



Theocritus' Pastoral

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ANDO Yukie

Theocritus originated the pastoral tradition: full-blown bucolic or pastoral poetry is found in his rustic Idylls. “Bucolic” and “pastoral” are a little different in meaning. A. S. F. Gow writes in *The Greek Bucolic Poets*:

. . . the title ‘Bucolic’, if it is understood as equivalent to ‘Pastoral’, is misleading, for in this strict sense only a small proportion of the poems here translated are entitled to it. Theocr. *Idd.* I, III-VII, X and XI may fairly be called bucolic¹

There is considerable agreement about this view; therefore I would like to treat here those eight Idylls which are considered bucolic. These are in Doric, using hexameter after Homer. But here I use Gow’s English translation, since I am mainly concerned with the content.

The title of the First Idyll is “Thyrsis or the Song.” The characters of the poem are a shepherd, Thyrsis, and an unnamed goatherd. Thyrsis, praising the goatherd’s piping, says, “Thou wilt take second prize to Pan”(3), high praise indeed since Pan was the god of the shepherds and of all the rustic inhabitants in mythology. The goatherd also praises Thyrsis’ song as sweeter than the stream-sound, saying it will take second prize to the Muses. Thyrsis asks the goatherd to pipe, but he refuses:

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“Nay, shepherd, nay; at noontide pipe we may not, for fear of Pan” (4). He, on the other hand, invites Thyrsis to “sing the woes of Daphnis” (4) and promises him two rewards: the chance to milk three times a goat that has borne twins and a deep drinking-cup which has wonderful decorations of various carved figures. Then Thyrsis begins: “Begin, dear Muses, begin the pastoral song” (5). This refrain is repeated seven times. From the middle of the song “again” is added to the refrain: “Begin, Muses, begin again the pastoral song” (6) and is repeated eight times. About the end of the song another refrain is repeated four times: “Cease, Muses, come cease the pastoral song” (7). Thus, every time he sings, he addresses the Muses to empower him to sing.

At first Thyrsis introduces himself: “Thyrsis of Etna am I, and sweet is the voice of Thyrsis” (5). Next he asks the Nymphs: “Where were ye, Nymphs, where were ye, when Daphnis was wasting?” (5). Thyrsis suggests that the Nymphs would have saved Daphnis if they had been in Sicily. As the story progresses, various kinds of animals come to lament for Daphnis. Hermes comes first and then the neatherds, the shepherds, and goatherds come and ask what ails him. This order corresponds to the ranking of the pastoral professions; goatherds are lowliest, and Daphnis has reached bottom: “Neatherd wast thou [Daphnis] called, but now thou art like a goatherd” (6). Cypris, that is, Aphrodite, comes and sneers at him. After referring to Adonis, Daphnis says to the goddess: “Go set thyself again before Diomedes and say, ‘I am the vanquisher of Daphnis, the neatherd; come, fight with me’” (7). From this we remember that Aphrodite is wounded and driven from the field by Diomedes (*Iliad*, 5, 330), one example of the influence of Homer on Theocritus. Daphnis says good-bye to Arethusa, the spring at Syracuse. He asks Pan to come to the Sicilian isle and take his pipe, because he will die. At last he dies in dejection and wrath. Thyrsis ends his song and asks for his rewards. The goatherd praises his song: “thy singing outdoes the cicada,” (8) and gives him the pledged goat and cup.

Theocritus’ Idylls are supposed to have been written between 270-260 B.C. (Gow, xix-xxi), but the setting of the First Idyll is uncertain, perhaps well before the third century B.C.. From about 735 B.C. Sicily was colonized by various Greek

city-states, such as Syracuse by Corinth in 734 B.C.. The natives were ejected from the colonized sites or reduced to dependent status; some of them became slaves. The shepherd, Thyrsis, and the goatherd may be slaves who are the property of and wholly subject to someone, but the fact is not indicated in the poem. But clearly the goats the goatherd keeps are his own property, because he lets Thyrsis milk one three times; if it were not his property, he could not do so. Besides he says he bought the precious drinking-cup for "a goat and a great cheese of white milk" (5). Therefore it is not unreasonable to suppose that the setting may be before the Greek colonization, a very significant historical distancing. Jacob Burckhardt, however, comments in his *History of Greek Culture*: "The shepherds of Sicily and lower Italy mentioned by Theocritus were slaves without doubt, but still they, like the farm slaves of Xenophon, had their own property, including sheep and goats, and were able to make pretty gifts" (51).

Theocritus was influenced by Homer, but he invented a new mode, not a long and magnificent epic, but a short poem, with the principal roles played by herdsmen, not by great men or heroes. It does not treat wars or adventures but the ordinary events of rural life. In Idyll I the goatherd is an important character, but he belongs to the lowliest class and does not have even a name. Theocritus looks on such people with warm-heartedness and describes them vividly. Will Durant grasps the essential meaning of pastoral in *The Life of Greece*:

Here [in the pastoral poetry of Theocritus] at last nature entered Greek literature, not as a goddess merely, but as the living and lovable features of the earth. Never before had Greek literature conveyed so feelingly the secret sense of kinship that stirs the soul with gratitude and affection for rocks and streams, water and soil and sky. (610)

In other words, the human instinct of a longing for nature was introduced into Greek literature for the first time by Theocritus' pastoral Idylls.

The main part of the First Idyll, the pastoral elegy for Daphnis sung by Thyrsis,

is noteworthy for the way it alters the traditional view of Daphnis. *The Oxford Classical Dictionary* (2nd ed., 1970) says:

According to Stesichorus (ap. [apud] Aelian [Aelianus], *VH* [*Varia Historia*] 10. 18) and Timaeus (ap. Parth. [Parthenius] 29) he was son or favorite of Hermes, and loved by a nymph, Echenaïs, who required of him that he should be faithful to her. This he was, till a princess made him drunk and so won him to lie with her. Thereupon the nymph blinded him; he consoled himself by making pastoral music (313)

Theocritus makes Daphnis not a shepherd but a neatherd. And instead of being a noble “son or favorite of Hermes” Theocritus has Hermes first come to Daphnis only when he is dying. The emphasis thus shifts from the power of dieties to the power of pastoral music itself to console a sorrowful heart. This view was picked up by Diodorus Siculus (at the turn of the first century A.D.), who made Daphnis the discoverer of the bucolic poem and song:

. . . as the myths relate, he who was known as Daphnis was born, a son of Hermes and a Nymph, and he, because of the sweet bay (*daphnē*) which grew there in such profusion and so thick, was given the name Daphnis. He was reared by Nymphs, and since he possessed very many herds of cattle and gave great attention to their care, he was for this reason called by the name Bucolus or “Neatherd.” And being endowed with an unusual gift of song, he invented the bucolic or pastoral poem and the bucolic song which continues to be so popular throughout Sicily to the present day. The myths add that Daphnis accompanied Artemis in her hunting, serving the goddess in an acceptable manner, and that with his shepherd’s pipe and singing of pastoral songs he pleased her exceedingly. (*The Library of History of Diodorus of Sicily*, IV, 84)²

This description is obviously much influenced by the First Idyll.³

The role of Pan as the best piper in the First Idyll is also significant for the way Theocritus focuses the myth on Syrinx, a nymph, who ran away from the lecherous demiurge and begged the earth, or the river nymphs, to help her. She becomes a reed-bed, from which Pan makes his pipe, the panpipe, a flute with seven holes. There is also a distinct shift away from remote Arcadia in Theocritus. Daphnis says to Pan, "whether thou art on the high hills of Lycaeus, or rangest mighty Maenalus, come to the Sicilian isle and leave the mountain peak of Helice and that high tomb of Lycaon's son" (7). In addition, Hermes and Aphrodite come down to Daphnis, and the earthy love affair between Aphrodite and Adonis is also referred to.

Theocritus was a native of Syracuse, but seems to have lived mostly outside Sicily, first perhaps in southern Italy and later in Cos, one of the Sporades islands. After several unsuccessful attempts to find a patron, including Hiero II of Syracuse (cf. Idyll XVI, "The Graces or Hiero"), he got recognition from Ptolemy Philadelphus, also called Ptolemy II, the Macedonian King (cf. Idyll XVII, "In Praise of Ptolemy") and lived in Alexandria, which was founded by Alexander the Great immediately after his conquest of Egypt and to which Ptolemy I transferred the seat of government from Memphis after he had established himself in possession of Egypt. Under Ptolemy II Alexandria grew rapidly and was made a center of learning as well as of commerce and industry. It was a civilized but crowded city, certainly hot and dusty, a place from which Theocritus naturally looked back with idealizing memory upon the hills and fields of his native Sicily.

The rewards given to Thyrsis must have wakened contemporary Greek readers there to nostalgia for the rural life of the old days. The reward of milking a goat three times reflected the way goats were kept mainly for milk; cows' milk was not common. Goats' milk was also consumed in the form of curds or cheese. Therefore, milking a goat and drinking fresh milk would seem to be rather rural for the Alexandrians. The other reward, a deep drinking-cup, carved "Along the lips above trails ivy, ivy dotted with its golden clusters" (4), was called "*kissybion* (κισσύβιον)" in Greek. The *kissybion* in the poem is "two-handled, and newly fashioned, still

fragrant from the knife" (4). The goatherd bought it for "a goat and a great cheese of white milk"(5) and it has never been touched by his lips. The *kissybion* is described as a wine-bowl in Homer's *Odyssey*: Odysseus offers wine in it to the Cyclop Polyphemus (9, 346) and his swineherd Eumaeus mixes wine in it to welcome him (14, 78), but in both cases one English translation is "an ivy-wood bowl."⁴ Theocritus have been influenced by the *Odyssey*, yet his cup is not simple, but rather a splendid piece of craftsmanship with decorative ivy and other elaborate carved figures on it, figures which themselves represent a pastoral tale. They show a beautiful, young and formally dressed woman standing between two men, who quarrel to get her love. Theocritus describes them as if they were living: they "contend from either side in alternate speech" (4). The woman also looks alive: "she looks on one and smiles, and now to the other she shifts her thought" (4). We can imagine the scene very easily. The description reflects the humorous and realistic character of the poet. By them an old fisherman is carved: on a rugged rock he "eagerly gathers up a great net for a cast as one that labours mightily"; he is "fishing with all the strength of his limbs, so do the sinews stand out all about his neck" (4). Theocritus makes the goatherd sympathize with the fisherman's powerful work. Near the fisherman there is a vineyard, which is guarded by a little boy who, sitting upon its wall, is plaiting a cricket-cage without noticing two foxes, one of which tries to get some ripe grapes and the other his wallet. The intentions and feelings of the foxes are humorously described by the goatherd. Thus the cup becomes marvelously artistic, not unlike Homer's description of Achilles' shield (*Iliad*, 18, 478-607) or the pseudo-Hesiodic fragment known as the *Shield of Heracles*⁵, but it also has charming originality. It is not too much to say that a shield is the emblem of the epic and this drinking-cup is the emblem of the pastoral, since, for all its decoration, its story and its practical function are both so domestic.

Humorous domestic situations also prevail in Idyll III, "The Serenade." The main character is an unnamed goatherd. He asks Tityrus to take care of his goats and goes to serenade Amaryllis. Gow thinks Tityrus is "possibly the leading he-goat rather than a human friend" (15). The goatherd says: "Tityrus, sweet friend, graze

the goats and take them to the spring; and mind the he-goat, the tawny Libyan, lest he butt thee" (15). To this Tityrus doesn't answer, unlike a human friend. The goatherd goes to his mistress, leaving his work while his goats are gently grazing. Amaryllis neither appears nor speaks a word. The Idyll is mostly a monologue, as the goatherd addresses Amaryllis, who lives in a cave. As the serenade in urban Greece was a sequel to a drinking party (Gow, 15), the theme of the poem would have been familiar to the Alexandrians. But a mistress living in a cave would seem rather ludicrous to them, a rustic imagining of days long gone.

The goatherd's addresses consist of complaints, entreaties, and threats. He complains: "Charming Amaryllis, why no more dost thou peep out of this thy cave and call me in—me, thy sweetheart?" (15); "Nay, look; my trouble cuts me to the heart" (15); "His [Love's] slow fires torture me to the very bones" (16); "O maiden . . . all of stone" (16); "Thou wilt make me shred my wreath to pieces" (16); "thou hearkenest not" (16); "My head aches, but thou cares not" (17). He then entreats her, bringing ten apples as a lovetoken: "O maiden . . . come to my arms, thy goatherd's arms, that I may kiss thee" (16). Besides apples he keeps for her a white nanny-goat with two kids, which another girl begs of him. He then threatens: "Thou'lt make me hang myself" (15); "I will strip off my cloak and leap into the waves from the cliff" (16); "if I kill myself, at least thy pleasure will have been done" (16); "No more I sing, but here will lie where I have fallen, and here the wolves shall eat me" (17).

This love-sickness is described rather humorously. The goatherd refers to famous lovers, including Endymion and Phoebe, but he makes a lot of fuss for nothing. His serenade, for all its fundamental human desire or instinct, is as far removed as possible from the wrenching pathos of Sappho.

Idyll IV, "The Herdsmen," consists of a rustic conversation between Battus and Corydon about how Aegon, who gave his cows into the care of Corydon, went to the Olympic festival to compete in boxing. Of course, "only freeborn Greeks were allowed to compete in the Olympic games" (Durant, 213), so Aegon appears to be a free man, but a question will occur when we hear: "Milon has carried him [Aegon]

off to the Alpheus" (18), which is the river at Olympia. Who is Milon, if Aegon is not a slave? According to Durant, the athletes were selected by local and municipal elimination trials (213) and so Milon may be one of local or municipal officials in charge of the Olympic games. We also get the interesting detail: "And he [Aegon]'s gone off with a pickaxe and twenty sheep from here" (18). About this Gow notes: "The pickaxe is for turning up the soil in the exercise-ground as part of an athlete's training; the sheep are rations for the thirty days' training at Elis previous to the Olympic festival" (18). For all his hardiness, Aegon must have had a tremendous gluttony for mutton to eat twenty sheep in thirty days.

Corydon is a sensible herdsman. He praises Aegon's strength: "They say he vies with Heracles in strength and might" (18); "he seized the bull by the hoof and brought it down from the hill and gave it to Amaryllis" (19-20). He consoles Battus, who laments over the death of Amaryllis: "My dear Battus, you musn't be so downhearted. Things may be better to-morrow" (20). He advises Battus, who has a thorn in his ankle: "When you go on the hill, Battus, don't come barefoot" (20). On the other hand Battus has a scathing tongue: "And you [Corydon], maybe, milk them [Aegon's cows] all on the sly in the evening?" (18); "Certainly there's nothing left of that calf yonder but the bones" (19); "Wretched Aegon, your cows too will come by their deaths because you, like others, have fallen in love with a cursed victory" (19). Such words may reflect his frustration; he says that "It's a cruel power indeed that rules my destiny" (20). But the main effect is one of slapstick.

In Idyll V, "Goatherd and Shepherd," the main characters are a goatherd, Comatas, who is a slave of Eumaras, and a shepherd, Lacon, who is a younger slave of Sibyras. A third one is a woodman, Morson, who judges their singing contest. This Idyll begins with accusations: Comatas insists that Lacon stole his goatskin; Lacon retorts that Comatas stole his pipe. Then Lacon suggests a singing contest with a stake; Lacon stakes a fat lamb and Comatas a billy-goat. They stand at some distance and Lacon asks Comatas to come to his side several times. But Comatas refuses to move and says: ". . . much it vexes me that you should dare to look me in the face, me that taught you when you were still a child" (22). Lacon cannot

remember the time. Gow lets Comatas speak in Latin: "Vbi te paedicabam tuque dolebas" (When I had sexual intercourse with you and you suffered) (22). Lacon's reply is also translated in Latin: "Paedicatione illa utinam tu" (I give you back your homosexuality over there) (22). Anthony Holden, on the contrary, translates them in English: "When I bugger you, you'll feel it"; "May you be buried no more deeply than you bugger, you old hump-back" (*Greek Pastoral Poetry*, 65) and notes: "These lines are generally rendered into Latin, a bizarre form of euphemism, or omitted altogether" (205)⁶, a form of homophobic prejudice that does a great disservice to both the Greek spirit and the humor of Theocritus. Comatas will not move and invites Lacon to come to his side. At last neither of them moves. They ask Morson to judge their singing match fairly.

As the contest begins, Comatas sings first: "The Muses love me much better than the minstrel Daphnis; and two goats I sacrificed to them the other day" (24). Lacon sings next: "Aye, and me Apollo dearly loves. And a fine ram I feed for him, and already the Carneia [the great Dorian festivals of Apollo] are coming on" (24). They make alternately boastful accounts of their livestock, their sweethearts, and their property. Comatas loves Clearista, a girl, but Lacon loves Cratidas, a boy. While they sing boastfully, their malignity heightens. The words of Comatas are translated in Latin again: "Nonne meministi cum ego te subigiitai . . . ?" (Don't you remember the time when I lay with you) (25). Lacon answers: "Of that I have no recollection, but very well I know when once Eumaras tied you up here and dusted you" (25). Comatas becomes increasingly vitriolic. Finally Morson judges Comatas the winner. He gets the lamb and Morson asks him: "And do you, when you sacrifice it to the Nymphs, send Morson straight a good piece" (26), a piece of extortion that adds to the burlesque.

Gow suggests that the hostility between the two herdsmen is due to their situation as slaves:

The ill-feeling between the two herdsmen is nowhere explicitly accounted for, but various hints suggest that Lacon is a slave born in his master's

household who for that reason enjoys privileges and gives himself airs which Comatas, the older man and not so privileged, resents. (21)

A homosexual tiff may also be the root of their hostility. But I would like to suggest another interpretation: the poet connects two herdsmen with images of their home cities, Sybaris and Thurii, which were on the Gulf of Tarentum in southern Italy. Sybaris was founded by immigrants, mostly Achaeans, about 720 B.C. near the river Sybaris. By expanding its territory, dispatching colonies, and monopolizing Etruscan trade, Sybaris became powerful. The citizens enjoyed wealth and luxury; “*Sybarite* became a synonym for *epicurean*” (Durant, 160). But in 510 B.C. internal dissensions enabled its neighbor Croton to obliterate Sybaris; the neighboring river Crathis was diverted from its course to flow over the sacked city. Sybarite exiles, after twice unsuccessfully attempting to refound Sybaris, joined the Athenian foundation at Thurii in 443 B.C.. Thurii was a new colony established by Pericles near the site of Sybaris. Thurii quickly expelled Sybarite exiles, whereupon they established a new Sybaris on the river Traeis. “Despite *stasis*, quarrels with other Greeks, and Lucanian wars, Thurii flourished for a time, but finally became voluntarily a Roman dependency, and as such opposed Pyrrhus” (*The Oxford Classical Dictionary*, 1070), who was the most famous of the Molossian kings of Epirus (319-272 B.C.). Theocritus subjects all this history to slapstick.

In Idyll V Sybaris and Thurii coexist, but in ways quite different from the historical facts. We see the river Sybaris flow through Sybaris, the city of Lacon, who is called “the man of Sybaris” (21) by Comatas. Lacon sings, “And for me let Sybaris flow with honey and at dawn my girl dip honeycomb for water in her pitcher” (25). These are images of the ancient and wealthy Sybaris on the river Sybaris, not a new Sybaris on the river Traeis. The river Crathis flows through Thurii. Comatas sings, “Let Himera run milk instead of water, and Crathis redden with wine and its reeds bear fruit” (25). Himera is a river in Sicily. This deliberately jarring geographical detail is matched by an equally odd error when Comatas says: “This is the flock of Sibyrta of *Thurii*, and there, friend, you see the goats of

Eumaras of *Sybaris*" (Italics mine, 23). Lacon is a shepherd, "Sibyrtas's slave" (21), and "the man of Sybaris" (21), and Comatas is a goatherd and his master is Eumaras (21). Therefore, Comatas has it backwards; it should be: "This is the flock of Sibyrtas of Sybaris, and there, friend, you see the goats of Eumaras of Thurii." The effect of all this revisionism is nostalgia leavened with burlesque.

Idyll VI, "The Rustic Singers," is addressed to Aratus, a friend of Theocritus. The characters are Damoetas and Daphnis, both young neatherds. Daphnis proposes a singing contest, the subject of which is the love affair of Galatae, a sea-nymph, and Polyphemos, a gigantic Sicilian Cyclops. Daphnis' song is addressed to Polyphemos: "Galatae pelts thy flock with apples, Polyphemos, and calls thee cursed in love and goatherd" (27). He takes an indifferent attitude; he has no eye for her but sits piping sweetly. Daphnis describes her as "wanton as the dry thistledown . . . she flies the wooer, and when one woos not, follows" (28).

Damaetas in replying assumes the part of Polyphemos, whom he presents as having been coy all along: "By Pan, I saw her when she was pelting the flock, and she did not escape unseen—nay, by my one sweet eye, she did not, wherewith may I see to the end" (28). Then the poet inserts Telemus' prediction of the blinding of Polyphemos by Odysseus (*Odyssey*, 9, 507 ff.), and turns it into a taunt: "let Telemus, the seer, carry home the bale he prophesies for me and keep it for his children" (28). Damaetas has Polyphemos tease Galatea back with words and actions that highlight his grotesque vanity. The singing match thus ends with a laugh in a draw, the two rustics celebrating in a homoerotic embrace.

In Idyll VII, "The Harvest Festival," the characters are the poet, his two friends Eucritus and Amyntas, and Lycidas, a goatherd. The scene is the island of Cos at harvest time. The poet, here called Simichidas, is going to the farm of a noble family in the suburbs with two friends. On the way they meet Lycidas, "a wayfarer, a man of Cydonia" (30), much like Theocritus himself. Simichidas praises Lycidas as "the best of pipers" (30), but then ups the ante: "I too am a clear voice of the Muses, and all call me the best of singers" (31). The poet invites Lycidas to exchange country songs. Lycidas agrees, referring to Homer: "much [I hate] those

cocks of the Muses who lose their toil with crowing against the bard of Chios,” an allusion that cuts against itself ironically, suggesting that he is not a mere goatherd, but rather a disguised poet.

Lycidas sings of his love for Ageanax, who is sailing to Mitylene. He prays his sweet boy will have a fair voyage. His loneliness will be comforted by pipes: “And two shepherds shall pipe to me, one from Acharnae, and from Lycope one” (32). Gow notes: “Acharnae is in Attica, Lycope in Aetolia, but unrecorded places in Cos are perhaps meant” (32). In Theocritus’ day the Greek moved widely, and so the cities in question are perhaps outside Cos. Lycidas hopes to be healed by the song of Tityrus, who will sing of the love between Daphnis and Xenea, and of Comatas’ sacrifice of his master’s sheep to the Muses.

After Lycidas Simichidas follows with the words: “Friend Lycidas, many another thing the Nymphs have taught me too as I tended my herd upon the hills, fine songs, whose fame report, maybe, has carried even to the throne of Zeus” (32-33). This shows that Simichidas is also a faux-herdsman. Through him Theocritus suggests that the reputation of his pastoral songs was known to Ptolemy II at the Alexandrian court. Simichidas, in other word, is also Theocritus disguised. Simichidas sings of a love affair of his friend, Aratus, who has a deep desire for a boy named Philinus, but gets no pity from the boy. He advises Aratus to give up unrequited love and ends his song. Simichidas and Lycidas say good-bye and go their ways. At the end of this non-contest the scenery of “rich harvest and of fruit-time”(34) prevails, an image of pastoral that came down to so many English poets, including, of course, Keats.

In Idyll X, “The Labourers or Harvesters,” the characters are Bucaeus, a young reaper and Milon, an elderly foreman. Bucaeus lags behind other reapers. When Milon asks the reason, he answers: “*I am in love, Milon, and have been near ten days now*” (41). Milon, who has never experienced love, suggests that Bucaeus sing a love-song for his girl. He touchingly praises his sweetheart, whose name is Bombyca. He and his love are both slaves. To counter this love song, Milon sings a working song to encourage reaping. The Idyll ends with Milon’s advice: “And as for your starveling love, Bucaeus—tell it your mother when she stirs in bed of a

morning" (43). This sounds like another burlesque, but it was a Greek custom for a mother to speak in her son's behalf, as we see in the angry words of Polyphemus in Idyll XI:

My mother alone it is who wrongs me, and her I blame; for never once has she spoken a kindly word for me to thee [Galatea], though she sees me growing thinner day by day. I will tell her my head throbs, and both my feet, that she may suffer since I too suffer.

The tone of Idyll X is influenced by the setting, which is agricultural rather than truly pastoral. This helps account for its formality, its strict contrasts: young and old; love-sick and indifferent of love; negligent and diligent.

Idyll XI, "The Cyclops," is a letter by Theocritus to his friend, Nicias, who is a physician and poet. In his letter the poet says that the only remedy for love is minstrelsy or song: "No other remedy is there for love, Nicias, neither unguent, methinks, nor salve, save only the Muses" (44). His own muse leads him to have Polyphemus sing his love for Galatea.

Polyphemus' complaint is traditional: "O white Galatea, why dost thou repulse thy lover—whiter than curd to look on, softer than the lamb . . . ?" (45). But his self-awareness is striking; he knows why she flies: "It is because a shaggy brow stretches over all my forehead—one long and single brow from ear to ear; and single is the eye beneath, and broad the nostril above my lip" (45). This is in dramatic contrast to the vanity he evinced in Idyll VI: "it [the sea] reflected the gleam of my teeth whiter than Parian marble" (28). Instead, he now more wisely offers wealth and romance:

. . . I tend a thousand head of cattle, and draw and drink from them the finest milk. Cheese I lack not, neither in summer, nor autumn, nor in the depth of winter, and my racks are ever heavy. And I can pipe as none other Cyclops here, as often in the depths of night I sing of thee, my sweet honey-apple, and

of myself. And for thee I rear eleven fawns with collars all, and four bear-cubs.

Nay, come to me, and thou shalt fare well enough. (45)

We can see here a prototype for the love songs of later ages. The love itself seems hopeless, since Galatea is apparently a mermaid. So Polyphemus complains: "Alack that my mother bore me not with gills, that so I might have dived down to thee and kissed thy hand, if thou wilt not let me kiss thy mouth" (46). But at the end of the Idyll Theocritus says that song has the power of healing: "Thus did Polyphemus shepherd his love with minstrelsy, and fared easier than if he had spent gold" (46), thus foregrounding the notion of the healing power of pastoral intimated by the myth of Daphnis. Singing is an anodyne, but it is also its own reward.

Notes

- ¹ *The Greek Bucolic Poets* translated with brief notes by A. S. F. Gow (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1953), xviii. All the quotations of Theocritus' Idylls are from this edition. The figures in parentheses show the page number.
- ² *The Library of History of Diodorus of Sicily*, Book IV. *Diodorus of Sicily* with an English Translation by C. H. Oldfather in Twelve Volumes (Cambridge Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1961), III, 85. The Loeb Classical Library.
- ³ Cf. David M. Halperin, *Before Pastoral—Theocritus and the Ancient Tradition of Bucolic Poetry* (London: Yale University Press, 1983), 80-81.
- ⁴ *Homer's Odyssey* translated by S. O. Andrew. Everyman's Library (London: J. M. Dent & Sons, 1953), 114 and 177.
- ⁵ Cf. Halperin for an examination of the cup in Chapter Nine, "Three Scenes on an Ivy-Cup" (161-89). Also see Paul Alpers, *What is Pastoral?* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1996), 139-40.
- ⁶ *Greek Pastoral Poetry: Theocritus, Bion, Moschus, The Pattern Poems* translated with an introduction and notes by Anthony Holden (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1974). Penguin Classics.

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