The Sphragis of Heliodoros, Genealogy in the Aithiopika, and Julian’s Hymn to King Helios

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Abstract: This article analyses the final sentence of Heliodoros’s Aithiopika as a sphragis — an autobiographical statement by the author. Heliodoros here stresses his descent from Helios, as one of characters in the romance, Persinna, also does. However, while genealogy (or physis) is an important element it is counterbalanced by the relativization of knowledge in the Aithiopika — nomos is king. The tension between these concepts is resolved by reading the romance in the light of Julian’s Hymn to Helios.

Keywords: Heliodoros; Aithiopika; Julian; Hymn to Helios; Genealogy.

The final sentence of the Ethiopian Story provides the best evidence we have for the identity of the author.\(^3\) The text reads as follows (10.41.4):

Τοιόνδε πέρας ἐσχέ τὸ σύνταγμα τῶν περὶ Θεαγένην καὶ Χαρίκλειαν Αἰθιοπικῶν· ὃ συνέταξεν ἀνὴρ Φοίνιξ Ἐμισηνός, τῶν ἀφ’ Ἡλίου γένος, Θεοδοσίου παῖς Ηναίανος.

The composition of the Ethiopian story about Theagenes and Charikleia ends here. A Phoenician of Emesa, one of those who trace their descent to Helios, the son of Theodosius, Heliodoros, composed it.

The fact that these words occur at the end of the work, rather than at the beginning as was the case with the majority of the ancient novelists apart from Xenophon of Ephesus,\(^4\) may be

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\(^1\) Text received on 05/20/2011 and accepted on 01/04/2012.

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\(^3\) Cf., e.g., E. Rohde, Der Griechische Roman Und Seine Vorläufer (Darmstadt 1914) 465-467 [437-438].

\(^4\) J. J. Winkler, 'The Mendacity of Kalasiris and the Narrative Strategy of Heliodoros’ Aithiopika': Yale Classical Studies 27 (1982) 93-158, at 96 and n. 6, states that the ‘novels of Longus, Achilles Tatius, Chariton, and Antonius Diogenes begin … by identifying the author and the circumstances of

explained by the complex construction of the opening of Heliodoros’s narrative, which draws the reader into the story by releasing puzzling visual information sparingly. The final position was also traditional in the case of an authorial statement (σφραγίς). In the ancient world there was no copyright law — instead authors established their rights over their work by appending a short autobiographical note to the text. The sentence discovery (Diogenes, Ach. Tat.) or composition (Longus, Chariton) of the story. Cf. Chariton, Χαρίτων Ἀφροδιςευς, Αθηναγόρου τοῦ Ἰάκωβου ὑπογραφεύς, παίδεος ερωτικόν ἐν Συρακούσαις γενόμενον διηγητός (1.1.1); Τοσάδε περὶ Καλλιρόης συνέγραψα (8.8.16); Achilles Tatius, Εὔος δὲ καὶ τὰ ἄλλα μὲν ἐπίνουν της γραφῆς, ἄτε δὲ ἦν ερωτικὸς περιεργότερον ἐβλεπον τὸν ἄγοντα τὸν βοῦν Ἐρωτα (1.2.1) — the author then hands over the narrative to his fictional ego-narrator, Kleitophon, Ο δὲ ἀρχεται τὸν λέγειν ὧδε: Ἐμοὶ Φοινίκη γένος, Τύρος ἡ πατρίς, ὄνομα Κλειτοφῶν (1.3.1); Longus, Ἐν Λέσβῳ θηρῶν ἐν ἄλσει Νυμφῶν θέαμα εἶδον κάλλιστον ἐδον (Prologue 1). Even the sophisticated Apuleius presents the prologue (for the most part) in the first person, although there is a considerable debate about who this person is (see Ahuvia Kahane and Andrew Laird (edd.), A Companion to the Prologue of Apuleius’ Metamorphoses [Oxford 2001] passim). According to Photius, Antonius Diogenes made use of the epistolary form (and so, presumably, the first person also) in dedicating his work to his sister, Isidora. Cf. Photius, Ἐπιστολὴν μὲν οὖν κατ’ αἰχμα τοῦ βιβλίου γράφει πρὸς τὴν ἀδελφὴν Ἱσίδωραν, δ’ ἐσεὶ καὶ τὴν προσφώνησιν αὐτῇ τῶν συγγραμμάτων δείκνυε πεποιημένος (Bib. 166.111a.41 [Bekker]). The best parallel to the final sentence in Heliodoros is the ending of the novel of Xenophon of Ephesus: Ἐν Καλλίροης τῶν κατὰ Ἀνθίαν καὶ Ἀβροκόμον Ἐφεσιακῶν τέλος.


6 The term σφραγίς is more accurate than κολοφών to describe such authorial statements, since the latter is generally used of a concluding argument in a philosophical treatise in antiquity: cf., e.g., Plato Euthyd. 301ε; Laws 673d; Thl. 153c.

7 For σφραγίς in the sense of a warrant, cf. Theognis 19; as a guarantee of secrecy, cf. Pseudo-Lucian Epigr. 11, and particularly Julian Hymn to Helios 141c and in magical texts (cf. LSJ ad loc. II).
is also written in the third person, whereas the earlier Greek novelists usually wrote about their work in the first person. The use of the third person is characteristic of the prefaces of the Greek historians and is in keeping with the historiographical pose Heliodoros adopts elsewhere in the work. There is no way of telling whether the final sentence was written by the author or by a copyist, but the formal style and the personal details offered carry some weight in favour of it having been written by Heliodoros himself. If so, it reveals that Heliodoros, a Phoenician from Emesa in Syria, thought it important to record his descent from Helios (τῶν ἀφ’ Ἡλίου γένος).

Genealogy is a theme in the *Aithiopika*. The romance is centrally concerned with birth, family, home, nationhood, race, and their opposites — illegitimacy, exile, alterity, and foreignness.

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8 See above, note 4.

9 For example, Herodotos: Ἡροδότου Θουρίου ιστορίης ἀπόδεξις ἡδε (Prol. 1.1); Thucydides Θουκυδίδης Αθηναίων ξυνέγραψε τὸν πόλεμον τῶν Πελοποννησίων καὶ Αθηναίων (1.1.1); Lucian Hist. Consdr. 54. Xenophon's *Ephesiaka*; the *Historia Apollonii Regis Tyrii*; the *Alexander Romance* are presented anonymously. The placing of the sentence at the end of the romance resembles the concluding autobiographical statement of Ammianus Marcellinus (31.16.7). For the historiographical pose of Heliodoros, cf. J. R. Morgan, 'History, Romance and Realism in the *Aithiopika* of Heliodoros': Classical Antiquity 1 (1982) 221-265. Walther Kranz, 'Sphragis: Ichform Und Namensiegel Als Eingangs- Und Schlussmotiv Antiker Dichtung': Röm. Jahrh. 104 (1961) 3-46, at 44-45, refers to similar statements by the authors of rhetorical and philosophical works and by vase painters such as Exekias (e.g., ΕΞΕΚΙΑΣΕΓΡΑΦΕΣΚΑΠΟΕΣΕΜΕ, Berlin 1720; ABV 143.1), although there the vase speaks.


The most important instance of this is, of course, the strange paradox of Charikleia’s seemingly illegitimate birth (Hld. 4.8), whose story is paradigmatic for the work as a whole. Charikleia is born white to the Ethiopian Queen Persinna, whose decision to expose her daughter creates two identities for the child — one legitimate and Ethiopian and one illegitimate and Hellenistic/Egyptian. It gives her multiple ‘fathers’ — Greek, Egyptian, and Ethiopian — and competing world views — Greek learning, Egyptian religiosity, and Ethiopian solar theology. It propels her to Delphi, the central and traditionally the most authoritative site of the Greek religion from which she must seek her return beyond the borders of the οἰκουμένη. Yet she, and her story, for which she is the cypher, remain one and within her and in it these three nations are ultimately united. To secure her reinstatement Heliodoros deploys a considerable weight of learning, both religious and secular, from within and without the Hellenistic world.

Throughout the narrative, emphasis is placed on the need to resolve the consequences of the heroine’s traumatic birth; the search for understanding of this enigma drives the plot forward.

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12 On the birth of Charikleia, see J. L. Hilton, ‘An Ethiopian Paradox: Heliodorus, Aithiopika 4.8’: Richard Hunter (ed.) Studies in Heliodorus (Cambridge 1998) 79-92; Tim Whitmarsh, ‘The Birth of a Prodigy: Heliodorus and the Genealogy of Hellenism’: Richard Hunter (ed.) Studies in Heliodorus (Cambridge 1998) 93-124; M. D. Reeve, ‘Conceptions’: Proceeding of the Cambridge Philological Society 215 (1989) 81-112. The King and Queen of Ethiopia had been childless for ten years before Charikleia was born; the King, Hydaspes, had been hoping for an heir to his line, which descended from Helios, Dionysos, Perseus, Andromeda, and Memnon. However, Charikleia was born white to her black parents and the Queen, Persinna, although she knew that this had happened because she had seen a painting of Andromeda at a precise and auspicious time for conception, decided to expose the child and to tell her husband that the infant had died at birth, because she realised that no-one would believe her explanation.

until the revelation of the truth in Book 10. The author insists on presenting the paradoxical biological facts; Persinna observed that, on the one hand, Charikleia’s skin gleamed with a colour alien to the Ethiopian tribe (ἐπειδὴ δὲ σε λευκὴν ἀπέτεκον, ἀπρόσφυλον αἰθιόπων χροιὰν ἀπαυγάζουσαν, Hld. 4.8.5, 10.14.2) and on the other that her features (τὸ πρόσωπον) were not Greek (Hld. 10.7.5). The puzzle of her daughter’s appearance was a mystery that astounded the king and his wise gymnosophists (Hld. 10.13.3), despite the fact that Persinna had published her explanation of her daughter’s ‘birth, nationality, and fate’ (γένος … καὶ ἔθνος … καὶ τύχην φράζει, Hld. 4.11.4) on her birth-band. After exposing her daughter, Persinna later regretted her decision and tried unsuccessfully to find anyone resembling her among her people (κατὰ τὸ ἔθνος). She entrusts the recovery of her daughter to an Egyptian priest, Kalasiris, who laments Charikleia’s loss of her rightful place in the royal family (Hld. 4.9.2, βασίλειον γένος). Charikleia herself is delighted to learn of her descent (Hld. 4.12.1, γένος) and her only goal in the second half of the romance is to regain her royal birthright (γένος) by escaping from Delphi with Theagenes and Kalasiris (Hld. 4.13.2; 4.18.5). Making use of oracles, dreams, and Persinna’s written evidence, the three are led to Ethiopia, where Charikleia regains her place in the royal family through recognition of a birth-mark which proves her genealogy. Throughout the work her Ethiopian identity and her religious role within Ethiopian society are viewed positively, while at the conclusion her Greek one is still acknowledged by the presence of

14 The meaning of ἀπρόσφυλος as ‘alien’, ‘not related to the tribe’, is clear from (Hld. 5.7.3). Here bandits surround Theagenes and Charikleia when they are shipwrecked on the coast of Egypt. The outlaws threaten to kill them but relent when they perceive their beauty. ‘For even the hand of a savage, it seems, is overawed in the presence of beauty; even the eye of a stranger (ἀπρόσφυλος ὀφθαλμός) is made gentle at the lovely sight.’

Charikles in the final scenes. Her genealogical line of descent is mentioned repeatedly: Charikleia appeals to the Sun, the forefather of her ancestors (Hld. 10.11.3, γενέαρχης) in the same way as Persinna had done (Hld. 4.8.2); Hydaspes attributed the discovery of the truth of Charikleia’s birth to his ancestral gods, Memnon, Perseus and Andromeda, the founders of his race (Hld. 10.24.1), who are displayed in a pavilion in the recognition scene at the end of the romance (Hld. 10.6.3). At the same time, the Greek god Apollo is equated with the Ethiopian Helios (Hld. 10.36.3). Nurture as well as nature is accommodated in the resolution of her story.

The importance of birth and nationality in the Aithiopika is not confined to the story of Charikleia. One of the many narrative doublets in the work, or in this case a narrative triplet, focuses on the importance of birth and nationality as credentials for marriage.16 A rich Tyrian merchant seeks the hand of Charikleia, praising his noble birth (γένος ἐνδόξον, Hld. 5.19.2). Her guardian, Kalasiris, refuses the match on the grounds that he could not marry his daughter to a foreigner who lived in a nation (ἔθνος) so far separated from Egypt (Hld. 5.19.3). When the merchant offers to adopt Egyptian ways and to take Egyptian nationality (ἔθνος … καὶ πατρίδα), Kalasiris promises to go along with his wishes, but only to humour him. In the contrasting second narrative, Nausikles is quite happy to marry his daughter to Knemon with a generous dowry, and asks nothing from him in return, because he knew his family, home, and nationality (Hld. 6.8.1, γένος καὶ οἶκον καὶ ἔθνος). Knemon was an Athenian by birth (Hld. 1.9.1), whom Theagenes and Charikleia are delighted to meet because he was born Greek and spoke the language (Hld. 1.8.6, Ἑλλην ὡς ἀληθῶς τὸ γένος καὶ τὴν φωνήν). He is reluctant to accompany them on their journey to Ethiopia, however, and seeks to return

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home to his family in Athens (Hld. 6.7.4; 6.7.6; 6.7.9). The core narrative of the romance could be seen to belong alongside these two cases. Even more noble than the Tyrian merchant, Charikleia’s lover, the Thessalian envoy Theagenes, is a true Greek, descended directly from Neoptolemos, Achilles, the son of Peleus and Thetis, and ultimately from Hellen, the son of Deukalion (Hld. 2.34.2, οἱ μὲν Αἰνιᾶνες, ἔφη, Θετταλικῆς ἐστι μοίρας τὸ εὐγενέστατον καὶ ἀκριβῶς Ἔλληνων ἀφ’ Ἐλληνος τοῦ Δευκαλίωνος), yet he gives up his home and nation, and by his elopement with Charikleia he calls down on himself the prospect of being punished with impalement, and on his people (γένος) and their descendants the loss of their privileges at Delphi and a cycle of revenge (Hld. 4.20.2). Like Knemon, however, Charikleia seeks only to return home to the land of her birth (ἡ ἐνεγκοῦσα — a word possibly coined by Heliodoros) on the request of her mother.17 The coinage of the word ἡ ἐνεγκοῦσα by Heliodoros, is a significant recognition of the importance of her birth, while at the same time the role played in her story by her adoptive fathers, Kalasiris and Charikles, is not undervalued. Besides Charikleia, Knemon, Kalasiris, Theagenes, Charikles, and Homer are all exiled from their homelands and aspire to return home. As Morgan notes, narratives that are so strikingly parallel demand interpretation.18 This narrative triplet shows that exile and return oscillate throughout the work and are structurally related, though not always resolved.

17 The word ἡ ἐνεγκοῦσα meaning ‘homeland’ or ‘land of birth’, if not first used by Heliodoros, was certainly unique to the fourth century and a favourite of the author. Cf. J. E. Mayor, ‘Ἡ ἐνεγκοῦσα in Heliodoros’: JP 15 (1886) 174-176. The term is used of Knemon’s exile (Hld. 1.14.1; 6.2.3), Charikleia’s home (Hld. 3.11.5; 4.9.2; 4.12.3; 7.14.7; 8.3.7 also refers to Theagenes, 10.7.8, 10.16.6. 10.15.9), Theagenes’ (Hld. 2.4.1), Kalasiris’ (Hld. 2.23.3; 2.25.4; 2.30.1; 3.15.3; 3.16.5), Charikles’ Delphi (Hld. 2.29.5; 4.19.7; 4.19.8), Homer’s (Hld. 3.14.4). Hydaspes mentions Ethiopia as the land of his birth (Hld. 10.16.4).

Heliodoros’ partial model for this emphasis on γένος and ἔθνος was Herodotos, whose complex ethnographical outlook is reflected in his frequent use of these same terms. Nevertheless, the use of γένος in Heliodoros is far more frequent than ἔθνος, whereas in Herodotos ἔθνος is by far the more common word. Heliodoros, like Herodotos, features many exotic nations such as the Seres (Hld. 10.25.2), who bring gifts of silk to Hydaspes, the Arabs (Hld. 10.26.1) bearing incense and spices, the Trogodytes (Hld. 10.26.2) with ant-gold (a notably Herodotean touch), the Blemmyes who presented Hydaspes with a crown of bows and snake-bone arrowheads (Hld. 10.26.4, and the Auxomitai (Hld. 10.27.1) accompanied by a camel. In addition, there are the Ionians (Hld. 1.22.2; 7.19.6), the βουκόλοι (Hld. 2.17.4); the Αἰγείδες (Hld. 2.34.5, 2.34.7); Thessalians (Hld. 4.5.5, 4.20.2, 10.36.3); the people of Chemmis (Hld. 6.13.2), the Greeks (Hld. 7.12.6, 8.17.3), and the Persians (Hld. 7.14.2, 7.20.4) — all of whom are referred to by the word γένος. However, in Heliodoros γένος is also used of in-born characteristics such as family (Hld. 2.9.2, 6.2.3) or sex (Hld. 6.11.2, 9.3.8, 10.4-5, 10.19.2) and even of a non-biological class (the Persian eunuchs, Hld. 8.17.4; 9.25.5) and of what amounts to a religious caste (the inherited priests: Hld. 1.19.7, 3.16.4 τὸ προφητικόν γένος; Hld. 3.19.3, τὸ λόγιον

19 The importance of Herodotos for Heliodoros is evident from the following intertexts: the Paeonian lake-dwellers (Hdt. 5.16, cf. Hld. 1.5), the Egyptian priesthood (Hdt. 2.37, cf. Hld. 1.19), Rhodopis (Hdt. 2.134-135, cf. Hld. 2.25), Lycurgus (Hdt. 1.65, cf. Hld. 2.27), Egyptian writing (Hdt. 2.36, cf. Hld. 4.8), the hunting chain (Hdt. 6.31, cf. Hld. 6.13), the Egyptian exiles in Ethiopia (Hdt. 2.30, cf. Hld. 8.1), gold chains (Hdt. 3.23, cf. Hld. 9.1), arrows hide the sun (Hdt. 7.226, cf. Hld. 9.18), the Table of the Sun (Hdt. 3.18, cf. Hld. 10.2), the horse sacrifice to Helios (Hdt. 3.18, cf. Hld. 10.6), ant-gold (Hdt. 3.102, cf. Hld. 10.26).

20 For the distinction between γένος and ἔθνος in Herodotos, see C. P. Jones, ’Εθνος and γένος in Herodotos: CQ 46.2 (1996) 315-320, who sees the terms as linguistically marked and unmarked versions of the same concept. Total figures for ἔθνος in Herodotos = 130, γένος = 64; in Heliodoros ἔθνος = 11, γένος = 59.

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γένος; Hld. 4.12.1, τὸ σοφῶν γένος; Hld. 7.8.3 ἰερὸν ἄπαν γένος; Hld. 7.11.5, προγητικὸν τε καὶ ἱερατικὸν γένος). This reflects what is known of priesthoods in Egyptian religion, of course. Herodotos (Hld. 2.37) informs us that when the chief-priest of a god dies in Egypt, his son inherits the position. In the Aithiopika, Thyamis and Petosiris contest the inheritance of the priesthood of Isis from their father, Kalasiris. When Kalasiris disappears from Memphis as a result of his sexual encounter with Rhodopis (Hld. 2.25.2) and the prophecy concerning the strife of his sons (Hld. 2.25.5), the office of high priest falls to Thyamis as his eldest male descendant (Hld. 7.2.2-5). However, his brother Petosiris, observing the infatuation of Arsake with Thyamis, makes this grounds for contesting the inheritance. Thyamis is exiled and Petosiris is made high priest instead.21 Similarly, when Charikleia is recognised as the daughter of Hydaspes and Persinna, she automatically inherits the priesthood of Selene from her mother (Hld. 10.41.1). Because of the stress on lineage, chastity among priests is important in the Aithiopika. Even male priests like Kalasiris and Thyamis are expected to abstain from sex, at least outside of marriage, and Persinna advises her daughter to revere chastity above all other qualities.22

Like his model, Herodotos (Hdt. 2.22; 2.32), Heliodoros underlines the somatic differences between races in the Aithiopika and emphasises their alterity.23 Moreover, these racial differences


22 Michael J. Anderson, ‘The Sophrosune of Persinna and the Romantic Strategy of Heliodoros’ Aethiopica’: CPh 92.4 (1997) 303-22. Chastity is also a male virtue in the work, cf. Hld. 2.25.2 (Kalasiris), 4.18.6 (Theagenes), 7.2.3 (Thyamis).

23 For example, Charikleia is struck but not disturbed by the black skins of the boukoloi, because she is more intent on her lover Theagenes (Hld. 1.2.9; Ágora. Estudos Clássicos em Debate 14 (2012))
are accentuated by Heliodoros’ insistence on drawing attention to the problem of intercultural communication between Greeks, Egyptians, Persians, and Ethiopians.24 Herodotos also mentions the problem of language and the need for interpreters (for example, Hdt. 4.25), but throughout the Aithiopika, the problem of intelligibility and cultural and intellectual difference is of central impor-

1.3.1). At first she takes them to be the dark spirits of the dead (Hld. 1.3.2). When Hydaspes offers to marry his daughter to him, Meroebos’ black skin glows when he blushes like a ‘flame licking over soot’ (Hld. 10.24.2, cf. Philostr. VA 6.12.4). Sisimithres’ skin is pure black (Hld. 2.30.1). The Ethiopian army is recognised from the colour of their skins (Hld. 8.16.3). The gymnosophist Sisimithres notes that character is more important than skin-colour (Hld. 10.10.4). An early critic, Dilke 1969: 353-354 took the Aithiopika as a satire on race. He also notes (1980: 271) that the work ends with black and white living happily together.

24 J. J. Winkler, ‘The Mendacity of Kalasiris and the Narrative Strategy of Heliodoros’ Aithiopika: Yale Classical Studies 27 (1982) 104, noted that ‘Heliodoros is unique in ancient literature for his continual attention to problems of language and communication.’ Relevant references include: Hld. 1.4.1 (Charikleia cannot understand the Egyptian bandit), Hld. 1.7.3 (Theagenes and Charikleia can only communicate with Knemon not with the Egyptians), Hld. 1.19.3 (Knemon could understand Egyptian but Thyamis could not understand Greek), Hld. 1.21.3 (Knemon interprets Charikleia’s words to Thyamis), Hld. 2.18.3 (Knemon interprets the words of Thermouthis), Hld. 2.21.5 (Kalasiris asks Knemon how come he, a Greek, was in Egypt), Hld. 2.33.1 (Charikleia could not understand Greek when she was first adopted by Charikles), Hld. 5.8.4 (Nausikles speaks Greek to Charikleia so that the Persians would not understand his words), Hld. 6.12.3 (Kalasiris communicated with the woman of Bessa in Egyptian), Hld. 6.14.1 (Kalasiris interprets the Egyptian woman’s words for Charikleia), Hld. 7.19.3 (Arsake could understand Greek but could not speak it, so she communicates with Theagenes and Charikleia through an interpreter), Hld. 8.17.2 (the Ethiopians communicate through an Egyptian who could also speak Persian, Theagenes, who had long been familiar with Egyptian, replies), Hld. 9.1.5 (Hydaspes puts Greek-speaking guards in charge of his prisoners), Hld. 9.25.3 (Hydaspes communicates with his prisoners in Greek — the gymnosophists and kings of Ethiopia know Greek), Hld. 10.9.6 (Sisimithres speaks in Greek so that the Ethiopians would not understand), Hld. 10.31.1 (Hydaspes speaks in Greek to Theagenes), Hld. 10.39.1 (Sisimithres speaks in Ethiopian so that the Ethiopians could understand), Hld. 10.40.1 (Hydaspes speaks in the native tongue).
tance that frequently confounds the reader’s efforts to interpret the narrative. This raises the question of competing world-views and epistemological indeterminacies in the romance. One manifestation of the contestation of knowledge in the work concerns Winkler’s so-called amphibolies — instances in which two or more competing explanations are provided, without the author or speaker necessarily taking a stand as to which is true. There many more of these in the Aithiopika than Winkler identified, some of great importance for the workings of the plot, and, although Herodotos was clearly a model, they go beyond being part of the duplicitous nature of Kalasiris or being merely a historiographical pose by the author, although they do also play this role. They are not restricted to the author or his surrogate, Kalasiris, but are expressed by a variety of characters, including Charikles, the old woman of Bessa, Charikleia, Theagenes, and Hydaspes, while retaining much the same character as the authorial amphibolies. Moreover, as in Herodotos, they occasionally report theoretical discussions or the ideas of people other than the author or the characters, and sometimes are of great narratological significance, determining the outcome of the plot, rather than being dismissive remarks as in Herodotos. Many of these are entirely ‘rational’ and do not involve a supernatural explanation at all. Others do involve some supernatural force such as Tyche, or the ‘will of

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28 Apposite examples in Herodotos are: Hdt. 1.137 (If a child killed its parents it would either be a changeling or the fruit of adultery because no normal child would do this); Hdt. 2.181 (A league was concluded by Amasis with the Cyrenaeans, by which Cyrene and Egypt became close friends and allies. He likewise took a wife from that city, either as a sign of his friendly feeling, or because he had a fancy to marry a Greek woman).
29 Hld. 1.31.4, 2.13.2, 2.25.2, 2.34.2, 3.14.4, 4.1.2, 5.23.2, 8.9.3.

The cultural character of knowledge in the *Aithiopika* is therefore complex. Sandy attributes Kalasiris’ duplicity to ‘his emphatically Egyptian background’, while Szepessy, Dowden and
others argue for a hierarchy of knowledge: Greek, Egyptian, and Ethiopian.34 However, it is hard to maintain the view that Kalasiris’ ‘wisdom’ can only be characterised as Egyptian. Heliodoros goes to great lengths to represent him at Delphi answering questions, in the Greek, or specifically Herodotean manner, about why different nations worship different animals (Hld. 2.27.3) and about the building of the pyramids, the Egyptian labyrinth, and the Nile (Hld. 2.28). This passage, as well as his deployment of Greek doctrine about the evil eye, adapted from Plutarch,35 show him to be learned in Hellenistic science as well as Egyptian magic and astrology. He dresses as a conventional Greek, rather than as an Egyptian priest (Hld. 2.21.2).36 Kalasiris is something of a polymath, and he is prepared to exploit his knowledge of both Egyptian and Hellenistic knowledge to fulfill his promise to Persinna to bring her daughter home. Likewise Charikles, whose life narrative is structurally but inversely similar to that of Kalasiris, exiles himself from Greece to Egypt, where he investigates at first hand Egyptian lore about the Nile (Hld. 2.29.5), buys herbs and roots that grow in India, Ethiopia, and Egypt (Hld. 2.30.2 — an action that attracts the notice of Sisimithres), and expresses a high opinion of Kalasiris’ knowledge of Egyptian magic (Hld. 3.9.1). Similarly too, the Ethiopian-born Charikleia is trained in the Hellenistic sophistry and argumentation that Charikles had taught her as a philosophical basis for her life (Hld. 2.33.5). Finally, Homer is exiled by his father, because a patch of hair on his thigh proved that he had been fathered by Hermes (Hld. 3.14), but in his


case the amphibolic suggestion is made that he deliberately decided to become a citizen of the world rather than claim citizenship of any one state and this serves as a precursor of the final resolution of national differences at the conclusion of the work.

Kalasiris provides a good example of the complex characterisation of knowledge in the *Aithiopika*. He was, in his own estimation, highly regarded by the Ethiopians for ‘making a god of’ (ἐκθειάζων) Egyptian wisdom by adding Ethiopian learning (Hld. 4.12.1).

> Ἐγώ λέγων, ὦ θύγατερ, ἠλίθων καὶ εἰς Αἰθιώπας ἐπιθυμία τῆς παρ᾽ ἐκεῖνος σοφίας εγενόμην καὶ Περσίνη τῇ σῇ μητὶ γνώριμος, οἰκεσοίται γὰρ ἂν το σοφὸν γένος ἢ βασιλείου αὐλὴ καὶ ἄλλως εἶχον τι καὶ δόξης πλέον τὴν Αἰγυπτίων σοφίαν προσθήκη τῆς Αἰθιώπων ἐκθειάζων.

“My daughter,” I said, “I went to the Ethiopians out of a desire for their wisdom. And I became known to your mother, Persinna, for the royal palace is a permanent home to the philosophical breed and besides I held some prestige there because I had raised the wisdom of Egypt to the status of a religion by the addition of that of Ethiopia.”

The word ἐκθειάζων here bears the meaning ‘deifying’, but Heliodoros also uses the term of the divinization of the Nile (Hld. 9.9.4), where it is balanced by a word (θεοπλάστουσι ‘they fabricate gods’) — elsewhere only used by Philo Judaeus (*Life of Moses* 2.195) in a severe attack on the Egyptian belief that the River is a deity. Philo’s scepticism has evidently rubbed off on Hydaspes who states amphibolically that the Nile is a river, or, as Egyptians believe, a god (Hld. 9.22.7). Philostratos mentions belief in the divinity of the Nile as a tenet of the Ethiopian gymnosophists on the grounds that it is both earth and water (*VA* 6.6). Heliodoros is evidently aware of this passage because he notes that Egyptians believe that life is sustained principally by the combination of moist and dry elements. Heliodoros confuses Egyptian and Ethiopian beliefs here. The episode illustrates the potential problems raised by nations contesting their religious beliefs.
Kalasiris does make wisdom a matter of culture — Egyptian v. Ethiopian — and Philostratos (VA 6.6) likewise talks of a hierarchical scale of wisdom embracing Egyptian, Ethiopian, and Indian. In practice, however, the situation is more complex. Sisimithres (Hld. 2.31.1) states that the sole precept of the Ethiopian gymnosophists was not to abandon a soul once it had taken human form (ψυχὴν ἀπαξ ἕνανθρωπησασαν). This has been taken as evidence of Heliodoros’ knowledge of Christian doctrines, since the term ἕνανθρωπησασαν is certainly used almost exclusively by Christian writers. However, Sisimithres talks of an incarnated soul rather than an incarnated saviour and the reference could equally be to neoPythagorean ideas of reincarnation, especially as Heliodoros is using Philostratos’ account of the visit of the neoPythagorean hero Apollonios of Tyana to the gymnosophists in Ethiopia as his model. Other ‘Ethiopian’ practices, such as the sacrifice of white horses to the Sun (Hld. 10.4.5, 10.6.5) are clearly taken from Herodotos (1.216). Similarly, the aversion expressed by the gymnosophists for human sacrifice can be paralleled in Plutarch (Pelopidas 21) and in Philostratos’ Life of Apollonios, in which the man from Tyana condemned human sacrifice as barbaric (VA 6.20.3, 7.11.3, 7.20.1, 8.7.3, 8.7.35-45) and avoids blood sacrifice in general although accused of it himself (VA 1.10-11). Sisimithres’ claim that a person’s character is as important as his appearance in matters of justice (Hld. 10.10.4), while it gains significance from its context which involves claimants who are racially distinct, must have been a commonplace of juristic rhetoric.37 The Ethiopian gymnosophists adopt a consistently high moral ground, but the knowledge they have of the world is essentially neoPythagorean or neoPlatonist.

So far, what I have been arguing in this paper is that Heliodoros’ Aithiopika contains within it two different quasi-Herodotean paradigms — on the one hand it emphasises the importance of ge-

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37 See, for example, Anonymous Seguerianus Rhetorica, 1.90.4 on appearance and character as parts of rhetorical narrative.

nealogy, home, nationality, race and their opposites (what we might term φύσις), on the other, it relativises knowledge, and proclaims that law or convention (νόμος) is king. The question that arises is whether these two may be reconciled. I suggest that they can and that the solution may be found in the fourth-century solar theology of the Roman Emperor Julian’s *Hymn to King Helios*. If the fourth-century date of Heliodoros is accepted, then the two men were contemporaries. There are a number of intersections between the extant writings of the two authors. The many references to Helios in the *Aithiopika*, exemplified by the author’s σφραγίς, are answered by a plethora of allusions to the cult in Julian (one need look no further than the *Hymn to King Helios* for this, but Julian, like Heliodoros, also thought of himself as the child of Helios, cf. *Or.* 7.229C). Julian knew of erotic fiction, although he deemed this form of literature unsuitable for priests to read (*Ep.* 89b.354-354). Heliodoros’ account of the Oroondates’ defence of Syene against Hydaspes closely resembles Julian’s version of Constantius’ defence of Nisibis against the Persian king, Sapor (*Hld.* 9.2-9.5, cf. *Jul. Or.* 1.27a-30b, 2.62b-63a), although the incident was probably well known in the fourth century. Both authors describe Persian cataphract ‘knights’ (*Hld.* 9.15, cf. *Jul. Or.* 1.30, 2.57b). Less well known is Julian’s reinauguration of the spring of Kastalia at Delphi (*Amm.* Marc. 22.12.8) as part of his struggle to revive pagan religion. Heliodoros rather unusually makes Delphi an important location in his narrative (especially in Books 3-4). His account of the hecatomb of animals sacrificed as part of the ceremony in honour of Neoptolemus (*Hld.* 3.1-3, cf. the hecatomb lined up by Persinna at 10.4) recalls Julian’s attempt to

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*Ágora. Estudos Clássicos em Debate* 14 (2012)
revive blood sacrifices (Amm. Marc. 22.12.6). Julian sacrifices a white bull ‘like a king’ (Letter to Libanius 399d), just as Hydaspes does white horses (Hld. 10.6, 10.28 – the colour of the bulls is not mentioned, but Charikleia rides in a chariot drawn by white oxen, Hld. 10.41). Julian recounts the famous story of Antiochos and Stratonike (Mis. 17), while Heliodoros adapts it to the ‘illness’ of Charikleia as a result of the onset of her passionate love for Theagenes (Hld. 4.7). Both observe the distinction between onar and hypar (Hld. 3.12, cf. Jul. Ep. 108.2 where it is proverbial). Heliodoros may share Julian’s antipathy for Christians, as he flirts with blasphemy in his account of the ‘counter-god’ who was opposing Kalasiris’ magic (Hld. 4.7.5). Heliodoros’ authorial description of the Neiloa and the flooding of the Nile (Hld. 9.9) is matched by Julian’s interest in the subject (Letter to Ecdicius 432b). Julian’s discourse on kingship (Or. 2.86) is exemplified by the justice and mercy exercised by Hydaspes towards his enemies (Hld. 9.26). There is a common interest in tests of chastity and legitimacy in both writers (Jul. Or. 2.81d [Celts], 5.160 [Claudia], Hld. 10.8-9 [the grid-iron]), especially when the latter is manifested by birthmarks (Hld. 10.15-16 [the birthmark on Charikleia’s arm], cf. Jul. Or. 2.82c-d [a white shoulder indicates descent from the house of Pelops]). Both are knowledgeable about precious stones (Jul. Or. 2.51a, Hld. 2.31.2, 5.13.3) and both have a taste for symbols and enigmas (Jul. Against the Galilaeeans 356c-d, Or. 7.216b-d; Hld. 2.31.2, 3.13.3, 3.15.1). Heliodoros’ concern with language and communication (above, n. 19) is shared with Julian (Against the Galilaeeans 134d [the Tower of Babel]). The list could be extended, but it seems clear that Julian and Heliodoros had remarkably similar views of the world.

Julian composed his hymn to Helios under the influence of the neoPlatonist philosopher Iamblichus of Chalcis (Or. 4.146c; 157d), whose influence over Heliodoros can be seen in his use of


terms such as ὁμοειδέες and θεολογία (according to Iamblichus, this was a subject taught by Pythagoras, De Vita Pyth. 19.93.1-2). Kalasiris’ discussion of higher and lower wisdom (Hld. 3.16.3) owes something to Iamblichus’ On the Mysteries (c.f., e.g. On the Mysteries 3.27-29; 3.4-6), as does the notion of the ἀντίθεος (Hld. 4.7.3, cf. Iamblichus On the Mysteries 3.31.38-40). Julian also acknowledges that Heliodoros’ birth-place, Emesa, was a sacred place because of the cult of Helios there (Or. 4.150c-d). In many ways the Aithiopika echoes the ideas in this text, particularly with respect to the descent of the heroine from Helios.

In Julian’s hymn, as he received it from Iamblichos, Helios takes on a triadic and neoPlatonic form of the Good, the intelligible gods, and Helios, the sun of the material world. Helios occupies a middle and mediating role between the intelligible world and the realm of sense-perception. This Helios works through the pagan gods — Apollo, Athena, Dionysos, the Muses (Or. 4.144a-b; 152d), and the literature which celebrates their achievements, to influence events on earth. The energy of Helios privileges the heroes, demons, and angels. This metaphysical universe is broadly recognisable in the Aithiopika, where Apollo and Dionysos are mentioned as associates of Helios (Hld. 4.8.3, 10.2.2, 10.6.5), and where heroes such as Neoptolemos and ‘the demonic’ play an important part. Julian notes the close relationship between Helios and Selene (Or. 4.149d; 152c) and Heliodoros has Charikleia finally become the priestess of Selene (Hld. 10.41.2).
Kalasiris’ distinction between higher and lower wisdom is reflected in Julian’s distinction between the higher part of our world — the heavens and planets — and the inferior part — the world of becoming. Julian also states that Helios exerts providence through Athena Pronoia (Or. 4.149b), which is echoed by the importance attached to foresight in the romance: for example, Kalasiris claims to have had foreknowledge of the disaster that would strike his family (Hld. 2.24.6), and foresight is required to preserve Charikleia safe until the time comes for her sacrifice (Hld. 9.25.5, cf. also 10.23.3). The interpretation of oracles, dreams, and necromantic rituals in the romance is all part of this need for prescience. This is the most certain form of intelligence in a world in which understanding is flawed and imperfect. The rigid distinction between the intelligible and the material world explains the amphibolous nature of the Aithiopika. When knowledge is uncertain deciding between alternatives is futile. Certainly, when viewed from the perspective of solar theology it is mistaken to rank Hellenistic values higher than any others. All beliefs are subsumed equally beneath the mediating power of Helios, through whom mortals attempt to access the intelligible world. Julian’s hymn emphasises the unifying function of Helios. For Julian, in keeping with the cosmopolitan spirit of late Roman religion, solar polytheism provided a way to unify the different races of men and different forms of civilisation. Mithraism was a universal cult that was confined to no one nation or sex. Julian observes that Apollo as the colleague of Helios has given humanity wisdom and government. He has civilised the world by means of Greek colonies and so made it easier for the world to be governed by the Romans (Or. 4.152d).

Ὁ δὲ αὐτῷ συμβασιλεύων Ἀπόλλων οὐ πανταχοῦ μὲν ἀνήκε τῆς γῆς χρηστῆρα, σοφίαν δὲ ἐδωκεν ἀνθρώποις ἐνθέου, ἐκόσμησε δὲ ἱεροῖς καὶ πολιτικοῖς τὰς πόλεις θεσμοῖς; οὗτος ἡμέρος μὲν διὰ τῶν Ἑλληνικῶν ἀποικιῶν τὰ πλείστα

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41 Gardner, Julian, 189, 179.

‘And has not Apollo, who is [Helios’] colleague in empire, set up oracles in every part of the earth, and given to men inspired wisdom, and regulated their cities by means of religious and political ordinances? And he civilised the greater part of the world by means of Greek colonies, and so made it easier for the world to be governed by the Romans. For the Romans themselves not only belong to the Greek race, but also the sacred ordinances and the pious belief in the gods which they have established and maintain are, from beginning to end, Greek’ (tr. Wright).

Helios cares for the whole human race in common but especially for Rome (Or. 4.157a). Julian’s solar theology makes Homer right to claim to be a citizen of the world. Within it are reconciled all the nations of the earth beneath the smiling visage of the Sun. The many nations which gather at Hydaspes’ court — a veritable United Nations in fact — are embraced with the Ethiopian cult of Helios.

However, Julian’s hymn also specifically emphasises the generative power (τὸ γόνιμον) of Helios (Or. 4.140a-c), which manifests itself in both the intelligible and the material world. As a result, heredity and legitimate descent from a line of ancestors is important (cf. Jul. Misopogon 348b-c) and this explains differences in national characteristics — each nation shares the nature of its national gods (Against the Galileans 115d-e). In Julian’s Hellenistic view of the world nobility and descent from the gods were vital.

This notion of the creative power of the Sun is evident in the narrative of Charikleia’s conception as the result of Hydaspes’ dream at noon in mid-summer in Meroë (Hld. 4.8.4). The astrolo-

42 See also terms such as γεννᾶν (Hld. 22.7), γένεσις (Hld. 9.10, 16.22, 17.9, 24.24), γενεαλογῶν (Hld. 11.5), γεννητικὴ (Hld. 17.7), all of which can be matched in Julian.
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...istical significance of the heroine being conceived when the power of the sun was at its height is surely not fortuitous and compares well with Julian’s discussion of how the pine sacred to Attis was felled on the day that the sun reaches its height (Jul. Hymn to the Mother of the Gods 168c-d). Julian emphasises the importance of inheriting a link with ancestors (Or. 4.131b):

ζηλῶ μὲν οὖν ἐγώης τῆς εὐποτμίας καὶ εἴ τι το σῶμα παρέσχε θεός εξ ἱεροῦ καὶ προφητικοῦ συμπαγὲς ἀναλαβόντι σοφίας ἀνοίξει θησαυροῦς.

‘I envy the good fortune of any man to whom the god has granted to inherit a body built of the seed of holy and inspired ancestors, so that he can unlock the treasures of wisdom.’

Julian states that the light of the sun gives form to the world and everything in it in the same way that a craftsman creates objects from matter (Or. 4.134c). According to the Phoenicians, he reports, Aphrodite assists Helios in his procreative function (Or. 4.150b). Moreover, Julian regards Helios as the common father of mankind because man and the sun beget man (λέγεται γὰρ ὁ ἄνθρωπος ἀνθρωπος ἀνθρωπον γεννᾶν καὶ ἠλιος, Or. 4.131c). The best condition to be in is to have inherited the service of the god from a long and unbroken line of ancestors (Κάλλιστον μὲν οὖν, εἴ τι το εὐνηνέχθη καὶ πρὸ τριγονίας ἀπὸ πολλῶν πάνυ προπατόρων ἐφεξῆς τῷ θεῷ δουλεύσαι, Or. 4.131c-d). For Julian, the light of Helios bears the same relation to this visible world as truth has to the intelligible world (Or. 4.133b) and acknowledges that this too is a doctrine of the Phoenicians (Or.4.134a). These ideas are echoed in the Aithiopika in which the heroine is finally recognised as the legitimate heir of Hydaspes and Persinna, and through them of Memnon, Andromeda, and ultimately, Helios himself. If Charicleia’s story is somehow synechdocal for the romance in general then the work itself is the product of the god’s enlightening power. Hence the allegorical interpretation of Philip

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43 Gardner, Julian, 184.

the Philosopher.\footnote{44} However the work is fathered also through the generative power of Heliodoros, who declares himself to be a descendant of the sun in his σφραγίς (Julian includes a σφραγίς or seal in his text 141d, which sums up his eulogy of the god). When read in the light of Julian’s Hymn to Helios, the final sentence of Heliodoros’ Aithiopika takes on a special significance.

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\footnote{44} For this, see L. Tarán, ‘The Authorship of an Allegorical Interpretation of Heliodoros’ Aithiopika’: Sofis Maihiores Chercheurs De Sagesse Hommage a Jean Pépin (Paris 1992) 203-230.

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J. E. Mayor, Ἡ ἐνεγκοῦσα in Heliodoros’ *JP* 15 (1886) 174-176.


E. Rohde, *Der Griechische Roman Und Seine Vorläufer* (Darmstadt 1914).


Resumo: Este artigo analisa a frase final das Aithiopika de Heliodoro como uma sphragis — uma declaração autobiográfica do autor. Neste passo, Heliodoro sublinha a sua descendência de Hélios, à semelhança de Persina, uma das personagens do romance. Contudo, apesar da sua importância, a genealogia (ou physis) é contrabalançada pela relativização do conhecimento nas Aithiopika — o nomos é soberano. Resolve-se a tensão entre estes conceitos, propondo-se uma leitura do romance à luz do Hino a Hélios de Juliano.

Palavras-chave: Heliodoro; Aithiopika; Juliano; Hino a Hélios; Genealogia.

Resumen: Este artículo analiza la frase final de las Étiopicas de Heliodoro como una sphragis — una declaración autobiográfica del autor. En este fragmento subraya Heliodoro su descendencia de Helios, al igual que una de los personajes de su novela, Persina. Sin embargo, aun siendo un elemento importante, su genealogía recibe el contrapunto de la relativización del conocimiento en las Étiopicas — el nomos es soberano. La tensión entre estos conceptos se resuelve con la lectura de la novela a la luz del Himno a Hélios de Juliano.

Palabras clave: Heliodoro; Étiopicas; Juliano; El Himno a Hélios; Genealogía.


Mots-clé: Héliodore; Éthiopiques; Julien; l’Hymne à Hélios; Généalogie.