

## A Garden Utopia: The Phaeacians in Longus' *Daphnis and Chloe*

Longus' *Daphnis and Chloe* is in many ways the most unique of the ancient Greek novels. Whereas all the other 'Big Five' feature extensive travel narratives, in which the protagonists undergo a series of separations and misadventures across the Mediterranean, Longus' story is entirely confined to the pastoral hinterland of a single city on Lesbos, Mytilene. Furthermore, *Daphnis and Chloe* replaces the theme of the journey with an intense societal reflection on the relationship between nature (φύσις) and civilization (τέχνη, literally 'art'), the shortcomings of one separated from the other, and the necessity of a proper harmony between the two in establishing a peaceful social order (Winkler 1990; Morgan 1994; Peters 2017).

Overall, this thematic shift from the journey to nature brings about an obvious consequence: while the other 'Big Five' novels are in different ways prose versions of the *Odyssey*, which mirror Odysseus' journey and reunification with his wife Penelope (Zanetto 2014), *Daphnis and Chloe* is believed to lack significant and recurrent Homeric references (Bowie, forthcoming).

In this paper, I challenge this scholarly view by arguing that *Daphnis and Chloe* exploits the Phaeacian episode in Books 6-8 of the *Odyssey*, and that it does so precisely to give foundation to the aforementioned reflection on the balance between nature and civilization. Throughout my analysis, I take some distance from the traditional model of intertextuality adopted by classicists and stress the importance of thematic connections alongside strictly verbal references.

In the first part of my paper, I offer an overview of Longus' philosophy of civilization, drawing on key passages such as the narrator's prologue, the *ekphraseis* of Philetas' and Dionysophanes' gardens (2.3 and 4.2-3), and the wedding scene of Daphnis and Chloe (4.32-40).

By presenting the world of his pastoral protagonists as a peaceable blending of φύσις and τέχνη, Longus subverts the traditional values of the bucolic genre—which pitted the corrupt and ugly city against the tranquil and morally innocent country—while also promoting an ideal of cooperation between the natural and the cultural domains.

In part two, I bring Longus' meditations into conversation with Homeric scholarship on the Phaeacian episode (Segal 1962; Dougherty 2001; Giesecke 2007). In the *Odyssey*, the Phaeacians represent a perfectly harmonious society in contrast to both the naturally barbaric Cyclopes and the societally corrupt Phoenicians. I argue that, in building the society of his novel, Longus appropriates this model of polarity and synthesis. For Homer, in light of their expert agriculturalism, hospitality to strangers, sagacious political assembly, and expertise in ship-building, the Phaeacians are antithetical to the barbarity of their former neighbors, the Cyclopes, whose cannibalism, lack of political institutions, and wholly uncultivated landscape characterize them as being beyond the pale of human civilization. This contrast between the Phaeacians and the violent Cyclopes is mirrored in Longus' contrast between Daphnis and Chloe's 'civilized' and peaceful engagement with their pastoral environment and the violent side of that nature represented by Dorcon and Lycaneion (1.15-22 and 3.14-20) and by Pan in the inset myths (2.23; 34). On the other hand, in Homer, the Phaeacians, due to their ideal blending of civilization and nature, differ from the Phoenicians, who by their exploitive trade and piracy represent the 'unnatural' corruptions of advanced societies that the Phaeacians avoid. Correspondingly, Longus reflects the contrast between the Phaeacians and the Phoenicians in depicting Daphnis and Chloe's triumph over this exploitative side of civilization, which is represented by pirates (1.28; 2.20), the Methymnean luxury tourists (2.12-30), and the gluttonous pederast Gnathon (4.10-23).

In exploring the Phaeacian harmony, I show how its ethical implications at multiple levels (especially vis-à-vis gender and sexuality) are strikingly similar to those put forward by Longus. I conclude that Longus, in the tradition of the novelistic genre, utilizes Homer in a way that is significant, if unconventional, in comparison with the 'Big Five' novels.

My paper will help to shed light not only on the vexed question of Homer's presence in *Daphnis and Chloe* but also on the meaning of Longus' own moral and societal vision.

### Bibliography

Bowie, E. (forthcoming) *Daphnis and Chloe*, Cambridge.

Giesecke, A. (2007) *The Epic City*, Washington.

Morgan, J. (1994) "Daphnis and Chloe: Love's Own Sweet Story," in J. Morgan et al. (eds.), *Greek Fiction*, London, 64-78.

Morgan, J., and S. Harrison (2008) "Intertextuality," in Whitmarsh (ed.), Cambridge, 218-236.

Peters, J. (2017) "Spring as a Civilizing Mechanism in *Daphnis and Chloe*," in D. Konstan et al. (eds.), *Cultural Crossroads*, Berlin, 123-140.

Segal, C. (1962) "The Phaeacians and the Symbolism of Odysseus," *Arion* 1.17-64

Winkler, J. (1990) "The Education of Chloe," in J. Winkler (ed.), *The Constraints of Desire*, New York, 101-126.

Zanetto, G. (2014), "The Greek Novel and Archaic Greek Literature," in E. Cueva et al. (eds.), *A Companion to the Ancient Novel*, Chichester, 400-410.