

Wonders Beyond Athens: Reading the 'Phaedra' Stories in Apuleius and Heliodoros

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1. Introduction

The novels of Apuleius and Heliodoros declare their literary and cultural hybridity in part by their narrative departures from the Greek world. Although Apuleius' narrator declares Attic Hymettos, the Corinthian Isthmos, and Spartan Taenaros as his origins at the beginning of the novel (1.1),¹ by the end of the novel he has been ensconced in the religious and forensic life of Rome.² Similarly, the plot of the *Aithiopika* traces the adventures of Charikleia and Theagenes away from Delphi, the holiest of Greek sanctuaries, to Egypt and finally to the mysteries of the marriage rite in Ethiopian Meroe, the πέρας (10.41.4), or boundary of the novel, beyond which the Greek prose of the narrative does not penetrate.³

For as much as they launch into brave new worlds, however, Apuleius and Heliodoros are keenly aware that their narratives are, ironically, deter-

¹ For the text of Apuleius, I have followed Hanson's Loeb edition; for Heliodoros, I have followed Rattenbury and Lumb's Budé edition. All translations are my own unless otherwise stated. I would like to thank the participants in the 2005 Rethymnon conference for their comments and suggestions on this paper and for creating such a welcoming, collegial atmosphere. I would especially like to thank Michael Paschalis and Stavros Frangoulidis for organizing and hosting a very pleasurable and memorable conference.

² Harrison 1990 interprets the speaking *ego* in the prologue as the voice of the book itself, thus answering the riddle of *ego*'s tripartite birthplace. Finkelppearl suggests that these places refer to literary ancestry (1998, 174f). Slater stresses the narrator's ambiguity: 'Apuleius seems to be deliberately fogging our geographical imagination here ... In this the prologue accurately anticipates the movement of the whole narrative, from our discovery of Lucius in an indeterminate space, on the road into Thessaly, to his final appearance as a priest of Isis in Rome' (Slater 2002, 165).

³ On the ending of the *Aithiopika*, see Winkler 1982 and Morgan 1989.

mined in part by the traditions of Athenocentric Hellenism. But their respective departures from the Greek world are not ones of simple resistance and disavowal; on the contrary, Apuleius and Heliodoros indulge in a complex system of homage and reconfiguration as a means of exploring Hellenism's potential in articulating meaningful views of the world.⁴ For Apuleius and Heliodoros, writing the world meant embracing non-Greek perspectives alongside the more conservative traditions of Hellenism.

Nowhere is this phenomenon more striking than in the embedded 'Phaedra' stories in Book 10 of the *Metamorphoses* and Book 1 of the *Aithiopika*. These Attic tales,⁵ inserted into their surrounding narratives, signal on one level the powerful role that the Athenian literary tradition continues to play in the production of culture. On another level, though, the embedded Phaedra stories also paradoxically participate in the texts' renunciation of Athenocentrism and the expansive embrace of alternative perspectives. That we can speak of these Athenian stories at all as 'embedded' implies that the Athenocentric perspective is no longer dominant,⁶ and that Apuleius and Heliodoros are, rather, involved in what Homi K. Bhabha calls the 'borderline work of culture,' which, 'renews the past, refiguring it as a contingent 'in-between' space, ... The 'past-present' becomes part of the necessity, not the nostalgia, of living.'⁷

In Apuleius' novel, Athens is tied to the thematic tension between disbelief and credulity programmatically introduced in Book 1. Book 10 reactivates this theme first by announcing the literary genealogy of the *noverca* story (Athenian tragedy), but second – and just as importantly – by alluding to the Court of the Areopagos and Athenian law not only within the *noverca* story itself (10.7) but also again at the conclusion of Book 10 in Lucius'

⁴ For notions of cultural hybridity and the construction of identity during the Second Sophistic and late antiquity, see most recently Bowersock 1994, 53; Schmitz 1997, 181–93; Miles 1999, 1–15, Bowie 2004, and Jones 2004. The diverse cultural background in Apuleius has received much attention in recent years, cf. Sandy 1997 and 1999, Clarke 2001, Edwards 2001, Innes 2001, Swain 2001, Too 2001, Graverini 2002, and Slater 2002. For the cultural background in Heliodoros, see especially Rogier 1982; Lonis 1992; Kuch 2003; Whitmarsh 1998, 2000, and 2001, 83–9; Hägg 2000; and Morgan 2005.

⁵ Despite the pervasiveness of the 'Potiphar's wife motif' (*Gen.* 39:7–20, cf. Goldman 1995) in the Jewish tradition, in the Greco-Roman tradition the classical exemplar is of course Attic tragedy and Euripides' *Hippolytos* (Yohannan 1968, 16f and Zimmerman 2000, 417–432).

⁶ Cf. Bowersock on the Greek novels: 'Fiction, and perhaps fiction alone, signals the disappearance of barbarism as a conceptual means of asserting the superiority of Graeco-Roman culture' (1994: 53).

⁷ Bhabha 1994, 7.

diatribe against judicial corruption (10.33). The ultimate ambiguity between disbelief and credulity is revealed in the final book of the novel, when Lucius undergoes his transformation from ass back into man, and, contrary to expectations, his metamorphosis into devoted follower of Isis and successful lawyer at Rome.

In Heliodoros' novel, Athens provides an introduction to themes upon which the remainder of the novel will play several variations. John Morgan has demonstrated that the perversion and asymmetry of the erotic adventures in Knemon's tale offer negative counterpoints to the symmetrical, idealized relationship between Charikleia and Theagenes.⁸ I wish to show that, in tandem with the power dynamics implicit in Athenian erotics, the Athens of Heliodoros' novel also provides a model and vocabulary for conceptualizing political power and its ethical implications. This problematization of power is achieved by allusion to Thucydides' *History* and by reconsidering an image of Athenian hegemony from within the tradition of paradoxography. An image of Athenian imperialism becomes, in other words, the object of an alien gaze and motivates new ways of thinking about the use of power.

2. *To Believe or Not To Believe: Athens in the Metamorphoses*

Any reading of Athens in Apuleius' *Metamorphoses* must of course begin in Book 1 with the opening scene of the novel, when Lucius claims to be offended by the unwillingness of his traveling companion to suspend his disbelief (1.3). As an example that one ought not to be so quick to discount what at first seems unbelievable, Lucius provides as 'evidence' what has to be one of the strangest images in all of Latin literature, that of the sword-swallowing street performer and his sinuous young dancing partner (1.4).⁹ Of particular interest here, though, is that Lucius establishes a special relationship between the apparently unbelievable and Athens itself, and he does so with a remarkable degree of specificity: the astounding image of the street performer appeared not just in Athens, but at a spot in front of the Stoa Poikile (*Et tamen Athenis proximo et ante Poecilen porticum*, 1.4).¹⁰ In Apu-

⁸ Morgan 1999.

⁹ Winkler connects the programmatic dialogue between Lucius, Aristomenes, and the unnamed interlocutor at 1.2f with several of the novel's inserted stories, including the *noverca* tale in Book 10 (1985, 27–32, 81–6, 39–42, 46–50, 77–80).

¹⁰ See Keulen 2003c for the image of the street performer as 'a visual comment on the genre of prose fiction' (168) and its philosophical implications. It is also worth noting the Stoa Poikile's association with the Stoics, who were "very credulous concerning super-

leius' novel, therefore, the very idea of credulity and, just as importantly, the question of what it takes to persuade someone to believe, are grounded in a literary representation of Athens.

There is a strong evocation of Athens again in Book 10, when Lucius, in an anonymous town in Thessaly, tells the story of an anonymous *noverca* and her wicked plot to discredit and destroy her stepson. Lucius famously announces that his narrative is moving into tragic territory, and the *lector optimus* will see here the hand of the author declaring the story's affiliation with Athenian tragedy.¹¹ Prior readings of the Phaedra story in book 10 of the *Metamorphoses* have for good reason focused on the novella's relationship with its tragic predecessors.¹² While the tragic background is important for sustaining the text's relationship with the classical tradition, the story's connection to the theme of disbelief and credulity is equally established through another branch of its literary genealogy, that of Roman declamation¹³ and, by extension, Attic oratory.¹⁴

At the opening of the trial scene in Book 10, when the young defendant is led into court, falsely accused of having seduced his mother-in-law and having killed his step-brother, the embedded story re-emphasizes the discursive background of forensic oratory.¹⁵ With the seats of the assembly filled, Lucius explains: 'Then at last the defendant too when he was announced is

natural phenomena ... The Stoa therefore appears a suitable place for an anecdote told by a person like Lucius who defends a credulous attitude toward the supernatural" (Keulen 2003a, 125).

¹¹ Zimmerman 2000, 68.

¹² Tappi 1985 sees the text's allusion to Euripidean and Senecan tragedy as a strategy for highlighting the immorality and banality of the Greek *civitatula*, while for Finkelppearl the incestuous desire of the *noverca* is a symbol for the 'ambiguity of literary relationships' (1998, 183).

¹³ Cf. Sen., *Controv.* 4.5–6; 6.7; 7.1, 5; 9.5, 6; Quint., *Inst.* 2.10.5. On declamation in the Roman novel in general see Van Mal-Maeder 2003. The influence of Antiphon 1 seems to have been significant, with many of the story's ingredients in place: erotic intrigue, a pair of half-brothers, and a wicked stepmother accused of poisoning.

¹⁴ In addition to Attic oratory, the influence of Thucydidean historiography is also noteworthy (see Sandy 1999, 91). Lucius' concession that his account of the courtroom speeches derives not from autopsy but from his own reconstruction of what he was told second-hand (10.7.4) recalls Thucydides' own methodology for reconstructing the speeches in his history (1.22.1; see Zimmerman 2000, 140–141).

¹⁵ Zimmerman suggests that at some point 'the story definitively left the generic context of tragedy and 'changed over' to the world of the mime, novel, and *declamationes*' (2000, 147), but there is no single moment when the story crosses over into the world of the *declamationes*. The story is from the beginning called a *dissignatum scelestum ac nefarium facinus* (10.2).

brought in, and by the example of Attic law and the Court of Mars, the herald declares to the lawyers in the case that they should neither give opening statements nor arouse pity' (*Tunc demum clamatus inducitur etiam reus, et exemplo legis Atticae Martiique iudicii causae patronis denuntiat praeco neque principia dicere neque miserationem commovere*, 10.7). Lucius' reference to Attic law and the Athenian homicide court on the Areopagos may evoke Aeschylus' treatment of the trial of Orestes at Athens, an allusion appropriate both because Orestes was accused of parricide and because he was acquitted, which will in fact be the outcome for the defendant in the story.¹⁶ But the mention of Attic law and the court of the Areopagos also alludes to archaizing tendencies prevalent throughout the Greek and Roman world of the second century, whereby the language, literature, and cultural institutions of 5th century BC Athens stood as models for emulation.¹⁷ In this sense the magistrates of this anonymous Thessalian town are typical of their time in their adherence to the legal customs of 5th century Athens.

But allusion to the Athenian Areopagos in Book 10 does more than just announce the story's literary and cultural affiliations. By drawing the reader back even momentarily to the specific geography of Athens, the allusion responds to Lucius' Athenian anecdote from Book 1 and consequently reactivates the themes of disbelief and credulity established in that programmatic introduction. Upon reconsideration, the *noverca* story is itself organized around the thematic tension between disbelief and credulity. Since Euripides, the ease and swiftness with which Theseus believes the word of his wife over the word of his son has been a point of primary concern in the Phaedra story,¹⁸ and it is no less a point of concern for Apuleius in Lucius' account of the anonymous *noverca* and her gullible husband. Though Lucius describes her as a 'singular example of stepmotherly wickedness' (*malitiae novercalis exemplum unicum*, 10.5), her husband has no difficulty believing her version of events. The reason for his credulity, Lucius implies, is because of the excessive love that the husband has for the *noverca*. The man was driven to the hatred of his son, says Lucius, 'because of the feigned lamentations of the wife he loved too well' (*uxoris dilectae nimium mentitis lamentationibus*, 10.5).¹⁹ When he soon afterwards makes an emotional plea for the execution

¹⁶ Sandy 1997, 254 and Zimmerman 2000, 138–9.

¹⁷ Cf. among others Bowie 1970, Swain 1996: 17–131, and Schmitz 1997: 9–66.

¹⁸ Cf. Plut. *Comp. Thes et Rom.* 3.2.: Θησέα δὲ πρὸς τὸν υἱόν, ἃ πάντα ὀλίγοι τῶν ὄντων διαπεεύγασιν, ἔρωσ καὶ ζηλοτυπία καὶ διαβολαὶ γυναικὸς ἔσφηλαν; Eur. *Hipp. Steph.* 1320 f.; Zimmerman 2000, 124.

¹⁹ Cf. Sen., *Controv.* 2.2.4; Quint. *Decl.* 6.1, 2.14; Zimmerman 2000, 123, and also Lys. 1.6–7.

of his son before the people and the council, the husband is said by Lucius to be ‘ignorant of the deceptions of his dreadful wife’ (*nescius fraudium pessimae mulieris*, 10.6). While these details emphasize the deceitful and wicked character of the *noverca*, they also imply the problematic credulity of the husband. By underscoring the husband’s lack of knowledge (*nescius*), the narrator indirectly questions the father’s assumptions and inclinations against his own son. The story proceeds as it does only because the father is *willing to believe* that his son is capable of incest and the murder of his own brother.

Within this tale exploiting the tension between disbelief and credulity, Attic law and the homicide court of the Areopagos play a significant role. Although the father is able to rouse the people against his son by means of pity (*miseratione*, 10.6), Attic law and the custom of the Areopagos are invoked precisely in order to prevent the advocates in the case from making emotional opening statements and arousing pity (*neque principia dicere neque miserationem commovere*, 10.7). Attic law and the custom of the Areopagos are invoked to strip the trial of rhetorical embellishments and to investigate the bare facts of the case. But the defendant is at a disadvantage, because his father has already used *miseratio* to arouse the indignation of the people; the invocation of Attic law to bar emotional appeals comes too late for the young man accused of incest and parricide. In fact, Lucius concentrates the reader’s attention on the court’s bias against the young man: ‘not one of the council members had remained so impartial towards the young man that he would not pronounce him to be sewn up in the sack, clearly found to be guilty of the crime’ (*Nec quisquam decurionum tam aequus remanserat iuveni quin eum evidenter noxae compertum insui culleo pronuntiaret*, 10.8).

Only the unforeseen intervention of the doctor finally undoes the deception of the *noverca*, for his testimony gives, in his own words, ‘clear proof on the basis of the actual situation’ (*rei praesentis evidens argumentum*, 10.11). The doctor declares that the poison procured by the accomplice slave of the *noverca* was in fact merely a sleeping potion, and in a seemingly unbelievable fashion, the defendant’s younger brother is rescued from his tomb and produced in court still clothed in his burial shroud. Resolving the concealment and deceptions of the *noverca*, the narrator declares that, ‘naked Truth comes forward into the open’ (*procedit in medium nuda veritas*,

10.12).²⁰ What finally acquits the young defendant is not emotionally persuasive rhetoric or for that matter legal procedure,²¹ but the incontrovertible truth, stripped *nuda* of rhetoric and emotional appeals, as Attic law and the venerable court of the Areopagos would ideally have it.

Lucius reminds the reader of his material's Athenian genealogy when, later in Book 10, he utters his diatribe against greed and corruption of jurors. The immediate motivation for this diatribe is of course the mythological Judgment of Paris and its evocation on the stage set for Lucius' own erotic performance. But the failings of juridical procedure evident from the story of the wicked stepmother are also relevant, especially when Lucius' diatribe evokes Athenian law and Socrates' famous trial in Athens:

Quale autem et illud iudicium apud legiferos Athenienses catos illos et omnis scientiae magistros? Nonne divinae prudentiae senex, quem sapientia praetulit cunctis mortalibus deus Delphicus, fraude et invidia nequissimae factionis circumventus velut corruptor adolescentiae, quam frenis coercebat, herbae pestilentis suco noxio peremptus est, relinquens civibus ignominiae perpetuae maculam, cum nunc etiam egregii philosophi sectam eius sanctissimam praeoptent et summo beatitudinis studio iurent in ipsius nomen?

And what sort of trial was that one among the lawful Athenians, those clever teachers of every knowledge? Wasn't the old man of divine prudence, whom the Delphic god placed before all mortals in wisdom, beset by the treachery and envy of the most morally corrupt faction? And alleged as a corruptor of the youth, whom he was really keeping in check, wasn't he killed by the poisonous juice of a deadly herb? He left behind for his fellow citizens the stain of an everlasting disgrace, since even now illustrious philosophers prefer his most holy school of thought and in their utmost pursuit of his blessedness swear by his name. (10.33)

²⁰ Cf. Antiphon 1.13, when the crime of the stepmother is 'about to be brought to light' (τὸ κακὸν ἀναφανησόμενον), and when the speaker declares that 'you [the jury] will make it clear' (σαφεῖς ποιήσετε).

²¹ This point is missed by Sandy, for whom the *noverca* story 'highlights the power of justice in the face of mob violence (10.6.4–7.1)' (1997, 254). Sandy concedes that 'the truth is not revealed too late to avert a tragedy,' but this has everything to do with the doctor's intervention in the trial and nothing to do with the procedure of the trial itself. Had the doctor not intervened, the court would have convicted and executed an innocent man. See also Cooper, who reads the figure of Mars in Apuleius' text as a symbol of 'what is morally despised,' and thereby connects this allusion to the Areopagos with the dubious sense of justice which pervades Book 10 (1980, 448f.).

Whereas the truth revealed at the end of the *noverca* story is said to be *nuda*, and by implication ‘pure,’ the memory of Socrates’ death is now said by Lucius to be a stain (*maculam*) upon the Athenians. The themes of deception/concealment and revelation in the *noverca* story are further evoked in the discrepancy between the Athenians’ allegation that Socrates was corrupting the youth (*velut corruptor adolescentiae*) and what was really the case, i.e. that Socrates actually curbed the behavior of his young followers (*quam frenis coercebat*, n.b. the indicative mood of the verb). And just as the son in the *noverca* story is acquitted in spite of an ineffective juridical procedure, so too has Socrates been vindicated, ‘since even now’ (*cum nunc etiam*) he is an icon for illustrious philosophers.

Signaling the ludic quality of this seemingly serious diatribe, Lucius anticipates the criticism of doubtful readers: ‘What, are we now going to put up with a philosophizing ass?’ (*Ecce nunc patiemur philosophantem nobis asinum?*, 10.33).²² By the recollection of the Athenian Socrates and by the presumption that an ass’ philosophical diatribe is too much to bear for readers willing to suspend their disbelief even this far, we are brought back to the novel’s programmatic opening dialogue. We are reminded of the sad sack Socrates from the tale of Aristomenes (1.6),²³ the interlocutor’s disbelief,²⁴ and Lucius’ own exemplum of the street performer in Athens. Much of the *Metamorphoses*, then, has been about the nature of believing fiction, subtly, persistently asking readers to question just how far they are willing to follow Lucius down his fabulous path.

We must suspend our disbelief to accept not only Lucius’ metamorphosis into an ass, nor just the climax of the *noverca* story, contrived to produce the novel image of a dead boy resurrected (10.12), but also the idea of an ass philosophically railing against judicial corruption. It makes sense, though, that Lucius would remind the reader so late in the novel and so forcefully that the entirety of the *Metamorphoses* has been about the nature of belief,²⁵

²² Sandy notes that by ‘mingling Plato and Plautus’ in this narrative aside to the reader, ‘Apuleius has fully exploited the sumptuous spectacle of obscene popular entertainment that outraged the moralists of the time while attempting to hide behind the philosopher’s cloak, as he accuses the false philosophers of Carthage of doing (*Fl.* 9.9)’ (1997, 251). See also Winkler 1985, 150 and Zimmerman 2000, 400–1.

²³ For Aristomenes’ Socrates as a ‘comic transformation of the father of philosophy’ (131), see especially Keulen 2003b.

²⁴ ‘Parce,’ inquit, ‘in verba ista haec tam absurda tamque immania mentiendo’ (1.2).

²⁵ Cf. Winkler’s interpretation of the *Metamorphoses* as an ‘hermeneutic game of ‘What is true?’’ (1985, 117). See also Shumate 1999, 117.

for Book 10 acts as a prelude to the most unbelievable metamorphosis in the entire narrative: Lucius' transformation from an ass into a devoted follower of the goddess Isis and a successful lawyer at Rome. Are we really to believe the sincerity of Lucius' outspoken attack on the *togati vulturii* (10.33) when he himself, born again under the auspices of Isis and Osiris, profits so handsomely from the legal trade and has consequently incurred the slanders of the spiteful (11.30)? Re-reading Lucius' diatribe in light of the knowledge of his legal profession begs the question: how many jurors has Lucius bribed? If there is any point at which the reader must be reminded of that astounding, unlikely street performer before the Stoa Poikile in Athens, the novel's symbol for the idea that anything can happen, it is now. The reader will need as much convincing as possible to believe that a man plagued by a *curiositas* for witchcraft becomes a fervent convert in an Egyptian cult and that a Greek ne'er-do-well becomes a man of distinction at Rome, the seat of imperial power. Though reconfigured representations of Athens at first seem to facilitate the suspension of disbelief for both narrator and reader, by the end of Book 10, the symbolic function of Athens within the game of believing and disbelieving itself becomes ambivalent. Athens fades into the distant background in the final pages of Apuleius' hybrid comic novel, as Athene and the power of Athens are subsumed beneath the aspect of the multiform goddess Isis (11.5), and the image of the Areopagos is replaced by the image of the Roman law courts in which Lucius makes a successful living (11.28).

3. *Athens & Empire in the Aithiopika*

Heliodoros announces the Attic heritage of Knemon's embedded Phaedra story (1.9.1–18.1)²⁶ not by hints and subtle gestures, as does Apuleius, but by setting the story in Athens itself.²⁷ While the events of the narrative unfold over a vast North-South axis, from Delphi to Ethiopia, Heliodoros reconstructs classical Athens within a narrative flashback²⁸ as a miniature

²⁶ This is only the first part of Knemon's story, which is resumed at 2.8.4–10.4. This paper is concerned mainly with the figure of Demainete and will therefore focus primarily on the portion of Knemon's story recounted in Book 1.

²⁷ For the role of Knemon's tale within the major plot, see Winkler 1999, 298–302 and Morgan 1999. For the negative representation of Athens as counterpoint to the positive representation of Delphi, see Oudot 1992, 106.

²⁸ Whitmarsh notes that, 'Within the 'real-time' narrative (as opposed to the 'flashback' narrations) ... Greece plays no part' (1999: 24), for even the events in Delphi, including

stage upon which he mounts the themes that will play out in the novel as a whole. Heliodoros thereby demarcates the special privilege of Athens and Athenian culture in his novel. The very dialectic between author and reader, narrator and audience, is in fact imagined in the novel as feeding off of a curiosity and desire for narrative that is characteristically Athenian. As Kalasiris remarks to Knemon at the opening of Book 3 regarding his fascination with hearing a detailed account of the festival at Delphi: ‘Even from this you are clearly Attic’ (σὺ μὲν Ἀττικὸς ὦν καὶ τούτων οὐ λέληθας, 3.1.2).

But long before Knemon becomes audience to Kalasiris’ narrative, he spins his own story, an Attic tale of erotic scheming and treachery. Having established the Phaedra-like character of his mother-in-law, Knemon says that the trouble began

Παναθηναίων τῶν μεγάλων ἀγομένων, ὅτε τὴν ναῦν Ἀθηναῖοι διὰ γῆς τῇ Ἀθηνᾷ πέμπουσιν, ἐτύγχανον μὲν ἐφηβέων, ἄσας δὲ τὸν εἰωθότα παιᾶνα τῇ θεῷ καὶ τὰ νενομισμένα προπομπεύσας, ὡς εἶχον στολῆς αὐτῇ γλαμῦδι καὶ αὐτοῖς στεφάνοις ἔρχομαι οἴκαδε ὡς ἐμαυτόν.

During the celebration of the Great Panathenaia, when the Athenians send the ship over land for Athena, I happened to be an ephebe, and having sung the customary paeon to the goddess and having taken part in the procession in the customary manner, dressed in that military-style cloak and those crowns, I returned to my own house. (1.10.1)

Of particular interest here is that Heliodoros, through the voice of his sub-narrator Knemon, describes the Great Panathenaia as the festival ‘when the Athenians send the ship over land to Athena’ (ὅτε τὴν ναῦν Ἀθηναῖοι διὰ γῆς τῇ Ἀθηνᾷ πέμπουσιν, 1.10.1).²⁹ The remark makes sense within the dramatic context, for Knemon’s audience, Theagenes and Charikleia, are not Athenians, and (unlikely as it may seem) they may never have heard of the Great Panathenaia and its most distinguishing feature, the conveyance of a ship over land to the temple of Athena Polias on the Akropolis. Nevertheless, for the educated reader of Heliodoros’ novel, Knemon’s description of the festival is a vivid reminder of the naval superiority of 5th century Athens. To be sure, Knemon’s story, like Apuleius’ embedded tale, clearly recalls Athenian

the moment when Theagenes and Charikleia first lay eyes upon one another, are part of Kalasiris’ inserted narrative (2.26–4.21).

²⁹ Cf. Schol. on Hom. *Il.* 5.734; Plaut. *Merc.* prol. 67; Paus. 1.29.1; Philostr. *Vit. Soph.* 2.1.5.

tragedy and New Comedy,³⁰ and in its trial scenes Knemon's story furthermore recalls Athenian oratory and Athenian legal procedure.³¹ But I would add that Knemon's description of the curious Athenian practice of sending a boat over land in honor of the goddess draws upon and reactivates two other literary traditions: historiography and paradoxography.

Heliodoros conjures in Knemon's story an imperial Athens whose celebration of the Great Panathenaia had become a carefully orchestrated expression of political and military authority over its tributary allies. Attendant upon such representations of Athenian hegemony are the inevitable considerations of the ethical costs of empire. Athens therefore acts as a symbol for the ways in which Heliodoros organizes his narrative and invites readers to think about issues of imperial tyranny and freedom, even so far as concerns the representations of non-Athenians. I do not mean to suggest an allegorical reading between Athens and the cultural 'others' depicted in the novel, namely Persians, Egyptians, and Ethiopians. Rather, Knemon's Athens provides an ideological vocabulary for addressing the universal social and political dynamics of Heliodoros' imagined world.³²

Morgan has demonstrated that the asymmetrical relationship between the Phaedra-like Demainete and Knemon, her appropriately unwilling Hippolytos, draws upon a mythic typology for representing a corrupt erotic relationship against which the pure, symmetrical relationship between Theagenes and Charikleia may be compared.³³ But erotic corruption is not exclusively Athenian in Heliodoros' novel, for the Attic typology is later applied to the Persian Arsake. Not only is Arsake, like Demainete, given to perverse pleasures and an expert at erotic manipulation,³⁴ but she also has a taste for young

³⁰ See Walden 1894, Montes Cala 1992, Oudot 1992, 104–5, and Paulsen 1992.

³¹ See Oudot 1992, 104.

³² Whitmarsh focuses on the narrative structure, initiatory myths, and acquisition of alien wisdom in the *Aithiopika* to arrive at a similar conclusion: 'By interacting with and reconfiguring the narratives of acculturation which undergird Greek claims to cultural hegemony, and which support a Hellenocentric view of the world, Heliodoros produces his own form of 'alien wisdom'. Although the *Aethiopica* does not betray a doctrinally coherent system of meaning, it can be said to have created, in its syncretic polyphony, a specifically counter-hegemonic, centrifugal, anti-Hellenocentric 'meaning' (1999, 32). My own contention is that traditionally Athenian discourses, appropriated as part of the novel's 'syncretic polyphony,' are integral in determining attitudes towards imperialism and the ethical (ab)use of power in the expansive, hybrid world represented by the *Aithiopika*. For a full account of this phenomenon in Chariton, see Smith 2003; 2007.

³³ Morgan 1999, 272–82.

³⁴ Demainete: 1.9.2; Arsake: 7.2.1. For a full list of the parallels between the two women, see Morgan 1999, 282–3. Like Demainete, Arsake is explicitly linked to Phaedra by verbal allusion to Euripides: Heliod. 8.15.2 = Eur. *Hipp.* 802.

men in uniform. For Demainete, the sight of Knemon in the ephebic garb of the Panathenaia was irresistible (1.10.1–2). Arsake, similarly, is inflamed by the sight of Kalasiris' son Thyamis dressed especially for assuming his role as priest of Isis: 'catching sight of him in the temple of Isis, Arsake cast eyes uncontrollable with lust upon the beautiful young man in the bloom of youth and all decked out for the ceremony at hand, and she made gestures hinting at her shameful desires' (ἐντυχοῦσα κατὰ τὸν νεῶν τῆς Ἰσιδος ἢ Ἀρσάκη νεανίσκῳ χαρίεντι καὶ ἀκμάζοντι καὶ πρὸς τῆς ἐν χερσὶ πανηγύρεως πλέον ὠραϊσμένῳ ὀφθαλμούς τε ἐπέβαλλεν οὐ σώφρονας καὶ νεύματα τῶν αἰσχροτέρων αἰνίγματα, 7.2.2). Eventually Theagenes too falls prey to Arsake's lust, a serious threat to the pure attachment of the *Liebespaar*. But the significance of the Demainete/Arsake parallel is not confined to the erotic, for both women are characterized by their use of power to satisfy personal desire. For Demainete, that power is primarily domestic (1.9.2). But domestic power within Knemon's Attic tale metamorphoses (almost inevitably) into the ultimate form of political power: Arsake, Demainete's later counterpart, is the sister of the Great King of Persia and wife of the Egyptian satrap Oroondates. The imperial implications of Demainete's Athenian *eros* evolve within the narrative and reach their efflorescence in the figure of the Persian Arsake, whose personal *eros* becomes the whim of a tyrant. Her dialogue with Thyamis on the nature of kingship (8.4–5) in fact hearkens back to a long tradition, extending from Herodotos, Plato, and Xenophon to Dio of Prusa.³⁵

Despite the romantic nature of Heliodoros' novel, responses to imperial power in the *Aithiopika* are not always expressed within erotic relationships. Like Chariton before him, Heliodoros writes imperial power explicitly into his narrative. I return to the quintessential image of imperial power with which Athens is introduced in the novel: the Athenian celebrants of the Great Panathenaia sending a boat overland to the temple of Athene on the Akropolis (1.10.1). The theme of naval superiority in the primary narrative extends first to the band of pirates in Book 5 who overtake the ship upon

³⁵ For Dio of Prusa, cf. orations 1–4 (the orations on kingship), and the insightful discussions by Swain 1996, 187–241 and Whitmarsh 2001, 156–67, 181–246, and 325–7. Sandy 1982 argues that the philosophical component of the novel (a) helps to characterize Kalasiris as a charlatan and (b) provides a foundation for the hermeneutic questing which the novel motivates in its readers. Winkler 1999 develops the latter idea more fully. But the novel's philosophical allusions and underpinnings characterize many more figures than just Kalasiris. Representations of tyranny and freedom in the world of Heliodoros' novel are also transformations of traditionally Athenian philosophical and political discourses.

which Kalasiris and the young lovers have fled from Delphi and Zakynthos. Despite their lowly social status, however, these pirates are characterized in Kalasiris' narrative with a severity similar to that with which Thucydides characterizes the Athenians in the Melian dialogue. And just as in the introduction to the theme of Athenian naval superiority in the embedded Phaedra-story of Book 1, so too in the pirate episode of Book 5 Heliodoros' sub-narrator draws the reader's attention to a paradoxical compounding of land and sea images. Kalasiris explains that the pirates do not necessarily want bloodshed: 'by sailing around us in a circle allowed us to go nowhere. They were like men besieging a city and eager to take the ship with our assent' (τοῖς δὲ εἰς κύκλον περίπλοις οὐδαμοῦ προβαίνειν ἐπέτρεπον ἐφ' ἑσάν τε πολιορκούσι καὶ τὴν ναῦν ἐξ ὁμολογίας ἔλειν ἐσπουδακόσι, 5.24.4).

The comparison of the circling pirates to men besieging a city, especially within the context of a parley prior to aggressive action, evokes Thucydides' account of the siege of Melos. In Thucydides' text, the Athenians vaunt their naval superiority, insisting that it is in the best interests of the Melians to accept Athenian rule (Thuc. 5.97). Despite the boasts of naval superiority, however, Athenian aggression against the Melians comes not by sea but by circling the city with a wall (περιετείχισαν κύκλῳ τοὺς Μηλίου, 5.114.1) and besieging it (ἐπολιόρκουν τὸ χωρίον, 5.114.2). Whether or not Heliodoros was drawing specifically upon Thucydides' characterization of the Athenians from the Melian episode, the point is that Heliodoros wants us to see the pirates in this moment not just as pirates circling their prey in boats, but as men surrounding and besieging a city. The point is that the behavior of the pirates is the kind of behavior which a reader of Greek history might associate with 5th century Athenians.

But the text does not sustain an allegorical correspondence between the historical Athenians and the pirates, for whereas the Athenians conclude their siege of the Melians by murdering all the adult men and selling the women and children into slavery (Thuc. 5.116.4), Heliodoros' pirates spare the suppliants (Heliod. 5.25.1–2). From the perspective of the conquered, however, Kalasiris describes the intolerability of the pirates' supposed clemency: 'it was a truceless cessation of hostilities and war in fact of the worst kind, suspended in the spurious name of peace, since the treaty was more severe than what is defined as combat' (ἐγένετο δὲ ἄσπονδος ἐκεχειρία καὶ πόλεμος ἔργοις ὁ χαλεπώτατος εἰρήνης ὀνόματι νόθῳ παραλυόμενος, συνθήκης βαρυτέρας πλέον ἢ τῆς μάχης ὀριζομένης, 5.25.2). The passage echoes not only what Thucydides calls the 'truceless cessation of hostilities' between the Corinthians and Athenians in 421 (ἀνοκωχὴ ἄσπονδος, Thuc.

5.32.7), but also Thucydides' famous ruminations on war and how it made men 'exchange the established meaning of words at will' (Thuc. 3.82.4). The survival of the pirates' victims in the novel reveals the startling complicity with which they succumb to violent tyranny: having lost hope of defending their ship, the Phoenician prisoners scramble over one another to be first to attain safety aboard the pirates' boat (Heliod. 5.25.3). Gone is the famed, courageous resistance of Thucydides' Melians, and in its place are the ethical compromises which survival requires, the difficult moral ambiguities of Heliodoros' world.³⁶ Clearly, Heliodoros departs from his model as he sees fit. Heliodoros' pirates and merchants are not clumsy, rigid disguises for Thucydides' Athenians and Melians respectively. Rather, Thucydides' text heightens our awareness of the historiographical scenarios and ideological vocabularies with which Heliodoros composed his novel.

That Heliodoros' text resists strict allegorical interpretation in this regard is all the more apparent when the paradoxical image of a ship crossing land is deployed again in the narrative, during the siege of Syene in Book 9. This time the besieging party is the Ethiopian army of Hydaspes, and behind the walls of Syene are the Persian army of Oroondates, to whom the people of Syene have given shelter. As is well known, Hydaspes at this point builds earthworks around Syene and by diverting the waters of the Nile he floods the channel that he has created between the walls of Syene and the earthworks with which he has surrounded the city. Heliodoros' narrator revels in the paradoxical imagery which follows: 'Syene was suddenly an island and surrounded with water, in the midst of dry land, washed by the waves of the Nile' (καὶ νῆσος αὐτίκα ἦν ἡ Συήνη καὶ περίρρυτος ἡ μεσόγαιος τῷ Νειλῷ κλύδωνι κυματουμένη, 9.4.2). Fearing inundation, the Syeneans stand atop their walls and reach out their hands toward the Ethiopian aggressors, pleading with them for salvation. Heliodoros' narrator reactivates the novel's affiliation with Athenian tragedy and theatrical spectacle when he depicts the besieging Ethiopian army as 'standing upon the earthworks and reckoning the sufferings of the Syeneans as theatre' (τοῖς χώμασιν ἐφεστῶτας καὶ θέατρον τὰ πάθη τὰ ἐκείνων ποιουμένους, 9.5.3). Hydaspes is sensitive to the suffering of the Syeneans, though, and he immediately sends men in ten boats to the walls of Syene to speak with the Persians within the city:

³⁶ It is fitting, I think, and deeply Thucydidean, that Kalasiris colors his historiographical account of the Phoenicians' hopeless situation with a tragic perspective, for his sententious remark that the soul is more precious than all else (5.25.3 ψυχὴ πάντων προτιμότερον) is nearly a quotation of Eur. *Alc.* 301 (ψυχῆς γὰρ οὐδέν ἐστι τιμιώτερον).

Καὶ ἦν θαυμάτων τὸ καινότερον, ναῦς ἀπὸ τειχῶν πρὸς τεῖχη περαιουμένη καὶ ναύτης ὑπὲρ μεσογαίας πλωϊζόμενος καὶ πορθμεῖον κατὰ τὴν ἀρόσιμον ἐλαυνόμενον· καινουργὸς δὲ ὢν αἰεὶ πως ὁ πόλεμος τότε τι καὶ πλέον καὶ οὐδαμῶς εἰωθὸς ἐθαυματούργει, ναυμάχους τειχομάχους συμπλέξας καὶ λιμναῖῳ στρατιώτῃ χερσαῖον ἐφοπλίσας.

And it was the most novel of spectacles: a boat crossing from wall to wall, a sailor sailing upon dry land, a dinghy being driven over arable field. War being, I suppose, always inventive, at that moment was even more marvellous and in no ordinary manner, intertwining naval and siege warfare and arming land- against water-force. (9.5.5)

The narrator's paradoxographical digression distinctly recalls Knemon's brief description of the Great Panathenaia from the embedded Phaedra-story in book 1, 'when the Athenians send the ship over land to Athena ὅτε τὴν ναῦν Ἀθηναῖοι διὰ γῆς τῇ Ἀθηνᾷ πέμπουσιν, 1.10.1). This imagistic echo invites us to read the siege of Syene against the backdrop of 5th century Athenian imperialism. In other words, the novel alludes to the 5th century historiographical context at this point as a means of signaling the discourse within which the text is operating. The allusion to Athenian imperialism at this point ironically demonstrates not the over-reaching aggression of Hydaspes, but his *difference* from the Athenians with whom he is implicitly compared. Hydaspes is not the grim, tyrannical invader typified by Thucydides' Athenians, but a benevolent leader sympathetic to the suffering of his military opponent: 'Hydaspes recognized that the Syeneans were pleading for salvation and he was prepared to offer it (for a fallen enemy provokes humanity in good men)' ('Ο δὲ Ὑδάσπης ἐγνώριζε μὲν σωτηρίαν αἰτοῦντας καὶ παρέχειν ἦν ἕτοιμος (ὑπαγορεύει γὰρ τοῖς χρηστοῖς φιλανθρωπίαν πολέμιος ὑποπίπτων). In this context, then, Heliodoros draws upon an image representative of 5th century Athenian imperialism, not to perpetuate the idea of Athenian cultural hegemony, but to idealize and to lend ethical depth to the king of the Ethiopians.³⁷ Paradoxically, Heliodoros' narrative uses the

³⁷ For the idealization of non-Greeks in the *Aithiopika*, see Kuch 2003, 214–19. For Hydaspes' exercise of power over the Syeneans, see Rogier 1982. For the representation of Meroe, see Hägg 2000. The idealization of Ethiopians in Greek literature has a long tradition beginning with Homer (*Il.* 1.423–4), but the Ethiopians' position in the value system of Heliodoros' novel is at first ambiguous: they are the keepers of an ancient, alien wisdom, but they also practice human sacrifice – a problem which the romance between Theagenes and Charikleia is designed by the gods to solve (Winkler 1982, 345–6). Perkins 1999 and Morgan 2005 also argue (with variation) that the idealization of Hydaspes

Athenian discourse of empire to expand beyond Athenocentrism and valorize traditionally more marginal perspectives.

4. Conclusion

Both Apuleius and Heliodoros embed in their narratives Attic tales which draw upon the Athenian traditions of tragedy, New Comedy, law, oratory, philosophy, and historiography. The *Metamorphoses* and the *Aithiopika* do not, however, repeat Athens in order to ossify their narratives within a classical tradition. Rather, the embedded stories of Apuleius' *noverca* and Heliodoros' Demainete appropriate literary and cultural representations of Athens in the complex process of redefining the world. At first Athens symbolizes the suspension of disbelief in Apuleius' novel. But Book 10 recounts the failure of Athenian judicial procedure, and the allusion to Socrates by a philosophizing ass is a further sign that the figure of Athens has been corrupted. Athens and her literary and cultural traditions are subsumed in the final book of the *Metamorphoses* beneath a more expansive gaze, a gaze which, admittedly, looks to Rome first, but which also looks to the far-flung limits of Rome's empire. Similarly, in Heliodoros' novel, the problematization of imperial power and its ethical implications is achieved through an intertextual dialogue with Greek historiography and through a reconfiguration of Athenian imperial imagery. Apuleius and Heliodoros remind their readers how large a shadow the Athenian akropolis casts in the landscape of the Hellenic and Roman imaginations. But a Latin comic fantasia by a citizen of Madauros and an Ethiopian romance by a Phoenician from Emessa inevitably also demand an interrogation of Athenianism.

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and the Ethiopians in the *Aithiopika* is part of a pervasive reversal of a contemporary Christian black/white semiotic system.

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