Characterisation in Apuleius' *Metamorphoses*

Pierides

Studies in Greek and Latin Literature

Series Editors:
Philip Hardie and Stratis Kyriakidis

Volume I:
S. Kyriakidis,
Catalogues of Proper Names in Latin Epic Poetry: Lucretius – Virgil – Ovid

Volume II:
Antonis Petrides and Sophia Papaioannou (eds),
New Perspectives on Postclassical Comedy

Volume III:
Myrto Garani and David Konstan (eds),
The Philosophizing Muse: The Influence of Greek Philosophy on Roman Poetry

Volume IV:
Sophia Papaioannou (ed.),
Terence and Interpretation

Volume V:

Characterisation in Apuleius' *Metamorphoses*

Nine Studies

Edited by

Stephen Harrison

Cambridge Scholars Publishing

Characterisation in Apuleius' *Metamorphoses*: Nine Studies

Edited by Stephen Harrison

This book first published 2015

Cambridge Scholars Publishing

Lady Stephenson Library, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE6 2PA, UK

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data
A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN (10): 1-4438-7533-3
ISBN (13): 978-1-4438-7533-2

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am most grateful to the editors of the *Pierides* series, Philip Hardie and Stratis Kyriakidis, for their kind invitation to contribute this volume, and for their considerable patience in waiting for it. I am also most grateful to their anonymous referee, who pointed out a number of ways of improving the volume. I would also like to express my warm thanks to the contributors, with all of whom I have had the pleasure to collaborate closely outside this volume for some years, in most cases within the context of the Groningen Commentaries on Apuleius project, and to those who aided the editorial process: Paola D'Andrea and Sophie Bocksberger, who provided valuable help with translation, and Alex Locock-Harrison, who helped materially with copy-editing and layout. I am especially grateful to Luca Graverini, who in addition to his efficiency as contributor also gave generous help in the matter of formatting. In the final stages, I am most grateful to Helen Peraki-Kyriakidou for her great editorial care, and to Kathrin Lüddecke for her highly professional editorial services.

The current volume cites the text of the *Metamorphoses* from the excellent recent Oxford Classical Text by Maaike Zimmerman (2012). Both editor and contributors would like to take the opportunity to thank Maaike for all that she has done for them and for the study of Apuleius in general in her leadership of the Groningen Apuleius group and in her editorship of *Ancient Narrative*.

Oxford, September 2014
Stephen Harrison

CONTRIBUTORS

Stavros Frangoulidis is Professor of Latin at the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki. He has co-organised several RICAN conferences on the study of the Ancient Novel, and co-edited the proceedings thereof (published as Ancient Narrative Supplementa). He has edited a thematic issue on the ancient novel (with Stephen J. Harrison), and a volume on Latin genre (with Theodore D. Papanghelis and Stephen J. Harrison), both published in the *Trends in Classics* series (Walter de Gruyter). He has written a number of articles on Roman comedy, the Latin novel and Senecan tragedy. Finally, he is the author of the following books: *Handlung und Nebenhandlung: Theater, Metatheater und Gattungsbewusstein in der römischen Komödie* (Stuttgart, J.B. Metzler, 1997); *Roles and Performances in Apuleius*' *Metamorphoses* (Stuttgart, J.B. Metzler, 2001); and *Witches, Isis and Narrative: Approaches to Magic in Apuleius' Metamorphoses* (Berlin and New York, Walter de Gruyter, 2008).

Luca Graverini teaches Latin Language and Literature at the University of Siena. He has published widely on the ancient novel. His 2007 monograph on Apuleius has been translated into English by Benjamin T. Lee (*Literature and Identity in Apuleius' The Golden Ass*, Ohio State UP, 2012); the volume on *Il Romanzo antico* he has written with Wytse Keulen and Alessandro Barchiesi is being translated by Thomas McCreight and will be published by Wiley-Blackwell. Together with Ben Lee and Ellen Finkelpearl he has edited a volume on *Apuleius and Africa* (New York, Routledge, 2014); he is also contributing to the Groningen Commentary on Book 11 of Apuleius' *Metamorphoses.* Together with Alessandro Barchiesi he will author and edit a four-volume complete commentary on Apuleius' novel for the Italian publisher Valla-Mondadori.

Stephen Harrison is Professor of Latin Literature at the University of Oxford and Fellow and Tutor in Classics at Corpus Christi College. He is the author of *A Commentary on Vergil, Aeneid 10* (OUP, 1991), *Apuleius: A Latin Sophist* (OUP, 2000), *Generic Enrichment in Vergil and Horace* (OUP, 2007), *Framing the Ass: Literary Form in Apuleius' Metamorphoses* (OUP, 2013) and *Horace* (CUP, 2014), co-author of *Apuleius: Rhetorical Works* (OUP, 2001) [jointly with John Hilton and Vincent Hunink], of *A*

Commentary on Apuleius Metamorphoses IV.28-VI.24 (Egbert Forsten, 2004) [jointly with the seven other members of the Groningen Apuleius Group], of *Louis MacNeice: The Classical Radio Plays* [jointly with Amanda Wrigley] (OUP, 2013), and of *A Commentary on Apuleius Metamorphoses XI: The Isis-Book* (Brill, 2015) [jointly with the seven other members of the Groningen Apuleius Group]. He is editor or co-editor of *Oxford Readings in Vergil's Aeneid* (OUP, 1990), *Homage to Horace: A Bimillenary Celebration* (OUP, 1995), *Oxford Readings in The Roman Novel* (OUP, 1999), *Texts, Ideas and the Classics: Scholarship, Theory and Classical Literature* (OUP, 2001), *A Companion to Latin Literature* (Blackwell, 2005), *Metaphor and the Ancient Novel* (Barkhuis, 2005), [joint ed. with M.Paschalis and S.Frangoulidis], *The Cambridge Companion to Horace* (CUP, 2007), *The Greek and the Roman Novel: Parallel Readings* (Barkhuis, 2007) [joint ed. with M.Paschalis, S.Frangoulidis, and M.Zimmerman], *Living Classics: Greece and Rome in Contemporary Poetry in English* (OUP, 2009), *Fictional Traces: Receptions of the Ancient Novels* [2 vols] (Groningen, 2011) [joint ed. with M.Futre Pinheiro], *Expurgating the Classics: Editing Out in Latin and Greek* (Bloomsbury, 2012) [joint ed. with Christopher Stray], *Classics in the Modern World: A 'Democratic Turn'?* (OUP, 2013) [joint ed. with Lorna Hardwick], *Generic Interfaces in Latin Literature. Encounters, Interactions and Transformations* (de Gruyter, 2013) [joint ed. with Theodoros Papanghelis and Stavros Frangoulidis].

Wytse Keulen currently teaches Latin at the University of Rostock. His commentary on Apuleius' *Metamorphoses* Book I (Groningen Commentaries on Apuleius) appeared in 2007. His most recent publication is a monograph on Aulus Gellius, elucidating the *Noctes Atticae* in the context of Antonine literary culture and Roman intellectual traditions (*Gellius the Satirist: Roman Cultural Authority in Attic Nights*, Leiden, Brill 2009). Together with Ulrike Egelhaaf-Gaiser, he edited *Aspects of Apuleius' Golden Ass III: The Isis Book* (Leiden, Brill 2012). He has been the organiser of an international commentary project on the Isis book of Apuleius; this commentary appears in the series *Groningen Commentaries on Apuleius* (2015).

Danielle van Mal-Maeder is Professor of Latin Language and Literature at the University of Lausanne. As a member of the Groningen Commentaries on Apuleius group, she has written a commentary on Book II of the *Metamorphoses* (Groningen, Forsten, 2001). She has published extensively on Greek and Latin fiction and on rhetoric, and is the author of

La fiction des déclamations (Leiden-Boston, Brill, 2007). She directs a research centre on ancient declamation and its reception.

Regine May is Lecturer in Latin literature and language at the University of Leeds. She is the author of *Apuleius and Drama: The Ass on Stage* (Oxford, OUP, 2007) and numerous articles on Apuleius and the Latin novels. Her translation of and commentary on Apuleius, *Metamorphoses* Book 1 appeared with Aris and Phillips in 2013.

Lara Nicolini works at the Scuola Normale Superiore di Pisa. She has published extensively on Apuleius and is the author of a commentary on a section of the *Metamorphoses* (*La novella di Carite e Tlepolemo*. Napoli, 2000) and of an Italian translation of the novel with an essay on its interpretation (*Apuleio, Le Metamorfosi*, Milano, 2005); in 2011 she published *Ad (l)usum lectoris. Etimologia e giochi di parole in Apuleio*, on Apuleius' use of etymology and wordplay.

Stelios Panayotakis is Associate Professor in Classics at the University of Crete, Rethymnon, and a member of the Groningen Commentaries on Apuleius group, as well as of the team project on writing a commentary on Book 11 of the *Metamorphoses*. He has published several articles on Apuleius, and a large-scale commentary on *The Story of Apollonius, King of Tyre* (Walter de Gruyter, 2012).

Costas Panayotakis teaches Latin language and literature at the University of Glasgow, where he is currently a Reader. He has published extensively on Petronius, including a monograph entitled *Theatrum Arbitri: Theatrical Elements in the Satyrica of Petronius* (Brill, 1995), and on popular comedy (especially mime) in the Roman Republic. His most recent book is a critical edition (with translation and detailed commentary) of the fragments of the mimographer Laberius (*Decimus Laberius: The Fragments*, CUP, 2010).

Stefan Tilg is Professor of Latin at the University of Freiburg. He is the author of *Chariton of Aphrodisias and the Invention of the Greek Love Novel* (OUP, 2010) and of *Apuleius'* Metamorphoses*: A Study in Roman Fiction* (OUP, 2014). He is also a member of the Groningen Commentaries on Apuleius group.

EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

The serious study of characterisation in Apuleius' *Metamorphoses* has a relatively short history, due mainly to the centuries of critical underestimation of the novel's literary texture which I have chronicled elsewhere [see Harrison (2013) 13-38]; a just appreciation of the work's subtlety and sophistication has emerged only in the last half-century or so. The earlier prejudice which viewed the output of Apuleius as late and decadent is one which is generally discredited in modern ancient novel studies: the *Metamorphoses* is no longer seen as an incoherent and marginal work in barbarous Latin, but rather as an elegantly expressed, intertextually complex and narratologically intriguing central work of Roman literature.

Part of this complexity is the interest of the novel's characterisation. Some concession was made to this even in the work of B.E. Perry (1967), who while giving a moderate literary value to the *Metamorphoses* granted that it had some psychological depth, noting (250) that "the tone in which the story is told is often much more serious, more moral and more sympathetic with the thoughts and emotions of the actors, however superstitious or credulous these may be, than in the Greek original" and pointing to "the lifelike portrayal of character and emotion for its own interest as a principal exhibit in many kinds of persons". Though Perry thought of Apuleius' novel as a series of interesting short stories rather than a coherent whole, and applied a moralising interpretation with which not all would agree, this is at least an admission that Apuleius' characters have some of the complexity and realism we might expect of fictional personages in modern novels.

In his key book *The Roman Novel* published three years later (1970),[1] P.G. Walsh brought into broader critical play what had been evident to close Apuleian commentators since the Renaissance, namely that the complexity of the characters in the *Metamorphoses* depended not only on psychological realism but also on the skilful manipulation of literary models. From the 1970s Apuleius' novel has been viewed with the same

[1] Here I record with sadness the death of Peter Walsh on 16th January 2013 aged 89, and pay tribute to his major contribution to the study of the Roman novels and of Latin literature in general.

intertextual lens being applied to more canonical Roman literature:[2] an important factor here has been the production of the Groningen Commentaries on Apuleius (*GCA*) since 1977, a series which is about to conclude in the publication of Book 11 in 2015, which through detailed attention to the text brought out its literary qualities, the associated series of Groningen Colloquia on the Novel and their published proceedings, and the occasional volumes *Aspects of Apuleius' Golden Ass* which likewise accompanied the project. Other work along the same lines is to be found in the journal *Ancient Narrative*, founded in 2000, and in its important series of Supplementa which largely publish the proceedings of significant conferences.

Another important development was the growing appreciation of the sophistication of Apuleian narrative technique in general. Pioneering work was done here in North America, e.g. Tatum (1969), Smith (1972), both reprinted in Harrison (1999), and the elegant treatment of the whole novel in Tatum (1979), as well as in the UK and continental Europe, e.g. Wlosok (1969), van der Paardt (1981), both again reprinted in Harrison (1999), some elements in Hijmans and van der Paardt (1978), Alpers (1980) and Dowden (1982). In 1985 appeared Jack Winkler's field-changing *Auctor & Actor: a narratological reading of Apuleius' Golden Ass*, which put Apuleius' novel firmly on the map as a postmodern work of narrative tricksiness and ideological ambiguity. It is to this brilliant book that much of modern literary scholarship on the *Metamorphoses* owes its impetus; though it does not touch the episode of Cupid and Psyche, its exploration of the character of Lucius as both dupe and true initiate has been highly influential.

Most of the more important work on characterisation in the *Metamorphoses* is discussed in the chapters that follow, but I shall here pick out some of the more significant trends and treatments.[3] One major area has been the relationship between the characters of Apuleius' novel and those of Greek and Roman epic, which provided a natural source given its status as one of the few extended fictional genres and as the centre of elite education. In the 1990s epic imitation in Apuleius became a major topic of scholarship, especially in the work of Ellen Finkelpearl (1990, 1998, mostly on Vergil) and Stavros Frangoulidis (e.g. Frangoulidis (1992) on the *Odyssey* and Frangoulidis (1991) on the *Aeneid*).

The *Odyssey* has remained an important intertext in the analysis of the characters of the *Metamorphoses*, as shown e.g. in Montiglio (2007) and

[2] For this tendency in novel studies generally see Doulamis (2011).

[3] The most extensive recent treatment of characterisation is in the dissertation of Elford (2012), which focusses on the episode of Cupid and Psyche.

Graverini [(2007) 158-73 = (2012b) 141-54]. Likewise the *Aeneid* has proved a continuing focus of interest as a source for Apuleian motifs and characters: before Finkelpearl this had already been investigated by Walsh (1970) and La Penna (1985), and further articles of significance in this area appeared around the same time as Finkelpearl's book: Shumate (1996), Harrison (1997), and Graverini (1998). My own approach in a series of articles [now collected in Harrison (2013)] was to propose new epic allusions in Apuleius' novel, and to argue consistently that these were humorous or parodic, thus suggesting that Apuleius' prose fiction was self-consciously less serious and elevated than its epic models; here I was following ideas of Apuleian epic parody shared with Westerbrink (1978) and Loporcaro (1992). This was based on the assumption of a learned readership which would recognise and interpret these allusions to the central texts of an elite education in the Roman Empire.

Other literary genres have also been seen as contributing to characters in the *Metamorphoses*: the Greek novel, often used in a spirit of parody [Effe (1974), Graverini (2009)], Greek tragedy [Schiesaro (1988)], Roman love elegy, naturally used especially in Lucius' affair with Photis [Müller-Reineke (2000), Hindermann (2009a,b), Roman drama [May (2006)], Roman satire [Zimmerman (2006)], Roman historiography [Graverini (1997)] and Roman mime [Kirichenko (2010)]. The last-named scholar has provided in his book the most explicit challenge to the now conventional assessment of Apuleian characterisation as the building up of a coherent psychological figure through literary allusion, arguing rather that the impact of the characters in the *Metamorphoses* derives from their deliberately improvisatory and inconsistent character [for a response see May (2012)].

More generally within classics, discussion of characterisation in Greek and Roman literature often used to start from Aristotle's approach in the *Poetics* and especially his statement (1450a) that in Athenian tragedy at least plot takes precedence over character, i.e. that characters do primarily what the plot needs them to do and are only secondarily developed for interest in psychology or realism. This could be seen as specially relevant to drama with its brief time limits, complete reliance on character-speech, and general lack of narrative opportunities for character-building.

The modern study of Greek tragic characterisation, however, has plausibly questioned this, stressing individual coherence and realism [see e.g Easterling (1990), Seidensticker (2008)], and modern scholarship in other areas of Greek literature clearly points in the same direction [see e.g. Pelling (1990), which covers epic, comedy, Platonic dialogue, rhetoric and biography as well as tragedy, in all of which subtle and well-crafted

characterisation of a recognisably modern kind is found]. The study of characterisation has been linked with the recent interest in the ancient analysis of emotion and identity, especially in Gill (1995), which interestingly suggested that in ancient Greek culture a modern-style conception of oneself as an autonomous subjective individual was in tension with a more objective view of oneself as an actor within a community and within a dialogic framework of larger values. This provides some argument for cultural difference in the matter of ideas about characterisation, but does not preclude the search for a rich and plausible psychological and intertextual approach to the construction of literary figures.

Apuleius' novel presents some particular issues and problems in the matter of characterisation. For example, if character is thought of as represented through mode of speech, all the human characters in the *Metamorphoses* talk in much the same way, even the anonymous and presumably uneducated old woman who is the official narrator of the tale of Cupid and Psyche: though it is possible to detect some elements of her narrative which might particularly appeal to her as a character [see van Mal-Maeder and Zimmerman (1998)], it is framed stylistically with the same attention to literary decoration and intertextuality as the rest of the novel, which constitutes an entertaining irony. Another key question surrounds the figure of Lucius: though he can be treated simply as a character constructed within the story-world, he is also of course the autodiegetic narrator, telling his own story with his own agenda, both *actor* and *auctor* in the famous terms of Winkler (1985). The chapters on Lucius here focus on attempting to present him as a coherently framed literary character, but this of course is not the only possible approach.

In the area of the ancient novel more generally, the traditional view used to be that such narratives presented stock characters of little intrinsic psychological interest. This has been well deconstructed for the Greek novel in an important recent book by De Temmerman (2014). In the first full study of character and characterisation in the Greek novels as a whole, he argues that the ancient theory of character recognised three opposing pairs of elements: type v. individual, ideal v. realistic, and static v. dynamic, and shows through the application of theory both ancient and modern that these supposedly fixed binary pairs in fact constitute either end of a spectrum over which individual novelistic characters range freely, so that the same character can behave according to a type at one time and more individually at another. Though this volume cannot match the theoretical sophistication of De Temmerman's work, it too sets out to

show how complex and interesting characterisation is in Apuleius' ever-attractive novel.

For the essays in the current volume no ideological line has been imposed, and contributors have been free to offer their thoughts on how the text of the novel presents particular characters. The first section naturally concerns the protagonist Lucius, in the three states that he passes through in the novel: as a human traveller away from home in Thessaly (Harrison, Chapter 1), as an ass moving around central Greece (Tilg, Chapter 2) and as an Isiac initiate in Corinthian Cenchreae (Keulen, Chapter 3). The longer second section focuses on further characters from the main narrative, for example the slave-girl Photis, Lucius' lover and witch's apprentice (May, Chapter 4), Lucius' older relative the Hypatan lady Byrrhaena and her household (Frangoulidis, Chapter 5), the story of Charite and her lover Tlepolemus, which crosses from the main narrative to an embedded tale (Nicolini, Chapter 7), and the robbers who capture both Lucius and Charite and their aged housekeeper who narrates the tale of Cupid and Psyche (Graverini, Chapter 6). The key inserted narrative of Cupid and Psyche receives its own chapter (Panayotakis and Panayotakis, Chapter 8), as do the gods (van Mal-Maeder, Chapter 9): it is sometimes forgotten that the gods in ancient literature are often as fully characterised as any human figure.

A:

LUCIUS

CHAPTER ONE

LUCIUS IN *METAMORPHOSES* BOOKS 1-3

STEPHEN HARRISON

1: Introduction

This opening chapter treats the presentation of Lucius, the protagonist of the *Metamorphoses*, in the earliest part of the novel, before he is transformed into an ass towards the end of the novel's third book (*Met.*3.24). Its main concerns will be the ways in which the text complicates the issue of Lucius' identity even before his bestial metamorphosis, and his overall presentation as a character who can be seen to have a significant relation to the author Apuleius, to the implied readers of the text, and to previous well–known literary characters. Books 1-3 are naturally the main opportunity for readers of the novel to assess Lucius as a human character before Book 11, where he returns from animal to human state and enters the cult of Isis.[1]

2: Who is Lucius? Issues of identity

The presentation of the narrative of the *Metamorphoses* as a first-person experience allows considerable flexibility in the characterisation of its narrating protagonist. Indeed, the text begins with a famous prologue where the identity of the speaker is notoriously unclear: Apuleius the author, an external prologue-speaker and the physical book have all been proposed as possible speakers of this opening section, as well as Lucius himself. [2] When the narrative proper begins in *Met.* 1.2.1, the identity of the speaker is still unrevealed (he is indeed for most of Book 1 an anonymous traveller on his way to Thessaly), but the reader becomes cumulatively better informed about his identity as the book proceeds. The speaker reveals very early on that his mother's family are related to the

[1] Lucius' character in Book 11 is discussed in Wytse Keulen's chapter in this volume.
[2] Kahane and Laird (2001).

great Plutarch (1.2.1), which perhaps points to the connections of the *Metamorphoses* with that writer's interests in both Isis and Platonism, he surprisingly locates the philosopher's family in Thessaly rather than Boeotia, showing his incomplete grasp of the geography of central Greece;[3] when he arrives at the house of Milo in Hypata, he presents his host with a letter of introduction from Demeas of Corinth (1.22.8), and in the next few chapters we discover that our narrator is indeed Lucius (1.24.6), but only when he is recognised in the market at Hypata by his former schoolmate at Athens, Pythias, now a local magistrate; that he comes from Corinth is only confirmed by his own words at 2.12.3. Clearly we are dealing with a deliberately teasing postponed revelation of crucial information; Lucius is not the only character whose naming is tantalisingly postponed, for the identity of Charite, the narratee of the tale of Cupid and Psyche in 4.28-6.24, is not revealed until well into Book 7 (7.12.2).[4]

Lucius' family background, like his name and city of origin, is revealed only gradually. Apart from his links with the family of Plutarch, already noted as immediately revealed at 1.2, it is only near the end of the first book that we find out that his father is called Theseus (1.23.6), and in the second book in the encounter with Byrrhaena, a relative and old friend of his mother, that we learn his mother's name, Salvia (2.2.8). These names point on the surface to an elite Greek origin and perhaps some links with the Roman *gens Salvia*:[5] but we should remember that we are in the world of fiction, and I have argued elsewhere that the name Theseus is applied to Lucius' father because of an imitation in the same scene of the humble hospitality offered to that hero in Callimachus' *Hecale*,[6] while the name Salvia could reflect the theme of salvation in the novel as a kind of anticipation of the 'saving' mother figure of Isis in the last book.[7]

Lucius is the only name we hear of as belonging to the protagonist; it is clearly inherited from the name of the protagonist of the Greek ass-tale as reflected in its summary version in the pseudo-Lucianic *Onos*. On the one hand, Apuleius' Lucius is like the Loukios of the *Onos* and other Greek novel male protagonists (e.g. Daphnis, Charicles, Cleitophon, or Theagenes) in having a single name in the Greek fashion; on the other hand, that name is identical with a ubiquitous Latin *praenomen*. The novel seems to sit uneasily between these two frameworks of nomenclature:

[3] The geographical switch may also indicate that we are moving into the realm of fiction – see Laird (1993) 160.
[4] See Lara Nicolini's chapter in this volume.
[5] See e.g. Bowersock (1965), Mason (1983).
[6] See Harrison (1997) and section 4 below.
[7] See *GCA* (2001) 72.

Lucius is addressed as such in the *Metamorphoses* even in the most formal situations (see the honorific *Luci domine* at 3.11.1, cited below) where a normal Roman address would use the *gentilicium* or *cognomen*,[8] though as an elite Greek with a Latin-named mother we might expect him to be a Roman citizen with the *tria nomina*. Lucius would be a very unlikely *cognomen* for a Greek incorporating his natal name into the *tria nomina* (e.g. Plutarch, L. Mestrius Plutarchus): here as elsewhere the novel is careful not to be too socially and historically specific. Likewise, though Lucius is Greek in origin and presumably delivers his speech of self-defence in Hypata in Greek (3.4.3-7.3), he finds it easy enough to turn to pleading in Latin in the law-courts of Rome at the end of the novel (11.28.6). The character of Lucius seems carefully poised between the worlds of Greece and Rome, perhaps to elicit interest in the widest possible set of readers (Romanised Greeks as well as Romans).

Lucius' elite status is clearly underlined in Books 1-3. Byrrhaena suggests that her relative and foster-sister Salvia made a socially distinguished marriage (*clarissimas … nuptias*, 2.3.2) and that Lucius' father was thus of elevated rank.[9] This high social position is later confirmed by the magistrate presiding at the festival of Laughter at Hypata in his fulsome apology to Lucius, indignant after the practical joke of a false accusation of murder (3.11.1):

> *neque tuae dignitatis uel etiam prosapiae tuorum ignarae sumus, Luci domine; nam et prouinciam totam inclitae uestrae familiae nobilitas complectitur.*
>
> "Nor are we unaware of your rank or of your family's origin, master Lucius: for the nobility of your celebrated family covers the whole province".

The Roman province here in Apuleius' period should be that of Macedonia, which contained Thessaly and Hypata; as Lucius comes from the Roman province of Achaia further south (see 10.18.1), the statement implies (no doubt with some encomiastic exaggeration) that his family is of national standing throughout the provinces of Greece.[10] The further honours offered by the magistrate, that Lucius is to be inscribed as Hypata's *patronus* and have a statue erected to him there (3.11.5) are

[8] For Latin modes of address see Dickey (2002) 41-76.
[9] See *GCA* (2001) 85.
[10] For a convenient map see Alcock (1993) 15.

realistic for the second century empire, and such as would be paid to a Roman grandee.[11]

In Books 1-3 Lucius' education is presented as matching his elite social origins. His learning and birth are flattered in a wheedling speech by the slave-girl Photis at 3.15.4:

> *sed melius de te doctrinaque tua praesumo, qui praeter generosam natalium dignitatem praeter sublime ingenium sacris pluribus initiatus profecto nosti sancti silentii fidem.*
>
> "But I expect better from you and your learning – you who apart from the noble rank of your birth, apart from your lofty intellect, have been initiated into a number of rites and know the fidelity of holy silence".[12]

As narrator Lucius occasionally gives us a taste of his learning, both in the first three books and elsewhere: his killing of the three supposed assailants at the end of Book 2 is likened to Hercules' slaying of the three-bodied monster Geryon (2.32.7), the old woman's attempts to stop the girl Charite's escape attempt on the back of Lucius-ass are compared to Dirce's struggle with the bull (6.27.5), a rider of Lucius-ass is ironically referred to as Bellerophon (7.26.3) , and Lucius describes his adventures as an ass as a form of *Odyssey*, showing that he knows the opening lines of that poem (9.13.4-5). We might plausibly see these as trite and self-important mythological and textual references, as if he is anxious to tell us what he has recently learnt. But the best evidence of his education is the persuasive and highly inventive forensic oration of Ciceronian character which he produces when required to at the mock trial in Book 3 (3.4.3-7.3), just as he is able to earn money easily as an advocate in the Roman law-courts (11.28.6): these are clear signs of a good elite rhetorical education.

Elite education is one of the resemblances between the fictional character Lucius and the real-life author Apuleius, which have often been noted;[13] the issue must be confronted by all readers of the novel given the spectacular apparent merging of Lucius and Apuleius at 11.27.9 *Madaurensem*.[14] Both come from provincial elites within the Roman

[11] See Harrison (2000) 216.

[12] Note that he is later rebuked for not living up to his education by the priest Mithras at 11.15.1 (*nec tibi natales ac ne dignitas quidem, uel ipsa, qua flores, usquam doctrina profuit*), and comments on his own learning in oratory at 11.30.4 (*studiorum meorum laboriosa doctrina*).

[13] See Harrison [(2000) 217 n. 25] with further references.

[14] On the links between Apuleius and Lucius in Book 11 see Wytse Keulen's chapter in this volume.

Empire (N. Africa for Apuleius, Achaia for Lucius); both are highly educated and accomplished sophistic orators (see above for Lucius' rhetorical skills, while Apuleius is of course the author of the extant forensic *Apologia* and apodeictic *Florida* and of a number of lost speeches);[15] both are connected with Platonic philosophy (for Apuleius as Platonist see *Apol*. 10.6 , for Lucius' connection with the Middle Platonist Plutarch see above)[16] and both are initiates of various cults, another elite marker (Lucius: *Met*. 3.15.4 and *Met*. 11, Apuleius: *Apol*. 55.8). The Festival of Laughter in Book 3 seems especially aimed at reflecting the life of Apuleius through events that befall Lucius: there we have an innocent man who defends himself against an invented charge, just as Apuleius (in his own view) did in the court case of the *Apologia*,[17] while the compensation offered of a statue (3.11.5, as already noted, modestly declined by Lucius) might reflect the offers of statues to Apuleius mentioned in the *Florida*.[18] These resemblances do not require that the *Metamorphoses* should be read as a fictionalised autobiography; though they do point to a date for the novel relatively late in Apuleius' career;[19] we need not follow some earlier readers in believing that Apuleius himself was metamorphosed into an ass (Augustine *Civ*. 18.18), or in holding that Apuleius bore the *praenomen* 'Lucius' to match that of the hero of his novel (he may have done, and the name is supplied as such in many Renaissance and later editions, but there is no ancient evidence for this). Like many modern novelists, Apuleius seems to be adapting elements of his own life and experience in order to make the characterisation of his first-person protagonist more realistic and effective, and to set him in his own contemporary cultural background.

3: Lucius – a (non-) model reader?

Very soon after Lucius appears unambiguously in the text as a character, we find him interacting with two unnamed travelling companions, whom he finds arguing about the veracity of an unidentified story one has just told the other (1.2.5-6):

---

[15] See Harrison (2000).

[16] For Platonic connections in the *Met.* see Harrison [(2000) 252-9] with further references and O'Brien (2002).

[17] For convenient background on the *Apologia* see Harrison (2000) 39-41.

[18] Cf. *Florida* 16.36-7.

[19] On this issue see Harrison (2000) 9-10.

> *Ac dum ausculto quid sermonibus agitarent, alter exerto cachinno: 'Parce' inquit 'in uerba ista haec tam absurda tamque immania mentiendo.' Isto accepto sititor alioquin nouitatis: 'Immo uero' inquam 'impertite sermonem non quidem curiosum sed qui uelim scire uel cuncta uel certe plurima; simul iugi quod insurgimus aspritudinem fabularum lepida iucunditas leuigabit.' At ille qui coeperat: 'Ne' inquit 'istud mendacium tam uerum est quam siqui uelit dicere magico susurramine amnes agiles reuerti, mare pigrum conligari, uentos inanimes exspirare, solem inhiberi, lunam despumari, stellas euelli, diem tolli, noctem teneri.' Tunc ego in uerba fidentior: 'Heus tu' inquam 'qui sermonem ieceras priorem, ne pigeat te uel taedeat reliqua pertexere', et ad alium: 'Tu uero crassis auribus et obstinato corde respuis quae forsitan vere perhibeantur'.*
>
> "And while I listened to what they were at in their conversation, one of them, letting out a guffaw, said: 'Spare me in fabricating those words of yours, so absurd and monstrous!'. Hearing this, I, being usually a thirster for novelty, said 'No, not at all, let me share in your conversation, as I am not a curious person but the kind who would like to know everything or at least most things; at the same time the elegant pleasure of tales will smooth out the roughness of the ridge we are climbing'. And he who had spoken first said: 'Indeed, that lie of yours is just as true as if someone were to say that rushing rivers turn back at the whispering of magic spells, that the sea becomes blocked and motionless, that the winds breathe their last and have no breeze, that the sun is held in its course, that the moon loses its dew, that the stars are torn from the sky, that daylight can be removed and night held in place'. Then I said, with some confidence in my words: 'Hey, you, who contributed the speech before, don't be ashamed or reluctant to spin out the rest, and to the other You are really rejecting with thick ears and obstinate heart things which may perhaps be truthfully related'".

This passage presents the reader of the novel with some key questions: should he/she believe the tall tales which its narrators, whether Lucius or the tellers of the many embedded tales, frequently offer in the course of this often fantastic novel? Lucius' own credulity is clear from the beginning, but is it to be imitated? Though he denies it, his attitude to strange stories reflects his general *curiositas*, a quality which gets him into trouble in the narrative through his desire to observe magic at close quarters. There is a tension here between the reader's understandable desire for new stories of entertainment, which matches that of Lucius, and Lucius' clear gullibility, which the reader is perhaps invited not to share: stories can be novel and worthwhile without being true.

Lucius' gullibility is confirmed by his reaction to the story told by Aristomenes which occupies most of Book 1, a tall tale involving sexual encounters with witches, informal heart surgery and sudden death (1.20.3-5):

> *'Ego uero' inquam 'nihil impossibile arbitror, sed utcumque fata decreuerint ita cuncta mortalibus prouenire: nam et mihi et tibi et cunctis hominibus multa usu uenire mira et paene infecta, quae tamen ignaro relata fidem perdant. Sed ego huic et credo hercules et gratas gratias memini, quod lepidae fabulae festiuitate nos auocavit, asperam denique ac prolixam uiam sine labore ac taedio euasi. Quod beneficium etiam illum uectorem meum credo laetari, sine fatigatione sui me usque ad istam ciuitatis portam non dorso illius sed meis auribus pervecto'.*

> "'I for my part' I said, 'think that nothing is impossible, but that all things come out for mortals just as the fates have decided: for many things which are extraordinary and almost unparalleled happen to you and me and all mortals, which might yet be lacking in plausibility when told to one who is unaware of them. But I believe this man, by Hercules, and bear him grateful thanks, because he has distracted us by the amusement of his witty story, and I have in the end emerged from a rough and lengthy journey without effort or tedium. This benefit I think is felt as a joy by that mount of mine too – without tiring him I am carrying myself right up to this gate of the city, not on his back but on my ears'".

This reaction of Lucius clearly forms a ring with his initial curiosity and gullibility, and once again presents the issue of the pleasure of fiction – need a story be true or even realistic in order to be entertaining? But most striking is his interpretation of the story as light-hearted: here he shows a callow callousness towards the narrator Aristomenes, who has just unburdened himself of a story which tells how Socrates, a good friend of his, was murdered in traumatic circumstances which exposed Aristomenes himself to suspicion and led to his abandoning his family and changing his identity. Notable too here is Lucius' incapacity to connect this story with his own situation, as he approaches Hypata, a famous city of witches; in the second and third books he deliberately seeks a sexual encounter with the witch's slave Photis in order to observe her mistress' magic rites, even though he has heard from Aristomenes of the disastrous consequences for Socrates of sexual involvement with a witch.

This is one of several passages in the novel where Lucius is presented as an uncomprehending critic of something said or narrated to him which points to his own life or situation.[20] The effect is usually one of dramatic irony for the second-time reader, who is aware of what is going to happen to Lucius in the plot: Socrates' story of entanglement with an alluring female agent of magic, consequent disaster and complete life-change is in essence the story of Lucius himself, catastrophically metamorphosed as a consequence of his liaison with Photis. We find a similar effect in Book 2,

[20] See Tatum (1969 = 1999).

where Byrrhaena points to a sculptural group of Actaeon being metamorphosed by Diana and says to Lucius (2.5.1) *tua sunt cuncta quae uides*, "everything you see is yours". Byrrhaena means to offer Lucius the freedom of her house, but interpreters have persuasively viewed her words as also referring to Lucius' future fate which is close to that of Actaeon – transformed into an animal through an unlucky encounter with higher powers, though Lucius-ass (despite several close shaves) avoids the bloody death which afflicts Actaeon as a stag.[21] The effect on the reader is largely one of sympathy with Lucius, unaware of impending calamity, though the hero's incapacity to sympathise with or learn from the sufferings of others also characterises him as thoughtless and unintelligent.

4: Lucius – an intertextual (anti-) hero?[22]

Recent scholarship has made it clear that Lucius' experiences on his journey to Hypata in Books 1 and 2 are several times presented as parallel to those of the heroes of epic, suitably transformed for a new novelistic context. One key point of comparison, as I have emphasised elsewhere, is the Telemachus of the *Odyssey*: like Telemachus at the beginning of that epic, Lucius at the beginning of the novel is a young man travelling abroad and learning from various social encounters. This is particularly notable in the encounter with Byrrhaena at 2.2.5-9:

> *'Est', inquit 'hercules, est Lucius', et offert osculum et statim incertum quidnam in aurem mulieris obganniit; 'Quin' inquit 'etiam ipse parentem tuam accedis et salutas?' 'Vereor' inquam 'ignotae mihi feminae' et statim rubore suffusus deiecto capite restiti. At illa optutum in me conuersa: 'En' inquit 'sanctissimae Salviae matris generosa probitas, sed et cetera corporis exsecrabiliter ad amussim congruentia: inenormis proceritas, suculenta gracilitas, rubor temperatus, flauum et inadfectatum capillitium, oculi caesii quidem, sed uigiles et in aspectu micantes, prorsus aquilini, os quoquouersum floridum, speciosus et immeditatus incessus'.*
>
> "… he exclaimed: 'by Hercules, it's Lucius' and he gave me a kiss. At once he whispered something inaudible to me in the lady's ear. 'Why not approach your foster mother yourself and greet her?' he said. 'I'm shy in front of a woman I don't know' I said, and at once, suffused with a blush, I stood back with head bowed. But she, turning her glance on me, said:

[21] Though Lucius-ass's encounter in the stables with the aggressive hostility of his own horse (3.26.4-8) could be seen as an allusion to the Actaeon-story, where Actaeon-stag is eaten by his own hounds.

[22] In this section I reprise some material from Harrison (1990) and (1997).

> 'Look at the noble goodness of his virtuous mother Salvia – and other things of a physical kind fit terribly closely: good height without being enormous, slim but sappy, moderate red colour, blond but unaffected hair, green eyes, but watchful and flashing in their gaze, quite eagle-like, a face flourishing in every part, and a gait which is attractive and not artificial'".

This scene of recognition derives from *Odyssey* 4, where Telemachus arrives in Sparta at the house of Menelaus and Helen, and is eventually recognised by Menelaus (*Odyssey* 4.141-50):

> "'Never, I think, have I seen such likeness in man or woman – amazement seizes me as I look. This boy is far too much like Odysseus to be any other than his son; surely he is Telemachus, the child that the hero left behind him, a babe in arms, when you Achaeans went up to Troy, planning bold war for the sake of shameless me'. Yellow-haired Menelaus answered her: 'Wife, your thought has become my thought as well. Odysseus had just such feet and hands; his head and his hair were like this boy's; his eyes had the same glance'".[23]

The naming of the distinguished parent and the enumeration of physical resemblances form a pattern which is found elsewhere, but the fact that the recognition involves a distinguished lady and a callow young man on his travels suggests a specific reminiscence of the Odyssean episode. Apuleius even seems to be providing clever inversions of his Homeric model: the steward who fails to recognise or welcome Telemachus at the palace of Menelaus is replaced by an old man, also a servant, who does both with enthusiasm, while the enumeration of physical resemblances is allotted as in Homer to the second recogniser (Menelaus/Byrrhaena) who, again as in Homer, is the same sex as the parent whom the son is claimed to resemble (Menelaus/Odysseus; Byrrhaena/Salvia) but, against Homer, is not the same sex as the son himself.

There is also the question of the subsequent attitude of the recognised young man; in Homer, the prudent Telemachus knows the identity of the royal pair who guess his identity and shows suitable courtesy, his modest reply being given through his companion Peisistratos (*Odyssey* 4.155-67), while Lucius shows embarrassment in trying to reject Byrrhaena's polite advances (*Metamorphoses* 2.2.7). A point is being made here: Telemachus, whose behaviour at the court of Menelaus is a model of good manners, clearly copes with his initiatory travels rather better than Lucius, whose awkwardness here might be seen as symptomatic of the youthful

[23] The translations of Homer in this section are taken from Shewring (1980).

ignorance which leads him through his *curiositas* to adventures of magic and metamorphosis.

Much later in the novel, Lucius famously compares his time as an ass to the informative travels of Odysseus (9.13), and there are moments in Books 1-3 too where parallels (and contrasts) with Homer's Odysseus plainly emerge. One example is the relationship between Lucius and Milo's maid Photis. The two find themselves alone for the first time in the low-life situation of the kitchen – Photis is stirring a saucepan and swinging her rear, which arouses Lucius (2.7.4-6):

> *Isto aspectu defixus obstupui et mirabundus steti, steterunt et membra quae iacebant ante. Et tandem ad illam: 'Quam pulchre quamque festive' inquam 'Photis mea, ollulam istam cum natibus intorques! Quam mellitum pulmentum apparas! Felix et <certo> certius beatus cui permiseris illuc digitum intingere'.*
>
> "I was spellbound at the sight, and stood there lost in admiration. The parts of me that were asleep before now stood to attention. Finally I managed to speak to her: 'My dear Photis,' I said, 'how lusciously and attractively you wiggle that wee pot, and your bottom with it! That's a succulent dish you have in readiness there! How lucky a fellow would be if you let him stick his finger in – he'd be on top of the world!'"

The sexual imagery is crude and obvious, and looks forward to Photis' encouraging reply and her subsequent sexual athletics. Two elements, the stupefaction of the hero at the sight of her attractions, and his rhetorical congratulations to the one who is to enjoy them, recall and invert another very different meeting of hero and girl in the *Odyssey* – that of Odysseus and Nausicaa on the beach.

In *Odyssey* 6 Odysseus, cast up naked on the shore after the wrecking of his raft, encounters the princess Nausicaa, and addresses her with diplomatic rhetoric (6.158-61):

> "… happy in all his being must be the man whose gifts will prevail with you, the man who will bring you home as bride. I have seen no mortal creature like you, no man, no woman; astonishment holds me as I gaze".

Lucius' crude physical reaction stresses that the Apuleian scene is a good deal more earthy and low-life than its Homeric model, and that Lucius is a character considerably more interested in the pleasures of the flesh than Odysseus is. Sexual congress follows swiftly and easily between Lucius and Photis; between Odysseus and Nausicaa the wanderer's compliments in fact lead nowhere.