

Chamberlayne's *Pharonnida*: The First English Verse Novel

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This article seeks to explain George Saintsbury's and W. MacNeile Dixon's enigmatic categorization of William Chamberlayne's *Pharonnida* (1659) as a verse novel, by elaborating the relation of *Pharonnida* with the ancient Greek prose novels, especially the *Aethiopica* of Heliodorus. *Pharonnida* imitates the *Aethiopica* quite closely: it is comparably long and its plot follows the ancient formula in which a pair of nobly-born young lovers manage to remain faithful to each other during a scarcely credible proliferation of adventures, including imprisonment, rescue, enslavement, disguise, and kidnapping by pirates and robbers. Whereas the *Aethiopica* is set in its own contemporary world, *Pharonnida* is set in a past resembling the present of the *Aethiopica*. Chamberlayne compensates for non-novelistic lack of contemporaneity by including some contemporary authorial comments and autobiographical episodes. The only significant generic difference is that *Pharonnida* is composed in verse.

PHARONNIDA, a long narrative poem by the royalist poet and physician William Chamberlayne, has remained little known since its first publication in 1659, despite its apparent influence on some of the Romantic poets.¹ Chamberlayne composed his *magnum opus* in iambic pentameter couplets, the poetic form that was to dominate all

¹ A. E. Parsons, 'A Forgotten Poet: William Chamberlayne and "Pharonnida"', *Modern Language Review* 45 (1950): 296–311, claims that *Pharonnida* was admired by Robert Southey, Thomas Campbell and John Keats (p. 296).

others in the coming 'long eighteenth century', and yet *Pharonnida* has never been identified with the neo-classical poetic tradition. Instead, it was declared a verse novel by two of the most formidable men of letters of the early twentieth century, George Saintsbury and William MacNeile Dixon – a judgement that was corroborated by A. E. Parsons some forty years later.² This declaration is at first sight very puzzling, since the verse novel was not a known genre in the seventeenth century, and both Saintsbury and Dixon were generally conservative in their classification of texts. The fact that they both disapproved of the hybrid genre may suggest that their declaration was intended to disparage Chamberlayne's skills in the use of verse and narrative. However, regarding their taxonomy of *Pharonnida* as a mere dismissal would be simplistic.

The enigma may be partly explained in terms of Chamberlayne's reading – in the sense of appropriation – of at least one of the ancient Greek fictional narratives widely classified as novels. Saintsbury, but not Dixon, cites these Greek texts as among the 'principal determinants' of *Pharonnida*'s 'form'.³ Chamberlayne's story, settings and characters bear a striking resemblance to those of the ancient prose novels, especially the *Aethiopica* of Heliodorus, which Chamberlayne had almost certainly read – in the normal sense of the word – in translation.⁴ Thus, *Pharonnida* can be seen as a transformation of the ancient Greek prose novel into an early modern English verse novel.

The novels of the ancient world have attracted a good deal of attention in recent years, owing in part to Mikhail Bakhtin's interest in them. They are known as 'novels' because they are long prose narratives intended for reading rather than reciting, singing or enacting, because they concern the actions of contemporary humans rather than ancient heroes or gods, because their stories are fictional, each made up for the specific text by its author, not based on an existing myth or legend, and because they were designed and read mainly for entertainment, rather

² George Saintsbury, 'Lesser Caroline Poets', in A. W. Ward and A. R. Waller (eds), *Cavalier and Puritan*, CHEL 7 (New York, 1911), pp. 82–107 (p. 85); W. MacNeile Dixon, *English Epic and Heroic Poetry* (London, 1912), pp. 234–35; Parsons, 'A Forgotten Poet', 310.

³ Saintsbury, 'Lesser Caroline Poets', 85.

⁴ Parsons, 'A Forgotten Poet', 304.

than for any philosophical, cultural or religious purpose. Bakhtin sees in them the origin of the 'adventure novel', a genre that, for him, was part of a process of 'novelization' rather than a full-blown example of the 'dialogic' text, the true novel.⁵ Perhaps for similar reasons, other commentators have objected to the term 'novel' for these ancient prose stories, preferring the word 'romance'.⁶ But a strong case can be made for their novel status, which is widely accepted today.⁷

Although they may appear somewhat unrealistic because of the breakneck speed of the action and the multitude of kidnappings, shipwrecks, attempted assassinations, acts of piracy, death-defying feats, coincidences and unlikely rescues, most of these narratives' individual episodes are, if not probable, at least possible in a real world. This would, by both Ian Watt's and Northrop Frye's estimation, place these texts more in the category of 'novel' than 'romance'.⁸ In fact, surprisingly few supernatural agencies or objects interfere with the realism of these stories' events, despite the tendency toward melodrama and extremity: as Bakhtin points out, the plots are suspensefully strung together by adverbials such as 'suddenly' and 'just at that moment'.⁹ Of course, the hero and heroine are always highborn or of royal lineage, though this is often concealed until late in the plot. These two protagonists also, as in popular romance of all ages, are exceptionally beautiful, fall in love at first sight and remain absolutely faithful to each other to the end. But, despite undergoing no character development and learning little from their adventures,¹⁰

⁵ M. M. Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin, TX, 1981), pp. 86, 22.

⁶ Brendan Boyle, 'Stodgy Historicism and the Ancient Novel', *Arion* 18 (2010): 33–48 (p. 33); Northrop Frye, *The Secular Scripture: A Study of the Structure of Romance* (Cambridge, MA, 1976), pp. 71–74.

⁷ Simon Goldhill, 'Genre', in Tim Whitmarsh (ed.), *Cambridge Companion to the Greek and Roman Novels* (Cambridge, 2008), pp. 192–93; Tim Whitmarsh, 'Introduction', *ibid.*, 2–4; Margaret Doody, *The True Story of the Novel* (New Brunswick, NJ, 1996), pp. 1–11.

⁸ Ian Watt, *The Rise of the Novel* (Berkeley, 1957), p. 12; Northrop Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism* (1957; rpt London, 1990), pp. 304–05.

⁹ Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination*, 92.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 90.

they do display some touches of authenticity and individuality, which are among Watt's principal criteria for the realist novel as it developed from the eighteenth century onward.¹¹ S. Wiersma has shown, for example, that the female protagonists' acts of courage and loyalty are consistent with the ideals 'of their beneficent sisters in the real world' of their original readers' time.¹² Though interiority, a feature that Watt also regards as definitive of the novel,¹³ is not prominent in these texts,¹⁴ focalizers do appear quite widely in the third-person narratives,¹⁵ and, in Heliodorus, character-narrators tell large parts of the story – one of them, Calasirus, being a deceptive narrator, whose true identity and motives are revealed only later on.

This novel by Heliodorus of Emesa, known as the *Aethiopica*, the *Aethiopian History* or *Story* or sometimes *Theagenes and Chariclea*, composed in the third or fourth century CE,¹⁶ is the most sophisticated of the ancient novels as far as narrative is concerned.¹⁷ It was translated into English by Thomas Underdowne in about 1569 and became widely influential on early modern English narrative and drama.¹⁸ It left its

¹¹ Watt, *The Rise of the Novel*, 16–17.

¹² S. Wiersma, 'The Ancient Greek Novel and Its Heroines: A Female Paradox', *Mnemosyne* 43 (1990): 109–123 (pp. 114–17).

¹³ Watt, *The Rise of the Novel*, 206–07.

¹⁴ Boyle, 'Stodgy Historicism', 44.

¹⁵ Tim Whitmarsh and Shady Bartsch, 'Narrative', in Whitmarsh (ed.), *Cambridge Companion to the Greek and Roman Novels*, 237–260.

¹⁶ Niklas Holzberg, *The Ancient Novel: An Introduction* (London, 1995), p. 104. Emesa is modern-day Homs, Syria.

¹⁷ John J. Winkler shows, in his detailed analysis of its narrative structure, 'The Mendacity of Kalasiris and the Narrative Strategy of Heliodorus' *Aithiopia*', in John J. Winkler and Gordon Williams (eds), *Later Greek Literature*, Yale Classical Studies 27 (Cambridge, 1982), pp. 93–158, the complexity and brilliance of the *Aethiopica*, which he describes as an 'act of pure play' (158).

¹⁸ Several other versions of Heliodorus' novel were available in Elizabethan times, notably a Latin translation by Stanislaus Warschewiczki, in addition to Underdowne's. The Warschewiczki translation was introduced by Philip Melancthon, who was an influential figure in Protestant countries. Steve Mentz, *Romance for Sale: The Rise of Prose Fiction* (Aldershot, 2006), indicates that some English writers may have read more than one version (p. 59).

mark on authors as various as Spenser, Shakespeare, Greene, Sidney,¹⁹ and, most strikingly, Chamberlayne. *Pharonnida* is among the closest imitations of the whole of the *Aethiopica*. It is comparably long, and its plot follows the same formula exactly: a pair of attractive young lovers of royal lineage manage to remain chaste, alive and faithful to each other during a scarcely credible number of adventures, including war, imprisonment, rescue, enslavement, disguise, poisoning, burying alive, attempted seduction and capture by both pirates and robbers. While the *Aethiopica*'s lovers are Chariclea, who turns out to be an Ethiopian princess, and Theagenes, the Thessalian descendant of Achilles, *Pharonnida* is Princess of Morea and her lover Argalia is revealed to be Prince of Aetolia and Epirus. Although *Pharonnida* is not quite as active a heroine as Chariclea, she is equally central to her story and possesses some political power: in the absence of her father she acts as judge and regent.

The fast-changing spatial settings of the two texts are not identical, but they do overlap. The world of the ancient novels is centred on the Mediterranean and this is the case in *Pharonnida*, too. The *Aethiopica* travels from and back to Ethiopia, spending time in parts of Greece and Carthage, but most of the dry-land action takes place in Egypt. *Pharonnida* is set mostly in parts of Greece such as Morea, Epirus and Aetolia, but it wanders into Cyprus and Turkey as well. Both stories are given closure by the lovers' eventual marriage; nothing would have prevented further adventures in the ever-exciting Mediterranean world otherwise. One apparent difference between these two texts is in the relation of the temporal setting of the story to the writer's own time. However, this difference proves in the end superficial. The *Aethiopica* pretends to be an historical novel, set in the late period BCE, perhaps a few centuries before its composition, but the cultures that it depicts belong substantially to the same milieu as that of the author and his readers. The realistic impulse in this text is much stronger than its historicizing one, causing it to include many details of custom, technology, objects and animals from the author's own contemporary

¹⁹ Merrit Y. Hughes, 'Spenser's Debt to the Greek Romances', *Modern Philology* 23 (1925): 67–76; Victor Skretkovicz, Jr., 'Sidney and Amyot: Heliodorus in the Structure and Ethos of the *New Arcadia*', *Review of English Studies*, n.s. 27 (1976): 170–174; Simon Reynolds, 'Cymbeline and Heliodorus' *Aithiopia*: The Loss and recovery of Form', *Translation and Literature* 13 (2004): 24–48 (pp. 24–25); Mentz, *Romance for Sale*, 47–50.

era.²⁰ *Pharonnida* is set in a much more distant, ancient past in relation to its author's time – but it is a past closely resembling the present of the *Aethiopica* and it builds its own sense of realism on that of the earlier text. Both authors embed striking anachronistic episodes from their own present into their narratives. Evidence suggests that Heliodorus modelled his description of the siege of Syene on the siege of Mesopotamia in 350 CE, an event that probably took place during his own lifetime.²¹ Much more spectacularly, Chamberlayne includes in his text descriptions of wars in which his characters are involved that are in fact his own detailed eye-witness accounts of battles in which he himself participated during the English Civil War, especially the Second Battle of Newbury.²² Chamberlayne's narrator also brings his own self-reflexive discourse into the real time of the Civil War, ongoing during the writing of *Pharonnida*, when at the end of Book II he announces that he 'must/Let [his] Pen rest awhile, and see the rust/Scour'd from [his] own Sword'.²³ At this precise moment in the composition the author felt himself obliged to forego the sedentary life of a poet and to go off with this real 'Sword' to fight for his king. It was at this stage of his career, in October 1644, that he experienced the second Battle of Newbury first-hand.

Pharonnida thus resembles the *Aethiopica* closely enough to provide motivation for Saintsbury to classify them both in the same genre – except that the former text is in verse. However, the anomaly of the novel in verse had been domesticated by the early twentieth century. Sufficient verse novels, labelled as such by both their authors and the public, existed by then for the crossbred genre to offer critics a convenient repository for a text that was a novel in all respects except

²⁰ Donald Lateiner, 'Abduction Marriage in Heliodorus' *Aethiopica*', *Greek, Roman and Byzantine Studies* 38 (1997): 409–439 (pp. 415–419); Lawrence Kim, 'Time' in Whitmarsh (ed.), *Cambridge Companion to the Greek and Roman Novels*, 145–61 (p. 147).

²¹ Heliodorus, *An Aethiopian History*, trans. Thomas Underdowne (c. 1569; rpt London, 1895), pp. 283–89; Wiersma, 'The Ancient Greek Novel and Its Heroines', 110; T. Hägg, *The Novel in Antiquity* (Oxford, 1983), p. 59.

²² Parsons, 'A Forgotten Poet', 298–304.

²³ William Chamberlayne, *Pharonnida: A Heroick Poem* (London, 1659), pp. 171–72. Although *Pharonnida* is printed in one volume, the pagination starts afresh in the third of the five Books.

the medium of composition. Famous examples, such as Alexander Pushkin's *Eugene Onegin*, which named itself a verse novel in its subtitle, and Elizabeth Barrett Browning's *Aurora Leigh*, which its author described in letters as a 'novel-poem', had appeared in the nineteenth century.²⁴ The fact that both Saintsbury and Dixon found flaws in the consistency of *Pharonnida*'s plot and syntax made the classification all the more satisfactory for them, since neither approved of the verse novel genre. Dixon quite clearly used the shortcomings of *Pharonnida*, which was in his view the originary verse novel in English, to justify his contempt for the whole genre:

Pharonnida is our first, and perhaps still our best novel in verse, a species of composition against which the Muse appears to have set her face, since no perfectly successful example can be cited. Why should it fail? Only, it would seem, because verse is inappropriate save in the conduct of elevated action, without due warrant where the key of feeling falls to the level of ordinary life. In drama which admits only the critical situations and critical moments verse is always legitimate, for it is then charged with responsibility. But verse, the aristocratic medium of expression, revolts from servile occupations, refuses to perform, or performs reluctantly, the workaday routine, the domestic tasks of the novel. It turns away from all menial service, it is intolerant, haughty, exclusive, it abhors introductions, explanations, details. Nothing, therefore, would appear less promising than such an attempt as Chamberlayne's to render into verse a long and complicated story, with its many characters, episodes, incidents, sentiments, and passions. The mere linking of part to part, the transitions from one matter to another, place a heavy strain upon his medium. Yet of such art he knew nothing.²⁵

Some of this grumbling is eminently defensible. *Pharonnida* as it has come down to us does display lapses in narrative coherence. Parsons shows that nearly half of the present text was interpolated in parts

²⁴ Alexander Pushkin, *Eugene Onegin: A Novel in Verse*, trans. Babette Deutsch (Harmondsworth, 1964), t.p.; Elizabeth Barrett Browning, *The Letters of Elizabeth Barrett Browning to Mary Russell Mitford 1836–1854*, ed. Meredith B. Raymond and Mary Rose Sullivan, 3 vols (Winfield, KS, 1983), III, 42.

²⁵ Dixon, *English Epic and Heroic Poetry*, 234–35.

into all five Books in a second draft;²⁶ Chamberlayne should have undertaken more careful editing of this new, longer narrative, as well as of some of his sentences, which Saintsbury finds incoherent.²⁷

However, most of Dixon's criticism is quite unjustified and derives from an elitist conviction that verse cannot be employed for the mundane or vulgar uses of everyday life – which is what he believes to be the novel's chief concern. Unlike Saintsbury, Dixon does not defend his classification of *Pharonnida* in terms of historical precursors but offers instead its use of a low style and subject-matter. His objections are in essence the generic complaint against the novel *per se*. It is a 'servile', 'workaday', 'menial' sort of genre that does not shrink from either 'domestic tasks' or a 'complicated plot'. Bakhtin would maintain that these features are the secrets of the novel's great power and the reasons why it has unseated the epic and all overly 'poetic' genres in the modern world.²⁸ Moreover, Dixon's aristocratic preference for the other genres is also badly based, since poetry and drama are not confined to elevated subjects and language. Perhaps especially in the hands of Shakespeare, these genres wallow and even thrive in the low style.

But Dixon does approach the heart of the problem of novels in verse. The novel is traditionally a prose genre – even in the fourth century CE. Watt insists that the point of the novel's use of prose is referential – that novelists may write 'gracelessly and sometimes with downright vulgarity' in order to bring the object directly into focus without calling attention to their language by the use of undue elegance of style.²⁹ Poetry is by nature more elegant, more self-consciously crafted, than prose, and the more stylization it selects, as deviations from a matter-of-fact, apparently spontaneous prose norm, the more self-reflexive it becomes. Blank verse can at times – as is so often demonstrated in Shakespeare – sound unstructured when the author or performer chooses to background the iambic pentameter line. But rhyme, particularly couplet rhyme because of the close proximity of the repeated sounds, is much harder to background and thus the

²⁶ Parsons, 'A Forgotten Poet', 305–08.

²⁷ Saintsbury, 'Lesser Caroline Poets', 86–87.

²⁸ Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination*, 18–28.

²⁹ Watt, *The Rise of the Novel*, 30.

discourse of rhymed verse is less transparently referential than most prose.

Chamberlayne probably chose the heroic couplet not as the most appropriate poetic form for his subject-matter but simply because it was the great emerging form of his era, the form that sounded sweetest to him – and his readers – at their moment in cultural history. But he adapted the form to his purposes quite ingeniously. Saintsbury claims that Chamberlayne enjambled his couplets to an almost incomparable degree,³⁰ which allowed him to bracket off sections of discourse into long flexible paragraphs, thus freeing himself of the eternal two-line unit of normal couplet utterance. Even Dixon writes appreciatively of Chamberlayne's mastery of the 'free run-on couplet' and admits that it is capable of a 'music never heard in the staccato rhymes of Pope'.³¹

In the following example from the end of the second Canto of Book III, Chamberlayne strikingly rhymes on non-lexical words such as prepositions and conjunctions ('be', 'and', 'to') and even, at line 603, on the determiner 'which', separated with wrenching enjambment from the rest of its noun phrase, 'Night dress':

| | |
|---|-----|
| But that which crost | |
| Distrest Pharonnida above the grief | 575 |
| Of her restraint, or ought but the belief | |
| Of her Argalia's death, is now to be | |
| Bar'd, when she wants it[,] most society | |
| With sorrowful Florenza, whilst she stayd | |
| The Partner of her secrets, now betrayd | 580 |
| By false Amphibia to her Father, and | |
| Banisht the Court, retiring, to withstand | |
| The storms of greatnesse, to her Fathers own | |
| Poor quiet home, which as if nere she'd known, | |
| The beauties of a Palace, did content | 585 |
| Her eaven thoughts at leasure to lament, | |
| In pensive tears, her wretched Mistresse Fate | |
| Whose joyes eclips'd, converts her Robes of State | |
| To mourning Sables; what delights the place, | |

³⁰ George Saintsbury, *Minor Poets of the Caroline Period*, 3 vols (Oxford, 1905–21), I, 12.

³¹ Dixon, *English Epic and Heroic Poetry*, 236–37.

Was capable of having to deface 590
 The Characters of grief, her Father strives
 To make them hers, but no such choice Flower thrives
 In the cold Region of her Breast, she makes
 Her Prison such as theirs, whose guilt forsakes
 All hopes of Mercy; the slow-footed day, 595
 Hardly from Night distinguisht, steals away
 Few beams from her tear-clouded Eyes, and those
 A melancholy Pensiveness bestows,
 On saddest Objects. The ore-shadowed Room
 Wherein she sate seemd but a large-siz'd Tomb, 600
 Where Beauty buried lay, its furniture
 Of doleful black hung in it, to inure,
 Her Eyes to Objects like her Thoughts, in which
 Night dress of sorrow, till a Smile enrich
 Impoverisht Beauty, I must leave her to 605
 Her sighs (those sad companions) and renew
 His fatal story for whose Love alone
 She dares exchange the Glories of a Throne.³²

The long sentences, which run ruthlessly over the ends of lines and couplets and conclude almost invariably at midline, use both weak rhyme and strategically placed grammatical phrasing to achieve this degree of enjambment and medial pause. Together with the lexical and prosodic weakness of some of the rhyme words, the rhythmic counterflow actually succeeds to some degree in backgrounding both rhyme and metre, sometimes for considerable stretches, creating an effect that is almost as irregular as much prose. The text may not embody the precise style that Watt had in mind for the novel, but it does create the illusion of a rougher, more spontaneous and uncrafted series of utterances than is usually perceived in a passage of heroic couplets.

Moreover, the prosaic effect is not the only novelistic feature evident in the passage. The discourse is surprisingly interior for so early a text, focalizing as it does both Pharonnida and Florenza in their separate experiences of sorrow and banishment and finally bringing forward the narrator, who shows himself tender-hearted and sympathetic to his characters. Unfortunately, Saintsbury's complaints

³² Chamberlayne, *Pharonnida*, 208–09.

about Chamberlayne's methods of composition are relevant here:

He has allowed a fresh thought, a fresh image, or even a fresh incident, to arise in his mind before he has finished dealing with the last, and he simply does not finish – but drops his old partner's arm and puts his own round the new partner's waist without ceremony, and without stopping the dance movement of verse and phrase. After a time, with tolerable alacrity of mind, some patience and a little goodwill, it is possible to accommodate oneself in reading to what, at first, causes mere bewilderment, and, perhaps, in the majority of readers, mere disgust.³³

The reader's initial puzzlement over transitions between focalizers in the passage is indeed a result of the author's impatient onward progression and lack of editing. However, despite some confusion of syntax and reference, a re-reading reveals that lines 582–87 apply to Florenza, not Pharonnida, who is the main focus of the rest of the passage. The phrase 'her Father' in line 581 refers to a different father-daughter combination from the one mentioned at line 583. Similarly, though the reader is aware that Pharonnida has been exiled from the palace and locked up in a lesser royal house as punishment for her love of Argalia, the phrase 'Banisht the Court' (line 582) does not apply to her but to Florenza who has been sent home for her role as accomplice. Florenza's sadness is accompanied by 'pensive tears' that flow not only in sympathy with 'her wretched Mistress Fate' but also for her own deprivation: her father's house contrasts starkly in her mind with the 'beauties of a Palace'. These memories of lost pleasure and her present impressions of a 'Poor quiet home' are unspoken and interior to the character, just as Pharonnida's distress at 'the belief/ Of her Argalia's death', 'grief/ Of her restraint' and consciousness of her need for Florenza's company, from which she is 'Bar'd, when she wants it most', are presented from within.

The transition from characters' focalization to the narrator's own discourse is managed with surprising dexterity. As the passage progresses, Pharonnida's impressions – almost, indeed, her free indirect discourse – become increasingly infiltrated by the perceptions and voice of the narrator. 'Slow-footed day/ Hardly from Night

³³ Saintsbury, 'Lesser Caroline Poets', 86–87.

distinguish' (lines 595–96) is clearly Pharonnida's observation, for she is living the experience of separation, which leadenly decelerates time and blurs its distinctions. However, the completion of the clause, 'steals away/Few beams from her tear-clouded Eyes' (lines 596–97), moves the centre of subjectivity from the character to the narrator watching her. Pharonnida's 'tear-clouded eyes' are observed from the outside, though the shift is a sleight of hand achieved without change of metaphor: the personified 'day' is still the active principle, here vainly attempting to steal what are in short supply, the 'beams' from Pharonnida's eyes. The passage thus demonstrates a complex multivocality that might impress even Bakhtin.

Watt observes the profusion of 'movable objects' to be found in the realist novel; recent exponents of 'thing theory' have pointed out the relationship of things that appear to exist in and as themselves to the metonymic existence of a (fictional) material world.³⁴ The *Pharonnida* passage includes mention of a world of 'Objects' (line 599). Though the narrator does not completely individualize these objects, he does make some mention of the mundane things of Pharonnida's world, such as clothing – she changes her royal finery for 'mourning Sables' (lines 588–89) – and 'furniture', here hung with 'doleful black' and therefore sympathetically presenting itself to the sad heroine as 'like her Thoughts' (lines 601–03).

Thus, Saintsbury and Dixon's pronouncement that *Pharonnida* is the first verse novel in English is not unjustified – and not only because of its obvious imitation of Heliodorus. Despite being composed not in prose but in heroic couplets, *Pharonnida* possesses a single, long, highly referential and absorbing plot; it displays some complexity of narration; it is concerned with the interior lives of characters, in particular women characters; and it is generally realistic, at times even accurately contemporary, also metonymically including some of the mundane objects of a real world.

³⁴ Watt, *The Rise of the Novel*, 26; Cynthia Sundberg Wall, *The Prose of Things: Transformations of Description in the Eighteenth Century* (London, 2006), p. 110; Stefanie Markovits, 'Form Things: Looking at Genre Through Victorian Diamonds', *Victorian Studies* 52 (2010): 591–619 (p. 605).

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