

## THE FOREBEARS OF DAPHNIS\*

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In the introduction to his commentary on the First Idyll of Theocritus, A. S. F. Gow wrote: “Thyrsis’s song deals with the death of Daphnis, and has caused a great deal of trouble owing to the fact that it is not certain what story lies behind the situation disclosed in the song.”<sup>1</sup> The predicament and personality of Daphnis, as they emerge from the First Idyll (and from other, more fragmentary, treatments of the myth),<sup>2</sup> have continued to elude literary historians. Theocritus’ Daphnis has been compared to a variety of traditional heroic figures—to Achilles, Ajax in the Underworld,

\* This paper elaborates an idea touched on but not developed in the course of a more general discussion of “Pastoral Origins and the Ancient Near East” in my book, *Before Pastoral: Theocritus and the Ancient Tradition of Bucolic Poetry* (New Haven 1983) 85–117. An earlier version of this paper was presented at the annual meeting of the American Philological Association in San Francisco, on December 29, 1981. I wish to thank the Editor of *TAPA* as well as the journal’s anonymous referee for suggesting many improvements in the final draft of the essay. Professor Edwin Good of the Department of Religious Studies at Stanford University aided me in the interpretation of ancient Near Eastern source material and called my attention to the Ugaritic evidence. The major debt is to my teacher, William Berg, to whom this essay is respectfully dedicated.

The following works are referred to by the author’s name alone or by the indicated abbreviation: William Berg, *Early Virgil* (London 1974); Walter Burkert, *Structure and History in Greek Mythology and Ritual*, Sather Classical Lectures 47 (Berkeley 1979); Thorkild Jacobsen, *Toward the Image of Tammuz and other Essays on Mesopotamian History and Culture*, ed. William L. Moran, Harvard Semitic Studies 21 (Cambridge, Mass. 1970) [*Toward the Image*]; id., *The Treasures of Darkness: A History of Mesopotamian Religion* (New Haven 1976) [*Treasures*]; J. B. Pritchard, ed., *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament*, 3d ed. with Supplement (Princeton 1969) [ANET<sup>3</sup>]; Charles Segal, *Poetry and Myth in Ancient Pastoral* (Princeton 1981) [*Poetry and Myth*].

<sup>1</sup> A. S. F. Gow, ed., *Theocritus* (Cambridge 1952<sup>2</sup>) II 1.

<sup>2</sup> See, in addition to Gow, Richard Reitzenstein, *Epigramm und Skolion. Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der alexandrinischen Dichtung* (Giessen 1893) 243–63; Ph.-E. Legrand, *Étude sur Théocrite*, Bibliothèque des Écoles françaises d’Athènes et de Rome 79 (Paris 1898) 146–48; A. Rostagni, “Autonomia e svolgimento della letteratura greca di Sicilia,” *ΚΩΚΑΛΟΣ* 3 (1957) 3–17; R. M. Ogilvie, “The Song of Thyrsis,” *JHS* 82 (1962) 106–10; E. A. Schmidt, “Die Leiden des verliebten Daphnis,” *Hermes* 96 (1968) 539–52; F. J. Williams, “Theocritus, *Idyll* i 81–91,” *JHS* 89 (1969) 121–23.

Aeschylus' Prometheus and Cassandra, Sophocles' Antigone and Electra, Euripides' Pentheus, and Virgil's Orpheus, for example<sup>3</sup>—but critical efforts to enroll him in the company of the heroes have tended to founder on the oddity of Daphnis' inertia, passivity, languor, and frank self-absorption. A radical solution to the problem of Daphnis' identity was proposed by William Berg in a monograph on Virgil's bucolic poetry published nine years ago: if Daphnis is mysterious, it is because the song of Thyrsis shrouds him in "a religious aura."<sup>4</sup> In what follows I shall attempt to vindicate Berg's brilliant, albeit vulnerable, intuition.

Berg concentrated his attention on the form and meaning of the "Lament for Daphnis" sung by Thyrsis at the request of an unnamed goatherd in Idyll 1. "It will soon become apparent," he wrote, "that this lament and its refrain place Daphnis in a religious and literary setting as old as human memory, that Theocritus had cast him in a rôle which had belonged through the millennia to a herdsman whose death is a symbol for the mystery of life itself." In other words, the presence in a pastoral landscape of a dying herdsman, wounded by love, who sings his own lament points to an extremely ancient figurative conception embodied in some of the earliest religious texts and cults of the Near East. Even as late as the Hellenistic period, according to Berg, the Greeks still had not lost sight of the herdsman's originally sacred rank and function, for a memory of his former status continued to be preserved in songs of worship and in myths that had been bequeathed to the Greeks at some previous time by peoples long since vanished and forgotten. Berg located the source of these venerable traditions in the rites of the Sumerian shepherd-god Dumuzi and Dumuzi's Semitic descendants: these early pastoral figures, he concluded, are the true "forebears" of Theocritus' Daphnis in ancient literature and cult.<sup>5</sup>

Berg's attempt to discover a connection between the later (Virgilian) genre of pastoral, the Greek bucolic poets, and the literature of the ancient Near East was hardly a novel venture. Thomas G. Rosenmeyer has shown that the "Orientalizing theory" of pastoral origins, as he calls it, is very old indeed and that it came to attract numerous adherents in the seventeenth

<sup>3</sup> G. Janowski, "La Passion de Daphnis," *Eos* 42.1 (1947) 175–94, esp. 179; Adam Parry, "Landscape in Greek Poetry," *YCS* 15 (1957) 3–29, esp. 11–14; William Berg, "Daphnis and Prometheus," *TAPA* 96 (1965) 11–23; Gilbert Lawall, *Theocritus' Coan Pastorals: A Poetry Book* (Cambridge, Mass. 1967) 20–21; Charles Segal, "'Since Daphnis Dies': The Meaning of Theocritus' First Idyll," *MH* 31 (1974) 1–22, esp. 18–19 [= *Poetry and Myth* 25–46].

<sup>4</sup> Berg 15. Berg's thesis is summarized below. My approach differs from his in its greater specificity, its greater reliance on the work of Jacobsen and Burkert and lesser dependence on Frazer, and its use of Ugaritic material.

<sup>5</sup> Berg 12–22.

and eighteenth centuries.<sup>6</sup> Already in 1859 Émile Egger, speaking at the annual meeting of the Académie des Inscriptions in Paris, could point to a sizable body of scholarly literature which undertook to derive the pastoral inspiration of Theocritus from a continuous poetic tradition originating in the ancient Near East and transmitted to Sicily by the Phoenician colony at Carthage; rightly dismissing such theories as implausible, Egger preferred to regard the Greeks as the inheritors of an Indo-European or Aryan pastoral tradition attested independently by the Vedas, so rich in allusions to the pastoral economy.<sup>7</sup> More skeptical still was W. W. Greg, the first truly modern scholarly critic of pastoral poetry: rejecting the claims of the *Song of Solomon* and of primitive folk-ballads ("half articulate experiments") to the title of pastoral on the ground that "no common feature of a kind to form the basis of a scientific classification can be traced in the spontaneous shepherd-songs and their literary counterpart," Greg held that "only when the shepherd-songs ceased to be the outcome of unalloyed pastoral conditions did they become distinctively pastoral."<sup>8</sup>

A new impetus, however, was given to speculation about the ritual origin of bucolic poetry by Sir James Frazer, whose theories had in turn been anticipated already in certain respects by Mannhardt, Baudissin, Zimmern, and Dhorme.<sup>9</sup> In Part IV of *The Golden Bough* Frazer isolated and defined a number of common elements belonging to a type of cult which appears to have been widely distributed throughout the ancient Near East and which featured periodic mourning for the death of a god. Frazer associated these rites with the yearly withering of vegetation, with the loss (and wished-for renewal) of fertility in nature; moreover, he identified the vegetation-spirit worshipped in this ceremony with a figure prominent alike in Greek folklore and bucolic poetry—namely, Adonis. Frazer's choice of nomenclature, far from being merely the result of a

<sup>6</sup> Thomas G. Rosenmeyer, *The Green Cabinet: Theocritus and the European Pastoral Lyric* (Berkeley 1969) 30–31.

<sup>7</sup> Émile Egger, "De la poésie pastorale avant les poètes bucoliques," *Mémoires de la littérature ancienne* (Paris 1862) 242–68, esp. 242–44; Halperin, *Before Pastoral* 85.

<sup>8</sup> W. W. Greg, *Pastoral Poetry and Pastoral Drama: A Literary Inquiry with special reference to the Pre-Restoration Stage in England* (1906; rpt. New York 1959) 4–5.

<sup>9</sup> A critique of this entire tradition can be found in Burkert 99–100 with references. The major monuments are: W. Mannhardt, *Wald- und Feldkulte* (Berlin 1875–77); W. W. Baudissin, *Studien zur semitischen Religionsgeschichte* (Leipzig 1876–78) and *Adonis und Esmun* (Leipzig 1911); Heinrich Zimmern, "Sumerisch-babylonische Tamūz-lieder," *Berichte über die Verhandl. der Königl. Sächs. Gesell. der Wiss. zu Leipzig, Philol.-hist. Kl.* 59 (1907) 201–52 and "Der babylonische Gott Tamūz," *Abhandl. der philol.-hist. Kl. der Königl. Sächs. Gesell. der Wiss.* 27.20 (Leipzig 1909) 701–38; E. Dhorme, *La Religion assyro-babylonienne* (Paris 1910). On the enduring value of Zimmern's work, see Samuel Noah Kramer, *The Sacred Marriage Rite: Aspects of Faith, Myth, and Ritual in Ancient Sumer* (Bloomington 1969) 158, note 46; on Dhorme, see Jacobsen, *Toward the Image* 320, note 2.

cultural prejudice in favor of Hellenism, was firmly based on a traditional, authoritative usage. The identification of Adonis with an earlier, and similar, Semitic deity called Tammuz had become axiomatic by late antiquity:<sup>10</sup> when Jerome translated the passage in *Ezekiel* (8:13–14), in which the prophet wrathfully denounces the presence of women weeping for Tammuz at the north gate of the Temple, he rendered the Semitic name of that deity by *Adonis* in the Vulgate. Frazer pointed out that the name of the Greek divinity is formed from *adon* (“lord”), a Semitic cult epithet of the Phoenician god, Baal (whom Frazer also identified with Tammuz), and he went on to connect Adonis–Tammuz with the Sumerian god Dumuzi.<sup>11</sup> The latter had to remain a somewhat shadowy figure—the study of Sumerian texts, though no longer in its infancy, was still not very far advanced at the time of the composition of *The Golden Bough*<sup>12</sup>—but Frazer did manage to establish the existence of typological resemblances between Adonis and other deities featured in some of the earliest religious cults of the ancient Near East.

Much of Frazer’s work, of course, has long been discredited. In particular, Samuel Noah Kramer has strongly cautioned against “the facile identification of Dumuzi with Osiris, Attis, and Adonis.”<sup>13</sup> Rather, many Sumerologists tend to lay stress on the uniqueness and atypicality of Dumuzi, observing that his relation to Tammuz and to other deities in the Semitic pantheon remains problematic;<sup>14</sup> similarly, specialists in various fields of ancient Near Eastern culture emphasize the irreducible singularity and individuality of local phenomena.<sup>15</sup> The traditional interpretation of the Adonis–Tammuz cult as a fertility ritual, together with its more recent, sophisticated formulations by Theodor Gaster and Thorkild Jacobsen,<sup>16</sup> has lately met with a few words of curt dismissal from Walter

<sup>10</sup> See I. Trencsényi-Waldapfel, “Werden und Wesen der bukolischen Poesie,” *Acta antiqua* 14 (1966) 1–31, esp. 27–29.

<sup>11</sup> James George Frazer, *Adonis Attis Osiris: Studies in the History of Oriental Religion* (New York 1935<sup>3</sup>) I 6–12; cf. Burkert 105–6.

<sup>12</sup> For a brief and entertaining history of Sumerology, see Samuel Noah Kramer, *The Sumerians: Their History, Culture, and Character* (Chicago 1963) 3–32.

<sup>13</sup> Kramer, *Sacred Marriage* (above, note 9) 160, note 48; cf. Bendt Alster, “Dumuzi’s Dream”: *Aspects of Oral Poetry in a Sumerian Myth*, Mesopotamia (Copenhagen Studies in Assyriology) 1 (Copenhagen 1972) 9, note 2.

<sup>14</sup> Adam Falkenstein, *Compte Rendu du Troisième Rencontre Assyriologique Internationale* (1954) 41–65; A. Leo Oppenheim, *Ancient Mesopotamia: Portrait of a Dead Civilization*, rev. ed. by Erica Reiner (Chicago 1977) 196.

<sup>15</sup> Burkert 101, although Henry Frankfort, “Three Lectures. [1.] The Dying God,” *JWCI* 21 (1958) 141–51, whom Burkert cites, concedes the possibility of an interrelation: “But we find in Greece, for instance, that certain elements of the cults seem to be related to the older civilizations of Asia or of the Aegean. . . . And yet to deny survival in any form is surely absurd” (p. 150).

<sup>16</sup> Theodor H. Gaster, *Thespis: Ritual, Myth, and Drama in the Ancient Near East*, rev. ed. (New York 1961); Jacobsen, *Treasures*.

Burkert: "Frazer's 'god of vegetation' is post-classic allegory transformed into a genetic theory of religion; we may leave it to rhetoric and poetry from whence it sprang."<sup>17</sup> Burkert's objections are not intended, however, to obscure the real historical and typological connections between the cults of Adonis and Tammuz but rather to enable us to place our understanding of the transmission of ritual and myth from the Near East to Greece on a more secure footing. "As to Adonis," Burkert argues, "his case is the clearest example of a Semitic god adopted by the Greeks in the archaic period, and the Greeks knew it."<sup>18</sup> The identity of Adonis and Tammuz does not depend in Burkert's view on the supposed derivation of their cults from primitive fertility ritual but on the demonstrable presence in both the myths and the ceremonies associated with their worship of certain persistent elements or themes. In myth, Adonis-Tammuz is a young god, the *parhedros* (consort or lover) of the goddess of love, who dies and in some versions is restored to life. In ritual, he is the subject of lamentation by women in a festival which takes place every year in early summer. In both respects he bears a striking resemblance to Dumuzi, thereby raising important questions about the relation of Greek religion to the earliest cults of the ancient Near East.<sup>19</sup>

As our knowledge of Mesopotamian religion and literature increases and as the cuneiform texts gradually become accessible to non-specialists through translation, literary scholars may begin to speculate about the nature of the various connections between the early religious rituals or myths and the secular tradition of bucolic poetry.<sup>20</sup> Thirty years ago Frank Kermode noted a resemblance between the Twentieth Idyll in the Theocritean corpus and a recently translated Sumerian "Dispute between Dumuzi, the Shepherd-God, and Enkimdu, the Farmer-God"; both works seemed to contain the now-familiar *topos* of the scorned shepherd.<sup>21</sup> A decade and a half later the Hungarian scholar I. Trencsényi-Waldapfel, in the course of his attempt to revive and vindicate the scholiasts' derivation of bucolic poetry from popular religious ritual, linked a number of Greek folk-customs with earlier Near Eastern religious rites and even claimed to be able to demonstrate that both the cult and name

<sup>17</sup> Burkert 100.

<sup>18</sup> Burkert 105.

<sup>19</sup> See, generally, Burkert 102-11.

<sup>20</sup> For a welcome emphasis on the secular character of bucolic poetry, in opposition to the venerable scholiastic tendency to derive the origins of bucolic poetry from rustic cults or hymns, see Rosenmeyer (above, note 6) 34-35.

<sup>21</sup> Frank Kermode, ed., *English Pastoral Poetry from the Beginnings to Marvell: An Anthology* (1952; rpt. New York 1972) 19-20. Similarities between the "Dispute" and Idyll 20 are rather more prominent in Jacobsen's translation of the Sumerian text, quoted by Kermode from H. Frankfort, et al., *Before Philosophy: The Intellectual Adventure of Ancient Man* (Harmondsworth 1949) 180-82, than in Kramer's more recent version, published in *ANET*<sup>3</sup> 41-42.

of Daphnis are descended from those of Dumuzi.<sup>22</sup> The most careful effort to combine literary criticism of Theocritus with an inquiry into the Mesopotamian religious background of bucolic poetry can be found in an essay by Charles Segal,<sup>23</sup> who maintains that the Greek poet deliberately plays on the religious associations surrounding the rites of Adonis in *Idyll* 3.48. Segal's argument is sufficiently persuasive to convince the reader not only that Theocritus was familiar with the cult of Adonis—that conclusion follows naturally from the poet's exploitation of the Adonis festival for the setting and occasion of *Idyll* 15<sup>24</sup>—but also that he was interested in drawing on traditional elements in religious ritual for the purpose of creating his intended literary effects.<sup>25</sup>

Daphnis, meanwhile, had not been neglected. As early as the middle of the last century, K. F. Hermann interpreted the hero of the First *Idyll* as a symbol of winter overcome by the forces of fertility at the start of spring;<sup>26</sup> the intellectual trends which were to culminate in *The Golden Bough* further stimulated similar speculation about Daphnis on the part of the "nature-mythicists" (as Segal calls them).<sup>27</sup> But the most ambitious interpreter of Daphnis in the light of ancient Near Eastern parallels is William Berg.<sup>28</sup> In a section of his book entitled "The Forebears of Daphnis," Berg contends that Theocritus' Daphnis unites elements originally belonging to a variety of pastoral figures in early ritual and legend. Like Dumuzi and Tammuz, Daphnis sings his own lament; like Dumuzi,

<sup>22</sup> See above, note 10.

<sup>23</sup> Charles Segal, "Adonis and Aphrodite: Theocritus, *Idyll* III, 48," *AC* 38 (1969) 82–88 [= *Poetry and Myth* 66–72].

<sup>24</sup> There are also allusions to Adonis in *Idylls* 1.109 and 20.35–36, not to mention the *Lament for Adonis* ascribed to Bion or the *Εἰς Νεκρὸν Ἀδωνιν* included in a bucolic manuscript and ascribed at one time to Theocritus. See, generally, W. Atallah, *Adonis dans la littérature et l'art grecs* (Paris 1966) 105–35; Salvatore Nicosia, *Teocrito e l'arte figurata*, *Quaderni dell' Ist. di Filol. Greca della Univ. di Palermo* 5 (Palermo 1968) 46, note 76.

<sup>25</sup> Whether or not Ptolemy IV Philopator's tragedy *Adonis* exhibited a similar design is impossible to determine from the bare mention of that drama by a scholiast on Ar. *Th.* 1059 (Nauck, *TGF*<sup>2</sup>, p. 824): see Rudolf Pfeiffer, *History of Classical Scholarship from the Beginnings to the End of the Hellenistic Age* (Oxford 1968) 155.

<sup>26</sup> K. F. Hermann, *Disputatio de Daphnide Theocriti* (Göttingen 1853) 19–24, also connects Daphnis with Adonis.

<sup>27</sup> An interim survey of such interpretations is provided by Henry W. Prescott, "EBA POON (Theocritus, *Id.* 1.139, 140)," *CQ* 7 (1913) 176–87. Segal's comment on the value of this tradition can be found in his essay, "Since Daphnis Dies" (above, note 3) 12: "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>28</sup> The remainder of this paragraph and the paragraph following it represent a summary of Berg, 13, 17–20.

Tammuz, Adonis, and Attis, he is the subject of ritual mourning; like Dumuzi, Tammuz, Adonis, Attis, and Anchises, he is destroyed by a goddess who represents the generative principle in nature; and like Dumuzi, Tammuz, David, Anchises, Paris, and Orpheus, he is a great musician. Finally, like Dumuzi, Tammuz, David, Adonis, Attis, Anchises, Paris, Orpheus, and the historical Hesiod, Daphnis is a herdsman who encounters divinities in the isolation of a pastoral landscape.<sup>29</sup>

Theocritus' Daphnis is conscious of his *Greek* forebears, at any rate, and he points out his lineage to Aphrodite in Idyll 1.105–110 when he reminds her of her commerce with Anchises and Adonis. Daphnis' repulse of Aphrodite and the specific terms of his rebuke are most closely paralleled, as Berg observed, not by any extant Greek text but by a passage on the Sixth Tablet of the Gilgamesh Epic. After Gilgamesh and Enkidu kill the monster Huwawa and wash off the grime of battle, the goddess Ishtar is attracted by the beauty of Gilgamesh and invites him to be her lover. Gilgamesh vehemently rejects her offer and, after a mutilated speech in which he emphasizes his unfitness to wed divinity and calls Ishtar a brazier that goes out in the cold, a back door that does not keep out the wintry blast, and a shoe that pinches the foot of its owner, among other things, he reproaches her—as Daphnis reproaches Aphrodite—for her record of treacherousness in matters of love:

Which lover didst thou love forever?  
 Which of thy shepherds pleased [thee for all time]?  
 Come, and I will *na[me for thee]* thy lovers:  
 Of . . . [ . . . ] . . .  
 For Tammuz, the lover of thy youth,  
 Thou hast ordained wailing year after year.  
 Having loved the dappled shepherd-bird,  
 Thou smotest him, breaking his wing.  
 In the grooves (*sic*) he sits, crying *kappi* ("My wing!"). . . .  
 Then thou lovedst the keeper of the herd,  
 Who ash-cakes ever did heap up for thee,  
 Daily slaughtered kids for thee;  
 Yet thou smotest him, turning him into a wolf,  
 So that his own herd boys drive him off,  
 And his dogs bite his thighs. . . .  
 If thou shouldst love me, thou wouldst [treat me] like them.  
 (VI, 42–50, 58–63, 79)<sup>30</sup>

Just as Gilgamesh enumerates several pastoral figures betrayed by Ishtar, so Daphnis reminds Aphrodite of her unhappy love-affairs with Greek

<sup>29</sup> Other pastoral figures, omitted by Berg, who might be included in this list of parallels are discussed by A. Kambylis, "Zur 'Dichterweihe' des Archilochos," *Hermes* 91 (1963) 129–50 and by Halperin, *Before Pastoral* 95–99.

<sup>30</sup> ANET<sup>3</sup> 84. Although I am obliged to quote from the Assyrian version, I assume that this passage had an antecedent in the Old Babylonian version of the Epic.

herdsmen: he actually speaks of Adonis as pasturing flocks (ἐπεὶ καὶ μῆλα νομεύει, 109) and he locates Anchises on Mount Ida (ἔρπε ποτ' Ἰδαν, ἔρπε ποτ' Ἀγχίσαν, 105–106), the lonely place where the goddess had first observed Anchises and where she seduced him, satisfied her desire, and then destroyed his manhood (according to the Homeric *Hymn to Aphrodite*, 53 ff.).

Not surprisingly, the treacherousness of the love-goddess is a recurrent theme in legends associated with the cult of dying gods. The tradition of Ishtar's deceitfulness may even go back all the way to Sumerian sources. Kramer has repeatedly called attention to the possible connection between a passage in a *sagid* belonging to the corpus of Sumerian sacred marriage texts in which Dumuzi calls Inanna—the goddess of fertility and his own consort—"most deceitful of women" (*dinanna lul-la-munus-e-ne*) and Gilgamesh's similar characterization of Ishtar in the passage quoted above from the Sixth Tablet of the Gilgamesh Epic.<sup>31</sup> The role of Gilgamesh as possible successor to Dumuzi–Tammuz in the affections of the love-goddess, which the passage from the Gilgamesh Epic seems to imply, may have encouraged the conflation of the two figures: certain laments, which may be dated as early as the first half of the second millennium B.C., mention Gilgamesh as a form of the dying god Dumuzi, and associations between the two continue to crop up in an interesting variety of contexts.<sup>32</sup>

The Gilgamesh Epic, then, furnishes us with a source which combines the motif of Ishtar's deceitfulness in love, proper to myths surrounding the cults of dying gods, with the motif of resisting the goddess and rebuking her for her behavior, a heroic gesture more congenial (perhaps) to the spirit of the epic narrative; this combination reappears in Daphnis' denunciation of Aphrodite in Idyll 1. Gilgamesh actually seems to know of another story which unites the motif of Ishtar's attempted seduction and subsequent punishment of a rural figure with the motif of heroic defiance:

Then thou lovedst Ishullanu, thy father's gardener,  
 Who baskets of dates ever did bring to thee,  
 And daily did brighten thy table.  
 Thine eyes raised at him, thou didst go to him:  
 "O my Ishullanu, let us taste of thy vigor!  
 Put forth thy 'hand' and touch our 'modesty!'"  
 Ishullanu said to thee:  
 "What dost thou want with me?  
 Has my mother not baked, have I not eaten,  
 That I should taste the food of stench and foulness?"

<sup>31</sup> Samuel Noah Kramer, "Cuneiform Studies and the History of Literature: The Sumerian Sacred Marriage Texts," *Proc. Amer. Phil. Soc.* 107.6 (1963) 499–500 and *Sacred Marriage* (above, note 9) 155, note 12.

<sup>32</sup> Jacobsen, *Treasures* 210–11.



Does reed-work afford cover against the cold?"  
 As thou didst hear this [his talk],  
 Thou smotest him and turn[edst] him into a *mole*.  
 Thou placedst him in the midst of . . . [ . . . ];  
 He cannot go up . . . nor can he come down. . . .

(GE, Tablet VI, 64–78)<sup>33</sup>

How might such a tradition have been transmitted to the Greeks? There are, to be sure, many possible answers to this question. But one important clue to the intermediate stages in this hypothetical process of dissemination and adaptation may be provided by a Phoenician myth recorded among the texts excavated in the 1920s by the French at Ras Shamra, ancient Ugarit.<sup>34</sup> It concerns the Canaanite hero Aqhat and the warrior-goddess Anath who seems to correspond with Ishtar in several of her aspects. Anath asks Aqhat to give her his bow, promising him first wealth, then (after receiving an initial rebuff) immortality.

But Aqhat the Youth answers:  
 "Fib not to me, O Maiden;  
     For to a Youth thy fibbing is *loathsome*.  
 Further life—how can a mortal attain it?  
     How can mortal attain life enduring?" (AQHT A vi 34–36)<sup>35</sup>

Her purpose thwarted, Anath arranges for Aqhat to be killed, promising (falsely) that she will revive him. But then she has a change of heart, and just as Aphrodite tries too late to restore Daphnis in the First Idyll (τὸν δ' Ἀφροδίτα / ἤθελ' ἀνορθῶσαι· τὰ γε μὰν λίνα πάντα λελοίπει / ἐκ Μοιρᾶν, 138–140), so Anath regrets her act and vainly wishes she could undo it.

Anath, [seeing] his vigor extinguished—  
     [The vigor of] Aqhat—doth weep.  
 "Woe! [Would] I could heal [thy corse]!  
 'Twas but for [thy bow I slew thee,  
     'Twas but for] thy *darts*.  
     But thou, would thou didst [live]. . . ." (AQHT B iv 38–43)<sup>36</sup>

<sup>33</sup> ANET<sup>3</sup> 84.

<sup>34</sup> On the importance of Ugarit as a link between the literary cultures of Greece and the ancient Near East, see Cyrus H. Gordon, *The Common Background of Greek and Hebrew Civilizations* (New York 1965) and *Ugarit and Minoan Crete: The Bearing of Their Texts on the Origins of Western Culture* (New York 1966).

<sup>35</sup> ANET<sup>3</sup> 151. Gordon, *Ugarit* (above, note 34) 127, translates: "But Aqhat the Hero replies: 'Do not beguile me, O Virgin! For to a hero thy lies are loathsome! As for man, what does he get as his destiny? What does man get as his fate?'"

<sup>36</sup> ANET<sup>3</sup> 153. Gordon's version (*Ugarit* [above, note 34] 130–31) differs slightly:

Anath, as her soldier strikes Aqhat  
     [The Progenitress of Heroes] weeps [saying]:  
 "[Aqhat] I shall repair  
 Yea for [the bow was he smitten]

Aqhat's death causes vegetation to wither and Baal, the rain-god, to fail. The end of the myth is not preserved, but according to its translator, H. L. Ginsberg, no doubt "some modus was found for restoring Aqhat to his father, perhaps only for half—the fertile half—of the year. The familiar Adonis–Tammuz theme."<sup>37</sup>

The Phoenicians, then, possessed a heroic narrative which also included a dying god legend. They replaced the attempted seduction of the hero by the goddess with a different kind of transaction which emphasizes the goddess's martial aspect; Daphnis reminds us that Aphrodite, too, had once tried to play a warrior's role when he recalls, in deliberately Homeric language, the story of her wounding by Diomedes in the *Iliad* (αὖτις ὅπως στασῇ Διομήδεος ἄσσον ἰοῖσα, / καὶ λέγε "τὸν βούταν νικῶ Δάφνιν, ἀλλὰ μάχευ μοι" Idyll 1.112–13).<sup>38</sup> The Ugaritic narrative thus helps to confirm the prevalence in ancient Near Eastern texts of the story-pattern also found in Idyll 1. Furthermore, by providing an example of an epic narrative occupying a transitional place between the Sumero-Akkadian version of the dying god myth and the secularized, heroic treatment accorded Daphnis by Theocritus, the Ugaritic tale illustrates one kind of possible bridge between Idyll 1 and legends of the Adonis–Tammuz type.

Once Theocritus' Daphnis is seen in the light of his Near Eastern forebears, his much-discussed relation to Hippolytus<sup>39</sup> and to other rebellious or defiant heroes<sup>40</sup> takes on a new and more precise meaning. The basis of the resemblance between Daphnis and Hippolytus has nothing to do with the issue of chastity, which has been quite perversely foisted upon Theocritus' treatment of the Daphnis myth by modern interpreters of the First Idyll<sup>41</sup> and which, as Burkert contends, is inessential to an understanding of the traditional elements in the legend of Hippolytus.

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[Only indeed for] the arc

But thou shalt surely [live       ]."

<sup>37</sup> ANET<sup>3</sup> 155.

<sup>38</sup> Segal, "Since Daphnis Dies" (above, note 3) 16–17. Pausanias 2.5.1 alludes to the presence on the Acrocorinth of a temple of "armed Aphrodite," a martial deity to whom prayers for the safety of the city were addressed: see Lionel Pearson, *Popular Ethics in Ancient Greece* (Stanford 1962) 210, note 1.

<sup>39</sup> The identification of Daphnis with Hippolytus appears to have been proposed first by Gustav Adolf Gebauer, *De Poetarum Graecorum Bucolicorum imprimis Theocriti Carminibus in Eclogis a Vergilio adumbratis particula prima* (Leipzig 1856), and it has recently been revived by Gow (above, note 1) II 2 and by Lawall (above, note 3) 19–22. For references to the scholarly debate over the issue, see Ogilvie (above, note 2) 106–7 and Schmidt (above, note 2) 540–41.

<sup>40</sup> See above, note 3.

<sup>41</sup> Arguments against the critical tendency to view Daphnis as a martyr to chastity can be found in Hermann (above, note 26) 13–19; Legrand (above, note 2) 146–48; and in the articles by Ogilvie, Schmidt, and Williams (above, note 2). Segal, "Since Daphnis Dies" (above, note 3) 11–12 tries to strike a balance.

Myth consists of a sequence of actions; the main “actant” in this case is the goddess Aphrodite; her representative on the human level is Queen Phaedra, the “shining,” who falls in love, offers herself, and kills her lover when he despises her. Hippolytus’ character is designed to meet this action program. The action of Aphrodite/Phaedra, however, is practically identical to what Inanna does to Dumuzi, or Agdistis/Cybele to Attis, though the motives are different; closer still is the myth about Astarte pursuing the hunter Ešmun.<sup>42</sup>

The song of Thyrsis in Idyll 1 offers a version of the Daphnis legend that conforms to this familiar pattern. Daphnis despises Aphrodite and had boasted of defeating the power of love (97); in revenge, Aphrodite destroys him, as Daphnis himself acknowledges (113). He recalls the fate of Anchises and Adonis, while she maintains that he has been defeated by the power of love (98). As in the case of Hippolytus, so in the First Idyll Aphrodite does not kill the hero directly but chooses instead to destroy him through the erotic intrigues of a human representative (the precise details of the story, of course, remain obscure). Daphnis’ resistance and death are subsequently commemorated, as Berg emphasized, in the traditional form of a ritual lament.

Finally, I should mention, for whatever it is worth, that there exist Sumerian versions of the Dumuzi story in which the god dies by being swept into the Underworld in the current of a river—the “death by water” motif<sup>43</sup> also present (despite some dispute) in the First Idyll: *χὼ Δάφνις ἔβα ῥόον. ἔκλυσε δίνα / τὸν Μοίσαϊς φίλον ἄνδρα . . .* (140–41).<sup>44</sup> To escape his pursuers Dumuzi runs to the river, flings off his clothes, leaving some on thorns and others on the ground, and tries to swim across to the other bank where his wife, Inanna, and his mother, Duttur, are waiting. But the river is rising in flood, and Dumuzi can only reach out helplessly to the women with a futile and pitiful gesture.

At the apple tree of the great dike  
in the desert of Emush,  
there did the boat-wrecking waters  
carry the lad into Hades,

<sup>42</sup> Burkert 111. For a further discussion of both Hellenic and Near Eastern parallels, see Jeffrey A. White, “Bellerophon in the ‘Land of Nod’: Some Notes on *Iliad* 6.153–211,” *AJP* 103 (1982) 119–27, esp. 122–24. I have not seen J. Fontenrose, *Orion: The Myth of the Hunter and the Huntress*, U. Cal. Publ. Class. Stud. 23 (Berkeley 1981).

<sup>43</sup> Charles Segal, “Death by Water: A Narrative Pattern in Theocritus (*Idylls* 1, 13, 22, 23),” *Hermes* 102 (1974) 20–38 [= *Poetry and Myth* 47–65], speaks of “the primitive resonances of his [i.e., Theocritus’] material” (p. 23), but he does not discuss Near Eastern parallels.

<sup>44</sup> For references to the scholarly debate over the meaning of these lines, see Prescott (above, note 27); Gow (above, note 1) II 30–31 *ad loc.*; Segal, “Death by Water” (above, note 43) 24 with notes and “Since Daphnis Dies” (above, note 3) 1–2; recently, Heather White, “A Case of ‘Arte Allusiva’ in Theocritus: Additional Note,” *AC* 47 (1978) 165–67.

did the boat-wrecking waters  
 carry Inanna's husband into Hades.<sup>45</sup>

Several other minor parallels between Daphnis and Dumuzi have already received some attention elsewhere and they can therefore be omitted from this discussion.<sup>46</sup>

For there are other connections to be made besides thematic connections, other sorts of parallels to be drawn besides narrative parallels, between the figure of Daphnis as he is portrayed in the First Idyll and earlier pastoral figures of the ancient Near East. In a famous essay entitled "Toward the Image of Tammuz," and more recently in *The Treasures of Darkness*, Thorkild Jacobsen has isolated several qualities belonging to Tammuz–Dumuzi, some of which are shared, in his opinion, by other cult figures in early (i.e., fourth millennium) Mesopotamian religion. It is possible to generate a typology from Jacobsen's analysis that will account for several of the peculiar features in the figure of Daphnis as he appears in the Idylls and in the work of Theocritus' contemporaries. The most important of these common characteristics are "intransitiveness," "ethical neutrality," "youthfulness," "belovedness," "defenselessness and suffering," and "attractiveness to women." Each will require some brief explanation.

"Intransitiveness" tends to characterize the deities worshipped in the earliest Mesopotamian cults (i.e., those dating from the fourth millennium), according to Jacobsen, who also expresses the concept by such terms as "boundness" or "localization."

It is characteristic for Sumerian religion, especially in its older phases, that the human reaction to the experience of the numinous remained singularly bound by the situation in which the numinous was encountered, and by some central phenomenon or group of phenomena in it particularly. The numinous appears to be immediately and unreflectingly apprehended as a power in, underlying, and willing the phenomenon, as a power within it for it to come into being, to unfold in this its particular and distinctive form. In consequence the phenomenon largely circumscribes the power, for the numinous will and direction appear as fulfilled in the phenomenon and do not significantly transgress it. This boundness to a phenomenon one might describe with a grammatical metaphor as intransitivity; it is found typically in . . . deities [that] are little more than active principles underlying certain specific forms, numinous powers for certain things to be . . . ; they act not, they suffer not, they appear, are, and vanish only.<sup>47</sup>

In other words, the numinous powers inherent in nature are expressed in a specific situation or locale (such as an animal, tool, or foodstuff) and

<sup>45</sup> Jacobsen, *Treasures* 51.

<sup>46</sup> Trencsényi-Waldapfel (above, note 10) 30–31.

<sup>47</sup> Jacobsen, *Toward the Image* 2–3; see also *ibid.*, pp. 320–21, note 3, sub-paragraph 4, and *Treasures* 9–11.

have a narrowly defined function. "The power that is the god is not only immanent in the phenomenon; it is curiously bound, curiously circumscribed by it."<sup>48</sup> The god's role is to manifest himself through the specific entity which is the vehicle of his power. "The deity made no demands, did not act, merely came into being, was, and ceased being in and with its characteristic phenomenon."<sup>49</sup> This seems to have been an abiding feature of the cult of Tammuz. Other Mesopotamian deities, although their earliest cults may have displayed qualities of "intransitiveness," came to "transcend the limits of the phenomenon with which they are associated in that they will and act beyond it, they are powers broadly active in human life, guiding and shaping human history."<sup>50</sup> These gods "are rulers of cities and countries, they lend help in war, or they destroy in anger their own cities. Man can turn to them for aid in sickness and in health; they make moral demands on him and enforce them. Correspondingly their mythology is replete with will and action, with deeds done, things created and achieved."<sup>51</sup> The intransitivity of Tammuz, then, appears to reflect the character of the earliest stratum of Mesopotamian religious feeling.

Thus, Dumuzi, whom Jacobsen associates with "the power of fertility and new life in the spring" or with the sustaining and preserving "power to life" of food in general,<sup>52</sup> manifests himself and achieves complete fulfillment of his power solely by his presence. "In all we know of Dumuzi from hymns, laments, myth, and ritual, there is no instance in which the god acts, orders, or demands; he merely is or is not."<sup>53</sup> Similarly, scholars have often remarked the essential passivity of Theocritus' Daphnis—he is less a personality or a force than he is the genius of the landscape, an embodiment of natural plenitude. According to Segal, at least, Daphnis represents the power of art as a harmonizing catalyst in nature and his presence signifies an accord between plants, animals, men, and gods.<sup>54</sup> The Ode of Thyrsis in Idyll 1 is not preoccupied with Daphnis' deeds, with his *gesta*, but with his intrinsic meaning and value: the singer's attitude conspires with the traditional religious pattern to accentuate Daphnis' "innocent self-centeredness"—to borrow Jacobsen's phrase for Tammuz.<sup>55</sup> Prayers to such a deity are not appeals for propitious intervention in one's own affairs

<sup>48</sup> Jacobsen, *Toward the Image* 75.

<sup>49</sup> Jacobsen, *Treasures* 9.

<sup>50</sup> Jacobsen, *Toward the Image* 321.

<sup>51</sup> Jacobsen, *Toward the Image* 76.

<sup>52</sup> Jacobsen, *Treasures* 10; see also *Toward the Image* 28–29 and 73–74.

<sup>53</sup> Jacobsen, *Treasures* 10.

<sup>54</sup> Charles P. Segal, *Landscape in Ovid's Metamorphoses: A Study in the Transformations of a Literary Symbol*, Hermes Einzelschr. 23 (Wiesbaden 1969) 75; Halperin, *Before Pastoral* 220.

<sup>55</sup> Jacobsen, *Toward the Image* 75.

but are simply “requests that he will more copiously express his own being.”<sup>56</sup> Virgil furnishes us with an example of such a prayer in Menalcas’ apostrophe to Daphnis in Eclogue 5.65: *sis bonus o felixque tuis!*

This emphasis on the beneficent presence of the deity contributes to the force of the “Where’er you walk” motif, a staple of ancient and modern pastoral alike. Not surprisingly, this motif can be found as early as the Sumerian hymn to the grain-goddess Nidaba, which Jacobsen cites as an example of divine intransitiveness.

Nidaba, where you are not heaped up  
people are not settled, cities not built,  
no palace is built, no king raised to office,  
the gods’ handwashings (before offerings) are not performed  
correctly  
Nidaba, where you are not near  
no cattle pen is built, no sheepfold constructed,  
and the shepherd soothes not the heart with his reed pipe.<sup>57</sup>

The same motif is implicit in the universal lament for Daphnis in Idyll 1, with its overtones of cosmic disaster and sterility, and it is most fully expressed in Idyll 8.41–48:

MENALKAΣ ἔνθ’ οἷς, ἔνθ’ αἶγες διδυματοκοί, ἔνθα μέλισσαι  
σμῆνεα πληροῦσιν, καὶ δρύες ὑψίτεραι,  
ἔνθ’ ὁ καλὸς Μίλων βαίνει ποσίν· αἱ δ’ ἂν ἀφέρπη,  
χῶ ποιμὴν ξηρὸς τηνόθι καὶ βοτάναι.  
ΔΑΦΝΙΣ παντᾶ ἔαρ, παντᾶ δὲ νομοί, παντᾶ δὲ γάλακτος  
οὔθ’ αὖτα πιδῶσιν, καὶ τὰ νέα τράφεται,  
ἔνθα καλὰ Ναῖς ἐπινίσσεται· αἱ δ’ ἂν ἀφέρπη,  
χῶ τὰς βῶς βόσκων καὶ βόες αὐότεραι.

In this very dependence of the pastoral landscape itself upon love, Berg saw a continuation of the ancient fertility motif.<sup>58</sup>

From the intransitiveness of Tammuz follows also his ethical neutrality, which is expressed, in turn, by his youthfulness. Jacobsen articulates the connection thus:

The fact that the power in Tammuz in the various aspects of the god has this pronounced intransitive, self-contained character removes it curiously from the moral sphere. It is not to be feared, or lauded, or blamed, for what it does; it does nothing, it interferes not in human life. . . . This aspect of the power in Tammuz as being rather than doing, as having no responsibilities, innocently self-centered, yet pleasing and attractive, is very finely expressed in its symbolization as a

<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

<sup>57</sup> Jacobsen, *Treasures* 10.

<sup>58</sup> Berg 21. See also Virgil’s imitation (Eclogue 7.53–56): “stant et iuniperi et castaneae hirsutae, / strata iacent passim sua quaeque sub arbore poma, / omnia nunc ridet: at si formosus Alexis / montibus his abeat uideas et flumina sicca.”

young boy, a youth, a symbol shared by all the aspects of Tammuz. In the youth, attractive for what he is, not for anything he has done or may do, unformed by responsibilities, still part of nature, immediate as a young animal, the element of sheer being, of intransitiveness, in Tammuz finds its right human form.<sup>59</sup>

Similar aspects of Daphnis and other bucolic characters are often emphasized by Theocritus and Virgil, who like to allude to their youthfulness, calling them *παῖδες* or *pueri* (e.g., Idylls 1.47, 50; 6.2–3; 8.3, 28–29, 61, 81, 88; 11.9; 20.39, 41; Eclogues 1.45; 3.111; 5.49; 6.14, 24; 7.4; 9.66).<sup>60</sup> Jacobsen continues:

Though Tammuz is a male god, proper manly virtues such as one finds exemplified and celebrated in, for instance, the early epical texts—courage, resourcefulness, steadfastness—are in him almost conspicuously lacking. When he is attacked, or merely fears that he may be attacked, he takes to his heels with no thought of offering resistance. . . . On any and all occasions he will weep in complete and abandoned self-pity, turning freely for help and comfort to the women around him, his mother and sister. Even to male relations his approach is basically the same.<sup>61</sup>

Readers of the First Idyll will recall that in it Daphnis appeals for pity and comfort to wild animals, to the river Arethusa, to Pan, and to the world of nature generally. His utter defenselessness and vulnerability emerge even more clearly in a version of the myth dramatized by Sositheus, a member of the Alexandrian Pleiad and a younger contemporary of Theocritus. Sositheus told how Daphnis competed with Menalcas, was judged victorious by Pan, and was awarded the hand of a Nymph, Thalea, as a prize; when the Nymph was stolen from him by the ogre Lityerses Daphnis tried to rescue her, was condemned to death, and had to be rescued in turn by Heracles, who saved him in the nick of time.<sup>62</sup>

<sup>59</sup> Jacobsen, *Toward the Image* 76. Cf. Sigmund Freud, "On Narcissism: An Introduction," *Standard Edition*, ed. J. Strachey (London 1953–74) XIV 88–91.

<sup>60</sup> On the significance of youthfulness in Virgilian and later pastoral, see Berg 115, 121; Renato Poggioli, *The Oaten Flute: Essays on Pastoral Poetry and the Pastoral Ideal* (Cambridge, Mass. 1975) 48.

<sup>61</sup> Jacobsen, *Toward the Image* 91; on Adonis as the antithesis of the warrior-hero, see Marcel Detienne, *The Gardens of Adonis: Spices in Greek Mythology*, trans. Janet Lloyd (Atlantic Highlands, N.J. 1977) 67.

<sup>62</sup> On Sositheus' lost drama, see Nauck *TGF*<sup>2</sup>, pp. 821–23. The story is related by Servius *ad Verg. Buc.* 8.68 but he does not credit Sositheus with this version of the Daphnis myth; Sositheus is given proper acknowledgment by the scholia *ad Theoc.* 8, *arg. b.* and 93a (Wendel) for telling the story of the contest with Menalcas, but no mention is made of Heracles. The sources were matched up by Hermann (above, note 26) 6, note 23, and by Otto Jahn, "Satura," *Hermes* 3 (1869) 175–92, section 23 (pp. 180–81). Jahn also noted similarities between Sositheus' *Daphnis* and Euripides' *Alkestis*; on Sositheus as the author of satyr-plays, see T. B. L. Webster, "Alexandrian Epigrams and the Theatre" in *Miscellanea di studi alessandrini in mem. di Augusto Rostagni* (Turin 1963) 531–43, esp.

Far from alienating the affection of his relatives and worshippers, the very helplessness and weakness of Tammuz actually seem to increase his "belovedness."

Tammuz, intransitive and self-contained, in sheer "being" and "not being" exerts an influence as strong as any he could have exerted through action, because he is loved. It is this love for him that is the mainspring of his cult and perhaps of his divinity: man wants nothing from him except what the lover wants from the beloved, that he be, so that the heart, enticed and taken captive, may dote on him and worship. We may thus add to the symbolization of Tammuz as a young boy the essential qualification "beloved," which renders his significance. He is a beloved lad.<sup>63</sup>

Dumuzi's name may mean perhaps "the true son"<sup>64</sup> or "the good child"<sup>65</sup> and his belovedness seems to be bound up with his identity as a child, carrying with it a sense of "defenselessness and suffering, which invite feelings of pity and compassion allied to those of love."<sup>66</sup> These childlike qualities suggest to Jacobsen a motive for the constituency of the cult of Tammuz as it is described by Ezekiel: the beloved, dependent, vulnerable, charming, and childish character of Tammuz would have appealed principally to women. The god's association with his female relatives and with female worshippers is therefore no accident.

The cult was primarily, perhaps exclusively, a woman's cult. . . . The great events celebrated are the great events in a woman's life: the wedding, which . . . must be seen through the eyes of the bride; and death, which is the death of husband, son, brother. And as the participation of the community of worshippers in the wedding was expressed through the figure of the bride, so it finds expression in the laments through the figures of the mother, the sister, and the widow. Male representatives such as a sorrowing father or brother are absent and find no place. . . .

The attitude of mother and sister as they search for the dead god is throughout one of pure maternal instinct, as if they were searching for a small child who had become lost. They have but one thought: he is not there. . . . Nothing else comes to awareness. Thus in this single, all-pervasive maternal instinct to find Tammuz, to be with him and mother him, is not only any sense of his otherness as ghost not permitted to register; every awareness of him as a power, a deity, has likewise vanished. In fact, the very nature of the love for him insists on his helplessness; he is the more loved for his helplessness and weakness. Thus in an almost complete reversal of the normal roles of god and worshiper it is the god who is powerless. He

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536–37. References are in Reitzenstein (above, note 2) 258–60 and in Rosenmeyer (above, note 6) 39 and notes.

<sup>63</sup> Jacobsen, *Toward the Image* 77.

<sup>64</sup> Frazer (above, note 11) I 8.

<sup>65</sup> Alster (above, note 13) 12. Jacobsen argues for an alternate interpretation of the name in *Toward the Image* 322, note 6, and in so doing discusses the philological evidence.

<sup>66</sup> Jacobsen, *Toward the Image* 91.



clings to mother and sister. . . . In part, this closeness and intimacy in the response traces . . . to the general closeness and intimacy of emotional experience in the woman's world, the home, which is the inner horizon of the cult.<sup>67</sup>

The appeal of Tammuz to women recalls the constituency of the related cult of Damu, "the Child," who was lamented by women,<sup>68</sup> and, notably, the cult of Adonis, whose female celebrants (portrayed by Theocritus in Idyll 15, together with occasional men scattered in the crowd) may have expressed a fuller range of erotic emotion than Jacobsen allows.<sup>69</sup> Daphnis, of course, is the beloved figure *par excellence*; moreover, he was beloved and lamented by women: Thyrsis wonders at the absence of the Nymphs, implying that they would have saved Daphnis if they could (or if they had been in Sicily at the time of his death), and at each refrain he invites the Muses to join with him in his bucolic lament. Daphnis is beloved of both the Muses and the Nymphs; it is surely no accident that his epitaph in the Ode of Thyrsis reads τὸν Μοῖσαις φίλον ἄνδρα, τὸν οὐ Νύμφαισιν ἀπεχθῆ (141). Berg observes that the poet's relation to the love-theme became increasingly self-conscious until the role of the love-goddess "was eventually usurped by the Muse herself, the rightful mistress of the poet's garden."<sup>70</sup> It is, after all, this high degree of artistic self-consciousness which, more than anything else, separates the creations of Theocritus and his successors from what Greg called "the spontaneous shepherd-songs" and from what we have come to see as an ancient and distinctive religious and literary tradition.

How does a study of ancient Near Eastern cults aid in elucidating the First Idyll of Theocritus? There is obviously no question of direct literary influence on the Greek bucolic poets of Mesopotamian religious texts: the intervals of time separating Theocritus from the Sumerian and even from the Akkadian hymnographers are too vast, even if the Phoenicians may have served as intermediaries at certain points. To be sure, one need not claim any familiarity on the part of Theocritus with pre-Hellenic sources: it is doubtless more attractive to posit a vague continuity of religious tradition or a substratal inheritance comprising both ritual and mythology, as Burkert's study suggests; perhaps the ceremonies surrounding the worship of dying gods proved especially tenacious, whether such worship owes its origin to the hunt or to agriculture. (The offerings of milk and olive oil made to Daphnis in Eclogue 5 may indicate that Virgil regarded him as a

<sup>67</sup> Ibid. 90–91, 96, 98.

<sup>68</sup> Jacobsen, *Toward the Image* 24–25; on the relation of Damu to Dumuzi, see *Toward the Image* 324, note 8; on the differences between them, see *Toward the Image* 336, note 6.

<sup>69</sup> On the role of women in the Adonis cult, see, generally, Frazer (above, note 11) I 223–59; on the relation of the Adonis festival to female sexuality, see Detienne (above, note 61) 60–122.

<sup>70</sup> Berg 22.

rustic deity descended from a *primaeval* age.) The festival of Adonis, at any rate, certainly preserved elements of the cult of Tammuz, and Theocritus, for whatever reason, took a lively interest in it; perhaps in composing the First Idyll he did nothing more than adapt his portrait of Daphnis to the traditional image of Adonis. Apropos of Idyll 3, Segal has argued that both Theocritus and Bion, in their treatments of Adonis, “are aware of these strata of myth and take special pleasure in incorporating into their sophisticated, self-deprecatory grace of verse the primitive seriousness of the tale. But in Theocritus’ Third *Idyll* more of that primitive seriousness shows through; and the discrepancy thus created is part of the basic program of the poem. . . . It is no mean achievement of Theocritus’ refined art that his elegant, distanced humor can incorporate such material.”<sup>71</sup> A similar contention might be made for Idyll 1. My purpose is not to claim that an understanding or awareness of the ancient Near Eastern religious context unlocks the literary interpretation of the poem—far from it! But a recognition of the “religious aura” still clinging to Daphnis in Idyll 1, however its presence is accounted for, may help to eliminate certain obstacles to the interpretation of his obscure erotic predicament, and may even help to explain Theocritus’ success in fashioning him into the presiding genius of the Sicilian landscape. If our interpretation of the First Idyll changes at all as a result of this inquiry, it should do so by assigning to Theocritus greater credit for skill, originality, and sophistication in adapting traditional material to a novel artistic purpose.

<sup>71</sup> Segal, “Adonis and Aphrodite” (above, note 23) 87–88.