

Speculative Smiles: Philosophical Questions in Theocritus' *Idyll* 1

Smiling women appear three times in Theocritus' *Idyll* 1: at line 36 the woman depicted on the cup smiles at one of her suitors, at line 90 dancing maidens smile while Daphnis weeps that he cannot dance with them, and at lines 95-6 Kypris comes to Daphnis smiling. It is not always clear to the audience if their smiles are genuine. Theocritus asks his audience to ponder the reason for their smiles, and the possible discrepancy between the women's facial expressions and their true emotions. In this paper, I will show how the smiling women in *Idyll* 1 serve as catalysts for philosophical discussion on φαντασία, πάθος, and ἀταραξία.

The philosophical context of Hellenistic poetry has been analyzed primarily in terms of criticism or the effects of poetry on the soul. However, breaking away from this trend, Gutzwiller (1991) examines the role of Platonic herdsmen in Theocritus' pastoral world. Similarly, Acosta-Hughes and Stephens (2012) have recently noted Callimachus' interaction with and reaction to Plato. While their study paves the way for further exploration, the model of interaction laid out for Callimachus does not apply to Theocritus. In the *Idylls*, he does not interact with a specific philosophy; rather, as this paper will show, he creates opportunities for discussion on φαντασία, πάθος, and ἀταραξία. Each of these smiling women raises questions about the relationship between presentation (φαντασία) and passion (πάθος) and the affect these smiles have on the men who receive them plays a part in the larger questions around love and ἀταραξία.

The woman depicted on the cup sets the tone for the other smiling women. Her heart is not touched by the suitors, yet she smiles at them (35-6). Lawall (1967, 28) sees her as "coy and teasing," whereas Hunter (1999, 80) believes that she is laughing at their suffering. This ambiguity continues in Priapos' reference to dancing maidens (90). Williams (1969) and

Zimmerman (1994, 53) see their smiles as joyful, yet there is clearly a seductive element to their smiles as they are compared to mounted nannies at lines 86-91. Zuntz (1960), Crane (1987), and Tarditi (1987) focus on Kypris' smile. When she comes to the side of dying Daphnis, she smiles, but we are not told why she smiles, ἦνθέ γε μὰν ἀδεῖα καὶ ἅ Κύπρις γελάοισα, / λάθρη μὲν γελάοισα, βαρὸν δ' ἀνὰ θυμὸν ἔχοισα (95-6). Zuntz (1960) argues that Aphrodite pretends to grieve Daphnis' death, while delighted at his demise. Crane (1987) proposes that she cares for Daphnis and pretends to mock him while grieving. Ott (1969) and Dover (1971) agree that Kypris smiles but holds back her wrath at his chastity. Hunter (1999, 94-5) summarizes the debate on Kypris' smile, noting "This is as far as interpretation of the transmitted text can go." Theocritus pushes the audience to wonder why she might smile and he gives us no direct answer.

I will show that Theocritus' ambiguity about the smiling women creates a heuristic device, in which the audience must consider whether the presentation (φαντασία) of the smile is false, and whether the passion (πάθος) could be prevented. I will also show how these smiling women jeopardize peacefulness (ἀταραξία) for the men on the cup and Daphnis. Theocritus presents his audience with lacunae in the narrative, which forces them to question the presentations of smiling women, the passion of the men on the cup and Daphnis, and Daphnis' internal battle for peace. I do not propose an answer to these questions, but I only wish to show that these smiling women ask the audience to reflect on the relationship between perception and passion. The audience is not meant to arrive at a specific destination, but only to begin the journey.

Works Cited

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