

# The Wisdom of Egypt: Base and Heavenly Magic in Heliodoros' *Aithiopika*

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## Introduction

Among the extant ancient Greek novels, the *Aithiopika* is striking for the quantity of magic it contains, yet there has been a dearth of concerted research on the subject, save for considerations of the ways in which magic contributes to the portrayal of Kalasiris' character.<sup>1</sup> I hope to go some way towards stopping this gap, arguing that Kalasiris' division of wisdom in Book Three into the base and the true evokes Plato's categorisation of love as Pandemic and Heavenly, and provides a framework by which the reader may gauge the characters and events of the novel. I also offer an interpretation of Charikleia's recognition tokens, which proceeds from the understanding that magic fulfils a didactic and characterising function in the work. The study begins with a brief discussion of Kalasiris who, by virtue of his taxonomy of wisdom, stands as a focal point for the magic in the novel; the second section then traces the theme of base magic, and the third of true.<sup>2</sup>

### Kalasiris: Charlatan, Pythagorean, and Platonist

...there is one kind [of wisdom] that is of low rank and...crawls upon the earth; it waits upon ghosts and skulks around dead bodies; it is addicted to magic herbs, and spells are its stock-in-trade; no good ever comes of it; no benefit ever accrues to its practitioners; generally it brings about its

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<sup>1</sup> E.g. Sandy 1982, 142ff; Dowden 1996, 283–284.

<sup>2</sup> The text of the *Aithiopika* is taken from the Budé series (*Les Belles Lettres*) and the translation is Morgan's (Reardon 1989); all other texts and translations are from the Loeb Classical Library, unless otherwise stated.

own downfall, and its occasional successes are paltry and mean-spirited – the unreal made to appear real, hopes brought to nothing; it devises wickedness and panders to corrupt pleasures. But there is another kind, my son, true wisdom, of which the first sort is but a counterfeit that has stolen its title; true wisdom it is that we priests ...practice from childhood; its eyes are raised towards heaven; it keeps company with the gods and partakes of the nature of the Great Ones; it studies the movement of the stars and thus gains knowledge of the future; it has no truck with the wicked, earthly concerns of the other kind, but all its energies are directed to what is good and beneficial to mankind.<sup>3</sup>

So says Kalasiris to Knemon in Book Three. His words are prompted by the assumption of others that all Egyptian magic is of one type and that, because he is an Egyptian, he must be versed in magical practice. Such stereotyping is found widely in ancient sources,<sup>4</sup> although Heliodoros is remarkable for making Kalasiris manipulate the stereotype himself. The above passage suggests that Kalasiris wishes to dissociate himself from low rank magic, yet he has previously, and will again, encourage Charikles and Theagenes to believe that he possesses this ‘Egyptian’ magical knowledge: at 3,7,2 Kalasiris claims that Charikleia has been afflicted by the evil eye, knowing full well that she is actually lovesick; at 4,5,3ff he embarks on a mock exorcism of the evil eye, and convinces Charikles that he has caused Charikleia to fall in love by the power of his magic. Kalasiris’ performance is clearly fraudulent, and Charikles later denounces him as a charlatan,<sup>5</sup> reflecting the accusations levelled at gurus such as Pythagoras and Alexander of Abonouteichos.<sup>6</sup> Kalasiris’ *modus operandi* in these scenes is familiar and only to be expected,

<sup>3</sup> Hld. 3,16,3ff. The concept of wisdom taking two forms – true wisdom and black magic – seems to have been popular by Heliodoros’ time: Philostratos refers to Apollonios as an adherent to ‘true wisdom’ (ἡ ἀληθινή σοφία) (*Life of Apollonios* 1,2).

<sup>4</sup> As early as the seventh century B.C., magic was associated with Egypt (*Odyssey* 4,219–239); Lucan contrasts the skills of Erichtho with those of ‘secret Memphis’ (*Pharsalia* 6,677–680), from where, incidentally, Kalasiris hails; Apuleius introduces Zatchlas as ‘an outstanding Egyptian prophet’ (*Metamorphoses* 2,28–30, trans. Ogden 2001); see Ogden 2001, 134ff for further examples.

<sup>5</sup> Hld. 10,36,4: Charikles labels Kalasiris ψευδοπροφήτης.

<sup>6</sup> Herakleitos [129] and Lucian *Alexander* 4: each refers to his subject’s κακοτεχνία (‘base artifice’, ‘malpractice’).

particularly of an Egyptian,<sup>7</sup> although we should note that Charikleia is not taken in by Kalasiris in the exorcism scene, which appears to establish a likemindedness between them. Kalasiris manipulates the guru stereotype for a higher purpose: by *appearing* to advocate the base magic he abhors, he remains faithful to his divinely sanctioned mission to return Charikleia to the land of her birth, and his ‘energies are directed to what is good and beneficial to mankind.’<sup>8</sup>

Kalasiris’ ascetic and itinerant lifestyle, together with his physical appearance, align him rather more with Pythagoreanism than with the Isis cult of which he was high priest.<sup>9</sup> Sources suggest, however, that Isiacism and Pythagoreanism shared certain features, at least in popular belief: Lucian tells us of an Egyptian sorcerer, Pankrates, who spent twenty-three years underground learning magic from Isis, while Diogenes Laertios asserts that Pythagoras descended into Egyptian crypts to gain his wisdom.<sup>10</sup> Kalasiris’ Egyptian birth, Pythagorean appearance and Isiac knowledge provide the necessary cachet to convince others of his mystic abilities. His biography of Homer and discussion of Homeric allegorical subtext serve to complete the impression that he has some superior understanding of magic and the divine. Homer, Kalasiris claims, was also a wandering Egyptian,<sup>11</sup> and his descent from Hermes and the wife of a Hermetic prophet implies that Homer too had some magical wisdom.<sup>12</sup> Kalasiris’ understanding of the ‘religious teaching’

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<sup>7</sup> Cf. Nektanebos in the Ps.-Kallisthenes *Alexander Romance* (whose magic is real, though used to trick Olympias), and Antonius Diogenes’ Paapis.

<sup>8</sup> At 3,15,3 Kalasiris in fact expresses regret that he must deprive Charikles of Charikleia, though he is acting for the greater good. Charikleia herself is the first to establish the Platonic theme of the noble lie: ‘Sometimes even a lie can be good, if it helps those who speak it without harming those to whom it is spoken’ (1,26,6,5–6). Cf. Philokles’ statement in Lucian’s *Philopseudes*: ‘There are many reasons, Tychiades, which constrain men occasionally to tell falsehoods with an eye to the usefulness of it’ (40).

<sup>9</sup> Heliodoros may intend readers to identify Kalasiris as a Pythagoras-figure by the subtle use of the minor character Tyrrhenos: Tyrrhenos was said to be the name of Pythagoras’ brother (Diogenes Laertios 8,1), and at 5,20,2 Heliodoros has Tyrrhenos tell Kalasiris that he loves him as a brother (see Jones 2003, 60–61).

<sup>10</sup> Lucian *Philopseudes* 34; Diogenes Laertios 8,3.

<sup>11</sup> The concept that Homer was Egyptian was not confined to Heliodoros; for this and other ancient beliefs regarding his origin, see Heath 1998.

<sup>12</sup> Homer’s verses are quoted in the Greek Magical Papyri (hereafter referred to as *PGM*, and *PDM* for the Demotic papyri; Betz 1992) – e.g. *PGM* IV, 2145–2240; Julius Africanus’ *Kestoi* 18 (= *PGM* XXIII) credits Homer with knowledge of necromantic spells,

of Homer's works elevates him above Knemon, who confesses that he is one of the 'ignorant majority' who do not grasp Homer's allusions.<sup>13</sup> Thus the groundwork is laid for Kalasiris to draw a dichotomy between those who seek true wisdom and those who cleave to base beliefs.

The predominant aspect of Kalasiris' character that influences the conclusions I shall draw on the role of magic in the novel is his Platonism. In Plato's *Symposium* Pausanias introduces the concept that love has two forms, 'Pandemic' and 'Heavenly',<sup>14</sup> the former obsessed with gratification and short-lived pleasure, and the latter concerned with the development of virtue and assimilation with the divine. As I have alluded to above, Kalasiris reworks this idea around the theme of Egyptian wisdom, one type bound to the earth and base pleasures, and the other regarding the heavens and communing with gods. Kalasiris' appearance has been likened to that of a Neoplatonic philosopher,<sup>15</sup> and he certainly adopts a Platonic stance in his disparaging remarks on base forms of magic.<sup>16</sup> It is my contention that, by the use of Platonic allegory in the taxonomy of magic, Heliodoros clarifies the moral values of the novel, 'the expression and reinforcement of which is the fundamental *raison d'être* of the *Aithiopika*'.<sup>17</sup>

Morgan has demonstrated that Knemon's story functions as an example of negative love, against which one may contrast the love of Theagenes and Charikleia.<sup>18</sup> Athenian love is dedicated to pleasure: it is Pandemic; the love of the hero and heroine is reciprocal, their souls dependent on one another and prompted to Platonic anamnesis: it is Heavenly.<sup>19</sup> Heliodoros never

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while Apuleius considers him a master of all forms of magic (*Apology* 31). Heliodoros manages to transform Homer from a magical adept to a mystic initiate (Ogden 2001, 259), and hence a model of true wisdom.

<sup>13</sup> Hld. 3,12,2ff.

<sup>14</sup> Plato *Symposium* 180Eff.

<sup>15</sup> Morgan 1982, 250; note also that Kalasiris' initial meeting with Knemon (Hld. 2,21) shows the influence of the *Phaedrus* – we are perhaps intended to think of Socrates.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. Plato *Laws* 933Aff.

<sup>17</sup> Morgan 1989, 107.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.* 107 *et passim*.

<sup>19</sup> 'For at the moment when they set eyes on one another, the young pair fell in love, as if the soul recognized its kin at the very first encounter and sped to meet that which was worthily its own...and all the while they gazed hard into one another's eyes, as if calling to mind a previous acquaintance or meeting' (Hld. 3,5,4–5). Dowden 1996, 269 first sug-

makes it explicit that we are to understand Knemon's story as pointing up the high moral value of the love of Theagenes and Charikleia, but Kalasiris' division of Egyptian wisdom would seem to support Morgan's thesis: base magic 'devises wickedness and panders to corrupt pleasures', as does the base love of Knemon's story; true wisdom is 'directed to what is good and beneficial to mankind', as is the love of Theagenes and Charikleia; Athenian love is 'promiscuous and ephemeral',<sup>20</sup> and in just the same way the 'occasional successes' of base magic are 'paltry and mean-spirited'; the outcome of Athenian love is 'humiliation and death',<sup>21</sup> and likewise base magic 'brings about its own downfall'. I argue that this Platonic distinction enables the reader to measure the novel's characters against an ethical scale of belief and behaviour, at the apex of which stands Charikleia. I shall begin by considering examples which, on the basis of Kalasiris' taxonomy, locate individuals at the lower end of the scale.

Base Magic: Ἡ μὲν γὰρ τις ἐστὶ δημόδης...<sup>22</sup>

Kalasiris' description of δημόδης wisdom is played out most explicitly in the necromancy scene in Book Six.<sup>23</sup> The old woman is the embodiment of Kalasiris' definition of base magic, and by comparing her necromancy with his taxonomy we see the similarities clearly: in raising the dead the woman 'waits upon ghosts and skulks around dead bodies'; she uses bay and fennel, which constitute the 'magic herbs' to which Kalasiris referred; she whispers 'incantations' into the ear of her dead son, the 'spells' Kalasiris said were base wisdom's 'stock-in-trade'.<sup>24</sup> By placing the scene at a central point in the novel, Heliodoros draws attention to its moral message: by practising

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gested that the love division in the novel is underwritten by the Platonic theme of Pandemic and Heavenly Love.

<sup>20</sup> Morgan 1989, 108.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.* 110.

<sup>22</sup> Hld. 3,16,3.

<sup>23</sup> The scene Heliodoros creates is reminiscent of Erichtho's necromantic extravaganza (Lucan *Pharsalia* 6,588ff; see also the case of Thelyphron in Apuleius' *Metamorphoses* 2,28ff), but also bears similarities to the rites at *Odyssey* 11,24ff, where Odysseus calls up the ghost of Tiresias.

<sup>24</sup> The language here is congruent with that used in the taxonomy: at 3,16,3 we read ...περὶ σώματα νεκρῶν εἰλουμένη... and at 16,14,7...περὶ...σώματα νεκρῶν εἰλουμένοις...; again, at 3,16,3 the noun ἐπωδή ('enchantment', 'spell') is used, and here the verb is ἐπαεῖδω ('use incantations').

base magic and ‘making the unreal appear real’, the woman ‘brings about her own downfall’; the outcome of base magic is negative, leading to humiliation and death. We saw earlier that the evil eye scene established complicity between Kalasiris and Charikleia; here the vituperation of the necromancer by her son and Kalasiris’ condemnation of necromancy separate Kalasiris and Charikleia from base magic, and hence also from base people. The reanimated corpse refers to necromancy as ‘forbidden mysteries’,<sup>25</sup> providing a further contrast between such activity and the true, higher mysteries into which Kalasiris has been initiated.

In the satrap’s court at Memphis we see another instance of δημώδης wisdom, conducted by Kybele, the old chambermaid of the satrap’s wife, Arsake, who aids and abets her mistress in her passion for Theagenes. Kybele is cast in the mould of Phaidra’s nurse, ready to use magic potions and spells to acquire her mistress’ desires:<sup>26</sup>

What is the matter, mistress? What is this new pain that makes you suffer so? ... Who could be so presumptuous or so deranged as not to capitulate before your beauty or not to consider union in love with you to be very bliss?... You have only to tell me, my darling child; there is no heart so hard that it is proof against my spells. You have only to tell me and you will have your heart’s desire in an instant. My past achievements have given you proof enough of my abilities, I think.<sup>27</sup>

With the collusion of Arsake, Kybele attempts to poison Charikleia with ‘a witch’s potion’,<sup>28</sup> hoping to acquire the love of Theagenes for her mistress by eliminating the competition. Kybele drinks the poison when the cups are confused,<sup>29</sup> and like the necromancer she dies the fitting death of those who dabble in base magic. Morgan has shown that Arsake’s desire for Theagenes serves the same moral purpose as Knemon’s story,<sup>30</sup> providing an antithesis to the positive reciprocal love of Theagenes and Charikleia, and leading

<sup>25</sup> 6,15,3.

<sup>26</sup> Cf. Euripides *Hippolytos* 478–481.

<sup>27</sup> Hld. 7,9,5.

<sup>28</sup> 8,7,2.

<sup>29</sup> The confusion of potions, usually love-philtres and poisons, is a common theme in the literary sources – e.g. Deianeira’s mistake in Sophokles’ *Trachiniai*.

<sup>30</sup> Morgan 1989, 112.

ultimately to ‘humiliation and death’. This argument may be extended to encompass base wisdom. Charikleia is present during both the necromancy and the poisoning scenes, and the intention seems to be to draw a contrast between her and those who resort to such behaviour. It is thus ironic when she is tried for poisoning Kybele, and then accused by Arsake of sorcery, for Kalasiris’ *faux* exorcism and the old woman’s necromancy have already separated her from such δημώδης beliefs.<sup>31</sup>

The ‘low rank wisdom’ of which Kalasiris speaks is not entirely the preserve of negative characters. I suggest that Heliodoros subtly places several innocuous characters at the lower end of Kalasiris’ scale of wisdom, thus insinuating that they lack moral fibre when compared with the hero and heroine. The examples which follow should be understood not as explicitly magical, but as implicitly related to Kalasiris’ definitions of wisdom. As discussed above, Knemon’s story serves as an exemplar of base, immoral love. From his initial words we see that his wisdom too is earthbound, rather than heavenly, as Kalasiris has defined true wisdom. Presenting himself in the role of the Herdsmen’s healer, Knemon offers to fetch a herb (βοτάνη) that will heal Theagenes’ wounds.<sup>32</sup> In a true Egyptian context magic and herbal medicine were inseparable,<sup>33</sup> but we later learn from Kalasiris that in the context of the novel reliance upon βοτάναις falls into the category of δημώδης wisdom. Knemon’s intentions are good, but his wisdom is base: by his advocacy of herbs his attentions are focused earthwards, and he will never attain the divinely inspired Platonic virtue of those who have true wisdom.<sup>34</sup> Of course, when we meet Knemon we have not yet encountered Kalasiris’ taxonomy of wisdom, and may only understand Knemon’s characterisation as δημώδης in hindsight. However, Heliodoros’ narrative structure frequently demands retrospection from the reader. When at 3,12 Knemon consigns himself to ‘the ignorant majority’, and shortly thereafter we learn Kalasiris’ taxonomy, we may relate it back to Knemon’s use of herbs. When

<sup>31</sup> Dowden 1996, 274.

<sup>32</sup> Hld. 1,8,5.

<sup>33</sup> See the many examples provided by the *PGM*, in particular *PGM* IV, 286–295 and *PDM* xiv, 940–952.

<sup>34</sup> At 9,21 Hydaspes has Oroondates’ wounds staunches by means of an incantation (ἐπωδή), another feature of δημώδης wisdom, according to Kalasiris; although, like Knemon’s, Hydaspes’ intentions are good, his trust in incantations suggests that even he does not have true wisdom.

he leaves the novel in Book Six, lacking the qualities to reach Ethiopia with Charikleia, our understanding of him as δημώδης is confirmed.

Charikles is also shown to be influenced by δημώδης concerns, as we learn from Sisimithres' first words to him:

I have been watching you buy a number of the herbs and roots that grow in India, Ethiopia, and Egypt. If you were interested in buying such things unadulterated and with no suspicion of sharp dealing, I would be pleased to supply them for you.<sup>35</sup>

Sisimithres refers to Charikles' interest in 'herbs and roots' in order to ingratiate himself with him. The reference serves to link Charikles, like Knemon, to the ground and hence to earthly, δημώδης concerns. Sisimithres – like Kalasiris an initiate of higher wisdom – then produces a pouch of precious stones, knowing that Charikles will be beguiled by their physical appearance. He is quite correct, for having described the colours of the stones in detail, Charikles tells Kalasiris, 'In short, all these gems, with their blend of many scintillating hues, were a sight to gladden the eye'.<sup>36</sup> This short scene establishes Charikles' character: by his attraction to the physical he is set apart from Kalasiris, Charikleia and Theagenes. This foundation is built upon when Kalasiris gives his explanation of the evil eye.<sup>37</sup> Charikles is at first skeptical: 'So ...you share the vulgar belief that there is such a thing as the power of the evil eye?'<sup>38</sup> He would like to think himself above such δημώδης beliefs, but after Kalasiris' 'explanation' he is completely convinced, and trusts in Kalasiris' ability to cure Charikleia.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Hld. 2,30,2.

<sup>36</sup> Hld. 2,30,3.

<sup>37</sup> Hld. 3,7,2.

<sup>38</sup> Hld. 3,7,2.

<sup>39</sup> Like Charikles, Nausikles is also shown to be attracted by superficial beauty and fooled by a showman's tricks: 'Nausikles' amazement at the miracle [*sc.* Kalasiris' trick by which he appears to draw an amethyst ring from the fire] was exceeded only by his delight at the value of the gem, which he estimated to be worth as much as all that he possessed' (Hld. 5,15,1).



A further example may be identified retrospectively with *δημώδης* wisdom. At the Delphic procession Theagenes is accosted by women hoping to win him for themselves:

And all those women of the lower orders who were incapable of controlling and concealing their emotions pelted him with apples and flowers in the hope of attracting his goodwill.<sup>40</sup>

As a sexual symbol, the apple was an important element in erotic magic:<sup>41</sup> a spell would be recited over the apple and it would then be thrown at or to the object of one's affections. The behaviour of these *δημώδεις γυναῖκες* recalls to mind such apple spells. Although we cannot categorically state that the scene represents a spell of this kind, when we meet *δημώδης* again in Kalasiris' taxonomy we may with hindsight interpret these women as participating in base behaviour: they are *δημώδης* in relation to Theagenes and, unable to control themselves, they resort to *δημώδης* behaviour in an attempt to win him. The description of them as *δημώδης* implies that, like base wisdom, they too 'pander to corrupt pleasures', hence their apple-throwing.

In addition to the above example, and the occurrence in Kalasiris' taxonomy of wisdom, Heliodoros uses the adjective *δημώδης* only four times, and on each occasion the intention is to draw a contrast between two forms of behaviour. At 2,26,1 Delphi is described as 'a workshop of wise men', a place far from 'the clamour of the masses' (*θορύβου...δημώδους*).<sup>42</sup> At 4,16,5 Kalasiris meets the Phoenician merchants and, after sharing a meal with them, says it would be 'vulgar [*δημώδεις*] and the height of bad manners' were they not to introduce themselves formally; here Kalasiris implicitly establishes a contrast between the merchants and himself. At 5,16,3 Nausikles has called upon Kalasiris to finish the rest of his story, and Knemon is delighted at the prospect, saying:

Blessings be upon you, Nausikles!...At your behest all sorts of musical instruments are in attendance at our festivities, yet now you do not give

<sup>40</sup> Hld. 3,3,8.

<sup>41</sup> E.g. *PGM* CXXII, 5–25; see Littlewood 1968 for ancient instances of the apple's symbolism in both magical and non-magical contexts.

<sup>42</sup> My own translations.

them a second thought and leave them to people with less taste [τοῖς δημωδεστέροις], preferring to hear of things that are truly mystical and imbued with a pleasure that is indeed divine.

Here we may detect a sense of irony, for, like Charikles earlier, Knemon thinks himself and Nausikles above δημώδης behaviour, but having understood Kalasiris' taxonomy, the reader knows better. Lastly, at 6,9,4 Charikleia makes a distinction between the 'depraving desire such as ordinary people [δημώδης] feel' and the 'pure and chaste longing' she feels for Theagenes.<sup>43</sup> Thus by each use of δημώδης Heliodoros delineates two sets of behaviour, which, as with the taxonomy of magic, may be reduced to base and true: ignorance and intelligence, vulgarity and proper etiquette, poor taste and higher interests, lust and pure love.

The majority of the characters discussed above are effectively harmless within the grand scheme of the novel; unlike Kybele and the necromancer, they are not obviously morally degenerate when measured against Kalasiris' description of base wisdom. However, by their often-unwitting acceptance of δημώδης wisdom or behaviour, the reader may locate them at the base end of Kalasiris' scale. I shall now proceed to discuss the means by which Heliodoros locates Charikleia in particular at the pole of true wisdom.

Heavenly Magic, or True Wisdom: Ἡ δὲ ἑτέρα... ἡ ἀληθῶς σοφία...<sup>44</sup>

True wisdom, Kalasiris says, caused him to leave Egypt 'to avert the ills it foretold';<sup>45</sup> underlying this, he believes, was the quest to find Charikleia. Thus we are to understand Charikleia as the culmination of adherence to true wisdom. Charikleia's name itself singles her out as special: the letters of the Greek alphabet doubled as numerals, and when the letters of her name are converted to numerals, they total 777.<sup>46</sup> Dowden has questioned whether

<sup>43</sup> We may have here a direct reference to the Platonic distinction between Pandemic and Heavenly Love.

<sup>44</sup> Hld. 3,16,4.

<sup>45</sup> Hld. 3,16,5.

<sup>46</sup> As observed by the Byzantine author, 'Philip the Philosopher': Χαρίκλεια = 600 + 1 + 100 + 10 + 20 + 30 + 5 + 10 + 1 = 777 (see Wilson 1983, 216–217 and Morgan 1997, 288–290 for a translation of Philip's text). No other character's name bears any discerni-

Heliodoros intended readers to add up the letters of his heroine's name.<sup>47</sup> Concluding positively, he draws attention to the fact that the priests of Syene do exactly this with the letters of the river Nile:

...the Nile, they said, is actually the year incarnate, as is confirmed by its name – for if the letters in its name are converted to numerals, they will total 365, the number of days in the year.<sup>48</sup>

Ancient sources show that belief in the magical or mystical power of the number 7 was widespread, not only in Greek societies, but throughout the world. Repetitions of 7 were common in magical and religious ritual, and the number 7 was a particular favourite of Pythagoras, who considered odd numbers to be divine:

Desiring to purify myself I went at once to bathe in the sea, plunging my head under the waves seven times, because the divine Pythagoras had declared that number to be especially appropriate to religious rituals.<sup>49</sup>

Schimmel has suggested that the veneration of 7 may stem from observation of the moon, whose shape clearly changes every seventh day.<sup>50</sup> Kalasiris identifies observation of the stars and planets as an element of true wisdom, indicating that it is part of his knowledge as a 'member of the sacerdotal caste',<sup>51</sup> thus allying astrology and religious belief. In the *PGM* astrology, numerology, religion, and magic combine in the significance of the number 7: *PGM* XIII, 227 refers to 'the flowers of the seven [stars]', and *PGM* CX, 1–12 speaks of the seven precious stones that represent the planets.<sup>52</sup> At the beginning of the *Aithiopika* Charikleia is likened to both Artemis and Isis,

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ble numerical significance, suggesting that we are indeed to understand Charikleia as special.

<sup>47</sup> Dowden 1996, 270.

<sup>48</sup> Hld. 9,22,6.

<sup>49</sup> Apuleius *Metamorphoses* 11,1.

<sup>50</sup> Schimmel 1993, 129.

<sup>51</sup> Hld. 3,16,4.

<sup>52</sup> The *PGM* demonstrate the close association between astrology and the perceived magical powers of gemstones, a subject to be considered further shortly in relation to Charikleia's recognition tokens. For the same association see the Ps.-Kallisthenes *Alexander Romance* 1,4, where Nektanebos produces a gold and ivory tablet inlaid with seven gems representing the planets.

two goddesses equated with the moon; at Delphi she is priestess of Artemis; at the end of the novel she is to be sacrificed to the moon, but after her reprieve she is ordained as high priestess of the moon.<sup>53</sup> After the Delphic pageant in Book Three Heliodoros draws another parallel between Charikleia – the mystical 777 – and the moon: Charikles asks Kalasiris his opinion of Charikleia, and Kalasiris indirectly equates her to the moon; in the conversation that follows Kalasiris labels Charikleia the ὀφθαλμός ἀληθῶς; ὀφθαλμός can mean the ‘eye of heaven’, usually indicating the moon; Charikleia, then, is the ‘true eye of heaven’.<sup>54</sup>

Thus Charikleia’s name makes her triply magical, endowed with religious significance and true wisdom, and her age supports such a reading. When entrusted to Charikles she is seven years old, and on her Platonic first encounter with Theagenes she is seventeen.<sup>55</sup> at two formative points in her life, her age incorporates the symbolic number 7. In fact, her age on meeting Theagenes may be the most significant, being the sum of 7 and 10, for 10 was also held to have mystical properties in antiquity.<sup>56</sup> Ten was the total of the *tetraktys*,<sup>57</sup> regarded by ancient authors as the epitome of Pythagorean wisdom.<sup>58</sup> The *tetraktys* was closely identified with Delphi, the home of wisdom, the sun god Apollo, and of Charikleia herself between the ages of 7 and 17.<sup>59</sup> Charikleia’s age for the bulk of the novel – seventeen – therefore incorporates allusions to both the Sun and the Moon, dominant influences at the climax of the story. Numerology, astrology, and religion, the elements of Kalasiris’ true wisdom, are thus united in the figure of Charikleia.

<sup>53</sup> Hld. 1,2,6; 2,33,4; 10,7,6; 10,41,1–2.

<sup>54</sup> Hld. 3,6,3ff. For ὀφθαλμός as the moon: Pindar *Olympian Odes* 3,20 and Aeschylus *Seven Against Thebes* 390; the eye metaphor was also used in relation to the sun: *Secundus Sententiae* 5.

<sup>55</sup> Hld. 2,30,6 and 3,5,4.

<sup>56</sup> Note that Charikleia was conceived in the tenth year of her parents’ marriage (4,8,4), and that the *Aithiopika* itself is comprised of 10 books.

<sup>57</sup> The *tetraktys*:  $1 + 2 + 3 + 4 = 10$ .

<sup>58</sup> E.g. Sextus Empiricus *Math.* 7,94–100.

<sup>59</sup> Pythagoras was said to have received his doctrines from the Delphic oracle (Aristoxenos fr. 15 = Diogenes Laertios 8,8), and was even believed by some to be Apollo incarnate (Aristotle fr. 191R = Aelian *VH* 2,26; Iamblichos *Life of Pythagoras* 30 and 140); see Burkert 1972, esp. 72ff and 186ff. I have already discussed Kalasiris’ Pythagorean aspect, and note in this context that he, like Pythagoras, benefits from the wisdom of Delphi.

Finally I consider Charikleia's recognition tokens: the jewelled necklaces and royal ring, and the band embroidered with the story of her birth,<sup>60</sup> left with her by her mother, Persinna. Recognition of a character's true status was a *topos* of Greek New Comedy, and recognition tokens play an important part in another extant novel, Longus' *Daphnis and Chloe*. I would argue, however, that Charikleia's recognition tokens are not merely that, but in fact may be understood as amulets that protect her, from birth through to her return to Ethiopia, and identify her as the embodiment of true wisdom. The *Kyranides* provides us with a compilation of instructions for making various amulets; the work of many authors, it is thought to be based on a core written by Harpokration in the fourth century A.D.<sup>61</sup> Both this and the formularies of the *PGM*, which date from the first century B.C. to the fifth century A.D., demonstrate that interest in amuletic magic was thriving during Heliodoros' period, whether we take this to be the third or the fourth century. Chapter *Kappa* of the *Kyranides* is dedicated to Aphrodite, and gives advice on how to make two types of amulet which it names *kestos himas*.<sup>62</sup> Protective amulets functioned by being tied around part of the body, usually beneath the clothes, just as Charikleia wears her tokens; they protected the wearer from external hostility, and it is amulets of this type which I suggest may have been Heliodoros' inspirations for Charikleia's γυνωρίσματα.

One *kestos himas* recommended by the *Kyranides* is a necklace of engraved gemstones which:

...makes the wearer inspired by the god and makes him worth (*sic*) to be honoured and worshipped by everybody. Many kings wear it under their clothes...not to be seen by anybody.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> Following Morgan's translation I use the word 'embroidered'; when we first hear of the band at 2,31,2 the Greek reads 'woven with native letters', suggesting embroidery of some sort.

<sup>61</sup> In his prologue Harpokration claims to relay revelations he found on a stele near Babylon; the stele had been pulled from a lake in Syria, Heliodoros' homeland. See Ogden 2002, 264 and Waegeman 1987 for discussions of the nature and dating of the *Kyranides*.

<sup>62</sup> After Aphrodite's *kestos himas* in *Iliad* 14, which is imbued by some magical means with her sexual charms.

<sup>63</sup> Trans. Waegeman 1987.

Charikleia produces such necklaces in the recognition scene, serving to make her ‘honoured and worshipped by everybody’.<sup>64</sup> We learn that her royal ring is set with a pantarbe stone ‘that endows it with holy, mystic powers’.<sup>65</sup> The ring later protects her from fire,<sup>66</sup> and she comes to understand that, by divine power, her tokens have saved her:

Death seemed certain, but see! Here I am alive still. I carried my salvation with me, though I did not know it at the time; but now I think I understand. Even in the past, I have made a point of always keeping about my person the tokens of recognition that were exposed with me, but yesterday I was especially careful to do so, for I was about to stand trial, and I thought that day would bring my death. So I girded them around my waist out of sight...They consist of precious necklaces and priceless gems...and...a ring...set with a jewel called pantarbe and inscribed with certain sacred characters; it is full, it seems, of a supernatural and mystic property, which I think must have endowed the stone with the power to repel fire and bestow immunity from the flames on its wearer.<sup>67</sup>

The stones to be used in the *kestos himas* include pearls, blue, green and red stones. The stones shown to Charikles by Sisimithres at 2,30, and said to come from one of Charikleia’s necklaces, are pearls, sapphires and emeralds, while the pantarbe stone is probably red.<sup>68</sup> One of the stones prescribed for the *kestos himas* is called *adamas*, but no description is given. The choice of this stone is apparently based on the meaning of its name, ‘unyielding’ or ‘indomitable’, for Pliny tells us that the stone is indescribably hard, and even unaffected by fire,<sup>69</sup> so that the wearer of *adamas* assumes the same qualities; Pliny goes on to say ‘for long it was known only to kings and to very few of them’ and indeed in the *Aithiopika* the pantarbe ring was originally a

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<sup>64</sup> Certain Near Eastern spells involve cords of semi-precious stones designed to make a superior better disposed toward a subject (Faraone 1990, 223), which is indeed the effect of Charikleia’s necklaces.

<sup>65</sup> Hld. 4,8,7. Such ring amulets are also found in the *PGM*, which allege that they are popular with kings and bestow favour on the wearer – e.g. *PGM* XII, 201–269 and *PGM* XII, 270–350.

<sup>66</sup> Hld. 8,9,13ff.

<sup>67</sup> Hld. 8,11,6ff.

<sup>68</sup> *LSJ* suggests a ruby; see Philostratos *Life of Apollonios of Tyana* 3,46.

<sup>69</sup> Pliny *NH* 37,57.

gift from the Ethiopian king to his wife. According to Waegeman, the *adamas* has been identified with haematite,<sup>70</sup> in which case it would be red in colour, similar to the pantarbe. Hence *adamas* and the pantarbe share appearance, royal connections, and flame-resistant properties; both also endow the wearer with power and respect, for the pantarbe is Charikleia's trump card, identifying her beyond doubt before her father. Heliodoros' choice of the pantarbe, which means 'all fear', seems to recall the meaning of *adamas*: the wearer will be indomitable, and hence feared and respected by all.<sup>71</sup>

Heliodoros never uses the noun *ἀδάμας*, but does use the corresponding adjective *ἀδαμάντιος* twice, and on both occasions in relation to magic:

And if the story being told is the love of Theagenes and Charikleia, who could be so insensitive (*ἀδαμάντιος*), so steely-hearted, that he would not be spellbound (*θέλγεσθαι*) by the tale...?<sup>72</sup>

...there is no heart so hard (*ἀδαμάντιος*) that it is proof against my spells (*θελγήτρος*)...<sup>73</sup>

The first instance is, of course, metaphorical spellbinding, and the second literal; as we have seen from the *Kyranides*, *adamas* was believed to have amuletic properties, and by his use of *ἀδαμάντιος*, I believe Heliodoros shows awareness of this, employing the adjective to evoke magic.<sup>74</sup>

Amulets in the vein of the other *kestos himas* detailed by the *Kyranides* may have influenced Heliodoros in his creation of Charikleia's embroidered band

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<sup>70</sup> Waegeman 1987, 207.

<sup>71</sup> Comparing the pantarbe with Nausikles' amethyst ring, we see that Heliodoros again achieves characterisation through magic: Nausikles' ring will protect him only from drunkenness, while Charikleia's will protect her from fire, the difference pointing up her superiority. *Kyranides* chapter *Theta* explains that a thyrsites stone, engraved with the image of Dionysos, will keep the wearer sober; the thyrsites has not been positively identified, but Heliodoros reflects the popular belief that an amethyst would serve the purpose just as well. For an archaeological example, see Delatte and Derchain 1964, no. 292: an amethyst depicting Dionysos and a magical inscription.

<sup>72</sup> Hld. 4,4,3.

<sup>73</sup> Hld. 7,9,5.

<sup>74</sup> Note that *ἀδαμάντιος* is not used in any other extant novels, suggesting that Heliodoros' use of it is indeed significant.

(ταινία). The outward appearance of the band is unclear, but it is evidently something to be tied around the body, as Persinna's embroidery explains: '...but chief among the treasures with which I bedecked you was this band that I *wrapped around* you...';<sup>75</sup> we later learn that Charikleia wears the band around her waist, after the fashion of amulets.<sup>76</sup> The *kestos himas* amulet appears to prevent or protect against sex: the *Kyranides* text reads 'If a woman wears that strap, no one will have intercourse with her, because the man will have no erection'.<sup>77</sup> Clearly Charikleia's band does not cause impotence in men, for she is always the focus of unwanted sexual attention; she does, however, retain her chastity, even with Theagenes, until the end of the story. When an unwanted marriage to Alkamenes seems imminent, and Charikleia must feign consent, we learn that she has been parted from her band since her arrival in Delphi:

After he [*sc.* Charikles] took me from my guardian in Egypt...and brought me here, he took that band from me and ever since has kept it locked away in a casket to protect it from the ravages of time.<sup>78</sup>

Now is the time for her to be reunited with the band and to learn of its contents, for her chastity faces a potential threat, and there are many more threats to come when she embarks on her journey to Ethiopia. Her band contains the maxim from her mother: 'Honor chastity: it is the sole mark of virtue in a woman',<sup>79</sup> and the very existence of the band is a result of Persinna's fear of being accused of forsaking her own fidelity. Thus the band is linked to chastity from the moment we learn of its contents, and by wearing it as a protective, encircling 'chastity belt', Charikleia preserves this quality in herself.<sup>80</sup> The amuletic significance of the ταινία finds a parallel in late Persian

<sup>75</sup> Hld. 4,8,6; italics mine.

<sup>76</sup> Hld. 8,11,9 and 10,13,1.

<sup>77</sup> Trans. Waegeman 1987.

<sup>78</sup> Hld. 4,11,3.

<sup>79</sup> Hld. 4,8,7.

<sup>80</sup> Anderson 1979, 149 has suggested that Charikleia's band adds authentic local colour to the Ethiopian recognition scene: Favorinus' Περὶ φυγῆς 2,20 says that if an Ethiopian king wants to honour a subject, he gives him one of his own belts; as long as the recipient wears it, others will show him respect.



culture, where kings would wear a protective band around the head;<sup>81</sup> rings and girdles were also considered to possess magical strength and provide protection, particularly to royalty.<sup>82</sup> Amulets were often inscribed with words or symbols thought to carry magical weight, and sometimes with the *Ephesia grammata*, letters believed originally to have been carved on the cult statue of Artemis at Ephesos.<sup>83</sup> The embroidery on Charikleia's band could be understood as a form of *Ephesia grammata*, protecting her from external threats.<sup>84</sup>

Amuletic cords, bands, and knots were thought capable of preserving a person's inherent magic within his body.<sup>85</sup> I suggest that, as well as providing protection, the ταινία is in itself a motif of Charikleia's own inherent magic, or true wisdom. When Kalasiris asks Charikles to show him the band, he claims to fear 'that it may be steeped in sorcery of some kind, that it may be inscribed with occult spells...'<sup>86</sup> Kalasiris' words, I argue, are knowingly ironic, for the band is not a symbol of base wisdom, but of true. In the recognition scene Hydaspes then raises the unwittingly ironic possibility that Charikleia may not be who she appears to be, but may be using the ταινία to obscure 'the truth' (ἀλήθεια).<sup>87</sup> The reader may infer that Charikleia, the band, and ἀλήθεια are inextricably entwined, an inference which is then confirmed by Sisimithres, who remarks that the issue at stake in the recognition scene is 'truth itself' (ἀλήθεια αὐτή).<sup>88</sup> Charikleia, then, is 'truth itself'.

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<sup>81</sup> A ταινία may be worn around the head, breast, or waist, and seems most often to have had sacred significance, as Hesychios' definition makes clear: στέμματα τῶν ἱερέων, διαδήματα ἀρχιερατικά, ἢ ζῶναι, ἢ στέφανοι, κόσμοι, ἢ δεσμοὶ ἱεροί.

<sup>82</sup> *RE* IV A.2, s.v. *Taenia* (Schuppe 1932), esp. col. 2003. Note here that several of Heliodoros' Ethiopian characters have Persian names, or names evocative of Persia – e.g. Hydaspes, Sisimithres, Persinna.

<sup>83</sup> Kotansky 1991, 111.

<sup>84</sup> Note that at 2,31,2 Heliodoros says the band is made ἀπὸ σηρικῶδ νήματος: νῆμα is a noun that carries connotations of destiny, something that cannot be avoided, so the very fabric of Charikleia's band contains and secures her destiny. Cf. Lucian *Philopseudes* 25, and see *Hld.* 2,26,5, where νῆμα is used in the oracle foretelling Kalasiris' return to Egypt.

<sup>85</sup> Bonner 1949, 2; Gellius 10,15 speaks of the priests of Jupiter shedding any form of knot or tie that might inhibit their sacred power from flowing freely.

<sup>86</sup> *Hld.* 4,7,13. Cf. Arsake's indictment of Charikleia for witchcraft.

<sup>87</sup> *Hld.* 10,13,5.

<sup>88</sup> *Hld.* 10,15,2.

Yatromanolakis has suggested that the adornments worn by Theagenes and Charikleia in the Delphic procession could be interpreted as protective amulets,<sup>89</sup> and also points out that Heliodoros is at pains to emphasise the power of Theagenes' and Charikleia's eyes.<sup>90</sup> In my identification of Charikleia's recognition tokens as amulets and symbols of true wisdom, I too wish to draw attention to the importance of her eyes within the moral framework of the novel. Her amulets appear to need no special activation:<sup>91</sup> they are divinely imbued with a 'supernatural and mystic property', and need only to be worn by Charikleia to be powerful – to paraphrase Plutarch, 'she has the charms in herself'.<sup>92</sup> Informing Charikles of her exposure, Sisimithres describes the baby Charikleia's gaze:

Besides, even at so tender an age, there was something special, something godlike, about the light in the baby's eyes, so piercing yet so enchanting was the gaze she turned on me as I examined her.<sup>93</sup>

In his Homeric digression Kalasiris says that the eyes of the gods 'have an extraordinary intensity and never blink',<sup>94</sup> and in his taxonomy he adds that true wisdom 'keeps company with the gods and partakes of the nature of the Great Ones'. I contend that, by means of these intimations, Heliodoros wishes us to identify Charikleia with the divine.<sup>95</sup> In Platonic thought the eyes were the initial route to the soul's anamnesis and eventual assimilation with the divine,<sup>96</sup> thus the divine light in Charikleia's eyes distinguishes her as the apogee of Kalasiris' Platonic moral scale.

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<sup>89</sup> At 3,3,5 Theagenes wears a brooch displaying Athena with the Gorgon's head on her shield, and at 3,4,3 Charikleia wears a cincture of serpents.

<sup>90</sup> Yatromanolakis 1988, 200.

<sup>91</sup> Unlike Eukrates' ring in Lucian's *Philopseudes*, for example: he must turn the ring to the inside of his finger for its power to be released (*Philopseudes* 24).

<sup>92</sup> Plutarch *Advice to Bride and Groom* 23, 141B–C.

<sup>93</sup> Hld. 2,31,1.

<sup>94</sup> Hld. 3,13,2.

<sup>95</sup> Note that when we first meet Charikleia in Book One she bears similarities to both Artemis and Isis. The etymological meaning of Theagenes' name ('Goddess-born') equates him with the divine too, although Charikleia is likened to the gods far more often than he. Note also in this context that at 3,6,3 when he calls Charikleia the 'true eye of heaven', Kalasiris says that those who sang the praises of Theagenes were 'only awarding second and third prizes' in comparison with Charikleia.

<sup>96</sup> For a more ribald take on the theory, see Achilles Tatius *Leukippe and Kleitophon* 1,9.

### Conclusion

Kalasis' excursus on Homer's use of allusion and allegory implies that we are to read the *Aithiopika* allegorically too, and Heliodoros appears to hint at how we should understand Kalasis' taxonomy of wisdom when he has Knemon refer to Homer's 'typically Egyptian combination of concealed meanings and sheer enjoyment in his poetry'.<sup>97</sup> As with the dichotomy of love in the novel, an allegorical reading of the taxonomy translates magic into a religious and moral scale, by which the reader may gauge the characters. At the nadir are sexually, morally, or magically base figures, like Arsake, Kybele, and the old woman necromancer. Above them are those effectively harmless, but distracted from divinity by fleeting earthly concerns – Knemon, Charikles, and Nausikles, for example. At the zenith are Theagenes and Charikleia, Charikleia in particular defined by her amuletic recognition tokens and the symbolism of her name and age. Her Platonic moral superiority is pointed up by others' belief in base magic, and her true, pure love for Theagenes is thus equated to philosophical enlightenment. She, then, is the embodiment of Kalasis' heavenly magic, or true wisdom, while he himself acts as the fulcrum enabling the reader to interpret the magic of the novel.<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>97</sup> Hld. 3,15,1.

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