

**READING FOR CLUES:  
DETECTIVE NARRATIVES IN HELIODORUS' *AITHIOPIKA***

by

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## ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the narrative strategies of one of the longest and most complex Late Antique prose fictional narratives, Heliodorus' *Aithiopika*, through the lens of modern detective narrative. It argues that the various kinds of lying by the characters of the former parallel the conventions, aspirations, and narrative strategies of the latter in order to establish a precedent for the backwards construction of meaning and reading for clues in antiquity. To this end, I look at the puzzling blood-bath of the introductory scene (Chapter 2), as well as the narrative arcs of three of the novel's characters, Knemon, a seeming buffoon who turns into an unexpected murderer (Chapters 3 and 4), Kalasiris, an overeager religious interpreter of oracles (Chapter 5), and Charikleia, a female protagonist of rare rhetorical prowess (Chapter 6). The establishment of such a precedent has two goals: first, to get a better grasp of the narratological challenges that Heliodorus presents with his inconsistencies of plot brought about by the characters' lying. Second, with the help of clues from within these webs of lies, to understand the characters' motivations and the reasoning behind their actions in order to decipher their rhetorical strategies and ethical outlooks. By reading the story in this way, this study argues, the reader can account for the openness of interpretation in a text that invites her to a difficult but rewarding challenge for the construction of meaning. Ultimately, the reader undertakes a process of reading the *Aithiopika* that presents an alternative to the standard reading practices of ancient fiction and in part anticipates the modern genre of detective fiction.

## CHAPTER 1

### THE STRATEGY OF DETECTIVE NARRATIVE

#### 1.1 Introduction

This study examines Heliodorus' *Aithiopika*, a work of prose fiction most probably composed in the 4<sup>th</sup> century CE.<sup>1</sup> It seeks to analyze the various associations between two seemingly distinct literary genres: the Greek novel in its most complex form as crafted by Heliodorus<sup>2</sup> and detective fiction as the intellectual product of post-enlightenment 19<sup>th</sup>-century narrative strategies.<sup>3</sup> By examining the former in light of the latter I argue that it is possible to see how Heliodorus' literary technique approximates and at times anticipates the

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<sup>1</sup> For the dating of the *Aithiopika* see Sinko 1940–1946, 23–45; Lacombrande 1970, 70–89; Scarcella 1972, 8–41; Szepessy 1976, 247–276; Sandy 1982a, 2–5; Keydell 1984, 467–472; Chuvin 1990, 321–325; Bowersock 1994, 149–155; Perkins 1999, 210n14; Dowden 2007, 133–150; Tilg 2010, 91, 144–145; Whitmarsh 2011, 5, 110; Bremmer 2013, 156–159; Futre Pinheiro 2014, 76–81. The *terminus post quem* is the reference of Heliodorus' signature (σφραγίς), which limits his date to after 194 CE, when Septimius Severus granted the division of Syria into Syria Coele and Syria Phoenice, with the latter encompassing Emesa, and the *terminus ante quem* is supplied most probably by Georgios Kedrenos (Colonna 1938, 370, *testimonium xiv*) of the 11th century: Ἡλιόδωρος ὁ γράψας τὰ λεγόμενα Αἰθιοπικὰ ἐπίσκοπος ἦν Τρίκκης, ἐπὶ Θεοδοσίου τοῦ μεγάλου βασιλέως (“Heliodorus the author the so-called *Aithiopika* was the bishop of Tricca, during the reign of Theodosius the Great”) [379–395 CE]”, supported also by Socrates, the historiographer of the 5th century CE: Ἀλλὰ τοῦ μὲν ἐν Θεσσαλία ἔθους ἀρχηγὸς Ἡλιόδωρος, Τρίκκης τῆς ἐκεῖ γενόμενος <ἐπίσκοπος>, οὗ λέγεται <εἶναι> πονήματα ἐρωτικά βιβλία, ἃ νέος ὢν συνέταξεν, καὶ Αἰθιοπικὰ προσηγόρευσε. (“But the leader of such a moral attitude was Heliodorus, who became the bishop of Tricca, whose written works were rumored to be love stories, which he composed while he was young, and titled *Aithiopika*,” *Hist. Eccl.* 5.22). (The *terminus post quem* may be also transposed later, between 211 and 217 CE, when Caracalla bestowed upon Emesa colonial status and other privileges.) For *testimonia* to Heliodorus see Rattenbury 1927; Colonna 1938; Dyck 1986.

<sup>2</sup> For analysis of the different aspects of Heliodorus' narrative complexity see Keyes 1922, 42–51; Hefti 1950; Sandy 1982a, 8–14; Winkler 1982, 93–105; Morgan 1994, 97–113; Doody 1996, 18–30; Whitmarsh 2002, 111–125; 2011, 108–110.

<sup>3</sup> On detective fiction as the product of Enlightenment and modernity see Messac 1929; Bennett 1979, 233–240; Steele 1981, 555–570; Malmgren 2001; Most 2006, 56–72; Key 2011.

conventions, aspirations, and literary perspectives of detective narrative, a genre almost universally identified as modern.

This argument might seem unorthodox to scholars of both classical studies and detective narrative. After all, the standard classification of detective narratives restricts them to being a part of a modern and utterly new genre in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>4</sup> As this dissertation will show, however, the *Aithiopika* has two aspects that allow one to see it as a suitable predecessor for the genre and the reader that it requires. The first regards the formal, narratological elements of the plot. How does misdirection work for Heliodorus? How does he manipulate his reader? What kind of readerly response does he seek to create? A formal examination of the narrative strategies employed in modern crime novels later in this introduction will help shed some light on these questions as we test just how much the *Aithiopika* can be said to employ them. The second aspect, a corollary of the multiple unreliable narrators that present themselves in the story, concerns the characters' moral integrity, and in particular the status of lying in the novel. Why do characters display an apparent predilection for lying and why exactly is the decision of whether or not to lie so integral to the story at so many levels? Detective narrative is concerned with generating, negotiating, and confronting readers with basic questions regarding the morality, integrity,

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<sup>4</sup> Marsch 1972, 13, suggests an early start to the genre, claiming that “*der historische terminus ‘Criminalgeschichte’, der sich seit Ende des 18. Jahrhunderts eingebürgert hatte, ist relativ eindeutig. Sowohl Meissner wie Hitzig und Häring (Willibald Alexis) gebrauchen ihn. Er meint die Erzählung einer ursprünglich ‘wahrer’ Begebenheit aus dem Bereich der praktischen Justiz, also einen Rechtsfall mit allen seinen möglichen Umständen. Es handelt sich also ursprünglich um kurze Prosa, die in mancher Hinsicht mit der Novelle vergleichbar ist und sich im 19. Jahrhundert vielfach mit ihr deckt.*” On the other hand, Borges 1981, 89, sees a later date, which starts with Poe: “In 1840 Edgar Allan Poe enriched literature with a new genre. This genre is above all ingenious and artificial; real crimes are not commonly discovered by abstract reasoning but by chance, investigation, or confession. Poe invented the first detective in literature.” See also Messac 1929, arguing that the birth of the detective novel was a direct consequence of the scientific spirit of the European Enlightenment; Todorov (1966) 1971, 42–43, seeing it as a product of Romanticism, which was reactionary about generic restrictions; Foucault (1975) 1995, 68–69, analyzing the genre as a side-effect and reaction to the change of the surveillance technologies; Alewyn 1971, 372–374; 1983, 63; Pyrhönen 1994, 10; Marcus 2003, 246; Bradford 2015, 1–18.

and decency of all the characters, including even the detective, who must think like the perpetrator of the crime in order to bring resolution to the mystery.<sup>5</sup> The main characters in the *Aithiopika* all lie. However, not all lying in the novel is of the same nature. As we will see, there are at least three main kinds of lying—malicious, “noble,” and defensive—and sorting through the motivations for each character when they lie is a challenge that parallels the reading experience of modern detective narrative. Examining these two elements of Heliodorus’ novel not only proves it to be an important predecessor for the genre of detective narrative, but also leads to the interesting observation that twists in the plot often coincide with twists in the perceived moral integrity of the characters, as each of the following chapters will show.

Before examining the ways in which the novel anticipates detective fiction, it is important first to explore the scholarly landscape of the *Aithiopika*, in order to see what contribution such an analysis might make. It is perhaps challenging to find a form of analysis of the *Aithiopika* that can keep all the narrative elements together while doing justice to its narrative complexity. It is no accident that very few monographs have undertaken to interpret Heliodorus’ narrative in a holistic and extensive manner.<sup>6</sup> Early scholarship on the novel was keen to demonstrate that the *Aithiopika* in its monolithic bulk picks up on many different classical elements: Homer (both the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*), tragedy (especially but not exclusively Euripides), comedy (both Aristophanic utopias and Menandrian stock motifs), Neoplatonic and Orphic philosophy (Kalasiris speaks repeatedly about his engagement with

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<sup>5</sup> Auden (1948) 1988, 15–24; Edenbaum 1968, 80–103; Grella 1970, 30–49; Charney 1981, 2–19; Porter 1981.

<sup>6</sup> Sandy’s 1982 study does not approach Heliodorus with a research question but with a survey of the evidence, the surviving sources, and an examination of the characters. Winkler’s 1982 paper on the mendacity of Kalasiris is perhaps closest to the approach I take here and is one work with which I will be in continual dialogue in the chapters that follow. See also Altheim 1942; Hefti 1950; Feuillâtre 1966; Paulsen 1992. The lack of monographs does not justify, however, any claims for lack of interest; quite the opposite, Heliodorean studies are currently thriving.

rites and higher ideas), religion (oracles seem to drive the plot, and everything ends in a divinely ordained happy ending), and, of course, the other ancient novels (its close relationship with Achilles Tatius is astounding, but this affinity goes back even to the cult of the sun in the Ninus romance, as well as to Chariton's *Callirhoe* with its imperfect heroes).<sup>7</sup> All these approaches are rich in themselves and consolidate Heliodorus' position within the Classical canon.

Heliodorus is indeed widely and deeply familiar with the Classical material, but, as scholars have shown, he is also doing more than just reshuffling past motifs and imitating tired rhetorical moves. His vast reputation and enormous influence would not stand if he were seen exclusively in the light of his predecessors.<sup>8</sup> More importantly, it would not reflect the rich reading experience that one has in following the story's many twists and turns. This sophisticated narrative engagement has not gone unnoticed by scholars in recent decades, coinciding with a flourishing in the study of ancient narrative more generally and focusing on the debate over character versus plot in the novel. Any attempt to encapsulate the current debate might not do justice to some of its more nuanced aspects. However, for the purposes of evaluating what my contribution can add, I will engage with an analysis of four recent and extensive studies by Montiglio, de Temmerman, Grethlein, and Whitmarsh, which are devoted (either fully or in part) to Heliodorus, having very carefully incorporated and at times revised nearly the entirety of existing scholarship on the ancient novel and its intellectual relatives up to that point.<sup>9</sup>

Before we get to these four studies, however, we first need to take a small step back here and summarize the foundations of the debate over character versus plot in the novel of

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<sup>7</sup> Rohde (1876) 1914, 448–450; Walden 1894, 1–43; Woronoff 1991, 403–410; Paulsen 1992; Tarán 1992, 203–230; Ronnet 1995, 55–68; Dowden 1996, 267–285; Dworaski 1996, 355–361; 2000, 121–129; Most 2007, 16–67; Morgan 2008b, 218–227; Zeitlin 2008, 91–108.

<sup>8</sup> Sandy 1982a; Billault 1992, 307–314; Agapitos 1998, 125–156; Carver (forthcoming).

<sup>9</sup> Of course, the main seeds for the direction of Heliodorean studies so far remain Winkler 1982 and Morgan 1989a, 1989b, 1991, and 1994.

Heliodorus, which began in earnest with Winkler's and Morgan's influential studies in the 1980s. Both set out to engage with the *Aithiopika* in response to the early ideas of Bakhtin, whose view is still dominant in the criticism of the ancient novel: one of the genre's most distinctive characteristics is that ancient novels have "maximal contact with the present in all its open-endedness."<sup>10</sup> Winkler nuanced this interpretation further by arguing that "the *Aithiopika* is an act of pure play, yet a play which rehearses vital processes by which we must live in reality—interpretation, reading, and making a provisional sense of things."<sup>11</sup> In other words, the novel demands an interactive engagement on the part of the reader to interpret not just its complex plot, but also the elements of that plot, including in particular its characters. What becomes important to the core of the novel is the idea that the texts should be understood as a process. Nimis, following Winkler, argues that "Heliodorus is himself 'going with the flow,' allowing something to emerge rather than imposing upon events a clearly defined structure."<sup>12</sup> At points, he even identifies hints of authorial surrender, following at large Barthes' dictum that "discourse has an instinct for self-preservation."<sup>13</sup>

At the polar opposite of this Bakhtinian outlook, Morgan has dominated the discussion with the following view, which is heavily influenced by the work of Kermode on the novel in general:<sup>14</sup>

[T]he meaning of a story flows back from its ending, which constitutes a goal towards which the narrative can be seen to have been directed. Because an omniscient narrator

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<sup>10</sup> Bakhtin 1981, 11. See also Fusillo 1996a, 49–67; 1996b, 277–305; 1997, 209–227, where he further exemplifies this discussion between closed form, as exemplified by tragedy (old, noble, sublime, rigidly coded) and open form, as illustrated by the novel, which has more flexible rules. This line of analysis is picked up by Nimis, who in a series of articles has argued in general that "one of the things that makes the ancient novels important is the fact that they are experimental and heuristic: the end is *not* fully contained in the beginning" (Nimis 1999, 216). See also Nimis 1994, 387–411; 1998, 99–122.

<sup>11</sup> Winkler 1982, 158.

<sup>12</sup> Nimis 1999, 230, citing also Winkler 1982, 130.

<sup>13</sup> Barthes 1974, 135. In this later reception of this discussion, however, I believe Derrida 1980, 55–81, has the key role in his theoretical undoing of the "law of genre." See also Pavel 2003a, 201–210.

<sup>14</sup> Kermode 1967; 1978, 144–158.

in the past tense by definition knows how the story ends, his narrative discourse is itself an act of implicit structuration towards the ending, retrospective for himself, prospective for the reader, who is led back along an already mapped path through the maze of contingencies and unrealized possibilities and follows eagerly in his desire to achieve the meaning which only the end can bring.<sup>15</sup>

Morgan's contribution was thus to give insight into Heliodorus' artistic complexity by arguing that everything coheres in the storyline, contributing towards an intricate, but unified, web of meaning. By elevating the sense of purpose in the narrative choices made, and by downplaying the sense of experimentation in the artistic creation, we are able to appreciate Heliodorus' craft as premeditated, organized, and symmetrical. It is true, after all, that the novels all do end with the marriage of the two main characters, which is a clear form of closure that is anticipated from the beginnings of each novel.<sup>16</sup>

This debate between Winkler and Morgan has continued to the present day through the four main representatives mentioned above: Montiglio, de Temmerman, Grethlein, and Whitmarsh. In her 2013 study, Montiglio examines recognition in an Aristotelian fashion, as a function of the plot, which allows, as the famous formulation has it, "the transition from ignorance to knowledge" in understanding "who one is" and whether "one has done something or not."<sup>17</sup> However, Montiglio emphasizes in her analysis the theatricality of the characters, as well as their resemblance to tragedy and its resolutions, and believes that recognitions operate smoothly in Heliodorus on the level of plot, not leaving much discussion for the level of understanding inner thoughts and intentions of the characters.<sup>18</sup>

To this effect, a helpful complement arrived in the form of the recent study of de Temmerman, entitled "Crafting Characters," and particularly his Section 5, which discusses

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<sup>15</sup> Morgan 1989b, 299.

<sup>16</sup> Konstan 1994. See also the introduction of Grewing, Acosta-Hughes, and Kirichenko 2013, 5–9.

<sup>17</sup> Arist. *Poet.* 1452a35–36, εἰ πέπραγέ τις ἢ μὴ πέπραγε; *Poet.* 1452b3, ἐπειδὴ ἡ ἀναγνώρισις τινῶν ἐστὶν ἀναγνώρισις.

<sup>18</sup> Montiglio 2013, 114.

Heliodorus.<sup>19</sup> In this work, the author offers the intriguing thesis that the characters in the Ancient Greek novel, and more specifically in Heliodorus, are “dynamic, realistically sketched and well individuated.”<sup>20</sup> Following the narrative of Heliodorus closely, however, de Temmerman argues that the characterizations of Charikleia and Theagenes are value-laden and ambiguous, driven essentially by rhetorical techniques of *ethopoeia* and effectuated by narrative flashbacks, metaphors, and metonymies. However careful in its analysis of the rhetorical practices, this study does not attempt to position itself in any definitive fashion and offer a future direction as to where it leaves us in the debate over plot versus character.

With Grethlein’s article of 2015, “Is Narrative ‘The Description of Fictional Mental Functioning?’ Heliodorus against Palmer, Zunshine & Co,”<sup>21</sup> we are asked again to see the novel as driven essentially by plot and the suspense it creates. In his paper, Grethlein argues that “Heliodorus’ novel draws our attention to the temporal dynamics of narrative,”<sup>22</sup> and that “the reader is enticed by such features as suspense and curiosity,” since much of the field of narrative, including the field of *paralittérature*, “is invested more in the mimesis and reconfiguration of time than the presentation of consciousness,”<sup>23</sup> presenting an overall “priority of plot over character.”<sup>24</sup> Grethlein’s selection of passages, especially in his analysis of the introduction of the *Aithiopika*, is convenient. However, it is not entirely representative. My argument, especially as it is unfolded in Chapter 2, proposes that Grethlein’s reading is perhaps misleading in that it mainly hinges on understanding the introductory scene as some sort of internal focalization. Whereas Grethlein calls the introductory scene “an impressive instance of internal focalization in ancient narrative,” which plays an essential role in adding

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<sup>19</sup> De Temmerman 2014, 246–313.

<sup>20</sup> De Temmerman 2014, 3.

<sup>21</sup> Grethlein 2015, 257–284.

<sup>22</sup> Grethlein 2015, 261.

<sup>23</sup> Grethlein 2015, 280.

<sup>24</sup> Grethlein 2015, 264.

vividness (ἐνάργεια) and intends to “reinforce the reader’s curiosity,”<sup>25</sup> the introduction is more nuanced than that, with a much more ambiguous focalizing viewpoint that teaches readers not to get carried away like the bandits in interpreting the scene without patience. Grethlein’s view is that ancient narrative is not interested in representing the complexities of consciousness and therefore cannot contain either any sense of the evolution of characters and, perhaps most importantly, any real sense of engagement with trying to understand the behavior of others in terms of their beliefs, feelings, and desires—what has been in modern literary criticism called “theory of mind.”<sup>26</sup> To further his argument for the importance of plot in the *Aithiopika*, Grethlein resorts to a comparison between Heliodorus and the detective narrative of Ian Fleming and *paralittérature* in general. He considers both of them to be creating plots as machines, providing clear-cut definitions about right and wrong and generally invested in temporal questions.<sup>27</sup>

This debate between plot and character is subsumed and transformed into a debate about identity by Whitmarsh in his chapter “Hellenism at the Edge: Heliodorus” from his book *Narrative and Identity: Returning Romance*.<sup>28</sup> He argues that the *Aithiopika* displays an “allegory of life as a process of cultural estrangement and refamiliarization,”<sup>29</sup> where some motifs dominate its narrative discourse: the debate over cultural authority; the contest of the understanding of the Hellenic center versus periphery in an effort to unpack a universal set of values; and, perhaps most importantly, the question of narrative finitude, also known as the question between openness and closedness of the text. Whitmarsh’s argument is significant in outlining the great stakes of Heliodorus’ text for ancient narratology in general, namely, an

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<sup>25</sup> Grethlein 2015, 266, citing Effe 1975, 152–157.

<sup>26</sup> Zunshine 2006.

<sup>27</sup> Grethlein 2015, 278–284. For responses about the importance of intentions and theory in deciphering Heliodorus see Zunshine 2006, 48, as well as the interesting responses to Grethlein by Fludernik 2015, 288–292, and Palmer 2015, 285–287.

<sup>28</sup> See also Whitmarsh’s chapter “Telos” in the same volume (Whitmarsh 2011, 177–213). For an earlier attempt to discuss and argue over identity in Heliodorus see Berry 2000.

<sup>29</sup> Whitmarsh 2011, 135.

understanding of the novel as driven either by plot or by character, as well as of the role of the reader in the interpretation of such a text. For Whitmarsh, the approaches of Winkler and Morgan (as well as those who follow in their footsteps) are really two sides of the same coin: “Winkler elevates what we have called the narratorial *id*, Freud’s ‘seething cauldron’ of energies and potentialities. Morgan, by contrast, elevates the superego, the matrix of cultural imperatives that determines the inevitability of the prescribed outcome.”<sup>30</sup>

This study will continue in the direction of Whitmarsh to unite the two sides of the debate by looking at the two aforementioned aspects of Heliodorus’ narrative that make his work a suitable predecessor to modern detective narrative: his intricate, backward-reading plot and the different kinds of lying in which his morally ambiguous characters engage. It is my strong conviction that action determines character and, consequently, that to understand the characters of the story we need to decipher the plot. However, I do not discuss plot for plot’s sake. I do not believe that the *Aithiopika* constitutes some form of plot automaton. Rather, I believe that plot is deliberately difficult in order to challenge the reader to *understand and emotionally relate to* the characters and make a decision on how to engage with them in view of their persistent lying. And in this decision-making process, clues work as guides to understanding the characters involved.

Thus, my argument is that the *Aithiopika* provides a distinctive predecessor for the genre of the detective narrative by demanding that the reader become engaged in backward construction and inferential reasoning—or, to put it differently, that the reader become a detective in understanding not just the twists of plot but of the characters in it, as well. The detective narrative patterns and concerns in Heliodorus may be different in their configuration from the modern versions because of the very different cultural milieu.

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<sup>30</sup> Whitmarsh 2011, 192.

However, as will become clear, Heliodorus presents a clear, if surprising, proto-model for this genre.<sup>31</sup>

## 1.2 Prolegomena to the Definition and Origin of Detective Narrative

In order to understand the *Aithiopika* as a predecessor to the genre of detective narrative, we need to define the detective narrative genre itself. In 1948, W.H. Auden provided a “vulgar definition” of the detective narrative: “a murder occurs; many are suspected; all, but the suspect, who is the murderer, are eliminated; the murderer is arrested or dies.”<sup>32</sup> This definition, admittedly crude, describes consistently the state of the average understanding of the detective novel. However, detective fiction is more complex than this simple definition might suggest.<sup>33</sup>

There are two different aspects in such a story that attract the reader. The first is curiosity: starting from some effect (a corpse and some clues) to understand the cause (the culprit and the motive). The second is suspense: we are first shown the causes, the *données* (say, gangsters preparing a robbery), and our interest is sustained by the expectation of what will happen (deaths, fights, crimes).<sup>34</sup> Detective narratives can do both, but the emphasis falls mainly on the first of these interests. Indeed, the reader’s confrontation with an enigma and ambiguities or red herrings that arouse curiosity are keys to the detective novel, which is a

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<sup>31</sup> The question of origins has been treated as relatively obsolete in the modern analysis of ancient genres. Especially polemical on the notion of a generic understanding of the ancient novel is the work of Whitmarsh, who maintains that family resemblance in the quest for a beginning of a genre is persistently elusive and cannot offer any clear help as to understanding the boundaries of a given genre (Whitmarsh 2013, 75–76). In my analysis, I firmly believe that the question of “genealogy” still has some significant import in understanding key turns in the formation of a genre, especially in our case where we are tracing the crime novel’s origin back before its modern formulation.

<sup>32</sup> Auden 1948, 15.

<sup>33</sup> More comprehensive and nuanced definitions can be found in Eckert 1971, 528–533; Byrd 1974, 72–83; Bennett 1979, 233–266; Most and Stowe 1983, 1–5; and, most recently, Bradford 2015, with comprehensive bibliography.

<sup>34</sup> Todorov (1966) 1971, 42–52.

code that remains to be deciphered. Here, one can easily see the connection with reader response theory, as exemplified by Iser: “Reading is an activity that is guided by the text; this must be processed by the reader, who is then, in turn, affected by what he has processed.”<sup>35</sup> In the detective novel, the reader in a sense becomes the detective, who must fill in the gaps and blanks of the text like her fictional counterpart in the story.

Thus the detective narrative is much more than the story of the crime and its aftermath. It is mainly about the structure of narrative and about how it creates a tension between two kinds of reading: one that moves forward towards the story’s conclusion and one that moves backward towards understanding its beginning, that is, the crime.<sup>36</sup> As Haycraft explains in discussing the structure of the detective novel, “the first thing to know about the detective story is that it is conceived not forward and developmentally, as are most types of fiction, but backward. Each tale, whether novel or short story, is a conceived solution foremost in the author’s mind, around a definite central or controlling idea.”<sup>37</sup>

The theoretical appreciation of the detective novel is not just the purview of literary critics but often arises from the detective novels themselves. In “A Study in Scarlet,” for example, Sherlock Holmes claims that

[i]n solving a problem of this sort, the grand thing is to be able to reason backward. [...] Most people, if you describe a train of events to them, will tell you what the result would be. They can put those events together in their minds, and argue from them that something will come to pass. There are few people, however, who, if you told them a result, would be able to evolve from their own inner consciousness what

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<sup>35</sup> Iser 1978, 163.

<sup>36</sup> To this day, the most influential account of the definition of the detective narrative comes from Todorov (1966) 1971, 42–52, who believes that the main mark of the detective story is to maintain two storylines: that of the crime and that of the investigation. An extreme example of this is the “whodunit,” which tends towards a geometric architecture. Agatha Christie’s *Murder on the Orient Express*, for example, offers twelve suspects; the book consists of twelve chapters, and again twelve interrogations, a prologue, and an epilogue (that is, the discovery of the crime and the discovery of the killer[s]).

<sup>37</sup> Haycraft 1941, 228.

the steps were which led up to that result. This power is what I mean when I talk of reasoning backwards, or analytically.<sup>38</sup>

This interest for how a skilled detective story is constructed backwards was captured also by semioticians like Umberto Eco. In his study of Ian Fleming's *James Bond*, Eco remarked that his novels discard the motive of psychology and rather transfer characters and situations to the level of objective structural strategies.<sup>39</sup> The task of the semiotician then becomes to find the general grammar, the abstract structures underlying these detective stories. Eco maintained that detective novels are simple and reducible, yet complex enough to illustrate some general laws by which the narrative works.

If we were to attempt a definition of detective narrative, it would be a story which starts with a decipherable enigma, normally a murder, and proceeds in two ways: forwards, via curiosity, ambiguity, and distractions, towards an eventual solution; backwards, via inferences, clues and revision, towards the reconstruction of events in their order of occurrence. This story is engaging because the reader is led to identify initially with the conceptual process of the detective. In other words, what makes the detective story a detective story is the kind of reader that it requires us to become. Moreover, as we will see below, the evolution of detective fiction leads to the kind of detectives who understand, but

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<sup>38</sup> Conan Doyle (1887) 1953, 4. Given the self-reflective nature of many crime novels, it should be no surprise that various authors have underlined the close connection between novels of detection and the general process of writing and reading texts. The most notable and recent example of this comes from Paul Auster in his *City of Glass*, where he argues that “in effect, the writer and the detective are interchangeable...since, like the reader, the detective is the one who looks, who listens, who moves around the morass of objects and events in search of the thought, the idea that will pull all of those things together and make sense of them” (Auster 1985, 15). Most has expanded further on the act of reading as a form of detection, claiming that the detective is “the one character whose activities most closely parallel the reader’s own, in object (both reader and detective seek to unravel the mystery of the crime), in duration (both are engaged in the story from the beginning, and when the detective reveals his solution, the reader can no longer evade it himself and the novel can end), and in method (a tissue of guesswork and memory, of suspicion and logic)” (Most 1983, 42).

<sup>39</sup> Eco 1979, 13. A similar approach is taken by Călinescu 1993.

also often break, the rules of this game, forcing the reader to make an ethical decision about the moral integrity of the detective and the other protagonists.

Several starting points have been suggested for a modern beginning of detective fiction.<sup>40</sup> However, the scholarly consensus remains that the advent of the crime-solving novels comes with Edgar Allan Poe and his detective C. Auguste Dupin, who appears in three stories: “The Murders in the Rue Morgue” (1841), “The Mystery of Marie Roget” (1842–1843), and “The Purloined Letter” (1844). Poe called these stories “tales of ratiocination,” and Dupin is certainly the first character in a novel about crime who makes use of his deductive skills to arrive at a solution to the transgressive act. In this sense, he could be regarded as the patriarch in a legacy that includes Holmes, Poirot, Miss Marple, Maigret, Father Brown, Sam Spade, John Rebus, and so on.<sup>41</sup> Poe’s narratives were highly innovative and have inspired much modern critical debate from authors like Lacan, Derrida, Foucault, and Johnson,<sup>42</sup> but many refuse to see his novels as involving a detective narrative *per se*,

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<sup>40</sup> Some scholars position the birth of detective narrative in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, with two landmark English authors, Daniel Defoe and Henry Fielding. Both of them had direct experience with the absurdity of their contemporary judicial systems, with Defoe being incarcerated for several years and Fielding being a barrister and later a magistrate. Defoe’s *Moll Flanders* (1722) is the story of the eponymous anti-heroine’s life of crime and eventual repentance. In Fielding’s *Joseph Andrews* (1742) and *Tom Jones* (1749), prejudiced and ignorant squire magistrates feature regularly and are depicted by Fielding as a social contagion. Later on, the state recognized the potentially degenerate nature of this and attempted to regulate popular tastes with the publication first in 1728 of *Accounts of the lives, crimes, confessions and executions of criminals...*, all written by prison chaplains who extracted the necessary information from the prisoners, usually those sentenced to death, and their fellow inmates. These miniature biographies were quite disparate in purpose but their successful and creative reception/distortion led to a more official account of events, which came to be known as the *Newgate Calendars*. Serious literature, like Dicken’s *Oliver Twist* (1839), carries the stamp of the Newgate novel and its fictional reappropriations, leaving the choice of determining guilt to the reader.

<sup>41</sup> Conan Doyle 1901, 15: “Edgar Allan Poe, who in his carelessly prodigal fashion, threw out the seeds from which so much of our present literature has sprung, was the father of the detective tale.”

<sup>42</sup> Lacan 1956, 39–72; Derrida 1975, 173–212; Foucault (1977) 1995; Johnson 1977, 457–505.

since Dupin's role in providing solutions seems incidental to some of the author's other concerns.<sup>43</sup>

An alternative to this Poe-centric genealogy is provided by Collins' *The Moonstone* (1868). T.S. Eliot considered it "the first, the longest, and the best of modern English detective novels" in "a genre that was invented by Collins and not by Poe." Nor was Eliot alone in this sentiment: Dorothy L. Sayers and G.K. Chesterton both agreed that *The Moonstone* is the "best" and "finest" detective story ever written.<sup>44</sup> This is the first novel actually to include a police detective, and it is the first novel also to include a proper solution, with the reader being guided through the multiple layers of red herrings, false clues, and suspects towards a privileged understanding which involves her much more into its deciphering.

Admittedly, the popularization of the genre came with Arthur Conan Doyle's "A Study in Scarlet" (1887) and the series of short stories that followed entitled *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*. The narrative prowess of these stories is clear and can account for some of the popularity of Holmes. However, Conan Doyle also revolutionized the genre by pointing to Holmes' imperfections and mistakes and thereby creating an extra layer of difficulty in figuring out the correct reasoning required to solve a case. Hence, the readers were confronted with the paradox of a fallible detective who was however always capable of solving a mystery—a paradox that made them all the more invested in the story while making their identification with the protagonist problematic.

Although many types of variants succeeded Conan Doyle, the most important for our purposes is the *metaphysical detective narrative*. It subverts and toys with the basic conventions of the classic versions in order to examine their philosophical and cultural implications through gaping inconsistencies, paradoxes, and even absurdities. Since it dwells

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<sup>43</sup> Bradford 2015, 12.

<sup>44</sup> Chesterton 1902, 118–123; Sayers 1929, 56.

on the reverse side of the conventions of the “straight” detective narrative, it has also been named the *antidetective or analytic novel*.<sup>45</sup> The reader’s role becomes one of highly active participation, as her reading activity is the major means of lending coherence to the narrative. In fact, the metaphysical detective narrative structure should be considered most relevant for the analysis of a text like Heliodorus’ *Aithiopika* for the way in which it forces the reader to solve crimes and narrative complexities without the guidance of a centralizing and completely trustworthy character.

### 1.3 Glimpses of a Prehistory: Clues, Inference, and Detection in Ancient Narrative

An important *topos* that has often been associated with the prehistory of detection is the oracle. The oracle as a site of ambiguity and authority has been very well explored in Classical literature, with numerous studies examining its philosophical, narratological, and historical impact in both Greek and Roman Antiquity.<sup>46</sup> According to Boileau and Narcejac, the oracle that must be solved is “the archaic form of the detective novel.”<sup>47</sup> They argue that, in some respect, these small, self-contained narratives include the seeds of both the pursuit of action and the clues for its deciphering, exemplifying solution and simultaneously misdirection. This study of the *Aithiopika*, especially Chapter 5, analyzes Kalasiris’ pursuits as seen through the spectrum of explaining one main oracle, which governs the entire procession of the story.

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<sup>45</sup> Poe’s *The Murders of Rue Morgue* and Chesterton’s *The Man Who Was Thursday* have been normally classified as the early anti-detective or metaphysical narrative. Modern authors of these kind of narratives normally include Jorge Luis Borges, Alain Robbe-Grillet, Leonardo Sciascia, Koba Abe, and Umberto Eco. See Haycraft 1941; Holquist 1971, 135–156; Tani 1984; Sweeney 1990, 1–14; Pyrhönen 1994, 41–47; Irwin 1994; Suits 1995, 200–219; Pyrhönen 1999, 3–14.

<sup>46</sup> Recent and compelling studies of oracles in general include Johnston and Struck 2005; Eidinow 2007, Flower 2008, Johnston 2008; Addey 2014; Marx-Wolf 2016; Struck 2016;. For the importance of oracles in Heliodorus see Winkler 1982; Pouilloux 1983, 259–286; 1994, 691–703; Rougemont 1987, 93–99; Hilton 1996, 187–195; 1998a; 2001, 77–86; Baumbach 2008, 167–183.

<sup>47</sup> Boileau and Narcejac 1964; 1971, 71.

Besides from identifying this specific *topos* of detection, scholars have also looked to certain texts as proto-detective narratives.<sup>48</sup> Ancient narrative material, such as the “Story of King Rhampsinitus” in Herodotus and the Biblical “History of Susanna,” are more often than not included as the early, yet very dissimilar predecessors of the genre of detective narrative.<sup>49</sup> However, what scholars have looked to again and again in the formation of the genre is Sophocles’ *Oedipus Rex*, traditionally considered as the prime candidate for the genre’s *Ursprung*.

*Oedipus Rex* has puzzled generations of detective theory scholars for its potential relevance to the establishment of the detective novel. Critics like Woeller and Cassiday regard Oedipus as clearly the ancestor of the detective hero, since the story is focused upon the uncovering of the murderer, and the protagonist solves the mystery through an adaptation of the question–and–answer technique.<sup>50</sup> Building further upon their argument, Belton has observed two similarities between Oedipus and the detective hero: first, that “both of them are led step by step to an acknowledgement of the essential irrationality that governs human existence”; and the second, that “both of them struggle under the weight of their knowledge and reconstitute the symbols of order by ‘seeing justice being done’, Oedipus, by casting

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<sup>48</sup> Byrd 1974, 72–83; Haining 1977; Woeller and Cassiday 1988, 10; Calhoon 1995, 307–329; Belton 1991, 933–950.

<sup>49</sup> At this point, I consider it essential to refer to the rather unnoticed collection of Haworth 1927, entitled *Classic Crimes in History and Fiction*. In that work, Haworth has gathered in a comprehensive yet methodologically incoherent way a reading compendium of a vast material which may be considered as the most representative early specimens of the detective mode of reading. This material runs from the “Story of King Rhampinitus” in Herodotus and the Biblical “History of Susanna” all the way to Dicken’s “The Pair of Gloves” and “The Detective Police.” This catalogue includes some famous stories like the Medieval “Gesta Romanorum,” Boccaccio’s “The Life accused of Wantonness,” Defoe’s “The Life and Actions of Jonathan Wild,” Voltaire’s “The Dog and the Horse,” and Schiller’s “The Host of the Sun,” among many others. Unfortunately, this material is left without commentary or analysis by the compiler. It denotes, nonetheless, the flexible, yet critically unexamined, limits of this genre by including some rather unfamiliar material from quite early on.

<sup>50</sup> Woeller and Cassiday 1988, 10. Sayers makes a similar inclusion of such works as the *Oedipus Rex*, “The Story of Susanna,” “Bel and the Dragon” in the *Apocrypha*, and later on Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*.

himself into exile, the detective, by explaining everything about the mystery and showing the force of reason.”<sup>51</sup>

Of course, we need to be careful here in order to avoid falling into the trap of seeing every story of search and discovery as a detective story. (It is not usually the case, after all, that the detective is ignorant of his own guilt, a narrative pattern more fitting to a reversal of Greek tragedy than to modern detective narrative.) The need for a story of crime and punishment, of justice being done, should be considered universal. However, the backward, hermeneutic construction of a story that starts with a puzzle and leads one along, through false clues, red herrings, and small, suggestive details towards the truth should not be considered common.<sup>52</sup> Nor should be the requirement of such a “detective” reader, who is able to decipher a story at both the level of the plot and at the level of character.

As another testimony to the potentially ancient pedigree of the detective story, this time from the field of ancient criticism, Sayers composed a unique paper on the Aristotelian “suitable standards” of the detective novel entitled “Aristotle on Detective Fiction.”<sup>53</sup> There, she argues that the true desideratum of Aristotle’s was a good detective story on the basis of three things: his predilection for the gruesome, the unexpected turn of events happening in strict consequence of one another, and his desire to recognize whether or not someone has done something.<sup>54</sup> The art involved in writing detective fiction was thus characterized as “the art of framing lies” or of telling the truth in such a way that the intelligent reader is seduced into telling a lie to himself or herself.<sup>55</sup> A good clue is one that “point[s] in the right direction,

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<sup>51</sup> Belton 1991, 933–950, especially 937.

<sup>52</sup> The very modern term for this kind of narrative in cognitive science is the “garden-path” narrative, and it refers to the technique of intentionally misleading “first narrative impressions” in characters and plots in order to require constant revision as the narrative progresses. See Perry 1979, 311–361; Schank 1995; Turner 1996; Jahn 1997, 441–468; 1999, 167–194; Hermann 1999; 2003.

<sup>53</sup> Sayers 1936, 23–35.

<sup>54</sup> Ar. *Poet.* 1462b35–6: καὶ εἰ πέπραγέ τις ἢ μὴ πέπραγεν ἔστιν ἀναγνωρίσαι.

<sup>55</sup> Sayers 1929, 54.

but which seems at first to point in the wrong direction, to mean something other than it does, or to point nowhere at all.”<sup>56</sup> The real feat of detective artistry is in fact the “double-bluff,” in which the reader’s own cunning is used to achieve his or her own downfall: she is lured to make wrong hypotheses on the basis of generic knowledge.<sup>57</sup>

It is possible to go back further than Aristotle and Sophocles in ancient precedents. In fact, as the landmark contribution of Cooper almost a century ago has shown, there is also perhaps a Homeric precedent to the crime novel, as well.<sup>58</sup> At *Poetics* 1460a17–26, Aristotle speaks about how Homer, like any poet successful in framing lies, uses the essence of the method of paralogism by showing how people tend to make illegitimate inferences from a known, truthful B to a supplied (προστιθέντες/προσθεῖναι) but untrue A in order to process a syllogism or a story. The example Cooper uses—and it was widely known in ancient literary circles, as it was the example provided by Aristotle himself—is from the Bath scene of Book 19 of the *Odyssey*. In that scene, Odysseus, disguised as a beggar, wants to persuade Penelope that he has seen the real Odysseus alive, a falsehood. He thus provides an accurate description of the hero’s clothing. Penelope, recognizing this description as accurate, since she gave Odysseus these clothes, infers that the beggar is telling the truth. This common principle of verisimilitude as leading to false assumptions, also known as a grain of truth in a successful lie, has become a *topos* in classical studies of recognition in poetics.<sup>59</sup>

However, ancient narratives have not been considered so far committed to procuring clues and a “backwards reasoning” process as an end in itself. The surviving early literary examples have been thought to display a rather incidental interest in the crimes presented and their detection, existing merely for the sake of exciting the audience and being rather

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<sup>56</sup> Rodell (1943) 1946, 264–265.

<sup>57</sup> Sayers (1946) 1988, 31–33. Agatha Christie is to this day the most ingenious in this method. On a persuasive argument for the technique of Christie see Barnard 1980.

<sup>58</sup> Cooper 1918, 251–261.

<sup>59</sup> Cave 1988 is the landmark in the field, with very comprehensive bibliography. The most recent study is Montiglio 2013.

subordinate to questions of higher order, like mortality, error, and human tragedy.<sup>60</sup> Hence, there has been no systematic analysis or overview of this ancient literature as bearing any close resemblance to the narrative and ethical concerns of the modern detective stories discussed in the previous section. The closest any study of ancient narrative has come to considering its proximity to detective narrative has been with Helm, who, in his early study of the *Aithiopika* has argued, based upon its introductory scene, for its affinities with the modern detective novel, due to the delayed clarification of the scene.<sup>61</sup> His comparison was not further pursued for a long time, presumably because both genres have also enjoyed, for a long while, an ambivalent status. Building upon this rather unnoticed assumption, however, Winkler revived the interest in Heliodorus, when he argued that this novel “include[s] decipherment and reading small signs as tokens of a larger pattern” and that “every sentence is a clue.”<sup>62</sup> This present study, in principle, agrees with these aforementioned premises and the detective narrative insights of Winkler, which are explicit but not systematic or developed in length. Nonetheless, starting from a careful reading of the plot of the *Aithiopika* and a rather serious reading of detective stories and their interpretative predicament, it revises the vast majority of its assumptions.<sup>63</sup> In what follows, I hope to show that the *Aithiopika* demonstrates to a surprising degree many of the generic characteristics of detective narrative and provides an interesting parallel to the plot and the type of reader it seeks to create.

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<sup>60</sup> As Segal 1993, 25, puts it, the *Oedipus Rex* is concerned with “the meaning of existence, the individual’s alienation from the world and himself, the mystery of individual destiny, and incestuous attraction.”

<sup>61</sup> Helm 1948, 40: “*Ist es nicht, als ob wir ein moderne Kriminalroman vor uns hätten? Diese Eingang ist typisch für die ganze Darstellung. Der Leser tappt zunächst völlig im Dunkeln, bis Kalasiris ihn später über die Flucht des liebenden Paares aufklärt.*”

<sup>62</sup> Winkler 1982, 98, 151.

<sup>63</sup> For the serious critical implications of the detective novel see Kaemel 1971, 516–522; Kraçauer 1971, 343–356; Röder 1971, 523–527; Bloch 1980, 32–52; Brooks 1984, 25; Priestman 1991; Deleuze 2001, 5–10; Segal 2010, 153–251.

## 1.4 The Present Study

Heliodorus' narrative is invested from its very opening in puzzles and their decipherment. My analysis in Chapter 2 begins with the *Aithiopika*'s introductory scene and its fragmented focalization by examining the most predominant criticism of the scene, especially Winkler's interpretation, which tends towards a deconstructive reading. Like Winkler, I focus on the word *aporia* and its philosophical connotations, arguing that in Heliodorus *aporia* is about raising questions that await an answer, one which will, contrary to the early Socratic method, in fact come in the end. I then move on to discuss the specific narrative techniques employed by Heliodorus in his introduction, which lead not to a sense of a fractured, irrecoverable meaning, but to a narrative that prompts readers to uncover meaning with the help of clues that the narrator plants from the start of the novel. As later chapters will show, this is a strategy that continues throughout the *Aithiopika* as a means of helping readers to refine their skills of detection, since it helps the reader to judge carefully what they see rather than "rushing in" like the bandits.

Issues of narrative misdirection and morality cluster almost immediately after the introductory scene in the so-called novella of Knemon. This inset narrative is told to the protagonists of the story, Charikleia and Theagenes, by their fellow Greek and captor, a man by the name of Knemon. My analysis breaks down the storyline surrounding Knemon into two parts. The first concerns Knemon's narrative of his Athenian past, which is the object of Chapter 3, while the second examines the cover-up of his murder of Thisbe, the focus of Chapter 4.

In Chapter 3, I argue—against much existing scholarship—that this inset novella of Knemon bears a similarly significant narrative import to the introduction examined in Chapter 2. More specifically, I maintain that its purpose in the *Aithiopika* is to introduce the reader to questions of doubt and suspicion, with the ultimate purpose of pushing the reader to

re-evaluate and nuance her approach to reading, that is, to act as a detective, by reading for clues against seeing Knemon as victimized. This Heliodorean suspicion raised in the inset story itself operates as an interpretative key for reading the rest of Knemon's storyline, as well as the *Aithiopika* in general. As I will show, this constant doubting of beliefs is not just a narrative strategy to arouse delay or to rekindle interest, as has been argued to be the case,<sup>64</sup> but is integral to understanding Knemon's moral ambiguity.

Chapter 4 goes on to propose a radically new way of seeing Knemon, one which continues the analysis of him in Chapter 3 as a character of whom the reader should be suspicious. As we will see, Knemon is more than a cryptic storyteller; if we read closely, he appears to have premeditated and perpetrated the murder of Thisbe. The reader upon repeated reading is forced to see these lies, taking the clues that are left by Heliodorus and concluding that Thisbe's death is not an accident but a matter of foul play. From the start of the story, then, the reader must be careful not to take characters at face value (Knemon is often seen as a buffoon-like character), but to look for keys to unlocking the truth. However, Knemon's ability to convince others of his innocence through malicious lying also puts the reader in the position of seeing how to get away with a crime as he goes unpunished in the novel.

Thus, Chapters 3 and 4 propose that we convert our understanding of Knemon as a timid buffoon to someone that got away with the perfect crime. The aim of Chapter 5 is to re-evaluate another character's reputation, that of Kalasiris, as an honest man who is compelled to lie in order to protect his divine imperative. Scholars have noted the persistent mendacity of Kalasiris.<sup>65</sup> However, this chapter will present Kalasiris as much less devious than he might appear, challenging the standard interpretation of him as a crafty narrator who knows how to lie and instead seeing him as lying for what he considers to be noble causes. I argue

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<sup>64</sup> Winkler 1982, 95–103; Morgan 1989a, 99–113.

<sup>65</sup> Winkler 1982, 93–158; Sandy 1982b, 141–167; Futre Pinheiro 1987; Futre Pinheiro 1991b, 61–83; Baumbach 2008, 167–183.

that the inconsistencies in Kalasiris' stories are there to test Heliodorus' readers/detectives in that the apparently devious character might in fact be innocent. Kalasiris is therefore not the Odyssean narrator that many claim him to be; rather, he is in the novel to challenge the reader not to evaluate characters based on the easiest and most readily available interpretation. In a way, then, Kalasiris serves as a model for the red herring character that is so often a part of modern detective narrative.

Chapter 6 will examine Charikleia, the novel's principal heroine. I will look back to the novel's beginning and follow her more questionable actions all the way to the conclusion of the *Aithiopika*. In particular, this chapter analyzes the significant instances of her lying, while elaborating on her narrative motivations to show them as unlike either the malicious lying of Knemon or the noble, religiously-oriented mendacity of Kalasiris. I will adopt an anthropological perspective in demonstrating that Charikleia's lying—while often very persuasive—is of a “defensive” nature.<sup>66</sup> Charikleia does not lie for the sake of lying but rather as a means to protect herself and her lover Theagenes. The conclusion of Chapter 6 will also suggest that Charikleia's lying even anticipates female characters in modern detective fiction in their conventions and patterns.

By way of conclusion, my study will tackle the issue of the benefits gained by reading the *Aithiopika* as a detective narrative. I argue that the readers by searching for clues in the story can appreciate the reading experience of the *Aithiopika* as a contest between them and the author for a determinate reading. In this way, the narrative should be considered as very intricate, but also very rewarding, since the reader is required to return constantly and exclude or revisit possibilities. The attention to detail is heightened, but simultaneously these details can invite a reader to enjoy the irony of deciphering what seemed to be inconsistent. In that respect, I argue that the process of interpreting the *Aithiopika* is a process of reading

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<sup>66</sup> Winkler 1990, 129–161.

against the grain—a fallible yet self-corrective reading, which can offer a sense of truth to be discovered beneath the surface of the text.

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Ever since its modern rehabilitation by scholars such as Kermode, Lacan, Barthes, and Derrida, the detective novel has provoked new critical approaches to intertextual, psychoanalytic, and deconstructive criticism. Detective fiction has been used to illustrate the hermeneutic code,<sup>67</sup> the importance of closure in Western literature,<sup>68</sup> the way in which narratives tell stories,<sup>69</sup> and the way in which readers read them.<sup>70</sup> What is more, it has become the locus of a revived interest of analytic philosophy, both in terms of its method and of its complexity in the inventiveness in the problem of “fictional worlds.”<sup>71</sup> What remains to be argued is to what extent such concerns may be informed and revised if seen through the ancient lens of the *Aithiopika*. This study intends to contribute a new dimension to the existing study of both the ancient novel and modern detective narrative by arguing that in the *Aithiopika*, plot misdirection and character evolution are inextricably interwoven, setting a precedent for modern detective narration.

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<sup>67</sup> Barthes 1970, 75–77, 84–88.

<sup>68</sup> Kermode 1967, 19–21. The most telling influence in my thought from Classical scholarship on this issue of detection comes from Fowler 1989, 75–122; 1997. Fowler does not speak about detective narratives per se, but anticipates much of my thought-process in his examination of fiction at large. See also Carroll 2007, 1–15.

<sup>69</sup> Brooks 1984, 23–27.

<sup>70</sup> Prince 1980, 225–240; Prince 1982.

<sup>71</sup> Eco (1966) 1979, 144–172; Eco 1984; Sternberg 1987a; 1987b; Lamarque and Olsen 1994; Schank 1995; Wiśniewski 1995; Sternberg 2001, 115–122; Krausz 2002; Carroll 2007, 1–15; Swirski 2007; 2010; 2014, 115–138.

## CHAPTER 2

### HELIODORUS' INTRODUCTION: A PUZZLING CRIME SCENE

#### 2.1 Introduction

The previous chapter looked at the narrative strategies of modern detective fiction and suggested that we can identify similar narrative techniques in Heliodorus' *Aithiopika*. In this chapter, I will examine closely this ancient novel's introductory scene, as well as the narratological challenge in which it engages its readers, in order to demonstrate these narrative strategies are at work from the very beginning of the text.

I begin my analysis of Heliodorus' introduction by examining the predominant criticism of the scene, that of Winkler, which tends towards a deconstructive reading. Like Winkler, I focus on the word *aporia* and its philosophical connotations, arguing that in Heliodorus *aporia* is about raising questions that await an answer. I then move on to discussing the subtle clues planted by Heliodorus in his introduction. These clues lead not to a fractured, irrecoverable meaning, but to a puzzle that prompts readers to forgo following the hasty interpretation of the bandits and thus to consider more carefully the significance of the scene. This narrative strategy helps turn the readers into better "detectives" from the start—something that will serve them well throughout the rest of the novel.

#### 2.2 The Opening Scene

Heliodorus initiates us into his narrative with a famous scene, which despite its relative length should be quoted in full, due to the nuanced manner in which the narrator engages his reader in the fiction by laying out a puzzling scene of killings that demands interpretation:

Ἡμέρας ἄρτι διαγελώσης καὶ ἡλίου τὰς ἀκρωρείας καταυγάζοντος, ἄνδρες ἐν ὄπλοις ληστρικοῖς ὄρους ὑπερκύψαντες, ὃ δὴ κατ' ἐκβολὰς τοῦ Νείλου καὶ στόμα τὸ καλούμενον Ἡρακλεωτικὸν ὑπερτείνει, μικρὸν ἐπιστάντες τὴν ὑποκειμένην θάλατταν ὀφθαλμοῖς ἐπήρχοντο καὶ τῷ πελάγει τὸ πρῶτον τὰς ὄψεις ἐπαφέντες, ὡς οὐδὲν ἄγρας ληστρικής ἐπηγγέλλετο μὴ πλεόμενον, ἐπὶ τὸν πλησίον αἰγιαλὸν τῆς θέας κατήγοντο. Καὶ ἦν τὰ ἐν αὐτῷ τοιάδε· ὀκλὰς ἀπὸ πρυμνησίων ὄρμει τῶν μὲν ἐμπλεόντων χηρεύουσα, φόρτου δὲ πλήθουσα· καὶ τοῦτο παρῆν συμβάλλειν καὶ τοῖς πόρρωθεν· τὸ γὰρ ἄχθος ἄχρι καὶ ἐπὶ τρίτου ζωστήρος τῆς νεῶς τὸ ὕδωρ ἀνέθλιβεν. Ὁ δὲ αἰγιαλός, μεστὰ πάντα σωμάτων νεοσφαγῶν, τῶν μὲν ἄρδην ἀπολωλότων, τῶν δὲ ἡμιθνήτων καὶ μέρεσι τῶν σωμάτων ἔτι σπαιρόντων, ἄρτι πεπαῦσθαι τὸν πόλεμον κατηγοροῦντων. Ἦν δὲ οὐ πολέμου καθαροῦ τὰ φαινόμενα σύμβολα, ἀλλ' ἀναμείκτο καὶ εὐχάσις οὐκ εὐτυχοῦς ἀλλ' εἰς τοῦτο ληξάσης ἐλεεινὰ λείψανα, τράπεζαι τῶν ἐδεσμάτων ἔτι πλήθουσαι καὶ ἄλλαι πρὸς τῆ γῆ τῶν κειμένων ἐν χερσὶν ἀνθ' ὀπλῶν ἐνίοις παρὰ τὴν μάχην γεγενημέναι· ὁ γὰρ πόλεμος ἐσχεδιάστο· ἕτεροι δὲ ἄλλους ἐκρυπτον, ὡς ὄντο, ὑπελθόντας· κρατῆρες ἀνατετραμμένοι καὶ χειρῶν ἐνιοὶ τῶν ἐσχηκῶτων ἀπορρέοντες τῶν μὲν πινόντων τῶν δὲ ἀντὶ λίθων κεχρημένων· τὸ γὰρ αἰφνίδιον τοῦ κακοῦ τὰς χρείας ἐκαινοτόμει καὶ βέλεσι κεχρηῆσθαι τοῖς ἐκπώμασιν ἐδίδασκεν. Ἐκείντο δὲ ὁ μὲν πελέκει τετρωμένος, ὁ δὲ κάχληκι βεβλημένος αὐτόθεν ἀπὸ τῆς ῥαχίας πεπορισμένῳ, ἕτερος ζύλῳ κατεαγός, ὁ δὲ δαλῶ κατάφλεκτος, καὶ ἄλλος ἄλλως, οἱ δὲ πλεῖστοι βελῶν ἔργον καὶ τοξείας γεγενημένοι. Καὶ μυρίον εἶδος ὁ δαίμων ἐπὶ μικροῦ χωρίου διεσκεύαστο, οἶνον αἵματι μιαίνας, καὶ συμποσίους πόλεμον ἐπιστήσας, φόνους καὶ πότους, σπονδὰς καὶ σφαγὰς ἐπισυνάψας, καὶ τοιοῦτον θέατρον λησταῖς Αἰγυπτίοις ἐπιδείξας. Οἱ γὰρ κατὰ τὸ ὄρος θεωροῦς ἑαυτοῦς τῶνδε καθίσαντες οὐδὲ συνιέναι τὴν σκηνὴν ἐδύνατο, τοὺς μὲν ἐαλωκότας ἔχοντες, οὐδαμοῦ δὲ τοὺς κεκρατηκότας ὀρῶντες, καὶ τὴν μὲν νίκην λαμπρὰν, τὰ δὲ λάφυρα ἀσκύλευτα, καὶ τὴν ναῦν μόνην ἀνδρῶν μὲν ἔρημον τᾶλλα δὲ ἄσυλον ὥσπερ ὑπὸ πολλῶν φρουρουμένη καὶ ὥσπερ ἐν εἰρήνῃ σαλεύουσαν. Ἀλλὰ καίπερ τὸ γεγονός ὅ τι ποτέ ἐστὶν ἀποροῦντες, εἰς τὸ κέρδος ἔβλεπον καὶ τὴν λείαν ἑαυτοῦς οὖν νικητὰς ἀποδείξαντες ὄρμησαν. (Hld. 1.1.1–8)<sup>72</sup>

The day was just starting to smile, and the sun was just beginning to brighten the hilltops, when a group of men in pirate gear peered over the mountain that overlooks the place where the Nile flows into the sea at the mouth that men call the Heracleotic. They stood there for a moment, scanning the expanse of the sea beneath them: first they gazed out over the ocean, but as there was nothing sailing there that held out hope of spoil and plunder, they cast their gaze to the beach nearby. This is what was present there: a merchant ship, moored by its stern, empty of crew, but laden with freight. This much could be surmised even from a distance, for the weight of her cargo forced the water up to the third line of boards on the ship's side. The beach was full of newly slain bodies, some of them quite dead, others half-alive and still twitching, which indicated that the fighting had only just ended. The appearance provided signs of no proper battle, but amongst the carnage were the miserable remnants of festivities that had come to this unhappy end. There were tables still set with food, and others upset on the ground, held in dead men's hands; in the fray, they had served some as weapons, for this had been an impromptu conflict; beneath other tables, men had crawled in the vain hope of hiding there. There were wine bowls upturned, and some slipping from the hands

<sup>72</sup> All texts follow Rattenbury and Lumb (1935-43) 1960.

that held them; some had been drinking from them, others using them like stones, for the suddenness of the catastrophe had caused objects to be put to strange, new uses and taught men to use drinking vessels as missiles. There they lay, here a man felled by an axe, there another struck down by a stone picked up then and there from the beach; here a man battered to death with a club, there another burned to death with a brand from the fire. Various were the forms of their deaths, but most were the victims of arrows and archery. The demon had contrived a myriad of sights within a little space. Wine and blood mixed, symposium with battle, murder and drinking, libations and slaughters—it put forth such a display for the Egyptian bandits. They seated themselves along the mountain as spectators, but they could not put the scene together. On the one hand, they captured the losers, but, on the other hand, they could not see anywhere the winners. The victory was illustrious, but the booty was untouched. They saw the ship being abandoned by men and the rest being intact, as if it were guarded by many men and moving lightly as though in tranquility. However, even though they were puzzled about the nature of the event, they were looking towards benefit and the loot; having appointed themselves as winners, they rushed forward.<sup>73</sup>

The *in medias res* introduction is startlingly brusque.<sup>74</sup> There is no invocation, no prologue, no clear sense of who is speaking, no definitive time-space besides a location, the Nile.

Measured by the standards of the extant Greek novels, this introduction is too sudden and too baffling. All the reader knows is that a massacre has occurred—and no one knows who did it or why.

Scholarship on this scene of apparent carnage has moved in different directions regarding its interpretation.<sup>75</sup> All of these directions, however, may be traced back to Winkler's seminal paper on "The mendacity of Kalasiris," which sowed the seeds for most subsequent Heliodorean scholarship.<sup>76</sup> In that paper, Winkler performed a principally deconstructive, carefully reasoned argument by presenting close readings of the passages in

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<sup>73</sup> All translations of Heliodorus' text are my own. I have consulted, for better effect, translations of the *Aithiopika* in several European languages: Reymer 1943; Rattenbury and Lumb (1935-43) 1960; Lamb 1961; Harsberg and Hägg 1978; Gasse 1985; Vox 1987; Sideri 1997; most importantly, however, Morgan 2008a.

<sup>74</sup> For a summary of all the points made so far on the scene see Temmermann 2014, 213–214. On the cinematic aspects see Winkler 2000–2001, 161–184. Grethlein 2015, 265–270, also comments on the scene. For the importance of introductory scenes in ancient narrative and especially in the ancient novel see Kahane and Laird 2001, 3–17.

<sup>75</sup> Winkler 1982, 93–158. Modern scholarship on the introduction includes Bühler 1976, 177–85; Marino 1990, 203–218; Birchall 1995; Winkler 2000–2001, 161–184; Whitmarsh 2005, 87–104; Telò 2011, 581–613; Whitmarsh 2011.

<sup>76</sup> Winkler 1982, 93–158.

which Heliodorus displays deviations from a main narratological line in order both to manipulate the sense of suspense in the story and to delay the investment of coherent meanings in the narrative. His main thesis is that “Heliodoros’ techniques of displaying incomplete cognition are designed to heighten our awareness of the game-like structure of intelligibility involved in reading a romance.”<sup>77</sup> The main thrust of this argument is based upon two chief points. The primary one rests on the supposedly devious personality of Kalasiris, whose manipulative character is directly reflected (according to Winkler) in an equally devious unfolding of his telling of the story. For Winkler, Kalasiris displays a remarkable “Protean” finesse in transforming the versions of his story to fit his respective audience’s diverse needs.<sup>78</sup> To this end, he chooses to give, at different times, very different versions of his personal story and travels to Knemon, Charikles, the Egyptian pirates, and Charikleia.<sup>79</sup> Although this point is sensibly argued and textually supported, it reads Kalasiris’ character a bit too metafictionally, as Chapter 5 will show. However, Winkler’s paper contains a second, more ambiguous point, which is based on the *Aithiopika*’s introductory paragraph and particularly on two phrases in the latter part of the section cited above: “the bandits could not put the scene together...puzzled about the nature of the event” (οὐδὲ συνιέναι τὴν σκηνὴν ἐδύναντο...τὸ γεγονός ὃ τι ποτέ ἐστὶν ἀποροῦντες). Drawing on these two phrases, Winkler assumes that Heliodorus proceeds right from the beginning in an “aporetic style of exposition” and goes so far as to say that the *Aithiopika* is “an act of pure play, yet a play which rehearses vital processes by which we must live in reality— interpretation, reading, and making a provisional sense of things.”<sup>80</sup> This confusion which the pirates show suggests that the readers are also supposed to suspend their understanding

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<sup>77</sup> Winkler 1982, 101.

<sup>78</sup> Hld 2.24.4: εὔρηκα γὰρ σε κατὰ τὸν Πρωτέα τὸν Φάριον, οὐ κατ’ αὐτὸν τρεπόμενον εἰς ψευδομένην καὶ ρέουσαν ὄψιν ἀλλά με παραφέρειν πειρώμενον.

<sup>79</sup> Kalasiris’ story-telling dominates the narrative from Hld. 2.21.3 up to 5.34.2.

<sup>80</sup> Winkler 1982, 97, 158.

throughout the narrative.<sup>81</sup> What is more, this suspension signals for Winkler an overall call for interpreting the rest of the *Aithiopika* as an open-ended, fluid narrative that proceeds in a mainly “hermeneutic” manner and excludes any certainties on all levels.<sup>82</sup>

If we interpret *aporia* in light of this postmodern tradition, exemplified by Winkler and consolidated over the past thirty years, which takes *aporia* to mean cognitive dissonance, semantic unreliability, and, hence, the inability to form lasting conclusions,<sup>83</sup> we end up understanding the introductory scene and in fact the entire novel as a self-referential commentary, primarily concerned with the openness of interpretation and with an agenda closely connected to the constant deferral of meaning. Such a line of interpretation has not only become the *communis opinio* among Heliodorus’ experts so far; more than that, it has colored the reading of most ancient novels in general.<sup>84</sup>

This interpretation is tempting or even convenient for establishing Heliodorus as a contemporary figure with a postmodern outlook. It is true that Heliodorus is very aware of the self-reflectiveness that artistic composition requires, and this is obvious throughout his narrative.<sup>85</sup> Moreover, in support of the proponents of a postmodern aporetic reading, Heliodorus does actually use the word twice in the first two paragraphs.<sup>86</sup> However, this interpretation of *aporia* in its postmodern reception may not apply directly to all classical cases. *Aporia* and the aporetic element has a long history in Classical literature, which is mainly *not* one of self-cancelling logic. Smyth in his *Greek Grammar* suggests the more

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<sup>81</sup> Winkler 1982, 98.

<sup>82</sup> Winkler 1982, 99.

<sup>83</sup> For *aporia* as paralysis in the *Meno* see Pl. *Men.* 80c6–d1: μὲν ἡ νάρκη αὐτῆ ναρκῶσα οὕτω καὶ τοὺς ἄλλους ποιεῖ ναρκαῖν, ἔοικα αὐτῇ· εἰ δὲ μή, οὐ. οὐ γὰρ εὐπορῶν αὐτὸς τοὺς ἄλλους ποιῶ ἀπορεῖν, ἀλλὰ παντὸς μᾶλλον αὐτὸς ἀπορῶν οὕτως καὶ τοὺς ἄλλους ποιῶ ἀπορεῖν. See also Derrida 1993 for his influential interpretation of this passage.

<sup>84</sup> See e.g. Winkler 1982; Nimis 1996; 1999; Whitmarsh 2011; Olsen 2012.

<sup>85</sup> For the most thorough discussion of Heliodorus’ self-reflexiveness see Lowe 2000, 249–258, including a very illuminating diagram for scenes and narrative levels at 252–253.

<sup>86</sup> Hld. 1.1.8: τὸ γεγονός ὃ τι ποτέ ἐστὶν ἀποροῦντες; 1.2.1 Θέαμα προσπίπτει τῶν προτέρων ἀπορώτερον.

standard interpretation of *aporia* is as “an artifice by which a speaker feigns doubts as to where he shall begin or end or what he shall do or say.”<sup>87</sup> Smyth’s interpretation emphasizes not the feigned confusion of the narrator, but the effect that the apparent confusion has upon the audience, which takes us back to a long-standing rhetorical tradition of orators posing as ignorant without actually being so in order to appear cognitively on the same level as the audience and thus a more reliable and trustworthy figure.<sup>88</sup> In this introductory scene, the bandits’ *aporia*—though clearly not rhetorical on their part—cannot but contaminate the narrative itself, bringing the readers into the scene in such a way that they are pushed towards seeing the carnage through the bandits’ eyes. If *aporia* is considered from this perspective, Heliodorus can be understood as starting his narrative not by simply inducing an interpretative standstill or an impasse. Not only does he give us a truly hard puzzle that makes his readers into interpreters of the confused crime-scene before them; he also seems to suggest through the use of *aporia* that the readers align their interpretations with those of the bandits.<sup>89</sup>

However, the readers are not meant to identify with the bandits, who are concerned in the end only with plunder (κέρδος) and not with figuring out what happened. The narrator provides several clues in the passage, including marked vocabulary and multiple focalizations, which careful readers will pick up on so that they do not fall into the easy trap of seeing the scene from the uncritical perspective of the bandits.

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<sup>87</sup> Smyth and Messing 1956, 674, §3014. The examples used come from Luke 16.3 and Demosthenes 18.129.

<sup>88</sup> See Poulakos 1993, 3; Poulakos 1995; Kennedy 2011.

<sup>89</sup> It is a puzzle, but not a “riddle,” as Morgan 1994 puts it. Riddles refer obliquely to the subject by exploring the boundaries of figurative language with open-ended suggestions, whereas puzzles require a high level of inductive reasoning aptitude, the ability to recognize patterns, and, most importantly, a very specific, finite mode of solutions. See also Aristotle’s definition of the riddle/enigma in *Poet.* 1458a27–28. (I owe this reference to Professor Janko.)

Let us first focus on Heliodorus' employment of a rather charged word in the history of interpretation, *symbolon*.

καὶ τοῦτο παρῆν **συμβάλλειν** καὶ τοῖς πόρρωθεν· [...] Ἦν δὲ οὐ πολέμου καθαροῦ τὰ φαινόμενα **σύμβολα**, ἀλλ' ἀναμέμικτο καὶ εὐωχίας οὐκ εὐτυχοῦς ἀλλ' εἰς τοῦτο ληξάσης ἔλεεινὰ λείψανα. (Hld 1.1.3–4)

This much could be **surmised** even from a distance. [...] The appearance provided **signs** of no proper battle, but amongst the carnage were the miserable remnants of festivities that had come to this unhappy end.

The choice of this specific word carries interpretative baggage that has gone unnoticed so far. Heliodorus starts his narrative by providing two cognates of the word, *συμβάλλειν* and *σύμβολα*. In the first case, *συμβάλλειν* is used by Heliodorus to mean “surmise” and suggests that a few assumptions can be drawn for the few available, visual clues.<sup>90</sup> This use of the verb as “to infer,” though marginal, is present in texts of the classical era as early as in Pindar.<sup>91</sup> However, and counterintuitive as it may seem, the cognate noun, *σύμβολον*, is not used in classical antiquity as a word meaning “inference.” On the contrary, the conclusion reached by Müri in his philological study of *symbolon* and repeated emphatically by both Coulter and Struck still holds true: in the classical period, the word “symbol” is used almost exclusively to mean the token that authenticates a contract.<sup>92</sup>

However, given the importance of *symbolon* in the later (and especially Neoplatonic) legacy, it is likely that Heliodorus makes a self-conscious choice here by aligning with the Late Antique exegetical tradition.<sup>93</sup> This tradition uses exegesis to reduce contingent literary examples to more abstract wholes in search of unified, universal messages.<sup>94</sup> Heliodorus thus

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<sup>90</sup> For an interesting study of visibility as a source of conflict see Goldhill 2001, 154–94.

<sup>91</sup> See LSJ s.v. *συμβάλλω*, III.3. esp. *συμβαλεῖν τι*, Pi. N. 11.33.

<sup>92</sup> See Müri 1976, 1–44; Coulter 1974, 18, and Struck 2004, 5. See Struck 2004 more generally for the bibliography on the subject, which is very rich and escapes the scope of this chapter.

<sup>93</sup> Philo remarks that a Pythagorean “speaks enigmatically through a symbol” (*αἰνίττεται διὰ συμβόλου*), conveying a message equivalent to an oracle (*χρησμοῦ*). Cf. Philo, *Quod omnis probus liber sit*, 2.4.

<sup>94</sup> See Copeland and Struck 2010, 8–9.

uses this connotation of the word in his introduction to brand his text as one of a postclassical, allegorical tradition.<sup>95</sup> Heliodorus' place in this tradition is important to acknowledge, because for the Neoplatonists symbolic interpretation would suggest a hierarchy of interpretations, namely, the hermeneutic journey towards a single, unified interpretation as part of the path to the good. When Heliodorus uses *symbolon* so markedly at the beginning of his text, he is prompting the reader to see the text itself as symbolic, that is, full of multiple paths of interpretation that eventually, through close reading, lead to one preferable solution—a narrative strategy that bears remarkable resemblance to that of detective fiction.

At the very start of the novel, the reader is presented with two paths of interpretation: that of the bandits, who are unconcerned with uncovering what happened, and that of the narrator, who appears much more observant of the details of the scene. Determining which focalization to follow is essential for grasping Heliodorus' narrative technique in this opening scene. Focalization is the viewing of the events of the *fabula*, and the focalizer is an individual *voice* that gives its own perspective on the story, one which provides a certain type of focus.<sup>96</sup> In our story, however, the narrative mode is ambiguous.<sup>97</sup> For instance, the narrative and its focalization is most ambiguous at the start:

μικρὸν ἐπιστάντες τὴν ὑποκειμένην θάλατταν ὀφθαλμοῖς ἐπήρχοντο καὶ τῷ πελάγει τὸ πρῶτον τὰς ὄψεις ἐπαφέντες, ὡς οὐδὲν ἄγρας ληστρικῆς ἐπηγγέλλετο μὴ πλεόμενον, ἐπὶ τὸν πλησίον αἰγιαλὸν τῇ θεᾷ κατήγοντο. Καὶ ἦν τὰ ἐν αὐτῷ τοιάδε· ὀκκὰς ἀπὸ πρυμνησίων ὄρμει τῶν μὲν ἐμπλεόντων χηρεύουσα, φόρτου δὲ πλήθουσα· καὶ τοῦτο παρῆν συμβάλλειν καὶ τοῖς πόρρωθεν· τὸ γὰρ ἄχθος ἄχρι καὶ ἐπὶ τρίτου ζωστῆρος τῆς νεῶς τὸ ὕδωρ ἀνέθλιβεν. (Hld. 1.1.1–2)

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<sup>95</sup> For the point of Heliodorus and allegory see Most 2007, 160–167.

<sup>96</sup> De Jong 2014, 55.

<sup>97</sup> See Bartsch 1989, 45–47; Whitmarsh 2002, 117; Whitmarsh 2011, 156, following Bühler 1976. Winkler 1982, 95–106, explicitly calls the bandits “aporetic focalizers.” See also Telò 2011, 583: “the pirates serve as the self-reflexive image of an author faced with the challenge of composing at the culminating moment of the novelistic tradition.”

They stood there for a moment, scanning the expanse of the sea beneath them: first they gazed out over the ocean, but as there was nothing sailing there that held out hope of spoil and plunder, they cast their gaze to the beach nearby. This is what was present there: a merchant ship, moored by its stern, empty of crew, but laden with freight. This much could be surmised even from a distance, for the weight of her cargo forced the water up to the third line of boards on the ship's side.

We appear to have what is traditionally known as an omniscient narrator, or what is more technically known as an overt-external primary narrator-focalizer, which gives one specific focalization, the authorial. The bandits are possible, internal focalizers, as the narrator explicitly mentions what they “first...gazed at” (τὸ πρῶτον τὰς ὄψεις ἐπαφέντες) from the cliff. There seems to be a possible switch, however, when the narrator starts talking about the carnage. For instance, “[t]his is what was present there” ([καὶ ἦν τὰ ἐν αὐτῷ τοιάδε) might indicate a switch of focalization from that of the bandits to that of the narrator. The question then becomes not only whether or not the bandits are focusing on the objects discussed but also whether or not they interpret them in the same way as the narrator. As the novel develops, it would certainly not seem that they are a very perceptive group.<sup>98</sup> It might be, then, that the scholarship on the *Aithiopika* is in error to describe the bandits as focalizers at this point. Claiming that the focalizers are the bandits does not do justice to Heliodorus' technique, which tries to create a balance between an omniscient narrator and a possible focalizer, without a clear indication as to when the perspective might be switching between the two or which one the reader should follow.

It might be helpful at this point to take a step back and consider how scholars have interpreted instances of ambivalent focalization in literature more broadly. The common interpretation of indirectly transmitted messages follows two standard routes. The first route supposes that the author chooses indirect delivery in order to supply the message with some distance and thus to allow room for interpretation. This is a rather postmodern reading of the

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<sup>98</sup> Heliodorus undercuts the bandits' interpretative authority repeatedly, but most emphatically at 1.24.

ambivalence of signs, as it practically considers all messages as skewed, only with a difference of degree. This view's most persuasive proponent is Kermode, but the idea at its core is Nietzschean, arguing for perspectivism.<sup>99</sup> The alternative interpretation of indirectness points in exactly the opposite direction: some messages are skewed only to be contrasted with other messages that are straightforward and possibly preferable.<sup>100</sup> This way of reading signs puts the interpreter on a hermeneutic journey towards a single, unified meaning—or, in the case of detective fiction, towards solving the crime.

In my analysis, it is this second interpretation that appears to flow from the text itself and which seems more pertinent to a reading of the *Aithiopika*. I contend, and will argue in more detail in the following chapters, that Heliodorus brings up distorted signs and messages at the start only to juxtapose them with positive evaluations that allow careful readers to discover important elements of the narrative that they may have missed. In other words, no sign is intended to be seen as empty. The novelist Paul Auster has put this notion very concisely in claiming that “behind every story the reader supposes authorial consciousness.”<sup>101</sup>

After a closer look at the text, we can see how the narrator begins to unravel the initial ambiguity of perspective in the novel at the close of the introduction. There, the narrator claims that:

Ἀλλὰ καίπερ τὸ γεγονὸς ὃ τι ποτέ ἐστὶν ἀποροῦντες, εἰς τὸ κέρδος ἔβλεπον καὶ τὴν λείαν· ἑαυτοὺς οὖν νικητὰς ἀποδείξαντες ὄρμησαν. (Hld 1.1.8)

Even though [the bandits] were puzzled about the nature of the event, they were looking towards benefit and the loot; having appointed themselves as winners, they rushed forward.

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<sup>99</sup> Nietzsche (1878) 1972, 56; Kermode 1967; (1974) 1983, 175–196; 1978, 144–158.

<sup>100</sup> Lamberton 1986; Sternberg 1992, 463–541; Krausz 2002; Swirski 2007; 2010; 2014, 115–138.

<sup>101</sup> Auster 1985, 2, in response to Foucault 1977, 113–138. For further analysis of the authorial functions in the anti-detective novel see Russell 1990, 71–84; Irwin 1994.

This ending makes it difficult to say that the bandits were the focalizers of the previous interpretation of the scene by the narrator, since they are in fact “puzzled about the nature of the event.” This confusion does not seem to fit well with the controlled and perceptive discussion of the scene at the shore that the narrator gives. Although we as readers might have thought that the bandits were the focalizers, these words should make us wary of such an interpretation.

It is important to see this disconnect between the narrator and the bandits because it calls into question the bandits’ uncritical perspective, concerned as they are only for plunder. Let us look again at the very last sentence: “having appointed themselves as winners, they rushed forward” (ἑαυτοὺς οὖν νικητὰς ἀποδείξαντες ὄρμησαν). The passage thus ends most emphatically: ὄρμησαν. The verb ὀρμάω has a befuddling variety of recorded meanings.<sup>102</sup> Nonetheless, the main connotation of the verb in its intransitive form entails a widely accepted meaning of spontaneity and what could be also taken to be as plain rashness. The bandits do not start moving cautiously towards the desired goal—they hasten. Could that be taken as implicit authorial criticism of the bandits’ uncritical perspective? Three paragraphs later, at Hld. 1.4.3, the criticism of the bandits will become absolutely explicit: “Likewise, the strength of noble birth and the sight of beauty knows how to subdue even a bandit’s *ethos*, and is able to overpower even rougher ones.”<sup>103</sup> The bandits, despite the fact that they were puzzled by the apparent events, do not stop in the face of their interpretative difficulty, but rather look to what is personally profitable (εἰς τὸ κέρδος ἔβλεπον). They base their own assumptions upon their intellectual or emotional needs and proceed to action. The construction of meaning and puzzles do not stop them, so to speak, at the level of abstract

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<sup>102</sup> For uses of ὀρμάω as “to rush headlong” or “to hasten” see Hom. *Il.* 4.335; A. *Pr.* 339; Phld. *Ir.* 93W.

<sup>103</sup> Οὕτως εὐγενείας ἔμφασις καὶ κάλλους ὄψις καὶ ληστρικὸν ἦθος οἶδεν ὑποτάττειν καὶ κρατεῖν καὶ τῶν ἀρχμηροτέρων δύναται.

interpretation, since the bandits move towards their own end, as well as their own interpretation.

The abrupt *in medias res* introduction, complicated by the confused focalization, forces the reader to be very attentive to its details—something that Heliodorus relies upon to embed the opening narrative with “clues” that are only understood as such upon further reading of the novel. Heliodorus’ craft in sowing several seeds in his narrative is incontestable.<sup>104</sup> This could be attested in the introductory paragraph, as well, by a yet undetected, teasing example. Heliodorus portrays there in quite some detail the various, gruesome ways of death and yet includes the seemingly insignificant fact that most deaths happened due to arrows and archery. These small details will prove to be important for the reader to remember for solving the murder of the people on the beach, as they will be picked again several books later in Book 5, when Charikleia is proven to be the only one with a bow and a mastery of archery—and eventually is exposed to the reader as the one responsible for the massacre.<sup>105</sup>

It is not just the way in which Heliodorus introduces clues into his narrative from the start that prompts us towards a close reading of his text. It is also the fact that he seems to pass judgment on the bandits who rush to conclusions (and to the plunder). Another example, again latent in the introduction, may be derived from Heliodorus’ overt effort to present apparently haphazard elements in his description. For instance, he mentions in 1.1.4 that the battle was done on the spot (ὁ πόλεμος ἐσχεδιάστω). The choice of the verb σκεδιάζω in this case is very peculiar, since it is standardly interpreted as “to sketch, to provide rough lines or

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<sup>104</sup> Lowe 2000, 249–265, is the standard locus for this interpretation.

<sup>105</sup> Hld. 5.32.3–4: Οὐ μὴν οὐδὲ Θεαγένης ἀπόλεμος ἦν οὐδὲ ἡ Χαρίκλεια, τὰ γὰρ συγκείμενα πράττοντες ὁ μὲν ξιφῆρης θατέρω τὰ πρῶτα μέρει συνεμάχει παντάπασιν ἐνθουσιῶντι προσεικώς, ἡ δὲ ὡς συνερρωγότα τὸν πόλεμον εἶδεν ἀπὸ τῆς νεῶς ἐτόξευεν εὐσκοπά τε καὶ μόνου τοῦ Θεαγένους φειδόμενα. See Helm 1948, 40; Winkler 1982, 98–99.

to draft, to improvise, to invent stories.”<sup>106</sup> At first sight, then, Heliodorus’ opening frame appears to be one of hurried, rough strokes towards the effect of immediacy: the reader is to read the text as if she were present there and then. This might seem to suppose that the narrator and thereby the reader should identify with the bandits and therefore adopt a here-and-now confused viewpoint of what is going on. However, as suggested above, the insistence by the narrator on the bandit’s rashness should perhaps make us *more* suspicious of the narrative’s level of design and in fact lead us in the opposite direction: “If one looks closer,” Heliodorus seems to be suggesting, “you will find what is going on.” All these details are thus present here not merely for the purposes of raising *l’effet du réel*.<sup>107</sup> They are details that will be picked up again as late as in the fifth book, this time slightly changed, to explain Kalasiris’ flight from the battle scene and the identities of the real killers, that is, Theagenes and especially Charikleia.<sup>108</sup> There is nothing random in this story, not the slightest detail.

Why then have multiple scholars interpreted the scene as being purposefully aporetic? One reason is that scholars have read the novel’s first scene as mere spectacle, that is, without trying to identify possibilities for a running commentary on Heliodorus’ behalf. Long before Winkler, in fact, scholars stressed the spectacular nature of the introductory scene. In 1912, for instance, Wolff contended that Heliodorus “will tell as little as possible; he declines the role of the omniscient novelist speaking of his men and women in the third person; they must do their own talking.”<sup>109</sup> Several decades later, a similar assumption was shared by Feuillâtre, when he claimed that “the author’s imagination appears to move readily in a world of

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<sup>106</sup> For the aforementioned meanings see respectively Plb. 22.9.12; Pl. *Sp.* 387e; Anaxandr. 15.3; D.H. 1.7; Plb 12.4.4.; D.S. 1.23.

<sup>107</sup> Barthes (1968) 1989, 84–89.

<sup>108</sup> Hld. 5.32.5–6.

<sup>109</sup> Wolff (1912) 1961, 4. See also Schissel von Fleschenburg 1913, 83–114.

spectacles: theatre, pantomime, circus.”<sup>110</sup> Building further upon this line of analysis, Bartsch consolidated the understanding of Heliodorus as an artist presenting the world as a static picture. For her, the introductory scene is a prime example of a painted picture, where the stillness of the picture defies any attempt to interpret; Heliodorus’s description, unlike Achilles Tatius, when it concerns interpretation, “offers nothing.”<sup>111</sup> Here, however, the scene is described almost as if it were painted: a stillness lies over everything, all movement is arrested, Charikleia (for it is she) sits on her rock like a statue, until finally Theagenes speaks and interrupts the inertness.

In short, for Bartsch, while the readers are trying to figure out the introductory scene, they are “made aware of the possibility, even probability, of incorrect exegesis—if the pirates can be misled, so can they.”<sup>112</sup> However, the reader, according to Bartsch, has only access to such a conclusion by inference in abstract, and not by paying attention to a subtle, but existent, nominal commentary by the author himself, which may limit and restrict the overall openness of the hermeneutic process. She goes as far as to say, in fact, that “the descriptive passages in these novels lay bare the illusory power of the readers to make of the text what they will.”<sup>113</sup> In that respect, for Bartsch, the detailed description of the introduction—picked up later on both in Thyamis’ and Petosiris’ battle, along with Theagenes’ athletic contests—is meant to arouse individual, emotive responses, namely, not one set of emotions, but two, often conflicting sets of emotions that undermine any single interpretation of the scene.<sup>114</sup>

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<sup>110</sup> Feuillâtre 1966, 15, cited in Bartsch 1989, 109.

<sup>111</sup> Bartsch 1989, 46: “Here, where Achilles offers a young man telling a story in the place of a clearly identified interpretation, Heliodorus offers nothing.”

<sup>112</sup> Bartsch 1989, 47–48.

<sup>113</sup> Bartsch 1989, 39.

<sup>114</sup> Bartsch 1989, 15–18, 109–115. See Schlissel von Fleschenburg 1913, 83–114; Mittelstadt 1967, 752–761; Schor 1980, 169, stating how ecphrastic descriptions tend to work for the interpreter “the lure of narcissistic identification only makes it more difficult for the interpreter to keep his distance from the interpretant.” See also Schor 1980, 170: “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.”

Description is there to encode different feelings, in other words, and the priority of ecphrasis, Bartsch contends, is to show, not to tell.<sup>115</sup>

Yet this interpretative thread that renders the opening into an emotive picture (even a fractured one) does not account for the complex nature of Heliodorus' introductory scene and its implications for the reader. As we have seen, the text in front of us is more dynamic than a picture; in fact, this is part of why it is a text, and not a picture.<sup>116</sup> The dynamics behind the textual medium lie in the fact that the text asks for meticulous attention to every cognitive detail. The reader is given a picture, certainly, but she is also presented with directions from the narrative which may suggest something more than a merely emotive or personal response to the work. An emotive response is not out of the question, of course, given that the description presented is one of a blood-bath, with vivid pictures of death. It is true, moreover, that emotive responses can never be excluded from a search for deciphering and generally from any cognitive quest, but they should not be considered as first-order authorial choices in a passage whose ambiguous wording invites the reader to examine the text more deeply, as prompted by two elements of the introduction examined above, namely, the use of *symbolon* and the fairly explicit judgment by the narrator of the bandits' rush for plunder.<sup>117</sup>

### 2.3 Conclusion

In this chapter, we have examined the initial narrative frame with which Heliodorus introduces his readers to his narrative universe. Who created all this carnage? Whose interpretation should we trust, the bandits' or the narrator's? This ambiguity helps the reader

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<sup>115</sup> Bartsch 1989, 109–143. See also Rohde (1876) 1914, 450: “A sense of a pictorial effect in the very effectively arranged pictures at the beginning of the novel”; Winkler 2000–2001, 161–184; Whitmarsh 2005, 87–104.

<sup>116</sup> Chatman 1980, 221–240.

<sup>117</sup> Harlan 1965, 58: “in the rhetorical literature of the second century A.D. the evocation of a fictitious allegorical scene was still a routine device.” See also Beaujour 1981, 32–33. For a general overview of allegorical impact and quest for potential meaning see also Casel (1919) 1967; Boys-Stones 2003.

to question the narrative, especially concerning from what perspective the *fabula* is told. It would seem that choosing the bandits is the obvious choice; however, that does not necessarily make it the right one. The above examination of the text has shown that the situation is much less clear: the end of the opening suggests that the bandits are not the best or sole focalizers for the previous description of the scene. If you choose the author's latent but present perspective, you are able to pass judgment against the rashness of the bandits and perhaps look more closely—as the narrator does—at the details of the carnage.

In action, just as much in interpretation, not all detectives have the same hermeneutic patience. Some will rush, while others will take their time in the act of interpretation. There is not one road to take, either. One must take time to think through the puzzle and see it from multiple perspectives if one is to arrive at the unifying meaning of the text and thereby sharpen one's ability to interpret symbols in life as well as in fiction.

My point is that Heliodorus, besides showing, does a lot of telling, a lot of naming which may be taken further as arguing or pointing towards specific interpretations—nuanced interpretations but ones that are decipherable. As we have seen so far, this introductory scene has been mainly interpreted through the lens of its visuality and its affinity to a (motion) picture, which leaves the readers at a visual loss. This line of interpretation is perfectly understandable: all narratives in all media are submitted to a broader structuring, an organization mainly dependent upon its temporal conditions, which allows narratives to offer a version of a narrated story to readers or audiences with which they tend to identify, regardless of the medium. However, because of the fact that narrative itself is a deep structure and can be understood regardless of its medium, the textual element of the *Aithiopika*'s introduction is perhaps underplayed. Unlike in films and visual arts, where description and presentation prevails, the dominant mode of the *Aithiopika* is textual, that is, nominal and assertive, which allows in putting a puzzle together that has some sense of finiteness and

intentionality, more so than a film or a painting.<sup>118</sup> Heliodorus does not just show here: he tells, as well, with a rather evocative and revealing commentary. Hence, like most authors, he offers guidance and clues as to how we may treat his work. This might be perceived as a way to antagonize readers' expectations, who have an instinctual tendency to identify with the viewing/acting agents, regardless of their perceptual ability.. In Heliodorus, viewpoints inhere certain limitations, intrinsic to its medium, which should be acknowledged and are to be kept distinct from other, visual counterparts. However, these limitations are also the very strengths that invite the reader to triumph over these textual clues and provide a most rich readerly experience which approximates the detective experience, both regarding its challenging but rewarding nature and its attention to detail.

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<sup>118</sup> Chatman 1980, 128. His argument has been, thanks to Professor T.W.J. Mitchell, very influential on me. It maintains that in the visual element (painting, sculpture, film), the number of details is "indeterminable," allowing film theorists to speak of overspecification of details (*Überbestimmtheit*). However, with the textual medium, the author is presented with the ability to name the attribute, rather than simply describe by showing, and hoping for identification with the visual clue. See also Chatman 1978 for a survey of narrativity in its different media. For the issue of intentionality the debate is large and heated. I still rely on the rich discussion of Iseminger 1992.

## CHAPTER 3

### THE HERMENEUTICS OF ΥΠΟΝΟΙΑ IN THE NOVELLA OF KNEMON

Let us not forget that the motives behind human actions are usually infinitely more complicated and various than we assume them to be. [...] [D]o as we will, we are now under the absolute necessity of devoting to this secondary character in our story rather more space and attention than we originally had intended.

—Dostoyevsky, *The Idiot*<sup>119</sup>

#### 3.1 Introduction

In his introduction to his critical edition of the *Aithiopika* in 1804, Koraës states the following about the novella of Knemon:

Τὸ αὐτὸ λέγω καὶ περὶ τῆς ἠθοποιΐας τῶν Αἰθιοπικῶν. Ἐάν, ὡς διδάσκει ὁ Ἀριστοτέλης, τὰ ἦθη πρέπει νὰ παριστάνονται τοιαῦτα, ὅποια ἀρμόζουν εἰς τὸν λέγοντα, ἤγουν νὰ ἦναι κατάλληλα εἰς τὸ γένος, εἰς τὴν ἡλικίαν, εἰς τὸ ἐπάγγελμα, εἰς τὸ πάθος, καὶ εἰς τὰς ἄλλας περιστάσεις, εἰς ὅσας εὐρίσκεται ὁ λέγων ἢ πράττων τὴν ὥραν ἐκείνην, ἐάν (λέγει) τοιαῦτα πρέπει νὰ ἦναι τὰ ἦθη, εὐδοκιμεῖ καὶ κατὰ τοῦτον ὁ Ἡλιόδωρος. Τίς ἠδύνατο νὰ παραστήσει πιθανώτερον τὴν ἡλίθιον εὐπιστίαν τοῦ Ἀριστίππου, κοινήν εἰς ὅλους τοὺς γηραλέους, ὅσοι λαμβάνουσι γυναίκας νέας; τίς τὸν ἄθεσμον ἔρωτα τῆς Δημαινέτης; τὴν νεανικὴν ἀπλότητα τοῦ Κνήμωνος καὶ τῆς θεραπαινίδος Θίσβης τὰς πανουργίας; (Koraës 1804, *Ἐπιστολὴ πρὸς Ἀλέξανδρον Βασιλείου*, κζ–κη)

I say the same thing about the creation of character in the *Aithiopika*. For if, as Aristotle teaches, characters should be represented such that would be appropriate for the speaker, namely, to be appropriate for the family lineage, age, profession, emotional composition, and all other circumstances in which the speaker or doer happens to be, at a given time, if he suggests that the disposition of ethical character should be of such a nature, Heliodorus excels in this respect, as well. Who would be able to represent most plausibly the idiotic gullibility of Aristippus, common in all elderly men who get young wives? Who (would be better at representing most plausibly) the illicit love of Demainete, the youthful simplicity of Knemon, or the slyness of Thisbe the slave-girl?

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<sup>119</sup> Dostoyevsky (1868–1869) 2002, 502, cited in Woloch 2008, 12.

In spite of Koraës' close reading of Heliodorus in many respects, he failed here to see Knemon and his narrative as anything but that of a naïve, youthful simpleton (νεανικὴν ἀπλότητα), which as a stock type exists only to be contrasted with Kalasiris and his supposedly crafty inset story later in the novel. In this chapter, I will point out the carefully planted doubts and inconsistencies in Knemon's tale (standardly defined as a novella by Morgan).<sup>120</sup> This will be especially beneficial for both our present purposes and our analysis in Chapter 4 below, as it is possible to regard Knemon's novella as another way for Heliodorus to prepare his readers for the difficult hermeneutic task of solving the murder of Thisbe that follows shortly after in Books 1–2.

The previous chapter focused on the *Aithiopika*'s introductory scene and the way in which it turns the reader into a detective at the very beginning of his narrative. I began by arguing for the importance of deliberately fragmented focalization in the process of understanding the complicated narrative strategies that Heliodorus employs from the start. To do this, I called attention to the disconnection between the implicit authorial and the explicit protagonistic perspective. Heliodorus allows us, on the one hand, to identify with the bandits on the first reading; on the other hand, he carefully sows seeds of doubt that compel a second reading, which ultimately undercuts the bandits' perspective. Subsequently, I moved on to analyzing this cautiously undermined outlook and role of the bandits in this narrative. As I demonstrated, this reversal serves as a way for Heliodorus to introduce his programmatic intentions at the start of his novel. This led me to propose that Heliodorus introduces and programmatically requires a hierarchical structure in his interpretative enterprise by promoting some interpretations while downplaying others, yet still including both.

This chapter will continue in a similar thematic direction, starting from the paragraphs almost directly after the introduction. Seven paragraphs later, at Hld. 1.8–1.18, we find the

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<sup>120</sup> Morgan 1989a, 99–113.

first and longest inset story in the *Aithiopika*, commonly referred to the novella of Knemon. In what follows, I will maintain that the purpose of the *Aithiopika* is to initiate the reader into questions of doubt and suspicion—both through the way in which Knemon’s tale demonstrates the importance of acting on suspicions and the way in which the tale itself is suspicious for inconsistencies that suggest Knemon might not be as simple or naïve as Koraës and many others have thought. Like the ambiguity of focalization in the introduction to the novel, this Heliodorean suspicion raised in the inset story of Knemon works as an interpretative key for reading the rest of the *Aithiopika*.

It is my understanding that such an argument might come as a surprise to scholarly discussion, which has so far considered this novella in two, markedly complementary ways: either, according to Winkler, as “an alternative, naïve [narrative] strategy to the rest of the novel,” or, in Morgan’s view, an “example of the Athenian, wrong kind of love, in juxtaposition to the Ethiopian, right kind of love.”<sup>121</sup> These interpretations are generally sound and corroborated by much textual evidence, which engages, as Morgan rightly points out, with Heliodorus’ omnipresent vocabulary of love and passion. What is more, the novella’s narrative is indeed linear in its temporal exposition, a notable contrast to that of the main story: this could indeed lead us to see it as an alternate narrative strategy, as Winkler suggests. More importantly, the previous studies have played an important role in situating the *Aithiopika* in the literary map of the period, consolidating both its penchant for the creative appropriation of classical narratives and its occasional departure from them. However, such an approach also seems somewhat narrow in scope, constraining the interpretations to reading the novella as solely another love story within a love story. In my study, I have decided to move in a different direction and broaden the scope and role of this novella and Knemon’s subsequent narrative arc by maintaining that it is actually the

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<sup>121</sup> Winkler 1982; Morgan 1989a.

(epistemological) construction of belief and doubt in general, and not of love, which is at stake. In this way, I contend that Heliodorus invites elaborate responses to the persistent question of seeing belief and doubt as a means of creating a more intense and pleasurable reading experience for his readers. As I will show, this constant questioning of beliefs is not just a narrative strategy to cause delay or rekindle of interest, as has been argued to be the case.<sup>122</sup> It is rather of a much more practical avail, pointing towards the growth of the interpretative and diagnostic capacities of the reader, who is supposed to remain sceptical and resistant in her interpretative attitude towards this story in order better to understand the deceptive nature of Knemon's character in the main narrative of the *Aithiopika*.

The theoretical framework used for this study is inspired by philosophical theories about the function and purpose of narrative fiction, with particular focus on the role played by inset stories. To be specific, I have been influenced by four thinkers: Habermas, Ricoeur, Gadamer, and Eco, particularly in their understanding of hermeneutic suspicion and the limits of interpretation in any one text.<sup>123</sup> I agree with all four of them on one, common premise, namely, that texts open up their meaning to the reader. However, such an approach does presuppose certain inherent limitations, including linguistic, historical, and emotive ones.<sup>124</sup>

Behind its theoretical underpinnings, the practical aim of such an approach to this inset story is to renegotiate a crucial and thorny issue in the study of the ancient novel: what role, if any, does the digressive element play in Heliodorus? Several scholars have considered

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<sup>122</sup> Sandy 1970, 463–475.

<sup>123</sup> Habermas 1968; Ricoeur 1974; Gadamer (1960) 1986, 313–323; Eco 1994.

<sup>124</sup> Ricoeur 1974 strives for a method whereby “one will both uncover the ontological structures of meaning and perhaps succeed in giving an interpretation of a ‘sort of being-in-the-world unfolded in front of the text’” (40). For Ricoeur, semiology—a linguistic tool that strives for meaning on the basis of the text alone (apart from its authorial intent, or solely in the intent of the reader)—can provide for both “participation” in the intentions of the speaker and independence from the particular references which the speaker actually had in mind. Through such a dialectical method of interaction between the reader and the text/symbol, “we will have a form of knowing in which the subject will possess truth both in the manner of a participation and in the manner of a truth critically reached” (53).

the issue closely in the ancient narrative, but no general consensus has emerged. In order to do this, I focus on the implicit, tacit assumptions in a text, those that are to be found between the lines and in the gaps, misdirections, implications, and ironies, noticeable yet downplayed, or at times even inconspicuous. The story of Knemon is full of such instances.

As has been discussed, Knemon has been considered, notably by Winkler, to be a second-rank narrator. A few scholarly studies, Morgan and Hunter being the most influential, have tried to save his reputation by arguing that he has some characteristics of a more elaborate narrator, but with no detailed or sustained analysis.<sup>125</sup> This study will try to build further upon these passing remarks and illustrate Knemon's craftiness. In this way, I hope to illustrate how Heliodorus narrates a story that is not only filled with legitimate suspicions and doubts regarding the characters' motivations, but also with inconsistencies that should make the reader wary of taking Knemon's novella itself at face value. Both of these aspects of the inset story are important for preparing the reader for the great interpretative burden of solving the "murder mystery" that we will examine in Chapter 4.

### **3.2 The Epic Frame of Knemon's Novella**

In the beginning of Book 1 and after the reader's initial encounter with the novel's yet unnamed bandits and the protagonist couple, Charikleia and Theagenes, the action moves forward rather slowly. The bandits not only plunder the unclaimed booty but also detain the young couple and lead them into captivity. The captives, owing to Charikleia's stunning beauty (and her rhetorical prowess, as we shall see in Chapter 6), are supposed to be held totally unharmed.<sup>126</sup> They come under the tutelage of another Greek captive, Knemon, assigned to them because of the language barrier between the couple and the bandits.<sup>127</sup> Once

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<sup>125</sup> Morgan 1989a, 260; Hunter 1998, 40–59.

<sup>126</sup> Hld. 1.7.3: ἀνύβριστον ἀπὸ πάντων διαφυλάττειν.

<sup>127</sup> Hld. 1.7.4: τοὺς μὲν νέους Ἑλληνί τινι παραδίδωσι νεανίσκῳ, οὐ πρὸ πολλοῦ παρ' αὐτοῖς αἰχμαλώτῳ γεγονότι, τοῦ διαλέγεσθαι ἕνεκεν.

the first night shift comes and the captives are supposed to be led to go to sleep, Charikleia has an emotional outburst of despair at her situation, which is soothed by Theagenes, who in turn suggests restraint and urges Charikleia to pacify the hostile deities with prayers, not with angry expletives.<sup>128</sup> It is at that very moment that their young guardian intervenes to appease the captives by bringing a healing herb for Theagenes' open wound and words of comfort for their spirits. This is how he introduces himself to the couple:

«Εἰ δέ μοι μέλει τῶν ὑμετέρων οὐκ ἄξιον ὑμῖν θαυμάζειν, τύχης τε γάρ μοι τῆς αὐτῆς εἰκόκατε κοινωνεῖν καὶ ἅμα Ἑλληνας ὄντας οἰκτεῖρω καὶ αὐτὸς Ἑλλήν γεγυῶς.» «Ἑλλήν; ὦ θεοί!» ἐπεβόησαν ὑφ' ἡδονῆς ἅμα οἱ ξένοι. «Ἑλλήν ὡς ἀληθῶς τὸ γένος καὶ τὴν φωνήν· τάχα τις ἔσται τῶν κακῶν ἀνάπνευσις.» «Ἀλλὰ τίνα σε χρὴ καλεῖν;» ἔφη ὁ Θεαγένης. Ὁ δὲ «Κνήμωνα.» «Πόθεν δὲ γνωρίζεις;» «Ἀθηναῖον.» «Τύχη τίτι κεχρημένον;» «Παῦε» ἔφη· «τί ταῦτα κινεῖς κἀναμοχλεύεις; τοῦτο δὴ τὸ τῶν τραγωδῶν. Οὐκ ἐν καιρῷ γένοιτ' ἂν ἐπεισόδιον ὑμῖν τῶν ὑμετέρων τὰμὰ ἐπισφῆρειν κακά· καὶ ἅμα οὐδ' ἂν ἐπαρκέσειε τὸ λειπόμενον πρὸς τὸ διήγημα τῆς νυκτὸς ὕπνου καὶ ταῦτα δεομένοις ὑμῖν ἀπὸ πολλῶν τῶν πόνων καὶ ἀναπαύσεως.» Ἐπεὶ δὲ οὐκ ἀνίσταν ἀλλὰ παντοίως λέγειν ἰκέτευον, μεγίστην ἠγούμενοι παραψυχὴν τὴν τῶν ὁμοίων ἀκοήν, ἄρχεται ὁ Κνήμων ἐντεῦθεν· (Hld. 1.8.6–1.9.1)

“It is not worthy of surprise if I am concerned about you, for you seem to share the same fate as I do, and at the same time I pity you, since you are Greeks, and I am a Greek myself.” “A Greek? O heaven,” exclaimed the strangers together in joy. “Truly a Greek in birth and speech! Perhaps now there might be some respite from our troubles. What name should we call you by?” asked Theagenes. “Knemon,” he replied. “And where are you from?” “Athens.” “What fate have you suffered?” “Stop,” he said. “why do you batter and prize open these doors? That is a task for tragedians. This is no time to introduce an episode and add my own misfortunes to yours; besides, the remainder of the night would not suffice for the story, since you need sleep and rest from the many pains you’ve been through.” They did not give up, but implored him in all sort of ways to speak, considering the hearing of similar misfortunes as the greatest consolation. So Knemon began.

A crucial part of any story is its framing.<sup>129</sup> As a rule, a study of the setting generally helps us understand the narrator’s and narratee’s original motivations and intentions, along with their prejudices. We will address the other end of the frame in 3.4 below. For the moment, we have

<sup>128</sup> Hld. 1.8.2: Πολλὰ δὴ οὖν ἀνοιμώξασα καθ’ ἑαυτὴν ἢ κόρη... καὶ ὅσον πλεῖστον ἐπιδεκρύσασα. [...] οὐ γὰρ ὄνειδίζειν, ἀλλὰ παρακαλεῖν χρεῶν, εὐχαῖς, οὐκ αἰτίας ἐξίλεοῦται τὸ κρεῖττον.

<sup>129</sup> For the importance of narrative frames in classical studies see especially De Jong 2014, 38–42, with relevant bibliography.

to explain Knemon’s hesitation and his audience’s motivation for this story. The common understanding of this hesitation so far has been that here Knemon is employing “Homer’s way of rekindling interest.”<sup>130</sup> Knemon’s “refusal” to tell his story because it would add to the suffering of himself and his hearers and would simply take too long to tell comes in a long tradition of such excuses in epic poetry from heroes who have suffered many misfortunes, including Vergil’s Aeneas and, of course, Homer’s Odysseus.<sup>131</sup>

Let us start with the Homeric model:

σοὶ δ’ ἐμὰ κήδεα θυμὸς ἐπετρέπετο στονόεντα  
εἶρεσθ’, ὄφρ’ ἔτι μᾶλλον ὀδυρόμενος στεναχίζω.  
τί πρῶτόν τοι ἔπειτα, τί δ’ ὑστάτιον καταλέξω;  
κήδε’ ἐπεὶ μοι πολλὰ δόσαν θεοὶ Οὐρανίωνες. (*Od.* 9.12–15)

but your heart is inclined to ask about my woeful troubles,  
so that I’ll groan still more in lamentation.  
What first, what last, will I recount for you then,  
since the heavenly gods have given me many troubles?

The epic hero of the *Odyssey* appeals to the fact that his story is likely to put a damper on the festive mood of the Phaeacian palace, adding to his own sadness (ἔτι μᾶλλον ὀδυρόμενος στεναχίζω, 9.13) upon hearing the tale of Demodocus about the Trojan War. Moreover, the

<sup>130</sup> Sandy 1970, 465.

<sup>131</sup> Cf. Verg. *Aen.* 1.372–374: *O dea, si prima repetens ab origine pergam, | et vacet annalis nostrorum audire laborum, | ante diem clauso componat Vesper Olympo* (“O goddess, if seeking the first things from their origin I shall proceed, and time remains to hear the annals of our labors, before evening puts an end to the day when the sky has closed”); Verg. *Aen.* 2.8–13: *et iam nox umida caelo | praecipitat suadentque cadentia sidera somnos. | sed si tantus amor casus cognoscere nostros | et breviter Troiae supremum audire laborem, | quamquam animus meminisse horret luctuque refugit, | incipiam* (“And now dewy night rushes down from the sky and the falling stars urge slumber. But if so great a desire to know our ruin and hear in brief the final toil of Troy, although my mind shudders to remember and flees because of grief, I will begin”); Hom. *Od.* 11. 328–334: *πάσας δ’ οὐκ ἂν ἐγὼ μυθήσομαι οὐδ’ ὀνομήνω, | ὅσας ἠρώων ἀλόχους ἴδον ἠδὲ θύγατρας· | πρὶν γάρ κεν καὶ νύξ φθῆτ’ ἄμβροτος. ἀλλὰ καὶ ὄρη|| εὔδειν, ἢ ἐπὶ νῆα θοὴν ἐλθόντ’ ἐς ἐταίρους | ἢ αὐτοῦ· πομπὴ δὲ θεοῖσ’ ὑμῖν τε μελήσει. | ὣς ἔφαθ’, οἱ δ’ ἄρα πάντες ἀκὴν ἐγένοντο σιωπῆ, | κληθμῶ δ’ ἔσχοντο κατὰ μέγαρα σκιδόεντα.* (“But I cannot tell or name all the wives and daughters of heroes that I saw; before that the immortal night would wane. Nay, it is now time to sleep, either when I have gone to the swift ship and the crew, or here. My sending shall rest with the gods, and with you.’ So he spoke, and they were all hushed in silence, and were held spell-bound throughout the shadowy halls,” translation adapted from Merry et al. 1886).

gods have given Odysseus so many troubles (κήδε'...πολλὰ δόσαν θεοὶ Οὐρανίωνες, 9.15) that it is hard for him to decide with which one he should start his tale of woe. The point of this posturing is, of course, to have his Phaeacian audience sympathize with the hero so that they will not send him home empty-handed.<sup>132</sup>

A more expanded version of the same theme appears in Vergil's *Aeneid*, when Aeneas tells of his own misfortunes in Dido's banquet hall (*Aen.* 2.3–13). Aeneas expands upon the Odyssean model, stressing repeatedly how painful (*meminisse horret luctuque refugit*, 2.12) and almost impossible it is to retell (*infandum*, 2.3) such sad events (*dolorem*, 2.3; *lamentabile*, 2.4; *miserrima*, 2.5; *casus*, 2.10). What is pertinent to the discussion of Heliodorus' text is how Aeneas also suggests that it is too late at night and that it should be time to go to sleep: "And now dewy night rushes down from the sky and the falling stars urge slumber" (*et iam nox umida caelo | praecipitat suadentque cadentia sidera somnos*, *Aen.* 2.6–7).<sup>133</sup> Although Aeneas' objectives here might not be as clear as that of the crafty Greek of Homer, the Trojan certainly is not averse from the rhetorical manipulation of an audience, as is made clear earlier in Book 1 when he addressed his despondent men.<sup>134</sup> Additionally, scholars have suggested that he might not be as reliable a narrator as he seems.<sup>135</sup> Aeneas does have to make sure, after all, that his Trojans are warmly received (not knowing the machinations of the gods already at work), and it would seem in his best interest to have his audience know just how much he has already suffered.

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<sup>132</sup> See Most 1989, 114–133; Pucci 1998, 145–150.

<sup>133</sup> For the lack of time for telling his story see also Verg. *Aen.* 1.372–374: *O dea, si prima repetens ab origine pergam, | et vacet annalis nostrorum audire laborum, | ante diem clauso componat Vesper Olympo...* ("O goddess, if seeking the first things from their origin I shall proceed, and time remains to hear the annals of our labors, before evening puts an end to the day when the sky has closed...").

<sup>134</sup> Cf. Verg. *Aen.* 1.208–209: *Talia voce refert, curisque ingentibus aeger | spem voltu simulat, premit altum corde dolorem* ("He says such things with his voice, and sick with great cares feigns hope on his face, pressing pain deep in his heart").

<sup>135</sup> Ahl 1989, 1–31.

It is fairly clear that Knemon here is attempting to draw upon a long-established epic tradition of how heroes introduce their tales of woe or delay their narratives.<sup>136</sup> As the rest of his story will reveal, Knemon is a part of this tradition of narrators who appear much simpler than they are.<sup>137</sup> One can thus maintain that the story is not only about a trite commonplace of the past but also, and more importantly, serves as a warning to the reader that Heliodorus is entering a different register—one that is charged with meaning, requiring careful interpretation if it is to be connected back to the main narrative in any significant way and reveal something about its teller.

Heliodorus thus introduces doubt about the straightforwardness of Knemon's story right from the start by recalling epic tropes of storytelling. As we will see, this doubt is ubiquitous in his narrative. Knemon tells the story of how he was falsely accused and exiled because of his stepmother Demainete's illicit advances, but doubt continues to creep in about his intentions involved in telling his story as he does.

### 3.3 The Novella of Knemon

Once the stage is set for Knemon to unfold his story, he starts narrating in a temporally linear manner.<sup>138</sup> In spite of the simple, straightforward beginning, the first element of suspicion in the story follows immediately after Demainete's introduction as part of Knemon's household, when she begins to display signs of explicit amorous advances.

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<sup>136</sup> Lateness of the hour is often associated with story-telling contexts, such as at Hom. *Od.* 3.329–336, 4.291–295; Callim. *Epigrams* 34.2–3 [Gow and Page]; Vergil, *E.* 9.52, *Aen.* 2.8–13; Ov. *Met.* 9.93–94, 12.159–160, 12.578–79. See also Hld. 5.1.

<sup>137</sup> A similar situation where knowledge is dissimulated by an unreliable narrator is Sinon in *Aen.* 2, who is able to successfully trick the Trojans to see only the horse's incredible frame, its façade, and miss the critical ability to read beneath the surface. See Putnam 1965, 13–14; Laurence 1996, 111–122.

<sup>138</sup> See Winkler 1982, 96, where he argues that the story bears a close resemblance to Xenophon of Ephesus' *faux-naïve* introduction, pointing to how traditional, linear novels are supposed to start. Winkler also points out that this was the way in which Xenophon of Athens began his *Anabasis*.

κάγω προσιέμην, τῶν μὲν ὄντων οὐδὲν ὑποπτεύων, ὅτι δὲ μητρώαν ἐπιδείκνυται  
περὶ ἐμὲ θαυμάζων διάθεσιν. Ἐπει δὲ ἰταμώτερον προσήει καὶ θερμότερα ἦν τὰ  
φιλήματα τοῦ πρέποντος καὶ τὸ βλέμμα τοῦ σώφρονος ἐξιστάμενον πρὸς ὑπόνοιαν  
ἦγεν, ἥδη τὰ πολλὰ καὶ ὑπέφευγον καὶ πλησιάζουσαν ἀπωθούμην. (Hld. 1.9.3)

I did not object, for I had no inkling of the truth. I was simply surprised that she showed a mother's disposition towards me. But when her advances became more headlong and her kisses were inappropriately warmer and her gaze, farther removed from prudent, led me towards suspicion, then I avoided her for the most part, and I pushed her away whenever she was accosting me.

From the very start, then, the reader encounters another situation where there are two levels of meaning between what appears on the surface and what comes from a closer reading of signs. At first, Knemon reads Demainete's kisses as simply a "mother's affection," as might anyone in his situation have mistaken them. After some time, however, he begins to suspect that something else is going on. He can detect the fine line between a "mother's affection" and the erotic "gaze" of a lover. The beginning of Knemon's story thus puts the reader on her alert that this will be a tale where things are not necessarily what they appear, much as the introduction to the *Aithiopika* itself also suggests.<sup>139</sup> And Knemon is certainly one who is able to pick up on the clues before him.

Things come to a head at the festival of the Panathenaea, when Demainete decides to make her advances towards Knemon more explicit. The moment she sees him wearing his festive attire, she becomes totally ecstatic and runs towards Knemon, hugs him, and

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<sup>139</sup> The language of the introduction here suggests an immediate, Second Sophistic parallel with Lucian's *Bis Accusatus* (Double Indictment) 31, where a Syrian orator (Lucian) accuses Rhetoric of having changed from an honest woman to a disreputable *hetaira*: Ἐγὼ γὰρ ὄρων ταύτην οὐκέτι σωφρονοῦσαν οὐδὲ μένουσαν ἐπὶ τοῦ κοσμίου σχήματος οἷόν ποτε ἐσχηματισμένην αὐτὴν ὁ Παιανιεὺς ἐκεῖνος ἠγάγετο, κοσμουμένην δὲ καὶ τὰς τρίχας εὐθετίζουσαν εἰς τὸ ἑταιρικὸν καὶ φυκίον ἐντριβομένην καὶ τῶφθαλμῶ ὑπογραφομένην, ὑπόπτευον εὐθύς καὶ παρεφύλαττον ὅποι τὸν ὀφθαλμὸν φέρει. ("Seeing that she was no longer modest and did not continue to make the respectable figure she made once when Demosthenes took her to wife, but made herself up, arranged her hair like a courtesan, put on rouge, and darkened her eyes underneath, I became suspicious at once and secretly took note where she directed her glances," *Bis Accusatus* 31; translation adapted from Harmon 1913). What is more striking is the perspicuous parallel with Apuleius, where we have a famous *noverca* story in Book 10 of the *Metamorphoses*. The parallels between this story and the story of Phaedra have been documented by Scarcella 1985, 213–239.

pronounces him her new Hippolytus (ὁ νέος Ἴππόλυτος, † ὁ Θησεὺς ὁ ἐμός †, Hld 1.10.2).<sup>140</sup>

As any good reader of classical tragedy would do upon understanding the import of this reference, he sends her off in spite of her nightlong steadfast persistence.

The very next day, Demainete begins her plan of revenge. She waits for her husband Aristippus in bed, claiming that she feels very weak. However, after Aristippus insists on learning what happened, she claims that she had a miscarriage because Knemon kicked her after she told him that he should stop having his mind set only on debauchery. As Knemon then reports:

Ταῦτα ὡς ἤκουσεν, οὐκ εἶπεν, οὐκ ἠρώτησεν, οὐκ ἀπολογία προὔθηκεν, ἀλλὰ πιστεύων μηδ' ἂν ψεύσασθαι κατ' ἐμοῦ τὴν οὔτω περὶ ἐμὲ διακειμένην, εὐθὺς ὡς εἶχε κατὰ τι μέρος τῆς οἰκίας περιτυχῶν, οὐδὲν εἰδότα πύξ τε ἔπαιε καὶ παῖδας προσκαλεσάμενος μάστιξιν ἠκίζετο, μηδὲ τὸ κοινὸν δὴ τοῦτο διότι ξαινοίμην γινώσκοντα. (Hld. 1.11.1)

As soon as he listened to all this, he said not a word, asked no questions, gave me no opportunity to defend myself, but without more ado, taking it for granted that one who was so well disposed to me would not have told lies about me, in that instant and on the spot where he found me in a part of the house, while I knew nothing of the matter, he struck me with his fists, and summoning servants had me cruelly flogged, though I lacked even the knowledge that is commonly given of the reason for my thrashing.

It is important to note the stress that is placed upon the fact that Aristippus does not say a word or question Demainete further but goes to find Knemon in order to beat him up. His emotions prevent him from doubting even in the slightest what his wife had told him. Just like the bandits in the novel's introduction,<sup>141</sup> he hastily moves to action without stopping to consider the situation more closely.

Although Knemon is beaten up by his father and servants, this does not satisfy Demainete fully, and she therefore comes up with a second revenge strategy, which includes Demainete's slave-girl Thisbe making advances towards Knemon and using herself as bait to

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<sup>140</sup> The insertion of <ἦ> would solve the textual problem between the *crucēs* (recommended by Prof. Janko).

<sup>141</sup> And also, as Professor Janko pointed out to me, in Euripides' *Hippolytus*, which gives to Theseus a similar role.

set him up. Thisbe tries to win Knemon’s trust so that she (according to Demainete’s plan) can make him unknowingly try to kill his own father and get caught red-handed. To accomplish this, Thisbe, who had previously rejected Knemon, seduces him herself, clouding his judgment with desire for her. Knemon at this point starts to lose his interpretative ability to doubt. Flattered by the attention of a pretty girl who had previously rejected him, Knemon persuades himself that he has suddenly become attractive.<sup>142</sup> He is still worried, however, that they might both get into trouble for sleeping together, and Thisbe capitalizes upon this worry in order to initiate the next part of the Demainete’s plan, as the following passage demonstrates:

«ὦ Κνήμων» ἔφη, «ὡς λίαν ἀπλοϊκός τις εἶναι μοι δοκεῖς· εἰ γὰρ ἐμὲ θεράπειναν οὖσαν καὶ ἀργυρώνητον ἠγῆ χαλεπὸν εἶναι σοι προσομιλοῦσαν ἀλῶναι, τίνος ἂν ἐκείνην ἀξίαν εἴποις τιμωρίας, ἢ καὶ εὐγενῆς εἶναι φάσκουσα καὶ νόμῳ τὸν συνοικοῦντα ἔχουσα καὶ θάνατον τὸ τέλος τοῦ παρανομήματος γινώσκουσα μοιχᾶται;» «Παῦε» ἔφην, «οὐ γὰρ ἔχω σοι πιστεύειν.» «Καὶ μὴν, εἴ σοι δόξειεν, ἐπ’ αὐτοφώρῳ παραδώσω τὸν μοιχόν.» (Hld. 1.11.4–5)

“Knemon,” she said. “I think you must be very naive. If you think that it is wrong for a bought slave like me to be caught having intercourse with you, what punishment would you say that a woman deserves who claims to be of a good family, who is lawfully wedded to a husband, who knows that death is the penalty for such an offense, but nevertheless knowingly takes a lover?” “Stop,” I said. “I don’t believe you.” “Nevertheless, if you wish, I shall deliver the adulterer to you in the act.”

Even though Knemon is under Thisbe’s spell, he still is able to doubt the validity of her accusation against Demainete, namely, that she has an illicit lover. However, after expressing concern for Knemon’s situation and suggesting that it would be an ideal opportunity for Knemon to get revenge for the trouble that Demainete’s lies have caused him (σοῦ τε ἔνεκεν οὕτω πρὸς αὐτῆς περιωβρισμένου, 1.11.5), he believes her and goes along with her plan. The desire for revenge, in addition to his desire to please Thisbe, drives Knemon to attempt to catch Demainete in the act with her lover. The doubt that once allowed Knemon to avoid

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<sup>142</sup> Hld. 1.11.3: ἐγὼ δὲ ὁ μάταιος ἀθρόον καλὸς γεγενῆσθαι ἐπεπέισμην.

dangerous situations has been clouded by the strong emotions that he now feels, leading him right into Demainete's trap.

Three nights later, Knemon is prepared to enter his stepmother's bedroom, armed with a sword and ready to kill her lover. The moment he sees the lantern, he breaks down the door only to find his actual father. Aristippus begs for his life, but Knemon becomes petrified and drops the sword, which Demainete picks up. Aristippus then orders his servants to tie Knemon up. Demainete tells Aristippus the following lie, and the old man falls for it given the evidence before him:

«οὐ ταῦτα ἦν ἂ προηγόρευον» βοώσης «ὡς φυλάττεσθαι προσήκει τὸ μαιράκιον, ὡς ἐπιβουλεύσει' ἂν καιροῦ λαβόμενον; ἑώραν τὸ βλέμμα, συνίην τῆς διανοίας.» Ὁ δὲ «προηγόρευες» εἰπὼν «ἀλλ' ἠπίστουν»... (Hld.1.12.4)

“Didn’t I tell you,” she shouted, “that you should beware of this youngster, since he would try to kill you if he got the opportunity? I saw his gaze, I understood his intention.” He responded: “You told me before, but I did not believe you.”

This passage is interesting for our purposes for two reasons. First, there is once again a stress on the idea of doubt and the construction of belief. Aristippus cannot see the trick that his wife has played on him and his son. He places his belief in the wrong person—with disastrous consequences for Knemon. What is more interesting is that, to our knowledge, Demainete never did tell Aristippus about Knemon's alleged advances on her, which forces the reader to decide whether the story itself is flawed, or whether Knemon himself might be an unreliable narrator. Given the highly constructed nature of the *Aithiopika* in general, as well as the nature of the inset story's frame, the latter of these two options seems more persuasive.

We will come back to why this is important in a moment. It is first necessary to examine the rest of the novella and, in particular, its conclusion. The next morning, Knemon is tried for attempted murder. He is convicted and exiled, but his account of the trial once again brings us to matters of doubt and believability:

Ἐμοῦ δὲ παρὰ πάντα τὸν θόρυβον καὶ τὸν χρόνον ὄν περι τῆς τιμωρίας  
διεχειροτόνουν «ᾧ μητρυιά» βοῶντος, «διὰ μητρυιάν ἀναιροῦμαι, μητρυιά με  
ἄκριτον ἀπόλλυσι» προσέστη τοῖς πολλοῖς τὸ λεγόμενον καὶ εἰσήει τῶν ὄντων  
ὑποψία. Καὶ ἠκούσθη μὲν οὐδὲ τότε, προκατείληπτο γὰρ ὁ δῆμος ἀκαταπαύστῳ  
θορύβῳ. (Hld. 1.13.5)

Throughout this uproar and all the time they were engaged in casting their votes about my punishment, I kept shouting: “Stepmother! I am being killed by my stepmother! My stepmother is destroying me without a trial!” Many of them took note of my words and began to suspect the truth. But even then I was not given a hearing, for the assembly was preoccupied by an unceasing uproar.

Knemon is loudly pronouncing his outrage at an unfair system, and part of his audience begins to feel his doubt about the circumstances of his arrest. However, the heinousness of his alleged crime, i.e., attempted parricide, causes an “unceasing uproar” that covers everything and makes it impossible for his words to be heard.<sup>143</sup> Knemon is thus not even allowed to make his case formally but is sent to Aegina into exile.

Demainete soon regrets her decision, resenting Thisbe because she considers the servant responsible for the failure of her romance with Knemon. Thisbe decides to make another plot, this time against Demainete, to save herself and have her mistress condemned. She arranges for Demainete allegedly to sleep with Knemon by pretending to be his invented

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<sup>143</sup> Closed ears that are preoccupied (προκατείληπτο) by other sounds are a common metaphor for inability to arrive at the truth. Cf. the anonymous author of the Derveni papyrus, col. 47 (form. 7) v. 6–13. The yet unpublished edited text (drafted by Janko and Kotwick 2016) goes as following: ἔστι δὲ μ[αντικὴ ἢ] πόησις κ[αὶ] ἀνθρώ[ποις] αἰνι[γμ]ατώδης. [κα]ὶ [Ὀρ]φ[εὺ]ς αὐτ[οῖς] ἐρίστ’ αἰν[ίγμ]ατα οὐκ ἔθελε λέγειν, ἐν [αἰν]ίγμ[α]τι δὲ μεγ[ά]λα. ἱερ[ολογ]εῖται μὲν οὐγ καὶ ἀπὸ [το]ῦ πρώτου [καὶ] μέχρι τοῦ [τελε]υτ[αί]ου ῥήματος, ὡ[ς] δηλο[ῖ] καὶ ἐν τῷ ἐνκ[ρι]νήτω[ι] ἔπει. **“θύρας” γὰρ “ἐπιθέσθαι” ὁ κελεύσας τοῖς ὠσὶν αὐτ[οῦ] κατ’ οὐδὲν ἀ[ε]βεῖμ φη[σιν] // το//[ῖ]ς πολλοῖς, ἀλλὰ διδάσκειν τοὺς τῆν ἀκοήν [διατηρο]ῦντας καθ[αρήν** (The composition is prophetic and riddling for people, and Orpheus did not want to tell them disputable riddles, but important things in riddles. In fact he is speaking allegorically from his very first word right through to his last, as is clear even in the verse that is easily explained: **for he who bids them ‘shut the doors’ on their ears is stating that he is certainly not committing impiety towards the many, but instructing those who are pure of hearing**). The importance of purity of ears, open or closed when appropriate, is present for allegorical interpretation right from the start of the tradition. Heliodorus’ passage here might have an allegorical resonance.

girlfriend. Thisbe then goes to Aristippus and turns Demainete in while she is waiting naked for Knemon. Here is Aristippus' response to Thisbe's offer:

Εἰ γὰρ ταῦτα οὕτως ἐπιδείξεις» φησὶν ὁ Ἀριστιππος· «σοὶ μὲν ἐλευθερίας μισθὸς ἀποκείσεται· ἐγὼ δὲ τάχ' ἂν ἐπιβίωην τὴν πολεμίαν ἀμυνάμενος· ὡς πάλαι γε σμύχομαι ἐν ἑμαυτῷ καὶ τὸ πρᾶγμα δι' ὑποψίας ἔχων ἀπορία τῶν ἐλέγχων ἠσύχαζον. Ἀλλὰ τί δεῖ ποιεῖν; (Hld. 1.16.5)

“If you show me this as you promise,” replied Aristippus, “you will be rewarded with your freedom. And as far as I am concerned, I could possibly move on with my life, after avenging my enemy. For a long time now I have had a smouldering doubt in my mind; I had a suspicion of that affair, but for want of proofs I kept quiet about it. Now, what is to be done?”

This passage once again brings to the fore the idea of doubt: how does Knemon know all of this? Aristippus was perhaps not as gullible a fool as he has seemed for much of the story, as he was for a long time holding a “smoldering doubt” (σμύχομαι ἐν ἑμαυτῷ) about his wife and was suspicious of the whole affair (τὸ πρᾶγμα δι' ὑποψίας ἔχων); only Thisbe's admission of what has occurred has given him the opportunity to act on his suspicions. Therefore, it is ultimately Demainete's desire for Knemon that clouds *her* judgment, too, causing her to resent Thisbe and eventually leading to the unraveling of her web of lies and the revelation of the truth of what happened—all because of her inability to look more deeply into the machinations of others.

### 3.4 Conclusion

Now that we have seen how the novella of Knemon thematizes doubt and suspicion, I want to pursue the idea of this suspicion in the novella of Knemon further by focusing on a traditionally marked moment in literary composition, namely, its conclusion. Endings tend to carry great significance for the establishment of meaning in narrative, since, as it has commonly been remarked, motivation and meaning tend to flow backwards, from the end

towards the beginning.<sup>144</sup> In that sense, the ending can best illustrate the true significance of Heliodorus' inset narrative.

Formally speaking, there is no conclusion proper in the novella of Knemon, that is, an ending that brings all the parts of the story into a coherent, tight conclusion by probability and necessity,<sup>145</sup> at least not what can be seen immediately. Rather, the novella ends differently for the three different agents. The closest we get to a conclusion of this inset story is at Hld. 1.18–19, where the narrator employs one of the most formulaic markers of a story's conclusion. From there, the novella's continuous narrative flow is permanently broken, with its loose ends being picked up only in fragmented, haphazard insertions, nearly intrusions, in Books 2 and 3. What follows is the closest one gets to a conclusion for Heliodorus' inset novella:

«Ταῦτά μοι ὁ Χαρίας ἀπήγγειλε. Τὰ δὲ ἐξῆς καὶ ὅπως δεῦρο ἀφικόμην ἢ τίσι ποτὲ κεκηρημένος τύχαις, μακροτέρου δεῖται λόγου καὶ χρόνου.» Καὶ ἅμα ἐδάκρυν· ἐδάκρυν δὲ καὶ οἱ ξένοι, τὰ μὲν ἐκείνου πρόφασιν, μνήμη δὲ τῶν ἰδίων ἕκαστος. Καὶ οὐδ' ἂν ἔληξαν θρηνοῦντες, εἰ μὴ τις ὕπνος, ἐπιπτὰς ὑφ' ἡδονῆς τῶν γούων, ἔπαυσε τῶν δακρύων. (Hld. 1.18.1)

“That was the news that Charias brought me. What happened next, how I came here, what adventures I have experienced is a long and time-consuming story.” And he wept. The strangers wept, too, ostensibly at his story but in fact each one in remembrance of her own sufferings. They would not have ceased from sorrowing, had not sleep, drawn by the pleasure they took in weeping, stanching their tears.

The story suggested that one is a much better interpreter when one is level-headed and not a slave to one's emotions. Knemon is quick to suspect what his stepmother's true intentions are and tries to avoid her at all costs. His father, Aristippus, is easily fooled because of his love for Demainete and proceeds to beat his son up merely upon the word of his new wife, creating the precedent for his son's prosecution later on. Although Knemon has a good amount of doubt and does not initially fall for Demainete's plan, he cannot resist her agent,

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<sup>144</sup> Morgan 1989b, 299–320.

<sup>145</sup> Arist. *Poet.* 1451a13: κατὰ τὸ εἰκὸς ἢ τὸ ἀναγκαῖον. For techniques and practices of conclusion in the ancient novel see Schmeling 1991, 352–377; Fusillo 1996, 209–227.

Thisbe, or the opportunity for revenge that Thisbe suggests. When Knemon is in court, moreover, outrage at his heinous alleged crime stirs up the crowd to such an extent that Knemon is unable to be heard. Finally, even once Knemon has been exiled, it is Demainete's own anger that leads to her careful plot's unravelling, as she grows irate at Thisbe, who eventually turns her over to Aristippus. It is not difficult to see how emotions clouded the judgment of several of the characters in the story, not allowing them to doubt the accounts that they heard and leading to problems for them all.

Although it is an established classical *topos*, it seems strange, then, that Charikleia and Theagenes respond by crying.<sup>146</sup> If they should have learned anything from the tale, it would be to doubt what one hears and not respond in an overly emotional and spontaneous manner; even if the two lovers cry at their own misfortunes, Knemon is much closer to gaining their trust than before in that they can all commiserate in their individual sorrows. There is good reason to doubt Knemon's tale, too. As was mentioned in the previous section, some of the details of the novella seem contradictory. At no point, for instance, does Knemon claim that Demainete told Aristippus that Knemon made advances towards her. When he reports his father's reaction after the trap that Demainete sets for her stepson, the father claims that Demainete had been telling Aristippus this all along—something that is never mentioned by Knemon in his narrative. One would expect that when Aristippus beat his son up the punishment would have been much worse if Demainete had told him that Knemon had attacked her sexually. That is not what Demainete said, however, as she distinctly removes

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<sup>146</sup> For the paradoxical reaction of mixing tears of sadness and joy see Hom. *Od.* 16.213–219, in the scene of the recognition of Odysseus by Telemachus; *Il.* 6.484, δακρυόεν γελάσασα in the scene in which Andromache, although weeping at Hector's danger, is still amused by fright of Astyanax at the sight of his father's helmet. This *topos* was most exemplarily picked up by Meleager of Gadara, as portrayed several times in the various epigrams of the Greek anthology (5.134; 12.167; 5.177; 5.178). Xenophon of Ephesus, Longus, and Heliodorus preserve this paradox on several occasions: *Eph.* 1.9.2–3; *Daph.* 1.31.1; 2.24.1; *Hld.* 10.38.3–4.

any notion that Knemon was interested in her and instead claims that he kicked her because she had commented on his debauchery.

The presence of such inconsistencies in a story again and again demonstrates that one should take a skeptical approach to what one hears and cannot but put the reader on alert that perhaps Knemon himself is not being as honest as he appears. However, if Knemon is not being totally straightforward with Charikleia and Theagenes, what is his point in making them feel sorry for him? To answer this question, one has to examine Knemon's role outside his tale, especially regarding the murder of Thisbe. Suspicion surrounding Thisbe's murder will be the primary focus of the following chapter, at the end of which we will return to examine Knemon's part in Heliodorus' overall lesson for his audience in how to read carefully.

## CHAPTER 4

### KNEMON, THE KILLER

#### 4.1 Introduction

At Hld. 2.3.3–4, Knemon and Theagenes come upon a corpse as they enter the cave. Both men appear to be in shock. As they examine the body of a woman more closely, they find a weapon lying nearby, as well as a writing tablet tucked under her arm. Who is it that lies before them? Who could have done this? And why? This chapter will analyze closely the immediately preceding and subsequent passages in order to solve this murder, relying on a close examination of clues that has been part of the reading experience from the start of the novel, both in its introduction (Chapter 2) and in Knemon's novella (Chapter 3). By examining a murder mystery in the text that has gone unnoticed by readers up to the present day, I will demonstrate that the *Aithiopika* can be seen as a significant predecessor to detective fiction, along with all the narrative complexity that this modern genre entails.

Our focus will again be on Knemon, a character who has not received significant scholarly attention, as noted in the previous chapter. At the beginning of Heliodorus' work, Knemon serves as a guardian of sorts for the protagonists, Charikleia and Theagenes, tending to their physical and mental distress after the two have been captured by bandits. He tells them his story, which seems straightforward enough on the surface, but which we saw to be more complex than its outward appearance. Knemon then stays with the couple for a short while after they all escape in the aftermath of a battle, appearing only a couple of times more in the rest of the novel and disappearing altogether at the text's midpoint in Book 5. In fact, due to his limited role, Knemon has been of minor consequence to most scholars of the *Aithiopika*, especially regarding what happens after he tells the first of several inset tales in

the novel, since he is consistently interpreted as a pseudo-tragic buffoon.<sup>147</sup> As Winkler puts it, Knemon is seen as a simple character whose narrative is “a paradigm of everything the *Aithiopika* as a whole was not—a simple, intelligible story of uncomplicated motivation, told in a sequential, non-digressive style, a model of the kind of ‘romance’ which Heliodorus set out to bury forever.”<sup>148</sup>

The present chapter proposes that Knemon’s role in the main narrative of the text can in fact be read as a paradigm of everything that Heliodorus’ narrative *is*. The focus of this chapter will not be on his inset narrative until his exile, but on what happens to him afterwards, namely, his actions regarding the death of Thisbe, another seemingly minor character who has connections to Knemon from his previous life in Athens. Although their relationship is discussed at length in the previous chapter, a brief overview of it will be beneficial at this point. Thisbe is the servant of Knemon’s evil stepmother, Demainete, who uses Thisbe to secure Knemon’s exile when he rebuffs her illicit advances. Demainete first accuses Knemon of kicking her, causing her to have a miscarriage, which results in Knemon’s father, Aristippus, beating him for his alleged lust for women and general

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<sup>147</sup> See Paulsen 1992, 99: “Pointierter formuliert: Knemon würde sich selbst zu einem tragischen Helden hochstilisieren. All das, was in diesen Rahmen nicht hineinpasst, wäre Zutat des Autors, um die Erzählung mit Ironiesignalen zu versehen.” Bowie 1995, 270–272, moves along the lines of seeing Knemon as a buffoon: “Knemon, whose name recalls Menander’s misanthrope, is transformed into a ‘malleable youth, easily interested in sex.’” See also Hunter 1998, 40–44. Jones 2006, 557, notes that “despite the obvious differences between Cnemon and his namesakes, his appellation places him firmly in the corrupt, immoral and often trivial Athenian world of New Comedy. He has seeped from his proper genre into that of the hero and heroine, and is unworthy of anything more than a small and temporary role in it. Cnemon’s departure from the novel in Book 6 would therefore be no great surprise to an ancient reader: he lacks the moral qualities necessary to proceed past the halfway point, and must return to his more appropriate comic origins at Athens.” This understanding of Knemon as an essentially comic character is to this day still the standard. See Brioso Sánchez 1987–1988, 101–107; Brethes 2007, 167–70; Montiglio 2013, 111, arguing that “Cnemon’s misrepresentation of identity has comic effects”; Doody 2013, 106–127; Finklerpearl 2014; Tagliabue 2016, 410. For the general tragicomic effect in Heliodorus, besides Paulsen 1992 important is Bretzigheimer 1999, 59–86.

<sup>148</sup> Hunter 1998, 40, in a paraphrase of the argument of Winkler 1982. This view of Knemon is also accepted by Fusillo 1989.

promiscuity. This does not suffice for Demainete, however, and she asks Thisbe to pretend to love Knemon in order to get close enough to him to frame him for trying to kill his own father out of jealousy. Knemon is then exiled after he does nearly kill his father, thinking him to be Demainete's lover. Then, Thisbe decides to frame Demainete out of fear that the latter might take out the loss of her love on Thisbe herself. Demainete is convicted and commits suicide, but this leads her family to banish Aristippus for allegedly conspiring against her. According to Knemon, he is looking for Thisbe in order to exonerate himself and his family's name (Hld. 2.9.2; cf. 6.2.3).<sup>149</sup> We do finally meet Thisbe in the next book: she is lying dead at the entrance to a cave. My contention is that Knemon premeditated and perpetrated Thisbe's murder. I will attempt to reconstruct the crime using the subtle clues provided by Heliodorus before then examining the impact of Knemon on readers' hermeneutic awareness. The reader's attention to detail demanded by this mini-crime story is intended to initiate the

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<sup>149</sup> Hld. 2.9.2: Συστάντες οὖν ἐπὶ τὸν πατέρα τὸν ἐμὸν οἱ κατὰ γένος τῆς Δημαινέτης προσήκοντες καὶ τοὺς δεινοτάτους τῶν ῥητόρων πρὸς τὴν κατηγορίαν ἐπὶ πολλοῖς χρήμασιν ἀναβιβασάμενοι, ἄκριτον καὶ ἀνέλεγκτον ἀνηρῆσθαι τὴν Δημαινέτην ἐβόων καὶ τὴν μοιχείαν προκάλυμμα τοῦ φόνου συγκεῖσθαι διεξήεσαν καὶ ἐπιδεικνύειν τὸν μοιχὸν ἢ ζῶντα ἢ καὶ τεθνηκότα ἠξίουσαν ἢ καὶ τοῦνομα φράζειν μόνον ἠνάγκαζον, καὶ τέλος τὴν Θίσβην εἰς βασάνους ἐξήτουν (“Later on, the relatives of Demainete conspired against my father and brought up to the court with a lot of money the most competent orators to shout the accusation that Demainete was murdered without trial and without any cross-examination. They considered the adultery a cover for the murder, and they required that they be presented with the adulterer or at least to be compelled to point out his name, and finally they requested that Thisbe be interrogated via torture”); Hld. 6.2.3: προσετίθει καὶ τὸν τρόπον καὶ ὅτι φυγαδευθεῖ τῆς ἐνεγκούσης, ὡς πατραλοία τοῦ δήμου ταύτην ζημίαν ἐπιθέντος, καὶ ὡς διάγοντι κατὰ τὴν Αἴγινα πρῶτα μὲν Χαρίας τις τῶν συνεφήβων τὴν Δημαινέτην ὅτι τέθνηκε καὶ ὅπως ἐξαγγείλειε, τῆς Θίσβης κάκεινη τὴν ἐπιβουλήν συνθείσης, ἔπειτα Ἀντικλῆς ὅπως μὲν ὁ πατὴρ αὐτῷ δημεύσει τῶν ὄντων ὑποβληθεῖ, συστάντων ἐπ’ αὐτὸν τῶν κατὰ γένος τῆς Δημαινέτης προσηκόντων καὶ πρὸς ὑπόνοιαν φόνου τὸν δῆμον κατ’ αὐτοῦ κινήσαντων, ὅπως δὲ ἡ Θίσβη τῶν Ἀθηναίων ἀπέδρα σὺν τῷ ἐραστῇ τῷ ἐμπόρῳ τῷ Ναυκρατίτῃ (“He added the circumstance [of his exile] and that he was exiled due to her being a prosecutor, since the people had imposed the penalty upon him as a parricide; and that when he was living in Aegina, Charias, one of his fellow young friends, announced to him the death of Demainete and the manner of it, with Thisbe having also plotted against her. Then Anticles informed him how his father was subject to a confiscation of his property, since the blood relatives of Demainete formed an alliance against him to arouse against him a suspicion of murder; and that Thisbe eloped from Athens with her lover, the merchant of Naucratis”).

reader into a kind of reading that is perhaps unparalleled in ancient literature, although it becomes common in modern detective fiction. This reading entails finding a rewarding pleasure in the decryption of the minutest clues, reconstructing a linear narrative out of a host of seemingly unconnected facts and details. Let us begin, then, with just such a minor detail.

## 4.2 The Perfect Crime

“There still lingered in his mind the suspicion that it was Knemon who had killed Thisbe” (οὐ γὰρ ἀνίει τῆς γνώμης τὸ εἰς αὐτὸν ὕποπτον ὡς ἀνελόντα τὴν Θίσβην, Hld. 2.20.1). These are the final thoughts of Thermouthis (one of the bandits) before he lies down and never wakes up again, dying from an asp’s snakebite. This might strike a reader of the *Aithiopika* as strange, for several reasons. First, the heterodiegetic narrator, taking no part in the plot, seems to suggest at first glance that it was the bandits’ leader, Thyamis, who killed Thisbe by accident (Hld. 1.30.7–31.1), as will be discussed below.<sup>150</sup> Second, the murder weapon found at the scene was indeed that of Thyamis, as Knemon points out more than once (Hld. 2.6.2; 2.11.4)<sup>151</sup> and as is recognized by Thermouthis himself (Hld. 2.14.4).<sup>152</sup> Third, as

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<sup>150</sup> Hld. 1.30.7–31.1: Ὑφ’ ὧν καὶ ὁ Θύαμις τῶν μὲν ἐν χερσὶ πάντων ἀμνημονήσας, καὶ ταῦτα ὡσπερ ἄρκυσι τοῖς πολεμίοις κεκυκλωμένος, ἔρωτι δὲ καὶ ζηλοτυπία καὶ θυμῷ κάτοχος ἐπὶ τὸ σπήλαιον ἐλθὼν ὡς εἶχε δρόμου καθαλάμενος ἐμβοῶν τε μέγα καὶ πολλὰ αἰγυπτιάζων, αὐτοῦ που περὶ τὸ στόμιον ἐντυχὼν τινὶ Ἑλληνίδι τῇ γλώττῃ προσφθεγγομένη, ἀπὸ τῆς φωνῆς ἐπ’ αὐτὴν χειραγωγηθεὶς ἐπιβάλλει τε τῇ κεφαλῇ τὴν λαιὰν χεῖρα καὶ διὰ τῶν στέρνων παρὰ τὸν μαζὸν ἐλαύνει τὸ ξίφος. Καὶ ἡ μὲν ἔκειτο πικρῶς ἐλεεινὸν τε ἅμα καὶ ἔσχατον κωκύσασα: (“This is why Thyamis, unmindful of all of his affairs at hand, and surrounded by enemies as if by a hunter’s net, possessed by love and jealousy and anger, rushed down, shouting loudly and greatly in the Egyptian language. There somewhere around the cave’s entrance he came across some Greek speaking woman and, guided to her by the sound of her voice, seized her head with his left hand and thrust the sword through her chest and next to her breast. With a pitiable and final shriek, bitterly she was lying dead.”)

<sup>151</sup> Hld. 2.6.2: Ἡ δὲ ἦν ἀληθῶς ἡ Θίσβη καὶ ξίφος τε πλησίον ἐκπεπτωκὸς ἐγνώριζεν ἀπὸ τῆς λαβῆς, ὃ παρὰ τὸν φόνον ὁ Θύαμις ὑπὸ θυμοῦ καὶ σπουδῆς ἐναπέλιπε τῇ σφαγῇ, καὶ δέλτον τινὰ τῶν στέρνων ὑπὸ τῇ μασχάλῃ προκύπτουσαν ἀνελόμενος ἐπειρᾶτό τι τῶν ἐγγεγραμμένων ἐπιέναι (“She was indeed Thisbe and he recognized the sword that was cast next to her by its handle, Thyamis, who left it to next to the murder scene, due to his anger and his haste; and some writing tablet was protruding from her chest and under her armpit. Picking it up, he tried to go over what was written on it”); Hld. 2.11.4: «Τὰ μὲν ἄλλα οὐκ ἔχω

mentioned above, the whole reason why Knemon allegedly set out on his mission and was captured by bandits in the first place was to find Thisbe alive so that he could exonerate himself. Why then does Thermouthis suspect that the killer was Knemon?

In this section, I will propose that Thermouthis' suspicion is well founded and accurate. Although few scholars have paid attention to Knemon as an unreliable and devious narrator, he is much craftier than he initially appears; in fact, as the evidence below will show, there is good reason to believe that he is the mastermind behind Thisbe's murder.

Let us start this investigation into Thisbe's death with a brief exposition of the narrator's account of the events that occurred immediately before and after her murder. Due to his fear of the upcoming battle with the opposing gang of bandits, Thyamis decides to put Charikleia in the cave wherein they usually place their treasure for safe-keeping (Hld. 1.28.1–2). He asks Knemon to accomplish this task. Knemon obliges, leading Charikleia to “the innermost recesses of the cave,”<sup>153</sup> before then returning to Thyamis and preparing for the battle (Hld. 1.29.3). During the fray, Thyamis is unable to endure letting Charikleia become the property of another man and decides to go and kill her so that she cannot fall into anyone

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λέγειν» ἔφη ὁ Κνήμων, «ὁ δὲ ἀνηρηκῶς ὡς ἐπίπαν ἐστὶ Θύαμις, εἰ δεῖ τῷ ξίφει τεκμαίρεσθαι ὃ παρὰ τὴν σφαγὴν εὐρήκαμεν· ἐκείνου γὰρ εἶναι γνωρίζω καὶ τὸ ἐπίσημον τουτὶ τῆς λαβῆς ἐλέφας εἰς ἀετὸν ἐκτετόρευται» (“As far as the others are concerned, I have nothing more to say,” said Knemon, “the killer is definitely Thyamis, if we are to draw assumptions from the sword that we found close to the murder scene; I know for a fact that it belongs to him by a distinguishing badge on its hilt, an ivory carving of an eagle”).

<sup>152</sup> Hld. 2.14.4: Καὶ ὁ Κνήμων ἄγαν ἐσπουδασμένως «Θύαμις ἐστὶν ὁ σφαγεύς» ἔλεγεν, ἀπολύσασθαι τῆς ὑποψίας ἑαυτὸν ἐπειγόμενος, καὶ μαρτύριον ἐπεδείκνυ τὸ ξίφος ὃ παρὰ τὴν σφαγὴν εὐρήκεσαν. Ὡς δὲ εἶδεν ὁ Θέρμουθις ἔτι τοῦ αἵματος ἀποστάζον καὶ τὸν πρὸ ὀλίγου φόνον θερμὸν ἔτι τὸν σίδηρον ἀποπτύοντα ἐγνώρισέ τε εἶναι Θυάμιδος, βαθύ τι καὶ βύθιον στενάξας καὶ τὸ γεγονός ὅπως εἶχεν ἀμχανῶν... (“And Knemon, in excessive haste, said ‘Thyamis is the slayer,’ eager to remove any suspicion from himself, and displayed as proof the sword that they found next to the slain scene. Once Thermouthis saw the blood still dripping with blood and the iron spitting it still warm from the recent murder, he recognized it was Thyamis’ sword, and heaved a deep and long-drawn sigh and was unable to comprehend the event...”)

<sup>153</sup> Hld. 1.29.3: Ἐνταῦθα ὡς καθῆκε τὴν Χαρίκλειαν ὁ Κνήμων καὶ πρὸς τὸ ἔσχατον τοῦ ἀντροῦ διεβίβασε τῇ πείρᾳ χειραγωγήσας... (“Into that place Knemon brought down Charikleia and led her by the hand, as he was very familiar with it, to the farthest end of the cavern”).

else's hands. "Just by the entrance," the narrator relates, "he came upon a woman who spoke to him in Greek. Guided to her by her voice, he seized her head in his left hand and drove his sword through her breast, close to the bosom. With her last, piteous cry, the poor creature fell dead" (Hld. 1.30.7–31.1).<sup>154</sup> Near the beginning of Book 2, Knemon returns to the cave with Theagenes (Hld. 2.3). They take only a few steps before Knemon suddenly shouts that he has found the body of Charikleia (Hld. 2.3.3). After they both lament her death, Knemon claims to hear shouts "from the furthest depths of the cave," that is, from the very part where the narrator related and Knemon himself claims that he left her (Hld. 2.5.2).<sup>155</sup> After the two are reunited with Charikleia and have read the letter that was found with Thisbe's body explaining why she was there at all, they are approached by Thermouthis (Hld. 2.12–13), who tells them that he had put Thisbe in the cave (Hld. 2.14.1).<sup>156</sup> Knemon then shows him the murder weapon, which he had picked up earlier from the scene of the crime (Hld. 2.6.2), eagerly pronouncing that Thyamis was without a doubt the murderer: "In his eagerness to exculpate himself, Knemon blurted out with excessive haste, 'It was Thyamis who killed

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<sup>154</sup> Hld. 1.30.7–31.1: Ὑφ' ὧν καὶ ὁ Θύαμις τῶν μὲν ἐν χερσὶ πάντων ἀμνημονήσας, καὶ ταῦτα ὡσπερ ἄρκυσι τοῖς πολεμίοις κεκυκλωμένος, ἔρωτι δὲ καὶ ζηλοτυπία καὶ θυμῷ κάτοχος ἐπὶ τὸ σπήλαιον ἐλθὼν ὡς εἶχε δρόμου καθαλάμενος ἐμβοῶν τε μέγα καὶ πολλὰ αἰγυπτιάζων, αὐτοῦ που περὶ τὸ στόμιον ἐντυχῶν τινὶ Ἑλληνίδι τῇ γλώττῃ προσφθεγγομένη, ἀπὸ τῆς φωνῆς ἐπ' αὐτὴν χειραγωγηθεὶς ἐπιβάλλει τε τῇ κεφαλῇ τὴν λαιὰν χεῖρα καὶ διὰ τῶν στέρνων παρὰ τὸν μαζὸν ἐλαύνει τὸ ξίφος. Καὶ ἡ μὲν ἔκειτο πικρῶς ἐλεεινὸν τε ἅμα καὶ ἔσχατον κωκύσασα· ("This is why Thyamis, unmindful of all of his affairs at hand, and surrounded by enemies as if by a hunter's net, possessed by love and jealousy and anger, rushed down, shouting loudly and greatly in the Egyptian language. There somewhere around the cave's entrance he came across some Greek speaking woman and, guided to her by the sound of her voice, seized her head with his left hand and thrust the sword through her chest next to her breast. With a pitiable and final shriek, bitterly she was lying dead.")

<sup>155</sup> Hld. 2.5.2: Καὶ ταῦτα διεξιόντος ἐκ μυχῶν τοῦ σπηλαίου φωνῆς τις ἦχος ἐξηκούετο «Θεάγενες» καλούσης ("As he was analyzing these things, from the depths of the cavern the sound of a voice seemed to be heard calling 'Theagenes!'").

<sup>156</sup> Hld. 2.14.1: ... ἀπὸ κηρύγματος πάντα τινὰ Θυάμιδος φεῖδασθαι παρεγγυῶντος, καὶ τέλος ὡς ἐκεῖνος μὲν ὅ τι καὶ γέγονεν οὐκ ἔχει λέγειν αὐτὸς δὲ τραυματίας ἀπενήξατο πρὸς τὴν γῆν καὶ τὸ παρὸν κατὰ ζήτησιν ἦκοι τῆς Θίσβης ἐπὶ τὸ σπήλαιον ("He was himself safeguarded by an order of Thyamis directing everyone to spare his life; and at the end that he did not know what happened to him eventually; he himself was wounded and swam away to the land; and he had now come to the cavern in search of Thisbe").

her!’ And to prove it he held up the sword that they had found at the scene of the crime” (Hld. 2.14.4).<sup>157</sup> The four of them join together briefly before then splitting up, with Knemon going off with Thermouthis. Knemon slips away, however, at which point Thermouthis lies down, is bitten by an asp, and dies (Hld. 2.20.1–2).<sup>158</sup>

Those are the events as described by the narrator. Before we move on to analyzing these individual scenes more closely, it is important to acknowledge two points regarding the narrator’s version of events. First, the narrator never explicitly says that Thyamis kills Thisbe. The woman in Hld. 1.30.7–1.31.1 is unnamed, only identified by the fact that she was speaking Greek (an important detail to keep in mind for when we examine the writing tablet found on Thisbe’s corpse). Second, there is no mention of Knemon or his whereabouts during the battle; he only reappears after Thyamis returns to the battle himself (Hld. 1.31.1).<sup>159</sup> As I will argue below in reconstructing the sequence of events out of several small details, there is

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<sup>157</sup> Hld. 2.14.4: Καὶ ὁ Κνήμων ἄγαν ἐσπουδασμένως «Θυάμις ἐστὶν ὁ σφαγέυς» ἔλεγεν, ἀπολύσασθαι τῆς ὑποψίας ἑαυτὸν ἐπειγόμενος, καὶ μαρτύριον ἐπεδείκνυ τὸ ξίφος ὃ παρὰ τὴν σφαγὴν εὐρήκεσαν (“And Knemon, in excessive haste, said ‘Thyamis is the killer,’ hastening to dissolve himself of all suspicion and displayed the sword that they found close to the murder as testimony”).

<sup>158</sup> Hld. 2.20.1–2: οὐ γὰρ ἀνίει τῆς γνώμης τὸ εἰς αὐτὸν ὑποπτον ὡς ἀνελόντα τὴν Θίσβην καὶ ὅπως ἂν † οἱ † ποτε διαχρήσαιτο ἐνενόει, ἐπιθέσθαι τε μετὰ τοῦτον καὶ τοῖς περὶ τὸν Θεαγένην ἐλύττα. Ὡς δὲ ὁ Κνήμων ἐφαίνετο οὐδαμοῦ τῆς δὲ νυκτὸς ἐγένετο ἄωρί, πρὸς ὑπνον τραπεῖς ὁ Θέρμουθις χάλκεόν τινα καὶ πύματον ὑπνον εἴλκυσεν ἀσπίδος δῆγματι, μοιρῶν τάχα βουλήσει πρὸς οὐκ ἀνάρμοστον τοῦ τρόπου τὸ τέλος καταστρέψας. (“He could not let go of the suspicion that Knemon was the murderer of Thisbe and he was thinking about how he could at some point take his life; he was in such fury to attack, after him, also Theagenes and his group. As Knemon was nowhere to be found and it was late at night, turning to sleep, Thyamis was drawn in to his last sleep, heavy as bronze, through the bite of an asp; according probably to the will of the fates, who arranged his end in a not inappropriate manner”).

<sup>159</sup> Hld. 1.31.1: ὁ δὲ ἀναδραμῶν καὶ τὸν οὐδὸν ἐπαγαγῶν καὶ χοῦν ὀλίγον ἐπιφορήσας καὶ «ταῦτά σοι τὰ παρ’ ἡμῶν νυμφικὰ δῶρα» σὺν δάκρυσιν εἰπὼν, ἐπὶ τε τὰ σκάφη παραγενόμενος τοὺς τε ἄλλους καταλαμβάνει δρασμὸν ἤδη βουλευόντας, τῶν πολεμίων ἐγγύθεν ὀρωμένων, τὸν τε Θέρμουθιν ἦκοντα καὶ τὸ ἱερεῖον μεταχειριζόμενον (“He ran back and said in tears ‘these are our wedding gifts to you’ and, when he arrived at the boats, he found the rest of the men already pondering over flight, as they saw the enemy approaching and that Thermouthis had arrived and held the sacrificial victim”).

thus time when Knemon’s absence is unaccounted for by the narrator in which he could have left the battle, gone back to the cave, and killed Thisbe.

Now that we have laid out the order of events as recounted by the narrator, we can examine closely Knemon’s interactions with each of the characters involved, starting with Theagenes at the crime scene when they first discover the corpse of Thisbe. It is important to note Knemon’s level-headedness in the scene despite his seemingly very agitated emotional state. First, when Knemon comes upon the dead body, “he dropped his torch to the ground, where it went out, and sank sobbing to his knees, his hands clasped over his eyes” (Hld. 2.3.3).<sup>160</sup> Then, upon realizing whose corpse it is, he appears dumbstruck and nearly faints (Hld. 2.5–6). This seems like a genuine reaction. However, one should note that when Theagenes is overcome with grief because he thinks the dead body is Charikleia’s (something that Knemon himself suggests at first), Knemon is still quite alert and careful, able to remove stealthily his companion’s sword from his scabbard without his noticing lest he do himself harm (Hld. 2.3.4). It is then Knemon, moreover, who is able to identify Charikleia’s voice, which as mentioned above is coming from the very innermost part of the cave where Knemon claims to have left her—something he does not seem keen to remember when he first encounters the body right near the entrance. One should note that the cave is rather labyrinthine (Hld. 1.29.1–2),<sup>161</sup> and it is only because Knemon knows the way that he was

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<sup>160</sup> Hld. 2.3.3: Ἐπεὶ δὲ ὀλίγον ὑπέβησαν ἀθρόον ὁ Κνήμων ἀνέκραγεν «ὦ Ζεῦ, τί τοῦτο; ἀπολώλαμεν· ἀνήρηται Χαρίκλεια»· καὶ τό τε λαμπάδιον εἰς τὴν γῆν καταβαλὼν ἀπέσβεσε καὶ τῷ χεῖρι τοῖς ὀφθαλμοῖς ἐπαγαγὼν εἰς γόνυ τε ὀκλάσας ἐθρήνει (“After they had descended a little Knemon cried out loudly ‘By Zeus, what is this? We are undone; Charikleia is killed.’ He dropped the torch, which went out, and, putting his hands over his eyes, crouched down on his knees and sobbed”).

<sup>161</sup> Hld. 1.29.1–2: ...στόμιον ἦν αὐτῷ στενόπορόν τε καὶ ζοφῶδες οἰκήματος κρυφίου θύραις ὑποκείμενον, ὡς τὸν οὐδὸν θύραν ἄλλην τῇ καθόδῳ γίνεσθαι ὡς πρὸς τὴν χρείαν· ἐνέπιπτε τε αὐτῇ ῥαδίως καὶ ἀνεπτύσσετο· τὸ δὲ αὐτόθεν εἰς αὐλῶνας σκολιούς ἀτάκτως σχιζόμενον. Οἱ γὰρ ἐπὶ τοὺς μυχοὺς πόροι καὶ αὐλακες πῆ μὲν ἕκαστος ἰδίᾳ τεχνικῶς πλανώμενοι πῆ δὲ ἀλλήλοις ἐπίπτοντες καὶ ῥιζηδὸν πλεκόμενοι πρὸς μίαν εὐρυχωρίαν τὴν ἐπὶ τοῦ πυθμένος συρρέοντες ἀνεστομοῦντο, καθ’ ὃ καὶ φέγγος ἀμυδρὸν ἕκ τινος διατρήσεως πρὸς ἄκροις τῆς λίμνης προσέπιπτεν. (“The entrance was narrow and gloomy, situated beneath the doors of a

able to lead Charikleia to the innermost part of the cave in the first place; for her to get to the entrance would seem difficult, and even more so when she did not have anything even to light her path. (Only the shouts and lamentations of Knemon and Theagenes serve as a guide to her to find her way.) Therefore, we can see that Knemon seems surprisingly able to control the situation despite his reactions, which are very conspicuous and one might say theatrical—so much so, in fact, that Theagenes later mocks Knemon by saying: “when you found that the dead woman was who you least expected it to be, you took to your heels as if she were some evil spirit in a play; though you were armed and had a sword in your hand, you fled from a woman, and a dead one at that!” (Hld. 2.7.3).<sup>162</sup>

The next witness on the stand is Charikleia. Important to note is her own suspicion of Knemon. When Knemon and Theagenes are reunited with Charikleia, Theagenes tells her that it is Thisbe whom they found dead at the entrance of the cave. Charikleia herself responds incredulously: “How is that possible, Knemon? [...] How can someone suddenly be spirited away by a sort of theatrical special effect, out of the heart of Greece to the remotest parts of Egypt? How did it happen that we did not meet her on our way down here?” (Hld. 2.8.3).<sup>163</sup> We will leave aside for the moment her second question here, which is important

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secret chamber, in a way that the threshold stone acted as a second door in case of need, for it could easily fall into position or open up. That very spot was further divided in a disorderly manner into winding tunnels. The paths and inner cuttings that led to the innermost recesses were kept to separate meanderings in some parts; whereas, in other parts, they crossed each other and became intertwined like tree roots until they converged and opened out in the depths into a single spacious area, over which a dim light fell, through a small fissure close to the lake’s edge”). On the labyrinthine in Heliodorus see Morgan 1994, 97–113.

<sup>162</sup> Hld. 2.7.3: Ἐπεὶ δὲ ἀπάτην ἐκεῖνα θεῶν τις εὖ γε ποιῶν ἔδειξεν, ὥρα σοι σαυτὸν ὑπομνῆσαι τῆς ἄγαν ἀνδρείας, ὕφ’ ἧς ἐθρήνεις μὲν ἐμοῦ τὰμὰ πρότερος τὴν δὲ ἀπροσδόκητον τῆς κειμένης ἐπίγνωσιν ὥσπερ ἐπὶ σκηνῆς δαίμονας ἀπεδίδρασκες, ἔνοπλος καὶ ξιφῆρης τὴν γυναῖκα, νεκρὰν καὶ ταύτην, ὑποφεύγων.

<sup>163</sup> Hld. 2.8.3: Τῆς δὲ Χαρικλείας ἐκπεπληγμένης καὶ «πῶς ἦν εἰκός, ὃ Κνήμων,» εἰπούσης «τὴν ἐκ μέσης τῆς Ἑλλάδος ἐπ’ ἐσχάτοις γῆς Αἰγύπτου καθάπερ ἐκ μηχανῆς ἀναπεμφθῆναι; πῶς δὲ καὶ ἐλάνθανεν ἡμᾶς δεῦρο κατιόντας;» «Ταῦτα μὲν οὐκ ἔχω λέγειν» ἀπεκρίνατο πρὸς αὐτὴν ὁ Κνήμων· «ἂ δ’ οὖν ἔχω γινώσκειν ἄμφ’ αὐτῇ τοιάδε ἐστίν· («And since Charikleia was surprised, she said: ‘How was it likely, Knemon, that a woman from the middle of Greece should be transported to a remote corner of Egypt, as if by a stage-machine? And how

for piecing together the sequence of events leading to the crime. For now, it is important to see that it is the protagonist of the novel herself who first questions Knemon's version of events, as we will see Thermouthis do later, as well. Knemon claims not to know the answer to her questions but responds with an addendum to his earlier novella from Book 1, telling his companions about how Thisbe abandoned his father when Demainete's family conspired against him, driving him into exile and stealing his property; in fact, Knemon then says, this was the whole reason why he had set out for Naukratis and was captured by pirates, namely, to bring back Thisbe and restore his father's good name (Hld. 2.9.3–4). This addition to his earlier novella would instantly seem to remove any suspicion from Knemon as the killer, since he claims that he wanted Thisbe alive. It is very convenient, however, that he chooses to bring up this information now, with Thisbe's dead body lying before the three of them.

Knemon's response (or lack thereof) to Charikleia's probing questions might seem defensive. There is no ambiguity, however, when it comes to how eagerly he tries to exculpate himself of all guilt in his interactions from Thermouthis. This section began with Thermouthis' final thoughts, which centered on the suspicion that Knemon had killed Thisbe. The relationship between Knemon and Thermouthis is an interesting one that seems to go beyond what is explained by the narrative in the text. When Thermouthis comes upon Knemon and the protagonists, Knemon is said to have "gently slunk back, recognizing Thermouthis, whom he saw unexpectedly, and supposed that he would try something harmful" (Hld. 2.13.2).<sup>164</sup> Why does Knemon think that Thermouthis might be a threat? This reaction has absolutely no explanation from anything that preceded it in the text. It is in fact entirely unmotivated. However, there is a possible explanation for why Knemon is afraid of

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is it that she escaped our attention as we came down here?' 'To these questions I have no answer,' Knemon answered her, "but what I do know about her are the following things").

<sup>164</sup> Hld. 2.13.2: ὁ δὲ Κνήμων ἠρέμα καὶ ὑπεδίδρασκε, γνωρίζων μὲν τὸν Θέρμουθιν ὀρῶν δὲ παρ' ἐλπίδα καὶ τι τῶν ἀτοπωτέρων αὐτὸν ἐγχειρήσειν προσδοκῶν ("And Knemon gently slunk back, recognizing Thermouthis, whom he saw unexpectedly and he supposed that he would try something harmful").

Thermouthis: the latter dearly loved Thisbe (Hld. 2.14.3)<sup>165</sup>; and if Knemon killed her and Thermouthis found out, he would most likely not let Knemon get away unpunished. This explanation would then also help make sense of what happens next, when the narrator more explicitly turns the reader towards seeing Knemon as a possible suspect, saying, as mentioned above, that “[i]n his eagerness to exculpate himself, Knemon blurted out with excessive haste, ‘It was Thyamis who killed her!’ And to prove it he held up the sword that they had found at the scene of the crime” (Hld. 2.14.4).<sup>166</sup> Knemon’s extreme eagerness here to clear his own name is rather suspicious. Again, there is no explicit explanation as to why Knemon feels he should be so concerned about what Thermouthis thinks about the murder. This can be inferred not just from what the narrator says, but also from Knemon himself, who admits openly to believing that Thermouthis harbors some suspicion against him, as he tells Charikleia and Theagenes a bit later in the following passage:

Ἀπολειπτέον οὖν ἡμῖν καὶ φευκτέον ὡς ἄρκυς τινὰς καὶ δεσμοπήριον τὴν νῆσον, ἀποπέμψαντας πρότερον τὸν Θέρμουθιν πρόφασιν ὡς πεισόμενον καὶ πολυπραγμονήσοντα εἶ τι περὶ τοῦ Θυάμιδος ἔχει μανθάνειν. Ῥᾷόν τε γὰρ ἐφ’ ἐαυτῶν ἂν σκοποῖμεν καὶ ἐγγειροῖμεν τὰ πρακτέα καὶ ἄλλως ἄνδρα ἐκποδῶν ποιήσασθαι καλόν, φύσει τε ἀβέβαιον καὶ ληστρικὸν καὶ δύσεριν τὸ ἦθος, **πρὸς δὲ καὶ ὑποψίας τι φέροντα εἰς ἡμᾶς τῆς Θίσβης ἔνεκα καὶ οὐκ ἂν παυσόμενον εἰ μὴ ἐπιβουλεύσειεν, εἰ καιροῦ λάβοιτο.** (Hld. 2.17.4–5)

We should flee and escape this island as a trap and a prison. But first let us get rid of Thermouthis on the pretext of sending him off to make inquiries and busy himself trying to find some news of Thyamis. It would be easier to make our plans and carry them out without him; and anyway it would be good to be rid of a man who is congenitally unreliable and has an acrimonious and brigand-like temperament, **particularly as he harbors some suspicion against us over Thisbe, which he will not let drop until he has perpetrated some villainy against us, should the opportunity arise.**

<sup>165</sup> Hld. 2.14.3: Ἐλεγε καὶ ταῦτα ὁ Θέρμουθις καὶ διηγείτο ὡς ἐμπόρων ἀφείλετο, ὡς ἠράσθη μανικῶς, καὶ τὸν μὲν ἄλλον ἔκρυπτεν ἔχων χρόνον παρὰ δὲ τὴν ἔφοδον τῶν πολεμίων καθῆκεν εἰς τὸ σπήλαιον (“Thermouthis was saying such things and he was describing how he carried her off from some merchants, fallen madly in love with her, and kept her hidden the rest of the time until, upon the attack of the enemy, he took her down into the cavern”).

<sup>166</sup> Hld. 2.14.4: Καὶ ὁ Κνήμων ἄγαν ἐσπουδασμένως «Θυάμις ἐστὶν ὁ σφαγεύς» ἔλεγεν, ἀπολύσασθαι τῆς ὑποψίας ἐαυτὸν ἐπειγόμενος, καὶ μαρτύριον ἐπεδείκνυ τὸ ξίφος ὃ παρὰ τὴν σφαγὴν εὐρήκεσαν.

Nowhere up to this point in the novel is this suspicion mentioned by Thermouthis himself (though we have seen that he does indeed have such suspicion later from his dying thoughts).

It is impossible to know what exactly motivates Knemon's anticipation of Thermouthis' suspicion here, but a guilty conscience does not seem an impossibility, especially as our evidence against Knemon begins to mount.

There are, of course, two important points that still need to be explained. First, we have not established a motive for *why* Knemon killed Thisbe. Second, and just as important, if Thyamis is not the murderer of Thisbe and does not kill Charikleia, then whom did Thyamis kill? We have so far spoken of only two women in the cave, Charikleia and Thisbe. Both of these issues can be explained by a close reading the writing tablet with its message from Thisbe to Knemon that is found with the corpse.

Because this letter provides a good deal of important evidence, it will be necessary to cite a large amount of it:

«Κνήμωνι τῷ δεσπότη ἢ πολεμία καὶ ἐπαμύνασα Θίσβη. Πρῶτα μὲν εὐαγγελίζομαι σοὶ τὴν Δημαινέτης τελευτὴν δι' ἐμοῦ μὲν ὑπὲρ σοῦ γενομένην, τὸ δὲ ὅπως, εἴ με προσδέξαιο, παροῦσα διηγῆσομαι. Ἐπειτα φράζω κατὰ τήνδε με νυνὶ εἶναι τὴν νῆσον δεκάτην ἤδη ταύτην ἡμέραν πρὸς τινος τῶν τῆδε ληστῶν ἀλοῦσαν, ὃς καὶ ὑπασπιστὴς εἶναι τοῦ ληστάρχου θρύπτεται κάμῃ κατακλείσας ἔχει μηδὲ ὅσον προκύψαι τῶν θυρῶν ἐπιτρέπων, ὡς μὲν αὐτὸς φησι, διὰ φιλίαν τὴν περὶ ἐμὲ ταύτην ἐπιθεὶς τὴν τιμωρίαν, ὡς δὲ ἔχω συμβάλλειν, ἀφαιρεθῆναί με πρὸς τινος δεδιώς. Ἄλλ' ἐγὼ σε θεῶν τινος ἐνδόντος καὶ εἶδον, ᾧ δέσποτα, παριόντα καὶ ἐγνώρισα καὶ τήνδε σοὶ τὴν δέλτον διὰ τῆς συνοίκου πρεσβύτιδος λάθρα διεπεμψάμην, τῷ καλῷ καὶ Ἑλληνι καὶ φίλῳ τοῦ ἄρχοντος ἐγχειρίζειν φράσασα. Ἐξελοῦ δὴ με χειρῶν ληστρικῶν καὶ ὑπόδεξαι τὴν σαυτοῦ θεραπαινίδα· καὶ εἰ μὲν βούλει, σῶζε μαθῶν ὡς ἂ μὲν ἀδικεῖν ἔδοξα βιασθεῖσα, ἂ δὲ τετιμώρημαι τὴν σοὶ πολεμίαν ἐκοῦσα διεπραξάμην. Εἰ δὲ ἔχει σέ τις ἀμετάβλητος ὀργή, κέχρησο ταύτη κατ' ἐμοῦ πρὸς ὃ βούλει· μόνον ὑπὸ σὲ γενοίμην εἰ καὶ τεθνάναι δέοι· (Hld. 2.10.1–4)

To Knemon, my master, from your enemy and protector, Thisbe. First I have some good news for you: Demainete is dead. It was I who brought this about, out of love for you. How it happened I shall tell you in person if you will agree to see me. Next I bring you the news that I have been on this island for ten days now, the captive of one of the bandits who lives here; he boasts that he is their captain's right-hand man. He is keeping me shut in and does not allow me even to peep out of doors, claiming that he has punished me like this because he loves me, but, as I gather, because he is afraid that someone might take me away from him. But by the grace of some god I saw you walk past, my lord, and I recognized you. I am sending you this tablet secretly, by way of the

old woman who shares my dwelling. She has instructions to deliver it into the hand of the captain's handsome Greek friend. Rescue me from the hands of these brigands and receive your servant; and if you so wish, save me and learn that the wrongs I appear to have done I was compelled to do, but the revenge I took on your enemy I took voluntarily. But if you are possessed by unchangeable anger, then vent it on me however you please: just let me be under your command, even if I should die.

Although it might be easy to read this letter as a continuation of Knemon's inset tale, it gains broader significance within the context of our case against Knemon. First of all, it establishes a possible motive for Knemon for killing Thisbe: although she professes to love him, she acknowledges that he still might be "possessed by unchangeable anger." This anticipation of his anger is corroborated by Knemon himself, who after reading the letter exclaims:

«ὦ Θίσβη» ἔφη «σὺ μὲν καλῶς ποιῶσα τέθνηκας καὶ γέγονας ἡμῖν αὐτάγγελος τῶν ἑαυτῆς συμφορῶν ἐξ αὐτῶν ἐγχειρίσασα τῶν σῶν σφαγῶν τὴν διήγησιν. Οὕτως ἄρα τιμωρὸς Ἐρινὺς γῆν ἐπὶ πᾶσαν, ὡς ἔοικεν, ἐλαύνουσά σε οὐ πρότερον ἔστησε τὴν ἔνδικον μάστιγα πρὶν καὶ ἐν Αἰγύπτῳ με τυγχάνοντα τὸν ἠδίκημένον θεατὴν ἐπιστῆσαι τῆς κατὰ σοῦ ποινῆς. (Hld. 2.11.1)

"Thisbe...you have done well by dying and you have become yourself the messenger of your sufferings, for it was your own wounds that put your narrative into our hands. It seems indeed that an avenging Fury pursued you all over the world and did not still her whip of Justice until she had brought you to Egypt, where I also happened to be by chance, and presented me, the injured spectator, with the spectacle of the retribution that she had exacted from you."

Knemon even goes so far upon reading the letter as to claim that Thisbe still had it in for him, asking the question: "But what was it, I wonder, that you were devising and scheming against me with this letter, and which divine justice preempted your attempts?" (Hld. 2.11.2).<sup>167</sup>

Although he earlier claimed that he needed Thisbe to exonerate himself in Athens, Knemon seems rather pleased that she has met her end in Egypt where (he reminds his companions) he just so "happened to be by chance." Indeed, his apparent joy at her demise seems somewhat strange, given that it would have been much better for Knemon (according to his story to Charikleia earlier) if he had found her alive, since he could then go back to Athens and prove

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<sup>167</sup> Hld. 2.11.2: Ἀλλὰ τί ἦν ἄρα, ὃ καὶ πάλιν σε κατ' ἐμοῦ τεχναζομένην καὶ σοφιστεύουσαν διὰ τοῦ γράμματος ἢ δίκη προαφείλετο τῶν ἐγχειρημάτων; ("But what was it, I wonder, that you were devising and scheming against me with this letter, and which divine justice preempted your attempts?").

his innocence. He has clearly not forgiven Thisbe for tricking him into falling in love with her and for then betraying him in the service of Deimenete, causing his exile, and ruining his family. Knemon's intense hatred for her that the letter makes explicit is certainly enough to give him a motive to kill Thisbe.

The letter is also important because it indicates that there was a time when Knemon and Thisbe crossed paths during the brief time that they both were on the island: "by the grace of some god," she claims, "I saw you walk past, my lord, and I recognized you" (ἐγὼ σε θεῶν τινοῦ ἐνδόντος καὶ εἶδον, ᾧ δέσποτα, παριόντα καὶ ἐγνώρισα, Hld. 2.11.3). Although this does not present definitive proof that Knemon knew of Thisbe's presence on the island, it does at least present evidence that there was indeed an opportunity for him to have seen her prior to her murder, which is obviously important for establishing the premeditation of his act.

The more significant aspect of the tablet for our purposes is that it introduces a third woman in the picture: Thisbe's roommate, an old woman to whom she was to entrust the writing tablet to give to Knemon. There is absolutely no narrative reason for Thisbe to mention this woman. She does not give the tablet to Knemon—and thus does not seem to play any role at all in the narrative. However, if Thyamis did not kill Thisbe, then this woman would play the important part of being his victim, as I will now explain in piecing together the narrative of the murder from all the pieces of evidence that we have gathered.

Here is how it happened. Knemon takes Charikleia to the cave as ordered by Thyamis. He leads her to its very back and exits. As he returns to Thyamis, he runs into Thermouthis, Thisbe, and the old woman as they are getting to the cave (the moment mentioned by Thisbe in the letter), which gives him the idea of returning during the fray of battle to kill Thisbe. On his way back during the battle, however, he finds the dead body of the old woman to whom Thisbe had entrusted her letter, as well as Thyamis' sword.

(Thyamis had killed her, mistaking her for Charikleia and dropping his weapon upon committing the traumatic act of thinking that he killed the woman he loved.) Knemon picks up both objects, finds the real Thisbe inside the cave, kills her, and drags her body near the entrance of the cave, planting the two objects near her and moving the old woman's body out of sight. He then returns to the battle in order to have an alibi.

Admittedly, there is nothing in the narration to make the reader upon a first reading go on to believe that Knemon had passed Thermouthis. However, if Knemon had passed Thermouthis as he was bringing Thisbe to the cave, this would then explain why he would be so worried about Thermouthis thinking him to be the one who killed Thisbe, since he was the only one who knew the way to where she was hidden. Moreover, this sequence of events would also explain how Charikleia did not see Thisbe on their way down, as she rightly points out to Knemon (Hld 2.8.3) when she expresses credulity that it is in fact Thisbe. Finally, the fact that Knemon saw Thisbe and that she is willing to start spreading word about their relationship as the letter suggests gives urgency to Knemon to kill her as soon as possible, since the fact that he can claim that he does not know of her presence would make him much less of a suspect for her murder.

When Knemon and Theagenes return to the crime scene, Knemon at first pretends that it is Charikleia's body, even though he knows that he placed her deep in the cave, as the narrator relates and he himself later claims upon hearing her voice. He points out (and insists) that the murder weapon is clearly Thyamis', first to Theagenes, then to Charikleia, and finally to Thermouthis. He is nervous about Thermouthis' return in particular, because they ran into each other when he returned from placing Charikleia in the cave.

### **4.3 Conclusions**

Before we summarize our case against Knemon and discuss the interpretative benefits of reading the text in the way proposed above, there is one final bit of evidence to examine.

Near the beginning of Book 5, Charikleia is told by Nausikles to pretend to be Thisbe and delivers a soliloquy, which Knemon overhears without seeing who the speaker is. This is his reaction:

Οὐκέτι κατέχειν ἑαυτὸν ἐκαρτέρησεν ὁ Κνήμων ὡς τούτων ἤκουσεν οὐδὲ ὑπέμεινε τὴν τῶν ὑπολοίπων ἀκρόασιν, ἀλλ' ἐκ τῶν πρώτων ἕτερα ὑπονοήσας, ἐκ τῶν ἐπὶ τέλους τὴν Θίσβην εἶναι τῷ ὄντι πιστεύσας, ὀλίγου μὲν ἐδέησε καὶ κατενεχθῆναι παρ' αὐταῖς σχεδὸν τι ταῖς θύραις· ... καὶ τάχα ἂν καὶ εἰς ἔσχατον ἦλθε κινδύνου εἰ μὴ θᾶπτον ὁ Καλάσιρις αἰσθόμενος ἔθαλπέ τε συνεχῶς καὶ λόγῳ παντοίως ἀνελάμβανεν. Ἐπεὶ δὲ μικρὸν ἀνέπνευσε τὴν αἰτίαν ἐξεμάνθανεν· ὁ δὲ «Ἀπόλωλά σοι» ἔφη· «ζῆ γὰρ ὡς ἀληθῶς ἢ κακίστη Θίσβη»· καὶ εἰπὼν αὐθις ἐξέθανε. (Hld. 5.3.3)

Knemon could not restrain himself any longer; having heard these tidings, he did not endure to hear the rest of what she had to say. Although her first words had encouraged him to think otherwise, the latter part had convinced him that this was indeed Thisbe, and he very nearly collapsed close to that very door. [...] He might have been exposed to the uttermost danger, had not Kalasiris, perceiving instantly the situation, brought him round by keeping him constantly warm and rousing him with words in all possible ways. Knemon breathed a little, and Kalasiris asked him why he was in such a state. “I am lost”, he said “she really is alive, Thisbe, the most despicable”; and after saying that he instantly fainted.

Knemon’s mortifying reaction here would seem quite incommensurate with what Knemon has said about Thisbe or the generally amicable tone of her letter to him, no matter how much bad blood there is between them. However, as with many of the small details we have analyzed in this chapter, if it was in fact Knemon who murdered her, then there is good reason for how he reacts in this scene.

What has been suggested above is not the only possible reconstruction of events. Nor is it one that is explicitly offered by a text as cryptic as the *Aithiopika*. There are so many small details and clues to keep in mind that is not surprising perhaps that this is not an interpretation that has been offered by scholars previously. However, when one considers all the small details—Knemon’s strange eagerness to exculpate himself, Thermouthis’ seemingly unmotivated suspicion of Knemon, Knemon’s explicit hatred of Thisbe, his complete lack of an alibi during the battle, and the fact that the third woman would otherwise be entirely extraneous to the plot—the reconstruction we have proposed here does not seem

unaccounted for; in fact, it is perhaps the only one that can make sense of all the details in a novel where famously nothing is unmotivated or irrelevant.<sup>168</sup>

Thermouthis' dying thoughts are thus accurate: Knemon is the murderer of Thisbe. But what interpretative benefit do we gain from acknowledging this while in the act of reading? An understanding of Knemon as a murderer makes the narrative all the more rewarding, as the reader has to keep returning to the story in order to eliminate possibilities and discover the one, coherent truth that brings the puzzle together, as we have argued above.

Of course, we have to note here that this is not a standard crime novel. There is no detective character, what happens to the body of the old woman is not discussed, nor is the crime even made the main point of the plot; more than that, Heliodorus' narrative strategy does not readily provide the solution or the connection between all the threads for the reader about Knemon's crime. It must be admitted, after all, that none of Heliodorus' prior readers—from late antiquity to the present—has solved the crime in the way proposed in this chapter.

It is likely in fact that in reading this chapter and the reconstruction suggested, one might not remember all the subtle and dispersed details that we have used to make our case. There are so many that to keep them all in mind upon a first or even a second reading is difficult. However, if the text is read like a detective narrative, then piecing together all the clues is not just possible; it becomes an enjoyable exercise that rewards readers who take the time (like detectives in modern crime novels) to look closely at all the available evidence and construct a narrative that makes sense of it all.

The astonishing fact with Heliodorus is that, even if one does not believe that Knemon killed Thisbe, the text can support the weight of such a reading, as we have seen. I have argued that Knemon did kill her, and this gives to Heliodorus' narrative an absolutely

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<sup>168</sup> Lowe 2000, 249–265. For more discussion of Heliodorus' attention to detail, see 35n99 above.

unexpected twist, forcing us to re-evaluate the novel's narrative code towards being a very sophisticated, if unexpected, predecessor of detective fiction. From his suspicious novella intended to elicit sympathy from his newly arrived Greek companions (and on another level from the readers of the text) to his unmotivated need to remove all blame from himself over Thisbe's death, it is clear that Knemon is not the buffoon that he has been considered to be. He is a talented liar who knows how to manipulate his audiences and get away with murder—not only in the novel itself but in its interpretation by readers until now.

## CHAPTER 5

### THE “HONORABLE MENDACITY” OF KALASIRIS<sup>169</sup>

#### 5.1 Self-Reflexive Mendacity: Some Background

Chapters 3 and 4 proposed that we convert our understanding of Knemon as a timid buffoon to someone who got away with the perfect crime through a web of lies and misdirection. In particular, the previous chapter showed that whereas Knemon’s narrative appears to be prohairetic—that is, linear and without much surprise—Heliodorus finds an ingenious method to embed hermeneutic demands extremely deep in his story in such a way that puts the burden on the reader not only to gather but also to interpret the many subtle clues of the narrative that point to Knemon’s ability to deceive and manipulate.<sup>170</sup>

The aim of this current chapter is to investigate another central character in the *Aithiopika*, Kalasiris, described by many scholars as a centerpiece of Heliodorus’ narrative.<sup>171</sup> Although the scholarly consensus has commented on Kalasiris’ shifting mendacity and creative story-telling,<sup>172</sup> I will present Kalasiris as a religious man, who is hyperconfident in his hermeneutic abilities and lies so that he can achieve a higher calling. In this way, I want to challenge the standard interpretation of Kalasiris as a self-aware, crafty narrator able to adapt his story to the situation and present him instead as religious man who tells “noble” lies in order to attain what he considers to be a religious imperative. My challenge is thus not to

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<sup>169</sup> This phrase comes from Winkler 1982, 93, in his seminal article on Kalasiris in the *Aithiopika*.

<sup>170</sup> For the distinction between hermeneutic and prohairetic narratives see Winkler 1982, 114–137; Morgan 1989a, 99; Morgan 1989b, following Barthes 1974; Perkins 1999, 200–202; Whitmarsh 2002a, 116–119; 1993–1994, ; 2007, 293; Whitmarsh 2011, 192–193.

<sup>171</sup> Goethals 1959, 292, maintains that Kalasiris is the most important character in the novel. A similar position is also held by Winkler 1982 and Futre Pinheiro 2001.

<sup>172</sup> Winkler 1982; Futre-Pinheiro 1991; Baumbach 1997, 333–341.

dismiss the former interpretations and downplay the obvious mendacity of Kalasiris' stories, which are clearly meant to manipulate those around him. On the contrary, I aim to show how the inconsistencies in Kalasiris' stories act as a challenge for Heliodorus' readers: they present a case in which suspicion against an apparently devious character might prove to be misleading. In other words, I argue that, while Knemon's narrative arc is designed to make the readers look more closely and critically at the text and its characters, the narrative of Kalasiris is there to warn them against reading too closely and looking for ambiguous craftiness where there is in fact an underlying consistency—something that is important also for understanding Charikleia's character, as we will see in the following chapter.

Kalasiris is not the Odyssean, self-aware narrator that scholars make him out to be. He is instead a red herring for the reader, serving the equivalent function of the character in detective fiction who the reader is led to believe is guilty, but whom eventually, and upon repeated reading she discovers to be a straw man, intended to misdirect from other, pressing inconsistencies in the narrative. We will return to the red herring character in modern detective fiction more at the end of this chapter to see its importance to the genre.

But first, why and how did Kalasiris come to be so important for understanding Heliodorus? The first surviving reactions to the *Aithiopika* display some characteristic signs pointing to his importance by calling attention to the seeming contradictions in Kalasiris' outlook. Michael Psellos (11<sup>th</sup> century) is the strongest advocate of Kalasiris' superficial culpability. He states in his *De Chariclea et Leucippe Iudicium* that Heliodorus “indeed (the author) elevates the aged Kalasiris from the charge of pandering, something of no great credibility, until by the complexity of his art this writer has eliminated the apparent charge.”<sup>173</sup> Philip the Philosopher (most likely 12<sup>th</sup> century)<sup>174</sup> seems to share a similar view

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<sup>173</sup> Colonna 1938, 364 (also available in Dyck 1986, 92): οὕτω γέ τοι καὶ τὸν πρεσβύτην Καλάσιριν ἐξαιρεῖ τῆς ἐπὶ τῇ προαγωγείᾳ μέμψεως, πρᾶγμα τῶν μὴ πάνυ πιστευομένων, πρὶν ἂν ὁ συγγραφεὺς οὗτος τῷ ποικίλῳ τῆς τέχνης τὸ δοκοῦν ὑπαίτιον ἀπόσαστο.

by maintaining that Kalasiris uses lying as a medicine against the discomforts of reality (ὡς φαρμάκῳ χρῆσθαι τῷ ψεύδει).<sup>175</sup>

Modernity has adopted a more skeptical outlook towards Kalasiris, however. On the level of character, Kalasiris stood out as an uncomfortable persona from the very first examination of the genre, when Rohde, unable to square his solemnity and his deceptiveness, who regarded him as a most problematic character.<sup>176</sup> At the same time, however, Rohde was also quick to identify in Kalasiris a typical description of what constituted the common currency for understanding “Egyptianism” in his own time, namely, as combination of both solemnity and trickery.<sup>177</sup>

To compound the understanding of Kalasiris further, on the level of plot design, Hefti’s early work on Heliodorus identified and was concerned with the narrative inconsistencies in Kalasiris’ early appearance in the story at 2.26.1, which he takes to be an intended lie on Kalasiris’ behalf.<sup>178</sup> Kalasiris’ ability to lie was also of paramount importance to Goethals, who provided direct and persuasive comparisons of Heliodorus with Homeric narrative technique and suggested similarities between Odysseus and Kalasiris.<sup>179</sup> Then, in 1982, Sandy suggested a compromise between these two positions, maintaining that Kalasiris

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<sup>174</sup> Compelling argumentation for a 12<sup>th</sup> century date is found in Colonna 1939; Gärtner 1969, 47–69; Roilos 2005, 303; Burton 2008, 272–281. *Contra* Tarán 1992, 229, who takes Philip to compose his *ἐρμῆνευμα* around the 6<sup>th</sup> century CE, but based only on cultural grounds and not textual testimonies. See also notes 175 and 227 below.

<sup>175</sup> Philip the Philosopher’s text survives in the Codex Venetus Marcianus gr. 410 (now 522), a manuscript of the 12<sup>th</sup> or 13<sup>th</sup> century and attracted scholarly attention instantly. See Hercher 1869, 382–388; Sandy 2001, 169–178; Hunter 2005, 123–138; Miles 2009, 292–305. Text found in Colonna 1938, 367 (line 47); cf. Plat. *Resp.* 459c–d.

<sup>176</sup> Rohde (1914) 1960, 477.

<sup>177</sup> Rohde (1914) 1960, 478–479: “Die Zeichnung des Kalasiris mischt ganz wunderlich Züge des weisen Gottesmannes und des verschmitzten Ägypters durcheinander. Einige Ansätze zu schärferer Charakterisierung werden bei manchen Nebenpersonen gemacht, welche den leuchtenden Idealgestalten zur Folie dienen sollen.” For Kalasiris’ Egyptianism and some of its ancient parallels see Rutherford 1997, 203–209.

<sup>178</sup> Hefti 1950, 36, believes that Kalasiris lies and withholds important information at Hld. 2.26.1.

<sup>179</sup> Goethals 1959.

is, simultaneously and inextricably, both a trickster and a saint.<sup>180</sup> He then proceeded to provide a long and fascinating list of similarities between the practices of Kalasiris’ “holy lying” and the activities of the typical Egyptian priest and holy man, as displayed by personalities like the the Egyptian prophet Proteus in the *Odyssey*,<sup>181</sup> the Egyptian priest Paapis in Antonius Diogenes’ *Wonders beyond Thule*,<sup>182</sup> and, finally, Nectanebus in the various versions of the *Alexander Romance*.<sup>183</sup> For Sandy, all three figures hark back to the ambiguous personality of Pythagoras, who seems to have deployed similar methods in his interactions with his students.<sup>184</sup> However, perhaps even more importantly for Sandy, these philosophical and simultaneously ambiguous resonances are testimonies to the omnipresent and unavoidable duality of wisdom.

It was also in 1982 that Winkler published his seminal article on “The Mendacity of Kalasiris and the Narrative Strategy of Heliodorus’ *Aithiopika*.” Although similar in some respects to the views of Sandy regarding Kalasiris, Winkler provided a more nuanced understanding of Kalasiris’ “tension between his oft-alleged wisdom, piety, virtual sanctity on the one hand, and his outrageous mendacity on the other.”<sup>185</sup> Even though Kalasiris seems at times to be a devout priest,<sup>186</sup> he tells two dramatically different versions of his motivation for leaving and returning to Egypt: first, to Knemon, he cites both his threatening flirtation

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<sup>180</sup> Sandy 1982b, 141–167, esp. 153: “Calasiris is a complex character and cannot be labeled fraud or holy man. He is both.”

<sup>181</sup> Hom. *Od.* 4.351–569. For Proteus’ cunning in the context of Greek culture see the excellent study of Detienne and Vernant 1978. I find Buchan 2004 to be one of the best interpretations of Proteus available.

<sup>182</sup> For trickster and deception in Antonius Diogenes see Cameron 2004, 52–59; Ní Mheallaigh 2008, 403–430; 2014, 144–206, 264–278.

<sup>183</sup> For analysis of Nectanebus and its implications see Pfister 1946, 29–66; Bergson 1965; Stoneman 1994, 112–129; 2005, 141–157.

<sup>184</sup> Sandy 1982b, 151, citing Morrison 1956, 135–156, and further evidence for the uses of γόνος as related to the intellectual reception of Pythagoras of Samos.

<sup>185</sup> Winkler 1982, 93.

<sup>186</sup> See Futre Pinheiro 1987, 1991a, and 1991b, 69–81, especially 78–79, for a more detailed analysis of multiple narrative levels in and motivation on Heliodorus, as well as Bargheer 1999. For religious motivation in the ancient novel in general see Edsal 1996; 2001, 114–133; Stark 1989, 135–149, presenting similarities to Christian narrative techniques.

with Rhodopis, a woman of Egyptian origin, which causes Kalasiris to depart (Hld. 2.25.4–6); however, he later claims to Charikleia that he left Egypt at the admonition of the Aithiopian queen Persinna to find her lost daughter, whom he reveals to be Charikleia herself (Hld. 4.12.1–3).<sup>187</sup> Winkler interprets this contradiction not as a “mere oversight of the author or poorly planned effect but more like a deliberate strategy on Kalasiris’ part, and hence an aspect of the larger problem of his honorable mendacity.”<sup>188</sup> For Winkler, this problem of “honorable mendacity” can be solved by understanding that Kalasiris is not so much lying as adapting his tale to safeguard the only thing that matters to him: his divinely inspired protection of Charikleia. However, according to Winkler, “the justification of [Kalasiris’] behavior is not that he acts basely in the service of a higher cause; rather *duplicity itself* is the proper moral attitude, duplicity in the sense of carefully weighing alternatives and respecting the volition of all the characters.”<sup>189</sup> Winkler connects this attitude of Kalasiris to that of the author of the novel himself, elevating the Egyptian priest to the level of almost a stand-in for the author, or at least one who knows how to play the same narrative games.<sup>190</sup>

Winkler’s almost impossibly nuanced interpretation of the inconsistencies in Kalasiris’ tales is correct in concluding that Kalasiris is not lying out of some ill intention. Winkler’s argument goes too far, however, in emphasizing Kalasiris’ craftiness as a narrator, downplaying his genuine religious devotion. He reads Kalasiris as a player in a narrative game, which would seem to undercut the sanctity of what he is trying to accomplish with his noble lies, namely, the homecoming of Charikleia and the consummation of her and Theagenes’ love. On the other hand, we have Sandy’s interpretation, which by combining

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<sup>187</sup> See Anderson 1997, 303–322; Bretzigheimer 1998, 93–118.

<sup>188</sup> Winkler 1982, 93.

<sup>189</sup> Winkler 1982, 136.

<sup>190</sup> Winkler 1982, 101: “My thesis will be that Heliodoros’ techniques of displaying incomplete cognition are designed to heighten our awareness of the game-like structure of intelligibility involved in reading a romance, and that Kalasiris is the major representative of one who know how to play this game.”

both attitudes fails to explain adequately the specific textual instances where Kalasiris seems deceitful or sincere, instead sweepingly accepting both stances as equally forceful.

I propose in this chapter to shift the balance to the diegetic level, towards Kalasiris' actions, by exploring how it might be out of a sincere attempt to serve a religious drive—and not as a self-conscious narrative game—that Kalasiris lies about his intentions and motivations. By explaining this religious drive, we might come to see his actions as less bewildering or contradictory. In fact, we may see Kalasiris' actions as predictable or even banal, since they seem to occur under a specific, religious mindset, and not because he is in any way more intelligent than the other characters in the novel.

First, I will analyze the beginning of Kalasiris' narrative arc, including the moment at which he meets Knemon and then the start of his inset tale. This examination will demonstrate that, although Kalasiris might seem a suspect character (and for good reason), he is in fact a devout religious person from the beginning. Then, I will examine how his interpretation of the oracle influences his interactions with Charikles, Charikleia, and Theagenes throughout the entire span of his presence in the narrative. Playing upon Winkler's understanding of mendacity, this chapter will explore his "honorable mendacity" and genuine devotion, especially when it comes to the gods and accomplishing their will. What follows is a complete, stage-by-stage investigation of all of his major actions with and their reception by the main characters in the novel in an attempt to consolidate further our understanding of Kalasiris' intentions and hence explain the contradictions through, and not in spite of, his religious motivation.

## **5.2 Kalasiris' Religiosity: Belief and Performance**

Kalasiris' entrance is striking. Portrayed as an old man with very long white hair that falls onto his shoulders in the manner of priests, a thick, long beard, and a dress that seems

somewhat Greek,<sup>191</sup> he is walking up and down the bank of the Nile, seeming to be deeply perturbed by thoughts—so much so, in fact, that he fails to notice Knemon’s presence before he is directly verbally addressed by him. Even then, however, Kalasiris seems rather distracted in his first encounter with Knemon: when the latter greets him, Kalasiris claims that he cannot be happy because bad luck cannot allow him to be so. Knemon then asks him to tell his story, and this brings us to the first intriguing part of Kalasiris’ narrative arc, its frame. This is how he begins:

Ἰλιόθεν με φέρεις [...] καὶ πάντως τὰ ἡμέτερα ποθεῖς ἀκούειν, ὠδίνω δὲ καὶ αὐτὸς πρὸς τινα ἐξειπεῖν (εἶπον ἂν τάχα καὶ τοῖσδε τοῖς καλάμοις κατὰ τὸν μῦθον εἰ μὴ σοὶ προσέτυχον). (Hld. 2.21.5–6)

You summon me from Troy [...] You have a desire to hear my story, and I am suffering to tell it to someone (if I had not met you, I might even have told it to these reeds, as the myth goes).

Kalasiris starts by instantly showing off. Beginning “from Troy,” he announces that his story has epic dimensions. The comparison with Odysseus’ storytelling is unavoidable for Heliodorus’ learned readers, who know the connotation of the proverbial phrase. After all, the *Aithiopika* in its overall structure clearly and unmistakably resonates with the *Odyssey*.<sup>192</sup> Heliodorus is not so predictable, though, and Kalasiris is not nearly so devious as his addressee in this situation. This frame might raise readers’ awareness about Kalasiris’ intellectual background and depth; however, in this case, it is their burden to read *against* their own, elevated expectations.

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<sup>191</sup> Hld. 2.21.2. One should remember here that Imperial literature (especially reflected by Polemon of Laodicea, but also by Galen, Plutarch, Philostratus, and Suetonius on the Latin side) was heavily invested in the study of physiognomy at the time, so the careful depiction of Kalasiris as a holy man should be considered in Heliodorus’ intellectual environment. See the classic but now quite outdated studies of Evans 1941, 96–108, and Evans 1969, 1–101. For text and translations of all the important physiognomical passages see Swain and Boys-Stones 2007. For modern studies on physiognomy see Barton 1995; Popović 2007; Rohrbacher 2010, 92–116.

<sup>192</sup> For the Odyssean pattern of the overall structure of the *Aithiopika* see Wolff (1912) 1961, 157, 192; Rohde (1914) 1960, 474–476; Keyes 1922, 42–51; Hefti 1950, 98–103; Futre Pinheiro 1991, 69–70; Whitmarsh 1998, 93; Elmer 2008, 431; de Temmerman 2014, 246–248.

As Kalasiris takes Knemon to the house on the other side of the riverbank, he invites him to dinner. Before they start, they decide to offer a libation to the gods:

Ἀλλὰ πρῶτον ἡμῖν ὡς νόμος Αἰγυπτίων σοφοῖς ἐσπείσθω τὰ πρὸς τοὺς θεοὺς· οὐ γὰρ δὴ με καὶ τοῦτο ὑπερβῆναι πείσει, μὴ οὕτω ποτὲ πάθος ἰσχύσειεν ὡς μνήμην τὴν εἰς τὸ θεῖον ἐκπλήξαι. (Hld. 2.22.5)

But first we must make our libation to the gods according to the custom of the wise men of Egypt. Even this could not induce me to neglect this observance. May my suffering never be so great as to make me dispel the memory of my duty to the divine.

This passage depicts Kalasiris from the start as a devout man, whose religious conviction conditions everything in life, including his food and his own well-being, much in the manner of the holy men of late antiquity.<sup>193</sup> In Kalasiris' words, we have in fact a reminder of Hadot's theory of the spiritual outlook predominant at the time, inextricably connected with the religious practice of spiritual exercise.<sup>194</sup> This outlook maintained that fundamental philosophical beliefs should cut across all aspects of an individual's life. Kalasiris' sacrificial rite, then, along with his vegetarianism and abstinence from alcohol, clearly marks a pattern which is consistent with such a spiritual outlook. Right from the outset, then, we get a sense of Kalasiris' system of values—and the priority that religion has in it.

Although one might believe this religious tendency to be a performance, as we saw in the discussion of scholarship in previous section, it is confirmed instantly when Kalasiris starts his own story by identifying himself as a former prophet from Memphis (*πάλαι γὰρ προφήτης*, Hld. 2.24.5). One of the main reasons why Kalasiris decides to abandon his land is to avoid the sacrilege of giving into the temptation of Rhodopis, a local Egyptian woman who tempts him all too much (Hld. 2.25.4–5). As Kalasiris tells Knemon, he had no choice but to leave in order to avoid breaking his vow of chastity that he had taken as a child.<sup>195</sup> The way

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<sup>193</sup> Brown 1971, 80–101; Baumbach 2008, 167–183.

<sup>194</sup> Hadot 1995; Hadot 2002.

<sup>195</sup> Hld. 2.25.3: τὴν μὲν ἐκ παίδων μοι σύντροφον ἱερωσύνην ἔγνω μὴ καταισχυῖναι καὶ ἀντέσχον μηδὲ ἱερὰ καὶ τεμένη θεῶν βεβηλῶσαι (“I resolved not to disgrace the priestly

that he reveals his own flaws as a religious man, showing regret for his inappropriate feelings in his past, suggests that his show of religiosity is genuine. In other words, if he was trying to deceive Knemon into believing that he is religiously devout, telling about his failure to live up to his ideals would seem a strange way to do so.

This devotion becomes a constant throughout his travels, as well. Given Delphi's reputation for being an isolated, sacred home to Apollo and other gods, including many Egyptian gods,<sup>196</sup> Kalasiris decides to find a haven there. Not only is he himself a self-proclaimed religious man, but the gods clearly agree: the moment he enters the city, he goes to the temple, where he receives his first oracle. This oracle bids him be brave and friendly to the god; in exchange, the oracle suggests, he will eventually find himself back in Egypt.<sup>197</sup> Because of the fact that he instantly received an oracle, the citizens of Delphi honor him greatly, and he is admitted to every aspect of their philosophical and religious lives (Hld. 2.27.1–2).

This endorsement of the Delphians makes Kalasiris known to a prominent priest of the sanctuary of Apollo, Charikles, who is familiar with the Egyptian mysteries owing to his former visit to the Nile. On the occasion of hearing Kalasiris' explanation of the river Nile and all things Egyptian, he decides to impart to Kalasiris his own Egyptian story, including the adoption of his daughter, Charikleia. Charikles' ultimate intention is to ask Kalasiris to convince Charikleia to abandon her total devotion to chastity and Apollo, as well as to encourage her to recognize, either with words or with deeds, that she is a woman who should

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service, my childhood companion, and I did resist so as not to disgrace the sacred rites and shrines of the gods”).

<sup>196</sup> Paus. 10.32.13.

<sup>197</sup> Hld. 2.26.5: Ἰχνος ἀειράμενος ἀπ’ ἐυστάχου παρὰ Νείλου | φεύγεις μοιράων νήματ’ ἐρισθενέων. | Τέτλαθι, σοὶ γὰρ ἐγὼ κυαναύλακος Αἰγύπτιοιο | αἶψα πέδον δώσω· νῦν δ’ ἐμὸς ἔσσο φίλος (“You have brought your footsteps from the fruitful land beside the Nile, to escape the spinings of the predominant fate. Persevere, for I will give you very soon the soil of dark-furrowed Egypt. Meanwhile, be my friend”).

embrace love and the idea of taking a husband.<sup>198</sup> It is precisely because of Kalasiris' wisdom concerning Egyptian religion and dealings with the occult that Charikles decides to confide in Kalasiris and assign this important task to him.<sup>199</sup>

As he is discussing this with Charikles, they both receive a request for a religious procession owing to the fact that a descendant of the Aenianes was approaching, who will later be revealed to be Theagenes. As this procession goes along, the Pythia utters an oracle. Here is the message itself, along with response of the crowd:

Τὴν χάριν ἐν πρώτοις αὐτὰρ κλέος ὕστατ' ἔχουσαν  
φράζεσθ', ὦ Δελφοί, τόν τε θεᾶς γενέτην·  
οἱ νηὸν προλιπόντες ἐμὸν καὶ κῦμα τεμόντες  
ἴξοντ' ἡελίου πρὸς χθόνα κυανέην,  
τῇ περ ἀριστοβίων μέγ' ἀέθλιον ἐξάψονται  
λευκὸν ἐπὶ κροτάφων στέμμα μελαινομένων.

Ταῦτα μὲν ὡς ἀνεῖπεν ὁ θεός, ἀμηχανία πλείστη τοὺς περιεστῶτας εἰσεδύετο τὸν χρησμὸν ὃ τι βούλοιο φράζειν ἀποροῦντας· ἄλλος γὰρ πρὸς ἄλλο τι τὸ λόγιον ἔσπα καὶ ὡς ἕκαστος εἶχε βουλήσεως, οὕτω καὶ ὑπελάμβανεν. Οὕπω δὲ οὐδεὶς τῶν ἀληθῶν ἐφήπτετο, χρησμοὶ γὰρ καὶ ὄνειροι τὰ πολλὰ τοῖς τέλεσι κρίνονται, καὶ ἄλλως οἱ Δελφοὶ πρὸς τὴν πομπὴν ἐπτοημένοι μεγαλοπρεπῶς ἠὲ τρεπισμένην ἠπεύγοντο, τὰ χρησθέντα πρὸς τὸ ἀκριβὲς ἀνιχνεύειν ἀμελήσαντες. (Hld. 2.35.5–36.2)

The one who starts in grace and ends in glory,  
Show, Delphi, and the son of the goddess!  
Who, leaving my temple here and cutting the waves,  
Will arrive at the black land of the Sun,  
Where as the great reward of their virtuous lives they will win and wear  
About their temples a white crown on black brows.

As the god said these things, a sense of great perplexity possessed the attendants, who were puzzled as to what the oracle intended to reveal. Every man drew the verse in a different direction, and as each one desired, so he interpreted it. But nobody could yet attain its true meaning; for oracles and dreams for the most part are only interpreted according to their results. The people of Delphi were in too much of a hurry, for they were highly excited at the prospect of this procession, for which such magnificent preparations had been made, neglecting to take time to investigate the exact meaning of the oracle.

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<sup>198</sup> Hld. 2.33.6: πεῖσον ἢ λόγοις ἢ ἔργοις γνωρίσαι τὴν ἑαυτῆς φύσιν καὶ ὅτι γυνὴ γέγονεν εἰδέναι (“Persuade her, either by words or by deeds, to recognize her own nature and to realize that she has become a woman”).

<sup>199</sup> Hld. 2.33.6: Σοφίαν τινὰ καὶ ἕγγα κίνησον ἐπ’ αὐτὴν Αἰγυπτίαν· (“Bring to her something of the Egyptian lore and enchantment”).

The essential point of this passage for our purposes is that Kalasiris plays up to the extreme the difficulty of this oracle, claiming that everyone seems to be interpreting oracles however they deem appropriate (ἄλλος γὰρ πρὸς ἄλλο τι τὸ λόγιον ἔσπα καὶ ὡς ἕκαστος εἶχε βουλήσεως, οὕτω καὶ ὑπελάμβανεν), with no one being able to get it right, or even taking the time to think about it more deeply (τὰ χρησθέντα πρὸς τὸ ἀκριβὲς ἀνιχνεύειν ἀμελήσαντες).<sup>200</sup> The oracle is not a difficult one, of course. The names of the two figures alluded to are basically spelled out in the first two lines: χάριν... κλέος = Charikleia; θεᾶς γενέτην = Theagenes. That is not to say that even the “wise” Kalasiris is completely able to solve the oracle at first. It is rather only when he sees the two together and notices their obvious attraction to each other that he claims to have figured out the oracle’s true meaning, and even then that of only part of it:

Ταῦτα δὲ τοὺς μὲν πολλοὺς, ὡς εἰκός, ἐλάνθανεν ἄλλον πρὸς ἄλλην χρείαν τε καὶ διάνοιαν ὄντας, ἐλάνθανε δὲ καὶ τὸν Χαρικλέα τὴν πάτριον εὐχὴν καὶ ἐπίκλησιν καταγγέλλοντα· ἐγὼ δὲ πρὸς μίαν τὴν παρατήρησιν τῶν νέων ἠσυχολούμην, ἐξ ἐκείνου, Κνήμων, ἐξ οὐ̄περ ὁ χρησμός ἐπὶ Θεαγένει θυομένῳ κατὰ τὸν νεῶν ἦδετο, πρὸς ὑπόνοιαν τῶν ἐσομένων ἀπὸ τῶν ὀνομάτων κεκινημένος. Ἄλλ’ οὐδὲ ἀκριβῶς οὐδὲν ἔτι τῶν ἐξῆς χρησθέντων συνέβαλλον. (Hid. 3.5.7)

These things, as was probable, escaped the notice of the multitude, as they were all taken up with their own concerns and thinking their own thoughts. Even Charikles failed to notice this, as he was pronouncing the traditional prayer and invocation. But I was concerned solely to watch the youths, for at the moment, Knemon, when the oracle was sung in the temple as Theagenes made his offering, I was moved by hearing their names towards an inkling of future events. But as yet I had not put together precisely what the latter part of the oracle meant.

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<sup>200</sup> Scholarship is currently flourishing on the historical and interpretative significance of oracles and their divination, with Johnston and Struck 2005; Eidinow 2007, Flower 2008, Johnston 2008; Addey 2014; Marx–Wolf 2016; Struck 2016. However, Heliodorus is still very marginal to the discussion of the perceptibility and decipherment of oracles. Marein 1999, 111–122 speaks only tangentially about it. Addey 2014, 15, makes only a passing mention of Heliodorus, with regard only to the *Aithiopika*’s date and not concerning its involvement with oracles. Stoneman 2011, 113–121, speaks marginally about Heliodorus and Kalasiris in his discussion about fake oracles, but only *en passant* and without analysis. Groves 2014 discusses cross-language communication and linguistic barriers in the *Aithiopika* but does not engage with the role of oracles in the story.

It is apparently Kalasiris alone who can do the (relatively simple) arithmetic and add the words in the oracle together to get the names of the two protagonists of the novel. As Kalasiris presents it, however, this is a great accomplishment: no one else in the whole city could get it right, as no one was religiously devout enough to look for the deeper divine meaning, while Kalasiris presents himself as having discovered the truth through his great religious devotion.

In the preceding, we have established Kalasiris' religiosity as a major motivating factor for him in his actions: he clearly believes himself to be of a higher standing in the eyes of the gods than everyone else. It is this same conviction, as I will now argue, that leads him to lie in almost every interaction he has from this point on.

After Kalasiris starts to suspect that the oracle definitely concerns Theagenes and Charikleia, he and Charikles start speaking about Theagenes's and Charikleia's incredible beauty, with the Egyptian priest comparing her to the moon itself (Hld. 3.6.3). It is during this conversation that Kalasiris displays (in an aside to Knemon) his first sign of mendacity in service of a higher cause.

Ἦδετο τούτοις ὁ Χαρικλῆς καί μοι ὁ σκοπὸς ἐκ τῶν ἀληθῶν ἠγύετο, θαρσεῖν μοι τὸν ἄνδρα βουλομένῳ παντοίως· (Hld. 3.6.4)

Charikles was delighted with these [remarks], and I, too, who wanted to encourage him in every way, was making progress with my objective by using truth.

This window into Kalasiris' purpose here lets Knemon (and the reader) know that his flattery of Charikles regarding his daughter has an ulterior motive. The motive is not entirely clear at this moment, of course. What is clear is his interest in learning more about Charikleia, as he says before his conversation with Charikles that "he had become more curious as a result of what [he] had seen and heard" (Περιεργότερος τοίνυν ἐξ ὧν ἠκηκόειν τε καὶ ἐώρακειν, Hld. 3.6.2). From what we already know of Kalasiris, it would seem that his desire to do what he considers the will of the gods is a leading force in his search for the truth about the oracle's

meaning, which he has only partially solved by this point. He knows that Charikleia and Theagenes are involved but not much else. More investigation is needed, then, and the only way to do that would be to continue to interact with Charikles and Charikleia herself, even if it involves manipulating people to achieve that, as he does with Charikles in the above passage. Kalasiris is in fact sincere when he tells Charikles that he “deemed [Charikles’] affairs of more pressing importance than any other business he might have” (Ἦδετο τούτοις ὁ Χαρικλῆς καὶ μοι ὁ σκοπὸς ἐκ τῶν ἀληθῶν ἠνύετο, θαρσεῖν μοι τὸν ἄνδρα βουλομένῳ παντοίως, Hld. 3.6.4), even if for different reasons from what Charikles might suspect.

The divine motivation behind Kalasiris’ manipulation of Charikles becomes more apparent when he tells Knemon about the visitation from two gods on the following night:

Ἐπεὶ δὲ ἦλθον οὗ κατηγόμην ἄπνος τὰ πρῶτα διῆγον ἐπὶ τῆς εὐνῆς ἄνω καὶ κάτω τὴν περὶ τῶν νέων φροντίδα στρέφων καὶ τοῦ χρησμοῦ τὰ τελευταῖα τί ἄρα βούλοιο ἀνιχνεύων. Ἦδη δὲ μεσοῦσης τῆς νυκτὸς ὄρω τὸν Ἀπόλλω καὶ τὴν Ἄρτεμιν ὡς ὄμην, εἴ γε ὄμην ἀλλὰ μὴ ἀληθῶς ἐώρων· καὶ ὁ μὲν τὸν Θεαγένην ἡ δὲ τὴν Χαρίκλειαν ἐνεχείριζεν· ὀνομαστί τέ με προσκαλοῦντες «ῶρα σοι» ἔλεγον «εἰς τὴν ἐνεγκοῦσαν ἐπανήκειν, οὕτω γὰρ ὁ μοιρῶν ὑπαγορεύει θεσμός. Αὐτός τε οὖν ἔξιθι καὶ τούσδε ὑποδεξάμενος ἄγε, συνεμπόρους ἴσα τε παισὶ ποιούμενος, καὶ παράπεμπε ἀπὸ τῆς Αἰγυπτίων ὅποι τε καὶ ὅπως τοῖς θεοῖς φίλον». (Hld. 3.11.4–5)

After returning to my lodgings, I lay awake in bed for the first part of the night, turning over and over in my mind my concern for the young couple, investigating the meaning of the last lines of the oracle. Then, in the middle of the night, I see Apollo and Artemis, so I imagined—if indeed I did imagine it and I did not see them for real. Apollo entrusted Theagenes to my care; Artemis, Charikleia. They called me by name and said: “It is time now for you to return to the land of your origin, for thus the ordinance of the fates demands. Leave then indeed yourself and take these whom we deliver to you; make them the companions of your journey and equal to your own children. From Egypt conduct them onward wherever and however it pleases the gods.”

This divine visitation confirms in Kalasiris’ mind his interpretation of the oracle as relating to Charikleia and Theagenes. What is more important for our purposes is how this passage reveals Kalasiris’ burning desire to understand the oracle’s meaning, as he is shown lying awake, “examining every facet of the question of the young couple, hunting for the meaning of the last lines of the oracle” (κάτω τὴν περὶ τῶν νέων φροντίδα στρέφων καὶ τοῦ χρησμοῦ

τὰ τελευταῖα τί ἄρα βούλοιοτο ἀνιχνεύων, Hld. 3.11.4). His anxiety is assuaged by the gods, who seem to appear to him directly and disambiguate the oracle further. Although it is not made explicit, the implication here is that Kalasiris believes himself to be devout enough to receive direct messages from the gods themselves, as he argues that these are perhaps not just dreams but in fact divinities that appear before him and govern his mission “to the land of [his] birth,” namely, Egypt.<sup>201</sup>

Yet, as before with the frame, Heliodorus pushes back against Kalasiris’ devotion, and has Knemon question him on how he is so sure about the nature of his divine visitation. Here is Kalasiris’ fervently argued, though seemingly sophistic, proof that these apparitions were not dreams but actually the gods themselves:

ἀλλὰ τίνα δὴ τρόπον ἔφασκες ἐνδεδειχθαί σοι τοὺς θεοὺς ὅτι μὴ ἐνύπνιον ἦλθον ἀλλ’ ἐναργῶς ἐφάνησαν;» «Ἵν τρόπον» εἶπεν «ὦ τέκνον, καὶ ὁ σοφὸς Ὅμηρος αἰνίττεται, οἱ πολλοὶ δὲ τὸ αἰνίγμα παρατρέχουσιν· Ἵχνια γὰρ μετόπισθεν ὡς ἐκεῖνός που λέγει ‘ποδῶν ἠδὲ κνημάτων ῥεῖ’ ἔγνων ἀπιόντος, ἀρίγνωτοι δὲ θεοὶ περ.’» (Hld. 3.12.1–2)

“But in which way did you say that the gods appeared to you, so that they did not come to your sleep but appeared in their actual bodily forms?” “In the same way, my child, that the wise Homer speaks also in riddles, but the majority overlook the riddle. As he says somewhere, ‘I easily knew the tracks of their feet or their shins from behind as they leave; for the gods are conspicuous.’”

Kalasiris shows off an assumed, but not quite applicable or relevant, Homeric knowledge here<sup>202</sup> to explain how he knows for sure that the divine presence that he experienced was

<sup>201</sup> For the importance of dreams and their interpretation in Heliodorus’ narrative see Lentakis 1993, 177–208, a study which devotes significant space in the Imperial Greek prose narrative background of dream interpretation and which, to my knowledge, has received very little attention from Heliodorean scholarship. For the importance of dream interpretation in that period see Russell and Nesselrath 2014.

<sup>202</sup> Kalasiris here refers to Hom. *Il.* 13, 71–72: Ἵχνια γὰρ μετόπισθε ποδῶν ἠδὲ κνημάτων | ῥεῖ ἔγνων ἀπιόντος· ἀρίγνωτοι δὲ θεοὶ περ· “I easily knew the tracks of their feet or their shins from behind as they leave; for the gods are conspicuous.”; for the Homeric reference see Rattenbury and Lumb (1935–43) 1960, 115. Kalasiris’ interpretation here should be taken as overzealous and irrelevant, since the connection between between Poseidon’s recognition via birdwatching and Kalasiris’ night vision is certainly on the level of a formulaic expression, rather than of meaning. An interesting study in the Homeric context of the Second Sophistic is Richardson 1975, 65–81. See also the most recent study of Pitcher 2016, 293–305.

real. These lines also reveal that Kalasiris thinks he is smarter than others at divining not just oracles but also texts, such as Homer’s poems, as he claims that “the majority overlook the riddle” (οἱ πολλοὶ δὲ τὸ αἶνιγμα παρατρέχουσιν). Knemon is no fool, however, as we have seen in previous chapters, and he seems to pick up on this, telling Kalasiris that his purpose in reciting those lines was to prove that Knemon was also a part of that ignorant majority (Hld. 3.12.3). For Kalasiris, though, only he himself has the divine insight to read and interpret Homer correctly, applying his own religious knowledge to the text in order to extract a meaning that others cannot see. Kalasiris’ interpretation of the lines is to take ῥεῖ’ with ἀπιόντος instead of with ἔγων. The chief evidence that Kalasiris cites for his unlikely interpretation is his knowledge of Egyptian statues of the gods. As he claims, “[f]or this reason, the Egyptians fashion the statues of the gods with their feet joined together, as though forming a single limb.”<sup>203</sup> The gods move, according to Kalasiris, as if gliding, and we know this because that is how Egyptian statues look, that is, “with their feet joined together.” Knemon doubts the sincerity of the divine insight of Kalasiris—who (somewhat pretentiously) explains everything through his “Egyptian wisdom” (as Charikles called it)—and so decides to push the priest even further:

«Ταῦτά με, ὦ θειότατε, μεμύηκας... Αἰγύπτιον δὲ Ὅμηρον ἀποκαλοῦντός σου πολλάκις, ὃ τῶν πάντων ἴσως οὐδεὶς ἀκήκοεν εἰς τὴν σήμερον, οὐδὲ ἀπιστεῖν ἔχω καὶ σφόδρα θαυμάζων ἱκετεύω μὴ παραδραμεῖν σε τοῦ λόγου τὴν ἀκρίβειαν». (Hld. 3.14.1)

“To these rites, most reverent sir, you have initiated me. [...] However, you have called Homer an Egyptian many times, something that possibly nobody ever heard to this day. I have no doubt about it, and being most surprised I implore you not to pass over the accuracy of your account.”

Kalasiris cannot resist the invitation to explain his stance and goes off on another tangent to explain Homer’s alleged Egyptian origins. It is hard to take seriously Knemon’s response that

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<sup>203</sup> Hld. 3.13.3: Διὸ δὴ καὶ τὰ ἀγάλματα τῶν θεῶν Αἰγύπτιοι τῷ πόδε ζευγνύοντες καὶ ὡσπερ ἐνοῦντες ἰσταῖσιν·

he finds what Kalasiris has to say about the matter “completely convincing.”<sup>204</sup> In fact, the whole conversation seems to be set up as a joke: first, Kalasiris embeds a pun in his explanation by using Knemon’s name (κνημάων) in a verse about recognizing the gods; however, as the conversation continues, it is revealed that the joke is actually on him. The confirmation of divine presence in his dream is nothing more than solipsistic and false academic reasoning, and Knemon pushes Kalasiris to absurdity to show how misguided the latter is in his apparent wisdom about divine matters.<sup>205</sup>

This interaction with Knemon is there to show that Kalasiris—while very religious—is perhaps not as smart as he thinks. As in the Odyssean-like frame that we looked at earlier, this dialogue with Knemon is meant to make the reader again question Kalasiris and his religiosity. Is he actually someone in contact with the divine? Or is he just mistaken? Are his intentions really good ones? It is again upon the reader to read against the suspicions that Knemon raises, if only to remember that it is Knemon himself against whom readers should be on their guard.

To return to Kalasiris’ devotion now, he finally understands the full meaning of the oracle and the unavoidable need to deprive Charikles of his daughter. He is split over this problem, however, and understands that the dilemma is seemingly impossible, forcing him to lose sleep again.

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<sup>204</sup> Hld. 3.15.1: Ταῦτα μὲν εὖ τε καὶ ἀληθῶς μοι λέγειν ἔδοξας... (“It seems to me that you claim these things well and accurately”).

<sup>205</sup> Homer was the repository of many such meanings, even at the level of the absurd. See Sider 1980, 417–419; Sandy 1982b, 157. Proclus (*In Rem.* 1.85.26–86.5) exemplifies the later tradition in which Homer was ransacked for deeper, hidden meanings. For this tradition in the fourth century, see also Porphyry’s *Cav. Nymph.* in Lambertson and Keaney 1992, 115–132. The recognition of two levels of meaning in the text invites the reader to interpret the romance allegorically and insists on exegesis (Lamberton 1986, 151). Such exegesis is not entirely alien to the romance, since Heliodorus discusses the Isiac doctrine of the allegorical significance of the Nile (Hld. 9.9.5), and Knemon comments on the enigmatic stance of Homer (Hld. 3.15.1).

Τοῖς προτέροις, ὦ Κνήμων, ὅμοια· πάλιν ἀγρυπνίαί καὶ βουλευμάτα καὶ νυκτῶν φίλαι φροντίδες. Ἐχαιρον, εὐρηκέναι τι τῶν οὐ προσδοκωμένων ἐλπίζων καὶ εἰς τὴν ἐνεγκοῦσαν ἐπανήξειν προσδοκῶν· ἠνιώμην δέ, ὁ Χαρικλῆς ὅτι στερήσεται τῆς θυγατρὸς ἐννοῶν· ἠπόρουν, ὅτῳ δεήσει τρόπῳ τοὺς νέους συναγαγεῖν καὶ κατασκευάσαι τὴν ἔξοδον συμφρονῶν· τὸν δρασμὸν ἠγωνίων ὅπως μὲν λήσομεν ὅποι δὲ τραπῶμεν καὶ πότερον διὰ γῆς ἢ θαλαττεύοντες, καὶ ἀπλῶς κλύδων μέ τις εἶχε φροντισμάτων ἄυπνός τε τὸ λειπόμενον ἐταλαιπώρουν τῆς νυκτός. (Hld 3.15.2–3)

Much the same as what had gone before, Knemon: sleeplessness again, deliberation, and the apprehensions that go along with nights. I was happy, because I hoped that I had found something that I had not expected to find, and could now look forward to returning home; but I was saddened to think that Charikles would have his daughter taken from him; I was perplexed when I tried to work out how to bring the young pair together and arrange our departure by common deliberation; I was tormented with worries about how we could make our escape undetected, what direction we should take, whether we should go by land or sea. In short, I was overwhelmed by a surge of anxieties and was tormented for the rest of the night, sleepless.

Kalasisir's anguish here reveals not only the respect he has for religious matters (to the extent that they determine his path in life) but also a genuine difficulty on his behalf to accommodate the controversial act of taking away Charikleia from her father. He is still determined to make it happen, telling Knemon that there are two types of Egyptian wisdom: a "true wisdom" (ἡ ἀληθῶς σοφία), which is in contrast to one that is "of low rank" (χαμαι ἐρχομένη) and "devises wickedness and is servant of corrupt pleasures" (πράξεων ἀθεμίτων εὐρέτις καὶ ἡδονῶν ἀκολάστων ὑπηρέτις, Hld. 3.16.3). It is the former wisdom, Kalasisir argues, that exiled him from his homeland originally and now commands that he bring Charikleia back with him at any cost:

Ταῦτα μὲν οὖν θεοῖς τε τοῖς ἄλλοις καὶ μοίραις ἐπιτετράφθω, οἱ τοῦ ποιεῖν τε καὶ μὴ τὸ κράτος ἔχουσιν, οἱ καὶ τὴν φυγὴν μοι τὴν ἐκ τῆς ἐνεγκούσης οὐ διὰ ταῦτα πλέον ὡς εἴκειν ἢ τὴν Χαρικλείας εὔρεσιν ἐπέβαλλον, καὶ τοῦτο μὲν ὅπως εἴση τοῖς ἐξῆς. (Hld. 3.16.5.)

So now I must commit these matters to the care the gods and of the Fates, that have power to decide over our doing and not doing. They, as it seems, sentenced me to exile from the land of my origin not so much for this reason as that I should find Charikleia. How this came about will concern what follows.

Hence, Kalasisir is driven by his deep religiosity and belief in his ability to interpret the gods to pursue the divine purpose that is in front of him. Fortunately, Theagenes comes to his side and is rather easy to persuade. Kalasisir brags and pretends to be absolutely certain that he

can overpower Charikleia's will. Theagenes is, after all, encouraging such an attitude, by displaying an open intellectual and emotional surrender in his erotic despair. Kalasiris thus soothes Theagenes' ardent love for Charikleia by comforting him:

«θάρσει» ἔλεγον «ἅπαξ καταπέφυγας ἐφ' ἡμᾶς· οὐχ οὕτως ἐκείνη κρείττων ἔσται τῆς ἡμετέρας σοφίας. Ἔστι μὲν αὐστηροτέρα καὶ κατενεχθῆναι πρὸς ἔρωτα δύσμαχος, Ἀφροδίτην καὶ γάμον ἀτιμάζουσα καὶ μέχρις ὀνόματος· ἀλλὰ διὰ σὲ πάντα κινητέον· τέχνη καὶ φύσιν οἶδε βιάζεσθαι· μόνον εὐθυμος εἶναι καὶ ὑφηγουμένῳ τὰ δέοντα πείθεσθαι πράττειν.» (Hld. 3.17.5)

“Take courage,” he said, “once you have come to seek my aid. She will not prove stronger than my wisdom. She may be very strict, she may be a difficult opponent against love's dominion, even the mere mention of Aphrodite and marriage; but on your account all resources must be mobilized. Art knows how to overpower even nature. Just be cheerful, and upon my instruction, be confident in doing what is necessary.”

This “true wisdom” that Kalasiris claims for himself will now be used to sway Charikleia to marry Theagenes, despite the fact that she is a virgin priestess of the gods. Kalasiris here, once again, thinks that he knows what is best for everyone involved. He believes that his knowledge of the gods is more important than the vows that Charikleia has sworn to them. Since he is convinced that he is guided by the gods themselves, as we have seen, his actions are not wrong to him, even if it does take a good deal of dishonesty to accomplish them.

Of course, even if he is divinely led to lie, there are still some great obstacles along the way. First, there is the problem of Charikles, who will certainly not give up his daughter easily. However, Kalasiris uses his status as a religious healer from Egypt to get closer to Charikleia right under Charikles' nose—in fact, at his very urging. He tells Charikles that he is working up a cure (τὴν ἴασιν, Hld. 3.18.3) for Charikleia (whom Charikles believes to be sick, even though she is just madly in love with Theagenes)<sup>206</sup> and that, when they go to see her, Charikles should “speak to his daughter on [Kalasiris'] behalf and tell her that he is a

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<sup>206</sup> Hld. 3.19.2–3. See Yatromanolakis 1988, 194–204; Dickie 1991, 17–29.

close and trusted friend, so that she will be more at ease and respond in better heart to his cures.<sup>207</sup>

After Charikles' consultation about the recovery of his daughter, the last day of the Pythian Games takes place. Theagenes competes to impress Charikleia and wins. After the end of the games, another day goes by when Kalasiris spends restless and eager to find his way out of Delphi (Hld. 4.4.5). His only clue was that it needed to happen "from the sea", as the oracle put it. This leads to the realization that the best way to solve the riddle and get more clues as to where he needs to lead the young couple is to get the band of Charikleia mentioned by Charikles (Hld 2.31.2, 4.5.1) and discover the identity of the parents that Charikles hinted at in his own narrative about her, even if (again) it means lying and deceiving Charikles.

Indeed, once Kalasiris realizes the importance of the band, taking possession of it becomes his main objective, which he predictably uses deceit to achieve. At 4.5.3, for instance, he says that he began his "performance" for Charikles (Κάπειδὴ σχολῆς ἐλαβόμεν, ἠρχόμεν ὥσπερ ἐπὶ σκηνῆς τῆς ὑποκρίσεως)<sup>208</sup>; moreover, at 4.7.2 he says that he pretended to be stupid in front of Charikles (Πρὸς ταῦτα ἐθρυπτόμην ἀνέσπων τε τὴν ὄφρυν καὶ βλακῶδες βαίνων).<sup>209</sup> He eventually obtains his objective by claiming dishonestly that there is some sort of divinity that causes Charikleia's apparent sickness; Charikles must bring him her band and all possible recognition tokens, since there might be something magical or demonic about them that prevents Charikleia from recovering (Hld. 4.7.13).

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<sup>207</sup> Hld. 3.18.4 βούλομαί σε καὶ λόγους τινὰς ὑπὲρ ἐμοῦ κινῆσαι πρὸς τὴν παῖδα καὶ γνωριμώτερον ἀποφῆναι παρακαταθέμενον, ὅπως ἂν οἰκειότερον ἔχουσα πρὸς με θαρραλεώτερον ἰώμενον προσίηται ("I would like you to use such language to the girl about me, as will make it plain that you commend me to her better acquaintance, in order to make her more familiar me and accept my treatment with greater confidence").

<sup>208</sup> "When I found some leisure I began what you might call a piece of play-acting business."

<sup>209</sup> "At these words I bridled up, raised my eyebrows, and started moving around in a stupid fashion."

Once in Charikleia’s presence, Kalasiris begins to persuade her to leave with him and Theagenes in search of her original home. This involves perhaps the most blatant lie that Kalasiris tells, one which was at the core of Winkler’s analysis of Kalasiris’ “honorable mendacity.”<sup>210</sup> Kalasiris narrates the time he spent at the Aithiopian court of Persinna, Charikleia’s mother, where he was asked by the queen to use his relationship with the gods to find out whether her daughter was still alive or not.<sup>211</sup> When Kalasiris does this and learns “everything from the gods” (ἅπαντα... ἐκ θεῶν, Hld. 4.12.3), Persinna then asks him to “search [Charikleia] out and persuade [her] to return to the land of [her] birth” (ἐπιζητεῖν καὶ προτρέπειν ἢ κειν εἰς τὴν ἐνεγκοῦσαν, Hld. 4.12.3).

As Baumbach has demonstrated by presenting a detailed outline of its irreconcilable inconsistencies, this story is completely fabricated: Kalasiris does not know any Persinna, nor has he ever been to Aithiopia.<sup>212</sup> However, Kalasiris is not lying here for lying’s sake: his ulterior motive is simply that he wishes to fulfill the divine oracle that he himself solved. He will do anything to achieve this, even if it means lying, because for Kalasiris the gods ordain his actions. In this regard, my outlook is very different from Baumbach’s, who considers that this story “ist ein Teil von Kalasiris’ Überzeugungsstrategie.”<sup>213</sup> It certainly is a part of Kalasiris’ rhetorical strategy. But this is not subordinate to some untold, private motivation for returning to Egypt. It is part of his plan for fulfilling the oracle and thus a divine command rather than a personal, crafty stratagem. We should take note of the fact that Kalasiris, after Charikleia implores him for the truth, does actually confide the truth to her, downplaying this very fabricated story that he told her to win her trust.<sup>214</sup> Therefore, we have

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<sup>210</sup> Winkler 1982, 93.

<sup>211</sup> Hld. 4.13.1.

<sup>212</sup> Baumbach 1997, 333–341.

<sup>213</sup> Baumbach 1997, 336.

<sup>214</sup> 4.13.1: Ταῦτα ἐκείνη μὲν ἔλεγε καὶ ποιεῖν ἰκέτευεν, ἐπισκῆπτουσα μοι πολλὰ τὸν ἥλιον, ὄρκον ὃν οὐδενὶ σοφῶν ὑπερβῆναι θεμιτόν· ἐγὼ δὲ ἦκω τὴν ἐνώμοτον ἱκεσίαν ἐκτελέσων, οὐ διὰ τοῦτο μὲν τὴν ἐπὶ τάδε σπουδάσας ἄφιξιν θεῶν δὲ ὑποθήκη μέγιστον ἐκ τῆς ἄλλης τοῦτο

no hidden agenda for manipulation here, but rather an attempt to create some comfort, a plan which is abandoned once the need to sugarcoat the truth is lifted.

Although Charikleia and Theagenes are on board with Kalasiris' plan, and they begin to plot their departure, one problem they face is a lack of money. Kalasiris must work out how to deal with that, as well, and so he does in his usual manner: by lying. When he listens to Charikles' dream (4.14.2), he is able to interpret it correctly this time, but deceives him in order to get what he needs, i.e., the Aithiopian gems and golden dress with which Charikleia was exposed. This is more than enough of a bounty to get them on their way out of Delphi and towards their destiny.

Once these items have been procured, Kalasiris can plan their escape. When the couple becomes nervous about giving up their lives and starting a new one together in a new place, Kalasiris is there to offer encouragement:

καὶ χρηστὰς ὑποθέμενος τὰς ἐλπίδας τῶν ἐσομένων, σὺν γὰρ θεῶ τὴν ἀρχὴν  
ἐπικεχειρήσθαι. (Hld. 4.18.3)

I suggested that you should have high hopes for the future, for our enterprise had been started with divine blessing.

For Kalasiris, there is no doubt that what they are doing is divinely ordained, starting as it is with the “divine blessing” of the oracle and the divine visitation. He is completely confident in his interpretations of both and is well on his way to convincing Charikleia and Theagenes of them, too.

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κερδήσας, ἐκ πολλοῦ τε ὡς οἶσθα προσεδρεύω χρόνου, θεραπείας μὲν τῆς περὶ σε καὶ πάλαι τῆς πρεπούσης οὐδὲν ἀπολιπὼν, σιωπῶν δὲ τὰ ὄντα, καιροῦ λαβέσθαι καὶ τὴν ταινίαν μηχανῆ τινι κομίσασθαι εἰς πίστιν τῶν πρὸς σε ῥηθησομένων περιμένων (“That is what in her talk with me she begged me to do, conjuring me repeatedly by the Sun, an oath that may not be violated by any of the sages. I have come here in order to perform the duty laid on me by the vow that I took at her supplication; not that this was the actual cause of my hastening to reach this place. It was through an intimation from the gods that I have reaped this richest gain from my travels, and for a long time now, as you are aware, I have been close to you here, without ever neglecting any careful attention I ought to pay to you. I have been silent about the truth, waiting for the right moment and means for obtaining the band that should attest the statement which I was to make to you”).

Before we move on to bringing our analysis of Kalasiris to bear on the red herring character in modern detective fiction, three more pieces of evidence are needed to establish Kalasiris' genuine religiosity and favor in the eyes of the gods, as they come from outside Kalasiris' narrative and are thus endorsed by the main narrative itself. When the trio finally arrive in Egypt and are trying to find their way to Memphis, driven by an old woman who works as a guide, they are walking through a battlefield, when she summons her dead son with a ritual. The corpse of her son then relates a prophecy to his mother together with the three wanderers:

ἦτις πρὸς τοῖς ἄλλοις οὐδὲ ἐπὶ σαυτῆς τὰ οὕτως ἀπόρρητα καὶ σιγῇ καὶ σκότῳ φυλαττόμενα μυστήρια δρᾶν ὑπέμεινας ἀλλ' ἤδη καὶ ἐπὶ μάρτυσι τοιούτοις τὰς τῶν κειμένων ἐξορχῆ τύχας· ἐνὶ μὲν προφήτῃ—καὶ τοῦτο μὲν ἔλαττον, σοφὸς γὰρ τὰ τοιαῦτα σιγῇ πρὸς τὸ ἀνεκλάλητον ἐπισφραγίσασθαι, καὶ ἄλλως θεοῖς φίλος· (Hld. 6.15.3)

Moreover, you had the audacity to perform these abominable mysteries, properly kept in secrecy and darkness, not in solitary privacy but in the presence of others, and even the secrets of the dead before witnesses such as these; one is a high priest—and in his case less harm is done, for he is wise enough to seal such secrets away in the silence of the ineffable; besides, the gods love him.

The corpse's prophecy cannot be clearer about Kalasiris' priestly stature, as well as his religious devotion and the divine favor that he enjoys—all of which is further evidence of his genuine religiosity.<sup>215</sup> As demonstrated above, Kalasiris is not lying out of anything but a sincere desire to accomplish the will of the gods, and the prophecy of the corpse confirms this. Moreover, this divine favor is once again made evident in the finale of Kalasiris' life:

εἴτε διὰ τὸ τῆς χαρᾶς μέγεθος τῶν πνευματικῶν πόρων εἰς ὑπερβολὴν ἀνεθέντων καὶ χαλασθέντων, οἷα δὴ γηραιοῦ τοῦ σώματος ἀθρόον διαφορηθέντος, εἴτε καὶ θεῶν αἰτήσαντι τοῦτο παρασχομένων. (Hld. 7.11.4)

[P]ossibly due to the magnitude of his joy, the muscles of his respiratory tract became excessively dilated and broken resulting in the sudden exhaustion of his aged body; or else perhaps he had prayed for death, and the gods had granted his prayer.

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<sup>215</sup> See also Feuchtenhofer 2010, 85–87.

This time it is the narrator himself who puts forth the idea that the gods are on Kalasiris' side and will answer his prayers. Therefore, from the first time that we see Kalasiris to his deathbed, all the evidence points to a man of high religiosity and devotion, one who receives messages and the favor of the gods and tries to accomplish their will at whatever price, even lying and manipulating others.

Kalasiris appears one last time in the novel, at the very end of the final book, when Charikles goes to Aithiopia and accuses him of being a false prophet:

Συνεργοῦ δὲ αὐτῷ πρὸς τὴν ἐναγῆ ταύτην πρᾶξιν ψευδοπροφήτου τινὸς Μεμφίτου γεγονότος, ἐπειδὴ κατὰ τὴν Θεσσαλίαν μεταθέων καὶ παρὰ Οἰταίων ὄντων αὐτοῦ πολιτῶν ἐξαιτῶν οὐδαμῶς ἤρρισκον, ἔκδοτον ἐκείνων τουτονὶ καὶ εἰς σφαγὴν, ὅπου ποτὲ ἂν εὐρίσκηται, ὡς ἀλάστορα παραχωρησάντων, ὀρμητήριον εἶναι τῆς φυγῆς τὴν Καλασίριδος Μέμφιν εἰκάσας εἰς τε ταύτην ἀφικόμενος, καὶ τὸν μὲν Καλάσιριν, ὡς ἐχρῆν, τεθνηκότα καταλαβών, παρὰ Θυάμιδος δὲ τοῦ ἐκείνου παιδὸς ἅπαντα τὰ περὶ τὴν θυγατέρα ἐκδίδαχθεις, τὰ τε ἄλλα καὶ ὅτι πρὸς Ὀροονδάτην εἰς τὴν Σὺνήνην ἐξαπέσταλτο, καὶ τοῦ μὲν Ὀροονδάτου κατὰ τὴν Σὺνήνην ἀποτυχῶν (ἦλθον γὰρ κάκεισε), κατὰ δὲ τὴν Ἐλεφαντίνην ὑπὸ τοῦ πολέμου καταληφθεὶς, ἦκω τὰ νῦν ἐνταῦθα καὶ γίνομαι ἰκέτης οὕτως ὡς ἡ ἐπιστολὴ διηγῆσατο. Τὸν ἀποσυλήσαντα ἔχεις τὴν θυγατέρα ἐπιζήτησον. (Hld. 10.36.4–5)

His accomplice in this act of sin was a false prophet from Memphis. I scoured Thessaly and demanded his extradition by the people of Oita, his fellow citizens, but he was nowhere to be found. However, they were ready to hand him over, even slain, wherever he was to be found, as an accursed sinner against the gods. Surmising that the goal of their flight was Memphis, Kalasiris' hometown, I made my way there, only to find Kalasiris already dead, as he so deserved. However, his son Thyamis told me everything there was to tell about my daughter, including the fact that she had been dispatched to Oroondates at Syene. But though I went to Syene, I was unable to reach Oroondates or to enter the town and was overtaken by the war in Elephantine. Now I have come to you and become your suppliant, just as the letter has explained. You have the impious robber; now search for my daughter.

This passage may appear to serve as the basis for the common accusation that Kalasiris is a “false prophet” (ψευδοπροφήτου). Charikles, a serial misreader,<sup>216</sup> is proceeding towards an effort to reclaim his daughter and restore the initial balance of the novel, the reunion.

Charikles has every right to be upset about Kalasiris, as he was the one who deprived him of

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<sup>216</sup> Morgan 1991, 102, claims that “Charikles is a persistent misreader” based upon his readings of Hld. 3.19.2, 4.14–15, and 4.19.3. For further comparisons for the readerly audience of the *Aithiopia* and its misreadings see Bowie 1995.

his daughter. However, calling him a false prophet is reading too much into Kalasiris' actions. The false prophet that Charikles accuses him of being was the very same person who was fully embraced by the entire Delphic community as extraordinary. As this chapter has shown, moreover, Kalasiris deceives only when he has to do so.<sup>217</sup>

Charikles is thus the necessary casualty in the process of Charikleia's return.

However, even he at the end realizes that finally the oracle has been fulfilled.

οὐ γεγονότος ἐνθύμιον τοῦ χρησμοῦ τοῦ ἐν Δελφοῖς ὁ Χαρικλῆς ἐλάμβανε καὶ τοῖς ἔργοις βεβαιούμενον τὸ πάλαι παρὰ τῶν θεῶν προαγορευθὲν ἠῦρισκεν, ὃ τοὺς νέους ἔφραζεν ἐκ τῶν Δελφῶν διαδράντας.  
ἴξεσθ' ἠελίου πρὸς χθόνα κυανέην,  
Τῆ περ ἀριστοβίων μέγ' ἀέθλιον ἐξάψονται  
Λευκὸν ἐπὶ κροτάφων στέμμα μελαινομένων. (Hld. 10.41.2)

As soon as this was done, Charikles called to mind the oracle at Delphi, and recognized that the divine prediction of long ago was being fulfilled in actual fact. For it had stated that the young pair, after fleeing from Delphi,  
Will arrive at the black land of the Sun,  
Where as the great reward of their virtuous lives they will win and wear  
About their temples a white crown on black brows.

Even for Charikles, then, Kalasiris is eventually seen not to be a pseudo-prophet. Charikles' acceptance of his interpretation of the oracle brings the story full circle to a happy ending and justifies the priest's actions, which at the time might have been seen as deceitful, even if they successfully led the couple to their fated marriage in Aithiopia.

Kalasiris is a man who will do anything to bring about the will of the gods. This includes lying, of which he does a good amount in the novel. This is not mendacity for the sake of mendacity (or Winklerian narrative awareness); rather, for Kalasiris, this is all for the good of a higher power that guides him through oracles and dreams throughout the

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<sup>217</sup> Hld.10.18.2: Καὶ ἡ Χαρίκλεια σὺν ἐρυθήματι κατανεύσασα «Τὸν μὲν ἀδελφὸν ἐψευσάμην» ἔφη «τῆς χρείας τὸ πλάσμα συνθείσης: (“Charikleia blushed, nodded and answered, ‘I lied in calling him my brother; necessity composed the fiction’”). Hld. 10.37.1: Ὁ δὲ «Ἀληθῆ» ἔφη «πάντα τὰ κατηγορηθέντα. Ληστής ἐγὼ καὶ ἄρπαξ καὶ βίαιος καὶ ἄδικος περὶ τοῦτον, ἀλλ' ὑμέτερος εὐεργέτης» (“He replied: ‘The accusations are all true. I am indeed a thief and a raptor and a violent and an unjust person towards this man: but to you I am a benefactor’”).

*Aithiopika*. It might be tempting, however, to look behind this apparent religiosity to some darker motives that drive Kalasiris to deceive many of the people with whom he comes in contact. Readers of the novel have been taught the value of reading closely, of looking behind the façade to the true intentions of characters, such as those of the murderer Knemon. I have argued in this chapter that Kalasiris *should* certainly be put on trial by readers; however, if his motivations and actions are examined carefully, they will end up justifying his innocence, even in his deceit. He is the opposite of the apparently innocent Knemon by being the character who appears deceitful, but in reality is not.<sup>218</sup>

### 5.3 The Red Herring in Modern Detective Narrative

This chapter has suggested that Kalasiris is a red herring character for the reader of Heliodorus. This type of character is, of course, a staple of modern detective narrative: a “usual suspect” that fulfills on paper all the criteria for being classified as the main subject of investigation, criticism, and mistrust.<sup>219</sup> As we can see from the example below of modern detective fiction, the red herring constitutes one of the primary narrative techniques that satisfy the authorial effort to engineer patterns of mistrust and suspicion that are to be falsified upon a closer look.<sup>220</sup>

Perhaps the first and most celebrated example of this kind of technique is Agatha Christie’s *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd*,<sup>221</sup> which exemplifies two narrative strategies: the framing of the wrong suspect by the main, unreliable narrator and also the absolutely unexpected twist of the narrator being himself the murderer. Red herring characters serve to

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<sup>218</sup> It is also possible that Kalasiris’ character may be seen as more than as an exercise in careful reading and disbelief. For literary exercises in suspending disbelief and their purpose see Schaper 1978, 5–23.

<sup>219</sup> See McQuarrie 1996.

<sup>220</sup> For a theoretical approach to the red-herring as a concept (not strictly narratological) see Currall, Moss, and Stuart 2008, 534–544; for red herrings in detective stories see Barron 2010, 60–77.

<sup>221</sup> Christie (1926) 2006.

help us remain invested in the narrative predicament of a story by overturning our expectations in the middle of the story and forcing us to keep guessing at possibilities.<sup>222</sup>

A summary of the Christie's work is in order here. When the widow, Mrs. Ferrars, commits suicide, and the wealthy Roger Ackroyd is murdered within a few days, the small English village of King's Abbot is more full of gossip than usual. The murder is a source of incredible bafflement for the incompetent local police. By a rather fortunate chance, however, the famous detective Hercule Poirot has just moved into King's Abbot and agrees to take on the case, even though he has already decided to retire from detective work. Everyone in Mr. Ackroyd's household is a suspect, but the main source of suspicion is directed towards Ralph Paton, Ackroyd's first stepson, who is nowhere to be found. Ralph is charming but lacks discipline, naturally leading many to believe him to be the prime suspect. Poirot investigates the murder with and after the admonition of Dr. James Sheppard, the town doctor and a good friend of Mr. Ackroyd, who also happens to be the narrator of the story. As Poirot unravels the case, many secrets, largely around the themes of love and money, come out about each member of the household. Although every member of the household is a suspect at some point, the case looks the worst for Mr. Paton. Ralph has several motives, and many clues point straight at him, but this does not fool Poirot. In a shocking twist at the end, Poirot discovers that Dr. Sheppard is the killer, even though he is in fact the narrator of the story (hoping to write of Poirot's failure, only to admit his own guilt at the very end of the text). The doctor was blackmailing Mrs. Ferrars for money in return for keeping her secret about the murder of her husband. Mr. Ackroyd found out about the blackmail through a suicide letter that Mrs. Ferrars wrote to him. Dr. Sheppard then had to silence Mr. Ackroyd.

Although the correlation between Kalasiris and Ralph Paton is not direct or entirely proportional, there is a point of significant convergence in the two stories, namely, the

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<sup>222</sup> For an ingenious analysis of Christie's work and the issue of narrative control in detective fiction see Lovitt 1990, 68–85.

misdirection towards the wrong culprit from the very beginning, based entirely upon false, prejudicial categories of thought. Christie, like Heliodorus, presents the reader with a character who might seem like a deceitful charlatan, and yet at the same time does not make it impossible to see that the red herring is in fact just that when compared to other characters: the skilled reader must see past the crooked narrative line that confronts her. What is important to note here is that Mr. Paton also bears significant amounts of guilt for his actions: his flaws and flight from the crime scene are very real and very puzzling to the reader. However, they should not be enough for us to hasten towards delivering a verdict on the actual events. This point is reinforced as the narrative progresses both in Christie and for Kalasiris in Heliodorus, where characters with similar shortcomings are obviously shown to be flawed yet proceed to their intended actions owing to some conviction about what they consider fair rather than from some premeditated malice, even if that conviction is the very thing that makes them suspicious in the first place.

I have argued that Kalasiris is the red herring of our story, a character with whom we are encouraged to identify and overestimate as a charlatan in our attempt to decipher the novel. However, we are also encouraged to take our distance and critically evaluate him in his attempts to use rhetorical situations to sway people. This critical distance makes us reflect upon his actions but is ultimately intended to make us lose sight of other more significant and downplayed actions, like the activities of Knemon and Charikleia. Ultimately, I maintain that Kalasiris is supposed to be seen as a religiously devout person who, beneath a web of fabricated stories, is essentially a real and perhaps overeager interpreter of religious and textual signs, always trying to stay true to his life's religious purpose. The following chapter will attempt to shed further light upon the misdirections of the plot of Knemon and Kalasiris by examining the incredible cunning and perhaps even more nuanced manipulation employed by the character whom I take to be the main protagonist of the novel: Charikleia.

## CHAPTER 6

### CHARIKLEIA'S DECEPTION AND HELIODORUS' DETECTIVE TENSION

Καλὸν γάρ ποτε καὶ τὸ ψεῦδος, ὅταν ὠφελοῦν τοὺς λέγοντας μηδὲν καταβλάπτῃ τοὺς ἀκούοντας. (Hld. 1.26.6)

Sometimes even a lie can be good, if it helps those who speak it without harming those to whom it is spoken.

#### 6.1 Introduction

Upon repeated reading, a stark paradox confronts the reader of the *Aithiopika*. On the one hand, the narrative presents us with a chaste, religious, and idealized couple pursuing virtue, purity, and spiritual union.<sup>223</sup> On the other hand, these two idealized protagonists display repeatedly a penchant for deception, lying, and manipulation that appears problematic and at times hardly motivated. Scholarship has not let this phenomenon of lying in Heliodorus pass unnoticed.<sup>224</sup> However, discussion of it has been restricted almost exclusively to Kalasiris, the prophet from Memphis who guides the young couple to Aithiopia, even though Chapter 5 demonstrated that his lying is much more nuanced than it may initially seem. Moreover, we have seen also in Chapters 3 and 4 how Knemon is certainly not as innocent as many have made him out to be. Indeed, he attempts to cover up his murder of Thisbe through a web of deceit. Here, I intend to shift the focus of this

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<sup>223</sup> Scholarship has agreed so far almost unanimously that the protagonists of the *Aithiopika* are more idealized than in any other surviving ancient novel. See Konstan 1994, 90–98; Goldhill 1995; Haynes 2003, 73. However, Whitmarsh 2008, 5–7, dismisses the idea of the ideal novel and substitutes it with the term “less than ideal,” challenging radically its generic uniformity; also Whitmarsh 2011, especially 117–118, disputing the idea that the *Aithiopika* is an ephebic (i.e., socially conforming as a ritual practice reinstating love) romance, presenting it instead as a peculiar, peripheral endeavor, which should be understood as highly artificial, partial, and deceptive.

<sup>224</sup> Sandy 1982a; Winkler 1982, 97–161; Futre Pinheiro 1987; 1991b, 69–83; Baumbach 1997, 333–341.

deceptiveness to analyze what I consider to be the main narrative subject in the novel in Charikleia.<sup>225</sup>

So far, this study has analyzed how lying has been thematized in the *Aithiopika* as a strategy of misdirection on the parts of both Knemon and Kalasiris. My first argument regarding Knemon demonstrated that he uses a carefully hidden and devious type of lying in order to accomplish and conceal the murder of Thisbe. My subsequent argument about Kalasiris suggests that his lying should be understood as a means to his divinely ordained religious ends, not as an end in itself or as a metaliterary technique.

In this chapter, I will focus upon Charikleia,<sup>226</sup> the novel's main protagonist, "the emblem of the text," and the speaker of the introductory quotation above.<sup>227</sup> In what follows, I hope to examine closely several significant instances of her lying and elaborate on some of the narrative motivations that may sufficiently explain it as neither malicious (like Knemon's lies) nor entirely religiously oriented (like those of Kalasiris). My analysis will explore her

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<sup>225</sup> For analysis of Charikleia's personality see Hani 1978, 268–273; Johne 1987, 21–33; 1988, 12–15; 1996; Liviabella Furiani 1989, 43–106; Pernot 1992, 43–51; Egger 1990, 130–140; Álvarez 2000–2001, 9–17; Haynes 2003, 67–72; Chew 2003, 205–222. De Temmerman 2014, 246–260, sees her as constantly battling with her emotions, which clash with her ideal of *sophrosyne* (Hld. 4.10.3), and believes that this clash exemplifies a profound ancient polarity between *ethos* and *physis* in Heliodorus, with Charikleia's *physis* being constant and unchanging. However, de Temmerman is quick to qualify his statement by saying that—as Plutarch put it in his ethical treatise *On The Delay of Divine Vengeance* (*De sera num.* 551d, 552b)—sometimes great natures allow for some deviation as to how far behavior can deviate from innate tendencies, if they need to adapt, but that those exceptions are marginal and require explanation. See also Lombardi 1997, 387, and Verdegem 2010, 120, for further elaboration on the complications of the Plutarchean position. However, see Gill 1983, 478–479, where he argues both that Plutarch is not always consistent in following this distinction and that sometimes *physis* is too close to *ethos* and is sometimes even capable of radical change (cf. *Sull.* 30.6; *Sert.* 10.6).

<sup>226</sup> For considering this narrative a "novel" instead of a romance see Hägg 1983, who believes that this term is "less liable to implant prejudices as to the nature of the genre." For a preference for the term romance as emphasizing "the link between most of them and similar literature in the West" see Beaton 1989.

<sup>227</sup> For the importance of Charikleia as the symbol of what the *Aithiopika* stands for see Gärtner 1969, 47–69; Stephens 1994, 713; Whitmarsh 2011, 126, 126n105, referring also to the work of "Philip the Philosopher," who defends Heliodorus' allegory through "Charikleia's virtue."

lying from an anthropological perspective that has proven useful for examining other notable liars in antiquity, such as Odysseus and Penelope in Homer.<sup>228</sup> However, even if she does not lie out of malicious intent, that does not mean she is not good at it. In fact, as I will suggest at the end of this chapter, Charikleia's great ability to lie even anticipates certain patterns and conventions that apply to many "femme fatale" characters in modern detective fiction.

By an anthropological perspective, I mean an examination of lying that covers "defensive lying" of the sort that Winkler discusses in his work on the *Odyssey*, that is, lying as "a policy of systematic and deliberate misdirection, in matters great and small, in order to protect oneself in a social environment full of enemies and charged with unremitting suspicion."<sup>229</sup> As this chapter will demonstrate, Charikleia's falsehoods fit this description of defensive lying. In each instance that we will examine, Charikleia lies not simply to fabricate a false story, but rather to protect herself and Theagenes in a world where, as we have previously seen, it is hard to trust anyone. After all, even a seemingly foolish character like Knemon can turn out to be a crafty murderer.

I will first examine events in Book 1 to show both Charikleia's motivations for lying under duress and her effectiveness at it. Then, I will turn to Books 2–4 to analyze further what Charikleia feels she needs to protect most of all, i.e., her chastity, as well as to provide more evidence illustrating her rhetorical prowess. An examination of her lying in Book 5 will demonstrate the way in which Charikleia uses lying defensively to ward off advances by multiple pirates. Finally, we will closely examine the motivations of Charikleia's lying during the reunion and recognition scenes in Aithiopia between her and her parents. This survey of Charikleia's lies will show that, while she certainly knows how to dissimulate her

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<sup>228</sup> Winkler 1990; Buchan 1996; Buchan 2004.

<sup>229</sup> Winkler 1990, 135. On defensive lying in this sense see also Campbell 1964; du Boulay 1976. For further motivations for lying in the *Odyssey* see Scodel 1998, 1–17. For similar understanding of lying, from a philosophically analytic perspective see Carson 2010, building upon the interesting definition of lying found in Carson 2006, 284–306, following after Nyberg 1993 and *contra* Griffiths 2004.

thoughts and use words to deceive others, she does so not out of any maliciousness but only in order to protect herself, Theagenes, and her chastity.

## 6.2 The Defensive Lying of Charikleia

The *Aithiopika* initiates us into its narrative, as Chapter 2 showed, through a puzzling shipwreck of scattered dead bodies along with the remnants of a battle and a symposium. This scene presents the reader with the split perspective of both the bandits and the omniscient narrator. After the description of this *tableau vivant*, we are left puzzled and eager to learn more. As the bandits approach the young couple, they are further surprised to see a young girl of Artemis-like stature wearing a bow and hugging a wounded man passionately. This further puzzle induces them to approach more closely in order better to assess the situation. These are the first words that Charikleia utters when the bandits are within hearing distance:

...«εἰ μὲν εἶδωλα τῶν κειμένων ἐστέ,» φησὶν «οὐκ ἐν δίκῃ παρενοχλεῖτε ἡμῖν· οἱ μὲν γὰρ πλεῖστοι χερσὶ ταῖς ἀλλήλων ἀνήρησθε, ὅσοι δὲ πρὸς ἡμῶν, ἀμύνης νόμῳ καὶ ἐκδικίας τῆς εἰς σωφροσύνην ὕβρεως πεπόνθατε· εἰ δὲ τινες τῶν ζώντων ἐστέ, ληστικὸς μὲν ὑμῖν ὡς ἔοικεν ὁ βίος, εἰς καιρὸν δὲ ἤκετε· λύσατε τῶν περιεστηκότων ἀλγεινῶν φόνῳ τῷ καθ' ἡμῶν δράμα τὸ περὶ ἡμᾶς καταστρέψαντες.» (Hld. 1.3.1)

“If you are the phantoms of the fallen,” she said, “you have no right to disturb us. Most of you were slain by one another’s hands. Those that were killed by us, you suffered it in self-defense and in retribution for your assault on chastity. But if you are among the living, your life appears to be one of brigandry and your appearance is timely. Deliver us from the pains that surrounds us and bring our drama to an end by killing us!”

Is it really the case that the heroine believes that these bandits may be ghosts? Or is it just the author’s way of pointing out her rhetorical prowess in order to exaggerate her despair and get pity from the bandits? Even a reader coming upon this passage for a first time might have doubts about Charikleia’s sincerity here. Although her words would certainly seem to suggest genuine fear and emotion at the possibility of being overcome by ghosts or bandits, the

paragraph just before showed very explicitly that she is not in the least concerned by the presence of the bandits, who are apparently easy to identify as such from their weapons:

Κτύπου δὲ περιηγήσαντος καὶ τῆς ἐξ αὐτῶν σκιᾶς τοῖς ὀφθαλμοῖς παρεμπεσούσης ἀνένευσεν ἡ κόρη καὶ ἰδοῦσα αὐθις ἐπένευσε, πρὸς μὲν τὸ ἄηθες τῆς χροιάς καὶ τὸ ληστρικὸν τῆς ὄψεως ἐν ὅπλοις δεικνυμένης οὐδὲ κατὰ μικρὸν ἐκπλαγεῖσα, πρὸς δὲ τὴν θεραπείαν τοῦ κειμένου πᾶσαν ἑαυτὴν τρέψασα. (Hld. 1.2.8)

Once their stamping resonated, and the shadows they cast fell across the girl's eyes, she looked up, saw them, and looked down again, quite unperturbed by the unaccustomed color and robber-like appearance, obvious by their weapons, turning herself wholly to the tending of the prostrate man.

Charikleia sees the bandits coming, but she is not concerned in the slightest by their bizarre and “robber-like appearance,” instead looking down quickly at her wounded Theagenes. This description of her actions hardly seems compatible with her subsequent greeting of the robbers quoted above. It seems more likely, in fact, that she notices their robber-like appearance and feels compelled to dissimulate her thoughts, pretending that they are ghosts and feigning her own desire to die (Hld. 1.2.4) in order to elicit sympathy from figures who clearly appear hostile to her. Her lying here is therefore not in any way aggressive but completely motivated by her desire to preserve herself and her injured lover Theagenes.

Even though the bandits take the two into captivity without harming them, Charikleia and Theagenes are far from being safe. Thyamis falls in love with his captive and soon claims publicly that Charikleia should be his lawful wife. Charikleia must think fast if she is not only to repel the advances of the bandit king, but also to rescue Theagenes, who would surely be in trouble if Thyamis found out that he was Charikleia's husband-to-be. She reacts in the following way:

καὶ δὴ ποτε πρὸς τὸν Θύαμιν ἀντωπήσασα καὶ πλέον ἢ πρότερον αὐτὸν τῷ κάλλει καταστράψασα... (Hld. 1.21.3)

Eventually she looked Thyamis full in the face and her beauty dazzled him even more now...

As she will do several times throughout the novel, Charikleia here makes use of her ability to dissemble her thoughts, varying her appearance so as to appear most beautiful to her captor. She is a girl who is fully aware of how her beauty affects the judgment of others. It is not just her looks, however, but her intelligence that allows her to preserve herself and Theagenes from danger, as the beginning of her tale demonstrates:

Ἔστι δὴ τὰ περὶ ἡμῶν τοιάδε· γένος μὲν ἔσμεν Ἴωνες, Ἐφεσίων δὲ τὰ πρῶτα γεγονότες καὶ ἀμφιθαλεῖς ὄντες, νόμου τοῦ τοιοῦτου καλοῦντος ἱερατεύειν, ἐγὼ μὲν Ἀρτέμιδος Ἀπόλλωνος δὲ οὐμὸς ἀδελφὸς οὗτος ἐλαγχάνομεν. Ἐπετείου δὲ τῆς τιμῆς οὔσης καὶ τοῦ χρόνου πληρουμένου θεωρίαν εἰς Δῆλον ἤγομεν ἔνθα μουσικούς τε καὶ γυμνικούς ἀγῶνας διαθήσεσθαι καὶ τὴν ἱερωσύνην ἀποθήσεσθαι κατὰ τι πάτριον ἐμέλλομεν. [...] Ἐν μόνον αἰτῶ καὶ δὸς ᾧ Θύαμι· συγχώρησον εἰς ἄστῳ με πρότερον ἐλθοῦσαν, ἢ ἔνθα βωμὸς ἢ ναὸς Ἀπόλλωνι νενόμισται, τὴν ἱερωσύνην καὶ τὰ ταύτης ἀποθέσθαι σύμβολα. Βέλτιον μὲν γὰρ εἰς Μέμφιν, ὅταν καὶ τὴν τιμὴν ἀνακτήσῃ τῆς προφητείας· οὕτως ἂν ὁ γάμος εὐθυμότερον ἄγοιτο νίκη συναπτόμενος καὶ ἐπὶ κατορθουμένοις τελοῦμενος· εἰ δὲ καὶ πρότερον, ἐν σοὶ καταλείπω τὴν σκέψιν· μόνον τελεσθεῖη μοι τὰ πάτρια πρότερον. Καὶ οἶδα ὡς ἐπινεύσεις ἱεροῖς τε ἐκ παίδων, ὡς φῆς, ἀνακεῖμενος καὶ τὸ περὶ τοὺς θεοὺς ὅσιον ἀποσεμνύνων. (Hld 1.22.2, 6–7)

Our story is this: we are of Ionian descent; we were born in the first place to Ephesian parents, and, as blessed with affluence, tradition calls upon such people as ourselves to undertake divine service: I became a priestess of Artemis, and my brother here a priest of Apollo. The office is held for a year, and as our tenure was drawing to an end, we were leading a sacred embassy to Delos, where we were to organize musical and athletic competitions and resign our office as dictated by an ancestral custom. [...] Just one thing I request, and you should grant it, Thyamis. First, allow me to go to a town or some other place where there is an altar or shrine to Apollo, and there to lay aside my priesthood and its insignia. It would be preferable to do this at Memphis, where you regained your rightful place as high priest, for then the marriage would be celebrated with better cheer, linked with victory, and consummated in success. Whether it is to happen sooner, I leave it to you to decide. Only let me perform the rites that are customary in my country first. I know you will agree, for, as you say, you have been destined for divine service since childhood and you hold in reverent regard the worship of the gods.

Charikleia's story is almost pure fiction: Theagenes is neither her brother (as is made clear right away in Book 1) nor a priest of Apollo, and they are certainly not nobility of Ephesos. Here we can see that she is a skilled liar, as her falsehoods respect the most basic premise of lying, namely, the detail-oriented character of the imparted information, which guarantees

verisimilitude and eventually persuasion.<sup>230</sup> She is also intelligent enough to ask them to wait for her to put aside her priesthood before they consummate the marriage, even offering Thyamis the choice “to decide” whether it should be sooner. She even appeals to Thyamis’ own past as the high priest of Memphis in order to direct their voyage towards their ultimate goal of reaching Aithiopia. In short, it is a perfect Odyssean tale. Yet this does not mean that she has any malicious intent behind what she tells Thyamis and the bandits. Charikleia needs to buy herself some time before the wedding that Thyamis proposes, while at the same time ensuring that no harm comes to Theagenes. This is defensive lying *par excellence*.

It is no surprise, then, that Charikleia’s words are effective:

Τῶν δὲ παρόντων οἱ μὲν ἄλλοι πάντες ἐπήνουν καὶ πράττειν οὕτως ἐκέλευόν τε καὶ ἐτοίμως ἔχειν ἐβόων, ἐπήνει δὲ καὶ ὁ Θύαμις ἐκὼν τε τὸ μέρος καὶ ἄκων· ὑπὸ μὲν τῆς περὶ τὴν Χαρίκλειαν ἐπιθυμίας καὶ τὴν παροῦσαν ὥραν ἀπέραντον χρόνου μῆκος εἰς ὑπέρθεσιν ἡγούμενος, ὑπὸ δὲ τῶν λόγων ὥσπερ τινὸς σειρήνος κεκληλημένος καὶ πρὸς τὸ πείθεσθαι κατηναγκασμένος. (Hld. 1.23.1–2)

Everyone present commended her request and urged Thyamis to do as she asked, with loud cheers for their readiness. Thyamis also approved, half willing and half unwilling. So aflame was he with desire for Charikleia that even one hour’s postponement seemed an eternity of waiting, but he was bewitched by her words as if by a siren and was compelled to assent.

Charikleia uses her allure to protect her chastity for the time being. Although the reader might not be aware of her abilities at this point (much as he or she would not know of Charikleia’s skill with the bow in slaughtering the pirates on the beach), a careful reader would be able to sense that Charikleia is not a simple damsel in distress—something that she shares, as we will see, with the women in modern detective fiction, who are often on an equal intellectual footing with the male characters.

After such an extensive lie, Theagenes demands an explanation from Charikleia for the ease with which she lies and accepts Thyamis’ proposal. Charikleia’s responses during this private discussion with Theagenes give us access to her thoughts about lying and provide

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<sup>230</sup> On the issue of verisimilitude see Barthes 1986, 141–148; Scodel 1999, 9–14.

evidence that she does so not out of any malevolence but to protect herself and Theagenes from danger. She tells him first not to be “suspicious” (δι’ ὑποψίας) of her “from words that were expedient and told out of some necessity” (ἐκ λόγων ἐπικαίρων καὶ πρὸς τι χρειώδες εἰρημένων). “They are in hard times” (δυστυχεῖν), she explains, and this is what caused her to promise herself to Thyamis (Hld. 1.25.3–4). In other words, Charikleia was constrained by the difficult circumstances to lie. Yet her explanation is still not enough for Theagenes, who asks her again, “What was the purpose of that pretty speech of yours?” (Τί οὖν ἐβούλετό σοι τὰ τῆς καλῆς δημηγορίας ἐκείνης; Hld. 1.25.5). Charikleia then explains the urgency of the situation and why she had to respond as she did:

Ὅρμην γάρ, ὡς οἶσθα, κρατούσης ἐπιθυμίας μάχη μὲν ἀντίτυπος ἐπιτείνει, λόγος δὲ εἰκὼν καὶ πρὸς τὸ βούλημα συντρέχων τὴν πρώτην καὶ ζέουσαν φορὰν ἔστειλε καὶ τὸ κάτοξυ τῆς ὀρέξεως τῷ ἡδεῖ τῆς ἐπαγγελίας κατεύνασε. Πρώτην γάρ, ὡς οἶμαι, πεῖραν οἱ ἀγροικότερον ἐρῶντες τὴν ὑπόσχεσιν νομίζουσι, καὶ κρατεῖν ἀπὸ τῆς ἐπαγγελίας ἡγούμενοι πραότερον διάγουσιν ἐπὶ τῶν ἐλπίδων σαλεύοντες. Ἄ δὴ καὶ αὐτὴ προμηθουμένη τοῖς λόγοις ἑμαυτὴν ἐξεδόμην. (Hld. 1.26.3–4)

For, as you know, a rigid fight only aggravates the force of overpowering desire, whereas an answer which is meek and considerate to one’s intent can curb the first and fervent eruption of desire and soothe away the pangs of lust with the sweet taste of a promise given. Lovers of the more boorish sort, it seems to me, consider a declaration of promise as the first success and, since they consider this promise as a proof of conquest, they act with much more composure, anchored by their hopes. It was with this forethought that I promised myself to him in words.

Although this passage might seem more fitting for a rhetorical treatise than the words of a heroine in an Ancient Greek novel, Charikleia’s point is to show the extent of the danger that she is in and how lying was the most effective manner of dealing with it, which serves as a more than adequate motivation for her display of deviousness. In order to avoid the danger that comes from a lover “of the more boorish sort,” she must tame “the force of [his] overpowering desire” with false promises. As we will see below, her speech here is also a warning to Theagenes on how to curb the desirer’s wishes and how to offer promises that will deflect the threatening predicaments ahead of them, which is advice that Theagenes will

eventually follow when they are captured by Hydaspes and the Aithiopians (Hld. 9.25.2), even if he is reluctant at first in front of queen Arsake (Hld. 8.6.4).

Yet perhaps the most explicit statement regarding Charikleia's rationalization for lying comes immediately after the previous passage:

πολλὰ μία ἡμέρα καὶ δύο πολλάκις ἔδοσαν τῶν εἰς σωτηρίαν, καὶ τύχαι παρέσχον ἃ βουλαῖς ἄνθρωποι μυρίαὶ οὐκ ἐξεῦρον. Τοῦτό τοι καὶ αὐτὴ τὸ παρὸν ἐπινοίας ὑπερεθέμην τὰ πρόδηλα τοῖς ἀδήλοις διακρουσαμένη. Φυλακτέον οὖν, ὃ γλυκύτετε, καθάπερ πάλαισμα τὸ πλάσμα καὶ σιγητέον οὐ πρὸς τοὺς ἄλλους μόνον ἀλλὰ καὶ πρὸς αὐτὸν Κνήμωνα· φιλάνθρωπος μὲν γὰρ ἐστὶ περὶ ἡμᾶς καὶ Ἕλληνα, ἀλλ' αἰχμάλωτος καὶ τῷ κρατοῦντι πλέον ἂν οὕτω τύχη, χαριούμενος. Οὔτε γὰρ φιλίας χρόνος οὔτε ἀγχιστείας θεσμὸς ἐνέχυρον ἡμῖν ἀκριβὲς τῆς πίστεως αὐτοῦ τῆς περὶ ἡμᾶς δίδωσι· διὸ κἂν ἐκ τινος ὑπονοίας ἐπιψαύσῃ ποτὲ τῶν ἡμετέρων, ἀρνητέον τὴν πρώτην. Καλὸν γὰρ ποτε καὶ τὸ ψεῦδος, ὅταν ὠφελοῦν τοὺς λέγοντας μηδὲν καταβλάπτῃ τοὺς ἀκούοντας. (Hld. 1.26.4–6)

A day or two can often do much for our salvation, and chance can bring to pass what men have failed to find out with a thousand counsels. So, you see how in my case I have put off immediate threats and averted certainties with uncertainties. We should maintain, my love, this fiction as our fighting chance and keep it secret, not just from the others but from Knemon, too. I know he has been kind to us, I know he is a Greek, but he is a captive and will try to ingratiate himself with his master, if he can. We have neither a long friendship nor a close connection to give us a firm guarantee of his reliability, so even if his suspicions lead him to light upon the truth about us, our first reaction must be to deny it. Sometimes even a lie can be good, if it helps those who speak it without harming those to whom it is spoken.

I want to note two things here. The first is that Charikleia seems to distrust Knemon, something that is possibly telling about her very astute reading of his character and his reliability (or lack thereof) that was discussed in Chapters 3–4. What is more important for our present purposes is how she essentially sees the necessity of lying in cases where “certain dangers” are present. As she puts it, “this fiction” is their only “fighting chance” against such threats; in fact, according to her, “even a lie can be good” in such circumstances, as long as it does not “harm those to whom it is spoken.” We can see from this passage that the only lying that Charikleia deems appropriate is the kind which wards off dangers—and then only when it does not harm the person to whom the lie is told. This sort of lying is anything but

malicious. Therefore, from the very start of the novel, Heliodorus establishes Charikleia as someone who can lie, and lie well, but only when circumstances compel her.

Although it is obvious from the start that Charikleia would do anything to protect her lover, it is only in Book 2 that we can fully come to understand another important facet of her character that she needs to protect with her falsehoods, namely, her chastity. We can get a glimpse of this in the first interaction between her father Charikles and the priest Kalasiris:

Ἄλλ' αὐτῆ τοιαύτῃ τις οὔσα λυπεῖ με λύπην ἀνίατον· ἀπηγόρευται γὰρ αὐτῇ γάμος καὶ παρθενεύειν τὸν πάντα βίον διατείνεται καὶ τῇ Ἀρτέμιδι ζάκορον ἑαυτὴν ἐπιδοῦσα θήρῃς τὰ πολλὰ σχολάζει καὶ ἀσκεῖ τοξείαν. Ἐμοὶ δέ ἐστιν ὁ βίος ἀφόρητος ἐλπίσαντι μὲν ἀδελφῆς ἑμαυτοῦ παιδὶ ταύτην ἐκδώσειν καὶ μάλα γε ἀστείῳ καὶ χαρίεντι λόγον τε καὶ ἦθος νεανίσκῳ, ἀποτυγχάνοντι δὲ διὰ τὴν ταύτης ἀπηνῆ κρίσιν. Οὔτε γὰρ θεραπεύων οὔτε ἐπαγγελλόμενος οὔτε λογισμοὺς ἀνακινῶν πείσαι δεδύνημαι, ἀλλὰ τὸ χαλεπώτατον τοῖς ἑμοῖς, τὸ τοῦ λόγου, κατ' ἐμοῦ κέχρηται πτεροῖς καὶ τὴν ἐκ λόγων πολυπειρίαν, ἣν ποικίλην ἐδίδαξάμην πρὸς κατασκευὴν τοῦ τὸν ἄριστον ἠρῆσθαι βίον, ἐπανατείνεται ἐκθειάζουσα μὲν παρθενίαν καὶ ἐγγὺς ἀθανάτων ἀποφαίνουσα, ἄχραντον καὶ ἀκήρατον καὶ ἀδιάφθορον ὀνομάζουσα. [...] πείσον ἢ λόγοις ἢ ἔργοις γνωρίσαι τὴν ἑαυτῆς φύσιν καὶ ὅτι γυνὴ γέγονεν εἰδέναί. Βουλομένῳ δέ σοι τὸ πρᾶγμα ῥᾶδιον· οὔτε γὰρ ἀπρόσμικτος ἐκείνη πρὸς τοὺς λογίους τῶν ἀνδρῶν ἀλλὰ τὸ πλεῖστον τούτοις συνόμιλος ἐπαρθενεύθη καὶ οἴκησιν οἰκεῖ σοι τὴν αὐτὴν ἐνταῦθα. (Hld. 2.33.4–6)

Yet for all her qualities, she is afflicting me with an incurable distress. She has renounced marriage and is proclaiming that she will stay a virgin all her life; she has dedicated herself to the sacred service of Artemis and spends most of her time hunting and practicing archery. My life is unbearable: I had hoped to marry her to my sister's son, a pleasant young man in speech and disposition, but my hopes have been thwarted by her cruel decision. I have been unable to persuade her with soft words, promises, and reasoned arguments. But the worst part is that I am, as the saying goes, hoist with my own petard: she makes great play with that subtlety in argument whose various forms I taught her as a basis for choosing the best way of life. Virginity is her god, and she has elevated it to the level of the immortals, pronouncing it without stain, without impurity, without corruption. [...] Persuade her by words or deeds to acknowledge her own nature and realize that she is a woman now. It is something you could do with no difficulty if you set your mind to it, for she is not unfamiliar with men of learning—in fact, she has passed most of her virgin life in their company—and she shares the same dwelling with you there.

This passage presents an overview of Charikleia's character before she undertakes her adventures with Theagenes, illuminating her original desires, skills, and motivations. It is clear that Charikles is resolutely intent on having his daughter marry, and her decision to negate her nature and consequently a husband has caused him much distress. In fact,

Charikleia is committed to her religious role to such an extent that she refuses to acknowledge herself as a woman altogether. Charikles is at a loss, moreover, because Charikleia has turned his rhetoric against him, using “subtlety in argument” to “hoist him with his own petard,” thus incapacitating his argumentative force. Charikleia is an educated young woman, having lived her whole life in the “company of scholars” and being well versed in their dialectic exchange.<sup>231</sup> It would thus seem that Charikleia is not only deeply religious and committed to maintaining her chastity above all else but also highly trained in rhetorical argumentation, which as we saw proved useful in the situation with Thyamis, just as it will in other instances that we will examine below.

Once Kalasiris helps Theagenes carry off Charikleia from her home, she has to ensure that Theagenes leaves her purity intact, and at the first moment that they are in the clear, she turns to Kalasiris when he is about to leave them for a little while and says:

«ὦ πάτερ, ἀδικίας... ἀρχὴ τοῦτο μᾶλλον δὲ προδοσίας, εἰ μόνην οἰχίση με καταλιπών, Θεαγένει τὰ καθ’ ἡμᾶς ἐπιτρέψας, οὐδὲ ἐννοήσεις ὡς ἄπιστον εἰς φυλακὴν ἐραστής εἰ γένοιτο τῶν ἐρωτικῶν ἐγκρατῆς καὶ οὐχ ἥκιστα τῶν καταιδέσαι δυναμένων μονούμενος. Ἀναφλέγεται γάρ, ὡς οἶμαι, πλέον ὅταν ἄνευ προμάχου βλέπῃ τὸ ποθοῦμενον προκειμένον, ὥστε οὐ πρότερόν σε μεθίημι πρὶν δὴ μοι τῶν τε παρόντων ἕνεκα καὶ ἔτι μᾶλλον τῶν μελλόντων ὄρκῳ πρὸς Θεαγένην τὸ ἀσφαλὲς ἐμπεδωθεῖ ὡς οὔτε ὁμιλήσει τὰ Ἀφροδίτης πρότερον ἢ γένος τε καὶ οἶκον τὸν ἡμέτερον ἀπολαβεῖν ἢ, εἴπερ τοῦτο κωλύει δαίμων, ἀλλ’ οὖν γε πάντως βουλομένην γυναῖκα ποιῆσθαι ἢ μηδαμῶς.» (Hld. 4.18.4–5)

“Father... it will be the beginning of iniquity, or should I say betrayal, if you go off and leave me alone in Theagenes’ care, considering what an untrustworthy guardian a lover makes if he is in charge of the object of his desire, and is not in the slightest constrained by those who can shame him. The flames of his passion burn higher, I think, when he sees the object of his desire lying defenseless in front of him. So I shall not let you go until I have Theagenes’ sworn word as a guarantee of my safety both for the present and, even more importantly, for the future. Let him swear that he will have no erotic contact with me before I regain my home and people; or else, if some divinity prevents this, at least let it be that he will make me his wife either with my full consent or not at all.”

Charikleia clearly wastes no time in making sure that her virginity remains unviolated, at least until they reach their destination. Although Charikleia loves Theagenes, she is still

<sup>231</sup> Cf. Hld. 3.19.3: οὐδὲ ἄλλως οὔσα πρὸς τὸ λόγιον γένος ἀπρόσμικτος.

suspicious of him, prompting her to use her ability to manipulate in order to protect her chastity. She knows that Kalasiris' religiosity would compel him to agree to this arrangement, as he had before told her that the only solution to her apparent desire for Theagenes is that the two young lovers should get married (Hld. 4.10.6). Moreover, the rider at the end of this passage gives Charikleia even more protection and control, since if they do not get to Aithiopia, Theagenes will have sworn not to marry her without her explicit consent. Charikleia's persuasiveness is in full effect yet again, and Kalasiris' response indicates that her speech has had the desired result: "I found this speech quite admirable and decided without demur that it should be done as she asked" (Ἐμοῦ δὲ τὰ εἰρημένα θαυμάσαντος καὶ οὕτω ποιητέον εἶναι πάντως ἐπικρίναντος, Hld. 4.18.6). Early on in their journey, then, Charikleia shows her capacity for manipulative, if defensive, rhetoric.

Charikleia's need to protect her chastity by lying does have an ancient precedent in the character of Penelope in Homer's *Odyssey*.<sup>232</sup> Indeed, Heliodorus' connection of Charikleia to Penelope is subtle yet unmistakable in the *Aithiopika*, as we can see in the message that Odysseus sends from his wife Penelope to Kalasiris in his sleep that he is then to pass on to Charikleia:

«τὴν κόρην δὲ ἣν ἄγεις παρὰ τῆς ἐμῆς γαμετῆς πρόσσειπε· χαίρειν γὰρ αὐτῇ φησι διότι πάντων ἐπίπροσθεν ἄγει τὴν σωφροσύνην καὶ τέλος αὐτῇ δεξιὸν εὐαγγελίζεται.»  
(Hld. 5.22.3)

"Give this message from my wife to the daughter that accompanies you: she tells her to cheer up, since she esteems chastity before all things, and promises that her story has a happy ending."

The relay of information suggests that Heliodorus is intentionally suggesting to the reader that there is a connection between his heroine and Homer's. Although Charikleia's lying is perhaps more expansive and creative, it would seem that even the author of the novel himself sees a precedent for Charikleia's actions in Penelope's defensive lying to protect her chastity

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<sup>232</sup> For Penelope's cunning and undeniable ability to lie or manipulate truths see Emlyn-Jones 1984, 3–7; Winkler 1990, 129–161; Buchan 2004, 173–190; Cásseres 2015, 35–36.

from her many suitors.<sup>233</sup> Making the connection to Charikleia’s literary predecessor explicit through this message allows Heliodorus further to strengthen not only Charikleia’s devotion to her chastity, but also the idea that her lying to protect it is not malicious but in fact defensive like Penelope’s.

As we have seen, Charikleia is motivated by two factors: her own safety, both from danger and from sexual advances, and that of Theagenes. These themes recur throughout the rest of the novel. For example, once they are on their way with Kalasiris, their ship is overtaken by Cretan pirates (Hld. 5.23–25). Charikleia is seen by Trachinus, the pirate captain who has had his eye on her since their last port of departure. He confesses his love for her, claiming that his purpose in capturing her ship was to make her his queen (Hld. 5.26.1). Here is Kalasiris’ narration of Charikleia’s reaction:

ἡ δέ (ἔστι γὰρ χρῆμα σοφώτατον) καιρὸν διαθέσθαι δραστήριος ἅμα δέ τι καὶ τῆς ἐμῆς ὑποθήκης ἀνύουσα, τὸ κατηφές ἐκ τῶν περιεστηκότων τοῦ βλέμματος ἀπεσκευασμένη καὶ πρὸς τὸ ἐπαγωγότερον **ἐκβιασμένη**... (Hld. 5.26.2)

Charikleia, this most clever being, ever quick to manage a situation, but also in part implementing my own suggestion, discarded the downcast visage caused by her present situation, and **forced herself** towards a more seductive expression...

Although Kalasiris seems to take some credit for Charikleia’s ability to disguise her true feelings, even he admits that she seems innately talented at such dissembling, knowing how to cast off her downtrodden visage and adopt a “more seductive expression.” It is clear from this passage that she is not shy about using her sexuality to achieve her ends. However, it is also important to acknowledge that she seems “forced” (ἐκβιασμένη) into it by circumstances. She does not enjoy it, in other words, but knows that it is the right thing to do at that moment if she is to protect herself and Theagenes. After she pleads for Theagenes’ life as a proof of the captain’s affection, pretending once again that he is her brother, “she fell and clasped [Trachinus’] knees in prolonged supplication,” allowing him to “take pleasure in her

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<sup>233</sup> For Penelope’s defensive lying see Winkler 1990, 129–161.

embraces” (τοῖς γόνασι προσέπιπτεν καὶ εἶχετο ἐπὶ πλεῖστον ἰκετεύουσα... τοῦ Τραχίνου ταῖς περιπλοκαῖς ἐντροφῶντος, Hld. 5.26.3). Charikleia will clearly go to whatever lengths to manipulate Trachinus’ feelings in order to protect herself and her lover, even if it means degrading herself in such a way.

In order to escape from their present situation, Kalasiris tricks Trachinus’ second-in-command, Pelorus, into believing that Charikleia is in love with him. This causes a disruption at the ceremony, and a battle ensues, with Charikleia and Theagenes killing many of the pirate’s crew. This is where the novel begins *in medias res*, with the passages discussed at the beginning of this chapter, which established for the reader Charikleia’s ability to lie when the situation demands it.

The next instance when Charikleia is forced to lie comes in Book 7, when she and Theagenes are being held captive by the Persian queen Arsake, who thinks that the pair are brother and sister, as Charikleia whispered to Theagenes to tell the queen (Hld. 7.12.7). Arsake is very much infatuated with Theagenes and sends her nurse to act as a go-between to make Theagenes aware of the queen’s intentions. After several rejections, Charikleia realizes that the situation might turn against herself and Theagenes if Arsake does not get what she desires. Thus, at Hld. 7.18.3, when Arsake requests Theagenes’ presence in her chambers, Charikleia first advises Theagenes to avoid presenting obvious resistance to her and to pretend to be willing to obey her in everything she requests. He is still unconvinced, however, and Charikleia addresses him again in the following passage:

«ἼΩ Θεάγενης», ἔλεγεν ἡ Χαρίκλεια, «ὁ μὲν δαίμων τοιαῦτα ἡμῖν προξενεῖ τὰ εὐτυχήματα ἐν οἷς πλέον ἐστὶ τὸ κακῶς πράττειν τῆς δοκούσης εὐπραγίας· πλὴν ἀλλὰ συνετῶν γέ ἐστι καὶ τὰ δυστυχήματα ἐκ τῶν ἐνότων πρὸς τὸ βέλτιστον διατίθεσθαι. Εἰ μὲν οὖν ἔχεις γνώμην καὶ τελείως δρᾶσαι τὸ ἔργον οὐκ ἔχω λέγειν· καίτοι γε οὐκ ἂν σφόδρα διενεχθεῖσα εἰ πάντως ἡμῖν ἐν τούτῳ τὸ σῶζεσθαι καὶ μὴ περιλείπεται. Εἰ δὲ εὖ ποιῶν ἄτοπον δοκιμάζεις τὸ αἰτούμενον ἀλλὰ σύ γε πλάττου τὸ συγκατατίθεσθαι καὶ τρέφων ἐπαγγελίαις τῆς βαρβάρου τὴν ὄρεξιν ὑπερθέσεις ὑπότεμνε τὸ πρὸς ὄξύ τι καθ’ ἡμῶν βουλευσασθαι, ἐφηδύνων ἐλπίδι καὶ καταμαλάττων ὑποσχέσει τοῦ θυμοῦ τὸ φλεγμαῖνον· εἰκός τινα καὶ λύσιν θεῶν

βουλήσει τὸν μεταξύ χρόνον ἀποτεκεῖν. Ἀλλ' ὃ Θεάγενης, ὅπως μὴ ἐκ τῆς μελέτης εἰς τὸ αἰσχρὸν τοῦ ἔργου κατολισθήσῃς.» (Hld. 7.21.3–4)

“So, Theagenes, the divinity procures this sort of good fortune which includes more adversity than any apparent prosperity. Nevertheless, sensible people ought to make the best they can of their misfortunes in the present circumstance. Whether you intend to carry this business through to the full, I cannot say; and indeed I should not have felt greatly upset if it were the one and only issue on which our life or death depended. But even if, to your credit, you consider this request abhorrent, nevertheless pretend to agree to it. Feed this barbarian woman’s desire with promises, undercutting with deferments any sort of harsh thoughts she may have against us, soothing her with hope and softening with promise the fiery heat of her indignation. It is probable that, with the gods’ help, a solution might be brought about in the meanwhile. But please, Theagenes, do not slip down from the rehearsal to the disgrace of its actual performance.”

As Charikleia says, they are once again faced with misfortunes that they must make the best of by lying, just as they previously did in Book 1, when she appears to agree to Thyamis’ wedding in order to keep herself and Theagenes safe. This time, however, she advises Theagenes to do as she has previously done, that is, to pretend to give in to a suitor’s demands and delay until some solution should present itself. This sort of lying would, as before, clearly be defensive, as Charikleia is worried that, if Theagenes does not give himself over to Arsake, the queen will turn spiteful, and so he must “undercut...any sort of harsh thoughts” (ὕπότεμνε τὸ πρὸς ὀξύ) against the two of them. This is not by any means lying for the sake of lying, but a lie to preserve Charikleia and Theagenes until a method of escape can be found.

After Arsake’s suicide and the siege of Syene in Book 9, where the queen’s husband Oroöndates is defeated, Charikleia and Theagenes are led with the rest of the Persian prisoners to Meroe, the capital of Aithiopia. On their way there, because of their astounding beauty, Charikleia and Theagenes are chosen to be the sacrificial human victims of the Aithiopians, who persist in a habit of human sacrifice after any great victory. In spite of the ominous prospect of their sacrifice, Charikleia retains a cheerful optimism about the eventual recognition by her mother and positive outcome of their audience with the Aithiopian

public.<sup>234</sup> Her sincere belief, as she makes clear to Theagenes in Book 9, was that the motherly nature of Persinna will eventually prevent their sacrifice (Hld. 9.24.8). Once they arrive at Meroe, the sacrificial victims need to have their chastity tested by stepping on a heated golden bar of an altar: only if they are revealed to be impure, can they be sacrificed to the Sun. After the trial, both young lovers are proven to be pure, and hence the sacrifice is stopped as unacceptable and impure by the head of the sacrificial procession and leader of the Gymnosophists, Sisimithres. In the presence of Sisimithres, Charikleia displays a recollection of his name and gains the courage to reveal her identity. Once she does reveal her identity through her tokens, everything goes according to plan: she is embraced by both of her parents in spite of her different skin and is allowed to remain alive, while the Aithiopians are supposed to look for a sacrificial substitute for her.

However, trouble begins for Charikleia once she is required to explain her relationship with Theagenes, who previously claimed to be her brother (Hld. 9.25.2). Hydaspes poses the question of Theagenes' relationship to her succinctly, and this is how Charikleia responds:

Καὶ ἡ Χαρίκλεια σὺν ἐρυθρήματι κατανεύσασα «Τὸν μὲν ἀδελφὸν ἐψευσάμην» ἔφη «τῆς χρείας τὸ πλάσμα συνθείσης...» (Hld. 10.18.2)

Charikleia, with a blush, lowered her eyes. "I lied when I said he was my brother," she said, "composing this falsehood due to necessity..."

What is made clear in this passage, as it has been throughout the novel, is that when it comes to Charikleia's lying, it is always "due to necessity" (τῆς χρείας), that is, to defend herself whether from danger or in situations of intense suspicion. It is not clear why she feels entirely compelled to be suspicious of her own parents, given that she has already been recognized by them as their daughter, but perhaps after so much time traveling in a constant state of

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<sup>234</sup> Hld. 10.7.3: ἡ Χαρίκλεια δὲ καὶ φαιδρῶ τῷ προσώπῳ καὶ μειδιῶντι συνεχές τε καὶ ἀτενές εἰς τὴν Περσίνναν ἀφορῶσα.

uncertainty and amid dangerous people and situations, she has trouble trusting anyone until she is absolutely sure of their intentions.

Knemon lies maliciously to manipulate others and get away with murder. Kalasiris lies because he believes that the gods would want him to do so. Charikleia's lies are a bit harder to parse. She is clearly skilled at lying just like Knemon. At the same time, she is also religiously devoted to her chastity, something for which she receives praise throughout the narrative. By approaching from an anthropological angle the situations where she lies, it becomes possible to understand that her lies are neither due to malice nor because she feels compelled by a higher power; rather, Charikleia lies because she is forced by necessity, i.e., by the dangers of the situation to herself or Theagenes. It might seem that she lies more than a typical, idealized heroine in an ancient Greek novel would; as we have seen, however, she is motivated in each instance by the need to survive.

### **6.3 Conclusions: Charikleia and the Women of Detective Fiction**

Charikleia's ability to lie—and lie well—using both her intelligence and her irresistible appearance is something that becomes a prominent characteristic of several female characters in modern detective fiction.<sup>235</sup> These modern heroines assume a leading role alongside the male detective, challenging his authority and leaving the reader puzzled regarding their motivations. Of course, their lying seems at times aggressive and uncalled for. However, this is often not the case in reality, and the reader must turn the pages to find their true motivations.

An indicative example comes from Collins' pioneering *The Policeman and the Cook* (1881), in which the cook, Priscilla Thurlby, is a woman who escapes the final punishment and sets the standard for the cunning woman getting away with murder while pointing out the

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<sup>235</sup> For a comprehensive overview of the role of the female protagonists in the detective novel see Craig and Cadogan 1981, 15–22, and Harrington 2005, 13–28.

failure of the detective in the story. Collins thematizes there the motif of “the least likely person,” a narrative strategy that became common later on. Yet Ms. Thurlby kills her boss because he traumatized her enough (it is not clear how) that she could see murder as her only option.

The most characteristic and famous story of this kind comes from Sir Arthur Conan Doyle’s *A Scandal in Bohemia* (1891). Conan Doyle has Sherlock Holmes take on as a client a mysterious woman named Irene Adler, who entrusts him with a mission of protecting a photo of her with the King of Scandinavia. Holmes ends up becoming infatuated with Ms. Adler, however. “She has the face of the most beautiful of women, and the mind of the most resolute of men,”<sup>236</sup> as he says, and this results in Holmes underestimating her, as well as failing her as his client. His failure was Ms. Adler’s plan all along, however, as she was assaulted by the King and seeks to get revenge on men in general. The novel ends with her leaving a letter behind, explaining how she had outwitted Holmes.

What is important about both of these stories is the fact that, although the women included in them seem to display an outstanding capacity to lie, this capacity stems from deep-seated motives, such as concerns about social status (as in the case of *The Cook*) or actual sexual assault by a dominant male (as in the case of *The Scandal in Bohemia*). Has a secret affair or sexual assault happened at earlier stages of their lives, compelling these women of crime fiction to distract the male detective from finding the perpetrator of a crime, so that they can find him and deliver justice themselves? That is the role of the reader to determine. However, the one thing that stands out about all these characters is their ability to lie and manipulate the men in the story. Their lies, very much like Charikleia’s, are not unmotivated but are rather enforced by hidden motives, such as sexual assault or social issues (class hatred and poverty). At times, such lying might seem to be done without much

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<sup>236</sup> Conan Doyle 1891, 166.

justification, but a close reader can see that these characters deceive others for reasons that are gradually revealed or need to be inferred, if only one looks carefully enough.

Charikleia is not a woman from a modern crime novel. She does not go as far as they do in their lies or their actions (which often involve murder). Yet she is a female character whose lying makes one want to read the text more closely to understand what kind of character she is. As is revealed over the course of the novel, she lies to protect herself and her chastity, as well as her lover Theagenes. Her lying, while at times very effective, is not malicious but rather a means for her to cope with a world that is full of bandits, pirates, and people who seek to take away from her what she values most. It is up to the reader to look closely enough at her and her lies to understand their motivations. Charikleia might not be the idealized heroine of other Ancient Greek novels, pure and innocent as a maiden can be, but that might be what makes her so much more interesting and worthy of the reader's attention.

## CHAPTER 7

### CONCLUSION

The detective story differs from any other story in this:  
that the reader is only happy if he feels a fool.

—G.K. Chesterton, “The Ideal Detective Story”

#### 7.1 The Benefits of the Detective Narrative

This study set out to explore the *Aithiopika*'s intellectual proximity to patterns and modes of reasoning found in the modern genre of detective narrative. Like most narrative fiction, the *Aithiopika* provides on the narrative level two primary ways of engaging the reader's interest: first, in a forwards direction, in which the reader keeps reading, captivated by the feeling of suspense over what will happen on the next page as the story unfolds. Secondly, and more importantly, in a backward manner, where the reader returns over and over again to the story in order to satisfy her curiosity over understanding the gaps in her knowledge of what has already happened in the text. My contention is that the narrative of the *Aithiopika*, while provoking the reader with various techniques for the production of suspense, is heavily inclined towards a “backwards” re-reading, namely, towards the reconstruction and understanding of an un-narrated story through small clues carefully seeded by the author. I have argued that locating and deciphering these small details constitutes the primary and perhaps most valid process for understanding the text of the *Aithiopika*. What is more, in this process of constant misdirection, which requires again and again the careful reconstruction of the plot after each new clue, the reader gains an elevated sense of narrative interest not only in the actions of the characters involved but also in unpacking and understanding their thoughts and motivations, much as in the genre of detective fiction today.

In my first chapter, I laid out a synopsis of the common denominators and structural constituents by which we can understand the genre of detective narrative. The consensus so far has been that these narratives *intentionally* use nonlinear plots to thematize narrativity as a problem, elevating the sense of reward and ratiocinative pleasure through the dispersion of multiple trails of seemingly disconnected clues towards the solution of a crime or mystery.<sup>237</sup> The intervening chapters provided evidence that this is exactly what is going on when a reader makes her way through Heliodorus' *Aithiopika*. At this stage, we now need to ask what benefit we can gain by reading Heliodorus' novel as detective fiction.

First, if we read the novel in this manner, we can enjoy the contest between author and reader for a determinate reading. As in detective fiction, it entails a kind of double bluff, namely, a contest where the author uses the readers' cunning against them so that they will arrive at wrong hypotheses on the basis of generic knowledge.<sup>238</sup> In the *Aithiopika*, the cryptic, counterintuitive clues offered against the grain of our normal strategies of reading seem to go so deep that one cannot help but wonder: am I still missing something? Is there a clue I am supposed to see here? Some word that may mean something different? Some detail that will somehow become relevant? The text seems to offer nearly inexhaustible clues within clues, making it difficult for us to "consume" it on a first try. We need to return to it again and again.

Scholarship on Heliodorus has been right to point to some aspects of the purposely aporetic, open-ended element in the story, which may frustrate the reader's ability to establish

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<sup>237</sup> See Hühn 1989. On ratiocinative pleasure in detective stories see Wittgenstein (1953) 2009, 54, §119: "The results of a detective's work are the uncovering of one or another piece of plain nonsense and of bumps that he has got by running its head up against the limits prescribed. These bumps make us see the value of the discovery."

<sup>238</sup> For the concept of the double bluff see Agatha Christie's work, as evidenced by such novels as *The Mysterious Affair in Styles* (1920), *Towards Zero* (1944), and *The Hollow* ([1946] 1984).

a firm grasp on “real closure.”<sup>239</sup> However, this constant return, this constant need to re-read the *Aithiopika* to “get it right” reveals the predicament of the archetypal detective formula at large: the possible existence of not one meaning but a hierarchy of meanings in the story, some more correct than others, but all still available to readers.<sup>240</sup>

This interpretation of the *Aithiopika* should elevate further our estimation of Heliodorus’ ability to craft an extremely sophisticated narrative, to create “a narrative of narratives,” as Peter Brooks has said of the genre of detective fiction.<sup>241</sup> Scholars have suggested that Heliodorus is very attentive to detail in a narrative in which nothing goes unnoticed.<sup>242</sup> My proposed reading of the *Aithiopika* as a narrative that contains several of the strategies of detective fiction would help to confirm this understanding of Heliodorus as a sophisticated writer, who plants very small clues even in seemingly irrelevant sections of his work away from the main storyline.<sup>243</sup> As a reader, then, one must always be on one’s guard with such a novel that demands such close reading at every turn.

If read in this way, the narrative becomes all the more rewarding, as the reader has to keep returning to the story in order to eliminate possibilities and discover the single coherent truth that brings the puzzle together. This painstaking quest for understanding an accurate sequence of events in the plot, requiring repeated re-readings of the story, makes the reader all the more engaged in the narrative predicament. What is more, it equips the reader to identify and locate even the minutest ironies and to take pleasure in solving the seeming inconsistencies that are so carefully planted by the author. In this way, the reader is also

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<sup>239</sup> Hunter 1998, 59, following the tradition of Winkler 1982; Whitmarsh 2011, 156; *contra* Morgan 1989.

<sup>240</sup> For the hierarchical connotations of meaning in Heliodorus see Dowden 1996, 267–285; Most 2007, 160–167; Whitmarsh 2011, 132.

<sup>241</sup> Brooks 1984, 25. See also Eco 1984; 1989; Hoffmann 2005, 17–19; 2013.

<sup>242</sup> Winkler 1982, 98.

<sup>243</sup> On the relevance of seemingly unnecessary descriptions and digressions see Hefti 1950; Kirk 1960; Bartsch 1989.

enabled to inspect more closely the author's laboratory and break down its techniques, raising questions as to why the plot took this or that turn at any specific point.

Of course, we have repeatedly shown that this is not a standard crime novel. Heliodorus seems to come up with something entirely unprecedented and original and does not seem to have left any known or explicit trace of his influence on the modern detective novel (although Poe was an avid armchair classicist, and Cervantes may display some uncanny similarities, as will be discussed below in 7.2).<sup>244</sup> However, to quote Todorov, "[t]he masterpiece does not enter any genre save perhaps its own."<sup>245</sup> Heliodorus' narrative strategy does not readily provide the solution or the connection between all the threads for the reader. His approach is exclusive and perhaps elitist in its demands: some will pick up on them, others will not, mostly because they have perhaps underestimated Heliodorus as an author, especially, but not exclusively, in his inset stories. The need to pay attention to the small details in this narrative gives to the *Aithiopika* unexpected twists, forcing us to re-evaluate the novel's narrative code as a very sophisticated, if unexpected, predecessor of detective fiction.

Of course, it is not the same as modern detective fiction. And that is perhaps not such a bad thing. Barthes maintained that "detective fiction...emerges as a much more mechanistic restructuration of the reading process whereby phenomena are reorganized into formulaic categories which reduce the complexity of experience to a series of delays, snares, equivocations, partial answers, suspended answers, and jamming action."<sup>246</sup> To these elements of detective narrative that appeared so simplistic to Barthes, Heliodorus seems to offer a sophisticated alternative: what if you offer the crime and the clues, but not the answers? The narrative becomes extremely complex, then, but also infinitely more rewarding, like an open-ended, inviting puzzle that waits for you to bring to it your own

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<sup>244</sup> Bennett 1983, 262–275.

<sup>245</sup> Todorov (1966) 1971, 43.

<sup>246</sup> Barthes 1974, 75.

solution. The agency falls entirely upon the reader, who is supposed to draw from every possible source, internal or external, to put the pieces together.<sup>247</sup>

Admittedly, reading for clues in the narrative of Heliodorus is nothing new. Kerényi belittled the literary dimension of the novel by pursuing *Quellenforschung* and, later on, Merkelbach avidly pursued clues that pointed to a mystical narrative.<sup>248</sup> However, by allowing ourselves to read this text as a detective narrative and against the grain, future scholarship can avoid reifying the concept of understanding the story either solely at the mimetic/structural level as a progression of actions or rhetorically as a means of manipulating the reader's interest. Detective stories can display great potential in mastering both levels, and even though the rhetorical seems to be subordinated to the structural, both perfectly complement each other.<sup>249</sup>

What is so surprising, then, is that reading for clues in the *Aithiopika* to explain the *Aithiopika* itself has not been an approach taken by previous scholarship on this text. My study tries to take into account the merits of reading for clues in both the formation of plot structures and character intentions by demonstrating that picking up on the clues in the plot also gives one clues about the characters in the action and reveals their ethical outlook. In this way, I have shown, Heliodorus does provide a kind of ethical criticism, one that is subtle yet important for understanding the novel as a whole. A line between good and bad clearly exists in the text, but is not easy to draw; it requires a closer reading, even at times a reading against the grain. Is a lie malicious? Is it noble? Or is it defensive? If one pays close attention, the reality is not what it seems: Knemon is no buffoon, Kalasiris is no criminal mastermind and

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<sup>247</sup> Here it is interesting to contrast this with Dicken's *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*. For a comprehensive analysis of Dicken's inadvertent detective story effect see Walton 1969, 446–462; Bubberke 1992; Grossmann 2002, 137–162. For a useful parallel between such fictional practices and everyday practice of detection see Walton 2015, 77–98, 153–182. Many thanks for this reference to Prof. Janko.

<sup>248</sup> Kerényi 1927; Merkelbach 1962.

<sup>249</sup> Marsh 1972; Dove 1989.

charlatan, and Charikleia is an uncanny combination of both characters: a defensive liar, out of radical mistrust of the threatening world that surrounds her, but with good intentions and a functioning moral compass.

Heliodorus, with this careful seeding of clues, seems to be challenging not only our ability to follow the actual plot but, more importantly, to follow the actual predicament of every character and their intentions. Why and how did they come to pursue a specific action? And what does this or that action say about the characters' intentions, not to mention Heliodorus' intentions as to where the story leads us? Heliodorus is neither quiet nor detached: he is deliberately cryptic in his efforts to induce backwards reading and the pursuit of "getting it right," starting with a puzzle and leading you along, with false clues and only small but suggestive and important hints pointing towards the truth, which at times is never revealed explicitly.

Yet we must also avoid the temptation to believe that by progressing towards the end of the story we can provide a definitive meaning at the structural level of the actions or, conversely and in a deconstructive manner, that we can never reach any safe conclusions. What we need to do instead is to revisit the clues and enter a process that is fallible, yet self-correcting. In that way, the reader can triangulate between the author's intentions, the text, and the actual effect upon her, i.e., the achievement of a moderate understanding of the author's intentions. And Heliodorus' intentions appear clear enough: a highly contained narrative, pregnant with seemingly random clues that await to be deciphered and reach a truth that is to be unearthed beneath the superficial.<sup>250</sup>

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<sup>250</sup> For similar intentions in the detective fiction see Wingate 1979, 581: "The satisfaction of the traditional mystery comes not from the reader's certainty of the immanence of justice but from his certainty of the immanence of truth." Or, as the detective Roger Sheringham declares in one of Anthony Berkeley's novels ([1932] 2001, 225), "I don't care a bit about convictions. All that interests me is to get to the bottom of a problem and prove it to my own satisfaction. What happens to the murderer later isn't my affair, or my concern."

## 7.2 Reflections and Suggestions

Καὶ ταυτὶ μὲν δημοσιεύουσι, πρὸς δὲ τοὺς μύστας Ἴσιν τὴν γῆν καὶ Ὅσιριν τὸν Νεῖλον καταγγέλλουσι, τὰ πράγματα τοῖς ὀνόμασι μεταλαμβάνοντες. Ποθεῖ γοῦν ἀπόντα ἢ θεὸς καὶ χαίρει συνόντι καὶ μὴ φαινόμενον αὐτὴς θρηνεῖ καὶ ὡς δὴ τινα πολέμιον τὸν Τυφῶνα ἐχθραίνει, φυσικῶν τινῶν, οἶμαι, ἀνδρῶν καὶ θεολόγων πρὸς μὲν τοὺς βεβήλους τὰς ἐγκατεσπαρμένας τούτοις ὑπονοίας μὴ παραγυμνούντων, ἀλλ' ἐν εἶδει μύθου προκατηγούτων, τοὺς δὲ ἐποπτικωτέρους καὶ ἀνακτόρων ἐντὸς τῆς πυρφόρῳ τῶν ὄντων λαμπάδι φανότερον τελούντων. Τοῦτό τοι καὶ ἡμῖν εὐμένεια μὲν εἶη τῶν εἰρημένων, τὰ μυστικώτερα δὲ ἀρρήτῳ σιγῇ τετιμήσθω, τῶν κατὰ Συήνην ἐξῆς περαινομένων. (Hld. 9.9.4–10.1.1)

This much they disclose to the public, but to the initiates they reveal that the earth is Isis and the Nile Osiris, bestowing these names upon real things. The goddess longs for her husband when he is away and rejoices at his union with her, mourns his renewed absence, and despises Typhon like a mortal enemy. There is, I imagine, a school of natural philosophers and theologians who do not lay bare to the uninitiated the allegorical subtexts sown within these stories; rather, they offer a veiled version of them in the guise of a myth, initiating more clearly only those who are at the higher grade and already within the temple with the fiery torch of truth. May the gods look kindly on what I have said; the more mystical parts should be honored with secrecy and silence, while events draw to a close in sequence at Syene.

For most scholars, the above passage constitutes a crux in their mode of engagement with Heliodorus' *Aithiopika*.<sup>251</sup> How are we supposed to interpret the secrecy and silence in the narrative? In the three levels between a) the public and unlearned understanding, b) the initiate's understanding of the connection between the inundation and the myth of Isis and Osiris, and c) the highest initiates, who understand the myth fully, it is only the last group that is fully equipped to understand all the aforementioned levels. However, this group will not reveal its secrets. This lack of an explanation, the tacit implication, and silence are sometimes taken as more powerful indicators of meaning than what is explained.<sup>252</sup> It is to these silences—the silences which hold all the “right” answers—to which my study has tried to give voice.

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<sup>251</sup> In the words of Whitmarsh 2011, 132, “Our narrator leads his readers to the second stage, but no further, theatrically stopping himself before he divulges too much.” For the importance of this passage see Lamberton 1986; Dawson 1992; Dowden 1996; Sandy 2001, 169–178; Most 2007. Szepessy 1972, 341–357, speaks about wedding as a form of an initiation ritual in Heliodorus. For the problematic notion of initiation in antiquity see Graf 2003, 3–24.

<sup>252</sup> See Whitmarsh 2011, 132–133.

The present research study began as the pursuit of Neoplatonic thought in the work of Heliodorus, in an effort to understand it allegorically and symbolically, as a text imbued with philosophical meaning and resonances. After much struggle with the difficult thought of Plotinus, Iamblichus, and Proclus, as well as their vast *corpora*, I came to realize that the task of identifying Platonic, Neoplatonic, and allegorical resonances in the work of Heliodorus was a Sisyphean one: not for the lack of such resonances, but for exactly the overabundant presence of linguistic and textual hints. Allegory is a very powerful instrument, one that lends itself to much constructive interpretation and also, inescapably, to subjective relativism. The process resembles to some extent the interpretation of fragments, which, however pregnant with meaning, require putting forth much of oneself and of one's own horizon of expectations into the text, while always considering its historical circumstances. However, unlike several of the fragmentary texts available, the scholar of Heliodorus would have to struggle also with a disconcertingly uncertain date and time in determining his specific philosophical milieu.<sup>253</sup>

Several other lines of future inquiry would bear fruit in reading the *Aithiopika* in the way in which I have proposed in this study. First, what is role of the other minor, yet important, characters in Heliodorus' narrative? What is the narrative significance of the inclusion of Charikles, Meroebos, Sisimithres, Arsake, and, most importantly, Theagenes? Their inclusion in the *Aithiopika* definitely raises many questions both on the level of narrative economy and on that of character formation.<sup>254</sup> I believe that, with persistence, readers may discover strong yet very well hidden clues that could further inform and upset

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<sup>253</sup> See note 1 above.

<sup>254</sup> Nimis 1999, 229–234, has a long discussion over potential inconsistencies in Heliodorus, especially at the beginning of Book 6. What is more, Nimis 1999 raises an eyebrow in his discussions of Thyamis' story at 7.2–4 as exposed by the omniscient narrator. Characters still open to interpretation are, I believe, Arsake and her death at 8.15.2, which deserves a closer comparison to Demainete and my own suggestion for reinterpretation through the prism of Knemon; Morgan 1989a cites some other loose ends, and so does Sandy 1982a, 86–89. Most urgently, what needs to be interpreted anew is the “ending of omniscience by everyone” at 10.38.2, which seems to me far too obvious and impromptu to be taken at face value.

the established understanding of the *Aithiopika*.<sup>255</sup>

A second approach that could have been further explored in this study would be to examine the reception of Heliodorus, especially given that his work was seen after the 16<sup>th</sup> century as epic and moralizing “poetry” of the highest stature.<sup>256</sup> If this task had been undertaken, it would have been easier to evaluate and appreciate the importance of Heliodorean influence on the formation of modern narrative prose discourse, with all the literary consequences that this may entail. Here, a small, highly speculative digression is in order. Although somewhat heretical, my personal view is that there has been at least one close reader of Heliodorus as a predecessor to the detective novelist, and that was Cervantes, who has likewise been considered a predecessor of the detective novel himself.<sup>257</sup> My speculation comes from admittedly weak evidence, yet a very strange fact: that the labyrinthine path on which Don Quixote and Sancho Panza meet, once they enter the Sierra Morena, is called “Persean” instead of the obvious Thesean. So far, this instance has been

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<sup>255</sup> For a very recent study of Arsake’s episode see Lye 2016, 235–262, seen in comparison with Demainete, connecting simultaneously approaches on both gender and ethnicity as interpretative factors.

<sup>256</sup> For the tremendous importance of Heliodorus in Byzantium see Burton 2008, 272–281; in the Renaissance and early modernity see Amyot 1559; Wolff (1912) 1961; Prosch 1956; Gesner 1970; Schneider 1976, 49–55; Sandy 1979, 41–55; 1982a; 1984–1985, 1–22; Berger 1984, 177–189; Doody 1996; Sandy 1996, 735–773; Carver 1997, 197–226; Mentz 2000; Carver 2000–2001, 322–349; and, most recently, Carver 2016, citing new findings of Heliodorus in: a) Joseph Hall’s *Epistles* (1608) and *The honor of the married clergie* (1620); b) Haly Heron’s *A newe discourse of morall philosophie* (1659); c) Mulcaster’s *Positions where those primitiue circumstances be examined, which are necessarie for the training vp of children, either for skill in their booke, or health in their bodie* (1581); d) Brian Melbancke’s *Philotimus* (1582); e) Sidney’s *The Defence of poesie* (1582); f) Fraunce’s *The third part of the Countesse of Pembrokes Yuychurch* (1592); g) Shakespeare’s *Twelfth Night*, V.i (c.a. 1601–1602).

<sup>257</sup> For Cervantes’ affinities with detective narrative patterns see Hahn 1972, 128–140; Herrero 1981, 55–67; De Armas 1992, 8–28; Weimer 1996, 196–210; Presberg 2001; Cascardi 2002, 58–79; De Armas 2005, 23–34; Mayer 2005, 371–382; Pavel 2003b; (forthcoming). For a fascinating study of the genealogy of clues, which does not consider ancient material at all but only gives the historical evolution from the Renaissance onwards see Ginzburg 1989. For a study of some ancient patterns of clues as found in the model of the labyrinth and its resonances in modernity see Miller 1992. For the familiarity of Cervantes with the ancient novel and particularly with Antonius Diogenes see Weissert 1967, 1–10.

considered a misunderstanding on Cervantes' behalf, and it has been obelized.<sup>258</sup> However, could the two protagonists be referring to the fact that we are entering an *alter ego* of the Andromedan labyrinth that Charikleia, as the daughter, by proxy, of Andromeda, represents?<sup>259</sup>

Let us take a quick look at the picture that Cervantes paints. In Book 3, Chapter 9, of the first part of *Don Quixote*, our characters seem to be entering the forbidding landscape of the Sierra Morena.<sup>260</sup> As they enter, they find a scattered scene that calls for interpretation: a saddle cushion, linens, a portmanteau with shirts, a handkerchief with golden coins, and a pocket book. As they follow these traces, they find also right away a half-naked savage and, finally, a dead mule. The clues give rise to a series of adventures and misunderstandings with a chain gang of galley slaves, where everyone provides his own version of his criminal actions as justified and where Sancho Panza becomes (contrary to Holmes' Watson) the successful detective.<sup>261</sup> Note here that the register of Cervantes' work changes and the plot becomes, in this inset tale, much harder to follow.<sup>262</sup> What is the role of this story in the rest of the novel and the reception of this work? A reading for clues has been far from standard for Cervantes' masterpiece and comes as a surprise in the outline of the story. Perhaps this story helps us unpack the Cervantine narrative further by providing clues for many contested

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<sup>258</sup> Cervantes 1993, 167: "But there is another thing come into my head, quoth Sancho; 'how shall I do to find the way hither again, it is such a by-place?' 'Take good notice of it beforehand,' said Don Quixote, 'and I will endeavor to keep hereabouts till thy return: besides, about the time I may reasonably expect thee back, I will be sure to watch on the top of yonder high rock for thy coming. But now I bethink myself a better expedient; thou shalt cut down a good numbers of boughs, and strew them in the way as thou ridest along, till thou gettest to the plains, and this will serve thee to find me again at thy return, like Perseus's clue to the labyrinth in Crete.'" Translated by Moteaux (1615) 1993.

<sup>259</sup> For the role of Andromeda in the conception and inception of Charikleia by Persinna see Olsen 2012, 301–322.

<sup>260</sup> For forbidding landscapes in *Don Quixote* as hot spots for interpretation of linguistic and plot in Cervantes see Brownlee 1990, 212; De Armas 2011.

<sup>261</sup> Weimer 1996, 198.

<sup>262</sup> De Armas 2005, 23–34.

passages of *Don Quixote*. Certainly, the story should be revisited and so should the relevance of its seemingly irrelevant clues.

As Williamson asserts about how the knight experiences clues, “he remains hermetically sealed within the circularity of his chivalric vision.”<sup>263</sup> Any such evidence is transformed into a proof of Don Quixote’s monomania. If read in this way, Cervantes could be inverting the position of Heliodorus, which would, in turn, complement the picture of the struggle between author and reader for meaning. What if the reader and the protagonist/detective do not share perspectives, with the readers seeing some of the clues but the detective missing them? The reader may recreate his own understanding of the crime, which, again, comes with no actual solution from the narrative itself. The importance and relevance of *Don Quixote* for the study of clues and how they function has been already established.<sup>264</sup> However, its potential relationship to Heliodorus and possibly other works of prose fiction remains to be explored. Clues have a fantastic way of showing biases of perception.

As this study comes to an end, I acknowledge with some regret the aforementioned restrictions on my undertaking, but also with the lively awareness that some paths must inevitably be left untrodden in a text like the *Aithiopika* and in a genre as rich and labyrinthine as Imperial prose narrative. I sometimes believe that it is a real, if very fortunate, accident that I encountered and thought about a text as difficult as this, which requires so much attention and, in return, gratifies by leaving so many research possibilities open. It is, after all, no accident that Byzantine scholars and, later on, Renaissance readers have glorified Heliodorus by putting him in a position third only to Homer and Vergil.<sup>265</sup> I sincerely hope that this study will inspire further research on the most cryptic and challenging Ancient Greek prose narrative available to us. My secret hope is that this might also happen in

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<sup>263</sup> Williamson 1984, 109.

<sup>264</sup> See note 243, above.

<sup>265</sup> See Sandy 1982a, 100, citing Pinciano’s 1596 *Philosophia Antigua Poetica*; Gärtner 1971, 322–325; Burton 2008, 272–281.

conjunction with Wittgenstein's favorite genre, detective fiction, where the detective, in Borges' famous formulation, "has to read with a different brain" in order to be successful.<sup>266</sup>

As research on narrative, ancient and modern, is currently thriving, the importance of Heliodorus for the stabilization and appreciation of the most persistent genre of writing available to us, the novel, cannot be overstated. If read and "investigated" as a persistent pursuit of clues, the *Aithiopika* can inspire an eternal return to both its technique and its message, one that can repeatedly challenge, reward, and, perhaps, outsmart us.

In the words of Nick Lowe,

the *Aethiopica* is the ancient world's narratological *summa*, a selfconsciously encyclopaedic synthesis of a thousand years of accumulated pagan plot techniques, and of the game of story as a way of understanding the world. For the next millennium and more, it remained the final word.<sup>267</sup>

Lowe provides a powerful explanation of many aspects of the intricacies of the *Aithiopika* and of how demanding they can be on the reader.<sup>268</sup> And understanding Heliodorus' stunning narrative mastery through the prism of resolving some of its small, if titillating, inconsistencies and paradoxes is one of ancient fiction's rarest, most secretive, and, hence, most precious gems of narrative complexity.

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<sup>266</sup> Wittgenstein (1953) 2009, 56, §129, best explains his intellectual fascination with detective fiction: "The aspects of things that are most important for us are hidden because of their simplicity and familiarity. (One is unable to notice something, because it is always before one's eyes.) The real foundations of their inquiry do not strike people at all. Unless that fact has at some time struck them. And this means: we fail to be struck by what, once seen, is most striking and most powerful (*das, was einmal gesehen, das Auffallendste und Stärkste ist, fällt uns nicht auf*)." See also Borges 1990, 1–4, with the reading of detective narrative as the embodiment of "*Lesen ist denken mit fremdem Gehirn*."

<sup>267</sup> Lowe 2000, 258.

<sup>268</sup> See also Whitmarsh 2011, 135, "Heliodorus pushes his chosen genre to the very limit, allowing no room for imitation and development", expressing similar thought to Whitmarsh 1998, 93–124.

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