

Theocritus and Oral Tradition

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Certain aspects of the life of the Greek poet Theocritus are fairly well agreed upon. We know, for instance, that he flourished in the third century B.C. He was most likely born in Sicily and migrated at a later time to the Greek island of Cos and from there to Alexandria in Egypt, or he was Coan by birth and came to be associated with Sicily only later in his life. At any rate, he appeared in Alexandria at a time in history when this great city was the cultural center of the Eastern Mediterranean. He became part of the Alexandrian school, which, coming as it did upon the heels of the golden age of Greek literature, did what it could to avoid slavish imitation of its predecessors:

All the Alexandrians had in common one characteristic, showing itself in a variety of forms, namely avoidance of the trite and commonplace. Hence all alike sought restlessly for subjects either new or capable of being treated from some new angle; and all used language which, while retaining the flavour of antiquity, showed at every turn some novelty of formation, shade of meaning, or collocation (Rose 1948:317).

In particular they developed new genres such as the epyllion, or little epic, and epigram, miniature forms instead of the large-scale epic and drama. They also had a keen regard for form in both language and meter, and developed a taste for erudition as witnessed in their didactic poems and mythological allusions. In particular, they avoided large works and strove to expand upon previously treated material in ways that emphasized individuals' emotions or peculiarities.

Theocritus' greatest contribution to the movement was a group of poems referred to today as the *Idylls*, which feature several pastoral poems, the first ever to appear in literary form, and which earned Theocritus the title of Father of Pastoral Poetry. We see here the beginnings of a genre that numbers among its followers such names as Bion and Moschus among

the Greeks, the Romans Virgil, Calpurnius, and Nemesianus, the Italians Boccaccio and Petrarch, and such English poets as Spenser, Milton, Shelley, and Arnold.

This genre, however, seems to have appeared full-blown with Theocritus out of a literary vacuum, the source used for his pastorals being shrouded in mystery. A few Theocritean scholars simply dismiss the issue as unresolvable due to scant evidence. There is, however, general consensus that the genre was most likely based somewhat upon a preexisting folk culture of Sicily and the Peloponnesus, more particularly upon the actual songs of the shepherds of these regions. They especially single out the tradition of singing contests among the country folk, the remnants of which are perhaps still to be found today in Greece, Sicily, and parts of mainland Italy.

Steven Walker (1980) recounts a tradition according to which Syracuse in Sicily was afflicted by a plague or civil strife that the goddess Artemis was responsible for bringing to an end. Consequently, in her honor a festival was instituted, featuring the custom of herdsmen coming to the theater at Syracuse to perform their singing contests for the public. Walker goes on to say that perhaps these were witnessed by a young Theocritus (16): "It is certainly tempting to imagine Theocritus witnessing such spectacles as a child, and later looking back on his childhood and saying like Wordsworth in *The Prelude*: 'Shepherds were the men that pleased me first.'" According to A. S. F. Gow (1972: xiv), however, "the gap between the ritual singing adduced as the origin of Bucolic and the real songs of peasants on the one hand, and on the other the songs of the bucolic poets, is profound, nor does our information suffice to bridge it." In fact most Theocritean scholars of today would agree that the extent to which Theocritus borrows from some earlier tradition and what is original in his poems is quite unclear.

This paper addresses some aspects of this supposed "borrowing," in particular the possibility of Theocritus' being influenced by the motifs of an oral tradition existing among the shepherds of some Doric-speaking Greek area.

First of all it should become obvious to the reader of Theocritus that the poet wanted his songs at least to *appear* to be directly from the mouths of his shepherd characters. In fact, most of his *Idylls* are presented in dramatic form and the narrated portions employ similar language. Yet there can be little doubt that what one encounters in the *Idylls* is not simply a mimicking of real country songs; on the contrary, most of the contents are a reflection of Theocritus' own literary genius. His poems are highly

literary, even artificially so. They are neither formulaic nor lacking a high incidence of necessary enjambement. And it may be noted, as has Richard Janko (1982:31), that Theocritus was aware of epic enjambement tendencies: “The mock-heroic *Idyll* 22 of Theocritus is indistinguishable from real epic in terms of enjambement.” Janko goes on to support this claim with pertinent statistics. In short, what we have in Theocritus is a highly literate poet fully steeped in a highly literate tradition. Yet Theocritus is attempting to compose songs that come forth from the mouths of his shepherd characters, who are thoroughly steeped in rusticity. Moreover, Theocritus would only naturally have wanted to give his shepherds’ words a semblance of authenticity. I contend that he would surely have wanted to, and indeed did, lend verisimilitude to his rustic scenes by borrowing some aspects of real shepherd life as well as certain aspects from real shepherd songs.

Let us also bear in mind that the Alexandrians, as one of their characteristics, tended to write for a well-educated reader, one familiar with a wide variety of literary works and well versed in various literary traditions. This practice is, of course, in extreme contrast to the oral style of song that would appeal to the non-literate shepherds as they composed their ditties.

As one reads Theocritus’ *Idylls*, it is not too difficult to determine what of real country life is reflected there. What remains to be proved is whether it is logical to assume that to *further* the verisimilitude there were borrowings from actual contest songs, that is, topics and motifs, if not actual wording. The issue then is, which, if any, motifs found in Theocritus have their roots in an oral tradition and which are original with the poet or perhaps to what extent he borrowed from the wording or phraseology of real shepherd songs. I shall elaborate on both these issues later, but first it will prove beneficial to digress a bit to consider a few mechanical aspects of the poems.

Theocritus, being from Sicily or Cos, spoke the Doric dialect of Greek as his native language. Yet the choice of dialect for a work of literature in Greek antiquity was based on other considerations: “In the course of literary development . . . dialects came to be characteristic of certain classes of literature, and, their role once established, the choice of one or the other usually depended upon this factor rather than upon the native dialect of the author” (Buck 1928:14). As a matter of fact, Theocritus himself writes in a number of different dialects within the *Idylls*. Those which are pastoral in nature, however, are invariably Doric. Theocritus of course stands at the beginning of the pastoral genre, that is,

there exists no literary precedent concerning choice of dialect. It seems only natural then that he would use the very dialect of the shepherds about whom he writes, that is to say, those of Sicily, south Italy, and the area around Arcadia. The dialect of all these regions is Doric. Yet Doric was considered by the Alexandrians to be in many respects a non-literary dialect. Perhaps it was for this very reason that Theocritus felt it to be especially appropriate for his non-literate shepherds. In his non-pastoral *Idyll* 15, two Syracusan women who now lived in Alexandria are criticized for their characteristic broadening of vowels by an unnamed man in the crowd:

MAN: Will you two wretched turtle doves put a stop to your endless chatter? [To the crowd] They'll wear us out with all their drawling.

PRAXINOA: Heavens, where is this fellow from? And what is it to you if we chatter? Go buy some slaves and order them about. You're giving orders to Syracusans now, and I'll have you know that we are Corinthians by descent as was Bellerophon. We are speaking a Peloponnesian dialect, and it is permitted, I presume, for Dorians to speak Doric.

Yet Theocritus' Doric is a fuller or "salon-Doric." Perhaps more of his artificiality is revealed by this hyper-Doric form.

Furthermore, according to R. J. Cholmeley (1913:36), "Theocritus introduces—even in the mouths of his roughest countrymen—long obsolete Homeric forms. His language is the Homeric which prevails in the epic and lyric poetry of Greece. Even in the bucolic idylls there is not only an admixture of Homeric forms, but a not infrequent reminiscence of Homeric phrase." Let us keep this in mind as we attempt to tie the *Idylls* to an oral tradition and in particular as we consider the fact that Theocritus chose the dactylic hexameter for his pastorals, the very metrical form of the Homeric epic.

Once again, there are strict conventions among the Greeks concerning their choice of poetic meter just as we have seen with their choice of dialect. It is fair to say that when a Greek poet considered composing within a given genre, his choice of meter was predetermined by tradition, and he would seldom question the issue. His reader would have considered the wrong choice of meter as in poor taste. Yet once again we must realize that Theocritus stood at the beginning of a genre. His choice therefore

could be based on something other than a literary tradition.¹ It is tempting to think that his choice of the epic hexameter was influenced in some way by shepherd songs. Of course the meter of shepherd songs is unknown, but a few conclusions may be inferred from available data. First of all, we can safely assume that shepherds may have been familiar with the language of rhapsodes. Their performances are known to have continued as late as the time of Sulla, 138-78 B.C., long after the time of Theocritus. One particular rhapsode, Cynaethus, is said to have recited Homer at Syracuse as early as 504 B.C.² Furthermore, an acquaintance on the part of shepherds with Homeric recitations or perhaps even with oral compositional techniques, could possibly have led them to make a general association between oral, spontaneous composition and the hexameter verse form. Again it is tempting to think that if shepherds chose the hexameter for their verse form as appropriate because of the extemporaneous nature of their contest songs, it would not be unlikely that Theocritus used the same verse form either in imitation of the shepherd songs or, more likely, to indicate extemporaneity in the songs of his *Idylls*.

Let us also consider Theocritus' use of contest songs, examining especially those of *Idyll* 5. Although this may not be one of the best of Theocritus' works, it does serve as his most typical example of the amoebaeon singing exchange. Here we have in literary form an approximation of the form of actual contest songs, similar in many ways even to those still sung in contest among country people of that part of the world today. The amoebaeon exchange has many characteristics that can be found reflected in practically all of Theocritus' successors in the field of the pastoral. It is the one format that perhaps most typically represents how shepherds actually sang for their own amusement in the fields of ancient Greece. David Halperin refers to "the convention of 'amoebaeon song' which was destined to become the hallmark of the bucolic poetry of Theocritus and his imitators" (1983:178). The term amoebaeon implies an exchange in which there are two singers singing in opposition. The one presents a "lead-off" song on a topic of his own choosing, and therefore it may or may not be extemporaneous. The "second" singer then would be expected to respond to the lead-off song in some way; he might give an

¹ Cf. Rosenmeyer 1969:14: "The gross fact remains that pastoral lyric was at first composed in the same verse form as epic, and remained faithful to the pattern for over 1700 years."

² According to T. W. Allen (1924:66), this performance occurred as early as soon after the founding of Syracuse, i.e., before 700 B.C.

opposing view, produce a song on a similar theme, or simply add information. His real task of course would be to outdo his opponent in some fashion. The lead-off singer would then begin the second round of the contest with a theme of his own choosing and the entire process would be repeated. It is felt by some, however, that if the lead-off singer were in some manner to build his song upon the previous response, he would "score more points," so to speak, with the judge. One sure thing about this technique is that it required spontaneity at least on the part of the second singer.

For example: Comatas, the lead-off singer in *Idyll 5*, begins the contest in line 80 with a claim of love from the Muses, the divine inspirers of song, and devotion to them on his part. Lacon, the second singer, responds with a claim of love from Apollo, another divine inspirer of song, and devotion to Apollo on his part. In the second set of songs (84-87), Comatas boasts of the fertility of his flock and of the amorous advances of one; Lacon responds with a boast of the productivity of his flock and of his amorous adventures with a loved one of his own. These exchanges continue on topics such as their respective admiration for wild plants and/or their fruits, gifts proffered to their respective loved ones, warnings addressed to their respective flocks, and so on for some fourteen amoebic exchanges, through line 137, all following the basic pattern in which the response songs are in some way built upon the lead-off songs.

We might also consider Theocritus' use of the refrain. Once again by using a stylistic feature, Theocritus establishes it as one of the conventional characteristics of the genre to be repeated by many of his successors. Yet this particular characteristic, the refrain, might be considered either related somehow to the oral pastoral songs preceding Theocritus or at least constituting an attempt on his part to lend his pastorals an oral flavor. Certainly the refrain can be used for a variety of other stylistic purposes, but in addition to these, whether an actual part of the oral tradition or not, the refrain could lend to the reader of a written tradition a feeling for the oral as if the refrain were being used as a compositional device whereby the extemporaneous oral singer paused somewhat to organize his thoughts before proceeding with the next several lines or stanzas.

So much for mechanical aspects, each of which, incidentally, can be thought of as a reflection of a preexisting oral form; let us return to our examination of other ways in which real pastoral life is reflected in Theocritus' *Idylls*. First of all, let us consider the caste system among the various herdsmen found in the *Idylls*. According to tradition the herdsmen occupied distinct social positions depending on the type of animals they

herded. The most elite were the neatherds (or cowherds) followed in turn by the shepherds, then the goatherds, and finally the swineherds. By far the majority of characters found throughout the pastoral genre are shepherds and goatherds. The herdsman's ideal, however, found in the character of a certain Daphnis, is quite naturally supposed to be a neatherd. The swineherds, on the other hand, are not even found in Theocritus, and they appear in later pastoralists only on rare occasions and never have speaking roles. Furthermore, a distinction is clearly made between the goatherd and other herdsmen above him in the caste system.³ Also, the rustics of the pastoral genre are frequently depicted as being involved in some all-too-realistic rustic chore, for example milking animals of the flock, making cheese from the milk thus extracted, herding the flocks to water or shade, protecting them from disease or predators, and so on.

Quite frequently in the *Idylls* we read of shepherds meeting in the fields as by coincidence they drive their respective flocks to the same place, perhaps in search of shade or water. The tradition is that when real shepherds met on just such real occasions, in order to while away their spare time as the flocks drank, rested, or browsed and cropped the grass, they would recline in some shady precinct and play their rustic musical instruments and/or sing. This practice in time gave rise to the singing contest in order to make such encounters more interesting and competitive. If the records of such contests in the *Idylls* are accurate, the entire process involved an exchange of compliments or insults upon their meeting, which would then precipitate the challenge to a match, a debate over the suitability of the environment for singing (choosing a lovely spot appropriate for their songs), selecting a judge to determine the victor in the contest, staking of wagers to be won by the victor (frequently involving the use of various animals from their respective flocks, hand-carved vessels, or musical pipes), and of course the judge's decision along with the elation of the victor and the depression of the loser.⁴

It seems only natural then that Theocritus, in wanting to lend verisimilitude to his *Idylls*, would reflect in them not only various aspects of real shepherds' lives but, since his readers could be expected to be sensitive to them, various aspects of their real songs. This activity might have involved the borrowing of specific words, topics, or motifs but, since there are practically no indications to the contrary, not necessarily

³ See *Idylls* 1.56, 1.86, 5.51-52, 6.6-7, and 7.13-14.

⁴ For examples, see *Idyll* 5.1-79 and 138-50.

phraseology of greater length than single words or short phrases. This study limits itself to Theocritus' borrowing of motifs; but in order to seek specific indications of this borrowing, it will first be necessary to establish the methodology employed for determining what comprises a sufficient basis for inclusion in the study. The assumption here is that if a motif occurs often enough in Theocritus' pastorals, it more than likely was thought by the poet to be one that typified the genre and therefore was more than likely an actual part of an oral shepherd song tradition existing in Theocritus' day.

I have treated here a total of seven poems: *Idylls* 1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, and 11.⁵ This list coincides with Steven Walker's list and does not differ radically from that of other Theocritean scholars (cf. Walker 1980:34). These seven poems yield a total of 703 lines, that is, an average of ca. 100 lines per poem. This study limits itself to five specific motifs, illustrated here selectively because of the frequency of their occurrences. Each of these motifs occurs from ten to twenty-three times for an average of sixteen times each in the collection of seven poems. Each of the seven poems contains an average of between eleven and twelve instances of these motifs alone.

Rustic Gifts

Let us consider these more commonly encountered motifs as they appear in the *Idylls*. First of all it may be noted that Theocritus makes frequent allusion to various rustic gifts that are usually being bestowed upon or offered to a loved one. The herdsman of pastoral literature would attempt this bestowal with the only gifts he had to offer, and these are sometimes even amusing in their crudeness. Often such rustic gifts consisted of animals or flowers. Note the following:

αἶ κα ταὶ Μοῖσαι τὰν οὔδα δῶρον ἄγωνται,
ἄρνα τὸ σακίταν λαψῆ γέρας· αἰ δέ κ' ἀρέσκη

⁵ *Idylls* 2 and 10 have not been considered since they are not essentially pastoral in nature, and *Idylls* 8 and 9 are generally considered spurious. Of the other poems in the corpus, only *Idylls* 20 and 27 are considered pastoral; *Idyll* 20, however, does not have a pastoral setting, merely a rustic character bemoaning his treatment at the hands of a "city girl," and *Idyll* 27 is spurious. Lawall's argument for linking *Idyll* 2 with *Idyll* 1 is made on stylistic grounds, rather than any pastoral nature of *Idyll* 2 (1967:14-33).

τήναις ἄρνα λαβεῖν, τὸ δὲ τὰν ὄιν ὕστερον ἀξῆ.
 (Id. 1.9-11)

[If the Muses take the ewe as their gift, you would take the stall-fed lamb as your prize; and if it should please them to take the lamb, then you would lead off the ewe in turn.]

αἰγά τέ τοι δωσῶ διδυματόκον ἐς τρίς ἀμέλξαι,
 ἃ δὴ ἔχοισ' ἐρίφως ποταμέλγεται ἐς δύο πέλλας,
 καὶ βαθὺ κισσύβιον κεκλυσμένον ἀδεί κηρῶ,
 ἀμφῶες, νεοτευχές, ἔτι γλυφάνοιο ποτόσδον.
 (Id. 1.25-28)

[I shall give to you a she-goat to milk three times, one that has delivered twins and which, although she has two kids, gives two pails of milk in addition; and I shall give you a deep two-handled, ivy-wood cup coated with sweet wax, one newly fashioned and still fragrant from the chisel.]

ἔνθ', ὦναξ, καὶ τάνδε φέρου πακτοῖο μελίπνουν
 ἐκ κηρῶ σύριγγα καλὸν περὶ χεῖλος ἐλικτάν.
 (Id. 1.128-29)

[Come, lord, and take this beautiful honey-breathing panpipe wreathed with tightly-packed wax around its lip.]

ἦνίδε τοι δέκα μάλα φέρω· τηνώθε καθείλον
 ὦ μ' ἐκέλευ καθελεῖν τὴν καὶ αὔριον ἄλλα τοι οἰσῶ.
 (Id. 3.10-11)

[Look, I bring you ten apples; I plucked them there where you bade me pluck them; and tomorrow I shall bring you more.]

ἦ μάν τοι λευκάν διδυματόκον αἰγα φυλάσσω,
 τάν με καὶ ἃ Μέρμνωνος ἐρίθακίς ἃ μελανόχρως
 αἰτεῖ· καὶ δωσῶ οἱ, ἐπεὶ τὴν μοι ἐνδιαθρύπτῃ.
 (Id. 3.34-36)

[I am saving a white she-goat for you, one that has borne twins, the one that Mermnon's dark-skinned working girl asks me for; and I shall give it to her since you trifle with me.]

ΒΑΤΤΟΣ

χὰ σύριγγε εὐρώτι παλύνεται, ἄν ποκ' ἐπάξα.

ΚΟΡΥΔΩΝ

οὐ τήνα γ', οὐ Νύμφας, ἐπεὶ ποτὶ Πισαν ἀφέρπων
δῶρον ἐμοί νιν ἔλειπεν· ἐγὼ δέ τις εἰμὶ μελικτάς.
(*Id.* 4.28-30)

[BATTOS: Aegon's panpipe is sprinkled with mold ever since he hung it up.

CORYDON: No, by the Nymphs, not that one, since he left it for me as a gift when he went off to Pisa; I myself am something of a flute player.]

τηνεὶ καὶ τὸν ταύρον ἀπ' ὄρεος ἄγε πιάξας
τὰς ὀπλάς κήδωκ' Ἀμαρυλλίδι.

(*Id.* 4.35-36)

[Grabbing the bull by the hooves, he brought it from the mountain and gave it to Amaryllis.]

ΚΟΜΑΤΑΣ

τάν ποίαν σύριγγα; τὸ γὰρ ποκα, δῶλε Σιβύρτα,
ἐκτάσω σύριγγα; τί δ' οὐκέτι σὺν Κορύδωνι
ἄρκει τοι καλάμας αὐλὸν ποππύσδεν ἔχοντι;

ΛΑΚΩΝ

τάν μοι ἔδωκε Λύκων . . .

(*Id.* 5.5-8)

[COMATAS: What panpipe are you talking about? Have you, the slave of Sibyrta, ever owned a panpipe? Why is it no longer enough for you to hiss upon that reed flute of yours along with Corydon?

LACON: Lycon gave that panpipe to me . . .]

ΚΟΜΑΤΑΣ

κήγῳ μὲν δωσῶ τῆ παρθένῳ αὐτίκα φάσσαν,
ἐκ τὰς ἀρκεύθῳ καθελῶν· τηνεὶ γὰρ ἐφίσδει.

ΛΑΚΩΝ

ἀλλ' ἐγὼ ἐς χλαῖναν μαλακὸν πόκον, ὀππόκα πέξω

τὰν οἶν τὰν πέλλαν, Κρατίδα δωρήσομαι αὐτός.
(*Id.* 5.96-99)

[COMATAS: I shall give a wood pigeon to the maiden soon, snatching it down from the juniper, for it roosts there.
LACON: But I, whenever I shear the dark ewe, shall myself give its soft fleece to Crathis for a cloak.]

ΚΟΜΑΤΑΣ

ἔστι δέ μοι γαυλὸς κυπαρίσσινος, ἔστι δὲ κρατήρ,
ἔργον Πραξιτέλεως· τᾶ παιδὶ δὲ ταῦτα φυλάσσω.

ΛΑΚΩΝ

χάμιν ἔστι κύων φιλοποίμνιος ὃς λύκος ἄγχει,
ὃν τῷ παιδὶ δίδωμι τὰ θηρία πάντα διώκειν.
(*Id.* 5.104-7)

[COMATAS: I have a milk pail of cypress wood, and I have a bowl, the work of Praxiteles, but I am saving these for my girl.
LACON: And I have a dog who loves the flock and kills the wolves, which I give to my boy to chase off all the wild beasts.]

ΚΟΜΑΤΑΣ

οὐκ ἔραμ' Ἀλκίππας, ὅτι με πρᾶν οὐκ ἐφίλησε
τῶν ὠτων καφελοῖς', ὅκα οἱ τὰν φάσσαν ἔδωκα.

ΛΑΚΩΝ

ἀλλ' ἐγὼ Εὐμήδευς ἔραμαι μέγα· καὶ γὰρ ὅκ' αὐτῷ
τὰν σύριγγ' ὤρεξα, καλὸν τί με καρτ' ἐφίλησεν.
(*Id.* 5.132-35)

[COMATAS: I do not love Alcippe because recently, when I gave her the wood pigeon, she did not take me by the ears and kiss me.
LACON: But I do love Eumedeus greatly; for when I offered the panpipe to him, he kissed me very well indeed.]

τόσσ' εἰπὼν τὸν Δάφνιν ὁ Δαμοίτας ἐφίλησε·
χῶ μὲν τῷ σύριγγ', ὃ δὲ τῷ καλὸν αὐλὸν ἔδωκεν.
(*Id.* 6.42-43)

[When he had thus spoken, Damoetas kissed Daphnis; the latter then bestowed a panpipe upon the former, and the former a beautiful lute upon the latter.]

“τάν τοι,” ἔφα, “κορύναν δωρύττομαι, οὔνεκεν ἐσσί
 πᾶν ἐπ’ ἀλαθείᾳ πεπλασμένον ἐκ Διὸς ἔρνος.”
 (*Id.* 7.43-44)

[“This shepherd’s staff,” he said, “I present to you because you are truly a child of Zeus, fashioned after the truth.”]

. . . ὁ δέ μοι τὸ λαγωβόλον, ἀδὺ γελάσσας
 ὡς πάρος, ἐκ Μοισᾶν ξεινήιον ὤπασεν ἦμεν.
 (*Id.* 7.128-29)

[Laughing sweetly as before, he gave to me a shepherd’s crook as a friendly parting gift from the Muses.]

ἤρατο δ’ οὐ μάλοις οὐδὲ ῥόδῳ οὐδὲ κικίνοις,
 ἀλλ’ ὀρθαῖς μανίαις, ἀγείτο δὲ πάντα πάρεργα.
 (*Id.* 11.10-11)

[He (Polyphemus) did not conduct his love with apples, nor roses, nor ringlets of hair, but with downright madness, and he considered all else as trivia.]

. . . τράφω δέ τοι ἔνδεκα νεβρώς,
 πάσας μαννοφόρως, καὶ σκύμνωσ τέσσαρας ἄρκτων.
 (*Id.* 11.40-41)

[I am nursing eleven fawns for you, all of which have collars, and four bear cubs.]

. . . ἔφερον δέ τοι ἡ κρίνα λευκά
 ἡ μάκων’ ἀπαλὰν ἐρυθρὰ πλαταγώνι’ ἔχουσιν.
 (*Id.* 11.56-57)

[. . . and I would bring you either a white lily or a soft red poppy with its broad petals.]

It can be noted additionally that in five of these instances (1.128-29, 4.28-30, 5.5-8, 5.132-35, and 6.42-43) the gift is specifically the panpipe (σῦριγξ), which becomes one of the most typical symbols of shepherd

music specifically and of the pastoral genre in general.

Nymphs

As might be expected, allusions to various denizens of the woods abound in Theocritus' *Idylls*. The Nymphs, representing the divine essence of various things in nature, e.g., mountains, bodies of water, trees, or regions, are particularly singled out for reference in song. Sometimes they are addressed by the poet or a character speaking directly to them:

πᾶ ποκ' ἄρ' ἦσθ', ὅκα Δάφνις ἐτάκετο, πᾶ ποκα, Νύμφαι;
(*Id.* 1.66)

[Where were you then when Daphnis was wasting away, where then, O Nymphs?]

. . . χαῖρ', Ἀρέθουσα,
καὶ ποταμοὶ τοὶ χεῖτε καλὸν κατὰ Θύβριδος ὕδωρ.
(*Id.* 1.117-18)

[Farewell, Arethusa and you rivers which pour your sweet water down Thybris.]

Νύμφαι Κασταλίδες Παρνασίον αἶπος ἔχουσαι,
ἄρά γέ πα τοιόνδε Φόλω κατὰ λάινον ἄντρον
κρατῆρ' Ἡρακλῆι γέρων ἐστάσατο Χίρων;
(*Id.* 7.148-50)

[Castalian Nymphs, you who hold the height of Parnassus, did the elderly Chiron serve Heracles such a cup as this in the rocky cave of Pholus?]

On still other occasions the allusion is to sacrifices or offerings made to the Nymphs:

τὸ Κροκύλος μοι ἔδωκε, τὸ ποικίλον, ἀνίκ' ἔθυσε
ταῖς Νύμφαις τὰν αἶγα.
(*Id.* 5.11-12)

[Crocylus gave the spotted (goatskin) to me when he sacrificed the goat to the Nymphs.]

στασῶ δὲ κρατῆρα μέγαν λευκοῖο γάλακτος
ταῖς Νύμφαις, στασῶ δὲ καὶ ἀδέος ἄλλον ἐλαίω.
(*Id.* 5.53-54)

[I shall place a great bowl of white milk for the Nymphs, and also I shall place another of sweet olive oil.]

. . . τὴν δέ, Κομάτα,
δωρεῖται Μόρσων τὰν ἀμνίδα· καὶ τὸ δὲ θύσας
ταῖς Νύμφαις Μόρσωνι καλὸν κρέας αὐτίκα πέμψον.
(*Id.* 5.138-40)

[Morson awards the lamb to you, Comatas, but when you sacrifice it to the Nymphs, see that you immediately send a good piece of its flesh to Morson.]

οὗτος ὁ λευκίτας ὁ κορυπτίλος, εἴ τιν' ὄχευσεῖς
τὰν αἰγῶν, φλασσῶ τυ, πρὶν ἢ ἐμὲ καλλιερῆσαι
ταῖς Νύμφαις τὰν ἀμνόν.
(*Id.* 5.147-49)

[You there, Whitey, you who butt with your horns, if you mount any of the she-goats before I have properly sacrificed this lamb to the Nymphs, I shall beat you.]

And using the term “Nymph” in the form of an oath is common enough:

λῆς ποτὶ τὰν Νυμφᾶν, λῆς, αἰπόλε, τεῖδε καθίζας,
ὡς τὸ κάταντες τοῦτο γεώλοφον αἶ τε μυρῖκαι,
συρίσδεν;
(*Id.* 1.12-14)

[By the Nymphs, goatherd, will you sit down here where this sloping hill is and these tamarisks, and play your pipe?]

οὐ τήνα γ', οὐ Νύμφας, ἐπεὶ ποτὶ Πίσαν ἀφέρπων
δῶρον ἐμοί νιν ἔλειπεν.
(*Id.* 4.29-30)

[No, by the Nymphs, not that (panpipe), since (Aegon) left it for

me as a gift when he went off to Pisa.]

οὐ μάν, οὐ ταύτας τὰς λιμνάδας, ὠγαθέ, Νύμφας,
αἴτε μοι ἴλαοί τε καὶ εὐμενέες τελέθειεν,
οὐ τευ τὰν σύριγγα λαθῶν ἔκλεψε Κομάτας.

(*Id.* 5.17-19)

[No, my good fellow, no, by these marsh Nymphs, and may they prove to be gracious and kind to me, Comatas did not secretly steal your panpipe from you.]

ναί, ποτὶ τὰν Νυμφᾶν, Μόρσων φίλε, μήτε Κομάτα
τὸ πλέον ἰθύνης, μήτ' ὦν τύγα τῶδε χαρίζη.

(*Id.* 5.70-71)

[Yes, friend Morson, do not, by the Nymphs, be partial to Comatas nor show favor to this fellow.]

Consider also a variety of other instances:

. . . ἔκλυσε δίνα
τὸν Μοίσαις φίλον ἄνδρα, τὸν οὐ Νύμφαισιν ἀπεχθῆ.
(*Id.* 1.140-41)

[The whirling water swept away the man who was dear to the Muses and who was not disliked by the Nymphs.]

χάλκυόνες στορεσεῦντι τὰ κύματα τάν τε θάλασσαν
τόν τε νότον τόν τ' εὐρον, ὅς ἔσχατα φυκία κινεῖ,
ἀλκυόνες, γλαυκαῖς Νηρηῖσι ταί τε μάλιστα
ὀρνίχων ἐφίληθεν, ὅσοις τέ περ ἐξ ἄλλος ἄγρα.

(*Id.* 7.57-60)

[Halcyons will calm the waves and the sea and the winds from south and east, which stir up the most remote seaweed, halcyons, which are the most beloved of birds to the pale-green Nereids and for whom there is booty from the sea.]

. . . πολλὰ μὲν ἄλλα
Νύμφαι κῆμὲ διδάξαν ἄν' ὄρεα βουκολέοντα
ἐσθλά, τὰ που καὶ Ζηνὸς ἐπὶ θρόνον ἄγαγε φάμα.
(*Id.* 7.91-93)

[The Nymphs taught me many other fine things while I was tending my flocks upon the mountains, which report has carried perhaps to the very throne of Zeus.]

. . . τὸ δ' ἐγγύθεν ἱερὸν ὕδωρ
 Νυμφᾶν ἐξ ἄντροιο κατειβόμενον κελάρῳζε.
 (*Id.* 7.136-37)

[And from nearby, the sacred water babbled as it trickled down from the cave of the Nymphs.]

ἄρα γέ πα τήγον τὸν ποιμένα τὸν ποτ' Ἀνάπῳ,
 τὸν κρατερόν Πολύφαμον, ὃς ὄρεσι νᾶας ἔβαλλε,
 τοῖον νέκταρ ἔπεισε κατ' αὔλια ποσσὶ χορεῦσαι,
 οἶον δὴ τόκα πῶμα διεκρανάσατε, Νύμφαι,
 βωμῶ παρ Δάματρος ἀλωίδος;
 (*Id.* 7.151-55)

[Was it such nectar that persuaded that shepherd alongside the River Anapus, the mighty Polyphemos, who hurled mountains at ships, to dance upon his feet about his cave, as that potion that you Nymphs then poured forth at the altar of Demeter Arealis?]

Pan

When shepherds sang of denizens of the woods, however, in addition to the Nymphs, the god Pan in particular might be mentioned, not merely because of his association with woodland areas, but because he was considered their patron god, the tutelary deity of herdsmen and of their flocks. As such he even had some of the physical attributes of a goat, such as budding horns, goat-like legs, and a nature to match. On occasion he is alluded to or even called upon by a devotee:

στασῶ δ' ὀκτώ μὲν γαυλῶς τῷ Πανὶ γάλακτος,
 ὀκτώ δὲ σκαφίδας μέλιτος πλέα κηρί' ἐχοίσας.
 (*Id.* 5.58-59)

[I shall offer eight pails of milk to Pan and eight bowls of honey including teeming honeycombs.]

τόν μοι, Πάν, ὄμολας ἐρατὸν πέδον ὅστε λέλογχας,
 ἄκλητον τήνοιο φίλας ἐς χεῖρας ἐρείσαις,
 εἴτ' ἔστ' ἄρα Φιλίνος ὁ μαλθακὸς εἴτε τις ἄλλος.
 κεῖ μὲν ταῦτ' ἔρδοις, ὦ Πάν φίλε, μήτι τυ παῖδες
 Ἄρκαδικοὶ σκίλλαισιν ὑπὸ πλευράς τε καὶ ὤμω
 τανίκα μαστίζοιεν, ὅτε κρέα τυτθὰ παρείη·
 εἰ δ' ἄλλως νεύσαις, κατὰ μὲν χροά πάντ' ὄνυχεσσι
 δακνόμενος κνάσαιο καὶ ἐν κνίδαισι καθεύδοις·
 εἴης δ' ἠδωνῶν μὲν ἐν ὥρεσι χεῖματι μέσσω
 Ἐβρον πᾶρ ποταμὸν τετραμμένος ἐγγύθεν Ἄρκτω,
 ἐν δὲ θέρει πυμάτοισι παρ' Αἰθιοπέσσι νομεύοις
 πέτρα ὑπο Βλεμύων, ὅθεν οὐκέτι Νεῖλος ὄρατός.

(*Id.* 7.103-14)

[O Pan, you to whose lot fell the beloved plain of Homole, may you place that lad unbidden into the loving hands of my (friend), whether it is the delicate Philinus or someone else. And if you should do this, dear Pan, may the Arcadian boys not flog you on the ribs and shoulders with squills whenever their portions of meat are shy; but if you should will it otherwise, may you bite and scratch yourself all over your body with your nails, and may you sleep upon nettles; and may you dwell upon the mountains of the Edoni in mid-winter wandering along the banks of the Hebrus toward the North Pole, and in summer may you pasture among the far-off Ethiopians beneath the rock of the Blemyes beyond where the Nile can no longer be seen.

Some of the allusions in this passage are quite obscure and beyond the scope of this paper. Several of the problems are addressed by Gow in his commentary (1952b:157-60). In line with the topic of this paper, I submit that the obscurities here are as logically ascribed to our lack of knowledge of the shepherd culture of Theocritus' day as they are to the erudition of Alexandrian literature.

Pan is also mentioned in the *Idylls* because of his association with piping. He was considered to be an accomplished musician himself and even the inventor of the syrinx or panpipe, which he first fashioned from the reeds into which his beloved Syrinx had been transformed in order to avoid his amorous advances. He was quite naturally then treated as the patron of the shepherds' music and is depicted as a piper himself. In *Idyll* 1.1-3 his skill is seen as superior:

Ἄδύ τι τὸ ψιθύρισμα καὶ ἅ πίτυς, αἰπόλε, τήνα,
 ἅ ποτὶ ταῖς παγαῖσι, μελίσδεται, ἄδὺ δὲ καὶ τύ

συρίσδες· μετὰ Πάνα τὸ δεύτερον ἄθλον ἀποισῆ.

[Something sweet, goatherd, is the murmuring of that pine tree, which makes its music there by the spring, and sweet too is your piping. You will carry off the second prize after Pan.]

In lines 123-30 he is seen as evidently the appropriate heir of a musician's flute:

ὦ Πᾶν Πᾶν, εἴτ' ἐσσι κατ' ὄρεα μακρὰ Λυκαίῳ,
εἴτε τύγ' ἀμφιπολεῖς μέγα Μαίναλον, ἔνθ' ἐπὶ νᾶσον
τὰν Σικελάν, Ἑλίκας δὲ λίπε ρίον αἰπύ τε σᾶμα
τῆνο Λυκαονίδαο, τὸ καὶ μακάρεσσιν ἀγητόν.

ἔνθ', ὄναξ, καὶ τάνδε φέρου πακτοῖο μελίπνου
ἐκ κηρῶ σύριγγα καλὸν περὶ χεῖλος ἐλικτάν·
ἦ γὰρ ἐγὼν ὑπ' Ἔρωτος ἐς Ἄιδαν ἔλκομαι ἤδη.

[Pan, Pan, whether you are on the lofty mountains of Lycaeus or you are tending mighty Mount Maenalus, come to the island of Sicily and leave Helice's peak and the lofty tomb of Arcas, which is revered even by the blessed gods. . . . Come, O king, and receive this handsome, honey-scented panpipe, wreathed about its lip with compact wax, for I am already being drawn by Love into Hades.]

In lines 15-18 the allusion is to a harsher side of Pan's nature as the goatherd responds to a request for him to play upon his pipes:

οὐ θέμις, ὦ ποιμήν, τὸ μεσαμβρινὸν οὐ θέμις ἄμμιν
συρίσδεν. τὸν Πάνα δεδοίκαμες· ἦ γὰρ ἀπ' ἄγρας
τανίκα κεγμακῶς ἀμπαύεται· ἔστι δὲ πικρός,
καὶ οἱ αἰεὶ δριμεία χολὰ ποτὶ ρίνι κάθηται.

[It is not permitted, shepherd, not permitted for us to pipe at midday. We fear Pan; for at that time he rests, being wearied from the hunt. He is bitter, and there is always a pungent wrath sitting upon his nostrils.]

In some instances Pan is viewed as the virtual equivalent of the Satyrs and even referred to in plural form:

εὖ γ', ὄνθρωπε φιλοῖφα. τό τοι γένος ἦ Σατυρίσκοις
ἐγγύθεν ἢ Πάνεσσι κακοκνάμοισιν ἐρίσδει.

(*Id.* 4.62-63)

[Good job, you lecher. Your kind is a close rival of the Satyrs or

the shaggy-legged Pans.]

Frequently the name of Pan is used in an oath, viz., *καὶ τὸν Πᾶνα*, “by Pan” (*Id.* 4.47, 5.141, and 6.21), and its negative form, *οὐ τὸν Πᾶνα*, “no, by Pan” (*Id.* 5.14).

Music of Nature

It can also be observed that musical sounds and musical performances have a key function in Theocritus’ *Idylls*. In fact, there are few sounds that are thought by his rustics to be less than melodious, and these same rustics seem especially fond of the sounds produced by the countryside itself. Such allusions to the music of nature abound, and most can easily be divided into three categories: (1) those dealing with insects, (2) those with birds, and (3) those with inanimate objects such as trees or water. One must bear in mind, however, that what seems harsh-sounding in nature to one of urban tastes may gladden the ears of the Theocritean rustic. Let us first consider the sounds of insects:

αἰ δὲ καλὸν βομβεῦντι ποτὶ σμάνεσσι μέλισσαι.
(*Id.* 1.107)

and

ὦδε καλὸν βομβεῦντι ποτὶ σμάνεσσι μέλισσαι.
(*Id.* 5.46)

[and (here) the bees buzz pleasantly around the hives.]

. . . τέττιγος ἐπεὶ τύγα φέρτερον ᾄδεις.
(*Id.* 1.148)

[(May you be rewarded) since you sing better than the cicada.]

*. . . αἶθε γενοίμαν
ἅ βομβεῦσα μέλισσα καὶ ἐς τεὸν ἄντρον ἰκοίμαν.*
(*Id.* 3.12-13)

[If only I might become a buzzing bee and come into your cave.]

ψυχρὸν ὕδωρ τουτεὶ καταλείβεται· ὦδε πεφύκει
 ποία, χά στιβάς ἄδε, καὶ ἀκρίδες ὦδε λαλεῦντι.
 (*Id.* 5.33-34)

[In this place the cool water drips down; here there is grass
 growing and this soft bed, and here the grasshoppers chatter.]

There is room, however, for the intrusion of an unpleasant sound alongside a
 pleasant one.

ὅστις νικασεῖν τὸν πλατίον ὡς τὸ πεποίθεις,
 σφᾶξ βομβέων τέττιγος ἐναντίον.
 (*Id.* 5.28-29)

[How confident you are that you will defeat your neighbor (in
 singing)—a wasp buzzing against a cicada!]

. . . βᾶτραχος δὲ ποτ' ἀκρίδας ὡς τις ἐρίσδω.
 (*Id.* 7.41)

[In contest I am as a frog striving against grasshoppers.]

Less commonly encountered is the music of birds:

κῆξ ὀρέων τοὶ σκῶπες ἀηδόσι γαρύσαιντο.
 (*Id.* 1.136)

[From the mountains may the owls sing to the nightingales.]

οὐ θεμιτόν, Λάκων, ποτ' ἀηδόνα κίσσας ἐρίσδειν,
 οὐδ' ἔποπας κύκνοισι.
 (*Id.* 5.136-37)

[It is not right, Lacon, for jays to strive against nightingales nor
 hoopoes with swans.]

καὶ Μοισᾶν ὄρνιχες ὅσοι ποτὶ Χίον αἰοδόν
 ἀντία κοκκύζοντες ἐτώσια μοχθίζοντι.
 (*Id.* 7.47-48)

[. . . and the cocks of the Muses, who toil in vain, crowing against

the Chian bard.]

There are also trees:

Ἄδύ τι τὸ ψιθύρισμα καὶ ἅ πίτυς, αἰπόλε, τήνα.
(*Id.* 1.1)

[Something sweet, goatherd, is the murmuring of that pine tree.]

. . . καὶ ὡς δρύες αὐτὸν ἐθρήνευν.
(*Id.* 7.74)

[. . . and the oaks sang a dirge for him.]

And streams:

ἄδιον, ὦ ποιμὴν, τὸ τεὸν μέλος ἢ τὸ καταχές
τῆν' ἀπὸ τᾶς πέτρας καταλείβεται ὑψόθεν ὕδωρ.
(*Id.* 1.7-8)

[Your song, shepherd, flows down sweeter than this babbling water from the rocks above.]

But perhaps the most representative passage, one that incorporates all of the techniques above is to be found in *Idyll* 7.135-42:

πολλὰ δ' ἄμμιν ὑπερθε κατὰ κρατὸς δονέοντο
αἴχειροι πετέλαι τε· τὸ δ' ἐγγύθεν ἱερὸν ὕδωρ
Νυμφᾶν ἐξ ἄντροιο κατειβόμενον κελάρυζε.
τοὶ δὲ ποτὶ σκιαραῖς ὀροδαμνίσιν αἰθαλίωνες
τέττιγες λαλαγεῦντες ἔχον πόνον· ἅ δ' ὀλολυγῶν
τηλόθεν ἐν πυκινάισι βάτων τρύζεσκεν ἀκάνθαις·
ἄειδον κόρυδοι καὶ ἀκανθίδες, ἔστενε τρυγῶν,
πωτῶντο ξουθαὶ περὶ πίδακας ἀμφὶ μέλισσαι.

[We had many poplars and elms that stirred mightily overhead, and nearby the sacred water babbled as it poured down from the cave of the Nymphs. And the swarthy cicadas went about their toil chattering upon the shady branches; and the tree frog murmured from afar in the thick thornbushes and brambles; and larks and finches sang while the turtle dove moaned, and the yellow bees flitted about the springs.]

Shepherd as Musician: Piper

It is the characters themselves, however, in Theocritus' poetry, with their avid preoccupation with music, who most dramatically reflect the impact of music upon the pastoral. No herdsman truly has a place in the genre unless he is also a musician of some accomplishment or, if not a participant, at least avidly interested in country song. Participation generally assumes the form of singing or playing the flute or panpipe. Let us first consider the shepherd as piper:

Ἄδύ τι τὸ ψιθύρισμα καὶ ἅ πίτυς, αἰπόλε, τήνα,
ἅ ποτὶ ταῖς παγαῖσι, μελίσδεται, ἄδῦ δὲ καὶ τὴ
συρίσδες· μετὰ Πᾶνα τὸ δεύτερον ἄθλον ἀποισῆ.
(*Id.* 1.1-3)

[Something sweet, goatherd, is the murmuring of that pine tree, which makes its music there by the spring, and sweet too is your piping. You will carry off the second prize after Pan.]

ΘΥΡΣΙΣ

λῆς ποτὶ τᾶν Νυμφᾶν, λῆς, αἰπόλε, τεῖδε καθίξας,
ὡς τὸ κάταντες τοῦτο γεώλοφον αἶ τε μυρῖκαι,
συρίσδεν; τὰς δ' αἰγας ἐγὼν ἐν τῷδε νομευσῶ.

ΑἰΠΟΛΟΣ

οὐ θέμις, ὦ ποιμὴν, τὸ μεσαμβρινὸν οὐ θέμις ἄμμιν
συρίσδεν.

(*Id.* 1.12-16)

[THYRSIS: By the Nymphs, goatherd, will you sit down here where this sloping hill is and these tamarisks, and play your pipes? I myself shall tend your goats here.

GOATHERD: It is not permitted, shepherd, not permitted for us to pipe at midday.]

. . . ἐγὼ δέ τις εἰμι μελικτάς,
κεῖ μὲν τὰ Γλαύκας ἀγκρούομαι, εὖ δὲ τὰ Πύρρω.
(*Id.* 4.30-31)

[I myself am something of a flute player, and I strike up the songs of Glauce quite well, and quite well those of Pyrrhus.]

καὶ τὺ νιν οὐ ποθόρησθα, τάλαν τάλαν, ἀλλὰ κάθησαι
ἀδέα συρίσδων.

(*Id.* 6.8-9)

[Poor, poor wretch, you do not even see (the girl), but you sit sweetly playing your pipe.]

αὔλει Δαμοίτας, σύρισδε δὲ Δάφνης ὁ βούτας·
ᾠρχεῦντ' ἐν μαλακᾷ ταῖ πόρτιες αὐτίκα ποία.

(*Id.* 6.44-45)

[Damoetas played his flute, and Daphnis the neatherd played his panpipe, and the heifers at once began to dance upon the soft grass.]

. . . Λυκίδα φίλε, φαντί τυ πάντες
ἤμεν συρικτὰν μέγ' ὑπείροχον ἐν τε νομεῦσιν
ἐν τ' ἀματήρεσσι.

(*Id.* 7.27-29)

[Friend Lycidas, everyone says that you are the most eminent piper, both among the herdsmen and among the reapers.]

αὐλησεῦντι δέ μοι δύο ποιμένες, εἷς μὲν Ἀχαρνεύς,
εἷς δὲ Λυκωπίτας.

(*Id.* 7.71-72)

[Two shepherds will play their pipes for me—one a man of Acharnae, the other of Lycope.]

συρίσδεν δ' ὡς οὔτις ἐπίσταμαι ὧδε Κυκλώπων.

(*Id.* 11.38)

[I know how to play the pipe as none of the Cyclopes here (can).]

Shepherd as Musician: Singer

Finally let us consider the shepherd as a singer. Frequently the *Idylls* are presented in dramatic form, and singing, when it occurs (as it often does), comes forth from the mouths of Theocritus' herdsmen themselves; but these instances need not be enumerated here. It is also frequently the case, and should be noted, that herdsmen are alluded to in the poems as being singers, or that the act of singing on the part of some rustic character is specifically pointed out:

ἄδιον, ὦ ποιμήν, τὸ τεὸν μέλος ἢ τὸ καταχές
τῆν' ἀπὸ τᾶς πέτρας καταλείβεται ὑψόθεν ὕδωρ.
(*Id.* 1.7-8)

[Your song, shepherd, flows down sweeter than this babbling water from the rocks above.]

ἀλλὰ τὸ γὰρ δὴ, Θύρσι, τὰ Δάφνιδος ἄλγε' αἰίδες
καὶ τᾶς βουκολικᾶς ἐπὶ τὸ πλεόν ἔκειο μοίσας.
(*Id.* 1.19-20)

[But you, Thyrsis, sing of Daphnis and his woes, and in bucolic song you have come far.]

. . . αἰ δέ κ' αἰείσης
ὡς ὅκα τὸν Λιβύαθε ποτὶ Χρόμιν ἄσας ἐρίσδων
(*Id.* 1.23-24)

[. . . if you would just sing as you once sang in contest against Chromis of Libya]

Θύρσις ὅδ' ὡς Αἴτνας, καὶ Θύρσιδος ἀδέα φωνά.
(*Id.* 1.65)

[This is Thyrsis of Etna, and the voice of Thyrsis is sweet.]

. . . ἄσευμαι ποτὶ τὰν πίτυν ὧδ' ἀποκλινθεῖς,
καὶ κέ μ' ἴσως ποτίδοι, ἐπεὶ οὐκ ἀδαμαντῖνα ἐστίν.
(*Id.* 3.38-39)

[I shall turn aside by the pine tree here and sing, and perhaps she will look out at me since she is not made of stone.]

ἐσδόμενοι θέρεος μέσῳ ἄματι τοιάδ' αἰιδον.
(*Id.* 6.4)

[Sitting down at noon on a summer day, they sang such songs as these.]

τῷ δ' ἐπὶ Δαμοίτας ἀνεβάλλετο καὶ τὰδ' αἰιδεν.
(*Id.* 6.20)

[And after this Damoetas lifted up his voice and sang these words.]

καὶ γὰρ ἐγὼ Μοισᾶν καπυρόν στόμα, κῆμὲ λέγοντι
πάντες ἀοιδὸν ἄριστον.
(*Id.* 7.37-38)

[For I am also a distinct voice of the Muses, and everyone says that I am an outstanding bard.]

ἄλλ' ἄγε βουκολικᾶς ταχέως ἀρξώμεθ' ἀοιδᾶς.
(*Id.* 7.49)

[Come, let us quickly begin our bucolic songs.]

. . . ὁ δὲ Τίτυρος ἐγγύθεν ἄσει
ὡς ποκα τᾶς Ξενέας ἠράσσατο Δάφνις ὁ βούτας.
(*Id.* 7.72-73)

[From nearby, Titryus will sing how once Daphnis the neatherd longed after Xenea.]

ἄσει δ' ὡς ποκ' ἔδεκτο τὸν αἰπόλον εὐρέα λάρναξ
ζῶν ἐόντα κακαίσιν ἀτασθαλίαισιν ἄνακτος.
(*Id.* 7.78-79)

[He will sing how once, due to the evil recklessness of the king, a wide coffer received the goatherd, still alive.]

φωναῶς εἰσαίῳν, τὸ δ' ὑπὸ δρυσὶν ἢ ὑπὸ πεύκαις

ἀδὸν μελισσόμενος κατεκέκλισο, θεῖε Κομάτα.
(*Id.* 7.88-89)

[I listened to your voice, godlike Comatas, while you lay beneath the oaks or beneath the fir trees and made sweet music.]

ἀλλὰ τὸ φάρμακον εὔρε, καθεζόμενος δ' ἐπὶ πέτρας
ὑψηλᾶς ἐς πόντον ὄρων ἄειδε τοιαῦτα.
(*Id.* 11.17-18)

[He found a cure; for sitting upon a lofty crag and looking toward the sea, he sang such words as these.]

τίν, τὸ φίλον γλυκύμαλον, ἀμᾶ κῆμαυτὸν ἀείδων
πολλάκι νυκτὸς ἄωρί.
(*Id.* 11.39-40)

[It is of you, my dear sweet-apple, and at the same time of myself that I sing frequently at untimely hours of the night.]

οὕτω τοι Πολύφαμος ἐποίμαινεν τὸν ἔρωτα
μουσίσδων, ῥᾶον δὲ διᾶγ' ἢ εἰ χρυσὸν ἔδωκεν.
(*Id.* 11.80-81)

[So Polyphemus shepherded his love by singing, and he spent his time better thus than if he spent gold.]

Three further examples are worthy of mention, but because of one detail or another do not fit happily in the preceding list. *Idyll* 3 opens with these words from a goatherd:

κωμάσδω ποτὶ τὰν Ἀμαρυλλίδα.

[I am going to Amaryllis' to serenade her.]

This verb *kwmavsdw* means to celebrate the *kw'mo*" that may or may not involve actual singing outside a loved one's home. *Idyll* 4 seems to have the speaker actually break into song at line 32:

αἰνέω τὰν τε Κρότωνα — “Καλὰ πόλις ἅ τε Ζάκυνθος” —

[I sing the praises of Croton — “Zacynthus is a lovely city”—]

The term αἰνέω literally means to praise and does not in itself imply singing. The interpretation of these lines is problematic in other respects also. Finally, in *Idyll* 7.100-1 the allusion is to the historical character Aristis, who is not a shepherd, but the use of αἰεῖδεν is similar to those above. Notice also that the instrument is not the typical pastoral flute:

ἔσθλός ἀνὴρ, μέγ' ἄριστος, ὃν οὐδέ κεν αὐτὸς αἰεῖδεν
Φοῖβος σὺν φόρμιγγι παρὰ τριπόδεσσι μεγάροι.

[(Aristis is) a fine man and very noble, whom Apollo himself would not begrudge to sing with a lyre alongside his tripods.]

Many other motifs could be included in this study that deal with particularly rustic allusions or that occur less frequently. The use of these five and the compilation of the above data are merely in an effort to make the essential point that such an influence upon Theocritus did actually exist. It is difficult to make convincing arguments for specifics beyond this point due to a lack of information about Theocritus' sources in general. In summary, we may say that if we can accept the premise that a tradition of oral shepherd songs existed in third-century Greece, at least some of them being amoebaeon contest songs, that were in part orally composed as indicated by the general extemporaneousness of such songs, and if Theocritus borrowed other aspects of real shepherds' lives in order to lend verisimilitude to his poems, such as their dialect, their caste system, their method of meeting in the fields and having singing matches, and so on, then it follows that he most likely also borrowed for the same reason from their oral songs, if not actual phraseology, at least some of the aspects that best typified the tradition; and it would also follow that, although the *Idylls* of Theocritus are in many ways typically Alexandrian, for example in being the product of a highly literate school and founded in large part upon the written poetry of previous generations, there is indeed a significant impact upon his poetry by a previously existing oral tradition.

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