

PHILITAS, THEOCRITUS, AND THORNY PLANTS: A RECONSIDERATION OF THEIR RELATIONSHIP

Hellenistic poets were obsessed with the pursuit of words: common or rare, traditional or newly-coined, variants of older forms or older forms with new meanings. According to Wimmel they were struggling to make “das Wort wieder zum Wert-Objekt”; in other words, they undertook a sort of “Wiederbelebung” of words¹. Theodore Papanghelis defined this tendency as a kind of linguistic materialism, detailing its theoretical background². By and large, words eventually became both a tool and an end in themselves; on the one hand, they were the vehicles of both poetic memory (to use Conte’s term)³ and experimentation (a key-idea for the poetry of that time); on the other hand, they retained their independence both as formal and sound units⁴.

Philitas of Cos occupies a pioneering position. He combined poetic creation with philological activity⁵ and his dual identity as both scholar and poet made him an important forerunner of avant-garde poetry, as is widely known (“poésie nouvelle”)⁶. Editors of his surviving poetic and grammatical

The main ideas of this paper were first presented at the 3th “Trends in Classics” conference (held in Thessaloniki) and then in the departments of Greek and Latin in University of Saarland (Saarbrücken) and UCL (London). In the present form I have added some more arguments on the matter. Many thanks are due to colleagues who read drafts and made useful suggestions: Prof. Lucia Athanassaki, Prof. Th. Papanghelis, Prof. Poulcheria Kyriakou, Dr. Pericles Christodoulou and especially an anonymous referee of “Prometheus”. The text of Theocritus is from A. S. F. Gow, *Theocritus*, vol. I (Cambridge 1952²).

¹ W. Wimmel, *Kallimachos in Rom. Die Nachfolge seines apoletischen Dichtens in der Augusteerzeit* (Wiesbaden 1960) 6.

² *Η ποιητική των Ρωμαίων Νεωτέρων* (Athens 1994) 58-68, 61.

³ G. B. Conte, *The Rhetoric of Imitation. Genre and Poetic Memory in Virgil and other Latin Poets* (Ithaca and London 1986).

⁴ P. Bing, *The Well-Read Muse. Present and Past in Callimachus and the Hellenistic Poets* (Ann Arbor 2008², Göttingen 1988¹) passim.

⁵ “Pratica filologica”: E. Dettori’s term, *La “filologia” di Filita di Cos (con qualche osservazione sulla filologia del III sec. a.C.)*, in: R. Pretagostini, *La letteratura ellenistica. Problemi e prospettive di ricerca* (Roma 2000) 183-98, 189. In general see S. Matthaios, *Ποιητής ἄμα καὶ κριτικός*, in: F. Manakidou and K. Spanoudakis (eds.), *Αλεξανδρινή Μούσα* (Athens 2008) 560-65 with further literature p. 570, n. 51. For a summary of the whole concept of the bond between poetry and philology and on pre-aristarchean scholarly activity see A. Rengakos, *The Hellenistic Poets as Homeric Critics* in: F. Montanari (ed.), *Omero tremila anni dopo* (Roma 2002) 143-57.

⁶ This is the opinio communis since U. von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff, *Hellenistische Dichtung in der Zeit des Kallimachos*, vol. 2 (Berlin 1924); e.g. M. Fantuzzi, *Il sistema letterario della poesia alessandrina nel III sec. a.C.*, in: G. Cambiano, L. Canfora, D. Lanza (eds.), *Lo spazio letterario della Grecia antica. I.2: L’Ellenismo* (Roma 1993) 31-73, especially 72 and E. Dettori, *Filita Grammatico: Testimonianze e frammenti* (Roma 2000)

work have succeeded in providing an important survey, which, for the most part, demonstrates the extent of his influence on poets and scholars of subsequent generations⁷. Theocritus, among others, seems to have been close to this literary novice. Ancient testimonies have him as a disciple of Philitas (T 14, T 26 Span.), while in the scholia on his poems we read about his debt to Philitan work (T 13). It is also possible that this relationship was based upon personal acquaintance, presumably at Cos, though there is no surviving material to verify this supposition. Especially, in *Id.* 7 he makes the young poet Simichidas declare that Philitas, together with Asclepiades (under the name Sikelidas), is a model “yet”⁸ to be surpassed, though he does not expand on why (7.39-42). This judgement has been interpreted in different ways by scholars who either saw in it a genuine sign of admiration or quite the opposite⁹ and recently A. D. Morrison argued for “avoidance of definitive narratorial or poetic authority”: we do not know who Lycidas is,

e.g. 185. P. Bing, *The Unruly Tongue: Philitas of Cos as Scholar and Poet*, “CP” 98, 2003, 330-48 (reprinted in Id., *The Scroll and the Marble. Studies in Reading and Reception in Hellenistic Poetry*, Ann Arbor 2009, 11-32).

⁷ L. Sbardella, *Filita: Testimonianze e frammenti poetici* (Roma 2000) 25, 37-8, 68-9, passim; Dettori (above, n. 6); K. Spanoudakis, *Philitas of Cos* (Leiden-Boston-Köln 2002) 40-52, 244-273 (on *Id.* 7), 273-307 (on Callimachus, Nicander, Philicus) and passim. Already the subject had been discussed in e.g. P. Fraser, *Ptolemaic Alexandria* (Oxford 1972) vol. I, 305ff. The older edition of G. Kuchenmüller, *Philetæ Coi Reliquiæ* (Diss. Berlin 1928) is still worth consulting.

⁸ On the meaning of οὐ πῶ (not yet), in connection with Simichidas’ declarations see e.g. Ch. Segal, *Simichidas; Modesty: Theocritus, Idyll 7.44*, “AJP” 95, 1974, 128-136 (cited from *Poetry and Myth in Ancient Pastoral. Essays on Theocritus and Virgil*, Princeton 1981, 167-175).

⁹ Spanoudakis (above, n. 7) who provided a list of direct echoes (40-42) admitted that in 7.39-41 Philitas’ alleged superiority is beset with ambiguities (41). Recently A. Sens in K. J. Gutzwiller, *The New Posidippus. A Hellenistic Poetry of Book* (Oxford 2005, 211-3) understood the passage as deeply indebted to Philitas’ poetry. M. Puelma, *Die Dichterbegegnung in Theokrits ‘Thalysien’*, “MH” 17, 1960, 144-64, 156-63 (and in: I. Fasel (ed.), *Labor et lima. Kleine Schriften und Nachträge, mit einem Geleitwort von Th. Gelzer*, Basel 1995, 217-39). The contrary view: P. Kyriakou, *Homeric Hapax Legomena in the Argonautica of Apollonius Rhodius*, Stuttgart 1995, 217, 223, especially 230f.; C. W. Müller, *Erysichthon. Der Mythos als narrative Metaphor im Demeterhymnos des Kallimachos*, Stuttgart 1987, 40-43, 89-97; G. Lohse, *Die Kunstaufassung im VII. Idyll Theokrits und das Programm des Kallimachos*, “Hermes” 94, 1966, 413-25, e.g. 420; G. Serrao, *La poetica del ‘nuovo stile’: dalla memoria aristotelica alla poetica della verità*, in: R. Bianchi Bandinelli (ed.), *Storia e civiltà dei Greci*. Vol. 9. *La cultura ellenistica. Filosofia, scienza, letteratura* (Milano 1977) 205-13 (who assumes that Simichidas, i.e. Theocritus, in ll. 35-41 takes distance both from *imitatio Homerica* and from his famous contemporaries, Philitas and Asclepiades, and declares his own individual bucolic poetry); and of the same author *La genesi del ‘poeta doctus’ e le aspirazioni realistiche nella poetica del primo Ellenismo*, in: E. Livrea and G. A. Privitera (eds.), *Studi in onore di A. Ardigzoni* (Roma 1978), vol. II, 911-48, 918-28.

nor Simichidas' precise relationship to Theocritus, and therefore we cannot be sure of what the personae are saying and of how they are expressing themselves¹⁰. The matter remains open for further consideration¹¹.

The aim of this paper is to reconsider the nature of this controversial relationship. However, in this survey two preliminary limitations need to be asserted. Firstly, Wilamowitz's rather axiomatic judgement that in Philitan poetry there is nothing "bucolic" ("Von Bukolik nichts darin") has been something of a guideline for scholars and to my knowledge nothing new has been added since this statement¹². Recently M. Fantuzzi, who was inquiring about "Filita bucolico", observed the Philitan interest in words from the rustic world and admitted only that Theocritus "bucolico sembra aver indicato in Filita un ideale di perfezione"¹³. Secondly, even if the term "bucolic" – let alone the term "pastoral" – is highly controversial as regards its conceptual range¹⁴, there is some consensus about recurrent thematic motifs, with plants of all sorts occupying pride of place among them¹⁵. In

¹⁰ A. D. Morrison, *The Narrator in Archaic Greek and Hellenistic Poetry* (Cambridge 2007) 265-8.

¹¹ Another issue is the Theocritean "poetica della verità": R. Pretagostini, *Incursioni bucoliche nella poesia non bucolica di Teocrito*, in: *Ricerche sulla poesia alessandrina*, II. *Forme allusive e contenuti nuovi* (Roma 2007), especially 43-44; and Serrao, *La genesi* (above, n. 9) 926. The notion of ἀλήθεια in Theocritus deserves closer examination, *inter alia*, in relation to Philitas.

¹² (above n. 6) vol. 1, 117, A. Cameron, *Callimachus and his Critics* (Princeton 1995) 418ff. Pace A. Couat, *La poésie alexandrine sous les trois premiers Ptolémées (324-222 av.J.-C.)* (Paris 1882) 77, 393, 400; Ph. E. Legrand, *Étude sur Théocrite* (Paris 1898) 154f. 'Status quaestionis' in R. Hunter, *A Study of Daphnis and Chloe* (Cambridge 1983) 78, n. 88; Fantuzzi (above, n. 6) 155, n. 27; and Dettori (above, n. 6) 7f., n. 1, 38. Further literature can be found in Manakidou in Manakidou & Spanoudakis (above n. 5), p. 136, n. 28.

¹³ (above, n. 6) 145-47, especially n. 4 and again 154f. Cf. Bing (above, n. 6) 335, n. 17, who speaks of "intriguing but ultimately speculative links... between Philitas and the early history of bucolic"; E. L. Bowie, *Theocritus' Seventh Idyll, Philetas and Longus*, "CQ" n.s. 35, 1985, 67-91, who saw in Lycidas a character from Philitas' *Demeter*, insists there is nothing improbable in the idea of a Philitan "bucolic", followed by R. L. Hunter, *Theocritus and the Archaeology of Greek Poetry* (Cambridge 1996) 18f., 20ff., who leaves the possibility open ("then the song of Lycidas may be full of Philitan echoes") and 27; and of the same author: *Theocritus. A Selection. Idylls 1, 3, 4, 6, 7, 10, 11 and 13* (Cambridge 1999) 162 (cited Hunter 1999); R. F. Thomas, *The Old Man Revisited: Memory, Reference and Genre in Virg., Georg. 4, 116-148*, "MD" 29, 1992, 35-70, went even further by seeing in Philitas the direct bucolic model for Vergil's *Bucolics*.

¹⁴ In general see the contributions in M. Fantuzzi and Th. Papanghelis (eds.), *Brill's Companion to Greek and Latin Pastoral* (Leiden-Boston 2006) and especially the editors' concise introduction.

¹⁵ A good classification in Ch. Segal, *Thematic Coherence and Levels of Style in Theocritus' Bucolic Idylls*, "WS" 11, 1977, 35-68 (above n. 8, 176-209, 204). Material in Homer: E. S. Forster, *Trees and Plants in Homer*, "CR" 50, 1936, 97-104. Material in Pindar

particular, in Theocritus plants and trees form an important part, not only of the bucolic poems but also of others, where the feeling of nature emerges through similes or descriptive vignettes¹⁶. In agreement with Ch. Segal that empiricism may be preferable to theory¹⁷, I shall focus upon the use of one particular category of names concerning thorny plants, and I shall examine, insofar as their choice can illuminate, Theocritus' position towards Philitas with respect to his treatment of words. Thorny plants by nature provide a suitable device for creating 'pricking' innuendos and, as such, within a society in which poets frequently challenged each other¹⁸, they could be used as fitting material for poetological implications. Speaking about Callimachus, Lelli spoke of "metafora botanica" and "immaginario simbolico botanico", and observed how the Romans adapted the Greek example: Vergil used the *humiles myricae* in his fourth *Eclogue* (l. 2) in order to define his own (low) bucolic poetry, and again in juxtaposition with the *durae quercus*

and his fondness of plants: G. McGracken, *Pindar's Figurative Use of Plants*, "AJPh" 55, 1934, 340-5. General important remarks on the ideal conception of plants in ancient art are now to be found in N. Himmelmann, *Grundlagen der griechischen Pflanzendarstellung* (Paderborn 2005) and H. Baumann, *Die griechische Pflanzenwelt in Mythos, Kunst und Literatur* (1982) = *Flora mythologica: griechische Pflanzenwelt in der Antike* (Vollständig überarbeitete Ausgabe). *Akanthus crescens*; 8, München 1982, 1993³, Zürich 2007. For a brief survey, see R. Nünlist, *Poetologische Bildersprache in der frühgriechischen Dichtung* (Stuttgart and Leipzig 1998), 206-223.

¹⁶ 12.3-8; 16.90-6; 17.101; 18.41-2; 13.12ff., 25 ff., 31-5, 40-2; 22.37-43. On a reconsideration of *Id.* 15 under the perspective of pastoral (in connection to 1, 7) see N. Krevans, *Is there Urban Pastoral? The Case of Theocritus' Id. 15*, in: Fantuzzi and Papanghelis (above, n. 14) 119-46. Especially Pretagostini (above, n. 11) 41-60.

¹⁷ Ch. Segal, *Theocritean Criticism and the Interpretation of the Fourth Idyll*, "Ramus" 1, 1972, 1-25 (= above n. 8, 85-109, 87 and now also in: B. Effe [ed.], *Theokrit und die griechische Bukolik* (Darmstadt 1986, Wege der Forschung 580) 176-211).

¹⁸ Callimachus' *Aetia*-Prologue and *Iambi* I and XIII are the best examples. For the difficulty of mutual relationships see e.g. the discussion in Cameron (above n. 12) e.g. 419ff. Posidippus, who seems to be a pupil of Philitas (e.g. H. Bernsdorff, *Anmerkungen zum neuen Poseidipp* (*P.Mil.Vogl. VIII 309*), in: "Göttinger Forum für Altertumswissenschaft" 5 [2002], 19), also held the opposite view from Callimachus about the *Lyde* of Antimachus and the merits of Archilochus (whom he mentions in his *Seal*). Together with Asclepiades Posidippus was included in the list of Telchines given in the Florentine scholia to the *Aetia*-Prologue (R. Pfeiffer, *Callimachus*, vol. I, p. 3, G. Massimilla, *Callimaco. Aitia. Libri primo e secondo*, Pisa 1996, 199ff.). For *SH 705* where Posidippus uses Callimachean motifs but with no apparent polemic see e.g. Cameron, *op. cit.* 183-4. Now see E. Lelli, *Posidippo e Callimaco* in M. Di Marco, B. M. Palumbo Stracca, E. Lelli, *Posidippo e gli altri. Il poeta, il genere, il contesto culturale e letterario. Atti dell'incontro di studio*, Roma 14-15 maggio 2004 (Pisa-Roma 2005) 77-132. On a possible allusion against Posidippus in *epigr.* 15 Pf. see K. Tsantsanoglou, *Ο διάλογος τῶν ποιητῶν*, in: A. Βασιλειάδης et al. (eds.), *Δημητρίω στέφανος* (Thessaloniki 2004) 217-32 and of the same author, *The λεπτότης of Aratus*, "Trends in Classics" 1, 2009, 55-89, 87.

(l. 30) and in the opening programmatic elegy of his fourth book Propertius spoke of old Ennius' *hirsuta corona* in contrast with his own ivy (ll. 61-64)¹⁹.

Philitas and Theocritus were deeply concerned with words, as any poet should be. To be sure, not long ago, Aristotle had proposed guidelines on how to use words in poetry and rhetorical prose, which became a reference point for all considerations of poetry thereafter. In the *Poetics*, he declares that diction is to be both precise and not base: λέξεως... ἀρετὴ σαφὴ καὶ μὴ ταπεινὴν εἶναι (1458a18). On the one hand, the highest degree of clarity (σαφήνεια) results from the use of the so-called κύρια ὀνόματα, i.e. standard words for things, words that everybody uses (κύριον ᾧ χρῶνται ἕκαστοι, 1457b)²⁰. On the other hand, to achieve a style that “diverges from the common idiom” (ἐξαλλάττουσα τὸ ἰδιωτικόν, 1458a21) we should use the so-called ξενικὰ ὀνόματα, unfamiliar terms, like strange words (*glossai*), metaphors and long (lengthened) forms; in other words, “everything that deviates from the ordinary modes of speech” (πᾶν τὸ παρὰ κύριον). It is explicitly stated that too many metaphors form a riddle (ἀίνιγμα), too many strange words are mere jargon (= unintelligible speech). In conclusion, the commensurate combination of clarity (σαφήνεια) along with the avoidance of triviality (ἰδιωτικόν, ταπεινόν) could only be achieved “by the proper use of the poetical forms” (ἔστιν δὲ μέγα μὲν τὸ ἐκάστῳ τῶν εἰρημένων πρεπόντως χρῆσθαι).

At first sight, Theocritus is a completely different case from Philitas. We are certain he never produced any work on poetry or on philological matters or glossography. However, there is consensus that “indirect philological preoccupation”, an accurate term introduced by Cessi²¹, can be detected within his poetry. More than once he applied the (again indirect) *interpretatio Homerica*²². As regards language and languages in his poems, he did

¹⁹ *Critica e polemiche letterarie nei Giambi di Callimaco* (Alessandria 2004) 57-90, 60. Cf. on both Roman poets Th. Papanghelis, *Από τη βουκολική ευτοπία στην πολιτική ουτοπία* (Athens 1995) 268-70, 279-82. R. Hunter, *The Shadow of Callimachus. Studies in the reception of Hellenistic poetry at Rome* (Cambridge 2006) passim and in general St. Hinds, *Allusion and intertext: dynamics of appropriation in Roman poetry* (Cambridge 1998).

²⁰ For the history of the term see S. Matthaios, *Kyrion Onoma. Zur Geschichte eines grammatischen terminus*, in: P. Swiggers and A. Wouters, *Ancient Grammar. Content and Context* (Leuven-Paris 1996) 55-77. The English transl. is by W. H. Fyfe, *Aristotle's Art of Poetry. A greek View of Poetry and Drama* (Oxford 1948).

²¹ C. Cessi, *La poesia ellenistica* (Bari 1912). See F. Manakidou in Manakidou & Spanoudakis (above n. 5) 147 with n. 51.

²² See Rengakos (above, n. 5), especially 150-51, Matthaios (above, n. 5) 545-643, 611-13 on στομάλιμνον *Id.* 4.2 and its Homeric background. Cf. *Id.* 13.48 on the Homeric

not limit himself to using a fictive Doric dialect²³, of which he was consciously proud. Let us remember the words from the mouth of his Syracusan ladies in the well-known passage of *Id.* 15: “It’s Syracusans you’re ordering about, and let me tell you we’re Corinthians by descent like Bellerophon. We talk Peloponnesian, and I suppose Dorians may talk Dorian” (15.80-95, 91-93). In fact, in his poems he showed himself to be more than just a single-dialect man, since, as far as his style and themes are concerned, he was a multi-sided poet²⁴. To be sure, Theocritus was not simply aware of dialectal divergence; he actually made productive use of it. In *Idyll* twelve, two different dialectal forms define the central persons of the erotic exposé: the lover is the Amyklaen εἰσπνηλός (i.e. Inspirer) and the beloved is the Thessalian ἀίτης (i.e. Hearer) (12.10-16). K. Latte has highlighted the fact that Theocritus (whom he characterised as “der Schüler des koischen Dichters”, i.e. of Philitas) is a prime example of “the practical application of such glossographical collections” (i.e. of Philitas) in this poem and suggested that Theocritus’ provision of the explicitly given geographical origin reveals his intention of it being interpreted as a citation of a glossographical work²⁵. Taken literally, both glosses recall the double-sided procedure upon which traditional poetry is based, namely oral creation/composition and performance and its oral reception; through them Theocritus imbues this archaic, though now old-fashioned, category of poetry with a new, erotic content, and thus makes it just one more ingredient of his poetic voice, where multi-dialectism plays an important part and as such transgresses the old rules of dialectal conservatism. In all, Theocritus’ interest in dialect matters is fully incorporated into his poetry and is deprived of any trace of self-assertive erudition.

meaning of ἀργεῖος, white (M. G. Bonanno, *Candido Ila [Theocr. XIII 49]* in: *Mnemosynon. Studi in onore di A. Ghiselli* [Bologna 1989] 51-53).

²³ This was the opinion of Wilamowitz (above, n. 6); ‘status quaestionis’ in: J. G. J. Abbenes, *The Doric of Theocritus. A Literary Language*, in: M. A. Harder, R. F. Regtuit, G. C. Wakker (eds.), *Theocritus* (Groningen 1996), 1-19, 1-5.

²⁴ G. Fabiano, *Fluctuation in Theocritus’ Style*, “GRBS” 12, 1971, 517-37 (= B. Effe [ed.], *Theokrit und die griechische Bukolik*, Darmstadt 1986, 13-35) introduced the term “stylistic fluctuation”, which is the best term for Theocritean style. Cf. “polifonia caratteristica della poetica teocritea”: Fantuzzi (above, n. 6) 190f. (with brief discussion of *Id.* 4 in n. 109).

²⁵ *Glossographika*, “Philologus” 80, 1925, 136-74 (= *Kleine Schriften zu Religion, Recht, Literatur und Sprache der Griechen und Römer*, München 1968, 631-666, especially 654 and n. 54). See also R. L. Hunter, *Speaking in Glossai. Dialect Choice and Cultural Politics in Hellenistic Poetry*, in: W. M. Bloomer (ed.), *The Contest of Language Before and Beyond Nationalism* (Notre Dame, Indiana 2005) 187-206, especially 191-92. Of the same author in M. Fantuzzi & R. Hunter, *Tradition and Innovation in Hellenistic Poetry* (Cambridge 2004) 371ff.

Unlike the poetry of Theocritus, glossographical and poetical activity run in tandem in Philitas' work, and any approach to his poetry ought to take into account this double-sided identity²⁶. When we look at his surviving poetic oeuvre we are confronted with a rather disappointing truth. Unless our evidence is misleading because of the scant evidence available to us, Degani was right to claim that his style was simple and natural, while his language was eclectic but not glossematic in an exaggerated way²⁷. As for strange words, there are indeed very few – to be more precise, there are very few extant fragments, and if they had survived due to their unusual diction, then the question as to why there are not more of them naturally arises: ἄεμμα (9 Sb.=16 Sp.), δολιχάορος (10 Sb.=21 Sp.), μελαμπέτροιο (11 Sb.=6 Sp.), ἄστλιγῆ (28 Sb.=11 Sp.). In that respect, he followed Aristotle, who had warned against the overuse of glosses that leads to barbarisms (*Poet.* 1458a 17f.). In his concise exposition of Philitan language, Sbardella pointed out that Philitas imitates Homer *cum variatione*²⁸, thus showing his knowledge of the Ionic epic and elegiac poetry (pp. 60-62, and passim in his commentary). We might also add that he exploited tragic language as well (Kuchennüller 41 spoke of “sententia magis tragica, a Phileta lingua Homeric pronuntiata”; e.g. Sbardella, pp. 111-2, 120-1); lyric poetry also seems to have influenced some of the ideas expressed in the surviving poetry (e.g. 4.1-2, 3; 5.2; 7.2, numbering Sbardella). In a total of 24 or 25 known lemmata of Philitas' glossographical researches²⁹, 6 are glosses connected to the world of plants but nothing more can be said on the matter (for instance, the interest could have been in sympotic or religious matters and not in botanology)³⁰: ἰάκχα (12), ἴσθμιον (13), ὑποθυμῖς (ὑπυθυμῖς Dettori 14), ἔλινός (15: ἔλινός Dettori, Sp.), στάχυν ὄμπνιον (16), ἄμαλλα (18). On the other hand, botanical interest is disappointingly scanty in his surviving poetic work. We only know of three plant names: a speaking alder tree (κλήθηρη) within a poem preserved as a paignion (12 Sb. = 25 Sp.), a plane tree that appears in an unknown context in the elegiac poem *Demeter* (fr. 22

²⁶ I am not dealing here with his lexicographical method on which see Dettori (above, n. 6) 25-30 (and on Homer 30-32), especially 24 n. 58 on the relationship of his lexicographical research with his poetry; Spanoudakis (above, n. 7) 390-95. On the Aristarchean *Πρὸς Φιλίταν* see e.g. K. Lehrs, *De Aristarchi studiis Homericis* (Heidelberg 1882³) 22.

²⁷ E. Degani, *L'elegia*, in: R. Bianchi Bandinelli (above, n. 9) 300-14, 305: “Lo stile appare semplice e naturale, la lingua scelta ma non glossematica καθ' ὑπερβολήν”.

²⁸ Cf. Spanoudakis (above, n. 7) 115 for cryptic language in fr. 4. E.g. fr. 20 Sb. (17 Sp.) δμωίδες, the apocope of ζ in αἰδώ fr. 23 Sb. (5 Sp.) and in ἔρι fr. 20 Sb. (17 Sp.), the use of νη- as intensive instead of the privative Homeric use in fr. 24 (7 Sp.).

²⁹ The numbers are given in Dettori's edition. fr. 25 D. = 15 Sp. Θεσσαλαί taken as part of *Demeter* by Spanoudakis is treated as a gloss by Dettori.

³⁰ See Dettori (above, n. 6) 30.

Sb. = 8 Sp.: πλάτανος instead of the Homeric form πλατάνιστος 2 x): Because of this lack of context I would not even attempt to reconstruct a *locus amoenus* and its function there³¹, given that we cannot be sure whether the fragment belonged to the poem at all. We cannot make great play with this but, to my mind, the scattered material we have at our disposition allows us to get a picture of the way Theocritus operated with the only Philitan images known to us that could be called bucolic ante litteram.

We know that Philitas made a thorny plant the centre of a couplet now preserved by Antigonus of Carystus in his (probably spurious and not a genuine work) *Mirabilia* 8 (fr. 18 Sb. = 20 Sp.). Although its provenance is not known, the couplet has the form of a riddle, γρίφος, and as such it has been associated with the paignia collection, although a context of symposiastic paraenesis cannot be excluded. Spanoudakis who, in agreement with Cessi, attributed it to the *Demeter*³², also admitted here that there is a Philitan allusion to the banqueters' habit of exchanging riddles among themselves³³:

γηρύσαιτο δὲ νεβρός ἀπὸ ζωὴν ὀλέσασσα
ὀξείης κάκτου τύμμα φυλαξαμένη.

Its content is a curiosity: a dead fawn can utter a voice provided it wasn't pricked by the wound of a sharp plant called κάκτος. The riddle refers to the pipes made of the bones of a fawn and is built around the curious paradox of a dead animal that can speak³⁴. What we have here is a metonymy of ἀύλος in νεβρός, modelled on the commoner interplay between χέλυς and λύρη³⁵. Apart from the unusual word κάκτος and the strange piece of information it

³¹ As Spanoudakis (above, n. 7) 155-8 did.

³² Cessi (above, n. 21) 182 saw here the wanderings of the goddess in Sicily, where the plant κάκτος is to be found.

³³ Spanoudakis (above, n. 7) 209-13. Already R. Reitzenstein, *Epigramm und Skolion. Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der alexandrinischen Dichtung*, Giessen 1893, 179-80 (cf. Kuchenmüller above, n. 5, 64f.); see Powell: *non iniuria*. Sbardella (above, n. 7) 147 agrees without excluding the hypothesis of Maass that it belonged to *Demeter* and wonders about a context of symposiastic paraenesis, following Nowacki.

³⁴ Sbardella (above, n. 7) 148 remarks that Theocritus in 1.136 and his imitator in 9.7-8 imitated the Philitan use of the γαρύειν. Bing (above, n. 6) 342, who also combined Athenaeus' information that the flute made from deer bones is a Theban invention, asks if Philitas was interested not just in obscure traditions, but in the changes brought on them as they shift from one locality to another. Quite true.

³⁵ Another strange construction of pipes is reported by Aristotle (preserved in Antigonus 169): the prickly plant ἄκανθα was used for the producing part of a musical instrument περὶ δὲ τῶν φυτῶν τῆς ἀκάνθης εἶδος Ἀριστοτέλην φάσκειν περὶ τὴν Ἐρύθειαν εὐρίσκεσθαι διαποίκιλον τὴν χροάν, ἐξ οὗ πλήκτρα γίνεσθαι... See for instance Callimachus in *Hymn. Artem.* 244-5 who ascribed to Athena the invention of the bone-pipes without further mentioning of the curiosity or the (expected?) gloss κάκτος: οὐ γὰρ πω νέβρεια δι' ὅστέα τετρήναντο/ ἔργον Ἀθηναίης ἐλάφω κακόν.

provides, the medical term τύμμα lends a prosaic character to the fragment³⁶, and the quality of style is due to the Homeric variation, as in most surviving fragments of Philitas: we have the poetic tmesis in the expression ἀπὸ ψυχὴν ὀλέσσασα, which in turn is a variation upon the common Homeric expression ἀπὸ θυμόν (alternatively ψυχὴν) ὀλέσαι/ὀλέσαντες (examples in Span. ad l.); at the same time, using the word ζῶν for an animal is a subtle un-Homeric touch (Homer uses θυμός for animals).

As for the history of κάκτος before Philitas, Athenaeus (2.70d-71c) collected all the excerpts where the word occurred under the heading of κινάρα³⁷: it occurs in the work of the Syracusan Epicharmus, who mentioned it among edible vegetables, ἐδώδιμα λάχανα (*PCG* 158.2, 5-6). Two peripatetic researchers, Phainias of Eressus (περὶ φυτῶν fr. 38 Wehrli) and Theophrastus (*HP* 6.4)³⁸, inform us that the plant, κάκτος Σικελικὴ, is a thorny plant (ἀκανθῶδες φυτόν) called so only in Sicily and that it is not to be found in Greece. In Theophrastus the plant is likened to a sort of artichoke with edible stems and broad, spiny leaves (κινάρα, κάρδος/ κάκτος). Antigonus has explained Philitas' curiosity by using ἄκανθα as the usual word for the Sicilian κάκτος: περὶ τὴν ἐν τῇ Σικελίᾳ ἄκανθαν τὴν καλουμένην κάκτον. In his lemma of the word Hesychius definitely refers to the Philitan fragment: κ 363 Latte κάκτος ἄκανθα, ὕφ' ἧς ἐὰν πληγῆ νεβρός, ἀχρεῖα ἴσχει τὰ ὀστᾶ εἰς αὐλούς. We shall return to this equation of κάκτος with ἄκανθα.

Although Alice Linsdell has declared that it was a mystery how Philitas came across such a Sicilian gloss, the mystery is by no means hard to resolve since it is known that Philitas, as a glossographer, was interested in at least one Syracusan gloss/dialect³⁹. As I argued earlier, we are at a loss with his

³⁶ Sbardella (above, n. 7) 148. On Callimachus' use of medical knowledge see G. W. Most, *Callimachus and Herophilus*, "Hermes" 109, 1981, 188-96.

³⁷ U. von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff, *Antigonos von Karystos* (Berlin 1881) 21 n. 12 assumes a connection between the three authors (Philitas, Antigonus, Hesychius) and that Antigonus' interpretation also stood in Athenaeus' text and was omitted by the epitomiser. Antigonus characterised Philitas as ἰκανῶς... περίεργος (T 9 Span.), originally meaning the man who takes needless trouble.

³⁸ ἡ δὲ κάκτος καλουμένη περὶ Σικελίαν μόνον, ἐν τῇ Ἑλλάδι δὲ οὐκ ἔστιν (more about see Spanoudakis above, n. 7, 214). Theophrastus describes it under the section of spinous plants (ἀκανθική). In the Loeb edition, A. Hort (1926) rightly translated it with "cardoon" (at p. 31).

³⁹ *Was Theocritus a Botanist?*, "G&R" 6, 1937, 78-93, 85. Spanoudakis (above, n. 7) 214-5. For the Syracusan gloss κύπελλα fr. 38 Sp.= 10 D. with the bizarre meaning of crumbs of barley cake and bread left on the table, i.e. a synonym of σκύβαλλα, see e.g. Bing (above, n. 6) 337-38 who spoke of "dissonance". In Homer it is always the drinking cup (10X Homeric, cf. Antim. fr. 24 Matthews= 22.2 Wyss). In this case we are dealing with a homonymy and this could be a hint that Philitas was also interested in such cases in matters of semantics, as

surviving poetry, where not many verbal eccentricities remain. This particular couplet is one of the few containing such a gloss. Along with its strange content, the word was chosen exactly because it was a gloss – apart from that, presumably, Philitas also wished to playfully evoke the notion of *κακός* through the use of *κάκτος* and the line has a strong sound with *ξ, τ*⁴⁰. Apparently he found the plant (and its name) in the Peripatetic bibliography with which he was thoroughly familiar and went a step further by combining the rare word with a strange piece of information. In all likelihood, he was the first to introduce that word into Hellenistic poetry⁴¹. Whereas the poetological implication is apparent once we solve the metonymy, nothing more can be induced from the lines with respect to Philitas' attitude towards the music produced by those pipes, i.e. towards the bucolic genre, whose beginnings scholars are inclined to connect with Sicilian folk poetry⁴².

In turn, Theocritus uses the word within a simile that hints at a similar incident. In the opening of *Idyll* ten, a reaper compares a companion of his who is lagging behind with an ewe "... when a thorn [sic in Gow's rendering] has pricked her in the foot" (10.4):

ὥσπερ ὄις (sc. ἀπολείπεται) ποιίνας, ἅς τὸν πόδα κάκτος ἔτυψε.

The wording recalls Philitas' couplet: *κάκτος ἔτυψε* is a variation on the Philitan *κάκτου τύμμα* and *ὄις* is synonym for the Philitean *νεβρός* that otherwise is often used by Theocritus (5x in feminine as in Philitas, see Gow at 11.40, p. 215). The gloss appears at the opening of a story that is not strictly bucolic, inasmuch as it refers to reapers instead of herdsmen⁴³. It has even been shown to display stylistic differences from the so-called pure bucolics⁴⁴. Apart from the obvious Hesiodic theme of work ideology, the poem is primarily concerned with love and its incompatibility with everyday

shown in ἴσθμιον (fr. 13 D.). Aristotle was again a pioneer in this field; the book of J.K. Ward, *Aristotle on Homonymy: Dialectic and Science* (Cambridge 2008) could be used as a starting point for further thoughts. This is out of the scope of my presentation.

⁴⁰ For word-play in his poetry see fr. 2 Sb.= 3 Sp. Ἀτραπός and ἀ+τρέπω; fr. 3.1= 2.1 Sp. Ἐπικρατεῖ-ἐπὶ κρατί; fr. 6.3-4= 10.3-4 Sp. ἀλλά/ἄλλα. It is interesting that in *Id.* 4 Battus often uses *κακός* and its compounds (13, 22, 27, 52, 63: as a sign of his *ethopoia* see Segal, above n. 8, 92); quite the opposite is true for Simichidas, who, in *Id.* 7, is fond of the epithet *ἔσθλός*.

⁴¹ For his influence by the peripatetic interest in paradoxography focusing on animals and plants see Spanoudakis (above, n. 7) 211, 214, and in general about his association with Peripatus 68-72.

⁴² K. J. Dover, *Theocritus. Select Poems* (London 1971) LXIII-LXV. H. Beckby, *Die griechischen Bukoliker. Theokrit-Moschos-Bion* (Meisenheim am Glan 1975) 347f.

⁴³ A quite different approach was made by Fr. Cairns, *Theocritus Idyll 10, "Hermes"* 98, 1970, 38-44 for the symposiastic topos of the content; he sees in it a highly sophisticated poem.

⁴⁴ Hunter 1999, 200.

life and the labour of working people; in all, this theme of work seems stylized rather than realistic and the poem's main concern is to set up a tension between two opposing attitudes of life. The style owes much to folk wisdom and folk beliefs in the form of proverbs⁴⁵; the fact that tradition has preserved gnomic utterances in the surviving lines of Philitas cannot mean that we have here a Philitan influence on the Theocritean style, since this material has been saved because of the aims of Stobaeus' anthology. Be that as it may, the idyll concludes with a ritual song in honour of Demeter, the most appropriate deity of fields and agriculture (and apparently the area of South Italy); Spanoudakis, who saw there a link to Philitas and his *Demeter*, suggested a further allusion to Philitas' *Demeter* in the singing of a lark in l. 50 in connection with ἐπιτυμβίδιοι κορυδαλλίδες in 7.23, 141 κόρυδοι and the role he assumed for birds associated with chthonic Demeter (p. 251). But remarks of this speculative nature need to be treated with caution. If we knew more about Philitas' *Demeter* the analogies might have proved more numerous than we can identify with any certainty at present. What is more important for our investigation is that this particular idyll, similar to others with an identified geographical setting, has no Italian associations⁴⁶. While Gow (p. 194) and Lembach thought it possible that Theocritus borrowed the gloss κάκτος from Philitas, both denied any connection with Sicily⁴⁷. Lately Hunter (p. 202) has denied any connection with the Philitan fragment, although he also believed that the word cannot form a solid basis upon which to seek a setting for *Id.* 10. As to the identification of the plant, Gow (p. 194) invoked Athenaeus' instances of the word that "seems to denote some form of thistle or artichoke"; however, in his translation he ignored this meaning and renders it with the rather misleading "thorn"; Lembach insisted that the plant is not a cactus, but after citing all the known sources (including Philitas) refused to identify it (79-80). Based on Theophrastus, Athenaeus and Lembach, Hunter also connected it with an unidentified plant with edible stems and a broad, spiny leaf.

The question why Theocritus uses this word instead of another with a cognate meaning and without any dialectal colouring can be answered if we consider it in relation with Theocritus' treatment of other unusual words in the same poem. I shall concentrate upon words in which we know Philitas

⁴⁵ For proverbs in Philitas fr. 7.2 Sb.= 13 Sp.; 3.2 Sb.=2.2 Sp.; 23 D.= 5 Sp. In general see Spanoudakis (above, n. 7) 79, who connects it with the Aristotelian influence.

⁴⁶ On the contrary, M. Strano, *Considerazioni sull'idillio X di Teocrito*, "Helikon" 15/16, 1976, 454-60 argues for its Sicilian setting because he finds the whole poem based on reality. Thanks to Linsdell (above, n. 39), we know that Theocritus has been scientifically accurate in his botanical knowledge.

⁴⁷ Cf. K. Lembach, *Die Pflanzen bei Theokrit* (Heidelberg 1970) 80.

also showed interest. One of them is the word ἀμαλλοδέται that is an Iliadic δις λεγόμενον (*Il.* 18.552-5): δράγματα... πίπτον ἔραζε./ ἄλλα δ' ἀμαλλοδετήρες... δέοντο./ τρεῖς δ' ἄρ' ἀμαλλοδετήρες ἐφέστασαν.../ παῖδες δραγμαεύοντες⁴⁸. In Theocritus the word appears within the rural context of the Lityerses song that Milon sung and the way it stands surely presupposes in variatione the Iliadic model: σφίγγει, ἀμαλλοδέται, τὰ δράγματα (binders of sheaves to bind up the sheaves, 57). Previously, Philitas had not been interested in the meaning of the word ἀμαλλα but in the pedantic exactness of the number of sheaves constituting a bundle, that is two hundred (Hes. α 3417 ἀμαλλαι = 18 D. = 46 Sp.)⁴⁹. A similar attitude is recognisable in the rare word ἄσκαλα (un-hoed, *non subactus, incultus*), which derives from the verb σκάλλω (hoeing; cf. σκάπτειν), which in Theocritus is again fully inserted in the reality of the rustic world (1.14; cf. e.g. Herodotus 2.14.11)⁵⁰. The same root is recognisable in the Philitan gloss σκάλλιον (7 D.) or σκαλλίον (35 Sp.) that has a totally divergent meaning, i.e. a small-size drinking cup used by Aeolians for libations⁵¹: κυλίκιον μικρόν, ᾧ σπένδουσιν Αἰολεῖς, ὡς Φιλητᾶς φησιν ἐν Ἀτάκτοις; cf. Hes. σ 817 Hansen σκαλλίον κυλίκιον μικρόν. Οἱ δὲ σκαλλόν. Whereas σκάλλ- resonates with the rustic world as described in the Theocritean idyll, Philitas was exclusively interested in its dialectal use⁵². The same process of exonerating any dialectal colouring is to be applied to κάκτος too. Theocritus uses the word in a similar situation to the one described by Philitas but deprives it of any glossematic character at least because its dialectal colouring has no relevance for the understanding of the context within which it appears: as with the above mentioned strange words κάκτος is also treated as one part of the poetic world.

The same thorn-pricking scene in the countryside reappears in *Idyll* 4, which offers a rustic snapshot consisting of a dialogue between two different characters: Battus, whose identity and profession remain unclarified, mostly seeks to humiliate his partner with his questions and remarks, and the naïve shepherd, Korydon, who for the most part replies to Battus' ironic questions.

⁴⁸ “Handfuls of the crop which are mown at one time and then bound together into ἄμιλλαι”: Hunter 1999, 212; δράγματα again in Homeric *Il.* 11.69 and in Theocr. 7.157. According Hesychius (α 3402) ἀμάλαι are αἱ δέσμαι τῶν δραγμάτων.

⁴⁹ Bing (above, n. 6) 334-5 provides a vivid image of the meticulous scholar asking the farmers themselves somewhere in the countryside.

⁵⁰ Theophrastus mentions it together with βοτανίζειν (*De plant.* 3.20.9) and Pollux knows of a σκαλίς as implement (*Onomast.* 1.245.5, 10.129.1); cf. Hesych. σ 816 Hansen σκαλίς: σκαφίον), an etymology that probably points to it being made of wood.

⁵¹ Spanoudakis (above, n. 7) 361-2, Dettori (above, n. 6) 81-86.

⁵² Dettori (above, n. 6) 81 sees in the Philitean σκάλλιον an analogy to the Theocritean i.e. Homeric κισσύβιον, that is also used for libation by the end of the poem.

By the end of the dialogue, Battus is pricked by a thorn, like the ewe in *Idyll* ten, and is saved by Korydon (ll. 50-57):

BA ... ἄ γὰρ ἄκανθα
 ἄρμοι μ' ᾧδ' ἐπάταξ' ὑπὸ τὸ σφυρὸν. Ὡς δὲ βαθεῖαι
 ἀτρακτυλλίδες ἐντί. ...
 εἰς ταύταν (sc. τὰν πόρτιν) ἐτύπην χασμεύμενος...
 55 ὁσσίχον ἐστὶ τὸ τύμμα, καὶ ἀλίκον ἄνδρα δαμάσδει.
 KO εἰς ὄρος ὄκχ' ἔρπης, μὴ νήλιπος ἔρχεο, Βάττε·
 ἐν γὰρ ὄρει ῥάμνοι τε καὶ ἀσπάλαθοι κομῶντι.

57 (Hunter crit. app.: ῥάμνοι codd., κάκτοι Π¹² Σ v.l.: βάπτου Π¹² v.l. ut. vid.)

“A thorn has just got *me* [sic italics Gow] one here under the ankle. How thick those spindle-thorns grow. ... it was after her (i.e. a heifer) I was gaping when it pricked me... What a little wound to master a man as big as me. (KO) When you go on the hill, Battus, don't come barefoot. Thorns and brambles flourish on the hill.” (transl. Gow).

Indisputably, what Theocritus makes here is a tour de force of botanical knowledge⁵³ by naming a handful of thorny plants (or at least he seems aware of their names): ἄκανθα (thorn, better artichoke as we shall see), ἀτρακτυλλίδες (spindle-thorns), ῥάμνοι (buckthorn), and ἀσπάλαθοι (camelthorn: Gow at 24.89; here he renders it with “brambles”). Philitas' thorn-pricking poem can be detected in ἐτύπην and τύμμα⁵⁴ and in the variatio βαθεῖαι of the Philitan ὄξεια⁵⁵. Taking into account that the scene of the poem is, as Gow puts it, “at any rate *prima facie*, the neighbourhood of Croton” (p. 76), it could be that the avoidance of the Sicilian κάκτος (in whatever meaning Theocritus understood it) is to be understood here as a sign of dialect accuracy. In fact, already ancient readers could not but help think of the Philitan background. In l. 57 POxy. 4432.9 (saec. II p.C., published in 1997) gives the lectio κάκτοι instead of ῥάμνοι. The same interchangeability of κάκτος and ῥάμνος is found⁵⁶ again in Σ Theocr. 4.57a (γράφεται καὶ κάκτοι) and in an ancient commentary on Theocritus in this papyrus. Furthermore, the scholiast (Σ 4.57b) comments on one of the other thorny plants, ἀσπάλαθοι, in a way that recalls the Philitan κάκτος-fragment: ἀσπάλαθοι: εἶδος ἀκάνθης, ἧ πλεγέντες οἱ ἔλαφοι ἀποθνή-

⁵³ On collections with glosses on flora see Latte (above, n. 25) 653f.

⁵⁴ Already emphatically Sbardella (above, n. 7) 148.

⁵⁵ Gow: “thick, close-set” like ὕλη βαθεῖη ll. 5.555. ἀντὶ τὸ ὡς μετέωροι καὶ ὑπερμεγέθεις Σ. Also Lembach (above, n. 47) 78: “Wie dicht gedrängt aber auch die ἀτρ. hier wachsen!”

⁵⁶ ἐν γὰρ ὄρει ῥάμνοι (codd.: κάκτοι Σ).

σκουσιν⁵⁷. There is another common thistle that Theocritus knew, as we shall see below, which is not mentioned here: this is βάτος (thorn bush), which is obviously avoided because of the witty word-play that has a Bramble-man (Βάττος) pricked by his botanic namesake⁵⁸.

In order to find a convincing explanation for the reasoning that led to the omission of kaktos and the concomitant selection of thorny plants, the nature of the named thorny plants need to be closely examined.

To start with, all thorny plants share a common nature. They are not just repellent and harmful for rustic people; they were also classified as *infelices* that, according the distinction given by Plinius between *felices* and *infelices arbores*, were under the protection of chthonic deities and therefore believed to have connections with the Underworld: *infelices autem existimantur damnataeque religione quae neque seruntur umquam neque fructum ferunt* (NH 16.108). Lembach, who collected all sources indicating this common sinister nature, has outlined that they “were held for sterile and sacred to the chthonic deities”⁵⁹. We are informed that this is actually the nature of all the named thorny plants of the poem. Theophrastus gave the synonym φόνος (HP 6.4, cf. 9.1) for ἀτρακτυλλίδες (identified with distaff-thistle, modern Greek: τῆς γυναικας τ’ ἀτράχτι) due to “the fact that its juice turns blood-red on contact with skin”⁶⁰. The information given by Dioscorides Pedanius shares a similar line of thought: οἱ δὲ κνήκων ἄγριον καλοῦσιν. Ἄκανθά ἐστὶν εὐοικῦα κνήκῳ, μικρότερα δὲ πολλῶ φύλλα ἔχουσα ἐπ’ ἄκρῳ τῷ ῥαβδίῳ τὸ δὲ πλεῖον γυμνόν, ᾧ καὶ αἱ γυναῖκες χρώνται ἀντὶ ἀτράκτου. ἔχει δὲ καὶ κόμην ἐπ’ ἄκρου ἀκανθώδη, ἄνθος ὠχρόν, ρίζα δὲ λεπτή, ἄχρηστος. Ταύτης τὰ φύλλα καὶ ἡ κόμη καὶ ὁ καρπὸς λεία ποθέντα σὺν πεπέρει καὶ οἴνω σκορπιοπλήκτους ὠφελεῖ. Ἱστοροῦσι δὲ ἔνιοι τοὺς πληθύντας, ἄχρι μὲν ἂν κρατῶσι τὴν πόαν, ἀνωδύνους μένειν, ἀποτιθεμένους δὲ ἀλγεῖν (3.93).

⁵⁷ Spanoudakis (above, n. 7) 212, cites Maehler on POxy. 4432,9 and believes that the sentence “seems to refer to κάκτοι, occurring as a v.l. of ῥάμνοι in that verse, rather than to ἀσπάλαθοι”.

⁵⁸ Cf. Hunter 1999, 143: “It is hard to resist hearing a play with βάτος, thorn”. For the etymology of Battus see Bömer on Ovid. *Met.* 2.688, M. Paschalis, *Battus and ‘batos’: Wordplay in Theocritus’ Fourth Idyll*, “RhM” 134, 1991, 205. A good summary on the previous interpretations of both characters in *Id.* 4 in S. Lattimore, *Battus in Theocritus’ Fourth Idyll*, “GRBS” 14, 1973, 319-24, who rightly sees in Battus an outsider and occasional visitor to the country. For the different opinion of Segal see above, n. 8 and 17.

⁵⁹ Lembach leaves open what particular sort ἄκανθαί are and is convinced only of their common nature (above, n. 47) 84: “Sie sind dornig, galten für unfruchtbar und den chthonischen Gottheiten heilig”. Cf. 81f.

⁶⁰ Gow 89; Lembach (above, n. 47) 78f.

Ἄσπάλαθος (camelthorn)⁶¹ was described by Dioscorides as θάμνος ξυλώδης, ἀκάνθαις πολλαῖς κεκρημένος (1. 20). The plant forms part of the “wild firewood” (ἄγριαι σχίζαι) Teiresias advises Alcmene to collect for fire in order to burn the dreadful serpents in *Id.* 24 (ll. 88 ff.)⁶². The plants named must be burned at midnight and the prescription is full of magic:

... πῦρ μὲν τοι ὑπὸ σποδῶ εὐτυκον ἔστω,
 κάγκανα δ' ἄσπαλάθου ξύλ' ἐτοιμάσατ' ἢ παλιούρου
 ἢ βάτου ἢ ἀνέμῳ δεδονημένον αἶον ἄχερδον·
 καίε δὲ τῶδ' ἀγρίαισιν ἐπὶ σχίζαισι δράκοντε
 νυκτὶ μέσα...⁶³

“... thou must have ready fire beneath the ashes. And do ye get in dry sticks of camelthorn or of paliurus [identified with “Christ thorn”, not used by Gow for obvious reasons] or of bramble, or wild pear wood, sapless and wind-beaten; and on that wild firewood do thou burn these serpents at midnight ...” (transl. Gow).

Similar connotations are attributed to ῥάμνος⁶⁴ (buckthorn), since it was used for sacrifices for the dead and was sacred to chthonian deities (Lembach 77f.). We even know that Pseudo-Dioscorides called the plant “persephonion”. If so, we can confidently apply Lembach’s suggestion (p. 73) that in *Id.* 4 Korydon warns against ἀσπάλαθος, not only because of its thorns but also because of its associations with the Underworld, to all named thorny plants. We cannot be sure about the alleged content of the Philitan *Demeter*, especially since it lacks any reference to plants (with the exception of the plane tree) but the chthonian nature easily alludes to the main point in the Demeter-Persephone myth. As we happen to know that this was the elegiac poem Callimachus praised when declaring his own preference for shorter over longer poems in the beginning of *Aetia*, we may be on the right track if we see in the chthonian associations of the thorn-pricking scene a bucolic

⁶¹ According to Gow more than one kind of thorny plant or shrub, possibly *genista acanthoclada*. Lembach (above, n. 47) 72f. again leaves its identification open; it is used for “verschiedene, meist strauchartige Pflanzen aus der Familie der Schmetterlingsblütler” and cites Wagler v. *RE* II (1896), 1710.

⁶² Lembach (above, n. 47) 71-76 under “Dorngewächse” and 81f. Macrobius (*Sat.* 3.20.2) also provided a catalogue of such *felices* and *infelices arbores*.

⁶³ On βάτος see Lembach (above, n. 47) 74f. Another plant of this group is ἄχερδος, wild pear, also with repellent qualities; see Pherecrates (fr. 174 K.-A.) τῆς ἀχέρδου τῆς ἀκραχολωπότης. Alcaeus of Messene (*AP* 7.536 = *HE* 76-81) names it unsympathetic together with βάτος on the tomb of Hipponax instead of βότρυς; on the poem see R. M. Rosen, *The Hellenistic Epigrams on Archilochus and Hipponax*, in P. Bing & J. S. Bruss (eds.), *Brill’s Companion to Hellenistic Epigram* (Leiden 2007) 466-8.

⁶⁴ Again in [21].36 ὄνος ἐν ῥάμνω τὸ τε λύχνιον ἐν πρυτανείῳ. Lembach (above, n. 47) 77f.

remodelling of an episode in Philitas' Demeter-story. However, this is as far as we can go due to a lack of tangible evidence.

When it comes to ἄκανθα and ῥάμνος, things become more complicated. Both words are Homeric hapax (*Od.* 5.328 and 24.230 respectively), a fact that guarantees their poetic value⁶⁵. Theocritus uses the names in other instances. Ἄκανθαί of βάτοι (thorns of bushes) are part of the very important *locus amoenus* that closes *Id.* 7 (ll. 139 f.): ἄ δ' ὀλολυγῶν/ τηλόθεν ἐν πυκιναῖσι βάτων τρύξεσεν ἄκάνθαις, “the tree-frog far off cried in the dense thornbrake” (transl. Gow). In juxtaposition with βάτος the plant appears in the adynaton of the first *Idyll* with the inversion of nature that is included in the mournful lament for the dying Daphnis (l. 132): νῦν ἴα μὲν φορέοιτε βάτοι, φορέοιτε δ' ἄκανθαι, “now violets bear, ye brambles, and, ye thorns, bear violets”⁶⁶. The word appears also as χαῖται ἄκάνθας within a simile for Galatea, who is described as flying or approaching her lover “as the dry thistledown when the bright summer parches it...”, ὡς ἀπ' ἄκάνθας/ ταῖ καπυραὶ χαῖται, τὸ καλὸν θέρος ἀνίκα φρύγει (6.15)⁶⁷. In this passage the scholiast identifies the plant ἄκανθα with κινάρα, artichoke, but all interpreters are rightly unanimous that here it does not mean thorn but a plant of the thistle kind (Gow, “Distel”: Lembach 82, Hunter 252; cf. 7.141 ἄκανθίς = Distelfink), and more specifically, the simile concerns the blown thistledown (χαῖται = elsewhere called πάππος) that is too insubstantial to be grasped but can fly at random and gives the impression it is either following someone or the opposite⁶⁸. What is important for the topic of the matter at hand is that we encounter the same image in Nicander, where also it means thistle, and, interestingly enough, the word is ἄκάνθη once (*Ther.* 328f. θριξ / σκίδναται ὡς γήρεια καταψηχθέντος ἄκάνθης) but elsewhere appears as κάκτος (*Alex.* 126-7 οἶά τε δὴ γήρεια νέον τεθρυμμένα κάκτου/ ἠέρα ἐπιπλάζουσαι διαψαίρουσι πνοῆσι). From other sources too it becomes plain that the word is identified with κινάρα or κινάρα, another

⁶⁵ Lembach (above, n. 47) 81-84.

⁶⁶ See also in [21].34ff. Vergil, who undertakes the Theocritean *adynaton*, transfers Theocritus' narcissus “that bloom on the juniper” (νάρκισσος ἐπ' ἄρκεύθοισι, 133) not to the thorny ἄρκευθος but to the alder, i.e. κλήθρη that is the mysterious tree in Philitas' *paignion* (12 Sb. = 25 Sp.). A noteworthy change indeed. See their coexistence in Longus 1.20.3: Ἐν κοίλῃ δὲ πάνυ [γῆ] ἦν ἡ πηγὴ, καὶ περὶ αὐτὴν πᾶς ὁ τόπος ἄκάνθαις καὶ βάτοις καὶ ἄρκεύθῳ ταπεινῇ καὶ σκολύμοις ἠγρίωτο. On Vergil's use of thorny plants see e.g. *Ecl.* 4.29: *incultisque rubens pendebit sentibus uva* (with comments e.g. of Papanghelis above, n. 19, 281).

⁶⁷ Ἄκανθα also appears among the plants Heracles has to tread on during his search for Hylas (ἀτρίπτοισιν ἄκάνθαις, 13.64).

⁶⁸ For a good explanation of the simile see J. H. Betts, *Theocritus 6.15-17*, “CP” 66, 1971, 252-3.

word for artichoke (Modern Greek *αγγινάρα*): According to Athenaeus (mentioned above, 2.70a) in Sophocles' *Φοῖνιξ* (F 718) *κύναρος ἄκανθα πάντα πληθύει γύην* and in *Κολχίδες* the word *κυνάρα* (F 348) was explained by Didymus as *ἄκανθα*: *Δίδυμος γραμματικὸς ἐξηγούμενος παρὰ τῷ Σοφοκλεῖ τὸ κύναρος ἄκανθα μήποτε φησί τὴν κυνόςβατον λέγει διὰ τὸ ἀκανθῶδες καὶ τραχὺ εἶναι τὸ φυτόν*⁶⁹. Dioscorides spoke of *ἄκανθα λευκή... ἀγριοκινάρα* and Pollux provides us with the information that the Dorian poets use *ἄκανθα* for *kinara*: *κινάρα οὕτω γὰρ παρὰ τοῖς Δωριεῦσι ποιηταῖς ἔστι εὐρεῖν καλουμένην τὴν ἄκανθαν* – (*Onomasticon* VI 46: a very useful observation that Olck, *op. cit.* 1457 declined to understand: “unverständlicher Weise”).

If we put all pieces together it becomes apparent that *κάκτος* and *ἄκανθα* are the same plant in Theocritus, a sort of artichoke, that is a plant that pricks with its small, nearly invisible spines like any kind of thorny plant, even if it does not belong to thorns but to the daisy family (*cynara cardunculus*, artichoke thistle, cardoon)⁷⁰. As we have seen above, *ἄκανθα* is very close in meaning to *ράμνος* (buckthorn), which is, in turn, affiliated with *κάκτος*. A further similarity is that both named plants are equally similar to the other omitted thorny plant, *βάτος*⁷¹. If so, Theocritus omits *κάκτος* and in its place prefers to put two of its synonyms. Why he does so can be explained by their other appearances. As argued above, in *Id.* one *ἄκανθα* and its synonym *βάτος* are mentioned within the lament for boukolos Daphnis in the *adynaton* and thus become part of the reversed order his loss causes. Soon after they are named, we hear of the Underworld of Acheron and Persephone, Demeter's daughter. It is, then, likely that the plant is chosen for its sinister undertones. Again, in *Id.* 7 they are part of the *locus amoenus* that very probably has poetological connotations, and ends up with the celebration of Demeter⁷². The imminent danger of being pricked within an other-

⁶⁹ See other sources on the paronymological connection with *κύων*: Radt at p. 490 in *TGF*.

⁷⁰ In his comments on the word *Lembach* (above, n. 47) 82-84 made a distinction between thorn (in *Idylls* 1, 7 and 4) and thistle, a sort of artichoke in 6 and left open the meaning in 13.64. As regards a snake's coil in 24.32 *ἀκάνθας*. Cf. Nicander *Ther.* 110, 316, 480.

⁷¹ *ράμνος* together with *βάτου φύλλα*: Hipp. *mul. aff.* 193.3; Theophr. *HP* 3.18.12; for *βάτος* Theophr. *HP* 1.9.4 (*θαμνώδες*), 3.18.1; Rhianus *CA* 76.1f.: *ράμνον ἐλίσσοις/ πάντοθεν, ἢ σκολιῆς ἄγρια κῶλα βάτου*.

⁷² To this homage we may add that Simichidas swears *οὐ Δᾶν* in l. 39 (= Demeter translates it Serrao above n. 11, 920 *pace* Gow at 4.17). On the *locus* see e.g. Segal (above, n. 8, 153ff.); S. Goldhill, *The Poet's Voice. Essays on Poetics and Greek Literature* (Cambridge 1991) 238-9; Papanghelis (above, n. 2), 43; Hunter 1999, p.193 following Kyriakou (above, n. 9) 214-31; Fantuzzi & Hunter, (above, n. 25) 146-7. Cf. W. Elliger, *Die Darstellung der Landschaft in der griechischen Dichtung* (Berlin-New York 1975) 333-6; T. E. V. Pearce, *The Function of the locus amoenus in Theocritus' Seventh Poem*, “RhM” 131, 1988, 276-304,

wise alluring environment is implied by the acoustic predominance of π, τ, ς, σκ, κ that interrupts the mellifluous flow of the preceding description⁷³. The jaunty tone is also hidden in the name ἀκανθίδες that describes singing birds: the word evokes the thorny plants and, at the same time, transforms their negative nature into a pleasant sound-effect⁷⁴. As in *Id.* 4 the message is that life out of doors is attractive but not void of dangers and that one should be constantly alert. The “Bramble man” proves himself to be an ignoramus in matters of the countryside, which is why he ends up by paying the price⁷⁵. The specific punishment is further underlined by two facts: firstly, Battus, who is literally a Thorny-man, is the one who falls victim to thistles and secondly, he is the one who, up till that point, had striven to play a trick on the rustic Korydon. The fact that it is the latter who utters a maxim of bucolic vademecum after the accident points to the dominance a rustic connoisseur wields within this world: “don’t be barefoot when you go on the mountain” (εἰς ὄρος ὄκχ’ ἔρπης, μὴ νήλιπος ἔρχεο, Βάττε). This means that thorny plants are not just the natural means that punish bucolic ignorance (or, presumably, its reverse: urban identity), but, what is more, they are heavily involved in the reestablishment of bucolic principles and values. Speaking in Philitan terms, this outcome considerably challenges the “bucolic” idea given in the kaktos-riddle: bucolic music is threatened with abolition not because of thistles but because of a lack of familiarity with matters of bucolic life.

In the above mentioned Korydon’s vademecum mountains are classified as the natural territory of bucolic life. Mountains do appear quite often

especially 291-304. On nature and everyday life see G. Zanker, *Modes of Viewing in Hellenistic Poetry and Art* (Wisconsin and London 2004) 24ff, 34ff, 48ff.

⁷³ Already Segal (above, n. 8 p. 206) pointed out that the thistles in 1.132 “reflect the fruitfulness of the Thalysian grove” in 7.140. In Longus (1.14.2) Chloe says: Πόσοι βάτοι με πολλάκις ἤμουξαν, καὶ οὐκ ἔκλαυσα.

⁷⁴ Hunter 1999, 194, who also mentions *Od.* 19.520 rightly remarks that nightingales (in Theocritus the ὀλολυγών 139) usually sings unseen in thickets.

⁷⁵ In this respect I cannot understand why Segal (above, n. 8 and 17 passim) believes that Battus is a goatherd and rustic man. On the other hand, he is right when he says in another instance (above n. 18) 188f.: “Corydon feels even these bothersome plants as infused with nature’s processes and variety”. I find fruitful van Sickle’s discussion (e.g. *Poetica teocritea*, “QUCC” 9, 1970, 67-82) on the different modes of poetry symbolized by the two men: e.g. his interpretation of the thin bull (l. 20) as an allusion to Callimachus’ thin style is worth considering but this would take us beyond the limited scope of the present investigation. On Philitas’ physical aspect, and the honours he received (cfr. below n. 82) see the New Posidippus (63 A.-B.). On Philitas’ real physical thinness without any literary connotations in this respect see the controversial discussion in Cameron (above n. 12) 488-93.

throughout the Theocritean poems⁷⁶. This is most evident in *Id.* 7, in which the name of Philitas is explicitly mentioned by Simichidas, when both Lycidas and Simichidas agree that they feel quite at home in these mountains. Lycidas declares that he will perform a song he fashioned *on* the mountain and later Simichidas also admits his close relationship with mountains, the location of his poetic activity: the Nymphs taught him, too, while he guarded his herd *up* the mountain and their fame has carried them to the throne of Zeus (*έν ὄρει τὸ μελύδριον ἐξεπόνασα* 51 and *πολλὰ μὰν ἄλλα/ Νύμφαι κῆμὲ δίδαξαν ἀν' ὄρεα βουκολέοντα/ ἐσθλά, τά που καὶ Ζηνὸς ἐπὶ θρόνον ἄγαγε φάμα*, 92-93).

We know of at least one instance where Philitas also introduced mountains and one tree in his poetry. In an elegiac quatrain preserved as a paignion (12 Sb. = 25 Sp.), a mysterious alder tree defines the sort of man it considers worthy of cutting it down *from* the mountains⁷⁷. We are told that this is not a rustic man but one who knows the treasure of all kinds of words, that is, a man who is the ideal of Philitas himself⁷⁸:

οὐ μέ τις ἐξ ὀρέων ἀποφώλιος ἀγροιώτης
αἰρήσει κλήθρην αἰρόμενος μακέλην,
ἄλλ' ἐπέων εἰδὼς κόσμον καὶ πολλὰ μογήσας
μύθων παντοίων οἶμον ἐπιστάμενος

Although the diction of the poem is Homeric, its spirit is undeniably Philitan as we reconstruct it from the surviving sources. The poem must have appealed to Theocritus since he was after all the man whose fame gradually reached Zeus' throne by bringing rustic life into the mainstream of poetic expression, or to put it in his own words, "who created poetry in the mountains". Lines 7.39-42, 51 and 92-93 are better understood if read against the Philitan interest in nature in whatever form this had but I also agree with N. Krevans who in respect of *Id.* 7 rightly spoke of "diversity of Theocritus' sources, as opposed to designating one figure a model for his poetry"⁷⁹. The

⁷⁶ Brief survey on the matter in Segal (above n. 8), p. 202 who also gave an important interpretation of Lycidas and Simichidas (the urban poet) in *Theocritus Seventh Idyll and Lycidas*, "WS" n.s. 8, 1974, 20-76 (above, n. 7, 110-166, especially 153-157).

⁷⁷ On the numerous proposals for the identity of this alder tree see e.g. P. Bing, *The alder and the Poet: Philetas 10* (p. 92 Powell), "RhM" 129, 1986, 222-26. Cf. Cameron (above n. 12) 419ff. I personally incline towards considering the matter still open for further investigation.

⁷⁸ Testimonies on his pedantry have been well-known since antiquity. The *locus classicus* of the issue is the fragment by the comic poet Strato (*PCG* VII fr. 1.40-6= T 4 Sp.), where Philitas' books are mentioned as the handbook a confused man should consult in order to interpret the glosses (mostly from Homeric poems) he hears from his eccentric cook.

⁷⁹ "TAPA" 113, 1983, 203.

omission of any alder tree⁸⁰ among a handful of trees (in Lembach's pioneering work we count 28 species of plants) in his poetry could be explained using the same line of interpretation that we assert for the aposiopesis of *kaktos* in *Idyll* 4.

We are confident that Philitas, thanks to his twofold identity as grammarian and poet, outshone his younger contemporaries, all the more so because of his leading position in the Ptolemaic dynasty – nor should we forget that he may have been the object of worship by the citizens of Cos⁸¹. What ought to strike us is the fact that so little of Philitas' poetry has survived⁸². Wilamowitz was right in saying that we would like to have more of Philitas' poetic work. But we do know Theocritus' *Idylls*. Theocritus presented himself as the one, "knowing all treasure of (thorny) words" on the mountains, but at the same time he is also aware of the dangers one meets in the countryside, and, all the more, like the Philitean fawn, is able to avoid all those threats that could jeopardise his musical ability. In this respect we could speak of "learned teases"⁸³, and not just learned citations from the younger poet to the older. If so, the *zetema* whether Philitas was a forebear of Theocritus' bucolics before is of no particular consequence for the understanding of their relationship. Perhaps there is more to say on the matter that escapes us, especially if we take into account that one *παλαιὰ βᾶτος* plays an important part in the Callimachean *Iamb* IV, where it interferes in a quarrel between the laurel and the olive with the intention of reconciling them⁸⁴. Did Callimachus engage in dialogue with Philitas and/or Theocritus

⁸⁰ In one *varia lectio* in 7.8 (in POxy. 2604) we read *κλήθραι* instead of *πετέλαι*. The plane tree features thrice in Theocritus in the form of *πλατάνιστος* and once in the Philitan form *πλάτανος* (see Gow at 18.44, p. 359).

⁸¹ See A. S. Hollis, *Heroic Honours for Philetas?*, "ZPE" 110, 1996, 56-62, 58, n. 15, modified in A. Hardie, *Philitas and the Plane Tree*, "ZPE" 119, 1997, 21-36, 33-35.

⁸² He was praised ten times by Roman elegists, mostly paired off with Callimachus. His name also survived much later in the pastoral roman by Longus (on which see Hunter above n. 12; J. R. Morgan, *Daphnis and Chloe: A Bibliographical survey 1950-1995*, ANRW 34.3, 1997, 2208-2276; Spanoudakis above n. 7, 64-6). M. Hose, *Die römische Liebeslegie und die griechische Literatur. Überlegungen zu POxy 3723*, "Philologus" 138, 1994, 67-82, 81. For the opposite view see M. Lenchantin, *Callimaco, l'acqua filetea e Properzio III 3*, "RFIC" 63, 1935, 168-69; J. Latacz, *Das Plappermäulchen aus dem Katalog*, in: C. Schaublin (ed.), *Catalepton. Festschrift für B. Wyss zum 80. Geburtstag*, Basel 1985; P. E. Knox, *Philetas and Roman Poetry*, "Papers of the Leeds International Latin Seminar" 7, 1993, 61-83. Status quaestionis in Hardie (above, n. 81) at 57, n. 11.

⁸³ Hollis (above n. 81) 58, n. 15.

⁸⁴ Recently D. Konstan and L. Landrey, *Callimachus and the Bush on Iamb 4*, "CW" 102, 2008, 47-49, identified *βᾶτος* with the Battiades Callimachus. See a totally different analysis in E. Lelli, *Il Giambo 4 di Callimaco e le polemiche letterarie alessandrine*, "ARF" 2, 2000, 43-78, and 'in extenso' above n. 18, 69-82; A. Kerkhecker, *Callimachus' Book of Iambi*

in this poem or perhaps even in others, and if yes what kind of dialogue did he inaugurate? Is the theme “thorny plants and relationships between poets” to be found in other poets too? A full-scale reconsideration of this matter could add important information to the still elusive issue of the dialogue between contemporary poets.

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ABSTRACT.

This paper aims to reconsider the still unsettled issue of the Theocritus-Philias relationship. Thorny plants are a natural device for poetological implications. In his use of words denoting thorny plants Theocritus displays both his awareness of and differentiation from Philias and, therefore, calls into doubt the possibility of a straightforward positive relationship and influence. The poems under consideration are: Philias fr. 18 Sb. = 20 Sp.; fr.12 Sb. = 25 Sp.; Theocritus *Idylls* 1, 4, 7, 1.

KEYWORDS.

Theocritus, Philias, poetry, bucolic world, botanic diction, thorny plants.

(Oxford 1999) 111-5; B. Acosta-Hughes, *Polyeideia. The Iambi of Callimachus and the Archaic Iambic Tradition* (Berkeley-London 2002) 170-204, prudently declined to identify the bramble. Related to this identification is the interpretation of βαττιάδης in *epigr.* 35 Pf.: for a possible interpretation see S. A. White, *Callimachus Battiades (epigr. 35)*, “CP” 94, 1999, 168-81 and recently K. Tsantsanoglou, *Callimachus Ia. XIII, fr. 203+204a Pf. (P.Oxy. 1011 fol. VI): A new reading*, “Trends in Classics” 2, 2010, 106-113.