

A Harvester's Song:
Genre and Gender in Theocritus' *Idyll* 10 and Callimachus' *Hymn to Demeter*
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Theocritus' *Idyll* Ten is modeled on the notion of work-song, a folk genre of performance intended to make the activity of work itself lighter and more pleasant. Reading Theocritus' *Idyll* Ten from an anthropological perspective with focus on the construction of the poetics of manhood (in Herzfeld's terms) one notes that invective, antagonism and direct reproach between the two reapers are embedded in the poetic fabric. The two stylized poems, the one by Bucaeus with the theme of the unrequited lover, and the other by Milon, stand in opposition to each other, and reincarnate a tradition of agonistic performances. Genre and gender are important threads in the poetics of *Idyll* Ten. Genre refers to the content and style of the poem whereas gender references are crucial in the narrative of the *Idyll*. According to the *Scholia*, when interpreting Milon's comment to the fellow harvester, the content of the song at work should correspond to the work itself. The mind at work should focus on labor and not deviate towards love, a theme not appropriate for masculine performance. Rustic labor and poetic labor are conflated. The invective at the end of Milon's comment is targeted to poets who undertake a great variety of genres instead of focusing on more specific ones. Milon's song is staged in the traditional context of songs for the hero *Lityerses*. The song starts with a hymnic tone, addressed to Demeter with a form of prayer for a rich harvest. The theme of abundance is one of the most characteristic features of work-songs for performance in agricultural setting. It has a didactic tone, which places it next to the Hesiodic tradition, as it includes advice to the farmers. There is also emphasis on the importance of continuous work, avoidance of idleness and ideological allusions to women as danger in his comments (which one can compare with *Works and Days* 308-316, 373-5, 441-445, 695-705). Masculinity is expressly a parameter of comparison between the two songs of Bucaeus and Milon, as the first is presented as the feminine type, whereas the other as the product of a masculine type of songs. The two songs also match in length and the arrangement in couplets.

The prayer to Demeter in Theocritus 10.42ff possibly builds upon traditional genres of prayers to divinities for a rich harvest, as R. Hunter has suggested. In Callimachus' *Hymn to Demeter*, the prayer to Demeter is represented as female discourse. In Callimachus, the women address the goddess with the vocative and imperative schema, whereas in Theocritus, the harvesters express their prayer for a rich harvest with the use of the optative (*Idyll* 10.42). While the representation of the male prayer within the work-song in Theocritus is in the optative, the representation of the female prayer to Demeter for a rich harvest uses emphatically the imperative. As commentators have noted, Callimachus' *Hymn to Demeter* presents the peculiar feature of the repetitive use of alternating imperatives. In my analysis, I argue that the schema of vocative + imperative alludes to magical incantations and performances that have their roots in daily ritual practices. By juxtaposing Theocritean and Callimachean invocations to Demeter, I show how the two Hellenistic poets reflect a gendered genre of performance, harvesters' songs.