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***The Goatherd and the Shepherdess:
Daphnis and Chloe for Children***

Link to abstract:

<https://camws.org/sites/default/files/meeting2021/abstracts/2360GoatherdShepherdess.pdf>

I've got a PowerPoint I'm going to use for the passages and images, but there is also a handout for those who want a copy of the passages and bibliography to keep, and a large print copy of the paper available for those who may need it.

This paper is a little off the beaten path for me, so let me tell you how it began: while I was finishing my dissertation on Apuleius' *Metamorphoses*, I spent a morning perusing the weekly book sale at the Ann Arbor Downtown Public Library when I found an unexpected treasure: "*The Goatherd and the*

DRAFT: NOT FOR CIRCULATION

Shepherdess, Retold by Lenny Hort; Pictures by Lloyd Bloom.”

The inside flap read: “On an ancient Greek island, an abandoned boy and girl were raised by two old farm couples.

Daphnis peacefully tended his goats, and Chloe quietly cared for her sheep – until romance, pirates, and destiny all

intervened.” And I thought “There’s a children’s book version of

Daphnis and Chloe! This is amazing! But...isn’t the central

conflict the protagonists’ inability to have sex?” We’ll get to

that, but first I want to thank two people. First is Bill Owens,

who urged me to take the step of actually writing about this

book that I found so fascinating. Second is the person who

illuminated the genesis, the sources of inspiration, and the

writing and publishing process behind *The Goatherd and the*

Shepherdess: Lenny Hort himself, who generously allowed me

DRAFT: NOT FOR CIRCULATION

to interview him and who is, in fact, in our audience this morning. Thank you so much, Lenny!

On to the topic of this paper: *The Goatherd and the Shepherdess*, and where it fits among children's adaptations of ancient Greek and Roman novels. For the sake of time, I'm going to focus on American and some British books written in English. There is a solid history of the reception of ancient Greece and Rome in American children's literature, from Nathaniel Hawthorne's 1851 *A Wonder Book for Boys and Girls* to contemporary works like Rick Riordan's popular *Percy Jackson* and spinoff series. While most Greek-and-Roman-inspired children's books draw on mythology, there are a few based on ancient novels. Yet among the growing body of scholarship on the reception of ancient Greece and Rome in children's literature, little has been written on these: the only

DRAFT: NOT FOR CIRCULATION

studies I've found are on Apuleius' *Metamorphoses* and C. S. Lewis' *Chronicles of Narnia*, and for that I'm going to refer you especially to Niall Slater.

American and British children's adaptations of ancient novels exhibit some interesting patterns. By far the most popular source-texts have been Lucian's *True History* and Apuleius' *Metamorphoses*, and I've put a few examples on the screen and handout. The popularity of the *True History* seems to be due to its use as a school text for boys learning ancient Greek in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The *Metamorphoses* is more complicated: while adaptations of its main narrative are few and far between, there is a plethora of retellings of the Tale of Cupid and Psyche, which is usually cited as a Greek myth rather than part of a Roman novel – there are so many of these that I've cited only a couple of recent

DRAFT: NOT FOR CIRCULATION

examples! While Lucian and Apuleius' tales of fantastical journeys go fairly easily into children's literature, Petronius and Longus seem somewhat more unusual choices. Nonetheless, we have Caroline Lawrence's 2007 *Trimalchio's Feast and Other Mini-Mysteries*, and there are not one but two retellings of *Daphnis and Chloe*. In addition to *The Goatherd and the Shepherdess*, there is a section on "Daphnis and Chloe" in the 2004 *Barefoot Book of Ballet Stories*. As you can probably guess from the title, this is *not* a direct retelling of Longus but rather of Maurice Ravel's ballet *Daphnis et Chloé*.

With this background in mind, let's look at *The Goatherd and the Shepherdess*, Lenny Hort's retelling of *Daphnis and Chloe* illustrated by Lloyd Bloom, published by Dial Books in 1995, and intended for young, elementary school aged children. Despite the innocence of Longus' protagonists,

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Daphnis and Chloe poses challenges for a modern children's adaptation because of its culturally specific and adult themes: the exposure of children, the constraints of social status, and Daphnis and Chloe's comically unsuccessful attempts to have sex. One of the remarkable aspects of *The Goatherd and the Shepherdess* is its closeness to Longus: Hort retains the major episodes of Book One of *Daphnis and Chloe*, eliding the other books for reasons of space and artistic choice. Given this closeness, I had two main questions: why *Daphnis and Chloe*, and why did Hort make the choices he did in his retelling? The ancient novel remains marginalized even among professional Classicists, so was he inspired by Ravel's ballet, or perhaps Marc Chagall's lithographs? The answer was in fact the simplest and most logical: Hort first read *Daphnis and Chloe* in graduate school. While completing his MA in English at Stony Brook, he

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took a proseminar on ancient classical literature with a unit on pastoral romance, and, as he told me during our interview a few weeks ago, that is when he fell in love with *Daphnis and*

Chloe:

“I remember reading it at the time and just loving it and enjoying it and being reminded of *Candide* – not the book so much, but the Leonard Bernstein musical, which is one of my all-time favorite shows with the way these innocent characters are just caught up in all these larger things going on around them and somehow manage to not be totally traumatized, battle-scarred people... And I kind of liked the whole pastoral idea, too.”

The pastoral held a particular appeal for him because, although he grew up in the suburbs, he spent weekends and summers visiting his great aunt and uncle, who were Holocaust survivors, on their farm in New Jersey. And so for Hort, as we also see in Longus, the pastoral is associated with nostalgia, innocence,

DRAFT: NOT FOR CIRCULATION

and childhood, but also with resilience in the face of traumatic events.

After Hort left Stony Brook, he worked in the children's book division at Dial and began to write his own books. In 1987, during a summer in London, with the aid of a rented Kaypro computer and a copy of the Loeb library edition of *Daphnis and Chloe*, Hort wrote his first draft of *The Goatherd and the Shepherdess*. The final version was published in 1995 and had limited success compared to Hort's other books, but it did sell about 2000 copies before being remaindered. Reviews were mixed, with critiques focusing on the ending and a perceived mismatch between the subject matter and its intended child audience. In fact, the ending is a product of Hort's love of the pastoral, as are the transformations he makes to the story's

DRAFT: NOT FOR CIRCULATION

prologue and central conflict; let's take a look at each of these in turn.

Longus' prologue famously begins with an ekphrasis and frame narrative that introduce the novel's erotic theme. The painting that is said to have inspired the novel depicts "a narrative of love," ἱστορίαν ἔρωτος, and "all its events are erotic," πάντα ἐρωτικά. The anonymous narrator composes his story as "a votive offering to Love and the Nymphs and Pan," citing first the god of erotic love and secondly the pastoral divinities. Although Hort experimented with a similar ekphrasis and frame narrative in earlier drafts, in the published version he replaces these with a streamlined invocation:

"Protect our flocks from wolves. Protect our children from bandits. The shepherds on a certain Greek island used to pray every day to the god Pan, who was half man and half goat."

DRAFT: NOT FOR CIRCULATION

The focus is shifted from Love to Pan, elevating the pastoral element of *Daphnis and Chloe* over the romance. The accompanying illustration also evokes the pastoral as well as the book's increased emphasis on familial over erotic love: in the shadow of a wooded mountain, a white-bearded shepherd hugs a child in a tender, protective manner.

Hort does not remove the romance entirely but changes the central conflict: while the tension in Longus' novel is around Daphnis and Chloe's sexual education and adult socialization, Hort's focus is the rivalry between Daphnis and Dorcon for Chloe's affections. As a result, Daphnis and particularly Dorcon have greater roles in *The Goatherd and the Shepherdess*, and the book focalizes their perspectives more frequently than Chloe's. In *Daphnis and Chloe*, by contrast, as Jack Winkler and David Konstan have shown, Chloe is the more active figure until

DRAFT: NOT FOR CIRCULATION

she is forced into an increasingly passive role as she is propelled towards adult femininity. Let me give just one example here: the scene in which one of the main characters first experiences what they will later recognize as love. The precursor to this scene in both Hort and Longus is the same: Daphnis falls into a wolf-trap. In *Daphnis and Chloe*, this is followed by the delightful bathing scene:

“To Chloe, as she looked at him, Daphnis seemed beautiful, and because this was the first time he seemed beautiful to her she thought the bath was the cause of his beauty.”

In *The Goatherd and the Shepherdess*, it is not Chloe but

Dorcon and then Daphnis who are the first to feel desire:

“As Dorcon gazed at Chloe tending to Daphnis’ bruises, he found himself wishing that he was the one she was nursing. And Daphnis would have happily broken both of his legs and sacrificed all of his goats if it had meant one more wound for Chloe to wash, massage, or bandage.”

DRAFT: NOT FOR CIRCULATION

While Dorcon is a generally unlikeable side character in Longus, scenes such as this make him a more sympathetic and central figure in *The Goatherd and the Shepherdess*. Dorcon and Daphnis are presented as much more equal rivals than in Longus: in fact, Chloe is never said explicitly to prefer one over the other, though there are clear hints she will end up with Daphnis. This illustration, for example, emphasizes Daphnis and Chloe's closeness and Dorcon's exclusion through their poses and expressions as well as those of the animals who mirror them.

The most notable difference between *Daphnis and Chloe* and *The Goatherd and the Shepherdess*, however, is their endings. In the last book of Longus' novel, the focus shifts from Daphnis and Chloe's inability to have sex to their inability to

DRAFT: NOT FOR CIRCULATION

marry due to their uncertain social statuses as foundlings. Even when Daphnis' aristocratic birth parents are discovered, they must wait until Chloe's birth parents are also found, for in this culture a legal marriage can only take place between social equals. We also see the theme of homecoming that Tim Whitmarsh has identified as common to the surviving Greek romances: before Daphnis and Chloe can marry, they must return to their birthplace, the urban center of Mytilene, to have their places within society confirmed. Although they find "the urban way of life unbearable," returning to the countryside for their wedding and "leading a pastoral life for most of the time," they remain aristocrats with obligations in both the city and the country. In Longus, the pastoral is never permitted to completely subvert the expectations of Greek romance.

DRAFT: NOT FOR CIRCULATION

The Goatherd and the Shepherdess rejects these ancient literary, social, and legal constraints, particularly in the epilogue that follows Daphnis and Chloe's marriage:

“Their flocks prospered and multiplied, not only sheep and goats, but boys and girls, all growing up under the adoring eyes of the old couples who had raised the two foundlings. Daphnis and Chloe never sought to learn who their natural parents had been. Whether they had been born rich or poor, slaves or princes, they both knew that they could have had no happier fate than that which had brought them together as children of the pasture, nursed by a sheep and a goat.”

The illustration depicts Daphnis and Chloe in a pastoral landscape, surrounded by children, sheep, and goats. Chloe's pose, tenderly hugging a child with her face bent downwards, mirrors the opening illustration. In this way, *The Goatherd and the Shepherdess* comes full circle with its theme of familial love in an undisturbed pastoral landscape.

DRAFT: NOT FOR CIRCULATION

The Goatherd and the Shepherdess's rejection of any attempt on the part of Daphnis, Chloe, and their adoptive families to discover the identities of their birth parents marks a sharp break between the expectations of the Imperial Greek elite and twentieth century American societies. But when Lenny and I spoke, it became clear that this ending was intended less as social commentary, and more inspired by the same love of the pastoral that drew him to the story in the first place:

“...I remember, in reading *Daphnis and Chloe* for the first time in graduate school, kind of feeling like, isn't this is a bit of a cliché here? What do you mean they have to turn out to, you know, be these – why would rich people have abandoned their babies? ... I didn't buy it! I mean, if I had bought it, I would have kept it, but I didn't. And I remember thinking, for me, the glory of it is that this whole pastoral lifestyle is so beautiful, so satisfying, why take them out of it at the end? Why not let them keep it, let them just be farmers and all? And I realized, of course, I was rewriting that, but I sort of felt, that's okay, that's

DRAFT: NOT FOR CIRCULATION

making it my own... For me, it made it a little bit more satisfying.”

The message of *The Goatherd and the Shepherdess* is ultimately one of resilience and contentment: with found family, with an identity that is not dependent on status and class, and with the valuation of a simple life connected to nature. It is, in fact, what seems to draw Longus to the pastoral, as well, though his work is in the end more constrained by generic and social conventions. Reading *The Goatherd and the Shepherdess* alongside *Daphnis and Chloe* calls greater attention to the culturally and historically specific concepts of love, family, status, and identity conveyed through this ancient Greek novel and twentieth-century American children’s book, but it also illuminates the ways in which authors use their source material, how they think and work within their genres, audiences, and

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sociotemporal settings, and the personal emotions and experiences that influence their choices in telling their stories.