THEOCRITUS’ USE OF DAPHNIS AS A POETIC SYMBOL

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Dedication

PARENTIBUS CARISSIMIS
LINDAE ET CAROLO,
NEC NON ET PRAECEPTORIBUS
SAPIENTISSIMIS
KIRKULI ET TATIANAE
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ABSTRACT:

This thesis examines Theocritus’ use of the mythic herdsman Daphnis in *Idylls* 1 and 7 and compares the accounts there with accounts of similar figures such as Adonis, Attis, and Osiris in other ancient authors. I focus especially on Daphnis’ associations with death and resurrection and with honey, which I argue functions for Theocritus as an emblem of the immortalizing powers of poetry.
CHAPTER ONE: THE DAPHNIS STORY IN THEOCRITUS AND OTHER SOURCES

Two accounts of the herdsman Daphnis exist within Theocritus' *Idylls*, the first in the very first *Idyll* of the collection, in which Daphnis is the subject of a lengthy song sung by the shepherd Thyrsis which takes up nearly half of the poem, and the second, much shorter, though in some ways clearer, in *Idyll 7*. In this chapter, I will summarize and situate these accounts within their respective poems and discuss the other ancient accounts of Daphnis which shed light on the accounts in Theocritus.

*Idyll 7* is narrated in first person by Simichidas, who tells of a journey he and his friends Eukritos and Amyntas took from Cos into the countryside for a festival of Demeter. During their journey they encounter the goatherd Lycidas, whom Simichidas challenges to a singing contest. Lycidas begins by singing a song about his unrequited love for Ageanax, while nonetheless wishing Ageanax a safe voyage to Mitylene. Lycidas tells his listener he will go home and drink to Ageanax's good health and safe voyage, and that Tityrus the cowherd will sing him a song about another man who was in love, Daphnis the cowherd:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{ο̌ δε̌ Τίτυρος̌ ἐγγύθεν ἀσεί̌}
\text{ω̌ς̌ πόκα̌ τα̌ς̌ Ξενέας̌ ἱράσασα̌ το̌ Δάφνις̌ ὁ̌ βούτας̌̌,}
\text{χω̌ς̌ ὄρος̌ ἀμμεπονεῖ̌ το̌ καὶ̌ ω̌ς̌ δρύς̌̌ αὐτό̌ν̌ ἐθρήνε̌υ̌ν.}
\end{align*}
\]

(72-74)\(^1\)

And Tityrus will sing nearby how Daphnis the cowherd was once enamored of Xenea, and how the mountain grieved over him and the oaks wept for him.

The scholiast to the passage tells us that Xenea was a nymph of the mountains, but leaves

\(^1\) All citations to Theocritus are to *Theocritus: A Selection*, ed. Richard Hunter, Cambridge University Press, 1999.
it unclear just why the mountain and the oaks wept over Daphnis. Lycidas at least gives us a hint in the next lines that Daphnis’ affliction was caused by his love for the nymph, whether because it was unrequited or because it was filled with conflict: Daphnis

εὐτε χιων ὧς τις καταγέτο μακρόν ὑφ’ Αἴμον, "was melting like a snow which melts beneath great Mount Haemus" (7. 76). Evangelia Anagnostou-Laoutides and David Konstan (2008:497) have noted the implications of Theocritus’ use of forms of τίκω in describing Daphnis’ affliction: given the association of the word and its related adjective τακερός, "melting," to refer to erotic melting away in Alcman, they argue that Theocritus is painting Daphnis as melting away from a specifically erotic affliction, connected with his love of Xenea.

The first Idyll opens with a dialogue of an unnamed goatherd and the shepherd Thyrsis. The goatherd praises Thyrsis for his melodious pastoral syrinx-playing underneath the pines beside a nearby waterfall. He asks him to sing the pains of Daphnis in exchange for a carved cup and a female goat. The carved cup, as Halperin (1983: 163) has noted, functions as an image of poetry itself. The goat is a logically pastoral prize: for a rural herdsman, a goat would have been of great value for its milk and its meat. Thyrsis obliges him and begins to sing. His song deals for the most part with the wasting away of Daphnis and the lament of the beasts and nature over him, though his being in love is mentioned several times: Hermes appears first, asking him who is wearing him down and of whom he is so greatly enamored (77-78, τὶς τὺ κατρύχει; τίνος, ὡγαθε, τόσον ἔρασαι;). Priapus nexts appears and asks him why he is melting (82, τί τυ τάκεσαι;); as we have seen, this language of melting implies ἔρως. Priapus then tells him that an unnamed girl (κώρα) is wandering about the wilderness
searching for him (82-85). The identity of this girl is left completely unclear: she can be presumed to be Xenea, though, as the accounts outside of Theocritus tell us many other women than Xenea sought to sleep with him, it may be another woman. According to Diodorus, Aelian and Parthenius, Daphnis was sought by many women other than the nymph with whom he first made love, and because she bound him under oath not to have sex with any other woman but he was then tricked into doing so while drunk, she punished him. That this pact with Xenea not to associate with other women is what Theocritus has in mind here finds support in verses 90-91, where Priapus speaks to Daphnis. He says that Daphnis melts with love whenever he sees the girls of the countryside dancing, but he himself is not able to dance with them (90-91), implying that Daphnis is restrained from doing so by his pact with Xenea.

Aphrodite, goddess of erotic love, appears to Daphnis next, and we are told she was secretly laughing at him: she taunts him, saying that while he had boasted that he would overthrow Eros, he has instead been overthrown by the god (97-98). Just what this means — especially his boast to overthrow Eros — is unclear in this context, but Daphnis responds to Aphrodite by taunting her back that he "will be a harsh pain to Eros even in Hades" (Δάφνις κην Ἀίδα κακὸν ἔσεται ἀλγος Ἐρωτι, 103). He is not yet in Hades, but is looking ahead to his death at the end of the Idyll. He means here that he will continue to resist Aphrodite even after death. He then reminds her of the number of

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2 Bibliotheca 4. 84. All citations to Diodorus are to Diodori Bibliotheca Historica, ed. Friedrich Vogel, Stuttgart, Teubner, 1985.
3 Varia Historia 10. 18. All citations to Aelian are to Aeliani Varia Historia, ed. Rudolf Hercher, Stuttgart, Teubner, 1866.
mortal lovers she had, mentioning first her famed affair with the Trojan prince and
cowherd Anchises\(^5\) and her affair with Adonis,\(^6\) and finally her perhaps even more
shameful wounding at the hands of Diomede during the Trojan War.\(^7\) He tells her to go
challenge Diomede again by saying that she is conquering Daphnis the cowherd. This
challenge is an insult to her precisely because, unlike Daphnis, Diomede had physically
harm to her: Daphnis is telling her to go get wounded again, basically. In the next lines
(115-121), Daphnis bids the bears of the mountains and other beasts farewell: he is aware
he is already being dragged down to Hades, as we learn at 130, but first he consigns his
syrinx to Pan (128-129). Pan is naturally associated with the world of pastoral poetry:
being part man and part goat, he is a fitting emblem of the countryside, and his invention
of the syrinx makes him a master of the music of the countryside.\(^8\) Lines 132-136 tell of
Daphnis asking for a number of impossible things to happen at his death: brambles
should bear violets, the land should change into the sea, pines should sprout pears, "since
Daphnis is dying" (135-136, Δάφνις ἐπεὶ τὸνόςκει).

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\(^5\) Homeric Hymn 5 to Aphrodite 164-167. All citations of the Homeric Hymns and Iliad

\(^6\) Apollodorus Bibliotheca 3.14.4. describes Adonis’ birth from a myrrh tree (his
mother Smyrna was punished for her incest with her father by being transformed
into said tree) and Aphrodite’s love for him, which lead to conflict with Persephone.
Aphrodite enclosed him in a larnax box and handed it over to Persephone for her to
keep, but Persephone fell in love with him and refused to return him to Aphrodite. I
discuss the parallel myth of Daphnis’ enclosure in a larnax box in the chapters
below. All citations to Apollodorus are to Mythographi Graeci, vol. 1, ed. Richard

\(^7\) Iliad 5. 334-337.

\(^8\) Vergil, Eclogue 2. 32-33, makes the association of him both with the syrinx and
with herdsmen quite nicely: Pan primum calamos cera coniungere pluris / instituit,
Pan curat ovis oviumque magistros, "Pan was the one to invent joining multiple reeds
together with wax, Pan cares for sheep and for the masters of sheep." All citations
Daphnis finally reaches his end in the next stanza, where his own words break off: *χῶ μὲν τόσσ’ εἶπὼν ἀπεπαύσατο, “having said so much, he ceased. “ Aphrodite, though portrayed as an adversary of Daphnis throughout the poem, wishes to lift him up (ἀνορθῶσαι, 139). This is because his death would actually prevent her from torturing him any longer. Dover, taking the view of later authors that Daphnis had vowed to be true to Xenea but Aphrodite was attempting to pull him away from her, explains, "if he dies, it is a hollow victory for Aphrodite, for he will have kept his vow; that is why she wants to save his life, hoping that he may yet surrender" (1971: 92). We are then simply told that Daphnis "went to the stream" (140, *χῶ Δάφνις ἔβα ῥόου), which has been interpreted from the time of the scholiast down to the most recent scholarship (Hunter 1999: 105; Laoutides 2005: 193) as a reference to his going to the underworld river Acheron at death. The song breaks off and Thyrsis receives the promised cup and goat from the goatherd.

So much do we learn of Daphnis from the *Idylls*. In the post-Theocritean sources for the myth we have much fuller accounts, which I will now analyze to throw light on Theocritus' poetry.

Diodorus Siculus in his *Bibliotheca Historica* gives us the longest account of the life of Daphnis, one filled with interesting details which suggest that Daphnis is largely a vegetation and poetry demigod. According to *Bibliotheca* 4.84 there was a grove in the inland Heraean mountains of Sicily, near Syracuse, very abundant in great oaks, grapevines and apples, as well as exceedingly thick laurel trees. It was here that Daphnis was born, and received his name from the thickness of the laurel in the area (ἀπὸ τῆς πυκνότητος τῆς Δάφνης), δάφνη being the most likely root of Δάφνις. He
was raised by nymphs, and on account of the abundant flocks of oxen which he tended
gained the appellation of θουκόλος, "cowherd." While tending his flocks he would play
the syrinx, at which he had great skill, and while doing so he invented bucolic poetry and
song. He was also a hunter and helped Artemis in the chase, entertaining her and her
virgin nymphs with his syrinx-playing, for which cause he was most dear to her. One of
her nymphs fell in love with him and forbid him to sleep with any other woman, under
pain of losing his eyesight should he transgress. Evidently he kept this promise until
a king's daughter made him drunk and slept with him, whereupon he was blinded in
retribution for this trespass, just as the nymph had foretold.

While we have not seen all of these details in Theocritus' own account, the
story solves several mysteries in Idyll 1. If Daphnis had sworn love and fidelity to Xenea,
Aphrodite is against him not because he is against erotic love, as might be the case if
Daphnis in Idyll 1 were an analogue of Hippolytus, chaste devotee of Artemis, but
because he had sworn faithful love for one woman. Because of his pact with Xenea, he
must resist the power which Aphrodite exercises through other women who attempt to
seduce him. This explains why Daphnis melts when looking at the dancing girls because
he cannot dance with them: being bound under threat of being blinded to love only one
nymph, he is not even allowed to dance with the girls.

Aelian gives us a similar account in his Varia Historia 10. 18, with a few details
added and some from Diodorus' account missing. Daphnis was either the son or the
beloved (ἐρωμενος) of Hermes and of a nymph, who exposed him at birth in a laurel
tree, whence his name. Diodorus left out the detail of his exposure, though as I show in
the next chapter it is an important hint at Daphnis' possible origin as a syncretized
Adonis, Adonis having also been exposed after being born from a tree, just as Daphnis was placed in a tree after his birth here. Aelian then tells us that he tended cattle which were the sisters of the cattle of the sun, and that while doing so he was seen by a Sicilian nymph, who became enamored of him, slept with him, and forbade him under pain of blinding to sleep with any other woman, just as in Diodorus. Likewise the story has the same tragic ending it did there: a princess makes him drunk, sleeps with him, and he is blinded, though Aelian gives us the extra detail that after being blinded Daphnis invented bucolic poetry, with his blinding being the subject of his first bucolic poems, none of which survive.

Parthenius of Nicea tells us the same basic story in *Narrationes Amatoriae* 29: Daphnis was the son of Hermes, an excellent player of the syrinx, and very beautiful. He rarely went into civilized areas, but tended his cattle on the mountains both by summer and by winter. A nymph, this time called Echinais rather than Xenea, fell in love with him and ordered him not to have sex with any other woman, saying that he would be blinded if he did so. Parthenius, however, goes on to emphasize that he resisted any erotic advances from the many women who fell in love with him. As in the two accounts I already discussed, Daphnis' story ends predictably with his being made drunk by a princess and then losing his eyesight for his infidelity.

The extra emphasis given to Daphnis' strong resistance to other women in this account links *Idyll* 1 with what I have already recounted from Diodorus: if these accounts indeed are giving details of the story which are absent in Theocritus, it makes sense that Daphnis is afflicted by love there: Aphrodite is attempting to make him break his vow of fidelity to Xenea/Echinais by having other women make advances to him, but by resisting
for a time he angers Aphrodite further. In *Idyll* 1, as we saw, Daphnis is successful in resisting, though the κόρα, clearly a parallel to the princess in these accounts, runs all about searching for him (*Id.* 1. 82-85). In Theocritus, he evidently dies before his resistance is broken: as we saw, he tells Aphrodite there that he will resist even in Hades, and shortly after we are told that he indeed did "go to the stream" of death, with no mention of him actually having an amorous encounter with anyone other than Xenea.

In these later accounts, he instead breaks his vow, and is thus punished.

Servius⁹ gives us our last major account which elucidates this story. Commenting on *Eclogue* 5. 20, where Vergil introduces his own version of Daphnis, he tells us that Daphnis was born from a nymph who was raped (*compressa*) by Mercury. She exposed the child after giving birth (*enixa abiecit*), but he was found by shepherds amid the laurels and given the name Daphnis. Though Servius does not tell us explicitly that it was because he was found among laurel trees that he was given this name, he strongly implies it by including the details in the same sentence. He then tells us that Pan, to whom we earlier saw Daphnis consigning his syrinx, at the end of *Idyll* 1, taught Daphnis the art of music, and he became most skilled at it. He was also very skilled at hunting, a detail which differs from the account that he was a cowherd, but nonetheless still associates him with the wilderness or the countryside. Because of his skills in these two pursuits he was beloved by a nymph; just as in every other account he requites the love but must swear fidelity to her, though here she does not warn him beforehand that his punishment for infidelity will be loss of sight. Servius then tells us that while Daphnis

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was following oxen he came to a court, where a princess seduced him and slept with him, though nothing is said of her having made him drunk. The mention of the oxen is a clear tie back to Theocritus and the other authors whose accounts I have discussed, which makes it clear that this is in essence the exact same Daphnis because he too is connected with livestock; the Daphnis in all the other accounts was a herdsman, if not specifically a cowherd. When the nymph hears of his transgression she blinds him, but he cries out in his pain to his father, Mercury, who assumes him into heaven and causes a spring to arise in Sicily in his place, which Servius claims remained a site of great sanctity for the Sicilians even in his day, with annual sacrifices to Daphnis being offered there. The fountain itself was even called Daphnis, whether his spirit was thought to lurk there in some fashion or simply because it was sacred to him.

While the last details of Servius' account differ from the previous accounts, Daphnis' assumption into heaven nearly presents him as a demigod of the same stature as Heracles. Furthermore, the detail that the Sicilians sacrificed to Daphnis at a fountain referred to by his name shows that he was given divine stature. While each of the accounts I have discussed come from the centuries immediately following Theocritus' own account, we have seen that much that is unclear in the *Idylls* can be clarified if we read these authors, and if, as Servius says, Daphnis had an actual cult in Sicily that was active even in the fourth century, it is likely that Theocritus bases his account of Daphnis on ancient stories passed down in Sicily, rather than simply inventing things.

Finally, Ovid makes two succinct yet important mentions of Daphnis. *Metamorphoses*\(^{10}\) 4 opens with a group of Theban sisters who, spurning the newly

\(^{10}\) All citations to the *Metamorphoses* are to *Ovid's Metamorphoses, Books 6-10* ed. William S. Anderson, Norman, Oklahoma University Press, 1972.
arrived Bacchus, choose instead to spend their time telling each other stories while weaving. It is when the girl Alcithoe begins her story that she tells us briefly a story of Daphnis in a short praeteritio: she will not sing "common love stories" of the "Idaean shepherd Daphnis, whom the wrath of a harlot nymph turned into a stone" ("vulgatos taceo," dixit, pastoris amores / Daphnidis Idaei, quem nymphae paelicis ira / contulit in saxum, 276-278). She follows this by a sententia: "So great is the sorrow which burns lovers" (tantus dolor urit amantes, 278). That Ovid has Alcithoe call these stories vulgatos implies that they were common in antiquity, and that Daphnis, whether through Theocritus or other sources now lost to us, had attained archetypal significance as a languishing lover. His transformation into a rock seems to be parallel to his transformation into a spring, though Servius himself in fact writes on Eclogue 8.68 that others related that Daphnis was transformed into a spring, although he may in fact be borrowing the detail from Ovid rather than from Ovid's source. The second mention of Daphnis in the Ovidian corpus is found in the Ars Amatoria, where we are told, in a description of the languishment which comes about from lovesickness, that pallidus in lenta Naide Daphnis erat (1.732), "Daphnis was pale for a lazy nymph," an obvious reference to the original story in Theocritus of him wasting away from love.

In summary, the story of Daphnis in Theocritus is clarified if we take into account that these other authors tell us he was bound to be faithful to the nymph with whom he first made love, but was sought by other women: this explains his wasting away in Idylls 1 and 7 as erotic wasting for women other than Xenea. Aphrodite's

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11 This citation to the Ars Amatoria is to P. Ovidi Nasonis Amores, Medicamina Faciei Femineae, Ars Amatoria, Remedia Amoris, ed. E.J. Kenney, Oxford, Claredon Press, 1994.
vindictive attitude towards him is not given any clear cause, but the manner in which she is trying to destroy him would seem to be through having him break his vow of fidelity: even though in Parthenius he eventually does succumb to the temptations of other women, in Theocritus it would seem that he does not, and rather goes to death still resisting, or perhaps even kills himself. Finally, his connection with the laurel tree in these later authors is a very important detail which does not appear in Theocritus, though as I show in chapter 2 from parallels between Daphnis and Attis, and Adonis and Osiris, it reveals important things about what Daphnis symbolizes within the Theocritean corpus.
CHAPTER TWO: PARALLELS WITH ATTIS, ADONIS AND OSIRIS

To summarize chapter 1: Daphnis was presented in Theocritus as a cowherd suffering from an erotic affliction and eventually died in connection with it; he was mourned over by all of nature. In the authors after Theocritus, he was said to have been born and placed into a laurel tree, or found amongst laurels when his mother exposed him; and it was from the laurel that he took his name. Furthermore, he was assumed into the heavens in some accounts, and thereafter divine honors were given to him in sacrifices in Sicily at a spring called Daphnis. In this chapter, I explore the parallels these details of the Daphnis story have with the myths of Attis, Adonis and Osiris, three major near eastern divinities of death, resurrection and vegetation. The connections that Adonis and Osiris have with the funerary larnax box will support my arguments in chapter 3, that Daphnis should be viewed as a vegetation demigod and symbol of poetic creativity and resurrection because, like other vegetative divinities, he was enclosed in a larnax and restored to life.

The myth of Attis takes a number of diverse, and sometimes contradictory, forms in Greek and Latin texts, but the four most important for the present purpose are in Pausanias, Diodorus Siculus, Ovid, and Servius as they are closest in time to Theocritus; I include Firmicus Maternus' later account as it also gives interesting details concerning Attis' cult, though these may be late in origin or slanted by Firmicus' goal as a Christian polemicist of discreditting paganism.

Pausanias, giving an account of a temple to Attis and Cybele built by the Dymaeans in book 7.17. 8-11 of his Graeciae Descriptio,\textsuperscript{12} tells us a strange and

\textsuperscript{12} All citations to Pausanias' Graeciae Descriptio are to Pausaniae Graeciae Descriptio, ed. Friedrich Spiro, Leipzig, Teubner, 1903.
monstrous story of how Attis came into being and became so dear to Cybele. Zeus had a nocturnal emission one night, and when his semen fell to earth it produced a terrible monster named Agdistis, who had both male and female genitalia. The gods were reasonably terrified of this strange hermaphroditic monster, and, lest he rape any of them, cut off his male members, which then fell to the ground and produced an almond tree bearing beautiful fruit. Just as in the Daphnis story, a tree is of importance in this myth. A daughter of the local river-god Sangarios took the fruit and placed it in her bosom, and it mysteriously vanished, whereupon she discovered she was pregnant. When she gave birth she exposed the child, just as Daphnis' mother exposed him in some accounts. The child was found raised by a he-goat; much as in the myths about Daphnis investigated in the last chapter, there is a consistent connection between Attis and both vegetation and livestock. Like Daphnis, Attis grew up to be a very handsome youth, and in an oddly incestuous manner given Attis' birth from the almond produced from Agdistis' genitals, Agdistis fell in love with him. We are told next that Attis was sent by his relatives to marry the daughter of the king of Pessinus, but as the wedding was taking place Agdistis appeared to Attis and both Attis and the king of Pessinus went mad and castrated themselves. We are then told Agdistis repented of what he had done to Attis upon seeing the boy dead. In his regret, however, he prevailed upon Zeus to grant that no part of Attis' body rot or decay. This final detail should remind us of Daphnis' assumption into the heavens brought about by Hermes, whom we have seen referred to as either the father or the lover of Daphnis, just as Agdistis is in some way both the father and the lover of Attis. Likewise, as I will show below in my discussion of Adonis, Osiris, and the larnax in which Daphnis was enclosed, there is a consistent connection between gods or heroes
connected with the vegetation and death and resurrection. Servius, in his commentary on *Aeneid* 9. 116, where Turnus tries to burn the Trojan ships which were built from pines from a grove on Mount Ida which was sacred to Cybele, tells us why Cybele was connected with the pine tree. Attis, he writes, was a young man of outstanding beauty, and was in charge of the sacred mysteries of Cybele. When a king, enflamed with lust for the youth, attempted to rape Attis, he fled into the woods. This was to no avail, for his pursuer chased him, but, just as the king was at the point of raping Attis, the youth castrated the king. The would-be rapist had his revenge by doing the same to Attis, and the boy died of the wound; he and his genitalia were, however, found by the servants of Cybele beneath a pine tree where this terrible incident happened. They brought Attis and his the genitals back to the temple of Cybele and tried to revive the youth, but in vain, whereupon they buried him. Lest the boy's memory die, Cybele instituted yearly ceremonies to commemorate Attis, and consecrated the pine tree beneath which he had been found dead to her cult. She also made it a requirement afterwards that all her priests, known as Galli, castrate themselves in his memory.

The pine tree should remind us of the connection we have seen between Daphnis and the laurel tree, and the rape here also recalls the girl of *Idyll* 1 frantically searching for Daphnis, and the princess who assails him while drunk in the other accounts, though here the assailant is another male instead of a princess.

Diodorus Siculus tells us in *Bibliotheca* 3.58-59 that Cybele was the daughter of an ancient king of Phrygian named Meon and his wife Dindyme. Meon did not wish to rear the girl, so he exposed her on Mount Cybelus. This should remind us of the similar detail of Daphnis' exposure which we have seen in Aelian. She was not, however,
neglected by the animals, who immediately began to suckle her and raise her of their own accord. She was then found by local peasant women who named her Cybele after the mountain. As she grew up, she showed exceptional skill at music and invented the syrinx as well as the kettle-drum. This recalls Daphnis' connections with music, especially the syrinx, both in Theocritus and in the historians. Cybele was not only skilled at music but also devised all manner of purifications from disease, and for this reason came to be honored as "the mother of the mountains." She fell in love with Attis, and became pregnant by him. At the same time king Meon recognized her at last as his daughter, but having learned of her seduction by Attis, he ordered Attis put to death and Cybele expelled. Later, however, a pestilence fell on the land. An oracle revealed that this was divine punishment for the murder of Attis and that the people of the country should bring back Cybele and institute divine worship for Attis.

_Fasti_\(^{13}\) 4. 179-241 deals with the festival of Cybele, whom Ovid does not distinguish from Rhea. In his account, the Muse Erato\(^{14}\) explains the details of the cult of Cybele to him: raucous music derives from the loud music the Corybantes and Curetes produced to keep Saturn/Kronos from hearing the cries of baby Zeus and devouring him as he had his other children (207-208), and she harnesses lions to her chariots because she tames their savagery (217-218). These details should remind us of Daphnis' connection to both music and wild animals: while syrinx-playing is far enough removed from the raucous banging of shields which the Corybantes made to protect the baby Zeus, Ovid

\(^{13}\) All citations to the _Fasti_ are to _P. Ovidi Nasonis Fastorum_, ed. Carolus Landi, Turin, Paravia, 1950.

\(^{14}\) The Muse of love poetry, perhaps chosen here as the interpreter because of the amatory concerns in the story of Attis and Cybele.
nonetheless also connects her cult with the *tibia*, a slender pipe, at 181 as he describes her festivities at Rome.

Ovid next asks the Muse why the priests of Cybele castrate themselves: ‘*unde venit* dixi, *sua *membra secandi / impetus?*’ (lines 221-222, ’’Whence came, ’ said I, ’this impulse of cutting their own members?’”). Erato replies by telling him that there was a beautiful Phrygian boy named Attis who lived in the forests and bound (*vinxit*) Cybele/Rhea with his chaste love (223-224). Here we are given an association, once more, of Attis with trees, as he inhabited the woods when he first joined with Cybele in love. The choice of the verb *vincio* is an interesting one: much as in the stories about Daphnis and the nymph, one party binds the other in love—chaste love (*casto amore*) here, implying fidelity. Erato next tells Ovid that Cybele chose Attis as her own, wanted him to be preserved for her, and made him guardian of her temples (225). Cybele evidently wants him to preserve his virginity, which clearly has not been lost through any physical lovemaking, for her. This is parallel to the pact Xenea binds Daphnis with in Diodorus *et alii*, and ends in a similarly tragic manner. Attis swears his agreement to this pact, telling her that if he breaks his oath, the love for which he breaks his faith with her is to be his last (227-228). We are then curtly informed that Attis, meeting the Naiad Sangaris, daughter of the river king Sangarius, broke his vow and "ceased to be what he had been" (*desinit esse / quod fuit*). Cybele immediately takes revenge on both parties in the affair: she cuts down a tree which was connected with the life of Sangaris (232), thereby killing her. Attis then goes mad, thinks the roof is falling (233), runs out to Mount Dindymus, and mutilates himself (237). He then cries out that he deserves this mutilation and even further punishment for his transgression, and then castrates himself
Because of this original castration all subsequent priests of Cybele, explains Erato, now castrate themselves.

Fontenrose has noted the parallels between Daphnis and Attis: "although more primitive, the Attis myth is very like the story of Daphnis. As Daphnis promised his nymph-mistress never to love another woman, so Attis promised the Mother not to love any woman; and both youths turned to love of a king's daughter" (1981: 212). Cybele is thus an analogue of Xenea/Echinais, as Sangaris is of the princess who makes Daphnis drunk and has sex with him. And while Ovid does not tell us of Attis' connection with the pine tree here in the *Fasti*, he includes a mention of it in his catalogue of trees in the story of Orpheus in *Metamorphoses* 10. 104-106, where a pine tree is the last of the trees following the great bard: *et succincta comas, hirsutaque vertice pinus / grata Deum matri, siquidem Cybeleius Attis / exuit hac hominem, truncoque induruit illo* ("and the hairy-headed pine with its locks bound up, beloved by the mother of the gods, since Cybelean Attis put off human form by this, and grew hard in this trunk").

The astrologer and Christian apologist against paganism Firmicus Maternus has left us more information on Attis and Cybele in his *De Errore Profanarum Religionum*, a book of Christian refutations of the teachings of classical paganism. At *De Errore* 3.3, he tells us the following about the two: the Phrygians who inhabit Pessinus in Asia Minor attribute the origin of all things to the earth, whom they refer to as the mother of all things. She was in love with Attis, as in the previous account, but he broke her faith and then was forced to castrate himself in punishment; Cybele then felt sorry for him and caused temples to be erected in his memory. He was later

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15 All citations to Firmicus are to *Iuli Firmici Materni De Errore Profanarum Religionum*, ed. Konrat Ziegler, Leipzig, Teubner, 1907.
resurrected, or so said the Phrygians. All of this, says Firmicus, is clearly an allegory of the crops and the yearly cycle of planting and harvesting: Attis is said to love Cybele, who represents the earth, because crops love being buried in the earth like a lover in the bosom of his mistress, and his castration simply represents what farmers do when they cut the crops, just as his supposed resurrection is a reference to the springing up of the seeds into shoots during the spring: *poenam autem quam sustinuit hoc volunt esse, quod falce messor maturis frugibus facit: mortem ipsius dicunt, quod semina collecta conduntur, vitam rursus, quod iacta semina annuis vicibus redduntur* ("the punishment he suffered they mean to be that which the harvester does to the mature crops with the scythe: and when they speak of his death, they speak of the collected seeds being hidden; and by his coming to life again they mean that the seeds which have been sown are brought back up in yearly turns").

We thus see that Attis was connected to vegetation not only through his transformation into a pine tree, but through a cultic identification of him with the crops. Lancelotti notes that "starting with J.G. Frazer, Attis has been interpreted as a vegetation numen, that is, a figure marked since its origin as a character connected with the natural cycle. Even though Frazer's theories are now outdated, some scholars still accept (mutatis mutandis) the connection of Attis with vegetation as the key to interpreting this whole tradition. They believe that, after his death, Attis, like other figures (Adonis, Osiris, etc.), would return to the world of the dead as required by arite connected with seasonal fertility that, precisely through his return, would be reactivated" (2003: 86). To reiterate: we have seen Daphnis also connected with a grove and with laurel trees, and the parallels between him and Attis are striking. While Daphnis may not directly be
connected to resurrection as he is to death (in *Idyll* 1 and in 7), I will show in chapter 3 that the scholiasts thought he was enclosed in a larnax, a detail which is implicit in the text of *Idyll* 7. A larnax is a type of funerary box, a fitting emblem of death, and the motif of a man or a god being enclosed in a larnax and then rescued from entrapment is, I argue, a poetic emblem of death and resurrection.

The story of Adonis likewise has several versions. The first that we must deal with occurs in Apollodorus' *Bibliotheca* and contains the important detail that Adonis was enclosed in a larnax at birth and that he is connected, like the grain, with the cycle of the seasons. The second is in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, and contains the equally important detail that Adonis was transformed into a plant at the end of his life.

Apollodorus tells us in *Bibliotheca* 3. 14. 4 that Adonis was killed while still a youth by a boar from the wrath of Artemis. He then tells us that Hesiod refers to him as the son of Phoenix (the eponymous forefather of the Phoenicians) and Alphesiboeia, while Panyasis narrates another story in which he was the son of Thias, a king of the Assyrians, and his own daughter, Smyrna. According to this latter account, Smyrna angered Aphrodite by not performing sufficient sacrifices, in result of which Aphrodite inspired her with a burning sexual love for her own father. By the help of her nurse, she deceived Thias into having sexual intercourse with her, but he then discovered that he had lain with his own daughter and, furious with her for deceiving him, pursued her with a sword. Before he could kill her, however, she prayed to the gods who, pitying Smyrna, transformed her into the myrrh tree. Ten months later, the tree burst open and Adonis was born. While he was still a baby, Aphrodite placed him into a larnax (ἐἰς λάρνακα) and gave him to Persephone, already wife of Hades in the underworld, for safekeeping.
Persephone grew enamored of him, however, and would not give him back, for which reason the goddesses convened a council with Zeus on Olympus, who settled the case by dividing the year into three sections: for one third of the year Adonis would be with Aphrodite, for another with Persephone, and for another wherever he wished. Apollodorus then tells us that Adonis chose to spend even his own section with Aphrodite; but shortly after this Adonis met death while hunting, as Apollodorus has already noted.

The birth of Adonis from a tree implies that he is, like Attis, in some way seen almost as nature personified, specifically vegetative nature. The division of the year into three parts, in one of which he is in the underworld with Persephone, is clearly an etiological myth for the seasons: Theocritus himself, as we will see, makes the connection in *Idyll* 15. 101-142, where he says Adonis returns to Aphrodite every ten months. The larnax is often a funerary box elsewhere in ancient literature: in *Iliad* 24. 795, the word is used for the cinerary box in which the remains of Hector are gathered. This connection of a vegetative god with death and burial is similar to what we just saw regarding Attis: like the grain itself, the deity is buried for a time—here given over to Persephone, who is in the underworld—but then after a time sprouts up again above the earth, just as the grain does after lying underground for a season.

The fifth century CE Latin author Macrobius has left us a wealth of allegorical interpretations of pagan mythologies in his *Saturnalia*, and he gives a very similar interpretation of Adonis, though he also connects the god with the sun. According to

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16 All citations of Macrobius are to *Macrobiii Opera Quae Supersunt*, ed. Ludwig von Jan, Leipzig, Bass, 1848.
Saturnalia 1. 20. 21, the Assyrian religion identified Adonis as the sun, and taught that the mourning of Aphrodite and Persephone for him was an allegory for the coming of winter. He likewise interpreted Attis as an allegory of the grain, which is the most likely significance of the myth.

The account of Adonis in Metamorphoses 10. 298-739 runs roughly parallel to that of Apollodorus, with the detail of the larnax and Persephone omitted and much more focus on Adonis' birth and subsequent affairs with Venus. His mother Myrrha seduced her own father while he was drunk, but upon repeatedly having intercourse with him was discovered. In his anger at his daughter's deception, her father pursued her with a sword. She fled into Arabia and was transformed into a weeping myrrh tree by the gods. The intoxication and sexual transgression in this story are paralleled once more by Daphnis' story, where he is made drunk by a princess who sleeps with him against his will, as I discussed in chapter 1.

After Myrrha's metamorphosis into a myrrh-tree, her child continues to grow beneath the bark (503), and, though pained because she no longer has a human voice and thus cannot call on Lucina, Myrrha finally gives birth to Adonis. Upon his birth he is taken up by the Naiades (stream-nymphs), who lay him on soft grass and anoint him with the tears (i.e., myrrh) of his mother (513-514). These are striking parallels with Daphnis' birth among, or exposure in, laurels. The connection with a retinue of nymphs also parallels Daphnis' connection with the nymphs of Artemis. Ovid next turns to cover the love affair of Adonis and Venus, telling us that Venus fell in love with the young demigod and left Olympus to be his mistress in the wilderness.

Adonis, as in the other accounts, was a hunter, however, and this greatly
troubled Venus, who warned him of the danger presented by lions and by boars, telling him that his age and beauty would not move these wild beasts as it had moved her (547-549). While Adonis was hunting in the woods one day, his dogs excited a wild hog, which he struck with his spear, but the boar then knocked his spear out of his hand and injured him in the thigh (710-716). Venus heard news of his death from far away, and, carried on her swan-drawn chariot, came to his aid, but too late: the wound was lethal, and his life had already fled, but she decides to institute an annual memorial of his death, and says that his blood is to be turned into a flower:

\[
\text{utque aethere vidit ab alto exanimem inque suo iactantem sanguine corpus, desiluit pariterque sinum pariterque capillos rupit et indignis percussit pectora palmis questaque cum fatis 'at non tamen omnia vestri iuris erunt,' dixit. 'luctus monimenta manebunt semper, Adoni, mei, repetitaque mortis imago annua plangoris peraget simulamina nostri; at cruor in florem mutabitur.' (721-728)}
\]

When she saw him, dead, from on high, and tossing his body about in his own blood, she leapt down and ripped her cloak fold and her hair equally, and beat her breasts with resentful hands, and, complaining to the Fates, said 'But not all shall be under your power. Memorials of my grief, o Adonis, shall always remain, and the repeated image of your death shall show annual simulations of our weeping; but your blood shall be turned into a flower.'

William Anderson notes in his commentary that this is clearly an aetiology for the Adonia, a festival in honor of Adonis, which had some type of performance that reenacted the death of Adonis, much as a Passion play does in Christianity (1972: 532). This no doubt involved a ritual lament, much like the lament given for Daphnis by the
beasts and trees in *Idyll* 1, and it may be Ovid was drawing on Hellenistic poetry for this detail. Indeed, Philip Hardie notes that "the language of repetition and imitation" in this passage "suggests intertextual repetition, allusion to Bion's *Lament for Adonis*" (2002: 69).

The actual cult of Adonis has historical details which Jennifer Larson has summarized: "The Adonis cult was an early import from the Levant, probably via Cyprus, but while many of the outward forms remained the same, its cultural context and significance changed. Adonis was modelled upon Tammuz, the consort of Ishtar whose death was annually lamented by women, and his name is a direct borrowing of the West Semitic *adon*, Lord" (2007: 124). The cult of Tammuz which she mentions here is mentioned in the Hebrew Bible in Ezekiel 8:14-16 where, much as we have seen with Adonis and Attis, the Semitic god has a ritual lament and is connected with the sun, and thus probably to the crops as well.¹⁷

The flower into which Adonis' blood in Ovid is transformed is the anemone, according to Ovid, and he notably tells us that Venus transformed it by sprinkling nectar on it, and that it had certain similarities with the pomegranate:

\[
	ext{sic fata cruorem}
\]
\[
	ext{nectare odorato sparsit, qui tinctus ab illo}
\]

¹⁷ The passage reads: "Then he brought me to the entrance to the north gate of the house of the Lord, and I saw women sitting there, mourning for Tammuz. He said to me, "Do you see this, son of man? You will see things that are even more detestable than this." He then brought me into the inner court of the house of the Lord, and there at the entrance to the temple, between the portico and the altar, were about twenty-five men. With their backs toward the temple of the Lord and their faces towards the east, they were bowing down to the sun in the east." Ezekiel's indignation against what he saw as sun-worshipping idolatry being syncretized with Judaism has thus preserved for us an invaluable account of the cult of Tammuz. Translation from the *New International Version*, International Bible Society, Colorado Springs, 2011.
intumuit sic, ut fulvo perlucida caeno
surgere bulla solet, nec plena longior hora
facta mora est, cum flos de sanguine concolor ortus,
qualem, quae lento celant sub cortice granum,
punica ferre solent; brevis est tamen usus in illo;
namque male haerentem et nimia levitate caducum
excutiunt idem, qui praestant nomina, venti.
(731-739)

Having thus spoken,
she sprinkled his blood with perfumed
nectar, which, mixed with it, swelled
just as a transparent bubble is wont to
swell in tawny mud, nor was there more than
an hour's delay when a flower arose from
the blood, of the same red color, the sort
which the pomegranates, which conceal
their seed beneath the bark, are wont to
bear: but there is only a brief use for it.
For the same winds which give it its name
shake it off, sticking poorly, and drooping
with its excessive lightness.

This metamorphosis into a flower further connects Adonis with vegetation, and most
especially with the ancient concept of the world of vegetation as the realm of death and
resurrection: plants die in the winter and rise again in the spring. The nectar may be an
image for the power of poetry, which snatches the memory of mortal things from fate
and makes it immortal. As I discuss in the next chapter, honey, like nectar, is connected
with the immortality of poetry.

The mention of the pomegranate is relevant not only because Arnobius\textsuperscript{18} has
Agdistis' genitals turn into a pomegranate tree rather than an almond as in Firmicus
Maternus, but perhaps also for the connection of the pomegranate with the story of

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{18} Adversus Nationes 5.158: "... malum repente cum pomis ex his punicum nascitur;"
"from these a pomegranate tree with fruits was suddenly born." All citations of
Arnobius are to Arnobii Adversus Nationes Libri VII, ed. August Reifferscheid,
Golders, Vienna, 1875.
\end{flushright}
Persephone being carried away into the underworld by Hades. The *Homeric Hymn to Demeter* tells us that when Hades carried Persephone down into the underworld, Zeus agreed that he would have to return her to Demeter as long as she did not eat anything while below the earth. However, Hades gave her a seed of pomegranate to eat before she could return to the upper world, and she was therefore compelled to remain in the underworld.\(^{19}\) This follows a description of the death of the vegetation in the world above resultant on Demeter's mourning of her missing daughter, which is another etiology of the seasons, just as in the myth of Adonis and the division of the year by Zeus, which also occurs in the Persephone myth.

The Osiris myth is very ancient and was of great importance in Egyptian religion: while the account of Plutarch\(^{20}\) in *De Iside et Osiride* is post-Theocritean, there are enough fragments in the hieroglyphic record which predate the Greek accounts that we can be fairly certain of the antiquity of the myth, which certainly would have been well known to the Alexandrian circle of Callimachus, Theocritus and Apollonius Rhodius. Frazer summarizes the issue:

> Now it is significant that in these ancient documents, though the myth or legend of Osiris is not set forth at length, it is often alluded to as if it were a matter of common knowledge. Hence we may legitimately infer the great antiquity of the Osirian tradition in Egypt. Indeed, so numerous are allusions to it in the Pyramid Texts that by their help we could reconstruct the story in its main outlines even without the narrative of Plutarch. Thus the discovery of these texts has confirmed our belief in the accuracy and fidelity of the Greek writer, and we

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\(^{19}\) *Homeric Hymn to Demeter* 371-374.

\(^{20}\) All citations to the *De Iside et Osiride* of Plutarch are to *Plutarch’s De Iside et Osiride*, ed. J. Gwyn Griffiths, Cardiff, University of Wales Press, 1970.
may accept his account with confidence even when it records incidents which have not yet been verified by a comparison with original Egyptian sources. (1890: 5-6)

With this in mind, it must first be pointed out that, even if the exact account of Plutarch which I summarize below with regards to Osiris' entrapment in a sarcophagus-larnax at the hands of Seth does not actually appear in any of the hieroglyphic texts which Frazer alludes to, the title *dbny*, meaning "He who is in the chest" (Griffiths 1970: 311) and the discovery of a number of so-called "Osiris-beds" — receptacles shaped in the form of a sarcophagus wherein barley or wheat was planted to represent resurrection — which Griffiths mentions on the same page strengthen our trust in the Plutarchan story of the coffin sprouting up into a tree.

The Osiris-bed is known to us from archeology, which dates its use as far back as the time of Tutankhamun (c. 1332-1323), in whose famous tomb such an artifact was found, as McCabe informs us (2008: 64). She also points to the actual ritual burying of effigies of Osiris which contained grain which would later sprout: "burial rituals relating to Osiris involve people placing Osiris figures made from damp soil mixed with seeds in the tombs of the deceased. The seed will sprout within the tomb, serving as a symbol for 'new life rising from the dead Osiris.'"

The myth as related by Plutarch is as follows: Osiris, for whom he gives two genealogies, was born either of Hermes and Rhea or from the sun, and took his sister Isis as his wife (12). He ruled over Egypt and introduced the arts of agriculture to the people, for which reason the Greeks identified him with Dionysus (13). He left Egypt to spread these agricultural arts abroad to other nations, and left the court and people in the care of his wife Isis. She guarded the kingdom well, but while Osiris was away his evil
brother Typhon laid a plot to kill him and get control of the land for himself. Typhon built a large and beautifully ornate coffin, for which Plutarch uses the word λάρναξ, having taken the measurements of Osiris' body so he would fit into it perfectly (13). He brought this beautiful larnax into a feast which Isis had prepared for Osiris upon his return, and offered to give it to whoever was able to fit perfectly into it. The ruse worked when only Osiris was able to lie down in the box, whereupon Typhon and his henchmen poured lead in it, slammed and nailed down the lid, and tossed the larnax into the Nile, whence it washed out to sea (13).

Plutarch next tells us how Isis went about Egypt searching for the larnax. After asking numerous people about it, she finally learns that the sea washed it ashore, where a heath tree grew up around it (15). A king cuts down this plant and uses it as the pillar of his palace, but Isis orders him to remove it and that it be made an object of veneration, though shortly thereafter Typhon steals it and, taking Osiris from the chest, dismembers him, so that it is only after Isis has retrieved all the pieces that he is truly resurrected.

All three figures examined in this chapter have strong parallels with Daphnis, as I have shown: Attis is connected with an almond or pine tree just as Daphnis is with the laurel, and his mistress Cybele is exposed at birth and later invents rustic musical instruments as Daphnis does in the accounts of Diodorus and Aelian. Fontenrose (1981: 212) noted the parallels of the pact Cybele binds Attis to in the Fasti of Ovid: just as in the versions of the story of Daphnis in Diodorus et alii, the young man breaks his oath to his mistress and is severely punished. Adonis also was connected with vegetation: he was born from a myrrh tree into which his mother had been transformed, and then enclosed in
a larnax and given to Persephone, who keeps him in the underworld. This is a symbol of
the death of the vegetation in the fall, as his return to Aphrodite in the spring is of the
rebirth of the plants in the spring. Finally, the Osiris myth makes explicit the connections
between the larnax and the yearly cycle of the death and rebirth of the crops: the coffin in
which he was trapped by Seth is enveloped by a heath tree, symbolizing the growth of
new life in the spring. Likewise, the Egyptians planted small coffin effigies with seeds
and placed them in tombs to express their belief in the continuation of life after death.
The seed lying in the ground may seem to have died, but it is really just awaiting the
coming of spring to sprout into a new plant.

Having seen these parallels with the Daphnis myth, I now return in the final
chapter to Idyll 7, where I argue that there is a striking, though often overlooked, parallel
with the Osiris myth. In Idyll 7, Daphnis is said to have been enclosed in a larnax by
an evil king and then sustained for a year by bees sent to bring him honey from the
Muses. This entrapment is clearly parallel to the entrapment Osiris suffers at Seth's
hands. I will also show the resonances honey has for Theocritus with poetry: from
Hesiod,21 Pindar22 and the Homeric Hymn to Hermes we discover that bees and honey are
symbols of poetry and of the Muses and connected with the inspiration of the individual
poet, who gives his utterances as though intoxicated on honey.

21 All citations to Hesiod are to Hesiodi Carmina, ed. Alois Rzach, Stuttgart, Teubner,
2011.
22 All citations to Pindar are to Pindari Carmina cum Fragmentis, ed. C.M. Bowra,

A third major element of the Daphnis story, though one that is somewhat dubiously ascribed to the story by the scholiast on *Idyll* 7. 78, is that Daphnis was enclosed in a larnax and fed honey by bees sent from the Muses. Immediately after describing how Tityrus will sing of the death of Daphnis, the poet writes that he will also tell "how the broad larnax received the goatherd while he was alive through the evil machinations of a king" (ἀσεὶ δὲ ὄς πότ᾽ ἔδεικτο τὸν αἱ πόλον εὐρέᾳ λάρναξ, 78). He then writes that he was sustained in this unfortunate entrapment because "the snub-nosed bees from the meadow were coming and feeding him in the sweet cedar chest on tender flowers" (αἱ σιμαῖ λειμωνόθε φέρβου ἱοίσαι / κέδρον ἐς ἀδείαν μαλακοῖς ἀνθέοι μέλισσαι, 80). This happened because the Muse loved him and had poured sweet nectar onto his mouth. This is followed by an apostrophe to Komatas: "and you too blessed Comatas, experienced these delightful things— you too were enclosed in a larnax, and you spent a goodly year being sustained on the honeycombs of bees" (ὦ μακαριστὲ Κομᾶτα, τῷ θην τάδε τερπνὰ πεπόνθεις / καὶ τῷ κατεκλάσθης ἐς λάρνακα, καὶ τῷ μελισσάν / κηρίος φερβόμενος ἔτος ὦριον ἐξεπόνασας, 83-85). Here it is clearly stated that Komatas was *not* the same as the goatherd just mentioned, but only underwent the same enclosure in a larnax and fed on honey sent by bees, presumably from the Muse who loved him and poured nectar on his mouth (Hunter 1999: 176).

While the identity of the goatherd is left unclear in the passage, he is, according to the scholiast on the passage, Daphnis himself. While Daphnis is usually called a

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23 The scholion to line 78 reads: φαύν, ὃτι Θεόκριτος τὰ τοῦ Δάφνιδος εἰς τὸν Κομᾶταν ἐπεκτίνεγκεν, "they say that Theocritus transferred the things of Daphnis onto Komatas," and the scholion to 83 says: Κομᾶτα: πέπλαστοι τὰ περὶ τοῦ Κομᾶτα ὑπὸ Θεοκρίτου παρὰ γὰρ τοῖς ἄρχαῖοις οὐ παραλαβόμενοι ὑπὸ μελλισῶν.
βουκόλος rather than an αἰπόλος, we have seen Priapus refer to him as being like a goatherd *Idyll* 1. 88,\(^{24}\) and there is no good reason to distrust the scholiast.

This should immediately remind us of the story of Osiris. In that myth, the evil brother of Osiris, Seth, lays a trap for Osiris by making an ornate larnax-coffin which he brings out at a party thrown to celebrate Osiris' return from abroad. Having already measured Osiris' body to make the dimensions of the larnax fit him, Seth offers the larnax to anyone who can perfectly fit into it. Osiris fits perfectly, and Seth shuts him inside of the coffin and tosses it into the Nile. The evil king in *Idyll* 7 is thus parallel to Seth, and Daphnis to Osiris.

The honey which the Muses send to sustain Daphnis is a symbol of his poetic talent. We have already seen him referred to as the inventor of bucolic poetry many times, and also connected with vegetation, specifically the laurel tree. It should not surprise us to see both the laurel and honey connected with the birth of poetry in archaic Greek poetic tradition. Theocritus himself connects honey with poetry at the end of *Idyll* 1: when Thyrsis finishes his song about the woes of Daphnis, the goatherd tells Thyrsis that he wishes that his mouth be filled with honey and with dates because he sings more sweetly than the cicada (146-148). The sweetness of the song is here clearly compared with the sweetness of honey.

The *Homeric Hymn to Hermes* and the *Theogony* give us the key to this trope.

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\(^{24}\) Βούτας μὲν ἐλέγει, νῦν δ’ αἰπόλος ἀνδρὶ ἔοικας, "you were called a cowherd, but now you seem like a goatherd."
The Hymn deals largely with the conflict of Hermes and Apollo, precipitated by the theft of Apollo's cattle by the newborn Hermes, which is resolved when Hermes gives Apollo his new invention of the tortoise-shell lyre. In return, Apollo teaches Hermes the art of divination and gives him power over three maidens who are associated with honey-bees and with prophecy. Honey is a metaphor for poetry for Hesiod and the author of the Homeric Hymn, and even for Theocritus. The passage runs as follows:

I will tell you another thing, son of bright Maia and aegis-bearing Zeus, goodly spirit of the gods. There are certain maiden sisters who delight in their swift wings, three in number. And on their heads they have sprinkled barley-meal, and they dwell in houses under a fold of Parnassus, far of teachers of prophecy, which art I practiced amongst my oxen while I was yet a boy: but my father paid no heed to it.

These maidens are clearly stated to be winged creatures here, but what follows clarifies their bee-like nature and tells us that they feed on honey:

Flying hither and thither from that place, now here, now there, they feed on honeycombs and they bring
each thing to pass. When they have eaten of the yellow honey and hurry forth, they wisely wish to speak the truth, but if they are taken away from the sweet food of the gods, they then tell lies, flitting about between one another.

Note that they feed on honeycombs, just as Daphnis was fed honeycombs by bees sent from the Muses in Idyll 7. Furthermore, on the connection of honey with divinely inspired poetry and prophecy, Pindar calls the Pythia a bee in Pythian 4. 60 (χρησίμος ὀρθωσεν μελίσσας Δελφίδος αὐτομάτω κελάδω, "the prophecy arose from the Delphic bee with an uninvited shout"). Scheinberg (1979: 11) has noted the undeniable parallel between the way these three maidens are only able to prophesy truth when they are able to eat the honeycomb and the Muses, who sometimes speak truth and sometimes falsehood: in the Theogony, they tell Hesiod that "We know how to say many false things which are like the truth, and at other times to say the truth" (ἴδμεν ψεύδεα πολλά λέγειν ἑτύμοισιν ὀμοία, / ἴδμεν, δ' εὔτ' ἐθέλωμεν, ἀληθέα γηρύσασθαι, 27-28). That these honey-maidens are so strongly likened to the Muses suggests that their honey itself is a type of poetic elixir, and this is borne out by comparative evidence from the Rig Veda. While the Vedas long predate the text of Hesiod, they are a source of much that is of value for reconstructing the beliefs of the earliest Indo-European societies, and hence any parallels between them and archaic Greek poetry should not be ignored.

Honey evidently had an important role in Indo-European religion and ritual. The Rig Veda25 (c. 1500-1200 BCE), one of the oldest extant texts in any Indo-European language and our source for much of ancient Hindu belief and ritual, speaks of a drink known as Soma, which evidently imparts wisdom and immortality:

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apama somam; amrta abhuma
tagman jyotir; avidama devan.
kim nunam asman krvad adratih?
kim u dhurtir, amrta, martisya?
(8.48.3)

Soma hath we drunk; immortal
have we become. To the light
hath we gone; the gods hath
we known. What can enmity
do to us now, immortal one,
what the evil of mortal man?\(^{26}\)

The Soma may have been made from honey, for it is elsewhere called *madhu* (cf. Greek
μέθυ, English mead):

\[
\begin{align*}
svador \text{ abhaksi vayasah sumedhah} \\
\text{suadhio varivovittarasya,} \\
\text{visve yam devā utā martiaso,} \\
\text{*madhu* bruvānto, abhi samcaranti. (8.48.1)}
\end{align*}
\]

With wisdom hath I taken of
the sweet food, stirring goodly
thoughts, banishing care, to
which come all gods and mortals
together, calling it *honey*.

What precisely the Soma was is beyond the scope of this paper, but the identification
of the drink with honey and its connection with wisdom and immortality is important in
this study. Daphnis is both a poet and a figure of death and resurrection, as we have seen,
so with this knowledge of the importance of honey in more ancient Indo-European
society and religion we can better understand the significance of the bees sent to feed him
and keep him alive during his entrapment in the larnax.

The connection between honey and immortality is most pointed in Hittite
mythology. The Hittites, whose language is one of our most important tools for

\(^{26}\) All translations of Sanskrit are mine.
reconstructing Proto-Indo-European, had a myth that recalls the Daphnis story, as it too contains the motif of a honey bee being sent by a female protectress to rescue an entrapped god who is identified with the fertility of crops and the land. Gamkrelidze and Ivanov recount this version:

Bees have an important role in Hittite mythology, and honey is significant in Hittite rituals. In the myth cycle about a god who disappears and returns (Telepinus, the thunder god, the sun god), after unsuccessful searches for the lost god, who has taken fertility away with him, the mother goddess (Hannahanna) sends 'little (ammiyant-) bee' out to search for him. The bee is to find the god, sting him, spread wax on his eyes and hands, sanctify him, and bring him back. Only this 'little bee' manages to find the god and bring him back together with fertility. (1995: 518-516)

While here the wax is smeared on the lost god's eyes rather than the honeycomb being fed to him, it is still a close enough parallel to merit investigation. The honey is not connected with poetry here, but it is clearly connected with the revival of dead life. Furthermore, the myth certainly has strong parallels with Adonis, Attis, Osiris, and Tammuz, and the Persephone and Demeter story from the *Homeric Hymn*. Ravinell and Green summarize it for us:

The beginning of the Telepinus Myth is missing. In the first preserved section, the deity's wrath over a wrongdoing is described. The deity has disappeared in an angry mood, and as a consequence the waters have all dried up, all vegetation has died, human beings and animals alike have become sterile, and gods and men are suffering from famine. (2003:137)

The gods search for him until the little bee finds him. While Ravinell and Green reject
this having any direct connection with the Semitic dying and rising god myths, they still note the parallels and they note that other scholars long saw a connection (2003: 138). Furthermore, Laoutides notes, pointing to the Telepinus myth in her discussion of the Aristaeus story in *Georgics* 4, that "the artistic pattern of the honeycomb can be found both in Near Eastern and Greek tradition and it seems to be associated with death and rebirth, notions that certainly enjoy Aristaeus' attention in the fourth book of the *Georgics*" (2005: 306). In Vergil, Aristaeus must sacrifice bullocks to the *manes* of Eurydice to atone for her untimely death from being bitten by a snake while fleeing his amorous advances. When Aristaeus has finished the sacrifices, he returns nine days later to find that bees have miraculously been born from the carcasses (*Georgics* 4.555-558). This too may be an emblem of life emerging anew after death, a major element of the Orpheus-Eurydice myth, where the *vates* at least temporarily leads his dead wife back to the upper world through the power of poetry.

Having established a link between honey, immortality, and poetic inspiration, we can approach Hesiod's use of honey and sweetness with a new understanding. He informs us in the *Theogony* that it is from the Muses that all poets get their talents, and that the Muses and Apollo grant them a sweet voice:

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ἐκ γὰρ τοῖς Μουσέωι καὶ ἐκηβόλου Απόλλωνος ἄνδρες, ἀοιδοὶ ἔσαιν ἐπὶ χθόνα καὶ κιθαρίσται, ἐκ δὲ Δίως βασιλῆς, ὁ δ` ὀλβίος, ὄντινα Μούσαι φίλωνται, γλυκερὴ οἱ ἀπὸ στόματος ῥέει σοφὴ.
(94-96)
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For from the Muses and far-shooting Apollo do men become singers and cithara players upon the earth, but from Zeus come forth kings. He is blessed whom the Muses favor. For him a sweet voice flows from his mouth.

Williams has noted in his discussion of the passage on Daphnis beeing fed by bees that
"this whole account clearly recalls Hesiod's account of his meeting the Muses in
*Theogony* 81-97; when they favor a prince, they pour sweet dew on his tongue and
honeyed words flow from his lips" (1992: 546).

We turn now to investigate what Hesiod tells us about the laurel and how it is
connected with poetry in archaic Greek thought. The laurel is the plant of Apollo, who is
god of both prophecy and poetry. It is well known that the oracles of antiquity were given
in verse, for which reason Vergil calls the prophecies of the Cumaean Sibyl *carmina*,
so we should look for an instance in which prophecy and poetry are not distinguished. This
appears in Hesiod's description of the epiphany of the Muses to him while he was
shepherdling his flocks on Mount Helicon: after telling him that they are able to speak
false things which are like truth – a reference to poetry and its power of mimesis – they
give him a branch of laurel and imbue him with prophetic powers:

Thus said the swift-worded daughters of great Zeus:
and they gave me a scepter, a bough of ever-
flourishing laurel, wondrous, which they had
plucked. And they breathed into me a divine voice,
so that I might make famous those things which are
to be and which have been, and they ordered me to
sing the race of the blessed ones who are forever,
and to always sing themselves first and last. But
what is all this talk of oak or rock to me?

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27 *Aeneid* 6. 74-76: "Foliis tantum ne carmina manda, / ipsa canas oro," "do not only
commit your songs to leaves: I pray that you sing them yourself."
Here we are told that the Muses have power, much like the three mysterious bee-maidens in the *Hymn to Hermes*, to cause what they sing to come to pass. The laurel staff reminds us instantly of Daphnis' association with the laurel, and Theocritus modelled a section of *Idyll 7* on this gifting of the staff to Hesiod, as will be shown. Greg Nagy has noted on this passage that:

> Even in the earliest literary evidence about Greek society, it is clear that a distinction was made between poetry and prophecy, as reflected by the word *aoidos*, "singer," and *kerux*, "herald," on the other . . . Such a pattern of distinction, however, was preceded by an earlier stage in which poet and prophet were as yet undifferentiated. This stage is evident in the self-references of Hesiod's *Theogony*, where the Muses of Mount Helicon are represented as endowing Hesiod with a sacral voice that enables him not only to sing a theogony (*Theogony* 33-34) but also to tell the future and present as well as the past (32); in addition, the Muses give Hesiod a *skeptron*, "staff, scepter," as a symbol of his sacral authority to proclaim the absolute truth. (1990:56)

In *Idyll 7*, line 44, Simichidas, who seems to represent Theocritus himself,\(^{28}\) receives a staff (κορυνα) from the mysterious shepherd Lycidas in return for his beautiful singing. Lycidas instructs him to sing pastoral poetry instead of epic, after complaining about the abundance of poets who vainly seek to rival Homer. He compares them with a carpenter who tries to be a house which rivals the height of Mount Oromedon\(^ {29}\)— a clear statement of Theocritus' allegiance to the Callimachean school of thought, which privileged the Hesiodic aesthetic of the didactic epic over the Homeric aesthetic (45-50). As Hubbard notes, 'Lycidas' gift of his staff to Simichidas clearly evokes the poetic investiture of the

\(^{28}\) *It is generally accepted that Simichidas, the townsman on a country holiday, is a mask for Theocritus himself* (Hubbard 1998: 23).

\(^{29}\) Unknown from any other source.
shepherd Hesiod by the Muses on Mt. Helicon (Hes. Th. 22-25), and Lycidas'
condemnation of those would-be Homeric rivals who aim to build their house as high as
Mt. Oromedon parallels the familiar Callimachean aesthetic of rejecting grandiose epic
modalities in favor of the slender and refined" (1998: 23).

That the laurel is connected with Apollo is made clear for us in several
Greek texts: in the Homerically Hymn to Apollo, the laurel is connected specifically with the
oracle at Delphi: having defeated Typhaon (later called the Python), we are told that
Apollo looked for men who would be suitable to deliver his oracles at Delphi, which he
now had control over after killing the monster:

καὶ τότε δὴ κατὰ θυμὸν ἐφράζετο Φοίβος Ἀπόλλων, οἷς τίνας ἀνθρώπους ὥργειόν οἰς εἰσαγάγοιτο, οἵ θεραπεύονται Πυθοὶ ἐν πετρέσση
tοὺτ' ἀρα ὀρμαίνων ἔνοσ' ἐπὶ οἴνοπι πόντῳ νὴα βοην' ἐν δ' ἀνδρεῖς ἔσαν πολέες τε καὶ ἐσθλοί,
Κρήτες ἀπὸ Κυνωσοῦ Μινωίου, οἵ ἄνακτι ίερὰ τε πέρεσσαι καὶ ἀγγέλλουσι θεμίστας
Φοίβου Ἀπόλλωνος χρυσαόρου, ὅτι κεν εὖ πη
χρείων ἐκ δάφνης γυαλῶν ὑπὸ Παρνησσοῦ. (388-396)

And then indeed did Phoebus Apollo begin to think
in his mind what men he would lead in as ministers,
who would serve in rocky Pytho. Thinking of these
things he saw a swift ship in the wine-faced sea:
and in it were many good men: Cretans from Minoan
Cnossos, who sacrifice holy things to their lord and
announce the just laws of Phoebus Apollo of the golden
sword, whatever he says prophesying from the laurel
beneath the folds of Parnassus.

Richardson comments on this passage that "the bay (or sweet laurel) tree was later the
symbol of Delphi par excellence. But it is not clear what this phrase means: the procedure
described in the hymn was similar to that of Dodona, 'where the god spoke from the oak
tree and the Selli expounded his oracles', and that the priests would claim to recognize the
god's utterances in the rustling of the leaves," though, he points out, no other passages
suggest this regarding the use of the laurel at Delphi (2010: 136). Plutarch, on the other hand, tells us that laurel leaves were burned by the Pythia, which may imply that she inhaled the smoke before uttering her prophecies (*De Pythiae Oraculis*,\(^\text{30}\) 397A). At any rate, the passage proves the antiquity of the association, while Pausanias leaves us an interesting testimony regarding a *female* Daphnis who was a priestess for Gaia before Apollo took possession of the site: *φασὶ γὰρ δὴ τὰ ἄρχαιότατα Γῆς εἶναι τὸ χρηστῆριον, καὶ Δαφνίδα ἐπ’ αὐτῶ τετάχθαι πρόμαντιν ύπὸ τῆς Γῆς: εἶναι δὲ αὐτῆν τῶν περὶ τὸ ὄρος νυμφῶν* (*for they say that in the most ancient times it [Delphi] was an oracle of Gaia, and Daphnis was set up over it as the head prophet by Gaia: and they say she was one of the nymphs from around the mountain,* *Graeciae Descriptio* 10. 5.5). Likewise Euripides implies that the laurel at Delphi predated the arrival of Apollo. In a choral ode of *Iphigenia in Tauris*,\(^\text{31}\) which I quote here at length, there are references to Apollo, like Daphnis in Diodorus' description, being born amid vegetation:

Χορός

εὐπαίς ὁ Λατοῦς γόνος,
τὸν πότε Δηλίας ἐν καρποφόροις γυάλοις
ἐτικτε, χρυσοκόμαν
ἐν κιθάρα σοφόν, ἀ τ´ ἐπὶ τόξων
ἔστοχια γάνυται· φέρε δ´ αὐτ´
nυν ἀπὸ δείγματις εὐαλίας,
λοχεία κλεινά λυπόσα μά-
tηρ, τὰν ἀστάκτων ὑδάτων
βακχεύουσαν Διονύ-
σω Παρνάσιον κορυφάν·
όθι ποικιλόνωτος οἱ-

\(^{30}\) This citation to *De Pythiae Oraculis* is to the edition in *Plutarchi Chaerontensis Moralia Vol. III*, ed. Gregorius Bernardakis, Leipzig, Teubner, 1891.

Noble is the child of Leto, whom the Delian one bore in the fruitful mountain-folds, golden-haired and skilled at the lyre, and she who rejoices in her skill at shooting arrows. She carried him from the ocean ridge, leaving the famous birth-place, to the Parnassian height with its gushing waters which revels for Dionysus; there the dragon with a many-colored back, a dark dragon, covered over by the dark, goodly-leafed laurel, a monstrous wonder of the earth, was guarding the oracle of Earth.

While it seems that the original explanation for Apollo's connection with the laurel was simply that a laurel tree grew at Delphi on Mount Parnassus, later generations invented an aetiology which will be of use in our study of Daphnis: that Apollo was enamored of the nymph Daphne, who rejected his advances and prayed to be delivered from him by being turned into a laurel, whereupon he chose the laurel as his plant. The oldest version of this myth is preserved in Parthenius of Nicea, whose Ερωτικά Παθήματα was one of the last great Greek productions of the Alexandrian sensibility, and exercised an influence on Propertius and his circle. This includes a myth in which a character, this time a nymph, whose name literally means "laurel," is connected with Artemis and her circle:

Περί δὲ τῆς Αμύκλα θυγατρός τάδε λέγεται
Δάφνης· αὕτη τὸ μὲν ἄ παν εἰς πόλιν οὐ κατήει,
ou'd` ònei'mísgeto taìs loipoiç parthènoiç:
páraekeusaménì de kúnav ëthìmenvn· ðì ìn aìtiàv
mála kataðúmioc ìn 'Artemìdi. (15.1)

These things are related concerning Daphne,
the daughter of Amycla. She did not go down to the
city at all, nor associate with the other maidens;
but, fitting herself out with dogs, she was always hunting,
for which reason she was very dear to Artemis.

Like Daphnis in Diodorus’ Bibliotheca, we are told that Daphne avoided the city and
lived in the country. And much as in the Daphnis story, the erotic component to the
Daphne myth has a violent side to it, ending when she is transformed into the eponymous
laurel by the gods, to grant her an escape from Apollo's amorous advances.

In conclusion, we have seen that the associations made by Theocritus between
Daphnis, the laurel plant, dying and rising gods of the vegetation, and honey have deep
resonances that would have been understood by his readers as associating Daphnis with
both death and resurrection and with poetry, which itself is a type of immortalization.
His name is derived from the laurel, the plant sacred to Apollo, who was god of both
poetry and prophecy: his story includes a number of parallels with Adonis, Attis, and
Osiris, all acknowledged to be vegetation deities. In the Daphnis, Adonis and Osiris
stories there is a larnax involved, and a type of death and resurrection pattern: in
Theocritus, Daphnis is enclosed in the larnax by an evil king but then sustained by
bees sent from the Muses, while in the Adonis and Osiris stories we have the vegetation
deity enclosed in a larnax either at birth, as Adonis was by Persephone, or later in life, as
Osiris by Seth, and later released. This entrapment and eventual release is undoubtedly
a poetic image of the death and disappearance of vegetation in winter, and its return in
spring. Poetry likewise has the power to grant immortality to its subjects. Daphnis is fed
honey by bees sent by the Muses. Honey is an emblem of the sweetness of poetry from Hesiod in archaic Greek literature and from even earlier in the Indo-European poetic consciousness, in texts as diverse as the *Rig Veda* and the Hittite inscriptions. Thus we see that Daphnis functions for Theocritus as an emblem of the powers of poetry to grant immortality to its author.
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