

SICILY'S PLACE IN GREEK POETRY*

by

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*...vuote le mani,
ma pieni gli occhi del ricordo di lei...**Ibn Hamdis*

ABSTRACT: A multitude of literary texts dealing with Sicily are presented in four chapters. Starting with a fusion of the *Aeneid*'s presentation of Sicily and some modern literary associations, the opening chapter proves that in Virgil's usage the term "Sicilian" became a kind of shibboleth, which turns his works into texts *au deuxième degré*. His *Sicelides Musae* come from Theocritus whose poetry is at the centre of the bifold second chapter, offering two retrospective glances upon earlier Greek poetry: a first half is dedicated to Theocritus' Cyclops-poems and their 'bucolic archaeology'. Quite similarly, the second half of the second chapter is concerned with Theocritus' poem on Hieron II and its epinician predecessors, i.e. Simonides and Pindar. This tradition, however, might well have started earlier than Simonides, and it is not unlikely that already Ibykos and Stesichoros, the latter born in Sicily, composed epinician poetry. Pindar and Simonides' nephew Bakchylides were guests of Hieron I, who also invited innovative Aeschylus, reputed to be a *vir utique Siculus*, to whom the third chapter is dedicated. Aside from the bucolic and epinician tradition, Sicily has another literary facet of which the fourth chapter catches some glimpses: Sicilian lifestyle attracted attention, and Sicilians were famous in antiquity for some extravagancies, a fact well known to comedy one streak of which is supposed to have its origins in Sicily. Sicilian food and all what comes with it were not altogether above suspicion, as Plato and his translator Cicero remarked, and also Horace thought of Sicilian banquets, *Siculae dapes*, as most lavish. It turns out not only that in the history of ancient Greek and Latin literature Sicily is a real island as well as an imaginary place, but also that Sicilian regularly denotes something outstandingly valuable; both themes are recurring like a leitmotif. But there is something more: Sicily was a place of modernist poetry. It was in Sicily where two highly unusual tragedies by Aeschylus were performed, and it was for Sicilian rulers that Pindar and Bakchylides created some of the most impressive epinician odes; and aside from Theocritus, whose awareness of the historic dimension of literature forms a leitmotif of this paper, a poet who managed to establish bucolic poetry as a new poetic genre, there is Stesichoros, credited with incessant multifarious inventiveness.

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I. VIRGIL'S SICILY

As they sail away from Carthage, today a suburb of Tunis, the Trojans look back and see a blaze in the city; although they do not know that it comes from Dido's pyre, they feel presentiments of disaster. When they reach the open sea a violent storm comes upon them. It is impossible to continue on the course for Italy: instead they run with the wind to Sicily. They land near the tomb of Anchises, Aeneas' father. He died at Drepanum, the most western city of Sicily, today called Trapani. Now, at the opening of the fifth book, after having betrayed Dido, who killed herself, and fleeing from Carthage, Aeneas arrives for a second time at the western end of Sicily in Trapani. When they came the first time, with Anchises still alive, the Trojans approached the Sicilian coast near Mount Etna in the east, where they passed a night of fear in the shadow of the volcano (*Aen.* III 548–587). After having escaped the Cyclops *in extremis*, they continued to sail clockwise round Sicily, finally reaching Drepanum (*Aen.* III 707–711).

Coming to the grave of his father, Aeneas proclaims a solemn sacrifice at his tomb. This is followed by contests in rowing, running, boxing and archery. Aeneas wishes to thank the gods and founds a new city for those of his comrades who decide to stay behind; finally, he sets sail for Italy. But before leaving Trapani for the last time, Aeneas dedicates a temple to Venus on Mount Eryx, named after Aeneas' half-brother. The building was very famous in Greek and Roman times: it is mentioned, e.g., by Thucydides as a place where a lavish banquet took place (VI 46, 3). Tacitus reports that Tiberius who since his adoption by Augustus regarded himself as a descendant of Aeneas, took on the responsibility for the temple's restoration (*Ann.* IV 43, 4)¹. A Sicilian poet also speaks of it: Theocritus (*Id.* 15, 100 ff.) lets two women from the Sicilian town of Syracuse describe a celebration in Alexandria during which a song in honour of Adonis is performed. The two Syracusan women listen to the song which begins with a list of cult-places of Venus, among which Mount Eryx is mentioned².

Nowadays, once you have paid the fare, a spectacularly vertiginous lift brings you upwards into the beautifully preserved, though half-abandoned mediaeval city of Erice. The voyage takes roughly ten minutes, but upon arrival, you have

¹ At Rome, Erycina (as a name for Venus) is used by Horace (*Carm.* I 2, 33); Ovid mentions a temple of Venus Erycina next the Colline gate, adding that the temple takes its name from the Sicilian hill (*Fasti* IV 871 f.: "a Siculo [...] colle"). At the end of 216 BC, Quintus Fabius Maximus requested of the senate that he be permitted to dedicate a temple of Venus of Eryx on the Capitol, as Livy reports (XXIII 30, 13; 31, 9).

² Δέσποινα, ἡ Γολγῶς τε καὶ Ἰδάλιον ἐφιλήσας/ αἰπεινάν τ' Ἔρυκα, χρυσῶν παιζοῖσ' Ἀφροδίτα "Mistress, you who love Golgi, sheer Eryx and Idalium, Aphrodite, whose sport is golden". Translations of Theocritus are taken from Anthony VERITY, *Theocritus Idylls*, Oxford 2002. – The scholia on *Id.* 15 refer to Sophron as a source of Theocritus, as they do also on *Id.* 2. Both assertions of dependence on Sophron, however, are taken with reserve by A.S.F. Gow, *Theocritus*, Cambridge 1952, vol. II, pp. 34 f., 265. On Sophron cf. also the fourth chapter of this paper.

travelled through a millennium. Seated in a Plexiglas cabin itself attached to an iron cable above your head, you seem to hover above Trapani for an instant. Soon the city slowly fades away as you approach the old town. Towering over Trapani, Erice is situated on a hill, 750 meters above the sea, one of the highest mountains in Sicily after Etna and coupled by Virgil with Mount Athos (*Aen.* XII 701). The overwhelming sight might have suggested to Virgil a line and a half in the *Aeneid*, where he says that “then, close to the stars, above Mount Eryx, to Venus of Idalium they raise a temple” (*Aen.* V 759 f. “tum vicina astris Erycino in vertice sedes/ fundatur Veneri Idaliae”). But it is not only due to the Venus-temple on Mount Eryx that Sicily left such an impression on certain poets. Neither is Sicily's importance restricted to the stones the Cyclops threw, intent on killing Odysseus, which can be seen from a bus going to Acitrezza in the suburbs of Catania, a town where other bus-lines end at Piazza Stesicoro.

Like many other parts of Italy, Sicily had become a literary topos. It is not only a real island but also an imaginary place. A naturalistic novel like *I Malavoglia* by Giovanni Verga (1840–1922), whose apartment in Catania is now a museum, is an outstanding example of this transformation of a real place into a mythic universe³. Regarding the island as representative or suggestive of something else, Leonardo Sciascia, e.g., a Sicilian author of the last century (1921–1989), explicitly spoke of Sicily as a metaphor⁴. Being much interested in Italian politics, he feared that the whole of Italy might become Sicily, i.e. wholly corrupt⁵. Curiously enough, the idea that Sicily is not only an imaginary place but that the island also offers a kind of key to an understanding of Italy as a whole was already expressed by Johann Wolfgang Goethe when he noted (in the diary of his Italian voyage, 13.4.1787): “Italien ohne Sizilien macht gar kein Bild in der Seele: hier ist erst der Schlüssel zu allem”.

Even in antiquity the term Sicily had been used as a metaphor for something “special”. Then, however, less in the sense of “rotten” and more in the opposite sense of “refined”. Virgil was the first to do so, not only exploiting the intense relationship between Greek and Roman poetry but also adding a second layer to

³ An illustration of this process is given by G. GARRA AGOSTA, who published forgotten photographs by Verga (*Verga fotografo*, Catania 1991). These pictures, discovered in Verga's apartment long after his death, show some of the real persons Verga changed into literary figures.

⁴ Cf. L. SCIASCIA, *La Sicilia come metafora*, Milano 1979, and earlier L. SCIASCIA, *Sicilia e sicilitudine*, in: IDEM, *La corda pazza. Scrittori e cose della Sicilia*, Torino 1970, pp. 11–17, and its often cited paragraph on two opposed theoretical approaches to describe the Sicilianess or Sicily-tude of its culture (p. 15).

⁵ Cf. L. SCIASCIA, *Il giorno della civetta*, Torino 1961, p. 115: “Forse tutta l'Italia va diventando Sicilia... A me è venuta una fantasia, leggendo sui giornali gli scandali di quel governo regionale: gli scienziati dicono che la linea della palma, cioè il clima che è proprio alla vegetazione della palma, viene su, verso il nord, di cinquecento metri, mi pare, ogni anno... La linea della palma... Io invece dico: la linea del caffè ristretto, del caffè concentrato... E sale come l'ago di mercurio di un termometro, questa linea della palma, del caffè forte, degli scandali: su su per l'Italia, ed è già oltre Roma...”.

it. Virgil intensified Greco-Roman intertextual references and made them a trademark of his texts which became so fraught by referring to other texts that his whole poetic achievement is thoroughly marked (and sometimes obscured) by the author's learnedness. A single word like "Sicilian" could express his whole poetic program. How did he achieve that?

Reading Latin poetry, at some time or other most have experienced that something sounds familiar. A single scene from the sixth book of Virgil's *Aeneid* may illustrate this phenomenon of *déjà vu*: Dido does not speak to Aeneas as Ajax did not reply to Odysseus. Among many a talkative hero or loquacious heroine, both are singular exceptions in both these underworld-journeys. That this is not an accident can be guessed from the fact that Virgil found a way of indicating his closeness to his model: His "silent Dido" episode comprises 27 lines (*Aen.* VI 450–476), which is exactly the same number of lines Homer used to portray the "silent Ajax" episode (*Od.* XI 541–567)⁶. This subtle but still clearly visible reference is typical of Virgil's new poetic mannerism, his pervading erudite allusiveness. The Virgilian *déjà vu*, however, had been prepared in his *Georgics*, which contain a second proemium at the beginning of the third book, replete with references to the second proemium at the beginning of the third book of Callimachus' *Aetia*⁷.

Virgil's refinement was copied, and is very much due to his close reading of Greek poetry. At the beginning of Virgil's career it is the Sicilian poet Theocritus who played a major role as a model. By imitating him, Virgil initiated something new in Latin literary history. It was from Theocritus that Virgil got his inspiration, and it is Virgil himself who says so. In his first published work, the *Bucolica* or *Eclogues*, he hints openly at his Greek predecessor. He does so by using a single word, i.e. "Sicilian", which works in a twofold way, indicating a literature *au deuxième degré*.

Virgil's fourth *Eclogue* begins with an appeal to the Muses. Including himself in their number, the poet exhorts them "let us sing something a bit bigger", and the whole line runs (*Ecl.* 4, 1) "Sicelides Musae, paulo maiora canamus". In Virgil's usage, the term "Sicilian" became a kind of shibboleth or catchword, adopted and chosen in order to indicate his own Alexandrian poetic programme,

⁶ Cf. G.N. KNAUER, *Die Aeneis und Homer: Studien zur poetischen Technik Vergils*, Göttingen 1964, pl. 2.

⁷ Callimachus, a contemporary of Theocritus in his days in Alexandria, composed four books of his *Aetia*, as did Virgil who composed four books of his *Georgics*. Moreover, the whole concept of aetiology plays a great role in Virgil's *Georgics*, a work dedicated to the study of causation, constantly providing a reason for something; cf. R.F. THOMAS, *Virgil, Georgics*, Cambridge 1988, vol. II, p. 37. As a learned Hellenistic poet, used to dictate many a line in the morning which he reworked during the day, finally reducing them to only very few (*Excerptum e vita Donatiana* 22), Virgil was seemingly not intent or eager to be discovered as such a learned Hellenistic poet, at least not at the very first instance.

characterized by a learned and allusive style. Explaining in the following that not all are pleased by poems on plants like orchards or lowly tamarisks, Virgil pretends to give a reason for his new poetic aim, as if he previously had been writing a handbook for hobby-gardening, which of course he had not.

Beginning the first line of his fourth *Eclogue* with an invented new word, *Sicelides*, which did not exist before him, neither in Greek nor in Latin⁸, Virgil indicated the new poetic status of the *Eclogues*, an attitude which made him the right candidate for “something bigger”. The word clearly means Sicilian and refers to the Muses. But since when are we to assume that the Muses come from or have anything to do with Sicily? The daughters of Zeus and Mnemosyne dwell on mount Helicon in Boeotia, and we should expect Helikoniades (Ἑλικωνιάδες) as in the opening line of Hesiod’s *Theogony*, or at least Pierides (Πιερίδες) as in Pindar’s first *Pythian*, because they were born in Pieria, north of Mount Olympos in the South-west of Macedonia, all places far away from Sicily.

Virgil did not force them to travel to Sicily. The new Muses are now metaphorically called “Sicilian” because Virgil’s model in the *Eclogues* is pastoral poetry, invented by Theocritus, who was a Sicilian. By calling the Muses “Sicilian”, Virgil transfers the Muses to an object different from, but analogous to that object to which their name is literally applicable, and to which it was in fact applied before Virgil. He creates a new poetic reality.

In the opening line of his sixth *Eclogue* Virgil repeats the statement from the beginning of the fourth, continuing his metaphorical discourse on Sicily. Now he states that his Muse in her early days liked to express herself in a verse Virgil calls “Syracusan” (*Ecl.* 6, 1 “prima Syracosio dignata est ludere versu”, “at the beginning, my Muse thought it apt to perform Syracusan verses”). Virgil again uses an adjective unknown to Latin⁹. Both beginnings certainly refer to each other and in both cases the subsequent lines speak metaphorically of bucolic poetry¹⁰. Now using the adjective “Syracusan”, however, Virgil hints directly at Theocritus, whose supposed birthplace is Syracuse in Sicily. Virgil also employs a poetic device called geographical antonomasia which means that a geographical indication replaces a person’s proper name.

⁸ Cf. W. CLAUSEN, *A Commentary on Virgil, Eclogues*, Oxford 1994, p. 130. – In his “mascarade bucolique”, however, Theocritus gives the name Σικελίδων, the origin of which is unknown, to Asclepiades (*Id.* 7, 40). There is no sign in his extant remains of “bucolic” poetry, and the name is suspected to be a patronymic.

⁹ Though this time normal in Greek; cf. CLAUSEN, *op. cit.* (n. 8), p. 179.

¹⁰ Cf. *Ecl.* 6, 2: “nostra nec erubuit silvas habitare Thalia” (“our Muse blushed not to dwell in woods”, referring to the beginning of his poetic work), and *Ecl.* 4, 3: “si canimus silvas, silvae sint consule dignae” (“if our song is of the woodland, let the woodland be worthy of a consul”, said of what is now to come). Virgil’s references to “song” are collected by L.D. CARSON, *Song in Virgil’s Eclogues*, Chapel Hill 1990.

This substitution of a geographical epithet for a person's proper name is a widespread and well used technique among Hellenistic poets¹¹. By copying that technique, Virgil adds a second layer to his term "Syracusan" (and "Sicilian"). Not only does he indicate indirectly what he really wanted to say, namely that he is following Theocritus, but he also shows his familiarity with Hellenistic poetic techniques. Thus his reference is twofold and works on two levels, directly and indirectly. Both messages confirm each other and signal that an author, who uses this way of encoding his message, is a Hellenistic poet, well aware of the latest literary trends – which makes his works from now texts *au deuxième degré*.

By adopting an Alexandrian manner, Virgil distinguishes himself from other Roman poets who followed Greek models. His way is quite different from the older *alter Homerus*, brashly outspoken Ennius, who claimed that Homer appeared at his side, telling him how his soul migrated into Ennius' body¹². Already Statius referred to Ennius' reputation as less sophisticated, calling Ennius' Muse "untutored" (as if she had not been at school) and Ennius himself "bold": "Musa rudis ferocis Enni" (*Silv.* II 7, 75)¹³. Although much of *Aeneid* 7–12 could be termed *ferox*, nobody would call Virgil untutored or bold, that goes without saying.

For subsequent poets, "bucolic poetry" was "Sicilian" or "Syracusan" because of Theocritus and it was Virgil who recreated Theocritean pastoral in Latin. That Theocritus came from Syracuse or at least Sicily may reasonably be deduced from his own poetry and was the almost unanimous opinion in antiquity. He himself treats Sicily and Syracuse as his native country and town¹⁴.

II. THEOCRITUS

(a) *Theocritus' Cyclops and the archaeology of the bucolic tradition*

That Theocritus is from Syracuse can be inferred from his twenty-eighth *Idyll* where he speaks of a woman from Syracuse as "coming from my land" (ἀμμετέρως ἔσσαν ἀπὸ χθόνης). Theocritus' way of expressing this simple fact is extremely elaborate, not only because his poem is written in an artificial, literary Aeolic but also because he uses an aetiological antonomastic description of Syracuse, as "the town Archias of Ephyra founded long ago"¹⁵, a town called "the

¹¹ Cf. J. FARRELL, *Vergil's Georgics and the Traditions of Ancient Epic: The Art of Allusion in Literary History*, New York–Oxford 1991, pp. 58 f.

¹² Cf. O. SKUTSCH, *The Annals of Q. Ennius*, Oxford 1985, pp. 147–149.

¹³ Cf. C.E. NEWLANDS, *Statius, Silvae, Book II*, Cambridge 2011, p. 241.

¹⁴ Cf. GOW, *op. cit.* (n. 2), vol. I, p. XVI.

¹⁵ Cf. G. MADDOLI, *L'Occidente*, in: *I Greci*, vol. II 1, Torino 1996, pp. 995–1034; A.J. DOMINGUEZ, *Greeks in Sicily*, in: *Greek Colonisation*, vol. I, Leiden–Boston 2006, pp. 253–357, and J.M. HALL, *Foundation Stories*, in: *Greek Colonisation*, vol. II, Leiden–Boston 2008, pp. 383–426, on Greek settlements in general, and furthermore A. WILLI, *Sikelismos: Sprache, Literatur und*

very essence of the isle of three capes”, i.e. Sicily, a town finally named “a city of famous men” (28, 17 ff.)¹⁶. Syracuse is seen by him as the most essential part or feature of Sicily, its purest or most perfect form or manifestation, its nucleus or core. Not surprisingly, Theocritus shows his pride in his *polis* when he speaks of it in these terms.

Theocritus also alludes to his Sicilian origin in his eleventh *Idyll*, addressing the Cyclops as his “countryman” (ὁ Κύκλωψ ὁ παρ’ ἀμῖν, 11, 7). The expression has a wide range of meanings: apparently, the Cyclops was familiar to Theocritus as a Sicilian compatriot as well as a literary motif, and fleetingly one perceives Theocritus as living with the one-eyed giant in his cave under Mount Etna in Sicily. What could have been on Theocritus’ mind that let him choose this curious phrase? What did a refined court-poet have in common with a man-eating Cyclops? And since “Sicilian” is another word for “bucolic”, what could be so particularly “idyllic” or “pastoral” about the monster?

The eleventh *Idyll* shows Polyphemus in love with Galatea, and the greater part of the idyllic setting (19–79) is an example of Polyphemus’ songs in which he pleads with Galatea in the hope of attracting her, though finally he blames himself for wasting his time on a person so intractable and wrongheaded. That there is no remedy for love save song is the message of the text, openly exhibited right at the beginning, and seemingly Theocritus is speaking of himself and his own work. The strong identification between the poetic voice and that of the Cyclops, introduced as “one of us” (in line 7), transforms the one-eyed monster Polyphemus into an aetiological paradigm for all subsequent Sicilian lovers and poets. If such a freak manages to sing convincingly about sweet love, every Sicilian can do the same, seems to be the gist of the narrative. In front of our eyes, a *primus inventor* of the genre is invented by Theocritus who in turn was credited by Virgil with being the *πρῶτος εὐρετής* of bucolic poetry, and we witness literary history in the making.

Once more, a second layer is attached to the text, and as if we were contemplating a palimpsest a second text becomes visible. During his poetic performance in Theocritus’ *Idyll*, Polyphemus boasts that he is immensely rich and describes at length the possessions in his cave. In particular he mentions his milking the sheep and the cheese he gains from that milk (*Id.* 11, 34–37). The language of this passage is so reminiscent of Homer’s that the Theocritean Polyphemus nearly sounds as if he had read the Homeric description of himself.

Gesellschaft im griechischen Sizilien (8.–5. Jh. v. Chr.), Basel 2008, on the concept of a shared Sicilian “literary identity” (opposing “universal” and “regional” values, as it is common in post-colonial literary criticism). Recently, O. TRIBULATO edited a volume on *Language and Linguistic Contact in Ancient Sicily* (Cambridge 2012). An outstanding modern history of Sicily is by Edward FREEMAN, *The History of Sicily from the Earliest Times*, Oxford 1891–1894 (in four volumes).

¹⁶ The founding of Syracuse is also briefly alluded to by Pindar *O.* 6, 6.

Certainly Theocritus did, and he was apparently thinking of the Homeric Polyphemus whom his own Polyphemus echoes, but he kept also in mind the Homeric Odysseus of that Cyclops adventure. Promising to the nymph Galatea that he wants to learn swimming, in order to live with her (11, 60), Theocritus' Polyphemus speaks of a stranger who might come (ξένος, 11, 61). Polyphemus, however, has no reason to expect visitors, because nobody would be so crazy as to visit him. His curious statement would only make sense if it were reflecting the coming of Odysseus depicted in Homer's *Odyssey*¹⁷.

What the Cyclops sings was to prove all too true. It was indeed a "Nobody", a "Noman" who came, unfortunately not keen on swimming with him but eventually killing the Cyclops. The fallacious name assumed by Odysseus to deceive Polyphemus, Οὔτις, "Nobody", from Homer's *Odyssey* (IX 366, 408), was later to return in Euripides' satyr-play *Cyclops* (549, 672 f.) where Odysseus provokes the Cyclops again.

It is ironic that the Theocritean Polyphemus performs not a sequel, but a prequel to a famous myth or literary work. He, of course, could not have known what was about to happen to him, but Theocritus certainly knew what was to come. He lets his Polyphemus recount what took place before Homer's account of his killing by Odysseus begins, and Theocritus gives an example of literature *au deuxième degré* Virgil was attracted to. Given that multiple intertextual perspective, Theocritus' Polyphemus is a pathetic victim of poetic tradition, in which "Theocritus too is 'trapped' [...], and he too is bound to 'lose' to Homer, as Polyphemus does to Odysseus"¹⁸.

Despite the weighty tradition, or maybe irrespective of it, Theocritus was so fascinated by the Polyphemus and Galatea story that he wrote on the subject for a second time. He depicted an imaginary poetic contest between two young herdsmen, Daphnis and Damoitas, who meet for a singing match. After an introductory narrative passage consisting of five lines, their songs are quoted directly, separated only by a single narrative verse of transition (*Id.* 6, 20). Daphnis begins with fourteen lines, which are addressed to Polyphemus. In these lines, Polyphemus is told how Galatea is doing everything in her power to attract him, but he does not seem to notice and remains indifferent to her advances. In reply, Damoitas adopts the role of Polyphemus, singing twenty lines *in Polyphemi persona*. One is curious what was to come.

Damoitas, the Cyclops' poetic voice, asserts that he knows precisely what Galatea is doing, what "she is up to". He, however, is "playing hard to get" and wants to make her jealous by telling her that there is already another woman in his life (6, 25–28):

¹⁷ Cf. Gow, *op. cit.* (n. 2), vol. II, pp. 214, 218 (on 35 ff. and 61 respectively).

¹⁸ R. HUNTER, *Theocritus, A Selection*, Cambridge 1999, p. 219.

I can tease her back: I don't look at her, but I say
 I'm married to someone else. When she hears this,
 she sulks, goes mad, and keeps on peering towards
 my caves and flocks from her home in the sea.

Polyphemus' strategy is deliberate and calculated to make Galatea capitulate. His indifference, he says, is assumed in order to cure Galatea of her arrogance and induce a complete surrender. Our freakish man-eating monster turns out to be a clever clown.

A closing narrative passage announces that the contest had no winner, but ended in perfect harmony. The text is clearly a fictitious song-contest between two fictitious literary personae. The answer to the question where it took place is given by one of its protagonists. Daphnis is mentioned elsewhere in Theocritus and in non-Theocritean poems in the Bucolic corpus¹⁹, and in the first *Idyll* he is associated with places in Sicily. One needs not to assume that "Daphnis" in Theocritus denotes always the same Daphnis, but the fact that *Idyll* 6 appears as a comic "reading" of *Idyll* 1 makes it plausible that at least in these two poems the same Daphnis is spoken of²⁰.

Daphnis is the subject of the first *Idyll* (Thyrsis' song deals with the death of Daphnis) and belongs to an area marked by the river Anapos (which flows from the hills into the sea at Syracuse) and Mount Etna itself, and another river which rises under Etna and flows into the sea near Acireale, a city north of Acitrezza at Sicily's east coast (*Id.* 1, 67–69). Later on in the text, dying Daphnis bids farewell to Arethusa, the famous spring of Syracuse, and to those streams "whose bright waters pour down" the wide valley of Thybris, somewhere between Mount Etna and Syracuse (*Id.* 1, 117 ff.), places he was never to inhabit again.

In the seventh *Idyll*, a certain Lycidas performs a song much occupied with two bucolic heroes, Daphnis and Comatas²¹. He speaks of Tityrus singing of Daphnis' love and "how the mountain grieved over him, and the oaks which grow on the banks of Himera sang a dirge" (*Id.* 7, 73–75). Pastoral poetry in general is founded upon this transference of the spectator's own emotions to external objects, the pathetic fallacy. Himera in particular is the name of two

¹⁹ Cf. Gow, *op. cit.* (n. 2), vol. II, p. 2.

²⁰ On the striking similarities between the story of Daphnis in *Idyll* 1 and that of Polyphemus in *Idyll* 6 cf. HUNTER, *op. cit.* (n. 18), p. 247 f.

²¹ In Theocritus' seventh *Idyll*, a first-person narrative of a past event by Simichidas, Lycidas is introduced with detail, a fact "which suggests that, unlike the characters and geography of the opening passage, he is new to us" (HUNTER, *op. cit.* [n. 18], p. 146). If *Idyll* 7 were an elaborate compliment to Philetas (as it had been suggested by E.L. BOWIE, *Theocritus' Seventh Idyll, Philetas and Longus*, CQ XXXV 1985, pp. 67–91), Lycidas could well be a character from Philetas' bucolic poetry, but in that case he would not have been new to his ancient readers. Older secondary literature assumed Lycidas to be a poet in disguise, and the candidates include a range of prominent Hellenistic poets (on which see Gow, *op. cit.* [n. 2], vol. II, p. 130).

rivers rising in central Sicily, one flowing south, the other north to the coast beside the town of Himera. Unmistakably, all these names lead us to Sicily and strongly connect bucolic poetry to the island. The Sicilian historian Timaios, an older contemporary of Theocritus and strong Sicilian patriot, regarded Daphnis as pasturing cattle in the region of Etna²².

But this simple geographical indication certainly hides something else. The name of the river Himera is surely a word-play hinting at the Greek word for desire, i.e. ἵμερος, meaning that bucolic poetry could express feelings due to strong desire, which makes even the trees which grow on the banks of Himera sing a song. But we may certainly also assume that a hint to Stesichoros is intended, born in Himera. In one of his poetic works Stesichoros also spoke of the river Himera, which “forks into two streams, one flowing (north) into the Tyrrhenian Sea, the other (south) into the Libyan Sea” (*PMGF* 270). Unfortunately, we do not know in which of his works he mentioned the river, and by no means it cannot be ruled out that this fragment belongs to “the second Stesichoros of Himera”, assumed to be a bucolic poet of a much younger age than the author of *Helen* and its *Palinodes*.

Adding always a second meaning ostensibly inscribes literary history in Theocritus’ poetry. But what can be said on the relationship between the two Cyclopean idylls in Theocritus which quite openly refer to each other?

The text of Theocritus’ sixth *Idyll* is certainly a play on the text of the eleventh. Now Theocritus’ Cyclops shows bravado in the face of the Homeric pattern, he allows himself to be teased, and wants nothing else than that Galatea capitulate without further ado. He even mocks the whole poetic tradition (6, 34–38):

And I’m not as ugly, you know, as men say I am;
just now I looked at myself in the calm sea, and –
as I judged it – saw two handsome cheeks and this
one handsome eye. The water reflected the gleam
of my teeth, which were whiter than Parian marble.

By this (in a double sense) narcissistic comparison, the Cyclops hyperbolically reinvents himself, while the existence of a famous literary model (which determined *Idyll* 11) has become irrelevant and is completely ignored. Now Theocritus demands a place for his bucolic poems in a world which already has Homer’s *Odyssey* and its ninth book. Now the fact that Homer has spoken does not mean that new directions are not possible: “if *Idyll* 11 showed how Homer

²² *FGrHist* 566 F 83: cf. K.J. DOVER, *Theocritus, Select Poems*, London 1971, pp. LXIII f.; in general, L. PEARSON, *The Greek Historians of the West: Timaeus and His Predecessors*, Atlanta 1987. On Timaios’ ideas on the origin of bucolic poetry cf. D.M. HALPERIN, *Before Pastoral: Theocritus and the Ancient Tradition of Bucolic Poetry*, New Haven 1983, pp. 80–84, 220 f.

had placed all subsequent poets in the hopeless position of young Polyphemos [...], *Idyll* 6 reasserts the power of the present over tradition”²³.

All that very much refers to another text. Again we are confronted with a *déjà vu* (as if the *déjà vu* wants to remind us of itself in a *mise en abyme*). There were other Cyclopes between Homer and Theocritus, funny, Sicilian, and (at least one of them) also getting into trouble with a “nobody”. Based closely on one of the most famous episodes of the *Odyssey*, the Cyclops portrayed by Euripides, however, is in one way or another different from what he used to be.

In Homer, Odysseus’ motive that prompts him to seek out the Cyclopes is a desire for guest-gifts. His curiosity impels him into a situation of danger which could have been easily foreseen and avoided, when, quite unnecessarily, he ventures from the Island of Goats to the land of the Cyclopes (from *Od.* IX 170 onwards)²⁴. In Euripides, Odysseus and his men approach the cave of Polyphemos because they are in need of food and water. Sympathy for Odysseus is therefore strengthened, but also the treatment of Polyphemos is different. Homer’s Polyphemos is rather nasty, but he is so clearly of a different world from the Greeks, so clearly a primitive creature, that it is difficult to view him consistently as one would a bad *human* being, one to whom the same standards apply as to ourselves. He is a fairy-tale monster, a man-eating hideous ogre. And Homer gives him a moment of pathos when in his blindness he speaks tenderly to his favourite ram.

By contrast, Euripides’ Polyphemos, though primitive in some respects, is very careful about his food, in general a circumspect manager of his household and his slaves, and he strongly resembles a sophist who can articulately justify his immoral behaviour. He clearly inhabits the same moral world as the Greeks whose morality he knows very well and chose to reject. When he is finally blinded, no pathos obscures the fact that his punishment is absolutely right. In fact, the blinding is introduced by Odysseus’ brutal prayer to Hephaistos, who is addressed as follows: “lord of Aetna (ἄναξ Αἰτναῖε), burn out the bright eye of this pest, your neighbour, and be quit of him for good” (*Cyc.* 599 f.).

In Euripides’ *Cyclops*, the only complete surviving example of the genre satyr-play, the protagonist is clearly at home in Greek culture, and Sicily is

²³ HUNTER, *op. cit.* (n. 18), p. 247. The proposed argument implies that *Idyll* 6 presupposes *Idyll* 11, and it is hard to resist the inference that *Idyll* 6 was written later than *Idyll* 11. But we need not assume that they were written very close in time and whether they “circulated” as a pair is unknown to us. What is interesting is the fact that the truly Sicilian Cyclops and his love-affair that never came true was such a favourite with Theocritus that he wrote twice on the same subject, treating it completely differently. Cf. further A. KÖHNKEN, *Theokrits Polyphemgedichte*, in: A. HARDER, R.F. REGTUIT, G.C. WAKKER (eds.), *Theocritus*, Groningen 1996, pp. 171–186, again in A. KÖHNKEN, *Darstellungsziele und Erzählstrategien in antiken Texten*, Berlin–New York 2006, pp. 127–141.

²⁴ Cf. A. HEUBECK, *Introduction*, in: A. HEUBECK, A. HOEKSTRA, *A Commentary on Homer’s Odyssey II*, Oxford 1989, p. 7.

adopted as part of the Greek mother-country. We are no longer in the folktale-world evoked by the Homeric Odysseus. But what makes his environment so typically “Sicilian” in the sense of “bucolic” (which is of a particular interest for our topic) is the fact that the *parodos*, the song performed by the chorus entering the stage, is the earliest extant pastoral song (*Cyc.* 41–81, in particular 41–62)²⁵. While Polyphemus whistled in the *Odyssey* as he was driving his sheep, now the sheep are addressed by the chorus. All the bucolic setting is there, gentle breezes, green grass, the water of rivers, and the cave where the young sheep are sheltered. The apogee of the idyll is formed by some grassy meadows hidden inside the rocks of Mount Etna (*Cyc.* 60–62). It turns out that already in Euripides, who died 406 BC, Sicily and Mount Etna were simply *the* bucolic place to be.

This pastoral element fits nicely into the rustic satyric drama. More than that, however, it fits nicely into the pre-history of the bucolic genre before Theocritus, believed to have ceased to write not later than 260 BC²⁶. When Virgil chose *Sicelides Musae* in order to speak of bucolic poetry, some time around 40 BC, he was certainly thinking of Theocritus, but not necessarily of him alone.

Even then, Euripides was not the only one familiar with the Cyclops. A contemporary of his, the poet Philoxenus of Cythera, once visited a shrine built by Polyphemus near Mount Etna. Polyphemus, as the story goes, wanted to thank Galatea for an abundant supply of milk, the Greek word for which is γάλα. Both the word-play and the fact that the monster was keen on expressing his thanks to Galatea are quite amusing. Just imagine for a moment a clumsy Cyclops tenderly building a shrine for his beloved Galatea. Philoxenus, however, was not aware of this funny explanation. He could not think of the reason for the shrine, instead of which he invented the tale that Polyphemus was in love with Galatea and composed a lyric poem on that subject.

Philoxenus’ quasi-dramatic dithyramb in turn was so well known that Aristophanes could write a parody of it (in a play performed in 388)²⁷. Whether or not Philoxenus had already exploited Sicilian traditions of “bucolic song” for his poem we are unable to say. It seems likely, or one is tempted to assume it,

²⁵ Cf. R. SEAFORD, *Euripides, Cyclops*, Oxford 1984, 106 (on Euripides’ taste for the bucolic in tragedy). Neither the song performed by the happy, syrinx-playing herdsmen, who appear as if coming “straight out of later pastoral poetry” (M.W. EDWARDS, *The Iliad: A Commentary*, vol. V, Cambridge 1991, p. 220), from Homer’s *Shield of Achilles* (Il. XVIII 525 f.) has come down to us nor are the nuances of poetry known Hesiod had been taught while pasturing lambs under holy Helicon (*Theog.* 23). Nevertheless there might well have been a certain link between poetry and a bucolic setting (with *boukoloi*, *aipoloi*, and/or *poimenes*), as is also shown by a character named Prodamos in Eupolis’ *Aiges*, who teaches a man from the country how to dance (in a scene which relates somehow to a similar teaching scene in Aristophanes, *Nub.* 627–803); cf. I.C. STOREY, *Fragments of Old Comedy*, Cambridge, Mass. 2011, vol. II, pp. 54 f.

²⁶ Gow, *op. cit.* (n. 2), vol. I, p. XXIX.

²⁷ The anecdote is to be found in Duris (*FGrHist* 76 F 58 = *PMG* 817), the parody in *Plut.* 290–321; cf. A.H. SOMMERSTEIN, *Aristophanes, Wealth*, Warminster 2001, pp. 156–158.

but the extant tiny fragments of his *Cyclops or Galatea* prove nothing (PMG 815–824). Philoxenus' *Cyclops*, however, might have provided a background for Theocritus' sixth and eleventh idylls. At least they indicate that even if the literary history inscribed in Theocritus' poetry may be largely his own, it can hardly be doubted that there was a history.

Another *Cyclops* adds to this bucolic poetry *avant la lettre*, this one written by a poet called “the second Stesichoros of Himera”, who won an Athenian poetic competition in 370/368 (PMG 841). His *Cyclops* was performed during a musical competition, and by a strange coincidence all the pipers performed a *Cyclops*, among them also that of Philoxenus (PMG 840). This “second Stesichoros”, Philoxenus' younger contemporary, might also have introduced the Sicilian Daphnis story, a Theocritean theme, to poetry: while Daphnis was tending his cattle in Sicily, a nymph fell in love with him; she threatened that his fate was to be blinded if he had intercourse with another girl; later on, however, he broke the agreement, and “from that time onwards herdsmen's songs were sung, having as their theme the story of his blinding” (ἐκ δὲ τούτου τὰ βουκολικά μέλη πρῶτον ἦσθη καὶ εἶχεν ὑπόθεσιν τὸ πάθος τὸ κατὰ τοὺς ὀφθαλμοὺς αὐτοῦ). According to Aelian, who relates the story (PMGF 279), Stesichoros of Himera is believed to have been the first to compose this kind of song, but it is not unlikely that Aelian mixed up “the second Stesichoros” with the temporarily blinded author of *Helen* and its *Palinodes* (PMGF 192 f.)²⁸.

(b) *Theocritus' Hieron and the epinician tradition*

Theocritus also enables us to head for another Sicilian poetic tradition because his Sicilian works include not only those on Daphnis and the Cyclops. One of Theocritus' most remarkable achievements, “which has not always been estimated at its proper worth” as Andrew Gow put it²⁹, is a poem celebrating the king of Syracuse, Hieron II. The name Hieron alone evokes a glorious poetic tradition, closely connected with Sicily. At the beginning of *Idyll* 16, Theocritus imagines his poetic Graces as papyrus-rolls, returning unsold in a box, without a gift, because he had sent them on a pointless journey (16, 5–13). In Pindar the part of the Graces is large; he composed, for example, an epinikion praising them more than the victor himself (*O.* 14). Though Pindar is not named by Theocritus, “the almost continuous echo of his phrases and sentiments”³⁰ may remind Hieron II, the addressee of Theocritus, of Pindar's services to Hieron I, whose gentle

²⁸ Cf. M.L. WEST, *Melica*, CQ XX 1970, pp. 205–215 (p. 206, *The Stesichori*). Momentarily one wonders whether PMGF 270 should be attributed to the “second Stesichoros”, too.

²⁹ Gow, *op. cit.* (n. 2), vol. II, p. 305.

³⁰ Gow, *op. cit.* (n. 2), vol. II, p. 307; cf. further R. HUNTER, *Theocritus and the Archaeology of Greek Poetry*, Cambridge 1996, pp. 82–90.

and father-like ruling over Syracuse was praised by Pindar in his third *Pythian* ode (*P.* 3, 68–71).

Two main themes dominate Theocritus' sixteenth *Idyll*, the importance of employing poets (22–57) and the prayer for Syracuse (71–100), a city Theocritus proudly declared to be his hometown in another and earlier mentioned *Idyll* (28, 15–18). It is hard for a poet to find a patron in these days, complains the poet's voice, although there is no better way of using wealth than upon poetry. In return, poetry will make the patron immortal. In Sicily a patron who will need Theocritus to celebrate his exploits will appear. Syracuse, with Hieron at its head, is arming for war, and the enemies will be driven from Sicily and the island restored to peace and prosperity. Theocritus needs only an invitation to place his services at the victor's disposal.

Theocritus seeks a patron and openly confesses to it, declaring that "my search is for a man who will welcome me, and my Muses too" (16, 68), someone who will be to him what the Skopadai of Thessaly were in earlier days to Simonides. Simonides is generally assumed to be the first poet to have composed epinician poetry and is mentioned by Theocritus in form of a geographical antonomasia as "the poet of Ceos" (16, 44), while his (lesser known) Thessalian patrons are mentioned by their proper names (16, 35). "Had not the poet of Ceos shaped inventive songs to his/ lyre of many strings", Theocritus argues, "they (i.e. the Skopadai) would have lain/ forgotten for time beyond reckoning among the luckless dead". Nobody would have ever heard of many a heroic subject – as those listed by Theocritus in the following lines – if poets had not sung of them (16, 50). The Plataea fragment of Simonides seems to be echoed by Theocritus, where Simonides spoke of the relationship between the Danaans and Homer in similar terms (11, 13–18 W²): "[And so] the valiant Danaans, [best of warr]iors, sacked the much-sung-of city, and came [home;] [and they] are bathed in fame that cannot die, by grace [of one who from the dark-] tressed Muses had the tru[th entire,] and made the heroes' short-lived race a theme familiar to younger men"³¹.

At the end of his life (he is supposed to have died in the 60s of the fifth century BC)³², Simonides worked at the court of Hieron I, and his grave was shown at Akragas, now Agrigento. Xenophon even depicted an imaginary conversation

³¹ Restored and translated by Martin WEST, published in D. BOEDEKER, D. SIDER (eds.), *The New Simonides: Contexts of Praise and Desire*, Oxford 2001, pp. 27–29.

³² Constantly pursuing patronage and money, stingy Simonides was an extremely successful poet in various genres; cf., e.g., J.M. BELL, *Κίμβιξ καὶ σοφός: Simonides in the Anecdotal Tradition*, QUCC XXVIII 1978, pp. 28–86. Simonides' fame resulted in the attribution to him of many epigrams, scarcely any of which is regarded as authentic. His greed made him consider memory more as a profane technique than as a divine gift; cf. M. DETIENNE, *Simonide de Céos ou la sécularisation de la poésie*, REG LXXVII 1964, pp. 405–419, reprinted with some alterations in *Les maîtres de vérité dans la Grèce archaïque*, Paris 1967, pp. 105–119. On Theocritus' relation to Simonides cf. HUNTER, *Archaeology...* (n. 30), pp. 97–109.

between them. No attempt at characterization, however, is made, Hieron appears just as a despot of the better type in a merely "Socratic" dialogue on the subject whether a tyrant or a private man is luckier in life. Although Xenophon does not represent him as a courtier poet³³, Simonides, as one of the first known practitioners of epinician poetry, might very well have written encomiastic court poetry in order to obtain funding from Hieron I.

In other words, Theocritus hints again at a literary tradition of which he himself forms a part. Now, in the first quarter of the third century BC, he imagines himself as being in the same position towards Hieron II as Simonides found himself in respect of Hieron I, then in the first quarter of the fifth century BC. To confirm, however, the importance of his poetic project, namely to procure everlasting fame to otherwise fast forgotten mortals, Theocritus mentions also Homer who rendered the same service to Odysseus. "Everlasting fame would have passed him by, and silence too/ would have shrouded" Odysseus (16, 53 f.) had not the songs of "an Ionian", i.e. Homer, brought them the reward of fame.

Mentioning Homer as bringing fame to Odysseus, Theocritus is by no means the first but again alluding to (and preceded by) not only Simonides, but also Pindar, who even declared that Odysseus' story had become greater than his actual suffering because of Homer's verse. The reason for this enhancement is the Homeric poetic force, the skill of which "deceives with misleading tales" as Pindar says (*N.* 7, 20–23).

Hieron I of Syracuse was one of the greatest patrons of Pindar and of his contemporary Bakchylides, Simonides' nephew, and it is not surprising that Theocritus' poem contains many echoes of the classical lyric poets. They, like Theocritus, had every reason to urge wealthy patrons not to keep their wealth for themselves, but to spend it on poetry. In one of Pindar's most prestigious works for Hieron, the first *Pythian* ode, the same topic is mentioned.

Pindar addresses Hieron directly, wishes him well, but continues "if indeed you love always to hear pleasant things said about you, do not grow too tired of spending" (*P.* 1, 90). The idea that men who keep their wealth hidden risk that their souls would remain devoid of fame, is commonly found in Pindar. He gave a prominent place to it at the end of his first *Isthmian* ode (*I.* 1, 67 f.), and again in the first *Nemean* ode (*N.* 1, 32), Pindar expresses the idea that wealth should not be stored away if one wishes to be praised for helping friends.

The closest connection, however, which combines Theocritus' text with the Sicilian tradition of epinikia is his praise of the Graces, the Charites. In Pindar, in addition to their duties in Olympus, the Graces dispense honour and glory to mortals, are patronesses of epinician songs, inspire their writers and attend their

³³ Xenophon could have made Simonides bring in the subject of verse panegyrics on princes when he lets him speak of courtiers praising everything Hieron does (*Hiero* 1, 14), but he does not.

performance³⁴. Wishing that Hieron may open his house to his Graces (16, 6), Theocritus is clearly following Pindar's model. He even amalgamates the groups of the Graces and the Muses in the final lines of his *Idyll*, where Muses and Graces are hard to distinguish. To Pindar it was self-evident that glory is conferred by the Muses (cf. e.g. *O.* 10, 95 f.), a statement Theocritus seems to adapt to his own quite similar purpose. In Pindar's already mentioned short fourteenth *Olympian* ode, which is nothing else than a hymn to the Graces, they are named as Aglaia (Splendour), Euphrosyne (Good Cheer), and Thalia (Festivity), all three present at gods' festivals and seated beside Apollo in order to look kindly upon the present celebration of an Olympic victory.

In marked contrast, Theocritus' Graces are imagined as going from house to house, seeking a welcome and a gift – but in vain; they return empty handed to the poet (5–13). In the end Theocritus has to declare (104–109) that he will wait at home until someone invites him; there he will go and take the Graces with him. By writing admirable poetry about him, Theocritus can make a man admired, he finally states³⁵.

But what did Pindar and Bakchylides have to say on Sicily? Does Sicily actually turn up in their works, and if so, how is she characterized?

In Pindar's first *Olympian*, a text which celebrates the same victory of 476 BC as Bakchylides fifth epinikion, Hieron of Syracuse rules over Sicily characterized by the epithet πολύμηλος, which means either "rich in flocks", "with many sheep or goats", or "bearing many fruits" (1, 12 f.)³⁶. In the second *Olympian*, Theron of Akragas, whose ancestors founded Agrigento, is called the pride and most precious part of Sicily by means of a beautiful metaphor: Pindar speaks of Theron, whose tomb is still to be seen in the valley of the temples at Agrigento, as the "eye" of Sicily, Σικελίας ... ὀφθαλμός (2, 9 f.), thus comparing the most precious sense of a human being to the most precious family of Sicily³⁷.

Pindar's first *Pythian* celebrates a victory of Hieron, too. In a long mythological digression, Pindar dramatically describes an eruption of Mount Etna. This volcano lies upon Typhos, the hundred-headed monster who dared to fight against the Olympian gods. The imprisonment of Typhos below Mount Etna is given as the reason, the *aition*, for later volcanic activity, just as in Hesiod the defeated Typhoeus, father of all monsters, as he is called there, is the *aition* for

³⁴ Cf. the references given by Gow, *op. cit.* (n. 2), vol. II, p. 308.

³⁵ Quite similarly, Pindar comes to the subject of one of his poems "together with the Graces" (*I.* 5, 21: σύν Χάρισιν δ' ἔμολον, "I have come with the Graces"), and "with the help of the Graces" Bakchylides "has woven a song" in praise of Hieron, as he declares at the beginning of his fifth epinikion (5, 9 f.: σύν Χαρίτεσσι ... ὑφάνας/ ὕμνον).

³⁶ M.S. SILK points out that δρέπων in the following line would be "prepared" by "much-fruited" (*Interaction in Poetic Imagery: With Special Reference to Early Greek Poetry*, Cambridge 1974, p. 153).

³⁷ Cf. M.M. WILLCOCK, *Pindar; Victory Odes*, Cambridge 1995, pp. 134 f.

subsequent “typhoons” (*Th.* 869). Zeus rules Mount Etna, as Pindar writes in the fourth *Olympian* (ἀλλὰ Κρόνου παῖ, ὃς Αἴτναν ἔχεις, *O.* 4, 6). From time to time, Typhos sends up lava as a sign of his once dreadful might, endangering the city Aitna, now Catania, recently (in 476/5) rebuilt by Hieron (*P.* 1, 18–32):

“Sicily weighs upon his shaggy chest, and a skyward column constrains him, snowy Aitna, nurse of biting snow all year round, from whose depths burst forth holiest springs of unapproachable fire” – Pindar indeed says springs of fire (πυρὸς ... παγαί, 21 f.), thus creating a strong contradictory image; continuing his long ekphrasis “during the days rivers of lava pour forth a blazing stream of smoke”, Pindar again combines stream, a word which usually goes with water, and smoke, which goes with fire (ῥόον καπνοῦ, 22); finally, Pindar unites literally and metaphorically both the water-image and the flame in the following “but in times of darkness a rolling red flame carries rocks into the deep expanse of the sea with a crash”. The Greek text is marked by an onomatopoeic alliteration, a long series of words beginning by a labial sound (ἀλλ’ ἐν ὄρφναισιν πέτρας φοίνισσα κυλιδομένα φλόξ ἐς βαθεῖαν φέρει πόντου πλάκα σὺν πατάγῳ, 23 f.).

In the following, the focus is directed on Typhon: “That monster sends up most terrible springs of Hephaistos’ fire – a portent wondrous to look at, a wonder even to hear of from those present” – in other words, an overwhelming sensual attraction. “Such a one (i.e. Typhon) is confined within Aitna’s dark and leafy peaks and the plain, i.e. between those dark-leaved heights and the ground below”. In the course of Pindar’s riddling description, the volcano becomes ever less visible. The final line is hardly understandable, where Pindar speaks of the silhouette or the outline of the volcano as “a jagged bed (which) goads (κεντεῖ) the entire length of the volcano’s back that lies against it” as if it were an animal or a living being, stretched out upon the hill, giving it a rough appearance. Pindar closes with a short prayer to Zeus whom he hopes to grant that he may please Hieron: “Grant, o Zeus, grant that I may please you, you who rule that mountain, the brow of a fruitful land (εὐκάρπιο γαίας, 30), whose neighbouring city that bears its name was honoured by its illustrious founder”, who is nobody else than Hieron³⁸.

Already in 470 BC Hieron had employed both Pindar and Bakchylides for the same occasion: not only did he commission Pindar’s first *Pythian* to be

³⁸ The whole Pindaric passage resembles another Pindaric description of Mount Etna crushing Typhos in his fourth *Olympian* (*O.* 4, 7 f.), and the vividness of both seems to be echoed by the author of the Prometheus-play, transmitted in the manuscripts together with other Aeschylean tragedies (cf. M. GRIFFITH, *Aeschylus, Prometheus Bound*, Cambridge 1983, p. 152.). In a long speech, Prometheus tells of Typhon’s fate; he was struck by Zeus, but time and again spits lava (363–372): “And now he lies, a sprawled, inert body, near the narrows of the sea, crushed under the roots of Mount Etna; on its topmost peaks Hephaestus sits forging red-hot iron, and from thence one day will burst forth rivers of fire” (368: ποταμοὶ πυρὸς, again a contradictory image), “devouring with their savage jaws the smooth fields of Sicily with their fine crops” (369: καλλικάρπου Σικελίας). Such is the rage in which Typhos will boil over, “raining hot darts of fiery breath that no one can touch, even though he has been calcinated by the thunderbolt of Zeus”.

performed in Aitna/Catane on his homecoming from the *Pythia* but also wanted Bakchylides to write a few lines to be performed on the spot at Delphi³⁹. The text commissioned is Bakchylides' fourth epinikion which begins more directly and hints right from the beginning at Hieron's most important friend: "Gold-haired Apollon still loves the Syracusan city and honours its righteous ruler, Hieron, since for the third time he is hymned [...] as a Pythian victor".

As if it were still not enough, even the book of Pindar's *Nemean* epinikia opens with a song on a Sicilian victory. A man from Aitna, Chromios, is hailed as coming from fertile Sicily, "the best of the fruitful earth with her lofty and prosperous cities" (1, 15). It was Zeus who granted to this island "a people of cavalrymen", which he "often indeed crowned with golden olive leaves from Olympic festivals". Since Chromios has no Olympic victories, this refers generally to Sicilian successes at Olympia and perhaps as well to Theron's and Hieron's victories there.

The first *Nemean* ode begins by explicitly mentioning both "famous Syracuse" (κλεινᾶν Συρακοσσᾶν, *N.* 1, 2) and Ortygia, an island just off Syracuse. This island Ortygia also plays a prominent role at the opening of the second *Pythian* ode, where Pindar says that Hieron "had crowned Ortygia with far-shining garlands" (ἱέρων ... τηλαυγέσιν ἀνέδησεν Ὀρτυγίαν στεφάνοις, *P.* 2, 5 f.). The island was a cult centre for Artemis (mentioned in the first *Nemean* as well as in the first *Pythian*); at Syracuse in turn a sanctuary of Ares was prominent, hailed at the very beginning of the second *Pythian* ode which starts by praising Syracuse as "great city, sanctuary of Ares, mighty in war" (μεγαλοπόλιες ὦ Συράκοσαι, βαθυπολέμου τέμενος Ἄρεος, *P.* 2, 1 f.). In the sixth *Olympian*, Hieron, administering Syracuse and Ortygia, "is devoted to red-footed Demeter and the festival of her daughter with the white horses, and to powerful Zeus of Aitna" (φοινικόπεζαν ἀμφέπει Δάματρα λευκίππου τε θυγατρὸς ἑορτᾶν καὶ Ζηνὸς Αἰτναίου κράτος, 94–96).

Praising the rulers of Sicily, Pindar and Bakchylides found a great deal to admire in their horse-driving. With the clear intent to ingratiate themselves with the Sicilians, they declared that the Sicilians invented even the chariot, or horsemanship in sports in general – which is clearly an exaggeration, though already an antique scholium refers to that story (Bakchylides, fr. 58)⁴⁰.

Bakchylides also spoke highly of Sicily's richness, right in the first line of his third epinikion. The text is devoted to Hieron's victory in the chariot race at

³⁹ On these epinician doublets cf. T. GELZER, *Μοῦσα ἀυθιγενής*, MH XLII 1985, pp. 95–120, and in a broader context A.D. MORRISON, *Performances and Audiences in Pindar's Sicilian Victory Odes*, London 1997.

⁴⁰ Cf. H. MAEHLER, *Die Lieder des Bakchylides*, Leiden 1997, vol. II, p. 358. – In Sophocles *OC* 312 f. Ismene is seen by Antigone as arriving "mounted upon an Etnean colt": Αἰτναίας ἐπὶ πώλου βεβῶσαν. Cf. further [Oppian] *Cyneg.* I 170.

Olympia (in 468 BC) and begins with a praise of Demeter, “ruling over Sicily, which bears the best fruit”, of whom the Muse Klio, “the giver of sweetness” may sing (ἀριστο[κ]άρπου Σικελίας κρέουσαν/ Δ[ά]ματρα .../ ὕμνει, γλυκύδωρε Κλεοῖ, 3, 1–3)⁴¹. But Bakchylides wants the Muse to sing of Hieron’s swift horses, too, the Olympic runners (θοάς τ’ Ο/λυμ]πιοδρόμους Ἴέρωνος ἵππ[ο]υς). By calling Sicily abounding in splendid fruit (τᾶς ἀγλαοκάρπου/ Σικελίας, fr. 106, 5 f.), Pindar infers that Sicily must have been a splendid place to live.

It is not unlikely that there were epinikia before Simonides. It cannot be proved for the time being but Stesichoros, already in antiquity credited with many an innovation⁴², might as well have written epinikia as Ibykos is suspected to have done. Ibykos, a generation younger than Stesichoros and born in nearby Reggio Calabria, speaks of Leontini, northwest of Syracuse, in a poem which seems to commemorate an athlete named Kallias, born in Leontini (*SLG* 220 f., from *P. Oxy.* 2637, a commentary on choral lyric). All this is highly speculative, of course. The very considerable athletic content of *P. Oxy.* 2735 (*SLG* 166–219, cf., e.g., *SLG* 166 & 176), however, makes it likely that already Ibykos composed victory-odes, an observation corroborated by other fragments of his⁴³.

In one of the last papyrus-publications of Stesichoros’ works some tiny fragments seem to indicate that he composed a work on some western isles⁴⁴. Not only Lipari and the Aeolian Isles in general might have been the subject of his poetry, but also Sicily, because the adjective Sicilian, or the noun Sikelos, the

⁴¹ One myth dominates all others in Sicily, that of Demeter and Kore or as Cicero put it, “vetus est haec opinio [...] insulam Siciliam totam esse Cereri et Liberae consecratam” (*Ver.* IV 106); cf. the testimonies gathered by R.D. GRIFFITH, *Pelops and Sicily: The Myth of Pindar Ol. 1*, JHS CIX 1989, pp. 171–173. The first explicit literary appearance of the “Sicilian” Rape of Persephone, however, is in Carcinus the Younger, a tragic poet of the 4th century (*TrGF* 70 F 5); cf. N.J. RICHARDSON, *The Homeric Hymn to Demeter*, Oxford 1974, pp. 76 f. Yet already Pindar speaks of the fact that Zeus gave Sicily to Persephone (at the opening of *N.* 1, 13 f.: τᾶν [scil. the island of Sicily] Ζεὺς ἔδωκεν Φερσεφόνᾳ), and early coins from Enna (about 450 BC) show Demeter on her chariot looking for Persephone, because the scene was connected with their city; cf. G. ZUNTZ, *Persephone*, Oxford 1971, pp. 70 f. Cicero (*loc. cit.*) spoke of a wood near Enna, itself the navel of Sicily, as the place from which Persephone was carried off, adding that Ceres in her eager search lighted her torches at the fires that burst forth from the peak of Aetna. – A new evaluation (focussing on Athens and Attica) is given by A. KLEDT, *Die Entführung Kores. Studien zur athenisch-eleusinischen Demeterreligion*, Stuttgart 2004.

⁴² Stesichoros seems to have been the first to compose in dactylo-epitrites, he “invented” the triadic structure (consisting of strophe, antistrophe and epode, TB 22 *PMGF*) and also various mythological variants (ἐκαινοποίησε τὰς ιστορίας): 192 f., 217, 219, 233 *PMGF* (on which cf. J.R. MARCH, *The Creative Poet: Studies on the Treatment of Myths in Greek Poetry*, London 1987, e.g., pp. 88–91, 157 f.). For a brief survey cf. G. SCHADE, *Stesichorus. Papyrus Oxyrhynchus 2359, 3876, 2619, 2803*, Leiden 2003, p. 3.

⁴³ Cf. J.P. BARRON, *Ibycus: Gorgias and Other Poems*, BICS XXXI 1984, pp. 13–24, and E.A.B. JENNER, *Further Speculations on Ibycus and the Epinician Ode: S 220, S 176, and the ‘Bel-lerophon’ Ode*, BICS XXXIII 1986, pp. 59–66.

⁴⁴ *P. Oxy.* 3876, fr. 25 b 2; 35, 10; 62, 5; 74, 4; cf. SCHADE, *op. cit.* (n. 42), p. 106.

mythic ruler in Sicily, can be read on the papyrus (and Sicilian places occur in his *PMGF* 270, if the fragment belongs to him and not to “Stesichoros the second”). Other emendations, however, are always possible, and the tiny scraps will probably never reveal their secret.

III. AESCHYLUS

The new city of Aitna was founded by Hieron of Syracuse in 476/5 BC. It is very likely that Aeschylus produced a play in honour of that founding during one of his visits to Sicily (*TrGF* T 1, 33 f.). By offering a good augury for the new city, Aeschylus somehow legitimised Hieron’s rule. *Aitnaiai*, the Greek title of Aeschylus’ play, however, is ambivalent. Of course, it denotes the chorus, but whether it is to be translated simply as “women of (the town) Aitna” or more specifically as “nymphs of Mount Etna” is unclear.

The play was remarkably innovative⁴⁵ as can be deduced from a papyrus-fragment describing the contents of the *Aitnaiai* (*P. Oxy.* 2257, fr. 1). It reveals that the play had many changes of scene, the setting being successively Aitna (perhaps the mountain rather than the city), Xuthia (a district near Leontini), Aitna again, Leontini, Syracuse, and another unidentifiable locality – all of them places within Hieron’s dominions. The divisions mentioned by this ancient “hypothesis” (as these notes are called) are real “acts”, and it is known that there was an ancient theory that a play should have five acts, as e.g. Horace points out in his *Ars Poetica* (“neve minor neu sit quinto productior actu/ fabula”, 189 f.)⁴⁶. The clear exemplification of the papyrus hypothesis seems to be in favour of the possibility that already a play by Aeschylus could contain such five “acts”⁴⁷. But we cannot tell how such a division was supposed to apply to Greek tragedy, itself not only divided into prologue, episode(s), and exodus, punctuated by choral odes, but also always containing a varying number of episodes⁴⁸. And if the chorus in the *Aitnaiai* consisted throughout of women of Aitna, then it seems that they will have left the scene and re-entered between each act and that “the chorus will only have been able to sing exit and re-entry songs, and never a proper act-dividing song”, a stasimon⁴⁹. The extraordinary formal structure of this play is still a riddle,

⁴⁵ A list of innovations attributed to Aeschylus is discussed cautiously by M.R. LEFKOWITZ, *The Lives of the Greek Poets*, Baltimore 1981, pp. 73 f.

⁴⁶ Cf. C.O. BRINK, *Horace on Poetry*, vol. II: *The “Ars Poetica”*, Cambridge 1971, pp. 248–251.

⁴⁷ E. LOBEL’s cautious statement is part of his notes on the hypothesis in *The Oxyrhynchus Papyri*, vol. XX, London 1952, pp. 66–69.

⁴⁸ Cf. N. RUDD, *Horace, Epistles II and Epistle to the Pisones (“Ars Poetica”)*, Cambridge 1989, p. 181.

⁴⁹ Cf. O. TAPLIN, *The Stagecraft of Aeschylus: The Dramatic Use of Exits and Entrances in Greek Tragedy*, Oxford 1977, pp. 416–418 (quotation 417).

and “it may have been the lack of the traditional Athenian dramatic framework that encouraged Aeschylus to experiment with the form of the play”⁵⁰.

References to the play in later authors suggest that it told the story of the Sicilian nymph Thalea, daughter of Hephaestus. Thalea was made pregnant by Zeus and then swallowed up by the earth, some say by command of the jealous Hera, others by the act of Zeus in order to protect her from Hera's wrath. The chorus of women from Aitna – or maybe rather of mountain nymphs, sisters of Thalea – may perhaps have been wandering across Sicily in search of her.

It was not the only Aeschylean play Hieron wanted to be performed in Sicily. Shortly after its first production in Athens in 472, Aeschylus' *Persae* was restaged in Syracuse. This highly unusual play of Aeschylus, often criticized for showing no plot and, accordingly, no action at all, depicts some high-ranking personnel at the Persian court, among whom not only does a dreaming queen figure but a dead king also returns from the underworld, both playing against their luckless son who issues lyrical messages⁵¹.

All that attracted the attention of the Syracusan tyrant, and Aeschylus in turn was attracted by Sicily. The biographical tradition that Aeschylus paid at least two visits to Sicily, and that he died there in 456 BC, seems plausible; the information does not contradict any known facts nor does it appear to be based merely on inference from the author's own work⁵². Unfortunately, we know nothing about his attitude to Sicily, nothing about the relation of his work to his trips abroad, nothing about the effect that prolonged exposure to the brilliant and contrasting culture of the West may have made on his artistic development⁵³. Whether Hieron offered him options Aeschylus always missed in Athens, or whether Aeschylus, born in Eleusis, a *deme* of the Athenian *polis*, appreciated more a new world and despised the old one, or whether the old one had become so different from the one he fought for at Marathon that it was no longer worth living in Athens,

⁵⁰ Cf. C. DEARDEN, *Plays for Export*, Phoenix LIII 1999, pp. 222–248 (quotation 230). Whether the play had been restaged in Athens is not known. The catalogue of Aeschylus' plays, however, lists both a “genuine” and a “spurious” *Women of Aetna* play (*TrGF* T 78 Αἰτναῖαι γυνήσιοι followed by Αἰτναῖαι νόθοι). Cf. recently K. BOSHER, *Hieron's Aeschylus*, and D.G. SMITH, *Sicily and the Identities of Xuthus: Stesichorus, Aeschylus' Aetnaeae, and Euripides' Ion*, in: K. BOSHER (ed.), *Theater Outside Athens: Drama in Greek Sicily and South Italy*, Cambridge 2012, pp. 97–111, 112–136 respectively.

⁵¹ On a (somehow altered) Sicilian text of the play cf. H.D. BROADHEAD, *The Persae of Aeschylus*, Cambridge 1960, pp. XLVIII–LV, and A.F. GARVIE, *Aeschylus, Persae*, Oxford 2009, pp. LIII–LVII.

⁵² Cf. LEFKOWITZ, *op. cit.* (n. 45), pp. 71–73.

⁵³ Cf. the attempts by M. GRIFFITH, *Aeschylus, Sicily, and Prometheus*, in: R.D. DAWE, J. DIGGLE, P.E. EASTERLING (eds.), *Dionysiaca: Nine Studies in Greek Poetry by Former Pupils Presented to Sir Denys Page on His Seventieth Birthday*, Cambridge 1978, pp. 105–139, to identify Sicilian influence on the *Prometheus*, which “have yielded little” as the author states in his commentary on the same play, published some years later (Cambridge 1983, p. 32).

or whether it was just a whim of his, a spleen of a silly old man who wanted to die in a more beautiful environment than Athens could offer, we simply do not know. We can be sure of one fact alone, namely that he was attracted to Sicily.

IV. SICILIAN FEASTS

Aside from the bucolic and the epinician tradition, which certainly belong to Sicily, there was something else constantly connected to the island. In fact, a very special Sicilian flavour was familiar to Archestratos, a Sicilian author of the fourth century BC, born in Gela⁵⁴. He seems to have composed only one work of which, however, four titles are known. Three of them – *Gastronomy*, *Science of Dining*, and *Art of Cooking* (in Greek Γαστρονομία, Δειπνολογία, and Ὀφιοποιία) – seem to hint at didactic poetry, though the fourth known title – *Life of Pleasure* (Ἡδυσπάθεια) – sounds more exciting⁵⁵. This last title was given to the book by Callimachus (fr. 436) and is now generally used. In Rome, Ennius took a vivid interest in the Archestratan dactylic hexameters and tried a translation of which eleven lines have come down to us in bad shape (*SH* 193)⁵⁶. Horace composed a quite similar *Satire* in which an expert in food is lecturing on dining as if it were a science (*Sat.* 2. 4). Apparently in the Rome of Augustus cookery held the place it had occupied already in the days of Archestratos, whose literary ancestry is somewhere between didactic poetry and its parody, or “subversion”⁵⁷.

Archestratos deals largely with food, and he seems to have travelled to Syracuse. In one of his longer fragments he vividly opposes the Syracusan way of preparing a particular fish, sea-bass (*SH* 176, 10–14)⁵⁸: “Let no Syracusan or Italian come near you as you are making this dish; for they do not understand how to prepare top-quality fish, but completely ruin them, by covering everything they cook with cheese and sprinkling it with liquid vinegar and silphium-flavoured brine-sauce”.

Having studied cooks from Syracuse rather closely, Archestratos praises them in the following for their own specialities (15–18): “They are the very best, however, at preparing some thrice-damned rockfish knowledgeably, and at a feast they are capable of cleverly devising many types of sticky little dishes full of seasonings and other nonsense”.

⁵⁴ Cf. A. SENS, S.D. OLSON, *Archestratos of Gela: Greek Culture and Cuisine in the Fourth Century BC*, Oxford 2000.

⁵⁵ The titles are discussed by Athenaeus at the beginning of his *Deipnosophistae* (I 4 d–e).

⁵⁶ Cf. G. SCHADE, *Ennius und Archestratos*, *Philologus* CXLII 1998, pp. 275–278.

⁵⁷ Cf. A. DALBY, *Siren Feasts: A History of Food and Gastronomy in Greece*, London–New York 1996, p. 117.

⁵⁸ Cited from Athenaeus VII 311 b–c, translated by S.D. OLSON, *Athenaeus, The Learned Banqueters*, vol. III, Cambridge, Mass. 2008.

In Greek comedy, too, Sicilian cooks are praised several times⁵⁹, but also a Sicilian way of preparing food, in particular fish, is well known. Two fourth-century comic poets, Epicrates and Ehippus, let a cook turn up who speaks of roasting or broiling (instead of stewing or boiling) as typically Sicilian⁶⁰. Ehippus' fragment is particularly revealing; he depicts a dialogue on how to prepare skate (a very large and common fish) which runs: "After I cut the skate into steaks, should I stew it? What's your opinion? Or should I roast it Sicilian style?" – "Sicilian style" (Σικελικῶς) is the answer.

A famous visitor to Sicily rejected this opulent Syracusan diet. In his *Seventh Letter* Plato is very much annoyed by the Italian and Syracusan lifestyle, i.e. "having two rich meals twice a day and never sleeping alone at night, and all the practices which accompany this mode of living", as he puts it (326 b–c). Nobody would become wise or temperate who indulges in these things, Plato continues. His lines were so admired by Cicero that he translated them into Latin (*Tusc.* V 100). Plato, however, who again disapproves of Syracusan and Sicilian dishes in his *Politeia* (404 d), was well informed on the subject due to the works of a certain Mithaecus. He published a book on Sicilian cooking, and is for that reason particularly mentioned by Plato in his *Gorgias* (518 b).

Sicilian tables, especially those of Syracuse, were proverbial for their luxury. Aristophanes speaks of them in his first play, the *Banqueters*, performed in 427. The banqueters of this play are the guests of a traditionally minded landowner, who has two sons, one virtuous and one not. The former was given traditional education, while the latter has dropped out of school to learn something new. He was taught by sophists like Thrasymachus and got to know Alcibiades (*PCG* 205), whom he even imitates. As a result, instead of being interested in Homeric words (*PCG* 233), the less virtuous son has abandoned traditional values for a life of self-indulgence and troublemaking (*PCG* 225). That "the Sicilians and Syracusans are notorious for luxury" are Athenaeus' words just before the unlucky father is cited, lamenting the fate of his son, who instead of other and more important things "learned how to drink, and also how to sing out of key, and what a Syracusan table is, and Sybaritic feasts": ἀλλ' οὐ γὰρ ἔμαθε ταῦτ' ἐμοῦ πέμποντος, ἀλλὰ μᾶλλον πίνειν, ἔπειτ' ἄδειν κακῶς, Συρακοσίαν τράπεζαν Συβαρίτιδᾶς τ' εὐωχίας. Vice is its own reward.

Athenaeus transmits this Aristophanean citation in a context (XII 527 c) where he also discusses Plato's similar statements from his *Seventh Letter* and his *Politeia*. The expression made its way to Rome where Horace speaks of

⁵⁹ Cf. Cratinus Iunior 1 *PCG* and Antiphanes 90 *PCG*, both authors of the fourth century, both quoted by Athenaeus XIV 661 e–f.

⁶⁰ On Epicrates 6 *PCG* and Ehippus 22 *PCG* cf. J. WILKINS, *The Boastful Chef: The Discourse of Food in Ancient Greek Comedy*, Oxford 2000, pp. 384–386.

the “Sicilian feasts which produce sweet savour” (“Siculae dapes dulcem elaborabunt saporem”, *Carm.* III 1, 18).

An impression of what these feasts might have been is given by Epicharmus, a poet of the fifth century BC. Whether or not he was born in Syracuse is disputed, and was already discussed in antiquity. But he is strongly connected to Sicily, where he seems to have lived and worked as a poet for Hieron I. He is credited with being one of the first comic writers, having originated the Dorian or Sicilian comic form. Aristotle in his *Poetics* (ch. 5, 1449 a 5–7) thought he was, noting that the plots of comedy came “at its beginning from Sicily” (ἐξ ἀρχῆς ἐκ Σικελίας ἦλθε). His being the inventor of comedy did not escape the attention of Theocritus, always aware of the historic dimension of Greek poetry. He wrote an epigram for a bronze statue of Epicharmus erected by his compatriots at Syracuse⁶¹, right at the opening praising him as the inventor of Comedy (ὁ τὰν κωμωδίαν/ εὐρῶν Ἐπίχαρμος, *Ep.* 18, 1 f.). Because Bacchus is addressed in the third line, one may assume that the statue was perhaps in the theatre of Syracuse⁶², the remains of which seem to date from the time of Hieron II⁶³.

Sophron, a Syracusan writer of mimes, must be mentioned in this context, too. His early years in Syracuse probably overlapped with Epicharmus’ old age, and he is the only author whom we know previously to Herodas to have written mimes as specifically literary pieces⁶⁴.

It is again Athenaeus who preserves a substantial fragment of one of Epicharmus’ works which lists various kinds of shell-fish, among them oysters. Having discussed in the preceding paragraph the worth of lemon in general, now Athenaeus effortlessly moves on to oysters in particular (both lemon and oysters belonging indeed together). He wants to illustrate what species are known and cites Epicharmus (*PCG* 40, 1–4), who “brings shellfish of every sort: limpets, aspendoi, krabuzoi, kikibaloι, sea-squirts, scallops, barnacles, purple shellfish, tightly closed oysters, which are difficult to open but easily swallowed down”. The list begins with names such as *aspendoi*, *krabuzoi*, and *kikibaloι*, which cannot be translated; these unidentifiable shellfish, however, are believed to be local

⁶¹ Cf. Gow, *op. cit.* (n. 2), vol. II, p. 542.

⁶² Cf. A.S.F. GOW, D.L. PAGE, *The Greek Anthology, Hellenistic Epigrams*, vol. II, Cambridge 1965, p. 533.

⁶³ Cf., however, L. ROSSI, *The Epigrams Ascribed to Theocritus: A Method of Approach*, Leuven 2001, p. 293: “...the possibility of the existence of a statue erected in honour of Epicharmus should not be excluded. Nor should the existence of a relevant inscription, even of known authorship, perhaps even of Theocritus, be ruled out. But it would be difficult for the inscription, if it existed, to have been the same one transmitted by epigram 18”.

⁶⁴ Sophron wrote in Doric prose: cf. E.W. HANDLEY in: *Cambridge History of Classical Literature*, vol. I: P. EASTERLING, B.M.W. KNOX (eds.), *Greek Literature*, Cambridge 1985, pp. 369 f., 612, and recently D. KUTZKO, *In Pursuit of Sophron: Doric Mime and Attic Comedy in Herodas’ Mimiambi*, in: BOSHER (ed.), *Theater...* (n. 50), pp. 367–390.

Sicilian designations⁶⁵. This fact and the abundance of words hint at the opulence of the dishes and the refined art of cookery which must have been prevailing in Sicily in general and in Syracuse in particular.

Finally Epicharmus' opulent dishes inspired Philoxenus of Leucas who echoes the wording of Epicharmus (*PCG* 40, 10 f.) in his dithyrambic *Banquet* (*PMG* 836 e 3 f.)⁶⁶. His ornate and somehow extravagant language in turn found comic echo in Antiphanes. This fourth-century writer appears to allude to his contemporary's *Banquet* poem in his own comedy called *Parasite* (*PCG* 180)⁶⁷. Considering the generic decline from *Banquet* to *Parasite*, one may guess how different tone and atmosphere were. Given these dense intertextual relations, however, it can fairly be stated that there certainly was something like a culinary literature of Sicily, a discourse on food quite similar to modern counterparts – opulent, diverting, and tempting, as the “Sicilian feasts” themselves certainly were.

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⁶⁵ Cf. OLSON, *op. cit.* (n. 58), vol. I, p. 471, n. 61.

⁶⁶ Cf. recently M. STULIGROSZ, *Philoxenus' Banquet against the Background of the Tradition of Greek Gastronomic Poetry*, Poznań 2012 (published in Polish with a summary in English).

⁶⁷ Cf. WILKINS, *op. cit.* (n. 60), pp. 352 f.