

## CRUEL BOYS AND AGEING MEN: THE PAEDERASTIC POEMS IN THE THEOCRITICAN CORPUS\*

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### ABSTRACT

In this analysis of the paederastic poems in the Theocritean corpus (*Idylls* 12, 23, 29, 30), the author argues that the poet reflects intensely on mutuality in a relationship between an older and younger man and engages not only with the paederastic literary tradition (as has been argued by many contemporary scholars), but also creates a 'homosexual identity' not encountered in texts of the Archaic and Classical periods.

Recent studies of the paederastic poems in the Theocritean corpus (i.e. *Idylls* 12, 23, 29, 30) have painstakingly uncovered the extent to which Theocritus echoed, alluded to and, in some cases, subtly transformed, themes and imagery in Archaic Greek lyric, particularly in the consciously-wrought poems in Aeolic dialect and metres (29, 30).<sup>1</sup> In fact, uncovering inter-textuality in Theocritus has become an industry of note, apparently satisfying the postmodern literary critic's need to excavate 'textual layers' and hunt for irony.<sup>2</sup> However, whilst some attention has been paid to the peculiarly Hellenistic features of the Theocritean construction of 'homosexual' desire in relationships between older and younger men (such as the dialogue between the lover and his  $\theta\upsilon\mu\omicron\varsigma$  in *Idyll* 30),<sup>3</sup> not enough emphasis has been placed on the one striking way in which

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<sup>1</sup> Palutan 1995; Hunter 1996:167-95; Pretagostini 1997; Fassino & Prauscello 2001.

<sup>2</sup> Thus Hunter 1996:186: 'As with *Idyll* 29, therefore, this poem [*Idyll* 30] is constructed of textual layers from both the recent and the distant past, and these lend both historical perspective and historicising irony to the pain of unrequited passion.' Cf. Effe 1992:55-67.

<sup>3</sup> In her study of the Homericisms in these poems, Palutan draws attention to Odysseus' speech to his  $\theta\upsilon\mu\omicron\varsigma$  in *Iliad* 11.407, mediated through an echo in Alcaeus (1995:105). Walsh, however, convincingly demonstrates how differently the relationship between the  $\theta\upsilon\mu\omicron\varsigma$  and the self is conceptualised in Hellenistic poetry, a change

these Hellenistic creations differ from archaic and classical reflections on male same-sex desire, and that is in the intense reflection on mutuality, reciprocity or homosexual *χάρης*.

In *Idyll* 12, in what is presumably an *epibaterion*,<sup>4</sup> extravagantly welcoming a young man (κοῦρος, 1), after an absence of an excruciating two days and nights, the poet-lover prays that he and his κοῦρος will be remembered by future generations for the mutuality of their love (15-16); significantly, for this idealised mutuality,<sup>5</sup> the poet uses φιλεῖν and ἀντιφιλεῖν (16) (and a cognate like φιλότης, 20), in contrast to ἔρως and ἐράσθαι, predominantly used elsewhere in the Theocritean corpus for unreciprocated sexual passion which torments, is unrequited,<sup>6</sup> and can result in madness<sup>7</sup> and disease.<sup>8</sup> This somewhat wistful desire for mutuality in love is embedded in a conventional model of male sexual desire: the deliberately arcane, archaicizing and perhaps even comic<sup>9</sup> use of εἰσπνηλος (13) and αἴτης (14) point to the situation created

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(he argues) evident first in Euripides. Where speakers in archaic poems addressed their ‘organs of feeling’ as if they were rational interlocutors separate from the self, the speakers in Hellenistic poetry (like Euripidean heroines) do not split the self as previously, and think aloud (often in confusion and doubt), rather than argue (1990:1-21). See too Pretagostini 1997:17-21 for the ways in which *Idyll* 30 (more so than the other paederastic poems) incorporates features specific to ‘poesia alessandrina’.

<sup>4</sup> Giangrande 1971:95-101 makes a strong case for assigning the poem to this genre. Cf. Cairns, who draws attention to Menander Rhetor’s confusion between the *epibaterion* and the *prosponteikon*, to which genre Cairns prefers to assign *Idyll* 12, because the poem has all the necessary elements of the genre (welcoming the traveller ‘who has arrived at the place where the speaker is’), a number of recognisable *topoi*, and should be distinguished from the *epibaterion*, which can also be applied to the speech of the traveller (not relevant in *Idyll* 12). Whether the difficulties critics have found in the poem can be neatly resolved by the assignment of the poem to this genre is obviously debatable (1972:18-31): see Quinn’s review of Cairns’ work for trenchant criticism of the ‘generic’ approach to literature (1973:403-07).

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Buffière 1980:280: ‘Un amour ainsi partagé, n’est-ce point rare et merveilleux? C’est un retour à l’âge d’or, en ces temps où l’aimé rendait toujours l’amour qu’on lui portait.’

<sup>6</sup> ἔρως: 1.37, 93 (πικρός); 2.29, 69, 75, 81, 87, 93, 99, 105, 111, 117, 123, 129, 135; 10.10, 57 (λιμηρός); 14.26, 52 (ἀμηχανέων); ἐράσθαι: 1.78; 2.149; 5.132; 7.97; 8.60; 9.13; 10.12. In the male same-sex contacts mentioned outside the paederastic poems, ἔρως and ἐράσθαι are used of consuming, unrequited loves (7.56, 102) and doomed, disastrous attachments (13.6, 48). Significantly, the adjective used for cursed in love is δύσερως (1.85; 6.7).

<sup>7</sup> 3.42 (μανία of Atalanta); 11.8, 10 (μανία of Polyphemos), 25.

<sup>8</sup> 11.1. For a similar attitude to ἔρως, see Apoll. Rhod. 4.445-49.

<sup>9</sup> Giangrande 1971:101, 103-04 n. 30 believes that Theocritus intends the speaker to

by the poet. There is a penetrator and a penetrated,<sup>10</sup> an older and a younger. The relationship is unequal, fraught with tension. Where has the boy been for two days and nights? He has hurt his lover (25). The assumption that the judge of the kissing-competition prays to Ganymede for morally discerning lips (35-37) discloses the poem's subtext. The poet-lover's Gany-mede is fickle; he is not to be trusted.<sup>11</sup> The poet-lover oscillates between physical desire itself which is ageing (2) and longing for mutuality (the equal yoke) which is ageless (an immortalising κλέος). A similar oscillation is apparent in the similes he uses to express his joy at the boy's arrival (2-8): as the ewe is deeper of fleece than the lamb; as a virgin surpasses a wife thrice-married, 'so have you delighted me by your arrival.' Both hint at the gap between youth and age, innocence and experience, the first privileging the richness of age, the latter the freshness of youth and inexperience.<sup>12</sup> The overwhelming feminine nature of his joy (the ewe, the maiden, the thrice-married wife, the fawn, the nightingale) is succeeded by the overwhelmingly masculine nature of the envisaged ideal (13-14): εἴσπινελος, explicitly ἄνδρες (16); the story of this love will be on the lips of unmarried young men (21). From feminine to masculine, from inequality to reciprocity, from desire to commitment; such is the nature of the older man's dilemma in his relationship with this young man. 'I run to you like a traveller to the shady oak when the sun is scorching' suggests the lover's relief at being re-united with his boy,<sup>13</sup> but at the same time a flight from desire itself.

*Ichyl* 29, the first of the Aeolic 'paidika', further problematises the unequal relationship and the longing for mutuality.<sup>14</sup> We are to imagine that the poet-

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be a pretentious rustic, ludicrously using learned language. See Kelly 1979-1980:55-61 for a different interpretation of the irony he sees in the poem, in which (he argues) we are meant to laugh with, not at, the rustic humour.

<sup>10</sup> For εἴσπινελος and αἴτης, see Gow 1973:223-24. I assume that at least the former ('inspirer') has sexual connotations (Hubbard 2003:69 n. 30).

<sup>11</sup> Cf. Hunter 1996:191: 'The theme of the impossibility of telling from a kiss what mind lies behind it ... betrays also the deluded insecurity of the speaker of the poem. How is he to know what his young man's attitude to him is? He too now is enjoying sweet kisses, but for how long?'

<sup>12</sup> See Hunter's perceptive comments on the 'lack of control of language' in these lines 'which clearly reflects the speaker's emotional state' (1996:190).

<sup>13</sup> Cf. Hunter 1996:187-88 on the image of the beloved offering cooling release from the heat of passion.

<sup>14</sup> For the purposes of this analysis, I have chosen to discuss the poems in the order 12, 29, 23 and 30, simply because, thematically, 12 and 29 belong together, and 23 and 30 comment effectively on each other. This is not to imply anything about the chronological order in which the poems were composed: West has, for example, demonstrated convincingly that, on metrical grounds alone, poems 28, 29, 30 were probably written in that order, and the grouping 28-31 may perhaps go back to the

lover and his παῖς are at an Alcaean symposium<sup>15</sup> at which the older lover, more keenly aware of the age-gap than the lover in *Idyll* 12 (see line 10), gives his boy a lecture on fidelity and on such sympotic commonplaces as the flight of youth and the rapid onset of age (25-30). Significant for our purposes is the fact that the poet, mired in inequality and insecurity (6-8), envisages an ideal, reciprocal relationship, when the boy reaches manhood (33). The ideal mutuality envisaged here is that of Achilles and Patroclus (34). Φιλεῖν is what the poet-lover expects of the παῖς (4), in return for what he feels himself (9, 18); Achilles and Patroclus are characterised (heroically) as Ἀχιλλεῖοι φίλοι (34); yet, in direct contrast to the idealised mutuality of *Idyll* 12 (in which φιλεῖν and ἀντιφιλεῖν are used), the poet-lover uses τῶραμένῳ συνέραν (32). In the *Idyll*, Ἔρως has already been characterised as a destructive force (22-24), especially if the boy persists in his fickleness, so why use, of the mutual ideal, the very verb which the poet uses elsewhere of destructive, one-sided passion?<sup>16</sup> Perhaps the prefix συν- and the adverb ἀδόλως (32, ‘without guile’) soften ἐρᾶν and almost shade it into φιλία, but this verbal chiaroscuro is unconvincing. What is the poet implying?

At the beginning of the *Idyll*, the poet-lover regrets that the παῖς does not love him with all his heart (καρδία, 4); he wants complete emotional commitment from the boy, and then promptly reveals that half his life is dependent on the boy’s physical beauty (his ἰδέα, 6). Like the poet-lover in *Idyll* 12 who is hurt and then healed by his κούρος (25-26), the lover in *Idyll* 29 is tossed from divine light to black despair at the boy’s whim (7-8); in both cases the boy holds the strings of the emotional yo-yo. In his characterisation of Ἔρως as a destructive power, the lover reveals that he has been transformed (24); if so, he too must have been a fickle παῖς; hence perhaps the focus on the swift-moving cycle of youth and age (27-30). The very precariousness of the envisaged ideal is thus highlighted by the use of τῶραμένῳ συνέραν:<sup>17</sup> the older man, who was a fickle παῖς, exhorts the παῖς to love with all his heart an older man who lusts after his ἰδέα (note the final word of the poem: πύθω). The very choice, too, of the Achilles-Patroclus exemplum encapsulates this uneasy ambiguity:<sup>18</sup> who really was the younger? Was their relationship really

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poet himself (1967:82-84).

<sup>15</sup> Palutan 1995:89; Hunter 1996:176; Pretagostini 1997:10-11. This is not to imply that we possess any substantial evidence of Alcaeus’ ἐρωτικά (Page 1955:295).

<sup>16</sup> See notes 6-8 above.

<sup>17</sup> See Hunter’s comments on the use of this verb, which distances the situation in this poem from Platonic φιλία: ‘the appeal to the brevity of youthful beauty and the inevitable onrush of time (vv. 25-30) are ironically pathetic in a poem that evokes a *kleos* which lives for ever’ (1996:180-81).

<sup>18</sup> Cf. Buffière (1980:282): ‘On sait pourtant que les noms de ces héros peuvent

restricted to Homeric *φιλία* or did it include the saucy *ἔρως* of the later tradition?<sup>19</sup> The mutual ideal is undone (perhaps amusingly) by the poet-lover's heavy desire, his *πόθος* (40).

*Idyll* 23, despite its authorial and apparent manuscript problems (and Gow's magisterial dismissal of it),<sup>20</sup> contributes further to the intense reflection on mutuality we have been discussing. From the outset, the poet distinguishes between the passionate *ἀνήρ* and the cruel *ἔφηβος* (1, 60; cf. 56), variously addressed or referred to as a *παῖς* (19, 35, 61; cf. 32) or *κῶρος* (22). Of the four pederastic *Idylls*, the age-gap between the lovers in 23 seems to approximate more closely the gap between *ἔραστής* and *ἐρώμενος* in the Platonic dialogues and Xenophon; the poem is entitled *ΕΡΑΣΤΗΣ* and this is how the older lover is designated in line 15. The lover in this *Idyll* is not the grey-haired wrinkly of *Idyll* 30 but, like the lover in *Idyll* 29, he reminds the youth of the swift passage of time and the evanescence of youthful beauty (28-32). Like the lover in 29 too, the lover in 23 is aroused by the boy's beauty (2) and by the anger of his rejection. Stung by the boy's contempt (*ἔρερίζετο*, 15), the pathetic *exclusus amator* kisses the door-post (18) and addresses his final words to the absent boy,<sup>21</sup> before hanging himself in the doorway. The lover's speech is laced with traditional *topoi*, but of interest to us are the words the lover asks the boy to utter over his grave in ritual lament (44-45): *ὦ φίλε, κείσαι* ('friend, here you lie') and *καλὸς δέ μοι ὄλεθ' ἑταῖρος* ('my lovely companion is no more'). But the lover has claims to neither *φίλος* nor *ἑταῖρος*. From line 1, the poet has used *ἐρᾶσθαι* of the man's love for the youth; *ἔρως* in line 20. So momentarily the desire for mutuality and reciprocity gleams in the

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éveiller en ce domaine quelque suspicion, pour un lecteur ou un auditeur grec!

<sup>19</sup> For the conflicting traditions about older and younger, Homeric *φιλία* and the *ἔρως* of the classical tradition, see Dover 1978:197-98, Buffière 1980:367-74, and, most recently, Hubbard 2003:183 n. 28.

<sup>20</sup> For authorial and manuscript problems, see Gow 1973:408. His dismissal is all-embracing: '... the essential badness of the poem is plainly due to the author not to the scribes. The narrative is bald, frigid, and improbable; the sentiment is sloppy, and embodied in an address to the boy who, *ex hypothesi*, cannot hear it. These faults are not relieved by any particular elegance in the style and the poem is the least attractive of the whole Theocritean corpus'. Similar opinions are expressed by older commentators like Pasquali and Legrand ('cette oeuvre de troisième ordre'; cf. Radici Colace 1971:325-26), and perpetuated by more modern ones like Segal (1981:63-64). For a detailed defence of the poem on stylistic grounds (with particular reference to Homer, Bion and Moschus), see Radici Colace 1971:325-46. Giangrande forcefully defends the text and style of lines 26-32 against Gow's unnecessarily harsh judgment (1992:213-20).

<sup>21</sup> I fail to understand why Gow should be troubled by this (see previous note). Addressing sentiments to an absent boy or mistress is a common feature of the *paraklausithyron* to which genre *Idyll* 23 clearly belongs (Copley 1940:52-61).

imagined φίλια, only to be erased by the honesty of the epitaph the suicide scratches on the wall (46): τοῦτον ἔρωσ ... ἐταῖρον (47-48): ‘This man love killed; traveller, do not pass by, but stop and say “he had a cruel friend”’). Once again thoughts of mutuality and reciprocity are fractured by Ἔρωσ. The final ἐταῖρον seems to me not to be careless writing, but to highlight the hopelessness of a desire for mutuality in an unreciprocated relationship of this kind.

As Ἔρωσ is destructive in *Idyll* 29, in 23 his statue is murderous and kills the cruel παῖς in revenge. The final words of the boy (Ἔρωσ or the cruel youth) contrast love and hate with what seems to me to be a deliberate avoidance of ἐρᾶν ... ἐρᾶσθαι; the justice of Ἔρωσ takes vengeance on those who hate, but not on those who love (φιλεῖν, στέργειν, 62-63).

A possible solution, bleak and cynical, is offered to the problem of mutuality in a relationship between an older man and a youth in the second of the Aeolic ‘paidika’ (*Idyll* 30).<sup>22</sup> The spotlight falls on the lover, who is much older than the lovers in the other paederastic poems: his temples are flecked with white hair (13). For this reason, the folly of his passion is characterised as a disease from line 1, with clinical precision (2) and loathing (5, 17). Strikingly, ἔρωσ (2, 9, 17) is used of his passion. There are no wistful longings for the φίλια of reciprocity; there is no reference to the flight of youth (*Idyll* 29) or the passage of time (*Idyll* 23); there is reference, however, to the fickleness of youth raised in *Idyll* 29. This lover does not look forward to a romantic future, but looks back. His πόθος is fed by his remembering, but one thing he has forgotten is that ‘it is indeed better for him who is older to hold aloof from the painful love of boys’ (16-17). In a very Euripidean exchange with his own θῦμος, passive submission to Ἔρωσ is recommended: he must drag his yoke against his will (29); resistance against a god who humbled the mind of Zeus and of Aphrodite herself is impossible. Instead of the immortalising κλέος of *Idyll* 12, the last of the paederastic poems ends with a reworking of the bleak image of the Homeric leaf tossed about for a day (ἐπάμερον 31). It is not the brevity of human life to which the image refers, but the emphatically positioned ἔμει. We must remember that the θῦμος is speaking; the very heart of the older man’s emotions, his affections, are ephemeral;<sup>23</sup> so much for the remembrance of times past.

There is a close relationship between time, memory and desire in these four poems which is worth commenting on. In *Idyll* 12 hope for a future φίλια is undone by a πόθος which ages one in a day; in 29, longing for the φίλια of Achilles and Patroclus is undone by a πόθος which is difficult and painful to

<sup>22</sup> For authorship and manuscript problems, see Hunter 1996:181, who demonstrates that ‘the case against Theocritean authorship is very far from proved.’

<sup>23</sup> Pretagostini (1997:19): ‘... la tradizionalissima similitudine degli uomini paragonati alle foglie ... non serve più a trasmettere, come in arcaico, il senso della caducità della vita umana, ma quello della debolezza del *thymos* del poeta di fronte alla potenza del dio Eros.’

endure; in 23, the longing at least for a phony memory of φιλία beyond the grave is undone by a painful ἔρωσ; in *Idyll* 30, as the ageing lover remembers the pain of his desire, he realises its evanescence. The quartan, intermittent disease is transmuted into the leaf that survives for a day. Read against the φιλία or ‘true ἔρωσ’ of Plato and Xenophon, who carefully expose the baseness of an ἔρωσ and πόθος which lust after boys’ bodies,<sup>24</sup> as they attempt to construct a desire without the body, these *Idylls* are keen reflections on the ineluctable tension between φιλία and ἔρωσ.<sup>25</sup> The lovers are not Platonic prototypes, their eyes fixed on the ἰδέαι, as they mount the *scala amoris*. The ἰδέαι they have in their minds’ eye are not fixed, immutable, unchanging, the purest of forms; on the contrary, these lovers attempt to educate or are educated about change;<sup>26</sup> the ἰδέαι of their boys change and grow and age; memory attempts to preserve that brief moment of perfection; there is a longing for permanence, for mutuality, but desire does indeed feed on one’s inmost marrow and the perfect body, like the leaf, lasts but for a day.

It remains to consider in what other ways these Theocritean reflections on the problem of mutuality in an unequal relationship between an older and a younger man, and its apparently bleak resolution, are markedly different from archaic and classical reflections on relationships of this kind. A number of important studies (I think especially of Foucault and the most ardent of his disciples, Winkler and Halperin) have rightly, in my opinion, focussed on the social structuring of ‘homosexual’ desire,<sup>27</sup> especially in the classical period, in which it is not difficult to appreciate the inextricable relationship between gender, sexuality and power in the classical city-state (or even earlier, in the structured commensality of the archaic symposium). Relationships between older and younger youths were part of the social fabric; that these relationships were necessarily unequal, often unreciprocated, often competitive and swiftly over, when the efflorescence of youth had wilted and the ἐρώμενος had his turn to be an ἐραστής, was surely accepted social practice, in which the intense exploration of mutuality we encounter in the Theocritean corpus would have seemed otiose, and in the case of *Idyll* 30, bizarrely self-indulgent. That is precisely where these poems are different. Despite the layered intertextuality, the poet seems to me to create a ‘homosexual’ desire and longing for mutuality outside of the structured inequality of classical Athens. We have moved outside the city-

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<sup>24</sup> For Platonic distinctions between good and bad ἔρωσ, see Dover 1964:33-40.

<sup>25</sup> A tension well delineated by Hunter’s mode of analysis (1996:168-69, 181).

<sup>26</sup> See Dover’s perceptive comments on the greater transience of homosexual as opposed to heterosexual relationships (1964:39).

<sup>27</sup> Foucault 1976, 1984; Winkler 1990; Halperin 1990, 1995.

state into a world where the neat binaries between older and younger, powerful and powerless,<sup>28</sup> seem to have unravelled and where male same-sex relationships seem to have lost their social function and legitimacy. Desire rather than tradition seems to structure these poems. *Pace* Foucault (who never even considers Theocritus), I do not think that the ‘homosexual’ becomes a personage in the 19th century.<sup>29</sup> In the wake of Plato’s and Aristotle’s reflections on paederastia,<sup>30</sup> I would like to suggest that the intense reflection on mutuality in the poems we have discussed indicates that this process was inchoate in the paederastic poems in the Theocritean corpus.

If the lovers in *Idylls* 12 and 29 desire mutuality in a relationship in which permanence rather than transience is the ultimate ideal, and if the lover in *Idyll* 23 dramatically commits suicide because he is rejected, Theocritus is creating a homosexual *persona* with a sense of identity: ‘I love young men only and want to grow old with one in particular’ is surely different from ‘I love young men for a period because my father and grandfather did before me.’<sup>31</sup> Furthermore, there is nothing in these poems to suggest that boy-love is one of the distinguishing features of the cultural *praxeis* of an aristocratic élite.<sup>32</sup> The lover in *Idyll* 12 may not be Giangrande’s bucolic Mr Malaprop, but the images he uses are rooted in nature (3-9), and his turn of phrase is decidedly earthy (23-24). The lover in *Idyll* 29 (rather like Simaetha in *Idyll* 2) seems to be placed in an urban setting (22, 39). In *Idyll* 23, references to the doorpost (18), the door (53), wrestling-school, baths (56-57), and the vengeful statue (60), suggest an urban environment rather than an aristo-cratic symposium in an archaic setting. Theocritus, in the manner of Herodas’ mimes, can comment on what must have been contemporary women (*Idylls* 2, 15),<sup>33</sup> and on the political realities confronted by the Greeks as colonisers (*Idyll* 17). Could he also not have explored the problems of mutuality in age-unequal

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<sup>28</sup> Perhaps inaccurately perceived binaries, as Hubbard 2002:288-90 argues, in his critique of what he calls the ‘penetration-centered regimen of phallic subordination’ (popularized by Dover and Halperin). Beautiful boys obviously exerted a kind of power over their lovers, but not social or political power (which is the kind of power meant by Dover and Halperin) or even the power granted by the right of access. There is no evidence that ἐρασταί were pursued, but abundant evidence (visual and textual) that ἐρώμενοι were.

<sup>29</sup> Foucault 1976:59.

<sup>30</sup> Conveniently collected and translated in Hubbard 2003:171-264; see, especially, Price 1990:223-49.

<sup>31</sup> Cf. Dover 1984:3.

<sup>32</sup> Hubbard 1998.

<sup>33</sup> See Lambert 2001, 2002.



homosexual relationships, read against archaic and classical models of παιδεραστία, as one can read the situation of Simaetha in *Idyll* 2 against that of women in the Classical period? The fact that these *Idylls* are highly artificial creations in artificial dialects does not mean that they cannot mediate or comment on social and sexual realities.<sup>34</sup>

What is of further interest in these poems is the fact that Theocritus' sympathies in all four poems are with the older lover, who, in *Idyll* 30, is white-haired (13) and definitely bereft of youthful attractions (14): 'better it is for him to keep away from the painful love of boys' (16-17). Why? Because the old man in love with a fickle youth is in the grip of a disease (1); he is afflicted by debilitating memories and nightmares (22); he passively submits to the yoke of desire (28-29); he is acutely conscious (as a young man would not be) of his transience (31-32). In contrast to the active ἐράσσης of the Classical tradition, this powerless old homosexual, gnawed by unreciprocated desire for a feckless youth and feeding on his memories, is deeply moving. Sympathy for the aged is yet another particularly Hellenistic feature of this poem.<sup>35</sup> That Theocritus could extend this to the ageing man in love with the cruel boy, grounding it in his awareness of the literary and social pedigree of παιδεραστία, is surely yet another indication of the brilliant way in which he blends his engagement with the literary tradition and his Hellenistic context.

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<sup>34</sup> But see Hunter's  *caveat*: 'To move from these literary considerations to conclusions about social change is, of course, extremely difficult. The 'archaism' of these poems cannot be considered in isolation from the gradually increasing freedom with which literature explored heterosexual, particularly female, desire. This freedom may have offered poets the possibility, rather than the necessity, of associating paederasty with 'the archaic' and heterosexual desire with 'the new', almost regardless of the social facts lying behind such a construction' (1995:171).

<sup>35</sup> Evident, for example, in Hellenistic sculpture; cf. Pollitt 1986:141-46.

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