The Wisdom of Egypt: Base and Heavenly Magic in Heliodoros' *Aithiopika*

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**Abstract**

The study examines references to, and practical examples of, magic in Heliodoros’ *Aithiopika* in order to evaluate the function of magic within the moral framework of the novel. Taking the figure of Kalasiris and his taxonomy of 'Egyptian wisdom' as a starting-point, the study finds that magic plays a didactic and characterising role, evoking the Platonic categorisation of Pandemic and Heavenly Love, and enabling the reader to gauge the characters. In addition, it concludes that veiled or overt references to astrology and numerology serve to establish Charikleia in particular as the highest point on Heliodoros’ moral scale.
Heliodoros’ novel describes a gradual process in the course of which Meroë becomes a Greek cultural enclave in an alien land, one that is parallel to, and associated with, Delphi, the religious center of the Hellenic world. Using literary and epigraphic sources alongside ancient visual media and archaeological evidence from Greco-Roman and Egyptian contexts throughout this study, I rethink the relationship between identity, narrative, and the exoticism in the novels. I argue that through their descriptions of wide-ranging travel and exotic locales, the novels reflect a multiplicity of individu