

Heliodoros smiles

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Every metaphor is the tip of a submerged model ...

Max Black¹

Ἡμέρας ἄρτι διαγελώσης καὶ ἡλίου τὰς ἀκρωρείας
καταυγάζοντος, ἄνδρες ἐν ὄπλοις ληστροκοῖς ὄρους
ὑπερκύψαντες, ὃ δὴ κατ' ἐκβολὰς τοῦ Νείλου καὶ στόμα
τὸ καλούμενον Ἡρακλεωτικὸν ὑπερτείνει...

When day had just begun to smile, and the sun was beaming down onto the peaks, men armed like bandits crept over the summit of the hill that overlooks the so-called Heracleiote mouth of the Nile, where it pours into the sea...² (1.1.1)

The beginning of Heliodoros' novel is justly famous. The lavish visuality, which has invited numerous comparisons with cinematic technique,³ inaugurates a narrative that makes sustained and creative use of the spectacular.⁴ The deployment of the bandits as aporetic focalisers for the scene they behold is a stroke of narratological brilliance, artfully retarding the reader's cognition of events with a drip-drip release of information.⁵ Heliodoros, the latest of antiquity's extant novelists, announces with a bang his arrival in a crowded, and to some extent overly regularised, marketplace: while the title of the papyrus or codex (τά περὶ Θεαγένην καὶ Χαρίκλειαν Αἰθιοπικά) will

¹ Black 1977, 445.

² Translations from Heliodoros are my own.

³ Weinreich 1960, 31; Bühler 1976, 178, 181; Winkler 2000–1.

⁴ Marino 1990.

⁵ Winkler 1982; Whitmarsh 2002.

have indicated the genre to ancient readers,⁶ the beginning of the narrative challenges us to read that genre with new eyes.

My interest for the purposes of this chapter lies in the very first words. Other novels open with straightforwardly diegetic material establish the parameters of place, characters, and sometimes period.⁷ Heliodorus' first words, on the other hand, unsettle. For sure, there are orientating markers here, but they are notably hazy: temporality (just after sunrise – but on what day, why?), geography (the 'so-called' Heracleotic mouth of the Nile) and prosopography ('men armed like bandits' – but are they really bandits?). Even before we begin to figure out just how much narratological information is missing, though, we are confronted with the elegantly figurative phrase 'Ἡμέρας ἄρτι διαγελώσης. What do we make of this? How and why can day be said to smile?

Metaphors constitute a kind of cognitive puzzle. A metaphorical statement is 'a verbal action essentially demanding "uptake", a creative response from a competent reader'.⁸ Heliodorus' metaphorical challenge is carefully planted. If it had been the sun smiling, the first-time reader might have taken the phrase as literal (Helios – the god – smiled); but it is the *day* that smiles, and the context here makes it clear that the sun, the subject of *καταυγάζοντος*, can only be the celestial body. The opening words demand to be taken as a metaphor, a riddle – the very first, indeed, of the many interpretative conundra that dapple the text.⁹ This chapter will constitute an extended engagement with Heliodorus' challenge, a meditations upon the rich interpretative possibilities thrown up by this striking string of pearls.

⁶ At least, if I am right that *τά περὶ / κατὰ* + girl's (and sometimes boy's) name is an indication of novelistic genre: see Whitmarsh (forthcoming). For the title of Heliodorus' novel, see the colophon at 10.41.4.

⁷ Chariton's novel begins (after identifying the author/narrator) Ἐρμοκράτης ὁ Συρακοσίων στρατηγός, οὗτος ὁ νικήσας Ἀθηναίους, εἶχε θυγατέρα Καλλιρόην (1.1.1); cf. Xen. Eph. 1.1.1 Ἦν ἐν Ἐφέσῳ ἀνήρ τῶν τὰ πρῶτα ἐκεῖ δυναμένων, Λυκομήδης ὄνομα. Longus and Achilles supply contextualising material both in their external frames and in the secondary narration that thereafter becomes the principal focus: cf. Long. 1 *praef.* 1 Ἐν Λέσβῳ θηρῶν ἐν ἄλσει Νυμφῶν θέαμα εἶδον κάλλιστον ὧν εἶδον· εἰκόνα γραπτὴν, ἱστορίαν ἔρωτος; 1.1.1 (Πόλις ἐστὶ τῆς Λέσβου Μιτυλήνη); Ach. Tat. 1.1.1 Σιδῶν ἐπὶ θαλάττῃ πόλις; 1.3.1 (Ἐμοὶ Φοινίκη γένος, Τύρος ἢ πατρίς, ὄνομα Κλειτοφῶν). For more on the prefaces, see Morgan 2001.

⁸ Black 1977, 442.

⁹ Winkler 1982, esp. 95–137; also Morgan 1994. Boys-Stone ed. (2003) is an excellent collection of essays on metaphor and allegory.

Literal beginnings

What kind of metaphor is it? I begin with some preliminary remarks. In Umberto Eco's terms, metaphors are interpreted via the identification of a point of convergence between the 'semiological' associations of the two terms. In the sentence 'Geoff gambled on interest rates falling', for example, **/Geoff's financial practice/** is associated with **/gambling/** via the mediating sememe of **/calculated risk-taking/**. Metaphors can, however, be more or less 'open'.¹⁰ The sentence 'Geoff botanised his share portfolio' would be more opaque: in what sense is **/Geoff's financial practice/** linked to **/the study of plants/**? In the case of such 'open' metaphors, where the cultural repertoire offers no guide to interpretation, the possibilities are potentially limitless; the only way in which some kind of limitation could be imposed upon the interpretative process would be through context (this is a point to which I shall return).

The terms of Ἡμέρας ... διαγελώσης are at one level fairly obvious. **/Day/** is linked to **/smiling/** via the sememe **/the action of a sentient being/**, plausibly **/the action of a god/**. At a subsidiary level, **/day/** is being implicitly associated, via the secondary sememe of **/sunrise/** (indexed by ἄρτι),¹¹ with **/the sun/**: Ἡμέρας ... διαγελώσης and ἡλίου ... καταυγάζοντος, together, look like a hendiadys (another point to which we shall return). To this extent, the metaphor does not stretch the reader overly: the rising sun is being personified / deified.

But what does the smile (or is it a laugh?) signify? Warmth, benevolence, nurture, favour? Trickery? Mockery? What precedents are there in the cultural repertoire for this kind of association? To approach this question, we need to analyse the lexical range of διαγέλω. By far the commonest usage is the transitive form, meaning 'mock'. There is, however, also a less familiar, intransitive usage that usually refers to the serenity of natural phenomena.¹² This is found only seven times in classical antiquity, outside of our

¹⁰ In this chapter, I pay less attention to 'closed' metaphors, i.e. those that embody insidious habits of thought: on these, see esp. Lakoff & Johnson 1980; Johnson 1987; Lakoff & Turner 1989; Turner 2000.

¹¹ For ἡμέρα in this sense, cf. expressions such as ἅμα τῆι ἡμέραι (LSJ s.v. 1) and ἄφ / προ ἡμέρας (LSJ s.v. III). I distinguish between 'daybreak' (first light) and 'sunrise' (the appearance of the sun). In Heliodorus, the reference is clearly to sunrise, as the second phrase makes clear.

¹² LSJ s.v. διαγέλω.

passage. Four of these instances are in Theophrastus (*Hist. Plant.* 8.2.4, *Caus. Plant.* 1.2.8, 2.3.1, 4.5.1), referring to climatic conditions, two in a treatise of Plutarch in a similar sense (*De prim. frig.* 950, 952F). These cases, referring to ongoing clement conditions, do not offer exact parallels. Not only is the subject different, but also the nature of the action described. Heliodorus' διαγελώσης is certainly a present participle, but, as the adverb ἄρτι shows, it needs to be taken as inceptive (hence the translation above, 'begun to smile'). It is not the ongoing balmy calmness of the weather that is denoted by διαγελᾶν, but the *event* of sunrise.

The only exact parallel for Heliodorus' sense is a fragment of the second-century CE *Praeparatio Sophistica* of Phrynichus the Arab:

διαφέρει δὲ ὄρθρος τῆς ἕως. ὄρθρος μὲν γὰρ ἐστὶν ἡ ὥρα τῆς νυκτός, καθ' ἣν <οἱ> ἀλεκτρούνες ἄδουσιν. ἄρχεται δὲ ἐνάτης ὥρας καὶ τελευτᾷ εἰς διαγελῶσαν ἡμέραν. τεκμήριον δέ. ὀρθρεύεσθαι γὰρ καλοῦσιν οἱ Ἄττικοι τὸ λύχνῳ προσκεῖσθαι, πρὶν ἡμέραν γενέσθαι. ὄρθριος δ' ἐρεῖς ἄδει καὶ ὄρθριος ὁ ἀλέκτωρ ἦσεν. ἕως δὲ τὸ ἀπὸ διαγελώσης ἡμέρας ἄχρις ἡλίου ἐξέχοντος διάστημα.

'Daybreak' (*orthros*) is different from 'dawn' (*heōs*). For 'daybreak' is the time of night when the cocks crow, beginning in the ninth hour and finishing when day smiles ... 'Dawn' is the period from the smiling of the day until sunrise.'

(*Praeparatio Sophistica* 93–4 de Borries)

This passage suggests that the phrase ἡ διαγελῶσα ἡμέρα is a naturalised term for a specific phenomenon, viz. the first twilight. A 'dead' metaphor, then? We need to be cautious about this kind of inference. Like all ancient lexicographers, Phrynichus invests heavily in the idea of an exact correlation between lexical taxonomy and the natural world. If this is the regular meaning of the phrase, it is not followed by Heliodorus, who uses it to refer to sunrise (what Phrynichus would call ἕως). What this passage does tell us is that Heliodorus did not invent the phrase *e nihilo*; what it does not tell us is whether the phrase really was in common usage with a specific meaning, how recondite it would have appeared, what associations it would have stimulated to contemporary ears. Was ἡ διαγελῶσα ἡμέρα an integral part of all readers' lexica? Or has Phrynichus used an obscure term, *faute de mieux*, to plug a lexical gap in his account of daybreak?

A less exact parallel comes in Philo's treatise *De mutatione nominum*: 'the day, however, smiles in deep dawn ahead of the impending rising of the sun' (καὶ ἡ ἡμέρα μέντοι προγελαῖ πρὸς βαθὺν ὄρθρον μέλλοντος ἀνίσχειν ἡλίου, 162). This passage seems to confirm Phrynichus' interpretation of the period of the sun's smile (first twilight); it also implies that the phrase is in regular usage. But it also suggests, in the context, that the metaphor embodied in the phrase is, or could be viewed as, a live one: Philo's treatise as a whole is on the need for catachresis when language attempts to confront the ineffable divine (cf. 13). For Philo, at any rate, the smile of daybreak is a controversial abuse of language necessitated by the awesome celestial phenomenon.

Moreover, the fact that Heliodorus' opening was so widely imitated in Byzantine times might be taken to militate against any view that ἡ διαγελωσα ἡμέρα was simply a dead metaphor.¹³ The twelfth-century scholar Stephanus Grammaticus certainly takes it as bold, striking and actively metaphorical:

“ἡμέρας ἄρτι διαγελώσης” εἶπεν ὁ Ἡλιόδωρος· ἐτίμησε τὴν ἡμέραν ἀπὸ τοῦ περιθεῖναι αὐτῇ ἀνθρώπου ἰδίωμα τὸ γελαῖν.

'When day had just begun to smile', said Heliodorus. He honoured 'the day' by furnishing it with a human property, namely laughter.

In artem rhetoricam 313

For Stephanus, laughter/smiling is a 'property' (ἰδίωμα) of human beings, which Heliodorus has metaphorically transferred to 'the day' in the service of a specially marked form of discourse, viz. 'honouring'.¹⁴ How do we explain the apparent mismatch between the Byzantine reception, which treats

¹³ Cf. Anna Comnena, *Alexias* 1.9.1 (ἡμέρας δὲ ἄρτι διαγελώσης καὶ τοῦ ἡλίου τοῦ ὀρίζοντος ὑπερκύψαντος), 8.5.4 (Ἡμέρας δὲ ἀπαρτί διαγελώσης); Georgius Cedrenus, *Compendium historiarum* 231–2 (ἡμέρας δὲ ἤδη διαγελώσης; cf. Hld. test. XIV Colonna for another possible reference to Heliodorus by Cedrenus); Constantinus Porphyrogenitus, *Oratio de translatione Chrysostomi* 314 (ἡμέρας γὰρ ἄρτι διαγελώσης); John Scylitzes, *Synopsis historiarum John* 1.12 (ἡμέρας δὲ ἄρτι διαγελώσης); Nicephorus Bryennius, *Historiae* 1.16 (Ἡμέρας δ' ἤδη διαγελώσης καὶ τοῦ ἡλίου ὀρίζοντα ὑπερβαίνοντος).

¹⁴ Ἡμέρα personified is relatively rare, but see Hes. *Th.* 124. In later periods, she occasionally appears as part of the cosmic apparatus of Hellenistic and imperial authority: see Ath. *Deipn.* 195b for the procession of Antiochus Epiphanes, and *SEG* 31.922 for early imperial Aphrodisias (with Reynolds (1981), 325).

the phrase as conspicuously figurative, and the passages from Phrynichus and Philo, which seem to suggest that it is a feature of regular speech? Does the metaphorical status of the phrase change, from naturalised in the second century CE to unfamiliar in the Byzantine period? If so, where does Heliodorus lie on the continuum? And how ‘regular’ is the imagery adopted by Phrynichus and Philo?

Clearly, these questions are not going to yield confident answers. But perhaps this is because they are the wrong questions to ask. As Max Black, Paul Ricoeur and Umberto Eco have all stressed in their different ways, metaphors do not simply operate at the atomic level of individual words or phrases; larger contextual structures (the sentence, the paragraph, the narrative, the text) can lend or subtract metaphoricity.¹⁵ Metaphors are features of discourse, not simply semantics. Thus, for example, the naturalised metaphor ‘life is a picnic’ might gain new metaphorical power if spoken by a character at a wake. Implicit in this view is that the metaphorical does not reside in language itself, but in the complex, polyhedral dialogue between the reader, the words, and the multiple contexts in which they are framed.

The crucial question, then, is not simply whether ἡμέρας ἄρτι διαγελώσης definitively is or is not a live metaphor, but how, within the given context, any metaphorical *potentialities* it contains might be activated. ἡ διαγελώσα ἡμέρα *might* be a dead metaphor denoting daybreak in a straightforward way. But it *might* also be a bold personification of ‘the day’, as Stephanus claims. And, furthermore, we might return to the question of hendiadys, proposing (provisionally) that ἡμέρα is coordinate with ἥλιος. Is, then, the smile of the day/sun an epiphanic manifestation of the controlling power of Helios, the principal deity of this narrative universe? Once we begin to consider metaphor modally, as a matrix of interpretative possibilities rather than the specific property of certain words, then we get much closer to the heart of Heliodorus’ strategy.

Estranging metaphors

This, perhaps, is what is really arresting about Heliodorus’ phrase: abrogating any safe compartmentalisation as either literal or metaphorical, it occupies an deliciously unsettling median point. If ἡ διαγελώσα ἡμέρα was

¹⁵ Black 1962, 1977; Ricoeur 1977, esp. 88–105; Eco 1983, 252–4.

indeed for Heliodorus a ‘dead’ metaphor, it has been partially (but how much?) remetaphorised by the text’s estranging tactics. The effect, for the reader, is like that disturbing moment when you cannot decide if you know a face or not: the more you peer at it, the less familiar it becomes, and also the more you doubt you ever looked properly at the original face.

One powerful model for understanding this sense of estrangement is Viktor Shklovsky’s concept of *ostraneniye*, usually translated into English as ‘defamiliarisation’ (although this translation neglects the lexical defamiliarisation enacted by the unusual Russian morphology). Shklovsky is best known as the driving force behind what we call the phenomenon of Russian formalism (though it was, in fact, hardly a single coherent movement). For Shklovsky, the point of ‘images’ (i.e. metaphors) lies in their reorientation of the reader’s received perception of the world. Imagery, he writes, is

created to remove the automatism of perception; the author’s purpose is to create the vision which results from that deautomatised perception. A work is created ‘artistically’ so that its perception is impeded and the greatest possible effect is produced through the slowness of the perception.¹⁶

Shklovsky’s textual interpretation is deliberately limited to aesthetics (perhaps perversely, though it is understandable given the context in which he was operating): all metaphysical, political and historical speculation surrounding literary texts is to be viewed as extraneous ideology.¹⁷ Formalist analysis need not be so etiolated. It is clear that, in the case we have been discussing, the formal issue of the cognitive *ostraneniye* stimulated by ἡμέρας ἄρτι διαγελώσης is closely related to the dialectic of familiarity and otherness that lies at the heart of the narrative. This is a text that fundamentally turns upon the device of estrangement. Charicleia is a substitute: she looks all white, but her biological parents are black. The narrative looks like an *Odyssey*, but ends up performing not a νόστος of return to Greece but a relocation to the edges of the world.¹⁸ The linguistic form,¹⁹ the protagonist

¹⁶ Shklovsky 1965, 22.

¹⁷ Excellent account and critique along these lines at Jameson 1972, 43–98.

¹⁸ On these themes, see Whitmarsh 1998 and 1999.

¹⁹ For the idea that Heliodorean syntax, at any rate, embodies Heliodorean aesthetics, see Mazal 1958; Winkler 1982, 113.

of the novel, and the novel itself are substantially interlinked in that they all hover over the threshold of unrecognisability. Heliodorus' text strategically confronts the 'automatism of perception' that governs the reading of a genre that has (or could be presented as having) coalesced into a series of stock *lieux communs*.

To consolidate this point, let us turn to Aristotle's canonical discussion of metaphor.²⁰ In a well-known passage in the *Poetics*²¹ metaphor is figured (metaphorically) as the application (ἐπιφορά, 'epiphora') of an alien, or 'belonging-to-another', term (ὀνόματος ἀλλοτρίου, 1457b). In the *Rhetoric*, again, metaphor is commended under the general advice that 'one should render one's diction foreign' in order to impress (δεῖ ποιεῖν ξένην τὴν διάλεκτον, 1404b). Metaphor is here explicitly connected to the artful alienation or expropriation of discourse.²² For Aristotle, it is constitutively transgressive. It is, moreover, (he claims) always focalised by the individual's cognition: a metaphor must be the result of an idiosyncratic world-view (which is why it cannot be taught).²³ Metaphor is the product of an irreducibly subjective, and hence necessarily non-canonical, interpretation of outside world as it is experienced and the individual subject's memories, dreams and desires. These figurative terms ἀλλοτρίου and ξένην are not accidental. (Would we expect Aristotle to be using metaphors casually in this of all areas?) For Aristotle, metaphor is forged at the point of convergence of self and 'other'.²⁴

For Aristotle and Shklovsky alike, metaphors require the reader to perceive the world anew. And for Heliodorus too. The opening scene is, as we have already noted, focalised aporetically (θέαμα προσπίπτει τῶν προτέρων ἀπορώτερον, 1.2.1; τὸ γεγονός ὅ τι ποτέ ἐστιν ἀποροῦντες, 1.1.8) through the eyes of a gang of bandits – or, rather, a group of men dressed as bandits (even in the case of *their* identity, the reader only gets the semiotic clues).²⁵ This passage does not merely foreground metanarrative questions of the

²⁰ See further Ricoeur 1977, 8–48, and most recently Silk 2003, 116–19.

²¹ Also discussed (with the following material from the *Rhetoric*) by Helen Morales in Chapter 1.

²² Ricoeur (1977), 19–20.

²³ Cf. also Black 1962, 41.

²⁴ Indeed, Freud 1955, 221 offers ξένος as the Greek for *unheimlich*.

²⁵ For further discussion of the opening scene, see the works cited at n. 2 above.

reader's cognition and interpretation,²⁶ it also requires readers to experience the narrative through the eyes of a barbarian, sub-elite other.

What does it mean to read a Greek novel from the perspective of a barbarian? Charicleia, we are told, resembles a goddess (θεὸς εἶναι ἀναπείθουσα, 1.2.1; θεϊότερον αὐτοῖς ... ἔδοξε, 1.2.5); some of the bandits take her to be Artemis or local Isis (οἱ μὲν γὰρ θεὸν τινα ἔλεγον, καὶ θεὸν Ἄρτεμιν ἢ τὴν ἐγγώριον Ἴσιν, 1.2.6), others a mad priestess. The term ἐγγώριος is significant, highlighting as it does the limited, parochial repertoire from which the bandits are working. The bandits' quest to understand this aporetic tableau is a kind of reverse *ostraneniye*, a 'familiarisation'. What is familiar to a bandit, however, is not familiar to the readership of a novel (as conventionally imagined, at any rate): narratologically speaking, the more the focalisers bring to bear their own cultural repertoire, the more culturally alienated the reader becomes.

Heliodorus' novel, then, requires readers from the beginning to experience the familiar in an unfamiliar guise. The metaphor with which the text opens contributes to this sense of disorientation, by confronting the reader with a linguistic that looks only partially familiar.

Primordially and repression

For Aristotle and Shklovsky, metaphor generates a new way of understanding the world, inspired by the idiosyncratic brilliance of the artist. But is any metaphor really created *ab initio* in the consciousness of the artist? Or do metaphors interact with other associations, and indeed other phrases, already present in the cultural repertoire? I want to consider now whether we might modify the formalist concept of 'defamiliarisation' in the light of Freud's views on *das Unheimliche*. Freud defines the uncanny as 'something which is familiar and old-established in the mind and which has become alienated from it only through the process of repression'.²⁷ According to this formulation, the effect of the uncanny certainly unsettles the onlooker's perception (as in the Aristotelian / formalist model of metaphor), but only in a limited sense does it represent a 'new' way of looking at the world: *das Unheimliche*

²⁶ Brilliantly analysed by Winkler 1982, 96–100.

²⁷ Freud 1955, 241.

results from the encounter with something that we already know, but has been forced below the level of consciousness by socialisation.

Now in Freudian psychoanalysis the concept of repression has a precise and easily identifiable meaning: repression occurs when socialisation requires the child to conceal primal urges. It is not immediately obvious how the term might be cross-applied to a literary text. I want to consider in this section, however, whether there is such a thing as cultural repression,²⁸ whether history can be thought of as congealing and deadening a society's earliest forms of symbolic articulation. We have already suggested that Heliodorus might be thought of as revivifying a dead metaphor. But there is much more to be said along these lines, specifically in relation to intertextuality. This is, of course, a fiendishly complex term; I do not propose to consider it in any great theoretical depth here.²⁹ My working proposition, which will become clearer as we proceed, is that the cultural *imaginaire* may be conceived of on terms analogous to those of the human psyche; that is to say, that intertextual reflexivity within the cultural tradition may be considered as a kind of memory, activating but also censoring its recollections of the past.

A temporal-clause description of daybreak, betokening a new narrative phase, is a distinctive device: it cannot but invoke (for all but the most repressed) the best known of all Homeric formulae:

ἦμος δ' ἠριγένεια φάνη ῥοδοδάκτυλος Ἥως...
when early-born rosy-fingered dawn appeared ...³⁰

This is a classic opening phrase: it begins three books (2, 8, 17) of the *Odyssey*, in the text that Heliodorus would have read. It is also a phrase that Heliodorus knows, since it is cited verbatim by Calasiris in his description of the Delphic parade, presaging the appearance of Charicleia:

ἦμος δ' ἠριγένεια φάνη ῥοδοδάκτυλος Ἥως, Ὅμηρος ἂν εἶπεν...

²⁸ See also Whitmarsh 2001, 88.

²⁹ For a recent overview, see Edmunds 2001.

³⁰ Hom. *Il.* 1.477, 24.788; cf. 6.175, 9.707, 23.109; *Od.* 2.1, 3.404, 3.491, 4.306, 4.431, 4.576, 5.228, 8.1, 9.152, 9.170, 9.307, 9.437, 9.560, 10.187, 12.8, 12.316, 13.18, 15.189, 17.1, 19.428; cf. 5.121, 23.241. On this phrase, see Austin 1975, 67–8; Vivante 1979; Radin 1988. There may also be an echo of *Il.* 23.226, where the dawn star (ἑωσφόρος) appears, 'announcing the light' (φῶς ἐρέων) to the world.

‘When early-born rosy-fingered dawn appeared’, as Homer might have said ... (3.4.1)

What is particularly striking about this latter passage is the arms-length irony conjured by the process of quotation. In a famous passage, Umberto Eco writes of the tactical use of quotation to assuage postmodern anxieties of influence:

The postmodern reply to the modern consists of recognizing that the past, since it cannot really be destroyed, because its destruction leads to silence, must be revisited: but with irony, not innocently. I think of the postmodern attitude as that of a man who loves a very cultivated woman and knows he cannot say to her, ‘I love you madly’, because he knows that she knows (and that she knows that he knows) that these words have already been written by Barbara Cartland. Still, there is a solution. He can say, ‘As Barbara Cartland would put it, I love you madly’.³¹

It is not that clichés like ‘I love you madly’ lack content; it is, rather, that they cannot be solely authored by the speaker, always carrying with them as they do traces of their intertextual origins. Similarly, for a late-imperial polymath, one simply cannot (even in the mouth of an Egyptian priest from the fifth century BCE) narrate daybreak without a more or less implicit ‘as Homer would put it’. The received language of literary expression has become overburdened with citationality. But if the Homeric line is among the most familiar, Heliodorus’ opening metaphor of the ‘smile’ of daybreak certainly serves to translate it into a strikingly new and unfamiliar idiom. The repressed metaphoricity of the phrase resurfaces, uncannily.

That the primary hypotext for ἡμέρας ἄρτι διαγελώσης is specifically Homeric is particularly significant: Heliodorus and Calasiris repeatedly signal intertextual links with Homer, and particularly with the *Odyssey*.³² I do not wish here to pursue the neo-Bakhtinian question of whether the novel is, generically, a bastardised, hybrid, polyglottic form of epic, although I do think a version of this works for Heliodorus.³³ What concerns me here is the intertextual relationship with a primordial moment in Greek literary history:

³¹ Eco 1985, 67–8.

³² Fusillo 1989, 28–33; Whitmarsh 1998, esp. 97–9.

³³ Whitmarsh 1998, 94–5.

in beginning with a daybreak scene, Heliodorus reaches back through the cultural memory-bank to the ‘childhood’ of Greek literature.

On reflection – which is to say, if we ponder and defamiliarise it – we can see that the clause ἡμῶς δ’ ἠριγένεια φάνη ῥοδοδάκτυλος Ἥως poses a very similar set of questions to ἡμέρας ἄρτι διαγελώσης. Is it metaphorical or literal? Is Dawn a theomorphic figure? If so, does she have real fingers, and are they really rosy? Is she really ‘born’ every morning?³⁴ Heliodorus’ opening phrase invokes his readers’ distant memory of these questions, which have since been repressed.

The idea that metaphor is a characteristically primordial, pre-rationalistic response to the powers that structure human life runs deep.³⁵ Vico, for example, argues that ‘when men want to create ideas of things of which they are ignorant they are naturally led to conceive them through resemblances with things that they know’.³⁶ In Hayden White’s elaboration of Vico’s scheme, the first, ‘religious’ phase of humanity is characterised by metaphorical language, theocratic society, divine law and reason, and hieroglyphic writing; the final phase, on the other hand, is characterised by ironical language, democratic society, forensic law, civil reason, and vulgar writing.³⁷ Heliodorus, strikingly, folds together *both* phases: his is a world that is simultaneously metaphorical and ironical, theocratic and democratic, hieroglyphic and vulgar. His two different modes of engagement with Homeric daybreak similes provide a startling confirmation of this. This text seeks simultaneously to exhaust its Homeric hypotext (through ironisation at 3.4.1) and to reenergise the latent potency of its expression (through deironisation at 1.1.1, a violent dislocation of the invisible postmodern quotation marks).

The sublime smile

Like Heliodorus’ novel, Pier Paolo Pasolini’s film *Medea* opens with the sun dominating the field of vision. The Colchian princess’ relationship to her grandfather Helios is a motif throughout the film: it is the focus of her in-

³⁴ Cf. Σ *Od.* 2.1 for the question of whether and why dawn is σωματοειδής.

³⁵ Cf. Clarke 1999 for Homeric poetry’s adoption of imagery to express the inexpressible; and Borg 2002 for a similar idea in early Greek art.

³⁶ Cited from Vico 2002, 254–5.

³⁷ White 1978, 209.

tense religious vision, an emblem of the primal energy inadequately repressed by the Greek society to which she finds herself, and the celestial transfiguration of the purging fire that she uses in both Colchis and (in the closing scenes) Corinth to purify herself. It is also – this is my central point – a metacinematic icon, representative of Pasolini’s ideal cinema purified of neo-realist (and indeed capitalist) decadence. ‘In essence’, Pasolini is quoted as having said, ‘cinema is a question of the sun’.³⁸

Heliodorus’ novel is dominated by Helios; the god is present inscribed in the very name of the author,³⁹ who also claims to be ‘of the race of Helios’ (τῶν ἀφ’ Ἡλίου γένος, 10.41.4). The pervasive role of solar imagery is one of the most famous aspects of the text, and has been used primarily for dating purposes.⁴⁰ Yet more important still (if only because more conclusive) is the figurative, metaliterary role that the sun plays in Heliodorus, just as in Pasolini. The rising of the sun over the mountaintops at the outset creates the conditions that allow the bandits to see, and hence the reader to experience their focalisation of ‘the visible symbols’ (τὰ φαινόμενα σύμβολα, 1.1.4) before them. If it is true that the opening scene is ‘cinematic’,⁴¹ the sun’s role is assuredly metacinematic: Helio(doru)s is the figure who submits the phenomenal world, in the form of visible symbols, to the reader’s interpretation.

The sunlight also seems to reanimate Charicleia and Theagenes.⁴² Theagenes’ first words are ghostly: ‘drawing breath and with a deep sigh’ (πνεῦμα συλλεξάμενος καὶ βύθιον τι ἀσθμήνας), he ‘whispered faintly’ (λεπτὸν ὑπεφθέγγατο); he asks if she is a spectre (φάσμα, 1.2.4). Suddenly, this oneiric scene is shattered: Charicleia leaps up (ἀνέθορεν), prompting the onlookers to astonishment and awe (θαύματος ἅμα καὶ ἐκπλήξεως, 1.2.5). It is as though the warmth of the day has thawed out the deathly frigidity that has gripped them. And it is notable that Charicleia, as she jumps, is implicitly compared to Apollo – often assimilated to Helios, of course – in his first appearance in the *Iliad*.⁴³ Apollonian energy, metaphorically transmitted by

³⁸ Kerrigan 1996, 107; I am indebted to Kerrigan’s discussion at pp. 106–7.

³⁹ For the theonym, cf. Aelius Aristides’ epiclesis ‘Theodorus’ (50.53–4).

⁴⁰ See most recently Bargheer 1999, 17–49, who connects Heliodorus with the reign of Julian. The problem is, of course, that most emperors deployed solar imagery.

⁴¹ Above, n. 2.

⁴² See further Whitmarsh, forthcoming.

⁴³ τῶν μὲν βελῶν τῇ ἀθρόα κινήσει κλαγγάντων, (1.2.5) ~ ἔκλαγγαν δ’ ἄρ’ οἵστοι ἐπ’ ὤμων χροομένοιο / αὐτοῦ κινήθεντος (*Il.* 1.46–7).

the rising sun, invigorates the novel's protagonists so as to begin the narrative.

The early part of the narrative is dominated by a powerful and complex dialectic between light and dark. The brilliant (ἀντέλαμπεν, 1.2.3) countenances of Charicleia and Theagenes contrast with the black faces of the bandits, whom they take for ghosts (1.3.1). The sun sets (1.7.1), and the night induces the couple to weep (1.8.1); it is to Apollo that they pray (1.8.2). Cnemon's grim story is told during that night (1.10.2), an obvious allusion to *Odyssey* 9–12, but also an indication of its dark contents.⁴⁴ Light is repeatedly imaged as ethically superior to dark. But not always: the bandits' camp is caught in a spectacular conflagration (1.30.2, 2.1.3), while Charicleia is kept safe in the 'nocturnal gloom' (νυκτὶ καὶ ζόφῳ, 1.29.4; cf. καὶ ζόφος ... καὶ χάος, 2.4.3) of a subterranean cave. There is a sense, too, that night has offered the young couple a reassuring refuge from the horrors of day. The sun, and the powers of light and heat it emblematises, can be destructive as well as supportive.

There is, of course, much more that one could say about sun and light imagery in Heliodorus; I want to retain my focus, though, on the metaphor in those opening words. What is the relationship of the bold linguistic figuration of ἡμέρας ἄρτι διαγελώσης to the sun, as a principle of massive potency? To answer this question, we should look to what is arguably the boldest and most invigorating of ancient literary-critical texts, the pseudo-Longinian treatise *On the sublime* (περὶ ὕψους).

Sublime language shares the mighty power of natural phenomena: 'Demosthenes burns and ravages; he might be compared to a thunderbolt or a flash of lightning; Cicero is like an engulfing conflagration, I think, ranging everywhere and rolling on, his huge fires continually burning ...' (12.4). Of all such natural forces, the sun is – in a literal as well as a figurative sense – the most sublime (ὑψιστος) of all the visible phenomena (in Heliodorus, its great height is imaged in the second phrase, τὰς ἀκρωρείας καταυγάζοντος). For ps.-Longinus, rhetoric can be surrounded with the luminosity (περιλαμφθεῖσ') of beauty and grandeur, an art that is comparable to the sun:

⁴⁴ Cf. the nocturnal liaisons (1.11.3, 1.12.1, 1.17), erotic stories and dreams (1.15.4, 1.16.2). 'Polarities of light and dark, white and black, are a fundamental part of the novel's image system, but here [viz. in Cnemon's story] they are made to underpin, by the close parallel of them and motif, a somewhat larger and ethically meant antithesis between Athenian and Charikleian love' (Morgan 1989, 111).

‘How did Demosthenes conceal the figure? By brilliance (φωτί), of course. Just as dimmer lights disappear when they are surrounded by the light of the sun (τῷ ἡλίῳ περιαιγούμενα), so the sophistic tricks of rhetoric are dimmed when grandeur is poured all around them’ (17.2).

There are two principal causes of sublimity for ps-Longinus: figuration of language and intertextuality.⁴⁵ Among the tropes, ps-Longinus gives pride of place to metaphor: ‘tropes are naturally grandiloquent, and metaphors create sublimity (ὕψηλοποιὸν αἱ μεταφοραί)’, even if they always carry with them the danger of excess (32.6). The other route is ‘imitation and emulation of the great writers of the past’, through a mixture of inspiration and agonistic competition (13.2). Pride of place in the intertextual pantheon goes, of course, to Homer – who is intriguingly compared, again, to the sun: ‘in respect of the *Odyssey*, one might compare Homer to the setting sun (καταδυομένῳ ... ἡλίῳ, 9.13).⁴⁶

I do not mean to argue that Heliodorus has necessarily read ps-Longinus, that his choice of a solar metaphor to begin his novel depends upon a precise allusion to a literary-critical tract. It is fascinating, however, to see a critic who is roughly contemporary (the dating of both Heliodorus and ps-Longinus is very uncertain) associating the dizzyingly disconcerting effects of metaphor and Homeric intertextuality with the sun, in a complex and multifiform nexus. On this basis, we might propose that the smile of daybreak announces the sublime power of Helio(doru)s not only within the narrative cosmos of the text, but also within the very weft of its words: the sun figures, self-reflexively, the power of Heliodorean *language* as well as theology.⁴⁷

Authority and ambivalence

Why do cocks crow?

εἴτε (ὡς λόγος) αἰσθήσει φυσικῇ τῆς ἡλίου καθ’ ἡμᾶς
περιστροφῆς ἐπὶ τὴν τοῦ θεοῦ πρόσρησιν κινούμενοι, εἴτε ὑπὸ

⁴⁵ See Too 1998, 187–217; Porter 2001, 76–85; Whitmarsh 2001, 57–71, with further literature.

⁴⁶ For Homer as blinding solar light, see also Luc. *Dem. enc.* 17; for Homer as cosmic poet, see Hardie 1986, 25–9.

⁴⁷ Cf. Mignogna 1995, who argues that Achilles’ metaphors serve to focus attention on the surface of the text.

θερμότητος ἅμα καὶ τῆς περὶ τὸ κινεῖσθαι καὶ σιτεῖσθαι
 θάπτον ἐπιθυμίας τοὺς συνοικοῦντας ἰδίῳ κηρύγματι ἐπὶ
 ἔργον ἐγείροντες...

Either, as they say, because they are stirred to hail the god by an innate perception of the sun wheeling towards us, or because its warmth and their pressing desire to stir and feed leads them to awaken their cohabitants with a distinctive call to work ... (1.18.3)

This is the first of Heliodorus' characteristic 'amphibolies' or unranked dual explanations for phenomena.⁴⁸ As Winkler notes in his classic discussion of this feature of Heliodorus' text, on offer here are two different types of interpretation, one theological and one naturalistic: 'Does it suggest that there is a philosophical or religious underpinning to the melodrama? And – a far more important question – if there be such an ideological framework is it philosophically or religiously *meant*?'⁴⁹ The amphiboly condenses a central interpretative question as to the theosophical status of Heliodorus' text, and of the workings of the world it describes.

The passage cited above can also be read as a self-reflexive commentary upon ἡμέρας ἄρτι διαγελώσης. How 'deep' is the opening description of daybreak? Is sunrise to be viewed in simply natural-physical terms, or does it betoken the underlying theosophy of Heliodorus' world? Might we connect it with, indeed, with the symbolic role of the sun in Plato's famous cave simile (*Rep.* 514a ff.), or with the daybreak that begins the *Crito*?⁵⁰ There is, of course, no way of nailing down the argument either way. What we can say is that Heliodorus is careful to overdetermine the concept of the sun, and indeed of daybreak: the *question* is cued in the text, even if no absolute answer is.

The daybreak metaphor condenses the central narrative crux of the text, namely the matter of Heliodorus' 'serious intentions'.⁵¹ This fundamental question of the extent of the text's seriousness is, indeed, thematised from the start. ἡμέρας ἄρτι διαγελώσης asks us to consider, from a metaliterary

⁴⁸ Winkler 1982, 121–9.

⁴⁹ Winkler 1982, 122.

⁵⁰ Indeed, Plato might be the paradigm case of an author whose apparently casual first words turn out to be prophetic, at a profound level, of the philosophical substance of the text. Thus Burnyeat 1997, building on the observations of Proclus *In Plat.* Parm. 658.34–659.23.

⁵¹ Dowden 1996.

perspective, the role of smiling / laughing / mocking deities in this narrative. Is this the benevolent smile of a Homeric Athena?⁵² Or the ambiguous laughter of Dionysus?⁵³ Or the mockery that the transitive *διαγελάω* usually signifies? Who is laughing or smiling at whom in this text, and what might that laughter or smiling mean? What kind of text is this, then? Serious or ludic? Theological or profane? Serene or mocking? Reassuring or deceptive? Heliodorus' smile is as fundamentally inscrutable as the Mona Lisa's: it figures the intractable *question* at the heart of the text.

Ultimately, then, the smile of day can be claimed as a rich, open, powerful metaphor that provokes a series of questions about the nature of the text. As recent studies have emphasised, metaphor is commonly associated with the marked language of authority.⁵⁴ Heliodorus' metaphorical beginning, as we have seen, represents the meeting-point for a whole series of issues around narratorial authority, and cultural, textual and intertextual identities. It is precisely because metaphor is a special, privileged form of discourse – but also an incomplete, open, even counterintuitive form of utterance – that it provokes this level of reflection. What is more, as with all tropes – but perhaps exceptionally among them⁵⁵ – we are encouraged to read metaphor simultaneously at the discursive and metadiscursive levels, focusing attention on texture as well as text, language as both the subject and the object of representation.

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⁵² Hom. *Od.* 13.287 (μειδιᾶν).

⁵³ Eur. *Bacch.* 1021, 1081 (γελάω).

⁵⁴ See esp. Fernandez (1986); McCreery (1995).

⁵⁵ Cf. Genette (1982), 106–19 for the privileged place historically given to metaphor, though he protests against it.

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