

The Home Life of a Heroine: The Winter of Chloe's Discontent in Longus

The seasonal structure of Longus's *Daphnis and Chloe* is well known, but while the pastoral lens idealizes some of that seasonality (Gill 2018), other elements foreground a sharper realism. Appearing only briefly, winter frames scenes in the life of the heroine Chloe not easily paralleled in the other novels, in which the realities of women's lives in pastoralist households enrich the reader's understanding of both character and plot development. Winter's sudden onset disrupts the symmetries of experience for heroine and hero (Konstan 1994). While initially Daphnis appears more active in attempts to overcome the separation, it is benevolent chance and Chloe's initiative within constraints of household and family structure that carry both through to the next stage of the plot's development.

Longus's four-book narrative plays with seasonal boundaries to build suspense. Book 2 ends with Chloe's miraculous rescue from the raiding Methymneans and an autumnal festival celebration, complete piping and dramatic dance. Book 3 finds the Mytileneans mustering a military counterstrike, but the Methymneans, discovering their initial raid was unjustified, sue for peace. This three days' war, without a blow struck, serves primarily as prelude to equally sudden winter, separating the young lovers more effectively than the Methymneans' raid and kidnapping of Chloe.

For winter impacts the lives and work of the men and women on country farms very differently. While all at first enjoy indoor fires and freedom from outdoor labor, the men of Lesbos soon prove to have real leisure, sweeter even than spring (ἦρος αὐτοῦ γλυκύτερον, 3.3.1), while winter if anything increases women's work. Trapped at home with her mother (who constantly tries to instruct her in wifely skills), Chloe finds herself without resources or

contrivance (ἄπορος ἦν καὶ ἀμήχανος, 3.4.5). Though already in the *Odyssey* (e.g., 19. 363), in a post-Hellenistic age ἀμήχανος may have a nearer and stronger resonance as almost the formulaic epithet Apollonius's Argonautic hero, "resourceless Jason" (Hadas 1936), though it soon also describes Medea there as well (*Argonautica* 3. 772; 4. 1049). Intriguingly, Richard Hunter (1993) even connects ἀμηχανία in Apollonius with the "ephebic" challenges of achieving adulthood. If this intertext resonates at all for Longus's readers, does the allusion makes Chloe a Jason or a Medea—or both?

With winter confining Chloe at home, both she and Daphnis eagerly seek a τέχνη for meeting, but it is Daphnis who sets the plot in motion by going bird-hunting near Chloe's dwelling. His supposed superiority is immediately ironized when he cannot devise sufficient excuse for visiting Chloe's family (3.6.3-4). He has already started home when chance takes pity on him: a dog stealing meat from the dinner table makes Chloe's father Dryas pursue the dog outside—only to encounter Daphnis and promptly invite him in (3.6.5)!

With Daphnis finding good fortune "beyond his hopes" (3.8.1), Chloe now exerts initiative and conscious τέχνη. Serving the wine at dinner, she pretends (ἐσκήπτετο, 3.8.2) to be angry that Daphnis was leaving without trying to see her but also first sips from his wine, thus conveying a secret kiss through the cup. Chloe's parents invite Daphnis to the next day's Dionysiac sacrifice, allowing the lovers more time for private conversation and kisses. Thereafter Daphnis visits on many "other pretexts" (ἐπ' ἄλλαις τέχναις, 3.11.3), so that their winter proves not entirely without Eros (ἀνέραστον).

Artifice is never quite absent from Longus's often simple-sounding narrative, but the harsh realities of cold weather and social confinement sharply separate Chloe's experience of winter from that of Daphnis and indeed the rest of the novel. The novel's second half in effect

begins with two false prologues: both the military counterstrike as well as the harsh winter that threatens to put the previously inseparable heroine and hero on separate paths come to nothing. Chloe nonetheless experiences realities of women's domestic life that might put an end to the way of life that she and Daphnis have so thoroughly shared since both were old enough to take the flocks out. Other novels show us heroines threatened by slavery and other dire dangers; Chloe is threatened with the possibility of dwindling into an ordinary wife, in the confines of a rustic homestead. A delicate interplay of chance and her initiative restore the shared experiences for now, though other challenges await.

Bibliography

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