THEOCRITUS
Square brackets enclosing an author's name indicate that the ascription of the poem is false or without authority; enclosing words in the text, that the passage in the original is corrupt and that only the general sense is given in the translation.
THEOCRITUS I

THYRSIS OR THE SONG

A shepherd, Thyrsis, invites an unnamed goatherd to pipe to him. The goatherd declines, but asks Thyrsis to sing his song about Daphnis and promises him as a reward a carved wooden bowl, the decoration of which he describes. Thyrsis complies, and the poem ends with compliments and the gift of the bowl.

The bowl, which seems a plausible invention in silver but less so in this rustic context, has apparently vegetable ornament on its exterior; in the interior a fishing scene in a central medallion, flanked on one side by a woman between two lovers, on the other by a boy between two foxes.

Thyrsis's song deals allusively with the death of Daphnis, and presupposes a form of the myth not recorded elsewhere. Daphnis has seemingly made a vow of chastity, and, after taunting Aphrodite, dies rather than break it.

THYRSIS

Sweet is the whispered music of yonder pinetree by the springs, goatherd, and sweet too thy piping. Thou wilt take second prize to Pan. If he choose the horned goat, thou shalt have the she-goat, and if he has the she-goat for his prize, the kid falls to thee. And the flesh of a kid is sweet before one milks her.

GOATHERD

Sweeter, shepherd, falls thy song than yonder stream that tumbles plashing from the rocks. If the Muses take the ewe for their gift, thou shalt have as prize the stall-fed lamb, and if it be their pleasure to have the lamb, thou shalt carry off the ewe after them.
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THYRSIS

In the Nymphs' name, goatherd, wilt thou sit down and pipe, here, where is this sloping knoll and the tamarisks? and I meanwhile will tend thy goats.

GOATHERD

Nay, shepherd, nay; at noontide pipe we may not, for fear of Pan. For then, of a surety, he is resting wearied from the chase. And he is quick of temper and bitter wrath sits ever on his nostril. But thou, Thyrsis, art wont to sing the woes of Daphnis and art come to mastery in pastoral song. Come hither then, and let us sit beneath the elm, facing Priapus and the springs, where is yon shepherds' seat and the oaks. And if thou sing as once thou sangest in thy match with Chromis from Libya, then will I let thee milk three times a goat that has borne twins, one that, for all she has two kids, yet yields two pails besides. And I will give thee a deep cup, washed over with sweet wax, two-handled, and newly fashioned, still fragrant from the knife. Along the lips above trails ivy, ivy dotted with its golden clusters, and along it winds the tendril glorying in its yellow fruit. And within is wrought a woman, such a thing as the gods might fashion, bedecked with cloak and circlet. And by her two men with long, fair locks contend from either side in alternate speech. Yet these things touch not her heart, but now she looks on one and smiles, and now to the other she shifts her thought, while they, long hollow-eyed from love, labour to no purpose. By these is carved an old fisherman, and a rugged rock whereon the old man eagerly gathers up a great net for a cast as one that labours mightily. Thou wouldst say that he was fishing with all the strength of his limbs, so do the sinews stand out all about his neck, grey-haired though he is; yet his strength is as a youth's. And a little way from the sea-worn old man there is a vineyard

1 A rustic figure of the god.
with a fair load of reddening clusters, guarded by a little boy who sits upon its dry-stone wall. About him hang two foxes, and one goes to and fro among the vine-rows plundering the ripe grapes, while the other brings all her wit to bear upon his wallet, and vows she will not let the lad be until [she has RAIDed the wallet]. But the boy is plafting a pretty cricket-cage of bonded rush and asphodel, and has more joy in his plafting than care for wallet or for vines. And every way about the cup is spread the pliant acanthus. A wondrous thing it is to goatherds’ eyes, a marvel that will strike thy heart with amaze; for it I paid the ferryman of Calydra\(^1\) a goat and a great cheese of white milk, but never yet has it touched my lips; it lies unsulliled still. Gladly would I pleasure thee therewith, my friend, if thou wilt sing to me that lovely song. I do not mock thee; nay, come, Sir, for of a surety thou canst not carry thy singing to Hades that brings forgetfulness of all things.

**THYRSIS**

*Begin, dear Muses, begin the pastoral song.*

Thyrsis of Etna am I, and sweet is the voice of Thyrsis. Where were ye, Nymphs, where were ye, when Daphnis was wasting? In the fair vales of Peneius or of Pindus? for surely ye kept not the mighty stream of Anapus, nor the peak of Etna, nor the sacred rill of Acis.\(^2\)

*Begin, dear Muses, begin the pastoral song.*

For him the jackals howled, for him the wolves; for him dead even the lion of the forest made lament.

*Begin, dear Muses, begin the pastoral song.*

Kine in plenty about his feet, and bulls, many a heifer and many a calf lamented.

*Begin, dear Muses, begin the pastoral song.*

First came Hermes from the hill, and said, ‘Who torments thee, Daphnis? of whom, friend, art thou so enamoured?’

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\(^1\) An island near Cos.

\(^2\) Had the Nymphs been in Sicily they would have saved Daphnis. Perhaps therefore they were in Thessaly.
Begin, dear Muses, begin the pastoral song.
The shepherds came, the shepherds came, and goatherds,
and all asked what ailed him. Priapus came, and said, ‘Poor
Daphnis, why art thou wasting? while for thee the maiden
wanders by every fount and glade—
Begin, dear Muses, begin the pastoral song—
searching. Ah, truly, cursed in love and helpless art thou.
Neatherd wast thou called, but now thou art like a goatherd;
for he, when he sees the nannies at their sport, weeps that he
was not born a goat.

Begin, dear Muses, begin the pastoral song.
And thou, when thou seest the maidens how they laugh,
weepest because thou art not dancing with them.’
To these no answer made the neatherd, but bore his bitter
love, bore it even to his appointed end.

Begin, Muses, begin again the pastoral song.
Aye and Cypris¹ came too, with a sweet smile, craftily
smiling but with heavy wrath held back, and said, ‘Surely,
Daphnis, thou didst vow that thou wouldst give Love
a fall, but hast thou not thyself been thrown by cruel
Love?’

Begin, Muses, begin again the pastoral song.
And to her at length Daphnis made answer: ‘Cypris,
grievous to bear, wrathful Cypris, Cypris detested by mortals,
thinkest thou, then, that all my suns are set already? Even
in Hades shall Daphnis be a bitter grief to Love.

Begin, Muses, begin again the pastoral song.
Is it not told of Cypris how the neatherd—² Get thee to
Ida, get thee to Anchises. There are oaks and galingale, and
sweetly hum the bees about the hives.²

Begin, Muses, begin again the pastoral song.

¹ Aphrodite.
² The neatherd is Anchises, whose liaison with Aphrodite ended unhappily.
Plutarch seems to have known a story in which bees were the agents of
retribution; hence probably their mention here.
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Adonis too is in his bloom; he herds his sheep, kills hares, and hunts all manner of beasts.¹

Begin, Muses, begin again the pastoral song.

Go set thyself again before Diomede and say, “I am the vanquisher of Daphnis, the neatherd; come, fight with me”.²

Begin, Muses, begin again the pastoral song.

Farewell, ye wolves and jackals and bears in your mountain caves. No more to your woods, to your groves and thickets no more, fares the neatherd Daphnis. Farewell, Arethusa, and ye rivers that down Thybris pour your fair waters.³

Begin, Muses, begin again the pastoral song.

I am that Daphnis that herded here his cows, and watered here his bulls and calves.

Begin, Muses, begin again the pastoral song.

O Pan, Pan, whether thou art on the high hills of Lycaeus, or rangest mighty Maenalus, come to the Sicilian isle and leave the mountain peak of Helice and that high tomb of Lycaon’s son⁴ wherein even the Blessed Ones delight.

Cease, Muses, come cease the pastoral song.

Come, my lord, and take this pipe, fragrant of honey from its compacted wax, with binding about its handsome lip, for now to Hades am I hailed by Love.

Cease, Muses, come cease the pastoral song.

Now violets bear, ye brambles, and, ye thorns, bear violets, and let the fair narcissus bloom on the juniper. Let all be changed, and let the pine bear pears since Daphnis is dying. Let the stag worry the hounds, and from the mountains let the owls cry to nightingales.⁵

¹ Adonis was loved by Aphrodite, who however failed to save him from being killed by a boar when hunting.
² In the Iliad (v. 330) Aphrodite is wounded and driven from the field by Diomede.
³ Arethusa is the spring at Syracuse; Thybris is unknown.
⁴ Arcas, whose mother was Helice. The places mentioned are all in Arcadia, the chief seat of Pan.
⁵ The meaning is apparently that Daphnis’s death is so surprising that nothing can now seem improbable.
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Cease, Muses, come cease the pastoral song.
So much he said, and ended; and Aphrodite would have raised him up again, but all the thread the Fates assigned was run, and Daphnis went to the stream.¹ The waters closed over him whom the Muses loved, nor did the Nymphs mislike him. Cease, Muses, come cease the pastoral song.
And do thou give me the goat and the bowl, that I may milk her and make libation to the Muses. Farewell, many times farewell, ye Muses. A sweeter song hereafter will I sing you.

GOATHERD

Filled may thy fair mouth be with honey, Thyrsis, and with the honeycomb; and mayest thou eat the sweet figs of Aegilus,² for thy singing outdoes the cicada. See, here is the cup; mark, friend, how sweet it smells; thou wilt think it has been dipped at the well of the Hours. Come hither, Cissaerha; and do thou milk her. And you she-goats be not so frisky lest the he-goat rouse himself.

¹ Acheron, the river of Hades, is probably meant.
² Dried figs from the Attic deme Aegilia, which were of high quality.
THEOCRITUS II

THE SORCERESS

Simaetha, an unmarried woman living, except for her slaves, alone, has had a liaison with Delphis, to whom she had made advances after seeing him at a festival of Artemis. She has now reason to suspect his fidelity and, hoping to recover his affections by the use of magic, performs an incantation. As it ends she despatches her maid servant who has been assisting her, to complete the rite at Delphis’s door, and making the moon her confidante, recounts the history of her infatuation.

The incantation consists of nine terms, each occupying four lines, of which the pattern is given in the first, second, sixth and ninth. A magic act is followed by a prayer or by a statement equivalent to a prayer. The pattern is skilfully varied in the remaining five quatrains, but the whole series is framed and articulated by a refrain which conforms to it—a turn of the magic wheel and a prayer that it will bring Delphs to Simaetha’s house. The magic wheel (iynx) is a wheel or disk, pierced near its centre by two holes and made to rotate first in one and then in the other direction by alternate tightening and relaxing of a string passed through the holes.

This poem, and the treatment of Medea’s infatuation for Jason in the third book of Apollonius Rhodius, are the chief examples of the romantic handling of love themes which is the most important legacy of the Alexandrians to European poetry.

Where are my bay-leaves? Bring me them, Thestylos. And where my magic stuffs? Wreathe the bowl with fine crimson wool that I may bind a spell upon my love, so hard to me. For eleven days now he has not even visited me, the wretch, and knows not so much as whether I am dead or alive. Nay, he has not once knocked at my door, so cruel is he. Of a surety Love and Aphrodite have carried elsewhither his
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fickle fancy. To-morrow I will go to Timagetus’ wrestling-school to see him, and will reproach him that he treats me so; but now I will bind him with fire-spells. Nay, shine bright, O Moon, for to thee, goddess, will I softly chant, and to Hecate of the world below, before whom even the dogs stand shivering as she comes over the graves of the dead and the dark blood. Hail, grim Hecate, and to the end attend me, and make these drugs of mine as potent as those of Circe or Medea or golden-haired Perimede.¹

My magic wheel, draw to my house the man I love.

First barley grains smoulder on the fire. Nay, strew them on, Thestylis. Poor fool, whither have thy wits taken wing? Am I become a mock, then, even to thee, wretch? Strew them on, and say the while, ‘I strew the bones of Delphis’.

My magic wheel, draw to my house the man I love.

Delphis brought trouble on me, and I for Delphis burn this bay. And as the bay-leaves crackle loud in the fire, and catch of a sudden, and we see not even the ash of them, so may the flesh of Delphis waste in the flame.

My magic wheel, draw to my house the man I love.

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Now will I burn the bran. And thou, Artemis, hast power to move Hell’s adamant and aught else as stubborn—Thestylis, the dogs are howling in the town; the goddess is at the crossroads. Quick, clash the bronze.²

My magic wheel, draw to my house the man I love.

Lo, still is the sea, the breezes still;³ yet not still the torment in my breast, but all on fire am I for him that has made me, alas, no wife but a wretched thing, no maiden now.

My magic wheel, draw to my house the man I love.

As, with the goddess’s aid, I melt this wax, so straight-way may Delphis of Myndus waste with love. And as by

¹ Arch-enchantresses.
² Noise drives away evil powers. The magician who raises one is in danger unless he averts it from himself. Simaetha orders Thestylis to take this precaution.
³ Silence is necessary for an incantation to be successful.