

Devising Descent  
Mime, Katabasis and Ritual in Theocritus' *Idyll* 15

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## Abstract

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15

(Under the direction of Dr. William H. Race)

In this thesis I investigate the genres and structure of Theocritus' fifteenth *Idyll*, as well as its katabatic and ritual themes. Though often considered an *urban mime*, only the first 43 lines exhibit the formal qualities of mime found in Herodas' *Mimiambi*, the only other surviving corpus of Hellenistic mime. The counterpoint to the mimic first section is the Adonia that makes up the last section of the poem and amounts to an urban recasting of pastoral poetry. A polyphonic, katabatic journey bridges the mimic and pastoral sections and is composed of four encounters that correspond to ordeals found in ritual katabases. The structure of the poem is then tripartite, beginning in the profane world of the household mime, progressing through the liminal space of the streets and ending in the sacred world of the Adonia. This progression mirrors Theocritus' evolution from Syracusan mimic poet to Alexandrian pastoral poet.

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## Introduction

Hellenistic studies have undergone a sort of revival in the last few decades, and in the process, there has been a significant shift in scholarly interest in the poetry of the period. A gauge of this is A. S. F. Gow's introduction to his 1938 article on Theocritus' *Adoniazusae*, "The fifteenth Idyll of Theocritus has probably been more admired, and has certainly received more attention from scholars, than any other Alexandrian poem."<sup>1</sup> But in the past three decades, scholars have turned their attention primarily to the so-called Hellenistic aesthetic—Callimachus' *Aetia Prologue* has come to dominate the field. As a result, scholars have tended to focus on Theocritus' bucolic poetry, since it is here that the poet most directly and frequently grapples with poetic aesthetics,<sup>2</sup> and his mimic poetry, like *Idyll* 15, has receded into the background. Accordingly, a review of the scholarship of the past 30 years, with the exception of commentaries, shows that only three monographs have been devoted to a study of Theocritus' non-bucolic *Idylls*.

Griffiths (1979) is primarily interested in deciphering the Ptolemaic influence on Theoc. 14-17. He begins with an extended analysis of the sixteenth *Idyll*, arguing that the

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<sup>1</sup> Gow 1938, 180. Helmbold (1951, 17) offers a similar, though more tendentious appraisal, "Its only rivals for popular favor, indeed, are 1 and 2, partly, no doubt, because of their position in the usual printing of the corpus, partly because love is as fashionable as gossip; and to a lesser degree because they are better poems."

<sup>2</sup> The major recent monographs on the bucolic *Idylls* include: Halperin 1983, Gutzwiller 1991, Alpers 1996, Hubbard 1998, Hunter 1999, and Payne 2007.

inconsistencies and omissions in the encomium of Hieron result from Theocritus' attempt to obfuscate the fact that the Syracusan monarch has achieved nothing worthy of praise. Griffiths then extends this line of argument to the Alexandrian courtly poems (14, 15, 17, 24). He concentrates on how Theocritus refuses to address what he sees as controversies surrounding Ptolemy II (incest, physical weakness, a lack of military talent). This book has been influential on Theocritean studies, but it has aged poorly for two reasons. First, his methodology is not entirely sound. Since we know so little about how contemporary Macedonians and Egyptians felt about Ptolemy's idiosyncrasies, Griffiths inevitably bases his argument on speculation, and often his speculations seem permeated with an anachronistic 20<sup>th</sup>-century morality. Related to this is the second fault of Griffiths' book. The historicism of the argument ultimately reveals very little about the text itself, a problem that is much exacerbated by Griffiths' concentration on what is *not* said.

After the publication of Griffiths' monograph, the courtly poetry of Theocritus once again recedes from scholarly attention, arising only occasionally in articles and general studies of Hellenistic poetry.<sup>3</sup> But the second Groningen Workshop on Hellenistic Poetry held in 1994, which was devoted to Theocritus, provided the backdrop for the two most important, recent, book-length studies of Theocritus' non-bucolic *Idylls*: Joan Burton's *Theocritus' Urban Mimes*, published in 1995, and Richard Hunter's *Theocritus and the Archeology of Poetry*, published, along with the contributions to the Groningen conference, in 1996.

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<sup>3</sup> The most important is G. O. Hutchinson (1987, 143-213), which has quite a good discussion of Theoc. 15 and the facile distinctions that have been made between the bucolic and non-bucolic poetry.

Burton (1995) is primarily concerned with the social and cultural aspects of the *urban mimes*, Theoc. 2, 14 and 15, and how we can see the social divisions of Alexandria, those between immigrants and natives, men and women, and the wealthy and needy, as well as the divide between the Classical and Hellenistic reflected in and, in a sense, bridged by Theocritus' poetry. While her attempts to situate historically Theocritus' poetry in Ptolemaic Alexandria resemble, in some respects, Griffiths' interpretation, her readings are on the whole more astute, and I might add, more generous to Theocritus.

In *Theocritus and the Archaeology of Greek Poetry*, Hunter (1996b) concentrates on Theocritus' non-bucolic idylls. As a result of this range, he spends less than a chapter on the *Adoniazusae*, but his analysis is in many ways the best of those found in these three monographs. His interest in the poem is twofold. He first discusses the metaliterary quality of the poem, arguing that through the mime's intertextual connection with Homer and Archaic poetry, and through the similarities between the Adonis tapestry and the Adonis hymn, Theocritus explores the tension between artifice and mimesis.<sup>4</sup> He then moves on to a discussion of the Adonis hymn, particularly how the Ptolemaic context of the hymn complicates the issue of whether or not the poem was intended to be parodic.<sup>5</sup> In the process Hunter offers an intriguing argument that the journey of the Syracusan women to the center of Alexandria, and the development of the poem's intertextual

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<sup>4</sup> Hunter 1996b, 116-123.

<sup>5</sup> Hunter 1996b, 123-137.

framework, is perhaps a representation of Theocritus bringing the Syracusan genre of mime to Alexandria.<sup>6</sup>

However, while both Burton and Hunter have made significant progress in the interpretation of Theoc. 15, both commit a similar mistake. Both assume that Theoc. 15 is actually a proper, uniform mime. It is my goal in this thesis to challenge this assumption and so in the first chapter I will offer a generic and structural interpretation of the *Adoniazusae*. I will show through a comparison with Herodas' *Mimiambi* that Theoc. 15 has a tripartite structure, and that only the first 43 lines, which I call the *household mime*, are properly mimetic. Moreover, I will argue that this accordance is not incidental, but rather that Theocritus pointedly deviates from these generic features in the rest of the poem. Finally I will argue that the last section of the poem, lines 100-149, are an urban recasting of Theocritus' bucolic poetics, and that we should read the poem as being bookended on one side by the Syracusan genre of mime, and on the other by bucolic with the transition between the two marked by an escalation of polyphony.

Having outlined the structure in the first chapter, in the second I will argue that Theoc. 15 is a katabasis. In doing so I will show that Theocritus makes use of many of the techniques that Plato utilizes in creating his katabatic dialogues. I will then argue that the reason for this general katabatic theme is that the tripartite structure of the poem accords with the three stages of rites of passage first identified by Arnold von Gennep.<sup>7</sup> The household mime, then, stands in for the *profane world* and the Adonia for the *sacred world*, and the streets of Alexandria represent the polyphonic liminal space which

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<sup>6</sup> Hunter 1996b, 118-119.

<sup>7</sup> Van Gennep 1961.

connects the two. Moreover, the encounters that Praxinoa and Gorgo have on the streets of Alexandria all accord with ordeals frequently found in the ritual katabases that link the worlds of the profane and the sacred and prepare initiands for the upcoming religious experience. I will conclude by offering a revision and extension of Hunter's metaliterary claim that the *Adoniazusae* represents Theocritus bringing mime to Alexandria.



## Chapter 1: Mime and Structure in the *Adoniazusae*

### 1.1 Introduction

The Hellenistic world that was left in the wake of Alexander's conquests and the chaotic infighting of the Diadochoi was characterized not by a rejection of the past, but by a renovation of the Hellenism of the Classical period. Even a city like Alexandria, which was built from the ground up by the Ptolemaic successors of Alexander, was a product of the Classical period against which it is often contrasted.<sup>1</sup> The religious festivals of pre-Alexandrian Greece were imported and modified to bolster the authority of the ruling class that needed both to maintain the authenticity of its Greek heritage and to make this heritage palatable to the native Egyptian population. The synthesis of independent customs and politics, both of the individual Greek *poleis* and the barbarian nations, marks the early years of the Hellenistic period. This is an historical dialectic, a process of making the old new again, and it is true not just of politics and religion, but of poetics as well.

The poets who exemplified the new Hellenistic period to the greatest degree were those who appropriated, challenged and renovated the traditional genres, myths and forms

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<sup>1</sup> The fullest account of the political and cultural milieu of Ptolemaic Alexandria is still Fraser 1972. His analysis of Hellenistic literature is, because of the recent re-emergence of interest in the time-period and declining interest in New Historicism, now somewhat outdated. For the multiculturalism that defined Alexandrian literature, see Burton 1995, Stephens 2003 and Fantuzzi and Hunter 2004.

inherited from Classical Greece.<sup>2</sup> This is why Callimachus' rustic epyllion *Hecale* is at the same time very familiar and very foreign.<sup>3</sup> There is perhaps no poet in the Hellenistic canon who was more devoted to this poetic program than Theocritus.<sup>4</sup> The combination of the discrete genres of mime and epic, as has been noted, is the origin of his innovative bucolic *Idylls*.<sup>5</sup> Occasionally his experimentation with genre borders on outrageous. For example, in *Id.* 22, a hymn to the Dioscuri written in hexameters, he includes a brief stichomythia, something unprecedented in the Classical period. More often, however, his experimentation was more subtle. The eighteenth *Idyll*, the epithalamion of Helen, is composed in a sort of virtual lyric, where the hexameters can be grouped into stanzas—a delicate indication of the lyric tradition from which he appropriated the content of the

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<sup>2</sup> Cunningham 1971, 12-13: "One of the characteristic features of Hellenistic poetry is the mixture of genres which in earlier times had been separate. So for example Kallimachos mingled the traditional hymn with political writing; so Theokritos took elements from epic, mime, country songs, etc., to form his new bucolic poems."

<sup>3</sup> Fantuzzi and Hunter 2004, 198: "The programmatically creative tension in the verse between matter and manner appears to have been the most prominent stylistic hallmark of the *Hecale*. The elegantly modern word order plays off against the (learnedly) local colour of 'a woman of Akte [believed to be an archaic name for Attica]' and the name of the legendary king Erechtheus to suggest a new telling of an old tale."

<sup>4</sup> For Theocritus' "generic contamination," see Fantuzzi and Hunter 2004, 32-33.

<sup>5</sup> Hutchinson 1988, 200: "The standard view of the bucolic genre is that it mixes or contaminates the epic with the genre of mime (and the sub-literary genre of bucolic song)." Modern scholars, including Halperin 1983, 78-79, and Hunter 1999, 5, speak in terms of the *invention* of bucolic poetry, but thus far all attempts to define *bucolic* have been unsuccessful. One begins to wonder whether we have created a genre that for Theocritus did not exist. The bibliography on the subject is large; see Gow 1952, lxvi-lxxx, Lawal 1967, Van Sickle 1976, and Halperin 1983. Gutzwiller (1991, 3-19) is circumspect in her hesitance to define *bucolic* and *pastoral*. Hutchinson (1988) already expresses some weariness over attempts to isolate an essential *bucolic-ness*: "It is also rash to insist too strongly that the 'bucolic' poems form a self-contained group. They were not designed by Theocritus to stand together as an independent work." (143-144). Payne (2007, 15) is justifiably resigned to the fruitlessness of defining and categorizing the *bucolic*, and offers what seems to me to be a satisfying and honest appraisal: "The irreducibility of the bucolic world's origins once again enhances its ontological mystique; what is sourced from myth and actuality has undergone a thorough fictionalization in its transduction to its new home, and the bucolic characters belong to no world that we can identify outside the poems in which they appear."

poem.<sup>6</sup> Because Theocritus was so engaged in the renovation of Classical genres, we are obliged, when analyzing his poetry, to begin with a formal analysis of his poetics. This is even more imperative when dealing with those *Idylls* that are based on an established genre like mime.

It is now commonplace to refer to Theoc. 2, 14 and 15 as Theocritus' *urban mimes*. They have acquired this designation because they are composed entirely of speech or dialogue between characters of low social status, are set in urban environments, and because they seem to have some connection to the Syracusan mimeographer Sophron.<sup>7</sup> But these are, ultimately, poor criteria for the classification of these poems. As we shall see, Theoc. 15, in particular, is vastly different from the other two urban mimes.

The fifteenth *Idyll* of Theocritus, the *Adoniazusae*, describes a pilgrimage taken by Praxinoa and Gorgo, two lower-class Syracusan women who live on the outskirts of Alexandria, to the festival of Adonis in the middle of the city. The poem is set first in Praxinoa's home, then on the streets of Alexandria, and then at the Adonia. We might briefly summarize the narrative structure of the poem:

1. The dialogue of Praxinoa and Gorgo (1-99)
  - a. The household mime (1-43)
  - b. The streets of Alexandria (44-77)
  - c. Inside the sanctuary (78-99)
2. The Adonia (100-150)

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<sup>6</sup> Hunter 1996b, 155-157.

<sup>7</sup> The label *urban mime*, however, has gone almost unchallenged. Even Burton (1995, 8-9), neither defines nor justifies the term, apparently allowing its legitimacy on the basis of Theocritus' connection to Syracuse. Krevans (2006, 119) evades the definition, "This idyll is often showcased as an example of urban mime in the Theocritean corpus. What that means, in modern critical terms, is that *Id.* 15 belongs to the 'non-bucolic' half of the Theocritean corpus."

- a. The Adonis song (100-144)
- b. Gorgo's farewell (145-150)

What marks the *Adoniazusae* as unique not only among Theocritus' *urban mimes* but among the entire surviving corpus of mimic poetry is that it has three distinct settings and it contains a hymn situated in a narrative.<sup>8</sup>

G. O. Hutchinson offers a succinct statement of the prevailing view of the *Adoniazusae*.

Modern readers are fascinated by the depiction of ordinary life in the past; modern scholars are interested by the connections of Theocritus with mime. But the climax of the poem is the song, and a chief purpose of the dialogue is to contrast with this. The poem was clearly intended to exalt the royal festival: the song gives Arsinoe and her mother a prominent place, in lines which resemble the formal panegyric poem 17; earlier references to the royal family have prepared for this. It is probable, therefore, that the song presenting the festival was meant to be the heart of the poem.<sup>9</sup>

Here Hutchinson is following Frederick Griffiths, whose influential *Theocritus at Court* is the earliest of the modern monographs to concentrate on Theocritus' non-bucolic *Idylls*.<sup>10</sup> The reason that scholars have awarded primacy to the Adonis hymn seems to lie

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<sup>8</sup> Krevans (2006, 126) is absolutely correct to say, "In spite of the many similarities to Herodas 4, then, *Id.* 15 cannot be completely described by the phrase 'urban mime'. First, the movable setting is unparalleled in Herodas; the closest equivalents are *Id.* 3 and 7—in 3, a dramatic idyll, the scene actually shifts; in 7, also a journey to a religious festival, the narrator includes descriptions of several different locations."

<sup>9</sup> Hutchinson 1988, 150-151. Hutchinson, follows Griffiths (1979) in his assertion that Theocritus' main intention was the flattery of Arsinoe and Philadelphus.

<sup>10</sup> Griffiths (1979) draws such a sharp delineation between the dialogue and the song that he will not even discuss them in the same chapter. Foster (2006) leaves this bifurcation unchallenged. Davies 1995, 152-153: "Like many Theocritean, indeed Hellenistic, compositions, *Idyll* 15 is carefully structured, and a clear understanding of its unity depends upon the rehabilitation of the penultimate section (100-44) which embraces the Adonis song." In this chapter, I will argue instead that an understanding of Theoc. 15 depends not on a "rehabilitation" of the Adonis song, but of the household scene that initiates the poem and of the dialogue on the Alexandrian streets.

in the importance of song to the Theocritean corpus as a whole.<sup>11</sup> Song is a recurrent motif in Theocritus' corpus, especially in the bucolic *Idylls*. These songs are almost always embedded in a narrative, dialogue or apostrophic address which provides the context and motivation for either the song's composition or its performance. The apparent dichotomy between frame and song encourages structural interpretations of Theocritus' poetry, where structure is understood as the relation between the expository frame and the song.<sup>12</sup> In these interpretations, the song is seen as the focal point, and the frame is generally considered secondary and contextualizing. But this interpretation of Theoc. 15 is fundamentally flawed because it neglects a generic analysis of the mimic dialogue.

Griffiths, like most scholars, defines mime in terms of setting or characterization.<sup>13</sup> For Griffiths, "...the essence of mime is its low-life setting..."<sup>14</sup> and the characters in this genre are similarly "low-lives."<sup>15</sup> But this is hardly an adequate

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<sup>11</sup> The importance of song in generically assigning the various *Idylls* is demonstrated by Krevans 2006, 126: "The Adonis song moves *Id.* 15 out of the realm of mime and aligns it closely with other idylls whose characters can sing back to their creator—that is, with the magical *Id.* 2 and the pastoral idylls 1, 3, 5, 6, 7, 10 and 11." In fact, she argues that the *Adoniazusae* itself is, at least in some respects, a pastoral poem because of the embedded hymn.

<sup>12</sup> Goldhill 1991, 246-261, and more directly concerning the *Adoniazusae*, 274-278.

<sup>13</sup> Ussher (1985, 45) offers another basic description: "...*mimos*, the 'imitation' of human life..." Payne 2007, 13: "Sophron's *Mimes*, Herodas' *Mimiambi*, and Theocritus' urban *Idylls* all make use of real-world locations and allude to contemporary history. The intention seems to have been to offer an imitation of everyday life without the full-scale dramatic plots and character types of New Comedy." It is worth noting that Payne 2007, does not call Theoc. 2, 14, and 15 mimes.

<sup>14</sup> Griffiths 1979, 110.

<sup>15</sup> For a discussion of "low-life" characterization in each of Herodas' extant *Mimiambi*, see Ussher 1985. The meter of Theoc. 15 further complicates this issue. Whereas Sophron wrote in prose, and whereas Herodas wrote his *Mimiambi* in choliambics—a choice of meter that seems to accord with the derisive attitude directed towards the characters depicted in his work—the hexameters of Theocritus' urban mimes would seem to elevate the material and characters. But since Theocritus writes exclusively in hexameters, the choice of this meter for the urban mimes is unmarked and cannot be the sole basis on which we claim

description of the genre, since it just as well applies to New Comedy and other genres that are independent of the mimic tradition;<sup>16</sup> we are left still to wonder what the essential features of mime are. Moreover, beyond the surface inadequacy of this criterion, it ultimately does not apply very well to Theocritus' urban mimes, something that Griffiths himself admits.

The scholiasts (*ad Idd.* 2 and 11) assure us that he follows Sophron as a student of ordinary life. But what Theocritus made of mime, it could not have been before, for he expands it to depict the whole social spectrum from pickpockets to kings, and to embody all levels of cultural attainment, from the high style of Homer down to the language of the streets.<sup>17</sup>

Theocritus' ground-up depiction of Ptolemaic Alexandria is an unsurpassable obstacle to any definition based on setting or characterization. The *Adoniazusae* is even more problematic because of its multiple historically and geographically distinct settings,<sup>18</sup> and embedded hymn, all features that are found nowhere else in mime.<sup>19</sup> Our only alternative

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that Theocritus is attempting to elevate the genre of mime. That is not to say that he is not doing exactly that, but evidence for this must be sought elsewhere. If Theocritus is attempting to elevate the genre, then the marked use of Homeric language and references to epic found in the street dialogue might contribute to this effect. For the effect of Homeric language and of the Doric dialect on *mimesis* in Theoc. 15, see Hunter 1996b, 119-123.

<sup>16</sup> In fact, the character's depicted in mime are not "low-lives" in the sense that they are the very worst or meanest elements of society. They are low in comparison to the heroes, kings and gods that populate the epic and tragic genres, but properly, like the characters of New Comedy, they are members of the bourgeoisie.

<sup>17</sup> Griffiths 1979, 106.

<sup>18</sup> Theoc. 15 is the only surviving mime that can confidently be located in a specific place at a specific time.

<sup>19</sup> While Theoc. 2 is in fact a spell/song, unlike Theoc. 15, there is no frame that contextualizes it; in this chapter I will argue that this is in accordance with mimic conventions. On the difficulty of claiming that Theoc. 15 is properly a mime, see Krevans 2006, 121.

then is to formulate a new definition of mime, one based on its formal and generic features, without privileging simple, surface resemblances.

It is my goal in this chapter to correct the mistaken interpretation of Theoc. 15 that the dialogue is a uniform mime subsidiary to the Adonis hymn. I will outline the generic features of mime through a formal analysis of Herodas' mimic poetry and then I will show that the first 43 lines of Theoc. 15 conform to these formal features but that after Praxinoa and Gorgo leave their home Theocritus deliberately deviates from these conventions. Ultimately I will argue that narrative and generic breaks coincide, that the poem should be formally and narratively divided into three parts, and that Theoc. 15 is just as much a journey away from Praxinoa's home and a departure from the mime as it is a journey to the Adonis festival.

### **1.2.1: The Formal Features of Herodas' Poetry**

Herodas was a 3<sup>rd</sup> century poet, roughly contemporary with Theocritus and Callimachus, perhaps working out of the library of Alexandria.<sup>20</sup> All that remains of his work are eight nearly complete and five extremely fragmentary poems that are referred to as the *Mimiamb*s, because they are dialogues between members of lower social strata written in choliambics.<sup>21</sup> Since they are roughly contemporary with Theocritus' poetry

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<sup>20</sup> For dating Herodas to the first half of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century, see Headlam 2001, ix, Cunningham 1971, 2, Burton 1995, 20, and Zanker 2009, 1. The location of his authorship is more problematic. Cunningham (1971, 2) sees the Gyllis' praise for Egypt (1.26-48) as evidence for Alexandrian residency. He notes, with appropriate caution, that "The places in which the scenes of his poems are set or which are mentioned in them are not necessarily ones with which he had a close connection, especially in an age of easy travel..."

<sup>21</sup> Cunningham 2002, 184: "His language and verse are, as far as we can tell, a slightly imperfect rendering of those of Hipponax. The qualification is necessary because we have so little of the latter's work and

and resemble his mimic *Idylls*, Herodas' *Mimiamb*s are suitable candidates for comparison with the Syracusan poet's work; since they are the only other extant corpus of mimic poetry to survive from the Hellenistic period or any other, they are a necessary object of comparison.<sup>22</sup> Moreover, Herodas' first and fourth *Mimiamb*s share a great deal with Theoc. 15 in particular.<sup>23</sup> In this section I will outline the formal qualities of Herodas's mimes, concentrating on the first seven *Mimiamb*s.<sup>24</sup>

Herodas' *Mimiamb*s are marked by a great deal of restraint. They are all quite short; Herodas 7, the longest of the *Mimiamb*s to survive, is only 128 lines. The number of speakers is also always limited to two or three and there is never more than one setting. Finally, each mime has only one topic of conversation. But these criteria in and of themselves do not provide an adequate formal description of Herodas' mimic genre.<sup>25</sup>

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because of the possibility of corruption in our texts of both Hipponax and Herodas and in Herodas' text of Hipponax." For Herodas' generic amalgamations, see Cunningham 1971, 13.

<sup>22</sup> Since they were contemporaries and since there is an absence of evidence that suggests they were familiar with each other's work, some caution is of course necessary when claiming that Theocritus' and Herodas' mimes share the same generic and formal qualities. Still, they did share the same poetic program—the appropriation and elevation of the folk genre of mime for a learned audience. Moreover, scholarly consensus is that Herodas especially drew primarily from the non-literary mime, and this, combined with Theocritus' connection with Sophron encourages us to assume that in the composition of their literary mimes, both authors were drawing from a similar, formally established tradition. This common inheritance allows us to be more confident that the formal similarities that can be identified between these two authors are not coincidental, but a consequence of poeticizing the same tradition of performed mime. For the non-literary origins of both Herodas' and Sophron's mimes, see Cunningham 1971, 3, 10-11.

<sup>23</sup> See Burton 1995, 906-108, and Krevans 2006, 122-126.

<sup>24</sup> The eighth *Mimiamb* is Herodas' sphragis poem. Since it deviates considerably from the generic qualities that characterize the first seven *Mimiamb*s, and since it is much more fragmentary, it must be excluded from an analysis of the formal aspects of Herodas' mimes. On the metapoetic qualities of Herodas 8, cf. Rosen 1992, Rist 1997 and Fountoulakis 2002.

<sup>25</sup> Fountoulakis (2002, 307) identifies these same features, "...the references to Herondas' poems as μιμίαι by a number of later authors is suggestive of the strong links of those poems with the mime. Even more suggestive of these links are the low-life characters and themes of his poems, his simple plots, the small number of speaking characters, and the brevity of the incidents depicted in his work. With the exception of mimiamb 8, which raises issues of poetic identity and reception, Herondas' extant poems recall in terms of form, plot-construction and character-drawing a well-known definition of mime as μίμησις βίου



Aristotle provides a productive starting point for determining the formal qualities of Herodas' mimes. In the *Poetics*, he shows that the most important aspect of tragedy is its plot, since it is the plot which makes a tragedy complete and whole, and which gives it its beginning, middle and end.<sup>26</sup> The other aspects of tragedy—character, diction, thought, spectacle and music—are essential but nonetheless subsidiary to the plot.<sup>27</sup> Since plot is the most important aspect of tragedy, Aristotle determines that tragedy is a mimesis of action.<sup>28</sup> We cannot assert that the same is true of Herodas' *Mimiambi*; there is often no action at all in these poems. But by identifying what is complete and whole about the individual *Mimiambi*, we can determine what the object of their mimesis is.<sup>29</sup>

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τά τε συγκεκριμένα καὶ ἀσυγχώρητα περιέχων, which is preserved by Diomedes and may well be traced back to Theophrastus.” Nonetheless, we are still lacking what is *essential* to this poetry—what is the object of *mimesis*.

<sup>26</sup> Arist. *Po.* 1450b: κείται δὴ ἡμῖν τὴν τραγῳδίαν τελείας καὶ ὅλης πράξεως εἶναι μίμησιν ἐχούσης τι μέγεθος· ἔστιν γὰρ ὅλον καὶ μηδὲν ἔχον μέγεθος. ὅλον δὲ ἐστὶν τὸ ἔχον ἀρχὴν καὶ μέσον καὶ τελευτήν. ἀρχὴ δὲ ἐστὶν ὃ αὐτὸ μὲν μὴ ἐξ ἀνάγκης μετ' ἄλλο ἐστίν, μετ' ἐκεῖνο δ' ἕτερον πέφυκεν εἶναι ἢ γίνεσθαι· τελευτὴ δὲ τοῦναντίον ὃ αὐτὸ μὲν μετ' ἄλλο πέφυκεν εἶναι ἢ ἐξ ἀνάγκης ἢ ὡς ἐπὶ τὸ πολὺ, μετὰ δὲ τοῦτο ἄλλο οὐδέν· μέσον δὲ ὃ καὶ αὐτὸ μετ' ἄλλο καὶ μετ' ἐκεῖνο ἕτερον. δεῖ ἄρα τοὺς συνεστῶτας εἰς μύθους μὴθ' ὁπόθεν ἔτυχεν ἄρχεσθαι μὴθ' ὅπου ἔτυχε τελευτᾶν, ἀλλὰ κεχρησθαι ταῖς εἰρημέναις ιδέαις. “We have stipulated that tragedy is mimesis of an action that is complete, whole, and of magnitude (for one can have a whole which lacks magnitude). A whole is that which has a beginning, middle, and end. A beginning is that which does not itself follow necessarily from something else, but after which a further event or process naturally occurs. An end, by contrast, is that which itself naturally occurs, whether necessarily or usually, after a preceding event, but need not be followed anything else. A middle is that which both follows a preceding event and has further consequences. Well-constructed plots, therefore, should neither begin nor end at an arbitrary point, but should make use of the patterns stated.” All translations of Aristotle's *Poetics* are taken from Stephen Halliwell's Loeb edition.

<sup>27</sup> Arist. *Po.* 1450a7-10.

<sup>28</sup> Hunter 1996b, 119: “...we can see that it is the literary mime of Herodas and Theocritus which foreshadows, in the implicit poetics of poetry itself, the connection between two senses of *mimesis* which we find in later poetic theory; these senses are the *mimesis* familiar from Aristotle's *Poetics*, that is the transference of the inherent mimetic qualities of human beings to a criterion for (particularly dramatic) poetry as imitative of the actions of men, and *mimesis* as the imitation of literary models. The literary mime interweaves these two senses in such a way as to explore the relation between them.”

<sup>29</sup> Arist. *Po.* 1451a30-35: χρὴ οὖν, καθάπερ καὶ ἐν ταῖς ἄλλαις μιμητικαῖς ἢ μία μίμησις ἐνός ἐστίν, οὕτω καὶ τὸν μῦθον, ἐπεὶ πράξεως μίμησις ἐστὶ, μιᾶς τε εἶναι καὶ ταύτης ὅλης, καὶ τὰ μέρη συνεστάναι τῶν πραγμάτων οὕτως ὥστε μετατιθεμένου τινὸς μέρους ἢ ἀφαιρουμένου διαφέρεισθαι καὶ κινεῖσθαι τὸ ὅλον· ὃ γὰρ προσδὸν ἢ μὴ προσδὸν μηδὲν ποιεῖ ἐπίδηλον, οὐδὲν μόνον τοῦ ὅλου ἐστίν. “Just as, therefore, in the

What then is whole and complete in Herodas' *Mimiambi*? Let us start with Herodas 2. This entire poem consists of a speech given by Battarus, a brothel-owner; it begins with Battarus' address to the jury and concludes with his exordium. No narrative frame or third party speaker contextualizes the speech and no action is depicted. Instead of action, what is whole and complete in Herodas 2 is the speech of Battarus. Similarly the entirety of Herodas 3, a dialogue between the mother of an indolent and willful student and the schoolmaster whom she pressures into corporally punishing him, is made up of a complete conversation over the punishment of Cottalus, the son. In fact, in the entire extant corpus of Herodas, we are able to recognize what is whole and complete: a conversation over a single subject. We might, then, state summarily that *mime is the mimesis of a dialogue, conversation or speech*.<sup>30</sup>

The structure of the *Mimiamb*s—their beginnings, middles and ends—confirms the pointed completeness of the conversations that they depict. The first *Mimiamb*, a dialogue between two women, Metriche and Gyllis, about the former's distress over the absence of her lover Mandris, begins with Gyllis arriving at Metriche's home (1.1-3):

MHTPIXH

Θ[ρέισ]σα, ἀράσσει τὴν θύρην τις· οὐκ ὄψητι  
μ[ή] .τ[ις] παρ' ἡμέων ἐξ ἀγρουκίης ἦκει;

ΘΡΕΙΣΣΑ

τίς .τ[ὴν] θύρην;

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other mimetic arts a unitary mimesis has a unitary object, so too the plot, since it is mimesis of an action, should be of a unitary and indeed whole action; and the component events should be so structured that if any is displaced or removed the sense of the whole is disturbed and dislocated: since that whose presence or absence has no clear significance is not an integral part of the whole.”

<sup>30</sup> And while we can recognize aspects of the universal in the depiction of the characters, as we can in tragedy, these characters are not whole or complete. They are necessary for the dialogue to have substance, just as the *ēthē* of the *dramatis personae* are necessary for a tragic play, but *ēthos* is not the primary object of the tragic mimesis.

ΓΥΛΛΙΣ

ἐγὼδε.

Metriche:

Th[reis]sa, someone is banging at the door. Go and see [if one] of our people from the country has come.

Threissa:

Who's at [the] door?

Gyllis

It's I.<sup>31</sup>

Herodas 1 concludes with Gyllis wishing her friend well as she departs (1.85-90):

ΓΥΛΛΙΣ

οσσοῦ γένοιτο, μᾶ, τέκνον π[.].....  
ἡδύς γε· ναὶ Δήμητρα, Μητρ[ί]χη, τούτ[ου]  
ἡδίον' οἶνον Γυλλίς οὐ πέ[π]ωκέν [κω.  
σὺ δ' εὐτύχει μοι, τέκνον, ἀσ[φα]λίς[ε]ν [δέ  
σαυτήν· ἐμοὶ δὲ Μυρτάλη τε καὶ Σίμη  
véαι μένοιεν, ἔστ' ἂν ἐνπνέη[ι] Γυλλίς.

Gyllis:

† † may be, ah, child [ ] sweet; by Demeter, Metriche,  
Gyllis has never [before] drunk sweeter wine than this. Farewell,  
child, [and] look after yourself; but may my Myrtale and Sime  
remain young, as long as Gyllis breathes.

Gyllis' announcements of arrival and departure define both the boundaries of the dialogue and the poem.<sup>32</sup> Intervening between the two is a dialogue that concerns exclusively a single topic—Mandris' absence and its effect on Metriche. Because Herodas emphasizes the arrival and departure of Gyllis, there can be no doubt that the conversation begins and

<sup>31</sup> The text and translations of Herodas' *Mimiamb*s are taken from Cunningham's 2002 Loeb edition.

<sup>32</sup> Because she does not consider the greeting scene as a recurrent, formal feature of Herodas' mime, Burton (1995, 21) over-reads this scene: "Through the hostess Metriche's ironic greeting to Gyllis, the poet underscores how even the low, fictive arrival of an old bawd can be shaped to evoke a mythic world in which mortals and immortals could mingle."

ends within the confines of the dialogue represented in the text. In respect to the conversation, the poem is whole and complete, and it has a beginning (the arrival of Gyllis), middle (the conversation itself) and end (Gyllis finishes her drink and bids farewell to Metriche).

Herodas frequently has his characters announce or indicate their arrival and departure as a way of signaling the completeness of the dialogues that he composes.<sup>33</sup> As a result, the duration of the setting of the dialogues frequently coincides with the boundaries of the text. The seventh *Mimiamb*, about a visit that Metro makes with some friends to the cobbler Cerdon, begins with an introduction (7.1-3):

Κέρδων, ἄγω σοι τάσδε τὰς [. . . . .] τι  
τῶν σῶν ἔχεις αὐτῇσιν ἄξιον δεῖ[ξ]αι  
χειρέων νοῆρες ἔργον.

Cerdon, I am bringing you these [ladies to see if] you can show them any skilled work worthy of your craft.

Metro introduces her friends to Cerdon. The setting of the dialogue and the reason for the women's visit are established at the very beginning. The poem concludes with Cerdon addressing the women (7.124-129):

γυναῖκες, ἣν ἔχητε κητέρων χρεῖην  
ἢ σαμβάλισκων ἢ ἃ κατ' οἰκίην ἔλκειν  
εἴθισθε, τήν μοι δουλ[ίδ]’ ὥδε <δεῖ> πέμπειν.  
σὺ δ' ἦκε, Μητροῖ, πρὸς με τῇ ἐνάτῃ πάντως  
ὅκως λάβηις καρκίνια· τήν γὰρ οὖν βαίτην  
θάλπουσαν εὖ δεῖ ἴδον φρονεῦντα †καὶ† ράπτειν.

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<sup>33</sup> On the theme of *Damenbesuch* in Herodas' *Mimiambi* and its metaliterary importance to Theoc. 15, see Hunter 2008, 192-193.

Ladies, if you have need of anything else, small sandals or what you are in the habit of trailing at home, you <must> send you slave here to me. But you, Metro, be sure to come to me on the ninth to get your crabs; for in truth a sensible man must stitch inside the skin coat that gives warmth.

The instructions that the cobbler gives the women are the sort of concluding information that mark a farewell; their business is complete and the women are leaving the shop. At the end of the third *Mimiamb*, the teacher, Lampriscus, refuses to injure the young man any further, and the mother, Metrotime, concludes the dialogue by announcing her departure (3.94-97):

ἐρέω ἐπιμηθέως τῷ γέροντι, Λαμπρίσκε,  
ἐλθοῦς' ἐς οἶκον ταῦτα, καὶ πέδας ἦξω  
φέρουσ' ὅκως νιν σύμποδ' ὧδε πηδεῦντα  
αἱ πότνια βλέπωσιν ἄς ἐμίσησεν.

On second thoughts, Lampriscus, I shall go home and tell the old man this; and I shall come back with fetters, so that the Ladies he has hated may see him jumping here with feet tied together.

Since it aids in the expression of a conversation's completeness, it becomes a recurrent feature of Herodas' mime that *the setting is established at the outset of a poem and undone at its conclusion*.

The consistent bound-ness of setting becomes especially important to our discussion of the *Mimiambi* because of the reliance of setting on the subject matter of the dialogue. Mime shows a strong interest in the typical. The characters that populate this genre are based on the sort of generalities that we find in Theophrastus' *Characters* and

in the *dramatis personae* of New Comedy.<sup>34</sup> Accordingly, just as he focuses on what is typical in respect to his characters, Herodas focuses on what is typical when choosing settings for his dialogues, and this is accordance between the types of characters who participate in the dialogue, the subject matter of the conversation and the place in which they speak. As a result, the settings of Herodas' mimes are never incongruent with the subject matter of the dialogue. Herodas 3 is set in a school, Herodas 6, a conversation about dildoes between two women, Coritto and Metro, is set in Corittos' home, and the discussion of love and livelihood in Herodas 1 is also set in a home. Moreover, mimic settings are for the most part, if not always, historically and regionally vague. Since the setting is determined by the subject matter of the dialogue, and since the dialogue depicted in a mime by Herodas never has more than one subject, we can identify another consistent feature of the *Mimiambi*, that *there is never more than one setting, and that setting dramatically exists for the duration of the entire dialogue.*

The importance of the typical to Herodas' *Mimiambi* cannot be overemphasized. It has several effects. First, since mimesis of the typical is the goal of this mime, we do not find depictions of uncommon or exceptional people. Mime is populated by οἱ πολλοί—poor housewives, courtesans, slaves, shopkeepers and schoolteachers; there are no heroes, kings, poets or sophists here. Moreover, the settings of mime accord with its characters; there are households and shops, but no palaces or academies. Herodas' *Mimiambi* were based on a popular genre, so what we find in these mimes are those things that a typical, ordinary person is most likely to have experience with. This being

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<sup>34</sup> Headlam 2001, xxxi: "Above all Herodas is devoted to the study of type. Theophrastus' *Characters* represent in a more psychological fashion, that study of types of character broadly outlined in the Sicilian Mime, and adopted in Attic comedy."

the case, our previous definition of the object of Herodas' mimesis needs some qualification. It is not just the mimesis of a conversation, *it is the mimesis of a typical real-life dialogue, conversation or speech.*

We can now give a fuller description of Herodas' mime:

1. It is a mimesis of a complete, typical, real-life dialogue.
2. There is never more than one setting and topic of conversation.
3. The setting is appropriate to the conversation, and its boundaries are frequently emphasized at the beginning and end of the conversation.
4. The characters, setting and subject matter that are depicted are generally typical and common.
5. The types of characters, setting and subject matter of the dialogue always accord with each other.
6. The number of speakers is restricted to three or less.<sup>35</sup>

Since there is such a strong accord among the various features of Herodas' mimes, and since they rely so heavily on types, nothing seems accidental in Herodas' *Mimiambes*, and

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<sup>35</sup> Even though we have outlined these formal features through an examination just of Herodas' relatively small surviving corpus, we have reason to believe that Theocritus was aware of them as well. First, regarding content, there are indications that Herodas, like Theocritus, was familiar with the work of the mimeographer Sophron, and even actively engaged with his work, perhaps directly borrowing characters and scenes for his third, fourth and sixth *Mimiambes* (Hordern 2004, 4-10, 28-29). In addition, these formal features can be found in two of Theocritus' three urban mimes—the second and fourteenth *Idylls*. The *Pharmakeutria*, *Idyll* 2, is a complete love-spell, performed by a heartbroken woman, Simaetha. It begins with her orders to her slave, Thestylis, to prepare the accoutrements for the spell (2.1-3), the rest of the poem is the spell/song, and it ends with an envoi to Selene (2.165-166). Though Simaetha addresses her, Thestylis says nothing; only Simaetha speaks in the poem. There are no affirmative indications of the setting, but the directions that Simaetha gives Thestylis at the start of the poem suggest that it is set in Simaetha's house, which would be appropriate for a mime about the performance of a love-spell. The fourteenth *Idyll* is a conversation, between two men, Aeschinas and Thyonichus, about the former's recent trouble with his mistress. The poem is set in a symposium, and it opens with a scene of greeting (14.1-2) which recalls the beginning of Herodas 1. The majority of the poem is made up of the complaints that Aeschinas makes about his mistress, and Thyonichus brings the conversation to an end by suggesting that his friend join the army of Ptolemy as a mercenary (14.60-70). In both of these poems, the completeness of the dialogue is stressed by the introduction and conclusion, the characters are typical and limited in number and type, and the subject matter of the dialogue accords with the setting and the characters who participate in it.

as a result, an impression of contrivance pervades his work. This being the case, it is possible to posit one final characteristic of Herodas' poetry: *mime is homophonic*.

### 1.2.2: Homophony and Herodas' Fourth *Mimiamb*

Since it was introduced to Western academics in the early 1980's, the work of Mikhail Bakhtin has gained some traction in Classical studies. Bakhtin's concepts of the carnivalesque, heteroglossia, the chronotope, and the novel have been shown to be especially relevant to ancient literature. But his primary focus was always on language and his concept of *polyphony* is central to his view of the history of western literature.<sup>36</sup> It is this concept that I will concentrate on in this section. At the outset of his earliest monograph, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, Bakhtin defines polyphony in respect to Dostoevsky's novels:

A plurality of independent and unmerged voices and consciousnesses, a genuine polyphony of fully valid voices is in fact the chief characteristic of Dostoevsky's novels. What unfolds in his works is not a multitude of characters and fates in a single objective world, illuminated by a single authorial consciousness; rather a plurality of consciousnesses, with equal rights and each with its own world, combine but are not merged in the unity of the event. Dostoevsky's major heroes are, by the very nature of his creative design, not only objects of authorial discourse but also subjects of their own directly signifying discourse.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Bakhtin's primary works, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* (1984, trans. Emerson) and *Rabelais and his World* (1984, trans. Iswolsky) both deal with the development of the European novel and the definition of the novelesque. But since it is the most theoretical of his surviving work, and the most easily applied to Greek and Roman literature, Bakhtin 1981 has attracted the most interest from Classical scholars. The four essays collected in this volume focus on the evolution of the novel, the carnivalesque, and Bakhtin's particularly Marxist view of language. For the theoretical foundation of Bakhtin's literary theory, see Holquist 1990, and Vološinov 1973 (trans. Matejka and Titunik), a linguistic monograph that probably was actually written by Bakhtin himself (Holquist 1990, 8).

<sup>37</sup> Bakhtin 1984, 6-7.



Polyphony is created when the language, thoughts and actions of one character seem distinct and independent from other characters and from the authorial voice.<sup>38</sup> When characters converse with idiosyncratic languages, polyphony is created between characters. And when a character behaves in a way that seems to contradict the authorial voice and when he uses a language that is markedly different from the narrator's, polyphony is created between the character and the implied author. Polyphony resides in contradiction, idiosyncrasy and the unexpected; everything contrived, univocal, and coherent, since it points towards the authorial consciousness, suppresses it. Since Herodas' mimes are characterized by a reliance on the typical and by a strong congruity between the characters, settings and the subject matter of the conversations, they are formally bound to be *homophonic*. But the homophony which pervades the *Mimiambi* is not just an incidental product of its formal features. Rather, Herodas makes deliberate choices in the content of his *Mimiambi* that reinforce the homophony of his poems but are

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<sup>38</sup> By *languages* I am borrowing another idea from Bakhtin, who thought of language not just in terms of syntax and semantics, but of the peculiarities of one's speech and the circumstances of utterance. So for example, the speech of a jester would be a different *language* from that of a king, and it would differ depending on when and with whom the jester is speaking. The authorial voice in Bakhtin's work presages the idea of the *implied author* developed by Booth (1961, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. 1983), "Whether we call this implied author an 'official scribe,' or adopt the term recently revived by Kathleen Tillotson—the author's second self—it is clear that the picture the reader gets of his presence is one of the author's most important effects. However impersonal he may try to be, his reader will inevitably construct a picture of the official scribe who writes in this manner—and of course that official scribe will never be neutral toward all values. Our reactions to his various commitments, secret or overt, will help to determine our response to the work." (71), "The 'implied author' chooses, consciously or unconsciously, what we read; we infer him as an ideal, literary, created version of the real man; he is the sum of his own choices." (74-75). The authorial voice or implied author is the image that we instinctually construct when we encounter meaningful language. In dramatic literature, we recognize both the differentiation of speaking parts but also that the combined meaning of these speaking parts must be composed by a single authorial consciousness. Thus, everything contrived points towards an authorial voice. It comes as no surprise that the introduction of Bakhtin 1984 was written by Booth himself.

not dependent on the formal features of his mime. Herodas 4 provides two examples of this deliberate homophony.

Herodas' fourth *Mimiamb* begins with its two main speakers, Phile and Cynno, accompanied by their slaves, arriving at the sanctuary of Asclepius and announcing their entrance by greeting the god Paeon.<sup>39</sup> They spend the majority of the poem describing the statues and paintings that they see in the sanctuary. The poem concludes with a very short prayer by the temple-warden, which is reiterated by Cynno, who then advises her slave to give the offering to the temple as they leave.

Herodas 4 demonstrates the formal qualities that I outlined in the last section. It has a beginning, middle and end; it begins with the women's entrance and concludes with their departure and this frames a complete conversation about the temple artwork. In accordance with the setting, the dialogue is concerned exclusively with what is found in the temple. Like the rest of the *Mimiamb*s, Herodas 4 is restricted in its speaking cast to three characters, one of whom has only a very small part; the entire dialogue is essentially between Phile and Cynno. But beyond conforming to the generic conventions of the poetry, Herodas achieves a homophonic composition by making pointed decisions in the content of the dialogue.

Two slave girls accompany Cynno and Phile to the temple and at one point when Cynno and Phile are exchanging their observations on the temple artwork, Cynno pauses to berate her slave Cydilla (Hds. 4.41-47):

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<sup>39</sup> The sanctuary has often been identified as the Asclepion of Cos; see Zanker 2006 and 2009, 106-108, 122-124. For the problems with this identification, and on the likely statues mentioned in Herodas 4, see Cunningham 1966, 115-117.

Κύδιλλ', ιοῦσα τὸν νεωκόρον βῶσον.  
οὐ σοὶ λέγω, αὐτῇ, τῇ ᾧδε κῶδε χασκεύσῃ;  
μᾶ, μή τιν' ὥρην ὧν λέγω πεποιήται,  
ἔστηκε δ' εἷς μ' ὀρεῦσα καρκ[ί]νου μέζον.  
ιοῦσα, φημί, τὸν νεωκόρον βῶσον.  
λαίμαστρον, οὔτ' ὀργή σ[ε] κ[ρ]ηγύην οὔτε  
βέβηλος αἰνεῖ, πανταχῇ δ' ἴση κεῖσθαι.

Cydilla, go and call the temple-warden. Am I not speaking to *you*, who gape this way and that? Ah, she has paid no heed to what I say, but stands staring at me more than a crab. Go, I say and call the temple-warden. Glutton, no woman pious or impure praises you as good, but everywhere you are valued equally.

Cydilla remains silent during and after her mistress' tirade. But when Cynno berates her for not paying attention to her command, she repeats verbs of speech: λέγω (42, 43) and φημί (45). These words call attention to her own voice and, in turn, they emphasize the slave girl's silence. Herodas reinforces this contrast when Cynno says, ἔστηκε δ' εἷς μ' ὀρεῦσα (43), and, even more vividly, he draws attention to her open but voiceless mouth with the participle χασκεύσῃ (42). The absence or limitation of this emphasis on vocality would have allowed Cydilla to recede into the background. Instead Herodas composes the scene so that the girl is conspicuous for her silence and passivity. This conspicuousness accomplishes two things. First, by contrast it emphasizes the vocal dominance of Cynno and Phile. Second, it shows that not only are the number of speakers present in the poem limited, but the type of speaker as well. Cynno and Phile, as types, are essentially identical; they are women of the same economic and social class, who have the same view of art and religion and who, in Bakhtinian terms, speak the same language.<sup>40</sup> But a slave girl like Cydilla would speak a language different from her

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<sup>40</sup> Payne 2007, 13: "Gorgo and Praxinoa in *Idyll* 15, or Kynno and Phile in *Mimiambus* 4, can hardly be identified, or distinguished from one another, as types; as fictional particulars, they do not embody real-

mistress'.<sup>41</sup> So by keeping Cydilla quiet, Herodas is limiting not only the number but also the types of speaking characters. But more important is the emphasis which Herodas places on her silence. He is not only refusing to let the idiosyncratic voice of the slave girl impede on the homophonic dialogue of Cynno and Phile, but he is showing that this refusal is deliberate, that he is actively working for homophony.<sup>42</sup>

The structure of the mime bolsters this essential homophony. As he does in other *Mimiamb*s, Herodas emphasizes the boundaries of the setting; the poem begins with Cynno and Phile announcing their arrival at the temple and ends when they depart. But in this poem, Herodas goes one step further. At both the moment of her arrival and her departure, Cynno offers a prayer to Paeon and makes a comment about her sacrifice. In short, this poem has ring-composition.<sup>43</sup> The structural coherence that results from the ring-composition points towards the intention of an implied author, and when we see the narrative and dramatic content as not determined by the psychologies, interests and attitudes of the characters, but rather by the artistic intention of the implied author, as it is here, homophony is created. Ring-composition is not necessary, even according to the generic qualities of this poetry. But like Cynno's abuse of Cydilla, Herodas has made, in

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world universals, and the poems in which they appear offer genre scenes rich in circumstantial detail rather than a representative range of characters in the manner of Theophrastus' *Characters*, or New Comedy."

<sup>41</sup> We find the linguistic idiosyncrasy of slaves and foreigners used for comic effect as far back as Xanthias in Aristophanes' *Frogs* and the Scythian Archer in his *Thesmophoriazusae*.

<sup>42</sup> One might object that a single word or phrase from Cydilla would not make the mime polyphonic. But the point is not that one could imagine Cydilla responding in such a way that polyphony would not be created, but rather that Herodas makes it clear that he does not want her to respond at all.

<sup>43</sup> Cunningham (1966, 115) mentions the ring-composition of the piece, and he points out that the abuse of Cydilla falls in the middle of the poem, dividing the ecphrasis in half. He adds that Herodas 1 and 3 also have this structure as well. However, he ends his discussion by merely pointing out that, "Herodas' careful structural technique, of which 4 is the most successful example, has been much neglected." Ussher (1985, 57) agrees with but does not offer additional support for this reading.

the content of his fourth *Mimiamb*, deliberate choices which reaffirm the homophony already determined by the formal qualities of his mime.

### 1.3.1: Theocritus' Household-Mime

In the preceding sections, I showed that the formal features of Herodas' mime create homophony, and that Herodas' careful avoidance of what would create polyphony shows that this homophony is deliberate. I now turn my attention to the main subject of this thesis, Theocritus fifteenth *Idyll*. In this section I will show that, in its first 43 lines, the *Adoniazusae* exhibits the same formal conventions of mime that are found in Herodas and moreover that Theocritus makes pointed decisions in content that are independent of these conventions in order to make these lines of the poem especially homophonic.

The *Adoniazusae* begins in the home of Praxinoa, when Gorgo drops by.<sup>44</sup> After Gorgo complains about the hectic streets and the intimidation of the king's soldiers, Praxinoa shifts the discussion to their husbands. She begins by complaining about her new home, because it is located at the outskirts of the city, away from her friends. She blames her husband for this, because he is contentious and begrudging (ποτ' ἔριτυ, φόθονερόν κακόν, 15.10). Gorgo responds by rebuking her friend for criticizing her husband in front of her child. Both women are pleasantly surprised to see that the child, Zopyrion, understands that they are talking about him. Praxinoa is, however, not

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<sup>44</sup> Hunter (2008, 192) does not recognize that the poem depicts a progression away from the formal features of mime and so he claims that, "It is noteworthy that in the poem in which, more than anywhere else in the extant corpus, Theocritus adopts the mode of literary mime, *Idyll* 15, he chose to begin with a 'Damenbesuch'."

persuaded and continues to complain about her husband's incompetence in household matters. At this point, Gorgo herself cannot resist and offers similar comments about her own husband. Then, at Gorgo's suggestion, the two decide to visit the Adonia. Praxinoa starts to prepare for the journey, but she is immediately frustrated by the messiness of her slave girl, Eunoia, and berates her for mishandling the wash-water. The discussion then moves to Praxinoa's clothing, particularly a wrap that impresses Gorgo. Now dressed, Praxinoa issues her final instructions to a handmaid, and she brushes off Zopyrion's protests that he is not being brought along. The women then leave for the festival. I will demonstrate that these first 43 lines are the first section of Theoc. 15, and for the rest of this thesis, I will refer to this section as the *household mime*.

In the household mime we can recognize exactly those formal qualities that we have identified in Herodas' poetry. In fact, at the risk of oversimplifying, we might say that the first section of Theoc. 15 is a complete and self-contained *urban mime*, and if it were all that had been transmitted, we would, through a comparison with Herodas and Theoc. 14, have good reason to consider the poem complete. This section of the poem is a mimesis of real-life conversation and the subject matter of this conversation, household management, accords with the setting, Praxinoa's home. Moreover, the setting of this section is bound. As in Herodas 1, the setting of the conversation is established at the moment of the arrival of one of the interlocutors, and is dissolved when the conversation is exhausted; at the moment that the two women step out into the streets of Alexandria, they stop discussing household matters. There is also a restriction in the number of speakers; only Praxinoa and Gorgo participate in the conversation.

But, as in Herodas, not only is the number of speakers restricted, but the types of character as well. Like Metriche and Gyllis in Herodas 1, Praxinoa and Gorgo, both women frustrated with their husbands and both, by all indications, from the same economic class, dominate the dialogue of household mime.<sup>45</sup> Theocritus does not allow speakers who depart from this model to take part in the dialogue. Confirmation of this can be found in Praxinoa's interactions with her slave girl Eunoia and her child Zopyrion.

While she is preparing to leave for the Adonia, Praxinoa hurls insults at Eunoia and the girl silently endures her mistress' vituperation (15.27-33):

Εὐνόα, αἶρε τὸ νῆμα καὶ ἐς μέσον, αἰνόδρυπτε,  
θὲς πάλιν· αἱ γαλέαι μαλακῶς χρήζοντι καθεύδειν.  
κινεῦ δὴ· φέρε θᾶσσον ὕδωρ. ὕδατος πρότερον δεῖ,  
ἃ δὲ σμᾶμα φέρει. δὸς ὅμως. μὴ δὴ πολὺ, λαστρί.  
ἔγχει ὕδωρ. δύστανε, τί μευ τὸ χιτῶνιον ἄρδεις;  
παῦέ ποχ'· οἷα θεοῖς ἐδόκει, τοιαῦτα νένιμμαι.  
ἂ κλᾶξ τᾶς μεγάλας πεῖ λάρνακος; ὧδε φέρ' αὐτάν.

Eunoia, pick up that spinning, and let it lie about there again and I'll teach you. Cats like soft beds. Shift yourself and bring me some water at once. I want water first and she brings soap. Still, let me have it. Not so much, you thief. Now the water. Idiot, you're slopping it on my smock. That'll do. I've washed as well as heaven allows me. Where's the key of the big chest? Bring it here.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> Whitehorne (1995, 67), drawing on evidence about the price and availability of the φῦκος and salt mistakenly purchased by the husbands of Praxinoa and Gorgo, insists that their complaints about this accidental expenditure are a clever way to indicate the wealth of these émigrés' families. He offers a compelling interpretation of their dialogue, "Praxinoa's deprecating term 'hovel' is therefore best read as part of a boastful understatement. The distance which separates her from her friend may well be irritating but what she is really drawing Gorgo's attention to with this complaint is not the distance itself or her husband's meanness but the fact that he has been successful enough to afford a house in this prestigious area." I do not however agree that Praxinoa is not drawing attention to her husband's "meanness," since this expression of frustration is entirely native to the genre of mime and can be seen throughout Herodas' *Mimiambi*. See also Payne 2007, 13.

<sup>46</sup> All text and translations of Theocritus are taken from Gow 1965.

While Theocritus does not focus on verbs of speech, as Herodas does when Cynno berates Cydilla, the homophonic effect is much the same. We hear nothing from Eunoia and we could reasonably believe that she does not respond to her mistress if it were not for Praxinoa's final question, ἃ κλᾶξ τᾶς μεγάλας πεῖ λάρνακος; (33). Praxinoa does not ask this rhetorically and it is not an exclamation; she is actually seeking information. And her order to Eunoia, ὧδε φέρ' αὐτάν (33), is responsive. It seems that the girl has told Praxinoa where the key is, and Praxinoa orders her to bring it. Eunoia then is not silent; her speech is unreported.<sup>47</sup>

Similarly, the silence of Praxinoa's child is conspicuous. He is apparently young, since his understanding of the conversation surprises even his mother, (αἰσθάνεται τὸ βρέφος, ναὶ τὰν πότνιαν. 15.13), but there is some evidence that he is capable of rudimentary speech. The women interact with Zopyrion twice in the household mime. The first interaction occurs when Gorgo tells Praxinoa not to criticize her husband in front of her child (15.11-14):

ΓΟΡΓΟ

μὴ λέγε τὸν τεὸν ἄνδρα, φίλα, Δίνωνα τοιαῦτα  
τῷ μικκῷ παρεόντος· ὄρη, γύναι, ὡς ποθορῇ τυ.  
θάρσει, Ζωπυρίων, γλυκερὸν τέκος· οὐ λέγει ἀπφῶν.

ΠΡΑΞΙΝΟΑ

αἰσθάνεται τὸ βρέφος, ναὶ τὰν πότνιαν.

ΓΟΡΓΟ

καλὸς ἀπφῶς.

<sup>47</sup> We might compare Theoc. 2.1-2: Πᾶ μοι ταὶ δάφναι; φέρε, Θεστυλί. πᾶ δὲ τὰ φίλτρα; | στέγον τὰν κελέβαν φοινικέῳ οἶος ἁώτῳ. "Where are my bay-leaves? Bring me them, Thestylis. And where are my magic stuffs? Wreath the bowl with fine crimson wool." Like Eunoia and Cydilla, we hear nothing from Thestylis herself, though we imagine that she does as Simaetha orders, since the latter is able to perform her spell.



Gorgo:

Don't talk of your man Dinon like that, my dear, when the little one's by. See how he's looking at you, woman. (*To the child*)  
Never mind, Zopyrion, my pet; she doesn't mean daddy.

Praxinoa:

Gracious! the child understands.

Gorgo:

(*to the child*) Pretty daddy!

During the denouement of the household mime, when the two women are about to step out into the streets, Praxinoa speaks to Zopyrion again (15.40-43):

οὐκ ἄξῳ τυ, τέκνον. Μορμώ, δάκνει ἵππος.  
δάκρυ' ὅσσα θέλεις, χολὸν δ' οὐ δεῖ τυ γενέσθαι.  
ἔρωμες. Φρυγία, τὸν μικρὸν παῖσδε λαβοῖσα,  
τὰν κύν' ἔσω κάλεσον, τὰν αὐλείαν ἀπόκλαζον.

I shan't take you, baby. Boo, Bogey! horse bites. Cry as much as you like, but I can't have you lamed. Let's be going. Phrygia, take the little one and play with him. Call in the dog, and lock the front door.

In both passages, the women interact with Zopyrion as an actual participant in their dialogue; they respond to him as they would to a person capable of meaningful communication. And while Gorgo speaks to him with an infantilizing vocabulary (*πάππα*, 16; *ἀποφῦς*, 12, 14, 15), she has not visited Praxinoa in a while, and would presumably not be aware of the child's linguistic development. His mother, on the other hand, uses a more mature vocabulary when she speaks to him (*οὐκ ἄξῳ τυ, τέκνον. Μορμώ, δάκνει ἵππος. δάκρυ' ὅσσα θέλεις, χολὸν δ' οὐ δεῖ τυ γενέσθαι. 15.40-41*). Her appeal is a rational one and she uses the word *Μορμώ* in an attempt to scare the child;

Zopyrion apparently is able to understand a concept as abstract as a *bogeyman*.<sup>48</sup> Finally, that he is crying in the first place indicates that he is mature enough to understand that his mother is getting ready to leave. But even though the child is capable of taking part in the dialogue, and even though the women react to him as if he does, none of his speech is recorded. The concentration of this sort of intimated but unrecorded speech in such a short passage shows the degree to which Theocritus is restricting the range of speaking characters in this section of the poem. Moreover, Theocritus was under no generic or formal obligation to emphasize the silence of Eunoia and Zopyrion; he does so nonetheless, and this confirms that the homophony of the passage is deliberate.

Moreover, these lines immediately segue into Praxinoa's orders to her slave Phrygia to close up the house and to play with the child in her absence: ἔρωμες. Φρυγία, τὸν μικρὸν παῖσδε λαβοῖσα, τὰν κύν' ἔσω κάλεσον, τὰν αὐλείαν ἀπόκλαζον. "Let's be going. Phrygia, take the little one and play with him. Call in the dog, and lock the front door" (15.42-43). Her departing instruction to Phrygia closely resembles the final lines of Herodas 4, where Cynno directs her slave Coccale on how to handle the sacrifice, and somewhat less directly the cobbler's reminders to the departing women in the seventh *Mimiamb*, in that all three conclude a mimic scene with the resolution of the main character's business. The final instructions given by each of these characters accord with the interests that they have because of their typical roles; the mother is concerned for her child, the pilgrim is concerned for her sacrifice, and the cobbler is concerned for his business. In short, the setting and conversation are punctuated by a final expression of the typical interest of the main character.

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<sup>48</sup> Gow 1965, 279 n.39f.

### 1.3.2: The Streets of Alexandria and Theocritus' Polyphonic Mime

After Praxinoa and Gorgo leave behind the comfort of their home and their matronly authority and step out into the raucous streets of Alexandria, they lose control of their dialogue and are forced to speak in reaction to their surroundings. The homophony, that in the household mime was so dependent on the priority and exclusivity of the women's voices, begins to collapse. Moreover, it happens that there are several points of contact between the conversation held in Praxinoa's home and the conversation held in the street. Theocritus creates, through these points of contact, a polyphonic street dialogue that stands in contrast with the household mime.

Horses are mentioned twice in Theoc. 15: first in the household mime and then again as soon as the women leave Praxinoa's home. Before departing, Praxinoa tells Zopyrion that she cannot take him to the Adonia because he might be injured by a horse (οὐκ ἄξω τυ, τέκνον. Μορμώ, δάκνει ἵππος. | δάκρυ' ὅσσα θέλεις, χολὸν δ' οὐ δεῖ τυ γενέσθαι. "I shan't take you, baby. Boo, Bogey! horse bites. Cry as much as you like, but I can't have you lamed." 15.40-41). This seems to be an expression of motherly concern motivated by Gorgo's recent distress (ὦ τᾷς ἀλεμάτω ψυχᾷς· μόλις ὕμιν ἐσώθην, | Πραξινόα, πολλῶ μὲν ὄχλῳ, πολλῶν δὲ τεθρίππων· | παντᾷ κρηπίδες, παντᾷ γλαμυδηφόροι ἄνδρες· | ἅ δ' ὁδὸς ἄτρυτος· τὸ δ' ἑκαστέρῳ αἰὲν ἀποικεῖς. "What a helpless thing I am! I hardly got here with my life, Praxinoa, among all that crowd and the chariots—hob-nailed shoes and men in cloaks all over the place; and the road is

endless—you live farther and farther away.” 15.4-7) and so it does not challenge generic norms.

But our understanding of Praxinoa’s motivation for not taking Zopyrion requires revision after the women encounter the king’s cavalry. When they first hit the street, Praxinoa offers a short encomiastic statement about Ptolemy, but she is then immediately frightened by a horse (15.51-55):

ἀδίστα Γοργώ, τί γενώμεθα; τοὶ πολεμισταὶ  
ἵπποι τῷ βασιλῆος. ἄνερ φίλε, μὴ με πατήσης.  
ὀρθὸς ἀνέστα ὁ πυρρός· ἴδ’ ὡς ἄγριος. κυνοθαρσῆς  
Εὐνόα, οὐ φευξῇ; διαχρησεῖται τὸν ἄγοντα.  
ὠνάθην μεγάλως ὅτι μοι τὸ βρέφος μένει ἔνδον.

Dear Gorgo! what will become of us? the king’s chargers! My dear sir,  
don’t tread on me. The chestnut’s reared; see how wild he is. Keep clear,  
Eunoa, you reckless girl. He’ll do for the man that’s leading him. It’s  
lucky I left the baby at home.

The dialogues that we have so far examined, both in Herodas and Theocritus, have been remarkably controlled by their interlocutors. Occasionally there are disagreements or arguments between characters (Herodas 5, for instance), but the setting has never shaped the dialogue, and the characters have never been forced to react to external circumstances or action. Praxinoa’s language then is exceptional. Her vocatives (ἀδίστα Γοργώ, 51; ἄνερ φίλε, 52; κυνοθαρσῆς | Εὐνόα 53-54;), her exclamations (τοὶ πολεμισταὶ | ἵπποι τῷ βασιλῆος, 51-52; ἴδ’ ὡς ἄγριος, 53), her rhetorical question (τί γενώμεθα; 51), her command to Eunoa (οὐ φευξῇ; 54) all express panic, as do the abbreviated sentences, and the enjambment of the lines. Her state of mind is such that she will both berate and express concern for her slave in the same sentence (53-54). This sort of reactive,

disoriented speech is not something that we find either in Herodas' *Mimiambi* or in Theocritus' other two urban mimes.

But the mimic quality of the poem is undermined by more than escalation of polyphony. At this point we begin to recognize differences in the personalities of Praxinoa and Gorgo. In contrast with her panicked friend, Gorgo reacts to the horse with reassuring poise, perhaps even insouciance: θάρσει, Πραξινόα· καὶ δὴ γεγενήμεθ' ὀπισθεν, | τοὶ δ' ἔβαν ἐς χώραν. "It's all right, Praxinoa; we've got behind them now, and they've gone to their place" (15.56-57). Praxinoa's response validates my assertion that the poem is leaving behind mime: καὶ τὰ συναγείρομαι ἤδη. | ἵππον καὶ τὸν ψυχρὸν ὄφιν τὰ μάλιστα δεδοίκω | ἐκ παιδός. σπεύδωμες· ὄχλος πολὺς ἅμμιν ἐπιρρεῖ. "And now I'm collecting myself again too. A horse and the cold snake I've been afraid of more than anything else ever since I was a child. Let's hurry; we're being swamped in all this mob" (15.57-59). Praxinoa was not just startled; she has a pathological fear of horses, one that originated in her childhood. Moreover, it was not just the reason for her reaction to the cavalry, but also for her earlier refusal to bring Zopyrion. We can no longer understand her refusal to bring him as a simple expression of motherly concern; rather, it is a transference of her own phobia onto her child and it is motivated by Gorgo's earlier complaints about the royal cavalry (ὦ τᾷς ἀλεμάτω ψυχᾷς· μόλις ὕμμιν ἐσώθην, | Πραξινόα, πολλῶ μὲν ὄχλῳ, πολλῶν δὲ τεθρίππων· | παντᾷ κρηπῖδες, παντᾷ χλαμυδηφόροι ἄνδρες· "What a helpless thing I am! I hardly got here with my life, Praxinoa, among all that crowd and the chariots—hob-nailed shoes and men in cloaks all over the place." 15.4-6). The surprise at finding such a non-mimic explanation is magnified by the revelatory enjambed position of ἐκ παιδός (59). Moreover, Praxinoa's

expression of fear for snakes (καὶ τὸν ψυχρὸν ὄφιν, 58) is inessential to the situation; she encounters horses but no snakes on the road to the Adonia. But she makes a connection between the two, implying that both originated in some childhood pathos, one severe enough to make her fear these animals especially (μάλιστα; 58). This implied trauma is far from the typical, barebones characterization that we find in Herodas' mimes. The streets of Alexandria have disoriented the two women. Now that they no longer control their own dialogue, they cannot control what we learn of them. The personalities of Praxinoa and Gorgo are differentiated through their reaction to the royal cavalry. In Herodas' *Mimiambes*, and in Theocritus' other two urban mimes for that matter, we never get specifics about the past of the characters, with the exception of what is directly pertinent to the subject matter of the mime. Generally, this will be little more than an account of a love affair, as in Herodas 1 and 5 and Theoc. 2 and 14, or of some insult committed against the speaker, as in Herodas 2 and Theoc. 14. The insight that we get into Praxinoa's psychology goes far beyond the typical characterization of Herodas, since it gives reasons for Gorgo's action that are not required by the character type of household manager, mother or wife.

On the street, other voices and foreign languages begin to intrude on the dialogue. Praxinoa and Gorgo can no longer conduct their conversation in isolation. And so, contrary to everything we see in Herodas' mimes, Theoc. 14 and the household mime of Theoc. 15, the second section of the *Adoniazusae*, is much less restricted in the number of speakers. Between the time that they leave behind the king's horse and enter the temple, the dialogue is composed almost entirely of interactions between the women and people they meet on the street. By the time the hymn to Adonis begins, they have encountered

three speaking characters: an old woman and two men. The mere presence of these tertiary speakers would create polyphony, but the content of these short conversations makes a significant contribution to this effect.

The first speaking character that the women meet is an old woman (15.60-63):

ΓΟΡΓΟ

ἐξ αὐλᾶς, ὦ μάτερ;

ΓΡΑΥC

ἐγών, τέκνα.

ΓΟΡΓΟ

εἶτα παρενθεῖν

εὐμαρές;

ΓΡΑΥC

ἐς Τροίαν πειρώμενοι ἦνθον Ἀχαιοί,  
κάλλισται παίδων· πείρα θην πάντα τελεῖται.

ΓΟΡΓΟ

χρησμῶς ἃ πρεσβῦτις ἀπόχετο θεσπίξασα.

Gorgo:

Are you from the palace, mother?

Old Woman:

I am, my children.

Gorgo:

Is it easy to get in then?

Old Woman:

The Greeks got into Troy by trying, my pretties; everything's done  
by trying.

Gorgo:

The old lady has pronounced her oracles and gone off.

In Herodas, tertiary speakers like the law clerk (Herod. 2) or the temple-warden (Herod. 4) serve only to facilitate the dialogue; their role is obvious, simple and unobtrusive. But the old woman in Theoc. 15 is strange. We cannot account for her presence or the motivation for her speech. Moreover, the language she uses is different from Gorgo and Praxinoa's. It seems like prophecy to Gorgo (χρησμῶς ἃ πρεσβῦτις ἀπόχετο θεσπίξασα).

15.63) but at the same time it has a colloquial or proverbial tone (ἐς Τροίαν πειρώμενοι ἦνθον Ἀχαιοί, | κάλλισται παίδων· πείρα θὴν πάντα τελεῖται. 15.61-62). Elsewhere in Theocritus, these sort of gnomic statements are found in the mouths of uneducated, poor or hostile men,<sup>49</sup> but this is incongruous with the woman's statement that she is from the palace and with the protective and perhaps even maternal feeling she expresses to Gorgo. The polyphony that is created through the old woman's puzzling speech will be developed even further in the two encounters that Praxinoa and Gorgo have with men.

After the old woman has left, Praxinoa and Gorgo start to feel uneasy about the size of the crowd. They group together, but in all of the jostling, a man accidentally rips Praxinoa's wrap. She reacts by reprimanding him: ποττῷ Διός, εἴ τι γένοιο | εὐδαίμων, ἄνθρωπε, φυλάσσεο τῷμπέχονόν μεν. "For heaven's sake, sir, mind my wrap if you hope for happiness." (15.70-71). Praxinoa is exasperated because the man, out of clumsiness, has destroyed the product of her domestic labor. The reason for her outrage recalls her earlier criticism of her husband's domestic incompetence. As we found in our discussion of horses, an encounter on the streets of Alexandria forces us to reinterpret a statement that Praxinoa has made in the household mime. The criticisms that Praxinoa makes of her husband are very much mimic; they fit the domestic setting and they are made to a friend who has had similar experiences. Moreover, they are relatively innocuous; her husband is, after all, not present, and we might imagine that the degree of her vituperation would be less severe if that were not the case.<sup>50</sup> But in the street, for Praxinoa to lash out

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<sup>49</sup> Theoc. 16.17-21.

<sup>50</sup> Moreover, the dominance of the female voice found throughout Herodas' *Mimiambi* (Herod. 1, 3-7), perhaps accords with the trend in folk literature to develop humor through the motif of gender-reversal.



at a man is not typical, and thus not mimic, for several reasons. The most important of these is that her assertiveness challenges the social order; she is a housewife reprimanding a male stranger. We are right then to be surprised at his contrite response: οὐκ ἐπ' ἐμὶν μὲν, ὅμως δὲ φυλάξομαι. “I will—though I can’t help myself.” (15.72). But the context which made her statements about her husband mimic has been removed—she is no longer an authority figure venting innocuously to a sympathetic friend. Moreover, we assumed that she was motivated to make her earlier criticism because she saw her husband as the reason for her diminished contact with Gorgo, but her treatment of the first man suggests that this is a more persistent quality of her character; she is characteristically impatient with men, especially incompetent or clumsy men. Praxinoa, is then, on a retroactive reading, a somewhat less stereotypical character than we find in Herodas’ *Mimiambi*.

The encounter that Praxinoa and Gorgo have with the second man creates polyphony in two ways. In his *Idylls*, Theocritus is sensitive to the effect of meter and dialect on the speech of his characters. This goes beyond the ironic and possibly carnivalesque casting of pastoral into hexameters.<sup>51</sup> Hexameter poetry in Greece before the Hellenistic period was composed in a poetic, regionally composite dialect; it was not a language that was actually used in conversation. Theocritus, on the other hand, writes not just in the Doric dialect, but specifically in a living Syracusan Doric, and since he does so when he writes about Syracusan subjects, there seems to lurk behind the dialogue the question of whether Theocritus is attempting to imitate the actual speech conventions of

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Since it is expected that, in literature like this, social hierarchies will be inverted for the sake of humor, the dominance of the female voice cannot actually threaten established patriarchal authority.

<sup>51</sup> Fantuzzi and Hunter 2004, 138-141.

his characters and of whether the characters are aware of their speech conventions.<sup>52</sup>

When the women meet the second man, this question comes to the forefront.<sup>53</sup> They encounter him after they have just described the Adonis tapestry. Their conversation annoys him and he lashes out: παύσασθ', ὧ δύσταντοι, ἀνάνυτα κωτίλλοισαι, | τρυγόνες· ἐκκναισεῖντι πλατειάσδοισαι ἅπαντα. “My good women, do stop that ceaseless chattering—perfect turtle-doves, they’ll bore one to death with all their broad vowels.” (15.87-88). His insults focus on their speech, particularly on their dialect.<sup>54</sup> What might have been unclear before this moment is why Theocritus chose to write the poem in Syracusan Doric. But the man’s insult confirms that the Doricising and Syracusan heritage of these émigrés housewives, Praxinoa and Gorgo, is an essential aspect of their character.

In response to the man, Praxinoa assertively defends her ethnic heritage:

μᾶ, πόθεν ὄνθρωπος; τί δὲ τίν, εἰ κωτίλαι εἰμές;  
πασάμενος ἐπίτασσε· Συρακοσίαις ἐπιτάσσεις.  
ὥς εἰδῆς καὶ τοῦτο, Κορίνθιαι εἰμές ἄνωθεν,  
ὥς καὶ ὁ Βελλεροφῶν. Πελοποννασιστὶ λαλεῦμες,  
Δωρίσδεν δ’ ἔξεστι, δοκῶ, τοῖς Δωριέεσσι.

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<sup>52</sup> Hunter (1996b, 118-123) discusses the exchange with the second man when describing the tension between artifice and the mimesis of real life that characterizes Theocritus’ poetry in general and the *Adoniazusae* in particular.

<sup>53</sup> Fantuzzi and Hunter 2004, 373-374: “This passage of Theocritus’ *Idyll* 15, which seems to bear (a special kind of) witness to a contemporary consciousness of and self-consciousness about linguistic difference, presumably fostered by the growth of *koine*, perhaps then also hints at what is otherwise largely unattested: although we have a lot of evidence for third-century scholarly interest in dialectology and a growing recognition of the broader groupings of types of Greek, we have no explicit witness to a recognition by the language-users themselves, however scholarly, of the growth of *koine* and the concomitant weakening of the local dialects.”

<sup>54</sup> Burton (1995, 14) sees this episode exclusively in social historical terms: “A key encounter at the center of *Idyll* 15 explicitly raises the issue of ethnic prejudice in a heterogeneous city.” and “By showing how the bystander’s insults force Praxinoa and Gorgo to think about their self-identity as Doric speakers from Syracuse, the poet raises the issue of cultural alienation.”

Gracious, where does this gentleman come from? And what business is it of yours if we do chatter? Give orders where you're master. It's Syracusans you're ordering about, and let me tell you we're Corinthians by descent like Bellerophon. We talk Peloponnesian, and I suppose Dorians may talk Dorian. (15.89-93)

Her hostility to male authority is reminiscent of her interaction with the previous man and of her criticism of her husband. This time, however, the motivation for her outburst is not an offense against her as a housewife; it is a matter of ethnicity. In reacting to the man she reveals herself to be a proud Syracusan, a fact that is indicated nowhere else in the poem. Her surprising declaration and the passion with which she makes it is not essential to her role as pilgrim, friend, wife or household manager. Herodas' characters would not speak this way. Secondly, the man's comments make an issue of the cultural and linguistic milieu that was prominent in 3<sup>rd</sup>-century Alexandria. Praxinoa and Gorgo are not naïve members of an entirely Doric speaking culture; they understand that their language is seen by some as strange and foreign.<sup>55</sup> Their recognition of these linguistic divisions and of the fact that status is afforded to some languages at the expense of others, demonstrates an awareness of the polyphony that characterizes the streets of Alexandria.

The encounter with this man shows how far Praxinoa and Gorgo have travelled from their home. At home they were comfortable to criticize their husbands; in fact, they were so accustomed to this freedom that Praxinoa feels free to lash out at two men she meets on the streets of Alexandria. But Praxinoa's self-assurance is challenged when she interacts with the second man. He destabilizes the poem; he addresses Praxinoa and Gorgo as ὧ δούστᾱνοι (86), a word notably used at home by Praxinoa when she

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<sup>55</sup> Burton 1995, 13-14.

reproached Eunoia (δύστανε; 31). Polyphony is especially concerned with a character's dialogical experience with the speaking subjects around her. The plurality of languages and the chaotic dialogue that results from Praxinoa and Gorgo stepping out into the streets where they must react to the people and languages around them destabilize the homophony that was established in the household mime. Moreover, the three successive conversations that Praxinoa and Gorgo have with strangers are increasingly destabilizing; the farther that Praxinoa and Gorgo get from home, and from mime, the more polyphonic the dialogue becomes.

#### **1.4: Conclusion**

In this chapter I have established that, contrary to the general opinion, Theoc. 15 is divided not into two parts, but three. These three parts are established narratively by transitions between settings, first from the home of Praxinoa to the streets of Alexandria, and then from the streets to the precinct of Adonis. Moreover, while scholars generally consider the entire poem, with the exception of the Adonis song, to be a mime, the mime actually terminates when the women leave the Praxinoa's home. My purpose in making this distinction is not to be pedantic; it has a direct effect on an interpretation of the poem's structure.

The last section of Theoc. 15 (87-150) has three scenes: 1) the argument with the obnoxious second man,<sup>56</sup> 2) the ecphrasis of the Adonis tapestry and 3) the hymn to

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<sup>56</sup> The altercation with the second man poses a problem for making an absolute determination about the division of the poem. Since this scene follows naturally from the encounter with the first man, it should be placed in the central section. But since he is properly within the threshold of the sanctuary, he should be

Adonis. The latter two are strongly juxtaposed and as such they take the frame/song form that is found throughout Theocritus' pastoral poems, particularly the first *Idyll*.<sup>57</sup> We might then see the last section as an urban recasting of bucolic poetry.<sup>58</sup> Moreover, since this section is set off narratively and spatially, we can identify here another coincidence of generic<sup>59</sup> and narrative boundaries, just as we saw in the household mime. The *Adoniazusae*, then, is bookended by distinct sections, the first mimic, the last bucolic, with the increasingly polyphonic journey through the streets connecting the two. In the next chapter I will investigate how the streets of Alexandria connect the first and last sections of the poem, and why the polyphonic quality of the streets is essential to the meaning of the poem.

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placed in the last section of the poem. The reason for this structural ambiguity, as I will argue in the next chapter, is the liminal quality of the threshold scene.

<sup>57</sup> See Burton 1995, 108-109 and Krevans 2006, 130. Krevans (2006, 138) sees the pastoral genre also in the household mime and in the conversations set in the street, "I would also claim, however, that Praxinoa engages at times in a form of amoebean competition both with Gorgo and with strangers she encounters en route to the festival." But her assertion that contentiousness between speakers is an indication of the pastoral is unconvincing, and if my tripartite structure of poem is accepted, it is unnecessary for the identification of pastoral in the last section of the poem.

<sup>58</sup> Krevans 2006, 129: "*Id.* 15 is pastoral in a fundamental and programmatic sense, in spite of its urban setting, and deserves to take its place alongside *Id.* 1 and 7 as a central text in Theocritean poetics." The basis for her claim is that, "In a limited sense, therefore, *Id.* 15 satisfies Alpers' criteria for pastoral. It contains a herdsman as a central figure; it celebrates the power of song to unite the past and the present; it assembles a naïve fictional audience who model for Theocritus' readers the proper response to the imagined world of art and poetry." (137). There is of course a natural objection to calling an urban poem like Theoc. 15 pastoral. For my purposes, however, what is important is not the terminology but the fact that the last section of the *Adoniazusae* is generically aligned with Theocritus' most mature and sophisticated poetry.

<sup>59</sup> I do not want to engage in the debate over whether bucolic is a discreet genre. It is sufficient to recognize that 15.1-99 is not bucolic, and that 15.100-145 is, just as 15.1-43 is mimic and 15.44-149 is not.

## Chapter 2: Katabasis and Ritual in the *Adoniazusae*

### 2.1: Introduction

In the first chapter I argued that only the first section of Theoc. 15 conforms to the formal features of mime. By extending the poem beyond Praxinoa's home and the conversation that was held there, Theocritus has created a poem that is not whole and complete in respect to the conversation, but to its *mythos*; it becomes a poem based on plot, obliging us to interpret this poem as a complete and structured narrative unit. Its social features, metapoetics, characterization and depiction of real life are of course relevant, but still secondary to its narrative structure. In this chapter I will argue that Theoc. 15 is katabatic, and that it is more deeply ritualistic than has yet been appreciated.

But before preceding, some clarification of the terminology is required. The most primitive katabases are mythological and can be classified into two categories: 1) a god or goddess descends to the underworld and either their descent or return has some effect on the annual fertility cycle, or 2) a mortal descends to the underworld for the purpose of obtaining some kind of knowledge through consultation with an infernal figure. These mythic structures long predate Greek poetry; they can be found in Mesopotamian literature, like the Gilgamesh epic or the Descent of Ishtar.<sup>1</sup> The earliest katabasis in

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<sup>1</sup> Clark (1979, 15-36) outlines these two categories of katabases in the process of showing the Mesopotamian precursors to the Greek and Latin katabatic traditions.

Greek literature is the *nekuia* of *Od.* 11, a katabasis made for the purpose of consultation.<sup>2</sup> In this katabasis, Odysseus stops at the threshold of the underworld, but in others, like the katabasis of Orpheus or of Aeneas in *Aen.* 6, the hero crosses this boundary and enters Hades. For the purposes of this paper, I will refer to those katabases which describe mythological descents to the underworld, regardless of whether the pilgrim passes into Hades or just comes to the boundary of the underworld, as *mythic katabases*.

But as the literature evolves, the potency of the katabatic theme inspires authors to adopt the structures, characters and images of mythic katabases, and to redeploy them in settings which are only metaphorically infernal. This process seems to have started very early, since the first of these figurative katabases is found in *Il.* 24, when Priam goes to retrieve Hector's body from Achilles. The episode does not literally involve a descent to the underworld, but its structure, characters and imagery correspond to those typically found in mythic katabases. Plato was especially fond of this theme, and several of his dialogues can be identified as katabatic. Voegelin points out that the *Republic* is structured as a katabasis and is pervaded with katabatic imagery, but we might as well count the *Protagoras*, *Phaedrus*, *Phaedo*, *Gorgias* and *Symposium*.<sup>3</sup> In this paper I will refer to those katabases which metaphorically express the structures, characters and imagery of *mythic* katabases, but are themselves not mythic, as *figurative* katabases. In this chapter I will argue that, based on its theme and ritual content, Theoc. 15 is one of these figurative katabases.

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<sup>2</sup> Clark 1979, 37-52.

<sup>3</sup> Voegelin 1957, 52-62.

## 2.2: The Katabatic Structure, Characters and Imagery of Theoc. 15

The identification of a figurative katabasis is problematic. Intertextual relationships with earlier poetry are generally unhelpful, since figurative katabases are built on recurrent mythic structures and imagery, and not single, specific literary utterances. Instead, I will argue that Theoc. 15 is a figurative katabasis by showing that it has an aggregate of metaphorical expressions of the essential structures, characters and imagery of mythic katabases. To this effect, in this section I will make frequent comparisons to other figurative katabases, primarily those of Plato and Petronius.<sup>4</sup>

The most basic and essential structural feature of a mythic katabasis is the infernal destination. A mythic katabasis must originate in non-infernal space and end in Hades, or at least at the threshold of the underworld. But in figurative katabases, which often take place in civic space, this cannot of course be the case, which means that the destination must in some way be *connoted* as infernal. One technique that authors use to accomplish this is to have a main character indicate at the start of the journey that they are headed towards a festival of an infernal god/goddess. Plato, for instance, announces at the beginning of his katabatic *Republic*:

Κατέβην χθὲς εἰς Πειραιᾶ μετὰ Γλαύκωνος τοῦ Ἀρίστωνος  
προσευξόμενός τε τῇ θεῷ καὶ ἅμα τὴν ἑορτὴν βουλόμενος θεάσασθαι τίνα  
τρόπον ποιήσουσιν ἅτε νῦν πρῶτον ἄγοντες. καλὴ μὲν οὖν μοι καὶ ἡ τῶν  
ἐπιχωρίων πομπὴ ἔδοξεν εἶναι, οὐ μέντοι ἦττον ἐφαίνετο πρέπειν ἢ οἱ  
Θρᾷκες ἔπεμπον.

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<sup>4</sup>Steel (2004, 59-63) argues for the katabatic theme of the *Symposium*, based on its similarities to the katabatic *Republic* and *Gorgias*, but much of the rest of the article (64-82) attempts to reinforce this identification with more direct allusions to *Od.* 11.



I went down yesterday to the Peiraeus with Glaucon, the son of Ariston, to pay my devotions to the Goddess, and also because I wished to see how they would conduct the festival since this was its inauguration. I thought the procession of the citizens very fine, but it was no better than the show made by the marching of the Thracian contingent. (Pl. *Rep.* 327a)<sup>5</sup>

Plato announces with the first word (κατέβην) that the *Republic* will be a katabasis, but there are further signals of this theme in the opening sentence. By choosing the Thracian festival of the nocturnal and infernal goddess Bendis as the destination for Socrates' journey, he has indicated the katabatic form that his dialogue will take.<sup>6</sup> Theocritus does something similar in the fifteenth *Idyll*, when he has Gorgo tell Praxinoa, ἀλλ' ἴθι, τῶμπέχονον καὶ τὰν περονατρίδα λάζευ. | βᾶμες τῷ βασιλῆος ἐς ἀφνειῷ Πτολεμαίῳ | θασόμεναι τὸν Ἄδωνιν· “But come; get your dress on and your wrap. Let's go and see the Adonis in our rich King Ptolemy's palace” (21-23). Like Bendis, Adonis is a fundamentally infernal deity, and Gorgo's statement indicates the katabatic structure of the poem.

Shorter accounts of mythic katabases are often embedded in figurative katabases, reflecting the metaphorical descent undertaken by the main characters. Plato is especially fond of this and he uses it throughout his katabatic dialogues. There is the myth of the afterlife in the *Phaedo*, the analogy of the chariot and the transmigration of the soul in the *Phaedrus*, the discussion of katabasis in the *Protagoras*, the myth of Gyges and the analogy of the cave in the *Republic*. The embedding of a mythic katabasis in a figurative

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<sup>5</sup> All text and translations of Plato's *Republic* are taken from Paul Shorey's 2003 Loeb edition.

<sup>6</sup> Voegelin 1957, 54: “For the Piraeus, to which Socrates descends, is a symbol of Hades. The goddess whom he approaches with prayer is the Artemis-Bendis, understood by the Athenians as the chthonian Hecate who attends to the souls on their way to the underworld.”

katabasis is a sort of *mise en abyme* and it reinforces the katabatic theme of the overall work. Connected to this are descriptions of the underworld or accounts of mythic katabases that are found at the end of figurative katabases, providing a sort of metaliterarily infernal endpoint for the journey. For instance, the myth of Er, a story about cyclic regeneration of the human soul and its journeys between the upper world and the underworld, is given at the end of the *Republic*; the literary progression of the work ends in the underworld. The song of the Argive woman's daughter that concludes Theoc. 15 describes the journey of Adonis between Hades and the surface. His journey to the upper world is a mythic rendering of the women's journey to the temple; and the reflection of one in the other reinforces the katabatic structure of Theoc. 15. Moreover, the singer addresses Adonis as if he were present at the ritual:

ἔρπεις, ὦ φίλ' Ἄδωνι, καὶ ἐνθάδε κῆς Ἀχέροντα  
 ἡμιθέων, ὡς φαντί, μονώτατος. οὐτ' Ἀγαμέμνων  
 τοῦτ' ἔπαθ' οὐτ' Αἴας ὁ μέγας, βαρυμάνιος ἦρως,  
 οὐθ' Ἑκτώρ, Ἑκάβας ὁ γεραίτατος εἵκατι παίδων,  
 οὐ Πατροκλῆς, οὐ Πύρρος ἀπὸ Τροίας ἐπανενθών,  
 οὐθ' οἱ ἔτι πρότεροι Λαπίθαι καὶ Δευκαλίωνες,  
 οὐ Πελοπιδάδαι τε καὶ Ἄργεος ἄκρα Πελασγοί.  
 Ἰλαος, ὦ φίλ' Ἄδωνι, καὶ ἐς νέωτ'· εὐθυμεύσαις  
 καὶ νῦν ἦνθες, Ἄδωνι, καί, ὅκκ' ἀφίκη, φίλος ἡξεῖς.

Thou, dear Adonis, alone of demigods, as they tell, dost visit both earth and Acheron. Such lot fell not to Agamemnon, nor mighty Aias, that hero of the heavy anger, nor Hector, eldest of Hecabe's twenty sons; no nor to Patrocles, nor Pyrrhus when he came back from Troy, nor yet to the Lapiths of an earlier age, nor Deucalion and his kind. Not to the house of Pelops and the Pelasgian lords of Argos. Look on us with favour next year too, dear Adonis. Happy has thy coming found us now, Adonis, and when thou comest again, dear will be thy return. (136-144)

Gorgo echoes this as she is leaving the sanctuary, χαῖρε, Ἄδων ἀγαπατέ, καὶ ἐς χαίροντας ἄφικνεῖ. “Farewell, beloved Adon; and I hope you’ll find us happy when you come again” (149). Adonis himself is very much a liminal figure; he passes from the underworld to the boundary of the upper world, and in a sense meets at this place the pilgrims coming to his religious precinct. By placing this convergence of figurative and mythic katabases at the site of the festival, Theocritus alludes to those mythical consultation katabases, like Odysseus’ journey to confer with Tiresias in *Od.* 11, where the infernal figure sought by the hero comes up to meet him at the threshold of the underworld.

Since he is both an inhabitant of the underworld and a metonym for it, allusions to Hades play an important role in the composition of figurative katabases. Often in addition to connoting the destination of a journey as infernal, an author will analogize the chief figure that is found in that place as Hades, or occasionally Persephone. Once again, Plato’s *Republic* furnishes an especially illustrative example. When Socrates and his companions arrive at the Piraeus, they enter the home of Lysias and Polemarchus and find their father, Cephalus already at home. Plato analogizes Cephalus to Hades by describing Cephalus as seated in a circle of cushions in the middle of his home, and wearing the garland he had put on when performing a sacrifice to the festival of Bendis (Pl. *Rep.* 328b-c). When Cephalus greets Socrates, he admits his inability to leave his home in the Peiraeus; an admission to the fact that the boundary between the surface and underworld is, after all, impermeable even to Hades. Moreover, he becomes Socrates’ chief object of consultation when the latter questions him about his views of justice and his responses are informed by a strong apprehension of his imminent death. Cephalus is the chief

denizen of this figurative underworld; death preoccupies him, and he is the man consulted for his authority and wisdom, and he is unable to leave his domain.

Cephalus' wealth becomes the subject of a portion of their dialogue.

ὦ Κέφαλε, οἴμαί σου τοὺς πολλούς, ὅταν ταῦτα λέγῃς, οὐκ ἀποδέχεσθαι  
ἀλλ' ἠγεῖσθαι σε ῥαδίως τὸ γῆρας φέρειν οὐ διὰ τὸν τρόπον ἀλλὰ διὰ τὸ  
πολλὴν οὐσίαν κεκτῆσθαι· τοῖς γὰρ πλουσίοις πολλὰ παραμύθια φασιν  
εἶναι.

I fancy, Cephalus, that most people, when they hear you talk in this way, are not convinced but think that you bear old age lightly not because of your character, but because of your wealth. "For the rich," they say, "have many consolations." (Pl. *Rep.* 329d-e).

Indications of wealth such as this reinforce the identification of a figure with Hades. The most conspicuous example of this is found in the *Cena Trimalchionis* of Petronius' *Satyricon*, which Courtney argues is a figurative katabasis.<sup>7</sup> Trimalchio, the metaphorical Hades of this scene, is characterized primarily by his ostentatious wealth and a preoccupation with his death, something he shares with Cephalus. This is no surprise, since the connection between wealth and the lord of the underworld is apparent in one of his most frequent eponyms, Pluto (πλοῦτος). In fact, Theocritus plays off exactly this when he has Gorgo urge Praxinoa to get ready for their pilgrimage: ἀλλ' ἴθι, τῶμπέχονον καὶ τὰν περονατρίδα λάζευ. | βᾶμες τῷ βασιλῆος ἐς ἀφνειῷ Πτολεμαίῳ | θασόμεναι τὸν Ἄδωνιν. "But come; get your dress on and your wrap. Let's go and see the Adonis in our rich King Ptolemy's palace" (15.21-23). Gorgo refers to the religious precinct with the

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<sup>7</sup> Courtney 1987.

periphrasis—to the house of the rich king—a phrase which recalls the frequent epic designation of the underworld, ὁ Αἵδου, the house of Hades.<sup>8</sup>

At the threshold of the precinct of the Adonis festival, Praxinoa and Gorgo observe a tapestry depicting the demigod reclining on a couch. The location of this tapestry and the time spent describing it accord with another general trend found in katabases. The arrival at or crossing of the threshold of the underworld is essential to a katabatic journey and so katabatic literature often stresses this liminal point.<sup>9</sup> In the earliest example, Odysseus' *nekuia* in *Od.* 11, the poet describes at length the sacrifice that the hero makes at the threshold of the underworld: the trench that Odysseus digs, the goats that he kills and the blood, wine and honey that he pours into it. Since they delay the narrative with visualization, ecphrases such as this are an especially potent tool for focusing on the liminal point. In the *Cena Trimalchionis*, Encolpius and his comrades encounter a painting at the entrance of Trimalchio's home:

super limen autem cavea pendebat aurea, in qua pica varia intrantes salutabat. ceterum ego dum omnia stupeo, paene resupinatus crura mea fregi. ad sinistram enim intrantibus non longe ab ostriarii cella canis ingens, catena vinctus, in pariete erat pictus superque quadrata littera scriptum 'cave canem'.

However, above the threshold there was hanging a gold cage, in which mottled magpies were greeting us as we entered. But while I was

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<sup>8</sup> cf. Pind. *Pyth.* 3.11: εἰς Αἶδα δόμον ἐν θαλάμῳ κατέβα.

<sup>9</sup> The word καταβαίω, when used not simply to mean “to step or go down,” often implies movement towards a boundary. It is for this reason that καταβαίω can mean both a journey to the coast from the mainland, or to the coast from the sea, with the coast representing the boundary between sea and land. Burton 1995, 17: “Outside the doors to the palace grounds are urban mobs and chaotic streets; inside, an Adonis festival. Between these two mimetic realms stands a threshold and within this liminal space a work of art—a tapestry decorated with moving figures—represents a passageway for the women to move from secular to ceremonial space (78-79).”

dumbstruck looking at everything, I was almost bowled over and I shivered up and down my legs. Because to the left of where we were entering, not far from the porter's chamber, there was an enormous dog, leashed with a chain, painted on the door, and above it in square letters was written "Beware the Dog!" (Petron. *Satyr.* 28.9-29.2).

Moreover, it is at this point in a mythic katabasis that the pilgrim leaves behind the surface and everything around him becomes unnatural and other-worldly. Petronius is sensitive to this, and he uses his ecphrasis not only to emphasize the moment at which Encolpius crosses into the underworld, but also, by having Encolpius mistake the painting for a real dog, to blur the lines between reality and imagination. Praxinoa and Gorgo's ecphrasis of the Adonis tapestry is marked by a similar confusion. The housewives interpret the Adonis tapestry in terms of fabrication and verisimilitude (πότνι' Ἀθαναία, ποῖαί σφ' ἐπόνασαν ἔριθοι, | ποῖοι ζωογράφοι τὰκριβέα γράμματ' ἔγραψαν. | ὥς ἔτυμ' ἐστάκαντι καὶ ὥς ἔτυμ' ἐνδινεῦντι, | ἔμψυχ', οὐκ ἐνυφαντά. "Lady Athena, what workers they must have been that made them, and what artists that drew the lines so true! The figures stand and turn so naturally they're alive not woven." 15.80-83). During their ecphrasis, the line between the real and the imaginary collapses.

Another point of comparison between Petronius' and Theocritus' liminal scenes is the guardian figure. The threshold of the underworld is populated by such figures, most notably Cerberus. Katabatic pilgrims must defeat or circumvent them if they are to continue into the underworld. The tranquilization of Cerberus by Aeneas in *Aen.* 6 or his capture by Hercules as the last of the hero's labors are clear examples of this. The picture of the dog which nearly knocks Encolpius over represents this guardian figure. We find a similar example in Theoc. 15. The man who berates Praxinoa and Gorgo does so at the

threshold of the temple of Adonis, while they are describing the tapestry depicting the demigod. Praxinoa's impassioned rebuttal of his bigotry and her apparent success at silencing him is a metaphorical enactment of the defeat of the liminal guardian.

A consistent feature of depictions of the mythic underworld is crowdedness. Examples include the multitude of shades that Homer describes coming up to meet Odysseus (οἱ πολλοὶ περὶ βόθρον ἐφοίτων ἄλλοθεν ἄλλος | θεσπεσίη ἰαχῇ. "With a god-awful wailing, the multitude were coming and going around the trench, each from a different place." 11.42-43) and the mob of diners in the *Cena Trimalchionis*. Likewise Praxinoa and Gorgo are constantly commenting on and complaining about the crowd that has gathered around Adonis' precinct. In fact, they begin their complaints as soon as they step out into the streets of Alexandria:

ὦ θεοί, ὅσος ὄχλος. πῶς καὶ πόκα τοῦτο περᾶσαι  
χρὴ τὸ κακόν; μύρμακες ἀνάριθμοι καὶ ἄμετροι.

Heavens, what a crowd! How and when are we to get through this plague?  
They're like ants—there's no numbering or counting them. (44-45)

Their efforts to enter the precinct of the Adonis festival are almost spoiled by the horde of pilgrims that have gathered at the entrance, and the women must make a concerted effort not to become separated as they force their way in (66-68). When Praxinoa's cloak is ripped in the disorder, she offers another complaint: ὄχλος ἀλαθέως | ὠθεῦνθ' ὥσπερ ὕες. "It really is a mob; they jostle one another like pigs" (72-73). Moreover, it is significant that twice already, in her outbursts about the mob, Praxinoa has compared

them with animals. The inhabitants of the underworld are shades, their existence and identities are liminal.<sup>10</sup>

The structure of the poem, the allusions to the infernal, and the description of the crowds that clog the streets of Alexandria all point toward a katabatic theme running through the last two sections of Theoc. 15 (44-149). But we are faced with the question of why Theocritus has created this katabatic theme. In the next section I will argue that the structure of the poem and the allusions to the infernal which establish the katabatic theme are intimately tied in with the ritual qualities of the poem.

### **2.3.1: The Ritual Structure of Theoc. 15**

The narrative movement of Theoc. 15 is directed towards the Adonia, which comprises a full third of the poem. So it is baffling that Theoc. 15, as concerned as it is not just with religious experience, but with a specific, historical ritual, has been almost completely neglected in respect to its ritualistic qualities.<sup>11</sup> The difficulty here is that any historicist approach is frustrated by Theocritus' concentration on the Adonis song rather than the ritual activities that occurred at the festival. Since the Adonis song is closely intertwined with themes, characters and ideas of performance that are found in the

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<sup>10</sup> According to Lada-Richards 1999, this is what makes Empusa in Aristophanes' *Frogs* so befitting, "But, more importantly still, being a shape-changing monster, which blurs the taxonomical categories of ordered society by fusing human and animal, male and female modes of existence, the Empusa of the *Frogs* fits nicely in the patterns of ritual marginality from another point of view as well: being 'now a bull, now a mule, now some very pretty woman' (290-1), now 'already a dog' (292), she resembles those boundary-crossing, ambiguous liminary creatures, in which the components of a culture are disassembled and recombined 'in any and every possible pattern however deviant, grotesque, unconventional, or outrageous' (V. and E. Turner 1982: 2004)." (71)

<sup>11</sup> Brief discussions of the ritualistic qualities in Theoc. 15 can be found in Burton 1995, 10, and Krevans 2006, 144-145.



bucolic *Idylls*, we cannot confidently use it as archeological or historical evidence.<sup>12</sup>

Accordingly, scholars have for the most part approached the Adonis song, not as an aspect of a ritual, but in the same way that they approach the pastoral songs in the bucolic poetry. But this approach is fundamentally flawed. Even if we grant that Theoc. 15 can provide little historical information, nonetheless the katabatic theme that runs through this poem shows that the ritualistic element is stronger than has been recognized. To investigate this ritualistic element, in this chapter I will apply Arnold van Gennep's tripartite scheme of rites of passage to Theoc. 15.

Arnold van Gennep's explanation of rites of passage is somewhat diffuse. It is best then to turn to a more concise summary, here provided by Ismene Lada-Richards, who has productively used this theory in her own work on Aristophanes' *Frogs*.

The classic study of such ritual structures, which have been classed by anthropologists as 'rites of passage', is that of the Dutch scholar Arnold van Gennep (1960(1909)), who was the first to detect and to describe the common pattern underlying all rites of transition. van Gennep saw that ritual passages consist of three phases: 'separation', 'limen' (from the Latin world that means threshold), and 'aggregation', or 'reintegration'.

Separation signifies the novice's symbolic abandonment of his previous condition as well as his spatial detachment from his original environment and his seclusion in the space where his initiation will take place. Limen or liminality or marginality is the middle period in an initiation ritual: it is a space and a time apart, during which the initiand hovers 'in between' two other fixed states and conditions, his/her old self, which he/she has, so to speak, left behind, and his/her new identity, which he or she has not acquired yet. Finally, the third phase of aggregation

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<sup>12</sup> Hunter 1996b, 129: "The content of the song is, of course, dictated by the design of Idyll 15, not by what was normally sung at real Adonis festivals."

refers to the initiand's reincorporation into the society to which he/she belongs, under a new *persona*.<sup>13</sup>

Implicit in this scheme is the contrast between the *profane* and *sacred* worlds.<sup>14</sup> The *profane* world amounts to the civic or domestic space which the initiand typically occupies. In this space a person is psychologically distanced from the rest of society; he sees himself as a separate, unique individual among a crowd of others. The *sacred* world, on the other hand, is the space of the rite; it is separated spatially and psychologically from the profane. Here everyone is equivalent; the participants of the rite are stripped of those distinctions, such as class, wealth, and occupation, that structure society and differentiate one's identity in the profane world. The removal of these distinctions equates the participants of the rite, allows them to bond as fellow citizens or religious initiates.<sup>15</sup> Through this bonding, the structures of the society that sponsors this rite, whether directly or indirectly, are reaffirmed.<sup>16</sup> The opposed worlds of the profane and sacred correspond in Theoc. 15 to the household mime and the Adonia.

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<sup>13</sup> Lada-Richards 1999, 46-47. See also Turner 1967, 94-95: "However, as van Gennep, Henri Junod, and others have shown, *rites de passage* are not confined to culturally defined life-crises but may accompany any change from one state to another, as when a whole tribe goes to war, or when it attests to the passage from scarcity to plenty by performing first-fruits or a harvest festival. *Rites de passage*, too, are not restricted, sociologically speaking, to movements between ascribed statuses."

<sup>14</sup> For the definition and importance of the *sacred* and *profane* worlds, see Durkheim 1979, 49-58.

<sup>15</sup> Burton (1995, 12) sees the process of bonding, but not as part of the ritualistic quality of the poem, "But also, by having Praxinoa describe the crowds she meets on the road as ants (45) and Gorgo describe the men she met on the way to Praxinoa's house as boots (6), the poet can explore how verbally dehumanizing others can diminish fear and strengthen group identity." I do not, however, see how "verbally dehumanizing others" makes Praxino and Gorgo any less afraid or nervous on the streets of Alexandria.

<sup>16</sup> Kertzer 1988, 62: "Through participation in such rituals, people's dependence on their social group is continually brought to their mind. Just as importantly, it is through these rites that the boundaries of the social group, the group of people to whom the individual feels allegiance, are defined. Ritual activity is not simply one possible way of creating group solidarity; it is a necessary way."

In the household mime, Praxinoa and Gorgo express that strong sense of identity and isolation that characterize the profane world.<sup>17</sup> As I showed in the first chapter, in accordance with the conventions of mime, their entire conversation concerns domestic matters—Praxinoa’s child, the incompetence of their husbands, and textile work. Praxinoa is entirely invested in her role as bourgeois mother and housewife. She is also fixated on wealth, another factor in the social structure of the profane world. As Whitehorne argues, the women’s complaints about their husbands’ financial incompetence are in fact, “disguised boasts by proud wives about the wealth and success of their menfolk.”<sup>18</sup> Moreover, Theocritus makes clear Praxinoa and Gorgo’s feelings of isolation. The poem opens with Gorgo knocking on Praxinoa’s door, a physical emblem of the boundary between her and the outside world. Praxinoa then complains about the location of her home; it is both far from her friends and on the outskirts of the city. And when the women finally leave the home, the boundary is emphasized yet again with Praxinoa’s instructions to her housemaid Phrygia, ἔρωμεξ. Φρυγία, τὸν μικκὸν παῖσδε λαβοῖσα, | τὰν κύν’ ἔσω κάλεσον, τὰν αὐλείαν ἀπόκλαζον. “Phrygia, take the little one and play with him. Call in the dog, and lock the front door” (42-43). It is then not just simply a matter of location that allows us to equate the household mime to the profane world; the sense of self and identity expressed by both Praxinoa and Gorgo in this space accords with the profane.

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<sup>17</sup> Burton (1995, 11) makes a similar observation, “Through Gorgo’s description of her experiences on the road, the poet explores a privatized person’s sense of alienation and disorientation in a crowded public setting.” She, however, does not see the ritual in this poem outside of its literal presentation in the Adonis song.

<sup>18</sup> Whitehorne 1995, 68.

Opposed to the profane world of the household mime is the *sacred* world of the Adonia, which can be identified as the sacred world, not just by virtue of being set in a religious ceremony, but because it demonstrates the social and psychological bonding which characterize this space. Central to this is the system of analogies that Arsinoe established in her renovation of the festival and that Theocritus used emphatically throughout his poem.<sup>19</sup> The Adonia became for the Ptolemies an effective conduit of Alexandrian social ideology because it depicts the pair of divinities, Aphrodite and Adonis, to whom the Ptolemies can compare themselves.<sup>20</sup> The Adonis myth becomes especially attractive to the Ptolemies after the apotheosis of the deceased Berenice because it involves a mortal who extraordinarily achieved immortality after his death. The image of the apotheosized Berenice comes forward when the Argive woman's daughter sings, τὴν δὲ χαρίζομένα, πολυώνυμε καὶ πολύναι, | ἃ Βερενικεΐα θυγάτηρ Ἑλένη εἰκυῖα | Ἀρσινόα πάντεσσι καλοῖς ἀτιτάλλει Ἄδωνιν. "And for thy sake, Lady of many names and many shrines, Berenice's daughter Arsinoe, lovely as Helen, cossets Adonis with all things good" (109-111), which has the added effect of indicating another analogy established by Arsinoe, that of Helen with Berenice and Arsinoe herself. The

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<sup>19</sup> I proposed in the first chapter that the last section of Theoc. 15 can be read as an urban expression of his bucolic poetry. The system of analogies between the Ptolemies, the participants in the Adonia and the gods depicted in the hymn and tapestry accords with this interpretation, since Gutzwiller (1991, 14-19) has shown that careful analogies between gods, singers and cattle are fundamental to the meaning of the bucolic *Idylls*.

<sup>20</sup> Hunter 1996b, 131: "All discussion of the context of this song must begin with the close and complex association between Arsinoe II and Aphrodite. In staging an Adonis festival 'Arsinoé se posait en Aphrodite et préparait son apothéose', claimed Gustave Glotz, and provided that we remember (as Glotz has a tendency to forget) that we are dealing with a Theocritean poem and not a documentary account of a 'historical' festival, I see no reason to disagree." And further, "The 'myth' of the royal house is linked to that of Aphrodite and Adonis—Arsinoe, as the person staging the festival and thus responsible for Adonis' annual reappearance, is indeed cast in the role of Aphrodite—but both are subject to this pattern of different readings." (132) For a similar reading, see Griffiths, 1979, 56-57, and Reed 2000, 321.

effect of this is not, as some scholars have assumed, mere propaganda. The Adonia was still a gendered ritual; its participants identified with each other as women and wives. In the Adonia they listened to a song that encouraged them to see themselves in the married Adonis and Aphrodite, and through analogy, in the married Arsinoe and Philadelphus. The women participating in this ceremony are bound together as wives, either potential or actual, and are both equated with the Ptolemies, as a married couple, and subordinated to them, as divine rulers. Moreover, the pointed references to ethnicity, both that of Praxinoa and Gorgo and of the singer herself, in such a congenial environment shows the unifying effect that a ritual such as this can have on an ethnically disparate populace. This communal and ritual sympathy is thus socially reaffirming, and it results in what Lada-Richards terms “the Experience of Bliss,”<sup>21</sup> indicated when Gorgo addresses Adonis as if he were actually present in the sanctuary: χαῖρε, Ἄδων ἀγαπατέ, καὶ ἐς χαίροντας ἄφικνεῖ. “Farewell, beloved Adon; and I hope you’ll find us happy when you come again.” (149). The Adonis hymn is not then tawdry and sycophantic,<sup>22</sup> but rather an expression of ritual and religious sentiment.

The *Adoniazusae* then corresponds to van Gennep’s three stages of ritual. The household mime represents the profane space, from which Praxinoa and Gorgo are separated in the first stage of the ritual, the Adonia is the sacred space of the liminal phase, and Gorgo’s final words at the conclusion of the poem: ὥρα ὁμῶς κῆς οἴκον.

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<sup>21</sup> Lada-Richards 1999, 98-102.

<sup>22</sup> Many scholars have been ungenerous towards the Adonis song. Griffiths 1979, 58: “The Adonis hymn which Theocritus there recreates, presumably with some fidelity to what the general public actually heard at such gatherings, is a polished performance, but conspicuously lacks the wit and evasiveness of the other courtly poems (apart from the *Ptolemy*).” Helmbold (1951, 17) sees no poetic value to the poem unless it is read as a parody of ritual song. More recently, voices of dissent can be heard; cf. Zanker 1987, 12-16, and Hunter 1996b, 124-137.

ἀνάριστος Διοκλείδας· | χώνηρ ὄξος ἅπαν, πεινᾷντι δὲ μηδὲ ποτένθης. “Still, it’s time for home. Diocleidas hasn’t had his dinner, and the man’s all vinegar; don’t so much as go near him when he’s hungry” (147-148), mark the reaggregation of the women into civic and domestic space. Yet, this scheme seems to leave a third of the poem, the journey through the streets of Alexandria, unaccounted for. But we must consider what van Gennepe says about the divide between the profane and the sacred, “So great is the incompatibility between the profane and the sacred worlds that a man cannot pass from one to the other without going through an intermediate stage.”<sup>23</sup> It is during this intermediate stage between the two worlds that the initiate is stripped of her identity, self-image, and individuality, and is thus made equal to, if not identical with, the other participants.<sup>24</sup> This intermediate stage is generally a *ritual katabasis*, a movement away from civic or domestic space and from the identities encoded in it.<sup>25</sup> In Theoc. 15 this finds expression in Praxinoa and Gorgo’s journey through the streets of Alexandria.

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<sup>23</sup> Van Gennepe 1960, 1. Burton (1995, 10) points in this direction, “Movement through poetic space can also be a metaphor for passage between spiritual states. In a rapidly changing Hellenistic world, by representing the movement of outlanders from the outskirts to the heart of Alexandria, Theocritus can explore what Alexandria can offer the spirit and what it means to move from abroad to Alexandria,” but one still wonders what she means by “offer the spirit.”

<sup>24</sup> Voegelin 1957, 54: “For the festival of the Piraeus in honor of Bendis is characterized by the equality of the participants. Socrates can find no difference in the quality of the processions; a common level of humanity has been reached by the society of which Socrates is a member. In Hades, in death, again all men are equal before their judge, and Er, the teller of the tale, is a Pamphylian, a man “of all tribes,” an Everyman.” Lada-Richards (2002, 58) points out that in order properly to undergo a ritual experience, the initiands often undergo a sort of symbolic death: “However, the symbolic range of initiatory death is even broader, as ‘death’ may also mean the annihilation of one’s social personality or, to put it in another way, signify the initiate’s social anonymity. The neophytes are ground down so that nothing demarcates them from their fellow ritual passengers.” On the surface, this seems contradicted by the heteroglossia and polyphony that, as I argued in the first chapter, is found in the streets of Alexandria. But since Alexandria is essentially heteroglot, and to be Alexandrian means to be aware of this heteroglossia, the polyphony that marks the streets does not put up boundaries between the participants in the ritual, it equates them all as members of a multicultural, heteroglot culture.

<sup>25</sup> The liminal phase, then, includes both the ritual katabasis and the sacred world of the festival, and is only terminated with the initiates’ reaggregation into society.

### 2.3.2: Four Ordeals

Ritual and mythic katabases, since they were formed diachronically from the same source, are intimately connected. Lada-Richards points out,

But the very scheme of a *descensus ad infernos* is a widely attested initiatory ordeal, which also belongs to the ritual experience of the Greek and Roman world...Furthermore, outside the classical Athenian frame, the existence of physical grottoes and artificially built underground chambers/pits (*megara, pastoi, thalamai/thalamoi, mychoi*), specifically designated for the performance of secret *teletai* in the cult of chthonic deities and deities worshipped through mystic rites, suggests that some at least of the ceremonies of initiation were dramatized through the physical enactment of the initiand's *katabasis*.<sup>26</sup>

Beyond the general downward movement, other features are shared between ritual and mythic, and thus figurative katabases. In particular, there are correspondences between the figures and ordeals found in mythic katabases and those found in ritual katabases. Mythic katabases, as is illustrated in Aristophanes' *Frogs*, are composed of a series of ordeals which the hero must endure before he arrives at Hades. Likewise, pilgrims on a ritual katabasis must endure various forms of abuse and humiliation before they can participate in ritual. The effect of this is the stripping away of identity and individuality that ritual experience requires. The four encounters that Praxinoa and Gorgo have on the way to the Adonia correspond to specific ordeals that are consistently found in both ritual and mythological katabases.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Lada-Richards 1999, 53-54.

<sup>27</sup> Krevans (2006, 144) briefly discusses the ritual aspect of Theoc. 15. But since her discussion is based on comparison to the Eleusis procession, and not on the ritual framework outlined by van Gennep and Durkheim, she does not recognize the effect that this theme has on the structure of the *Adoniazusae*. And

When she leaves her home and steps out into the streets of Alexandria, Praxinoa is terrified by the king's cavalry. Her reaction to the rearing horse illustrates the feeling of unease and insecurity that characterizes both figurative and mythic katabatic journeys. For example, the home of Trimalchio is pervaded with a sense of unease and danger, which is first indicated by Encolpius' reaction to the dog painting at the entrance of the home. In Aristophanes' *Frogs*, Xanthias terrorizes Dionysus by describing the infernal creatures that surround them (285-308). This same feeling of danger and unease in the face of the unknown or inhospitable is found in ritual katabases, where throughout the Greek world spectators would don masks and antagonize those participating in the ritual.<sup>28</sup> The effect of these threats is the disorientation of the initiands; they are stripped of the complacent self-assurance and confident independence which they feel at home, and thus are then prepared for the communal ritual experience that they are about to undergo. Theocritus makes a point of establishing the dangerousness of the environment and its effect on Praxinoa and Gorgo at the beginning of their pilgrimage, but it does not dissolve after the king's cavalry are gone; these two women are under constant threat, whether from the crowd in general, or more specifically from the man who accosts them at the threshold of the sanctuary.

Another figure typically found in mythic katabases is the guide, a person who is able to give directions to the hero on how to gain access to the underworld. Since the

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while some of the points she makes about the poem's connection to ritual—the dangerousness of the streets, the ripping of the garment, and the oracular quality of the old woman's response—are legitimate, she also claims that the washing of Praxinoa's hands that occurs in the household mime is another ritualistic feature of the poem. This interpretation is unconvincing since ritual purification should take place before the performance of the rite, not in the profane world in preparation for the ritual katabasis.

<sup>28</sup> Burkert 1985, 103-105.



underworld is a place restricted to living mortals, these guide figures are able to fulfill their duty by either being semi-divine, or formerly katabatic pilgrims themselves; Circe, for instance, is able to give Odysseus instructions on how to get to Hades because she is the daughter of Helios. Moreover, the guide figure is seen as so necessary to katabases that in the *Frogs*, Aristophanes has Dionysus, despite being divine himself, consult Heracles on how to gain entrance to Hades.

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ Ἀλλ' ὥνπερ ἔνεκα τήνδε τὴν σκευὴν ἔχων  
 ἦλθον κατὰ σὴν μίμησιν, ἵνα μοι τοὺς ξένους  
 τοὺς σοὺς φράσῃς, εἰ δεοίμην, οἷσι σὺ  
 ἐχρῶ τόθ', ἥνίκ' ἦλθες ἐπὶ τὸν Κέρβερον,  
 τούτους φράσον μοι, λιμένας, ἀρτοπώλια,  
 πορνεῖ', ἀναπαύλας, ἐκτροπάς, κρήνας, ὁδοὺς,  
 πόλεις, διαίτας, πανδοκευτρίας, ὅπου  
 κόρεις ὀλίγιστοι.  
 ΞΑΝΘΙΑΣ Περὶ ἐμοῦ δ' οὐδεὶς λόγος.  
 ΗΡΑΚΛΗΣ Ὡς σχέτλιε, τολμήσεις γὰρ ἰέναι;  
 ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ Καὶ σὺ γε  
 μηδὲν ἔτι πρὸς ταῦτ', ἀλλὰ φράζε τῶν ὁδῶν  
 ὅπῃ τάχιστ' ἀφιζόμεθ' εἰς Ἅιδου κάτω·  
 καὶ μήτε θερμὴν μήτ' ἄγαν ψυχρὰν φράσης.

Dionysus:

Well, the reason I've come wearing this outfit in imitation of you is so you'll tell me about those friends of yours who put you up when you went after Cerberus, in case I need them. Tell me about them, about the harbors, bakeries, warehouses, rest areas, directions, springs, roads, cities, places to stay, the landladies with the fewest bedbugs.

Xanthias:

But not a word about me!

Heracles:

You madcap, would you dare to go there too?

Dionysus:

Drop that subject; just give me directions, my quickest route down to Hades, and don't give me one that's too hot or too cold.

(108-119)<sup>29</sup>

<sup>29</sup> All translations of Aristophanes' *Frogs* are taken from Henderson's 2002 Loeb edition.

The old woman that Praxinoa and Gorgo encounter on the streets fills this role.<sup>30</sup>

ΓΟΡΓΟ            ἐξ αὐλᾶς, ὦ μάτερ;  
ΓΡΑΥΣ            ἐγών, τέκνα.  
ΓΟΡΓΟ            εἶτα παρενθεῖν  
                 εὐμαρές;  
ΓΡΑΥΣ            ἐς Τροίαν πειρώμενοι ἦνθον Ἀχαιοί,  
                 κάλλισται παίδων· πείρα θην πάντα τελεῖται.  
ΓΟΡΓΟ            χρησμός ἄ πρεσβῦτις ἀπώχετο θεσπίξασα.  
ΠΡΑΞΙΝΟΑ    πάντα γυναῖκες ἴσαντι, καὶ ὥς Ζεὺς ἀγάγεθ' Ἥραν.

Gorgo:

Are you from the palace, mother?

Old Woman:

I am, my children.

Gorgo:

Is it easy to get in then?

Old Woman:

The Greeks got into Troy by trying, my pretties; everything's done  
by trying.

Gorgo:

The old lady has pronounced her oracles and gone off.

Praxinoa:

Women know everything—even how Zeus married Hera.

(15.60-64)

Not only does the old woman offer advice on how to get into the festival, she has obtained this knowledge by being herself from the palace; like Circe and Heracles, she is privileged with special knowledge. Moreover, her response, as Gorgo points out, has an

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<sup>30</sup> Burton (1995, 15-16) recognizes this role, but unnecessarily forces a metaliterary reading, "In epic journeys, needy travelers often meet helpers midway on their journeys or when approaching their destinations. Similarly, in *Idyll* 15, when Praxinoa and Gorgo find themselves engulfed by the crowd (59), an old woman appears coming from the palace. Thus the circumstances of the old woman's appearance, as well as her Homeric language and explicit reference to Troy's capture, encourage the perception of her role as mythic helper. By linking contemporary events to a mythic past, the poet can also raise the problematic issue of the relevance of the old world to modern poetry (and life)." But the reason for the inclusion of the guide figure is the katabatic and ritualistic theme and structure of the poem.

oracular quality. But, as Lada-Richards argues, the katabatic guide is not exclusively found in mythic katabases; they are found as well in ritual katabases.<sup>31</sup>

A common feature of katabatic ordeals is that they do not just disorient or threaten the pilgrim, they undermine their sense of identity in preparation for ritual experience.<sup>32</sup> Praxinoa, as a housewife, is fixated on clothing and textile work. Much of her dialogue with Gorgo in the household mime concerns the cloak that she made and the pride that she takes in its quality.<sup>33</sup> Moreover, it has been pointed out that throughout the poem she sees the world in terms of textiles.<sup>34</sup> Her ecphrasis of the Adonis tapestry is very much from the point of view of a person who is interested above all in craftsmanship. Since her cloak is an emblem of her self-image as a textile worker, when it is torn on the streets, her identity is undermined.<sup>35</sup> In fact, the ritual stripping of clothing is a common motif in ritual katabases because it accomplishes exactly that; equivalence between the participants in the ritual is achieved by taking from them the outward signs of their identity.<sup>36</sup> That the destruction of Praxinoa's cloak is followed immediately by her

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<sup>31</sup> Lada-Richards 1999, 89-90.

<sup>32</sup> Turner 1967, 98: "A further structurally negative characteristic of transitional beings is that they *have* nothing. They have no status, property, insignia, secular clothing, rank, kingship position, nothing to demarcate them structurally from their fellows."

<sup>33</sup> Griffiths 1979, 118: "Gorgo and Praxinoa understandably interpret their world largely in terms of cloths. Where a man might note soldiers' weapons, Gorgo perceives rather their shoes and cloaks."

<sup>34</sup> Griffiths 1979, 118: Gorgo and Praxinoa understandably interpret their world largely in terms of clothes." Also, see Burton 1995, 102-103.

<sup>35</sup> We might add that the stripping of Praxinoa's clothing throws into jeopardy her identity as a chaste wife, since stripping of clothing is used as a metaphor for rape in the New Comedy of Menander, especially in the context of a ritual or festival.

<sup>36</sup> Lada-Richards 1999, 76: "Nakedness is one of those signs of liminality which encapsulate and dissolve two antithetical processes simultaneously. As Turner (1967: 99) has expressed it, it is 'at once the mark of a newborn infant and a corpse prepared for burial.'"

description of the crowd as, ὄχλος ἀλαθέως | ὠθεῖνθ' ὥσπερ ὕες. (72-73), juxtaposes the stripping of her cloak and the indiscriminate crowd into which she is being integrated.

The second man that Praxinoa and Gorgo encounter challenge their sense of self even more directly. A common feature of ritual katabases is *aischrologia*—insults that spectators of the pilgrimage or ritual hurl at the participants.<sup>37</sup> The effect of these insults is humiliation and the effect is to undermine the participants' feeling of confidence and identity. Burkert points out that this is especially the case in festivals and rites that exclude one of the sexes, wherein *aischrologia* often targets the gender of the participants.

As a counterpart to this there are ugly sayings, *aischrologia*, and obscene exposures in women's festivals, especially at the Thesmophoria. As the women celebrate on their own at the expense of the men, the antagonism between the sexes is played up and finds release in lampoonery... In Athens, the Stenia festival immediately before the Thesmophoria was given over to the exchange of abuse between the sexes. The women in Aegina, financed by specially appointed *choregoi*, presented mocking choruses at the festival of Damia and Auxesia, though here the raillery was directed only at other women from the district. On the island of Anaphe, however, men and women jeered at one another at the sacrifice for Apollo Aigletes—a practice initiated, according to legend, by the slave girls of Medea during the Argonaut expedition. During the procession to Eleusis grotesquely masked figures sat at a critical narrow pass near the bridge across the brook known as the *Rheitoi* and terrorized and insulted the passers-by.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> On "ritual degradation" and Pentheus' humiliation in the *Bacchae* and of Dionysus' in the *Frogs*, see Lada-Richards 1999, 95-97.

<sup>38</sup> Burkert 1985, 104-105.

The second man has pride of place in the list of people whom Praxinoa and Gorgo meet and his *aischrologia* is the last ordeal that they must endure before the Adonis song. The basis for his insults is the ethnicity and dialect of the women.<sup>39</sup> He attacks the way they speak, and implicitly, the land from which they have emigrated. The passion with which Praxinoa defends her Dorianism indicates how important it is to her sense of self; the abuse that she endures has targeted what she feels is essential to her identity. And since the Adonia is, even in Alexandria, a female festival, we might see in the man's abuse of Praxinoa and Gorgo resemblances with the gendered *aischrologia* directed at the women in the Thesmophoria.

## 2.4: Conclusion

Having identified the katabatic theme of Theoc. 15 and its correspondences with ritual, we are faced with one last problem. Unlike the road to Eleusis on which the initiands endure the masked insults of their fellow citizens, the road to the Adonia is not actually part of the ritual proper. The encounters with the cavalry and the old woman are mere chance, Praxinoa's cloak is torn accidentally, and the second man berates the two women not in accordance with ritual custom, but only out of annoyance. How then might we account for such a clear and consistent correlation between typically ritualistic ordeals and the experiences that Praxinoa and Gorgo have on the streets of Alexandria?

In *Theocritus' Urban Mimes*, Joan Burton applies Bakhtin's *road motif* to Theoc.

15. Bakhtin himself best describes the importance of this motif.

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<sup>39</sup> Burton 1995, 14: "By showing how the bystander's insults force Praxinoa and Gorgo to think about their self-identity as Doric-speakers from Syracuse, the poet raises the issue of cultural alienation."

The chronotope of the *road* associated with encounter is characterized by a broader scope, but by a somewhat lesser degree of emotional or evaluative intensity. Encounter in a novel usually take place “on the road.” The road is a particularly good place for random encounters. On the road (“the high road”), the spatial and temporal paths of the most varied people—representatives of all social classes, estates, religions, nationalities, ages—intersect at one spatial and temporal point. People who are normally kept separate by social and spatial distance can accidentally meet; any contrast may crop up, the most various fates may collide and interweave with one another. On the road the spatial and temporal series defining human fates and lives combine with one another in distinctive ways, even as they become more complex and more concrete by the collapse of *social distances*.<sup>40</sup>

The road then is essentially polyphonic; the people and the languages that they speak are diverse and it is through exposure to this diversity that characters evolve. For Burton, the importance of the road in Theoc. 15 is that it allows the insight into alienation and marginality in Alexandrian society.

Through their encounters with persons of different ethnicity, gender, age, and class, Theocritus raises social issues related to the themes of immigration and cultural difference—e.g. the difficulties involved in establishing or maintaining identity, finding a place in the world, dealing with the rejection of others.<sup>41</sup>

But this ultimately overlooks the context in which Bakhtin first outlines his theory. According to him, the importance of the road motif to Western literature is twofold. First, it arises when literature begins to become chronotopically specific; that is, when settings become located at a specific place at a specific time. Second, the road becomes the setting for character development; the encounters which a character has on the road

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<sup>40</sup> Bakhtin 1981, 243.

<sup>41</sup> Burton 1995, 11.

fundamentally and permanently change him. As literature develops, these two effects combine, so that the experiences that characters have on the road are deeply connected with the specific historical circumstances in which the narrative is set, and thus the character becomes a product of history. So, while Burton's observation is certainly valid, Theocritus is doing more here than exploring social strata and alienation.

Theoc. 15 is peculiar among the *Mimiambi* of Herodas and the other two urban mimes of Theocritus in that it is, in Bakhtinian terms, chronotopically specific. No other mime takes place at a specific place at a specific time. But Theoc. 15 is set on the streets of Alexandria, sometime around 270 BC, during the festival of Adonis.<sup>42</sup> Moreover, the experiences that Praxinoa and Gorgo have on these streets are all connected either directly, through the king's cavalry, or more implicitly, through the issues of nationality and multiculturalism raised by the second man's vituperation, with the historical circumstances that provide the backdrop for the mime. The historical setting of Theoc. 15 is not incidental or arbitrary. It is through participating in this historically specific festival that Praxinoa and Gorgo are fashioned into true citizens of Philadelphus' and Arsinoe's Alexandria; they become products of history. It is in light of this conversion, from marginalized emigrants to true Alexandrians, that the ritual elements of Theoc. 15 gain their importance.

I argue that Theocritus has ritualized the streets of Alexandria themselves. Alexandria is a place that undermines the boundaries of ethnicity and reforms the identities of its émigré citizens. To step out into the streets is to be incorporated into the

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<sup>42</sup> Reed (2000, 319 n.1) provides the dating: the poem is set sometime between the death of Berenice I (275 BC) and the death of Arsinoe (probably 270 BC).

newly established, heterogeneous city of the Ptolemies. It is for this reason that the interest in ethnicity and multiculturalism surges when Praxinoa and Gorgo reach the Adonia. The Adonia itself has been reconfigured by Arsinoe. What was once a fringe festival, distrusted by society at large and all but ignored by the political structures of Greece has been transformed into a state-sponsored ritual, transferred to the center of the city, and imbued with the political ideology of the Ptolemies.<sup>43</sup> It has been fashioned into a metonym for Alexandria itself, the new center of the Greek world. Praxinoa and Gorgo's journey to the Adonia is a metaphor for their immigration to Alexandria. The ritualistic challenges which they face on the way to the Adonia and the initiatory rites in which they engage once arriving there mark metaphorically their final conversion to citizens of Alexandria. Gorgo's final remarks show that she has not totally left behind her Doric heritage; like all immigrants, she is keenly aware and even proud of where she came from, but she is nonetheless a citizen of Alexandria.

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<sup>43</sup> On the origin, ritual meaning and political distrust of the pre-Alexandrian Adonia in Athens, see Detienne 1972, Simms 1998 and Reitzammer 2008. Reed (2000) argues that Arsinoe's Alexandrian version, through a process of politically motivated religious syncretism, was fundamentally changed to an annual festival that affirmed the political sovereignty and divine authority of the Ptolemies: "At the Greek Adonia (which was not an agricultural rite) an offering or display of produce would have made no ritual sense; Arsinoe's Adonia, on the other hand, if it is not expressly an agricultural rite (as Weber 170 has recently characterized it), at least advertises—to the god and goddess, and to the crowds of spectators—the fertility of Egypt and her own dynasty's successful custody thereof" (322). See also Hunter 1996b, 117.



## Conclusion

My goals for this thesis are in one respect relatively modest. In the first chapter I challenged the prevailing notion that Theoc. 15 is a uniform mime with an embedded song, and I argued instead for a three-part structure, of which only the first section is properly mimic. I also argued that the journey that Praxinoa and Gorgo make through the streets of Alexandria is marked by a deliberate deviation from the formal conventions of Herodas' *Mimiambi* and Theocritus' other two urban mimes, and that here we can identify an escalation in the degree of polyphony. I concluded by arguing that the last section of the poem resembles the form of Theocritus' bucolic poetry, and that we should read the poem as being bookended on one side by Theocritus' Syracusan mime and on the other by his bucolic poetics. In the second chapter I showed that Theoc. 15 is a katabatic poem in two respects. First, it shares with Plato's dialogues many of the general markers of a figurative katabasis, and second, that the middle section is made up of four encounters which allude to important, recurrent ordeals which initiands undergo in a ritual katabases. I conclude by arguing that Theocritus has metaphorized the streets of Alexandria as an initiatory rite, and that Praxinoa and Gorgo's journey to the Adonia is a metaphor for the initiation into the Alexandrian city from which they are so distant at the beginning of the poem. All of this has strong implications for a metaliterary reading of the poem.

Richard Hunter sees a metaliterary meaning behind the women's pilgrimage to the Adonia: the journey of the two Syracusan women to the distinctly Alexandrian Adonia represents Theocritus' bringing the Syracusan mime of Sophron to Alexandria.<sup>1</sup> This is an especially attractive interpretation of the poem, considering the interest in genre and his Syracusan identity that Theocritus shows elsewhere<sup>2</sup> and because the renovation of Classical literary traditions was essential to Hellenistic poetics. Nonetheless, this interpretation becomes problematic in light of the structure that I have argued for. Hunter is able to see the poem as a metaphorical importing of mime because he sees the entire poem as a mime. But if Theocritus abandons the mimic genre in Praxinoa's home at line 43, this can no longer be the case. Instead, we should read Theoc. 15 as a metaliterary conversion or inspiration poem.

Theocritus' seventh *Idyll*, the *Thalusia*, is central to his corpus because it depicts the conversion of the main speaker, Simichidas, from dilettantish Hellenistic poet to mature bucolic poet. When Simichidas meets the quasi-mystical goatherd Lycidas on the road to the *Thalusia* (7.10-14), they engage in a song contest (7.52-127), after which Lycidas gives Simichidas his staff (7.128-129), an emblem of poetic inspiration and an

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<sup>1</sup> Hunter 1996b, 118-119: "There are two important aspects of this literary debt [to Sophron]. One is that, just as Gorgo and Praxinoa have moved from Syracuse to Alexandria, so has mime. Even if Praxinoa's proud assertion 'we are Corinthians by descent' does not amusingly glance at Sophron's mime, and it is a pure (if attractive) speculation that Sophron too represented Syracusan women present at a Corinthian festival, Gorgo's arrival at her friend's house, not unlike the arrival of 'the bawd' in Herodas 1, marks the arrival in Alexandria of a new literary form, embodied in the amusing shapes of Gorgo and Praxinoa and in a rough hexametric technique which may seek to imitate in verse the half-way house of Sophron's rhythmical mimes. With their admission to the palace, the Syracusan mime tradition has reached the Alexandrian court." Griffiths (1979, 84) makes a similar observation, "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." See also Krevans 2006, 146.

<sup>2</sup> In particular, the opening of the eleventh *Idyll*, where Theocritus refers to Polyphemus as, ὁ Κύκλωψ ὁ παρ' ἁμῖν (11.7).

allusion to the inspiration scene depicted in Hesiod's *Theogony* (30-34). The poem ends with a *locus amoenus* (7.130-146), demonstrating the effect of the inspiration and the maturity that Simichidas gained through his interaction with Lycidas.

Theoc. 7 and 15 closely resemble each other in several respects.<sup>3</sup> In regards to their settings, both poems take place on the road to an annual fertility god or goddess. They are also chronotopically specific. Theoc. 7 is set on Cos, and the reference to Philetas establishes a date of sometime in the early 3<sup>rd</sup> century; Theoc. 15 is set in Alexandria around 270 BC. No other bucolic *Idyll* or urban mime in Theocritus' corpus comes close to this degree of chronotopic specificity. But in general, neither of these poems fits cleanly into the categories of bucolic or mime. Theoc. 15, as I have shown, is not properly a mime, and Theoc. 7, describes men from the city rather than quasi-mythical herdsmen; Simichidas and his friends encounter a pastoral figure, but are not themselves pastoral. The characters of both poems have random encounters on the road and are fundamentally changed by them: Praxinoa and Gorgo are eventually integrated through ritualistic experience into the Alexandrian community, and Simichidas is anointed as a bucolic poet. It should be noted as well that these changes are effected largely through discourse; whether it be a series of conversations on the hectic streets of Alexandria, or a song contest on the road to the Thalusia. These two poems share a similar mystical element. The people that Praxinoa and Gorgo meet on the way to the Adonia recall figures found on figurative and ritual katabases, and Lycidas is portrayed as being in some way semi-divine. These similarities are deliberate; Theocritus has

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<sup>3</sup> Krevans 2006, 143-145.

composed a dyad of katabatic poems, both of which depict the conversion of the main character through a dialogical encounter that he has on the road.<sup>4</sup>

It is finally left to offer a revision of Hunter's interpretation. Theocritus, like Callimachus (fr. 1.1-36 Pfeiffer), is concerned not just with what it means to be Hellenistic, but how one *becomes* Hellenistic. And so the *Adoniazusae*, as its katabatic theme reassures us, is a poem not just about immigration to Alexandria, but a conversion to Alexandrian.<sup>5</sup> This is the metaliterary value of the ritual theme. Just as Praxinoa and Gorgo leave their home for the center of Alexandria, and in the polyphonic environment of the streets undergo a series of ordeals that challenge their identity in preparation for a religious rite, Theocritus leaves behind the Syracusan mime which he inherited from Sophron and which represents the local, homophonic tradition in which Theocritus' poetics originate. He is brought into a community of erudite, innovative poets that have been assembled by Ptolemy and as a result, he evolves beyond the limitations that his Syracusan heritage placed on him. The polyphonic multiculturalism that characterized Alexandria and its *literati* converts him from a local, Syracusan poet to an Alexandrian

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<sup>4</sup> Theoc. 7 pointedly begins with a direct allusion to the beginning of Plato's *Republic*: Ἦς χρόνος ἀνίκ' ἐγὼν τε καὶ Εὐκριτος εἰς τὸν Ἄλεντα | εἵρπομες ἐκ πόλιος, σὺν καὶ τρίτος ἄμυν Ἀμύντας. | τᾷ Διοῖ γὰρ ἔτευχε θαλύσια καὶ Φρασίδαμος | κἀντιγένης, δύο τέκνα Λυκωπέος. "Time was when Eucritus and I were going from the town to the Haleis, and Amyntas made a third with us. For to Deo Phrasidamus and Antigenes were making harvest-offerings" (7.1-4). Hunter (1999, 145) identifies this intertextual connection, but since he does not see the katabatic theme of Theoc. 7, he can make little of it: "The similarity between Plato and T. may be due in part to a shared debt to the mimes of Sophron (so Weingarth (1967) 77), and T. may even wish to appropriate Plato, who visited Syracuse, as a 'Sicilian' writer."

<sup>5</sup> It is worth noting that when Praxinoa and Gorgo are viewing the Adonis tapestry Gorgo tells Praxinoa, Πραξινοά, πόταγ' ὦδε. τὰ ποικίλα πρῶτον ἄθρησον, | λεπτὰ καὶ ὡς χαρίεντα (15.78-79). Both the words ποικίλα (78) and λεπτά are used programmatically by Hellenistic poets to describe their craft. Moreover, the phrase, λεπτὰ καὶ ὡς χαρίεντα (79), is a quotation from Homer describing the weaving of the nymph Circe, itself a metaphor for poetic composition. See Burton 1995 102, 173-175.

author whose bucolic *Idylls* are marked by a confluence of genres and voices. His bucolic poetry could only have been conceived in an environment that brought together, re-examined and recreated what were formerly diverse, local traditions.<sup>6</sup> But just as Praxinoa asserts her Doric heritage, even after reaching the precinct of Adonis, Theocritus never renounces his Syracusan origin. His bucolic poetry is still based on mime, but it has evolved in the heteroglot landscape of Alexandria. We, then, should view Theoc. 7 and 15 as a pair of poems metaliterarily depicting the growth of Theocritus from local Syracusan poet to mature Hellenistic poet.

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<sup>6</sup> Griffiths 1979, 113: Theocritus' herdsmen, who "live about their intellectual means," are also given to sudden leaps upward in style, as colloquialisms, obscenities, and epic usages regularly collide with one another in the language of the bucolic poems."

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