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A SLIM GIRL AND THE FAT OF THE LAND IN THEOCRITUS, *ID.* 10[1]

Theocritus' Idyll 10 does not qualify as a bucolic poem *stricto sensu*, but has an agricultural setting and features a dialogue between two reapers.[2] When Milo asks Bucaeus why he is falling behind in his work, Bucaeus reveals that he is in love with a girl named Bombyca and, encouraged by Milo, sings a song about her. Milo ridicules this poem and responds with a traditional reaping song which he ascribes to Lityerses. Idyll 10 has not received much attention – its juxtaposition of romantic love with tough work seems straightforward and its simplicity seems to allow Theocritus to come closer to 'real' country life than in most other *idyllia*.[3] Some readers though have made a case for additional layers of significance. Francis Cairns, for example, has argued that Theocritus carefully reworks the scheme of *amator–irrisor amoris* which he transfers from a symposiastic setting to the countryside.[4] More recently, Richard Hunter has challenged the reading of Idyll 10 as a simple representation of country life. The Hesiodic echoes alert the reader to the fact that 'poetry … can only approach the "countryside" through traditional schemes which inevitably distort'. The hexameter in particular marks the gap between the two embedded songs and 'the real exemplars of which they are literary copies'.[5] It is hard to disagree with this interpretation, as the metrical discrepancy is marked in the poem itself: Milo's ironic comment that Bucaeus 'has measured out well the pattern of his tune' (ὡς εὖ τὰν ἰδέαν τᾶς ἁρμονίας ἐμέτρησεν, 39) underscores that Theocritus renders a lyric song in hexameters.[6]

[1] Translations are taken, with modifications, from: D.A. Campbell (ed. and tr.), *Greek Lyric I: Sappho, Alcaeus* (Cambridge, MA, 1982); A.H. Sommerstein (ed. and tr.), *The Comedies of Aristophanes IX: Frogs* (Warminster, 1996); A.S.F. Gow, *Theocritus* (Cambridge, 1952[2]); A.W. Mair and G.R. Mair (edd. and trr.), *Callimachus: Hymns and Epigrams; Lycophron; Aratus* (Cambridge, MA, 1989); C.A. Trypanis (tr.), *Callimachus: Aetia, Iambi, Lyric Poems, Hecale, Minor Epic and Elegiac Poems and other Fragments* (Cambridge, MA, 1978); W.R. Paton (ed. and tr.), *The Greek Anthology I: Books I–VI* (Cambridge, MA, 2009); G. Lee (tr.), *Virgil's Eclogues* (Liverpool, 1980). I wish to thank audiences at the Universities of Bamberg, Heidelberg and Crete as well as Markus Asper, Bill Furley and CQ's anonymous reader for their comments.

[2] Cf. M. Fantuzzi, 'Teocrito e il genero bucolico', in M. Fantuzzi and R. Hunter (edd.), *Muse e modelli: la poesia ellenistica da Alessandro Magno ad Augusto* (Rome, 2002), 177–262, at 221 n. 2. J.M. Hunt, 'Bucolic experimentation in Theocritus' *Idyll* 10', *GRBS* 49 (2009), 391–412 explores the confrontation of bucolic with non-bucolic elements in *Id.* 10.

[3] Cf. U. Ott, *Die Kunst des Gegensatzes in Theokrits Hirtengedichten* (Hildesheim, 1969), 65. On the juxtaposition of love and bucolic or agricultural life in and beyond Theocritus, see M. Fantuzzi (n. 2), 228–30.

[4] For a critique of Cairns' interpretation, see G.O. Hutchinson, *Hellenistic Poetry* (Oxford, 1988), 174 n. 51; T. Reinhardt, *Die Darstellung der Bereiche Stadt und Land bei Theokrit* (Bonn, 1988), 46–9.

[5] R. Hunter (ed.), *Theocritus: A Selection* (Cambridge, 1999), 200.

[6] Cf. R. Pretagostini, 'Tracce di poesia orale nei carmi di Teocrito', *Aevum(ant)* 5 (1992), 67–87, at 82–3; R. Hunter, *Theocritus and the Archaeology of Greek Poetry* (Cambridge, 1996), 125–6. On μετρεῖν, see also J.E.G. Whitehorne, 'The reapers. Theocritus Idyll 10', *AUMLA* 41 (1974), 30–49, at 40. See now also M. Payne, *Theocritus and the Invention of Fiction*

In this article, I will argue for yet another metapoetic aspect which makes Idyll 10 more sophisticated than has been seen so far. While intertextual echoes and the metrical form mark the literary form of Idyll 10 in general, Theocritus also taps more specifically into the Hellenistic discourse on poetry. My starting point is an aspect in Idyll 10 that is as striking as neglected – the prominence of eating. Milo's emphasis on eating, both literally and metaphorically, contrasts with the slenderness of Bucaeus' mistress and thereby reinforces the juxtaposition of work with love (§I). In a second step, I will propose a metapoetic interpretation of this contrast and suggest reading Idyll 10 as a subtle play with the poetological metaphor of slenderness, best known under the term of *λεπτοσύνη* (§II).

I. EATING AND EMACIATION

References to eating and eating metaphors figure prominently throughout Idyll 10. Milo first addresses Bucaeus with the following question (5–6):

> *ποιός τις δείλαν τὺ καὶ ἐκ μέσω ἄματος ἐσσῇ,*
> *ὃς νῦν ἀρχόμενος τᾶς αὔλακος οὐκ ἀποτρώγεις;*
>
> What will you be like in the evening, or afternoon even,
> if now at the start you can't get your teeth into your row?

The uncommon imagery[7] transforms a metonymy into a metaphor: reaping is part of the process in which food is produced, but here the relation of contiguity is replaced by the notion of similarity[8] – eating is used as vehicle for cutting the swathe.

In the following stichomythia, Milo is asked by Bucaeus whether 'it never befell him to lie awake for love' and replies: 'No; and I hope it never will. It's ill to teach a dog the taste of hide' (*μηδέ γε συμβαίη· χαλεπὸν χορίω κύνα γεῦσαι*, 11). This is one of several proverbs on which Milo draws.[9] As Gow ad loc. notes, its meaning must be: 'once you acquire the habit you cannot cure yourself of it'.[10] The image of animals eating is taken up by Bucaeus in what starts as a description of the food chain (30–1):

> *ἁ αἴξ τὰν κύτισον, ὁ λύκος τὰν αἶγα διώκει,*
> *ἁ γέρανος τῶροτρον· ἐγὼ δ' ἐπὶ τὶν μεμάνημαι.*
>
> Goat follows after the moon-clover, wolf after goat,
> crane after plough, and I for thee am mad.

(Cambridge, 2007), 47, who comments on the Daphnis song in *Id*. 1: 'In its representation of oral performance, the poem playfully stages its own distance from orality.'

[7] Hunter (n. 5) ad loc. notes that 'there is no clear parallel for this colloquialism'.

[8] My analysis of metaphor and metonymy in *Id*. 10 draws on Jakobson's classic approach which identifies these two rhetorical figures as basic ways of organizing discourse: while metaphor rests on similarity and corresponds to the selection axis of language, metonymy depends on contiguity in space and time and corresponds to the combination axis of language (R. Jakobson, 'Two aspects of language and two types of aphasic disturbances', in R. Jakobson and M. Halle (edd.), *Fundamentals of Language* (The Hague, 1956).

[9] Cf. Fantuzzi (n. 2), 207–8.

[10] See also K.J. Dover, *Theocritus. Select Poems* (London, 1971) ad loc. on the meaning of 'hide'.

Like the first two parts of the priamel, the third deals with the nourishment of animals, while also breaking the sequence – Bucaeus does not, as may be expected, tell who is eating the wolf. Moreover, unlike in the first two parts, the object, namely the 'plough', does not signify what the crane is eating, but metonymically the tool after the use of which cranes pick up worms or old seeds from the fields. While the zeugmatic use of *διώκειν* aligns the third with the first part, it may imply a comic inversion as Hunter ad loc. suggests: 'The shift in the sequence is mildly comic, and would be more so if we are to understand that, from the point of view of weather-signs, it should really be "the plough follows the crane".'[11] For my reading, the cap of the priamel is crucial: while Milo uses the image of a dog getting a taste for guts to express the addictive force of love, Bucaeus parallels his obsession with the need for animals to eat. There is only a slight shift from the employment of eating as vehicle for loving to the juxtaposition of the two activities, but it prepares the sharp contrasting of the two which we will encounter at the end of the poem.

In his song, Milo focusses on the production of food, notably how to reap and thresh with the best results, but also refers directly to eating. To start with, the persona of Lityerses may be relevant not only as the inventor of reaping contests in which Bucaeus would pay dearly for his inefficiency: Athenaeus calls him 'extremely gluttonous' (*ἀδηφάγος δ' ἰσχυρῶς*, 10.415B) and quotes as evidence verses from a satyr drama by Sositheus, a contemporary of Theocritus (*TrGF* 99 F 2.6–8). While this is only a possible implicit reference, eating is explicitly mentioned at the end of the song (54–5):

> *κάλλιον, ὦ 'πιμελητὰ φιλάργυρε, τὸν φακὸν ἕψειν*
> *μὴ 'πιτάμῃς τὰν χεῖρα καταπρίων τὸ κύμινον.*
>
> It is better, stingy steward, to boil the beans,
> lest thou cut thy hand with cumin-splitting.

No matter whether we take *κάλλιον* as an adverb qualifying an infinitive that serves as imperative or, as in the translation given here, assume an elliptical construction of the main clause with the copula missing, Milo unveils the metonymic relation that underlies the eating metaphor with which he has addressed Bucaeus at the beginning. The reapers work for food; more generally, only those who work the land will have something to eat.

Milo's final comparison of his with Bucaeus' songs[12] takes up the juxtaposition of love with nourishment, here of humans (56–8):

> *ταῦτα χρὴ μόχθεντας ἐν ἁλίῳ ἄνδρας ἀείδειν,*
> *τὸν δὲ τεόν, Βουκαῖε, πρέπει λιμηρὸν ἔρωτα*
> *μυθίσδεν τᾷ ματρὶ κατ' εὐνὰν ὀρθρευοίσᾳ.*
>
> That's the stuff for men that work in the sun to sing.
> And as for your starveling love, Bucaeus –
> tell it your mother when she stirs in bed of a morning.

[11] See also Hunt (n. 2), 409–10, who notes the shift from bucolic to agricultural imageries.

[12] I assume that the final three verses are spoken by Milo, but the scholiasts have also considered the possibility of attributing them to the narrator.

The needs of love are not only to be compared with the need for eating, but love gets in the way of eating: it goes with starving. As Hunter (ad loc.) points out, the 'starveling love' has two aspects: First, 'unless Boukaios pulls himself together, he will starve because no one will pay his wages', or, again more generally, he who does not till the field will have nothing to eat. Second, since the days of Hesiod, lovers have been envisaged as emaciated.[13] The Cyclops of Idyll 11, madly in love with the Nereid Galatea, complains that his mother lacks empathy 'though she sees me growing thinner day by day' (69) and in Idyll 14 Aeschinas, rejected by Cynisca, is thin as well as unshaven and unkempt (3–4).

In Idyll 10, emaciation already comes into play before the closure, in the form of thin Bombyca. Meagreness is thus transferred from the lover to his mistress: Bucaeus introduces Bombyca as *ῥαδινάν … | παῖδ'* (24–5) and adds that all call her *ἰσχνάν* (27). Probably, Milo already homes in on the measure of Bombyca right after Bucaeus has revealed her identity (17–18):

> *εὗρε θεὸς τὸν ἁλιτρόν· ἔχεις πάλαι ὧν ἐπεθύμεις·*
> *μάντις τοι τὰν νύκτα χροϊξεῖται καλαμαία.*
>
> God finds out the sinner. You have got what you've been asking for all this while.
> You'll have a grasshopper to cuddle you all night.

It is hard to reach certainty in establishing the meaning of these lines, but I find the reading advanced by Gow the most convincing: Bucaeus has received the appropriate punishment – his mistress is like a grasshopper. That this is an unfavourable description is implied in Bucaeus' rejoinder, that not only Plutus, but also Eros is a blind god (19–20). While it is not certain whether Theocritus has Milo allude to the fact that such praying mantises tend to devour the male during the mating,[14] the grasshopper would nicely visualize the slenderness of Bombyca.[15]

I suggest that the link between the meagreness of Bombyca and the topos that lovers become thin is marked in 57: *λιμηρός* can not only be causative, i.e. signify 'causing hunger', but can also describe a state and mean 'starved, hungry'. If we assume this meaning, then *ἔρως* is to be read metonymically, the 'love' referring to the object of desire.[16] In that case, Milo brings up the thin figure of Bombyca yet again. The double entendre of *λιμηρὸς ἔρως* – 'love that prompts the lover to starve' and 'starved beloved' – nicely intertwines the impact of desire on the lover and the looks of Bombyca.

To conclude, eating is a major theme that looms large in Idyll 10 from the beginning to the end. It is metonymically linked to both love and work and reinforces

[13] Hes. *Op*. 66. For a nice Hellenistic example, see Callim. *Epigr*. 30 Pfeiffer.

[14] This interpretation is advanced by F. Cairns, 'Theocritus Idyll 10', *Hermes* 98 (2010), 38–44, at 42. For a very different reading, see M. Strano, 'Considerazioni sull'idillio X di Teocrito', *Helikon* 15–16 (1975–6), 454–60 who takes the praying mantis as a symbol of good fortune.

[15] For this, see already the scholia. Broadly speaking, slenderness seems not to have been considered attractive in ancient Greece, cf. M. Asper, *Onomata allotria. Zur Genese, Struktur und Funktion poetologischer Metaphern bei Kallimachos* (Stuttgart, 1997), 160–8; G. Nisbet, 'A sickness of discourse', *G&R* 50.2 (2003), 191–205.

[16] See e.g. Pind. *Nem*. 11.48. For this interpretation, cf. N. Hopkinson (ed.) *A Hellenistic Anthology* (Cambridge, 1988) ad 57 and Hunter (n. 5) ad 57, both of whom, however, deem it less likely.

their juxtaposition:[17] Work produces food and, as the address to the bailiff (54–5) shows, makes men hungry. Love, on the other hand, keeps men both from working and eating. The production of a 'fat' crop (47) contrasts with λιμηρὸς ἔρως, be it the emaciating effect of love upon Bucaeus or the meagre figure of Bombyca. The relation of love and work to eating seems to be inverted by their relation to drinking. When Milo learns about Bucaeus' love, he jokes: 'Belike, then, you've the cask to draw from. My drink's sour, and scant at that' (13) and later in his song he calls the frog happy because 'no care has he for one to pour out his drink, for he has it by him unstinted' (52–3). While the lover is metaphorically rich in wine, the worker is both metaphorically and literally short of it.[18] The inversion reinforces the juxtaposition of love with work and throws into relief their relation to eating.

II. THE POETICS OF SLENDERNESS

This, however, does not exhaust the semantics of food and slenderness in Idyll 10. I shall now argue for a metapoetic significance which taps into the metaphor of 'slender' poetry. The programmatic character of λεπτοσύνη for Hellenistic poetry is well known.[19] At the beginning of the *Aetia*, for example, Callimachus has Apollo advocate that the sacrifice be fat, but the Muse slender (fr. 1.23–4 Pf.):

.....] … ἀοιδέ, τὸ μὲν θύος ὅττι πάχιστον
θρέψαι, τὴ]ν Μοῦσαν δ' ὠγαθὲ λεπταλέην·

… poet, feed the victim to be as fat as possible
but, my friend, keep the Muse slender.

Among further uses of λεπτός as poetological metaphor in Callimachus, we find the praise of Aratus' *Phaenomena* as λεπταὶ ῥήσιες (*Epigr.* 27.3–4 Pf.). While it is doubtful that the famous acrostic in *Phaenomena* 783–7 (λεπτή) bears poetological meaning – the verses describe the slender moon[20] – the λεπτοσύνη of Aratus was also praised by other poets, for example by Leonidas of Tarentum (*Anth. Pal.* 9.25):

Γράμμα τόδ' Ἀρήτοιο δαήμονος, ὅς ποτε λεπτῇ
φροντίδι δηναιοὺς ἀστέρας ἐφράσατο,
ἀπλανέας τ' ἄμφω καὶ ἀλήμονας, οἷσιν ἐναργὴς
ἰλλόμενος κύκλοις οὐρανὸς ἐνδέδεται.
Αἰνείσθω δὲ καμὼν ἔργον μέγα, καὶ Διὸς εἶναι
δεύτερος, ὅστις ἐθηκ' ἄστρα φαεινότερα.

This is the book of learned Aratus, whose slender
mind explored the long-lived stars,
both the fixed stars and the planets with which the bright
revolving heaven is set.

[17] Cf. Hunt (n. 2), 398–401 on the juxtaposition of love with work in *Id.* 10.

[18] See, however, the *Iliad*'s description of the shield of Achilles, in which the workers on the fields are provided with wine (*Il.* 18.545). On wine in Theocritus, see also *Id.* 7.65 and 147.

[19] On the difficulties of translating λεπτός into English, see Nisbet (n. 15) at 191. In the following, I will switch between 'thin', 'slender' and 'slim'.

[20] Cf. Asper (n. 15), 184–5.

> Let us praise him for the great task at which he toiled; let us count him second to Zeus, in that he made the stars brighter.

The poetological prominence of λεπτός beyond Callimachus and Aratus is attested for example by the opening distich of an epigram by Hedylus of Samos (5 Gow–Page, *GP*):[21]

> *Πίνωμεν, καὶ γάρ τι νέον, καὶ γάρ τι παρ᾽ οἶνον*
> *εὕροιμ᾽ ἂν λεπτὸν καί τι μελιχρὸν ἔπος.*
>
> Let us drink, for with wine I could find a new,
> a slender and honey-sweet poem.

The exact meaning of λεπτός as poetological metaphor in Hellenistic poetry is rather complex and, while implying notions such as 'short', 'polished', 'refined', ought not to be reduced to a single one of these. Asper distinguishes three different semantic layers that feed into the poetological antithesis of λεπτός–παχύς: the medical, which views slenderness as healthy; the intellectual, according to which thin equals smart; and the acoustic, in which it is linked with harmony.[22] In taking a more historical approach, van Tress emphasizes that Callimachus builds upon the Homeric link between μῆτις and λεπτός as well as integrating the slightly negative connotation in Euripides, 'subtle, refined, and sophisticated, perhaps too much so'.[23]

For my argument, the thorny question of whether it was Callimachus who coined λεπτός as a poetological metaphor or, as Cameron argues, it was Aratus who was its originator[24] can be ignored; what matters is that it was firmly established in Hellenistic poetry by the time Idyll 10 was written.[25] There is also no need to make a case for the relevance of λεπτοσύνη to Theocritus – just think of the ecphrasis in Idyll 1, a cup with three scenes on it: the first shows the quarrel of two lovers and evokes the court scene on the Homeric shield of Achilles, the second alludes to the Hesiodic *Aspis* in order to describe a fisherman and the third, a boy in the vineyard, leads into the bucolic world. The embedding of visual art in narrative is thus intertwined with a subtle play with literary genres – 23 verses set up a multiple mirror, intermedial as well as intertextual, that sheds light on Theocritus' own poetry. It comes therefore as no surprise that the most important Roman successor of Theocritus, Virgil, explicitly refers to the Callimachean idea of λεπτοσύνη when he characterizes his bucolic poetry in the introductory *recusatio* of Eclogue 6.4–8:[26]

[21] On the issue of whether the λεπτότης of Philitas was literal or metaphorical or both, see A. Cameron, 'How thin was Philitas?', *CQ* 41 (1991), 534–8.

[22] Asper (n. 15), 160–75.

[23] H. van Tress, *Poetic Memory* (Leiden, 2004), 43–55.

[24] A. Cameron, *Callimachus and his Critics* (Princeton, NJ, 1995), 325–8. Yet another view is advanced by E. Reitzenstein, 'Zur Stiltheorie des Kallimachos', in *Festschrift Richard Reitzenstein zum 2. April 1931 dargebracht* (Leipzig and Berlin, 1931), 37, who believes that Callimachus takes the term from fifth-century handbooks on rhetoric.

[25] The exact date of *Id.* 10 is uncertain, and the move beyond the bucolic world makes it hard to use the non-bucolic elements for the purposes of dating.

[26] On the reworking of the *Aetia* prologue in *Ecl.* 6.4–8, see W.V. Clausen, *A Commentary on Virgil, Eclogues* (Oxford, 1994), 174–5; van Tress (n. 23), 63–5. On Callimachean poetics and bucolic poetry, see E.A. Schmidt, *Poetische Reflexion. Vergils Bukolik* (Munich, 1972), 19–32.

cum canerem reges et proelia, Cynthius aurem
vellit et admonuit: 'pastorem, Tityre, pinguis
pascere oportet ovis, *deductum* dicere carmen.'
nunc ego (namque super tibi erunt qui dicere laudes,
Vare, tuas cupiant et tristia condere bella)
agrestem *tenui* meditabor harundine Musam.

When I was singing kings and battles, Cynthius pulled
my ear in admonition: 'A shepherd, Tityrus,
should feed his flock fat, but recite a thin-spun song.'
I now (for you'll have many eager to recite
your praises, Varus, and compose unhappy wars)
will meditate the rustic Muse on slender reed.

There are even two passages in the Theocritean corpus for which a poetological significance of λεπτός is worth considering.[27] In Idyll 16, Theocritus offers his services to Hiero who is about to enter a war with the Carthaginians. At the end of the poem, Theocritus envisions the Sicilian countryside after a victory: The fields will flourish, countless sheep will populate the fields, and (94–7):

νειοὶ δ' ἐκπονέοιντο ποτὶ σπόρον, ἀνίκα τέττιξ
ποιμένας ἐνδίους πεφυλαγμένος ὑψόθι δένδρων
ἀχεῖ ἐν ἀκρεμόνεσσιν· ἀράχνια δ' εἰς ὅπλ' ἀράχναι
λεπτὰ διαστήσαιντο, βοᾶς δ' ἔτι μηδ' ὄνομ' εἴη.

May the fallows be worked for seed-time while the cicada
overhead, watching the shepherds in the sun, makes music
in the foliage of the trees. May spiders spin their delicate webs
over armour, and the cry of onset be no more even named.

Kathryn Gutzwiller suggests that 'in all likelihood, this extended description of nature is offered to Hiero as an example of the type of poetry Theocritus might compose under his patronage'. More specifically, she points out: 'In addition to the Homeric and Hesiodic echoes, the delicacy of the spider's web (λεπτά) recalls the quality of that λεπτότης the Alexandrian poets Philitas and Callimachus advocated as the new standard for poetry written under the protection of Hellenistic monarchs like the Ptolemies.'[28]

A poetological significance of λεπτός seems even more likely in Idyll 15. When Praxinoa and Gorgo enter the palace, they first admire the tapestries. The women are particularly fascinated by the naturalism of the figures who 'stand and turn so naturally they're alive not woven' (82–3). J.B. Burton spells out the metapoetic dimension of this scene and the visit of Coccale and Cynno to the Asclepius sanctuary in Herodas' fourth Mime: 'The poems' readers have, within the fiction of the poems, themselves looking at art. Thus, in the experience of fictive viewers of art, readers can see their own interpretive problems mirrored.'[29] This self-referential aspect makes it plausible that a poetological chord is struck

[27] I am not convinced by M.A. Seiler, *Poiesis poieseos* (Stuttgart, 1997), 34–7 who argues that *Id*. 25.156: λεπτὴν … τρίβον is to be read metapoetically as an allusion to Callimachus.

[28] K.J. Gutzwiller, 'The herdsman in Greek thought', in M. Fantuzzi and T.D. Papanghelis (edd.), *Brill's Companion to Greek and Latin Pastoral* (Leiden, 2006), 1–23, at 3.

[29] *Theocritus' Urban Mimes: Mobility, Gender, and Patronage* (Berkeley, 1995), 106.

when the tapestries in Idyll 15 are praised as λεπτὰ καὶ ὡς χαρίεντα (79). Such a reading can build upon the observation by Hunter that λεπτὰ καὶ ὡς χαρίεντα 'echoes the account of Circe's weaving at *Od*. 10.222–3 to dramatize the artifice, the *mimesis*, of the "naturalism" of this mime'.[30] The combination of mimesis as imitation of life and as imitation of literary models nicely mirrors the tension between life-like representation and artistic subtleties, *physis* and *technê*, that is characteristic of Theocritus' poetry.

Let me now elaborate on the thesis that the poetological metaphor of slenderness also comes into play in Idyll 10. While not using the word λεπτός itself, Theocritus employs one, perhaps even two more or less synonymous terms that can carry poetological significance. The first comes at the beginning of Bucaeus' song (24–7):

> Μοῖσαι Πιερίδες, συναείσατε τὰν ῥαδινάν μοι
> παῖδ'· ὦν γάρ χ' ἅψησθε, θεαί, καλὰ πάντα ποεῖτε.
> Βομβύκα χαρίεσσα, Σύραν καλέοντί τυ πάντες,
> ἰσχνάν, ἁλιόκαυστον, ἐγὼ δὲ μόνος μελίχλωρον.
>
> Pierian Muses, hymn with me the slender
> maiden, for all things that ye touch do ye make fair.
> Charming Bombyca, all call thee the Syrian,
> lean and sun-scorched, and I alone, honey-hued.

The invocation of the Pierian Muses is rather pompous for a small-scale poem and ῥαδινός and χαρίεσσα set an elevated lyrical tone. The general claim in verse 25 is given a twist by the two following verses: Bucaeus refers not so much to the beauty of poetry as to the beauty of its object, more precisely to the poetic transformation of ugly Bombyca into a beautiful girl. The commentators have focussed on the word μελίχλωρος, whether it means 'pale' or, as Gow and Hunter (ad loc.) argue, is a positive synonym of ἁλιόκαυστος. For my argument, ἰσχνός is of more interest, as it is used as a poetological metaphor in a very prominent passage. In Aristophanes' *Frogs*, Euripides describes the diet to which he subjected the art that he inherited from Aeschylus (939–43,):

> ἀλλ' ὡς παρέλαβον τὴν τέχνην παρὰ σοῦ τὸ πρῶτον εὐθὺς
> οἰδοῦσαν ὑπὸ κομπασμάτων καὶ ῥημάτων ἐπαχθῶν,
> ἴσχνανα μὲν πρώτιστον αὐτὴν καὶ τὸ βάρος ἀφεῖλον
> ἐπυλλίοις καὶ περιπάτοις καὶ τευτλίοισι λευκοῖς,
> χυλὸν διδοὺς στωμυλμάτων, ἀπὸ βιβλίων ἀπηθῶν.
>
> No, as soon as I first took over the art from you,
> swollen as it was with boasts and overweight vocabulary,
> I began by reducing its swelling and removing its excess weight
> with a course of versicles, walking exercise and small white beets,
> while dosing it with chatter-juice strained off from books.

The mixing of vehicle and tenor renders the passage comic: interspersed with 'small white beets' and 'chatter-juice', we find 'boasts' and 'versicles'. While it is hard to maintain the view that Callimachus derives his notion of λεπτοσύνη directly from

[30] R. Hunter, *On Coming After: Studies in Post-Classical Greek Literature and its Reception. 1, Hellenistic Poetry and its Reception* (Berlin, 2008), 236.

the *agôn* between Aeschylus and Euripides, the importance of the Aristophanic play for Callimachus' poetological reflections is obvious and widely acknowledged.[31]

There is a passage in Callimachus which perhaps plays with a poetological connotation of the *ἰσχν-* stem, *Epigr*. 46.1–6 Pf.:

> Ὡς ἀγαθὰν Πολύφαμος ἀνεύρατο τὰν ἐπαοιδάν
> τῶραμένῳ· ναὶ Γᾶν, οὐκ ἀμαθὴς ὁ Κύκλωψ·
> αἱ Μοῖσαι τὸν ἔρωτα κατισχναίνοντι, Φίλιππε·
> ἦ πανακὲς πάντων φάρμακον ἁ σοφία.
> τοῦτο, δοκέω, χἀ λιμὸς ἔχει μόνον ἐς τὰ πονηρά
> τὠγαθόν· ἐκκόπτει τὰν φιλόπαιδα νόσον.
>
> How excellent was the charm that Polyphemus discovered
> for the lover. By Earth, the Cyclops was no fool!
> The Muses, O Philippus, take the swell out of love.
> Surely the poet's skill is sovereign remedy for all ill.
> Methinks hunger, too, hath this good and this alone in regard to evil:
> it drives away the disease of love.

Perhaps the phrase 'take the swell out of love' plays with the image of an erection, but the mention of poetry as remedy may also suggest a reference to a specific kind of poetry, which is *λεπτός*. This would tie in nicely with the idea that Callimachus alludes to the Polyphemus of Idyll 11, a poem that fully embodies *λεπτοσύνη*: 'The Doric dialect, the medical language and the possibility that Philip like Nikias, was a doctor … all suggest allusion to T[heocritus].'[32] For my interpretation, it is of particular interest that we find the word *λιμός* in the context of a poetological play with the notion of thinness.[33] Hunger figures prominently in Idyll 10 and in verse 57 *λιμηρός* qualifies *ἔρως* which figures as the object to a verb of singing, *μυθίζειν*. The context would thus be particularly apt for a poetological reading just as the position in the closure of the poem would lend it weight.

There may be further evidence for the use of *λιμηρός* as a poetological metaphor in Callimachus, but this must remain tentative, as the passage in question is far from clear (*Iamb*. fr. 203: 54–62):

>]δ[ύ]ῃηται τὴν γενὴν ἀνακρίνει
> κα[ὶ] δοῦλον εἶναί φησι καὶ παλίμπρητον
> καὶ τοῦ πρ.....ου τὸν βραχίονα στίζει,
> ὥστ᾽ οὐκ αικε[.....]υσιν α.λ..υσαι
> φαύλοις ὁμι[λ]εῖ[ν....].ν παρέπτησαν
> καὐταὶ τρομεῦσαι μὴ κακῶς ἀκούσωσι·
> τοῦδ᾽ οὕνεκ᾽ οὐδὲν πῖον, ἀ[λλὰ] λιμηρά
> ἕκαστος ἄκροις δακτύλοις ἀποκνίζει,
> ὡς τῆς ἐλαίης, ἣ ἀνέπαυσε τὴν Λητώ.

[31] See e.g. W. Wimmel, *Kallimachos in Rom. Die Nachfolge seines apologetischen Dichtens in der Augusteerzeit* (Wiesbaden, 1960), 115; F. Cairns, *Tibullus. A Hellenistic Poet at Rome* (Cambridge, 1979), 8–9; A. Cameron (n. 24), 328–31. See also, however, van Tress (n. 23), 43–55, who argues that Callimachus drew not only on Aristophanes, but also on other authors such as Homer and Euripides.

[32] Hunter (n. 5), 223.

[33] The anonymous reader kindly draws my attention to A.W. Bulloch, 'A new interpretation of a fragment of Callimachus' *Aetia*: Antinoopolis Papyrus 113 fr. 1 (b)', *CQ* 20 (1970), 269–76 who discusses the poetological significance of hunger in the *Aetia* fragment on the Antinoopolis Papyrus (see especially p. 275).

The passage obviously deals with quarrels among poets one of whom accuses another of being a slave. As a consequence, the Muses fly past either the one called slave, if we assume that the consecutive clause is focalized by the subject of *φησι* in 55, or, if Callimachus is speaking in his own voice, past his critic(s). The verses in which *λιμηρός* occurs are causally linked to this: Therefore they all miss a real bite and have to do with very little. While earlier scholarship tends to take this literally as a reference to poverty,[34] more recent commentators read it metaphorically, I think for good reasons, as the context is poetological.

Their interpretations, however, diverge: Whereas Kerkhecker and Acosta-Hughes assume that Callimachus is speaking and that *ἕκαστος* signifies his adversaries, Asper believes that the verses still form part of the reproach voiced by the critic of Callimachus who is subject of *φησι* in 55.[35] In that case, Callimachus would subtly undermine the critique levelled against him by having his adversary blame him for a stylistic feature in which he takes pride. The damaged state of the papyrus makes it hard to come to a conclusion in favour of one of these readings but, no matter which we opt for, a poetological significance of *λιμηρός* seems likely. While the reconstruction of Kerkhecker and Acosta-Hughes makes it purely negative, Asper's reading envisions a subtle play with the notion of *λεπτοσύνη*.

Needless to say, the use of one or two adjectives which can be used as poetological metaphors is far from sufficient to establish a metapoetic reading of Idyll 10. It gains significance, however, from two weightier points, first the identity of Bombyca, second the song of Bucaeus. Bucaeus' mistress is not just any girl; she is a flute player, a piece of information that is given right when she is introduced (15–6):

MI. *τίς δέ τυ τᾶν παίδων λυμαίνεται;*
BO. *ἃ Πολυβώτα,*
ἃ πρᾶν ἀμάντεσσι παρ' Ἱπποκίωνι ποταύλει.

MI. And which of the wenches is it that afflicts you?
BU. Polybotas' girl –
she that was piping to the reapers at Hippocion's the other day.

Her affiliation with music is reinforced by her name which is first mentioned in line 26: 'Charming Bombyca, all call thee the Syrian …' (*Βομβύκα χαρίεσσα, Σύραν καλέοντί τυ πάντες …*). There is a pun not only in that Bombyca was a major Syrian city, but also in that it signifies the flute, parts of it or the lowest tone on it. As Hunter (ad loc.) puts it, 'the girl is named for her art'.[36] The marked association of Bombyca with song – we do not learn much else about her – makes it tempting to refer her most prominent feature also to art and to interpret her slenderness as a metonymic allusion to *λεπτοσύνη* as stylistic feature of some Hellenistic poetry.[37]

[34] Cf. the literature given by Asper (n. 15), 165 n. 147.

[35] Asper (n. 15), 164–5; A. Kerkhecker, *Callimachus' Book of "Iambi"* (Oxford, 1999), 267; B. Acosta-Hughes, *Polyeideia: the Iambi of Callimachus and the Archaic Iambic Tradition* (Berkeley, 2002), 99.

[36] See also C. Kossaifi, 'L'onomastique bucolique dans les "Idylles" de Théocrite', *REA* 104.3–4 (2002), 349–61, at 350–1; Payne (n. 6), 87–8.

[37] A possible objection to this argument would be that Theocritus' poetry was not accompanied by flute playing. However, besides signifying art at a more general level, the flute is part

Perhaps, such a connection is facilitated by the 'tall lady' whom Callimachus discusses in the prologue of the *Aetia* (fr. 1.9–12) The exact reference of the 'tall lady' is notoriously controversial, whether it is Antimachus' *Lyde*, Mimnermus' *Smyrneis* or *Nanno*,[38] but most interpreters agree that Callimachus defends himself against the reproach of the Telchines by unfavourably contrasting a long poem, the 'tall lady', with small-scale works that are λεπτά. There is, of course, a significant difference in that Callimachus seems to refer to a title whereas Bombyca in Idyll 10 is only the object of the poem, but this does not weaken the parallel: Bombyca embodies characteristics of the poem devoted to her just as in Callimachus a work is personalized as a woman whose physical attributes serve as a poetological metaphor.[39] More precisely, Theocritus' juxtaposition of a slim girl with the fat of the land is paralleled in the already quoted verses of the *Aetia* prologue in which Apollo contrasts the slender Muse with the fat sacrifice, a passage on which, as we have seen, Virgil draws in Eclogue 6.4–8.[40] We should not press the case too hard and argue that Theocritus refers to the prologue of the *Aetia*, but its prologue furnishes a parallel for the metaphorical thinness of a woman that is thrown into relief by literal fatness, in one case of the land, in the other of animals.

Let me now argue that my interpretation of Bombyca ties in nicely with the song in praise of her. Scholars have correctly elaborated on its gaucheness.[41] Fantuzzi, for example, observes that '… Bucaeus' song displays the most unrefined hexameters found in the bucolic poems of Theocritus …'.[42] Several parts are unintentionally comic: the shoes of the statue about which Bucaeus fantasizes elicited from Wilamowitz the *Junker*-like comment: 'We will have to laugh at him when today he reveals his wishes, the strongest of which is for a pair of boots, but should nonetheless preserve our sympathy for him.'[43] In the closing remark 'thy character – it passes my power to tell', Bucaeus draws on the topos ἄφατον ὡς καλός, but the phrase also lends itself to other interpretations, either 'what your disposition may be I cannot say'[44] or, even more ironically, 'for us it is *his* powers of description which fail'.[45] In the words of Hunter, the Bombyca encomium is 'a masterly text, but a poor love-song'.[46]

None the less, despite these shortcomings, Bucaeus' poem has unmistakably Hellenistic features. In his invocation of the 'Pierian Muses' (24), Bucaeus echoes the Hesiodic *erga*, but this allusion rather emphasizes the gap between traditional didactic poetry and his poem, as it 'suggests the mental distraction which has turned Boukaios from hard work to what Hesiod warns against most vehemently, the attractions of the female'.[47] At the same time, the invocation seems to have a

of the bucolic world, see Theoc. *Id.* 5.7; 6.43; [20.]29, *Epigr.* 5.1.

[38] For a helpful survey, see A. Allen, *The Fragments of Mimnermus: Text and Commentary* (Stuttgart, 1993), 147–56.

[39] It may also be relevant that the name of her father or owner is 'Mr Many Cattle' and establishes a link to the bucolic world that features prominently in many of Theocritus' poems.

[40] See above at n. 26.

[41] Gow (n. 1) ad 37, on the other hand, notes that Bucaeus' encomium 'is not unskilful'.

[42] Fantuzzi and Papanghelis (n. 28), 256.

[43] U. von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff, *Reden und Vorträge, Bd. 1* (Dublin, 1967[5]), 286–7: 'Wir werden ihn auslachen müssen, wenn er heute seine Wünsche verrät, deren dringendster einem Paar Schaftstiefeln gilt, sollen ihm aber doch Sympathie bewahren.'

[44] Gow (n. 1) ad 37; cf. Hutchinson (n. 4), 176.

[45] Hunter (n. 5) ad 36–7. On verse 37, see also M. Payne (n. 6), 76.

[46] Hunter (n. 6), 127.

[47] Hunter (n. 5) ad loc.

Hellenistic ring, as there is no earlier evidence for appeals to the Muses to join the poet in his singing.[48] The allusion to Sappho that Lentini finds in ῥαδινάν (24) would add to the Hellenistic flavour of the invocation.[49] The reference to flowers in 28–9 then leads straight into the world of bucolic poetry[50] to which also the animals in the following priamel belong (30–1).

Hellenistic elements are less obvious in Bucaeus' fantasy of a statue of himself and Bombyca (32–5). Statues devoted to gods are not limited to a specific period in Greek history, but some scholars have nevertheless argued for an allusion to the Ptolemies, who seem to have been particularly fond of spreading their fame through statues.[51] Perhaps more significantly, the objects adorning the statues evoke the bucolic world:[52] the flute is an obvious symbol for art; rose and apple figure prominently as symbols of love in Hellenistic poetry, while the wish for clothes and shoes reveals the perspective of the poor countryman.

Hunter ad 36–7 notes that the final two lines of Bucaeus' song tap into the Hellenistic tradition of cataloguing the beloved's charms:

> *Βομβύκα χαρίεσσ᾽, οἱ μὲν πόδες ἀστράγαλοί τευς,*
> *ἁ φωνὰ δὲ τρύχνος· τὸν μὰν τρόπον οὐκ ἔχω εἰπεῖν.*
>
> Charming Bombyca, like knuckle-bones thy feet,
> and thy voice a poppy, and thy character – it passes my power to tell.

τρύχνος not only evokes once more the world of botany,[53] but also seems to be the kind of learned allusion in which much of Hellenistic poetry revels: there is evidence that in antiquity these plants of the nightshade family were considered to bring sleep or insanity or to have aphrodisiac qualities.[54] Any of these effects would underscore the praise of Bombyca's voice, albeit in different ways. There is perhaps also a pun in the comparison of Bombyca's feet with ἀστράγαλοι, taken

[48] Cf. fr. adesp. 17.3 Page, *PMG* (4th c. B.C.E.): *καί μοι συναείσατε* ('and join me in singing'); Posidippus, *Suppl. Hell.* 705.5: *νῦν δὲ Ποσε̣[ι]δίππῳ στυγερὸν ξυναείσατε γῆρας* ('now join Posidippus in singing of hateful old age'). See also Asclepiades, *Anth. Pal.* 9.63 (=32 Gow–Page, *GP*) 3–4: *τίς γὰρ ἔμ᾽ οὐκ ἤεισε; τίς οὐκ ἀνελέξατο Λυδήν, | τὸ ξυνὸν Μουσῶν γράμμα καὶ Ἀντιμάχου;* ('For who has not sung me, who has not read Lyde, the joint work of the Muses and Antimachus?'). See also, much later, Musaeus 14.

[49] G. Lentini, 'Amore "fuori luogo". Presenze saffiche ed esiodee nell'idillio 10 di Teocrito', *SCO* 43.3 (1998), 903–7 argues that Bucaeus' love is modelled on Sappho fr. 102V: *Γλύκηα μᾶτερ, οὔ τοι δύναμαι κρέκην τὸν ἴστον | πόθωι δάμεισα παῖδος βραδίναν δι᾽ Ἀφροδίταν* ('Truly, sweet mother, I cannot weave my web; | for I am overcome with desire for a boy because of slender Aphrodite').

[50] For a similar point see Asclepiades, *Anth. Pal.* 5.210.3–4: *Εἰ δὲ μέλαινα, τί τοῦτο; καὶ ἄνθρακες· ἀλλ᾽ ὅτ᾽ ἐκείνους | θάλψωμεν, λάμπουσ᾽ ὡς ῥόδεαι κάλυκες* ('And if she is dusky, what is that to me? So are the coals, but when we light them, they shine as bright as roses'). On further botanic vocabulary in *Id.* 10, see L. Argentieri, 'I piedi di Bombica', in R. Nicolai (ed.), *Studi L.E. Rossi* (Rome, 2003), 347–55, at 350.

[51] See Whitehorne (n. 6), 39–40; Burton (n. 29), 131–2. See also H. Bernsdorff, 'The idea of bucolic in the imitators of Theocritus, 3rd – 1st century BC', in Fantuzzi and Papanghelis (n. 28), 167–207, at 182.

[52] Cf. F. Manakidou, *Beschreibung von Kunstwerken in der hellenistischen Dichtung* (Stuttgart, 1993), 96.

[53] On Theocritus' fondness for botanical vocabulary, see A. Lindsell, 'Was Theocritus a botanist', *G&R* 6 (1937), 78–93; K. Lembach, *Die Pflanzen bei Theokrit* (Heidelberg, 1970).

[54] Cf. Gow (n. 1) and Hunter (n. 5) ad loc.

by most interpreters to mean 'knuckle-bones'.[55] Recently, Argentieri has argued that ἀστράγαλοι here signifies the plant which goes by the same name in antiquity and is now known as *Lathyrus*.[56] While I do not think that Argentieri succeeds in showing that the meaning accepted by the *communis opinio* is impossible, his argument for a reference to the plant is an attractive one. Given the prominence of botanical expressions, particularly the τρύχνος in the following verse, a double entendre would fit in well and add yet another feature of λεπτοσύνη to Bucaeus' song. Gauche as it is, its Hellenistic character is obvious and is thrown into relief by the strongly Hesiodic character of Milo's song.[57]

Taken together, the emphasis on the slenderness, partly in vocabulary that is also used poetologically, of a girl who is closely associated with art, in an embedded song with strong Hellenistic features and bucolic flavour, prompts me to suggest that Idyll 10 plays with the poetological notion of slenderness that is best known under the term λεπτοσύνη. The connection between eating and poetological slenderness parallels the *Hymn to Demeter* (*Hymn* 6) in which Callimachus seems to contrast fasting Demeter – as a symbol of his new poetry – with gluttonous Erysichthon.[58] In Idyll 10, this play with the prominent metaphor for refined poetry rests on a double metonymic play with thinness: traditionally a feature of the lover, it is transferred to his beloved. Thereby, the object of the poem comes to embody the 'slenderness' typical of some Hellenistic poetry. This second metonymy goes hand in hand with the literalization of the metaphor – the object of a poem that is metaphorically thin is just skin and bones.

This interpretation ties in nicely with Theocritus' fondness of playing with literal and metaphorical meanings. In Idyll 3, for instance, the anonymous goatherd komiast threatens to kill himself when his beloved does not reply to his song (25–6):

> τὰν βαίταν ἀποδὺς ἐς κύματα τηνῶ ἁλεῦμαι,
> ὥπερ τὼς θύννως σκοπιάζεται Ὄλπις ὁ γριπεύς·
>
> I will strip off my cloak and leap into the waves from the cliff
> whence Olpis, the fisherman, watches for the tunny;

[55] On such knuckle-bones and their use for oracles, see J. Nollé, *Kleinasiatische Losorakel* (Munich, 2007), 7–17.

[56] L. Argentieri (n. 50).

[57] See e.g. Hutchinson (n. 4), 178 n. 55; Hopkinson (n. 16), 167; Fantuzzi (n. 2), 207; Lentini (n. 49), 906–7. The discrepancy between Bucaeus' and Milo's songs comes to the fore in the treatment of individual and collective: whilst Bucaeus emphatically refers to himself with the personal pronoun (24, 27, 31, 32, 35), Milo's song focusses on communal activities and has no place for the individual. Cf. Hutchinson (n. 4), 177. The second couplets of their songs nicely illustrate the difference: Bucaeus juxtaposes his own appreciation of Bombyca's beauty with the negative judgement of all others (26–7). Milo, on the other hand, makes an appeal to work hard: σφίγγετ', ἀμαλλοδέται, τὰ δράγματα, μὴ παριών τις | εἴπῃ, 'σύκινοι ἄνδρες· ἀπώλετο χοὗτος ὁ μισθός', 44–5 ('Binders, bind up the sheaves, lest someone pass | and say, "Here be fig-wood fellows; here's more wages wasted."'). Whereas Milo is concerned to avoid a reproach from others, Bucaeus emphasizes the gap between himself and the others. For further comparison of the two songs, see Hunt (n. 2), 403–11.

[58] For this interpretation, see C. Müller, *Erysichthon. Der Mythos als narrative Metapher im Demeterhymnos des Kallimachos* (Stuttgart, 1987), 27–45; P. Bing, 'Callimachus and the Hymn to Demeter', *Syllecta Classica* 6 (1995), 29–42, at 40–1; J. Murray, 'The metamorphoses of Erysichthon. Callimachus, Apollonius, and Ovid', in M.A. Harder, R.G. Regtuit and G.C. Wakker (edd.), *Hellenistica Groningana. Callimachus II* (Groningen, 2004), 207–41, at 212–16.

When neither this threat nor the mention of another girl have any effect, the goatherd starts another song consisting of mythical *exempla*, the first of which is Hippomenes (41b–2):

> ἁ δ' Ἀταλάντα
> ὡς ἴδεν ὡς ἐμάνη, ὡς ἐς βαθὺν ἅλατ' ἔρωτα.
>
> [A]nd Atalanta
> saw, and frenzy seized her and deep in love she plunged.

The first literal use of ἅλεσθαι in a suggestion which remains hypothetical is thrown into relief by a second metaphorical use of the same word for an event that actually took place.[59]

To give another example, in Idyll 11, Polyphemus contrasts the cold waters in which Galatea dwells with his cave (42–9) and adds (50–3):

> αἰ δέ τοι αὐτὸς ἐγὼν δοκέω λασιώτερος ἦμεν,
> ἐντὶ δρυὸς ξύλα μοι καὶ ὑπὸ σποδῷ ἀκάματον πῦρ·
> καιόμενος δ' ὑπὸ τεῦς καὶ τὰν ψυχὰν ἀνεχοίμαν
> καὶ τὸν ἕν' ὀφθαλμόν, τῶ μοι γλυκερώτερον οὐδέν.
>
> But if it is I myself that seem too shaggy to thee,
> oak logs I have, and fire undying beneath the ash,
> and thou mayest burn my soul,
> and my one eye too, than which nothing is dearer to me.

Theocritus has Polyphemus speak literally of the warmth of his cave and the possibility of singeing his hair (cf. Nicet. Eugen. 6.511), while at the same time evoking the metaphorical fire of love. The play with literal and metaphorical meanings is further enriched by the implicit allusion to his literal blinding at the hands of Odysseus which is triggered by the reference to his eye in 'a kind of tragic-comic flash-forward'.[60]

In the case of Idyll 10, the play with the metaphorical and literal significance of slenderness gives the poem a special twist. Critics have noted that Milo clearly appears the superior of the two reapers.[61] He manages to poke fun at Bucaeus throughout the poem and also has the last word which seems to give an authoritative evaluation of the two songs (56–8):[62]

[59] There is a third – metaphorical – use of ἅλεσθαι in 37: ἅλλεται ὀφθαλμός μευ ὁ δεξιός ('my right eye twitches').

[60] Cf. M. Fantuzzi, 'Mythological paradigms in the bucolic poetry of Theocritus', *PCPhS* 41 (1995), 16–35, at 17.

[61] Manakidou (n. 52), 96–7; Hunt (n. 2), 401.

[62] The authoritative character of the final verses is seen in the scholia's wish to attribute them not to Milo, but to the narrator. See Fantuzzi (n. 2), 229 who points out that Milo 'canterà il canto da lavoro che parrebbe "approvato" da Teocrito come più pragmaticamente consono all' ambientazione campestre …' (207). Hutchinson (n. 4), 174 perceptively observes that the disqualification of Bucaeus' behaviour as childish harks back to 40, ὤμοι τῶ πώγωνος, ὃν ἀλιθίως ἀνέφυσα ('beshrew the beard I've grown to so little profit'): 'Thus the colourful detail of growing the beard is turned round by the real immaturity of Bucaeus' behaviour.'

ταῦτα χρὴ μόχθεντας ἐν ἁλίῳ ἄνδρας ἀείδειν,
τὸν δὲ τεόν, Βουκαῖε, πρέπει λιμηρὸν ἔρωτα
μυθίσδεν τᾷ ματρὶ κατ᾽ εὐνὰν ὀρθρευούσᾳ.

That's the stuff for men that work in the sun to sing,
and as for your starveling love, Bucaeus–
tell it your mother when she stirs in bed of a morning.

Accordingly, interpreters have seen Idyll 10 as a simple representation of agricultural life. However, the metapoetic play with slenderness, just like the intertextual echoes and the metrical form, undermines the plea against the 'starveling love', both at the levels of content and form. It evokes an important stylistic feature of Hellenistic poetry, and it does this in a highly sophisticated play with metaphor and metonymy. In a double metonymy – thinness is transferred from the lover to his beloved who thereby comes to embody the 'thinness' of her encomium – the poetological metaphor of *λεπτοσύνη* is literalized. Milo's plea against poetry that is *λεπτόν* may prevail over Bucaeus' song, which is rather gauche, but it is part of a poem that itself heavily draws on *λεπτοσύνη*. In accordance with much recent scholarship, Clausen notes: 'in its affectation of simplicity, the disparity between the meanness of his subject and the refinement of the poet's art, lies the essence of pastoral'.[63] Idyll 10 exacerbates this tension as it seems to challenge poetry that goes beyond marshalling workers. It is, however, the ultimate refinement of Idyll 10 that it features an attack against refinement that seems to carry the day but, upon closer inspection, turns out to be subverted.

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[63] Clausen (n. 26), xv.