

Jean ALVARES

Eros and the Reformation of Love and Society in Longus' *Daphnis and Chloe*

As Chalk noted, Longus' Eros more closely resembles Hesiod's Eros and the beneficent deities of mystery religion than bow-wielding putti. Apuleius' Cupid is a young man whose considerably spiritualized love relationship with Psyche benefits the world by producing Voluptas. Showing a similar transformation, Longus establishes the *muthos* of Chloe, a girl who chooses to surrender to a male who initiates her in the mysteries of Eros. While not rejecting recent interpretations, I present a reading of *D & C* as myth of divinely protected lovers initiated into a new vision of Eros, which produces both an ideal relationship between the couple and a new ground for society, an utopian myth that I believe deeply engages most readers of *D & C*.

Longus' romance is both a dedication to Eros and a *terpnon ktêma* that aids humanity through a new, non-tragic, beneficent vision of Eros' operations. His Daphnis must be seen as a counterpoint to that of Theokritos, the originator of pastoral poetry who dies from love and for whom creation mourns. Instead Longus' Daphnis participates in a somewhat Aristophanic comedy, one positing ideal solutions for old, intractable problems; for love does not destroy this Daphnis, but instead leads to a new type of love and a social formation.

The fact that Daphnis and Chloe were born aristocrats, suckled by animals, raised as slaves in the pastoral world and watched over by gods suggests their careers synthesize these different worlds. The echo of myths of divine births are part of a paradigm of divine beings who, incarnated in the world, by struggle with that world bring about its reformation. The key is Chloe who, like other romantic heroines, inspires and develops the hero, rescuing him (with divine help) from the necessity of aggressive, destructive sexuality implied in the *muthoi* of Phatta, Echo and Syrix. A pivotal episode occurs when Daphnis, now schooled by Lycanaeium in sexual technique, nevertheless defers for Chloe's sake the violence of sex until their relationship is further deepened, rejecting the violence implied in the earlier *muthoi*.

The real world's dangers are not ignored. We see exposed children, Dorcon's attempted rape, pirates, military invasion, slavery, and more. The pastoral world is vulnerable, as symbolized by the ruin of vast ornamental garden by the lust-inspired ravages of Lampis. But its altar of Dionysos (the god of theater) remains undisturbed, whose mythic scenes underscore themes of the romance. The willingness of Chloe and Daphnis to play the mythic roles Eros creates for them allow others, from both city and country, to be included during the wedding in what becomes a comedy of innocence as the world of purely aggressive Eros is transcended.

Thus the borders between human and divine, between nature, pastoral and city dissolve, and with it old oppositions of guilt and innocence. Earlier, Chloe's kiss had allowed Dorcon to die peacefully, and now even Gnathon and Lycanaeium, along with the city folk, join the pastoral wedding, the preliminary to Chloe's final metamorphosis. Although Daphnis and Chloe still frequent the pastoral world, this life is not simply a continuation

of former time, for they have learned and matured. Their life is a new synthesis, whose continuation is suggested as their children likewise suckled by animals, thus conferring their benefits upon the future.