

The quotation is from Lawrence Durrell (1968: 14), who contrasted his imagined characters with a “real” Alexandria. This paper discusses Longus’ “real” Mytilene, described with present tenses, as opposed to the estate of Dionysophanes, distanced from it both in space (200 stades) and time (described with past tenses, and belonging to an era when Mytilene and Methymna had armies and fleets).

Longus describes Mytilene (1.1.1) as “great and beautiful,” intersected by *euripoi* (channels) through which the sea flows, and adorned with bridges of polished white stone.

Mytilene was “almost totally leveled” (κατηνέχθη μικροπέσσα) by an earthquake (Aristides 49.38), probably in 148 CE. I propose that Longus describes the city as it was rebuilt after the earthquake, largely through the efforts of M. Pompeius Macrinus, described as “Neos Theophanes” and as *ktistes kai euergetes* of the city (ZPE 34 [1979] 221-237; IG 12. 2. 237), whom I link to Longus’ Dionysophanes

Longus’ *euripoi* and bridges are appropriate for a date after 148 CE. The main *euripos*, described by Diodoros Siculus (13.79), was mentioned as a familiar point of comparison by Pausanias (8.30.2); he is conventionally dated to mid-second century. Also datable after 148 CE is a mosaic in the Mytilene Museum portraying a figure that the excavator has equated with *Euripos* (Archontidou 1991: 363 and plan 3; Archontidou and Acheilara 1999: 112-113, 154-15). A (Roman-period) channel connecting the sea to fish-tanks (Archontidou 1997: 906-907; Paraskevaidis 2002: 20, 55) provides a parallel for Longus’ plural *euripoi*.

The archaeological evidence for (two) bridges (Paraskevaidis 2002: 48) has not provided a secure date; but they would have prevented movement of warships between the two harbors and are not likely to have been built while Mytilene had a fleet (until at least Actium). Their construction in white marble, rather than the local blue Moria stone, is typical of the second and third centuries.

The Grove of the Nymphs described in Longus’ *Preface* belongs to the same “present” as his Mytilene. It too finds strong parallels in contemporary Roman Mytilene. They include: a white marble plaque illustrating, and dedicated to, the Nymphs (Charitonidis 1968: 29 and *pinax* 10a); a grove dedicated to Silvanus, the Roman equivalent of Pan, popularized in Greece by Hadrian (IG 12. 2.122; see Dorsey 1992); and a fine mosaic depicting Eros with a trident (Kontis 1973: 129-130). All of these can plausibly be dated after 148 CE.