INTO THE SNAKE PIT

Heliodorus's *Aethiopica* and cognitive pluralism

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Preface

This thesis is the result of my own work and includes nothing which is the outcome of work done in collaboration except as declared in the Preface and specified in the text. It is not substantially the same as any that I have submitted, or, is being concurrently submitted for a degree or diploma or other qualification at the University of Cambridge or any other University or similar institution except as declared in the Preface and specified in the text. I further state that no substantial part of my thesis has already been submitted, or, is being concurrently submitted for any such degree, diploma or other qualification at the University of Cambridge or any other University or similar institution except as declared in the Preface and specified in the text. It does not exceed the prescribed word limit for the relevant Degree Committee.

Abstract

Into the snake pit: Heliodorus's *Aethiopica* and cognitive pluralism

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This PhD thesis explores the conflicting narratological momenta at play in Heliodorus's *Aethiopica* (approx. fourth century C.E.) and their relationship to the novel's irreconcilable ideological impulses. The conception of this novel as a whole is still dominated by the readings of Winkler (1982) and Morgan (1989a): the former sees it as a playful work about hermeneutical questions; the latter singles out its teleological drive and moralising side. Developing a narratology of possibilities, the first part of this dissertation argues that both interpretations fundamentally misconceive the *Aethiopica*'s nature by advocating a single 'correct' reading. I demonstrate that this novel is a magic box containing numerous possible narrative scenarios on a broad spectrum, of which a playful and pluralising, on the one hand, and teleological and reductive, on the other hand, mark the extremes.

The final chapter of my dissertation ventures into the intellectual landscape of late antiquity: I explore hypothetical interpretations that might emerge if we viewed the *Aethiopica* from perspectives associated with two non-Christian interpretative communities of its time—rhetorically trained *pepaideumenoi* and Platonists—that is to say, with their cognitive habits in mind. While the 'educated' reading focuses on Heliodorus's engagement with the Classical past, the Platonist interpretation zooms in on the novel's allegorical side. From the *Aethiopica*'s receptivity for these ideologically charged readings, I infer that the novel is a playing field for what I call 'cognitive identities' of the late imperial era—by which I mean those elements of social identity that concern methods of information processing. To conclude, my thesis aims to achieve something that has all too often remained an unfulfilled promise in narratologically oriented literary criticism: to bridge the gap between formal analysis and cultural, discursive interpretation.

Contents

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INTRODUCTION

... he saw that while the world appeared not to exist, the totality of that-which-had-been-thought-about-it did in fact exist, and, furthermore, that it was only this, in its countless thousands of varieties, that did exist as such ...

László Krasznahorkai, *War & War*[1]

1. Towards a wormhole narratology

Reading the two most influential modern experts on Heliodorus's *Aethiopica* side by side, sometimes one wonders whether they are writing about the same novel. For Jack Winkler 'there has to be some Noble Message or other at the end, any one will do … 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.'[2] John Morgan, in turn, emphasises the novel's end-directed and ideological side: 'At the centre of the novel's moral universe stands love, elevated almost to the status of a sacrament. The love of the protagonists is ideal: mutual, permanent and exclusive. Their ultimate union is what gives a sense of purpose and meaning to their sufferings.'[3] The contrast between these interpretations is symptomatic of scholarship on Heliodorus. Unlike with the earlier extant Greek novels and with much of ancient literature in general,[4] modern interpreters seem to find it difficult even to agree on the main orientation and tone of the *Aethiopica*: some readers see it as a serious text primarily occupied with religious, ethical, or philosophical matters,[5] whereas for others it is a ludic work

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[1] Krasznahorkai (1999/2016: 12).
[2] Winkler (1982/1999: 349–50).
[3] Morgan (1996b: 450).
[4] The other prominent exception is Apuleius's *The golden ass*; see Winkler (1985).
[5] For religious readings see e.g. Bargheer (1999); Ramelli (2009); for moralising interpretations see Morgan (1989b, 1998); for a philosophical reading see Dowden (1996).

that is concerned with hermeneutical issues;[6] for some the reading experience is dominated by a teleological drive;[7] others delve into the digressive, meandering edifice of subplots and stories within stories.[8]

An attempt to resolve the tension between these conflicting interpretations is the core of Winkler's reading: according to him, what ultimately matters is the very incompatibility of the novel's different registers and signals; the *Aethiopica*'s message is not to be found among but *pertains to* them; the meaning is *about* sensemaking. I shall address the shortcomings of this approach in the next paragraph. Another explanation mediates between the underlying interpretative assumptions, setting them in relation: according to Tim Whitmarsh, Winkler's and Morgan's readings result from different notions of how the work's 'ending shapes our reception of the text … it is preferable to see these two readings as accentuating different tendencies within the romances, rather than mutually exclusive choices.'[9] While Whitmarsh's approach is fruitful if we are primarily interested in *universal* momenta of literary sensemaking (see the telling plural 'romances' in the quote above), it does not explain how these contrasting readings relate to the novel's narratological complexity, which is at the centre of Morgan's and Winkler's studies and which is the *Aethiopica*'s most prominent quality.[10] How is the Protean nature of the novel connected to its complex network of embedded narratives told by characters exhibiting contrasting agendas of storytelling, or to the reserved primary narrator, who prefers showing over telling?[11] Are our inherited theoretical frameworks even suitable to get to the bottom of this issue? How can we learn to read Heliodorus?

I suggest that we need to radically rethink our approach to the *Aethiopica*'s narrative architecture if we want to get a more detailed picture of its complexity. This becomes clear if we have a closer look at the relationship between Morgan's and Winkler's interpretations. While Whitmarsh is right in pointing out that the two readings are different insofar as they emphasise opposing narrative momenta, they are surprisingly similar in another respect: both scholars aim to work out what the *Aethiopica* is *actually* about, presenting their conclusions concerning *the* message of the novel as final. For Winkler the novel *is* a metainterpretative game; according to Morgan it *is* about ideal love. In this important respect Winkler's otherwise

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[6] See e.g. Winkler (1982/1999); Hunter (1998).
[7] See Morgan (1989a); Fusillo (1997).
[8] See Winkler (1982/1999); Kasprzyk (2017).
[9] Whitmarsh (2011: 191–2).
[10] See e.g. Lowe (2003: 258): 'The *Aethiopica* is the ancient world's narratological summa, a self-consciously encyclopaedic synthesis of a thousand years of accumulated pagan plot techniques.'
[11] On these features see e.g. Hefti (1950); Morgan (1982, 1991, 1994); Winkler (1982/1999); Bartsch (1989); Grethlein (2016).

pluralistic reading proves to be as reductive as Morgan's. This unquestioned singling out of a privileged meaning is symptomatic of traditional narratology,[12] which aims to study objectively describable narrative features. This is the implicit agenda of Genette's ground-breaking *Narrative discourse*:[13] if we look closely enough at the structure of Proust's *À la recherche du temps perdu*, we will find out what it is about. The bad reputation from which narratology tends to suffer in scholarly circles where more discursive approaches enjoy a preeminent position is closely connected to this restriction:[14] as scholars started to increasingly appreciate audiences as active, creative participants in the process of literary sensemaking,[15] traditional narratology forfeited much of its appeal. Now, however, the revolutionary fervour of deconstructionism has calmed down even in those branches of humanities where trends tend to lag behind cutting-edge theory by a decade or two. Accordingly, there is more and more interest in exploring ways to bridge the gap between text- and audience-oriented approaches. For example, literary scholars have started to work with cognitive scientists to gain insights into objectively describable areas of aesthetic experience.[16]

In light of these theoretical shifts, it is high time to overcome the reductionism and old-fashioned methodology characteristic of Heliodoran scholarship.[17] I aim to contribute to this endeavour by developing a pluralistic narratology of potentialities: one that has as its foundation the methodological safe space of Genettean analysis but takes a step further, exploring what kind of different responses the formal qualities of the text *might* elicit, and how these add up to various overall interpretations. The plurals 'responses' and 'interpretations' are essential to how my project aims to transcend mainstream narratology. In the same way as Morgan and Winkler are equally reductive interpreters, so is every approach to literature that aims to reconstruct *the* meaning of the text or how *the* reader makes sense of the work.[18] These concepts are all based on the assumption that some of our interpretative choices will always be preferable to others; in line with this, what the reader does is to gradually strip down a complex work to the stable meaning that lies at its core. However, as I shall outline later, the criteria for these selection processes are rarely made explicit, let alone questioned, and the possibility that

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[12] And of much modern literary scholarship in general, as noted by Whitmarsh (2011: 205).
[13] Genette (1972/1980).
[14] As Emma Greensmith puts it in her review of Geisz (2018), 'the narratological method is … very good at explaining what poetic composers do, but often less successful at exploring why' (BMCR 2018.08.05, available at http://bmcr.brynmawr.edu/2018/2018-08-05.html).
[15] See below, pp. 11–13.
[16] For a collection of recent studies, see Zunshine (ed. 2015).
[17] Important exceptions from the prevalence of old-school narratology in Heliodoran studies are Whitmarsh (2011); Grethlein (2017: 74–130).
[18] See below, pp. 8–11.

one might be able to process a certain narratological element in more than one way is scarcely entertained. The narratology I shall develop in dialogue with the *Aethiopica* aims to overcome these limitations by acknowledging the possibility that different audiences can interpret certain formal features in contrasting ways and by considering cognitive and cultural factors underlying interpretative choices. As every such decision has an impact on the rest of one's reading, a single narrative can give rise to a plethora of interpretations, which form a complex network.

I shall coin the phrase 'wormhole narratology' for the method that brings these factors together: unlike Morgan's and Winkler's studies, it treats narrative elements prompting interpretative choices not as parts of a two-dimensional network that adds up to a definite message; instead, this approach understands them as gates to various interrelated yet autonomous narrative universes that are subject to different sets of rules and systems of internal logic. Whenever readers make an interpretative choice, they are transported to a new world, a new version of the story, whereby their view on previous and later parts of the narrative is altered.[19] To sum up, the central point that distinguishes my wormhole narratology from traditional approaches is that it is a study of *potential* meanings, conceiving of the novel as their never-resting generator. Accordingly, my aim is to provide snapshots of the *Aethiopica* understood as a dynamic entity, not to accumulate the totality of possible responses to it. This tentative quality of my project results from the complex and dialogic relationship between texts and audiences, which is better not to be reduced to a unilateral process of decoding.

2. Novel directions

Like the coiled snake to which the Byzantine scholar Michael Psellus famously compares the *Aethiopica*'s structure,[20] the argument of my dissertation has a spiral shape, featuring a gradually expanding scope: *Chapter One* concentrates on Cnemon's novella, the novel's first substantial embedded narrative; *Chapter Two* discusses Calasiris, the most prominent secondary narrator, whose stories take up several of the *Aethiopica*'s ten books; *Chapter Three* offers an account of its fundamental narrative principles; finally, *Chapter Four* ventures into the intellectual landscape of the later Imperial period and explores hypothetical interpretations

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[19] This wormhole metaphor is closely connected to possible worlds theory, on which see below, pp. 14–15.

[20] See *Diacrisis* ll. 24–28 Dyck. On Psellus's essay see below, *Sections 1.1*; *2.1*.

that might emerge if we viewed the *Aethiopica* from the perspective of different reading communities of its time.

This progression from smaller, isolated observations to a comprehensive account of what I think are the novel's most distinctive and crucial features is at one level an inductive process but not just that: the macrostructure of my thesis is closely connected to the underlying conception of how the novel's meaning unfolds in a dynamic exchange between text and reader. Of course, this notion has to do with my general methodology, to which I shall return shortly; however, it also depends on my perception of the *Aethiopica*'s architecture in particular. It is a central tenet of scholarship that the interactions between the novel's intradiegetic narrators and narratees have metainterpretative significance: they serve to showcase—by positive or negative example—how the reader should approach the work;[21] I call these elements 'interpretative seeds.' With these in mind, we should expect to learn how to interpret Heliodorus if we read him carefully enough.[22] In other words, these signals facilitate our orientation in the *Aethiopica*'s system of interpretative wormholes. While some of these seeds have been studied in isolation, there is a related issue to which scholarship has not paid the attention it deserves: how are such hints distributed over the *Aethiopica*? Does a pattern emerge from them? These questions are connected to a broader topic. Unlike visual art, literature—and narrative in particular—is something that we usually take in in a given order— a circumstance that is of crucial importance for considerations about reading fiction.[23] While those features of the *Aethiopica* that are most obviously related to the sequential nature of narrative—for example, effects of suspense, surprise, and retardation—have received much attention and appreciation,[24] the position and arrangement of interpretative seeds remains unexamined. If we consider that such cues are supposed to guide the reader's way of comprehending the narrative, this proves to be a serious gap. I think that a closer look at the *Aethiopica* reveals that planting these interpretative seeds, Heliodorus follows a sophisticated plan, whose goal it is to acquaint the reader bit by bit with the hermeneutical complexity of his work. The gradually expanding scope of my thesis mirrors this quality of the novel: I start by analysing a relatively compact subplot at the *Aethiopica*'s beginning that serves as a first window into the work's interpretative pitfalls and subsequently proceed to more complex

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[21] The classic studies of this topic are Winkler (1982/1999); Morgan (1991). For a similar reading of Apuleius, see Winkler (1985).

[22] See Călinescu (1993: 33–9) on the expectation 'that the text offer internal means for solving the difficulties and problems with which it confronts the reader' (33).

[23] As Rabinowitz (2015: 86) puts it, 'it's generally, although not universally, agreed that some kind of temporality or sequence is essential to narrative.' See further Grabes (2013).

[24] See e.g. Bartsch (1989: 80–108); Morgan (1989a, 1994, 2007a); De Temmerman (2014: 246–58).

issues that are connected to later parts of the novel; in this respect, my approach to the dynamics of reading takes heed of the linear nature of narrative. Insofar as my analysis pays attention to the sequentiality of reading, we can even say that my narratology operates not in a three- but in a four-dimensional space.

However, interpretative seeds have another, opposing momentum—one that diverts the reader from a strictly unidirectional reading. The central idea behind the metaphor of the seed is that once such elements catch the reader's attention, they can develop into something bigger: for example, when readers witness how an internal narratee makes sense of an embedded narrative, they may feel encouraged to apply the underlying cognitive strategy to other parts of the novel. The crucial point here is that this potential of interpretative seeds can unfold in both directions:[25] just as entering a single wormhole might change our perception of earlier and later parts of the narrative, we can (re)evaluate both subsequent and earlier passages with the help of such seeds, thereby overwriting our initial interpretation. Bearing in mind this retroactive force of interpretative cues, I shall often abandon the sequence of the *Aethiopica*'s narrative, jumping back and forth to explore how certain passages might inform our understanding of related sections. To sum up, I aim to balance two polar principles of reading: one that takes a linear path through the text and embraces the teleological momentum of the narrative—and another one that is dominated by a wandering approach, emphasising the novel's intricate wormhole structure.[26] As we shall see, the *Aethiopica* constantly plays these opposed momenta off against each other. While scholarship usually aims to resolve the resulting hermeneutical tension by privileging certain reading strategies over others, I suggest that it is more fruitful to comprehend it as a fundamental principle of the novel's architecture and a key source of its Protean nature. During the reading process, the directive force of the abovementioned fourth dimension will vary. In fact, experiments suggest that a dynamic model of the relationship between linear, immersed 'pleasure reading' on the one hand and analytical 'close reading' on the other hand, which emphasises that the two can 'ebb, flow, and intermingle,'[27] describes the reader's cognitive activity best. In light of this, we can say that while my conception of the *Aethiopica* is of course as much an artificial construct as the interpretations of other scholars, it is informed by recent insights into the cognitive dynamics of reading.

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[25] Cf. the concept of the wandering viewpoint in Iser (1976/1978: 108–18).

[26] Whitmarsh (2011: 177–252) also sets the two impulses in relation to each other. On the difference between our approaches, see below, *Section 3.1*.

[27] Phillips (2015: 71).

A question closely related to these opposed momenta is whether we have a first or repeated reading in mind, which is rarely addressed explicitly in studies of the *Aethiopica*.[28] On the one hand, scholarship that is primarily concerned with reading experience usually focuses on issues that we tend to associate with a first reading: for example, the gradual, often painfully slow resolution of mysteries and puzzles,[29] false closures,[30] and the suspense at play in the finale.[31] All these narrative devices and tricks work best if the reader does not yet know the novel as a whole; they are based on the observation that Heliodorus makes sophisticated use of the narratee's ignorance.[32] On the other hand, there are studies that aim to resolve complex plot-related puzzles such as Calasiris's mission, scouring the *Aethiopica* for relevant information in a way that would not be possible without detailed knowledge of the entire novel.[33] Such an approach hunts for insights that are the fruit of repeated reading. These contrasting perspectives have existed side by side, and scholarship has not attempted to set them into relation with each other.

Whether we privilege a first, largely linear, or a repeated, analytical reading is primarily a question of aesthetic preferences and thus a subjective matter.[34] What is more relevant to my study is how responses that are typical of first or repeated readings, respectively, relate to each other. The distinction between the two categories is not as clear as we tend to think, which is a result of essential characteristics of the reading process. One of them we have already encountered when talking about interpretative seeds. As Matei Călinescu points out, all reading (including first reading) is 'a process of continuous hypothesis building and revising';[35] even over the course of a first reading, we look back and reconsider earlier passages—in short, we abandon the linear mode and adopt a perspective commonly associated with rereading. The capacity of generic conventions to shape our expectations is also important here:[36] even if we are reading Heliodorus for the first time, we may know other Greek novels and can thus, for example, anticipate the happy ending. These qualities of first readings are condensed in

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[28] On the relationship between first and repeated readings of Apuleius, see Winkler (1985: 8–11); the dramatisation of these perspectives in Achilles Tatius is discussed by Whitmarsh (2011: 207–11); on Lucian's *True Stories* as a work inviting rereading, see von Möllendorff (2000: *passim*).

[29] See e.g. Winkler (1982/1999); Morgan (1994).

[30] See Bowie (1998) on Book Eight; Grethlein (2016) on Book Five.

[31] See e.g. Morgan (1989a).

[32] See below, *Chapter One*.

[33] See e.g. Hefti (1950); Fuchs (1993: 174–88); Baumbach (1997); Bretzigheimer (1998).

[34] In literary theory this is a controversial issue; see Călinescu (1993: 31–56), providing an overview of positions held by Barthes, Ingarden, Iser, and Riffaterre.

[35] Călinescu (1993: xiv).

[36] Culler (1975/2002: 159), for example, defines genre as 'a conventional function of language, a particular relation to the world which serves as norm or expectation to guide the reader in his [*sic*] encounter with the text.'

Nabokov's dictum that 'one cannot read a book; one can only reread it.'[37] Repeated reading, in turn, can elicit responses that we tend to associate with a first reading: it is possible to reread a detective novel 'for the plot,' and we can fear for the life of 007 during a car chase when rewatching a James Bond film. Richard J. Gerrig has argued that as readers are immersed in the narrative (or, in his terminology, 'transported' to the fictional world), 'knowledge from outside a narrative world fails to influence the moment-by-moment experience.'[38] An essential allure of rereading a work incubates this effect: when we revisit a text, we can reexperience our first reading, which, for example, might have taken place a long time ago—under circumstances that we might desire to relive.[39] As I shall argue, the *Aethiopica* is constructed in a way that actively encourages us to reread the novel and thereby to grasp more and more of its complexity; considering Gerrig's observations, we can nevertheless say that even when we have this quality of the work in mind, we should not ignore features that might be most appealing to first-time readers. To sum up, while certain responses will always be more closely associated with first or repeated readings, respectively, we cannot establish a clear-cut line between them. My thesis aims to account for this circumstance by shifting gradually from reactions that we tend to ascribe to first-time readers to more complex and comprehensive insights that require a more analytical approach and detailed knowledge of larger parts of the novel. The present dissertation thus attempts to sketch the process of a step-by-step familiarisation with the *Aethiopica* and the resulting dynamics of sensemaking.

3. Will the implied reader please stand up?

These considerations lead us to another, larger issue: what do we mean when we talk about '*the* reader(s) of the *Aethiopica*'? What is it exactly that we are saying *about the text* when we describe *responses to it*? These methodological questions are of crucial importance for literary criticism in general: if we do not provide a clear answer to them, it remains vague what sort of literary meaning we are talking about. Studies of the *Aethiopica* all too often brush this issue

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[37] As quoted by Cannon (2013: 404).
[38] Gerrig (1998: 176).
[39] The ending of *Alice's adventures in wonderland* dramatises this appeal of rereading: the protagonist's sister imagines how Alice would years later retell her imaginary story to her children, 'and how she would feel with all their simple sorrows, and find a pleasure in all their simple joys, remembering her own child-life, and the happy summer days' (Carroll (1865/2006: 130)).

under the carpet. Since Wayne Booth introduced us to the implied reader,[40] literary critics have gotten so used to this handy heuristic concept that they rarely concern themselves with its implications. According to a recent, compact definition, it 'designates the image of the recipient that the author had while writing or, more accurately, the author's image of the recipient that is fixed and objectified in the text by specific indexical signs.'[41] This sounds all very neat, but how useful is such a concept in the wilds of Heliodoran interpretation? Discussing Calasiris's lengthy excursus on the Evil Eye (3.7–9),[42] Ken Dowden states that it '*clearly* gives pleasure to *the* reader.'[43] As this reader is not further specified, we can assume that it is the one whose behaviour should be intrinsic and self-evident—that is to say, the implied reader. However, in what respect is it clear that the digression gives pleasure to the reader? What in the text tells us that we must not be bored by such sections, which keep us from finding out instantly what happens next? Does not Cnemon, the novel's most interactive internal audience, during another excursus interrupt none other than Calasiris, complaining that he has had 'enough' of his 'wheeling on this subplot,' and subsequently ordering him, 'take your narrative back to what you promised' (2.24.4)?[44] For sure, if we understand Cnemon with Winkler as a caricatural anti-reader, who illustrates the 'comedy of misreading,'[45] we can agree with Dowden. However, what keeps us from siding with Morgan, who claims that 'Knemon presents an exact fit, cognitively and affectively, with *the* reader'?[46] If it is not even clear how Cnemon's reactions, which are particularly prominent interpretative seeds, should be understood to contribute to our image of the implied reader, what can we say about him or her at all? Maybe not much more than that once we embrace this concept without second thoughts, we enter slippery terrain.[47]

Yet we can be more specific about these hermeneutical problems; this will help us to think more carefully about how to approach readerly concepts. First, an implication of talking about *the* implied reader is that every text speaks to a single audience that has a well-defined set of characteristics. But what about works such as *Alice's adventures in wonderland*, which is both a children's book celebrating the power of our imagination and a carnival of logical paradoxes?

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[40] See Booth (1961/1983: 157), who prefers the now unusual expression 'postulated reader' but occasionally uses 'implied reader' synonymously. The latter term became popular about ten years later; see Iser (1972).
[41] Schmid (2013).
[42] Unmarked references indicate the *Aethiopica*.
[43] Dowden (1996: 283); my italics.
[44] Translations of Heliodorus are adapted from Morgan (2008).
[45] Winkler (1982/1999: 335).
[46] Morgan (1991: 99); my italics. See also Paulsen (1992: 17–8), agreeing with Morgan; Hunter (1998: 51–6), offering a more nuanced assessment.
[47] For similar considerations see Martindale (1993: 2–10).

Does the film *The wizard of Oz* primarily speak to children, intellectuals interested in metafictional and metamedial gimmicks, or to the LGBTQ+ community, all of whom have felt equally addressed by it? The relevance of these issues is not restricted to the pluralised mass media of our modern world: an important quality of the Greek novel is that it is designed to circulate; it is a product of empire rather than *polis*.[48] On what grounds can we prioritise one kind of reader over another? If we, in the case of the mentioned examples, think of the implied reader as somebody who perfectly understands all facets of the work, we get a chimera instead of a model resembling a real-life audience. We thus have to accept that this theoretical concept is not suited at all to describe what goes on between actual texts and audiences. Another statement by Morgan illustrates some of these tensions. At the end of Book One, the bandit Thyamis kills a girl, whom he thinks to be Charicleia; it is only later that Heliodorus reveals that Thyamis mistook someone else for the heroine. As Morgan argues, '*the* reader has been deluded into believing Charikleia dead, but it is unthinkable for a novel to lose its heroine with nine-tenths of the plot still to come; how can the apparent facts of the narrative be squared with the expectations inherent in the form?'[49] This interpretative tension, acknowledged by Morgan, is not just indicative of Heliodorus's games with generic expectations, but, I suggest, also bears witness to the futility of singling out a response to the text (in this case, either a naive or a generically informed, suspicious one) as that of *the* implied reader.

These issues are further complicated when we consider that constructing an audience solely based on information present in the work leaves us with very little in our hands: how can we know which supposed intertextual connections *the* reader can be expected to make? If we do not know if, for example, Martial was even known at the time a certain work was written, how can we tell whether a passage that *might*—from our oversensitive philological perspective— pass as a punctual, arcane allusion counts as one for the implied reader? Moreover, if we exclude information on contemporary habits of interpretation, for instance, whether the cultural environment from which a novel originated had a concept of narrative ambiguity, can we tell how the implied reader is supposed to deal with a certain puzzle? To sum up, if we stick to its strict, immanent meaning, the concept of the implied reader does not get us far in those cases where some sort of a readerly model is needed most.

When thinking about fruitful ways to approach the *Aethiopica*'s readership, we encounter these complications simultaneously, as Heliodorus wrote at a distant time characterised by

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[48] See Whitmarsh (2011: 11–12; 259).
[49] Morgan (1989b: 101); my italics.

competing reading communities. These circumstances result in two main problems. First, if we ignore everything we know about (approximately) fourth-century cultures of interpretation and take our cues only from the text,[50] we run the risk of reading the *Aethiopica* anachronistically, guided solely by our modern cognitive patterns.[51] Second, if we do develop our interpretation in dialogue with what we know about interpretative practices at Heliodorus's time, we have to deal with reading communities that had contrasting, in important respects mutually exclusive approaches to literature. In view of this, how expedient would it be to single out *one* readerly profile? A related question can be asked concerning the novel's unparalleled intertextual richness: what do we learn if we operate with an almost superhuman reader who is able to pick up on all references and all their possible implications at the same time?[52] I do not think that such a model would allow us to come to conclusions that have anything to do with the experience of real readers. In sum, while the implied reader might be a useful tool to talk about certain specific aspects of literary works, it can hardly be trusted as a universally applicable critical device. At the end of the day, the implied reader is not much more than a phantom; if the popularity of this concept is indicative of something, then first and foremost of our futile desire to establish a hotline to ancient readers. Much more often than not, when literary critics describe what *the* reader makes of a text, this wording serves as a rhetorical move to establish their own control and authority over it,[53] to cover up that they are articulating but one among many possible interpretations.

4. Raiders of the lost meaning

The described shortcomings of the implied reader lead us to the most fundamental aspect of the question as to what we mean when we describe responses to a literary text. Are we excavating something pre-existent or constructing something subjective? Where is literary meaning anchored, in the text or in the reader? This is a, if not the, central question of (post)modern literary criticism: particularly since Roland Barthes proclaimed the death of the

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[50] On Heliodorus's dating and possible cultural contexts, see below, *Section 4.1*.

[51] As my phrasing should make clear, I do not believe that it is possible (or necessary) to suppress our modern approaches to literature when interpreting ancient texts.

[52] See below, *Section 3.4*, where I suggest that Heliodorus reduces his own intertextual method to absurdity.

[53] As Martindale (1993: 15) suggests, 'authority is variously inscribed within particular reading practices … Judgements are always socially constituted … constructions like that of … "an implied reader" (always already a matter of interpretation) seem to amount to little more than the critic himself [*sic*] in another guise.'

author,[54] numerous theorists have attempted to design new models of where and how literary meaning comes about—models that are not based on the idea of authorial intention. While it is now universally accepted that the reader plays an active role in making sense of literature, opinions vary widely on the question of how far this readerly participation is creative and arbitrary, and in what way, if at all, it is influenced and restricted by properties of the text.

In view of its reductive inclinations, it is clear that scholarship tends to conceive of the *Aethiopica*'s meaning as something that is located in the text.[55] However, such an approach neglects an important quality of the novel: as we shall see, Heliodorus in various ways encourages us to grapple with puzzles that cannot be solved without our creative participation. My reading attributes great importance to this side of the *Aethiopica*, which heightens the importance of what I have depicted as the work's network of wormholes. I do not argue that first-time readers would be able to grasp the novel in its full complexity, identifying all points of indeterminacy and exploring possible ways of filling these gaps. In fact, we shall see that the *Aethiopica* develops innovative devices that serve to encourage rereading, incubating insights that belong to what is known as 'metacomprehension'—our understanding of what we understand in a text.[56] The more often we read the novel, the better we see to which questions the text provides clear answers and which puzzles remain unsolved.

Another important shortcoming of Heliodoran scholarship is that it tends to leave unexamined the cognitive patterns that underlie the reader's problem-solving strategies. Such an approach ignores that the way we interpret literature has a cultural and historical dimension: readers from different backgrounds approach texts in contrasting ways. As studies of the *Aethiopica* usually single out a specific intellectual environment as the novel's supposed ultimate interpretative framework, they fail to entertain the possibility that this work might be receptive to more than one reading community.

While a comprehensive overview of relevant theoretical debates would go beyond the scope of this *Introduction*, it is worth outlining two influential takes on the relationship between texts, readers, and literary meaning that mark the extremes of a methodological scale on which my thesis operates. In *The act of reading*, a classic of reader-response criticism, Wolfgang Iser argues that 'the interpreter's task should be to elucidate the potential meanings of a text, and not to restrict himself [*sic*] to just one.'[57] According to Iser, 'the literary text potentially

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[54] See Barthes (1967).
[55] Even Baumbach (2008), who acknowledges the coexistence of numerous perspectives, arranges them hierarchically and singles out one point of view as that of *the* reader.
[56] See e.g. Cannon (2013: 402).
[57] Iser (1976/1978: 22).

prestructures certain results to the extent that the recipient can actualize them in accordance with his own principles of selection.'[58] However, Iser firmly negates the question as to whether this open nature of literary texts results in arbitrary interpretation: 'selective decisions depend on the reader's individual disposition … on his or her historically and socially determined views … however, the forms of the plot-level nevertheless offer a range of possible meanings, on which all subjective realisations depend structurally.'[59]

Stanley Fish, in contrast, attributes greater creative power to what he calls 'interpretive communities,'[60] arguing that what we perceive as formal features of texts 'are always a function of the interpretive model one brings to bear (they are not "in the text").'[61] Along these lines, he outright refuses that it is objectively possible to distinguish between right and wrong, good and bad interpretations: 'When one interpretation wins out over another, it is not because the first has been shown to be in accordance with the facts but because it is from the perspective of its assumptions that the facts are now being specified.'[62] In other words, 'while there are always mechanisms for ruling out readings, their source is not the text but the presently recognized interpretive strategies for producing the text. It follows, then, that no reading … is inherently an impossible one.'[63] Fish illustrates his approach with a short poem rather than an extensive narrative text. If he is right about poetry, we may infer, his considerations would all the more apply to the *Aethiopica*.

Considering its reductive tendencies, we can say that much of Heliodoran scholarship is based on an understanding of literature that is closer to Iser's than to Fish's. In my opinion, however, both theorists touch on important sides of interpretation; for a nuanced understanding of literature, it is crucial to pay close attention to both how cues found in the text guide us and how interpretation depends on what the reader brings to the table. As the *Aethiopica* already provides us with a variety of strong interpretative signposts, it makes most sense to start with an in-depth text-internal reading (*Chapters One* to *Three*), on which I shall subsequently base an exploration of the reader's creative potential (*Chapter Four*).

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[58] Iser (1976/1978: 26), with changes.
[59] Iser (1976: 201); the translation is my own, as the larger part of this passage is missing from the available English version.
[60] As Fish (1980) emphasises in his introduction, his opinion on the constitution of literary meaning underwent significant changes over the course of his career. It is thus often possible to find statements in his oeuvre that conflict with the views I attribute to him here.
[61] Fish (1980: 13).
[62] Fish (1980: 340).
[63] Fish (1980: 347).

5. Experiencing fiction: possible worlds, narrative gaps, cognitive narratology

As the present study aims to conceptualise a dynamic model of the interaction between text and reader, it is important to outline its underlying notion of experiencing fiction. Reading narrative literature triggers complex mental processes, which are connected to the 'world-creating powers of imagination';[64] what emerges in our minds while we read can be described as fictional worlds. In two influential papers Kendall L. Walton discusses how we relate to these mental constructs while reading.[65] According to him, reading fiction is best understood as a game of make-believe, in which a vivid psychological interaction between reader and fictional world takes place: '*from the inside* the fictional worlds … look very much as though they are real. What fictionally is the case is, fictionally, really the case.'[66] Since the late seventies, scholars have made use of this methodology to build comprehensive theories:[67] it is now popular to understand the reader's dynamic conception of the fictional world as a network of possible worlds (storyworlds). As David Herman puts it, narrative comprehension is a process of '(re)constructing storyworlds on the basis of textual cues and the inferences that they make possible.'[68] We can now refine a central image of this introduction: the *Aethiopica*'s network of wormholes connects such possible worlds. To return to the previous quote, Herman has good reasons for putting 're' in brackets; this grammatical ambiguity encapsulates an important characteristic of reading fiction. On the one hand, in the words of Alan Palmer, 'storyworlds differ ontologically from the real world because they are incomplete.'[69] On the other hand, immersed readers can forget or ignore this circumstance. According to H. Porter Abbott, 'we read these gaps as if there are real connecting threads inside them, despite the fact that there is no thread, nor anything else, there to be known.'[70] This is precisely the hermeneutical trap to which many scholars fall victim when they cling to the assumption that it should be possible under all circumstances to find (to <u>re</u>construct) an unambiguous solution to each and every narrative puzzle in the *Aethiopica*. I would like to think that such assumptions arise less from interpretative naiveté than from biased views on the history of narrative, which

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[64] Pavel (1986: 10).
[65] Walton (1978a, 1978b); cf. Grethlein (2017: 25–9).
[66] Walton (1978b: 21); W.'s emphasis. W. distances himself from the concept of suspension of disbelief, a term that was introduced by Coleridge (1817/1983: 2.6) in a different context and meaning.
[67] See most prominently Pavel (1986); Ryan (1991); Doležel (1998); for further literature see Ryan (2013).
[68] Herman (2002: 6).
[69] Palmer (2004: 34).
[70] Abbott (2015: 108).

associate ambiguity as a literary device only with later, mainly (post)modern works.[71] It is a major concern of the present study to dispel this myth.

For this endeavour it is also important to think about how our minds process information contained in works of fiction, a major question of cognitive narratology. It is a prevalent tenet of this discipline that the reader's activity is best described as a kind of mind-reading: when we take in narratives, what we are primarily doing is to make sense of characters' actions and inner workings, exercising the same cognitive instruments that we use in real life.[72] Proceeding from Herman's claim that 'readers … work to interpret narratives by reconstructing the mental representations that have in turn guided their production,'[73] I suggest that we can broaden this cognitive approach to fiction: if we understand (the reader's construct of) the author as the ultimate source of the work, the concept of mind-reading can be extended to the reader's mental representations of him or her; when we read narrative, we speculate about what it is *supposed to* mean, constructing a coherent plan behind the work and a mind that conceived it.[74] This is what Daniel Dennett calls the 'intentional stance': 'the strategy of interpreting the behavior of an entity (person, animal, artifact, whatever) by treating it *as if* it were a rational agent who governed its "choice" of "action" by a "consideration" of its "beliefs" and "desires."'[75] In the words of Palmer, this is the 'hypothesis that visibly coherent behavior is caused by a directing consciousness.'[76] To prevent a misunderstanding, the application of this model to readerly experience does not go hand in hand with the bugbear of literary scholarship, intentionalism: we can construct a mind from which the literary work emanates without identifying it with the historical author's consciousness; this mental model of the author is nothing but an element of our fictional experience.[77] The concept that we as readers are prompted to construct a mind conceiving the *Aethiopica* is central to my understanding of the novel: we can make sense of it as a work that *could* be ruled by contrasting sets of principles, which are best described as the cognitive properties of different alternative 'authorial' minds, connected by wormholes on the highest level.

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[71] For a notable exception see Thomas (2000), who explores the role of ambiguity in Virgil as well as in ancient scholarship and rhetorical theory.

[72] See e.g. Zunshine (2006: 24–5). The primacy of this understanding of narrative has recently been questioned by Grethlein (2015), who uses Heliodorus to advocate the concept of experience instead of mind-reading 'to grasp the relation of processing narrative to processing the everyday world' (279).

[73] Herman (2002: 1).

[74] Zunshine (2006: 65) touches on this topic by asking, 'aren't works of fiction themselves metarepresentations with source tags pointing to their authors?'

[75] Dennett (1996: 27).

[76] Palmer (2004: 178).

[77] Cf. Zunshine (2006: 66–7). On related concepts in the oeuvre of Bakhtin, see Whitmarsh (2005a: 109–11).

6. Historicising the reading experience

As we take such a cognitive approach, the historical context of the *Aethiopica* moves into the spotlight: after all, it is inevitable that our cognitive strategies should be culturally determined.[78] As Charles Martindale puts it, 'meaning is produced and exchanged socially and discursively, and this is true of reading.'[79] With this in mind, it is a particularly tricky endeavour to approach somebody like Heliodorus: on the one hand, as a writer from a distant era, he is by no means as immediately accessible to us as modern authors are. On the other hand, from the perspective of Classicists, Heliodorus is a particularly *late* writer who was able to draw on an immense amount of (literary and other) learning.[80] How does this circumstance inform our understanding of his novel? What, if anything at all, can we say about Heliodorus's cultural environment? Scholarship usually approaches the question of the *Aethiopica*'s cultural background by practising what is called *Motivgeschichte* in German, scouring the novel for material that can be traced back to distinct cultural contexts.[81] However, Classicists rarely reflect on the theoretical premises and methodological implications of this strategy. What exactly are we doing when we try to work out *the* cultural context of a literary work? Is it inscribed into the text and does it consequently have a stable existence, as the established approach seems to imply, or does it rather lie in the eye of the reader? What kind of reading, what picture of Heliodorus's 'lateness' do we get if we turn the tables and approach the *Aethiopica* starting from what we know about (roughly) contemporary traditions of interpretation instead of reducing the scope of our investigation to what we can find in the text?

A useful concept for talking about what distinguishes reading communities is Umberto Eco's encyclopedia, which can be described as 'shared communal knowledge [that] varies with cultures, social groups, historical epochs, and for this [*sic*] reasons relativizes the recovery of implicit [literary] meaning.'[82] What do we know about the encyclopedias of Heliodorus's ancient readers? What can we say about the way their worldview and cognitive functioning might have influenced their understanding of the *Aethiopica*? While, as Grethlein observes, there is a 'growing consensus that narratology needs to be sensitivized historically,'[83] and

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[78] See e.g. Zunshine (2006: 154).
[79] Martindale (1993: 7).
[80] On my decision to avoiding the term 'late antiquity,' see below, *Section 4.1*.
[81] See e.g. Ramelli (2001/2012) on Christianity; Rutherford (1997) on Egypt; Dowden (1996) on Platonism. Whitmarsh (2011: 154) has argued most decidedly against such approaches.
[82] Doležel (1998: 177). On the semiotic concept of encyclopedias in Eco's work, see Eco (1976: 98–100, 1979/1984: 17–27).
[83] Grethlein (2017: 69).

important steps have been taken in this direction by theorists, this awareness is only slowly making its way into 'applied' literary studies. It is a central concern of the present thesis to push on with this development: *Chapter Four* approaches the *Aethiopica* from the perspective of two (inevitably constructed) reading communities and explores how their contrasting interests and cognitive dispositions might have affected their interpretation of specific puzzles and of the work as a whole.

These 'historically informed' readings, to borrow a term from musical performance studies,[84] are not independent from but built on the text-internal reading I develop over the course of *Chapters One* to *Three*: with the help of my wormhole narratology we can gain a deep understanding of the novel's Protean, never-resting nature, which makes the work all the more receptive to various reading communities. If we want to comprehend in what respects Heliodorus's work is the culmination of ancient storytelling, we have to consider both sides of the coin: the text and its potential readers.

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[84] Martindale (1993: 8–9) contrasts his conception of reading with naive, allegedly authentic interpretations of Early music. However, he seems to be unaware of the methodologically more circumspect approach of historically informed performance, as represented by Giovanni Antonini, Nikolaus Harnoncourt, and Roger Norrington, to name a few influential representatives of this movement.

CHAPTER ONE: REVISITING THE STORY OF CNEMON

1. Getting started (twice)

As announced in the *Introduction*, the present study first takes a predominantly text-internal approach: I shall start by exploring the interpretative guidance that Heliodorus offers his readers. While this method corresponds to the general expectation that narrative works ought to teach us how to interpret them,[1] it is also promoted by the *Aethiopica*, starting with its iconic beginning. The opening scene features a reserved primary narrator and internal focalisers who attempt to 'read' the tableau as well as the teenage boy and girl at its centre;[2] this setting raises the expectation that fictive agents *within* the narrative will shed light on questions prompted by the narrative.[3] Moreover, we can observe that during the *Aethiopica*'s beginning the couple encounter increasingly promising internal 'readers': a first group of bandits can only speculate about them and does not understand at all what the young woman says (1.1–1.3); the second gang is not better at interpreting the scene; however, their leader manages to communicate with her using nonverbal gestures (1.3–1.4).[4] As the brigands lead away the girl and the boy to their village, we are still clueless as to their background; we can at best suspect from generic conventions and possibly from paratextual evidence that they are the protagonists.[5] When we learn that they are handed over to Cnemon, a young Greek, 'so that they might have someone to converse with' (τοῦ διαλέγεσθαι ἕνεκεν, 1.7.3), we can integrate him into this succession of

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[1] See e.g. Călinescu (1993: 33); on such interpretative cues in other ancient novels, see Hunter (2005: 124–5).

[2] On the role of internal audiences in the opening scene, see Hefti (1950: 115–6); Winkler (1982/1999: 290–3); Bartsch (1989: 45–8); Morgan (1991: 86–90). On the intertextuality of the tableau, see Winkler (1980: 180); Telò (2011); Tagliabue (2015). On the visual quality of the novel's beginning, see Bühler (1976); Winkler (2002). On further narratological aspects see Grethlein (2017: 77–80).

[3] On the primary narrator's main characteristics, see Fusillo (1989/1991: 131–41); Morgan (2004b: 526–33). On the predominance of showing over telling, see Wolff (1912: 194).

[4] For instances of puzzlement see 1.1.7; 1.2.1; 1.2.6; 1.3.2. On the aporetic nature of the opening scene, see Whitmarsh (2002: 117–9).

[5] On generic clues see De Temmerman (2014: 248–9); Grethlein (2017: 80). Morgan (1996b: 421) suggests that it is unlikely that the title of the novel included the names of the protagonists; Whitmarsh (2005c), however, argues that the original title was τὰ περὶ Θεαγένην καὶ Χαρίκλειαν Αἰθιοπικά; see further Doody (1996/1997: 89); Montiglio (2013: 145 n. 60).

internal readers: finally, we might think, Heliodorus is introducing a character who is able to extract information from the two captives.[6]

While we expect the couple, who call each other 'Charicleia' and 'Theagenes' (1.8.3–4), to tell their story to Cnemon, what we get is the opposite: they become the audience of his narrative. All of a sudden, the little orientation acquired by the readers is destabilised: when they have just started to suspect that the young couple are the protagonists, the narrative shifts its focus on a newly introduced character.[7] Will Cnemon turn out to be the protagonist instead?[8] If not, what is his story doing here?[9] Admittedly, it is likely that some lost Greek novels, first and foremost Antonius Diogenes's *Wonders beyond Thule*, began in an even more confusing manner.[10] Nevertheless, if we consider the plethora of signals directing our curiosity at Charicleia and Theagenes, it is safe to say that Cnemon's extensive story comes as a surprise.[11] The Byzantine scholar Michael Psellus (11th century C.E.) might have this in mind when he writes in his essay comparing Achilles Tatius and Heliodorus (hereafter *Diacrisis*)[12] that 'at the beginning the reader has the impression that most elements are superfluous (ἐκ περιττοῦ τὰ πολλὰ κεῖσθαι οἰόμενος, ll. 22–23 Dyck).'[13] Before developing a new perspective on Cnemon's story and its function, I shall offer an overview of the subplot.[14]

(*i*) Cnemon tells Charicleia and Theagenes about his adventures in Athens (1.9.1–14.2). Because he refused to reciprocate the passion of Demaenete, the second wife of his father Aristippus, her attraction turned into hatred. She accused Cnemon of attacking her; Aristippus believed her and beat him up. Demaenete hooked up Cnemon with Thisbe, a slave. She convinced him that he could catch Demaenete *in flagrante* with her supposed lover; however,

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[6] The bandits and Cnemon can thus be seen as an instance of what Grethlein (forthcoming c) calls Heliodorus's 'climactic arrangement of … doublets'; cf. Morgan (1989b: 103–4).

[7] See Keyes (1922: 49); Morgan (1982: 258); Morgan (1989b: 104). Unlike its position, the very existence of the secondary storyline is unsurprising. Subplots can also be found in other Greek novels; see e.g. the stories of Hippothous (Xen. Ephes. 3.2) and Aegialeus (5.1.4–9) in *Anthia and Habrocomes* and the Charicles subplot in *Leucippe and Clitophon* (Ach. Tat. 1.7–14); cf. Anderson (1984: 126–7); Fusillo (1988: 27, 1989/1991: 142–65); Konstan (1994: 26–9); Morgan (1996a: 174–6, 2004a: 502–6, 2004d: 490–2).

[8] On this effect see Winkler (1982/1999: 299 n. 19); Paulsen (1992: 89–93); ignored by Brethes (2007: 116). From a theoretical point of view, Schneider (2001: 623) notes that the quantity of information provided on characters informs the reader's understanding of their status.

[9] We can speculate that this might be a Homeric move: after the prologue of the *Odyssey*, which identifies Odysseus as the protagonist, Aegisthus becomes the subject of Zeus's opening speech (Hom. *Od*. 1.31–43), and the action subsequently focuses on Telemachus; see Olson (1990: 59–60); de Jong (2001: 591–3).

[10] See Stephens and Winkler (1995: 114–8).

[11] Of course, a major effect of this narratological sidestep is that it teases the reader; see Grethlein (2017: 81–8).

[12] The full title of the essay (according to cod. Vat. gr. 672) is Τίς ἡ διάκρισις τῶν συγγραμμάτων, ὧν τῷ μὲν Χαρίκλεια, τῷ δὲ Λευκίππη ὑποθέσεις καθεστήκατον; see McLaren (2006: 73–4).

[13] Text from Dyck (1986); cf. Colonna T XII. On Psellus's essay see Gärtner (1969: 56–60); Wilson (1983/1996: 174–7); Agapitos (1998: 132–9); McLaren (2006).

[14] The piecemeal distribution of the subplot finds a parallel in the Odyssean *Nostoi*; see de Jong (2001: 591–3); Nünlist (2009: 171–2).

when armed Cnemon burst into the bedroom, he found Demaenete in bed with Aristippus, who subsequently accused him of attempted murder.[15] Cnemon was banished and sailed to Aegina.

(*ii*) Cnemon relates what he learned from his friend Charias, whose source is Thisbe (1.14.3–17.6). Afraid that Demaenete would harm her, she decided to strike first. She pretended to arrange an opportunity for Demaenete to sleep with Cnemon and told Aristippus that she could convict her of adultery. Thisbe brought together Demaenete and Aristippus in the house of the musician Arsinoe, whom she had also deceived. Aristippus arrested Demaenete, who then killed herself.

(*iii*) Cnemon pauses his story (1.18.1–2.8.3); the brigands are under attack. Thyamis, their leader, orders Cnemon to hide Charicleia in a cave. Thyamis visits the hiding place, intending to kill her. Later Cnemon and Theagenes enter the cave and find the body of Thisbe, whom Thyamis has erroneously stabbed instead of Charicleia.

(*iv*) Cnemon and Theagenes find Charicleia alive. Cnemon reports what he learned from Anticles (2.8.4–10.1). Aristippus was found not guilty of Demaenete's death. Thisbe pinched Arsinoe's lover, the merchant Nausicles. Jealous Arsinoe told Demaenete's relatives about Thisbe's earlier machinations. Aristippus was put on trial, convicted of being an accessory to Demaenete's murder, dispossessed, and exiled. Thisbe and Nausicles travelled to Naucratis; Cnemon and Anticles followed her.

Complementary information stems (*v*) from Thisbe's letter to Cnemon, which is found next to her corpse (2.10.1–4) and clarifies that she was a captive of the bandit Thermouthis; (*vi*) from an authorial statement (2.12.2–3) that Thermouthis snatched Thisbe from Nausicles and hid her in the cave; (*vii*) finally, when Cnemon retells his story to a new audience, he hints at further adventures that he had experienced before Thyamis's crew caught him (6.2.3–4).

How does this subplot relate to the *Aethiopica* as a whole? What is its function? Scholarship has offered different answers to these questions. Winkler's pioneering study, 'The mendacity of Kalasiris and the narrative strategy of Heliodoros' *Aithiopika*,'[16] focuses on the narratological characteristics of Cnemon's story, contrasts it with the main storyline, and concludes that the subplot serves 'to make clear what kind of story the *Aithiopika* is *not*.'[17] Conversely, Morgan reads the episode as a 'motivic and thematic'[18] counterpoint and emphasises the contrast between its focus on depraved love on the one hand and the ideal love

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[15] For a legal analysis of the trial scenes in Cnemon's story, see Schwartz (2016: 157–85).
[16] Winkler (1982/1999).
[17] Winkler (1982/1999: 299); W.'s italics. Hunter (1998) offers a similar interpretation.
[18] Morgan (1989b: 106); similarly Stark (1989b: 92).

of Charicleia and Theagenes on the other hand.[19] These interpretations encapsulate Winkler's and Morgan's contrasting yet equally reductive methods:[20] both readings are based on the idea that Cnemon's story serves to highlight *ex negativo* the novel's single most important aspiration. In line with my pluralistic conception, I shall approach the subplot in a fundamentally different way, arguing that it introduces the reader to the novel's main hermeneutical and narratological characteristics, most importantly, its ability to generate different meanings. According to this interpretation, Cnemon's story works against the idea of a single privileged reading and lures us into the *Aethiopica*'s network of interpretative wormholes.

2. Decontrasting the (sub)plot

In order to contextualise my approach, let us have a closer look at Winkler's and Morgan's reasoning. The former claims that insofar as Cnemon's story 'is a tale with … an unproblematic narrative from its very first words, it has been designed and positioned to emphasize the ambiguity and unanswered questions of the opening tableau. Knemon's tale shows that Heliodoros is perfectly capable of writing an old-fashioned novel in a direct narrative mode.'[21] Morgan rightly objects that the second half of the novel is comparably straightforward. Over the course of the present chapter, I shall also make clear that Cnemon's story is not as unproblematic and unambiguous as Winkler claims—a circumstance that further weakens his conception of Cnemon-narrator as an anti-Heliodorus. Winkler goes on to claim that 'Knemon's tale is a model of the ordinary *chronological* intelligibility of all plotted stories.'[22] Morgan, in turn, points out that this is not true as regards Thisbe, whose death is revealed before the events leading to it.[23] As we shall see, this is not the only major instance of temporal rearrangement in Cnemon's story. Finally, Winkler suggests that the subplot also constitutes a counterpart to the main narrative concerning the dynamics of narrative modes: it 'begins with ingenuous simplicity but becomes more and more complex in narrative structure,'[24] whereas Charicleia's story is presented as a riddle that is gradually solved over the course of the novel.

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[19] Fusillo (1989/1991: 149) combines the two concepts: 'au niveau idéologique comme au niveau narratif, le long récit de Cnémon est à l'opposé du modèle dominant du roman.'
[20] See above, *Introduction*.
[21] Winkler (1982/1999: 300).
[22] Winkler (1982/1999: 300); W.'s italics.
[23] Morgan (1989b: 105).
[24] Winkler (1982/1999: 301).

Morgan objects that 'verbally Knemon is not characterised as a different kind of narrator from Heliodoros,'[25] and that the point of view of every narrator featured in the subplot is restricted. As I shall argue,[26] we may add to these observations that the *Aethiopica*'s closure can be read as considerably weaker than both Winkler and Morgan suggest, and important questions about the main storyline remain unanswered. To sum up, Winkler's conception does not withstand scrutiny. Instead of countering with an alternative hermeneutical interpretation, Morgan concentrates on the significance of the subplot for the novel's construct of ideal love.[27] While this reading strikes me as plausible, it is important to note that the corresponding teleological, moralising mode of reading is not the only interpretative approach invited by Heliodorus. Accordingly, it is worth exploring alternative conceptions of Cnemon's story.

My reading resembles Winkler's insofar as I agree that the narratological characteristics of the subplot are important; however, I shall argue that they have an exemplary rather than a contrasting function. Heliodorus would not be the first Greek author to deploy such a technique: an important precursor is Herodotus.[28] After a short proem the narrative of the Histories opens with mythical conflicts between Greeks and barbarians (Hdt. 1.1–5). While this passage distances itself thematically from the main narrative, it also anticipates major narratological traits of the work. On the one hand, Herodotus closes the digression by announcing that he 'will not further address these issues' (περὶ μὲν τούτων οὐκ ἔρχομαι ἐρέων, Hdt. 1.5.3). On the other hand, the excursus displays some of the *Histories*' main narratological characteristics: for example, it connects various episodes via the motif of vengeance and juxtaposes complementary yet contrasting versions of the same story.[29] The digression thus articulates both what the Histories are not about and how the narrator handles his material. Morgan argues that Cnemon's story serves a comparable thematic purpose; the present chapter aims to show that it also has a similar narratological function.

In disagreement with Winkler, Nick Lowe claims that 'Thisbe's story is a rehearsal for the narrative strategy of Charicleia's, and only when we have mastered the Thisbe/Cnemon subplot

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[25] Morgan (1989b: 105).
[26] See below, *Sections 2.6.c–d*; *3.2.c*.
[27] See Morgan (1989b: 106–13).
[28] Here it is worth pointing out that the ethnographical excursus on the Herdsmen (βουκόλοι) that precedes the protagonists' encounter with Cnemon (1.5–6) features Herodotean echoes; see Birchall (1996a: 98). On Heliodorus and historiography see Morgan (1982); Elmer (2008).
[29] On this function of the *Histories*' opening, see Asheri et al. (2007: 9). On the exemplary role of stories told in Book One, see e.g. Konstan (1983); Gray (2001); Demont (2009).

will we be ready for the still more demanding Charicleia/Calasiris complex.'[30] Lowe highlights three narratological analogies between the two storylines: manipulation of the order, gradual release of information by narrators whose knowledge is limited, and recycling of story elements.[31] These observations constitute a good basis for my interpretation, which goes one step further: I suggest that the subplot does not simply prepare readers to master the main narrative in the sense that it helps them to find the definite way to overcome the *Aethiopica*'s major interpretative challenges; instead, Cnemon's story introduces us to different interpretative strategies and cognitive patterns, encouraging us to try out contrasting approaches to the novel.

3. Keeping an eye on the eye: shifting focalisation

In passage *i* Cnemon tells his own adventures; he serves as a homodiegetic narrator.[32] This setting enables him to choose between different narrative points of view.[33] Homodiegetic narrators can exclude all information that came to their knowledge *after* the narrated events ('experiencing focalisation') or incorporate such insights ('*ex eventu* knowledge') into their account ('narrating focalisation').[34] Narrators who shift back and forth between experiencing and narrating focalisation have a long history in Greek literature, and ancient scholars were familiar with this phenomenon.[35] Such narrators can be found in prominent intertexts of the *Aethiopica*: Odysseus makes use of both perspectives in the *Apologoi*,[36] and so does Clitophon, Achilles Tatius's secondary narrator.[37]

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[30] Lowe (2003: 254). That which L. calls 'Thisbe's story' is the entire Cnemon subplot excluding Demaenete's first scheme; see Lowe (2003: 251). For another 'positive' reading of (parts of) the subplot, see Grethlein (forthcoming c), who argues that there is an analogy between the deception of Thisbe's victims and 'the spell that the *Ethiopica* strives to cast on its readers.'

[31] Lowe (2003: 250–5), whose concept of recycling corresponds to *Ökonomie* in Hefti (1950: 125); see further Oeftering (1901: 22); Schissel von Fleschenberg (1913: 55); Sandy (1982b: 37–9).

[32] See Genette (1972/1980: 243–52).

[33] On focalisation see e.g. Genette (1972/1980: 189–94); Bal (1985/2009: 145–65); Niederhoff (2013).

[34] This distinction goes back to the concepts of *erlebendes Ich* and *erzählendes Ich*, as introduced by Spitzer (1928: 448–9); cf. Nünning and Nünning (2000a: 68–9).

[35] See Nünlist (2009: 125–6).

[36] See de Jong (2001: 232). On the *Odyssey* as the *Aethiopica*'s primary intertext, see Keyes (1922), focusing on structural aspects and making speculative claims about the novel's composition; Feuillâtre (1966: 105–14); Gabert (1974); Fusillo (1989/1991: 26–31); Woronoff (1992: 37–42); Whitmarsh (1998: 97–8, 1999), focusing on Heliodorus's cultural refashioning of the *Odyssey*; Lowe (2003: 236–41); Morgan (2014: 267–8) offers further observations on intertextuality.

[37] Hägg (1971: 124–36); Reardon (1994); Morgan (2004a: 496–7). For a collection of possible echoes of Achilles Tatius in Heliodorus, see Neimke (1889: 22–57); Durham (1938) (n.b.: both get the relative chronology of the two novelists wrong); cf. Hilton (2001); Whitmarsh (2002: 114).

As early as in the second sentence of (*i*), it becomes clear that Cnemon includes *ex eventu* knowledge into his account: Aristippus married Demaenete, who was 'pretty enough, but the cause of much evil (ἀρχέκακον, 1.9.1)'. Needless to say, Cnemon did not know that when Demaenete entered his life.[38] Here and in similar cases,[39] the incorporation of *ex eventu* information is inconspicuous; in other instances, however, it is hard to overlook. For instance, Cnemon notes that initially he did not object to Demaenete's physical approaches because he 'had no inkling of the truth' (τῶν μὲν ὄντων οὐδὲν ὑποπτεύων, 1.9.3), which he relates earlier. Similarly, when he describes the beating he received from his father, the reason for which he names earlier, he emphasises that he 'knew nothing' (οὐδὲν εἰδότα) and 'did not even have the usual consolation of knowing (μηδέ … γινώσκοντα, 1.11.1).' In these and similar passages,[40] Cnemon explicitly highlights his lack of information at the time of the narrated events and thus calls attention to his shifting focalisation. A similar effect can be found in Lysias's *On the Killing of Eratosthenes*, a central intertext of Cnemon's story.[41] The defendant Euphiletus presents himself as too simple to have orchestrated the scheme of which he is accused;[42] in order to underline his naivety, he repeatedly emphasises his ignorance and lack of suspicion.[43]

Other sections of the embedded narrative, in turn, are characterised by experiencing focalisation without added narratorial comments.[44] When Cnemon rushes into Demaenete's bedroom in the belief that he will catch her with an adulterer, the reader does not learn the truth before Cnemon-actor does: 'I stepped forward to dispatch the pair of them. But—heaven have mercy!—it was my father who slid from the bed and fell at my feet' (1.12.2–3).[45] The advent of Charias, the narrator of (*ii*), is related in a similar fashion: 'A cutter was just coming into port, and I lingered a while, curious to see where she was from and who her passengers were (ὁπόθεν τε εἴη καὶ τίνας ἄγοι περιεσκόπουν). Even before the gangplank was properly fixed, a man leapt ashore (ἐξήλατό τις), ran up to me, and threw his arms around me. It was Charias' (1.14.3).

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[38] See Winkler (1982/1999: 299–300); as a side note, we can add that Cnemon's knowledge can also be understood as resulting from his familiarity with the mythical and literary motif of the evil stepmother, on which see Watson (1995).

[39] See e.g. 1.9.3 and 1.10.3 on Demaenete's machinations.

[40] See e.g. 1.11.3, where Cnemon-narrator calls Cnemon-actor an 'idiot' (ὁ μάταιος).

[41] On Cnemon's story and Lysias, see Hunter (1998: 45–6). Note that this intertext might indicate that Cnemon is exaggerating his naivety. On his unreliability see below, *Section 1.6*.

[42] See Carey (1989: 66).

[43] See Lys. *Or.* 1.10; 13–15; cf. Edwards (1999: 58).

[44] Conversely, Fusillo (1989/1991: 148) claims that Cnemon's narrative is characterised by 'focalisation constante sur le je-narrateur et non sur le je-personnage.'

[45] As Schwartz (2012) observes, this is the first of numerous variations on the bedtrick motif in the *Aethiopica*.

To sum up, Cnemon makes use of both experiencing and narrating focalisation; his explicit references to the difference in knowledge between the two perspectives play them off against each other and highlight the contrast between them. This narratological heterogeneity further undermines Winkler's proposition that the supposedly simple subplot serves as the negative foil for Heliodorus's complex storytelling. We can reach a more attractive understanding of Cnemon's dynamic and self-conscious handling of focalisation if we read it as a precursor of what is to come in the *Aethiopica*. In *Chapters Two* and *Three*, I shall discuss Calasiris's and Sisimithres's masterful use of *ex eventu* knowledge and argue that we have to pay close attention to how sophisticated narrators deploy shifting focalisation if we want to explore the *Aethiopica*'s complex network of interpretative wormholes. This is exactly what Cnemon's storytelling prepares us to do. Moreover, his shifting focalisation showcases that the same story can be told and taken in from different perspectives: on the one hand, from one that lacks an understanding of where the action is leading and is instead characterised by a gradual comprehension of complex narrative constructs such as intrigues; on the other hand, from a retrospective, teleological point of view, which primarily draws on the outcome of events to understand them.[46] As we shall see, these opposing hermeneutical principles are essential to the *Aethiopica*'s multiperspectival architecture (*Chapter Three*) and serve as important road signs in the novel's maze. Finally, Cnemon's shifting focalisation can be understood as a first hint that the *Aethiopica* is designed to be read again and again: just as the subplot takes on a different shape when Cnemon revisits it as a narrating focaliser, the novel offers a whole new experience upon rereading.

4. Ellipses, paralipses, and ()ther ()missi()ns

Homodiegetical narrators can go even further than restrict the information flow to their experiencing focalisation: they can also reveal relevant parts of their story later or omit material altogether. In Genette's terminology, this is done in the form of ellipses and paralipses. The former are temporal gaps in the narrative; events taking place during an ellipsis are not narrated at all.[47] Paralipses, again, are omissions 'of one of the constituent elements of a situation in a

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[46] On the relationship between these perspectives in ancient historiography, see Grethlein (2013).
[47] Genette (1972/1980: 51).

period that the narrative does generally cover.'[48] In what follows, I shall argue that Cnemon's story showcases the potential of these and related devices.

Before turning to Cnemon's narrative, I shall discuss the scene that introduces him to the reader. While this passage is not part of the subplot—it comes directly before (*i*)—we can nevertheless consider it as belonging to Cnemon's story *qua* hermeneutical gateway to the *Aethiopica*. Upon arrival in the bandits' village, Thyamis hands over Charicleia and Theagenes to Cnemon and retires for the night. 'For the girl and her companion (οἱ περὶ τὴν κόρην) the absence of people to interrupt them presented a good opportunity for voicing their sorrows' (1.8.1). What follows is a dialogue between the protagonists featuring vague references to their past adventures,[49] at the end of which Theagenes mentions that his wounds have been treated by 'the young lad' (τοῦ μειρακίου, 1.8.4).[50] All of a sudden, it is not Charicleia but Cnemon who responds (1.8.5): 'You will be more comfortable yet, come the morning!' It comes as a surprise that he has overheard the conversation:[51] up to this point, the reader has no specific reason to assume that a further character has been listening to the protagonists; the primary narrator emphasises their privacy, and Theagenes addresses Charicleia in intimate terms as 'my darling, my soul' (ὦ φιλτάτη καὶ ψυχὴ ἐμή, 1.8.4).[52]

We can interpret this narratological twist in two compatible ways. On the one hand, it can be understood as an instance of implicit embedded focalisation:[53] as Charicleia and Theagenes do not yet know that Cnemon speaks their language, they ignore him.[54] On the other hand, we learn earlier from a narratorial comment that Cnemon is Greek (1.7.3); from our point of view, it does therefore make a difference that he is present. Consequently, when this is revealed, we realise that the primary narrator has withheld relevant information. Here he takes his reticence further than in the opening scene.[55] He does not simply favour showing over telling; instead,

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[48] Genette (1972/1980: 52). For a slightly different distinction between the two terms, see de Jong (2001: xiii; xvi).

[49] On this passage see Reardon (1991: 80); Paulsen (1992: 63–4); Konstan (1994: 94); Dowden (1996: 271–2); MacAlister (1996: 66–7).

[50] On Cnemon's herb, see Sandy (1982b: 34); Jones (2005: 85).

[51] See Hefti (1950: 9–10). For a similar situation featuring the same combination of characters, see 2.16.5.

[52] See Birchall (1996a: 89–90). Returning to the introduction of this scene, we can note that Heliodorus refers to the protagonists as οἱ περὶ τὴν κόρην, 'the girl and company,' a construction that adumbrates the number of people involved. However, the context clearly indicates that the phrase refers to Charicleia and Theagenes alone: they are the ones who start lamenting; moreover, in all other instances where Heliodorus writes οἱ περὶ/ἀμφὶ τὴν κόρην/τὴν Χαρίκλειαν/τὸν Θεαγένην, he is referring to the protagonists alone; see e.g. 5.8.3; 7.12.1; 8.15.5. Note also that Heliodorus has a good reason to use such a periphrastic phrase in this particular scene: the protagonists have not yet revealed their names.

[53] See Bal (1985/2009: 162).

[54] As argued by Dowden (1996: 272).

[55] By ancient and modern convention, I shall assume that the gender of the primary narrator corresponds to that of the author, who identifies himself as an ἀνήρ (10.41.4). I shall return to Heliodorus's *sphragis* in *Section 4.3.d.*

he deliberately chooses not to reveal everything we can reasonably expect him to show. As a result, the reader's experience is assimilated to that of the protagonists: we are surprised by Cnemon's intrusion. This effect is reinforced if we understand the paralipsis in question as an innovative variant of the silent character (κωφὸν πρόσωπον), a device whose invention a scholiast ascribes to Homer (schol. AbT *Il.* 1.332b *ex.*).[56] Both the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* feature characters whose presence is made clear only by narratorial comments or deictic references.[57] However, Homer—unlike Heliodorus in this case[58]—alerts his audience to the presence of silent characters whenever they are relevant to the understanding of the scene. I suggest that the surprising effect of the paralipsis directs our attention to the narratological trick as such. How is it, we ask ourselves, that we did not 'see' Cnemon? What kind of text are we reading, in which such a twist is possible? What else might the primary narrator be withholding? To conclude, the paralipsis alerts us that in the *Aethiopica* important information can be deliberately suppressed—even by the primary narrator. As we shall see, this awareness will open some of the novel's most far-reaching wormholes.[59]

We find a different kind of narrative omission at the beginning of (***ii***). Arriving in Aegina, Charias jumps ashore before the ladder for disembarking comes to a halt, greets Cnemon, and immediately gets to the point (1.14.3): 'Justice is done … Demaenete is dead.' Cnemon is frustrated (1.14.4):

> Why do you hurry past this piece of good news (τί δὲ παρατρέχεις τὸ εὐαγγέλιον) as if the tale you had to tell were something appalling? Tell me just how she died, for I am very much afraid that she may have died some common death and so escaped the end she deserved (δέδοικα μὴ τῷ κοινῷ κέχρηται θανάτῳ καὶ διέδρα τὸν πρὸς ἀξίαν).

Charias obliges and fills in Cnemon on the events in Athens. Massimo Fusillo suggests along the lines of Winkler's interpretation that Charias's end-directed account echoes the straightforward narrative technique of earlier novelists.[60] However, this metaliterary reading undermines Winkler's conception of Cnemon's story: if Charias's account, against whose elliptical nature Cnemon raises objections, stands for simpler novels, Cnemon's own narrative can hardly represent the same kind of simple narrative. Thomas Paulsen, again, argues that the

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[56] See Nünlist (2009: 242–3).
[57] See Besslich (1966: 94–5); de Jong (1987).
[58] Note that when Theagenes refers to Cnemon, he does not use a deictic pronoun (τοῦ μειρακίου, 1.8.4).
[59] See below, *Sections 2.6*; *3.5–6*.
[60] See Fusillo (1989/1991: 148–9).

summary followed by an extensive account echoes tragic messenger speeches, thus adding to the (pseudo)tragic tone of the subplot.[61] Developing this observation, we can reach a new understanding of this scene and its metanarrative significance. The tragic reference, I think, is a specific one. There are three messenger speeches in extant Greek tragedy featuring an audience that is delighted to learn of somebody's death.[62] However, only Euripides's *Medea* introduces a narratee who—like Cnemon—asks for details, hoping that her victims died as cruel a death as they supposedly deserved. I suggest that Heliodorus is alluding to this specific passage. After Medea sets into motion her revenge plan, a messenger arrives, announcing that Glauce and Creon are dead. Medea wants to know more (Eur. *Med*. 1133b–1135):

> Do not hurry (μὴ σπέρχου), friend,
>> but tell me: how did they die? For twice
>> the pleasure would you give me if they died in great agony (εἰ τεθνᾶσι παγκάκως).

If we read Cnemon's reaction against the background of this intertext and with Medea's cruel curiosity in mind, our attention is directed at the fact that he does not criticise Charias for rational reasons—for instance, by pointing out that the omitted events are relevant to his present situation. Instead, his desire to learn more is emotional and pertains to narrative as such: he fears to miss out on the sadistic pleasure of learning about Demaenete's (preferably unpleasant) death. On one level, this adds to the depiction of Cnemon as a base character.[63] On another, his behaviour dramatises an approach to narrative that is characterised by a thirst for details *per se* and braces itself against a selective, teleological drive, here represented by Charias, who jumps ashore and straight to the end of his message.[64] As we shall see, these two narrative impulses, which are related to the two perspectives explored in the preceding section,[65] are often played off against each other in the *Aethiopica*. To sum up, the narratological U-turn represented by

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[61] See Paulsen (1992: 88–9).

[62] Eur. *Bacch.* 1024–1064 (the bacchants and Pentheus's death); *El.* 761–879 (Electra and Aegisthus's death); *Med.* 1121–1250. Barrett (2002: 223–4) provides a comprehensive list of messenger speeches in Greek tragedy.

[63] On the characterisation of Cnemon, see Paulsen (1992: 82–118). On Heliodorus's methods of characterisation, see De Temmerman (2014: 246–313); Morgan (2018).

[64] Cf. Chariton 8.7, where the people of Syracuse ask Chaereas to narrate his adventures; he starts at their end (ἀπὸ τῶν τελευταίων, Char. 8.7.3), but his audience asks him to give a complete account. This passage too is of great metanarrative significance: while Chaereas 'does not want to cause the people sorrow by telling them of the grim episodes at the beginning' (*ibid*.), Hermocrates argues that 'the ending which has proven to be splendid overshadows all the previous events, whereas the very silence makes the untold parts even more suspicious' (τὸ … τέλος λαμπρὸν γενόμενον ἐπισκοτεῖ τοῖς προτέροις ἅπασι, τὸ δὲ μὴ ῥηθὲν ὑπόνοιαν ἔχει χαλεπωτέραν ἐξ αὐτῆς τῆς σιωπῆς, Charit. 8.7.4). Unfortunately, we can only speculate whether the similarity between 'Chaereas' and 'Charias' is accidental.

[65] See above, *Section 1.3*.

Charias's ellipsis followed by an extensive narrative dramatises contrasting strategies of reading and thus serves as another interpretative seed.

In the present context the transition from (*ii*) *to* (*iii*) and the end of (*iv*) also deserve attention. At the conclusion of his narrative, Charias informs Cnemon that Aristippus started to arrange his son's return to Athens. 'Whether or not he succeeded I cannot tell you (οὐκ ἔχω λέγειν), for before a decision was reached, I set sail for Aegina' (1.17.6). Here Cnemon pauses his narrative (1.18.1): 'What happened next (τὰ δὲ ἑξῆς), how I came here, what adventures I have had is a long story, and there is not time enough to tell it (μακροτέρου δεῖται λόγου καὶ χρόνου).' We are here confronted with two signals (on different diegetic levels), indicating that we have not yet learned everything about Cnemon's story. We thus return to the primary narrative with the desire to find out more later.[66] This prospect is buttressed by two Odyssean intertexts. The end of Charias's report echoes Nestor's first narrative in *Odyssey* Book Three, towards the end of which he informs Telemachus that he cannot tell certain events because he sailed straight home (Hom. *Od*. 3.184–185). As a scholiast comments on this passage, 'the poet marvellously (δαιμονίως) rouses the curiosity of the reader to want to hear about the homecomings and … creates in him suspense, so that he can reveal the rest in another passage' (schol. EHMQ *Od*. 3.184). At the end of Charias's story, readers may feel similarly. The intertext of Cnemon's pause, in turn, is the prototype of all interrupted narratives, Odysseus's *Apologoi*: the narrator—like Cnemon—breaks off his story with a reference to narrating time (Hom. *Od*. 11.328–330a):[67]

> But I shall neither tell of nor name all
>
> the wives and daughters of heroes whom I saw:
>
> for divine night would be over sooner.

Odysseus continues his story after a short intermezzo (Hom. *Od*. 330b–377);[68] accordingly, readers of Heliodorus who recall this intertext are reinforced in their expectation that Cnemon will pick up the narrative thread. He does so indeed, although numerous chapters later and after

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[66] Montiglio (2005: 255–6) rightly points out that when the protagonists pretend to cry at Cnemon's story but in truth have their own misfortune in mind (1.18.1), this can be read as a sign that their story is more important. However, an intertextual reference undermines this interpretation. The protagonists cry τὰ μὲν ἐκείνου [Κνήμωνος] πρόφασιν, μνήμῃ δὲ τῶν ἰδίων ἕκαστος (1.18.1), which echoes *Iliad* 19.302, where the enslaved women bewail Πάτροκλον πρόφασιν, σφῶν δ᾽ αὐτῶν κήδε᾽ ἑκάστη. As Patroclus is more important for the main plot of the *Iliad* than the slaves, this echo arguably directs our attention at Cnemon.

[67] On narrating time see Genette (1972/1980: 215–27); Scheffel et al. (2013).

[68] See de Jong (2001: 283–6). This passage is itself a reworking of the *Iliad*'s second proem (Hom. *Il*. 2.284–293).

significant developments in the primary narrative (*iv*). Cnemon keeps his audience in suspense for a while but ultimately fulfils his implicit narrative promise. So far, it seems that while Heliodorus might be dividing up his material in unexpected ways, he ultimately delivers what the reader has been waiting for.[69] The conclusion of (*iv*), however, undermines this impression: (2.9.4–5):

> I later sailed to Egypt [with Anticles], hoping to discover Thisbe … And now here I am, facing the same predicament as you! Why and how this came about, all my adventures in the meantime, you shall hear some other time (τὴν δὲ αἰτίαν καὶ ὅπως καὶ ὅσα τοὺς μεταξὺ χρόνους ὑποστάς, εἰσαῦθις ἀκούσεσθε).

This passage raises even stronger expectations for a follow-up narrative: in combination with the shift from *then* to *now*, the succession of questions calls attention to the ellipsis; moreover, Cnemon makes an explicit narrative promise.[70] His actorial motivation to interrupt his story is clear:[71] he has answered Charicleia's question that prompted (*iv*)—namely, why Thisbe travelled to Egypt (2.8.3); furthermore, he hopes that her tablet will provide additional information (2.10.1).[72] This, however, hardly explains why Cnemon emphasises the ellipsis and thus fuels our desire for an additional instalment of his story. An important effect of this passage is that it calls attention to the narrative architecture of the subplot, highlighting what we have *not* found out so far and letting us hope that we will do so at a later point. Considering Calasiris's labyrinthine narratives, which gradually and with many retardations assemble Charicleia's story on various diegetic levels, we could assume that Heliodorus here aims to teach his audience to be patient and to make a mental note of unanswered questions. However, to anticipate things, Cnemon never fulfils his narrative promise to Charicleia and Theagenes. Moreover, I shall argue that when we learn about his further adventures as late as in Book Six, we do so in an incomplete, arguably unsatisfying way.[73] Consequently, readers whose curiosity was raised by the narrative promise keep wondering in vain when they will find out more. In

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[69] As does Achilles Tatius in 8.16–18, answering remaining questions and filling narrative gaps.
[70] See Hefti (1950: 23); Sandy (1982b: 26–7); Grethlein (2015: 272–3). For fulfilled narrative promises see 2.23.4; 2.26.3; 2.31.1; 2.31.5; 2.32.3; 5.1.6; 5.2.3; 5.21.4. The *Aethiopica*'s only other unfulfilled narrative promise can be found in Thisbe's letter; see below, *Section* 2.6. On the internal reference system of other Greek novels, see Hägg (1971: 213–87).
[71] On the distinction between actorial and narratorial motivation, see de Jong (2001: xi & xvi); cf. Stürmer (1921: 580). For a similar concept, see the mimetic and synthetic components of characters in Phelan (1989) See also below, *Section 4.3.b*.
[72] See Hunter (1998: 43–4) on possible ironic undertones of this assumption.
[73] See below, *Section 3.5*.

view of this frustration, the ending of (*iv*) highlights the fragmentary nature of Cnemon's story. As we shall see, this passage thus heralds a feature of the main storyline that boosts the *Aethiopica*'s network of available interpretative paths.[74]

5. Who says so? Sources of information

A quick glance at my summary reveals that Cnemon's story is a patchwork of narrative settings and a Russian doll of diegetic levels; in these structural respects the subplot prepares the reader for what is to come. As I shall argue in this section, a related matter to which Cnemon's story directs our attention is the question of who the narrator's sources are. Let us return to (*iv*), which covers the events after Demaenete's death. Unlike in (*ii*), where Cnemon names his source right away, he first offers an account of events that he did not witness and then concludes, 'More than that I do not know; this much was told me in Aegina by a man called "Anticles" (ταῦτα μόνον ἔχω γινώσκειν Ἀντικλέους, 2.9.4).' Dimitri Kasprzyk suggests that Cnemon invented his sidekick and their common adventures;[75] while this interpretation is plausible and, as we shall see,[76] matches the sceptical momentum of the subplot, it is two-dimensional and reductive insofar as it privileges one approach to the text without even considering equally possible alternatives. Victor Hefti, meanwhile, suggests that Cnemon postpones the naming of his informant for the sake of narratological variety[77]—an unsatisfactory interpretation, as it considers Heliodorus's art of storytelling exclusively as an end in itself. Nevertheless, Hefti's take, with its emphasis on the contrast between this passage and the beginning of (*ii*), is a good starting point for further considerations. Whereas only readers who keep a close eye on matters of information flow will be puzzled about Cnemon's source *while* reading (*iv*), the postponed naming of Anticles highlights that up to this point we did not know how the narrator knew about the narrated events; the end of Cnemon's narrative thus calls the reader's attention to matters of information flow between characters. This significance is emphasised if we read the passage in question against the background of an Odyssean intertext: the late revelation of Cnemon's source may recall the ending of Odysseus's *Apologoi*, where he recounts that Helios was informed by Lampetie about the fate of his cattle

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[74] See below, e.g. *Section 3.6*.
[75] See Kasprzyk (2017: 161–6).
[76] See below, *Section 1.6*; cf. *Sections 3.5*; *4.3.c*.
[77] See Hefti (1950: 22).

and complained to the other gods. Only after narrating these events, which he did not witness, does Odysseus explain (Hom. *Od*. 12.389–390),

> I heard this from Calypso (ταῦτα δ᾽ ἐγὼν ἤκουσα Καλυψοῦς), the lovely-haired, who, in turn, said that she had heard it from Hermes, the leader.

The introduction of Anticles is arguably modelled on this passage: this is the only instance in the *Odyssey* where a narrator names his or her informant at the end of the narrative; moreover, both Odysseus and Cnemon deploy this device before a short account of adventures at sea, which closes the respective embedded narrative.[78] This intertextual connection is significant in two respects. First, it strengthens the link between Cnemon and Odysseus-narrator. As I shall discuss later, Calasiris-narrator also fashions himself as a new Odysseus, and the *Aethiopica* presents itself as a (heteroglossic) rewriting of the *Odyssey*.[79] In view of this, the relationship between Cnemon and Odysseus confirms that the subplot in important respects serves as a *positive* foil for Heliodorus's literary project. Second, the link between Cnemon and Odysseus is established via a narratological analogy; the intertextual connection thus directs our attention to the narrative device shared by the two passages, highlighting the role of information flow between characters.

A part of (*i*) can be understood as having a similar effect. As mentioned earlier,[80] Cnemon repeatedly emphasises that he did not find out about Demaenete's first scheme. Considering his narratorial habit of naming his sources, this is surprising: while he recounts her machinations vividly and in detail, even lending her a voice in direct speech (1.10.4), he never clarifies where his information comes from. One does not have to be a modern academic with narratological interests to wonder about Cnemon's source: ancient scholars of Homer and Greek drama frequently speculate about such questions.[81] When scholiasts notice that a character possesses knowledge whose provenance is not named in the text, they often 'explain' this by stating that he or she received information κατὰ τὸ σιωπώμενον, 'in silence': according to this concept, information transfer does take place (according to the fictional truth) but is left implicit.[82] Sometimes a possible source is added: for instance, a critic answers the question of

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[78] I shall return to this Odyssean reference below, p. 107 n. 126.
[79] See below, *Section 2.2.*
[80] See above, *Section 1.3.*
[81] See Nünlist (2009: 157–73); on the interest of contemporary reading communities in such matters, see below, *Sections 4.2.d*; *4.3.c.*
[82] See Nünlist (2009: 168–9).

how Helen knows during the *Teichoscopia* that Ithaca is rocky by suggesting that she hosted guests hailing from there, which Homer omits 'to avoid surfeit' (διὰ τὸ προσκορές, schol. bT *Il.* 3.201 *ex.*).[83] Reading Cnemon's references to his actorial ignorance and the absence of a source against the backdrop of this interpretative tradition, we can entertain the possibility that he learns about the scheme κατὰ τὸ σιωπώμενον.[84] In this context, it is noteworthy that suspicion runs like a red thread through Cnemon's story; we encounter the term ὑπόνοια five times.[85] Ancient critics often use the verb ὑπονοεῖν, 'to suspect', when they talk about cases where we arguably have to read between the lines.[86] If we understand the omission of Cnemon's source as an invitation to do so, we can read the motif of suspicion as further encouraging this approach.

To conclude, the passages discussed in this section prompt us to think about two issues that will be important to our understanding of the main storyline. First, we have encountered questions of information flow: do we know who the sources of narrators are? How does the origin of information influence our evaluation of the respective narrative? What are our interpretative options if we realise that a character passes on 'undocumented' material?[87] Second, we are invited to look for answers *beyond* the limits of the text; as we shall see, this approach is the basis of different strategies of grappling with the *Aethiopica*'s fragmentary nature.[88]

6. Deceit, unreliability, and a Phaedran cave

Scheming, disinformation, and suspicion are central motifs of Cnemon's story; accordingly, the subplot features a wide range of unreliable and deceptive narratives. I use the latter to denote a subcategory of the former: while unreliable narrators simply do not speak 'in accordance with the norms of the work,'[89] deceptive narrators knowingly distort the fictional truth. The unreliability of Cnemon-narrator has received considerable attention: Paulsen analyses how he aims to lend a tragic tone to his story, whereas he is constantly exposed as a comic character;[90] Kasprzyk examines inconsistencies in his narrative and explores the

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[83] For further examples see Nünlist (2009: 151 n. 65).
[84] Hefti (1950: 133 n. 44) speculates that Cnemon's source might be Charias.
[85] See 1.9.3; 1.10.4; 1.14.1; 2.9.4; 6.2.3.
[86] See Nünlist (2009: 164).
[87] See below, e.g. *Sections 2.6.c*; *3.6*.
[88] See below, *Chapters Three and Four*.
[89] Booth (1961/1983: 158). On this 'rhetorical' conception of unreliability, see Shen (2013).
[90] See Paulsen (1992: 82–119).

possibility that Cnemon might be distorting or inventing parts of it.[91] These studies focus on Cnemon's story as a whole, aiming to come to general conclusions about its protagonist *qua* actor or narrator. In line with this chapter's emphasis on sequential reading, I suggest that it is also worth paying attention to the dynamics of the subplot—that is to say, to how it unfolds. Just like the *Aethiopica*'s opening, which features more and more promising 'readers' of Charicleia and Theagenes,[92] Cnemon's story is characterised by a gradual progress from simplicity to complexity: Heliodorus introduces increasingly intricate and far-reaching instances of deceit,[93] leading his readers further and further down a rabbit hole of disinformation and gradually familiarising them with the potential of unreliable narratives.

In Demaenete's simple first scheme, Cnemon makes it easy for the reader to understand right away what is going on. Drawing on *ex eventu* knowledge,[94] he depicts her as deceptive from the beginning on: 'She exploited her charms to win the old man's affections (τῇ τε ὥρᾳ … ἐπαγομένη) … At first, she pretended (ἐπλάττετο) to look on me as a son' (1.9.2–3). Moreover, Demaenete's mendacious accusation is preceded by Cnemon's retrospective version of the events: 'She started her devilish web of intrigue against me (τῶν ἐπιβουλῶν … κατήρχετο) … She pretended (ἐσκήπτετο) to be unwell' (1.10.3). In her second scheme Demaenete shifts up a gear, and Cnemon makes more use of experiencing focalisation. While he identifies the second plot against him precisely as such (δευτέρας ἐπιβουλῆς κατ' ἐμοῦ τοιᾶσδε ἥπτετο, 1.11.2), he leaves his audience in the dark about crucial questions; most importantly, we find out only at the very last moment that Demaenete does not have a secret lover and that she is with Aristippus when Cnemon enters their bedroom.[95] The intertexts of this episode are of little help to guess in advance what is going on: in Lysias's *On the Killing of Eratosthenes*, the adulterer does indeed exist; Chariton's Chaereas, however, becomes the victim of a scheme in which he is misled to believe that his wife has a secret lover.[96] What adds to the complexity of Demaenete's second scheme (besides Cnemon's narrative technique) is that she is joined in her efforts by Thisbe.[97] On the one hand, Cnemon emphasises right away that she seduces him at the behest of Demaenete (1.11.2–3), and the speech with which she convinces Cnemon that Demaenete has a secret lover is unambiguously manipulative. On the other hand, the reader is yet to learn what Cnemon's adversaries want to achieve and, as noted,

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[91] See Kasprzyk (2017).
[92] See above, *Section 1.1*.
[93] See Grethlein (forthcoming c).
[94] In doing so, he resembles Odysseus-narrator in the *Apologoi*; see Race (1993: 102–6).
[95] See above, *Section 1.3*.
[96] On the intertextual relationship between Lysias, Chariton, and Heliodorus, see Hunter (1998: 45).
[97] On the relationship between Demaenete and Thisbe, see Morgan and Repath (2019: 139–43).

to what extent Thisbe is lying about Demaenete's supposed lover; we find out about the precise amount of deceptive information in her narrative only at a later point. Finally, Thisbe's account displays a complex relationship of truth and falsehood, belief and suspicion. When Cnemon tells Thisbe, at that time his new lover, that she should take care not to be caught by Demaenete, she introduces her deceptive story by calling him 'very naïve, (λίαν ἁπλοϊκός, 1.11.4). This is, as the reader knows, true also concerning his credulity towards Thisbe. Therefore, her statement is characterised by dramatic irony.[98] Moreover, Cnemon interrupts her narrative after a short while, 'Stop! For I cannot believe what you are saying (οὐ γὰρ ἔχω σοι πιστεύειν, 1.11.5).' It is in reaction to this scepticism that she promises him that she will deliver the adulterer. Cnemon's justified disbelief thus offers Thisbe a welcome opportunity to delude him even further; the machinery of the intrigue is so well-oiled that even doubts about the plotter's veracity incubate the victim's deception. Something similar happens between Demaenete and Aristippus at the culmination of the second intrigue. When he arrests Cnemon, Demaenete shouts at him, 'Is not this what I predicted (προηγόρευον)? I told you to beware of the boy. I said he would attack you if he had the chance.' Aristippus answers, 'Yes, you did warn me, but I did not believe you' (Προηγόρευες … ἀλλ' ἠπίστουν, 1.12.4). Aristippus's initial disbelief therefore allows Demaenete to have a triumphant 'told you so' moment, which consolidates her control over him.

This brings us to Aristippus's public accusation of Cnemon, which introduces another form of unreliability. Aristippus believes what he claims—namely, that Cnemon tried to kill him; his account is thus not deceptive but a product of deception. His speech showcases a possible consequence of successful deceit: the victim might unknowingly pass on bad information to others. Borrowing from Lucian's *Philopseudes* 40, where 'lies' (that is to say, fiction) are compared to contagious rabies,[99] I shall call this phenomenon 'viral unreliability.' As we will see, it reappears at the end of Cnemon's story and plays an important role in the novel's network of wormholes.[100]

Concerning its structure, Thisbe's intrigue in (*ii*) is the most complex scheme in Cnemon's story:[101] at its culmination she brings together Aristippus, Demaenete, and Arsinoe in one place, having misled all of them.[102] Two components of the plan are particularly noteworthy.

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[98] On dramatic irony in the *Aethiopica*, see Morgan (1989a); Kruchió (2018: 160–1). On a similar combination of dramatic irony and deception in Cnemon's story, see Grethlein (forthcoming c).
[99] On this passage see ní Mheallaigh (2014: 88).
[100] See below, *Section 3.6*.
[101] Noted by Hefti (1950: 11).
[102] On the relationship between aesthetic illusion and deception in this scheme, see Grethlein (forthcoming a); Grethlein (forthcoming c).

First, Thisbe convinces Demaenete that Cnemon is staying with his new lover, Arsinoe, and suggests a plan (1.15.7):

> I shall pretend (προσποιήσομαι) to be in love with Cnemon and ask Arsinoe to let me go to him in the night in her place … then you must play the part of Arsinoe (Ἀρσινόην εἶναι δοκεῖν) … and take her place in bed.

Thisbe's true aim is to let Aristippus 'catch' Demaenete with her supposed lover. She is thus taking her cunning to a new level here: the scheme that she proposes to Demaenete is itself part of a larger plot.[103] What we have here is deception in the second degree; with this in mind we cannot even be sure that characters are being straightforward when they propose a scheme.

Second, Thisbe's speech to Aristippus deserves a closer look (1.16.2–4):

> I have come to you to accuse myself (κατήγορος ἐμαυτῆς), sir. Do to me what you will. It is partly my fault that you have lost your son. I did not mean it to happen … I discovered that my … mistress was dishonouring your bed … being unable to summon the courage to tell you … I went to the young master … Thinking that I meant that the lover was in the house at that very moment … he seized his dagger and, ignoring all my … protestations … or else suspecting that I had had second thoughts, he rushed to her bedroom … You know what happened next (καὶ τὰ λοιπὰ γινώσκεις) … This very day I shall show you Demaenete in bed with her lover.

This is in several respects the most remarkable instance of deception in Cnemon's story. It features a sophisticated blend of true and false claims:[104] Thisbe is indeed not innocent of Cnemon's misfortune; however, she downplays her guilt, and her 'confession' merely serves as *captatio benevolentiae*. She admits that she told Cnemon about Demaenete's lover; however, she sticks to the version in which he really existed. She reveals that Cnemon did not intend to kill Aristippus but invents a misunderstanding. Thisbe's account further blurs the line between truth and falsehood, as its ending dovetails with events witnessed by Aristippus. The technique of mixing real and invented elements to lend credibility to a deceptive narrative, which we will reencounter as a central element of Calasiris's scheming,[105] has a Homeric prototype: Odysseus

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[103] See Paulsen (1992: 96).
[104] Cf. Grethlein (forthcoming c).
[105] See below, *Section 2.4*.

also blends truth and fiction in his lying tales.[106] As the primary narrator puts it (Hom. *Od.* 19.203), 'Telling many lies, he made them like the truth' (ἴσκε ψεύδεα πολλὰ λέγων ἐτύμοισιν ὁμοῖα).

The last unreliable narrative connected to Cnemon's story is Thisbe's letter *(v)* (2.10.1):[107]

> To Cnemon, my lord, from your enemy and benefactress (ἡ πολεμία καὶ ἐπαμύνασα), Thisbe. First, I have some good news for you: Demaenete is dead. It was I who brought this about, out of love for you. How it happened I shall tell you face-to-face (παροῦσα διηγήσομαι) … Do not abandon your servant (ὑπόδεξαι τὴν σαυτοῦ θεραπαινίδα) … the wrongs I appear to have done I was compelled to do but the revenge I took on your enemy I took voluntarily (ἃ μὲν ἀδικεῖν ἔδοξα βιασθεῖσα, ἃ δὲ τετιμώρημαι … ἑκοῦσα διεπραξάμην). But if you are too full of anger to heed my prayers, then vent your hatred on me however you please (κέχρησο ταύτῃ κατ' ἐμοῦ πρὸς ὃ βούλει). My one wish is to be yours, even if it means my death …

Having read the document, Cnemon first rejoices over Thisbe's misfortune; however, his mood changes abruptly (2.11.2):

> But what new scheme were you concocting against me beneath the cloak of this letter (τεχναζομένην καὶ σοφιστεύουσαν διὰ τοῦ γράμματος) … ? Even dead I regard you with suspicion (σε καὶ κειμένην ἔχω δι' ὑποψίας), and I am haunted by the fear that the story of Demaenete's death is untrue (δέδοικα μὴ καὶ πλάσμα ἐστὶν ἡ … τελευτή), that the friends who brought me the news were deceiving me (ἠπάτησαν) and that you have come across the sea to make me the victim of another tragedy … !

Theagenes interrupts him (2.11.3):

> Enough … of your superhuman courage! And of your dread of ghosts and phantoms (εἴδωλά τε καὶ σκιὰς εὐλαβούμενος)! You cannot say that Thisbe has cast a spell (ἐγοήτευσεν) on me and my power of sight, for I have no part in your tragedy. She is well and truly dead (κεῖται σῶμα νεκρὸν ὡς ἀληθῶς).

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[106] See de Jong (2004: 19).
[107] Unless we count *(vii)*, which I shall discuss in *Section 3.5*. On letters in the Greek novels, see Létoublon (2003).

While Thisbe's letter is obviously deceptive, it plays a different role in Cnemon's story than the preceding unreliable accounts. In one respect, this is the simplest instance of (attempted) deception that we have encountered: Cnemon has more information on the events in Athens than Thisbe was aware of and is thus able to realise right away that she is lying.[108] However, there are complicating factors: Thisbe promises to tell Cnemon more at a proposed meeting. Her death prevents her to do so; consequently, Cnemon and Theagenes have only the letter to make sense of her intentions. Something similar can be said about the reader: after these juxtaposed, contrasting reactions, Thisbe's tablet is never discussed again, and we are left wondering where the truth lies.

Previous examinations of this passage tend to focus on its implications for Cnemon's characterisation.[109] There are, however, good reasons to understand the letter and its discussion as the culmination and endpoint of Cnemon's story in its function as a hermeneutical introduction to Heliodorus's narrative project. The document echoes earlier parts of the subplot. Its opening recalls the beginning of Charias's narrative.[110] Moreover, its overall (pseudo)confessional and self-incriminating tone resembles that of Thisbe's speech to Aristippus—a parallel emphasised by verbal similarities.[111] In the absence of further evidence, these analogies invite us to read the letter against the background of earlier schemes featured in Cnemon's story. The written document thus encourages us to apply the interpretative insights gained while reading the subplot to new material—material that lies at the threshold between subplot and main storyline:[112] while the reader first encounters Thisbe in Cnemon's story, she quickly gains relevance in the primary narrative as Charicleia's *Doppelgängerin*.[113]

An important feature of the clash between Cnemon and Theagenes is that neither's attitude is unreasonable.[114] Cnemon's suspicion that Thisbe's scheme might extend beyond her letter corresponds to the deceptive function of her speech to Aristippus. Moreover, as Cnemon knows that Charias's source is none other than Thisbe and we cannot exclude that she also interacted with Anticles, the information Cnemon received in exile could be wrong and part of a further scheme.[115] In view of the role viral unreliability plays in the subplot, this would continue a

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[108] Briefly noted by Hefti (1950: 23); see also Pizzone (2013: 144–5) on the significance of πλάσμα in this context.
[109] See Oudot (1992: 105); Paulsen (1992: 107–10); Hunter (1998: 44). The main exception is Grethlein (forthcoming b, forthcoming c), who does not discuss the interaction between Cnemon and Theagenes.
[110] εὐαγγέλιά σοι κομίζω … Δημαινέτη τέθνηκεν, 1.14.3; εὐαγγελίζομαί σοι τὴν Δημαινέτης τελευτήν, 2.10.1.
[111] κέχρησο ὅ τι βούλει, 1.16.2; κέχρησο ταύτῃ κατ' ἐμοῦ πρὸς ὃ βούλει, 2.11.1; see Hefti (1950: 23).
[112] As Grethlein (forthcoming c) puts it, 'Thisbe's scheming power has wandered from the tertiary to the primary narrative.'
[113] See Morgan (1989b: 111).
[114] See Schwartz (2016: 184) on Cnemon's fears.
[115] Some of this is noted in passing by Pizzone (2013: 145).

familiar pattern.[116] We can go as far as to acknowledge: it is possible that (as Cnemon fears) Demaenete is still alive. In this context we can recall that Cnemon's and Aristippus's misfortunes always resulted from trials and, accordingly, from the public perception of their actions. Considering that Cnemon cannot know for sure what Thisbe was planning, nor what the status quo in his *polis* is, nor what the Athenians believe about him and his father, we can note that his current fears match his earlier experiences.[117] Along these lines, we can read his despair as an invitation to a speculative detour: what scheme might have Thisbe concocted this last time?[118] Theagenes's reaction, in turn, reminds us that Cnemon has a habit of overdramatising his misfortunes—and thus hints that his interpretation might be overly paranoid. Unlike Cnemon, Theagenes concentrates on the known instead of the speculative, on the death of Thisbe instead of what she might have done or might have had in mind. Developing Theagenes's approach, we can argue that if we have no concrete reason to doubt Charias's and Anticles's accounts, we ought to believe them and move on. Unlike Cnemon's own narrative, those of his informants do not feature obvious signs of intranarrational unreliability;[119] from this point of view, Cnemon's fears can be brushed off as unfounded.

To sum up, Theagenes's and Cnemon's attitudes have a strong metanarrative momentum; we can understand them as interpretative seeds that advance the hermeneutical principles articulated in Charias's announcement of Demaenete's death and Cnemon's reaction to it. Along the lines of these principles, we may come to contrasting conclusions about a central question raised at the end of the subplot: can Charias and Anticles be trusted? How do we best deal with *potentially* unreliable narrators? As we shall see, this latter question is central to the interpretation of Calasiris's story, which begins soon after Cnemon's and Theagenes's discussion.[120]

The metainterpretative dimension of this exchange is highlighted by three things. First, Cnemon and Theagenes are discussing the significance of a written artefact,[121] the first featured in the *Aethiopica*. Second, after talking about the tablet, they turn their attention to Thisbe's 'dead body' (σῶμα νεκρόν, 2.11.3), 'reading' it for clues as to who killed her (2.11.3–5). Upon repeated reading, this becomes significant: later in the novel Charicleia serves as a symbol for

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[116] Grethlein (forthcoming c) ignores this when he states that 'Cnemon, recounting his friend's report, assumes the perspective of an omniscient narrator.' However, later in his paper G. acknowledges that the subplot invites readers to entertain the possibility that they remain deceived.

[117] For similar considerations (What happened in Delphi after Charicleia's escape?) see below, *Section 3.2.a*.

[118] Hunter (1998: 43) connects Thisbe's unfulfilled narrative promise to Cnemon's 'insatiable appetite for stories.'

[119] On the concept of intranarrational unreliability, see Hansen (2007: 241).

[120] See below, *Chapter Two*.

[121] As Grethlein (forthcoming a) puts it, Thisbe's 'final entrance … literalizes her status as an author.'

the *Aethiopica*, and in Book Ten the examination of her body becomes a metaphor for interpreting the novel.[122] In light of this, the analogy between the examination of Thisbe's and Charicleia's bodies reinforces the metainterpretative momentum of the scene.[123] Third, I suggest that Heliodorus invites us to read this episode against the background of a philosophical intertext. As others have suggested, the cave in which the discussion takes place lends a Platonic aura to the episode.[124] Grethlein argues that 'the cave addresses … the deficiency of … sensory delusion compared with sensory perception. The cave allegory is thus transferred from the lofty realm of philosophical speculation to the fleshy world of the novel.'[125] In what follows, I shall argue that our scene makes a similar, 'literary' use of the critique of writing in the *Phaedrus*, a central erotic intertext of the *Aethiopica* and earlier Greek novels.[126] Socrates explains (Pl. *Phdr*. 275d):

> Writing shares a remarkable feature with painting. The offsprings of the latter stand there as if they were alive, but if anyone asks them anything, they remain most solemnly silent (σεμνῶς πάνυ σιγᾷ). The same is true of written words. You would think they were speaking as if they had some understanding (δόξαις μὲν ἂν ὥς τι φρονοῦντας αὐτοὺς λέγειν); however, if you question anything that has been said because you want to learn more, they continue to signify just that very same thing forever (ἐὰν δέ τι ἔρῃ τῶν λεγομένων … ἕν τι σημαίνει μόνον ταὐτὸν ἀεί).

According to this theory, writing merely creates the illusion that it is capable of a dynamic dialogue with the reader; similarly, Thisbe in her tablet promises Cnemon a face-to-face conversation, which never takes place (2.10.1).[127] In Socrates's account, texts prompt us to ask them questions they cannot answer; Cnemon too asks the dead Thisbe a direct question upon studying her document (2.11.2). Writings, like paintings, lead us to believe that they are alive. In this context, the simultaneous presence of Thisbe's tablet and her corpse, both of which are

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[122] See Laplace (1992); Whitmarsh (1998: 107–18, 1999: 29–30). On the metonymic relationship between the heroine and the text, see also Stephens (1994b: 71–3); Whitmarsh (2011: 126).

[123] Note also that Persinna's letter, which is a credible, authoritative document with metatextual and metaliterary significance, can be seen as a counterpart to Thisbe's tablet. On these qualities of Persinna's document, see e.g. Whitmarsh (1998: 118–22).

[124] See Dowden (1996: 273, 2007: 145); Grethlein (forthcoming a).

[125] Grethlein (forthcoming a).

[126] See Trapp (1990); ní Mheallaigh (2007); Graverini (2010); Repath (2011). On Heliodorus's relationship to the *Phaedrus*, see Hunter (2012: 13–4); Morgan (2012a: 567–8); Montiglio (2013: 118–9); Pizzone (2013: 154–7); Morgan and Repath (2019: 153–8). In the first section of the *Phaedrus*, Socrates and his interlocutor discuss a speech by Lysias, and the first part of Cnemon's story echoes another Lysianic oration. A coincidence?

[127] This is a common feature of ancient epistolography; see Malherbe (1988: 12).

examined, can be understood as serving to emphasise that a text is not a satisfactory replacement for its (living) author.[128] Finally, after Cnemon's reaction to the letter, Theagenes calls his object of fear εἴδωλα (2.11.3), which recalls that Phaedrus refers to the written discourse as an 'image' (εἴδωλον, Pl. *Phdr.* 276a) of living discourse. These analogies are complemented by two echoes of the myth that Socrates tells about the invention of writing, which he attributes to the god Theuth (Θεύθ) 'from Naucratis' (περὶ Ναύκρατιν, Pl. *Phdr.* 274c). Right before he inspects the tablet, Cnemon states that he 'sailed to Egypt, hoping to discover Thisbe at Naucratis (κατὰ τὴν Ναύκρατιν, 2.9.4).' Moreover, when Cnemon picks up the letter, he suspects, 'We will probably learn more from it (εἰκός τι πλέον **ἐντεῦθεν** ἡμᾶς ἐκμαθεῖν, 2.10.1).'[129] Retrospectively, we can hear a pun on the name of the mythical inventor: Cnemon hopes to find out something ἐν Θεύθ[130]—that is to say, in the written document.

The evocation of Socrates's critique of writing buttresses the metainterpretative force of the scene in the cave. While the *Phaedrus* emphasises that it is impossible to reliably document philosophical knowledge in writing, the discussion of Thisbe's letter becomes an illustration of the difficulties in accessing the author's intentions, the (fictive) truth behind written narratives. However, we would jump to conclusions if we read Cnemon's crisis as a celebration of the open nature of literature in general.[131] As we have seen, Heliodorus does not leave readers without guidance as to what they can do with Thisbe's tablet; he instead presents two contrasting interpretative approaches. On the one hand, we have Cnemon, who revels in exploring unanswered questions, looks down every rabbit hole, and is full of suspicion; on the other hand, there is Theagenes, who focuses on the outcome of the story as he knows it (Thisbe's death), does not show any interest in the 'small print' of her back story, and prefers to trust available information. These two perspectives, I suggest, develop the dichotomy to which the reader was introduced during the short clash between Charias and Cnemon. By planting such interpretative seeds, Heliodorus dramatises conflicting hermeneutical principles, offering them to the reader as alternative compasses for the *Aethiopica*'s system of wormholes. And this is the point where Thisbe's letter arguably becomes a negative foil for the *Aethiopica*. Unlike ordinary literature, which is mute and does not answer our questions, Heliodorus's work speaks to its readers via interpretative seeds; looking for possible ways to make sense of the novel, we can turn to Cnemon and (as we shall see) numerous other characters who reflect on

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[128] Upon repeated reading one might also notice that later in Chemmis, Cnemon will spend a night believing that Thisbe is alive (5.3).
[129] On Heliodorus's puns on 'Phaedrus,' see Morgan and Repath (2019: 156–8).
[130] The name is indeclinable; see Pl. *Phdr.* 274e.
[131] *Contra* Nimis (1999: 233–4).

the narrated events. Thisbe, who in many respects serves as Charicleia's negative *Doppelgängerin*, is dead. Charicleia, representing the *Aethiopica*, is very much alive. With the Phaedran intertext in mind, we can thus conclude that Heliodorus invites us to connect the *Aethiopica* to the living discourse of Platonic dialectic.[132] While the novel challenges us with its complex, three-dimensional interpretative maze, for which his unreliable narrators serve as catalysts, we do not enter it without guidance.

7. Unequal and unclear states of knowledge

When it comes to matters of information flow and deceit, a final issue that plays an important role in Cnemon's story is how characters' states of knowledge relate to each other—and what the reader knows about them. Thisbe's scheme in (*ii*) effectively dramatises the former question.[133] At the climax of the intrigue, all of Thisbe's victims are in Arsinoe's house at the same time, and the resulting hubbub, which only Thisbe understand fully, highlights the other characters' errors via juxtaposition: Demaenete believes that Cnemon is awaiting her; Arsinoe thinks that while Demaenete is at home, Thisbe is coming with Teledemus;[134] Aristippus, finally, expects to catch Demaenete with her supposed lover. They all are wrong, but in different ways; here the reader can enjoy Thisbe's deceptive *tour de force* from a privileged, seemingly omniscient point of view. However, the bridge to the next leg of the subplot highlights that Cnemon does not know everything about Thisbe's story. Charicleia asks how Thisbe came from Greece to Egypt and how it can be that they did not notice her earlier in the cave. Cnemon answers, 'That I cannot tell you (ταῦτα μὲν οὐκ ἔχω λέγειν). But what I do know of her story is this …' (2.8.3).[135] As Cnemon explicitly outs himself as a narrator of limited knowledge, he heralds a challenging characteristic of (*iv*)—namely, the lack of clarity concerning characters' states of knowledge.

Heliodorus once again introduces the reader to this element of his narratological repertoire gradually. At the beginning of this last leg of Cnemon's narrative, we only get a brief account of Aristippus's public speech: He 'reported to the assembly what had happened (τὸ γεγενημένον, 2.8.4)' and was found not guilty of Demaenete's death. Considering Thisbe's

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[132] *Contra* Pizzone (2013: 154–7), who emphasises the contrast between Heliodorus's fictional project and the goals of the Socratic method. For a Platonist reading of Heliodorus, see below, *Section 4.2.*
[133] On the role of *apatē* in this episode, see Grethlein (forthcoming b).
[134] On possible significances of this name, see Birchall (1996a: 131); Grethlein (forthcoming c).
[135] See Heiserman (1977: 190–1); Sandy (1982b: 29–30), who focuses on the role of implausibility and curiosity in this passage.

successful scheming, both Cnemon-narrator and the reader are aware that Aristippus knew about the real background of the events leading to Demaenete's death. We can thus understand τὸ γεγενημένον as an instance of embedded focalisation: it is Aristippus who thought that he was giving a correct account. To readers who have picked up on the central role of information flow, unreliability, and deceit in the subplot and read its last part with a focus on such matters, the striking discrepancy between signifier and signified emphasises two crucial points. Like Aristippus's first public speech, this second one is characterised by viral unreliability. Moreover, as Cnemon does not spell out that Aristippus is sharing an incorrect account, his report dramatises the dangerously inconspicuous nature of this phenomenon:[136] just as Aristippus unknowingly passes on bad information, this detail might escape less meticulous and sceptical readers. An important interpretative lesson is that we should not expect Heliodorus to always make it explicit when a character (knowingly or unknowingly) disseminates bad information, even if the misinformation is important for the further development of the plot.

This insight becomes relevant soon afterwards. The subsequent events around Aristippus feature a whole range of (mis)information transfer. Seeking revenge against Thisbe, Arsinoe 'approached Demaenete's relations and told them of Thisbe's plot against her mistress, combining the suspicions she had formed herself (τὰ μὲν αὐτὴ καθ᾽ αὑτὴν ὑποτοπήσασα) with what Thisbe had told her as friend to friend (τὰ δὲ καὶ τῆς Θίσβης αὐτῇ παρὰ τὴν ἑταιρίαν ἐξειπούσης, 2.9.1).'[137] The lawyers of Demaenete's relatives claimed that Aristippus had instrumentalised her supposed adultery to kill her without a trial. While Aristippus could not name Demaenete's alleged lover, 'he was able to give a full account of what had happened' (ἅπαντα ὡς ἔσχεν ὑποθέμενον, 2.9.3); consequently, he was only convicted of having been an accessory to the scheme against Demaenete and held responsible for Cnemon's unjust banishment. As in Cnemon's reporting of Aristippus's public speech, all references in this episode to the past events are extremely unspecific. As a result, if we read this section with a focus on information flow, it raises numerous questions:[138] what was Arsinoe able to figure out as regards Thisbe's scheme? What did she report to Demaenete's relatives? Was it part of Arsinoe's plan that Aristippus would be brought to court? What did he tell the assembly? What connection did they establish between Aristippus's role in the present case and Cnemon's

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[136] This characteristic will also become relevant in the main storyline; see below, *Section 3.2.a*.
[137] On the humorous ambiguity of ἑταιρία, see Morgan and Repath (2019: 141 n. 4).
[138] Some of these are noted by Hefti (1950: 20–2).

previous banishment?[139] Hefti attempts to fill some of these gaps by extrapolating from what he thinks we know for sure. As Cnemon's account is extremely fragmentary, it is unsurprising that Hefti's conclusions are unsatisfactory: he first takes a two-dimensional approach, assuming that there must be a single solution to all interpretative puzzles; when he fails to (re)construct a sound story, he concludes that Heliodorus left this episode in a fragmentary state to hide that his plotting was inconsistent.[140] This reasoning is based on what is known as a 'constructivist approach': readers resolve incongruities with the help of so-called integrating principles; in the present case the fragmentary narrative style is explained as serving to cover up inconsistencies ('functional integrating principle,' here creating a sense of plausibility).[141]

I think we can reach a more fruitful understanding of this episode if we distance ourselves from the expectation that there is a single privileged way to make sense of the narrated events.[142] As the thread of the subplot frays towards its end, it deliberately frustrates a readerly approach that resembles Hefti's. Like the omissions discussed in *Section 1.4*, the increasingly sketchy nature of this episode heralds the fragmentary nature of the main storyline—a characteristic that incubates the *Aethiopica*'s receptivity to contrasting interpretative principles. Here we can either follow the example of Charias and Theagenes, brushing aside open questions as well as inconsistencies and hurrying towards an ending that provides clarity and comfort; or we take Cnemon's speculative and sceptical approach, decide not to distinguish between relevant and irrelevant questions, and plunge into the endless interpretative possibilities opened up by the narrative. As we shall see in the next chapter, these two principles lie at the core of Calasiris's contradictory character.

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[139] Schwartz (2016: 177–85), who is primarily interested in the legal background of this trial, does not address these questions and only notes that 'the judgment of the popular court proves to be erratic, resulting in a conviction that confounds the reader's expectations of justice' (183).

[140] Cf. Kruchió (2017: 177).

[141] See Yacobi (1981: 114–7). Hefti also attempts to reconstruct Heliodorus's creative process as part of his explanation; his reasoning is therefore also informed by what Y. calls the 'genetic principle.' I shall return to such interpretations of gaps found in Cnemon's story in *Section 3.5.*

[142] Cf. the discussion of 'double logics' in Sturgess (1992: 68–92).

INTERMEZZO: FROM CNEMON TO CALASIRIS

Before focusing on Calasiris, let us consider the bridge between the discussion of Thisbe's letter (2.11) and the beginning of his story (2.25.5). As outlined earlier,[1] the novel's beginning plays with our expectations concerning the main topic of the work. This game is developed further after the cave episode. I shall push back against the tendency of scholarship on this part of the novel to prioritise a wandering, comprehensive mode of reading, according to which the events leading up to Calasiris's narrative are best understood against the background the entire *Aethiopica*. I hope to show that this section also becomes a rewarding read if we take a linear approach, disregarding what we might know about later parts of the work. With its focus on (dis)orientation, this reading develops a (metaphorically speaking) spatial quality, emphasising a hitherto neglected aspect of Heliodorus's virtuosic handling of narrative experience.[2]

It is a commonplace of scholarship to emphasise the 'hermeneutical'[3] qualities of the novel's first half: 'the reader's desire is directed not so much at learning what happens next and how the story ends as at discovering what has already happened and how the story began.'[4] I shall show that the *Aethiopica* goes much further in resisting a teleological, proairetic momentum: this part of the novel induces perplexity concerning the fundamental nature of the work and makes us wonder *what* we should be looking for in the first place. Describing the dynamics of how Heliodorus guides our assumptions, I shall draw on Jonathan Ready's concept of spotlight, which he uses 'as a heuristic convenience for speaking about the attention the poet [Homer] gives to his characters. A character is in the spotlight both when he [*sic*] is an … actor being spoken of … and when he … speaks or when his perspective is presented through … embedded focalization.'[5] In the present context the first two kinds of spotlight will be relevant: whose

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[1] See above, *Section 1.1*.
[2] On the spatial quality of narrative experience in this sense, see Grethlein (2017: 62–5) in general and pp. 92–107 on Heliodorus in particular; cf. Kestner (1981).
[3] Originating from the concept of the hermeneutic code, as introduced by Barthes (1973/1990).
[4] Morgan (1989a: 303).
[5] Ready (2011: 223).

story stands at the *Aethiopica*'s centre? Who will be telling it? Refining Ready's concept, I shall refer to these as 'narrative' and 'narratorial spotlight,' respectively.

After discussing Thisbe with Charicleia and Theagenes, Cnemon refers to the Oracle of Delphi, thereby provoking a strong emotional reaction in his companions. We learn that 'Cnemon was startled (ἐκπέπληκτο) and had no idea (οὐκ εἶχε συμβάλλειν) why they should be so affected by the name of Pytho (2.11.5).' This directs our attention and curiosity back to the couple; we hope that they might (re)enter the narrative and narratorial spotlight. However, instead of shifting the focus to their past, Heliodorus pauses the action (καὶ οἱ μὲν ἐν τούτοις ἦσαν, 2.12.1) and fills us in on how Thisbe ended up in the cave and what happened to Thermouthis before he returns there (2.12).[6] After this analepsis we witness a conversation about Thyamis and Thisbe (2.13–14), which does not contain any information that is new to us. While we may welcome the recapitulation, this scene does not exactly contribute to our sense of orientation: the narrative keeps returning to characters of (presumably) secondary importance, and the already disparate trio of Cnemon, Theagenes, and Charicleia is joined by Thyamis, who does not even speak Greek and thus hardly has the makings of a deuteragonist, let alone a protagonist (2.12.4).[7] Questions over questions. Where is this all leading? Who will end up in the spotlight, having what Ready calls the greatest 'narrative status'?[8] Should we stop hoping that we will learn anything about the mysterious couple?

The next scene underlines Heliodorus's reluctance to accommodate our curiosity and provide orientation at this stage of the narrative. Once Thermouthis fell asleep (2.15),

> they [Charicleia, Theagenes, and Cnemon] seemed to want to form a plan, but the extent of their past woes, the hopelessness of their present predicament, the uncertainty of the future (τῶν δὲ παρελθόντων ἀλγεινῶν τὸ πλῆθος καὶ τῶν παρουσῶν συμφορῶν τὸ ἄπορον καὶ τῶν προσδοκωμένων τὸ ἄδηλον), clouded their intellects. For a long time, they stared at one another, each expecting the other to speak; but meeting only with silence (εἶτα ἀποτυγχάνων), they averted their eyes towards the ground … For as long as they could they kept at bay the sleep that assailed them, for they wanted desperately to devise a strategy against their present plight (τῶν παρόντων); but eventually they

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[6] Charicleia and Cnemon initially hide in the cave; see Brethes (2007: 121). On the function of this completive analepsis, see Hefti (1950: 23–4); Futre Pinheiro (1998: 3166); Feuchtenhofer (2010: 49–50).

[7] On language barriers in the *Aethiopica*, see Morgan (1982: 258–60); Winkler (1982/1999: 287–8) Saïd (1992); Shalev (2006: 183–91).

[8] As Ready (2011: 222) puts it, 'the longer a character is in the spotlight the greater becomes his or her narrative status.'

were compelled to obey the law of nature (φύσεως νόμῳ καὶ ἄκοντες ἐπείθοντο) and yield to their lassitude and fatigue.

This neglected passage has rich metanarrative implications. The general reference to past misfortunes, with an emphasis on their severity, and to the uncertain future underlines the twofold disorientation resulting from a linear reading: first, we still don't know Charicleia's and Theagenes's backstory; second, we have no clue as to what sort of future plot developments we should expect. Just as each character hopes that another one will propose a plan, the readers desire some orientation; considering the reticent primary narrator,[9] they know that the awaited information would likely come from an actor. However, Heliodorus puts everything on hold with a display of authorial control as he intrudes into the scene disguised as the law of nature. The sleep he forces on the characters can be understood as a metaphor for the strict information control in this initial phase of the novel:[10] the characters are concerned with their past and future, but Heliodorus prevents them from speaking, turning off the spotlight altogether.

Next, Charicleia dreams that a man gouges out her right eye. She discusses this nightmare with her companions; however, they cannot settle on an interpretation (2.16). While earlier discussions of this scene have taken a comprehensive approach and focused on the question of what the meaning of the dream *turns out to be*,[11] it is, I suggest, equally worth exploring its significance from a linear perspective. As dreams in the Greek novels frequently serve to foreshadow future events,[12] Charicleia's nightmare directs our attention at her specifically, raising the expectation that something important will happen to her—and thus that she will reenter the narrative spotlight. However, even this supposition is further complicated. According to Charicleia's own interpretation, she will lose Theagenes, an outlook that evokes the possibility that we might not be reading a conventional erotic novel about this couple (if such a thing exists):[13] should Theagenes die, there is no love story to tell about them.[14] If Charicleia is right, who will end up in the narrative spotlight—and on what sort of stage?

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[9] See above, *Section 1.1.*
[10] Montiglio (2016: 240) labels this instance of sleep only as a 'catnap.' On echoes of Platonic psychology in this scene, see Repath (2007: 77–8).
[11] I agree with Hunter (1998: 48–50); Brethes (2007: 179–81) Whitmarsh (2011: 195 n. 109) that the nightmare remains a puzzle. For some explanations see Hefti (1950: 26); Winkler (1982/1999: 307–10); Bartsch (1989: 99–100); Stark (1989a: 144); MacAlister (1996: 36–8); Grethlein (2017: 99).
[12] See e.g. Hägg (1971: 213–44); Bartsch (1989: 80–108); Whitmarsh (2011: 195–6). On the *Aethiopica*'s main oracle, see below, *Section 3.7.*
[13] On questions of genre see e.g. Whitmarsh (2005c); Goldhill (2008); Morales (2009); Whitmarsh (2011: 12–6).
[14] Cf. MacAlister (1996: 38).

The way Cnemon joins the conversation also deserves attention. When Charicleia shares her nightmare with Theagenes, they have just woken up. Unaware that Cnemon is also awake, she addresses Theagenes with affectionate terms, calling him 'my eye, my soul, my all (ὀφθαλμὸν … καὶ ψυχὴν καὶ πάντα ἐμαυτῆς, 2.16.4).' While they once again start behaving like a novelistic couple, Cnemon, 'who overheard this entire exchange,' puts on hold the unfolding of the *Aethiopica*'s erotic theme: 'Stop (παῦσαι)! … It seems to me that the dream has a quite different meaning' (2.16.5). On the one hand, Cnemon thus challenges the interpretation that seems to indicate an unnovelistic development;[15] on the other hand, his intrusion also pushes Charicleia and Theagenes, here finally behaving like a 'proper' novelistic couple again, out of the spotlight. A narrative doublet in Book One emphasises Cnemon's desire to steal the novelistic show: in a scene discussed earlier,[16] he unexpectedly interrupts a similar lamentation scene and hijacks the narrative as well as the narratorial spotlight.

After the oneirocritical discussion Cnemon keeps insisting on his pre-eminence: when Theagenes claims that his and Charicleia's sorrows are worse, Cnemon objects, 'I am not sure whose misfortune is greater … The divinity has filled my cup of misery generously (ἀφθόνως), too' (2.17.1).[17] This exchange once again directs our attention to Charicleia's and Theagenes's unknown past: how could we tell who is right without learning about their story, too? Heliodorus, however, keeps frustrating our curiosity, separating Cnemon and Thermouthis from Charicleia and Theagenes—and choosing to follow the former duo. As if Cnemon had successfully bullied the primary narrator into granting him his full attention, the narrative spotlight shifts away from the couple altogether. What follows is a series of comical episodes: Cnemon and Thermouthis enjoy a barbaric barbecue; the former gets rid of the latter with a trick that involves diarrhoea;[18] while Thermouthis dies in a way that, as we shall see, has humorous undertones,[19] Cnemon spends a terrible night afraid of being found by him. This section further disorients readers who take a linear approach: leaving behind the idealised heterosexual couple, they enter a comic universe. Is this a text, they might wonder at this point, that is related more closely to Petronius's *Satyricon*, the pseudo-Lucianic *Onos*, or Iamblichus's *Babyloniaca* than to Chariton's *Callirhoe* or Xenophon's *Anthia and*

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[15] On the possible meanings of Charicleia's dream, see also below, *Section 4.2.e.*

[16] See above, *Section 1.4.* On lamentation scenes in the Greek novels, see Fusillo (1989/1991: 31–41); Paulsen (1992: 56–66), both with a focus on their relationship to Greek tragedy. See Birchall (1996b) for a rhetorical analysis of this motif.

[17] See also Brethes (2007: 116–9), suggesting that Cnemon is aspiring to become a deuteragonist; Kasprzyk (2017: 164–72), arguing that he fashions himself as a potential protagonist.

[18] On the humour and intertextuality of these passages, see Morgan (1998: 60–2); Brethes (2007: 165–6); Doody (2013: 115).

[19] See below, *Section 3.4.*

Habrocomes?[20] Will Charicleia and Theagenes never overtake Cnemon in their narrative status? Morgan suggests that the humour of these episodes lives from what he calls 'comic disjunctions … in this, apparently, chastest of novels.'[21] While it is true that this is how we experience and categorise Thermouthis's and Cnemon's adventures when taking a comprehensive approach, things look different from a unidirectional perspective: at this early, confusing point of the *Aethiopica*, we can hardly even guess what sort of text we are reading; as we are not able to set the comic episodes in relation to a solid bigger picture, they only add to our disorientation.

The *Aethiopica*'s reluctance to decide on a topic becomes most striking before the narrative finally settles on Charicleia. As Whitmarsh notes, the encounter of Cnemon and Calasiris is modelled on the opening of Philostratus's *On heroes*.[22] On the one hand, while this intertextual reference foreshadows their extensive conversation in Chemmis, it hardly helps our generic orientation. On the other hand, when Calasiris proposes that he and Cnemon leave the hot Nile banks and find a more pleasant place for their exchange of stories (2.21.5–7), we find echoes of Odysseus's *Apologoi*, the beginning of the *Phaedrus*, and the frame story of *Leucippe and Clitophon*; these intertexts direct our literary compass at an epic-philosophical-erotic narrative,[23] setting the general tone of Calasiris's story. Here we finally receive signals that help our orientation. What remains to be designated, however, is the topic of Calasiris's impending narrative—and this turns out to require a challenging process. When Cnemon inquires about his past, he only receives a general answer; instead of offering an extensive account, Calasiris asks him about his adventures. Cnemon replies, 'This is ridiculous (γελοῖον)! … You have told me nothing about yourself, even though I asked first' (2.21.5). Here the readers can identify with Cnemon's reaction: unlike his past, Calasiris's background is almost completely unknown to them; whatever it is that Calasiris has to offer, a fresh narrative would certainly be more attractive than a rehash of Cnemon's story. We can recall the ending of the *Apologoi*, where Odysseus says (Hom. *Od.* 12.450b–453),

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[20] Interpreting Cnemon's actions *ab initio* as unsuccessful attempts to fit into Heliodorus's novelistic universe, Brethes (2007: 115–24) builds his argument on an ossified concept of the novelistic genre.
[21] Morgan (1998: 61).
[22] Whitmarsh (2011: 125 n.101). On the relationship between seeming and being in this scene, see Whitmarsh (1998: 101, 2002: 114–5); Slater (2005: 116–7).
[23] On the references to Odysseus's narrative, see Wifstrand (1945: 97); Paulsen (1992: 143); Hunter (2014: 146–50); on Phaedran echoes see above, p. 40 n. 126; on the reference to Achilles Tatius, see Neimke (1889: 54), misconstruing the relationship between Heliodorus and Achilles Tatius; Hunter (1998: 51); Whitmarsh (2020: 131–2).

τί τοι τάδε μυθολογεύω;
ἤδη γάρ τοι χθιζὸς ἐμυθεόμην ἐνὶ οἴκῳ
σοί τε καὶ ἰφθίμῃ ἀλόχῳ· ἐχθρὸν δέ μοί ἐστιν
αὖτις ἀριζήλως εἰρημένα μυθολογεύειν.

Why am I telling these things?
Already yesterday I told them in your house
to you and your noble wife. I dislike
retelling tales that have already been told clearly.

Readers taking a linear approach do not yet see the network that connects all narrative threads, including the stories of Cnemon and Calasiris. Their curiosity, dramatised by Cnemon's, is nevertheless directed at Calasiris's adventures and thus characterised by a longing for narratives as such.[24] The prospect of learning more about Charicleia and Theagenes has never been more distant.

Cnemon and Calasiris arrive in Chemmis, and the former reiterates his question about the latter's adventures (2.2.4). At this point we may still be expecting a story that has nothing to do with Charicleia and Theagenes. When Calasiris states that 'robbers have taken away [his] children' (παίδων … πρὸς λῃστῶν ἀφαιρεθείς, 2.22.4), we have no specific reason to suspect who they are. However, this changes soon afterwards, when he offers a toast to 'noble and fair Theagenes and Charicleia' (2.23.1). All at once, our disorientation disappears; we can recall the signs indicating the couple's status as novelistic protagonists and realise where the narrative is heading.[25]

However, one last obstacle remains: Cnemon has to make Calasiris tell the story he wants to hear[26]—namely, 'where they [Charicleia and Theagenes] come from, who their parents are, how they came here, what adventures they have had' (2.23.4). Calasiris first puts him off by suggesting that they eat—an Odyssean tactic of procrastination.[27] Then he discloses that his host is Nausicles, a revelation that temporarily distracts Cnemon. Once again, readers may notice, the narrative is in danger of derailing—even more so when Calasiris reveals that Nausicles is away trying to get Thisbe back (2.24.1). While the subsequent passage has

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[24] The readerly desire at play therefore recalls Cnemon's frustrated response to Charias; see above, *Section 1.4*.
[25] For a narrative doublet of this scene, see 2.11.5, discussed above. On early hints at Charicleia's and Theagenes's status, see above, *Section 1.1*.
[26] On the different stages of Cnemon's curiosity, see Pizzone (2013: 141–2).
[27] See Hunter (2014: 150).

received considerable attention, I think we can tease out more about its irony and metainterpretative significance. That it is Calasiris who has to tell his story first is the result of hard bargaining with Cnemon (2.23.3–4).[28] This circumstance is essential for our understanding of what follows. Cnemon's shock upon hearing Thisbe's name does not escape Calasiris (2.24.2):

> 'What is wrong (τί πέπονθας)?' asked the old man, but Cnemon changed the subject (ἀπάγων), 'I am wondering (θαυμάζω) how he [Nausicles] came to conceive the plan of attacking them [the bandits] and what force of arms he has to rely on.'

Cnemon, I suggest, does not give a straight answer to Calasiris's question because if he did, he would have to reveal his connection to Thisbe, thereby fuelling Calasiris's curiosity and running the risk of having to renegotiate their deal.[29] What Cnemon did not expect, however, is that his feigned curiosity about Nausicles's campaign provokes a complex narrative featuring several seemingly irrelevant characters (2.24.2–3).[30] From a comprehensive point of view, it is clear that this story serves to introduce figures who will feature later in the novel; for Cnemon and readers assuming a unidirectional perspective, in turn, Calasiris's answer appears to be a frustrating digression from the *Aethiopica*'s main topic, which has been firmly established by now. Accordingly, Cnemon loses his patience (2.24.4):

> Let us have no more of Herdsmen, or satraps, or Great Kings either! You very nearly succeeded in bringing me straight to the ending of the story with your talk (εἰς πέρας τῷ λόγῳ διαβιβάζων), before I realised what you were up to, wheeling on this subplot (ἐπεισόδιον δὴ τοῦτο … ἐπεισκυκλήσας)[31] … So take your narrative back to what you promised!

Scholarship usually discusses this famous passage with a focus on its significance for the bigger picture, exploring how the conflict informs our understanding of the relationship between

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[28] On this scene see Hefti (1950: 29–30); Winkler (1982/1999: 302), arguing that the bargain highlights the relationship between Cnemon's and Calasiris's stories; Paulsen (1992: 148), emphasising comical implications.
[29] For a similar situation see 6.3.1, where Nausicles wonders whether he should reveal his relationship with Thisbe.
[30] On Nausicles's plan to send Thisbe to Ethiopia, see Paulsen (1992: 120); Dowden (1996: 281) on ethical implications; Morgan (2007a: 487), observing that Thisbe seems to have been unaware of Nausicles's treachery; Dollins (2012: 56–9) has some unconvincing ideas about the implications of this passage for the relationship between Thisbe and Charicleia.
[31] On the meaning of ἐπεισόδιον here, see Telò (1999: 82–5) *contra* Doody (1996/1997: 94).

Calasiris-narrator and Cnemon-narratee.[32] What has remained unnoticed is the irony of Cnemon's indignation and its metanarrative significance. With his now interrupted narrative, Calasiris was only answering the question of his interlocutor; while Cnemon reprimands him, he should blame himself for simulating interest. What we have here is not simply a clash between two characters with different narrative predilections: the joke is that Cnemon gets caught in his own trap.

Of course, it is Calasiris's choice to give an answer that goes on and on, and scholars have rightly identified this as an early sign of his proclivity for digressions.[33] However, an equally important implication of the narrative derailment is that in the overcrowded universe of the *Aethiopica*, there is a complicated story lurking behind every corner: if we adopt a linear perspective, the unexpected complexity of Calasiris's account (followed by Cnemon's intrusion) dramatises a consequence of our newly found orientation. As we choose to focus on Charicleia and Theagenes, we say no to learning about other characters and stories, missing out on experiencing further narrative 'moods' of which we got a taste during Books One and Two. This awareness is emphasised by Calasiris's answer to Cnemon: while he assures him that he 'shall learn' (μανθάνοις ἄν, 2.24.4) about Charicleia and Theagenes, he insists that he tell his own story first, if only 'in summary' (ἐπιτεμών, 2.24.5).[34] This emphasis on compression—and thus on incompleteness—further highlights the fact that as a result of our focus on the young couple, we will miss out on much else that is going on in the *Aethiopica*'s densely populated narrative cosmos.

As argued in *Chapter One*, Cnemon's story calls attention to its own fragmentary nature and invites us to try out a selective and teleological as well as a curious and wandering approach. The bridge between Cnemon's and Calasiris's stories continues what the discussion of Thisbe's letter started—namely, to carry over this sense of incompleteness and the availability of competing modes of reading into the primary narrative as well as the main storyline. While the disorientation that results from Heliodorus's games with our expectations nurtures our desire for an end-directed, straightforward narrative mode, Cnemon's initial curiosity about Calasiris's past and the repeated emphases on narrative incompleteness fuel the

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[32] See Whitmarsh (2011: 234–5), emphasising Calasiris's 'wandering' mode of storytelling; Pizzone (2013: 152–3), suggesting that Cnemon still displays some control over the narrative; Gabert (1974: 22–3); Hunter (2014: 151–4); Lefteratou (2018: 279–80), exploring the implications of the Proteus comparison. See further Futre Pinheiro (1991: 71).

[33] See previous note.

[34] On Calasiris's style of storytelling in his autobiography and his pertinent remarks, see Sandy (1982b: 93); Winkler (1982/1999: 337–8); Futre Pinheiro (1991: 71–4); Hunter (1998: 52–3); Pizzone (2013: 145–6); Hunter (2014: 154). Rutherford (1997) argues—as far as I can tell unconvincingly—that Calasiris's prehistory is modelled on the Egyptian story of Setne Khamwas.

opposed, insatiable and omnivorous approach. Does not Heliodorus's mastery in the burlesque mode, as showcased by Cnemon's and Thermouthis's adventures, make us hungry for more material that seems to be out of place in this supposedly 'chastest of novels?'[35] Does not a part of us wish that Cnemon should resume his narrative sometime? If we allow for a linear approach to Book Two, we gain a better understanding of how Heliodorus plays off against each other contrasting narrative desires.

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[35] Morgan (1998: 61).

CHAPTER TWO: CALASIRIS

1. Heliodorus still smiles

For modern readers, who often find it difficult to be as impressed by the purity of Charicleia and Theagenes as early appreciators of Heliodorus were,[1] Calasiris's role resembles that of Captain Jack Sparrow (Johnny Depp) in the first instalment of *Pirates of the Caribbean* (2003): he is a shady supporting character with a complicated past, far more fascinating than the idealised protagonists, whose union he advances. While most people who grew up in the 2000s remember Sparrow's makeup, eccentric gesticulation, and (even for a pirate) eye-catching clothes, they hardly recall even the names of the leading characters ('Elizabeth Swann' and 'Will Turner'—I had to google them). Similarly, Calasiris is in many respects the real star of the *Aethiopica*, a circumstance reflected by scholarship: ever since Winkler's pioneering paper,[2] much scholarship has attempted to come to terms with Calasiris's character. The main source of interpretative difficulties concerning Calasiris is his 'duplicity':[3] he exhibits characteristics of a manipulative charlatan and an authentic holy man.[4] To frame the problem in Uri Margolin's terminology, these types have 'semantically incompatible properties,' which obstruct 'the construction of an internally consistent literary character.'[5] Given the two-dimensional, reductive tendencies of Heliodoran studies, it does not come as a surprise that scholarship has aimed to provide final answers to the questions prompted by Calasiris's character and narratives: what *is* he—a reliable or an unreliable narrator? A trickster who irresponsibly talks Charicleia and Theagenes into eloping from Delphi, or a holy man on a divine mission?[6] Lawrence Kim summarises the status quo of scholarship as follows: 'Attempts to resolve the problem tend to fall into two camps. Proponents of a solution internal to the text

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[1] See Philip the Philosopher's *Hermeneuma* (T XIII Colonna, ll. 53–58; 74–76); Photius's *Diacrisis* (ll. 36–41; 50–53 Dyck); the poem on Charicleia that Colonna attributes to Theodore Prodromus (T XVIII Colonna); John Eugenicus's *Protheoria* with its emphasis on *sophrosynē*; for the text see Gärtner (1971).

[2] Winkler (1982/1999).

[3] Kim (2018: 1). In modern scholarship this problem was first noted by Rohde (1876/1914: 477–8).

[4] See e.g. Sandy (1982a); Levin (1992); Bretzigheimer (1998); Jones (2005); Baumbach (2008); Billault (2015); Dowden (2015).

[5] Margolin (1987: 114).

[6] See below, *Sections 2.3–5*.

excuse Calasiris' unscrupulous behavior on the grounds that it is undertaken for a worthy cause: to fulfill the Delphic oracle's prophecy as well as Calasiris' promise to the Ethiopian queen … Others … have asserted that Calasiris is modeled on Imperial "holy men", whose advocacy of "duplicity in the service of a higher cause" is also found articulated in Neoplatonism and mystery religions; Calasiris' behavior is thus only ethically problematic from our modern perspective.'[7] Kim's analysis, however, which is the most recent attempt at a comprehensive reading of Calasiris, is no less reductive than those he criticises. Most significantly, Kim privileges a single kind of implied reader, concluding that 'the reader whom Heliodorus has in mind as the ideal recipient of Calasiris' narrative—one impressed by and appreciative of Calasiris' observational and inferential activity, rather than his piety or religiosity—is also the one envisioned for the novel as a whole.'[8]

As regards the evaluation of Calasiris's character, it is worth going back to Byzantine scholarship. Michael Psellus states the following about Calasiris (*Diacrisis* ll. 44–49 Dyck):

> The author does not deviate from the plausible in the rest of his characterisations. As for the indecent elements of the plot, which could not be concealed (ἃς οὐκ ἄν τις δυνηθείη περικαλύψασθαι),[9] our author, by the decency of his narration, has made them good in the telling rather than bad in the acting (κρείττονας δέδειχε λεγομένας ἢ χείρονας πεπραγμένας).[10] For instance, he even relieves the old man Calasiris of the blame for pandering (ἐξαιρεῖ τῆς ἐπὶ τῇ προαγωγείᾳ μέμψεως), a thing scarcely credible until our author by his varied artistry thrust aside the apparent guilt (πρὶν ἂν … τὸ δοκοῦν ὑπαίτιον ἀπώσατο).

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[7] Kim (2018: 1–2). The former 'solution' is advocated by Heiserman (1977: 191–4); Winkler (1982/1999); Futre Pinheiro (1991); Fuchs (1993: 174–88); Schubert (1997); Robiano (2003); Brethes (2007: 170); the latter by Merkelbach (1962: 242–4); Sandy (1982b: 65–74); Dowden (1996: 283–4); Jones (2005: 81); Billault (2015); for combinations of the two, see Sandy (1982a); Baumbach (1997). Resisting the 'reductive' trend, Paulsen (1992: 192–4) embraces the inconsistency of Calasiris's character and attributes great significance to it; cf. Szepessy (1957: 252–3). For a racially prejudiced interpretation, see Kövendi (1966: 190–3), who sees in Calasiris a conflict between 'Fatalismus des Orientalen [*sic*], der an die Macht der Sterne glaubt, und Griechentum, das sein Leben auf Einsicht, freiem Entscheid und individueller Verantwortung aufgebaut hat' (193).

[8] Kim (2018: 18).

[9] It is not clear to me whether Psellus is referring to elements that Heliodorus might have wanted to but could not conceal or elements that are so striking that the reader cannot overlook them. Wilson (1983/1996: 175) advocates the latter option.

[10] Or, in the translation of Wilson (1983/1996: 175), 'he is able to show … that they are better when narrated than when performed.'

While this passage raises other intriguing questions,[11] let us focus on its implications regarding Calasiris. First, the unprompted discussion of an accusation against Calasiris may indicate that Psellus is defending him against real critics. Second, as he pleads for Calasiris in general terms and then abruptly returns to his previous topic, he seems to be struggling to find good arguments in Calasiris's defence. Third, Psellus discusses his role in the context of plausible characterisation, which arguably implies that—moral questions aside—the point of critique is that his activities are incompatible with his priestly character.[12] Other early readers of Heliodorus exhibit similar traits. The *Hermeneuma* attributed to a Philip the Philosopher, a late antique or Byzantine essay on the *Aethiopica*,[13] emphasises that Calasiris uses deceit responsibly (*Hermeneuma* ll. 44–48 Colonna):[14]

> Calasiris teaches you … how to use falsehood … when you are determined to come to the aid either of friends or of yourselves, neither harming others nor pledging a falsehood in violation of an oath (μήτε ζημιοῦντες τὸν πέλας μήτε μὴν ἐπιορκίᾳ τὸ ψεῦδος πιστούμενοι).

With this conception, which also seems to be directed at real critics,[15] the *Hermeneuma* establishes the still popular teleological 'solution' of the Calasiris puzzle: his trickery is justified by the higher cause it serves. Finally, we can surmise that Photius (9th century C.E.), who in his *Bibliotheca* offers a chronological summary of the *Aethiopica*,[16] was also concerned with the problematic role of Calasiris: according to his account,[17] Theagenes kidnaps Charicleia (Θεαγένης δ᾽ ἦν ὁ ἡρπακώς); Calasiris merely acts as his accomplice (διὰ Καλασίριδος, Phot. *Bibl.* cod. 73, 50a27–28). This inaccuracy might indicate that Photius found it difficult to come to terms with the events in the Delphi episode and Calasiris's role therein. To sum up, his problematic behaviour and contradictory character have polarised readers from early on; as far as we can tell, premodern interpreters have either seen in Calasiris a primary moral and

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[11] Most importantly, what exactly does it mean that Heliodorus has made indecent elements of the *Aethiopica* 'good in the telling rather than bad in the acting'? Scholarship tends to avoid this question; see Gärtner (1969: 58); Sandy (1982a: 142–3); Dyck (1986: 107).
[12] Gärtner (1969: 58) touches on all three points.
[13] On the *Hermeneuma*, see below, *Section 4.2*.
[14] Text from Colonna (1938), T XIII.
[15] Note that the frame narrative of the *Hermeneuma* features a discussion between opposed readers of Heliodorus (ll. 8–35 Colonna).
[16] On the *Bibliotheca*, see Wilson (1994: 1–22). On such *Kurzreferate* see Reyhl (1969: 8–9); Hägg (1975: 199).
[17] On Photius's inaccuracies, see Danek (2000: 116–22).

compositional shortcoming of the *Aethiopica*, or they went to great lengths to defend him. Will we follow suit?

2. Reading Calasiris, reading Heliodorus

Like Cnemon's narratives, Calasiris's story is a homodiegetic secondary narrative. From the beginning on, however, we have a different, deeper relationship to it. As discussed, the *Aethiopica*'s first two books only invite us to speculate about Cnemon's potential as a novelistic hero, whereas we know from the outset of Calasiris's story that its topic corresponds to our central interests. The position of his narrative is underlined by its extent: assuming a linear perspective, the longer we read his story, the greater becomes his narrative and narratorial status,[18] pushing Cnemon further and further away from the spotlight. Accordingly, only readers who have developed an unselective curiosity will at this stage still be concerned with questions left unanswered by Cnemon's narratives;[19] conversely, Calasiris's story is a permanently high-stakes concern for all sorts of readers. From no point of view do his reports appear as alien elements in the *Aethiopica*; on the contrary, they seem to be indispensable. In line with this, readers might develop a more serious relationship to interpretative challenges posed by Calasiris's story than to Cnemon's: as questions concerning Calasiris's narrative pertain to Charicleia's story, the way we choose to tackle them has a great impact on our interpretation of the *Aethiopica* as a whole. Reading Calasiris, we are reading Heliodorus.

The close relationship of the two is emphasised by inter- and intratextual references. It is widely known that Heliodorus develops his literary project in close dialogue with the *Odyssey*;[20] as Whitmarsh puts it, the *Aethiopica* presents itself as 'the *Odyssey* rewritten as a heteroglossic novel by an outsider.'[21] Equally well explored is the connection between Calasiris and Odysseus.[22] How do these parallels affect our evaluation of Calasiris? Hunter suggests that they 'pick up the "special relationship" which antiquity saw between Odysseus and his creator.'[23] To tease out the implications of this observation, if Odysseus stands for the author

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[18] Narratorial status is to narratorial spotlight as narrative status is to narrative spotlight; see above, *Intermezzo*.
[19] On these questions, see above, *Sections 1.4*; *1.7*, and below, *Section 3.5*.
[20] See above, p. 23 n. 36.
[21] Whitmarsh (1998: 99).
[22] For a good overview see Paulsen (1992: 161–4). See further Hilton (2001: 81–2); Elmer (2008: 414–6); Telò (2011: 604-605); Whitmarsh (2011: 232–5).
[23] Hunter (2014: 154).

of the *Odyssey*,[24] then the analogies between the *Aethiopica* and the *Odyssey*, on the one hand, and between Calasiris and Odysseus, on the other hand, invite us to consider Calasiris as Heliodorus's alter ego. This last link is reinforced by parallels between Calasiris and the author as he presents himself in the novel's *sphragis*.[25] Calasiris is an Egyptian ex-priest of Isis (2.24–25). Heliodorus, in turn, claims to be 'a Phoenician from the city of Emesa, one of the descendants of the Sun by race (τῶν ἀφ᾽ Ἡλίου γένος, 10.41.4).'[26] Both priests identify themselves as non-Greeks but tell their story in Greek;[27] moreover, just as Heliodorus associates himself with the most prominent deity of his work,[28] Calasiris is the priest of a goddess who plays an important role in the plot and in the *Aethiopica*'s universe is set into relation with Helios.[29] An early reader who understood the close connection between Calasiris and Heliodorus is the author of the *Hermeneuma*. As Hunter argues convincingly, the character who in the frame story of the essay presents his interpretation of the *Aethiopica* bears a strong resemblance to Calasiris[30]—an elegant comment on his authorial status in the novel.[31]

3. Mission implausible?

Another reason why Calasiris's character is so important is that he plays a decisive role in the plot, convincing the protagonists to elope with him from Greece. The novel's most prominent puzzle is connected to this activity: did Calasiris come to Delphi at the behest of Persinna, Charicleia's mother, intending to bring her home to Ethiopia? While this is a simple polar question, there are several problems lurking behind it. When Charicleia comes to know her provenance from Calasiris, she asks him for advice. Calasiris has a plan in place (4.12.1–13.3):

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[24] On Odysseus as an epic poet, see Murnaghan (1987: 148–54).

[25] For recent discussions of the *sphragis*, see De Temmerman (2014: 307), highlighting how Heliodorus aligns himself with Charicleia; Morgan (2014: 275–6); Quinn (2017: 135–52), contextualising Heliodorus's self-identification as a Phoenician; Lefteratou (2018: 295), reading the *Aethiopica*'s ending as a twist on the conclusion of the *Odyssey*; Kruchió (2019) *contra* Ramelli (2001/2012: 126–30), who takes this passage as revealing reliable information on the author. Hilton (2012) offers an interpretation in dialogue with Julian's *Hymn to Helios*. On the *sphragis* see also below, *Section 4.3.d*.

[26] On the possible meanings of this phrase, see Hilton (1998: 6–8).

[27] On Heliodorus's self-presentation as a Hellenised non-Greek, see Whitmarsh (1998: 97–9).

[28] On this connection, see e.g. Morgan (2009: 265–8).

[29] On Isis's role in the *Aethiopica*, see Birchall (1996a: 33–45); on her relationship to Helios, see Altheim (1942: 15–6), whose straightforwardly religious interpretation is simplistic. The same can be said about Kerényi (1927) and Merkelbach (1962), who interpret the Greek novels as *Mysterientexte*.

[30] See Hunter (2005: 130–7). As Philip's *Hermeneuma* breaks off in the middle of the interpretation, it is impossible to tell whether the essay returns to the (frame?) narrative. On the *Hermeneuma* see below, *Section 4.2.a*.

[31] On the relationship between Calasiris and the author, see also below, *Section 4.3.b*.

At last the moment had come for me to drop my pretence and offer her my counsel in earnest. I revealed everything as it was. 'My daughter,' I said, 'my travels took me as far as the land of the Ethiopians … There I met your mother … Persinna … told me the whole of your story (τὰ κατὰ σέ μοι πάντα διηγεῖτο), having first sworn me to secrecy. She … begged me to ask the gods first whether you had been rescued after she abandoned you, and then where … you might be … From the gods I learned the whole truth (ἐμοῦ δὲ ἅπαντα μαθόντος ἐκ θεῶν), and I told Persinna both that you were alive and where you were living, whereupon she renewed her pleas for me to search you out and persuade you to return to the land of your birth, for … she … was ready … to confess to your father what had occurred; she was sure that he would believe her … Such was the favour Persinna begged of me, calling upon me repeatedly to undertake this mission in the name of the Sun, an oath that any wise man is duty-bound to respect. So I have come here to do as she implored me to do, in discharge of my sworn undertaking (τὴν ἐνώμοτον ἱκεσίαν ἐκτελέσων). Although this was not the reason for my eagerness to visit Delphi (οὐ διὰ τοῦτο μὲν τὴν ἐπὶ τάδε σπουδάσας ἄφιξιν), it is a substantial compensation for my banishment … I have kept the truth secret … waiting until … I could get hold of the band to confirm the truth of what I had to tell you. So, if only you will put your trust in me and join me in getting away from here … you may be restored to your kinsfolk … and be wedded to Theagenes …' And then I reminded her of the oracle and explained what it meant.

This narrative is problematic for several reasons.[32] First, there is a tension between Calasiris's motives for travelling to Delphi: it is hard to believe that if he was on a mission and knew where to find Persinna's daughter all along, he has not come to Delphi primarily to track her down but, as he claims earlier, because this *polis* seemed to suit him for his exile (2.26.1).[33] Second, Calasiris's supposed trip to Ethiopia belongs to a chapter in his life that he omits in his narrative, telling Cnemon that they 'have no bearing' (συντελεῖ γὰρ οὐδὲν, *ibid.*) on what he wants to know. As they have agreed on Charicleia's and Theagenes's story as the main topic of the narrative, this statement can hardly be accurate if Calasiris met Persinna.[34] Third, there is no external evidence corroborating his claims; his visit to Ethiopia is not even mentioned

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[32] For overviews, see Fuchs (1993: 179–85); Baumbach (1997: 337–9). Cf. below, *Section 2.6*.
[33] On this issue, see below, *Section 2.6.b*.
[34] As discussed below, *Section 2.6.a*.

when his role in the protagonists' adventures is discussed in the presence of the royal couple.[35] Is it possible that Calasiris has made up his mission? What reinforces this suspicion is that his revelation of his meeting with Persinna advances his project of gaining influence over Charicleia.[36] If Calasiris deceives Charicleia, his motivation to do so is obvious.

Discussions of Calasiris's mission usually attempt to provide final answers to the questions it raises.[37] Pertinent studies settle on one of the following conclusions: Calasiris either fabricates his visit to Ethiopia[38]—or he tells the truth, in which case the (supposed) interpretative problems are sometimes explained away with constructivist concepts such as authorial incompetence or preference of certain literary effects over consistent plotting.[39] In line with my general methodology, I shall understand the puzzle of Calasiris's mission as an interpretative wormhole that generates disparate interpretations and thus has the power to transfer readers to different fictional worlds. In this case some of the evoked worlds are far apart from each other, governed by contrasting sets of rules. For several reasons the question of how we decide to interpret Calasiris's mission has a great impact on our conception of the entire *Aethiopica*. To begin with, this wormhole reinforces the contrast between Calasiris's two sides. If we choose to take his mission at face value, his prophetic side gains prominence: we ascribe a sublime motivation to his actions in Delphi and accept that he has access to supernatural knowledge.[40] If, however, we do not believe him, his charlatanic nature comes to the fore. On a more general level, Calasiris's Ethiopian assignment, if taken at face value, emphasises the *Aethiopica*'s religious teleology:[41] Calasiris does not meet Charicleia by chance but because he was looking for her, having sworn an oath on Helios, the novel's most important deity.

Finally, if we do not consider Calasiris's claims about his trip to Ethiopia to be true, his veracity as a secondary narrator is also undermined.[42] In this I disagree with Morgan, who

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[35] See below, *Section 2.6.d.*
[36] See Anderson (1984: 126); Baumbach (1997: 335–6); cf. below, *Section 2.4*.
[37] A notable exception is Anderson (1984: 126), who understands the puzzle as an instance of narrative ambiguity deliberately created by Heliodorus.
[38] Kövendi (1966: 191–2); Baumbach (1997); Bretzigheimer (1998); Andreadakis (2016: 96). Morgan (2004b: 534–5) keeps an open mind but favours this option.
[39] Hefti (1950: 74–78; 105); Reardon (1969: 302); Sandy (1982b: 40–1); Morgan (1982: 255–6), following Winkler (1982/1999: 329–43), at that time forthcoming; Fusillo (1988: 27); Morgan (1989a: 310–1, 1996b: 443–4); Futre Pinheiro (1991: 78–82); Reardon (1991: 114–5); Fuchs (1993: 179–85); Doody (1996/1997: 95); Levin (1992: 502–3) acknowledges the interpretative difficulties but does not draw the conclusion that Calasiris lies. On the constructivist approach see above, *Section 1.7*.
[40] See his consultation of the gods in Meroe.
[41] On the *Aethiopica*'s religious teleology, see below, *Chapter Three*.
[42] We may here recall how Thisbe's unreliability permeates diegetic levels, an important lesson for the reader; see above, *Section 1.6*.

argues that Calasiris lies to Charicleia but not to his narratee Cnemon:[43] 'The novel would be unreadable if the primary narratee were not able to accept the facts of Calasiris' narrative to Cnemon … However, the story of the visit to Ethiopia occurs in a tertiary narrative by Calasiris embedded within his secondary narrative; the narrative structure requires the primary narratee to accept that Calasiris tells Cnemon the truth about what he said to Charicleia, but not necessarily that what he told her was true.'[44] Morgan thus rejects the idea that the unreliability of Calasiris *qua* tertiary narrator might cast doubt on his reliability as a secondary narrator, and concludes that 'Calasiris is deceitful as an actor but not as a narrator.'[45] Morgan's conclusion, however, is incompatible with Calasiris's introduction of the mission narrative: he tells Cnemon that he 'revealed everything as it was' (ἅπαντα ὡς ἔσχεν ἀνακαλύπτων, 4.12.1) to Charicleia. The verb ἀνακαλύπτω implies that its object is not imaginary,[46] and both ἅπαντα (indicating completeness) and ὡς ἔσχεν (which we can translate as strongly as 'according to the facts') underline this notion of accuracy. Readers might remember Aristippus's second trial, where they are told that the defendant recounted ἅπαντα ὡς ἔσχεν (2.9.3), while his understanding of the events was at best incomplete.[47] It is thus an inevitable corollary of Calasiris's claim of completeness and accuracy that if he lies to Charicleia, he also deceives Cnemon.[48] This connection imparts further weight to the question of Calasiris's veracity: if he invented his mission, we have good reasons to also distrust other parts of his narrative, which is our only source for much of Charicleia's and Theagenes's prehistory. We thus end up being unable to tell which parts of it are true, which sections Calasiris has embellished, and which he has made up altogether. This is what would make the *Aethiopica* 'unreadable' according to Morgan—a conclusion that implies an understanding of fiction that is closely connected to the reductive tendencies of Heliodoran scholarship: false information always ought to stand out clearly against the fictional truth.

To the theoretical reservations outlined earlier,[49] I shall add two points. First, even if we embrace Calasiris's unreliability with all its consequences, the *Aethiopica* does not become more unreadable than, for example, Achilles Tatius's *Leucippe and Clitophon* or Lucian's *True Stories*, which feature unreliable (secondary or primary) narrators and leave essential questions

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[43] This paragraph develops an argument that I have presented in Kruchió (2018: 159–60).
[44] Morgan (2004b: 535).
[45] *Ibid*.
[46] Accordingly, elsewhere in the *Aethiopica* ἀνακαλύπτω always refers to facts; see 4,8,2; 4,11,4; 9,24,4; 10,30,1.
[47] See above, *Section 1.7*.
[48] Cf. Baumbach (1997: 340); Bretzigheimer (1998: 105).
[49] See above, *Introduction*.

unanswered.[50] Second, as I have argued in my discussion of Cnemon's reaction to Thisbe's letter, Heliodorus there dramatises a sceptical, aporetic approach of reading that corresponds to the conception of Calasiris's narrative discarded by Morgan.[51] This indicates that there might be more to such a method of interpretation than Morgan suggests: Thisbe's letter displays correlations with her scheming technique in Cnemon's narratives and thus evokes the possibility that her manipulative activities continue on the level of the primary narrative; similarly, correspondences between Calasiris's methods of deceit within his story and his interactions with Cnemon cast doubt on his reliability as secondary narrator.[52] Much has been written about the relationship of Calasiris-narrator and Cnemon-narratee;[53] what is particularly important in the present context is that while the latter frequently interrupts the former and objects to certain features of his storytelling,[54] he never doubts his veracity. As suggested, the reader has good reasons not to follow suit.

This interpretative possibility—and its far-reaching consequences—are buttressed by analogies between Calasiris's actions and his role as narrator. He presents pseudo-scientific excurses to other characters within his narrative, aiming to impress them and gain their trust.[55] As he also offers such digressions to Cnemon—for example, on two types of Egyptian wisdom (3.16)[56]—the suspicion arises that he might be aiming to manipulate his narratee. Moreover, a central element of Calasiris's technique of scheming is that he influences characters without them noticing. For instance, he confronts Charicleia with Alcamenes, to whom Charicles hopes to marry her off, thereby inducing her nervous breakdown, which allows him to expand his power over her (4.7). In light of this method, we can entertain the possibility that Calasiris tricks Cnemon-narratee in similar ways. For example, when he recounts that he was visited by Apollo and Artemis at night, he casually adds that 'when they were leaving, they demonstrated

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[50] On the relationship between the *Aethiopica* and other 'sophistic' works, see below, *Section 4.3*.

[51] See above, *Section 1.6*.

[52] The most comprehensive discussion of Calasiris's trickery is Paulsen (1992: 172–84); see also Heiserman (1977: 192–4); Sandy (1982a: 143–6, 1982b: 65–71); Fuchs (1993: 174–85); Morgan (2007c: 41–2); Kim (2018).

[53] Winkler (1982/1999: 332–9) argues that Cnemon serves as a negative foil for the implied reader; conversely, Bartsch (1989: 121) and Morgan (1991: 95–9) suggest that he is as a positive model; Futre Pinheiro (1991: 73–4) and Dowden (1996: 283) emphasise the intellectual gap between Calasiris and Cnemon; Hunter (1998: 53–6) and Whitmarsh (2011: 173) advocate a more elastic model of their relationship. See also Morgan (2004b: 535–8).

[54] See previous note and Hardie (1998: 22–6).

[55] See e.g. 3.7–8 on the Evil Eye; cf. below, *Section 3.3*.

[56] Winkler (1982/1999: 321–4) suggests that Calasiris's distinction mirrors the contrast between his and other characters' *modi operandi*; Dowden (1996: 284) and Jones (2005) argue *contra* Paulsen (1992: 178-179) that the excursus has a deeper meaning; Hunter (1998: 56–8) highlights its metaliterary significance; according to Alvares (2003: 20) Calasiris's account echoes a utilitarian approach to magic; Morgan (2014) suggests *contra* Baumbach (2008: 176) that there is nothing Egyptian about Calasiris's concept. On digressions in the Greek novels, see Whitmarsh (2011: 235–46). For other excurses in Calasiris's narrative, see 2.28 (the annual flood of the Nile); 3.12–14 (various topics related to Homer); on these passages see below, *Sections 4.2.a; 4.3.c*.

that the vision had been real and no mere dream' (3.12.1). Cnemon demands an explanation, thus providing Calasiris with an opportunity to showcase his alleged philosophical and philological expertise (3.12–13).[57] Considering his manipulation of characters in the Delphi episode, we may speculate that he inserts the vague and thought-provoking references in order to provoke Cnemon to ask for details;[58] according to this reading, he creates an opportunity for himself to display his knowledge and cement his authority without Cnemon noticing.[59] The crucial yet neglected point, I think, is that Cnemon does not call out Calasiris on what he might be doing here. It thus remains impossible to tell with certainty whether Calasiris manipulates him. If we conclude that he does, this interpretative choice fuels our suspicion that his mission—and possibly other parts of his narrative—are made up. However, if we recall Theagenes's response to Cnemon's nervous breakdown in the cave, we can just as well conclude that in the absence of hard evidence, our best option is to assume that Calasiris is playing straight with his narratee.[60] To sum up, the puzzle of Calasiris's mission proves to be a particularly far-reaching wormhole: it has a great impact on how we understand a character who plays a significant role in the main storyline, affects our view of the *Aethiopica*'s teleological momentum, and has a bearing on how we relate to the protagonists' prehistory.

4. The two sides of Calasiris

I shall now take a closer look at those elements of Calasiris's activities that contribute to his charlatanic and prophetic sides, respectively. As we shall see, keeping an eye on these behavioural patterns is essential for our understanding of the different ways to evaluate his role in the *Aethiopica*.[61] Let us first concentrate on his methods of scheming. Two of his favourite tricks are to dissimulate his sources and his state of knowledge—matters for which Cnemon's story has sharpened our eye.[62] For example, when Calasiris attends the ritual ceremony during which Charicleia and Theagenes fall in love, he is the only attendant who notices this development (3.5.4–7); later, however, he stages a magical show and convinces Theagenes that

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[57] I shall return to this passage in *Sections 4.2.a*; *4.3.c*.
[58] Sandy (1982b: 25) acknowledges only a narratorial motivation behind Calasiris's comments. For further instances of possibly manipulative remarks, see 2.34.5; 3.13.3, where Calasiris mentions that Homer was from Egypt, prompting Cnemon to ask for an explanation (3.14).
[59] On Calasiris fooling Cnemon see Winkler (1982/1999: 337–8); Futre Pinheiro (1991: 73–5); on his intention to impress his narratee, see Sandy (1982b: 66–7); Paulsen (1992: 175–7).
[60] See above, *Section 1.6*.
[61] See below, *Sections 2.5–6*.
[62] See above, *Sections 1.3–6*.

he made this discovery deploying supernatural powers (3.17.1–2).[63] Similarly, he tells Charicleia that he found out 'using science' (παρὰ τῆς τέχνης) and from 'a divine voice' (ὀμφή … θεῶν, 4.10.4–5).[64] These and similar tricks allow Calasiris to gain influence over others, leading them to believe that he has access to esoteric wisdom. As regards the presentation of his state of knowledge, Calasiris often feigns ignorance about matters known to him. When he conceals from Charicles that he knows Charicleia, he spells out his agenda in a narratorial remark: 'Actually, Cnemon, I had seen his child many times before … But I held my tongue and waited to see what would happen (ἐσιώπων τὸ μέλλον ἀπεκδεχόμενος, 2.35.3).'[65] Not much later, when it becomes expedient for Calasiris to display his familiarity with Charicleia, he tells Charicles that he has known her for a while (3.6.2); Charicles does not notice the inconsistency, and Calasiris gets away with his earlier lie.[66] With the help of this and comparable machinations, he can observe the course of events as a supposedly unknowing and disengaged bystander, plotting and executing the next steps of his schemes without running the risk of being found out.

In other instances he withholds information altogether—another technique showcased by Cnemon's story in manifold forms.[67] On Zacynthus Calasiris forges a plan to fight off the pirate Trachinus, about whose malicious intentions he learns from his host, Tyrrhenus. While he keeps his scheme to himself, he makes no secret of his reticence towards his narratee: 'Concealing (ἀποκρύπτων) from him [a merchant] such parts of Tyrrhenus's information … I revealed to him no more than that one of the local people had in mind to kidnap the girl' (5.21.1). To Tyrrhenus he does not reveal 'anything at all' (οὐδὲ ἕν), and to the protagonists only 'that they should have to go back on board their ship that evening after dark' (5.21.4).[68] In one instance Charicleia calls out Calasiris over his reticence, and he spells out parts of his methodology: 'When a plan is disclosed to a woman in advance, it can sometimes cause her alarm, and often an enterprise is executed more boldly if it is carried through without forethought (ἐκ τοῦ παραχρῆμα). Just do as I say' (4.13.5).[69] In short (and Calasiris's sexism

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[63] On this passage see Olsen (2012: 316–7); on Platonic echoes see Montiglio (2013: 118–9); Létoublon (2017: 93). On Calasiris's trickery in this scene, see Billault (2015: 128–9).
[64] For a similar claim see 3.8.1 (Calasiris's source on the Evil Eye.)
[65] Charicleia and Sisimithres use similar strategies; see 9.24.3–4; 10.37.3.
[66] Cf. 3.17.5; 3.18.3; 4.5.6–7, where Calasiris conceals his awareness of Charicleia's feelings for Theagenes.
[67] See above, *Section 1.4.*
[68] See also Calasiris's justification for not having revealed more to Charicleia (5.29.5), which we can reasonably assume to be yet another half-truth.
[69] For further examples of Calasiris's reticence, see 4.16.9 (he conceals from the Phoenicians that he is not Greek); 5.19.1; 5.20.2 (the Phoenicians and Tyrrhenus do not learn that he is not the protagonists' biological father); 5.22.4 (Calasiris refuses to reveal to Theagenes his dream about Odysseus).

aside), keeping his plans to himself allows him to retain full control. Sometimes he does adduce reasons for his actions, but untrue ones. He makes this trick explicit when he recounts how he left Memphis: 'I told no one (οὐδενὶ φράσας) of my departure but pretended (πρόφασιν … ποιησάμενος) that I was making a visit to Great Thebes' (2.25.6).[70] In other instances, however, it is up to the reader to figure out that Calasiris is lying about his motivation.[71]

A last important constituent of Calasiris's trickery is his habit of mixing truth and falsehood—another technique with which readers are familiar from Cnemon's story.[72] A slick application of this method can be found in Calasiris's first (narrated) conversation with Charicleia,[73] where he claims to suspect the reason of her suffering: 'You have been touched by an Evil Eye … And I have a suspicion (ὑπονοῶ) who was chiefly responsible … it was Theagenes … It did not escape me (οὐκ ἔλαθέ με) that he was staring at you' (4.5.4).[74] Charicleia then inquires about Theagenes; Calasiris is happy to provide information and reemphasises his assumption that he has bewitched her (4.5.6). On one level this scene lives from its dramatic irony, which results from an ambiguous mix of truth and falsehood: as we are aware, Theagenes has indeed cast a 'spell' on Charicleia—but a different, erotic one. In the present context it is worth focusing on Calasiris's actorial motivation. As he knows from Charicles, Charicleia has avoided men all her life (2.33.4). Anticipating that a major challenge in uniting the protagonists will be to make Charicleia accept her own attraction to Theagenes, Calasiris realises that it would be counterproductive to confront her with her feelings right away. Instead, he avoids this sensitive topic and nevertheless finds a way to familiarise her with Theagenes.

Let us now turn to Calasiris's other side: the authentic holy man who has access to supernatural knowledge. As discussed, Calasiris often claims misleadingly that he has received knowledge directly from the gods or from esoteric sources. Taken in isolation, these instances suggest that whenever he claims to access information in this way, he is lying. Two neglected

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[70] Cf. 7.2.2, where the primary narrator highlights that Calasiris left Delphi 'without a word to anyone'; cf. Stark (1989b: 93).

[71] See e.g. 4.7.10 (Calasiris encourages Charicles to present Alcamenes to Charicleia); 4.7.13 (he asks Charicles to hand over Persinna's band so he can eliminate malicious spells).

[72] See above, *Section 1.6.*

[73] For other instances see 2.33 (Calasiris promises Charicles that he will arouse Charicleia's interest in men, particularly Alcamenes); 3.7.5 (he convinces Charicles that Charicleia is suffering from an Evil Eye, which he compares to love; see Paulsen (1992: 173–4); De Temmerman and Demoen (2011: 7); 4.17–21 (Calasiris makes the people of Delphi believe that Theagenes's comrades have kidnapped Charicleia.

[74] On Heliodorus's possible sources on the Evil Eye, see Koraes (1804: 2.124); Rommel (1923: 60–1); Capelle (1953: 175–80); Kövendi (1966: 193–7); Dickie (1991); Brethes (2007: 167–8); see also Yatromanolakis (1988).

prophecies complicate this picture.[75] At the beginning of his narrative, Calasiris tells Cnemon (2.25.5),

> Above and besides all else, it was my children who were the cause of my exile, for the god-sent wisdom of which I may not speak predicted to me on many occasions (ἡ ἄρρητος … ἐκ θεῶν σοφία … προηγόρευε) that they would take up swords and fight one another.

As Calasiris relates this prediction to Cnemon before it is fulfilled (7.6), the prophecy is undoubtedly genuine and certainly no *vaticinium ex eventu*.[76] To highlight this, the primary narrator verifies the prophecy three times.[77]

   The other event reinforcing Calasiris's genuinely prophetic side is his death. Soon after the aborted duel of his sons, he hands over his priesthood to Thyamis, 'explaining publicly that … he could foresee that his end was at hand (προορᾶν τὴν τελευταίαν πλησιάζουσαν, 7.8.7).' Soon afterwards, we learn that Calasiris dies, having told his sons that they would not see him again (7.11.3–4). In this case the genuine nature of Calasiris's prediction is emphasised by the close succession of foretelling and fulfilment.[78] With these episodes in mind, we can entertain the possibility that (some of) Calasiris's other prophecies are also authentic, and that not all of his claims about divine wisdom are bogus. Most importantly, readers may speculate that he did not make up his consultation of the gods in the mission narrative (4.12.3), from which they can conclude that this element is not *per se* enough to dismiss his claims about the trip to Ethiopia. As this connection illustrates, the behaviour of Calasiris-actor informs our understanding and evaluation of his role as a narrator. Considering his double nature, can we nevertheless reach final conclusions about interpretative challenges related to him? This is the main question that I shall address in the rest of this chapter.

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[75] Arguing that all of Calasiris's 'divine' insights can be rationalised, Kim (2018) conveniently ignores these counterexamples.

[76] Noted by Hefti (1950: 34).

[77] 7.2.2; 7.6.5; 7.8.1.

[78] Doody (1996/1997: 99) wrongly claims that Calasiris does not see his death coming. A comparable scene is the death of the necromancer (6.15.3–5), on which see Sandy (1982a: 165); Paulsen (1992: 163-164); Feuchtenhofer (2010: 86); Morgan (2007a: 484).

5. Categorising Calasiris

How might readers attempt to construct Calasiris's character? Why is it so difficult to create a coherent image of him without ignoring evidence? If we want to grapple with these questions, Ralf Schneider's theory of characterisation is a good starting point.[79] According to his cognitive approach, readers form a mental model of literary characters, which they construe 'in the reading process through a combination of information from textual and mental sources.'[80] The former are activated in 'bottom-up processing': the reader uses information found in the text. Mental sources, again, are used in top-down processing, 'in which the reader's pre-stored knowledge structures are directly activated to incorporate new items of information.'[81] Bottom-up processing makes use of 'all direct or indirect sources of characterizing information,'[82] such as behaviour, appearance, and narratorial references to character traits. In top-down processing, in turn, practically any information available to the reader about the world can be activated, including literary knowledge (generic expectations etc.). The way readers perceive characters depends on which type of processing is at work. If they are 'able to assimilate the target person into a structure of social knowledge'[83] (top-down processing), they will *categorise* the character in question. If no such category is available, 'impression formation proceeds bottom up and is called "personalization."'[84] According to Schneider and other theorists,[85] there is a tendency that readers attempt to categorise a character first, and only when they encounter elements that do not fit into the respective category, 'the mental model undergoes some degree of modification and enters into a stage of individuation.'[86] Information 'that stands in direct opposition to the defining characteristics of the category'[87] induces a process of 'decategorisation': readers are prompted to radically revise their mental model of the character.

I shall now draw on these concepts to reframe the difficulties concerning Calasiris's character. For now, I shall take a linear approach in order to call attention to the sequential dynamics of Calasiris's presentation. When Heliodorus introduces him in Book Two, readers can spot numerous clues that associate him with a holy man typical of the imperial era: he wears his hair in a priest-like fashion (ἱερώτερον, 2.21.1), abstains from meat and wine (2.23.5),

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[79] See Schneider (2001).
[80] Schneider (2001: 608).
[81] Schneider (2001: 611).
[82] *Ibid.*
[83] Schneider (2001: 617).
[84] *Ibid.*
[85] Gerrig and Allbritton (1990: 386).
[86] Schneider (2001: 623).
[87] *Ibid.*

and is a wanderer (ἀλήτης, 2.24.5). His claims concerning divine, Egyptian wisdom match this picture.[88] At this early stage of the narrative, readers can thus process him in a top-down fashion, assuming that he is a stereotypical holy man. The first element that sticks out is Cnemon's interruption of Calasiris's first narrative:[89] 'I have found you just like Proteus of Pharus … as you are forever trying to lead me in the wrong direction' (2.24.4). As has been noted, Cnemon here compares Calasiris to a character who in antiquity was frequently associated with sophists and their fake knowledge.[90] However, we do not have to assume that this connection should necessarily prompt readers to decategorise Calasiris, as they are already familiar with Cnemon's penchant for exaggeration and drama; they can take his outburst with a grain of salt.[91] Moreover, we have seen that the ultimate joke in this scene is on Cnemon,[92] which makes it even more difficult for us to consider his voice as a particularly authoritative one. The rest of the *Aethiopica*'s first half, however, raises serious doubts concerning Calasiris's status as an authentic holy man. As discussed, his own narrative is full of instances where he pretends to have access to esoteric knowledge,[93] a habit that he also displays in the primary narrative.[94] Such instances prompt us to see Calasiris as a charlatan, who only pretends to be the holy man we initially thought him to be. In this context it is relevant that holy men and charlatans were already considered as incompatible types in antiquity: numerous accounts survive of (alleged) prophets warning their audiences about false sages and of supposed holy men trying to outperform each other to show that their opponent is an impostor, a charlatan.[95] Consequently, when readers pick up on Calasiris's trickery, they may start doubting that he is a holy man *at all*. This effect of decategorisation is getting stronger with every trick he performs in Delphi. As this is the context in which Calasiris reveals his Ethiopian mission, readers have good reasons to conceive of it as his biggest lie and to *re*categorise him as a charlatan.

Things, however, do not stop here. In Books Six and Seven, we find events that call attention to Calasiris's genuinely prophetic qualities: a summoned corpse, whose other claims all come

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[88] On these characteristics as typical features of the holy man, see Cox (1983: 17–30); Anderson (1994: 34–53).

[89] See above, *Intermezzo*.

[90] See Paulsen (1992: 149–50); Whitmarsh (2011: 234 n. 117); Lefteratou (2018: 279–80); cf. Hunter (2014: 150–4), exploring the Homeric background of the Proteus reference. On the imitation of wisdom as a characteristic of sophists, see Nōtomi (1999: 279–88). I shall return to this scene in *Section 4.3.c*.

[91] On the reliability of characters passing judgment on others, see Schneider (2001: 615).

[92] See above, *Intermezzo*.

[93] See above, *Section 2.4*.

[94] Calasiris gives Nausicles a precious ring as a finder's fee for Charicleia, pretending to conjure it up by magic (5.12–15). On this passage see Whitmarsh (2002: 114); Dowden (2010: 370–2). On the significance of the ring, see Morgan (1991: 100); Paulsen (1992: 123); Bowie (1995: 278–80); Hardie (1998: 28–9); Pitcher (2016: 302); for a detailed, somewhat old-fashioned analysis of Heliodorus's ecphrastic technique, see Menze (2017: 258–76).

[95] Anderson (1994: 131–50) provides a good collection of relevant sources; see also Poupon (1981) on apocryphal Acts.

true, states that Calasiris is a 'high priest' (προφήτη), 'beloved by the gods' (θεοῖς φίλος, 6.15.4), and in two cases Calasiris's own predictions prove to be accurate.[96] In this context his death also deserves attention. The way holy men die is often an important element of their *vita*,[97] and the end of Calasiris's life matches typical elements of such literary accounts. First, holy men are ready to die: they do not attempt to procrastinate their death; often they even await it.[98] In contrast, Lucian makes fun of the charlatan Peregrinus, who first announces that he will immolate himself but then gets cold feet and postpones his stagy suicide with various excuses, hoping that his followers would talk him out of it.[99] As regards their relationship to death, the archetype of genuine holy men is Socrates, who in the *Phaedo* keeps philosophising calmly after taking hemlock.[100] As a side note, it is worth pointing out that Calasiris's death arguably features a distant echo of Socrates's last wish, which is that Crito sacrifice a cock (ἀλεκτρυόνα, Pl. *Phd.* 118a):[101] Calasiris is 'found dead at cockcrow (εἰς ἀλεκτρυόνων ᾠδάς, 7.11.4).' A last typical element, especially in the Christian tradition, is that the holy man foretells his death and subsequently gives instructions to disciples. The prime example is Jesus, who in the canonical gospels repeatedly predicts the end of his life and at the Last Supper tells his apostles what he wants them to do;[102] many early Christian Acts and Lives feature similar elements.[103] Calasiris's last night echoes such accounts: he hands over his priesthood to Thyamis, calmly predicts his death, and dines with his children and the protagonists (7.11.3–4):

> He poured a libation and prayed long … and then told his sons that this would be the last time they saw their father. He laid a solemn charge on them (πολλὰ ἐπισκήψαντα) to make the best provision they could for the two young Greeks … and to render them whatever assistance they could in whatever they chose to do.

To sum up, in Books Six and especially Seven, we find several elements that lend credence to Calasiris's prophetic powers. Considering that the *Aethiopica* features extensive sections in

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[96] See above, *Section 2.4*.
[97] See Cameron (2000: 82).
[98] See e.g. Lucian, *Demon.* 65; Porph. *Plot.* 2.23–27, on which see Edwards (2000: 56–61).
[99] Lucian, *De mort. Peregr. passim*.
[100] See Hägg (2012: 23). On the 'philosophical' quality of Calasiris's death, see also Montiglio (2016: 243–6).
[101] For ancient comments on this passage, see Edwards (2000: 61 n. 26).
[102] For instances of Jesus predicting his death, see e.g. *Ev.Marc.* 8.31; *Ev.Matt.*20.17–19; *Ev.Jo.* 12.31–33; cf. Hägg (2012: 162). For instructions during the Last Supper, see *Ev.Luc.* 22.24–27; *Ev.Jo.* 13.12–17; 15.12–17.
[103] See e.g *Acta Thomae* 66–67; Athanasius of Alexandria, *Vita Antonii* 89; Eusebius, *Vita Constantini* 4.61–62; Gregory of Nyssa, *Vita Gregorii Thaumaturgi* 46.955–6 Migne.

which either side of Calasiris clearly predominates, I suggest that it would be simplistic to consider him as either a charlatan or a holy man; nor do I think that the tension between his contrasting sides disappears at a closer look. We get a better picture if we focus on the sequential dynamics of Calasiris's characterisation. At first impression he appears to be a holy man. Then he surprisingly behaves like a charlatan in his own story for a long period of narrating and narrated time; readers thus have good reasons to assume that he acts manipulatively and lies, even in cases of doubt (such as his mission). If they reconsider Calasiris's initial presentation from this point of view, they can integrate it into the charlatan type, assuming that he was *playing* the prophet to impress Cnemon. However, our initial conception of Calasiris as a holy man lives on, at least in the back of our head; in Rabinowitz's terminology, what remains is an 'aftertaste' of his prophetic side.[104] We may occasionally consider the possibility that Calasiris acts as a genuine holy man even in the Delphi episode. Our first, prophetic impression is then revived in Books Six and Seven.[105] This surprising U-turn in Calasiris's characterisation may then invite readers to return to the Delphi episode and reconsider their interpretation from an altered perspective.

Drawing the threads together, we can distinguish three phases in Calasiris's characterisation. Readers paying attention to the *Aethiopica*'s sequential ordering do not perceive a chaotic coexistence of conflicting sides; they instead learn to interpret Calasiris's actions and storytelling according to two distinct sets of principles. They are invited to tackle questions prompted by the narrative from a sceptical point of view as well as from a trusting and teleological perspective.[106]

6. Choices

How do the two sets of interpretative principles that go hand in hand with Calasiris's dual character inform our understanding of specific puzzles? In tackling this issue, we proceed from a linear mode of reading to a wandering and comprehensive approach, returning to certain problems with the bigger picture in mind.[107] In what follows, the reductive, two-dimensional tendency of earlier readings becomes evident: as we shall see, they usually prioritise either of

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[104] Rabinowitz (2015: 94).

[105] On the dynamics of Calasiris's generic affiliations, see Paulsen (1992: 192–3).

[106] Once again, we may recall the contrasting interpretative principles dramatised by Cnemon's reaction to Thisbe's letter and Theagenes's criticism; see above, *Section 1.6*.

[107] Just as Calasiris's dynamic characterisation invites us to do; see above, *Section 2.5*; cf. *Section 1.3*, where I argued that Cnemon's story dramatises how events can take on a different shape in hindsight.

Calasiris's sides and rely exclusively on the corresponding interpretative approach without considering alternatives. Parts of this section may seem reductive in their limitation to a few specific trails through a complex narrative; this, however, is due to the nature of established interpretations, which I aim to set into relation with each other. The sets of interpretative choices discussed here are representative (and limited) examples of the many possible paths through the *Aethiopica*'s network of wormholes.

6.a An intriguing ellipsis

The first passage that is directly connected to the mission puzzle is Calasiris's narratorial remark between his prehistory and the account of his trip to Delphi: 'I shall omit my travels in the intervening period (παραλείπω τὴν ἐν μέσῳ πλάνην), for they have no bearing on (συντελεῖ γὰρ οὐδέν) what you want to know' (2.26.1).[108] There are good reasons to accept the *communis opinio* that if Calasiris visited Ethiopia, we should expect that journey to belong to this ellipsis;[109] most significantly, this is Calasiris's only reference to untold travels; the account of his earlier life does not mention similar expeditions. Scholars have made sense of the ellipsis in different ways. Some conclude from the supposed inconsistency that Calasiris made up his mission (*i*).[110] Others explain the ellipsis on the level of the secondary or primary narrator's motivation (*ii*): Calasiris omits some events because Cnemon has just lost his temper out of impatience—or because Calasiris wants to astonish him later on (*ii.a*);[111] or it is Heliodorus who is setting up a moment of surprise for the reader, and in doing so he favours literary effect over airtight plotting (*ii.b*).[112] These solutions rely on different methods of processing inconsistencies. As (*i*) and (*ii.a*) draw a clear line between right and wrong accounts, they are based on a rhetorical approach to unreliability. As Chatman puts it, 'the narrator's account is at odds with the … reader's surmises about the story's real intentions … We conclude, by "reading out" between the lines, that the events … could not have been "like that," and so we hold the narrator suspect.'[113] In (*ii.b*) we find a constructivist approach to unreliability:[114] here the discrepancies are explained as providing an additional literary effect of surprise, and the contrast between the incompatible accounts is regarded as a side effect.

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[108] Cf. above, *Section 2.3*.
[109] See e.g. Hefti (1950: 35); Bretzigheimer (1998: 99) argues that if the mission narrative were true, it would have taken place before Calasiris's exile; however, she fails to offer convincing arguments in favour of this and eventually concludes that Calasiris is lying.
[110] See Bevilacqua (1990: 248); Baumbach (1997: 337); Bretzigheimer (1998: 99).
[111] See Winkler (1982/1999: 337); Fusillo (1988: 27); Futre Pinheiro (1991: 73); Montiglio (2005: 258).
[112] See Hefti (1950: 35).
[113] Chatman (1978/1980: 233).
[114] See above, *Section 1.7*.

How do these explanations relate to the bigger picture? Solution *i* is in line with the readerly approach of understanding Calasiris as a charlatan. According to this interpretation, he tells Cnemon the truth with the ellipsis but later lies to him (and to Charicleia) about his mission.[115] Even the fact that he tells Cnemon conflicting things at different times matches his methods of scheming: as noted earlier, he first tells Charicles that he has never met Charicleia and shortly thereafter admits that he has known her for a while.[116] Here we may note that if Calasiris makes up his mission, he has good reasons to conceal this from Cnemon: they expect to be reunited with Charicleia soon, and if Cnemon would be in on Calasiris's secret, the latter would risk that Charicleia might find out about it. On a final note on interpretation *i*, it is worth highlighting that Heliodorus does not supplement Calasiris's conflicting statements with a more authoritative account; this solution thus presupposes that in the *Aethiopica* certain elements that are crucial to the bigger picture are not spelt out; we have to read between the lines. This implication underlines that if we conceive of Calasiris as a charlatan, we are pushed towards a suspicious, sceptical mode of interpretation.

What about solution *ii.a*? If we assume that the mission narrative is true, we also have to embrace Calasiris's prophetic side: according to this interpretation, he is on a higher mission and was able to communicate with the gods in Ethiopia. This reading is also reconcilable with the fact that Calasiris withholds information from Charicleia: we may assume that he did not intend to deceive her; he was just waiting for the right moment to tell her about his mission in a bid to make sure that she is on board with his plan.[117] As noted, a possible way to interpret Calasiris's initial omission of his Ethiopian journey is that the ellipsis is prompted by Cnemon's impatient outburst. To this we can add that Calasiris adjusts the speed of his narration to Cnemon's demands in other instances, too (3.1; 3.2; 5.17.2).[118] The argument that his narratorial motivation is to build up to a great moment of surprise is also plausible, especially if we recall Calasiris's authorial aura and consider that Heliodorus has a predilection for such effects.[119] According to (*ii.a*), the ellipsis thus does not call into question Calasiris's authority as a holy man; the emphasis on his closeness to the primary narrator might even reinforce his status.

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[115] See above, *Section 2.3*.
[116] See above, *Section 2.4*.
[117] Cf. Winkler (1982/1999: 342), connecting Calasiris's reticence to his claim that he swore secrecy to Persinna.
[118] See Futre Pinheiro (1991: 73); Pizzone (2013).
[119] On the relationship between Calasiris and Heliodorus, see above, *Section 2.2*. On the primary narrator's deferrals, see above, *Intermezzo*; cf. Morgan (2004b: 526–9). For a narratological parallel to Calasiris's ellipsis, interpreted according to (*ii.a*), see Ach. Tat. 5.8.1–2; 5.11.5–6. Clitophon-narrator skips a period of six months, only noting that his grief for Leucippe faded away. Soon thereafter, Satyrus reveals that during that time Melite fell for Clitophon and tried to seduce him for four months. See Morgan (2004a: 506).

Solution ***ii.b***, I think, is more problematic than the previous ones. It rests on the assumption that Heliodorus introduced a conspicuous plot hole to create a certain literary effect. While it is not my aim to defend his narratorial competence, whatever the cost, we have seen that there are two plausible options to solve this puzzle, neither of which requires us to push the evidence particularly hard.[120] Considering this, I see no reason to find fault in the author; I suggest that we embrace options ***i*** and ***ii.a*** as equally attractive alternatives and discard alternative ***ii.b***. To conclude, Calasiris's ellipsis contributes significantly to his story's potential to be receptive to two contrasting cognitive patterns and thus enriches the network of interpretative wormholes evoked by his narrative.[121]

6.b Calasiris's causalities

Another prominent puzzle arises from Calasiris's two reasons for visiting Greece. Early in his story he claims that he went to Delphi because 'it seemed … to be a place of refuge well suited for a member of the priestly caste' (2.26.1). At the end of his mission narrative, however, Calasiris states (4.13.1),

> So I have come here … in discharge of my sworn undertaking (τὴν ἐνώμοτον ἱκεσίαν ἐκτελέσων). Although this was not the reason for my eagerness to visit Delphi (οὐ διὰ τοῦτο … τὴν … σπουδάσας ἄφιξιν), it is a substantial compensation for my banishment.

This puzzle has been interpreted in ways that match the discussed approaches to the ellipsis. Certain scholars suggest that the double motivation constitutes an inconsistency and thus highlights Calasiris's mendacity concerning his mission (***i***).[122] Others argue either that the two reasons match Heliodorus's or Calasiris's narrative principles (***ii.a***)[123] or that the interpretative problems result from a compositional flaw (***ii.b***).[124] My overall take on these options is equivalent to the conclusions drawn in the previous section: solutions ***i*** and ***ii.a*** are equally plausible and match either facet of Calasiris and the corresponding cognitive pattern; option ***ii.b*** is less satisfactory.

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[120] Cf. *Section* 3.6, where I discuss a supposed plot hole concerning Charicles's state of knowledge, concluding that it is just the result of a reductive approach.

[121] Cf. *Section 1.4* on omissions in Cnemon's story.

[122] See Bretzigheimer (1998: 104); considered as a possibility by Anderson (1984: 126); implicitly presupposed by Sandy (1982a: 144) and Kövendi (1966: 191–2).

[123] See Winkler (1982/1999: 339–40); Futre Pinheiro (1991: 79); Hartmann (1999: 27); considered by Morgan (1994: 111 n.13).

[124] See Hefti (1950: 73–8); Reardon (1969: 302, 1991: 114–5); Morgan (1982: 255); Sandy (1982b: 80–1); Fuchs (1993: 180–1); Nimis (1999: 229).

Before we move on, it is worth adding a few observations. If we categorise Calasiris as a charlatan and interpret his narrative accordingly (*i*), the passage quoted above reinforces our sceptical, suspicious stance: Calasiris mentions his two motivations in one sentence, arguably sounding apologetic: he seems to get caught in his web of lies; the juxtaposition then serves to highlight his mendacity.[125] Moreover, the lie about his reasons to travel matches his manipulative side both on a general and on a specific level: as we have seen, deceiving others concerning his motivation is a standard element of his scheming, and in one instance he misinforms others about his reasons for leaving Memphis.[126] All this reinforces Calasiris's charlatanic side; once readers have decided to go with this characterisation, they can find more and more evidence confirming their interpretation. In this respect, the puzzle discussed here catalyses our suspicions of unreliability: as soon as we are on the sceptical track, we can start doubting further, hitherto unscrutinised elements of Calasiris's narrative. For example, we might recall that Calasiris—in addition to his fake motivation—offers two reasons why he left Memphis:[127] he wanted to get away from the irresistible prostitute Rhodopis (2.25.3–4)[128] and hoped to avoid seeing the predicted duel of his sons (2.25.5–6).[129] If our interpretation gravitates towards the sceptical end of the scale, suspicion spreads rapidly through Calasiris's narrative: we can even speculate that this accumulation of reasons is indicative of his tall tales and doubt the authenticity of the Rhodopis episode.

As to (*ii.a*), we can easily make sense of Calasiris's motivation without undermining the authenticity of his Ethiopian mission. If we consider Calasiris as a genuine holy man (and, when in doubt, as a reliable narrator), we have two choices. First, we can note that the (true) background of his trip to Delphi is inextricably linked to his visit to Ethiopia; he thus omits the former for the same reason as the latter—namely, out of consideration for his narratee, Cnemon, as discussed in the previous section under (*ii.a*). Second, we can accept Calasiris's double motivation to leave Memphis as authentic and moreover spot an analogy to his two reasons for travelling to Delphi; with this correspondence in mind, we may even speculate that

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[125] On similar approaches to inconsistencies, see below, *Section 4.3.c*.

[126] See above, *Section 2.4*.

[127] Noted by Fuchs (1993: 193); Bretzigheimer (1998: 103–4).

[128] The best discussion of Rhodopis is Paulsen (1992: 151–7). On possible sources and Rhodopis's connection to Thisbe, see Hefti (1950: 33–4); Bucher (1989) argues that her function is to add a historical touch to the novel; on her relationship with Charicleia, see Olsen (2012: 307–8).

[129] As if this were not enough, Calasiris later claims that the gods prompted him to leave his homeland so he can find Charicleia (3.16.5). Bretzigheimer (1999) explores the relationship of the conflict between Calasiris's sons and tragedy.

it confirms Calasiris's veracity, as the pattern buttresses his consistency.[130] Along these lines, readers can move on to assume that Calasiris's next twofold motivation also reinforces his holy nature: he leaves Delphi with Charicleia to fulfil his oath to Persinna *and* because the gods told him to do so (2.26.5; 2.35.5; 3.11.5).[131] According to the 'prophetic' pattern of interpretation, these instances accentuate the fact that for Calasiris, who walks a holy path, human and divine motivation are two sides of the same coin.

On another level, we can observe that double motivation also occurs in situations unrelated to Calasiris.[132] For example,[133] Nausicles engages Mitranes to recover Thisbe 'not just because (οὐχ ὡς … μόνον) he loves her or because she is an excellent musician, but also because (ἀλλ' ὅτι … καί) … he intended to take her to the king of Ethiopia to be his wife's confidante' (2.24.3).[134] It is thus possible to tie Calasiris's double motivation to Heliodorus's plotting technique and conclude that this parallel reinforces his authorial aura. Furthermore, we may entertain the possibility that this significance of Calasiris's twofold motivation is buttressed by its connection to a question that has occupied many readers of Homer, ancient and modern: what is the relationship between divine interventions and human free will in the epic poems?[135] Calasiris's double motivation concerning his trip to Delphi prompts a similar question; this link thus accentuates his close relationship to Homer, which, as argued,[136] reinforces his role as Heliodorus's alter ego. To sum up, the puzzle of Calasiris's motivation(s) incubates the contrast between his two sides and widens the gap between the corresponding modes of interpretation.

6.c   What Calasiris might have known

The final major component of the mission puzzle is Calasiris's cognitive development over the course of the Delphi episode. Calasiris presents it as a 'detective story':[137] his narrative is full

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[130] Moreover, Heliodorus invites us to set Calasiris into relation to Solon, who leaves his hometown κατὰ θεωρίης πρόφασιν (Hdt. 1.29.1)—in truth, however, to avoid a misfortune. Calasiris, again, leaves Memphis 'pretending' (πρόφασιν) that he wants to see (θεασαίμην) his son (2.35.6). This connection is emphasised by Calasiris's connection to Rhodopis: according to Herodotus, she was Solon's contemporary (Hdt. 1.30.1; 2.134.2).

[131] See Winkler (1982/1999: 342).

[132] Many instances of double motivation are also cases of what Winkler calls 'amphiboly,' which I discuss below in *Section 3.3*.

[133] Another instance is 6.3.1, where Nausicles conceals information 'partly by his own decision, partly because something else occurred to prevent his telling all.'

[134] While this passage is narrated by Calasiris, its content is confirmed by the primary narrator (5.4–10). On Nausicles's double motivation, see Paulsen (1992: 120); Dowden (1996: 281). On the reference to the king and queen of Ethiopia, see Hefti (1950: 32); Dollins (2012: 56–9).

[135] For traces of an ancient discourse on this topic, see schol. DHJMᵃ *Od.*1.33 *Porph.* in Pontani (2007: 33); cf. Clay (1983: 217–8); schol. bT *Il.* 249 *ex.* in Erbse (1969: 495); cf. Schmitt (1990: 45); Plu. *Cor.* 32; cf. Lesky (1961: 18–9). For other modern contributions to this topic, see e.g. Dodds (1951: 7); Schwabl (1954); Snell (1964); Gaskin (1990); Porter (2017).

[136] See above, *Section 2.2*.

[137] Winkler (1982/1999: 339).

of enigmatic signs concerning Charicleia's identity and the further course of her adventures, which he deciphers bit by bit. The plot is thus dominated by his gradual acquisition of knowledge about Charicleia and the pertinent divine plan. The great questions are: should we take this progress at face value? How does it relate to the mission narrative? These issues are raised by two observations. First, if Calasiris comes to Delphi looking for Persinna's daughter, it is surprising how long it takes him to realise that she is identical with Charicleia; after all, he learns shortly upon his arrival that she is from Ethiopia (2.31). Second, one might expect him to realise that the divine plan articulated by the oracle—the protagonists should travel 'to the black land of the Sun' (2.35.5)—coincides with his mission, especially considering that he proves to be a skilful interpreter of signs. The established interpretations correspond to familiar principles. First, there are those who argue that Calasiris's interpretative difficulties are incompatible with the mission narrative; he thus made up his trip to Ethiopia (*i.a*).[138] A variant of this interpretation is that it is the other way around: he tells the truth about his journey but withholds information concerning his insights to facilitate his plans or to surprise Cnemon (*i.b*). Some studies suggest that Calasiris's cognitive processes, as portrayed in the secondary narrative, are plausible, even considering his prior knowledge about Charicleia (*ii.a*).[139] Finally, there is the constructivist approach, according to which Heliodorus wanted to have his cake and eat it: he was aiming to write a gripping detective narrative, which turned out to be incompatible with the teleological drive created by the mission motif (*ii.b*).[140] For the same reasons as in the previous sections, I shall discard this last option.

As my approach here corresponds to the methodology of the preceding sections, I shall confine my discussion to representative components of the puzzle. There are three kinds of relevant passages: those that can be interpreted as implicit signs of Calasiris's lack of knowledge or certainty; instances where he explicitly claims ignorance; finally, elements of his narrative that arguably indicate that he knows or suspects more than he admits. I shall start with the first type. When Charicles reveals that he took over Charicleia from Sisimithres, an Ethiopian priest who claims to have found the girl after her mother had exposed her (2.31), Calasiris does not remark that he is looking for somebody who matches this description. Baumbach understands this as a sign of Calasiris's ignorance—and thus as evidence that he made up his mission (*i.a*).[141] I agree that this is a *plausible* interpretation, which can be

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[138] See e.g. Baumbach (1997: 338).
[139] Most influentially Winkler (1982/1999: 329–50).
[140] See Hefti (1950: 72–8).
[141] See above, p. 76 n. 138.

extended to all other instances where we might expect Calasiris to react to material relevant to his Ethiopian assignment. However, such *argumenta ex silentio* are never airtight;[142] it only catches our eye that Calasiris fails to do something if we are already determined to see him as a charlatan and accordingly approach his story with suspicion. Readers trusting him have no reason to protest (*ii.a*). Finally, as the withholding of information is a central element of Calasiris's scheming and narrative technique, solution *i.b* is also reasonable.

What about Calasiris's explicit claims of ignorance? For example,[143] when he recounts how the Oracle of Delphi declared the novel's main prophecy, he states that 'as yet nobody at all had discovered the real meaning (οὔπω δὲ οὐδεὶς τῶν ἀληθῶν ἐφήπτετο), for by and large the interpretation of dreams and oracles depends on their outcome' (2.36.2). Just as in the case of the previous clue, if we take a sceptical approach, this becomes a sign that Calasiris made up his mission; otherwise he ought to understand the oracle (*i.a*).[144] Viewed from this perspective, we can moreover attribute significance to the fact that here Calasiris does not specifically call attention to his own ignorance: we can speculate that he tries to bury the inconsistency.[145] However, as Winkler has demonstrated,[146] we can equally take Calasiris's claim of ignorance at face value (*ii.a*). To Winkler's observations we can add two points: first, Calasiris's remark about the retrospective significance of dreams can be read as an explanation (or, according to (*i.a*), another attempted justification) of his cluelessness.[147] Second, despite Winkler's emphasis on Calasiris's scheming, this line of interpretation can be linked to the 'trusting' approach to his story: in case of doubt we may prefer to understand him as a reliable narrator. Moreover, we can once again make sense of his claim by assuming that he deceives others by holding his cards close to his chest (*i.b*); in this case his claim about the nature of portents becomes another attempt to cover up a lie.

Finally, let us turn to a passage that can be read as a sign that Calasiris knows more than he admits to know.[148] In his account of how he read Persinna's letter, he tells Cnemon, 'I froze at the mention of Persinna's name' (ἐπάγην … ὡς τοῦ Περσίννης ὀνόματος ἤκουσα, 4.8.2). If we approach this section with a suspicious mindset, we can read it as a sign that Calasiris invented

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[142] Cf. below, *Section 2.6.d*.

[143] The other instances, all of which can be interpreted along these lines, are 3.12.1; 4.4.5; 4.9.1–2.

[144] See Baumbach (1997: 338). Another possible reading is that by 'nobody' he means 'nobody apart from me.'

[145] This observation, of course, does not apply to those cases where Calasiris talks about his individual cluelessness.

[146] See above, p. 76 n. 139.

[147] On the metainterpretative significance of this *gnomē*, see Winkler (1982/1999: 311); Bartsch (1989: 83); Paulsen (1995: 353); Whitmarsh (2011: 203). On the Artemidoran background of this passage, see MacAlister (1996: 74–5).

[148] The other instances are 4.5.1; 4.13.1.

his mission: the last thing he expected is that Charicleia is a princess (*i.a*).[149] Less sceptical readers may notice a parallel between this passage and an earlier section: when Calasiris mentions Charicleia and Theagenes for the first time, 'Cnemon froze at the sound of those names' (ἐπάγη πρὸς τὴν ἀκοὴν τῶν ὀνομάτων ὁ Κνήμων, 2.32.2). With this parallel in mind, we can assume that Calasiris *recognised* Persinna's name and conclude that he has met her before (*ii.a*). Doubting readers who do not believe the mission narrative can also reconcile the interpretation of Calasiris's reaction as a sign of recognition with their assumptions: they can conclude that Calasiris-narrator *invents* his reaction, aiming to lend plausibility to the mission.

In a way, the puzzle of Calasiris's cognitive processes is the one that is most immediately connected to the question of how we interpret his character: it is a central tenet of cognitive narratology that interpreting fiction *is* a kind of mind-reading. As suggested in the *Introduction*, we can expand this concept from actors to narratorial agents; accordingly, what we do when we interpret Calasiris is to reconstruct the mental processes underlying not just his actions but also his narratorial moves. Along these lines, when we explore what Calasiris might have known and how his cognitive processes relate to his behaviour, we essentially ask ourselves how we read his character. This connection reinforces a central thesis of the present chapter: how we solve specific narrative puzzles is inextricably linked to the questions of whether we prioritise Calasiris's charlatanic or prophetic side and where between the suspicious-sceptical and the teleological-trusting poles of the scale our interpretative mindset is located.

6.d *Il grande silenzio*

Let us now leave the embedded narrative and consider the *Aethiopica*'s finale, which features the last major component of the Calasiris puzzle. In a scene that I shall discuss in more detail below,[150] Charicles pops up in Meroe, the Ethiopian capital, interrupts a scene gravitating towards the happy ending, and offers a subjective account of Charicleia's story in the presence of the protagonists and the royal couple (10.35–36). He portrays Calasiris as a villainous 'charlatan priest' (ψευδοπροφήτου) assisting Charicleia's illicit abduction and mentions that he died, 'as he so richly deserved' (ὡς ἐχρῆν, 10.36.4). Charicles thus prompts us to recall all the questions concerning Calasiris, which might have faded into the background since his death in Book Seven. Now, readers may think, we will finally receive some answers about Calasiris's mission: surely, if he did act at the behest of Persinna, she will mourn the death of her

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[149] See Baumbach (1997: 339); cf. Hefti (1950: 75).
[150] See below, *Sections 3.2*; *3.6*.

benefactor and try to set the record straight. However, nobody comments on Charicles's account. Persinna's surprising silence has been interpreted as the final confirmation of Calasiris's charlatanic side.[151] Even at the very end of the novel, however, where readers desire final answers and compact meanings,[152] Heliodorus does not give in to such expectations. We learn that Persinna observes the events from a distant pavilion; it is thus unclear whether she hears Charicles's account at all.[153] Whatever we may conclude from Persinna's silence, we are constructing another speculative *argumentum ex silentio* (this time literally).

In this context a passage from Calasiris's story becomes relevant. According to his mission narrative, Persinna 'swore him to secrecy' (τὸ πιστὸν τῆς σιωπῆς ὅρκῳ … κομισαμένη, 4.12.2). Recalling this detail, readers may draw different conclusions concerning Persinna's behaviour in Book Ten. If we accept Calasiris's claim, it is easily reconcilable with Persinna's silence, even if we choose to assume that she overheard Charicles's account: why would she, who was afraid to tell Hydaspes about their child, now admit that she went behind his back another time? Along these lines, it makes sense that she stays in the background and does not risk clouding the happiness about Charicleia's return by calling attention to her activities. To conclude, even at the very end of the novel, Heliodorus plants a puzzle that readers can resolve according to either conception of Calasiris, (possibly) understanding their solution as confirming their overall interpretation. Persinna's silence is the final element of a wormhole network that enables readers to read Calasiris—and much of the *Aethiopica*'s plot—according to two conflicting sets of cognitive principles.

How, then, can we frame the relationship between these two modes of reading? Just as there is no single ultimate resolution of the problem posed by Calasiris's character, I suggest that it is best to address this question on the level of *possible* interpretations and meanings. First, we can fundamentally reinterpret the Delphi episode with Calasiris's prophetic side in mind, allowing its teleological force to outshine all doubts raised by his machinations. Second, we can just as well fully embrace Calasiris's charlatanic facet and let the resulting suspicions dominate the entire reading. Third, given that readers constantly readjust their interpretation in dialogue with the text and, as we have seen, the Calasiris problem consists of numerous interrelated puzzles,[154] it is also possible for readers to move back and forth between the two

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[151] Understood as an inconsistency by Hefti (1950: 76); Sandy (1982b: 130 n. 5); Morgan (1989a: 310–1); interpreted as confirming Calasiris's mendacity by Bevilacqua (1990: 248); Baumbach (1997: 339); Bretzigheimer (1998: 97–8).
[152] On this and related readerly desires, see Brooks (1984/1992: 37–61).
[153] Noted by Bretzigheimer (1998: 97 n. 14).
[154] On this aspect of the dynamics of reading, see above, *Introduction*.

approaches and explore dynamic readings which are not wholly dominated by either set of principles. I think that there are factors encouraging us to choose one of the radical interpretations—but also considerations favouring a 'mixed' reading. On the one hand, our desire for consistent characterisation pushes us towards the one-sided options. On the other hand, we have seen that the *Aethiopica* features extensive sections for which one of Calasiris's sides is a better match;[155] as a result, each of the radical interpretations pose interpretative difficulties, and we are encouraged to develop a reading that navigates between the two sets of cognitive principles. Drawing on the main metaphor of my study, the decisions readers have to make while interpreting Calasiris and his story do not add up to a gateway that simply catapults them to either of two possible worlds; instead, their choices form a complex network of wormholes leading to many different worlds lying between (and overlapping with) two extreme cases. Viewed from this perspective, the scholarly debates about Calasiris appear in a new light: they are *symptomatic* of the *Aethiopica*'s nature, as the contrasting interpretations turn out to represent different two-dimensional paths through the novel's three-dimensional construct.

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[155] See above, *Section 2.5*.

CHAPTER THREE: MULTIPERSPECTIVITY

1. From Calasiris's dual nature to multiperspectivity

The discussion of Persinna's silence has highlighted an important quality of the interpretative difficulties concerning Calasiris: they are not confined to his story but spill over into the primary narrative. In his role as our main source for Charicleia's and Theagenes's prehistory, he answers our questions about them; however, his dual nature also gives rise to new problems, some of which trouble readers until the work's ending. The present chapter builds on this observation. Considering the novel from a comprehensive point of view, I shall argue that the *Aethiopica* as a whole is responsive to two conflicting approaches—on the one hand, a reductive, teleological, and moralising one, and on the other hand, a pluralising, wandering, and hermeneutical one. Heliodorus's novel is constructed in such a way that it reacts to these perspectives in diverging ways: depending on the readerly approach, the *Aethiopica* reveals varied layers of meaning, prompts different questions, and leads to conflicting answers to one and the same puzzle.

It might be objected that such claims simply rehash commonplaces of theory: literature never carries stable messages; meaning always emerges from a dialogue between text and reader.[1] My aim, however, is to show that Heliodorus does something unique: the *Aethiopica* is particularly responsive to two specific approaches that are present in the work as coequal alternatives. This claim raises further questions of originality. Does not Morgan suggest something similar when he divides the novel into a hermeneutical first and a proairetic second half?[2] Does my claim amount to more than just a unification of Winkler's hermeneutical-ludic and Morgan's teleological-moralising approaches?[3] What about Whitmarsh, who has already pointed out that these are 'accentuating different tendencies within the romances'?[4] I have

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[1] See above, *Introduction*.
[2] See Morgan (1989a: 303–4).
[3] See above, *Introduction*.
[4] Whitmarsh (2011: 192).

outlined my answers to these questions earlier in general terms;[5] here I shall add some more specific thoughts. Morgan's dichotomous model privileges the (in his Barthesian terminology) proairetic mode over the hermeneutical: suggesting that 'the meaning of a story flows back from its ending,'[6] he concludes that as far as our reading experience is concerned, the proairetic second half overrides the hermeneutical first. Morgan's reasoning implies that he has a teleological, unidirectional reading in mind: the ending dominates our interpretation *because of* its position, partly due to what we can call a 'recency effect.'[7] If (and only if) we take such a linear approach, Morgan's concept is accurate: I agree that there is such a contrast between the dominant narrative momenta of the *Aethiopica*'s two halves. One of my earlier observations even buttresses this model: the shift in Calasiris's character from charlatan to holy man after Book Five.[8] However, just as the question of Calasiris's evaluation becomes more complicated and defies a final answer once we take a step back and consider all the evidence comprehensively, Morgan's concept stops working from this point of view. We no longer have a reason to attribute greater significance to the proairetic mode just because it happens to prevail in the *Aethiopica*'s latter half. Moreover, I shall argue that we can find passages all over the novel that respond well to either perspective or even play them off against each other. As a result, we can let either momentum dominate our interpretation or take a less blinkered approach and dynamically shift back and forth between them.

But what, then, about Whitmarsh's two sides of a coin–concept, which (unlike Morgan's) is pluralistic? Whitmarsh's reading of the Greek novels[9] is based on the idea that they explore the relationship between contrasting yet co-dependent human desires—one 'for home-coming, and for all the conservative ideological apparatus thereby implied' (in Freudian terms, the superego), and the id, which 'is the realm of emotional turbulence, centrifugality, narrative polytropism, alterity, the transformation of identity.'[10] It is time to face my anxiety of influence and examine the relationship between this concept and my reading of Heliodorus.[11] While there is a significant overlap between our approaches to the narrative impulses at work, it is important to underline conceptual differences between them. Whitmarsh understands the novels as

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[5] See above, *Introduction*.
[6] Morgan (1989a: 299).
[7] See Perry (1979: 57–8).
[8] See above, *Section 2.5*.
[9] Whitmarsh (2011: 1 n. 1) uses 'the term "romance" for the heterosexual erotic narratives of travel and return … and "novel" as a more extended category.' I shall stick to the latter term, as the differentiation between the romantic subgenre and other novels does not play a significant role in my thesis.
[10] Whitmarsh (2011: 20).
[11] The obligatory reference is to Bloom (1973).

reflections on human identity, as explorations of our 'conflicting desires,'[12] to which he links the opposed narrative forces that are characteristic of this genre. He reads all extant novels as setting these momenta in relation to each other; they all are characterised by a 'play between sameness and difference.'[13] According to Whitmarsh, this shared property explains why 'the same text [any Greek novel] can be read as a closed, teleological form or as an open-ended experimental … as philosophically serious or as comedic.'[14] Therefore, if novels prompt contrasting interpretations, they do so because of this generic quality. Whitmarsh's influential concept of the genre's inherent tensions offers a useful framework for the exploration of how individual works reconfigure identity. Yet it does not resolve the puzzle with which I opened my thesis: what is it about the *Aethiopica* that makes this work particularly elusive? why has this novel invited much more conflicting readings than its predecessors? Heliodorus's transformation of the centripetal plot pattern and his complicated relationship to Hellenism—the topics on which Whitmarsh focuses—do not answer these questions. I aim to show that we have to take a deeper look at the *Aethiopica*'s narrative gearbox to find satisfying answers.

While Whitmarsh's emphasis is on the tension between the two forces at work in any novel, I argue that Heliodorus elevates them to a new status. First, he gradually teaches readers to approach the narrative with two distinct cognitive toolkits, which correspond to these opposing momenta. Second, the *Aethiopica* as a whole is written in a way that maximises the contrast between the interpretations resulting from these perspectives. As we shall see, elements that activate both or react differently to them are ubiquitous in the novel. Heliodorus's work is not just another novel playing out the *tension* between two modes. The *Aethiopica* achieves something more extraordinary: it invites us to fully experience the fictional world according to either perspective. Only if we embrace this quality of the novel can we gain a better understanding of its special status in the novelistic corpus and its Protean nature.

First, however, it is necessary to do away with some terminological chaos: I have been talking about contrasting interpretative approaches, perspectives, momenta, and modes without making clear what exactly these terms mean. From now on I shall settle on the expression 'perspective.' What does it mean that the *Aethiopica* is dominated by two rival perspectives? What is narrative multiperspectivity? As a clear-cut concept, narrative perspective it is a product of the structuralist 1970s; it is, however, rooted in Bakhtin's work on the modern novel. His concepts of heteroglossia, polyphony, and dialogism became influential once his work was

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[12] Whitmarsh (2011: 18).
[13] *Ibid.*
[14] *Ibid.*

rediscovered in the second half of the 20th century.[15] Bakhtin called attention to an important capacity of narrative literature: it can confront the reader with a 'plurality of independent and unmerged voices and consciousnesses … with equal rights and each with its own world.'[16]

In recent decades more systematic and refined accounts emerged, attempting to explain how contrasting views on specific events, characters, questions, or even the entire world can coexist in a narrative work, and how readers can process literature that confronts them with such conflicting attitudes. Theorists have settled on the term 'multiperspectivity' to refer to this phenomenon.[17] The most elaborated account so far has been offered by Vera and Ansgar Nünning.[18] To quote the latter, 'the notion of perspective is applicable not only to the rhetorical structure of narrative transmission, but … to the … word-models of the fictional individuals that populate the represented universe projected by narrative texts. By perspective, I do not mean the acts of narration and focalization, but more generally a character's or a narrator's subjective worldview. Such character-perspectives and narrator-perspectives are conditioned by the individuals' knowledge, mental traits, attitudes, and system of values.'[19] Nünning goes on to explain how this concept is based on constructivism,[20] which 'explores the cognitive activity through which observers create subjective modes of the world they regard as actual'; moreover, this method 'proceeds from the … assumption that human beings do not have access to an objective reality and that they cannot know anything that lies outside their subjective cognitive domains.'[21] In short, the Nünnings' understanding of narrative perspective focuses on the subjective perception and worldview of fictional entities and their potential to relate to the fictional world in contrasting ways.

Just as perspectives can be attributed to characters within the narrative and to the primary narrator, literary works can feature a reader-perspective (*Perspektive des fiktiven Lesers*). As the qualification *fiktiv* indicates, what the Nünnings have in mind is not a reader-response theory: they argue that 'we can only talk about an elaborated perspective of the fictive addressee if the personalised narrator is matched by a similarly explicit fictive addressee (overt

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[15] On heteroglossia and dialogism see Bakhtin (1975/1981: 259–422); on polyphony see Bakhtin (1963/1984: 5–100).
[16] Bakhtin (1963/1984: 6).
[17] The first monograph on this topic is Neuhaus (1971); for further bibliography and on the history of relevant scholarship, see Hartner (2012/2013).
[18] See Nünning and Nünning (2000a); Nünning and Nünning (2000b).
[19] Nünning (2001: 207–8).
[20] Related to the constructivist approach to unreliability but not to be confused with it; see above, *Sections 1.7*; *2.6*.
[21] Nünning (2001: 209).

narratee).'[22] I shall adjust this concept to the aim of the present chapter and take a broader approach: while the *Aethiopica* does not feature a personalised primary narratee,[23] Heliodorus nevertheless encourages us to adopt two specific attitudes to his work—attitudes that match the outlined concept of perspective. As these evolve accumulatively from character- and narrator-perspectives but are not identical with any of them, we cannot say that readers are simply invited to adopt a specific perspective belonging to either category.

This approach pushes the meaning of 'reader-perspective' towards that of a more established concept—namely, the implied reader.[24] While the mindset of the implied reader can be regarded as a perspective, its product is a single, supposedly ultimate interpretation; such an ideal perspective therefore does not allow further perspectives of equal rank by its side and eliminates the possibility of multiperspectivity on its level.[25] A supposedly ideal reading takes full account of the work's complexity (whatever that means); this, however, cannot be said about the two reader-perspectives explored in this chapter. They both have limitations, to which the narrative alerts us. The *Aethiopica* offers the two perspectives to the reader as alternative cognitive toolkits. In line with my understanding of narrative perspective, these include such general things as worldviews. Accordingly, the corresponding interpretations will amount to more than specific versions of the *Aethiopica*'s story and, for example, include a stance on the (ideological, logical, etc.) rules governing the fictional world. To refer to another component of my methodology, we can thus say that the competing reader-perspectives lead us to contrasting possible worlds, thereby contributing to the *Aethiopica*'s network of interpretative wormholes on the highest level. Let us now proceed to examining a particularly eye-catching clash between the two conflicting perspectives.

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[22] '… kann von einer ausgestalteten Perspektive des fiktiven Adressaten jedoch nur dann gesprochen werden, wenn einem personalisierten Erzähler auf der Empfängerseite ein ebenso expliziter fiktiver Adressat (overt narratee) entspricht,' Nünning and Nünning (2000a: 50) (my translation).

[23] On the scant implicit characterisation of Heliodorus's primary narratee, see Morgan (2004b: 526–33).

[24] See above, *Introduction*.

[25] Moreover, the fictive addressee is distinct from the ideal addressee; for example, Achilles Tatius's fictive addressee is the unnamed frame-narrator, who is not necessarily identical with the ideal reader.

2. Senses of the ending: Charicles and Sisimithres summarising Heliodorus[26]

Through the darkness of future's past

The magician longs to see[27]

Towards the end of Book Ten, Charicles and Sisimithres sum up the novel's main storyline from their distinct points of views. In certain respects, they are similar characters, both being priests and acting as Charicleia's foster-fathers. In other regards, however, they contrast each other: Sisimithres serves as the novel's highest religious authority and displays prophetic powers,[28] whereas Charicles becomes the victim of Calasiris's machinations and is the most naive of the novel's three prominent priests.[29] I shall argue that both characters provide highly biased interpretations of the plot, which evoke Calasiris's two sides. As we get Charicles's and Sisimithres's character-perspectives on the entire main storyline, this correspondence encourages us to extrapolate from the competing modes of reading outlined in the previous chapter to our interpretation of the whole novel. Moreover, the juxtaposition of the contrasting summaries highlights that if we adopt either perspective, we also say no to another possible approach that plays an equally important role in the novel. In other words, the two accounts dramatise two extreme ways of reading the *Aethiopica*. I shall argue that contrary to the prevailing opinion,[30] their juxtaposition subverts the ostensibly unambiguous ending of the work.

2.a   Charicles: lies, doubts, and hermeneutical pitfalls

When Charicles arrives in Meroe and accuses Theagenes in front of Hydaspes,[31] the king wishes to know more (10.36):

> The old man [Charicles] … suppressed the fuller truth of Charicleia's origins (τὰ μὲν ἀληθέστερα … ἀπέκρυπτε), for he had no wish to attract the hostility of her true parents

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[26] This section is based on Kruchió (2018).
[27] *Twin Peaks*, Season 1, Episode 3 (1990).
[28] See Kruchió (2018: 167).
[29] On the hierarchy of the novel's three priests, see first Szepessy (1957: 252–4).
[30] Morgan (1989a: 320); Fusillo (1997: 221); Nimis (2004: 188–93).
[31] On this scene see also above, *Section 2.6.d.*

if she had in fact disappeared during her flight southwards before ever reaching Meroe. So he simply summarised the harmless parts of her story (ἐπιτέμνων ἃ μηδὲν ἔβλαπτε) and said: 'I had a daughter … She lived a virgin life … until this paragon … stole her slyly away and looted the holy shrine of Apollo. And so you might with justice consider yourselves the victims of his sacrilege … His accomplice in this act of sin was a charlatan priest (ψευδοπροφήτου τινός) from Memphis. I scoured Thessaly and demanded his [Theagenes's] extradition … but he was nowhere to be found. However, they … gave me a free hand to put him to the sword … Surmising that the goal of their flight was Memphis … I made my way there, only to find Calasiris already dead, as he so richly deserved (ὡς ἐχρῆν). However, his son Thyamis told me everything there was to tell about my daughter (ἅπαντα … ἐκδιδαχθείς) … Now I have come to you and kneel before you in supplication … You have the abductor; now take up the search for my daughter.

Charicles is a highly unreliable and deceptive narrator: as the primary narrator emphasises, he deliberately omits those parts of the story that would weaken his case—most importantly, that Charicleia is neither his biological daughter nor from Greece but an Ethiopian foster-child.[32] Intertextual connections emphasise the mismatch between this account and what we know to be fictionally true. Heliodorus is arguably drawing on Achilles Tatius's novel: when Clitophon offers a summary of his story towards the end of the work, he fails to mention that he has slept with a woman other than Leucippe (Ach. Tat. 8.5.2–3). Clitophon's selective account, again, plays on Odysseus's recapitulation to Penelope, which passes over his amorous relationships with Circe and Calypso and does not mention Nausicaa at all.[33] In addition to Charicleia's ethnicity and ancestry, there are two prominent deviations from the *Aethiopica*'s story: first, Theagenes is no longer the ideal lover with whom she ought to be united but a villain who deserves punishment; and second, if it were up to Charicles, Charicleia would return with him to Greece. Although he does not say so explicitly, he stresses that Theagenes kidnapped his alleged daughter from Delphi and has made his home 'childless and lonely' (εἰς ἀπαιδίαν ἐρημώσας, 10.35.2). As he presents the situation, taking her back to Greece seems to be the only thing that could restore justice and his happiness. Charicles's speech thus sideshadows an

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[32] Charicles seems to have an obvious motivation for withholding information—namely, to improve his chances of getting Charicleia back. The primary narrator provides another reason, which has not yet been satisfyingly explained; cf. Morgan (1978: 566–73). In the present context, however, it is sufficient to keep in mind that Charicles intentionally withholds information.
[33] Hom. *Od*. 23.310–341; cf. de Jong (2001: 563).

alternative resolution of the plot;[34] if it came about, we would have to reinterpret the numerous signals ringing in the novel's Ethiopian ending as elements of yet another false closure.[35] As Grethlein argues, both tools (sideshadowing and false closure) subvert the teleological drive of narratives: the former hints at alternative courses of action and thereby highlights the indeterminacy of human experience;[36] the latter undermines the reader's expectation of a single and definite ending towards which the narrative gravitates.[37] Charicles's intentions, as he presents them, thus bear a strong antiteleological force.

Another remarkable feature of Charicles's account is that it is impossible to pin down to what extent its differences from the plot—as readers know it—stem from his mendacity and which discrepancies result from his own delusion or lack of knowledge. This ambiguity is due to different factors. First, when Charicles presents his version, he does not yet know about the protagonists' love. Second, when Charicleia and Theagenes elope from Delphi, Charicles receives *bad* information from Calasiris—namely, that Theagenes has kidnapped Charicleia against her will. Recalling earlier instances of viral unreliability,[38] readers may realise that Charicles is here *in part* echoing somebody else's lies. Third, Charicles claims that Thyamis told him 'everything' (ἄπαντα, 10.36.4) about Charicleia. As in earlier instances,[39] it is not clear what exactly this might have included. I shall return to this question below;[40] for now it suffices to note that these circumstances multiply our interpretative possibilities concerning Charicles's motivation and intentions.[41] Moreover, considering that Charicles portrays Calasiris as mischievous and we lack clarity concerning the former's cognitive processes, we are invited to reflect on the negative effects of Calasiris's scheming: while Charicles poses a risk to the happy ending, he is also a pitiful character and the victim of Calasiris's machinations. In the middle of the finale, this account thus revives Calasiris's reckless and charlatanic side.

There is a further element in Charicles's recapitulation that emphasises this facet of Calasiris. The most important piece of information found in the speech that is new to the reader

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[34] On sideshadowing see Morson (1994: 118): 'It casts a shadow "from the side", that is, from the other possibilities. Along with an event, we see its alternatives; with each present, another possible present … While we see what did happen, we also see the image of what else could have happened. In this way, the hypothetical shows through the actual and so achieves its own shadowy kind of existence in the text.'
[35] On instances of false closure in the *Aethiopica*, see Bowie (1998: 17); Grethlein (2016: 317–20).
[36] See Grethlein (2013: 45–46; 69–75).
[37] See Grethlein (2013: 78–80).
[38] See above, *Sections 1.6–7*.
[39] See above, *Section 1.7*; *2.3*.
[40] See below, *Section 3.6*; cf. Kruchió (2017).
[41] Zunshine would say that we can read his mind in different ways; see below, *Section 3.6*.

is that Charicles went to Thessaly, where Theagenes was sentenced to death *in absentia*.[42] This highlights that Charicles simply believes what everybody else thinks (except for the very few well-informed characters): Theagenes has kidnapped Charicleia against her will. Hence readers, by now familiar with the viral force of misinformation, are reminded that nobody in the Greek world knows what really happened in Delphi;[43] as a result, the enormous consequences of Calasiris's manipulative, irresponsible activities are further emphasised.[44] Finally, the questionable side effects of the escape from Delphi are reinforced by Charicleia's reaction to the speech: she supplicates Charicles, asks him for forgiveness, and proclaims that she has wronged him (10.38.1).[45]

To sum up, Charicles's version of the plot features a wide range of characteristics that evoke Calasiris's charlatanic side and resonates with the corresponding mode of interpretation. Charicles is an unreliable and deceptive narrator. At the very end of the novel, his story highlights our lack of secure and complete knowledge about the goings-on: it remains unclear to what extent Charicles's unreliability results from bad second-hand information, and we never learn about the further course of events in Delphi. As a result, we are lured into interpretative rabbit holes, experience hermeneutical insecurity, and are invited to assume a suspicious attitude. In line with all this, Charicles openly characterises Calasiris as nothing but a malevolent charlatan. Finally, Charicles resists the novel's teleological drive, taking on an attitude that matches a wandering, pluralising mode of reading. His 'counternarrative' can be read as a strong protest against the reductive forces at play. In conclusion, Charicles's account gives us a taste how the *Aethiopica* might look from a radical reader-perspective that corresponds to an interpretation of Calasiris as nothing but a charlatan.

2.b Sisimithres: religious teleology and reductionism

After the scene of reconciliation between Charicleia and Charicles, Hydaspes asks Sisimithres for advice, and he presents the following account (10.39.1–3):

> Sire … you ought to have realised long ago (σὲ … πάλαι συμβάλλειν ἐχρῆν) that the gods have no desire for the sacrifice you are making ready to offer: first, on the very altar of sacrifice, they revealed the blessed lady (τὴν πανόλβιον) Charicleia to be your

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[42] See 5.1.1, where Calasiris points out that he does not know what happened in Delphi (and thus to Charicles) after Charicleia's staged kidnapping and the assembly.
[43] On the implications of this point for Theagenes's characterisation, see De Temmerman (2014: 289).
[44] See De Temmerman (2014: 289).
[45] On Charicleia's bad conscience in this scene and elsewhere in the *Aethiopica*, see below, *Section 4.2.e*.

daughter and dramatically (καθάπερ ἐκ μηχανῆς) transported her foster-father here from the heart of Greece; then they cast fright and panic among the sacrificial bulls and horses and so gave a sign that those sacrifices that are thought superior (τὰ τελεώτερα νομιζόμενα) would also be cut short; and now, to make our happiness complete, as a theatrical climax (ὥσπερ λαμπάδιον δράματος) they have revealed that this young stranger is betrothed to the maiden. Let us not be blind to the miracles the gods have wrought; let us not thwart their purpose; let us abolish human sacrifice forevermore and hold to purer forms of offering (ἀλλ᾿ αἰσθανώμεθα τοῦ θείου θαυματουργήματος καὶ συνεργοὶ γινώμεθα τοῦ ἐκείνων βουλήματος καὶ ἐχώμεθα τῶν εὐαγεστέρων ἱερείων, τὴν δι᾿ ἀνθρώπων θυσίαν καὶ εἰς τὸν ἑξῆς αἰῶνα περιγράψαντες)!

This account could not be more different from Charicles's interpretation. Sisimithres understands the events according to a perspective dominated by religious teleology: Charicleia's story is a product of divine providence, the purpose of which is to induce a cultic reform. According to this approach, the past makes most sense against the backdrop of its outcome. For Sisimithres the earlier parts of the story are in themselves of secondary importance: they matter only insofar as they facilitate a certain higher result. In line with this attitude, Sisimithres's account can hardly be called a 'narrative.' In Brooks's terminology, this is a result of his paradigmatic mode.[46] As Whitmarsh puts it, 'the closural force … seeks to tie together all loose strands into a single, tightly ravelled skein, and hence permits the significance of the narrative as a whole to be grasped, as a totalised expression of cultural values.'[47] Among these, Charicleia's and Theagenes's virtues have a prominent status: if they had not remained virgins, they would not have been recognised as suitable sacrificial victims, and Hydaspes would not have had to choose between killing his daughter and giving up the ritual.[48] The teleological momentum of this perspective is further accentuated by Sisimithres's claim that Hydaspes 'ought to have realised long ago' what the gods wanted: as this implies, we can perceive their will, and it is our responsibility to consciously facilitate their goals. According to Sisimithres's principles, Calasiris is a holy man who, unlike everybody else in Delphi (but like Sisimithres himself) understood the gods' plan and proactively contributed to its fulfilment. In sum, Sisimithres's speech is the counterpart of Charicles's: it dramatises how the

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[46] See Brooks (1984/1992: 91–2).
[47] Whitmarsh (2011: 204–5).
[48] Cf. the penultimate line of the Apollonian oracle, on which see below, *Section 3.7.*

Aethiopica takes shape if we adopt a perspective that matches a one-sided interpretation of Calasiris as an authentic holy man.

2.c   The hierarchy of the perspectives

What about the relationship between the two summaries? Can we understand them as equally plausible—as with Calasiris's two sides—or is there a clear hierarchy between them? Even Winkler, who views the *Aethiopica* as a playful and open text, privileges Sisimithres and considers him as the author's mouthpiece.[49] And indeed, Heliodorus presents him as a much more reliable narrator than his Greek counterpart. Unlike Charicles's speech, Sisimithres's is not introduced with alerting narratorial remarks. Moreover, he has already won great authority during the Meroe episode, comes up with the final proof of Charicleia's identity, and is the first to renounce the human sacrifices, which are indeed abolished. Conversely, Charicles's plans are thwarted: he does not return Charicleia to Delphi but himself ends up staying in Meroe. Moreover, Sisimithres has access to supernatural knowledge, which emphasises the contrast between his clairvoyance and Charicles's cluelessness: at the beginning of Book Ten, he discloses to Persinna both that Hydaspes will return the following day and that she will shortly learn about this prospect (10.4.2–4). To these points we can add that the finale of the *Aethiopica*—with its near sacrifice of the male hero, Charicles's blighted demand that the supposed kidnapper be punished, and the cultic reform—is replaying Euripides's *Iphigenia in Tauris*.[50] This analogy reinforces Sisimithres's authority, as it connects him to Athena cutting short Thoas's initiative (Eur. *IT* 1435–1489), which, in turn, echoes Charicles's agenda. These observations suggest that there is a clear 'hierarchy of perspectives'[51] between the two accounts.

However, Sisimithres's speech and its circumstances also feature characteristics that may encourage us to resist this conclusion. He offers his account in Ethiopic, 'for everybody to understand' (10.39.1). Even though the act of switching to the local language means that almost everybody understands him, this move also has distancing and alarming implications for us readers. When Morgan argues that 'the two languages … collaborate in the novel's final scenes, and Sisimithres's climactic interpretative oration telescopes the distinction between the two,'[52] I think he singles out a tendentiously teleological approach as the only possible one. First, the

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[49] See Winkler (1982/1999: 331).
[50] Cf. Lefteratou (2018: 96–9).
[51] Nünning (2001: 217).
[52] Morgan (1998: 75).

language issue raises questions about mediation: who has translated the speech for us? How can we possibly know whether we are reading a version that accurately represents what Sisimithres is saying 'in truth'? This issue is accentuated by theatrical *termini technici*: how could the Greeker-than-Greek expressions μηχανή or δρᾶμα possibly be precise translations of anything in Sisimithres's 'original' speech?[53] Moreover, the language change also results in the exclusion of Charicleia, Theagenes, and Charicles.[54] As Sisimithres reduces the significance of the protagonists' love story to the facilitation of a divine plan, this detail raises eyebrows. Sisimithres gives his speech *before* Charicles recalls the Delphic oracle and accepts the Ethiopian happy ending (10.41.2). We can thus assume that Charicles would disagree with Sisimithres at the time of his speech—if he understood him. Moreover, Charicleia and Theagenes regard the impending sacrifice as a threat to their love throughout the course of the whole Meroe episode. After Charicleia is saved, both lovers even demand that she be the one to kill Theagenes (10.20.2; 10.32.4). Readers therefore have every reason to reject the idea that the protagonists would happily subordinate the story of their love to the goal of abolishing human sacrifices. Finally, as a result of Sisimithres's switch to Ethiopic, Charicleia and Theagenes participate in the procession described in the *Aethiopica*'s closing tableau without knowing that their love and all their adventures—and therefore the whole novel—have been *reduced* to facilitating a cultic reform.[55] These conspicuous consequences of Sisimithres's choice of language warn us against wholeheartedly subscribing to his account as the *Aethiopica*'s ultimate condensation.

And indeed, if we consider Sisimithres's interpretation against the background of the entire novel, it proves to be the product of a highly reductive approach.[56] The issue of human sacrifices is first broached as late as in Book Nine, whereas the love of the protagonists is systematically established as the main theme of the work. Readers who take a comprehensive approach and consider how much space different topics take up in the *Aethiopica* would hardly agree with Sisimithres in favouring the novel's cult-related side at the cost of its erotic aspects.

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[53] Moreover, technical interpretations have also been offered for the puzzling term λαμπάδιον δράματος; see Rattenbury and Lumb (1935–1943/1960: *ad loc.*); Arnott (1965); cf. Bowie (1998: 18). On another level the theatrical terms are also reminiscent of Heliodorus's habit of presenting his narrative as a dramatic performance; see Neimke (1889: 1–11); Walden (1894); Wolff (1912: 176–83); Feuillâtre (1966: 115–21); Bartsch (1989: 130–43); Marino (1990); Morgan (1991, 2004b: 531–2); Montes Cala (1992); Paulsen (1992).

[54] On language barriers in the *Aethiopica*, see Morgan (1982: 258–60); Winkler (1982/1999: 287–8); Saïd (1992); Shalev (2006: 183–91).

[55] *Contra* Nimis (1999: 234), who argues 'that there is a hint of authorial surrender in the climactic assertion … that suddenly everyone understands everything.'

[56] Cf. Whitmarsh (2010: 319): 'These sophisticated, narratologically self-aware texts [the Greek novels], then, show a keen awareness of the reader's desire for abbreviation.'

An ambiguity at the *Aethiopica*'s very end highlights this tension.[57] Heliodorus closes his narrative by describing how the protagonists are escorted into the city, 'where the more mystic parts (μυστικωτέρων) of the wedding ritual were to be performed (τελεσθησομένων) with greater magnificence (φαιδρότερον, 10.41.3).' The first comparative can be understood as referring to both the esoteric rituals and the consummation of marriage. Considering that Plato's *Phaedrus* is a prominent erotic point of reference for the Greek novels,[58] we can also read the second comparative as alluding not only to the religious ceremonies but also to carnal pleasures.[59] The participle is also ambiguous: τελεσθησομένων can be taken as foreshadowing the performance of cultic rituals or a sexual act.[60] The very last clause of the narrative thus dramatises the tension between the opposing forces at play, alerting us to the reductive force of Sisimithres's account.[61] On a final note, we can go further and attempt to understand the ambiguities at play as a cubistic merging of different points of view—of contrasting embedded focalisations: it is only Sisimithres (and Charicles?) who go on to revel in the religious teleology of the ending; Charicleia and Theagenes, in turn, can finally think of sex.

To conclude, we have good reasons not to take Sisimithres's account at face value and to call into question the apparent hierarchical relationship between the two summaries. Sisimithres's character-perspective does not overwrite Charicles's but is placed at eye-level with it. At the end of the novel, where readers are more than ever looking for compact, final meanings,[62] the two accounts provide radically one-sided perspectives on the *Aethiopica*'s main storyline, corresponding to extreme readings of Calasiris. Readers are thus invited to extrapolate from the different conceptions of his character and narrative to the entire novel. On the one hand, they can develop a **pluralising perspective**, characterised by a wandering approach, suspicion, hermeneutical interests, and a lack of distinction between relevant and irrelevant material; on the other hand, a **reductive perspective**, which is teleological, ideological (religious, moralising), and selective. I suggest that it is best to locate Charicles's and Sisimithres's character-perspectives as the two ends of a scale, between which readers can navigate as they make their way through the novel. Charicles's counternarrative, certain thought-provoking aspects of Sisimithres's own account, and the ambiguities found in the last

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[57] I shall briefly revisit this passage in *Section 4.3.d*.

[58] See above, p. 40 n. 126.

[59] Cf. Whitmarsh (1999: 30–1). See also Morgan and Repath (2019: 158), advocating a reading on the 'serious' end of the scale.

[60] The beginning of *Leucippe and Clitophon* features similar puns, on which see Whitmarsh (2003: 194–5).

[61] See also below, *Section 3.7*.

[62] See above, *Section 2.6.d*.

clause of the story add up to a strong invitation not to give in to the teleological sweep of the finale, which threatens to shut all of the *Aethiopica*'s wormholes.

3. Alternative explanations

The summaries in Book Ten contribute to the *Aethiopica*'s multiperspectival quality with contrasting character-perspectives; the passages to which I shall now turn are characterised by an even more immediate clash of competing attitudes, voiced by the same instance—often the primary narrator. One of his prominent habits is to introduce alternative explanations, also known as 'amphibolies':[63] he frequently offers two (or more) mutually exclusive explanations of common phenomena (the cock's crowing before sunrise, 1.18.3)[64] or specific events (Theagenes's decision to go after a runaway bull, 10.28.4). Morgan and Winkler amicably agree to disagree on the function of this narratorial habit.[65] The former understands it as contributing to the narrator's historiographic and realistic pose: 'The admission that there is a possibility of doubt or of a different interpretation removes the narrative from the realm of fiction to that where the author sits in judgment evaluating raw evidence—that is, to history.'[66] Consequently, 'the substance of the alternatives offered is relatively unimportant … what matters is avoidance of omniscience … Usually, one of these explanations involves divine agency, but in a work of fiction there is no formal difference between this kind of explanation and a more physical one.'[67] Conversely, Winkler claims that it is important to distinguish between different kinds of amphibolies: those 'which leave the question open or (more often) seem to weight the scales in favor of the more supernatural alternative'[68] contrast with those which 'suggest that a providential explanation is unlikely.'[69] He agrees with Morgan in stating that 'these references are not meant philosophically or religiously'[70] but comes to a different conclusion: the amphibolies are 'reflexive allusions to the novel's own structure of progressive and problematic intelligibility';[71] 'by reminding us both of providential and of naturalistic

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[63] Morgan (1982: 229); Winkler (1982/1999: 307).
[64] On the metainterpretative dimension of this amphiboly, see Whitmarsh (2005b: 101–3).
[65] It is a nice detail in the history of scholarship that Morgan and Winkler read the drafts of each other's seminal papers, which were published the same year; see Morgan (1982: 231); Winkler (1982/1999: 325).
[66] Morgan (1982: 227); M.'s italics.
[67] Morgan (1982: 229).
[68] Winkler (1982/1999: 315).
[69] Winkler (1982/1999: 316).
[70] Winkler (1982/1999: 314).
[71] Winkler (1982/1999: 314–5).

hypotheses, Heliodoros keeps alive the questions of how and on what terms the plot will resolve itself.'[72]

Both interpretations exhibit a familiar pattern. Morgan builds his entire argument on the thesis that amphibolies contribute to Heliodorus's realistic project. As he puts it, 'virtually *everything* in the novel is geared to *one end*: intensity of experience for the reader.'[73] On a general note, Morgan's interpretation is again characterised by a strong preference for an immersive and thus linear approach over a detached and wandering mode of reading. Moreover, his choice to discard the specific content of the alternative explanations as irrelevant wholly depends on this predilection; he thus shows only that *if* we read the *Aethiopica* looking for an immersive experience, *then* it makes sense to interpret the amphibolies as he does. In sum, this reasoning is circular. Winkler's argument reveals a similar weakness. He interprets the amphibolies as reflecting the dynamics of readerly sensemaking and concludes that this metaliterary significance is '*the real meaning* of these ambiguous alternatives.'[74] What he actually demonstrates, however, is that they *can* be read in a way corresponding to his general approach to the *Aethiopica*, without even exploring the possibility that there might be equally plausible alternatives. In the case of alternative explanations, the reductive force of Morgan's and Winkler's interpretations is particularly striking: they both attribute a *single* function to a narrative device that *multiplies* interpretative possibilities. Can we develop a more fruitful approach?

Let us start with an amphiboly concerning Calasiris. An anonymous temple servant offers different explanations of his death (7.11.4):

> Possibly (εἴτε) the enormous joy had caused the muscles of his respiratory tract to become excessively dilated and flaccid (τῶν <u>πνευματικῶν πόρων</u> εἰς ὑπερβολὴν ἀνεθέντων καὶ χαλασθέντων) consequent upon the sudden exhaustion of his aged body; or else perhaps (εἴτε καί) he had prayed for death, and the gods had granted his prayer (θεῶν αἰτήσαντι τοῦτο παρασχομένων).

Unlike Morgan and Winkler, I think it is worth having a look at the specific content of amphibolies; this instance is a good case in point. The first, scientific explanation bears strong similarities to Calasiris's account of the Evil Eye (3.7.3–5):

[72] Winkler (1982/1999: 319).
[73] Morgan (1982: 260); my italics.
[74] Winkler (1982/1999: 318); my italics.

We are completely enveloped in air, which permeates our bodies by way of our eyes, nose, airways (ἄσθματος), and other channels (πόρων) … Thus, when a man looks maliciously upon beauty, he imbues the air around him with the quality of malevolence, and disperses his own breath (πνεῦμα) … towards his neighbour … This is perfectly logical, because, of all our channels of perception (πόρων τε καὶ αἰσθήσεων), sight is the least static and contains the most heat, and so is more receptive of such emanations; for the breath (πνεύματι) that animates it is akin to fire …

As discussed,[75] this pseudoscientific excursus is a centrepiece of Calasiris's scheming; the first explanation of his death therefore echoes his charlatanic qualities. The second, in turn, evokes his holy side, emphasising Calasiris's close relationship to the gods and his willingness to die.[76] From a comprehensive point of view, we can thus conclude that right when Calasiris leaves the narrative, an amphiboly dramatises the interpretative problem that lies at the core of his character.

Yet I think that we can also attribute a general significance to this and similar alternative explanations that juxtapose natural and supernatural options. As Winkler points out, several amphibolies presented by the primary narrator concern events that are turning points of the action.[77] For example, when Charicleia is accused of Cybele's murder, a slave defends her 'possibly (εἴτε) touched by an affection for Charicleia … or possibly even (εἴτε καί) enacting the will of heaven (δαιμονίᾳ βουλήσει χρησάμενον, 8.9.2)'. When Theagenes kicks off his *aristeia* in Meroe by going after a runaway bull,[78] the narrator claims that he 'cannot say whether (εἴτ' οὖν) what Theagenes did next was the product of his own innate courage (οἴκοθεν ἀνδρείῳ τῷ λήματι κινούμενος) or (εἴτε καί) the inspiration of some god or other (ἔκ του θεῶν ὁρμῇ χρησάμενος, 10.28.4).' Winkler suggests that such amphibolies accentuate the opposing narrative forces at work in the *Aethiopica* and are thus indicative of Heliodorus's hermeneutical interests. I think we can also make sense of these instances as serving a function beyond this detached, metanarrative level: explanations being explanations, they also dramatise possible ways of relating to the narrative and of approaching interpretative problems. In short, they inform our reader-perspective(s).

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[75] See above, *Section 2.4*.
[76] On the death of holy men, see above, *Section 2.4*.
[77] See Winkler (1982/1999: 320).
[78] On Theagenes's performance in Meroe, see e.g. Jones (2012: 147–53); De Temmerman (2014: 301–4).

The amphiboly regarding Theagenes's bull chase is a case in point. The first, psychologising option (innate courage) supports a 'naturalistic' understanding of the narrative. If accepted by readers, this explanation accentuates that Theagenes has the inner life of a real human being and acts accordingly. This approach has an impact on how we read the novel, prompting us to assume that characters have relatable emotions and motivations even when these are not spelt out. In short, such explanations encourage us to fill in the (unavoidable)[79] gaps of the narrative based on our real-life experience and cognitive skills. In the *Aethiopica*, a work that is characterised by a fragmentary style of narration and confronts us with challenging puzzles concerning the motivation of characters, this expectation invites us to take a wandering and hermeneutical approach: to linger over questions to which Heliodorus does not provide clear answers, read between the lines, scan the novel for evidence, focus on details, and speculate about possible ways of completing the picture.[80] By contrast, if we embrace the supernatural explanation of Theagenes's behaviour, he becomes a puppet operated by divine forces that are in control of the *Aethiopica*. Consequently, this option promotes a teleological, reductive perspective privileging material that serves to implement a higher plan. Considering these implications, we can conclude that just like Calasiris's dual character and the summaries in Book Ten, amphibolies juxtaposing natural and supernatural explanations contribute to the contrasting perspectives at play in the novel—and (by means of juxtaposition) highlight their coexistence.

These functions of amphibolies are accentuated by an instance in the *Aethiopica*'s finale. When Charicleia is reunited with Charicles, the primary narrator describes the reaction of the Ethiopian audience as follows (10.38.3):

> The populace cheered … and there was no discordant voice … for though they had understood very little of what was said (τὰ μὲν πλεῖστα … οὐ συνιέντες), they were able to surmise the facts of the matter from what had already transpired concerning Charicleia (τὰ ὄντα δὲ … συμβάλλοντες); or else perhaps (ἢ τάχα καί) they had been brought to a realisation of the truth by the same divine force that had staged this whole drama (ἐξ ὁρμῆς θείας ἣ σύμπαντα ταῦτα ἐσκηνογράφησεν εἰς ὑπόνοιαν τῶν ἀληθῶν ἐλθόντες).

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[79] See Pavel (1986: 107).
[80] I shall explore this facet of the pluralising perspective in *Section 3.6*.

This amphiboly concerns the question of how an internal audience makes sense of a major development in the plot; hence, this passage has a strong metainterpretative force.[81] According to the first explanation, the onlookers understand what is happening due to their interpretative effort. The latter alternative, by contrast, attributes their insight to a supernatural source. This instance thus dramatises the reader-perspectives mentioned earlier: according to the pluralising perspective, we make inferences from the sparse information available to us; conversely, the teleological perspective is hermeneutically less engaged and relies on Heliodorus, the orchestrator of the plot, to guide us according to his clear plan.[82]

In this context it is worth emphasising that the primary narrator is not the only source of amphibolies: Calasiris (e.g. 5.27.1), Hydaspes (10.22.4), the protagonists (8.10.1–3), and a servant (7.11.4) also offer alternative explanations. This circumstance is in line with my suggestion that the reader-perspectives at play in the *Aethiopica* do not simply result from our adoption of a specific narratorial or actorial point of view: instead, they evolve gradually from interpretative seeds coming from various sources. This accumulative quality of my reader-perspectives is essential for my thesis that they do not lead to just two competing readings, in which case we could label the outcome as a simple case of narrative ambiguity.[83] Instead, the *Aethiopica* generates a wide range of alternatives located on a scale between a pluralising, hermeneutical and a reductive, teleological extreme. Readers can thus adopt different perspectives at different times and dynamically explore the *Aethiopica*'s network of possible worlds.

4. Thermouthis and the (w)asp

The comic intermezzo of Book Two features a narratorial comment that bears resemblance to the kind of alternative explanations that we have encountered in the previous section (2.20.2–3):

> Thermouthis lay down to sleep (πρὸς ὕπνον τραπείς), but the sleep he slept was the final sleep, the brazen sleep of death (χάλκεόν τινα καὶ πύματον ὕπνον εἵλκυσεν), for he was bitten by an asp (ἀσπίδος δήγματι). Perhaps it was the will of destiny that his life should

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[81] Cf. Winkler (1982/1999: 319).
[82] On supernatural forces as a metaphor for authorial control, see below, *Section 3.4*.
[83] In the sense popularised by Rimmon (1977).

end in a way so befitting his way of life (μοιρῶν τάχα βουλήσει πρὸς οὐκ ἀνάρμοστον τοῦ τρόπου τὸ τέλος καταστρέψας). Cnemon, in turn, kept running from the moment he deserted Thermouthis.

Winkler includes this passage in his list of amphibolies juxtaposing specific natural and supernatural alternatives.[84] However, it is better to understand it as an instance of general narratorial uncertainty. Heliodorus here does not spell out two mutually exclusive alternatives:[85] the primary narrator says that an asp kills Thermouthis *and* this event *might* have a supernatural background. While it is clear why Heliodorus wants to do away with Thermouthis, who has become redundant for the plot,[86] this passage raises two questions. First, is it significant that of all animals, it is an asp that kills Thermouthis? Second, what is the meaning of the narratorial remark about his τρόπος? Discussing these questions, I shall argue that the narrator's comment is responsive to contrasting interpretative approaches, thereby lending this scene a multiperspectival quality.

As has been observed, Thermouthis's death has a humorous and a serious side. On the one hand, it echoes Iphidamas's 'brazen sleep' (i.e. death) in the *Iliad*;[87] as his killer is not a hero (Agamemnon) but a snake, this is one of the numerous Homeric references found in Cnemon's and Thermouthis's adventures whose mismatch between original (epic) and new context contributes to the comic quality of the episode.[88] To this we can add that the unvarnished narrative efficiency with which Heliodorus does away with Thermouthis, abruptly shifting back the spotlight to Cnemon (ὁ δὲ Κνήμων …), enhances the contrast between the raw momentum of this episode and the *Aethiopica*'s elegance elsewhere. On the other hand, the narratorial comment—in its established interpretation—adds a moralising dimension to this scene. The asp (or Egyptian cobra) gets its name (ἀσπίς, 'shield') from its swollen throat, which resembles a hoplite shield.[89] Describing an Egyptian snake called θέρμουθις ἀσπίς, Aelian relates a belief attributed to Egyptians, according to which this animal 'spares virtuous people but kills evildoers (ἀσεβοῦντας, Ael. *NA* 10.31).'[90] Read against the background of this passage, Heliodorus's narratorial comment gains a moralising significance: Thermouthis's

[84] Winkler (1982/1999: 315).
[85] On this device see Morgan (1982: 227–9).
[86] On the narratorial motivation of Thermouthis's death, see Hefti (1950: 26–7).
[87] κοιμήσατο χάλκεον ὕπνον, Hom. *Il.* 11.241b; first observed by Koraes (1804: 2.80).
[88] See above, *Intermezzo*. On the tension between idealism and comic realism in the *Aethiopica*, see Brethes (2007: 103–124; 163–186).
[89] See Overduin (2015: 248).
[90] On this connection see e.g. Hefti (1950: 27).

death fits his depraved τρόπος ('way of living,' 'character') not just in the general sense that he is a bad person dying an unpleasant death but, more specifically, because he is killed by a snake that bears his name and only harms villains.[91] This interpretation is reinforced by Thermouthis's intention to attack Cnemon, Charicleia, and Theagenes, which is revealed right before the death scene (2.20.1).

I do not want to force these humorous and moralising aspects into my concept of multiperspectivity; in fact, I consider this passage to be a good example that comic and serious layers of meaning can complement each other. From a comprehensive point of view, the sardonic humour of this scene, which stands out from the rest of the *Aethiopica*,[92] can be understood as accentuating the contrast between Cnemon and Thermouthis, on the one hand, and Charicleia and Theagenes, on the other hand. The adventures of the former pair give us a taste of how different Heliodorus's novel would be if they were its protagonists. In this respect the comic and moralising elements of Thermouthis's death are pulling in the same direction. I wish to show, however, that this scene is more complex. When Thermouthis makes his first appearances in the novel, his name does not come up in conversations, and the primary narrator (in typical fashion)[93] does not step in to provide this piece of information. Before and after his name is revealed by another character (1.31.1), he is referred to by his rank amongst the bandits: Thyamis's shield-bearer (ὑπασπιστής).[94] Recalling this detail, we can understand the narratorial remark as a ludic reference to the different meanings of ἀσπίς at play: Thermouthis's death (also) matches his τρόπος insofar as it is brought upon him by a snake whose name features in his job description.

The question prompted by the narratorial comment is what the significance of Thermouthis's death is. Whatever this meaning might be, it is attributed to destiny (μοιρῶν … βουλήσει), an entity (or entities)[95] exercising control over the narrated events.[96] How we interpret Thermouthis's death thus depends on our conception of the principles governing the novel; it is a matter of our reader-perspective. According to the interpretation that establishes a connection between Thermouthis's vile character and the θέρμουθις ἀσπίς, the narratorial comment, in Montiglio's words, accentuates the *Aethiopica*'s 'optimistic teleology':[97] while

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[91] See Morgan (2008: 392); cf. Dowden (1996: 275–6); Montiglio (2016: 240–1).
[92] See above, *Intermezzo*.
[93] See above, *Section 1.1*; cf. Hefti (1950: 11); Morgan (2004b: 526).
[94] Six times in total: 1.4.2; 1.28.1; 1.32.2; 2.10.2; 2.12.1; 5.4.3.
[95] I agree with Hilton (1998: 211) that there is no discernible conceptual difference between Heliodorus's use of μοῖραι and τύχη/τύχαι.
[96] Cf. Bartsch (1989: 140–1); Morgan (1989a: 319–20), identifying the supernatural forces at work in the *Aethiopica* with authorial control; cf. Whitmarsh (2011: 183–4).
[97] Montiglio (2016: 241).

good characters reach their goals, villains get what they deserve. Such a reading assumes that Thermouthis must die (amongst other things) because he represents an obstacle to Charicleia's and Theagenes's anticipated happy ending. In sum, this interpretation ties in with the reductive, teleological reader-perspective. What about the other option? Punning on the two meanings of ἀσπίς, it displays a playful engagement with semantics and multiple signification. Moreover, this interpretation is based on an intratextual reference to Thermouthis's rank—a minor, otherwise irrelevant piece of information. While the moralising reading emphasises his depraved nature and redundancy for the further plot, this alternative builds on his status, requiring readers to pay close attention to details. As the narratorial remark is responsive to both a teleological, reductive and a wandering, unselective approach, we can conclude that it fuels the *Aethiopica*'s multiperspectival quality.

The plurality of meanings at play in this brief scene is incubated by further details. As noted, the narratorial comment is characterised by uncertainty: the primary narrator just claims that *perhaps* (τάχα) there is more to this event. Consequently, readers cannot ask themselves only on what level they should be looking for its significance but also whether the scene has a deeper meaning *at all*; they may entertain the possibility that both alternatives are empty speculation. Moreover, this brief scene is characterised by an (even by Heliodorus's standards) extreme density of intertextual references,[98] whose significance is difficult to pin down. First, as has been noted, the phrase χάλκεόν τινα καὶ πύματον ὕπνον combines the Iliadic echo with another intertext:[99] in the *Homeric Hymn to Hermes*, Apollo ironically reproaches the young god for stealing his cattle and orders him to get out of his cradle if he does not want to sleep his 'very last sleep' (πύματόν τε καὶ ὕστατον ὕπνον, *Hymn. Hom. Merc.* 289). Does Heliodorus's amalgam of passages that in their original context have serious (*Iliad*) and humorous (*Homeric Hymn*) tones emphasise the coexistence of contrasting moods in this scene? Does the evocation of Apollo chiding Hermes echo Thermouthis's and Cnemon's feasting on a stolen ram in the previous scene (1.19.4–5)? If so, this intertext can be understood as one of the many literary references in this episode whose humorous force lives from the mismatch between original and new context: Hermes is a baby god, Thermouthis an adult bandit; Hermes does not eat from the meat he roasts;[100] Thermouthis and Cnemon greedily devour their undercooked meal; Hermes receives an ironic, harmless threat while lying in his cradle; Thermouthis is killed

[98] For overviews of Heliodorus's intertextuality, see Morgan (1996b: 436–40, 2014: 267–70).
[99] See above, p. 99 n. 87.
[100] See *Hom. Hymn. Merc.* 130–133.

during a night spent in the wilderness. Are these connections overly far-fetched? I find it hard to tell; besides the intertextual references *per se*, Heliodorus gives us little to go on.

Moreover, Thermouthis's death might be echoing the beginning of Aristophanes's *Wasps*, where Xanthias recounts a dream (Ar. *Vesp.* 15–19):

> I saw a huge eagle swoop down into the market and snatch up a bronze-covered shield (ἀσπίδα … ἐπίχαλκον) in its talons and take it up to the sky, and then it became Cleonymus and threw away the shield (κἄπειτα ταύτην ἀποβαλεῖν Κλεώνυμον)!

An eagle dropping a snake was a common omen in ancient Greece; consequently, Xanthias's dream first invokes an asp, but the ἀσπίς in question surprisingly turns out to be an actual shield.[101] According to the playful interpretation of Heliodorus's narratorial remark, we can detect a similar semantic shift from the serpentine to the literal meaning of ἀσπίς. Moreover, in Xanthias's account it is the word 'bronze-covered' (ἐπίχαλκον) that heralds the literal meaning of ἀσπίς; similarly, when Thermouthis's sleep is described as χάλκεος, this attribute may be understood as foreshadowing the meaning 'shield.' If we embrace this intertextual connection, how does it contribute to our understanding of the death scene? Does it reinforce its humorous side? Does it more specifically call attention to Heliodorus's semantic game? Or does it have a moralising significance, underlining Thermouthis's lack of courage? Xanthias's dream makes fun of Cleonymus, who (according to Aristophanes) was a coward in war and on one occasion threw away his shield mid-battle.[102] Thermouthis also displays unheroic behaviour: when rival bandits surround him and Thyamis on water, he pretends to be wounded, flings himself overboard, and abandons his captured commander (1.32.2). Read against this background, the literal meaning of Thermouthis's τρόπος might also be activated: like Cleonymus, he *turns* away from battle and flees.[103] All these interpretations, I think, are plausible, but none of them stands out as uniquely convincing. In this context of multiple yet vague signification, we can also ask ourselves whether it is a coincidence that the precise meaning of the Iliadic passage evoked by the primary narrator is anything but perfectly clear:

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[101] See MacDowell (1971: 129).
[102] See MacDowell (1971: 130).
[103] Is it a coincidence that the snake bites Thermouthis after he 'turned' (τραπείς) to sleep?

Homer does not specify in what respect death is a *brazen* sleep; Eustathius offers three alternative interpretations without indicating a preference.[104]

As if all this were not enough, Heliodorus's asp may have yet another significance. Numerous literary sources attribute to this snake the unique property that its lethal bite induces deep sleep, from which the victim never wakes up.[105] Most prominently, Plutarch relates that Cleopatra chose asps for her suicide because her experiments on death row inmates proved these snakes to provide a most pleasant death resembling deep sleep (ὥσπερ οἱ βαθέως καθεύδοντες, Plut. *Vit. Ant.* 71.8).[106] We can thus speculate that while the asp matches Thermouthis's character in several ways, it is also the case that the circumstances of his death in turn correspond to the τρόπος of the asp. Finally, the resulting emphasis on sleep prompts a further question: what is the relationship between this passage, Thermouthis's strikingly deep sleep earlier in Book Two, and Cnemon's comic sleepless night that follows?[107] To sum up, this brief scene is characterised by an extreme richness of significance and intertextual overdetermination, inviting readers to ponder numerous *possible* interpretations. Envisioning all of them at once is a challenging task; along these lines, a central effect of this hypertrophy of meanings is that we are encouraged to follow those leads that resonate best with our preferred reader-perspective.

5. What ever happened to Anticles?

After Cnemon's and Thermouthis's burlesque adventures, the former undergoes a metamorphosis from narrator and potential protagonist to narratee.[108] If we take a linear approach, the longer we read on with Charicleia and Theagenes in the narrative spotlight, the fainter becomes Cnemon's announcement that he will tell them about his further adventures.[109] When he finally reassumes the role of a storyteller, he does so in an unusual manner. At the beginning of Book Six, Calasiris, Nausicles, and Cnemon set out from Chemmis to find Theagenes. Calasiris asks Cnemon to tell his story (6.2.2–3),

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[104] See Eust. *Il.* 3.186: Iphidamas's death is brazen because Agamemnon kills him with his sword; death is a sleep that is as solid as bronze because one cannot wake up from it (στερρὸν διὰ τὸ ἀνέγερτον); it is as hard as bronze, as opposed to the Homeric soft, deep sleep (μαλακὸν κῶμα).
[105] See e.g. Luc. 9.701; Nic. *Ther.* 187–189.
[106] For an overview of other relevant sources, see Pelling (1988: 296–297; 318–321).
[107] For a brief attempt to connect these passages, see Montiglio (2016: 240–2).
[108] See above, *Intermezzo*.
[109] On these promises see above, *Section 1.4*; cf. 1.18.1; 2.9.5.

which he has always found an excuse of one kind or another to put off doing (ὃν πολλάκις … ὑπερθέμενος) … Cnemon consented and summarised all that he had already recounted (ἔλεγεν ἅπαντα ἐπιτέμνων ὅσα ἤδη … προδιηγήσατο) to Theagenes and Charicleia.

What follows is a recapitulation in indirect speech of this digest; the primary narrator thus offers a highly compressed version of events already known to the reader—the summary of a summary.[110] Cnemon then proceeds to material unknown to the reader. In narratological terms, his repeating analepsis turns into a completing one (6.2.3–4):[111]

Cnemon ended his tale by telling (καὶ τέλος ἐπῆγεν) how he had sailed off to Egypt with Anticles in search of Thisbe … In the period that followed he had faced many dangers and experienced many adventures (καὶ πολλοῖς μὲν ἄλλοις κινδύνοις πολλαῖς δὲ τύχαις τοὺς μεταξὺ χρόνους περιπεσών), finally being captured by buccaneers; but he somehow had managed to escape (εἶτά πως διαδράς), only to be captured for a second time as soon as he set foot in Egypt … That was how he had met Theagenes and Charicleia; he told them also of … everything thereafter (καταλέγων καὶ τὰ ἐπὶ τούτοις ἑξῆς), until he reached the part of his story that was already familiar (ἄχρι τῶν γνωριζομένων … πάντων) to Calasiris and Nausicles.

What deserves attention here is that readers find out *less* about this part of Cnemon's adventures than his internal audience: the primary narrator only offers a summary of what Cnemon tells Calasiris and Nausicles. Heliodorus highlights this information gap in various ways. Both the transition to the completing section and the return to known material are tagged with narratorial remarks (καὶ τέλος ἐπῆγεν … ἄχρι τῶν γνωριζομένων). Moreover, Heliodorus emphasises the great extent of the adventures unknown to the reader (πολλοῖς μὲν ἄλλοις κινδύνοις πολλαῖς δὲ τύχαις)—a claim reiterated by Cnemon soon after this scene.[112] These signals prompt the question of why we do not learn (at least) as much as his fellow travellers—a puzzle to which contrasting answers have been offered.

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[110] Cf. Morgan (2004b: 541), who wrongly assumes that Cnemon has not yet identified his host with the Nausicles known to Thisbe. On the function of summaries in the Greek novels, see Hägg (1971: 245–87); Fusillo (1997: 216); Morgan (2004c: 175); Kruchió (2018). On Heliodorus's concern with epitomisation, see above, *Section 3.2*; Whitmarsh (2010: 316–9); cf. Woronoff (1992: 39–40).

[111] See Genette (1972/1980: 51; 54).

[112] 'You [Fortune] drove me ashore in Egypt, to say nothing of the many things that intervened (πολλὰ τὰ μεταξὺ σιωπῶντα προσώκειλας, 6.7.4).' Cf. Morgan (2007a: 487 n. 13).

According to most interpreters, the compressed nature of Cnemon's account and its indirect presentation serve to emphasise his secondary importance compared to the protagonists and to herald the primary narrator's prevalence in the *Aethiopica*'s straightforward second half.[113] Heliodorus thus signals that he deliberately decides against turning the narrative and narratorial spotlight on Cnemon again; while the novel's first half is full of digressions, stories within stories, and riddles, the narrative hereafter decidedly focuses on Charicleia and Theagenes and gravitates towards the desired happy ending. As Paulsen puts it, the compressed account articulates Heliodorus's 'demonstratives Desinteresse'[114] in making room for Cnemon again. Finally, readers who embrace this approach might think, the primary narrator takes control in Book Six and starts doing his job, arranging the material in a more orderly fashion than in the *Aethiopica*'s first half. From this point of view, Calasiris's expectation that Cnemon's narrative would 'make the journey less arduous' (6.2.2) emphasises the 'complete "irrelevance"' of his story, as Hunter puts it.[115] This approach also resonates with a moralising reading of the *Aethiopica*: according to Morgan, the function of the summary is 'to retriangulate Cnemon ethically and bring out the full ethical significance of his withdrawal from the pilgrimage to Ethiopia.'[116] In sum, this interpretation of the summary corresponds to the reductive perspective: we discard irrelevant material, experience subplots as obstacles impeding the teleological drive of the main storyline, and attribute a 'serious' significance to the contrast between certain characters: along these lines, we understand figures like Cnemon in relation to Charicleia and Theagenes; Cnemon is silenced and left behind because he is unworthy of what the Apollonian oracle calls the 'great prize of those whose lives are passed in virtue' (ἀριστοβίων μέγ᾽ ἀέθλιον, 2.35.5).[117]

While this reading of Cnemon's summary resonates with important features of the *Aethiopica*, a contrasting interpretation has also been proposed. Let us start with Hefti's suggestion that Cnemon's unfulfilled narrative promise to the protagonists 'eröffnet dem Leser neue, geheimnisvolle Perspektiven in eine dunkle Vergangenheit. Dies wirkt stimulierend auf die Neugierde.'[118] If we keep this effect in mind, the general reference to further events in the summary continues teasing our curiosity. In a similar vein, Kasprzyk presents a detailed

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[113] See Paulsen (1992: 127–8); Hunter (1998: 41–2), calling attention to features resembling oral storytelling; Grethlein (2016: 321–2), emphasising the contrast between the portrayal of Cnemon- and Calasiris-narrator; Grethlein (2017: 97–8) on the spatial effect of the summary.
[114] Paulsen (1992: 128).
[115] Hunter (1998: 42).
[116] Morgan (2007a: 495).
[117] On this oracle see below, *Section 3.7*.
[118] Hefti (1950: 23).

reading of Cnemon's adventures: he points out that just like Calasiris's journey to Ethiopia, they are not corroborated elsewhere in the *Aethiopica*, and concludes from Cnemon's omissions and deferrals that he might have invented parts of his story.[119] Unlike reductive readers, Kasprzyk does not discard questions raised by Cnemon's narratives as irrelevant: instead, he offers a detective-like, suspicious examination of Cnemon's behaviour and utterances in Book Six, aiming to get to the bottom of his past. How does this approach relate to the reductive, teleological reading? Does it simply work against the grain of the *Aethiopica*'s principles? I think there is more to be said about the relation of these competing interpretations: Cnemon's summary *also* invites an approach that resembles Kasprzyk's.

Let us recall the beginning of Calasiris's second narrative session in Book Five. Cnemon is joined by Nausicles as his audience, so Calasiris recapitulates the known parts of his adventures. As Grethlein notes, 'the [primary] narrator only states that Calasiris recounts the adventures that he has already told Cnemon and then goes on to reproduce Calasiris' narration of untold events in direct speech.'[120] Comparing this passage to the summary in Book Six, Grethlein highlights their differences: Cnemon's narrative, in contrast to Calasiris's recapitulation, is 'densely, but fully'[121] summarised; unlike the rest of Calasiris's story, Cnemon's unknown adventures are only mentioned in passing. From these observations he concludes (in line with the established reading) that 'the synopsis [in Book Six] helps to close the Athenian novella.'[122] While I deem this interpretation plausible, I think there is another way to make sense of the narratological contrast in question. Calasiris takes over from the primary narrator where he starts treading new ground; by analogy, when we get to Cnemon's recapitulation of his adventures, we can reasonably expect that something similar will happen: once Cnemon reaches untold events, we may hope to learn about them *in extenso*. This anticipation is strengthened by Cnemon's unfulfilled promise to Charicleia and Theagenes: we can recall that he still 'owes' us a story. Such an expectation is confirmed by Achilles Tatius's habit of always switching from indirect to direct speech when he proceeds from a repeating to a completing analepsis.[123] With this in mind, we can reasonably conclude that Heliodorus denies us an account that we were desiring to obtain.

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[119] See Kasprzyk (2017: 161–3).
[120] Grethlein (2016: 322).
[121] *Ibid.*
[122] *Ibid.*
[123] See Ach. Tat. 8.15.4–16.7; 8.17.1–5; 8.51–53; cf. 2.34, where Menelaus's unknown story is presented in direct speech, whereas Cleinias's and Clitophon's known stories are mentioned only briefly. See Puccini-Delbey (2001: 97–8); Morgan (2004a: 503–4); cf. Hägg (1971: 180–2).

This effect is reinforced by several factors. We have seen that the primary narrator marks the transition to the completing analepsis, calling attention to the narratological development. In the present context the function of Cnemon's story as pastime and the emphasis on the quantity of omitted adventures reveal a new significance: we can read them as highlighting that we are missing out on an extensive and entertaining account. Moreover, the synopsis reminds us that on his journey to Egypt, Cnemon was accompanied by Anticles, and that we never learn what happened to him.[124] Why does Heliodorus not display the same diligence as in Thermouthis's case, economically pinching off the narrative thread that has become dispensable? Along the lines of a suspicious and curious interpretation, the Anticles question only fuels our frustration. In a similar vein, Kasprzyk even entertains the possibility that Cnemon has invented this character as a *Beglaubigungsapparat*[125]—an option that, we can add, even casts doubt on parts of his Athenian narrative in Book Two.[126]

As several elements of Kasprzyk's method and results show, his reading resonates with the pluralising perspective. He does not distinguish between relevant and irrelevant characters or puzzles; resisting the teleological flow of the narrative, he descends into a deep rabbit hole— one that might not even be there from a reductive point of view. He implicitly assumes that if we look close enough at characters, we can make sense of their behaviour, reconstruct their motivations, and get to the bottom of their secrets.[127] Accordingly, such hermeneutical curiosity leads to detective-like suspicion: the closer we look at Cnemon, the clearer we see how much he does *not* tell us, which prompts the question of *why*. As the text does not provide clear answers, we surmise that he has something to hide. According to Pavel's terminology, this perspective results in a reading that emphasises the '*enacted* incompleteness'[128] of the fictional world. It is telling that Kasprzyk opens his discussion by calling attention to similarities between Cnemon's synopsis and Calasiris's Ethiopian narrative, whose dubious nature he emphasises. This connection illustrates well that the mission puzzle is a central interpretative seed and contributes significantly to the *Aethiopica*'s multiperspectival structure: Kasprzyk's particular conception of the Calasiris puzzle has a considerable impact on his reading of other passages. Setting the possible ways to read Cnemon's last narrative in relation to each other,

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[124] Cf. 2.9.4.

[125] See above, p. 106 n. 119.

[126] Note that Eust. *Od*. 2.31 offers a similar explanation for Hom. *Od*. 12.389–390, the passage arguably echoed by Cnemon's introduction of Anticles (see above, *Section 1.5*)—with the difference that according to Eustathius, it is not Odysseus but Homer who spots the inconsistency and quickly constructs a source. Speculating that Eustathius's interpretation might be rooted in earlier scholarship (which Heliodorus might have known), we can argue that the Homeric reference serves to underline the unreliability of Cnemon-narrator.

[127] I shall elaborate on such a completing approach in *Section 3.6*.

[128] Pavel (1986: 108); P.'s emphasis.

we can conclude that this episode is highly responsive to both the reductive and the pluralising perspective; it is constructed as a wormhole that leads into opposed directions. As in the case of Calasiris's mission, a closer look at the contrasting interpretations thus reveals that they are *symptomatic* of the conflicting reader-perspectives at work in the *Aethiopica*.

6. Minds under the radar

The way characters find out about certain things (or miss out on them) is crucial to the *Aethiopica*'s plot dynamics—especially in the novel's first half, where we gradually learn about the protagonists' past via Calasiris, who might or might not provide a reliable account of his cognitive processes. Depending on how we understand these, we get radically different versions of the main storyline. Mind-reading, in the sense Zunshine uses this term,[129] is therefore a pillar of the novel's multiperspectivity. In this section I shall take a distinctly cognitive approach and explore how the *Aethiopica* invites us to relate to the minds of its characters.

A thought-provoking phenomenon found in Books Six to Ten is what I call 'hidden information transfer': characters seem to receive essential information behind the scenes—that is to say, in parts of the action omitted in the narrative and only hinted at later. In two instances Heliodorus introduces explicit back references. First, Theagenes *recalls* the many times Charicleia told him that Hydaspes is her father (πολλάκις ἔφραζες, 9.24.3). While the protagonists' interactions at certain points suggest that Charicleia has indeed filled him in on what she has learned from Calasiris about her provenance,[130] the *Aethiopica* does not feature a scene in which she relates these things to Theagenes. Second, when she has a nervous breakdown upon learning that Thyamis has snatched Theagenes from a Persian troop, Calasiris comforts her and emphasises his personal interest in travelling to Memphis: 'You know full well from what you have already heard (οἶσθά που πάντως προακηκουῖα) that Thyamis is my son' (6.9.5). As Morgan points out, 'we must presume that Kalasiris has on some unnarrated occasion mentioned [this] to Charikleia.'[131] While Nimis considers this a 'minor lapse,'[132] implying that there is an unwritten rule according to which the narrator must not refer to earlier

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[129] According to Zunshine (2006: 6), mind-reading is the activity of explaining 'people's behavior in terms of their thoughts, feelings, beliefs, and desires.'
[130] See e.g. 8.11.7–9.
[131] Morgan (2008: 481 n. 161).
[132] Nimis (2004: 191).

unnarrated events in represented speech, I think we have no reason to blame Heliodorus here. This device, known as 'emancipation of speech,' is frequently deployed in the *Odyssey*, sometimes to great dramatic effect.[133] Moreover, the specific form in which emancipation of speech occurs in these two scenes—the event in question is a conversation in which somebody receives vital information—can already be found in Cnemon's story: when he enters his father's bedroom and Aristippus arrests him, Demaenete shouts, 'Is not this what I anticipated (προηγόρευον)? I told you to beware of the boy. I said he would attack you if he had the chance' (1.12.4). With this direct speech Cnemon-narrator fills in his audience on a conversation that took place earlier, thereby achieving a similar effect as the primary narrator does in the above-mentioned instances.[134] Considering these parallels, we can conclude that there is no reason why we should resort to the questionable concept of authorial incompetence here; we can instead turn to a more fruitful task and explore the cognitive potential of this device.

I suggest that instances of hidden information transfer can be interpreted in contrasting ways, which (broadly speaking) correspond to the options we have encountered in the previous section. On the one hand, we can consider this phenomenon according to the reductive perspective, as a manifestation of the streamlined, straightforward narrative style dominating the *Aethiopica*'s second half. Instead of introducing extensive, retarding analepses to explain Charicleia's and Theagenes's states of knowledge, the primary narrator chooses to 'bring them up to date' in an efficient way and thus avoids compromising the teleological drive of the plot. If, however, we adopt the pluralising perspective, things look different: instances of hidden information transfer then highlight the fragmentary quality of Heliodorus's narrative technique and make us aware that characters might be passing on information in untold scenes, 'under the radar.' This is what H. Porter Abbott has in mind when he suggests that if we 'adopt cognitive lenses, the event structure of narrative can appear far busier than what is determined to be its actual sequence of events.'[135] For readers who are eager to focus on the *Aethiopica*'s many puzzles, which often revolve around 'who knew what and when' questions, this

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[133] See e.g. Hom. *Od.* 22.154–156, where Telemachus reveals that he left the door open. On this device, see de Jong (2001: 41).

[134] The only difference is that in Books Six and Nine the content of the omitted conversations is already known to the reader; unlike in Cnemon's story, there is no surprise effect. Cases of narratorial remarks where Nimis's criticism would be justified to a certain extent can be found in *Leucippe and Clitophon*: for example, when Clitophon introduces Sostratus, he claims that he 'was a commander of war, as I mentioned (ὡς ἔφην, Ach. Tat. 2.14.2),' whereas this information is new. However, even here it is more reasonable to blame the incompetent or careless homodiegetic narrator than Achilles Tatius; see Morgan (2004a: 495). On Clitophon's characterisation see De Temmerman (2014: 152–87); on his unreliability see Morgan (1996a: 179–85); Morales (2004: 54–6).

[135] Abbott (2015: 111).

realisation encourages speculation, opens up all sorts of wormholes, and thus multiplies interpretative possibilities.

And indeed, the novel's second half features several instances where the source of information displayed by a character is not spelled out or immediately clear. Thyamis's resurfacing is a good example. When he is separated from the protagonists in Book One, he thinks that he has killed Chariclea, whom he believes to be Theagenes's sister. When he meets her again in Memphis, however, he does not display any surprise at all—neither seeing her alive nor witnessing her intimacy with Theagenes (7.7–8). Readers adopting the reductive perspective might not attribute great significance to this contrast—or they might take it as a corroboration of their streamlined, selective approach. As far as their cognitive processing of the plot is concerned, they 'effortlessly'[136] (intuitively) read Thyamis's mind and simply deduce from his behaviour that he knows about Chariclea's survival and her relationship to Theagenes. From this point of view, how he found out is simply irrelevant. By contrast, readers adopting the pluralising perspective are motivated to dig deeper and explore possible ways to narrativise Thyamis's mental development: when did he learn all this? From whom?[137] Here the hermeneutical perspective's lack of interest in distinguishing between relevant and irrelevant questions is particularly striking. As readers know perfectly well, what Thyamis has learned is true; consequently, the endeavour to figure out his source is an end in itself.[138]

Here it is worth pointing out that there are further signals directing our attention to untold events concerning Thyamis. After killing Thisbe, he is captured by rival bandits (1.32–33; 5.4.3). The next time we hear about him, he is the 'newly chosen leader' (ἔναγχος ἀποδειχθεὶς ἔξαρχος, 6.3.4) of a new crew. We find out neither how he escapes the bounty hunters who were targeting him nor how he manages to regain power. While the spotlight is directed at Chariclea throughout Book Six, we only get glimpses of this other storyline: Thyamis frees Theagenes from a Persian troop (6.3.4; 6.13); by the time they arrive in Memphis, Theagenes has become his right hand (7.1). Again, the fragmentary nature of this plotline makes sense from a reductive perspective: when the protagonists are reunited in Book Seven, all that matters is what comes next. However, the opposite, pluralising approach is here fuelled by a generic convention. With slight variations, all earlier extant Greek novels handle the common motif of the protagonists' separation in the same way, always providing an account of both threads.[139]

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[136] See Zunshine (2006: 13–6).

[137] Homeric scholarship confirms that ancient readers were interested in such questions; see above, *Section 1.5*.

[138] Zunshine would say that this is a particularly pure instance of interpretation as an exercise in mind-reading and mind-tracking.

[139] See Hägg (1971: 138–88).

In Xenophon and Chariton the primary narrator switches back and forth between them—and so does Longus, who separates Chloe and Daphnis only for short periods (Longus 2.22–30). Achilles Tatius, whose homodiegetic (and thus limited) narrator cannot follow suit, comes up with various ways to fill in the gaps: sometimes Clitophon witnesses what happens to Leucippe;[140] in other instances he learns about her adventures from her or from third parties. In view of this convention, it is surprising that we do not get a fuller account of Thyamis's and Theagenes's adventures.[141]

Returning to our original question, can we solve the puzzle of Thyamis's insights? While Heliodorus does not give us explicit clues, there is only one person who possesses all relevant information and whom we know Thyamis meets between killing Thisbe and arriving in Memphis: Theagenes. There is a further sign that he might be the source in question: we learn that he and Thyamis develop a confidential friendship—another process of which we only get fleeting glimpses. Taking a detective's approach and scanning the *Aethiopica*, readers can find several clues. When Thyamis meets the protagonists for the first time, 'he hopes to have in the young man [Theagenes], if he survived, a valuable addition to his band' (1.4.2). Before Calasiris reminds Charicleia that Thyamis is his son, he argues that if he snatched Theagenes from the Persian troop, 'then he must be safe, for there already exist ties of acquaintance and friendship between him and Thyamis' (φιλίας … καὶ γνώσεως προϋπαρχούσης, 6.9.5).[142] When they arrive in Memphis, this is confirmed: Theagenes and Thyamis behave like good comrades and friends (7.5.3–5). To conclude, while readers adopting a reductive perspective may consider Thyamis's updated state of knowledge in Book Seven as an inconspicuous narrative shortcut advancing the plot, the very same detail is receptive to a contrasting interpretation. Readers adopting the pluralising perspective can understand it as an invitation to recall Thyamis's and Theagenes's unconventionally fragmentary adventures, scan the novel for evidence of their developing friendship, and speculate about their interactions. The abundance of relevant material that we find if we embark on this scavenger hunt is a further point in favour of my thesis that the *Aethiopica* continues rewarding such an approach after Book Five, strategically sustaining the two perspectives and playing them off against each other.

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[140] Via a letter in Ach. Tat. 5.18.3–6; via an embedded narrative in 8.16.

[141] Note the recurring pattern that Heliodorus subverts generic conventions to contribute to the pluralising perspective.

[142] Here, by the way, we can spot another possible instance of hidden information transfer: who told him so? Charicleia? Cnemon?

While the isolated question of Thyamis's source is a relatively easy nut to crack, the *Aethiopica*'s finale features a possible instance of hidden information transfer that is a deep hermeneutical rabbit hole.[143] When Charicleia and Theagenes elope from Delphi, Charicles is aware of her Ethiopian background but does not know who her parents are. According to the established reading of a brief passage in Book Ten, however, he seems to have acquired this piece of information by the time he demands her back from Hydaspes. When the king orders Theagenes to hand over Charicleia, he responds, 'it is not the man who committed the crime … but the man who has the proceeds of the crime in his possession who should do the giving back. That man is you [Hydaspes]!' Theagenes closes with the following remark (10.37.2):

Ἀπόδος, εἰ μὴ σὴν θυγατέρα εἶναι Χαρίκλειαν καὶ οὗτος ὁμολογήσειεν.

In Morgan's translation,

Give her back then, unless this man [Charicles] too will admit that Charicleia is *your* [Hydaspes's] daughter![144]

If we understand this sentence as rendered here and adopt the pluralising perspective, we can conjecture a double instance of hidden information transfer: the demand indicates both that Charicles is aware of Charicleia's royal descent and that Theagenes knows or at least suspects so. How did Charicles find out who her parents are? How could Theagenes get wind of this? As in the case of Thyamis's state of knowledge, we can spot thought-provoking clues if we take a detective-like approach. In his recapitulation Charicles tells Hydaspes that Thyamis revealed to him 'everything' (ἅπαντα, 10.36.4) about Charicleia. This lack of specificity does not exactly facilitate reaching a clear conclusion; moreover, readers may recall Cnemon's and Calasiris's similar statements, which also give rise to interpretative puzzles.[145] Considering the information featured in Charicles's speech, it is reasonable to assume that Thyamis's account includes what happened to Charicleia after her arrival in Egypt—that she was captured by him when he was a bandit, taken to Memphis, detained by Arsace, and subsequently sent to her husband Oroondates. Along these lines, readers may speculate that Thyamis also told Charicles about Charicleia's parents. It is striking that this solution thus reveals a connection to a similar

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[143] For an extensive discussion of this puzzle, see Kruchió (2017).
[144] Morgan's emphasis.
[145] See above, *Sections 1.7*; *2.3*.

puzzle, Thyamis's state of knowledge in Book Seven. Readers who adopt the pluralising perspective and are willing to go all the way can therefore even speculate that Thyamis might learn from Theagenes who Charicleia is and passes on this information to Charicles; this would even explain why Theagenes suspects that Charicles knows …

Of course, all this is guesswork, and numerous interpreters have categorically rejected such an approach, most decidedly Morgan: 'In a novel, where the author has complete control over his material, one is not entitled to make suppositions about events or motivations which are not specifically stated or at least hinted at by the author … We are not entitled to assume that Thyamis revealed Charicleia's parentage to Charicles, for the simple reason that Heliodorus nowhere says that he did.'[146] My argument, by contrast, is that this very approach is firmly written into the *Aethiopica*; for readers adopting the pluralising perspective, the puzzle of Charicles's state of knowledge is a particularly demanding and exciting challenge.

Moreover, scholars criticising Heliodorus for authorial incompetence in this scene neglect a further option: I propose that we can understand Theagenes's comment in a way that does not give rise to the interpretative problem in the first place. Let us reconsider the passage in question:

Ἀπόδος, εἰ μὴ σὴν θυγατέρα εἶναι Χαρίκλειαν καὶ οὗτος ὁμολογήσειεν.

Let us start with a semantical and a syntactical observation. First, while Morgan translates ὁμολογεῖν as 'to admit,' this verb can also refer to something previously unknown to the subject, meaning 'to concede.'[147] Second, in the rare combination with an imperative in the *apodosis*, εἰ followed by an optative refers to an imaginary event in the future.[148] In view of these points, we can read Theagenes's request as expressing that he only considers it a vague possibility that Charicles should acknowledge Charicleia's royal ancestry: 'Give her back, unless even this man should concede that Charicleia is your daughter [and this is unlikely to happen].' To put it more emphatically, this can be paraphrased as 'You must give him Charicleia back, because he does not even know that she actually is your daughter!' According to this interpretation, Theagenes addresses Hydaspes exclusively, cynically emphasising the absurdity of his demand, and expresses that it would be hard to convince Charicles of Charicleia's true provenance. If we embrace this reading, the puzzle disappears.

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[146] Morgan (1978: 570). See also Hefti (1950: 95); Sandy (1982b: 22–3); Morgan (1983: 107 n. 74); Woronoff (1992: 41), all of whom suggest that this is an authorial mistake.
[147] See LSJ s.v. ὁμολογέω II.2.
[148] See Smyth (1956: §§ 2322; 2359; 2364).

Does its relatively straightforward nature make this interpretation more attractive than the established one? I would say so—but quickly add, only if we prioritise the reductive perspective. While Morgan's reading turns Charicles's and Theagenes's states of knowledge into a rabbit hole, this new interpretation results in fewer questions and even enriches the scene with dramatic irony. By the very act of expressing his doubts that there is an easy way out of the situation, Theagenes contributes to its resolution: he is the first to link Charicleia to Hydaspes in the presence of Charicles, thereby triggering a reconciliatory recognition scene. Moreover, further dramatic irony results from Charicles's initial ignorance: pretending that Charicleia is his biological daughter, he demands her back from Hydaspes—not knowing that he is her natural father.[149] What is important here is that such instances of dramatic irony resonate with the narrative's teleological momentum, as they widen the gap between how readers and characters relate to the events:[150] unlike the fictive agents, we know exactly where the action is leading, are amused by their cluelessness, and enjoy our privileged plan view. To conclude, while the established reading of Theagenes's statement is attractive for readers who adopt the pluralising perspective, this new interpretation resonates with the reductive perspective.

7. The Apollonian Oracle

When it comes to teleological narration, oracles and dreams play a central role in Greek literature: across various genres, they foreshadow crucial elements of the story's outcome and thus encapsulate the *telos* in the action.[151] Neither the *Aethiopica* nor the other extant novels are exceptions: they all make use of this proleptic device.[152] Dreams and oracles, however, often come coded and require an interpretative effort;[153] as Whitmarsh puts it, they thus 'mobilise … the … tension between infinite narrative potentiality and goal-oriented

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[149] See Lateiner (1997: 436).

[150] On the gap between readers' and characters' experiences that is characteristic of teleological narrative, see Grethlein (2013: 200–5). On dramatic irony in the Meroe episode, see Morgan (1989a).

[151] See e.g. Morris (1983) on dreams in Homer; Grethlein (2013: 203–17) on oracles and their teleological momentum in Herodotus; Devereux (1976) on dreams in tragedy.

[152] For general studies see Weinstock (1934); MacAlister (1996); Saïd (1997); Whitmarsh (2011: 191–204). Hägg (1971: 213–44) offers a good narratological analysis. On Heliodorus's use of this device, see Bartsch (1989: 80–108); Morgan (1989a, 2007a: 499–502); Létoublon (1993: 202–3); Hilton (2001). On Xenophon of Ephesus see Plastira-Valkanou (2001); Liatsi (2004). On Chariton see Auger (1983).

[153] See e.g. Winkler (1982/1999: 307–14); Bartsch (1989: 80–108); Hunter (1998: 48–50); Whitmarsh (2011: 195–204).

teleology.'[154] To drive home my thesis that Heliodorus does something more special than that, I shall turn to the novel's most prominent oracle. The Oracle of Delphi proclaims the following prophecy, which has received a lot of attention in scholarship (2.35.5):[155]

> Consider her who has elegance (χάριν) at first but fame (κλέος)
>> at the end, Delphi, and the goddess's (θεᾶς) offspring (γενέτην).
> They shall leave my temple, carve the wave
>> and come (ἵξοντ᾽) to the dark land of the sun (ἠελίου).
> There they shall garner the great prize (μέγ᾽ ἀέθλιον) of those whose lives are passed
>>>> [in virtue (ἀριστοβίων),
> a white garland on blackening temples (λευκὸν ἐπὶ κροτάφων στέμμα
>>>>> [μελαινομένων).

Whitmarsh highlights that the oracle has both teleological and hermeneutical momenta.[156] On the one hand, it can be seen as a condensed, linear version of the plot: Charicleia and Theagenes, whose names are encrypted in the first distich, make their way from Delphi to Ethiopia ('the dark land of the sun'), where they are rewarded for their virtues;[157] the penultimate line thus anticipates the connection between their chastity and the happy ending. Moreover, if Calasiris is to be believed, the prophecy has not only a proleptic but also a dynamic force,[158] triggering his activities that result in the escape from Delphi. On the other hand, the oracle is the object of much interpretation in Calasiris's story. Furthermore, it becomes increasingly enigmatic towards its end; most significantly, it remains unclear how exactly the last line is realised in the narrative.[159] While I agree with Whitmarsh, who argues that the same teleological and hermeneutical forces are at work in this prophecy as, for example, in the oracle kicking off the action of *Anthia and Habrocomes*,[160] I think there is more to Heliodorus's use of these opposing principles. What deserves particular attention is how the

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[154] Whitmarsh (2011: 196).
[155] See Hefti (1950: 44); Morgan (1978: 618, 1989a, 2007a: 501–2); Winkler (1982/1999: 329–30); Bartsch (1989: 102); Bowie (1989: 226–7), calling attention to the oracle's unusual form; Paulsen (1995: 353–4); MacAlister (1996: 74–5), with a focus on audience reaction; Grethlein (2017: 99–101). For some stylistic remarks see Rainart (2017).
[156] See Whitmarsh (2011: 201–4).
[157] See Winkler (1982/1999: 329); Whitmarsh (2011: 202).
[158] On the kinetic potential of oracles, see Whitmarsh (2011: 199–202).
[159] Whitmarsh (2011: 203–4) *contra* Bartsch (1989: 102 n. 9); see further Morgan (1989a: 318); Hilton (1998: 89); Jones (2006: 555), who connects the passage in question to the white and black horse in Plato's analogy of the chariot.
[160] Xen. Ephes. 1.6.2; see Whitmarsh (2011: 198–201).

oracle's two sides are woven into the novel's fabric: depending on which side of the oracle we privilege, it has a different impact on our understanding of Calasiris and the relationship between Sisimithres and Charicles in Book Ten.

If we privilege the teleological momentum of the prophecy, it highlights that Calasiris executes the will of the gods when he convinces and helps the protagonists to elope from Delphi. Even if readers envisage that he deploys questionable methods in doing so, the proleptic oracle confirms that the end justifies Calasiris's means and thus emphasises his status as a genuine holy man. Moreover, the oracle's content is a perfect match with Sisimithres's summary and thus elevates it over Charicles's rival account. This imbalance is confirmed by the 'kinetic'[161] role of the prophecy in resolving the last obstacle to the happy ending. When the audience approves of Sisimithres's suggestion to abolish human sacrifices (10.41.2),

> Charicles recalled the oracle (ἐνθύμιον … ἐλάμβανε) at Delphi and found the prophecy that the gods had given long ago fulfilled in fact (τοῖς ἔργοις βεβαιούμενον τὸ πάλαι παρὰ τῶν θεῶν προαγορευθὲν ηὕρισκεν): it had said that the young pair would flee from Delphi (ἐκ τῶν Δελφῶν διαδράντας) and

> > come (ἵξεσθ᾽) to the dark land of the sun.
> > There they shall garner the great prize for the virtue of their lives,
> > a white garland on blackening temples.

From a reductive perspective, the agency of the oracle drives home the superiority of Sisimithres's point of view: Charicles finally realises that he was wrong all along; his initial, sceptical attitude is overwritten by the prophecy and Sisimithres's speech, the two of which here represent the same thing: the ultimate, proper way of relating to the plot.[162]

Things, however, look different if we take a contrasting approach and concentrate on the hermeneutical intricacies of the prophecy. Let us start by having a look at Calasiris's reaction to Persinna's letter (4.9.1):

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[161] See Whitmarsh (2011: 199).
[162] This is the established interpretation; see e.g. Morgan (1989a: 318–9); Fusillo (1997: 222); cf. Kruchió (2018: 164–5).

My heart was thankful that the mystery has been explained (πρὸς τὴν τῶν ἀγνοουμένων εὕρεσιν), that the riddle of the oracle has been resolved (τῶν χρησθέντων ἤδη τήν ἐπίλυσιν).[163]

While Calasiris proceeds to emphasise that he was worried about the future, this passage purports that by that point of his story he has fully understood the oracle. On the one hand, we know that Calasiris has deciphered those parts that are relevant to his present situation (i.e. the first four lines). However, it is impossible that he could have deciphered the penultimate line, the full meaning of which only becomes clear against the background of the virginity test in Book Ten. Moreover, how could he know what the last line means, which remains obscure even to readers familiar with the entire *Aethiopica*? In sum, if we focus on the enigmatic side of the prophecy, we become aware that on yet another occasion Calasiris acts as a charlatan, presenting himself as wiser than he is.

Let us now reconsider the role of the prophecy in the finale. If we do not know what the last line signifies, we have good reasons to assume that Charicles does not understand it either; this suspicion distances us from his conclusion that the entire oracle has been 'fulfilled in fact.' From this point of view, Charicles does not simply come to his senses and give in to Sisimithres's objectively superior perspective; he is instead lulled into the belief that absolutely everything went according to the predetermined plan.[164] Moreover, if we look close, we can find a final trace of Charicles's resistance against the ending in the words introducing the oracle quote. The way Charicles recalls things,[165] the prophecy said or indicated (ἔφραζεν) that the protagonists would reach Ethiopia ἐκ τῶν Δελφῶν διαδράντας. As this phrase matches the last three and a half metra of a hexameter, it invites comparison with the corresponding line of the prophecy, according to which they would 'leave' (προλιπόντες) Apollo's temple. This difference is thought-provoking. The verb διαδιδράσκω, describing from Charicles's point of view the elopement of Charicleia and Theagenes, is less neutral, often used in connection with runaway slaves and convicts;[166] Charicles's perspective is thus reminiscent of his summary, which presents the flight as a criminal act committed by the villains Theagenes and Calasiris.

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[163] On the metaliterary implications of Calasiris's reaction to the letter, see Létoublon (1994: 161–2); Nimis (1999: 234).
[164] Cf. the protagonists' unawareness of the (reductive) meaning attributed to the ending by Sisimithres; see above, *Section 3.2.c.*
[165] The version in Book Ten is focalised by Charicles (ἐνθύμιον … ἐλάμβανε … βεβαιούμενον … ηὕρισκεν).
[166] See LJS s.v. διαδιδράσκω; cf. Thuc. 7.85.4; Dio Cass. 68.22.3.

If we focus on the hermeneutical intricacies of the prophecy, its reprise in the *Aethiopica*'s ending does not buttress its teleological, reductive force but undermines it.

To draw the lines together, the Apollonian oracle proved to be a good test case for the differences between Whitmarsh's approach and mine. We both start from the same observations on the same passage. Whitmarsh establishes a relationship between the opposing forces at play in the prophecy to general narrative impulses featured in all Greek novels. I, in turn, conclude that Heliodorus does something more ambitious and special with this tension than his predecessors. He inextricably links a passage that is responsive to conflicting perspectives to other equally multiperspectival parts of the novel (Calasiris's character, the relationship between Sisimithres's and Charicles's summaries, Charicles's conversion). Together with the other passages and devices discussed in this chapter, these add up to a network of interpretative wormholes, each of which responds in contrasting ways to the reductive and the pluralising perspective. Heliodorus's novel does not just punctually explore the tensions resulting from coexistent yet opposed forces: the entire *Aethiopica* invites conflicting approaches and is composed in a way that maximises the contrast between the two extreme, one-sided interpretations, between which readers can navigate. It is this multiperspectival quality that lies at the core of the *Aethiopica*'s Protean nature.

CHAPTER FOUR: IMPERIAL COGNITIVE IDENTITIES[1]

1. Towards a historically informed reading

So far, my thesis has sought to illuminate the *Aethiopica*'s Protean nature by examining how a text-internal reading reveals different paths through the novel's narrative maze. Now it is time to build on these 'immanent textual readings'[2] and acknowledge that literature and reading have never existed in a historical vacuum. What can we say about the relationship between Heliodorus's work and the cultural landscape of its time? How is it that one and the same novel has prompted scholars to consider it primarily as a philosophical work,[3] one promoting—or opposing—Christianity,[4] or as a celebration of Hellenism?[5] Such readings have a strong paradigmatic momentum,[6] assuming that Heliodorus pursues a coherent ideological agenda; they aim to pinpoint what the narrative as a whole is 'about,' an approach that I do not share. Instead, I shall explore the *Aethiopica*'s responsivity to two different contemporary reading communities: Platonist philosophers[7] and rhetorically educated *pepaideumenoi*. In doing so, this chapter builds on the previous ones to explain how it is that the *Aethiopica* is so susceptible to the contrasting modes of interpretation associated with these groups. In short, instead of asking what the novel's inherent ideological programme is, I shall explore how the *Aethiopica* takes shape when we place it in different cultural environments.

Before expanding on the methodology of this chapter, I shall briefly address the question of why I have not added Christians, without doubt an important reading community of the later imperial period, to the two above-mentioned groups. On the one hand, this was a practical

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[1] I shall outline my concept of cognitive identities later in this section.
[2] Fineman (1989: 51).
[3] See Dowden (1996).
[4] For Christian readings see e.g. Ramelli (2009, 2001/2012); for an anti-Christian interpretation, see Morgan (2005).
[5] See Morgan (2014). A notable exception is Whitmarsh (2011: 154), calling Heliodorus 'syncretistic rather than particularist, polyphonically universalist rather than partisan.'
[6] On paradigm and syntagm see Whitmarsh (2011: 204–13).
[7] I shall avoid the term 'Neoplatonism' and stick to the more general 'late Platonism,' as major elements of the allegorical methods with which *Section 4.2* is concerned go back to the pre-Plotinian tradition. On the problematic distinction between Platonism, Middle- and Neoplatonism, see e.g. Gatti (1996: 12–4); Remes (2008: 1–10).

decision: Christian literary production (in both Greek and Latin) explodes during the late imperial period, and the early church is anything but a homogeneous ideological movement; as a result, any attempt to offer a well-informed, nuanced account of what it might have meant in Heliodorus's time to read fiction as a Christian would go beyond the scope of a compact PhD chapter. On the other hand, my choice to exclude Christianity also has to do with the relationship between this movement and Platonism: as regards their social and intellectual history as well as their interpretative strategies, they are closely connected.[8] What is particularly important here is that for both movements allegorical interpretation was a central hermeneutical device,[9] and, as we shall see, allegoresis *per se* has a strong reductive force. As far as their cognitive principles are concerned, we can thus say that Christian and late Platonist reading strategies are very similar in a way that is central to the *Aethiopica*'s multiperspectivity. Considering that a main aim of this chapter is to explore the novel's ability to 'react' differently to conflicting readerly approaches, we can conclude that in regard to this endeavour, the exclusion of Christian material does not have grave consequences for my project.

The reorientation of this chapter towards cultural contexts calls for a different mode of arguing than the one prevailing in earlier parts of my thesis—one that is less analytical and inductive, instead more associative and discursive. Moreover, my reasoning will be inevitably speculative: I do not attempt a historical *re*construction of how people *did* read Heliodorus in antiquity. Not only would such an approach lead to various methodological pitfalls, we also know too little about the actual readership of the *Aethiopica* (or any other Greek novel): the scarce papyrological evidence only allows for tentative speculation about the popularity of individual authors, and the few supposed references in imperial literature to the reading of novels are not helpful for such a project either.[10] As far as actual readers are concerned, I concur with Hunter: 'the very variety of "the ancient novel" allowed novelists to exploit the expectation of a diverse … audience response, and that in turn might suggest a diverse … audience for the novels themselves.'[11] Along these lines, I shall embrace the inevitably hypothetical nature of such an endeavour and explore—based on what we know about traditions of interpretation in the imperial era—how contemporary readers *might* have approached the *Aethiopica*.

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[8] For a collection of essays on late Platonist and Christian thought, see the first part of O'Meara (ed. 1982). On the influence of Platonism on Christian theology, see e.g. Rist (1996: 397–401); Dimitrov (2014), comparing the cases of Gregory of Nyssa and Synesius of Cyrene. For an overview of late Platonic tenets that made this philosophy attractive for Christians, see Moran (2014: 510–3).

[9] On Christian allegoresis see e.g. Dawson (2002); Boyarin (2010); Turner (2010).

[10] See Stephens (1994a), focusing on papyrological evidence; Bowie (1994b, 1996).

[11] Hunter (2008: 270).

Even so, it is important to stay within the realm of plausibility—and this is where we have to address Heliodorus's uncertain dating. While I agree with the current *communis opinio* that he wrote in the late fourth century C.E. and shall proceed on the basis of this assumption, all evidence in its favour is circumstantial;[12] and indeed, certain scholars have advocated an earlier, third-century date.[13] However, if we consider the continuity of the reading communities on which this chapter focuses, this uncertainty does not lead to methodological problems. Late Platonists were already active in the third century, and their methods of philosophical allegoresis go back to even earlier, now lost Middle Platonists and Neopythagoreans.[14] If I thus explore how the *Aethiopica* responds to an approach that, for example, corresponds to Porphyry's allegorising method, this experiment does not presuppose that Heliodorus wrote after Porphyry. Furthermore, as far as imperial *paideia* is concerned, it is important to acknowledge continuity in the opposite direction. The rhetorical culture that scholarship often labels as the 'Second Sophistic' was carried on by *pepaideumenoi* and their schools in the fourth century.[15] It is thus reasonable to adduce 'sophistic' authors from the second and third centuries when developing an 'educated' perspective on Heliodorus. As I prefer not to reopen the issue of Heliodorus's dating, I shall avoid referring to his time as 'late antiquity': due to the vagueness of this concept and the *Aethiopica*'s uncertain dating, doing so would misleadingly create the illusion of historical clarity.[16]

With these considerations in mind, let us look at the environment in which this chapter places the *Aethiopica*. In the fourth century the intellectual landscape of the Greco-Roman world was dominated by three communities for which the engagement with texts was an essential activity:[17] philosophical circles who saw themselves in the tradition of Plato,

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[12] For recent discussions of Heliodorus's dating, see Mecella (2014); Kruchió (2019); for further details see Morgan (1996b: 417–21). On linguistic evidence supporting a late dating, see Wifstrand (1945: 104–9).

[13] See e.g. Szepessy (1975); Bowie (1985: 696); Swain (1996: 423–4). For an impartial overview see Bowie (2008: 32–5).

[14] On the relevant aspects of Plotinus's intellectual background, see Lamberton (1986: 84–5); Gatti (1996: 12–3); on Neopythagorean interpreters of Plato such as Numenius, see Tarrant (2000: 84–6). Porph. *Plot.* 14 mentions that Numenius and Cronius were part of Plotinus's teaching curriculum. Porphyry's *On the cave of the nymphs* (probably after 262 C.E., hereafter '*On the cave*') draws heavily on these lost interpreters of Homer; see Akçay (2019).

[15] On the continuity between the 'Second Sophistic' and Greek culture in the fourth century, see Swain (2004); Van Hoof (2010, 2013). On rhetorical education in the fourth century, see e.g. Cribiore (2007, 2009); Watts (2012); Van Nuffelen (2014). On Libanius's *progymnasmata* see Gibson (2014); on his interest in Second Sophistic authors, see Nesselrath (2014); on his agonistic concept of Greekness, see Stenger (2014). For evidence on continuity in sophistry in the later imperial era, see also Puech (2002); Janiszewski et al. (2015).

[16] Some recently proposed starting points of late antiquity: 250 C.E. (Bowersock et al. (eds 1999)); 283 (Rousseau (ed. 2009)); 300 (Johnson (ed. 2012)).

[17] As I will not be focusing on the characteristics of individual philosophical schools and circles of *pepaideumenoi*, it suffices to treat each of them as single communities; see also the end of this section.

Aristotle, and other authorities, studying and commenting on their works;[18] the educated Greek-speaking elite, for whose members it was indispensable to possess rhetorical skills and be familiar with a canon of classical literature;[19] and finally, the group excluded from this study, Christians, whose religious routine has always featured various ways of engaging with Scripture. We can consider these circles as textual and interpretative communities,[20] each of which drew on a well-developed hermeneutical tradition. Their members' engagement with texts could take on different forms, depending on the circle in question and their role therein: for example, they composed philosophical (or theological) commentaries,[21] engaged with literary works in orations (and with Scripture in homilies),[22] taught, studied, and discussed authoritative texts.[23] In short, for the members of these circles, reading and interpreting certain texts in certain ways was an essential means of constructing and performing their social identity.[24]

It is important to emphasise that these communities were not insulated from one another: there was a significant social and intellectual overlap between them.[25] The gatherings of many philosophers were open to the public; it was possible to attend these events without serious commitment.[26] Just as in the earlier imperial era, possessing classical *paideia* was the cultural norm for the Greek-speaking elite,[27] to which most students of Platonic philosophers

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[18] For an overview of fourth-century Platonist schools, see Fowden (1982: 38–48); on Platonic curricula in the third and fourth centuries, see Tarrant (2014: 20–5). The 'scripturalisation' of Greek philosophy in the late imperial period goes hand in hand with the hermeneutical tendencies of late Platonism; cf. Slaveva-Griffin and Remes (2014: 103).

[19] On the literary canon of *pepaideumenoi*, see below, *Section 4.3*.

[20] Textual communities, as Haines-Eitzen (2009: 247) puts it, 'emerge, develop, or are sustained by their … engagement with and reflection on particular written texts.' This concept was introduced by Stock (1983: 88–151). On Christian and Platonic circles as competing textual communities, see Becker (2015: 25–31). On the concept of interpretative communities, which has its roots in literary theory rather than cultural history, see Fish (1980: *passim*).

[21] For example, Porphyry wrote a (now lost) commentary on Aristotle's *Categories*, Iamblichus on Plato's *Timaeus*, *Parmenides*, and *Phaedrus*, whose fragments are collected in Dillon (1973/2009). On the Aristotelian commentary tradition of late Platonists, see Baltussen (2014). For a recent collection of essays on early Christian Biblical interpretation, see Blowers and Martens (eds 2019).

[22] On Libanius's *progymnasmata* and declamations as well as their role in his school, see Gibson (2014); Penella (2014), who notes that sophistic contests were still carried out in the fourth century. On catechetical and homiletic interpretation, see e.g. Mayer (2019).

[23] On rhetorical schools and Platonist circles, see above, p. 121 n. 15; p. 122 n. 18. On the fourth-century catechumenate, see Harmless (1995: 44–75).

[24] Tajfel (1974/2010: 80) defines social identity as 'that part of an individual's self-concept which derives from his [*sic*] knowledge of his membership of a social group.' Identity is here understood not in an essentialist way but as something that is in constant change and constructed performatively; see e.g. Hall (1992, 1996).

[25] On Christian and sophistic circles in the earlier empire, see Eshleman (2012).

[26] See e.g. O'Meara (2003: 14) on Plotinus's circle; cf. Stern-Gillet (2014: 415–6). Public teaching seems to have been the norm; cf. Socrates, *Hist. eccles.* 7.15, on Hypatia.

[27] On the culture shared by the fourth-century elite, see Van Nuffelen (2014: 296–9); cf. Rapp (2005: 158–9).

belonged.[28] Conversely, philosophers moved in influential political circles.[29] Similar things could be said about the intersection between Christian and pagan groups.[30] It is, however, also important to emphasise the tensions between the three communities. As the vast majority of these conflicts took place between Christians and pagans, I shall not elaborate on them in detail.[31] What we ought to keep in mind, however, is that one of the fields where these disputes were carried out was the interpretation of texts[32]—a circumstance that buttresses the important social function of interpretation in this period. This struggle for interpretative authority is particularly evident in the case of Homer, whom all three communities claimed for themselves.[33]

If we look at the beginning of the fifth century, we encounter a figure who is paradigmatic for the cultural intricacies of this era: Synesius of Cyrene, a student of the Platonist Hypatia and a 'literary elitist.'[34] Due to his social status and intellectual authority, he was offered a bishopric, which he accepted after much hesitation and not without sketching in a letter his difficulties in reconciling Platonic tenets with major principles of Christian theology.[35] Synesius's example illustrates how difficult it could be for individuals to navigate this complex intellectual environment and its textual communities. In the above-mentioned document he announces that if he were to accept the bishopric, he would 'deal with philosophy at home and mythologise in public' (τὰ μὲν οἴκοι φιλοσοφῶ, τὰ δ' ἔξω φιλόμυθός εἰμι διδάσκων, *Ep*. 105, ll. 99–100).[36]

Against the background of this cultural landscape, we can now rephrase and specify the questions addressed in this chapter: what does it mean to write for such a complex, heterogeneous audience? How does the particular social and ideological role that interpretation played in the late empire enrich our understanding of its literature? Where in this intricate

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[28] See Fowden (1982: 48–9); cf. Eunap. *VS* 10.3.3, treating Prohaeresius, who came ἄνωθεν, as a notable exception.

[29] See e.g. O'Meara (2003: 13–26) on the social environment of Platonist philosophers.

[30] See above, p. 120 n. 8. I am aware of the problematic aspects of the term 'pagan,' which I shall use in a neutral sense, as referring to non-Christians in a Christianising environment; see McLynn (2009: 573).

[31] On pagans firing against Christians, see e.g. Porphyry's *Against the Christians*; cf. Becker (2016); Julian's *Or.* 7; cf. Greenwood (2014). On Christianity's problematic relationship with classical *paideia*, see e.g. Haines-Eitzen (2009: 249); Eshleman (2012: 102–12); cf. Cribiore (2007: 165–9) on Gregory of Nazianzus. On the relationship between pagans and Christians in the fourth century, see Lim (2009); McLynn (2009). On sanctions against pagans, see Lib. *Or.* 30; cf. Fowden (1978); Van Nuffelen (2014: 303–9).

[32] See e.g. Porphyry's challenging of Origen's allegorical approach; cf. Becker (2016: 73–6); Basil's subordination of classical *paideia* to religious wisdom in *De legendis gentilium libris* 7; cf. Wilson (1975: 9–12).

[33] See e.g. Webb (2010) on Libanius's relationship to Homer; for a Christian reading of the *Odyssey*, see Basil. *De legendis gentilium libris* 5; on late Platonist interpretations, see below, *Section 4.2*.

[34] Dimitrov (2014: 537).

[35] See Synesius, *Ep*. 105; cf. Liebeschuetz (1986: 183–6); Rapp (2005: 159–60); Dimitrov (2014).

[36] See Dimitrov (2014: 526).

intellectual environment can we locate the *Aethiopica*? More specifically, what is the relationship between the coexisting interpretative communities of this period on the one hand and the contrasting modes of reading dramatised in Heliodorus's novel on the other hand? To grapple with these questions, it is crucial that we resist embracing an expressive-realist approach to literature, which would entail supposing that the *Aethiopica* statically replicates certain historical conditions.[37] Instead, I shall start from the assumption that writing and reading literature are performative acts, with which we construct and negotiate social identities and power relations.[38] To take an example from an ideological milieu that lies outside the scope of my study, the agenda of Basil's *De legendis gentilium libris* is a case in point:[39] laying out how Christians ought to read pagan authors, this essay teaches its audience not only something about 'good' literature and the benefits of reading but also a social lesson: Basil maps out how educated Christians can—*in* the act of reading—reconcile their enthusiasm for classical culture (their identity as *pepaideumenoi*) with their religious values (their Christian identity) without compromising the primacy of the latter.

This implication highlights that in the intellectual environment of the late empire, the activity of interpreting texts (be that in private or public) was an opportunity to rehearse social identities. Displaying one's ability to read texts according to the principles taught in or practiced by a certain community,[40] one could demonstrate one's membership in the respective group. To take this into account and bundle up the interpretative characteristics that I associate with each reading community, I shall introduce the term '*cognitive identity*,' by which I mean those principles of information processing that belong to a certain social identity. By Platonic and 'educated' cognitive identities I thus understand clusters of principles according to which readers would approach literature when performing the role of a Platonist philosopher or a *pepaideumenos*, respectively.

Does this mean that my cognitive identities are essentialist categories? Is there a definite list of criteria to which an interpretation has to conform in order for the reader to participate in the discourses of philosophy or *paideia*? Is it the case that interpretations either correspond to a Platonist or a 'sophistic' cognitive identity or to neither? To round off my methodological remarks, it is important to state that the answer to these questions is 'no'—and, of course, to clarify how I conceive of my cognitive identities instead. I understand them as heuristic

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[37] See Belsey (2002: 6–12).

[38] See Fox-Genovese (1989); Greenblatt (1989); Montrose (1989); Veeser (1989).

[39] For an edition with brief introduction and commentary, see Wilson (1975).

[40] See above, p. 122.

categories, whose members are linked by 'family resemblance' instead of sharing a stable set of criteria. To be more specific, individual interpretations can be perceived as 'educated' or Platonist, participating in the social phenomenon of *paideia* or philosophy, without having to tick a set of boxes. With this and the heterogeneity of the pertinent communities in mind, it would be futile to single out a specific readerly profile as the ultimate sophistic or Platonist one. My cognitive identities are historically informed insofar as I develop them in dialogue with texts that play central roles in the respective tradition. The resulting interpretations are best understood as *possible* ways to read the *Aethiopica* as a Platonist or a *pepaideumenos* would, not the definite way to do so. On a final note, considering the social overlap between sophistic and philosophical circles, it is reasonable to assume that one and the same reader could draw on interpretative principles that I associate with different cognitive identities: while certain interpretative strategies are more closely associated with one circle than with another, individual readers were likely able to proceed eclectically. It in a nutshell, my cognitive identities aim to be representative without claiming normativity and are devised as (possible) extremes between which individual readers could operate.

2. The reductive impulse: Platonist allegoresis

Let us picture the following fictive scenario: towards the end of the fourth century, Nilus,[41] a member of the Alexandrian elite, who is known for his interest in philosophy and spends his free time in Hypatia's circle, receives a parcel from Sardis. It comes from a like-minded friend, a member of the local Platonist community, with whom he regularly exchanges philosophical letters.[42] In the parcel Nilus finds a book by a certain Heliodorus and a laconic note: τάχ᾽ ἂν συνείης ('perhaps you'll understand'). He starts to read, suspecting that the gift has something to do with their shared interest. How might Nilus approach the *Aethiopica*? What might his conclusions be?

A good starting point for constructing a Platonist cognitive identity is a famous passage from *Ennead Five* (Plotinus, *Enn.* 5.1.8.10–14):[43]

> These statements of ours are not new nor even recent but rather were made a long time ago (πάλαι), though not explicitly (μὴ ἀναπεπταμένως). The things we are saying now comprise exegeses of those, relying on the writings of Plato himself as evidence that these are ancient views (τὰς δόξας … παλαιάς).

As Nilüfer Akçay suggests, this declaration is representative of how late Platonists related to certain texts, including the Platonic and Homeric corpora:[44] they considered them as repositories of a cross-cultural, ancient wisdom that can be recovered by reading between the lines. As regards myths and other narrative forms, their central hermeneutical tool was allegoresis. While this method is rooted in the archaic period and plays an important role in the Stoa, it is—besides Christianity—in late Platonism where allegorical interpretation gains central importance.[45] To understand what it means for Plotinus and his followers to allegorise texts that we would consider as literary, we have to keep in mind that they regard hidden meanings recovered from, for example, Homer as corresponding to the wisdom supposedly

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[41] As a Roman citizen, he would retain his Greek name, Νεῖλος, in his cognomen, preceded by a Latin praenomen and nomen; see Matthews (2019). A search in the online *LGPN* suggests that this was a common name (34 hits).
[42] At that time the leading Platonists in Sardis were Epigonus and Beronicianus; see Eunap. *VS* 24.1; Fowden (1982: 42).
[43] Translations of Plotinus from Gerson (ed. 2018).
[44] See Akçay (2019: 33).
[45] On the history of allegoresis, see e.g. Pépin (1958); Brisson (1996/2004); Struck (2004); compact introductory chapters can be found in Copeland and Struck (eds 2010); for a good collection of essays on metaphor and allegory in the Graeco-Roman world, see Boys-Stones (ed. 2003). On allegory and cultural authority in Alexandria, see Dawson (1992); on Christian allegoresis see above, p. 120 n. 9; on allegorical readers of Homer, Buffière (1957) and Lamberton (1986) are still essential; on allegory *in* Homer, see Most (1993); Hunter (2018: 47–48; 57–59).

found in the Platonic corpus. Plotinus, for instance, interprets Odysseus's homecoming from the realm of Circe and Calypso as a return from a place where 'he had visual pleasures and passed his time with sensual beauty (κάλλει πολλῷ αἰσθητῷ, *Enn.* 1.6.8.19–20)' to the intelligible world—as a spiritual ascent.[46] As we shall see, he was not the first and by no means the last to take such an approach. From the perspective of an outsider, this looks like a forceful and biased hermeneutical move: Plotinus is projecting his own philosophy on the *Odyssey*. Late Platonists, however, believe that these ideas are *actually* present (albeit hidden) in the works of Homer. In *On the cave*, Porphyry spells out this tenet, presumably in response to anticipated outsider criticism (Porph. *De antr. nymph.* 36.8–13):[47]

> One should not think that these types of exegeses are forced (βεβιασμένας), nor a case of concocting ingenious arguments to invent persuasiveness (εὑρεσιλογούντων πιθανότητας). If one takes into consideration the ancient wisdom (τὴν παλαιὰν σοφίαν) and the wisdom of Homer … one should not reject the idea that he hinted at images (εἰκόνας … ᾐνίσσετο) through the medium of the concoction of a myth.

To what extent is it reasonable to transfer this approach to the *Aethiopica*—that is to say, to read Heliodorus as late Platonists read Homer? Even if we assume 'their' cognitive identity, we have to acknowledge that Plotinus and his followers are not arguing that *any* literature—let alone any new literature—contains the same kind of 'ancient wisdom' to which Homer and Plato supposedly had access. To return to our fictional scenario, why is it the *Aethiopica* of all texts that Nilus receives from his friend? As is well known, Heliodorus's work draws heavily on Plato's philosophy and in various ways invites allegoresis;[48] the *Aethiopica* thus presents itself as receptive to a reading that corresponds to how late Platonists approached Homer and other authoritative works from the distant past.[49] We could now ask whether we have specific reasons to believe that late Platonists would readily apply their hermeneutical toolkit to contemporary fiction.[50] In line with my experimental approach, however, we can simply assume as a working hypothesis that they did. Moreover, I do not think it is necessary to draw

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[46] On this passage see Lamberton (1986: 106–7). On Plotinus's conception of spiritual ascent, see Halfwassen (2014).

[47] Unless otherwise noted, translations of *On the cave* are from Akçay (2019).

[48] See below, *Section 4.2.a.*

[49] In this sense the *Aethiopica* is a forerunner of texts such as Synesius's *On Providence*, Musaeus's *Hero and Leander*, and the *Orphic Argonautica*.

[50] See Hunter (2005: 125), who suggests, 'as the novelists … knew only too well, the [allegorical] practice and modes of interpretation to which they direct us arose from and were designed for texts which occupied a very different cultural position [than their own works].'

a clear line between 'serious' (i.e. from a Platonist perspective philosophically valuable) texts, which they would happily allegorise, and other literature: we can entertain the possibility that Platonist readers playfully attempt to apply their allegorical devices to 'inferior' works; Nilus might read Heliodorus employing the same methods with which he interprets Homer without ascribing to the *Aethiopica* the same philosophical authority as to the *Odyssey*.[51]

2.a Allegory and Platonism *in* Heliodorus

Upon reading some of the *Aethiopica*, Nilus has good reasons to believe that he has not become the victim of a joke.[52] This section covers a selection of relevant signals, which from a Platonist perspective can easily be interpreted as inviting an allegorical reading. Most of these interpretative seeds have received considerable scholarly attention. I shall focus on how readers assuming a Platonist cognitive identity might respond to them, and concentrate on two kinds of signals: first, passages that readers who are familiar with allegoresis can easily associate with this method; second, sections with a strong Platonic undertone, which interpreters like Nilus can take as evidence that this is 'their' kind of text. I shall start with the first group.

In his Homeric excursus Calasiris explains to Cnemon how he learned from an inconspicuous detail found in the *Iliad* to distinguish between gods appearing in dreams and real visions. As has been noted, Calasiris's exegesis abounds in characteristics of allegoresis.[53] For example, he draws a clear line between the superficial meaning and a deeper one, to which Homer 'alludes' (αἰνίττεται) and which is 'missed by the majority of readers' (3.12.2).'[54] If we assume a Platonist cognitive identity,[55] this passage amounts to an invitation to allegorise the *Aethiopica*. As Sandy puts it, 'Heliodorus … conditions the reader to anticipate that even the most apparently insignificant events have a significance that is part of some … transcending

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[51] We can here recall Philip's *Hermeneuma*, which develops an interpretation of Heliodorus that corresponds to patterns of Platonist allegoresis *and* draws on interpretative principles dramatised in the *Aethiopica*; see Hunter (2005); Papadimitropoulos (2013: 112–3). On this essay see below, *Section 4.2.a*. The late Byzantine author John Eugenicus also offers an allegorical reading of Heliodorus; see Gärtner (1969: 64–9, 1971).

[52] Most (2007: 165) goes as far as to state, 'if there is one ancient Greek romance of which it might indeed be claimed with some plausibility that it was intended consciously [*sic*] as an allegory, it is Heliodorus' *Aethiopian Tale*.'

[53] See Sandy (1982a: 154–7), adducing parallels from late Platonists; Hunter (2005: 131), highlighting parallels between this passage and the allegorical method of Philip's *Hermeneuma*. On the metatextuality of this passage, see Fusillo (1990: 44–6). Telò (1999: 72–6) discusses the relationship between Calasiris's philological interpretation and Greek scholarship.

[54] Besides αἰνίττεται, further allegorical *termini technici* in this passage are συμβολικῶς and αἴνιγμα (3.13.3); cf. Struck (2004: 23).

[55] For a contrasting reading of this passage, see below, *Section 4.3.c*.

goal. This is the principle on which philosophical interpretation of supposedly enigmatic literature is formulated.'[56]

Nilus, however, might find further meaning in this episode. He might note that the Homer emerging from it—an esoteric theologian[57]—matches the way late Platonists related to the poet.[58] Moreover, he might attribute significance to the analogy between Calasiris's hermeneutical method, which assumes more than one level of meaning, and his spiritual, layered worldview: 'when gods and spirits (θεοὶ καὶ δαίμονες) descend to earth … they might pass unperceived by the uninitiated (τοῦς … βεβήλους) but cannot avoid recognition by the wise (τὴν δὲ σοφοῦ γνῶσιν, 3.13.1–2).' We can associate this correspondence with the close relationship between the tiered ontology advocated by late Platonists and their allegorical method, which also postulates hidden layers.[59] Moreover, we can link Calasiris's claims about supernatural beings, hidden to most of us, to Iamblichus's higher ranks of souls, which only few of us manage to find and use in our spiritual ascent.[60] Finally, we can read Calasiris's claim that he was awake and not asleep when he saw Artemis and Apollo against the background of Plotinus's favourite metaphor for spiritual ascent, awakening:[61] Calasiris saw the gods while he was in an elevated, purified state.

To sum up, readers assuming a Platonist cognitive identity may see in Calasiris a like-minded philosopher and allegorical interpreter of Homer, a perception that is further confirmed by his often sage-like behaviour.[62] The crucial point is that these conclusions have a twofold, far-reaching impact on how one approaches the *Aethiopica*. We will encounter both elements numerous times throughout this chapter. First, Calasiris's exegetical showpiece, in which readers like Nilus can recognise their own methods, might encourage them to read not just Heliodorus but also his Homeric references through allegorical lenses; I shall call this effect '*allegorised intertextuality*.' We shall see that this phenomenon becomes particularly relevant when it comes to the *Aethiopica*'s Odyssean foundation. Second, as Platonist readers have good

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[56] Sandy (1982a: 167).

[57] Cnemon refers to an 'embedded theological teaching' (τὴν δὲ ἐγκατεσπαρμένην … θεολογίαν, 3.12.3).

[58] See Lamberton (1986: 22–31); Brisson (1996/2004: 85–6); Akçay (2019: 21). Porph. *De antr. nymph.* 32.13 calls Homer θεολόγος.

[59] On this connection, first articulated by the Christian allegorist Origen, see Lamberton (1986: 127); Struck (2010: 59; 220–221). For an excellent discussion of the relationship between Proclus's metaphysics and hermeneutics, see Layne (2014).

[60] Iamblichus presents his theory of souls in *Myst.* 1–3; in *Myst.* 5.18 he claims that most humans never rise but are 'held down by nature' (ὑποτέτακται ὑπὸ τὴν φύσιν); see Dillon and Finamore (2002: 161–3); Finamore (2010).

[61] See e.g. Plotinus, *Enn.* 1.6.8: 'Just shut your eyes, and change your way of looking, and wake up (ἀνεγεῖραι). Everyone has this ability, but few use it'; cf. *Enn.* 4.8.1; on the One's 'wakefulness' (ἐγρήγορσις), see Enn. 6.8.16.

[62] See above, *Sections 2.4–5*; cf. Sandy (1982a: 143–54). On late Platonists as holy men, see Fowden (1982: 33–8). On Calasiris and Pythagoreanism, see Feuillâtre (1966: 128–32); cf. Akçay (2019: 11–2) on late Platonists and the Pythagorean way of life.

reasons to take Calasiris's intellectual authority at face value, the novel's reductive perspective is especially attractive for them; as I shall argue, this preference is a good match with the allegorical method in general.[63]

A passage that sends even stronger allegorical signals is the interpretation of the Nile flood offered by the primary narrator in Book Nine (9.9.3–10.1). As has been noted, this excursus resembles Calasiris's Homeric exegesis in featuring allegorical terminology and distinguishing between several layers of meaning that are associated with different audiences.[64] Just like the Homeric digression, this section links tiered ontology (the Nile *is* different things on different levels) to allegorical hermeneutics.[65] Taking the allegorical implications at face value, readers like Nilus may consider this passage as another important interpretative seed—especially as the digression establishes connections between the allegorised river on the one hand and Hydaspes as well as the protagonists on the other hand.[66]

Let us now turn to the second kind of cues: conspicuous echoes of Platonic thought. A prominent instance is the protagonists' first meeting, which Calasiris describes as follows (3.5.4–5):

> In that instant it was revealed to us, Cnemon, that the soul is something divine (θεῖον ἡ ψυχή) and partakes in the nature of heaven (συγγενὲς ἄνωθεν). For at the moment when they set eyes on one another, the young pair fell in love, as if the soul recognised its kin at the very first encounter (ὥσπερ τῆς ψυχῆς ἐκ πρώτης ἐτεύξεως τὸ ὅμοιον ἐπιγνούσης) and sped to meet that which was worthily its own … she handed him the torch … and all the while they gazed hard into one another's eyes, as if calling to mind a previous acquaintance or meeting (ὥσπερ εἴ που γνωρίζοντες ἢ ἰδόντες πρότερον ταῖς μνήμαις ἀναπεμπάζοντες).

This passage borrows numerous elements from Socrates's palinode in the *Phaedrus* (243e7–257b6). Morgan and Repath summarise these echoes: 'the divinity of the soul, its connection to a higher world, the causal link between sight and love, and the role of recognition and

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[63] See below, *Section 4.2.d.*
[64] See Sandy (1982a: 159, 2001: 174); Whitmarsh (2011: 130–4); Papadimitropoulos (2013: 109–10). See also below, p. 130 n. 66.
[65] See also Sandy (1982a: 157–60), highlighting possible connections between the Nile allegoresis, Porphyry, and Iamblichus.
[66] On the Nile and Hydaspes, see Morgan (2012b). On the metanarrative significance of the digression, see Winkler (1982/1999: 343–4); Grethlein (2017: 94–6).

memory.'[67] What distinguishes these references from Platonic material found elsewhere in the *Aethiopica* is not so much their conspicuousness as their far-reaching significance and allegorical force,[68] their *potential* to radically change the reader's understanding of the entire main storyline: if we assume a Platonist cognitive identity, Charicleia's adventures as a whole mirror the Phaedran journey of the soul; her home, Ethiopia, represents the heavenly circle, where she returns from the lower realms of being, guided by her love for Theagenes.[69] This observation lies at the core of the second, higher interpretation offered by Philip's *Hermeneuma*, a late antique or Byzantine essay on the *Aethiopica* (ll. 79–80; 92–94 Colonna):[70]

> Charicleia is a symbol of the soul (σύμβολον … ψυχῆς) … [she] was born among the Ethiopians, for man comes forth out of the invisible as if out of darkness into the light, and proceeds to life in this world as she is taken to Greece.

Shall we infer from the triangular relationship between Plato, Heliodorus, and Philip that the entire *Hermeneuma* is plausible after all? Scholars tend to resist this conclusion;[71] however, they seem to struggle as to where to draw the line.[72] Take Papadimitropulos's concerns: 'I do not consider improbable the basic contention of Philip … although I cannot agree with most of his argumentation … the task of the scholar who attempts to define further exactly what Heliodorus' symbolic or allegorical implications are will not be easy.'[73] This aporetic cautiousness, I suggest, is indicative of a mismatch between the kind of text the *Aethiopica* is and the methods with which scholarship attempts to grapple with some of its features. Papadimitropulos's approach implies that further research on the *Aethiopica*'s allegorical dimension ought to illuminate in more detail the novel's *actual* deeper meaning; this expectation, however, is based on the misguided hypothesis that the *Aethiopica* is a

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[67] Morgan and Repath (2019: 153); also noted briefly by e.g. Montiglio (2013: 118–9).

[68] On other instances of Platonic material in Heliodorus, see e.g. Feuillâtre (1966: 125–7); Kövendi (1966: 171–83); Sandy (1982a); Dowden (1996); Jones (2005, 2006); Repath (2007: 77–81); Pizzone (2013: 154–7); Grethlein (forthcoming a, forthcoming c).

[69] See Dowden (1996: 280–5); Papadimitropoulos (2013: 111–3); Morgan and Repath (2019: 154).

[70] An early, fifth- or sixth-century dating is advocated most convincingly by Tarán (1992); see also Oldfather (1908: 457–63); von Fritz (1937); Weinreich (1962: 57–9); Hunger (1978: 121–2); Acconcia Longo (1991); Agapitos (1998: 128 n. 21); Mecella (2014: 633); a late, twelfth- or thirteenth-century origin is promoted by Colonna (1938: 365–6, 1960); Gärtner (1969: 60–4); Lavagnini (1974); Wilson (1983/1996: 216); Conca (1994: 13–4). Lamberton (1986: 148–9), Sandy (2001), and Hunter (2005) remain aporetic.

[71] Hardie (1998: 39) calls Philip 'over-interpreting'; according to Sandy (2001: 175), his method is 'at best pretentious or at worst silly.'

[72] An attractive solution to this problem is offered by Hunter (2005), who emphasises the *Hermeneuma*'s playful side.

[73] Papadimitropoulos (2013: 112–3); cf. Dowden (1996: 285), suggesting that 'it is a difficult task to describe the degree of earnestness with which Heliodorus promotes the values and philosophy which inform his novel.'

programmatical allegory in the manner of Prudentius's *Psychomachy* or Julian's autobiography in his *Oration* 7, works whose deeper meaning is an objectively identifiable part of the text.[74] How different a work the *Aethiopica* is can be illustrated by the unanimous and categorical scholarly rejection of Merkelbach's attempt to spell out its supposedly definite allegorical significance.[75] A major aim of this chapter is to resolve this tension, which results (in part) from the presence of allegorical seeds in the novel, on the one hand, and its 'fully functional' surface meaning,[76] on the other hand. To achieve this, we have to abandon the accustomed approach of novel studies, which tends to prioritise immanent meanings and thus strongly diverges from a Platonist cognitive identity. Instead of seeking to determine what the *Aethiopica*'s deeper meaning *is*, we need to investigate how certain interpretative seeds might sprout in the imaginative mind of readers like Nilus.

2.b Spiritual coordinates

If we consider the *Aethiopica*'s Odyssean foundation according to what I have labelled 'allegorised intertextuality,' it takes on a whole new significance: if Odysseus's story represents a spiritual journey and Charicleia's adventures mirror his, we can understand this analogy as pointing in the same direction as the protagonists' Phaedran meeting. From a Platonist perspective the two intertexts operate in allegorical synergy, signalling that Charicleia's travels stand for a metaphysical ascent. This section explores how this reading maps onto the novel's narrative space.[77] First, however, I shall briefly address a characteristic of allegorical interpretation: it draws heavily on the reductive, teleological perspective at play in the *Aethiopica*. If we conceive of Charicleia's travels as a spiritual journey, her story gains a strong end-directed momentum: just as the true home of the soul is the intelligible sphere, Charicleia *belongs to* Ethiopia. More generally, allegoresis proceeds from the assumption that the interpreted story bears a well-defined, compact meaning,[78] to which it can be reduced. In this respect the allegorical method corresponds to an approach to the Platonic corpus that was

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[74] On Prudentius's allegorical method see Pelttari (2014: 55–62); on Julian's see Nesselrath (2008); see also Greenwood (2014). Lamberton (1986: 144–61) calls such texts not 'programmatical' but 'deliberate' allegories, an expression that I prefer to avoid due to its intentionalist implication; cf. *ibid.* p. 145 n. 3, where Lamberton defines them as stories '*intended to be understood* on one or more levels beyond the superficial' (my emphasis).
[75] See Merkelbach (1962: 234–98); for detailed assessments of his approach, see Turcan (1963); Stark (1989a); Beck (1996).
[76] In Julian's terminology the *Aethiopica* lacks elements that are ἀπεμφαῖνον (*Or.* 7.12.10), i.e. incongruous or absurd.
[77] On space in the *Aethiopica*, see Morgan (2012a).
[78] Or meanings, as in Philip's *Hermeneuma* or Christian allegoresis, which from Origen onwards assumes several layers of hidden significance; see e.g. Boyarin (2010). However, allegorical interpretation is also reductive in these instances, as the recovered meanings are compact, stable, and final.

popular amongst philosophers from Iamblichus onwards: to assume that each work has a *skopos*, 'a single unifying theme in relation to which every aspect of the dialogue can be explained.'[79] For late Platonists even such a heterogeneous and rich work as the *Phaedrus* had (to have) such a topic, 'around which the arguments circulate in pursuit of the answer' (*Prolegomena* 27.30–31). I shall develop my Platonist reading along similar lines, assuming that spiritual ascent has a *skopos*-like status in the *Aethiopica* and novel's other elements ought to be explained in relation to this theme. The resulting reductive momentum of this approach will manifest itself continuously throughout this chapter; I shall call attention to it in particularly noteworthy instances.

The *Aethiopica*'s ethically charged geography is well-known: the protagonists travel from Greece, which (in Cnemon's story) is portrayed as base, morally corrupt, and carnal, via 'ambiguous and liminal'[80] Egypt to the ideal place that is Ethiopia.[81] According to Morgan,[82] the resulting moral hierarchy, especially as regards different forms of love, is the central topic of the novel. How does this ethical conception of the *Aethiopica*'s space relate to our metaphysical reading? Philip suggests that the metaphysical layer of meaning lies *beneath* the ethical one: in a subversive variation on an allegorical *topos*, he compares the latter to Charicleia's 'sacred chiton' (*Hermeneuma* l. 78 Colonna) and the former to her naked body;[83] what we have here is thus a *hierarchy* of different deeper meanings.[84] If we regard the ethical and metaphysical layers from a Platonist perspective, we can establish a close relationship between them. For Plotinus ethical and metaphysical concerns (for example, liberation from evil and ascent from the material realm) go hand in hand (*Enn.* 1.8.14.44–50):

> This is the fall of the soul (πτῶμα τῆς ψυχῆς) … what it [matter] … seized by a kind of theft it makes evil (κακόν), until soul can lift itself up again (ἕως ἂν δυνηθῇ ἀναδραμεῖν). So, matter is the cause of weakness in the soul and the cause of vice. This evil … is primary evil.

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[79] Tarrant et al. (2018: 253). See e.g. Iambl. *In Phdr.* fr. 1.a Dillon, on which see Dillon (1973/2009: 248–9). The only extant theory of *skopos* can be found in the anonymous *Prolegomena to Platonic Philosophy* (hereafter '*Prolegomena*') 21–23; cf. Layne (2018: 551–4).
[80] Morgan (2012a: 572).
[81] See e.g. Szepessy (1957); Merkelbach (1962: 292–5); Dowden (1996: 280–3); Morgan (2007d: 151–6).
[82] See above, *Introduction*.
[83] *Hermeneuma* ll. 76–79 Colonna; see Hunter (2005: 133–4).
[84] This conception is reminiscent of the Nile allegoresis and resembles Christian exegesis in the manner of Origen; see e.g. Hunter (2005: 132–3); cf. above, p. 132 n. 78.

It is thus the ethical responsibility of human souls to flee from the region of corrupting matter and proceed to the intelligible realm.[85] Along these lines, the two layers of 'serious' meaning at play in the *Aethiopica* are inextricably linked—just as they are in the *Odyssey* according to Porphyry.[86] To sum up, ethical and metaphysical messages correspond to two ways of looking at one and the same issue.

Having established the relationship between these two levels of meaning, let us focus on the protagonists' movements and explore their spiritual significance. Charicleia and Theagenes travel steadily southwards, into hotter and hotter regions.[87] This pattern is emphasised at several stages of the novel: for example, Cnemon notes that 'they must head due south' (2.18.5) to get to Chemmis; when Charicleia and Theagenes are taken southwards from Memphis, the primary narrator refers to the 'scorching heat of the sun' (τῆς τε ἡλιακῆς ἀκτῖνος τὸν φλογμόν, 8.14.2), 'intolerable noonday' (τῆς ἄγαν μεσημβρίας, 8.15.1), and 'suffocating heat' (δείλης οὖν ὀψίας, 8.15.6); in Syene the instruments and phenomena presented to Hydaspes highlight that we have reached the Tropic of Cancer (9.22).[88] From a Platonist perspective the point of this development is that Charicleia and Theagenes are getting closer and closer to the (land of the) Sun, which represents the first principle.[89] Nilus and like-minded readers may furthermore link the protagonists' southward procession to Porphyry's remarks about the significance of the cardinal points and the climate of the respective regions (*De antr. nymph.* 25.7–29.3):[90]

> The one [the North Wind] is colder and tends to freeze them [souls] and hold them in the frigid grip of earthly genesis (ἐν τῷ ψυχρῷ τῆς χθονίου γενέσεως), while the other [the South Wind] is warmer and so melts them and sends them back up to the warmth of the divine (πρὸς τὸ θερμὸν τοῦ θείου) … Thus, the northern regions are appropriate to the swarm of mortal beings that have fallen under the power of genesis, and the southern regions to the more divine class.

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[85] On matter and evil in late Platonism, see Narbonne (2014); on the relationship between metaphysics and ethics in Plotinus, see also Aubry (2014: 318–21).

[86] See Edwards (1996: 99); Akçay (2019: 164–71).

[87] The stations of their trip are as follows: Delphi–Zacynthus–Nile Delta–nearby Chemmis (unidentifiable; cf. Morgan (2008: 391 n. 42))–Memphis–Syene–Meroe. Merkelbach (1962: 293) speculates that the number of stations (seven) is significant.

[88] On the rich implications of this episode, see Plazenet (1995: 21); Elmer (2008: 435–7); Whitmarsh (2011: 134–5); Morgan (2012b).

[89] See Dowden (1996: 279); cf. e.g. the role of the sun in Plato's Analogy of the Sun and the Cave Allegory. Plotinus also likens the One to the sun; see e.g. *Enn.* 5.5.7–8; cf. Ahbel-Rappe (2014: 168–72).

[90] On this section of Porphyry's essay, see Akçay (2019: 139–71).

With this in mind, we can assign a deeper meaning not just to the protagonists' movements but also to their successful virginity test on a gridiron that 'can … incinerate anyone who is unclean' (10.8.2)[91] and to Charicleia's survival of the gigantic stake in Memphis (8.9):[92] their resistance to heat and fire indicates their unique spiritual purity, which qualifies them for proceeding to higher and higher spiritual realms.[93]

Besides the north-south and cold-hot oppositions, those between moisture and dryness, between sea and land are also central to Platonist allegoresis. In Porphyry's interpretation of the *Odyssey*, ' "open sea" (πόντος) and "sea" (θάλασσα) and "wave crash" (κλύδων) … signify the material universe (ἡ ὑλικὴ σύστασις, *De antr. nymph.* 34.12–13)'; Odysseus's arrival in Ithaca (and thus the end of his travails at sea) is a major step in his spiritual journey; Teiresias's prophecy, according to which Odysseus would proceed to the land of 'men who do not know of the sea' (Hom. *Od.* 11.122b–123a), represents the culmination of his ascent.[94] Readers who assume a Platonist cognitive identity can recognise a similar development in the *Aethiopica*. The first part of the protagonists' adventures leads them over the Mediterranean Sea. Calasiris kicks off this part of his narrative with a digression on why rough waters are characteristic of the straits of Calydon (5.17.1–4). At the culmination of this excursus, 'the water seethes and boils (βρασμόν τε ἴσχει τὸ ὕδωρ καὶ κῦμα φλεγμαῖνον ἐγείρει), arching up to the sky in huge, angry waves (κλύδωνα) at the shock of the impact.' We can understand this passage as serving to emphasise that the journey by sea has a deeper meaning;[95] the same can be said about the extensive description of the storm leading the protagonists to the Nile Delta (5.27).[96] Along these lines, we may find it significant that the Apollonian Oracle announces that they will 'carve the wave' (κῦμα τεμόντες, 2.34.5) and that Calasiris attributes great importance to this detail (4.4.5): 'All I was sure of was that we should make our escape by sea (κατὰ θάλατταν), reckoning that this was our best chance of success from the oracle.'[97] To readers like Nilus this indicates that if we want to reach higher spiritual realms, we must identify the region of matter as such and escape from it. Viewed in this way, Calasiris's pondering the best way to start their

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[91] On this episode see e.g. Goldhill (1995: 118–21); De Temmerman (2014: 293–4); on Charicleia's virginity see Brethes (2007: 104–15).

[92] For Christian echoes in this episode, see Ramelli (2001/2012: 138–9); Edsall (2002: 128–9); Andújar (2012); on mythical intertexts see Lefteratou (2018: 84–6); for further parallels see Whitmarsh (2011: 154 n. 73).

[93] On these two episodes as narrative doublets, see Morgan (1998: 68–72).

[94] As Porphyry himself acknowledges (*De antr. nymph.* 10.10–20), the identification of sea with matter has a long history in Greek thought; cf. Plotinus, *Enn.* 4.3.17.21–31. On Odysseus's journey through the intelligible realm according to Porphyry, see Akçay (2019: 153–64).

[95] Philip the Philosopher agrees: Calasiris 'leads the soul, in a state of calm through the salt sea and the waves of life (διὰ τῆς ἅλμης καὶ τῶν βιωτικῶν κυμάτων, *Hermeneuma* ll. 113–114 Colonna).'

[96] On Heliodorus's use of paradox in this scene, see Anderson (2017: 27).

[97] On the Apollonian Oracle see also above, *Section 3.7*.

'flight' (φυγήν, *ibid.*) recalls Plotinus's famous question about the nature of spiritual ascent: 'What is our course (στόλος) and what is our means of flight (φυγή, *Enn.* 1.6.8.21–22)?' As has been noted, not just Charicleia's φυγή[98] from Delphi but also her lack of memories about her Ethiopian past and the way she recalls it with the help of Persinna's letter invite an interpretation along the lines of Plotinus's philosophical metaphors;[99] so are, as negative examples of characters failing to escape from the material realm, Nausicles, Cnemon, Thisbe, and Thermouthis, none of whom makes it beyond Egypt.[100] As regards Thermouthis, readers may additionally associate his manner of death with the significance Plotinus ascribes to sleep:[101] the opposite of spiritual ascent, remaining imprisoned in the material realm. As he puts it, 'rising up with the body is change from one sleep to another like going from one bed to another' (*Enn.* 3.6.6.72–74).

After their arrival in Egypt, the protagonists move further and further away from the sea, proceeding along the Nile. In this context Calasiris's description of the river is noteworthy: 'the water of the Nile is sweeter to drink than that of any other river (πιεῖν … γλυκύτατος), since it is supplied by the rains of heaven (ἐξ ὄμβρων οὐρανίων, 2.28.5)': this heavenly water could not be more different from the salty sea representing the lowest sphere. With this in mind, we can understand the route along the Nile as one leading away from the realm of ordinary water—especially considering that the protagonists' journey leads them *up*stream (ἄνω).[102]

The *Aethiopica*'s beginning features two Odyssean references, which, read as allegorised intertexts, add to the metaphysical significance of the novel's narrative space. First, the famous banquet gone massacre featured in the opening tableau is modelled on the *Mnesterophonia*;[103] second, in her interactions with both the first group of bandits and Thyamis, Charicleia imitates Odysseus's behaviour upon his arrival in Scheria.[104] Platonist interpreters attribute allegorical significance to both episodes: for Porphyry the killing of the suitors represents the successful elimination of passions (*De antr. nymph.* 36.11–14), which allows Odysseus to embark on his final journey; an oracle featured in his *Life of Plotinus* implicitly equates Odysseus's swimming

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[98] The protagonists' escape is called φυγή in several other instances (5.1.1; 5.18.3; 10.36.1; 10.36.4).

[99] See Merkelbach (1962: 246–7); Dowden (1996: 280; 284); cf. Plotinus, *Enn.* 5.1, discussing the forgetfulness of souls. Plotinus compares them to 'children who at birth are separated from their fathers and, being raised for a long time far away, are ignorant both of themselves and of their fathers' (5.1.1.8–1); cf. Aubry (2014: 311–4).

[100] See Merkelbach (1962: 253–69); Dowden (1996: 275–82).

[101] On Thermouthis's death see above, *Section 3.4*.

[102] See LSJ s.v. ἄνω (B) I.

[103] I shall return to this intertext in *Section 4.3.b*.

[104] See Whitmarsh (2002: 119) on 1.3.1; Sandy (1982b: 64–5) on 1.22; on Charicleia's Odyssean qualities in this scene, see also De Temmerman (2014: 260–3).

ashore in Scheria with spiritual ascent (*Plot.* 22.27).[105] Read allegorically, Heliodorus's references to these episodes thus highlight the status of the *Aethiopica*'s Nile Delta as a metaphysical liminal space between sea and land.

At the end of the novel, the protagonists finally enter Meroe, which readers like Nilus may identify with the highest metaphysical realm. If we assume such a perspective, it is hard not to recall Socrates's Chariot Allegory when we learn that the main characters ride into a city associated with the Sun in chariots drawn by horses and white oxen.[106] Along these lines, we can understand the last phrase of the narrative as underlining this Phaedran connection: 'the more mystic parts of the wedding ritual were to be performed in the city with greater magnificence' (τῶν ἐπὶ τῷ γάμῳ μυστικωτέρων κατὰ τὸ ἄστυ **φαιδρότερον** τελεσθησομένων 10.41.3).[107] Moreover, the ritual echoes of the two genitives and the narrator's silence about the impending ceremonies, as implied by the future participle, can be read as buttressing the allegorical significance of the narrative.[108] To sum up, if we assume a Platonist cognitive identity, the *Aethiopica*'s narrative space turns into a system of spiritual coordinates, in which the protagonists proceed from the lowest to the highest realm.

2.c   Calasiris and Hermes

If we read the *Aethiopica* as a metaphysical allegory, the role of Calasiris is particularly interesting: he discovers Charicleia's provenance, induces her and Theagenes's flight, and guides them towards the kingdom of the Sun. Accordingly, the *Hermeneuma* etymologises his name as 'the one who draws [the soul] to the good' (ὁ πρὸς τὰ καλὰ σύρων) and suggests that he is the 'teacher leading up the soul to initiation into the knowledge of the divine' (πρὸς τὰς τῆς θεολογίας τελετὰς τὴν ψυχὴν ἀνάγων διδάσκαλος, *Hermeneuma* ll. 111–112 Colonna). This interpretation highlights that from a Platonist perspective, Calasiris's role invites comparison with that of the philosopher in Plato's Cave Allegory, who descends to guide those who live in darkness to the daylight (Pl. *Resp.* 515c4–516c2).[109] Read against the background of this philosophical intertext, several details concerning Calasiris become significant. The

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[105] See Akçay (2019: 30–1). On further (Platonist and Christian) allegorical interpretations of Odysseus swimming ashore, see Webb (2010: 150–1).

[106] See Morgan (2015: 190–1). Considering that Porphyry's allegorical method operates freely with a wide range of traditions and imageries, including Mithraic material, we can assume that readers employing a similar technique may ascribe additional significance to the white oxen; cf. Akçay (2019: 71–2). On the intratextual function of the juxtaposition of horses and oxen, see Morgan (1978: 621).

[107] See Morgan and Repath (2019: 158).

[108] See Whitmarsh (2011: 134). In this context it is noteworthy that Heliodorus's only other two comparatives of μυστικός can be found in Calasiris's Homeric excursus (3.13.1) and the Nile allegoresis (9.10.1).

[109] Note that the Cave Allegory is evoked before Calasiris even enters the picture; see above, *Section 1.6.*

philosopher spends time in the cave, adjusting his sight to darkness, before he engages with the prisoners, gains their respect, and then frees them (517d4–518b3); similarly, Calasiris first dwells in Delphi, then wins the protagonists' admiration and trust before setting his plans in motion. In Socrates's allegory, the philosopher explains to the prisoners that they are living in a world of illusions and ought to follow him to the real one; similarly, Calasiris sheds light on Charicleia's *true* provenance and convinces her to escape from Delphi. Finally, just as the philosopher is coming from the place where he intends to lead others, Calasiris has already been to Ethiopia, where he plans to guide Charicleia. Here the close relationship between reductive perspective and allegorical interpretation becomes particularly apparent: Calasiris's role maps best onto that of a spiritual guide if we embrace his veracity and take the mission narrative at face value.

Calasiris's function as ψυχοπομπός brings me to my main point: if we concentrate on the *Aethiopica*'s Odyssean foundation, his role appears to correspond to that of Hermes in the *Odyssey*, an association that has rich implications when considered from a Platonist perspective (another instance of allegorised intertextuality). Charicleia's sojourn in Delphi can be understood as echoing that of Odysseus in Ogygia, from where he embarks on his travel across the sea (the material realm). This connection is strengthened if we recall that according to Homer, Ogygia is the 'navel of the sea' (ὀμφαλός … θαλάσσης, Hom. *Od*. 1.50), which resonates with Delphi's status as the navel of the world.[110] Calasiris then plays the role of Hermes, who descends from Mount Olympus to facilitate the protagonist's departure (Hom. *Od.* 5) and deals with an 'unfit' partner (Calypso / Charicles's nephew, Alcamenes). Readers drawing this analogy may find it significant that Heliodorus repeatedly sets Calasiris in relation to Hermes: Calasiris presents a libation to him (3.5.1); he performs rituals at his temple (5.13–15); in his biography of Homer, which he partly shapes after his own image,[111] he claims that the poet was Hermes's son (3.14.2).

For readers like Nilus the close association of Calasiris with Hermes is thought-provoking, as this god occupies a special position in late Platonism. Let us start with the interpretation of his role in the *Odyssey*. In a fragment preserved by Stobaeus, Porphyry interprets the Circe episode as a 'riddle (αἴνιγμα) concealing what Pythagoras and Plato have said about the soul':[112] Circe is linked to the realm of *genesis*, representing 'the cyclical progress and rotation

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[110] See e.g. Pind. *Pyth*. 4.74; Bacch. 4.4.
[111] See above, *Section 2.2*.
[112] Translation from Lamberton (1986). For a similar reading see [Plut.] *Vit. Hom.* 2.126; cf. Buffière (1957: 516–7); Keaney and Lamberton (1996: 24).

of *metensōmatōsis*.' Odysseus can only escape her with the help of Hermes, who stands for 'reason' (λόγος), 'meets the souls, and clearly points the way to the good' (Stob. *Ecl.* 1.41.60). Later a similar interpretation of Hermes is attested for the Calypso episode in Proclus's commentary on the first book of Euclid's *Elements*.[113] In light of this tradition, Calasiris's association with Hermes emphasises the anagogic role attributed to him in the *Hermeneuma*.

Late Platonists frequently portray Hermes as a representative of *logos*, a connection that goes back to the *Cratylus*;[114] it is in this function that Platonist philosophers routinely invoke Hermes at the beginning of their works.[115] In the present context it is worth noting that Cnemon sets Calasiris-narrator in relation to the god right before a storytelling session, claiming that 'there is no better way to propitiate Hermes than by bringing as a contribution to the festivities that which is his own special concern—words (τὸ οἰκειότατον ἐκείνῳ λόγους, 5.16.4).' Against the background of the above-mentioned habit of Platonist authors, readers like Nilus may conclude from this invocation that Calasiris's story is set up like a philosophical work and therefore bears deeper meaning. However, the potential links between Calasiris and Hermes do not end here. The latter is also associated with remembering, as allegorical interpretations of his fight against Leto in the *Iliad* attest.[116] Platonist readers can link this side of Hermes to Calasiris's decisive role in enlightening Chariclea about her origin. Finally, if we emphasise Calasiris's association with Hermes, we can gain a new understanding of his charlatanic activities, which, as discussed in *Chapter Two*, seem to be at odds with his divine nature. As Hermes is the 'ruler of thieves' (*Hom. Hymn. Merc.* 292) and widely associated with deception and trickery,[117] Calasiris's fraudulent behaviour can be reevaluated as a sign of his close relationship to the god—and thus reconciled with his holy side. Furthermore, late Platonists who ascribe great importance to theurgy—most prominently, Iamblichus—link their magical practices to Egyptian priests and Hermes.[118] Considering this, we can take a new approach to those passages where it is unclear whether Calasiris is performing genuine divinatory rituals

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[113] Procl. *In Eucl.* 55.18–23; see Lamberton (1986: 224–5). In Julian's allegorical autobiography the god also plays the role of a guide to higher spheres (*Or.* 7.22.91–112); see Greenwood (2014: 146).

[114] Pl. *Cra.* 407e5–408b3, deriving Hermes's name form εἴρειν ('to speak') and μήδεσθαι ('to invent'); see Buffière (1957: 289–90).

[115] See e.g. Iambl. *Myst.* 1.1.1; Ammonius's commentary on Aristotle's *De interpretatione* 1.11; cf. Van den Berg (2014) on late Platonists and language. In Hermias's commentary on the *Phaedrus*, Theuth, the inventor of writing, is identified with Hermes (*In Phaedrum* 268.8–9); for a recent collection of essays on this commentary, see Finamore et al. (eds 2020).

[116] See Heraclit. *All.* 55 on Hom. *Il.* 20.72; [Plut.] *Vit. Hom.* 2.102. Note also that Hermias identifies Hermes with Plato's Theuth, who invents writing as a cure against forgetfulness (see previous note).

[117] See e.g. Jost (2019).

[118] See e.g. Iambl. *Myst.* 8.4–6. On the connection between Iamblichan theurgy and Hermeticism, see Fowden (1986/1993: 131–41). On Iamblichus's Egyptian persona in *Myst.*, see Struck (2002).

(5.13.3, at a temple of Hermes) or where he claims in his narrative to have acted as a charlatan:[119] we can entertain the possibility that even in these instances he is performing genuine theurgical rituals, which, due to the esoteric nature of these practices, the uninitiated are supposed to understand as empty mumbo jumbo.[120]

To conclude, if we assume a Platonist cognitive identity, Calasiris becomes a thoroughly Hermes-like character, acting as an adversary of forgetfulness, a spiritual guide, a master of *logoi*, and a magician. Is this take on him not incompatible with his death in Egypt, which has been read as a *failure* to accompany the protagonists all the way to Ethiopia?[121] I do not think so. First, let us recall that if we believe Calasiris, he has indeed reached this destination in the past. Second, returning to the Cave Allegory, we can even argue that his decision to pass the rest of his life in a lower realm corresponds to the task that Socrates ascribes to philosophers: they ought to redescend into the cave and live there (Pl. *Resp.* 519c8–520d4). Third, and finally, it is worth adducing a scene from Book Eight, where Charicleia and Theagenes discuss their dreams in Arsace's prison. Charicleia remembers that the previous night 'most divine' (θειότατος) Calasiris foretold her survival: 'Either I fell asleep without realising, and he came to me in a dream, or else I saw him in the very flesh.' Theagenes then notes, 'I have an oracle from the selfsame prophet; be it Calasiris or a god in Calasiris's shape (θεὸς εἰς Καλάσιριν φαινόμενος, 8.11.2–3).'[122] The protagonists here articulate exciting ideas, which fit in with our considerations: Calasiris might be alive somehow—or what seems to be Calasiris is in fact a divine entity.[123] For readers familiar with philosophers such as Iamblichus, who postulates various classes of supernatural beings mediating between humans and gods (daemons, angels, heroes, etc.),[124] this passage might indicate that Calasiris belongs to this sphere: he is a *theios anēr* in a special, metaphysical sense. As we shall see in the next section, Proclus attributed a similar mediating role to Hermes in the *Odyssey*.

2.d   Spiritual narratology

Let us return to Calasiris's association with Hermes *qua* spiritual guide and master of *logoi*. Platonist interpreters, I suggest, might consider these roles as coinciding in Calasiris's

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[119] On such instances see above, *Section 2.4*.
[120] On the blurry boundary between imperial holy men and charlatans, see Merkelbach (1962: 243–4); Sandy (1982a: 147–54).
[121] For such a reading see Merkelbach (1962: 272).
[122] Interpretations of this episode usually focus on the protagonists' attempts at making sense of the messages; see e.g. Bartsch (1989: 84); Morgan (1989a: 304).
[123] Interestingly, a similar consideration introduces Calasiris's Homeric allegoresis; see above, *Section 4.2.a*.
[124] See above, p. 129 n. 60.

relationship to the *Aethiopica*'s readership: Calasiris is not just their source of extensive embedded *logoi* but, as discussed above,[125] also presents his story in such a way as to highlight its allegorical meaning, thereby assisting his audience in embarking on a spiritual journey with the protagonists. In this context the novel's narrative macrostructure deserves closer attention: when Calasiris's story reaches Delphi, which represents the soul's low point, readers are lured into a vortex of embedded narratives. From this they fully arise by the end of Book Five: the story returns to the mouth of the Nile, which can be understood as a spiritual liminal space.[126] Afterwards, the primary narrator takes over, and the teleological drive of the plot becomes more tangible. To sum up, the reader's emergence from the narrative Russian doll of Calasiris's story corresponds to the spiritual ascent represented by the protagonists' journey. Assuming a Platonist cognitive identity, we can thus say that the *Aethiopica*'s narrative macrostructure mirrors the allegorical dimension of the plot.

If we allow ourselves an (anachronistic) glimpse into the fifth and sixth centuries, we encounter similar ideas about the correlation between narrative form and allegorical meanings. In his commentary on Plato's *Cratylus*, Proclus talks about communicating deities (*In Cra.* 79):[127]

> Our knowledge [of the divine] descends from above … through certain intermediaries. For … in Homer knowledge of the conversation between Zeus and Helios came down as far as Odysseus through the medium of both the archangel Hermes (διὰ μέσου τοῦ … ἀρχαγγελικοῦ Ἑρμοῦ) and Calypso.

If we transfer Proclus's understanding of the multistage information transfer that we encounter in Calasiris's narrative, its long chain of sources (at one point reaching four stages)[128] becomes a representation of the low spiritual status for which that part of the narrative stands. We find an even better match to a 'spiritual' approach to the *Aethiopica*'s narrative structure in the anonymous *Prolegomena* (approx. sixth century),[129] which offers the following interpretation of the narrative form of certain Platonic dialogues (*Proleg.* 20.2–11):[130]

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[125] See above, *Section 4.2.a*.
[126] See above, *Section 4.2.b*.
[127] Translation from Duvick (2007); on this passage see *ibid*. 143–144.
[128] Sisimithres-Charicles-Calasiris-Cnemon (2.31).
[129] For a good introduction see Layne (2018).
[130] Translation from Westerink (1962/2011).

> Plato makes the conversation take place either by the mouth of the personages themselves … or through other people who are among the audience … when he represents somebody else as reporting the things he heard Socrates say; or again through other people who have been told by those who heard Socrates himself; or finally, through others who heard it from those second-hand hearers; the succession of hearers goes as far as this, but no farther. In this respect, too, we can see Plato imitating the order of the universe (τὴν τῶν ὄντων τάξιν μιμούμενος φαίνεται), which goes no further than the third degree.

Here a narrative Russian doll represents the tiered ontology advocated by Platonists,[131] and diegetic mediation stands for the distance between lower and higher spheres of being—a concept that we also find in Proclus.[132] If we apply this to the *Aethiopica*, we thus get the very correspondence between narrative form and spiritual ascent that I have outlined.

With this 'spiritual narratology' in mind, let us consider a famous interaction between Calasiris and Cnemon. When the former offers a detailed description of the protagonists, the latter interrupts him; what follows is an exchange rich in metaliterary implications concerning *enargeia* as well as the relationship between illusion and deception.[133] According to Cnemon, the description was so vivid that he seemed to really see Charicleia and Theagenes. Calasiris replies, 'I doubt … that you have seen them as Greece and the sun gazed upon them that day (οἵους αὐτοὺς … ἡ Ἑλλάς τε καὶ ὁ ἥλιος ἐθεάσατο, 3.4.8).' Calasiris here links his unmediated experience to the presence of the sun, contrasting it to Cnemon's mediated one. If we assume a Platonist cognitive identity, we can understand the reference to the sun against the backdrop of the Cave Allegory: what Calasiris experienced was the 'real deal,' directly illuminated by the sun, whereas Cnemon is only partaking in a lower version thereof, in the realm of shadows and illusion. Read in this way, Calasiris's reaction becomes a reflection on the deeper significance of narrative mediation.

2.e Charicleia's *hamartēmata*

Before we learn anything specific about the protagonists' past, Charicleia identifies a god as the source of her misfortunes (1.8.2):[134] 'Apollo, you punish us too much and too harshly for

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[131] On this passage see Layne (2014: 87–8).
[132] See Procl. *In Prm*. 625.37–627.39; 644.1–645.8.
[133] See most recently Grethlein (forthcoming b); cf. Menze (2017: 234–7).
[134] On this scene see above, *Section 1.3*.

our sins (τῶν ἁμαρτημάτων)! Do you think we have not already suffered punishment enough?' What are Charicleia's supposed *hamartēmata*? Is Apollo (*qua* Helios)[135] not her forefather and protector? Paulsen suggests that from her limited perspective the reference to this god makes sense: the misdeed in question is her flight from Delphi, which, as Charicles makes clear in Meroe (10.36), can be seen as an offence against Apollo and his priest.[136] This interpretation is supported by those instances where Charicleia articulates her guilty conscience about abandoning Charicles.[137]

Introducing the idea of an avenging god who causes the misadventures of the protagonist(s), Heliodorus picks up a common novelistic motif, which ultimately goes back to Poseidon's vindictive role in the *Odyssey*.[138] Platonist readers might find it attractive to understand Charicleia's supposed transgression specifically in relation to the epic intertext, filtered through Porphyry's inventive take on it (an instance of allegorised intertextuality). Towards the end of his essay, Porphyry allegorises the blinding of Polyphemus, which he calls Odysseus's 'sin' (τῶν ἁμαρτημάτων, *De antr. nymph.* 35.5), as follows (35.7–9):

> It was not in the nature of things for him [Odysseus] to cast off this life of the senses simply by blinding it (ἁπλῶς τῆς αἰσθητικῆς ταύτης ἀπαλλαγῆναι ζωῆς τυφλώσαντα)— an attempt to put an end to it abruptly.

Lamberton teases out the implications of this passage: the blinding represents an attempt to escape from the material realm via suicide instead of contemplation, the latter of which would be the right path; having attempted to kill himself, Odysseus has to go through an 'arduous ordeal of expiation.' What is particularly remarkable about Porphyry's interpretation is that it transforms 'an element of the myth entirely external to Odysseus into a projection of an aspect of his own spiritual life.'[139]

If we assume a Platonist cognitive identity, this allegoresis offers an attractive filter for Charicleia's travails and her relationship to Charicles. Understanding her flight from Delphi as the beginning of a metaphysical journey, we can attribute significance to its abrupt and

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[135] On their identity see 10.36.3.
[136] See Paulsen (1992: 232 n. 17).
[137] See 7.14.6; 10.38.1; the former passage is briefly discussed by Konstan (1994: 94). On the literary and legal background of the elopement, see Lateiner (1997); Schwartz (2016: 215–25). Whitmarsh (2018: 1–8) brings the Constantinian law on adultery into play. Note also that Leucippe writes in similar terms about her mother in Ach. Tat. 5.18.4 (τὴν μητέρα κατέλιπον).
[138] See Eros in Xen. Ephes. 1.2 and (punctually) Ach. Tat. 1.2.1; Priapus in Petronius's *Satyricon*; Poseidon in the *Odyssey* (as early as *Od.* 1.20–21; 68–75); cf. Schissel von Fleschenberg (1913: 46 n. 1).
[139] Lamberton (1986: 131), who connects this interpretation to Porphyry's own intended suicide.

problematic nature and associate it with Porphyry's interpretation of Polyphemus's blinding, another escape with devastating consequences. According to such an interpretation, Charicleia should have left Delphi, the sensual realm, without attempting to cut ties with her old life by force. Readers like Nilus might conclude that this is the main point of Charicles's account in Book Ten and the deeper meaning of Charicleia's subsequent claim that she is 'a wicked parricide' (τὴν ἀθέμιτον … καὶ πατραλοίαν, 10.38.1). Along these lines, they can more generally connect Charicles's resurfacing in Meroe and his reunion with Charicleia to Porphyry's account of Poseidon's wrath. According to Porphyry, when Odysseus arrives at the harbour of Phorcys (Thoosa's father and Polyphemus's grandfather) and there sits under Athena's olive tree, this means that he is 'appeasing the daemon presiding over genesis [Thoosa]' (*De antr. nymph.* 35.7) for his sin.[140] Read against this backdrop, Charicleia's remorseful reunion with Charicles represents the soul acknowledging that her attempt to forcefully tear herself away from material life was misguided—an insight that is essential to the final stage of her ascent.

On a final note, if we understand Charicleia's departure from Delphi against the backdrop of the *Cyclopeia*, this connection opens up a new take on the puzzling dream she has in Book Two: Charicleia is blinded in one eye by 'a man with matted hair, with cunning in his eyes (τὸ βλέμμα ὑποκαθήμενος) and blood on his hands' (2.16.1). According to Cnemon this indicates that her father 'has died' (τεθνηκέναι, 2.16.5), an interpretation that some scholars accept, arguing that it refers proleptically to the death of her foster-father Calasiris.[141] However, if we emphasise Charicleia's guilty conscience concerning her flight, we can speculate that it is the violent man who represents Calasiris: he is the one who with his cunning plans has done away with another father, Charicles, and thus has his blood on his hands, a representation of his sufferings. From a Platonist point of view, this interpretation is particularly attractive if we consider the prominent role that violent blinding plays in both Charicleia's dream and the *Cyclopeia*. According to this reading, Charicleia's dream highlights not only her concerns about the escape but also its connection to the Odyssean episode.

2.f Two symbols

At the beginning of Book Five the primary narrator fills us in on what happened to the protagonists after they had parted ways with Cnemon and Thermouthis.[142] Left alone in the

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[140] On the identification of this daemon, see Akçay (2019: 97–8).
[141] See above, *Intermezzo*.
[142] For narratological details see Hefti (1950: 83–4); Morgan (2004b: 529–30, 2007a: 492–3).

cave, Charicleia and Theagenes enjoy a moment of (more or less chaste) intimacy,[143] whereupon the latter suggests (5.4.7),

> Let us agree upon some signs (σύμβολα) that will enable us to pass secret messages (ἀπόρρητα) while we are together, and by which we may track one another down if … we are separated.

Charicleia agrees, adding that they should use the male and female forms of 'the Pythian' (ὁ Πυθικός … ἡ Πυθιάς) as written codes, inscribing them 'on shrines, conspicuous statues, herms' (5.5.1). Moreover, they set physical recognition tokens and agree 'upon certain verbal signs' (ἐκ … λόγων σύμβολα): Charicleia chooses 'torch' (λαμπάδα), Theagenes 'palm' (φοίνικα, 5.5.2).'

   On the level of the plot, this scene prepares the protagonists' reunion in Memphis, where Theagenes recognises the disguised Charicleia only when she utters some of their secret names (7.7.7).[144] From a Platonist point of view, however, there might be more to their arrangement. The term σύμβολον, with which they refer to their code words, is not just ubiquitous in the history of ancient allegoresis but also popular amongst late Platonists:[145] Porphyry uses it and its cognates twenty-seven times in *On the cave*;[146] Iamblichus, who is less interested in literary exegesis, makes it a central *terminus technicus* of theurgy.[147] Readers like Nilus may also pick up on Theagenes's remark about the potential of symbols to convey ἀπόρρητα, another standard term of allegoresis.[148] If we assume a Platonist cognitive identity, we thus have every reason to set this scene in relation to allegorical interpretation. Developing such a reading, I shall focus on the code words λαμπάς and φοῖνιξ.[149]

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[143] See Lateiner (1997: 431); Whitmarsh (2011: 170–1); Morgan and Repath (2019: 155–6). Brethes (2007: 114) notes that this passage mirrors the scene where Theagenes embraces Thisbe's corpse.

[144] I shall refrain from ascribing significance to the book, chapter, and paragraph number of this passage. On this scene see also below, *Section 4.3.a*.

[145] For a comprehensive study see Struck (2004). Note also that Calasiris uses the cognate συμβολικῶς in his Homeric allegoresis (3.13.3).

[146] Akçay (2019: 34) counts one instance fewer, presumably not factoring in the adjectival form συμβολικῆς (Porph. *De antr. nymph.* 4.26).

[147] See Struck (2004: 204–26).

[148] See e.g. Origenes *C. Cels.* 1.20.20–21; Gregory of Nyssa, *De vita Mosis* 2.180.18; Julian. *Or.* 7.11.8; Porph. *Historia philosophiae* fr. 17. Note also that in the next sentence Theagenes calls their codes σύνθημα, which Iamblichus uses as a synonym for σύμβολον; see Struck (2004: 218–9).

[149] Another possibility would be to read this episode as a veiled reference to Iamblichan theurgy, where verbal and physical symbols as well as statues play a role; see Fowden (1986/1993: 131–41); Struck (2004: 210–3).

As Bowie demonstrates,[150] both words are ubiquitous in the *Aethiopica*, so it is promising to read them as carrying deeper meaning. As far as the torch is concerned, it fits well into a Platonist take on Heliodorus's imagery of darkness and light. According to such an interpretation, the former stands for the material realm and its low epistemic status, the latter for higher ontological and epistemic levels.[151] The *Hermeneuma* briefly hints that the torch Charicleia receives from Theagenes can be associated with this symbolism.[152] Such a reading works in other instances as well. For example, when Cnemon mistakes Thisbe's body for Charicleia's in the cave, he drops his torch (λαμπάδιον, 2.3.3), which goes out;[153] here the resulting darkness corresponds to Cnemon's lack of understanding. At the other end of the scale (and, characteristically, of the novel), we witness the protagonists proceeding into Meroe 'by the light of torches' (ὑπὸ λαμπάσι ἡμμέναις, 10.41.3).[154] Finally, in the Nile allegory the primary narrator makes explicit use of this symbolism, saying about an esoteric layer of meaning that it is revealed 'by the fire-bearing torch of truth' (τῇ πυρφόφῳ τῶν ὄντων λαμπάδι, 9.9.5).[155]

In the case of Theagenes's φοῖνιξ, we have to dig a bit deeper to establish a symbolic significance—in part because Heliodorus mobilises so many of its meanings: palm, date, crimson, Phoenician, and phoenix.[156] As Grethlein argues, it is the last of these that is linked to Theagenes in a particularly suggestive way when Charicleia and her companions encounter Nausicles's flamingo-hunting friend (6.3–4). We shall see that from a Platonist point of view, the association of both protagonists with the phoenix has allegorical potential.[157] As far as we can tell, the phoenix does not play a role in late Platonist philosophy;[158] yet central elements of the phoenix's story fit well into an allegorical reading of Heliodorus. What are these parts of the myth? 'The essence of the phoenix myth is that by dying the bird renews its life';[159] it is primarily associated with the sun; while its habitat is controversial, Heliodorus names Ethiopia as a possible biosphere;[160] most sources agree that from there it travels to Heliopolis, where it

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[150] See Bowie (1998).
[151] Cf. above, *Section 4.2.b*; similarly interpreted by Bowie (1998: 18).
[152] See *Hermeneuma* ll. 103–104 Colonna. For the richest study of these elements of Heliodorus's image system, see Morgan (2005). For a similar symbol see the torch that Julian receives from Hermes in Julian. *Or.* 7, 234a.
[153] On the role of misidentification in this scene, see Montiglio (2013: 108).
[154] On further instances see Hardie (1998: 39); Grethlein (forthcoming a).
[155] See Papadimitropoulos (2013: 110).
[156] For relevant passages see Bowie (1998: 2–14).
[157] See Grethlein (2016: 326–8); cf. Morgan (1989b: 106–7); Dowden (2007: 145–7).
[158] No noteworthy references to the phoenix in Plotinus, Porphyry, Iamblichus, and Proclus. However, the phoenix bears great potential for a Christian reading: in early Christianity the phoenix became a symbol for the Messiah and resurrection; see van den Broek (1972: *passim*).
[159] van den Broek (1972: 146).
[160] Besides India (6.3.3). Achilles Tatius also names Ethiopia as the phoenix's habitat (Ach. Tat. 3.25.1).

burns and arises from its ashes as a new bird.[161] While the phoenix's movements do not map onto the *Aethiopica*'s plot, it is nevertheless fruitful to read the protagonists' story against the background of its myth. The association of the phoenix with the Sun fits into the *Aethiopica*'s solar imagery, which in a Platonist reading carries deeper meaning. Along these lines, the phoenix's journey to Heliopolis, the city of the Sun, also gains significance: it emphasises the solar side of Meroe.[162] Focusing on the novel's ending, we can moreover connect Charicleia's and Theagenes's virginity test on the glowing gridiron, their near death, and their admission to Ethiopian society to the phoenix's immolation and palingenesis.[163] Considering the wondrous nature and metaphysical symbolic potential of this intertext,[164] readers like Nilus may understand it as serving to emphasise the deeper significance of the *Aethiopica*'s ending: a final step of spiritual purification and the beginning of a new life. In sum, both the torch and the phoenix can be understood as accentuating the *Aethiopica*'s allegorical dimension.

Let us now return to the scene in which the protagonists establish them as their symbols. According to their plan, the ultimate function of the (other) written signs is to facilitate orientation, should they be separated. This is important because, as Theagenes puts it, 'the human condition is full of uncertainty and subject to constant change' (5.4.7). From an allegorising perspective, readers can ascribe a similar function to λαμπάς and φοῖνιξ with regard to their own journey through Heliodorus's work: understood as allegorical signposts, the many λαμπάδες and φοίνικες found in the *Aethiopica* facilitate their orientation, helping them to stay focused on what really matters: the spiritual dimension of the novel. The two omnipresent symbols keep them from getting distracted by all the adventures (as well as digressions etc.) that similarly threaten to derail the protagonists from their path. Embracing this analogy, we can conclude that for readers like Nilus, the protagonists' plan not only calls attention to the *Aethiopica*'s symbolism but also is a veiled reflection on Heliodorus's allegorical method—to put it pointedly, a meta-allegory. From a Platonist point of view, the novel's narrative and thematic exuberance, a major source of pleasure for many readers, is— to say it with the Byzantine epigram on Achilles Tatius (by Photius or Leon the Philosopher)— πάρεργον, beside the main point.[165] For the reductive momentum of allegorical interpretation, which once again comes to light here, the φοῖνιξ is a particularly good example: on the surface

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[161] For the most detailed study, see van den Broek (1972).
[162] See above, *Section 4.2.b*. According to Herodotus, the phoenix's supposed destination is even the temple of Helios in Heliopolis (Hdt. 2.73.3–4).
[163] On Charicleia's reunion with her parents as a second birth; see Morgan (1989b: 111).
[164] See e.g. the phoenix's role as a symbol for the fate of the soul in the Stoa; cf. Colish (1985/1990: 29–30).
[165] *Anth. Pal.* 9.203.8; see Morales (2004: 227–8); Whitmarsh (2011: 168–9).

of the text, Heliodorus playfully showcases the wide range of meanings that this term can carry; for Platonist readers, by contrast, the deeper significance of all its instances is to remind us to narrow down the meaning of a rich work to a single, compact message. To return to the scenario with which I opened my Platonising reading, if Nilus were to send his friend a reply, aiming to demonstrate that he has indeed 'understood' the *Aethiopica*, he would be able to do so in the vein of the laconic note he received.

3. The pluralising impulse: imperial Greek *paideia*

This final section explores how the *Aethiopica* coalesces meaningfully if we assume a cognitive identity very different from the Platonist one: that of *pepaideumenoi*, for whom literary and rhetorical education as well as an intense engagement with the Greek past were cornerstones of cultural identity.[166] In view of the social overlap between Platonist circles and *pepaideumenoi*,[167] the reader envisioned here could even be Nilus from the last section—with the difference that now he would be discussing the novel with a friend with whom he has bonded over their shared *paideia*.[168] The rhetorical culture and literary corpus on which I base this reading are commonly associated with the fashionable yet contested term 'Second Sophistic,' which I shall not embrace for two reasons. First, in view of its programmatic undertones, doing so would misleadingly create the impression that the interpretative community I have in mind was a homogeneous, well-defined movement.[169] Second, while the Second Sophistic is commonly associated with the first three centuries C.E., fourth-century rhetorical handbooks and schools as well as the works of sophists like Libanius and Himerius testify to the continuity of this tradition;[170] consequently, while I shall primarily base my 'educated' reading on earlier authors such as Dio Chrysostom, Lucian, and Philostratus, it is nevertheless compatible with a fourth-century setting.

I build this erudite cognitive identity on a modern, recent understanding of these authors and imperial *paideia*—a strategy that demands methodological circumspection. However, as long as we keep in mind that this interpretative profile is a hypothetical, experimental model, we can avoid short-circuiting the argument and jumping to conclusions about actual readerships. In recent decades much scholarship has been devoted to Greekness under the Roman empire and to the role of *paideia* therein.[171] Essential elements of this educational concept were rhetorical skills, knowledge about the history of (especially classical) Greece, and familiarity with a literary canon that consisted amongst others of Homer, Hesiod, Pindar, Euripides,

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[166] The literature on *paideia* and imperial Greek identity is abundant; good starting points are Schmitz (1997); Whitmarsh (2001c, 2005d); Eshleman (2012). On *paideia* in the fourth century, see above, *Section 4.1*; see also below, p. 149 n. 171.

[167] See above, *Section 4.1*.

[168] For example, they could both be ex-students of the local rhetor Gessius, on whom see Cribiore (2007: 79); Janiszewski et al. (2015: 146–7). I elaborate on the possibility of such a 'social' reading in the last paragraph of this section.

[169] On this point see e.g. Whitmarsh (2011: 10). I shall use the term 'sophistic' as referring generally to the rhetorical culture of the imperial era.

[170] See above, *Section 4.1*.

[171] See e.g. Anderson (1993); Gleason (1995); Swain (1996); Schmitz (1997); Goldhill (ed. 2001); Whitmarsh (2001c); Johnson (ed. 2017).

Menander, Herodotus, Thucydides, Isocrates, Aeschines, Demosthenes, and Plato. We are thus dealing with an elite that constructs its identity in relation to and engagement with an idealised past; this culture is self-consciously secondary and postclassical.[172] Another important aspect of imperial *paideia* is its performative and competitive nature. In a society that treated education as social capital, individuals had to constantly prove themselves as *pepaideumenoi*. The main medium for demonstrating and defending this status was the sophistic performance, an often improvised delivery of a speech in close interaction with the audience.[173]

Recent studies have placed prominent characteristics shared by authors such as Dio, Lucian, and Philostratus in the context of this retrospective, bookish, rhetorical culture:[174] their ludic revisions of Homer (*Sections 4.3.a–b*), self-reflexive engagement in matters of truth and falsehood (*3.c*), their construction of elusive literary *personae*, which tease and challenge the reader with an endless deferral of meaning (*3.d*), and their agonistic side (*3.e*). A good example of these trends is Lucian's *True stories*: the prologue sets the reading process in relation to competitive sports (*Ver. hist.* 1.1), announces that the work is full of intertextual references to earlier literature (1.2), and presents it as the product of the author's 'vanity' (κενοδοξίας) and as containing nothing but lies (1.4).[175] In a sense, the present chapter can be understood as an attempt to read the *Aethiopica* with the same kind of audience in mind that is evoked by Lucian's provocative preface.

3.a Homeric mimesis 1: All the world's a stage?

Homer was a particularly important member of the imperial Greek literary canon;[176] for *pepaideumenoi* it was crucial to showcase their familiarity with the Homeric corpus. A popular kind of sophistic speech was the declamation (*meletē*), which was 'given in the persona of, or addressed to, a famous figure from myth or ancient history.'[177] As many others, the theorist Hermogenes (*fl.* 2nd century C.E.)[178] mentions Homeric topics for declamations: for example, 'what would Andromache say to Hector' and 'what would Achilles say to Patroclus' (*Prog.*

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[172] See Whitmarsh (2001c: 41–5); on the concept of postclassicism, see Whitmarsh (2013: 1–7).
[173] On the improvisational element see Schmitz (1997: 118–23); Whitmarsh (2005d: 24–6). On the interactive aspect see Korenjak (2000).
[174] See e.g. Whitmarsh (2001c, 2009); Kim (2010); ní Mheallaigh (2014).
[175] For a detailed analysis of the prologue, see von Möllendorff (2000: 30–61); see also ní Mheallaigh (2014: 206–8).
[176] See e.g. Kindstrand (1973); Kim (2010: 5).
[177] Whitmarsh (2005d: 20).
[178] Whitmarsh (2005d: 56).

9).[179] As Homer played a central role in rhetorical education, imperial authors naturally had an intimate relationship to him; orators such as Dio and Aelius Aristides go so far in constantly comparing themselves to Homeric heroes, most prominently Odysseus, that they make him the foundation of their public persona.[180] This practice is best understood in connection with the mimetic nature of sophistic performances, which is buttressed by the expectation that orators deliver their speech in a manner and dialect matching its content and by their habit of putting on clothes that suited the occasion.[181]

Some imperial authors, while themselves admiring Homer, reflect critically on his status as the untouchable, authoritative forefather of their culture. In his *Trojan oration* Dio playfully argues that Homer made up his partisan version of the Trojan War to please the Greeks.[182] Lucian's *True stories* also grapples with the secondary nature of contemporary culture: the protagonist visits the Island of the Blessed, where prominent figures from the past live together in a way that, as has been observed, recalls the competitive milieu of *pepaideumenoi*.[183] As there is no escape from their dull community, this scenario arguably epitomises the 'anxiety of entrapment and the crisis of posteriority'[184] experienced by the educated elite. However, in contrast to this melancholic reflection, *True stories* is also an astonishingly creative work that explores and celebrates the possibilities offered by a rich literary past. I shall argue that such ambivalence and challenging absence of stable meanings, characteristic of much imperial literature, are also shared by Heliodorus.[185] If we consider the *Aethiopica* from an erudite perspective, the novel invites reflection on its relationship to canonical literature and, more specifically, critical engagement with the culture of performatively impersonating figures from the mythical past.

Let us start with a scene that takes place before the protagonists part ways with Cnemon and Thermouthis at the bandits' hideout. Theagenes makes the following suggestion (2.19.1–2):

> 'We shall disguise ourselves as beggars, vagabonds who beg for a living.' 'Of course!'
> said Cnemon. 'Your faces are hideously ugly … It seems to me that beggars like you

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[179] On declamations and their role in imperial *paideia*, see Webb (2017: 146–50). For overviews of Libanius's declamations and *progymnasmata*, which also feature Homeric topics, see Gibson (2014); Penella (2014). On the relationship between rhetorical education and classical literature in the fourth century, see Cribiore (2001: 225–30).

[180] See Kindstrand (1973: 34–36; 89–90). I shall return to Dio's relationship to Odysseus later in this section.

[181] On language see Hermog. *Prog.* 9.46; on clothes see Anderson (1989: 94); Whitmarsh (2005d: 25–9).

[182] See Kim (2010: 85–139). On Homeric revisions see below, *Section 4.3.b*.

[183] ní Mheallaigh (2014: 246–7).

[184] ní Mheallaigh (2014: 250); see also Kim (2010: 156–74).

[185] See below, *Section 4.3.d*.

will not ask for scraps but for swords and cauldrons (οὐκ ἀκόλους ἀλλ᾽ ἄοράς τε καὶ λέβητας αἰτήσειν)!' This brought a smile to their faces, but it was forced and did not come from the heart.

As has been noted, Theagenes's idea is modelled on Odysseus's disguise in Ithaca, and Cnemon's attempt at making a critical, witty remark underlines this connection: he quotes *Odyssey* 17.222, where the goatherd Melantheus mocks beggar-Odysseus as a man who is 'asking only for scraps, never for swords and cauldrons' (αἰτίζων ἀκόλους, οὐκ ἄορας οὐδὲ λέβητας).[186] If we approach this scene with a focus on the intricacies of literary imitation, we can reasonably assume that at the very latest after Cnemon's remark, the (educated) protagonists are aware of the Odyssean intertext at play:[187] the quotation is so decontextualised that they can make sense of it only if they identify it as such. We may infer that they do so from their smile, which from an erudite perspective is best understood as a reaction to Cnemon's intertextual joke:[188] Charicleia and Theagenes are too beautiful to convincingly adopt the Odyssean trick.[189] Considering Odysseus's supernatural transformation by Athena, educated readers can furthermore ascribe metaliterary significance to Cnemon's remark: unlike the fantastic *Odyssey*, the *Aethiopica* is set in a realistic universe.[190]

A final element of this scene that deserves attention is the tension between Theagenes's suggestion and Cnemon's reaction, which remains unresolved. If we assume a sophistic cognitive identity, this scene thus raises questions about mimesis: how similar are Heliodorus's protagonists to the Homeric characters to whom they are frequently linked? How appropriate and useful is it (for them) to imitate epic heroes? What is the relationship between the mythical past and (fictive) reality? Before we address these questions in more detail, let us look at another scene, where Charicleia picks up Theagenes's plan with explicit reference to it.

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[186] First Koraes (1804: 2.77–78). Cf. Garson (1975: 137–8), calling the joke 'somewhat insensitive'; Fusillo (1990: 41) for metaliterary remarks; Paulsen (1992: 73–4) on possible implications concerning literary genre; similarly Doody (1996/1997: 132–3); De Temmerman (2014: 280–1), arguing that the joke dissociates the protagonists from the Odyssean model.

[187] Being a member of a ritual delegation sent by his polis, Theagenes clearly belongs to its (educated) elite; Charicleia's *paideia* is highlighted by Charicles in 2.33.5.

[188] Note that the joke also serves to introduce Cnemon's and Thermouthis's comic adventures, on which see above, *Intermezzo.*

[189] Cf. De Temmerman (2014: 280–9), exploring how Heliodorus deconstructs Theagenes's use of *exempla* in his self-presentation.

[190] De Temmerman (2014: 279) reads 5.5.4, where Charicleia changes her clothes, straightforwardly as the implementation of Theagenes's ruse. I, however, think it is better to understand this as an instance of merely attempted disguise: as Charicleia hints in 6.10.1, they are interrupted by the arrival of Mitranes's troups (5.6).

When Charicleia and Calasiris are about to leave Chemmis, the latter refers to the former's expertise in devising tricks (σοφιστεῦσαι, 6.9.7) and encourages her to come up with a plan for the impending trip. Charicleia replies (6.10.1),

> Theagenes and I tried a ruse once before … I propose that we make use of it again, with better hopes of success this time … We decided to change into the shabbiest clothes we could find and disguise ourselves as beggars.

As has been noted, the subsequent description of their costumes features numerous verbal parallels to Odysseus's transformation.[191] A principal function of these is that they serve as an interpretative aid, underlining the Homeric prototype at play.[192] However, readers focusing on matters of mimesis may attribute further significance to the Odyssean echoes: remembering Cnemon's earlier joke, they can entertain the possibility that at this point Charicleia is aware of the literary background of her ruse, and understand the Odyssean references as focalised by the heroine. In this reading they serve to underline that she is *knowingly* imitating the epic model.[193]

These considerations lead to further questions: how does Charicleia's (deliberately literary) initiative relate to Cnemon's criticism in Book Two? Does her implementation of the ruse prove him wrong? Two passages can be understood as suggesting otherwise. First, Charicleia and Calasiris do not take their masquerade completely seriously either: 'they teased one another (ἐπισκώψαντες εἰς ἀλλήλους) a little, telling each other in jest (ἐπιχλευάσαντες) how well the costume became them' (6.12.1). Second, their ruse proves more successful than they intended: when the protagonists are reunited at the gates of Memphis, Theagenes initially does not recognise Charicleia and even hits her as she tries to embrace him (7.7.5–7).[194] These observations complicate the picture further, and we can phrase our questions more generally: what attitude towards literary imitation can we infer from these scenes? What is the significance of the question whether it is good to model one's actions on Homeric prototypes?

I think there are two interrelated aspects of imperial culture to which these mimetic issues can be linked. Let us start by considering the one that in my opinion provides a less fruitful

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[191] See Rattenbury and Lumb (1935–1943/1960: *ad loc.*); De Temmerman (2014: 280).

[192] Note also a further parallel between the two scenes: in both instances a second departure is imminent—from the hideout in Book Two, here from Chemmis.

[193] We find a comparable form of intertextual awareness in *True stories*, whose primary narrator in the prologue announces that his adventures are full of literary references; see above, p. 150. See also Paulsen (1992), arguing that Cnemon, Calasiris, and Charicles knowingly stage themselves as tragic characters.

[194] On the implications of this passage for Heliodorus's concept of identity, see Perkins (1999: 201).

context for such considerations—namely, what Rebecca Langlands has labelled 'exemplary ethics': the custom of communicating what is right and wrong by means of paradigmatic stories about historical and fictive figures.[195] This practice has a long history, reaching back through Aristotle's rhetorical theory and Plato's aesthetics all the way to Homeric *exempla*;[196] it finds expression in historiography,[197] education,[198] and both Greek and Roman rhetoric.[199] In the present context, however, it suffices to focus on the role of *exempla* in the Roman world. If we read the scenes in question against the background of exemplary ethics, they invoke a discourse about what Langlands calls 'situational sensitivity,' a skill that Cicero and others consider to be crucial for successful mimesis: we have to imitate *exempla* selectively and creatively, taking into account the differences between the model and our own circumstances instead of mechanically replicating it.[200] Cnemon's critique can be regarded as implying that Theagenes lacks this very skill: he proposes to imitate Odysseus without realising that in this case doing so one-to-one is inadvisable. Chariclea's success in replicating Odysseus's actions, however, seems to prove him wrong. While such an 'exemplary' reading is thought-provoking, certain aspects of the discussed scenes raise doubts as to whether they are best understood against this backdrop. Chariclea's and Calasiris's jokes about their costumes stand in contrast to the lofty atmosphere usually surrounding ethical models; moreover, the imitation in question is that of a specific trick, whereas the process of learning from *exempla* usually targets something general behind concrete actions.[201]

A more productive cultural context for the *Aethiopica*'s discourse of Odyssean mimesis is the sophistic habit of impersonating figures from the past, be that in the context of a specific declamation or of the sustained self-dramatisation of celebrities such as Dio.[202] From this perspective we can relate the ironic handling of Homeric intertexts in both scenes to the tongue-in-cheek tone of imperial rhetors and their playful engagement with *paideia*. Moreover, the straightforward adoption of Odysseus's masquerade in the *Aethiopica*, with its focus on appearances, is a good match to the theatrical impersonation characteristic of declamatory

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[195] Langlands (2018); cf. above, p. 152 n. 189.
[196] For overviews of exemplarity in Greek literature and philosophy, see Goldhill (1994: 55–6); Blondell (2002: 80–5).
[197] On Livy see Chaplin (2000); on Roman historiography and culture in general, see Roller (2009); on Roman exemplarity in Greek historiography, see Gowing (2009); on the ethics of Plutarch's *Lives*, see Duff (1999).
[198] On the process of learning from *exempla*, see Langlands (2018: 86–111).
[199] For an overview see Ueding et al. (1996: 60–4); on *exempla* in Roman declamation, see van der Poel (2009).
[200] See Langlands (2018: 112–27).
[201] See Langlands (2018: 104); cf. Valerius Maximus's *Facta et dicta memorabilia*, our largest collection of *exempla*, the majority of which is arranged according to (general) virtues and vices.
[202] On Dio's self-conscious handling of his public *personae*, see Moles (1978). On rhetorical overtones in Theagenes's and Chariclea's plans, see De Temmerman (2014: 279–80).

culture. An audience familiar with imperial Greek culture may even specifically recall Dio's self-staging as a new Odysseus: 'When I was wandering in exile … I assumed the guise and dress of a vagabond beggar, *asking only for handouts, never for swords or cauldrons.*'[203]

Placed into this cultural context, Cnemon's objection in Book Two appears—in a Lucianic tradition—as a critique of Homeric mimesis. He makes fun of Theagenes's Odyssean idea, thereby distancing himself from the practice of *pepaideumenoi* to imitate characters from the epic poems. The protagonists' languid reaction, in turn, can be understood as undermining Cnemon's position; the tension between the different takes on imitation remains unresolved. The beginning of the episode in Book Six arguably confirms such a 'meta-sophistic' interpretation of the Odyssean roleplay: when Calasiris asks Charicleia to σοφιστεῦσαι, erudite readers may understand this as an invitation 'to play the sophist.'[204] While Charicleia's and Calasiris's jokes match the ludic, self-conscious relationship of imperial culture with its secondary status, the protagonists' unsettling reunion sustains the *Aethiopica*'s ambivalent relationship to the mimetic quality of *paideia*. Charicleia eventually takes on Odysseus's role but also ends up burying her true self so deeply that not even Theagenes sees through the façade. As this scene dramatises, an all too prone absorption of the secondary and artificial may supersede a more authentic and essential self.

3.b Homeric mimesis 2: Who is playing?

An episode found towards the end of Calasiris's narrative offers further food for thought to readers interested in matters of *paideia* and posteriority. Calasiris and the protagonists are captured by pirates, whose leader, Trachinus, declares his intention to marry Charicleia. To prevent this from happening, Calasiris starts plotting: he convinces Pelorus, the best fighter amongst the bandits, that Charicleia is in love with him. When Trachinus asks Pelorus which part of the loot he claims as a reward for his braveness, he chooses Charicleia. Trachinus is not willing to give her up; the conflict escalates, and the outlaws start to kill each other (5.26–32).

As has been noted and *pepaideumenoi* may easily spot, two Homeric intertexts are at play here: the massacre—especially the description of its outcome in Book One—recalls the *Mnesterophonia*,[205] and Calasiris's scheme echoes the conflict between Achilles and

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[203] Dio Chrys. *Or.* 1.50. On the Odyssean background of Dio's disguise, see also *Or.* 13.11 and Philostr. *VS* 488. On the language of exile in imperial Greek literature, see Whitmarsh (2001b).

[204] A TLG search suggests that this was the common sense of the verb in the imperial period.

[205] Feuillâtre (1966: 105); Doody (1996/1997: 90); Telò (2011); Whitmarsh (2011: 108); Doody (2013: 109); Dowden (2013: 50–1); Tagliabue (2015).

Agamemnon at the beginning of the *Iliad*.[206] Scholarship has discussed the function of the two intertexts in similar terms, exploring their aesthetic purpose and reading them as instruments of characterisation. From a sophisticated perspective, however, the two intertextual connections also deserve attention as regards their relationship to their respective originator. In the case of the bandits' massacre and the *Mnesterophonia*, the reference is exclusively motivated on the *narratorial* level:[207] there is no reason to assume that an involved character deliberately creates the allusion (no *actorial motivation* as regards the reference). The conflict of Trachinus (Agamemnon) and Pelorus (Achilles) over Charicleia (Briseis), in turn, may appear more complex to readers who have schooled their intertextual sensitivity on authors such as Lucian and Philostratus, whose works are inhabited by characters familiar with Homer.[208] While it is possible to interpret the Iliadic reference as narratorially motivated, there is another option: in view of Calasiris's literacy and his playful, sophisticated engagement with Homer, erudite readers may entertain the possibility that he deliberately models his scheme on the beginning of the *Iliad*. In a seemingly hopeless situation, he would spot a parallel between his situation and the constellation of characters in the *Iliad*—the leader, the fighter, and the woman desired by both—and instrumentalise his *paideia* to instigate a conflict.[209] According to this actorially motivated reading of the Iliadic intertext, we can establish a connection between Calasiris's machinations and Charicleia's Odyssean disguise, which we can also interpret as the conscious imitation of a prominent Homeric scene.[210]

From an erudite point of view, such instances of actorially motivated intertextuality are best understood against the backdrop of sophistic impersonation. It is, however, important to note a difference between Calasiris's and Charicleia's cases: the latter instance lacks markers of intertextual awareness; we thus have no grounds on which to decide whether the Homeric reference is actorially or narratorially motivated. I suggest that *pepaideumenoi* may take this *ambiguous intertextual motivation* as an invitation to reflect on the mimetic quality of the *Aethiopica* and on Heliodorus's relationship to imperial rhetorical culture. They can read the

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[206] First Paulsen (1992: 49–51), whose interpretation of the Iliadic intertext should be treated with reservation; see also Dowden (1996: 277); De Temmerman (2014: 292–3).

[207] On the distinction between actorial and narratorial motivation, see de Jong (2001: xi, xvi); cf. Stürmer (1921: 580); for a similar concept see the mimetic and synthetic components of characters in Phelan (1989).

[208] A particularly striking example is the well-read Protesilaus of Philostratus's *On heroes*; see Kim (2010: 191–5).

[209] Moreover, if we understand the intertextual reference as actorially motivated, the resulting reading is attractive insofar as Calasiris then becomes a hybrid between Chryses and Calchas: like the former, he wants to recover his daughter from a predatory 'suitor'; like the latter, he initiates a conflict between two competing men by interfering in their power dynamics.

[210] See above, *Section 4.3.a.*

connection between Calasiris's actions and their Iliadic background in contrasting ways. If they understand it as narratorially motivated, the relationship is simple: a fictional character follows a Homeric model as the unknowing puppet on the strings of a sophisticated author. In the actorially motivated scenario, the entire act of mimesis takes place in the fictive world, with Calasiris imitating the *Iliad* knowingly. This setting is different from those instances of actorially motivated intertextuality that we encounter in earlier novels: in the works of Chariton and Achilles Tatius, characters comment on the similarities of events to epic scenes but—unlike Calasiris—do not seem to purposefully imitate them.[211] To tease out the implications of this reading, it is important to remember that Calasiris has an authorial aura, in important respects acting as Heliodorus's *alter ego*.[212] If we assume that Calasiris imitates a Homeric prototype on purpose, he himself turns out to play the role of an author standing in an epigonal relationship to Homer; Heliodorus then becomes the creator of a mimetic author and is thereby lifted to a level where his posterior relationship to the epic poet is itself mediated.[213] Is he staging himself as a *tertiary* author, an imitator of mimesis? Erudite readers might recall Odysseus's role in *True stories*: on the Island of the Blessed he writes a letter to Calypso, which is a sequel to the *Odyssey*. As ní Mheallaigh argues, Odysseus's authorial role 'mirrors Lucian's own hypertextual relationship with Homer.'[214] By going through the different ways to picture Heliodorus's relationship to his major literary role model, readers can reflect on the degree of the novelist's literary 'lateness,' a favourite topic of imperial Greek writers.

3.c   A sceptical reading

As noted earlier,[215] establishing and defending one's status as a *pepaideumenos* is a performative business. This competitive rhetorical culture favours those who are skilled in impressing and charming their audiences; it is therefore not surprising that imperial society was

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[211] On Chariton see Manuwald (2000: 107–8); Hirschberger (2001: 164–76). Ach. Tat. 2.23.3 subverts this motif; see Whitmarsh (2001a: 152). This form of intertextuality is in a way prefigured by Euripides's *Cyclops*, in which some characters are portrayed as being aware that they are re-enacting an Odyssean episode; see Hunter (2009: 53–64). An interesting case can be found in Longus 3.16, where Lycaenion combines two Odyssean dreams to trick Daphnis; see Hunter (1983: 61); Morgan (2004c: 211); Cikán and Danek (2018: 348). However, while Lycaenion comes from the city, her status is unclear; it is thus impossible to say anything about her education. On further intertexts and Lycaenion as an experienced 'reader' of the novelistic plot, see Lefteratou (2018: 152–4). On a related phenomenon in Libanius's *progymnasmata*—mythical characters possessing literary knowledge that belongs to the authorial sphere—see Webb (2010: 144–5).

[212] See above, *Section 2.2*.

[213] Cf. Nonnus, Dion. 25.265, where the poet asks to 'hold the living spear and shield of father Homer (ἔμπνοον ἔγχος ἔχοντα καὶ ἀσπίδα πατρὸς Ὁμήρου).

[214] ní Mheallaigh (2014: 244).

[215] See above, *Section 4.3.b*.

a fertile soil for all sorts of frauds and impostors.[216] Contemporary authors introduce numerous such figures and engage with their culture of semblances; scepticism towards (intellectual, cultural, etc.) authorities is a popular topic in imperial literature. Lucian is a prime example: a major subject of his satires is the self-proclaimed philosophers of his time and their pseudo-knowledge; he portrays them as charlatans who are primarily concerned about *appearing* as impressive, imitating rather than doing philosophy.[217] Authors engaging critically with the cultural identity of their time found a major target for their scepticism in Homer. This choice is commonly understood against the background of his status as a cultural authority and the devotion of *pepaideumenoi* to his works as a source of reliable information on an idealised past.[218] Revisionist works such as Dio's *Trojan oration* or Philostratus's *On heroes* offer alternative, allegedly truer versions of events described in the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*. As has been observed, however, both Dio and Philostratus caution readers against taking their alternative accounts at face value.[219] The tension between Homer's authoritative version and its rivals is not resolved in these works; they are not setting out to put common yet incorrect beliefs right but instead encourage readers to keep questioning the truth behind literary accounts.[220] Here the proem of *True stories* is worth recalling, where Lucian contrasts the sceptical approach of his targeted audience of *pepaideumenoi* with the credulous attitude of *idiōtai* (*Ver. hist.* 1.3). Moreover, the suspicious drive of such works is rooted in contemporary rhetorical culture: students sharpened their argumentative skills by composing exercises in which they subjected classics of literature to forensic scrutiny, even facing the challenge of developing contradictory positions on one and the same literary or mythological question.[221] With this in mind, we can assume that for erudite readers a pluralising, sceptical perspective on the *Aethiopica*, as outlined in *Chapter Three*, may be particularly attractive. The present section places this perspective in dialogue with imperial literature. While the first, larger part of this section is concerned with Calasiris, I shall then turn my attention to other material to illustrate the pervasive force of such a reading.

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[216] Of course, these are not stable categories: somebody whom one person considers to be a charlatan might be a learned master in the eyes of another; see e.g. Philostr. *VA* 2.
[217] See e.g. Hahn (1989: 25–8); Whitmarsh (2001c: 261–2).
[218] On this connection see Kim (2010: 12–3).
[219] On Dio's Egyptian priest see Kim (2010: 108–12); on Philostratus's Protesilaus see *ibid*. 195–9.
[220] This attitude, shared by Dio, Lucian, and Philostratus, is summarised by Kim (2010: 218–20).
[221] Such argumentative exercises are *anaskeuē* and *kataskeuē* (refutation and confirmation) as well as *enkōmion* and *psogos* (praise and blame); see Webb (2010: 136–49), with examples from Libanius and references to theorists. On the rhetorical background of Dio's treatment of Homer, see Kim (2010: 85–139); on related implications of Lucian's *Toxaris*, see ní Mheallaigh (2014: 63–4).

For the ambition of *pepaideumenoi* to subject literary accounts to elaborate rhetorical polygraph tests, Calasiris's mission is a great match. We may compare the treatment of Homer as an untrustworthy witness in Dio's *Trojan oration*; in this work supposed narrative incongruities such as the confusing or wrong sequence of events or the omission of important information are interpreted as signals that Homer was making up his story as he went along and failed to cover up his improvised lies.[222] Let us reconsider against this backdrop the ellipsis at the beginning of Calasiris's narrative:[223] he claims that nothing relevant happened during the omitted chapter of his life; later, however, he places his supposed journey to Ethiopia in the period covered by this ellipsis. Erudite readers may identify this and similar inconsistencies as symptoms of Calasiris's mendacity. In this vein, they may take the communicative situation of Calasiris's narrative as validating their scrutinising approach: just as Dio's Homer, who gradually loses control over his improvised story, Calasiris offers an oral account in a dynamic setting characterised by adjustments to a demanding narratee. Moreover, in analogy to Dio's and Philostratus's versions of Homer, according to which the poet is lying for specific reasons that can be exposed,[224] *pepaideumenoi* may identify motivations for Calasiris's mendacity: most obviously, his lies arguably allow him to justify his actions as well as manipulate his audiences.

We have seen in *Chapter Two* that a sceptical approach results in a conception of Calasiris as a quack feigning wisdom and supernatural powers. *Pepaideumenoi*, who may be familiar with such figures from their own experience or from imperial literature,[225] can recognise the charlatanic traits of Calasiris and from the outset prioritise this side in their reading. The parallels between Calasiris and, for instance, Lucian's tricksters are numerous. Just as Calasiris slickly manipulates his sources of information and deludes his victims into believing that he has access to supernatural knowledge,[226] Lucian's Alexander runs an elaborate oracular scheme (*Alex.* 37):

> He set up a great many of his confederates as spies … who reported back to him everyone's opinions and gave him forewarning of the questions and the greatest wishes

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[222] See Kim (2010: 97–108); see also above, p. 158 n. 221. In this context it is worth noting that Hefti (1950) has a similar understanding of Heliodorus, who, he argues, makes numerous narrative adjustments to cover up inconsistencies.
[223] See above, *Section 2.6.a.*
[224] See Dio Chrys. *Or.* 11.15; Philostr. *Her.* 43.14; cf. Kim (2010: 97, 208–211).
[225] For a collection of essays on this topic, see Panayotakis (ed. 2015).
[226] See above, *Section 2.4.*

of the questioners, so that the messengers would find him ready with his answers even before they arrived.[227]

In another passage Cnemon calls Calasiris 'Proteus' (2.24.4); as Whitmarsh points out, this figure was ever since Plato 'a common *comparandus* for sophists,'[228] whom the philosopher associates with fake knowledge. Erudite readers might here think of the infamous charlatan Peregrinus in particular—known to Lucian, Philostratus, and Gellius[229]—who also went by 'Proteus' and had as his main disciple a certain Theagenes; the two onomastic parallels ('Proteus' and 'Theagenes') may be understood as further indicators of Calasiris's charlatanic nature.[230]

Let us now turn to Calasiris's Homeric *vita*, in which he claims that Homer deliberately withheld information about his hometown. As Calasiris speculates, 'possibly this may be another example of his wisdom (σοφίᾳ), and by concealing his true place of origin he was claiming the whole world as his own' (3.14.4). This is significant for Calasiris's characterisation for two reasons. First, he presents Homer as building his fame in a calculated, manipulative manner, which evokes charlatanic soothsayers' habit of abusing deliberate obscurity.[231] Considering that Calasiris to an extent models Homer after his own image,[232] we can conclude that this element of the *vita* underlines his deceptive practices. Second, erudite readers may connect Calasiris's explanation to Philostratus's *On heroes*, where we find the only matching interpretation known to me. Just as Calasiris, the vinedresser offers two explanations for Homer's provenance, one of which is that 'Homer himself did not say [where he came from] in order to keep all ambitious cities claiming him as their own (Philostr. *Her.* 44.2).'[233] *Pepaideumenoi* may spot the close analogy and set the versions of Calasiris and the vinedresser in direct relation to each other. The resulting association of the two further buttresses Calasiris's sophistic and charlatanic side: the vinedresser is in various ways an epitome of imperial *paideia* and a particularly slippery figure who arguably fools his credulous

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[227] Cf. Philostr. *VS* 490, where Favorinus invents a dream to secure Hadrian's benevolence.
[228] Whitmarsh (2001c: 228). Cf. above, *Section 2.5*.
[229] See Luc. *De mort. Peregr. passim*; Philostr. *VS* 563; Gell. *NA* 12.11. The *Suda* (under 'Philostratus the Elder,' φ 422) notes that Philostratus wrote a Πρωτεὺς κύων ἢ σοφιστῆς, which might have been about the same Peregrinus, a Cynic philosopher.
[230] On parallels between Calasiris and Peregrinus, see Sandy (1982a: 152–3).
[231] On this *topos* of *Orakelkritik*, as found in Oenomaus and Lucian, see Bendlin (2011: 226–41).
[232] See e.g. Whitmarsh (1998: 105–6); Pitcher (2016) with a focus on the biographical tradition.
[233] See also *Anth. Plan.* 299. For further ancient sources on Homer's homeland, see Whitmarsh (2011: 114).

interlocutor on several occasions.[234] To conclude, sophistic readers have good reasons to embrace Calasiris's deceptive side; following the cognitive principle of top-down processing,[235] they can from the outset understand him as a stereotypical charlatan.

This scrutinising, mistrustful perspective can be expanded to other embedded narratives. Drawing on *Chapter One*, we can find several elements in Cnemon's story that may be taken as signals that he is making up parts of his story. One such sign is his use of a narratological device that I called 'emancipation of speech':[236] we learn *after* his attack on his father that his stepmother *predicted* that this would happen (1.12.4). Erudite readers, who may be prone to interpret Calasiris's *belated* claims about his trip to Ethiopia as a sign of mendacity, can do the same here. Another element receptive to such scrutiny is that Cnemon first narrates what happened in Athens after he was exiled and only thereafter specifies Anticles as his informant (2.9.4). If we assume a sophistic cognitive identity, we can read this as a further sign that Cnemon is improvising his story: he realises belatedly that his narratorial state of knowledge is implausible and hastily invents a source to resolve the inconsistency.[237] This assumption is arguably confirmed by Anticles's unclear fate.[238]

Such a scrutiny of the narrator's sources was popular amongst imperial authors. In his *Trojan oration* Dio accuses Homer of breaching historiographical principles by reporting what gods told each other in private (ἰδίᾳ, *Or.* 11.19).[239] Lucian's *Rooster* mockingly reflects on such rhetorical-scholarly criticism by letting a bird claim that Homer could not possibly know anything about the Trojan War, during which he was a camel in Bactria (*Somn.* 17).[240] Finally, source criticism lies at the core of Philostratus's *On heroes*: on the one hand, the vinedresser states that he received reliable information about the Trojan War from Protesilaus's ghost, a claim that is never substantiated; on the other hand, he argues that while Homer did know the truth, Odysseus convinced him to distort his account (*Her.* 43.11–16).[241] Readers familiar with this interpretative trend have every reason to question the veracity not just of Calasiris but also of Cnemon. A main source of readerly pleasure for such an audience is to outsmart

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[234] On these and related aspects of *On heroes*, see Whitmarsh (2009); Kim (2010: 175–215). For another scene where Calasiris and Cnemon are set into relation with the vinedresser and the Phoenician, see Whitmarsh (2011: 125).
[235] See above, *Section 2.5*.
[236] See above, *Section 3.6*.
[237] See above, p. 107 n. 126.
[238] On this plot hole see above, *Section 3.5*.
[239] See Kim (2010: 98–9).
[240] On further imperial Greek accounts of Homer's sources, see Kim (2010: 185–188; 206–211).
[241] See Grossardt (2006: *ad loc.*); Kim (2010: 206–11).

homodiegetic narrators, seeing through their attempts to deceive their addressees—a challenge that we also face when reading Achilles Tatius as well as Lucian's *True stories* and *Toxaris*.[242]

3.d   The never-ending deferral of meanings

In this section I shall tease out the overarching implications of the close connection between the pluralising perspective and the cognitive identity of *pepaideumenoi*. As has been noted, many works of imperial Greek literature are characterised by the constant unveiling and reveiling of meaning, by an aesthetics of perpetual deferral.[243] In three instances Lucian writes sequels to his works, which present themselves as apologies and serve to challenge the position taken in the original piece.[244] In his *Life of Apollonius*, Philostratus on the one hand tells the story of an idealised holy man but on the other hand introduces a questionable source, the writings of a certain Damis. Bowie argues that this *Beglaubigungsapparat* makes the narrative receptive to contrasting interpretations: readers can either take the source at face value and see Apollonius as a historical, genuine holy man or see the reference to Damis's documents 'as a covert admission of fictionality.'[245] As noted, Dio's *Trojan oration* and Philostratus's *On heroes* feature comparable instances of unresolved tension—namely, between a mendacious Homer and competing sources.

Erudite interpreters, who are familiar with such open texts and have learned during their rhetorical education to develop edgy, sometimes contradictory interpretations on command,[246] may be eager to identify in the *Aethiopica* elements that undermine a one-sided reading. Let us revisit the scene where Charicles gives in to Sisimithres's religious teleology (10.41.2). Is this not, I asked earlier,[247] the final victory of one perspective over the other? Rhetorically educated readers may be inclined to resist this conclusion. An insightful parallel is the ending of *On heroes*, where the Phoenician, who has played the role of the religious vinedresser's sceptical interlocutor, finally proclaims, 'I believe you' (πείθομαί σοι, Philostr. *Her.* 58.6). Whitmarsh calls attention to signals undermining the vinedresser's authority and concludes, 'we should question … any assumption that the Phoenician's "conversion" to belief provides the only

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[242] Of course, as Lucian hints in *Ver. hist.* 1.3, such complications concerning the reliability of homodiegetic narratives go back to the *Odyssey*. On homodiegetic narrators in Lucian, see ní Mheallaigh (2014: 66–7); for a recent overview of related matters in Achilles Tatius, see Whitmarsh (2020: 40–6); see further Whitmarsh (2003); Repath (2005); Morgan (2007b).

[243] On various forms of openness in late Latin literature, see Pelttari (2014).

[244] On this Lucianic technique see Whitmarsh (2001c: 291–3).

[245] Bowie (1994a: 196).

[246] See above, *Section 4.3.c*.

[247] See above, *Section 3.2.c*.

possible model of response to the vinedresser's story.'[248] If we place the *Aethiopica* in the tradition of such slippery texts and, more specifically, read its ending with *On heroes* in mind, we can attribute great significance to details that arguably call into question Charicles's U-turn; as a result, the teleological force of the ending is subverted.[249] A close parallel is Lucius's ritual conversion in Book Eleven of Apuleius's *Golden ass*. Winkler argues in a pioneering study that the unexpected religious ending, which stands in stark contrast to the playful narrative it concludes, features several signs that warn us against taking it at face value; the unexpected religious turn is best understood as an interpretative trap.[250]

In a similar vein, Heliodorus's invitations to read his work allegorically (and thus reductively) can be challenged from the perspective of *pepaideumenoi*. If we prioritise Calasiris's charlatanic side, we can reasonably suspect that his Homeric excursus is an attempt to impress and fool Cnemon with fake knowledge. And indeed, the digression is responsive to such an approach. As has been noted, Calasiris's interpretation of the Iliadic passage is grammatically implausible and features a pun on Cnemon's name.[251] Moreover, while Calasiris uses allegorical terminology, his interpretation is not an instance of genuine allegoresis, as it does not operate with different layers of meaning;[252] if we embrace a sceptical approach, the mysticism of this passage turns out to be empty mumbo-jumbo, matching Homer's shrewd silence about his provenance.[253] Erudite readers may recall Lucian's *On salaried posts*, a text that uses telestic imagery to describe the exploitation of *pepaideumenoi* in a Roman household. As Whitmarsh notes, their futile attempt to gain prestige and power is depicted as a mystical journey towards a centre that seems to be desirable and in reach but in fact is empty and unattainable.[254] Let us now reconsider the Nile digression in Book Nine, another allegorical interpretative seed, which is intratextually linked to Calasiris's exegesis.[255] If we assume a sophistic cognitive identity, we can read the ritual silence that forms the culmination of this excursus in the same vein as Calasiris's explanation of Homer's manipulative secrecy: as a result, the primary narrator's reticence appears as another smokescreen, a device serving to

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[248] Whitmarsh (2009: 209).
[249] See above, *Section 3.2.c.*
[250] See Winkler (1985: 204–47).
[251] On the pun see Sandy (1982b: 67); Bowie (1995: 273). On the grammatical implausibility see Sandy (1982a: 165); cf. Janko (ed. 1994: 52). For a comparable instance of questionable Homeric exegesis in a sophistic context, see Luc. *Ver. hist.* 1.17; cf. Georgiadou and Larmour (1998: 114).
[252] Briefly noted by Grethlein (forthcoming b).
[253] See the concept of pseudo-concealment in Călinescu (1993: 251–4).
[254] See Whitmarsh (2001c: 279–93).
[255] τὰς ἐγκατεσπαρμένας τούτοις ὑπονοίας (9.9.5) echoes τὴν δὲ ἐγκατεσπαρμένην αὐτοῖς θεολογίαν (3.12.3); τὰ μυστικώτερα (9.10.1) recalls τὸ μυστικώτερον (3.13.1).

inflate Heliodorus's authority and to delude readers into believing that the *Aethiopica* bears hidden wisdom.[256]

Let us now turn to Heliodorus's *sphragis*, which arguably corroborates the religious dimension of the *Aethiopica*, identifying its author as 'a Phoenician (ἀνὴρ Φοῖνιξ) from the city of Emesa, one of the clan of descendants of the Sun (τῶν ἀφ' Ἡλίου γένος), Theodosius's son, Heliodorus' (10.41.4). The crucial question is how we make sense of the connections between this passage and the main narrative.[257] Heliodorus identifies himself as another *phoenix* and connects himself to Helios; both these elements are receptive to a reductive, Platonist reading.[258] Moreover, the author's self-presentation as a Greek-writing Phoenician from Emesa, not a traditionally Phoenician city, picks up the central topic of multiculturalism and artificially constructed identities.[259] It is popular to read this postscript as a serious paratext,[260] as a revelation of the author *qua* historical figure.[261] According to such an interpretation, those elements of the narrative that correspond to the *sphragis* appear as imprints of the author's identity on his work—an explanation that draws on an intentionalist and historicising understanding of literature. If, however, we take on the cognitive identity of *pepaideumenoi*, things look different. As has been argued, Dio's and Philostratus's tongue-in-cheek revisions of the Homeric epics make fun of such a historicising conception of literature, which was popular in the imperial era.[262] Lucian also mocks this tradition: when the hero of *True stories* encounters Homer and asks questions about his poetry, the answers are strikingly underwhelming (*Ver. hist.* 2.20).[263] To refer to a closer parallel to Heliodorus's *sphragis*, the protagonist of *True stories* erects a column on the Island of the Blessed, inscribing the author's name, 'Lucian' (*Ver. hist.* 2.28).[264] As ní Mheallaigh puts it, in the context of a lying tale, this inscription serves to expose 'the naivety of reading any authorial persona at face value as a conduit to the "real" author outside the text.'[265] In the vein of such subversive variations on historicist and intentionalist attitudes, *pepaideumenoi* can read the parallels between Heliodorus (as written into the *Aethiopica*) and his novel as a metaliterary joke: the authorial

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[256] Another passage that can be interpreted as bearing anti-allegorical force is the protagonists' discussion of their visions in 8.11; it is not Theagenes's allegorical interpretation that comes true but Charicleia's literal reading.

[257] I am here drawing on Kruchió (2019).

[258] See above, *Section 4.2.f.*

[259] See Whitmarsh (1998: 97); Quinn (2017: 135–52).

[260] On paratexts see Genette (1987/1997).

[261] See e.g. Morgan (1996b: 417); Ramelli (2001/2012: 126–30).

[262] See Kim (2010: *passim*).

[263] See Kim (2010: 162–8).

[264] With this monument Lucian is riffing on the golden pillar in Euhemerus's *Sacred Inscription*, on which see Whitmarsh (2013: 49–62); Winiarczyk (2013).

[265] ní Mheallaigh (2014: 257).

persona simply is too good a match with his work to be taken seriously. Not that the *Aethiopica* is an organic extension of the author's self; on the contrary, the novel's author-construct belongs to the fictive realm.[266]

A general characteristic of the *Aethiopica* that might be of particular interest for *pepaideumenoi* is Heliodorus's fragmentary narrative technique.[267] We have seen that this feature may (but does not have to) encourage speculation about the plot, thus boosting the variety of interpretative possibilities. In imperial Greek literature we find several instances where incomplete narration is used to similar effect.[268] In Lucian's *The death of Peregrinus*, the narrator provides rudimentary accounts of speeches, claiming that he did not hear everything due to noisy crowds (*De mort. Peregr.* 5; 32); these declarations contribute to his incredulous, down-to-earth perspective, which contrasts the naive masses falling for a charlatan. At the end of *On heroes*, the vinedresser and the Phoenician agree to continue their conversation the next day, which, however, is not included in the work; the open ending emphasises the absence of firm meanings characteristic of this work. A particularly provocative instance of fragmentary narration is the conclusion of *True stories*: the narrator announces that he will 'tell the events that took place on land in the following books (ἐν ταῖς ἐξῆς βίβλοις διηγήσομαι, *Ver. hist.* 2.47),' which, as a scholiast notes, is 'the biggest lie of all.'[269] In his *Trojan oration* Dio engages with the aesthetics of openness as an interpreter, explaining the arguably abrupt ending of the *Iliad* by claiming that Homer 'did not know how to continue his work and was dissatisfied with his lies (τοῖς ψεύσμασι δυσχεραίνων, *Or.* 11.109).' The supposed lack of closure is here taken as a symptom of Homer's unreliability, the hypothesis on which Dio builds his alternative account of the Trojan War;[270] in this case, therefore, the force of fragmentary narration to induce scepticism and interpretative speculation becomes apparent. Considering this trend, and particularly with the anti-closural διηγήσομαι at the end of *True stories* in mind, we can reconsider the *Aethiopica*'s last clause. Heliodorus ends his narrative with the future participle τελεσθησομένων (10.41.3).[271] Erudite readers may understand this reference to future events—be they of a ritual or sexual nature—as pushing closure proper beyond the limits of the novel and consequently as part of Heliodorus's

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[266] For a similar reading of Chariton's proem, see Danek (2013: 95–100).
[267] See above, *Sections 3.5–6*.
[268] For a collection of essays on false closure in ancient literature and art, see Grewing et al. (2013). On Libanius's rhetorical exploitation of silence in Homer, see Webb (2010: 147).
[269] See Georgiadou and Larmour (1998: 232). A comparable example is *Leucippe and Clitophon*, whose narrative (semi)frame is never resumed; see Fusillo (1997: 219–20); Repath (2005).
[270] On this passage see Kim (2010: 129–30).
[271] See Morgan (2007a: 484).

fragmentary aesthetics.[272] The participle thus becomes a final reminder that the *Aethiopica* ultimately withholds answers to important questions.

Does this mean that at the end of the day the reading developed here matches Winkler's?[273] While there are certain overlaps between them, I suggest that his conception of the *Aethiopica* is in a major respect different from the one I associate with the cognitive identity of *pepaideumenoi*. On the one hand, both readings are sceptical and prefer metainterpretative analysis to religious teleology. On the other hand, however, Winkler reduces the *Aethiopica* to its metainterpretative considerations *per se*, whereas for *pepaideumenoi* these concerns have further implications: for such readers hermeneutical reflection does not take place in a vacuum but, as we have seen, entails an intense engagement with their relationship to *paideia* and thus with their cultural identity; for an educated audience reading the *Aethiopica* thus becomes an exploration of selfhood.[274]

3.e Interpretative agonistics

Much imperial Greek literature bears witness to the competitive intellectual milieu of its time. Homeric revisions are a good example: they enter an intellectual contest with Homer's cultural and literary authority as well as with other participants of this subversive game. As ní Mheallaigh suggests, Lucian satirises this literary circus by letting none other than Odysseus step into the ring (*Ver. hist.* 2.35).[275] We can also place the comparison of literary interpretation to gymnastics in the proem of *True stories* in this context.[276] The agonistic quality of sophistic culture lived on in the fourth century: Libanius, for example, conceives of Greekness as a competition and calls rhetorical exercises and showpieces in which the speaker refutes an ancient writer 'contests' (ἁμίλλαις, *Or.* 34.15).[277] I suggest that the *Aethiopica* is highly susceptible to an approach that emphasises this culture of intellectual agonistics. This starts on the level of the plot: as discussed in *Chapters One* and *Two*, characters constantly attempt to outsmart each other; in Cnemon's story the scheming gradually escalates, taking on an absurd degree of complexity. This element is not even absent from the Ethiopian utopia of Book Ten, where Meroe becomes a site of spectacular, competitive performances. Charicleia's fight for

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[272] We might also hear an echo of the *Odyssey*'s ending, where the reconciliation of the parties is postponed to κατόπισθε (Hom. *Od.* 24.546).
[273] See Winkler (1982/1999), whose approach I have discussed in the *Introduction* and in *Section 3.3*.
[274] For a reading of *On heroes* that comes to a similar conclusion, see Whitmarsh (2009).
[275] See ní Mheallaigh (2014: 251–4).
[276] See *Ver. hist.* 1.1; cf. von Möllendorff (2000: 34–5).
[277] See Stenger (2014: 283–4) on the former point and Cribiore (2007: 149–50) on the latter.

her identity is an ἀγών (10.9.3; 10.10.2) and frequently described in theatrical terms;[278] like a good sophist, she puts on the clothes that are most appropriate for her role (10.9.2);[279] throughout the finale, audience reactions are of crucial importance and reported as meticulously as in Philostratus's *Lives of the Sophists*.[280] Readers familiar with the rhetorical milieu of the imperial era may associate these elements with sophistic culture. Even King Hydaspes participates in the performative *agōn*. Once it has become clear that everybody wishes Charicleia's life to be spared, he gives an extensive speech to his people, in which he stresses his selfless loyalty to them and his willingness to sacrifice her (10.16). When the audience protests, a narratorial comment reveals that this reaction is exactly what Hydaspes was aiming for (10.17.1–3):

> All the while he prayed that his oration, whose rhetoric he had contrived to ensure its
> ineffectiveness, would fail to carry its point … he had prayed for his hand to be forced,
> and he complied willingly (τὴν εὐκτὴν ταυτηνὶ βίαν αὐθαίρετος ὑπομένων).

Hydaspes thus uses rhetorical means to perform his role as a king as well as to consolidate his authority, expertly controlling his audience.[281] Along these lines, erudite readers may spot a specific connection between Hydaspes's speech and their rhetorical culture. As Morgan observes,[282] this oration is an instance of *logos eschēmatismenos*, in which the speaker professes to intend something else than what his or her words are designed to achieve (often its opposite). While this rhetorical concept was likely theorised and known under said name as early as the fourth century B.C.E.,[283] our sources suggest that it was most popular in the imperial period.[284] Morgan shows that Hydaspes's speech adheres to numerous principles of *logos eschēmatismenos*, as outlined in handbooks of oratory, and features an insightful quote from *Iliad* Book Nine: Hydaspes's words echo Achilles's response to Phoenix's speech,[285] which

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[278] On Heliodorus's theatrical terminology, see e.g. Neimke (1889: 1–11); Walden (1894); Feuillâtre (1966: 115–21); Bartsch (1989: 130–43); Marino (1990); Montes Cala (1992); Paulsen (1992: 21–39); Morgan (2004b: 531–2).

[279] On the significance of the Delphic robe, see Morgan (1998: 71–2). Edsall (2002: 124–5) hears echoes of the epiphanic tradition.

[280] On the role of audiences in Heliodorus, see Morgan (1991).

[281] The best discussion of this passage is Morgan (2006). See also Anderson (1984: 45); Paulsen (1992: 77–8); Bretzigheimer (1999: 81–3). Bartsch (1989: 117) misunderstands Hydaspes's manipulative rhetoric.

[282] See Morgan (2006); cf. Bretzigheimer (1999: 72–84).

[283] See Quint. *Inst*. 9.1.14, referring to Zoilus.

[284] See [Dion. Hal.] *Rhet*. 8–9; [Demetr.] *Eloc*. 287–298; Hermog. *Meth*. 22; *Peri ton tou logou schematon* 16; Sopat. Rh. *Diairesis zetematon* 336, on which cf. Russell (1983: 36–7); Phoeb. *Fig*. 1.1. For a list of possible instances of *logos eschēmatismenos* in the Libanian corpus, see Penella (2014: 112).

[285] μή μοι σύγχει τὸν θυμὸν ὀδυρομένη (10.16.9); μή μοι σύγχει θυμὸν ὀδυρόμενος (Hom. *Il*. 9.612a).

was a textbook example of this type of speech in the imperial period.[286] As Morgan concludes, this reference helps educated readers spot the relationship between Hydaspes's speech and its rhetorical framework.

To these observations I shall add two points. First, as the speech calls attention to its own dependence on a rhetorical milieu of the kind we commonly find in the imperial Greek world, it adds to the sophistic flair of the *Aethiopica*'s finale. On a side note, this means that Hydaspes's manipulative speech joins the ranks of other subtle elements that can be read as undermining the teleological and reductive momentum of Book Ten.[287] Second, let us consider that according to Frederick Ahl,[288] the underlying technique of *logoi eschēmatismenoi* is a mode of the powerless, frequently used to safely criticise authorities such as emperors. Considered against this background, Hydaspes's cunning reveals yet another dimension: not only does he consciously perform the role of the benevolent king, he even seems to be treating his subjects as if *they* were *his* ruler, whereas in truth, of course, he is manipulating them.[289] Even Hydaspes, a supposedly straightforward character who does not seem to have much in common with Calasiris, turns out to be a Russian doll of intentions, again and again challenging the reader to find further layers of duplicity.

Let us now return to the main concern of the present section, the agonistic dimension of a sophistic reading. As regards those instances of scheming that, like Hydaspes's speech, are clearly presented as such, the role of erudite readers is a passive, observing one: they analyse the cunning of fictive characters; the only challenge that they face consists in keeping track of the often complex and demanding plot (including the state of knowledge, motivation, and hidden agenda of characters). However, when it comes to ambiguous elements that constitute *potential* instances of scheming—most prominently, Calasiris's claims about his mission— readers are invited to take a more active role. *Pepaideumenoi*, who learn during their rhetorical education to scrutinise Demosthenes's speeches and Homer's poetry, mining them for inconsistencies, argumentative weaknesses, and hidden agendas, may take a similar approach to Heliodorus's embedded narratives: they can aim to outsmart the narrators Cnemon and

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[286] See [Dion. Hal.] *Rhet*. 8.11; 9.14.
[287] See above, *Section 3.2.c.*
[288] See Ahl (1984).
[289] In connection with an epic intertext, Hydaspes's rhetorical method also underlines his political competence and authority: his speech recalls Agamemnon's address to his men in *Iliad* 2, in which the king unsuccessfully attempts to trick them into doing the opposite of what he suggests. Agamemnon opens his speech by complaining that Zeus first made him believe that he would take Troy and now sends him home (Hom. *Il*. 2.111–118); at the beginning of his address, Hydaspes emphasises that the gods reunited him with Charicleia only to take her away from him (10.16.4). Note that Hydaspes also proves to be a better Agamemnon insofar as he successfully defends his daughter, who is supposed to be sacrificed; see Lefteratou (2018: 95–6).

Calasiris by finding reasons to believe that they are trying to fool their audience. Importantly, the discussion of the Nile allegoresis and the *sphragis* has shown that such an approach does not even spare the *Aethiopica*'s highest authorities, the primary narrator and the author. The resulting uncertainties are never resolved, and the novel's fragmentary nature encourages all sorts of speculation; consequently, the number of plausible interpretations is multiplied *ad infinitum*—a circumstance that buttresses the close relationship between a sophistic reading and the pluralising perspective. Erudite interpreters, who have a good eye for hermeneutical intricacies, may feel encouraged to read the *Aethiopica* again and again,[290] experiencing this activity as a sophistic *agōn* against the wits of Heliodorus, an undeniably powerful opponent.

So far, I have considered reading the *Aethiopica* as a one-person project. As a final thought experiment, it is worth bringing into the picture the social role of reading and interpreting in the imperial era: what if *pepaideumenoi* discussed the *Aethiopica* in public, as it happens in the frame story of Philip's *Hermeneuma* (ll. 10–12 Colonna)? With this scenario in mind, we can add a social dimension to the *Aethiopica*'s interpretative agonistics. As we have seen, there are innumerable ways to put together and fill out the novel's plot, and certain ways to do so will always be more sophisticated, original, and impressive than others. We can imagine that the public discussion of different Heliodoran interpretations itself became an intellectual *agōn*, comparable to the exchange of Homeric revisions. As a work that is highly responsive to such an approach, the *Aethiopica* had the potential to occupy a central place in contemporary Greek culture, competing directly with its great role model Homer.

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[290] On this effect see also Kruchió (2018).

CONCLUSION

My thesis set out to grapple with the *Aethiopica*'s Protean nature: what it is about this work that gives rise to such divergent readings? It quickly became clear that in order to explore this question, we have to transcend the methods that dominate narratologically oriented scholarship on Heliodorus and ancient fiction in general. My central issue has been to find a way to move on from the formalism of traditional, two-dimensional narratology to a three-dimensional study of narrative potentialities. Moreover, I have argued that we cannot investigate the novel's Protean quality in a historical vacuum. The *Aethiopica* is responsive to the interpretative habits of competing contemporary readerships; consequently, our method has to bleed into and out of the cultural microcosms of late imperial reading communities.

A major concern of my study has been to show the insufficiency of the accustomed text-immanent approach of Heliodoran studies, which operates on the assumption that we can assign stable functions and meanings to the formal features of narrative. My discussions of the *Aethiopica*'s many puzzles as well as the relationship between the novel's micro- and macrostructure have illustrated the deficiencies of such two-dimensional readings. Scholarship usually attempts to provide ultimate answers to problems such as the conundrum of Calasiris's mission and aims to explain exactly how, for example, Cnemon's story contributes to the work's definite, compact message. I have argued that such attempts to single out one interpretation as the best and thus 'correct' are reductive. Furthermore, my close readings have aimed to demonstrate that if we want to understand the *Aethiopica*'s Protean nature, the solution is not to embrace the opposite extreme and conceive of the novel as a set of infinitely interpretable moments of openness. Instead, I have traced a network of specific interpretative possibilities, which emanate from precisely identifiable wormholes. The established two-dimensional interpretations of narrative puzzles and of *the* message of the novel nevertheless provided a useful basis for my endeavour to develop such a wormhole narratology. Throughout *Chapters One* to *Three*, I set such reductive readings in relation with each other and played through different possible scenarios. In doing so, I have aimed to show that what makes it so challenging and polarising to read the *Aethiopica* is the novel's pervasive network of interpretative wormholes: Heliodorus's balancing act between closed and open forms. More specifically, my exploration of this system showed that the wormholes are interlinked in such a way as to have a great impact on the reader's track through the narrative. The *Aethiopica* is

geared towards maximising the contrast between specific available readerly approaches. According to my study, the reductive tendencies of scholarship are—somewhat paradoxically—linked to this multiperspectival quality of the work. The *Aethiopica* gives rise to conflicting, one-sided reader-perspectives, which single out a specific way of relating to the plot and processing information, while neglecting other available modes of interpretation. Another way of framing this is my observation that controversies such as the question of Calasiris's mission and the significance of the novel's ending do not simply result from the general capacity of narratives to comprise conflicting drives but are *symptomatic* of Heliodorus's narrative in particular. It is in this sense that Heliodorus still smiles.

The question of what determines available interpretations brings me to my second main concern. As argued in *Chapter Four*, it is crucial to acknowledge that our socio-cultural environment has a great impact on how we process information and interpret literature. This factor has proved to be particularly important in the context of the late imperial period, where reading is a high-stakes activity: *pepaideumenoi*, Platonist philosophers, and Christians construct and perform their complex social identities and negotiate their power relations in engagement with authoritative texts. Thanks to the work of historians (of religion, philosophy, etc.), we have learned a lot about the socio-cultural intricacies of the late empire over the course of the last decades. We are, however, only beginning to explore what role contemporary literature plays in this environment, how literary works engage in the discourses of this time. Exploring the *Aethiopica*'s responsivity to erudite and Platonist approaches, the last part of my thesis does not only pursue the hermeneutical concern of showcasing how our socio-cultural background affects our interpretative habits. These historically informed readings also contribute to our understanding of what it means to read (in) the late empire. In this respect my study aims to be a starting point for further research into the politics of, for example, imperial Greek poetry, apocryphal Christian fiction, and late antique allegorical literature. While I have developed my erudite and Platonist approaches in dialogue with what we know about contemporary trends of interpretation, they have led to results that have little in common with the kinds of readings that we usually find in scholarship on Heliodorus or literature from the late empire in general. This contrast, I suggest, is indicative of our habit of approaching works from this period with our accustomed, 'Classical' interpretative tools, which were developed for literature that is many centuries older and accordingly plays by different rules. In this respect, my historically informed readings demonstrate the potential and necessity of rethinking our approach to late Greek literature and outlines possible directions for such a reorientation.

Furthermore, the historically informed aspect of my project dovetails with a recurring question of studies on the ancient novel. It is widely acknowledged that we know too little about the actual readership(s) of this genre to come to reliable conclusions concerning its *Sitz im Leben*—a circumstance that has undoubtedly provoked envious glances at experts of Greek drama or Augustan poetry. It is *communis opinio*, however, that the novel is a product of empire insofar as it is designed to circulate and reach distant corners of the Graeco-Roman world. In sum, while we assume that many different people would have been able to read novels, we do not know who actually did. How can we nevertheless overcome a text-immanent approach to this genre? I have argued that trying to identify 'the (ideal, intended, or actual) reader' of the *Aethiopica* is not just impossible but, more importantly, a mistaken approach: Heliodorus is aware that he is writing for multiple, diverse readerships and explores the creative potential of this artistic opportunity.

This brings me to my final question. Is my historically informed approach a methodology of reading ancient novels in general, or is it tailored to the *Aethiopica* as a unique case? I do think that our understanding of the literary culture of the post-classical era can also help us to go beyond our futile attempts to say anything about 'the' (ideal etc.) reader of earlier novels. For example, we know a lot about what functions ancient scholars attributed to formal features of narrative texts. In view of this, my attempts to develop *possible* responses to the *Aethiopica*'s narratological features in dialogue with Homeric criticism have the potential to inform scholarship on earlier novels. Nevertheless, Heliodorus's case is unique insofar as he has found particularly effective ways of reacting to the increasingly diverse and polemical reading practices of his time. In this respect, the *Aethiopica*, with its responsivity to contrasting approaches and faculty to polarise readers, bears witness to a specific, momentous cultural shift. The Protean nature of Heliodorus's novel heralds the cultural climate of late antiquity.

BACK MATTER

Unless otherwise noted, Greek texts are from the *Thesaurus Linguae Graecae* and translations by the author. Abbreviations follow the *Oxford Classical Dictionary* (4th edition), except for journal abbreviations, which follow *L'Année philologique.*

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