

HELIODOROS: SERIOUS INTENTIONS

INTRODUCTION: READING HELIODORUS

What merit should we find in Heliodoros' novel? Towards its end Hydaspes, agonizing over whether to save Charikleia from human sacrifice, sees before him an internal audience stirred by *πάθη* (emotions, feelings) equal to his and 'weeping through pleasure and pity at Fortune's stage-management' (10.16.3).¹ This is a popular audience, a *demos*, evincing a popular reaction, but one which Heliodoros anticipated and doubtless welcomed. Their reaction is characterized by simple, direct emotions and some limited awareness of the larger processes that have been going on in this novel. For them this is a world of *Τύχη* (Fortune) and amazement. Does the novel invite any deeper critical reaction than this?

An influential view in recent years has been Winkler's, that Heliodoros was a reflective writer who understood how readers only make provisional sense of things, and that his strengths lie in the hermeneutic games in which he engages those readers. Focusing on the 'mendacity' of Kalasiris, Winkler opened up a new critical language through which Heliodoros might be positively valued. At the same time, however, Winkler's reading eliminated authoritative statement and firm content from the novel—the 'serious intentions' of the title of this article. By contrast, Morgan's 1989 analysis of the story of Knemon demonstrated that Heliodoros privileges some views over others, and in particular that Knemon and Thisbe are deliberately used to establish the sense and value of the love of Theagenes and Charikleia.² One cannot prescribe that modern audiences should find serious and elevating the things which Heliodoros did, but perhaps it can be demonstrated that Heliodoros' own *Aithiopika* has what for him were depths, which cannot be omitted from our understanding of the novel and which it is possible, if we wish, to share. The novel in my opinion does more than just, as Winkler believed, 'raise the question of supernatural control' (p. 128): it asserts the value and the actuality of objectives beyond the material world.

Possibly, the values which ancient authors might wish us to share are less obviously enduring than the techniques with which they enshrined those values in literature.

¹ On the association of the reader's response with that of this crowd, see Morgan 1991, pp. 90–5. The following works are cited more than once in the course of the text or notes: S. Bartsch, *Decoding the Ancient Novel: The reader and the role of description in Heliodorus and Achilles Tatius* (Princeton, 1989). E. L. Bowie, 'The Greek Novel', in P. E. Easterling and B. M. W. Knox (edd.), *The Cambridge History of Classical Literature*, Vol. 1, 'Greek Literature' (Cambridge, 1985), pp. 683–98. F. Conca, E. De Carli, G. Zanetto, *Lessico dei Romanzieri Greci*, vol. 2 'Δ-Ι' (Hildesheim, 1989). N. Holzberg, *The Ancient Novel: an introduction*, tr. C. Jackson-Holzberg (London, 1995) [*Der Antike Roman* (München/Zürich, 1986)]. R. Merkelbach, *Roman und Mysterium in der Antike* (München, 1962). J. R. Morgan, 'History, Romance and Realism in the *Aithiopika* of Heliodoros', *Classical Antiquity* 1.2 (1982), 221–65. J. R. Morgan, 'The Story of Knemon in Heliodoros' *Aithiopika*', *JHS* 109 (1989), 99–113. J. R. Morgan, 'Reader and Audiences in the *Aithiopika* of Heliodoros', in H. Hofmann (ed.), *Groningen Colloquia on the Novel*, vol. 4 (Groningen, 1991), pp. 99–113. E. Rohde, *Der griechische Roman und seine Vorläufer* (Leipzig, 3rd 1914). G. N. Sandy, 'Characterization and Philosophical Decor in Heliodoros' *Aethiopica*', *TAPA* 112 (1982), 141–67. T. Szepessy, 'Die *Aithiopika* des Heliodoros und der griechische sophistische Liebesroman', *Acta Antiqua Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 5 (1957), 241–59. J. J. Winkler, 'The Mendacity of Kalasiris and the narrative strategy of Heliodoros' *Aithiopika*', *YCS* 27 (1982), 93–158.

² Morgan 1989, pp. 99–113.

Symptomatic of this view are Holzberg's judgement that the 'significance (of the *Aithiopika*) for literary history lies above all in its outward, technical aspects'³ and Bowie's (p. 695) that 'it is in the story itself, and the manner in which Heliodorus unfolds its complexities, that his superiority (*sc.* over the other novelists) most clearly lies'. But is this consistent with the evident religious intensity that emanates from Heliodorus' novel? Bowie concedes (p. 696):

for a reader of the third or fourth century, with strong religious convictions and a proclivity to accept divine explanations of the world's ways, it will have charged the whole story with a deeper and more coherent significance than the more casual reference to gods or fortune in the earlier writers.

This gives the impression of restricting deeper readings to ancient readers, and then only to the more religiously inclined amongst them. Yet if the work actually facilitates such interpretation, it may go too far to claim that 'we are not entitled to assume that this (*sc.* the religious dimension) was the writer's chief concern' (*ibid.*)—except in the sense that it remains a novel and is obviously not a philosophical tract. What I suggest in this article is that one of the most important distinguishing characteristics of Heliodorus' novel is that *it matters*.

Others have diverted the religious dimension into the area of the novelist's technique, pressing hard Heiserman's assimilation of the divine in Heliodorus to 'the conventional romantic plot itself'.⁴ This view is presented by Morgan in the introduction to his translation of the novel, where he describes the *Aithiopika* as not a religious work, but a 'religiose' one. 'In a work of fiction Providence is only Plot in disguise'; the work does not 'instruct its readers in the ways of god' and 'the whole divine apparatus' is 'a literary device to give the plot a sense of direction, purpose, and eventual closure'.⁵ This is a tempting response to the bravura delectation offered by the novel, if one believes that there is no coherent theology in the work.⁶ Yet it is obviously not true of all works of fiction that 'Providence is only Plot in disguise'. In the *Oedipus Tyrannus*, for example, there is a profound religious sense as well as, or as a result of, a divinely driven and managed plot. The relentlessness of the plot instructs us about the irresistible power of forces beyond our control and understanding. Is Heliodorus' work too of this type? In addition to its 'religiose' surface, is it simultaneously a religious—or philosophical—work, imbued with a sense of the meaning of things?

In case of misunderstanding, I should stress that religion and philosophy are scarcely inconsistent disciplines in the centuries in which Heliodorus may have lived (3rd–4th A.D.).⁷ Yet, if one is to create a divide between them, Heliodorus probably

³ Holzberg, p. 99 (German original: p. 116).

⁴ A. R. Heiserman, *The Novel before the Novel: Essays and Discussions about the Beginnings of Prose Fiction in the West* (Chicago and London, 1977), p. 195, cited with minor modification by Bartsch, p. 142. Bartsch and Morgan set aside Heiserman's appreciation of the divine and especially destiny in Heliodorus (*cf.* Heiserman, p. 201). Heiserman is arguing, I think, that the metaphor of drama mediates between (fictional) plot and (actual) destiny (p. 202).

⁵ J. R. Morgan, introduction to his translation, in B. P. Reardon (ed.), *Collected Ancient Greek Novels* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1989), pp. 350–1, close to Winkler, p. 119 on higher divinities and plot, and p. 122 on whether the ideology of the novel is 'philosophically or religiously meant' (Winkler's italics), *cf.* p. 126.

⁶ *Cf.* Winkler, p. 125, n. 38; and Morgan 1982, p. 230.

⁷ For bibliography on the dating of Heliodorus, see G. N. Sandy, 'Recent Scholarship on the Prose Fiction of Classical Antiquity', *CW* 67 (1974), 321–59, at pp. 345f.; and E. L. Bowie and S. J. Harrison, 'The Romance of the Novel', *JRS* 83 (1993), 159–78, at p. 160.

belongs on the philosophical side: he does not promote particular gods as final solutions in his work (unless we count Sun and Moon). The individual gods are aspects of some larger purpose and his vocabulary for the divine is noticeably abstract or anonymous. Few gods are envisaged as initiating action, except maybe Apollo at Delphi (who is the same as the Ethiopian Sun-god anyway—*Ἀπόλλωνα τὸν αὐτὸν ὄντα καὶ Ἥλιον*—10.36.3), whereas we hear repeatedly of *ὁ θεός* or *οἱ θεοί* or *τὸ θεῖον* ('the god', 'the gods', or 'the [abstract] divine'), *οἱ κρείττονες* and *τὸ κρείττον* ('those superior', 'the [abstract] superior'), a *δαίμων* or *δαίμονες* or *τὸ δαιμόνιον* or *δαιμόνιον τι* ('daimon, daimons, the [abstract] daimonic, some daimonic thing'—like the *daimonion* that Socrates could hear).⁸

I argue that the work is basically Platonic. Morgan's view that the novel discusses two kinds of love, that of Knemon and Thisbe (associated with Athens) and that of Theagenes and Charikleia, is surely underwritten to some extent by the Platonic distinction between Heavenly and Pandemic Love. It is too weak to hold that a Platonic intertext has subconsciously affected the ways in which Heliodoros identifies human types. But equally, the content of the novel cannot simply be unlocked with the labels 'Heavenly' and 'Pandemic'. That would be to denude it of the sophistication and interest which lies in its working out of concepts which were felt important in later Platonism (one may compare Virgil's dialogue with Fate and Fortune through the figures of Jupiter and Juno). Heliodoros develops his thought with richness and human understanding. In this connection, it is of the greatest credit to Heliodoros' humane dogmatism that Knemon is understood and sympathetically drawn despite the exposure of his limitations. Heliodoros presents greater gradations than Apuleius in his *Metamorphoses*, a lonelier and bleaker work, devoid of friendships and of the sympathetic understanding of the human weakness of others. Yet Apuleius is a more than casual comparand. He above all has his Platonic dimension: *Cupid and Psyche*, an inserted story based in some way on Platonic conceptions of Love, casts light on the whole story.

In this article I do not offer a complete interpretation of the *Aithiopika*, but, rather, dig some trenches across this Heliodoran site to reveal the character and strategy of the novel. After a brief section on meaningful details ('Coded Messages'), I turn to the purposeful operation of superior powers in the novel and the ways in which characters and readers become aware of that operation ('The Reader's Evaluation of World-Views'). I then develop this view of purposeful intervention by looking at some of those who come to a bad end in the novel, in the course of which we see the moral deficiencies which are characteristic of unsympathetic persons such as brigands and barbarians ('Crime and Punishment'). This leads us to the direction given to the novel by mirror scenes at the beginning and at the centre of the *Aithiopika* ('Icons'). Finally, I look at the significance of the geography that informs the novel ('The Grading of the World and its Inhabitants') and try to fine-tune our view of Kalasiris—a key figure in the novel and central for its interpretation, but one whose trickery has perhaps been better understood than his purpose ('Understanding Kalasiris').

⁸ See Rohde, pp. 462–5, and Conca-De Carli-Zanetto. A CD-ROM search shows that he does not use *Πρόνοια* (unlike, say, Ps.-Kallisthenes) for the divine force despite its providential nature in his novel. On *Μοῖρα* and its special association with Kalasiris see below, p. 276 and n. 21. *Τύχη* has a variety of meanings from 'personal wealth/status' to the personified goddess 'Fortune' and it is often hard to say whether any independent superior force is envisaged; Rohde, p. 464, n. 2, attributes 16 (of the in fact 68) instances to a personal *Τύχη*.

CODED MESSAGES

As a preliminary, we may catch the flavour of Heliodoros by briefly observing some of the occasional meaningful details which he seems to have embedded in his novel. The 'enigmatic' approach implied should not surprise, in the light of ancient allegorical readings of Homer. We shall see that Heliodoros' own text interacts with Homer's and refers to an enigmatic Homer.⁹

It is a peculiar observation of 'Philip the Philosopher' (a 10/11th-century Byzantine author) that the letters of Charikleia's name, read as numerals, add up to a perfect 777.¹⁰ The number seven, here triply reinforced, is, Apuleius's Lucius tells us (*Metamorphoses* 11.1), particularly suited to religious practices according to Pythagoras, and is in any case closely associated with Apollo (the 7th is held to be his birthday and his festivals tend to fall on the 7th). But can Heliodoros really have intended his readers to add up the letters of Charikleia's name? The stimulus to the Byzantine author's observation came from the text of Heliodoros himself, where the priests of Syene (an authoritative source) tell Hydaspes about the Nile (9.22.6):

if the letters in its name are converted to numerals, they will total 365, the number of days in the year.¹¹

An author who is capable of this observation is no less capable of encoding his heroine's name.

Amongst other enigmatic details is the choice of sites for the story of the downfall of Demainete in Book 1. Aristippos is told that he can witness the affair of Demainete if he waits for Thisbe at the Garden which houses the monument of the Epicureans (1.16 *fin.*). The only other geographically fixed site in this story is where Demainete meets her death—at the Pit in the Academy. These appear to be philosophical grid-references appropriate to the role of shameless pleasure in human life—Epicurean and Platonic.

Later in the novel, it may be more than coincidence that the name Sisimithres is composed of Mithras and (running in reverse) Isis—Mithras with solar connections and Isis with lunar, thus reflecting the Ethiopic religious dyarchy in the novel. And there is something odd also about the residence of Sisimithres and his gymnosophists—the temple, the manuscripts tell us, of Pan (10.4.1), the *Paneion*. The oddity of this detail led Morgan to suggest that we should read *Pantheion* instead of *Paneion*. But the manuscript reading needs no correction, because Pan, whose name is coincidental with $\pi\alpha\nu$ ('all'), was interpreted pan-theistically, as *Allgott*, by some

⁹ The Homeric-allegoric method is applied to another fiction by Philo in his interpretation of the Old Testament. I doubt, however, whether Heliodoros read Philo—the similarities between *Life of Moses* 2.195 and Heliodoros 9.9.3 (Morgan 1982, p. 245) result from a common source, cf. 9.22.3, another instance of Nile lore, this time close to Strabo 17.1.48.

¹⁰ In A. Colonna (ed.), *Heliodori Aethiopica* (Roma, 1938), pp. 368–9. Colonna argues that the work is by Theophanes Kerameus. On the number 7, see also Plut. *Is. et Os.* 354f., Lucian, *Philopseudes* §12. J. G. Griffiths, *The Isis Book* (Leiden, 1975), p. 113, cites W. Roscher, 'Die Sieben- und Neunzahl im Kultus und Mythos der Griechen', *Abh. Sächsische Akademie der Wissenschaften, Phil.-hist. Klasse* 24/1 (Leipzig, 1904).

¹¹ Translated by John Morgan (n. 5 above); I have started from this translation elsewhere too though generally presenting more literal English. The numerology evokes antipathy in modern times—cf. Rattenbury's otiose comment (in the Budé edition) 'Curieuse rencontre et rien de plus.'

philosophers during the Empire—as can be seen from this passage of Cornutus, the Stoic freedman of Seneca the Younger:¹²

(Ἐνιοι νομίζουσιν...) τοῦτον (sc. τὸν ὅλον κόσμον) εἶναι καὶ τὸν Πάνα, ἐπειδὴ τῷ παντὶ ὁ αὐτός ἐστι. καὶ τὰ μὲν κάτω λάσια καὶ τραγώδη διὰ τὴν τῆς γῆς δασύτητα ἔχειν, τὰ δ' ἄνω ἀνθρωπομορφοῦ διὰ τὸ ἐν τῷ αἰθέρι τὸ ἡγεμονικὸν εἶναι τοῦ κόσμου, ὃ δὴ λογικόν ἐστι... λάγνον δὲ καὶ ὀχευτὴν αὐτὸν παρεισάγεσθαι διὰ τὸ πλῆθος ὧν περ εἴληφε σπερματικῶν λόγων καὶ τῶν κατὰ σύμμειξιν ἐξ αὐτῶν γινομένων. ἐν ταῖς ἐρήμοις δὲ διατρίβειν μάλιστα τῆς μονότητος αὐτοῦ διὰ τοῦτον παρισταμένης· εἰς γὰρ καὶ μονογενὴς ὁ κόσμος ἐστί.

(Certain people think that) this is what Pan is too (the whole *kosmos*), since he is the same as the universe (*tōi panti*). His lower parts are shaggy and goat-like on account of the roughness of the earth; his upper parts are human on account of the guiding principle of the *kosmos* being in the ether, namely the rational part. He is presented as lecherous and sex-mad on account of the multitude of generative principles with which he is endowed and the things which issue from them by combination. He spends his time particularly in isolated places because this presents his singularity—for the *kosmos* is one and singular.

Whether or not Heliodoros would subscribe to the elaborate detail of this account, the fundamental identification of Pan with the universe, of which the sages alone have true knowledge, accounts for the temple in which they live.

THE READER'S EVALUATION OF WORLD-VIEWS

Heliodoros assigns a more substantial role to the reader than many ancient authors. Part of the reader's task, I now argue, is to observe the workings of the divine in the novel, even when the characters fail to notice and the narrator does not overtly prompt us. In this way the reader is drawn by the act of interpretation into the providential world of the plot, one which demonstrates amply Richard Gordon's observation (in a different context) that 'one of the characteristic features of the religious mentality is to look for intention where others might merely see chance'.¹³ This is the mentality which the novel displays to the discriminating reader and it is also a mentality according to which people both in antiquity and in modern times have led their lives. It perhaps only seems a 'religious' novel to those who, Knemon-like, are distracted by its trappings and who are personally disinclined to take its religio-philosophical world-view seriously. It is indeed a complex and interesting problem for atheist critics (myself included) to know how to value, and enter into the world of, a religious work of art, but there is no way forward in denying the sincerity of its religious content.

1. *Charikleia's Lament*

A small but revealing example occurs at 1.8, when Charikleia laments. Laments, bemoaning the misfortunes of the hero and heroine, are a regular part of the Greek romance, but this one develops in an unusual way, in comparison with a more standard lament (such as Xenophon of Ephesos 2.1). Theagenes does not amplify the lament of Charikleia; rather, he punctures it and questions its propriety, with the result that the lament is used to raise an issue worthy of Plutarch: is it appropriate to blame the divine for one's misfortune? Charikleia, somewhat evoking the

¹² *Epidrome* 27. Winkler, p. 114, n. 25, characteristically prefers an interpretation in terms of ambivalence relative to truth. For further possible deeper meanings, note (i) Winkler, pp. 151f.; (ii) Theagenes bull-tamer as Mithras tauroctonus (Merkelbach, p. 290), though Theagenes does not represent the Sun (*pace* Merkelbach) but his servant, who can (p. 292) travel in the Sun's *quadriga*; (iii) the naming of Arsake's servant as Kybele (cf. p. 272, n. 2); (iv) just possibly, as 'Philip the Philosopher' alleges (line 119, Colonna), the name Arsake reflects *σαρκική* ('of the flesh').

¹³ *JRS* 83 (1993), p. 148.

Aeschylean Cassandra, has blamed an Apollo punishing them for their sins (*ἀμαρτήματα*). Theagenes, however, rejects this way of interpreting the divinity and its actions. He turns aside from the anthropomorphic and iconic language of myth and cult, and adopts instead Heliodoros' abstract, more philosophical language—*τὸ θεῖον* ('the divine') and *τὸ κρείττον* ('the superior').¹⁴ It is at this point that the camera moves to Knemon. The reader has known since 1.7.3 that he is a Greek, but the hero and heroine have not. It is only now that they discover, when he speaks of his own *τύχη* ('fortune') as comparable to theirs (1.8.6). This revelation is intensely comforting to the hero and heroine and in it they perceive the possibility of some 'respite from our suffering'. To be precise, their immediate reaction is: 'A Greek. O gods!' The alert reader is, I think, called upon at this point to recognize in the placing of Knemon in their path the characteristic activity of the divine and a verdict from above on the heroes' debate. To summarize, the lament became a debate about the view to be taken of the divine during apparent misfortune; and the more positive view of Theagenes is immediately supported by an aspect of their circumstances of which they had hitherto been ignorant.

2. *The Malicious Activities of Daimones*

A second example comes at 2.6.2, where it is Theagenes who appears to have surrendered to a random view of the world. Here he attempts to rouse Knemon from the body of Thisbe so that Charikleia may be recovered *εἰ μὴ τις ἡμᾶς παίζει καὶ νυνὶ δαίμων* ('unless some *daimon* is even now making fun of us'). This is a surprising view for Theagenes, though it would not be for Knemon, who had held *daimones* responsible at the end of 2.5 when he discovered to his amazement that the corpse was Thisbe's. And generally, if we are to believe Rohde, this view is characteristic of *Volksglaube*, where the divine is held responsible for misfortune (contrary to the teachings of Plato).¹⁵ Thus it is a world-view appropriate to a Knemon in misfortune that Theagenes is presenting at this point, one where the purposeful operation of higher powers is perceived as the maliciously playful action of mere *daimones*. He speaks to Knemon in a language which he, especially in his present confused state, may understand.

The *daimon* view appears elsewhere too. At 5.4.1 Kalasiris tries to revive a Knemon swooning at the voice apparently of Thisbe, but in fact of Charikleia. The narrator comments:

ἔπαιζε δὲ ἄρα τι τὸν Κνήμωννα δαιμόνιον, ὃ καὶ τὰ ἄλλα χλεύην ὡς ἐπίπαν τὰ ἀνθρώπεια καὶ παιδιὰν πεποίηται, καὶ οὐδὲ τῶν ἡδίστων ἀλύπως μετέχειν ἐπέτρεπεν
 some *daimonion* which in general has taken the view that human affairs are a matter for mockery and fun was, evidently (*ἄρα*), having fun with Knemon, refusing to allow him great happiness without also making him feel some pain.

It is not clear why the narrator should adopt this limited view, unless he is adopting the perspective of Kalasiris and presenting what Kalasiris must have said in consolation to Knemon.¹⁶ '*Daimones* that make fun of us' can then once again be seen as a consolatory topic for those whose insight into events is blunted by

¹⁴ Different levels of naming of the divine are categorized by Proclus, *Theol. Plat.* 1.29. Julian, *Ep.* 89 (Bidez) 293a–d, states that the gods must appear in corporeal forms to match our nature: the first level of images is the heavenly bodies, but our nature demands something closer, namely anthropomorphic statues.

¹⁵ Rohde, pp. 463f. Plato, *Republic* 379b.

¹⁶ Something similar happens at 7.6.4 where events we know have been predetermined are viewed speculatively as theatrical action by *εἴτε τι δαιμόνιον εἴτε τύχη τις* because Heliodoros' narrator has adopted the viewpoint of the crowd who perceive the events as spectacle and in effect *θαῦμα*.

misfortune: human life is characterized by somewhat malicious supernatural activity to which we can only resign ourselves. In this case it is another, if implicit, instance of consolation of Knemon. But at 5.6.2–3, it is Theagenes who gives way to depression and, with it, to the melodrama of other romances: we should not, he says, any longer flee Fate (είμαρμένη) which pursues us everywhere, but should yield to Fortune (τύχη), and thereby spare ourselves τὴν ἐπάλληλον τοῦ δαίμονος καθ' ἡμῶν πομπείαν ('the continual ritual mockery of us by the *daimon*'). This *daimon* παίζει καθ' ἡμῶν πόλεμον ('is having fun from a war against us').

Now that the status of the *daimon* view is clearer, we can return to 2.6 in the expectation that the discovery of the corpse of Thisbe will turn out not to be a trivial moment of demonic sarcasm. It is perhaps important that it is set in a *cave*. In one of the best known passages of Plato's *Republic* the cave is a symbol of the world in which we live and the scene of perceptions of mere images of the truth. In Heliodoros' cave Thisbe, who is another but worse Charikleia, is confused with the real Charikleia. Porphyry too, who could be Heliodoros' contemporary, but at least is symptomatic of later Platonic development of this theme, reads the cave of the Nymphs in Homer's *Odyssey* (13.103–12) as an image of *genesis*, the world into which our souls fall on incarnation (Porphyry, *de antro nympharum*). And in the world of religious cult, in whatever century Heliodoros lived, Mithraists were depicting caves as an image of the *kosmos*.¹⁷ In the Heliodoran cave both Charikleia and Thisbe are present; their identities may be confused, but we see the relative value of them set side by side. It is in accordance with their value that Thisbe dies, but Charikleia does not, and they differ most notably in the variety of love which they display, Pandemic or Heavenly.

Even at the most obvious level, the apparently chance presence of Thisbe has ensured (a) the rescue of Charikleia from Thyamis' murderous intentions, and (b) the just punishment of the sinner Thisbe herself, even if delayed—and delay is not uncommon in heaven's punishments, as we learn from Plutarch's *de sera numinis vindicta*. The significance of the punishment of Thisbe is so obvious that even Knemon can mouth it at 2.11.1. He has, however, only a superficial grasp on this message, as his theatrical language shows, speaking of an 'avenging Erinyes' driving Thisbe with 'the righteous whip'.¹⁸ This is a remarkable effect achieved by Heliodoros, that a character's correct view can be devalued all the same: it is as though Knemon has, in Plato's terminology, *orthē doxa* (correct opinion) not *epistēmē* (knowledge).

So, the view which Theagenes entertains for Knemon's benefit at 2.6.2, that the sequence of events including the discovery of Thisbe's corpse may be malicious activity on the part of a *daimon*, is there for the reader to reject and stimulates the reader to some awareness of a larger significance inherent in these events. The fact that we are invited to step in and make this sort of correction to the characters' views is, I think, more than just a matter of entertainment through irony, or of filling in 'gaps' to show we are active readers (Bartsch, p. 79). In making the correction we are invited to assert, and subscribe to, a view of the divine and how it operates in Heliodoros' world.

¹⁷ Also Plotinos, *Ennead* 4.8.3, where the embodied soul is a 'a victim to troubles and desires and fears and all forms of evil, the body its prison or its tomb, the Cosmos its cave or cavern' (tr. Mackenna).

¹⁸ Ἐρινύες drive Thisbe according to Knemon's friend Charias (1.1.46) and Theagenes blames an Ἐρινύς for the death, as he supposes, of Charikleia in a passage characterized as τραγικόν τι καὶ γοερὸν by the narrator (2.4.1). These are the only other references to Ἐρινύες in the text.

3. *Response by Tablet*

A further example of a 'chance' event occurs at the end of 2.9. Here, Knemon reflects trivially that we shall never know about Thisbe's arrival and death 'unless some god (θεός) reveals the answers to us', a passage whose phraseology evokes consultation of an oracle. Immediately he turns to the tablet and discovers information about Thisbe in a letter which she had intended to send him, in effect the god's response. Thus on the one hand, Knemon does not have the sense to inspect the evidence before relegating to the divinity the viability of discovering information. But on the other hand events have so worked out, i.e. the divine has so managed it, that this information is present and that they will later discover more (esp. 6.8.1). So again the reader can perceive that the divine is more active than a Knemon may think. In fact, even Kalasiris can be amazed: beset by worries, no sooner does he offer a prayer to Apollo and the Egyptian gods, and to Theagenes and Charikleia, whom he thinks lost, than Knemon—whom he has just met by (let us say) chance—gives him reassuring news (2.23.2).

4. *How Not to Be Burnt at the Stake*

A number of these themes come together in one final passage which I will consider in this section. This is the sensational scene (8.9–11) where Charikleia is to be burnt at the stake, but the flames will not touch her and she is returned to prison to join Theagenes. As she ascends the pyre, having so far asserted her guilt in order to invite death, she now protests her innocence, dramatically calling upon 'Sun, Earth, and the *daimones* upon and beneath the earth who watch over and take vengeance on lawless men' (8.9.12). This is an invocation which is answered, for the flames will not touch her. Yet this is no simple miracle and differs markedly from that in Xenophon (4.2) where prayer to the Nile god (Osiris, presumably) achieves instant miracles: there, the wind sweeps his cross into the Nile and subsequently the Nile waters rise to extinguish the pyre on which he is to die. There are no puzzles there: everyone except Habrokomes is amazed—θαύμα... τοῖς παρούσιν (4.2.9), ἐθαύμασεν (*sc.* ὁ ἄρχων, 4.2.10)—and it is not in dispute that the gods are looking after him (4.2 *fin.*). But in Heliodoros, Charikleia's safety is something which is presented by the text as requiring explanation. The heroine herself is amazed (θαυμάζουσα), as she seeks some flame to burn her (8.9.14). The reader now hypothesizes that this is the divine at work. This is confirmed, if anything, by Arsake's insistence to the crowd (8.9.17–18) that Charikleia is a poisoner and murderess (casting her rather in the mould of the final depraved woman of Apuleius' *Metamorphoses*, 10.23–9), that the crowd are wrong to ascribe her salvation to the gods (the reader's hypothesis), that she has succeeded by her expertise in *pharmakeia* and *goeteia*, i.e. by witchcraft. This, however, is a false debate, even if it does cause doubts in the crowd (8.9.19), because the reader, given the choice between magic and divine intervention, will clearly reject the former. Charikleia had visibly been distanced from magic by the necromancy scene in Book 6.

Now, with Charikleia returned to prison and to Theagenes, a different debate starts between them. Theagenes, as in their previous debate, takes the more positive view: this is an instance for him of θεῶν εὐμένειαν ('goodwill of the gods'). Charikleia is more ambivalent: yes, her rescue is evidence of δαιμονία τινὶ καὶ θεία... εὐεργεσία ('some goodwill from *daimones* and gods'), but their suffering points rather to δυσμενείας κρείττονος ('ill will from the superior') or θανατοποιία τις δαίμονος ('some wonder-working by a *daimon*') who takes them from extremity to extremity.

This of course is the ‘*daimones* that make fun of us’ school of interpretation which is characteristically employed by those overwhelmed by suffering. The real explanation, however, soon emerges. It was, they discover (8.11), the property of the stone *pantarbe*, which Charikleia happened to be wearing, to resist fire. But this is no physicalist explanation: it emerges out of the consideration of dreams and oracles—one misinterpreted by Theagenes (8.11.4) to encourage the reader’s, and Charikleia’s, skills. Charikleia herself pronounces (8.11.8), plainly with justice and with the authority of successful interpretation of Theagenes’ dream just behind her, that the stone ‘saved me too, perhaps (*τυχόν*) with the *συμβουλήσει* [a rare word, the ‘co-operative goodwill’, maybe] of the gods’. The ‘perhaps’, translated ‘no doubt’ by Morgan and ‘sans doute’ by Maillon, does not, I think, weaken this ascription but rather peels aside the mist so that we may see this superhuman causation.

It does not come to many of us to be rescued from burning at the stake. But this powerful moment has some application to those threatened by more ordinary misfortune. There is after all an iconic character about the flames that threaten to engulf us being beaten back by the tokens of our otherworldly origin. This can be viewed in an entirely metaphorical way, or indeed it could be related to the practice of receiving tokens in the process of initiation into cults, such as those which initiates of *Liber pater* kept at home, concealed from the profane (Apuleius, *Apol.* 55). One does not have to subscribe to the whole of Merkelbach’s thesis to make this connection, one which, as he observes, is encouraged by the hieroglyphs on the stone which Charikleia describes as *τελετής, ὡς ἔοικε, θειοτέρας ἀνάμεικτος*, ‘full of, so it seems, rather divine *telete*’—a word referring primarily to potency (it is used in this sense in magical papyri), but which also typically refers to secret, mystery, rites.¹⁹

So, in various ways, it emerges that for all the exotic trappings of the novel—Ethiopians, miraculous birth, elephants, caskets, satraps and giraffes—there is a more generally applicable lesson to be learnt about the operations of divinity. It is a characteristically religious (or philosophical) lesson about purpose in the world, ultimately optimistic if rather submissive. Apparently chance and ironic events can be part of a larger plan and make a sense which eludes us; it is up to us to strive for that sense with the confidence that it exists.

CRIME AND PUNISHMENT

There are a number of instances in the novel of characters ostentatiously meeting the fate they deserve. Such things happen in comfortable novels to reassure us that the world is better ordered than we know it in fact is. In Heliodoros, however, these events are subordinate to a total view of divine management in the novel and are therefore not just incidental events but part of the vision of the whole novel.

A right-hand man (*hypaspistes*) of Thyamis, who first appears casually at 1.4.2, and then at 1.28.1, is finally named at 1.30.1 as Thermouthis—a very Egyptian sounding name, known from several sources as a local variety of cobra.²⁰ Thermouthis is not present, as it turns out, until Thyamis returns from the murder (as he thinks) of Charikleia. But in fact what has happened is that Thermouthis was away hiding Thisbe (2.12.2), just in time for Thyamis to appear immediately afterwards and kill her. Their respective erotic interests grade these brigands (for it is as a brigand that the reader is currently perceiving Thyamis): Thyamis and Charikleia, Thermouthis and Thisbe. Thyamis himself is beset by emotion as defeat looms (1.30.7), but Thermouthis is more sinister—‘stressed by brigandish ferocity (*θυμός*) and barbarian rage (*ὀργή*), aggravated on this occasion by his frustrated passion’ (2.12.5). He

¹⁹ Merkelbach, p. 278.

²⁰ Casual introduction: Winkler, p. 102, n. 15.

intends only death to our heroes. His character is inherent in his name—as Heliodoros observes when a cobra kills him (2.20.2). ‘Perhaps’, Heliodoros speculates, this death befell him ‘at the wish of the Fates’ (*Μοιρῶν τάχα βουλήσει*). The phrase is the more striking because it is the first appearance of the Fates, who are relatively infrequent in the novel except as a *leitmotif* associated with Kalasiris and with the very specific divine organization of his life.²¹ Why, however, does Heliodoros think that it was only ‘perhaps’ at the wish of the Fates?

Heliodoros has no need to speculate about causes. It is his fiction and he can assign whatever causes he wishes with complete assurance. If, however, as narrator he expresses doubt about causes, he thereby obscures the fact that he is writing a fiction and gives the impression that he is dealing with actual events. These events invite interpretation, as events in the actual world do, both by their historian Heliodoros and by the reader of that history.²² This is why he uses the word *ἴσως* (‘perhaps’) so much more than most other novelists:²³ Heliodoros’ readers are speculators about the reasons for things. So for our part we *should* perhaps be looking for the hand of the divine; and perhaps Thermouthis’ death *is* an instance of it. The fictional world becomes an actual world, close to the actual world in which we live and on which also we must speculate. ‘His method,’ observes Heiserman (p. 188), ‘may in itself stimulate inferences about destiny and knowledge.’ He ‘conditions the reader’, observes Sandy (though without wishing to take it seriously, p. 188), ‘to anticipate that even the most apparently insignificant events have a significance that is part of some still unclear transcending goal’.

This particular instance is related to those cases where Heliodoros presents the reader with alternative explanations, one of which is divine causation.²⁴ Morgan is sensitive to the language by which the divine cause is introduced: *εἴτε καὶ* (‘or whether, even, ...’). The question is the effect of the *καὶ* (‘even’). Does it present the divine explanation as a matter ‘of last resort, a more remote possibility’ and does it therefore weaken the case for taking the divine seriously in Heliodoros, as Morgan has argued (1982, p. 230)? Or does it, as I now suggest, make the second possibility more tantalizing, as though it is dawning on us later than more material or scientific explanations, as though the penny is only now beginning to drop, as though there is the beginning of a realization that there may be deeper forces at work than we have hitherto envisaged? There is no linguistic way to decide between these possibilities: the divine causation must on either view (and because of its rhetorical ‘weight’) generally be the second alternative and the hesitation may be equally caused by the

²¹ Arguably personified *Μοῖραι* or *Μοῖρα* appear as follows: (A) directly associated with Kalasiris (8 instances): (i) in Kalasiris’ narration: 2.24.6, 2.25.4, 2.26.5 (verse oracle), 3.11.5 (instructions from gods in a dream), 3.16.5, and more trivially 2.25.1; (ii) 7.7.2 (climactic address to his sons); 7.8.1 (of Kalasiris and his sons). (B) loosely associated with Kalasiris (3 instances): 2.20.2 (death of Thermouthis—just before Kalasiris appears); 6.15.1 (the corpse speaks, in the presence of Kalasiris); 8.11.2 (action of the *pantarbe*, in oracle spoken by Kalasiris). (C) other (2 instances): 10.9.3 (Charikleia speaks, depicted hieratically, before chastity test); 10.20.2 (Charikleia to father Hydaspes for the life of Theagenes).

²² See Morgan 1982, p. 227 on ‘authorial uncertainty’ as part of the historiographical pose; cf. Winkler, p. 133, and p. 134 for the ‘literary construct’, reaching a very different conclusion.

²³ See Conca–De Carli–Zanetto, p. 288: Achilles 1 instance, Chariton 4, Longus 4, Xenophon 9, Heliodoros 33. Adopting the pages in Reardon’s *Collected Ancient Greek Novels* as a rough measure, we can derive a frequency per 100 pages of: Achilles 0.9, Chariton 3.3, Longus 6.6, Xenophon 22.0, Heliodoros 14.0. The figure for Xenophon clearly requires explanation.

²⁴ Morgan 1982, p. 229 on ‘Alternative Explanations’: ‘Usually, one of these explanations involves divine agency.’ Other instances include that at 10.28.4, where Theagenes may have decided to catch the bull because of a divine impulse; cf. 8.9.2, 10.22.4 and Winkler, pp. 122f. for other examples.

relative unlikelihood of the idea or at the realization that so grand an alternative applies, as we have already seen in the case of the involvement of the gods in Charikleia's salvation through the *pantarbe*. It would, however, be strange for an author repeatedly to turn to an explanation that he regards as unlikely, making a theme of an idea he does not seriously wish to be considered.

Similar considerations arise at the end of an important scene (which we shall consider further a little later) at the conclusion of the sixth book, where the old Egyptian woman who calls back her son from the dead meets her own death. She has persisted in black magic and exercised magical violence on her son. She is then denounced to her face by him: she has violently disturbed the order of life and death laid down by the Fates (*Μοῖραι*) and paid attention only to her own needs (6.15.1); death is 'allotted' (*ἀποκεκληρωμένην*) for all such as her. Her reaction is one of violence and madness: she seeks the death of Kalasiris and Charikleia. But her rage (*θυμός* again) leads to inattention and she is skewered on a broken spear shaft. The result is justice (*δίκη*), and this powerful scene, which dominates the sixth book, closes.

The first half of the novel had begun with the scene of death and destruction. That half ends (all but a closing paragraph) with the explanation of the opening scene, forming a fine and satisfying ring structure. But the closing scene of the fifth book also mirrors a scene in the first book, both of them replaying the great dispute between Achilles and Agamemnon at the opening of the *Iliad*.

At 1.19.6, Thyamis, as head of the brigands, wishes to award himself Charikleia from the spoils. This obviously evokes Agamemnon's handling of the allocation of the girls Chryseis and Briseis (*Iliad* 1.12–304), but Thyamis has learnt the lessons which Agamemnon had not. He will not allocate himself the girl without the consent of his fellow warriors. He does not seek any greater share of the plunder than anyone else and will indeed forbear from taking any further proceeds than this. He does not have a Clytaemestra at home awaiting his return and this Chryseis is not to be a mere concubine (contrast *Iliad* 1.31). He wants Charikleia, in two senses the daughter of a priest (Charikles, Kalasiris), for his lawful wedded wife. But no priest like Chryses opposes him (Kalasiris, the Chryses of this story, does not): indeed, Thyamis is a priest himself. He even asks Charikleia's permission (1.21.2). The whole intertext serves, by its contrasts, to ennoble Thyamis. Incidentally, this has the result that his barbaric attempt to kill Charikleia at the end of the book is unsatisfyingly out of character for this Noble Brigand; there (1.30.7) he is dominated by the characteristically barbaric evils of passion (*ἔρως*) and ferocity (*θυμός*).

By contrast, in the mirror-scene at 5.30–32 the characters are much worse than in the Iliadic intertext. Trachinos, the pirate chief, is not interested in Charikleia's consent except as a sensual extra (5.26.3) and simply informs Kalasiris, specifically not seeking his consent (5.28.2). His name is Greek and transparent: 'rough, harsh, grating'. His love on his own admission is madness on first sight (5.20.6), from Charikleia's perspective 'a loathsome passion (*ἔρως*)' (5.29.4). The mention at 5.29.2 of *Σιδωνίων ἔργα χειρῶν* ('products of Sidonian hands') recalls the *ἔργα γυναικῶν Σιδωνίων* ('products of Sidonian women') at *Iliad* 6.289ff.²⁵ and through that passage turns Trachinos into the sinner Paris eloping with a Charikleia jarringly metamorphosed into Helen.

²⁵ Compare Virgil, *Aeneid* 1.650, where Aeneas gives Dido clothing which Helen had brought to Troy. There is also mention of Sidonian products at *Iliad* 23.743, perhaps also evoked and, if so, contrasting prizes for energetic competition (in *Iliad* 23) with the luxurious arrangements for roistering (in Heliodoros 5.29).

It proves simple for Kalasiris to stir up the passions in Trachinos' deputy Peloros. These characters are base, violent and passionate, devoted to what Plato would describe as *epithymiai*. 'Peloros' is based on the epithet *πελώριος* ('huge'), a word only at home in epics, describing the formidable bulk of individual heroes.²⁶ Peloros is an appropriate name for a distorted Achilles in a replay of the dispute over Chryseis and Briseis.²⁷ Achilles, through the power of Athene, restrained himself from violence against Agamemnon. It is otherwise here. The plague-arrows of Apollo in *Iliad* 1 are now transmuted into the real arrows of a Charikleia dressed as Artemis (that is why she has the arrows). This dazzling and resonant scene revolves around the susceptibility of the pirates to violence, as emphasized at the end of 5.31: it is like a sudden storm at sea; an irrational impulse (a *ὁρμή*, which can be a technical word in the analysis of ethical conduct)²⁸ leads the pirates to 'indescribable confusion', possessed as they are by wine and *θυμός*.

What is it to be a pirate, or a barbarian? Somehow it is the negative of conscious and consistent observation of moral standards. Thus the Ethiopian archer who kills Achaimenes as he attempts to murder Oroondates (9.20 *fin.*) feels a sense of moral outrage at Achaimenes' behaviour. This is a philosophical archer, no barbarian. Arsake on the other hand, though a very intelligent woman (7.2 *init.*, 7.3 *init.*), is a woman with no moral scruples. This is underlined by the intertextuality with Euripides' *Hippolytos*: Phaedra, Nurse, Theseus and Hippolytos are all in this cast (Arsake, Kybele, Oroondates, Theagenes respectively), but Phaedra's moral scruples, which so dignify Euripides' *Hippolytos* *Stephanephoros* (in contrast to his earlier *Hippolytus*) and make her such a noble and interesting character, are here completely and conspicuously lacking. Arsake is a barbarian, interested (as novels' Persians tend to be) in luxury, of which sex seems to be a department.

Heliodoros sometimes stops to tell us about barbarians and brigands.²⁹ The impulses (*ὁρμᾶν*) of the barbarian character are very hard to restrain; and if it despairs of its own safety, it habitually kills first everything it loves (1.30.6). Brigands, we have seen, are prone to *ὁργή* and barbarians to *θυμός* (Thermouthis, 2.12.5). Yet the vision of true beauty is apprehended by, and subdues, the brigandish character (1.4 *fin.*). On a Platonic view—once again Plato has the concepts for the expression of the novel's value system—these brigands-cum-barbarians are epithymetic characters, who, like everyone and everything else in the world, have some apprehension of the Good. Their apprehension is, however, weak and inaccurate and their love (*ἔρως*) is correspondingly degraded.

ICONS

The opening of Heliodoros is justly celebrated for its imaginative power, for the sophisticated 'point of view' it imposes on its readers, and for its *in medias res* approach—as well as for its cinematographic quality.³⁰ But the *ekphrasis* also has an

²⁶ It is applied to Achilles as he looms up to slaughter Hektor at *Iliad* 21.527, 22.92. There are 14 other occurrences in the *Iliad*, five in the *Odyssey*, 13 in Apollonios' *Argonautika*, 18 in Quintus' *Posthomerica*, but, e.g., none in the whole corpus of Aelius Aristides.

²⁷ I do not regard it as inconsistent to view Trachinos as painted with colours derived from the situations of both Paris and Agamemnon. There is no theoretical reason why only one intertext should be alive at a time.

²⁸ *LSJ* s.v. II, esp. II.2 (Stoic).

²⁹ This posture of 'knowing about barbarians' has a close parallel in Herodian (see Winkler, p. 135, n. 48).

³⁰ Cinematographical analogy: W. Bühler, 'Das Element des Visuellen in der Eingangsszene von Heliodors Aithiopika', *WS* nf 10 (1976), 177–85; T. Hägg, *The Novel in Antiquity* (Oxford, 1983), 55; Holzberg, p. 100 [German original, pp. 116–17].

iconic quality and conditions our understanding of the novel which follows.³¹ At the most obvious level, the novel by 'Sun-given' (*Heliodoros*), which will conclude in the Sun and Moon worship of the Ethiopians, appropriately begins with the sun rising.³² In the light of the sun, from the perspective of the arriving brigands, we are presented with a scene for interpretation. This is partly a matter of plot (how has this situation arisen?), but there are also aspects of the scene which invite serious reflection on the significance of what is displayed.³³

At the heart of the scene, on a rock and almost statuesque,³⁴ Charikleia embraces Theagenes amidst utter confusion. Calm, unmoving, indescribably beautiful, perhaps actually divine, Charikleia exists amidst a world of death and confusion, of slaughter and plunder, a world that appears senseless and devoid of value. Theagenes is wounded and in danger of sinking into this world of death, but one thing keeps him alive: the compulsive power of the vision of Charikleia (1.2.3), the power of love for the truly beautiful. For anyone who has been brought up on the world-view of Plato (an educated Heliodoros surely would be), this is a new Cupid and Psyche pair: Charikleia in this particular image represents the divine beauty (Cupid, *Ἔρως*) which raises the soul (Psyche, here Theagenes) from the mortal condition through our love.³⁵ We are in this life in a world of *genesis*, where things come into and go out of being, an impermanent world of which there can be no true knowledge. True knowledge is only of unchanging realities, immobile in their perfection, leading in Aristotle's extension of the system to the concept of the Unmoved Mover. Thus in this crucial opening tableau we see an image of the soul and its quest for true value in the midst of a disordered, unsatisfactory and, in the last resort, deadly world. It is a world from which one will wish to escape Yonder.

This scene is re-enacted grotesquely in Book 6 in the necromancy scene. Now the sun is not rising but setting (6.12.2) and there is a very different scene to view, as this time Charikleia and Kalasiris join the reader to watch events. Once more the scene is littered with corpses, but this time it is not wounded Theagenes (however near unto death) with the beautiful Charikleia; it is a dead man clasped by an old woman. Once more the scene is hard to interpret, but the language barrier has been removed: Kalasiris can speak Egyptian—and finds a situation to mirror his own: a parent has arrived to find her child dead, anticipating Kalasiris' problems with Thyamis and Petosiris. But Kalasiris' enquiries do not resolve the uncertainties of the scene. For that, the old woman turns to necromancy, raising her dead son to give her the message she deserves for supposing that the path to knowledge lies through disturbing

³¹ Bartsch has shown very clearly that *ekphraseis* can hold more significance than appears at first. Winkler's denial (p. 101) of the term *ekphrasis* for the opening scene depends on a use of the term which excludes deeper meanings.

³² E.g. Merkelbach, p. 251.

³³ The scene is commonly recognized as requiring explanation but only in the plot sense: Winkler, pp. 97, 103. Bartsch, p. 47 speaks simply of 'hermeneutic activity', citing an arid passage of Schor focusing on a sub-Peircean act of interpretation: 'via the interpretant the author is trying to tell the interpreter something *about* interpretation and the interpreter would do well to listen and take note' (N. Schor, 'Fiction as Interpretation/Interpretation as Fiction', in: S. R. Suleiman and I. Crosman (edd.), *The Reader in the Text: Essays on Audience and Interpretation* (Princeton, 1980), p. 170).

³⁴ Bartsch, p. 46.

³⁵ See also 3.5 for their love and the soul's divinity, where 'the hint of Platonic *anamnesis* is muted but unmistakable', as Winkler (p. 125) observes, immediately defusing this observation after making it. Merkelbach (p. 252) calls attention to religious reflections of this 'Pietà' (Kerényi's term)—Isis and the dead Osiris, and (more impressively, maybe) Aphrodite and Adonis. For a detailed attempt to work out the Platonism of Apuleius' Cupid and Psyche episode, see K. Dowden, 'Psyche on the Rock', *Latomus* 41 (1982), 336–52, where I identify Cupid as the soul's personal *δαίμων* or *νοῦς*.

the dead. The practice of magic and abuse of the divine are no solution to the problems presented by this world. Rather she joins the corpse in death, inverting the outcome of the scene.³⁶

THE GRADING OF THE WORLD AND ITS INHABITANTS

The *Aithiopika* is a tale of three countries:³⁷ Greece, whether the profane Athens of Knemon, or the hieratic Delphi of Theagenes and Charikleia; secondly, Egypt, scene of brigands, priests, magic, and corrupt power (portrayed by another exotic nation, the Persians); thirdly, Ethiopia, source and target.

This is not really a story of Ethiopians, despite the story of Charikleia's birth. Theagenes and Charikleia, on Heliodoros' narrative level, are Greeks and this is understood throughout the novel. Theagenes is in no sense an Ethiopian and Heliodoros makes no attempt to allow the audience to consider the full oddity of Theagenes' situation: on the surface level he is a Greek who is abandoning his home culture and the wider Greek world (to which Heliodoros himself also belongs) to reach Ethiopia, a country—as a matter of historical fact—in no way hellenized. Why does he do this?—because he has fallen in love with a girl who has been led to believe, contrary to all physical evidence, that she comes from there. Likewise, Heliodoros does his best to cover up the lack of motivation for Knemon in pressing on with Charikleia and Kalasiris: Knemon has no investment in Ethiopia and the search for Theagenes is only a limited duty for him, not driven by the special motivations of Charikleia and Kalasiris—even if he has been bound by a communal oath (2.19.2) from which Charikleia must now in effect release him (6.7.8).³⁸

The journey of the heroes is, then, different from its Odyssean forebear and from the precedent of the other novels: it is not, except in some special sense, a journey home.³⁹ They are Greek, but they—or, rather, Charikleia—*belong* elsewhere, a curious situation perhaps most closely replicated in the circumstances of the soul of later Platonists. It is indeed born into the world and lives here, but the enlightened soul is conscious that it belongs Yonder and must return Yonder. Its special status, its divinity, is a function of its belonging Yonder, something most tellingly described by Plotinos in his *Ennead* on Beauty (1.6).⁴⁰ That, I think, is why Charikleia, a feminine figure like the *psyche*, is the daughter of a king and queen in Ethiopia—just as Psyche in Apuleius' *Metamorphoses* is also a royal child who must seek a home which is her due and to which she must aspire, but which is of another world. One difference between Heliodoros and Apuleius is that here *Cupid and Psyche* occupies the whole novel and religion is integrated into the more philosophical myth. The other difference is that Theagenes is not Cupid, though the love of Theagenes and Charikleia is in some way necessary to the achievement of Ethiopia.

There are, then, three levels of geographical significance in the novel. The base level is **Greece** and in particular Athens. This is the world of Knemon's *novella*, characterized, as Morgan has shown (1989, pp. 107–8), by the egocentricity and promiscuity of 'Athenian love'. Delphi is the highest plane to which Greece can

³⁶ The Apuleian comparanda are (a) the death of Psyche's sisters, who have no Cupid but aspire to one (*Met.* 5.27); (b) the assimilation of Thelyphron to the corpse (*Met.* 2.25).

³⁷ This tripartition is underlined by Szepessy, pp. 252–4.

³⁸ Merkelbach, p. 268.

³⁹ A point stressed by Szepessy, p. 254.

⁴⁰ Esp. 1.6.8–9 and cf. Merkelbach, p. 247.

aspire, dominated as it is (in the novel) by the figures of Apollo and Artemis. In fact 'the Artemis in Delphi' of whom Charikleia is a *ζάκορος* (10.36.2) is an artificial intrusion into the real world of Delphic cult,⁴¹ but one which is required by the novelist. This is because he requires a force to correspond to Isis and the Moon, whom Charikleia may serve.

Egypt is presented as a transitional area. We can see that it is a land of dangers and, if one wishes so to phrase it, trials. It is attached to, and debased by, the real world in a way that Ethiopia is not. It is interesting that Knemon and Nausikles reach Egypt but venture no further. Knemon views himself as beached there by *tyche* (6.7.3): *Ὡ πάσης... τροπῆς ἀνάμεστον καὶ ἀσταθμητότατον τύχης ἀνθρωπίνης κίνημα* ('O movement of human fortune, full of every change and utterly unstable'). He had only come originally in order to recover Thisbe and to return to his mistaken, misfortunate father (2.9.4). His present motive for proceeding no further is, despite all he says, his (very ordinary) passion for Nausikles' daughter (6.7.8). Knemon is readily overwhelmed and lives a life of self-consolation by resignation to superior powers who have no discernible purpose other than malicious amusement and spreading a gospel of instability. Nausikles, on the other hand, exhibits the merchant lifestyle (*βίος ἐμπορικός*), which revolves around profit and the summons of business which calls him to Greece (6.6.3). He has no notion of higher values and it is not even imagined that he will join the quest for Theagenes. Most notably, he is the author of an amazingly inappropriate idea—that Thisbe should be sent as a present to Hydaspes in order to offer Greek company and entertainment to Persinna (2.24.3), another passage in which the identities of Thisbe and Charikleia are intertwined.⁴² Nothing could illustrate more clearly the misapprehension which Nausikles has of the moral hierarchy of the novel. Thisbe is a creature of Athens, dead in Egypt, unthinkable in Ethiopia.

So, ignorant of the value of Ethiopia, valuing material goods, a quick marriage, and a return to the Athenian world devalued by the novel, these characters sink back from the hardship of Charikleia's quest, seeing greater certainties in a chance-driven world than in a firm destiny which they cannot share. The Platonic image is perhaps the loss of the soul's wings or the domination of the Black Horse, in either case the fall of the soul in its attempt to strive upwards, a fall which leads Nausikles and above all Knemon, who has for a while shared Charikleia's world, to be reincarnated into the ordinary world.⁴³ Nevertheless it seems to be a presupposition of the novel that Egypt, a hieratic land since Herodotos and 'temple of the whole world' according to Ps-Apuleius, *Asclepius* 24,⁴⁴ is situated closer to reality than Greece. This may also go some way to explaining the apparently preposterous view of Kalasiris (3.14) that Homer was really an Egyptian.⁴⁵ Homer's works had a special status as Greek culture's source of values, a status that progressively was felt to require reinforcement

⁴¹ In Pausanias' account of Delphi, Artemis only occurs as follows: the Aitolians send a pair of statues, of Apollo and Artemis, to the shrine (10.16.6); a pediment of the Temple of Apollo depicts Artemis, Leto, Apollo, Muses, the setting Sun, Dionysos and the Thyiades (10.19.4). The only temples are of course those of Athene and Apollo himself. K. Wernicke in *RE* 2 (1896), 1403 cites as evidence for Artemis at Delphi only Heliodoros, a false reference to Pausanias (10.12.2), and the oath of the Amphiktionones by Apollo Pythios, Lato and Artemis (*CIG* 1.1688).

⁴² Merkelbach, p. 254: 'as though the pure Ethiopians would accept such a girl'.

⁴³ Merkelbach, pp. 253f., takes a similar view of Knemon and Nausikles, except that he adds religious colouring to make them the 'uninitiated'. Better, p. 269 ('kehrt er in die irdische Heimat zurück') and p. 292.

⁴⁴ Observed by Sandy, p. 146.

⁴⁵ Homer, Egypt and allegory: Sandy, pp. 155–6. Winkler too (pp. 102f.) felt that this required *some* explanation, if a different one.

through allegory. And Kalasiris bases the Egyptian character of Homer on his supposed concealment of meanings together with aesthetic pleasure (3.15.1). Once Homer is viewed in this way, it can be seen that 'men find only one time to be finished with Homer, when they are finished with life' (Ps-Herakleitos, *Homeric Allegories* 1.7) and that in fact 'we are all priests and attendants of his divine words' (ibid. 79.12). This special, partially concealed, cultural and educative force is therefore appropriately assigned, in the spiritual geography of the novel, to Egypt. It remains, however, at one remove from the philosophical quest for reality and Homer is therefore no Ethiopian. Nevertheless, Homer, inasmuch as an author of works of fiction can be, is a useful guide towards deeper understanding. This view is a specially appropriate one for Heliodoros' own fiction to present: his text is entwined with Homer's, and it opens on the margin of Egypt.

Beyond lies **Ethiopia**, a land where the Sun and Moon that are the visible representatives of Platonic God and World-Soul oust the limited, anthropomorphic representations of divinity of the two lower worlds: Isis in Egypt, Apollo and Artemis in Delphi.⁴⁶ This may, however, be to misapprehend the gradation, as the anthropomorphic gods are less visible in Egypt than in Greece: Osiris only occurs to be identified with the Nile (9.9.4), as does his son Horos at 9.22.5 (if this is the right reading). Isis is identified with the land of Egypt (9.9.4) and otherwise appears almost exclusively in connection with Kalasiris' and Thyamis' service at the Memphis Iseion.⁴⁷ All the same, Artemis, Isis and Selene are united at the Greek beginning of Charikleia's story: as Merkelbach noted, she is depicted with attributes of both Artemis and Isis (3.4) and it may be said, as Merkelbach does (p. 240), that the true name of the goddess she serves is Selene. This is clinched by the white oxen that draw her carriage both at 3.4.2 and in the final, triumphant paragraph (10.41.3).

There are gradations also in the **priests** of the novel, a theme which Szepessy once developed.⁴⁸ To Delphi belongs Charikles, a person of limited insight ('ein leichtgläubiger Mensch mit etwas engem Horizont' in Szepessy's view), but he is in communication with Kalasiris. In Egypt, then, is Kalasiris (whose name refers to the distinctive, tasselled, linen robe of the Egyptians, the *kalasiris*)⁴⁹ whose character deserves more serious consideration than emphasis merely upon its trickster aspects (see below). He is not the priest, but the *prophetes*, of Isis at her shrine in Memphis (2.25.2). Yet we see him little in his strictly religious activities except finally in prayer to the goddess the night of his death (7.11.3). The Kalasiris we know is exiled from his shrine and embodies not a particular cult, but religion *tout court* or, rather, the religious life. Egypt is a land where religion rises to theosophy and Kalasiris is indeed pushing at the bounds of religion: as Morgan has observed (1982, p. 250), his long hair and his asceticism mark him less as an Egyptian priest/prophet than as a Neoplatonic philosopher. Yet in the story his assigned function, in which he dies, is that of prophet and though he is in communication with the gymnosophist Sisimithres, the difference is that the gymnosophists are assuredly philosophers (an

⁴⁶ Of course this worship of Sun and Moon by the Ethiopians was not *invented* by Heliodoros (see Diodoros 3.8; Rohde, p. 466), but *used* by him.

⁴⁷ In connection with the Iseion: 1.30.4, 3.11.2, 1.18.4, 2.25.2, 2.31.5, 2.32.1, 7.2.2, 7.8.5, 7.8.6 (Iseion), 7.11.1 (Iseion). Otherwise only 1.2.6 (is Charikleia Artemis or the native Isis?), 3.11.1 (Kalasiris swears by Isis—to lead into the statement of his status as prophet to her), 9.9.4 (Isis = the land of Egypt).

⁴⁸ Szepessy, p. 252. Bowie, p. 695, also observes 'a series of priests of an ascending order of sanctity'.

⁴⁹ Herodotos 2.81, misread by Sandy, p. 166—the Pythagoreans are not connected, except indirectly, with the *kalasiris*.

exotic offspring of the Alexander saga). They may live in the temple of Pan (see above), but they are not priests of Pan but philosophers concerned with *to pan* (the universe). Thus the final level of reality is a philosophical level.

UNDERSTANDING KALASIRIS

Finally, given that Kalasiris is so central to the interpretation of the novel, I attempt to show that his chicanery is not incompatible with his authority.

Kalasiris' narration of events at Delphi is affected by the different mentality of Knemon. Knemon's interruption at the beginning of the third book draws our attention to the contrast between their perceptions. As an Athenian, Knemon would rather goggle at theatrical spectacle than understand. He does not have the intellectual qualities that lead to true knowledge; he is distracted by extraneous detail and by mere *θαύματα* ('wonders').

Yet it is not only Knemon whose cognitive powers are contrasted unfavourably with those of Kalasiris. Charikles, unlike Kalasiris, does not perceive the falling in love of Charikleia and Theagenes (3.5.7) and the succeeding chapters underline his superficial vision of events and of the condition of his daughter. Kalasiris is not concerned to enlighten Charikles, but leads him to suppose quite falsely that it is the Evil Eye which has afflicted Charikleia. The detail with which Kalasiris explains the non-existent operation of the Evil Eye (3.7–9) clearly gives pleasure to the reader, whilst at the same time undermining the claim of this sort of writing to intellectual respectability. It is a parade of invalid materialist science, based in *Volks Glaube*.⁵⁰ So we should be careful how we judge this account: we must damn the Aelianesque mentality that it is designed for, and view its author, Kalasiris, as using it as a vehicle for his intellectual superiority. But it is not empty vanity: Kalasiris judges that Charikles does not have the capacity to cope with what is about to unfold. A strategem for the best, involving trickery and deception, cannot be regarded as unacceptable in pre-Christian Greek culture; it is after all endorsed by the character of Odysseus.

The contrast with the perceptions of the crowd is even more clearly marked. At the end of the Second Book, the oracle is delivered and Kalasiris comments on the interpretative skills of the crowd. They do not understand, but leap to premature conclusions. They are in any case 'all of a flutter', distracted by the impressive procession and (the closing words of the book) 'not bothering to investigate/track down exactly what had been prophesied'. Their mentality is the same mentality that Knemon displays immediately at the beginning of the next book. Nor do they notice the falling in love, as the oracle begins to be fulfilled (3.5 *fin.*). Only Kalasiris pays the necessary attention, avoids distraction.

Kalasiris, by surrendering to the request of Knemon, delivers to the reader an account which may therefore seem intellectually unrespectable and devalued. Yet the effect is that the reader is presented with the full environment from which Kalasiris had to draw the relevant and significant factors. By these means the reader is enabled to replicate the discrimination of Kalasiris and to practise cognitive skills, in a sort

⁵⁰ This leads Bartsch, p. 155, close to self-contradiction: the reader is envisaged as finding the Evil Eye discussion as being 'of genuine educational worth', but the author has already signalled it as pseudo-science. Yet Heliodoros does have his cake and eat it: the reader is invited to take an interest in a panoply of ekphrastic and digressive material in the novel, whilst at the same time being required to maintain a sense of purpose and direction. All the same, Kalasiris' provocation of demands for digression does not intellectually excuse Knemon's penchant for them at this point in the novel, as I think Morgan (1991, pp. 97–8) implies.

of tutorial. The test is whether we can extract from what Winkler alleges has become 'a romantic extravaganza' (p. 144) the factors that matter and demote those which do not. Contrary to the view presented by Bartsch (p. 121), we should not try to close the distance between Knemon and the reader: they are not the same audience just because they are both audiences. The reader is an audience of Knemon as well as of events and is in a position to estimate the value of Knemon's critical skills.⁵¹ The distinction between the audiences is one reason for the frequency, observed by Winkler (p. 140), with which Kalasiris addresses Knemon by name.

Viewing Kalasiris' narrative as a test for the reader prevents it from becoming a mere 'romantic extravaganza'. Nor is it necessary to believe that 'Kalasiris' lofty-mindedness is... a pose'. He is admirably devious, and sparing with his knowledge—an attitude to knowledge found in that environment where it matters most, the mystery religions. So far from preaching, explaining and welcoming to the knowledge that will save, these religions shut out those who did not know and kept secret what they felt mattered.⁵² Kalasiris shares this attitude, as though his life was some sort of mystic allegory: to outsiders, the Egyptian charlatan that they expect and than which they know nothing better; inside, for the privileged few, the Egyptian *prophetes* with a real understanding and real principles.

As a result, Kalasiris' statements, at least before unreliable audiences, are to be tested before acceptance. This is not to say, however, that he is simply posturing or that he is not authoritative when correctly understood. This applies particularly to the remarkable moment when Theagenes enters to seek out Kalasiris' help, thus setting in motion the fated plans (3.16). At this point Kalasiris issues a credo to his audience (still Knemon) on the purpose of his life and the nature of his priesthood in comparison with the misguided and disastrous Egyptian magic later practised by the old woman of Bessa. The passage suggests a different, more serious and more uplifting portrait of Kalasiris than modern criticism has been developing. He speaks of true wisdom and the need to distinguish it from counterfeit wisdom, of investigation of stars and future, of single-minded pursuit of the good to which his own exile is testimony. It is not just the aspiration to divinity that Heliodoros underlines in the passage, but the need to take measures, correctly judged, to escape evils. Kalasiris' own life mirrors the exile and flight of Charikleia and encourages readers, maybe, to consider whether they too can aspire to these objectives. It is at once a great and a fundamental passage, which might warm the heart of any Platonist, and lead us to enquire, with Plotinos (e.g. 1.2.1, 1.6.8), *τίς ἡ φύγη*—what constitutes the 'escape' (from this world)? It is of course the question which 'God-Born', Theagenes, will need to ask. But he is at the beginning of his new perception and correspondingly Kalasiris, not ready to disclose the real nature of his wisdom, acts in a way rather distant from the ideals he has just enunciated (3.17.1).

Yet Kalasiris is still entangled in a world of difficulties, for himself (through his association with Rhodopis) and for those others whom he protects and guides. His pliability and manoeuvrability, though not discreditable in these circumstances, lack the tranquil assurance of the Gymnosophists with whom he is implicitly contrasted.⁵³

⁵¹ Cf. Winkler, pp. 140–4.

⁵² Synesios exhibits a striking parallel in his own conduct: after taking holy orders he intends to communicate such legends as the resurrection to the common people who need them, whilst himself standing by a deep philosophical and allegorical view: *Ep.* 105 with Sandy, p. 148.

⁵³ The priority of Sisimithres: Szepessy, p. 253.

CONCLUSION

This, then, is to return broadly to the position of Rohde, adopted also, from a different perspective, by students of later paganism.⁵⁴ It also goes some way to meet the views of Merkelbach and indeed of 'Philip the Philosopher', who claimed that beneath its surface level the novel 'acted as mystic guide to higher things' (*μυσταγωγούσα τὰ ὑψηλότερα*).⁵⁵ Opinions will differ on how far such views should be accommodated, but I think it is important that we are not distracted by current interest in literary technique and in novels which promote ambivalence, into rejecting the methods and contents of novels of a different culture. It is a difficult task to describe the degree of earnestness with which Heliodoros promotes the values and philosophy which inform his novel. Of the possible excesses in such description, I think the current critical climate is more susceptible to underrating that earnestness than overrating it and I hope that this article has gone some way to counteract that tendency.⁵⁶

The University of Birmingham

KEN DOWDEN

⁵⁴ Rohde, pp. 466–71. J. Geffcken, *Der Ausgang des griechisch-römischen Heidentums* (Heidelberg, 1920), p. 88: 'die Erzählung ist eine neuplatonische Tendenzdichtung'; cf. M. P. Nilsson, *Geschichte der griechischen Religion* (München, ³1974), vol. 2, p. 565.

⁵⁵ P.367.37 Colonna (see n. 10 above).

⁵⁶ This article began life as a paper delivered to a seminar on the Ancient Novel organized by Dr David Vessey at the Institute of Classical Studies in London. It has benefited very much from the alert critical observations of Dr S. J. Heyworth and the anonymous referee.