

Greek Winter School 2025

Theokritos: Idyll I.

Brief Notes. (P.G. Brown)



Commentaries and Editions:

Theocritus, A.S.F. Gow, 2 volumes, 2nd edition 1965.

Theocritus, H. Kynaston, 1892.

Theocritus: A Selection, R. Hunter, 1999.

Theocritus: Select Poems, K.J. Dover, 1987 edition.

A Hellenistic Anthology, N. Hopkinson, 1988. (Contains Idyll 2).

The Idylls of Theocritus, R.J. Cholmeley, 1896.

Theocriti Reliquiae, T. Kiessling, 1819. (Contains the Scholia).

The following notes are taken from the above, especially from Hunter and Dover.

There are translations by A. Lang, 1941, James Hallard, 1894, R.C. Trevelyan, 1947.

Idyll 1.

Notes:

For the various myths and stories about Daphnis, see Hunter pp. 64ff.

Lines 1-6:

1. ψιθύρισμα - 'whistling', perhaps better 'rustling (of leaves)'.



5. καταρρεῖ - lit. 'flows down to'.

6. χίμαρος - 'young she goat'.

The meaning of the line is 'as long as she has not yet grown up to bear a kid herself.'

Lines 7-11:

7. καταχής - 'flowing'.



Lines 12-14:

13. ὡς-`where', dialect.



Figure 1. Tamarisk tree in Athens.

Lines 15-17:

17. τανίκα - `at that time'.

Lines 18-23:

19. Note that piping will upset the resting god, but singing appears to be fine.

20. `reaching mastery in bucolic song'.

21. Priapos is the son of Dionysos and Aphrodite.



Figure 2. Priapos.

22. Hunter reads Κρανιάδων - 'Statues of the spring nymphs', for the manuscript κρανίδων - 'springs'.

26. 'produces two pails of milk in addition (to the milk for her kids)'.

Lines 27-61: Ekphrasis. The cup shows the three ages of man and is modelled on the shield of Achilles.

27. κεκλυσμένον - technical word for sealing the wood to protect it from the wine.

30. 'priding itself in its saffron fruit'.



Figure 3. Helichryse.

31. κατ' αὐτόν - 'along the helichryse'.

33. ἀσκητός - 'adorned'.

34. ἐθειράζω - 'to wear the hair long'.

37. ποτὶ τὸν - 'to the other'.

38. κυλοιδιόωντες - 'with hollow eyes'. Hunter renders 'with bags under their eyes' from lack of sleep.

40. σπεύδων - 'exerting himself'.



Figure 4. The cup.

42. 'you would say that he was fishing with all the strength of this limbs'.

43. ὠδήκωντι - perfect. ind. active, 3rd p. pl.

45. Lit. 'it is a little how much distance from', i.e. 'very close to'.

46. περκνος - 'dusty', but the codices read πυρναίαις.

48. ὄρχος - 'row of vines'.

49. τρώξιμον - 'the edible (grapes)'.

51-2. Corrupt. The sense is probably 'until she has caused the boy to sit having breakfasted (ἀκράτιστον) upon dry food', i.e. she has stolen his cheese, leaving only bread. Note the verb ἀκρατίζεσθαι - 'to have breakfast' from which this adjective must be derived.

52. ἀνθερίκοισι - 'asphodel stalks'.



Figure 5. Flowering stalk of asphodel.

55. περιπέπταται - 'is spread around', perfect pass. <περιπετάννυμι
 ὑγρός - 'supple'.

56b. 'it would amaze your heart as a wonder'. Sc. ἔστι.

57. 'the ferryman from Kalynda', an island off the NW coast of Kos.

58. ὦνον - 'price'.

τυρόεντα - meaning uncertain, but possibly a bread made using cheese.
 See Gow and Hunter ad loc.

60. ἄχραντον - 'uncontaminated, unstained'.

60b. 'I would gladly please you with it'.

Lines 62-63:

63. ἐκλελάθοντα - 'which causes forgetfulness'.

Lines 64-94: The Song of Thyrsis. The song is broken by three different strains,
 but the manuscript tradition is not secure on their exact placing.

65b. sc. ἔστι.

67ff. Daphnis is in Sicily, but the Nymphs are said to be in northern Greece.
 Pindos is a mountain range in northern Greece, while the river Peneios rises in
 the northern part of the range.

68. The Anapos flows into the great harbour of Syracuse.

69. The Akis flows into the sea on the east coast of Sicily north of Catania.

71. θώς - 'jackal'.

72. δρυμός - 'woods'.

Lions are not known in Sicily, but this is myth.

75. πόρτις - 'calf'.

85. δυσερώς - 'perverse in respect of love', since the girl is looking for him.

ἀμήχανος - 'beyond help'.

86a. 'you were called'.

87. μηκάς - 'she-goat'.

88a. This may mean he is crying.

Lines 95-113:

95. ἄδεια – probably an adverb (neuter pl.).



Figure 6. Aphrodite.

97. κατεύχο - this could mean 'bound yourself with an oath', following the story that Daphnis was pledged to remain faithful to one girl, and hence to reject any other sexual offers. Others simply take it as 'boast'.

λυγιξεῖν - seems to mean 'get the better of', in that it refers to a wrestling hold which the opponent cannot get out of.

105. The verb is impersonal, 'was it not said', and we are meant to supply some infinitive indicating sexual intercourse. The ox-herd was Anchises, but various of her lovers are referred to in the coming lines.

106. The transmitted text implies the meaning 'there are the oaks, here is the galingale and here are the bees ...', contrasting the two settings. Bees were believed to sting adulterers, but otherwise the contrast is not at all clear. It might be the bees were chaste and asexual whereas Ida was where the famous beauty contest took place.

112. αὖτις - 'for a second time'.

The reference here is to Iliad 5:335-430, where Diomedes wounds Aphrodite and sends her from the battle-field.

ὥπως + fut. indic. 'why don't you ...'.

Lines 115-143:

115. These lines recall the speech of Philoketes in Sophokles' Phil. 936-8.

φώλας - 'lying in the cave'.

117. Arethusa is the famous spring in Syracuse.

118. Thybris may refer to Monte Crimiti above Syracuse, but its true nature and location are unknown.

123. Lykaion is a mountain in SW Arcadia with a sanctuary to Pan.



Figure 7. Mount Lykaion.

124. Mainalos is a mountain in Arcadia between Megalopolis and Mantinea, also associated with Pan.

125. On Helike see Dover p. 91 and Hunter ad loc.

126b. 'which even the blessed ones delight in', ἀγητός - 'wondrous'. The allusion here is obscure.

128-9. 'bring this sweet-blowing pipe (set) with hardened wax, well (καλόν) wound around the lip'.



Figure 8. Daphnis and Pan.

132. βάτος - 'bramble bush'.

133. ἀρκεύθος - 'juniper'.



Figure 9. Acanthus



Bramble



Juniper

132-5. Note the rhyming verse ends, indicative of a magical incantation.

133. κομάσαι - 'put down its leaves' < κομάω.

134. ἄναλλα - 'changed', very rare word as is the variant reading.

135. ἔλκοι - 'tear apart'.

136. γαρύσαιντο - 'outsing', 'rival in song'.

139. λίναι - 'threads'.

Lines 143-152:

147. ἰσχάδα - 'dried figs'.

Aigilos was eponymous hero of the Attic deme Aigilia, famous for its figs.

150. The Hours were the daughters of Zeus and Themis, associated with beauty and fruitfulness.

152. ἀναστῆ - 'excite', but the literal meaning is 'stand up' (from where he is lying). The last few lines are earthy and meant to transfer up back from the mythical world of Daphnis to the real world of the countryside.