Dead Adonis

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There are many myths about the life of Adonis, often contradictory, but the boar has an important part in most of them. In some stories his mother is turned into a tree by the gods, and his birth is made possible by a boar charging the tree and splitting wood with its tusks when it hears him crying. In most of the stories Adonis is killed by a boar, sometimes a normal boar while he's out hunting, and sometimes by a boar that is really Apollo out for vengeance. In all the stories Adonis is beloved of Aphrodite, but she must share him with Persephone for part of the year.

This poem offering an interesting take on the motives of the boar that kills Adonis is listed as Theocritus 30 in Kiessing's 1829 *Theocritus, Bion et Moschus*. Modern editors no longer take this poem to be by Theocritus. This text is based on Kiessing and Gow's 1952 OCT *Bucolici Graeci*.

The meter of this poem is odd, basically an anacreontic hemiamb ‿–᎘–᎘––, but with several places where syllables are shortened or lengthened unexpectedly.

The dialect is the bucolic Doric of Theocritus. Like all the Greek poetic dialects, there is a strong dose of Epic. Most likely to confuse beginners to bucolic Doric are:

1. Epic: the forms of the definite article are used as pronouns. For example, line 40, τὸν δ᾽ ἠλέησε Κύπρις *and Aphrodite had mercy on him.*

2. Epic: μευ = μου, σευ = σου.

3. Epic: the augment of the imperfect or aorist indicative may be omitted.

4. Original long alpha retained, instead of Attic-Ionic eta. This will show up mostly in the forms of the first declension, αὐτάν = αὐτήν. Also, first person middle -μαν = -μην.

5. Second declension genitive singular is -ω. The article: τῶ = τοῦ.

6. Second declension accusative plural is -ως. The article: τώς = τούς.

Pay close attention to the punctuation in the poem. The word order can be a little surprising in a few places, and taking in the full sentence will clarify a tricky line.

Names: Ἄδονις is *Adonis*, an i-stem third declension. Aphrodite shows up as Ἀφροδίτα, and also as Κύπρις and Κυθήρα, both epithets associating her with major cult sites. Her attendants are the Loves, Ἔρωτες, and like Cupid they have wings and are armed with bows and arrows.

1. Ἄδωνιν ἡ Κυθήρα
2. ὡς εἶδε νεκρὸν ἤδη,
3. στυγνὰν ἔχοντα χαίταν,
4. ὠχράν τε τὰν παρειάν,
5. ἄγειν τὸν ὗν πρὸς αὐτάν
6. ἔταξε τὼς Ἔρωτας.
7.   οἱ δ᾽ εὐθέως ποτανοί
8. πᾶσαν δραμόντες ὕλαν,
9. στυγνὸν τὸν ὗν ἀνεῦρον,
10. δῆσάν τε καὶ πέδασαν.

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[10]*καὶ πέδασαν* Gow   *κἀπέδησαν* Kiess.

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[2]ὡς here *when*.   εἶδον aorist, *see*.   νεκρός ὁ *corpse*. In apposition to Ἄδονιν in the previous line, so can be translated "dead" here.   ἤδη *now; already*.

[3]στυγνός -ή -όν *hated, horrible; gloomy, sad, miserable*.   ἔχοντα present participle, masc.acc.sing, of ἔχω, agreeing with νεκρόν in the previous line.   χαίτη ἡ *long hair; mane*.

[4]ὠχρός -ά -όν *pale*.   παρειά ἡ *cheek*.

[5]ἄγειν *lead* is part of an inf. + acc. indirect command; the command and acc. subject of this verb are in the next line.   ὗς, ὁ ἡ *boar* or *sow* matching gender.

[6]τάσσω *arrange, order; command, assign; appoint;* verb subject is ἡ Κιθήρα in 1.

[7]εὐθέως *at once, right away*.   ποτανός -ά -όν *winged*, a Doric form.

[8]τρέχω, δραμοῦμαι, ἔδραμον *run*.   ὕλη ἡ *forest, wood; timber, staff*.

[9]ἀν-ευρίσκω, ἀνευρήσω, ἀνεῦρον *discover*.

[10]δέω, δήσω, ἔδησα *bind*.   πεδάω *fetter; bind*

11. χὠ μὲν βρόχῳ καθάψας
12. ἔσυρεν αἰχμάλωτον·
13. ὁ δ᾽ ἐξόπισθ᾽ ἐλαύνων,
14. ἔτυπτε τοῖσι τόξοις.
15. ὁ θὴρ δ᾽ ἔβαινε δειλῶς·
16. φοβεῖτο γὰρ Κυθήραν.
17.   τῷ δ᾽ εἶπεν Ἀφροδίτα·
18. "πάντων κάκιστε θηρῶν,
19. οὐ τόνδε μηρὸν ἴψω;
20. σύ μευ τὸν ἄνδρ᾽ ἔτυψας;"
21.   ὁ θὴρ δ᾽ ἔλεξεν ὧδε·
22. "ὄμνυμί σοι, Κυθήρα,
23. αὐτάν σε, καὶ τὸν ἄνδρα,
24. καὶ ταῦτά μευ τὰ δεσμά,
25. καὶ τώσδε τὼς κυναγώς·
26. τὸν ἄνδρα τὸν καλόν σευ
27. οὐκ ἤθελον πατάξαι·
28. ἀλλ᾽ ὡς ἄγαλμ᾽ ἐσεῖδον,
29. καὶ μὴ φέρων τὸ καῦμα,
30. γυμνὸν τὸν εἶχε μηρόν

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[11]χὠ = καὶ ὁ; here ὁ μέν refers to one of the Ἔρωτες.   βρόχος ὁ *rope; noose.*   καθ-άπτω *tie, fasten to; take hold of.*

[12]σύρω, συρέω, ἔσυρα *drag, pull.*   αἰχμάλωτος ὁ *prisoner of war, captive.*

[13]ὁ δ᾽ *i.e., another of the* Ἔρωτες.   ἐξόπισθε(ν) *(from) behind; backwards.*   ἐλαύνω *drive.*

[14]τύπτω *hit, beat; wound.*   τόξον τό *bow; arrow, missile.*

[15]θήρ θηρός ὁ *(wild) animal, beast of prey.*   βαίνω *walk, go.*   δειλῶς *adv. miserably, wretchedly.*

[16]φοβέω *terrify,* middle *fear, be afraid; flee.*

[19]μηρός ὁ *thigh, thighbone.*   ἵπτομαι, ἴψομαι, ἰψάμην *smite, strike; press hard.* ἴψω *is 2.sg. middle aorist.*   Note this sentence is a question.

[22]ὄμνυμι *swear an oath.* The accusatives in the next three lines are what the boar swears by.

[23]αὐτάν σε = αὐτήν σε *you yourself.*

[24]δεσμός ὁ but two plurals, οἱ δεσμοί, τὰ δεσμά, *fetter, bond; imprisonment.*   The sense is *and by these bonds of mine.*

[25]τώς = τούς.   κυναγός, ὁ ἡ *huntsman, huntress,* i.e. the Ἔρωτες.

[27]ἐθέλω *want.*   πατάσσω *beat, knock; kill.*

[28]ὡς here *as, just as* in the sense of *resembling.*   ἄγαλμα τό *statue; ornament.*   εἰσ-οράω *look into, on, at; perceive.*

[29]φέρω *carry, bear* here in the sense *endure.*   καῦμα τό *heat* (of desire).

[30]γυμνός -η -ον *naked, bare.*   τόν here is acting as a relative pronoun.   *(his) thigh which he*

31. ἐμαινόμαν φιλᾶσαι,
32. † καί μευ κατεσίναζε. †
33. τούτους λαβοῦσα, Κύπρι,
34. τούτους κόλαζε, τέμνε·
35. τί γὰρ φέρω περισσῶς
36. ἐρωτικὼς ὀδόντας;
37. αἰ δ' οὐχί σοι τάδ' ἀρκεῖ,
38. καὶ ταῦτά μου τὰ χείλη·
39. τί γὰρ φιλεῖν ἐτόλμων;"
40.   τὸν δ' ἠλέησε Κύπρις,
41. εἶπέν τε τοῖς Ἔρωσι
42. τὰ δεσμά οἱ 'πιλῦσαι.
43. ἐκ τῶδ' ἐπηκολούθει,
44. κὰς ὕλον οὐκ ἔβαινε·
45. καὶ τῷ πυρὶ προσελθών
46. ἔκαιε τὼς Ἔρωτας.

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[32]κατεσίνευζε Kiess. κατεσίναζε Gow.

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had bare.

[31]μαίνομαι *rave, be crazy, be frenzied.*   φιλέω *to love, enjoy* but also *to kiss*, which is the sense here; φιλᾶσαι = φιλῆσαι.

[32]κατα-σινάζε *injure*, evidently from σίνομαι; Gow marks the line bad. I keep it for completeness, but would omit it in translation.

[33]τούτους refers to ὀδόντας in line 36.

[34]κολάζω *chastize, punish; correct.*   τέμνω *cut, sever.*

[35]περισσός -ή -όν *above measure, more than enough; unusual; excessive; useless.*

[36]ἐρωτικός -ή -όν *amorous, of love.*   ὀδούς -όντος, ὁ *tooth, tusk.*

[37]αἰ = εἰ, *if.*   οὐχί *not.*   ἀρκέω *help; be enough for* + dat.

[38]χεῖλος -εος τό *lip.*   The action is implied, from line 34.

[39]τολμάω *bear, endure; dare.*

[40]ἐλεέω *pity, have pity on.*

[42]οἱ *to him*, Epic enclitic third person singular dative pronoun, here acting either as a possessive "his bonds" or benefit "loose the bonds for him."   ἐπι-λύω *loose.*

[43]ἐκ τῶδε *from that time.*   ἐπ-ακολουθέω *join, follow; yield.*

[44]κὰς = καὶ εἰς.

[45]πῦρ πυρός τό *fire; lightening; fever*; here the fever of love.   προσ-έρχομαι *come to; approach; surrender*

[46]καίω *kindle; burn.* Here the personification of the Ἔρωτες seems to recede.