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Goddesses, Monsters, and Shepherds: Playing with Homeric Fantasy in Theocritus' *Idylls*

Handout 1

Theocritus, *Idyll* 7.14

ἐπεὶ αἰπόλῳ ἔξοχ' ἐφκει (*Id.* 7.14)

“Since he seemed like a goatherd beyond compare”¹

Handout 2: Statements on poetic “truth”

Theocritus, *Idyll* 7.43-4

‘τάν τοι’, ἔφα, ’κορόναν δωρύττομαι, οὔνεκεν ἐσσι
πάν ἐπ’ ἀλαθείᾳ πεπλασμένον ἐκ Διὸς ἔρνος

[Lycidas] said, “I will give to you a staff, because you are
a sapling fashioned entirely by Zeus for truth...”

Hesiod *Theogony* vv. 27-8

ἴδμεν ψεύδεα πολλὰ λέγειν ἐτύμοισιν ὁμοῖα,
ἴδμεν δ’ εὖτ’ ἐθέλωμεν, ἀληθέα γηρύσασθαι.

We know how to speak many false things like true things,
and we know how, whenever we wish, to utter the truth.

Handout 3

Theocritus, *Idyll* 7.41

βάτραχος δὲ ποτ’ ἀκρίδας ὡς τις ἐρίσδω

“... but I compete (with them) as some frog against grasshoppers”

Handout 4: The ideal euphonist “composition” (σύνθεσις)

Theocritus, *Idyll* 7.45-8

ὡς μοι καὶ τέκτων μέγ’ ἀπέχθεται, ὅστις ἐρευνηῖ
ἴσον ὄρευς κορυφᾷ τελέσαι δόμον Ἰρομέδοντος,
καὶ Μοισᾶν ὄρνιχες ὅσοι ποτὶ Χῖον ἀοιδὸν

¹ Translations are my own unless stated otherwise.

ἀντία κοκκύζοντες ἐτώσια μοχθίζοντι

How **the builder** is hated greatly by me, who seeks to complete a house equal (in height) to the peak of Mt. Oromedon, even as much as the cocks of the Muses labor in vain cuckooing against the Chian bard (*Id.* 7. 45-8)

Dionysius of Halicarnassus *Comp.* 6

When a builder (οικοδόμος) has supplied himself with the materials (ὕλην) from which he intends to construct the house – stones, timber, tiling and all the rest – he proceeds at once to put together (συντίθησιν) the building from these, paying close attention to the following three questions: what stone, timber and brick is to be fitted together (ἀρμόσαι) with what other stone, timber and brick; next how each of the materials that are being so joined (ἀρμοζομένων) should be fitted, and on which of its sides; thirdly, if anything fits badly, how that very piece can be pared down and trimmed and made to fit well ... Now I say that those who are going to put the parts of speech together effectively should proceed in a similar way...²

Demetrius *Eloc.* [138]-139

[χάριεν ... γλαφυρόν] ἐστὶν ἀπὸ τῆς τάξεως...
... [grace and elegance] exist from arrangement...

Aristoxenus *Harm.* 27.18-20 observed that the “nature of continuity in melody (ἐν τῇ μελωδίᾳ) seems to be similar to that which in speech (ἐν τῇ λέξει) relates to the putting together of letters (περὶ τὴν τῶν γραμμάτων σύνθεσιν).”

Handout 5

Theocritus *Idyll* 1.112-3

αὐτίς ὄπως στασῆ Διομήδεος ἄσσον ἰοῖσα,
καὶ λέγε “τὸν βούταν νικῶ Δάφνιν, ἀλλὰ μάχευ μοι”

Go and stand again before Diomedes and say,
“I am the conqueror of Daphnis, the cowherd; come on, fight me”

Handout 6

Theocritus *Idyll* 1.82-3

... ἦνθ' ὁ Πρίηπος
κῆφα: ‘Δάφνι τάλαν, τί τὸ τάκεαι, ἀ δέ τε κώρα
πάσας ἀνὰ κρήνας, πάντ' ἄλσεα ποσὶ φορεῖται—

... Priapus came and said:
“Wretched Daphnis, **why** are you **wasting away**, but a girl wanders up through all the fountains, all the glades by foot [searching for you]...”

² Cf. also Demetrius (*Eloc.* 13-4). Translation by Usher (1985).

Handout 7

Theocritus Idyll 1.138-41

χὼ μὲν τόσσ' εἰπὼν ἀπεπαύσατο· τὸν δ' Ἄφροδίτα
ἤθελ' ἀνορθῶσαι· τὰ γε μὰν λῖνα πάντα λελοίπει
ἐκ Μοιρῶν, χὼ Δάφνις ἔβα ῥόον· ἔκλυσε δῖνα
τὸν Μοῖσαις φίλον ἄνδρα, τὸν οὐ Νύμφαισιν ἀπεχθῆ

Saying so much, he stopped; and Aphrodite would like to have raised him up again, but all the threads spun by the Fates had run out, and Daphnis walked to the stream. The pool washed over the man who was dear to the Muses, who was not hateful to the Nymphs.

Handout 8: Edmund Lowell (page 428)

“This simple fact tends to be overlooked by scholars interested in myth in Homer. They have often referred to 'mythological innovation' in Homer or to Homer's 'invention' of mythical details or even of whole myths... It would be fitting to refer not to Homer but to the speaker and to the speech in its context in the poem. For it is the speaker who creates the 'innovation' in a myth, in response to the demands of the situation in which he or she is speaking. Thus it would be more accurate to say that Homer represents his characters as innovating than it is to say that Homer innovates.”

Handout 9

Homer Odyssey 19.203

ἴσκε ψεύδεα πολλὰ λέγων ἐτύμοισιν ὁμοῖα
“He spoke, saying many false things like true things”

Handout 10: Negative clauses

Homer Odyssey, Bk. 9.106-9

Κυκλώπων δ' ἐς γαῖαν ὑπερφιάλων ἄθεμίστων
ικόμεθ', οἳ ῥα θεοῖσι πεποιθότες ἀθανάτοισιν
οὔτε φυτεύουσιν χερσὶν φυτὸν οὔτ' ἀρώσιν,
ἀλλὰ τὰ γ' ἄσπαρτα καὶ ἀνήροτα πάντα φύονται...

And we arrived at the land of the arrogant, **lawless** Cyclopes, who rely on the immortal gods, who **neither** plant with their hands **nor** plough, but all things grows **unsown** and **untilled**...

Theocritus Idyll 11.36-7

τυρὸς δ' οὐ λείπει μ' οὔτ' ἐν θέρει οὔτ' ἐν ὀπώρα,
οὐ χειμῶνος ἄκρω· ...

Cheese does **not** leave me lacking **neither** in summer **nor** in autumn, **nor** in the peak of winter...

Handout 11

Theocritus Idyll 11.45-8

ἐντὶ δάφναι τῆνεί, ἐντὶ ῥαδινὰι κυπάρισσοι,
ἔστι μέλας κισσός, ἔστ' ἄμπελος ἅ γλυκύκαρπος,
ἔστι ψυχρὸν ὕδωρ, τό μοι ἅ πολυδένδρεος Αἴτνα
λευκᾶς ἐκ χιόνος ποτὸν ἀμβρόσιον προίητι

There are bay trees there, **there are** slender cypresses,
There is dark ivy, **there is** vine of sweet fruit,
There is cold water, which Mount Aetna of the many-trees
pours forth from its white snow a **divine** drink.

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