Theocritus’ Eleventh *Idyll* continues to elicit no less discussion than his masterpiece, the Seventh. The poem has been addressed from various points of view: poetry as medicine (Erbse), the nature of pastoral (Spofford), generic composition (Cairns), bucolic landscape (Segal), framing (Goldhill), etc. But whatever the critic’s approach, he must face one crucial and controversial question: Is the Cyclops cured of his love or not? Does he achieve true self-awareness or does he resort to self-deception?

Critical opinion has been divided almost equally over the last quarter century, expressed with varying degrees of certitude. There is little to be gained from recycling the old arguments. But a close study of the structure of the poem can help to resolve the disagreement.

Those who have attempted to show the structure of *Theocritus 11* have almost invariably segregated the song of the Cyclops from the frame passages and concentrated on it. And very reasonably—one cannot deny the distinction between frame and song, especially since Theocritus uses the frame so often (as in *Idyll 7*, where the use is more complex). But however reasonable, it does not follow that, if there is another organizing principle at work in *Idyll 11*, it must accommodate the segregation of the Cyclops’ song. That assumption has worked against the discovery of the symmetrical structure of *Idyll 11*.

If one looks at the poem as a whole, the ring composition becomes apparent. The poem has (A) an Introduction: music is the cure for love (1-6) and a Conclusion: Polyphemus cares for his love with music (80-81). There are several verbal repetitions: ἔρωτα (1, 80), ἔφοβον (4)—ἔφοβον (81), Μοῖσσις (6)—μουσιτίους (81). Then (B) Polyphemus’ love for Galateia is described (7-13a), and later his intention to find someone else to love (72-79). Verbal repetition: Ἐκλέκτης (7, 72; only here in the singular). The Cyclops’ frenzied love is first described positively as ‘real’ (ὥσπερ δ’ οὖ μάλλοις..., ἀλλ’ ὤρθαις μανίαις, 10 f.), then remorsefully by the Cyclops himself (πᾶ τὰς φρένας ἐκπεπτώσατι; 72); the tasks he has left undone, specifically allowing his sheep to find their way home to the sheep-pen (11-13a), are evidently about to be taken up again later, that is, plaiting baskets and gathering greens for the lambs (73-74a). The painful symptoms of love (C) are detailed in 13b-18 and 67-71: the Cyclops wastes away (κατετάχετο, 14) or grows thin (λεπτόνοντα, 69); he has taken an arrow in the liver (16) or his head and feet throb (70 f.).

In the next parallel sections (D) he addresses and describes Galateia, wistfully observing that she comes to him when he sleeps, departs when he awakes (19-24); and addresses Galateia, wishes he could learn to swim, and invites her to come and—forget to leave (60-66). Parallels and contrasts or repeated ideas: Ὄλος λευκός Γαλάτεια (19) — ὦ κέριον (60), πακτάς (20) — τυφών πᾶξι (66), γυλυκός (22 f.) — δραμείαν (66), φοιτής... οὐχὶ... οὐσία (22 f.) — ἐξενθείος... λάθοιο... ἀπενθείν (64 f.).

Polyphemus (E) declares that he loved Galateia from the time she came flower-picking with his mother (25-29); and regrets that he can not come to her—as she had previously come to his world—for he would bring her flowers (54-59). Parallels: ήρασθην (25) — ἐφίλησα (55), ματρι (26) — μάτρι (54), ὑπάκουια φύλλα ... ὅρθρασθαι (26 f.) — ἐφερον ... κρίνα λευκά/ ἤ μάκαν' κτλ. (56 f.).

Polyphemus (F) tries to excuse his shaggy eyebrow stretching from ear to ear and his one eye (30-33, 50-53), the second time with a labored joke, whether deliberate or inadvertent. Verbal repetitions: λασία (31) — λασίοτερος (50), ὀρθαλμός (33) — ὀρθαλμόν (53)4). In the central pair of parallel passages (G) Polyphemus boasts of his wealth in cattle, milk and cheese (34-37) and praises his well-treed cave covered with ivy and grape vines and supplied with ambrosial water direct from Actna’s snows (45-49). One might see a parallel between χειμώνος (37) and χιόνος (48).

Analysis of the structure points to lines 38-44 as the center of the poem5). Typically the passage at the center of a ring composition is important if not climactic6). And that is the case here. It is only in line 42, one line from the precise center of the eighty-one line poem, that Polyphemus, the beastly lover, screws up his courage to actually ask Galateia to come to him and spend the night (At 63 he only invites her to “come out,” using a polite but not very hopeful optative.) The Cyclops’ song rises to this climax of importunate optimism, then falls back to hopelessness and self-deception. Consider the sequence again, from the beginning of the song. In D1 Polyphemus declares his love, though Galateia flees from him as ewe from wolf. At E1 he tells how he first fell in love, adding “but you don’t care.” He accounts for her rejection with his appearance (F1) which he counters by listing his material assets (G1).