

What Charicles Knew: Fragmentary Narration and Ambiguity in Heliodorus' *Aethiopica*

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Towards the end of the tenth and last book of Heliodorus' *Aethiopica*, a character who was left behind by the protagonists in Delphi in Book Four makes a surprising reappearance in Ethiopia: Charicles, the Greek foster-father of the heroine Charicleia, arrives in Meroe, where the royal couple reside, and demands his daughter back from king Hydaspes, who is her biological father. While Charicles' resurfacing is in itself surprising,¹ scholars have particularly been puzzled by the question what he knows about Charicleia when he enters the scene: when the girl and her lover Theagenes elope from Delphi, Charicles is aware of her Ethiopian background but not of her royal descent; however, according to the established reading of a short segment of the novel's finale, he seems to know who her parents are when he brings forward his request.

Heliodorean scholarship has heretofore contented itself with branding Charicles' differing states of knowledge as a striking inconsistency.² I shall first show that this is not just in general an obviously unsatisfactory approach to a puzzling passage, but also highly unlikely to be an accurate explanation in the present case. My paper will proceed by presenting alternative solutions to this puzzle. The first one sticks to the conventional reading of the two abovementioned direct speeches, arguing firstly that the communicative line which results in Charicles' acquisition of knowledge can be reconstructed, and secondly that certain narratological properties of the *Aethiopica* invite the reader to make assumptions about unnarrated events like those which are necessary for explaining Charicles' surprising state of

¹ According to Lowe 2003, 256, Charicles' reappearance is 'the novel's final and most masterly programmed surprise'; cf. Wolff 1912, 116. Paulsen 1992, 200, sees the primary reason of Charicles' participation in the finale in Heliodorus' sense of poetic justice.

² Morgan 1978, *ad* 10,36,1; Sandy 1982, 22f.; Morgan 1982, 257 (n.150); *id.* 1983 (n.74); Woronoff 1992, 41.

knowledge. The second solution contends that the passage in question can be read in a way which does not presuppose that Charicles knows who Charicleia's biological parents are.

Rather than just resolving a striking puzzle of the *Aethiopica's* grand finale, the combination of the two explanations will throw a whole new light on essential characteristics of Heliodorus' narrative technique and especially on their impact on the reader's response to the text in two respects. Firstly, the disparate character of the two solutions to the puzzle calls attention to the fact that the *Aethiopica* opens itself to entirely different modes of reading: while in one solution, all relevant interactions are drawn from sections of the plot which are narrated in detail, the other explanation makes extensive use of assumptions about events which happen outside of the narrative's focus and are merely hinted at. The latter mode of reading arises from Heliodorus' frequently elliptical or paralyptical narrative style:³ he often gives only a sketchy or⁴—in cases of embedded narratives—unreliable accounts of events which might initially seem to be relatively unimportant, but at a later point of the narrative turn out to be relevant in a different context. New questions—in the present case, about Charicles' state of knowledge—prompt the readers to reconsider earlier events, the fragmentary presentation of which allows them to fill in gaps in a way which fits the conditions set by the further course of the novel.

Secondly, it will become clear that the hitherto overlooked profound ambiguity which lies at the core of the Charicles puzzle has far-reaching consequences for its context: it leads to two utterly different readings of Charicles' motives and of other characters' attitudes towards him. This effect will prove to be closely linked to Heliodorus' habit to prefer showing to telling:⁵ as the primary narrator refrains from commenting on the characters' actions, the reader has the freedom to interpret them himself; if—as is the case in the section on which this paper focuses—even the characters' words can be understood in completely different ways, this interpretative freedom triggers a chain reaction of alternative readings which can reach far into parts of the plot that are connected with the ambiguous segment.

³ Ellipses are temporal gaps in the narrative; that is to say, events belonging to a certain time interval are not narrated at all. Paralipses, again, are omissions 'of one of the constituent elements of a situation in a period that the narrative does generally cover' (Genette 1993 [1972], 52). For a slightly different distinction between the two terms, see de Jong 2001, xiii & xvi.

⁴ Throughout this paper, I use 'p or q' in its adjunctive sense ('pVq').

⁵ For good overviews of the narratological characteristics of Heliodorus' primary narrator, see Fusillo 1991 [1989], 131–141; Morgan 2004b, 526–533; on the predominance of showing over telling in the *Aethiopica*, see Wolff 1912, 194.

I. Calasiris' Mission:

From the Functional Integrating Principle to a Completive Reading

Before turning our attention to Book Ten, we shall briefly address a prominent Heliodorean puzzle in order to highlight a characteristic feature of the *Aethiopica's* narrative technique which will be relevant to the question of Charicles' state of knowledge: Heliodorus' novel opens itself to a mode of reading which starts from the premise that the *récit* omits some pieces of information which are relevant to the interpretation of certain elements of the narrative.

The most controversial question of modern Heliodorean scholarship pertains to Calasiris (an Egyptian priest who serves as the major secondary narrator of the novel) and—as is the case with the Charicles puzzle—concerns information about Charicleia possessed by a prominent character. In his first extensive account, Calasiris narrates that after travels which he omits as irrelevant to the story of the protagonists, he arrived in Delphi, where he chose to spend his voluntary exile as it seemed to be an appropriate place for a prophet (2,26,1).⁶ There he met Charicles, a Greek priest, and his foster-daughter Charicleia. From a letter which no one before him had been able to decipher in Delphi, Calasiris learned that the girl was an Ethiopian princess. In the light of this sequence of events, the encounter between Calasiris and Charicleia appears to be coincidental. However, Calasiris' account contains a tertiary narrative which he addresses to Charicleia, telling her that he was sent to Delphi by her mother, the queen of Ethiopia, in order to escort her home (4,12,1–13,1). If we take these two accounts at face value, they are clearly irreconcilable with each other: Calasiris gives two incompatible reasons for his journey to Delphi and claims that he both did and did not know about Charicleia's background before having met her in person. This has been interpreted as a major compositional flaw which Heliodorus was perfectly aware of, but accepted in order to 'create tension and forward movement in the plot'.⁷ This explanation is based on a constructivist approach to unreliable narration,⁸ which assumes that readers resolve incongruities with the help of so-called integrating principles: in the present case, the discrepancies are explained as providing an additional literary effect ('functional integrating principle', here creating a sense of unity and a teleological drive).⁹ Other scholars have offered explanations which

⁶ Unmarked references indicate Rattenbury & Lumb 1960.

⁷ Reardon 1969, 302; for a similar reading, see Heffi 1950, 77: '*Künstlerische Wirkung scheint ihm [scil. Heliodor] wichtiger gewesen zu sein als eine streng folgerichtige Fabel.*' For other supposed inconsistencies interpreted similarly, see *ibid.* 84–96.

⁸ For a good overview, see Shen 2014, 901.

⁹ Yacobi 1981.

do not operate on the level of the primary narrator's motivation;¹⁰ the more recent and convincing discussions of this puzzle agree on the point that Calasiris lies to Charicleia when he tells her about the mission—an option which earlier scholars did not consider at all.¹¹ This solution implies a remarkable assumption concerning the novel's narrative technique: as Calasiris' conflicting narratives are not supplemented by a more reliable account and the primary narrator nowhere states that Calasiris deceives his *protégé* concerning his mission, this explanation presupposes that in the *Aethiopica* some elements which are crucial to the interpretation of the main storyline are not spelled out; instead, the reader is required to make additions—the accuracy of which is not clearly confirmed later—on the basis of more or less reliable pieces of information in order to answer questions which are prompted by the conflicting elements. This interpretative approach—let us call it 'completive mode of reading'—will play an important role in the puzzle of Charicles' state of knowledge, which I shall start to discuss after outlining some elements of the *Aethiopica*'s story that are relevant to the main topic of this paper.

2. Charicles' Journey to Ethiopia and its Background

As we learn from Charicles' (tertiary) narrative, which is embedded into Calasiris' (secondary) account, the Ethiopian sage Sisimithres entrusted Charicleia to Charicles at the Nile cataracts when she was seven years old and told him her story (2,31): he had received Charicleia together with some recognition tokens from her mother and had taken care of her until the girl had become so beautiful that he had started to be afraid that she would attract too much attention; he had subsequently travelled to Egypt in order to pass her on to someone else. Having finished his (quaternary) narrative, Sisimithres promised Charicles that he would tell him about Charicleia's ancestry the following day; however, due to a diplomatic crisis between Persia and Ethiopia concerning emerald mines, Sisimithres had to leave Egypt before he could pass on this information to the girl's new foster-father (2,32). Having no prospect of finding out more about Charicleia after Sisimithres' unexpected departure, Charicles took her to Delphi. When Charicleia is seventeen, she meets Theagenes, a Thessalian, and the two fall in love with each other; unlike Calasiris, Charicles does not notice this. With the help of the Egyptian priest, the

¹⁰ Winkler 1999 [1982], 339; Futre Pinheiro 1991; Fuchs 1993, 174–188. On the distinction between narratorial and actorial motivation, see de Jong 2001, xi & xvi; cf. Stürmer 1921, 580.

¹¹ Baumbach 1997; Bretzigheimer 1998; Morgan 2004b, 534f.

lovers elope from Delphi, and Charicles receives *bad* information from Calasiris, namely that Theagenes has kidnapped Charicleia against her will. The young couple and Calasiris travel to Egypt, where the latter dies. After adventures at the court of Oroondates, the satrap of Egypt, the lovers are captured and taken to Meroe, the Ethiopian city where Charicleia's parents rule. There the young couple are selected for sacrifice to the gods. With the help of Sisimithres, Charicleia manages to prove her identity to her parents, but is too shy to admit that she is in love with Theagenes, who still remains to be saved. At that point, Charicles enters the scene in search of his lost daughter. Unable to find her, he nevertheless spots Theagenes, whom he accuses of kidnapping Charicleia. Hydaspes—king of Ethiopia and Charicleia's biological father—wishes to know more, and Charicles gives an extensive account of his story. This narrative is on the one hand intentionally deceptive, as Charicles conceals the fact that Charicleia is not his biological daughter, and on the other hand unintentionally unreliable: it contains information which Charicles does not yet know is bad as it is a result of Calasiris' machinations in Delphi, namely Charicleia's supposed kidnapping by force. Hydaspes asks Theagenes to defend himself, but the young Thessalian claims that he is guilty; thereupon the king tells him to give Charicles back his daughter, and to everybody's surprise, Theagenes states that Hydaspes has her. Sisimithres, who has understood the goings-on all along, reveals to Charicles that the girl is safe and has proved to be the daughter of the royal couple.¹² Charicleia then approaches her foster-father begging for forgiveness, and the subsequent events head for the desired happy ending: the human sacrifices are abolished; Charicleia and Theagenes become priestess and priest of the local cults and marry.

3. *A Constructivist Approach to the Charicles Puzzle*

The question, what Charicles knows about Charicleia when he enters the stage, is a puzzling one: while it is clear that at the time of Charicleia's elopement from Delphi, Charicles is aware of her Ethiopian background but not of her royal descent,¹³ it has repeatedly been argued that when he arrives in Meroe, he appears to know who her parents are. This claim is based on the established reading of two sentences which are reported in direct speech and belong to the same scene in the novel's finale. For now, I shall quote them in John Morgan's translation.¹⁴

¹² See Kruchió (forthcoming) on the relation of Charicles' and Sisimithres' speeches to the *Aethiopica's* ending and on the metaliterary significance of these passages.

¹³ See above, Part 2.

¹⁴ Morgan 2008.

When Hydaspes orders Theagenes to hand over Charicleia to Charicles, the young Thessalian 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!”¹⁵ and closes with the following remark:

Ἀπόδος, εἰ μὴ σὴν θυγατέρα εἶναι Χαρίκλειαν καὶ οὗτος ὁμολογήσειεν.
(10,37,2)

“Give her back then, unless this man [*scil.* Charicles] too will admit that Charicleia is *your* [*scil.* Hydaspes’] daughter!”¹⁶

Morgan argues that ‘although this [*scil.* sentence] can be said merely to reflect Theagenes’ belief, his case is so weakened unless it is true belief [*scil.* belief which also happens to be true] that his remark becomes pointless.’¹⁷ According to this reading, Theagenes’ demand indicates both that Charicles already knows of Charicleia’s royal descent when he arrives in Meroe and that Theagenes suspects that Charicles is in possession of this information. These implications, again, prompt questions about information transfer: How has Charicles learned about his foster-daughter’s biological parents? Why does Theagenes suspect that the Greek priest already knows who they are? As if Theagenes’ words were not puzzling enough, Sisimithres’ reaction raises further questions about the involved characters’ states of knowledge. In the middle of the tumult created by Theagenes’ confusing remark, Sisimithres reveals to Charicles:

Σόζεται σοι ἡ νομισθεῖσα καὶ παρ’ ἡμῶν ἐγχειρισθεῖσά ποτε θυγάτηρ (...),
θυγάτηρ ἀληθῶς οὖσα καὶ εὐρεθεῖσα ὧν γινώσκεις. (10,37,3)

“The child you regarded as your daughter, the child I committed to your keeping all those years ago, is safe (...), though in truth she is, and has been discovered to be, the child of parents whose identity you know!”

In Morgan’s translation, this sentence not only confirms that the Greek priest is already in possession of information concerning Charicleia’s descent, but even indicates that Sisimithres is aware of Charicles’ state of knowledge. From this, Morgan infers that the words of Sisimithres are ‘quite unequivocal in assuming

¹⁵ Ἄλλ' οὐχ ὁ ἀδικήσας (...) ἀλλ' ὁ τὸ ἀδίκημα ἔχων ἀποδιδόναι δίκαιος· ἔχεις δὲ αὐτός
(10,37,2).

¹⁶ Translations of Heliodorus, unless indicated otherwise, from Morgan 2008.

¹⁷ Morgan 1978, *ad* 10,36,1.

that Sisimithres did reveal all to Charicles in Egypt',¹⁸ and concludes that in Book Ten, Heliodorus ignores an important element of Book Two, where Sisimithres did not disclose Charicleia's provenance to Charicles.¹⁹ While Morgan leaves the inconsistency uninterpreted, Victor Hefti, who reads this passage in a similar way, argues that Heliodorus did not intend to present Charicles as knowing everything about Charicleia's past, but rather made a mistake in narrating Sisimithres' revelation.²⁰ In what follows, I shall propose two solutions to the puzzle of Charicles' state of knowledge. The first one, which sticks to Morgan's reading of the pertinent passages, is similar to the popular interpretation of Calasiris' mission outlined above²¹ as it resorts to the completive mode of reading and resolves the conflicting elements of the plot by factoring in an element which is not explicitly stated in the narrative but a plausible conjecture. Operating on a linguistic basis, the second solution will argue that it is perfectly possible to understand Theagenes' and Sisimithres' words in a way which eliminates the discrepancy between Charicles' states of knowledge in Books Two and Ten.

We shall start by having a look at the information acquired by Charicles during his travels. When he tells Hydaspes about his adventures, we learn that his search for Charicleia and her alleged kidnapper Theagenes brought him to Memphis; there Thyamis, Calasiris' son who shared some adventures with the protagonists and became their friend, told him 'everything' (ἅπαντα, 10,36,4) about Charicleia. With the question of Charicles' state of knowledge in mind, the readers ask themselves what this strong and general expression might stand for. Judging from Charicles' speech in Book Ten, Thyamis' account certainly included what happened to Charicleia after her arrival in Egypt: that she was caught by him at the time he was a pirate, taken to Memphis, held captive by Oroondates' wife, and subsequently sent to the satrap of Egypt. Of course, the crucial question is whether we have any reason to assume that Thyamis also told Charicles who Charicleia's biological parents were. The abovementioned ἅπαντα does not help us to answer this question for the simple reason that this 'everything' is focalised by Charicles, who on the one hand cannot know whether Thyamis has told him absolutely everything there is to know about his foster-daughter,²² and on the

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ Similarly Sandy 1982, 22f.; Morgan 1982, 257 (n.150); *id.* 1983 (n.74); Woronoff 1992, 41.

²⁰ Hefti 1950, 95; see Morgan 1978, *ad* 10,36,1, for critique on Hefti's interpretation.

²¹ See above, Part 1.

²² For another instance of focalised ἅπαντα, see 2,9,3, where Cnemon narrates that his father Aristippus was not convicted of murdering his second wife because 'he was able to give a full account of what had happened' (ἅπαντα ὡς ἔσχεν ὑποθέμενον); however, it becomes clear from Cnemon's story that Aristippus did *not* know everything about the events

other hand he himself withholds information concerning Charicleia in his speech.²³ Due to textual corruption, the sense of the primary narrator's comment on Charicles' motivation to conceal his knowledge on Charicleia's descent is unclear, so that we cannot factor this passage of potentially decisive importance into the present discussion.²⁴ Be that as it may, it is indeed hard to tell what exactly Charicles could find out about Charicleia in Memphis. Hence the question arises whether the reader is at all entitled to resolve the potential inconsistency with the help of the conjecture that Thyamis told Charicles about Charicleia's biological parents. Morgan rejects this option categorically, stating that '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. We can scarcely suppose that he would have omitted to mention such an important event expecting the reader to supply it for himself. There is also no mention of Calasiris having passed the information to Thyamis in the first place.'²⁵ While Morgan is perfectly right in claiming that the reader should not arbitrarily add anything to the plot that is not 'at least hinted at', I shall first argue that it is quite unlikely that by mistake or on purpose Heliodorus is being inconsistent in relation to his earlier account of Charicles' state of knowledge, and subsequently show that there is a more attractive alternative to the communication line considered and subsequently discarded by Morgan.

Let us start by discussing the possibility that we are dealing with an inconsistency which is the result of authorial negligence. This explanation proves to be rather unconvincing if we take into account that Sisimithres' premature departure from Egypt, which—as noted above²⁶—is the reason for Charicles' ignorance about Charicleia's ancestry, is closely linked to the end of the novel and to the political setting of the main narrative in general: in 10,11,1, the primary narrator recalls in one of his rare explanatory comments that Sisimithres was sent to Oroondates as an ambassador to discuss the emerald mines and during this

leading to his wife's death. Cf. Hefti 1950, 20–22, who raises important questions about this episode but jumps to rather simplistic conclusions as regards Heliodorus' narrative technique.

²³ See above, Part 2.

²⁴ On the textual problem in 10,36,1, see Hefti 1950, 153 (n.800), who in his interpretation follows Korais' emendation but also expresses his doubts about it; for the most detailed discussion of this puzzle, see Morgan 1983, 107f., who is not convinced by any of the solutions presented so far.

²⁵ Morgan 1978, *ad* 10,36,1.

²⁶ See above, Part 2.

mission handed over Charicleia to Charicles;²⁷ moreover, the territorial dispute about the mines, because of which Sisimithres has to leave Egypt without having told Charicles everything about the Ethiopian princess, is referred to twice as the cause of the current war between Ethiopia and Persia—the same war which brings both the protagonists and Charicles to Meroe.²⁸ Against the background of these multiple connections, the explanation that Heliodorus simply forgot about the details of his account of Charicles' and Sisimithres' meeting in Egypt appears to be a weak one.

Alternatively, it might be thought that there is some additional literary effect generated by this change of track, for the sake of which Heliodorus was willing to introduce an element which is incompatible with earlier parts of the narrative; I shall demonstrate that this is not the case. As noted above, such solutions which resort to the functional integrating principle have repeatedly been offered to the puzzle of Calasiris' mission.²⁹ Similarly, Gerald Sandy claims concerning Charicles' state of knowledge in Book Ten that the inconsistency stems from Heliodorus' aspiration 'to disclose vital information from multiple points of view'.³⁰ This line of argument is clearly flawed, as Charicles' ignorance of Charicleia's parents would by no means render it impossible to make Sisimithres the one who reveals her provenance. However one tries to make sense of the inconsistency by means of the functional integrating principle, these attempts remain futile, as there is no reason why the finale of the novel would benefit from Charicles' additional knowledge. On the contrary, if the Greek priest were in possession of this information, the scene would become unnecessarily problematic in terms of actorial motivation, as it is quite implausible that Charicles would want 'his' daughter back from Hydaspes in full awareness of the identity of her biological father³¹—unless he believes (or hopes) that Charicleia is still an anonymous captive at that time. One could argue that Charicles' behaviour before his speech can be interpreted as suggesting that he does so: knowing that his foster-daughter was taken to Meroe as a prisoner of war (10,34,3), the Greek priest examines the other nine

²⁷ 'For he [*scil.* Sisimithres] it was who had taken her [*scil.* Charicleia] up when she was abandoned by her mother so long ago, and who had entrusted her to Charicles' keeping ten years previously when he was sent to Katadoupoi as an envoy to Oroondates over the issue of the emerald mines' (ἦν γὰρ δὴ οὗτος ὁ τὴν ἀρχὴν ἐκτεθεῖσαν ἀνελόμενος καὶ τῷ Χαρικλεί παρακαταθέμενος ἔτεσι δέκα πρότερον, ὅτε εἰς τοὺς Καταδούπους ἐστάλη τῶν συναργαείων μετάλλων ἕνεκεν ὡς τὸν Ὀροονδάτην πρεσβεύων, 10,11,1).

²⁸ See 8,1,3 & 9,26,2.

²⁹ See above, Part 1.

³⁰ Sandy 1982, 23.

³¹ This point has been made by Hefti 1950, 95. On the concept of actorial motivation, see n.10.

anonymous captive girls (10,34,6).³² However, this objection proves to be rather weak if we factor in that Charicles only inspects the girls on Hydaspes' suggestion. It can therefore be concluded as an interim result that however one tries to explain Charicles' new state of knowledge (authorial negligence or deliberate inconsistency), these attempts remain problematic and unconvincing.

4. *From Plot Hole to Hidden Information Transfer: A Completive Approach*

Be that as it may, if we stick to Morgan's reading of 10,37,2–3, we have no other choice than to accept that Charicles is fully aware of the connection between the royal couple and Charicleia. In what follows, I shall present an alternative to Morgan's attempted explanation, arguing that Calasiris is neither the only possible nor even the most likely informant of Thyamis, from whom, again, Charicles arguably learns about the descent of his foster-daughter. First, I shall address a general objection against (re-)constructing processes of information transfer in Heliodorus. As noted earlier,³³ Morgan states that the *Aethiopica* is a novel in which 'the author has complete control over his material', wherefore the reader is not entitled to conjecture 'events or motivations which are not specifically stated or at least hinted at'.³⁴ While I fundamentally agree with this point, I think that it pays off to have a closer look at the extent to which Heliodorus specifies processes of information transfer in his narrative. I shall show that the *Aethiopica* is a work which repeatedly signals that it is not giving a full account of all the instances of information transfer which are relevant to the plot, thereby inviting us to read the novel in a completive way and to do exactly what we are arguably required to do at the end of Book Ten: to add to the communication line a missing link which is necessary for making sense of passages which refer to certain characters' states of knowledge.

It occurs several times in the *Aethiopica* that in a conversation which is not presented in the *récit* and only referred to later, a character acquires knowledge which he or she lacked at an earlier point of the narrative and which retrospectively turns out to be important. For instance, in 6,9,5, Calasiris reminds Charicleia that she has already learned from him that Thyamis is his son—in a conversation which is not reported in the narrative.³⁵ While Stephen Nimis calls this a

³² The number of the captives is metatextually significant, as the *Aethiopica* is divided into ten books and Charicleia, the (now missing) tenth girl, has been saved in Book Ten.

³³ See above, Part 3.

³⁴ Morgan 1978, *ad* 10,36,1.

³⁵ See Morgan 2008, 481 (n.161).

‘minor lapse’,³⁶ I do not see why Heliodorus should be blamed here: there is no unwritten rule which requires the author not to refer to yet unnarrated events in represented speech analeptically. On the contrary, the so-called ‘emancipation of speech’ is a narratological device that is frequently deployed already in the *Odyssey*,³⁷ which is the *Aethiopica*’s most important (thematic and) narratological hypotext.³⁸ Calasiris’ remark could only be called an authorial mistake if the primary narrator claimed that the primary narratee had learned about this instance of information transfer earlier. Cases of narratorial remarks where Nimis’ criticism is justified to a certain extent can be found in Achilles Tatius’ *Leucippe and Cleitophon*: for example, when the novel’s major (secondary) narrator Cleitophon introduces the character Sostratus, he notes that he ‘was a commander of the war, as I mentioned’,³⁹ whereas this information is new to the narratees. Needless to say, it is not necessarily Achilles Tatius who should be blamed here, as this inconsistency can be understood as a device which serves the characterisation of Cleitophon as a careless or inept narrator.⁴⁰ In the case outlined above, on the other hand, Calasiris’ remark can be read simply as a reference to an ellipsis which is located earlier in the narrative.

A combination of information transfer and emancipation of speech which is more relevant to the question of Charicles’ state of knowledge can be found at 9,24,3, where Theagenes refers to the many times Charicleia has told him that Hydaspes is her father. Here the reader learns that information about Charicleia’s descent—the core of the Charicles puzzle—has repeatedly been passed on in conversations which are *not* reported in the *récit*. Of course, a crucial difference between these instances and Charicles’ acquisition of knowledge is that the Greek priest only states generally that he received information about Charicleia, but does not say explicitly that he learned about her biological parents. I shall shortly argue that there is a subtle hint at this specific case of information transfer in the finale of the *Aethiopica*; for now, it suffices to point out that an important function of the aforementioned instances of emancipation of speech is to make the readers aware of the possibility that they are not necessarily informed about important

³⁶ Nimis 2004, 191.

³⁷ De Jong 2001, 41.

³⁸ On the *Odyssey* as the primary intertext of the *Aethiopica*, see Keyes 1922 (on structural aspects with speculative claims on the novel’s composition); Feuillâtre 1966, 105–114; Fusillo 1991 [1989], 26–31; Woronoff 1992, 37–42; Whitmarsh 1998, 97f., and *id.* 1999 (on the cultural refashioning of the *Odyssey* by Heliodorus); Lowe 2003, 236–241; Morgan 2014, 267f., presents some new intertextual connections.

³⁹ τοῦ πολέμου γάρ, ὡς ἔφη, στρατηγὸς ἦν οὗτος (Ach. Tat. 2,14,2); *cf.* Morgan 2004a, 495.

⁴⁰ On Cleitophon’s characterisation, see De Temmerman 2014, 152–187; on his unreliability, see Morgan 1996, 179–185; Morales 2004, 54–56.

processes of information transfer directly and that they consequently have to be prepared to accept that a character knows more than they expected. The *Aethiopica* thereby prompts its readers to speculate about the characters' states of knowledge—especially in cases like Charicles' final appearance, where it seems to be clear that he has acquired knowledge in a situation which is only recounted in a compressed form in his secondary narrative. To return to Morgan's general objection against solutions which resort to speculative additions: of course, it is true that the author has complete control over his material—insofar as the narrative is fictional in a semantic sense and therefore has no reference in our world;⁴¹ however, it is also important to acknowledge that Heliodorus invites his readers to toy with the idea that certain things which would throw a new light on the plot remain unsaid in his novel, and that this narratological characteristic, again, prompts a complete reading within the limits defined by the *récit*.

A final case of unnarrated information transfer will lead us back to the question of Charicles' state of knowledge. In Book One, Thyamis is captured by rival outlaws. We later learn from secondary narrators that he manages to become a bandit chief again and subsequently frees Theagenes,⁴² who was supposed to be sent to Oroondates as a slave.⁴³ After Book Six, the plot of which is primarily driven by Charicleia's and Calasiris' search for Theagenes, the protagonists are reunited in Memphis, where the male hero arrives as a leading member of Thyamis' gang.⁴⁴ It is striking that there is no extensive account of Theagenes' adventures between his rescue by Thyamis and his arrival in Memphis. What is crucial for the present context is the following conspicuous element of Thyamis' behaviour: when Thyamis is initially separated from the protagonists and disappears from the primary narrative at the end of Book One, he thinks that he has killed Charicleia (in fact, his victim was Thisbe, another captive girl); when he meets her again in Memphis, on the other hand, he shows no sign of surprise.⁴⁵ Heliodorus repeatedly stresses that Theagenes becomes Thyamis' close friend and confidant;⁴⁶ it is therefore reasonable to assume that what we have here is another instance of unnarrated information transfer, which in this case is only implicitly hinted at by Thyamis' silence: the fact that he does not demand an explanation

⁴¹ The juxtaposition of the novelistic genre and historical writing in Morgan 1978, *ad* 10,36,1, makes clear that this is what 'complete control' means here. On the semantic definition of fictionality, see Schaeffer 2014, 179 & 185–187.

⁴² 6,3,4 & 6,13.

⁴³ 5,9, which forms part of an analepsis in the primary narrative.

⁴⁴ Theagenes' career as Thyamis' right hand is foreshadowed as early as 1,4,2: the brigand chief hopes that Theagenes will become a valuable member of his band.

⁴⁵ 7,7f.

⁴⁶ 6,9,5 & 7,5,3–5.

when he meets Charicleia again suggests that he has learned about the background of her apparent death from Theagenes, who is the only possible informant. This is therefore an instance of hidden information transfer between Theagenes and Thyamis about Charicleia. Against this background, it becomes clear that besides Calasiris, Theagenes also is a potential informant of Thyamis as regards the descent of the Ethiopian princess. In what follows, I shall argue that this communication line is significantly less problematic than the one which Morgan has discarded as too speculative.

Morgan has pointed out that a problematic aspect of regarding Calasiris as Charicles' source of information (*via* Thyamis) is that this explanation cannot account for Theagenes' confidence about Charicles' concealed knowledge.⁴⁷ The communication line presented above clearly eliminates this problem: Theagenes can suspect that the Greek priest is aware of Charicleia's descent firstly because it was none other than he who passed on this information to Thyamis, and secondly because he knows from Charicles' speech that Thyamis has told him 'everything' about the girl. However, there is a further difficulty: according to Morgan's reading of Sisimithres' reaction to Theagenes' disclosure, the Ethiopian sage is also aware of Charicles' state of knowledge.⁴⁸ At first sight, this may seem to be incompatible with the solution presented here and rather to suggest—as Morgan argues—that Sisimithres has told Charicles everything about Charicleia in Egypt. However, Sisimithres' awareness can easily be explained in another way if we factor in his supernatural mental powers, which result from his close relationship to the gods:⁴⁹ earlier in Book Ten, he is able to foretell the outcome of the sacrificial ritual and to disclose to Persinna both that her husband will return to Meroe the following day and that she will shortly learn about the imminent arrival of a letter from Hydaspes.⁵⁰ Introducing the speech which the Ethiopian sage addresses to Charicles, the primary narrator states that 'from the very start all the words and actions had made sense to Sisimithres, but he had resisted the impulse to intervene, waiting for the gods to bring their revelation to the fullness of its clarity'.⁵¹ This passage clearly indicates that Sisimithres has insight into everything that is going on in the finale; it is therefore not necessary to conclude from his awareness of Charicles' state of knowledge that Heliodorus has forgotten or ignores his account of Sisimithres' and Charicles' meeting in Egypt. To sum

⁴⁷ See above, Part 3.

⁴⁸ See above, Part 3.

⁴⁹ On Sisimithres as the Aethiopia's highest religious authority, see Szepessy 1984 [1957], 443f.; Paulsen 1992, 200–202.

⁵⁰ 10,4,2–4.

⁵¹ Ὁ Σισιμίθρης δὲ ἐπὶ πολὺ διαρκέσας καὶ πάλαι τὰ λεγόμενα καὶ πραττόμενα γνωρίζων, εἰς τὸ ἀκριβὲς δὲ περιελθεῖν τὰ φανερούμενα πρὸς τοῦ κρείττονος ἀναμένων (...) (10,37,3).

up, the solution suggested here is not incompatible with Sisimithres' revelation and—read against the background of other unnarrated processes of information transfer in the *Aethiopica*—withstands Morgan's general criticism. Moreover, the way Thyamis behaves in Memphis and Theagenes unmasks Charicles in Meroe are strong points in favour of this explanation: the beginning of the Memphis episode unmistakably suggests that Theagenes has passed on information concerning Charicleia to Thyamis, and Theagenes' unerring attack on Charicles' credibility can be read as a hint at his role as the Greek priests' indirect informant. This communication line enables us to interpret Charicles' appearance at the end of the *Aethiopica* in a way which is neither incompatible with earlier parts of the novel nor overly speculative.

5. *An Overlooked Ambiguity*

In the last section of this paper, I shall present an alternative solution which takes a completely different approach to the puzzle of Charicles' state of knowledge: the two sentences from which Morgan has concluded that at the time of his arrival in Meroe, the Greek priest already knows who Charicleia's biological parents are, can equally well be read in a way which does not necessitate this inference. Let us firstly consider what Theagenes says to Charicles:

Ἀπόδος, εἰ μὴ σὴν θυγατέρα εἶναι Χαρίκλειαν καὶ οὗτος ὁμολογήσειεν.
(10,37,2)

“Give her back then, unless this man too will admit that Charicleia is *your* daughter!”

According to Morgan's reading, which presupposes that Charicles is aware of Charicleia's true origin and that Theagenes strongly suspects that Charicles does so, Theagenes' primary intention here is to expose Charicles, respectively his concealed knowledge. However, there is another way of making sense of this sentence: let us consider firstly that ὁμολογεῖν can refer to something the subject has not previously known—meaning ‘to concede’⁵²—and secondly that in (the rather rare) combination with an imperative, εἰ plus optative refers to an *imaginary* event in the future;⁵³ in light of these points, it is perfectly possible to understand this sentence as one which expresses that for Theagenes, it is just a vague possibility

⁵² LSJ *s.v.* ὁμολογέω II.2.

⁵³ See Smyth 1956, §§ 2322, 2359, & 2364.

that Charicles should acknowledge Charicleia's royal ancestry: 'Give her back, unless even this man *should concede* that Charicleia is your daughter [*scil.* and this is rather unlikely to happen].' To put it more clearly, his words can be paraphrased as 'You have to give him Charicleia back, because he does not even know that actually she is your daughter!' According to this interpretation, the young Thessalian addresses Hydaspes exclusively, pointing out the absurdity of the king's demand in a cynical way;⁵⁴ this reading does *not* presuppose that Theagenes suspects Charicles' awareness of Charicleia's descent; on the contrary, his words can be understood as indicating that in his opinion, it would be hard to convince Charicles of the girl's royal lineage.⁵⁵ A strong point in favour of this reading is the fact that Theagenes refers to Charicles as *καὶ* οὗτος. In this context *καὶ* clearly indicates that Charicles is not the only one who ὁμολογεῖ. If we assume that this verb means 'to admit', it is quite hard to make sense of the preceding *καὶ*: there is no one else present who has *admitted* who Charicleia is (after having known about her identity all along). If, in turn, we follow the reading presented here, *καὶ* can easily be understood as referring to the previously unknowing royal couple, who have *conceded* that Charicleia is their daughter.

Of course, this interpretation of Theagenes' words is irreconcilable with Morgan's reading of Sisimithres' reaction, which he takes as the major indicator of Charicles' full awareness of Charicleia's descent, translating *θυγάτηρ ἀληθῶς οὔσα καὶ εὔρεθεισα ὧν γινώσκεις* as 'the child of parents whose identity you know'. Grammatically, this reading is undoubtedly correct: both classical authors and Heliodorus use *γι(γ)νώσκω* in present tense to refer to knowledge which the subject already possesses.⁵⁶ However, there is another possibility: in present tense, *γι(γ)νώσκω* can also denote a process of coming to know or of perceiving

⁵⁴ This reading is in line with Theagenes' truculent behaviour in Book Ten; for another clearly cynical remark which Theagenes addresses to Hydaspes and which—just as the sentence under discussion—has a core of truth, see 10,33,2: "Finish your sentence", interrupted Theagenes, "by saying he [*scil.* Meroebos] never will be her husband, not if I know anything of Charicleia's heart. And you will have to believe my predictions, for I am a sacrificial victim!" ("Ἄλλ' οὐδὲ ἐσόμενον πρόσθεζ' εἶπεν ὁ Θεαγένης, "εἴ τι ἐγὼ τοῦ Χαρικλείου φρονήματος ἐπήσθημαι· κάμοι ὡς θύματι μαντευομένῳ πιστεῦναι ἔσται δίκαιον.")

⁵⁵ Alternatively or additionally, one could make sense of Theagenes' words by assuming that the Greek protagonist indirectly yet deliberately reveals new information to Charicles in the hope that this will somehow contribute to the resolution of his difficult situation.

⁵⁶ See e.g. Pl. *Phd.* 60a2 εἰσιόντες οὖν κατελαμβάνομεν (...) τὴν δὲ Ξανθίππην – γινώσκεις γάρ – ἔχουσάν τε τὸ παιδίον αὐτοῦ (...); Hld. 7,10,4 "Γινώσκω" ἔφη "τὸν νεανίαν [*scil.* Theagenes]" ἢ γραῦς [*scil.* Cybele], followed by a description of Theagenes, which makes it unmistakably clear that what Cybele means is that she already knows him.

something,⁵⁷ and—referring to a person—mean ‘to detect somebody’ or ‘to recognise somebody as being something’.⁵⁸ Sisimithres’ words therefore can just as well be understood as follows: ‘In truth she is, and has been discovered to be, the daughter of people whom you are finding out to be her parents at this very moment.’ According to this reading, the Ethiopian priest does *not* claim that Charicles has already been aware of Charicleia’s descent, but rather points out that he is in the middle of finding out about it.

If we combine this new reading of Theagenes’ and Sisimithres’ words, we can conclude that there is a surprisingly simple solution to the question of Charicles’ state of knowledge in Book Ten: when the Greek priest arrives in Meroe, he does not yet know that Charicleia is the daughter of the royal couple, but finds out over the course of the events of the last chapters. In a typically Heliodorean manner,⁵⁹ he does so through a series of clues: first, Hydaspes mentions to Charicles that one of the captive females has been discovered not to be the Greek priest’s daughter (10,34,5); when the Ethiopian king asks Theagenes to defend himself against the allegations raised by Charicles, the young Thessalian points out that he is a robber to the Greek supplicant, but a benefactor to Hydaspes (10,37,1). In the same conversation, the accused protagonist states that the king himself is in possession of Charicleia and asks Hydaspes to hand over the girl unless Charicles should admit that she is the king’s daughter (10,37,2). Finally, Sisimithres confirms Charicles’ suspicions (10,37,3), whereupon Charicleia is reunited with her foster-father (10,38,1). Regarding the role of the Ethiopian sage, this process is perfectly in line with the *Aethiopica*’s finale: just as Sisimithres is the one who comes up with the ultimate proof of Charicleia’s identity,⁶⁰ he becomes the source of final clarity about her for Charicles, whereby his authority is further confirmed.⁶¹

Against the background of Charicles’ cognitive process, Theagenes’ cynical demand in 10,37,2 gains additional, ironic significance: by the very act of

⁵⁷ See e.g. 4,5,7 πάθος γὰρ ἅπαν τὸ μὲν ὀξέως γνωσκόμενον εὐβοήθητον (...). ‘Any wound that is quickly diagnosed is easily healed (...).’

⁵⁸ See Pl. *Thi.* 149c6 Οὐκοῦν καὶ τότε εἰκός τε καὶ ἀναγκαῖον, τὰς κυούσας καὶ μὴ γινώσκεισθαι μᾶλλον ὑπὸ τῶν μαιῶν ἢ τῶν ἄλλων; ‘It is therefore not both plausible and necessary that midwives are better than others at detecting who is pregnant and who is not?’

⁵⁹ On the importance of signs and their deciphering in the *Aethiopica*, see Winkler 1999 [1982], 288–307; Bartsch 1989 *passim*.

⁶⁰ On Charicleia’s resemblance to the Andromeda painting, see Whitmarsh 1998, 110f., who argues that it can be interpreted as a joke on a novelistic *topos* (beauty is the product of art) and as a reversal of the concept of *mimesis*. Reeve 1989 explores the literary and cultural history of what he calls the ‘Andromeda Effect’.

⁶¹ See n.49.

expressing his doubts about whether there is an easy way out of the tricky situation, he substantially contributes to its resolution. Moreover, there is another instance of dramatic irony resulting from Charicles' initial ignorance: pretending that Charicleia is his biological daughter, the Greek priest demands her back from Hydaspes—not knowing that the king is in fact her natural father.⁶² These points are perfectly in line with the prominent role of dramatic irony in the Meroe episode.⁶³

Is one of the two solutions to the puzzle preferable to the other? This paper has aimed at showing that we get a more differentiated picture of Heliodorus' narrative technique if instead of trying to find a definite answer to this question, we have a closer look at the implications of the two solutions and the factors which make their coexistence possible in the first place. The first solution is attractive from a narratological point of view as it presumes that Heliodorus places an important instance of information transfer in the only major hidden section of the main storyline, and only hints at its existence indirectly. An event which lies outside of the narrative's focus becomes relevant in a new context, and the reader is required to use his imagination in order to reconcile Charicles' behaviour in Meroe with earlier parts of the novel. This completive mode of reading is made possible and induced by certain narratological characteristics of the *Aethiopica*: firstly, Heliodorus' often fragmentary (*i.e.* elliptical and paralyptical) narrative style gives rise to gaps which can be filled in by the readers: they do not learn about the interactions between Theagenes and Thyamis, as the narrative completely omits the pertinent segment of the story. Furthermore, the readers are kept in the dark about many details of sections which are narrated, because—*e.g.* in the case of Calasiris' story and Charicles' adventures—the unreliable and fragmentary embedded narrative is neither commented on by a higher authority nor supplemented with a more complete account.⁶⁴ Furthermore, two devices prompt the readers to fill in these gaps. Firstly, the unexpected behaviour of certain characters like Thyamis in Memphis or Theagenes and Sisimithres in Meroe makes the readers wonder which events which took place off-stage could explain the surprising elements. Secondly, the repeated references to instances of information transfer *via* emancipation of speech make clear that it is indeed the case that important exchanges between characters take place off-stage, thereby inviting the readers to use their imagination and to complete the gaps. If one takes account of

⁶² See Lateiner 1997, 436.

⁶³ Morgan 1989 *passim*.

⁶⁴ *Cf.* Hunter 1998, 53, who points out that 'most of Kalasiris' tale finds no response at all inscribed in the text. We have then no guide, except extrapolation from the relatively few scripted reactions, and it ought not to be surprising that judgements may differ.'

these narratological devices and their effect on the reader's response to the text, the *Aethiopica* turns out to be a fragmentary work which constantly highlights that its *récit* only constitutes a very limited account of the story it tells, leaving it up to the reader to answer certain questions.

The second solution, again, is more straightforward as it does not require the reader to make assumptions about events which are not spelled out in the *récit*. It also, however, leads to an attractive reading of Charicles' role in Book Ten: Charicleia's foster-father goes through a gradual process of knowledge acquisition, and both he and Theagenes become victims of fine dramatic irony; all these elements are undoubtedly typical features of Heliodorean narrative.

Finally, it is striking that an inconspicuous, heretofore overlooked ambiguity leads to entirely different readings of a considerable part of the novel's finale. According to one of them, Charicles is misled by his partial ignorance and gradually realises an important fact with Theagenes' (in-)voluntary⁶⁵ and Sisimithres' caring help. According to the other, the Greek priest is aware of everything *ab initio*, unsuccessfully tries to follow a ruthless agenda, and is unmasked by Sisimithres and Theagenes. This interpretive chain reaction is made possible by Heliodorus' habit to restrain from commenting on the events and to explain his characters' motivation—in short, by favouring showing over telling. Due to the absence of narratorial comments, it is up to the reader to make sense of the goings-on,⁶⁶ and even a small ambiguity can have far-reaching effects on the interpretation of events related to it. Instead of weighing the pros and cons of the different readings which result from the ambiguous passage with the goal of making a final interpretive choice, we are certainly better off if we understand this characteristic of the *Aethiopica* as a powerful tool to engage the readers in an open dialogue with the work and consequently to enable them to construct remarkably different stories from the *récit*.⁶⁷

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⁶⁵ See n.55.

⁶⁶ Hunter 1998 comes to a similar conclusion.

⁶⁷ I should like to express my thanks to John Morgan, Thomas Poiss, Ian Repath, Tim Whitmarsh, and especially Georg Danek, for stimulating discussions and comments on this paper and its earlier drafts.

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