Heliodorus' *Aethiopica*:
A New Patristic Context

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In Book 5 of his *Historia Ecclesiastica*, the fifth-century CE historian Socrates Scholasticus discusses the celibacy required by the Bishop of Tricca. The practice was begun, Socrates writes, by one Heliodorus, who had written in his youth 'a collection of erotic books' which he called the *Aethiopica*.[1] This offhand mention by Socrates has famously been the most important ancient testimony of Heliodorus' *Aethiopica* known to modern scholarship. But it has not constituted conclusive proof for dating the text and for at least the last hundred years or so, scholars have debated the century in which Heliodorus composed his sophistic romance.[2] Did he write in the third century, close in time and sentiment to his novelistic predecessors? Or is his novel from the fourth century, a literary experiment infusing erotic Greek fiction with the religious plurality characteristic of Late Antiquity?[3]

These two frameworks, with their respective emphases on classical and late antique contexts are not, questions of dating aside, mutually exclusive. In fact, the

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[1] *h.e.* 5,22.

[2] Key modern summaries of the date of Heliodorus can be found in van der Valk 1941; Colonna 1950; Lacombrade 1970; Morgan 1978, i-xxxvii; 1996, 417-419; Chuvin 1990, 321-324; Bowersock 1994, 149-155; Bargheer 1999, 17-49; Whitmarsh 2011, 110-111; and Mecella 2014.

[3] For interest in Heliodorus' relationship to his classical past, see e.g., Bartsch 1989; Cave 1990, 18-21; Morgan 1993; 2013; Bowie 1995; Whitmarsh 1998; 2011; 2014, 132-134; Elmer 2008; Telò 2011; Montiglio 2012. The third-century date of Heliodorus is first laid out by Rohde 1914, 460-498 as a preferable alternative to the fourth-century dating and given further support by Weinreich 1950, 346-52; Szepessy 1975; 1976; Bremmer 1999, 26-27 (although Bremmer has since expressed support for a fourth-century date; see Bremmer 2018, 228). Feuillâtre 1966, 147-148 and Robiano 2009 push the dating back even further, arguing for the second century as the earliest date of composition for the *Aethiopica*.

recent tendency to favour the later, fourth-century dating has sparked scholarly interest in restoring Heliodorus to a more fully late antique milieu which considers the novel's response to contemporary political and cultural issues *alongside* its well-known classical heritage. Such attempts to ground Heliodorus' classicising text in a fourth-century cultural context were first undertaken by scholars in the mid-twentieth century working to establish the claim that Julian's descriptions of the siege of Nisibis were a source (or evidence of a fourth-century source) for the *Aethiopica*'s own siege of Syene in Book 9.[4] The last ten years have seen renewed efforts in compiling a broader spectrum of historical and literary evidence, from the late antique treatments of Helios, to a dispute over emerald mines in Ethiopia, to Constantine's laws on adultery, which suggest that Heliodorus' classical, sophistic romance also responds to events and cultural changes taking place over the fourth century.[5]

The array of ancient sources which inform our reading of the *Aethiopica*'s cultural milieu, however, should be expanded further. As this article will argue, reconstructing Heliodorus' historical and intellectual context requires examining the *Aethiopica* alongside fourth- and fifth-century Patristic texts. This approach offers new insight on the *Aethiopica*'s relationship to Christian thought, a question which has plagued Heliodoran studies since at least the commentary of Coraes in the early nineteenth century. Scholars initially approached the topic by examining similarities on the level of language between Christian writings and the *Aethiopica*, with the goal of determining whether Heliodorus was a Christian, and thus, likely identifiable with the homonymous bishop of Tricca.[6] Over the last twenty-

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[4] van der Valk 1941; Colonna 1950; Lacombrade 1970; Bowersock 1994, 149-155 and Chuvin 1999. Morgan 1996, 418-419 argues that the similarities between the sieges described by Heliodorus and Julian are compelling enough to establish that the siege of Syene is based on the fourth-century siege at Nisibis, but do not necessarily establish a direct relationship between the two texts. For the opposite view that Julian used Heliodorus as a source for his description of the siege, Szepessy 1975; 1976 (who explicitly uses this argument to date Heliodorus to the third century) and Lightfoot 1988, 117-119. The description of the armour of the Persians at the battle has also been taken as having significant points of connection with fourth-century texts (Bowersock 1994, 157-158).

[5] Malosse 2011-12; Hilton 2012a; 2012b; 2016; 2019; Mecella 2014; Ross 2015; Slaveva-Griffin 2015; Lefteratou 2019. For slightly older scholarship on Heliodorus' resonances with fourth-century literary production and culture, Wifstrand 1944, 36-41; Lacombrade 1970; Nilsson 1974, 565-567; Birchall 1996, 18-20; Lateiner 1997, 418-430; Hilton 1998, 81; Bargheer 1999; Dowden 2006, 255-256. Coraes 1804, κα also dates Heliodorus to the fourth century, but he follows the Byzantine assignation of Heliodorus' *floruit* to the reign of Theodosius I; the problems with this proposal are discussed by Morgan 1978, ii-iii.

[6] Coraes 1804, 56, 98-99, 234, 267, whose parallels are met with scepticism by Rohde 1914, 462-472. Sixty years later Cataudella 1975, 172-174, concluded that the correspondences in language between the *Aethiopica* and the New Testament were sufficient enough to

five years, the focus has shifted towards ideas and themes in Heliodorus' text that are shared between classical and Christian authors, without necessarily making a claim for the religion of the text or its author. Although not an explicitly Christian text, and perhaps not even written by a Christian author, the *Aethiopica*'s scenes of miraculous rescue (most notably Chariclea's release from being burned at the stake in Book 8) and rigorous preservation of both male and female chastity reveal that Heliodorus is thinking about many of the same ideas as writers of martyrdom tales, and expresses them in much the same language.[7] Indeed, the phrasing which Heliodorus uses can offer proof of his knowledge not only of the themes familiar to martyr narratives, but also of distinctly Christian conceptions of the words ἀντί-θεος, and κρείττονες, of Christian ideas of race, and fiction, and of Christian texts themselves.[8]

Compelling though they are, such analyses of the affinities between Heliodorus and Christian ideas capture only one aspect of Heliodorus' engagement with this world of thought. The place of Christian ideas in the *Aethiopica* is much more complex, both deeply akin to some of the novel's central values, but also at times consciously held at a distance. This article will take some first steps in this direction, bringing to light the complexities of Heliodorus' responses to, and incorporations of, themes which are prominent in roughly contemporary Christian works. It will do so through an analysis of three discrete test cases, Calasiris' musings on the arrival of Rhodopis in Book 2, the consolation of Chariclea and Theagenes by an unnamed Isaic priest after the death of Calasiris in Book 7, and Hydaspes' initial doubts about Chariclea's identity towards the beginning of the climactic recognition scene in Book 10. In each of these passages, the *Aethiopica* engages either with norms central to late antique Christian behaviour or language which is closely paralleled in fourth- and fifth-century theological texts. When read together, these three scenes do not suggest a coherent 'counterreaction' to the easy assimilation of Christianising mores at other moments in the text. Rather, they

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demonstrate Heliodorus' knowledge of Christian Scripture but not enough to prove him a Christian. Likewise, Colonna 1981 argues that the use of the ἐνανθρωπήσασαν at Hld. 2,31,1 demonstrates that Heliodorus had significant knowledge of Christian texts and can therefore be identified with Heliodorus with the Bishop of Tricca. For a slightly different approach, Kerényi 1927, 57, who explored the possibility that Heliodorus' use of the phrase ἡ ἐκ θεῶν οἰκονομία at Hld. 4,9,1 had Christian influences but decided that the Greek version of the legend of Tefnut was a more likely source for Heliodorus' language.

[7] Bowersock 1994, 141; Perkins 1995; 2006; Lateiner 1997, 418-430; Edsall 2002, 128-129; Ramelli 2009; Andújar 2012; Konstan and Ramelli 2014. On the linguistic parallels with Christian texts as evidence of Heliodorus' knowledge of Christian writing more generally, Birchall 1996, 20-27.

[8] Hilton 1997 (on ἀντίθεος); Dowden 2006 (κρείττονες); Morgan 2013 (on race); and Jackson 2021 (on fiction).

illustrate the *Aethiopica*'s critical, thoughtful absorption of ideas familiar to contemporary Christian texts, and the resulting diversity of roles for these ideas in Heliodorus' work—from subversive foil to the generic expectations of the novel, to ambiguous 'other' (in true Heliodoran fashion) at once familiar and estranged, to the object of ironic, humorous deflation. The position of all three test cases within an explanation of either individual or group identity also offers a new perspective on this theme within the *Aethiopica*, as catalysing reflections not only on the *Aethiopica*'s literary heritage, but also on more distinctly 'late antique' discourses.[9]

Because of their differences, each of the passages under discussion demands to be brought into dialogue with a slightly different set of fourth- and fifth-century Patristic interlocutors. Throughout the course of this article, I will compare views on theatre and adultery in John Chrysostom's homily *Contra ludos et theatra* and *Aethiopica* Book 2, the use of the phrase ὁ θεῖος καὶ ἱερὸς παρεγγυᾷ λόγος in a dialogue of Cyril of Alexandria, a commentary of Theodoretos of Cyrus, and *Aethiopica* 7, and the use of theatrical metaphor to articulate anxiety about legitimacy in Cyril of Alexandria and *Aethiopica* 10. Looking beyond both the enigmatic words of Socrates Scholasticus and the martyr tales to which the *Aethiopica* is so often compared demonstrates the potential of post-Nicene Patristic texts to shed light on Heliodorus' inventive, and at times irreverent, adoption of language and ideas which were prominent in contemporary Christian thought. Although many of the Patristic parallels under discussion almost certainly postdate the *Aethiopica*, looser affinities with early Christian writings in each of the test cases offer further evidence that the passages under discussion engage with a learned, common cultural ground shared by Christianising and classicising discourse.[10] Thus, while evidence for explicit intertextual allusions between the *Aethiopica* and Christian theological treatises remains elusive, charting the relationship between Heliodorus' work and Patristic authors more broadly can help us comment on the ways in which the *Aethiopica* anticipated later post-Nicene concerns, especially in the eyes of an informed late antique readership.[11] The analysis to

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[9] The parallels between questions of Chariclea's identity or parentage and the *Aethiopica*'s literary heritage have been discussed at length by Cave 1990, 18-21; Whitmarsh 1998; Elmer 2008.

[10] In this way, Heliodorus shares points of similarity with Julian, for whom the interaction between classical and Christian culture was an important part of his literary production and political agenda; on Julian see e.g. Athanassiadi 1981, 161-191; Elm 2012.

[11] My use of (potential) early readers of the *Aethiopica* to examine its cultural positioning is indebted to the methodology of Jackson 2021; Kruchió 2020. More generally, this article takes inspiration from the work of scholars such as Shusterman 1988 (= Shusterman 1992) which seeks to shift focus away from recovering the objective meaning of the text and

follow will therefore spotlight a multifaceted self-positioning in the *Aethiopica vis à vis* these concerns which would have been perceptible to Heliodorus' earliest audiences.

Section 1: Christianity and the Cult of Isis in Aethiopica *2,25*

The first of these reworkings of concerns shared by Patristic texts occurs in the narrative of the Egyptian priest Calasiris in Book 2, which constitutes, on multiple different levels, the first in-depth introduction to the priest's identity and life story.[12] Tempted by Rhodopis' beauty into committing an act of adultery considered impure for a priest of his status, Calasiris relates,

τῶν δὲ ἡμαρτημένων οὐκ ἔργῳ, μὴ γένοιτο, ἀλλ' ἐφέσει μόνῃ τὴν ἁρμόζουσαν ἐπιβαλὼν ζημίαν, δικαστὴν ἐμαυτῷ τὸν λογισμὸν ἀναδείξας, φυγῇ κολάζω τὴν ἐπιθυμίαν (Hld. 2,25,4)

I cast upon myself a punishment suitable not for the sin in deed, may that not come to pass, but for the desire alone; having set reason as a judge for my case, I checked my desire with exile. [13]

In asserting that he castigated himself for his lust, Calasiris reaffirms the importance of sexual purity to the *Aethiopica*'s self-positioning between classical and Christian thought. Calasiris' method of approach to his predicament, to use reason to control sexual desire, has precedents in Greco-Roman philosophy.[14] The decision which he reaches, however, that his desire merits a material punishment, resembles ideas which circulated in both classical and Christian contexts. Indeed, Calasiris' condemnation of sexual thoughts finds points of similarity with sentiments expressed in the *controversiae* of Seneca the Elder on the purity of Vestal Virgins, as well as with the teachings on adultery in the *Gospel of Matthew*, although neither Seneca nor *Matthew* differentiate between the punishment fitting for thoughts of lust and that incurred by acting upon those thoughts as Calasiris

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towards the multiple interpretations it can generate, while acknowledging the importance of a literary work's historical context sketched by Carroll 1992, esp. 124.

[12] On the importance of this extended narrative to key characteristics of Calasiris such as his truthfulness, see Winkler 1982 (= 1999); Billault 2015.

[13] All translations are my own, with reference to Morgan 1989a. The text used is Rattenbury's and Lumb's Budé.

[14] See e.g., Gaca 2003, 30-34; Harper 2013, 72 on this idea in Platonic and Stoic concepts of sexual continence, respectively.

does.[15] The Matthean verse in particular generated discussion from the second century onwards, serving as an interlocutor for writers such as Clement of Alexandria, who played a significant role in shaping 'orthodox' thinking on the subject of adultery.[16]

When these anxieties about desirous thoughts are considered alongside the theatrical language with which Calasiris describes his penance, however, the words of the Egyptian priest come closest to late fourth-century concepts of lust. In particular, Calasiris' description of Rhodopis resonates with the late fourth-century polemic *Contra ludos et theatra* written by the Antiochean priest John Chrysostom in 399. Towards the middle of his homily criticising theatrical entertainment of all varieties, Chrysostom details the harmful consequences of viewing a sex worker, γυναῖκα πόρνην,[17] onstage, arguing that her effect upon the audience is not limited to the confines of the theatrical performance. Rather, she remains in the mind of the men who have seen her, inciting them with such lust that they neglect their duties as head of house.[18] Calasiris' narration likewise combines concerns about the temptations of sex workers with a sense of the theatrical. He describes Rhodopis as a mere instrument in a larger divine drama, the mask of a god sent to set his fate into motion: συνεὶς ὡς τῶν πεπρωμένων ἐστὶν ὑπόκρισις καὶ ὡς ὁ τότε εἰληχὼς δαίμων οἱονεὶ προσωπεῖον αὐτὴν ὑπῆλθε ('I understood that she was the enactment of what was fated and that the deity assigned to my fate assumed her form like a mask at that time', *Aeth*. 2,25,3).

Rhodopis' part on this cosmic stage consists of 'forcing' Calasiris to flee Memphis, a task which she accomplishes by tempting him with her charms. Like

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[15] For Seneca, and his resemblance to later Patristic thinkers, Undheim 2018, 171-172; *Matthew*'s discussion of adultery can be found at *Ev. Matt*. 5,28.

[16] Gaca 2003, 247-272 esp. 258-260 on the early Christian interest in *Ev. Matt*. 5,28. For the appearance of the verse in either treatments of adultery or the problematic nature of human impulse and urges more generally (including several references by Chrysostom himself), see e.g. Just. *apol*. 15,1; Athenag. *Leg*. 32,2; Thphl. Ant. *Autol*. 3,13; Or. *Cels*. 3,44; *Jo*. 20,17,149; 20,23,189; *princ*. 3,1,6; *philoc*. 18,15; 21,5; *sel. In Ezech*. PG 13,785; Nemes. *Nat. hom*. PG 40,116; Eus. *D.e*. 3,6,4; Bas. *Ep*. 46,1; *Hom. in illud: Attende tibi ipsi*; *Enarratio in Is*. 2,93; *Const. App*. 1,1; *A. Phil*. 14; Serap. *Man*. 52; Ephr. *Or*. 37; *Serm. de iudicio et resurrectione*; *De paenitentia*; *Adversus improbas mulieres*; Ast. Am. *Hom*. 2,5,3; Chrys. *De paenitentia Hom*. 6 (*PG* 49,316-321); *De decem millium talentorum debitore PG* 51,24; *In Gen. Hom*. 5 (*PG* 53,56); *Hom*. 15 (*PG* 53,124); *Hom*. 22 (*PG* 53,189); *Hom*. 27 (*PG* 53,244); *David* 3 (*PG* 54,695-696; 48,1057); *Hom. in Mt*. 16; *De paenitentia* (*PG* 59,764); *Apparuit gratia dei omnibus hominibus* 1-2; *Catech. ad illuminandos* 1,32; *Comm. In Job* 31.8a; *Jud*. 2.

[17] *PG* 56,266.

[18] *PG* 56,263-270. Leyerle 2001, 42-74 offers a full analysis of the relationship between Chrysostom's anxieties about the sexuality of theatrical performances and his critique of worldliness more broadly.

the sex worker in the *Contra ludos* whose dances arouse adulterous thoughts in the minds of pious Christians, Rhodopis plays a theatrical role which poses an erotic threat to religiously mandated purity.[19] While her portrayal as a masked actor in a metaphorical drama differs from Chrysostom's image of the sex worker as a bare-headed actor in the humbler confines of the city theatre,[20] the outcome for Calasiris, the victim of Rhodopis' allure, resembles that recommended by Chrysostom at the end of the *Contra ludos*. Just as Calasiris decides to impose exile on himself as a punishment for his misdeeds, Chrysostom too declares excommunication from the Church as a fitting punishment for improper indulgence of sexual desire.[21]

In the face of these points of similarity, the possibility emerges that Calasiris' connection between the dangers of sexual desire, drama, and sex workers contained Christian connotations for Heliodorus' fourth-century audience. Although Chrysostom differs slightly from Calasiris in following *Matthew* and equating thoughts of desire and sexual acts as equally condemnable,[22] the resemblances between the two texts are reinforced by their agreement that the urge to have sex, regardless of whether it is acted upon, is a source of punishable sin. Calasiris' insistence on lustful thoughts as worthy of exile likewise reflects a similar cultural outlook to that of Christianity.[23]

These remarkably Christian lines of thought form at least part of Calasiris' decision to flee from Memphis,[24] thus beginning the journey which will bring him into contact with Chariclea. They contribute, in other words, to the initiation of Calasiris' own set of adventures. In contrast to the tribulations of Chariclea and Theagenes, however, Calasiris' story has a very un-novelistic beginning. Like the

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[19] The language of hunting and trapping to portray Rhodopis' seductive powers at Hld. 2,25,2 constitutes another point of contact with the depiction of sex work in Chrysostom's oeuvre, as his comparisons of greed to a sex worker are replete with images of sex workers attempting to catch their prey (on Chrysostom, Leyerle 2001, 46 n. 19). This shared discourse, however, has roots in a larger classical tradition as opposed to any particularly 'late antique' interests. It finds precedents at least as far back as X *Mem*. 3,11,5-15, who likewise uses metaphors from the hunt to describe the active, and thus from an ancient Greek perspective potentially transgressive, alluring of women by men (Rösch 2018).

[20] *PG* 56,266.

[21] *PG* 56,268-270.

[22] *PG* 56,266.

[23] On excommunication as a possible punishment for breaking vows of chastity, with a particular focus on the consequences of jeopardising virginity, Undheim 2018, 158-166. Lane Fox 1986, 336-374 notes the points of similarity between classical and Christian views on sexual abstinence more generally, although his narrative stresses the significant differences, as opposed to the common ground, between these two worldviews.

[24] At Hld. 2,25,5 Calasiris also mentions the importance of the impending duel between his children as a reason for his flight.

Athenian drama which Cnemon has recounted for Chariclea and Theagenes in Book 1, Calasiris' departure from Memphis functions as a foil for the tale of Chariclea and Theagenes, albeit a subtler one than that offered by Cnemon's narrative.[25] If, with Morgan, we take Rhodopis to be the famous sex worker, then the difference in status between Rhodopis and Calasiris, the high priest of Memphis, signals the opening of his story as a sort of playful twist on the 'typical' Greek romance, in which the protagonists are of the same social standing.[26] Furthermore, while the maintenance of chastity is emphasised in both narratives, the departure of the protagonists in the *Aethiopica*, as in the Greek novels more broadly, is inspired by their desire to be (re)united with their lover, whereas the Egyptian priest leaves to escape the temptation posed by Rhodopis. For all the similarities between the ending of Calasiris' tale (in his hometown reunited with his children) and the ending of Chariclea's story (in her hometown reunited with her parents),[27] Calasiris' narrative is fuelled by a different type of narrative energy, which seeks to avoid erotic love, and, at least initially, maintain Calasiris' religious integrity. Although the reader's impression of Calasiris' relationship to matters divine may change,[28] the Egyptian priest's use of logic and imagery familiar to Christianity to justify his evasion of *eros* thus plays an important part in asserting one of the significant differences between his narrative arc and the 'main story' of the protagonists.

Section 2: Religious and cultural 'difference': Aethiopica 7,11

The complex position of Christianity within the world of the *Aethiopica* resurfaces in Book 7, in reference once again to a priest of Isis in Memphis. In Book 7, however, distinctly Christian ideas arise in the context of a communal custom instead of an individual decision. Upon returning to his homeland and resolving the dispute between his sons, Calasiris peacefully passes away. Chariclea and Theagenes, whom Calasiris had been helping on their journey to find Chariclea's parents, mourn the loss of their guide, and are offered the following words of comfort from an unnamed priest at the temple:

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[25] On Calasiris Paulsen 1992, 152-153; Montiglio 2012, 123-124. For the elaborate and pronounced contrast between the love of Demainete for Cnemon and the mutual affection between Chariclea and Theagenes, Morgan 1989c.

[26] Morgan 1982, 236. The identification is reinforced by Calasiris' association of Rhodopis with a metaphorical ἑταιρίας σαγήνη which she uses to ensnare her victims, (Hld. 2,25,2).

[27] On which see Paulsen 1992, 152-153.

[28] For discussions of Calasiris' charlatanry Winkler 1982, esp. 127-137 (= 1999, 320-329); Billault 2015.

Οὐκ ἔννομα μὲν ἔφη οὐδὲ συγκεχωρημένα ἐκ τῶν πατρίων διαπράττεσθε, καὶ ταῦτα προαπηγορευμένον ὑμῖν, ὀδυρόμενοι καὶ θρηνοῦντες ἄνδρα προφήτην, ὃν χαίροντας καὶ εὐφημοῦντας ἐκπέμπειν ὡς τῆς βελτίονος μετειληχότα λή-ξεως καὶ πρὸς τῶν κρειττόνων κεκληρωμένον ὁ θεῖος καὶ ἱερὸς παρεγγυᾷ λό-γος (Hld. 7,11,9).

You do things that are neither lawful nor allowed by our customs (and in fact have been rejected by us) in mourning and lamenting a high priest, who, as divine and sacred tradition commands, should be sent to his grave by men rejoicing and acclaiming that he has been allotted a better place by the Higher Powers.

As was the case with Calasiris' meditations in Book 2, the priest's words sit in a 'liminal' position, revealing affinities in language with both classical and late antique Christian texts. The description of the rejoicing men who are to carry Calasiris to his grave, χαίροντας καὶ εὐφημοῦντας ἐκπέμπειν, quotes directly from Euripides' fragmentary *Cresphontes*.[29] The priest's phrase, ὁ θεῖος καὶ ἱερὸς παρεγγυᾷ λόγος, by contrast, voices an idea about the transmission of sacred laws and texts that is distinctively Judaeo-Christian. Other than Julian, who speaks of the θεῖος καὶ ἱερὸς νόμος which is violated by Cynicism, Heliodorus is the only other non-Judeo-Christian author to use comparable phrasing.[30] Although not particularly common, the tag θεῖος καὶ ἱερὸς λόγος is employed by Christian authors throughout the fourth century, appearing in Eusebius and Gregory of Nyssa (who describes the λόγος Θείου as a θεῖον ἄλλως καὶ ἱερὸν χρῆμα).[31] Prior to this, a few references to a θεῖος καὶ ἱερὸς λόγος or a ἱερὸς καὶ θεῖος λόγος appear in Philo.[32]

The most compelling correspondences in phrasing, however, appear in texts which probably postdate a fourth-century *Aethiopica*. The closest linguistic parallel is from the bishop Cyril of Alexandria writing in the first half of the fifth century, who in one of his paschal letters rhetorically asks after a quotation of *Romans* 9,6-7, Τί τοίνυν ὁ θεῖός τε καὶ ἱερὸς παρεγγυᾷ λόγος; ('What then does the sacred and divine word hand down?' *PG* 77,857). Cyril uses a similar phrase in his dialogue *De adoratione et cultu in spiritu et veritate* before introducing a passage from *Deuteronomy* 17,14, Ἐπείτοι καὶ θεῖος ἡμῖν παρεγγυᾷ λόγος, τὴν

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[29] Morgan 1989a, 499 n. 176.

[30] For Julian, c. *Herac.* 209c. The nearest non-Christian parallel outside of Julian is Mus. *Diss.* 3 ὁ φιλόσοφος παρεγγυᾷ λόγος.

[31] Eus. *Ps. PG* 23.1049; Gr. Nyss. *castig. PG* 46.308.

[32] *De confusione linguarum* 27; *Quis rerum divinarum heres sit* 225; *De Abrahamo* 243.

εἴς γε τούτους αἰσχρότητα καταμυσάττεσθαι δεῖν ('Since indeed the divine word also hands down to us that it is proper to loathe the baseness of [astrologers, augurs, false prophets, and demonic quacks]', *PG* 68,425). The bishop Theodoretos of Cyrus, also writing in the early fifth century, comments on *Isaiah* 35,3-4 with the following: Τοὺς ἡττηθέντας πάλαι καὶ τῷ διαβόλῳ δεδουλευκότας ὁ θεῖος ἀναρρώννυσι λόγος καὶ παρεγγυᾷ τὴν ἐκείνου τυραννίδα μὴ δεδιέναι ('The divine word reinforces and hands down that those who were once weak and enslaved to the devil should not fear his tyranny', *Is*. 10,414-416). Given that the appeal to either a θεῖος and/or ἱερός λόγος as dictating, παρεγγυᾷ, a doctrine to follow occurs only in Heliodorus and Christian texts of roughly the same period, as well as the importance of a θεῖος καὶ ἱερὸς λόγος in earlier Judaeo-Christian writings, it seems likely that the parallels between the words of the priest of Isis in *Aethiopica* 7 and Christian texts would have been noticeable to late antique readers.

By nestling 'Christianising' language alongside an allusion to Athenian tragedy, the priest's response to Chariclea and Theagenes incorporates ideas familiar to Christian thought at the heart of a characteristically Heliodoran reflection on the nature of translation, and by extension, the 'self' and 'other'. At first glance, the priest's wording, used to explain a set of divinely sanctioned, Egyptian customs which differ from the rites of mourning of the culturally Greek Chariclea and Theagenes, frames the traditions of the Egyptian 'other'. As is well known, the line between 'self' and 'other', Greek, and non-Greek, however, is never quite so simple in the *Aethiopica*.[33] In full keeping with Heliodorus' tendency to play with cultural boundaries, the Egyptian priest's quotation of a Euripidean tragedy places him in an erudite, Hellenic paradigm which would be fully familiar to classically-educated readers of the *Aethiopica*. The distance between the priest, the interpreter of Egyptian customs, and the Greek culture of both the protagonists and the intended audience collapses almost as soon as it is asserted.

This conflation of identities and meditation on cultural custom initially imbue the priest's particularly Christian phrase with an uncomfortable ambiguity. Underwriting the explanation of a custom which is simultaneously presented as foreign and familiar to Greek culture, the Christian language in this passage is swept into a position that is neither fully 'self' nor 'other' in the text. Paradoxically, the seemingly uneasy place of this Christianising phrasing weaves it seamlessly into the navigations between Greek, Egyptian, and Ethiopian identities which pervades the *Aethiopica*'s textual fabric. The implicit fluidity of Greek and Egyptian identity, classical and Christianising language which results creates additional resonances with pre-Constantinian Christian texts, which is self-consciously

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[33] Whitmarsh 1994; 2011, 108-135.

reflected in the tensions inherent in encompassing many different cultures within a larger, Christian fold.[34]

Section 3: Masks and Christology in Aethiopica 10,13

The ironic and even slightly playful approach to Christian language in *Aethiopica* 7,11 is likewise on display in the recognition scene which occupies the bulk of *Aethiopica* 10. At the beginning of the recognition scene, phrasing familiar to Patristic authors appears as part of the learned, self-subverting humour which pervades the establishment of Chariclea as rightful heir to her parent's throne. The revelation of identity *par excellence* in Heliodorus' text, Chariclea's claim to be the long-lost daughter to the childless king and queen of Ethiopia mere moments before she was to be offered as a sacrifice of thanks at first seems incredible to her unsuspecting father. Hydaspes, who did not know that his white daughter had been exposed in secret to avoid charges of adultery, speculates that the appearance of his supposed heir may simply be a cover for a more self-serving agenda:

> Ἢ πόθεν ὅλως ὅτι αὕτη ἐκείνη, καὶ μὴ διέφθαρται μὲν τὸ ἐκτεθὲν τοῖς δὲ γνωρίσμασιν ἐπιτυχών τις ἀποκέχρηται τοῖς ἐκ τῆς τύχης καὶ ὥσπερ προσωπείῳ τῇ κόρῃ ταύτῃ περιθεὶς ἐντρυφᾷ τῇ ἡμετέρᾳ περὶ τεκνοποιΐαν ἐπιθυμίᾳ καὶ νόθον ἡμῖν καὶ ὑποβολιμαῖον εἰσποιεῖ διαδοχήν, καθάπερ νέφει τῇ ταινίᾳ τὴν ἀλήθειαν ἐπισκιάζων (Hld. 10,13,5).[35]

> μή τις δαίμων ἡμῖν ἐπιπαίζει P: om. VZM. προσωπεῖον τῇ κόρῃ ταῦτα Coraes: πρσωπείῳ τῇ κόρῃ ταύτῃ codd.

> Indeed, how can we be safely sure that she is that child, and that the exposed child did not meet her ruin, and that someone, happening across the recognition tokens, did not use the gifts of fortune, bestow these things upon the girl and use her like a mask, take advantage of our desire to beget a child, and make an illegitimate and false line of succession our heir, overshadowing the truth as if with a cloud by means of this band?

This combination of dramatic metaphors and fears of bastardy situate Hydaspes' response at an intriguing intersection between New Comedy and Christological

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[34] Buell 2002; 2005.
[35] My text and apparatus (on which more below) follows that advocated by Morgan 1978 348-350; 1983, 98-99.

debate. However, while Hydaspes' hesitance to accept the narrative he has been presented is clear, the exact meaning of his remarks has been slightly obscured by two textual problems concerning these very theatrical and theological themes. To start with, the subject of περιθείς and ἐντρυφᾷ has come under critical scrutiny, as the phrase μή τις δαίμων ἡμῖν ἐπιπαίζει has been viewed as an interpolation by John Morgan and Tim Whitmarsh.[36] Furthermore, scholars have questioned whether the manuscript reading of προσωπείῳ to ought to be emended προσωπεῖον, and whether ταύτῃ should be changed to ταῦτα.[37] In this discussion, I will adhere to the text as printed above, believing, with Morgan, that it offers the most sensible option. Due to the controversy around this passage, however, I will keep in mind the alternate readings, particularly μή τις δαίμων ἡμῖν ἐπιπαίζει, and προσωπεῖον and their effect on the parallels between Hydaspes' language and late antique theological texts.

As signalled by the contested προσωπεῖον, Hydaspes' engagement with Christian thoughts and themes is embedded in classical motifs, and in particular from the world of drama. Hydaspes, and later the Ethiopian priest Sisimithres debate Chariclea's claim to be the legitimate daughter of Hydaspes and his wife Persinna in theatrical terms.[38] Throughout the recognition scene, these references to theatricality highlight the similarities between Chariclea's situation and the recognition scenes familiar from the plays of Euripides and Menander.[39] At the same time, the language which Hydaspes employs in this moment evokes another, Christian world of ideas. Whether it is Chariclea who acts as a mask (προσωπείῳ), or her birth tokens (προσωπεῖον), the words of the astounded Ethiopian king associate illegitimacy with masks and disguise. They thereby reveal an affinity with theological treatises debating the nature of Christ in the fourth and fifth centuries, which made use of metaphors of masking when discussing the nature of the relationship between Father and Son.

Like the 'Christian' words of the priest from Book 7, the nexus of themes which Hydaspes' masking metaphor activates appears to be particularly late antique. Prior to the fourth century there is only one mention of the προσωπεῖον in

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[36] Morgan 1978, 348-350; 1983, 98-100; Whitmarsh 1998, 120 n. 107. Rattenbury and Lumb 1935, lxxxi-lxxxii defend their inclusion of the phrase.

[37] For further discussion, Rattenbury and Lumb 1943, 91 n. 2; Morgan 1978, 350; 1983, 100; Whitmarsh 1998, 120 n. 107.

[38] Bartsch 1989, 132-143. Hydaspes has already likened Chariclea's seemingly miraculous appearance to the arrival of a *deus ex machina* onstage (Hld. 10,12,2), language which will be echoed by Sisimithres' theatrical metaphor to describe the recognition scene at Hld. 10,39,2.

[39] On which Bartsch 1989, 133; Feuillâtre 1966, 122; Fusillo 1991, 51-54; Dworacki 1996, 360; Alaux and Létoublon 1998, 158.

the context of parent-child relations by Clement of Alexandria. With rhetoric which anticipates that of the post-Nicene theologians discussed below, Clement explains that Christ is the equal of God the Father and was recognised as such when he adopted a mortal form, τὸ ἀνθρώπου προσωπεῖον ἀναλαβών.[40]

Interest in (metaphorical) masks and parent-child resemblance comes into sharper focus, however, from the fourth century onwards. The earliest fourth-century parallel appears in a treatise traditionally attributed to Eusebius of Caesarea (and dated to the early fourth century),[41] the *contra Hieroclem,* in which (ps.-)Eusebius launches an attack on the portrayal of Apollonius of Tyana as divine in Philostratus' *Vita Apollonii*, Ἀλλὰ μὴν εἰσῆκται αὐτῷ θεῖος ἄνθρωπος, καὶ θαλαττίου δαίμονος σχῆμά τε καὶ προσωπεῖον ἀπὸ γενέσεως ἀναλαμβάνων ('But in fact [Apollonius] is introduced by [Philostratus] as a divine man who assumed the form and mask of a marine deity from the time of his conception' *Hierocl.* 8).[42] While not rendering him a parent figure *per se*, the identification of Proteus with Apollonius ἀπὸ γενέσεως places Apollonius' claims to divinity in the context of stories of birth; indeed, in the lines immediately following, (ps.-) Eusebius considers the story told by Philostratus, that Proteus visited Apollonius' mother during her pregnancy, and announced that she would bear himself, a god, to the world.[43] Consequently, when (ps.-)Eusebius critiques these assertions as a mere σχῆμά τε καὶ προσωπεῖον, he integrates questions of origins and birth with metaphors of masking. Towards the end of the century, in the early 380's,[44] Gregory accuses Eunomius of imposing a mask, or appearance, of slavery upon Christ οὐ γὰρ δὴ δοῦλον ὁμολογοῦντες τῇ φύσει τῷ προσωπείῳ τῆς δουλείας ἐπαισχυνθή- σεσθε ('In fact, since you agree that he is a slave in nature, you will not feel ashamed at endowing him with a mask of slavery' *Eun.* 3,4,37= GNO 2,148,10), which introduces a false hierarchy between Father and Son.[45] Approximately five years later, John Chrysostom mentions the προσωπεῖον when describing the literal disguise by which Rebecca tricked Isaac into granting Jacob his blessing before death.[46]

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[40] *Protrep.* 10,110.

[41] Johnson 2013 gives a summary of the debates over the authorship of the text, touching briefly on its historical context in so doing.

[42] The translation here is my own, with reference to Jones 2006.

[43] *c. Hieroc*. 8.

[44] Cassin 2014, 3-5 proposes a date of between 381 and 383.

[45] In this passage, προσωπεῖον takes on a slightly more metaphorical meaning, as documented by Lampe, *Patristic Greek Lexicon* s.v. προσωπεῖον. The translation is my own, with reference to Hall 2014. For the explicit detailing of the theological consequences of Eunomius' misstep, see *Eun*. 3,4,37-38 (= GNO 2,148,10-23).

[46] *Hom. 1-6 in Is*. 6,4. For the date of 386-387 for *Hom. 1-6 in Is*. 2, 3, 5 and 6, Dumortier 1981, 10-13.

Once again, however, the work of Cyril of Alexandria comes closest to Heliodorus. In his dialogue *Quod sit unus Christus*, dated to the mid-430's,[47] Cyril expresses disagreement with the doctrine of Nestorius and his teachers on the relationship between the human and divine natures of Christ. Towards the end of the text, he writes the following:

εἰ νόθος ἐστὶ καὶ ψευδώνυμος, καὶ εἰσποιητὸν ἔχει τὸ εἶναι Υἱός, ἐγκαλείτωσαν αὐτοῖς τὴν ψευδηγορίαν, καὶ τοῦτο ὀμωμοκόσι. Προσθείκασι γὰρ τὸ 'ἀληθῶς,' Υἱὸν αὐτὸν εἶναι διαβεβαιούμενοι τοῦ Θεοῦ καὶ Πατρός (748d-e).

But if the Son is a bastard under a false name and is adopted as an heir, let [our enemies] charge with falsehood [the disciples] who swear [by calling Christ the Son of God]. Since they have added the word 'truly' to affirm that he is the Son of God the Father.[48]

Σύνες οὖν ὅπως 'ἴδιον αἷμα' καὶ 'ἰδίαν σάρκα' φησὶν αὐτοῦ τὴν δοθεῖσαν ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν, ἵνα μὴ ἑτέρου παρ' αὐτὸν υἱοῦ λέγωμεν αὐτήν, νοουμένου τε ἀναμέρος, καὶ ψιλῇ συναφείᾳ τετιμημένου, καὶ ἐπακτὴν ἔχοντος δόξαν, καὶ οὐκ οὐσιώδη τὴν ὑπεροχήν, ἐπίβλημα δὲ καὶ ὥσπερ τι προσωπεῖον ἐπερριμμένον αὐτῷ, τό τε τῆς υἱότητος καὶ τῆς ὑπὲρ πάντα θεότητος ὄνομα (774d-e).

Understand then that one says 'his own blood' and 'his own flesh' given on our behalf, so that we may not say that it is from another son besides him, perceived as separate and honoured because of mere union [with the Son], having a reputation not its own and a false prominence, and that the name of sonship and divinity beyond all else is spread over him like a cloak and mask.

According to Cyril, the Nestorian position on Christ's nature implies that his divine status is merely adopted. Consequently, Cyril continues, his opponents strip Christ of his rightful place as the true Son of God, rendering him instead a sort of bastardised or counterfeit son, νόθος ἐστὶ καὶ ψευδώνυμος.[49] Later in his discussion, Cyril addresses Nestorius' analogy between wearing a garment and the relationship between God and man in Christ, demonstrating his disapproval of

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[47] De Durand 1964, 70-80 proposes a date of composition between 434 and 437.

[48] All translations are my own, with reference to de Durand 1964; McGuckin 1995. The text is de Durand's Sources Chrétiennes.

[49] An attribution that is not uncommon when discussing heretical conceptions of Christ in this period (Lampe s.v. προσωπεῖον).

understanding Christ's divinity as a cloak or a mask.[50] Christ's mask-like divinity is thus bound up with his contested legitimacy since both, as Cyril sees it, are fictive and erroneous conditions inherent in the Nestorian separation of Christ's humanity from his divinity. Cyril reinforces this link by describing the Nestorian Christ as a bastard, νόθον δὲ ὥσπερ τι καὶ ψευδώνυμον ('a bastard and under a false name'), at 774e shortly after his masking metaphor.[51]

Cyril's descriptions of Christ as a bastard even contain several echoes with Hydaspes' words on the level of language. As in Heliodorus, Cyril's reference to the προσωπεῖον concerns a bastard and adopted child. In 748d, Cyril claims that Nestorian doctrine renders Christ analogous to an adopted son, εἰσποιητός, just as Hydaspes speculates that Chariclea is a false heir to the Ethiopian throne (εἰσποιεῖ). [52] Both speak of a προσωπεῖον and both use the metaphor to reveal a νόθος.[53] If the emendation of προσωπεῖον is accepted, then the similarities are quite close, as both Heliodorus and Cyril imagine a mask which attempts to establish a bastard child's claim to legitimate filiation. If the manuscript reading of προσωπείῳ is retained, then the parallels are slightly less exact, as Chariclea becomes both mask and bastard child, whereas Christ's illegitimacy is likened to the *wearing* of a mask. In both cases, however, Hydaspes' use of theatrical metaphor touches upon a nexus of themes, masking and the correct relationship between parent and child, that are also used by Cyril.

When read with these similarities to Cyril in mind, Hydaspes' sceptical reaction posits Chariclea as the equivalent of the heretic's Christ. Just as Cyril sees Nestorius' Christ as a false image engineered by a theologian is harmful to 'orthodox' Christianity, Hydaspes too asserts that Chariclea's claims to be his daughter are superficial and the product of malignant action. Chariclea's portrayal as

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[50] On the importance of images of Christ's humanity and divinity being superficially joined in Cyril's refutations of Nestorius, see McKinion 2000, 104.

[51] I have here printed Migne's text (*PG* 75) and not de Durand's as de Durand's reads νωθὸν δὲ ὥσπερ τι καὶ ψευδώνυμον. Both de Durand and McGuckin translate the word in question as bastard, i.e. the equivalent of νόθος. A use of νωθός, normally employed as a first-second declension alternative to νωθής (slow or sluggish), to mean bastard would be unprecedented according to the *LSJ* and Lampe's *Patristic Greek Lexicon*, and neither de Durand nor McGuckin offers any commentary on Cyril's language in this passage. The fault thus appears to lie with the printer of de Durand's edition, rather than with de Durand himself for passing by a linguistic idiosyncrasy in the manuscript tradition.

[52] Hld. 10,13,5.

[53] For the use of εἰσποιητός and νόθος as attributes acquired by Christ as the result of heresy, see also Thdt. *Ep.* 146.

supernatural or godlike at several points across the *Aethiopica* underscores these likenesses to Christ, as they render her in some sense both divine and human.[54]

It is important to note that these resonances in language and content do not suggest that the metaphors of masking in the *Aethiopica* and the *Quod sit unus Christus* are directly engaging with one another. In fact, given the absence of other meaningful similarities in content, conscious interaction between Cyril and the *Aethiopica* is unlikely. The definitively later date of Cyril's dialogue renders such engagement even less plausible, as chronology dictates that Cyril allude to the *Aethiopica*, a move which makes little sense in a treatise on heresy that otherwise does not express interest in allusion to non-Christian texts. Instead, the *Aethiopica*'s metaphor should be read as expressing an affinity with that of Patristic texts more generally, albeit while looking forward in certain ways to the conceptual links made with masking in its closest point of comparison, the *Quod sit unus Christus*.

Moreover, there are several, crucial differences in the stakes of the Christian and Heliodoran speculations. Unlike late antique theologians, who were embroiled in controversies with very real opponents, the conspirators plotting to take Hydaspes' throne are imagined. Furthermore, Cyril's theatrical language refers specifically to a relationship between a divine father and divine/human son, namely God and Christ. In the *Aethiopica*, Hydaspes' rhetorical question, μή τις δαίμων ἡμῖν ἐπιπαίζει, has been recognised as an interpolation, thus excluding the possibility that Hydaspes is pondering the relationship between the divine and mortal realms.[55] Instead, Hydaspes employs a dramatic metaphor to describe his potentially illegitimate daughter. This difference in gender between Chariclea and the Son of God is of perhaps slightly less importance, as Chariclea is in any case

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[54] Lateiner 1997, 428-429; Hilton 1998, 86-91; Edsall 2002, 121-124; Chew 2007, 294-295. In this context, Hydaspes' reference to Charicleia's appearance οἷον ἐκ μηχανῆς ἀναφαίνουσα (Hld. 10,12,2) further underscores her resemblance to divinity, as does, from a Neoplatonic perspective, the numerological significance of Chariclea's name; the letters in Chariclea's name add up to 777 and thus align her with the world soul, which was represented by the number 7 (see Jones 2005, 88-90 on the numerology of Chariclea's name; Macr. *Somn.* 1,6,26-27 on the association between the number 7 and the world soul). For the traditional porousness between gods and rulers in antiquity, Price 1987, 56-99; Mitchell and Melville 2012, 3.

[55] Were Hydaspes to have referred to a δαίμων, the *Aethiopica* and the *Quod sit unus Christus* would have perhaps aligned even more closely, as their anxiety about masks and legitimacy would have both incorporated a meditation on the role of divinity in these matters.

the most direct heir to her father's throne. Her status as a woman thus in no way diminishes the significance of determining her parentage. [56]

Indeed, perhaps the most important point of contrast between Heliodorus' recognition scene and the polemic of roughly contemporary theologians is the tone of the *Aethiopica*'s end. As is well-known by scholars of the *Aethiopica*, Hydaspes' hesitance to believe Chariclea is the object of hermeneutic and met-aliterary play. His repeated recourse to the language of drama to articulate his doubts about the truth of Chariclea's identity both dismisses her story as a con-venient, self-serving fiction while simultaneously reminding the reader of the Eu-ripidean and New Comedy precedents for the situation at hand which foreshadow a much happier end to the reunion between parent and long-lost child. His reac-tion, in other words, contains assumptions about what is realistic or 'probable' which do not map onto the theatrical, miraculous event he is witnessing. [57] More-over, the words of Hydaspes are full of dramatic irony for the reader, who has been aware of Charicleia's identity since Book 4. The use of language with close Christian parallels in *Aethiopica* 10,13 is thus embedded in a larger misinterpre-tation which appears erroneous, and thus slightly amusing, to the more knowl-edgeable audience. For an informed late antique readership, the recognition scene deflates ideas which align with Christian anxieties by positioning them within a misguided, overly sceptical line of reasoning.

Concluding thoughts: Interpreting Christian resonance in the Aethiopica

Each of the three cases analysed above, Calasiris' narrative of flight from Mem-phis in *Aethiopica* 2, the consolation of the priest in Book 7, and Hydaspes' que-ries in Book 10, represents a slightly different response to Christian lines of thought, and introduces yet another layer of complexity to revelations about the identity of Calasiris, the simultaneously foreign and familiar explanation of the funeral rites of Egyptian priests, and the recognition of Chariclea by her parents as their legitimate daughter. Taken together, these short passages suggest a dia-lectic between Heliodorus' text and the newly prominent Christian worldview, which does not hesitate to point (even if playfully) to the 'strangeness' of Chris-tianity from the point of view of certain aspects of Greco-Roman (literary) culture. This set of responses, I have suggested, would be apparent to a readership aware

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[56] This is not the first instance where Chariclea 'replaces' a male figure; see Hilton 2017, 61-62 for the parallels between the lovesick Chariclea and the legendary lust of Antiochus I for his stepmother Stratonice.

[57] On the play with τὸ εἰκός in the text, Hunter 1998b, 56; similarly, Fusillo 1991, 33-34.

of fourth- and fifth-century theological writings. The *Aethiopica*'s cameo appearance in Socrates Scholasticus implies that Heliodorus' novel was circulating amongst just such an audience.

Exploring Heliodorus' place within Patristic circles not only restores a fuller range of potential readings of the *Aethiopica* in Late Antiquity. It also offers more evidence towards establishing the elusive context of the *Aethiopica*. The similarities in language and themes alone lend further weight to the belief that Heliodorus' novel is from the fourth century and suggest that it could have emerged from an intellectual milieu shared with early Patristic thinkers. While the *Aethiopica* picks up themes which were significant to classical and early Christian texts, it also looks forward in important ways to the concerns and self-expression of late-fourth and early-fifth century theological works.[58]

Perhaps more interestingly, acknowledging the wide variety of ways in which Christian logic would have appeared embedded in the *Aethiopica* to late antique readers brings to the fore new and fruitful ways of understanding Christian resonances in the text. The *Aethiopica* offers multiple, and at times conflicting readings where questions of philosophy and theology are concerned, perhaps more so than any of other surviving 'ancient novels' except Apuleius' *Metamorphoses*.[59] Consequently, mapping a broader range of Heliodoran responses to Patristic writings does not supersede or efface the important affinities it shares with Christian literary production. Rather, it unlocks the many different paths of meaning the *Aethiopica* leaves open to its audience in matters of Christian theology, and sheds light on the place of Patristic thought within the set of theological and philosophical puzzles posed to Heliodorus' readers.[60]

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[58] I join Jackson 2021 here in viewing Heliodorus as particularly 'prescient' of later developments in Christian literary culture.

[59] On Heliodorus, Szepessy 1957, 252-253; Kövendi 1966, 166-197; Reardon 1971, 386-390; Heiserman 1977, 199-203; Geffcken 1978, 84; Fusillo 1991, 234; Sandy 1982; Winkler 1982, 152-158 (= 1999, 344-350); Morgan 1989b; Dowden 1996; Hunter 1998b, 58-59; Bargheer 1999, 91; Kruchió 2020. For Apuleius, Harrison 2000, 210-259.

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