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ABSTRACT

There are strong but previously unnoticed intertextual links between the dream of Charikles in Heliodorus (4.14.2), the portent of the eagle in Achilles Tatius (2.12.1-3), and the dream of Penelope in Homer (19.535-69). The allusion to Achilles Tatius' Leukippe and Kleophon may have alerted Heliodorus' readers to the approach of an important turning-point in the plot, but it is the Homeric link that is the primary focus. The dream of Penelope provides moral underpinning for marriage in the Athiopika and helps to underline the complex ironies in Heliodorus' narrative at this crucial turning-point in the plot.

In the Budé edition of Heliodorus' Athiopika, Rattenbury's note (Vol. II, vi) to Maillon's translation (Vol. II, 24 n. 3) raises a question, which remains unanswered, about the connection between the dream of Charikles (4.14.2) and the famous and much-discussed hapax of Penelope in the Odyssey (19.535-69). On the surface there does not appear to be a strong resemblance between the two accounts; nevertheless, in this article I argue that the connection should be accepted and that an awareness of this intertext adds greatly to the reader's appreciation of the subtle irony in Heliodorus' story.  

1 Est-ce là un souvenir d'Homère, Odyssee XIX.538 où Penelope en songe voit un aigle qui représente Ulysse? Ce n'est pas sûr.

2 Surprisingly little is made of Charikles' dream by Suzanne MacAlister, Dreams and Suicides, The Greek Novel from Antiquity to the Byzantine Empire (London 1996) 198 n. 32, other than to suggest that it is situated at an important turning-point in the plot; Shadi Bartsch, Decoding the Antiqua Novel (Princeton 1989) 103-04, discusses the narratological function of the dream at greater length, but without reference to Homer; J.J. Winkler, 'The mendacity of Kalasiris and the narrative strategy of Heliodorus' Athiopikae', JCCL 27(1992) 89-156 n. S. Swain (ed.), Oxford Readings in the Greek Novel (Oxford 1999) 286-350, deals with the connection between Ethiopia and Hades in the dream only; F. Weinstock, 'De somniorum visionumque in anciantis Graecorum vitae usum', Eos 35 (1934) 49, suggests that the dream expresses the fears of a lover that he would lose, or be separated from his beloved.
Charikles' dream may be briefly summarised as follows: Charikles, the high priest of Apollo at Delphi, intends to marry his adopted daughter Charikleia to his nephew, Alkamenes. However, she unexpectedly falls ill. Her sickness is at first interpreted as the result of the evil eye by a visiting Egyptian priest, Kalasiris, but later as love-sickness (not, as it turns out, for Alkamenes) by the more scientific doctor, Akesinos. Kalasiris then discovers that Charikleia is in fact an Ethiopian princess whom he had earlier promised to reunite with her mother in that distant land. At this point, Charikles informs him that he has had a dream in which an eagle, released from the hand of Apollo, had swooped down, snatched his daughter from his arms, and disappeared into a remote part of the earth full of dark and shadowy phantoms:

In the Odyssey, on the other hand, Penelope confides in the disguised Odysseus that she was uncertain whether or not she should remarry and that she had had a dream, which she asks him to interpret, in which an eagle killed her twenty geese.
In her account, the eagle returned and spoke to her to allay her fears, explaining that the dream (οὐπάρος) was in fact a vision (ἰεώτα) and that he represented her husband, Odysseus, and the geese stood for the suitors. She then awoke to find her geese unharmed. The disguised Odysseus expresses surprise that she had found the dream difficult to construe, since her husband Odysseus had interpreted it for her in the dream. Penelope remains sceptical, however, and explains to him that not all dreams can be relied on; true dreams emanate from a gate of horn and false ones from a gate of ivory. She informs him that she will soon be separated from her husband, as she intends to hold the tournament of axes on the next day, after which the first successful suitor would marry her.4

Superficially, therefore, the dreams are quite dissimilar. The strongest point of resemblance—the eagle—featured frequently in dreams and portents.5

For the allusion to the gates of horn and ivory, see P.C. Miller, Dreams in Late Antiquity (Princeton 1994) 15-17; R.G.A. van Lieshout, Dreams on Dreams (Oxford 1980) 38-39; A. Anistry, "The gates of horn and ivory," YCS 29 (1966) 3-57; E.L. Highbarger, The Gates of Dreams (Baltimore 1940). The most important texts on the theme are: cf. Plato, Charm. 97-100; Soph. El. 645; AP 7.42; Verg. Aen. 6.893-98 (most famously); Hor. Carm. 3.27-41; Prop. 5.7.87; Luc. Somn. 6; VII 2.32; Macrobi. Somn. 1.3.20; Ter. De Astria 44; Philostr. Imag. 3.3.3-1.3; R. Fab. 30.8; Julian, Ep. 17; Nom. Dion. 34.90; 44.53.

The literature on Penelope’s dream is very extensive. The most recent discussion is by Louise Pratt, Odyssey 19.935-56: on the interpretation of dreams and signs in Homer’s, CP 69.2 (1994) 147-52, who views the dream as a bird-sign indicating that Penelope’s 20 years of waiting for the return of Odysseus are over; the geese are symbolic of marital fidelity. For the Freudian interpretation that Penelope has a secret regard for the suitors, see A.V. Rankin, "Penelope’s dreams in Books 19 and 20 of the Odyssey," Hellenic 2 (1962) 617-24; M.A. Katz, Penelope’s Remorse: Mourning and Indecisiveness in the Odyssey (Princeton 1991) 146; G. Deveraux, "Penelope’s character", Psychanalytic Quarterly 26 (1957) 381-62; and E.R. Dodds, The Greeks and the Irrational (Berkeley-Los Angeles 1951) 123 n. 21. This view is contested by A.H.M. Kenney, Studies on the Dream in Greek Literature (Urbana 1978) 91-110, who argues that the dream should be considered a literary creation and an integral part of the narrative of the last books of the poem—the dream is an eroten that strengthens Odysseus’ resolve to reclaim his home; cf. also in this vein, W.S. Meyer, The Dream in Homer and Greek

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in antiquity. In the collection of dreams compiled by Artemidorus, for example, an eagle is said to indicate a powerful threat (αετός απελευθερώσει τον προφητημίαν, 2.20). Again in Achilles Tatius (2.12.1-3), the marriage of Kleitophon to his half-sister, Kalligone, is put off because of a portent in which an eagle snatches sacrificial meat from an altar. This omen foreshadows an actual event—the bride-theft of Kalligone by Kallisthenes, a young man from Byzantium who mistakes her for Leukippe. All this is very similar to what transpires in Heliodorus. The vocabulary used by both authors is close, although to some extent unavoidable: θειός απελευθερώσει το τερέτον (Achilles Tatius 2.12.2); αετός απελευθερώσει 

Teatrocracy (New York 1918) 32. J.J. Winkler, Contexts of Desire. The Anthropology of Sex and Gender in Ancient Greece (New York/London 1990) 153, regards the dream as a fiction by which Penelope communicates with the beggar; see also P.W. Harsh, ‘Penelope and Odysseus in Odyssey XIX’, AJPh 11 (1950) 1-21, who considers the dream to be an exciting duel of indirectness (between Penelope and the beggar), subtle and brilliant in its execution. In my view, Penelope’s sorrow at the death of the geese arises from her despair at the possibility of her sacrifice of so many years of her life, her desire for a son accompanied by her husband appears to be unlikely. For the harshness of a widow’s lot in ancient Greece, cf. W.K. Lacey, The Family in Classical Greece (London 1968) 81 n. 200, 108-09.

In the present passage, the image of the eagle is chosen, according to D. Koraes, ‘ΗΗεοΓεώτρησις Απολλωνίου Βιβλίου Βέβαιον’ (Paris 1804-1806) 1, to suggest that the kidnapping of Charikeia is imminent because the Greek word for eagle, αετός, means ‘first year’ (α’ημ). Cf. Artemidorus 2.20, ἡ πρωταία συνάρτησις ἡ πρώτη. Given Heliodorus’ propensity for numerology, this is not entirely fantastic.

For the literary function of the dream, see Bratsch (note 2) 86-87, who does not notice the link with Heliodorus.

On the relationship between Heliodorus and Achilles Tatius, see D.B. Durham, ‘Parody in Achilles Tatius’, CP 33.1 (1938) 1-19, who assumes that Achilles was parodying Heliodorus (which is the other way around); P. Neirmeke, Que est-ce Heliodore? (Bos, Halle 1889) — a study of the striking similarities between Heliodorus’ romance and that of Achilles Tatius. I assume here that Heliodorus wrote in the 4th century and Achilles Tatius in the 3rd. For the fourth-century date of the Aithiopika, see most recently J.R. Morgan, ‘Heliodorus’ in G.L. Schmitt (ed.), The Novel in the Ancient World (Leiden 1996) 417-56, esp. 417-21. In my view, therefore, Heliodorus was clearly aware of Achilles’ novel and even followed the sequence and theme of his romantic plot, but needed to distance himself from his predecessor’s eroticism and parody of the romance genre, in view of the greater moral earnestness of his own work. I intend to discuss the relationship between Heliodorus and Achilles Tatius more fully in a subsequent publication.

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Moreover, in Heliodorus, too, there is an incident of bride-theft in which Charikleia is abducted by Theagenes as a prelude to their elopement to Ethiopia with Kalasiris, and the narrative of events in Delphi shows a number of resemblances to the abductions of Kalligone and Leukippe in Achilles Tattus. No doubt Heliodorus' contemporaneous readers would have noticed the intertextual relationship. If so, they would have been alerted to the coming resolution of Charikleia's love problems by means of a violent abduction. They would also notice Kleitophon's cynical attitude towards the divine portents—he deems the eagle the king of birds because its action causes a delay in the preparations for his marriage to Kalligone and gives him a chance to develop his plans to seduce Leukippe. This puts readers in a sceptical frame of mind for reading the Heliodorus passage and alerts them to the possibility of extended irony in the narrative.

Nevertheless, there are a number of reasons why it is plausible that many of Heliodorus' readers would have had Penelope's dream primarily in mind here. Firstly, allusions to Homer and particularly to the Odyssey, are very plentiful in Heliodorus and intertextual links between the epic and novel are always to be expected. Secondly, Heliodorus has deviated from Achilles Tattus precisely in giving Chariklé to a premonition of the future in a dream rather than as a portent, thus pointing the reader's attention to his famous Homeric model. Thirdly, the dream of Charikleia, like that of Penelope, is introduced into the narrative from outside the chronological context of the plot. In fact, it has been argued that Charikleia could not have dreamt this dream in the time available to him. Earlier in the day, Charikleia had greeted Kalasiris happily with the news that Charikleia had fallen in love, according to the opinion of the doctor Akesinos (4.7.1); at midday (ἐνθισθαμώθηκεν ἐπὶ τοῖς ἀργοῖς), he reported that she had reacted badly to

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9 For bridge-theft in Heliodorus, see Donald A. LaCroix, 'Abduction marriage in Heliodorus' Anthiaiopis', CPh 38.4 (1947) 409.39. This article only appeared in 1940.
11 Cf. V. Heft: Zur Erzählformtechnik in Heliodorus Anthiaiopis (Vienna 1956) 79.
being introduced to Alkamenes (4.7.10). Only a little while later, after Kalasiris had discovered the truth about Chariklea’s origins, he told the Egyptian priest of his ominous dream, although he said that it had come to him during the night (τῇ παρασκευῇ νυκτός, 4.14.2). It is very likely that Heliodorus has made this narratological error through following his Homeric model, in which the dream of Penelope is similarly not tied to the strict chronology of the narrative and takes place at an unspecified time of anxiety and troubled nights (Od. 19.512-17). Both dreams are to some extent imposed on the narrative to aid its development: in the Odyssey the incident alerts Odysseus to Penelope’s state of mind and propels him into action, and in the Aithiopika Kalasiris is stirred into accelerating his plans to escape by becoming conscious of the intuitive premonitions of Charikles. On close investigation, the two passages do in fact appear to be very similar. Both dreams concern marriage, but in both the marriage is overshadowed by sadness and the dreamers are dejected: Charikles is πρὸς ὑπερβολὴν περίληπτον καὶ ὀλίγας καταθέσεις ὁνετολέον (4.14.1), while Penelope is described as ὀλυσφορομένη (Od. 19.543). The dreamers both interpret their dreams negatively: Charikles believes that the dream presages the death of his daughter (the shadows stand for the aerilfe; cf. 1.3.1); Penelope laments the apparent futility of her twenty years of fidelity to her absent husband and fears a bleak future as an unmarried old woman. The dreams concern the loss of something dearly cherished, in the case of Charikles, his daughter;12 in that of Penelope, the loss of her husband, coupled with the possibility that she would not be able to remarry and retain her status in her home.13 Both dreamers are sceptical about their dreams: Charikles says οἷς δὲ προσεχέν ὀνειρόμην (4.14.2) and Penelope ὄνειροι ἀξίωσαν αὐτόπτωμα ἕα γάνταν (19.560-61). Penelope expounds the well-known doctrine of the gates of horn and ivory, and concludes that her dream must have come through the gate of ivory and that it was therefore untrustworthy. Moreover, in both dreams the interpreters also play a role in the dream. In Homer, the eagle actually becomes Odysseus and assures Penelope that he will return and kill the suitors—a prophecy that is later fulfilled. In the Ethiopian Story, Kalasiris takes on the role of

12 The love of Charikles for his foster-daughter is clear from his lament on her disappearance (4.19.9). He had earlier lost his biological daughter in a fire on her wedding-night (2.29.4).
13 Discussed above (note 4).
the dream-eagle, when he assists Theagenes and Charikleia to elope. However, Odysseus and Kalasiris are also deceitful interpreters who supply positive interpretations for the dreams: Kalasiris has disguised his true intentions, which are to assist Charikleia and Theagenes to elope from Delphi, in accordance with the oracle of Apollo and the mandate of Persinna; Odysseus is disguised as a beggar and conceals the details of his plans from his wife. The reader or audience suspects (and the re-reader knows) that in fact the dreamers’ interpretations are false and that the apparently false interpretation is true: Charikles’ fear that his daughter will die is false, but it is true that she will marry; Penelope’s premonitions are unfeigned and Odysseus does return and kill the suitors. Both dreams foreshadow the fates and, while Penelope’s dream does not shape the narrative, as did that of Agamemnon in the Iliad (2.1-34), which precipitates the disastrous assembly in which the Greek leader tests the will of his troops, nevertheless it does create atmosphere and prepares the reader for further developments in the plot. Similarly, the dream of Charikles is closely followed by the elopement of the two lovers from Delphi. The words which refer to the immense intervening distance (705 παρεδοτη γενικευμενον, 4.14.2) between Charikles and his daughter suggest an extremely remote country, such as Ethiopia where the novel ends.

It may also be worth noting that both dreams are essentially allegorical in nature. Messer notes14 that Penelope’s dream is the first in European literature for which an allegorical interpretation is provided, but argues that the return of the eagle to expound the dream is a reversion to the more typical Homeric dream, which is normally objective, external and personal (cf., for example, the dream of Agamemnon: II. 2.1-34). The dream of Charikles is even more susceptible to allegorical reading on a number of levels: it could foreshadow Charikleia’s death, her intended marriage with Alkamenes, her elopement with Theagenes, or a spiritual journey (in which the eagle of Apollo that leads her to a distant and physically unobservable land represents philosophy, Charikleia represents the soul, and the distant land represents the enlightened kingdom of the sun).15

14 Messer (note 4) 30-46, esp. 34.
15 On the allegorical interpretation of the Athiopika, see R. Merkelbach, Rom und Mystere im der Antike (Munich/Berlin 1962) 234-99; Sandy (note 10) 50-56.
It seems unlikely, therefore, that Heliodorus' readers would have missed the intertextual allusion to the dream of Penelope and they may well have been more aware of it than the passage in Achilles Tatius. I turn now to consider the literary function of the link.

Above all, the dream of Penelope draws attention to her fidelity to her absent husband and to her chaste marriage. Her despondency over the apparent futility of her twenty years of waiting for Odysseus provides a strong contrast with the circumstances under which Kaligone and later Leukippe were abducted in Achilles Tatius. There is a strong element of farce in the way Callisthenes, a young man from Byzantium, innocently abducts Kaligone in mistake for Leukippe, thus putting an end to Hippias' marital plans for his son. Kleitophon was never in favour of marrying his step-sister and was in any case more strongly attracted to Leukippe; eventually the couple elope after being discovered in bed together by her mother (2.23.5-6). In Heliodorus the abduction of Chariklea by Theagenes raises Charicles' plans to marry her to Alkamenes, but the deed is carried out in far greater earnest and for very different motives. Kalaisis' aim is to reunite Chariklea with her mother in Ethiopia so that she can reclaim her rightful royal status, and Theagenes is made to swear an oath to respect her chastity until they are married (4.18.5-6). The Homeric intertext serves a very important function in elevating the moral tone of the abduction of Chariklea and distinguishing it from the more erotic and comic narrative of Achilles Tatius.

All awareness of the Homeric intertext also deepens the reader's appreciation of the irony of Charicles' dream. In the Homeric dream, Penelope's cleverness and mistrustfulness cause her to disbelieve a dream which is, in fact, soon to come true. Further irony lies in the fact that the disguised Odysseus tells Penelope that she should trust the eagle's words, since they were the words of Odysseus himself. Similarly, in Heliodorus the ironies are complex and may be broken down as follows:

1. Charicles'…

8 See Pratl (note 4) 351: 'Penelope's geese might be taken as symbols of her marital fidelity.'
9 See S. Goddall, Forerunners of Byzantium (Cambridge) 116-19.
11 Cf. J.R. Morgan, A Commentary on the Ninth and Tenth Books of the Aithipnka of Heliodorus (Oxford 1991) at 9.25.1, who points out that Heliodorus uses the dream of Charicles to give ironic depth to his narrative.
interpretation of the dream is incorrect and Kalasiris is right to point out the irony in the priest of Apollo being unable to interpret his own dreams correctly. (2) Kalasiris' interpretation of the dream is ironically ambiguous: he is aware that Charikles will think that the dream signified that he would give Charikleia in marriage to Alkamenes, whereas both he and the reader know that Kalasiris intends to bring about the marriage of Charikleia to Theagenes. (3) If the dream can be read as a cipher of the Ethiopian Story, a further level of metadiegetic irony can be observed, since Kalasiris, who is the mainspring of the events in Delphi, gives an ambiguous interpretation of the dream that obscures the way the plot actually unfolds. (4) On the allegorical level, the journey of Charikleia may be viewed as a spiritual journey of enlightenment, but ironically here it is portrayed as a journey towards darkness and death. (5) Finally, if the dream can be read as a cipher of the Ethiopian Story, a further level of metadiegetic irony can be observed, since Kalasiris, who is the mainspring of the events in Delphi, gives an ambiguous interpretation of the dream that obscures the way the plot actually unfolds. Kalasiris' actions here are consonant with the pessimistic view of dreams elsewhere in the Ethiopian Story: Kalasiris, for example, says: χρήσατα για καλόν τόμον τός τέλων κρίνοντα (2.36.2; cf. also 3.11.5 and 3.12.1). Heliodorus comments on Thyamis' interpretation of a dream: Καὶ τῷ μὲν ὄνων τόσον ἐπιδροτείς τὰ τρόπια τοῦτος τῶν ἐπιθυμιῶν ἐξήγονεν (2.36.3). The words are unusual in Homer and the similarity in expression between the two passages strongly suggests that Heliodorus was very familiar with Penelope's speech: ἑξήγονε τὰ τρόπια τοῦτος τῶν ἐπιθυμιῶν (Od. 19.547: ὥσπερ ὡς ἤπειρος). The words are unusual in Homer and the similarity in expression between the two passages strongly suggests that Heliodorus was very familiar with Penelope's speech: ἑξήγονε τὰ τρόπια τοῦτος τῶν ἐπιθυμιῶν (Od. 19.547: ὥσπερ ἤπειρος). The words are unusual in Homer and the similarity in expression between the two passages strongly suggests that Heliodorus was very familiar with Penelope's speech: ἑξήγονε τὰ τρόπια τοῦτος τῶν ἐπιθυμιῶν (Od. 19.547: ὥσπερ ἤπειρος). The words are unusual in Homer and the similarity in expression between the two passages strongly suggests that Heliodorus was very familiar with Penelope's speech: ἑξήγονε τὰ τρόπια τοῦτος τῶν ἐπιθυμιῶν (Od. 19.547: ὥσπερ ἤπειρος).
and finally Charikleia tells Theagenes: ἡ συνηθέσις σε τῶν δισταχημάτων πάντας πρὸς τὸ φαντάστων νοεῖν τε καὶ εἰκάζειν παρεσκεύασε, φιλεῖ γὰρ ἀνθρώπος πρὸς τα συμπληρώσει τρέψειν τὴ γνώμην (8.11.5).23 Such pervasive irony at the very least suggests a scepticism in the romance about the ability of humans, including priests, to determine the will of the gods.24 In the case of Charikles, this is particularly true, of all the priestly characters in the romance he is least able to foresee how events will unfold.25

Thus, Heliodorus makes creative and original use of traditional epic material in his romance. The dream of Charikles recalls Penelope’s dream and of necessity its context — her sorrow at the apparent waste of twenty years of her life in which she had upheld the sanctity of her marriage to Odysseus. This recollection serves to accentuate the serious implications of the abduction of Charikleia, for which the law prescribed the penalty of death, as Kalasiris reminds Theagenes (4.6.5). Without the underlying Homeric intertext the elopement of the young couple would lack the earnest sense of purpose that distinguishes their undertaking from that of Leukippe and Kétopphon, despite the superficial resemblance between the flight of the two pairs of lovers (the prevention of a wrong marriage and the facilitation of the right one). As it is the couple affirm their intention to remain chaste until Charikleia should regain her kingdom, and that, if this should prove to be impossible, Theagenes should only marry her with her full consent (4.18.5-6). Moreover, when both passages are read alongside one another, the ironies inherent in the interaction between the dreamers and their more worldly and sophisticated advisors are more sharply delineated.

23 There is a later parallel in the Ethiopiczn Story to the pessimism of Charikles, interpreted more optimistically by Kalasiris, in the dream of Theagenes (8.13), which he takes as a bad omen but which Charikleia views more sanguinely. Cf. also the dream of Thymis concerning Charikleia, which he interprets over-optimistically at first, and then over-pessimistically (1.18.5: 1.30.4): Homeric dreams are often deceitful (cf. 2.36-71; 5.148-51; 10.496-97, but cf. contest 4.795-841). In Philonistratos (cf. 1.23) Apollonios similarly gives a more sanguine interpretation to a dream of fish beached by dolphins, which Darius thought fearful.

24 The question of the religious interpretation of the work has been discussed by Morgan (note 7) 446-54, to which should be added K. Dowden, ‘Heliodore: serious intentions’, CQ 46.1 (1996) 267-86, who argues for divine guidance in the affairs of the hero and heroine.

25 On this point see Szepessy (note 21) 252-53.