The Metamorphosis of Daphnis from Theocritus to Virgil

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Abstract. The character of Daphnis, who has intriguing significance in folklore and religion, becomes an important literary figure in Theocritus, who, in his narrative of Daphnis' death, makes him the founding figure of his new genre, bucolic poetry. Theocritus' successors, Bion of Smyrna in his *Adonidis Epitaphium*, and the anonymous author of *Bionis Epitaphium*, refer to Daphnis – inevitably the Theocritean Daphnis – and transform his figure, adapting it to the themes and purposes of their poems. After them, in founding Latin bucolic poetry, Virgil appropriates Daphnis, not only in order to pay tribute to the previous literary tradition, but as a point of departure (and of arrival) in his reflection on bucolic poetry and his relationship with his great Syracusan predecessor. The paper aims to retrace the path of Daphnis, to understand, in the treatment reserved for him by each poet, the elements of vitality and originality that his great *inventor* Theocritus gave him and that his successors developed at different levels. Virgil, in particular, is able to employ the figure of Daphnis and charge it with a new significance, in order to highlight the great difference between his own poetry and Theocritus' bucolic production.

Although lack of evidence renders the origin of bucolic poetry inscrutable,[1] rooted as it is in ancient oral folk culture, in remote and undefinable times, the creation of this genre was attributed in antiquity to a definite *inventor*, the Syracusan Theocritus, who transformed hints and suggestions coming from folk heritage into everlasting masterpieces. In his poetry, apparently simple and lightweight, but in reality deeply learned, he succeeded in combining the demands of a refined culture and the spiritual requirements of his times, and brought to life an idealized world of shepherds, seemingly reviving the primeval innocence of the Golden Age.[2]

In order to summarize and symbolize his art, Theocritus chooses the mythical Daphnis, a figure based perhaps on Sicilian folklore, to which he gives original features. Although Theocritus presents Daphnis in his *Idylls* only a few times, this character has a central role in his poetry, so much so that it influenced Theocritus' Greek imitators, namely Moschus, Bion and the anonymous author of the *Bionis Epitaphium*.[3] His greatest successor, Virgil, will confront Theocritus' figure of Daphnis when reworking the poetry of his predecessor. For these reasons, by following the metamorphosis of Daphnis throughout ancient bucolic poetry, we can retrace the path of the genre from its origin to the unparalleled achievements of Virgil's *Eclogues*.

The origin of Daphnis is mysterious.[4] Perhaps he is an Eastern divine figure, similar to the deities of vegetation who die each year (Tammuz-Dumuzi, Baal, Osiris, and Adonis).[5] One possibility is that Phoenician merchants brought such a figure to Sicily and that there he be-

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[1] On the history of the topic, see Halperin 1983, and Vara and Weatherby 1992.

[2] Segal 1981, 12.

[3] It is possible that Daphnis figured in the poetry of Philetas. See Bowie 1985, arguing that both Lycidas in Theoc. 7 and "Philetas" in Longus' *Daphnis and Chloe* reflect the poet Philetas. This would provide a convenient explanation for the elliptical nature of Theocritus' account in Theoc. 7: there will have already been a well-known version and acknowledgement of Philetas would then be a natural part of Theocritus' programmatic manifesto.

[4] See Scholl 2014.

[5] Cf. Berg 1974, 12-22; *contra*, Halperin 1983, 186.

came a local variant of this divine prototype.[6] In fact, Daphnis shares many features with Adonis,[7] in particular, such as his relationship with Aphrodite and his untimely death.[8] Another possibility is that Daphnis was a local Sicilian god, adopted by Greek colonists when they settled on the island.[9]

The story of Daphnis is similarly unclear and enigmatic. Theocritus in *Id*. 1 is intentionally vague.[10] Some later sources may have been written precisely to explain Theocritus' mysterious version.[11] Daphnis is referred to several times in Theocritean and pseudo-Theocritean *Idylls*, but his most important occurrence is in *Id*. 1, which is to be read as a "manifesto" of Theocritean bucolic poetry because of its programmatic nature and significance.[12] This complex poem begins with an exchange of compliments between the shepherd Thyrsis and an anonymous goatherd (1-23), continues with the ἔκφρασις of a bowl (24-60) and the song of Thyrsis (64-145), and ends with compliments and a farewell (146-152): Thyrsis sings the death of Daphnis, lamented by nature, and the visit of Hermes and Priapos, who sympathize with him, and of Aphrodite, who seems to have caused his death. Daphnis addresses his last words to her, reaffirms his hostility toward love, bids farewell to nature, symbolically consigns his pipes to Pan, and dies.

The reasons for his death and for Aphrodite's enmity remain vague,[13] and the girl who obstinately wanders through the mountains

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[6] Cf. Halperin 1983, 191-192; Müller 2000, 27-29, 33.

[7] On Daphnis and Adonis, see Hermann 1853, 19-24; Segal 1981, 66-72; Halperin 1983, 185; Hunter 1999, 68; Müller 2000, 26-28.

[8] Halperin 1983, 200.

[9] Scholl 2014, 293-420.

[10] For an analysis of the sources, see Segal 1981, 26; Hunter 1999, 63-66. The reconstruction of Daphnis' story based on the *Idyll* is difficult. See Alpers 1979, 223; Walker 1980, 39.

[11] Hunter 1999, 63-64. The sources on the myth of Daphnis are analyzed by Scholl 2014, 63-291.

[12] In general on *Id*. 1, see Ogilvie 1962, 106-110; Segal 1981, 25-46. On its programmatic nature, see Hunter 1999, 60-61.

[13] Segal 1981, 25, 35 (on the death of Daphnis, see 46-65); Hunter 1999, 66-67.

searching for Daphnis is mysterious. All these unexplained elements make interpretation of the *Idyll* difficult. Some scholars see Daphnis as a symbol of winter, about to die when spring arrives,[14] or the annual cycle of vegetation (like Adonis[15]), or bucolic poetry itself, seen as an impossible aspiration to an all-encompassing harmony of gods, mankind and nature, cruelly defeated by the hard fate of the death.[16] While a number of these features may be attributed to the mythical Daphnis, other aspects are Theocritus' own emphasis,[17] and these should be the focus of our study. In my opinion, it is at the literary level that the most important significance attributed by Theocritus to Daphnis is to be found, this being the foremost area of interest in the work of learned Alexandrian poets.

DAPHNIS AS A SYMBOL OF BUCOLIC POETRY

Theocritus' Daphnis symbolically expresses the features of Theocritean bucolic poetry: *in primis*, an elaborately careful style – a crucial aspect of learned Alexandrian poetry – defined by Theocritus as ἁδύ, which, not by chance, is the first word of the *Idyll*.[18] The purpose of poetry is aesthetic pleasure (ἀσυχία), obtained through the beauty of song, free from concern about the content. A good poet can tell sorrowful stories without troubling his readers.[19] Theocritus does this in *Id*. 1, where Daphnis' pains (τὰ Δάφνιδος ἄλγεα, 19), the founding theme of pastoral song, do not disturb the readers' enjoyment of the

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[14] Hermann 1853, 19-24.

[15] According to Frazer, on which see Halperin 1983, 185 and n. 9.

[16] Segal 1981, 16-17.

[17] According to Halperin (1983, 199), we can only imagine a vague religious continuity between the Daphnis of *Id*. 1 and eastern or Phoenician gods, or a tenacious mythical and ritual substrate.

[18] On the literary meaning of ἁδύ, see Hunter 1999, 60, 70; Breed 2006, 111-112.

[19] Serrao (1990, 115) thinks that the Theocritean ἀσυχία is represented in *Id*. 7 and considers ἀσυχία an expression of the Stoic and Epicurean σοφός (see also Serrao 1971, 67; Rosenmeyer 1969, passim, but especially 70-73); Hunter (1999, 16-17) prefers to relate both the philosophical σοφός and the Theocritean ἀσυχία to the contemporary mentality and sensitivity.

elegance and gracefulness of the verses.[20] The mournful story of Daphnis, which is presented as the subject of an already known song renowned among shepherds, is related with a crucial sense of detachment. The same effect is achieved through the refrain (Ἄρχετε βουκολικᾶς Μοῖσαι φίλαι ἄρχετ' ἀοιδᾶς, 64-89, then Ἄρχετε βουκολικᾶς Μοῖσαι, πάλιν ἄρχετ' ἀοιδᾶς, 94-122, and Λήγετε βουκολικᾶς Μοῖσαι, ἴτε λήγετ' ἀοιδᾶς, 142), in which the repeated invocation of bucolic Muses emphasizes the presence of Thyrsis as the singer, preventing the audience from fully identifying with the narrative. Even the final dialogue between Thyrsis and the goatherd has the effect of transforming the verses on Daphnis into a song within a song, distant and unrelated in time and space.

So in *Id*. 1 Daphnis appears as a marvellous synthesis of Theocritus' aims and poetics: Daphnis himself is a poet (141), the founder of pastoral song, as showed by the imaginary delivery of his pipes to Pan (123-129), with the suggestion that he had received them from the god, while his sufferings become a topic for the bucolic tradition.[21] The Δάφνιδος ἄλγεα, transformed into a beautiful song, convey only aesthetic pleasure, and symbolize poetry which is able to make pleasant that which in real life causes tears: this theme recurs often in the *Idylls* (e.g., 11; 2). Also, by choosing a traditional Sicilian figure and setting (Thyrsis, who is somehow comparable to Theocritus himself, comes from Sicily) Theocritus defines his homeland as the cradle of bucolic poetry and makes his claim to be *inventor* of it.

Many additional observations could be made (and have been made) on Daphnis in *Id*. 1, but I want to highlight his literary importance as a symbol of a typically Alexandrian view of bucolic poetry. Theocritus reaffirms his poetics through Daphnis also in the second "manifesto" of his poetics (*Id*. 7).[22] Here the scene of Theocritus's poetical investiture is particularly remarkable.[23] Daphnis appears in the song of

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[20] See Hunter 1999, 61, 70, with bibliography.
[21] Cf. Hunter 1999, 75; Breed 2006, 112, 118.
[22] On the programmatic nature of *Id*. 7, cf. Hunter 1999, 149, and Serrao 1990, 114.
[23] On the likely identification Theocritus/Simichidas, see Hunter 1999, 146.

Lycidas, a highly valued poet in the text. After delivering a *propempti-kon* for the departure of his beloved boy, Lycidas finds his own rest in a banquet and in the song of two poets, one of whom sings the mortal suffering of Daphnis. Here too the mythical shepherd wastes away, lamented by nature, while his beloved girl desperately searches for him. Again, the story of Daphnis appears as a foundation myth of bucolic poetry, and the Sicilian setting reaffims the Theocritus' authorship.[24] Here too, in spite of the tragic subject, the death of Daphnis, in the pleasant context of the banquet, provides relief from the sorrow for the departure of the beloved. So in *Id*. 1 and *Id*. 7, the most important texts for Theocritus' poetics, Daphnis summarizes the main qualities of this concept of art, and expresses Theocritus' pride for the genre he has invented.

DAPHNIS IN THEOCRITUS' IMITATORS

The importance of Daphnis in Theocritus influenced his followers, who made him a protagonist of their bucolic poems. In the anonymous *Id*. 8 (an imitation of Theoc. 6), Daphnis is a shepherd-poet in a singing contest with Menalcas. More interesting (also for its influence on Virgil) are the allusions to the Theocritean Daphnis in the *Epitaphia* for Adonis and Bion, two poems that continue the bucolic tradition of conflating stories of love and death in a pastoral landscape in a style which is highly influenced by Theocritus. The attention paid to Daphnis in these texts confirms not only the importance of Theoc. 1 and 7, but also the vitality of Daphnis, his symbols and meanings.

The two epitaphia are clearly linked: the death of Bion, the supposed author of the *Adonidis Epitaphium*, is lamented in the *Bionis Epitaphium*, written by an anonymous follower, imitating the style, language and scenes of the *Adonidis Epitaphium*.[25] In the *AE*, the pastoral setting is downplayed, and its bucolic features are mainly stylistic and lexical.[26]

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[24] Hunter 1999, 175-176 (vv. 78-79).

[25] On the relationship between the two poems, see Legrand 1927, 156, and n. 2; 193; Fantuzzi 1985, 139-140; Schmidt 1972, 69-91. The quotations of the *AE* in the *BÉ* are evidence for the attribution of the *AE* to Bion.

[26] Reed 1997, 6-8.

From Theocritus come the analogies between Adonis and Daphnis, and their death in a natural landscape, lamented by nature. In many ways the dead Adonis recalls Daphnis in *Id*. 1, revealing this poem as the main model for the *AE*.[27] Of course, in the *AE* Adonis is already dead, we do not hear his voice, and his presence is entirely passive, whereas the Theocritean Daphnis speaks his last words. But the complaint of nature and the disorderly list of mourning animals are similar to *Id*. 1, even if Bion imitates with a certain elegance an allusion to weeping oaks in Theoc. 7 (74). In extending weeping to inanimate beings, however, the poet is unable to maintain Theocritus' moderation and includes a very long and confusing list of Loves, dogs, Nymphs, mountains, oaks, rivers, springs, flowers, Graces, and Muses.[28] Typically Theocritean is the image of Adonis lying on the ground, surrounded by mourning beings, as well as the presence of Aphrodite, although in Theoc. 1 the goddess is Daphnis' enemy and causes his death, whereas here she loves Adonis and is overhelmed with grief. But Bion understands the numerous analogies between the two figures at the mythical level: the relationship with an important goddess, the connection with erotic themes, untimely death, activity as shepherds,[29] emotional ties with nature, and their eastern origins, supposed also for Daphnis.[30] Theocritus gracefully evokes this relationship in the words of Daphnis (*Id*. 1.109-110), and describes Adonis as a shepherd (*Id*. 3.46-48),[31] adapting him to bucolic poetry. Bion evidently thinks of this connection when chooses Daphnis as his Theocritean model, rather than the Adonis of Theoc. 15.

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[27] Reed 1997, 22.

[28] On the *Mitempfindung der Natur* in *AE*, see texts and bibliography in Fantuzzi 1985, 66-67.

[29] Adonis too is often represented as a shepherd: Theocritus highlights this feature, showing the mythical youth in this role at *Id*. 1.109-110 and 3.46-48, and so does Virgil in *Ecl*. 10.18.

[30] Müller 2000, passim.

[31] This was perhaps a primeval characterization of him. See Müller 2000, 27, 30.

The anonymous author of the *Bionis Epitaphium*,[32] who presents himself as a pupil and admirer of Bion, imitates the *AE* very closely, making comparison inevitable with the Theocritean passages reworked there. Of course, there are fewer analogies between the dead Bion and Daphnis of Theoc. 1 than between Daphnis and Adonis, but the anonymous poet recognizes the essential importance of Theocritus' poem for the definition of the bucolic genre, and therefore comes to terms with it, sometimes with maladroitness, sometimes with greater elegance. In order to recall Theoc. 1, he uses a refrain (Ἄρχετε, Σικελικαί, τῶ πένθεος ἄρχετε, Μοῖσαι), imitating Thyrsis' song, and a list of the inanimate beings that weep over the dead poet (but the model here is more *AE* than Theoc. 1). However, this poet is inclined to exaggeration, and increases enormously (even hilariously) the number and variety of participants, creating a long list of cities and homelands of poets (26-49; 86-93). Another proof of his desire to surpass his predecessors is the figure of Pan, recalled from Theoc. 1 (123-129): evoking the symbolic restitution of the pipes to the god from Daphnis (123-129), the author promises to deliver himself the pipes of Bion to Pan (55), but he hyperbolically adds that perhaps the god will not receive them, worrying about being inferior to the dead poet (56). The compliment looks excessive and questionable, but the emphasis on Daphnis as a poet is interesting, because this feature is not a point of emphasis in Theoc. 1, while is useful for the author of the *Epitaphium* to create an analogy between Bion, who is a poet, and the mythical Daphnis.

So the two Greek post-Theocritean bucolic poems acknowledge the importance of Daphnis and the crucial role of Theoc. 1 for the definition of bucolic poetics. For this reason, their *Epitaphia*, in varying ways, consciously refer to Daphnis and hint at Thyrsis' song. They are undoubtedly prompted by the funereal subject of their poems, but other analogies between Daphnis and their protagonists are emphasized: in particular, the religious background with Adonis and the common poetic activity with Bion. In this way, these two authors bring to the

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[32] On *BÉ* and the identification of the author, see Reed 1997, 59-60, with bibliography.

foreground their own main characters, while underlining their poems' place in the bucolic genre, and try to show their own independence from Theocritus, but also loyalty to his precepts.

VIRGIL AND THEOCRITUS

The same logic, but with greater results and a much deeper message, is followed by Virgil, Theocritus' most important successor. Virgil fully appreciates the significance of Daphnis in Theocritus, and uses him as a symbol of Theocritean poetry. This clearly appears in the quotation of Theoc. 1.1 at the *incipit* of *Ecl*. 1, in which Virgil recalls the sound and the effect of ἁδύ.[33] But in *Ecl*. 1, the image of Tityrus lying in a peaceful natural setting seems to overturn, more than to recall, the dying Daphnis of Theoc. 1. In the *Eclogues*, mention of Daphnis always comes in passages imitating Theocritean poems: in *Ecl*. 2, the model of the Theocritean Cyclops conflates with the shepherd of Theoc. 3; in *Ecl*. 3, the name of Daphnis is quoted in passing; in *Ecl*. 7, Daphnis appears in a Theocritean context, while in *Ecl*. 8 his name belongs to a lover that the sorceress tries to bring back, imitating Theoc. 2. But Daphnis has a much greater significance in *Ecl*. 5 and 10, closing the two halves of Virgil's work with his name, in dialogue with Theocritus.

A constant feature of Daphnis' presence in the *Eclogues* is his connection with Cornelius Gallus, the elegist and friend with whom Virgil enters into a poetic dialogue, now more apparent thanks to the discovery of verses of Gallus at Qaṣr Ibrîm.[34] Allusions to these couplets in the *Eclogues* reveal an intense literary discussion about the value of

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[33] As in the initial verses of Theoc. 1 (Ἁδύ τι τὸ ψιθύρισμα καὶ ἁ πίτυς αἰπόλε τήνα / ἁ ποτὶ ταῖς παγαῖσι μελίσδεται, ἁδὺ δὲ καὶ τὺ / συρίσδες..., 1-3), the sound of a flute is imitated by means of repetition of ι and υ (Hunter 1999, 1-11, 69), also in Virg. *Ecl*. 1.1 (*Tityre, tu patulae recubans sub tegmine fagi...*), the repetition of *t* and *u* reproduces the sweet sound of the *tenuis avena;* see Cucchiarelli 2012, at *Ecl*. 1.1, 1.136. According to many scholars, even the choice of the name Tityrus may have been made because of its sound; see the bibliography in Lipka 2001, 182.

[34] On the relationship between Virgilian and Gallan poetry and on the allusions to the Qaṣr Ibrîm verses in the *Eclogues,* see Gagliardi 2011, 676-696; 2015, 508-524.

poetry and its ability to ease suffering, so that Gallus, given his mod-
ern and original idea of art, can be considered, along with Theocritus,
as an important model for the *Bucolics*.[35] Unfortunately, we cannot
reconstruct this dialogue because of the almost complete absence of
Gallus' poetry, but Virgil hints at its main points, in such a way that
we can deduce that he shares with Gallus the idea of poetry which is
not detached from the suffering of its characters, as in Alexandrian
authors, but rather involved in it. The poet identifies with their sorrow
and engages his readers in their stories. In Latin love elegy, of which
Gallus is considered the *inventor*,[36] this *sympatheia* with the characters
is expressed through a "subjectivity" (the poet shows himsef as the
protagonist of his poems) that creates deep *sympatheia* in the reader.
Virgil applies this technique to bucolic poetry and, although the iden-
tification with the characters is not complete, it reaches the point of
seeming as though the protagonists are speaking directly, which is
really moving.[37] Virgil, therefore, creates an opposition to Theocritus
in this idea of art: Theocritus is Virgil's starting point, right from the
start of *Ecl*. 1, but the Latin poet immediately moves beyond Theocri-
tus, in that the sufferings of Meliboeus arouse much more sympathy
than the "Theocritean" detachment of Tityrus.

  Virgil consistently connects allusions to Gallus with close imitations of
Theocritus and references to Daphnis, making clear the link between
these figures as symbols of two opposing concepts of art and suffering.
Except for *Ecl*. 3.12, in fact, in which the name of Daphnis is intended to
characterize the poem in a "Theocritean" sense (as the initial quotation
of Theoc. 4 confirms), all other mentions of the mythical shepherd are
somehow linked to Gallus. Thus, in *Ecl*. 2, the words of Corydon, while
recalling at times the verses of Polyphemus in Theoc. 11, mention

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[35] See Gagliardi 2014a, passim.

[36] See Ov. *Tr*. 4.10.53-54 and Quint. *Inst*. 10.1.93.

[37] For this reason, ancient grammarians had the impression that in characters
and situations of the *Eclogues* autobiographical treats of Virgil could be recog-
nized: think, for example, of the land confiscations, or the alleged love of Virgil
for the young slave Alexandros.

Daphnis as an example of beauty,[38] and, interestingly, the context of the mention of Daphnis is an imitation of a Gallan passage,[39] consistently with Virgil's intention to develop a literary dialogue with Gallus about erotic poetry and representation of characters.[40] Also in *Ecl*. 9, the quotation of Daphnis is a close Theocritean imitation,[41] in which a reference to Gallus has been identified.[42]

Something similar happens in *Ecl*. 8, where the Daphnis mentioned is not the mythical shepherd, but a namesake. The first half of this *Eclogue* is the lament of a shepherd betrayed by his beloved girl and determined to kill himself, and the second song describes the spell of a sorceress who tries to bring back her unfaithful lover, Daphnis. The main model of this song is Theoc. 2, in which Simaetha tries to regain the love of Delphis, whose name shares with Daphnis the Apollonian origin. Also in *Ecl*. 8, there are hints of Gallan poetry in the "elegiac" attitude of the dying shepherd and in the statement of 62-63 which evokes a phrase of Gallus (PQI 1.6-7).[43] The topic of this *Ecl.* is a comparison between Theocritean and Gallan poetics on the capability of art to ease suffering, praising the artistic and psychological excellence of poetry able to express sorrow by immersion into characters and their tragedies. In this perspective, the shepherd of the first half, similar to elegiac characters, is shown to be obviously superior to the less

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[38] Theocritus lacks any reference to the aesthetic appearance of Daphnis. But this detail, repeated by Virgil at *Ecl*. 5.43-44, is in Parthenius of Nicaea (*Amat. narr.* 29.1-2, and Lightfoot 1999 ad loc.), a poet closely linked to Gallus; so one might suspect that Gallus presented Daphnis in his poems, highlighting his physical beauty. This would better explain the treatment of Daphnis and his close link to Gallus in Virgil's *Eclogues*.

[39] Cf. *Ecl*. 2.26-27 (*... non ego Daphnim / iudice te metuam...*) and PQI1.8-9 (*non ego, Visce, ... / ... Kato, iudice te vereor*). On the chronological priority of the Gallan verses, see Morelli and Tandoi 1984, 104-106.

[40] About this reading of *Ecl*. 2 and the Gallan influence on it, see Gagliardi 2011, passim.

[41] Cf. Theoc. 7.37-41 and *Ecl*. 9.32-36.

[42] Cf. Hinds 1984, 44.

[43] See Gagliardi 2012, 52-73.

characterized sorceress of the second half (a shortcoming which is, of course, deliberate).[44]

Finally, in *Ecl*. 7 Gallus' influence seems to be recognizable in lexical and stylistic features. At v. 40, the word *cura* has the erotic sense of "beloved person," as in other occurrences linked to Gallus;[45] at v. 21, the so-called "parenthetic apposition" is a word order probably used by Gallus, as the learned epithet *Libethrides* may also have been;[46] there are also many allusions to the "elegiac" *Ecl*. 2. Equally important is the possible connection of Gallus with Arcadia, often underlined in the *Eclogues* and perhaps affirmed here by the definition of *Arcades ambo* (4), which may refer to Virgil's and Gallus' defence of a shared view of art.[47] Also, in this *Eclogue*, which is similar in many ways to *Ecl*. 5, dedicated to Daphnis, the Sicilian shepherd is presented under a pretext (he invites the narrator to attend a singing competition), giving readers the impression that he has nothing to do with the story narrated in the poem, and is mentioned only to develop the poetic dialogue.

In these brief appareances in the *Eclogues*, Daphnis is never a protagonist and he often seems unrelated to the context. He is, however, presented in a very different way in the two poems which symmetrically close the two halves of the *liber*, *Ecl*. 5 and *Ecl*. 10. *Ecl*. 5 is dedicated in its entirety to Daphnis, with a lament for his death sung by Mopsus, and joy for his apotheosis described by Menalcas. The poem has the traditional bucolic structure of an exchange of songs between shepherds, while in *Ecl*. 10 the description of the protagonist Gallus in Arcadia evokes the *incipit* of Thyrsis' song in Theoc. 1. Virgil clearly in-

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[44] The song of the anonymous sorceress has always been considered by the scholars inferior to its Theocritean model of *Id*. 2: in comparison to the psychological representation of the Theocritean woman, Virgil maintains only the description of the magic ritual. See Garson 1971, 202 n. 1; Richter 1970, 82-84; Segal 1987, 167.

[45] Cf. especially *Ecl*. 10.22, on which see Gagliardi 2014 ad loc., 138-141.

[46] On the parenthetic apposition, see Gagliardi 2016a; on *Libethrides* cf. Canetta 2008, and Magnelli 2010; on a likely Gallan employ of the epithet, see Kennedy 1987, 54-55.

[47] Cucchiarelli 2012, 385 (v. 22); Kennedy 1987, 56-57; Gagliardi 2016b, 99-114.

tends to create a connection between the two halves of his own *liber* in order to present an assessment of his own work in comparison with Theocritus (whose poetry is symbolized by Daphnis) and Gallus, the main character in *Ecl*. 10, perhaps alluded to also in *Ecl*. 5.[48] In this poem, scholarly attention has mainly been paid to the point that the apotheosis of Daphnis conceals reference to the potential apotheosis of Julius Caesar, as suggested by the ancient scholars.[49] This seems likely at a general level, if we do not search for close correspondences,[50] and scholars have often emphasized the skill of Virgil in deploying a character in the bucolic tradition for Octavian's propaganda.[51] On this view, the deification of Daphnis, which is a theme absent from Theocritus and probably from the original myth itself and, therefore, seemingly a Virgilian invention, acquires crucial significance.[52] While the political implications of Daphnis' apotheosis are undoubtedly a key to Daphnis' treatment in this *Eclogue*, nevertheless, in my view, the literary aspects of the appearance of the mythical shepherd also deserve attention.

Since *Ecl*. 5 closes the first half of Virgil's *liber* and must function somehow as a reflection on his work, engagement with Theocritus is inevitable. Daphnis, the embodiment of Theocritean poetics, allows Virgil to compare his own idea of art with that of Theocritus, who inspired it, although he has moved in a different direction. It cannot be an accident that Virgil's protagonists begin their songs where Theocritus had stopped, with the death of Daphnis.[53] The Sicilian shepherd,

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[48] Cucchiarelli (2012, 283) glimpses it; Torlone (2003, 206-207) recognizes in *Ecl*. 5 remarkable elegiac features. It is intriguing that DuQuesnay (1977) identifies Gallus as the source for an (Eastern) triumph poem for Julius Caesar lying behind *Ecl*. 5, even before the discovery of the Qasr Ibrm papyrus.

[49] Cf. Serv. ad *Ecl*. 5.20, 29, 34, 44, 56.

[50] See Coleman [8]2001, 174; Cucchiarelli 2012, 281. Some scholars admit the reference to Caesar (Conington and Nettleship 2007, 64; Coleman [8]2001, 173; Otis 1964, 135; Klingner 1967, 96; Hubbard 1998, 98-99), while others deny it (Clausen 1994, 152 n. 4).

[51] Cf. Müller 2000, 32, and Coleman [8]2001, 174.

[52] Cf. Müller 2000, 26-27, 30, 32.

[53] Conington and Nettleship 2007, 64; Clausen 1994, 152; Cucchiarelli 2012, 280.

who in Theoc. 1 had an active role, is merely the object of shared mourning here. As usual, Virgil writes under the influence by Theocritus, but direct literal imitation is rare. Thus, the song of Mopsus (20-44), which is a lament for the death of Daphnis, is both indebted to its Theocritean model (alluding specifically to Theoc. 1)[54] but, at the same time, shows an eagerness to surpass its model. However, Mopsus' poetry is not new; rather it represents the highest point attainable for art in the Theocritean register. This is emphasized by the final judgement of Menalcas, who uses phrases and images recalling the *incipit* of Theoc. 1 in order to praise Mopsus' song.[55] Mopsus has written a poem at the level of the Theocritean Thyrsis,[56] but this poetry is not much different from Theocritus as is confirmed by the similarities between Mopsus and another emblematic Virgilian shepherd, whose name declares his Theocritean origin: Thyrsis of *Ecl*. 7, who, like Mopsus, loves harsh words and dark images.[57]

Menalcas (56-80), the second protagonist, and his song are very different: he is a mature poet who has written a fully original text in comparison to tradition, although in Theocritus his name is connected to Daphnis.[58] His song is remarkable for the novelty of its subject, the ascent of Daphnis to the heavens, which does not appear in Theocritus,[59] and also for its striking reference to contemporary events (if in the deification of Daphnis we are to see reference to the apotheosis of Caesar). The models for Menalcas' verses are also original: Theocri-

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[54] Close similarities are underlined by Clausen 1994, 155-173, and Coleman [8]2001, 154-171.

[55] Cf. Theoc. 1, 1-3, and Virg. *Ecl*. 5.45-47.

[56] Cucchiarelli 2012, 45-47, 305.

[57] For this characterization of Thyrsis, see Fantazzi and Querbach 1985, 360-364; Coleman [8]2001, 226; on Mopsus, see Cucchiarelli 2012, 280, 315.

[58] In the ps.-Theocritean *Id*. 8 and *Id*. 9, that Virgil considered authentic (Serrao 1990, 111), Menalcas seems to be the lover of Daphnis (cf. 8.91; 9.22-27), and maybe this love story was treated by Hermesian. fr. 2 Pow. Virgil alludes perhaps to it at *Ecl*. 5.52 (... *amavit nos quoque Daphnis*), according to Cucchiarelli 2012, at *Ecl*. 10.20, 492.

[59] On the novelty of the *Eclogue* in this sense, see Müller 2000, 30, 32.

tus,[60] of course, but also encomiastic Hellenistic poetry, and Lucretius.[61] Perhaps Virgil himself can be seen through Menalcas to be staking a claim to the novelty of his own poetry. In *Ecl*. 5 and *Ecl*. 9, in fact (and perhaps also in *Ecl*. 10), Virgil himself seems to lie behind Menalcas. In *Ecl*. 5, the authorship of *Ecl*. 2 and *Ecl*. 3 is attributed to Menalcas, while in *Ecl*. 9 he is mentioned in a Mantuan scene and his songs are typical of Virgilian style.[62] For these reasons, the ancient grammarians thought that Virgil had represented himself in Menalcas.[63] Further, in the Greek bucolic tradition Menalcas competes with Daphnis in singing contests, and in Theoc. 6 the competition ends without a winner. This strengthens the suspicion that Virgil wanted to show himself as a competitor of Theocritus, able to match his illustrious model. So, if Menalcas can be seen in this way, Virgil's claim of his own novelty becomes clear; the most original features of his bucolic production are in fact the allusions to authors and genres different from pastoral ones (however, they do not destroy the nature of his poems) and the references to contemporary times allow the author to speak about anxieties and fears of his own generation. In this *Eclogue* all these features are skillfully summarized in a learned comparison with Theocritean poetry, as symbolized by Daphnis.

The use of Daphnis as the embodiment of Theocritus' poetry and as a point of comparison for Virgil's new poetics is further developed in *Ecl*. 10, at the end of the *liber*. The presence of Daphnis creates a direct link with *Ecl*. 5, and Virgil's choice of Theoc. 1 as a model is not surprising. The Roman poet aims to reflect back upon the poems which he has written in dialogue with Theocritus, the original standard, and with Gallus, who shares the most original features of his poetry, and to

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[60] There are less references to Theocritean poetry in Menalcas' song than in Mopsus'. See Clausen 1994, 153.

[61] Cucchiarelli 2012, 282. Coleman ([8]2001, 172-173) sees analogies also with the *Bionis Epitaphium*, in the complaint that becomes praise. See also Clausen 1994, 160 (v. 26).a

[62] See Conington and Nettleship 2007, 72 (v. 86); Clausen 1994, 154-155; Coleman [8]2001, 273-274.

[63] See Quint. 8.6.46-47; Serv. *ad Ecl*. 9.1; Powell 2008, 198-199.

whom he dedicates the last *Eclogue.* Affirming that he wants to write for him, and perhaps alluding to his elegiac production, Virgil makes Gallus the protagonist of a scene (9-30) based on, but also overturning, Daphnis' death in Theoc. 1. Whereas Daphnis dies because he has struggled against love and his lover desperately searchs for him, Gallus, by contrast, suffers because his beloved has abandoned him for another lover; like Daphnis, Gallus is visited by shepherds and gods, and nature weeps for him. But Virgil's close imitation of Theocritus is on occasion interrupted by brief and meaningful changes, and when Gallus directly speaks (31-69), the Theocritean model is completely abandoned, except for a few allusions, in a learned and complex series of hints.

In the *Eclogue's* final verses (70-77) Virgil speaks in first person, revealing the described situation as a song within a song, like in Theoc. 1, but Gallus is not merely the object of others' poetry, he is the author of part of the poem. His attempt to entrust his sufferings to the Arcadians (31-34), who could make it sublime in their verses, fails when he starts speaking and conflates the roles of subject and author. In this way, he eliminates the convenient distance between the poet and the theme of his poem, which is needed to make sorrow a pleasant subject.[64] This is the most important difference between Virgilian and Theocritean poetics, and, in this respect, the choice of Daphnis as a symbol of Theocritean art can be understood. In the figure of Daphnis, in fact, Theocritus had established the distance between subject and author of the poem, but Gallus, the new Daphnis, cannot assume the standpoint of that tradition; on the contrary, he marks the end of the Virgilian bucolic poetry, because of his failure in finding relief from his pains.[65] In this way, Gallus overturns Daphnis and explains Virgil's choice to abandon bucolic poetry. Daphnis, starting point of that tradition, compared to Gallus, the "new Daphnis," closes the whole of

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[64] On this passage, see Gagliardi 2014a ad loc.

[65] These features of *Ecl*. 10 can be traced back to Gallan love elegy and indeed the whole monologue of Gallus is characterized by elegiac feeling and language. See Klingner 1967, 171-172; Snell ²2002, 408.

Greek and Latin bucolic poetry, and highlights the differences be-
tween Theocritus and Virgil.

The Theocritean Daphnis affirms Virgil's originality also in another
way. In Virgil's imitation of Thyrsis' song (9-30), the poet remarkably
changes his model and presents Gallus not in Sicily, but in Arcadia,
the homeland of bucolic poetry, invented by the Arcadian god Pan.[66]
Furthermore, while in Theoc. 1 the dying Daphnis invokes Pan to
come from distant Arcadia to give him his pipes, in *Ecl*. 10 the god
spontaneously comes to Gallus, honouring the "new Daphnis," who is
now in Pan's own homeland, and proposes a means of relief for his
pains which is typically Virgilian (28-30). Specifically, Virgil alludes to
a primeval bucolic poetry, which places the genre invented by Theoc-
ritus before the time of the Syracusan poet. Thus, while Theocritus,
inventor of the genre, referred to bucolic poetry as already existing be-
forehand, Virgil places it in a mythical, pre-Theocritean time. By root-
ing bucolic poetry in myth, Virgil characterizes his own production as
going beyond his Greek model: his Daphnis (Gallus) is a different po-
et, whose art is based on his capability to express sorrow. Although
his work originates from Theocritus, it surpasses him and goes back to
the mythical origins of the genre; Theocritus is no longer the only
standard of comparison, but merely a moment in the creation of a po-
etics able to overcome his views, claiming its origin in the founding
myth of the genre. Virgil's bucolic poetry is thus placed on the same
level as Theocritus', and its greatness is attested by Pan himself. Its
direct relationship with the source of the genre, without the Theocrite-
an mediation, is affirmed by a brief but meaningful phrase, in which
the narrator says that he himself has seen the god coming to Gallus
(*quem vidimus ipsi*, 26).

As we can see, Daphnis, the symbol of Theocritus' poetry and essen-
tial standpoint for each change and innovation, affords the best means
of affirming all these ideas. When Virgil chooses to "refound" bucolic
poetry in *Ecl*. 10, Daphnis assumes new features. The enemy of Aph-
rodite and Love becomes victim of this god and the bucolic singer be-

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[66] For this interpretation of the Arcadia in *Ecl*. 10, see Gagliardi 2014b, passim.

comes an elegiac poet. As such, he cannot maintain detachment from his subject and obtain Theocritean ἀσυχία, but remains involved in the sufferings he narrates. In this way, the new Daphnis completely overturns the essence of bucolic poetry and changes his own role from founder to destroyer of it.

CONCLUSION

With Virgil's audacious reversal, Daphnis finishes his journey through ancient bucolic poetry: Virgil becomes the main model of the genre instead of Theocritus, and subsequent bucolic poets cease to refer to the mythical shepherd in their works. On his journey, Daphnis, symbol of pastoral poetry in Theocritus, appears in the *Epitaphia* of Adonis and Bion, which do not fully exploit his literary potential, but understand his importance and allude to him through analogies to his situation. Only Virgil gives the character new meanings and new life, exploring and exploiting his features in a metapoetic manner, continuing a dialogue with his predecessor and showing the novelty of his own art, but also his great debt to Theocritus. After assuming the role of Adonis and Bion, in Virgil Daphnis becomes Gallus, representing a new idea of art, far from the Alexandrian one, in which he was conceived. In all of these metamorphoses Daphnis attests to the greatness of his *inventor*, remaining a vital figure, surviving through changing times, and suggesting to poets the right response to the anguish and distress of their generations.

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