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**Autor:** Segal, Charles

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## «Since Daphnis Dies»: The Meaning of Theocritus' First Idyll

By Charles Segal, Providence, R.I.

## I

The first Idyll of Theocritus is an extraordinarily closely knit and carefully constructed poem. Most of its second half consists of Thyrsis' song about 'the sorrows of Daphnis' (τὰ Δάφνιδος ἄλγεα, 19), a cowherd-singer (cf. 128–129) who is 'wasting away' because of an unexplained struggle with love. Attempts to find reasons for Daphnis' death have, on the whole, suffered from considering Daphnis apart from the rest of the poem<sup>1</sup>. The present paper seeks to place Daphnis' death in the perspective of the poem's total structure and thereby to offer an interpretation of the Idyll as a whole. In so doing, it draws heavily on the symbolism attaching to the elements of the pastoral world depicted in the Idyll, especially the symbolism of water.

The exact nature of Daphnis' death is itself a perplexing problem. Theocritus is brief and elusive (138–141):

χῶ μὲν τόσσ' εἰπὼν ἀπεπαύσατο · τὸν δ' Ἀφροδίτα  
ἤθελ' ἀνορθῶσαι · τά γε μὰν λῖνα πάντα λελοῖπει  
ἐκ Μοιρᾶν, χῶ Δάφνις ἔβα ῥόον. ἔκλυσε δῖνα  
τὸν Μοῖσαις φίλον ἄνδρα, τὸν οὐ Νύμφαισιν ἀπεχθῆ.

'Him Aphrodite wished to raise up, but all the thread had run out from the Fates (Moirai), and Daphnis came to a stream. The eddy washed over the man dear to the Muses, one not hated of the Nymphs.'

The scholiasts thought that the 'stream' of 140 is Acheron<sup>2</sup>, but there is no evidence that Theocritus ever refers to Acheron in such terms<sup>3</sup>, nor should it 'wash

<sup>1</sup> The most important recent studies are as follows: G. Lawall, *Theocritus' Coan Pastorals. A Poetry Book* (Cambridge, Mass. 1967) ch. 1; R. M. Ogilvie, *The Song of Thyrsis*, JHS 82 (1962) 106–110; U. Ott, *Die Kunst des Gegensatzes in Theokrits Hirtengedichten*, Spudasmata 22 (Hildesheim 1969) 85–137; E. A. Schmidt, *Die Leiden des verliebten Daphnis*, Hermes 96 (1968) 539–552; F. J. Williams, *Theocritus, Idyll i 81–91*, JHS 89 (1969) 121–123. The recent study of the Daphnis myth by G. Wojaczek, *Daphnis. Untersuchungen zur griechischen Bukolik*, Beitr. z. klass. Philol. 34 (Meisenheim am Glan 1969) 33–38 is unhelpful since the author believes that Daphnis is a Dionysiac-Orphic initiate (p. 36) and Thyrsis' song «eine mystische Unterweisung» (p. 38).

<sup>2</sup> So the scholiast ad loc.; most recently Lawall (preceding note) 25–26, with note 6. So also Fritzsche-Hiller, *Theokrits Gedichte*<sup>3</sup> (Leipzig 1881) ad loc. and, reluctantly, H. W. Prescott, *A Study of the Daphnis-Myth*, Harv. Stud. Cl. Phil. 10 (1899) 138 with n. 2. For a recent survey see Ott (above n. 1) 129 with n. 371.

<sup>3</sup> For these objections to interpreting the 'stream' as Acheron, see Ogilvie (above n. 1) 109; A. S. F. Gow, *Theocritus*<sup>2</sup> (Cambridge 1952) ad I 140.

over' its victim. Others have suggested that Daphnis is metamorphosed into a spring<sup>4</sup>, a view which has even less support from the text or from what is known of the myth of Daphnis. Of the traditional, apparently Sicilian myth of Daphnis, a herdsman punished with blindness for his infidelity to a Nymph to whom he pledged his love, there are, at best, only hints (see 88–91 and *infra*)<sup>5</sup>. A number of recent interpreters, however, maintain that Theocritus is following the traditional legend<sup>6</sup>.

The most likely interpretation is that the 'stream' of 140 is a real stream and not a metaphor for death. On this view Daphnis dies by drowning<sup>7</sup>. Yet his death is no ordinary event. The water which washes over him is akin to the mysterious water which adorns other dangerous places in the Theocritean corpus, notably in Idylls XIII, XXII, and in the spurious XXIII<sup>8</sup>. The poet gives Daphnis a deliberately mysterious, archetypal death by water in order to enhance the range and suggestiveness of his tale. Such a fate is of a piece with the remote and mythical atmosphere of the tale as a whole: the appearance of gods, the Nymphs in the background, the conversation with Aphrodite.

At the same time water is an important unifying symbol throughout the poem. Inviting, refreshing, joyful at the beginning (1–8), the haunt of Nymphs of Sicily's rivers and streams in the song of Daphnis (68–69. 118), ominous and mysterious at Daphnis' death (140), and then finally benign and evocative of a fanciful Olympian mythology near the very end (150), water symbolizes opposing elements in Theocritus' pastoral world and in his art. The association of water and poetry goes back to the proem of Hesiod's Theogony, a passage which Theocritus perhaps has in mind in the opening of his Idyll (1–8)<sup>9</sup>. It is implicit also in the connection

<sup>4</sup> See especially E. Schwartz, *Theokrits Daphnis*, NGG (1904) 291, who interestingly connects the idea with Daphnis' 'wasting away' through love. Also R. J. Cholmeley, *The Idylls of Theocritus* (London 1919) 384; Williams (above n. 1) 122 n. 6.

<sup>5</sup> For the legend and the ancient sources see Gow's prefatory remarks to *Id.* I; also Cholmeley (preceding note) 383–374; Prescott (above n. 2) *passim*. The other allusions to Daphnis in the Theocritean corpus do not help much. In *Id.* VII 73–77, Daphnis loves one Xenea and is lamented by the mountains and oaks near the Himera, but no reason for his death is given. In *ps.-Theocr.* VIII 92–93 Daphnis wins a singing contest and marries the Nymph Nais. In *Epigram* III he is stalked by Pan and Priapus as he sleeps. *Id.* VII 73–77 is not inconsistent with the traditional myth nor with *Id.* I, but it neither proves nor disproves that Theocritus is following the traditional myth in *Id.* I.

<sup>6</sup> So Ogilvie (above n. 1), answered in part by Schmidt (above n. 1), especially 542. See also Prescott (above n. 2) 140, who accepts the traditional version with reservations; and see the same author's article, "Εβα ἑόν (Theocritus *Id.* I, 139. 140), CQ 7 (1913) 176–187, especially 187, who stresses the parallel with the tale of Hylas.

<sup>7</sup> So Ogilvie (above n. 1) 109 and Ott (above n. 1) 129 with n. 371, with discussion of earlier scholarship. See also Williams (above n. 1) 123 n. 13.

<sup>8</sup> I develop these parallels in a separate study, *Death by Water: A Narrative Pattern in Theocritus*, forthcoming in *Hermes*.

<sup>9</sup> Hes. *Theog.* 39. 83–84. 97. The importance of the Hesiodic and also the Callimachean «Dichterweihe» for the Thalysia (*Id.* VII) has been shown by B. A. Van Groningen, *Quelques problèmes de la poésie bucolique grecque*, Mnemosyne, Ser. IV 12 (1959) 31–32 and M. Puelma, *Die Dichterbegegnung in Theokrits 'Thalysien'*, Mus. Helv. 17 (1960) 156–157 and extended more recently by G. Luck, *Zur Deutung von Theokrits Thalysien*, Mus. Helv. 23 (1966)

of the 'springs of the Seasons' (150) with the cup, the elaborately adorned artifact and prize of song which itself as a work of art symbolizes poetry and especially pastoral poetry.

## II

Idyll I falls into three parts, each of which has its own distinctive geography. First comes the meeting between the two rustics at the beginning, with its quiet, beautiful, but not entirely secure pastoral *locus* (1–23). To this bucolic frame we return at the very end of the poem (143–152). Second stand the scenes on the cup. These belong to a more realistic workaday world (29–56), a pastoral version of the Homeric Shield of Achilles. This *locus* bears the imprint of human cultivation and habitation: there is a well-planted vineyard (46) and a rubble wall (47). Here nature is fenced in, demarcated for human use and not left to its spontaneous whisperings and gurglings, as in Thyrsis' world (cf. 1–8). Even the sheer rock by the sea serves human work: it is the place from which the muscular old fisherman casts his net (39–40). There is a certain aggressiveness between nature and man here. Foxes prowl around the intent boy of the third scene, looking for a chance to get at the grapes or his lunch. Musing and wrapt absorption may here bring their penalty. The concentrated weaving of the 'beautiful' (*καλάν*, 52) cage for the grasshopper is a palpable symbol of poetry<sup>10</sup>. Yet even this scene is, in a way, connected with the theme of food-getting through the presence of the hungry and designing foxes. The making of the cage too implies fencing in, control, the containment of nature for human purposes.

Third and last is the setting of Daphnis' death. Its real geography shades off into the realm of myth and imagination. There are real Sicilian rivers and mountains, to be sure (68–69): «These points describe an area in western Sicily of about 60 kilometers from north to south», as one commentator notes<sup>11</sup>. But Pan, Priapus, Hermes, Aphrodite and the Nymphs are at home here and pass to and fro easily in converse with mortals. Jackals and lions, not very likely inhabitants of Theocritus' Sicily, dwell in Daphnis' mountains and lament his death (71–72. 115)<sup>12</sup>.

Each of these three *loci* is, in a sense, unreal and artificial; but there are gradations of unreality<sup>13</sup>. The realm of Daphnis, despite its actual place names, stands at the furthest remove from reality. The workaday world of the cup is the closest. In between stands the shepherd world of Thyrsis and the Goatherd. For them

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186–189 and by G. Serrao, *Problemi di poesia alessandrina I: Studi su Teocrito* (Rome 1971) 13–68, especially 29. 33. 37.

<sup>10</sup> So too the *tettix* in 148 may be an allusion to Callimachean theories: cf. *Aetia* I, fr. 1, 29ff. Pf. See also A. Dihle, *The Poem on the Cicada*, *Harv. Stud. Cl. Phil.* 71 (1966) 112 with n. 17. The word *ἐραγμώδων* in line 53 also suggests craftsmanlike activity appropriate to art.

<sup>11</sup> Ott (above n. 1) 120–121.

<sup>12</sup> See Ott (above n. 1) 121–122.

<sup>13</sup> In *Id.* VII also Theocritus exploits a narrative frame which stands on a different plane of reality from the episode which it encloses within it: see Luck (above n. 9) 187 and Puelma (above n. 9) 145.



nature is free, generous, unmarked by boundaries or tillage. Rustic gods haunt their glades. Yet work is not entirely absent: Thyrsis still has to attend to the pasturing of his companion's goats (14).

A complex pattern of parallel motifs and verbal repetitions relates these three locales to one another<sup>14</sup>. Furthermore, the closing dialogue between the two rustics holds all three settings present simultaneously for a final, synoptic moment.

The character of each *locus* also appears through the kind of water it contains. The water of the rustics' world is gentle, beautiful, songful, in close sympathy with art and leisure (1–8. 150). It is felt to be the haunt of the forest divinities, the Nymphs (12 and 22). In the scenes on the cup water appears only indirectly and secondarily: the sea is implied in the description of the fisherman casting his net (39–40), but only the rock itself is actually mentioned. This *locus* belongs primarily to earth and dry land rather than to water. As the poem once more moves farther from reality in the song of Daphnis' death, water too becomes less realistic, more magical. The nymphs, who appeared only briefly and obliquely in the pastoral *locus* of the beginning (12. 22) are now much in evidence (68–69. 117–118). The water of this realm is 'sacred water', *ἱερὸν ὕδωρ* (69), or 'lovely water', *καλὸν ... ὕδωρ* (118). It becomes, finally, the deadly, mysterious eddy which closes over the cowherd (139–140).

'Sacred water' partakes of the ambiguity of this mythicized natural world. As the haunt of Nymphs, it is life-giving and points back to the refreshing springs by which Thyrsis and the Goatherd sing (12. 22). But to the herdsman embattled against Aphrodite it shows its destructive side. To that ambiguity of water corresponds an ambiguity within this mythical world as a whole. Aphrodite's 'secret laughter' and 'heavy anger' (95–96) may be playful, as Zuntz has convincingly argued<sup>15</sup>. Yet to cross the powers of love is dangerous; and Daphnis, for all the goddess' wish to 'raise him up' (139), does, in fact, perish. This tension between life and death is also hinted at in Daphnis' own scornful reference to Adonis<sup>16</sup>. Indeed, the hunting motif of 110 suggests the circumstances of Adonis' death. Since Theocritus was interested in the myth of Adonis' death and resurrection (Idyll XV), there may be a further irony in Daphnis' quarrel with Aphrodite. He taunts her with her paramour in terms which evoke the myth of Adonis' death and resurrection. Yet the herdsman who scorns the love-goddess cannot participate in the cycle of death and renewal. She cannot 'raise him up'. The 'sacred water' shows only its destructive power.

To the three geographical realms of the poem correspond three levels of art. The least 'real' is the most emotionally intense and involving. The song of Daphnis' sufferings is pervaded by a rhetoric and pathos that set a lofty and artificial tone,

<sup>14</sup> See below n. 18.

<sup>15</sup> G. Zuntz, *Theocritus I*. 95f., CQ, N.S. 10 (1960) 37–40, whom most recent critics accept.

For the earlier literature see Ott (above n. 1) 124–125 with n. 358.

<sup>16</sup> Ott (above n. 1) 116–117 points out the contrast between Anchises and Adonis here.

far from 'realistic' representation (cf. 66–69. 80–86. 132–136). The procession of gods and pastoral figures, the dialogue between Daphnis and Aphrodite, the apostrophe to the Nymphs all serve to keep the narrative on a plane of remote, self-conscious mythicity. Of this atmosphere Daphnis' mysterious death by water is an integral part.

There is obviously a strong contrast between the fresh setting of the bucolic *locus amoenus* in the first part of the Idyll (1–23) and the mythical world of Daphnis at the end. This contrast, in turn, creates an ironic interplay between the serious and the playful, between gaiety and sorrow. The rustic gods, Priapus and the Nymphs, who occur in the bucolic frame in close association with water (12. 21–22, and cf. Pan in 3), recur, more dolefully, in the lament for Daphnis, where they again stand in close association with water (66–69. 81–83). The song of Daphnis, in fact, ends with Nymphs as it began with Nymphs (66 and 141). The symmetry is reinforced by the recurrence of the important word, 'stream' (ῥόον) in 68 and 140; and we may also recall the related *καταρρεῖ* of the opening (5). Springs, though remote and mythical, recur in the bucolic frame that ends the Idyll (150), thus reminding us once more of the happier aqueous setting which enframes Daphnis' death. The rivers and springs which earlier invited the rustics to song (cf. 2. 8. 22) are now incorporated into the sorrows of Daphnis: they are a part of the strange, fleeting landscape of his tormented love (cf. 83). He himself bids farewell to 'Arethusa and the rivers that pour (their) lovely water down the Thybris' (117–118). If one were to seek a specific stream for Daphnis' death, as some interpreters have done, one would be tempted to look for it in the vicinity of these rivers<sup>17</sup>. What is significant, however, is precisely the fact that the 'stream' where Daphnis perishes is nameless. It is thus set apart from the 'great stream' (μέγαν ῥόον) of the Anapus or the 'sacred water' of the Acis in 68–69. Its reality stands on an entirely different plane; it is not of the sort to be verified on the map.

The contrast between Daphnis and the rest of the rustic world develops on several different levels<sup>18</sup>. It is clearest if we compare the scene on the cup. The playful 'love' there (*eros*, 37) becomes the frustrated and doomed 'love' of Daphnis (*eros*: 78. 85. 93. 97. 104. 130). The teasing 'laughter' (36) of the flirtatious woman on the cup becomes the hidden, mocking 'laughter' of the love-goddess herself (95–96). To one embroiled in the complexities of love (cf. *δύσεργως*, 85) the 'sweet' goddess can be 'bitter' (cf. 93 and 95), and her laughter can have a sinister or at best an ambiguous quality (96)<sup>19</sup>.

<sup>17</sup> So in fact Ogilvie (above n. 1) 109. His suggestion of a plunge «from the mountain into water» (p. 110) has little support either from *Id.* I or from Callim. *Epigram* XXII which he adduces.

<sup>18</sup> Both Lawall (above n. 1) 30–31 and Ott (above n. 1) 132–137 have sensitive observations on these contrasts, but neither develops the antitheses as far as the material permits nor relates them to the settings and the symbolism of the poem as fully as I seek to do here.

<sup>19</sup> See above n. 15

The goatherd's plea for a song from Thyrsis ends with a playful and conventional reference to Hades: 'Come, my friend, for you won't keep your song for Hades who brings forgetfulness' (πόταγ', ὠγαθέ· τὰν γὰρ αἰοιδάν | οὐ τί πα εἰς Ἄϊδαν γε τὸν ἐκλελάθοντα φυλαξεῖς, 62–63). In Daphnis' lament, however, Hades is far more ominous (cf. 103. 130), and in both of these passages it is connected with Eros. In Daphnis' world of tragic emotions, death and love go together, as they have for tragic lovers of all times. On the cup the labors of love are only mock-serious: love is treated here with the humorous exaggeration attaching to the amours of country bumpkins, as the ponderous rhythms of 38 make clear: *δηθὰ κυλοιδιόωντες ἐτώσια μοχθίζοντι*.

The motif of 'sweetness' forms an even stronger link between the bucolic frame, the cup, and the story of Daphnis<sup>20</sup>. The rustics enjoy the 'sweet' sounds of springs, rustling trees, and song (1–2. 7). The cup has been 'washed with sweet wax' (27). Thyrsis introduces the Daphnis song with a reference back to this sweet singing (65); and the Goatherd's praise in the closing frame sounds the motif for one final time, even more sensually and exuberantly than before, in the comparisons to honey and figs (146–148). But within the episode of Daphnis sweetness occurs only in the ambiguous laughter of Aphrodite (95). Instead, the cowherd 'fulfils bitter love' (*ἄννε πικρὸν ἔρωτα*, 93). Here too love and death are closely associated through the symmetry of the line and the repeated verb 'fulfilled' (93): *ἄννε πικρὸν ἔρωτα, καὶ ἐς τέλος ἄννε μοίρας*. In the bucolic frame the Goatherd had warned of the possible 'bitterness' of Pan (16–17). But rustics can avoid the dangerous aspects of their god as Daphnis cannot avoid the dangers of 'bitter Eros'.

The rustics' respect for Pan (16) contrasts with Daphnis' confident insulting of Aphrodite (100ff.). In the rustic world of the opening section Pan is a quietly accepted presence with whom the experienced herdsman reckons as a normal part of rustic life (cf. 3. 16–18). But when Pan recurs in Daphnis' complaint, it is in more strident and emotional tones: *ὦ Πὰν Πάν* (123)<sup>21</sup>. The impassioned address and listing of his haunts in 123–126 also recalls the indignant tone of the narrator's apostrophe to the Nymphs at the very beginning of the Daphnis song (66–69). That emotionality, however, is now transferred from the narrator to the sufferer himself. Whereas the narrator, Thyrsis, addressed the absent Nymphs in terms of rivers and the 'lovely vales of Tempe' (67–69)<sup>22</sup>, Daphnis addresses the absent Pan in terms of the remote and rugged mountains of Arcadia, Lycaeus and Maena-

<sup>20</sup> Lawall (above n. 1) 18 observes that «sweetness» forms «a symbolic pattern throughout *Idyll 1*», but does not explore it in detail.

<sup>21</sup> Ott (above n. 1) observes the recurrence of Pan in 15–18 and 123–130, but says only: «Im Daphnislied, V. 123–130, tritt der Syrinxspieler Pan – auf mythischer Ebene und in pathetischerem Stil – noch einmal auf.» For Wojaczek (above n. 1) 37 Daphnis' address to Pan is «ein Höhepunkt des Liedes», but he makes the invocation subserve his Orphic-Dionysiac thesis.

<sup>22</sup> Thyrsis, however, also mentions the Pindus (67) and 'the peak of Aetna' (69), though without emphasizing the mountainous landscape as Daphnis does in 124–126.

lus (124–126)<sup>23</sup>. It is as if Daphnis is blind to the gentler features of his world and little cognizant of its gentler divinities, despite their good will toward him (141).

Love and death, laughter, bitterness and sweetness thus occur in all three sections of the poem. This contraposto of emotional tones concentrates heavily on water. The mysterious 'eddy' washes over Daphnis (ἐκλυσσε δίνα 140). But the cup, where love and laughter are facile and happy, is 'washed with sweet wax' (κεκλυσμένον ἀδεί κηρῶ, 27). The contrasts of sweetness and water here fuse. The verb κλύζειν is not common. Theocritus uses it in these two passages and nowhere else.

In one sense the scenes on the cup and the story of Daphnis stand on the same level: both are enclosed within an artificial frame and both are incorporated into the larger rustic world within which Thyrsis and the Goatherd pasture their flock, meet, and sing. Through this frame Theocritus self-consciously juxtaposes ecphrastic art and narrative art. The one is static, distanced, ironical, unemotional<sup>24</sup>. The other is full of movement, emotionally tense, pathetic. The contrast between the two kinds of narrative and between the two landscapes corresponds also to the contrast between the two aspects of the motif of water: the refreshing, inviting water of the bucolic frame and the destructive, mysterious water of Daphnis' deadly 'stream'; the fatal 'washing over' of Daphnis (140) and the figurative 'washing' of the cup with 'sweet wax' (27).

On the cup the natural world is joyful. The twisting ivy 'rejoices' in its yellow fruit (ἀγαλλομένα, 31). The boy carved on it 'takes joy' (γαθεῖ, 54) in his plaiting. In the Daphnis episode nature's vital processes are inverted 'since Daphnis dies' (132–135). The word 'dies' (θνάσκει, 135) follows immediately upon the description of these inversions of normal growth. It echoes the only other direct, non-metaphorical reference to death, the beasts' lament over Daphnis 'dead' (θανόντα) in 71–72. Beginning and end of the song are thus, once more, drawn together. Nature's sympathy for the dying poet frames the tale, but there is an added pathos in the contrast between the drier, more objectively (though still rhetorically) conveyed sympathy of 71–72 and the victim's own cry, with all its hyperboles, in 132–136. The difference is analogous to that between 66–69 and 123–126 discussed above. It is a difference similar also to that between the rustics' third-person talk of Pan in 16–18 and Daphnis repeated invocation, 'O Pan, Pan ...' in 123–126.

<sup>23</sup> The old controversy about the existence of an Arcadian bucolic poetry (maintained by Reitzenstein) does not concern us here: see P. Legrand, *Étude sur Théocrite*, Bibl. des Ecoles françaises d'Athènes et de Rome 79 (Paris 1898) 207ff.

<sup>24</sup> C. Gallavotti, *Le coppe istoriate di Teocrito e di Virgilio*, Parola del Passato 21 (1966) 421, is right to insist on the «animated quality of the scenes on the cup and their spirit of observation». Yet the fact remains that, relative to the story of Daphnis, which has a beginning, a middle, and an end, the scenes on the cup are static. This point is well appreciated by Lawall (above n. 1) 27. 30 and by Ott (above n. 1) 133–135 with further literature on p. 135 n. 394.



Feeling becomes more intense as we draw closer to the dying man and enter into his emotional life. The rhetorical exaggerations of 132–135 depict for a lingering moment that last glimmer of poetic power and still living consciousness which struggle against this fate and protest its bitterness. We draw near to Daphnis and participate sympathetically in his fate, however, only to draw apart again to a more distanced relationship. The refrain, 'Cease, Muses, come cease the bucolic song' (137), follows immediately upon Daphnis' hyperboles and in its stylized repetition removes us once more from Daphnis' turbid emotionality. The half-line, 'So speaking Daphnis ended' (χὼ μὲν τόσσ' εἰπὼν ἀπεπαύσατο, 138), marks the conclusion both of Daphnis' speech and Daphnis' life. The verb ἀπεπαύσατο of 138 has a restrained pathos very different from the wild, unreal pathos of Daphnis' rhetoric<sup>25</sup>. Its calm, fading note and its unadorned factuality, helped by the evocation of Homeric style in this formal closure, seal the reality of his death and closes the tension between emotionality and objectivity.

The inversions of nature's growth in 132–136 form the climax as well as the conclusion of Daphnis' lament. The verb 'dies' (135) and the inversion of nature prepare for the actual death of Daphnis and place it in a larger perspective, a cosmic alternation of life and death. Aphrodite's wish to 'raise up' the dying cowherd continues the antithesis between life and death, and the destructive water completes it, for it recalls the joyful waters earlier (cf. 1–8. 22. 27), especially as the Nymphs are mentioned immediately (140; cf. 12. 22).

The closing words of Thyrsis, framing the song of Daphnis, now extend to the realm of art that contrast between death and the life-giving forces of nature. Thyrsis makes a libation to the Muses (σπείσω, 144). This joyful liquid image follows the deadly water of 140. Success balances failure. The Muses who could not help Daphnis, dear to them though he was (140–141), will, presumably, be propitious to this other rustic singer.

This passage reflects still other contrasts between Thyrsis and Daphnis. 'Farewell' (χαίρετ'), Thyrsis addresses the Muses, 'and I will sing to you later too (καὶ ἐς ὅσπερον) still more sweetly' (145). 'Farewell' (χαίρεθ'), Daphnis called to the wild beasts, 'for I, Daphnis the cowherd, would exist for you no longer (οὐκέτ') in the woods' (116). The sharp contrast between the two statements opposes continuity and finality, hope and despair. For Daphnis there is no 'later' (145), only 'no longer' (116). Thyrsis will 'sing again' (145), whereas Daphnis has 'stopped' (ἀπεπαύσατο, 138) forever. The motif of sweetness then recurs (ἄδιον, 145), in contrast to Daphnis' 'bitter' love (93). In the Goatherd's reply sweetness returns, as we have noted (148), but it is now conjoined with 'fulness'. The two occurrences of 'sweet' (ἄδιον and ἀδείαν, 145. 148) enframe the word 'full' (πληῆρες repeated) at the beginning of both lines 146 and 147: sweet – full, full – sweet is the pat-

<sup>25</sup> In *Id.* VII 90 ἀπεπαύσατο is used merely to mark the end of a song, without the pathetic ambiguity of *Id.* I 138. For the defence of the reading ἀπεπαύσατο (instead of ἀνεπαύσατο in some Mss.) see Gow ad loc.



tern. The prayer for 'fulness' adds to the contrast of sweet and bitter a contrast between the emptiness of Daphnis 'wasting away' (*τάκεσθαι*, 66. 82. 88. 91) and the joyful 'fulness' of honey and figs. Since these images describe the mouth, i.e. the song, of Thyrsis, the contrasts also embrace the realm of art: they suggest an antithesis between the joyfulness of the singer who belongs to the bucolic frame and the sad plaints of Daphnis within the song. This singer's only utterances are taunting or doleful. The happy exuberance of Thyrsis is like that of the cup (cf. *ἀγαλλομένα*, 31). His art may embrace sorrow and frustration, but in itself it is sweet and joyful. Its very inclusiveness is, like the gaily encompassing ivy of 31, a source of joy. Thyrsis is not touched by the sorrow of his song. One might compare also the intentness of the boy who 'takes such joy in his plaiting' that he is untouched by the loss of his grapes and his lunch (53–54).

As the dialogue of the two rustics at the end leads back to the bucolic frame of the beginning (142–145 and 4–11), so the motif of the cup recurs, again with liquid imagery (149–150): 'How fine it smells. You would say it was washed in the springs of the Seasons'. The Seasons (Horai) are divinities associated with the life-giving processes of nature. In Idyll XV they lead the risen Adonis from the grave (XV 102–105). Only here, apparently, are they associated with springs of water. Theocritus may have intended a fusion between the Nymphs and the Seasons, both connected with nature's vitality. In any case these springs of 150 connect the cup with the bucolic frame where, as we have seen, springs have a prominent place (1–8. 21–22). Over against these life-giving springs stand the springs where Daphnis' abandoned girl sought him ('by all the springs', *πάσας ἀνὰ κρήνας*, 83) and, of course, the water where he dies. The repeated verb, *κλύζειν*, as already noted, sharpens the contrast (27 and 140).

It may be amusing to have a goatherd so appreciative of lovely scent (149). Elsewhere Theocritus is not above explicitness as to the odoriferous side of this rustic calling (cf. V 52 and VII 16)<sup>26</sup>. But the Goatherd of Idyll I is in touch with many levels of nature's beauty and vitality. It is his he-goat, aroused, who closes the poem (151–152). Earlier Priapus, reproaching Daphnis for the neglect of his girl, compares him to a goatherd who 'wastes away in his eyes' with envy for his lascivious goats (87–88). Daphnis' neglect of love here parallels his removal from the life-energies of the world which surrounds him. The rutting billy at the end unites that antithesis with the other sections of the poem, the cup and the rustic dialogue.

The contrast implied in 150–152 operates on two planes simultaneously, a higher and a lower, or a poetical and a more prosaic. On the higher and more poetical plane, the mythological 'springs of the Seasons' contrast with the deadly waters of Daphnis' stream. On the lower plane the contrast is earthier and more rustic: the vitality of the eager goats contrasts with the death of the love-lorn herdsman. This separation into a higher and lower level is, in one sense, artificial, for Theo-

<sup>26</sup> On the «realism» of *Id.* VII 16 see Serrao (above n. 9) 14–15.

critus means us to see the mythological element of the Seasons' springs and the naturalistic element of the goats as binary aspects of the same thing, opposite, simultaneous perspectives upon the same terrain. Hence Thyrsis' first gesture as possessor of the cup is to pour a libation of milk to the Muses (143–144). The libation is itself connected with the fruitfulness of his companion's herds and thus with the rhythms and bounty of the natural world. At the same time, he has to milk the goat before he can perform the libation (143–144):

καὶ τὸ δίδου τὰν αἶγα τό τε σκόφος, ὥς κεν ἀμέλξας  
σπείσω ταῖς Μοῖσαις.

The practical necessities of the situation resume the realism of the rustic frame of the beginning (cf. ἀμέλγειν in 6 and 25 ~ 143. 151).

Goats enable Thyrsis to make his libation to the Muses, but for Daphnis they reflect another dimension of Aphrodite's victory. The simple, instinctive loves of rutting goats outlast and mock the emotional complexities of a human lover who is δύσερως (85)<sup>27</sup>. In struggling against Aphrodite (for whatever reason), Daphnis alienates himself from a crucial aspect of that very world from which he, as a rustic singer, draws his strength. He is dear to the Nymphs, who are rustic deities associated with the vitality of nature and the life-giving qualities of water. Even the Muses who love him (141) have a place in the rustic setting amid talk of lambs and sacrificial beasts (9–11). Rejecting love, cut off from his ties to the life-giving powers of nature and the life-giving waters of its springs, Daphnis cannot be resurrected (139). It is the he-goat who will 'rise up', the last word in the poem (ἀναστῆ, 152). The Idyll closes on an earthy note, a basic sexual vitality which, however, closely parallels the more metaphorical, 'higher' image of that vitality in the springs of the Seasons.

The two levels, high and low, poetical and 'realistic', unite harmoniously in the image of a libation of goats' milk for the Muses, poured from a cup that belongs to the rustic world (αἰπολικὸν θάγμα, 56), but is yet adorned with elaborately carved scenes. Keeping in mind the antitheses between Daphnis and the other herdsmen, we may contrast the gaiety of this 'wonder for shepherds' of which the Goatherd speaks (56) with Daphnis' tomb of Arcas which is 'admired even by the blessed gods' (τὸ καὶ μακάρεσσιν ἀγητόν, 126). The one speaks of shepherds, the other of gods; the one of a cup, the other of a tomb. Daphnis' horizons are larger, reaching from his native Sicily to far-away Arcadia, from the rustic world to gods and learned mythologies. Yet his subjects are grimmer, his tone sadder.

Water is a unifying symbol of whatever is alive and vital in this pastoral world. It is a symbol both of the life-giving aspects of nature and of the vital energies on

<sup>27</sup> Both Schmidt (above n. 1) 549ff. and Williams (above n. 1) 122–123 have argued that δύσερως means suffering from the difficulties and especially from an excess of love and therefore militates against the «Hippolytus» theory of Daphnis' death.

which the poet draws. Springs of water invite the rustics to song (1–8. 22)<sup>28</sup>, and an elaborate work of art is, figuratively, washed in the springs of the goddesses who guide nature's movements through the year (150). Yet the powers of nature can be dangerous: Pan can be 'bitter' (17), and water can bring death as well as life. It is men who determine on which side of these powers they will stand. Daphnis insults Aphrodite as 'hateful to mortals', *θνατοῖσιν ἀπεχθής* (101). But he may be taking too one-sided a view. At his death he is called 'not hateful to the Nymphs' (*τὸν οὐ Νύμφαισιν ἀπεχθῆ*, 141). He has forced upon the deities of the natural world an enmity which is not necessarily theirs. Aphrodite herself would 'raise him up' (139). Her laughter is playful, her 'wrath' (*θυμός*, 96) only pretence. But Daphnis takes both very seriously and colors them with his own embittered emotionality<sup>29</sup>.

### III

Approaching the poem in these terms may help us to understand the vexed question of why Daphnis dies. Interpreters have adduced evidence from Theocritus' text to support the view that he is following the traditional, Sicilian version: Daphnis has vowed fidelity to a Nymph, is unfaithful to her, and is consequently punished with blindness or, possibly, death<sup>30</sup>. The *κώρα* of Priapus' speech (82) could be the girl with whom Daphnis is unfaithful. His 'wasting away in the eyes' (*τάκε(τ)αι ὀφθαλμῶς*, 88 and 91) could allude to his blindness. The Nymph of his oath might be one of the 'maidens' at whose laughter, according to Priapus, Daphnis 'wastes away in his eyes' (90–91)<sup>31</sup>. Yet, to dwell on this last passage for a moment, it is hard to see why Theocritus speaks of 'maidens': Nymphs are not usually *parthenoi*, nor, according to the legend, did Daphnis love more than one.

It is certainly possible that the details mentioned above *may* be an allusion to the traditional myth. One fact about them, however, is curious. They all occur in Priapus' speech and not elsewhere in the song about Daphnis. Possibly Priapus' interpretation of Daphnis' plight reflects that divinity's characteristic preoccupations, but not necessarily the truth, since that interpretation receives no clear objective confirmation elsewhere in the poem. Outside of Priapus' speech, nothing

<sup>28</sup> Cf. Callim. *Hymn to Apollo* 111–112 and A. Kambylis, *Die Dichterweihe und ihre Symbolik*, *Bibl. d. klass. Altertumswiss.* 2 (Heidelberg 1965) 23–30. 44.

<sup>29</sup> Of the Nymphs here Wilamowitz, *Daphnis*, *Reden und Vorträge I*<sup>4</sup> (Berlin 1925) 268, remarked, «... sie repräsentieren die elementare Natur, und diese hat für die Entsagung kein Verständnis, die ja der Natur zuwiderläuft.» Lawall (above n. 1) 25–26 maintains the opposite, that Daphnis remains in harmony with nature and does so through his chastity: «By retaining his chastity, he remains faithful to nature, wild animals, woods, and streams» (p. 25).

<sup>30</sup> For the legend, see above n. 5.

<sup>31</sup> So Ogilvie and Williams (above n. 1). Legrand (above n. 23) 145–148 advances a rather fanciful explanation of Daphnis' suffering: he does not requite a maiden's love, she asks Aphrodite for help, and the goddess makes Daphnis waste away with a hopeless passion. As an argument against Daphnis' chastity, however, he observes, as have others, the fact that Aphrodite is still sympathetic to him (p. 147).

else in the song of Thyrsis is inconsistent with the view, accepted by many interpreters, that Daphnis dies because he resists love in order to remain chaste, like Hippolytus. Yet it must be admitted that nothing firmly supports that view either<sup>32</sup>. If Daphnis is dying because of his resistance to love rather than because of an excessive indulgence in it or excessive desire, Priapus would hardly be the god to understand that<sup>33</sup>.

If Theocritus is aware of the traditional version and is referring to it, obliquely and teasingly, in the passages cited above, he has nevertheless so transformed it within his own narrative as to make its familiar content virtually unrecognizable. Even Ogilvie, the staunchest recent defender of the view that Theocritus follows the traditional myth, has to confess that the poet «has veiled the whole story in a cloak of allusive obscurity»<sup>34</sup>.

Such a distortion of the myth in a poet as learned and sophisticated as Theocritus cannot but be intentional. The effect of departing from the received legend while subtly hinting at it, as Priapus' speech seems to do, forces the reader to explore further. The very *mystery* of Daphnis' end may be the most essential element in the poem. Whether Daphnis dies for chastity or is paying the price of his amorous infidelity, the essential fact remains that within the narrative which the poem itself provides, Daphnis feels himself at odds with Aphrodite. The fact that she remains well-disposed toward him (139) does not alter *his* sense of bitterness toward her<sup>35</sup>. He has some sort of difficulty with love (*δύσχεως*, 85) and is wrestled to a fall by Eros (98), whom he himself hoped to throw (97) and hurt even in Hades (103)<sup>36</sup>. As a result of this struggle with Eros he is 'wasting away', and his weakened state involves a waning and inversion of nature's vitality (cf. 87–88. 132–136). The language of resurrection and erection in 139 and 152 and the allusion to Adonis in 109 also suggest that Theocritus means us to bring Daphnis' death into relation with the cycles of death and resurrection in vegetation myths, though such a possibility does not entitle us to interpret Daphnis himself simply as a vegetation god as nature-mythicists of the nineteenth century did<sup>37</sup>.

As in Idyll III, Theocritus is playing upon a mythical archetype in a complex

<sup>32</sup> Ogilvie (above n. 1) 106–107 and Schmidt (above n. 1) 540–541, who survey the scholarship on this point, trace the view of Daphnis' chastity back to Gebauer in 1856.

<sup>33</sup> Williams (above n. 1) 122 points out the «jeering» and «offensive» tone of Priapus in 81–91. See also the good remarks of J.-H. Kühn, *Die Thalysien Theokrits* (*id.* 7), *Hermes* 86 (1958) 58 on Priapus' inability to understand Daphnis.

<sup>34</sup> Ogilvie (above n. 1) 108. See also Prescott (above n. 2) 140.

<sup>35</sup> This point is overlooked by those who, like Legrand (above n. 23) 147, stress Aphrodite's good will toward Daphnis as evidence against his being a chaste, Hippolytus-like figure.

<sup>36</sup> Schmidt (above n. 1) 549–550 thus lays insufficient stress on the conflict between Aphrodite and Daphnis and does not really account for the bitterness of Daphnis' reply to the goddess or for his wish to be a *kakon algos* to Eros even in Hades (103).

<sup>37</sup> e.g. K. F. Hermann, *Disputatio de Daphnide Theocriti* (Göttingen 1853) 19–20. See also Prescott, CQ (above n. 6) 178.



and allusive way<sup>38</sup>. The waters of death close over the living singer (cf. 128–129) whose tensions between Nymph and maiden are left unresolved, whereas the waters of life bathe the cup (150), whose gaily entwining ivy (31) encloses playful love, work, growth, childhood, maturity, and old age, in a calm balance and tranquillity. In more condensed form, the antithesis is between the 'stream' of death which closes over Daphnis and the 'springs of the Seasons' which wash the cup, object of enduring beauty and the prize of happy singers.

The Idyll's self-conscious juxtaposition of different levels of fiction and of the different modes of language appropriate to each level (rustic conversation – cup – rustic song – rustic conversation) suggest that the poem is as much about art as it is about love. As the 'washing' of the cup (27) and its 'springs' (150) contrast with the 'washing' of Daphnis and his 'stream' (140), so the happy rustic singer, Thyrsis, contrasts with the tragic rustic singer, Daphnis. Daphnis' pipe has 'breath like honey' (μελίπνονν, 128) and so, in the Goatherd's wish, Thyrsis' mouth should be 'full of honey' (πληρὲς τοι μέλιτος, 146)<sup>39</sup>. But within the poem Daphnis himself does not sing. Since he is 'dear to the Muses' (141), he is, presumably, a singer of considerable talent, as Theocritus suggests elsewhere too<sup>40</sup>. But the only time there is mention of his art, it is in pathetic farewell: Daphnis consigns his honey-voiced pipe to Pan, for he is being dragged down to Hades by Eros (128 to 130):

ἐνθ' ὧναξ, καὶ τάνδε φέρει πακτοῖο μελίπνονν  
ἐκ κηρῶ σύριγγα καλὸν περὶ χεῖλος ἐλικτάν·  
ἧ γὰρ ἐγὼν ὑπ' Ἔρωτος ἐς Αἶδαν ἔλκομαι ἤδη.

His art stands under the shadow of the fate engulfing him. It too is overshadowed by death. Hence his 'wasting away in his eyes' when he sees the maidens and cannot dance with them may be due not so much to erotic desire, as Priapus seems to think (90–91), as to the frustration of his artist's desire to pipe and sing. Thyrsis, on the other hand, in happy relation with his world and its divinities, blooms in his singing and wins the prize, itself a symbol of art's joyful and fruitful comprehensiveness. The 'real' singer, Thyrsis, stands in close and harmonious relation to the exuberance of nature's rhythms. The mythical singer, Daphnis, stands apart from them. Dragged to Hades by Eros (130), he must abandon his pipe. His fate enacts a tragic union of art and death.

As an interpreter of the primal experiences of love and death, the poet-singer-rustic stands in a special relation to the mysterious vital energies of nature. This relation is presented as opposing, but complementary extremes in the antithesis

<sup>38</sup> See my essay, *Adonis and Aphrodite: Theocritus, Idyll III 48*, *Ant. Class.* 38 (1969) 82–88.

<sup>39</sup> Note also the repeated motif of wax in 27 and 129, where there is another contrast of happiness and sadness.

<sup>40</sup> *Id.* V 80–81, 'the bard Daphnis', loved by the Muses. See also ps.-Theocr., *Id.* VIII 92–93 and Diod. 4, 84, 3, who makes Daphnis the inventor of bucolic song. See also Prescott (above n. 2) 132.



between Daphnis and Thyrsis. Yet this polarity is, in turn, only a part of the larger antithetical structure of the Idyll. On the one side stands the death of the bucolic singer whom Aphrodite cannot 'raise up'. On the other stands the 'rising up' of the happy singer's he-goats in a beautiful pastoral *locus*, an expression par excellence of untrammelled access to creative energy in its most basic form. As a singer, Daphnis is loved both by the Muses and the Nymphs (141), and there is a pathos and irony in the fact that he dies in the element which both symbolizes life and is associated throughout the poem with the divinities who love him (22. 66-69)<sup>41</sup>.

Water throughout the poem mediates between art and nature and between life and death. The water of Daphnis' geographically wider world is dangerous, whereas the water associated with art, both in the rustics' pastoral locale and in the springs of the Seasons, is life-giving and benign. Sweetness, springs of water, and symbols of art (song and cup) span the arc of the whole poem. The Idyll opens with Thyrsis' comparison of his companion's song to the whispering of the pine 'by the springs' (1-3). The Goatherd develops the comparison, moving from the implicit, paratactic comparison of 1-3 to explicit and hypotactic comparison: 'Sweeter your song, O shepherd, than that water which flows down from the rock high above' (7-8):

ἄδιον, ὦ ποιμήν, τὸ τεὸν μέλος ἢ τὸ καταχές  
τῇν' ἀπὸ τᾶς πέτρας καταλείβεται ὑπόθεν ὕδωρ.

All this sweetness and liquid imagery return in the Goatherd's compliments at the end (146-149). Yet the positive symbolism of water has become far more complex, not only in the reference to the mythological 'springs of the Seasons' in the Goatherd's next line (150), but also in the fact that the symbolical association of water and art have been deepened by the intervening elements, the cup 'washed' in sweet wax and Daphnis 'washed over' by the deadly stream. Song (art, poetry) is seen to stand in a more complex relation to those springs from which it draws its life and its images of beauty.

The rustics' comparison of song to whispering trees and flowing water in the opening lines makes nature itself songful: it sings, as it were, in response to the sweetness of the rustics' music. But over against this sympathetic relation between nature and song and between the happy rustics and their natural world stands the discordant relation of Daphnis. Not only does water cause his death; not only does he invert nature's rhythms of growth in his closing lines (132-136); but also, in the very last of those lines – and therefore in his last utterance in the poem – he envisages the defeat of song. This defeat is part of the topsy-turviness of his embittered view of nature: 'And from the mountains owls would chatter to the nightingales' (κῆξ ὄρεων τοὶ σκῶπες ἀηδόσι γαρούσαιντο, 136). The owls do

<sup>41</sup> On the ambiguity of Daphnis' relation with the Nymphs see above n. 29. The litotes of 141 may also hint at this ambiguous relation.

not merely 'vie with nighthingales', the more common *topos*, but, it would seem, disturb their music<sup>42</sup>. The more raucous sounds of the rustic world drown out its sweeter notes. These owls come 'from the mountains', the realm inhabited by the pastoral divinities, the Nymphs (67–69), Hermes (77, ἀπ' ὄρεος), and Pan (123, κατ' ὄρεα; also 124–126). Thyrsis too comes from Mount Aetna (65). Daphnis' image of owls and mountains in 136 not only negates the songfulness of the rustic world<sup>43</sup>, but also reverses the harmony between song and landscape established by the two herdsmen in their opening lines. They are in accord with nature's songs (1–3) and even boast of improving on them (7–8). Significantly, Daphnis' defeat of song stands in close association with his words of death and violence: the phrase 'since Daphnis dies' and an image of hunting immediately precede (Δάφνις ἐπεὶ θνάσκει, καὶ τὰς κύνας ὦλαφος ἔλκοι, 135). Aside from the brief allusion to Pan's hunting in 16, the only other reference to hunting in the poem comes in Daphnis' challenge to Aphrodite (110). There, as here, it shatters the peace of the bucolic setting and there too it is associated with death and disaster in love: the death of Adonis as he hunts the boar.

Daphnis' association of death and song also contrasts with Thyrsis and the Goatherd. They had also juxtaposed song and death, but in a playful way which, in fact, stressed enjoyment of the present and championed continuity over discontinuity<sup>44</sup>. In exhorting Thyrsis to sing, the Goatherd had teased, 'You won't keep your song in Hades who brings forgetfulness' (τὰν γὰρ αἰοιδάν | οὐ τί πα εἰς Ἀΐδαν γε τὸν ἐκλελάθοντα φυλαξεῖς, 62–63). These two passages, 62–63 and 135–136, stand at the beginning and end of the sufferings of Daphnis respectively and, like the enframing water, help focus the antitheses between Daphnis and the other parts of the Idyll.

Some of these antitheses may be set forth in the following diagram:

<i>Thyrsis and Goatherd</i>	<i>Daphnis</i>
Water and song in joyful setting (nature in harmony with man) sweetness	Death and song (136–141) (inversion of nature, 132–136) bitterness
Art and water in joyful setting (150)	Water and death (139–140)
Fulness (146–147)	Wasting away (66. 82. 88. 91)
Sexual energy and exuberance (152)	Failure of the 'raising up' of Daphnis (139) Envy of rutting goats (87–88)
Nymphs' presence in a watery setting which fosters song (1–8. 21–22) (waters of life, song, vitality)	Nymphs' withdrawal to their 'streams' at Daphnis' death (66–69. 141) (waters of death)

<sup>42</sup> See Gow ad loc. for the problem of interpretation here.

<sup>43</sup> Compare also Daphnis' taunting reference to Mt. Ida in 105 and his description of mountains as the habitat of bears in 115. In *Id.* VII 87–88 and 92–93 being 'on the mountains' is part of a peaceful bucolic life of song and closeness to the Muses. Lycidas also elaborates his song 'on the mountain', VII 51. See Puelma (above n. 9) 154 n. 31.

<sup>44</sup> Cf. 116 and 144, discussed above.

## IV

As a *boukolos*, Daphnis shares the same world as Thyrsis and the Goatherd. But unlike Thyrsis and his companion, Daphnis never himself mentions either the Muses or the Nymphs. He invokes the rivers, as he invokes Pan, only to bid farewell (117–118. 123–129). In Thyrsis' song both wild and domestic creatures mourn Daphnis' plight (71–75), the latter at his feet (74–75). Yet in Daphnis' own utterances, only wild and unproductive animals are addressed: wolves, jackals, bears in their mountain caves (115–116). Though Thyrsis makes the mountains inhabited by Nymphs (67) and by Hermes (77), Daphnis places there not just Pan (123), but also the bears (115), the rude-voiced owls (136), and the sad myths of Callisto and Arcas (125–126). These passages, taken together with Daphnis' inversion of nature in 131–136, depict a certain removal from what is life-giving and gentle in his world, what the goats, the Nymphs, Aphrodite all share.

Daphnis' 'bitterness' (cf. 93) calls out the potential 'bitterness' of Pan (cf. 16) and destroys the 'sweetness' of the rustic world which enframes his suffering (cf. 1–2. 7–8. 65. 95. 145–148). The phrase *καὶ ἃ πῖνυς* of the poem's very first line recurs, in the identical metrical position, in Daphnis' doleful inversion of nature in 134 *καὶ ἃ πῖνυς ὄχνας ἐνέλκαι*. In his upside-down perspective the songful pine of the happy rustics must now bear an alien fruit. The springs where rustics sing (1–2. 21–22) become, through Daphnis, the place of a foresaken maiden's wanderings (*πάσας ἀνὰ κρήνας*, 83). The mountains visited by gods and Nymphs (67. 77. 105) are for him the place from which owls come to defeat the songful nightingale (136). The lovely trees which Thyrsis and the Goatherd admire for shade and sound become an item in Daphnis' taunt of Aphrodite (106ff. and cf. *δρυές* in 23 and 106). 'Pasturing' itself figures here in scornful tones (*ρομεύει*, 109; cf. *ρομευσῶ*, 14). Whereas Thyrsis and the Goatherd found the natural sounds of their setting an invitation to song and an occasion for compliments (1–8), Daphnis uses these sounds mockingly. In a lovely line he describes the pleasing buzz of bees around their hives (*αἶ δὲ καλὸν βομβεῦντι ποτὶ σμάνεσσι μέλισσαι*, 107), a common motif in the bucolic *locus amoenus*<sup>45</sup>. But the resonant beauty of the line is at variance with Daphnis' embittered tone. His irony destroys the very beauty which his words create. The tone is totally different from the rustics' simple, un-ironical, grateful acceptance of their world and their ingenuous belief in and respect for its gods (cf. 16–18). Their matter-of-fact caution in their talk of Pan in these lines (16–18) differs also from the emotionality and rhetoric of Daphnis' death-burdened invocation to Pan (123–130), where, in fact, a tomb enters into his sweep over Pan's Arcadia (*αἰπύ τε σᾶμα*, 125).

Daphnis' taunting of Aphrodite is his boldest challenge to the spirit of life and sexual energy from which he is alienated. This challenge itself threatens to burst the limits of the pastoral world. Daphnis invokes epic battle scenes in heroic language (112–113):

<sup>45</sup> See V 46; VII 81 and 142; XXII 42. Also [VIII] 45–46, *A.P.* 9, 564 (Nikias).

αὔτις ὅπως στασῇ Διομήδεος ἄσσον ἰοῖσα,  
καὶ λέγε «τὸν βούταν νικῶ Δάφνιν, ἀλλὰ μάχεν μοι».

Both stylistically and thematically these two verses sound a note discordant with pastoral peace and pastoral song. Epic language (cf. ἄσσον ἰοῖσα, 112)<sup>46</sup> and the call of battle (ἀλλὰ μάχεν μοι, 113) reveal a spirit at variance with the happy limits of style and setting accepted by Thyrsis and the Goatherd. The *hybris* of this challenge to Aphrodite finds expression in a corresponding *hybris* of style (112)<sup>47</sup>. In both cases this is also the *hybris* of art (or one view of art) against nature.

The 'springs of the Seasons' and the rutting goats of the end assert the victory of nature's powers, self-contained and indifferent, over the fevered emotionality of the mortal who defies them. Yet these lines also affirm a more positive vitality, accessible to those less recalcitrant, less violent singers who know the ways of goats, but can also speak of mythological life-giving springs. Daphnis may die, but other, happier dwellers in this rustic world remain to inherit the whispering pines by the spring and the rill dripping down from its high rock. Their songs can incorporate the 'sorrows of Daphnis' (19); but they themselves go beyond this suffering, death-bent pathos in a more inclusive and more affirmative vision of the relation between art and nature, fiction and reality. So the cup, also a symbol of art, contains scenes of frustration, toil, imminent damage to crops and food; yet in its totality it remains joyful (31) and retains associations with sweetness (27) and life-giving water (150).

This contrast between the death of the embittered individual and the continuity and creative life of art may also be reflected in the juxtaposition of *Μοιρᾶν* and *Μοῖσαις* in identical metrical positions in the last two lines of Thyrsis' song (140–141). 'Fates' and 'Muses', death and poetry are thus counterposed. A coincidence of this nature is unlikely in a poet as conscious of repetition and sound as Theocritus, and the antithesis seems too deeply related to the main themes of the Idyll to be accidental. In the only other place in the Idyll where *moira* occurs, 'Muses' also follow immediately in the next line, this time in the refrain (93–94). The Muses to whom Thyrsis and the Goatherd offer sacrifices and libations (9–11. 143–145) foster life and profit from the herd's increase; but they can be only helpless bystanders of Daphnis' death (141).

Daphnis' isolation, as Lawall has rightly remarked, has an heroic stamp. Like an Homeric hero, he challenges the gods and with his death he calls into question the entire order of the natural world: 'Let *everything* (πάντα) be upside down since Daphnis dies' (134–135). At his death 'all' the rustic herdsmen ask after him (πάντες, 81), and Priapus speaks of the girl, forlorn on his account, wandering among 'all the springs, all the groves' (πάσας ἀνὰ κράνας, πάντ' ἄλσεα, 83). 'Do you

<sup>46</sup> Cf. *Il.* 15, 105 and 22, 92.

<sup>47</sup> Note too Daphnis' recondite and unhappy myths in his invocation to Pan in 125–126. Such a tone is very different from the rustic level on which Thyrsis and the Goatherd speak of Pan in 15–18.



think that my every sun (πάνθ' ἄλιον, 102) has set?' Daphnis mockingly charges Aphrodite. Adonis, he says, 'hunts all wild beasts' (θηρία πάντα, 110). His death brings a tragic dimension into a realm which tends to pull away from such sufferings into either rustic realism or mythical fantasy. Hence it is a momentous event in the pastoral world. It shows the pastoral poet seeking to connect his art with the prior traditions of Greek tragic and heroic poetry. Even this fanciful and artificial framework deals, after its fashion, with the facts of suffering, loss, isolation. Daphnis' sufferings, nevertheless, are framed by the talk of rustic herdsmen, enclosed within a song with a stylized refrain, and juxtaposed with the self-conscious *ekphrasis* on the cup. Thus they are also kept at a certain distance. Daphnis is not merely a sufferer, but also a singer, the archetypal pastoral singer. According to Diodorus (4, 84, 3) he was called simply Boukolos and invented bucolic song. All the inhabitants of the pastoral world, therefore – animals, rustics, deities, even Pan himself – are implicated in his death and asked to share his grief.

If through the enframing theme of the cup Theocritus is exploring the capacity of his art to encompass, with pathos and sympathy, the lighter losses of life and to touch disappointment with a gentle and humorous irony, through the Daphnis song he explores these disappointments in greater depth and in a darker tonality. Daphnis' death is a statement of an eternal and tragic conflict, not only between will and instinct, but also between art and nature<sup>48</sup>. The calm beauty of the pastoral frame can encompass both sides: harmony with nature and discord; playful and tragic love; happy and tormented rustics; realistically beautiful springs and the ominous, archetypal stream of death.

Through his careful handling of structure, allusion, and pathos Theocritus has enabled the transformed myth of Daphnis to say even more to us. Art – poetry, song, the carving on the cup – is both in touch with the vital energies of goats, winding ivy, melodious springs and at the same time is removed from them in a tragic assertion of autonomy. Metaphorically speaking, it draws its strength from the 'springs of the Seasons', and yet it may also defy the gods of love and meet death in the element associated with creativity and refreshment. Hence Theocritus uses the ancient Homeric and Hesiodic metaphor equating the sweetness of song and the sweetness of running water (7–8). But the 'bitterness' of unfulfilled love (93) brings a union of song and death (128–130. 135–136). The 'sacred water' of kindly Nymphs (cf. 69. 141) becomes ultimately the water of death (140). The ambiguity of water corresponds to an ambiguity in art itself: art's participation in a life-giving and beautiful natural world on the one hand (cf. 1–8. 21–22) and its union with death as an aspect of its *hybris* in rejecting the 'natural' on the other hand.

In one sense Theocritus' Daphnis is descended from the mythical heroes who

<sup>48</sup> The statement by Kühn (above n. 33) 58 is, therefore, only partially valid when he speaks of «Daphnis, der von Liebesleidenschaft erfüllt ist, aber seiner Strebung den Trotz des Willens entgegensetzt» and of «der Zwiespalt zwischen Geistwillen und Triebnatur».



assert the independence of their emotional or spiritual life over against the busy, happy natural rhythms surrounding them, an independence which can only be tragic. The line runs from Homer's Achilles to Sophocles' Antigone and Electra, from Euripides' Hippolytus and Pentheus to Virgil's Orpheus<sup>49</sup>. Such heroism, like all heroism, is not at home in pastoral, and so Daphnis' motives remain obscure. His death, therefore, partakes more of the pathetic than of the tragic.

Unlike the heroic personages mentioned above, Daphnis does not die for any larger commitment or any clearly defined spiritual purpose. Inviting as this hypothesis is, there is not a word in the poem that tells us clearly that he dies for the sake of preserving chastity. That he dies out of a quarrel with Aphrodite and Eros is clear, but the basis of that quarrel is not revealed. We cannot assert with certainty that, like Virgil's Orpheus in the Fourth Georgic, he resists physical love in the name of some higher devotion to sentiment or to art. We are not even sure that he dies, *δύσεως* (85), out of an excess or out of a deficiency of desire. It is rather the poignancy of his obscure death and the contrast of that death with the rest of his pastoral world that are important. The very mystery of his end heightens this poignancy. He is simply a rustic singer doomed to die. That is how he appears to us, a figure laden with the lugubrious burden of a destiny which is given, unexplained, a fixed, unchangeable fact. It is like the mysterious fate of figures in the mythical background of the Iliad and the Odyssey: Bellerophon in Iliad VI or Niobe in Iliad XXIV or the daughters of Pandareus in Odyssey XX. And in the very fixity and factuality of his fate, Daphnis is also an unchanging symbol for an aspect of art. Hence the poem emphasizes less his personality *per se* than the world of mythicized, sympathetic or mysterious nature and divinity which surrounds him and survives him.

As Daphnis is a symbol of only one aspect of art, so the world he creates about him reflects only one aspect of reality. Its mournful, elegiac coloring and the negative, destructive force of its water belong to that side of art which does violence to nature and stands apart from it in its own autonomy and pride. On the other side stand the happier singers and the easy, melodious, exuberant generosity of their pastoral environment (1-28. 146-152). Viewing the 'sorrows of Daphnis' as a self-contained narrative cannot clarify the mystery of his death, no matter how hard we scrutinize the text of 66-141 as an isolated unit. Neither Daphnis nor the world he occupies *can* stand by itself. That is in part the meaning of Thyrsis' song. Each is part of a dialectic, of which the happier rustics, the cup, the frisky goats, the whispering pines, the singing waters form the other side.

Without the awareness of this polarity within Theocritus' art not only Idyll I, but other Idylls as well remain unintelligible. The Seventh Idyll, which Gow found «an enigmatic masterpiece», its problem «unsolved»<sup>50</sup>, becomes fully meaningful only in terms of the antitheses between its two main figures, their setting,

<sup>49</sup> Lawall (above n. 1) 20 and *passim*.

<sup>50</sup> Gow, CQ 34 (1940) 50. Cf. Kühn (above, n. 33) 64 with n. 2.

character, style<sup>51</sup>. The contrast between Thyrsis and Daphnis, cup and inset song, expresses an aspect of the same dialectic that binds together Lycidas and Simichidas in VII, Corydon and Battus in IV, Lacon and Comatas in V, Milo and Bucaeus in X: a dialectic between sentiment and factuality, between hopeless passion and the continuities of work, between dreamlike aspiration and practical acceptance, between imagination and reality. These tensions in the fictions and the characters of the Idylls represent tensions both within the inner world of the poet and within the outer world of the human condition as the poet grasps it and can render his vision accessible to others.

Seen in this perspective, Daphnis is not an isolated personality in Theocritus. His affinities lie with figures like the sentimental goatherd of III, Battus of IV, Bucaeus of X. These characters are wrapped up entirely in their own emotions and distort reality in their tendency to color events with their own projected personalities and passions. Daphnis shares in their melancholy and their penchant for invoking death. In his case, however, this death-bent sentimentality reaches tragic dimensions and takes on universal proportions. Daphnis the singer exemplifies a view of art which weaves its stuff almost entirely out of the emotional world of the artist and thus runs the risk of losing touch with reality. The antidote to it is the practical realism and resiliency of a Thyrsis (I), or a Corydon (IV), or a Milo (X), who see life with a down-to-earth precision and celebrate the 'real' beauty before them rather than search for a beauty not given in the world as it is.

This aspiration toward the impossible, toward 'what is absent', *τὰ ἀπείρτα*, in the terms of Idyll X (8), is an element in the melancholy of Daphnis. On the one hand this unhappiness with the world as it is may be a divine discontent which leads the poet to harken to a music within him finer than that which whispering pines or plashing springs can create. On the other hand it can also constitute a removal from reality in a negative sense, an inwardness which feeds upon and destroys the healthy capacity to enjoy life as we find it.

Even before the artificial and sophisticated Alexandrian literary circles which Theocritus knew, the poet in Greek society had ceased to occupy the clearly defined social and public position of a Tyrtaeus, a Solon, an Aeschylus. The poet's world becomes more inward, self-conscious, self-reflective. Thus he inevitably becomes aware of his ambiguous relation to reality. Indeed, from Euripides on, he is persistently engaged in the task of questioning just what 'reality' is.

For all his apparent earthiness and simplicity, Theocritus is heir to this tradi-

<sup>51</sup> See especially Kühn (above n. 33) *passim*. For a recent critical survey of the scholarship on *Id.* VII see Serrao (above n. 9) 13–68. Serrao himself accepts some elements of this dialectical interpretation (see especially pp. 41ff. and 59ff.). On the whole, however, he treats the two songs in terms of complementarity rather than polarity and in terms of moral rather than aesthetic considerations. Though he excellently observes the complex blending of realistic detail and idealization in the characters of the poem (pp. 26–28), he tends at the end to oversimplify Theocritus' tension between reality and imagination and to fall back on the traditional view of bucolic escapism (pp. 66–68 with n. 113).

tion of poetic self-examination and exploration of the roots of his art. The first Idyll, as we have seen, develops a series of ramifying divisions between the celebration of life and the dark longing for death, between loves that are open and exuberant and loves that are obscure and doomed. The artist mediates between these two realms, between outer and inner, between joyous participation in the present and exploration of the hidden and unknown realms that most men cannot or dare not enter, between continuity in a public world and an 'irresponsibility' that scorns companions and demands a fierce independence. A modern artist and thinker who has pondered art's ambivalence between life and death may shed some light on Theocritus:

«Nowhere so clearly as here does one see how virtue and morality are the task of life, a categorical imperative, a command on the part of life, whereas all aestheticism is of a pessimistic and orgiastic nature, that is, belongs to death. It is only all too certain that all art has this inclination, tends to the abyss. But art, despite the interconnection of death and beauty, is yet wonderfully bound to life and contains its own antidotes. Love of life and welcoming of life (*Lebensfreundlichkeit*, *Lebensgutwilligkeit*) form one of the artist's basic instincts ... The artist, it seems to me, is truly and literally the (ironic!) mediator between the worlds of Death and Life.» (Thomas Mann, «Über die Ehe».)

Here, to be sure, we are venturing beyond Theocritus' text, yet not so far as might at first seem, for Theocritus has recast an ancient myth of a doomed poet into a form which expresses universal antitheses in the nature of art. These antitheses are no less gripping and no more resolvable in our day than they were in the third century B.C., for they are fundamental to the condition of a being who, over and above his physical needs, possesses consciousness, yearnings, imagination and thus has the ambiguous capacity to make himself unhappy for no good reason. The perception of such discrepancies between reality and imagination, outer and inner worlds, may permit a comic or even grotesque view of the human condition, as expressed in the Goatherd of III or the Cyclops of VI or XI. But these discrepancies also have tragic implications, and these Theocritus develops in the tale of Daphnis in Idyll I.

Through the polarities between Daphnis and Thyrsis, as through those between the pairs of the other Idylls, Theocritus also expresses his recognition that the creative power of his art flows from a tension of opposites, from the ability of the poet to acknowledge a profound cleavage within the nature of reality<sup>52</sup>. The poet spans the abyss between the two worlds as with a fine wire, and, like Pope's spider, «lives along the line».

<sup>52</sup> For this aspect of Theocritus' art see Lawall (above n. 1) 13. 101. 105–108; Kühn (above n. 33) 57–61 and 66–69. Yet one must be careful not to focus the issue too narrowly or to limit it solely to questions of expression of personality. See my review of Lawall, *CJ* 63 (1968) 227–228 and my remarks in *Theocritean Criticism and the Interpretation of the Fourth Idyll*, *Ramus* I 1 (1971) 1–25. See also Luck's criticism of Kühn (above n. 9) 187 and J. Van Sickle, *Poetica teocritea*, Quad. Urbin. 9 (1970) 71ff.

In Idyll I, accordingly, Daphnis is not a whole figure, a complete personality whose motives can be analyzed in depth. As a figure in a narrative he has, to be sure, his individual pathos which wins our involvement in the sad and elusive beauty of his story. But, like the contrasting waters of the poem, he is also a symbolical element within a larger frame. And in this larger frame the sadness of his mysterious end finds its appropriate foil and response in Thyrsis' joyful libations and the Goatherd's lively flock.

These goats and springs frame Daphnis' sufferings at either end of the poem just as elms, oaks, Priapus and sacred springs framed the first reference to 'the sorrows of Daphnis' (19) at the beginning (21-23). Each side needs the other to anchor it to the wholeness of reality. And each stands in a perpetual oscillation with the other. Between the two poles vibrates the wide field of possible attitudes to life, to art, and to nature, from the acceptant to the aggressive, from rustic contentment to heroic restlessness, from self-effacing modesty (note that the Goatherd is nameless)<sup>53</sup> to self-assertive individualism, from the bucolic to the epic style. All of the antitheses together are implicit in each one of them individually, and they all overlap. Thus they are all contained symbolically in the contrast between Thyrsis' springs on the one hand and the mysterious eddy which closes over Daphnis on the other. In their complex totality and interrelatedness only symbol can hold them all simultaneously. In this sense too Theocritus' poem, with its inset of cup and song and its heavily articulated enframing motifs, provides its own key to the meaning of Daphnis' death.

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<sup>53</sup> For a different view of the Goatherd's anonymity see Ott (above n. 1) 136-137.