

Fishermen and Cicadas: Theocritus *Idyll* 1 and the Hesiodic *Shield*  
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This paper examines the intertextual relationship between Theocritus *Idyll* 1 and the Pseudo-Hesiodic *Shield*. To do this, I first demonstrate how the *Shield* would have been seen as an appropriate model for a Hellenistic poet. The most obvious trait of this sort is its small scale, but it also turns the ephrasis into the chief substance of the poem with narrative framing surrounding it (contrary to, for example, Achilles' shield in the *Iliad*). Secondly, when the author borrows images from Achilles' shield, he uses expansion and compression in his presentation of them. Thirdly, he chooses a minor episode in the hero's mythology and does some unconventional things with the story. One might even describe the work as an epyllion.

Nevertheless, there are also characteristics of the poem which run counter to the Hellenistic poet's program, such as (most notably) the subject of the work, a heroic battle. Though it can be debated in what sense Heracles is to be tied to the monstrous figures in the poem (as protector against them, himself containing those qualities, or some of both), the important point for Theocritus is that Heracles as epic hero is connected with these nightmarish visions born from war and strife.

My argument is that Theocritus alludes to the *Shield* in several passages; I give special emphasis to the fisherman and the boy weaving a cicada cage. Theocritus here makes use of *oppositio in imitando* in order simultaneously to tie himself to and distinguish himself from Hesiod. This happens on three levels. First, the fisherman evokes a pessimistic Hesiodic vision of strife and old age, yet undercuts it by also demonstrating the strength of youth. Secondly, the fisherman serves as a foil for Heracles in the *Shield*. A crucial element of my argument is that Theocritus references Heracles in order to highlight his absence from the cup. Thirdly, the poem is linked both to the *Shield* and *Works and Days* through a nexus of images referenced by the vineyard and cicada cage. This brings a further metaliterary element to the images, as Theocritus shows that he is able to encompass both the prior worlds of *epos* – heroic epic and didactic poetry – and “weave” them into something new which is neither epic nor didactic. The repeated focus on labor and strife serves to highlight Theocritus' relationship to Hesiod's work as the transient and physical labors of the men in love and the fishermen yield to the best, most enduring kind of labor: that of the poet.