# Daphnis in the Middle: Theocritus' Inter-generic Poetics and the Origins of the Bucolic Genre

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*Abstract*: Because of its programmatic significance, *Idyll* 1 features prominently in modern discussions of the origins of the bucolic genre. While some scholars prioritize the connection with early hexameter poetry, others call attention to the tragic elements in it. Against this background, this paper argues that Daphnis holds an interstitial position between epic and drama. Thyrsis' song may rely on epic poetry for its formal elements, but its theme and motifs bespeak the influence of tragic poetry. Thyrsis and Daphnis stand in a mirroring relationship that symbolizes the intergeneric combination of epic and dramatic traditions. Considering the presentation of Daphnis in Sositheus' *Daphnis* or *Lityerses* and Theocritus 6 can help us appreciate the theatrical elements in Daphnis' behavior in *Idyll* 1. Daphnis' silence, his refusal to accept divine help and his isolation from the bucolic community suggest dramatic, and particularly Sophoclean, influence. Daphnis' fear of ridicule by Aphrodite motivates his anger thus bringing him close to a reaction typically associated with Sophocles' heroes. Theocritus combination of epic and tragic elements reflects discussions about the exact lines separating dramatic genres in Hellenistic times. It also signals that Theocritus appropriates tragedy's critical reworking of epic to establish bucolic poetry as an autonomous genre.

*Keywords*: Theocritus, bucolic, tragedy, theatricality, genre

## 1. Introduction

Theocritus' *Idyll* 1 presents the encounter of an unnamed goatherd and Thyrsis of Etna. Not much is ever revealed regarding the latter apart from his previous successful performance of a song about the suffering and death of Daphnis. At the request of the goatherd and with the prospect of winning an ornate rustic cup among other prizes, Thyrsis delivers a song about the sufferings of Daphnis. Hermes, Priapus, and Aphrodite visit Daphnis as he lies dying to inquire about the reasons of his suffering and to attempt to change his mind. Daphnis meets the entreaties of his first two visitors with stubborn silence. Hurt by Aphrodite's ironical reminder of the omnipotence of eros, he

delivers a passionate harangue against the goddess. Before he dies, Daphnis addresses the denizens of the bucolic world, bequeathing his syrinx to Pan and bidding them all farewell. The poem concludes with the goatherd bestowing the promised prizes upon Thyrsis.

*Idyll* 1 holds programmatic importance in the corpus of Theocritus' poetry that is only rivalled by that of *Idyll* 7.[1] Its placement at the opening of Hellenistic editions reflects this poem's key role in defining the new genre of bucolic poetry.[2] All other treatments of Daphnis, in *Idyll* 6 and the pseudo-Theocritean *Idylls* 8 and 9, echo details of *Idyll* 1.[3] Additionally, this is the only bucolic poem in which major Olympic gods appear. Indeed, as Fantuzzi has noted,[4] the suppression of the divine apparatus typical in Homeric epic is a defining attribute of Theocritus' bucolic poetry. Thyrsis' address to the bucolic Muses for inspiration is an opening technique that finds no parallel in the performance of songs embedded in Theocritus' poems.[5] Even the inclusion of Thyrsis, a kind of itinerant bucolic bard,[6] is conducive to bestowing special significance upon this *Idyll*. As a result of these considerations, the story of Daphnis as sung by Thyrsis can shed light on Theocritus' inception of a new poetic genre—bucolic poetry.

In their efforts to elucidate the traditional background of Theocritus' poetry, scholars have proposed a twofold connection. The dactylic hexameter Theocritus uses serves as a first point of contact with previous epic poetry.[7] In addition to the various echoes of epic idiom, Theocritus refers to specific Homeric heroes (e.g., Diomedes in *Idyll* 1; Polyphemus in *Idyll* 11) and epic devices. The elaborate ekphrasis of the cup the goatherd offers Thyrsis is a technique emblematic of epic poetry and functions as an index of genre affiliation.[8]

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[1] Cairns 1984. See also Halperin 1983a, 186; Hunter 1999, 60–61; Kyriakou 2018, 162.

[2] For ancient editions of Theocritus' poem, see Gutzwiller 1996.

[3] Gutzwiller 1983; Fantuzzi 1998.

[4] Fantuzzi 1998, 63; 2000, 136.

[5] Fantuzzi 1998, 63; 2000, 146. See also Reitzenstein's comment (1893, 202n1) that this is the only bucolic song in Theocritus to imitate hymns.

[6] Fantuzzi 2008, 577.

[7] Halperin 1983b, 18, 211.

[8] Halperin 1983b, 176, 185; Cairns 1984, 107–110. In addition to this, as Halperin (1983b, 170–171) also remarks, the term *kissubion* (27) recalls the use of the same word in the Cyclops episode at *Od.* 9.346.

The ancient scholia connect some of Theocritus' poems with the prose mimes of Sophron.[9] The fact that we speak nowadays of Theocritus' bucolic or non-bucolic mimes reflects the importance of this connection, which in turn raises the issue of the dramatic qualities in Theocritus's poems.[10] Recent readings focus on Theocritus' engagement with material previously treated in Attic tragedy—for instance, the story of Pentheus in *Idyll* 26, which alludes to Euripides's *Bacchae*—or the inclusion of tragic tropes or narrative patterns in Theocritus' poems.[11] The story of Daphnis in *Idyll* 1 has been of particular importance in this regard: for several scholars, his death reenacts or imitates Hippolytus' end in Euripides' play of the same name.[12] Accordingly, they attribute to Daphnis Hippolytus' indifference to love and virginal hostility towards Aphrodite.[13] Non-Theocritean tradition does not bear out such views of Daphnis: not only is Daphnis not averse to lovemaking, but he is even punished because of his promiscuity.[14] If a connection with Euripides's *Hippolytus* is to be entertained, comparison of Daphnis with Phaedra might be more to the point: both are victims of Aphrodite's power and suffer because of their refusal to give in to the passion that devours them; both resist suggestions, by the Nurse in Euripides and Priapus in Theocritus, to indulge in eros.[15] Be that as it may, Theocritus is not

[9] Prolegomena F 20–22 (p. 5 Wendel); Summary of *Idyll* 2 (a.1–2 p. 270 Wendel), Σ 2.11–12a, 11–12b, Summary of *Idyll* 15 (p. 305 Wendel). See also Hordern 2004: 26–27.

[10] Voelke 1992, 14; Payne 2007, 92.

[11] See Sistakou 2016; Cusset 2021 (with emphasis on comedy).

[12] Aguirre de Zárate 2012 offers a useful survey of the various hermeneutic approaches to the poem.

[13] E.g., Reitzenstein 1893, 211; Lawall 1967, 19–20; Billault 2016, 59; Sistakou 2016, 129; Cusset 2021, 291–293. Against this tendency Halperin 1983a, 192. Judicious skepticism: Segal 1974, 35–36. Comparison of Daphnis with tragic heroes (apart from Hippolytus mentioned above) has been rife in secondary literature: e.g., Prometheus (Berg 1965; Lawall 1967, 20). More generally, for Daphnis as a tragic hero, Segal 1974, 42; Walker 1980, 39; Halperin 1983b, 220; Billault 2016; Sistakou 2016, 128–129.

[14] Ogilvie 1962, 108. Scholars have noted Daphnis' lack of measure in love and the (probable) misplacement of his desire: Schmidt 1968; Williams 1969, 123; Anagnostou-Laoutides and Konstan 2008, 518. Hunter 1999, 63–66 offers a useful survey of the various traditions surrounding Daphnis.

[15] Gutzwiller 1991, 96. Hunter (1999, 67) and Billault (2016, 59) posit that Daphnis imitates Phaedra in his suffering and Hippolytus in his aversion towards Aphrodite.

interested in presenting a complete, detailed account of Daphnis.[16] The gaps in the narrative are a calculated part of his poetics, which promote a different kind of reading experience; one that instead prioritizes identifying sets of images, devices, or techniques that bespeak the influence of genre traditions and provide angles from which to appreciate Theocritus' poetic art.[17]

Against this background, this paper argues that Theocritus' treatment of Daphnis relates to the configuration of his new genre identity. Specifically, it proposes that the behavior of Daphnis recalls traits of the typical Sophoclean hero. Such a statement inevitably encounters two interrelated problems. These concern first the idea of the typical Sophoclean hero and second the question of whether our modern perception of Sophoclean heroism is also valid for Theocritus' reception of Sophocles in Hellenistic times. The concept of the typical Sophoclean hero is a modern scholarly construct that goes back to comments by Reinhardt 1976 (originally published in 1933) amplified through the work of Whitman 1951, Knox 1964, and Winnington-Ingram 1980. These readings emphasize the isolation of Sophocles' heroes, their stubborn resilience, their tendency to self-destruction, and ultimately their resemblance to the Homeric depiction of Achilles in the *Iliad*. Without a doubt, Sophocles' seven surviving tragedies offer a slippery foundation upon which to erect theoretical edifices representative of Sophocles' entire literary output. Even so, our modern understanding of Sophocles is conditioned by the realities of textual transmission, and any generalization is to be accepted with the concomitant dangers that ensue from our limited knowledge of his work. Some comfort is offered by occasional ancient evidence that confirms a salient feature of modern reconstructions of the Sophoclean hero—that is, the proximity of Sophocles to the Homeric epics that allows an interesting interplay between epic ideas and tragic plot to emerge in his plays: e.g., Aristotle (*Poet.* 1448a), and Diogenes Laertius (4.20, 'Sophocles is the tragic Homer'). One may thus feel more confident that at least aspects of our modern reception of Sophocles would not seem alien to an educated reader of the Hellenistic times such as Theocritus. Beyond this general framework, reception theorists point out the fallacy in any effort to establish objectively the reception of one ancient author by another one. In all such cases, they

[16] Cf. Goldhill 1991, 242–243; Hunter 1999, 63.

[17] Payne 2007, 46 considers Thyrsis' song a stylistic medley.

aver, it is the modern reader or scholar who reconstructs the relationship between modern images of either author he or she has created.[18]

Bearing such limitations in mind, the following discussion argues that Theocritus makes use of tragedy's critical reworking of epic to establish his own independence in the face of an overwhelming epic tradition. Section 2 surveys dramatic or tragic elements in Thyrsis' telling of the story of Daphnis. It is argued that the mirroring relationship between Daphnis and Thyrsis stands for Theocritus' intergeneric mingling of epic and tragic elements in his bucolic poetry. The following section (Section 3) examines the appropriateness of Daphnis' myth for Theocritus' composition. The evidence provided by Sositheus' play and *Idyll* 6 demonstrate Daphnis' close association with dramatic discourse and his tendency for theatrical deportment. In this light, the following two sections (Sections 4–5) examine theatricality in Daphnis' speech and actions. Daphnis' violent response to Aphrodite finds parallels in Sophocles' tragedy as does his fear of his opponents' laughter. Parallels to or echoes of Attic tragedy invest Daphnis' behavior with a theatrical aspect that undermines the seriousness of his story. Furthermore, it suggests that Daphnis assumes a role that enables him to act as an archetype for other characters in Theocritus' bucolic poetry. The concluding section (Section 6) situates Daphnis' interstitial position in Theocritus' oeuvre in the context of Hellenistic discussions about tragedy and generic boundaries.

## 2. Performing Daphnis

The unnamed goatherd asks Thyrsis to sing of the sufferings (*algea*) of Daphnis. The phrasing sounds very close to that Herodotus (5.67.5) uses to refer to dramatic performances in sixth-century Sicyon. The tyrant Cleisthenes put a stop to his people's dramatic performances with tragic choruses, which centered around the sufferings (*pathē*) of the hero Adrastus. Instead, he dedicated the performances to Dionysus. If Herodotus explores the possible non-Attic provenance of drama,[19] Theocritus may also be toying with the background of Sicilian dramatic performances. Thrysis' song focuses on the sufferings of Daphnis, who not only resembles an epic hero but also engages with Attic tragedy. Although we miss choruses, the choral element is still present after an

[18] Martindale 1993, 73; Kallendorf 2006, 68–70.

[19] Hornblower 2013, ad loc. For the variety of such dramatic performance outside Athens, see Griffith 2008, 61, 65.

elementary fashion in the guise of the refrains and lamenting animals and herdsmen. Accordingly, *Idyll* 1 present a generic hybridity that has programmatic significance for how we understand Theocritus' bucolic poetry. Despite the epic exterior of the song Thyrsis performs, echoes of tragic poetry permeate both his technique and the content of the poem. Unprompted arrivals of characters in Attic Tragedy—particularly of the members of the chorus, moved by the news of the protagonists' suffering or illness—offer a pertinent parallel for the arrivals of Hermes, Priapus, and Aphrodite.[20] Lines 76–98 could be divided into three episodes which center around the entrance of a new character and are separated by refrains. As elements of choral poetry,[21] their function in articulating Thyrsis' poem could be a reworking of the similar function that stasima have in tragedy as act-separating songs. The exchange of speeches between Daphnis and Aphrodite has been compared to an *agōn*, typical of Attic drama.[22]

The derivation of his name from *thursos* 'ivy wand,' associated with the cult of Dionysus, brings Thyrsis close to dramatic tradition.[23] Even so, Thyrsis looks more like a bucolic version of the itinerant bard.[24] From the very little we can gather, he has participated in at least one poetic competition in the past (24). *Idyll* 1 offers an informal, bucolic version of such a competition strengthening the impression that Thyrsis performs at competitions or festivals and wins prizes. Some technical features of his composition lend support to this interpretation. His song imitates rhapsodic hymns for the most part. His self-aggrandization in the opening lines also brings him very close to similar opening devices in the corpus of Homeric Hymns and Hesiod's *Theogony*.[25] In comparison to other embedded performances in Theocritus, his song is of unparalleled complexity. In most other cases, songs assume confessionary tones typical of monodic lyric with uncomplicated narrative parts (e.g., Simaetha; Cyclops; herdsman in *Idyll* 3). For the duration of his performance, Thyrsis delivers not only the spoken parts of his song but also the refrains, which

[20] Billault 2016, 57.

[21] Acosta-Hughes 2006, 31.

[22] Sistakou 2016, 127.

[23] Cf. Cusset 2008, 18n11. Cairns (1984, 100) also notes the prominence of ivy on the cup Thyrsis gets as a prize. Hunter (1999, 60–61) adds that the prospect of winning a goat or sheep for a song evokes the interpretation, according to which tragedy was originally a song performed for a goat.

[24] Fantuzzi 2008, 577.

[25] Cussett 2008, 18n11. For the bard's self-presentation in epic proems, see Ford 1992, 23–31.

a chorus would sing in different circumstances. This is a first indication of the tendency that Hellenistic texts exhibit to incorporate and textualize performed genres. The extensive speeches imitate Homeric practice praised by Aristotle (*Poet.* 1460a5–11). However, the connection with Homeric technique is problematized by Aelian's report (2nd–3rd cent. CE; *VH* 10.18 = fr. 323 Finglass) that Stesichorus was the first to treat the myth of Daphnis.[26] To be more specific, the extensive use of direct speech over narrative could reflect a salient feature of Stesichorean style, which also exercised a considerable influence on Attic tragedy.[27] Additionally, both poets exhibit an analogous combination of lyric and epic elements: whilst Stesichorus combines lyric format with epic themes, Theocritus combines epic meter with lyric elements (refrains) or themes (love).

Surveying the connections with Homer, rhapsodic hymns, Stesichorus, and tragedy, the modern reader comes face to face with the protean discourse of Theocritus' poetry, which also impedes the demarcation of his poetry across clear and easily defined genre lines. Formal elements of epic poetry are combined with motifs or themes of dramatic poetry, while lyric technique needs to be added to the mixture whether this affects Theocritus directly or the texts with which he engages as in the case of Stesichorus and tragedy.[28] A form of erudition, subtler than that of either Callimachus or Apollonius, thus emerges as a defining trait of Theocritus' poetic elegance. In turn, this way of reading his poetry establishes the intermingling of distinct poetic traditions as a defining attribute of Theocritus' conceptualization of genre in agreement with the poetic views of his contemporaries.

The changes in the circumstances attending the circulation of poetry between classical and Hellenistic times occasions a renegotiation of the criteria whereby genres are defined.[29] Although the concept might not have been current in Greek thought, there is ample evidence of pre-generic consciousness. Whilst the context of performance with its accompanying traditions of previous performances and the audience's horizon of expectation confirmed the generic outlook of a

[26] Davies and Finglass (2014, 596–598) treat this information with skepticism suggesting that it refers to a later namesake—a fourth-century dithyrambic poet (*FGrHist* 239 A 73 and *PMG* 841); cf. Rutherford 2015. See, however, Hunter 1999, 65 and Griffith 2008, 81. For the Hellenistic reception of Stesichorus, see Massimilla 1995 and Hunter 2015.

[27] Maingon 1989, 45–46; Carey 2015, 60; Finglass 2015, 90–92.

[28] See Finglass 2018.

[29] Kampakoglou 2019, 9–10.

performed poem in classical times, Hellenistic literary production prioritizes formal characteristics and content. This is not to say that performances were obsolete in Hellenistic times.[30] Adhering to a rigid theoretical model fails to do justice to the varied literary realities of the Hellenistic world.

The lack of a clear genre predecessor complicates things further in the case of Theocritus' bucolic poetry. Although evidence is not forthcoming, his *Idylls* lend themselves to easy dramatization as short sketches, a quality they share with mimes.[31] Formal characteristics such as analogy,[32] albeit adequate in the description of some *Idylls*, are not present throughout. Even so, appreciation of textual aspects provides a more promising avenue to reconstructing Theocritus' ideas of genre that cut across the surviving corpus. As Hunter (1996) has shown, Theocritus engages systematically with the literary patrimony of archaic and classical Greece, offering an archaeology of Greek poetry. Accordingly, one can see Theocritus' bucolic work as an archive of cultural traditions in which intertextuality is not only his poetry's most prominent but also everlasting characteristic. Thus, Theocritus sets the foundation upon which later poets will develop his original conception of bucolic poetry: herdsmen channeling echoes of previous poetry become the means through which older traditions are recast and developed. The dactylic hexameter serves as the convenient textual locus where Theocritus defines his poetic identity by playing off against each other distinct genres. While he elaborates on the epic association of the meter, the selection of content, themes, or motifs from tragic or lyric poetry (to mention just two traditions out of many) allows Theocritus to replicate the discourse of lyric poets (e.g., Sappho, Ibycus etc.) or entire genres (e.g., tragedy) to differentiate themselves from Homer.[33]

It is in this regard that the following discussion examines the presence of dramatic (and especially tragic) elements (in terms of both motifs and technique) in Theocritus' account of Daphnis. The aim is not to suggest the source of Theocritus' discourse but shed light on an aspect of Theocritus' bucolic poetry defined through his interaction with a specific generic discourse—that of tragic poetry. Going back to definitions of intertextuality,[34] Theocritus' *Idylls* are plural texts where distinct traditions (epic, dramatic, lyric, philosophy) interact with each other.

[30] D'Alessio 2017.

[31] Hunter 1999, 10–11. See also Stanzel 1995.

[32] Gutzwiller 1991.

[33] Kampakoglou 2021.

[34] E.g., Kristeva 1969, 145–146; Barthes 1970, 9–20.

Discussing tragic elements in Daphnis prioritizes one aspect of this varied discourse without ignoring the other elements also present in his poetry; these are necessarily relegated to a secondary position for the needs of this paper's argument. Furthermore, since Theocritus does not offer a complete narrative, the discontinuities in his telling of the myth alert the reader that they need to appreciate each specific scene from the angle of its intertextual potential rather than as constituent part of a complete epic or tragic narrative.

As an instance on a formal level of Theocritus' combination of traditions, I consider the interaction between Thyrsis and Daphnis. For the better part of Thrysis' song, Daphnis and Thyrsis share the same voice. Theocritus constructs a mirroring relationship between the two that bears important metapoetic implications for the poem's discourse. Both Daphnis and Thyrsis perform hymns addressed to Aphrodite and the Muses, respectively; they share a prominent position in their respective communities. Through his performance, Thyrsis demonstrates how Daphnis will remain immortal through the appropriation of his persona by later performers. The considerable differences between Daphnis and Thyrsis notwithstanding, they share a common ground which concerns the common elements that Theocritus detects in the poetic traditions they represent—drama and epic. If Daphnis recalls tragic characters, Thyrsis' profile associates him with epic performances and recitation. Thus seen, their analogy becomes a performative metaphor about the mixed, intergeneric locus in which Theocritus anchors the creation of his bucolic poetry.

It is in this regard that we can also consider the relationship in which Thyrsis stands to Theocritus as the textual mirror of the latter. In his request to Thyrsis in lines 23–24 the goatherd essentially asks for the repetition of Thyrsis' previous performance against Chromis: αἰ δέ κ' ἀείσῃς | ὡς ὅκα τὸν Λιβύαθε ποτὶ Χρόμιν ᾆσας ἐρίσδων, 'If you will sing as you sang when you competed with Chromis from Libya […]' (tr. N. Hopkinson).[35] Taken with the goatherd's comment that Thyrsis cannot take his song to the oblivion of Hades (62–63), it seems very likely that this version is intricately connected with Thyrsis.[36] Theocritus' text contributes to the textualization of Thyrsis' performance and its preservation. Thus seen, the authority of Thyrsis is enhanced to match that of Daphnis. In a manner of speaking, what Thyrsis does for Daphnis (i.e., preserving his memory through his performance), Theocritus does for Thyrsis (i.e., preserving his

[35] Acosta-Hughes 2006, 30.

[36] See especially Kyriakou 2018, 169–172.

memory) through the textualization of the performance. In addition to the intergeneric quality of Theocritus' poetry, *Idyll* 1 emphasizes textualization of performance as a means through which he engages with previous poetic tradition in an environment prioritizing text over orality. In the manner of Thyrsis incorporating in his performance dramatic and lyric elements, Theocritus also engages with distinct traditions that he combines in his own *Idylls*.

### 3. Dramatic Illusion and Theocritus' Bucolic Poetry

The previous section examined the combination of epic and tragic elements in *Idyll* 1. This section considers the relevance of the myth of Daphnis. As I argue, other Hellenistic attestations of Daphnis bear the strong imprint of dramatic potential thus making his story amenable to Theocritus' intergeneric experimentations. This tradition concerns not only the presence of Daphnis in Sositheus' drama, which probably antedates Theocritus, but also the theatrical elements with which Theocritus invests Daphnis in *Idyll* 6. The comparison with both these accounts contextualizes Daphnis' programmatic function in Theocritus' corpus and his relevance for getting a finer appreciation of his poetics.

The surviving information about Sositheus' life and his literary output is scarce.[37] Some ancient sources name him as a member of the Tragic Pleiad: the group of the seven most successful playwrights active in the reign of Ptolemy II Philadelphus (284–246 BCE).[38] Athens, Syracuse, or Alexandria in Troas are named as his possible birth places. Although certainty is lacking, Sositheus probably spent part of his career in Alexandria where he also produced some of his plays. Copies of his works would have been deposited in the Museum at Alexandria or circulated more widely thus reaching Theocritus. The realities of literary production and the fame that both Theocritus and Sositheus enjoyed make it quite likely that they were acquainted with each other's work if they did not actually meet in Alexandria. The possibility becomes greater when we consider that both treated the myth of Daphnis.

Sositheus' treatment of the myth in his *Daphnis or Lityerses* both reinforces the relevance of drama as a genre for the understanding of Theocritus' account of Daphnis and offers additional reasons to assume Theocritus' ongoing engagement with dramatic poetry in Hellenistic times for

[37] Kotlińska-Toma 2015, 93–95.

[38] Kotlińska-Toma 2015, 49–54.

the creation of his bucolic poetry.[39] As Sositheus was Theocritus' contemporary, it is very difficult to establish the direction of the influence. Whatever the answer to the question of priority, there can be no doubt that Theocritus acknowledges the dramatic elements of Daphnis' myth not only in *Idyll* 1 but also in *Idyll* 6 reinforcing the relevance of dramatic tradition for understanding his bucolic hero. Furthermore, the similarities between Sositheus' myth of Daphnis and Theocritus' bucolic poetry are such that they shed light on the pre-history of Theocritus' bucolic poetry: Theocritus could respond to elements he found in Hellenistic drama or reversely Sositheus could invest his plays with bucolic elements because he acknowledged the dramatic potential in Theocritus' poems. The fact that both Theocritus and Sositheus engage with the same dramatic tradition (particularly satyr drama) must have facilitated the interaction between their respective accounts of Daphnis.

Despite some attempts to consider it a tragedy,[40] Sositheus' play is generally identified as a satyr drama.[41] The plot resembles that of later novels.[42] Seeking his beloved nymph, Daphnis is captured at the court of the Phrygian king Lityerses. Heracles arrives to defeat the cruel king and free the captives. Some of the elements in this plot overlap with Theocritus' bucolic poetry. These include the importance of love, the rustic setting, a poetic competition leading to the establishment of a new poetic genre (the reaping song also known as *lityerses*),[43] and the humorous elements that undermine the seriousness of the action. Even the appeal to Pan in *Idyll* 1 may relate to a reference

[39] Voelke 1992, 20 focuses on the similarities between Sositheus' play and Theocritus 6: the presence of an ogre-like character (Lityerses and Polyphemus) and the theme of poetic rivalry are reminiscent of bucolic poetry.

[40] Xanthakis-Karamanos 1994.

[41] Napolitano 1979; Günther 1999, 605–613; Cozzoli 2003; Kotlińska-Toma 2015, 95–105.

[42] Xanthakis-Karamanos 1997. The outlines of the plot are restored thanks to the testimony of Servius (in Vergilii *ecl.* 8.68) [= Kotlińska-Toma 2015, 97–98]. Fakas 2019 discusses the influence of Sositheus' play on Longus' novel *Daphnis and Chloe*.

[43] In *Idyll* 10, Milon's reaping song (42–55) contrasts with Bucaeus' amatory song (24–37). The *agōn* may recreate aspects of Sositheus' lost play; see Hunter 1999, 211–212 ad loc.

in the play's opening, according to which Pan judged a poetic competition between Daphnis and Menalcas.[44]

Assuming that this reconstruction of the lost play is sound, Sositheus' *Daphnis* imitates patterns typical in Euripidean satyr dramas (e.g., *Theristae*; *Syleus*; *Busiris*)[45] or 'light' tragedies such as *Alcestis*.[46] Cyclops' presence in *Idyll* 11 leaves no doubt as to Theocritus' engagement with this genre and Euripides' *Cyclops*, which presents the first ever shepherds' song in Greek literature (41–62). The preponderance of romantic stories, both hetero- and homosexual, the pastoral setting, and the parody of high-flown style are elements present in both satyr drama and Theocritus' bucolic idylls.[47] To this we should add that satyr and pastoral themes were conducive to musical experimentation;[48] this aspect of satyr drama accounts for the creation of new genre in Sositheus' play but also the importance of singing and the appropriation of lyric genres in Theocritus. Sositheus' play underlines the relevance of this part of the tradition and explains the dramatic elements in Thyrsis' song. But we should avoid applying too rigid a model in our treatment of Theocritus' antecedents. Romantic elements with incongruous heroes would have also appeared in other genres such as Philoxenus' poem, a 'pastoral romance' according to Griffith (2008, 67). It is this variability of the connections that Theocritean poetry exhibits that makes for a considerable part of its intellectual and aesthetic appeal.

Apart from Sositheus' play, Daphnis' presence in *Idyll* 6 sheds an interesting light on Theocritus' engagement with drama more generally and in his treatment of Daphnis more

[44] Napolitano 1979, 87. A version of this competition, without mentioning Pan, is found in the pseudo-Theocritean *Idyll* 8, which offers an important glimpse of the reception of *Idyll* 1: see Gutzwiller 1983.

[45] According to Welcker's hypothesis, Euripides' *Theristae*, 'Reapers,' also treated the story of Lityerses; see Pechstein 1998, 284–286. See Pechstein 1998, and Krumeich, Pechstein, and Seidensticker 1999 for commentary on the satyr plays mentioned.

[46] As a tragic play presented instead of a satyr play, Alcestis constitutes a unique case. Although some of its motifs (e.g., captivity and liberation) overlap with similar ones in satyr plays, its standing as a tragedy cannot be doubted; see Parker 2007: xix–xxiv; Mastronarde 2010: 55–57.

[47] Lämmle 2013, 351–443 offers an exhaustive list of themes typical in satyr drama. Some of these (e.g., athletic competitions and ogres) are echoed in Theocritus' *Idylls* 4 and 13. For the athletic imagery in *Idyll* 4 and its connections with satyr drama, see Kampakoglou 2014.

[48] Griffith 2008, 68n28; Lämmle 2013, 371–375.

specifically.[49] This poem presents Daphnis and Damoetas engaging in a singing contest. In so doing, they act out the story of Polyphemus' liaison with the sea-nymph Galatea. Whatever the implications that this myth has for the relationship between the two young men,[50] it is remarkable that, while Damoetas clearly assumes the persona of Polyphemus, Daphnis remains himself and addresses Polyphemus as if he were his friend. Daphnis straddles frame and *agōn* in a manner that is unique to him and separates him from all other Theocritean characters. As readers we must give up any hope of ever learning anything substantial about Daphnis. Both *Idylls* 1 and 6 give the impression that Daphnis always performs a role out of which he cannot step. In *Idyll* 7 Daphnis is already the subject of songs, surrounded by traditions and thus inaccessible to the reader. The same inaccessibility attends Daphnis' presence while alive in *Idylls* 1 and 6. Inasmuch as his is a role with tragic and epic connections, the only way to understand Daphnis is to perform Daphnis.[51] The discontinuities and gaps in the story of Daphnis in *Idyll* 1 thwart readers' tendency to comprehend Daphnis' action by contextualizing them in a complete epic-style narrative of his life. Instead, the reader is afforded snapshots that emphasize the tragic and theatrical aspects in Daphnis' deportment.

Viewing Daphnis in such a way also accounts for the archetypal role he holds in Theocritus' oeuvre. Most of Theocritus' characters imitate aspects of Daphnis' behavior in *Idyll* 1. Theocritus' characters have a flair for the pompous and grandiloquent often supported by the appropriate poetic discourse. They are given to grand statements and gestures that do not suit their station or the particulars of the plot in which they participate.[52] The reasons are never made

[49] The connection between the two poems, and particularly between Polyphemus and Daphnis, is supported by a rare case of internal borrowing: Theocritus refers to both characters as *duserōs*. Bernsdorff (1996, 45–49) notes that Daphnis in *Idyll* 1 does not heed his own advice in *Idyll* 6; instead, like Polyphemus, he rejects love (although this is more of an affectation meant to win over Galatea [see Köhnken 1996, 181]) and shuns the woman looking for him.

[50] See Bernsdorff 1996, 42–44; Bowie 1996, 94–95.

[51] Voelke 1992, 12–13; Köhnken 1996, 174–177. Payne 2007, 93–94 sees wider implications in this suggesting that 'Theocritus' herdsmen consciously experiment with personae. Even the most heart-felt song is a kind of role play.'

[52] Payne 2007, 67. Fruitful discussion of Theocritus' herdsmen as 'metalogical conceits' apropos of *Idyll* 3 in Isenberg and Konstan 1984.

explicit. Instead of providing a realistic or persuasive story, Theocritus prioritizes the juxtaposition of themes or motives from different genres for stylistic effect.

### 4. 'As I lay dying': Daphnis as a Tragic Hero

Up to line 99, Daphnis remains silent, avoiding responding to the other characters. His silence has impeccable tragic credentials that have been acknowledged previously.[53] Remaining silent for a significant part of the action was a trait of Aeschylus' art.[54] Cassandra's silence in the presence of Clytemnestra (*Ag.* 1035–71) is perhaps the best-known example. Silence is an indication that communication fails, a willful act of self-isolation that frustrates Clytemnestra.[55] In the case of Daphnis, this is an additional indication of his alienation from the surrounding world. In spite of such parallels, I argue that the vehemence with which Daphnis responds to Aphrodite brings these lines closer to Oedipus' violent response to Polynices in *OC* (1350–96).[56] In the *Agamemnon*, Aeschylus depicts Cassandra, remaining silent for a prolonged period of time and never engaging directly with the person who addressed her, Clytemnestra. Instead, she later talks to the chorus elders (cf. Prometheus in *Prometheus Bound*). Unlike Cassandra, or other examples of silent characters, such as Iole or even Prometheus, Oedipus like Daphnis responds to the person addressing him. Prior to this explosion, Oedipus remains silent refusing to engage with his son's pleas (1271–74). In addition to the overall setting of the scene, there are analogies in the structure and articulation of the two scenes. These do not constitute evidence that Theocritus patterns Daphnis after Oedipus. Rather, they reinforce the tragic background of Theocritus' poem helping

[53] Lawall 1967, 20 who also mentions Prometheus in *Prometheus Bound*. Before addressing the chorus of the Oceanus' daughters, Prometheus addresses the elements (88–91) to witness his suffering (cf. n. 74 below for Cassandra's similar behavior in the *Agamemnon*). Unlike Prometheus, Daphnis addresses only Aphrodite. Prometheus' angry response to Hermes (953ff.), which could parallel that of Daphnis to Aphrodite is not preceded by silence.

[54] Cf. Aristophanes, *Ran.* 911–930 with Dover 1993 on 911–912. See also Taplin 1972: 58–76 and more generally for silence in tragedy Montiglio 2000, 158–212.

[55] Scholars also compare Iole's silent response to Deianira's speech (*Trach.* 298–313). Finglass (2022, 89–91) notes the difference between the two playwrights. Sophocles underlines Deianira's kindness towards her husband's concubine.

[56] For Oedipus' silence, see Reinhardt 1976: 226; Guidorizzi 2008 on line 1272.

the reader appreciate the tragic patina in Daphnis' behavior. Oedipus' opening address to his son (1354) parallels Daphnis' address to Aphrodite in its grandiloquence. While Oedipus accuses Polyneices of exiling him from Thebes and turning him into a beggar, Daphnis focuses on Aphrodite's belief in defeating him. In both cases, the speakers note the similarity between themselves and their opponent: Polyneices shares his father's lot as an exile (1359–60), while Aphrodite suffers defeat at eros' hands just like Daphnis. Both discourses attain oracular heights through the use of future tenses and expressions, to paraphrase: the expedition against Thebes shall fail, while Daphnis shall remain a bane to eros even in death. Furthermore, both speakers refer to themselves by name in the third person as if they were performing a role (*OC* 1395). In Sophocles' play, Oedipus is about to be heroized and be permanently linked with the grove surrounding the shrine of the Eumenides. A similar fate awaits Daphnis. Although the details of his death are unclear, scholars have noted Daphnis' association with the natural setting, as is the case with Oedipus, but perhaps in a more literal way than in Sophocles.[57] For some readers, Daphnis' association with a river might reflect his attainment of a special, heroic or divine status.

As with Sophocles' play, Daphnis' irate response presupposes a special bond between Aphrodite and him.[58] The reader is never afforded any insight, but as I argue his response relates to Thyrsis' presentation of Aphrodite in lines 95–96. Just as Oedipus feels enraged by the hypocritical, self-serving interest that Polynices has recently taken in his father, Daphnis' response is motivated by the fact that he sees Aphrodite's mockery through her serious façade.

ἦνθέ γε μὰν ἀδεῖα καὶ ἁ Κύπρις γελάοισα, (95)
λάθρη μὲν γελάοισα, βαρὺν δ' ἀνὰ θυμὸν ἔχοισα,

Cypris came too, laughing with delight,
laughing inwardly and nursing heavy anger
(tr. N. Hopkinson)

[57] Lawall 1967, 19, 25; Halperin 1983a, 195, Gutzwiller 1983, 175.

[58] Crane 1987, 178–179.

Such repetitions of hemistiches are not common in epic discourse.[59] Scholars identify only three such cases in the *Iliad*.[60] Despite the Homeric credentials of the device, Theocritus innovates in not reproducing exactly the second half of line 95: ἀ Κύπρις is replaced by λάθρη μὲν, 'secretly,' which is thus thrown into relief. Even so, the meaning is far from clear.[61] One may take this as an element of improvisation suggesting the instantaneous correction of the performing bard: Aphrodite was laughing, but she was doing so in secret. Another way of understanding the text would be that the repetition implies the change of Aphrodite's behavior as she is approaching Daphnis: Aphrodite was laughing but tried to hide this as she came closer. Equally ambiguous is the meaning of *barus* usually rendered as 'severe' or 'stern' (cf. LSJ[9] and DGE s.v.). It is unclear whether it expresses Aphrodite's anger, grief, or perhaps both.[62] Quite likely, the juxtaposition of *lathrē* with *ana thumon* implies a split between how Aphrodite appears and what she is truly thinking.[63] If *lathrē* emphasizes Aphrodite's true response to the spectacle, *barus* describes the pretense she assumes in front of Daphnis.[64] Her grief or wrath is false and angers Daphnis.

Achilles, to whom Daphnis has often been compared, declares to Odysseus that he hates the person who says one thing while he thinks something else (*Il.* 9.312–313). But there is nothing in Aphrodite's response or in Daphnis' subsequent discourse that comes remotely close to anything in the *Iliad* or specifically to Achilles' speeches in *Iliad* 9. I argue that Aphrodite's laughter is an

[59] The terms used to describe this device vary with *epanalepsis* being the most common; see Edwards 1991, 331 on *Il.* 20.371–372. For repetitions in Homer and their appreciation in ancient scholarship, see Richardson 1993: 282–283.

[60] Nestor's description of his chariot race against the twin sons of Actor (23.641–642), Hector's description of Achilles (20.371–372), and Achilles' refusal to countenance Hector's pleas (22.127–128). To these one could add *Il.* 2.849–850 = 21.157–158, which repeats only the name of the river Axius, rather than the entire hemistich.

[61] Cf. Hunter 1999 ad loc.

[62] Cf. Crane 1987, 173–177 (in favor of the meaning grief). However, anger does not contradict Aphrodite's feeling sorry for Daphnis (cf. Lawall 1967, 24).

[63] This construction presents a peculiar twist of Homeric idiom (τὰ φρονέοντ' / φρονέουσ' ἀνὰ θυμὸν ἅ, 'considering in his/her mind those things which'): *Il.* 2.36, 18.4, and *Od.* 2.116. Typically, the participle governing the prepositional phrase has a direct object, which reveals the content of the person's cogitations.

[64] So Zuntz 1960, 38–39; Ogilvie 1962, 107; Lawall 1967, 24.

index that guides the reader's response about the effect intended. It is at this point that one can witness Theocritus' careful handling of distinct traditions: by varying epic conventions, Theocritus calls attention to motifs or themes that he borrows from other genres specifically tragedy. The repetition of the hemistich throws into relief Aphrodite's laughter. In turn, this motivates Daphnis' response, which parallels attitudes usually found in Sophocles' heroes.

Theocritus' adaptation of a Homeric formula lends strength to the interpretation that Aphrodite's laughter motivates Daphnis' explosive response. Line 95 (ἁδεῖα καὶ ἁ Κύπρις γελάοισα) offers a variation of an epic formula comprising the neuter *hēdun*, 'sweetly,' used adverbially and a form of the verb *gelaō*, 'to laugh.' As a rule, the formula describes the reaction of an internal audience to a ludicrous or humorous episode. This can concern the reaction of the Achaean soldiers to the beating of Thersites by Odysseus (*Il.* 2.270) or Ajax falling in cow dung during his race with Odysseus (*Il.* 23.784). In the *Odyssey*, ἡδὺ γέλασσαν describes the reaction of the suitors to Irus, Telemachus, or even Theoclymenus (18.111; 20.358; 21.376). At *Iliad* 21.508, the formula under discussion describes Zeus' bemused response to Artemis sulking after she is hit by Hera (εἶλε πατὴρ Κρονίδης, καὶ ἀνείρετο ἡδὺ γελάσσας). Halliwell (2008: 69) construes Zeus' laughter as '[the] externalization of divine pleasure in its own exercise of strength and domination,' a representation of divine 'self-sufficiency in its own eternal conditions of existence.'[65] Along similar lines, in the *Homeric Hymn to Aphrodite* (49, ἡδὺ γελοιήσασα φιλομμειδὴς Ἀφροδίτη),[66] Zeus associates the laughter of Aphrodite with her boasting that she has compelled all gods to sleep with mortal lovers. Against this background, Aphrodite's laughter in *Idyll* 1 conveys her amused superiority at the sight of Daphnis, who can also be seen as a defeated opponent (note also ὃ δὲ μάλα ἡδὺ γελάσσας at *Iliad* 11.378 of Paris laughing at Diomedes).[67] At the same time, her

[65] The Hellenistic *Batrachomyomachia* (172 ἡδὺ γελῶν) imitates this line when it describes Zeus' amusement at the battle between the frogs and the mice; see Hosty 2020 ad loc.

[66] Faulkner 2008 ad loc. For the connection of *Idyll* 1 with this Homeric Hymn, see Crane 1987.

[67] Crane 1987, 165–169; Cameron 1995, 412–413. Aphrodite's laugher mirrors that of the woman in the ekphrasis of the rustic cup (36); its ambiguous, but erotic, teasing aspect is further confirmed by the dancing maidens Priapus mentions (95). For the various links between the ekphrasis and Thyrsis' song, see Frangeskou 1996.

reaction is a textual index about the effect that the incongruous imitation of epic or tragic heroes has.[68]

The double repetition of *gelaō* in lines 95–96 calls attention to Daphnis' fear of his opponents' scorn and ridicule and provides an important link to Attic tragedy. A similar concern motivates particularly Sophocles' heroes but also Medea, who thus feel compelled to resort to desperate action such as preferring death to life or, in Medea's case, even filicide.[69] The uncertainty surrounding the history and nature of his affliction problematizes Daphnis' connection with such Sophoclean heroes. Although it is unclear whether his death is not part of his punishment, it is equally uncertain whether Daphnis had expected death as an outcome when he made the fateful comment about eros (97–98). Still, one gets the impression that his interlocutors believe that Daphnis could still avoid death if he only changed tack. Whether Daphnis can change his mind, as Priapus or Aphrodite might suggest, or not, whether he had countenanced the possibility of death or not, Daphnis is keen to convey that he is in control of his fate (even if this is nothing more than just an attempt to save face in the presence of his detractors). His braggadocio renders his appropriation of heroic discourse the more incongruous: Daphnis views death as the only way to defeat his opponents and save his heroic credentials. Faced with the perennial heroic dilemma, Daphnis follows Achilles' example: he chooses death, a decision which also guarantees him immortality through his entrance into the oral traditions of bucolic singers. Instead of submitting to Aphrodite and Eros, Daphnis prefers to face death with heroic dignity.

The connection with Achilles does not undermine the tragic background of Daphnis' behavior. On the contrary, the proximity of Sophocles' heroes to Achilles renders their stories useful to Theocritus. As Knox (1964, 50–53) notes, the Sophoclean hero stands in direct

[68] The only other bucolic idyll to mention laughter is *Idyll* 7 (42, 128). The goatherd Lycidas laughs with pleasure twice. In both instances, the formula appears in connection to the bestowal of his staff to Simichidas. Lycidas approves and enjoys Simichidas' performance but does so in the comfort of his own superiority as his laughter seems to imply. There is a parallel here between the interaction of Aphrodite and Daphnis, which the possibility of Lycidas being a god could only make stronger.

[69] E.g., Sophocles, *Aj.* 79, 302–304, 454 961, 1042–43; *El.* 1153, 1295; *Ant.* 839; *Phil.* 258, 1023–24; *OC* 1423; Euripides, *Med.* 383, 797, 1049. For Medea as a Sophoclean hero, see Knox 1964, 5; 1977, 196, 198–200.

connection to Achilles.[70] Consequently, the connection with tragedy allows Theocritus to convey his reliance on epic poetry filtered through the lens of Attic tragedy. Theocritus appropriates Sophocles' ideas of tragic heroism because of their proximity to Achilles but also because they allow Theocritus to innovate and proclaim his independence. Trying to declare his autonomy from the overpowering influence of epic poetry, Theocritus sees in the tragic hero a model for innovative engagement with epic poetry.

### 5. Daphnis Performs his own Death

Scholars have noted the similarities between Daphnis' farewell to nature and similar discourses in Sophocles' *Ajax* and *Philoctetes* and Euripides' *Hippolytus*.[71] For the most part, scholarship focuses on the parallel in technique, but I would like to examine the theatricality with which this movement invests Daphnis' behavior, a theatricality that agrees with his heroic pomposity (examined in the previous section) and the role he assumes in *Idyll* 6. The vocatives at line 115 usher in the second half of the speech: Daphnis ignores Aphrodite and reasserts his isolation. The distance separating Daphnis from those present parallels a trait typical, at least, in Sophocles' plays. Very often such is the distance separating Sophocles' heroes from their community that other characters fail to understand them, attributing their behavior to folly.[72] This commonality contextualizes the parallels with similar addresses to nature scholars have pointed in Sophocles' *Ajax* (859–863) or *Philoctetes* (1081–94, 1145–62). Whilst Ajax addresses nature in complete isolation moments before his suicide, Philoctetes addresses his surroundings in the presence of other characters—Neoptolemus, Odysseus, and the chorus.[73] This is also true of Daphnis, who speaks in front of Aphrodite and all the other characters mentioned in the previous lines. Unlike Philoctetes, Daphnis does not seek to win the sympathy of those present. Still, the setting of the

[70] See also Whitman 1951, 64, 150–151.

[71] Hunter 1999, 98 on lines 115–21.

[72] Typically, the Sophoclean hero cuts a lonely figure alienated from his community due to his intransigence: Jones 1962, 214–218; Knox 1964, 32–36; Reinhardt 1976, 10. Cf. Whitman's (1951, 70) discussion of self-destructiveness in heroic spirit.

[73] Seale 1982, 40 (Philoctetes); 158 for the possibility that Ajax's soliloquy is overheard.

soliloquy invests Daphnis' speech with theatricality: Daphnis feigns his isolation in the presence of an audience, which he is trying to impress.[74]

The theatrical, performative aspect in Daphnis' speech is prominent from the first word he addresses to Aphrodite. The incongruity of the register to the surroundings reinforces the impression that Theocritus presents his bucolic hero as putting on a show. For some readers, the manner of Daphnis' death poses some difficulties: Daphnis dies in silence.[75] Theocritus seems to withhold a key ability from the archetypal *boukolos*—the ability to deliver himself through song from his suffering. In this way, as this interpretation continues, *Idyll* 1 contradicts a basic principle of Theocritean poetics: faced with the impossibility of love, the possibility of music always remains.[76] Still, a closer look at Daphnis' speech suggests that his discourse is inherently different from those of other speaking characters making use of a higher register and including markers of lyricism. These suggest that, even if he does not outright sing, he nonetheless imitates the effect of tragic songs or soliloquies.[77] Daphnis' address to Aphrodite recalls the solemnity of hymnic openings. He makes use of repetition, includes addresses, makes use of mythological examples and *adynata*, and apostrophizes an absent god—Pan. Finally, Daphnis repeatedly talks of himself in the third person, creating for himself a fictional persona. The presence of all these features has a cumulative effect on the impression that Daphnis makes on his internal and external audiences and reinforces the impression that he is putting on a performance inspired by tragedy.[78] The fact

[74] The presence of an audience gazing at the actor is a defining condition of theatricality: Féral and Bermingham 2002, 97–98. In addition to Daphnis' address to the surrounding nature, his gesture of dedicating his syrinx to Pan in the presence of an internal audience has tragic parallels: e.g., Cassandra dedicating her fillets to Apollo (Euripides, *Tro.* 451–454). In *Agamemnon*, Cassandra addresses the Sun in the presence of the chorus elders (1323–24), who although well-disposed towards her fail to understand her actions like Daphnis' visitors (1242–45).

[75] Walker 1980, 41; Aguirre de Zárate 2012, 38.

[76] The formulation is Voelke's 1992, 12.

[77] See Nooter 2012, 14–16. The tendency to perform solo songs that particularly Sophocles' male heroes have (Hall 1999, 120–121) could offer a useful intertextual background for discussing Daphnis' discourse.

[78] One might even point to possible echoes: Daphnis' promise to be an *algos* to eros even in death (103) parallels Ajax's promise (*Aj.* 864–865) to continue talking in Hades in an ironic perversion of his Homeric silence there.

that Daphnis talks about himself adds to the impression that he presents a spectacle (116, 120–121) that contrasts with his previous reputation. This tendency that Daphnis shares with other heroes such as Eteocles (*Sept.* 7), Ajax (*Aj.* 98, 864) or Oedipus (*OT* 1365–66) invests Daphnis with the necessary authority to compensate for his weakened status as sufferer. Stripped of any real power, Daphnis like tragic heroes resorts to the potency of lyric discourse. Being able to recreate poetic artifice in one's speech thus becomes a defining part of one's heroic identity.[79]

Daphnis' answer to Aphrodite exhibits the formal characteristics of a hymn. The address to the god is followed by adjectives that then lead to a mythological section.[80] In spite of these superficial similarities, the rhetorical function is the opposite. Daphnis does not lavish praise but blame upon the goddess—this is an anti-hymn.[81] Without a doubt, Aphrodite cuts a less than flattering figure in early Greek epic. But such games with genre lines are more typical of lyric poetry embedded in drama (whether tragic or comic). The analogies that scholars have detected between Daphnis and tragic heroes (e.g., Sophocles' Ajax or Philoctetes), who also bid farewell to nature suggest that there is a tragic background to this scene. This realization motivates the reader to consider the tragic potential in Daphnis' address to Aphrodite. Creusa's attack on Apollo in Euripides' *Ion* offers a useful parallel to appreciate Daphnis' behavior from a tragic perspective. The analogy consists in the perversion of the same kind of discourse (hymn) to attack a divinity. Although she uses techniques typical in the hymnic praise of gods (solemn invocation, ornamental epithets, attributes),[82] Creusa confronts Apollo and accuses him of her rape. In both cases, love plays a role in motivating the reaction of the mortals: Creusa was raped by Apollo, while Aphrodite makes it clear that Daphnis' suffering is the result of his comment about eros. Her inability to keep silent, repeatedly expressed, offers a point of contact with Daphnis.[83] The use of the genre of hymn emphasizes the emotionality of each character that breaks into a pathetic performance that reveals the extent of their suffering and their distrust in the divine—however well motivated (or not) this might be. Yet Creusa suffers the result of actions that she has not willed or brought about. Nothing

[79] Cf. Nooter 2012, 10–12.

[80] Kampakoglou 2021, 246.

[81] Billault 2016, 58; Bouchard 2022, 42 with n.16, who also notes the similarity to Creusa in Euripides' *Ion.*

[82] Gibert 2019, 253–254.

[83] Creusa remains silent while the old tutor speaks (800–858); but there is no questioning as in *Idyll* 1 or *Oedipus at Colonus*.

could be further from the truth in the case of Daphnis. Daphnis suffers because of his indomitable will; even while he lies dying, he remains in control of his fate in a typical Sophoclean fashion.

The background that such overlaps with tragic poetry offers contextualizes Daphnis' animosity towards the gods and perhaps the absence of the divine in Theocritus' bucolic poems. The depiction of Daphnis in *Idyll* 1 comes close to two aspects of what Whitman (1951, 59–60) calls the 'matrix of heroism.' To be specific, Daphnis is close to the gods and exhibits tragic heroes' tendency to self-destruction. As in tragedy, both these elements emphasize Daphnis' isolation from and antithesis to the divine world. Aphrodite's late arrival on the scene and her ineffectiveness in changing Daphnis' mind throw into relief Daphnis' resolution and help align him more clearly to tragic models: At the same time, I submit that the inability of Daphnis and the three gods to communicate with each other functions etiologically. It accounts for the absence of the divine from Theocritus' bucolic poetry. The denizens of the bucolic world invoke the gods, but unlike epic poetry there is no real contact with the divine world, which remains outside of their concerns and lives. Through their behavior, Theocritus' herdsmen channel Daphnis' heroic attitude, who thus serves as their model. Daphnis helps define the limits of humanity thus setting the standard against which other characters are measured.[84] In this light, it comes as no surprise that Daphnis is meant for a special, privileged posthumous fate, of which he seems cognizant.

## 6. Conclusions

Is the story of Daphnis as told by Thyrsis in *Idyll* 1 a tragedy? For Aristotle (*Poet.* 1452b9–13), three elements make for a good tragic plot—peripety, recognition, and *pathos*:

> δύο μὲν οὖν τοῦ μύθου μέρη ταῦτ' ἐστί, περιπέτεια καὶ ἀναγνώρισις· τρίτον δὲ πάθος. […] πάθος δέ ἐστι πρᾶξις φθαρτικὴ ἢ ὀδυνηρά, οἷον οἵ τε ἐν τῷ φανερῷ θάνατοι καὶ αἱ περιωδυνίαι καὶ τρώσεις καὶ ὅσα τοιαῦτα […].
>
> These, then, are two parts of the plot, **peripety** and **recognition**; third is the ***pathos***. […] The ***pathos*** is an act which is destructive to life or painful […]
> (tr. G. Else)

[84] This would bring Daphnis once again close to the typical Sophoclean hero. Cf. Jones 1962, 168.

The examples he brings in the *Poetics* leave no doubt that Aristotle applies these in the first instance to interfamilial relationships (*Poet.* 1453b14–26). But after a kind Daphnis meets these criteria: there is a change in his circumstances associated with his suffering (peripety); and all this is motivated by his comment about eros (*Poet.* 1453a13–17). Whatever their motivation, the tragic hero's actions result in the loss of something they hold valuable. Very often, as is the case particularly with Sophocles' heroes, this may be a price they are willing to pay as is also true of Daphnis. Upstanding conduct by an admirable character with the potential of regret is the business of tragedy,[85] and Daphnis' story as dramatized by Thyrsis bears unmistakable hallmarks of the genre.

Mastronarde (2010, 51–52) has called attention to the existence of two models whereby the tragic credentials of a plot were, and have been, evaluated since antiquity. While one prioritizes plot lines, story pattern, and endings, the other emphasizes social and ethical values. If the ultimate destruction of the hero is the defining attribute of tragic discourse, as some ancient theorists would believe,[86] then Daphnis' story is tragic no matter the lighthearted tones that permeate it. The same is true when we consider Daphnis' story from the perspective of its ethical and ideological values. Several elements mark Daphnis as Sophoclean after a kind. His isolation, his indomitable will, his fear of ridicule, his address to the surroundings bring him closer to characters such Ajax and Philoctetes. Recognizing the tragic elements in Daphnis explains the relationship in which he stands to the rest of Theocritus' bucolic characters. Like Daphnis, Theocritus' bucolic (and, one might add, non-bucolic) heroes perform their sufferings in a rather theatrical, over-the-top manner. But they recognize their limitations: they cannot antagonize eros, and they lack Daphnis' determination that leads to his heroic status. The comportment of tragic heroes illustrates their

[85] White 1992, 228–230.

[86] Mastronarde 2010, 46n7. Evidence includes the hypotheses to *Alcestis*, and *Orestes*, and Aristotle (*Poet.* 1453a22), who notes contemporary criticism of Euripides' penchant for negative conclusions. Nonetheless, Aristotle does not suggest that a play's ending is the defining attribute of what constitutes tragedy or not. This is best explained through the example of Euripides' *Iphigenia in Tauris*, which Aristotle considers one of Euripides' most tragic plays (see Belfiore 1992). The unhappy ending is averted through recognition, but the arrangement of the plot is enough to emotionally move the audience with the prospect of *pathos*. See Else 1957, 450–451.

excessiveness and the problems that emerge when this sort of behavior takes place in a non-epic context such as that of democratic city (tragedy) or bucolic community in Daphnis' case.[87] This way of seeing things could also explain the contrast between the violence in Daphnis' world and the peace in that of Thyrsis and the goatherd, which Segal (1974, 37) has detected.

The tragic seriousness of Daphnis' story is tempered by the focus on eros, the incongruity of an oxherd behaving like an epic or tragic hero, and the inclusion of comic elements (Priapus, Aphrodite). Without insisting on too rigid a demarcation one can posit the double influence of satyr drama with its predilection for romance, pastoral settings, and parody of tragic discourse, and tragedy. Sositheus, active in Alexandria as a member of the tragic Pleiad around the same time as Theocritus, not only illustrates the dramatic potential in the story of Daphnis, but also helps link Theocritus' version with this lighter dramatic tradition. In the end, the reader wonders how seriously one can take such tragedy. It may very well be that Theocritus engages, indirectly at least, with a Hellenistic discussion about the exact boundaries of dramatic genres.[88] With Hellenistic satyr drama moving close to old comedy,[89] and with new comedy appropriating devices typical of tragedy (recognition scenes, reconciliations),[90] drama is a convenient locus for a Hellenistic poet experimenting with establishing his own distinct voice.

Daphnis and Thyrsis emerge as symbols of Theocritus' own art. Theocritus relies on the dramatic potential inherent in epic and drama to effect a combination of both. This way of viewing his art agrees with the assumed influence of Sophron's mimes on his urban idylls. The mimetic mode that prevails allows the association of Daphnis with epic and tragic heroes. This double connection notwithstanding, Daphnis' attitude reflects a new kind of heroic sensitivity that parallels the behaviors of Heracles in *Idyll* 13, Acontius in Callimachus' *Aetia* 3, and Jason in Apollonius' *Argonautica*. These tales of heroic aptitude signal the application of the archaic heroic code to new fields such as love. Setting a trend that Callimachus and Apollonius will follow, Theocritus engages with other traditions (e.g., tragedy, lyric, comedy, Plato). In this manner, Theocritus bestows upon his idylls, particularly the bucolic ones, an intergeneric quality that defies

[87] See especially Winnington-Ingram 1980, 317–323; Goldhill 1987, 70

[88] Note particularly Σ *Orestes* 1691 and Σ *Andromache* 32. See Fantuzzi 2014.

[89] For the Hellenistic development of the satyr drama, see Shaw 2014, 124–148.

[90] Fantuzzi 2014: 232.

classifications to an extent that is not easy to parallel in the works of either Callimachus or Apollonius. Daphnis, the hero of the bucolic world, thus becomes the representative of a new interstitial poetic attitude.

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