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Spenser's Debt to Heliodorus
in The Faerie Queene

BY

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Spenser's Debt to Heliodorus in *The Faerie Queene*

by

Henry C. Aiman *

In considering Spenser's indebtedness to the Greek romances for character and situation in *The Faerie Queene*, scholars have tended to overlook the extent to which he made use of the *Aithiopica* of Heliodorus, available to him in Thomas Underdowne's 1569 English translation of an intermediate Latin version.¹ Probably also accessible in another form or forms, it ". . . was widely popular in both France and England in the sixteenth century and was certainly known to Shakespeare."² Lewis thinks that Underdowne's translation ". . . had in Sidney's [and Spenser's] time an importance which the successive narrowings of our classical tradition have since obscured."³ Smith, who translated it from the Greek in 1901, recalls that Tasso became absorbed in the work when it was ". . . introduced at the Court of Charles IXth of France, where it was read by the ladies and gentlemen in the translation made by Amiot."⁴ Lewis further notes that both Sidney and Tasso mention the *Aithiopica* ". . . as a model of epic construction" among heroic poems.⁵ Significantly, Hughes points out that Underdowne, like his contemporaries, Spenser and Sidney, ". . . was moved by a desire to give England an epic that would contribute to the education of gentlemen, and in the *Aithiopica* he felt that he had found such an epic."⁶ Moreover, he has discovered that Underdowne in his marginal notes describes the virtues of the work as being "much the same as those exemplified in the moral 'legends' of *The Faerie Queene*."⁷ He also

* Portions of this study originated as a master's thesis in the Department of English at Emporia Kansas State College.

¹ C. S. Lewis, *English Literature in the Sixteenth Century, Excluding Drama* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1954), p. 34. Rowland Smith (tr.), *The Greek Romances of Heliodorus, Longus, and Achilles Tatius, Comprising The Ethiopica, or Adventures of Theagenes and Chariclea; The Pastoral Amours of Daphnis and Chloe; and The Loves of Clitopho and Leucippe* (London: George Bell and Sons, 1901), p. xiii, gives the date of Underdowne's translation as 1587.

² Hardin Craig and John W. Dodds (eds.), *Types of English Fiction* (New York: Macmillan, 1940), p. 88.

³ Lewis, p. 334.

⁴ Smith, p. ix.

⁵ Lewis, p. 334.

⁶ Merritt Y. Hughes, "Spenser's Debt to the Greek Romances," *MP*, XXII (August, 1925), 75.

⁷ Hughes, *loc. cit.*

notes that the formal topics of Heliodorus's work ". . . are identical with the six moral virtues which Spenser actually allegorized, minus the first."⁸ He suggests that a comparison of Spenser's treatment of Chastity in Book III with Heliodorus's treatment of the same theme would clearly show that the two episodes "belong to one ethical tradition."⁹ Although he himself detects no parallels between the two works,¹⁰ he recalls that John Upton, in a 1758 edition of *The Faerie Queene*, thought that the cave in which Pastorella is confined in Book II was ". . . suspiciously like the cave where 'the Egyptian Thyamis confines the beautiful Chariclea'" in Book I of the *Aithiopica*.¹¹ He notes, as well, that Upton thought Spenser indebted to Heliodorus, Longus, and Achilles Tatius for the pastoral cantos of Book VI.¹² He concludes, however, that ". . . outside of the sixth book . . . it is impossible to find any concrete resemblances between *The Faerie Queene* and any Greek romances."¹³

Heliodorus's *Aithiopica*, nevertheless, had a much greater influence upon Spenser than has hitherto been recognized. In fact, it is possible to demonstrate that Spenser was often indebted to Heliodorus for both character and situation, especially in the crucial episodes that mark the turning point of Book V. Moreover, throughout the poem, there is evidence of his reliance upon Heliodorus for concepts, descriptions, and characterizations.

One should consider, first, the episode of Britomart's visit to the Temple of Isis in Book V, in which the Radigund sequence, as prologue to the scene, is a direct reflection of Heliodorus. Although Allen has argued that Radigund is patterned after Rhodoguna (wife of Rontes and daughter of Antaexes II) as portrayed in Plutarch and Philostratus,¹⁴ one suggests that Spenser's models for Radigund and her handmaiden, Clarinda, may have been Arsace and her handmaiden, Cybele, in *Aithiopica*. To illustrate, one begins with the following passage from Smith's translation in which Heliodorus, in retrospect, discusses the character of Arsace, a Persian queen who, upon first sight of Theagenes, begins to lust for him:

Arsace was beautiful, and tall; expert in business; haughty because of her birth, as being the sister of the Great King; extremely

⁸ P. 76.

⁹ P. 75.

¹⁰ Pp. 74-75.

¹¹ P. 67.

¹² *Ibid.* Cf. Edwin Greenlaw, "Shakespeare's Pastorals," *SP*, XIII (1916), 123, considers Longus' *The Amours of Daphnis and Chloe* ". . . the only true Greek pastoral which influenced English literature." Nevertheless, he implies (p. 129) that any influence on even the Calidore-Pastorella episode in Book VI of *The Faerie Queene* comes through Sidney's *Arcadia*.

¹³ Hughes, p. 72.

¹⁴ Don Cameron Allen, "Spenser's Radigund," *MLN*, LXVII (February, 1952), 120-122.

blameable, however, in her conduct, and given up to a dissolute pleasure. She had, in a great measure, been the cause of the exile of Thyamis: for when Calasiris, on account of the oracle which he had received relative to his children, had withdrawn himself privately from Memphis, and on his disappearing, was thought to have perished; Thyamis, as his eldest son, was called to the dignity of the priesthood, and performed his initiatory sacrifice in public. Arsace, as he entered the temple of Isis, encountered this blooming and graceful youth, dressed on the occasion with more than usual splendor. She cast wanton glances at him, and by her gestures gave plain intimation of her passion. He, naturally modest, and virtuously brought up, did not notice this, and had no suspicion of her meaning, nay, intent on the duties of his office, probably attributed her conduct to quite some different cause. But his brother Petosiris, who had viewed with jealous eyes his elevation to the priesthood, and had observed the behavior of Arsace towards him, considered how he might make use of her irregular desires, as a means of laying a snare for him whom he envied. He went privately to Orcondates, discovered to him his wife's inclinations, and basely and falsely affirmed that Thyamis complied with them.¹⁵

In Spenser, Radigund's similar passion for Artegall also goes unnoticed by that innocent champion of justice, as does the passion of Malecasta for Britomart. Thereafter, however, Spenser reverses the situation having Clarinda falsely report that Artegall knows the extent of Radigund's intentions but remains obstinate in spite of her overtures.¹⁶

In Heliodorus, Thyamis, banished by the trickery of his brother, Petosiris, eventually returns with Theagenes to reclaim the priesthood of Memphis that is rightfully his. When confronted by this force, Arsace suggests a single combat to decide the issue:

Let those who contend for the priesthood engage in single combat, and be the holy dignity the prize of the conqueror.¹⁷

In Spenser, Britomart, figuratively the priestess of friendship, engages in single combat with Radigund, the priestess of enslaving passion. In Heliodorus, although Petosiris protests, he agrees to fight Thyamis, but when they are on the verge of combat, their father, Calasiris, appears out of voluntary exile to witness the conflict as an oracle had predicted. When he intercedes, he is recognized by his sons who, then,

¹⁵ The source for this and subsequent quotations from Heliodorus is the Rowland Smith translation cited earlier in this study and hereafter referred to as *Aithiopica*.

¹⁶ R. E. Neil Dodge, "Spenser's Imitations from Ariosto," *PMLA*, X (1897), 153, points out that Spenser "sometimes reverses situations."

¹⁷ *Aithiopica*, pp. 151-152.

. . . crown and invest him with the ensigns of that dignity, which had nearly been the cause of a bloody contest between them.¹⁸

In Spenser, Britomart similarly hastens to crown and invest Artegall with the ensigns of manly dignity. One recalls that Radigund has dressed him in women's clothing and ordered him to spin wool. It is for these reasons that Britomart feels that he has been robbed of his "manly hew":

Thenceforth she streight into a bowre him brought,
And causd him those uncomely weedes undight,
And in their steede for other rayment sought,
Whereof there was great store, and armors bright,
Which had bene reft from many a noble knight;
Whom that proud Amazon subdewed had,
Whilst fortune favoured her successe in fight:
In which when as she him anew had clad,
She was reviv'd and joyd much in his semblance glad.

(V.vii.41)¹⁹

Similarly, in Heliodorus, Calasiris had been dressed in beggars' weeds so that his sons, at first, had mistaken him for ". . . some wandering vagrant, who was probably beside himself."²⁰ In the meantime, Chariclea, also disguised, upon seeing Theagenes, her lover,

. . . ran frantically towards him, and, falling on his neck, embraced him closely, breathing out her passion in inarticulate murmurs. He, when he saw a squalid face, disguised, and industriously discoloured, her tattered garments, and vile appearance, repulsed and threw her from him in disgust.²¹

The reaction of Theagenes to Chariclea's disguise resembles Britomart's reaction to the sight of Artegall after the rescue:

At last when as to her owne love she came,
Whom like disguise no lesse deformed had,
At sight thereof abasht with secrete shame,
She turned her head aside, as nothing glad
To have beheld a spectacle so bad.

(V.viii.38)

In Heliodorus, Theagenes and Chariclea, the lovers, are eventually united. They embrace when Chariclea gives the verbal token upon

¹⁸ *Aithiopica*, p. 154.

¹⁹ The source for the quotations from Spenser is the Cambridge Edition, *The Complete Poetical Works of Spenser*, edited by R. E. Neil Dodge (1936).

²⁰ *Aithiopica*, p. 155.

²¹ *Aithiopica*, p. 155.

which they had agreed at the time of their separation. Arsace, who has been feasting her eyes upon Theagenes, swells with displeasure. In the scene that follows in the Temple of Isis, as old Calasiris ". . . took the sacred diadem of the priesthood from his own head and placed it on that of his son Thyamis," Heliodoros emphasizes that the ". . . keen stings of jealousy sank deep into the breast of Arsace." Unable to endure even the sight of Theagenes and Chariclea holding hands, she retires to her palace,

. . . . a woman ever inclined to sensual passion: and was now inflamed by the beauties and grace of Theagenes, which excelled any she had ever beheld. She continued restless and agitated all night, turning from one side to the other, fetching deep and frequent sighs; now rising up, and again falling back on her couch; now tearing off her clothes, and then again throwing herself upon the bed; calling in her maids without cause, and dismissing them without orders.²²

In Spenser, there is a reversal of this situation, as Britomart laments for Artegall in a much more temperate manner (V.vi.13).

Further parallels between the two works occur when Heliodoros introduces into his narrative the old crone, Cybele, the counterpart of Spenser's younger Clarinda, who comes to Arsace's bedchamber to entreat her mistress to divulge the cause of her suffering and to make trial, once again, of her "skill and fidelity."²³ In Spenser, Radigund also tests Clarinda's fidelity, but is foiled by the clandestine actions of her maid. In Heliodoros, Arsace tells Cybele of her love for Theagenes and identifies the

. . . strolling hussy, whose home-spun made up of charms have nothing more in them than common, but are, alas! much more fortunate . . . since they have obtained for her such a lover.²⁴

The action that follows in Heliodoros parallels that in V.vi of *The Faerie Queene*, in which Britomart, having overcome her initial fit of jealousy,²⁵ now rides with Talus to rescue Artegall, only to encounter false hospitality at the House of Dolon. In Heliodoros, through Cybele's designs, Theagenes and Chariclea are removed from the priest's quarters and offered the false hospitality of Arsace's palace:

Theagenes and Chariclea did as they were directed. Grief had so overwhelmed their faculties, that they hardly knew what they were

²² *Aithiopica*, pp. 156-157.

²³ *Aithiopica*, p. 158.

²⁴ *Aithiopica*, p. 159.

²⁵ Dodge, "Spenser's Imitations from Ariosto," p. 177, thinks that Britomart's jealousy corresponds to that of Bradamante when she learns that Ruggerio is betrothed to the warrior maiden, Marfissa.

about; and in their present forlorn state were willing to fly to any refuge. But could they have foreseen the calamities which awaited them in the house they were about to enter, they would have shrunk back. Fortune, whose sport they were, seemed not to promise them a short space for rest, and a prospect of joy, only to plunge them deeper in a misfortune. They went voluntary prisoners; the young strangers, and unsuspecting, deceived by the fair show of hospitality, they delivered themselves up to their enemy.²⁶

Similarly, in Spenser, Talus and Britomart allow Dolon's display of hospitality to deceive them, and they, too, become "voluntary prisoners." At first, old Dolon had appeared to Britomart to be most harmless:

Well shot in yeares he seem'd, and rather bent
To peace, then needlesse trouble to constraine;
As well by view of that his vestiment,
As by his modest semblant, that no evill ment.
(V.vi.19)

Dolon salutes Britomart ". . . with curteous words, in the most comely wize" (V.vi.20), entreating her and Talus to rest for the night at his dwelling. Treason is intended, however, and after an attempt is made on Britomart's life, she and Talus must fight their way out of the difficulty.

Next, in Heliodorus, Cybele endeavors to win the confidence of Chariclea and Theagenes, once she has established them in Arsace's palace. However, as Artegall was suspicious of Clarinda's guile (V.v.37), so is Theagenes immediately wary of Cybele:

Theagenes, comparing in his mind what Cybele now said, with the behavior of Arsace the day before; recollecting how intently she had fixed her eyes upon him, and calling to memory her wanton sighs and glances, forboded no good to himself from what was to follow: he prepared, however, to say something in answer to Cybele, when Chariclea whispered in his ear — "Remember that I am your sister in what you are going to say" ²⁷

Similarly, Britomart shows invention when, eager to learn of Artegall's character, she resorts to subterfuge when she tells the Redcross Knight that she "wishes" to hear

Tydings of one, that hath unto me doone
Late foule dishonour and reprochfull spight,
The which I seeke to wreake, and Arthegall he hight.
(III.ii.8)

²⁶ *Aithiopica*, p. 161.

²⁷ *Aithiopica*, p. 162.

In Heliodorus, Arsace sends for Theagenes, who, having been instructed in the manner in which he should converse with the queen, immediately arouses the indignation of the court by refusing to prostrate himself before her (as Artegall figuratively refuses to prostrate himself before Radigund). Arsace, however, rationalizes that Theagenes is a ". . . foreigner, unaccustomed to forms, and above all, a Greek, infected with the national contempt towards Persians."²⁸ Similarly, Radigund decides to tolerate Artegall's "first folly" until Clarinda has "tempted him more neare" (V.v.48). In Heliodorus, Arsace sends her maid to tempt Theagenes "more near," and Cybele exaggerates her queen's goodwill towards him, extolling the ". . . beauties of her person, as well those which appeared to every beholder as those which her attire kept concealed."²⁹ Eventually, she counsels him (unwittingly in Chariclea's presence) that to refuse Arsace's offer of love might involve some danger:

Spare yourself danger, and spare Arsace a disappointment: she is worthy of some regard from you, who has shown and feels such intensity of passion for you: beware of a loving woman's anger, and read that revenge which follows neglected love³⁰

Clearly, Spenser follows the same general pattern of events in his own narrative, Cybele's advice to Theagenes being essentially the same as that which Clarinda gives to the captive Artegall. In Spenser, however, it is Clarinda, the handmaiden, who

. . . wounded was with her deceipts owne dart,
And gan thenceforth to cast affection,
Conceived close in her beguiled hart,
To Artegall, through pittie of his causelesse smart.
(V.v.43)

Clarinda's actions, thenceforth, involve infidelity to her mistress, Radigund, and plunge Artegall into a more dangerous relationship with Radigund, who is now moved to fury by Clarinda's reports of his obstinacy. Finally, in order to break Artegall's pride, Radigund commands Clarinda to place him in chains, increase his labors, and restrict his diet (V.v.50). In Heliodorus, the episode involving Cybele's infidelity to Arsace has another emphasis. Cybele, originally a captive slave from the Greek island of Lesbos, is infatuated with Arsace and greatly jealous of her queen's attentions to Theagenes. Because she enjoys Arsace's confidence, she persuades the queen to punish him, as follows:

²⁸ *Aithiopica*, pp. 168-169.

²⁹ *Aithiopica*, p. 169.

³⁰ *Aithiopica*, p. 171.

. . . when kindness is ineffectual, assume a tone of more severity; let punishments, and even stripes, force from him that compliance which favours have failed in doing Try this method, and you will find him give to force that which he refused to mildness.³¹

In Spenser's adaptation of the situation, Radigund instructs Clarinda to "Let [Artegall] feele hardnesse of thy heavie arme: / Who will not stoupe with good shall be made stoupe with harme" (V.v.49). Moreover, she storms and rages at the very thought of being scorned by ". . . a base born thrall, / Whose life did lie in her least eye-lids fall" (V.v.47). In Heliodorus, Cybele warns Arsace, "You are flattering this youth like a slave, when you should command him like a mistress."

Radigund, however, remains hopeful, even after Clarinda's first report, and urges her handmaiden to use all of her arts before resorting to force. In Heliodorus, Arsace is also tender-hearted. After Cybele has suggested severe punishment, the queen asks, ". . . but how can I bear to see that delicate body, which I dote on to destruction, torn with whips, and suffering under tortures?"³² At length, nevertheless, she is persuaded by Cybele to deliver Theagenes to Euphrates, the chief eunuch, for "a few turns of the rack."³³ While Artégall's hardships are increased by Clarinda's selfishness, those of Theagenes are knowingly worsened by Cybele, who urges Euphrates to increase the severity of the tortures, ". . . contrary to the intentions of Arsace, whose object was by moderate chastisement, to bend, but not to kill him." Moreover, Heliodorus explains that Euphrates, receiving Arsace's instructions with "savage joy, ranking with the envy natural to his race,"³⁴ had placed Theagenes

. . . immediately in chains, cast him into a deep dungeon, and punished him with hunger and stripes; keeping all the while a sullen silence; answering none of the miserable youth's inquiries, who pretended (though he well knew the cause) to be ignorant of the reason why he was thus hardly treated.³⁵

Thus, Euphrates increases Theagenes's sufferings "every day, far beyond what Arsace knew of or commended, permitting no one but Cybele to see him; for such were his orders."³⁶ All of this time, however, Theagenes's spirit remained (as Cybele clearly observes)

. . . unconquered, and seemed to acquire fresh force from the duration of his trials. His body, indeed, was torn with tortures, but his

³¹ *Aithiopica*, p. 187.

³² *Aithiopica*, pp. 187-188.

³³ *Aithiopica*, p. 188.

³⁴ *Aithiopica*, p. 188.

³⁵ *Aithiopica*, p. 188.

³⁶ *Aithiopica*, p. 188.

soul was exalted by the consciousness of having preserved its purity and honour. He gloried that while fortune was thus persecuting him, she was conferring a boon upon his nobler part — the soul. Rejoicing in this opportunity of showing his fidelity to Chariclea, and hoping only she would some day become acquainted with his sufferings, for her sake he was perpetually calling upon her name and styling her his light! his life! his soul!³⁷

Similarly, in Spenser, Clarinda reports to Radigund that Artegall

. . . was obstinate and sterne,
 Scorning her offers and conditions vaine;
 Ne would be taught with any termes to lerne
 So fond a lesson as to love againe.
 Die rather would he in penurious paine,
 And his abridged dayes in dolour wast,
 Then his foes love or liking entertaine:
 His resolution was, both first and last,
 His body was her thrall, his hart was freely plast.
 (V.v.46)

Furthermore, Artegall remains true to Britomart as does Theagenes to Chariclea:

Yet in the streightnesse of that captive state,
 This gentle knight himselfe so well behaved,
 That notwithstanding all the subtile bait,
 With which those Amazons his love still craved,
 To his owne love his loialtie he saved:
 Whose character in th'adamantine mould
 Of his true hart so firmly was engraved,
 That no new loves impression ever could
 Bereave it thence: such blot his honour blemish should.
 (V.vi.2)

The striking similarities between these two episodes are obvious. It is clear that Spenser has conceived of Artegall in the image of Theagenes and has adapted the material in Heliodorus to his own needs, not vaguely reflecting a literary convention of Greek romance, but using Heliodorus as his source. Britomart, moreover, is modeled, to a large extent, upon Chariclea, her counterpart in Heliodorus and also a championess of chastity. It is possible, as well, to suggest that Spenser may have had in mind Heliodorus's account of Chariclea's early youth when he created Belpheobe. For example, one recalls that, in Heliodorus, before Chariclea had become enamoured of Theagenes, she had disap-

³⁷ *Aithiopica*, p. 189.

pointed her guardian, Charicles, by spending her leisure hours in the chase with bow and arrow. Like Diana, she had obstinately refused to marry and was inexhaustible in her praises of virginity, placing it ". . . next the life of the gods—pure, unmixed, and uncorrupt."³⁸ Heliodorus also points out that she was "equally skillful in depreciating love and Venus and marriage."³⁹ In Spenser, Belpheobe, like Britomart, is the embodiment of chastity, but unlike Britomart, she is inexperienced in the ways of love.⁴⁰ Like Heliodorus's Chariclea, she rejoices in her woodland activities with bow and arrow and appears to be one in whom any call of love is sublimated into boundless vitality.

It is the romance of Chariclea and Theagenes, however, that parallels that of Britomart and Artegall at many points in Spenser's epic. Early in Book III, in retrospect, Spenser explains how the innocent Britomart, looking into her father's mirror, had fallen in love with the image of Artegall reflected there (III.ii.17). He further explains that Britomart, at this time, did not realize the cause of her subsequent illness, but believed that she was plagued by an unknown malady (III.ii.17). Glauce, her aged nurse, observing the young woman's distress, and fearing that she had been smitten with love, comforts her and begs her to reveal her secret (III.ii.30-51). In Heliodorus, also in retrospect, one learns that Theagenes and Chariclea unknowingly (almost unwillingly) have fallen in love at first sight at the Temple of Isis.⁴¹ In fact, they are literally thrown together at the Pythian games when Theagenes in complete armor (like Artegall when he first appears to Britomart in the mirror) falls upon Chariclea's bosom, ". . . not without design, but in appearance as if unable to check on a sudden the rapidity of his pace."⁴² After this event, Chariclea passes a wretched night alone in great distress. Like Britomart, she, too, does not recognize her affliction. Physicians are summoned, one of whom diagnoses the malady as love-sickness.⁴³ Her guardian, Charicles, begs her to conceal the reason for her suffering in counsel that is so similar to that which Glauce offers Britomart as to warrant the following parallel study. In Heliodorus, when Chariclea tells how the thought of love is odious to her, her guardian replies,

I acquiesce, my daughter . . . , in your silence. I do not blame your reserve, and that for two reasons. In the first place, I have no need to be told that which I have before discovered by my art; and then an unwillingness to speak of a matter of this nature, becomes

³⁸ *Aithiopica*, p. 59.

³⁹ *Aithiopica*, p. 59.

⁴⁰ Frederick M. Padelford, "The Women in Spenser's Allegory of Love," *JEGP*, XVI (1917), 70-83.

⁴¹ See Hardin Craig, *The Enchanted Glass, The Elizabethan Mind in Literature* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1952), pp. 43-46.

⁴² *Aithiopica*, p. 81.

⁴³ *Aithiopica*, p. 85.

well the modesty of your sex. But since you have at last felt love, and are manifestly smitten by Theagenes (for this the gods have disclosed to me), know that you are not the first, or the only one who has succumbed to this passion. It is common to you with many celebrated women, and many maidens in other respects most irreproachable; for love is a very powerful deity, and is said to subdue even the gods themselves. Consider then what is the best to be done in your present circumstances. If it be the greatest happiness to be free from love, the next is, when one is taken captive, to regulate it properly: this you have in your power to do; you can repel the imputation of mere sensual love, and sanctify it with the honourable and sacred name of wedlock.⁴⁴

This is the same basic advice that Britomart receives from Glauce:

“Daughter,” said she, “What need ye be dismayd,
Or why make ye such monster of your mind?
Of much more uncouth thing I was affrayd;
Of filthy lust, contrary unto kinde:
But this affection nothing straunge I finde;
For who with reason can you aye reprove,
To love the semblant pleasing most your minde,
And yield your heart whence ye cannot remove,
No guilt in you, but in the tyranny of Love.”
(III.ii.40)

Later, Merlin also gives similar counsel to Britomart:

It was not, Britomart, thy wandring eye,
Glauncing unwares in charmed looking glas,
But the streight course of hevenly destiny
Led with Eternall Providence, that has
Gyuded thy glaunce, to bring His will to pas:
Ne is thy fate, ne is thy fortune ill,
To love the prowest knight that ever was:
Therefore submit thy wayes unto His will,
And doe, by all dew meanes, thy destiny fulfill.
(III.iii.24)

Thus, both Chariclea and Britomart are advised to accept their fates and to fulfill their destinies. Whereas Merlin attributes Britomart's fate to the workings of Divine Providence, the Egyptian priest, on the other hand, attributes Chariclea's plight to the fate of the gods themselves.

Yet another parallel between these two romances may be recorded. In Spenser, Britomart is betrothed to Artégall after he has overwhelmed

⁴⁴ *Aithiopica*, p. 90.

her in combat in the crucial central episodes of Book V. Artégall woos her, and she relents, yielding her consent "To be his love, and take him for her lord, / Till they with marriage meet might finish that accord" (IV.vi.41). She agrees only after he has spoken many vows and sworn many goodly oaths. In Heliodorus, Theagenes is also required to swear many oaths that obligate him to respect Chariclea after she consents to become his wife. In fact, he swears by "the Pythian Apollo, by Diana, and by Venus herself . . . that he could conform to the will of Chariclea . . ." ⁴⁵ Moreover, Theagenes and Chariclea are thereafter separated upon many occasions in the narrative, as are Britomart and Artégall in Spenser.

There is a further correspondence in an episode that occurs toward the end of *Aithiopica* that points to similarities between Chariclea and Britomart. Just as the fire guarding the entrance to Spenser's House of Busirane will not burn Britomart (III.xi.22-25), neither will the fire at the altar to the sun god harm Chariclea. In Heliodorus, the law requires "a male to be offered to the Sun, and a female to the Moon." ⁴⁶ Chariclea and Theagenes are among the prisoners whom the king has scheduled to be sacrificed. When the altar fire is prepared, the individual captives are compelled to ascend to it:

It was furnished with golden bars of such mystic virtue that whenever any unchaste or perjured person placed his foot upon it, it burnt him immediately and he was obliged to retire: the pure, on the contrary, and the uncontaminated, could mount it uninjured. ⁴⁷

In his turn, Theagenes ascends to the altar and is found to be pure. He urges Chariclea, then, to avoid possible sacrifice by revealing herself as the king's daughter. (Persina, the queen, thinks Chariclea is a Greek because her skin is white.) Theagenes argues that, by so revealing her identity, Chariclea could also preserve him; at least, he reasons, she herself would be safe, and he might die with some measure of comfort in that knowledge. She remains firm, however, replying:

"Our trial now approaches — our fate trembles in the balance." So saying, and without awaiting any command, she drew from out of a scrip which she had with her, and put on, her sacred Delphic robe, interwoven and glittering with rays of light. She let her hair fall dishevelled upon her shoulders, and as under the influence of inspiration, leaped upon the altar and remained there a long time, unhurt. ⁴⁸

Her beauty, like Britomart's when it is revealed (IV.i.13), dazzles every bachelor, for

⁴⁵ *Aithiopica*, p. 98.

⁴⁶ *Aithiopica*, p. 234.

⁴⁷ *Aithiopica*, pp. 234-235.

⁴⁸ *Aithiopica*, p. 235.

. . . visible to all from this elevated place, and with her peculiar dress, she resembled an image of [Isis] more than a mere mortal maiden.⁴⁹

In Spenser, Britomart is also conceived in the image of Isis (V.vii), so that when Artegall first sees her face after overwhelming her in combat (IV.vi.19-22), he thinks ". . . some heavenly goddesse he did see" (IV.vi.22). Similarly, in Heliodorus, the multitude is confounded when it sees Chariclea in all of her beauty:

An inarticulate murmur of applause ran through the multitude, expressive of their surprise and admiration, that with charms so superhuman, she should have preserved her honour, enhancing her beauty by her chastity. Yet they were almost sorry that she was found a pure and fitting victim for the goddess.⁵⁰

But like Artegall, whose hand will not hold his sword after seeing "so divine a beauties excellence" in Britomart's face (IV.vi.21), the Gymnosophists in Heliodorus refuse to carry out the king's order for the sacrifice. Heliodorus explains that they had judged ". . . from various divine tokens, and particularly from a kind of glory shed around these strangers, that [they] were under the particular protection of the gods."⁵¹ In Spenser, Artegall sees

. . . round about the same, [Britomart's] yellow heare,
Having through stirring loosd their wonted band,
Like to a golden border did appeare
(IV.vi.20)

The similarities, here, need no further comment.

The foregoing observations upon Spenser's indebtedness to Heliodorus point to one important conclusion. When Dodge assessed Spenser's borrowings from Ariosto, he noted that Spenser frequently adopted situations, "giving them such a peculiar turn that they [were] hardly recognizable."⁵² He further argued,

One has only to set these situations side by side with their originals to perceive that Spenser had small genius for situation. They are anything but vivid; indeed, we hardly think of them as situations at all; they are mere groups of narrative fact.⁵³

He concluded,

⁴⁹ *Aithiopica*, p. 235.

⁵⁰ *Aithiopica*, p. 235.

⁵¹ *Aithiopica*, p. 236.

⁵² Dodge, "Spenser's Imitations from Ariosto," p. 181.

⁵³ P. 188.

It is of course evident that Spenser did not need effective situations for the *Faerie Queene*. Ariosto, aiming at narrative variety and the like, would find them indispensable; Spenser in a poem chiefly reflective and picturesque, would find no use for them.⁵⁴

One must take exception to Dodge. To the contrary, because *The Faerie Queene* is a reflective poem, and a highly didactic poem, Spenser did need "effective situations." In resorting to Heliodorus for situation and character for the Radigund episode, he succeeds in pointing up his moral allegory of friendship and justice. In borrowing from Heliodorus for the Temple of Isis sequence, he emphasizes the equality that exists between Britomart and Artegall, subjecting the latter to Radigund to show that sincere goodwill must underlie friendship. By altering Cybele's character to present a second example of the faults that derive from a love not based upon goodwill, he stresses that equity and justice can prevail only when those involved desire one another's well-being. By devising a means of showing that Britomart and Artegall represent equity and justice and are equals in merit, he establishes a concept essential to the Aristotelian definition of friendship which he develops in the continuing allegory of Book V. For these reasons, therefore, it appears that Spenser, contrary to Dodge's views, adapts Heliodorus effectively, allowing his unerring sense of moral allegory to guide him in his selection and re-casting of situation and character.

⁵⁴ Pp. 183-184.

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