

**NATURE AND EDUCATION IN ‘IDYLLIC’ ROMANCE:
*DAPHNIS AND CHLOE AND FLOIRE AND BLANCHEFLOR***

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The story of love between two children, Floire and Blancheflor, enjoyed a great popularity in medieval and Renaissance Europe and versions of it survive in French, Spanish, Italian, German, Greek and Old Norse.¹ The Old French romance *Floire and Blancheflor* (mid-12th Century) is often considered to be the oldest extant version of the story, although 19th and 20th century scholars of medieval literature have suggested its Germanic, Byzantine, Persian, and Arabic provenance. Discussion concentrates on establishing a hypothetical continuity of transmission for the story (or, in some cases, different versions of the story) from one text to another, from one culture to another. The argument is usually based on similarities between the names of the protagonists, the basic structure and details of the plot, as well as on dating of manuscripts so as to establish chronological relations between different versions. However, a single source for this Old French romance has never been conclusively identified (Reinhold 1906; Grieve 1997: 15-20).

An alternative reading of *Floire and Blancheflor* compares a different text that shares similar themes, motifs and certain elements of the plot, but does not tell the same story. This would allow judgments about continuity and variation in the treatment of themes. This kind of analysis was suggested by Lot-Borodine in her 1913 monograph *Le Roman idyllique en France au moyen âge*, where she argued that the so-called aristocratic French version of *Floire and Blancheflor* belonged to and also constituted the model for a sub-genre of medieval French romance.² She names this group of texts (which also includes

¹ For the full list of manuscripts, early and modern editions see Grieve 1997: 210-214.

² Two versions of the story of *Floire and Blancheflor* survive in Old French. Following du Ménil's hypothesis that these versions have different target audiences in distinct social classes (du Ménil 1856: xix-xxi), critics have distinguished an 'aristocratic' and a 'popular' version. Krueger has shown that while the 'popular version'

the late 12th or early 13th century texts *Aucassin et Nicolette*, *L'Escoufle*, *Galeran de Bretagne* and *Guillaume de Palerne*) 'idyllic romance' ('roman idyllique'). These works are united by the theme of 'idyllic childhood', that is by the description of a boy and a girl who grow up together, fall in love, and after a number of trials are married (Lot-Borodine 1913: 2-3). The use of the term 'idyllic' is descriptive since the romances in question treat such 'idyllic' themes as love and nature. However, it also translates Lot-Borodine's interest in the similarity between the texts of her corpus to classical idyllic texts, most importantly to one of the most famous of Greek romances, *Daphnis and Chloe* by Longus (2nd Century AD).³ In both the Greek and Old French texts, love between two children is experienced in a natural setting and linked to nature (Lot-Borodine 1913: 6). According to Lot-Borodine, the Greek text shares plot structure and a number of motifs with the later Old French romances:

[L]a composition reste toujours la même dans ses grandes lignes: motif de la mésalliance comme point de départ, séparation des amoureux comme nœud de l'action, dénouement invariablement heureux, qui est le mariage. (Lot-Borodine 1913: 6).

[T]he broad plot structure remains always the same: the motif of misalliance as starting point, the separation of the lovers that sets the plot in motion, and the invariably happy denouement – the marriage.

The present study revisits and develops the comparison between *Floire et Blancheflor* and *Daphnis and Chloe*. My aim is not to define a common generic model underlying the two texts but to concentrate on the theme identified by Lot-Borodine as 'idyllic childhood' in order to show how this

uses battles to solve conflicts, the 'aristocratic' concentrates instead on the themes of books and reading (Krueger 1983:4).

I will use the edition of MS A of the 'aristocratic' version (Paris, B.N.F., fr. 375) by Jean-Luc Leclanche (Leclanche 1983).

³ On the dating of *Daphnis and Chloe* see Hunter 1983.

theme is developed in different cultural contexts.⁴ *Daphnis and Chloe* forms part of the late classical tradition of prose narratives in Greek that narrate the adventures of a young couple. Similar romances include *Aetheopica* by Heliodorus, *Leucippe and Clitophon* by Achilles Tatius, and *Chareas and Callirhoë* by Chariton.⁵ *Daphnis and Chloe*, however, is the only instance to use the motif of common upbringing in a natural setting. Nothing is known about the text's author or the history of its composition. It presents itself as a fantasy about country life composed by a city dweller for city dwellers. By contrast, *Floire and Blancheflor* is one of the earliest Old French romances and as such stands at the origins of the genre. Along with the theme of love it is also concerned with the conversion of Muslims to Christianity and the Christian expansion in Europe and beyond. Unlike the contemporary *chanson de geste* genre, however, *Floire and Blancheflor* uses not war and violence as the main medium of conversion, but love.

Despite significant dissimilarities in plot and settings, both *Daphnis and Chloe* and *Floire and Blancheflor* relate their protagonists' coming of age through the experience of love. From the harmony of innocence (in the sense of the ignorance that precedes knowledge) through a set of adventures the protagonists are brought to a new harmony of love consummated in marriage. They avoid the sorrows of adult love by choosing the right partner while still children, despite the objections of *mésalliance* presented by their parents.

I shall begin by briefly outlining the plots of the romances in question. The action of *Daphnis and Chloe* takes place in a rural area on the island of Lesbos. A slave shepherd finds a baby boy exposed with rich tokens and brings him up as his own son, calling him Daphnis. Two years later another shepherd finds a similarly exposed baby girl. He adopts her and calls her Chloe. When Daphnis and Chloe reach adolescence they are sent to graze goats and sheep

⁴ Quotations are taken from the English translation of *Daphnis and Chloe* Longus, McCail, 2002.

⁵ Bakhtin's analysis of time and space in these romances has informed my analysis in the present paper (Bakhtin 1981: 86-110).

together, and fall in love. On various occasions they are separated: Daphnis is captured by pirates, Chloe is kidnapped by city men, a city man wants to make Daphnis his lover, Chloe is abducted by a shepherd. Moreover, a union between Daphnis and Chloe appears as a misalliance to the adoptive parents of each: both couples are convinced of their own foster-child's higher birth. However, the lovers overcome all these obstacles. Daphnis is revealed to be the son of the local landowner, while Chloe's wealthy parents are also found in the city. The lovers are married, become owners of the land where they grew up, and decide to stay there to lead a pastoral life for the rest of their days.

In *Floire and Blancheflor*, Floire, the son of a Muslim Spanish king, and Blancheflor, the daughter of a Christian captive, are brought up together and fall in love.⁶ In order to prevent a misalliance, Floire's parents send Floire away to study, and sell Blancheflor to merchants. Floire, who is told his friend is dead, wants to kill himself. When his parents reveal the truth, the boy sets out in search of Blancheflor. He learns that she has been resold to the emir of Babylon who intends to marry her. Floire gains access to the girl's room in the tower where she is kept with the emir's other maidens. Discovering the couple in bed together, the emir wants to put them to death. However, their beauty, their willingness to die for each other and the story of their love move the emir to pity. Forgiven, the children are married. When news of Floire's parents' death arrives, the couple return to Spain, where Floire has himself and his people baptized. Later the pair become rulers of Hungary. Their daughter, Berthe aux Grands Pieds, will give birth to the Emperor Charlemagne.

'Nature' has two interconnected meanings that I will explore in the present paper. Firstly, 'nature' refers to all forms of non-human environment, primarily to landscapes, animals and elements. Secondly, 'nature' also

⁶ Large part of Spain remained under Arabic rule for most of the medieval period (from the arrival of the Arabic armies in 711 to the fall of the emirate of Granada in 1492). The struggle for Christian Reconquest of Al-Andalus (as the Arabic Spain was known) was one of the major preoccupations of Western Christian society and became an important theme of medieval French literature. The Emperor Charlemagne, whose fictional genealogy is established in *Floire and Blancheflor*, was the major figure of Spanish Conquest-themed literature.

represents the concept of a pre-given law that operates in the world before any law of society. Childhood is that stage in the individual's development where this meaning of 'nature' manifests itself fully. Importantly, however, 'human nature' also includes a potential for education, seen as a necessary condition of the individual's successful integration into society.⁷ The first sense of 'nature' allows for an analogous process since humans appropriate and transform natural landscapes into farmland and garden. Both the romances discussed here explore these different meanings of 'nature' and 'education' in connection with themes of love and childhood.

In the following sections I shall explore what the descriptions of the couples in *Daphnis and Chloe* and *Floire and Blancheflor* tell us about the nature of their love. Further, I will look at how education supplements the natural ability of the protagonists to love and analyse the relationship between natural environment and humans in each text. Finally, since we think of natural landscape as a form of space and of education as a process that is situated in time, the presentation of time and its effects in each romance will be studied.

Love and Education

Descriptions of Daphnis and Chloe centre around differences that point to their gender. They are both beautiful, but in different ways - Daphnis is dark-haired and strong (1.13), Chloe blond and delicate (1.17). Daphnis is two years older than his friend. They are predestined to each other by Eros (1.7; 3.3-3.6) but the intervention of the god of love appears to reflect their 'natural' inclinations: they have reached the right age (when they are sent to pasture, Daphnis is fifteen and Chloe thirteen (1.7)), and are well suited to each other.

In descriptions of Floire and Blancheflor it is not difference but similarity that is underlined. Both the boy and the girl have blond hair and look so similar that when Floire travels in search of his beloved he reminds his hosts

⁷ For a survey of the history and criticism of the concepts of 'nature' and 'culture', see MacCormack 1980.

of Blancheflor (who stayed with them earlier); once he is even taken for her twin brother (l.1728). The two children are brought together by a number of coincidences that have undoubtedly religious (Christian) connotations: Blancheflor's mother is captured by a pagan king on her pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela; she is given as a gift to the queen, Floire's mother, and both give birth the same day, Palm Sunday (Paske Flourie, literally 'Flowery Easter' l.163). In commemoration of the day the babies are given similar names - Floire (flower) and Blancheflor (white flower). Unlike Daphnis and Chloe, Floire and Blancheflor are therefore the same age. They fall in love precociously early, soon after they are sent to study at age five (l.197)).

Lovesickness is the effect of love in both romances. Daphnis and Chloe each experience lovesickness (Chloe, 1.13; Daphnis, 1.17), which at first they think to be some kind of illness. They lose their appetites, think of each other all the time, and need to see each other. Love and suffering separate them, and they start having secrets from each other (they cannot discuss their feelings). In *Daphnis and Chloe* lovesickness is the first sign of love, and leads to the lovers' recognizing their difference. In *Floire et Blancheflor*, however, love is experienced as union while lovesickness occurs when the lovers are forcibly separated. When Floire is sent away to Montoire, he is unable to remember his lessons (ll.375-6). When informed of the death of his beloved, he suffers greatly, wishing to kill himself in order to join Blancheflor in the afterlife. On the way to Babylon, his lack of appetite and sad face remind his hosts of Blancheflor's similar demeanour (ll.12995-300; ll.1459-68; ll.1532-7; ll.1725-8). Symptoms of lovesickness thus make the children appear even more alike. Whereas in *Daphnis and Chloe* love makes the lovers different, in *Floire and Blancheflor* it underlines their sameness. Moreover, in the Greek text the lovers have to acquire gender difference before they can attain reunion as a couple, and it is this acquisition which occupies the body of the text. *Floire and Blancheflor* presents a different concept of love that operates by making the

partners more and more alike; the couple's final union depends on this perfect similarity and equality.⁸

The love of both couples is linked to education and can be understood only in relation to this process. Certain aspects of their emotions come to the protagonists 'naturally' but some have to be learned; the need for instruction and the ability to learn, however, are presented as inherent parts of the children's 'nature'. An important distinction between the Greek and the French romances lies in the way each treats the relationship between experience and education. In *Daphnis and Chloe* experience of love precedes any knowledge of it, while in *Floire and Blancheflor* education transforms childhood attachment into erotic love.

In the Greek romance, Chloe is the first to experience love, and her inability to identify her feelings is linked to her 'natural' upbringing - 'young and countrified as she was, and never having so much as heard another person uttering the name of love' (1.13) she does not know the name of the pain that is torturing her. However strong their attachment to the landscape and the animal world, Daphnis and Chloe cannot understand their feelings or consummate their passion without the help of other people, that is, without being educated. Although they grew up with animals, they cannot imitate their sexual acts (3.14). It is in this need for education that their human nature is revealed.

In response to the couple's need, the text provides Daphnis and Chloe with two instructors in love. The first is the old shepherd Philetas, who is a skilled pipe-player and an iconic figure in Greek lyric poetry.⁹ He tells the children the name of their emotion, and names three remedies for lovesickness

⁸ When the two are discovered together in the Tower of Maidens, the emir and his entourage take them for a couple of identically beautiful girls (1.2579 ff.). Jane Gilbert argues that because of his young age, adults fail to recognize Floire's relationship with Blancheflor as erotic love and construct other, more acceptable, explanations: he is taken for either for her twin or her female friend (Gilbert 1997: 40-50).

⁹ The name Philetas recalls the poet Philitas (Philetas) of Cos (c. 290 BC) who influenced many Greek and Roman poets; only a few lines of his poetry survive. For the discussion on the figure of Philetas and the possible influence of Philitas of Cos on Longus, see Hunter 1983: 76-83.

– ‘kissing/and embracing/and lying down naked together’ (2.7). Philetas’s advice is, however, too imprecise and euphemistic for Daphnis and Chloe.

Both Daphnis and Chloe can benefit from the poetic lesson taught by Philetas; only Daphnis, however, will proceed to the next stage of education. The second instructor in love is a woman from the city, named Lycaenion. Attracted by Daphnis’s beauty, she volunteers to teach him how to make love. To the boy she presents her intention as educational: ‘So if you want to banish the blues and sample the delights you’ve set your heart on, all you have to do is make yourself my pupil, and I’ll give you a lesson’ (3.17). In order to reveal Daphnis’s ‘natural’ ability to perform sexual acts, Lycaenion needs to teach him what to do. Only then ‘nature herself taught him how to complete the act’ (3.18).

Daphnis and Chloe explicitly states its ideology of gender roles and sexuality. Chloe is the first to experience the emotion and reflect on its significance. Thus toward the beginning of the romance she is presented as more sensitive and more mature than Daphnis; her sexuality, however, needs to be controlled and it is Daphnis who is given the knowledge that will make him her instructor on the wedding night.

In the love education of *Floire and Blancheflor* the role of instructor is given to books and reading, and knowing the name and theory of love precedes experience. When they begin to study together, Floire and Blancheflor learn about love from ‘pagan’ Latin poetry. Their reading transforms their attachment into erotic love:

*Livres lisoient paienors
u ooient parler d’amors.
[...]
Cius livres les fist molt haster
en autre sens d’aus entramer
que de l’amor de noureture
qui lor avoit esté a cure. (ll.231-2; 235-8)*

They read pagan books where they heard talk of love[...] This book made them hurry to experience a kind of love different to the love of upbringing that they felt before.

Latin becomes their private language, the secret language of their love (ll. 269-72).¹⁰ Later in the text, books and reading take on the value of a metaphor for love. Blancheflor's friend Glaris employs this imagery to explain the heroine's absence at the emir's bedside one morning:

*'Sire, merci!
Tote nuit a liut en son livre
que a joie peüssiés vivre,
k'a paines tote nuit dormi,
contre le jor se rendormi. (ll. 2534-8).*

Sir, be merciful! She was reading all night, in order that you may live in joy, so she hardly slept at all, and she went to sleep at dawn.

Books and reading, which earlier in the text instructed the protagonists in love, are now used to mean 'love-making' for those in the know - Glaris and the reader. The emir, unfamiliar with Blancheflor's story, is unable to read the metaphor correctly.

Thus both couples – Daphnis and Chloe and Floire and Blancheflor– receive instruction in love from sources external to their everyday experience. In the Greek romance these sources are poetry and city (through the figure of Lycaenion); in the French romance, 'pagan' books. Thus education appears as an intrusion on the 'natural' state of affairs and at the same time as a condition of the 'natural', necessary and ideal, integration of the loving couple in society.

¹⁰ Whereas MS A does not specify what book made Floire and his friend fall in love (all we know it is a Latin book), MS B states that it was Ovid (Pelan, 1956: l. 227)). Ovid enjoyed the status of *praeceptor amoris* (instructor in love) in the Antiquity and the Middle Ages. His *Ars amatoria* and *Remedia amoris* enjoyed great popularity in the Middle Ages and were standard texts used in education. On Ovid in the Middle Ages, see Hexter, 1986.

The city in the Lycaenion episode is already presented as a source of corruption but as the later events will confirm, it is a necessary evil; only the wealth of their real parents - the city dwellers - will allow Daphnis and Chloe to continue living the idyllic life they loved as children and to avoid the hardships of peasant life.

In *Floire and Blancheflor*, the couple is educated reading 'pagan books'. The term 'pagan' is ambiguous here. Floire's father's army is termed 'pagan' as a medieval 'synonym' for Muslims and other non-Christians (e.g. l.76); the same term also designates the literature of classical antiquity. 'Pagan' thus denotes an area outside the Christian ideology – the ideology espoused by the text as a French production. On the other hand, the 'pagan' Latin language was in medieval Europe an elite language of learning, and indeed defines Western Christianity. It is this language that provides a private space for the lovers. Their early initiation into Christianity's sacred language will lead ultimately to the lovers' inclusion in, and to the objective expansion (via Floire's conversion of his subjects, prefiguring that of Charlemagne) of the Christian imagined community (Anderson, 1983: 12-19).

Natural Landscape and time

The concern of the two romances with the problematics of nature and education is further extended onto the representation of the *locus amoenus* - the natural landscape that serves as setting for love in each story.¹¹ The *locus amoenus* motif creates a metaphorical relationship between love and childhood through associating both with nature. The treatment of nature surrounding the lovers is defined by presentation of love in relation to education. Whereas in *Daphnis and Chloe* education supplements the 'natural' desires of the lovers, in *Floire et Blancheflor* it transforms childish emotions into love. In other words, in the

¹¹ According to the classic definition by Curtius, the minimal ingredients of a *locus amoenus*, or description of a 'lovely' natural place in classical and medieval literature (often serving as a setting for a love story), 'comprise a tree (or several trees), a meadow and a spring or brook' (Curtius, 1953: 195). All these elements are found in both texts.

Greek text, one may love ‘naturally’ but needs further instruction to make sense of and profit from one’s feelings; in the French text education produces the feelings themselves. Where natural settings are concerned, the initial setting for love in the Greek work is the meadow, nature wild but made productive and purposeful by man; there are also two gardens in the romance. By contrast, the sole natural setting in *Floire et Blancheflor* is the garden, where the beauty of nature is also the product of human skill.

Daphnis and Chloe is usually described as a ‘pastoral’ romance, the only example within the genre of Greek romance. This definition underlines the connection of *Daphnis and Chloe* with Greek pastoral poetry (Rhode 1963), but also the roles that the protagonists’ occupation (grazing goats and sheep) and the natural environment itself play in the text. ‘Nature is at the centre of the story: it is neither just background nor pure embellishment, but the basis of the action itself’ (Hägg 1983: 35). The text connects the dynamics of its protagonists’ relationship to the seasonal transformations of the surrounding landscape. The story begins in spring when Daphnis and Chloe are sent to pasture together, and ends in the autumn of the following year with their marriage. Nature is described to parallel or to stimulate the feelings of Daphnis and Chloe. For instance, in the first spring the children imitate what they see and this imitation draws them closer together:

It was the beginning of spring, and all the flowers – in woods and meadows and on the mountains – were bursting into bloom ... With such a delightful sense of spring all about them, it was natural that these two young and impressionable people should begin to imitate what they heard and saw. They sang when they heard the birds sing, they jumped about nimbly when they saw the lambs skipping, and they gathered flowers in imitation of the bees – some they threw into each others’ laps, some they wove into garlands, which they gave the Nymphs as offerings (1.9).

Another function of nature description is to provide an environment allowing the protagonists to show initiative in love. In winter, heavy snowfalls paralyse life in the village. While the other peasants are happy to rest, the situation is unbearable for the young lovers:

Remembering departed joys – their kisses and embraces and the delightful picnics which they had shared – they passed sleepless nights and doleful days, and waited for the spring, that rebirth after death (3.4).

Daphnis, who ‘had time to spare’ (3.4), finds a pretext to approach Chloe’s house and is invited in. Later that winter, he ‘invented many more schemes to make many more journeys in Chloe’s direction’ (3.11).

Along with the open space of pastures and meadows that serve as a natural setting for the love of Daphnis and Chloe, the text also has two gardens: the garden of old Philetas, and the large park (‘pleasure-ground’) belonging to Dyonisophanes, master of the land, eventually revealed to be Daphnis’s biological father. If the meadow is related to the immediate experience of nature, then the gardens represent a reflection on it, man-made places created in response to certain notions of ‘nature’. Philetas attempts to reproduce nature: his garden is so well arranged that, were it not for the boundary-wall, one could have mistaken it for a woodland grove (2.3). The landowner’s garden, maintained by Daphnis’s foster father, on the other hand, is so splendid that it could have only been man-made: even what happened naturally ‘looked as though human skill had been at work’ (4.2).

The text presents an obvious parallel between these two gardens and the two types of education in love in *Daphnis and Chloe* discussed in the previous section. Two attitudes toward the relationship between man and natural landscape are presented here, one of which may be called poetical (or mimetic), the other consumerist. The retired shepherd Philetas is proud of having reproduced nature within the boundaries of his garden, as a poet would be

proud of having expressed human feelings correctly in his poetry. The pleasure-ground, on the other hand, is planted to give its master a pleasant idea of the countryside. Not only can he take pleasure in all possible trees and flowers in the garden, he can also enjoy the view over the plain, the sea, and ‘the peasants minding their flocks and herds’ (4.2). This garden is an emblem of the city men’s view of the countryside as an object of consumption.¹²

In contrast to this variety of natural and semi-natural environments, the sole kind in *Floire et Blancheflor* is the garden. There are nevertheless three gardens in the story: that belonging to King Felis, Floire’s father; that around Blancheflor’s false tomb; and finally, the emir of Babylon’s garden. These multiple versions allow reflection on the ideas the garden conveys. Central is the question of whether it is possible to capture and preserve the beauty and harmony of nature in a man-made landscape while at the same time avoiding such disappointing aspects of nature as time, change, and decay. For time in the gardens of *Floire and Blancheflor* is not ruled by the natural change of seasons that has been observed in the Greek text. It is always spring here and trees are in blossom (1.247; 1.630; 1.2021). The eternal spring recalls medieval lyric poetry and its *débuts printaniers* when the joy of awakening nature is either compared to or contrasted with the lover’s sentiments. As such, spring is a common metaphor for love, especially its beginnings.¹³ Throughout the narrative of *Floire and Blancheflor* springtime and flowers create an atmosphere of harmony and are linked to the idyllic theme.¹⁴ However, the desire to use the space of the garden to stop the flow of time is present in every description.

Floire and Blancheflor’s love begins between their studies and the delights of the garden where they take their meals and listen to birds singing of

¹² For the analysis of the second garden, see Zeitlin 1990: 444-7.

¹³ The difference in treatment of the seasons was noticed by Lot-Borodine who argues that in *Floire and Blancheflor* the eternal spring is a metaphor for the protagonists’ ‘printemps du cœur’ - ‘spring of the heart’ (Lot-Borodine 1913: 6).

¹⁴ Calin counts 13 episodes where flower imagery is evoked (Calin 1964).

love (ll.243-254). This is the only life they know and if it were possible they would lead it forever (ll.265-6).

Floire's parents, who want to free their son from his attachment to Blancheflor and make him ready for a new, more socially acceptable love, try to make him believe the girl is dead. They order a rich tomb to be built and ever-blossoming trees to be planted around it. Their plan is to convince their son that Floire the child, the young lover in the garden exists no longer. They therefore crown the tomb with two statues (automata) representing Floire and Blancheflor offering each other flowers.¹⁵ When the wind blows, the figurines kiss and talk (ll.593-604). His parents do not want to accept that Floire's attachment is in fact love, as suggested by his lovesickness in Montoire. Meanwhile in Montoire, the developing, maturing quality of Floire's love is expressed by the metaphor of the tree that Love has planted in his heart. The boy does not care about the aroma of its flowers as he waits for it to bear fruit, that is, for reunion with Blancheflor (ll.378-390). Although only a figure of speech, this tree of Love is the only tree in the romance that is expected not only to blossom but also to bear fruit, and is, therefore, the most 'natural'. While his parents wish to destroy Floire's love by transforming the garden of love into its own parody, Floire himself is ready to give up the dream of love in the ever blossoming garden in favour of a new 'fruitful' love.

In Babylon the lovers have to confront an ultimate version of the garden and the cruelty it can contain. The emir's garden is the most luxurious garden in the text. Euphrates, '*un fleuve de paradis*' – 'river of Paradise' (l.2008) flows there, and the beauty of the garden makes one believe that it is in fact paradise itself (l.2040). Another Tree of Love is planted there. It is always in blossom, since as soon as one flower falls another grows in its place. This garden is the setting for the annual ceremony by means of which the emir chooses his next bride. The virgin on whom a flower from the Tree falls will become his wife to

¹⁵ On the use of automata in medieval romance see Baumgartner 1988.

be beheaded at the end of the year. In order to maintain his own life in blossom all the time and become an ever-blossoming garden himself, the emir never attaches himself to one woman for longer than a year (Price 1982).¹⁶

The lovers discovered in the Tower of Maidens are an outrage to the emir's world. Deciding to execute them, the emir attempts to preserve the order represented by his garden. Price has shown how indifference to death and willingness to die for the beloved makes the lovers immune to the adult world. Death is exactly what the emir is trying to resist by consuming virgins, and contemplating Floire and Blancheflor ready to die for each other impresses him so much that he forgives them and decides to abandon his lifestyle by marrying Glaris not for one year, but for life (Price 1982: 19-20).

The quality that permits Floire and Blancheflor to resist the emir's world and cure what are presented as its deviations is therefore the ability to love one person in life and death. This same quality requires the children to grow up and leave the garden to enter adult society as they marry and become rulers of Floire's land, and later of Hungary. The couple leave the gardens of childhood to become political figures.

In *Daphnis and Chloe*, by contrast, the protagonists decide to remain in the land of their childhood. They bring their children up there, giving them shepherds' names. Hence the same natural location will serve as the setting for generations of descendants, who will live there in harmony with the seasons as their parents did. *Daphnis and Chloe* attempts to present time as cyclical, attached to the seasons of the year and reproducing itself in generations. This attempt, however, is ironic, for the book enshrines a vision of the countryside from the point of view of the city dweller. This project is announced in the prologue, where a hunter from the city sees a painting representing the story of

¹⁶ This project can be compared to the project of the Shah Shahriar from the *Arabian Nights* who beheaded his wives at dawn after the wedding night. This similarity has served as one of the arguments for the Arabic provenance of *Floire and Blancheflor* (Huet, 1899: 353). The emir's behaviour, however, does not seem to be motivated primarily by jealousy or even aggression against women. Rather, he is trying to stop the flow of time and thus to prevent any changes time may make in his own body.

Daphnis and Chloe in the nymphs' cave and decides to write the story down. Both a rural upbringing and (knowledge of) a noble origin are necessary conditions of the lovers' union with nature. These children are different from the peasants who surround them, more sensitive to the beauties and privileges of their natural environment. Acknowledgement by their wealthy families provides them with the leisure and means to enjoy a pastoral existence for the rest of their days.

In *Floire and Blancheflor*, by contrast, time is conceived to be teleological. It leads the lovers to happy marriage and regal power, and brings Floire to conversion. For these benefits to occur the stasis of the garden needs to be overcome; it is only a transitional phase on the lovers' path to marriage and power. Nevertheless, this phase is necessary, for only in the garden can the social and religious differences between the son of a pagan king and the daughter of a Christian captive be suspended allowing for the formation of the attachment which, when the protagonists leave the enclosure, will lead to Christian expansion.

In conclusion, *Daphnis and Chloe* creates a fiction of natural love in eternal harmony with nature and its cycles. This is, however, a sophisticated narrative of simple life destined for the cultured urban audience of Late Antiquity. Employing a number of the same themes, *Floire and Blancheflor* contests idea of an inherent and self-sufficient nature at every stage in the narrative. Thus, the text proposes a fiction of the Christian super-natural. In the teleological time of the French romance everything, and first of all the love between the protagonists themselves, is directed toward the realization of the divine plan.

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