

NOTES

Two Notes on Heliodorus

1. *Charicleia's Girdle: Heliodorus ii 31.3, x 13*

At *Περὶ φυγῆς* 20.2 Favorinus¹ introduces an unusual exemplum: if an Ethiopian king wishes to honour one of his subjects he takes off one of his own belts (ζώματα) and gives it to him: αὐτὴ γὰρ Αἰθίοπων στολή. As long as the recipient wears this, the king's subjects will show him respect; the moment he is deprived of it, he loses his authority. Barigazzi *ad loc.*² notes that the anecdote is otherwise unknown. But this royal belt of the Ethiopians does emerge elsewhere in a slightly different guise. Charicleia, the heroine of Heliodorus' *Aethiopica*, has a silk ταινία³ exposed with her, embroidered with an inscription which explains her royal birth and the circumstances of her exposure (ii 31.3, *cf.* iv 8.6). On her return to Ethiopia she deliberately wears the belt. When about to be sacrificed, she presents it to her mother Queen Persinna, and her royal birth is conveniently established at the eleventh hour. The parallel in Favorinus is a new illustration of one of Heliodorus' characteristic techniques: he is fond of investing an obscure piece of paradoxography with a key role in the plot. A portrait of the white Andromeda determines Charicleia's skin colour at conception (iv 8.5), and makes her exposure necessary in the first place; and among her other birth-tokens is no less a stone than the Pantarbe itself (v 14). Thanks to the papyrus of Favorinus we can conclude that the most important of her inevitable γνωρίσματα is in fact an unusual but attested 'Ethiopian' detail of the same order.

2. *Ὁμηρος, ὁμηρος, ὁ μηρός: Heliodorus iii 14.4*

Homer's thigh has occasioned rather less dispute than his birthplace: but it still remains the most puzzling of the many contrived surprises in Heliodorus' *Aethiopica*: the Egyptian priest Calasiris claims that the poet was an Egyptian, son of Hermes, with a divine mark on his thigh: hence *Ὁμηρος* > *ὁ μηρός*. His companion Cnemon declares himself suitably enlightened, but scholars have found little to add to the double exclamation mark with which Rohde's footnote records Calasiris' theory. Rohde himself dismissed this nonsense as nothing more than a schoolmaster's erudition, characteristic of the sheer perversity of Heliodorus' paradoxography;⁴ Merkelbach hails it as proof that jokes in Heliodorus must have a mystical basis, which in this case happens to elude us;⁵ Rattenbury-Lumb compares Lucian's clearly jocular claim (*Ver. Hist.* ii 20) that Homer was a Babylonian hostage (*ὁμηρος*).⁶ What has not been seen is that the

sacred joke in Heliodorus and the secular one in Lucian are two halves of the same pun, and are both imitations of a classic enigma in Teiresias' monologue in the *Bacchae*. There the prophet is talking not about the birth of Homer, but of Dionysus: the god's *eidolon* seems to have been given as a hostage to Hera, while Zeus makes arrangements to have him hidden.⁷ But the tradition that Dionysus was inserted into the thigh of Zeus is dismissed as a mere human fabrication: χρόνω δέ νιν / βροτοὶ ῥαφήναι φασιν ἐν μηρῷ Διός, / ὄνομα μεταστήσαντες, ὅτι θεᾶ θεός / Ἥρα ποθ' ὠμήρευσε, συνθέντες λόγον (294 ff.). Now Heliodorus shows a special interest in levels of religious interpretation, and seems to derive satisfaction from citing a popular explanation for a religious phenomenon, then rejecting it in favour of something more mystical and esoteric (e.g. the traditions concerning the Nile, ix 9.5); in the present case he has found just such a piece of priestly one-upmanship in Euripides, and it can be no accident that he completely reverses Teiresias' revelation. The thigh is now the *correct* explanation of the word ὁμηρος (τῶν δὲ ἐγνωκότων τὸ περὶ τὸ σῶμα πάθος εἰς ὄνομα κροτησάντων iii 14.3) applied, it seems, by those in the know: the popular and silly explanation has become the sacred, mystical and esoteric one known only to Egyptian priests! Calasiris has a hint of Plato's Egyptian priest before Solon (*Tim.* 22b ff.: *Aeth.* ii 21 ff.), and of Proteus before Menelaus (*Aeth.* ii 24.4); a touch of Teiresias enriches his elusive character still further—all the more so when Teiresias' Theban explanation is calmly turned upside down in *Egyptian Thebes* (ii 14.2). Cnemon is elsewhere shown as superstitious to the point of gullibility: this subtle parody of Euripides dupes him as usual. Nineteenth-century editors of the *Bacchae* were ill at ease in dealing with sacred puns and their implications for the taste and intentions of their author;⁸ there should be little doubt about the taste or intention of Heliodorus. This subtle tragicomic novelist has started from the priestly sophistries of the most ambiguous tragedian, and manipulated the manipulator a stage further—not without a wink to the reader.

GRAHAM ANDERSON

Keynes College,
University of Kent at Canterbury

⁷ What is actually done with Dionysus, or how precisely he is made a hostage, is far from clear: I accept Dodds' lacuna, and the tentative interpretation offered in his edition (Oxford 1943) *ad* 292 ff. The important point for my argument is that ὠμήρευσε in 296 clearly implies ὁμηρον in 293.

⁸ See Dodds *ibid.* *ad* 286–97.

¹ Favorino di Arelate, *Opere, Introduzione, testo critico e commento a cura di Adelmo Barigazzi* (Florence 1966) 396 f.

² *Ibid.* 477. Barigazzi takes the Αἰθίοπων τῶν πρὸς ἀνατολὰς to be Indians; but confusion between the two races was commonplace, and Heliodorus does in fact make Hydaspes τῶν πρὸς ἀνατολὰς καὶ δυσημῶν Αἰθίοπων . . . βασιλεὺς (ix 6.2).

³ The ταινία is not a bra, as Rattenbury-Lumb explain *ad* ii 31.4: (Budé i p. 90); at x 13.1 ff. she has been wearing it ὑπὸ τῆ γαστρῆ!

⁴ *Der griechische Roman und sein Verläufer*³ (Leipzig/Berlin 1914: repr. with Kerényi's additions, Darmstadt 1974) 486 f., 487 n.1.

⁵ *Roman und Mysterium in der Antike* (Munich/Berlin 1962) 296 f.

⁶ In the first volume of their Budé edition (Paris 1934) *ad loc.*

The Karchesion of Herakles

Athenaeus (474e) quotes the description of the karchesion cup by Kallixeinos of Rhodes, a third-century B.C. author: 'a tall cup, slightly contracted at the middle with handles which extend down to the base'. Scholars have easily recognised in this a variety of kantharos, a cup with