

CHAPTER 10

‘WE SPEAK PELOPONNESIAN’

Tradition and linguistic identity in post-classical  
Sicilian literature

*Andreas Willi*

**Alexandria, 272 BC**

On a late summer morning, in the year 272 BC,<sup>1</sup> hundreds of people are crowded together in one of the great halls at the Palace of Alexandria, keen to admire the tapestries on display as Queen Arsinoe is hosting the Adonia festival. Everybody is pushing, pulling and shouting, but two women are particularly annoying with their loud comments on whatever they can catch sight of. One is just describing the figure of Adonis on one of the tapestries, as if her friend had no eyes to see for herself:

αὐτὸς δ' ὡς θαητὸς ἐπ' ἀργυρέας κατάκειται  
κλισμῶ, πρᾶτον ἴουλον ἀπὸ κροτάφων καταβάλλων,  
ὁ τριφίλητος Ἄδωνις, ὁ κῆν Ἀχέρωντι φιληθείς.

Look, how marvellous he is, lying there on a silver couch, with just the first down on his cheeks, Adonis, the sweetheart – he finds love even on the Acheron!

It is uncomfortably hot in the Palace, and anyone could easily do without such silly babbling; but worst of all, the two women are not even locals, to judge by their accent. Many in the crowd mumble that Alexandria should be left to the Alexandrians, until one man finally loses his temper and shouts at the two:

παύσασθ', ὦ δύστανοι, ἀνάπτυτα κωτίλλοισαι,  
τρυγόνες· ἐκκναισεῦντι πλατειάσδοισαι ἅπαντα.

Stop it, you idiots, chattering all the time, like doves: they'll kill me with all their broad vowels everywhere.

<sup>1</sup> On this date, which is nothing but a possibility, see Gow (1950: II 265).

That should put them in their place, but no – one of them has the guts to shout back:

μᾶ, πόθεν ὠθηρωπος; τί δὲ τίν, εἰ κωτίλαι εἰμές;  
 πασάμενος ἐπίτασσε· Συρακοσίαις ἐπιτάσσεις.  
 ὡς εἰδῆς καὶ τοῦτο, Κορίνθιαι εἰμές ἄνωθεν,  
 ὡς καὶ ὁ Βελλεροφῶν. Πελοποννασιστὶ λαλεῦμες,  
 Δωρίσδειν ὄξεστι, δοκῶ, τοῖς Δωριέεσσι.

Hell, where's that guy from? What's our chattering got to do with you? You better give orders only when you're the master. You're trying to order around Syracusans! And just to make that clear: we are Corinthians originally, just like Bellerophon. We speak Peloponnesian – surely it's alright to speak Dorian if you're a Dorian!?

Readers will have recognized the scene from Theocritus' *Idyll 15* (vv. 84–93), the urban mime entitled *Syracusan Women* or *Women at the Adonis Festival* (Συρακόσῃαι ἢ Ἀδωνιάζουσαι). The two main characters, Gorgo and Praxinoa, are Sicilians from Syracuse, like Theocritus himself; but the setting is Ptolemaic Alexandria and the poem is undoubtedly written for an Alexandrian audience. To look at it here, in the context of a discussion of language, linguistic contact and identity in Ancient Sicily, may therefore seem odd. However, the following paper will argue that the scene we have just witnessed in Arsinoe's Palace is a key not only to Sicilian Greek identity in Hellenistic times, but also to the entire work of Theocritus, the greatest Sicilian Greek poet whose writings survive in an unfragmented form. It will even be claimed that the scene opens up a new, and distinctly Sicilian, perspective on Hellenistic literature as a whole. As will shortly become clear, dialectological and other linguistic considerations are paramount in all this.

### A language question

Praxinoa's self-conscious 'We speak Peloponnesian – surely it's alright to speak Dorian if you're a Dorian!?' is a rare metalinguistic statement in Theocritus, and as such it has been duly highlighted in Theocritean scholarship. For Magnien (1920) it constituted a cornerstone of his extremist thesis that *Idyll 15* was actually

written in early-third-century spoken Syracusan.<sup>2</sup> At first sight such a thoroughly mimetic theory might seem appealing since we are after all dealing with a mime; but its flaws are only too obvious, both on a thematic and on a linguistic level. One may for instance ask why the Syracusan women’s Alexandrian interlocutors use exactly the same dialect as they do; for *if* that dialect were Syracusan, linguistic realism could not be a determining factor in the composition. Moreover, it is true that there are some forms which *may* be Syracusan, such as the consonant-stem dative plurals in  $-\epsilon\sigma\sigma\iota$ ,<sup>3</sup> but there are others which are clearly not. Feminine participial forms in  $-\omicron\iota\sigma\alpha$ , for example, are not only absent from the meagre epigraphic evidence from Syracuse, but also from the fragments of Epicharmus and Sophron, which must be fairly accurate representations of fifth-century spoken Syracusan (see Willi (2008: 125–61)); and it is impossible that fifth-century  $-\omicron\upsilon\sigma\alpha$  should have become third-century  $-\omicron\iota\sigma\alpha$  in real life.

However, showing that Magnien was wrong is easier than doing better than him in answering the fundamental question: What is the language of *Idyll* 15? In his monumental edition and commentary, Gow (1950: I lxxii) has usefully distinguished five groups of poems in the Theocritean corpus, depending on the type of language used: (i) genuine poems in Doric, (ii) dubious or spurious poems in Doric, (iii) poems prevailing in Epic dialect with an admixture of Doric, (iv) poems in Epic and Ionic, (v) poems in Aeolic. *Idyll* 15 belongs to the first or core group, whose ‘genuine poems in Doric’ also comprise *Idylls* 1–7, 10, 11, 14, 18 and 26: that is, above all, the bucolic poems. But saying that the language of

<sup>2</sup> And not just *Idyll* 15: according to Magnien (1920: 136) Theocritus’ *Syracusan Women* belongs to the same group, and uses the same language, as Epicharmus, Sophron, the Pythagorean authors, the author of the *Dissoi Logoi*, Callimachus in *Hymns* V and VI and Archimedes.

<sup>3</sup> Syracusan is one of the few non-Aeolic dialects in which  $-\epsilon\sigma\sigma\iota$  has been generalized: cf. Thumb and Kieckers (1932: 131), Buck (1955: 89), Willi (2008: 129) (on Epicharmus and Sophron), and Chapter 8 by Mimblera in this volume. Note also the (Syracusan) perfect forms with present inflection (e.g. Theocr. 15.58  $\delta\epsilon\delta\omicron\iota\kappa\omega$  ‘I fear’; cf. Molinos Tejada (1990: 302–4), Willi (2008: 144)), the pronoun  $\psi\epsilon$  ‘them’ in Theocr. 4.3 and 15.80 (according to *P. Hamburg* 201; cf. Hunter (1996a: 153–4) and (1996b: 120–2)) or the imperative  $\acute{\alpha}\phi\iota\kappa\epsilon\upsilon\sigma\omicron$  ‘arrive’ in Theocr. 11.42, with the scholiast’s remark  $\omicron\upsilon\tau\omega$   $\Sigma\upsilon\rho\alpha\kappa\omicron\upsilon\sigma\iota\omicron\iota$   $\tau\eta\nu$   $\sigma\omicron$   $\pi\lambda\epsilon\omicron\nu\acute{\alpha}\lambda\omicron\upsilon\sigma\iota$   $\sigma\upsilon\lambda\lambda\alpha\beta\eta\nu$ ,  $\eta\pi\epsilon\rho$   $\kappa\acute{\alpha}\theta\upsilon\sigma\omicron$   $\sigma\tau\epsilon\phi\acute{\alpha}\nu\omicron\upsilon\sigma\omicron$   $\acute{\alpha}\nu\tau\iota$   $\tau\omicron\upsilon$   $\kappa\acute{\alpha}\theta\upsilon\sigma$   $\sigma\tau\epsilon\phi\acute{\alpha}\nu\omicron\upsilon$  (read  $\sigma\tau\epsilon\phi\acute{\alpha}\nu\omicron\upsilon\tilde{\omicron}$ ) ‘in this way the Syracusans use a redundant syllable  $-\omicron\sigma$ , as in  $\kappa\acute{\alpha}\theta\upsilon\sigma\omicron$ ,  $\sigma\tau\epsilon\phi\acute{\alpha}\nu\omicron\upsilon\sigma\omicron$  instead of  $\kappa\acute{\alpha}\theta\upsilon\sigma$  “be seated”,  $\sigma\tau\epsilon\phi\acute{\alpha}\nu\omicron\upsilon$  “be crowned”’.

*Idyll* 15 is essentially the same as that of the bucolic poems<sup>4</sup> still begs the question: What type of language or dialect is it?

### Three theories, no solution

One possible and in fact widespread response to this question is to despair. The most distinctive features of the Ancient Greek dialects are phonological. In particular, divergences in the vowel development serve as diagnostic dialect features, as for instance with the opposition of Attic-Ionic η vs ᾱ in all the other dialect groups. Unfortunately, these are also the features that are most easily distorted in the manuscript tradition. This is especially true when they are not as well known as the one just mentioned. Within the Doric dialects, for example, we distinguish ‘Mild Doric’ from ‘Strong Doric’ dialects by looking at the long *e*-vowels and *o*-vowels arising from various stages of compensatory lengthenings and vowel contractions.<sup>5</sup> Thus, Laconian is a Strong Doric dialect because it has open [ɛ:] and [ɔ:] in words like ἦμεν ‘to be’ (< \**es-men*) and accusative plural λόγως (< \**-ons*), whereas Syracusan (and its mother dialect Corinthian) is Mild Doric because it has closed [e:] and [o:], i.e. εἴμεν (= [e:men]) and λόγους (= [logo:s]). Now, since the basically Doric character of Theocritus’ bucolic poems is unquestionable, we might want to further pin down their dialect by classifying them according to this ‘mild vs strong’ division. However, this is more easily said than done. The manuscripts present Mild Doric and Strong Doric forms next to each other, apparently without any overarching principle. There seems to be no way of deciding whether an originally Strong Doric text has become ‘milder’ during the transmission or vice versa – nor indeed to what extent Theocritus himself or a host of sloppy later scribes are responsible for the mess. We are facing a textual critic’s

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Di Benedetto (1956: 53), despite the allowance made by Gow (1950: II 277) for Theocr. 15.33 πῆε ‘where?’; this does not of course mean that there are no minor differences (cf. n. 34 and see e.g. Fantuzzi (1995: 249) on the particularly high score of correction in *Idyll* 15).

<sup>5</sup> This classification of the Doric dialects, which goes back to Ahrens (1843: 5), has been refined more recently by Bartoněk (1972: esp. 96–123), who adds a ‘Middle Doric’ category (cf. Willi (2008: 46–7)); for our present purposes the latter is irrelevant.

nightmare (or paradise), as Gow (1950: I lxxv) admits: 'to tinker with the text in such details is as likely to deprave as to improve it'.

Meanwhile, others have been more cheerful. Since the level of 'inconsistency' is so remarkable, it is hard to believe that it is due *exclusively* to a poor transmission. In other words, some 'inconsistency' may have characterized the Theocritean text from the beginning, and thus triggered the later scribal hovering. If so, we can still hope to discover a pattern and rationale behind the variation. For instance, it might be that some of the Doric poems were written in Strong Doric and others in Mild Doric, but the two groups were 'assimilated' to each other later on. Something like this is argued for *Idyll* 15 by Molinos Tejada (1990: 202–10): according to her, slightly more papyrus and manuscript evidence for forms with closed *o*-vowels in the productive genitive singular in  $-\omega/-ου$  and the accusative plural in  $-\omega\varsigma/-ου\varsigma$  can be observed in this piece, and she therefore suggests that *Idyll* 15, unlike the bucolic poems, was originally written in the Mild Doric Syracusan dialect. For *Idyll* 15 we would thus return to Magnien's position, though in a modified form and with more respect for what is actually attested for Syracusan elsewhere. However, Molinos Tejada's evidence is extremely slim: even in *Idyll* 15 the Strong Doric forms prevail overall, and of course we would still be facing the problem of participles in  $-οισα$  and the like being non-Syracusan forms.

These forms in turn are central to the theory advanced by Ruijgh (1984). Building on Risch (1954), who had famously – though certainly wrongly – argued that the dialect of our Alcman text is essentially a literary Doric brought in line with contemporary Cyrenaean Doric by Alexandrian editors, Ruijgh suggests that Theocritus too was inspired by early-third-century Cyrenaean, a dialect which does have participles in  $-οισα$ .<sup>6</sup> This source could also explain the Strong Doric elements,<sup>7</sup> but Ruijgh has to acknowledge that,

<sup>6</sup> Theocritus'  $-οισα$  was compared with that of Cyrene already by Wilamowitz-Moellendorff (1906: 26–7), Vollgraff (1919: 337–40) and Braun (1932).

<sup>7</sup> Note, however, that the *o*-stem acc. pl. would be  $-ο\varsigma$  in Cyrenaean (cf. Thumb and Kieckers (1932: 175), also on  $-οισα$ ):  $-ο\varsigma$  does occur in Theocritus, but is much rarer than  $-\omega\varsigma$  (cf. Molinos Tejada (1990: 163–8), Basta Donzelli (2003: 261–2 n. 31)), just as (according to Ruijgh, again Cyrenaean) 2sg.  $-\epsilon\varsigma$  is much rarer than  $-\epsilon\iota\varsigma$  (cf. Molinos Tejada (1990: 279–81), never metrically guaranteed). The absence of  $-ο\varsigma$  from the text of Alcman is a crucial piece of evidence against Risch's theory (cf. Cassio (1993a: 28–30)).

especially for the front vowels, the manuscript evidence of Theocritus does not so clearly support a Strong Doric system: next to genitive singular  $-\omega$  and accusative plural  $-\omega\varsigma$ , the transmission has for instance contractions with  $-\epsilon\iota-$  <  $*-ee-$  very frequently (Molinos Tejada (1990: 71–4)).

Hence, Ruijgh modifies his Cyrenaean theory by suggesting that the mixture of ‘mild’ and ‘strong’ forms in Theocritus reflects a linguistic reality best described as a partially ‘koineized’ Ptolemaic Cyrenaean, the dialect of Dorians like Praxinoa and Gorgo who were living in the melting-pot Alexandria and whose language was therefore influenced by non-Doric Greek. There is little to commend such a view. Not only is there not a single piece of independent evidence for such a mixed Alexandrian Doric dialect, and in a normal koineization process highly marked forms like those in  $-\omicron\iota\sigma\alpha$  should be among the first to disappear,<sup>8</sup> but the whole point of the small scene in *Idyll* 15 would also be lost if, as Ruijgh claims, a substantial part of the Greek population of Ptolemy II’s Empire used even ‘broader’ vowels than Praxinoa the Syracusan.<sup>9</sup> The scene clearly implies that *any* Doric accent, however ‘mild’ it may have been, was easily singled out as unusual and stigmatized as ‘broad’ in Ptolemaic Alexandria.

Even so, Ruijgh’s observations on the uneven balance between ‘mild’ front vowels and ‘strong’ back vowels remain suggestive. If the vowel distribution is not accidental and if it cannot reflect a

Ruijgh (1984: 60–1) further emphasizes the occurrence of ablatival adverbs in  $-\theta\epsilon$  (next to  $-\theta\epsilon\nu$ ) in Theocritus as well as Cyrenaean, but Abbenes (1996: 3) rightly observes that ‘Theocritus['] decision to write  $-\theta\epsilon$  or  $-\theta\epsilon\nu$  depended primarily upon the metre’, since  $-\theta\epsilon\nu$  is also found in the Doric poems and  $-\theta\epsilon$  is also used by Pindar (cf. Molinos Tejada (1990: 341–4), Basta Donzelli (2003: 256)).

<sup>8</sup> In order to maintain his ‘realistic Cyrenaean’ theory, Ruijgh (1984: 74–6) commits himself to a remarkable degree of special pleading, for instance with regard to the infinitive of contract verbs (Theocr.  $\phi\iota\lambda\epsilon\acute{\iota}\nu/\phi\iota\lambda\eta\tilde{\nu}$  vs Cyren.  $\phi\iota\lambda\acute{\epsilon}\nu$ ) or the nom. sg. masc. of participles in  $*-nt-$  (Theocr.  $\lambda\acute{\upsilon}\sigma\alpha\varsigma$ ,  $\lambda\upsilon\theta\acute{\epsilon}\iota\varsigma$  vs Cyren.  $\lambda\acute{\upsilon}\sigma\alpha\varsigma$ ,  $\lambda\upsilon\theta\acute{\epsilon}\varsigma$ ): Attic/koine influence is invoked whenever it suits the argument, but for the datives in  $-\epsilon\sigma\iota$  even he admits some literary admixture (Ruijgh (1984: 82)).

<sup>9</sup> Ruijgh (1984: 63) tries to save his argument by arguing that Praxinoa ‘y habite donc assez de temps pour avoir pu apprendre le dialecte dorien caractéristique d’Alexandrie’ (‘has lived there long enough to have been able to learn the Doric dialect typical of Alexandria’). Denying that Doric was widespread in Alexandria is of course not the same as subscribing to the questionable view that Theocritus’ audience had lost contact with the dialects (Bertolini (2001: 97), ‘aveva perso contatto e familiarità con i dialetti’; similarly Thumb and Kieckers (1932: 223)).

real spoken dialect, it must be explained as a literary creation. An important step in this direction has been made by Abbenes (1996), who again observes that Theocritus’ ‘inconsistent’ Doric is not dissimilar from the dialect we read in our text of Alcman. Alcman too has -οισα (no doubt echoing early Aeolic lyric) and, more importantly, Alcman’s text too shows Strong Doric forms such as genitive singular -ω and accusative plural -ως next to some, though not exclusive, Mild Doric -ει- in contractions and compensatory lengthenings on the front-vowel axis. This situation, Abbenes argues, came about when the Alcman text was transliterated from an archaic alphabet (with only one E and one O sign) into a modern one (where E, EI, H and O, OY, Ω were available to write different front and back vowels). Mostly the Strong Doric variants were chosen by the editors/translitterators because Alcman’s Laconian dialect was known to be Strong Doric, but especially in those grammatical categories where a Strong Doric form might have been confusing for a Hellenistic readership, the Mild Doric alternative was selected instead: for instance, had a contracted middle in -ειται < -εεται been written as -ηται, it might have been mistaken for a subjunctive. As for Theocritus, this would mean that he consciously modelled his ‘bucolic’ Doric after Alcman, i.e. that he simply followed the modernized orthographic conventions which had been established for the latter.

But again, while the comparison of Theocritus’ bucolic Doric with the Doric of Alcman is pertinent, there are questions in the detail. To start with, and leaving aside the lengthened *e*-vowels and *o*-vowels for a moment, there are also noticeable differences in dialect. For instance, Theocritus never has Σ instead of Θ (which in Alcman frequently indicates a Laconian pronunciation [θ] instead of usual [t<sup>h</sup>]), he does not close ε to ι before *o*-vowels and *a*-vowels (as in Alcman’s fr. 1.98 σιαι < θεαι ‘goddesses’), he observes initial digamma much less regularly than Alcman, and he uses a good number of metrically guaranteed Doric futures (cf. Molinos Tejada (1990: 118–20, 293–7)).<sup>10</sup> We must therefore be wary of putting too much weight on apparent similarities in vocalism.

<sup>10</sup> On digamma and the absence of metrically guaranteed Doric futures in Alcman cf. Page (1951: 104–10, 123–5), Cassio (1999a: 200–1) and Hinge (2006: 104–12, 193–6).

Moreover, there are numerous examples of secondary EI (and two or three of the rarer OY<sup>11</sup>) in both Alcman and Theocritus where the avoidance of confusion is a weak rationale. In Alcman's Louvre Partheneion (Alcm. fr. 1), for example, we find not only δραμέιται 'will run', but also ἀνειρομένοι 'rising up' and τείρει 'wears out', each with compensatory lengthening; and even the infinitive of the athematic verb 'to be' was εἶμεν, not ἦμεν, *ante correcturam*.<sup>12</sup>

As for the infinitive of thematic verbs, this frequently ends in -εν in Theocritus, as normally in Alcman, but there is considerable evidence for -ειν next to it (as in the book fragments of Alcman, the papyri mainly showing -ην).<sup>13</sup> Can we really assume that the scribes slipped much more frequently when they were dealing with front vowels, while carefully preserving the Strong Doric variants on the back axis? And why should anyone have thought in the first place that some liberty could be taken with the vowel representation in certain categories? Is any Greek reader (or listener) likely to have been confused by a strict observance of a Strong Doric vocalism, especially when the same reader/listener was apparently able to 'decode' endings like a genitive singular in -ω, an accusative plural in -ως and an infinitive in -ην? Since, as Abbenes himself underlines, the Strong Doric forms cluster in such well-defined endings, as well as in the stem of specific lexemes like the Doric verb δήλομαι (= Attic βούλομαι 'to want') and the infinitive ἦμεν,

<sup>11</sup> For uncontroversially attested Theocr. 2.146 Μελιξοῦς and 7.97 Μυρτοῦς as well as 14.57 νοῦν there is no early papyrus evidence (cf. Molinos Tejada (1990: 70)), but despite Ἀγιδῶς in Alcman fr. 1.40 we cannot confidently assume (with Abbenes (1996: 5)) that Theocritus *must* have written ὦ here.

<sup>12</sup> For a complete overview of the Alcman material see Hinge (2006: 22–30), who suggests for cases like τείρει and ἀνειρομένοι (as opposed to e.g. gen. sg. χηρός 'hand') 'Epenthese und nicht Ersatzdehnung' ('epenthesis, not compensatory lengthening'), and for a conspectus of the Theocritean evidence Abbenes (1996: 6–7). The evidence of εἶμεν *ante correcturam* in Alcman fr. 1.45 is important because the scribe cannot have slipped here simply out of habit: the corresponding form in Attic/koine Greek was quite different (εἶναι).

<sup>13</sup> Cf. on Alcman Hinge (2006: 204–7) and on Theocritus Molinos Tejada (1990: 71 and 311–17); -εν is originally a preconsonantal sandhi variant of -ειν/-ην (cf. García Ramón (1977: 191–5)). According to the (limited) data in Molinos Tejada (1990: 70–3), the infinitive ending resulting from \*-εεν might have been spelled quite regularly as -ην at first, -ειν becoming more frequent in later papyri and in the medieval manuscripts of Theocritus, but the same contraction product in the nom. pl. of the *u*-stems (-εις < \*-ε(F)ες; cf. Theocr. 2.128 πελέκεις 'axes') and in the paradigm of the *verba vocalia* (e.g. -εῖται < \*-εεταί) is most commonly spelled with EI.



we may rather postulate exactly the inverse: not that the Strong Doric forms are the default variants, which were actively *avoided* in some categories to ensure easy readability, but that the Mild Doric forms were the basis, and a Strong Doric patina was *added* to the text, affecting – as it were symbolically – only the most conspicuous lexemes and categories.

### Alcman, Theocritus and Hellenistic Greek

Of course, we then still have to ask why this happened, both in the case of Alcman (where an Alexandrian editor may be responsible) and in the case of Theocritus (where there is no reason to assume an edition fundamentally diverging from the author’s own text). For Alcman we might argue that his Laconian background justified any orthographic move in the direction of a Strong Doric text, just as it justified the orthographic replacement of  $\Theta$  by  $\Sigma$  in most environments.<sup>14</sup> For Theocritus, however, no such easy explanation is available since he, unlike Alcman, hailed from a Mild Doric area. As we have just seen, he also cannot simply have imitated what he found in Alcman, for in that case he would no doubt have adopted further Alcmanic features as well (e.g. the  $\Sigma/\Theta$  convention). Looking for other literary models does not lead very far either, because Mild Doric vocalism prevails in the rest of archaic and classical Doric literature. So at best we could assume that Theocritus added the Strong Doric patina because he regarded Strong Doric as *the* Doric  $\kappa\alpha\tau’\ \xi\sigma\chi\acute{\eta}\nu$  and wanted to differentiate his (or his shepherds’) dialect as much as possible from standard Attic/koine Greek,<sup>15</sup> disregarding literary precedent – but

<sup>14</sup> The secondary (editorial) insertion of specific dialect features into the text of Alcman is also seen in the case of the Doric futures: cf. above and Cassio (1999a: 202–3).

<sup>15</sup> Note that the Strong Doric vocalism cannot be explained as mimetically appropriate because of the geographical localization of some of the bucolic poems in Strong Doric Magna Graecia (4.17 Αἰσάραιο, 4.24 Νήαιθον, 5.1 Συβαρίταν, 5.16 Κρᾶθιν, 5.72–3 Θουρίω, Συβαρίτα, 5.124 ἡμέρα?, Κρᾶθι, 5.126 Συβαρίτης) (or, in Theocr. 7, on Middle Doric Cos, where e.g. gen. sg. -ου would be appropriate): other references are to Mild Doric Sicily (Theocr. 1.65 Αἴτνας, 1.117–18 Ἀρέθουσα, Θύβριδος, [Theocr.] 8.56, 9.15, Theocr. 11.7 with the Cyclops as a compatriot of the narrator, 11.47 Αἴτνας) and we must also keep in mind the ‘Syracusan’ *Idyll* 15 as well as the Sicilian connections of Daphnis (cf. Theocr. 7.75 ἡμέρα); see further Gow (1950: I xix–xxi). On the question of (partial) linguistic mimesis see further below.

why, then, did he celebrate in one of his epigrams as quintessentially Doric the comic poet Epicharmus, who used Mild Doric Syracusan (Theocr. *Epigr.* 18.1 ἄ τε φωνὰ Δώριος χῶνῆρ ὁ τὰν κωμῳδίῳν εὐρών Ἐπίχαρμος ‘both the language is Doric and the man who invented comedy, Epicharmus’)? And why did he spoil the intended effect by using in his own poems the common participles in -οισα which do echo the traditional language of lyric poetry in Doric, while *not* being characteristic of maximally differentiated Strong Doric (outside Cyrene)? In reality, the solution is much simpler and, as we shall discover, the key is given by Theocritus himself in the scene from *Idyll* 15 which was our starting point. However, in order to understand better what is going on, we first have to undertake a brief detour into the realm of the consonants.

The most remarkable feature of the consonantism of the text of Alcman (as well as Theocritus<sup>16</sup>) is the frequent, but again not entirely consistent, writing of word-internal -ζ- with ΣΔ, just as in the Aeolic poets. At first sight this is puzzling both because classical Laconian has ΔΔ = [dd] (*vel sim.*) instead and because nothing of the sort is found in the Lesbian inscriptions. Laconian [dd] must be assimilated from earlier [zd] (Thumb and Kieckers (1932: 85–6)), a change which may have happened already before Alcman’s time, in which case Alcman simply avoided too parochial a form.<sup>17</sup> The question is just why Alcman’s, and the Aeolic poets’, preferred [zd] was not written with Ζ, which *was* good enough for the Lesbian inscriptions and whose classical pronunciation as [zd] can hardly be doubted (see Allen (1987: 56–9)<sup>18</sup>). The

<sup>16</sup> For the Theocritean evidence see Molinos Tejada (1990: 120–30), who dismisses as a waste of time any attempt to justify ΣΔ or Ζ in specific lines with thematic criteria (cf. e.g. Arena (1956–7), Ruijgh (1984: 78–80) on *Idyll* 15); but she does recognize a significant concentration of ΣΔ variants in *Idyll* 1 with its strongly bucolic character (similarly Arena (1956–7: 24) on ΣΔ in bucolic words, Stanford (1968), Dimitrov (1981: 31–3)).

<sup>17</sup> Note that this was respected throughout the centuries, just as later editors refrained from introducing the (probably later) Laconian change of intervocalic [s] > [h] (whereas the fricative pronunciation [θ] of Θ, which is reflected in the spelling with Σ, may well have existed already in Alcman’s days; cf. Morani (1976: 76–9) and Hinge (2006: 73)). For the inscriptional evidence with ΔΔ see Bourguet (1927: 59–60, 135) and Hinge (2006: 93).

<sup>18</sup> The counterarguments advanced by Teodorsson (1993) are weak; in particular, he notes that ‘if Ionic-Attic actually had [zd], the grammarians ought at least to have mentioned these dialects together with Lesbian’ (p. 311), but this is not so: for the Hellenistic

only satisfactory answer is this:<sup>19</sup> ΣΔ was introduced into the text of Alcman and the Lesbian poets when, at some point during the fourth century BC, Z was *no longer* pronounced as [zd], but had become [z] in Attic/koine Greek (cf. Teodorsson (1977: 243–4), Allen (1987: 58)); from now on, only a spelling ΣΔ could ensure that these dialect texts continued to be recited in the correct traditional way. This lends support to the recent thesis of Hinge (2006), according to whom ‘our’ Alcman is based on a Hellenistic text written down from a living oral tradition.<sup>20</sup> That not *every* [zd] was ‘transcribed’ in this rather unfamiliar way is neither surprising nor was it necessary: in theory, a single note at the beginning of the text, stating ‘τὸ ζ διὰ τοῦ σδ ἐκφέρεται’ (‘Z is pronounced as ΣΔ’), would have been sufficient.<sup>21</sup>

If this is true for the consonants, why should it not also be true for the vowels? Let us take again the long vowels resulting from contractions and compensatory lengthenings, which are spelled as EI and OY in classical Attic-Ionic as well as Hellenistic orthography. Orthographic OY, originally [o:] in pronunciation, had become [u:] in Attic no later than the mid-fourth century, as proved by the Boeotian spelling of original \*u as OY (cf. Threutte (1980: 239),

grammarians Attic-Ionic was not in the same way distinct from their own language as was Lesbian. Synchronically, therefore, their own (i.e. ‘Attic-Ionic’) [z] contrasted with Lesbian (and Doric) [zd]. It is true that there is relatively little independent evidence for the pronunciation of Z in Doric, but see Lejeune (1972: 113–14) and Allen (1987: 58 n. 115) on Argive δικάσζοιτο and note that a progressive assimilation [dz] > [dd] in Laconian, though also possible (cf. Brixhe (1996c: 101), who prefers a direct change of palatal [d’d] > [dd]), is certainly not more likely than [zd] > [dd].

<sup>19</sup> Cf. e.g. Thumb and Scherer (1959: 96–7), Lejeune (1972: 115), Ruijgh (1984: 76–7), Allen (1987: 59) (on the Lesbian evidence) and West (1974: 188–9) (on Alcman and Theocritus). To assume, with Hooker (1977: 18), that Lesbian ΣΔ stands for [z] is absurd.

<sup>20</sup> Rather surprisingly, Hinge (2006: 91–9) does not, however, use the Z ~ ΣΔ convention as evidence, but implausibly interprets ΣΔ as an attempt at writing a sequence [z.dz] (*sic*); even if, contrary to what is noted above in n. 18, Z represented [dz] in early Laconian, surely something like \*ΣZ or perhaps \*ZZ would be expected for [z.dz]. Hinge’s thesis is foreshadowed by Morani (1976), but whereas Morani’s earlier (fifth-century) date for the production of a written text from an oral performance is able to account for Σ ~ Θ = [θ], it fails to explain the case of Z ~ ΣΔ, where the ‘problem’ of a diverging pronunciation of the traditional spelling only arose in post-classical times.

<sup>21</sup> There is thus no need to assume, with Page (1951: 144–5), that ΣΔ was imported into the text of Alcman under the influence of that of Theocritus; nor need the grammatical tradition according to which ΣΔ for Z is Doric (Schol. Dion. Thr. 35.2 Hilgard, *Et. Magn.* 411.57–412.3, Gow (1950: II 3)) be based (exclusively) on Theocritus.

Allen (1987: 76–8)). Similarly, orthographic EI was becoming increasingly closed during the fourth century, but the change from classical Attic [e:] to late Hellenistic [i:], which *may* have started among some speakers already during the fifth century BC,<sup>22</sup> did not become universal before the third century (cf. Threatte (1980: 195), Allen (1987: 69–70)). So, at the time when Theocritus was writing, an educated speaker of Attic or koine Greek might still have pronounced EI as [e:], while already pronouncing OY as [u:].

However, the same is not necessarily true for a speaker of Doric. In Greek terminology, the closing involved in the changes [e:] > [i:] and [o:] > [u:] makes the respective vowels less ‘broad’ (πλατύς). This in turn recalls the anonymous Alexandrian’s complaint in *Idyll* 15 about the Syracusan women’s vowels: they are πλατειάσδοισαι ἅπαντα.<sup>23</sup> This is usually taken to refer to Doric  $\bar{\alpha}$  where koine Greek had η, and indeed it cannot refer more generally to a Strong Doric, as opposed to Mild Doric, treatment of the vowels on the front and back axis: we have seen that the Syracusan women’s native dialect is *not* Strong Doric. But what it can, and indeed should, refer to is a more general observation on vowel pronunciation in Doric as a whole, as opposed to koine Greek: Doric, even Mild Doric Syracusan, is less advanced in closing *all* of its vowels.<sup>24</sup> In other words, at the start of the third century, [o:] (= OY) has not yet been closed completely to yield [u:], and [e:] (= EI) is also still further away from [i:] than in koine Greek. In normal orthography, of course, this did not matter; but a writer who wanted to indicate unequivocally such a greater degree of vocalic openness could do so only by using the graphemes Ω and Η instead of OY and EI. As in the case of ΣΔ ~ Ζ, however, there was no need to do this with absolute consistency, because the alternative orthography served merely as a signal. Moreover,

<sup>22</sup> Cf. especially Teodorsson (1974: 176–8) and (1987) as well as Duhoux (1987); Teodorsson (1977: 214) gives 250 BC as a *terminus ante quem* for the completion of EI = [i:], but this may be too early.

<sup>23</sup> Cf. also [Demetr.] *Eloc.* 177 πλατεία λαλούσι πάντα οἱ Δωριεῖς ‘the Dorians pronounce everything in a broad manner’ (exemplified with Doric βροντά ‘thunder’ for βροντή).

<sup>24</sup> See further Hermogen. *Id.* 1.6 (p. 247 Rabe), where ἐξαιρέτως αἱ τε τῶ α καὶ τῶ ω πλείστου χρώμενα [λέξεις] ‘especially the words with many α’s and ω’s’ are singled out as effecting a πλατεία λέξις or ‘broad accent’ (cf. Schol. Theocr. 12.6–8 Wendel); however, already Hermogenes (followed by Schol. Theocr. 15.87–8) refers the Alexandrian man’s remark primarily to ‘Doric’  $\bar{\alpha}$ .

this scenario may even explain why there is overall more consistency in the use of  $\omega$  as compared to that of H.<sup>25</sup> As pointed out above, even in early koine Greek the change [o:] > [u:] was far more advanced than the corresponding change [e:] > [i:]. Hence, in highlighting the ‘correct’ pronunciation it was more vital to prevent an erroneous [u:] interpretation of OY by using  $\omega$ ; whereas on the front axis the difference between the standard (koine) and the intended (Doric) pronunciation was merely one between two different timbres of a long *e*-vowel.<sup>26</sup>

If this is correct, it has some interesting implications. The alleged Strong Doric character of the Alcman text has been used in the past as a basis for the claim that Alcman’s dialect is close to Old Laconian.<sup>27</sup> We now see that Alcman’s Doric *need* not have been any ‘stronger’ than that of the other choral lyric poets. As far as the diagnostic feature of the lengthened vowels is concerned,<sup>28</sup> it is just Doric *tout court*; and in a recent article Cassio (2007) has shown that this is indeed how it was classified by ancient scholars like Apollonius. The main difference between Alcman and the other choral lyric poets would only lie in the way in which Alcman’s text was recorded, particular attention being paid to the correlation of written text and oral delivery.<sup>29</sup> More importantly in our context, whether or not there was a living oral tradition in the case of Alcman, the fact that *any* Doric dialect could best be *written*

<sup>25</sup> Note especially the divergence between  $\omega$  and EI as results of the third compensatory lengthening (e.g. Theocr. 1.82 κῶρα and 15.120 κῶροι without *varia lectio* κούρα/κούροι vs Theocr. 2.154, 2.162, 7.119 with ξειν- without *varia lectio* ξην-); H is never found in these cases (cf. Molinos Tejada (1990: 174–7), Abbenes (1996: 6–7)).

<sup>26</sup> Perhaps one may even explain the occasional occurrence of hyper-Dorisms in a similar way (e.g. Theocr. 3.19 φιλάσσω ‘I shall kiss’, 1.109 etc. μᾶλα ‘sheep’; cf. Strunk (1964), Darms (1981: 187–8), Cassio (1993b) and Molinos Tejada (1990: 38–46), who stresses that the hyper-Doric  $\bar{\alpha}$  is old in the Theocritus text); in these, A would stand not for plain [a:], as in the case of old \* $\bar{a}$ , but for a very open [æ:] normally written with H. In any case, it is unwise to edit out these forms with Wilamowitz-Moellendorff (1906: 20–1) and Latte (1949: 226).

<sup>27</sup> See particularly Page (1951: 102–63, esp. 153–5) who even asserts that the participles in -οισα must have been used in early Laconia (pp. 133–4; cf. already Braun (1932: 188–93) and for a rejection most recently Schade (1997–8)).

<sup>28</sup> But of course spellings like σισα for θεαα (cf. above) do suggest that a distinctly Laconian sound pattern was intended here, and this would include a Strong Doric pronunciation of the secondary long vowels.

<sup>29</sup> Note that the above explanation of only apparently Strong Doric  $\omega$  also accounts for the unexpected (though rare) attestation of some such  $\omega$  spellings in Epicharmus and Sophron (cf. Willi (2008: 127 n. 29)): here too the oral performance was crucial.

down for recitation in a non-Doric environment with graphically ‘Strong Doric’ vocalism at least in some signal categories was certainly a good reason for Theocritus to do so in fashioning his ‘bucolic’ language: for his poems too were meant to be recited aloud. Thus, what is at stake in Theocritus is not Laconian, Syracusan or Cyrenaean, and not Mild Doric or Strong Doric either, but simply Doric or not Doric. And that finally brings us back to our main topic, Sicilian language and identity.

### The literary dimension

If we dismiss Magnien’s and Molino Tejada’s Syracusan theories as unfounded, and if we instead regard the dialect of both *Idyll* 15 and the bucolic poems as a ‘generic’ form of literary<sup>30</sup> Doric, we may still agree with Hunter (1996a: 154–5), who claims that ‘when Praxinoa and Gorgo use Doric forms, the effect remains mimetically analogous to Syracusan speech’. However, things become more problematic with the addition that ‘if no other Theocritean poem had survived, there would be little critical disagreement about the linguistic mimesis of the poem’. Praxinoa, Gorgo and the impolite Alexandrian man are not the only speakers in the mime. There is also an old woman before the palace, another more polite Alexandrian man and finally the singer who sings the long Adonis hymn. All of these speak or sing in the same dialect. So why should *their* native dialect not be treated in a similar ‘mimetically analogous’ way, by using a ‘generic’ version of it? And of course other Theocritean poems did survive, so that we cannot look at *Idyll* 15 only. If we want to read the language of *Idyll* 15 as ‘gestur[ing] towards “the realistic”’ (Hunter (1996a: 157)), we should do the same for the bucolic poems. That would not

<sup>30</sup> This qualification is important not only because of the existence of metrically guaranteed variant forms which can belong to different epichoric Doric dialects (cf. e.g. above on the inf. in -εῦ/-ῆῦ/-εῖῦ and the acc. pl. in -ος/-ως, Legrand (1898: 238–40), or also Molinos Tejada (1990: 173–8) on cases like κᾶλός vs κᾶλός, ξένος vs ξεῖνος etc.), but also because of a number of distinctly non-Doric additions like the participles in -οισα (unless these are inspired by Cyrenaean), pronominal forms such as ἄμμι (Theocr. 1.102; cf. Arena (1956–7: 42–65) and Molinos Tejada (1990: 141–9) on similar, but not metrically guaranteed, forms elsewhere) or the particles κε(ῖ) and ἄν (Molinos Tejada (1990: 360–1), Thumb and Kieckers (1932: 224)).

be impossible – Theocritus’ bucolic scenes *are* located in Doric areas –, but it would seem reductionist.<sup>31</sup> Is a hint at mimesis really all there is to Theocritus’ choice of language? Or if not, is it sufficient to invoke ‘the literary tastes of the Alexandrians, who loved to write in obscure, or at any rate antiquated dialects’ (Abbenes (1996: 17)) – as if they had acted at random?

The answer is clearly no, as Hunter himself demonstrates. Commenting on the opening verses of *Idyll* 1 he observes that ‘the cumulative effect of distinctive Doric forms seems to be to convey the “new” sound of “new poetry”’ (Hunter (1996b: 33)). Of course this is not true if we look at the forms in isolation, for Doric had been used in literature since the days of Alcman. What is new is rather the amalgamation of these literary Doric forms with the traditional metre of epic poetry in the framework of a mime.<sup>32</sup> No doubt the bucolic hexameter is in some respects different from the more strictly regulated Callimachean one<sup>33</sup> – and Di Benedetto (1956) has shown that the stronger the Dorism is in one of Theocritus’ poems the less Callimachean are its hexameters<sup>34</sup> –, but even the least Callimachean hexameter is still a hexameter and therefore unlike any traditional metre of Doric poetry. In this metrical

<sup>31</sup> Cf. Di Benedetto (1956: 49–50), Fabiano (1971: 521) and Halperin (1983: 149–53), after Legrand (1898: 234–5), against the view expressed in Schol. Theocr. 7.8–10 Wendel (*Anecdota Estense III*: ὅτι τῶν τὰ βουκολικὰ συγγραψάντων ἴδιον τὸ Δωριδί χρησθαι διαλέκτῳ, τὸ μιμῆσθαι εἰς ἄκρον ἀγροίκων ὀμιλίας καὶ νομέων χαριέντους αὐτὰς ἐκφράζων ‘[Note] that authors of bucolic poems typically use the Doric dialect, [and] imitate as far as possible the conversations of countrymen and shepherds, [the poet] representing them in a charming manner’). Hunter (1996b: 8–10) and Basta Donzelli (2003: 265–8) contrast Theocritus’ language with the more truly realistic language of the popular mime (e.g. *P.Oxy.* 413 and the *Fragmentum Grenfellianum*).

<sup>32</sup> Cf. Di Benedetto (1956: 48), Ruijgh (1984: 87–8), Basta Donzelli (2003: 262–3, ‘il Dorico . . . nei versi dell’*epos* era uno degli aspetti formali più caratteristici della novità letteraria teocritea’ (‘Doric in the verses of epic was one of the most characteristic formal aspects of Theocritus’ literary novelty’)), Hinge (2009: 73, ‘The linguistic and metric form marks the text as a hybrid of mime, lyric and *epos*’).

<sup>33</sup> For a description of Theocritus’ hexameter and its internal variation see Kunst (1887), Legrand (1898: 314–42) and Fantuzzi (1995) as well as the useful short summary in Hunter (1999: 17–21).

<sup>34</sup> On the different ‘degrees’ of Dorism (especially as opposed to ‘Homerism’) in the various *Idylls* see already Legrand (1898: 234–50) and Gallavotti (1952, *non vidi*) and subsequently also Darms (1981), Dimitrov (1981), Hunter (1996b: 38–45) and Bertolini (2001: 96). More controversially, Di Benedetto (1956: 59) wants to see here a criterion for dating the poems (the most Doric *Idylls*, including *Idyll* 15, being the earliest; but see the objections in Fabiano (1971: esp. 519–24), who stresses the ‘constant fluctuation’ of Theocritus’ language and style).

environment, then, Doric is a literary counter-language, apparently inferior to, and certainly dissimilar from, the expected ‘standard’. The end product thus becomes an adventurous hybrid and the status of a Theocritean mime or bucolic poem turns out to be identical to that of his Syracusan women in Alexandria, the city of learning and culture, but an Alexandria before the Callimachean revolution, where epic poetry is still the literary ideal.<sup>35</sup> Like his women,<sup>36</sup> Theocritus’ poems are ‘intruders’ into a closed society, trying to blend in, but scorned and frowned upon because of their rough ways and their linguistic foreignness. But again like the Syracusan women, Theocritus’ poems ‘protest’: look more closely and you will discover the noble ancestry of what you are dismissing. The Syracusans are Κορίνθιαὶ ἄνωθεν and they therefore speak Πελοποννησιαστί; but so do Theocritus’ poems, written in a dialect akin to that of the Peloponnesian Alcman and later choral lyric tradition.

### Missing Sicily?

Everything, then, seems to fall neatly into place. And yet there is something unsettling about it, a categorization which we hardly notice because we are far too used to it. Praxinoa and Gorgo define their identity through (a) their city of origin, Syracuse, hence (b) the metropolis of Syracuse, Corinth, hence (c) the Peloponnese, hence (d) the Doric world. What is missing is Sicily. Why are they not (a) Syracusans, hence (b) Sicilians? One might be tempted to think that it is because there was no such thing as a *Sicilian* identity, but that is not true. Writers like Antiochus of Syracuse in the fifth century or Philistus of Syracuse and Alcimus in the fourth would not have written Σικελικά if they had not thought of themselves as *Sicilians*, and Timaeus of Tauromenion, whose life overlapped with that of Theocritus, obviously does the same when he ‘tries so hard to make Sicily greater than Greece as a

<sup>35</sup> Cf. the Theocritean ‘manifesto’ in Theocr. 7.45–8: the narrator hates ‘the birds of the Muses who toil in vain crowing against the singer from Chios’ (Μοισῶν ὄρνιαες ὅσοι ποτὶ Χίου ἄοιδόν ἀντία κοκκύζοντες ἐτώσια μοχθίζοντι).

<sup>36</sup> For the Syracusan women as ‘embodiments of the poetic voice’ cf. Hunter (1996a: 150–1).



whole, its history more illustrious and impressive than that of the rest of the world, its inhabitants wiser than all the other outstanding thinkers, and those originating from Syracuse better and more divine political leaders’ (Plb. 12.26b.4 = Tim. *FGH* 566 F 94.4: Τίμαιος. . . τοσαύτην ποιείται σπουδὴν περὶ τοῦ τὴν μὲν Σικελίαν μεγαλομερεστέραν ποιῆσαι τῆς συμπάσης Ἑλλάδος, τὰς δὲ ἐν αὐτῇ πράξεις ἐπιφανεστέρας καὶ καλλίους τῶν κατὰ τὴν ἄλλην οἰκουμένην, τῶν δ’ ἀνδρῶν τῶν μὲν σοφίᾳ διενηνοχότων σοφωτάτους τοὺς ἐν Σικελίᾳ, τῶν δὲ πραγματικῶν ἡγεμονικωτάτους καὶ θειοτάτους τοὺς ἐκ Συρακουσσῶν). Significantly, too, at the Congress of Gela in 424 BC the Syracusan general Hermocrates is said by Thucydides to have rallied all the Sicilian Greeks by reminding them that ‘it is not shameful at all when friends yield to each other, a Dorian to a Dorian and a Chalcidian to his relatives, given that we are all neighbours, inhabit one and the same land in the midst of the sea and share one common name: Siceliots’ (Thuc. 4.64.3: οὐδὲν γὰρ αἰσχρὸν οἰκείους οἰκείων ἥσασσθαι, ἢ Δωριᾶ τινὰ Δωριῶς ἢ Χαλκιδέα τῶν ξυγγενῶν, τὸ δὲ ξύμπαν γείτονας ὄντας καὶ ξυνοίκους μιᾶς χώρας καὶ περιρρύτου καὶ ὄνομα ἐν κελημένους Σικελιώτας).

So the reasons for the Syracusan women’s silence on their Sicilianess must lie elsewhere. They are, I suggest, twofold. Firstly we must take into account the Alexandrian setting. The anonymous man’s arrogance is based on an insider’s feeling of superiority: in a sense Arsinoe’s palace and her great show are also his. As long as Alexandria is the centre, any other place, including Syracuse, is the periphery, and no additional reference to Sicily will change that. But in reality Alexandria’s own status is at least as precarious as that of Syracuse. It may be reinventing itself, under Ptolemy II, as a new focus of Greek culture (cf. Theocr. 14.57–68, 17.105–16), but it can do so only by gathering this culture from elsewhere. On the mental map, therefore, Alexandria itself is part of the periphery, whereas mainland Greece is still the centre: located in the Egyptian diaspora, Alexandria will never really be a new Athens. By establishing their ‘Peloponnesian’ credentials, Theocritus’ Syracusan women thus turn the tables – *they* are part of the centre, the Alexandrian is not, or at any rate not more than they. *Him* we must imagine as speaking koine Greek – Hellenistically

internationalized Attic-Ionic –, whereas *them* we must imagine, not as speaking *Syracusan*, as Magnien, Molinos Tejada or even Hunter would have it, but as speaking the equally international Doric koina of post-classical Sicily.<sup>37</sup> The opposites are perfectly balanced:

|   |                                   |
|---|-----------------------------------|
| Alexandria                              | Syracuse                          |
| Egyptian ‘diaspora’                     | Western Greek ‘diaspora’          |
| koiné Greek (~ Hellenistic Attic-Ionic) | Doric koina (~ Hellenistic Doric) |
| Athens as mental centre                 | Peloponnese as mental centre      |

In other words, the women’s silence on their Sicilianness is not in contrast with Timaeus as it does not imply that there is no longer a Sicilian identity. Referring to Sicily would simply not add any value to the women’s argument *under the present circumstances*.

But why, one might object, should they then make reference at least to Syracuse? Why should they not content themselves with a proud reference to their Doric language and culture, without bringing in *any* hint of periphery? Here we must free ourselves of a dangerous prejudice. From our omniscient modern vantage point we accept Alexandrian claims to centre status all too easily, and we do tend to think of Syracuse as peripheral.<sup>38</sup> Politically, however, it must have been far from clear to Theocritus and his contemporaries whether Ptolemy II’s Alexandria or Hiero II’s Syracuse was going to have a greater impact on world history (cf. Theocr. 16.76–81 next to 17.86–94). Moreover, in the first decades of the third century the myth of cultured metropolitan Alexandria was still very much a construction site, and one on a *tabula rasa* as far as Greek culture was concerned. Syracuse, on the other hand, looked back on more than three centuries of Hellenic culture. Seen in this light the women’s pride is not parochial at all, but justified and highly effective; and behind it, we again hear the Syracusan Theocritus

<sup>37</sup> On the Doric koina of Sicily, which seems to have been established already around 400 BC, see Bartoněk (1973), Willi (2008: 30–4) and Chapter 8.

<sup>38</sup> For instance, Hinge (2009: 74) speaks of ‘the anachronism of Praxinoa’s Doric identity’, but although in early Alexandria being Doric may have been out of place, it was certainly not a thing of the past.

himself, who, through the very act of writing this μῦθος γυναικεῖος, follows in the footsteps of Sophron, his Syracusan compatriot who had lived a century before.<sup>39</sup>

Also, the second reason why Theocritus’ women do not mention Sicily now becomes clear. Syracuse had been the focus of all cultural activity in Sicily and the West since the days of Hiero I, the ‘marrow of Sicily’ as Theocritus himself writes in *Idyll* 28.18 (Τρινακρίας μύελον). Hence, pride in being Syracusan as it were automatically implied pride also in being Sicilian:<sup>40</sup> there was no need to mention Sicily separately. Unless we are told otherwise, we take it for granted that a French person who is proud of the splendours of Paris will also be proud of French culture more generally. So when we see something of Theocritus himself in his Syracusan women in Alexandria, we must not think of him exclusively as a representative of Syracuse, but also of Sicily, or rather: of western Greek culture as a whole. It is no coincidence that his shepherds are from Aitna and Sybaris (Theocr. 1.65, 5.1) or tend their flocks near Croton (Theocr. 4.17, 4.24). Diachronically being Doric may mean being from the Peloponnese,<sup>41</sup> but synchronically being (and, above all, writing in) Doric has come to mean, more often than not, being from Sicily or Magna Graecia.

Of course Doric was still far from dying out elsewhere too – in Crete or the Peloponnese, for example (cf. Bubeník (1989)) – but its ‘ethnocultural vitality’ nowhere remained as strong as in the west, as witnessed for instance by the linguistic choices of Theocritus’ contemporary Archimedes, the Pythagorean prose writers or the authors of various kinds of pseudo-Epicharmean texts.<sup>42</sup>

<sup>39</sup> Schol. Theocr. 15 *arg.* even points to a specific source: παρέπλασε δὲ τὸ ποιημάτιον ἐκ τῶν παρὰ Σώφροσι Ἰσθμια Θεωμένων ‘he fashioned the poem on the basis of Sophron’s *Visitors to the Isthmian Games*’ (cf. Magnien (1920: 59–60)).

<sup>40</sup> Note also the implicit equation Syracusan leaders ~ Sicilian leaders in Plb. 12.26b.4 cited above.

<sup>41</sup> Cf. the Doric dialect of Helen’s bridesmaids in Theocr. 18.48 (Δωριστί, but not Λακωνιστί, as stressed by Hunter (1996a: 154)).

<sup>42</sup> Abbenes (1996: 11–15) shows that in (at least some of) the fragments of Archytas and Philolaus as well as the pseudo-Pythagorean texts and in the *Dissoi Logoi* essentially the same ‘mixed Doric’ vocalic system as in Theocritus is found (for the comparison cf. already Magnien (1920: 53), who refers to Greg. Corinth. p. 6–7 Schaefer: Ἀττικῆς μὲν φράσεως κανόνα τὸν κωμικὸν Ἀριστοφάνην προθέμενοι, καὶ Θουκυδίδην τὸν συγγραφέα, καὶ [Δημοσθένην τὸν] ῥήτορα, . . . Δωρίδος δὲ τὸν Ταραντῖνον Ἀρχύταν, καὶ

Not by coincidence it is also fourth-century Syracuse, the ‘capital’ of this Doric οἰκευμένα, where a Lucanian ambassador was greatly honoured, according to Favorinus (fr. 95.24 Barigazzi), for addressing a flattered assembly Δωριστί ‘in Doric’.<sup>43</sup> Writing in a ‘generic Doric’, Theocritus is therefore indeed using a literary counter-language, but first and foremost he is using language as a symbol of his Sicilianness.<sup>44</sup> And that in turn encourages us not to forget the Sicilian Theocritus because of the Hellenistic Theocritus. By way of conclusion, two points may illustrate why this is important.

### Theocritus the Sicilian

The first point is about Theocritus’ novelty. Let us again consider Hunter’s statement that Theocritus’ use of Doric ‘convey[s] the “new” sound of “new poetry”’, a statement which clearly plays out the Hellenistic Theocritus. But how new is all of this new poetry? In *Idyll* 1 the shepherd Thyrsis sings a farewell song of lovesick Daphnis, the ‘hero’ of bucolic poetry, who also features in *Idylls* 5, 6, 7, 8 and 9. The myth implied by *Idyll* 1 is unlike the classical myth of Daphnis, as told for instance by Timaeus (*FGH* 566 F 83 = Parthen. *Narr. am.* 29), but the figure of Daphnis himself is certainly not Theocritus’ invention, nor is the writing

Θεόκριτον τὸν τὰ βουκολικὰ συγγραψάμενον, . . . ἴσως ἂν περὶ τῶν διαλέκτων ἰκανῶς διαλάβοιμεν ‘if we posit as the canon of the Attic form of expression the comic poet Aristophanes, Thucydides the historian and Demosthenes the orator . . . and of the Doric one Archytas of Tarentum as well as Theocritus the author of the bucolic poems, . . . we might get a good grip on the dialects’). For these texts too the explanation given above makes better sense than the assumption of a Strong Doric version partially koineized in certain grammatical categories, for here too the Doric dialect served as a differentiating marker of identity (cf. *Iamb.* *VP* 241–3, *Porph.* *VP* 53 and Cassio (1989: 145–50) on the Pythagorean preference for Doric over other dialects). Archimedes, on the other hand, has EI and OY throughout, not because he was a Syracusan, but because for him the use of Doric was a matter of convenience rather than ideology (cf. Thumb and Kieckers (1932: 209), who see in him a ‘representative of the later Sicilian Dorism that formed the transition to the koine’ (‘Vertreter jenes jüngeren sizilischen Dorismus . . . , der den Übergang zur Κοινή bildete’)). Prose texts in Doric from other parts of the Greek world were exceptional; cf. Cassio (1989: 137–41).

<sup>43</sup> On this episode, its dating and wider context see especially Poccetti (1989).

<sup>44</sup> To some extent one may thus agree with Schol. *Theocr.* 12.5–6 Wendel, according to which one of the reasons Theocritus had for writing in Doric was διότι Συρακούσιος ἦν ‘because he was from Syracuse’.

of bucolic song. Theocr. 1.19–20 unequivocally points back to a tradition (ἀλλὰ τὸ γὰρ δὴ, Θύρσι, τὰ Δάφνιδος ἄλγε’ αἰίδες καὶ τᾶς βουκολικᾶς ἐπὶ τὸ πλεόν ἴκειο μοίσας ‘but you, Thyrsis, are used to sing the story of Daphnis and have become a master of bucolic poetry’) and according to Diodorus of Sicily (4.84.4) musical Daphnis himself was said to have invented τὸ βουκολικὸν ποίημα καὶ μέλος, ‘bucolic poetry and song’, which, Diodorus proudly adds, ‘until today remain transmitted traditionally in Sicily’ (μέχρι τοῦ νῦν κατὰ τῆν Σικελίαν τυγχάνει διαμένον ἐν ἀποδοχῇ). In other words, Theocritus appears to be taking up, not inventing, a genre that had been around before him.<sup>45</sup>

More crucially still, Aelian, after a summary of the story of Daphnis being blinded for his broken faith, adds: Στησίχορον γε τὸν ἡμεραῖον τῆς τοιαύτης μελοποιίας ὑπάρξασθαι ‘Stesichorus of Himera is supposed to have begun this type of song-making’ (Ael. VH 10.18 = Stes. fr. spur. 279 Davies). Modern editors of Stesichorus have dismissed this claim as spurious, together with further independent evidence for ‘romantic ballads’ of Stesichorus; but there is no reason why one should accept this act of misguided historical criticism.<sup>46</sup> In fact Aelian’s version has a perfectly Stesichorean flavour to it. Whoever knows of the *Palinode* must recognize the poet’s own *persona* in a Daphnis who succumbs to, and is punished for, a forbidden desire. If we therefore accept that Theocritus not only ‘excerpted’ Stesichorus in *Idyll* 18, the *epithalamios* of Helen (cf. Schol. Theocr. 18 *arg.* = Stes. fr. 189) but also followed this fellow Sicilian poet in turning popular bucolic song into a literary genre, he suddenly looks much less innovative.<sup>47</sup> And what is more, if we also remember that Stesichorus regularly

<sup>45</sup> Note also that ‘no one in antiquity explicitly credited [Theocritus] with having invented [bucolic poetry]’ (Halperin 1983: 78).

<sup>46</sup> Cf. especially Lehnus (1975) and D’Alfonso (1994: 89–103), against e.g. West (1970: 206), Halperin (1983: 79–80) and Bertolini (2001: 90). Halperin misrepresents Aelian’s views when he translates ὑπάρξασθαι as ‘inherited [sc. from Daphnis]’.

<sup>47</sup> That Asclepiades of Samos and Philitas of Cos (cf. esp. Bowie 1985), without strong evidence and against the ancient sources, as pointed out by Gutzwiller (1991: 6) also wrote bucolic poetry can hardly be inferred from Theocr. 7.39–41; even if Simichidas ‘is’ Theocritus, no competition in the same genre is implied here (*pace* Puelma (1960: 158)). On this much-discussed poem cf. further e.g. Hunter (1996b: 20–8), and on the popular origins of bucolic song Athen. 14.619b as well as various scholia with different versions often involving Sicily (listed in Halperin (1983: 81–2), with bibliography on relevant modern scholarship).

used the same choral lyric language as Alcman, we may well end up with a centuries-old Sicilian tradition of bucolic poetry written in a ‘generic Doric’ dialect very similar to the one found in Theocritus. Perhaps, then, Theocritus’ language, which, as pointed out above, must not be tied too strictly to a specifically Alcmanic model, should really be thought of as para-Stesichorean<sup>48</sup> – so that both the genre and the sound of Theocritus’ ‘new poetry’ in the end look far more Sicilian than Hellenistic and new.

And that leads on to the second point. What has just been formulated as an opposition may not really be one. Even if we place Stesichorus next to Sophron as a forerunner of Theocritus, we may still concede that Theocritus’ hybrid of ‘lowly’ bucolic and/or mime with ‘lofty’ epic metre is unheard of before, and hence ‘Hellenistic’; for if our concept of ‘Hellenistic literary culture’ is stripped to its essentials, there are but two main ingredients in it: generic experimentation<sup>49</sup> and universal learnedness. The latter, which may be traced back to scholar-poets like Philitas of Cos and Antimachus of Colophon and which became so prominent in Callimachus, is only of limited importance in Theocritus;<sup>50</sup> it is really the former that earns him his place in the hall of fame of Hellenistic literature.

But now let us think again of the Sicilian Stesichorus: Stesichorus’ great achievement in the history of literature is the experimental creation of a generic hybrid too, one of choral lyric and epic, or an epically rethematized and relexified choral lyric, which responds to the colonial need for a new common genre bridging the gap between the Ionian and the Doric traditions meeting in Sicily (cf. Willi 2008: 89–90). After Stesichorus, the Syracusan Epicharmus also creates a novel hybrid, this time by turning colloquial language, the language of the ‘lowly’ man in the street,

<sup>48</sup> Given the Stesichorean connection of *Idyll* 18, which Hunter (1996b: esp. 150–1) acknowledges, ‘analogical *mimesis* of the language of Alcman’ (Hunter 1996b: 154) need not be invoked even for this ‘Spartan’ poem.

<sup>49</sup> ‘Kreuzung der Gattungen’ is the classical term of Kroll (1924: 202), who had been anticipated by Legrand (1898: 413–36, ‘confusion des genres’) and others (cf. Halperin (1983: 203)). Rossi (1971: 83–4 with n. 76) cites e.g. Cercidas of Megalopolis’ philosophical work in the style of the new dithyramb or Callimachus’ epinician odes in elegiac distichs.

<sup>50</sup> Note at least the dialect glosses in Theocr. 12.13–14; but even learned allusions like those to Simonides’ Thessalian patrons in Theocr. 16.34–9 are not very arcane.

for the first time into the recognized medium of communal literature, thus paving the way for both later comedy and mime (Willi 2008: 158–61). Still later, Gorgias of Leontinoi invents yet another hybrid: *Kunstprosa*, which amalgamates pedestrian prose and high poetry into one. And the story goes on in the fourth century: Archestratus of Gela writes a gastronomic didactic poem (Ἡδυπόθεια) in epic dialect and metre – not an epic parody, like the roughly contemporary work by Matro of Pitane, but a hybrid based on the emerging genre of cookery books in Sicily and Magna Graecia,<sup>51</sup> Archestratus’ immediate source of inspiration perhaps being the equally hybrid gastronomic dithyramb Δεῖπνον of Philoxenus of Cythera, a poem which perfectly suits the context of Philoxenus’ stay at the court of Dionysius I of Syracuse (*PMG* 836).<sup>52</sup>

It is hard to believe that this concentration of literary hybrids in Sicily is a coincidence. In Willi (2008: esp. 4–8 and 324–6), I have suggested that it is a product of the colonial environment, where a new identity had to be construed in opposition to the oppressive weight of imported tradition. However that may be, we do not find anything like it elsewhere in the Greek world<sup>53</sup> – before Hellenistic times, that is, when the Greeks again find themselves united

<sup>51</sup> Mithaeus of Syracuse (fifth century) is already mentioned by Pl. *Gorg.* 518b; see further Athen. 12.516c–d, who also refers to Glaucus of Locri, two Syracusan writers called Heracleides, and Hegesippus of Tarentum (pre-Hellenistic), among other later writers (cf. Bilabel (1921: 934–41)). On Archestratus, his style and relationship to other gastronomic texts see now Olson and Sens (2000: esp. xxviii–xliii).

<sup>52</sup> *Pace* Wilamowitz-Moellendorff (1900: 85–8), the Δεῖπνον must not be ascribed to the otherwise obscure Philoxenus of Leucas: Athen. 4.146f is correcting his ascription in Athen. 1.5b, as shown by his unequivocal later citations in Athen. 11.476e, 11.487a, 14.642f and 15.685d; note that the hexametrical quotation from an ὄψαρτυσία ‘cookery-book’ by Philoxenus in Plat. Com. fr. 189.6 is hardly compatible with the dactylo-epitrites of *PMG* 836, but Plato must surely mean the famous Philoxenus, and since Philoxenus of Cythera also wrote a hybrid ‘genealogy’ in melic form (*PMG* 814), it is quite possible that he also attempted a further hybrid of the type exemplified by Archestratus’ work (cf. Olson and Sens (2000: xl–xliii)). Like Stesichorus and Sophron, Philoxenus of Cythera (on whose life in Sicily see *PMG* 815, 816, 819) seems to have been among Theocritus’ sources (cf. Gow (1950: II 118) on *Idylls* 6 and 11).

<sup>53</sup> When Callimachus defends his own πολυειδεια, ‘genre diversity’, in *Iamb.* 13 by referring to Ion of Chios, he points to a classical predecessor who had tried his hands at, but not made a hybrid of, different genres; but his Hellenistic opponents apparently take issue with linguistic hybridization as well (cf. Call. *Iamb.* 13 fr. 203.18 ἴασι καὶ Δωριῶσι καὶ τὸ σύμμεικτον ‘in Ionic and Doric and a mixture’; Bertolini (2001: 88–9)). Plato (*Leg.* 700d) complains about generic hybridization among the representatives of ‘New Music’; again one may think above all of Philoxenus of Cythera (cf. Ar. fr. 953 and the parody in Ar. *Plut.* 290–315, Zimmermann (1992: esp. 127–8)).

'abroad'.<sup>54</sup> At that point the conditions for generic experimentation and hybridization are again ideal, except that this time round the way to proceed is already known: for Sicily, archaic, classical and post-classical, has shown it. Reducing the novelty of Theocritus' work therefore need not mean reducing its importance in the history of Greek literature. Not only is it Hellenistic precisely because it is also deeply Sicilian, but with its intrinsic Sicilianness, in content, form *and* language, it may even have acted as the main intermediary between Sicily and Alexandria, triggering much of what we nowadays admire Hellenistic literature for.

<sup>54</sup> The formation of the dialectally 'mixed' koine is therefore an extra-literary parallel rather than a precondition of this literary hybridization (as suggested by Bertolini (2001: 90)); cf. above on the somewhat earlier formation of the Doric koina in Sicily and Willi (2008: 34–5).