Hellenistic poets were obsessed with the pursuit of words: common or rare, traditional or newly-coined, variants of older forms or older forms with new meanings. According to Wimmel they were struggling to make “das Wort wieder zum Wert-Objekt”; in other words, they undertook a sort of “Wiederbelebung” of words. Theodore Papanghelis defined this tendency as a kind of linguistic materialism, detailing its theoretical background. By and large, words eventually became both a tool and an end in themselves; on the one hand, they were the vehicles of both poetic memory (to use Conte’s term) and experimentation (a key-idea for the poetry of that time); on the other hand, they retained their independence both as formal and sound units.

Philitas of Cos occupies a pioneering position. He combined poetic creation with philological activity and his dual identity as both scholar and poet made him an important forerunner of avant-garde poetry, as is widely known (“poésie nouvelle”). Editors of his surviving poetic and grammatical

The main ideas of this paper were first presented at the 3th “Trends in Classics” conference (held in Thessaloniki) and then in the departments of Greek and Latin in University of Saarland (Saarbrücken) and UCL (London). In the present form I have added some more arguments on the matter. Many thanks are due to colleagues who read drafts and made useful suggestions: Prof. Lucia Athanassaki, Prof. Th. Papanghelis, Prof. Poulcheria Kyriakou, Dr. Pericles Christodoulou and especially an anonymous referee of “Prometheus”.

The text of Theocritus is from A. S. F. Gow, Theocritus, vol. I (Cambridge 1952).

6 This is the opinio communis since U. von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff, Hellenistische Dichtung in der Zeit des Kallimachos, vol. 2 (Berlin 1924); e.g. M. Fantuzzi, Il sistema letterario della poesia alessandrina nel III sec. a.C., in: G. Cambiano, L. Canfora, D. Lanza (eds.), Lo spazio letterario della Grecia antica. I.2: L’Ellenismo (Roma 1993) 31-73, especially 72 and E. Dettori, Filita Grammatico: Testimonianze e frammenti (Roma 2000)
work have succeeded in providing an important survey, which, for the most part, demonstrates the extent of his influence on poets and scholars of subsequent generations. Theocritus, among others, seems to have been close to this literary novice. Ancient testimonies have him as a disciple of Philitas (T 14, T 26 Span.), while in the scholia on his poems we read about his debt to Philitan work (T 13). It is also possible that this relationship was based upon personal acquaintance, presumably at Cos, though there is no surviving material to verify this supposition. Especially, in Id. 7 he makes the young poet Simichidas declare that Philitas, together with Asclepiades (under the name Sikelidas), is a model “yet” to be surpassed, though he does not expand on why (7.39-42). This judgement has been interpreted in different ways by scholars who either saw in it a genuine sign of admiration or quite the opposite and recently A.D. Morrison argued for “avoidance of definitive narratorial or poetic authority”: we do not know who Lycidas is, e.g. 185. P. Bing, The Unruly Tongue: Philitas of Cos as Scholar and Poet, “CP” 98, 2003, 330-48 (reprinted in Id., The Scroll and the Marble. Studies in Reading and Reception in Hellenistic Poetry, Ann Arbor 2009, 11-32).

7 L. Sbardella, Filìta: Testimonianze e frammenti poetici (Roma 2000) 25, 37-8, 68-9, passim; Dettori (above, n. 6); K. Spanoudakis, Philitas of Cos (Leiden-Boston-Köln 2002) 40-52, 244-273 (on Id. 7), 273-307 (on Callimachus, Nicander, Philicus) and passim. Already the subject had been discussed in e.g. P. Fraser, Ptolemaic Alexandria (Oxford 1972) vol. 1, 305ff. The older edition of G. Kuchenmüller, Philètae Coi Reliquiae (Diss. Berlin 1928) is still worth consulting.


nor Simichidas’ precise relationship to Theocritus, and therefore we cannot
be sure of what the personae are saying and of how they are expressing
themselves.\(^{10}\) The matter remains open for further consideration.\(^{11}\)

The aim of this paper is to reconsider the nature of this controversial
relationship. However, in this survey two preliminary limitations need to be
asserted. Firstly, Wilamowicz’s rather axiomatic judgement that in Philitan
poetry there is nothing “bucolic” (“Von Bukolik nichts darin”) has been
something of a guideline for scholars and to my knowledge nothing new has
been added since this statement.\(^{12}\) Recently M. Fantuzzi, who was inquiring
about “Filita bucolico”, observed the Philitan interest in words from the
rustic world and admitted only that Theocritus “bucolico sembra aver
indicato in Filita un ideale di perfezione.”\(^{13}\) Secondly, even if the term
“bucolic” – let alone the term “pastoral” – is highly controversial as regards
its conceptual range, there is some consensus about recurrent thematic
motifs, with plants of all sorts occupying pride of place among them.\(^{14}\) In

10 A. D. Morrison, The Narrator in Archaic Greek and Hellenistic Poetry (Cambridge

11 Another issue is the Theocritean “poetica della verità”: R. Pretagostini, Incursioni
bucoliche nella poesia non bucolica di Teocrito, in: Ricerche sulla poesia alessandrina, II.
Forme allusive e contenuti nuovi (Roma 2007), especially 43-44; and Serrao, La genesi
(above, n. 9) 926. The notion of αληθεία in Theocritus deserves closer examination, inter
alia, in relation to Philitas.

12 (above n. 6) vol. 1, 117, A. Cameron, Callimachus and his Critics (Princeton 1995)
418ff. Pace A. Couat, La poésie alexandrine sous les trois premiers Ptolémées (324-222
‘Status quaestionis’ in R. Hunter, A Study of Daphnis and Chloe (Cambridge 1983) 78, n. 88;
Fantuzzi (above, n. 6) 155, n. 27; and Dettori (above, n. 6) 7ff., n. 1, 38. Further literature can
be found in Manakidou in Manakidou & Spanoudakis (above n. 5), p. 136, n. 28.

13 (above n. 6) 145-47, especially n. 4 and again 154ff. Cf. Bing (above, n. 6) 335, n. 17,
who speaks of “intriguing but ultimately speculative links... between Philitas and the early
history of bucolic”; E. L. Bowie, Theocritus’ Seventh Idyll, Philetas and Longus, “CQ” n.s.
35, 1985, 67-91, who saw in Lycidas a character from Philitas’ Demeter, insists there is
nothing improbable in the idea of a Philitan “bucolic”, followed by R. L. Hunter, Theocritus
and the Archaeology of Greek Poetry (Cambridge 1996) 18f., 20ff., who leaves the possibility
open (“then the song of Lycidas may be full of Philitan echoes”) and 27; and of the same
author: Theocritus. A Selection. Idylls 1, 3, 4, 6, 7, 10, 11 and 13 (Cambridge 1999) 162 (cited
Hunter 1999); R. F. Thomas, The Old Man Revisited: Memory, Reference and Genre in Virg.,
Georg. 4, 116-148, “MD” 29, 1992, 35-70, went even further by seeing in Philitas the direct
bucolic model for Vergil’s Bucolics.

14 In general see the contributions in M. Fantuzzi and Th. Papanghelis (eds.), Brill’s
Companion to Greek and Latin Pastoral (Leiden-Boston 2006) and especially the editors’
concise introduction.

15 A good classification in Ch. Segal, Thematic Coherence and Levels of Style in
Theocritus’ Bucolic Idylls, “WS” 11, 1977, 35-68 (above n. 8, 176-209, 204). Material in
Homer: E. S. Forster, Trees and Plants in Homer, “CR” 50, 1936, 97-104. Material in Pindar
particular, in Theocritus plants and trees form an important part, not only of the bucolic poems but also of others, where the feeling of nature emerges through similes or descriptive vignettes. In agreement with Ch. Segal that empiricism may be preferable to theory, I shall focus upon the use of one particular category of names concerning thorny plants, and I shall examine, insofar as their choice can illuminate, Theocritus’ position towards Philitas with respect to his treatment of words. Thorny plants by nature provide a suitable device for creating ‘pricking’ innuendos and, as such, within a society in which poets frequently challenged each other, they could be used as fitting material for poetological implications. Speaking about Callimachus, Lelli spoke of “metafora botanica” and “immaginario simbolico botanico”, and observed how the Romans adapted the Greek example: Vergil used the humiles myricae in his fourth Eclogue (l. 2) in order to define his own (low) bucolic poetry, and again in juxtaposition with the durae quercus and his fondness of plants: G. McGrawden, *Pindar’s Figurative Use of Plants*, “AJPh” 55, 1934, 340-5. General important remarks on the ideal conception of plants in ancient art are now to be found in N. Himmelmann, *Grundlagen der griechischen Pflanzendarstellung* (Paderborn 2005) and H. Baumann, *Die griechische Pflanzendarstellung in Mythos, Kunst und Literatur* (1982) = Flora mythologica: griechische Pflanzenwelt in der Antike (Vollständig überarbeitete Ausgabe). Akanthus crescens; 8, München 1982, 2007. For a brief survey, see R. Nümß. *Poetologische Bildersprache in der frührömischen Dichtung* (Stuttgart and Leipzig 1998), 206-223.

16 12.3-8; 16.90-6; 17.101; 18.41-2; 13.12ff., 25 ff., 31-5, 40-2; 22.37-43. On a reconsideration of Id. 15 under the perspective of pastoral (in connection to 1.7) see N. Krevans. *Is there Urban Pastoral? The Case of Theocritus’ Id. 15*, i: Fantuzzi and Papanghelis (above, n. 14) 119-46. Especially Pretagostini (above, n. 11) 41-60.

17 Ch. Segal, *Theocriticus Criticism and the Interpretation of the Fourth Idyll*, “Ramus” 1, 1972, 1-25 (= above n. 8, 85-109, 87 and now also in: B. Effes [ed.], *Theokrit und die griechische Bukolik* (Darmstadt 1986, Wege der Forschung 580) 176-211).

and in the opening programmatic elegy of his fourth book Propertius spoke of old Ennius’ *hirsuta corona* in contrast with his own ivy (ll. 61-64).

Philitas and Theocritus were deeply concerned with words, as any poet should be. To be sure, not long ago, Aristotle had proposed guidelines on how to use words in poetry and rhetorical prose, which became a reference point for all considerations of poetry thereafter. In the *Poetics*, he declares that diction is to be both precise and not base: *λέξεως... ἀρετῆς σωφή καὶ μὴ ταπεινὴν εἶναι* (1458a18). On the one hand, the highest degree of clarity (σαφήνεια) results from the use of the so-called κύρια ὁνόματα, i.e. standard words for things, words that everybody uses (κύριον ὁ χρώναται ἔκαστοι, 1457b). On the other hand, to achieve a style that “diverges from the common idiom” (*εξωλλαττόσωσα τὸ ἰδιωτικόν, 1458a21*) we should use the so-called ξενικά ὁνόματα, unfamiliar terms, like strange words (*γλώσσαι*), metaphors and long (lengthened) forms; in other words, “everything that deviates from the ordinary modes of speech” (*πᾶν τὸ παρὰ κύριον*). It is explicitly stated that too many metaphors form a riddle (*ἀγνίμα*), too many strange words are mere jargon (=%. In conclusion, the commensurate combination of clarity (σαφήνεια) along with the avoidance of triviality (ἰδιωτικόν, ταπεινόν) could only be achieved “by the proper use of the poetical forms” (*ἐστὶν δὲ μέγα μὲν τὸ ἐκάστῳ τῶν εἰρημένων πρεπόντως χρῆσθαι*).

At first sight, Theocritus is a completely different case from Philitas. We are certain he never produced any work on poetry or on philological matters or glossography. However, there is consensus that “indirect philological preoccupation”, an accurate term introduced by Cessi, can be detected within his poetry. More than once he applied the (again indirect) *interpretatio Homerica*. As regards language and languages in his poems, he did

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21 C. Cessi, *La poesia ellenistica* (Bari 1912). See F. Manakidou in Manakidou & Spanoudakis (above n. 5) 147 with n. 51.

22 See Rengakos (above, n. 5), especially 150-51, Matthais (above, n. 5) 545-643, 611-13 on *στομάλιμνον* Id. 4.2 and its Homeric background. Cf. Id. 13.48 on the Homeric
not limit himself to using a fictive Doric dialect\textsuperscript{23}, of which he was consciously proud. Let us remember the words from the mouth of his Syracusan ladies in the well-known passage of \textit{Id}. 15: “It’s Syracusans you’re ordering about, and let me tell you we’re Corinthians by descent like Bellerophon. We talk Peloponnesian, and I suppose Doriens may talk Dorian” (15.80-95, 91-93). In fact, in his poems he showed himself to be more than just a single-dialect man, since, as far as his style and themes are concerned, he was a multi-sided poet\textsuperscript{24}. To be sure, Theocritus was not simply aware of dialectal divergence; he actually made productive use of it. In \textit{Idyll} twelve, two different dialectal forms define the central persons of the erotic exposé: the lover is the Amyklaen εἰσπνηλός (i.e. Inspirer) and the beloved is the Thessalian ἀκηίς (i.e. Hearer) (12.10-16). K. Latte has highlighted the fact that Theocritus (whom he characterised as “der Schüler des koischen Dichters”, i.e of Philitas) is a prime example of “the practical application of such glossographical collections” (i.e. of Philitas) in this poem and suggested that Theocritus’ provision of the explicitly given geographical origin reveals his intention of it being interpreted as a citation of a glossographical work\textsuperscript{25}. Taken literally, both glosses recall the double-sided procedure upon which traditional poetry is based, namely oral creation/composition and performance and its oral reception; through them Theocritus imbues this archaic, though now old-fashioned, category of poetry with a new, erotic content, and thus makes it just one more ingredient of his poetic voice, where multi-dialectism plays an important part and as such transgresses the old rules of dialectal conservatism. In all, Theocritus’ interest in dialect matters is fully incorporated into his poetry and is deprived of any trace of self-assertive erudition.

\textsuperscript{23} This was the opinion of Wilamowitz (above, n. 6); ‘status quaestionis’ in: J. G. J. Abbenes, \textit{The Doric of Theocritus. A Literary Language}, in: M. A. Harder, R. F. Regtuit, G. C. Wakker (eds.), \textit{Theocritus} (Groningen 1996), 1-19, 1-5.


Unlike the poetry of Theocritus, glossographical and poetical activity run in tandem in Philitas’ work, and any approach to his poetry ought to take into account this double-sided identity. When we look at his surviving poetic œuvre we are confronted with a rather disappointing truth. Unless our evidence is misleading because of the scant evidence available to us, Degani was right to claim that his style was simple and natural, while his language was eclectic but not glossematic in an exaggerated way. As for strange words, there are indeed very few – to be more precise, there are very few extant fragments, and if they had survived due to their unusual diction, then the question as to why there are not more of them naturally arises: ἄξιμα (9 Sb.=16 Sp.), δολιχόσρος (10 Sb.=21 Sp.), μελαμπότριο (11 Sb.=6 Sp.), ἀστλίγχις (28 Sb.=11 Sp.). In that respect, he followed Aristotle, who had warned against the overuse of glosses that leads to barbarisms (Poet. 1458a 17f.). In his concise exposition of Philitan language, Sbardella pointed out that Philitas imitates Homer cum variatione, thus showing his knowledge of the Ionic epic and elegiac poetry (pp. 60-62, and passim in his commentary). We might also add that he exploited tragic language as well (Kuchenmuller 41 spoke of “sententia magis tragica, a Phileta lingua Homeric a pronuntiata”); e.g. Sbardella, pp. 111-2, 120-1; lyric poetry also seems to have influenced some of the ideas expressed in the surviving poetry (e.g. 4.1-2, 3; 5.2; 7.2, numbering Sbardella). In a total of 24 or 25 known lemmata of Philitas’ glossographical researches, 6 are glosses connected to the world of plants but nothing more can be said on the matter (for instance, the interest could have been in symptotic or religious matters and not in botanology): ἵκιχα (12), ἵοτινον (13), υποθιμίς (ὑποθιμίς Dettori 14), ἐλίνος (15: ἐλίνος Dettori, Sp.), στάχεν ὁμπνιον (16), ὀμαλλα (18). On the other hand, botanical interest is disappointingly scanty in his surviving poetic work. We only know of three plant names: a speaking alder tree (κληθρη) within a poem preserved as a paignion (12 Sb. = 25 Sp.), a plane tree that appears in an unknown context in the elegiac poem Demeter (fr. 22

26 I am not dealing here with his lexicographical method on which see Dettori (above, n. 6) 25-30 (and on Homer 30-32), especially 24 n. 58 on the relationship of his lexicographical research with his poetry; Spanoudakis (above, n. 7) 390-95. On the Aristarchean Προς Φιλίταν see e.g. K. Lehns, De Aristarchi studiis Homericis (Heidelberg 1882) 22.

27 E. Degani, L’elegia, in: R. Bianchi Bandinelli (above, n. 9) 300-14, 305: “Lo stile appare semplice e naturale, la lingua scelta ma non glossematica καθ’ ὑπερβολήν”.

28 Cf. Spanoudakis (above, n. 7) 115 for cryptic language in fr. 4. E.g. fr. 20 Sb. (17 Sp.) δυναίες, the apocope of ς in αἵδο fr. 23 Sb. (5 Sp.) and in ἕγεi fr. 20 Sb. (17 Sp.), the use of νη as intensive instead of the privative Homeric use in fr. 24 (7 Sp.).

29 The numbers are given in Dettori’s edition, fr. 25 D. = 15 Sp. Θεσσαλι taken as part of Demeter by Spanoudakis is treated as a gloss by Dettori.

30 See Dettori (above, n. 6) 30.
Sb. = 8 Sp.: πλάτανος instead of the Homeric form πλατάνιστος 2 x): Because of this lack of context I would not even attempt to reconstruct a locus amoenus and its function there\(^{31}\), given that we cannot be sure whether the fragment belonged to the poem at all. We cannot make great play with this but, to my mind, the scattered material we have at our disposition allows us to get a picture of the way Theocritus operated with the only Philitan images known to us that could be called bucolic ante litteram.

We know that Philitas made a thorny plant the centre of a couplet now preserved by Antigonus of Carystus in his (probably spurious and not a genuine work) Mirabilia 8 (fr. 18 Sb. = 20 Sp.). Although its provenance is not known, the couplet has the form of a riddle, γρίφος, and as such it has been associated with the paignia collection, although a context of symposiastic paraenesis cannot be excluded. Spanoudakis who, in agreement with Cessi, attributed it to the Demeter\(^{32}\), also admitted here that there is a Philitan allusion to the banqueters’ habit of exchanging riddles among themselves\(^{33}\):

\[ \text{γηρύσαιτο δὲ νεβρὸς ἀπὸ ζωῆν ὀλέσσασα} \]
\[ \text{ὀξεῖς κάκτου τύμμα φυλαξαμένη} \]

Its content is a curiosity: a dead fawn can utter a voice provided it wasn’t pricked by the wound of a sharp plant called κάκτος. The riddle refers to the pipes made of the bones of a fawn and is built around the curious paradox of a dead animal that can speak\(^{34}\). What we have here is a metonymy of αὐλὸς in νεβρός, modelled on the commoner interplay between χέλλος and λύρη\(^{35}\). Apart from the unusual word κάκτος and the strange piece of information it

\(^{31}\) As Spanoudakis (above, n. 7) 155-8 did.

\(^{32}\) Cessi (above, n. 21) 182 saw here the wanderings of the goddess in Sicily, where the plant κάκτος is to be found.

\(^{33}\) Spanoudakis (above, n. 7) 209-13. Already R. Reitzenstein, Epigramm und Skolion. Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der alexandrinischen Dichtung, Giessen 1893, 179-80 (cf. Kuchenmüller above, n. 5, 64f.); see Powell: non iniuria. Sbardella (above, n. 7) 147 agrees without excluding the hypothesis of Maass that it belonged to Demeter and wonders about a context of symposiastic paraenesis, following Nowacki.

\(^{34}\) Sbardella (above, n. 7) 148 remarks that Theocritus in 1.136 and his imitator in 9.7-8 imitated the Philitan use of the γαρύειν. Bing (above, n. 6) 342, who also combined Athenaeus’ information that the flute made from deer bones is a Theban invention, asks if Philitas was interested not just in obscure traditions, but in the changes brought on them as they shift from one locality to another. Quite true.

\(^{35}\) Another strange construction of pipes is reported by Aristotle (preserved in Antigonus 169): the prickly plant ἀκανθα was used for the producing part of a musical instrument πῆλον ἀπὸ τῶν φυτῶν τῆς αὐλάκους ἔδωσε. Αριστοτέλειον φαίνειν περὶ τὴν ἕρμην εὐρύσκεσθαι διασποίκιον τὴν χρώαν, ἐξ οὗ πλῆκτρα γίνεσθαι... See for instance Callimachus in Hymn. Artem. 244-5 who ascribed to Athena the invention of the bone-pipes without further mentioning of the curiosity or the (expected?) gloss κάκτος: οὐ γὰρ πιὸ νέβρεια δὲ ὀστᾶ ἀρχρήναντο/ ἕργον Ἀθηναίης ἐλάτῳ κακὸν.
provides, the medical term τύμμα lends a proseic character to the fragment36, and the quality of style is due to the Homeric variation, as in most surviving fragments of Philitas: we have the poetic tmesis in the expression ὁπὸ ψυχῆν ὀλέσσασα, which in turn is a variation upon the common Homeric expression ἀκὸ θυμὸν (alternatively ψυχῆν) ὀλέσσαι/ἀλέσαντες (examples in Span. ad l.); at the same time, using the word ζωῆν for an animal is a subtle un-Homeric touch (Homer uses θυμός for animals).

As for the history of κάκτως before Philitas, Athenaeus (2.70d-71c) collected all the excerpts where the word occurred under the heading of κιννάρια37: it occurs in the work of the Syracusan Epicharmus, who mentioned it among edible vegetables, ἔδούδιμα λάχανα (PCG 158.2, 5-6). Two peripatetic researchers, Phainias of Eressus (περὶ φυτῶν fr. 38 Wehrli) and Theophrastus (HP 6.4)38, inform us that the plant, κάκτος Σικελική, is a thorny plant (ἀκανθόδεξες φυτών) called so only in Sicily and that it is not to be found in Greece. In Theophrastus the plant is likened to a sort of artichoke with edible stems and broad, spiny leaves (κιννάρα, κάρδος/κάκτος). Antigonos has explained Philitas’ curiosity by using ἁκανθά in the usual word for the Sicilian κάκτον: περὶ τὴν ἐν τῇ Σικελίᾳ ἁκανθάν τὴν καλουμένην κάκτων. In his lemma of the word Hesychius definitely refers to the Philian fragment: κ 363 Latte κάκτως ἁκανθά, ὡς ἦς ἐὰν πληγῇ νεβρός, ἀρεία ἰσχεί τὰ ὅστὰ εἰς σύλοις. We shall return to this equation of κάκτως with ἁκανθά.

Although Alice Linsdell has declared that it was a mystery how Philitas came across such a Sicilian gloss, the mystery is by no means hard to resolve since it is known that Philitas, as a glossographer, was interested in at least one Syracusan gloss/dialect39. As I argued earlier, we are at a loss with his

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37 U. von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff, Antigonos von Karytos (Berlin 1881) 21 n. 12 assumes a connection between the three authors (Philitas, Antigonos, Hesychius) and that Antigonos’ interpretation also stood in Athenaeus’ text and was omitted by the epitomiser. Antigonos characterised Philitas as ἰκανοῦ...περίσσερος (T 9 Span.), originally meaning the man who takes needless trouble.
38 ἡ δὲ κάκτως καλουμένη περὶ Σικελίαν μόνον, ἐν τῇ Ἑλλάδι δὲ οὐκ ἔστιν (more about see Spanoudakis, n. 7, 214). Theophrastus describes it under the section of spinyous plants (ἰκανερό). In the Loeb edition, A. Hort (1926) rightly translated it with “cardoon” (at p. 31).
39 Was Theocritus a Botanist?, “G&R” 6, 1937, 78-93, 85. Spanoudakis (above, n. 7) 214-5. For the Syracusan gloss κύπελλα fr. 38 Sp.= 10 D. with the bizarre meaning of crumbs of barley cake and bread left on the table, i.e. a synonym of σκύπαλλα, see e.g. Bing (above, n. 6) 337-38 who spoke of “dissonance”. In Homer it is always the drinking cup (10X Homeric, cf. Antim. fr. 24 Matthewss 22.2 Wyss). In this case we are dealing with a homonymy and this could be a hint that Philitas was also interested in such cases in matters of semantics, as
surviving poetry, where not many verbal eccentricities remain. This particular couplet is one of the few containing such a gloss. Along with its strange content, the word was chosen exactly because it was a gloss – apart from that, presumably, Philitas also wished to playfully evoke the notion of κάκτος through the use of κάκτος and the line has a strong sound with ξ, τ. Apparently he found the plant (and its name) in the Peripatetic bibliography with which he was thoroughly familiar and went a step further by combining the rare word with a strange piece of information. In all likelihood, he was the first to introduce that word into Hellenistic poetry. Whereas the poetological implication is apparent once we solve the metonymy, nothing more can be induced from the lines with respect to Philitas’ attitude towards the music produced by those pipes, i.e., towards the bucolic genre, whose beginnings scholars are inclined to connect with Sicilian folk poetry.

In turn, Theocritus uses the word within a simile that hints at a similar incident. In the opening of *Idyll* ten, a reaper compares a companion of his who is lagging behind with an ewe “… when a thorn [sic in Gow’s rendering] has pricked her in the foot” (10.4):

ωσπερ οἷς (sc. ἀπολείπεται) ποίμνας, ὃς τὸν πόδα κάκτος ἔτυψε.

The wording recalls Philitas’ couplet: κάκτος ἔτυψε is a variation on the Philitan κάκτου τύμμα and οἷς is synonym for the Philitean νέβρος that otherwise is often used by Theocritus (5x in feminine as in Philitas, see Gow at 11.40, p. 215). The gloss appears at the opening of a story that is not strictly bucolic, inasmuch as it refers to reapers instead of herdsmen. It has even been shown to display stylistic differences from the so-called pure bucolics. Apart from the obvious Hesiodic theme of work ideology, the poem is primarily concerned with love and its incompatibility with everyday

shown in ἵθημον (fr. 13 D.). Aristotle was again a pioneer in this field; the book of J.K. Ward, *Aristotle on Homonomy: Dialectic and Science* (Cambridge 2008) could be used as a starting point for further thoughts. This is out of the scope of my presentation.

40 For word-play in his poetry see fr. 2 Sb.= 3 Sp. Ἀτραπός and ἀ+τρέπος; fr. 3.1= 2.1 Sp. Ἐπικρατεῖ-ἐπί ἑρατεί; fr. 6.3-4= 10.3-4 Sp. ἄλλακτα. It is interesting that in Id. 4 Battus often uses κοκός and its compounds (13, 22, 27, 52, 63: as a sign of his *ethopoiia* see Segal, above n. 8, 92); quite the opposite is true for Simichidas, who, in Id. 7, is fond of the epithet ἐπιθλος.

41 For his influence by the peripatetic interest in paradoxography focusing on animals and plants see Spanoudakis (above, n. 7) 211, 214, and in general about his association with Peripatus 68-72.


43 A quite different approach was made by Fr. Cairns, *Theocritus Idyll 10*, “Hermes” 98, 1970, 38-44 for the symposiastic topos of the content; he sees in it a highly sophisticated poem.

44 Hunter 1999, 200.
life and the labour of working people; in all, this theme of work seems stylized rather than realistic and the poem’s main concern is to set up a tension between two opposing attitudes of life. The style owes much to folk wisdom and folk beliefs in the form of proverbs; the fact that tradition has preserved gnomic utterances in the surviving lines of Philitas cannot mean that we have here a Philitan influence on the Theocritean style, since this material has been saved because of the aims of Stobaeus’ anthology. Be that as it may, the idyll concludes with a ritual song in honour of Demeter, the most appropriate deity of fields and agriculture (and apparently the area of South Italy); Spanoudakis, who saw there a link to Philitas and his Demeter, suggested a further allusion to Philitas’ Demeter in the singing of a lark in 1. 50 in connection with έπισταμένοι κορικαλλίδες in 7.23, 141 κόρυθοι and the role he assumed for birds associated with chthonic Demeter (p. 251). But remarks of this speculative nature need to be treated with caution. If we knew more about Philitas’ Demeter the analogies might have proved more numerous than we can identify with any certainty at present. What is more important for our investigation is that this particular idyll, similar to others with an identified geographical setting, has no Italian associations.

While Gow (p. 194) and Lembach thought it possible that Theocritus borrowed the gloss κάκτος from Philitas, both denied any connection with Sicily. Lately Hunter (p. 202) has denied any connection with the Philitan fragment, although he also believed that the word cannot form a solid basis upon which to seek a setting for Id. 10. As to the identification of the plant, Gow (p. 194) invoked Athenaeus’ instances of the word that “seems to denote some form of thistle or artichoke”; however, in his translation he ignored this meaning and renders it with the rather misleading “thorn”; Lembach insisted that the plant is not a cactus, but after citing all the known sources (including Philitas) refused to identify it (79–80). Based on Theophrastus, Athenaeus and Lembach, Hunter also connected it with an unidentified plant with edible stems and a broad, spiny leaf.

The question why Theocritus uses this word instead of another with a cognate meaning and without any dialectal colouring can be answered if we consider it in relation with Theocritus’ treatment of other unusual words in the same poem. I shall concentrate upon words in which we know Philitas

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45 For proverbs in Philitas fr. 7.2 Sb.= 13 Sp.; 3.2 Sb.= 2.2 Sp.; 23 D.= 5 Sp. In general see Spanoudakis (above, n. 7) 79, who connects it with the Aristotelian influence.

46 On the contrary, M. Strano, Considerazioni sull’idillio X di Teocrito, “Helikon” 15/16, 1976, 454-60 argues for its Sicilian setting because he finds the whole poem based on reality. Thanks to Linsdell (above, n. 39), we know that Theocritus has been scientifically accurate in his botanical knowledge.

47 Cf. K. Lembach, Die Pflanzen bei Theokrit (Heidelberg 1970) 80.
also showed interest. One of them is the word ἄμαλλοδέται that is an Iliadic δίς λεγόμενον (II. 18.552-5): δράγματα... τίπτων ἔραζε... ἄλλα δ’ ἄμαλλο-

dετῆρες... δέντον... τρεῖς δ’ ἁρ’ ἄμαλλοδετήρες ἐφέσταισαν... παίδες δραγ-

μεύνοντες.

48 In Theocritus the word appears within the rural context of the Lityerses song that Milon sung and the way it stands surely presupposes in variation the Iliadic model: σφίγγετ’, ἄμαλλοδέται, τὰ δράγματα (binders of sheaves to bind up the sheaves, 57).

Previously, Philitas had not been interested in the meaning of the word ἄμαλλα but in the pedantic exactness of the number of sheaves constituting a bundle, that is two hundred (Hes. α. 3417 ἄμαλλαι = 18 D. = 46 Sp.)

A similar attitude is recognisable in the Theocritean idyll, Philitas was exclusively interested in its dialectal use.

The same root is recognisable in the Philitan gloss σκάλλιον (7 D.) or σκάλλιον (35 Sp.) that has a totally divergent meaning, i.e. a small-size drinking cup used by Aeolians for libations:

κυλίκιον μικρόν, ὁ σπέν-

δουσιν Ἀιολεῖς, ὡς Φιλιτάς φησιν ἐν Ατάκτοις; cf. Hes. σ 817 Hansen σκάλλιον κυλίκιον μικρόν. Οἱ δὲ σκάλλιον. Whereas σκάλλιον is inserted in the reality of the rustic world (l.14; cf. e.g. Herodotus 2.14.11)

The same process of exonerating any dialectal colouring is to be applied to κάκτος too. Theocritus uses the word in a similar situation to the one described by Philitas but deprives it of any glossematic character at least because its dialectal colouring has no relevance for the understanding of the context within which it appears: as with the above mentioned strange words κάκτος is also treated as one part of the poetic world.

The same thorn-pricking scene in the countryside reappears in Idyll 4, which offers a rustic snapshot consisting of a dialogue between two different characters: Battus, whose identity and profession remain unclarified, mostly seeks to humiliate his partner with his questions and remarks, and the naïve shepherd, Korydon, who for the most part replies to Battus’ ironic questions.

48 “Handfuls of the crop which are mown at one time and then bound together into ἄμαλλαι”: Hunter 1999, 212; δράγματα again in Homeric II. 11.69 and in Theocr. 7.157.

According Hesychius (α 3402) ἄμαλλαι are αἱ δέσμαι τῶν δραγμάτων.

49 Bing (above, n. 6) 334-5 provides a vivid image of the meticulous scholar asking the farmers themselves somewhere in the countryside.

50 Theophrastus mentions it together with βοτανιζέων (De plant. 3.20.9) and Pollux knows of a σκάλλις as implement (Onomast. 1.245.5, 10.129.1); cf. Hesych. σ 816 Hansen σκάλλις: σκαφίον), an etymology that probably points to it being made of wood.

51 Spanoudakis (above, n. 7) 361-2, Dettori (above, n. 6) 81-86.

52 Dettori (above, n. 6) 81 sees in the Philitean σκάλλιον an analogy to the Theocritean i.e. Homeric κυσσύβιον, that is also used for libation by the end of the poem.
By the end of the dialogue, Battus is pricked by a thorn, like the ewe in *Idyll* ten, and is saved by Korydon (ll. 50–57):

_BA_ 
... ἄγαρ ἄκανθα  
ἀρμοὶ μ’ ὀδὶ ἐπάταξι, ὑπὸ τὸ σφυρὸν. Ὅς δὲ βαθεῖται  
atρακτυλλίδες ἐντί. ...  
eἰς πάυταν (σκ. τὰν πάρτιν) ἐτύπην χασμεύμενον...  
55 ὀσιχοῖν ἐστὶ τὸ τίμμα, καὶ ἄλικον ἄνδρα δαμάσσει.  
_KO_ εἰς ὅρος ὃκ’ ἔρπης, μὴ νήλιπος ἔρρηξο, Βάττε:  
ἐν γὰρ ὅρει ράμνοι τε καὶ ἀσπάλαθοι κομόντι.  

57 (Hunter crit. app.: ράμνοι codd., κάκτοι Π12 Σ v.l.: βάττου Π12 v.l. ut. vid.)

“A thorn has just got me [sic italics Gow] one here under the ankle. How thick those spindle-thorns grow. ... it was after her (i.e. a heifer) I was gaping when it pricked me... What a little wound to master a man as big as me. (KO) When you go on the hill, Battus, don’t come barefoot. Thorns and brambles flourish on the hill.” (transl. Gow).

Indisputably, what Theocritus makes here is a tour de force of botanical knowledge by naming a handful of thorny plants (or at least he seems aware of their names): ἄκανθα (thorn, better artichoke as we shall see), ἀτρακτυλλίδες (spindle-thorns), ράμνοι (buckthorn), and ἀσπάλαθοι (camelthorn: Gow at 24.89; here he renders it with “brambles”). Philitas’ thorn-pricking poem can be detected in _etypēn_ and _tumma_ and in the _variatio_ βαθεία of the Philitan _oj_ _xe_ _i’_. Taking into account that the scene of the poem is, as Gow puts it, “at any rate _prima facie_, the neighbourhood of Croton” (p. 76), it could be that the avoidance of the Sicilian κάκτος (in whatever meaning Theocritus understood it) is to be understood here as a sign of dialect accuracy. In fact, already ancient readers could not but help think of the Philitan background. In l. 57 _POxy_. 4432.9 (saec. II p.C., published in 1997) gives the lectio κάκτοι instead of ράμνοι. The same interchangeability of κάκτος and ράμνος is found again in _Σ_ _Theocr_. 4.57a (γράφεται καὶ κάκτοι) and in an ancient commentary on Theocritus in this papyrus. Furthermore, the scholiast (Σ 4.57b) comments on one of the other thorny plants, ἀσπάλαθοι, in a way that recalls the Philitan κάκτος-fragment: ἀσπάλαθοι: εἰδὸς ἀκάνθης, ἥ πληγέντες οἱ ἐλαφοὶ ἀποδηνή-

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53 On collections with glosses on flora see Latte (above, n. 25) 653f.  
54 Already emphatically Sbardella (above, n. 7) 148.  
55 Gow: “thick, close-set” like ὑλὴ βαθεῖ αἰ. 5.55. ὁντὶ τὸ ὡς μετέχοιτο καὶ ὑπερ-μεγέθεις _Σ_. Also Lembach (above, n. 47) 78: “Wie dicht gedrängt aber auch die ürp. hier wachsen!”  
56 ἐν γὰρ ὅρει ῥάμνοι (codd.: κάκτοι _Σ_).
To start with, all thorny plants share a common nature. They are not just repellent and harmful for rustic people; they were also classified as infelices that, according to the distinction given by Plinyus between felices and infelices arbores, were under the protection of chthonic deities and therefore believed to have connections with the Underworld: infelices autem existimantur damnataeque religione quae neque servuntur unquam neque fructum ferunt (NH 16.108). Lembach, who collected all sources indicating this common sinister nature, has outlined that they “were held for sterile and sacred to the chthonic deities”59. We are informed that this is actually the nature of all the named thorny plants of the poem. Theophrastus gave the synonym φόνος (HP 6.4, cf. 9.1) for ἀρτρακτυλλίδες (identified with distaff-thistle, modern Greek: τής γυναίκας τ’ ἀτράχτι) due to “the fact that its juice turns blood-red on contact with skin”60. The information given by Dioscorides Pedanius shares a similar line of thought: οἱ δὲ κνήκον ἄγριον καλοῦσιν. “Ακανθά ἐστιν εὐκύττα κνήκω, μικρότερα δὲ πολλῷ φύλλα ἐχουσά ἐπ’ ἀκρῷ τῷ ῥόβδιῳ τὸ δὲ πλεῖον γυμνόν, ὦ καὶ αἱ γυναίκες χρώνται αντί ἀτράκτου. ἔχει δὲ καὶ κόμην ἐπ’ ἄκρον ακανθώδη, ἀνθός ἀχρόν, ρίζα δὲ λεπτή, ἀχρηστός. Ταύτης τά φύλλα καὶ η κόμη καὶ ὁ καρπός λεία ποθέντα σὺν πεπέρει καὶ οἶνῳ σκορποπλάκτους ὀφελεῖ. Ἰστορούσι δὲ ἐννοῖ τοὺς πληξθέντας, ἀχρὶ μὲν ἄν κρατώσι τὴν πόλιν, ἀνωδύνους μένειν, ἀποτελοῦμένους δὲ ἄλγειν (3.93).

57 Spanoudakis (above, n. 7) 212, cites Maehler on POxy. 4432.9 and believes that the sentence “seems to refer to κάκτοι, occurring as a v.l. of ῥόμυοι in that verse, rather than to ἀσπατάθαι”.

58 Cf. Hunter 1999, 143: “It is hard to resist hearing a play with βέτος, thorn”. For the etymology of Battus see Bömer on Ovid. Met. 2.688, M. Paschalis, Battus and ‘batos’: Wordplay in Theocritus’ Fourth Idyll, “RhM” 134, 1991, 205. A good summary on the previous interpretations of both characters in Id. 4 in S. Lattimore, Battus in Theocritus’ Fourth Idyll, “GRBS” 14, 1973, 319-24, who rightly sees in Battus an outsider and occasional visitor to the country. For the different opinion of Segal see above, n. 8 and 17.

59 Lembach leaves open what particular sort ἀκανθοῦ are and is convinced only of their common nature (above, n. 47) 84: “Sie sind dornig, galten für unfruchtbar und den chthonischen Gottheiten heilig”. Cf. 81f.

60 Gow 89; Lembach (above, n. 47) 78f.
`Aspálathos` (camelthorn)\(^{61}\) was described by Dioscorides as θύμνος ξυλώδης, ἀκάνθας πολλάς κεχρημένος (1. 20). The plant forms part of the “wild firewood” (ἀγρίαι σχιζαί) Teiresias advises Alcmena to collect for fire in order to burn the dreadful serpents in \textit{Id.} 24 (ll. 88 ff.).\(^{62}\) The plants named must be burned at midnight and the prescription is full of magic:

\begin{verbatim}
... πῦρ μὲν τοι ὑπὸ σποδῶν ἐντυκον ἔστω,
κάγκανα δ’ ἀσπαλάθους ἔτοιμασέτ’ ἢ παλιούρου
ἡ βάτος· ἢ ἀνέμω ἔδεσσινεν ἄγριον ἄχερῦδον,
καίε δὲ τῶδ’ ἀγριαίσιν ἐπὶ σχιζαίς δράκοντε
νυκτί μέσσα...\(^{63}\)
\end{verbatim}

“... thou must have ready fire beneath the ashes. And do ye get in dry sticks of camelthorn or of palurus [identified with “Christ thorn”, not used by Gow for obvious reasons] or of bramble, or wild pear wood, sapless and wind-beaten; and on that wild firewood do thou burn these serpents ar midnight ...” (transl. Gow).

Similar connotations are attributed to ῥάμνος\(^{64}\) (buckthorn), since it was used for sacrifices for the dead and was sacred to chthonian deities (Lembach 77ff.). We even know that Pseudo-Dioscorides called the plant “persephonion”. If so, we can confidently apply Lembach’s suggestion (p. 73) that in \textit{Id.} 4 Korydon warns against ἀσπαλάθος, not only because of its thorns but also because of its associations with the Underworld, to all named thorny plants. We cannot be sure about the alleged content of the Philitan \textit{Demeter}, especially since it lacks any reference to plants (with the exception of the plane tree) but the chthonian nature easily alludes to the main point in the Demeter-Persephone myth. As we happen to know that this was the elegiac poem Callimachus praised when declaring his own preference for shorter over longer poems in the beginning of \textit{Aetia}, we may be on the right track if we see in the chthonian associations of the thorn-pricking scene a bucolic

\(^{61}\) According to Gow more than one kind of thorny plant or shrub, possibly \textit{genista acanthoclada}. Lembach (above, n. 47) 72f. again leaves its identification open; it is used for “verschiedene, meist strauchartige Pflanzen aus der Familie der Schmetterlingsblüter” and cites Wagler v. \textit{RE} II (1896), 1710.

\(^{62}\) Lembach (above, n. 47) 71-76 under “Dorngewächse” and 81f. Macrobius (\textit{Sat.} 3.20.2) also provided a catalogue of such felices and infelices arbores.

\(^{63}\) On βότρυς see Lembach (above, n. 47) 74f. Another plant of this group is ἀχερόδος, wild pear, also with repellent qualities; see Pherecrates (fr. 174 K.-A.) τῆς ἀχερόδου τῆς ἀκραχολογικής. Alcaeus of Messene (\textit{AP} 7.536 = \textit{HE} 76-81) names it unsympathetic together with βότρυς on the tomb of Hipponax instead of βότρυς on the poem see R. M. Rosen, \textit{The Hellenistic Epigrams on Archilochus and Hipponax}, in P. Bing & J. S. Bruss (eds.), \textit{Brill’s Companion to Hellenistic Epigram} (Leiden 2007) 466-8.

\(^{64}\) Again in \textit{[21].36} ὅνος ἐν ῥάμνῳ τὸ πελώριον ἐν πρυτανείῳ. Lembach (above, n. 47) 77f.
remodelling of an episode in Philitas’ Demeter-story. However, this is as far as we can go due to a lack of tangible evidence.

When it comes to ἀκάνθα and βάτοι, things become more complicated. Both words are Homeric hapax (Od. 5.328 and 24.230 respectively), a fact that guarantees their poetic value. Theocritus uses the names in other instances. "Ἀκάνθας of βάτοι (thorns of bushes) are part of the very important locus amoenus that closes Id. 7 (ll. 139 f.): ἄ δ’ ὠλολυγὼν/εἰν πυκναίσα βάτον τρύζεσκεν ἀκάνθας, “the tree-frog far off cried in the dense thornbrake” (transl. Gow). In juxtaposition with βάτοι the plant appears in the adynaton of the first Idyll with the inversion of nature that is included in the mournful lament for the dying Daphnis (I. 132): νῦν ὶν μέν φορέοτε βάτοι, φορέοτε δ’ ἀκάνθας, “now violets bear, ye brambles, and, ye thorns, bear violets”⁶⁶. The word appears also as χαίται ἀκάνθας within a simile for Galatea, who is described as flying or approaching her lover “as the dry thistledown when the bright summer parches it....”, ὥς ἀπ’ ἀκάνθας/ται καπναί χαίται, τὸ καλὸν θέρος ἀνίκα φρύγει (6.15)⁶⁶. In this passage the scholiast identifies the plant ἀκάνθα with κινάρα, artichoke, but all interpreters are rightly unanimous that here it does not mean thorn but a plant of the thistle kind (Gow, “Distel”); Lembach 82, Hunter 252; cf. 7.141 ἀκάνθις = Distelfink), and more specifically, the simile concerns the blown thistledown (χαίται = elsewhere called πάππος) that is too insubstantial to be grasped but can fly at random and gives the impression it is either following someone or the opposite⁶⁶. What is important for the topic of the matter at hand is that we encounter the same image in Nicander, where also it means thistle, and, interestingly enough, the word is ἀκάνθης once (Ther. 328f. θρίζε/ σκιόνισαι ὥς γήρεαι καταψηχθέντος ἀκάνθης) but elsewhere appears as κάκτος (Alex. 126-7 οὐά τε δὴ γήρεαι νέον πεθημένα κάκτων/ ἥρα ἐπιπλάζουσι διαψαίρουσι πνοήσαι). From other sources too it becomes plain that the word is identified with κυνάρα or κινάρα, another

⁶⁵ Lembach (above, n. 47) 81-84.
⁶⁶ See also in [21].34ff. Vergil, who undertakes the Theocritean adynaton, transfers Theocritus’ narcissus “that bloom on the juniper” (νάρκισσος ἐπ’ ἀρκευθοσι, 133) not to the thorny ἀρκευθος but to the alder, i.e. κλήθη that is the mysterious tree in Philitas’ pagtition (12 Sb. = 25 Sp.). A noteworthy change indeed. See their coexistence in Longus 1.20.3: Ἔν κοίλη δὲ πάνῳ [γῇ] ἢ πηγῇ, καὶ περὶ αὐτὴν πάς ὁ τόπος ἀκάνθας καὶ βάτος καὶ ἀρκευθὸν τασπείνη καὶ σκολίμος ἡγήσω. On Vergil’s use of thorny plants see e.g. Ecl. 4.29: incultisque rubens pendebit sentibus uva (with comments e.g. of Papangheli above, n. 19, 281).
⁶⁷ Ἀκάνθας also appears among the plants Heracles has to tread on during his search for Hylas (ὑπρίκατοιν ἀκάνθας, 13.64).
⁶⁸ For a good explanation of the simile see J. H. Betts, Theocritus 6.15-17, “CP” 66, 1971, 252-3.
word for artichoke (Modern Greek αγγυνάρα): According to Athenaeus (mentioned above, 2.70a) in Sophocles’ Φοίνιξ (F 718) κύναρος ἄκανθα πάντα πληθύει γύνην and in Κολχίδες the word κυνάρα (F 348) was explained by Didymus as ἄκανθα: Δίδυμος γραμματικός εξηγούμενος παρά τῷ Σοφοκλεί τὸ κύναρος ἄκανθα μήποτε ήσσι τὴν κυνόσβατον λέγει διὰ τὸ ἄκανθοδές καὶ πραγματί εἶναι τὸ φυτόν. Dioscorides spoke of ἄκανθα λευκή... ἀγγυικνάρα and Pollux provides us with the information that the Dorian poets use ἄκανθα for κινάρα: κινάρα οὔτω γάρ παρὰ τοῖς Δωριέωσι ποιηταῖς ἐτοί εὑρέθη καλομενῆν τὴν ἄκανθαν – (Onomasticon VI 46: a very useful observation that Ock, op. cit. 1457 declined to understand: “unverständlicher Weise”).

If we put all pieces together it becomes apparent that κάκτος and ἄκανθα are the same plant in Theocritus, a sort of artichoke, that is a plant that pricks with its small, nearly invisible spines like any kind of thorny plant, even if it does not belong to thorns but to the daisy family (cynara cardunculus, artichoke thistle, cardoon). As we have seen above, ἄκανθα is very close in meaning to ράμνος (buckthorn), which is, in turn, affiliated with κάκτος. A further similarity is that both named plants are equally similar to the other omitted thorny plant, βάτος. If so, Theocritus omits κάκτος and in its place prefers to put two of its synonyms. Why he does so can be explained by their other appearances. As argued above, in Id. one ἄκανθα and its synonym βάτος are mentioned within the lament for boukolos Daphnis in the adynaton and thus become part of the reversed order his loss causes. Soon after they are named, we hear of the Underworld of Acheron and Persephone, Demeter’s daughter. It is, then, likely that the plant is chosen for its sinister undertones. Again, in Id. 7 they are part of the locus amoenus that very probably has poetological connotations, and ends up with the celebration of Demeter. The imminent danger of being pricked within an other-

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69 See other sources on the paretymological connection with κύων: Radt at p. 490 in TGF.
70 In his comments on the word Lembach (above, n. 47) 82-84 made a distinction between thorn (in Idylls 1, 7 and 4) and thistle, a sort of artichoke in 6 and left open the meaning in 13.64. As regards a snake’s coil in 24.32 ἄκανθας. Cf. Nicander Ther. 110, 316, 480.
71 ράμνος together with βάτων φύλλα: Hipp. mul. aff. 193.3; Theophr. HP 3.18.12; for βάτων Theophr. HP 1.9.4 (θιμνόδες), 3.18.1; Rhianus CA 76.1f.: ράμνον ἐλίζοις/ πάντο-θεν, η σκολίης ἐγρία κάλα βάτων.
72 To this hommage we may add that Simichidas swears οὐ Δᾶν in l. 39 (= Demeter translates it Serrao above n. 11, 920 pace Gow at 4.17). On the locus see e.g. Segal (above, n. 8, 153ff.); S. Goldhill, The Poet’s Voice. Essays on Poetics and Greek Literature (Cambridge 1991) 238-9; Papanghelis (above, n. 2), 43; Hunter 1999, p.193 following Kyriakou (above, n. 9) 214-31; Fantuzzi & Hunter, (above, n. 25) 146-7. Cf. W. Elliger, Die Darstellung der Landschaft in der griechischen Dichtung (Berlin-New York 1975) 333-6; T. E. V. Pearce, The Function of the locus amoenus in Theocritus’ Seventh Poem, “RH” 131, 1988, 276-304,
wise alluring environment is implied by the acoustic predominance of π, τ, τ, σκ, κ that interrupts the mellifluous flow of the preceding description\(^\text{73}\). The jaunty tone is also hidden in the name ἀκονθίδες that describes singing birds: the word evokes the thorny plants and, at the same time, transforms their negative nature into a pleasant sound-effect\(^\text{74}\). As in Id. 4 the message is that life out of doors is attractive but not void of dangers and that one should be constantly alert. The “Bramble man” proves himself to be an ignoramus in matters of the countryside, which is why he ends up by paying the price\(^\text{75}\). The specific punishment is further underlined by two facts: firstly, Battus, who is literally a Thorny-man, is the one who falls victim to thistles and secondly, he is the one who, up till that point, had striven to play a trick on the rustic Korydon. The fact that it is the latter who utters a maxim of bucolic vademecum after the accident points to the dominance a rustic connoisseur wields within this world: “don’t be barefoot when you go on the mountain” (εἰς ὄρος ὄκχ’ ἔρημος, μὴ νῆλυπος ἔρχεσθαι, Βάττε). This means that thorny plants are not just the natural means that punish bucolic ignorance (or, presumably, its reverse: urban identity), but, what is more, they are heavily involved in the reestablishment of bucolic principles and values. Speaking in Philitan terms, this outcome considerably challenges the “bucolic” idea given in the kaktos-riddle: bucolic music is threatened with abolition not because of this tles but because of a lack of familiarity with matters of bucolic life.


\(^\text{73}\) Already Segal (above, n. 8 p. 206) pointed out that the thistles in 1.132 “reflect the fruitfulness of the Thalysian grove” in 7.140. In Longus (1.14.2) Chloe says: Πόσοι βάτοι με πολλάκις ἠμίζεν, καὶ ὁκ ἐκλαυσα.

\(^\text{74}\) Hunter 1999, 194, who also mentions Od. 19.520 rightly remarks that nightingales (in Theocritus the ὁλοληθὼν 139) usually sings unseen in thicketts.

\(^\text{75}\) In this respect I cannot understand why Segal (above, n. 8 and 17 passim) believes that Battus is a goatherd and rustic man. On the other hand, he is right when he says in another instance (above n. 18) 188f.: “Corydon feels even these bothersome plants as infused with nature’s processes and variety”. I find fruitful van Sickle’s discussion (e.g. *Poetica teocritea, “QUCC”* 9, 1970, 67-82) on the different modes of poetry symbolized by the two men: e.g. his interpretation of the thin bull (l. 20) as an allusion to Callimachus’ thin style is worth considering but this would take us beyond the limited scope of the present investigation. On Philitas’ physical aspect, and the honours he received (cfr. below n. 82) see the New Posidippus (63 A.-B.). On Philitas’ real physical thinness without any literary connotations in this respect see the controversial discussion in Cameron (above n. 12) 488-93.
Throughout the Theocritean poems. This is most evident in Id. 7, in which the name of Philitas is explicitly mentioned by Simichidas, when both Lycidas and Simichidas agree that they feel quite at home in these mountains. Lycidas declares that he will perform a song he fashioned on the mountain and later Simichidas also admits his close relationship with mountains, the location of his poetic activity: the Nymphs taught him, too, while he guarded his herd up the mountain and their fame has carried them to the throne of Zeus (ἐν ὄρει τὸ μελόδρομον ἐξεπόνυσα 51 and πολλά μᾶν ἄλλα/ Νύμφαι κημε δίδαξαν ἀν’ ὀρέα βουκολέοντα/ ἐσθλά, τα που καὶ Ζηνός ἐπὶ θρόνον ἀγαπεῖ φῶμα, 92-93).

We know of at least one instance where Philitas also introduced mountains and one tree in his poetry. In an elegiac quatrain preserved as a paeanon (12 Sb. = 25 Sp.), a mysterious alder tree defines the sort of man it considers worthy of cutting it down from the mountains. We are told that this is not a rustic man but one who knows the treasure of all kinds of words, that is, a man who is the ideal of Philitas himself:

οὗ μὲ τις ἔξ ὀρέων ἀποφαύλος ἁγροιῶτης
αἰρήσει κλήθρην αἰρόμενος μακέλην,
ἄλλ’ ἐπέον εἰδῶς κόσμον καὶ πολλὰ μογήσας
μύθον παντοίον οἶμον ἐπιστάμενος.

Although the diction of the poem is Homeric, its spirit is undeniably Philitan as we reconstruct it from the surviving sources. The poem must have appealed to Theocritus since he was after all the man whose fame gradually reached Zeus’ throne by bringing rustic life into the mainstream of poetic expression, or to put it in his own words, “who created poetry in the mountains”. Lines 7.39-42, 51 and 92-93 are better understood if read against the Philitan interest in nature in whatever form this had but I also agree with N. Krevans who in respect of Id. 7 rightly spoke of “diversity of Theocritus’ sources, as opposed to designating one figure a model for his poetry”.

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76 Brief survey on the matter in Segal (above n. 8), p. 202 who also gave an important interpretation of Lycidas and Simichidas (the urban poet) in Theocritus Seventh Idyll and Lycidas, “WS” n.s. 8, 1974, 20-76 (above, n. 7, 110-166, especially 153-157).


78 Testimonies on his pedantry have been well-known since antiquity. The locus classicus of the issue is the fragment by the comic poet Strato (PCG VII fr. 1.40-6= T 4 Sp.), where Philitas’ books are mentioned as the handbook a confused man should consult in order to interpret the glosses (mostly from Homeric poems) he hears from his eccentric cook.

omission of any alder tree80 among a handful of trees (in Lembach’s pioneering work we count 28 species of plants) in his poetry could be explained using the same line of interpretation that we assert for the aposiosis of kaktos in Idyll 4.

We are confident that Philitas, thanks to his twofold identity as grammarian and poet, outshone his younger contemporaries, all the more so because of his leading position in the Ptolemaic dynasty – nor should we forget that he may have been the object of worship by the citizens of Cos81. What ought to strike us is the fact that so little of Philitas’ poetry has survived82. Wilamowitz was right in saying that we would like to have more of Philitas’ poetic work. But we do know Theocritus’ Idylls. Theocritus presented himself as the one, “knowing all treasure of (thorny) words” on the mountains, but at the same time he is also aware of the dangers one meets in the countryside, and, all the more, like the Philitean fawn, is able to avoid all those threats that could jeopardise his musical ability. In this respect we could speak of “learned teases”83, and not just learned citations from the younger poet to the older. If so, the zetema whether Philitas was a forebear of Theocritus’ bucolics before is of no particular consequence for the understanding of their relationship. Perhaps there is more to say on the matter that escapes us, especially if we take into account that one παλαίω βάτος plays an important part in the Callimachean Iamb IV, where it interferes in a quarrel between the laurel and the olive with the intention of reconciling them84. Did Callimachus engage in dialogue with Philitas and/or Theocritus

80 In one varia lectio in 7.8 (in POxy, 2604) we read κλήθημα instead of παλαίω. The plane tree features thrice in Theocritus in the form of πλάτανισμα and once in the Philitan form πλάτανος (see Gow at 18.44, p. 359).


83 Hollis (above n. 81) 58, n. 15.

84 Recently D. Konstan and L. Landrey, Callimachus and the Bush on Iamb 4, “CW” 102, 2008, 47-49, identified βάτος with the Battiaides Callimachus. See a totally different analysis in E. Lelli, Il Giambro 4 di Callimaco e le polemiche letterarie alessandrine, “ARF” 2, 2000, 43-78, and in extenso above n. 18, 69-82; A. Kerkhecker, Callimachus’ Book of Iambi
in this poem or perhaps even in others, and if yes what kind of dialogue did he inaugurate? Is the theme “thorny plants and relationships between poets” to be found in other poets too? A full-scale reconsideration of this matter could add important information to the still elusive issue of the dialogue between contemporary poets.

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ABSTRACT.
This paper aims to reconsider the still unsettled issue of the Theocritus-Philitas relationship. Thorny plants are a natural device for poetological implications. In his use of words denoting thorny plants Theocritus displays both his awareness of and differentiation from Philitas and, therefore, calls into doubt the possibility of a straightforward positive relationship and influence. The poems under consideration are: Philitas fr. 18 Sb. = 20 Sp.; fr.12 Sb. = 25 Sp.; Theocritus Idylls 1, 4, 7, 1.

KEYWORDS.
Theocritus, Philitas, poetry, bucolic world, botanic diction, thorny plants.