

L'Héroïque et le Champêtre
Volume II:
appropriation et déconstruction des théories stylistiques
dans la pratique des artistes et dans les modalités d'exposition des œuvres

sous la direction de Marianne COJANNOT-LE BLANC,
Claude POUZADOUX et Évelyne PRIoux



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L'INVENTION D'UN STYLE INTERMÉDIAIRE
DANS LES TEXTES ANTIQUES

What is in an Idyll? Contrasting Modes in Theocritus, *Idyll* 10

Maria Rosaria FALIVENE

In this paper I shall argue that Theocritus' aim in *Idyll* 10 (in fact, in all of his *Idylls*) was to achieve the *mimesis* of a *mimesis*: to re-present a work of art, *i. e.* an act of *mimesis* (or more than one). I should term this kind of poetical practice (ποίησις) a *meta-mimesis* placed at what Plato would judge to be a yet further remove from the original object, or experience¹: Theocritus shared it with several other Alexandrian poets of his time, all of them engaged in a reflection about art which was at heart and by nature a deeply philosophical one, though variously masqueraded and resolved into new art. Incidentally, this may also justify the well-known variant φιλοσόφου/φιλολόγοι in the *Diegeseis* to Callimachus (*P. Mil. Vogl.* I 18, col. VI, l.3), as the two terms may have been felt to denote partly overlapping categories.

Mimesis may be defined as the re-presentation, or re-production of whatever object in a different medium, *i. e.* in a medium other than the material an object is originally made of. There thus will be a *new* object, re-presenting the original by means of one or another of the media available and appealing to the human senses, thereby producing an aesthetic experience (*aisthēsis*). Prior to the age of mechanical and digital reproduction, the available means for re-presentation, or *mimesis*, were those of the traditional arts. Painting, as well as sculpture, would appeal to eyesight. *Mousikē*, on the other hand, as the Greeks understood it, would affect eyesight and hearing at the same time, being a complex aesthetic experience

1. PLATO, *Republic*, 596a-597e.

which combines (observed) body-movement with (heard) word and music. Throughout his *œuvre*, Theocritus aimed at verbally re-presenting the whole range of these aesthetic experiences, as it were, in their making, *i. e.* while they happened as part of a given way of life.

Arguably, the favourite objects of Theocritus' double mimesis included works of art produced by *poiētikē*, that is, in Aristotelian terms, by rhythm (implying movement), word and music, either separately or in various combinations: ἐν ῥυθμῷ καὶ λόγῳ καὶ ἁρμονίᾳ (*Poetics*, 1447a22-23). Further on (1447b25), the different sequence rhythm + melos + metron (ῥυθμῷ καὶ μέλει καὶ μέτρῳ) in fact implies a combination of rhythmic movement (dance) accompanied by song, both according to the same metrical pattern: this should be different from the combination (envisaged in the previous passage: 1447a22-23) of rhythmic movement (dance) accompanied by (spoken, not sung) word *and* music, but apparently not in unison (not according to the same metrical pattern). In other words, and in practice: we may have a dancer and a singer on stage, both of them performing to the same rhythm (1447b25) or, alternatively (1447a22-23), a dancer and a (reciting, not singing) actor, against a musical background that, however, does not dictate a rhythm to which dancer and actor must both conform: *e. g.*, the dancer will dance to the music, while the reciting actor will follow a different pattern. Other combinations of the three basic ingredients (movement, music, word) are conceivable, as illustrated at 1447a22-b2: words can be spoken or sung, with or without musical accompaniment, with some “acting” (movement) occurring at the same time (or not); speaker/singer, musician and actor may be one and the same person, or more than one; they can act at the same time (or not); according to one and the same rhythm (or not).

Let us take *Idyll* 10 as a test case. Its title, as preserved by the medieval tradition, is *The Labourers* or *The Reapers* (Ἐργατῖναι ἢ Θερισταί).

“So, why are you not in step with the man reaping near you, but are left behind, already at the start of the day?,” asks Milon, the Fast Reaper. “Were you ever in love with someone who is away?”: Boukaios (the Slow Reaper) asks in turn. M.: “Never! A reaper can’t afford it.” B.: “Anyway, I have been in love for ten days now.” M.: “Whom with, then?” B.: “Polybotas’ girl, who the other day played the *aulos* to the reapers at Hippokion’s.” M.: “Just what you need!” (lines 1-20).

This opening confrontation leads to Milon’s invitation (21-23) to “strike down (κατάβαλλε) the crop” and “strike up (ἀμβάλεω) a love-song,”² the word-play stressing

2. *Theocritus*, GOW ANDREW Sydenham Farrar (ed.), Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1952 (1st ed. 1950), 2 vol., vol. II, p. 199 (*ad l.* 26): “... κατάβαλλε ... is no doubt chosen with some consciousness of ἀμβάλεω to follow.” More on this below.

that Boukaios should proceed with both activities at the same time: “So work will be sweeter for you; and indeed, you once used to be well versed in *mousikē*” (“μουσικός”).

Boukaios then sings (24-37) of his longing for Bombyka, whose very name is resonant with her music;³ the meta-mimetic effect here propagates into a multiple *mise en abyme*, as Boukaios’ song is re-presented as re-presenting two different works of art: Bombyka’s actual performance (music, song, dance, which caused Boukaios to fall in love when she accompanied the reapers’ work on a previous occasion, πρᾶν: 15-16) and an imagined statuary group re-producing, in gold, Bombyka and Boukaios as lovers (to be “presented to Aphrodite”: 33) and, respectively, musician and dancer (34: Bombyka “holding [her] *auloi* and either a rose or, rather, an apple”; 35: Boukaios “wearing [his] costume, and new shoes in Amyclaeon style on either foot”).⁴ The song then praises the girl’s dancing (her feet well-formed and moving in time: εὐρυθμοί, like ἀστράγαλοι) and singing (her voice soft and charming: ἀπαλός, like τρύχνος)⁵ but ends, somewhat disconcertingly, in a note of apparent dissatisfaction, either with Bombyka’s other gifts or, more likely, with Boukaios’ own ability to “tell about them,” to render them in words (37):

... τὸν μὲν τρόπον οὐχ ἔγω εἶπεῖν.

The end of line 37, which the ancient commentators already found puzzling,⁶ implies a musical meaning. Because *τρόπος* is the word for somebody’s “character” or “way of life,” but also a synonym of ἄρμονία, a musical “mode,”⁷ when Boukaios declares himself unable to render in words “Bombyka’s manner of being,” he is by the same token saying that he cannot re-produce the “mode of her music” in a different (Boukaios’ own) medium:

... but your *temperament*—I cannot render in words.

3. *Ibid.*, ad l. 26.

4. The scholia agree on Boukaios’ costume being the costume of a dancer (σχῆμα ὀρχηστοῦ), and I think we should assume them to know better than us: “shoes made in Amyclae” might conceal a reference to a dancer’s attire and special kind of performance, lost to us but obvious to Theocritus’ ancient readers.

5. Both similes can be explained on the basis, respectively, of the scholia ad l. 36 (ὄν ἀστράγαλοι) and of PHOTIUS, *Lexicon*, s.v. τρύχνον: see the ever agnostic but extremely informative *Theocritus*, II, *op. cit.*, ad l. 36 and 37.

6. *Ibid.*, ad loc.

7. See LIDDELL Henry George, SCOTT Robert, JONES Henry Stuart [Summary LSJ], *A Greek-English lexicon*, Oxford/New York, Clarendon Press/Oxford University Press, 1996 (9^e ed., First edition 1819). s.v. (IV: “In Music ... a particular *mode*”); WEST Martin L., *Ancient Greek Music*, Oxford, Clarendon press, 1992, p. 188, n. 103, and *Index*, s.v. “*tropoi*,” with further reference to “keys.”

“Temperament” is, I think, the appropriate translation for τρόπος in this context, as it renders the ambiguity between “character” and “musical mode.” A manner of life and the music which expresses it are the same thing, in that a particular music responds, or is appropriate to the rhythm which characterises a particular way of life. A way of life is signified, or expressed by its own music: their combination produces μουσική.

Boukaios’ song, then, ends on a note of doubt, as he admits to not being quite up to Bombyka’s standard. On the other side, Milon’s response is, on the other hand, “ironical” (40-41).⁸ He does recognise the beauty of Boukaios’ song (38: “I was not aware that our little Boukos could produce really beautiful songs”): in the following line (39), he actually describes what this beauty is made of. Line 39, is in fact crucial to the understanding of *Idyll*, 10 and, as I shall now try to argue, of Theocritus’ *Idylls* as a whole:

ὡς εὖ τὰν ιδέαυ τὰς ἀρμονίας ἐμέτρησεν

As in Aristophanes’ *Frogs*, 384—where the words ἄγε νυν ἑτέρωυ ὕμνων ιδέαυ⁹ mark a change of rhythm and structure in the singing and dancing of the chorus, as they “enthusiastically” move on to a hymn to Demeter—ιδέαυ must here mean the “form” of a piece of music, *i. e.* the structure of successive, measured (“ἐμέτρησεν”) intervals making up a scale, or mode, or ἀρμονία:¹⁰

How well he arranged the structure of the mode!

The scholion *ad l.*39 offers a close paraphrasis (“ὡς εὖ τὸ τῆς ἀρμονίας εἶδος ἐρρῦθμισην ὁ Βουκαῖος”), which posits the equivalence of metre and rhythm (ἐμέτρησεν = ἐρρῦθμισεν),¹¹ as well as εἶδος and ιδέαυ. Here may linger awareness of the musical-theoretical subtext to Milon’s words: Boukaios’ song is—as Milon must admit—a good instance (strictly speaking: εἶδος) of the form, or rhythmical structure (strictly speaking: ιδέαυ) of a given mode (ἀρμονία) but—as Milon proceeds to argue—the mode is not the right one for Boukaios. Instead, he should be singing Lityerses’ song, for “this is indeed the song for reapers at work!” (56). Boukaios’ song of “hungry” love (57)

8. As remarked in the scholia on l. 38: “τοῦτο ὁ Μίλων εἰρωνευόμενος ἐν ἤθει φησί” (schol. UEAGPT), and again on l. 39 (schol. GPT): “καὶ τοῦτο κατ’ εἰρωνείαν.”

9. The reference is in *Theocritus*, II, *op. cit.*, *ad l.* 39.

10. On “Scales and Modes,” and the meaning of ἀρμονία: West Martin L., *Ancient Greek Music*, *op. cit.*, p. 160-189, esp. 177 f.

11. *Ibid.*, p. 129-132.

will bring starvation;¹² it would be better whispered into his mother's ear early in the morning, when she is not quite awake yet (58): such is its stark contrast with the reality of an adult reaper's life. Boukaios has just re-presented himself and Bombyka as golden statues dedicated to Aphrodite: in Milon's opinion, however, a Reaper cannot afford to be in love and to sing of his love; he should be cutting crops instead, while all along singing about it. Being μουσικός requires precisely this ability to combine song and work, to sing and work at a rhythm appropriate to both activities, as required in the given circumstances. Boukaios ought to be singing in a different mode. Accordingly, Milon proceeds to perform (41-55) the song of "divine Lityerses" (41: "τὰ τῷ θεῷ Λιτυέρσα"), which starts with an invocation to Demeter and gives no thought to Aphrodite. "Lityerses" (the song, as well as its putative author: in the exegetical tradition Lityerses identifies with his song) is "divine" in that it transcends any particular circumstances, while at the same time locating them within a "traditional" pattern of behaviour, thereby imparting them a form (ιδέα), a measured rhythm and sense of direction. The exegetical tradition also defines "Lityerses" as an "εἶδος ᾠδῆς."¹³ A Reaper should sing Lityerses' song, an εἶδος which conforms (εἶδος = ιδέα) to/is in accordance/on a comparable scale (ἄρμονία) with a Reaper's way of life. A Reaper can indeed be μουσικός, but only if he will play a mode which is in agreement with his way of life.

Plato would surely applaud, but it is important to make clear that Milon's "platonic" point of view need not coincide with his Author's. Rather, the whole point of Theocritus' meta-mimetic exercise is to re-present and compare different ιδέαί, or εἶδη: different ways of life, kinds of ἄρμονία, genres. This he does by re-creating an ἀγῶνη, a competition between two instances of *mousikē*. The word-play κατάβαλλε vs ἀμβάλευ (21-22)¹⁴ anticipated this contrast: the beating out of different rhythms ("down" vs "up")¹⁵ reflects and directs different rhythmic movements, as required by different circumstances.¹⁶ Milon's exhortation to Boukaios (41: "θᾶσαι δὴ καὶ ταῦτα τὰ τῷ θεῷ Λιτυέρσα") is not so much an invitation to listen to Lityerses' traditional song, as to contemplate (θᾶσαι) the whole of a Reaper's manner of life, which Lityerses accompanies and aptly

12. λιμηρόν: besides threatening starvation (*Theocritus*, II, *op. cit.*, *ad l.* 57), Boukaios' song presently brings no (sexual) satisfaction.

13. Photius and Suda *s.v.*; see *Theocritus*, II, *op. cit.*, p. 205 (*ad l.* 41).

14. See above, and note 3.

15. See WEST Martin L., *Ancient Greek Music*, *op. cit.*, p. 133-135.

16. Much the same meanings in LUCIAN, *Imagines*, 14 (quoted by *Theocritus*, II, *op. cit.*, *ad l.* 39).

expresses in words. Just such a synaesthetic act of contemplation is what Theocritus requires from his readers (or audience), if they/we are to perceive the sophistication of his poetry, and the special melancholy of it, which so attracted Vergil. He aims at producing a “synaesthetic” experience: not just listening to a song (or smelling the scent of a newly made wooden cup),¹⁷ but observing what brings that aesthetic experience into being—all the while observing one’s experience as an observer. Each and all of the εἰδύλλια re-present one or more εἶδη as if *in vitro*, hence their title: Theocritus’ εἰδύλλια are miniature εἶδη. They are small experiments in *genre*.

The interpretation of the meaning of εἰδύλλιον that I have just suggested may find support in *Prolegomenon* E.a to the Theocritean scholia. Codices P, E^b, A, T attest it in its ampler version:¹⁸

Ἰστέον δὲ, ὅτι εἰδύλλιον λέγεται τὸ μικρὸν ποίημα ἀπὸ τοῦ εἶδος, ἢ θεωρία.
οὐχ ἡδύλλιον παρὰ τὸ ἦδω, τὸ εὐφραίνω

which may be translated as follows:

Note that εἰδύλλιον means “small poem,” (the word deriving) from εἶδος, (i. e.) θεωρία; not ἡδύλλιον corresponding to ἦδω “please,” (i. e.) εὐφραίνω “give pleasure.”

The scholion on l.39 of *Idyll* 10 (see above) indicates that ἰδέα and εἶδος may be taken as synonymous. The *scholia recentiora* on Aristophanes, *Ran.* 384, on the other hand, explain ἰδέα as synonymous with θεωρία. It seems legitimate to infer that *Prolegomenon* E.a intends θεωρία as synonymous with εἶδος; as a consequence, an interpunction sign seems appropriate between τοῦ εἶδος and ἢ θεωρία, just like between τὸ ἦδω and τὸ εὐφραίνω).

If this line of reasoning is correct, I find it difficult to believe that the term *Eιδύλλια* was invented by anybody else but Theocritus, as the title of a book of poems he himself edited. In this book, the epigram Ἄλλος ὁ Χίος (*Anth. Pal.*, 9, 434) would introduce the poet himself: “I am *not* Theocritus from Chios, for I am one of the many Syracusans around, my mother was renowned [for her wisdom, just like Queen Berenice],¹⁹ and I have dragged in no alien Muse.” Assuming that Theocritus did not compose his book of

17. As in *Idyll*, 1, l. 149: see *Theocritus*, II, *op. cit.*, Gow’s note *ad loc.*

18. *Scholia in Theocritum vetera*, WENDEL Carl (ed.), Leipzig, Teubner, 1914, *Prolegomena*, p. 5. The stratification of the Theocritean exegetical tradition is not a topic for the present paper.

19. Theocritus’ mother is περικλειτά (a rare adjective, as noted by *Theocritus*, II, *op. cit.*, *ad loc.*) like Queen Berenice in *Idyll*, 17 (l. 34): “I suggest that Berenice’s wisdom is by implication attributed to Philinna, too.”

poetry, Wilamowitz attributed this epigram to a later editor, whom he supposed to be the grammarian Theon. Much in the same stride, the other towering figure in Theocritean scholarship affirmed that “there is no evidence that T. in fact ever collected his own poems.”²⁰ This is not convincing;²¹ rather, Theocritus here uses his Chian namesake as a foil, in order to claim his allegiance to Ptolemy, and to Hellenic culture: he would never oppose a Macedonian dynasty, nor would he exchange, or alienate Hellenic (cultural) currency against a foreign (ὀθνεῖαν) one.²² Theocritus of Chios, the “sophist and wit ... killed by Antigonus Monophthalmos towards the end of the fourth century B.C.”²³ was the author of a “ἱστορία Λιβύης and of ἐπιστολαὶ θαυμασίαι”:²⁴ the Syracusan’s inspiration, on the other hand, was drawn exclusively from Hellenic ways of life (and their musical modes).

Kathryn Gutzwiller has convincingly shown that the Ἄλλος ὁ Χίος epigram must date from the third century B.C.;²⁵ she still favours, though, the idea that this epigram was written by a poet (and editor) impersonating Theocritus, rather than by Theocritus himself. In my opinion, this is not the most economical assumption, and it may well be a remnant of the deeply entrenched *Textgeschichte der griechischen Bukoliker*, as construed by Wilamowitz.²⁶

Wilamowitz thought that the confusion in the order of the *Idylls*, as they have come down to us through the medieval tradition, ultimately derived from the original absence of an authorial principle: in his opinion, no book of poetry was issued by Theocritus

20. *Theocritus*, II, *op. cit.*, p. 549 (on *Palatine Anthology*, 9, 205 and 9, 434: Gow’s epigrams [XXVI] and [XXVII], respectively). Gow also reports all contrary opinions, and further refers to the discussion in his volume I, p. LXXXII.

21. GUTZWILLER Kathryn, « The Evidence for Theocritean Poetry Books », in *Theocritus*, HARDER Annette, REGTUIT Remco Ferdinand, WAKKER Gerrigje Catharina (dir.), Leuven, Peeters, 1995, p. 119-148.

22. On the meaning of the attribute which also recurs, in a “technical” context, in another Theocritean epigram (*Palatine Anthology* 9, 435): Rossi Laura, *The Epigrams ascribed to Theocritus. A Method of Approach*, Leuven, Peeters, 2001, p. 248-251.

23. *Theocritus*, II, *op. cit.*, p. 549 (on l. 1).

24. *Suda s.v. Θεόκριτος*. The structure of this whole entry (the “end of the line” in the exegetical tradition to the Ἄλλος ὁ Χίος epigram) is in fact based on the opposition between the Chian (discussed first), and the Syracusan Theocritus.

25. GUTZWILLER Kathryn, « The Evidence for Theocritean Poetry Books », *op. cit.*, p. 137.

26. WILAMOWITZ-MOELLENDORF Ulrich (von), *Die Textgeschichte der griechischen Bukoliker*, Berlin, Weidmann, 1906.

himself, and this explained the apparent disarray in the tradition of the *Idylls*. He consequently posited that the bucolic poems by Theocritus and, possibly, later poets were first collected by the *grammatikos* Artemidorus, whose claim (“The once scattered bucolic Muses are finally put together”: *Palatine Anthology*, 9, 205) Wilamowitz interpreted as deriving from the fact that Theocritus’ bucolic poetry (and, by implication, all of his poems) circulated singly during the poet’s lifetime and for the next two centuries or so, until Artemidorus assembled the bucolic ones.²⁷ Finally, he posited that Theon, possibly Artemidorus’ son and known to be the author of a *hypomnema* to Theocritus, might have issued a collection of Theocritus’ bucolic and urban poems. If, however, the Ἄλλος ὁ Χίος epigram may be taken as evidence to the contrary and if, contrary to Wilamowitz’ opinion, there was indeed an authorial edition of the *Idylls*, it also becomes possible to read the epigram by Artemidorus in a quite opposite sense: namely, as evidence of an early or even of the first stage in the disassembling of the original collection of Theocritus’ poems. Artemidorus might have extracted the bucolic poems from Theocritus’ original book of (bucolic and urban) *Eidyllia*, and combined them in a new book of bucolic poetry, also including poems by later and lesser bucolic poets: a new order would thus be produced by disarranging the original, authorial one.

I have argued (in agreement with Gutzwiller, but pushing her argument somewhat further) that Wilamowitz was wrong as regards the manner of publication of Theocritus’ poems, and the early stages of their tradition. Nevertheless, his perception of the *Idylls* was very exact:

... einen *Ton* für sich bilden diese epische Gedichte, weil sie ein jedes sein individuelles *Wesen* haben.²⁸

27. *Theocritus*, II, *op. cit.*, p. 549: “Artemidorus would seem to have lived in the first half of the first century B.C. and to have worked in Alexandria” (introducing Artemidorus’ epigram).

28. WILAMOWITZ-MOELLENDORF Ulrich (von), *Die Textgeschichte der griechischen Bukoliker*, *op. cit.*, p. 129.