to be poets, who knew not the Muses before.

Bion’s declaration is not only more resolutely serious than Nicias’, but also more explicit in its opposition to the motif of poetry as a φάρμακον against love: Bion wants both love poetry and love – both the ‘medicine’ and the ‘illness’ – and thus he establishes the causal (and reversible) nexus between poetry and love which is at the basis of Latin elegiac poetry, but which is quite new in Greek tradition.\(^{182}\)

One significant parallel to the attitudes of Bion’s love poetry in foreshadowing Latin elegy may come from a pseudo-Theocritean poem, Idyll 23 ‘The Lover’, which is generally considered to be the work of an author belonging to the ‘school of Bion’.\(^{183}\) In the face of the beloved’s cruel refusal, a lover kills himself at the beloved’s door, but before committing suicide he asks his lover to write on his tomb the epitaph:

\[ \text{τοῦτον ἔρως ἐκτείνειν, ὀδοιπόρε, μὴ παροδεῦσῃς, ἀλλὰ σταῖς τοῦτο λέξους: ὁ αὐτήν εἰχεν ἐταίρου}. \]

Eros killed this man. Traveller, do not pass-by, but stop and say: ‘He had a cruel friend’. ([Theocritus] 23.47–8)

This passage, which is related to, though different from, the epigrammatic motif of the inscription left on the door of the beloved at the end of the paraklausithyron (e.g. Meleager, AP 5.191.7f. = HE 4384f.,

\(^{181}\) This seems the most likely meaning of ἀεὶ ποθοῦντι (cf. Theoc. 12.2); some understand ‘always desiring (to receive the song)’.

\(^{182}\) Given the absence of context, other interpretations can, of course, be imagined: Reed (1997) 146, notes sceptically the possibility that φάρμακον might mean ‘to bring (love) to my beloved’, and not to the poet.

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AP 12.23.3f. = HE 4526ff.), is a very rare Greek example (however, cf. Meleager, AP 5.215.5f. = HE 4276ff.) of the elegiac motif of the lover who asks for his tomb to have a tombstone immortalising his commitment to love (e.g., Ovid, Trist. 3.3.71–6. [Tibullus] 3.2.27–30, Propertius 2.13.31–6).

With the hoped-for epitaph we may also compare Propertius 2.1, another dream of death, where Propertius imagines that Maecenas, as he passes the poet’s tomb, plays the traditional epigrammatic rôle of the wayfarer who comments on the dead man’s fate (v. 78):

\[
\text{huic misero fatum dura puella fuit.}
\]

It is, of course, difficult to say to what extent Bion’s poetry – for example, the love poems for Lycidas – and that of his ‘school’ were really forerunners of, or parallels to, Latin elegy. Bion and the poets of the Anacreontea do share a conception of love quite different from the tormenting illness which the intellectualism of Theocritus and the epigrammatists had seen in passion and the poetry devoted to it, and from which not even Meleager could free himself completely. This liberation comes from defining themselves in terms which are not in fact very different from those subsequently used by the Latin elegists: love poetry is an ‘inevitable’ choice which excludes all other kinds of poetry; and there is a clear and inevitable connection between this choice and the actual experience of love in one’s own life. Furthermore, as we have seen, Bion’s Cyclops appears to dedicate his life to courting his beloved with song, and he declares that he will never abandon hope: both ideas are very common in Latin elegy. Nevertheless, we must be very cautious here. Stobaeus, the anthologist to whom we are indebted for almost all the fragments of Bion, is mainly interested in collecting gnomic maxims, and thus most of the passages by Bion that we have are programmatic verses about love or love poetry; apart from frs. 11 and 16, we have very little that can be considered to put those programmes into practice. The protagonists who use ‘I’ in frs. 11 and 16 are not the poet, but, respectively, a shepherd and the Cyclops, and the majority of the speculations about love that we find in Bion’s fragments may be supposed to have a bucolic setting and to have been spoken by pastoral ‘masks’ (just as all the authors of the Anacreontea were masked as Anacreons at a symposium). It would thus appear that the subjectivity – whether real or literary – which had been at the basis of lyric poetry, of some archaic elegy, and of the erotic epigram, and which was to become the basic perspective of Latin elegiac poetry, remained foreign to Bion’s poetry, just as it did to Hellenistic erotic-mythological elegy.

\footnote{Cf. F. O. Copley, \textit{TAPhA} 71 (1940) 61.}

\footnote{For this distinction, cf. the first chapter of A. A. Day, \textit{The Origins of Latin Love Elegy} (Oxford 1938), and the last chapter of Cairns (1979).}
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An important demonstration of both this difference and of the importance of Bion as a model for the elegiac poets is offered by Propertius 2.13, which in the past was regularly considered a conflation of two distinct poems, though its unity has been asserted by most modern critics.186 The poet presents himself as a man who has been wounded several times by love and is dedicated to the love poetry which will please his beloved Cynthia; his hope is that she may come to love him until (and even after) death and weep for him in a funeral ceremony, which the poet wishes to be without any pomp, but marked by Cynthia’s most sincere grief and followed by a constant veneration of his tomb (vv. 17–42); the poet has suffered greatly, and it would have been better for him to have died at birth, above all because Cynthia will not be able to call him back to life, even if she invokes him after death (vv. 43–58). The description of the poet’s funeral and the mourning for him have an important debt to Bion’s Epitaph for Adonis,187 a poem which describes the mourning of Aphrodite for her beloved Adonis, who has just been killed by a wild boar. It is Propertius himself who announces the relationship with this mythological and textual paradigm at the close of the poem (vv. 51–8):

\[
tu\ tamen\ amisso\ non\ numquam\ flebis\ amico:
fas\ est\ praeteritos\ semper\ amare\ uiros.
testis,\ cui\ niueum\ quondam\ percussit\ Adonem
uenantem\ Idalio\ uertice\ durus\ aper;
illis\ formosus\ iacuisse\ paludibus,\ illic
\textit{diceris}\ effusa\ te,\ Venus\ isse\ coma.
\textit{sed}\ frustra\ mutos\ reuocabis,\ Cynthia,\ manis:
\textit{nam\ mea}\ qui\ poterunt\ ossa\ minuta\ loqui?
\]

But you will weep many a time for your lost friend: it is right always to love men who have died. She is a witness of this, who suffered when the snow-white Adonis was killed by a cruel boar, while he was hunting on Mount Idalium: they say that the handsome youth lay in those marshes, and that you, O Venus, arrived there with your hair trailing. But you, O Cynthia, will call back in vain my mute spirit: how will my bones, reduced to dust, be able to speak?

The description of Adonis as \textit{niueus} ‘snow-white’ points specifically to Bion’s telling of the myth. This is a rare poetical term, and here it seems to pick up \textit{χιόνεος}, which itself is very rarely used in Greek to describe the colour of the skin, but which is used twice in this way in Bion’s \textit{Epitaphios}: \textit{χιόνεος} κατά σαρκός ‘through his snow-white skin’ (v. 10) and μαζι | \textit{χιόνεοι} ‘snow-white breasts’ (vv. 26–7). The detail of Venus wandering with

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her hair unbound (v. 56), a typical gesture of grief, perhaps recalls specifically vv. 19–20. of Bion’s poem, ἀ δ’ Αφροδίτα | λυσαμένα πλοκαμίδας ἀνά δρυμών ἀξιαλάτητα ‘and Aphrodite wanders through the woods with her hair unbound’; diceris ‘they say that you’ (v. 56), with which the detail is introduced, is a very familiar kind of ‘Alexandrian footnote’ denoting the existence of poetic sources.

So, too, some of the details of the funeral rites and Cynthia’s imagined mourning (vv. 21–2, 27–30) find striking parallels in Aphrodite’s mourning for Adonis (vv. 24, 77, 11–14).

Relevant also is Propertius 2.19. Here, as in 2.13, there is a kind of dream, this time about a possible stay of Cynthia in the countryside; the poet too will dedicate himself to the worship of Diana, putting aside that of Venus (me sacra Dianae / suscipere et Veneris ponere uota iuvat), and he will hunt, directing the dogs himself (audaces ipse monere canis), but with all due caution:

non tamen ut uastos ausim temptare leones
aut celer agrestis comminus ire sues.
haec igitur mihi sit lepores audacia mollis
excipere et structo figere auem calamo.

Not, however, to the point of having the courage to challenge powerful lions, or, with a rapid movement to close with wild boars. May this, then, be my courage, to catch timid hares with a net, and to hit birds with arrows. (Propertius 2.19.21–4)

Here, we may be reminded of the rebuke that Aphrodite pronounces over the corpse of Adonis in vv. 60–1 of the Epitaphios, τι γάρ τοις ταλαπράτον κυνάγεις; καλὸς ήν τι τοσοῦτον ἐμήνσαν θηρὶ πολείν; ‘but why do you recklessly give orders to the dogs? You who are handsome, why did you long to fight against a wild beast?’ Perhaps, too, there is also an anticipation of the more detailed warning which Ovid, in the wake of both Bion and Propertius, attributes to the goddess when, in Metamorphoses 10.533–52 at

88 Cf. Papanghelis (1987) 66, following J. André, Etude sur les termes de couleur dans la langue latine (Paris 1943) 375. The word reuocabis may also recall the Greek ἅνωκελείσαν (v. 94); Adonis wishes to reply to the mourners (οὐ μόνον κακὸν ἔθηλει, v. 96), but Kore does not let him go, and the tone of the rhetorical question in v. 58 in Propertius may suggest an analogous impossible desire to answer Cynthia.

90 The adverbial neuter πολλά is an emendation of Hermann, for the transmitted πολύω or πόλυα. If we accept the variant πολλά, the meaning will be ‘shouting in the Oriental manner, and calling her husband and her son’, cf. Reed (1997) 208.
91 The last kiss is repeated also in vv. 45–9, acted out in Aphrodite’s appeal to Adonis, rather than narrated: she believes that he is still alive and can therefore transmit his last breath to her. As such, this second passage of Bion appears less close to the perspective of Propertius’ v. 29: osculaque in gelidis pones superba labellis, where the coldness of the lover’s lips is a fact that is perceived without any illusions, as in Ad. ep. 13–14.
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the height of her love for Adonis, she, like Propertius, submits to hunting
as a kind of seruitium amoris; she dresses like Diana and gives orders to the
dogs, but she hunts only animals that can be hunted without danger, such
as hares (also mentioned by Propertius), and a fortibus abstinet apris | rap-
toresque lupos armatosque unguibus ursos | uitat [. . .] te quoque, ut hos timeas
|. . .], Adoni, monet ‘fortis’ que ‘fugacibus esto’ | inquit, ‘in audaces non est
audacia tua.| parce meo, iuuenis, temerarius esse periclo, | nue feras, quibus
arma dedit natura, lacesse . . .’‘she refrains from facing up to sturdy boars,
ravenous wolves, bears with their dangerous claws [. . .] and she exhorts
you, too, Adonis, to be prudent with them [. . .], and she says: “Demonstrate
your strength against those animals which easily run away, but with those
that are aggressive, courage is dangerous! Avoid being reckless (cf. Bion’s
τολμησέ), and running a risk that is mine, and do not provoke beasts
which nature has supplied with arms”’, etc.”192 Ovid thus correctly reads
Propertius as having presented himself as a prudent Adonis, who does not
commit the sin of recklessness, of which Bion’s Aphrodite had accused her
beloved.

Certain of Bion’s images, like that of the last kiss for the beloved who
is already dead, or that of Adonis who is to be placed, even if disfigured
by death, on the bed where he had spent his nights of love with Aphrodite
(cf. vv. 72–3), are extremely rare in Greek erotic poetry and mythology, but
are in tune with the dominant atmosphere of Latin elegiac poetry. Such an
extreme manifestation of the ideal of eternal faithfulness is certainly not far
from a poem like Propertius 2.13, where the motif of eternal commitment
to a single love is intertwined with the thought of death and, in particular,
with the changes that death imposes upon eternal love.193 Propertius may
have seen in Bion not just a precedent for a particular kind of romantic
Stimmung which combined love and death in highly sensual terms,194 but
also a precedent for his ideal of an eternal singer of a single love and his
utopian dream of a pastoral love. Be that as it may, Bion’s mythological
material is subsumed by Propertius into a serious first-person reflection
on life and death,195 with a transformation of the ‘objective’ mythological

192 Theocritus’ Daphnis too taunted Aphrodite with Adonis’ rashness (1.109–10); cf. Fantuzzi (1995b).
193 What unites the texts of Bion, Propertius and Ovid is their emphasis on the distinction between
animals that are not dangerous and those animals to be avoided.
194 This poem is not an isolated episode in elegiac poetry: cf. Propertius 1.3.17–18, 1.3.21–30, Tibullus
1.1.61–8, 1.3. Ovid, Am. 3.9.
195 Cf. Papanghelis (1987) 65–70. Another demonstration of the influence of Bion’s Epitaph for Adonis
and the pseudo-Moschean Epitaph for Bion (which imitates the former) in Latin elegiac reflections
on death can be seen in the fact that Ovid, Amores 3.9 alludes to these two poems: cf. J. D. Reed,

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into the ‘subjective’, which is analogous to, though perhaps more radical than, the transformations of, say, Propertius 1.18 and Catullus 68. The extant poetry of Bion thus suggests that the gap between the ideology of love found in Latin elegiac poetry and that found commonly in Hellenistic Greek poetry, particularly the epigram, was considerably reduced in the second and first centuries BC. The combination of Bion’s erotic values and the coincidence between persona loquens and author, which had existed in archaic lyric poetry and in epigram, would render more credible and immediate the exclusive, eternal faithfulness to the beloved and to love poetry which is claimed by Latin elegists.