

Rudis Locutor: Speech and Self-Fashioning in Apuleius' Metamorphoses

by

Evelyn Wynn Adkins

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Doctoral Committee:

Professor David S. Potter, Chair
Professor Sara Ahbel-Rappe
Associate Professor Basil Dufallo
Professor Yopie Prins

*If this were a novel it would be the 'frame story,' isn't that what they call it,
but it would have an even bigger story inside it. About history. About truth.*

John Crowley, *Aegypt*

*Man is least himself when he talks in his own person.
Give him a mask, and he will tell you the truth.*

Oscar Wilde, *The Critic as Artist*

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*For my parents, with more love and thanks
than I can put into words.*

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ABBREVIATIONS

- AAGA 1** = Hijmans, B. L., Jr. & van der Paardt, R. T. (eds.) 1978. *Aspects of Apuleius' Golden Ass Vol. 1*. Groningen: Bouma.
- AAGA 2** = Zimmerman, M., et al. (eds.) 1998. *Aspects of Apuleius' Golden Ass Vol. II: Cupid and Psyche*. Groningen: Forsten.
- AAGA 3** = Keulen, W. H. & Egelhaaf-Gaiser, U. (eds.) 2012. *Aspects of Apuleius' Golden Ass. Volume III: The Isis Book*. Leiden: Brill.
- GCA 1977** = Hijmans, B. L., Jr. et al. 1977. *Apuleius Madaurensis Metamorphoses Book IV.1-27*. Groningen Commentaries on Apuleius. Groningen: Bouma.
- GCA 1981** = Hijmans, B. L., Jr. et al. 1981. *Apuleius Madaurensis Metamorphoses Books VI.25-32 and VII*. Groningen Commentaries on Apuleius. Groningen: Bouma.
- GCA 1985** = Hijmans, B. L., Jr. et al. 1985. *Apuleius Madaurensis Metamorphoses Book VIII*. Groningen Commentaries on Apuleius. Groningen: Egbert Forsten.
- GCA 1995** = Hijmans, B. L., Jr. et al. 1995. *Apuleius Madaurensis Metamorphoses Book IX*. Groningen Commentaries on Apuleius. Groningen: Egbert Forsten.
- GCA 2000** = Zimmerman, M. 2000. *Apuleius Madaurensis Metamorphoses Book X*. Groningen Commentaries on Apuleius. Groningen: Egbert Forsten.
- GCA 2001** = van Mal-Maeder, D. 2001. *Apuleius Madaurensis Metamorphoses Livre II*. Groningen Commentaries on Apuleius. Groningen: Egbert Forsten.
- GCA 2004** = Zimmerman, M., et al. 2004. *Apuleius Madaurensis Metamorphoses Books IV.28-35, V and VI.1-24: The Tale of Cupid and Psyche*. Groningen Commentaries on Apuleius. Groningen: Egbert Forsten.
- GCA 2007** = Keulen, W. H. 2007. *Apuleius Madaurensis Metamorphoses Book I*. Groningen Commentaries on Apuleius. Groningen: Egbert Forsten.

ABSTRACT

This dissertation argues that discourse, broadly defined to include speech, silence, gesture, and text, is a primary tool for the negotiation of social and power relations in Apuleius' *Metamorphoses*. I begin by conceptualizing the dynamics of identity construction and status negotiation in the speech of elite and non-elite characters. Chapter One discusses the distinctive uses of language by non-elite, alternative communities in the novel. Chapter Two documents successes and failures in the public speech of elite characters. Through these episodes, Apuleius establishes a dissonance between the intended production and actual reception of characters' discourse, challenging the relationship between internal identity and external appearance and destabilizing speech as a marker of status and truth. With this framework in place, I turn to the problematic characterization of the protagonist Lucius. Chapter Three examines how Lucius undermines his own elite self-fashioning through words and actions. Chapter Four focuses on mystical silence versus garrulous curiosity and Lucius' attempts to gain power and control through access to supernatural knowledge. Finally, Chapter Five discusses the novel itself as a discursive negotiation between the narrator Lucius and his characterized fictive reader. These misrepresentations, miscommunications, and misinterpretations prepare the reader for the final revelation of the narrator's - and the

author's - identity in last book of the novel. In contrast with previous work that has emphasized the influence of single languages or genres on Apuleius, I interpret the *Metamorphoses* through the range of frameworks available to ancient readers, including allusions to Greek and Latin literature, mime, moral and philosophical discourses, rhetoric, and Roman law. I draw on ancient rhetorical treatises, modern discourse analysis, and sociological studies of language and power to analyze how social identities and relationships are negotiated via speech in the novel. I trace Apuleius' contributions to contemporary debates about elite masculinity, the utility of a traditional rhetorical education, and the relationship between discourse, knowledge, truth, and power. This study thus argues for the centrality of Apuleius and the *Metamorphoses* within the social, cultural, and literary trends of the Second Sophistic and second century C.E. Roman Empire.

INTRODUCTION

Though his name has become less well known of late, Apuleius of Madaura was one of the foremost public intellectuals of the second century C.E. and one of the most enduring authors of the Roman Empire. His works were debated by St. Augustine, his image was depicted alongside Vergil's in the Emperor Constantine's capital cities of Constantinople and Trier, and he was the second classical author (after Cicero) to be printed in Renaissance Italy. His novel the *Metamorphoses* or the *Golden Ass* inspired Petrarch, Boccaccio, C. S. Lewis, and John Crowley. It relates the misadventures of Lucius, a Greek aristocrat whose obsession with magic leads to his accidental transformation into an ass. As a mute and abused donkey, Lucius passes through the hands of masters from all classes of Roman society and hears the numerous stories that make up the famous inset tales of the novel. In the end, he regains his humanity and his voice through the beneficence of the Egyptian goddess Isis. Although Apuleius wrote the *Metamorphoses* sometime in the 160s-180s C.E., when the Roman Empire was more stable and united than it had ever been, his novel reveals deep anxieties about the mutability of social status, identity, and language underlying second century C.E. Roman culture. This study examines the uses of discourse, broadly defined to include speech, silence, gesture, and text, in the self-fashioning of identity and the negotiation of social

status and power relations in the *Metamorphoses*. Apuleius' work of popular fiction provides unique insight into the polyphonic, multicultural, and socially stratified world of the High Roman Empire.

By the end of the second century C.E., the expansion of the Roman Empire to its furthest extent had ushered in a new era of political and economic stability. The empire's focus shifted from Italy outwards to new provincial centers in the Greek-speaking East (Greece, Egypt, and Asia Minor) and the Latin-speaking West (Gaul, Spain, and Apuleius' birthplace, North Africa). Latin was the language of imperial law and bureaucracy, while Greek art and literature experienced a renaissance of production based on earlier Greek models in a cultural movement usually referred to as the Second Sophistic. Alongside Greek and Latin, other local and regional languages remained in use. The High Roman Empire enabled multiple and hybrid identities, such that Apuleius could be North African by birth but call himself Roman in his cultural and legal status and Greek in his education and philosophical program. His Latin *Metamorphoses* is based on a Greek novella and draws on Roman, Greek, and Egyptian culture and literature. His protagonist Lucius travels from Greece to Rome, is initiated three times into the cults of Isis and her consort Osiris, and builds a new life as a successful lawyer in the Roman Forum. The novel, like its author and protagonist, is thus emblematic of the culturally and linguistically fluid second century C.E. Mediterranean world.

The Life and Works of Apuleius

Apuleius' extant and attested works cover an exhaustive range of subjects.¹ In addition to the *Metamorphoses*, we have two rhetorical texts: the *Apology* (a defense speech against charges of magic) and the *Florida* (a collection of excerpts from Apuleius' speeches). Although Apuleius is perhaps best known today as an orator and novelist, he identified himself as a Platonic philosopher and took pride in his philosophical works.² The lecture *De Deo Socratis* is an important Middle Platonic text detailing Apuleius' theories about *daimones*, especially the *daimon* of Socrates. The *De Mundo* is a translation of the pseudo-Aristotelian *περὶ κόσμου* (*On the Universe*), while the *De Platone* is a treatise on Platonic philosophy. We also have attestations and fragments of several lost works, including poems, speeches, another novel (the *Hermagoras*), a translation of Plato's *Phaedo* into Latin, and works on history, proverbs, medicine, astronomy, trees, music, and other subjects.³ The range of Apuleius' works attest to his exceptional education as well as his interest in depicting himself as a preeminent philosopher and intellectual.

What we know of Apuleius' life is derived almost entirely from his own works.⁴ He was likely born in the 120s C.E. in the province of Africa Proconsularis in the town of Madaura (modern M'Daourouch, Algeria), about 150 miles southwest of Carthage. One

¹ For extant, lost, and spurious works, see Beaujeu (1973), vii-viii; Harrison (2000), 10-36.

² Cf. *Apol.* 10.6; Sandy (1999), 82-84.

³ Other works whose attribution is debated include the *περὶ ἑρμηνείας* (a Latin version of an Aristotelian doctrine) and the *Asclepius* (a translation of a Greek Hermetic treatise); cf. Harrison (2001), 7-8.

⁴ For Apuleius' biography, see Harrison (1996); (2000), 1-10, 36-38; (2001); Hunink (1997) vol. 1, 15.

of the most important events of his life was his marriage to the wealthy widow Aemilia Pudentilla...and her family's subsequent accusations that Apuleius won her - and control of her wealth - through magic. The charge was a harsh one, for a conviction of magic was punishable by death.⁵ In 158/9 C.E., Apuleius stood trial in the town of Sabratha before the Roman proconsul Claudius Maximus.⁶ His brilliant self-defense is preserved in the text of the *Apology* or *Pro se de Magia*. This speech is also our main source for Apuleius' biography, along with the extracts of his other public speeches preserved in the *Florida*. As we shall see, the image of Apuleius we get from the *Apology* is very much one of his own making. While there is likely to be some historical truth in it, the details given are intended to enhance Apuleius' reputation and self-proclaimed identity as an elite, educated Romano-African, a gifted orator, and a virtuous philosopher.⁷

Apuleius begins by establishing a dichotomy between his ignorant accusers and himself as an innocent philosopher.⁸ He frames his speech in grand terms as a defense of philosophy as well as himself:

For I am undertaking not only my own defense, but also in truth that of Philosophy, whose greatness despises even the slightest criticism as though it were the utmost crime; for which reason only a little while ago Aemilianus' lawyers, with hired garrulousness, babbled many fabrications against me in particular and other general ones usually made against philosophers by the ignorant. (*Apol.* 3)⁹

⁵ Under the *Lex Cornelia de sicariis et veneficis* passed in 81 B.C.E. and preserved in Just. *Inst.* 4.18.5; see Hunink (1997) vol. 1, 12.

⁶ The trial is dated by Claudius Maximus' proconsulship; cf. Hunink (1997) vol. 1, 12.

⁷ For the *Apology* as more literary than historical or autobiographical, see Hunink (1997) vol. 1, 11-12, 14-15, 24; (2001), 19-21.

⁸ See Hunink (2001), 14-21, on the structure and rhetorical techniques of the speech.

⁹ *sustineo enim non modo meam, verum etiam philosophiae defensionem, cuia magnitudo vel minimam reprehensionem pro maximo crimine aspernatur, propter quod paulo prius patroni Aemiliani multa in me proprie conficta et alia communiter in philosophos sueta ab imperitis mercennaria loquacitate effutierunt.* See also *Apol.* 1: "...with you as judge, the means and opportunity have fallen to me to purify philosophy in

Apuleius proceeds to address one by one the charges brought against him, both major and minor. As he says in *Apol.* 28, his goal is not to deny any of these, but to explain how the details his accusers have latched upon prove that he is not a magician, as they claim, but a learned philosopher. Apuleius reframes the accusations against him as virtues, taking the opportunity to showcase his superior education and rhetorical expertise by turning his accusers' own words against them. He spends less time addressing the charges directly than constructing an image of his elevated status and identity.

Apuleius' self-fashioning in the *Apology* is centered around his social status, his education, and most of all, his identity as a philosopher. He portrays himself as a native African steeped in Roman culture, appealing to both the Roman proconsul presiding over the trial and the evidently diverse audience attending it.¹⁰ Referring to his hometown Madaura, he calls himself "semi-Numidian and semi-Gaetolian" (*Seminumidiam et Semigaetulum*), comparing his "mixed birth" (*genere mixto*) with that of the famous Persian king Cyrus the Great (*Apol.* 24).¹¹ In contrast with this African self-portrait, he boasts that his father held the office of *duumvir* in the Roman colony of Madaura; he himself was enrolled in the local senate.¹² His family was not only of the decurial class, but also quite well off: Apuleius' father left him and his brother a substantial inheritance

the minds of the ignorant and to justify myself..." *...quod mihi copia et facultas te iudice optigit purgandae apud imperitos philosophiae et probandi mei...* Latin text of the *Apology* is that of Helm (1963). All translations of Greek and Latin throughout this dissertation are my own.

¹⁰ Cf. Hunink (1997) vol. 1, 18. For the similar audience of the speeches in the *Florida*, which like the *Apology* seem to have been delivered in North Africa, see Bradley (2005), 19-21.

¹¹ Madaura lay on the border between the tribal regions of Numidia and Gaetulia. Apuleius' declaration has sometimes been interpreted as geographic rather than ethnic, but his comparison with Cyrus lays claim to the latter. Cf. Harrison (2000), 4-5; Bradley (2005), 24.

¹² Madaura was refounded as a Roman colony in the Flavian period; see Bradley (2005), 22-23.

(*Apol.* 23). The current state of poverty for which his accusers reproach him is simply due to his studies, travels abroad, and frequent acts of generosity towards his friends and teachers (*Apol.* 23). His poverty, like his place of birth, is not a mark against him, but one in his favor. These accusations also give him scope to compare himself favorably with renowned philosophers like the Cynics Crates and Diogenes and the Scythian Anacharsis (*Apol.* 22, 24).

Throughout the *Apology*, Apuleius takes numerous opportunities to highlight his education and eloquence in both Greek and Latin. He juxtaposes his own learning with his opponents' ignorance: his stepson Pudens, who has been coached to accuse him, can speak nothing but Punic and a few stuttered words of Greek (*Apol.* 98).¹³ An education in Greek and Latin was a marker of high status. Apuleius lays claim to this elite education not only explicitly but also through his references to Greek and Latin literature throughout his speech.¹⁴ At several points, he has excerpts from his own writings read as evidence in his defense: these include poetry in Latin, including verses recommending a particular type of tooth powder to a friend (*Apol.* 6, 9); a treatise on fish in Greek (*Apol.* 36-37); a similar treatise in Latin (*Apol.* 38); and a published speech on the god Aesculapius so famous that some members of the audience can recite the opening words by heart. Another has a copy of the book with him (*Apol.* 55).¹⁵ Apuleius' claims to elite status are rooted more strongly in his reputation as an author and orator and in his

¹³ On Apuleius' superior command of Greek and Latin, see also *Apol.* 4, 36, 38-39, 87.

¹⁴ In other speeches, Apuleius claims to have received his education in Carthage and Athens (*Fl.* 18.15, 20.4) and to have visited Rome as a student (see *Fl.* 16.36-37, 17.4).

¹⁵ In *Apol.* 76, Apuleius mentions another speech he gave in the town of Oea that was so successful he was invited to become a citizen of the town!

eloquent display of *paideia* - cultured education - than they are in the class into which he was born.

The most prominent element of Apuleius' self-fashioning is his proclaimed identity as a philosopher. As we saw earlier, he portrays his self-defense as equally a defense of philosophy. He reinterprets each of the prosecution's charges against him to prove that he is not a magician, but a philosopher and respectable member of society. His possession of a mirror, for example, is not a sign of vanity, but a tool of philosophical investigation (*Apol.* 13-16). He examines fish not for their magical applications, but because of his study of natural science based on the model of Aristotle (*Apol.* 29-41). The objects he wraps in a linen cloth are not magical equipment, but mementos of his initiations into several mystery cults; they are a sign of his religious piety and pursuit of higher knowledge (*Apol.* 53-56). Finally, the statuette he carries is not a skeleton, but an image of Mercury, carved of wood following Plato's recommendation that this material is most sacred to the gods (*Apol.* 61-65). Apuleius' lengthy citations of philosophical precedents for each of his actions are quite convincing. At the same time, he betrays a suspicious amount of knowledge about magic for a man defending himself against charges of practicing it.¹⁶ Although most of his references to magic are literary, he reveals a distinct interest in the subject that rather undermines his claims to complete innocence.

¹⁶ See, for example, *Apol.* 30-31 (on fish), 43 (on invoking prophecies), and 47 (on the practice of magic). Cf. Hunink (1997) vol. 1, 13, 20 n. 1.

After refuting the accusations of magic and those against his own person, Apuleius comes to the heart of the trial: his marriage to Pudentilla. The prosecution claims that Apuleius compelled the widow to marry him using magical spells so that he could gain control of her wealth. As proof, they offer an excerpt from a letter written in Greek by Pudentilla herself: “Apuleius is a magician, and I am bewitched by him and I love him” (*Apol.* 82).¹⁷ Pudentilla’s words seem quite damning. Yet Apuleius’ method of reframing his accusers’ charges in his own defense is nowhere more apparent than in his treatment of this letter. As with the other charges leveled against him, the central issues are context and interpretation. Apuleius has acquired a verified copy of Pudentilla’s letter and can thus put her words back into their original context. The letter is in fact a rebuke of her son Pontianus. Pontianus encouraged Pudentilla’s marriage to Apuleius at first, but later brought accusations against him under the influence of his father-in-law Herennius Rufinus. In the letter, Pudentilla reminds Pontianus that he persuaded her to marry Apuleius, “But now, since these malicious accusers of ours are misleading you, suddenly Apuleius is a magician, and I am bewitched by him and I love him” (*Apol.* 83).¹⁸ Pudentilla’s words are not serious, but sarcastic. Her letter is a declaration of Apuleius’ innocence rather than his guilt. As Apuleius boasts, he wins the argument using the very letter the prosecution used to accuse him by revealing the true context and meaning of Pudentilla’s words (*Apol.* 84).

¹⁷ *Ἀπολείιος μάγος, καὶ ἐγὼ ὑπ’ αὐτοῦ μεμάγευμαι καὶ ἐρῶ.*

¹⁸ *νῦν δὲ ὡς κατήγοροι ἡμῶν κακοήθεις σε ἀναπαίθουσιν, αἰφνίδιον ἐγένετο Ἀπολείιος μάγος, καὶ ἐγὼ ὑπ’ αὐτοῦ μεμάγευμαι καὶ ἐρῶ.*

Apuleius' other claims about his marriage to Pudentilla are not quite as convincing. Although he dismisses these details, Pudentilla's advanced age (she is somewhere between 40 and 60) and the location of the wedding in a private country house rather than in public are unorthodox to say the least (*Apol.* 87-89). This might give some credence to the accusers' charge that Apuleius married too far above his social class. Apuleius counters this by arguing that he did not marry Pudentilla for financial gain: her dowry was not large (*Apol.* 90-92), he encouraged her to donate money to her sons and name Pudens in her will despite his accusations against her husband (*Apol.* 93, 99-100), and the estate she purchased after the marriage is in her name, not Apuleius' - and it is really not all *that* big (*Apol.* 101). Although Pudentilla's money and property may not be in Apuleius' name, it is clear from his own account that he has a large say in what she does with them. As in his defense against the charges of magic, some of the details he provides concerning his marriage to Pudentilla suggest that he may not be quite as innocent as he portrays.

Apuleius' reworking of the accusations against him in the *Apology* is a masterpiece of rhetorical self-fashioning. His method of defense is his mastery of discourse. He recontextualizes the prosecution's charges to shape his identity not as a magician and inheritance hunter, but as a philosopher and dutiful husband. In the triumphant finale to his speech, he summarizes the charges and his refutations in two words each:

Moreover I will respond to those charges with no more than two words. "Gleaming teeth": forgive cleanliness. "Examining mirrors": philosopher must. "Writing poetry": rightfully done. "Investigating fish": Aristotle's

teaching. “Consecrating wood”: Plato’s recommendation. “Marrying wife”: legal obligation. “She’s older”: it happens. “Pursuing gain”: hear dowry, remember donation, read will. (*Apol.* 103)¹⁹

Apuleius’ strategy rests on reinterpreting the charges to praise rather than accuse him. He demonstrates his power to reshape his public image by establishing the true meaning of the language used to accuse him. Yet within his dazzling speech, there are hints that his version of events may not be completely credible. He does, after all, know rather a lot about magic. Even his marriage to Pudentilla is not without suspicion: he has achieved both material and social gain in wedding the wealthy widow, despite his attempts to paint himself as a virtuous philosopher.²⁰ Apuleius’ discursive games in the *Apology* reveal how easily identity may be manipulated and language misconstrued. Linguistic and social meaning is determined not entirely by those who produce it, but also by those who receive and interpret it.

The outcome of Apuleius’ trial is unknown. We hear nothing of it outside of the *Apology*. Based on the excerpts of his speeches preserved in the *Florida*, Apuleius seems to have been active as an orator and public lecturer in Carthage in the 160s C.E.²¹ This suggests that he was acquitted, for were he convicted he would have been condemned to death.²² On the other hand, we have no evidence beyond Apuleius’ own text that the trial even occurred. Scholars have usually reconstructed the *Apology* as either a transcript of

¹⁹ *ceterum ad haec, quae obiecastis, numera an binis verbis respondeam. ‘dentis splendas’: ignosce munditiis. ‘specula inspicias’: debet philosophus. ‘versus facis’: licet fieri. ‘piscis exploras’: Aristoteles docet. ‘lignum consecras’: Plato suadet. ‘uxorem ducis’: leges iubent. ‘prior natu ista est’: solet fieri. ‘lucrum sectatus es’: dotalis accipe, donationem recordare, testamentum lege.*

²⁰ Cf. Hunink (1997) vol. 2, 247.

²¹ *Fl.* 9 is dated by internal evidence to 162/3 and *Fl.* 17 to 163/4.

²² Hunink (1997) vol. 1, 19-20; (2001), 19-21.

the speech Apuleius actually delivered in court or a later revision and publication. Rarely is it considered completely fictitious, although there is no less evidence for this.²³ Those who argue in favor of a biographical approach to Apuleius' works point out common details of the *Apology* and the *Metamorphoses*: the interest in magic, Lucius' trial during the Festival of Laughter in Book 3, and Cupid and Psyche's questionable marriage in a country house in *Met.* 6.9. Yet these may be literary tropes as easily as autobiographical details.²⁴ The *Apology*, as we shall see is also the case for the *Metamorphoses*, encourages belief without fully authorizing it.

The *Apology* cannot be read for certain as either historical or fictitious. Likewise, the image we get of Apuleius in his speech is very much his own image of himself. Although his verbal self-portrait is compelling, there are details that urge us to look through his words in search of the elusive figure behind them. All we can say for certain is that the work is a showpiece of its author's literary and rhetorical education. Even a master wordsmith like Apuleius, however, is unable to completely control the reception of the imaged he has constructed. These conflicts between the production and reception of meaning, between internal and external identity, and between authority and truth drive the surprising literary twists and turns in Apuleius' best-known work, the *Metamorphoses*.

²³ Cf. Hunink (1997) vol. 1, 12. For an overview of the debate, see Hunink (1997) vol. 1, 25-27; (2001), 22-24. For a historical approach to the *Apology*, see Bradley (2008). Fictitious speeches were not uncommon in Greek and Latin literature; Hunink cites Cicero's *Verrines* as an example (Hunink (2001), 23).

²⁴ For similarities between the *Apology* and the *Metamorphoses*, see Harrison (2000), 9-10. Magic, dramatic trial scenes, and challenges to marriages between members of seemingly different social classes are also common in the Greek novels; these are rarely read as autobiographical or historical.

The *Metamorphoses*

Despite its fame, the *Metamorphoses* has proved as elusive as its author. Even its title is debated. The manuscript tradition gives the title as the Greek *Metamorphoseon*, but Augustine calls it *The Golden Ass*, *Asinus Aureus* (*De civ. Dei* 18.18). By analogy with Varro's *Menippean Satires*, Jack Winkler provocatively suggests that it may have had a double, bilingual title: *Asinus Aureus, περὶ μεταμορφώσεων*.²⁵ I have chosen throughout this study to refer to the work as the *Metamorphoses* based on the manuscript tradition and Apuleius' own summary of his work in the novel's prologue: "men's forms and fortunes transformed into other appearances and restored to themselves again by a reciprocal bond" (*Met.* 1.1).²⁶

The date of the *Metamorphoses* is likewise contested.²⁷ Most scholars suggest that it should be dated to the 160s, after Apuleius' trial in 158/9. Given the role of magic in the novel, it seems likely that it would have been mentioned in the charges against Apuleius had it been written before this. Others have dated the novel either earlier or later than the 160s. On the basis of references within the text, Ken Dowden suggests that Apuleius wrote the *Metamorphoses* for a specifically Roman audience during his stay in Rome in the 150s.²⁸ The references he cites, however, could be recognized by educated

²⁵ Winkler (1985), 294-296, though he ultimately suggests that Apuleius entitled it *Asinus Aureus*. His interpretation of the meaning of the title *Asinus Aureus* follows in 292-321; see also Gianotti (1995), 114-115; Sandy (1999), 84. On the title of the novel, see also Scobie (1975), 47-50.

²⁶ *...figuras fortunasque hominum in alias imagines conversas et in se rursus mutuo nexu reffectas...* See Chapter Five on the prologue. Latin text of the *Metamorphoses* is that of Zimmerman (2012).

²⁷ On the relative dating of Apuleius' extant works, see Hunink (1997) vol. 1, 21-22.

²⁸ Dowden (1994).

readers of the time regardless of their place of residence. On the other side of the debate, Glen Bowersock suggests a date of composition after 177. He cites parallels between the legal details of apprehending runaway slaves in the Tale of Cupid and Psyche (*Met.* 6.2-7) and a letter of Marcus Aurelius and Commodus on the same subject (*Dig.* 11.4.1.2).²⁹ Stephen Harrison argues for a date in the 170s or even 180, citing the novel's literary parallels with the *Sacred Tales* of Aelius Aristides. He suggests that Apuleius may be parodying Aristides' religious experiences.³⁰ Although the exact date of writing and publication of the *Metamorphoses* is uncertain, it seems likely that Apuleius wrote it sometime in the 160s-180s C.E. during the high point of his literary career.

The plot of the *Metamorphoses* is not entirely Apuleius' invention. It is a loose adaptation of a Greek story about a man who turns into an ass.³¹ There is one version of the story extant among the works of Lucian, entitled *Lucius, or The Ass* (*Λούκιος ἢ ὄνος*); this is usually referred to as the *Onos*. Although it is generally agreed that Lucian did not write the *Onos*, it is dated to the second century C.E. and roughly contemporaneous with Lucian and Apuleius' literary activity. A third version of the tale is attested by the ninth century patriarch Photios in his *Bibliotheca* (cod. 129): a *Metamorphoses* by Lucius of Patrae, now lost. Photios suggests that the Lucianic *Onos* is an epitome of the first two books of Lucius of Patrae's *Metamorphoses*, a much longer work. Based on Photios' testimony and the parallels between Apuleius' *Metamorphoses* and the *Onos*, most scholars agree that Apuleius, like the author of the *Onos*, used the

²⁹ Bowersock (1965), 282 n. 31. For the legal details of *Met.* 6.2-7, see Summers (1967), 206-214.

³⁰ Harrison (1996), 513-515; (2000), 250-252.

³¹ For the possible origins of the ass story in Near Eastern folklore and literature, see Scobie (1975), 26-46; Anderson (1984), 198-210.

Metamorphoses of Lucius of Patrae as the source for his novel.³² Apuleius' innovations are the many inset tales he includes in his narrative, though some of these may have existed in the Greek *Metamorphoses*. The Isiac ending of Apuleius' novel and the long Tale of Cupid and Psyche are generally agreed to be his own additions. In transforming the Greek novel into a Latin one, Apuleius adapts it to a Roman cultural and literary setting and alters key details such as moving the conclusion of the story from Thessaloniki to Corinth.³³

Another debated aspect of Apuleius' *Metamorphoses* is its genre. There was no single word for a "novel" in the ancient world. What we might term a novel was called a *plasma*, *drama*, or *komodia* in Greek and a *fabula* or *mimus* in Latin.³⁴ Apuleius refers to his own work as *varias fabulas*, "various stories" (*Met.* 1.1). According to ancient rhetorical manuals, *fabulae* were implausible fictions such as those found in tragedy and poetry.³⁵ Most modern scholars refer to the *Metamorphoses* as a novel or, more broadly, a work of prose fiction, though some prefer to call it a romance.³⁶ It is usually grouped with Petronius' *Satyricon* and the surviving Greek romances of Chariton, Xenophon of Ephesus, Longus, Achilles Tatius, and Heliodorus, as well as the lost and fragmentary

³² For the relationship between these three works, see Winkler (1985), 252-256; Harrison (1996), 500-502; Mason (1999); Shumate (1999).

³³ Other examples include Lucius' first sexual encounter with Photis (Palaestra in the *Onos*): Apuleius changes the Greek metaphors of sex as wrestling to Roman ones of sex as battle (*Met.* 2.16-17, *Onos* 8-11). For the change from Thessaloniki to Corinth, see Graverini (2002); (2012), 169-174.

³⁴ Finkelpearl (1998), 25.

³⁵ Cf. *Ad Her.* 1.8.13; *Quin.* 2.4.2. See also Chapter Five.

³⁶ Cf. Relihan (2007), xv-xviii, who uses the term as defined by Frye (1976). Heiserman calls the *Metamorphoses* a "comic romance" (Heiserman (1977), 118, 145).

Greek novels of Lollianos, Iamblichus, and Antonius Diogenes.³⁷ Along with these other works of ancient prose fiction, Apuleius' *Metamorphoses* is often viewed as a novel in the Bakhtinian sense: a prose genre that subsumes or incorporates other genres within its language and structure.³⁸

Closely related to the question of the novel's genre is that of its intended audience and possible readership. Moving away from earlier suggestions that ancient novels were a "low" genre read by women and/or the lower classes, more recent scholarship on Apuleius has emphasized the literary allusions and polished language of the *Metamorphoses*, implying a very well educated readership.³⁹ Luca Graverini has argued recently that while the novel may be "aimed at highly cultured readers," its entertaining tales may have appealed also to less well-educated audiences.⁴⁰ Regine May and Wytse Keulen have even proposed that it may have been performed publicly as well as read. May argues that parts of the novel may have been recited in a theatrical setting.⁴¹ Keulen suggests that Roman intellectuals may have read novels aloud to each other as a source of entertainment at dinner parties.⁴² Though we have few references to Apuleius'

³⁷ On the genre of the ancient novel, see most recently Pinheiro (2014). For the debated use of the term "romance" for Greek prose narratives, see Whitmarsh (2011), 12-14.

³⁸ Bakhtin (1981), 301-331. For the *Metamorphoses*' transgression of generic boundaries, see Finkelpearl (1998), 30; May (2006), 274-275, 302; Graverini (2012), 11. For the ancient novel as a non-conformist or non-genre, see Selden (1994).

³⁹ Cf. Dowden (1994); Finkelpearl (1998), 28-29; Harrison (2000), 210-259. See also Conclusion. For the readership of ancient novels as likely restricted to the same intellectual elite who wrote them, see Stephens (1994). For the readership of the Greek novels, see Bowie (1994).

⁴⁰ Graverini (2012), 199-200; but see Stephens (1994), 406-409, on the difficulties of procuring books in the ancient world.

⁴¹ May (2006), 332.

⁴² Keulen (2007), 110-113.

Metamorphoses from the ancient world, his novel has delighted and puzzled readers from antiquity to the present day.⁴³

History of Scholarship

The scholarship on Apuleius' *Metamorphoses* has been organized around two primary, related points of debate: the unity of the novel and whether it is to be read as a "serious" religious and philosophical text or an entertaining, "comic" text.⁴⁴ The strongest argument for disunity is found in B. E. Perry's 1967 *The Ancient Romances*. Perry contends that the *Metamorphoses* is a loose collection of entertaining stories with no structural or thematic unity and no greater meaning.⁴⁵ In contrast, Reinhold Merkelbach interprets the novel through the mythic and symbolic lens of ancient mystery cults, identifying in it allusions to the myth of Isis and Isiac ritual.⁴⁶ His reading focuses on specific episodes rather than the unity of the novel as a whole. Antonie Wlosok offers an influential, early argument for unity based on a thematic study of the novel. She focuses in particular on the theme of *curiositas*. She concludes that the novel reflects Apuleius' belief in Isis and a Platonic approach to the mysteries following Plutarch's model in *On Isis and Osiris*.⁴⁷ In contrast with Merkelbach and Wlosok's religious

⁴³ Ancient references: Aug. *De civ. Dei* 18.18; *Hist. Aug. Alb.* 12.12. For Apuleius' reception from antiquity through the Renaissance, see Carver (2007); Gaisser (2008). See also Conclusion.

⁴⁴ For exhaustive summaries of the scholarship on the *Metamorphoses* from 1938 to 1970 and from 1970 to 1998, see respectively Schlam (1971) and Schlam and Finkelparl (2000).

⁴⁵ Perry (1967), 236-282.

⁴⁶ Merkelbach (1962), 1-90.

⁴⁷ Wlosok (1969=1999). For another Isiac approach to the novel, see Griffiths (1975), esp. 1-55. See also Chapter Five.

readings of the novel, Arthur Heiserman argues that the *Metamorphoses* is a comic novel, but that it should be contrasted with the satiric tone of the Greek ass-story.⁴⁸ Finally, P. G. Walsh offers an early interpretation of the novel as a work that incorporates both serious and comic elements, a view that has become increasingly prevalent in Apuleian scholarship.⁴⁹

The terms of the debate over unity and the interpretation of the *Metamorphoses* were forever changed with the publication of Jack Winkler's 1985 *Auctor & Actor: A Narratological Reading of Apuleius' The Golden Ass*.⁵⁰ Winkler argues that the unity of the *Metamorphoses* lies in Apuleius' narratological and hermeneutic games throughout the novel.⁵¹ He highlights the multiplicity of perspectives and interpretations offered by characters within the novel as well as those found in the juxtaposition of Lucius *auctor* (Lucius the narrator) and Lucius *actor* (Lucius the character). He contrasts the information available to first- and second-time readers, concluding that the novel's ending is deliberately ambiguous and provides no single, authorized interpretation. While many have criticized Winkler's aporetic reading of the novel's conclusion, his emphasis on Apuleius' literary art and the narrative structure of the *Metamorphoses* has put the old question of unity to rest. His narratological approach remains a starting point for almost any study of the novel.

Post-Winklerian studies of Apuleius' *Metamorphoses* have been predominantly literary and narratologically inspired. The literary emphasis in Apuleian scholarship has

⁴⁸ Heiserman (1977), 145-166.

⁴⁹ Walsh (1970), esp. 141-144.

⁵⁰ Winkler (1985). For a similar literary reading of the *Metamorphoses*, see James (1987).

⁵¹ Cf. Winkler (1985), 11-13, 165-173.

been influenced not only by Winkler's approach but also by the activities of the Groningen group, which has published commentaries on every book of the *Metamorphoses* except Books 3 and 11 (the latter is currently in preparation).⁵² Recent literary approaches have sought to contextualize Apuleius and his novel within the culture of the Second Sophistic. Gerald Sandy and Stephen Harrison, for example, emphasize Apuleius' similarities to Greek sophists of the period.⁵³ There have also been numerous studies of Apuleius' intertextuality with works of both Greek and Latin literature, including epic, Plautine comedy, elegy, and Roman rhetoric and satire.⁵⁴

In addition to literary studies, there have been several prominent historical, religious, and philosophical readings of the novel. Historical and sociohistorical interpretations of the *Metamorphoses* focus on its depictions of second century C.E. daily life and culture. Notable studies include an early article by Fergus Millar on "The World of the Golden Ass" and Keith Bradley's collection of essays in his 2012 *Apuleius and Antonine Rome*.⁵⁵ Post-Winklerian religious interpretations of the novel have tended to focus less on whether it reflects Apuleius' own religious experiences than on the expression of religious ideas and the social functions of religion in the novel.⁵⁶ Nancy Shumate's *Crisis and Conversion in Apuleius' Metamorphoses* draws on literary conversion narratives and modern social psychological studies to argue persuasively that

⁵² *GCA* (1977); (1981); (1985); (1995); (2000); (2001); (2004); (2007).

⁵³ Sandy (1997); Harrison (2000).

⁵⁴ General allusions to Latin literature: Finkelparl (1998). Epic, especially the *Odyssey*: Harrison (1990a); Montiglio (2007). Plautine comedy: May (2006). Elegy: Mattiacci (1998); Graverini (2004); Hindermann (2009). Rhetoric and satire: *GCA* (2007). New comedy: Frangoulidis (1997).

⁵⁵ Millar (1981); Bradley (2012a). See also Bowersock (1965); Riess (2001); Vasconcelos (2009); Baker (2011).

⁵⁶ See, for example, McCreight (1993). But see Kenney (2003) for a more biographical approach.

regardless of Apuleius' own experiences, his character Lucius embodies a realistic depiction of religious conversion.⁵⁷ Philosophical interpretations have favored a similarly serious reading of the *Metamorphoses*, focusing on the inclusion of Platonic elements in the novel.⁵⁸ Jeffrey Winkle in particular has emphasized the importance of Plato's *Phaedrus* as an intertext for the *Metamorphoses*.⁵⁹

While most of these literary, historical, religious, and philosophical interpretations fall into the traditional categories of "comic" vs. "serious" readings of the *Metamorphoses*, several recent studies have preferred to see the novel as seriocomic. Carl Schlam and Luca Graverini argue that Apuleius' novel combines the serious and the comic, *utile* and *dulce*.⁶⁰ The strength of these readings lies in their recognition of the great variety of voices, styles, and genres represented in the novel, including Platonic philosophy and philosophical interpretations of Isis, comedy, mime, satire, and rhetoric. By taking into account multiple interpretive possibilities, these studies provide fruitful observations and further avenues of investigation into the place of Apuleius and the *Metamorphoses* in the literature and culture of the second century C.E. Roman Empire.

Speech and Self-Presentation in the Second Sophistic

The second century C.E. Roman Empire, the period of the so-called Second Sophistic, was an era of intense literary, artistic, and cultural production, particularly in

⁵⁷ Shumate (1996). But see Bradley (1998)

⁵⁸ Cf. Penwill (1975); DeFilippo (1990); Gianotti (1995). See also Chapter Four.

⁵⁹ Winkle (2013).

⁶⁰ Schlam (1992); Graverini (2012).

Greek but also in Latin. Archaism in language, art, and literature thrived alongside creative receptions of tradition. Displays of erudition and education - *paideia* in Greek and *doctrina* in Latin - were valued as cultural capital and markers of elite status. Concern for the display of *paideia* and elite identity extended into all aspects of an aspiring intellectual's life, from his dress and bearing to his religious and philosophical affiliations to his daily encounters with friends, rivals, patrons, students, and the public. Negotiations of status and identity were conducted partially through writing but primarily through speech, ranging from public lectures to private dinner parties or conversations in the streets and baths.⁶¹ Traditional boundaries between elite and non-elite and between different social, cultural, and ethnic identities were shifting. Many scholars have pointed to the second century C.E. as a period of increased cultural mobility, where character and identity could be molded to fit the circumstances of the moment.⁶² The outward expression of this malleability of identity frequently took the form of speech.

Scholars such as Maud Gleason and Erik Gunderson have demonstrated the prominent role that speech and a traditional rhetorical education played in the self-presentation of Roman male status and identity, especially elite identity.⁶³ What a man said, how he spoke, the sound of his voice, and how he moved his speaking body

⁶¹ Cf. Gleason (1995), xx-xxi; Fantham (1997), 112-113, 122-123.

⁶² Bowersock (1994), 46-47; König (2008), 135; Whitmarsh (2011), 72-75, 106-107. This is not a unique feature of the second century C.E., though it is particularly apparent in that period. For cultural mobility to the first century C.E., see Hingley (2005), 53-54. Modern identity politics have emphasized that identity is always constructed, aggregate, hybrid, and progressive rather than static; cf. Too (2001), 186-187; Eshleman (2012), 2, 5.

⁶³ Gleason (1995); Gunderson (2000). See also Morgan (1998).

signified not only his gender, class, and social status, but also his inner character.⁶⁴

Roman speakers themselves were acutely aware of this: treatises discussing how an elite male should or should not speak proliferated in the Roman Empire. Instructional handbooks such as the anonymous *Ad Herennium*, Cicero's *De Oratore*, and Quintilian's *Institutio Oratoria* focused on proscriptively training young men in how to speak. By contrast, satirical essays like Plutarch's *On Talkativeness*, Aulus Gellius' diatribe against the loquacious man (*Noct. Att.* 1.15), and Lucian's *Teacher of Rhetoric* focused on how *not* to speak, providing humorous *exempla* of the garrulous man, the foolish babbler, and the effeminate, repulsively appealing, sophist. All of these works expound the importance of not only polished words, but also thoughtfulness, moderation, and care in speaking. Through proper speech, a man could claim his place in society and shape it to his image.

This study is concerned with rhetorical self-fashioning, meaning the uses of speech and other forms of discourse to construct identity.⁶⁵ I take Maud Gleason's work in *Making Men* as my point of departure: where she outlines the mechanisms by which elite Roman men shape their public images, I focus on how they subsequently undermine them through their own words and actions. Identity is formed not only through its production, but also through its reception. Rhetoric, as described in the Roman manuals, is an attempt to control that reception by controlling meaning and interpretation. As we saw in Apuleius' *Apology*, this control may be more or less successful depending on the speaker's skill, the circumstances of his speech, and his audience's knowledge. Identity is

⁶⁴ Apuleius connects speech and morality: "speaking well" and "living well," *ad bene dicendum...ad bene vivendum* (*Fl.* 7.10).

⁶⁵ The term "self-fashioning" was coined by Greenblatt (1980). I use the term to emphasize the malleability of identity as it is shaped in acts of individual self-presentation and social interactions.

shaped not in isolation, but in the space between speaker and audience and between production and reception.

In addition to identity, this study focuses on the uses of discourse to negotiate relations of status and power between individuals and groups.⁶⁶ Recent work on the Second Sophistic has emphasized the role of social connections and networks in the formation of individual and group identity. Tim Whitmarsh, in his 2011 *Narrative and Identity in the Ancient Greek Novel*, explores the construction of identity through narrative in the Greek romances. He is particularly concerned with the definition of individual identity in relation to communities.⁶⁷ Kendra Eshleman's 2012 *The Social World of Intellectuals in the Roman Empire* traces the common mechanisms of identity construction through social connections for three different groups in the High Roman Empire: sophists, philosophers, and Christians. She points out that identity "...was a matter not only of *being* - that is, conformity with certain cognitive, ritual, ethical, and/or professional standards - but also of ties to other members of the group, past and present - that is, of *belonging*."⁶⁸ She notes that identity is defined "...in the interface between internal definition...and external categorization," in the process of negotiation between members within the group and those without, insiders and outsiders.⁶⁹ Like Whitmarsh

⁶⁶ On the uses of rhetoric in the ancient world to shape social relations - to dominate one's inferiors and assert one's place among equals - see Gleason (1995), 163-164.

⁶⁷ Whitmarsh (2011), 41, 140, 257.

⁶⁸ Eshleman (2012), 2.

⁶⁹ Eshleman (2012), 67. Foucault explores the dynamics of indirect and direct modes of identity construction: "Let's say very briefly that, through studying madness and psychiatry, crime and punishment, I have tried to show how we have indirectly constituted ourselves through the exclusion of some others: criminals, mad people, and so on. And now my present work deals with the question: How did we directly constitute our identity through certain ethical techniques of the self that developed through Antiquity down to now?" (Foucault (1988), 403-404).

and Eshleman, I focus on the construction of identity as a narrative process and an ongoing social negotiation. Where they focus on interactions between individuals and communities, I am more interested in the negotiation of status and identity on a micro level, between individuals.

At the heart of this study is the role of speech and other forms of discourse in the characterization of literary figures, that is, in the construction of identity within a fictional narrative. Apuleius' *Metamorphoses* is centrally concerned with problems of discourse and meaning. The novel is a Latin translation of a Greek text that mixes diverse literary genres and plays with the conventions of oral and written discourse. The protagonist Lucius loses his voice as a result of his metamorphosis and is unable to communicate with men or other animals for most of the novel. His losses are not just physical, but also social. Where previously he was a Greek aristocrat and Roman citizen, his transformation degrades him to the status of an enslaved beast of burden. Without a human voice, he is unable to assert his human status and identity. The dissonance between Lucius' external appearance and internal sense of identity - sharply felt in his first-person narrative - challenges the links between speech, identity, and the body. He is not unique: other characters in the novel from all levels of Roman society see themselves quite differently than others see them. In all of these cases, the connection between internal and external identity turns on the multiple interpretive possibilities of discourse. Although Apuleius'

Metamorphoses is a work of fiction, it reveals contemporary anxieties about the malleability and fluidity of identity, perhaps even those of Apuleius himself.⁷⁰

Discourse Analysis and Apuleius' *Metamorphoses*

Previous studies of discourse in the *Metamorphoses* have focused on Apuleius' own uses of language in composing the novel. While scholarship has moved beyond the idea of a dialect of "African Latin," Apuleius' innovative uses of language remain a subject of study. Louis Callebat has documented Apuleius' use of archaisms and *sermo cotidianus* in the *Metamorphoses*, suggesting intertextual connections and a shared approach to language in Apuleius and Plautus.⁷¹ Ellen Finkelpearl's 1998 study reads Apuleius' use of Latin intertexts in the *Metamorphoses* as representative of a struggle under the burden of literary tradition. This is only resolved when Lucius finds salvation in Book 11 and Apuleius' novel finds its place in the Latin literary tradition.⁷² Wytse Keulen focuses on the novel's connections with Roman rhetoric and Socratic dialogue, arguing that it is about the "acceptance or rejection of a specific kind of rhetoric."⁷³ He contrasts the educational benefits of Roman rhetoric with the seductive eloquence of Greek literature, reading the text as "a kind of allegory of literature" and literary criticism.⁷⁴

⁷⁰ See Laird (1999), 16-17, 40. On fiction and history, see also Bowersock (1994); Bradley (2012a).

⁷¹ Callebat (1967). See also Callebat (1978); May (2006).

⁷² Finkelpearl (1998).

⁷³ *GCA* (2007), 9. See also Keulen (2007); *GCA* (2007), 8-27.

⁷⁴ *GCA* (2007), 2.

In addition to these studies of Apuleius' language, there have been a few discussions of his uses of speech within the novel. Most of these focus on speech as a marker of the boundary between man and animal.⁷⁵ The only published study that I know of on the speech of characters within the novel is Laird's article "Person, 'Persona,' and Representation in Apuleius' *Metamorphoses*."⁷⁶ Laird applies theories of speech presentation to discuss the effects of Apuleius' first-person narrative form and his representations of speech in the novel. He focuses primarily on the speech of the narrator (which is the novel itself) and argues that this first-person, discursive narrative is designed "to convince his audience that his fictional story is true."⁷⁷ He does not address the use of speech to characterize any other figures in the novel; other scholars, in fact, have claimed that Apuleius does not use speech as a tool of characterization at all.⁷⁸ Although all of Apuleius' characters generally speak in elevated and literary language (in contrast with, for example, Petronius' freedmen), I argue that speech is actually Apuleius' primary method of characterization.⁷⁹ This is not surprising given the common use of *ethopoeia* or *prosopopoeia* - the impersonation through speech of another person - in the declamatory exercises that were a prominent part of a Roman rhetorical education.

This study analyzes speech as well as other types of discourse within Apuleius' *Metamorphoses*. I define discourse broadly to include speech, silence, written text, and

⁷⁵ Man and animal: Schlam (1981), 131; (1992), 106-108; Bradley (2000), 166; Finkelpearl (2006), 203.

⁷⁶ Laird (1990). See also the brief discussion of dialogue in Apuleius in Anderson (2014), 227.

⁷⁷ Laird (1990), 158. See also 140-141 on the novel as the narrator's speech.

⁷⁸ "One is never allowed to forget that Apuleius the author is pulling all of the strings here, for every speaker, of whatever circumstance or social station, speaks in the same linguistically over-the-top fashion. There is no characterization by language here" (Relihan (2007), xx).

⁷⁹ Laird argues that the "...presentation of speech and thought (as a form of the text) is the primary technical medium of characterization in narrative..." (Laird (1999), 314).

nonverbal forms of socially meaningful communication like gesture, dress and appearance, and physical contact.⁸⁰ Speech, meaning spoken words, linguistic utterances, or the representation of these in written text, is perhaps the most common meaning of “discourse.”⁸¹ Silence has also been identified as an integral component of discourse, particularly in its polysemic ability to communicate social relationships of friendship or power.⁸² Nonverbal forms of communication have been less well studied in Latin literature, despite the attention of Roman rhetoricians to the very specific meanings of hand gestures, physical movement, and the details of one’s dress and appearance.⁸³ In contrast, text as discourse has been quite well studied, particularly in terms of Bakhtin’s dialogism and Kristeva’s intertextuality. Andrew Laird’s 1999 study of speech presentation in Latin literature argues for the status of texts as discourses that both represent and act as social exchanges of power.⁸⁴ Laird’s use of modern discourse analysis, his focus on characterization through speech, and his emphasis on the inherent resemblances between discourses within texts and texts as discourses are central to my own study.

I draw in particular on Pierre Bourdieu’s sociological methods of discourse analysis in *Language & Symbolic Power* to examine the social functions of different types of discourse in Apuleius’ *Metamorphoses*. Bourdieu focuses on linguistic

⁸⁰ For similar broad approaches to discourse from the modern perspective of linguistic anthropology, see the articles collected in Silverstein and Urban (1996a).

⁸¹ Cf. Bakhtin (1981), esp. 331-366. See also the discussion of discourse in Laird (1999), 3ff.

⁸² Cf. Van Nuffelen (2007); McNeill (2010).

⁸³ Cf. Quin. 11.3.92-104. Newbold (1992) offers tantalizing possibilities for the range of nonverbal communications in Petronius and Apuleius, but concludes only that ancient authors did not make as much use of nonverbal signs as modern authors do.

⁸⁴ Laird (1999), esp. xv-xvi, 1-43.

exchanges as relations of symbolic power.⁸⁵ He emphasizes the power of authoritative speech to shape reality, to “make people see and believe,” and to impose the speaker’s vision of reality onto the world.⁸⁶ Power and authority are negotiated through speech in the spaces between the interpretations of the speaker and the audience:

What circulates on the linguistic market is not ‘language’ as such, but rather discourses that are stylistically marked both in their **production**, in so far as each speaker forms an idiolect from the common language, and in their **reception**, in so far as each recipient helps to *produce* the message which he perceives and appreciates by bringing to it everything that makes up his singular and collective experience.⁸⁷

My study of discourse in Apuleius’ *Metamorphoses* focuses on clashes between production and reception and between speaker and audience.⁸⁸ The outcome of these clashes determines the “true” meaning of a speaker’s discourse and may reshape his identity and social position. The authority to determine meaning is tied to social hierarchies and reveals the lines of power between individuals and within a society. Apuleius’ depictions of successful and unsuccessful uses of discourse as a medium of power and authority resonate with contemporary rhetorical and cultural concerns of the second century C.E. They also shed light on his own self-fashioning as the author of the *Metamorphoses*.

⁸⁵ Bourdieu (1991), 37-38, 66-67.

⁸⁶ Bourdieu (1991), 170, 221. Bourdieu’s descriptions of speech as “magical” illustrate the power of speech to act and to shape reality.

⁸⁷ Bourdieu (1991), 39.

⁸⁸ My clashes are similar to Winkler’s asymmetric syzygies and Selden’s conceptualization of syllepsis in the novel: Winkler (1985)123-124; Selden (1994), esp. 48-51.

Speech and Self-Fashioning in Apuleius' *Metamorphoses*

In the following chapters, I argue that discourse is a primary tool in the construction and representation of both individual and group identity in Apuleius' *Metamorphoses*. It is also central to the negotiation of social status and power relations in the novel. Apuleius uses episodes of dissonance between the intended production and actual reception of characters' discourse to explore the problematic relationship between internal identity and external appearance. This series of clashes between speakers and audiences reveals discourse as an unstable, often false tool of self-presentation. Each chapter is a thematic case study of discourses in the novel, including speech, silence, nonverbal communication, and the text of the novel itself.

In Chapters One and Two, I conceptualize the dynamics of identity construction and status negotiation in the speech of both elite and non-elite characters. Chapter One discusses how two non-elite groups in the novel fashion themselves through discourse as alternative communities distinct from the Roman dominant culture. Both communities are characterized by modes of discourse viewed through the normative eyes of the narrator as inappropriate to their social position, outward appearances, and actions. The priests of the Syrian Goddess are portrayed as stereotypical *cinaedi*, Roman scare-figures of gender and sexual deviance. Although the narrator Lucius perceives their speech as effeminate and defective, the priests identify themselves through their own words as transgender women. Like the priests, the bandits use speech to construct their group identity. They claim social legitimacy by appropriating the language of the Roman

military and professional guilds. Their heroizing, mock-epic dialogue, however, only draws attention to their outlaw status and inept campaigns. By examining the speech of marginalized “others” in the novel, this chapter begins to define the boundaries between elite and non-elite and successful and unsuccessful speech.

Chapter Two documents successes and failures in the public speech of three characters who belong to the circles of the elite: Thelyphron, Lucius, and the wise physician of Book 10. I demonstrate that success and failure are dependent on a combination of internal and external factors, including the speaker’s virtues, vices, and intended self-presentation as well as the audience’s perception of his status and identity and the truth of his speech. Contests over truth and imbalances of knowledge between speaker and audience create imbalances of power. These conflicts of knowledge, power, and truth are mapped onto the opposing concepts of the actor and the orator. Although both actors and orators engaged in public speech and performance, in the Roman imagination the actor spoke lies for the sake of entertainment, while the orator spoke truth for the good of his community. In each of the episodes I discuss in this chapter, the lines between these categories blur to the detriment or (rarely) the success of the speaker.

With this framework of identity construction and the dissonant interpretations of speakers and audiences in place, I turn in the next two chapters to the protagonist Lucius’ problematic characterization. Chapter Three examines how Lucius undermines his own self-fashioning as an elite intellectual through both words and actions. I focus on his discursive negotiations of status and identity during his private, one-on-one encounters with others as both a man and an ass. He adapts his strategies of communication to

position himself along on a sliding scale of social hierarchy and power. Unfortunately, he is as unsuccessful at negotiating an elite identity in his private interactions as he was in public. His host Milo dominates him both verbally and physically as a man, while as an ass he is completely deprived of speech, status, and agency. Despite his animal body, he attempts to communicate with those around him using verbal and nonverbal means. His tactics differ according to the social statuses of his masters. With lower-class masters, he tries to assert a superior status through human speech. With upper-class masters, he seeks to ingratiate himself by braying and mimicking human gestures for their entertainment, acting like a model slave rather than a member of the elite. His unsuccessful attempts at communication reveal his escalating lack of control and lack of awareness of the social position imposed by his animal body.

Chapter Four analyzes silence as an important mode of discourse in Apuleius' *Metamorphoses*. I focus specifically on mystical silence as a rhetorical tool, including both magical and religious prohibitions against speech. Magic and initiation into the mysteries of Isis are depicted as two conflicting, supernatural paths to higher knowledge and power. In order to explore how the novel conceptualizes this pursuit of knowledge, I introduce three sets of binaries: magic and the divine, curiosity and revelation, and garrulousness and silence. Magic and religious impiety are associated with garrulousness and curiosity, the linked social vices that Plutarch sought to cure in his treatises *On Talkativeness* and *On Curiosity*. Lucius' initiations into magic and the mysteries of Isis are accompanied by warnings against curiosity and admonitions to silence. Magic and curiosity are portrayed as reckless, transgressive, and false paths to knowledge. True

knowledge of the divine can only be gained through revelation, as is evident in the Tale of Cupid and Psyche and Lucius' own salvation by Isis. At the end of the novel, Lucius' control over his previous curiosity is tied to his conversion and his voluntary observation of religious silence. By gaining superior knowledge of the divine and restricting access to it through his silence, Lucius at last assumes control over himself as well as his curious reader.

In Chapter Five, I turn to the subject of the *Metamorphoses* itself as a discourse between the narrator Lucius and his "characterized fictive reader." In the prologue and his direct addresses to the reader throughout the novel, the narrator Lucius places himself in an inferior position, playing the role of suppliant to his educated Roman reader. He satisfies his audience's demands, advancing his narrative through the reader's combative stance. This relationship continues until the final book of the novel, when Lucius reveals his true identity and his power to manipulate the reader's expectations. In the end, however, it is not Lucius who controls the narrative, but Apuleius. Apuleius engineers a final slippage of identity between himself as author and Lucius as narrator, prompting the reader to question what his relationship to this shifting narrative should ultimately be.

Apuleius' portrayal of the malleability of discourse and identity is central to the *Metamorphoses'* theme of transformation. It reflects the marked anxieties about social status, identity, appearance, and truth running beneath the culture of self-display of the Second Sophistic and the second century C.E. Roman Empire. At the same time, Lucius' salvation and the novel's conclusion seem to offer the possibility of a higher truth and knowledge beyond the limitations of human speech. Through these misrepresentations,

misinterpretations, and miscommunications, Apuleius' *Metamorphoses* challenges second century C.E. notions of elite identity, the utility of a traditional rhetorical education, and the relationship between discourse, power, truth, and knowledge both earthly and divine.

CHAPTER ONE

The Priests and the Bandits: The Speech of Alternative Communities

Lucius' magical transformation into an ass in Book 3 of Apuleius' *Metamorphoses* results in both a physical metamorphosis and social displacement, as he falls from his high status as a Greek aristocrat and Roman citizen to become a beast of burden subject to physical abuse and a loss of speech and agency.¹ As an ass, he passes through the hands of masters from across the class spectrum of Roman society, from the slaves of Charite to a poor market gardener to the Corinthian magistrate Thiasus. His journey, like those of the protagonists of the Greek romances, is a series of encounters with the Other, although Lucius' Others usually differ in socioeconomic status rather than ethnicity.² Most of Lucius' masters reside firmly within Roman society, whether higher or lower on the social ladder, but two groups stand out: the priests of the Syrian Goddess in Books 8-9 and the bandits in Books 4 and 7.

Both the priests and the bandits are on the fringes of Roman society, geographically displaced into the countryside and socially marginalized by their

¹ See Chapter Three. On Lucius' debated status as a Roman citizen, see Summers (1970), 520; Mason (1983), 135 n. 4; and Baker (2011), 63-65. Regardless of his official citizenship, socioeconomically he is certainly of the *honestiores*, the upper classes, rather than the *humiliores*. See also Chapter Two.

² For travel in the ancient Greek romances as encountering the Other, see Bowersock (1994), 29-53; Romm (1992), (2008); Morgan (2007); Stephens (2008); and Whitmarsh (2011).

transgressive practices and values. They construct identities distinct from the dominant Roman culture through their non-normative physical appearances, rituals, and, most notably, speech. Apuleius' portrayals of the priests and bandits provide examples of alternative communities outside of the dominant culture, each with their own social and linguistic codes. Yet while these alternative communities challenge the structures and practices of the dominant culture, they remain marginalized and ultimately unsuccessful in their linguistic claims to legitimacy. In the end, both the priests and bandits serve as negative examples of how *not* to speak and act, confirming the normative practices of the dominant culture.

Recent scholarship has shed light on the importance of speech in the construction of Roman elite male identity. Maud Gleason and Eric Gunderson identify rhetoric - meaning public speech, gesture, and deportment as learned through formal rhetorical education - as a primary tool in the self-presentation of Roman male status and identity.³ Where these scholars focus on elite self-fashioning, I turn in this chapter to the construction of the *non*-elite, alternative identities of the priests and robbers in Apuleius' *Metamorphoses*. Drawing on Bourdieu's theories of the symbolic power of different linguistic products on "dominant" versus "free" linguistic markets, I examine the discourse of the priests and bandits first through their own eyes (through their linguistic production and intended self-presentation), then through the eyes of the dominant culture

³ Gleason (1995); Gunderson (2000).

as represented by the narrator Lucius (through their reception).⁴ While this analysis allows us to explore the possible existence and constructed identities of actual alternative communities in the ancient Roman world, it is more importantly a first step in establishing the hierarchical structures of power valued by the dominant culture. I thus follow Foucault's methods of analyzing power relations not from within the dominant structures of power but on their fringes.⁵

Scholarship on both the priests of the Syrian Goddess and the bandits has frequently focused on whether or not Apuleius' novel represents "realistic" depictions of "real" groups of people. I discuss in the introductions to each section the evidence for and against the actual existence of each group. Regardless of their "reality," what interests me in this chapter is Apuleius' *portrayal* of both groups as alternative communities. He uses stereotypes as well as his own literary innovations to present the discourse of each group as a negative example of how not to speak. The bandits are outlaws who revel in theft and murder, but they use vocabulary derived from the Roman military and the language of epic and myth to present themselves as a heroic military band. Their self-fashioning is at least partially received by representatives of the dominant culture in the novel like Lucius and Charite. Yet the bandits' final defeat through the aristocrat Tlepolemus' appropriation of their linguistic identity confirms their inferiority. The priests of the Syrian Goddess are more problematic. Although they engage in ritual cross-dressing and use grammatical gender to identify themselves as feminine, Lucius and other members of

⁴ Free linguistic markets: Bourdieu (1991), 98; production and reception of discourse: Bourdieu (1991), 39. See Introduction.

⁵ Foucault (1982), 329.

the dominant culture reject their self-fashioning and impose upon them an identity as effeminate men. They are viewed as stereotypical *cinaedi* in their appearance, vocal qualities, and transgressive sexuality. The dissonance between the priests' and bandits' linguistic self-fashioning and their reception by Lucius and others outlines the boundaries of the dominant Roman culture's normative practices and expectations for speech.

The Priests of the Syrian Goddess

In Book 8, the ass Lucius is sold to a band of priests who worship the Anatolian fertility goddess Atargatis under the Roman name *Dea Syria*, “the Syrian Goddess.” Like the *Galli* with whom they were often grouped (priests of the closely related cult of Cybele or *Magna Mater*), the priests of the Syrian Goddess were infamous among the Romans for their ecstatic rituals, transvestitism, self-castration, and alleged sexual deviance.⁶ As was often the case for priests of both cults in the ancient world, the priests of the Syrian Goddess in Apuleius' *Metamorphoses* are referred to by the derogatory term *cinaedi*. By the time of the High Roman Empire, the term *cinaedus* referred to an effeminate man or one who sought the passive role in sexual intercourse, particularly with other men. Since Roman ideals of masculinity emphasized control and physical inviolability, this desire was viewed as unnatural and unmanly.⁷

⁶ Taylor (1997), 330-331.

⁷ Williams (2010), 193-202. For a provocative discussion of Roman sexual norms, see Parker (1997). On inviolability, see Edwards (1997); Walters (1997).

Although *cinaedus* is often translated into English as “passive homosexual,” “pathic,” or occasionally “pervert,” the term indicated gender deviance as much as sexual deviance. *Cinaedi* were stereotyped in ancient literature as men who moved, spoke, and dressed in effeminate ways. They wore long robes and makeup, walked with a swaying or mincing gait, and spoke in high, quavering voices.⁸ Such men were often characterized as sexually passive by ancient authors, but Gleason and Williams rightly point out that the word *cinaedus* refers to effeminate men more broadly. The term refers to gender more than sexual transgression, though the two went hand-in-hand in the eyes of ancient authors.⁹ The word was almost always used as an insult to imply that a man had failed to act in an appropriately masculine way. In this way, the *cinaedus* served as an antitype or “ideological scare-figure” for Roman men, a symbol of failed masculinity and everything a man should not be.¹⁰

The figure of the *cinaedus* has attracted much attention in modern scholarship on ancient gender and sexuality. The central question is often “were there any *cinaedi*, really?”¹¹ This is often accompanied by the question of whether or not there existed a subculture of *cinaedi* in ancient Rome. Setting aside the problem of whether or not there existed men who would have identified themselves by this derogatory term, the answers to these questions differ by theoretical approach. Those writing from the perspective of

⁸ Cf. Gleason (1990), 396. For other signs of effeminacy in ancient Rome, see Edwards (1993), 68-69, 77. These stereotypes appear especially in satire (Juvenal and Martial) and the ancient Latin novel. The *cinaedi* of Petronius’ *Satyricon* have received particular attention: see Richlin (2009), 82-89, with bibliography.

⁹ Gleason (1990), 411-412; Williams (2010), 177-178, 197, 233-234.

¹⁰ Scare-figures or failed men: Williams (2010), 196, 197, 202. “Illegitimate” men: Gleason (1990), 412. Antitypes for appropriate Roman male behavior: Parker (1997), 60.

¹¹ Parker (1997), 60.

gay history like Amy Richlin and Rabun Taylor have argued that there is evidence for the existence of an urban, homosexual subculture in ancient Rome.¹² Those writing from the perspective of gender studies such as Maud Gleason and Craig Williams have argued that the signs from ancient sources sometimes interpreted as indications of sexual orientation are in fact indications of gender identity.¹³ Williams rejects Richlin and Taylor's theorizations of an ancient homosexual subculture, claiming that *cinaedi* were not sexual deviants, but gender deviants.¹⁴

Though Williams is certainly correct in his critique of the application of terms like "homosexual subculture" and "homophobia" to ancient Rome, he protests too much the existence of Taylor's subcultures. Taylor actually posits two "pathic subcultures," one an urban subculture and one a religious subculture, specifically the cults of Cybele and the Syrian Goddess. Drawing on comparative evidence from ethnographies of the *hijras*, a group of gender-transgressive, transvestite priests of the goddess Bahuchara Mata in modern India and Pakistan, Taylor argues that the cults of Cybele and the Syrian Goddess served as sexual subcultures.¹⁵ Although he implies some differentiation between gender and sexual identity in his opening discussion of the *hijras*, he often conflates these categories. He refers to these cults primarily as "a subculture of passive homosexuality,"

¹² Richlin (1993); Taylor (1997). Richlin argues for the existence of a *passive* homosexual subculture (541). Taylor claims that the term *cinaedus* indicated a man who preferred *reciprocal* homosexual intercourse and that a subculture of such men found a place in urban settings like the city of Rome (349-357). Though there are problems with both articles, Taylor's argument for reciprocity has more to do with contemporary debates than ancient ideals.

¹³ Gleason (1990); Williams (2010), 230-239. See also Roscoe (1996).

¹⁴ Williams (2010), 239-245. But see Edwards (1993), 75 on sexuality as inseparable from gender.

¹⁵ Taylor (1997), 332-237. See also Roscoe (1996) on Greco-Roman *Galli*, Indian *hijras*, and ancient Mesopotamian priests of Inanna and Ishtar. Roscoe deliberately does not address whether or not these cults had a common derivation (197), but Taylor argues that the *Galli* and *hijra* may have derived from the same west Anatolian fertility cult (332).

but also as “a haven for a fairly small class of men who had strong transgender, even gynemimetic, tendencies.”¹⁶ Williams disagrees primarily with Taylor’s discussion of homosexuality, but he goes so far as to deny the existence of *any* subculture. He ends by discussing what defines a subculture:

Besides characteristic places, typical outward appearances, or gestures, subcultures can be marked by language, in the form of a jargon or groupspeak furthering group cohesion. Are there signs of this in the Latin textual tradition?¹⁷

He concludes that there is no evidence in ancient literature for a Roman homosexual subculture, but he does not discuss the evidence for a group that *did* use language to distinguish itself from the gender and sexual norms of the dominant culture. In Apuleius’ *Metamorphoses*, the priests of the Syrian Goddess use speech to identify themselves as female - a transgender alternative community on the outskirts of Roman society.¹⁸

The priests of the Syrian Goddess are portrayed as stereotypical *cinaedi* in both Apuleius’ *Metamorphoses* and the Greek *Onos*. Their characterization in each text rests primarily on their speech, including their linguistic self-presentation and their reception by others. Although the priests in the *Onos* are depicted as *cinaedi* only through their words and actions, the priests in the *Metamorphoses* are also characterized by their appearance, dress, and use of makeup.¹⁹ They are clearly perceived by others as *cinaedi*:

¹⁶ Taylor (1997), 371. Where Taylor refers to the *hijras* as welcoming “classic transgender men,” read transgender women (336).

¹⁷ Williams (2010), 244.

¹⁸ Where Williams, Taylor, Richlin, and others discuss *cinaedi* in terms of a “subculture,” I use the term “alternative community” to emphasize the geographic and social marginalization of the priests of the Syrian Goddess. Their structures are separate from and tangential to those of the dominant Roman culture.

¹⁹ Apuleius’ depiction of the priests has sometimes been seen as a programmatic comparison between the cults of the Syrian Goddess and Isis; cf. *GCA* (1985), 287-298.

the auctioneer mocks the head priest Philebus with a joke about his sexual proclivities (*Met.* 8.25), while Lucius names him a *cinaedus* by sight alone (*Met.* 8.24). Although he describes only Philebus' bald head and long curls in this passage, there must be other indications of his identity such as the priests' distinctive makeup and clothing described in *Met.* 8.27.

Although the narrator Lucius calls the priests *cinaedi*, they do not refer to themselves by that term, which was highly derogatory in both Greek and Latin.²⁰ They do, however, identify themselves as feminine through their speech. Philebus tells the auctioneer how upset he would be if the ass he bought should turn out to be wild and toss the statue of his goddess to the ground: “I would be compelled to dash about like a poor girl pulling out her hair...” (*Met.* 8.25).²¹ The joke does not translate well into English, but Philebus uses the feminine form of the adjective *misera*, “poor” or “wretched,” to describe himself. The manuscripts disagree as to whether the adjective should be the feminine *misera* (as in manuscript φ) or the masculine *miser* (as in manuscripts F and a*). Editors have likewise disagreed, with older editions of the text preferring the masculine *miser*. Most modern editors, however, prefer the feminine *misera* based on stylistic grounds as well as the evident erasure of the *-a* in our best manuscript, F. As we shall see, the feminine form *misera* is consistent with the priests' almost exclusive use of feminine forms throughout these episodes.²²

²⁰ Cf. Richlin (1993), 530-531; Parker (1997), 60-62; Williams (2010), 193-202.

²¹ ‘...egoque misera cogar crinibus solutis discurrere...’

²² See also Catullus 63, which famously switches from masculine to feminine grammatical forms to mark the moment of Attis' self-castration. For more examples, see *GCA* (1985), 218.

When Philebus brings the ass Lucius home to his fellow priests, he greets them: “Girls, come see the pretty little slave I’ve purchased for you!” (*Met.* 8.26).²³ In addition to calling the priests *puellae*, “girls,” Philebus applies to himself the feminine form of the participle “purchased,” *mercata*. The priests tease Philebus that he has bought not a slave, but a husband for himself (*maritum illum...sibi*), implying not only that they will use the ass in the same way they would use a male slave, but also acknowledging the identification of Philebus and their group as feminine.²⁴ Finally, they warn him not to hog the new slave: “Hey! Don’t eat up such a lovely little chick alone...” (*Met.* 8.26). Here they apply the masculine adjective *solus*, “alone,” to Philebus.²⁵ With this single exception, Philebus and the priests use only feminine grammatical forms for themselves and each other, constructing their group identity as feminine.

Lucius and the other characters in the novel reject the priests’ feminine identity. Lucius apply a feminine form to the priests only once: just after Philebus’ greeting to his “girls,” Lucius notes, “But these girls were a chorus of *cinaedi*, who (*quae*), immediately leaping for joy...” (*Met.* 8.26).²⁶ Although he uses the feminine relative pronoun *quae*, this is only to agree grammatically with the preceding subject *puellae*, “girls.” In the next clause, he reverts to the masculine. In all other instances, Lucius refers to the priests

²³ *‘Puellae, servum vobis pulchellum en ecce mercata perduxit.’* The priests’ conversation is almost word-for-word the same in the Greek *Onos*, including their use of feminine nouns and adjectives (*Onos* 36).

²⁴ See the next paragraph in 8.26, where the priests’ current slave enthusiastically greets the ass as a source of relief for his own exhausted loins. The priests’ characterization as stereotypical *cinaedi* includes their aggressively seeking the passive role in sexual relationships.

²⁵ *Et ‘Heus,’ aiunt ‘cave ne solus exedas tam bellum scilicet pullulum...’*

²⁶ *Sed illae puellae chorus erat cinaedorum, quae statim exultantes in gaudium...*

using *only* masculine grammatical forms.²⁷ Despite the priests' self-presentation as feminine, the dominant Roman culture as represented by Lucius perceives them as male, albeit unnaturally effeminate in their speech, appearance, and practices.

This perception of defectiveness comes out most clearly in the narrator's descriptions of the priests' distinctive vocal qualities. In *Met.* 8.26, the priests welcome their new servant (the ass Lucius) with "discordant shouts in their broken, hoarse, effeminate voices."²⁸ In *Met.* 8.27, they enter a house in a religious frenzy "making [the place] resound with their discordant wailing."²⁹ Gleason notes that the Latin words for "broken," *fracta* and *infracta*, indicate an effeminate vocal quality through the association of a cracked voice with physical frailty: "Words or voices that are 'broken' are weak, and therefore feminine..."³⁰ The priests' voices in Apuleius' *Metamorphoses* strike the narrator's ears as unnatural, the opposite of everything a man's voice should be. They are discordant rather than pleasant, cracked rather than strong, hoarse rather than clear, and above all, effeminate...but not *feminine*.³¹ Despite the priests' identification of themselves as female, the narrator persists in seeing them as men who act too much like women.

The uses to which the priests put their voices are also characterized as unnatural. Rather than using speech to defend themselves against false charges, as Lucius attempts

²⁷ There are too many instances to list, but masculine forms occur in all chapters in *Met.* 8.24-30 and 9.8-10.

²⁸ ...*fracta et rauca et effeminata voce clamores absonos*...

²⁹ ...*absonis ululatibus constrepentes*...

³⁰ Gleason (1995), 112. See also Quin. 11.3.19, 11.3.30-32.

³¹ On "masculine," "effeminate," and "feminine" as distinct "gender modalities," see Skinner (1997), 12.

to do as both a man and an ass, the priests falsely accuse themselves.³² In *Met.* 8.28, one of the priests “shouting prophetically, began to attack and accuse *himself* with a fabricated lie about how he had perpetrated something against the law of his holy religion...”³³ Lucius’ incredulousness is marked by his double emphasis of “himself,” *semet ipsum*. He regards the priest’s words as completely false. He writes them off as a “fabricated lie,” *conficto mendacio*, and uses a word for “accuse” that specifically indicates a *false* accusation, *criminari*.³⁴ As if this were not enough, the priest whips himself, subjecting his own body to a physical violation that marks him in the narrator’s eyes as belonging to the social classes that could be physically punished for wrongdoing, like slaves.³⁵ This denigration is marked not by reference to social class but to gender: Lucius remarks with horror that the ground is soaked with the “pollution” of the priests’ “effeminate blood,” *spurcitia effeminati sanguinis*. Most notable of all, he calls the whip “the distinctive attribute of those *half-men*,” *semiviris illis*.³⁶

Although the priests of the Syrian Goddess collectively self-present as *feminine* - as a transgender alternative community - the narrator Lucius, viewing them through the perspective of the dominant Roman culture, imposes his own identification of them as

³² For Lucius’ self-defense, see Chapters Two and Three.

³³ *Infit vaticinatione clamosa conficto mendacio semet ipsum incessere atque criminari, quasi contra fas sanctae religionis dissignasset aliquid...*

³⁴ *GCA* (1985), 246. The priests are depicted as habitual liars; see their use of a made up prophecy with multiple false interpretations (*Met.* 9.8) and their claim that a stolen golden cup was a “gift” from the goddess Cybele to her sister the Syrian Goddess (*Met.* 9.10). See also *Art. On.* 2.69 on priests of Cybele, castrated men, and eunuchs as innately untrustworthy.

³⁵ Cf. Walters (1997); Edwards (1997).

³⁶ *...flagro quod semiviris illis proprium gestamen est...* Cf. Williams (2010), 184, 279 n. 29 on the use of the term *semivir* to refer to men who have lost the use of their penises through castration or other injury.

effeminate - as defective males or “half-men.”³⁷ One of the primary loci of the priests’ characterization is their speech, including the words they use, their vocal qualities, and the uses to which they put their voices. Despite the priests’ feminine self-fashioning through speech, their identity is redefined by Lucius and the other characters in the novel and subordinated to the dominant culture’s normative structures of gender and sexuality.

The Bandits

Shortly after his asinine metamorphosis, Lucius is taken from Milo’s stables by a gang of bandits who use him to carry their stolen loot. Like the priests of the Syrian Goddess, the bandits are depicted as an organized, alternative community with their own social codes and communal identity distinct from the dominant culture of the novel. They, too, are geographically marginalized, residing in a mountain camp somewhere between Hypata, Thebes, and Plataea. The bandits are even more concerned with their self-presentation - particularly to one another - than are the priests. The Robbers’ Tales in Book 4 take the form of a rhetorical contest to determine which of two groups of bandits is more heroic and legitimate, while Haemus’ Tale in Book 7 is a speech designed to persuade the robbers to accept Haemus as their new leader. Like the priests, the robbers in the *Metamorphoses* use speech as their primary tool of self-presentation. The robbers in the Greek *Onos* hardly speak at all, at least not in direct speech (*Onos* 16-26). This

³⁷ For effeminacy as failed masculinity, see Edwards (1993), 81; Williams (2010), 137-139. Williams also contrasts effeminacy and femininity: effeminacy does not have anything to do with an actual feminine gender identity, but rather represents the negative paradigm for appropriate masculine behavior.

suggests that their characterization through speech in the *Metamorphoses* is another Apuleian invention.³⁸ The bandits describe themselves and their deeds in the language of epic, myth, and the Roman army, fashioning themselves as a heroic military band. Their own narratives, however, undermine this elevated image. Yet unlike the priests, whose feminine identity is rejected, other characters in the novel sometimes apply to the bandits the same terms they use for themselves. Although both groups are socially marginalized, the robbers as a heroic and hyper-masculine military band are more readily received within a Roman cultural framework than the priests are as transgender.

Apuleius' portrayal of the bandits as an organized military band has been a frequent source of discussion in scholarship, particularly on the topic of brigandage in the ancient world. Much of the discussion has focused on how "realistic" the depictions of bandits are in the ancient novels, including Apuleius' robbers and the *Boukoloi* or "Herdsman" of the Nile Delta most famously described in Heliodorus' *Aethiopika*. The Groningen group summarizes the contemporary state of the debate on ancient banditry and lists the uses of military terminology in the robber episodes in their 1977 commentary to *Met.* 4.1-27.³⁹ They interpret the use of military terms in the novel literally, concluding that large bands of robbers modeled on the Roman army actually existed in the second century C.E.⁴⁰ A similar view prevails in the 1980s discussions of Roman historians Brent Shaw, Keith Hopwood, and Fergus Millar, who argue that while

³⁸ The robbers in the *Onos* do not refer to themselves using military terminology. The lengthy robbers' tales of Book 4 as well as Haemus' Tale in Book 7 appear only in the *Metamorphoses*.

³⁹ *GCA* (1977), 208-209.

⁴⁰ Mackay (1963) concludes that Apuleius' bandits, like those in the Greek romances, are a literary trope. His suggestion that Apuleius may have been inspired by North African folk songs about bandit chieftains is less convincing.

the ancient novels might not depict “real” bandit groups, they are certainly based on actual robber bands described by contemporary Roman historians like Cassius Dio.⁴¹ Following Eric Hobsbawm’s theorization of the “social bandit,” they conceptualize a theory of the cultural function of the bandit gang and chieftain as marginalized figures on the fringes of Roman society that serve as foils for the Roman army and emperor.⁴²

More recent scholarship has concluded that banditry did not exist on as large and organized a scale as it is depicted in ancient fiction. Grünewald and Riess provide the most comprehensive discussions.⁴³ Grünewald concludes that bandits are a stock theme of Roman fiction *and* history. They should be understood as a literary *topos* rather than a “concrete social type.”⁴⁴ Riess covers much of the same ground, with the addition of documentary sources from Roman Egypt. The second half of his book focuses exclusively on the bandits in Apuleius’ *Metamorphoses*. Riess’ conclusion is similar to Grünewald’s: while the *topos* of the bandit gang may have had some basis in reality, Apuleius’ portrayal is fictional and serves the purposes of plot and theme.

While Apuleius’ robbers are by no means a realistic depiction of contemporary bandits, the issue at hand is how they are portrayed as an alternative community within

⁴¹ Millar (1981); Shaw (1984); Hopwood (1989). Shaw’s article provides a comprehensive review of the evidence for banditry during the Roman period from the second century B.C.E. through the fourth century C.E.

⁴² Hobsbawm (2000; first edition 1969). See Shaw (1984), 48 for the bandit chieftain as “*imperator* ‘manqué’” and Hopwood (1998), 196 on bandits as the “anti-army.” In contrast to his 1989 article, Hopwood seems to suggest here that Apuleius’ bandits may *not* be realistic depictions (cf. 197).

⁴³ Grünewald (2004 = 1999); Riess (2001). On bandits and the safety of travel in the ancient world, see also Casson (1974); Winkler (1980); Bowersock (1994), 52-53; Pretzler (2007); Romm (2008), 117-118.

⁴⁴ Grünewald (2004 = 1999), 13. Regarding the portrayal of bandits in Cassius Dio that Shaw found so compelling, Grünewald comments, “(especially) when it came to dealing with bandits Roman historians became novelists; but when real novelists wrote about bandits they did not turn into social historians” (162).

the *Metamorphoses*. Like the priests of the Syrian Goddess, the robbers are socially and geographically on the fringes of Roman society.⁴⁵ They are displaced by their outlaw status as much as the priests are marginalized by their non-normative gender identity and sexual orientation. The robbers, along with the priests, are an image of the Other, an undesirable alternative community where those displaced from elite Roman culture - like Lucius and Charite - might find themselves.

The Robbers' Rhetoric

Despite their low status as a community outside the bounds of Roman law, the robbers appropriate epic and heroic language and military terminology to present themselves as an organized military band.⁴⁶ They also refer to themselves as a *collegium* (an urban social club or professional guild) or a philosophical school. Their elevated rhetoric and assertions of legitimacy provide a humorous contrast with their bumbling and criminal actions. Unlike the priests of the Syrian Goddess, the robbers' self-presentation is at least partially acknowledged by Lucius and other elite characters like Charite, who alternate between referring to them as a military band or as common criminals.⁴⁷ In the end, the robbers are beaten at their own game, their speech and

⁴⁵ Cf. Habinek (1998), 69-72.

⁴⁶ See Finkelpearl (1998), 74; Harrison (2002) for literary allusions in the Robbers' Tales.

⁴⁷ Lucius describes the robbers as a *globus*, a band of soldiers (*Met.* 3.28; Turpin (2002), 51), and puts their actions in military terms: "they struck camp," *castra commovent* (*Met.* 4.22); "after some heavy engagement," *ecce confecto nescio quo gravi proelio* (*Met.* 6.25). Charite alternates between calling the robbers "terrible robbers and horrible gladiators," *tot ac tales latrones et horrendum gladiatorum populum* (*Met.* 4.24) and describing their attack on her bedchamber as a "dense and close-ranked formation," *denso*

identity appropriated by the aristocrat Tlepolemus, who disguises himself as the bandit Haemus to rescue his fiancée Charite.

Although the robbers first appear in *Met.* 3.28, we do not hear them speak directly until Book 4. The robbers who have brought Lucius from Hypata are joined by another group that has just returned from Plataea. The introduction to the Robbers' Tales consists of an argument - or rather, a rhetorical contest - between one robber from each group about who was more successful. The first robber begins:

“We have valiantly stormed the house of Milo of Hypata! Besides the great abundance of fortune we obtained through our courage, we returned **to camp** with our company unharmed, and we even, if it means anything, came back **with our forces augmented by eight feet!** But you, who assailed the cities of Boeotia, you led back your company diminished by **your general himself, the most valiant Lamachus...** The memory of such a hero will be honored **among famous kings and battle commanders.** But *you*, good and honest robbers, with your servile, petty thefts, creeping timidly through baths and old ladies' houses, you do your business in second-hand junk!” (*Met.* 4.8; military terms bolded) ⁴⁸

The speech is a finely structured example of formal rhetoric, establishing a series of antitheses contrasting the actions and character of the two groups. The speaker introduces a conflicting identification of the bandits as either a heroic military band or a group of low-life thieves, a paradox that continues throughout the Robbers' Tales. He uses the rhetorical trope of *tutum* and *honestum* to compare his own group - which has returned

conglobatoque cuneo (*Met.* 4.26). She uses similar language for their battle tactics as they use in the Tale of Thrasyleon. For military terminology in the robber episodes, see *GCA* (1977), 209.

⁴⁸ *‘Nos quidem’ inquit ‘Milonis Hypatini domum fortiter expugnanimus. Praeter tantam fortunae copiam, quam nostra virtute nacti sumus, et incolumi numero castra nostra petivimus et, si quid ad rem facit, octo pedibus auctiores remeavimus. At vos, qui Boeotias urbes adpetistis, ipso duce vestro fortissimo Lamacho deminuti debilem numerum reduxistis...inter inclitos reges ac duces proeliorum tanti viri memoria celebrabitur. Enim vos bonae frugi latrones inter furta parva atque servilia timidule per balneas et aniles cellulas reptantes scrutariam facitis.’*

both *tutum* (with their company intact) and *honestum* (with a profit gained through valiant deeds) - with the others. They have returned neither *tutum* nor *honestum*, not only losing their general Lamachus but also engaging in petty thievery rather than honorable campaigns.⁴⁹ When speaking of his own band, the bandit uses military language. He treats the leader of the other band, Lamachus, in a similarly elevated fashion, calling him “your valiant general” and grouping him “among famous kings and generals.” The other bandits are *latrones*, simply “robbers,” with the connotation of common criminals. They are weak, timid, and servile, and they plunder lowly places for poor loot.

A bandit from the second group answers with an equally polished speech, appropriating military terminology for his own band. His reply is structured like a defense speech refuting the charges of the first bandit as prosecutor, with a formal introduction (*prooimion*, *Met.* 4.9), narrative of events (*narratio*, *Met.* 4.9-21), and conclusion (*epilogus*, *Met.* 4.21). In the *prooimion*, he claims that their campaigns were more difficult than those of the first group. He ends with a phrase that formally signals the beginning of the *narratio*: “Indeed, the facts themselves will prove my assertion” (*Met.* 4.9).⁵⁰ His *narratio* consists of the three Robbers’ Tales, each focused on a different bandit: the Tale of Lamachus (*Met.* 4.9-11), the Tale of Alcimus (*Met.* 4.12), and the Tale of Thrasyleon (*Met.* 4.13-21). The stories are alternately epic and comic: Lamachus and Thrasyleon are depicted as tragic heroes through the narrator’s use of military vocabulary and allusions to epic and history, while Alcimus’ comic blunders are

⁴⁹ *Tutum* and *honestum*: cf. *GCA* (1977), 72-73.

⁵⁰ ‘*Res ipsa denique fidem sermoni meo dabit.*’

related with a notable lack of military terminology. Throughout the three tales, the narrator's language is the key element in the bandits' characterization.

The Tale of Lamachus begins with the robbers' attack on "seven-gated Thebes." (*Met.* 4.9). The epic epithet *Thebas heptapylos*, first found in Homer (*Il.* 4.406, *Od.* 11.263ff), does not appear in Latin until the second century C.E. It paints the bandits' attack as an epic battle like the legendary expedition of the Seven Against Thebes.⁵¹ The bandits' "general" is Lamachus. His name is significant: several scholars have noted the allusion to the Athenian general Lamachus who died at Syracuse in 414 B.C.E. during the Sicilian expedition.⁵² Like the Athenian general, the bandit Lamachus is portrayed as a heroic military commander, referred to as "our eminent standard-bearer" (*sublimis ille vexillarius noster Lamachus*, *Met.* 4.10); "our general" (*ducis nostri*, *Met.* 4.10); "our front-line commander" (*antesignani nostri*, *Met.* 4.11); "our hero of preeminent spirit and courage" (*vir sublimis animi virtutisque*, *Met.* 4.11); and "our stout-hearted general" (*magnanimi ducis*, *Met.* 4.11).⁵³

This elevated language contrasts sharply with Lamachus' unheroic actions. When he reaches through the keyhole of the wealthy miser Chryseros' house to unlock the door, Chryseros nails his hand to the door jamb. The robbers amputate his arm and flee, but the wounded Lamachus cannot keep up. When they refuse to kill him, he commits suicide, proclaiming himself both hero *and* robber:

⁵¹ *GCA* (1977), 78; Harrison (2002), 46.

⁵² Thuc. 6.101. The Athenian general Lamachus is also parodied in Aristophanes' *Acharnians*. For the name in Apuleius, see Walsh (1970), 158; *GCA* (1977), 81; Harrison (2002), 46-47.

⁵³ Other military terms include *potiremur*, "to get possession, become master of," and *reportamus*, "to take away (booty)," used of Lamachus after his amputation. Cf. *GCA* (1977), 79, 87.

“...he exhorted us **by the right hand of Mars, by the faith of our oath**, that we should free **a good fellow-soldier** from both torture and capture. For why should a brave robber outlive his hand, which alone could thieve and murder?” (*Met.* 4.11; military terms bolded) ⁵⁴

Lamachus swears by Mars, the god of war, rather than Mercury, the god of thieves. He calls himself a “good fellow-soldier,” *bonum commilitonem* and adjures his comrades “by the faith of our oath,” *per fidem sacramenti*, alluding to the oath sworn by members of the military. ⁵⁵ He also calls himself a robber whose primary actions are theft and murder. Lamachus’ self-fashioning reflects the juxtaposition of violent bandit and heroic soldier threaded throughout the Robbers’ Tales. Despite his own ambiguous identification, the narrator of the tale and the other bandits view him as unfailingly heroic. They give him a funeral befitting a general named after the Athenian commander at Syracuse, wrapping him in linen and burying him at sea...despite Thebes’ landlocked location. ⁵⁶

In contrast to the Tale of Lamachus, the Tale of Alcimus, the briefest of the three Robbers’ Tales, notably lacks military and epic language. The protagonist is more of a comic than a heroic figure. His name, which means “strong” or “mighty,” is a poor moniker for a bandit who dies at the hands of an old woman. ⁵⁷ The narrator attributes Alcimus’ death to the cruelties of Fortune, but there is a distinct irony in his description of Alcimus’ “clever schemes” (*sollertibus coeptis*, *Met.* 4.12): he is deceived into leaning

⁵⁴ ‘...adhortatur per *dexteram Martis*, per *fidem sacramenti*, *bonum commilitonem* cruciatu simul et captivitate liberaremus. Cur enim manui, quae rapere et iugulare sola posset, fortem latronem supervivere?’

⁵⁵ Cf. van der Paardt (1971), 188 on the same phrase in *Met.* 3.26.

⁵⁶ The geographically implausible Theban sea-burial has provoked much discussion. Though Walsh comments on the resemblance between the Apuleian and Athenian Lamachii, he concludes that the burial is “a typically Apuleian loose end” (Walsh (1970), 158 n. 2). See also *GCA* (1977), 91. Harrison has convincingly argued that this seeming inconsistency emphasizes Apuleius’ deliberate allusion to the Athenian general Lamachus (Harrison (2002), 46-47).

⁵⁷ Cf. Walsh (1970), 158; *GCA* (1977), 114; Harrison (2002), 46.

out of a window by the old woman whom, as the narrator informs us, he failed to strangle before robbing. Despite Alcimus' ignominious death, the robbers give him the same honorable (and geographically impossible) sea-burial as Lamachus; he is even described as "a worthy squire" for Lamachus, *bonum secutorem Lamacho dedimus* (*Met.* 4.12). Regardless of the narrator's half-hearted attempts to heroicize Alcimus, he is a humorous, bumbling bandit. He provides a contrast to the valiant Lamachus and a moment of comic relief before the tragic Tale of Thrasyleon.

After the untimely deaths of Lamachus and Alcimus at Thebes, the robbers move on to Plataea, another Boeotian city with historic military associations. There, in the longest of the three Robbers' Tales, the bandits plot to rob the wealthy Demochares by sending one of their number into his house disguised as a bear for the upcoming gladiatorial games. The narrator refers to the attack on Demochares' house as a military campaign, "the present campaign," *instanti militiae* (*Met.* 4.14). The bandits attack in military fashion: "we stationed our cohort, armed with swords, before Demochares' very doors" and "straightaway we broke into the storeroom with the force of a packed formation" (*Met.* 4.18).⁵⁸ Their military organization fails as one thing after another goes wrong, and a slave secretly alerts the household that a bear is loose.

The hero of the bandits' campaign is Thrasyleon, "Brave Lion," who dons the bearskin to infiltrate Demochares' house. His name foreshadows his "metamorphosis," although he dies as a bear rather than a lion. He is described in the same heroic, military

⁵⁸ *'...cohortem nostram gladiis armatam ante ipsas fores Democharis...sistimus.'* and *'...horreum...Quo protinus perfracto confertae manus violentia...'* In addition, the robbers' hideout is called a *receptaculum*, a military shelter or retreat (*Met.* 4.14).

language as Lamachus, though he is a “fellow-soldier,” *commiles* (*Met.* 4.18, 4.20), rather than a “general,” *dux*. His demise, trapped in the bearskin and torn apart by dogs and spears, is heroically tragic:

“But Thrasyleon, the distinguished glory of **our band**, whose spirit deserved immortality...did not betray **the faith of our oath** with a single shout or wail...he won glory for himself, though he surrendered his life to Fate...Thus Thrasyleon too was lost to us, but not lost to the annals of glory.” (*Met.* 4.21; military terms are bolded)⁵⁹

The narrator refers to the same soldiers’ oath as in the Tale of Lamachus (*fidem sacramenti*) and depicts Thrasyleon as a military hero whose glory will endure beyond his death.

With this tale, the narrator concludes his speech with an epilogue reflecting on the tragic losses of Lamachus, Alcimus, and Thrasyleon:

“It is with good reason that Loyalty is not found in this life, since she has emigrated now to the ghosts and the dead out of disgust at our treachery. And so the whole of us...missing three of our companions, brought in that booty that you see here.” (*Met.* 4.21)⁶⁰

The bandit narrator ends his speech with a sentiment appropriate for such a sad series of tales...but he destroys the defense speech he began in *Met.* 4.9 by convicting his band of the very things the first robber accused them of in *Met.* 4.8. The paradox between “the whole of us,” *toti*, and “missing three of our companions,” *tribus comitum desideratis*, emphasizes that this group has *not* returned safe and sound, *tutum*. All they have to show

⁵⁹ ‘*Enimvero Thrasyleon, egregium decus nostrae factionis, tandem immortalitate digno illo spiritu...neque clamore ac ne ululatu quidem fidem sacramenti prodidit...gloriam sibi reservavit, vitam fato reddidit...Sic etiam Thrasyleon nobis perivit, sed a gloria non perivit.*’ “Our band,” *nostrae factionis*, is strange in this context. The word *factio* is usually used in a negative sense; cf. *GCA* (1977), 120. The narrator’s use of the word for his own band implies another slip in the robbers’ self-fashioning.

⁶⁰ ‘*...merito nullam fidem in vita nostra repperiri, quod ad manis iam et mortuos odio perfidiae nostrae demigrarit. Sic...toti...tribus comitum desideratis, istas quas videtis praedas adveximus.*’

is their loot, which the first robber declared was hardly *honestum* since it was gained in ways unbecoming their military ideals. It was certainly not worth the death of Lamachus. Despite the narrator's use of military language in the Tales of Lamachus and Thrasyleon, the bandits' failed schemes and Alcimus' disgraceful end only prove the first robber's accusation. The robbers' self-presentation in their speeches as a heroic, organized, military band is undermined by their own accounts.

In addition to presenting themselves as a military band, the robbers depict themselves as a lawful society, debating their collective actions through the rhetoric of the Roman courtroom. We have already seen this in the rhetorical contest between the two robbers described above. Later, the bandits deliberate whether to punish Charite for her failed escape by burning her alive, throwing her to the beasts, crucifying her, or racking her. Regardless of the means, they agree on her death "by a unanimous vote," *calculo cunctorum* (*Met.* 6.31).⁶¹ There is a clear irony in these bandits voting in a lawful manner on the appropriate torture and death for an upper-class young woman.

One bandit provides the winning solution in another classically structured prosecution speech.⁶² He begins by appealing to the robbers' collective identity: "It is not in accord with the principles of our guild..." , *Nec sectae collegii...* (*Met.* 6.31). He calls the robbers a *collegium*, here most likely in the sense of a professional guild, though

⁶¹ The word used for vote, *calculus*, indicates the black or white pebble by which jury members voted for conviction (black) or acquittal (white). It is used here in a figurative sense of "judgment" or "opinion"; cf. *GCA* (1977), 70; *GCA* (2000), 151, 392 (on *Met.* 10.8, 10.32).

⁶² The speech draws on juridical language: see the speaker's accusation of the ass Lucius as (in Hanson's delightful translation) "a falsifier of counterfeit lameness and an aider and abettor of maidenly escape," *'...nunc etiam mendaci fictae debilitatis et virginalis fugae sequestro ministroque.'*

the word may also indicate a social club, college of priests, or bureaucratic committee.⁶³ The robbers are a *collegium* with guiding principles, *sectae*. The bandits use this word several times, though with somewhat different meanings. In most cases, it seems to mean “profession,” granting them the status of a legitimate organization.⁶⁴ Yet at *Met.* 4.18, the robbers wait until midnight to rob Demochares, “following the teachings of our profession,” *ex disciplina sectae servato*. The combination of *disciplina* and *sectae* has a philosophical connotation: the bandits envision themselves as a philosophical school with their own principles and doctrine.⁶⁵ Of course their philosophy and profession are, if we remember Lamachus’ dying words, rapine and murder. At the conclusion of the speech, the robbers vote, as though on a senate proposal,⁶⁶ to punish Charite and the ass in the most horrific manner imaginable: they will flay the ass, sew Charite into the skin, and leave her to die of starvation and scavengers’ teeth. Despite the robbers’ polished rhetoric and pretensions to legal procedure, their actions indicate how very far they are outside the bounds of Roman law and society.

The bandits’ planned punishment of Lucius and Charite is interrupted by the return of another of their gang who stayed behind in Hypata. After learning of the tragic deaths of his comrades, he suggests that the bandits observe a temporary “truce” in order to “recruit” new “fellow-soldiers” to their band, which he calls their “cohort of Mars”

⁶³ *OLD*, “collegium.” The robbers are also called a *collegium* in the Tale of Thrasyleon, where the narrator calls them *fortissimi collegii*, “our gallant band”; cf. *GCA* (1977), 119.

⁶⁴ For this sense, see *Met.* 4.23 (*ad istam sectam paupertatis necessitas adegit*), 4.24 (*ad sectae sueta conferunt*), and 7.4 (*sectam suam conferre malle*).

⁶⁵ See *GCA* (1977), 136-137 on the philosophical connotations and humor of the phrase. The pirates of Disney’s *Pirates of the Caribbean* films are similar to Apuleius’ bandits in this sense; the “pirates’ code” in particular resembles the bandits’ pretensions of lawfulness.

⁶⁶ *...non pedibus...in eius vadunt sententiam* (*Met.* 6.32). Cf. Westerbrink (1978), 65; *GCA* (1981), 79.

(*Met.* 7.4).⁶⁷ He has already recruited a strong young man to their cause. This youth introduces himself as the bandit Haemus (*Met.* 7.5), though we later learn that he is in fact Charite's fiancé Tlepolemus in disguise (*Met.* 7.12). He has come to rescue her in a scheme reminiscent of Odysseus' defeat of the Cyclops.⁶⁸ Although Haemus' appearance is described in some detail at *Met.* 7.5, his disguise relies not so much on how he looks but on how he *speaks*.

Haemus addresses the robbers in a speech as rhetorically elevated as their own, with a *prooimion* listing his credentials (*Met.* 7.5-6), a *narratio* relating his valiant deeds (*Met.* 7.6-8), and a *peroratio* offering himself as the bandits' new "general" (*Met.* 7.8).

He begins:

“Greetings, servants of **the valiant god Mars** and now my faithful **fellow soldiers!** Accept willingly a willing man of great-hearted courage, who more gladly takes wounds on his body than receives gold in his hand, and who is better than death itself, which others fear.” (*Met.* 7.5; military terms bolded)⁶⁹

Haemus uses the same military language as the bandits, calling on Mars and his fellow soldiers and claiming he is less interested in profit than in honorable deeds. He introduces himself as the Thracian bandit Haemus, raised among the “platoons” of his father, the

⁶⁷ “He advised that, leaving the roads at peace for the time and **observing a truce from all hostilities**, they should concentrate rather on a search for **fellow-soldiers** and, by **recruits** of fresh young men, restore the appearance of their **cohort of Mars** to the number of its former force,” (military terms are bolded) *...suadet, tantisper pacatis itineribus omniumque proeliorum servatis indutiis, inquisitioni commilitonum potius insisteretur et tirocinio novae iuventutis ad pristinae manus numerum Martiae cohortis facies integraretur.* On the military terminology in this passage, see *GCA* (1981), 105.

⁶⁸ For parallels between Tlepolemus and Odysseus, see Harrison (1990a) and Frangoulidis (1992).

⁶⁹ *Sic introgressus ‘Havete’, inquit ‘fortissimo deo Marti clientes mihique iam fidi commilitones, et virum magnanimae vivacitatis volentem volentes accipiter, libentius vulnera corpore excipientem quam aurum manu susipientem, ipsaque morte, quam formidant alii, meliorem.’*

renowned robber Theron.⁷⁰ He even refers to the bandits as a *collegium*, imitating this secondary aspect of the robbers' self-fashioning (*Met.* 7.7, 7.8).

Finally, Haemus narrates the tale of his greatest robbery and downfall: the loss of his entire band to the emperor's soldiers and his own escape in drag as an old woman riding a donkey (*Met.* 7.7-8). Haemus' tale imitates the Robbers' Tales in its elevated, heroic language that does not quite match its comic, low-life content.⁷¹ In addition to using the same polished rhetoric, military terminology, and claims to professional legitimacy as the bandits, the very content of Haemus' speech corresponds with the robbers' own comic and stories. Tlepolemus' verbal disguise is so convincing that the robbers appoint him their general, a position he exploits to rescue Charite and destroy them.

The bandits in Apuleius' *Metamorphoses* represent themselves through speech as an alternative community separate from but modeled on legitimate institutions of the dominant Roman culture: the Roman army and professional organizations. Tlepolemus gains admittance to this community by mimicking the bandits' self-fashioning, disguising himself not so much physically as linguistically. His construction of a bandit identity is even more successful than the robbers' own: Hijmans points out that "Haemus does not just compete with the robbers at their own game, he wins hands down and in all

⁷⁰ Hijmans on the name "Haemus": 1) his height and place of birth suggest a connection with the Haemus mountain range in Thrace; 2) "Haemus" evokes the Greek word for blood, *αἷμα*; the connection is made more explicit by the phrase "nourished on human blood," *humano sanguine nutritus*; 3) his name, if pronounced "Aemus" (the Romans usually did not articulate their h's), is a pun on the Latin *aemulus* in the phrase *aemulus virtutis paternae* at the end of *Met.* 7.5, "I was a rival to my father's courage" (Hijmans (1978), 115-116). The first two suggestions best fit Haemus' characterization.

⁷¹ The image of an enormous, muscular young man convincing the emperors' soldiers that he is really a frail old woman is incongruous, to say the least.

respects.”⁷² His superiority in size, strength, and cleverness is befitting a hero of noble birth, though the bandits do not recognize his identity until he has destroyed them. Tlepolemus’ defeat of the bandits represents a restoration of the social order. Through his actions, a dangerous alternative community is removed from the countryside, and the hero and heroine return home in triumph to resume their place among the upper echelons of society.

Conclusion

In Apuleius’ *Metamorphoses*, the priests of the Syrian Goddess and the bandits are depicted as alternative communities with their own social institutions and distinctive group identities. They fashion their collective identities through speech: the priests identify themselves as feminine, while the bandits present themselves as a heroic military band. The reception of each group’s identity is constrained by the normative values of the dominant culture. The robbers’ self-presentation, though partially acknowledged in Lucius’ and Charite’s own linguistic choices, is undermined by their actions and appropriated to their destruction by Tlepolemus. The priests’ self-presentation as feminine is incomprehensible within normative Roman gender and sexual structures and is misinterpreted as effeminate.

The bandits are perhaps more transgressive in literary than in social terms. They combine the high language of tragedy, mythology, and epic with the blunders, violence,

⁷² *GCA* (1981), 111.

and lowbrow humor of Roman comedy and mime. Although they speak in the wrong literary genre and aspire to a higher social status than they occupy, they still model themselves on the social and gendered institutions of the dominant Roman culture. They come across as hyper-masculine, fashioning themselves as heroic, military figures using the terminology of the Roman army. The priests, however, transgress one of the most basic divisions of Roman culture, one that underlies both social and legal status: gender. Their group identity remains beyond the social comprehension of the dominant culture and their self-presentation fails outside of the bounds of their own community.

The priests of the Syrian Goddess and the bandits are thus depicted as alternative communities, displaced from normative Roman culture. They are marginalized not only socially but also geographically. The priests travel from town to village to estate throughout Thessaly, while the bandits range through the mountains and towns of the Boeotian countryside. Their negative depictions within the *Metamorphoses* reveal Roman expectations for speech, self-presentation, and gender roles.⁷³ Speech in particular should be masculine, controlled, and truthful - the opposite of the priests of the Syrian goddess. Unlike the speech of the bandits, it must match the social status of the speaker. In this chapter, I have begun to establish how negative examples of non-elite, socially inappropriate speech can shed light on Roman expectations for elite discourse. I have also established the potential conflict between characters' visions of their own identity and

⁷³ Non-normative speech is measured by its distance from normative speech; cf. Bourdieu (1991), 167: "The dominant culture produces this ideological effect by concealing the function of division beneath the function of communication: the culture which unifies (the medium of communication) is also the culture which separates (the instrument of distinction) and which legitimates distinctions *by forcing all other cultures (designated as sub-cultures) to define themselves by their distance from the dominant culture*" (my emphasis).

others' quite different perceptions of them. In the next two chapters, I analyze examples of elite speech within the novel, including both public and private speech. As we shall see, the dissonance between self-presentation and the reception of speech remains a prominent pattern throughout the novel.

CHAPTER TWO

Public Speech and Self-Fashioning

For the elite, educated male of the Roman Empire, speech was a primary tool in the self-presentation of identity and social status. By the second century C.E., public speaking for the average elite male was primarily ceremonial (dedications of monuments, funeral eulogies), judicial (advocating in court for oneself or another), or conversational (learned debates in the semi-public, semi-private worlds of elite dinner parties and the baths).¹ These venues provided opportunities for advertising one's superior social position, moral authority, and *paideia*, the refined literary and cultural knowledge gained through an elite education. Yet public speaking could also be treacherous, providing equal opportunities for failure, humiliation, and loss of face if the truth of one's speech, status, or identity was challenged.² In this chapter, I examine the dynamics of success and failure in the public speech and self-fashioning of three characters in Apuleius' *Metamorphoses* who belong to the circles of the educated Greco-Roman elite: Thelyphron, Lucius, and the wise physician of the first of two tales of murderesses in Book 10.

¹ Cf. Gleason (1995), xx-xxi; Fantham (1997), 112-113, 122-123.

² For the potential failures of sophists in particular, see Gleason (1995) and Eshleman (2012).

The primary question governing this chapter is: what factors prompt success or failure in public speech? How does one make an ass of oneself in public (so to speak) and how does one avoid this? Pierre Bourdieu emphasizes that the success of a performative utterance (an utterance that acts, that shapes reality) is dependent not only on its linguistic qualities and appropriateness, but even more on the authority of the speaker.³ Success requires the authorized speaker to use authorized discourse in front of an audience that recognizes that authority. There is a manifest conflict between internal and external forces, between the speaker's own abilities and the combined external forces of his audience and the linguistic market in which they encounter each other.⁴ In this chapter, I examine the public speeches of Thelyphron, Lucius, and the wise physician as performances of status and identity that seek to shape reality through their claims to authoritative truth. I argue that a speaker's performance fails when his self-presentation clashes with his audience's knowledge and perception of his status, identity, and the truth of his speech. In other words, the image of himself the speaker intends to present does not match the audience's perception of his identity as revealed through his words, actions, and/or appearance. The speaker's inability to control his self-presentation - to control the reception of his speech and image - leads to his displacement or loss of social status.⁵

³ Bourdieu (1991), 70, 76. "A performative utterance is destined to fail each time that it is not pronounced by a person who has the 'power' to pronounce it, or more generally each time that the 'particular persons and circumstances in a given case' are not 'appropriate for the invocation of the particular procedure invoked'; in short, each time that the speaker does not have the authority to emit the words that he utters" (Bourdieu (1991), 111).

⁴ Production and reception on the linguistic market: cf. Bourdieu (1991), 39. See also Introduction.

⁵ Bourdieu emphasizes that although a speaker's success is dependent on external factors to a great extent ("the totality of the social universe and the relations of domination that give structure to it"), it must *seem* to be dependent "on the qualities of the person alone" (Bourdieu (1991), 73). The structure of social

Apuleius' preoccupation with authoritative truth and self-fashioning through speech reflect the anxieties of the complex, face-to-face society of the imperial Greco-Roman elite.⁶ Ancient Greek and Roman rhetorical treatises express a similar set of anxieties about success and failure, control and loss of control, and truth and falsehood in speech.⁷ These poles - and the potential slippage between them - are embodied by two figures: the orator and the actor. The actor and the orator, both public speakers who sought the approval of the crowd through practiced speech and movement, were dangerously close categories in the Roman imagination.⁸ Skillful orators represented the epitome of elite Roman masculinity.⁹ Actors played a more problematic role. On the one hand, they held a unique position as public figures with a certain artistic license to speak and act freely. On the other hand, they were *infames*, grouped with prostitutes, gladiators, and others subject to legal disabilities due to their perceived immorality, a product of their professions that involved using and displaying their bodies for the pleasure of others.¹⁰ Although Roman rhetorical manuals often suggest that orators study with comic actors to acquire their polished vocal training and delivery, they are careful to differentiate between the high business of the orator and the low business of the actor:

“For I do not want [my pupil] to be a comedian, but an orator...for [oratory] consists of

success is bolstered by its claims to manifest a true, natural reality when it is in fact arbitrary, socially and historically conditioned.

⁶ Cf. Gleason (1995), xx-xxvi.

⁷ See Introduction.

⁸ Gunderson (2000), 111-148. For the close relationship between orators and actors, see Fantham (2002).

⁹ “The rhetorical performer embodied his civilization’s ideal of cultivated manliness” (Gleason (1995), xxiv).

¹⁰ Edwards (1993), 98-136; Edwards (1997). These legal disabilities excluded actors from many civic institutions. They seem to have included limited rights of testimony and the possibility of corporal punishment. Actors may also have been barred from voting. On the moral and conceptual overlap between actors, prostitutes, and effeminate men in the Roman imagination, see Edwards (1993), 128-131.

real action, not imitation” (Quin. 11.3.181-182).¹¹ The orator speaks truth for the good of his community, while the actor speaks false words, imitations of truth, for mere entertainment.¹²

In the three episodes I will examine in this chapter, the lines between orator and actor, truth and falsehood, and civic duty and entertainment become blurred during a speaker’s performance. Thelyphron assumes the pose of an orator during Byrrhaena’s dinner party but speaks only to entertain his audience. During the Festival of Laughter, Lucius becomes an unwitting actor in a fake murder trial. In contrast, the wise physician successfully proves the truth of his own narrative of events during another false murder trial in the first of two inset tales of murderesses in Book 10. Each of these episodes expresses the confusion of orator and actor on a metanarrative level, as Apuleius mixes high rhetoric with the stock characterizations, theatrical spectacles, and scenes of beating popular in mime.¹³ While uncomfortable, the combination is not farfetched: staged trials and speeches for the prosecution and defense were a popular component of both declamation (practice rhetorical exercises) and drama, especially comedy and mime.¹⁴ These slippages in characterization, register, and generic language challenge the reliability of speech as a marker of elite identity, status, and truth.

¹¹ *non enim comoedum esse, sed oratorem volo...actione enim constat, non imitatione*. Cf. also Quin. 1.11.1-2, 11.3.4-5. On rhetorical manuals, see Gleason (1995), 105-108, 114-116.

¹² Artemidorus classifies actors, sophists, the poor, priests of Cybele, castrated men, and eunuchs as untrustworthy because of their false speech and bodies (*On*. 2.69). On actors as false speakers, see also Edwards (1993), 99, 102, 118, 124.

¹³ Beatings as a stock motif in mimes: Kehoe (1984), 105. On generic confusions or “metamorphoses” in the novel more generally, see Finkelppearl (1998), Frangoulidis (2001), and May (2006).

¹⁴ Popularity of trial scenes in mimes: Kehoe (1984), 94, 97, 99, 105.

The Tale of Thelyphron

During Lucius' stay in Hypata, he is invited to a dinner party at the home of his aunt Byrrhena, one of Hypata's leading *matronae*. Driven by his characteristic obsession with magic, Lucius raises the topic of witchcraft, claiming to be frightened of witches who steal the body parts of corpses for their spells.¹⁵ Another dinner guest replies that in Hypata, witches attack even the living: there is a man who was “mutilated, with his face completely disfigured in every way” (*Met.* 2.20).¹⁶ Laughing uproariously, the dinner guests turn towards a man in the corner. When he tries to leave, upset by the behavior of the other guests, Byrrhena asks him to stay:

“No, my Thelyphron - stay for a little while and, with your customary sophistication, go back over that tale of yours so that my son Lucius here may enjoy the charm and elegance of your speech.” (*Met.* 2.20)¹⁷

Byrrhena's request and the laughter of the other dinner guests reveal that they already know Thelyphron's story. Byrrhena's flattering introduction represents the oddly named Thelyphron as a good speaker: sophisticated, elegant, and charming.¹⁸ Yet the laughter

¹⁵ See Chapter Four on Lucius' obsessive curiosity about magic.

¹⁶ *'Et nescio qui simile passus ore undique omnifariam deformato truncatus est.'*

¹⁷ *'Immo mi Thelyphron,' Byrrhena inquit 'et subsiste paulisper et more tuae urbanitatis fabulam illam tuam remetire, ut et filius meus iste Lucius lepidi sermonis tui perfruaturs comitate.'*

¹⁸ Thelyphron's name means “female-minded” or “effeminate.” It is found nowhere else in Greek or Latin literature, although the adjective *θηλόφρων* appears in Arist. *Eccl.* 110 and Vett. Val. 104.21. Helm and Brotherton suggest that the name fits Thelyphron's cowardly or dimwitted character, while Ingenkamp suggests that it is appropriate for a tale of adultery, as adulterers were considered to be weak-willed and thus effeminate (cf. Ingenkamp (1972), 339-342). Frangoulidis suggests that the name creates a “gender problem of identity” for both Thelyphrons arising from their encounters with the adulterous, murderous wife (Frangoulidis (2001), 48). For summaries of the debate, see Ingenkamp (1972), 337-338; *GCA* (2001), 304-305.

of the other guests and Thelyphron's spatial isolation, sitting by himself in the corner of the room, exclude him from their company and suggest that all may not be as it seems.¹⁹

Thelyphron, at last convinced to stay, prepares to relate his story.²⁰ Propping himself up on his couch, he assumes the pose of an orator:

And so, when he had piled the covers into a mound and propped himself on his elbow, sitting half erect on the couch, he extended his right arm and shaped his hand in the likeness of an orator's by bending in his two lowest fingers, extending the others, and poising his thumb menacingly... (*Met.* 2.21)²¹

Thelyphron appropriates an orator's gesture in an attempt to present himself as a dignified and credible speaker.²² For Lucius and the first-time reader of the novel, the precise description of the arrangement of Thelyphron's fingers supports his elevated self-presentation. It also delays the beginning of his story, building a sense of drama and anticipation. For the other dinner guests and the second-time reader, however, Thelyphron's pose is patently ridiculous. It corresponds to neither his character nor his physical appearance as revealed by the end of his tale.²³

¹⁹ Laughter functions as a sign of social inclusion/exclusion throughout the novel: cf. Lateiner (2001), 221 n. 9; May (2006), 76, 191-192. Frangoulidis rightly connects Thelyphron's social and spatial isolation with the physical deformity revealed at the end of his story (Frangoulidis (2001), 38; (2002b), 165).

²⁰ On the Tale of Thelyphron generally, see *GCA* (2001), 417-422; Frangoulidis (2002b), a slightly revised version of the chapter "Mutilation as Emasculation: Thelyphron's Tale of Thelyphron" in Frangoulidis (2001).

²¹ *Ac sic aggeratis in cumulum stragulis, et effultus in cubitum suberectusque in torum porrigit dexteram, et ad instar oratorum conformat articulum duobusque infimis conclusis digitis ceteros eminus porrigens et infesto pollice...*

²² This gesture best resembles the one described in *Quin.* 11.3.98. It was evidently a popular oratorical gesture, perhaps best known in its later usage (with the hand raised vertically) as the Christian gesture of benediction; cf. *GCA* (2001), 309-310. Frangoulidis suggests that Thelyphron assumes the pose of a storyteller to improve his social standing (Frangoulidis (2001), 39; (2002b), 166), but storytellers, who related entertaining tales for money or patronage, did not boast the high social position and reputation of orators.

²³ "The comic force is evident: a simple man, that is, Thelyphron...whose face is moreover mutilated by witches' tricks, begins his story with the seriousness of a great orator," *vis comica manifesta est: homo*

Throughout his narrative (*Met.* 2.21-30), it is clear that Thelyphron is not the fine orator he initially presented himself to be, but a foolish and careless speaker. His story opens with himself as a young man from Miletus on his way to see the Olympic games.²⁴ He has run through most of his money by the time he reaches Thessaly. In Larissa, he hears a herald offering payment to anyone willing to guard a corpse for the night. He asks a passerby rather facetiously if dead men are accustomed to run away in these parts. The passerby admonishes him to be quiet: he is young, a stranger, and does not understand that here in Thessaly, witches regularly steal parts of corpses' faces for their magic spells.

Ignoring the warning, Thelyphron volunteers as corpse-guard and follows the herald to the dead man's house. His foolishness and thoughtless speech are increasingly evident in his interactions with the widow. When she asks him to perform his duty with care, he confidently replies, "Don't worry! Just prepare a suitable tip" (*Met.* 2.23).²⁵ The word for tip, *corollarium*, is generally used in pleasurable, entertaining, or erotic contexts.²⁶ Later, Thelyphron requests that the widow provide a lamp, plenty of oil, wine, and a tray of leftovers from dinner to sustain him for the night. The widow chides him for the inappropriate nature of his demands, pointing out that this is a house of mourning where no fire or cooking has been seen for days. Thelyphron's requests, which are more appropriate for a dinner party than a funeral, reveal his social ignorance and carelessness in speaking.

simplex, ut est Thelyphron, ... cuius os praeterea dolis sagarum deformatum est, gravitate magni oratoris fabulam suam incipit (de Jonge (1941), 87).

²⁴ Thelyphron's hometown is a generic allusion to the bawdy Milesian Tales, revealing another crack in his dignified self-fashioning.

²⁵ 'Sine cura sis' inquam. 'Modo corollarium idoneum compara.'

²⁶ A *corollarium* was originally a garland, later a tip or gratuity; cf. *GCA* (2001), 328-329.

Thelyphron spends a long night with the dead man trying to stay awake and ultimately failing. He awakens the next day to find with relief that the corpse is still whole. The widow repays him her thanks and the agreed sum. Thelyphron finds the gold coins so beguiling that he cheerfully offers similar aid in the future: “as often as you desire my services, command me with confidence” (*Met.* 2.26).²⁷ The widow’s servants beat Thelyphron and throw him out of the house, cursing his words as an evil omen since they suggest that the widow will need him to guard more dead husbands in the future. At last, Thelyphron recognizes his own foolishness. He acknowledges that he fully deserved to be beaten for his “unlucky and thoughtless speech” (*Met.* 2.27).²⁸ In multiple instances in his own narrative, Thelyphron exhibits an inability to speak appropriately in various social contexts. His bumbling foolishness and the beating he receives for it (from the widow’s slaves, no less!) reveal him to be closer to the *stupidus* of mime than the elevated *persona* of an orator.

While Thelyphron lies recovering in the alley, the funeral procession begins (*Met.* 2.27). The dead man’s uncle interrupts the proceedings to claim that the widow actually murdered her husband to steal his money and please her lover. The uncle has commissioned an Egyptian priest to reanimate the corpse so he can testify to wife’s adultery and his murder. To prove his credibility, the corpse relates the true events of the previous evening, to which he was the sole witness. Witches attacked the room and cast a sleeping spell on Thelyphron before summoning the dead man by name. As it happens,

²⁷ ‘...*quotiens operam nostram desiderabis, fidenter impera.*’

²⁸ ...*infausti atque improvidi sermonis mei...*

the dead man's name was also Thelyphron, but since the living Thelyphron was closer to consciousness, he came to the door first. The witches cut off his nose and ears, replacing them with wax replicas. At this point, the living Thelyphron touches his own nose and ears, which fall off while the crowd laughs derisively. Mutilated and humiliated, he exiles himself to Hypata, where he has become an eternally entertaining spectacle for Byrrhena and her guests.

Thelyphron suffers an irreversible loss of status after his public revelation as a dupe and laughingstock. His deformity, revealed to the reader only at the end of his tale, makes him a social pariah and a spectacle not only for the people of Larissa but also for Byrrhena's dinner guests.²⁹ Maud Gleason sheds further light on Thelyphron's loss of status through her explanation of a puzzling detail of his narrative: the corpse, to prove his veracity, reveals a truth completely unrelated to the murder, that is, Thelyphron's secret mutilation.³⁰ Gleason compares Thelyphron's disfigurement to the common practice of torturing a confession out of a slave during a trial: "Like a slave witness in a criminal trial, his body's mutilation attests another man's truth."³¹ Thelyphron is like a slave in his mutilation and especially in the use of that mutilation to prove the truth of the dead Thelyphron's story.

²⁹ Having one's nose or nose and ears cut off was a punishment for various crimes, most notably adultery (cf. Martial 2.83, 3.85). Thelyphron's mutilation, in addition to being physically unattractive, would thus suggest to others that he had committed some crime (Ingenkamp (1972), 338-340). Artemidorus links dreaming that one has no nose with death, since skulls do not have noses (*On.* 4.27). The living Thelyphron has his own nose removed when the witches mistake him for the dead Thelyphron. He exiles himself to Thessaly in a sort of social death.

³⁰ Gleason (1999). Van Mal-Maeder suggests that Thelyphron is living proof of the corpse's omniscience (*GCA* (2001), 385). This seems to me a case of superior knowledge rather than omniscience; the dead man himself was in the room when the witches cut off Thelyphron's nose and ears.

³¹ Gleason (1999), 295.

The failure of Thelyphron's self-fashioning is notably due to both internal and external forces. He fails to preserve his original, projected identity as a dignified orator, but his audience also knows from the beginning that this identity is false. Imbalances of knowledge abound: the dinner guests' and second-time reader's superior knowledge about Thelyphron, Lucius and the first-time reader's inferior knowledge, and the dead Thelyphron's superior knowledge about what has happened to the living Thelyphron. Through his narrative of his own foolish speech and actions, Thelyphron enacts his public humiliation over and over again for the entertainment of others. In the process, he undermines his initial self-fashioning as a dignified orator, replacing it with an image of himself as a comic or mimic buffoon. His tale is welcomed not with praise or applause, but with laughter, marking his exclusion from the community and the dissonance between his self-image and reality.

Lucius at the Festival of Laughter

Thelyphron's public humiliation presages Lucius' similar experiences during the Festival of Laughter in Book 3. The morning after Byrrhena's dinner party, Lucius is brought to trial for the murder of three young men, a murder he is convinced he committed. Despite a polished defense speech attesting his elite education and status, Lucius is pronounced guilty and threatened with torture and execution. At the last minute, the trial and murder itself are revealed to be an elaborate joke, a celebration in honor of

Hypata's unique deity Laughter.³² Although the magistrates of Hypata offer Lucius praise and civic honors for his starring - if unwitting - role in the festival, he feels a continued sense of shame as a spectacle and object of laughter. The circumstances of Lucius' trial and the causes of his failed defense speech are the focus of this section.

The Risus Festival or Festival of the god of Laughter is one of the most written-about episodes in the novel, after the Tale of Cupid and Psyche and Lucius' initiations in Book 11. Although a few ancient authors make brief references to a deified personification of Laughter, Apuleius seems to have invented the festival itself wholesale.³³ Scholars have offered numerous interpretations for the ritual, drawing on diverse approaches from the history of religion, anthropology, and sociology.³⁴ My own analysis of Lucius' trial draws in particular on the anthropologically and sociologically oriented studies of Thomas Habinek, Donald Lateiner, and Stavros Frangoulidis. Each argues for a similar reading of the Festival of Laughter as a ritual of community that constructs group identity through the exclusion or inclusion of outsiders.³⁵ Habinek interprets the Festival of Laughter as a religious, scapegoat ritual, but posits it as one of

³² Byrrhena claims that the Hypatans alone worship the god of Laughter with an annual festival (*Met.* 2.31).

³³ Plutarch mentions a statue and sanctuary of Gelos (Greek for "Laughter") at Sparta (*Lyc.* 25.2, *Cleo.* 9.1) and Philostratos cites Gelos as a member of Dionysos' retinue on Andros (*Imag.* 1.25). Aulus Gellius quotes an epitaph for the Roman comedian Plautus that describes Laughter and Comedy mourning his death (*Noct. Att.* 1.24.3). No ancient festivals of Laughter are attested, but Apuleius' festival bears some resemblance to the Roman *Hilaria* of Cybele, the *Hilaria* of Isis, the Athenian *Thargelia*, and other festivals like the *Liberalia* and *Lupercalia* in which laughter played a prominent role. Cf. van der Paardt (1971), 2-3, 89; Grimal (1972), 459-463; Bartalucci (1988), 52-53; Milanezi (1992), 127-131; May (2006), 187-188.

³⁴ History of religion: Grimal (1972); Bartalucci (1988); Milanezi (1992); McCreight (1993). Anthropology and sociology: Robertson (1919); Habinek (1990); Lateiner (2001); Frangoulidis (2002a), which is a slightly revised version of the chapter "The Laughter Festival as a Community Integration Rite" in Frangoulidis (2001).

³⁵ May also views the Festival of Laughter as concerned with Lucius' place within the community. She points to laughter as a sign of social inclusion or exclusion depending on whether one is laughing or being laughed at (May (2006), 76, 191-192).

three “rituals of community identity” in the novel.³⁶ Each of Habinek’s festivals establishes community identity through the exclusion of outsiders, reaffirming the boundaries between “inside and outside” and “belonging and not belonging.”³⁷ Lucius as scapegoat or *pharmakos* remains an outsider as both man and ass until his (uneasy) integration into the cult of Isis in Book 11. Lateiner argues for a similarly pessimistic interpretation of the festival. He describes Lucius’ frozen, speechless reaction to his humiliation as a “social death,” a traumatic loss of dignity and social status that can never be restored.³⁸

Frangoulidis argues more optimistically that the festival is not a scapegoat ritual - a ritual of exclusion - but a community integration ritual. In his view, Lucius’ performance is a *dokimasia*, a trial of worthiness in a rite of passage.³⁹ This performance is ultimately successful in the eyes of Lucius’ Hypatan audience if not his own. The magistrates of Hypata offer to inscribe him as patron of the city and build him an honorary statue, symbolically offering him the opportunity for community integration. Lucius refuses their offer, perceiving himself humiliated rather than honored. His rejection of the Hypatan community ultimately leads to his transformation into an ass and his displacement from his high social status and the town of Hypata.⁴⁰

³⁶ These are the Festival of Laughter in Book 3, the Corinthian games in Book 10, and the Festival of Isis at Cenchræe in Book 11. Habinek argues that these festivals punctuate Victor Turner’s three stages of a rite of passage: 1) detachment from the community; 2) a liminal period; and 3) reaggregation or reincorporation into the community (Habinek (1990), 51-53).

³⁷ Habinek (1990), 53.

³⁸ Social death: Lateiner (2001), 231, 241. Irreversible loss of status: 250.

³⁹ Frangoulidis (2002a), 177, 179.

⁴⁰ Frangoulidis (2002a), 184, 187.

Drawing on Habinek, Lateiner, and Frangoulidis' interpretations, I argue that the Festival of Laughter is a trial of identity for Lucius. The speeches for the prosecution and defense focus less on his crime than on his status within the community: is he a respectable, elite guest or an untrustworthy foreigner? Despite Lucius' verbal self-fashioning as a worthy member of the community, he is treated not as the highborn Roman citizen he presents himself as, but as a common criminal.⁴¹ Like Thelyphron, his elite image of himself is undermined by his own words and actions, casting doubt on his purported status and identity. His resulting humiliation and loss of face prefigure his metamorphosis into an ass, when he is stripped completely of status, identity, and speech and displaced from the human community as a whole.⁴²

Lucius' ordeal begins the night before his trial, while he is returning from Byrrhena's dinner party. Drunk and in the dark, accompanied only by his slave, he sees three men attacking Milo's door. Thinking them to be robbers, he draws his sword and slays all three (*Met.* 2.32). In the morning, he awakens wracked with guilt, certain that he will be charged with murder (*Met.* 3.1). Immediately, the magistrates of Hypata enter the

⁴¹ Apuleius does not state outright that Lucius is a Roman citizen. Lucius in the *Metamorphoses* is in fact more Greek than Lucius in the *Onos*. In the *Onos*, Lucius says he and his brother Gaius share their last two names with their father, indicating that all three have the Roman *tria nomina* (*Onos* 55); cf. Swain (2001), 61. In the *Metamorphoses*, Lucius' mother Salvia has a common Roman name, but his father's name is given as Theseus (2.2, 1.23). For contrasting views of Lucius' citizenship in the *Metamorphoses*, see Mason (1983), 135 n. 4; Summers (1967), 131-132, 135, 145-146; (1970), 520. Baker points out that in the second half of the second century, only a few decades before the 212 CE *Constitutio Antoniniana* of Caracalla granted universal Roman citizenship, socioeconomic status mattered more than citizenship (Baker (2011), 63-65). Lucius is clearly of the *honestiores*, the upper classes, rather than the *humiliores*, the lower classes. For the status and privileges of the *honestiores*, see Garnsey (1970), 221-258. For Lucius as a Greek aristocrat, see Harrison (2000), 215-216; *GCA* (2007), 395.

⁴² See Chapter Three on Lucius' metamorphosis as a loss of status. On the Festival of Laughter as foreshadowing Lucius' metamorphosis and salvation, cf. Grimal (1972), 464-465; Bartalucci (1988), 60; van der Paardt (1990), 39; Milanezi (1992), 139, 147; McCreight (1993), 49-50 with n. 134, 56-57; Frangoulidis (2002a), 187. For Lucius' spatial displacement in the novel, see Slater (2002).

house and arrest Lucius, leading him through the city among crowds of people who are - bewilderingly - laughing. They arrive at the forum and tribunal, but the trial is moved to the theater by the demand of the growing crowd (*Met.* 3.2). With this act, the trial becomes a spectacle and the crowd becomes an audience and gains control of the proceedings. Although it was not unusual for a trial to take place in a theater, the setting is generically suggestive.⁴³ As we shall see, Lucius' trial is in fact a comedy, with the humor provided by the false speeches of all involved.

It is clear from the beginning of the trial that the verdict hangs less on the facts than it does on the status and identity of the prosecutor and especially the defendant.⁴⁴ The prosecution opens with a speech by the leader of the night watchmen, who claims to be an eyewitness to the murders. His speech is textbook Roman prosecution: an *exordium*, *narratio*, and *peroratio* delivered with all the rhetorical flourishes.⁴⁵ He addresses the citizens of Hypata by the archaic name for Roman citizens, *Quirites*, which serves as a marker of group identity throughout this episode.⁴⁶ He verbally establishes his own identity as commander of the night watch, a trustworthy member of the community.

⁴³ On the generic significance of the trial's location, see Finkelpearl (1998), 88; May (2006), 192-195. Ancient theaters were polyvalent gathering spaces for the community.

⁴⁴ Proof of guilt and innocence in ancient trials was regularly sought in the characters and/or social statuses of the plaintiff and defendant; cf. Quin. 5.10.24-9. At the end of the Greek *Onos*, Lucius proves his veracity to the governor of Macedonia by providing nothing more than his name. The governor knows his family and exclaims, "I know you are not lying if you are their son!" *καὶ ἐπίσταμαι ὅτι οὐδὲν ψεύδη παῖς ἐκείνων ὄν* (*Onos* 55).

⁴⁵ Cf. van der Paardt (1971), 46; Frangoulidis (2002a), 181. For the legal terminology in this scene, see Summers (1967), 135-147; (1970), 518 n. 20. For the legal verisimilitude of the trial, see Summers (1967), 125-133; (1970), 513-515, 517-521.

⁴⁶ Baker documents the history of the word *Quirites* and demonstrates that it is a marker of inclusion/exclusion throughout the novel (Baker (2011), 57-72). The citizens of Hypata were certainly not all Roman citizens at this time; for the first known grant of citizenship at Hypata, in the reign of Domitian, see Summers (1970), 520 n. 5.

Finally, he begins his *narratio* or account of events by asserting that he will “faithfully report the facts of what happened last night” (*Met.* 3.3).⁴⁷ We later learn that he is in fact lying. He graphically describes Lucius as a savage murderer and ends his speech with this damning accusation:⁴⁸

“So you have a defendant stained with numerous murders, a defendant caught in the act, a defendant who is...a foreigner. So firmly pass a sentence on an outsider for a crime which you would severely punish even in the case of your fellow-citizen.” (*Met.* 3.3)⁴⁹

The tricolon decrescendo and anaphora of “defendant,” *reum*, in the first sentence emphasize the real focus of the trial: Lucius’ status and identity. The prosecutor never refers to Lucius by name, identifying him only by the exclusionary labels of “foreigner,” *peregrinum*, and “outsider,” *alienum*. Although Lucius had previously been welcomed to Hypata as a guest of its citizen Milo (*Met.* 1.22), as an old school-fellow of the market aedile Pythias (*Met.* 1.24), and as a dear relative of the respected *matrona* Byrrhena (*Met.* 2.3), the prosecutor’s speech elides his high status and personal connections and excludes him from the community.

Lucius’ defense speech responds to the prosecutor’s challenges to his identity and social status. He aims to replace the prosecutor’s negative image of him with a positive one of his own making. He delivers his defense in an equally high rhetorical style, with

⁴⁷ *‘Rem denique ipsam et quae nocte gesta sunt cum fide perferam.’*

⁴⁸ Lucius as a murderer: “...I see that extraordinarily cruel young man with sword drawn busy with slaughter everywhere, and three already extinguished by his savagery still breathing at his feet, their bodies convulsing in pools of blood,” “...*conspicio istum crudelissimum iuvenum mucrone dextrico passim caedibus operantem, iamque tris numero saevitia eius interemptos ante pedes ipsius spirantes adhuc, corporibus in multo sanguine palpitantes*’ (*Met.* 3.3).

⁴⁹ *‘Habetis itaque reum tot caedibus impiatum, reum coram deprensum, reum peregrinum. Constanter itaque in hominem alienum ferte sententias de eo crimine quod etiam in vestrum civem severiter vindicaretis.’*

carefully crafted *exordium*, *narratio*, and proofs.⁵⁰ After a moment of restrained weeping - the standard *miseratio* to drum up the audience's pity - he argues that his actions were both accidental and justifiable.⁵¹ In his own *narratio*, he impersonates the dead men using the popular rhetorical device of *prosopopoeia*.⁵² By relating the dead men's speech word-for-word, he reveals them - or rather, allows them to reveal themselves - as murderous robbers (*Met.* 3.5). He calls them not only *latrones*, "robbers" or "violent men," but also "barbarians," *illi barbari*, and "monstrous men," *immanes homines*, representing them as creatures outside the bounds of civilization (*Met.* 3.5). His own actions were self-defense: he had only a little sword, a *gladiolo*, and the robbers attacked first. Furthermore, while he defended himself with his sword like a civilized man, the robbers attacked like barbarians or animals. One tried to smash his head in with a stone, one bit his leg, and the third recklessly ran straight onto his blade (*Met.* 3.6). Throughout his *narratio*, Lucius contrasts the violent and barbarous actions of the robbers with his own noble, civilized character and deeds.⁵³

Lucius takes every opportunity in his speech to highlight his fine character, high social status, and standing within the community. He declares that he is a guest "at the

⁵⁰ Cf. van der Paardt (1971), 63-4. Van der Paardt refers to this speech as the *apologia parva*, alluding to Apuleius' own defense against in his *Apology*.

⁵¹ *Miseratio*: van der Paardt (1971), 49. Justifiable: "...because of the accidental outcome of reasonable indignation I am suffering such a hateful accusation to no purpose," *...sed rationabilis indignationis eventu fortuito tantam criminis invidiam frustra sustinere* (*Met.* 3.4).

⁵² Cf. *Quin.* 6.1.25-26.

⁵³ Lucius' *narratio* draws on the language of Roman epic (Finkelpearl (1998), 87-88). It is also full of military terminology: "battle-lines" (*proelialis acies*), "their general and standard bearer" (*ipse dux et signifer*). As with the robbers' speech in Books 4-7, Lucius intends his epic, military language to heighten the perceived importance of the event and his own role in it.

home of your good fellow-citizen Milo” (Met. 3.5).⁵⁴ He addresses the audience as *Quirites*, appropriating the prosecutor’s language to include himself within the Hypatan community.⁵⁵ He claims that he approached the robbers out of fear for his host and himself and because it was “the duty of a good citizen” (Met. 3.5).⁵⁶ Finally, he re-presents himself in direct opposition to the prosecutor’s final words:

“Thus, with peace restored and the home of my hosts as well as the safety of the community protected, I believed that I would be not only unpunished but in truth even praiseworthy in the eyes of the public!” (Met. 3.6)⁵⁷

Lucius recasts himself not as an outsider or murderer, but as a worthy member of the community who sought only to protect his hosts and the public. He counters the prosecutor’s speech by verbally including himself in the Hypatan community. He draws a contrast between himself and the men he killed - the true murderers, outsiders, and barbarians. After a final tearful appeal to the Hypatans and the gods, he glances up at last to check the audience’s reaction: everyone, even Milo, is united against him in raucous laughter. Once again, the mocking laughter of the crowd signals the failure and exclusion of the speaker.

Lucius’ self-defense fails despite his structured speech, polished eloquence, and masterful use of rhetorical devices like *prosopopoeia*. The magistrates declare him guilty, disregarding not only his fine speech but also his high status. Since his slave cannot be

⁵⁴ ‘...ad bonum autem Milonem civem vestrum...

⁵⁵ Cf. Baker (2011), 70-72.

⁵⁶ ‘...boni civis officium...’ Van der Paardt claims that Lucius’ goal is to prove that, “though a *peregrinus*, he behaved himself like a *civis*” (van der Paardt (1971), 57). I argue that Lucius is actually attempting to portray himself as a citizen.

⁵⁷ ‘Sic pace vindicata domoque hospitum ac salute communi protecta, non tam impunem me, verum etiam laudabilem publice credebam fore...’

found, they threaten to wrest from *him* the names of his supposed accomplices through torture (*Met.* 3.8). While torturing slaves for evidence was standard practice, as it was believed that they would tell the truth only under physical duress, exemption from corporal punishment was one of the privileges of Roman citizenship. By the second century C.E., citizenship had become a less significant legal distinction than it had been in the Republic and early Principate. Members of the lower classes or *humiliores* might be beaten even if they boasted Roman citizen status. Members of the upper classes or *honestiores*, however, remained exempt from physical penalties.⁵⁸ The threat of torture denies Lucius the noble status he claimed in his speech. Furthermore, although the magistrates do not state the penalty for Lucius' crime, an old woman calling for his punishment assumes he will be crucified (*Met.* 3.9), an unheard-of sentence for a highborn Roman citizen.⁵⁹ Although Lucius presents himself in his defense speech as an educated, elite, and worthy member of the community, he is treated neither as a Roman citizen nor as an aristocrat, but as a common criminal and a stand-in for his slave.

Just as the wheel and whips are brought in, the magistrates order Lucius to uncover the shrouded bodies of the murdered men that have been lying on display in the theater throughout the trial. Although he resists, the lictors force his hand: “And finally **beating** my hand away from my side, they extended it to its own destruction above the corpses” (*Met.* 3.9).⁶⁰ Various emendations have been suggested for *tudentes*, which is

⁵⁸ Cf. Summers (1967), 144-145; (1970), 520; Walters (1997), 37-38; Edwards (1997), 74; Turpin (2002), 25.

⁵⁹ Crucifixion is a symbol of lost status in the Greek novels; cf. Habrocomes' crucifixion in Xen. Eph. 4.2.

⁶⁰ *Manum denique ipsam e regione lateris tudentes in exitium suum super ipsa cadavera porrigunt.*

a forceful word meaning “to strike with repeated blows,” “to beat.”⁶¹ Gruter proposed *tendentēs*, “stretching my hand.”⁶² More commonly accepted is Helm’s *trudentēs*, “pushing my hand,” which Robertson also accepts.⁶³ Giarratano, van der Paardt, Hanson, Turpin, and Zimmerman all preserve the manuscript reading *tudentēs*, “beating” or “knocking.”⁶⁴ Although Turpin and van der Paardt both note the unusual strength of the word in their commentaries, neither comments its social implications for Lucius in this scene. I argue that *tudentēs* should be understood with its full force: Lucius is physically struck by the lictors despite the high status he claims in his defense speech. While previously he was threatened with torture and crucifixion, it is at this moment that he is physically treated as a slave, a being without status, agency, or physical control over his own body. He yields to the lictors with the verb *succumbo*, which implies submission or physically lowering oneself, as of a woman to a man or a pack animal to a heavy load.⁶⁵ Lucius’ loss of bodily agency and social status during the Festival of Laughter foreshadows his impending metamorphosis into an enslaved beast of burden.⁶⁶

At this, his lowest moment, Lucius’ fortunes are suddenly reversed: what he is forced to uncover are not murdered bodies, but slashed wineskins (*Met.* 3.9).⁶⁷ While the

⁶¹ *OLD*, “tundo.”

⁶² Gruter in van der Paardt (1971), 80.

⁶³ Helm (1931), 58; Robertson (1940), 67.

⁶⁴ Giarratano (1929), 64; van der Paardt (1971), 79-80 (“knocking my hand”); Hanson (1989), 142-143 (“they knocked my hand”); Turpin (2002), 26 (“they pushed his hand by assailing it with blows”); Zimmerman (2012), 54.

⁶⁵ *OLD*, “succumbo.”

⁶⁶ Lucius is beaten by almost every master who owns him. The verb *tundo* reappears in some of these episodes: cf. *Met.* 6.25. In Chapter Three, I discuss Lucius’ failures to defend himself both physically and verbally in his human interactions with Milo and his animal interactions with his various masters.

⁶⁷ Literary precedents for the slain wineskins include Aristophanes’ *Thesmophorizousai* (cf. Milanezi (1992), 144-146; May (2006), 195-196) and a proverb attested in Petronius’ *Satyricon* that refers to

crowd again roars with laughter, Lucius is silent, the eloquence he displayed during his defense gone. He remains frozen on stage until Milo physically drags him home, highlighting again his loss of physical agency.⁶⁸ The magistrates arrive soon after to apologize and thank Lucius for his unwitting role in their annual worship of the god of Laughter. At last, they acknowledge his good family and high status, announcing that the town has decided to make him its patron and erect a bronze statue in his honor. Lucius refuses. Though he modestly thanks them, he regards the entire experience as a permanent blow to his status. He goes so far as to call it *iniuria* (*Met.* 3.10), a term that can mean simply “insult” or “injury” but refers in Roman law to both physical assaults and the defamation of a person’s reputation.⁶⁹

Why does Lucius’ self-presentation fail during his trial? He defends himself in court as an elite man should, with an accomplished speech that attests to his education and legal knowledge. He asserts his noble status and importance within the community of Hypata. What he lacks, however, is knowledge of the true circumstances of the trial. The audience knows from the beginning that Lucius’ explanation of events is a lie. It also notably differs from both the prosecutor’s *narratio* and his own experiences the previous evening (*Met.* 2.32). The audience also knows that the prosecutor is lying as part of the act. Their superior knowledge that the murder never actually occurred allows them to see

drunken men as “walking wineskins” (cf. Grimal (1972), 457-458; Milanezi (1992), 141-142). For other examples, see Milanezi (1992), 143.

⁶⁸ See my discussion of the legal term *iniecta manu* in Chapter Three.

⁶⁹ Summers (1967), 147-148. Lucius experiences both a physical attack and a loss of reputation at his trial.

through the mask of Lucius' false speech and self-presentation. Their mocking laughter reveals that they, not Lucius, have been in control all along.⁷⁰

Despite Lucius' self-fashioning as a polished orator, the audience, who already knows the punch line of the joke, sees him as a comic actor performing for their amusement. When the magistrates offer Lucius civic honors, they also promise that Laughter "will propitiously and affectionately accompany his agent and **actor** everywhere" (*Met.* 3.11).⁷¹ Although the word *actor* may indicate not only a stage actor but more generally one who speaks, performs, or enacts something, it is evocative in the context of Lucius' unwitting performance during the Festival of Laughter.⁷² Lucius' lies, as obvious to his knowledgeable audience as the prosecutor's, bring him closer to an actor's dissembling than an orator's truthful manipulation of the crowd.⁷³ As in the case of Thelyphron, Lucius' humiliation is the product of both internal flaws and external forces.⁷⁴ His inability to read the audience's expectations, his use of lies rather than true knowledge, and especially his loss of control over the public reception of his self-presentation causes the failure of his speech during the Festival of Laughter. His loss of

⁷⁰ The audience's knowledge is superior to both Lucius' and the first-time reader's. The first-time reader thus experiences Lucius' exclusion and disempowerment. We must remember, however, that Lucius *auctor* ultimately controls the narrative; cf. May (2006), 206. See also Chapters Four and Five.

⁷¹ *Iste deus auctorem et actorem suum propitios ubique comitabitur amanter...*

⁷² *OLD*, "actor." For the word as a signifier of dramatic intertexts in this episode, see May (2006), 205.

⁷³ On Lucius as an involuntary actor, see Milanezi (1992), 136; Frangoulidis (2001), 51.

⁷⁴ Cf. McCreight (1993), 50-51 with n. 134. For parallels between Lucius and Thelyphron, see Shumate (1996), 82-84; *GCA* (2001), 421-422. Lucius tacitly acknowledges the similarities: when Byrrhena invites him to dinner again after the Festival of Laughter, he refuses, "dreading her house and recoiling in terror even at a distance," *...formidans et procul perhorrescens etiam ipsam domum eius...* (*Met.* 3.12). Doubtless he fears that he, like Thelyphron, will have to reenact his humiliation for the entertainment of Byrrhena's guests. Lucius' humiliation also parallels that of Diophanes, whose loss of reputation, however, stems solely from his own careless speech; cf. *GCA* (2001), 13, 229; May (2006), 191.

face leads him towards the even greater degradation and loss of status he experiences through his transformation into an ass.⁷⁵

In the end, however, true knowledge of the Festival of Laughter is possessed not by the audience but by Lucius. After his trial, Milo's maidservant and Lucius' lover Photis confesses to her secret role in the drama: her mistress Pamphile is a witch, and the wineskins were magically animated by a love spell gone wrong (*Met.* 3.13-19). This revelation comforts Lucius where the magistrates' offers of a statue and civic honors did not, for now *he* possesses a superior knowledge of the truth. It is perhaps even more powerful because it is a secret. Through Lucius the narrator, the reader of the novel is also privy to the secret and is thus encouraged to accept Lucius' final version of the story as the truth.⁷⁶ Possession of superior knowledge remains the key to success even during the Festival of Laughter, where true and false change places so many times that truth itself becomes elusive.⁷⁷

The Wise Physician of Apuleius' *Phaedra*

In the sea of failures in speech and self-presentation that run throughout the *Metamorphoses*, there is a single example of success: the wise physician of the so-called *Phaedra* episode, the first of the paired tales of murderesses in Book 10. Shortly after

⁷⁵ See Chapter Three. See also James and O'Brien (2006), who argue that Lucius' metamorphosis represents an attempt to recover his lost dignity.

⁷⁶ See Chapter Four.

⁷⁷ "Reason and logic are no longer adequate tools for finding the truth. The 'truth' in the Risus episode is dependent finally on a leap of faith into what most would call manifestly fictional: magic" (Finkelpearl (1998), 90). On the elusiveness of true knowledge in the novel, see also Shumate (1996), 54.

Lucius' master the market gardener is arrested, the arrogant Roman soldier takes possession of the ass. They travel to a new town where Lucius learns of the events he relates in *Met.* 10.2-12. To give a very brief summary: a stepson rejects his stepmother's amorous advances; in retaliation and with the help of her slave, she tries to poison her stepson but instead accidentally kills her own son. She accuses the stepson of poisoning her son, his half-brother. The young man is called to trial and almost convicted. Thanks to the last-minute testimony of a wise physician, the truth emerges. The stepson is declared innocent, the stepmother and her slave are rightfully convicted, and the younger son is found to be not dead but in a drugged sleep. The sorrowing father is reunited with both of his sons and the wise physician is rewarded for his role in the trial.

The tale of the stepmother's lust, her stepson's rejection, and her false accusations would have been quite familiar to a Greek and Roman audience, who would have immediately recognized the story of Phaedra and Hippolytus. The myth was frequently reproduced on the tragic stage, most notably in Euripides' *Hippolytos Stephanephoros* and lost *Hippolytos Kalyptomenos*, Sophocles' *Phaedra* (only a few fragments are extant), and Seneca's *Phaedra*.⁷⁸ Ovid's *Heroides* 4 relates the tale in epistolary elegy as a letter from Phaedra to Hippolytus. The Phaedra motif - the plot of a stepmother's acts of attempted adultery and murder - also appears frequently in mime and popular

⁷⁸ Cf. *GCA* (2000), 418-427; May (2006), 270-275.

literature, including several Greek novels.⁷⁹ Finally, wicked stepmothers were a common theme of Roman rhetorical declamations.⁸⁰

Apuleius' version of the Phaedra tale draws to a certain extent on all of these traditions.⁸¹ The introduction explicitly signals the tale's literary nature. Lucius begins: "Several days later, in that very place, I recall, a wicked and abominable crime was revealed; but, so that you too may read it, I am putting it forward in my book" (*Met.* 10.2).⁸² He even gives the genre of his tale: "Now then, most excellent reader, know that you are reading a tragedy, not a light tale, and you are rising from the comic slipper to the high boot of tragedy" (*Met.* 10.2).⁸³ Apuleius alludes to the well-known tragic versions of the tale, most notably Seneca's *Phaedra*.⁸⁴ While the allusion acknowledges the tale's literary ancestors, it is misleading when it comes to the outcome of the tale itself. Several scholars have noted a shift or "metamorphosis" of genres in the middle of the tale from tragedy and declamation to mime and romance.⁸⁵ The narrator's introduction directs the reader's expectations in one generic direction only to subvert them later. The shift is not

⁷⁹ Mimic versions include Decimus Laberius' *Belonistria* and the *Moicheutria* or "Adultery Mime" (P. Oxy. III 413); cf. *GCA* (2000), 424-425. For the Greek novels, see Xen. *Eph.* 2.3-7 (Manto and Habrocomes) and Hel. *Eth.* 1.9-11 (Knemon and Demainete). The related tale of Joseph and Potiphar's wife (*Gen.* 39) was also retold in the Roman period by Philo of Alexandria (*Peri Iōsēph* 40-53) and Josephus (*AJ* 2.39-59); cf. *GCA* (2000), 422-423.

⁸⁰ As in Sen. *Con.* 6.7. Cf. *GCA* (2000), 426.

⁸¹ On Apuleius' *Phaedra* and the murderess tales generally, see Finkelppearl (1998), 149-183; Zimmerman (1999); *GCA* (2000), 417-434, 440-444; Frangoulidis (2001), 119-127; May (2006), 270-294.

⁸² *Post dies plusculos ibidem dissignatum scelestum ac nefarium facinus memini, sed ut vos etiam legatis, ad librum profero.* Zimmerman points out the unusual nature of this introduction within the *Metamorphoses*: it posits a written rather than an oral transmission of the tale (Zimmerman (1999), 122-123; *GCA* (2000), 59-61). See also Chapter Five.

⁸³ *Iam ergo, lector optime, scito te tragoediam, non fabulam legere et a socco ad cothurnum ascendere.*

⁸⁴ For Seneca as Apuleius' main dramatic source, see May (2006), 271-272. For allusions to Vergil, Ovid, and Seneca, see Finkelppearl (1998), 149, 152, 161.

⁸⁵ Zimmerman (1999), 123, 125-126; *GCA* (2000), 442-443; Frangoulidis (2001), 120; May (2006), 273-274. The phrase "metamorphosis or shift of genres" is May's (273).

so neat, however; genres are mingled throughout Apuleius' tale, which is as closely related to the popular adultery mime as it is to Seneca.⁸⁶ The trial scene in particular, with its dramatic surprises and carefully crafted speeches, presents an odd mix of the mimic and rhetorical. At the center of this generic confusion stands the wise physician. He rejects his expected role as the stock character of the unscrupulous doctor who will sell anyone deadly poison for the right amount of money.⁸⁷ Instead, he is instrumental in saving the lives of two innocent young men through his wise words and actions.

The stepson's trial is puzzling in many ways. It is rife with Roman legal language and procedural details, but some of these were no longer in use by Apuleius' time.⁸⁸ The procedure explicitly referred to in the text is not Roman, but that of "Attic law and the court of Mars" (*Met.* 10.7).⁸⁹ The allusion to the Athenian Areopagus evokes literary trial scenes like that of Orestes, most famously depicted in Aeschylus' *Eumenides*.⁹⁰ Despite its realistic legal details, this trial is a fantasy that draws on Roman law and literary precedent, including both tragedy and mime.⁹¹

Emotions are running high when the wise physician enters our tale at the end of the trial. The stepmother's slave is called to the stand and speaks so convincingly that all the town councilors are prepared to convict the young man and sentence him to death

⁸⁶ Cf. Kehoe (1984), 104.

⁸⁷ Cf. Zimmerman (1999), 123, 125-126; *GCA* (2000), 158, 442-443; May (2006), 274.

⁸⁸ Unlike Lucius' trial at the Festival of Laughter this is not a *quaestio* conducted by a magistrate, but a trial by jury. During the High Roman Empire, the provincial governor was in charge of trials involving capital punishment. A trial by a jury of councilors was possible during the Republic and is mentioned in Augustus' Cyrene Decrees (Summers (1967), 321-322). Summers argues that while the circumstances surrounding the trial and the terminology used are in keeping with contemporary Roman law, the procedure itself is not (Summers (1970), 528).

⁸⁹ *...exemplo legis Atticae Martiique iudicii...*

⁹⁰ Cf. *GCA* (2000), 138-139.

⁹¹ Cf. Summers (1970), 529.

(*Met.* 10.7-8). Just as the votes are about to be cast, one of the council members interrupts the proceedings. He is introduced as “one of the older members of the council, above all others in proven honesty and exceptional authority, a physician...” (*Met.* 10.8).⁹² We are primed by the narrator’s description to believe the physician’s testimony despite the stepmother’s slave’s attempts to paint him as the stereotypically unscrupulous doctor.⁹³ On the other hand, the novel as a whole has conditioned us to beware initial characterizations, which are frequently false; we have only to look at the Tale of Thelyphron and Lucius’ defense during the Festival of Laughter.

The physician’s first speech upholds his preliminary characterization. He interrupts the councilors’ votes to argue that the accusations against the young man are false:

“I myself cannot trample on my reverence of the gods, conceal my private knowledge, and pronounce a wrongful verdict. Therefore learn from me what the fact of the matter is.” (*Met.* 10.8)⁹⁴

The physician presents himself verbally as a devout and honest man. He claims that he has privileged knowledge concerning the case and cannot remain silent in the face of a patently wrongful verdict. He reveals that the stepmother’s slave bought the poison from *him*, ostensibly for the use of a sick man who wished to commit suicide. Observing the holes in the slave’s explanation, the physician suspected foul play. He convinced the slave to put the mark of his signet ring on the bag of gold provided as payment. When the slave took the witness stand, the physician recognized him and sent his servant to fetch

⁹² ...*unus e curia senior prae ceteris compertae fidei atque auctoritatis praecipuae medicus...*

⁹³ *GCA* (2000), 152-153.

⁹⁴ ‘*Ipse non possum calcata numinum religione conscientiam meam fallens perperam pronuntiare. Ergo ut res est de me cognoscite.*’ For *conscientiam* as “private knowledge,” see *GCA* (2000), 155.

the bag of gold. Since the bag has just arrived at court, the physician is able to prove that the slave, not the brother, purchased the poison (*Met.* 10.9).

The slave accuses the doctor of lying despite the proof of his own ring. He persists in this second round of accusations even under torture. The physician speaks again, declaring that he will prove his veracity by revealing another piece of privileged information to the audience. He was afraid that if he denied the slave poison he would only buy it elsewhere or resort to another means of murder. The drug that he sold the stepmother's slave, therefore, was only a sleeping potion. If this is the drug the half-brother took, he should soon awaken without harm (*Met.* 10.11). The entire court reconvenes at the younger brother's tomb, where they find him just waking up from his drugged sleep. The stepmother is exiled, the slave crucified, and the wise physician rewarded with the bag of gold for saving the lives of two young men - one from poison and one from wrongful execution (*Met.* 10.12).

The wise physician's speech and self-fashioning contrast sharply with Thelyphron's at Byrrhena's dinner party and Lucius' at the Festival of Laughter. Unlike Lucius and Thelyphron, the wise physician's verbal image of himself is a true representation of his character, identity, and status within the community. He does not conform to the generic expectations of the unscrupulous doctor, a popular literary stock character. Instead, he reveals himself to be an authoritative orator who speaks the truth for the good of his community. At the end of the trial, he is not displaced as Lucius and Thelyphron were, but praised and rewarded. His actions restore the integrity of the community by saving two of its innocent citizens, the stepson and his younger brother,

while removing unsavory elements, the stepmother and her lying slave. For once, law, order, and truth prevail.

As we saw in the case of Lucius and Thelyphron, the success or failure of an individual's public speech and self-presentation is dependent on both the speaker's internal merits and the external forces of the audience and circumstances. The wise physician has both internal and external factors on his side. He remains in control of the situation through his careful manipulation of the audience's expectations and beliefs. He claims a superior knowledge of the case that he judiciously disseminates for maximum effect. He speaks only the right words at the right moments, delaying his first speech until his slave arrives with the bag of gold as proof (*Met.* 10.9). The timing of his second revelation gives the drugged boy enough time to awaken and confirm the truth of his story (*Met.* 10.11).⁹⁵ The wise physician's superior knowledge of the truth, carefully controlled speech, and authentic self-fashioning allow him to succeed where Lucius and Thelyphron failed.

Truth and the Body

In each of the episodes I have discussed in this chapter, speech alone is an inadequate marker of truth. Truth is more often revealed physically, through bodies that have been altered by mutilation, torture, death, or resurrection. Maud Gleason, in her article "Truth Contests and Talking Corpses," discusses numerous examples of truth

⁹⁵ The doctor fears that he himself might be accused of murder if the boy is found dead (*GCA* (2000), 185).

proved through such altered bodies in literature, including the three episodes of the *Metamorphoses* I have discussed here.⁹⁶ Placing these “truth contests” in the broader context of the second to fourth century C.E. Roman Empire, she argues that these dead and mutilated bodies showcase the arbitrary nature of the Roman legal system and the power of the Roman state over its subjects.⁹⁷ Yet bodies prove as inadequate as words, for truth itself “is constructed by those who effectively wield power.”⁹⁸ The only truth available is that of those in power.

I would like to expand on Gleason’s argument to focus on the social power of individuals in the Tale of Thelyphron, the Festival of Laughter, and the *Phaedra* episode. Power is expressed through control over one’s own body as well as the bodies of others. Thelyphron and Lucius, for example, lose control of their bodies as well as their speech: Thelyphron is mutilated and Lucius is threatened with torture and crucifixion as well as physically struck by the lictors. Both resemble slaves in their loss of physical agency. The wise physician, however, controls the bodies of others: he puts the young boy into a drugged sleep and is thus able to almost “resurrect” him later. His success is charted through control of both speech and the body.

Finally, as Gleason notes, the link between the body and truth is highly unstable in the *Metamorphoses*.⁹⁹ During the Festival of Laughter, the revelation of the “dead bodies,” the wineskins, proves Lucius’ innocence, but it does not prove the truth. It is up to Photis to explain the secret, supernatural origins of the whole affair. The body that

⁹⁶ Gleason (1999): *Phaedra* episode: 288-289; Tale of Thelyphron: 294-295; Festival of Laughter: 295-297.

⁹⁷ Gleason (1999), 299-300, 306.

⁹⁸ Gleason (1999), 299.

⁹⁹ Gleason (1999), 288.

most successfully proves the truth is that of the drugged young boy. His body is notably not mutilated, tortured, or dead, but *intact*. It represents not only the preservation of the community, saved by the wise physician's timely words, but also an authentic and authoritative truth. Throughout the *Metamorphoses*, Lucius' transformation into an ass poses the question of whether the body can ever serve as a marker of the truth. The body of the young boy provides some hope of that.

Conclusion

This chapter began with the central question: when do public speech and self-presentation succeed and when do they fail? In the Tale of Thelyphron, Lucius' trial at the Festival of Laughter, and the wise physician's defense in the *Phaedra* episode, success and failure depend on both the internal qualities of the speaker and the external forces acting upon him, including the audience's perception. In each of these episodes, an imbalance of knowledge between speaker and audience creates an imbalance of power. A speaker fails when this imbalance favors the audience and when his verbal image of himself does not match his status and identity as perceived by his listeners. Lucius and Thelyphron undermine their elite self-portraits through their own narratives and actions. Both would-be orators come across as comic or mimic actors speaking for the amusement of their audiences. The wise physician succeeds because his speech and self-fashioning match his true status and identity. *He* has knowledge superior to that of his audience. The

expected stock character of the unscrupulous doctor becomes a wise orator who restores law and order through his authoritative, true words.

In each of these episodes, truth and power are tied to the physical realm through the display of mutilated, dead, or waking bodies. The need for signifiers of truth and control *beyond* words highlights the fallibility of speech as a marker of true status and identity, a theme that runs throughout the *Metamorphoses*. The body itself is an equally unstable marker. Yet the conclusion of the *Phaedra* episode in Book 10 points to the possibility of truth in the words of a good and wise orator. This orator succeeds through his control of his words, himself, his audience, and even the bodies of others. As I shall discuss in the next chapter, Lucius increasingly loses control of both speech and body in his interactions as a man and an ass. The Festival of Laughter turns out to be only the beginning of his humiliation and displacement.

This leaves us with one final question: how does a speaker gain the superior knowledge and control that differentiate success from failure? In the episodes I have discussed, superior knowledge is often a product of external rather than internal forces. For example, Lucius' lack of knowledge of the true circumstances of his trial during the Festival of Laughter cannot be said to be entirely his fault. Likewise, the wise physician's superior knowledge of the truth seems more happy coincidence than his own achievement; the stepmother's slave, after all, might have consulted a different physician. This external aspect is emphasized in both episodes. When Lucius reveals that the murdered men are actually wineskins, he exclaims, "What a sudden transformation of my

fortunes!” (*Met.* 3.9).¹⁰⁰ At the end of the *Phaedra* episode as well, the credit for the father’s recovery of both sons is transferred from the wise physician to good fortune: “And the famous and storied fortune of that old man received an ending worthy of divine providence...” (*Met.* 10.12).¹⁰¹ The *Metamorphoses* is in many ways about the struggle to access truth and control uncontrollable forces, symbolized by the blind *Fortuna* so prominent throughout the novel. In the next two chapters, I trace Lucius’ attempts to gain control and knowledge first by social means, through communication as both a man and an ass, then by supernatural means, through magic and finally initiation into the mysteries of Isis.

¹⁰⁰ *Quae fortunarum mearum repentina mutatio!*

¹⁰¹ *Et illius quidem senis famosa atque fabulosa fortuna providentiae divinae condignum accepit exitum...*
Cf. *GCA* (2000), 429.

CHAPTER THREE

Lucius' Speech and Self-Fashioning

Speech in the High Roman Empire was not only a tool of self-presentation, but also a medium for negotiating social relationships of status and power. Recent studies of the Second Sophistic have emphasized the importance of social networks and personal connections in the self-definition of both individuals and groups. These have focused primarily on the dynamics of an individual's inclusion or exclusion within a perceived community.¹ In this chapter, I examine social identity, inclusion, and exclusion on a micro scale, in the intimate interactions between individuals in Apuleius' *Metamorphoses*. I focus specifically on the protagonist Lucius' discursive negotiations of status and identity during his encounters with others as both a man and an ass. Lucius flexibly adapts his strategies of communication in an attempt to position himself along a sliding scale of social hierarchy and power. As I shall show, he is as unsuccessful at negotiating an elite identity in his private interactions as he is in his public defense speech at the Festival of Laughter.²

¹ Cf. Whitmarsh (2011), 140, 257; Eshleman (2012), esp. 2, 4, 23, 65. For the construction of identity in narrative, see Whitmarsh (2011); Graverini (2012).

² See Chapter Two.

In the previous chapter, I discussed failures in speech and self-presentation as a result of both internal and external factors, including a speaker's own verbal missteps and his audience's superior knowledge of the truth. In this chapter, I focus on Lucius' own flawed characterization as a source of dissonance between his internal identity and external appearance. Lucius is characterized not only through his speech but also through his physical appearance and his family, intellectual, and educational credentials. From his first appearance in the novel, each of these elements of his identity is open to multiple, conflicting interpretations.³ Cracks in his social mask reveal glimpses of his flawed inner character. In his interactions with others, Lucius' elite self-fashioning is consistently undermined by his lack of control over his own words, actions, and body.

Lucius' inability to control his speech and body is a central element of his characterization. We have already seen how Lucius' loss of bodily and verbal control during the Festival of Laughter is equated with a servile status. This is even more evident in his private interactions with his Hypatan host Milo and with his various masters as an ass. He frequently resembles the comic stock character of the parasite, readily adapting his speech and self-presentation to others' wishes in order to fulfill his own uncontrollable desires.⁴ In Lucius' case, these desires are not just for food but also for sex, magic, marvels, and stories.⁵ Self-control of one's physical senses and desires was considered one of the virtues that validated the power of the Greco-Roman elite. It

³ "Scrutinising Lucius, the reader is continually invited to make sense out of a variety of conflicting information about Lucius' character, his distinction, and the sincerity of his intentions" (*GCA* (2007), 49).

⁴ Cf. May (2006), 144-156, 330; *GCA* (2007), 30-33.

⁵ For Lucius' curiosity and obsession with magic, see Chapter Four.

differentiated them from the lower classes, slaves, and animals.⁶ Lucius' lack of control over his desires and the integrity of his human body bring him conceptually close to the enslaved animal he will become with his transformation into an ass.

Lucius remains sublimely unaware of his own character flaws through most of the *Metamorphoses*.⁷ His failures in speech and self-presentation as both a man and an ass reveal his inability to locate himself within the social structure. He cannot read the reality of his own social position in relation to others.⁸ His unstable speech reflects his unstable status. In his interactions with Milo, he frequently misspeaks, stutters, or falls silent. Milo is his first "master": Lucius' passivity and inability to assert himself verbally or physically in Milo's house prefigure his experiences as an ass. As an animal, Lucius is completely unable to speak. Nonetheless, he repeatedly - albeit unsuccessfully - tries to communicate with those around him using both verbal and nonverbal means. His communicative strategies differ according to the relative social statuses of his masters. With his lower-class masters, he tries to assert a superior status through human speech. With his upper-class masters, he seeks to ingratiate himself by braying and mimicking human gestures for their entertainment, acting like a model slave rather than an elite individual. His unsuccessful, asinine attempts at communication reveal his escalating lack of control and lack of awareness of the social position imposed by his animal body.

⁶ Cf. Edwards (1993), 190, 195-197. "Self-control legitimated the power of the elite in a way that wealth alone could never do" (197).

⁷ "...Lucius shows little inclination to engage in conscious or systematic ethical thought. His virtues as well as his vices are practiced out of habit" (Shumate (1996), 121).

⁸ For the connection between language, the body, and awareness of one's social position, see Bourdieu (1991), 81-89. "The sense of the value of one's linguistic products is a fundamental dimension of the sense of knowing the place which one occupies in the social space" (82). Lucius' mis-valuation of his linguistic products reveals the instability of his social position as both a man and an ass.

Apuleius' portrayal of the malleability and instability of discourse as a medium of self-fashioning and the negotiation of social status and identity is central to Lucius' unstable characterization as well as the novel's broader theme of transformation.

Lucius' Characterization

Lucius' characterization unfolds gradually. In the first two books of the *Metamorphoses*, we learn details of his family and social connections, his verbal self-fashioning as an intellectual, and his physical appearance. From the very first scene of the novel, each of these aspects of Lucius' character is called into question. This initial instability of speech, external appearance, and social credentials suggests Lucius' potential unreliability as a narrator and paves the way for his eventual metamorphosis.

Our first encounter with Lucius comes just after the prologue to the novel. Lucius, as first-person narrator, addresses his narrative to the reader.⁹ The first piece of information he gives is the elevated status of his family:

To Thessaly - for in that very place the foundations of my ancestry on my mother's side, springing from the renowned Plutarch and next from his nephew Sextus the philosopher, bring me glory - to this Thessaly I was headed on business. (*Met.* 1.2)¹⁰

Lucius associates himself by descent with the famous Greek philosophers Plutarch and Sextus of Chaeronea, who was the teacher of Marcus Aurelius and perhaps Apuleius

⁹ See Chapter Five

¹⁰ *Thessaliam - nam et illic originis maternae nostrae fundamenta a Plutarcho illo inclito ac mox Sexto philosopho nepote eius prodita gloriam nobis faciunt - eam Thessaliam ex negotio petebam.*

himself during his studies in Athens.¹¹ The family connection is mentioned again in Byrrhena's first conversation with Lucius in the streets of Hypata, when she comments on their shared descent from Plutarch (*Met.* 2.3).¹² Apuleius seems to have invented this aspect of Lucius' character rather than taking it from the lost Greek ass-story; there is no mention of Plutarch in the *Onos*. It is a significant part of Lucius' social identity in the *Metamorphoses*: he proclaims his elevated ancestry long before we even learn his name, which is finally revealed in *Met.* 1.24.

Lucius' claim to descent from Plutarch is the first element of his characterization that can be read in two opposing ways.¹³ On the one hand, a familial connection with Plutarch and Sextus brought a certain prestige in the second and third centuries C.E.¹⁴ Lucius' famous ancestry reveals his high social status, intellectual aspirations, and academic connections, suggesting affiliations with the Stoic and Platonic schools of philosophy.¹⁵ By advertising this connection, Lucius suggests that he himself is a privileged member of the elite and an aspiring intellectual.¹⁶ On the other hand, his claims to famous ancestry may not be entirely trustworthy: Sextus and Plutarch boasted hometowns in Boeotia, not Thessaly.¹⁷ From this initial introduction to Lucius through his own words, we his readers are left with a sense of dissonance between the image he

¹¹ Russell (2001), 6; *GCA* (2007), 95.

¹² See Scobie (1975), 77-8 on *Met.* 1.2 and *GCA* (2001), 83-4 on *Met.* 2.3.

¹³ I focus here on Lucius' use of descent from Plutarch to establish his social identity. For philosophical interpretations of the reference to Plutarch, see Chapter Four. See also Walsh (1981); Finkelparl (1998), 174-175; Hunink (2004); Keulen (2004).

¹⁴ Mason (1983), 138. See also *GCA* (2007), 94.

¹⁵ Walsh (1981), 22. See also Keulen (2004), 262; *GCA* (2007), 92-94.

¹⁶ Cf. Kirichenko (2008), 351.

¹⁷ Keulen (2004), 262; *GCA* (2007), 94.

projects of himself and the glimpses we catch of a very different identity underlying it. For the second-time reader of the novel, Lucius' relationship to Plutarch is particularly ironic given his numerous vices of gluttony, curiosity, lustfulness, and credulousness, many of which Plutarch sought to cure in his moral writings.¹⁸

Lucius' vices are soon on display. His first instances of direct speech in the novel also undermine his elevated social and intellectual claims. On the road to Hypata in Thessaly, he encounters two travelers involved in a heated debate. Eagerly straining his ears, Lucius overhears one accuse the other of lying. He interrupts to ask what they are talking about:

Having heard this, and thirsting in general for novelty, I said, "On the contrary, in truth, share your conversation with me; I am certainly not a curious man, but one who wishes to know everything, or at least most things. At the same time, the charming pleasure of stories will smooth out the roughness of the hill we are climbing." (*Met.* 1.2)¹⁹

With his first words, Lucius seeks to establish an image of himself as an open-minded intellectual. This image is immediately destabilized by the broader implications of his verbal self-definition. He introduces himself through a negative statement, denying that he is a "curious man." His words in indirect speech to the reader and direct speech to the travelers, however, reveal this very fault: "thirsting for novelty" and wanting to know "everything, or at least most things" are clear circumlocutions for inquisitiveness.

Through his denial, Lucius seeks to frame his nosiness as a laudable desire for

¹⁸ Cf. Keulen (2004), 262; *GCA* (2007), 28, 94; Graverini (2012), 141. For Lucius' curiosity, see Chapter Four.

¹⁹ *Isto accepto, sititor alioquin novitatis, 'Immo vero' inquam 'impertite sermones non quidem curiosum, sed qui velim scire vel cuncta vel certe plurima. Simul iugi quod insurgimus aspritudinem fabularum lepida iucunditas levigabit.'*

intellectual knowledge. Yet he is interested specifically in *fabulae*, usually implausible or invented “charming stories.”²⁰ Lucius’ purported intellectual curiosity is directed toward false entertainments rather than any sort of enlightened, philosophical truth.²¹

Neither traveler responds to Lucius. Their continuing conversation reveals the topic of discussion: one traveler has told a fantastic tale of which the other is highly skeptical, just as he is dubious of so-called magical events (*Met.* 1.3). Lucius interrupts again to insult the skeptical speaker, calling his doubt a sign of ignorance. He claims that the seemingly impossible may in fact be possible if examined more closely. As proof, he offers the following tale:

“As for myself, in fact, yesterday evening while I was eager to gobble up a largish, modest little chunk of cheesecake in competition with my dinner companions, the softness of the sticky food stuck in my throat and blocked the passages of breath, and I was almost done for. And yet a little while beforehand in Athens, in front of the Stoa Poikile, I saw with my own twin gaze a street performer devour a sharpened cavalry sword with a lethal point...” (*Met.* 1.4)²²

The story continues: the sword-swallower put a hunting spear down his throat, then a beautiful young boy climbed the spear and performed an acrobatic dance - and this spectacle looked like nothing more than a staff with a snake wrapped around it, that noble symbol of Asclepius, the god of medicine...What was Lucius’ point again? We’ve lost it in this stream of narrative. He ends by asking the second traveler to relate his story, promising to believe him before he has even heard the tale.

²⁰ Cf. *GCA* (2007), 18.

²¹ On curiosity, see Chapter Four.

²² ‘*Ego denique vespera, dum polentae caseatae modico secus offulam grandiore in convivas aemulus contruncare gestio, mollitie cibi glutinosi faucibus inhaerentis et meacula spiritus distinctis minimo minus interii. Et tamen Athenis proxime et ante Poecilen porticum isto gemino obtutu circulatorum aspexi equestrem spatham praeacutam mucrone infesto devorasse...*’

Lucius intends his pseudo-philosophical lecture against skepticism to project an image of himself as an educated, elite intellectual.²³ His references to a dinner party and his recent sojourn in Athens casually reveal his elite status and urbane sophistication. The Stoa Poikile or Painted Stoa, the home of the Stoics, suggests a philosophical education and scholarly aspirations. Yet Lucius' speech also reveals some very *un*-philosophical, low-class traits. Attending a nice dinner party may imply a high social status, but competing for food is a stock attribute of the gluttonous parasite in Roman comedy.²⁴ Cheese and especially "cheesecake," *polenta caseata*, were associated with Plautine parasites and Roman satirical portraits of greedy Greeks.²⁵ Lucius attempts to mitigate these associations by claiming that the bite of cheesecake, though rather large, was really quite modest, *modico secus offulam grandiore*. As with his disavowal of curiosity, his denial only calls attention to this character flaw. Finally, he is not at the Stoa Poikile to engage in learned philosophical discussion, but to gape at a sword-swallower's sideshow performance. His intended verbal self-fashioning as an educated member of the elite is destabilized by hints of his numerous vices: gluttony, a possible status as a parasite, and a low curiosity directed towards entertaining stories and spectacles. Each of these vices was representative of a general lack of self-control unbecoming an elite Roman male.²⁶

A final element of Lucius' unstable characterization is his physical appearance.

His physical form is described only after his initial, verbal characterization in the opening

²³ Keulen places this conversation in the context of philosophical debates between "sceptical rationalism" and "excessive credulity" (*GCA* (2007), 114-115). See also Winkler (1985), 27-33, who calls this cynicism and anti-cynicism. The Stoics in particular were satirized as overly credulous.

²⁴ May (2006), 143-156.

²⁵ Scobie (1975), 85; May (2006), 149; and *GCA* (2007), 130.

²⁶ *GCA* (2007), 132.

scene of the novel. After the second traveler, Aristomenes, relates his tale of witchcraft and murder,²⁷ the first traveler reiterates his skeptical disbelief in the story. He appeals to Lucius for support: “But you - a distinguished man, as your bearing and appearance show - do you agree with this tale?” (*Met.* 1.20)²⁸ Lucius’ physical appearance seems to corroborate his claims to a high social status. The skeptical traveler’s words attribute a certain elite morality to Lucius’ appearance. The words *vir*, “man,” and *ornatus*, “distinguished,” carry connotations of Roman virtue.²⁹ Milo, Lucius’ host in Hypata, also associates his physical appearance with high social status and elite morality:

“Certainly from that attractive physical appearance of yours and from this utterly virginal modesty I would infer - and rightly so - that you were born of noble stock...” (*Met.* 1.23)³⁰

Modesty, *verecundia*, was a Roman virtue and a sign of self-control.³¹ As the novel unfolds, Lucius is revealed to be utterly lacking in self-control in his pursuits of food, stories, spectacles, and the physical pleasures to be found with Milo’s maidservant Photis. His attractive physical appearance clashes with the character he gradually reveals through his words and actions.

As with his speech and family connections, Lucius’ appearance also enables two conflicting interpretations of his inner character. Our most thorough description of Lucius’ physical form comes from his relative Byrrhena during their first meeting in the streets of Hypata. When Byrrhena’s male companion chides Lucius for not greeting his

²⁷ See Chapter Four.

²⁸ ‘*Tu autem,*’ inquit ‘*vir ut habitus et habitudo demonstrat ornatus, accedis huic fabulae?*’

²⁹ *GCA* (2007), 364-365; cf. especially *vir* and *habitus et habitudo*.

³⁰ *Et sic* ‘*Ego te*’ inquit ‘*etiam de ista corporis speciosa habitudine deque hac virginali prorsus verecundia generosa stirpe proditum et recte conicerem...*’

³¹ *GCA* (2007), 407-410; cf. especially *virginali...verecundia*.

aunt, Lucius blushes, claiming that his silence is a sign of respect towards an unfamiliar woman. Byrrhena, like Milo, praises his modesty:

“See what noble behavior you inherited from the most venerable Salvia, your mother! But the rest of the body also is damnably and precisely fitting: a not abnormal height; a slenderness filled with lively sap; a mildly rosy complexion; blond hair worn without artifice; eyes blue, certainly, but alert and with a flashing glance, entirely like an eagle’s; a face flowering in every way; an attractive and unaffected gait.” (*Met.* 2.2) ³²

Byrrhena interprets Lucius’ blush as a sign of modesty and a noble upbringing by his mother, Salvia. ³³ She follows with a curiously detailed description of Lucius’ physical appearance, emphasizing his attractiveness and natural beauty.

Byrrhena’s description of Lucius’ physique is reminiscent of a physiognomic portrait. ³⁴ He resembles the types of the good man, the man of letters, and the Greek. His average height, form, and complexion exemplify the much-praised Golden Mean. ³⁵ Unadorned blond hair was associated with the man of letters - the intellectual. ³⁶ Lucius’ “natural” appearance - attractive but lacking in artifice, adornment, and affectation - fits with Roman ideals of elite masculinity. ³⁷ There is one component of Lucius’ form,

³² ‘*En’ inquit ‘sanctissimae Salviae matris generosa probitas. Sed et cetera corporis execrabiliter ad amussim congruentia: inenormis proceritas, succulenta gracilitas, rubor temperatus, flavum et inadfectatum capillitium, oculi caesii quidem, sed vigiles et in aspectu micantes, prorsus aquilini, os quoquoversum floridum, speciosus et immeditatus incessus.*’

³³ On the Roman blush, see Barton (1999). Lucius’ mother, Salvia, has a common Roman name. Some have taken her name as a realistic detail or have attempted to link it with attested historical figures or inscriptions; cf. Bowersock (1965), 289. Others, pointing to the name’s association with *salus*, “safety” or “salvation,” see it as foreshadowing Lucius’ salvation by Isis; cf. *GCA* (2001), 72-73. Winkler suggests a reference to Proserpina as Salvia based on a first century B.C.E. curse tablet (Winkler (1985), 381 n. 75).

³⁴ Cf. Mason (1984); *GCA* (2001), 75. Keulen compares Lucius’ portrait to comic masks of flatterers and parasites (*GCA* (2007), 407-408). Some have suggested that this is a self-portrait of Apuleius; others have focused on its generic ties with rhetorical panegyric or poetic *encomia*; cf. *GCA* (2001), 74-75.

³⁵ Mason (1984), 308.

³⁶ Apuleius cites his own unadorned hair as a sign of virtuous, philosophical dedication (*Apol.* 4). Gods, heroes, and poetic lovers were frequently depicted as blond: cf. *GCA* (2001), 75-77; de Jonge (1941), 22.

³⁷ Cf. Gleason (1995), 73, 80-81.

however, that destabilizes this physiognomic portrait of aristocratic virtue: his eyes. The eyes were one of the most important parts of the body for physiognomists.³⁸ Lucius' eyes are not the gray eyes of the Golden Mean type, but blue. Physiognomists associated blue eyes with cowardice, shamelessness, nearsightedness, and blindness. Flashing eyes could be a sign of recklessness, although the comparison of Lucius' eyes to those of an eagle suggests a more noble association.³⁹ Lucius' eyes may cast his whole physiognomic portrait into question. His praise-worthy physical appearance turns out to be as ambiguous an indicator of his true character as his noble ancestry and educated speech.

Lucius' First Master: Milo

The destabilization of Lucius' characterization from the beginning of the novel foreshadows the challenges to his speech, status, and body that will follow. Speech becomes not just a medium of self-presentation but also one of negotiation, as Lucius seeks to position himself socially in relation to others. His first extensive interactions are with his Hypatan host Milo. Milo overturns Lucius' elite, intellectual image with his own overwhelming wordiness. Their conversations resemble verbal battles more than social exchanges, with Lucius inevitably the loser. Milo's verbal and physical domination of Lucius reveals his own boorish character as well as Lucius' inability to retain control

³⁸ Gleason (1995), 57-58.

³⁹ Mason (1984), 308-309; *GCA* (2001), 78-79.

over his speech and body. Lucius' passivity and silence in Milo's house anticipate his complete loss of agency as an ass. In this way, Milo becomes Lucius' first "master."

Milo's character is evident before Lucius even meets him. An old woman describes him as a miser, a stock type familiar from Roman comedy.⁴⁰ He is "a man notorious for his extreme miserliness and sordid squalor" (*Met.* 1.21).⁴¹ He has plenty of money but conceals it when he is not lending it at high interest. He lives in a small house on the edge of town with only his wife and a single maidservant.⁴² The expectations raised by this description are confirmed when Lucius meets Milo for the first time. Milo's dining room contains a single couch and an empty table towards which he gestures Lucius with an ironic "'Here is my hospitality!'" (*Met.* 1.22).⁴³ He greets Lucius as an important guest of a high status evident from his fine physical appearance (see above) and his letter of introduction from Milo's friend Demeas of Corinth (*Met.* 1.23).⁴⁴ Yet his first action as host is to invite Lucius to take his wife's place at the foot of the couch, putting him in the position of a social inferior.⁴⁵ When Lucius hesitates, Milo grasps his clothing to pull him down. Lucius permits the subtle act of domination. In relinquishing control of his body, he acts in an unbecomingly subservient and passive manner, granting the greater social power to Milo.⁴⁶

⁴⁰ Cf. May (2006), 161-166.

⁴¹ *...extremae avaritiae et sordis infimae infamis homo...* See also *Met.* 1.24 and 1.26.

⁴² Milo appears to have several slaves in later episodes: cf. *Met.* 2.15; *GCA* (2007), 384. Van Mal-Maeder suggests these are Lucius' slaves rather than Milo's (*GCA* (2001), 242).

⁴³ *'En...hospitium.'*

⁴⁴ On the use of social credentials to validate one's status and identity, see Eshleman (2012), 23, 35, 65.

⁴⁵ *GCA* (2007), 400.

⁴⁶ Cf. *GCA* (2007), 402, 404.

Milo's physical assertions of dominance continue throughout Lucius' stay in Hypata. Recognizing Milo's miserliness, Lucius attempts to buy himself dinner at the market. After a painful lack of success, he returns wanting only to sleep (*Met.* 1.24-25). Milo waylays him on his way to bed and once again physically drags him to his still empty dinner table: "having laid hold of me with his right hand (*iniecta dextera*), he began to drag me along gently" (*Met.* 1.26).⁴⁷ After Lucius' humiliating experiences at the Festival of Laughter, Milo leads him away from the theater with another gesture of physical force: "My host Milo approached and, laying his hand on me (*iniecta manu*), drew me away with him - though I resisted - with gentle violence" (*Met.* 3.10).⁴⁸ Finally, Milo takes Lucius to the baths after "laying his hand firmly" on him, *manu firmiter iniecta* (*Met.* 3.12).

The phrase used of Milo's physical action in each of these episodes is *iniecta manu* or the closely related *iniecta dextera*. *Manum iniecere* is a technical term in Roman law referring to the action a creditor may bring against a debtor who has defaulted (the *legis actio per manus iniectioem*). The creditor can forcibly bring the debtor before a magistrate by proclaiming a set formula while physically laying hands on him (*manus iniectio*). This law went out of use in ca. 150 B.C.E., long before Apuleius' time.⁴⁹ Yet the phrase itself is clearly one of Apuleius' favorites: he uses *iniecta manu* eight times

⁴⁷ ...*iniecta dextera clementer me trahere adoritur*.

⁴⁸ ...*Milo hospes accessit, et iniecta manu me renitentem...clementi violentia secum adtraxit*.

⁴⁹ On Apuleius' use of the legal term, see Summers (1967), 77-78 (on *Met.* 1.17); van der Paardt (1971), 84 (on *Met.* 3.10); *GCA* (1995), 99 (on *Met.* 9.10).

and *iniecta dextera* three times in the *Metamorphoses*.⁵⁰ In each case, the phrase describes a person exerting physical power or ownership over another person or object.

In part, Apuleius' use of *iniecta manu* demonstrates his archaic legal knowledge and wit to those readers educated enough to catch the reference. In the social context of Lucius' interactions with Milo, however, the phrase is significant in its connotations of dominance and power. The repeated use of the phrase to describe Milo's actions reveals his attempts to place himself in a superior position to his guest Lucius. Here Milo does not exert his social power verbally, as one would properly do with a social equal. He dominates Lucius physically, as one would a slave or other social inferior. Lucius' lack of either physical or verbal resistance challenges the image of his high social status evoked by Milo's initial greeting. Of the eleven instances of *iniecta manu* and *iniecta dextera* in the novel, Lucius as man or ass is the object of seven. He is as unable to protect his body as he is to maintain his elite appearance.

Milo and Lucius clash verbally as well as physically, with Milo gaining the upper hand here as well. After Milo forces Lucius to the dinner table for the first time, he traps him in conversation (*Met.* 1.26). He inquires about the health of Lucius' patron Demeas; Demeas' wife, children, and servants; Lucius' journey; his hometown and all of its inhabitants...and he does not stop until he reaches the governor himself! Although his first questions are related in direct speech, the rest are in indirect speech, as Milo's

⁵⁰ *Iniecta manu*: *Met.* 1.6 (Aristomenes to Socrates); 2.30 (Thelyphron to his nose); 3.10 (Milo to Lucius); 3:12 (Milo to Lucius); 9.10 (men to Lucius the ass); 9.30 (an old woman to the miller); 9.39 (soldier to Lucius the ass); 9.42 (men to Lucius the ass). *Iniecta dextera*: *Met.* 1.17 (Aristomenes to Socrates); 1.26 (Milo to Lucius); 11.22 (Mithras to Lucius).

endless talk becomes a blur to Lucius. His garrulousness finally drives Lucius to a corresponding speechlessness:

When he perceived that I, after the hardship of such a cruel journey, and also fatigued by the succession of stories, was drowsily stopping in the middle of my words and, now worn out, was vainly stuttering uncertain, jerky words, finally he allowed me to depart to bed. At last I escaped the rancid old man's talkative, famished feast, and weighed down with sleep, not food, having dined on talk alone, I returned to my bedroom and delivered myself to the rest I desired. (*Met.* 1.26)⁵¹

At Milo the miser's dinner table, Lucius becomes the frustrated parasite of Roman comedy.⁵² Despite his attempts to satisfy his host's desire for conversation, his speech fails and he leaves hungry. When he is defeated in conversation, able to utter nothing more than stammers, Milo finally lets him go.

Milo is the miserly host yet again, feeding his guest an oxymoronic "famished feast" of talk (*fabulis*) rather than food, and even the conversation is unsatisfying.⁵³ The ablative form *fabulis* may indicate not only "stories," *fabulae*, but also "beans," *fabuli*. The pun is familiar from Plautine comedy, and beans are the stereotypical food of the poor.⁵⁴ Beans also carry a philosophical connotation and were associated with Pythagoras and his followers.⁵⁵ Milo's dinner party is a perversion of the symposium,

⁵¹ ...ubi me post itineris tam saevi vexationem sensit fabularum quoque serie fatigatum in verba media somnolentum desinere ac nequiquam, defectum iam, incerta verborum salebra balbutire, tandem patitur cubitum concederem. Evasi aliquando rancidi senis loquax et famelicum convivium, somno non cibo gravatus, cenatus solis fabulis, et in cubiculum reversus optatae me quieti reddidi.

⁵² Cf. May (2006), 154; *GCA* (2007), 27, 30-33, 464.

⁵³ Milo also resembles the boorish hosts of Roman satire like Nasidienus (*Hor. Sat.* 2.8), Virro (*Juv. Sat.* 5), and Trimalchio (*Petr. Sat.* 26-78).

⁵⁴ *GCA* (2007), 466-467. See also May (2006), 124.

⁵⁵ Apuleius' contemporaries debated whether Pythagoras avoided beans or recommended them as a particularly salutary food: cf. *Gell. Att. Noct.* 4.11; *Luc. VH* 2.24. See *GCA* (2007), 467.

where food and drink were shared with congenial and often philosophical conversation.⁵⁶ The pun *fabulis* emphasizes the poverty of Milo's speech and hospitality. He provides his guest with the most miserly of offerings: poor food and even poorer talk.⁵⁷

Lucius' response to Milo's abundant but poor conversational offering is a gradual loss of speech. He nods off in the middle of his own sentences until finally he can do nothing but stutter. The words *balbutire* and related *balbus* are used to describe various types of "bad" speech according to the Romans, including speech impediments, children's verbal errors, and an affected, lisping, or effeminate style.⁵⁸ Lucius' stammers in the face of Milo's talkativeness represent a social defeat. Milo, eager to assert his dominance over his guest both physically and verbally, overcomes Lucius with a stream of words. Lucius' inarticulate replies do not fit his purportedly high social status. They place him on the level of children and effeminate, those perceived to be unmasculine, passive, and weak.

Lucius makes a better showing during his second dinnertime encounter with Milo in Book 2. This time they are joined by Milo's wife Pamphile, whom Lucius has just learned is a witch (*Met.* 2.5). Although he is insatiably curious about magic, he fears Pamphile's powers.⁵⁹ He decides to avoid her and instead seduce her maid Photis into revealing her mistress's secrets. At dinner, Pamphile predicts the weather by looking at a

⁵⁶ *GCA* (2007), 465-466.

⁵⁷ Extrapolating from beans to their digestive consequences, one might wonder whether the connection between beans and Milo's poor conversational skills evokes the image from Old Greek Comedy of the loquacious orator's mouth as a *λαλητικὸς πρωκτός*, a "babbling (=farting) asshole." Cf. Major (2002).

⁵⁸ *GCA* (2007), 463.

⁵⁹ See Chapter Four for Lucius' curiosity about magic.

lamp (*Met.* 2.11). When Milo mocks her prophecy, Lucius interrupts with a didactic monologue similar to the one he delivered to the skeptical traveler in *Met.* 1.3-4:

“These are elementary proofs of this sort of prognostication. Nor is it strange that, although that modest little flame was produced by human hands, it nevertheless remembers that greater and heavenly fire like its own parent; and whatever is about to be enacted in the aether’s summit, it itself knows and announces to us by divine presentiment.” (*Met.* 2.12)⁶⁰

Lucius recites a Stoic proclamation of cosmic harmony in high philosophical language.⁶¹

What he defends, however, is the divination of a witch. He follows with a tale about a Chaldaean prophet at Corinth who predicted his own future.⁶² The link between this marvelous tale and his philosophical pronouncement is as weak as that between the cheesecake, sword-swallower, and declaration of open-mindedness in *Met.* 1.3-4. After Milo’s verbal victory in their previous encounter, Lucius seeks to renegotiate his social position by presenting himself in his favorite guise as a wise intellectual. As with the travelers on the road to Hypata, his pseudo-scholarly façade only reveals his excessive credulity and un-philosophical fascination with marvels.

Milo refuses to be upstaged. He debunks the prophet Diophanes as false or at least incompetent (*Met.* 2.13-14). He ends with an insincere wish that at least his prediction for Lucius may turn out to be true. By this point, Lucius has long since lost interest in the conversation:

While Milo was going on at length about these things, I was silently groaning and not a little angry with myself because, having voluntarily

⁶⁰ *Ad haec ego subiciens ‘Sunt’ aio ‘prima huiusce divinationis experimenta. Nec mirum, licet modicum istum igniculum et manibus humanis laboratum, memorem tamen illius maioris et caelestis ignis velut sui parentis, quid is sit editurus in aetheris vertice, divino praesagio et ipsum scire et nobis enuntiare.*

⁶¹ Walsh (1970), 178.

⁶² See Chapter Five.

brought on a succession of inopportune stories, I was losing a good part of the evening and its most pleasing fruit. (*Met.* 2.15)⁶³

Lucius' complaint about Milo's garrulous "succession of stories," *serie...fabularum*, recalls their first unsatisfying dinner at *Met.* 1.26. The previous night, Milo's talkativeness deprived Lucius of both sleep and food. This time it deprives him of sex, delaying his planned rendezvous with Photis. The hungry parasite is denied all of his physical desires. Lucius has lost yet another social battle to Milo. Despite his display of erudite *paideia*, Milo has the last word. This time he leaves Lucius not stuttering but completely silent, *tacitus*.⁶⁴

Lucius and Milo's interactions are a repeated negotiation of their respective social identities and positions relative to one other. Each encounter is a verbal and physical battle for social dominance, and Milo wins all of them in ways inappropriate to both of their elite statuses. While Milo is the boorish, miserly host of Roman comedy and satire, Lucius is the frustrated parasite, unable to voice his protests to his host or satisfy his base desires. He attempts to assert his elite, educated status verbally, delivering an elegant philosophical monologue. His interests lie not in appropriately scholarly topics, however, but in witchcraft, divination, and sex. When the talk turns from magic to its debunking, Lucius retreats from the conversation. His silent acceptance of Milo's physical and verbal dominance reveals a passivity and lack of agency that clashes with his supposedly high

⁶³ *Haec Milone diutine sermocinante tacitus ingemescebam, mihi que non mediocriter suscensebam, quod ultro inducta serie inopportunarum fabularum partem bonam vesperae eiusque gratissimum fructum amitterem.*

⁶⁴ Milo's verbal defeat of Lucius is highlighted by his final, ironic address to Lucius as "master Lucius," *Luci domine*, at the end of the Tale of Diophanes (*Met.* 2.14). Milo also silences Pamphile after her prophetic pronouncement, establishing himself as the dominant social agent in the room.

status. Rather than cultivating a relationship with Milo, his host and social equal, he cavorts with Milo's maidservant. Lucius' inability to control himself in every way - in the face of Milo's assertions of dominance and in the face of his own insatiable appetites for food, sex, stories, and magic - leads to his gradual displacement and the even greater loss of status and agency he experiences with his transformation into an ass.

Lucius' Metamorphosis

Lucius' metamorphosis is both a physical transformation and a powerful challenge to his social status and identity.⁶⁵ He is a hybrid, neither completely animal nor completely human.⁶⁶ He transgresses multiple boundaries between the human and animal worlds, including food and sexual practices, but the single impassable boundary he encounters is speech.⁶⁷ As soon as he realizes that he has been turned into an ass instead of a bird, he tries to berate Photis for her mistake. He finds that he is "deprived at the same time of both human gesture and speech" and can communicate only with a donkey's expressions: "I did the only thing that I could: casting down my lower lip and

⁶⁵ Ovid reveals a similar interest in the destabilizing effects of metamorphosis; cf. Finkelpearl (1998), 12, 192.

⁶⁶ Lucius' physical metamorphosis seems incomplete at times. Gazing down the cliff over which the bandits have threatened to cast him, he comments that he will easily be impaled on the rocks below because "That splendid magic of yours gave you only the appearance and burdens of an ass, but in truth it enclosed you not in the thick hide of an ass, but in the fine, delicate membrane of a **bird**," *Nam et illa ipsa praeclara magia tua vultum laboresque tibi tantum asini, verum corium non asini crassum, sed hirundinis tenue membranulum circumdedit* (*Met.* 6.26). I read *hirundinis*, "bird, swallow," as it is transmitted in the F manuscript in place of *hirudinis*, "leech," which appears in all major textual editions and commentaries, including Giarratano (1929), 163; Helm (1931), 148; Robertson (1941), vol. 2, 95; Zimmerman (2012), 141. Leeches are not known for their thin skin in Latin. Lucius' analogy also recalls his initial desire to transform himself into a bird in *Met.* 3.22-24.

⁶⁷ Cf. Schlam (1981), 131; (1992), 106-108; Bradley (2000), 166; Finkelpearl (2006), 203.

looking sidelong at her with moist eyes, I remonstrated her silently” (*Met.* 3.25).⁶⁸ At the moment of his metamorphosis, Lucius finds himself dispossessed not only of human speech but also of all nonverbal mechanisms of human communication including body language.

In the eyes of many ancient philosophers, speech was one of the defining features that set human beings apart from animals. Speech, at least meaningful speech, was the perceptible evidence of rational thought, the true marker between human and animal.⁶⁹ Lucius challenges this view. He retains a sense of himself as intellectually human, but his animal body prevents him from uttering human speech. He cannot even converse with the other “dumb” and “mute” animals in the novel, although they occasionally seem to communicate with each other.⁷⁰ Lucius eventually finds ways of communicating with his human masters, but his meaning and social intentions are almost always misinterpreted to his disadvantage. While his failures in human speech displaced him from his host Milo and from the community of Hypata during the Festival of Laughter, his communicative difficulties as an ass exclude him from both the human and animal worlds.⁷¹

⁶⁸ *...querens de facto Photidis, sed iam humano gestu simul et voce privatus, quod solum poteram, postrema deiecta labia, umidis tamen oculis obliquum respiciens ad illam tacitus expostulabam.*

⁶⁹ Sorabji (1993), 80-83; Finkelpearl (2006), 203.

⁷⁰ During Lucius’ first night as an ass, his horse and another ass - both “dumb animals,” *mutis animalibus* - “put their heads together” to “plot his destruction” and drive him away from their food, *Praeclarus ille vector meus cum asino capita conferunt in meamque perniciem ilico consentiunt...* (*Met.* 3.26). Lucius has an elevated view of his own status even as an animal: he expects the horse and ass to offer him *loca lautia*, a technical term for the honors offered to foreign ambassadors or guests of state at Rome; cf. *OLD*, “*lautia*”; Hanson (1989), vol. 1, 173 n. 2.

⁷¹ Cf. Baker (2011), 130: “Lucius’ loss of speech, then, is not simply a mark of his animalization. For, if it were, he would be able to communicate with the animals surrounding him and would be able to establish a social identity among the animals. His loss of speech is a complete loss of social identity, whether among men or beasts.”

The dissonance between Lucius' human mind and asinine body, marked by his inability to speak, comes as a surprise to him. At first glance, he seems to remain essentially human during his metamorphosis: "In truth, though I was a complete ass and beast of burden instead of Lucius, I nevertheless retained my human intelligence" (*Met.* 3.26).⁷² This statement answers a question asked not in the *Metamorphoses* but in the Greek *Onos*, where Lucius is interested in the metaphysical implications of metamorphosis. He speculates that changing his shape might alter his identity: "...for I wished to learn by experience whether, having been metamorphosed from my human form, I would also be a bird in spirit" (*Onos* 13).⁷³ In the *Metamorphoses*, Lucius assumes without question that he will retain his inner sense of human identity. His conversation with Photis before his metamorphosis reveals his expectations that he will have the same thoughts and feelings in the body of a bird as he does in his human body (*Met.* 3.23-24). He even suggests that he may still be able to speak. He asks Photis, "by what **word** or act will I in turn strip off those features and revert to my own Lucius?" (*Met.* 3.23).⁷⁴

Despite Lucius' expectations in the *Metamorphoses*, he experiences a loss of speech and slippage of self at the very moment of his transformation. Lucius in the *Onos* evidently does not feel this same crisis of identity: "But though I was an ass in all other ways, I was human in mind and intellect, that same Lucius, except for my voice" (*Onos*

⁷² *Ego vero, quamquam perfectus asinus et pro Lucio iumentum, sensum tamen retinebam humanum.*

⁷³ ἤβουλόμην γὰρ πείρα μαθεῖν εἰ μεταμορφωθεὶς ἐκ τοῦ ἀνθρώπου καὶ τὴν ψυχὴν ὄρνις ἔσομαι.

⁷⁴ '...quo **dicto** factove rursum exutis pinnulis illis ad meum redibo Lucium?'

15).⁷⁵ In the *Metamorphoses*, Lucius retains his human intelligence, but he is *not* “that same Lucius.” He is an ass “instead of” or literally “in place of” Lucius, *pro Lucio* (*Met.* 3.26). His self-definition fluctuates painfully between human and animal, Lucius and the Ass. He refers to his human and animal selves as separate entities, calling them “my Lucius,” “my former Lucius,” and “my ass.”⁷⁶ His consciousness of his own loss of identity is evident throughout the novel: “he is aware of the danger that his new body may be causing the gradual dissolution of his human identity, and his bodily transformation is described as a kind of fragmentation, a separation from his true self.”⁷⁷

Lucius’ loss of identity goes far beyond his name and intellect. His physical transformation results in a dramatic loss of social status as he falls from his elite human rank to become an abused beast of burden.⁷⁸ The first indications of his displacement are immediate: shut up in the stable for the night, he is attacked by his own horse and beaten by his own slave in an inversion of the normal social hierarchy (*Met.* 3.26-27). Slaves and animals were equated in the Roman imagination as well as in the eyes of Roman law.⁷⁹ They were subject to many of the same experiences, including physical labor, verbal and physical abuse, sale, and sexual exploitation.⁸⁰ Lucius encounters all of these as an ass. Although he occasionally attempts to protest his ill treatment through physical, asinine

⁷⁵ ἐγὼ δὲ τὰ μὲν ἄλλα ὄνος ἦμην, τὰς δὲ φρένας καὶ τὸν νοῦν ἀνθρώπος ἐκεῖνος ὁ Λούκιος, δίχρα τῆς φωνῆς.

⁷⁶ “My Lucius” (*meum...Lucium*, *Met.* 3.23); “my future Lucius” (*Lucius...futurus*, 3.27); “my former Lucius” (*veteris...Lucii*, 9.13; *priori meo Lucio*, 10.29); “my ass” (*asino meo*, 9.13).

⁷⁷ König (2008), 136.

⁷⁸ Bradley argues that Lucius’ metamorphosis is a “perfect metaphor” for the human experience of enslavement in the ancient world. Slaves were dehumanized and conceptually assimilated to animals (Bradley (2000), 113-114).

⁷⁹ Artemidorus equates the ass with slavery and misery (*On.* 1.24). Loss of speech is associated with poverty and low status (*On.* 1.32).

⁸⁰ Bradley (2000), 115-116.

methods such as kicking, defecating, or running away, his animal body deprives him of the main form of defense allotted to free, elite men: speech.

Social Status and Strategies of Communication

Lucius' loss of speech, social status, and identity does not affect his essential character. In his asinine interactions with his various masters, he remains the gluttonous, lustful parasite, eager to please those who might satisfy his desires. As in his encounters with Milo, communication and the violation of physical boundaries chart his relative position within the social hierarchy. He continues to assert an elite self-presentation through different communicative strategies, all of which inevitably fail. Among his lower-class masters, Lucius tries to utter human speech to assert what he perceives to be his superior social, legal, and moral status. His failures only emphasize that he is an enslaved animal. With his upper-class masters, Lucius adopts nonverbal, animal forms of communication. He brays and pretends to learn human gestures for their entertainment. Although he sees himself as socially equal to these masters, his efforts to please them resemble the actions of a model slave or parasite rather than a member of the elite. Through these adaptive strategies of communication, Lucius attempts to negotiate new social and power relations in light of his altered status as an enslaved animal. His efforts fall flat as he consistently misreads the status imposed by his new body and his decreased linguistic capacity.

Nowhere is Lucius' new status more apparent than in those episodes where he attempts as an ass to produce human speech. In each of these cases, his intended speech is forensic: he tries to defend his legal rights or the rights of others as though in court. His first failed attempt occurs during his first night as an ass, when the bandits steal him from Milo's stables. During his abduction to the robbers' mountain stronghold, Lucius tries to call on the emperor's name for protection:

Among those crowds of Greeks I tried to invoke the august name of Caesar in my native speech, and the "O" itself I shouted very clearly and strongly, but I could not pronounce the rest of Caesar's name. The robbers, disdainful of my discordant shout, cudged my wretched hide all over, leaving it not even fit for a sieve. (*Met.* 3.29)⁸¹

There has been much debate about Lucius' "native speech," *genuino sermone*: is it Greek or Latin? John Heller and R. Th. van der Paardt maintain that *genuino sermone* should be taken closely with *Graecorum* to read "in the native tongue of the Greeks."⁸² The argument is unconvincing and rests too heavily on a comparison with the same episode in the Greek *Onos* where Lucius tries to say ὦ Καῖσαρ.⁸³ Furthermore, the pun "the august name of Caesar" works only in Latin.⁸⁴ William Turpin suggests that "native speech" may indicate human speech, emphasizing the distance between Lucius' human and

⁸¹ ...inter ipsas turbelas Graecorum genuino sermone nomen augustum Caesaris invocare temptavi. Et 'O' quidem tantum disertum ac validum clamitavi, reliquum autem Caesaris nomen enuntiare non potui. Aspernati latrones clamorem absonum meum, caedentes hinc inde miserum corium nec cribris iam idoneum relinquunt.

⁸² Heller (1942), 532-533; van der Paardt (1971), 203-204. See also Millar (1981), 65.

⁸³ Heller's argument is based primarily on the sound a donkey makes, which is of course culturally subjective. He alludes to other evidence for the pronunciation of Latin *ō* versus Greek *ω* in this period, but does not elaborate.

⁸⁴ Cf. van der Paardt (1971), 203, though he himself disagrees with this suggestion. For another Latin pun that occurs shortly before this at *Met.* 3.27, see Winkler (1985), 198.

animal states.⁸⁵ The mention of *Graecorum* in this case would seem to be superfluous. I argue that Lucius intends to free himself from the robbers' enslavement through a human utterance in Latin. By invoking the emperor's name, he asserts his privileged Roman status.⁸⁶ His body, however, is no longer that of a free, elite man, and his verbal self-fashioning fails. The robbers beat him for his efforts, emphasizing his lost social status through his inability to protect his body from physical punishment.⁸⁷ In spite of Lucius' human intellect, he looks and sounds like an ass and is treated accordingly.

Lucius tries to speak once more among the robbers shortly after a failed escape attempt with the maiden Charite. One of the bandits, who remained behind in Hypata, returns to report that they do not need to fear pursuit. Rather than attributing their property losses to the bandits, the Hypatans have accused a certain Lucius of robbing his host Milo after presenting him with "counterfeit letters of introduction falsely representing himself as a gentleman" (*Met.* 7.1).⁸⁸ Lucius is deeply offended by both allegations: that he is *not* a member of the elite and that he would attack his host; he likens this to parricide. He tries to refute the charges verbally as though he were on trial:

But I could not defend my case, or even deny the allegation with a single word. At last, lest I should seem to have a bad conscience and silently consent to such a wicked accusation in my presence, I could endure it no longer: I wanted to say "Not guilty!" And I cried the first word over and over again without restraint, but I could not get out the second word in any

⁸⁵ Turpin (2002), 53.

⁸⁶ The only other characters who invoke the emperor's name are a group of Roman soldiers (*Met.* 9.42); it is tied to Roman identity in the novel. For Lucius' citizenship status, see Chapter Two.

⁸⁷ See Edwards (1997) and Walters (1997) on beating as an indication of low or slave status.

⁸⁸ *...fictis commendaticiiis litteris...virum commentitus bonum...*

way. I stayed on the first word and brayed over and over, “Naw...naw...,” although I vibrated my pendulous lips as roundly as possible. (*Met.* 7.3)⁸⁹

Once again, the only sounds Lucius can produce are those of an ass. Although he feels legally and morally obligated to defend himself against these charges, his animal body again deprives him of the ability to speak.

At this point, Lucius’ linguistic failure spurs him to acknowledge his loss of status. He berates Fortune for making him an animal and a slave: “But what more can I lament about Fortune’s perversity than that she was not even ashamed to make me a fellow slave and yoke-mate with my own servant and carrier, that horse of mine?” (*Met.* 7.3).⁹⁰ His main complaint is not his loss of humanity, but his loss of social status. In equating himself with his horse, he even overestimates his importance in the hierarchy of animals. Earlier in the episode, he lamented that Fortuna had “most savagely attacked me and degraded me to a beast and quadruped of the very lowest rank” (*Met.* 7.3).⁹¹ Lucius is not just an animal. He is at the very bottom of the social hierarchy, the animal equivalent of the most wretched of human slaves. In this episode, he seeks again to assert his status as an elite man with an educated knowledge of Roman law and courtroom procedure. This self-fashioning remains incongruent with his animal body and both speech and self-defense fail.

⁸⁹ *Nec mihi tamen licebat causam meam defendere vel unico verbo saltem denegare. Denique ne mala conscientia tam scelesto crimini praesens viderer silentio consentire, hoc tantum inpatientia productus volui dicere: ‘Non feci.’ Et verbum quidem praecedens semel ac saepius inmodice clamitavi, sequens vero nullo pacto disserere potui, sed in prima remansi voce et identidem boavi ‘Non non,’ quamquam nimia rotunditate pendulas vibrassem labias.* The phrase *non feci*, “not guilty,” was used by defendants in a Roman court to deny a charge (*GCA* (1981), 98).

⁹⁰ *Sed quid ego pluribus de Fortunae saevitate conqueror, quam nec istud puduit me cum meo famulo meoque vectore illo equo factum conservum atque coniugem?*

⁹¹ *Ego denique, quem saevissimus eius impetus in bestiam et extremae sortis quadripedem deduxerat...*

In a final instance of frustrated speech, Lucius tries to defend a young man from rape by his current masters, the lascivious priests of the Syrian Goddess:

I desperately wanted to shout out “O help, citizens!” but the “O” came out deprived of the other syllables and letters. It was certainly strong, clear, and ass-like, but distinctly ill-timed. (*Met.* 8.29) ⁹²

Lucius’ attempt to defend the young man arises from a sense of moral outrage at the priests and their actions. As I discussed in Chapter One, Apuleius depicts the priests of the Syrian Goddess as stereotypical *cinaedi*, scare-figures of sexual and gender deviance who represented a threat to Roman cultural norms. Lucius addresses his appeal against them to the *Quirites*, the archaic name for Roman citizens particularly favored by Cicero in his oratorical addresses. As we saw in Lucius’ trial during the Festival of Laughter, *Quirites* serves as a marker of community identity and inclusion in the *Metamorphoses*. ⁹³ By calling on the *Quirites*, Lucius seeks to distance himself from the priests’ low company. He views his defense of the young man as a moral and social duty. His reliance on a verbal means of defense using the language of Roman oratory fits his vision of his own status as an elite, educated citizen.

Despite his pretensions, Lucius’ utterance is not at all human but “properly ass-like,” *asino proprium*. It is in fact this asinine sound rather than his intended human speech that saves the day. A group of villagers happens to be searching for a stolen donkey. When they hear Lucius’ brays, they invade the house and catch the priests in the act. They rescue the young man and drive the priests out of town (*Met.* 8.29). While

⁹² ‘Porro *Quirites*’ proclamare gestivi, sed viduatum ceteris syllabis ac litteris processit ‘O’ tantum, sane clarum ac validum et asino proprium, sed inopportune plane tempore.

⁹³ See Chapter Two. On the history of the term *Quirites* and its use as a marker of community inclusion and exclusion in the *Metamorphoses*, see Baker (2011), 57-72.

Lucius' utterance prompts the desired result, it does not succeed in communicating his intended self-presentation. He is perceived not as a proper Roman elite or even a man, but as an annoyingly loud ass. The priests punish him for his role in their humiliation by whipping him and threatening him with death (*Met.* 8.30).

In each of these episodes, Lucius' attempts to utter human speech result only in the brays of an ass. His intended speech acts are all endeavors to assert his high status and legal rights. In Book 3, he wishes to free himself from servitude by calling on the emperor's name for protection. In Book 7, he tries to defend himself against the false accusations of robbing his host and lying about his status. Finally, in Book 9, he acts as advocate for another young man, seeking to defend him from one of the vilest outrages in the eyes of Roman law. While this final example may seem to involve a greater challenge to the status of the young man, Lucius fears moral contamination should he fail to prevent the priests' debauchery.⁹⁴ In each of these episodes, Lucius intends to use human speech to negotiate a social distance between himself and those masters he considers social inferiors, the bandits and the priests of the Syrian Goddess. Yet every time he tries to act as a responsible, elite citizen, defending his own or another's rights through speech, he is violently reminded of his animal status. He has become a piece of property akin to a

⁹⁴ In a similar episode in Book Seven, Lucius remains silent despite several appeals to speak. A bear eats Lucius' master, the sadistic slave boy, while Lucius flees. A stranger finds the ass on the road and quickly leads him away. They are apprehended by a group of Charite's slaves who recognize the ass and accuse the stranger of theft. The stranger wishes that the ass, the only witness to his innocence, could speak in his defense (*Met.* 7.25). Lucius also wishes he could defend the stranger, but remains silent during his arrest (*Met.* 7.26). The slave boy's mother blames Lucius for his death. She claims that even if he could speak, he would be unable to persuade anyone of his innocence (*Met.* 7.27). Lucius' silence in this episode fits with his reasons for speaking in the three episodes just discussed: no one's legal rights or status are at stake, so there is no need for him to speak.

slave, his body under the control of others, subject to physical abuse, and deprived of even the agency of speech.

Lucius' strategies of communication and self-fashioning are quite different among his upper-class masters. With his lower-class masters, the bandits and the priests of the Syrian Goddess, he sought to exclude himself from their company and assert his higher status through human speech. With his upper-class masters Charite and Thiasus, his communicative strategies are distinctly more asinine, including animal sounds and nonverbal gestures. He tries to include himself within their elevated social circles by performing as an intelligent, model ass. His attempts to please, however, only lower him to the enslaved status imposed by his animal body. Charite and Thiasus treat him not as a social equal, but as a favored pet.

Lucius is particularly asinine in his interactions with Charite. When they flee the bandits, he "tries to whinny in reply to the girl's sweet utterances" (*Met.* 6.28).⁹⁵ In contrast with his attempted acts of human speech among the bandits and priests, here he intends to communicate like an animal. Charite, however, perceives his gentleness and aid in her escape as almost "human" qualities. She links Lucius with mythical animal saviors like Phrixus' ram and Arion's dolphin. She ends by comparing herself with Europa: "'If Jupiter truly bellowed as a bull, perhaps in this ass of mine lies hidden the face of a man or a divine form'" (*Met.* 6.29).⁹⁶ In the same vein, an auctioneer seeks to prove the ass Lucius' docility to a prospective customer by declaring, "'You would

⁹⁵ *...virginis delicatas voculas adhinnire temptabam.*

⁹⁶ *'Quodsi vere Iuppiter mugivit in bove, potest in asino meo latere aliqui vel vultus hominis vel facies deorum.'*

absolutely believe that in the hide of this ass dwelt a mild-mannered human being” (Met. 8.25).⁹⁷ Lucius’ behavior as a “good” animal causes Charite and the auctioneer to anthropomorphize him.⁹⁸

When Tlepolemus rescues Charite from the bandits, Lucius again attempts to communicate with the voice of an ass:

Even I myself was as happy as a man could be, and, so that I would not be out of harmony with the present business like an outsider, I stretched out my ears, blew out my nostrils, and brayed vigorously, or rather, shouted with a thunderous din. (Met. 7.13)⁹⁹

Lucius focuses on the physical, animal aspects of his sound production, stretching out his ears and inflating his nostrils to bray.¹⁰⁰ At the same time, he associates his animal utterance with human emotions and desires: “I was as happy as a man could be,” *pro virili parte*. He brays so he will not seem like an outsider, *alienus*, during Charite and Tlepolemus’ triumphant return home.¹⁰¹ Lucius’ attempts at human speech among the bandits and priests were intended to assert his elite status and distance him from their undesirable company. With Charite and Tlepolemus, he uses animal utterances to include himself within their company and community. Here at last, his communicative strategies match his linguistic (in)capacity and the social identity engendered by his animal form.

⁹⁷ ‘...sed prorsus ut in asini corio modestum hominem inhabitare credas.’

⁹⁸ These passages are usually cited as examples of “dramatic irony” without comment on their social implications: see Walsh (1970), 160; *GCA* (1981), 58.

⁹⁹ *Denique ipse etiam hilarior pro virili parte, ne praesenti negotio ut alienus discreparem, porrectis auribus proflatisque naribus rudivi fortiter, immo tonanti clamore personui.*

¹⁰⁰ The ass’s long nose and ears were two of its most distinctive attributes and ones that Lucius devotes some time to describing during his metamorphosis (Met. 3.24).

¹⁰¹ See Chapter Two on *alienus* as a term of social exclusion during Lucius’ trial at the Festival of Laughter.

Lucius' tactics of communication and self-fashioning become even more complicated when he comes into the possession of the Corinthian aristocrat Thiasus. Thiasus is by far his most elite owner. Lucius proudly makes note of his distinguished ancestry and recent ascension to the status of quinquennial magistrate of Corinth, the highest-ranking municipal office in the capital of the province of Achaia (*Met.* 10.18).¹⁰² Lucius himself rises to a position of distinction in Thiasus' household. Although Lucius was originally purchased by Thiasus' cooks, Thiasus eventually buys him and treats him as a favored pet. Lucius pursues his promotion by performing increasingly "human" tricks to delight his master. He learns to recline to eat, to wrestle, and to dance, but his most impressive trick is his performance of communication:

And, most marvelous of all, he taught me to communicate by nodding, so that I would show what I did not want by raising my head and what I did want by dropping it; and when I was thirty I would look at the cupbearer and blink my eyelids one after the other to ask for a drink. (*Met.* 10.17)¹⁰³

Lucius "learns" to communicate using human gestures. At first glance, this seems to be a step in his apparent return to humanity in Book 10, along with eating human food and having sex with a human woman.¹⁰⁴ In fact, it is his lowest, most animal, and slave-like point. Lucius is no longer attempting to speak, present himself as human, or assert an elite, privileged status. He even comments that he must be careful not to seem *too* human lest he be killed as an unlucky omen (*Met.* 10.17).

¹⁰² Cf. *GCA* (2000), 249-251.

¹⁰³ ...*quodque esset adprime mirabile, verbis nutum commodare, ut quod nollem relato, quod vellem deiecto capite monstrarem, sitiensque pocillatore respecto, ciliis alterna conivens, bibere flagitarem.*

¹⁰⁴ Cf. Frangoulidis (2001), 150.

The status Lucius embraces in Thiasus' household is that of a pet, a favored slave, and a rich man's parasite.¹⁰⁵ In one instance, he greedily devours food for Thiasus' amusement (*Met.* 10.16). The gluttony he exhibited in his first speech to the travelers on the road to Hypata and which he found constantly frustrated in Milo's household is here satisfied in his role as Thiasus' fawning parasite. His performances bring praise not to himself, but to his master: "This is the man who owns as companion and dinner guest an ass who wrestles, an ass who dances, an ass who understands human speech and expresses his thoughts through nods" (*Met.* 10.17).¹⁰⁶ He actively seeks to please Thiasus by performing for him and his guests, and even for the paying customers who come to see the acts of the amazing ass. His body is sold to the sexual desires of a wealthy Corinthian *matrona* and his final performance is to be a public act of copulation with a condemned murderess during Thiasus' Corinthian games. Although Lucius acts "human" in his interactions with Thiasus, it is only an act. He remains a slave, lacking agency and control over his own body and actions. In Thiasus' household, he exhibits a speechless, "human-like" obedience that underscores his low status. By making himself into a spectacle and performing for the entertainment of others, Lucius at last voluntarily descends to the slave status imposed by his animal body.

¹⁰⁵ On Lucius as Thiasus' parasite, see May (2006), 144, 148-149. On the basis of Lucius' dancing abilities, Zimmerman suggests that he is being treated like a famous pantomime dancer (*GCA* (2000), 244).

¹⁰⁶ *'Hic est qui sodalem convivamque possidet asinum luctantem, asinum saltantem, asinum voces humanas intellegentem, sensum nutibus exprimentem.'*

Conclusion

Lucius' strategies of self-fashioning, speech, and communication are unsuccessful throughout his interactions as both a man and an ass. His social identity is problematic from the very beginning of the novel, when his family connections, physical appearance, and verbal representation of himself are all put into question. His image as an elite intellectual clashes with the vices he reveals in his own narratives. These vices, including gluttony and a lack of self-control, are even more evident in his encounters with Milo. Lucius' position in Milo's household resembles that of a comic parasite, putting up with his boorish host in the hope of satisfying his hungers. Milo and Lucius negotiate their relative social positions through both speech and the body, with Lucius always the loser in the face of Milo's physical and verbal dominance.

With his transformation into an ass, Lucius loses his social identity. He is completely silenced and deprived of bodily control. His metamorphosis is as much a loss of social status as it is of humanity. Despite his loss of speech, Lucius still seeks to present himself as a privileged member of the elite. He adopts new strategies of communication to negotiate his status and social position relative to his various masters. He tries to distance himself from his lower-class masters verbally, using forensic, human speech. With his upper-class masters, he employs nonverbal, animal forms of communication, attempting to include himself within the social spheres of those he considers close to his own status. In both cases, his communicative tactics fail to establish the status he desires. His unsuccessful human speech only emphasizes his animality,

while his animal performances, intended to please his upper-class masters, render him a slave and parasite. Paradoxically, Lucius' nonverbal braying and gestures are interpreted as human-like, while his attempts at human speech emerge as animal utterances. A self-presentation that aligns with the status imposed by his new body is read as human and good, meaning acceptable to members of his former human class. A self-presentation that clashes with the status imposed by his body, however, is perceived as animal and transgressive.

In this chapter, I have traced the path of Lucius' increasingly unstable characterization as both a man and an ass. Lucius' tale reveals the flexibility of discourse, both verbal and nonverbal, for negotiating a spectrum of hierarchical relationships of status and power. This malleability of communication, self-fashioning, and status is central to the novel's theme of metamorphosis. It also brings into question the status of truth in the novel. Lucius' consistent undermining of his own projected identity, particularly in his speech, challenges the reliability of his narrative as a whole. In light of his contested identity throughout the first ten books of the novel, the disclosure of his status as a priest of Isis in Book 11 should come as no surprise. The miscommunications and misinterpretations of Lucius' narrative prepare the reader for the final revelation of the narrator's identity in the last book of the novel. Thus far, then, we have seen the discourses of speech, gesture, and nonverbal communication fail in the *Metamorphoses*. The next chapter addresses one more form of discourse: silence.

CHAPTER FOUR

Curiosity, Magic, Silence, and Revelation

In Chapter Two, I identified the difference between successful and unsuccessful public speech and self-presentation as dependent on two factors: the speaker's control, meaning both his self-control and his power over his audience, and the speaker's knowledge, which should be superior to that of his audience for him to maintain control of his performance. In comparing Lucius' unsuccessful performance at the Festival of Laughter with the successful speeches of the wise physician in Book 10, however, I suggested that a speaker's possession of superior knowledge is paradoxically *uncontrollable*. It is a matter of happenstance, coincidence, or capricious Fortuna rather than a product of the speaker's superior rhetorical or moral qualities. In this chapter, I turn to Lucius and others' attempts to gain a specific type of superior knowledge: experience of the supernatural. The *Metamorphoses* depicts both magic and religious initiation as paths to knowledge and power. Yet while magic and witchcraft are portrayed as reckless, transgressive, and false, true knowledge of the divine is acquired only through divine revelation. I focus here on the interplay between magical and divine knowledge in the novel, how one acquires them, and the types of discourse associated with each.

In order to explore how Apuleius' *Metamorphoses* conceptualizes the pursuit of superior knowledge, I introduce three sets of binaries: magic and the divine (or witchcraft and initiation into the mysteries), curiosity and revelation, and garrulousness and silence. As we shall see, magic and religious impiety are both linked with the vices of curiosity and garrulousness, which are characterized as transgressive acts of immoderate and uncontrolled seeing, hearing, and speaking. Lucius' initiations into both magic and the mysteries of Isis are accompanied by warnings against curiosity and admonitions to silence. Religious curiosity and silence are differentiated from magical curiosity and silence. Curiosity may be good or bad, reckless or reverent, while silence may be externally or internally imposed, forced or voluntary, and passive or active. I divide my discussion of silence in the *Metamorphoses* along an axis of passivity/activity, contrasting those instances in which characters are threatened to silence by external forces (such as witches, fear of magic, or magical transformation) from those in which characters are voluntarily silent as a form of reverence towards the divine.

I open my discussion with the motif of curiosity, which many have described as the key to interpreting the *Metamorphoses*. I then turn to one of the most famous texts on curiosity in the ancient world, and one that Apuleius himself was likely familiar with: Plutarch's *On Curiosity*, *Περὶ Πολυπραγμοσύνης*. This treatise and the closely related work *On Garrulousness*, *Περὶ Ἀδολεσχίας*, link curiosity and garrulousness as vices of incontinence that can only be cured by learning the habit of self-control. This leads me to the converse of garrulousness: silence. Apuleius' comments in the *Florida* and *Apologia* on the benefits of silence engage with those of philosophers and rhetoricians. They

demonstrate a conceptualization of silence as multifaceted as Apuleius' treatment of curiosity.

After discussing these broad concepts of curiosity, garrulousness, and silence, I return to the *Metamorphoses*, focusing on episodes in which curiosity and silence or garrulousness intersect with the pursuit of magical or divine knowledge.¹ Lucius is characterized from the very beginning of the novel as both curious and garrulous. He ignores numerous cautions against the dangers of curiosity in his obsession with novelties and marvels, including magical knowledge. Disregarding several implicit warnings as well, Lucius at last obtains his longed-for magical initiation through Photis. His curiosity is the catalyst for his metamorphosis into an ass.

Lucius is as curious as an ass as he was a man. His curiosity is depicted ambiguously as both positive and negative. On the one hand, it was the cause of his transformation and it proves a danger to both himself and others. On the other hand, his inquisitiveness is described as his sole source of comfort as an ass. His ability to see and hear the things others try to hide also furnishes him with the very source material of the novel: the chilling, raunchy, and marvelous stories he relates to the reader. Without Lucius' curiosity and interest in telling stories, there would be no *Metamorphoses*.

Alongside these more secular and profane examples of curiosity, there is another type of curiosity characterized as a religious longing for the divine. This is introduced first in the Tale of Cupid and Psyche. Psyche's curiosity about her mysterious husband

¹ I focus in this chapter only on episodes of silence or garrulousness associated with supernatural knowledge. For Lucius and Milo as garrulous men, see Chapter Two. For different types of silence in the *Metamorphoses* and especially the association between silence and powerlessness, see Lateiner (2001), 227-232, 249-251.

may be interpreted as either a transgressive pursuit of knowledge and power beyond the reach of mortals or an innocent yearning for the divine. Cupid's warnings are directed against Psyche's curiosity and the dangers that might arise from her not only seeing but also speaking about what she sees; curiosity is linked again with speech. Finally, after Isis' seaside revelations in Book 11, Lucius' curiosity is directed away from magic towards the mysteries of Isis and Osiris. It is refashioned as a positive curiosity towards true, divine knowledge. At the same time, Lucius exchanges his characteristic garrulousness for a reverent silence about the details of his initiation, denying a story to his equally curious reader for the first time in the novel. Silence becomes as prominent a marker of knowledge and power as speech.

A Brief History of Curiosity

Curiosity plays such a major role in the *Metamorphoses* that it has often been called the "key" to the novel.² The concept of curiosity has a long history in Greek and Latin literature. It was the subject of an ongoing debate as to what it consisted of and to what positive and negative ends it could be directed.³ In Greek, the concept is usually

² Scholarship on the topic is vast. Mette is often credited with being the first to emphasize the importance of *curiositas* as a leitmotif of the novel: Mette (1956). Other prominent studies include Labhardt (1960), Joly (1961), Lancel (1961), Rüdiger (1963), MacKay (1965), Schlam (1968), Wlosok (1969=1999), Sandy (1972), Penwill (1975), Moreschini (1978), Walsh (1988), DeFilippo (1990), Bös (1995), Hijmans (1995), Schmidt (1995), Kirichenko (2008), Leigh (2013). See also Walsh (1970), 176-180; van der Paardt (1971), 208-209; Scobie (1975), 80-82; Griffiths (1975), 248-250, 354; Schlam (1992), 48-57; *GCA* (2007), 33-36.

³ For the history of the concept and its related vocabulary, see Bös (1995), 12-21; Kirichenko (2008), 340-345; and the recent study by Leigh (2013). For the conceptual development of Greek *πολυπραγμοσύνη*, see Ehrenberg (1947); for Latin *curiositas*, see Labhardt (1960).

expressed by the noun *πολυπραγμοσύνη* or its synonym *περιεργία*. A person possessing this characteristic is a *πολυπράγμων* or *περίεργος*.⁴ In their earliest attested uses in the fifth and fourth centuries B.C.E., *πολυπραγμοσύνη* and *περιεργία* express the negative qualities of “officiousness” or “meddlesomeness,” meaning involving oneself excessively in affairs that are not one’s concern. The officious or meddlesome man interferes especially public affairs and litigations, though the private affairs of others might also attract his attention.⁵ From the Hellenistic period onwards, *πολυπραγμοσύνη* could also describe a positive, intellectual curiosity and a desire for philosophical or scientific knowledge.⁶ The debate then became what sorts of philosophical or scientific knowledge were worthy of inquiry and which were merely vain and useless pursuits.

The concept of curiosity follows a parallel and intersecting path in Latin literature. Before Apuleius, however, there was no fixed term for curiosity in Latin. When Aulus Gellius is asked to translate the title of Plutarch’s treatise *Περὶ Πολυπραγμοσύνης* (*On Curiosity*), he cannot find a satisfactory Latin word (*Noct. Att.* 11.16.3). He tentatively suggests a noun he invents, *negotiositas*, but he wishes to check his notes for a more accurate term. Latin authors generally expressed the notion of curiosity through phrases such as *cupiditas noscendi*, “a desire for knowledge,” or *cupiditas discendi*, “a desire for learning.” They might characterize individuals using the

⁴ Ehrenberg (1947); Kirichenko (2008), 341. Labhardt argues that the words *πολυπραγμοσύνη* and *περιεργία* became synonymous in the Hellenistic period (Labhardt (1960), 206). Leigh claims they were synonyms from Plato onwards but he differentiates the root meanings of *πολυπραγμοσύνη*, *περιεργία*, and the less commonly used *φιλοπραγμοσύνη* (Leigh (2013), 5-8).

⁵ This is the sort of *περιεργός* Theophrastus portrays in *Char.* 13; cf. Leigh (2013), 50-52. Leigh defines *πολυπραγμοσύνη* as “...the failure to distinguish between that which is proper to oneself and that which is proper to others...” and “...man’s restless desire to know...” Leigh (2013), 53, 131.

⁶ Kirichenko (2008), 342-344; Leigh (2013), 89, 196.

adjective *curiosus*, which expressed the negative quality of meddlesomeness, although from Cicero onwards it could also express the effort involved in scholarly inquiry.⁷ In Cicero, Seneca, and other Greek and Latin moralists and philosophers, this sort of intellectual curiosity could be good or bad. It depended on whether it was directed towards morally useful topics or towards matters considered useless or beyond the bounds of what human beings should know.⁸ Finally, the related adverb *curiose* was usually more closely tied to its base noun *cura* and indicated doing something “carefully” or “diligently,” though it sometimes means “inquisitively” in Apuleius.⁹

Apuleius and the *Metamorphoses* are often seen as a transitional point in the development of the concept and language of curiosity in Latin literature.¹⁰ The noun *curiositas* appears in Latin only once before Apuleius, in a letter of Cicero (*Att.* 2.12.2); Apuleius appears to have independently invented it for use in his novel.¹¹ He uses it in none of his other extant works, but it appears twelve times in the *Metamorphoses*. The adjective *curiosus* appears another twelve times, and Apuleius also makes use of related words such as the adverbs *curiose* and *curiosius*.¹² In addition to inventing the word

⁷ Labhardt (1960), 207-209; Leigh (2013), 89, 197.

⁸ Labhardt (1960), 207-208, 210-214; Joly (1961) focuses on Seneca; Leigh (2013), 175-183.

⁹ Labhardt (1960), 208; Schlam (1968), 121; Leigh (2013), 55.

¹⁰ Cf. Labhardt (1960), 215-216; Walsh (1988), 75-76, 84-85; Kirichenko (2008), 339-340. For the opposing view, see Joly (1961), 34-35, 43 and Schmidt (1995), 134.

¹¹ Apuleius' independent invention of the word: Labhardt (1960), 216.

¹² See DeFilippo (1990), 471 n. 2; Hijmans (1995), 364-367 (including other expressions for “curiosity”).

Instances of *curiositas* and related words in Apuleius' *Metamorphoses*:

curiositas: *Met.* 1.12, 3.14, 5.6, 5.19, 6.20, 6.21, 9.12, 9.13, 9.15, 11.15, 11.22, 11.23.

curiosus: 1.2, 1.17, 2.4, 2.6, 2.29, 4.16, 5.23, 5.28, 7.13, 9.30, 9.42, 10.29.

curiose: 1.18, 2.1, 5.8, 5.31, 7.1, 10.12.

curiosius: 6.19. Zimmerman's recent edition reads *curare* instead of *curiosius*: Zimmerman (2012), 136.

curiosulus: 11.31.

incuriosa: 5.17.

curiositas, Apuleius transforms the concept. He draws on earlier treatments of curiosity, including Plutarch's treatise on the subject and the characterization of Lucius in the Greek ass-story as a *περίεργος*, but he uses his novel to explore the range of the concept from positive to negative.¹³ The *Metamorphoses* portrays curiosity in all its forms both high and low, becoming a literary investigation of the human quest for knowledge.

Scholarly discussions of curiosity in the *Metamorphoses* have centered around several topics: the motif of *curiositas* as a unifying theme of the novel; the kinds of curiosity Apuleius portrays and their resonances with contemporary philosophical or theological concerns; and whether or not the novel conveys a moral message, i.e., whether curiosity is always negative or always positive or whether certain types of curiosity are better than others.¹⁴ Gunther Bös, Alexander Kirichenko, and Matthew Leigh provide recent, comprehensive summaries of the paradigms of curiosity in Apuleius' *Metamorphoses*.¹⁵ In Books 1-10, positive intellectual curiosity is contrasted with a petty inquisitiveness that delights in spectacles, gossip, and human evils. Lucius' so-called philosophical or scientific inquiry is most often directed towards magic, a

¹³ On curiosity in the Greek *Onos*, see the helpful summary in Kirichenko (2008), 345-350. See also Walsh (1988), 75; Walsh (1970), 176; Scobie (1975), 81-82; Wlosok (1969=1999), 150.

¹⁴ *Curiositas* as a unifying theme: Schlam (1968), Wlosok (1969=1999), Sandy (1972). Philosophical: DeFilippo (1990); Winkle (2013). Religious: Mette (1956); Labhardt (1960), 216, 224; MacKay (1965); Wlosok (1969=1999); Walsh (1988); Schlam (1992), 57; Shumate (1996), 242-249; Kirichenko (2008), 357. The *Metamorphoses* as related to hermetic and magical texts about theurgy: Lancel (1961). Moral message/cautionary tale: MacKay (1965); Scobie (1975), 81; Walsh (1988). No moral message: Penwill (1975), 49-50; DeFilippo (1990); Shumate (1996), 12-13, 121, 147. For two sides of the debate over universally positive or universally negative curiosity in the novel, see DeFilippo (1990); Hijmans (1995); and DeFilippo's reply to Hijmans in his 1997 afterward to his reprinted article in Harrison (1999), 288-289.

¹⁵ Bös (1995), 16-17, 58-84; Kirichenko (2008), 350-367; Leigh (2013), 136-150. Leigh's conclusion that Lucius' innate curiosity should be interpreted with reference to astrology is inadequately supported by the text of the novel: Leigh (2013), 148-150.

particularly dangerous object of curiosity.¹⁶ In the Tale of Cupid and Psyche and Lucius' conversion in Book 11, this paradigm is transferred from the realm of philosophy to that of theology.¹⁷ Psyche's curiosity about her husband and Lucius' obsession with magic are reinterpreted as a blind, misdirected yearning for the divine that is only satisfied through the benevolence of a deity.¹⁸ On a narrative level, curiosity is one of the driving forces of the plot.¹⁹ The reader is also implicated as *curiosus*: his or her curiosity is a prerequisite for reading and enjoying the tales Lucius recounts.²⁰

Perhaps the most extensive discussion of curiosity in the ancient world is Plutarch's treatise *On Curiosity, Περὶ Πολυπραγμοσύνης* (*Mor.* 515b-523b). Apuleius' portrayal of curiosity in the *Metamorphoses* bears close resemblances to Plutarch's. It may have been influenced by it or similar philosophical discussions of the topic.²¹ Plutarch's *On Curiosity* is closely related to the preceding treatise in the *Moralia*, *On Garrulousness, Περὶ Ἀδολεσχίας* (*Mor.* 502b-515a). Plutarch diagnoses excessive talkativeness and meddlesomeness as linked social diseases:

To garrulousness is attached inquisitiveness, no less of an evil; for these people wish to hear many things so that they may have many things to say. And they go about tracking down and seeking out above all secret and

¹⁶ Intellectual vs. petty curiosity: cf. Joly (1961); Schlam (1968), 121; Walsh (1970), 180; (1988); Kirichenko (2008), 359.

¹⁷ Kirichenko (2008), 357.

¹⁸ For magic and religion as two opposed methods of seeking knowledge in the novel, see Labhardt (1960), 215; Lancel (1961); Schlam (1968), 121-123; Wlosok (1969=1999); Walsh (1988), 75-76; Schlam (1992), 50-51; Schmidt (1995); Kirichenko (2008), 359; Leigh (2013), 145-147. For Lucius and Psyche's curiosity as a yearning for the divine, see Penwill (1975), 67, 71; Shumate (1996), 156, 218, 243-245.

¹⁹ Moreschini (1978), 47; Montiglio (2007), 103-104; Leigh (2013), 139. For curiosity as a driving force in other ancient novels, see Scobie (1975), 81-82; Hunter (2009); Leigh (2013), 84-88.

²⁰ Bös (1995), 78-79; *GCA* (2000), 21; Kirichenko (2008), 360-368; Leigh (2013), 148.

²¹ Cf. Walsh (1988), 74-75; Schlam (1992), 57. For Apuleius' relationship with Plutarch, see Walsh (1981), Hunink (2004), Keulen (2004). See also Chapter Two.

concealed tales, storing up their foolishness like some ancient rubbish...
(*Mor.* 508c)²²

...speaking badly necessarily follows along with inquisitiveness; for what they gladly hear they gladly chatter about, and what they zealously gather from some they disclose to others with delight. (*Mor.* 519c)²³

Plutarch depicts the curious man as particularly interested in knowledge of hidden things. These are usually not good: he gives as examples adulterous affairs, lawsuits, and family quarrels.²⁴ Garrulousness, likewise, delights in empty conversation, gossip, and revealing secrets. It is not surprising, then, that no one will trust or want to talk to someone who is meddlesome or loquacious. He will find himself excluded from normal social interactions (*Mor.* 503b-d, 518e, 519e-f). Although this may seem like a fairly minor consequence, these vices, especially curiosity, may become more treacherous:

But these people secretly open the letters of their friends, insinuate themselves into secret meetings, become spectators of sacred rites which it is not lawful to see, tread on holy places, and search out the affairs and words of kings. (*Mor.* 522e-f)²⁵

What begins as petty nosiness may become religious impiety or a politically dangerous action.

Luckily, Plutarch offers a solution: garrulousness is not so bad if one speaks on learned topics. The inquisitive man ought therefore to redirect his investigations towards

²² τῆ δ' ἀδολεσχία καὶ ἡ περιεργία κακὸν οὐκ ἔλαττον πρόσεστι· πολλὰ γὰρ ἀκούειν θέλουσιν, ἵνα πολλὰ λέγειν ἔχωσι· καὶ μάλιστα τοὺς ἀπορρήτους καὶ κεκρυμμένους τῶν λόγων περιόντες ἐξιχνεύουσι καὶ ἀνερευνῶσιν, ὥσπερ ὕλην παλαιάν τινὰ φορυτῶν τῆ φλυαρία παρατιθέμενοι...

²³ ...τῆ δὲ περιεργία τὴν κακολογίαν ἀνάγκη συνακολουθεῖν· ἃ γὰρ ἠδέως ἀκούουσιν ἠδέως λαλοῦσι, καὶ ἃ παρ' ἄλλων σπουδῆ συλλέγουσι πρὸς ἑτέρους μετὰ χαρᾶς ἐκφέρουσι.

²⁴ "...the seduction of a maiden, or the adultery of a wife, or the preparation of a lawsuit, or a dispute of brothers..." ...ἢ φθορὰν τις παρθένου...ἢ μοιχείαν γυναικὸς ἢ δίκης παρασκευὴν ἢ στάσιν ἀδελφῶν... (*Mor.* 518a).

²⁵ ἀλλ' ἐπιστόλια παραλύουσιν οὗτοι φίλων, συνεδρίοις ἀπορρήτοις ἑαυτοὺς παρεμβάλλουσιν, ἱερῶν ἃ μὴ θέμις ὄραν γίνονται θεαταί, τόπους ἀβάτους πατοῦσι, πράγματα καὶ λόγους βασιλικούς ἀνερευνῶσι.

the natural sciences, or perhaps history (*Mor.* 514d, 517c-e.). In this way, intellectual inquiry and discussion may replace mere petty gossip and nosiness. Yet there is an even better cure: “The greatest thing, however, for averting this vice is habituation, if, beginning early on, we train and instruct ourselves in this self-control” (*Mor.* 520d).²⁶ Plutarch recommends waiting to talk until someone else has spoken; writing instead of speaking; refraining from reading public inscriptions, looking into other people’s open doors, or opening one’s mail immediately; and avoiding the theater, the circus, and other public spectacles (*Mor.* 511f-512c, 514c-d, 520d-522e). In Plutarch’s view, talkativeness and meddlesomeness are characterized by immoderate seeing, hearing, and speaking. Although these urges may be redirected towards more salutary objects, the only true cure is self-control.²⁷

The Benefits of Silence

The path to self-control, particularly for those accustomed to talking too much, is silence. Plutarch and Apuleius both praise silence as the first step not only in learning how to speak, but also in learning wisdom and good judgment.²⁸ Plutarch comments, “Those who have obtained a noble and truly royal education learn first to be silent and

²⁶ Μέγιστον μέντοι πρὸς τὴν τοῦ πάθους ἀποτροπὴν ὁ ἐθισμὸς, ἐὰν πόρρωθεν ἀρξάμενοι γυμνάζωμεν ἑαυτοὺς καὶ διδάσκωμεν ἐπὶ τὴν ἐγκράτειαν...

²⁷ Self-control is a prominent theme of both treatises: cf. *Mor.* 506a-b, 507e, 508b, 512c, 512f, 513c-d, 520d, 521f.

²⁸ See also the implicit association of silence and wisdom in *Ad Her.* 4.28.39: “If you are an idiot, for that reason you should be quiet; nevertheless, should you be quiet, you are not for that reason an idiot.” - *Si stultus es, ea re taceas; non tamen si taceas, ea re stultus es.*

then to speak” (*Mor.* 506c).²⁹ Apuleius praises the philosopher Pythagoras for requiring his students to maintain a lengthy period of silence (up to five years). This “exile of the voice” (*exilio vocis*) was “the first lesson in wisdom: to learn well how to think, to unlearn how to speak” (*Fl.* 15.22-25).³⁰ Apuleius claims that in order to be accepted into the school of Plato, who “Pythagorizes in most things,” he had to learn “to speak readily when speech is necessary and to be silent willingly when silence is necessary.” He calls this quality “moderation” (*qua moderatione*) (*Fl.* 26-27).³¹ The goal of this training in silence was not to remain silent, but to learn how to moderate one’s speech to make it more rhetorically effective. Plutarch reminds his reader that concise speakers are praised and viewed as particularly wise (*Mor.* 510e). Aulus Gellius urges that the tongue should not be unrestrained, but chained and steered by the heart, the seat of judgment (*Noct. Att.* 1.15.1).³² Both authors praise Odysseus as a model of reticence whose self-control was the source of his eloquence (*Aul. Gell. Noct. Att.* 1.15.2-3; *Plut. Mor.* 506a).³³ Odysseus is frequently considered a prototype of the novelistic hero. As we shall see, he is also an important model for Lucius in the *Metamorphoses*.

²⁹ οἱ γὰρ εὐγενοῦς καὶ βασιλικῆς τῶ ὄντι παιδείας τυχόντες πρῶτον σιγᾶν εἶτα λαλεῖν μαθάνουσιν.

³⁰ *prorsus, inquam, hoc erat primum sapientiae rudimentum, meditari condiscere, loquitari dediscere.* Plutarch also references Pythagorean silence (*Mor.* 519c). See also Montiglio (2000), 27-28; Van Nuffelen (2007), 15-16.

³¹ “Moreover our Plato...Pythagorizes in most things; and in the same manner, so that I myself might be adopted into his school by my teachers, learned each of these in my academic practices: both to speak readily when speech is necessary and to be silent willingly when silence is necessary.” *porro noster Plato...pythagorissat in plurimis; aequae et ipse ut in nomen eius a magistris meis adoptarer, utrumque meditationibus academicis didici, et, cum dicto opus est, inpigre dicere, et, cum tacito opus est, libenter tacere.*

³² “...moreover they say that the tongue ought not to be unimpeded or wandering, but moved and, as it were, steered by chains fastened from the innermost breast and from the heart.” *...linguam autem debere aiunt non esse liberam nec vagam, sed vinclis de pectore imo ac de corde aptis moveri et quasi gubernari.*

³³ For Odysseus as a model of silence and eloquence, see Montiglio (2000), 256-275, 286-288.

Silence may be not only a method of learning how to speak, but also a highly significant mode of discourse in and of itself. Randall McNeill discusses the social functions of silence, focusing on silence as a marker of hierarchical relationships and personal friendships in Cicero and Catullus. He highlights the polysemic nature of silence, which can be interpreted as a sign of assent, dissent, dominance, or loss of control. He maintains that the most important factor in the use of silence as a discursive tool is whether the “speaker” or his audience/interlocutor controls the interpretation of his silence.³⁴ As in my own discussions of clashes between speakers and audiences over the interpretation of speech in Chapters One through Three, McNeill concludes that controlling the interpretation of silence signals social authority.³⁵

Van Nuffelen discusses the persuasive power of silence by examining the use of a specific type of silence in Plutarch. He argues that mystical silence (a speaker’s appeal to a speech taboo set forth by a mystery cult) is a powerful tool of “truth-suggestion.” It allows a speaker to claim the truth of his words without offering proof.³⁶ According to Plutarch, the knowledge and wisdom conveyed in the mysteries is the same truth as that sought by philosophy. The difference is in the discourse employed to signal truth: the mysteries signify it by silence, while philosophy conveys it through speech, especially

³⁴ McNeill (2010), 70-72. See also Montiglio (2000) on silence in archaic and classical Greek literature; Newbold (1992) on nonverbal communication in the *Satyricon* and *Metamorphoses*; Van Nuffelen (2007) on mystical silence in Plutarch. I focus on the silence of the speaker; for the audience’s silence, see Montiglio (2000), 144-157; McNeill (2010), 72.

³⁵ “...any act of silence is an inherently interactive form of communication, inasmuch as it requires at least two partners for its final meaning to be established. The performer must either control how it is perceived, or else bow to the interpretation given it by its recipient. For silence to be effective as a conversational and pragmatic tool, someone must establish and maintain authority over the discursive space in which the silence occurs,” McNeill (2010), 73. On silence as a form of domination in the *Iliad*, see Montiglio (2000), 54-60.

³⁶ Van Nuffelen (2007), esp. 10, 14, 29.

figurative speech like Platonic myth-making. In both philosophy and the mysteries, truth is located beyond ordinary discourse, although discourse may approach this truth.³⁷ The rhetorical use of mystical silence relies on a balancing act of revelation and concealment. It is only by partially revealing a truth that one may draw attention to its secret nature and one's knowledge of it.

Silence holds a privileged place in ancient discourse. It is a social signal with multiple possible interpretations: it may signify passive submission when externally imposed, or it may indicate power and control when voluntarily undertaken. Silence and moderation in speech signify wisdom and good judgment. Silence is also described as a way of learning self-control. It may define the boundaries of friendship, social authority, and group identity.³⁸ It may also serve (particularly in the case of mystical silence) as a powerful signal of a speaker's superior knowledge. Silence is associated with the divine and with mystery cults: Plutarch says in his *On Garrulousness* that "...in speaking we have men as teachers, but in being silent we have gods, and we receive this silence during initiations into the mysteries" (*Mor.* 505f).³⁹ Silence is linked above all with secrecy and truth, while falseness is associated with curiosity and garrulousness.

³⁷ Van Nuffelen (2007), 29-31.

³⁸ On the Eleusinian mysteries and the "social frontiers" marked by silence, see Montiglio (2000), 32-33.

³⁹ ...τοῦ μὲν λέγειν ἀνθρώπους τοῦ δὲ σιωπᾶν θεοὺς διδασκάλους ἔχομεν, ἐν τελεταῖς καὶ μυστηρίοις σιωπὴν παραλαμβάνοντες.

Unheeded Warnings: Magic and the Dangers of Curiosity

Both curiosity and silence can be either positive or negative. In each case, the most important factor is control, including self-control and control of another's interpretation of that curiosity or silence. Unrestrained curiosity, especially when directed towards low or petty matters, is read as representative of a lack of self-control, while a silence imposed by external forces is perceived as a sign of powerlessness or submission. In Apuleius' *Metamorphoses*, unrestrained and petty curiosity is linked with both talkativeness and externally imposed silence. In the first three books of the novel, Lucius is presented with numerous examples of the dangers of inquisitiveness, garrulousness, and meddling in magical affairs. These only increase his curiosity and obsession with magic. Lucius' escalating lack of self-control leads to his transformation into a mute ass.

As I discussed in Chapter Three, Lucius is characterized from the very first scene in the novel as excessively inquisitive and talkative. This is particularly evident in his attempts to portray himself as an intellectual to the strangers on the road to Hypata and to his Hypatan host Milo. At *Met.* 1.2, his denial that he is *curiosus* is negated by his claim to want to know "everything, or at least most things."⁴⁰ He seeks to frame his curiosity not as the vice of nosy meddling denounced in Plutarch's *On Curiosity*, but as a positive

⁴⁰ ...*velim scire vel cuncta vel certe plurima*. See Chapter Three.

intellectual curiosity. His attention, however, is directed not towards high philosophical matters, but towards low spectacles and entertaining stories.⁴¹

Stories are not the only target of Lucius' curiosity. At the beginning of Book 2, he awakens on his first day in Hypata brimming with excitement:

Impatient in general, and exceedingly desirous to learn rare and marvelous things, and considering that I was in the middle of Thessaly, where local incantations of the art of magic are unanimously celebrated throughout the whole world...in a general state of suspense from both desire and eagerness, I inquisitively examined each and every thing. (*Met.* 2.1)⁴²

This is the first explicit description in the novel of Lucius' interest in magic. It is presented within the framework of his general characterization as impatient, curious, and excessively desirous of all forms of knowledge, especially of "rare and marvelous things," *rara miraque*.⁴³ His desire is later described as a "torturous longing" that dazes and stupefies him, emphasizing that it is an excessive and unhealthful desire (*Met.* 2.2).⁴⁴ Lucius imagines that everything in Hypata is different than it seems, that every object and animal is a transformed human being, that both objects and animals will begin to speak prophecies, and he will receive an oracle from the sky or the sun (*Met.* 2.1). His curiosity is directed not just towards magic, but towards supernatural events in general. At the same time, he confuses the magical and the divine: the events he describes could be

⁴¹ "At the same time, the charming pleasure of stories will smooth out the roughness of the hill we are climbing." *'Simul iugi quod insurgimus aspritudinem fabularum lepida iucunditas levigabit.'* (*Met.* 1.2).

⁴² *...anxius alioquin et nimis cupidus cognoscendi quae rara miraque sunt, reputansque me media Thessaliae loca tenere, quo artis magicae nativa cantamina totius orbis consono ore celebrentur...suspensus alioquin et voto simul et studio, curiose singula considerabam.*

⁴³ *GCA* (2001), 54.

⁴⁴ *Sic attonitus, immo vero cruciabili desiderio stupidus...*

induced by magical practices or - especially in the case of the oracles - governed by the gods.⁴⁵

Lucius is determined to gain access to the supernatural during his stay in Hypata. When Byrrhena warns him to beware his host Milo's wife Pamphile, who is a witch, his reaction is not one of fear but delight:

But in my general curiosity, as soon as I heard the always desirable name of the art of magic, I was so far from being cautious of Pamphile that I was eager to hand myself over willingly to such instruction, along with a great fee, and cast myself straight into that abyss with a quick jump. (*Met.* 2.6)⁴⁶

Lucius' innate curiosity is again linked with his interest in magic. He thinks he has finally found a path to magical knowledge through Pamphile.⁴⁷ On his way back to Milo's, he rejoices that this will provide him with an opportunity to satisfy his great desire for "marvelous stories" (*Met.* 2.6).⁴⁸ Yet rather than approaching Pamphile herself and running the risk of cuckholding his host (Byrrhena warns Lucius about Pamphile's attraction to handsome young men like him), he decides to seduce her maidservant Photis instead. The link between magic and sex is a common theme of all the tales of witches in the *Metamorphoses*. Lucius' curiosity is linked with his desires for both sex and magic, and all of these desires are representative of his general lack of self-control.

⁴⁵ Lucius' curiosity towards the supernatural: see Walsh (1970), 180.

⁴⁶ *At ego curiosus alioquin, ut primum artis magicae semper optatum nomen audivi, tantum a cautela Pamphiles afui ut etiam ultro gestirem tali magisterio me volens ampla cum mercede tradere et prorsus in ipsum barathrum saltu praecipitare.*

⁴⁷ Lucius humorously envisions himself paying a fee to Pamphile for his instruction, as though she were a teacher rather than a witch. In imagining handing himself over (*tradere*) for a fee, Lucius uses the language of slavery and sale, hinting at his future status as an ass. The "great fee" will turn out to be his own metamorphosis. Cf. *GCA* (2001), 130.

⁴⁸ "You have a longed-for opportunity, and you can fill your heart with marvelous stories as you have long desired." *'Habes exoptatam occasionem et voto diutino poteris fabulis miris explere pectus.'*

Lucius pursues his seduction of Photis and his quest for magical knowledge despite numerous warnings about the dangers of curiosity and meddling with magic. His first warning is the first inset tale in the novel, the Tale of Aristomenes (*Met.* 1.5-19). Aristomenes recounts that while he was in the town of Hypata on business, he encountered his old friend Socrates, long thought dead, sitting in the street in rags. After Socrates is clean and fed, he narrates his own tale of woe: on the way to see a gladiatorial show in Larissa, he was robbed by bandits. He stopped at an inn for help and fell into bed with the innkeeper, Meroe. This single act, he says, had disastrous consequences: “And immediately I, wretched, when I slept with her, from a single encounter contracted a lengthy and pestilential relationship” (*Met.* 1.7).⁴⁹ Socrates gave his clothes and all his money to Meroe, until he became the filthy wreck Aristomenes found.

Aristomenes responds to Socrates’ story by chiding him for abandoning his own wife and children in favor of “sexual pleasure and a hoary whore” (*Met.* 1.8).⁵⁰ Socrates warns him to be quiet: he should watch his “intemperate tongue” and cease speaking ill of “that divine woman.”⁵¹ Socrates’ language is reminiscent of religious taboos against speaking about divine matters.⁵² Yet what he reveals are not religious mysteries, but magical ones: Meroe is a witch, known for transforming men into animals and punishing anyone who insults her with her magical powers (*Met.* 1.9-10). Aristomenes is convinced by Socrates’ tales of transformation. He expresses concern that Meroe might learn of

⁴⁹ *‘Et statim miser, ut cum illa adquevi, ab unico congressu annosam ac pestilentem contraho...’* For the disputed reading of this sentence, see *GCA* (2007), 196-197.

⁵⁰ *‘...qui voluptatem veneriam et scortum scortum lari et liberis praetulisti.’*

⁵¹ *‘Parce’ inquit ‘in feminam divinam, ne quam tibi lingua intemperante noxam contrahas.’*

⁵² For Socrates’ use of the gestures and language of religious initiation, see *GCA* (2007), 201-202. For the contrast between the witches and Isis, see Schlam (1968), 121-122; (1992), 50; Penwill (1975), 61.

their conversation by magic (*Met.* 1.11). His fears are revealed to be true shortly after both men fall asleep, when Meroe herself breaks into the room along with her assistant Panthia. While Aristomenes watches from underneath the bed, Meroe chastises him for insulting her and encouraging Socrates' escape:

“...now he lies prostrate on the ground, reclining beneath his little cot, and watches all these things - he thinks that he will get away with insulting me with impunity. Later - no, immediately - no, in truth, at this very moment, I will make him regret his previous loquacious wit and present curiosity.”
(*Met.* 1.12)⁵³

In Meroe's eyes, Aristomenes' fault is a combination of the insults he garrulously babbled earlier and his voyeuristic curiosity in watching the witches' deeds.⁵⁴

Aristomenes continues to gaze in horror as the witches remove Socrates' heart through his neck and patch the hole with a sponge. After urinating on Aristomenes in one last magical act of humiliation, they depart.⁵⁵ Aristomenes fears that he will be blamed for Socrates' death, but Socrates surprisingly awakens. The two quickly depart, with Aristomenes imagining that the whole incident was only a dream. When they stop for lunch in a deserted area, the sponge in Socrates' neck falls out and he collapses, definitely dead at last. Aristomenes fears again that he will be blamed for Socrates' death, so he flees and exiles himself to Aetolia.

The Tale of Aristomenes introduces several important themes. The link between sex and magic is prominent: Socrates directly attributes his misfortunes to his sexual

⁵³ *'...iam humi prostratus grabattulo subcubans iacet et haec omnia conspicit, impune se laturum meas contumelias putat. Faxo eum sero, immo statim, immo vero iam nunc, ut et praecedentis dicacitatis et instantis curiositatis paeniteat.'*

⁵⁴ Aristomenes punished for his curiosity: cf. Scobie (1975), 81.

⁵⁵ On the witches' urination, cf. Keulen (2006).

relationship with the witch Meroe. Likewise, Lucius' sexual relationship with Photis is a path to his own disastrous encounter with magic.⁵⁶ Like Lucius, both Socrates and Aristomenes are curious, though in very different ways. Socrates' interest in spectacles like the gladiatorial show represents the mild sort of curiosity described by Plutarch. Aristomenes' voyeurism of the witches' magical rites reveals a more dangerous side of curiosity that consists of prying into the affairs of those more powerful than oneself.⁵⁷ Curiosity is linked here with garrulousness and intemperate speech. It is dangerous because of the witches' supernatural powers and intolerance of insults. Throughout the Tale of Aristomenes, the languages of magic and religion, especially religious initiation, are conflated. Socrates' admonition of silence takes on the tone of religious taboo, while the description of his death at the hands of Meroe and Panthia resembles a perversion of a religious sacrifice.⁵⁸ Finally, Socrates' encounter with magic leads to his death and Aristomenes' leads to his exile. Displacement, whether by death, exile, mutilation, or transformation, is another common theme in the tales of witches related in the *Metamorphoses*.

Unfortunately, Lucius is oblivious to the warnings against magic, curiosity, and intemperate speech conveyed in the Tale of Aristomenes. In fact, the story only seems to increase his desire to experience magic for himself.⁵⁹ The second warning Lucius

⁵⁶ Lucius and Socrates: "Both becomes victims of a witch, after they have enjoyed her hospitality; in both cases, the sorceress applies magic to erotic ends...and bewitches unwilling lovers. In both cases, a sexual liaison...is the prelude to subjection by magic" (*GCA* (2007), 195-196).

⁵⁷ Socrates' interest in spectacles as a form of curiosity that contributes to his downfall: Shumate (1996), 206; May (2006), 129-130.

⁵⁸ Cf. McCreight (1993).

⁵⁹ Cf. *GCA* (2007), 58, 129.

receives prompts a similar reaction. This time the warning comes not in the form of a story, but a sculpture. During Lucius' first morning in Hypata, he wanders the town seeking out signs of magic (see above). On the way, he meets the wealthy *matrona* Byrrhena, who turns out to be his relative. Byrrhena invites Lucius to her home, where he pauses in the atrium, captivated by its architecture and especially by the statue of Diana at its center. While examining the beautifully carved grotto behind the goddess, Lucius notices another figure:

In the middle of the stone foliage, an image of Actaeon was visible both in stone and in the fountain, leaning down towards the goddess with an inquisitive gaze, changing into a stag - a beast already - waiting for Diana to bathe. (*Met.* 2.4) ⁶⁰

The ekphrasis of the statue of Diana and Actaeon in Byrrhena's atrium has received much scholarly attention. ⁶¹ Of particular note is the description of Actaeon's attitude: he watches the goddess with curiosity, *curioso optutu*, deliberately waiting for her to disrobe and step into the bath. This contrasts with Ovid's description of Actaeon's gaze in his *Metamorphoses* (3.318-252) and *Tristia* (2.105-108). In Ovid, Actaeon sees the goddess and her nude form accidentally. His act of seeing and subsequent metamorphosis and death are a consequence of bad fortune rather than a crime. ⁶² What Ovid frames as a tale

⁶⁰ *Inter medias frondes lapidis Actaeon simulacrum, curioso optutu in deam deorsum proiectus, iam in cervum ferinus et in saxo simul et in fonte loturam Dianam opperiens visitur.*

⁶¹ See in particular *GCA* (2001), 91-92; Baker (2011), 188-197; Dufallo (2012), 244-248. Winkler reads the statue as a symbol of unity and stability that the novel does not quite achieve: Winkler (1985), 168-173.

⁶² "But if you seek rightly, you will find in this the fault of Fortune, not his crime - for what crime does mischance have?" *at bene si quaeras, Fortunae crimen in illo,/non scelus invenies; quod enim scelus error habebat?* (Ovid *Met.* 3.141-142); "Actaeon, unknowing, saw Diana without her clothes; he fled, no small prey himself for his dogs. It is clear that even fortune must be atoned for among the god, nor does chance obtain a pardon when a divinity has been injured." *inscius Actaeon vidit sine veste Dianam:/praeda fuit canibus non minus ille suis./scilicet in superis etiam fortuna luenda est,/nec veniam laeso numine casus*

of the cruelty of fate and the gods, Apuleius reinterprets as a warning against curiosity and magic - for Diana, of course, is the goddess of magic, syncretized with Hecate.⁶³ Actaeon's encounter with magic differs notably from those of Socrates and Aristomenes. While their encounters were accidental, Actaeon's is deliberate. Moreover, the object of his gaze is not a witch, but a goddess. His curiosity thus falls into the realm of religious transgression. It represents an illicit assault on the divine and an attempt to gain knowledge that he should not have.⁶⁴

As with the Tale of Aristomenes, Lucius' reaction to the warnings embodied in the sculpture of Diana and Actaeon is not fear, but delight. Byrrhena interrupts his wonder to state, "Everything you see is yours" (*Met.* 2.5).⁶⁵ On the surface, her words are merely an invitation to Lucius to enjoy her hospitality, but they also foreshadow his own imminent voyeurism and metamorphosis.⁶⁶ Her statement, in conjunction with the statue, is another warning Lucius ignores. He is also oblivious to other examples of the consequences of curiosity and meddling with magic, including the Tale of Thelyphron (*Met.* 2.21-30) and his own humiliation during the Festival of Laughter (*Met.* 3.2-12),

habet (Ovid *Tr.* 2.105-108). On Actaeon in Ovid and Apuleius, see Wlosok (1969=1999), 146-147; *GCA* (2001), 111-112; Baker (2011), 176-197; Leigh (2013), 136-137.

⁶³ Baker argues that despite Lucius' interpretation of Actaeon's guilt, the statue depicts his metamorphosis as occurring before he even sees the goddess nude; his guilt or innocence is ambiguous. His metamorphosis represents not a punishment but the instability of identity; it is as though his metamorphosis is spontaneous (Baker (2011), 196-197). While I agree with Baker's interpretation of instability, her reading of the statue ignores the narrative conventions of ancient art, where lengthy chronologies are often collapsed into a single, static image.

⁶⁴ Cf. Wlosok (1969=1999), 147. As I noted above, Socrates' and Aristomenes' experiences are charged with the language of religious transgression although they are magical.

⁶⁵ *Dum haec identidem rimabundus eximie delector, 'Tua sunt' ait Byrrhena 'cuncta quae vides.'*

⁶⁶ Cf. *GCA* (2001), 116. For parallels between Lucius and Actaeon, see *GCA* (2001), 91-92.

which he learns from Photis had magical origins.⁶⁷ While these two incidents, like the Tale of Aristomenes, involved a sort of innocent curiosity and accidental, unplanned encounters with magic, Lucius' inquisitiveness will be as deliberate as Actaeon's was. With each warning against meddling with magic, Lucius becomes increasingly obsessed until Photis at last provides him with the knowledge he seeks.⁶⁸

Lucius' Magical Initiation

After the Festival of Laughter, Photis seeks Lucius out and asks him to punish her for causing him harm (*Met.* 3.13). Although Lucius does not know what she is talking about, his characteristic curiosity is piqued by the idea of learning a secret: "Swayed by my habitual curiosity and eager to lay bare the hidden cause of the event, I replied..." (*Met.* 3.14).⁶⁹ He asks what Photis means, but before she will tell him she locks the door: "Let me first carefully shut the bedroom door, lest by the profane carelessness of indiscrete speech I should commit a great offence" (*Met.* 3.15).⁷⁰ Her caution resembles that of Socrates, who was also concerned that revealing secrets through intemperate speech might cause him harm. Like Socrates, Photis delivers her warning in language reminiscent of religious prohibitions against speech.

⁶⁷ See Chapter Three. For other unheeded warnings, see Walsh (1970), 177-179.

⁶⁸ *GCA* (2001), 16-17.

⁶⁹ *Tunc ego familiaris curiositatis admonitus factique causam delitiscentem nudari gestiens suscipio...*

⁷⁰ *'Patere,' inquit 'oro, prius fores cubiculi diligenter obcludam, ne sermonis elapsi profana petulantia committam grande flagitium.'*

The religious overtones of Photis' words become even more apparent after she bolts the doors. Her revelation is preceded by a lengthy admonition to silence:

“I am afraid,” she said, “I am mightily frightened to uncover the concealed matters of this house and reveal my mistress's hidden mysteries. But I assume better of you and your learning; for besides the noble rank of your birth, besides your lofty character, you have been initiated into many mysteries and certainly understand the sacred trust of silence. And so whatever I entrust to the sanctuary of your devout heart, always guard these things locked within its precinct, I beg, and repay the candor of my story with the persistence of your silence.” (*Met.* 3.15)⁷¹

Photis expresses a sense of fear at the thought of relating Pamphile's secrets to Lucius. It is unclear whether her fear is directed towards her mistress's potential anger, as Socrates' was, or simply because she is about to speak of something secret. She believes Lucius to be a trustworthy listener not only because of his high status and good character but also because he has been initiated into many mystery cults. Prohibitions against speech were a standard feature of these cults, as we saw in Plutarch's *On Garrulousness*. Photis' entreaty, much like Socrates', employs the language of initiation to adjure Lucius to silence, but her appeal is even more overtly religious.⁷² In addition to her reference to Lucius' previous initiations, she asks him to keep the knowledge she will reveal locked in

⁷¹ *'Paveo' inquit 'et formido solide domus huius operta detegere et arcana dominae meae revelare secreta. Sed melius de te doctrinaque tua praesumo, qui praeter generosam natalium dignitatem, praeter sublime ingenium, sacris pluribus initiatus profecto nosti sanctam silentii fidem. Quaecumque itaque commiserero huius religiosi pectoris tui penetralibus, semper haec intra conceptum clausa custodias, oro, et simplicitatem relationis meae tenacitate taciturnitatis tuae remunerare.*

⁷² Cf. Schlam (1968), 121-122; Schmidt (1982); (1995), 128.

the “sanctuary” of his heart.⁷³ Her words parallel the pledge of devotion Lucius makes to Isis at *Met.* 11.25.⁷⁴

Photis’ revelations, however, are magical rather than divine. She promises to reveal to Lucius something that “she alone of all mortals” knows (*Met.* 3.15).⁷⁵ Her mistress Pamphile is a witch with amazing powers, which she uses primarily to compel the affections of handsome young men. Due to Photis’ own mistakes, Pamphile’s most recent spell led to the accidental animation of the three wineskins Lucius slew at the end of Book 2. These provided excellent props for his fake murder trial during the Festival of Laughter (*Met.* 3.16-18). It is this accident for which Photis seeks atonement. Lucius promises forgiveness if she will grant him what he most desires:

“But, to win my willing pardon for that whole misdeed by which you entangled me in such great anguish, grant me what I clamor for with the greatest desire and show me your mistress when she is working at something of that divine craft and let me see her when she is invoking the gods, or at least undergoing a transformation. For I most ardently desire to learn about magic face-to-face...” (*Met.* 3.19)⁷⁶

Lucius’ most heartfelt desire is to witness some supernatural act with his own eyes. This desire falls within the framework of Lucius’ insatiable curiosity: he is most desirous (*summis votis*) and ardently passionate to gain a knowledge of magic (*magiae noscendae ardentissimus cupitor*). This phrase *noscendae cupitor* is one of the Latin expressions

⁷³ She entreats him to silence once more at the end of their discussion, after she has promised to allow Lucius to watch Pamphile working magic (*Met.* 3.20).

⁷⁴ Many scholars have interpreted Photis as an “anti-Isis” figure: cf. *GCA* (2001), 409-411 with bibliography. For Photis as Isis’ earthly counterpart, see Carver (1990).

⁷⁵ ...*quae sola mortalium novi...*

⁷⁶ ‘*Sed ut ex animo tibi volens omne delictum quo me tantis angoribus implicasti remittam, praesta quod summis votis expostulo, et dominam tuam, cum aliquid huius divinae disciplinae molitur, ostende, cum deos invocat, certe cum reformatur, videam. Sum namque coram magiae noscendae ardentissimus cupitor...*’

commonly used to express the concept of curiosity. Like Photis, Lucius conflates magic and religion, referring to magic as a “divine craft,” *divinae disciplinae*. What he wants to see most is Pamphile invoking the gods, but he will settle for watching her transform into another shape. He finally obtains his goal, watching through a crack in the door as Pamphile transforms herself into an owl, but seeing is no longer enough to satisfy his curiosity (*Met.* 3.21). His desire to experience a magical metamorphosis for himself proves his downfall as he is transformed not into the owl or noble eagle he envisions, but into an ass.⁷⁷

Asinine Curiosity, or How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love My Ears

Although Lucius loses his identity, social status, and power of speech as an ass, his innate character remains unchanged. He remains gluttonous, lustful, excessively curious, and unable to control himself or the boundaries of his body.⁷⁸ His asinine inquisitiveness is directed towards the same things as his human curiosity: low spectacles, the supernatural, and anything that makes for an entertaining story. His curiosity is closely tied to his role as the novel’s narrator. Lucius the ass is silenced as a character within the novel, but as the narrator he retains his loquaciousness in relating every story he hears or sees to his audience, the reader.⁷⁹ The stories he relates are the

⁷⁷ For the ass as an animal particularly appropriate for Lucius because of his curiosity, see DeFilippo (1990), 489, 491.

⁷⁸ See Chapter Three.

⁷⁹ Lucius’ curiosity tied to his role as narrator: Keulen (2004), 267; Montiglio (2007), 104; *GCA* (2007b), 34. See also Chapter Five.

kind Plutarch says the curious man is particularly attracted to: tragic tales of other's woes, including murders, adulterous wives, and sexual perversities.⁸⁰

Despite the low nature of most of the stories Lucius relates, his curiosity is still depicted ambiguously as alternately positive and negative.⁸¹ His meddlesomeness also continues to be directed towards hidden things and revealing secrets. In Book 9, his curiosity about the miller's wife and her suspicious activities leads him to discover the details of her adulterous affairs.⁸² Although he mourns that he cannot see what she is up to since, as a mill-donkey, he wears blinders over his eyes, he rejoices that at least his ears are in good shape:

But - though deeply angry at the mistake of Photis, who, while trying to fashion me into a bird made me an ass - I was cheered nevertheless by this single consolation in my miserable disfigurement: that, provided with giant ears, I could very easily hear everything even at quite a distance. (*Met.* 9.15)⁸³

Lucius' transformation has in fact enhanced his ability to pry into others' affairs!

Although he takes a certain amount of pleasure in his meddling here, it does not have a positive outcome. He exposes the miller's wife's affair with Philesitherus out of a sense of offended morality.⁸⁴ The result of his interference, however, is the miller's death at

⁸⁰ Schlam (1992), 51-52; *GCA* (2007), 34; Kirichenko (2008), 355.

⁸¹ See Leigh (2013), 143.

⁸² "This cruelty increased all the more my innate curiosity about her behavior." *Quae saevitia multo mihi magis genuinam curiositatem in suos mores ampliaverat* (*Met.* 9.15).

⁸³ *At ego, quamquam graviter suscensens errori Photidis, quae me dum avem fabricat perfecit asinum, isto tamen vel unico solacio aerumnabilis deformitatis meae recreabar, quod auribus grandissimis praeditus cuncta longule etiam dissita facillime sentiebam.*

⁸⁴ "But my innermost heart was torn by thinking about the previous outrage and present effrontery of the degenerate woman, and I deliberated painstakingly whether I could in some way, by uncovering or revealing her trickery, bring aid to my master..." *Sed mihi penita carpebantur praecordia et praecedens facinus et praesentem deterrimae feminae constantiam cogitanti, mecumque sedulo deliberabam si quo modo possem detectis ac revelatis fraudibus auxilium meo perhibere domino...* (*Met.* 9.26).

the hands of a witch hired by his humiliated wife. Lucius emphasizes his curiosity again at the end of this episode when he relates his knowledge of the witch's role in the miller's death: "So hear how I, a curious man bearing the form of a pack-animal, learned everything that was done to destroy my miller." (*Met.* 9.30)⁸⁵ Unfortunately, Lucius' knowledge is useless. Given the constraints of his mute, animal body, he cannot tell anyone the truth (or at least what he asserts is the truth) - except the reader.⁸⁶

Lucius' curiosity causes more destruction at the end of Book 9, when he accidentally betrays one of his few kind masters, the poor market-gardener, to the imperial soldiers searching for him. Although the gardener and Lucius are safely hidden in a friend's house, Lucius overhears the soldiers arguing outside and cannot resist investigating:

When I heard that shouting and noisy uproar, being a generally curious ass possessed of a restless impulsiveness, I turned my neck sideways, longing to see through a certain little window what that commotion meant. (*Met.* 9.42)⁸⁷

The soldiers recognize the ass, search the house, and find the gardener. As they lead him off to face jail and execution, they mock the ass for his act of peering out the window.

⁸⁵ *Accipe igitur quem ad modum homo curiosus iumentum faciem sustinens cuncta quae in perniciem pistoris mei gesta sunt cognovi.* Lucius' emphasis on his humanity (*homo curiosus*) is in part a reply to his imagined reader's criticism: "But perhaps as a careful reader you will object to my narrative and argue thus: 'But how could you, you clever little ass, confined within the boundaries of the mill, know what the women were doing in secret, as you assert?'" *Sed forsitan lector scrupulosus reprehendens narratum meum sic argumentaberis: 'Unde autem tu, astutule asine, intra terminos pistrini contentus, quid secreto, ut adfirmas, mulieres gesserint, scire potuisti?'* Cf. *GCA* (1995), 257. For another interpretation of Lucius' emphasis on *homo*, see below.

⁸⁶ Lucius' narrative is suspect as he is self-admittedly confined to the mill; Hijmans et al. suggest that his imagined reader's criticism is a hint to the actual reader to question the trustworthiness of his narrative (*GCA* (1995), 257-258). See also Chapter Five.

⁸⁷ *Qua contentione et clamosa strepitu cognito, curiosus alioquin et inquieti procacitate praeditus asinus, dum obliquata cervice per quandam fenestrulam quidnam sibi vellet tumultus ille prospicere gestio, unus e commilitonibus casu fortuito conlimatis oculis ad umbram meam cunctos testatur incoram.*

Lucius' curiosity, linked again with his desire to see and know, has gotten him into trouble. Hijmans et al. note that this is the third time the ass has betrayed someone in addition to the priests of the Syrian Goddess at *Met.* 8.29 and the miller's wife in the episode discussed above.⁸⁸ This is the first time, however, that his betrayal has been accidental rather than a result of moral indignation. Lucius acknowledges the dark side of his curiosity in this episode. Before, he took pleasure in his curiosity and claimed it as a human quality, calling himself "a curious man," *homo curiosus*. Here he connects his curiosity and impulsiveness with his asinine identity, *curiosus...asinus*, in an attempt to distance himself from it.⁸⁹

Lucius' asinine inquisitiveness seems thus far to be an exclusively negative and dangerous quality, at least for those around him.⁹⁰ Yet during his first day at the mill, he asserts that his curiosity is pleasurable and even beneficial, if only for himself. Exhausted after a long day of work, Lucius postpones his supper to examine his surroundings:

...nevertheless, inspired and quite impatient because of my habitual curiosity...I observed the routine of the undesirable workshop with a certain delight. (*Met.* 9.12)⁹¹

He describes the wretched state of the mill-slaves and the equally wretched shape of the animals. Reflecting on his own misfortunes, he mourns the loss of his human identity.

The only solace for his circumstances is his curiosity:

⁸⁸ *GCA* (1995), 354. For Lucius' betrayal of the priests of the Syrian Goddess, see Chapter Three.

⁸⁹ See Chapter Three on the differentiation between Lucius' human and animal selves.

⁹⁰ Lucius' curiosity as an ass is highlighted in two other instances, although both of these are neutral rather than strictly positive or negative: *Met.* 7.13 (Lucius wants to see the bandits' capture) and *Met.* 10.29 (Lucius takes pleasure in watching the show at Corinth despite his impending fate).

⁹¹ ...*tamen familiari curiositate attonitus et satis anxius...inoptabilis officinae disciplinam cum delectatione quadam arbitrabar.*

Nor was there any consolation anywhere for my torturous life, except that I was revived by my innate curiosity, since everyone, taking little notice of my presence, freely did and said what they wished. Nor was it without merit that the divine inventor of ancient poetry among the Greeks, desiring to portray a man of the highest wisdom, sang that he attained the highest excellence by visiting many cities and learning about various peoples. For I too remember my ass-self with grateful gratitude because, while I was disguised by his hide and trained in various fortunes, he made me much-knowing, if less wise. (*Met.* 9.13)⁹²

Lucius' consolation is that his animal form facilitates his inquisitiveness, since no one thinks to conceal their secrets from the eyes and ears of an animal. He claims that his meddlesomeness is also educational: like the great Odysseus, he has learned many things during his travels as an ass.⁹³ The comparison is not exact, for Lucius calls Odysseus a "man of the highest wisdom," *summae prudentiae virum*, but says that his own journey and experiences have made him "less wise," *minus prudentem*. They have, however, brought him a great deal of knowledge, making him *multiscius*, "much-knowing."

Lucius draws a distinction between knowledge and wisdom, contrasting *minus prudentem* with the Apuleian neologism *multiscius*.⁹⁴ His statement recalls a famous saying of the pre-Socratic philosopher Heraclitus: "Much learning does not teach one to

⁹² *Nec ullum uspiam cruciabilis vitae solacium aderat, nisi quod ingenita mihi curiositate recreabar, dum praesentiam meam parvi facientes libere quae volunt omnes et agunt et loquuntur. Nec inmerito priscae poeticae divinus auctor apud Graecos summae prudentiae virum monstrare cupiens, multarum civitatum obitu et variorum populorum cognitu summas adeptum virtutes cecinit. Nam et ipse gratas gratias asino meo memini, quod me suo celatum tegmine variisque fortunis exercitatum, etsi minus prudentem, multiscium reddidit.*

⁹³ Apuleius translates Hom. *Od.* 1.3: "he visited the cities of many men and learned their minds" - πολλῶν δ' ἀνθρώπων ἴδεν ἄστεα καὶ νόον ἔγνω. There has been much discussion of this comparison between Lucius and Odysseus and particularly the contrast between knowledge and wisdom; see Schlam (1968), 123; Harrison (1990a); Montiglio (2007).

⁹⁴ The word appears only here in the *Metamorphoses*, but twice in the *Florida* and once in the *Apologia*; cf. *GCA* (1995), 132. Montiglio (2007), 100 claims that the word is always used in a "laudatory sense," but it is actually used in each of these instances as an insult (*Fl.* 3.9, Marsyas of Apollo) or to draw an unfavorable contrast between Apuleius and someone else (*Fl.* 9.24, Hippias vs. Apuleius; *Apol.* 31.5, in reference to Homer's knowledge of magic).

have wisdom” (fr. 40).⁹⁵ André Labhardt was the first to suggest that *multiscius* is Apuleius’ translation of *πολυμαθία*, “much learning,” a word central to Greek debates over the proper limits of human knowledge and curiosity.⁹⁶ Wisdom, *prudentia*, is more difficult to define, but it seems to refer to the judicious application of knowledge, the ability to differentiate between good and bad and between what should and should not be done.⁹⁷ Lucius the narrator, looking back on his experiences as an ass, claims that he gained knowledge but not wisdom. But what exactly does Lucius’ vaunted knowledge consist of? He gives an example just after this speech comparing himself to Odysseus: “So here is a story, better than the rest before, charming, and elegant, which I have decided to convey to your ears...” (*Met.* 9.14)⁹⁸ With these words, Lucius begins his series of tales about adulterous women, including the tale of the miller’s wife and the infamous Tale of the Tub. Lucius’ knowledge consists of the stories within the novel itself, including the adventures of murderous bandits, tales of adultery, horror stories of man-eating animals, and tragedies both high and low.⁹⁹ Once again, the intellectual curiosity Lucius claims sounds more like Plutarch’s petty inquisitiveness. His travels as an ass turn on its head the trope of the philosopher’s odyssey as a path to wisdom.

⁹⁵ *πολυμαθία νόον ἔχειν οὐ διδάσκει* (Heraclitus B40 = Ath. 610B = Diog. Laert. 8.6). Cf. Penwill (1975), 69; Leigh (2013), 171. Heraclitus was particularly influential on the Stoics; we might recall from *Met.* 1.4 that Lucius seems to be a student of the Stoic school (see Chapter Three).

⁹⁶ Labhardt refers to *πολυμαθία* as “a form of undisciplined curiosity,” *une forme de curiosité indisciplinée* (Labhardt (1960), 215, 210).

⁹⁷ Cicero defines *prudentia* as “the knowledge of good and bad things”; cf. Montiglio (2007), 101. In the *Ad Herrenium*, *prudentia* can be the ability to distinguish good from bad, the knowledge of an art, a good memory, or diverse experiences (3.2.3). In Quintilian it is knowing not only what to do and what not to do, but also what to say in a given set of circumstances (2.20.5, 6.5.11). Like Heraclitus, Quintilian prioritizes wisdom over knowledge: “Wisdom without learning is worth more than learning without wisdom” - *plusque vel sine doctrina prudentiam quam sine prudentia facere doctrinam* (6.5.11).

⁹⁸ *Fabulam denique bonam, prae ceteris suavem, compertam ad auris vestras adferre decrevi, et en occipo.*

⁹⁹ Montiglio (2007), 103-104.

Despite his pretensions as a philosopher and intellectual, he has gained no wisdom at all from visiting many places and knowing the minds of diverse peoples.¹⁰⁰

Silence and Revelation

As both a man and an ass, Lucius' curiosity turns out to be directed towards false paths to wisdom. He is interested in stories, marvels, low gossip, and the supernatural. He is incapable or unwilling to see the negative consequences of his curiosity, which he so often portrays as intellectual, well intentioned, or comforting. Furthermore, he is unable to judge what objects are worthy of his attention, blurring the lines between magic and the divine and between knowledge and wisdom. His investigations into the realms of magic are less an act of divine transgression - a deliberate quest for knowledge and power - than they are a mistake in judgment, the blindness of a well-educated young man who has not yet learned to discriminate between harmful and beneficial objects of study.¹⁰¹ It remains to be seen whether he is able to acquire this wisdom by the end of the novel.

Lucius' foolish innocence and inability to distinguish between good and bad link him with the character of Psyche in the long inset Tale of Cupid and Psyche. The Tale of Cupid and Psyche is usually interpreted as a *mise-en-abyme* of the novel as a whole, with

¹⁰⁰ Montiglio (2007), 100-101; Leigh (2013), 94-96, 127-128.

¹⁰¹ Lucius' curiosity as transgressive: Schlam (1968), 121-122. My reading is influenced by Shumate, who argues for Lucius and Psyche's moral innocence (Shumate (1996), 243 n. 32, 255, 258-259). See also Penwill (1975), 67: "...having no knowledge of the true reality and no-one to guide him, he is in no position to exercise any discrimination. He wants to know *everything* - not just what is worth knowing."

Psyche as Lucius' mythological double.¹⁰² Psyche is also characterized by her uncontrollable *curiositas* and her *simplicitas* or extreme naivety. Where Lucius' curiosity was misdirected towards stories, spectacles, and magic, Psyche's is a more innocently misdirected desire to see her husband's face. Unbeknownst to her, her husband is the god Cupid. Her desire to see his face - and thus gain knowledge of his divinity - is perhaps not so different from Lucius' quest for supernatural knowledge. Like Lucius, she receives numerous warnings about the potential dangers of curiosity. These are combined with admonitions against both seeing and speaking about her husband. Her unthinking slips of the tongue along with her curiosity lead her into an accidental act of divine transgression. This results in a loss of status as drastic as Lucius' own after his metamorphosis.

During the Tale of Cupid and Psyche, Psyche's mysterious husband delivers four warnings against the dangers of curiosity and against seeing, hearing, and speaking. His first caution is relatively vague, admonishing Psyche to neither listen to nor look at her sisters when they approach in their search for her (*Met.* 5.5). Just as Lucius' curiosity is only further provoked by the warnings he receives, Psyche's husband's warning prompts her to beg him to allow her sisters to visit. He consents, but delivers another, more specific warning: he tells her to ignore her sisters' encouragement to seek knowledge of his appearance, "...lest through her sacrilegious curiosity she should cast herself down

¹⁰² Kenney (1990), 12-17; *GCA* (2004), 9. For the tale and its place in the novel, see the collected articles in *AAGA* 2. The tale is often interpreted as a Platonic allegory: cf. Shumate (1996), 259, 260 n. 7 with bibliography. For counterarguments, see Lancel (1961); Penwill (1975), 50-59. For Cupid and Psyche as a mythological comedy, see May (2006), 208-248.

from such a great height of fortune and never afterwards feel his embrace” (*Met.* 5.6).¹⁰³

Psyche’s curiosity is now framed into the context of a divine transgression which could cost her both her husband and her current social position.

Psyche’s sisters visit her in her palatial surroundings and conclude (correctly) that her husband must be a god. Tormented by jealousy, they devise a plan to further her curiosity about her husband’s appearance in order to make him angry with her.¹⁰⁴

Psyche’s husband, meanwhile, delivers a third warning, saying that even speaking about him will have divine consequences:

“For now we are about to increase our family, and this womb of yours, although still a child’s, bears for us another child who - if you protect our secrets in silence - will be divine, but if you profane it - mortal.” (*Met.* 5.11)¹⁰⁵

Curiosity and garrulousness are combined again. Curiosity is framed as seeking an illicit knowledge of the divine, while revealing that knowledge through speech is the greatest impiety. In a final warning, Psyche’s husband urges her to resist looking at or listening to her sisters by her “religious self-control,” *religiosa continentia* (*Met.* 5.12).¹⁰⁶

Unfortunately, Psyche is misled by her sisters’ false tales that her husband is a monster and forgets her promises of self-control. She follows their directions and at last sees her husband’s divine face. Her act of viewing is described as a religious experience:

¹⁰³ ...neve se sacrilega curiositate de tanto fortunarum suggestu pessum deiciat nec suum postea contingat amplexum.

¹⁰⁴ Psyche’s sisters are also characterized as meddling: they question her “carefully and inquisitively” about her husband (*satis scrupulose curioseque*; *Met.* 5.8).

¹⁰⁵ ‘*Nam et familiam nostram iam propagabimus et hic adhuc infantilis uterus gestat nobis infantem alium, si texeris nostra secreta silentio, divinum, si profanaveris, mortalem.*’

¹⁰⁶ For the multiple meanings of *religiosa* here, which range from “conscientious” to “religious,” see *GCA* (2004), 194.

her lamp illuminates the “mysteries of the bed,” *tori secreta*, the razor she holds has a “sacrilegious sharpness,” *acuminis sacrilegi*, and she at last recognizes Cupid with his “divine appearance,” *divini vultus* and ambrosial hair (*Met.* 5.22). Insatiably, curiously, and enflamed with desire, she examines her husband’s weapons and kisses his sleeping form (*Met.* 5.23).¹⁰⁷ In her uncontrollable excitement - her lack of self-restraint - she causes her own downfall. As she kisses Cupid, the lamp she is holding drips hot oil onto his shoulder and awakens him. The consequences are immediate: Cupid flies away and Psyche, clinging vainly to his leg, falls back to the earth. Her fall represents a loss of status just as Lucius’ metamorphosis did. Before, she was a princess and concubine of a god, but now she wanders the earth as an exile. When she finally surrenders herself to Venus, she is treated as a runaway slave, beaten and forced to labor at seemingly impossible tasks.

Psyche’s final task is to retrieve from the underworld a box of the goddess Proserpina’s beauty. She is warned neither to open the box nor to think about it too much (*Met.* 6.19). Once again, she is unable to control her curiosity:

When she had returned and paid homage to that bright daylight, although in a hurry to complete her task, her mind was captivated by a rash curiosity. “Look,” she said, “at what a foolish carrier of divine beauty I am, for not skimming off for myself just a little from that same source, so that I might at least please my handsome lover.” (*Met.* 6.20)¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁷ *Quae dum insatiabili animo Psyche, satis et curiosa...Tunc magis magisque cupidine flagrans Cupidinis...*

¹⁰⁸ *Et repetita atque adorata candida ista luce, quamquam festinans obsequium terminare, mentem capitur temeraria curiositate. Et ‘Ecce’ inquit ‘inepta ego divinae formonsitatis gerula, quae nec tantillum quidem indidem mihi delibo, vel sic illi amatori meo formonso placitura.’*

In opening the box, Psyche's curiosity veers into the realm of religious transgression, as she seeks to take some of its divine contents for herself.¹⁰⁹ Yet her intentions are innocent: she seeks not power or knowledge, but a beauty that would make her worthy of her handsome husband. Her fault, like Lucius', is not so much one of grasping or presumptive curiosity, but of chasing after the wrong things in the wrong ways.¹¹⁰ This time, her actions cause not a loss of status but a death-like sleep.

Fortunately, Cupid arrives to save Psyche from her error. After awakening her and chiding her once more for her curiosity (*Met.* 6.21), he ends up not restoring but elevating her status by convincing Jupiter to make her a goddess. Psyche at last achieves knowledge of the divine, though it was not a knowledge she deliberately sought. Throughout the tale, she is surprisingly oblivious to her husband's divinity and its implications for her own status. By contrast, her sisters surmise these without even encountering her husband. Her apotheosis and personal knowledge of the divine occur not through any action of her own but in spite of her mistakes. The message of the tale then, is not quite one of punishment and redemption for a transgressive curiosity or a presumptuous grasping for the divine. What the Tale of Cupid and Psyche tells us is that true knowledge of the divine can only be granted by the benevolent act of a god - through revelation. It is an invitation-only affair.

¹⁰⁹ Cf. Wlosok (1969=1999), 149; Schlam (1968), 122; (1992), 50.

¹¹⁰ Cf. Shumate (1996), 252: "...the tale describes Psyche's habit of allowing her desire to be displaced onto 'false' objects, and her tendency to derive pleasure from spurious and transient sources. This incorrect orientation is the substance and the cause of her separation from pristine union with divinity, and results, as it does for Lucius, in a period of trials and exile. Only with the realization that the divine is the 'true' object of her desire does Psyche at last experience...enduring pleasure."

In the final book of the novel, Lucius receives his own invitation to divine knowledge in the form of the goddess Isis. She appears to him in an epiphany and provides him with the means to safely return to his human form. As I mentioned previously, Lucius' sufferings as an ass do not seem to have a particular moral value attached to them. Yet after his anamorphosis - his transformation back into human form - Isis' priest Mithras explicitly interprets his misfortunes as a consequence of his curiosity:

“Neither your birth, nor even your social standing, nor that education that served you well everywhere were an advantage to you, but on the slippery path of flourishing youth you fell into servile pleasures and earned the perverse reward of ill-starred curiosity.” (*Met.* 11.15)¹¹¹

Although Mithras' words are not the only possible interpretation of Lucius' experiences, they do link his curiosity with his metamorphosis and trials as an ass.¹¹² Like Psyche, Lucius is only saved from the consequences of his foolish curiosity by divine beneficence. He pledges his service to Isis and seeks initiation into her cult. His curiosity - his desire for knowledge - is now positively directed towards the divine rather than towards the false paths of magic, marvels, stories, and sex. Although he retains his propensity for excessive impatience, his urges are tamed and redirected by an external power. Despite his eagerness to be initiated, he finds that he must wait for the day the goddess determines (*Met.* 11.21). His eventual initiation into the mysteries is described as a revelation of divine knowledge. As in Psyche's case, this revelation can only be granted by the will of the divine.

¹¹¹ *'Nec tibi natales ac ne dignitas quidem, vel ipsa qua flores usquam doctrina profuit, sed lubrico virentis aetatulae ad serviles delapsus voluptates, curiositatis inprosperae sinistrum praemium reportasti.'*

¹¹² For other interpretations of Lucius' metamorphosis and anamorphosis, see Chapter Five.

At last, Isis announces the day of Lucius' initiation in a dream. The priest begins by reading to him from books whose letters are obscured "to defend their reading by the curiosity of the uninitiated" (*Met.* 11.22).¹¹³ He gives Lucius verbal instructions both secretly and openly (*Met.* 11.23). Although Lucius does not relate the details of these books or instructions, he provides plenty of information about his ritual preparations: the purifactory bath, abstinence from meat and alcohol, his linen clothing, and his path to the inner sanctuary. Although we have followed him thus far, here he stops and turns to address us, his readers:

Perhaps you are inquiring quite anxiously, zealous reader, what was said then and what was done. I would tell if it were permitted to tell, you would learn if it were permitted to hear. But both ears and tongue would commit an equal crime, the tongue by its unlawful immoderation, the ears from their rash curiosity. Nevertheless, since you are perhaps in suspense because of religious longing, I will no longer torture you with anxiety. (*Met.* 11.23)¹¹⁴

The reader is characterized here, as throughout the novel, as curious. At numerous points, Lucius addresses the imagined questions of his reader, who always demands more details that Lucius happily provides.¹¹⁵ Curiosity is figured as a prerequisite for the process of reading the novel. Here, for the first time, Lucius refuses to satisfy his inquisitive reader. The reader's curiosity is now portrayed as impious, as is the possibility of Lucius' speech. But while Lucius has been the poster child for uncontrolled meddlesomeness and talkativeness throughout the novel, here at last he seems to have learned moderation and

¹¹³ ...a curiositate profanorum lectione munita.

¹¹⁴ *Quaeras forsitan satis anxie, studiose lector, quid deinde dictum, quid factum. Dicerem si dicere liceret, cognosceres si liceret audire. Sed parem noxam contraherent et aures et lingua, illicitae intemperantiae ista, illae temerariae curiositatis. Nec te tamen desiderio forsitan religioso suspensum angore diutino cruciabo. Igitur audi, sed crede, quae vera sunt.*

¹¹⁵ See Chapter Five.

restraint. In place of his former gluttony, he fasts and abstains from eating meat. He is granted a supernatural knowledge that finally seems to satisfy him, and he seems to have learned the value of patience and silence.

Conclusion

Although Lucius seems to have learned to curb his inquisitiveness by the end of the novel, the reader is as curious as ever. Lucius attempts to put a positive spin on this, suggesting that it may be a legitimate yearning for divine knowledge. Yet even then he refuses to satisfy it fully, giving only enough details to confuse and further intrigue. In this conversation, Lucius at last has the upper hand. Though deprived of control through most of the novel, both physically and verbally, as both a man and an ass, in the end he wields power over the reader through a privileged knowledge of the divine that he denies access to by his circumspect speech and silence. The reader, like Lucius and Psyche, must wait for his or her own revelation.

CHAPTER FIVE

The Narrator's Identity and the Novel as Discourse

In the second book of the *Metamorphoses*, Lucius recounts to Milo a prophecy he received from the Chaldaean astrologer Diophanes at the beginning of his journey from Corinth to Thessaly:

“Finally, when I inquired into the outcome of this journey, he replied with many things both exceedingly marvelous and rather varied: namely, that on the one hand my glory will really blossom, and on the other hand I will be a great account, an unbelievable tale, and a multivolume book.” (*Met.* 2.12)¹

Diophanes' prophecy is rather obscure, and Milo's subsequent tale of his fraud and public humiliation undermines any authority he held as a soothsayer (*Met.* 2.13-14). Despite his debunking, at least part of his prediction seems to be true: the reader can easily detect the metanarrative joke of the “multivolume book” as the very text s/he is reading.²

Diophanes' prophecy serves on the surface as a humorous nod of acknowledgement between author and reader. Yet it also plays with the fundamental themes of the novel, looking back to both the beginning and the end of the *Metamorphoses*.

¹ *Mihi denique proventum huius peregrinationis inquirenti multa respondit et oppido mira et satis varia: nunc enim gloriam satis floridam, nunc historiam magnam et incredulam fabulam et libros me futurum.*

² Cf. Winkler (1985), 40, 159; *GCA* (2001), 213.

Although Lucius seems not to understand the meaning of Diophanes' divinations, their implications within the broader context of the novel are apparent to the second-time reader. Diophanes' prophecies are "marvelous and varied," *mira* and *varia*, alluding to the prologue of the novel where the narrator promises that his *variae fabulae*, "various tales," will be a source of delight and marvel (*ut mireris*) to his reader (*Met.* 1.1; see below). The prediction of Lucius' future as *mira et satis varia* also fits with the themes of marvelous spectacles and tales that run throughout the novel. The prophecy itself is two-fold. First, Lucius' fame will blossom, *gloriam satis floridam*. The adjective *floridus* is associated with flowers and is suggestive of the roses Lucius will consume to regain his humanity in Book 11. As we shall see, his anamorphosis and devotion to Isis and Osiris will bring him glory as both a priest and an advocate in the Roman forum.³ Since *floridus* may indicate flourishing or brilliant rhetoric, the prophecy also alludes to Lucius' future career as a public speaker.⁴ In this way, Diophanes' prophecy looks forward to the end of the novel while referring back to its prologue and opening themes.

The second part of the prediction is more ambiguous: Lucius will become a great account (*historiam magnam*), an unbelievable tale (*incredulam fabulam*), and a book (*libros*). The unusual phrase *libros me futurum* identifies Lucius directly with the book in the reader's hands. Through his journey, he will become an object - a fixed, written product under the reader's control. At the same time, the juxtaposition of account and tale, *historia* and *fabula*, challenges the boundaries between oral and written and fixed

³ Cf. *Met.* 11.27: "...glory from his studies would be provided to him by the god's providence," *illi studiorum gloriam...sua comparari providentia*.

⁴ *OLD*, "floridus."

and dynamic, as well as between truth and fiction. In Roman rhetoric, *historia* is contrasted with *fabula* and *argumentum*. A *fabula* is an unbelievable fictional tale, an *argumentum* a realistic but fictional story, and a *historia* an account of actual events.⁵ *Fabulae* are often envisioned as oral stories, while *historiae* are written accounts. In the *Metamorphoses*, the word *fabula* is almost always used to indicate that a tale is transmitted orally.⁶ As I shall discuss in this chapter, the novel presents itself alternately as both an oral and a written text, a fixed transmission of knowledge and an ongoing conversation between narrator (and/or author) and reader. This conversation is competitive, with the narrator challenging the reader to believe while providing numerous reasons to disbelieve his unbelievable tale, *incredundam fabulam*.⁷ Like Diophanes the charlatan prophet, Lucius and the novel alike present themselves as both false and true.

Diophanes' prophecy focalizes two of the main problems of the novel: the authority of untrustworthy speakers and the identity of the narrator, specifically the identity that Lucius will have by the end of the novel and the commencement of his tale. As we saw in Chapters Two and Three, Lucius as a character within the *Metamorphoses* undermines his own elite self-fashioning from the very beginning of the novel. Lucius as the narrator exhibits the same tendencies, raising explicit questions about his credibility. In the prologue and at several points throughout the novel, he addresses the reader directly and depicts him or her as questioning his narrative and the source of his

⁵ Cf. *Ad Her.* 1.8.13, *Quin.* 2.4.2.

⁶ See *Met.* 6.29: "...it will be heard about in stories and the rustic account will be perpetuated by the pens of the learned," ...*in fabulis audietur doctorumque stilis rudis perpetuabitur historia...* Cf. *GCA* (2001), 213, 215.

⁷ The gerundive indicates a command or obligation - the tale *must not be believed* (*GCA* (2001), 217).

knowledge. These questions draw attention to the narrator's inconsistencies, preparing the reader for the final revelation of his identity in the last book of the novel. In this chapter, I discuss the dissonant identity of Lucius the narrator and his authorial self-presentation. I focus in particular on the shifting power dynamics between narrator and reader that are played out using the text of the novel itself as a form of discourse.

Although I have been referring to the narrator and reader as though they were singular, concrete entities, the situation is much more complicated than this. The *Metamorphoses* represents multiple discourses between Lucius the narrator, Lucius the character, Apuleius the author, Apuleius the historical figure, and several different levels of readers. The most extensive discussion of the relationship between Lucius the narrator and Lucius the character is Jack Winkler's 1985 *Auctor & Actor: A Narratological Reading of Apuleius' Golden Ass*. Winkler concludes that the duplicity between narrator (*auctor*) and character (*actor*) serves to suppress the narrator's identity and authority by immersing the reader in the experiences of the character as though they were happening in the present. The slippage between narrator and character is mirrored by that between narrator and author, as Lucius, with Apuleius the author lurking behind him, alternately takes responsibility for his narrative and disavows it. These duplicities challenge concepts of authorship and authorial control as the text presents itself as both having an intended meaning and having no meaning, as being both unified and disjointed.⁸ As we saw in the introduction, the slippage between Apuleius as authorial *persona* and Apuleius as

⁸ Winkler (1985), 140-144, 153-154, 173. For another view on the dialogical play enabled by a split between *auctor* and *actor* or between "the narrating *I*(s) and the narrated *I*(s)," see the discussion of the nineteenth century memoirs of the hermaphrodite Herculine Barbin in Crapanzano (1996), esp. 106.

historical figure produces the same result, destabilizing contemporary notions of authority, elite identity, and rhetorical self-fashioning. Apuleius' conflicting identities and the uncertain authorization of the novel's "message," if indeed there is one, are parallel to Lucius' dissonant identity as character and narrator.

In addition to these polyphonic authorial/narratorial voices, the *Metamorphoses* speaks to multiple levels of readers. In this chapter, I focus on the characterized fictive reader, the reader directly addressed by the narrator as "you." The relationship between Lucius the narrator and his characterized fictive reader also has implications for the implied reader (Apuleius' intended audience) as well as the novel's actual readers, those who have enjoyed and puzzled over the *Metamorphoses* from the second century C.E. to the present day.⁹ I discuss the implied and actual readers of the novel in more detail in the conclusion. While these may overlap to some extent with the characterized fictive reader, the latter is of most relevance to the question of the narrator's identity.

As in the case of Lucius the character, Lucius the narrator negotiates his identity through discourse, specifically in his adversarial conversations with the characterized fictive reader. From the prologue through the first ten books of the novel, the reader is characterized as skeptical, curious, and insulting, demanding more tales and details from the narrator. The reader's status and control over the narrative often seem to exceed those of the narrator. As we saw at the end of Chapter Four, this power dynamic is overturned

⁹ I use "characterized fictive reader," "implied reader," and "actual reader" in the sense that Zimmerman uses them in her discussion of the prologue to the *Metamorphoses* (Zimmerman (2001), 245-246). She borrows the terms characterized fictive reader and implied reader from Iser (1974). "Characterized fictive reader" corresponds to Habinek's "internal reader" and Laird's "(primary) addressee," while Habinek collapses "implied reader" and "actual reader" into the single term "external reader" and Laird refers to these as the "reader-addressee" and "superaddressee" (Habinek (1998), 144; Laird (1999), 21-23).

in Book 11. At this point, Lucius the narrator reveals his true identity as a priest of Isis and legal advocate, his present location in the city of Rome, and the superior knowledge and control he has possessed all along.¹⁰

The final revelation of Lucius' identity has struck many readers as a surprise. Although the second-time reader may see Isis foreshadowed in the prologue and other episodes in the first ten books of the novel, the first-time reader does not expect her epiphany and Lucius' initiations. Yet while the details themselves may be unexpected, Lucius' final metamorphosis of identity should not be. As I have shown, the *Metamorphoses* prompts the reader to look beneath the façade of almost every character, both major and minor. Identity - and the different modes of discourse used to communicate it - is malleable and unstable throughout the novel. The narrator's identity is no different.

The Prologue

The problem of the narrator's identity is first introduced in the prologue to the *Metamorphoses*, which poses the famous question '*Quis ille?*', "Who is that?" The

¹⁰ Although it seems that the narrator or author should hold power as the text's creator, the reader may also hold power through his or her attention and approval; cf. Crapanzano (1996), 113, 116. Laird (1999), 19, outlines the possibilities: "...an inequality may be discerned between speaker and addressee which consists in the domineering tone of the text as discourse: the discourse constitutes a speaker who remains speaker, while the addressee has no discourse and remains subordinated as the addressee. However, this interpretation of the power relation between the narrator as speaker and the reader as addressee could be reversed. Power does not only consist in the ability or propensity to speak: silence too can on occasions be an emblem of power. The speaker of a text need not only be seen as wielding a sceptre: he could be attempting to win the attention of an addressee who occupies a superior position."

narrator's ambiguous response provides many details but few clues to answer this question. From the very beginning of the novel, the reader is challenged to consider how the discourses of speech and text may serve to communicate or conceal a speaker's identity - especially the narrator's. My discussion in this section focuses on the identities of the narrator and characterized fictive reader as well as the shifting relationship of power between them established in the prologue. This relationship is negotiated discursively using cultural markers of Greek and Roman and linguistic markers of Greek and Latin to signal the narrator and reader's competing claims to cultural capital, authority, and power. This negotiation of power continues in imagined dialogues between the narrator and characterized fictive reader until the final book of the novel.

The prologue to the *Metamorphoses* is both programmatic and resistant to interpretation. Perhaps more ink has been spilled on these 119 words than on any other part of the novel, with the exception of the equally perplexing Book 11.¹¹ The main points of contention concern the genre of the novel, particularly its connection with the Milesian Tales; the novel's program, whether literary, rhetorical, religious, or philosophical; and the identity of the prologue's speaker.¹² While I will touch briefly on each of these topics below, I argue that the main point of the prologue is to establish the narrator's slippery identity and the adversative relationship between the narrator and his characterized fictive reader.

¹¹ Prominent studies include Smith (1972); Winkler (1985), 180-203; Harrison (1990b); the collected articles in Kahane and Laird (2001); Tilg (2007); and Graverini (2012), 1-50. See also *GCA* (2007), 8-27.

¹² For an overview of the debated genre and program of the *Metamorphoses*, see Introduction.

The first sentence of the prologue sets up a dialogic relationship between the narrator and the reader:

But I would like to link together for you different tales in that Milesian style of speech and caress your benevolent ears with a charming whisper, if only you do not scorn to examine an Egyptian papyrus inscribed with the sharpness of a reed from the Nile; I begin so that you may marvel at men's forms and fortunes transformed into other appearances and restored to themselves again by a reciprocal bond. (*Met.* 1.1) ¹³

The connection between reader and narrator is established in the first three words of the novel, *At ego tibi*, "But I for you." The unusual beginning with the connective particle *at* seems to imply a conversational setting, perhaps an ongoing dialogue between narrator and reader. ¹⁴ The nature of this dialogue lies ambiguously between oral and written modes of transmission: the narrator "whispers" to the reader's "benevolent ears" while asking the reader not to disdain his written, Egyptian papyrus. ¹⁵ This mingling of oral and written discourse, which we also saw represented in Diophanes' prophecy, is a feature of the ongoing conversation between narrator and reader in the novel. It points to the status of the narrative as completed and retrospective, but delivered in a performative

¹³ *At ego tibi sermone isto Milesio varias fabulas conseram, auresque tuas benivolas lepido susurro permulceam, modo si papyrus Aegyptiam argutia Nilotici calami inscriptam non spreveris inspicere, figuras fortunasque hominum in alias imagines conversas et in se rursus mutuo nexu reffectas ut mireris, exordior.* There has been some debate as to whether this should be one sentence or two, with the second sentence beginning at *figuras fortunasque*. I follow the single sentence of Zimmerman (2012), 1. For two sentences, see Harrison and Winterbottom (2001), 12.

¹⁴ Cf. Morgan (2001), 161; Kirichenko (2008), 361; Graverini (2012), 161-162. For possible parallels and intertexts, particularly with history, Roman comedy, and Latin poetry, see Scobie (1975), 66; Harrison and Winterbottom (2001), 10-11; Graverini (2012), 3-4, 6-10.

¹⁵ For interpretations of the reference to Egypt in light of the Isiac ending of the novel, see Winkler (1985), 186-188; Harrison and Winterbottom (2001), 11; *GCA* (2007), 68-69.

style that replicates the narrator's experiences, reactions, and emotions for the reader as though they were happening in the present.¹⁶

In addition to presenting his written text as both performance and dialogue, the narrator introduces the subject of its genre and style. He refers to his work as a collection of stories, *varias fabulas*, linked together in a "Milesian style of speech," *sermone isto Milesio*. The term "Milesian" may refer generally to fictional tales, but here it is more likely an allusion to the second century B.C.E. *Milesian Tales* of Aristides, translated into Latin by Sisenna in the first century B.C.E. Although we have only limited evidence for the Greek and Latin *Milesian Tales*, as a genre they were known in antiquity as entertainingly obscene and clever stories. Despite Aristides' and Sisenna's written tales, they seem to have been envisioned as oral stories; hence the emphasis in the prologue on "Milesian speech," *sermone Milesio*.¹⁷ The immoral and low-life content of Milesian tales could reflect poorly on those who told them: in Petronius' *Satyricon*, the poet Eumolpus' raunchy stories of the Widow of Ephesus and the Pergamene Boy reflect his questionable morals and social status.¹⁸ In the *Metamorphoses*, the narrator's association

¹⁶ Oral and written, text and performance in the novel: Fowler (2001), 227-230; *GCA* (2007), 8-9; Graverini (2007); (2012), 120, 157-164. For Roman authors' play with writing vs. performance more generally, see Habinek (1998), 104-105, 152. Keulen (2007) provocatively suggests that the prologue can be read as a set of vocal performance directions for the reader, particularly for ancient readers whose rhetorical education included reading aloud and declamation.

¹⁷ Apuleius' fictions are referred to disparagingly as *Milesiae* in the *Historia Augusta* (*Alb.* 12.12). Cf. Scobie (1975), 66-67; *GCA* (2007), 64-65. Graverini suggests that Apuleius' prologue is inspired by the lost Greek *Metamorphoseis* and either/both Sisenna's or Aristides' *Milesian Tales* (Graverini (2012), 47-50). Tilg connects Apuleius' unusual language and style in the novel with Sisenna's *Milesian Tales* (Tilg (2007), 165-169). On Milesian tales and the Roman novel, see also Harrison (1998).

¹⁸ *Petr. Sat.* 85-87, 111-112. In Plutarch's *Life of Crassus*, Crassus and his soldiers are ridiculed for having books of the *Milesiaka* in their possession (32).

of his project with Milesian tales may hint at vice and a low social status. It also fits with his declared intention to provide his reader with pleasure and entertainment.

After this allusion to genre, the speaker of the prologue reveals the content of his work: transformations of men's forms and fortunes into other appearances and back again. The novel is concerned with metamorphoses, broadly defined. Physical appearance and form, status, and identity will shift back and forth in an interconnected manner, *mutuo nexu*.¹⁹ These transformations are intended to evoke a sense of wonder in the reader, with *ut mireris* introducing the themes of marvel and miracle that will run through the novel. In the final words of the first sentence, the narrator establishes the expected relationship between himself and the reader: "so that you may wonder, I begin," *ut mireris, exordior*. The narrator will relate his stories, and the reader will marvel passively as s/he hears/reads this collection of entertaining tales. Although the narrator grants the reader the power to inspect and disdain his tales, the communication is envisioned as moving in one direction, from the narrator's mouth and pen to the reader's ears and eyes.

Before the narrator can begin his story, he is interrupted by the question '*Quis ille?*', "Who is that?" (*Met.* 1.1). This has been understood variously as an address to the narrator, to the characterized fictive reader, or even to a silent third party listening in on the dialogue between narrator and reader. I take it as an inquiry to the narrator from the reader/listener, who subverts the passive role assigned in the previous sentence by

¹⁹ See Chapter Three on Lucius' simultaneous physical transformation and loss of status. See also *GCA* (2007), 72. Winkler reads *mutuo nexu* through its association with money-lending and debts, suggesting that it evokes the idea of the novel as a contract between narrator and reader (Winkler (1985), 188-189).

inserting his/her own voice.²⁰ With these words, the reader becomes a concrete character within the novel - a characterized fictive reader - and the novel becomes a conversation. The reader's voice challenges the narrator for control, reestablishing their relationship as one of competitive dialogue rather than unidirectional transmission and reception.

'*Quis ille?*' also calls into question the identity of the narrator before he can even begin his story. He replies with a narrative of multiple and conflicting identities:

Attic Hymettos and Ephyraean Isthmos and Spartan Taenaros, fruitful lands preserved forever in even more fruitful books, are my ancient lineage. There I acquired the Attic tongue in the first campaigns of boyhood. Soon afterwards in the Latin city as a newcomer to Roman studies I attacked and cultivated the native speech with laborious toil, with no teacher guiding me. (*Met.* 1.1)²¹

The narrator does not provide his name or even his hometown, though this is not unusual for any of the narrators in the *Metamorphoses*.²² Instead, he proclaims his identity through an elaborate literary and linguistic genealogy. His ancestry is given symbolically as the body of Greek literature, described in geographical terms as Athens, Corinth, and Sparta, lands preserved in "fruitful books."²³ He then traces his linguistic path from learning Greek, specifically Attic Greek, to learning Latin. His education is mapped as a

²⁰ Cf. Winkler (1985), 195; Slater (2001), 218-219. Some have noted the resemblance of the phrase *Quis ille, paucis accipe* to the language of Plautine prologues: Harrison and Winterbottom (2001), 12-13; *GCA* (2007), 74.

²¹ *Hymettos Attica et Isthmos Ephyraea et Taenaros Spartiatica, glebae felices aeternum libris felicioribus conditae, mea vetus prosapia est. Ibi linguam Atthidem primis pueritiae stipendiis merui. Mox in urbe Latia advena studiorum Quiritium indigenam sermonem aerumnabili labore, nullo magistro praeunte, aggressus excolui.*

²² Examples of delayed naming in the *Metamorphoses* include Aristomenes (begins his tale at 1.5, named by another character in 1.6), Charite (first appears in 4.23, named by her fiancé Tlepolemus at 7.12), and Lucius himself, whose name is finally provided by Pythias in 1.24. Characters almost never provide their own names in the novel.

²³ Cf. *GCA* (2007), 75-78; Graverini (2012), 174. We might also recall from Chapter Three Lucius' claims to descent from Plutarch and Sextus, which may be a literary and philosophical ancestry more than a biological one.

journey from the great cities of ancient Greece to the city of Rome. This mirrors the normal stages of education for a wealthy young man in this period, who would have ideally learned Greek literature first before moving on to Latin literature and rhetoric.²⁴ The narrator defines his identity through his elite education in different types of discourse, including both Greek and Latin literature and rhetoric.

The narrator's description of his linguistic and cultural status in literary terms raises more questions than it answers: we still do not know who the narrator *is*. The speaker of the prologue has been identified as Lucius, as Apuleius, as Lucius and Apuleius in dialogue, as the book speaking in its own voice, or as a Plautine-style *prologus*.²⁵ I agree with those who identify the speaker of the prologue as Lucius, the same first-person narrator as in the rest of the novel. Although Apuleius may be lurking behind the *persona* of his narrator during the programmatic introduction to the novel, the voice of the "I" belongs to Lucius.²⁶ No change in speaker is signaled within the novel itself and it seems an urge of modern literary scholarship to invent one. Furthermore, the prologue speaker's self-fashioning mirrors that of Lucius as character and narrator

²⁴ Cf. Quin. 1.1.12-14; *GCA* (2007), 14-16, 79-80. This journey also mirrors Lucius' physical journey from Greece to Rome in Book 11, but it should not be taken as a literal reference to that event, particularly in terms of where Lucius learns Latin. He clearly knows Latin while still in Greece: see his attempted use of Latin phrases such as *non feci* (*Met.* 7.3) and *porro Quirites* (8.29) as well as his understanding of the Roman soldier's Latin and Greek (9.39). For spatial displacement and geographical movement in the *Metamorphoses*, see Slater (2002).

²⁵ For a summary of the debate, see *GCA* (2007), 11-12. Lucius: Scobie (1975), 71-72; De Jong (2001); *GCA* (2007), 12. Speaking book: Harrison (1990b); (2000), 228. Comic *prologus*: Smith (1972); May (2006), 110-115. Winkler suggests linking the speaker with the comic *prologus* but ultimately argues that the speaker's identity is a deliberate conundrum (Winkler (1985), 200-203. The matter has never been definitively agreed upon by scholars: see the results of the poll in Kahane and Laird (2001), 5.

²⁶ Cf. Tilg (2007), 188-189.

throughout the novel.²⁷ As we saw, Lucius seeks to present himself as an educated, elite intellectual, but he consistently undermines this image through his own words and actions. In the prologue, he likewise provides himself with an elevated literary pedigree while hinting that his social status and tastes may not be so high: his generic choice of Milesian tales, for example, is distinctly lowbrow.

A greater clue to the narrator's status lies in his identification of himself as Greek and as a "newcomer" or "foreigner" to Rome, *advena*. He locates himself within a complex of social and cultural associations: being Greek could be a claim to prized cultural capital, but it could also connote a lower or servile status, at least from a Roman perspective.²⁸ In the final section of the prologue, the narrator refers again to this mixed cultural and linguistic identity: "Look then, I ask for your indulgence in advance if I should offend as a rough speaker of the foreign talk of the Forum" (*Met.* 1.1).²⁹ On one level, this is a standard *apologia* offered at the beginning of a literary performance: the narrator begs the reader/listener's indulgence lest he offend with his unskilled speech. He again emphasizes his identity as an outsider by referring to Latin as "foreign talk."³⁰ The implication is that the reader is Roman and a fluent speaker of Latin, while the narrator is Greek. This new element lowers the relative status of the narrator even more and completely reverses the relationship with the reader established in the first sentence. The

²⁷ For a similar observation by Keulen, see *GCA* (2007), 16-17.

²⁸ Cf. Edwards (1993), 23, 95; Hingley (2005), 55.

²⁹ *En ecce praefamur veniam, siquid exotici ac forensis sermonis rudis locutor offendero.*

³⁰ There seems to be a pun in the word *forensis*, which can mean both "foreign" and "of the forum." Apuleius generally uses the word in its second sense, but "foreign" continues the sense of the preceding adjective *exotici*. See Harrison and Winterbottom (2001), 14; Powell (2001), 30-32; Tilg (2007), 169-172; *GCA* (2007), 9, 83-85.

reader is not a passive recipient of the narrator's discourse, but is in fact in a position to actively judge his literary and linguistic efforts.³¹

The narrator's awareness of his reader's potentially negative reception is further expressed in his description of himself as a "rough speaker," *rudis locutor*. The word *rudis* means "rough" or "unskilled" but may also be a pun on "braying," *rudere*.³²

Lucius' speech within the novel exemplifies all of these qualities: as a man, he is an unsuccessful speaker at the Festival of Laughter and in his interactions with Milo, and as an ass his "speech" emerges only as braying.³³ Following these allusions to his inadequate speaking abilities in the prologue, Lucius the narrator ends on a high note by asserting his rhetorical and literary skills. He compares them with the acrobatics of a rider leaping from one horse to another:

Now indeed, this very change of voice corresponds with the style of a switchback-rider's knowledge we have approached. We begin a Greekish tale. Reader, pay attention: you will be delighted. (*Met.* 1.1)³⁴

Although the exact nature of the metaphor is unclear, the narrator claims a praiseworthy quality of speech, literary style, and skill in moving between the languages of Greek and Latin.³⁵ This claim challenges his depiction of himself in the previous sentences as an unskilled speaker seeking the reader's indulgence. He ends by reestablishing the

³¹ For the contrast between Greek and Roman identities in the prologue, see *GCA* (2007), 14-16, 19; Keulen (2007), 123, 133. On a Latin education as forming a "culture of exclusion," see Hingley (2005), 101.

³² Winkler (1985), 196-199.

³³ See Chapters Two and Three. I disagree with Keulen's positive evaluation of Lucius' skills in rhetoric and performance; he discusses Lucius' educated language and knowledge of rhetoric, but not the failed outcomes of his performances (*GCA* (2007), 9, 16).

³⁴ *Iam haec equidem ipsa vocis immutatio desultoriae scientiae stilo quem accersimus respondet. Fabulam Graecanicam incipimus. Lector intende: laetaberis.*

³⁵ *Desultoriae scientiae* has been taken to refer to: the novel's composition from multiple tales (Scobie (1975), 75-76); the novel as a Latin translation or adaptation of a Greek work (cf. *GCA* (2007), 88); or the novel's rhetorical style (*GCA* (2007), 89). See also Harrison and Winterbottom (2001), 14-15.

relationship with the reader interrupted by the question '*Quis ille?*' The final sentence of the prologue commands the reader to pay attention, as the narrator promises, using another passive verb, that s/he will be delighted.

The prologue to the *Metamorphoses* introduces the malleable patterns of speech and self-fashioning that will become prominent throughout the novel as the relationship and identities of both narrator and reader shift back and forth multiple times. Although the narrator presents himself as culturally Greek and his characterized fictive reader as culturally Roman, the identity and relative authority of each is put into question.³⁶ The narrator Lucius, a self-proclaimed *rudis locutor*, asserts an elevated literary education and rhetorical skill that are belied by hints of his potential immorality, foreignness, and low status. His identity becomes unstable as it moves between languages and cultures.³⁷ The nature of his relationship with the reader is likewise called into question. The narrator alternates between giving the reader orders and responding to his or her questions and possible reception of his narrative. In response, the reader asserts his or her own voice against the narrator's, becoming a concrete character within the novel and vying for control of the narrative.³⁸ This negotiation continues until Book 11, when the narrator at last reveals his true identity and status, as well as the power he has had over the reader and the narrative all along.

³⁶ Cf. Harrison (2000), 228, on the novel as an "interrogative text."

³⁷ On the hybrid cultural and linguistic identities expressed in the prologue, see Too (2001), 178, 180.

³⁸ Cf. Winkler (1985), 61-66.

The Characterized Fictive Reader

After the prologue, the reader does not emerge again as a character until Book 4, shortly after Lucius' metamorphosis and capture by the robbers.³⁹ Upon his arrival at the robbers' mountain hideout, Lucius addresses the reader directly:

The subject and the time itself require that I give a description of the area and that cave which the robbers inhabited. For at the same time I will both test my talent and also make you attentively perceive whether I was actually an ass in intelligence and perception. (*Met.* 4.6)⁴⁰

Lucius follows with a lengthy ekphrasis of the mountain and the robbers' cave and fortifications. His introduction ("The subject and the time itself...") is reminiscent of historiographic descriptions of foreign locales, while the ekphrasis contains numerous allusions to the literary tropes of the *locus amoenus* and *locus horridus*.⁴¹ Lucius as narrator seems to accomplish the goal of demonstrating his literary and rhetorical talent. Yet his introduction to the ekphrasis calls his authority into question: he commands the reader to examine his words in order to determine whether his metamorphosis has altered his human intelligence.⁴² He draws attention to his changed body and status and challenges the reader to ask how much of an ass he really is and to what extent his narrative can be trusted. Perhaps the most interesting aspect of this address is that Lucius

³⁹ The narrator occasionally addresses the reader in the second person in Book 2, but these rhetorical addresses do not serve to characterize the reader or his/her relationship with the narrator. Cf. Zimmerman (2001), 248-249.

⁴⁰ *Res ac tempus ipsum locorum speluncaeque illius quam latrones inhabitabant descriptionem exponere flagitat. Nam et meum simul periclitabor ingenium, et faxo vos quoque an mente etiam sensuque fuerim asinus sedulo sentiatis.*

⁴¹ Historiography: Walsh (1970), 57-58; *GCA* (1977), 56-57; Schiesaro (1985), 214-215. *Locus amoenus/horridus*, particularly with reference to Vergil, Ovid, and Seneca: Schiesaro (1985).

⁴² Lucius asserts his continued human intelligence (*sensum humanum*) during his metamorphosis (*Met.* 3.26); see Chapter Three.

envisions the reader's reception as a prerequisite for his performance. Although the reader does not speak here as he does in the prologue, Lucius' description of the robbers' hideout is presented as part of the ongoing, combative dialogue between them.

At several other points in the novel, Lucius calls attention to his status as narrator by addressing the reader directly.⁴³ These addresses are often at the beginnings or ends of the inset tales, particularly those narrated by Lucius himself. He alternately emphasizes the status of his narrative as an oral performance and as a written work. These references to oral or written transmission serve as generic markers, indicating whether the inset tale will draw on literary allusions and motifs or correspond more closely to the form of an oral story. Oral stories are often those that have been identified as Milesian tales in terms of their amusing and obscene content. The adultery tales in Book 9 provide the best examples for this depiction of oral transmission: Lucius introduces the Miller's Tale by declaring, "So I have decided to bring to your ears a story, proven good and charming beyond the rest..." (*Met.* 9.14).⁴⁴ By contrast, he begins the first murderess tale in Book 10 with a reference to written transmission: "After a few days, I recall, a wicked and abominable crime was perpetrated there, but, so that you may read it too, I am adding it

⁴³ See Zimmerman (2001); May (2006), 116-121.

⁴⁴ *Fabulam denique bonam, prae ceteris suavem, compertam ad auris vestras adferre decrevi, et en occipio.* Other tales with signals of oral transmission include the tale of the adulterous slave eaten by ants (8.22), the Tale of the Tub (9.4), and the Miller's Tale (9.30).

to my book” (*Met.* 10.2).⁴⁵ The subsequent tale is replete with allusions to literary versions of the Phaedra myth, including Seneca’s *Phaedra* and Ovid’s *Heroides* 4.⁴⁶

The narrator’s generic signals cannot always be trusted, however. As I discussed in Chapter Two, Lucius introduces the *Phaedra* episode in Book 10 by claiming that it is “a tragedy, not a light tale,” *tragoediam, non fabulam* (*Met.* 10.2). While the story begins as a tragedy, it ends on a comic or mimic note. In addition to misleading the reader’s expectations, the narrator suggests that his account may not be as reliable as he claims. As the pivotal trial scene begins, Lucius pauses to comment on his authority as the narrator. He acknowledges that he learned about the events before the trial from others’ conversations. As for the trial itself, he states:

But with what words the prosecutor pressed his case, with what facts the defendant refuted it - in a word, the speeches and debates - I myself can neither know, since I was away at the manger, nor can I report to you what I was ignorant of; but what I learned clearly I will add to this document. (*Met.* 10.7)⁴⁷

In the next chapter, Lucius narrates the speeches of the wise physician in direct speech.⁴⁸ His addresses to the reader during the *Phaedra* episode raise expectations about his

⁴⁵ *Post dies plusculos ibidem dissignatum scelestum ac nefarium facinus memini, sed ut vos etiam legatis, ad librum profero.*

⁴⁶ See Chapter Two. Other “literary” tales bracketed by references to written transmission include the Tale of Cupid and Psyche (*Met.* 6.25) and the story of Tlepolemus and Charite’s death (*Met.* 8.1).

⁴⁷ *Quibus autem verbis accusator urserit, quibus rebus diluerit reus ac prorsus orationes altercationesque neque ipse absens apud praesepium scire, neque ad vos quae ignoravi possum enuntiare, sed quae plane comperi ad istas litteras proferam.*

⁴⁸ Zimmerman explains this contradiction by claiming that the narrator of the speeches is no longer Lucius, but those who were there at the trial and from whom he heard the story (*GCA* (2000), 139-140). A far simpler explanation is that Lucius is characterized here as an untrustworthy narrator, as indeed he has been since the beginning of the novel.

narrative and methods that are soon proven false.⁴⁹ Despite the narrator's assertions of truth and authority, it is evident that his words cannot be trusted.

As the end of the novel approaches, the reader is increasingly urged to question the narrator's claims to authority. At two points, Lucius responds directly to his reader's imagined criticisms. During the Miller's Tale, Lucius relates that the miller's wife sought revenge on the miller by hiring a witch to destroy him. Lucius depicts the reader interrupting, as in the prologue, to challenge his credibility:

But perhaps as a careful reader you will object to my narrative and argue thus: 'But how could you, you clever little ass, confined within the boundaries of the mill, know what the women were doing in secret, as you assert?' (*Met.* 9.30)⁵⁰

As some have noted, this question does not seem to be one that would occur to an actual reader. The actual reader is more likely to take the ass's tale at face value while acknowledging the fictional framework of the novel.⁵¹ The characterized fictive reader here plays the role of skeptic, interrupting the narrative to draw the actual reader's attention to the narrator's limited perception and the inconsistencies in his story.⁵² The reader's question also highlights the narrator's animal and servile status as well as his lack of freedom and agency in this episode. As in the prologue, the characterized fictive

⁴⁹ Lucius' remarks are reminiscent of Thuc. 1.22. Apuleius seems to be parodying the reliability of historians, much as Lucian does in *VH* 1.2-4.

⁵⁰ *Sed forsitan lector scrupulosus reprehendens narratum meum sic argumentaberis: 'Unde autem tu, astutule asine, intra terminos pistrini contentus, quid secreto, ut adfirmas, mulieres gesserint, scire potuisti?'*

⁵¹ Cf. Winkler (1985), 61. Zimmerman suggests that the gap between the characterized fictive reader and actual reader widens towards the end of the novel (Zimmerman (2001), 251).

⁵² See Chapter Three on the skeptical traveler's response to the Tale of Aristomenes in Book 1.

reader is pictured as challenging the narrator's status and credibility and driving him to provide more details to satisfy the reader's demands.

In Book 10, the narrator again provokes the reader to question his authority and even his identity. During the pantomime of the Judgment of Paris in the Corinth theater, Lucius breaks into his own narrative to deliver a diatribe against false judgments.⁵³ He begins:

Why, then, do you wonder, you worthless individuals - no, you sheep of the forum - no indeed, you togate vultures - if all jurors now barter their verdicts for money...? (*Met.* 10.33)⁵⁴

He relates several mythological and historical examples: the judgment of Paris, the death of Palamedes, Ulysses and Ajax's contest for the arms of Achilles, and the trial of Socrates.⁵⁵ His outburst returns to the questions raised in the prologue about the cultural identities of the narrator and reader, as well as their relative statuses and power. The narrator's frames of reference are Greek: he cites episodes from Greek mythology, literature, and history, though these were also popular topics of the declamatory exercises that were part of a Roman rhetorical education.⁵⁶ While the narrator frames his own discourse as Greek, he depicts his addressees as Roman: they are "sheep of the forum" and "vultures in togas." The narrator's accusatory tone here is in direct contrast to his

⁵³ Apuleius' vocabulary does not clarify whether he imagines this scene as occurring in the theater or amphitheater of Corinth. While the pantomime of the Judgment of Paris and its special effects suggest a theatrical setting, the same venue also hosts gladiatorial and beast fights. Based on Apuleius' account and evidence from the excavations of the theater at Corinth, Charles K. Williams II argues that the theater was modified to accommodate both theatrical and gladiatorial entertainments (Williams, pers. comm.).

⁵⁴ *Quid ergo miramini, vilissima capita, immo forensia pecora, immo vero togati vulturii, si toti nunc iudices sententias suas pretio nundinantur...?*

⁵⁵ For the speech's resemblance to a rhetorical *indignatio* or Cynic diatribe, see *GCA* (2000), 393-401.

⁵⁶ Cf. *GCA* (2000), 397.

supplicating stance in the prologue. By referring to his addressees as animals - sheep and vultures - he draws them closer to his own animal level. Although it is difficult to say whether Lucius' addressees here are meant to be read as the same characterized fictive reader he spoke to in the prologue, his philosophical diatribe momentarily elevates him above them.

Lucius ends his outburst by arguing that the best philosophers now belong to the school of Socrates, the Platonic school. His contention seems at odds with earlier hints that his allegiance may be to the Stoic school rather than the Platonic.⁵⁷ In one respect, his focus on Socrates at the end of this passage reveals the source material for his diatribe: Socrates himself uses Palamedes and Ajax as examples of unjust verdicts in Plato's *Apology* 41b. Yet we may also briefly discern the voice of Apuleius, the *Philosophus Platonicus*, asserting his own presence and literary and philosophical knowledge beneath the mask of his narrator Lucius. Apuleius' presence becomes increasingly prominent towards the end of the novel, prompting the reader to ask again '*Quis ille?*' Who is speaking? Who is the narrator, and who is the author?

After his exaltation of Socrates and the Platonic school, the narrator imagines the reader's reaction to his diatribe. He depicts the reader again verbally challenging his authority:

But lest someone should object to this attack of my indignation, thinking to himself thus, 'Look here, are we to suffer an ass philosophizing at us?'

⁵⁷ See Chapter Three on Lucius' references to Sextus of Chaeronea (*Met.* 1.2), the Stoa Poikile (1.4), and the theory of cosmic harmony (2.12). Some have pointed out the difference in tone and style between this diatribe and the rest of Book 10 - it is as though a different voice entirely is speaking here (*GCA* (2000), 393-394).

I will return again to the story from the point where I digressed. (*Met.* 10.33)⁵⁸

As in his previous dialogue with the reader in Book 9, the narrator's low, animal status is underlined. The actual reader is prompted to follow the characterized fictive reader in questioning the asinine narrator's truthfulness and authority to speak. Despite the literary and rhetorical heights Lucius reaches in his diatribe, he responds to this challenge by once again giving in to his reader's demands. He turns his attention back to the entertaining spectacle in the theater at Corinth that he interrupted with his philosophical lecture, reassuring the reader that their relationship remains unchanged. He is still the same asinine narrator.

In Books 1 to 10 of the *Metamorphoses*, the periodic, ongoing dialogue between the narrator and the characterized fictive reader puts into question their identities and the relationship of power between them. This relationship is often figured along cultural lines: the narrator presents himself as a Greek speaker seeking the indulgence of his Latin-speaking, Roman audience. Yet his tone is not always one of supplication: he occasionally interrupts his own narrative to challenge the reader to question his credibility as a lowly, animal speaker. At other times, the narrator depicts the reader interrupting him to question his identity and the source of his information. The narrator's addresses and the reader's imagined responses alternately present the narrative as a current conversation and a retrospective, fixed work, playing with the conventions and truth-values of oral and written genres. The narrator's shifting identity hides the level of

⁵⁸ *Sed ne quis indignationis meae reprehendat impetum secum sic reputans 'Ecce nunc patiemur philosophantem nobis asinum?' rursus unde decessi revertar ad fabulam.*

control he has over the narrative, ceding the appearance of greater power to the characterized fictive reader. The narrator's use and subversion of generic cues, however, is an early signal of his manipulation of the reader's expectations. The narrator's slippery self-fashioning and the power plays between narrator and characterized fictive reader prepare the actual reader for the final revelation of the identity of the narrator - and the author - in Book 11.

The Narrator's Identity Revealed

After the pantomime of the Judgment of Paris, Lucius the ass is to publicly copulate with a condemned murderess who will then be slaughtered by beasts as part of the entertainment at Thiasus' Corinthian games. Fearing for his own life, Lucius flees the theater and races six miles east until he collapses on the beach at Cenchreae, the eastern port of Corinth (*Met.* 10.35). Awakening at night, he sees a full moon over the ocean and prays to the supreme goddess to free him from his tribulations and his asinine form (*Met.* 11.1).⁵⁹ After a syncretistic appeal to the goddess by any and all of her names, Lucius receives a divine vision:

I will strive to relate its marvelous appearance to you too, if only the poverty of human speech grants me the means of expression, or the divine power herself furnishes me with a rich abundance of rhetorical eloquence. (*Met.* 11.3)⁶⁰

⁵⁹ I, along with Bradley, read Lucius' prayer as silent, though some have argued that the goddess grants him a voice while still in his animal body: cf. Bradley (2012b), 208.

⁶⁰ *Eius mirandam speciem ad vos etiam referre conitar, si tamen mihi disserendi tribuerit facultatem paupertas oris humani, vel ipsum numen eius dapsilem copiam elocutilis facundiae subministraverit.*

Lucius' plea to the goddess to grant him eloquence foreshadows his later attribution of his newfound rhetorical success to divine beneficence. The skillful description that follows attests to the deity's favor and allows the reader to share in Lucius' epiphany as it unfolds. Although the goddess does not identify herself by name until *Met.* 11.5, any Roman reader of the second century C.E. would have easily recognized her from the ekphrasis in *Met.* 11.3-4 as Isis.

Worship of the Hellenized Egyptian goddess Isis was established in Rome by the first century B.C.E. and widespread throughout the empire in the second and third centuries C.E.⁶¹ Although her cult was popular in this period, many scholars have asked why Apuleius chose her as Lucius' savior in the final book of the *Metamorphoses*.⁶² Some have suggested an autobiographical solution to the problem, claiming that Apuleius himself must have been initiated into the cult of Isis, or perhaps sought a Platonic approach to her cult based on the model of Plutarch's treatise *On Isis and Osiris*. There is no evidence in Apuleius' other writings or later reception, however, that he was involved in the cult of Isis beyond observing its public rites and images as an outsider.⁶³ Isis was a well-known salvation goddess in the second century C.E. whose popularity in the

⁶¹ See Bradley (2012b), 220-222.

⁶² Lucius does not name Isis in his prayer and seems unaware of her throughout the novel; she only reveals herself during his epiphany. Cf. Griffiths (1975), 115, 119-120; Bradley (1998), 322-323.

⁶³ Autobiography: Griffiths (1975), 1-7; Kenney (2003). Isiac interpretations of the *Metamorphoses*: Merkelbach (1962), 1-90; Griffiths (1975), esp. 1-55. Critiques of the Isiac interpretation: Finkelpearl (1998), 202; Harrison (2000), 238-253; Graverini (2012), 67. Platonic Isiac interpretations: Fick (1987); DeFilippo (1990). Apuleius' knowledge as that of an outsider: Winkler (1985), 206; Bradley (1998), 316. Apuleius' reception as a magician, but never a priest of Isis: Winkler (1985), 277. The *Metamorphoses* as a realistic representation of religious conversion: Shumate (1996). Conversion as a term that cannot apply to Lucius' polytheistic experiences: Bradley (1998). For a range of recent literary approaches to Book 11, see *AAGA* 3.

Corinthia in particular is attested in literary and numismatic evidence.⁶⁴ More importantly, Isis is the logical choice of savior for a man who has been transformed into an ass: the ass was a symbol of Isis' nemesis Seth/Typhon.⁶⁵ Apuleius likely chose Isis for her symbolic value to his tale, though her Plutarchan and philosophical resonances may have also appealed to the self-professed *Philosophus Platonicus*.

Isis' presence dominates Book 11, altering the course of the tale and Lucius' identity as both character and narrator. During Lucius' epiphany, Isis promises to restore him to human form and watch over him in this life and the next if he pledges that life to her (*Met.* 11.6).⁶⁶ Lucius' privileged relationship with the goddess, and later with her consort Osiris, becomes the most important part of his narratorial self-fashioning in the last book of the novel. Although he regains his human form, his human voice, and the status, family, and connections he lost with his metamorphosis, he rejects these after his initiation into the cult of Isis. He leaves Greece to travel to Rome, where he undergoes two more initiations into the related cult of Osiris. When we leave Lucius at the end of the novel, he is residing happily in Rome as a priest of Osiris and makes his living as a lawyer in the Roman Forum. Our narrator, who seemed to be a foolish Greek aristocrat, a poor speaker, and an ass, has been all along a resident of Rome, a priest, and a successful advocate. Alongside his own revelation of Isis in Book 11, he reveals to the reader his

⁶⁴ Paus. 2.2.3 mentions a temple of Isis at Cenchreae. Excavations at the port of Cenchreae in the 1960s and 1970s revealed a building identified as this temple, but the evidence is shaky; cf. Scranton, et al. (1978), 53-78. Numerous coins from second and third century C.E. Corinth depicting Isis and Osiris/Serapis attest their popularity in the Corinthia at this time: Bricault and Veymiers (2007).

⁶⁵ Cf. Winkler (1985), 276-279; DeFilippo (1990).

⁶⁶ For the contractual language of Isis' speech, see Bradley (1998), 325; Bradley (2012b), 209.

true identity and his skillful manipulation of the reader's expectations.⁶⁷ Yet his control over his own image remains as uncertain as ever as his narrative continues to destabilize his projected identity. In the end, even his status within the cult of Isis and Osiris may not be as elevated as he claims.

Our first glimpse of Lucius' unstable identity in Book 11 comes after his miraculous transformation back into human form during the festival procession for Isis Pelagia (*Met.* 11.13-14). His anamorphosis is interpreted in two very different ways by his observers, though Lucius himself is notably silent on this occasion.⁶⁸ The first explanation is offered by Mithras, the priest of Isis, who reinterprets Lucius' metamorphosis as punishment for his curiosity and youthful indulgences.⁶⁹ His experiences should serve as an example and a warning to others:

“Let the unbelievers see, let them see and recognize their error! Behold, freed from his former afflictions, rejoicing in the providence of Isis, Lucius triumphs over his Fortune.” (*Met.* 11.15)⁷⁰

As Jack Winkler has pointed out, Mithras' speech urges the reader to question the previous ten books of the novel: was Lucius' metamorphosis really a penalty for his

⁶⁷ “The identity of the narrator himself turns out to be the great secret of the book...” (Winkler (1985), 69).

⁶⁸ “But I, completely stupefied, stood transfixed and silent...as to what would be the very best to say first, from where I should take the introduction for my newfound voice, with what speech I should most fortuitously inaugurate my tongue now reborn, and with what and how many words I should offer my thanks to such a great goddess.” *At ego stupore nimio defixus tacitus haerebam...quid potissimum praefarer primum, unde novae vocis exordium caperem, quo sermone nunc renatam linguam feliciter auspicarer, quibus quantisque verbis tantae deae gratias agerem* (*Met.* 11.14). Cf. Winkler (1985), 209-210.

⁶⁹ See Chapter Four. On Mithras' name, see Griffiths (1975), 281-282; Bradley (2012b), 213-214.

⁷⁰ *Videant inreligiosi, videant et errorem suum recognoscant: en ecce pristinis aerumnis absolutus Isidis magnae providentia gaudens Lucius de sua Fortuna triumphat.*

reckless curiosity, and is this novel in fact a moral lesson rather than just a series of entertaining tales? ⁷¹

Yet Mithras' interpretation is not the only one. The surrounding crowd offers a different explanation for Lucius' transformation:

“Fortunate, by Hercules, and thrice blessed is he who, doubtless because of the innocence and faith of his previous life, has earned such a splendid patronage from heaven, so that he was reborn, in a certain way, and immediately pledged to the service of her mysteries.” (*Met.* 11.16) ⁷²

Both Mithras and the crowd read Lucius' anamorphosis as a sign of the power of Isis, but Mithras views Lucius as morally guilty while the crowd views him as a paradigm of innocence. Although Mithras' interpretation may seem more convincing in light of Lucius' previous exhibitions of curiosity, Isis herself offers no explanation for her appearance to Lucius aside from her propitious nature (*Met.* 11.5). What we have, then, is the same person and the same event perceived in very different ways by different groups of observers. ⁷³ Lucius as the narrator provides both possible readings of his transformation but authorizes neither one. The choice of how to read Lucius' moral identity through his anamorphosis is left fundamentally uncertain within the text. What is certain to all present is his claim to a privileged relationship with Isis through her providence and patronage.

⁷¹ Winkler (1985), 8-11.

⁷² *'Felix hercules et ter beatus, qui vitae scilicet praecedentis innocentia fideque meruerit tam praeclarum de caelo patrocinium, ut renatus quodam modo statim sacrorum obsequio desponderetur.'*

⁷³ Ian Moyer reads this syllepsis through the lens of metapragmatic framing and sociocultural studies of religion, arguing that these interpretations represent the different perspectives of informed participants and uninformed observers of the same religious ritual (Moyer, pers. comm.).

Along with his restoration to human form, Lucius experiences an almost complete restoration of his former life and circumstances. After his restoration to humanity, he goes back to the temple of Isis at Cenchreae. There he is visited by his friends, his household slaves, and “those who were tied to me by the closest bond of blood,” all of whom thought he was dead (*Met.* 11.18).⁷⁴ Rejoicing that he is really alive, they bring him gifts that cover his living expenses quite generously, *largiter*. While Lucius accepts their offerings and relates his experiences to them, he does not return to his former household or social position. Instead, he takes up residence in the precinct of Isis and prepares for initiation. He is encouraged by numerous visitations of Isis: “There was not a single night or any nap at all devoid of a vision and admonition of the goddess...” (*Met.* 11.19).⁷⁵ In Lucius’ narrative, the goddess continues to take a personal interest in his initiation. Lucius’ attention is correspondingly turned not to regaining his previous wealth or social connections, but to pursuing a new position as a favored initiate in the cult of Isis.

Lucius’ final moment of encouragement before his initiation comes in the form of a prophetic dream. He dreams that the chief priest of Isis brings him gifts from Thessaly and tells him that his slave Candidus has also arrived from there (*Met.* 11.20). Lucius is puzzled by the vision, since he has never had a slave named Candidus. Nevertheless, he is certain the dream promises some profit. The next day, he is surprised by the arrival of the slaves he left behind in Hypata after his metamorphosis. Accompanying them is his white

⁷⁴ *Confestim denique familiares ac vernulae quique mihi proximo nexu sanguinis cohaerebant...*

⁷⁵ *Nec fuit nox una vel quies aliqua visu deae monituque ieiuna...*

horse, proving the truth of his dream since *candidus* is Latin for “white.” The return of Lucius’ horse is a symbol of the total restoration of his old life and status. In Book 3, his metamorphosis resulted in a loss of status highlighted by his horse and slave attacking him (*Met.* 3.26-27).⁷⁶ With his horse not only returned but also described as his slave, the normal hierarchy is restored and Lucius comes full circle to the status he held at the beginning of the novel. Once again, however, he rejects the trappings of his former life. He interprets the return of his horse *not* as a sign of status restored, but as a portent of his future with the cult of Isis: “After this occurred I attended even more anxiously to the ministry of worship, since my future expectations were guaranteed by my present benefits” (*Met.* 11.21).⁷⁷ Lucius seeks a status and identity based not on his social class or wealth, but on his initiation into the cult of his patron goddess.

Lucius’ initiation succeeds in providing him with the power and control he lacked in the first ten books of the novel.⁷⁸ Through divine revelation, he at last gains the supernatural knowledge he sought through his unfortunate forays into magic. As we saw in Chapter Four, he narrates each step of his initiation ceremony in detail until the moment he approaches the doors of the inner sanctuary. There, he pauses to address the reader:

⁷⁶ See Chapter Three.

⁷⁷ *Quo facto idem sollicitius sedulum colendi frequentabam ministerium, spe futura beneficiis praesentibus pignerata.*

⁷⁸ I hold the opposite view as Bradley, who argues that Lucius has more agency in Books 1-10 and less in Book 11 (Bradley (2012b), esp. 206).

Perhaps you are inquiring quite anxiously, zealous reader, what was said then and what was done. I would tell if it were permitted to tell, you would learn if it were permitted to hear. (*Met.* 11.23)⁷⁹

This is Lucius' first direct address to the reader since his diatribe against false judgments in Book 10. At the end of that outburst, he surrendered the last word to the characterized fictive reader, returning to his tale where he left off. Here, for the first time in the novel, Lucius the narrator refuses to satisfy his reader's demands. He continues the narrative of his initiation, but provides only enough details to confuse rather than enlighten:

"Therefore I will relate only what can be revealed to the understanding of the uninitiated without expiation" (*Met.* 11.23).⁸⁰ He draws a line between himself as an initiate and the uninitiated reader. Throughout the novel, Lucius has been an outsider: at the Festival of Laughter, in his interactions with Milo and Byrrhena, and especially as a mute ass.⁸¹ Even as the narrator, he depicts himself in Books 1-10 as a foreign speaker seeking the approval of his Roman reader. Lucius' initiation reconfigures this relationship: now he becomes the insider and the reader the outsider. He reveals his knowledge of the mysteries of Isis by conspicuously concealing them, at last achieving a superior position not through his speech, but through his silence.

Were the novel to end here, we might find Lucius' new self-fashioning of identity and power convincing. Yet a series of delayed endings and further transformations follows as Lucius leaves Greece for the city of Rome. There he adopts another new

⁷⁹ *Quaeras forsitan satis anxie, studiose lector, quid deinde dictum, quid factum. Dicerem si dicere liceret, cognosceres si liceret audire.*

⁸⁰ *Ergo quod solum potest sine piaculo ad profanorum intellegentias enuntiari, referam.* Cf. Griffiths (1975), 294.

⁸¹ See Chapters Two and Three.

identity and undergoes two more initiations into the cult of Osiris. In the eyes of Lucius the narrator, these additional initiations provide him with new opportunities to showcase his favored relationship with the gods. For the reader, however, his ongoing narrative only raises new doubts.⁸² In the end, not only his status within the cult but even the truth of his religious experience may be in question.

After a year in Rome, Lucius is called to a second initiation, this time into the closely related cult of Osiris. This initiation is presaged by another prophetic dream, this time of the priest who will perform it (*Met.* 11.27). The priest is also visited by the god, who commands him to initiate Lucius, “for glory from Lucius’ studies would be provided to him by the god’s providence, and to the priest himself, great profit” (*Met.* 11.27).⁸³ The mention of Lucius’ glory and studies evokes Diophanes’ prophecy in *Met.* 2.12, which foretold that Lucius would receive great glory and become a multivolume book.⁸⁴ Here, the reference to Lucius’ studies is to the new profession he takes up in Rome: pleading cases as a legal advocate.⁸⁵ Whether or not this truly brings him glory is a question we shall address shortly. Lucius pursues his second initiation - and its promise of gain - despite his poverty, going so far as to sell his clothes to pay for the cost of the ceremony. As he tells us, he receives ample recompense for his troubles after his initiation:

⁸² For the novel’s ending as confrontational and tangential, see Fusillo (1997), 223-226.

⁸³ *...nam et illi studiorum gloriam et ipsi grande compendium sua comparari providentia.*

⁸⁴ Cf. Griffiths (1975), 334.

⁸⁵ Lucius’ dual identity in Book 11 as a religious devotee and a Roman lawyer have struck some as paradoxical: see Griffiths (1975), 336-337; Graverini (2012), 89. Lucius himself clearly views them as complementary pursuits. The notion that priesthood and spiritual devotion should preclude having a secular profession applies more readily to later Christian institutions than to an initiate and low-level priest like Lucius.

This bestowed the greatest comfort for my stay abroad, and furthermore it even supplied me with a more abundant living - and why not? For my small profit from pleading legal cases in Roman speech was nourished by the breeze of favoring Success. (*Met.* 11.28) ⁸⁶

Through his devotion to the gods, Lucius achieves monetary success. What is more, he gains this wealth through speaking. After his many failures in speech as both a man and an ass, it is notable that he should come to make his living as a lawyer. As it turns out, our narrator's identity is quite different than we envisioned from the prologue and his earlier addresses to the reader: he is no *rudis locutor* at all, no uncertain Greek outsider, but a successful public speaker in Latin.

Shortly after his second initiation, Lucius is called to a third. He is as puzzled as the reader is by this point, and voices doubts as to the priests' competence and perhaps even their trustworthiness, *fide* (*Met.* 11.29). Another dream promptly reassures him that his third initiation is only a further sign of the gods' favor: "you will experience three times what is hardly granted to others even once, and from that number assume rightly that you are forever blessed" (*Met.* 11.29). ⁸⁷ Lucius throws himself into his third initiation, paying even more for the preparations than is required. Once again, his efforts are well repaid: "By the generous providence of the gods I was now nicely maintained by my wages from the courts" (*Met.* 11.30). ⁸⁸

⁸⁶ *Quae res summum peregrinationi meae tribuebat solacium nec minus etiam victum uberiorem subministrabat - quidni? - spiritu faventis Eventus quaesticulo forensi nutrito per patrocinia sermonis Romani.*

⁸⁷ *...potius exulta ter futurus quod alii vel semel vix conceditur, teque de isto numero merito praesume semper beatum.*

⁸⁸ *Nec hercules laborum me sumptuumque quicquam tamen paenituit - quidni? - liberali deum providentia iam stipendiis forensibus bellule fotum.*

Throughout the account of his multiple initiations, Lucius as the narrator is at pains to present his relationship with Isis and Osiris as a uniquely favorable one. He recounts numerous prophetic dreams and divine appeals. He emphasizes that he is amply recompensed for the monetary costs of his devotion by the professional success the gods grant him.⁸⁹ Yet there are holes in Lucius' image of professional and spiritual accomplishment, gaps left between his account of the past as he experienced it and his narratorial self-fashioning. As many have pointed out, the emphasis on Lucius' multiple initiations and particularly their high costs may urge the reader to doubt the sincerity of the priests of Isis and Osiris. Lucius' account of his own doubts before his third initiation only increases the reader's.⁹⁰ At the end of the novel, perhaps Lucius is a religious fool rather than a man who has gained valuable knowledge of the divine.

The last scene of the novel confirms this picture of Lucius' increasingly unstable self-fashioning. A few days after his third and presumably final initiation, Lucius is visited in a dream by Osiris himself:

...Osiris appeared to me in my sleep, not transformed into any other guise; but he deigned to welcome me face to face with his own venerable address, bidding me unhesitatingly to continue as now to gain glory by pleading cases in the forum, nor to fear the slanders of the malevolent which the laborious training of my studies aroused there (*Met.* 11.30)⁹¹

⁸⁹ Cf. Graverini (2012), 71-73.

⁹⁰ See in particular Winkler (1985), 215-223. Multiple initiations were not unusual in ancient mystery cults, however, and initiation fees were a normal part of ancient religious practice: cf. Bradley (2012b), 214-215. As for the high cost, especially regarding the episode where Lucius sells his clothes, Ian Moyer points out that while outsiders to the cult might view the initiate as a fool, insiders would view his actions as a virtue; he cites as a comparandum the parable of the widow in Luke 21.1-4 (Moyer, pers. comm.).

⁹¹ ...*Osiris, non in alienam quampiam personam reformatus, sed coram suo illo venerando me dignatus adfamile per quietem recipere visus est: quae nunc, incunctanter gloriosa in foro redderem patrocina, nec extimescerem malevolorum disseminationes, quas studiorum meorum laboriosa doctrina ibidem exciebat.*

Lucius showcases his personal relationship with Osiris, who appears and speaks to him face to face just as Isis did on the beach at Cenchreae.⁹² He reiterates the gods' patronage in his professional pursuits as an advocate. Rather than appealing to the reader's benevolent ears as he did in the prologue (*aurisque tuas benivolas*, *Met.* 1.1), Lucius is now to ignore the slanders of the malevolent (*malevolorum disseminationes*). This power to disregard others' receptions of his actions is in line with his refusal to share the details of his first initiation with the reader in *Met.* 11.23. The very mention of malevolent slanderers, however, reminds us that there are multiple ways to perceive Lucius' new image as a devotee of Isis and Osiris. The glory he gains through his studies in Roman law may not be as glorious in others' eyes as it is in his own.⁹³

In addition to Lucius' professional success as a lawyer, Osiris grants him a new position within his cult:

And, so that I should not serve his mysteries comingled with the rest of the herd, he elected me into the college of his *pastophori*, and even made me one of the quinquennial officers themselves. (*Met.* 11.30)⁹⁴

Lucius makes much of his position as one of Osiris' *pastophori*, boasting that he was also made one of the five-year officers of this college. Many have pointed out that despite Lucius' evident pride in his new status, a *pastophorus* was a low-grade position just above that of a temple servant. The position of quinquennial officer is unknown in the

⁹² Boasting a personal relationship with Osiris was a feature of his cult in its Greco-Roman form; cf. Griffiths (1975), 306-307.

⁹³ Being an advocate did not automatically confer a higher status, though advocates in the Empire might advance somewhat through the ranks of the Roman bureaucracy; cf. Crook (1995), 44-45.

⁹⁴ *Ac ne sacris suis gregi cetero permixtus deservirem, in collegium me pastophorum suorum, immo inter ipsos decurionum quinquennales adlegit.*

cult of Isis and Osiris, but it is a documented type of civil magistracy.⁹⁵ Regardless of the reality of the terms he uses, Lucius' goal is clearly to fashion himself as an initiate who is continuously singled out by the gods. In recounting this final dream of Osiris, Lucius presents his new status and identity in as positive a light as possible. Unfortunately, his elevated self-image here holds together as well as it did in Books 1-10.

When we leave Lucius in the last sentence of the novel, he has marked his final transformation of status and identity in the cult of Osiris with a corresponding physical transformation:

Finally, with my head completely shaved and my baldness neither concealed nor covered but in every way apparent, I joyously attended to the duties of that most ancient of colleges, founded in the time of Sulla. (*Met.* 11.30)⁹⁶

Baldness in the ancient world had many connotations: a man with a bald or shaved head might be a priest of Isis, a philosopher, a freed slave, a shipwreck survivor, or the stock character of the *stupidus* or fool from Roman comedy and mime.⁹⁷ Lucius has embodied each of these figures in his narrative, either literally or metaphorically, in his own mind or in the perception of others.⁹⁸ The final image of his shaved head sums up the many roles he has played throughout the novel. Yet it also symbolizes the final failure of his discursive self-fashioning. With such a multitude of possible readings, Lucius' head fails

⁹⁵ Cf. Griffiths (1975), 265-266; Relihan (2007), xxv-xxvi.

⁹⁶ *Rursus denique quaqua raso capillo collegii vetustissimi et sub illis Sullae temporibus conditi munia, non obumbrato vel obtecto calvitio, sed quoquo versus obvio, gaudens obibam.*

⁹⁷ Cf. Winkler (1985), 224-227; Brennan (2011).

⁹⁸ For the shipwreck survivor, see Mithras' speech at *Met.* 11.15: "Having endured many and various labors and having been driven by great storms of Fortune and the mightiest gales, you have come at last, Lucius, to the harbor of Peace and the altar of Mercy," *'Multis et variis exanclatis laboribus magnisque Fortunae tempestatibus et maximis actus procellis, ad portum Quietis et aram Misericordiae tandem, Luci, venisti.'*

to signify authoritatively the identity he seeks to present to the rest of the world. Despite his divine knowledge, despite the gods' favor, despite his newfound successes in speech and silence, in the end Lucius the narrator still cannot control the reception of his projected self-image.

Conclusion

By the end of the *Metamorphoses*, Lucius' identity is radically different than it was at the beginning. His transformation is mapped through his experiences as a character within the narrative as well as his self-fashioning as the narrator. This disjunction between character and narrator, between Winkler's *actor* and *auctor*, serves to hide the narrator's identity and his manipulations of the reader until the final book of the novel. The dissonance in the narrator's self-fashioning between the prologue and Book 11 serves much the same purpose. Yet it also undermines Lucius' credibility as the narrator. In hiding his present identity for much of the novel, he drives the reader to question the validity of his experiences, particularly his religious experiences in the cult of Isis and Osiris.

As with the identity of Lucius the character, that of Lucius the narrator is negotiated discursively. Lucius directs his narrative towards a characterized fictive reader who is imagined as an adversarial figure. He presents himself as a suppliant to the reader, as a poor speaker and a Greek seeking the approval of his Roman, Latin-speaking audience. The reader responds with skepticism, questioning the truth of Lucius'

experiences, his sources of knowledge, and even his identity. In the first ten books of the novel, Lucius acquiesces to the reader's questions and demands. He provides more stories and details, though these often serve only to reveal his own inconsistencies. In the final book of the novel, with his revelation of Isis and his initiation into the mysteries, Lucius at last refuses the reader's demands. The superior knowledge of the divine he gains through his initiation provides him with a new power he wields through his silence, rather than his speech. At the same time, he achieves a newfound success in speech, making his living as a legal advocate with the divine patronage of Isis and Osiris.

At the end of the novel, Lucius is at pains to present an image of professional and spiritual success. He rejects traditional Roman structures of family, class, wealth, and social connections to embrace a new identity shaped by his privileged relationship with the gods. Yet he continues to undermine this projected image through his own narrative and his physical body. The combative conversations between Lucius and the characterized fictive reader, and the numerous examples of unsuccessful self-fashioning within the novel, have trained the actual reader to be a skeptic. Despite Lucius' convincing performance as a religious devotee chosen by the gods, we cannot quite buy his success. Although his evocation of divine knowledge is a powerful lure to belief, Lucius' unstable identity puts even this into question. His attempts to create a convincing, alternative identity outside the bounds of ordinary Roman structures of society, education, and discourse seem in the end to be unsuccessful. In presenting the possibility, however, he questions the foundations of the system itself. As an insider and outsider to Rome, a man of multiple images and identities, Lucius begins unexpectedly to resemble

his author Apuleius. In the end, even the lines between narrator and author blur, prompting the reader to ask one last time *Quis ille?* - who that is speaking? Is it Lucius or Apuleius?

CONCLUSION

The Man From Madaura

Apuleius' *Metamorphoses* plays games of identity. In showcasing the fluidity of discourse - speech and silence, oral and written, the external signs of the body - the novel questions the fixity of identity and the credibility of self-fashioning. Through its characters, especially its narrator and protagonist Lucius, it models a subjectivity of the self, a dissonance between the production and reception of identity through discourse that outlines hierarchies of social status, authority, and power. Power is vested in those who determine identity, whether of themselves or others. Although the *Metamorphoses* frames itself as fiction, the real world is not far distant. Glimpses of it can be caught in the novel's representations of status and society, and in its use of the languages of Roman law, philosophy, and religion. In Book 11, the world of the novel and the world of Apuleius' second century C.E. Roman Empire abruptly collide. During this collision, the identity of the narrator is thrown into question again, along with the identity of the author. Behind the *ego* of Lucius stands Apuleius himself, daring the reader to believe in his own self-image and his collection of unbelievable *fabulae*.

Towards the end of Book 11, Lucius begins preparations for his second initiation - his first into the cult of Osiris in Rome. One night, the gods send him a dream of the priest who will initiate him. The next day, the priest relates that he, too, had a dream:

For it seemed to him in his sleep on the previous night, that, while he was preparing garlands for the great god, he heard from his mouth, from which he declares the fates of each man, that a man from Madaura was being sent to him... (*Met.* 11.27)¹

Lucius is described throughout the novel as Greek, most likely from the city of Corinth. The only man from Madaura present, in fact, is Apuleius. The mention of the “man from Madaura” has cast readers and scholars into a quandary. Is *Madaurenses* a slip of the author’s pen, or an error in the manuscripts? While most scholars now accept that Apuleius did write *Madaurenses* deliberately, his intentions remain murky. Some see this as a simple sphragis, the author’s signature playfully inserted into the narrative. Others see it as a declaration of autobiography, arguing that Lucius’ experiences, particularly his religious initiations, should be read as Apuleius’ own.² In my view, *Madaurenses* should be taken as neither completely simple nor intentionally autobiographical. It represents a final destabilization of self in the novel, calling into question the identities of both the narrator and the author. For a moment, Apuleius becomes Lucius, or perhaps Lucius becomes Apuleius.³ Like *Quis ille?* in the prologue, *Madaurenses* at the end of Book 11 challenges the reader to rethink the narrator’s

¹ *Nam sibi visus est quiete proxima, dum magno deo coronas exaptat, de eius ore, quo singulorum fata dictat, audisse mitti sibi Madaurenses...* For this scene, see also Chapter Five.

² For the possibilities, see van der Paardt (1981); Harrison (2000), 228-231. Autobiography: cf. Griffiths (1975), 5-7, 334; Kenney (2003); see also Chapter Five. Critiques of the autobiographical and religious approach: Winkler (1985), 128, 199; Hunink (1997) vol. 1, 15; Bradley (1998), 330-331. For Isis as Apuleius’ attempt to counter the spread of Christianity in Africa, see Walsh (1968).

³ Cf. Gaisser (2008), 20.

identity once again, as well as his or her own relationship to the narrator, the novel, and the author.⁴

In the last chapter, I argued that the relationship between the narrator of the *Metamorphoses* and his characterized fictive reader is adversarial and hierarchical. The reader addressed in the novel is imagined in a position of superior authority until Lucius' initiation in Book 11. At that point, Lucius reveals his present identity and the power he holds to manipulate his reader. The word *Madaurenses* at *Met.* 11.27 turns the tables yet again: it is not Lucius who controls the narrative, but the author Apuleius. As Jack Winkler has pointed out, the fact that the author of the *Metamorphoses* is Apuleius of Madaura is hardly surprising. While *Madaurenses* does not tell us anything we did not already know, it does prompt us to question what we *should* know.⁵ It draws our attention to the author as an entity separate from but linked with his first-person narrator, whose character he dons as a mask, a literary *persona*. It invites us to read Lucius as Apuleius, but in its brevity and ambiguity it does not confirm that we should do so.⁶ *Madaurenses* raises the specter of the author's intentions: how are we to (re-)read the novel in light of Apuleius' revealed presence, and how are we to read the intended relationship between the author and his actual readers?

The audience of the *Metamorphoses*, as of all ancient novels, is uncertain.

Apuleius' implied readership was likely elite and well educated, as is suggested by his

⁴ For other parallels between the prologue and the end of the novel, see Laird (2001).

⁵ Winkler (1985), 247. For ancient readers' horizons of expectation and knowledge of the author's identity, see Slater (2001).

⁶ On ancient authors' and especially Apuleius' use of *personae*, see Gaisser (2008), 4-5, 17-18. On the complicated relationship between authors and narrators in first-person narratives, see Laird (1990), 158, and (1999), 212.

numerous references in the novel to Greek and Latin literature, archaic and contemporary Roman law, and philosophical debates.⁷ It is evident in his other works, especially the *Florida* and *Apology*, that Apuleius fashioned himself as a public intellectual, a member of the educated elite. The *Metamorphoses* is in one respect a display of its author's cultural and educational capital. As a Latin adaptation of a Greek text, it allows Apuleius to parade his bilingualism and his ability to adapt Greek literature to a Roman idiom.⁸ Its philosophical and religious resonances express Apuleius' claims to higher knowledge gained through his linked pursuits of philosophical study and religious initiation.⁹ In this way, the *Metamorphoses* is certainly a product of Apuleius' "sophistic" self-display, locating itself at the center of Greco-Roman discourses about literature, rhetoric, religion, philosophy, and culture.¹⁰ At the same time, it challenges the foundations of sophistic self-display and a status based on the traditional elements of birth and education.¹¹ Through the *persona* of his asinine Greek narrator and the speech of his characters from all levels of Roman society, Apuleius experiments with alternative constructions of identity.

In his rhetorical works, Apuleius presents himself as a philosopher, a scholar and teacher to the public, instructing his provincial, African audiences in international Greco-

⁷ See Introduction; Bowie (1994); Dowden (1994); Stephens (1994); Finkelpearl (1998), 28-29; Harrison (2000), 210-259; Keulen (2007a), 110-113; Graverini (2012), 199-200.

⁸ Cf. Swain (2001), 59; Hunink (1997), 23. For the politics of Latin literature and its appropriation of Greek literature, see Habinek (1998), esp. 10, 34, 60-63.

⁹ Cf. *Apol.* 55-56. Apuleius claims initiation into numerous mystery cults, though he does not name them in any of his surviving works; Isis is mentioned in none of his other works (see Chapter Five). For links between philosophy and the mysteries in the High Roman Empire, see Van Nuffelen (2007).

¹⁰ Cf. Harrison (2000), 210-259; Gaisser (2008), 18.

¹¹ For the *Metamorphoses* as work "written *against* as well as with its times," see Winkler (1985), 230. See also Habinek (1998), 103, on Latin literature's capacity to undermine as well as reinforce traditional hierarchies.

Roman culture. Yet he is also an advocate for the place of Carthage within the Roman literary and cultural traditions of the second century C.E.¹² He shapes his cultural identity fluidly, manipulating his status as an insider and outsider to Roman culture.¹³ He is equally at home asserting his authority within the Roman courtroom and lecture hall or defending his literary and philosophical achievements despite his place of birth.¹⁴ He represents a vision of Africa not as a locus of imperialism or “Romanization,” but as one of hybridization and globalization through the medium of Roman culture.¹⁵ His flexible manipulation of identity in his different written and rhetorical works raises the same questions as Lucian’s: which image of Apuleius is the “real” one and which are mere *personae* put on for show? A public figure and author like Apuleius cannot be separated from his projected image. In adopting such multiple and shifting identities, particularly in the *Metamorphoses*, Apuleius destabilizes his own position along with that of his reader. Are we to consider ourselves superior or inferior to our puzzling author? As is clear from the history of reception of Apuleius and his *Metamorphoses*, the author’s protean self-fashioning succeeds in leaving his audiences ultimately uncertain as to how to read his novel and him.

Apuleius’ performance as the author of the *Metamorphoses* is perhaps too convincing. His insertion of details such as *Madaurensis*, and the elision of author and

¹² Cf. *Fl.* 20.10: “Carthage, the venerable teacher of our province; Carthage, the heavenly Muse of Africa; Carthage, the Roman Muse of those who wear the toga!” *Karthago provinciae nostrae magistra venerabilis, Karthago Africae Musa caelestis, Karthago Camena togatorum!*

¹³ For Lucian’s similar manipulation of insider/outsider status to Greek culture, see Maturen (2009).

¹⁴ Cf. *Apol.* 24; *Fl.* 9.1-14, 16.28-48.

¹⁵ Imperialism/Romanization: Graverini (2012), 175-177, 201-206; Dufallo (2012), 244-247. Hybridization and cultural fluidity: Bhabha (1994); Too (2001), 186-187; Bradley (2005). Globalization: Hingley (2005). See also Finkelpearl (1998), 135-148.

narrator encouraged by first-person fictional narrative, means that Lucius and Apuleius have often been read as the same person.¹⁶ St. Augustine of Hippo famously identifies Apuleius with his asinine narrator in the *City of God*:

...Apuleius, in his books which he inscribed with the title *The Golden Ass*, either shows or pretends that these very things happened to him: that by taking a potion he became an ass, but remained human in his mind. (*De civ. Dei* 18.18).¹⁷

The manuscript tradition often gives Apuleius' *praenomen* as Lucius. In the history of his pre-modern reception, Apuleius is identified as the philosopher he claims to be, but he is perhaps more famously known as a magician.¹⁸ Even in more recent times, Apuleius and Lucius are conflated: in a very abbreviated version of the *Metamorphoses* published in the 1905 *Red Book of Romance*, the protagonist is named not Lucius, but Apuleius. The accompanying engraving of a man in a toga with the head and forelegs of a donkey is likewise captioned "Apuleius changes into an Ass."¹⁹ Finally, as I have discussed, autobiographical interpretations of the *Metamorphoses* remain a prominent thread in Apuleian scholarship. This is not to say that there is nothing of Apuleius in Lucius and in the *Metamorphoses*, but the correspondence cannot be a simple one when read in light of the novel's exploration of dissonant identities and discourses.

¹⁶ For the first-person form in fictional narratives, see Laird (1999), esp. 140-141, 158, 164.

¹⁷ ...sicut Apuleius in libris, quos asini aurei titulo inscripsit, sibi ipsi accidisse, ut accepto ueneno humano animo permanente asinus fieret, aut indicauit aut finxit. This is the first attestation of the title *The Golden Ass*.

¹⁸ See Winkler (1985), 277; Gaisser (2008), 20-39. Unfortunately, Apuleius is always the incompetent magician in Byzantine tales: cf. Gaisser (2008), 36-38.

¹⁹ Lang (1905), 298-308. Engraving by H.J. Ford on p. 302.

What Apuleius' *Metamorphoses* teaches us is that identity, discourse, and truth itself are multiple and subjective.²⁰ Apuleius and Lucius dare us to believe while showing us we cannot, revealing the cracks in their own self-fashioning that appear between the production and reception of their discourses. Rhetoric, as taught in its traditional form and deployed by Lucius and Apuleius, represents a Roman attempt to control their uncontrollable reception by others. The power to control reception is the power to control meaning, and thus reality. The discursive negotiations that determine meaning - whether in Apuleius' speeches, the *Metamorphoses*, or 21st century identity politics - reveal the hierarchical lines of power running through cultures and societies.²¹ Although Apuleius' self-fashioning is more effective than his character Lucius', he is a victim of his own success. His multiple identities as Roman and African, a Greek philosopher, an orator, a magician, and an author of prose fiction attest to his success in creating convincing *personae* through the spoken and written word. His failure lies in his inability to fix any of these as definitive through the winding paths of his reception; but perhaps this is also his success. Through the mask of his asinine narrator Lucius and his own authorial images, Apuleius performs the conflicts of self underlying second century C.E. Roman imperial culture: between internal and external identity, between a

²⁰ Much of Winkler's assessment of the effect of Lucius' conversion holds true for the effects of discourse and identity in the novel: "But the effect of the *AA* on all its readers, whatever their prior religious traditions and convictions, is to show how all supernatural and revelatory knowledge is essentially *relative to the unshareable point of view of an individual*. As that location shifts, from reader to reader or character to character or even from *auctor* to *actor*, conviction vanishes" (Winkler (1985), 319-310, my emphasis).

²¹ For meaning and power in silence in the ancient world, see McNeill (2010). For contemporary discourses, see the collected articles in Silverstein and Urban (1996a), esp. Silverstein and Urban (1996b), 11: "Politics can be seen, from this perspective, as the struggle to entextualize authoritatively, and hence, in one relevant move, to fix certain metadiscursive perspectives on texts and discourse practices."

traditional elite education and alternative routes to knowledge and power, and between discourse, meaning, and truth.

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