

By the 1st century CE, Hellenism had ceased to be merely a regional identity and had become instead a cultural category spanning across geographical boundaries. As the work of Simon Swain, Maud Gleason, Thomas Schmitz, and Tim Whitmarsh (*inter alios*) has demonstrated, Hellenism was an evolving medium within which members of a social elite (both Greek and non-Greek alike) might construct for themselves an identity and a position of some cultural authority within the Roman imperial landscape.

This paper seeks to show how in the early centuries of the Roman Imperial period, Hellenism had become not just a mask of cultural authority, but one mask among several possible personae, and that investiture in “Greek clothing” became an apt metaphor for the variability of Greek identities during the period in question. This paper will not be concerned with physical evidence or clothing practices of the 1st-4th centuries CE. Rather, I intend to analyze how the emergent identity politics of Hellenism as a social performance found a particular literary expression through the metaphor of costume. The two texts under consideration will be Chariton's *Kallirhoe* and Heliodoros' *Aithiopika*.

In Chariton's *Kallirhoe*, Hellenism functions as a disguise for the Milesian Dionysios. Occupying a geographically in-between space in Ionia, definitely not Persian, but neither completely Greek, Dionysios oscillates culturally between the influences of these two worlds. A supporter of Persian interests, Dionysios is favored by the Great King. But when he is summoned to Babylon to defend himself against those whom he alleges to be seducing his wife, Dionysios strategically conceals his Milesian dress with simple Greek clothing (Ἑλληνικῶν σχήματι Μιλησίαν στολήν ἀμπεχόμενος, 5.4.7). Dionysios' self-consciously Greek presentation in Babylon is related to the Attic rhetorical style of his oration (as opposed to the Asianism of his opponent): the simplicity of his Greek garment and the “purity” of his language mutually reinforce his argument. In an ironic twist, however, Chariton reveals the vanity of Dionysios' Hellenic posturing with a *coup de théâtre*: Kallirhoe's former husband, Chaereas, thought dead, is led into court alive, undermining the very status of Dionysios' claim as husband and, by implication, the presumed superiority of his Hellenism and Atticist rhetoric.

In Heliodoros' *Aithiopika*, the cultivated quality of Hellenism is demonstrated most acutely in the meeting between the Athenian Knemon and the Egyptian priest Kalasiris. Knemon first mistakes Kalasiris for a Greek because of his Greek clothing (στολή καὶ ἐσθῆς ἢ ἄλλη πρὸς τὸ ἑλληνικώτερον βλέπουσα, 2.21.2), and when he learns that the old man is actually Egyptian he is curious to hear why he has “Hellenized” his dress (Πόθεν οὖν ἑλληνίζεις τὴν στολήν; 2.21.4). Kalasiris, for his part, aroused by Knemon's language and characteristically Greek curiosity, attributes Knemon's Egyptian appearance to fortune (σέ τις ὡς ἔοικε μετασχηματίζει τύχη, 2.21.6). The ambiguities, mistaken identities, and desire for narrative in this brief scene correspond with the novel's larger themes of culture and identity. Heliodoros' novel alternately re-affirms and questions what it means to be a Greek in a vast imperial world where even an apparently white, apparently Greek girl can turn out to be the biological heir to the black Ethiopian throne.

From a careful analysis of these passages from the novels of Chariton and Heliodoros, costume will be shown to be a powerful metaphor in the literary representation of Hellenic self-fashioning.