

### Pastoral Desire: The Third Idyll of Theocritus

The pastoral poems of Theocritus are studies in love, or rather, in erotic desire.<sup>1</sup> But why the loves of herdsmen? Why does the anatomy of desire need such social distance from its theme? The question is fundamental to the nature of pastoral poetry.

We have posed the question of Theocritean pastoral in such a way as to highlight the Alexandrian vision of the countryside as the scene of desire. The answer to our question, therefore, demands an articulation of the nature of the idyllic countryside, of the nature of desire in the particular inflection exhibited in Theocritus's poems, and finally, of the reasons why the one is the natural scene of the other.

The primary signification of the bucolic landscape is distance. The distance is analogous to that between the world of mythical heroes and the Hellenistic epic poet, such as Apollonius of Rhodes, or to that between the composer of hymns, or of funerary epigrams, like Callimachus, and the rituals and beliefs which these genres recreated with sympathy and feeling but at the same time with a reserve akin to irony—the view, as Paul Veyne has said, of the folklorist.<sup>2</sup> Theocritus only occasionally speaks in his own voice in the pastorals, which are normally either monologues or dramatic dialogues among rustics.<sup>3</sup> Within the limits of generic propriety and poetic diction, there are reasonable efforts at characterization, or what the Greek rhetoricians called *ethopoia*. Yet the distance remains as a kind of wry pleasure, a patronizing sympathy for lovesickness in the humble. There is, of course, nothing new in this conception of bucolic condescension. Its sources doubtless lie in the rise of new forms of city life among the Greeks after the conquests of Alexander the Great, forms that were in some ways analogous to the colonies planted centuries earlier in Greater Greece, that is, Southern Italy and Sicily. In Egyptian Alexandria, as in Syracuse, which tradition identifies as the birthplace of Theocritus and pastoral poetry, Greek societies were embedded in foreign, that is to say, native populations of herdsmen or agricul-

turalists. The life of the royal court, which harbored a new kind of scribal caste in poets, scholars, and scientists, contributed further to the separation of cosmopolitan thinkers and writers from the people of the land. To be sure, in the fifth-century city-state and earlier, urbanity was contrasted with the boorishness of the rustic, but even when the satire is harsh, there remains the sense that men of the country are countrymen, less polished but still kin.<sup>4</sup> Theocritus betrays no snobishness toward his goatherds and shepherds. His is the genial amusement of the tourist in the country. But why such folk for poetry of love?

Pastoral lovers are sometimes rough or raw, but they are not brutish. The poet's condescension is not contempt or social criticism. The desires of the humble are not strange or peculiar, and it is not for such reasons that Theocritus takes an interest in them.

The poet and the reader are, of course, superior in wisdom or judgment to the rustic lover, but this is because they are not in love, or at least, not in love with the same object. Theocritus's idylls do not invite the reader to identify with the pangs of the enamored shepherd, to feel his desire for Amaryllis or Galatea. This is not love lyric, or the moving soliloquy of drama. The reader of pastoral is rather a bystander, observing another's passion. The social disparity between the pastoral folk, on one side, and the poet and his audience, on the other, enables a psychological distance toward the lover that admits of sympathy but not participation. In the pastoral version, the state of love has about it an element of inferiority and apartness.

In Theocritean love, then, the site of passion is lowly and removed, and is regarded from above and beyond. The refined self-consciousness of the Alexandrian poets and their readers allowed them to translate this aloof gaze into a genre, or rather a group of genres, including the mime, the didactic poem along the lines of Hesiod, the romantic epic, the hymn, or, to take another experiment of Callimachus, the encounter between hero and peasant woman. With the invention of the pastoral, Theocritus focused that gaze more narrowly, on the personal expression of desire.

The isolation, as though under glass, of the pastoral lover in relation to the world of the poet and reader, the transmitter and receiver of the poetic message, is mirrored within the poem in the lover's loneliness and frustration, his or her incapacity to win the beloved and bridge the rift between their subjectivities. The lover's condition is one of discord and separation within his own sphere. This condition elicits his song, which is a lament for a lost wholeness, a moment of oneness with the other in a garden world. The sense of loss and desire is constitutive of the lover's subjectivity, according to the now familiar formula of Lacan:

Where is the subject? It is necessary to find the subject as a lost object. More precisely this lost object is the support of the subject. The question of desire is that the fading subject yearns to find itself again by means of some sort of encounter with this miraculous thing defined by the phantasm.<sup>5</sup>

In his address to the beloved, the lover-herdsman fashions a narrative that seeks to restore an original unity, against which his present separation is a fall. The narrative is obsessive and flawed, for it fails to reach or move the beloved. It cannot produce the happy ending it desires, but neither can it relinquish the vision of fulfilment. Within the lover's song, there is a tension between wholeness and lack through which the lover constitutes himself as the subject of a story. Doubtless, this is true of all discourses of desire. But in the pastoral, the lover is being studied. His discourse is recognizable as discourse that comes from another place. The breakdown of his myth is calculated. The reader, in complicity with the poet, overhears the lover's singing as though it were happening somewhere else. This leaves the reader in a theoretical space, a place of privileged observation, from which to muse about the nature of love. The production of such a distance from the scene of passion, as we have said, is characteristic of the Alexandrian sensibility.

We shall illustrate Theocritus's presentation of love's discourse by a look at one of his simpler and briefer pastoral poems, the third idyll in the traditional ordering.<sup>6</sup> We shall attempt to show that Theocritus structures the goatherd's song out of the conflict between linear and cyclic tendencies in a way that conforms to the theories of the Tartu school of semiotics concerning the origins of plot. But first, the poem:

- 1 I am going to serenade Amaryllis, my goats  
are grazing on the hill, and Tityrus is herding them.  
Tityrus, my dear friend, graze the goats,  
and take them to the spring; and the billy-goat,  
5 the dark Libyan one—watch that he does not butt you.  
Charming Amaryllis, why do you no longer peep out of  
your cave, and summon me, your sweetheart? Do you hate me?  
Do I seem snub-nosed up close, mistress?  
and does my beard stick out? You will make me hang myself.  
10 Look, I am bringing you ten applies; I gathered them from the very  
place  
you bade me gather them; and tomorrow I shall bring you others.  
Just see. My troubles cut me to the quick. I wish I could become  
that buzzing bee, and come into your cave,  
penetrating through the ivy and the fern that cover you.  
15 Now I know Love; he is a heavy god. Yes, he suckled  
at a lioness's breast, his mother raised him in the woods,  
and now he burns and stabs me right down to the bone.  
Sweetly glancing maiden, all of stone, o dark-browed

mistress, embrace me, your goatherd, so that I may kiss you.  
 20 There is sweet delight even in empty kisses.  
 You will make me tear my wreath all to pieces,  
 the one I'm saving for you, dear Amaryllis, of ivy,  
 which I twined with rosebuds and fragrant celery.  
 Alas, what will happen to me, poor wretch? You do not listen.  
 25 I shall take off my cloak and leap into the waves from the place  
 where Olpis, the fisherman, looks out for the tunny-fish.  
 And if perhaps I should die, that will be a sweet event to you.  
 I knew the other day, when I was wondering whether you loved me,  
 and smacking it did not make the far-love stick.  
 30 but it shriveled up just like that on my smooth arm.  
 And Agroeo, the fortune-teller with the sieve, also told the truth,  
 the one who was recently cutting grass alongside me—that I am  
 entirely in your possession, while you do not consider me at all.  
 But I am saving for you a white nanny-goat with two kids.  
 35 which Mermnon's dark serving-girl is also  
 asking me for. And I shall give it to her, since you despise me.  
 My right eye is twitching. Shall I see  
 her? I shall sing leaning against this pine tree, like this,  
 and maybe she will look at me, since she is not made of adamant.  
 40 Hippomenes, when he wished to marry the maiden,  
 took apples in his hand and ran a race. When Atalanta  
 saw, she went mad, and fell in deepest love.  
 And the seer Melampus brought the herd from Orthrys  
 to Pylus, and in the arms of Bias reclined  
 45 the charming mother of wise Alpheisiboea.  
 Pasturing his sheep on the hills, did not Adonis  
 drive lovely Cytherea to such a pitch of frenzy  
 that she does not remove him from her breast even as he is dying?  
 Envious to me is the one who sleeps the unchanging sleep,  
 50 Endymion. And I envy, dear lady, Iasion,  
 who attained such things as you, the profane, may not learn.  
 My head aches, but you don't care. I sing no more,  
 but I shall fall down and lie here, and so the wolves will eat me.  
 Like sweet honey may this be to your throat.<sup>7</sup>

In the figure of the enamored goatherd serenading his beloved at the foliage-shrouded entrance to her cave, it is possible to see a parody or adaptation of the lover's plaint at the closed door of his lady, a practice alluded to in Plato's *Symposium* and which became, among Hellenistic and Roman poets, a conventional format for epigrams and elegies, sometimes labeled by the hybrid term *paraclausithyron*<sup>8</sup> To be sure, ivy and fern are no impregnable barriers, and there may be a comic note in the goatherd's wish to become a bee in order to penetrate the screen.<sup>9</sup> But, as Veyne has insisted, the bolts and locks of elegy are themselves figurative, and not designed to suggest a realistic setting for the expression of a true and individual passion.<sup>10</sup> The leafy barricade is an emblem of Amaryllis's distance or unattainability. A bee is not excluded because, as a small creature, it may enter without disturbing

the foliage, which was not intended to keep out such things. Since the sexual symbolism of the foliage-shrouded mouth of the cave is evident, moreover, it is plausible that reference to the bee is not just a naturalistic detail, but alludes to the notion that bees reproduce asexually<sup>11</sup>. Their capacity to fly may also be significant (compare the wish of the Cyclops, in *Idyll XI*, that he might swim, in order to enter the domain of his beloved, in this case a sea-nymph). Within her cave, Amaryllis inhabits another realm, attainable to things that can fly, that are beneath or beyond sexuality. The herdsman's earthy desire is the condition for his exclusion.

In the mind of the excluded lover, the beloved is not only remote but augmented or elevated as well. In our poem, Amaryllis is twice addressed as *nympha*. The note of a learned commentator, insisting that "Amaryllis is not a supernatural 'nymph' but a human girl, whom the goatherd addresses as 'bride', "misses the essential point which is the lover's tendency to what Freud called the inflation of the love-object<sup>12</sup>. At the end of the poem, the goatherd expresses his envy for men who have united with goddesses (albeit always at a mortal cost), and in a momentary identification with their exaltation, addresses, as though from within the privileged sanctum, the uninitiated outsiders<sup>13</sup>. The lover's feeling of insufficiency and inferiority which is the other side of the coin to the inflation of the beloved, is figured in his humble social status. But his country nymph is of the same milieu. Though she never reveals herself from her sanctuary, the poet and reader know her station. The drama of love is played out in the pastoral world, in which desire is not innocent, but cannot be taken wholly seriously either. From a distance, the separations and aspirations of the herdsmen and their women seem not quite real.

The *idyll* is introduced by a brief apostrophe to the listener or reader, announcing the goatherd's intention of wooing Amaryllis in song, which requires that a friend tend his animals the while. This is followed by a direct address to Tityrus, with some instructions for the herd. These prefatory remarks exhibit the pastoral rhythms of work, the exchange of favors among co-labourers, and the bond of affection or friendship. The herdsman's song to Amaryllis is an interruption in this order, a time apart from regular activities. His withdrawal from his herd marks the beginnings of an event, and a drama.

Within the body of the song, this drama is played out as a series of temporal sequences<sup>14</sup>. Let us look at the first and last of these. The herdsman complains to his charming Amaryllis that she no longer peeps from her cave and summons him, her sweetheart. Does she hate him? Does he seem ugly up close? She will make him hang himself. The pattern is: former invitations, present disdain, future suicide or death

of the lover. There is a whole story here. The only space for further development lies in the hope or anticipation that this brief narrative will itself have an effect upon the listener, Amaryllis, and thereby alter the ending.

At the end of the idyll, the goatherd sings a special song for Amaryllis, in the hope that she is about to appear to him<sup>15</sup>. This song, more formal than the rest, runs through several mythological exempla of men, most of them herdsmen, who have won the heart of their beloved. The poem closes with three final verses in the conversational idiom of the lover's plea. Here the herdsman complains of a headache, and the indifference of Amaryllis: he adds that he will no longer sing, but will lie where he has fallen, and the wolves will devour him, may it please her. The pattern again is: former serenades, present unconcern on Amaryllis's part, future collapse and extinction of the herdsman, with a final hint that this, at least, will make her notice him, even if she merely feels relief.

The beginning and end of the plaint, then, are alike in representing first, what is no longer the case, then the event, and finally the consequence to come. There are, of course, differences. The question of the first set of verses have become statements of fact in the last. More interestingly, the first set defines the past by Amaryllis's coquettishness, while the final group substitutes for this moment the song of the goatherd himself. There is a shift in the representation of the amorous exchange from Amaryllis's teasing glances to poetry itself—a shift that renders the idyll a part of the lovers' game. It is, in effect, the answer to the lady's summons. In return for her refusal to present herself, the goatherd will discontinue his part in the dialogue, as he imagines it. In a poem, the threat of silence has a kind of finality about it, but this is undercut by the suggestion that the lover's death will be sweet in the mouth of Amaryllis, for this makes of his declared intention to die a kind of gift, another token of exchange, that looks forward to further interaction. Whether or not Amaryllis will respond is beside the point: the poem has not really advanced beyond the opening lines of the herdsman's plaint.

The same temporal structure, based on the idea of exchange, informs the pair of verses that follow the opening set we have just examined. The goatherd points to the apples he is bearing, indicates they are offered at the beloved's command, issued earlier, and promises more for the following day. Here there is no mention of death or surcease, only of iteration, save for the intimation that the gifts depend upon Amaryllis's requests. Shortly after this comes another appeal to Amaryllis for a hug and a kiss, even if her kisses are empty ones—illusory things, that is, teases that give no final satisfaction. Her con-

tinued concealment evokes another warning, that she will make him tear up the ivy wreath he had woven and was saving for her. Offer, silence, termination: Amaryllis pays no attention, and the herdsman threatens this time to drown himself, not failing here, too, at the midpoint of the poem (line 27 out of 54 verses), to hint that this may be sweet to Amaryllis. Besides apples, the wreath, and the song itself, the herdsman is also saving a goat for Amaryllis, which he may give to another, if she persists in despising him. But his resolution dissolves when he feels his eye twitch, which gives him the superstitious hope that he may see Amaryllis, and she may look at him, in an act of mutual recognition.

That is enough to see how the story progresses, or rather winds round on itself. The failed exchange, the unaccepted offering, which are the essence of the herdsman's love, are each time resolved or transposed into another version of the same minimal drama. Each threat to end the process becomes another way of eliciting a response, requiring in turn a new end to the story. This chain of terminating narratives reintroduces the cyclical into the successive false attempts at linear conclusion or closure. The poem's dilemma is semanticized in a conflict between *what* it says and *how* it says it. The order of experience connects desire with the eviction into linear, lethal time, while the order of the poem suspends time, refuses resolution, folds back upon itself. The narrative of the herdsman's love attempts repeatedly to evolve a plot, but lapses back each time into stasis. It is obsessive repetition without reciprocity, a production of sameness out of itself.

Within the plane of the lyric, the goatherd's speech is riven by the speech of the Other (Bakhtin's *čůžoe slovo*, literally "alien speech"), identified with his beloved Amaryllis. The lyric hero cites this speech, both by recalling it (lines 9-10) and by supplying a surrogate for it (lines 6-8). Taking the form of a series of rhetorical questions, this surrogate speech seeks to compel the original by speculating about its content.

For the reader, what is most obviously present is the lyric hero's speech; what is most lacking is Amaryllis. Yet from the perspective of that speech, 'presence' is something that can only be conferred by Amaryllis, to whose sight and hearing the goatherd repeatedly appeals (lines 5, 7-9, 11, 18 and 25). The tension of presence and absence is also at work in the image of empty kisses and in the gift of apples, which have only a qualified presence because, unlike Hippomenes's apples they are lacking in the desired effect.

Since the apples are emblematic of what the lyric hero had taken to be Amaryllis's favourable disposition, they also belong to the semantic field of gathered/collected objects that signify the speaker's desire. The wreath of ivy twined with rosebuds and celery is another token of the



same type. Since he wears it for her, her absence makes it an empty signifier. If twining a wreath signifies love, then tearing the wreath apart is a sign of loss, and, by a slight modulation, of death.

The work of Yuri Lotman and his colleagues illuminates the tensions that structure the poem. We refer especially to Lotman's version of how the logic of myth, and even the outlines of the myths as narratives, continue to subsist in European secular literature. In what Lotman calls "prescientific cultural formations," mythical tests with their totalizing and systematic functions, are in complementary distribution with narratives about "unique and chance events, crimes, calamities—anything considered the violation of a certain primordial order".<sup>16</sup> Secular literature—in Lotman's terms, the "modern plot-text"—is produced by the interaction of these two types, an interaction that takes the most varied and complex forms. With the loss of the mythical worldview, for example, cyclical myth-ritual can be "unrolled" into linear, novelistic narrative. Yet insofar as the hero's adventures are presented as catastrophic violations of the way things *should* be, rather than as simply the order of things, the tug of a mythical undertow will be at work. Whether fictional texts are ancient or modern (Shakespeare and Dostoevsky, in a typically Russian conjunction are Lotman's modern examples) fictional singularities conjure up mythical regularities.

Owing to the restrictions it places upon the multiplication of characters and events, lyric poetry is for Lotman "the most 'mythological' of the genres of modern verbal art".<sup>17</sup> This restriction is in our view only formal, but *Idyll III* is nevertheless open to a Lotmanian interpretation. In Lotman's terms, the poem's semantic axis would be the discontinuity between the unfinalizable, mythical order and the individual human experience: the goatherd's situation is incommensurate with the mythical order to which he appeals because individuation is precisely a consequence of a violation of the eternal round.

The very topology of the poem carries this contradiction, insofar as it connotes at least the possibility of what Lotman calls the "mythological invariant: life, death, and resurrection," abstractly coded according to the schema "entry into enclosed space (i.e. the *antron*)—emergence from it".<sup>18</sup> In the tradition of symbolic anthropology to which Lotman and his colleagues are contributors, there is in myth a multileveled isomorphism of space, so that any point in mythic space finds its equivalent in isomorphic regions at other levels. "Dream" as a setting, for example, is equivalent to "death, night, winter, and the eschatological end of the universal cycle"; death also has equivalents in any entry into closed space, as in burial, hoarding, or eating.<sup>19</sup> Another contributor to the Tartu circle, T. V. Civ'jan, shows how folkloric texts



(songs and tales) preserve traces of myth in that their spatial and temporal indicators can represent what she calls "a pure expression of basic semiotic oppositions". These oppositions fix the mythological course of life, according to the which "Man must pass through *defined points at defined moments*" in order to fulfill the ritual scenario of birth-initiation-marriage-death.<sup>20</sup>

In Theocritus III, the hillside and the cave that are the poem's principal sites evoke the maximal opposition of sky world to underworld; the transit between these sites forms an important part of the armature of myth. Yet in the mimetic time of the lyric, neither character crosses into the semantic space of the other. The goatherd is no Orpheus. Lotman has defined a narrative event as what happens when an actor crosses the boundary of a semantic field.<sup>21</sup> Hence the lyric hero's catastrophe is that the event (union with Amaryllis) does not happen; it is sealed off in the past, perhaps only an imaginary past. Thus each frustrated exchange is translated, in its turn, into an ideal point of reference, the basis for a new argument and a new reproach. In place of the universal flow, there enters the condition of individual stasis, of the inability to continue according to a prescribed pattern. Here we see how the mythic undertow conditions the theme of blocked life which is one of the great themes of the pastoral tradition from Theocritus to Robert Frost.

The exempla in the goatherd's formal serenade seem generally to concern myths associated with the mysteries of resurrection, like the relatively familiar legends of Adonis and Endymion and the more obscure tale of Iasion, who was connected with the cult of Demeter. By focusing on the death of Adonis (though he is preserved at the breast of Aphrodite), and on the endless sleep of Endymion (legend had it that Iasion was struck by Zeus's thunderbolt after he enjoyed the love of Demeter), the goatherd suggests a narrative of desire, fulfilment and extinction, as an analogue, perhaps to his own story of frustration and suicide, but the cultic resonances evoked by the mention of Iasion bring the story back to the eternal repetition of myth. Dover comments: "In his self-pitying and self-destructive mood the goatherd thinks extinction a fair price to pay for brief attainment of his desire."<sup>22</sup> But perhaps it is rather that fulfilment in myth is only a moment in the cycle, while in linear narrative it is naturally associated with the finality of death. This accounts for the semic intersections between the fields of death and nurturance.<sup>23</sup>

Like the image of Adonis at the breast of Venus, the gift of apples also conveys the idea of 'nurturance' as do the allusions to Erōs being suckled by the lioness and to Adonis feeding his sheep. The lioness/mother combines in a single image the notions of nurturance and of

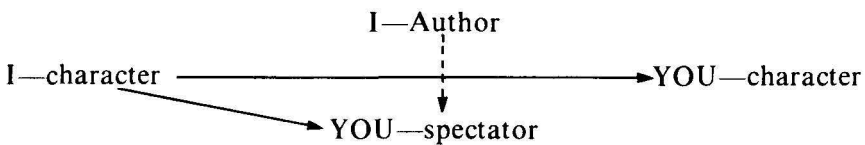
carnivorous rendering. Both qualities are thus transferred to Eros, and this establishes the surprising chain of associations that concludes the poem. The wolves will eat the poet, who had earlier wished to be a bee (*melissa*), but it is Amaryllis who will taste his death, as honey (*meli*). Thus, by a play on etymology and connotation, the poem forges the link between love and death, transforming the beloved into a devouring wolf.

This, then, is the Eros that the goatherd has come to know: a thing obsessive, forever uncompleted, thriving on its own wishes, and differing from legendary love only in the want of satisfaction, for otherwise frustration too has the mythic pattern of recurrence.

We may read into this description the autonomy of fixated desire, forever aspiring to narrative completion, forever frustrated, forever renewed. It is a desire that cannot imagine its own release, even in death. Such seems to be Theocritus's own reading of the goatherd's desire. It is in principle a solipsistic conception, for the object of desire never emerges from behind its screen, so that the lover must find in himself, if anywhere, the resources to end the ceaseless compulsion. The object must be disclosed as mere projection, a thing whose content is to serve as the sign of lost wholeness.

But in fact, the pastoral poem presents more than the lover and his phantasm. There is also the audience, addressed in the opening verses, and again, perhaps, as the ignorant uninitiated at the end of the mythological serenade. But even without these formal tokens of recognition, the reader is always there in the pastoral, on a level distinct from that of the country characters. Because it is pastoral, the desire so neatly anatomized is a laboratory specimen, desire seen from above. The ego is not invested in love of this sort, but is situated elsewhere, where it may observe love's obsessions at a distance.

In general, the lyric's "communicative status," to borrow Yu. I. Levin's term, is not reducible to a univocal, unidestinal I You schema.<sup>24</sup> Behind the speaker and addressee of the poem stand the implicit author and implicit readers; hence the idyll's communicative network resembles the model proposed by Cesare Segre for theatrical communication.<sup>25</sup>



This schema is a formalization of the communicative dimension of the basic conceit of the genre: the rustic as a figure for the 'universal' concerns of the poem's urbane audience. The oscillation between the world of the poem and the world of its producers thus goes with the territory. The lyric hero is a metalogical figure, which we grasp by means of the distance, or lack of assimilation, between the given term (the goatherd) and the extratextual referents (urbane Alexandrians).<sup>26</sup> In Idyll III, the goatherd's intensely literary speech and conduct signal his situation as a metalogical conceit ("This is not a goatherd!"). What, for example, bars him from entering the cave, except the narrative conventions of the song of unrequited love?

To what extent does the effect of distance in pastoral poetry, which has a source in the social position of learned writers and readers in the Hellenistic world, condition the interpretation of passion as an endless drive to closure? Is this conception of desire new, a function of the displacement of desire, its location in a pastoral realm upon which poet and reader gaze from a theoretical position? Pondering questions like this on the basis of a single poem which, while typical, by no means exhausts the range of Theocritus's pastoral vision, has its hazards. One is chastened by the sober admonition of Sir Kenneth Dover, who writes in his introduction to a school edition of our poet:

The least profitable way of attempting to characterize Hellenistic poetry as a whole is to begin with second-hand generalizations about it (or about Greek morals, politics, or intellectual developments), find passages in Hellenistic poetry which bear out these generalizations, and omit to ask to what extent archaic and classical poetry bear out the same generalizations.<sup>27</sup>

We shall not attempt to exclude the possibility that an earlier Greek poet may have represented the wooing of an absent lover in a form similar to that of Theocritus's goatherd, even if the persona in the poem was other than a herdsman. Yet it must be said that the topos of addressing an absent lover appears to be essentially Hellenistic, and was much favored among the Roman adapters of the Alexandrian manner.<sup>28</sup> Let us observe that in Classical Greek speculation on human nature and conduct, desire and its pleasurable fulfilment were not normally segregated or demeaned as attributes or vices of the flesh, but were accepted and approved as part of the whole psyche. Desires might, of course, be dangerous if they succeeded in directing behavior in the wrong contexts, or exclusively, but this is a different matter from regarding them as essentially foreign or corrupt.

In the second volume of his *History of Sexuality*, Michel Foucault writes:

L'attirance exercée par le plaisir et la force du désir qui porte vers lui constituent, avec l'acte même des *aphrodisia* [a Greek term for sexual activity that Foucault prefers to leave in the original], une unité solide. Ce sera par la suite un des traits fondamentaux de l'éthique de la chair et de la conception de la sexualité que la dissociation—au moins partielle—de cet ensemble. Cette dissociation se marquera d'un côté par une certaine "élimination" de plaisir . . . elle se marquera également par une problématization de plus en plus intense de désir . . . Dans l'expérience des *aphrodisia* en revanche, acte, désir et plaisir forment un ensemble dont les éléments, certes, peuvent être distingués, mais sont fortement associés les uns aux autres. C'est leur lien serré qui fait précisément un des caractères essentiels de cette forme d'activité.<sup>29</sup>

Of course, this is not to say that lovers were never frustrated in Classical Greece. But it is to suggest, at least, that a genre of poetry in which passionate longing is the essence of the experience of love, where the beloved is conceived or projected as an absent and unattainable object (note the name of the talismanic plant, "farlove," or as Gow and Dover render it, "love-in-absence"),<sup>30</sup> evoking a complaint that forever renews itself and ceases only when the song itself is silent—that such a genre devoted to the "figure of the passionately desirous lover," who "seeks love but is frustrated"<sup>31</sup> may mark an inflection in the dramatization of desire which is properly called postclassical. The new attitude toward love—if that is what it is—presents itself in Theocritus as patronizing, for all its humanity. Passion has migrated to the lower orders, so that it can be inspected theoretically. This theoretical stance, which is not so much a theory of desire as a relation of the self to desire by way of theoretical distancing, recognizes desire as striving for finality and doomed to circularity. Perhaps there is a lesson here for what happens when theory enters the text.

## NOTES

1. Thomas G. Rosenmeyer, in *The Green Cabinet: Theocritus and the European Pastoral Lyric* (Berkeley, 1969), is so intent upon demonstrating that the spirit of Theocritus's poetry is Epicurean that he all but eliminates love as a theme. "Characteristically, the great preoccupation with pure love and chastity, which comes to be so important in the Renaissance, does not exist in Theocritus" (p. 79), purity and chastity, surely not—but desire is another matter. It would be silly to multiply citations of authorities to the contrary; we rest content with three: "Tout motif porte sur l'amour." Petar Dimitrov. "La langue de l'idylle de Théocrite: Principes, éléments, expression linguistique," *Revue des Études Grecques*, 94 (1981), 14-33. Dimitrov goes on to observe: "Le thème de l'amour est un moyen de pénétrer dans la psychologie de l'individu (p. 28)". W. Gerg, *Early Vergil* (London, 1974), argues that the goatherd, who in the programmatic idyll, offers a carved ivy-cup as a prize, "is willing to stake all of Theocritus's themes for the theme *par excellence*, that of a herdsman-musician sacrificed on love's altar" (p. 14). After a rigorous review of the themes of Theocritus's bucolics (not limited to those that betray conventions later associated with the pastoral), David M. Halperin, *Before Pastoral: Theocritus and the Ancient Tradition of Bucolic Poetry* (New Haven, 1983), endorses the idea that erotic and poetic rivalry (emblemized in the scenes on the ivy-cup) account for the themes of the great majority of the poems in the Theocritean corpus (see especially 186-87).

2. Paul Veyne, *L'Églogie érotique romaine: L'amour, la poésie et l'occident* (Paris, 1983), 28-29.
3. Most of the pastoral idylls, however, have some brief narrative prelude or conclusion; for discussion, see Gary B. Miles, "Characterization and the Ideal of Innocence in Theocritus's Idylls," *Ramus* 6 (1977), 139-64, p. 139.
4. On the image of the rustic in antiquity, see Edwin S. Ramage, *Urbanitas: Ancient Sophistication and Refinement*, (Norman, Okla., 1973).
5. Jacques Lacan, *Of Structure*, pp. 189, 194; cited in Robert Young, "Post-Structuralism: An Introduction," in his anthology *Untying the Text: A Post-Structuralist Reader* (Boston, London, and Henley, 1981), p. 13.
6. An argument, based largely on numerological considerations in the pattern of verses, has been made for a revised ordering of the collection, in which Idyll III would stand first; see Jean Irigoien, "Les *Bucoliques* de Théocrite: la composition du recueil," *Quaderni Urbinati di Cultura Classica* 19 (1975) 27-44. Irigoien's formulas have been endorsed and extended by Gilbert Ancher, "Les *Bucoliques* de Théocrite: Structure et composition du recueil," *Revue des Études Grecques* 94 (1981), 293-314, and by Claude Meillier, "Quelques nouvelles perspectives dans l'étude de Théocrite," *ibid.* 315-37. The argument involves philological difficulties concerning the authenticity of Idylls VIII and IX, among other things; see the remarks of Charles Segal, "Thematic Coherence and Levels of Style in Theocritus's Bucolic Idylls," *Wiener Studien* 11 (1977), 37-38 and *Poetry and Myth in Ancient Pastoral Essays on Theocritus and Virgil* (Princeton, 1981), 178-79. An argument for an independent book of pastoral poems, arranged by Theocritus himself, was advanced by Gilbert Lawall, *Theocritus's Coan Pastorals: A Poetry Book* (Cambridge, Mass., 1967). The question of arrangement does not substantially affect the interpretation of Idyll III.
7. The translation is freely adapted from A. S. F. Gow, *Theocritus* (Cambridge, 1932), volume 1, 31-33; changes have been made primarily to achieve a more literal approximation to the Greek and to American idiom, and also to maintain a close line-for-line correspondence with the original.
8. See Gow (above, n.7), vol 2 (Commentary), 64; Lawall, 35-38; Steven F. Walker, *Theocritus* (Boston, 1980) 43-45; M. Sicheil, "El paraclausithyron en Teócrito," *Boletín del Instituto de Estudios Helenicos* 6 (1972) 57-62.
9. On the comedy in Idyll III, see Lawall, 38; Walker, 45-46; K. J. Dover, *Theocritus: Select Poems* (Basingstoke and London, 1971), 113.
10. Veyne, 47: "Les élégiaques ne sont pas sérieux;" Veyne entitles one of his chapters on the elegy "La pastorale en costume de ville."
11. See August Pauly and Georg Wissowa, *Real-Encyclopädie der classischen Altertumswissenschaft*, vol. 3 (Stuttgart, 1899), cols. 433-34. For a different view, according to which the bee indicates the humbleness of the goatherd's ambitions, see Charles Segal, "Landscape into Myth: Theocritus's Bucolic Poetry," *Ramus* 4 (1975), 117-18 *Poetry and Myth*, 212-13; Segal also remarks that the "tension of the bucolic *persona* between sentimentality and realism has its counterpart in the landscape."
12. The quotation is from Dover, 113; for the contrary view, that "*nympha* implies semidivine status just as readily as marriageability," see Walker, 47. The same kind of inflation operates also in the non-bucolic poems; see David Konstan, "A Note on Theocritus's Idyll 18," *Classical Philology* 79 (1979), 233-34, where the treatment of the wedding of Menelaus and Helen betrays a similar comic condescension. If Helen and Menelaus were also figures for Ptolemy Philadelphus and Arsinoe, as Frederick T. Griffiths has suggested in *Theocritus at Court* (Leyden, 1979 = *Mnemosyne* Supplement 55), 86-91, then this is an indication of the degree to which the pastoral attitude informed self-perception in the highest circles of Alexandrian culture.
13. This is the sense of the Greek term *bebatoi* in line 51.
14. The temporal pattern is set out in elaborate detail by Ulrich Ott, *Die Kunst des Gegensatzes in Theokrits Hirtengedichten* (Hildesheim, 1969 = *Spudasmata* 22) 186; see also his summary of the arrangement of motifs in the poem on p. 184. Ph.-E. Legrand, *Étude sur Théocrite* (Paris, 1898), has an elegant description, in the spirit of an older aesthetic, of the naturalness by which Theocritus manages the several transitions (180-81).
15. That this serenade is simply part of the goatherd's song at Amaryllys's cave, rather than the song itself (as the ancient scholia take it) is shown by Gow, vol. 2, 66.
16. Yuri Lotman, "The Origins of Plot," *Poetics Today* 1-2 (1979), 161-84.
17. *Ibid.*, 168.
18. *Ibid.*, 170-71.

19. Lotman, "On the Mythological Code of Plot-Texts," in Yuri Lotman, ed., *Sbornik statej po vtoricnym modelirujuscim sistemam* [Essays on Secondary Modeling Systems]. (Tartu, 1973), 87.
20. T.V. Civ'jan, "Towards a Semantics of Spatial and Temporal Indicators in Folklore," in Lotman, *Secondary Modeling Systems*, 13-17.
21. Lotman, *Struktura xudozesvnenogo teksta* [The Structure of the Literary Text].
22. Dover, 118.
23. On the association of the breast with nurturance, see the rather surprised comment of Gow, vol. 2, p. 74; also the discussion by Charles Segal, "Adonis and Aphrodite: Theocritus's Idyll III, 48." *L'Antiquité classique* 37 (1969), 82-88 = *Poetry and Myth*, 66-72, for the mythic resonances with the motif of the year-god and his resurrection.
24. Yu. I. Levin, "The Communicative Status of Lyric Verse," in Lotman, *Secondary Modeling Systems*, 105-09.
25. Cesare Segre, "The Semiotics of Theater," *Poetics Today* 1 (1980), 46; cf. also the revised version in Segre's *Teatro e romanzo: Due tipi di comunicazione letteraria* (Turin, 1984), 11-12. See also Harry Berger, Jr., "The Origins of Bucolic Representation: Disenchantment and Revision in Theocritus's Seventh Idyll," *Classical Antiquity* 3 (1984), 1-39, and esp. 9-16 on the nature of "impersonation" in Theocritus.
26. In their *General Rhetoric*. [tr. Paul B. Burrell and Egar M. Slotkin (Baltimore and London, 1981)] the Group Mu rhetoricians oppose metalogisms, which depend upon extralinguistic considerations [e.g., "That cat, it's a tiger!"; "This is not a pipe."] to metaseemes, or rhetorical figures that operate more in the linguistic sphere, such as metaphor, synecdoche, or metonymy; see also Halperin, 222.
27. Dover, lxvii.
28. See F. Klingner, *Catullus Peleus-Epos, Sitzungsberichte der Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften* 6 (1956), and Callimachus fr. 556 Pfeiffer.
29. Michel Foucault, *Histoire de la sexualité*, vol. 2: *L'Usage des plaisirs* (Paris, 1984), 51-52. See also Giovanni Casertano, *Il piacere l'amore e la morte nelle dottrine dei prosocratici*, vol. 1, *Il piacere e il desiderio* (Naples, 1983), in connection with the doctrines of Empedocles: "Il desiderio, dunque, è una molla fondamentale anche per la conoscenza, l'attività più nobile per l'uomo" (44). Broadly speaking, this association between desire and the intellect seems characteristic of Greek thought in the classical age.
30. The Greek word is *telephilon*; for what is known about the form of divination (probably something like the game of "she loves me, she loves me not"), see Gow, vol. 2, 70-71; Dover, 116. On divination by means of a sieve, see Geoffrey Arnott, "Coscinomancy in Theocritus and Kazantzakis," *Mnemosyne* 31 (1978), 27-32.
31. Lawall, 65.