NOTES ON THE TEXT OF THEOCRITUS’ *IDYLLS*

Abstract: The author discusses and attempts to solve various textual problems which are contained in Theocritus’ *Idylls*.

Key words: Theocritus, Greek textual criticism.

Resumen: El autor trata varios problemas textuales de los *Idilios* de Teócrito, a los que pretende dar solución.

Palabras-clave: Teócrito, crítica textual griega.

1. THE ROUT OF SPRING

At *Idyll* 13, line 25ff. Theocritus states that the Argonauts set sail for Colchis at the rising of the Pleiads, i.e. at the beginning of summer:

"Ἀμος δ᾽ ἀντέλλων Πελειάδες, ἐσχαταὶ δὲ ἄρια νέον βοσκοῦν, τετραμμένων ἔλαιος ἡδη, τάμως ναυτίλας μμινάσκειν θεὸς ἀυτὸς ἢρων, καλὰν ὀν καθερηθήντες ἐς Ἀργκά Ἑλλασπόντον ἱκτο νότι τρέτον ἄμαρ ἀέντι

Translation by Gow:

«And when the Pleiads rise, and, spring now turned to summer, the far uplands pasture the young lambs, then that noble band of heroes bethought them of their seafaring; and taking their places in the hollow Argo they came to the Hellespont with three days of fair wind from the south».

In his commentary on this passage, Gow discussed the meaning of the words τετραμμένων ἔλαιος ἡδη, in line 26. I would like to suggest that Theocritus has employed a metaphor which is expressed by the participle τετραμμένων. Spring is imagined to be metaphorically routed by summer: cf. LSJ s.v. τρέπω III: «turn or put to flight». Thus the words τετραμμένων ἔλαιος ἡδη mean «when spring is already being put to flight». For the fact that metaphors were often expressed by one word in Greek cf. *Mus. Phil. Lond.*, vol. 4, page 61ff. Dover’s note *ad loc.*: «has

been turned» = «has changed» is inaccurate. Cf. Manetho II, 72 κύκλος, ὅπου τρέπει πυραλαμπέος ὥραι: Thes. s.v., τρέπω 2384 B-C. τρέπειν = «in fugam vertere».

2. THE VOYAGE OF THE ARGO

At *Idyll* 13, line 32ff. Theocritus describes how the Argonauts left their ship and prepared a meal:

> ἐκβάντες δ' ἐπὶ θύρα κατὰ ξύρα δαίτα πένυοτο δειλεύοι, πολλοί δὲ μᾶν στορέσαντο χαμεύναν.
> λείμων γὰρ οὖν ἐκεῖτο μέγα σπιβάδεσσαν ἄνειαρ,
> ἐνθὲν βούτομεν ὡς βαθὺν τ' ἐτάμοιο κύπειρον.

Translation by Gow:

> «And stepping out upon the beach they made ready their meal in the evening two by two, but one resting-place they laid for all, for there was a meadow with mighty store of litter for their couches, whence they cut sharp sedges and tall galingale».

The reader will note that according to Gow2, the Argonauts prepared their meal «two, by two» (κατὰ ξύρα). It is, however, more likely that the Argonauts are said by the poet to have left the ship «two by two». Each bench of the Argo was imagined to have held two Argonauts: cf. Ap. Rhod., *Arg.* I, 396. Hence the Argonauts are said to have left the ship «in pairs», i.e. bench by bench.

3. HYLAS AND THE SPRING

At *Idyll* 13, line 39f. Hylas is said to have found a spring:

> τάχα δὲ κράναι ἐνόθεν ἡμένῳ ἐν χόρτῳ.
> line 40 χόρτῳ: χόρτῳ v. l.

Translation by Gow:

> «Soon in a low-lying place he spied a spring».

In line 40 Gow printed the reading χόρτῳ. I would like to point out, however, that better sense is provided by the reading χόρτῳ. Hylas is said to have found a spring «with pasture lying by it» (ἡμένῳ3 ἐν χόρτῳ).

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2 Followed by Dover *ad loc*. Why on earth should the Argonauts prepare «their meals in pairs»?
3 Cf. LSJ s.v. ἑμένα. Cf. also LSJ s.v. πρόστημαι: «to be or lie near», γάρ προστήμαι (Aesch. *Pers.* 881). For the dative cf. Gow’s note on *Idyll* 13, line 29. The word ἑμένας (cf. Dover *ad loc.*) cannot mean «low-lying» (Gow) or «hidden away» (Dover).

At *Idyll* 13, line 43ff. the poet mentions the nymphs who fell in love with Hylas:

υδατι δ’ ἐν μέσσω Νύμφαι χορὸν ἀρτίζοντο,
Νύμφαι ἁπαξίματοι, δεινὰ θεᾶι ἀγροῖτας,
Εὐνίκα καὶ Μαλίς ἔαρ θ’ ὀρόσσα Νύχεια.

In line 45 Gow translated the phrase ἔαρ θ’ ὀρόσσα Νύχεια as «and Nycheia with her eyes of May». In other words, Gow regarded the words ἔαρ θ’ ὀρόσσα as an internal accusative. It is, however, possible to make better sense of the transmitted text if we understand that Nycheia is said to «attend to» (ὀρόσσα) spring. For this meaning of ὀρόσσα cf. Gow’s note on *Idyll* 15, line 2. Cf. also LSJ s.v. ὀρόσσα II, 2: «see to» (Od. 8. 443, ὄθε πῶμα). The nymphs, like the Hours, were connected with flowers and spring. Cf. Orph. *Hymn* 51, 15 Νύμφαι ... ἐλαροτερπεῖς («rejoicing in spring»).

5. The Nymphs and the Gaddfly

At *Idyll* 13, line 48f. the Nymphs are said to have fallen in love with Hylas:

πασίων γὰρ ἔρως ἀπαξίας φρένας ἐξεφόβησεν
`Ἀργείω ἐπὶ παιδί.

Gow noted that the critics have been puzzled by the meaning of the verb ἐξεφόβησεν. I would like to suggest that better sense is provided by the variant reading ἀμφεδώνησεν. The poet is alluding to *Od.* 22, line 300 where the gadfly (ὄστρος) is said to have «disturbed» (ἐδώνησεν) cattle. For the gadfly and love cf. also Ap. Rhod., *Arg.* 3, 276.

6. Hylas and the Nymphs

At Theocritus, *Idyll* 13, line 49ff. Hylas is said to have been dragged down into the water by the nymphs:

κατήρπε δ’ ἐς μέλαν ύδαωρ
ἀθρόος, ὡς ὅτε πυρὸς ἀπ’ οὐρανοῦ ἡμπεν ἀστήρ
ἀθρόος ἐν πώμῳ

The critics have been puzzled by the meaning of this passage: cf. Gow’s note ad loc. The comparison with a star, however, suggests that Theocritus has used the adjective ἀθρόος (i.e. «noiseless, silent»).

Dover follows Gow. Gow (ad loc.) admits that the internal accusatives governed by ὀρόσσα et sim. denote a manner (’Ἀργείω «murderously», τίρα «in a fiery manner», etc.), whereas ἔαρ does not fit into this category («much more imaginative than the nouns elsewhere so used»).

Dover, ad loc., who thinks that ἐξεφόβησεν must mean here «put to flight», without being able to quote any parallels.
Hylas is said to have fallen «without noise» (ἀθροος) into the water, just as a shooting star falls «without noise» (ἀθροος) from the sky. Cf. LSJ s.v. εὐθροος («loud-sounding») and πολύθροος («clamorous»).

According to Apollonius Rhodius, however, Hylas cried out when he fell: cf. Arg. I, 1240. Note the felicitous oppositio in imitando between Theocritus and Apollonius.

7. A Mouse and Pitch

At *Idyll* 14, line 50f. Aeschinas states that he wishes that he could fall out of love:

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κεὶ μὲν ἀποστέρξαμι, τὰ πάντα κεῦ ἐς δέον ἔρπω.
νῦν δὲ πόθεν, μύς, φαντί, Θυώπωξε, γείμεθα πόσσος.
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line 51 πόθεν: ποθ’ ὡς v. l.

Translation by Gow:

«If only I could fall out of love all would go as it should; but as it is, how can I say? I’m like the mouse in the pitch-pot, as they say, Thyonichus».

The reader will note that Gow printed the reading πόθεν in line 51. Better sense can, however, be obtained from the transmitted text if we print the variant ποθ’ ὡς and translate as follows: «As it is (νῦν δὲ), like, they say, a mouse once upon a time (ποθ’), we have tasted pitch, Thyonichus». Cf. LSJ s.v. πότε III, 1: «esp. in telling a story, once upon a time, ὡς ποτ’ ἢ μύς καὶ γαλὴ Ar. V. 1182».

8. Persephone and Hades

At *Idyll* 15, line 94f. Praxinoa states that she only wishes to have one master:

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μὴ φύη, Μελατώδες, ὅς ἀμῶν καρτερὸς εἶ
πλάν εἰνός, οὐκ ἄλεγα, μὴ μοι κενεάν ἀπομάξῃς.
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Translation by Gow:

«Persephone, don’t let us have any master but the one. So there; don’t level an empty pot for me».

According to Gow, Praxinoa is alluding to «the king, rather than her husband, for whom she has scant respect (8ff.)».

9. On Theocritus’ Graces

At *Idyll* 16, line 5 Theocritus asks who would like to be a patron for his poetry:
Translation by Gow:

«Who, of all that dwell beneath the bright daylight, will gladly with open house receive our Graces, nor send them back without a guerdon?»

The critics have been puzzled by the meaning of the participle πετάσας, in line 6. I would like to suggest that the poet is alluding here to the fact that his poetry was written on a papyrus roll, which had to be unfolded by the reader. We should therefore translate as follows: «Who, having spread out (πετάσας) our Graces (i.e. my poems), will receive them gladly in his house?»

10. ON THE FAME OF SIMONIDES

At Theocritus, Idyll 16, line 44 the poet refers to Simonides of Ceos:

εἰ μὴ θεῖος ἀιώνος ὁ Κήνος αἰῶνα φωνέων

In his commentary on this passage, Gow stated that the readings θεῖος and δευνός are both plainly preferable to κεύος… and there is little to choose between them». I would like to point out however, that the reading κεύος makes perfect sense. The words κεύος αιώνος mean «that famous singer»: cf. Nicander, Alex., line 105 λαγγείς πόμα κεύο («the famous spring of Langea»). Cf. also my Studies in the Poetry of Nicander, page 39 and G. Giangrande in Sic. Gymn. 1989, vol. 42, page 26.

The adjective θεῖος, as a mere episthētom ornans (so Gow ad loc.) and δευνός (platitudinous) are contextually inferior readings to κεύος, which, in the sense «celebrated», «famous» underlines that the famous Simonides made famous those whom he sang and who, without his poetry, would have remained obscure.

11. ON THEOCRITUS AND THEBES

At Idyll 16, line 104 ff. Theocritus addresses the Graces of Orchomenus:

ὠ. Ἐπεθέθη Χάρητες θειά, ὡ Μυνέων
Ὁρχιμενοὶ φίλεισα ἀπεχάθηκαν ποτὲ Θήβας
ἀκλήτως μὲν ἔγγει μένομι κεν. ἐς δὲ καλέωνεν
θαρσήσας Μόδαισι σὺν ἀμετέρασιν ἰομὴ ἀν.

The passage has caused difficulties to the critics because they have connected Θήβας with ἀπεχάθηκαν and not with μένομι. This would indicate that «the Graces are enemies of Thebes», a fact which, not surprisingly, puzzled Dover, and moreover, if we connect ἀπεχάθηκαν with Θήβας μένομι must be made to mean «I will stay (at home)» (Dover) or to be equivalent to οὐκ ἰομὴ (Gow), both of which suggestions are untenable. If we remember that Egyptian Thebes was, in
Hellenistic times, a literary centre where Posidippus resided (D. L. Page, Select Papyri, vol. III, Loeb edition 1970, page 471), all these difficulties are eliminated. Θήβας, in line 105, denotes Egyptian Thebes, and accordingly Theocritus means that if he is not summoned by anybody he will stay at Thebes (Θήβας, locatival dative). We should put a comma after ποτὲ and translate as follows: «Ο Graces, goddesses whom Eteocles adored, O ye that love Minyan Orchomenus, hated of old, when no man summons me I will stay at Thebes (Θήβας), but to the houses of them that call I will take heart and go, together with the Muses». The phrase άπεχθόμενών ποτέ means «hated of old», and refers to the fact that Heracles hated and defeated the Minyae (cf. RE VI, 433, quoted by Gow). Note the elegant *enjambement* Θήβας / ἄκλητος ... μένωμι.

The position of μὲν is of course perfectly normal.

Theocritus is patently alluding to Homer, *Iliad* 9, 381-2: Όρχομενών ... Θήβας Αἰγυπτίας.

### 12. The Marriage of Helen and Menelaus

At *Idyll* 18, line lff. Theocritus describes the wedding of Helen and Menelaus:

"Εν ποκ’ ἄρα Σπάρτα ξυνότρεχι πάρ Μενελάῳ
παρθενικαί ἄλλοισσα κόμαις ἱάκουν ἔχοισαι
πρόσε θεογράπτω τιθαίμω χορόν ἐστάσιντο,
δώειςα ταί πρέται πόλος, μέγα χρήμα λακανών,
ἀνὰ Γυναικόριδα κατεκλίσατο τάν ἄγαπατάν
μενοτείφας' Ἐλέναν ὁ νέωτερος Ἀτρέως νύϊν.

The critics have been puzzled by the meaning of line 4. Perfect sense can, however, be restored to the transmitted text if we place a full stop after πόλος in line 4, and translate as follows:

«Once, then, in Sparta, at the palace of golden-haired Menelaus, maidens with blooms of hyacinth in their hair formed a choir before the newpainted bridal chamber - twelve in number were they, the foremost in the town. There was a mighty crowd of Spartan women (μέγα χρήμα λακανών) when Atreus' younger son had closed the doors on his beloved Helen, Tyndareus' daughter, whom he had woo'd and won».

Theocritus means that when the twelve maidens sang the wedding-song for Helen and Menelaus, a large number of Spartan women were also present to witness the occasion.

### 13. A Wedding-Song in Theocritus

At *Idyll* 18, line 7f. the poet describes how girls sang a wedding-song for Helen and Menelaus:

άειδον δ’ ἄμα πάοσα ἐς ἐν μέλος ἐγκρύκοισαι
ποσί περεπλέκτοις, ὅπο δ’ ἑιχε δῶμ’ ἰμεναίῳ.

6 Note the ellipse of the *verbum substantivum*: cf. my *Studies in the Poetry of Nicander*, page 51. The *asyndeton* is of course common in Theocritus.

7 «A mighty host», Gow *ad loc.*
Translation by Gow:

«And all in unison they sang, beating time with weaving feet to their song, while the house rang with the bridal hymn».

Gow noted that the adjective \( \text{περιπλέκτως} \) has puzzled the critics. I would like to suggest that we should print the variant reading \( \text{περιβλέπτως} \). We are faced here with an example of adjectival enallage. The chorus are said to beat time with their «admired» feet. It is, of course the girls themselves who are looked at from all sides. For other cases of adjectival enallage in Theocritus cf. my commentary on Theocritus, \textit{Idyll} 24 (Amsterdam 1979), page 92.

14. A HYMN TO CASTOR AND POLYDEUCES

At \textit{Idyll} 22, line lff. Theocritus announces that he is going to sing a hymn to Castor and Polydeuces:

\[
\text{Τρινήτευς Λήδας τε καὶ αἰγιόχοιν Δίος τε,}
\text{Κάστωρα καὶ φασιῷν Πολυδέκατα πίθ᾽ ἐρεβίζειν}
\text{χεῖρας ἐπιζεύγεντα μέσας βοῶσιν ἰμάσιν.}
\]

line 3 \( \text{μέσος} \) Reiske: \( \text{μέσοις} \) codd.

Translation by Gow:

«We hymn the two sons of Leda and of aegis-bearing Zeus, Castor and Polydeuces, grim to challenge in boxing when he has strapped his palms with the oxhide thongs».

The reader will note that Gow printed Reiske’s alteration \( \text{μέσος} \) in line 3. Textual alteration is, nevertheless, not necessary. The mss. reading \( \text{μέσοις} \) refers to the fact that boxing-matches took place in the midst of men. Thus the poet states that Polydeuces is grim to challenge when he has joined his hands to oxhide-thongs in the midst of a crowd of men.

15. POLYDEUCES AND WINE

At \textit{Idyll} 22, line 34f. Theocritus describes how Castor and Polydeuces wandered apart from their comrades:

\[
\text{Κάστωρ δ’ ἀιωλόπωλος ὑπὸ τ’ ὀινωπόσ Πολυδέκατος}
\text{άμφω ἐρημαξοσκον ἀποπλαγγέντες ἐταῖρον}
\]

In his commentary on this passage, Gow discussed the possible meanings of the adjective \( \text{οἰνωπός} \). I would like to add that Theocritus is alluding here to the fact that the name Polydeuces

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8 «The figure is somewhat violent» Gow \textit{ad loc.}
9 Gow regards \( \text{περιβλέπτως} \) as «plainly inferior» because he is not acquainted with \textit{enallage adjectivi}.
10 Cf. LSJ s.v. \( \text{μέσος} \) III: «μέσον, τό, midst». Cf. also \textit{Iliad} 4, 444 ἐμάξω μέσα. Note the use of the poetic plural: cf. my \textit{Studies In The Poetry Of Nicander}, page 8.
was connected etymologically\footnote{For similar etymological explanations of names cf. my Studies in the Poetry of Nicander, page 76.} with the noun δέυκος, i. e. «sweet wine». The implication is that Polydeuces’ face was flushed with the effects of much sweet wine. Accordingly, οἰνωπός means here «wine-coloured».

16. AMYCUS’ LION-SKIN

At *Idyll* 22, line 51f. Theocritus describes Amycus’ lion-skin:

\[\text{αὐτὰρ ὑπὲρ μύτου καὶ αὐχένος ἡμρεῖτο} \]
\[\text{ἀκρών δέρμα λέοντος ἀφημένον ἐκ ποδώνων}.\]

Translation by Gow:

«A lion-skin fastened by the paws swung on his back and neck».

Gow was puzzled by the meaning of this line. All becomes clear when we realize that Theocritus has employed the verb ὑπεραίρω\footnote{Cf. LSJ s.v. ὑπεραίρω: «Med., lift oneself or rise above, πάντων».} in *tmesis*. We should translate as follows:

«A lion-skin fastened by the paws, rose above (ὑπὲρ ... ἡμρεῖτο) his back and neck».

The lion-skin is imagined to have covered Amycus’ head as well as his body.

17. WATER FOR POLYDEUCES

At *Idyll* 22, line 62f. Polydeuces asks Amycus for water:

\[\text{ΠΟ. δαμόσι-, οὐδὲ ἂν τοῦδε πείν ἰδᾶτος σύγια δοῖς,} \]
\[\text{AM. γνώσεαι, εἰ σεν δίφος ἀνεμένα χείλεα τέρσει.} \]

Translation by Gow:

«PO. Nay, Sir, wilt thou not even give us leave to drink of this water?
AM. That shalt thou know when thirst shall parch thy blistered lips».

In his commentary on line 63, Gow noted that ἀνεμένα normally means «relaxed». However, Gow argued that this meaning «is unsuitable for the effects of thirst». I would like to point out that the poet has employed adjectival *enallage*\footnote{For other cases of adjectival *enallage* cf. my Studies in the Poetry of Nicander, page 51f.}. He means that Polydeuces’ body will be enervated, i. e. «relaxed», by the effects of thirst.
18. A BOXING-MATCH IN THEOCRITUS

At *Idyll* 22, line 65 Amycus challenges Polydeuces to a fight:

\[\text{AM.} \text{ ei\'s \\\(\epsilon\iota\nu\iota\zeta\) \chi\varepsilon\iota\rho\alpha\zeta\ \delta\epsilon\iota\omega\nu\rho\omicron\ \varepsilon\nu\alpha\tau\iota\sigma\iota\varsigma\ \alpha\nu\delta\rho\iota,}\]

\[\text{PO.} \ 
\text{πυγμάχως \ \& \ \καί \ \ποσσὶ \ \θέων \ \οκλος, \ \δ\mu\mu\alpha\tau \ \delta\iota \ \\ oi\rho\alpha,}\]

line 66 δ\mu\mu\alpha\tau : δ\mu\mu\alpha\tau \ lunt.

The critics\(^{14}\) have been puzzled by the meaning of line 66: cf. Gow’s note *ad loc*. Perfect sense can, however, be restored to the text if we print the reading δ\mu\mu\alpha, which has been preserved for us by the lunt. This edition was printed in 1516: cf. Gow, *Theocritus*, vol. I, page xlv. We should therefore translate as follows:

«Are\(^{15}\) you a boxer or do you kick (\(\theta\iota\nu\iota\omega\varphi\)\(^{16}\)) legs with your feet? And are clinches (δ\mu\mu\alpha)\(^{17}\) fair?»

Polydeuces asks Amycus whether they are going to box or to wrestle, in which latter case δ\mu\mu\alpha would be licit, «correct» (cf. LSJ, s.v. όμοιος \(\text{III, b)}\); Moulton-Milligan, *Vocab. Gr. Test. s.v. όρθος* («right and fair»).

19. A BOXER’S THONGS

At *Idyll* 22, line 68 Polydeuces mentions the thongs which were worn by a boxer:

\[\text{PO.} \ \tis \ \gamma\alpha\rho, \ \delta\iota\nu\ χ\iota\rho\alphaς \ \kai \ \\ \epsilon\muοις \ \ς\nu\nu\epsilon\rho\iota\iota\zeta\omega \ \i\mu\alpha\tau\alpha\zeta,\]

Translation by Gow:

«PO. Who, then, is he with whom I shall join my thong-bound hands in fight?»

The critics have been puzzled by the meaning of this line: cf. Gow’s note *ad loc*. It is clear that Theocritus is referring here to the fact that thongs were wound round the arms of a boxer: cf. *Idyll* 22, line 81. We should therefore translate as follows:

«Who, then, is he for whom I shall join arms (\(\chi\iota\rho\alphaς\)\(^{18}\)) and my thongs?»

\(^{14}\) Dover states that δ\mu\mu\alpha\tau \ \delta\iota \ \oi\rho\alpha «makes no sense», and accepts a violent conjecture.

\(^{15}\) Note the ellipse of the *verbum substantivum*: cf. my *Studies in the Poetry of Nicander*, page 51.

\(^{16}\) The participle \(\theta\iota\nu\iota\omega\varphi\) has been employed instead of a finite verb: cf. my *New Studies in Greek Poetry* (Amsterdam 1989), page 20.

\(^{17}\) Cf. LSJ s.v. δ\mu\mu\alpha (5): «in pl. clinches in wrestling». The δ\mu\mu\alpha\tau mentioned in line 66 are the σημπλοκαί used in the *pankration* (cf. Philostr. *Imag.* 348 K, quoted by Gow). For a similar case where the correct reading has been preserved for us by an early edition cf. my *New Essays in Hellenistic Poetry* (Amsterdam 1985), page 48.

\(^{18}\) Cf. LSJ s.v. χ\iota\iota\rho (2): «hand and arm, arm».
20. The Hollow Shell

At *Idyll* 22 line 75ff. Amycus is said to have blown a shell in order to summon his men:

"Η ἡ... Ἀμυκός καὶ κόχλον ἐλὼν μικήσετο κόλλων
οὶ δὲ θῶς συνάγεσθεν ὑπὸ σκεράς πλατανίστους
κόχλου φυσήθεντος ἀεὶ Βέμφρυκες κομώμετε.

line 75 κόλλων: ἀηδ. D line 77 κόχου v. 1.

Translation by Gow:

«So said Amycus and took and blew a hollow shell; and at the blast of the shell the Bebryces, whose hair is ever unshorn, swiftly gathered beneath the shady planes».

In his commentary on line 75, Gow stated that κόχλος «is occasionally fem. in later writers, but κόλλων cannot be right here unless κόχου is to be read in 77».

It is, however, perfectly possible that Theocritus did in fact consider that κόχλος is feminine in gender. It should be noted that there are several examples of participles treated as having two terminations only: cf. Gow’s note on *Idyll* 15, line 119, quoting Nicander, *Ther.* 329 καταψηχθέντος ἀκάψης. Thus Theocritus may well have written κόχλου φυσηθέντος in line 77 and κόχλων ... κολλή in line 75.

21. Preparations for a Boxing-Match

At *Idyll* 22, line 80ff. Theocritus describes how Amycus and Polydeuces prepared for their boxing-match:

αῇ δὲ ἔπει ὄνομερην ἐκαρπάνωτο βοιαίας
χείρας καὶ πέρι γάρ μακροῦς ἐλαχὰς ἴμαστος,
ἐς μέσονν σύναγον φῶνον ἀλλήλας πεύνοντες.
ἐνθα πολώς σφικὴ μόχθιος ἐπιγομένωσιν ἐτύχον,
ἐπιστέρος κατὰ νύστα λάβα φῶς ἱέλοιο.

In his commentary on this passage, Gow argued that the two boxers wound straps of oxhide round their own hands. It is, however, possible to make better sense of the transmitted text if we imagine that the Bebryces and the Argonauts wound straps of oxhide round the hands of Amycus and Polydeuces. They then led them into their midst and watched the fight. We should translate as follows:

«Now when they had fortified their hands with straps of oxhide and wound long thongs about their arms, they led them into their midst breathing slaughter against each other. In their eagerness, much toil they had to see who should get the light of the sun behind him».

Note that the poet has employed *Subjektswechsel*.

19 For similar cases of *Subjektswechsel* cf. my *New Studies in Greek Poetry* (Amsterdam 1989), page 92.
22. THE GIANT BOXER

At Idyll 22, line 90f. Theocritus describes how Amycus attacked Polydeuces:

\[ \text{σίων ἔμεν μάχην ἑτάραξε, πολύς ἐπῆκετο ἰερεικῶς ἔς γαῖαν.} \]

Translation by Gow:

«he (i.e. Amycus) confused the fighting and, head down, fell on with all his force».

Theocritus is describing here how Polydeuces fought against a mighty opponent. Thus πολύς means «mighty»
\(^{20}\). Amycus is imagined to stoop towards the earth as he attacked (ἐπῆκετο). We should translate as follows:

«he confused the fighting and the mighty man attacked bending towards the earth».

23. POLYDEUCES THE BOXER

At Idyll 22, line 112ff. Theocritus states that, as the fight with Amycus proceeded, Polydeuces grew stronger:

\[ \text{σάρκες δὴ ὄ μὲν ἱδρύῃ συνίζασθαι, ἕκ μεγάλον δὲ} \]

\[ \text{ἀδυί ὁ λίγος γένετ' ἄνθρωπός, ὡς' ἠ' ἐξὶ πάσονα γίγαν} \]

\[ \text{ἀνθώμενον φορέοιekte πόνον καὶ χρώμα ἀμείναι.} \]

line 114 ἀνθώμενον Meineke : ἀπτώμενον codd.

Translation by Gow:

«And as he sweated the flesh of Amycus fell in, and from a giant in a little while he became small; but as the work waxed hotter the other's limbs grew ever stronger and of better hue».

In his commentary on this passage, Gow argued that Meineke’s alteration ἀπτώμενον is necessary
\(^{22}\). I would like to point out, however, that the mss. reading ἀπτώμενον makes perfect sense. Gow failed to understand that the poet has employed the present participles with a sense of anteriority. Thus he states that «when the work had started» (ἀπτώμενον ... πόνον) Polydeuces grew stronger.

24. THE MIGHT OF AMYCUS

At Idyll 22, line 118ff. Theocritus describes how Amycus boxed with Polydeuces:

\(^{20}\) Cf. LSJ s.v. πολύς 2, b: «rarely of a single person, great, mighty, μέγας καὶ πολύς ἐγένετο, Hdt. 7. 14».

\(^{21}\) Cf. LSJ s.v. ἐπίκειμαι (2): «attack», Βοιωτοίς (Hdt. 5. 81).

\(^{22}\) Dover follows Gow.

The Cruelty of Amycus

At *Idyll* 22, line 123ff. Theocritus describes how Polydeuces attacked Amycus’ temple:

> ἀλλ’ ὡς ὑπεξανέων κεφαλή, στιβαρῇ δ’ ἄμα χείρι
> πλὴξεν ὑπὸ σκαΐνον κρόταφον καὶ ἐπέμπεσεν ὁμώς.
> ἐκ δ’ ἐχύθη μέλαν ἁμά θοῶς κρόταφοι χαύντος.

Translation by Gow:

> «but Polydeuces slipped his head aside and with his stout fist struck below the left temple and put his shoulder into the punch; and from the gaping temple swift flowed the dark blood».

The reader will note that Gow translated the words ἐπέμπεσεν ὁμώς as «he put his shoulder into the punch». He admits, however, that «the language is odd». This difficulty is eliminated when we realize that Theocritus has employed the adjective ὁμῶς[25], i.e. «cruel». Thus Polydeuces is said to have «attacked the cruel man»[26], i.e. Amycus. For ἐπεμπίπτω + dat. personae = «attack» cf. Thes. s.v.; in lines 123-24 we are of course faced with *hysteron proteron*.

The Death of Lynceus

At *Idyll* 22, line 203f. Theocritus describes the death of Lynceus:

> 24 Cf. LSJ s.v. ἐπιβίαινω II, b: «c. dat. pers., set upon, assault, πιτ. X. Cyr. 5. 2. 26».
> 25 Cf. LSJ s.v. ὁμῶς, II: «metaph., savage, fierce, cruel».
> 26 The absence of the article before the substantivized adjective ὁμῶς is not surprising in Theocritus, as we can learn from the standard monographs by Ameis and Leutner.
Translation by Gow:

«and Lyneus bowed him and fell on his face, and heavy the sleep that sped down upon his eyes».

In line 203 Gow printed the variant στόμα. I would like to suggest, however, that better sense is provided by the variant χόνα. Lyneus is imagined to bend towards the earth before dying. We should translate as follows:

«and Lyneus lay dead (κείτο), having bent towards the earth (ἐς χόνα ... νευκόως), for (§) heavy sleep sped down upon his eyes».

27. ON THE BIRTHPLACE OF DIONYSUS

At Theocritus, *Idyll* 26, line 33f. Dionysus is said to have been born on «snowy Dracanus»:

χαϊρα μὲν Δίαννος, δὲν ἐν Δρακάνῳ νιφόει
Zeix ὑπατος μεγάλαν ἐπιγούλα καθετεο λόσας

Gow was puzzled by the reference to Dracanus. He stated that «two places of the name are known: (i) a hill on the island of Icaros; (ii) an island west of the Thracian Chersonese (see RE 5. 1645)». I would like to suggest that Theocritus has located the birth of Dionysus on the island of Icaros. Dracanus is mentioned together with the island of Icaros at *A. P.* 7. 651, line 3 Δοξίχης (=Icaros) τε καὶ αἰπεῖνς Δρακάνοκα. Nonnus followed Theocritus and also located the birth of Dionysus on the hill called Dracanus (i. e. on Icaros). Cf. *Dion.* 9, 16 Δρακάνωκα λεχών ἀμφι κολώπην.

In a fragment of a hymn quoted by Diod. Sic. 3, 66 Dracanus is named and grouped together with Icaros and Naxos among the reputed birthplaces of Dionysus:

οἶ μὲν γὰρ Δρακάνωκα σ’, οἶ δ’ Ικάρω ἀμελόσσῃ
φάσ’, οἶ δ’ ἐν Νάξῳ, διόν γένος, εἰραφλώτα κτλ.

Probably the author of this fragment is referring to the Thracian island of Dracanus. For the connection of Dionysus with Thrace cf. Ovid, *Met.* 9, 641f. where the poet mentions the Ismarian worshippers of Bacchus.

28. FAREWELL TO SEMELE

At Theocritus, *Idyll* 26, line 35ff. the poet bids farewell to Semele and her sisters:

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27 Cf. LSJ s.v. ἐκμαί (4): «lie dead, Il. 5. 467».
28 Cf. LSJ s.v. νευκόω (3): «generally, nod, bend forward, of warriors... »

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Translation by Gow:

«Farewell to comely Semela and her sisters, Cadmean dames honoured of many a heroine, who, at Dionysus' instigation, did this deed, wherein is no blame. At the acts of gods let no man cavil».

The reader will note that Gow translated the words πολλαῖς μεμελημέναι ἦρωίναις as «honoured of many a heroine». But who are the «heroines»? Dover thinks that the word denotes «women in other cities in the “heroic” age», which is lexically impossible: mortal women are not heroines. Gow writes that «the ἦρωίναι are presumably the anonymous Maenads in their θάσοι», but such Maenads were mere women, not heroines. The resultative perfect participle μεμελημέναι gives us the correct explanation of the phrase: the literal sense is «who have been honoured by many women now dead». The word ἦρωινη can denote deceased women, cf. e. g. LSJ s.v. II. The poet wants to underline that Semele and her sisters have been worshipped by a long line of female devotees reaching far back into the past.

29. THEUGENIS AND THE DISTAFF

In *Idyll* 28 Theocritus describes a distaff, which he is sending as a present to Theugenis. Gow noted that the critics have been puzzled by the meaning of lines 24f.:

κήπον γὰρ τῆς ἐρεί τῶπος ἵδω τοι. ἦ ἡ μεγάλα χάρας
ἀφώρω σὺν ὀλέγῳ, πάντα δὲ τίματα τὰ πάρ φίλων.

The solution to the problem posed by these lines is obvious once we realise that χάρας, in line 24, means «pleasure, delight»: cf. LSJ s.v. IV. Theocritus means that somebody who sees the distaff will say that «great pleasure» (μεγάλα χάρας) comes to Theugenis together with a little gift. He is alluding to the fact that Theugenis is destined to produce beautiful garments with the distaff: cf. line 10ff. In other words, Theugenis will spend many happy hours working with her distaff.

30. THE SHRINE OF APHRODITE

At *Idyll* 28, lines 3-4 Theocritus refers to Miletus together with the shrine of Aphrodite:

θέρσεις ἄμμων ὑμάρτῃ πόλιν ἐν ὑπεκλόος ἑγλάσαι,
ὅππα κυπρίδος ἵρουν καλάμων χλώριον ὑπὶ ἀτάλω.

50 «Admired by many heroines» Dover.
Translation by Gow:

«attend me without fear to the splendid town of Neileus, where green amid its soft rushes lies the precinct of Cypris.»

The critics have been puzzled by the reference to a shrine of Aphrodite in line 4. Gow argued that «the reference to a temple of Aphrodite at Miletus has no seeming relevance here, and accords somewhat ill with the mention of Athena (1)». It should be noted, however, that the story of the unhappy love-affair of the children of Miletus (i.e. Caunus and Byblis) was famous in antiquity: cf. Parthenius XI and Ovid, _Met._ 9, 453ff. Moreover, the shrine of Aphrodite at Miletus is mentioned by the _scholia_ on _Idyll_, 7, line 115. Theocritus therefore mentioned the shrine of Aphrodite together with the town of Miletus in order to allude to this famous story. Athena, the chaste goddess of spinning, is purposely mentioned by the poet together with Aphrodite, who caused ruin for the children of Miletus. Thus the story of the children of Miletus serves as a foil to the chaste behaviour of Theugenis, who is devoted to spinning.

31. **ON SPINNING AND WEAVING**

_At Idyll_ 28, line 10f. Theocritus refers to cloaks for men and women:

ṣιν τά πόλλα μὲν ἔργα ἐκτελέσῃς ἄνδρεῖας πέπλοις,
πόλλα δ᾽ ἀδίκαιες φόρεοι ἴδαιτινα βρακη.

Gow noted that most editors have treated πέπλοις as the Aeolic accusative, like 12 πόκοις, 16 δόμοις, 20 νόσοις, etc. Gow argued, moreover, that «a distaff is for spinning raw wool into yarn, not for weaving yarn into cloth». According to Gow, ἐργα ἐκτελεῖν must mean «spin» and πέπλοις must be dative not accusative. I would like to point out, however, that better sense can be made of the transmitted text if we understand that Theocritus has employed the verb συνεκτελέω.

We should translate as follows:

«whom (τὰ 32) you will help in completing (σιν … ἐκτελέσῃς 33) many tasks (πόλλα … ἔργα), men’s garments (ἄνδρεῖας πέπλοις), as well as many flowing cloaks such as women wear».

32. **THE SHEEP OF MILETUS**

_At Idyll_ 28, line 12f. the poet mentions the famous wool of Miletus:

δίς γὰρ μάτερες ἄριστων μαλάκων ἐν βοτάναις πόκοις
πέξαιντ’ αὐτοτεί, θεογένεος γ’ ἐφεκ’ ἐναφύρω.

31 For the fact that Hellenistic poets preferred to allude to well known legends rather than to narrate them in full, cf. _Mus. Phil. Lond._, vol, X, page 51.

32 Cf. _Idyll_ 2, line 67 τὰ δὴ τόκα κτλ.

33 Cf. LSJ s.v. συνεκτελέω: «help in completing», τὰ πράγματα Αριστιδ. I. 442J».
Gow translated as follows:

«for twice in the year for aught fair-ankled Theugenis would care might the mothers of the lambs be shorn of their soft fleeces in the pastures».

I would like to suggest that better sense can be made of these lines if we understand that the words ματερες34 αρνων refer to Miletus. Theocritus states that «the mother of sheep (i. e. Miletus) might shear (περικαιωντων) soft fleeces in the pasture twice a year on behalf of fair-ankled Theugenis».

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34 Cf. LSJ s.v. μητηρ (2): «of lands, μ. μητηρ, θηρων mother of flocks, of game, Il. 2. 696, 8. 47 etc.» For other examples of the poetic plural cf. my Studies in the Poetry Of Nicander, page 8.

35 Note the employment of the middle form of the verb instead of the active; cf. my commentary on Theocritus’ Idyll 24 (Amsterdam 1979) page 105.