

Metaphor and the Ancient Novel

ANCIENT NARRATIVE

Supplementum 4

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Metaphor and the Ancient Novel

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Introduction

This thematic fourth *Supplementum* to *Ancient Narrative*, entitled *Metaphor and the Ancient Novel*, is a collection of revised versions of papers originally read at the *Second Rethymnon International Conference on the Ancient Novel (RICAN 2)* under the same title, held at the University of Crete, Rethymnon, on May 19–20, 2003.¹

Though research into metaphor has reached staggering proportions over the past twenty-five years, this is the first volume dedicated entirely to the subject of metaphor in relation to the ancient novel. Not every contributor takes into account theoretical discussions of metaphor, but the usefulness of every single paper lies in the fact that they explore *actual texts* while sometimes theorists tend to work out of context. Aristotle's celebrated definition of metaphor in *Poetics* 1457b7 as ὀνόματος ἀλλοτρίου ἐπιφορά and, to a lesser degree, the discussion of metaphor on a macro-level in book 3 of the *Rhetoric* (1404b–1405b) justifiably constitute a point of reference for some contributions to this volume. Helen Morales, for instance, detects remarkable similarities between the features Aristotle attributes to metaphor in the *Poetics* and the *Rhetoric* and the action of the major Greek novels; and Tim Whitmarsh sees, like others before him, in Aristotle's invitation to the orator "to make the language unfamiliar" (ποιεῖν ξένην τὴν διάλεκτον, *Rhetoric* 1404b10) a precursor of the Russian Formalist notion of 'defamiliarization'. John Kirby has noted that "even those who wish to propose new or different parameters for the analysis of metaphor must do so *against* the grain of the Aristotelian tradition".² It is a statement that finds confirmation in this volume: Judith Perkins, for instance, discusses the power of naming in the *Satyrical* of Petronius *against* the notions of 'proper' meaning and of 'permanent essences' of names that can be 'transported' by metaphor. The attraction of Aristotle's definition of metaphor lies partly in the fact that all

¹ RICAN 1 on 'Space in the Ancient Novel' took place on May 14–15, 2001 and its proceedings have already been published as *Supplementum* 1 of *AN* [M.Paschalis and S.Frangoulidis (eds.), *Space in the Ancient Novel* (Groningen, 2002)]

² "Aristotle on Metaphor", *AJP* 118 (1997) 517–554, 518.

three terms in it, and especially the last two, admit of different interpretations and hence of different translations—hence we have chosen to leave it untranslated.

In the first paper of this volume Helen Morales argues that some ancient Greek novels (Chariton, Achilles Tatius and Heliodorus) display a special relationship to metaphor in the sense that they dramatize the operations of metaphor as characterized by Aristotle and other ancient writers. Just as the notions of place, exchange and foreignness are central to ancient characterizations of metaphor (Aristotle and Cicero), in an analogous way these Greek novels dramatize relations between home and abroad, displacement and exchange, and similar notions. The tendency to describe heroines through comparisons is also significant in terms of Aristotle's theory of metaphor and comparisons to Helen of Troy point in addition to the "metaphoricity" of her figure as conveyed through her fortunes. Morales also argues that metaphors in the Greek novel are largely employed to degrade women; even the cases when males appear as victims of female power, as 'hunted', 'captured' or 'enslaved', actually provide eroticised justification for the violence women undergo in the novels.

Ken Dowden is concerned with accommodating the notion of allegorical novel and in particular of Merkelbach's *Roman und Mysterium in der Antike* into our "modern age of sophisticated literary criticism". He argues that novels (like other texts) are metaphorical, since a metaphor is "the process of describing one thing as if it were another". But the idea of *equating* novels with mystery rites (as Merkelbach did) is to be rejected in favor of an analogical and typological relationship. The 'soft' allegorical interpretations of the *Odyssey*, an epic with which the novels have a strong intertextual relationship, would be an acceptable alternative; in these the wandering Odysseus becomes a *type* of person finding his way through life. Dowden proposes a schema in which the ultimate referent is an ancient world sense of *bios*, a choice of direction in life, and in the context of which the same 'story' (*fabula*) is told in different ways by the epic, the mystery rites, and the novel. The relationship between these tellings would be a metaphorical one, metaphor working in different directions.

Gareth Schmeling concentrates on the metaphor/simile of Callirhoe's godlike beauty in Chariton's novel in an attempt to show her celebrity status. Callirhoe is a celebrity because Chariton has written her in that role: she is as beautiful as Aphrodite and makes epiphany-like appearances, she is instantly

recognized and causes large crowds to gather around her; the personified Φήμη that broadcasts fame is a remote counterpart of modern mass media. Schmeling shows that Callirhoe derives her celebrity features from Helen of Troy, who was the first celebrity in the western tradition.

Michael Paschalis draws attention to the portrayal of the narrator as a hunter in the prologue of *Daphnis and Chloe* and investigates the significance of this metaphor in terms of the devising of the subject-matter and of the composition of *Daphnis and Chloe*. He traces the contextual features of hunting and its analogies to other activities within Longus' novel and examines its relationship to the novel's major constituent genres, pastoral and romance. With regard to the former, it is Theocritean and especially Virgilian bucolic that receives the closest attention. The relation between Town and Country constitutes a fundamental interpretative angle throughout.

Ewen Bowie offers a survey of metaphors in *Daphnis and Chloe*, divided into four groups. The first group comprises symptoms and concomitants of desire and a subcategory that treats a social aspect of desire. The second group includes anthropomorphisation of the inanimate and anthropomorphisation of animals. Next come metaphors that concern literary and meta-literary activity and the fourth group is dedicated to the world of learning. There is also an appendix with instances of metaphor that do not fall into these categories.

Tim Whitmarsh takes us through a series of readings of the 'smile' of day, the very first words of Heliodorus' *Aethiopika*. In his view this is an open metaphor that provokes a series of questions about its nature and opens limitless possibilities of interpretation; these could be reduced only by considering the larger contexts in which metaphoricity operates. Whitmarsh starts with a lexical study of διαγλώσσης that shows that this is probably a 'dead' metaphor, partially revived by the text's estranging tactics. A powerful model for understanding this sense of estrangement would be Shklovsky's strategy of 'defamiliarisation', together with Aristotle's discussion of metaphor. Furthermore, the application of Freudian psychoanalysis would reveal the 'smile' to be a 'repressed' Homeric formula for the arrival of Dawn. Finally Whitmarsh adduces pseudo-Longinus' notion of metaphor as *hypsilopoion* in order to illuminate the 'sublimity' of solar imagery (a recurring feature in the novel) and the rhetorical strategy of Heliodorus, descended 'from the race of Helios'.

Niall Slater concentrates on the role of language in establishing cultural identity and the role of translation as a metaphor for cultural exchange in the *Aethiopika*: ‘translation’ and ‘metaphor’ are anyway synonymous on an etymological basis. Heliodorus acknowledges a multilingual world but one in which Greek is the dominant language. Not knowing Greek amounts programmatically to complete mutual incomprehension between cultures; knowledge of Greek promotes all sorts of communication, including concealed or pre-arranged communication for protection from unfriendly environments; partial or minimal knowledge of Greek is accompanied by gestures; and refusing to speak Greek may be intended to display non-Greek cultural superiority. The relationship between cultural identity and language turns out, however, to be a complex question: Charicleia’s acquisition of Greek runs parallel with the acquisition of Greek values, but the Ethiopian elite may speak Greek while retaining their barbarous customs. According to Slater Heliodorus’ dream was a universal translatability, in part through a universal visual language and in part through Greek, the language shared by all the protagonists, Hellenes and Ethiopians alike.

Richard Hunter is concerned with ways and levels of reading a text, the literal or lower and the higher, a distinction made in late antique and Byzantine hermeneutics (both pagan and Christian) and applied by Philip the Philosopher to Heliodorus’ *Aethiopika*. Philip’s ‘higher’ interpretation has two further levels, a moralizing and an allegorical one. According to Hunter, Philip’s ‘interpretative’ allegory draws on the novel’s own incorporation of ‘higher’ criticism into its texture (compositional allegory). Philip’s counterpart in the novel itself would be the Egyptian priest Kalasiris who also distinguishes two ways of understanding Homer, that of the ignorant majority and that of the wise men. The alignment of Philip’s hermeneutics with the ‘higher’ interpretation practised by Kalasiris could be viewed as remarkably foreshadowing modern critical practice.

In her discussion of ‘naming power’ in Petronius’ *Satyrica*, Judith Perkins sets out from modern theorists who challenge Aristotle’s definition of metaphor on two points, that he accepts a standard ‘proper’ naming and also a permanent ‘essence’ in names which can be ‘transported’ by metaphor. In the *Cena* Trimalchio voices his distrust of philosophers (and their assumptions about naming and metaphor) through his famous puns that show names to be in flux and constantly open to change. Trimalchio also proclaims change and flux when he embraces the body and its fluids in opposition to

Plato's *Symposium* and a range of contemporary philosophies, when he tells his idiosyncratic mythological stories that challenge the power of the elite "to impose one's fictions upon the world", and when he conceives life as a becoming and a progress.

Stephen Harrison studies the comic and parodic reception of a lofty epic metaphor in Apuleius' *Metamorphoses*. The image of 'waves' indicates high passion or passionate decision already in Homer's *Iliad*, and these are the two main fields in which it is deployed in Apuleius. Harrison surveys the main appearances of the 'waves of emotion' in Greek and Latin epic (and tragic) literature and shows that the Latin novelist reworks the passions of the *Aeneid* while in one case Virgil's voice merges with Catullus 64 and Ovid's *Metamorphoses*.

Luca Graverini brings to the fore the ambiguities of a metaphor in Apuleius' prologue, the promise to "stroke the ears" of his readers (*aurisque tuas ...permulceam*) with a "pretty whisper" (*lepido susurro*). As regards the former he detects similarities with the effeminate, "singing" style of imperial rhetoric criticised by Quintilian and others and sometimes compared to the song of the Sirens, while he associates the latter with the sleep-inducing voice of the bees in Virgil's *Eclogue* 1 and especially with the enchanting voice of the cicadas in Plato's *Phaedrus* that must be resisted like the song of the Sirens. The seductive song of Homer's Sirens would thus bring together the dangerous pleasures of rhetoric and poetry and would, in addition, constitute an appropriate intertext for this metaphor considering the Odyssean background of the *Metamorphoses*; but the reader is expected to distinguish between the *sapientia* of Odysseus and the *curiositas* of Lucius and its consequences, and therefore to listen with preparedness to the ear-soothing stories promised by the narrator.

Stavros Frangoulidis argues that the metaphor of death and rebirth of Aristomenes in Apul. *Met.* 1.14 indicates the changes Aristomenes undergoes and the associated revision of his views about magic. In Frangoulidis' view, Aristomenes' negative death and rebirth following contact with the witches in the shorter tale is best seen in comparison with the positive conditions prevailing in Lucius' Isiac rebirth in the novel's larger story.

Paula James is concerned with real and metaphorical mimicking birds in Apuleius' *Metamorphoses*. She distinguishes two kinds of mimicking: that of the *gavia* and the eagle in the story of *Cupid and Psyche*, which are talented birds that possess reason and are portrayed like full-fledged human

characters; and that of the parrot, which simply mimics human sounds and also stands for slavish imitation on a metapoetic level. Paula James finds parallels with characters in the novel. Psyche would represent the parrot model: she is a mere mimicry of Venus and in the palace of Cupid she leads an existence that resembles Melior's caged parrot at Statius *Silvae* 2.4.11–15. Lucius wanted to become a bird but was instead transformed into an ass and lost the faculty of speech; he was thus unable even to “hail” the emperor as the parrot in Martial does (14.73). In the concluding section she draws attention to the allusions and riddles in the novel's prologue: learning Latin *nullo magistro* (like a parrot), feeling uneasy about the *immutatio vocis* (that suggests a parrot-like *imitatio vocis*) and learning a language that later the ass will be unable to speak.

According to Andrew Laird, riddles, as expressions that denote one thing while referring to something else, would fit the Aristotelian definition of metaphor—actually, Aristotle says that “metaphors are made like riddles” (μεταφοραὶ γὰρ αἰνίττονται, *Rhetoric* 1405b1–5). Laird studies the persistently recurring riddles in the *Historia Apollonii*, but also shows dissatisfaction with Aristotle's definition of metaphor in the *Poetics* for being inadequate to cover on a macro-level the notion of representation of things not present. He shows how the story is carried forward by re-presentations of things that have already been presented, how the narrative foregrounds the problem of the relationship between an image and its object, and how in visual representations different eyes make different inferences from what they see. Laird treats also the text itself as representation, because it employs imitation of previous models and because the ending of the *Historia Apollonii* (in the B and C recensions) reveals that the novel became a votive offering and a library item; the latter case would raise the issue of the representation of the narrator's identity.

John Barclay's *Argenis*, a Latin novel published in 1621 that found three English translators in the same decade, is modelled on Heliodorus' *Aethiopika* and set in pre-Roman Sicily and North Africa. It is an allegory that re-oriented English romance in a political direction and created a fashion for political romance writing in the period of the Civil War. A Catholic and a Royalist, John Barclay moved between the France of Henry IV and Louis XIII and Jacobean England, and designed “The loves of Polyarchus and Argenis” as a kind of ‘mirror’ (*obiecto speculo*) for (near-) contemporary events and characters, in particular for the religious and political struggles in

France under Henry III and IV. Catherine Connors explains how Barclay uses classical mythology and classical models as vehicles for alluding to the world-shaping conflicts of Catholic against Protestant and Christian against Moslem. Central to her reading of the novel is the familiar metaphor in which the bodily integrity of a woman stands for the integrity of a political entity. She analyzes in particular Ovid's Sicilian myths of rebellion and rape as metaphors for the safety of the kingdom of Sicily; the myth of the division of the cosmos as a metaphor for monarchs co-existing in peace; and the geographical features and intertextual background of Mauritania (Heliodorus, Virgil and Pliny) as metaphors for the encounter of Christian Europe with Islamic North Africa and as a reflection of Elizabethan England.

We would like to thank a number of individuals for their help in the organization of *RICAN 2* and the publication of the present volume of proceedings: to all speakers, panel chairs, and guests; to colleagues in the Classics Division and most especially to Athina Kavoulaki and Yannis Tzifopoulos; to our computer wizard George Motakis and to Vangelis Gherarchakis for his technical assistance; and finally to our graduate and undergraduate students, Sofia Galanaki, Stavros Petropoulos, Evghenia Perysinaki, Katerina Mikraki, Antonis Chiotakis and Stavros Frangioudakis, for providing all sorts of valuable assistance. Special thanks must also go to the University administration, and especially to the former vice-Rector Nikos Siafakas, for the financial support that enabled us to cover the cost of accommodation and meals.

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Michael Paschalis
Stavros Frangoulidis

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