

Bovine Hoofs and Epicene Sexuality:  
Natural History as Intertextual Space in Moschus' *Europa* and Longus' *Daphnis and Chloe*

<https://camws.org/sites/default/files/meeting2022/2712BovineHoofsEpiceneSexuality.pdf>

1. Longus, *Daphnis and Chloe* 1.30. Ed. Reeve/Bowie.

The pirates had their daggers at their sides and were wearing their small breastplates and greaves fastened halfway up their shins, while Daphnis was barefoot, since he was tending herds in the plain, and half-naked since the season was still hot. So the pirates swam only a short way before their gear pulled them to the bottom, while Daphnis easily stripped off his clothes – though the swim had tired him, since he had swum only in rivers before. But before long he learned by necessity what had to be done: he plunged into the midst of the cattle, grabbed the horns of two oxen in his two hands, and was carried along between them as comfortably and effortlessly as if he were driving a wagon.

**In fact, an ox swims better than a human, second only to waterfowl and of course fish. An ox would never drown while swimming except if the nails of its hoofs were to get waterlogged and drop off. Witness to this point: the many maritime places that to this day are called Bosporus.**

οἱ μὲν γὰρ ληστὰς τὰς μαχαίρας παρήρτηντο καὶ τὰ ἡμιθωράκια λεπιδωτὰ ἐνεδέδυντο καὶ κνημίδας εἰς μέσην κνήμην ὑπεδέδεντο, ὁ δὲ Δάφνις ἀνυπόδετος <ἦν> ὡς ἐν πεδίῳ νέμων καὶ ἡμίγυμνος ὡς ἔτι τῆς ὥρας οὔσης καυματώδους. ἐκείνους μὲν οὖν ἐπ' ὀλίγον νηξαμένους τὰ ὄπλα κατήνεγκεν εἰς βυθόν, ὁ δὲ Δάφνις τὴν μὲν ἐσθῆτα ῥαδίως ἀπεδύσατο, περὶ δὲ τὴν νῆξιν ἔκαμνεν οἷα πρότερον νηχόμενος ἐν ποταμοῖς μόνους· ὑστερον δὲ παρὰ τῆς ἀνάγκης τὸ πρακτέον διδαχθεὶς εἰς μέσας ὄρμησε τὰς βοῦς, καὶ δύο βοῶν κεράτων ταῖς δύο χερσὶ λαβόμενος ἐκομίζετο μέσος ἀλύπῳ καὶ ἀπόνῳ, ὥσπερ ἐλαύνων ἄμαξαν.

**νήχεται δὲ ἄρα βοῦς ὅσον οὐδὲ ἄνθρωπος· μόνον λείπεται τῶν ἐνύδρων ὀρνίθων καὶ αὐτῶν ἰχθύων· οὐδ' ἂν ἀπόλοιτο βοῦς νηχόμενος εἰ μὴ τῶν χηλῶν οἱ ὄνυχες περιπέσοιεν διάβροχοι γενόμενοι. μαρτυροῦσι τῷ λόγῳ μέχρι νῦν πολλοὶ τόποι τῆς θαλάσσης βοῶν πόροι λεγόμενοι.**

2. Problems with the content of Longus' natural history excursus:

- i) while cows are certainly capable swimmers, the comparison to humans, waterfowl and fish seems silly
- ii) the idea that cows could drown if their nails were to get waterlogged and fall off – is patently false
- iii) there were not a great number of places designated “bosporus” in the ancient Mediterranean world
- iv) the reference to historical time outside the story world, with the phrase “to this day” (μέχρι νῦν), is a gesture mostly avoided in Longus' novel

3. Proposed solutions:

- i) excise the whole passage (Castiglione 1906)
- ii) keep the whole passage (Reeve 2001, Bowie 2019)
- iii) excise only the final sentence concerning present-day “bosporoi” (Pattoni 2005)

And interpretations:

- i) “the joke is on the narrator himself, whose ridiculous pedantry distances himself from the author and the best reader of the novel.” (Morgan 2004, 516)
- ii) the author/narrator is “parodying, ironically, pseudo-scientific digressions common in the prose literature of the Early Empire.” (Maciver 2020, 844)

4. Achilles Tatius, *Leucippe and Cleitophon* 1.9-12. Trans. J. Winkler, slightly modified.

**A bull was depicted in the middle of the sea riding the waves, which rose up like a mountain under the bent curve of the bull's foreleg.** The maiden sat on the bull's back, not astride but sidesaddle, with her feet together towards the right, **her left hand holding the bull's horn as a charioteer would hold the reins. And the bull in fact had turned back towards her somewhat, guided by the pressure of her hand.** There was a chiton over the maiden's chest down to her private parts; from there on a robe covered the lower part of her body. The chiton was white, the robe purple, and the body showed through the clothing – navel well recessed, stomach flat, waist narrow – but with a narrowness that widened downward as it descended – breasts gently nudging forward. A confining sash pressed the chiton to breasts, so that it took on the body's form like a mirror. **Both her hands were outstretched, one to the horn and one towards the tail;** connecting them from either side was her veil, which fluttered behind her in a long arc above her head. The bosomy folds of this garment billowed out in all directions, puffed full by a wind of the artist's own making. **She rode on the bull as if on board a cruising ship, using her veil as a sail.**

ταῦρος ἐν μέσῃ τῇ θαλάττῃ ἐγέγραπτο τοῖς κύμασιν ἐποχοῦμενος, ὡς ὄρους ἀναβαίνοντος τοῦ κύματος, ἔνθα καμπτόμενον τοῦ βοῦς κυρτοῦται τὸ σκέλος. (10) ἡ παρθένος μέσοις ἐπεκάθητο τοῖς νότοις τοῦ βοῦς, οὐ περιβάδην, ἀλλὰ κατὰ πλευράν, ἐπὶ δεξιᾷ συμβᾶσα τὴν πόδε, τῇ λαίᾳ τοῦ κέρως ἐχομένη, ὥσπερ ἠνίοχος χαλινῶ· καὶ γὰρ ὁ βοῦς ἐπέστραπτο ταύτῃ μᾶλλον πρὸς τὸ τῆς χειρὸς ἔλκον ἠνιοχούμενος. χιτῶν ἀμφὶ τὰ στέρνα τῆς παρθένου μέχρις αἰδοῦς· τοῦντεῦθεν ἐπεκάλυπτε χλαῖνα τὰ κάτω τοῦ σώματος. λευκὸς ὁ χιτῶν· ἡ χλαῖνα πορφυρᾶ· τὸ δὲ σῶμα διὰ τῆς ἐσθῆτος ὑπεφαίνετο. (11) βαθὺς ὀμφαλός· γαστήρ τεταμένη· λαπάρα στενή· τὸ στενὸν εἰς ἰζὺν καταβαῖνον ἠρύνητο. μαζοὶ τῶν στέρνων ἠρέμα προκύπτοντες· ἡ συνάγουσα ζώνη τὸν χιτῶνα καὶ τοὺς μαζοὺς ἔκλειε, καὶ ἐγένετο τοῦ σώματος κάτοπτρον ὁ χιτῶν. (12) αἱ χεῖρες ἀμφὶ διετέταντο, ἡ μὲν ἐπὶ κέρασ, ἡ δὲ ἐπ' οὐράν· ἡρτητο δὲ ἀμφοῖν ἐκατέρωθεν ὑπὲρ τὴν κεφαλὴν ἡ καλύπτρα κύκλω τῶν νότων ἐμπεπετασμένη· ὁ δὲ κόλπος τοῦ πέπλου πάντοθεν ἐτέτατο κυρτούμενος· καὶ ἦν οὗτος ἄνεμος τοῦ ζωγράφου. ἡ δὲ δίκην ἐπεκάθητο τῷ ταύρῳ πλεούσης νῆος, ὥσπερ ἰστῖφ τῷ πέπλῳ χρωμένη.

5. Moschus, *Europa* 108-19. Transl. Hopkinson (Loeb)

Ὡς φαμένη νότοισιν ἐφίζανε μειδιώσα,  
αἰ δ' ἄλλαι μέλλεσκον, ἄφαρ δ' ἀνεπήλατο ταῦρος,  
ἦν θέλεν ἀρπάξας, ὡκὺς δ' ἐπὶ πόντον ἴκανεν. (110)

ἡ δὲ μεταστρεφθεῖσα φίλας καλέεσκεν ἐταίρας  
χεῖρας ὀρεγνυμένη, ταὶ δ' οὐκ ἐδύναντο κυχάνειν.  
ἀκτάων δ' ἐπιβὰς πρόσσω θέεν ἠύτε δελφίς,  
**χηλαῖς ἀβρεκτοῖσιν ἐπ' εὐρέα κύματα βαίνων.**  
ἡ δὲ τότε ἔρχομένοιο γαληνιάσκει θάλασσα,  
(115)  
κῆτεα δ' ἀμφὶς ἄταλλε Διὸς προπάροιθε ποδοῖν,  
γηθόσυνος δ' ὑπὲρ οἶδμα κυβίστεε βυσσόθε δελφίς.  
Νηρεΐδες δ' ἀνέδυσαν ὑπέξ ἁλός, αἰ δ' ἄρα πᾶσαι  
κητείους νότοισιν ἐφήμεναι ἐστιχόωντο.

Cf. Longus, *Daphnis and Chloe*  
1.30: οὐδ' ἂν ἀπόλοιτο βοῦς  
νηχόμενος εἰ μὴ τῶν χηλῶν οἱ  
ὄνυχες περιπέσοιεν **διάβροχοι**  
γενόμενοι.

With these words she sat smiling on his back, and the others were about to do so, but the bull leaped up suddenly, having gained the girl he wanted, and arrived swiftly at the sea. She turned round and kept calling her dear companions, stretching out her hands; but they could not reach her. Crossing the beach, he sped onward like a dolphin, **going over the wide waves with hoofs unwetted.** Then sea became calm as he went along, and the sea beasts played all around before the feet of Zeus, and the dolphin somersaulted joyfully over the swell out of the deep. The Nereids rose from the sea, and all moved in ranks sitting on the backs of sea beasts.

6. Moschus, *Europa* 135-45. Transl. Hopkinson (Loeb)

‘πῆ με φέρεις θεόταυρε; τίς ἔπλεο; πῶς δὲ κέλευθα (135)

**ἀργαλέ’ εἰλιπόδεσσι διέρχεται οὐδὲ θάλασσαν  
δειμαίνεις;** νηυσὶν γὰρ ἐπίδρομός ἐστι θάλασσα  
ὠκύαλοις, ταῦροι δ’ ἀλίην τρομέουσιν ἀταρπόν.

ποῖον σοὶ ποτὸν ἠδύ, τίς ἐξ ἀλὸς ἔσσειτ’ ἐδωδή;  
ἦ ἄρα τις θεὸς ἐσσί; θεοῖς γ’ ἐπεικότερα ῥέξεις. (140)

**οὔθ’ ἄλλιοι δελφῖνες ἐπὶ χθονὸς οὔτε τι ταῦροι  
ἐν πόντῳ στιχῶσι, σὺ δὲ χθόνα καὶ κατὰ πόντον**

**ἄτρομος αἰσσεις, χηλαὶ δὲ τοί εἰσιν ἔρετμά.**

ἦ τάχα καὶ γλαυκῆς ὑπὲρ ἠέρος ὑψόσ’ ἀερθεῖς

εἵκελος αἰψηροῖσι πετήσεαι οἰωνοῖσιν.

Where are you carrying me, godlike bull? Who are you? And **how do you pass over ways hard for shambling cattle, and do not fear the sea?** The sea is passable for swift ships, but bulls fear a briny path. What sweet drink, what food will there be for you from the sea? Are you then some god? At any rate, you do things fitting gods. **Seagoing dolphins do not go on land, and bulls do not go at all on the sea; but you speed fearlessly over land and sea, and hoofs are oars for you.** Soon, I dare say, rising high above the clear sky you will fly like the swift birds.

7. Longus, *Daphnis and Chloe* 3.14.2-5. Transl. C. Gill

She [Chloe] asked what more there was than kissing and embracing and actually lying down, and what he proposed to do when they were lying down naked together, “What the rams do to the ewes,” he replied, “and the he-goats to the she-goats. After they’ve done it, don’t you see how the females stop running away from the males, and the males don’t have the trouble of chasing the females? But from then on they graze together as though they’ve enjoyed mutual pleasure. What they’re doing must be something sweet that overcomes the bitterness of love.”

“But don’t you see, my dear Daphnis, that he-goats and rams do it standing up, and she-goats and ewes have it done to them standing up. The males jump on the females, and the females are jumped on, from behind. But do you propose that I should do this lying down, and naked too – although those hairy animals are much more well-covered than I am even in my clothes?”

8. Longus, *Daphnis and Chloe* 1.13.1-2. Transl. C. Gill

He [Daphnis] went with Chloe to the shrine of the Nymphs and gave her his tunic and bag to look after while he stood beside the spring and started to wash his hair and his whole body. His hair was dark and thick, and his body was tanned by the sun; you could have imagined that his body was taking its dark color from the shadow of his hair. It seemed to Chloe, as she gazed at him, that Daphnis was beautiful; and she thought that since he hadn’t seemed beautiful to her before, the bathing must be the cause of his beauty. She washed his back, and as she did so, his flesh yielded so gently to her touch that she surreptitiously felt her own several times to see if his was more delicate than hers. And then, since it was nearly sunset, they drove their flocks home: and all the time Chloe had felt nothing but the desire to see Daphnis bathing again.

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