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The Mendacity of Knemon and the Reform of the Reader in Heliodoros' *Aithiopika*.

In an influential essay, John J. Winkler (1982) explores Kalasiris' mendacity as a strategy of both Heliodoros and his crafty narrator with important narrative and moral ramifications. His analysis of the contrast between Kalasiris, the old Egyptian priest, and Knemon, his young Athenian listener, between the sophisticated interpreter/narrator and the naïve recipient of Charikleia's romance, does a lot to illuminate the self-conscious artistry of the *Aithiopika*. However, it ignores the edifying effect of Kalasiris' narrative upon Knemon. My aim is to show that, by listening to Kalasiris, Knemon develops a duplicitous sophistication of his own, as morally significant as that of Kalasiris, which he immediately applies in his interaction with his former antagonist and future father-in-law, Nausikles. I focus especially on the way Knemon narrates his story for the second time in the beginning of Book 6. His omission of crucial information, far from being a sign of carelessness on the author's part, is rather a deliberate device intended to test tactfully the truthfulness and trustworthiness of Nausikles. In replicating thus the method of Kalasiris, Knemon displays more acute interpretative skills than Winkler, J. R. Morgan (1982), or S. Bartsch (1989) allow.

Such a reading of Knemon's transformation has implications for the didactic aspects of the *Aithiopika*, as it serves as a model for the reader's reception of the novel. Heliodoros' edifying qualities, as described e.g. by Byzantine scholars, include the justified use of lies and deception. If this Odyssean subtlety, intimated in Kalasiris' dream (5.22), is part of the author's didacticism, then Heliodoros, besides representing through Kalasiris the model to be imitated, also offers, in Knemon, a reader as he learns to imitate this duplicity. The didactic effect of the story on its reader becomes a theme in the novel itself, in which we find not only the lesson, but also the transformation of the reader. In fact, the reader's recognition of Knemon's mendacity is proof that Heliodoros' lesson has been driven home.