

Her words can be better understood as an impudent parody by the poet of a historic remark from the context of a well-known (supposed) historic event. Unlike either the nymph or Tereus, the nurse is returning home from the scene of the action. Her remark is not merely an exclamation like theirs, but information addressed to the interested party who has remained at home. The words *gaude, vicimus*, addressed to a single person, translate Lucian's words *chairete, nikomen*, addressed to a group.<sup>1</sup> (The reading of MSS recentiores is *gaude, vincimus*.) Ovid's fondness for parody of the characters of gods and other received

dignities is well known: cf. Apollo's ludicrous pursuit of Daphne, *Met.* 1. 504 ff., with its hints of parody of Vergil's Second Eclogue.

The story of the Marathon runner is older than Lucian, but does not seem to occur before him in a form including the best-known words of the runner. The curious announcement of Myrrha's nurse in *Metamorphoses* 10 may be evidence in the form of parody that the story with these words was known, though it has not survived in writing, as early as the end of the first century B.C.

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1. When the present tense of the verb *nikan* expresses an enduring result, it may be translated by the perfect. Cf. Smyth, *Greek Grammar*, § 1887, with examples.

## FORMAL ASPECTS OF THEOCRITAN COMPARISONS

If one leaves aside the quasi-Homeric similes in Theocritus' *epyllia* (e.g., 13. 49–52; 25. 247–53), few affinities remain between Homeric and Theocritean comparisons. One need not dwell on the difference in their usual length in the two authors, nor on the fact that, while 'Homer's similes normally occur in narrative passages, Theocritus' are most often found in speech—the new genre suffices to account for these changes. This article is confined to an examination of the diversity of form in Theocritus, which is not foreshadowed by the stereotyped Homeric simile, and it will be seen that this diversity of form is coupled with a much closer integration of context and simile than is found in Homer.

At the opening of the Theocritean corpus stands a comparison achieved by means of anaphora: 'Αδύ τι τὸ ψιθύρισμα καὶ ἅ πίτυς, αἰπόλε, τήνα, / ἅ ποτὶ ταῖς παγαῖσι, μελίσδεσαι, ἄδν δὲ καὶ τύ / συρίσδες (1. 1–3). It may be that anaphora is favored by the rhythmic lilt of the pastoral song, but in order to accommodate it and throw the point of comparison into relief Theocritus has caused his readers' minds to sway hopelessly from one false interpretation of the grammatical interrelationship of the words to another. These are

impressionistic lines in which the poet relies on suggestion and sound to convey his meaning. One may note incidentally that, as Theocritus prefers variety to a monotonous balancing of constructions, the goatherd replies with the first of the many quantitative comparisons in the *Idylls*: ἄδιον, ὦ ποιμήν, τὸ τεὸν μέλος ἢ τὸ καταχές / τῇν' ἀπὸ τᾶς πέτρας καταλείβεται ὑπόθεν ὕδωρ (7–8). It is not difficult to see that the unsophisticated mind would favor this type of comparison, and the special effect of other instances will be studied below. Anaphora occurs, again with notable poignancy, as a means of contrast in Simaetha's incantation (2. 38–39). She has been going about her acts of magic with fierce determination. Silence is a necessary condition for their success, and the reader thinks she is heartened by it—ἡνίδε σιγῇ μὲν πόντος, σιγῶντι δ' ἄηται—but suddenly she breaks off with ἅ δ' ἐμὰ οὐ σιγῇ στέρνων ἔντοσθεν ἀνία. The postponement of οὐ σιγῇ from the head of the line makes it less rhetorical and more heartfelt; it is encompassed by Simaetha's personal pain. The reader has been unexpectedly transferred from the macrocosm to the microcosm in the most intimate way possible.<sup>1</sup>

Paratactic similes are, thanks to their con-

1. The pathos of Simaetha's situation is, moreover, enhanced by the very sound of the line, with its assonance of

α and ε, alliteration of σ, and hint of a rhyme in ἅ δ' ἐμὰ . . . ἀνία.

centration of form, well suited to the *Idylls*. A simple instance occurs in 8, whose authenticity is suspect: δένδρεσι μὲν χειμῶν φοβερόν κακόν, ὕδασι δ' αὐχμός, / ὄρνισιν δ' ὕσπλαγξ, ἀγροτέροις δὲ λίνα, / ἀνδρὶ δὲ παρβενικῆς ἀπαλῆς πόθος (57–59), while at 14. 39–41 Theocritus introduces a comparative in order to exaggerate Cynisca's desire to be off: μᾶστακα δοῖσα τέκνοισιν ὑπωροφίοισι χελιδῶν / ἄψορρον ταχινὰ πέτεται βίον ἄλλον ἀγείρειν / ὠκυτέρα μαλακῆς ἀπὸ δίφρακος ἔπτετο τήνα . . . At 17. 9–11 ('*Ἴδαν ἐς πολυδένδρον ἀνὴρ ὑλατόμος ἐλθὼν / παπταίνει, παρεόντος ἄδην, πόθεν ἄρξεται ἔργου. / τί πρῶτον καταλέξω; ἐπεὶ πάρα μυρία εἰπεῖν*'), the paratactic simile involves a partial suppression of thought (i.e., παπταίνω κάγω), with no obscurity of sense. When Bucaeus extols the charms of the swarthy Bombyca we find καὶ τὸ Ἴον μέλαν ἐστί, καὶ ἄγραπτὰ ὑάκινθος· / ἀλλ' ἔμπας ἐν τοῖς στεφάνοις τὰ πρῶτα λέγονται (10. 28–29). Here, despite a more thoroughgoing suppression of thought, the meaning, that Bucaeus prizes the swarthy Bombyca above all others, is never left in doubt.<sup>2</sup> Comatas and Lacon, when disparaging each other's preferences in love, indulge in a much more elaborate and sustained symbolism requiring some ingenuity to unravel: ΚΟ. ἀλλ' οὐ συμβλήτ' ἐστὶ κυνόςβατος οὐδ' ἀνεμῶνα / πρὸς ρόδα, τῶν ἀνδρῶν παρ' αἵμασιαῖσι πεφύκει. / ΛΑ. οὐδὲ γὰρ οὐδ' ἀκύλοις ὀρομαλίδες· αἱ μὲν ἔχοντι / λεπτόν ἀπὸ πρίνοιο λεπύριον, αἱ δὲ μελιχραὶ (5. 92–95). Indeed, only the fact that these couplets are framed between others extolling Clearista and Cratidas (88–91 and 96–99) indicates that the flowers and fruit here represent Comatas' and Lacon's loved ones and thus form an implied simile.<sup>3</sup> It is to be assumed that the acorns' thin rind represents Clearista's skin-deep beauty while the honey-sweet wild apples stand for Cratidas' more profound sweetness and desirability. This interpretation,

however, involves the unhappy imbalance of Comatas' saying that the worse thing cannot be compared with the better while Lacon says that the better thing cannot be compared with the worse.

The goatherd's quantitative comparison at 1. 7 has already been noticed. Through a string of similar comparisons from Polyphemus' lips, Theocritus achieves his desired effect of humor and grotesqueness:<sup>4</sup> λευκοτέρα πακτᾶς ποτιδεῖν, ἀπαλωτέρα ἀρνός, / μόσχῳ γαυροτέρα, φιαρωτέρα ὄμφακος ὠμᾶς (11. 20–21). The monotonous construction reflects Polyphemus' lack of inspiration.<sup>5</sup> An even more engaging gaucheness appears in Bucaeus' song to Bombyca. While Polyphemus' comparisons are in themselves at least apt and in a uniform key, Bucaeus becomes progressively more extravagant and vague—one may guess that Bombyca's feet are dainty and show their bones, that her voice is soothing and soporific—until he confesses his inability to sustain his own powers of invention: οἱ μὲν πόδες ἀστράγαλοι τεύς, / ἃ φωνὰ δὲ τρύχνος· τὸν μὲν τρόπον οὐκ ἔχω εἰπεῖν (10. 36–37). On this note of exhausted inspiration Bucaeus' song ends, and Milon's seeming compliment ἧ καλὰς ἄμμε ποῶν ἐλεάθει Βοῦκος ἀοιδᾶς (38) is best taken as ironic.

Coupled with the diversity of form shown by Theocritean comparisons is occasional looseness of construction. A simple example occurs in the probably spurious *Idyll* 9: οὔτε γὰρ ὕπνος / οὔτ' ἔαρ ἐξαπίνης γλυκερώτερον, οὔτε μελίσσαις / ἀνθεα· τόσσον ἐμὶν Μοῖσαι φίλαι (33–35), where clearly τόσσον is ungrammatical. Somewhat easier to justify grammatically is 12. 3–8, where the confusion of construction is more apparent than real. The terms of comparison involve measures of difference, so that τόσσον ἔμ' εὐφρηνας needs to be stretched a little to mean "you have made

2. If the two similes just mentioned were filled out explicitly we should have an inversion, in that the context of the *Idyll* would have become the term of comparison. *Idyll* 8 furnishes two much clearer examples of such inversion: ὥς μὲν ὁ παῖς ἐχάρη καὶ ἀνάτατο καὶ πλατάνησε / νυκᾶς, οὕτως ἐπὶ ματέρι νεβρός ἄλοιο (88–89 and cf. 90–91). It is worth noting, too, that the situation in these inverted similes is presented as a potential one.

3. Another implied simile, of a totally different nature, is

the much-jostled Praxinoa's exclamatory μύρμακες ἀνάρημοι καὶ ἀμετροὶ (15. 45).

4. Compare the ridiculous effect of the accumulated similes in the self-praise of Eunice's lover (20. 21–27), but the poem is almost certainly not Theocritus'.

5. Theocritus often strives for variety in the construction and in the length of his similes where they are accumulated. A prime example is Simaetha's description of the physical effects of her love (2. 106–110).

me so much gladder than I was before.”<sup>6</sup> The simile immediately following (σκιερὴν δ’ ὑπὸ φηγόν / ἡελίου φρύγοντος ὁδοιπόρος ἔδραμον ὥς τις, 8–9) involves yet another structural oddity. Here Theocritus has fused the two clauses together completely, and the exact sense of ἔδραμον is not clear. A comparable fusion is seen in the goatherd’s prayer in *Idyll* 3: ὥς μέλι τοι γλυκὺ τοῦτο κατὰ βρόχθιοι γένοιτο (54). The sense plainly demands that κατὰ βρόχθιοι fall within the simile. Finally, 6. 15–17 affords an example of looseness, not of construction, but rather of connection between simile and context. Theocritus has here allowed himself a quasi-Homeric licence in that only one aspect of Galatea’s behavior is common to her and the thistledown.<sup>7</sup>

The similes discussed above as cases of fusion may be regarded as extreme examples of Theocritus’ generally close integration of similes into their context. This integration may be thematic as well as formal. Homer’s similes are as neatly marked off from their context as the world they are drawn from is remote from that of his narrative. The ample form of epic allows, and may be enriched by, an occasional lack of economy in narration, while the narrow limits of Theocritus’ poems as well as a desire for realism demand that his characters draw their comparisons from a world familiar to them. The rustics draw theirs from the countryside (e.g., 11. 24); Simaetha prays that her drugs may equal in potency those of her fellow sorceresses Circe and Medea (2. 15–16);<sup>8</sup> Delphis’ apology, whose clumsiness of language reflects his insincerity in making it, involves a quantitative comparison drawn from those very athletic pursuits for which he has been neglecting the sorceress (2. 114–16); in the

spurious *Idyll* 21 one fisherman invites the other to share his dreams just as he does his haul of fish (31); and one might add that Theocritus, addressing his doctor friend Nicias, ends *Idyll* 11 a little tactlessly, by saying that emotional ills are better overcome with music than through the payment of medical fees!

A formal aspect of the close integration of Theocritean comparisons is that occasionally they derive from an object being addressed: the moon at 2. 79; cicadas at 5. 110–11. More significant is the fact that within the limited scope of his poems Theocritus utilizes similes as a means of characterization. Their very inappropriateness contributes to his gently humorous sketches of rustics.<sup>9</sup> It has been noticed on 7. 97 that loving Myrto as goats love spring is an odd, if not obscure, comparison; on 7. 120 that pears are not necessarily ripe, even if they are quick to rot; on 9. 12–13 that Daphnis ignores the heat because he is protected against it, whereas lovers ignore their parents’ advice because they are headstrong; on 9. 20–21 that cold is an evil against which Menalcas is protected, while nuts are a pleasure which the toothless cannot enjoy; on 9. 31–32 that cicadas, hawks, and even ants have little devotion to their kind as individuals. No harm is done through such observations by learned editors, as long as the obscurity or illogicality is not attributed to the poet. Looseness of thought as well as of expression lends some verisimilitude to Theocritus’ make-believe rustics. Stripped of their similes they would be far less memorable.<sup>10</sup>

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6. It may be remarked incidentally that the fourth of the six terms of comparison—a maiden surpasses a woman thrice wed—appears παρά προσδοκίαν amid the rural images. As the poem is generally serious in tone, the incongruity may appear hard to justify.

7. The φρύγει / φεύγει jingle attaches the simile to its context in sound. Another simile criticized on grounds of inappropriateness is 10. 30–31. Clearly the crane pursues the plough with feelings far different from those of Bucaeus pursuing Bombyca. I suggest, however, that this very differ-

ence forms the essence of the simile: the crane pursues the plough, *but* I am mad for you.

8. By their very nature her repeated acts of sympathetic magic will give rise to what are, formally, similes: e.g., 2. 24–26.

9. Similarly, the vividness of Praxinoa’s and Aeschinas’ idiom owes something to analogies from familiar sayings and proverbs: e.g., 15. 77; 14. 51.

10. See earlier remarks on the particular effects of strings of similes from the lips of Polyphemus, Bucaeus, and Eunice’s lover.