

The Goatherd and the Shepherdess: Daphnis and Chloe for Children

The reception of ancient Greece and Rome in American children's literature has a long history, from Nathaniel Hawthorne's *A Wonder Book for Boys and Girls* to Rick Riordan's *Percy Jackson, Heroes of Olympus*, and *Trials of Apollo* series. While most Classics-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 (Lovatt 2009; Maurice 2015; Marciniak 2016; Hodkinson and Lovatt 2018), little has been written on the novels (but see Winkle 2017; Slater 2018). This paper briefly surveys the range of adaptations of ancient novels in American children's literature before focusing on one unusual example: Lenny Hort's *The Goatherd and the Shepherdess*, a 1995 retelling of *Daphnis and Chloe* illustrated by Lloyd Bloom and intended for elementary school age children. Hort's transformation of Longus highlights differing ideologies of love, family, and identity in the hierarchical, status-driven society of Imperial Greece versus the nominally more equitable twentieth century United States.

Despite the emphatic innocence of Longus' protagonists, *Daphnis and Chloe* poses particular challenges for a modern children's adaptation because of its culturally specific and adult themes: the exposure of children, the constraints of status, and Daphnis and Chloe's comically unsuccessful attempts to have sex. Hort removes or changes these while remarkably retaining the major episodes of Book One; the remaining books are elided for space. The main transformations are to the prologue, the central conflict, and the ending. While Longus' prologue introduces the novel's erotic theme (πάντα ἐρωτικά) and its Lesbian setting, *The Goatherd and the Shepherdess* begins with a shepherd's prayer to Pan made "on a certain Greek island": "Protect our flocks from wolves. Protect our children from bandits." The accompanying

illustration depicts a shepherd hugging a child. The theme is family rather than erotic love. Similarly, the central conflict in Longus – Daphnis and Chloe’s education in love and sex – is transformed into a rivalry between Daphnis and the cowherd Dorcon for Chloe’s affections. Daphnis and Dorcon are central, active figures throughout Hort’s story, while in Longus, Dorcon is a side character and Chloe takes a more active role in her relationship with Daphnis, at least in the beginning (Konstan 1994; Winkler 1990).

The most notable change, however, is to the ending. In Longus, Daphis and Chloe must find their birth parents and establish their equal – and elite – social status before they can marry (3.26, 3.31, 4.30). *The Goatherd and the Shepherdess* rejects these ancient ideals and legal constraints: “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 message is a particularly American vision of found family and an identity not dependent on one’s social status or class at birth. Reading *The Goatherd and the Shepherdess* alongside *Daphnis and Chloe* calls greater attention to the culturally and historically specific concepts of love, status, family, and identity communicated through this ancient Greek novel and twentieth-century American children’s book.

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