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The Trouble with Calasiris

Duplicity and Autobiographical Narrative in Heliodorus and Galen

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Abstract

In this article, I take a new look at the problem of Calasiris' 'duplicity' as depicted in the long autobiographical narrative he delivers to Cnemon in Books 2-5 of Heliodorus' *Aethiopica*. A close parallel for Calasiris' self-presentation can be found in an unlikely source: the medical case histories of the doctor Galen. Through a comparison of Calasiris' narrative with those of Galen, I demonstrate that both narrators employ similar 'deceptive' strategies to showcase their observational and deductive skills to their audience. Calasiris' foregrounding of such 'rational' methods and his downplaying of the prophetic power that others attribute to him suggest that, despite the *Aethiopica's* religious trappings, its ideal reader is a secular one.

Keywords

Heliodorus, *Aethiopica* – Galen – autobiography – narrative – audience – divination

The Egyptian priest Calasiris has long 'troubled' readers of Heliodorus' *Aethiopica*. In particular, critics have had difficulty reconciling his priestly status and self-styled noble calling with what has been described as his "mendacity", his "ambivalent and devious personality", or his "chicanery".¹ Attempts to resolve the problem tend to fall into two camps. Proponents of a solution internal to the text excuse Calasiris' unscrupulous behavior on the grounds that it is undertaken for a worthy cause: to fulfill the Delphic oracle's prophecy as well as Calasiris' promise to the Ethiopian queen by bringing

¹ Winkler 1982, title; Morgan 1996, 453; Dowden 1996, 283. E.g., Futre Pinheiro 1991, 79: "his complex and contradictory personality unites the qualities of saint and impostor"; Bretzigheimer 1998, 93: "Er gilt als Priester und Weiser, aber auch als Scharlatan und Komödiant."

Theagenes and Charicleia to Ethiopia.² Others, looking to the novel's cultural context, have asserted that Calasiris is modeled on Imperial 'holy men', whose advocacy of "duplicity in the service of a higher cause" is also found articulated in Neoplatonism and mystery religions; Calasiris' behavior is thus only ethically problematic from our modern perspective.³ Both explanations have much to recommend them, but in this article I want to focus on two crucial (and interrelated) aspects of Calasiris' portrayal that they tend to ignore: first, the fact that Calasiris *himself* draws our attention to his 'mendacious' nature in his own first-person narrative, and second, that this account of his deceptions privileges and showcases his observational and deductive skills, in explicit contrast to the divine wisdom or prophetic power that others attribute to him. Through a comparison with several similar autobiographical case-histories written by the late second-century physician Galen of Pergamum, I suggest some possible answers as to why Heliodorus depicts Calasiris portraying himself in such a fashion.⁴

1 The Trouble with Calasiris

The apparent split in Calasiris' personality is fairly evident to any modern reader of the *Aethiopica*. On the one hand, he appears, both in the primary narrative and in the autobiographical account he gives in Books 2-5, as a holy and devout (θειότατος; 8.11.2 and 8.11.9) Egyptian priest (προφήτης; e.g., 3.11.3 and 3.16.2),⁵ who is often seen

² Winkler 1982, although his argument is far more complex; Futre Pinheiro 1991; Fuchs 1993, 174-178.

³ Dowden 1996, 283-284; 2015; Schubert 1997, 258; Jones 2005, 81; Billault 2015. The two arguments are often combined, as in Sandy 1982a and 1982b, 65-74; cf. the succinct formulation of Baumbach 1997, 336-337: "Daß Kalasiris sich einer Lüge bedient, um sie zu überzeugen, ist nicht unmoralisch oder ungewöhnlich, sondern zur Durchsetzung des Götterwillens legitim. Es handelt sich [...] um eine Art 'holy lying' eines Mannes, der alle, die ihm [...] im Wege stehen [...], täuscht."

⁴ My comparison does not depend upon, nor does it attempt to provide evidence for any particular dating of the *Aethiopica*, nor any knowledge of Galen on the part of Heliodorus. For the record, my heart hopes that the novel was written in the early to mid-third century CE, but my mind tells me that it is from the late fourth. For recent discussions, see Malosse 2011-12 and Mecella 2014.

⁵ Baumbach 2008, 171-174 on Calasiris as priest.

engaged in religious rituals (e.g., 2.26-27). A particular emphasis is placed on his mastery of the “divine art” (τὴν θεῖαν τέχνην: 3.19.3) which Calasiris himself calls ‘the true wisdom’ (ἡ ἀληθῶς σοφία) and describes in lofty spiritual terms:

[This wisdom] looks toward the heavens (πρὸς τὰ οὐράνια), keeps company with the gods (θεῶν συνόμιλος), and partakes of the nature of the Great Ones; it studies the movement of the stars and thus gains knowledge of the future (μελλόντων πρόγνωσιν);⁶ it has no truck with the wicked, earthly concerns of the other kind, but all its energies are directed to what is good and beneficial to mankind (3.16.4-5)⁷

This portrait of Calasiris and his “divine art”, however, is systematically undermined throughout the *Aethiopica*. Many have noted the ironic attitude and slippery narrative style Calasiris displays in his conversation with Cnemon, as well as the affectation with which he passes off, with a straight face, preposterous ‘learned’ information to his naïve interlocutor: e.g., the outlandish account of Homer’s Egyptian origins.⁸ Far more ‘troubling’, however, is his penchant for deceiving and lying to both his enemies, such as the pirate Trachinus and his first officer Pelorus (in Book 5), and his friends, Charicles, Theagenes, and Charicleia (in Books 3-4).⁹ His ploys against the pirates are hatched *in extremis*, and thus somewhat understandable; Calasiris’ behavior at Delphi, however, causes uneasiness in readers, not only because his deceptions are directed against the hero, heroine, and heroine’s foster-father (albeit for their own good), but also because he rather brazenly exploits their belief in his priestly piety and divinely inspired ‘wisdom’ to further those deceptions.¹⁰

⁶ Cf. 2.24.7 and 2.25.5: “the **god-sent wisdom** (ἡ...ἐκ θεῶν σοφία) of which I may not speak **foretold** (προηγόρευε) to me on many occasions that [my sons] would take up swords and fight one another”.

⁷ Translations, occasionally modified, are those of Morgan, in Reardon 1989.

⁸ Sandy 1982a, 143-144; Futre Pinheiro 1991, 73 on Calasiris’ “sadistic pleasure” in his manipulation of Cnemon; Levin 1992, 499; Paulsen 1992, 175-177.

⁹ Not to mention the series of lies he tells the Phoenician captain at 5.20-21.

¹⁰ Surveys of Calasiris’ deceptions in Sandy 1982a, 144-146 and Levin 1992.

For instance, although Calasiris knows very well that Theagenes and Charicleia have, unbeknownst to anyone else (even each other), fallen in love, he convinces Theagenes that he has supernaturally ‘divined’ his love for Charicleia and also instilled her with a reciprocal desire; likewise he initially feigns ignorance of Charicleia’s love for Theagenes, but later assures her that his *technê* had revealed it to him and that he has intensified Theagenes’ love for her.¹¹ Calasiris thus consistently pretends that he has used his heavenly-directed *sophia* to ascertain information that he had simply acquired through observation or to achieve results that had come about through no action on his part. This strategy of deception, deployed against people who regard him as a mentor or friend, jars considerably with the picture of a pious Egyptian priest that we encounter elsewhere, both in the primary narrative of the *Aethiopica*¹² and in Calasiris’ secondary narrative itself.

2 Calasiris and Imperial ‘Holy Men’

While there have been some attempts to suture this split in Calasiris’ personality via careful attention to Heliodorus’ text,¹³ the most influential explanations have pointed to the religious and philosophical context of the novel. The most thorough treatment is that of Gerald Sandy, who compares Calasiris to similar figures, real and fictional, described in Imperial Greek literature: the Egyptian priests Nectanebo (*The Alexander Romance*) and Paapis (Antonius Diogenes’ *The Wonders Beyond Thule*), and the

¹¹ Although Charicleia ‘sees through’ Calasiris’ initial play-acting (4.5.4) and later proves herself an apt pupil of his in this regard, she remains a victim of Calasiris’ deceptions in Delphi, as the examples mentioned make clear (see Bevilacqua 1990, 249). Moreover, if Bretzigheimer 1998 and others (e.g., Bevilacqua 1990; Baumbach 1997) are right, as I believe they are, the long story Calasiris tells to Charicleia at 4.12-13 about his meeting with Persinna and her injunction to him to locate Charicleia is also a lie (an often-debated question; exhaustive discussion in Bretzigheimer 1998). Both of these points substantially weaken Winkler’s (1982) claim that Calasiris, “in his very play-acting as love magus liberates Charikleia to make her own choice and saves her from the raping intentions of others” (136).

¹² Sandy 1982b, 65-66 lists several examples: e.g., his insistent postponement of his tale to tend to religious observances at 2.22.5.

¹³ Cf. n. 2 above.

eponymous pagan 'holy men' depicted in Lucian's *Alexander* and *Peregrinus* and Philostratus' *Life of Apollonius of Tyana*.¹⁴ A glance at these figures reveals intriguing parallels for aspects of Calasiris' split personality: the deviousness of the Egyptian priests, the chicanery of the so-called sages attacked by Lucian, the piety of the 'real' holy men. The problem, however, is that none of these 'models' is portrayed as *both* pious and fraudulent in any one given source, as Calasiris is; the holy man is either viewed through a rosy prism, like Philostratus' Apollonius, or revealed as a hypocrite and fraud, like the Egyptian priests and Lucian's Alexander and Peregrinus.

To get around this difficulty, Sandy argues that Calasiris is a hybrid creation, formed from Heliodorus' fusing of the conflicting traits found in accounts of holy men together into a single figure.¹⁵ The glue that Heliodorus uses to bind this somewhat unwieldy combination together is a theory of 'divine duplicity' that Sandy claims "authentic holy men of the Imperial period...often exhibited" (143)—"[d]eception is justified on the grounds that it serves some greater, divine purpose" (153). Moreover, according to Sandy, a similar sentiment, reminiscent of those found in Neoplatonist exegetes, underlies Calasiris' frequent philosophical and religious justifications 'for withholding or disguising the truth from other characters in the story'.¹⁶ While Sandy sees Heliodorus' re-casting of the duplicitous 'holy man' as predominantly satirical, others have detected

¹⁴ Such connections had already been suggested by Rohde 1914, 448-449 (cf. Szepessy 1957), but Sandy 1982a is the most thorough and influential treatment; his 1982b is briefer and less nuanced. See also Paulsen 1992, 184-187, and for further similarities between Apollonius and Calasiris, Morgan 2009, who presses the connection between Philostratus' *Life* and Heliodorus' *Aethiopica* more generally.

¹⁵ This is how I understand Sandy's thesis, even if some of his formulations suggest a more one-to-one correspondence: e.g., Calasiris is 'the successful albeit sardonic portrayal of an authentic type of holy man of late antiquity' (1982a, 154); "Heliodorus' portrayal of Calasiris is that of a true-to-life Egyptian holy man of his age" (Sandy 1982b, 74).

¹⁶ Sandy (1982a, 167) also sees Calasiris' interest in Neoplatonist literary interpretation and 'hidden' meanings reflected in Heliodorus' narrative design for the novel in general. On this idea, see now Slaveva-Griffin 2015.

a more 'serious', religiously motivated purpose behind the Neoplatonic and holy man parallels.¹⁷

Such readings, however, overlook an essential aspect of Calasiris' portrayal that differs from those of contemporary holy men and charlatans: the fact that our impressions of Calasiris are largely formed from an *autobiographical self-portrait* delivered by the priest himself to Cnemon. That is, the portrait of Calasiris as *both* a noble, pious, and religious priest *and* as a charlatan, deceiver, and fraud, is explicitly painted by Calasiris himself, and not by the Heliodoran narrator nor by any other character in the novel.¹⁸ From a historicist perspective, then, a proper comparison would be not with texts written by a third-party observer, like Lucian's *Alexander* or *Peregrinus*, but a hypothetical first-person narrative told by, for instance, Alexander *himself*, in which he appears as both a pious priest *and* as a lying, deceptive manipulator.

¹⁷ Sandy's basic characterization of Calasiris is accepted but modified by Paulsen 1992, 184-187, who sees each side of Calasiris' split personality (sage and charlatan) as corresponding to the 'tragic' and 'comic' roles he plays in the novel. Dowden 1996, 283-284, however, assesses Calasiris' Neoplatonically-inspired attitude toward his mission in a more serious light: Calasiris is "admirably devious", and from the Heliodoran perspective, there is nothing contradictory or morally questionable in playing the "Egyptian charlatan" to the uninitiated, while remaining the *prophétês* to the "ones who know" (Dowden 2015 restates this claim without adding any significantly new arguments; the same goes for Billault 2015, 131: "Kalasiris is a genuine priest...who sometimes acts as a charlatan to protect and serve Theagenes and Charikleia"). Dowden's insistence on taking the *Aethiopica* seriously as a religious work is matched by Baumbach 2008, who also emphasizes Calasiris' similarity to holy men, especially their traditional rejection of magic. For Baumbach, however, Calasiris is an "incomplete" holy man *because* of his deceptive qualities (in addition to several other deficiencies: lack of beauty, lack of a group of students, no understanding of cult rites and their reform), and his character represents an initial stage of "a discourse about the (new) role of the priest in a syncretistic religion and about his transformation into a divine man" (183). As will become clear, I am skeptical of such attempts to read Calasiris and Heliodorus in a 'serious' and religious light.

¹⁸ The one exception is Calasiris' deception of Nausicles at 5.13, which is related by the narrator.

Now, holy men, according to Lucian and Philostratus' accounts, presented themselves to the public (unsurprisingly) as noble, wise, and divinely inspired, and it seems unlikely that they would have also foregrounded their manipulation of their clients' belief in their holiness. Lucian's accusations of fraud center on the identification of a discrepancy between the sage's professed and public claim of supernatural activity and the 'real' mundane private action that lies behind it: e.g., Alexander professes to miraculously answer sealed queries to his oracle, but actually has several techniques for clandestinely opening, reading, and resealing them (Luc. *Alex.* 19-21). If Alexander were to regale a listener with a tale of his activities, he would presumably narrate them as the *public* had perceived it (miraculous sealed-letter reading), and avoid any mention of his *private* machinations.

But this second possibility is precisely what Heliodorus' Calasiris chooses. On the one hand, he presents himself as an upright, devout priest with access to divine wisdom; on the other he relates episodes in which he lays bare the gap between the divinely inspired activity that others believed he was engaged in, and the run-of-the-mill 'normal' means by which he determined, for example, that Theagenes and Charicleia were in love. Calasiris' mode of self-presentation is precisely what a priest or holy man would *avoid*, because it would risk undermining his otherwise pious reputation. By depicting Calasiris engaged in such activity, Heliodorus implies that the Egyptian priest is less interested in projecting a positive image of himself as a holy man than in foregrounding his skills in the art of deception. In fact, the impression one gets of Calasiris as a narrator is that, far from glossing over or defending his various manipulations, half-truths, and subterfuges, he takes considerable pleasure in vividly and precisely relating them to his audience.

The question, then, is why Heliodorus has chosen to have Calasiris represent his own activities in Delphi as deceptive and morally questionable. After all, the priest easily could have dispensed with revealing his private stratagems and schemes and shown himself instead as others saw him at the time—as a powerful, prophetic priest able to manipulate divine forces for his own purposes. Why is Calasiris showing his 'private' face? In what follows, I want to focus on Calasiris' activity at Delphi (2.26-4.21), particularly his attempt to unite Theagenes and Charicleia and whisk them away to Ethiopia, to offer a partial answer. The 'joke' of this entire section hinges on a single misunderstanding: everyone views Calasiris as an Egyptian priest in touch with the

divine and capable of supernatural feats, particularly prophecy; but in actuality, Calasiris gains all of his knowledge and pursues his goals in a completely 'rational', mundane manner.¹⁹ This discrepancy between what others think he is doing and what he is actually doing is at the heart of the accusations of deception, particularly because he gives the impression to the other characters that he has brought about states of affairs that he knows have occurred without his influence.²⁰

As a comparison text, then, the third person biographical accounts of holy men, whether laudatory or libelous, will not do: what we need is a first-person, autobiographical narrative in which the narrator's activities are perceived by the audience internal to the narrative as 'prophetic' or 'divine', but revealed to the external audience to whom he is telling the story, as purely 'rational' and profane. I want to turn to a few examples of such narratives, taken from the case histories of Galen of Pergamum, with a particular focus on his 'autobiographical' treatise *On Prognosis*.²¹

3 Galen, On Prognosis and Calasiris' Story

The most obvious connection between Galen's *On Prognosis* and Heliodorus' *Aethiopica*

¹⁹ Winkler 1982; Baumbach 2008, 176: "In fact, the strongest proof of his own divinity, the correct interpretation of the oracle...turns out to be nothing more than the crafty invention of a clever man with sufficient experience in life to unravel the prediction without the aid of the gods."

²⁰ Hence the ironic effect when Calasiris spouts his distinction between the lofty and wicked types of Egyptian wisdom; to Cnemon he professes allegiance to the former, but in the story, he proceeds as if he were practicing the latter: see e.g., Paulsen 1992, 178.

²¹ On Galen's 'case histories' see Mattern 2008. Text, translation, and numbering of *On Prognosis* (*De praecognitione* or *De praenotione ad Epigenem = Praen.*) are taken, with occasional slight modifications, from Nutton 1979. For the non-technical, literary, and personal character of the treatise, which sets out a series of Galen's notable cases and concentrates on his triumphant struggles with rivals, his performances before audiences, and his rapid rise to fame, see Nutton 1979, 59-63. See Mattern 2008, 7-11 for bibliography on Galen's connections to the Second Sophistic in this text and more generally.

is that both feature a story concerning a doctor's diagnosis of lovesickness.²² The tales pay homage (Galen does so explicitly) to the archetypal ancient variant, in which the Hellenistic doctor Erasistratus not only diagnoses the prince Antiochus' love for his stepmother Stratonice, wife of Seleucus I, but also convinces the king (by means of some subterfuge) to allow the prince to marry her.²³ In the *Aethiopica* (4.7.4), the physician Acesinus correctly identifies Charicleia's lovesickness, but does no more; in *On Prognosis* Galen figures out that a woman was in love and identifies the man for whom she was pining.²⁴ As Patrick Robiano has noted, however, there is another 'doctor' in the *Aethiopica* that provides a better parallel to the Erasistratus figure in the Antiochus-Stratonice romance—Calasiris, who not only 'diagnoses' Charicleia and Theagenes' love for each other but also arranges for their union.

Robiano is primarily concerned with the correspondence of plot elements between Calasiris' and Erasistratus' stories,²⁵ but I prefer to focus on a feature common to the diagnostic method of Calasiris and Galen in their respective narratives: their reliance on observation and conjecture. After examining his female patient, Galen concludes that "there was no bodily illness and that the woman was troubled by some psychological disturbance (ἀπὸ ψυχικῆς τινοῦ ἀηδίας)" (6.7). He only figures out the cause "by chance" (κατὰ τύχην: 6.6); when a man coming from the theater mentions that he had just seen the dancer Pylades perform, Galen "**notices**" (θεασάμενος) that the woman's "expression and facial color changed" and that her pulse is irregular (6.8). On each of

²² Galen, *Praen.* 6.1-6.10 (14.630-633 Kühn); Heliod. *Aeth.* 4.7.3-7. Amundsen 1974, 328-337, provides a cursory comparison; Robiano 2003, 130-135, is more thorough, although his concerns are different from mine.

²³ Mesk 1913; Amundsen 1974, 333-335; Nutton 1979, 194-196; Lightfoot 2003, 373-374; Robiano 2003; Müller 2006, 362-390. The story is told, with some discrepancies, in many ancient sources, e.g., Plut. *Demetr.* 38, App. *Syr.* 308-327, Luc. *De dea Syr.* 17-18 (full list in Mesk 1913 and Lightfoot 2003, 373-374 n. 1).

²⁴ For discussion of Galen's references to this story (as well as that of Erasistratus) in *Hipp. Prog.* (CMGV.9.2) I.4 and 8, see Nutton 1979, 194-198.

²⁵ Robiano 2003 claims that Heliodorus is working intertextually *both* with the literary legend of Erasistratus (in the Calasiris narrative) *and* with the more technical medical literature of doctors like Galen (in the Acesinus episode).

the next two days, he conducts an experiment, arranging for an associate to announce that Morphus (or another dancer) was scheduled to dance; the woman's pulse, however, remains steady both times. Then, when Pylades is mentioned again on the following day, her pulse becomes "wildly disturbed", from which Galen "**discovered**" (εὔρον) that the woman was indeed in love with Pylades (6.10). Galen emphasizes the non-technical nature of his discovery to the addressee of *On Prognosis*, his friend Epigenes: "What was it that **escaped the notice** (έλάνθανε) of the doctors?...For such discoveries are made from common inductions (έκ...κοινῶν έπιλογισμῶν), even if one has only the slightest acquaintance with medical science" (6.14).²⁶

Despite considerable differences of scale and content, Calasiris' diagnosis of Charicleia and Theagenes' love also depends upon a series of careful observations of their behavior that nobody else notices. The most obvious example is the moment they fall in love at the Delphic festival:

These things seemed to **escape the notice** of the crowd (ταῦτα δέ τοὺς μὲν πολλοὺς, ὡς εἰκός, έλάνθανεν)...and even **escaped the notice** of Charicles (έλάνθανε δέ καὶ τὸν Χαρικλέα)...But I was engaged **solely in the observation** (πρὸς μίαν τήν παρατήρησιν...ήσυχολούμην) of the young couple (3.5.7)

Calasiris also observes signs of what Galen might call 'psychological disturbances' in Theagenes at dinner:

He could not disguise the true tendency of his thoughts from me (ήλίσκετο δέ πρὸς έμοῦ τήν διάνοιαν ὅποι φέροιτο). At one moment he would stare into space and the next heave a deep sigh for no apparent reason; he would be gloomy, seemingly lost in thought, and then the next minute he would seem to become conscious of his state,

²⁶ Galen stresses that the woman's pulse only revealed a disturbed psychological state, rather than the lovesickness itself; the idea that the pulse directly indicated lovesickness was a common 'misreading' of Erasistratus' feat. Characteristically, he cannot refrain from a flattering comparison of his achievement with that of Erasistratus, whose "discovery was made with less difficulty because the woman was in the same house as the patient and so could be seen more often by the young man" (6.15).

recall his thoughts, and affect a more cheerful expression (3.10.4)

So too when Theagenes leaps up to compete in the armed footrace at the Pythian Games, Calasiris notices a subtle change in Charicleia's behavior: "Charicleia's emotion passed all bounds; **I had been observing her carefully** for some time (ἐκ πολλοῦ παρατηρῶν) and **saw** (εἶδον) every conceivable expression pass in succession over her face" (4.3.2). And finally, after Theagenes has won the race, Calasiris alone sees another piece of evidence: "And as [Charicleia] presented him with the palm branch, **I noticed** him kiss her hand (οὐκ ἔλαθέ με τὴν χεῖρα τῆς κόρης φιλῶν)" (4.4.2).

Both Galen's and Calasiris' narratives emphasize observation and inference, rather than any special technical or spiritual wisdom.²⁷ Formally, the two tales are also similar, keeping the focus on their protagonists' private observations, conjectures, and conclusions; there is no direct speech, no performance of wisdom, no interaction with the 'patients' or any audience. In the *Aethiopica*, however, Calasiris' story becomes far more dramatic and lively than anything in Galen's brief narrative, as he meets with Charicles and each of the lovers, engages in extensive play-acting, and lays himself open to charges of deception. There are, however, some of Galen's cases, in *On Prognosis* and elsewhere, in which he, like Calasiris, dramatically narrates his diagnostic 'performances' as well as his exploitation of his audience's belief in his prophetic powers, and they provide some subtler, but more incisive parallels with Calasiris' story.

4 The Case of Cyrillus and the Bread: Divination v. Reason

In one episode, also appearing in *On Prognosis* (7; 14.635-641 Kühn), Cyrillus, the young son of Galen's friend Boethus, is suffering from alternating attacks and remissions of fever. As in his story of lovesickness, the case is narrated by Galen retrospectively in the first person; here, however, he inserts direct speech—his own and that of others—in dramatic fashion. Galen had suspected that the recurrences of Cyrillus' fever were caused by his secretly eating more food than he was supposed to, but even after the boy's mother had acted as a guard for four days in order to prevent this activity, the fever had still come on. As the story opens, Boethus, distraught, "seizes" Galen and

²⁷ As Baumbach 2008, 174-178, notes, Calasiris appears less like a priest and more like a philosopher as his narrative progresses.

brings him to his house, along with a crowd of people they had met in the street.²⁸ After Galen examines Cyrillus and takes his pulse, the stage is set for a dramatic denouement:

“You are prepared to testify, Boethus”, I said, “that no one has approached me on my way here during the course of our conversation along the road and revealed the **prophecy** (μάντευμα) I am about to deliver.” When he agreed that he would testify, you [Epigenes] remember how I laughed and told you to listen closely, saying that the **prophet’s** utterance (τὸ τοῦ μάντεως θέσπισμα) was like this: “Cyrillus here has some food hidden in this room: so, when his mother goes to the bathroom and locks the door, and then makes this clear by pushing the key into the lock for safety’s sake—I am told that she does this each time—her son can take out his hidden food and eat it.” (7.9-10)

Unfortunately, a search fails to reveal any food. Boethus asks, “What does our **prophet** say now?” (τί...ὁ μάντις λέγει; 7.13), and Galen is momentarily perplexed and faced with potential humiliation. His careful eye, however, comes to the rescue:

I picked up the one thing that had **escaped scrutiny** (ἀζήτητον) because **none suspected** (ὡς οὐδενὸς ὑποπτεύοντος) that what we were looking for was contained there, and began to shake it [a small wrap on the mother’s chair]. As I shook it, the piece of bread enveloped in it fell to the ground, and you all gave a great cheer (ὕμεις πάντες ἀνακεκράγατε μέγιστον), laughing with Boethus and praising my **powers of divination** (τὴν μαντικὴν ἐπαινοῦντες) (7.13)

Just as in the lovesickness story, Galen relies on his superior powers of observation, but note that his ‘rational’ activity—his diagnosis, his identification of the cause of the recurring fever—is figured here in the language of prophecy (ἡ μαντική). Not only do

²⁸ On the public and agonistic backdrop of many of Galen’s case histories, replete with rivals and witnesses, see Mattern 2008, 69-97; on his anatomical demonstrations, Gleason 2009.

Boethus and the audience call Galen a prophet and refer to his abilities as mantic,²⁹ but in his story Galen *himself* refers to his diagnosis as a “prophecy” and himself as a “prophet” (7.9-10, quoted above).³⁰ Moreover, the whole episode is presented as a *performance* of prophetic wisdom in front of an audience, which is astounded at the revelation and shouts their admiration.³¹

We might compare how Calasiris amazes Theagenes with what appears to the young man to be a divinatory revelation:

So, gazing at [Theagenes] with a benign expression, I said, “You may hesitate to confess, but all things are known to my wisdom and the gods.” Then I paused for a moment, performed some meaningless calculations (ψήφους τινὰς οὐδὲν καταριθμούσας) on my fingers, tossed my hair around, and imitating (μιμούμενος) someone possessed. “You are in love, my son!” I pronounced. At this **oracular utterance** he started (ἀνήλατο πρὸς τὴν μαντείαν), but when I added “with Charicleia”, he thought that the voice of god really was speaking through me, and would have prostrated himself at my feet, had I not restrained him (3.17.1-2)

In other words, both stories feature their narrators playing along with the expectations of their audiences, taking on the role of ‘prophet’ or ‘diviner’ and leaving

²⁹ Aside from the examples quoted, Boethus assures Galen, “I too used to call you a **prophet...**” (καλεῖν εἴωθά σε μάντιν ὄντα: 7.7); the audience urges Galen “to declare [his] **prophecy**” (λέγειν...τὸ μάντευμα: 7.9)

³⁰ Cf. 7.6, where Galen says that the boy’s lack of fever would be “a source of great amusement to those who called [him] a **prophet** (τοῖς ὀνομάζουσί με μάντιν).” On Galen and accusations of divination in medicine, see Nutton 1979, 169; Barton 1994, 138-40; Hankinson 1998, 171-173; and especially Nuffelen 2014. On Galen’s attitude toward religion, in addition to Nuffelen, see Boudon 1988.

³¹ On the importance of impressing audiences, see Mattern 2008, 80-83. Note Galen’s repeated emphasis on the audience’s astonishment: Boethus is “dumbfounded” (ἐξεπλάγη: 7.1), “surprised” (ἔφη θαυμάζειν: 7.17), and “expresses amazement” (ἐθαύμαζε: 7.14).

their audience thunderstruck. Of course, at this point in the novel we are aware that Calasiris already knows that Theagenes was in love, and it turns out that Galen too had not actually ‘prophesied’ (nor even relied on any detailed medical knowledge), but simply exercised his observational and deductive skills. Indeed, after the crowd has dispersed, Galen explains to Boethus, in Holmesian fashion, that it “was not difficult to **conjecture**” (οὐ χαλεπὸν ἦν τεκμήρασθαι)³² that the boy was eating food once the door was locked. When he had “**noticed**” (θεασάμενος) that the boy was worried, Galen reveals, “**I reasoned** (ἐνόησα) that his distress had some psychological cause” (7.15).

The case of Boethus’ son neatly illustrates two methods (defined and analyzed by Tamsyn Barton) by which Galen establishes his medical authority: a theatrical one, associated with divination and prophecy, and another privileging rational explanation (note the stark shift in the two halves of Galen’s story, from the terminology of ‘prophecy’ to that of ‘conjecture’).³³ Each of these “corresponds to the two levels at which all practitioners of prognosis had to work” (Barton 1994, 139)—the popular and the professional. On this model, theatrical ‘divination’ reinforces rather than undermines the ‘rational’ side of the art by helping to establish the physician’s *êthos* among the masses: “[t]echnical justification could be kept in reserve, for the audience that challenged” (Barton 1994, 139-40). Just as Calasiris plays along with the assumptions that Charicles and Theagenes make about his priestly abilities, so Galen, when it suits him, can play to the public’s desire for prophecy.

It is also instructive to observe how Galen incorporates these two authority-creating modes into his account. Galen narrates the events retrospectively, in the first person, but systematically suppresses any indication of what he was observing or deducing at the time. Such a narrative mode emphasizes Galen’s ability to dramatically astound; the reader is placed in a position identical to the original audience, for whom the prognosis, or ‘prophecy’, seems to come from out of the blue. It is only later, when he explains to Boethus what was ‘really’ going on that the reader is brought into his confidence, and comes to appreciate, along with Boethus (but not the crowd), Galen’s conjectural and

³² Cf. in the same passage: “**I conjectured**” (ἐτεκμηράμην: 7.16); “I had not **conjectured** (ἐτεκμήρατο: 7.14) that there was food hidden in the room from the pulse.” On the centrality of the art of conjecture to Galen’s conception of medicine, see Boudon 2003.

³³ Barton 1994, 138-143.

observational skill. The reader thus is placed in both roles—first, as one of the theatrically-minded masses and second, as a member of the more refined ‘professional’ class impressed by his reasoning.³⁴

Calasiris’ story is told in a significantly different way. Like Galen, he pretends to utter ‘prophecies’, but in this case his external audience is *immediately* aware of how the priest has come to his knowledge, and in fact, Calasiris makes the false nature of his divinatory activity quite explicit: just before he describes amazing Theagenes with his ‘prophecy’ in the passage quoted above (3.17.1-2), he confides to Cnemon his intentions at the time: “The situation, I decided, called for a spot of showmanship; I would **divine** what I knew already!” (“Εγνων οὖν καιρὸν εἶναι τερατεύεσθαι πρὸς αὐτὸν καὶ μαντεύεσθαι δῆθεν ἄπερ ἐγίνωσκον: 3.17.1). And note Calasiris’ similarly open references to play-acting in the same passage: his “**meaningless** calculations”, his “**imitating** someone possessed.” In fact, the entire narrative is told in this way—Calasiris carefully notes, as we have seen, the moments when he observes the clues from which he deduces Theagenes and Charicleia’s love for each other, so that the reader is put in the position not of Calasiris’ various ignorant audiences—the Delphians at large, Charicles, the lovers—but of the knowing Calasiris himself. Unlike Galen’s story of Cyrillus, the ensuing episodes avoid astonishing Cnemon or the reader of the *Aethiopica*, who both know perfectly well that there is nothing ‘divine’ or ‘prophetic’ about his declarations.

5 The Case of the Sicilian Doctor: Conspiring with the Reader

If Galen does a creditable imitation of Sherlock Holmes in the Cyrillus tale, he is also capable of narrating his case histories as Calasiris does. *On Prognosis* boasts several examples, but the most illuminating for our purposes is the famous anecdote he relates

³⁴ We might compare the slightly different variation used in Achilles Tatius’ two *Scheintod*-scenes, where there is a similar reticence to inform the reader of the full story: Clitophon narrates Leucippe’s ‘apparent deaths’ *as he saw them at the time*, i.e., as if Leucippe had really been killed, and only reveals the ‘truth’ afterward, at the point in the narrative when he learns of it. Galen, on the other hand, conceals what he observed and thought at the time, and narrates his story as seen through the eyes of his audience. Cf. Fuchs 1993, 187 for a brief comparison of Achilles’ first *Scheintod*-scene and Calasiris’ narrative.

in *On Affected Parts of the Body*.³⁵ Galen is once again accosted in the street, this time by his friend, Glaucon, and taken to the bedside of a sick man—a Sicilian doctor visiting Rome. The opposition between prophecy and rational skill implied in the Cyrillus story is brought out into the open here; Glaucon wants to see for himself whether Galen’s “diagnoses and prognoses owed more to the **prophetic** art than the medical” (διαγνώσεις τε καὶ προγνώσεις...μαντικῆς μᾶλλον ἢ ἰατρικῆς ἐχομένας: 361.7-8).

Galen takes the patient’s pulse and proceeds to make a series of pronouncements. He identifies a place on the patient’s right side as painful, and postulates both that the pain gets worse when he breathes deeply and that he sometimes suffers from a “brief, dry cough, without expectoration”. After the accuracy of these remarks have “**astounded**” Glaucon (ὁ Γλαύκων...μοι θαυμάζων: 364.1-3; τὸν Γλαύκωνα μεγάλως θαυμάσαντα: 364.8), Galen declares that the patient probably feels a drawing sensation in his collarbone, and that he even knows what illness the patient himself believes (incorrectly) that he is suffering from. When his answer, pleurisy, is revealed to be correct, the patient too, along with Glaucon, is “**astounded**” (ὁ νοσῶν...θαυμάζων: 365.17).³⁶ The episode follows a similar pattern as the previous anecdote—a public performance that wows the audience, to whom Galen plays up its ‘prophetic’ nature.³⁷ And just as the crowd gathered at Boethus’ house never learned Galen’s true method, here neither Glaucon nor the patient are informed of how Galen had reached his conclusions.

As in the Cyrillus story, Galen reveals his methods to the *reader*, but whereas in that narrative he only apprises his readers of his observations and conjectures *after* he has

³⁵ *Loc. Aff.* 8.361-366 Kühn. Discussed by Barton 1994, 140-143; see also Nutton 1993, 14-15, Boudon 2003, 129-130, and Mattern 2008, 81. Translations are based on Siegel 1976, but frequently modified. Unlike *On Prognosis*, *On Affected Parts* is not addressed to a specific person.

³⁶ As in the previous story (cf. n. 31 above), Galen repeats a restricted range of terms of amazement: θαυμα- derivatives occur five times in the narrative while ἐκπλήσσω occurs three times.

³⁷ Cf. the remarks Galen makes to his audience: “These are not the only things that the art (τὴν τέχνην) is capable of **divining** (μαντεύεσθαι)!”: 364.10-11; or “I will add one more **prophecy** (μαντεῖαν)”: 365.12.

told his tale, here they are revealed at the precise moment in the narrative when they occurred. For instance, as he describes his entrance into the patient's bedroom, he tells us that a servant passed him, carrying a bedpan which contained "a thin bloody serum—the **surest sign** (βεβαιότατον σημεῖον) of a disease of the liver" (362.16). But he enters the room "as if **I had seen** (ἐωρακώς) nothing at all", like Calasiris making no mention of this observation or conjecture to anyone present; nor does he do so when, as he informs his reader, he finds "symptoms of an inflammation" (363.6) upon examining the patient. Finally, when he "**noticed** (θεασάμενος) a little cooking pot...containing a preparation of hyssop in honey water" from which "**I deduced** (έλογισάμην) that the doctor believed he suffered from pleurisy" (363.7-10), he still keeps silent, but reveals to the reader the thought that struck him at the time: that "fortune (τὴν τύχην) had given me the opportunity to rise in the esteem of Glaucou" (363.15-16). Now that he has figured out that the patient believes he has pleurisy, which shares several symptoms with liver inflammation, he confides to the reader that he went on to describe those symptoms to Glaucou—pain on the right side, intermittent dry cough, drawing sensation in the collarbone—"in order to increase his **astonishment**" (ὅπως οὖν αὐτὸν μᾶλλον ἐκπλήξαι: 364.4). To the internal audience it appears as if Galen has figured all of this out merely by taking the man's pulse; the external audience, or the readers, know better, because they have been permitted to view events from the privileged position of Galen himself.

In the story of Cyrillus, the reader shares the experience of the internal audience, particularly Boethus, who is first astonished at Galen's predictions before learning of the rational explanations behind them. Although the story of the Sicilian doctor is similarly centered on Galen's ability to amaze his public, here the reader's experience is *distinct* from that of the oblivious internal audience (the patient and Glaucou), who marvel at the miraculous fulfillment of Galen's prophetic prognosis and never, apparently, become any wiser. The reader, privy to the activity of Galen's eyes and mind, is primarily figured as someone who will appreciate Galen's skill in observation and inference. But rather than experiencing the bewilderment and awe of the audience within the narrative, he is permitted to indulge a certain kind of pleasure that derives from witnessing, from a superior vantage point, the incomprehension of those taken in by Galen's 'prophetic' performance.

In this respect, the story has a lot in common with Calasiris' narrative in the

Aethiopica, which depicts a series of his observations and deductions, unnoticed by others, but revealed to the reader as they occur, as well as Calasiris' exploitation of this information in order to amaze audiences and be taken as 'prophetic'.³⁸ And like Galen, Calasiris never informs Charicles, Charicleia, or Theagenes of the 'truth' concerning his activities at Delphi. Moreover, both clearly figure the narratee, whether that is the reader of the text, as in Galen's case, or Cnemon, in Heliodorus' novel, as a co-conspirator, who is 'let in on' the joke of the ostensible 'prophecies', and can laugh along with the narrator at the incomprehension of the internal audience. In this sense, Galen's asides, like "I added these words in order to increase his astonishment", are comparable to those of Calasiris, e.g., "I would divine what I knew already".³⁹

The danger inherent in this kind of narrative, however, is that it risks bringing charges of deceit and dishonesty upon the narrator,⁴⁰ who lovingly details his duping of the hapless public, especially when that public consists of otherwise sympathetic

³⁸ Both Galen and Calasiris also understand "the importance of seizing upon chance" (Nutton 1993, 15); in fact, this is one of the lessons Galen hopes his readers will take from the story: "if **fortune** offers you such a start (παρεχούσης τε τῆς τύχης ὑμῖν ἀφορμὴν τοιαύτην), you should use it to your own advantage. For **fortune** often presents you the chance [to acquire] a great reputation..." (πολλάκις γὰρ ἢ μὲν τύχη μεγάλας εὐδοκίμησης ἀφορμὰς ὑποβάλλει: 366). In Calasiris' tale, he makes clever use of several chance events: Theagenes' visit (presented as an "opportunity", or, *καιρός*), Charicles' imploring him for help, the arrival of Phoenician sailors, etc. On Calasiris' opportunism as reflective of his saintly "passivity", see Winkler 1982, 129-132.

³⁹ Other examples of Calasiris' play-acting: "I launched into a sort of stage performance..." (ἡρχόμεν ὥσπερ ἐπὶ σκηνῆς τῆς ὑποκρίσεως: 4.5.3); "I averted my eyes and walked past, pretending not to have noticed him" (ἐκτραπόμενος οὖν παρήειν ὥσπερ οὐχ ἐωρακώς: 4.6.3); "I made a show of annoyance..." (ἡγανάκτουν ἐγὼ μέχρι τῶν ὄψεων: 4.6.4); "I started strutting around self-importantly..." (βλακῶδες βαίνων: 4.7.2).

⁴⁰ Boudon 2003 on the often unclear "boundaries between medicine and charlatanry" (130) in Galen's world.

characters.⁴¹ As I mentioned above, when such narratives are told about similar figures from an external perspective, as in Lucian's *Alexander* and *Peregrinus*, the resulting portraits are often negative, and readers are encouraged to join the narrator (e.g., Lucian) in his indignation at the holy man's hypocrisy and mendacity. But when the holy man himself is the narrator and relates *his own* activities in the first-person, observed from his point of view, and permits his audience access to his thoughts at the time, it becomes harder for the audience to avoid becoming complicit in his deceptions. This identification with the narrator/deceiver brings the narratee into a privileged circle of those 'in the know', in opposition to the less observant internal audience who are too quick to be amazed and to ascribe everything to 'prophecy'.

6 Conclusion: Heliodorus, Calasiris, and the Reader

Galen and Calasiris exploit public expectations of mantic power, but they obtain their results by relying on astute observation, luck, and knowledge of human psychology. In the Sicilian doctor tale, Galen chooses a narrative mode analogous to that employed by Calasiris, and for the same reason: to highlight the 'rational' underpinnings of their apparently prophetic 'wisdom'. The resulting self-portraits might have a tinge of the rogue about them, but that too is perhaps part of their appeal. A significant difference between the two narrators, however, is that while both Galen and Calasiris depict themselves as skilled rational observers, Galen's profession has a 'rational' basis, and he plays up, but does not actually believe, the common perception of him as a 'prophet.' Calasiris, on the other hand, is a prophet and a priest who has chosen, curiously, to foreground his cognitive, conjectural skills rather than the religious and prophetic powers more appropriate to his priestly role.

The question then is why Heliodorus has Calasiris represent himself in this way, particularly to Cnemon. Galen's putative readers, including Epigenes, the addressee of

⁴¹ The effect is mitigated when the audience is openly hostile, as are the pirates in Calasiris' tale, or in the Galenic narratives where he performs in the company of rival physicians. Cf. *On Prognosis* 13 (14.665-669 Kühn) where Galen's successful prediction of a patient's bloody nose results in victory: "there was a great shout, and all of the [other] doctors ran away" (μεγίστης κραυγῆς...γενομένης οἱ μὲν ἰατροὶ πάντες ἔφυγον: 13.10).

On Prognosis,⁴² are students, fellow professionals, or members of elite society with an interest in medicine, and thus a rhetorical strategy that treats them as equals, flattering their rationality over and against the masses (or even less clever colleagues), seems like a natural and effective choice.⁴³ By contrast, Calasiris' addressee, Cnemon, seems like someone who would be more impressed if Calasiris simply were to represent himself as he appeared to his internal audience—as a master of prophecy, divine wisdom, and supernatural powers. After all, Heliodorus depicts Cnemon as eagerly listening to Calasiris' account of how Apollo and Artemis came to him in a dream and commanded him to convey Theagenes and Charicleia to Egypt, and as approving of the priest's eyebrow-raising explanation of how to differentiate such theophanies from mere dream images of gods (3.11-13). If Heliodorus had wanted Calasiris to highlight his prophetic, 'divine' power, he had only to make him narrate his activities at Delphi in the way that Galen tells the case of Cyrillus and the bread; to an audience like Cnemon, one could even dispense with the *post eventum* explanation of 'how he did it', since Cnemon would be likely satisfied with the 'prophetic' version of Calasiris' exploits.⁴⁴

The fact that Calasiris does not employ this kind of narrative suggests that he is not that interested in impressing Cnemon, and thus that Cnemon is not really the intended recipient of this self-portrait. As Dowden has argued, following Winkler and others, Cnemon's inadequate response to Calasiris' story is part of the 'message': the real intended recipient is the reader, "construed as an initiate, [...] meant to appreciate Calasiris' wisdom and recognize the poor cognitive abilities of the persons [i.e., Charicles and Cnemon] who fail to understand."⁴⁵ But while Dowden characterizes this 'wisdom' as primarily philosophical and religious in nature, I would put the focus more squarely

⁴² On Epigenes, of whom nothing certain is known other than that he was a member of the elite from Pergamum with some familiarity with medicine, see Nutton 1979, 147-148.

⁴³ For another example of Galen's 'invention' of his readership, see Asper 2005.

⁴⁴ On Cnemon's excitable and gullible character, see Winkler 1982, 137-145; Morgan 1991, 95-99; Whitmarsh 2011, 172-173; Pizzone 2013, who argues that Calasiris actively shapes Cnemon's response.

⁴⁵ Dowden 1996, 284; Winkler 1982, 137-145 on Cnemon as an exaggerated reflection of and thereby negative model for the reader.

on the ‘cognitive’ abilities that Calasiris’ story is designed to advertise—observation, conjecture, and the skillful deployment of the knowledge thus acquired to achieve one’s ends. By setting up an opposition between audiences within the narrative who view Calasiris’ abilities as stemming from his religious affiliations, and external readers whom Calasiris informs of the real nature of things, Heliodorus, like Galen, takes a calculated risk that the pleasure the reader receives from conspiring with the narrator will supersede any concerns about his ethics. The reader whom Heliodorus has in mind as the ideal recipient of Calasiris’ narrative—one impressed by and appreciative of Calasiris’ observational and inferential activity, rather than his piety or religiosity—is also the one envisioned for the novel as a whole.⁴⁶ The self-portrait of Calasiris as *not* primarily a representative of religion is another hint that for all its religious trappings, the *Aethiopica* has a secular, romantic soul.

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⁴⁶ So e.g., Winkler 1982; Bretzigheimer 1998.

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