

BELLARIA XLVII



Monument commemorating Lucian of Samosata from Nordkirchen, Germany

LUCIAN 3

DIALOGUES OF THE SEA-GODS

In these dialogues Lucian makes fun of Greek myth, turning gods into humans subject to ordinary, everyday human feelings—here on the subject of the sea-nymph Galateia's love for the Cyclops Polyphemus and her sister Doris's reaction to it.



Polyphemus wooing Galateia (mosaic Cordoba)

Polyphemus was best known for his encounter with Odysseus in the *Odyssey*, but Theocritus (born c. 300 BC), who invented pastoral idyll (shepherds tootling away on pipes and reflecting on life and love), pictured the sea-nymph Galateia teasing him (*Idyll* 6) and he trying to woo her (*Idyll* 11) ('O my white Galateia, why do you spurn your lover? Whiter to look at than cream cheese, softer than a lamb, more playful than a calf, sleeker than an unripe grape...' (A.C.F. Verity, *Theocritus: Idylls* [World's Classics])).

Lucian typically took a different line: he decided to picture Galateia's sister the sea-nymph Doris being bitchy about her relationship with Polyphemus and Galateia replying in kind. *Gala* is, of course, Greek for 'milk', whence 'galactic', 'galaxies', etc.



Galateia and Cyclops from the Casa della Caccia antica, Pompeii (Naples)

Doris and Galateia

Doris

A good-looking lover, Galateia—that's what they say about this Sicilian shepherd of yours, and crazy about you!

[1] Καλὸν ἐραστήν, ὦ Γαλάτεια, τὸν Σικελὸν τοῦτον ποιμένα φασὶν ἐπιμεμνηναί σοι.

Galateia

Mock not, Doris. He's Poseidon son, whatever else he's like.

Μὴ σκῶπτε, Δωρί· Ποσειδῶνος γὰρ υἱὸς ἐστίν, ὁποῖος ἂν ᾦ.

Doris

What's that got to do with it? Even if he were the son of Zeus, with that wild and hairy appearance and, ugliest of all, single-eyed, do you think his birth would improve matters when it comes to his looks?

Τί οὔν; εἰ καὶ τοῦ Διὸς αὐτοῦ παῖς ὢν ἄγριος οὕτως καὶ λάσιος ἐφαίνετο καί, τὸ

πάντων ἀμορφότατον, μονόφθαλμος, οἶει τὸ γένος ἄν τι ὄνησαι αὐτὸν πρὸς τὴν μορφήν;

Galateia

His hairiness and, as you claim, his wildness don't make him ugly - he's all man! And his eye suits his forehead no less well – it can see as well as two.

Οὐδὲ τὸ λάσιον αὐτοῦ καί, ὡς φῆς, ἄγριον ἄμορφόν ἐστιν - ἀνδρῶδες γάρ - ὅ τε ὀφθαλμὸς ἐπιπρέπει τῷ μετώπῳ οὐδὲν ἐνδεέστερον ὄρων ἢ εἰ δύο ἦσαν.

Doris

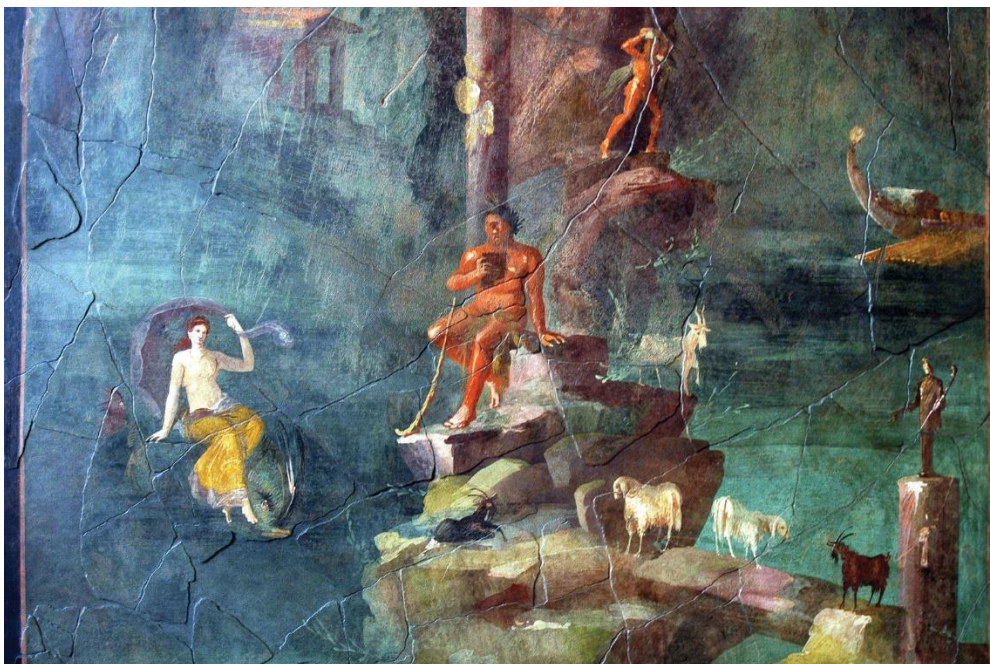
It appears, Galateia, that your Polyphemos is not a lover but a beloved, from the way you sing him up.

Ἔοικας, ὦ Γαλάτεια, οὐκ ἐραστήν ἀλλ' ἐρώμενον ἔχειν τὸν Πολύφημον, οἷα ἐπαινεῖς αὐτόν.

Galateia

No, not my beloved, but this criticism I can't take from you all. You seem to be doing it because you're jealous, because once, while he was herding sheep, watching us from afar, he saw us playing by the sea shore at the foot of Etna, where the beach stretches out between the mountain and the sea, but he didn't see *you*, and he thought me the prettiest of all, and was all eye only for me. That's what you can't stand. It proves I'm better and more desirable, while *you* attracted no looks at all.

[2] Οὐκ ἐρώμενον, ἀλλὰ τὸ πάνυ ὄνειδιστικὸν τοῦτο οὐ φέρω ὑμῶν, καί μοι δοκεῖτε ὑπὸ φθόνου αὐτὸ ποιεῖν, ὅτι ποιμαίνων ποτὲ ἀπὸ τῆς σκοπῆς παιζούσας ἡμᾶς ἰδὼν ἐπὶ τῆς ἡϊόνος ἐν τοῖς πρόποσι τῆς Αἴτνης, καθ' ὃ μεταξὺ τοῦ ὄρους καὶ τῆς θαλάσσης αἰγιαλὸς ἀπομηκύνεται, ὑμᾶς μὲν οὐδὲ προσέβλεψεν, ἐγὼ δὲ ἐξ ἀπασῶν ἢ καλλίστη ἔδοξα, καὶ μόνη ἐμοὶ ἐπεῖχε τὸν ὀφθαλμόν. ταῦτα ὑμᾶς ἀνιᾶ· δεῖγμα γάρ, ὡς ἀμείνων εἰμι καὶ ἀξιέραστος, ὑμεῖς δὲ παρώφθητε.



Galateia and Polyphemos from the villa of Agrippa Postumus at Boscotrecase (c' 10 BC) (Met., NY). Note the youth at the top – Acis, also in love with Galateia, from another version of the story, turned into a musical entertainment by Handel.

Doris

Well, if you look pretty to a shepherd with one eye, do you think that makes people jealous? Anyway, what else did he have to praise in you except your white skin? And that, I reckon, just because he knows all about cheese and milk. He thinks everything like that is pretty.

[3] But, as far as anything else goes, if you want to find out what you really look like, when it's calm, bend down from a rock and take a look at yourself in the water—nothing but white flesh, to be accurate. No one sings that up, unless there's some rosy colour to show it off.

Εἰ ποιμένι καὶ ἐνδεεῖ τὴν ὄψιν καλὴ ἔδοξας, ἐπίφθονος οἶει γεγονέναι; καίτοι τί ἄλλο ἐν σοὶ ἐπαινέσαι εἶχεν ἢ τὸ λευκὸν μόνον; καὶ τοῦτο, οἶμαι, ὅτι συνήθης ἐστὶ τυρῶ καὶ γάλακτι· πάντα οὖν τὰ ὅμοια τούτοις ἡγεῖται καλά.

[3] ἐπεὶ τά γε ἄλλα ὀπόταν ἐθελήσης μαθεῖν, οἶα τυγχάνεις οὔσα τὴν ὄψιν, ἀπὸ πέτρας τινός, εἴ ποτε γαλήνη εἴη, ἐπικύψασα ἐς τὸ ὕδωρ ἰδὲ σεαυτὴν—οὐδὲν ἄλλο ἢ χροῖαν λευκὴν ἀκριβῶς· οὐκ ἐπαινεῖται δὲ τοῦτο, ἢν μὴ ἐπιπρέπη αὐτῷ καὶ τὸ ἐρύθημα.

Galatea

Well, so I'm all white then, but I've still got a lover, even if it's him, but there's no one among all you whose praises a shepherd or sailor or boatman sings. And on top of everything else, Polyphemus is at any rate musical.

Καὶ μὴν ἐγὼ μὲν ἢ ἀκράτως λευκὴ, ὅμως ἐραστὴν ἔχω κἂν τοῦτον, ὑμῶν δὲ οὐκ ἔστιν ἦντινα ἢ ποιμὴν ἢ ναύτης ἢ πορθμεὺς ἐπαινεῖ· ὁ δὲ γε Πολύφημος τά τε ἄλλα καὶ μουσικὸς ἐστὶ.



Greek lyre with 'uprights', and 'bar fitted with strings'.
By twisting the strings round the bar, the lyre could be tuned.

Doris

[4] Oh bottle it, Galatea. We heard his singing when he was serenading you the other day. Dear Aphrodite! Anyone would have taken it for a braying donkey. And the lyre itself—what?! A stag's skull stripped of flesh, with horns for uprights, that's what they were; putting a bar across and fitting it with strings, no twisting them round a peg, he sang tunelessly and unmelodiously, bellowing away on one note, the lyre echoing back with another, so that we couldn't stop laughing at that 'love' song. Even Echo refused to respond, and she such a chatterbox, to his roaring, ashamed to seem to be caught imitating such a rough, ridiculous song.

[5] And lover-boy was carrying in his arms a plaything, a bear-cub, quite as hairy as himself. Who would not envy you, Galatea, such a lover?

[4] Σιώπα, ὦ Γαλάτεια· ἠκούσαμεν αὐτοῦ αἰδοντος ὁπότε ἐκώμασε πρώην ἐπὶ σέ· Ἀφροδίτη φίλη, ὄνον ἄν τις ὀγκᾶσθαι ἔδοξεν. καὶ αὐτὴ δὲ ἡ πηκτὶς οἴα; κρανίον ἐλάφου γυμνὸν τῶν σαρκῶν, καὶ τὰ μὲν κέρατα πήχεις ὥσπερ ἦσαν, ζυγώσας δὲ αὐτὰ καὶ ἐνάψας τὰ νεῦρα, οὐδὲ κολλάβοις περιστρέψας, ἐμελώιδει ἄμουσόν τι καὶ ἀπιδόν, ἄλλο μὲν αὐτὸς βοῶν, ἄλλο δὲ ἡ λύρα ὑπήχει, ὥστε οὐδὲ κατέχειν τὸν γέλωτα ἐδυνάμεθα ἐπὶ τῷ ἐρωτικῷ ἐκείνῳ αἰσματοῦ· ἡ μὲν γὰρ Ἥχῳ οὐδὲ ἀποκρίνεσθαι αὐτῷ ἠθέλεν, οὕτω λάλος οὔσα, βρυχομένῳ, ἀλλ' ἠισχύνετο, εἰ φανείη μιμουμένη τραχεῖαν ὠιδὴν καὶ καταγέλαστον.

[5] ἔφερον δὲ ὁ ἐπέραστος ἐν ταῖς ἀγκάλαις ἀθυρμάτιον ἄρκτου σκύλακα τὸ λάσιον αὐτῷ προσεοικότα. τίς οὐκ ἄν φθονήσῃ σὺν σοι, ὦ Γαλάτεια, τοιοῦτου ἐραστοῦ;

Galatea

Well, Doris, shows us yours, then, obviously far more handsome, more musical and better at the lyre.

Οὐκοῦν σύ, Δωρί, δεῖξον ἡμῖν τὸν σεαυτῆς, καλλίῳ δῆλον ὅτι ὄντα καὶ ὠιδικώτερον καὶ κιθαρίζειν ἄμεινον ἐπιστάμενον.

Doris

I have no lover and I don't pride myself on being desirable. But as for your Cyclops, for what he is—a goat smelling of he-goat, eating his meat raw, by all accounts, and munching his way through any strangers that turn up—may he be yours, and you for ever return his affection.

Ἄλλὰ ἐραστής μὲν οὐδεὶς ἔστι μοι οὐδὲ σεμνύνομαι ἐπέραστος εἶναι· τοιοῦτος δὲ οἶος ὁ Κύκλωψ ἐστίν, κινάβρας ἀπόζων ὥσπερ ὁ τράγος, ὠμοβόρος, ὡς φασι, καὶ σιτούμενος τοὺς ἐπιδημοῦντας τῶν ξένων, σοὶ γένοιτο καὶ πάντοτε σὺ ἀντερῶις αὐτοῦ.