

A Vindication of Chloe: Challenging ‘sexual symmetry’ in Longus’ *Daphnis and Chloe*

Longus’ *Daphnis and Chloe* is the most unique of the ‘Big Five’, because, unlike the other extant Greek novels, its plot does not focus on the protagonists’ journey, but rather highlights the protagonists’ erotic education. Longus’ text presents the development of Daphnis and Chloe as a *Bildungsroman* (Morgan 1996), in which the characters grow and mature sexually and socially while remaining in their rural contexts (De Temmerman 2014). In light of this thematic focus, it is no surprise that David Konstan chose *Daphnis and Chloe* as the text case of his book *Sexual Symmetry*. In Longus’ text, more than in any other Greek novel, the protagonists’ relationship is portrayed as symmetrical: Daphnis and Chloe share a mutual attraction and love, a reciprocity of emotion and a balance of power (Konstan 1994). While Konstan believes that this relational symmetry undergoes no change as the plot continues, other scholars have more recently argued for a different trajectory: Chloe begins the novel as the sexual and social agent, but over the course of the novel Daphnis becomes socially and sexually dominant, as a result of which, at the end, the protagonists’ relationship has asymmetrical aspects (Winkler 1990 and De Temmerman 2014).

In this paper, I will build on this revisionist approach to Konstan’s ideal of symmetry, but, unlike the abovementioned scholars, I will argue that in fact, as the novel progresses, Chloe maintains her influence over Daphnis. In the first two sections, I will challenge the current assumption that Chloe is a weakened character, and even a victim of “erasure” (Winkler 1990), and present a new understanding of her dominance.

My framework of characterization comes from De Temmerman and van Emde Boas (2017), especially from their study of indirect characterization, which includes both metaphorical and metonymical aspects, and reflection on character-based focalization.

In the first section of the paper, I assert that in the second half of the novel Chloe does not lose her initial sexual agency. In 3.8.2. she takes the sexual initiative in front of her parents and performs an erotic act (“But before passing him his wine, she drank some of it herself and then gave it to him.”), one which Daphnis himself had performed in Book 1 (1.24.4, “[...] He snatched the pipes and ran his lips along the reeds [...] it gave him an excuse for kissing her by means of the pipes”). This scene challenges the scholarly view that Daphnis experiences sexual growth in Book 3, and, by contrast, Chloe plays the passive role in the relationship (Winkler 1990). Instances of equality continue through Books 3 and 4 (e.g., shared work, 3.33.1), yet Chloe continues to display levels of sexual control as well (e.g. 3.34.3, “and as he came close, she kissed him, so that Daphnis did not regret having dared to climb so high”).

In the second section, I examine passages that share imagery or themes with the inset stories. Since in two of them the god Pan acts in violence against the female protagonist (2.34.3 and 3.23.3), most scholarly discussion, following Winkler (1990), centers around the analogy between Pan and the dominant Daphnis, and on the identification between Pan’s female victim and the passive Chloe (Morgan 2004). However, following De Temmerman (2014), I will stress that Chloe is characterized as possessing the same anger as Pan, and as a result she is in some way identified with the god: although not always in control, Chloe, like Pan, is emotionally dominant and ultimately generates the outcome of the story.

In a brief third section, I will contextualize this new conception of Chloe’s power within the novelistic genre and stress the need to challenge the adoption of Konstan’s notion of ‘sexual symmetry’. Two scholars have recently considered the generic variation in how protagonists’ relationships display symmetry: while De Temmerman (2014), following Wiersma (1990), notes that Chariton’s heroine Callirhoe retains her agency in subtle ways, despite the increasingly

prominent role of her husband Chaereas, Tagliabue (2017) explains that Anthia in the *Ephesiaca* demonstrates growth in personality and *andreia*. A now-vindicated Chloe joins the ranks of these dynamic heroines. This discovery indicates that symmetry and gender ought to be broadly reexamined within both Longus' text and the ancient novel as a whole.

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