Scholl, W.


Readers of Theocritus’ first *Idyll* will be familiar with the song of Thyrsis on ‘the sorrows of Daphnis’ (vv. 64-127). They will also acknowledge that the goat-herd’s rendition is tantalizing: what exactly happened to Daphnis? And how does this compare to the Daphnis story in *Idyll* 7 about his love for Xenea and his exposure in a chest, where he was fed by bees? Although the Daphnis myth left some earlier traces (Stesichorus, Timaeus), the ‘original’ story, dealing with Daphnis as an ancient herdsman, a beautiful youth, a *primus inventor* of bucolic song, but also with mutual or unrequited love, nymphs, mortal women, and Sicilian local lore, remains elusive indeed. In this gargantuan study (the contents section alone is 14 pages!) Scholl has set himself the task of sorting out all the material, testimonies, fragments and different versions of the myth in order to trace back the roots of this story, or rather these stories, and get to the bottom of it. At that bottom seems to be, according to Scholl, a Greek *Volksmärchen*. Scholl’s analysis, already presented as a dissertation in 1981, is now, reworked, available in this monograph.

The first chapter lists the ancient *testimonia* of the myth, supplemented with similar ancient stories. All relevant sources are listed and printed (sometimes not in a very economical type page) in Greek or Latin with facing translations in German or English, usually borrowed from the *Tusculum or Loeb* editions. The Bohemian fairytale about the black princess (pp. 52-62) may show interesting similarities, but should such a ‘testimony’ really be printed in full along the ancient *Textzeugnisse*? The brief second chapter treats the principles used in sorting out the myth. In chapter 3, which runs over 200 pages, Scholl deals with the seven (or eight, counting 1A, in which Daphnis is blinded, and 1B, in which he is petrified) different versions he has untangled. Treatment of each version always follows the same pattern: “Quellenlage”, “das Sein des Daphnis”, “das Handeln und Leiden des Daphnis”, and an interpretative summary. Chapter 3 ends with all the other sources that do not evidently pertain to the seven versions charted, or do not contribute to solving the puzzle, e.g. Daphnis’ appearance in some of the Theocritean epigrams, in the *Greek Anthology*, or even in Silius’ *Punica*.

Chapter 4 focuses on the roots of Daphnis. Now that all different versions and conflations have been sifted and deconstructed in chapter 3, Scholl can finally start constructing the origin of the Daphnis story, his name, the nature of his being (ancient fertility god, mortal, local hero), localisation (the Heraia...
mountains, the Sicilian countryside), place in time, ‘nationality’ (mainly in relation to Sicily), his suffering, and the qualification of the Daphnis myth as a folk tale. After a thorough treatment of Daphnis’ roots, chapter 5 traces the development of the myth through time. Starting with Stesichorus, Scholl moves on to the Hellenistic playwright Sositheus, a fragment of whose satyr play *Daphnis or Lityerses* constitutes the seventh version in Scholl’s taxonomy. Leaving behind these fragmentary stories, the reader is soon back to more familiar ground with Vergil’s *Eclogues*, which are central both from a literary and an ideological perspective. This long chapter (160 pages) on Daphnis’ reception in Vergil, the size of a small monograph, gives a detailed treatment of Daphnis’ dimensions in the age of Augustus. Its focus on Vergil’s historical-political awareness shows just how much the Latin poet is a true innovator here, placing Daphnis as a redeemer in a new context of a future Golden Age. The final chapter wraps it all up, followed by a bibliography, a list by page of translations borrowed, and registers on personal names, geography, and ancient authors and works. The book comes with two foldout maps (one of Sicily at the beginning, and one a comparative chart with the myth’s different versions at the end) and two separate folded “tabellarische Synopse”: the author has anticipated that at some point the reader would lose track of all these variant versions and should not be wanting for assistance.

Scholl addresses each and every element of the Daphnis story; his blinding (in comparison with other blinding myths), the nature of his song (truly bucolic, or merely sung by a herd), the mode of his love (Daphnis in love, soliciting for someone’s love, or loved by someone else against his will), the lover (a nymph, a mortal woman, another herdsman), competition (Daphnis as loved by both a nymph and a princess), Daphnis’ suffering (his wasting away as a nymph takes revenge), Daphnis’ dealings with Menalcas (rivals or lovers?), his connection to Euboea (as Hermesianax fr. 8 states) and Phrygia (as Alexander Aetolus fr. 14 implies) etcetera. It becomes clear that the seven versions Scholl has unravelled show much overlap as they have clearly influenced each other in the long tradition from Stesichorus to Nonnus, but overall these versions can be separated in two groups: one that concerns Daphnis and his female lover(s), and one in which Daphnis is pictured in an *agon* with his Euboean counterpart Menalcas. In reconstructing the earliest versions Scholl finds connections with later fairy tale stories. This is less known territory for classicists, who will not necessarily be prone to accept that similarities to folk stories can solve the puzzle. Scholl’s hypothesis that the Daphnis’ story is at heart about a *gestörte Mahrtenehe* (p. 416 et alibi) is fascinating, but hard to prove. The relation between an isolated male mortal and an enticing but dangerous female divine entity connects Daphnis with stories of undines and melusines, but