

THEOCRITUS, IDYLL 14: ALCAEUS AND MEGARA

I. The Song

Idyll 14 consists of a dialogue between two men, Αἰσχίνιας and Θυώνιχος. That the former is some years the younger may be implied by the form of the greeting he uses in line 1: Χαίρειν τὸν ἄνδρα Θυώνιχον¹, but it is probably proven by Aischinas' reference in v. 54 to another as ἐμὸς ἀλικιώτας. In any case, the content of the dialogue shows Aischinas to be appreciably less experienced and knowledgeable than Thyonichos.

Theocritus manages to sketch Aischinas' immoderation and naiveté immediately and in short compass: Thyonichos wonders at Aischinas' appearance which he describes as thin, unkempt, like the recently arrived Athenian „Pythagorist“ who was pale and unshod (vv. 3-6). Then Aischinas naively asks: „Was he too in love?“ Thyonichos responds: „I think so – with baked wheat flour (7)“². Aischinas answers: „παίσδεις, ὠγάθ', ἔχων“ where 'having' refers, not just to Thyonichos' possessions, but, we may infer, more to his 'love-life', for, as Aischinas' subsequent confession of his unlucky love shows, this is what is foremost in his own mind which according to him is „a hair's breadth from insanity“ (8 f.). Thyonichos says: „That's just like you, always somewhat unrestrained“; and he asks Aischinas to relate what has happened (10 f.).

Aischinas then recounts the drinking party at his place in the country attended by an Argive, a Thessalian named Agis, who, not surprisingly for a Thessalian, worked with horses³, and a soldier named Kleunikos. Present also was the cause of Aischinas' disappointment, the girl Kyniska, probably an ἐταίρα⁴.

At an advanced stage in the proceedings they decided to drink their wine un-mixed, with the drinker announcing the name of the object of his desire. When it

¹ See Gow, *Theocritus II ad loc.*, otherwise Dover, *Theocritus*, Basingstoke and London 1971.

² The basic dramatic structure of the Idyll is the same as that of Idyll 10. Cf. F. Cairns, *Generic Composition in Greek and Roman Poetry*, Edinburgh 1972, 171 ff.; A.W. Bulloch, in: *The Cambridge History of Classical Literature I*, Cambridge 1985, 580.

³ The exact meaning of ἵπποδιώκτας is uncertain; Gow (on v. 12) assumes „that he is connected with the horse-trade for which Thessaly was famous (18.30 n.)“.

⁴ For her profession see Gow on vv. 8 and 21; Dover p. 189 is sceptical.

came her turn, Kyniska, much to Aischinas' surprise and disappointment, refused to say anything (18-21). One of those present joked: „Can't you speak? Did you see a wolf?“ „How clever!“ she responded blushing brightly (22 f.). At this point in his narrative, Aischinas admits to Thyonichos that there is in fact a 'wolf', the neighbor's son Lykos whom many consider a very handsome youth; it is he with whom she is in love. Aischinas adds that he was a fool for not having found it out earlier⁵. Later, when all were „deep in their cups“ (πόσιος ... ἐν βάθει, 29), the Thessalian maliciously (κακαὶ φρένες)⁶ sang „τὸν ἐμὸν Λύκον“⁷, which Aischinas calls „some Thessalian ditty“ (μέλισμα 30 f.), from the beginning (ἀπ' ἀρχῆς)⁸. Kyniska immediately broke out in tears. Aischinas, who was now aware of what was going on, punched her twice on the head, whereupon she fled (32-42).

Aischinas complains that it has now been two months since he has seen Kyniska who is entirely taken up with Lykos (43-49). As a means for himself for falling

⁵ The view taken here is opposed to that of Gow and Dover who believe that the choice of the words λύκον εἶδες; is a coincidence. Kyniska's reaction shows that she believes the speaker knew what was going on and Aischinas' own words imply that everyone knew but he. This explains as well why the speaker inverted the saying and said 'did you see a wolf?' and not the expected 'did a wolf see you?'. The passage was understood by L. Doederlein, *Interpretatio Thyonichi Theocritei sive Idyllii XIV*, Erlangen 1850, 10 f. The Thessalian's choice of song 'τὸν ἐμὸν Λύκον' (30 f.) must, in my opinion, also be interpreted in this way (more below). See J. Stern, in: GRBS 16, 1975, 55 and F.T. Griffiths, *Theocritus at Court*, Mnem. Suppl. 55, Leiden 1979, 109 f. See n. 6 below.

⁶ „We are not necessarily meant to infer that Aischinas thinks that the Thessalian acted out of malice ...“ writes Dover; but the definition of κακαὶ φρένες is given at Moschus I 8 ff.: κακαὶ φρένες, ἀδὸν λάλημα· | οὐ γὰρ ἴσον νοεῖ καὶ φθέγγεται· ὡς μέλι φωνά, | ὡς δὲ χολὰ νόος ἐστίν· ἀνάμερος, ἠεροπευτάς, | οὐδὲν ἀλαθεύων, δόλιον βρέφος, ἄγρια παιδάων. Also the related Homeric phrase κακὰ φρονέων (H 70, K 486, M 67, P 373, 783, X 264, 320, κ 317, σ 232, υ 5) means 'planning destruction'.

⁷ The text here has received differing interpretations. The following list reflects the editions (or treatments) which the present author has been able to see. It refers simply to the printed text and does not go into the differences in understanding often present in the commentaries, especially in the understanding of the adjacent text. 1) τὸν ἐμὸν Λύκον (no quotation marks, reference to Kyniska's lover): Valckenaer (1779), Stroth (1782), Kiessling (1819), Wüstemann (1830), Hermann, *Opuscula V* (Leipzig 1834) 96, Meineke (1836), Doederlein (1850), Ameis (1862), Fritzsche-Hiller (1881), Vollgraff, *Mnem.* 47 (1919) 348, Hartigan, in: *ZAnt* 25 (1976) 343. 2) 'τὸν ἐμὸν Λύκον' (title of song): Graefe, *Epistola critica in Bucolicos Graecos* (Petersburg 1815, 58 f., the first according to Ziegler), Briggs (1821), Hartung (1858), Fritzsche (1869), Ziegler (1879), Cholmeley (1919), Legrand (1924), Gow (1950), Dover (1971), Beckby (1975). 3) τὸν ἐὸν λύκον: Ahrens (1855). 4) τὸν ἐμὸν λύκον: Wilamowitz (1905), Koennecke (1914), Gallavotti (1946), Latte (1948). 5) 'τὸν ἐμὸν λύκον': Edmonds (1928).

⁸ This (and κακαὶ φρένες) have sometimes been taken for part of the song, see Fritzsche, *Theokrits Idyllen*, Leipzig ²1869: „von Haus aus bin ich Lykos gut“. Dover (for example) doubts that it means 'from the beginning' and Beckby, *Die griechischen Bukoliker*, Meisenheim am Glan 1975, translates: 'aufs neue'. The (natural) meaning of the phrase seems clear enough from Lycophr. Alex. 2 and 30. Theocritus uses the phrase to emphasize the first words of the song and to imply performance at length.

out of love he proposes following the example of a certain Simos⁹ and taking up mercenary service overseas (51-56).

Thyonichos hopes that Aischinas' love-story takes a happy turn but if Aischinas is determined to go abroad, then Ptolemy is the best employer. Aischinas asks what kind of a man Ptolemy is, and Thyonichos delivers an encomium on the king. The poem ends with Thyonichos advising action since they are getting older (57-70)¹⁰.

Here, as in the beginning of the poem, Thyonichos is portrayed as superior to Aischinas: he shows a knowledge of the wide world – Egypt and the advantages of its king – clearly far beyond Aischinas' horizons. Aischinas, on the other hand, is portrayed as rustic and naive with his drinking party on his place „in the country“ (ἐν χώρῳ παρ' ἐμὶν v. 14)¹¹ and his still persistent infatuation with the questionable Kyniska. To top it off, there is his typically ill-devised plan of a love-sick adolescent 'to leave the country and join the Foreign Legion'. For, as we may infer from the indications given us, he has property, some money, and enough leisure to allow him to carry on like this. His is surely not the group which needs to take up mercenary service¹².

Another aspect of Aischinas' rusticity (a quality which links him with most other unlucky Theocritean lovers) is his recurrent use of proverbs and picturesque phrases¹³: θριξὶ ἀνὰ μέσσον (9); εὐμαρέως κεν ἀπ' αὐτᾶς καὶ λύχρον ἄψας (23); ἔκλαεν ἐξασπίνας θαλερώτερον ἢ παρὰ ματρὶ | παρθένος κτλ. (32 f.)¹⁴; τήνῳ τεὰ δάκρυα; μᾶλα ρέόντω (38); μάστακα δοῖσα τέκνοισιν ὑπωροφίοισι χελιδῶν | ἄψορρον ταχινὰ πέτεται βίον ἄλλον ἀγείρειν· | ὠκυτέρα μαλακᾶς ἀπὸ δίφρακος ἔπτετο τήνα (39-41); αἰνός θην λέγεται τις ἔβα ποκὰ ταῦρος ἀν' ὕλαν' (43);

⁹ Σῆμος, ὁ τᾶς ἐπιχάλκῳ ἐρασθεῖς (53). For bolstering the opinion that τᾶς ἐπιχάλκῳ means 'penny prostitute' (treated by Gow and Dover ad loc.) see LSJ χαλκιδίτις; cf. Oxford Latin Dict. s.v. *diobolaris*.

¹⁰ If we are to take this as an indication that Aischinas is a good deal older than his immature behavior suggests, his actions speak that much the worse for him. Cf. G.O. Hutchinson, *Hellenistic Poetry*, Oxford 1988, 168 and Stern, loc. cit. (n. 5 above), 53 f. But the reference to aging is probably just a generalization (see n. 50 below).

¹¹ See F. Cairns, op. cit. (n. 2 above), 172 f. on Aischinas' 'country boorishness'. Part of Aischinas' description of the party's fare runs as follows: θηλάζοντά τε χοῖρον, ἀνῶξα δὲ βίβλινον αὐτοῖς | εὐώδη τε τὸ ρων ἐτέων (15 f.). Apart from Hesiod's βίβλινος οἴνος (Op. 589), inspiration seems to be drawn from Eumaeus' country repast (ξ 419-421): οἱ δ' ἦν εἰσηῖγον μᾶλα πίονα πενταέτηρον. | ... οὐδὲ συβώτης | λήθει ἄρ' ἀθανάτων· φρεσὶ γὰρ κέκρητ' ἄγαθη ἦσιν, where the latter phrase connects with κακαὶ φρένες (31).

¹² Cf. Griffiths, op. cit. (n. 5 above), 111: „Aischinas and Thyonichos belong to the class of free and perhaps moderately prosperous men whose opinions traditionally carried most weight“. Also A.W. Bulloch, op. cit. (n. 2 above), 580: „... the two speakers seem to be men of the world“.

¹³ See Stern, loc. cit. (n. 5 above), 54 ff.; cf. Griffiths, op. cit. (n. 5 above), 109 f.

¹⁴ On Homeric echoes in Aischinas' speech see Griffiths, op. cit. (n. 5 above), 114 f.

οὐδ' εἰ Θρακιστὶ κέκαρμαι | οἶδε (46 f.); ἄμμες δ' οὔτε λόγῳ τινὸς ἄξιοι οὔτ' ἀριθμητοί, | δύστανοι Μεγαρήες ἀτιμοτάτῃ ἐνὶ μοίρῃ (48 f.); μῦς, φαντί, Θυώ- νιχε, γεύμεθα πίσσας (51). This is, of course, more extravagant than the use of such phrases made by Theocritus' pastoral rustics and is another mark of Aischinas' lack of moderation and symptomatic of his modest intellect¹⁵.

The view taken here, then, is that Aischinas is presented as a self-centered, rather naive and unintelligent member of the class of citizen-farmers¹⁶, a group which has one foot in each domain of Theocritean mime: country and city. And so, with his rustic characteristics and his points of contact with Theocritean pastoral rustics, he appears in a city-mime in a combination that must have appeared ingenious to Theocritus. Further, it has been asserted by some that Aischinas consciously exaggerates his own deportment so that he can conform to the literary type of the rejected lover¹⁷. What Theocritus has done, rather, is to show us the type and the kind of person responsible for the casting of this type. Self-pitying unkemptness is today, as ever, the reflex reaction of some people to romantic disappointment. There is nothing in the poem which points to Aischinas being an intellectual¹⁸.

The advice which Theocritus puts in Thyonichos' mouth, that Aischinas should choose Ptolemy II as employer, together with the praise of that monarch, functions on different levels. The praise of Ptolemy (vv. 57 ff.) consists mainly of the following description (60-64):

¹⁵ See the interesting treatment by Stern, loc. cit. (n. 5 above), 54 ff.: „... instance of Aeschinas' shallowness“, cf. Griffiths, op. cit. (n. 5 above), 109 f. and Dover 189 f.; K.V. Hartigan, in: ZAnt 26, 1976, 343 f., believes that Aischinas is „a refined city dweller“ who identifies his proverbs with the phrases αἰνός θην λέγεται τις (v. 43) and φαντί (v. 51); this form of expression is said to characterize the rustic moved to the city (344). There is some discrepancy here. In any case the assertion on the expressions appearing with the fable and the proverb is clearly over-interpretation. For v. 43: αἰνός θην λέγεται τις ἔβα ποκὰ ταῦρος ἄν' ὕλαν' J. Griffin in 'Owls to Athens' (Festschr. Dover) ed. E. Craik, Oxford 1990, 121-123, has championed the variant reading κένταυρος, but see Gow ad loc.

¹⁶ Cf. R. Wells, Theocritus: the Idylls, Manchester and New York 1988, 34: „... dishevelled, lugubrious and self-centred. ... his tone is aggrieved and self-justificatory, and he reveals himself as a type of overbearing obtuseness.“

¹⁷ B. Mills, The Idylls of Theokritos, Purdue 1963, ix: „Because Aischinas is quite clearly a sophisticated man-about-town, and because he is overacting, we are less likely to sympathize with him than to laugh at him, along with Thyonichos“. Griffiths, op. cit. (n. 5 above), 114: „Aeschinas is no less given to literary posturings than is Simaetha. In affecting the 'symptoms of love', he patterns his behavior on conventions which flourish only in poetry. Predictably, Thyonichus does not for an instant find them convincing“. Sterns, loc. cit. (n. 5 above), 52, cf. 58, sees Aischinas' lack of awareness as a feature of the characterization.

¹⁸ The echoes of Homer which have been observed in his speech (Griffiths, op. cit. [n. 5 above], 114 f.) do not show the contrary, since these can be found with many or most Theocritean characters, and since Homer belonged to the level of basic education which need not be denied Aischinas.

ἄριστος·
 εὐγνώμων, φιλόμουσος, ἐρωτικός, εἰς ἄκρον ἀδύς,
 εἰδὼς τὸν φιλέοντα, τὸν οὐ φιλέοντ' ἔτι μᾶλλον,
 πολλοῖς πολλὰ διδούς, αἰτεύμενος οὐκ ἀνανεύω,
 οἶα χρῆ βασιλῆ· αἰτεῖν δὲ δεῖ οὐκ ἐπὶ παντί

First, the praise functions as the debt paid by court-poet to patron: superficially, at any rate, it looks like the propaganda a monarch has a right to expect. On the other hand, the poem is also a clever suggestion for continued largess, asserting that it is a king's duty to be generous. With regard to the inner dynamic of the piece it seems possible to view the character Aischinas, half-rustic, lovesick, naive, with foibles, ready to take up service with a king, as an allegory of Theocritean mime/poetry attracted to the ennobling service of the attractive king¹⁹. Further, it has not escaped notice that the description of Ptolemy is in rather complete contrast to that applicable to Aischinas' character²⁰.

The node-word in the web of implications seems to be φιλόμουσος. It is this word which really expresses the main concern of the poet: to reinforce Ptolemy in his rôle as patron and connoisseur of poetry. On the other hand, granting that Ptolemy is depicted as the exact opposite of Aischinas, it may be worth examining the latter's ἀφιλομουσία.

Generally speaking, as we saw above, there is not much positive that can be said for Aischinas. We have reviewed his naiveté, his ἀγροικία, and his habit of expressing himself in trite phrases. Of course, for Theocritus, the sophisticated poet, such a person must, though amusing, be ἄμουσος.

¹⁹ Cf. Griffiths, *op. cit.* (n. 5 above), 84 on Idyll 15: „The poem as a whole may well serve as the poet's presentation of himself to the court: like Gorgo and Praxinoa, Theocritus is bringing his Syracusan dialect to court, and with it the Sicilian mime as well.“ The first words of the ladies on seeing the works of art in the palace are: λεπτὰ καὶ ὡς χαρίεντα (79); with regard to the suggestion that Aischinas stands for Theocritean poetry one should note that the first word used to describe him is the programmatic word λεπτός (3); cf. Callim. *Aetia* fr. 1.22-24: Ἄ[πό]λλων εἶπεν ὁ μοι Λύκιος· | [... ..] ... αἰοῖδέ, τὸ μὲν θύος ὅτι πάχιστον | [θρέψαι, τή]ν Μοῦσαν δ' ὠγαθὲ λ ε π τ α λ έ η ν and P. Bing, *The Well-Read Muse*, Göttingen 1988, 94 ff.; T.B.L. Webster, *Hellenistic Poetry and Art*, London-New York 1964, 40. 59. 101 ff. Idyll 14 has someone λεπτός (3), victims (νεοσσῶς, χοῖρον 14 f.), and Λύκος. For another (easily parallel) train of thought cf. Alcaeus fr. 347 Voigt (λέπτοι v. 5) and Hesiod, *Op.* 582-596, a passage which had a good deal of influence on Theocritus and on the description of the country dinner in Idyll 14 (see n. 11 above). One might compare the 'thin man' and the 'lewd woman' of Idyll 14 with Alcaeus fr. 347, 4 f. Voigt.

²⁰ Stern, *loc. cit.* (n. 5 above), 58: „... what [...] by his portrait of Ptolemy, Thyonichus recommends for Aeschinas.“ Griffiths, *op. cit.* (n. 5 above), 110: „... Ptolemy, who has precisely the kind of acuity that Aeschinas lacks (v. 62): 'Knows his friend, and knows his enemy even better'“.

With this as background let us return to Aischinas' story of what happened at the drinking party. Sometime after the first revelation concerning Kyniska's Wolf (22 ff.), when the drinkers were even deeper in their cups, the name Wolf was mentioned anew:

ἤδη δ' ὦν πόσιος τοὶ τέσσαρες ἐν βάθει ἡμες,
 χά Λαρισαῖος 'τὸν ἐμὸν Λύκον' ἔδεν ἀπ' ἀρχᾶς,
 Θεσσαλικὸν τι μέλισμα, κακαὶ φρένες· ἅ δὲ Κυνίσκα
 ἔκλαεν ἐξαπίνας θαλερώτερον ἢ παρὰ ματρὶ
 παρθένος ἐξαετῆς κόλπῳ ἐπιθυμήσασα (29-33).

„Some Thessalian ditty“, says Aischinas. How does he know that it was Thessalian? Of course the singer was Thessalian, but mainly, one imagines, because it sounded like his dialect. With this in mind, let us turn to the following passage:

age dic Latinum,

barbite, carmen,

Lesbio primum modulate civi,
 qui ferox bello tamen inter arma,
 sive iactatam religarat udo
 litore navim,

Liberum et Musas Veneremque et illi
 semper haerentem puerum canebat
 et *Lycum* nigris oculis nigroque
 crine decorum.

(Horace, Odes 1.32,3 ff. = Alcaeus, Test. 430 p. 347 Voigt)

This raises the question whether the song was in fact in another Aeolic dialect which our rather obtuse Aischinas could easily mistake for Thessalian, namely Lesbian. Then 'τὸν ἐμὸν Λύκον' would be the beginning of a poem by Alcaeus on Lykos²¹. Such a stroke by Theocritus would add a good deal of point to his treatment of Aischinas. His ignorance is again caricatured: not only was he ignorant of the Lykos in his own affairs, he also is ignorant of the darling Lykos of literature.

Admittance of this feature to the poem appreciably enhances the contrast with Ptolemy, φιλόμουσος and εἰδῶς τὸν φιλέοντα, while heightening the humor of the piece. All the more so when we imagine the situation at the disastrous symposion. It seems clear from Horace that Alcaeus' song or songs to Lykos contained fervent

²¹ See Nisbet and Hubbard, *A Commentary on Horace: Odes Book 1*, Oxford 1970, 364; Page, *Sappho and Alcaeus*, Oxford 1955, 1975, 294 f. Alcaeus fr. 368 Voigt gives a thematic and metrical parallel: Κέλομαι τινα τὸν χαρίεντα Μένωνα κάλεσσαί, | αἱ χρῆ συμποσίας ἐπόνασιν ἔμοιγε γένεσθαι.

erotic praise. The Thessalian's singing a homosexual song from beginning to end (ἀπ' ἀρχῆς) in order to caricature Kyniska's love for her Lykos in the presence of her disappointed lover Aischinas was indeed perversely clever irony (κακαὶ φρένες).

There can be, of course, no doubt that Alcaeus was an author in whom Theocritus was intensely interested. Moreover, the ΠΑΙΔΙΚΑ, Idylls 29-31, demonstrate that Theocritus chose to imitate just the type of Alcaic poem in which Lykos featured. Regarding Idyll 14, we may note that the poem, despite its un-Alcaic appearance, does contain more than one theme corresponding to the Horatian passage on Alcaeus:

qui ferox bello tamen inter arma: mercenary service (55 ff.).

sive iactatam religarat udo litore navim: πλευσεῦμαι κηγῶν διαπόντιος (53-55).

Liberum et Musas Veneremque: symposion, love for Kyniska and her love, song (ῥῆδεν μέλισμα 30 f.).

canebat et Lycum: 'τὸν ἔμὸν Λύκον' ῥῆδεν ἀπ' ἀρχῆς (30). Λύκος νῦν πάντα, Λύκῳ καὶ νυκτὸς ἀνῶκται (47).

nigroque crine decorum: χῶ μύσταξ πολὺς οἶτος, ἀυσταλέοι δὲ κίκιννοι (4), θριξὶ ἀνὰ μέσσον (9), οὐδ' εἰ θραξιστὶ κέκαρμαι οἶδε (46 f.), καὶ ἐπισχερῶ ἐς γένυν ἔρπει λευκαίνων ὁ χρόνος (69 f.)²².

A further point of contact between Idyll 14 and Alcaeus is the latter's trip to Egypt, perhaps in mercenary service²³.

Have we, then, preserved in the words „τὸν ἔμὸν Λύκον“ („τὸν ἔμον Λύκον“ in Lesbian) a *fragmentulum* of Alcaeus' homoerotic poetry?²⁴

²² It is worth noting how the descriptions of Aischinas (vv. 4 and 69 f.) contrast with Horace's description of Alcaeus' Lycus: *nigroque crine decorum*. The importance of hair as a recurring motif in Idyll 14 was pointed out by Hartigan, loc. cit. (n. 15 above), 343 n. 44.

²³ Test. 432 p. 347 Voigt = Strabo 1,2,30: 'Ἀλκαῖος ... καίτοι φήσας ἀφίχθαι καὶ αὐτὸς εἰς Αἴγυπτον. For uncertainties of circumstance and date see Page, op. cit. (n. 21 above), 223-226.

²⁴ The two Lykoi of Idyll 14: happy love and Mytilene; Lykidas in Idyll 7 sings of happy love and Mytilene (52 ff.). Simos in Idyll 14: unrequited love and mercenary service; Simichidas in Idyll 7 complains in his song of Aratos' (his patron's?) unrequited love and the resultant night-watches (96-127). The influence, if allowed, will have gone in this direction (14 to 7). On the other hand (though not incompatibly), the story of Komatas ('Longhair', see n. 22 above and Quinn, *Horace, The Odes*, Basingstoke and London 1980, 184 on 1.32,11 f.) in Lykidas' song (78-89) may have been taken from Lykos of Rhegion (see Gow on 7.78; cf. Walsh, CP 80, 1985, 11 n. 42) and the bees in Lykidas' version are σιμαί (80). Recently on Lykidas: Hutchinson op. cit. (n. 10 above), 206; T. Pearce, in: RhM 131, 1988, 302-304; Bowie, in: CQ 35, 1985, 67-91; v.d. Valk, in: REG 98, 1985, 142; Arnott, in: Estudios Clásicos 87, 1984, 333-346; H.J. Berger, in: CA 3, 1984, 31 ff.; N. Zagagi, in: Hermes 112, 1984, 427-438.

II. Place and Time

In respect to the dramatic location of Idyll 14, Wilamowitz professed agnosticism on the grounds that had we been meant to localize the scene, we would have been told where: „Wo das Gedicht spielt, ist nicht gesagt, es ist auch gleichgültig; irgendwo in einer griechischen Freistadt, wo allerhand Leute verkehren, auch Ätoler und Thessaler, also aus den Gegenden, die besonders viele Söldner stellen. An Sizilien ist nicht zu denken.“²⁵ Others follow the same line: Gow made a principle of not enquiring where an Idyll was set: „His Myndians and Assyrians, Argives and Thessalians, are there because such adjectives, like names, lend precision and verisimilitude to the figures to which they are attached, and for no other reason at all: they are no more evidence for the scene of the idyll than larks or cactuses or Coan oaths.“²⁶ In his commentary he wrote: „in some unspecified place.“²⁷ Griffiths also refers to „some unspecified place“ outside Ptolemy’s realm. Also „... in a vacuum. The setting is not Egypt. More we cannot say – not the place, the circumstances, the time.“ And „... at a safe distance from the political realities of Alexandria.“²⁸ It is surely safe to assume that many scholars have been of the same opinion.

There has, however, always been a less cautious group. First the Scholia which place the scene in Sicily: τὰ πράγματα ἐν Συκελίᾳ.²⁹ Presumably the identification with Sicily was made on the analogy of Theocritus’ having been a Sicilian who took up Ptolemaic literary service in Alexandria. In more recent times Cos has come under consideration from Brinker, Cholmeley, and Beckby, clearly because of Theocritus’ connection with that isle³⁰.

Another approach is that of Dover: „Since Egypt lies across the sea (55, 59, 68) and Aischinas knows nothing about Ptolemy, the scene is certainly not Egypt but there is little positive indication of where in the Greek world it might be. An Argive and a Thessalian were present at Aischinas’s party (12 f., 30 f.), and Thyonichos

²⁵ Textgeschichte der griechischen Bukoliker, Berlin 1906, 161. He continues: „Offenbar verwertet Theokrit anderswo seine ägyptischen Erfahrungen“. If he means that the poem must have been written away from Egypt, the conclusion is unwarranted.

²⁶ Gow, *The Methods of Theocritus*, in: CQ 24, 1930, 152. In writing this he ignored the sibling relationship of Idylls 14 and 15, where the latter (at least the dramatic date) is rather narrowly fixed.

²⁷ Gow II 246.

²⁸ Griffiths, *op. cit.* (n. 5 above), 82, 101 f.

²⁹ Scholia in Theocritum vetera, ed. Wendel, Teubner 1914, repr. Stuttgart 1967, p. 294, cf. on 5a, p. 295.

³⁰ C. Brinker, *De Theocriti vita carminibusque subditiis*, diss. Rostock 1884, p. 14; Cholmeley, *Theocritus*, London 1930, pp. 30, 35, 286; Beckby, *op. cit.* (n. 8 above), p. 447. Beckby’s report here that Wilamowitz’ ‘thought of Rhodes’ seems to go too far. Wilamowitz, *Textgeschichte*, p. 225, thought that the name Thyonichos might be of Rhodian origin or inspiration. That he did not derive the dramatic place from this surmise seems clear from his revised *Bucolici Graeci*, OCT 1910, p. 11: „scaena non indicatur“ (cf. p. 174).

has recently encountered an itinerant Athenian ascetic. Since nothing in the poem points to the islands or to the West, we are perhaps meant to think of the Peloponnese.³¹

Dover's approach seems to make more sense, for we expect „an itinerant Athenian ascetic“, and a hungry one at that, to arrive on foot; and with regard to the dialect of the poem, we are looking for a Dorian location. Hence Dover's suggestion of the Peloponnese. However, if we press our information somewhat and use Argos, Athens, and Thessaly as co-ordinates, we seek a Dorian place 'between' these three points. That pushes us up to the Isthmus. Corinth is the first possibility³². But Corinth, one of the 'Fetters of Greece', was in Macedonian hands from the battle of Chaeronea until 243, when Aratos wrested it (for a time) from the Antigonids. Thus it seems somewhat unlikely for the setting of the Idyll, since one imagines it as a rather dangerous place for giving and following advice to seek service with Ptolemy. The other possibility is Megara and, in fact, this is the city which Aischinas identifies by applying the proverb: ἄμμες δ' οὔτε λόγῳ τινὸς ἄξιοι οὔτ' ἀριθμητοί, ἰδύστανοι Μεγαρηεὺς ἀτιμοτάτῃ ἐνὶ μοίρῃ³³.

Are there other indications that the scene of the poem is Megara? There is, at least, the characterization of Aischinas which we examined above in another context: a farmer, naive and ignorant, a characterization which is hardly at variance with the negative assessment of Megarians in Attic literature³⁴. That is the one type of Megarian, while Thyonichos could then serve (surely justly) to balance the picture, mainly for those Megarians who recognized their city as the scene of the mime.

And the time? This too is favorable for identification with Megara. We expect on the basis of Theocritus' other Ptolemaic poems that this poem also falls in the 270's of the third century B.C. Although no great deal appears to be known about the history of Megara during these times, it seems to be agreed that the city was free from Antigonos Gonatas for most of the decade: free before 278 and re-acquired by the Macedonians between 272 and 268³⁵. It was in Macedonian hands during the Chremonidean War which was fought after 268 until about 261 by Greek cities with Ptolemaic backing against Antigonos precisely in this area³⁶.

This frees Megara at least from the objection made against Corinth above. Further it coincides to some extent with the observation made by Vollgraft that Ar-

³¹ Dover, *op. cit.* (n. 1 above), 188 f.

³² ἐκπλεύσας in v. 54 (cf. πλευσέῃμαι 55) seems to imply a port.

³³ The proverb is treated by Winfried Bühler, *Zenobii Athoi Proverbia IV*, Göttingen 1982, 270-276: oracle originally addressed to the Aigees. See also E. Harrison, *Studies in Theognis*, Cambridge 1902, 269 ff., A. Andrewes, *The Greek Tyrants*, repr. New York 1963, 39 ff., and Page, *op. cit.* (n. 21 above), 216.

³⁴ E. Meyer, *RE XV*, 1931, 205; Bühler, *op. cit.* (n. 33 above), 273.

³⁵ *Cambr. Anc. Hist. VII 1²*, 1984, 116 and 231; Hammond and Walbank, *A History of Macedonia III*, Oxford 1988, 249 n. 5 and 270.

³⁶ See P. Green, *Alexander to Actium*, Berkeley-Los Angeles, 1990, 146 f.

gos was on friendly relations with Egypt from 278-272 and Thessaly from 286-276 and 274-272; since Egypt was at peace between 278 and 276 and at war between 274 and 272, Vollgraff dated *Idyll* 14 to the latter period³⁷. Gow objected that this was hardly a secure foundation for dating the *Idyll*, for, even if Theocritus did not use names just to impart vividness³⁸, „it would be venturesome to infer that because Aischinas is presently to be advised to take service in Egypt, he could not be depicted as consorting in some unspecified place with natives of Argos and Thessaly unless those states were on friendly terms with his prospective employer.“³⁹ It should, however, be pointed out that the „friendly terms“ of which Gow speaks amount in fact to freedom from Macedonian rule and that the natives of those places must be regarded as naturally well disposed toward Ptolemy, the enemy of their enemy, regardless of whether their countries were at any given time subjugated or free; in fact, individuals may, at least inwardly, have been most friendly toward Egypt during those times when their countries were under Macedonian rule⁴⁰. As we shall see below there was another reason for choosing these nationalities. At any rate, Argos and Thessaly did share with Megara antipathy toward Antigonid control. Aischinas, in his naive way, may not know much about Ptolemy, but it does aid the verisimilitude of the mime, if his companions need not be suspected of being against Ptolemy and of having filled Aischinas' head with anti-Egyptian comments. And perhaps one reason for Ptolemy's continuing machinations against Antigonos was to keep him from controlling completely the recruiting grounds of mainland Greece⁴¹.

If accepted, then, the suggestion that we are meant to deduce Megara as the scene of the poem, does not serve to define the time limits of the poem more narrowly than before: sometime within the 270's, most likely in the latter half with *Idyll* 15⁴².

³⁷ W. Vollgraff, in: *Mnem.* 47, 1919, 348, discussed by Gow II 246 f.

³⁸ See n. 26 above.

³⁹ Gow II 246 f.

⁴⁰ It was Ptolemy's policy to stir up as much trouble as possible for Antigonos on the Greek mainland (Green, op. cit. [n. 36 above], 146 f.; M. Cary, *The Legacy of Alexander*, New York 1932, 132 ff.).

⁴¹ On nationalities of troops (later than Ptolemy II) P.M. Fraser, *Ptolemaic Alexandria I*, Oxford 1972, 70. 80 f. also 88 f. 129; see also Green, op. cit. (n. 36 above), 289-291.

⁴² Cf. Griffiths, op. cit. (n. 5 above), 84. 109. The two poems could have been designed as a king's mime and a queen's mime (see also Griffiths, *Home before lunch: The emancipated women in Theocritus*, in: *Reflections of Women in Antiquity*, ed. H.P. Foley, New York-London-Paris 1981, 247 ff.). Cf. the end of *Idyll* 15: ὦρα ὅμως κῆς οἴκον. ἀνὰ ριστος Διοκλείδας· | χώνηρ ὄξος ἅπαν (147 f.) with the praise of Ptolemy in *Idyll* 14: ἀριστος | ... ἐρωτικός, εἰς ἄκρον ἄδύς (60 f.) who in turn, as we have seen above, is contrasted with Aischinas who is described as: ἀσυχαῖ ὄξος, | πάντ' ἐθέλων κατὰ καιρόν (10 f.). The argument that ἐρωτικός could not have been written before Arsinoe's death in 270 (Legrand, *Bucoliques grecs I*, Paris 1925, 108 f.; Beckby, op. cit. [n. 8 above], 448) was rightly rejected by Gow (I 247): it imputes contemporary attitudes to Hellenistic monarchs; further, the influence of Arsinoe has been exaggerated, see S.M. Burstein,

It is, however, possible to bolster further the identification of the dramatic scene with Megara by examining more closely the oracle concerning the Megarians alluded to by Aischinas. Here is the text in the version given by the Scholia on Idyll 14, 48/49 Wendel⁴³:

Γαίης μὲν πάσης τὸ Πελασγικὸν Ἄργος ἄμεινον,
ἵπποι Θρηίκιαι, Λακεδαιμόνιαι δὲ γυναῖκες,
ἀνδρῶν δ' οἱ πίνουσιν ὕδωρ καλῆς Ἀρεθούσης,
ἀλλ' ἔτι καὶ τῶν εἰσιν ἀμείνονες, οἱ τὰ μεσηγὺ
Τίρυνθος ναίουσι καὶ Ἀρκαδίας πολυμήλου,
Ἄργεῖοι λινοθώρηκες, κέντρα πολέμοιο·
ὑμεῖς δ', ὦ Μεγαρεῖς, οὔτε τρίτοι οὔτε τέταρτοι
οὔτε δυωδέκατοι, οὔτ' ἐν λόφῳ οὔτ' ἐν ἀριθμῷ.

We can scarcely go wrong in believing that these verses were well known in Theocritus' Syracuse. The lines about those who drink from Arethusa referred originally to the Chalcidians of Euboea. But clearly it will have pleased the Syracusans to believe that the verses were about themselves, or at least they will have treated the verses as referring to Syracuse. All the more so because of the Megara they had nearby. That Megara had been taken in 483 by Gelon who removed its inhabitants: the well-to-do were resettled in Syracuse while the rest were deported⁴⁴. The place was inhabited again by Theocritus' time, though to a very reduced extent⁴⁵. This Syracusan and therefore Theocritean identification with these verses is of interest for what follows.

Together with the Alcaean themes mentioned above the oracle seems to have been one of the matrices upon which Idyll 14 was constructed. The correspondences between the oracle and the Idyll go a good way beyond the references to 'wretched Megarians'. Mention of both Argoses in vv. 1 and 4-6 of the oracle is matched by the Argive in v. 12 of the Idyll. The Thessalian 'horse-chaser' in the same verse corresponds to the Thracian horses in the second line of the oracle. In fact, more exact correspondence, with Thessalian horse(s), appears in other versions of the oracle: ἵπποι Θεσσαλικάι⁴⁶ and ἵππον Θεσσαλικὴν Λακεδαιμονίαν τε γυναῖκα⁴⁷.

Arsinoe II Philadelphus: A Revisionist View, in: Philip II, Alexander the Great and the Macedonian Heritage, edd. W.L. Adams and E.N. Borza, Washington D.C. 1982, 197-212, and Green op. cit. (n. 36 above), 145 f.

If Idyll 14 has some peculiarly Alcaic features, it would be pleasant if Idyll 15 could be shown to have something very Sapphic beyond female solidarity. It is, at least, clear that Sappho made an Adonis song: see fr. 140 Voigt (Page, op. cit. [n. 21 above], 126 f.), cf. fr. 168 and 214.

⁴³ For the differing versions in which the oracle is attested see Bühler, op. cit. (n. 33 above), 270 ff.

⁴⁴ Herodotus 7, 156.

⁴⁵ K. Ziegler, Kl. Pauly 3, 1148.

⁴⁶ Anth. Pal. 14, 73.

⁴⁷ From the lost Synagoge Aucta, see Bühler, op. cit. (n. 33 above), 271.

It was clearly one such version which Theocritus had in mind. The 'Lacedaimonian woman' (or 'women') is the next feature needing a match. And it just so happens that *the* famous woman in antiquity called Kyniska was a Spartan princess, the daughter of Archidamos and sister of Agesilaos. She was the first woman to win Olympic crowns (ca. 396 and 392) which she accomplished with her chariot teams⁴⁸. 'The men who drink the water of beautiful Arethusa' are represented here by the poet, Theocritus of Syracuse, in a rather oblique mode of self-recommendation (with the splash of water symbolism suitable for a 'Callimachean' poet⁴⁹). Finally, to be transformed by the treasure of Ptolemy's grace (including the grace of his treasure), Aischinas, the wretched Megarian, bested by the others just as in the oracle he cites. These seem sufficient connections for identifying Megara as the scene of the poem⁵⁰.

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⁴⁸ Honigmann, RE XII, 1924, 2; Beckby, Kl. P. 3, 400. The inscription of one of her victory dedications at Olympia has been preserved (Anth. Pal. 13, 16; Hansen, Carm. Epigr. Gr. 2 § 820):

Σπάρτας μὲν βασιλῆες ἐμοὶ πατέρες καὶ ἀδελφοί·
ἄρματι δ' ἠκυπόδων ἵππων νικῶσα Κυνίσκα
εἴκονα τάνδ' ἔστασα. μόναν δ' ἐμέ φαμι γυναικῶν
Ἑλλάδος ἐκ πάσης τόνδε λαβεῖν στέφανον.

She was emulated in this by another Spartan woman, Euryleonis, who won in 368 (Kirchner, RE VI, 1907, 1331), and later by Philadelphus' mistress Bilistiche and by the subsequent queen, Berenice II; see S.B. Pomeroy, *Women in Hellenistic Egypt*, New York 1984, 20.

⁴⁹ Cf. N. Hopkinson, *A Hellenistic Anthology*, Cambridge 1988, 86 ff. and n. 19 above.

⁵⁰ Theocritus may have had Megara in his mind at the end of the poem as well, where Thyonichos tells Aischinas that if he is willing to take a steady stand and meet the attacking enemy (66 f. ἐπ' ἀμφοτέροις δὲ βεβακῶς | τολμασεῖς ἐπιόντα μένειν θρασὺν ἀσπιδιώταν), then he should be off for Egypt, for time whitens hair and one must do while one can (65-70). Gow on 65 f. points out that Theocritus is thinking of Tyrtæus fr. 10,31 f. = 11, 21 f. W.: ἀλλὰ τις εὖ διαβὰς μενέτω ποσὶν ἀμφοτέροισιν | στηριχθεὶς ἐπὶ γῆς, and fr. 12, 15-17: ξυνὸν δ' ἐσθλὸν τοῦτο πόλῃ τε παντὶ τε δῆμῳ, | ὅστις ἀνὴρ διαβὰς ἐν προμάχοισι μένη | νωλεμέως. The latter verses are, however, cited in the collection of Theognis (1005 f.) in connection with the *carpe diem* theme ending with κακὸν δ' ἐπὶ γῆρας ἐλέγχει | οὐλόμενον, κεφαλῆς δ' ἄπτεται ἀκροτάτης (1011 f.). It may be worth recalling here that the two verses of the oracle beginning ὑμεῖς δ', ὦ Μεγαρεῖς κτλ. were attributed to Theognis by Clement of Alexandria, Strom. 7,110 = Theognis fr. dub. 1, p. 84 Young; see E. Harrison, op. cit. (n. 33 above).

Cf. also the Theognidean parody: βολβὸν ἐπαινῆσω (Πολυπαίδη) (West, *Iambi et Elegi Gr. I*, Oxford ²1989, p. 241) with Id. 14,17: βολβός τις, κοχλίας and Alexis fr. 281 K.-A. (PCG II p. 180, [cf. also fr. 246: Ptolemy] and Nicander fr. 88: 'Μεγαρήας βολβούς' ἐπαινεί). Further note Id. 12: an 'Alcaeic' poem in Ionic hexameters praising Megarians (27 ff.).