

# Virtue Obscured: Theagenes' *Sōphrosynē* in Heliodorus' *Aethiopica*

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The concept of *sōphrosynē* has a central role in the genre of the Greek novel.<sup>1</sup> The five extant texts have at their heart the representation of a mutual, heterosexual erotic relationship between beautiful, aristocratic youths and, in all of the novels apart from Longus' *Daphnis and Chloe*, the protagonists' possession of *sōphrosynē* is a crucial part of their identity. They must prove their *sōphrosynē* when faced with sexual advances from lustful antagonists, and they often prove their fidelity through their innate regard for this virtue. While as a term and concept *sōphrosynē*<sup>2</sup> is semantically complex, encompassing the qualities and psychological states of temperance, moderation, sanity, self-control and chastity, in the novels it generally refers to sexual restraint and the motivation behind chastity. The texts differ in their respective treatments of *sōphrosynē*: there is a spectrum from the representation of mutual chastity in Xenophon of Ephesus' novel, which has been labelled obsessive,<sup>3</sup> to the irreverent subversion of chastity found in Achilles Tatius' *Leucippe and Clitophon*.<sup>4</sup> Despite these divergent treatments, the role of *sōphrosynē* is always fundamental to the ethics of these novels.

Heliodorus' *Aethiopica* has long been considered a complex work, particularly in terms of its narrative structure.<sup>5</sup> The characterisation of its protagonists

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<sup>1</sup> I consider the five extant works of Chariton, Xenophon of Ephesus, Longus, Achilles Tatius and Heliodorus to be examples of the genre of the Greek novel. For discussion of *sōphrosynē* in the novels, see Anderson 1997; De Temmerman 2014; Kasprzyzk 2009.

<sup>2</sup> The only published works, which attempt to deal comprehensively with the representation of this cardinal virtue in Greek thought and literature are, North 1966, and Rademaker 2004.

<sup>3</sup> Schmeling 1980, 116.

<sup>4</sup> Morales 2004, 7; 220-226; Jones 2012, 158-159.

<sup>5</sup> See Morgan 1989a; 1989b; 1991; 1994; Whitmarsh 2011; Winkler 1982. With reference to the narrative structure, I will use certain narratological terms, which I define here for those readers unfamiliar with them. The *récit* refers to the narrated situations and events in the

has recently emerged as an important factor too.<sup>6</sup> The representation of gender and ethics has also received attention.<sup>7</sup> This article, in focusing explicitly on the nature of how Theagenes is represented in this text in relation to his sexual ethics, will open up a new avenue of exploration into Heliodorus' aims (particularly as those aims relate to ethical aspects of characterisation), and his depiction of traditional masculine mores. Theagenes' characterisation is less straightforward than Charicleia's: Heliodorus often prioritises her adventures and destiny over Theagenes'. This goes some way to explaining the comparative lack of attention the hero has received in scholarship. Here, the aim will be to analyse the extent to which this indirect and sketchy characterisation and consequent blurring of ethical motivation inform us about Heliodorus' representation of this example of masculine *sōphrosynē*, creating doubt about how *sōphrōn* this hero is. In broader terms, this article will seek to advance our understanding of how Heliodorus' representation of gender roles is far from normative in generic terms: his subtleties are not limited to his narrative strategies, but also extend to his view of masculinity and heroism.

*Sōphrosynē* and its cognates occur 33 times in the text of Heliodorus.<sup>8</sup> The frequent use of this terminology indicates how central the concept is to the novel and to the characterisations within it. Out of these 33, fourteen refer to the heroine, Charicleia,<sup>9</sup> directly, and it is her *sōphrosynē*, and that of her mother, Persinna, which is discussed in Anderson's excellent article.<sup>10</sup> Theagenes is described as possessing *sōphrosynē* on only two occasions (5,4,5; 8,6,4: he refers to *sōphrosynē* in general, implying his and Charicleia's mutual possession of the virtue, at 10,9,1), so I will explore how his attitude towards sexual restraint is implied and nuanced, even though the term is not often used of him. First, I will discuss some early representations of the male protagonist and of his implied *sōphrosynē*. Second, I will explore how Theagenes' restraint is subordinate to his desire for Charicleia, looking at passages from throughout the novel. I will finish

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order in which they are presented to the narratee; the *histoire* refers to the narrated situations and events in their chronological order in the imagined time frame of the fiction; 'focalisation' denotes the perspective through which characters and situations are represented.

<sup>6</sup> De Temmerman 2014.

<sup>7</sup> Jones 2012.

<sup>8</sup> 1,3,1; 1,8,3; 1,9,3; 1,10,4; 1,12,2; 1,20,2; 1,24,3; 1,25,4 (x2); 2,4,2; 2,7,1; 2,17,4; 4,8,7; 4,10,5; 4,10,6; 4,18,2; 5,4,5; 5,22,3; 5,29,6; 5,31,1; 6,9,3; 6,9,4; 7,2,2; 7,2,3; 8,6,4; 8,9,18; 8,9,22; 8,11,1; 8,13,2; 10,9,1; 10,9,4; 10,9,5; 10,10,4.

<sup>9</sup> 1,3,1; 1,8,3; 1,20,2; 1,25,4 (x2); 2,4,2; 4,8,7; 5,22,3; 6,9,3; 8,9,22 (with Theagenes); 8,11,1; 8,13,2 (with Theagenes); 10,9,4; 10,9,5.

<sup>10</sup> Anderson 1997, 312-22.

by considering how the nuanced and subtle portrayal of Theagenes and his *sōphrosynē* has broader consequences for the study of the *Aethiopica*.

*Theagenes' Sōphrosynē: First Impressions*

In looking at Theagenes' *sōphrosynē*, it is important to consider how the reader becomes aware of the youth's character and his relationship with Charicleia. By establishing how the first impressions of Theagenes affect our reading of his approach to *sōphrosynē*, we can build on these initial findings in order to provide a picture of how this protagonist is represented in relation to this virtue.

Although Theagenes is introduced in the second chapter of the first book, the reader does not know his name until Charicleia names him in her first lament (in terms of the *récit*: at 1,8,3). The Herdsmen have taken prisoner Charicleia and Theagenes and Charicleia laments her fate, stating that she would prefer an inviolate death to any attempt on her chastity by the bandits. Charicleia's lament immediately emphasises her *sōphrosynē*, and, by implication, Theagenes' adherence to the virtue, at least in relation to Charicleia. Our very first impression of Theagenes involves his relationship to the *sōphrōn* girl who has stunned the bandits with her beauty. At this point, then, we are beginning to perceive generic conformity: two beautiful young people are apparently devoted to one another and *sōphrosynē* is central. However, Theagenes is represented through Charicleia's focalisation at this early stage, rather than via any self-representation.

This representation is repeated at 1,25: at this juncture in the narrative, Charicleia has pretended to consent to the marital proposal of the bandit chief, Thyamis, who had previously placed the couple in captivity. Theagenes' dismay regarding Charicleia's response to Thyamis' suit is quickly resolved by the heroine's explanation, which involves some crucial information regarding the central couple's back-story. The repetition in quick succession of terms related to *sōphrosynē* is clear evidence of how Charicleia values this virtue, but the speech is also indicative of how her relationship with Theagenes is couched in this narrative:

Ἐγὼ γὰρ δυστυχεῖν μὲν οὐκ ἀρνοῦμαι, μὴ σωφρονεῖν δὲ οὐδὲν οὕτω βίαιον ὥστε με μεταπεισθῆναι· ἐν μόνον οἶδα μὴ σωφρονοῦσα, τὸν ἐξ ἀρχῆς ἐπὶ σοὶ πόθον· ἀλλὰ καὶ τοῦτον ἔννομον· οὐ γὰρ ὡς ἔραστῆ πιεθομένη ἀλλ' ὡς ἀνδρὶ συνθεμένη τότε πρῶτον ἑμαυτὴν ἐπέδωκα καὶ εἰς δεῦρο διετέλεσα καθαρὰν

ἐμαυτὴν καὶ ἀπὸ σῆς ὀμιλίας φυλάττουσα, πολλάκις μὲν ἐπιχειροῦντα διω-  
 σαμένη, τὸν δὲ ἐξ ἀρχῆς ἡμῶν συγκείμενον τε καὶ ἐνώμοτον ἐπὶ πᾶσι γάμον  
 ἐνθεσμον εἶπη γένοιτο περισκοποῦσα.

I do not deny that I am in a sorry plight, but no danger could be so great that I could be induced not to be virtuous. I know of only one thing in which I have not been virtuous: my original passion for you. But even that was lawful, for I first gave myself to you then not as a woman consenting to her lover, but as a wife pledging herself to her husband, and to this day I have continued to keep myself pure, even from intercourse with you, many times repelling your advances, safeguarding the union which we pledged at the outset and swore to honour whatever befell, in the hope that one day it will be legally solemnised. (1,25,4)<sup>11</sup>

Although this speech from Charicleia might strike the reader as a perfect encapsulation of *her* position *vis à vis* *sōphrosynē*, it is also strongly suggestive of Theagenes' position, but only, once again, from Charicleia's perspective. While it could be argued, therefore, that the speech tells us more about Charicleia's obsession with sexual purity and her prioritising of marriage over physical union, a view does emerge of Theagenes here, albeit a view that is filtered through Charicleia's speech. From this speech and from the one at 1,8 mentioned above, the reader perceives the hero's sexual abstinence as caused primarily by Charicleia's insistence upon it, which means that he does not possess *sōphrosynē*, if we understand the virtue to be something beyond a display of abstinence, as something involving an intrinsic commitment to a moderation of desire. The oaths mentioned here are not sworn until much later in the *récit* (4,18), and I will discuss the significance of their role below. Here, it is enough to note that the couple are pledged to one another in readiness for marriage, but they have agreed to no carnal contact before their wedding. The focalisation through Charicleia, and the motivation behind her speech, which stems from a need to reassure an anxious Theagenes, both mean that our initial view of Theagenes and of his position regarding *sōphrosynē* is not straightforward. However, we can gain a partial view and, even at this early point in the novel, it is implied that his stance is strongly influenced by his desire for and dependence on the *sōphrōn* and wily Charicleia.

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<sup>11</sup> Text is from Rattenbury and Lumb 1960. Translations are from Morgan forthcoming (in provisional form; adapted in places) for Books 1-7, and from Morgan 1989c (adapted in places), for Books 8-10, unless otherwise stated.

A further important consideration is the fact that Charicleia claims that she has rejected Theagenes' advances many times previously. This statement is problematic, not just because there is only one narrated occasion when Charicleia has to remind Theagenes of his oath to respect her *sōphrosynē*, namely at 5,4, but also because it does not sit easily with the rest of what she says at 1,25. While it can be read as an indication of the determined nature of Charicleia's restraint, it remains significant for our reading of Theagenes' behaviour, or at least his behaviour as viewed and represented by Charicleia. As we do not see many sexual advances on Theagenes' part in the novel, it is either the case that Charicleia, because of her obsessive preoccupation with chastity/virginity, is exaggerating the necessity for resistance to such advances, or it suggests that the primary narrator and the secondary narrator, Calasiris (who narrates from 2,21 through to 5,1, and again from 5,17 through to the end of Book 5) limit our access to Theagenes' behaviour to a considerable degree. In the following section, this restricted access to Theagenes will be explored further.

### *Theagenes' Restraint*

At 3,17, Calasiris reports Theagenes' claim that he has never found sex and women appealing before seeing Charicleia. To provide some context: Calasiris is now narrating the story of how he knows Charicleia and Theagenes to Cnemon, whom he comes upon when the latter is heading to the Egyptian village of Chemmis to meet up with Theagenes and Charicleia. All three have now escaped the Herdsmen (whose leader is Thyamis) following an invasion by enemy bandits. Calasiris' tale provides the reader with an analeptic account of how Charicleia and Theagenes met and fell in love, and how Calasiris is involved in their adventures. Calasiris is now explaining how Theagenes comes to confess his love for Charicleia, which struck him on seeing her at a religious festival. The claim that Theagenes makes, like much of Theagenes' speech in both the primary and secondary narratives, is reported indirectly:

Ὅμιλίας γὰρ ἔτι γυναικὸς ἀπείρατος εἶναι διετείετο πολλὰ διομνύμενος· αἰεὶ γὰρ διαπτύσαι πάσας καὶ γάμον αὐτὸν καὶ ἔρωτας εἶ τινοσ ἀκούσειεν, ἕως τὸ Χαρικλείας αὐτὸν διήλεγξε κάλλος ὅτι μὴ φύσει καρτερικὸς ἦν ἀλλ' ἀξιεράστου γυναικὸς εἰς τὴν παρελθοῦσαν ἀθέατος.

He maintained, swearing many oaths, that he was still without experience of intercourse with a woman, for he had always spat upon them all and marriage

itself and amours, if ever anyone mentioned them to him, until Charicleia's beauty had proved that he was not naturally immune but until yesterday had never set eyes on a woman worth loving. (3,17,4).

While this indirect speech on the surface implies that Theagenes is similar to Xenophon of Ephesus' Habrocomes in his initial indifference to *erōs*, this is not necessarily true. On closer reading and bearing in mind the indirect reporting of this claim, Heliodorus does not frame Theagenes' rejection of women and sex in the same terms as Habrocomes', whose rejection of love stems from a vain impiety rather than contempt for women.<sup>12</sup> Therefore, Theagenes displays a strain of misogyny that is not present in Habrocomes' attitude.

His apparent misogyny sets Theagenes apart from the generic norm, and does not lend itself easily as proof that he has been *sōphrōn* in the past, despite De Temmerman's argument that this speech is evidence of his *sōphrosynē*.<sup>13</sup> If we define *sōphrosynē* as merely 'chastity' then a non-erotic lifestyle as depicted here does justify De Temmerman's argument. However, *sōphrosynē* implies a mindset that motivates chastity, a self-restraint that, by implication, must react to feelings of desire.<sup>14</sup> Theagenes has not experienced such feelings, according to his speech here, until he met Charicleia. There is also a tacit recognition in this speech that his previous attitude was not truly indicative of a nature that was able to achieve enduring resistance to sex (μη φύσει καρτερικὸς ἦν). Calasiris is ensuring that his narratee recognises the 'game-changing' nature of Charicleia, and the indirect speech suggests that Calasiris has a high level of control over how he represents Theagenes' speech. This representation complicates our view of Theagenes. It is tempting to assert that this statement is indicative of character development: Theagenes' encounter with Charicleia alters his world-view. Misogyny is cast out by desire. Whereas his previous stance did not necessitate the possession of *sōphrosynē*, now he will be tested in this respect. However, the narrative levels and Calasiris' desire to tell a good story mean that we must be cautious in interpreting this as a genuine representation of the young man's words. Here, we see Theagenes darkly: he is obscured by the manipulative Calasiris who does not represent his speech directly. The reader can therefore ask, is this really how Theagenes saw the situation, or is this speech part of Calasiris' 'spin', which aims at

<sup>12</sup> For Habrocomes' rejection of *Erōs*, see Xen. Eph. 1,1,5-6. For his subsequent defeat at the hands of the god, see 1,4,1-5.

<sup>13</sup> De Temmerman 2014, 253.

<sup>14</sup> In relation to Charicleia in particular, *sōphrosynē* and its cognates do not always denote the state of chastity, but imply the mindset behind it, or the inherent motivation to preserve chastity in the face of erotic desire: e.g. 1,25,4; 4,10,6. For discussion regarding *sōphrosynē* as a virtue which comes about as a reaction to desire, see Goldhill 1995, 3-4.

maximising the erotic power of Charicleia at all times?<sup>15</sup> Perceiving a ‘true’ picture of Theagenes is not easy in this text, and this passage, while offering some tempting suggestions about his non-erotic history and the potential importance of *sōphrosynē* now that he is in love, remains frustrating because it is part of Calasiris’ narrative strategy. At this juncture, then, building on the incipient doubt raised for the reader at 1,25, further doubt seeps into the reader’s view of Theagenes’ *sōphrosynē*

A similar situation regarding Calasiris’ manipulation of Theagenes’ view occurs at 4,18. Now, as Calasiris’ narration continues, he reports how the lovers fled from Delphi, in order to return to Charicleia’s homeland under Calasiris’ guardianship. Calasiris must now leave them alone together as he implements the next stage of his plan to secure their escape. Theagenes’ plea to Calasiris, which precedes the representation of Charicleia’s anxiety over being left alone with him, is indicative of his view of the nature of his and Charicleia’s relationship:

... σῶζε τύχης λοιπὸν ἀγώγιμα σώματα καὶ σωφρονοῦντος ἔρωτος αἰχμάλωτα  
...

... Save us, who are now Fortune’s disposable chattels, the captives of a chaste love ... (4,18,2)

While Theagenes recognises, and seems to emphasise, the *sōphrōn* nature of his and Charicleia’s love, his motivation in emphasising this is debatable. This plea to Calasiris serves the purpose of highlighting that Theagenes recognises the importance of *sōphrosynē*, but does he express his predicament in these terms to ensure that Calasiris understands the nature of the love which has captured the couple, or in order to reassure Charicleia that his attitude is *sōphrōn*? While this could indicate Theagenes’ adherence to the virtue in relation to his love for Charicleia at this point, it is important to recognise that his speech is tailored for his audience: that is, Calasiris and Charicleia. Charicleia is not wholly convinced by his assertion, it seems, as she requires him to swear an oath of chastity at 4,18,4-5.

When reacting to Charicleia’s insistence that he swear an oath promising not to have sex with her until they are married, Theagenes remonstrates with this un-

<sup>15</sup> For examples of Calasiris’ emphasis on Charicleia’s erotic power, see 3,4: her unsurpassable beauty is described as she emerges from the temple of Artemis to take part in the festival where she and Theagenes first set eyes on each other; also, 5,31, where Pelorus views her dressed ready for marriage.

fair judgement on his character. However, this is expressed through Calasiris' filter, in indirect speech. The lack of symmetry in how the protagonists' words are represented is an important factor. Whereas Calasiris represents Charicleia's pleas directly and in full, this is not the case in his representation of Theagenes' words:

... ἐπάμνυνεν ὁ Θεαγένης, ἀδικεῖσθαι μὲν φάσκων εἰ προλήψει τοῦ ὄρκου τὸ πιστὸν τοῦ τρόπου προῦποτέμεται, οὐ γὰρ ἔχειν ἐπιδείξειν προαίρεσιν φόβῳ τοῦ κρείττονος κατηναγκάσθαι νομιζόμενος:

... Theagenes swore his oath ... protesting that he was being treated unfairly if by an anticipatory oath the trustworthiness of his character was undercut in advance for he would not be able to display a moral choice, since he would be supposed to be compelled by fear of the Greater Power. (4,18,6).

Theagenes' indirect speech reflects Charicleia's vocabulary (ἀδικεῖσθαι (4,18,6) = ἀδικίας (4,18,4); πιστὸν (4,18,6) = ἄπιστον (4,18,4)). While it is plausible that Theagenes responded to Charicleia's words by using equivalent terminology, I suggest that the use of indirect speech implies that this could be Calasiris' rhetoric for the sake of narrative flow rather than a genuine representation of Theagenes' anger in defence of his *sōphrosynē*. Although it is perfectly plausible for Theagenes to react to Charicleia's mistrust in this way, Calasiris' admiration of Charicleia's speech (4,18,6), and the way in which Theagenes immediately complies despite his complaint, both suggest that Calasiris is keen to emphasise Charicleia's *sōphrosynē* and her pragmatism in maintaining it. Therefore, the episode at 4,18 does not stand necessarily as an honest representation by Calasiris of an apparent disagreement between the lovers: the use of indirect speech allows room for doubt.

By reading between the lines in these passages, it is possible to gain a clearer picture of the sexual dynamics and of how Theagenes adheres to *sōphrosynē*, despite the fear or lack of trust from Charicleia, and despite her guardian Calasiris' implicit prioritising of her volition and prowess. One other point that emerges is that Theagenes, in contrast to Charicleia, seems to want to prove his love for Charicleia by agreeing to her terms, and this is his priority, rather than the need to prove his *sōphrōn* nature without being under duress. While Charicleia proves consistently that she must be *sōphrōn* even regarding Theagenes, which seems to place her adherence to the virtue over her desire for him, there is the implicit suggestion in the representation of Theagenes that, for him, Charicleia is worth being *sōphrōn* for. The *sōphrosynē* follows the erotic desire, rather than the erotic desire becoming subordinate to an intrinsic *sōphrosynē*.



The next passage which demonstrates Theagenes' restraint in action comes at 5,4. This is now part of the primary narration, so the narrative dynamics are somewhat simpler as Calasiris' filter does not feature. The couple find themselves alone together for the first time. Following much cuddling and kissing, Theagenes' arousal is cooled by Charicleia's reminder of his oaths:

... ἡ γὰρ Χαρίκλεια τὸν Θεαγένην εἶ τι παρακινουῖντα αἰσθοῖτο καὶ ἀνδρίζομενον ὑπομνήσει τῶν ὄρκων ἀνέστελλεν, ὁ δὲ οὐ χαλεπῶς ἐπανήγετο καὶ σωφρονεῖν ῥαδίως ἠνείχετο ἔρωτος μὲν ἐλάττων ἡδονῆς δὲ κρείττων γινόμενος.

For if ever Charicleia found Theagenes becoming too passionate and playing the man, she would subdue him with a reminder of his oaths, and he would draw back without resentment and happily bear to be self-controlled, being weaker than love but stronger than pleasure. (5,4,5)

The use of the verb ἀνδρίζομαι is significant here and, it seems, can only mean one thing in this context.<sup>16</sup> The term occurs in only one other of the extant novels, Achilles Tatius' *Leucippe and Clitophon*, at 2,10,1 and 4,1,2, both times alluding to the assertion of male sexuality.<sup>17</sup> While elsewhere in Heliodorus the verb is used to express courage (2,11,3; 5,32,5), it is clear that this is not the meaning at 5,4. Here, as the couple are intimate for the first time and Charicleia checks Theagenes by reminding him of his oaths, he is clearly physically aroused. The narrator is quick to assert that this is soon dealt with, and that Theagenes easily relents, drawing back (ἐπανήγετο) and moderating (σωφρονεῖν) his behaviour. While ostensibly this illustrates Theagenes' self-restraint, there is the obvious implication that he is unable to remain as cool and collected as his beloved Charicleia. In addition, there is perhaps some implicit humour in how the self-control of Theagenes is expressed: he was able easily to 'bear' (ἠνείχετο) being self-controlled, so that there is a hint of, if not unwillingness in his restraint, then at least a certain level of sufferance.

There is also potential intertextuality with the instances of the verb in Achilles Tatius, which are closer semantically to the usage at Heliodorus 5,4,5 than are the other occurrences in the *Aethiopica*. The similarity in context (both couples are alone together after escaping bandits and the man is making sexual advances), and the positioning of these episodes a few books in but before the halfway point of

<sup>16</sup> See Whitmarsh 2011, 170-171; Jones 2012, 155.

<sup>17</sup> See Jones 2012, 158-159: she stops short of suggesting any allusion by Heliodorus to Achilles Tatius (see below).

the novel point to Heliodorus' engagement with Achilles Tatius' text. The reader is encouraged to recall Clitophon's opportunistic sexual advances, particularly at 4,1,2, where his actions are clearly made with one thing in mind:

Καὶ ὡς εἶσω παρῆλθον, περιπτυσσόμενος αὐτὴν οἷός τε ἤμην ἀνδρίζεσθαι. Ὡς δ' οὐκ ἐπέτρεπε, 'Μέχρι πότε', εἶπον, 'χηρεύομεν τῶν τῆς Ἀφροδίτης ὀργίων; ... Ἡ δὲ, 'Ἄλλ' οὐ θέμις', ἔφη, 'τοῦτο ἤδη γενέσθαι. Ἡ γάρ μοι θεὸς Ἄρτεμις ἐπιστάσα πρόην κατὰ τοὺς ὕπνους ...

When I entered, I grabbed her into my arms, trying to put my manhood to use. She refused. 'How long will we go without Aphrodite's rites?' I cried ... 'No', she said, 'it would now be against divine law for that to occur. For Artemis appeared to me in a dream that night before last ... (Ach. Tat. 4,1,2)<sup>18</sup>

Leucippe's new-found maidenly restraint is expressed in direct speech (it transpires that Artemis has instructed her to remain virginal until her marriage): Leucippe rarely speaks directly in Clitophon's narrative. This draws attention to the import of her words and their results. Further, if we are intended to recall the passage when reading the scene in Heliodorus, our recollection of the emphasised instance of direct speech on Leucippe's part draws our attention to the lack of direct speech here. It seems that the primary narrator at 5,4 is keen to be discreet in terms of conveying this intimate episode: neither Theagenes nor Charicleia speak directly and this has the effect of distancing the reader from the scene to a certain extent. Perhaps the primary narrator does not want to provide too much titillation for the reader, whose own *sōphrosynē* is challenged by the potential for voyeurism at this juncture.<sup>19</sup> The allusion to Achilles Tatius also raises questions regarding Theagenes' role here and regarding whether he is a 'better' example of a male protagonist than Clitophon. Both male lovers are checked by their girlfriends, but Theagenes' compliance is couched in the language of restraint, whereas Clitophon, it seems, submits only from obedience to the divine will as expressed in his and Leucippe's dreams. There is also the possibility that we are encouraged to consider how different the two protagonists really are. Is Theagenes only self-controlled because Charicleia was clever enough to lay down the parameters at the outset of their journey? Further, if he was narrating his own adven-

<sup>18</sup> Text from Garnaud 2013; translation from Whitmarsh 2001.

<sup>19</sup> Goldhill's argument regarding Longus' narrator's intended encouragement of the reader's voyeurism demonstrates the genre's engagement with such considerations (Goldhill 1995, 6-8; 23-30).

tures, would the narrative take on a more ‘Clitiphontic’ style? The nature of Theagenes’ *sōphrosynē* can thus be seen to be complicated, especially when considering the various implications of the use of ἀνδρίζομαι, and, once again, given the lack of direct speech from the protagonist.

Theagenes’ restraint is evident again at 7,25: the situation in Memphis, to where they were guided by the now deceased Calasiris, has taken a turn for the worse for Theagenes and Charicleia. Theagenes is facing enslavement by Arsace (the sister of the Persian King and the wife of the Satrap, Oroondates), should he not submit to her lust, and Charicleia has been promised in marriage to Arsace’s nurse and servant, Cybele’s son, Achaemenes. Charicleia suggests that by conceding to Arsace’s wishes, Theagenes might save Charicleia from an abhorrent marriage. Theagenes’ response is clear, and marks a turning point in his representation by the primary narrator: up to this juncture Theagenes has been consistent in resisting Arsace, but he has not used any guile to do so, just honest refusal.<sup>20</sup> His reply to Charicleia, which takes the form of a prayer, reveals the principal motivation behind his resistance, before he tells her that he now has an idea:

‘Εὐφήμεσον’ ἔφη· ‘μὴ γὰρ οὕτως ἡ δαίμονος τοῦ ἡμετέρου βαρύτης ἰσχύσειεν ὥστε με τὸν Χαρικλείας ἀπείρατον ἄλλης ὁμιλίας παρανόμως μιανθῆναι. Ἀλλά τι δραστήριον ἐπινενοηκέναι μοι δοκῶ· εὐρέτις ἄρα ἐπιλογισμῶν ἡ ἀνάγκη.

‘You must not speak like that!’ he answered. ‘May the god who has us in his power never be so cruel that I, who have never known Charicleia, am compelled to defile myself in illicit intimacy with another woman! But I think I have an idea that may work. Necessity is the mother of invention!’ (7,25,7)

This speech, while clearly expressing his devotion to Charicleia, whom he has not yet ‘known’ (ἀπείρατον), also recalls the indirect speech narrated by Calasiris at 3,17,3-4 (discussed above), where Theagenes’ lack of interest in sex prior to meeting Charicleia was emphasised. The language is significant here, clearly demonstrating Theagenes’ view of sex with anyone other than Charicleia, as illicit (παρανόμως), and having the potential to pollute or stain him (μιανθῆναι). A similar tone emerges to that used by Calasiris when he represents Theagenes’ views at 3,17,4. The use of διαπτύσαι at 3,17 has been mentioned above, and there is a clear fixation on severe distaste for sex in both passages. At 7,25, the distaste for sex refers to the act with women other than Charicleia, and this was implicit at

<sup>20</sup> See De Temmerman 2014, 273-275: he reads Theagenes’ altered behaviour in becoming more duplicitous as evidence of his learning from Charicleia.

3,17 too: this suggests that Theagenes' resistance to sexual advances is something which comes from his love for Charicleia. However, there is also the potential implication that Arsace would never succeed in seducing Theagenes, whether Charicleia was present or not: his 'distaste' has become moral rather than merely aesthetic. His lack of experience (at 3,17,4: ἀπείρατος; at 7,25,7: ἀπείρατον), combined with his contempt, make Theagenes appear *sōphrōn* in both passages. However, I maintain, in line with my comments on 3,17, that he only demonstrates true *sōphrosynē* in relation to Charicleia, the only woman in whom he is interested.

Theagenes' resistance to the lust of Arsace is twice couched in terms relating to *sōphrosynē*, when he is being tortured for that very resistance, first alone (8,6,4), then with Charicleia (8,9,22). Heliodorus' omission of direct speech might be explained by a desire to limit the reader's access to the emotional impact of violence on the victim, with the aim of retaining their dignity and apparent strength (cf. Xen. Eph. 2,6,2-2,7,1; Ach. Tat. 6,21-22). Again, the role of *sōphrosynē* is central to Theagenes' lack of submission to Arsace despite his physical sufferings and this is made explicit in the words of the primary narrator at 8,6,4: '... τὸ μὲν σῶμα καταπονούμενος τὴν δὲ ψυχὴν ἐπὶ σωφροσύνῃ ῥωννύμενος ...' ('... though he was exhausted in body, his spirit was strong in chastity ...' (my translation)). However, once more we are faced with distancing by the primary narrator, which frustrates efforts to see clearly how Theagenes expresses this restraint. The primary narrator is determined to imbue Theagenes' *sōphrosynē* with his devotion to Charicleia (her name is repeated as Theagenes is said to regard it as a kindness from Fortune that he can display his devotion to his beloved, and he is said to call her his life, his light, his soul). While the consistent emphasis on Theagenes' relationship with Charicleia is an essential thread running through the novel, the fact that this emphasis often comes indirectly from Theagenes raises doubt: should the reader trust a narrator who veils his hero's speech in this way? Is this indicative of a narrator who prioritises the representation of Charicleia's *sōphrosynē* over Theagenes'? Further, if Theagenes' chastity is only represented in relation to his heartfelt regard for Charicleia, is it then reduced in value as a virtue? Surely, if one's *sōphrosynē* is tied so directly to one other person, it is lessened in its validity.

### Conclusion

Theagenes' relationship with *sōphrosynē* is not a simple one. Heliodorus ensures that his readers are continually invited to question the hero's position *vis à vis*

sexual desire and how he is required to moderate that desire. In contrast to Charicleia, whose *sōphrosynē* is never in doubt, Theagenes emerges as a character who loves Charicleia first, and tempers the physical urges encouraged by that love second. The fact that both the primary narrator and Calasiris provide obscured views of Theagenes invites the reader to consider Heliodorus' strategy in preventing a clear picture of Theagenes from emerging from the text. Readers can perceive a reticence on Heliodorus' part in his representations of Theagenes' *sōphrosynē*. In terms of gender in the *Aethiopica*, *sōphrosynē* is differently nuanced for the male protagonist in contrast to the female. Charicleia's prioritising of the virtue is an implicit sign of her identity as a virtuous heroine. The prizing of her virginity can be read as inherently normalising in gender terms, but Theagenes' attitude invites a less clear reading of his masculinity. *Sōphrosynē* is present as a sign of his burgeoning maturity and sexual awareness, which Calasiris suggests comes about only when Theagenes sees Charicleia. Hence, it is implied that the virtue is necessitated as a correct masculine response to intense sexual desire. However, the correct masculine response to desire is not always clearly part of Heliodorus' representation of Theagenes and this indicates that Charicleia's exceptionally virtuous characterisation is the priority. As this article has shown, Theagenes' possession of *sōphrosynē* is imbued with greater subtlety, allowing alert readers to appreciate how this hero is drawn with sensitivity as he reacts to the onslaught of desire for Charicleia. These conclusions allow a fresh insight into Heliodorus' view of sexual desire and his view of how his characters perform the control of that sexual desire, neither of which is simple or straightforward. The reliability of his narrators is questionable at several points, and this complicates our view of ethics in this text. While the *Aethiopica* seems on a surface-level reading to offer a representation of extreme adherence to sexual virtue and therefore to *sōphrosynē*, particularly in the characterisation of Charicleia, this is an over-simplistic view of the text. In fact, what Heliodorus provides is an indication that *sōphrosynē* is necessary for both Charicleia and Theagenes, but it is inherent for her, and a hard-won virtue for him. *Sōphrosynē*, in this novel, does not negate desire, but acts as a virtue which suggests one way of living with desire. If Theagenes' adherence is not as clear as Charicleia's, then we must conclude that Heliodorus did not create his hero with the inherent knowledge of how to be *sōphrōn* instilled in him. He is not the male version of Charicleia, but the subtlety of his characterisation and the consequent problematisation of his approach to *sōphrosynē* show us that Heliodorus' aim is to provide a balance to Charicleia's extraordinary sexual restraint.

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