FROM PHILOSOPHISING ASS TO ASININE PHILOSOPHER:

SATIRE IN BOOK 11 OF APULEIUS’ *METAMORPHOSES*

by

Nathan A. Watson

A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the degree of Master of Arts

University of Otago, Dunedin, New Zealand

October 2012
ABSTRACT

The major question in the study of Apuleius’ Metamorphoses concerns the interpretation of Lucius’ religious conversion in Book 11. For the past thirty years scholars have put forward interpretations that discern satire in this conversion. As yet, however, there has been no comprehensive examination of the merits and drawbacks of each approach that offers a systematic deconstruction of the essential themes in relation to Books 1-10.

This study argues that there is a fundamental flaw in the current approach to satire in Book 11. This is caused by trying to read it as a satire on priestly deception and religious gullibility, just as in the presentation of the priests of the Syrian goddess and their followers in Books 8-9. The key difference between the scenario presented in Books 8-9 and that in Book 11 is that the latter includes god-sent dreams. This thesis shows that, depending on whether one interprets Lucius’ dreams as divine visions or as meaningless delusions, the ultimate responsibility for the conversion rests with the priests or the gods. Both alternatives are explored separately. It emerges that a more coherent interpretation of satire in Book 11 can be found when the gods and their relationship to Lucius is the focus rather than the priests. Consequently, Apuleius is shown to have a philosophical motive driving his satire in addition to his desire to entertain.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to show my heartfelt appreciation to all those who have aided me on this journey. It has not been easy and I cannot help but feel that I am not the same man now as the one who first set out to explore Apuleius’ *Metamorphoses*. Any journey entails change to some degree, and this one has been no different.

My enduring thanks to Dr. John Garthwaite for his encouragement, patience, and open mindedness. The reins could not have been in better hands.

A big ‘thank you’ to Kerri for the reading, the suggestions, and helping me understand what I was trying to say all along (see, I get there eventually!).

To my colleagues and fellow post grads in the Otago Department of Classics – you are all very inspirational, each in your own special way. I would resent your talent if you weren’t such wonderful people.

To my friends and family, whom I’ve neglected for so long, call off the search party, I’m back.

And finally, to the people at the ISIS Centre. Thank you for taking care of this not-so-golden ass. (No, the irony was not lost on me.)

Cover image: ‘Lucius’ by Nathan Watson.
CONTENTS

Abstract  ii
Acknowledgements  iii
Abbreviations  vi

Introduction  1

Chapter One – The Philosophical Context of Dream Interpretation  10
  Background to Dream Interpretation  13
  Philosophical Context  17
  Dreams in Satire  31

Chapter Two – Dreams in the *Metamorphoses*  38
  Background to Scholarship on the dreams in the *Metamorphoses*  38
  Analysis of Dreams in the *Metamorphoses*
    Books 1-10  50
    Book 11  59
    Why Dreams  71

Chapter Three – Mithras and Asinius Marcellus  77
  Instances of Greed and Theft in the Metamorphoses  77
  Instances of a Gullible and Foolish Lucius in the Metamorphoses  81
  Mithras the High Priest  85
  Asinius Marcellus the *pastophorus*  91
  The Case for the Satire of a Greedy Asinius and a Gullible Lucius  100
  The Case against the Satire of a Greedy Asinius and a Gullible Lucius  103

Chapter Four – Isis and Osiris  107
  Isis, Divine Mistress  107
    Magic  109
    Love and Slavery  114
    Isis as *domina*  118
  Osiris, Divine Mentor  124

Chapter Five – The Transformed Man  131
  Lucius, Pre-Conversion  131
  Lucius, Post-Conversion  134
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Inconscient Narrator</td>
<td>136</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lucius and Wisdom</td>
<td>141</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lucius and Appearances</td>
<td>144</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lucius and Emotion</td>
<td>149</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lucius and Apuleius</td>
<td>157</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>167</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bibliography</td>
<td>172</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ABBREVIATIONS

AAGA     Aspects of Apuleius’ *Golden Ass*
GCA      Groningen Commentaries on Apuleius
GCN      Groningen Colloquia on the Novel
ILA      Inscriptions latines de l’Algérie
PGM      *Papyri Graecae Magicae* (Greek Magical Papyri)

All abbreviations used for ancient authors and their works follow the conventions used in Oxford Classical Dictionary (3rd Edition).

Journal abbreviations follow the convention set forth by *L’année philologique*. 
Introduction

The subject and occasion itself demand that I produce a description of the region and the cave inhabited by the robbers, for thus I shall both put my talent to the test and also let you effectively perceive whether in intelligence and perception I was the ass that I appeared to be.¹

This passage from Book 4 of Apuleius’ *Metamorphoses* invites the reader to evaluate the intelligence, perception, and character of Lucius the ass and Lucius the narrator. When it is considered in light of the work’s conclusion, however, the sentiment appears to gain added significance, striking at the heart of the problem presented by its eleventh and final book. For the question of how to explain Lucius’ sudden change from the bumbling fool of Books 1-10 to the devout and literally reformed figure of Book 11 is still a subject of animated discussion amongst Apuleian scholars. Indeed, the third volume of *Aspects of Apuleius’ Golden Ass*, which was published earlier this year and focuses upon the so-called Isis-Book, bears testament to this remaining a point of contention. Its preface, putting the problem in simple terms, asks:

should we interpret the religious narrative of Book Eleven as the true and serious report of the protagonist’s genuine experiences as an Isiac convert, or should we read it as comedy, continuing the atmosphere of entertaining fiction in the preceding ten books of the *Metamorphoses*, with the credulous dupe Lucius featuring in the final book as the butt of the authorial irony and the victim of an exploitative cult?²

² Keulen and Egelhaaf-Gaissier (eds.) (2012) vii. (= AAGA 3)
INTRODUCTION

One might expect that an understanding of Apuleius’ life and the reception of his *Metamorphoses* would help to answer this question, but this is not so.

Born some time during the 120s AD, Apuleius was a provincial North African from the Roman colony of Madauros. The son of a man who achieved the duumvirate, the highest magistracy available in a *colonia*, Apuleius received a privileged upbringing. He seems to have been educated first at Carthage and then in Athens (*Flor*. 18.15, 20.4), before he moved to Rome for an indeterminate period (*Flor*. 17.4). His greatest fame, however, was evidently achieved in his home province of *Africa proconsularis*, where he became a prominent orator and author. He is also said to have been elected to the Imperial cult’s chief priesthood (*August. Ep*. 138.19), and appears also to have been a priest of Aesculapius (*Flor*. 18.38). But Apuleius’ career was not without its troubles; his marriage to the wealthy, widowed mother (Pudentilla) of an old school friend (Pontianus), both of whom soon died, resulted in him having to defend himself against a charge of being a magician (*magus*). This charge was brought forward by his step-son (Sicinius Pudens), apparently under compulsion by the boy’s paternal uncle (Sicinius Aemilianus) and Pontianus’ father-in-law (Herennius Rufinus), who sought to use the boy, a minor, to gain access to the fortune of the late Pudentilla. Apuleius defends himself by contrasting the ignorance of his accusers, the evidence being their absurd charges, with his learning as a philosopher; he points to his religious convictions by stating that he has been initiated into many mystery cults (*Apol*. 55). Though a priest, follower of Asclepius, and initiate in many cults, Apuleius refers to himself and was

---

3 Apuleius also mentions taking up a priesthood at *Flor*. 16.38, but does not offer specific details about it. Rives (1994: 273-90) believes that Augustine was mistaken about the nature of Apuleius’ priesthood, and instead argues that he was a priest of Aesculapius or Ceres. Harrison (2000a: 8 and n. 30), however, prefers to trust Augustine. Like Harrison, I am inclined to trust Augustine’s knowledge of Apuleius, but I do not discount Apuleius’ comment about having become a priest of Aesculapius. The evidence thus points to Apuleius attaining both priesthoods, for they were not mutually exclusive.

4 The odd set of circumstances behind this court case put to shame anything that one might expect to see from a modern television talk show; for a retelling of these circumstances in greater depth, see Harrison (2000a) 39-41, and Harrison, Hilton & Hunink (2001) 11-14.

5 It is clear that Apuleius was acquitted because he chose to publish his defence speech, which survives under the name *Apologia*. There thus seems to have been some poetic justice in that this court case likely benefitted Apuleius’ career and fame by the publishing of the speech.
identified by later authors as a *philosophus* (*Platonicus*).\(^6\) And yet, centuries after his death, the fame of Apuleius’ learning was such that many apparently viewed him to have been a worker of miracles—a status which Augustine earnestly sought to correct (*Ep. 102.32, 137; 138.18*).\(^7\)

Apuleius’ literary output seems to have been vast and varied, but sadly most of it has been lost.\(^8\) He himself attests that he wrote all kinds of poems (epic, lyric, comic, tragic), satires and riddles, speeches, philosophical dialogues, and histories on various topics (*Flor. 9.27-8*).\(^9\) He makes much of his bilingualism in Latin and Greek (*Flor. 9.29*), and appears to have had a penchant for taking Greek works and translating them into Latin.\(^10\) The *Metamorphoses* numbers amongst these works, but it should be stressed that since Apuleius has added to and changed aspects of the story it is truer to say that it is an adaptation rather than a translation.

It is greatly vexing to Apuleian scholars that the original Greek version of the tale has not survived. Fortunately, however, an epitomised version of the original does survive. This text, entitled Λούκιος ὦ Ὀνος (henceforth, *Onos*), was attributed to Lucian and features a protagonist named Loukios.\(^11\) A comparison between the *Metamorphoses*

---

\(^{6}\) August. *De civ. D.* 8.12, 8.14, 8.24, 9.3, 10.27; Sid. Apoll. *Epist.* 9.13.8; Cassiod. *Inst.* 2.5.10; and Charisius *Gramm.* 2.16. Apuleius himself claimed to be a Platonic philosopher (*Apol.* 10, 36; *Flor.* 2.1, 15.26), and it seems to be as a philosopher that Macrobius considers him (*In. Som.* 1.2.8). The inscription (*ILA 2115*) found in modern M’Daourouch (i.e. Madauros) dedicated to a *philosophus Platonicus* is very likely to have belonged to a statue of Apuleius erected by his native city; Harrison (2000a) 8 and n. 31.

\(^{7}\) Gaisser (2008) 30-32. Note that Apuleius’ posthumous fame as a *magus* thus contradicts his own defence speech, a fact which Augustine is only too happy to point out. This has led some to argue that Apuleius’ knowledge of magic suggests that he did in fact have some involvement with it; Winter (2006: 100-106), however, argues against such notions.

\(^{8}\) For an excellent review of Apuleius’ literary output, see Harrison (2000a) 10-38.

\(^{9}\) cf. *Apol.* 9, in which Apuleius refutes the prosecution, who evidently read aloud Apuleius’ elegiac love poetry in an attempt to tarnish his character, and *Flor.* 20.5-6, in which he claims to have cultivated the poems of Empedocles, the dialogues of Plato, the hymns of Socrates, the mimes of Epicharmus, the histories of Xenophon, and the satires of Crates.

\(^{10}\) Harrison (2000a) 9, 218-19.

\(^{11}\) The relationship between the three versions of the ass-tale is problematic. A Greek original, entitled *Metamorphoseis*, is referred to in the ninth century by the patriarch Photius (*Bibl. cod.* 129), who claims it was written by one ‘Loukios of Patrae’, whom he believed Lucian plagiarised when writing the *Onos*. Perry (1967: 212-13, 224-25), however, attributes the Greek *Metamorphoseis* to Lucian, whose name he believes was mistakenly attached to the epitome, whilst the protagonist (Loukios of Patrae) was erroneously credited with authorship of the longer original. Loukios of Patrae, it so happens, is the protagonist of the *Onos*. Sullivan, in *Reardon* (2008: 589), and Tilg (2012: 143) consider this theory the most plausible; Harrison (2000a: n. 34, 218), however, sees no reason to doubt Photius about the authorship of the Greek original. This is interesting since Harrison regards Augustine as mistaken in his belief that Apuleius was writing about himself as the protagonist in the *Metamorphoses*, and yet he
and the *Onos* reveals that, for the most part, the story of Lucius progresses in much the same manner as that of Loukios.\(^\text{12}\) Where the stories of Loukios and Lucius differ greatly is at the conclusion. Loukios, the talented ass, is set to perform in the theatre at Thessalonike when he discovers the roses that will cure his condition (*Ps.-Luc. Onos* 54). He eats them and is thus transformed back into a man by a mix of opportunism and luck. Yet he remains a comic figure right up to the end; for, thinking himself to be vastly improved in human form, he is rejected by his former lover, who preferred him when he was an ass (*Onos* 56). This conclusion contrasts with that of Lucius, for he escapes from his Corinthian amphitheatre and, after waking from sleep, prays to the moon for deliverance before he is visited by Isis in his sleep (11.1-4). The goddess provides the roses that cure him during the following day’s religious procession (11.13). This divine intervention and the subsequent religious ‘conversion’ provide a change in tone that seems to turn the novel into more than just a moral fable but an actual dedication to Isis.\(^\text{13}\) The significance of Book 11, then, lies in its difference with the ending of the original ass-tale epitomised in the *Onos*.

Despite this apparently edifying objective, the surviving references from antiquity to the *Metamorphoses* are dismissive due to the general stigma attached to prose narrative fiction.\(^\text{14}\) Even so, the references reveal that it was well known and widely read. A letter

\(^{12}\) Walsh (1970: 147) compares the *Metamorphoses* and the *Onos* and reveals that the many tales outside the main plot are missing from the latter. It is unclear whether none, some, or all of the tales found in Apuleius’ *Metamorphoses* existed in the Greek original but were omitted from the *Onos*.

\(^{13}\) Bradley (1998) makes many pertinent points about the misuse of the term ‘conversion’ for describing Lucius’ experience (preferring ‘reformation’ instead); nevertheless, this study will (for better or worse) follow the long established convention of using ‘conversion’.

\(^{14}\) This stigma seems to have been based upon several ideas. First, narrative prose fiction lacked official status as an established *literary* genre in the ancient world, and as such was not included by Quintilian in his survey of literary genres (*Inst. Or.* 1.10.46-131); Hofmann (1999) 3-4. Such narrative, however, did have an established *oral* tradition in the form of old wives’ tales and the entertaining stories told at dinners. Moreover, the two surviving Latin ‘novels’, Petronius’ *Satyrica* and Apuleius’ *Metamorphoses* are largely comic and bawdy, dealing with low-life characters, situations, and themes that were familiar from Aristides’ *Milesiaca* (translated into Latin by Sisenna in the first century BC) and the mimic stage. Other extended fictional narratives, such as philosophical dialogues and epic poetry, had established and respected genres. Dialogues had a clear didactic purpose in discussing philosophical ideas; epic poetry, whilst entertaining, dealt with characters that were heroes, gods, or high-ranked historical personages, situations that were seemly, and themes that were far removed from the bawdy material of the novels. For an informative discussion on the Latin novel, see Harrison (2005) 213-22.
purportedly from the Emperor Severus to the Senate holds the opinion that since his
deceased rival Clodius Albinus, whom the Senate had supported, read Apuleius’
Mileanian tales he cannot have been a respectable intellectual (SHA Alb. 12.12).\textsuperscript{15}
Similarly, Macrobius expresses surprise that Apuleius, a Platonist, indulged in writing
works that sought only to entertain, rather than those that had a moral purpose (Somn.
1.2.8).\textsuperscript{16} Augustine, in fact, believes that Apuleius was writing about himself as having
transformed into an ass, but had the sense to suspect that he made the whole thing up
(Civ. D. 18. 18.).\textsuperscript{17} From these references, there is no sense that Apuleius sought to extol
the cult of Isis. Then again, there is nothing to suggest he sought to present a satirical
ending. What is clear is that this type of fiction was thought to have had the primary
function to entertain rather than to educate.\textsuperscript{18} But the question remains whether it is
entertainment showing a genuine and uplifting conversion, or entertainment showing a
satiric one.

From the details concerning Apuleius’ life it is clear that he was a priest, a follower
of Aesculapius, and a Platonist. Yet it is also apparent from his surviving works that he
had a sharp wit and wrote all kinds of literature, including satire. Thus the
aforementioned problem: does Apuleius endorse Lucius’ conversion or does he satirise
it?

The view of the conversion in Book 11 as satire evolved from the view of the work
as comic entertainment. According to Perry (1967), Apuleius wrote the \textit{Metamorphoses}

\textsuperscript{15} The reference to Mileanian tales from Carthage clearly identifies the \textit{Metamorphoses}, which begins with
a note in the prologue on its Mileanian style (1.1). The importance of this letter lies not in whether it is
legitimate, but in the idea that reading Mileanian tales could be held against someone. Clodius Albinus was
without doubt viewed as an educated man if Severus felt it necessary to tarnish his reputation in this way.
This being the case, the letter can be understood as proof that some educated men enjoyed reading
Apuleius’ \textit{Metamorphoses} in the decades after its publication; Carver (2007) 12.

\textsuperscript{16} Macrobius does not state the names of the \textit{fabulae}, but Apuleius is known to have written two novels,
the \textit{Metamorphoses} and the lost \textit{Hermagoras}; the latter is discussed by Harrison (2000a) 20-21. It is not
clear if Macrobius has read the \textit{Metamorphoses} or if he is merely reporting how it is generally regarded,
but this is not so important, for he, or the one whose opinion he is using, seems not to view the work as
the religious evocation that many modern scholars argue that it is.

\textsuperscript{17} Augustine refers to the \textit{Metamorphoses} as ‘Asinus Aureus’ (‘The Golden Ass’). ‘Metamorphoses’ is
the name upon the manuscripts of the texts of it that have survived. Interestingly, Augustine does not
appear to be aware of the earlier Greek version of the ass-tale.

\textsuperscript{18} It should be noted that none of these references is at all sympathetic to Apuleius or the \textit{Metamorphoses}.
Indeed, ‘Severus’ and Augustine had their own agendas in referring to the work.
to be literary entertainment, but added the serious and quite unrelated conclusion of Book 11 to lend the overall work credibility. Despite seeing a comic intent behind the *Metamorphoses*, Perry still views the ending as a serious and genuine conversion based upon Apuleius’ own. In the next decade of scholarship this view developed to include Book 11 as part of the humour too. Massey (1976) sees Lucius as submissive and entering a cult that separated him from the human world just as he had been separated from it as an ass. Heiserman (1977) views the work as a comedy of marvels, which by Book 11 is so well established that Lucius’ conversion can only be interpreted as a comedy as well. The final book provides a comic resolution of Lucius’ comic suffering as an ass, with his last transformation into an Isiac priest being as ludicrous as his first into an ass. The next decade brought forth the idea that satire was present in the final book. Anderson (1982) focuses on the work as fiction, believing one’s religious views as a poor motive for writing a comic novel. Moreover, he believes that the comic treatment of religion both in Book 11 and in the earlier books denies the possibility of a serious purpose of the religious material included in the conclusion. It is Winkler (1985) who provides the foundation for interpretation of Book 11 as satire upon which all subsequent versions are modelled. He discerns a satire of religious gullibility in Book 11, seeing Lucius’ experience in Book 11 as becoming so absurd in the last four chapters that the earlier presentation of the conversion is undercut. In the end, the reader is forced to decide whether Lucius’ viewpoint is correct or whether the sceptical position encouraged by the last four chapters is the more plausible; Apuleius, argues Winkler, never himself confirms which choice the reader should make.

Most subsequent adherents to the view of satire in Book 11 are not convinced by Winkler’s indeterminate approach. Instead, they argue for a purely satirical conclusion. Van Mal-Maeder (1997) sees Lucius’ three initiations as an example of comic repetition. Moreover, Isis takes advantage of Lucius, robbing him with these initiations, just as the witch Meroë had taken advantage of Socrates in Aristomenes’ story in Book 1. Harrison (2000a) sees the work as philosophical comedy with Lucius playing the dupe who believes his dreams (which are meaningless) and both of his priests (who are
INTRODUCTION

greedy), resulting in him being fleeced by the cult of Isis. Murgatroyd (2004), following Harrison’s interpretation of a satire of both priests, believes that Isis’ exploitation is presaged in Book 10 with the Judgement of Paris mime. Van Nuffelen (2011) also follows the interpretation of Harrison but believes the satire of religion stems from more than just a desire to entertain with a sophistic display; rather, Apuleius seeks to depict a superstitious man who approaches religion without the aid of philosophy, resulting in his exploitation by the mystery cult. Edsall (1996), however, sees only the second priests as being satirised, contrasting with the first priest who is in fact an idealised Isiac priest. For her, Lucius is more than a mere dupe; he is someone who, without realising it, becomes a greedy priest just like the one who had taken advantage of him for his second and third initiations. Kirichenko (2010) has recently argued for a similar satire of Lucius, who becomes the very thing which he had earlier mocked (i.e. the priests of the dea Syria in Books 8-9). He sees a strong connection to the satires of Lucian, who also satirises pseudo-intellectuals and false prophets. Unlike Edsall, Kirichenko understands both priests to be part of the satire. Similarly, Weiss (1998) sees both priests deceiving Lucius, whom he views as having remained as curious, foolish, and full of desire, as he had been when he sought out magic. In Book 11, Lucius merely focuses his curious nature upon a different type of supernatural female, resulting in him being duped by his priests. And yet Weiss does not see it as a serious satire of religious cults, but rather as a comic use of a social reality current in second century Rome. Kenny (2003) suggests that the reverse of Perry’s position is true; instead of adding Book 11 to Books 1-10, Apuleius added the earlier books to the final one, which was based on his own experience, in order to satirise Lucius and his quest for religion because his own had been as misguided as Loukios’ quest for magic in the original ass-tale. Vander Poppen (2008) focuses on the theme of hospitium and has Isis and Osiris, by demanding multiple initiations, breach this trust with Lucius in like manner to characters that earlier had hosted him. Hunink (2006) discusses the dreams in the Metamorphoses and in Book 11 sees the possibility for an interpretation of both satire (due to Lucius’ earlier gullibility) and religious evocation (due to dreams generally
appearing to be true in Books 1-10). In the end, the answer remains as elusive as any dream.

It can be observed that since Winkler first argued for a reading of Book 11 as a satire of religious gullibility, various approaches to satire in Book 11 have been developed. Some see the dreams as non-revelatory, being either psychological manifestations of Lucius’ desire to be initiated or the result of manipulation by the priests. Others see the dreams as god-sent because the gods are the architects of the scam. One interpretation sees only one priest as greedy and manipulative, but most interpretations view both as equally deceitful. In some readings Lucius is the figure satirised, in others it is both Lucius and the priests (as gullible and devious, respectively). Last, the purpose for the satire is said to be nothing but a show of sophistic display, whilst it is elsewhere said to have a philosophical purpose in addition to the humour, and it is even suggested to have stemmed from an aspect of Apuleius’ past.

The truth of the matter is that the question posed in the preface of the third volume of Aspects of Apuleius’ Golden Ass is a very difficult one to answer completely, and most likely will never be answered to the point where all critics agree. A question that does appear to be surmountable, however, is the following: if there is indeed a satire in Book 11, how does that satire operate? This is the question that this study will focus upon. The underlying hope is that having provided an answer, readers will be better equipped to tackle the larger question about Book 11 themselves. Now, at this juncture, it is pertinent to note that the majority of scholarship on Apuleius’ Metamorphoses does in fact lean the other way, understanding and arguing for, in various ways, a sincere portrayal of Lucius’ conversion. So the above question might appear to ignore or even to deny the validity of this impressive collection of scholarship. This is not the intent, and, to be sure, scholarship from this differing viewpoint will not be ignored where it pertains to interpretations of certain aspects the Metamorphoses, or simply provides insight into a reading of the text. It is merely in the interest of time, space, and keeping the question in focus, that this study concentrates upon the approach that perceives satire in Book 11. This is achieved best by entertaining the hypothesis that there is such
a satire from the outset. Thus it is hoped that any doubts regarding satire can be addressed fully. For, whilst the above studies advocating satire in Book 11 have all made important observations, none addresses all of the aspects said to be crucial to it: dreams, money, the priests, the gods, and connections to similar scenes from Books 1-10 (most notably, the satirised priests of the Syrian goddess and the scenes of the witches and Photis dominating a passive male figure). As such, each lacks clarity, to an extent, by not addressing possible objections or alternative readings. This study thus attempts to reach something of a consensus on the interpretation of satire in Book 11.

From the above overview of scholarship interpreting satire in Book 11, it is clear that dreams are especially prominent in Lucius’ conversion. Not only that, but it is within a dream (or at least, the report of a dream) that Apuleius is identified with Lucius in the *Madaurensem* passage (11.27), an explanation of which is essential to any interpretation of Book 11 as satire. As dreams seem to be the key to the conversion—which by all accounts is the heart of the satire—it is important to understand the philosophical, historical, and literary context of dream interpretation, and to understand the author’s view with regards to dreams outside of the *Metamorphoses*. Therefore, Chapter One will address this context of dream interpretation. With that context in mind, Chapter Two will consider the dreams in the *Metamorphoses*, first those in Books 1-10 and then those of Book 11. Having addressed the dreams, the following chapters will address the other aspects deemed to be crucial to the satire. Chapter Three will look at the priests and money, whilst Chapter Four will focus upon the gods and their relationship to Lucius. Finally, Chapter Five will examine Lucius before and after his conversion to discern any change in his character and situation with an eye to the satire.

For the purpose of this study, I will use the Loeb edition of the text by J. A. Hanson. This text is the widely used amongst Apuleian scholars, and its translation is very reliable. I will, of course, note any sections of the text that have alternative readings.19

---

19 Unfortunately, the latest edition of the text by Maaike Zimmerman had not been published when I was in the research stage of this thesis, so its text is not referenced.
CHAPTER ONE

The Philosophical Context of Dream Interpretation

The dreams of Lucius in Book 11 of the *Metamorphoses* are integral to his religious experience. It is within dreams—and only within dreams\(^1\)—that Lucius encounters Isis and Osiris, who coach him through his initiations. In the waking world, Lucius is also given instruction from priests, who have themselves received divine messages from the gods during sleep. Therefore, how one understands the function and significance of the dreams in the text can greatly affect one’s interpretation of the novel as a whole. Are Lucius’ dreams really revelations from supreme deities? Or are they simply the meaningless sleep-visions of an impressionable fool whose priests tell him what he wants to hear? It could be that some dreams are to be read sceptically while others are to be interpreted as true and meaningful. Whatever the case may be, it is important to interpret the dreams in Book 11 within the context of dreams throughout the whole *Metamorphoses*. One should not come to a conclusion concerning the dreams in the final book without considering the dreams in the first ten books, which serve to prime the reader for the final book. That is to say, if all the dreams encountered before Book 11 are true, it would be inconsistent for Apuleius to use false dreams throughout the final book (and vice versa), unless they can somehow be differentiated.

---

\(^{1}\) Despite the ambiguity of Apuleius’ language preceding Lucius’ first vision of the goddess (*Necdum satis coniveram* (‘I had not yet completely closed my eyes’; 11.3). [My translation]), scholarship is unanimous in the conclusion that Lucius is dreaming when he first sees Isis. Indeed, Lucius says that he wakes up: *Nec mora cum somno protinus absolutus ... exsurgo* (‘At once I was quickly released from sleep’; 11.7). This confirms he has been asleep.
This chapter examines the treatment of dreams and dream interpretation in ancient philosophy and satire, thus considering the intellectual climate in which Apuleius was writing. The purpose is to see if a clue can be offered as to how he might be using the dreams in his novel. This is necessary to establish whether the dreams in the novel conform to ancient standards of dream interpretation. If they do not conform to these standards, it is likely that Apuleius is not reflecting contemporary thought on dream interpretation and is instead using the dreams for specific literary ends. Similarly, if it can be shown that Apuleius is likely to be hostile to the idea of divine dreams it could suggest that the dreams are false and are possibly being used as a tool for satire. Conversely, if Apuleius favoured the idea of divine dreams, then it is unlikely that he would be using Lucius’ character to satirise those who did believe in them unless there is a difference between the believer and the overly superstitious, a difference to which Apuleius is drawing attention with Lucius’ unquestioning faith in his dreams as divine.

Turning to the novel itself, it is significant to note that dreams are scattered throughout, showing that they are important to various episodes and the novel as a whole, rather than to just one part of it. The opening dream appears in the first of the ‘inserted’ tales, specifically, that of Aristomenes (1.5-19). Within this account, his friend Socrates recalls his dream of having had his throat cut by the witch Meroë, which Aristomenes either witnessed or dreamt about witnessing. This tale is important as it sets the tone of the novel with its mix of comic and tragic elements, threads of magic and horror, and its narrative twists that leave the reader unsure as to what or whom to believe. Thus the possibilities of Apuleius’ fictional world are established: magic, transformations, fearsome witches, meaningful dreams, and perhaps even the possibility of shared dreams. In addition, the story sets the first interpretive dilemma for the reader—to take Aristomenes at his word, as Lucius does, or to be sceptical like the unnamed traveller.

---

2 For instance, dreams occur in each of the four sections into which Schlam (1992: 30) divides the *Metamorphoses*; he labels them (1) Hypata, (2) Charite Complex, (3) On the Road, and (4) Transformation and Further Adventures.

3 The ambiguous nature of what Aristomenes witnessed will be discussed in further detail in Chapter Two.
The next dream in the *Metamorphoses* features as part of the main narrative and belongs to the abducted bride-to-be, Charite (4.27). At first the dream appears to reflect her situation and refer to the present time, but with hindsight, can be seen to have predicted the death of her husband, Tlepolemus, thus opening the reader to the possibility of divination in dreams. Her second dream occurs in an inserted narrative told by one of her former servants (8.1-14). This tale introduces a new and important function of dreams, for, within Charite’s dream, the shade of her late husband tells her of the circumstances concerning his death (8.8). This same motif is reused in the story about the mysterious death of Lucius’ owner, the miller. Like Charite, the miller’s daughter receives a vision of her recently deceased loved one, who explains the circumstances of his death (9.31). Therefore, the possibility of obtaining important information about one’s life from dreams appears prior to Book 11.

In the final book, Lucius has many dreams, some requiring introspection while others are straightforward. The first of these dreams is recounted in the most detail; Lucius beholds a vision of Isis rising from the sea, describing her in a full *ecphrasis*. After proclaiming her various names, Isis instructs Lucius on what to do at her impending festival and informs him that she is simultaneously appearing in the dream of her high priest, who will help change Lucius back to human form. Thus returns the idea of the

---

4 I shall not treat the experience of Thelyphron with the witches (2.25), Lucius’ encounter with the animated wine-skins (2.32), or Lucius viewing Pamphile’s transformation (3.22) as dreams, even though some have argued that they have been presented as ‘dream-like’ encounters, designed to make the reader question their reality/veracity. Similarly, I shall not treat the tale of Cupid and Psyche as a dream, ‘archetypal’ or otherwise. For the Cupid and Psyche tale as Lucius’ archetypal dream, see Gollnick (1999) 110, 112-25. For the dream-like nature of the aforementioned episodes, see Kenan (2004) 262-65, Laird (1993) 163-64, and Hunink (2006: 21-23), who also notes the dream-like quality of the Cupid and Psyche tale.

5 This tale is not strictly an ‘inserted’ narrative since it is told as part of Lucius’ main narrative (i.e. it is told by Lucius-the-narrator rather than a character). Its inclusion seeks to explain the Lucius-the-narrator’s knowledge of information that would have been hidden from Lucius-the-actor (9.30).

6 This priest is surely the man named Mithras, who is the *sacerdotem praecipuum* at 11.22. As Lucius is still in Cenchreae for his initiation, the high-priest would presumably be the same *summus sacerdos* that appears in Lucius’ dream at 11.20, and thus the same one that fed him the roses and received Lucius’ back-story from Isis; cf. Isis’ words to Lucius in his dream at 11.6: *nam hoc eodem momento quo tibi venio, simul et ibi praesens quae sunt sequentia sacerdoti meo per quietem facienda praecipio* (‘for at this very moment when I come to you I am present there too and am instructing my priest in his sleep about what he must do next.’).
shared dream, which is possibly featured (or, at least, is implied) in Book 1 with Socrates and Aristomenes.

After Lucius is transformed, he dreams that the high priest offers him gifts, including a slave named Candidus (11.20). When he wakes he later discovers that his possessions have been returned to him, including his white horse (*equum ... candidum*). To Lucius, this detail confirms beyond doubt his continued dream-connection with the divine. Before his initiation he states that he has nightly dreams of Isis, one of which announces it is time for his initiation. After the ceremony, and having returned to his ancestral home, he is told in a dream to go to Rome (11.26). Once there he dreams about Isis and a further initiation. After thinking it over and consulting other initiates about the dream, it is decided that Isis wills his initiation in the cult of Osiris. On the very next night (*proxima nocte*) Lucius dreams of a lame priest holding sacred objects of the cult (11.27). He wakes and later finds a hobbling priest named Asinius Marcellus, who tells him that he too had been sent a vision instructing him to initiate a poor Madauran (*Madaurensen ... pauperem*) into the cult of Osiris. Here the idea of the shared dream returns for a third appearance. Lucius is goaded into initiation despite his poverty, selling his clothes to pay for it; but afterwards he lives comfortably (11.28). Soon he has another dream telling him he is to be initiated yet again (11.29). Lucius is perturbed by this, beginning to doubt the priests’ integrity and/or credentials, until he receives a dream from a kindly vision (*clemens imago*) telling him why he requires a third initiation. Finally, after his third initiation, Osiris visits him in his true form and tells Lucius to keep winning fame (*gloriosa*) in the courts (11.30). Lucius finds peace and enjoys a promotion to a minor position in the priesthood, ending the tale as a shaven-headed servant of Osiris.

**A Background to Dream Interpretation**

Before considering how scholars have treated Lucius’ dreams in their interpretations of the *Metamorphoses*, or analysing the dreams themselves, the philosophical context of dream interpretation in which Apuleius wrote should be considered. Thus the category
into which Apuleius fits with regards to god-sent dreams can be identified and his purpose for the use of dreams in the conversion of Lucius can be better understood. The following is a brief introduction to dream interpretation during the period in which Apuleius was writing, as well as a very brief overview of philosophical attitudes towards dream divination and god-sent dreams.7

The dream interpreter Artemidorus, author of the *Oneirocritica*, was a contemporary of Apuleius.8 His manual on dream interpretation survives in five books and is the best source on dream interpretation for the ancient world.9 In his preem to Book 1, he claims to have collated a large amount of information from a wide variety of sources, including interviews with ‘much-despised’ marketplace dream interpreters and collecting many books by previous authors on the subject.10 These references to other authors and marketplace diviners suggest the extent to which dream interpretation was taken seriously and written about by professionals, yet the detail that marketplace diviners were reviled shows that not everyone cared for their profession.11 It is highly likely that Apuleius possessed some knowledge of dream interpretation and the various schools of thought regarding meaningful dreams,12 which one could expect from someone with his wide range of interests and knowledge on various topics (cf. *Flor.* 18.15, 20.4, 20.13).13

---

7 For a more detailed study of the various attitudes towards and application of dreams in the Graeco-Roman world, Hanson (1980) is still very useful. For a more recent survey, see Harris (2003).

8 That Artemidorus lived in the second century AD under the Antonines is understood from certain comments made in the *Oneirocritica*; see White (1975) 1.

9 Macrobius, who wrote a commentary on Cicero’s *Somnium Scipionis*, post-dated Apuleius, and thus will not be included in this overview. It is sufficient to note that he follows Artemidorus’ division of dream categories (discussed below). Similarly, the treatise on dreams by Synesius, contemporary of Macrobius, will not be included.

10 ἐγώ δὲ τούτῳ μὲν οὐκ ἔστιν ὃ τι βιβλίον οὐκ ἐκτηράμην ὁμοροκητικόν πολλὴν εἰς τούτῳ φιλοτιμίαιν ἐγὼν, τοῦτο δὲ καὶ αφόδρα διαβεβλημένου τῶν ἐν ἐγωρί μᾶντεων (‘I, on the other hand, have not only taken special pains to procure every book on the interpretation of dreams, but have consorted for many years with the much-despised diviners of the marketplace.’ Artem. preem). All translations of Artemidorus are by R. J. White 1975.

11 White (1975: 6-7) provides an overview of Artemidorus’ influences and his references to other authors. Harris (2003: 21, 32), on the other hand, believes Artemidorus’ work would not have been widely read, and only then by wealthy people of eccentric taste and other dream interpreters.

12 The allegorical explanation of dreams offered by the old woman to Charite at *Met.* 4.27 shows some basic knowledge of dream interpretation.

13 Indeed after providing an overview of Apuleius’ interests, Harrison states that ‘there seems to have been no branch of ancient learning in which Apuleius had no interest’; Harrison, Hilton & Hunink (2001) general introduction, 8-9.
Returning to Artemidorus, he begins his discussion by dividing dreams into those of the non-signifying type (ἐνυπνιον) and the signifying type (ὄνειρος; Artem. 1.1). Dreams of the enhypnion category relate to the present condition of the psyche or body, resulting in dreams of one’s current concerns (fears and hopes, or bodily needs and excesses); in Freudian terms they reflect the ‘day’s residues’. These dreams, according to Artemidorus, are only relevant during sleep and become irrelevant upon waking. Artemidorus further describes two specific types of enhypnion, namely anxiety-dreams (about one’s fears) and petitionary-dreams (dreams experienced after one has asked the gods for something in prayer), both being caused by the dreamer’s psychological state (Artem. 1.6, 4.2). So even if someone dreamt that a god gave a command or sign relating to something that the dreamer requested an answer for, the dream could well be meaningless. This does not mean that Artemidorus is sceptical of the ‘vision’ (ὤραμα) or the ‘oracular response’ (χρηματισμός), for he considers both to be oneiros (Artem. 1.2). The difference between the petitionary-dream and the vision, it appears, lies in the psychological state of the dreamer.

Another factor that was commonly believed to contribute to the trustworthiness of one’s dreams was diet. Generally speaking, it was believed that dreams experienced after a heavy meal or much wine were untrustworthy. Similarly, dreams that occurred during the day or early evening were held to be less reliable than dreams after midnight (at around dawn was held to be the best time since the body would least be under the effect of food or wine). Artemidorus, however, states that the time of the dream is not a factor, but claims that immoderate eating will prevent a dreamer from seeing a truthful dream, that is an oneiros (Artem. 1.7).

14 This explanation for dreams goes as far back as Herodotus (Hdt. 7.16.2), and was picked up by the Epicureans and Sceptics (discussed below); cf. also Cicero (Div. 1.45).
15 Epiphanic dreams (under which fall the incubation, vision, and oracular response) are not discussed by Artemidorus because he believes that anyone who requires an explanation for something so obvious would not likely be able to understand an explanation (Artem. 1.2).
16 For the time of day/night affecting dreams, cf. Hor. Sat. 1.10.33. Cf. also Mosch. Ep. Bion. 2.2-5; Ov. Her. 19.195-96; Prop. 4.4.63-66. For food and drink affecting thought and dreams, cf. Philostr. VA 2.37; Pl. Resp. 9.571c; Arist. De insomn. 3.461a 12-25; Cic. Div. 1.60-61, 2.119; Plin. HN 10.98, 28.14; and, of course, Aristomenes’ words to Socrates in Apul. Met. 1.18. Plutarch, following Plato, discusses the bodily and emotional state affecting dreams; De def. or. 437d-f).
Dreams of the *oneiros* type are those dreams which refer to future events and upon awakening ‘excite the soul by inducing active undertakings’ (Artem. 1.1). They may be therapeutical (dreaming of a shipwreck and later experiencing one) or allegorical (dreaming of an egg and later finding treasure). The event predicted may be good or bad, near in time (even concurrent with the dream) or distant.\(^\text{17}\) Artemidorus explains that, in the divinatory dream-state, the mind predicts the future through ‘images’ (*eikónas*), which one can then decipher by applying reason, thereby learning of future events (Artem. 1.2).\(^\text{18}\) These allegorical dreams may be about oneself (personal), about others (alien), about oneself and others (common), about matters of state or civic life (public), or even about the environment and natural forces (cosmic). Furthermore, such dreams can be shared, potentially involving many members of a populace and thereby increasing their significance (Artem. 1.2). Another factor than influences significance is whether the dream is recurrent (Artem. 4.27).

Artemidorus offers no explanation for the origin of such ‘images’ that constitute *oneiroi*; he neither states that they are divine in origin nor the product of something within the dreamer. He qualifies his use of the term ‘god-sent’ (*θεόπεμπτος*), stating that he merely refers to something ‘unforeseen’ (*ἀπροοδόκητος*; Artem. 1.6). He does say that the mind is innately prophetic, but no metaphysical cause is given (Artem. 4.2).\(^\text{19}\) This lack of explanation derives from Artemidorus limited goal; he seeks to set

\(^{17}\) The dreams may appear good but foreshadow a bad event and vice versa, or both dream and event may correspond as either good or bad (Artem. 1.5).

\(^{18}\) ὁ *ονείρως* ἔστι κόψις ἢ πλάσις ψυχῆς πολυσχήμων σημαντικῆ τῶν ἐσομένων ἀγαθῶν ἢ κακῶν. τούτου δὲ ὡστος ἔχοντος, ἄκα κρίνει *ἐκοθμένους* ἢ πολλοῦ ἢ ὀλίγου, τούτα πάντα δὲ εἰκόνων ἢ ἔτειναι τῶν καὶ στοιχείων καλομενῶν προαγορεύει ἡ ψυχή, ἐν τῷ μεταχειρίσει χρόνῳ νομίζοις ἢ ὡς δύνασθαι λόγιο μετασχηματικά μαθεῖν τὰ ἐυόμενα (*'Oneiros is a movement or condition of the mind that takes many shapes and signifies good or bad things that will occur in the future. Since this is the case, the mind predicts every-thing that will happen in the future, whether the lapse of time in between is great or small, by means of images of its own, called elements, that are natural products. It does this because it assumes that, in the interim, we can be taught to learn the future through reasoning.'*).

\(^{19}\) ὁ μὲν γὰρ θεὸς πρὸς τὸ ἐκοθμόμενον δίδωσι τοὺς ὀνείρους τῇ ψυχῇ τοῦ ὀρθοντος ψήσει μαντικῆ ὡστος ἢ εἰ τῷ ὀλίγῳ ἐστὶν ὧς τοῦ ὀνείρωσεν (*'For the god—or whatever it is that causes the person to dream—presents to the dreamer’s mind, which is by its very nature, prophetic, dreams that correspond to future events'*).
out a method of explaining the images themselves, rather than their origin. Such explanations came within the jurisdiction of philosophers.

**Philosophical Context**

Some philosophical schools were more amenable to the idea of god-sent dreams than others. Therefore, a fairly reliable indicator of an ancient scholar’s position on god-sent dreams lies in his philosophical proclivity.

The Stoic school of philosophy, founded by Zeno of Citium in Athens, was arguably the most influential philosophical school throughout the Hellenistic and Roman periods. Put briefly, the Stoics held that the universe was composed of active and passive ‘substances’, cause and matter, respectively. Seneca, Stoic philosopher and adviser to Nero, makes clear what is meant by ‘cause’ in a letter to Lucilius: *Quaerimus, quid sit causa? Ratio scilicet faciens, id est deus* (‘Do we ask what cause is? It is surely Creative Reason, - in other words, God’; Sen. *Ep. 65.12*). Moreover, human souls were held by a sympathetic link to the cosmic soul (God), of which they were but a part. Marcus Aurelius, Stoic emperor and contemporary of Apuleius, speaks about the nature of the universe:

> Constantly think of the universe as one living creature, embracing one being and one soul; how all is absorbed into the one consciousness of this living creature;

---

21 One could, however, be influenced by more than one philosophical school. For instance, in Artemidorus’ dream theory one can discern Stoic principles, along with Sceptic, Empiricist, and even Epicurean principles; see White (1975) introduction, 9-10.
22 Cf. Sen. *Ep. 65.2*: ‘Our Stoic philosophers, as you know, declare that there are two things in the universe which are the source of everything, - namely, cause and matter. Matter lies sluggish, a substance ready for any use, but sure to remain unemployed if no one sets it in motion. Cause, however, by which we mean reason, moulds matter and turns it in whatever direction it will, producing thereby various concrete results.’ Translation by R. M. Gummere 1917.
24 Cf. Sen. *Ep. 65.23-24*: ‘All things are made up of matter and of God. God controls matter, which encompasses him and follows him as its guide and leader. And that which creates, in other words, God, is more powerful and precious than matter, which is acted upon by God. God’s place in the universe corresponds to the soul’s relation to man. World-matter corresponds to our mortal body’. Translation by R. M. Gummere 1917.
how it compasses all things with a single purpose, and how all things work together to cause all that comes to pass, and their wonderful web and texture.\(^{25}\) (Med. 4. 40)

This interconnectedness of God, Fate, nature, reason, and humanity opened the possibility of divining future events by ‘natural’ and ‘artificial’ means.\(^{26}\) In \textit{De divinatione}, Cicero outlines the thoughts of the Stoic philosopher, Posidonius:

He [Posidonius] maintains that there are three ways in which men dream under divine impulse. In the first the soul foresees all by itself because of the relationship with the gods it possesses; in the second, the air is full of immortal souls (\textit{inmortalium animorum}) on which the marks of truth are clear, as though hallmarked; in the third, the gods themselves speak with people as they sleep.\(^{27}\) (\textit{Div.} 1.64)

Of course, the Stoics did not believe that all dreams were god-sent. The character of Quintus Cicero, arguing from the Stoic viewpoint in the same work, admits that, while some dreams might appear unintelligible because their meaning is beyond us, people can experience false dreams, which are influenced by excessive food and wine consumption (\textit{Div.} 1.60).

Opposed to the idea of dream divination was the Epicurean school of philosophy, which was founded by Epicurus in his garden between Athens and Piraeus. Lucretius is the most comprehensive source on Epicurean doctrine. He derides divination as superstition and even rationalises the phenomenon of dreams using psychology and

\(^{25}\) Translation by A.S. L. Farquharson 1946.

\(^{26}\) According to Cicero, the Stoics considered divine dreams to fall under the ‘natural’ sphere of divination together with ecstatic prophesy, whereas ‘artificial’ divination involved techniques of interpreting observations, including haruspicy, prodigies, augury, astrology, and casting lots (\textit{Div.} 1.12). Cicero also informs us that the Stoic philosopher Chrysippus wrote about divination in two volumes, including sections on oracles and dreams (\textit{Div.} 1.6). Elsewhere Cicero (\textit{Nat. D.} 1.39) outlines Chrysippus’ somewhat confusing view of divine omnipotence (through the mouth of Gaius Velleius): ‘He [Chrysippus] says that divine power resides in reason, and in the soul and mind of the universe; he calls the world itself a god, and also the all-pervading world-soul, and again the guiding principle of that soul, which operates in the intellect and reason, and the common and all-embracing nature of things; and also the power of Fate, and the Necessity that governs future events.’ Translation by H. Rackham 1933.

\(^{27}\) Translation by D. Wardle 2006. The \textit{inmortales animi} are synonymous with the Greek δαίμονες (\textit{daemones}). Originally, \textit{daemones} were considered the souls of men who lived in the Golden Age under Saturn/Ouranos, who dwell on or above earth as (mostly) kindly spirits rather than in the underworld (Hes. \textit{Op.} 110-26). The souls of heroes at hero shrines were also considered to be \textit{daemones} (cf. Diog. Laert. 8. 32). Socrates’ guiding spirit was a δαίμων that served as his conscience/intuition (Pl. \textit{Apol.} 31c-d, 40a). So by Apuleius’ time they had come to include many types, including the household gods (\textit{lares familiaris}), but there were also \textit{daemones} who were not considered to have inhabited a human body, including abstract concepts such as Sleep and Love as well as the guardian spirits assigned to each mortal (Apul. \textit{De deo Soc.} 16 (154-55)).
elaborate pseudo-scientific explanations. Dreams are the product of ‘faint images’ (*tenuia simulacra*) that are constantly emitted from material objects like shed skin and which then float about in the air until they are received directly in the minds of dreamers.\(^{28}\) This phenomenon is also used to explain ghostly apparitions and dreams about dead people: the dead do not come back from the underworld as ghostly phantoms to haunt the living, their ‘image’ has merely been wandering around since it was emitted from the person when they were alive (Lucr. 4.30-53, 722-34; 5.62-6). Lucretius also observes that dreams are caused by what people most see or think about whilst awake, which explains why people (and even animals) often dream about their occupations (Lucr. 4.962-1036). In addition to this ‘day residue’ explanation, Lucretius understands that dreams often result from bodily needs (Lucr. 4.1024-29) as well as functioning as wish-fulfilments, erotic or otherwise, when people dream of something they desire (Lucr. 3.112-16; 4.1037-57, 1097-1100). But the most telling Epicurean argument against god-sent dreams regards the nature of the gods themselves; for Epicureans, the gods were indifferent to human affairs, so the idea that they would bother to send dreams, even if they could, was absurd (cf. *Principal Doctrines* 1).\(^{29}\)

There was another branch of ancient philosophy that questioned the claims of both Stoics and Epicureans: the Sceptics. Instead of making dogmatic statements about truth, knowledge, or perception, they opted to suspend judgement, withholding their assent to truth claims (such as the proposition ‘Dreams are god-sent’).\(^{30}\) The Academic Sceptic Carneades, however, would assent to a proposition as having greater probability of

\(^{28}\) Long (1986: 24-25) provides a comprehensive discussion of the rather peculiar Epicurean dream theory.

\(^{29}\) For an explanation of the Epicurean concept of the gods see Long (1986) 45-48. Note that the Epicurean idea of ‘images’ of the gods being received directly in the minds of people, whilst awake and asleep, is not the same as the non-Epicurean concept of god-sent dreams, whereby a god chooses to send a command or appear in the mind of the sleeper for a specific purpose.

\(^{30}\) The Sceptics can be divided into the Pyrrhonian and Academic schools. Here I shall consider the Academic position only. The Pyrrhonian position required constant suspension of judgement regarding truth claims, so its approach to dream interpretation would run something like this: the proposition ‘Dreams are god-sent’ is objectively unknowable, but the proposition ‘My dreams appear to me to be god-sent’ is valid, but makes no objective claims about other dreams (it is relativist). Therefore, the Pyrrhonist would make no claim about the nature of dreams in general (as god-sent or not), and need not be discussed here.
truth than another, so long as it could be tested thoroughly. The great orator Cicero was one of the most prominent ancient authors to serve under the Academic Sceptic banner and, conveniently, records his position on god-sent dreams in his dialogue, *De divinatione*. The dialogue focuses upon a debate between Cicero and his brother Quintus regarding divination. Quintus, having just read Cicero’s previous dialogue, *De natura deorum*, opens the debate and argues for divination from the Stoic perspective. Cicero, however, follows Carneades in taking a view against all forms of divination, and thus rejects the idea of god-sent dreams (Div. 2.147,150). He does so on three counts: (1) Since nothing indicates the difference between ‘true’ and ‘false’ dreams, the (Stoics’) choice between God sending one and nature creating the other is arbitrary. If, however, one says that God sends both ‘true’ and ‘false’ dreams, God becomes untrustworthy, which is absurd. Therefore, God cannot be responsible for dreams, and so nature must be responsible for all dreams, which are merely the confused images of things seen whilst awake and reflect one’s waking concerns (Div. 2.125-40, esp. 127-28, 140). (2) There is no sympathetic bond between dreams and the laws of nature, as there is with signs from natural phenomena. For example, dreaming of an egg and later finding treasure (symbolised by the egg) has no natural correlation, whereas sailors using dolphin behavioural patterns to forecast coming storms, or doctors using symptoms to diagnose disease is ‘traceable to natural causes and explicable by reason’ (Div. 2.145). Dream interpreters merely conjecture using analogies which are occasionally successful, but only by luck (Div. 2.140-45). And finally, (3) dreams cannot be observed by the dream interpreter nor can they even be properly expressed by the dreamer. When these details are considered with the fact that dreams are

---

32 Cicero (Div. 2.128) stresses that by ‘nature’ (natura) he simply means the force that makes us ‘tick’ (require sleep, food etc.), rather than Stoic concept of nature being one in the same as ‘God’.
33 Cicero (Div. 2.137-39) also argues against ‘phantoms’ (imagines), in particular, the theory of the Atomist Democritus, who said that εἴδωλα (synonymous with Lucretius’ simulacra) emanate from material bodies and cause dreams, a theory which clearly influenced Epicurus’ thoughts on this subject.
34 Cicero is here referring to a dream recorded by Chrysippus. The story has it that a man dreamt of an egg hanging from his bed by a cord. He was informed by his dream interpreter that it signified treasure, which he subsequently dug up and shared with the interpreter (Div. 2.134).
35 Translation by W. A. Falconer 1923.
consistently inconsistent—the same dreams do not bear any relation to the following events for any one individual, let alone between scores of people—it is clear that there can be no overarching art used for divining from them (*Div.* 2.146). True to Carnaeades’ methodology, Cicero’s judgement that dreams are natural and meaningless rather than supernatural and signifying is based upon an argument from probability. That is to say, by having examined all the attending circumstances and the experiences of himself and others, rather than resulting from a disagreement/alignment with dogmatic philosophical premises, *à la* the ‘yea’ of the Stoics and the ‘nay’ of the Epicureans concerning god-sent dreams.

From the empirical Sceptics, it is necessary to turn to the more esoteric. The Pythagorean philosophical system, established by Pythagoras in the sixth century BC, was not a philosophical school *per se*, yet it was highly influential on the philosophical tradition. The biographer of the Greek philosophers, Diogenes Laertius, says that Pythagoras’ philosophy sought to respect all forms of divination, and that the man himself performed augury—divination using bird-flight (*Diog. Laert.* 8.20, 24; cf. *Cic.* *Div.* 1.5). Essential Pythagorean doctrine included the idea of the transmigration of the soul (reincarnation), and thus accepted the soul’s immortality (*Diog. Laert.* 8.4–5, 30–31). This relates to another idea attributed to Pythagoras which concerns dream divination:

> The whole air is full of souls which are called *genii* (δαίμονιας) or heroes; these are they who send men dreams and signs of future disease and health, and not to men alone, but to sheep also and cattle as well; and it is to them that purifications and lustrations, all divination, omens and the like, have reference.\(^{36}\) (*Diog. Laert.* 8.32)

He also records that Pythagoras advised his followers to abstain from eating beans because they caused troubled dreams (*Diog. Laert.* 8.19; cf. *Cic.* *Div.* 1.62, 2.119). Additionally, Plutarch notes that the Pythagoreans strummed the lyre to relax the emotional and irrational part of the soul before sleep (*De Is. et Os.* 384a).

---

\(^{36}\) Translation by R. D. Hicks 1925. The observation that animals dream is recognised by Aristotle and Epicurus. For Aristotle, however, this fact is used as evidence against the idea of god-sent dreams, as the idea of the gods sending dreams to base animals as well as rational humans is, to a human-centric philosophy, absurd (discussed below).
Pythagoreanism underwent a revival with such Neo-Pythagoreans as P. Nigidius Figulus (1st C BC) and Apollonius of Tyana (1st C AD). Nigidius was praised by imperial Roman authors as one of the most learned Romans alongside M. Terentius Varro. He wrote treatises on many things, including divination (De Augurio Privato, De Exitis) and dreams (De Somniis). Indeed, Apuleius relates an anecdote in which Nigidius induced a dream-trance in a boy in order to find a lost sum of money (Apul. Apol. 42). It is also recorded that Nigidius proclaimed that Octavian would rule the world when he learnt the time of his birth (Suet. Aug. 94; Dio Cass. 45.1.3-5). Apollonius was a well travelled philosopher who was hailed by some as a miracle worker. In his biography by Philostratus, he is said to have witnessed the assassination of the emperor Domitian in a vision (VA 7.24; cf. Dio Cass. 67.18.). Philostratus also records that Apollonius discussed dream divination with the king of Taxilia, advocating that drinking water is better than drinking wine for receiving truthful dreams (VA 2.35-37). From the stories about these figures it seems clear that Pythagoreans were in favour of dream divination with a monitored diet.

The Cynic breed of philosophy focussed upon ascetics and ethics, rather than metaphysics and epistemology, and as such, did not have much to say about the possibility of god-sent dreams. Having said that, Diogenes of Sinope, the archetypal Cynic, seems to have been dismissive of dream divination, and divination in general. Diogenes Laertuis records his Sinopean namesake’s reaction to dream interpreting:

As for those who were excited over their dreams he [Diogenes] would say that they cared nothing for what they did in their waking hours, but kept their curiosity for the visions called up in their sleep. (Diog. Laert. 6.24, 43)

The rejection of something as conventionally accepted as divination is not too surprising considering that Cynics were, by nature, unconventional. It is unclear

37 Conte & Solodow (1999: 220-21) provide a biopic of Nigidius Figulus, including a list of works attributed to him.
38 Eusebius (Contra Heiroclen 370.5-10) disputes the comparison, by Sossianus Heirocles, of Jesus and Apollonius. Eusebius quotes a passage in which Apollonius is said to have worked miracles (370.25-31).
39 How accurate the ideas of later Pythagoreans were to Pythagoras’ own philosophy is debatable, but for our purposes this is not so important—for in Apuleius’ time Pythagoreanism had incorporated the ideas of Neo-Pythagorean figures such as Nigidius and Apollonius.
40 Translation by R. D. Hicks 1925.
whether Diogenes’ stance on divination was based upon the views of the first Cynic, Antisthenes. Likewise, the extent to which his views influenced subsequent philosophers on this matter is also unclear.\textsuperscript{41}

The Peripatetic school was founded by Aristotle, who lectured in front of the Lyceum at Athens. The Peripatetics followed their founder’s naturalistic approach to philosophical enquiry, but seem to have been divided with regards to dream divination. Some Peripatetics (Cratippus of Pergamon and Dicaearchus) accepted dream divination, while others (Aristotle and Strato of Lamsachus) did not.\textsuperscript{42} Interestingly, Cicero includes the Peripatetics among those who followed the ‘ancient philosophers’ \textit{(antiqui philosophi)} that advocated all forms of divination, but he concedes that Dicaearchus and Cratippus rejected ‘artificial’ forms of divination, allowing only for divination by dreams and frenzy (\textit{Div.} 1.5, 70-71).\textsuperscript{43} Cratippus, like the Stoics, sees human souls as sharing ‘substance’ with the divine soul (\textit{Div.} 1.70), which appears to have contributed to his stance on divinatory dreams. Aristotle, however, rejects divination through dreams and the idea that they are god-sent; he puts any correlation between dreams and events down to coincidence and luck (\textit{Div. per somn.} 1.463b 1-11, 16-22), concluding that they are only divine in origin since nature is divinely ordained, but not divine in itself (2.463b 12-15). Aristotle also reasoned that because animals and unintelligent people dream, and since dreams happen at night while people sleep rather than during the day, then dreams must not be a means of communication for the gods with mortals. If this were the case, only important and wise leaders would receive such communication (2.463b 12-18, 464a 20-23).

\textsuperscript{41} Curiously, Cicero, in \textit{De divinatione}, does not mention the views of Diogenes the Cynic in his overview of philosophers who were either for or against divination (\textit{Div.} 1.5-6), or indeed anywhere else in the work.

\textsuperscript{42} The two Peripatetic \textit{scholarches} after Aristotle, Theophrastus and Strato, each wrote treatises on dreams, as recorded by Diogenes Laertius (5.45, 59), neither of which have survived. Strato was a materialist who saw no need of a conscious divine force to have created the world and denied the immortality of the soul (cf. Cic. \textit{Luc.} 121; cf. also Cic. \textit{Nat. D.} 1.35); it is therefore impossible that he would have believed dreams to have been either god-sent or the product of contact with disembodied souls.

\textsuperscript{43} Eusebius, however, praises the Peripatetics because they argued against divination from oracles, but he makes no mention of their stance on dream divination (\textit{Praep. evang.} 4.2.13).
Aristotle’s teacher Plato also had much to say on divine dreams. While none of Plato’s works specifically focuses upon dreams as a phenomenon, he can be seen to favour dream divination from various passages. In the *Republic*, Socrates states that God does not deceive people by sending them false signs while they sleep (*Resp.* 2.382e). It is unclear if he is here claiming that God sends true visions only and meaningless ones are a product of the dreamers’ psyche. This connection between the psyche and dreams, however, is confirmed when Socrates later posits that someone who goes to bed clear of mind, as opposed to one who is emotionally unbalanced, will likely have a restful sleep in which the mind can ‘try to fulfil its impulse for perceiving something past or present or future that it doesn’t know’ and that ‘in this state he can maximise his contact with the truth and minimise the lawlessness of the visions he sees in his dreams’ (*Resp.* 9.571c-572b). This ‘lawlessness’ is the result of reason releasing its hold over the passions and, in an unrestrained person, can lead to all manner of depraved dreams that are clearly not god-sent. These false dreams can be related to the false perceptions due to the nature of dreaming; for instance, in *Theatetus* Socrates equates disease, insanity, and dreams when speaking of things that deceive the senses, noting that in these conditions nothing is what it appears to be. Theatetus agrees: ‘those who are insane and dreaming have false opinions, when some of them think they are gods and others fancy in their sleep that they have wings and are flying’ (*Tht.* 157e-158e). But this does not reveal any ambiguity in Plato’s thoughts on dreams, nor does it imply that he condemns all dreams as irrelevant, denying that they can be god-sent; he is merely stating that someone who is sleeping is not in their right mind (reason is not in control).

However untrustworthy someone may be in a dream-state, dreams themselves can sometimes be trusted to convey ‘god-sent’ information. In *Symposium*, Socrates recalls

---

44 Here it can safely be assumed that Plato shares the ideas that he puts into the mouth of Socrates.

45 Translation by R. Waterfield 1993. Cicero relates that both Pythagoras and Plato give instructions to those who wish to have trustworthy dreams (*Div.* 1.60-62, 2.119).

46 Translation by H. N. Fowler 1921.

47 Hanson (1980: 1399) uses this reference as evidence that Plato was inconsistent in his treatment of dreams. I believe this to be in error, as Theatetus is here talking about false perception within dreams rather than all dreams being false and therefore insignificant.
how the seeress Diotima told him that *daemones* provide the link between gods and mortals, whilst they are awake or asleep (Symp. 203a). This function of *daemones* is reinforced in *Crito* when the condemned Socrates explains that a woman came to him in a dream and told him that he will come to fertile Phthia on the third day, meaning he will die the day after tomorrow, so Socrates interprets the message (*Cri*. 44a-b). Elsewhere, Socrates reveals that he has taken up poetry after his imprisonment because a recurring dream told him to ‘make music and work at it’ (*Phd*. 60e). He had formerly interpreted the message as referring to his philosophical enquiries, but had since taken it to be more literal in its significance, which he thought best to follow before his death (*Phd*. 60e-61b).

This acceptance of divinatory dreams is confirmed and explained when Socrates talks about the liver as the organ of divination. It engages in divination while one sleeps (and is thus incapable of reason and intelligence) so one may gain truth and thereby learn to better oneself; yet it is for none but the wise to interpret dreams (*Ti*. 71a-72b). This exclusive sentiment is present when the unnamed Athenian speaks out against the practice of founding shrines on the basis of dream-visions (*Leg*. 909e-910a); he is talking primarily about people founding shrines in homes or at the sites of visions, which he wants to make illegal in the law code of the hypothetical city under discussion—religion must be observed publicly rather than privately. But again, this is not a denial of signifying dreams; it is an assertion of practical policy in a hypothetical scenario.

From this analysis of Plato’s works, it appears that Plato believed that the mind could witness true visions which came to people through the agency of *daemones* and were processed (bodily) with aid of the liver. Thus mind and body must be kept pure to avoid

---

48 Translation by H. N. Fowler 1966.
49 Hanson (ibid.) also uses this reference to show ambiguity and inconsistency in Plato’s treatment of dreams. Again I disagree; there is clearly a reference here to a social practice which Plato wishes to address, rather than a doubt in the authority of divine dreams. People founding shrines in their homes because of dreams suggests that they have been interpreting dreams themselves, rather than having someone wise interpret for them, which Plato is against.
false dreams that are not to be considered true or god-sent. True dreams could still be misinterpreted, however, especially by an unwise dreamer.

Plutarch was, like Apuleius, keenly interested in the philosophy of Plato. To some degree, his treatment of dreams seems to reflect that of the Academy’s founder, but there appears to be some ambiguity. In de Superstitione, Plutarch is scathing of superstition, stating that dreams are a refuge from troubles for all save the superstitious, whose fear of the gods induces frightful dreams and whose superstition causes them to view them as true (De superst. 165e–166c). These superstitious types even frequent ‘conjurors and imposters’ (ἀγυρτας και γοητας) and have to be purified by crones and dip themselves in the sea, whilst those that adorn their sleeping chambers with gold are fools because sleep, which is free, costs them money. This suggests that, for some, dreams are meaningless products of the psyche that others prey upon to make profit, the success of which Plutarch sees as resulting from much luck as much as anything.50

Similar to the superstitious man is the pious and ritualistic man (ὁ εὐσεβής και φιλοθύτης), whom Plutarch says regularly speaks of his dreams and is pleased when asked about them (Quaest. conv. 631a). Such statements have lead Harris, in his study of dreams in antiquity, to conclude that Plutarch was likely sceptical of dream divination as a whole, thinking of dreams as products of the imagination and only important to the superstitious.51

---

50 In the life of Marius, dreams are linked to Marius’ psychological state, which arise from his fears of Sulla (Plut. Mar. 45.5); see Pelling (1997) 200. Cf. also Plut. De def. or. 437f: ‘But especially does the imaginative faculty of the soul seem to be swayed by the alterations in the body, and to change as the body changes, a fact which is clearly shown in dreams; for at one time we find ourselves beset in our dreams by a multitude of visions of all sorts, and at another time again there comes a complete calmness and rest free from all such fancies….The cause of this is the temperament of the body, just as that of persons who are prone to melancholy, at the other extreme, is subject to a multitude of dreams and visions; wherefore they have the repute of possessing the faculty of dreaming straight; for since they turn now to this and now to that in their imagery, like persons who shoot many arrows, they often manage to hit the mark’ (Translation by F. C. Babbit 2003). Cf. Aristotle saying that melancholic people have many dreams but finding truth in them is like playing odds and evens (Div. somn.1.463b 1-11, 16-22).

51 Harris (2003: 31) cites Plut. De superst. 165e-166c and De Is. et Os. 383e-384a as proof. The latter reference documents a concoction named Cyphi, used by Egyptians, which stimulates ‘the imaginative faculty that is susceptible to dreams’ (Translation by F. C. Babbit 2003). Harris evidently takes the reference to imagination (τὸ ὑπερτοστικὸν) as evidence of Plutarch’s scepticism, but Plutarch goes on to compare the effectiveness of Cyphi to the Pythagorean use of the lyre to relax oneself before sleep; there is no condemnation to be found in this passage. Elsewhere Plutarch lumps the imaginative and prophetic (ἡ φαντασματικὴ και μαντικὴ) faculties together (De def. or. 438a).
Yet meaningful dreams feature positively elsewhere in Plutarch’s catalogue. In his biographies dreams are important motivators for the actions of various figures. For example, Plutarch relates that Cicero was motivated to befriend Octavian as the result of a dream (Cic. 44.2-4). Likewise, the founding of Alexandria is sanctioned by a dream in which an old man (supposedly Homer) recited to Alexander a verse from the Odyssey (Plut. Alex. 26.2-3). Divine dreams, however, were a feature of historical literature since Herodotus, and their use merely indicates that Plutarch follows genre convention by reporting what had been said about his subjects. Even so, positive reference to divine dreams can be found outside Plutarch’s biographies. In the dialogue de Defectu Oraculorum, the narrator, Lamprias, asks:

‘Why deprive souls in bodies of that power by virtue of which the demigods (οἱ δαίμονες) possess the natural faculty of knowing and revealing future events before they happen? For is it not likely that any power or portion accrues to souls when they have left the body, if they did not possess them before; but the souls always possess them.’ (De def. or. 431e)

But he adds one qualification: ‘it possesses that power even now, but it is blinded by being combined and commingled with the mortal nature’ (De def. or. 432a). Lamprias finally concludes: ‘Souls therefore, all possessed of this power, which is innate but dim and hardly manifest, nevertheless oftentimes disclose its flower and radiance in dreams’ (De def. or. 432c). While it might be argued that Plutarch is here representing the views of his brother Lamprias, it is interesting to note that Plutarch abstained from eating eggs because of a dream (unfortunately the details of the ‘troubling dream’ are not related; Quaest. conv. 635e). This, however, does not necessarily confirm that he thought the dream was god-sent (although, he does note that he was ridiculed by an Epicurean for

---

52 This dream is also related by Dio Cassius (45.2.2) and Suetonius (Aug. 94). Cicero’s philosophical position on dreams in De Divinatione evidently did not prevent such stories attaching themselves to his legacy.
53 In the above examples, Plutarch uses ἐδόκει ‘it was thought’ and φασίν ‘they say’ (Cic.), and λέγουσιν ‘they say’ (Alex.), making it unclear as to what he personally thinks about such reports.
54 Lamprias is Plutarch’s brother and is the narrating ‘I’ of this work; some hold him to represent Plutarch’s own ideas because Plutarch held an official position at Delphi and Lamprias is used to defend divination and explain its decline; Babbit (2003) 349.
his irrational reasoning), yet it does show that he thought dreams were important enough to be heeded.

Plutarch thus seems to believe that dreams were influenced by temperament and that this caused superstitious people to seek worth in worthless dreams, a fact which was exploited by charlatan dream interpreters. Moreover, the eagerness to find significance in every dream could result in the occasional meaningless dream coming true due to the law of averages. But Plutarch also seems to favour the idea that the soul had the potential to receive truly signifying dreams due to its divine nature.

It would be remiss to conclude the discussion of Platonism and god-sent dreams without reference to the works of Apuleius himself. In the discourse *de Deo Socratis*, Apuleius, when outlining the role of daemones, mentions divination from dreams:

These the Greeks have endowed with the name *daimones*, bearers of prayers upwards and benefits downwards between the inhabitants of heaven and earth, who, moving to and fro, carry petitions from men and aid from the gods, acting between the two as a kind of go-between and bringer of blessings. And it is through these same powers, as Plato affirms in his *Symposium*, that all messages are transmitted from above, and that the various wonders of magicians and all types of portent are controlled. Individuals amongst them are in charge of particular activities, with each assigned his province—whether constructing dream visions, or marking prophetic entrails, or directing divinatory bird-flight, or teaching oracular bird-cry, or launching thunderbolts or inspiring seers, causing clouds to flash, or indeed every other activity through which we try to make out our future.56 (*De deo Soc. 6* (133-34))

Apuleius’ support for this view of daemones is confirmed in the *Apologia* after the story of Nigidius putting a boy into a dream-trance:

These and other things about magic arts and boys I read in a number of authors, *but I cannot make up my mind whether they are possible or not*. I do believe Plato when he argues for the existence of certain intermediate divine powers, which by nature and location are situated between gods and men and which control all divinations and magician’s miracles. I also bear the following in mind: a human soul, especially the naïve one of a child, can be put to sleep either by distracting spells or by enticing smells and be moved outside itself to forget the present. It then briefly releases the memory from its body and departs from it, in return to its nature, which is immortal and divine. In such a form of sleep it can predict the future.

But howsoever these things may be, *if they are to be given any credence*, this unknown prophetic boy must be (so I hear) one who is not only handsome and

---

56 Translation by S. J. Harrison 2001.
healthy but also intelligent and eloquent. Then the divine power can worthily dwell in him as in a fine house, if it enters his body from without. Or the soul can quickly wake up to itself and be restored to its own divinatory powers; these have not suffered any damage or loss through forgetfulness and it easily regains them. To agree with Pythagoras: ‘one should not carve a Mercury from a block of wood’.57

(Apol. 43)

This passage seems to be fairly conclusive evidence that Apuleius accepts the possibility of dream divination. The hypothetical scenario described, however, is not so much a normal dreaming experience as it is a designed ritual. A boy of a specific type is required and then he is ‘put to sleep’ (hypnotism?); Apuleius here makes no claims about the dreams of regular people on any given occasion (such as Lucius’ dreams). Moreover, there appears to be some doubt in Apuleius’ comments with regards to the plausibility of the ritual he is describing (shown in italics).58

Another reference to signifying dreams comes later when Apuleius uses a command from a dream (somnium) as an example of a possible refutation of the charge that he kept ‘magical objects’ wrapped in a handkerchief with the household gods of Pontianus (Apol. 54). Again, this does not expressly confirm the case for Apuleius’ belief in god-sent dreams; it simply reveals that he could use it as a plausible argument in his defence (i.e. one that the jury might believe if he argued it with enough force). Similarly, in de Platone, Apuleius relates a dream of Socrates that predicted the greatness of Plato (De dog. Plat. 1.1 (182-83)). But there is no clear indication that Apuleius believes the story anymore than there is that Plutarch believes the dream anecdotes in his biographies. Nonetheless, the whole of the evidence seems to show that Apuleius followed the Platonic views on daemones and dream divination. Even so, he is unwilling to believe any story of this sort outright, which can be seen in his reservations about the stories of bewitching children for divination. Thus, like Plutarch and Plato himself, it is most

57 Translation by V. J. C. Hunink 2001 [my emphasis].
58 It should not be forgotten that this is a speech in his legal defence (the accusation Apuleius is here refuting is of bewitching a boy); Apuleius advances the idea of sleep divination, but maintains that the entranced child must be of pure in mind and body. He then defends himself by focusing upon the sickness of the child he was said to have bewitched, thus showing that a real magician would not have chosen such a subject. It is thus difficult to know how much the proposition of dream divination here reflects Apuleius’ personal beliefs or his rhetorical skill, though the two are not mutually exclusive.
probable that Apuleius did not believe all dreams to be divinatory and that the superstitious could mistake the false dream for the true.

The clearest indicator that Apuleius gives credence to some form of divine dreaming, however, comes from his involvement with the cult of Aesculapius. As was noted in the introduction, Apuleius appears to have been a worshipper and even a priest of this god. In addition, Apuleius states that he lectured about him to the people of Oea (Apol. 55) and had composed a hymn to the god (Flor. 18.38). It should be noted, however, that these dreams were of a specific type (incubation), wherein the god gave commands to the sick regarding cures when they slept within his shrines. Nevertheless, it is true that belief in incubation could influence one heavily concerning a broader belief in divine dreams.

This is the case with another devotee of this healing god, the famous rhetorician P. Aelius Aristides. He published his Heiroi Logoi roughly around the time that Apuleius wrote the Metamorphoses. The work was based upon accounts of his dreams written down at the time by the command of Asclepius, but compiled at a later date (Or. 48.1-3.). In these diaries, Aristides reports many dreams in which the gods, mainly Asclepius but also others (including Isis and Sarapis), gave him advice concerning his health as well as his rhetorical and literary career. The dreams are presented both as direct commands and dreams that sometimes require interpretation, which he may misinterpret (Or. 47.6-7). There are even instances of shared or confirmation dreams coming into effect concerning Asclepius’ cures (Or. 48.30-36). The nature and purpose of the Heiroi

---

59 For Apuleius’ priesthood(s), see Introduction, 2 and n. 3.
60 That is, somewhere in the 170s AD. Weiss believes the date that Aristides wrote Heiroi Logoi was AD175 in anticipation of Marcus Aurelius’ tour of the eastern provinces. Behr (1981: 425) dates it to winter 170/171. Concerning the date of the Metamorphoses, the debate is focussed upon whether it precedes Apuleius’ Apologia (itself dated some time, likely soon, after Apuleius’ trial in AD158). Dowden (1994: 419-34), finds the 150s AD (when Apuleius was a younger man in Rome) more attractive than a later date, such as the 170s or 180s (when Apuleius was in Africa). In the chronology of his works, most scholars place the Metamorphoses after Apologia; see Kenny (1990: 2), Schlam (1992: 12), Walsh (1999a: xix-xx), Harrison (2000a: 9-10), and, most decisively, Hunink (2002: 233). Hunink (ibid., 234), however, speculates that the Metamorphoses could have been written earlier in Apuleius’ career but published later.
61 Sarapis and Isis; Or. 49.46-49; Or. 50.97. Rhetorical and literary career; Or. 50.22-29 [13-47], 31.
62 At Or. 48.18-21 Aristides dreams that Asclepius appears before his bed and instructs him to follow a boy who will lead him to the river where he was to bathe. This is similar to Isis appearing to Lucius and telling him to enter the procession where he will meet a spiritual guide (11.3-6.13).
Logoi has been debated, but the consensus is that they are the memoirs of a genuine conversion to the worship of Asclepius.\textsuperscript{63}

Returning to Apuleius, it is safe to say that, as a Platonist, a follower of Aesculapius, and from comments in his speeches, he favours the possibility of divine dreams (with the aid of daemones). Moreover, he wrote in a time when this general position appeared to be (re)gaining influence.\textsuperscript{64} But even if this was so, there were still those who were sceptical and dismissive of the dream interpreter’s profession, as Artemidorus notes in his preface.\textsuperscript{65} Indeed, the credulous and superstitious man was still an object of mockery, with Plutarch ridiculing those whose fears inspire their dreams and who make use of dream interpreters. This begs the question of whether Apuleius is making a similar use of dreams to Plutarch, and is perhaps drawing upon the treatment of dreams in satire for literary ends in his presentation of Lucius.

**Dreams in Satire**

Since the dreams in Book 11 are relevant to reading satire in the novel’s conclusion, it is important to inquire into the treatment of dream divination in the genre of satire. Thus it may be possible to see whether Apuleius found inspiration there.

The Epicurean rejection of meaningful dreams comes through in Petronius’ *Satyricon*.\textsuperscript{66} Petronius has the ruffian, Ascytus, associate dream interpretations with broken glass, implying that they are worthless (Petron. *Sat.* 10.1). Later in the story, the

\textsuperscript{63} This is not to suggest that this is the document’s only, or even main, function; there is much in the way of careful self-presentation involved; see Weiss (1998) 37-46. Harrison (2000b: 245-59) argues that Book 11 of the *Metamorphoses* is a parody of Aelius Aristides’ *Heiroi Logoi* (discussed further in Chapter Two).

\textsuperscript{64} Concerning dream-theory in Apuleius’ time, Harris (2003: 33) makes an interesting observation; he states that during the late Republic and early empire (first century AD) there was a greater tendency towards scepticism, but after AD150 there is no author who is an outright sceptic. Harris recognises that Lucian is open to depicting dreams as unreal and fraudulent, but does not seem to conclude that he is sceptical of dream divination.

\textsuperscript{65} Similarly, friends of Aristides accused him of acting too much upon his dreams when he allows a tumour to grow at the god’s instruction rather than following his doctor’s advice (*Or*. 48.63).

\textsuperscript{66} This is not proof of Petronius’ status as an Epicurean (or the *Satyricon* as an Epicurean work), it merely signals his knowledge and use of Epicurean doctrine.
characters Lichas and Tryphaena have a double-dream\(^{67}\) about the people for whom they are searching (Giton and Encolpius, respectively) just prior to meeting them aboard Lichas’ ship. Eumolpus dismisses their superstition and refers to a witty saying of Epicurus, but he is cut short by a lacuna in the text before he can quote it (Petron. *Sat.* 104.3). Whilst these dreams are undeniably signifying, it is clear that Lichas’ and Tryphaena’s superstitious faith in god-sent dreams is part of their satirical characterisation—tellingly, their god-sent dreams do not benefit them: Lichas is killed in the shipwreck and, whilst Tryphaena survives, Giton escapes (Petron. *Sat.* 114.7-14, 115). Thus it appears that Petronius is having it both ways; he is using a shared dream, a common narrative device in the Greek novels,\(^{68}\) to alert Lichas and Tryphaena to the presence of the *fratres*, whilst also poking fun at superstitious people who actually believe in god-sent dreams (characterising Lichas and Tryphaena thus).\(^{69}\) Once the god-sent dream has served its narrative purpose, Petronius can dispose of the dreamers, whose superstition has been highlighted by Eumolpus.

Earlier in the work Quartilla, priestess of Priapus, relates that she sought a cure from her dreams (17.7-8). She was told (presumably by Priapus; cf. *deus* at 18.3) to seek out Encolpius and his *fratres* to cure her malady (Tertiary fever). This, argues Kragelund, is another instance of a dream functioning as an erotic wish-fulfilment,\(^{70}\) as the cure is the sexually debauched *pervigilium* in honour of Priapus. This, again, fits with Epicurean dream theory outlined above and is an instance of a cult member seeking something, with the result that the god conveniently provides the answer in a dream.\(^{71}\)

\(^{67}\) While the dreams are apparently sent by different gods, Neptune and Priapus, and concern the relationships of the dreamer to different people, the dreams are still to be considered as ‘shared’ or ‘confirming’ dreams. Shared dreams did not have to be literally the same but simply to concern the same event; this is discussed in Artemidorus’ classification of dreams above. Significantly, after hearing about Lichas’ dream, Tryphaena remarks: *putes ... una nos dormisse; nam et mihi simulacrum Neptuni* (‘You would think that we had slept together, for I too received a message’; *Sat.* 104.2); translation by P. G. Walsh 1999b. It seems to have been thought that close proximity could cause shared dreams, cf. Kragelund (1989) 439.

\(^{68}\) For instance, in Longus 1.7 and in Achilles Tatius 4.1; cf. Kragelund (1989) 437-38.

\(^{69}\) Kragelund (ibid. 439-40) sees the dreams of Lichas and Tryphaena as erotic wish-fulfilments, and links them to the Epicurean doctrine on the wish-fulfilment aspect of dreams.

\(^{70}\) Ibid. 445-46.

\(^{71}\) I think Kragelund might read too much into the reason why Quartilla’s dream is included. While the dream may characterise Quartilla as superstitious, the dream itself appears to be god-sent (rather than just a wish-fulfilment) since it is part of the Wrath of Priapus theme. The dream serves to expose the *fratres* to
There is another reference to dreams in one of the fragments of the *Satyirca*, which similarly references the Epicurean stance, dismissing dreams rationally (sadly, this poem lacks a context, so it is unclear who is reciting it and to what it is in response):

> Our dreams with fleeting shadows mock our minds.  
> They do not emanate from shrines of gods,  
> Nor do divinities launch them from the sky;  
> We each compose our own, for when our limbs  
> Are overcome in sleep, and quiet reigns,  
> Our disembodied minds enjoy their sport,  
> Rehearsing in the night their daytime thoughts.\(^\text{72}\) (*Sat. fragment 43\(^\text{73}\)*)

The satirist Juvenal makes a similar attack on divine dreams when he mocks credulous women by highlighting such superstitious beliefs and an eagerness to act upon them no matter how unpleasant or demanding the dream’s command:\(^\text{74}\)

> On a winter’s morning she will break the ice and enter the Tiber,  
> plunging into the water thrice and dipping her fearful  
> head right into the eddies. Emerging, half-dressed and shaking,  
> she will crawl across the entire field of Tarquin the Proud  
> on bleeding knees; if milk-white Io tells her to do so,  
> she will make her way to sweltering Meroe, beyond the border  
> of Egypt, in order to fetch some water that she may sprinkle  
> in Isis’ temple, which stands right next to the ancient sheepfold.  
> She believes she received her orders direct from the voice of the goddess—  
> a likely soul and mind for the gods to talk to at night-time!\(^\text{75}\) (Juv. 6.522-31)

Lucian, contemporary of Apuleius, appears to share this sceptical view of god-sent dreams, which comes across in his work. For instance, in the speech *Somnium sive vita Luciani*, although not strictly satire, Lucian’s sceptical view of dreams (and acting upon them) is apparent. It is also worth noting his use of humour at the expense of dreams more humorous torment at the phallic god’s bidding, just as Lichas’ and Tryphaena’s dreams do aboard the ship. The Wrath of Priapus is itself contradictory to Epicurean doctrine about the gods—but a work of literature that parodies Greek novels, epic, and myth would not benefit from a faithful Epicurean representation of the gods as disinterested in human affairs. Indeed, Petronius’ could be using god-sent dreams to expose their very absurdity, having the gods send dreams to unworthy people in unworthy settings about base and trivial matters (the idea of Priapus sending dreams is humorous in itself). This would be a very Epicurean way to treat god-sent dreams without their use reflecting belief in them.

\(^{72}\) Translation by P. G. Walsh 1999b.

\(^{73}\) Frag. 43 in Müller (1995/2009); Frag. 30 in previous editions.

\(^{74}\) In this same passage, Juvenal also makes sure to draw attention to the baldness as well as to the corruption of the priests of Osiris (6.539-41). Baldness is discussed in more detail in Chapters Three and Four.

\(^{75}\) Translation by N. Rudd 1992.
interpreters, a view which he expects his audience to share. Lucian does this by using a dream to express his coming-of-age dilemma: to get a paying job or continue with an expensive education. The young Lucian in the narrative makes the choice to continue his education, thanks to the speech of Lady Culture in a dream. This appears to imply that Lucian chose his career path as the result of a dream, but there is a slight twist; the dream motif is mocked by Lucian (through the heckles of his imagined audience) for being long-winded and hackneyed, and for which his fictitious hecklers are annoyed to have been taken for dream interpreters (Lucian Somn. 17). This results in Lucian admitting the dream’s overt literary purpose (and, implicitly, its fictional status): to show young men the path to betterment is through culture rather than a laborious job that is required to make ends meet (Somn. 18).

In Lucian’s Alexander, the indictment of the prophet Alexander of Abonoteichus, he uses false dream divination as a means of preying upon the gullible. Alexander sleeps upon sealed letters with written queries from followers and claims to receive god-sent dreams in answer to them. But he would secretly open them, read the question, and then supply the response he deemed best. When the letters were too securely sealed he would give ambiguous responses. He was paid considerable sums for these ‘night oracles’ (Alex. 49-53). Contrary to his own prediction, however, Alexander dies of a diseased foot and leg at age seventy and, prior to his death, he is revealed to have been wearing a wig to cover his baldness (Alex. 59).

Finally, in the farcical Vera Historia, Lucian describes the Island of Dreams after his sojourn in the Isle of the Blest and sailing past the Isle of the Damned (Lucian Ver. hist. 2.32-35). In the Island of Dreams, dreams are dressed as kings and gods, some offering

---

76 The lines that Lucian quotes from Homer to introduce the dream sequence are those in the Iliad (2.56-7) where Zeus sends Agamemnon a false dream, perhaps subtly hinting at the dream’s untruth.
77 The reason for Lucian to place this episode in a dream is that the contrived nature of the scene would immediately become apparent (and thus less effective) if he said that he encountered the personifications of Culture and Sculpture in the flesh—to dream of women representing them is somewhat believable (after the scene serves its purpose Lucian is not afraid to reveal the dream’s untruth).
78 The unidentified ‘I’ narrator of this pseudo-biography is not Lucian but an overly devout Epicurean, who is himself the subject of the humour, as well as Alexander, thanks to Lucian’s supreme irony; see Branham (1984) 157-63. This satirisation of the narrator does not take away from the condemnation of the false practices of Alexander.
riches and success (Ver. hist. 2.34). In this way the promises of dreams are shown to be empty, while gods or significant figures are merely phantoms from the Island of Dreams rather than the real thing (even if they come through the Gate of Horn (true) rather than the Gate of Ivory (false) they have the same origin; Lucian notes that he left through the Gate of Horn on his ‘true’ adventure!). In this ridiculous setting Antiphon, a fifth century BC dream interpreter, holds the post as Lord of Sleep. While this is all in jest, it nonetheless points towards a sceptical stance regarding dream interpretation and god-sent dreams.

Satire thus highlights the baldness of priests, foot ailments, greed, false ritual, manipulation using dreams, and those who too credulously believe them to be god-sent. Thus Lucian’s pseudo-biography of Alexander combines many ideas that have possible resonances in Book 11 of Apuleius’ Metamorphoses.

Conclusion

It appears, then, that there were those that accepted divine dreams, including religious exponents (Aristides), dream interpreters (Artemidorus), and the various Stoic, Platonic, Pythagorean, and Peripatetic philosophers. But there were also many that rejected them, including the satirists Petronius, Juvenal, and Lucian, as well as the various Academic Sceptic, Epicurean, and Peripatetic philosophers. (Lucian and Petronius use god-sent dreams in their works, but for literary purposes.) Apuleius, like Plato, would accept the possibility that some dreams possess truth, but, like Plutarch, he would not accept all dreams to be signifying or god-sent (not even the Stoics believed this). Indeed, Plutarch ridicules superstitious people who believe every dream of theirs to be true.

---

79 Lucian also mocks the dichotomy of Ivory and Horn (False and True) gates with the addition of two more gates of sleep (Iron and Clay) (Ver. hist. 2.33). This is also employed in the Gallus when Micyllus adds a gate of Gold to Homer’s gates of Ivory and Horn (Lucian Gall. 6-7).
80 Lucian’s mocking treatment of ‘divine’ dreams is also evident in the Gallus (5-8, 12).
81 Foot deformity/disease, particularly with regards to the priest Aisinius Marcellus is discussed further in Chapter Three.
82 Harris (2003: 21-22) points out that the very language of the Romans is enough to show that most dreams were thought to be false or meaningless: ‘It was the decision of the population at large, not of an intellectual elite, that Latin somniare, from Plautus onwards, quite often meant ‘to have illusions’. The Romans must generally have been suspicious about the truth-content of a dream.’
There even seems to be an idea that worthless people have worthless dreams while worthy people have more significant dreams. Artemidorus believes that people dream according to their capacity (at least concerning matters of state), for which he finds support in Homer (Il. 2.80-82) regarding the interpretation of Agamemnon’s dream (Artem. 1.2; cf. Ov. Met. 11.644-45). He also says that serious men in control of their desires do not experience enhypnia, only oneiroi (Atrem. 4 introduction). Likewise, Plato states that unbalanced people have ‘lawless’ dreams while the minds of temperate people can pursue truth in dreams. Even Aristotle, who did not believe in dream divination, says that unintelligent people are more susceptible to dreams (Div. somn. 464a 20-25). For those that believed in divine dreams, there is the idea that purity, moderation in food and drink, and balanced emotions, would influence their occurrence. Nevertheless, believers such as Artemidorus and Plutarch understood that dreams can be psychological, resulting from anxiety and desire.

Whist it has been noted that there appeared to be a growing belief in god-sent dreams in Apuleius’ time, Artemidorus still recognises opposition. He states that he is setting out to fight ‘those who are trying to do away with divination in general or its various aspects’ and was even afraid of receiving their criticism for publishing his work (Artem. proem). So it seems that sceptics, or at least detractors of dream interpreters, were not uncommon in Apuleius’ time, and may have numbered among his readers.

Whilst Apuleius likely believed that some dreams had a divine origin, this does not eliminate the possibility that he depicts Lucius putting faith in false dreams, or that Lucius is manipulated by his priests (through his readiness to accept all of his dreams as divine), as a warning to the too credulous. Indeed, it should also be noted that in his depiction of Lucius’ conversion, Apuleius is not consistent with his own thoughts on dream divination when he says that all contact between the divine and mortal worlds occurs through intermediaries (daemones). In de Deo Socratis he says:

It is not the task of the gods above to descend to such things [producing signs for any kind of divination]; this is the province of the intermediate divinities, who move around in the regions of the aer, next to the earth and no less close to the

---

83 See the discussion of Artemidorus by Bowersock (1994: 81-82).
heaven, just as the appropriate creatures move around in every part of creation—circling in the aether, walking on the earth.\(^{84}\) (De deo Soc. 7 (137))

Yet in the *Metamorphoses*, Lucius has direct contact with Isis and Osiris in his dreams, which is more in line with the Stoic school of philosophy than the Platonic. Consequently, these epiphanies appear to reflect a literary use of the gods and dreams rather than Apuleius’ personal beliefs. Furthermore, dreams were particularly relevant to the priests of Iris and Osiris, who were known as dream interpreters (*coniectores Isiaci*).\(^{85}\) This is particularly relevant when considering Book 11 of the *Metamorphoses* as satire; the practice of dream interpreting was targeted by satirists and associated with the superstitious—sometimes even by those who believed in signifying dreams. It is possible, then, that dreams might be used by Apuleius, just as in Petronius, for a dual purpose: to comment upon the character of Lucius in the conventions of satire whilst simultaneously providing Lucius with a claim to divine connection that would befit someone narrating a conversion experience. Before this can be established, the dreams of Book 11 and those in the rest of the *Metamorphoses* must be analysed to discover whether they are really signifying dreams, as Lucius claims, or misinterpreted by him, betraying his own concerns, anxieties, and desires.

---

\(^{84}\) Translation by S. J. Harrison 2001.

\(^{85}\) Isis, Osiris, and dream-interpreting priests, see Scobie (1979) 241-42 and n. 58. In Cicero’s *de Divinatione*, Quintus quotes Ennius in rejecting seers of Isis who prophesy for money (*Div. 1.132*).
CHAPTER TWO

Dreams in the *Metamorphoses*

Having explored dreams within the contexts of philosophy and satire, the dreams of the *Metamorphoses* can now be analysed. Based on the findings of the previous chapter, it seems unlikely that Apuleius would, in Book 11 of the *Metamorphoses*, seek to satirise Lucius simply for believing in divine dreams. Nevertheless, the possibility remains that Lucius is presented as more than just a believer in the possibility of divine dreams and instead becomes the superstitious type that believes all his dreams unquestioningly—the figure ridiculed by Plutarch. Thus the dreams of Lucius and those of other characters will be analysed to determine whether they contribute to the possible characterisation of Lucius as a superstitious figure.

Initially, this chapter seeks to survey the Apuleian scholarship that comments upon the dreams in the *Metamorphoses*, particularly with regards to the nature of the dreams (god-sent or not) and the character of Lucius’ conversion. Where possible, I will also identify how these interpretations seek to explain the tone of Book 11, with its mix of comic and serious aspects. Having identified the merits of these approaches, I will then take a closer look at the dreams in the hope of contributing fresh insight to these studies.

**Background to Scholarship on the Dreams in the *Metamorphoses***

The function and significance of the dreams that occur throughout the *Metamorphoses* have been variously interpreted by modern scholars. I will limit the following discussion to those interpretations of the novel that significantly draw upon, or at least take into account, Lucius’ dreams in Book 11.
James Gollnick provides the most thorough treatment of dreams in the *Metamorphoses* in his book *The Religious Dreamworld of Apuleius’ Metamorphoses: Recovering a Forgotten Hermeneutic* (1999). He approaches the dreams of the novel from the viewpoint of modern psychology and breaks the dreams down into various ‘dimensions of reference’ that shape the dreamworld which Apuleius has constructed. By focussing upon the aspect of ancient religion that concerns dreams, Gollnick argues that this ‘dreamworld’ helps to depict a genuine religious conversion for Lucius, who undergoes a psychological transformation on top of the physical one.¹ Gollnick concedes, however, that the identification of Apuleius with Lucius is problematic, and as such the author may not advocate ‘all that is involved in these perspectives on dreams and religion, but he presents and preserves them in a powerful, authentic way.’² Despite acknowledging this problematic relationship, Gollnick views Apuleius as having likewise been a member of the cult of Isis.³ Moreover, Gollnick trusts that the purveyance of dreams in the novel reveals Apuleius’ own belief in their significance.⁴ Therefore, all the dreams of the *Metamorphoses* are true (*oneiroi*) and, in Book 11, Lucius’ dreams are religious experiences, as are those of the priests, who are unquestioningly genuine.⁵

With regards to comic tone of much of the text, Gollnick believes that the paradox of a series of lewd tales reaching a religious climax is solved by identifying the dream-

---

¹ Having described dream incubation and dreams in the writings of Galen, Tertullian, Artemidorus, and Aelius Aristides, Gollnick (1999: 45-48) discusses the divine aspect to dream interpretation, focussing mainly upon Aristides. He concludes (48): ‘Two of the most prevalent beliefs throughout the second-century Greco-Roman world, among all strata of society, were a belief in the presence of the divine in dreams, and a belief in a god as the author of dreams.’ This generalisation, however, ignores the scorn for dream interpreters recorded by Artemidorus himself, discussed in the previous chapter. For Lucius’ psychological transformation, see ibid. 138.

² Ibid. 19.

³ Ibid. 17. Gollnick (123) later calls the work ‘semi-autobiographical’. Apuleius, however, nowhere specifies into which cults he was initiated, nor is he referred to as a *pastophorus* (by himself or others); cf. Winkler (1985), 276-77, n.78, 319.

⁴ Ibid. 110: ‘The many dreams occurring throughout the novel should be enough to convince us that Apuleius takes dreams and their communications seriously…’ This same line of argument would lead one to conclude that the many transformations throughout the novel should convince us of Apuleius’ sincere belief in magical transformations too. His attitude regarding dreams is better ascertained from his philosophical works and speeches, rather than his narrative fiction.

⁵ Ibid. 146-48.
nature of the narrative; for bawdy and bizarre stories, like such dreams, can convey hidden (even religious) truths.6

A different psychological approach is proposed by Vered Lev Kenaan in her article ‘Delusion and Dream in Apuleius’ Metamorphoses’ (2004). In contrast to Gollnick, who focussed solely upon authors who favoured dreams as signifying, Lev Kenaan focuses upon those figures that rejected divine dreams, citing Cicero, Petronius, Heraclitus, and Lucretius, each of whom regarded dreams as the inner workings of the individual who dreamt them.7 In addition, Lev Kenaan uses Macrobius’ method of textual criticism to illustrate that the Metamorphoses—as an old wives’ tale (fabula nutricis)—can be equated with the ‘lower’ non-signifying dream (insomnium / enhypnion).8 Then, outlining the works of Artemidorus and Macrobius on dreams, she argues that, contrary to these two authors, Apuleius appreciates the value of the psychological dream (insomnium / enhypnion).9

Lev Kenaan thus treats the Metamorphoses as a narrative resembling a dream or nightmare, full of psychological detail.10 That is, Apuleius is supposedly drawing upon psychological dreams for narrative insight, and to better portray Lucius’ character.11 To Lev Kenaan, it is not the dreams in the text that are important; it is the dreamlike nature of the narrative that gives psychological depth to the work. Therefore, unlike Gollnick,

6 Ibid. 153: ‘Dreams and dreaming . . . constitute a contextual genre or hermeneutical perspective for resolving the striking contradictions which so frequently baffle readers of the novel, where, as often happens in ‘real’ dreams, comic and bizarre stories express deeper meaning and even religious truth. By regarding the dream as a relevant literary genre we free the Metamorphoses from conforming to the logic and demands of waking consciousness.’ Gollnick (ibid. 139) follows Franz Cumont in the reason for Apuleius’ choice of genre/subject matter: ‘. . . this connection between Isis and love may have something to do with the key paradox of the Metamorphoses, namely, Apuleius’ choice to describe the fervour of an Isiac initiate in the context of a lewd tale.’
8 Ibid. 258-59.
9 Ibid. 280: ‘In contrast to Artemidorus and Macrobius, Apuleius accepts neither the hierarchical distinction between the literal and the symbolic dream, nor the hegemony of the allegorical as a standard for evaluating dreams. In this respect, we may say that Apuleius’ psychological interest in the dream phenomenon is closer to Freud’s than it is to the two ancient authors who developed detailed theories on dreams. Like Freud, Apuleius’ fiction is based on an understanding of the psychological dream as being indispensable to depicting human experience.’ Lev Keenan’s claim that a hierarchy of literal (thereomatic) and symbolic (allegorical) dreams existed is puzzling—both were considered oneiroi to Artemidorus.
10 Ibid. 259-64.
11 Ibid. 280: ‘Apuleius adopts dream strategies in order to enrich his first-person narrative.’
Lev Kenaan has almost nothing to say about the actual dreams depicted in the *Metamorphoses*. But she does seem to regard Lucius’ dreams as god-sent revelations (*oneiroi*). Nevertheless, Lucius’ conversion does not justify reading the novel as a true conversion narrative since there is no condemnation from the narrator for his past conduct (as there is with Augustine’s *Confessiones*). Instead, she sees the struggle of the two goddesses who have presided over Lucius’ life, namely Isis and Fortuna, as a ‘Platonic metaphor concerning the soul’s two horses’. In Freudian language, they each represent inner psychic forces. The revelatory Isis, latent throughout the first ten books, represents Lucius’ coming to consciousness and the accompanying release from his anxieties. These psychic forces are reconciled in Lucius, and result in his journey to Rome, where he will find the ‘literary glory’ promised to him, as well as success in the law courts.

Since Lev Kenaan views the narrative as dreamlike, her approach to the comic and the serious elements within the *Metamorphoses* is similar to Gollnick’s. She explains that the comic and serious elements are presented together because, like the message of the conversion summarized above, it connects the lower and higher psychic forces and reconciles them.

As regards the interpretation of the novel, then, Apuleius, through the conversion experience of Lucius, is not trying to expound Isiac propaganda or the mystical path to knowledge—these are incidental details of a more philosophical goal. So the status of Lucius’ dreams as divine is unimportant. The aim is to reveal the sophisticated workings of the psyche and how one can come to self-knowledge by identifying with

---

12 Ibid. 280-81.
13 Ibid. 281.
14 Ibid. 282
15 Ibid. 281-82.
16 Lev Kenaan (2004: 280): ‘The coexistence of Cupid and Psyche’s tale alongside Aristomenes’ tale is not paradoxical but, rather, central to Apuleius’ aesthetic objective: a narrative of generic miscegenation where high and low, and metaphysical and sensual, form the basis for storytelling. The *Metamorphoses* consequently constitutes a narrative in which the highly elevated dream revelations of its final book and the psychological dimension of dreams characteristic of the rest of the novel can meet. In contrast to Artemidorus, Apuleius conceives of both the *oneiros* and the *enhypnion* as valuable material worthy of interpretation, just as, in contrast to Macrobius, he finds the *fabula lepida* and the philosophical religious tale to be interrelated.’
Lucius’ struggle against his fears and passions. This is a philosophical examination of the psyche rather than strict Isiac religion.

John J. Winkler, in his seminal book Auctor and Actor: A Narratological Reading of Apuleius’ Golden Ass (1985), accepts that the dreams are god-sent. Winkler discusses the last four chapters of Book 11 and speaks of Isis making decisions for Lucius, which assumes a god-sent status for the dreams. Likewise, Winkler sees Osiris giving instruction to Asinius Marcellus ‘in some guise’. But whilst the dreams can be understood as oneiroi, Winkler warns that ‘a significant message in a dream regularly stands for something else.’ In other words: beware of misinterpreting an allegorical dream. This is advice Lucius supposedly fails to heed, for Winkler believes that in the last four chapters of Book 11, ‘the temptation to view Lucius as a sucker … becomes … unavoidable.’ Moreover, whilst Winkler insists that Osiris is not ‘the greatest con artist’, he nevertheless believes that, contrary to his words to Lucius at 11.29 (‘quicquam sit prius omissum’), ‘something has been left out’, and he is ‘wrong’ to say otherwise. Thus Lucius’ final dreams and initiations into the cult of Osiris, as they are presented, promote doubt in the reader as to how one is to understand the ending: ‘[t]he standard of surprising clarification set by the intellectual worries resolved in Aristomenes’ tale, Milo’s tale, Thelyphron’s tale, the Risus festival, etc., is not met here.’ This portrayal leaves the reader with the choice of seeing the whole conversion as either a sham or a truly sacred experience, but unable to detect which view Apuleius favours. Winkler hints at a possibility of a venal priesthood, and notes that this was true of the Isiac cult outside the text (at least, in reputation), and therefore a possible

---

17 Cf. Ibid. 281: ‘Lucius is, therefore, not to be blamed for his dreamlike experience, since it provides a dramatic setting for representing his soul at work, a psychological spectacle from which Lucius and the reader both gain self-knowledge.’
19 Ibid. 218: ‘he [Lucius] … follows the goddess’s will when she chooses both the initiator and the amount to spend on Lucius’s individual initiation’.
20 Ibid. 219.
21 Ibid. 216 [Original emphasis]. Winkler is here speaking with especial reference to Lucius’ first dream about initiation in Rome.
22 Ibid.
23 Ibid. 222.
24 Ibid.
suspicion of Roman readers from the outset of the Isiac material.\textsuperscript{25} Unfortunately, Winkler offers no motivation to the gods for stringing Lucius along. It seems Winkler views this ambiguous Osiris and his clergy as not requiring any definite motive; perhaps he and his priests are portrayed thus simply as a means to an indeterminate end, helping to provide the reader a ‘lesson about the nature of religious conviction’ for both those who revere it and those who revile it.\textsuperscript{26}

David Carlisle’s article, ‘Vigilans somniabar: Some Narrative Uses of Dreams in Apuleius’ \textit{Metamorphoses}’ (2008), likewise allows for both sceptical and religious readings of Lucius’ conversion. Indeed, the use of dreams enables the ‘message’ of the work to reach the reader of either viewpoint.\textsuperscript{27} Examining the dreams throughout the text sequentially, Carlisle identifies two roles of dreams: 1) as an aid to accepting miraculous events (i.e. helping to suspend disbelief) and 2) conveying important information.\textsuperscript{28} Lucius’ dreams in Book 11 are ‘true’ because he experiences them, and even if the reader does not believe that they were really god-sent, one can still accept them as meaningful to Lucius without rejecting the story as patently false.\textsuperscript{29} Thus the use of dreams gives Lucius’ tale credibility, protecting him from the charge of lying.\textsuperscript{30} This ‘truth’ leaves open the possibility that the novel can have meaning (i.e. reveal truths) for the reader even though the story is fictional.\textsuperscript{31} But one still cannot conclusively solve the question of the novel’s ‘message’ because the riddle ‘has been sown into the fibre of the novel itself.’\textsuperscript{32} Carlisle addresses the text’s ambiguous nature regarding Lucius’ conversion with two pertinent questions. If Apuleius wanted to focus on a religious conversion, why does he have Isis appear in dreams rather than when

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{25} Ibid. 223.
\item \textsuperscript{26} The quoted phrase is from page 227.
\item \textsuperscript{27} Carlisle (2008) 231-32.
\item \textsuperscript{28} Ibid. 217.
\item \textsuperscript{29} Ibid. 222, 228.
\item \textsuperscript{30} Ibid. 231.
\item \textsuperscript{31} Ibid. 228. 231-32: ‘A skeptic may disbelieve that Lucius actually saw what he claims to have seen, but it is no longer because Lucius is lying, but because he was dreaming. And even if he believes that dreams have no meaning, he will still listen to the story, still believe that it happened, in Lucius’ mind at least, if not in the objective ‘real world.’ If, finally, he is led again and again to believe that dreams have some important relation to reality, he may begin to believe that he has something to learn from Lucius’ story.’
\item \textsuperscript{32} Ibid. 232.
\end{itemize}
Lucius is awake? A direct epiphany would give Lucius’ conversion story more authority, removing ambiguity. But if Apuleius wanted to focus on clerical deceit, why does he have the dreams instruct Lucius in his conversion rather than the supposedly venal priests? This would better serve to compare them with the obviously venal priests of the dea Syria. Thus ambiguity is firmly established by the use of dreams, but Apuleius is not content to leave the matter at that. According to Carlisle, he raises the stakes by having one of the dreams refer to himself and therefore the real world of the reader; this is a challenge to the reader to take meaning from his fictional text.

Stephen J. Harrison, in his book, Apuleius: A Latin Sophist (2000a), takes a sceptical view of a divine origin for Lucius’ dreams. He argues that the dreams do not reveal any mystical truth and can instead be explained rationally. Harrison posits that Lucius’ emotional and physical fatigue could conceivably hint at the scene on the shore (11.1-3) as a mere dream (of the enhypnion variety). That is, Harrison views Lucius’ vision of Isis as a type of subconscious wish-fulfilment. The subsequent dreams are explained by Lucius’ autosuggestion and possibly by programming from the priests to interpret his dreams in this way. The dreams form a crucial part of the larger satire of Lucius as a

---

33 Ibid. 231.
34 Ibid. 233.
35 Harrison (2000a: 240): ‘the fact that both the miraculous visions of Lucius-ass, that of the moon and that of Isis herself, wake him from sleep opens up the possibility that these may merely be dreams experienced as if reality. This would be only natural for a physically and emotionally exhausted Lucius…’ Harrison here seems to be under the impression that Lucius claims to have awoken with the appearance of Isis (i.e. he met her ‘in the flesh’). Whilst the Latin is ambiguous at 11.3 (see Chapter One, n.1), Lucius does realise that he was asleep when he saw Isis: Sic oraculi venerabilis fine prolato numen invictum in se recessit. Nec mora cum somno protinus absolutus pavore … (This was the end of the holy revelation, and the invincible deity now withdrew into herself. At once I was quickly released from sleep …; 11.7). It would be strange if Lucius knew he were dreaming when he saw Isis, but only thought he were awake when he espied the moon and cleansed himself in the sea. Regardless, if Lucius were dreaming during the whole scene (11.1-7), it would have no bearing on the significance of the vision of Isis as an oneiros.
36 On Lucius’ autosuggestion and the idea that the priests are programming Lucius, cf. Harrison (2000a: 246): ‘it seems that he can even deceive himself when the cult and its staff are not there to do it for him.’ After the vision that tells him to go to Rome (11.26.1), Harrison (ibid.) notes: ‘The breathtaking suddenness of Lucius’ change of plan … and his tremendous facility for seeing the life-changing visions of the goddess … suggest that we are now dealing with a hyperdutiful and autosuggestive religious maniac, motivated by self-induced miraculous visions.’ On the dreams as wish-fulfilment Harrison (247) states: ‘[Lucius’] extreme agitation is noted … immediately before he has another consoling divine vision, another suggestion that his continuing series of divine encounters has more to do with his state of mind than with the actual visitations of the gods.’
gullible fool who is duped out of his money through expensive initiations conducted by a venal priesthood.\textsuperscript{37}

Harrison sees the comic aspects overriding the serious, which in the narrative sequence are used to compliment and build up to the comic climax.\textsuperscript{38} The \textit{Metamorphoses} is thus not serious philosophy or religious evocation, it is an unpretentious philosophical comedy by a particularly sophisticated sophist.

Paul Murgatroyd follows Harrison’s argument in his article ‘The Ending of Apuleius’ \textit{Metamorphoses’} (2004). In doing so he adds a few thematic details which are said to foreshadow the venal cult of Isis and Osiris. Murgatroyd is open to the possibility of Lucius having meaningless dreams, the priest Asinius Marcellus lying to Lucius about his own dream,\textsuperscript{39} and Isis being in on the scheme (comparing her to the three bribing goddesses of the Judgement of Paris scene at the end of Book 10).\textsuperscript{40} A comic twist at the end, argues Murgatroyd, keeps the tone of the novel the same throughout and provides the climactic ‘tease’ for the reader.\textsuperscript{41} Thus Book 11 is a parody throughout, although the satire only becomes apparent from 11.26 onward.

In Murgatroyd’s view, Lucius is ensnared by Isis with promises in dreams, deceived by the priests, and even believes some dreams to be god-sent that are meaningless.\textsuperscript{42} The motive for this deceit is to use Lucius ‘for propaganda purposes and to drum up converts’.\textsuperscript{43}

In the book \textit{Land of Dreams} (2006), Vincent Hunink’s chapter, ‘Dreams in Apuleius’ \textit{Metamorphoses’}, highlights the importance of the dreams for interpreting the novel. Examining each dream in turn, Hunink demonstrates that the dreams are consistently

\begin{thebibliography}{9}
\bibitem{37} Ibid.
\bibitem{38} Ibid. 240-41.
\bibitem{39} Murgatroyd (2004) 321. Murgatroyd notes that Lucius dreams of a lavish banquet at 11.27 but this never happens. For Asinius’ dream of a man from Madauros, Murgatroyd states: ‘Despite all the ink spilled on \textit{Madaurensem} the easiest and most obvious explanation is that Asinius … has simply got Lucius’ birthplace wrong …. With this interpretation Asinius may have been misled by his dream or misremembered it or clumsily made the whole thing up.’
\bibitem{40} Ibid. 319-20.
\bibitem{41} Ibid. 319 (see also n. 4).
\bibitem{42} Ibid. 320. Lucius ‘receives orders from master and mistress figures and is passed on among them’, suggesting that the gods \textit{are} sending Lucius’ dreams.
\bibitem{43} Ibid. This view appears to be supported by Kirichenko (2010) n. 88, 36.
\end{thebibliography}
presented as having a high degree of truth to them. Yet he also explains that this appearance need not point to the dreams being true; many of the tales are unsettling in their enigmatic quality due to the frequent use of dreams. Moreover, Lucius continually shows himself to be credulous, so it is no surprise that he takes his dreams to be true. It is this character trait that may even point to their falsehood. The alarming frequency of dreams in Book 11 perhaps reveals Lucius’ overbearing desire to be initiated (i.e. wish-fulfilment dreams). Furthermore, the repetition of dreams raises questions as to the possibility of duplicity (either Lucius’ self-deception or deception on the part of the Isiac clergy). The apparent truth of the dreams combined with Lucius’ credulous nature lead Hunink to conclude: ‘At the end, certainty is no more within reach than in the horror stories of the beginning.’ Thus he sees ‘elusiveness’ as a fundamental quality of the text, echoing Winkler’s conclusion that the end is indeterminate.

In her article ‘Lector intende: laeta beris: The Enigma of the Last Book of Apuleius’ Metamorphoses’ (1997), Danielle van Mal-Maeder argues for Book 11 as satire. She sees the repetition of dreams and initiations in Book 11 as pointing to a comic motif. While van Mal-Maeder does not expressly say that Lucius’ dreams are meaningless, she does state that he and the woman in Juvenal’s sixth satire who takes heed of her dreams of Isis have ‘a lot in common’. It is unclear if van Mal-Maeder views Lucius as being

---

44 Hunink (2006: 24): ‘Dreams can be misleading and confusing, but in the Metamorphoses they do seem to contain a disturbingly high proportion of truth.’
45 Ibid. 28.
46 Ibid. 28: ‘Nocturnal visions are almost piled up, occurring with a rather alarming frequency, which reveals perhaps more about Lucius and his ardent desire to devote himself to Isis than about her divine power.’
47 Hunink (2006: n. 40, 29): ‘In this reading, one may add, Lucius’ ‘truthful dreams’ could be explained as opportune ideas deliberately suggested to him by Isiaci coniectores, interpreters of dreams given to Isis adepts, as mentioned by e.g. Cic. Div. 1.132.’ Yet, whilst a clever detail, there is no clear evidence within the text that this is taking place (Lucius does not mention coniectores specifically).
48 Ibid. 30.
49 Van Mal-Maeder (1997) 94 (see also n. 23). Cf. May (2006: 316): ‘…the doubling of the motifs of initiation is a strong indication against a straightforward explanation of Book eleven as a mere salvation narrative. Although double initiations may be possible in reality, and even pressing for a mystic, it would still be more effective in a fictional text, if grandeur and pathos are to be created, to create a sense of closure through one single appearance. The repetitive apparitions distract from this grandeur, and give the novel a comic note.’
50 Ibid. 105.
manipulated by Isis and Osiris with dreams or whether the dreams are mere wish-fulfilments.\textsuperscript{51}

As regards the mix of serious and comic aspects, van Mal-Maeder affirms that the serious \textit{ecphrasis} found in Book 11 does not take away from the comic interpretation, but is simply part of the rhetorical play and the literary enjoyment that is promised to the reader with the words of the prologue, \textit{lector intende: laetaberis}.\textsuperscript{52} Furthermore, the serious religious tone belongs to Lucius the convert who is narrating, the humour belongs to Apuleius.\textsuperscript{53}

Margaret Edsall likewise argues for satire at the end of Book 11 in her dissertation, ‘The Role and Characterization of the Priest in the Ancient Novel’ (1996). Her approach, however, is subtle and more nuanced than the others. She accepts that the dreams are god-sent.\textsuperscript{54} Moreover, she views Isis’ high priest, Mithras, as an idealised Egyptian priest who is genuine in his motive for initiating Lucius.\textsuperscript{55} But the profit seeking \textit{pastorphorus}, Asinius Marcellus, contrasts with the asceticism of Mithras when he dupes Lucius with his ‘degraded mysteries’.\textsuperscript{56} Nevertheless, Edsall points out that when Mithras and Asinius receive god-sent dreams it is about performing their religious duties, whereas Lucius’ final dream from Osiris is about winning fame in the law court, showing him to be the complete opposite of the ascetic Mithras.\textsuperscript{57} On this view, Lucius’ metamorphoses continue throughout Book 11; he initially changes from an ass to an Isiac convert, then from a convert to a dupe, and finally from a dupe to a charlatan priest himself.\textsuperscript{58}

---

\textsuperscript{51} At one point van Mal-Maeder (ibid. 104) states that Osiris’ investment in Lucius ‘pays off: for his college is guaranteed to be the first to profit from the successful lawyer-priest’, suggesting manipulation by Osiris.

\textsuperscript{52} Ibid. 88, 94.

\textsuperscript{53} Ibid. 105.

\textsuperscript{54} Edsall (1996: 201) quite unambiguously states: ‘Isis appears to [Lucius] in a dream vision and orders him to join the procession’. Elsewhere (ibid. 203) she states: ‘[Mithras] possesses a mysterious power of divination in that Isis twice appears to him in dreams’.

\textsuperscript{55} Edsall (1996) 211-14.

\textsuperscript{56} Ibid. 215-17.

\textsuperscript{57} Ibid. 218. While Edsall (220) notes that Book 11 starts off with dreams as oracles and ends with ‘strange dreams’, she does not openly state that they are wish-fulfilment dreams that reflect Lucius’ desire of fame and money.

\textsuperscript{58} Ibid, 218-19.
Edsall does not specifically comment upon the mix of comic and serious aspects, but she does suggest that ‘the initiation performed by Mithras is extravagantly idealized to prepare for the other jokes in Book 11: Lucius’ second and third initiations.’

The dissertation by Charles G. Weiss, ‘Literary Turns: the Representation of Conversion in Aelius Aristides’ Hieroi Logoi and Apuleius’ Metamorphoses’ (1998), presents a comic reading of Book 11. Interestingly, Weiss does not doubt the status of the dreams (as oneiroi) and instead sees Lucius as being manipulated by the gods Isis and Osiris (in conjunction with the priests), all the while helping them with his ‘uncritical self-persuasion’.

So Isis is very much like Meroë and the witches in her role as domina, and Lucius approaches religion in the same way that he had approached magic—his objective is the same: to experience the supernatural. But this is not a parody of conversion narratives, such as the memoirs of Aelius Aristides (à la Harrison), instead the Metamorphoses merely draws upon the genre of conversion narratives and then (purposely) fails to meet the expectations. Therefore, Apuleius does not desire to ridicule: ‘[The Metamorphoses] does not crudely (or cruelly) satirize conversion, rather it sets the experience in a wider context where it is allowed to appear as somehow deficient, or in need of further explanation.’ In this way the Metamorphoses seeks to show life experiences, of which conversion is but one of many.

Alexander Kirichenko, in his book, A Comedy of Storytelling (2010) argues for satire as one of the many ‘polyphonic’ plots of the Metamorphoses. Kirichenko’s unique idea of multiple plots allows for various readings but denies the possibility of one straightforward ‘classical’ plot (i.e. one that excludes other readings). As such, the

---

59 Ibid. 214.
60 Weiss (1998) 90.
61 Ibid. 89, 97-101
63 Ibid. 128.
64 Ibid. 129.
65 Kirichenko (2010: 1-7) contrasts the straightforward plot of the Onos with the more complex and unorthodox plotting of the Metamorphoses, concluding that there are multiple plots that intertwine. In chapters 3-7, Kirichenko presents five such plots.
plots can both reinforce and contradict each other. Regarding the dreams in Book 11, this allows for the Isiac dreams to reinforce the aretology plot, yet also permits them to be a part of the satire plot. Thus, in the satire, the return of Lucius’ horse is a normal event which, because of Lucius’ obsession with all things divine, he attributes to providence and connects with his dream from 11.20. Therefore, the dream is meaningless, but Lucius is superstitious enough to add meaning to it (seeing what he wants to see). By presenting a gullible Lucius and charlatan priests, Apuleius satirises the intellectual climate of the time; specifically, intellectuals who uncritically accepted the claims of oriental miracle workers. Kirichenko also labels the explanations for the later initiations (which occur in dreams) as ad hoc, and says that the ease of his acceptance ‘emphasizes Lucius’ clueless gullibility’. It is unclear if Kirichenko views these ad hoc dream explanations as emanating from Lucius’ psyche or from the gods; elsewhere, Kirichenko indicates that the gods make monetary demands of Lucius via dreams (indicating their compliance with his deception). Indeed, Lucius’ poverty in Rome indicates that his first initiation has near ruined him, which ‘lends further support to Apuleius’ implicit portrayal of the Egyptian priests and gods as rapacious vultures who against all odds continue to rip off the poor unsuspecting dupe even after they have appropriated his entire fortune.’ In the satirical plot, then, the dreams are thus sent by the gods and Lucius, being gullible, attributes unnecessary meaning to them.

From the above survey, it can be seen that scholars view the dreams as god-sent ‘true’ dreams (to instruct), god-sent ‘false’ dreams (to deceive), as inconsequential to the philosophical objective of the work, as necessary to suspend disbelief and accept the tale as a true account, and as meaningless wish-fulfilments that reflect Lucius’ desire to be initiated (mirroring his insatiable desire to experience magic first hand). Thus the dreams have been used to argue for the interpretation of Book 11 as an edifying

66 Ibid. 68.
67 Ibid. 137.
68 Ibid. 131.
69 Ibid. 137.
70 Ibid. 138-39.
71 Ibid. 139.
conclusion as well as a satire of the credulous and curious initiate in the hands of a venal cult. They have also been seen as a key to ambiguity in the conclusion, suggesting that Winkler’s interpretation of indeterminacy still holds true.

Analysis of Dreams in the Metamorphoses
Books 1-10

Before the dreams of Book 11 are assessed it is important to study the dreams of Books 1-10.\(^{72}\) The treatment of the dreams from the first ten books establishes how dreams are regarded in the world of the novel, priming the reader for the dreams in the final book. This section seeks to establish whether these dreams are oneiroi or enhypnia (or a collection of both).

It has been observed that dreaming in the first three books is used to contribute to the ‘ghost story’ atmosphere of the tales told.\(^{73}\) Dreams help to blur the line between reality and dream, making events uncertain, which works in conjunction with the supernatural atmosphere provided by the theme of witchcraft. For instance, in Aristomenes’ tale (1.5-19) it is initially unclear whether he observers the dramatic entrance of Meroë and Panthia and their attack on the sleeping Socrates or merely dreams this as the result of his fear.\(^{74}\) If it is the former, magic has been witnessed; but if it is the latter, it is merely a nightmare aroused by his psychological state (i.e. an enhypnion). Hunink believes that the similarities between the scenes at 11.3, where Lucius encounters Isis, and at 1.11, where Aristomenes nods off before the witches’ entrance, show that it is likely

---

\(^{72}\) This is the approach of Gollnick and Carlisle, which sensibly replicates the order in which they appear to the first-time reader.

\(^{73}\) Cf. Hunink (2006: 21): ‘Apuleius’ use of the dream motif in the Aristomenes tale is highly effective both to captivate and to unsettle the reader.’ Gollnick (1999: 53): ‘The story of Aristomenes and Socrates … presents a strange world where the realms of magic, dream and reality co-exist.’ Heiserman (1977: 152-53) views the Metamorphoses as containing Milesian tales as well as Egyptian tales (the stories of Aristomenes and Thelyphron being examples of the latter): ‘Like Milesian tales, [Egyptian tales] were brief; but they were of a more diverse character, for they include mythological tales, historical anecdotes, philosophical apologues, and a few elegant autobiographical tales that seem to derive from the lives of real men…. But one characteristic they have in common: they all involve the marvelous—the deeds of sorcerers, speaking animals, witches.’

\(^{74}\) His fear is apparent: *Ac primum prae metu aliquantisper vigilio* (‘At first, out of fear, I stayed awake for quite some time.’ 1.11). Aristomenes then mentions falling asleep, but it is unclear if he actually awakens: *dein circa tertiam ferme vigiliam paululum coniveo. Commodum quieveram et repente… ianuae reserantur* (‘Then about midnight I shut my eyes a bit. I had just fallen asleep when suddenly the doors were opened…’).
Aristomenes was also dreaming. But the fact that Aristomenes is covered in urine at 1.17 suggests that the witches were actually present to urinate upon him at 1.13. Socrates, however, thinks his friend has merely wet the bed when he inquires into the reason for the stench, and in his embarrassment Aristomenes laughs it off with a joke (1.17). Carlisle appears to favour the idea that Aristomenes was dreaming, but this is difficult to maintain as there is no convenient moment in the narrative for him to have awakened. The moment of awakening has to be after the witches leave at 1.14 and before Socrates wakes up at 1.17. So, if one argues that Aristomenes awoke at 1.16 just after the rope broke when he tried to hang himself, which is probably the best place in the text for such an awakening, one has to ask why the porter then enters claiming that Aristomenes had been in a hurry to escape during the night.

The suggestion that the attack was a dream comes from Aristomenes in retrospect when he attempts to rationalise what he witnessed with the fact his friend appears unharmed: ‘Vesane,’ aio ‘qui pociulis et vino sepultus extrema somniasti.’ (‘You are crazy,’ I said to myself. ‘You were buried in your wine cups and you had a very bad nightmare.’ 1.18). This throws the witches’ assault into doubt, but it is just a red herring designed to keep the reader guessing as to what happened until the end. For no sooner does Aristomenes reach his rational conclusion than Socrates reveals that he dreamt he had his throat cut and his heart torn out (1.18). This suddenly does away with the idea that what Aristomenes saw was a nightmare (enhypnion) and returns to him

---

76 Gollnick (1999: 56) suggests another possibility, that ‘the urine is a dream omen, a physical element from the dream that is left behind and found in waking reality when the dreamer awakes.’
77 Cf. Socrates’ joke at 1.18: Ad haec ille [Socrates] surridens ‘At tu’ inquit ‘non sanguine sed lotio perfusus es.’ (At this he grinned. ‘It is not blood,’ he answered, ‘that you were soaked with, it is piss!’).
78 Carlisle (2008: 219-20) seems agree with Aristomenes that his experience was a dream, but one that ‘took place in the waking world too’. Anneckin (1996: 170-71) turns the issue into a dilemma, either you believe in magic so that Aristomenes was awake and witnessed it (Socrates experiencing it first hand), or both dreamt the whole thing (in a double dream). Shumate (1996: 64) acknowledges the confusion between reality and dream but holds that Aristomenes was indeed dreaming.
79 Aristomenes and the porter had indeed argued about this earlier at 1.15, showing that it cannot have been a dream after all. This detail, however, might be lost on a first time reader of the novel.
80 Contrary to his position at 1.5, Aristomenes was initially sceptical of witches when Socrates first explained his misfortune (1.8), as noted by Carlisle (2008: 218).
DREAMS IN THE METAMORPHOSES

having been awake. This scenario thus points to the dream of Socrates as an *oneiros* that depicted events concurrent with the dream. After Socrates relates his dream, he falls ill and dies trying to drink from the river, which brings to fruition Panthia’s cryptic words to the magical sponge at 1.13.

This proves that Socrates’ dream was an *oneiros* and his murder was carried out using witchcraft. Thus the only option for the reader is either to believe Aristomenes’ tale (including its magic, witches, and the signifying dream), like Lucius, or to cast it off as fiction, like the sceptical companion at 1.20. The dreams have not, as Carlisle argues, helped to suspend the reader’s disbelief regarding the bizarre witchcraft displayed in Aristomenes’ tale, for he was not dreaming. Indeed, it is the dream of Socrates that confirms that this bizarre sorcery actually happened (i.e. within the story’s framework). Despite the conclusion that Aristomenes was not dreaming, Apuleius has played with the reader by insinuating that he was in fact dreaming so as to create uncertainty about the sub-narrator’s experience, which adds to the supernatural tone and keeps the reader in suspense until its conclusion. Moreover, Socrates’ *oneiros* shows the reader that, provided one sides with Lucius rather than the unnamed sceptic, dreams in world of the *Metamorphoses* can be signifying.

This same narrative feature of suggesting the sub-narrator was dreaming is also found, though in a less pronounced fashion, in the tale of Thelyphron (2.21-30).

---

81 The idea that Aristomenes and Socretes experienced a kind of double dream (*oneiros*) would come to mind, but it has to be rejected for the reason that there is no convenient time for Aristomenes to have awoken. Panayotakis (1998: 128) raises the idea of the double dream but rejects it, concluding: ‘However, since Aristomenes has witnessed the murder of his friend, it is obvious that one has experienced awake what the other [sc. Socrates] has seen in his dream.’

82 Artemidorus says that predicted events may be concurrent with an *oneiros* (Artem. 1.2): ‘And, indeed, some of them [sc. *oneiroi*] come true at the very moment of perception, so to speak, while we are still under sway of the dream-vision.’

83 Cf. Gollnick’s conclusion (1999: 57): ‘The decisive factor here is Socrates’ sudden deterioration with the appearance of the scar and the sponge. Only this event confirms that the horrible experience with the witches actually happened.’

84 Ibid.: ‘No doubt the sudden shifts that take place in Aristomenes’ and Socrates’ perception of reality, along with the juxtaposition of dream and waking worlds, adds to the story’s dramatic effect.’

85 Kirichenko (2010: 118-19) points out a major inconsistency that implies Aristomenes has made the whole thing up: his professed fear of Meroë and escape from Hypata do not fit with the fact that he is walking towards this place with Lucius and the unnamed traveller. Thus Lucius can be seen to be a dupe for believing the tale to be true; nevertheless, despite its fictional nature, it still serves as a warning about Hypata that he fails to register.
Thelyphron tells his story of how he was hired to guard a corpse against witches who would mutilate it in the night. During his vigil he shoos away a weasel with an unnatural gaze that tries to enter the room, but soon falls into a profoundly deep sleep (2.25). He awakens in the morning and is happy to find the corpse untouched (2.26). One wonders whether the weasel was really a dream or a transmuted witch who put him to sleep (disabling him just as the entrance of Meroë and Panthia disabled Aristomenes by trapping him under his bed). Judging from the previous tale, the categories of ‘dream’ and ‘reality’ can be blurred, the attack on Socrates taking place even as he dreamt it. Like Aristomenes’ story, in the light of morning the night appears to have passed by without incident, hinting the tale will end happily. But when the bier is brought out an elderly man accuses the widow of murder and an argument ensues (2.27); thus an Egyptian priest is hired to revive the corpse so as to provide the answer (2.28). After the undead husband confirms the widow’s guilt, she denies the testimony of a reanimated corpse (2.29). So the corpse shares his secret knowledge of what happened after Thelyphron fell asleep. He explains that the witches indeed tried to enter in changed shapes (reformatae) and, having been thwarted, put Thelyphron to sleep. But because the corpse and his sleeping guardian happen to share the same name, when the witches called the corpse by name the living Thelyphron arose instead (in an unconscious state) and they removed his nose and ears, replacing them with identical wax substitutes (2.30). The truth of these words breaks the spell on the living Thelyphron, whose wax prosthetics drop off. In this story the undead Thelyphron’s account takes the same place as Socrates’ description of his dream in the previous tale (both confirming the truth of what happened), but here the witches’ victim is the narrator rather than the dreamer. Thus it is as if the corpse has related an oneiros from his eternal sleep, the physical confirmation being the disfigured face of the living Thelyphron.

---

86 Cf. James (1987: 77): ‘Like Socrates’ sponge, Thelyphron’s nose and ears remain firmly fixed only on certain conditions. When the corpse exposes the infidelity and the crime of his wife, it is a sign for the false in every sphere to be revealed.’

87 The possibility remains that Thelyphron is a professional storyteller who has fabricated a wonder tale about his deformity to earn his bread, as it were. Note the similarity between Thelyphron and Niceros at Trimalchio’s dinner party in Petronius’ Satyricon. James (ibid. 44, 75, n. 9, 84) believes that Aristomenes and Thelyphron are professional storytellers and that the laughter at the end of Thelyphron’s tale is
Thelyphron’s story also introduces a narrative device that is used later in the *Metamorphoses* with dreams. This is the supplying of information from the dead to the living, bridging past and present. It is not surprising to find Apuleius using this connection between the dead and dreams as it quite common:

Supernatural contact via dreams or ghosts was another way of bridging the present and past: Demosthenes appears to Aelius Aristides in a dream (Or. 50.19), as does Odysseus to the Egyptian priest Calasiris in Heliodorus’ *An Ethiopian Tale* (5.22.3). The grammarian Apion claimed to have raised the ghost of Homer … while Philostratus, in the *Life of Apollonius* (4.11–16), tells us of the holy man’s interview with the ghost of Achilles; the same author’s *Heroicus* … features a vinedresser who is a close associate of the ghost of Protesilaus.88

Winkler identifies five ‘dead men’s tales’ in the *Metamorphoses*.89 In these stories, hidden information is passed from the dead (through necromancy and dreams), or a character about to die, to the living, who can then tell the whole story as if an omniscient narrator.90 A former slave relates that Charite, mourning for Tlepolemus, dreams of his shade visiting her and exposing his former friend Thrasylus as a treacherous murderer (8.8). Similarly, the ghost of the miller comes to his daughter in a dream, explaining how his wicked wife murdered him using witchcraft (9.31). These dreams are used to supply ‘secret knowledge’ about an unpunished evil character, knowledge which is privileged on account of its supernatural source.

But before these dreams are accepted as oneiroi, might it be possible to rationalise them? Celsus suggested Mary Magdalene’s vision of Jesus after the crucifixion was a common type of wish-fulfilment dream from someone who is frantic (πάροιστρος), intended to be applause (rather than being derisive); cf. Zimmerman (2008) 149. Kirichenko (2010: 163-65) sees a professional Greek storyteller as the voice of the prologue who ‘imitates’ or ‘acts’ Lucius’ part as a kind of primary sub-narrator. Aristomenes and Thelyphron are thus said to recall this Greek storyteller since they share his profession. Whether Aristomenes and Thelyphron are professional storytellers not has no basis on the status of the dreams in Book 11—fictional oneiroi can still prime the reader for their use with Lucius.

90 Ibid. 70. The tales are listed as follows: (1) The miller’s daughter tells the details revealed by her father’s shade to her in a dream concerning his death; (2) the tale of Tlepolemus likewise told by his shade to Charite, who tells her own tale before she kills herself; (3) the dead Thelyphron’s tale is told with the aid of necromancy; (4) the tale of one of robbers is told to his comrade as he lays dying after having been pushed out of a window by an old woman; and (5) in the story of the condemned woman, the doctor is poisoned by his own medicine and tells his wife everything before his death. Later, when she too is poisoned, she reveals everything to the governor before her death.
presumably from grief (Orig. Contra Celsum 2.55). This same approach could conceivably be used to explain the dream of the distraught Charite about her recently deceased husband, combined with her newfound suspicions about Thrasyllus, who has thoughtlessly proposed marriage to her (8.8). Against this idea, however, is the reaction of Thrasyllus to her suicide. He appears to reveal his guilt concerning the death of Tlepolemus when he addresses both Tlepolemus’ and Charite’s ghosts as hostile (infesti manes). This detail suggests that the information in Charite’s dream was true and that this is the reason why Thrasyllus views Tlepolemus’ shade as hostile; for if Thrasyllus was innocent there would be no reason for him to consider Tlepolemus to be hostile towards him.

Belated confirmation of Charite’s dream as an oneiros may also come from the story of the murdered miller. For the daughter does not yet know about her father’s hanging, but dreams of him all the same (11.31). That she would dream about his shade with a noose around his neck (adhuc nodo revincta cervice) would be an incredible coincidence. It is very likely that this dream is a type of oneiros that conveys true

91 Origen counters this claim by stating that Mary’s vision happened whilst awake, and that she was not half-mad (C. Cels. 2.60).
92 GCA (1985: 5) suggests that Apuleius leaves open the possibility for the reader to interpret Tlepolemus’ murder by Thrasyllus as ‘a figment of Charite’s (subconscious) imagination’ and that (6): ‘far from being a message from the hereafter, it may be a reaction to, or confirmation of, Charite’s suspicions.’
93 To paraphrase the suggested argument in defence of Thrasyllus, in GCA (1985: 4-8): Thrasyllus perhaps struck Tlepolemus only accidentally with his spear or perhaps not at all, and that the sub-narrator gave a biased account (due to loyalty or having been informed of events by Charite), thus explaining the malicious thoughts attributed to Thrasyllus (which none could have known). After the marriage proposal, the grief stricken Charite decides that Thrasyllus murdered Tlepolemus, dreams that his shade tells her about this and takes it as confirmation, which results in her misguided vengeance and eventual suicide. When Thrasyllus discovers everything (8.14: cognitis omnibus) he shuts himself inside the tomb of Charite and Tlepolemus. The narrator (Lucius) has fallen for the bias of the sub-narrator (Charite’s slave) and reported the false account. Whilst this is conceivable, the facts do undeniably stack up against Thrasyllus. They run as follows: Thrasyllus was a suitor to Charite but lost out to Tlepolemus on account of his bad character, he was alone with Tlepolemus when he died on the hunt, he did not cry at his funeral, he then proposed marriage to Tlepolemus’ grieving widow, and after she blinded him and committed suicide (publicly revealing her reasons) he had himself brought to Tlepolemus and Charite’s tomb and starved himself to death inside.
94 quae nullo quidem domus infortunium nuntiante cuncta cognorat (‘Although no one had told her of the family’s misfortune, she knew it all.’).
95 GCA 9 (1995: 266), however, doubts the veracity of this dream because it is only related indirectly rather than a ‘verbatim report’ (as is Charite’s dream at 8.8) and because the miller’s purpose is not to instruct his daughter how to act (like Tlepolemus instructs Charite) but merely to share his tale. If anything, though, the dream of Charite appears less trustworthy since it seems to confirm her suspicions, whereas the miller’s daughter had no knowledge of her father’s death.
information from an otherworldly source rather than predicts events. This type of dream about a deceased loved one, who appears in a dream to instruct or to expose his or her murderer, commonly occurs in epic and elegiac poetry. Here, then, Apuleius can be seen to be using a type of dream with a long literary history, and a type that is, importantly, always depicted as being true.

The final dream to be discussed from Books 1-10 is unlike those previously discussed. It does not depict actual events, like Socrates’ dream, nor does it convey important information from the dead; it instead seems to predict a future event. Charite tells the old woman in the robbers’ cave that she dreamt she was at her wedding and was abducted by the bandits, but when Tlepolemus tried to rescue her he was killed by a bandit striking him with a huge rock (4.27). The old woman warns against the empty fancies of dreams (vanis somniorum figmentis), stating that dreams during the day are false, and even those at night can portend opposite outcomes, bad dreams predicting something good and good dreams something bad. The time of day for this dream is unclear, perhaps deliberately so on Apuleius’ part, thus the reader may follow the old woman’s advice and discard the dream as meaningless or heed the warning that one needs to be cautious when interpreting (allegorical) dreams. Winkler, however, supports the dream as an oneiros and states that it simultaneously predicts both the good outcome (Tlepolemus is not killed by the bandits, but kills them instead) and the bad outcome (Tlepolemus dies at the hands of the bandit-like Thrasyllus, who sought to marry Charite).

---

96 Cf. Verg. Aen. 2.274-78 (Hector’s mutilated and weeping shade appears to Aeneas in sleep and tells him to flee burning Troy); and more closely, Aen. 1.353f (Sychaeus appears to Dido and, still bearing his wounds, shows how Pygmalion treacherously murdered him before instructing her to flee). Cf. also Prop. 4.7.7f (Cynthia appears to Propertius, names her treacherous slaves, implies Chloris caused her death, and gives several instructions). For more literary parallels, see GCA 8 (1985) 90.

97 At first this appears to have been a daytime dream, as it is near dawn when Charite is brought to the cave (4.22-23) and, after much lamenting, she falls asleep before waking almost instantly from her dream (4.25: At commodum coniverat, nec diu cum…). It is unclear, however, how long she spends crying before her sleep. GCA 4 (1977: 205) believes the dream was nocturnal due to the words of the old woman: ‘Whereas the images presented by day-time dreams are simply fake, night-time dreams often announce events actually opposite the truth’. She presumably would not have had to mention night-time dreams if it were daytime.

98 Winkler (1985) 52-53. GCA (1977: 204) suggests that the dream not only predicts Tlepolemus’ death but that of Charite as well. GCA (1985: 5): ‘there seems to be a link between the robber-element there [in the dream at 4.27] and the characterisation of Thrasyllus’ in the present tale [at 8.1] as factionibus
Yet Charite’s dream could also be rationalised as a mix of anxiety-dream and wish-fulfilment dream, reflecting her desire to be rescued by Tlepolemus as well as her feelings of concern for him if he did attempt this. This kind of dream in which someone pictures a loved one, out of concern or desire, is commonplace in the Greek romances.99

Unlike the previously discussed dreams, then, this one is not conclusively shown to be meaningful, but it does lend itself to such interpretations. If it is signifying, it is allegorical (with the rock-hurling bandit symbolising Thrasyllus and/or the boar that kills him, or, if the other interpretation is right, Tlepolemus’ death at the hands of the bandits symbolising his victory over them).100 If it is non-signifying, it is an anxiety-dream mixed with desire for her lover, which makes sense considering the circumstances of Charite and the possibility that it is dreamt during the day.101 It is quite possible that Apuleius does not favour one interpretation over the other and has deliberately created ambiguity to highlight the difficulty in interpreting allegorical dreams. Yet it may also be true that the last word concerning the interpretation of this dream (i.e. the death of Tlepolemus reported in Book 8) finalises the interpretation of it as a predictive oneiros.

While the tales that contain dreams feature true dreams, the truth of the tales themselves could be rejected. This would not be productive, however, as the reader

---

99 Cf. Chariton Chaer.et Call. 3.7.4-5 (Callirhoe dreams of Chareas in chains, which is true, but it also shows her anxiety and her love for him); and at 5.5.5-6 (Callirhoe dreams she is in Syracuse and about to embrace her lover in the shrine of Aphrodite, demonstrating her desire for him); Xen. Eph. Ephes. 5.8 (Anthia dreams that a seductive woman takes away her lover, revealing her inner fear); Achill. Tat. Leuc. et Cleit. 1.3.2-4 (Cleitophon dreams that he and Leucippe merged together and are separated by a terrible woman, symbolically predicting their separation and also expressing his anxiety); and 1.6.5 (Cleitophon dreams of his lover, showing his longing for her); and again at 2.23.4-5 (Pantheia dreams that her is daughter killed by a bandit, which expresses her fear as well as relating to events in the story); Heliod. Aeth. 2.16.3-4 (Chariclea dreams that a bandit cuts out her eye, which she interprets as death of her lover but Cnemon interprets as the death of her father. Chariclea’s interpretation of the dream reveals her fear, but it neither interpretation is realised, unless Cnemon, who dies, is taken to be a father figure for her).

100 The second interpretation could have been explained by a dream interpreter thus: the death of Tlepolemus at the hands of a bandit whilst trying to rescue his beloved shows that Tlepolemus will rescue her disguised as a bandit, in effect slaying his former identity (with a rock, itself symbolising his unyielding love for her) by taking on the identity of a bandit to rescue her.

101 Artemidorus, however, would not hold the time of day against the dream (1.7).
would reject each narrator (Aristomenes, Thelyphron, Charite’s former slave), until one reaches Lucius, as it is he who relates the story of the miller’s daughter. The dream of Charite in the robber’s cave also features in the main narrative of Lucius and is first hand (Lucius hearing Charite describe it) rather than information he has been told; interestingly, the status of this dream is the least certain. This possibly seems to be Apuleius’ way of reiterating the warning to Charite (and the reader) that the old woman gives about interpreting dreams. Yet the death of Tlepolemus in Book 8 could be seen to vindicate the dream’s status as an oneiros.

On the above evidence, then, it seems that each narrator, including Lucius, primes the reader to view the dreams in Books 1-10 as true. Perhaps significantly, each category of dream encountered (thereomomatic, allegorical, and instructive epiphany) occurs in the final book. This is important when considering those who addressed the dreams of Book 11, viewing some of them as meaningless products of Lucius’ psyche, without consideration of the dreams in Books 1-10. There is no evidence for the universal meaninglessness of dreams prior to Book 11. This is no surprise since Apuleius did not hold this view himself.

Nevertheless, contrary to Gollnick’s view that the dreams in the Metamorphoses reflect Apuleius’ belief in them, many of the dreams discussed would be rejected as examples of oneiroi by Artemidorus and the Platonists; they would instead explain them as enhypnia influenced by an excess in wine and food (Socrates; 1.18), trauma induced anxiety/desire (Charite; 4.27), and emotional instability due to grief and thoughts of revenge (Charite; 8.8). These interpretations, however, do not fit with the world that is consistently presented by the various narrators. If one rejects the dreams one must also reject the narrator of each tale (including Lucius). So it seems that Apuleius, in

102 The reader, however, might still reject this story without discounting Lucius as a liar by putting it down to Lucius recalling hearsay about a mysterious death.
103 Note that the sceptical traveller disbelieves the story of Aristomenes on account of its inclusion of magic and witches, the dream of Socrates is not mentioned as a reason to disbelieve it.
104 Artemidorus probably would accept the dream of the miller’s daughter as signifying since she did not know of his death and, therefore, would not have been be influenced by such knowledge.
105 Kirichenko (2011: 199-200) says that the use of divination (including the dreams) has been used consistently in the Metamorphoses so that the prophetic dreams of Book 11 are bound to be interpreted in the same way, presenting a consistent fictional world.
Books 1-10, is drawing from literary dreams of the type found in epic poetry, elegy and the Greek romances.

**Book 11**

With the dreams of the preceding books covered, Book 11 can now be analysed to discover whether the same rules apply to its many dreams. The first of these dreams is depicted after Lucius prays to the moon. Lucius barely closes his eyes when he is visited by Isis, who offers him instruction (11.3-7). This type of divine instruction dream occurs throughout ancient literature, and is common in the Greek romances. This dream appears to be what Artemidorus would class a vision (ὅραμά). On the other hand, due to Lucius’ circumstances, Artemidorus might regard this dream an *enhypnion* of the petitionary or anxiety kind. But since Artemidorus’ dream-theory did not apply to the dreams in Books 1-10, this would surely be an erroneous conclusion. Moreover, rationalising Lucius’ dream results in a very difficult set of coincidences to explain, for everything that Isis says in the dream is borne out by subsequent observations. She declares that the following day will celebrate her festival which opens the sailing season:

‘Diem qui dies ex ista nocte nascetur aeterna mihi nuncupavit religio, quo sedatis hibernis tempestatibus et lenitis maris procellosit flunctibus, navigabili iam pelago rudem dedicantes carinam primitias commeatus libant mei sacerdotes.’ (11.5)

‘The day which will be the day born from this night has been proclaimed mine by everlasting religious observance: on that day, when the winters tempests are lulled

---

106 Cf. Achill. Tat. *Leuc. et Cleit.* 4.1.4 (Artemis appears to Leucippe in a dream and says that she will protect her but that she must remain a virgin until her wedding); 4.1.6-7 (Leucippe’s dream is confirmed by Cleitophon’s dream of a closed door in a temple of Aphrodite and a command to wait before he can enter); and 7.12.4 (Sostratos is told by Artemis in a dream to find Leucippe and his nephew at Ephesus); Heliod. *Aeth.* 3.11.5 (Apollo and Artemis appear to Calasiris and tell him to look after the lovers Theagenes and Chariclea as his own children. He believes it was not a dream but an actual visitation.); cf. also Ps.-Lucian *Syr. D.* 19 (Hera comes to Stratonike in a dream and tells her to build a temple in her honour). All of these dreams offer instruction to the dreamer from a divine source.

107 Artem. (1.6): ‘But one must understand that the things that are manifested to people who are anxiously concerned about something and who have asked the gods for a dream do not correspond to the objects of their concern [signifying something about the present], since those dreams that are similar to the dreamer’s thoughts are non-significative and in the *enhypnion* class …. These are called anxiety dreams and petitionary-dreams by some men.’
and the ocean’s wind-blown waves are calmed, my priests dedicate an untried keel to the now navigable sea and consecrate it as the first fruits of voyaging.’

It just so happens to be the *Navigium Isidis* (11.16). She also explains that her high priest will lead the procession carrying Lucius’ long sought cure:

‘Nam meo monitu sacerdos in ipso procinctu pompae roseam manu dextera sistro cohaerentem gestabit coronam.’ (11.6)

‘At my command, my priest, as part of his equipment for the procession, will carry in his right hand a garland of roses attached to the sistrum.’

The priest does just that:

At sacerdos, ut reapse cognoscere potui, nocturni commonefactus oraculi miratusque congruentiam mandati munieris, confestim restitit et ultra porrecta dextera ob os ipsum meum coronam exhibuit. (11.13)

But the priest, who, as I could tell from the facts, remembering the oracle that he had received in his dream and marvelling at the coincidence with the instructions he had received stopped at once and spontaneously stretched out his hand and held the wreath of roses right in front of my face.

This passage also confirms that, as the priest appears startled by the realisation that his dream from Isis has come true, Isis did in fact appear in his dream too. She states as much to Lucius:

‘Nam hoc eodem momento quo tibi venio, simul et ibi praesens, quae sunt sequentia sacerdoti meo per quietem facienda praecipio.’ (11.6)

‘for at this very moment when I come to you I am present there to and am instructing my priest in his sleep about what he must do next.’

Isis also assures Lucius that people will not accuse him of sorcery:

‘vel figuram tuam repente mutatam sequius interpretatus aliquis maligne criminabitur.’ (11.6)

‘Nor will anyone misinterpret your sudden transformation and prefer charges against you out of spite.’

They do not:

Populi mirantur, religiosi venerantur tam evidentem maximi numinis potentiam et consimilem nocturnis imaginibus magnificentiam et facilitatem reformationis, claraque et consona voce, caelo manus adtendentes, testantur tam illustre deae beneficium. (11.13)
The crowd was amazed, and the devout paid homage to the power of the mighty deity, to her grandeur which exactly matched my dream revelations. With one clear voice, stretching out their hands toward heaven, they bore witness to the marvellous beneficence of the goddess.

These examples conclusively demonstrate that this dream of Isis cannot be explained away rationally, unless one dismisses Lucius’ account entirely, which is a position that has been consistently denied by critics.\textsuperscript{108} Therefore, when Harrison suggests that Lucius dreams the whole episode upon the beach as the result of stress, fatigue, and the need for salvation, he does not address the main issue. Whether Lucius dreams that he beholds the moon and purifies himself in the sea, the fact remains that he receives instruction from Isis in his dream, instruction that is relevant to the celebration which ass-Lucius does not know about. Nor can this dream be the result of cunning suggestions or ‘programming’ from the priests, as is suggested for Lucius’ later dreams, because up until the procession arrives he has not met any such priests. More importantly, Harrison fails to explain how it is that Mithras obtained information about Lucius and his adventure. First, Mithras addresses Lucius by name (\textit{Luci}; 11.15). Second, Mithras alludes to Lucius’ high status, his education, and that he has been a slave due to his curiosity:

\begin{quote}
‘Nec tibi natales ac ne dignitas quidem, vel ipsa qua flores usquam doctrina profuit, sed lubrico virentis aetatulae ad serviles delapsus voluptates, curiositatis improsperae sinistrum praemium reportasti.’
\end{quote}

‘Not your birth, nor even your position, nor even your fine education has been of any help whatever to you; but on the slippery path of headstrong youth you plunged into slavish pleasures and reaped the perverse reward of your ill-starred curiosity.’

That Lucius, a man transformed into an ass, has experienced much hardship at the expense of blind Fortuna might be obvious, but Mithras goes into specifics, naming robbers, wild animals, and slavery as his torments (\textit{Quid latrones, quid ferae, quid servitium}).\textsuperscript{109} Lucius, as a speechless animal, could not have related this detailed information to anyone. Harrison himself acknowledges that Mithras knows about

\textsuperscript{108} Winkler (1985) 140; Weiss (1998: 82): ‘We never suspect … that Lucius falsifies his account’.
\textsuperscript{109} For the correspondences between Mithras’ words and Lucius’ adventures, cf. Kirichenko (2010) 80 and n. 38.
Lucius’ education, ‘showing detailed knowledge of his name and history’. Yet he does not seem to realise that in order for this information to be true, the double-dreams of the Isiac high-priest and Lucius have to be true, and therefore god-sent. If they are god-sent, this then raises the question of how Lucius can be considered gullible for believing them—Lucius’ gullibility being the supposed target of the satire.

Of course, Lucius experiences more dreams of Isis following his transformation. He explains that after he rents a room in her temple precinct, he receives many visits from Isis (11.19). It is these frequent dreams which are said to reveal Lucius’ overwhelming desire to become initiated, thus implying that the dreams are merely wish-fulfilments. It is true that Lucius states that he was eager to join the cult and that he dreamt repeatedly about initiation, but he also admits that he delayed:

At ego quamquam cupienti voluntate praeditus, tamen religiosa formidine retardabar, quod enim sedulo percontaveram difficile religionis obsequium .... Haec identidem mecum reputans nescio quo modo quanquam festinans differebam. (11.19)

But although I was eagerly willing I was held back by a conscientious fear .... I pondered these matters again and again, and somehow kept delaying, despite my sense of urgency.

This demonstrates that whilst eager, Lucius did have fears and did not rush into initiation. Moreover, with regards to wish-fulfilment dreams, Kragelund makes an important observation:

---

110 Harrison (2000a) 217, 244.
111 One might argue that the priest receives an oneiros, as a true priest of Isis, while Lucius’ dream is merely a petitionary-dream (enhypnion). This would still leave unexplained the many coincidences of Lucius’ dream and would, in any case, relieve Mithras of the charge of seeking profit from initiating Lucius as his own goddess is instructing him to take part in Lucius’ conversion. It might also be argued that Lucius would not have joined Isis’ cult had the priest not suggested it, but the desire to win a follower is understandable, given the circumstances, and such a desire does not equal venality. In any case, Isis had pre-empted Mithras’ invitation by instructing Lucius to worship her up until—and even after—his last breath (11.6).
112 Nec fuit nox una vel quies aliqua visu deae monituque ieiuna, sed crebris imperis sacris suis, iam dudum destinatum, nunc saltem censebat initiari; (Not a night passed, not even a nap, devoid of a vision of admonition from the goddess. With repeated commands she urged me now at last to be initiated, since I had long been destined for her rites.).
Throughout Latin literature writers would employ in such dreams [i.e. wish-fulfilment dreams] verbs like *quaero* or *invenio* to designate what a particular person wished or desired. But the verb *quaero*, although appearing twice in Book 11, is not used in relation to dreaming, nor even with reference to Lucius. The verb *invenio* does not occur at all. If Apuleius is depicting wish-fulfilment dreams, he is not employing the language for such dreams in literature.

Later, when Lucius can no longer restrain his enthusiasm after his ‘Candidus dream’ (discussed below), it is checked by the high priest:

> At ille … clementer ac comiter et ut solent parentes immaturis liberorum desideriis modificari, meam differens instantiam, spei melioris solaciis alioquin anxium mihi permulcebat animum: (11.21)

> But he … gently and kindly put off my insistence as parents try to restrain the premature desires of their children, and he soothed my natural anxiety with the comfort of hope for better things.

Weiss, however, sees manipulation in this refusal to initiate Lucius, and believes it is designed to increase his eagerness. But any such manipulation would be redundant since Lucius is already approaching Mithras frequently with urgent entreaties to be initiated:

> Nec minus in dies mihi magis magisque accipiendorum sacrorum cupido gliscebat, summisque precibus primarium sacerdotem saepissime conveneram, petens ut me noctis sacraeae tandem arcanis initiaret. (11.21)

> Furthermore, day by day my desire to receive the rites of initiation grew greater and greater, and I approached the high priest time and time again with urgent entreaties, asking him to initiate me at long last into the mysteries of the holy night.

Not long after Mithras advises him to be patient, Lucius finally receives the dream from Isis calling for his initiation, which he claims is Isis’ reward for his newfound self-

---

115 *quaerat* occurs at 11.15 during the speech of Mithras to the newly transformed Lucius (the subject of the sentence being blind Fortuna). Lucius uses *quaeras* at 11.23 when he addresses the reader about wanting to know the secret rites of Isis.
116 Weiss (1998: 86): ‘… Mithras has put off poor Lucius because it increases both the initiand’s desire for the special rite and the authority that the priest enjoys.’ Cf. Shumate (1996: 324): ‘this eagerness only intensifies each time he is told by Mithras that he must be patient and await the nod of approval from Isis herself.’
Supporting Lucius’ interpretation that this is indeed a god-sent dream, rather than a result of Mithras’ manipulation, is the suggestion that there has been another double-dream, for Mithras anticipates Lucius good news with his own announcement:

At ille statim ut me conspexit, prior ‘O’ inquit ‘Luci, te felicem, te beatum, quem propitia voluntate numen augustum tantopere dignatur.’ Et ‘Quid’ inquit ‘iam nunc stas otiosus teque ipsum demoraris? Adest tibi dies votis assiduis exoptatus, quo deae multinominis divinis imperiis per istas meas manus piissimis sacrorum arcanis insinueris.’ (11.22)

The moment [Mithras] caught sight of me, however, he anticipated me, saying, ‘O Lucius, how fortunate are you, how blessed, that the hallowed deity so greatly favours you with her benevolent will. Why,’ he added, ‘are you still standing around doing nothing, causing your own delay? Your day has come, the day you that you have been praying for with ceaseless desire, the day on which, at the divine command of the goddess of many names, you will be introduced by these very hands of mine into the holiest of secrets of our cult.’

It seems that Mithras has been told by Isis to initiate Lucius himself. Those sceptical of god-sent dreams, however, might argue that Mithras merely reads the change in Lucius’ demeanour (resulting from a wish-fulfilling dream calling for initiation) and cleverly pre-empts him by saying the time for initiation has come and he will perform the rites. To be sure, this is reading much more into the scene than is within the text, which renders this interpretation less likely than the alternative (i.e. Lucius and Mithras have again experienced a double-dream sent by Isis).

Yet the use of dreams in Book 11 to motivate Lucius does seem excessive. For instance, Lucius dreams the high priest gives him ‘shares’ (partes illas) from Thessaly and informs him that his slave, Candidus, has also arrived from there (11.20). This seems to predict something profitable for Lucius, but he does not know its exact nature

---

117 Dixerat sacerdos, nec impatienca corruppebat obsequium meum, sed intentus miti quiete et probabilis taciturnitate sedulum quoit dies obibam cultuas sacrorum ministerium. Nec me feellit vel longi temporis prolatione cruciavit deae potentis benigmitas salutaris, (‘The priest had made his pronouncement. My obedience was not marred by impatience, but attentively, in peaceful calm and commendable silence I diligently performed my service every day at the celebration of the sacred rites. The powerful goddess’s saving kindness did not fail me, or torture me with a long waiting period.’)

118 This motif recurs with the double dream of Lucius and Asinius, who claims that Osiris told him to initiate Lucius (11.27).

119 Weiss (1998: 86): ‘[Mithras]’ manipulative skill is revealed when Lucius has another dream not long afterward that indicates Mithras (inevitably) is to be the initiator.’ Cf. the manipulation indicated by Harrison (2000a: 245).
since he has no slave of this name. The physical proof of the god-sent nature of this dream is the arrival of his servants from Hypata, who have managed to recover his white horse (candidum equum). On the face of it, this dream serves to tie up the loose end of Lucius’ servants and his stolen horse, but this could have been achieved without the use of a dream. This apparent oneiros does give Lucius more reason to be attentive to his dreams as well as to his dedication to Isis, whose providence seems to have brought Lucius this good fortune. Moreover, this dream reintroduces the idea of allegorical dreams and the difficulty in decoding their meaning.

Another use of a seemingly unnecessary dream occurs soon after Lucius returns to his ancestral home. This dream, although not described, appears to have been a straightforward command from Isis rather than allegorical prediction, for Lucius unhesitatingly packs up and relocates to Rome as instructed (11.26). One might imagine that Lucius’ story should end with him at home in Corinth, whence he left to conduct his business, but this relocation ties up the loose thread of the narrator writing in Latin at Rome, which is, as Winkler puts it, ‘the site of the prologue’. Again, however, this could have been achieved without the use of a dream. What this use of dreams seems to demonstrate, then, is that Lucius will make momentous life decisions at the behest of his dreams. These examples start to portray Lucius’ ultra-devout character and faith in his god-sent dreams, following orders at great expense to himself. This is alarmingly similar to the women in Juvenal’s sixth satire and leads Harrison to posit Book 11 as a parody of Aelius Aristides’ Heiroi Logoi.

In Rome, having been an initiated follower of Isis for some time, Lucius receives another dream about initiation (11.26). He is confused by this, already being a cult

---

120 Harrison (2000a: 247-48) does not find this connection of candidus convincing, and believes that a cautious reader will understand that Lucius is seeing what he wants to see.

121 Quo facto idem sollicitius sedulum colendi frequentabam ministerium, spe futura beneficiis praesentibus pignerata. (After this event I became even more eagerly attentive in my constant ministry of service, in the belief that my present blessings were a guarantee of future expectations. 11.21)

122 Winkler (1985) 216.

123 Harrison (1996) 514; (2000a) 250-51; (2000b) 245-59. This parody is based upon the idea that the dreams originate from Lucius’ psyche, rather than from the gods.

124 Apuleius’ phrasing is ambiguous: Ecce transcurso signifero circulo Sol magnus annum compleverat (Now when the Sun had run through the circle of the zodiac and completed a year. 11.26). Either a whole year has passed or the current year has ended, which would not be a long time as Lucius comes to Rome
member, and so discusses the dream’s meaning with other initiates (*sacrorum consiliis*). In this way he discovers the cult of Osiris, which is united with that of Isis (11.27: *immo vero unita*), and he is informed that joining it is what his dream likely suggests. Yet Lucius could have gone to Rome and there met a priest of Osiris who brought him into the cult without dream instruction being employed—this would have still shown him to be devout and dedicated. Moreover, since this dream puzzles Lucius, unlike the dream that sent him to Rome, one suspects it was symbolic in its reference rather than a direct command. If so, the old woman’s warning about allegorical dreams representing their opposites could resurface at this crucial juncture; perhaps this dream is not a calling to initiation but a warning against someone who would try to give him false or unworthy initiation rites with an irreligious motive. So far there is nothing that conclusively points to this being an *oneiros*, let alone how to interpret it if it is. Therefore it is necessary to turn to Lucius’ next dream to see whether it confirms an interpretation one way or the other.

On the following night, Lucius dreams of a limping priest who presents sacred objects to Lucius’ household gods at a banquet (11.27). Lucius interprets this as confirmation of what the initiates said about his initiation into the cult of Osiris. While this dream may reflect his enthusiasm for joining Osiris’ cult (i.e. a wish-fulfilling dream), Lucius did not even know the cult existed until the day before. This leaves the first dream about initiation at 11.26 unexplained since it cannot originate from the wish to join something unknown to him. Moreover, there is another coincidence in Lucius locating this distinctive priest from his dream:

> Nec fides afuit. Nam de pastophoris unum conspexi statim praeter indicium pedis cetero etiam statu atque habitu examussim nocturnae imaginis congruentem, (11.27)

on the eve of the Ides of December. Finkelpearl (2004: 321) favours the interpretation that a whole year had passed since Lucius’ first initiation due to the inclusion of *iam dudum* in the subsequent statement: *Plenissime iam dudum videbar initiates* (‘I appeared to have been fully initiated for a long time.’) [my translation].

125 Griffiths (1975) and Robertson (1945) have *sacratorum consiliis*, but the meaning is essentially the same (literally, ‘with a body of councillors of those having been consecrated’). Since performing initiation was the role of priests, Apuleius could have more clearly used *sacerdotum consiliis* if he intended those speaking to Lucius to have been interpreted as venal priests.
Nor did confirmation fail to appear, for I instantly caught sight of one of the *pastophori* who, besides the evidence of his foot, precisely fitted my dream apparition in physical appearance and dress.

Lucius also takes the priest’s name, Asinius Marcellus, to be significant to his transformation—the name ‘Asinius’ being a cognate of *asinus*, ‘ass’. Moreover, this minor priest, is expecting Lucius. He explains thus:

Nam sibi visus est quiete promixa, dum magno deo coronas exaptaret, de eius [sc. Osiris’] ore, quo singulorum fata dictat, audisse sibi Madaurensem sed admodum pauperem, cui statim sua sacra deberet ministrare; nam et illi studiorum gloriæ et ipsi grande compendium sua comparari providentia. (11.27)

[Asinius Marcellus] had had a dream on the preceding night: while he was arranging garlands for the great god, he heard from the god’s own mouth, with which he pronounces each person’s fate, that a man from Madauros was being sent to him; the man was quite poor, but it behoved the priest to administer the god’s initiation rites to him at once, since by the god’s providence the man would acquire fame for his studies and the priest himself ample recompense.

Both Lucius and Asinius assume that the ‘man from Madauros’ represents Lucius, making it a somewhat allegorical dream since Lucius is a Greek from Corinth, rather than a North African. From this double-dream sequence, then, the concurrences between reality and dream are Asinius’ twisted foot, appearance and dress (*pedis cetero etiam statu atque habitu examussim*; 11.27), and the initiate being someone poor (*pauperem*) yet studious, which vaguely describes Lucius. Moreover, as Winkler notes, the priest’s dream can be said to have accurately predicted events since Asinius does make a profit from initiating Lucius, who himself achieves success through his legal career.

Yet while it seems that Lucius’ first dream of initiation at 11.26 was likely an *oneiros*, this double-dream still has not answered the question of whether Lucius was

---

126 Hanson (1998: 350): *reformationis meae minime alienum nomen* (‘a name not at all inappropriate to my transformation’). Griffiths (1975: 104): *reformationis meae non alienum nomen* (‘a name alluding, it seemed, to my transformation’). Nicolini (2012: 29-30) suggests that instead of the interpolation *minime* or *non*, *iam* might have been used originally, and thus translates the phrase as ‘a name that by this time sounded foreign to my transformation’.

127 The position of the *pastophorus* is discussed further in Chapter Three.

128 The contentious Madaurensem comment will be discussed further in Chapters Three and Five.

129 The use of a double dream here would echo the double dream of Lucius and Mithras. Mithras had likewise awaited Lucius when he received his call from Isis for his first initiation. There is clear repetition here, but this does not mean that the latter echoes the former; it may contrast with its predecessor.

130 Winkler (1985) 221.
being warned about Asinius or encouraged to undergo another initiation. One may argue that Asinius is an opportunistic and greedy priest who is lying about his own dream after learning of Lucius’ desire to experience the mysteries of Osiris. In this way, Asinius’ name and deformity would reflect a defective character, as would the financial theme of the priest’s dream. In this scenario Lucius would have been warned about this shady figure in his god-sent dreams, but, blinded by his desire to enter a new level of the cult, misinterprets the warning.

Regardless of the nature of this meeting with Asinius, Lucius delays his second initiation because of his poverty. He is pushed, however, by divine will (numinis premebar instantia; 11.28); Osiris (or Isis, the text is ambiguous) demands that he sell his clothes to pay for his initiation:

‘An tu,’ inquit ‘si quam rem voluptati struendae moliris, laciniiis tuis nequaquam parceres; nunc tantas caerimonias aditurus impaenitenda te pauperiei cunctaris committere?’ (11.28)

‘Surely,’ he [sc. Osiris] said, ‘if you were intent on some object for the production of pleasure, you would not spare your rags; now when you are on the verge of such important ceremonies, do you hesitate to entrust yourself to a poverty which you will have no cause to regret?’

In light of this dream, one might argue that this divine urging surely vindicates as god-sent the first dream of initiation at 11.26 and the subsequent dreams of Lucius and Asinius. But if one views Lucius’ dreams (at 11.26 and 11.27) as warnings it may be argued that since Lucius has chosen to follow this minor priest whose name relates to Isis’ eternal enemy, she has abandoned Lucius and this latest dream is merely a product of his psyche. After all, Lucius had already been warned by Mithras not to delay once called, and (thinking himself to have been called again) this could be the high priest’s words coming back to haunt him. Implausible as this may seem, such a sceptical view would correspond with the ominous details of a deformed priest and Lucius’ creeping doubts regarding the second and third initiations, not to mention such a twist would
correspond with the twists in the tales of Aristomenes and Thelyphron, where a happy ending is in sight only to be taken away from the narrator.\textsuperscript{131}

It is perhaps relevant that the function of these later dreams serves to justify the expense and necessity of the initiations rather than offering any mystical knowledge. For, not long after Lucius’ second initiation (\textit{post pauculum tempus}), he dreams of initiation again (11.29). Interestingly, this is not due to any conversation with initiates or priests but completely unexpected (\textit{inopinatis}),\textsuperscript{132} highlighting either the role of the gods or Lucius’ psyche as his motivation for this prolonged religious investment. Lucius, however, is unnerved and begins to suspect either the good faith or the credentials of his priests (11.29). But a kindly image (\textit{clemens imago}) justifies the initiation to Lucius, telling him it is because his cloak is in storage at the temple in Cenchreae.\textsuperscript{133} This seems a very obscure and pedantic reason for a third initiation, especially when compared with the build up to and significance of Lucius’ first initiation.\textsuperscript{134}

This sense of the anticlimax comes across in the final dream of the \textit{Metamorphoses} in which Osiris reveals his true form to Lucius:

\begin{quote}
Denique post dies admodum pauculos deus deum magnum potior et potiorum summus et summorum maximus et maximorum regnator, Osiris, non in alienam quampiam personam reformatus, sed coram suo illo venerando me dignatus affamine per quitem recipere visus est: quae nunc incunctanter gloriosa in foro redderem patrocinia, nec extimesce rem malevolorum disseminationes, quas studiorum meorum laboriosa doctrina ibidem exciebat. (11.30)
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{131} Cf. Murgatroyd (2004) 319. Anderson (1982: 77) labels Apuleius’ twists, ‘dextrous perversions of the audience’s expectations.’ He then notes that ‘[o]ne must not discount the possibility that the elevated tone of the conversion itself may be a twist of the same order.’

\textsuperscript{132} Carlisle (2008: 230) observes that it is Lucius’ dreams which focus on the cost of his initiations, not the priests.

\textsuperscript{133} Griffiths (1975: 339) suggests that the figure of the dream might be a priest, because \textit{imago} was used of the high priest who appeared to him in the ‘Candidus dream’ and, more importantly, during the speech the gods are twice referred to in the third person. Winkler (1985: 222), however, believes that the kindly vision is Osiris. I am inclined to agree with Winkler that it is Osiris because it makes more narrative sense for a god to offer information in a dream than a priest, who could easily be presented as giving this advice in the flesh. Whilst the priest Mithras appears in the dream of Lucius, he does not give information—it is the dream itself which contains symbolic information—the return of the white horse (11.20). Moreover, it was one of the gods, most likely Osiris, that instructed Lucius to sell his clothes to pay for his second initiation (11.38). After the third initiation, Osiris is said to appear in his true form, which suggests that he has come to Lucius in a form not his own; logically, this would be kindly figure.

\textsuperscript{134} Griffiths (1975: 340) speculates that the local temple in Cenchreae forbids the cloaks from being removed, which seems an arbitrary excuse.
Finally, after just a few days, he that is mightiest of the great gods, the highest of the mightiest, the loftiest of the highest, and the sovereign of the loftiest, Osiris, appeared to me in a dream. He had not transformed himself into a semblance other than his own, but deigned to welcome me face to face with his own venerable utterance, bidding me unhesitatingly to continue as now to win fame in the law courts as an advocate and not to fear the slanders of detractors which my industrious pursuit in legal studies had aroused in Rome.

This dream adds little wonder to Lucius’ conversion experience as depicted in chapters 1-17. Indeed, one might even say that its content takes away from the effect of the earlier dreams, instead bestowing a sense of banality to the conclusion. How is it important for the reader to know that Lucius’ legal career has divine sanction? The first dream of Book 11 features Isis in her true form; the sublime detail of its *ecphrasis* promotes awe. By contrast, the last dream of Book 11 features Osiris, who likewise reveals his true form to Lucius, but his majesty is not related in a majestic way—he gets no *ecphrasis*.\(^\text{135}\) Thus the highest of the gods does not convey the same splendour as Isis does when she steps forth from the sea. Indeed, Lucius’ attempt to express the supremacy of Osiris (*deus ... regnator*) comes across as comically histrionic wordplay.\(^\text{136}\)

It is true that the later dreams (11.26 onward) show a continued link between Lucius and the divine (if one accepts that they are indeed divine), but a link that is less mystical and more based on mundane details (explanations for further initiations, reassurances that he has not erred, and praise of his career mixed with social advice).\(^\text{137}\) Adding to the sense of doubt is the fact that the last three dreams cannot conclusively be proven to be *oneiroi* by any observable details from the waking world. There is no double-dream for Lucius’ third initiation with corresponding elements, and so the mystagogue is a

---

\(^\text{135}\) This is because of the narrative roles played by Lucius, Isis and Osiris, discussed in Chapter Four.

\(^\text{136}\) Finkelpearl (2004: 329) refers to this description as ‘over-the-top’ and that ‘there is clearly humor in this excess, but it does not follow that the humor is aimed at the Isis/Osiris cult or at those who indulge in it.’ Griffiths (1975: 341): ‘The first phrase is clearly an elaboration of Egyptian and Semitic idiom *god of gods* and *king of kings*’ [original emphasis].

\(^\text{137}\) Cf. Hunink (2006: 29), who highlights the strangeness of Osiris, highest of the gods, speaking to Lucius about his judicial career. Cf. also Edsall (1996: 220), noting that Book 11 ends with ‘strange dreams’. Even Griffiths (1975: 54) admits that Lucius’ joy at the conclusion ‘is slightly tinged with a feeling of self-interest after the Osirian boons which are both spiritual and material.’ Massey (1976: 42): ‘There is a discouraging incongruity between the mystic vision of Isis rising from the sea and the bald priest-barrister raking in the drachmae as a reward for his pious zeal.’
DREAMS IN THE *METAMORPHOSES*

complete mystery. The dream justifying this initiation tells Lucius something which the reader does not know to be true, nor is it confirmed by anything in the text (cf. the ‘Candidus dream’). Finally, the last dream fails to predict anything, merely telling him to continue on his path, which Lucius was presumably going to do regardless. It thus seems that the dreams from 11.26 onward are, like Charite’s dream at 4.26, open to interpretation as to whether they are *oneiroi* or *enhypnia*.

**Why Dreams?**

Before the analysis of the dreams is concluded, the question remains: why does Apuleius choose to use dreams for Lucius’ conversion in the first place? Carlisle argues that the dreams give Lucius the necessary protection from the accusation of lying by shrouding his divine contact in the cloak of subjectivity. Thus Apuleius aims for ambiguity by having Isis and Osiris appear in dreams rather than in the flesh because: ‘[i]t is crucial for the *Metamorphoses* … if it is to carry any message, that Lucius’ honesty not be called into question.’ But the idea that dreams offer subjectivity to wondrous events does not account for all of them. The magical transformations of Pamphile and Lucius (3.21, 3.24, 11.13), as well as the portents at the house of the man who hosts the market gardener (9.33-34), do not occur in dreams or in the stories of sub-narrators (who could be considered misinformed or lying). Carlisle notes that Lucius wonders whether he is dreaming while watching Pamphile transform into an owl, and goes on to acknowledge that, provided Lucius is dreaming, one must logically accept Lucius’ whole experience as an ass to be a dream as well. Carlisle appears to be open to the possibility (if not in outright support of the idea) that Lucius dreams his asshood. But this proposition cannot be sustained under scrutiny.

---

138 It is assumed that Asinius Marcellus fulfils this role yet again.
140 Ibid. 231.
141 Ibid. 221.
142 Carlisle (ibid. 222) initially seems undecided on the matter, stating: ‘… the transformation of Lucius, whether a dream or simply dream-like, will reveal important truths to Lucius.’ But when Carlisle subsequently refers to Lucius (in Book 11) reflecting positively on his experience as an ass, he states: ‘Once again, then, at a crucial moment we see the dream functioning as a way of explaining away bizarre
mater is that the magical transformations have to be accepted by the reader as objectively true. This is a major hole in Carlisle’s theory that dreams are used to protect wondrous events by suspending disbelief. Indeed, Carlisle is logically constrained to accept that Lucius dreamt his asshood; if he did not, the fact that the magical centrepiece of the *Metamorphoses* occurred outside a dream would invalidate his theory. Consequently, it follows that there is another purpose for the dreams in Book 11 other than allowing for both sceptical and religious readings of the tale.

Winkler has already answered the question as to why Isis is appropriate for the ending of Lucius’ adventures. Most importantly, Isis is a goddess who has the power to cure and transform people. In Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*, Isis changes the sex of a girl, Iphis, who was raised as a boy, so she can legally marry her heart’s desire, Ianthe (Ov. *Met*. 9.666-797). Isis is also appropriate for saving Lucius from asshood, in particular, because the ass symbolises Set, her eternal enemy, a fact to which as she alludes at 11.6. Dreams are also appropriate to an Isiac ending because the goddess was associated with experiences [i.e. Lucius turning into an ass], which then later turn out to have had something important to reveal to the dreamer.” [My emphasis] This reference to dream and dreamer appears to indicate that Carlisle does view Lucius’ asshood as a dream.

Many questions are raised by the proposition ‘Lucius dreams his whole experience as an ass’. It follows that Lucius must awaken after Mithras’ speech about his adventures as an ass (at 11.15), but at which point? There is no convenient moment for this awakening. Moreover, how does one explain how Lucius got to Cenchreae and why he is not still in Hypata? For that matter, at which point did Lucius fall asleep in the first place? And why would the narrator not realise it had all been a dream? Surely the blinding ineptitude of a narrator so out of touch with reality would undercut any positive message his story attempted to convey. It thus seems incredible that Apuleius would really expect the reader to believe Lucius’ many experiences from Books 3-11 are a dream – including all the stories he overheard (even the lengthy tale of Cupid and Psyche!) and including his dream of Isis, which would become a dream within a dream. The whole tale becomes a convoluted mess when one tries to accept this proposition, and as such it has to be rejected.

Some of the portents witnessed (9.33-34) seem to have been reported by others, but the blood coming from the crack in the floor and the hen giving birth to the live chick appear to have been witnessed by Lucius.

Winkler (1985: 276-79) provides three answers: 1) the adaptation of the existing ass-story to encompass religion points towards using the best known ass god, Seth-Typhon; 2) Isiac worship was well known and yet considered strange in the Graeco-Roman world; and 3) Isis was associated with saving people from crises. Recently, Kirichenko (2010: 100) has proposed an additional reason for the choice of Isis; namely, that Egyptian priests were essential to many philosophers (e.g. Phythagoras, Thales, Plato) in their conversion to philosophy. Whilst maintaining the importance of Isis in her role as a divine healer, he points out that the conversion Lucius undergoes resembles the accounts reported of these paramount philosophers, and demonstrates that Plutarch views Egyptian myth and ritual through a philosophical lens, arguing that this influenced Apuleius’ use of Egyptian religion in the *Metamorphoses*.
dream cures (incubation). Isis and her priests appear in the dreams of Aelius Aristides (Or. 47.25-26, 49.45-49). Similarly, the mute Aesop, after helping a priestess of Isis, beholds Isis in a dream and is cured of his mute state as well as gifted by Isis’ daughters, the nine muses (Vita Aesopi 4-8). Moreover, dream interpreting was an important part of the cult of Isis; coniectores Isiaci could be paid to interpret one’s dreams (cf. Cic. Div. 1.132), and Plutarch mentions cyphi, the concoction used to induce dreams (De Is. et Os. 383e-384a). Thus, for Apuleius to depict a common-place convert to Isis, having Lucius claim to have received dream-visions of her would likely be something more familiar to the reader than someone who claims to have conversed with her whilst awake. This is a more explicable reason behind his use of dreams.

Furthermore, I do not agree that all of the dreams in Book 11 can be rejected, just as the animal transformation cannot be rejected, without denying Lucius’ story wholesale. In the world of the novel, magic exists and dreams can be meaningful, and even god-sent.

**Conclusion**

An interpretation of the *Metamorphoses*, then, that focuses on the dreams in the novel must recognize two important facts: 1) that the final interpretation of Lucius’ religious experience will depend on how the cluster of Isis-dreams is seen to relate to the waking world and 2) that, within the narrative universe, dreams are never false, they are always borne out by subsequent events.

While Lucius is often puzzled by his dreams, he never doubts their divine origin. Moreover, the multitude of dreams is not necessary to show how eager Lucius is to join the cult of Isis and Osiris—he explicitly states as much. Since Lucius undergoes his first

---

146 Meier (1966) 315-16. Although the information on the *Metamorphoses* is somewhat dated, Meier provides a clear description of the process of incubation.
147 Winkler (1985) 286.
148 Edsall (1996: 203-5, 211, 216-20) also notes that dream interpretation is a feature of Isiac priests.
149 In Chapters Four and Five, I will argue for an additional reason behind the use of dreams in Book 11.
150 Carlisle (2008) 232. Carlisle (ibid. n. 57) adds two caveats to these ‘facts’: ‘1) all the dreams, through very contorted logic, can be explained away as meaningless: this is the element which ultimately protects the narrative from straightforward dismissal; 2) some of the dreams … are not directly predictive but use slightly obscure symbolism to communicate their message.’ The ‘contorted logic’ of the first caveat relates to rationalising the dreams, which I have argued cannot be sustained in some cases, although one might reject the truth of the (sub-)narrator telling the story in which the meaningful dream features. The second caveat points out that, in Artemidorus’ terms, some dreams are allegorical, not thereomatic.
initiation having received what appear to be god-sent dreams, they do not seem to be
designed to highlight his gullibility. Yet the possibility remains that he mistakenly trusts
meaningless dreams as well as signifying dreams, or it could be that he simply
misinterprets the latter. It also remains possible that Asinius lies to Lucius about his
own dream, which Lucius unquestioningly accepts.

While most of the dreams in the *Metamorphoses* appear to be true and, in Book 11,
god-sent, analysis shows that Apuleius is not working with Artemidorus’ dream-theory.
The dream interpreter would class many of the dreams throughout the *Metamorphoses*
as *enhypnia* (due to wine, or the psychological state of the dreamer). Nor is Apuleius
employing Platonic ideas for the dreams, since most of the dreams would have been
rejected (due to wine, the worthiness and emotional balance of the dreamer, and the idea
that the gods directly appear in dreams). Therefore, Apuleius must be using literary
dreams instead—the types that occur in epic poetry, elegy, and the Greek romances.
Thus, contrary to what some critics have suggested, the dreams of the *Metamorphoses*
are removed from Apuleius’ own ideas on divine dreams.151

Having said that, Apuleius would not reject *oneiroi* in principal (as Petronius and
Lucian seem to do), and thus would not satirise Lucius simply for believing his dreams
to be god-sent. Yet there does seem to be an excessive use of dreams, as well as a
change in the dream’s reference and tone. Combined with the lack of waking world
confirmation for the meaningfulness of the final dreams, suspicions are raised about
whether Lucius is still the comic figure that he was in Books 1-10 and what Apuleius is
trying to achieve with his characterisation of Lucius as an ultra-devoted worshipper of
Isis and Osiris. Thus the double-dream with Asinius Marcellus could conceivably be
explained away as a plot to recruit and exploit Lucius, which (if accepted) would put a
shadow over the, frankly, uninspiring Osiran dreams, making them products of the

151 Harris (2003: 34) concludes his article on dreams in the Roman Empire by stating that the evidence for
belief in divine dreams is somewhat biased since the remaining sources on the subject all have vetted
interests in them. He identifies three types who advanced the idea of dream divination: practitioners and
followers of certain religious cults, political and military officials to advance their cause, and authors of
fiction for literary purposes (for plot or character development, or linking divine and mortal worlds). By
my reasoning, Apuleius, in the *Metamorphoses*, would fit into the third category, rather than the first.
psyché. Or it could be that all the dreams are god-sent, but the nature of the Osirian dreams reveals that the gods have played some trick on Lucius, which the narrator has failed to note.

Most critics who interpret satire in Book 11 follow Winkler in the view that the satire involves a gullible convert duped by a venal cult consisting of corrupt priests who follow corrupt gods (that is, the gods are complicit in their priests’ duping of Lucius). This, however, creates a tension between Lucius believing meaningless psychological dreams (possibly as a result of manipulation by the priests) and being deceived by the gods via dreams. This view makes Apuleius inconsistent: dreams constantly appear to be signifying in Books 1-10, and some are god-sent in Book 11 while others are not, yet Lucius is still considered a gullible fool for believing the dreams that are only a product of his desire to join the cult. Moreover, it is not clear why Asinius or Mithras would have to lie about their double-dreams with Lucius and manipulate him if the gods were intent on aiding the priests fleece Lucius in the first place. Therefore, it is clear that Book 11 cannot contain a satire of a gullible convert fleeced by deceitful priests (akin to the satire of the priests of the dea Syria in Books 8 and 9) if the gods are complicit in the scam; if the Syrian goddess was shown to be influencing Philebus and his troupe, they would not be corrupt, but instead merely following a thieving goddess. Likewise, Lucian’s satire of Alexander of Abonoteichus would fall flat if he was actually said to be receiving god-sent instruction. The humour of such satire lies in the affectation of the priests: they make a grand spectacle of their religious devotion, but they are really thieving degenerates. If they are both obedient to their gods and impious thieves, the humour is lost, the focus instead falling upon the corrupt divinities. Similarly, Lucius (regardless of his previous gullibility) cannot be gullible for obeying what he thinks are the commands of the gods if they actually are.

My analysis of dreams in the Metamorphoses, then, leaves two choices open for an interpretation of Book 11 as satire. In the first scenario Asinius Marcellus deceives Lucius, whose dreams are enhypnia from 11.26 onward, showing that Lucius begins as a devout convert and ends up a dupe. The second scenario has Lucius (and his priests)
receive god-sent dreams, but questions the relationships between Isis, Osiris, and Lucius in light of themes from Books 1-10, and ultimately, Lucius’ character. To explore the validity of each scenario, Chapter Three will focus upon the first hypothesis and Chapter Four and Five upon the second. The most compelling scenario, it is hoped, will reveal the best path to satire.
CHAPTER THREE

Mithras and Asinius Marcellus

The previous chapter came to the conclusion that, near the start of Book 11, Lucius and Mithras undeniably experience a double-dream sent by Isis. Likewise appearing to be god-sent (if seeming somewhat superfluous) are the subsequent dreams of Lucius up until 11.26 when he leaves Greece for Rome. Therefore, the guiding presence of Isis during his stay in Cenchreae implies that there is no satire of a gullible Lucius who believed wish-fulfilling *enhypnia* to be god-sent *oneiroi*. The possibility remained, however, that the dreams and initiations following Lucius’ move to Rome were not as credible, and that Asinius Marcellus was misleading Lucius so that he would undergo his expensive Osirian mysteries. Therefore, this chapter seeks to verify Edsall’s idea that ‘Mithras and his initiation serve as a foil for Asinius Marcellus and his initiations.’

But first, Books 1-10 will be explored with respect to the themes of greed, theft, and gullibility (or misapprehension) in order to demonstrate how the reader might be led to expect the aforementioned satire in the final book.

**Instances of Greed and Theft in the *Metamorphoses***

Interpreting the conclusion of the *Metamorphoses* as a satire of venal priests and gullible converts requires the reader to view Book 11 from the perspective of Books 1-10, thus perceiving a continuation of themes and narrative techniques. Perceiving a

---

2 Edsall (1996: 200) proposes that the reader let the depiction of ‘blind religious fervour’ and the ‘skepticism expressed by non-believers’ from earlier in the *Metamorphoses* inform the reading of Book 11. van Mal-Maeder (1997: 94) sees the *ecphrasis* of Isis in Book 11 as repetition of those about Photis (2.8, 17); Murgatroyd (2004: 319) views 11.26-30 as repeating the comic twists from the tales in Books
continuation of theme into Book 11 is not a radical position, in itself; Schlam discusses a variety of themes in the *Metamorphoses*, many of which are found in all of its eleven books.\(^3\) Two themes that Schlam does not address, however, are greed and theft. These themes are essential to a view of the satire of a venal priesthood in Book 11.\(^4\)

In Books 1-10 of the *Metamorphoses* a string of greedy and deceitful characters feature in Lucius’ adventure as well as in the various inserted tales. A notable example of such a figure is Milo, the money-lender who accommodates Lucius in Hypata. Despite his wealth (*ampliter nummatis et longe opulentus*), he is known for his sheer miserliness (*extremae avaritiae*) to the extent that he dresses like a beggar (*habitum mendicantis*; 1.21). Indeed, his financial focus seems to have rubbed off on his only slave, Photis, who immediately takes Lucius for someone enquiring about a loan (1.22). Milo even shows his guest the discourtesy of having to procure his own dinner (1.24). This same miserliness is echoed in one of the robber’s tales in which a certain banker named Chryseros (‘Lovegold’) is said to hide his gold so that he does not have to fund public works out of his own pocket (4.9). Thus those who work with money are shown to covet it so much that it affects their civic duties and social roles.

Fittingly, marketplaces are centres for greedy and deceitful people to operate in the *Metamorphoses*. Aristomenes explains how he first came to Hypata to get a great deal on cheap cheese to mark up and sell at a profit, but when he arrived a wholesale dealer named Lupus (‘Wolf’) had beaten him to the punch and bought it all (1.5). In Hypata, Lucius encounters another profit seeking merchant, this time a fishmonger that asks an

---

1-10; Weiss (1998: 83-102) sees in Book 11 a continuation of the themes of *simplicitas*, *cupiditas*, and *curiositas* in the characterisation of Lucius. An interpretation of *Metamorphoses* as religious edification, by contrast, reassesses Books 1-10 from the perspective of ‘Book 11 (along the same lines as Mithras’ interpretation of Lucius’ adventure at 11.15), using it as a hermeneutic tool. This view notes parallels and themes that prestage the Isiac conclusion, such as the reference to Egyptian papyrus and the Nilotic reed (1.1), Zatchlas the Egyptian priest (2.27), Byrrhena’s similarity to Isis as a caring motherly figure (2.3), Photis’ talk of initiations (3.15), Psyche’s descent into the Underworld before becoming one with divinity (6.24). Cf. the assessments of the two opposing viewpoints by van-Mal-Maeder (1997: 90) and Kirichenko (2007: 254-55).

3 Schlam (1992: 6): ‘No single, central theme provides unity to the work, rather an abundant network of themes integrates the account of Lucius’ experiences and the diversity of the interpolated stories …. The pursuit of wonder, power, and pleasure, the contrasts between male and female, human and animal, sacred and profane, are themes extending through all the eleven books of the *Metamorphoses*.

4 For a brief account of the theme of *avaritia* in the *Metamorphoses*, see Zimmerman (2006) 91-92.
extortionate amount, ‘one hundred sesterces’ (centum nummis), for poor quality fish (1.24); Lucius manages to haggle down to 20 denarii (viginti denarios). Later, Milo tells Lucius the story of a sham fortune-teller named Diophanes, who, having just given a prediction, meets an old friend and unthinkingly recounts his own recent misfortunes, thereby scaring off the man who was about to pay him for the prediction (2.13-14). Likewise, the priests of the dea Syria are thieves and charlatans, giving false oracles (9.8) and even stealing a sacred object from a temple (9.9-10). Another priest who provides services for pay is the Egyptian priest, Zatchlas. In the tale of Thelyphron he performs necromancy for a ‘great price’ (grande praemio; 2.28). All of these dubious figures offer their services in marketplaces, which are depicted as haunts for charlatans and greedy merchants.

In addition to these greedy yet relatively harmless figures, Hypata and its surrounds is infested with dangerous thieves. Initially, Milo’s paranoia concerning robbers seems a symptom of his greed (1.23), but his fear turns out to be fully justified when his home is burgled (3.28). The robbers responsible meet with other members of the gang who recount various other burglary attempts (on the homes of the banker Chryseros, a cunning old woman, and the wealthy Demochares; 4.9-21); they also plan to ransom Charite (4.23). Cleverly, it is to their greed that ‘Haemus’ appeals when he proposes that they receive him as their new leader, offering them two thousand gold pieces and pledging, like some kind of King Midas, that he will turn their stone home into gold (7.8). He then recommends that they sell Charite to a pimp rather than profitlessly killing her as punishment for her escape attempt (7.9). These robbers are anticipated in

---

5 Note that the asinine Lucius is first sold for seventeen denarii (8.25)—less than this basket of fish.
6 In this instance, however, the wonder-worker is not a fraud since his magic is successful. Nevertheless, Edsall (1996: 175-76) associates him profit-seeking magicians: ‘That Zatchlas performs this magic to make money … puts him in the company of Egyptian priests of the popular tradition who are portrayed as common magicians,’ Edsall (ibid. 177-78) goes on to contrast Zatchlas (who takes money for temporary resurrection) with the holy man Apollonius of tyre (who permanently resurrects someone yet refuses payment). Van Mal-Maeder (1997: 100) notes that performing or even witnessing necromancy was illegal, citing a scene from Heliodorus’ novel: ‘In this passage … Calasiris, a priest of Isis, expresses his aversion to a scene of necromancy he accidentally witnesses, calling it a blasphemous act a true prophet should neither take part in nor attend (Hld. 6, 12, 7).’ Thus Zatchlas is profiting from breaking both religious and secular law; contra: Schlam (1992) 70.
7 To this medley of corrupt marketplace dwellers can be added the auctioneer who lies in order to sell the asinine Lucius (8.24-25).
the tale of Aristomenes when Socrates reports being mugged on the road near Larissa (1.7). Having reached Hypata, Meroë ensnares Socrates, robs him of his clothes and the wages he earns, and kills him when he escapes (1.13, 19). Meroë finds a counterpart in the widow of Thelyphron’s tale; this woman has poisoned her husband for his inheritance (2.27). Perhaps the most brazen greed-motivated crime, however, is that committed by the young nobleman who steals cattle from his poorer neighbour before claiming all his land in a court case over boundaries; he and his followers kill those who try to defend the poor neighbour (9.35-6).

Not only are inherently greedy people common in the *Metamorphoses*, but there are some whose good character is corrupted by gold. The trusted slave Myrmex could not resist the lure of gold in the tale about the adulterer, Philesitherus. He was charged with guarding his master’s wife but sold her honour for the lover’s coins (9.18-19). Similarly, in the story of the condemned woman, an unnamed doctor abandons his Hippocratic Oath when he accepts fifty thousand sesterces to concoct a poison to kill her stepson (10.25). Lucius’ generous magistrate master, Thiasus, and his freedman trainer turn a profit from his clever ass’s almost human behaviour (10.19), which starts off innocently (getting Lucius to eat, drink, and dance; 10.17) but soon degrades into pimping Lucius to a wealthy *matrona* for a bestial coupling (10.23). The last image of degrading avarice is mentioned in Lucius’ diatribe on judicial corruption in which he harangues ‘vultures in togas’ (*togati vulturii*) who give their verdicts for a price (10.33).

Thus a whole spectrum of greed and theft is comprehensively portrayed in Books 1-10 of the *Metamorphoses*, from the antisocial (miserliness, marketplace charlatanry), to the corrupt (the receipt of bribes, profiting from unnatural prostitution), and finally to the outright criminal (banditry, murderous robbery). Therefore, with the association between profit-seeking and immoral or criminal activity, one cannot help but find the financial details in Book 11 disconcerting given the avaricious world already depicted in Books 1-10.8

8 References to expenses, gifts, or finances are found in every chapter from 18 onwards. 11.18: Lucius’ friends bring him gifts which help him to pay his living expenses. 11.19: Lucius rents a house at the temple district. 11.20: Lucius dreams about Mithras bearing gifts from Thessaly and the return of his
Instances of a Gullible and Foolish Lucius in the *Metamorphoses*

In addition to the themes of greed and theft and the disconcerting reappearance of financial concerns in Book 11, the theme of a gullible and foolish Lucius from Books 1-10 may also cause the reader to pause.¹ That Lucius is often the subject of deception and regularly misjudges situations leaves the reader in suspense about his conversion, especially when he begins to question his own priests at 11.29. A quick overview of Lucius’ gullibility and folly from Books 1-10 is instructive.¹⁰

Lucius sets out his stance on mysterious phenomena by opting for an open mind (1.3), which appears to be a sensible position. But the illustration to his point, wherein he marvels at street performers who swallow spears, having recently choked on a piece of cheesecake himself (1.4), only reveals his own gluttony and foolishness even as he tries to appear intelligent.¹¹ After Aristomenes’ strange tale is dismissed outright by the sceptical companion, Lucius states that he believes it and thanks Aristomenes for the ‘charming and delightful story’ (*lepidae fabulae festivitate*; 1.20). It has already been

---


¹⁰ Winkler (1985: 160-65) highlights aspects of Lucius’ character that resonate with the *stupidus* or *calvus mimicus* of the mimic stage and the *scholasticus* from jokes in the *Philogelos*. More recently, Kirichenko (2010: 35-36) compares Lucius to the *calvus mimicus*.

noted in Chapter Two that Kirichenko views the story as an invention of Aristomenes because the idea that he narrates his tale of escape from Meroë whilst strolling towards her very town is illogical (a conclusion that escapes Lucius).\textsuperscript{12} There is another level of stupidity on Lucius’ part: he labels ‘charming’ a story that involves the death of the narrator’s friend and ends with his exile, separating him from his family.\textsuperscript{13} This is as unthinking as Thelyphron when he says that he will be pleased to watch over any other dead relatives for the widow (2.26); fortunately for Lucius, his callousness does not earn him a beating (unlike Thelyphron’s faux pas).

Lucius encounters another sceptic in Milo, who does not accept his wife’s divination from the flame in the lamp (2.11). Lucius, however, defends divination with a discussion about the flame’s kinship with celestial fire and offers the example of the Chaldaean astrologer, Diophanes, who recently made a prediction for Lucius (2.12). In rebuttal, Milo tells his story about how this same Diophanes was laughed at when he lost business because he could not predict his own misfortune (2.13), which suggests that Lucius has been duped and did not even know it.\textsuperscript{14} Interestingly, Lucius continues to believe (or wants to believe) in the truth behind Diophanes’ prophecy, thinking it may have referred to his slaying of three men when he came back to Milo’s house drunk (3.1).

Lucius, it turns out, was mistaken about the three men he chanced upon breaking into Milo’s home—they were in fact enchanted wineskins (2.32; Photis’ explanation, 3.16-18). The townspeople somehow take advantage of this error by making Lucius the focus of their laughter festival. They charge him with the murder of three men and make him speak his defence in the makeshift courtroom (appropriately, the theatre). Before he is found guilty, they bring in the ‘bodies’ and remove the sheets to reveal the wineskins;

\begin{footnotes}
\item[13] Kenny (2003: 167) makes a similar observation about Lucius’ description of the story of the miller being a ‘good story’ (\textit{fabulam… bonam}; 9.14), when in actual fact the miller is murdered by his adulterous ex-wife.
\item[14] Edsall (1996: 172) points out that Diophanes and Lucius are equated because they both fail to foresee danger to themselves and recount their misfortune. Apuleius elsewhere attacks charlatan Chaldaean astrologers who tell lies (\textit{Apol}, 97).
\end{footnotes}
the townspeople all laugh and the celebration of Risus is complete (3.2-10). In many ways, this scene typifies Lucius’ experience in Books 1-10—always one step behind.

Not only is Lucius often fooled, but his plans are regularly thwarted. He decides to feign exhaustion in order to escape the robbers, but his fellow ass beats him to it and is hurled from a cliff as a result (4.4-5). His plan to transform into an owl goes awry when he rubs the wrong magical salve onto his skin, instead transforming himself into an ass (3.24). The significance of this metamorphosis says a lot about Lucius’ character:

Most metamorphoses deal with the changing of a person into something else, such as, for instance, a tree, a stone, or an animal. Regardless of the way they are transformed, such transformations are not capricious but turn out to be very meaningful because they set in relief the true and lasting character of the person involved. The physical characteristics of the personages are subject to the change but the quintessential substance lives on.

Thus Lucius becoming an ass is appropriate to his curious and libidinous nature. The antidote for this condition is to eat roses, which Lucius later sees in a field, but upon closer inspection the flowers are in fact poisonous ‘laurel roses’ (4.2). Lucius again is fooled by what he sees when he observes Charite’s affection for Haemus, judging all women by her supposed fickleness only to discover that the bandit is her betrothed in disguise (7.11-12). Lucius underestimates another woman when he is given over to the lustful matrona—he does not believe she would be able to accommodate him, but he is proven wrong again (10.22). Lucius later condemns judicial corruption with regards to the Judgement of Paris mime; it would have been more appropriate, however, to address the dangers of Venus, the crimes of the condemned woman (with whom he is to couple

16 The quote is from Galinksy speaking about metamorphoses in Ovid; found in James (1987: 92).
17 James 1987, 93. Corncering the link between the ass and Typhon (Seth), the description by Plutarch is instructive: ‘… Typhon is that part of the soul which is impressionable, impulsive, irrational and truculent…’ (De Is. et Os. 371b) Translation by Babbit 2003.
18 Even upon this realisation Lucius determines to eat the flowers, but beforehand he is chased away by an angry farmer (4.3).
19 Zimmerman (2006: 96) points out in this scene the voice of the ‘self-ironising satirist’ who points to his own shortcomings as a moralist. Thus while Lucius’ ignorance of Haemus’ true identity understandably leads Lucius to an erroneous conclusion, his quickness at judging all women on this one act is highlighted as being itself foolish.
and whose execution the mime precedes) arising from her misplaced and spurned love.\textsuperscript{20} Furthermore, during Lucius’ rant, he seems to forget the legal career that pays his way and wins his fame in Rome (11.28, 29)—condemning as corrupt the same system in which he takes pride in having made a successful career presents Lucius-narrator as either mercenary or simpleminded (or both).\textsuperscript{21}

On top of Lucius’ misjudged notions and thwarted plans, he continually fails to heed the warnings in his story. There are the warnings against involvement with magic in the tales of Aristomenes and Thelyphron,\textsuperscript{22} and the danger of spying on powerful women is evident in the story behind the statue of Diana and Actaeon.\textsuperscript{23} The dangers of Venus are clear in the adultery tales and that of Thrasyllus, but appear to be unnoticed by Lucius.\textsuperscript{24} Nor does he discern any philosophical or moral worth in the story of Cupid and Psyche; he could have learnt from Psyche’s troublesome \textit{curiositas}, but instead views the tale merely as a ‘beautiful little story’ (\textit{bellam fabellam}; 6.25).\textsuperscript{25}

Judging from his frequent errors in judgement and mistaking the obvious, it is entirely possible, if not expected, that Lucius would misinterpret one or two that were actually god-sent. It is also

\textsuperscript{20} Cf. Finkelpearl (1991: 233): ‘Apuleius as author has exposed the moral and intellectual posturing of Lucius’. The ‘dangers of Venus’ seem to have had their part in Lucius’ own downfall (in addition to his \textit{curiositas}) as it is his lover Photis that brings him into contact with magic (at his urging; 3.19) and gives him the magical salve. Anderson (1982: 78) points out that Lucius’ sexual exploits ‘have to be borne in mind alongside his indignation at wicked and deceiving adulterers.’

\textsuperscript{21} It is unclear if this rant should be attributed to Lucius-actor or Lucius-narrator; he refers to himself as a philosophising ass (10.33), which would suggest that it is the actor, yet the use of the present tense in the digression suggests it is coming from narrator; cf. Winkler (1985: 150) and Zimmerman-der Graaf (1993: 154-55). This distinction is not so important for my point, for if it is the actor’s rant, he knowingly joins a corrupt system at a later date, whereas if it is the narrator’s, he condemns the very system in which he later takes pride in having achieved his fame, which is clearly inconsistent.

\textsuperscript{22} Murgatroyd (2001) discusses foreshadowing in Books 1-3 for Lucius’ encounter with witchcraft. Kirichenko (2010: 119-20) explains that Lucius is here under the influence of his \textit{philomythia} and should not be seeking only to be entertained by Aristomenes’ tale, nor looking for factual truth (like the unnamed sceptic), but should be decoding its philosophical meaning (as if it were a Platonic myth).

\textsuperscript{23} Weiss (1998: 160) notes that Lucius is too caught up in giving a colourful \textit{eephrasis} to link the scene to his own \textit{metamorphosis}.

\textsuperscript{24} Finkelpearl (1991: 234) rightly notes that despite the warnings against of the pleasures of Venus in the adultery tales and Lucius’ own encounter with Photis, Lucius enjoys the sexual nature of the Judgement of Paris mime. I would add that Lucius enjoys his encounter with the \textit{matrona}, which leads to him being scheduled to couple with the condemned woman in the arena.

\textsuperscript{25} Sandy (1978) 128, 130. Harrison (1996: 511) discusses the many obvious parallels between Psyche and Lucius that he (as narrator) fails to recognise. Harrison (2000a: 242) also notes that Lucius fails to recognise the relevance in the figures from the pageant preceding the Isiac procession (11.8) to his own adventures—he merely notes what they were and that they were amusing.
true that he would be, under the influence of his religious awe, vulnerable to manipulation should he encounter a charlatan priest.

**Mithras the High Priest**

Susceptible to suggestion Lucius may well be, but whether his priests are charlatans remains to be seen. Fortunately, the initiations of Lucius under his priests Mithras and Asinius follow the same pattern, which aids in comparing and contrasting the two.26

The high priest of Isis who feeds Lucius the roses and performs the *Navigium Isidis* at Cenchreae is undoubtedly the same priest who is chosen to perform the initiatory rites for Lucius at 11.22. Edsall believes that the various adjectives used by Apuleius to denote the high status of Mithras are ‘merely literary embellishments’ rather than reflecting historical practice.27 Whatever the case may be, Apuleius has chosen Mithras’ high status for the story, which emphasises his pre-eminence.

The connection between Mithras and Isis is demonstrated by his knowledge of Lucius’ adventures via divine revelation (*divino monitu*; 11.14). Not only does Mithras receive instruction from the goddess but himself has a godly bearing (*vultu geniali et … inhumano in aspectum*).28 Mithras even appears to Lucius in a dream, bearing gifts and informing him about the return of a slave named Candidus (11.20), symbolising the return of his servants and horse (i.e. possessions) he took to Hypata. This has been said

---

26 Edsall (1996: 211): ‘The descriptions of Lucius’ initiations follow the same patterns: orders in double-dreams, visits to a priest already informed, preparations involving purchases and abstinence, a description of the initiation and its outcome and mention of the cost.’
27 Edsall (1996: 202) bases this upon the evidence that the principal priests at temples of Isis are ‘almost always referred to as priests (sacerdos, ἱερεύς) in inscriptions.’ Mithras is referred to as a priest (sacerdos) at 11.6, 12, 13, 14 (twice), and 20. He is also referred to as *summus sacerdos* (11.16, 20), *sacerdos maximus* (11.17), *primarium sacerdotem* (11.21), and *sacerdotem praeceptuum* (11.22). Griffiths (1975: 261) denies the suggestion by Vidiman that these expressions refer to different grades of priest and instead states that they are ‘synonymous’ and ‘[refer] to the same person.’ Moreover, whilst several high priests (antisitēs) appear at 11.10, it makes narrative sense that the one who transforms Lucius, the priest who advises patience, the figure in the Candidus dream, and the man chosen to initiate him are the same. This continual relationship would make better sense of their closeness at 11.25 where Lucius considers him parens.
28 I support the conclusion of Zimmerman (2012: 19) that *inhumanus* is not here being used in a pejorative sense. Apuleius uses this adjective in a non-pejorative sense earlier at *Met.* 5.8.
to relate to the financial aspect of the conversion experience—but note that this is a gift rather than a demanded price, thus demonstrating generosity rather than venality (contrast that with the miserliness of Milo, the man whom Lucius foolishly labelled \textit{parens}; 3.7). Moreover, it is Lucius’ dream of Mithras rather than him in person; thus if a financial focus is displayed here by anyone it is Lucius.

Mithras’ position as high priest is affirmed by his direction of the religious ceremony of the \textit{Navigium Isidis} (11.16). Appropriate to a priest of his status, Mithras displays his wisdom and asceticism when Lucius meets with him to press for initiation; Lucius describes him as serious and famous for his observance of austere religious discipline, which shows the esteem in which he is held (11.21). Here Mithras advises Lucius to be patient and explains that the time, cost, and priest for the initiation are decided by Isis herself. Mithras also points Lucius towards an ascetic diet. It is only after adhering to this advice that the goddess informs Lucius about these things, choosing Mithras, here named for the first time, as the priest for the job (11.22). The previous chapter of this study pointed out that while Harrison and Weiss view this as an example of manipulation, Lucius’ dream has to be god-sent because there was a double dream in which Mithras was likely told to initiate Lucius. To strengthen this conclusion, I would add that Mithras cynically directing Lucius to look for signs in what the high priest believes to be meaningless dreams is inconsistent with the character of the priest already depicted: Mithras had already been given a dream revelation by Isis, who

\begin{itemize}
  \item[29] Cf. Shumate (1996: 326): ‘It is not only the priests of Isis and Osiris who seem to have an eye to profit. Before his first initiation, Lucius himself has a dream about recovering his lost wealth (20) and after his move to Rome appears to embark on a successful legal career in addition to serving Isis and Osiris. None of this is consistent with the ascetic features of the cult that seem to assert themselves at other points in the book; an Isiac convert, it seems, can ‘have it all.’
  \item[30] Vander Poppen (2008: 160-170) points out the many failings of Milo as a host that contrasts with both Byrthena, whose \textit{hospitium} Lucius turns down due to his curiosity in magic (Milo’s wife being a witch), and Isis (initially).
  \item[31] Lucius is also given gifts, this time by a crowd of people, prior to his initiation (11.23).
  \item[32] \textit{vir alioquin gravis et sobriae religionis observatione} (‘[Mithras] being a serious man famous for his observance of austere religious discipline’; 11.21).
  \item[33] Sandy (1978: 136) notes the contrast between Mithras and Photis; both introduce Lucius to kinds of mysteries, but while Lucius heeds the warnings of Mithras, the warnings of Photis ‘serve only to arouse Lucius’ ingrained curiosity’.
  \item[34] \textit{nec secus quam cultores ceteri cibis profanis ac nefariis iam nunc temperare} (‘Also, like other worshippers, I ought already to begin to abstain from unholy and unlawful foods’; 11.21).
\end{itemize}
instructed him to transform an ass into a man named Lucius and inspired his speech to this transformed man.\textsuperscript{36} This implies that Mithras changes from a believer in divine dreams to a disbeliever, or that he never believed in divine dreams in the first place, which is inconceivable; both of these interpretations require changing the details of the story to fit the interpretation. Moreover, since both Mithras and Lucius have already experienced Isiac dreams, one wonders (if Mithras were seeking profit) whether he would be worried that Isis might detect his greedy intentions and choose someone more appropriate to be Lucius’ mystagogue. Furthermore, the choice of Mithras to initiate Lucius is entirely appropriate to the narrative as they have established a bond already (the reader might feel short-changed were an unknown priest to assume this role). Presumably, this is why Mithras’ name has been revealed at last. Therefore, nothing in the text points to Mithras concealing a hidden scepticism towards divine dreams or casts doubt upon his character.

It has been argued, however, that the priest’s name itself creates doubt about Lucius’ conversion experience. That Apuleius carefully chose the names of his characters is beyond doubt.\textsuperscript{37} Therefore, the choice of the name ‘Mithras’ is clearly significant to the interpretation of the priest’s character. The god Mithras of the Roman mysteries was a sun god and bull slayer.\textsuperscript{38} These Mithraic mysteries were exclusively male, admitting no women, and were especially popular among sailors, soldiers, and Roman officials, who doubtless identified with the masculine and militaristic nature of the initiations.\textsuperscript{39} Winkler believes that, since the reference to this manly ‘Persian’ god was too estranged from the Egyptian mother goddess Isis, the revelation of the priest’s name has been strategically postponed until this point (11.22) to ‘shock’ the reader and give one pause before the twist from religious evocation to satire properly begins (at 11.26).\textsuperscript{40} Griffiths,

\textsuperscript{36} Smith (2009: 66) considers the speech of Mithras to be that of Isis ‘channeled [sic.] through the priest’. This would mean that Isis speaks of herself in the third person; it seems sufficient to say that he was inspired by the goddess, which explains the ‘more than human expression on his face’ before he speaks (\textit{vultu … inhumano in aspectum}; 11.14), discussed above.

\textsuperscript{37} Hijmans (1978) 107-23.


\textsuperscript{39} Clauss (2000) 33.

\textsuperscript{40} Winkler (1985) 245-47. Winkler goes so far as to say that the choice of name is like a pope being called Martin Luther. But while syncretism may have been overstated in the past as an explanation for the use of
however, sides with Reitzenstein in the view that Apuleius’ reasoning lies with the gods Mithras and Mercury both acting as guides of souls to the Underworld (the significance being that the priest Mithras provides the initiation, symbolising the death and rebirth of the initiate).

Edsall suggests that Apuleius has a less specific reference in mind: '[t]he name of a Persian god may merely evoke the exotic atmosphere of mystery cults'. Kirichenko offers another possibility, noting that Plutarch draws a comparison between Egyptian and Persian dualistic worldviews (Plut. De Is. et Os. 369d-370c). Plutarch places Mithras as the mediator in Persian religion, noting that they gave Mithras the title ‘mediator’. Kirichenko thus concludes:

The role that Mithras plays in Apuleius perfectly corresponds to his function in the Persian myth that Plutarch uses to explain the essential conflict between good and evil in Egyptian mythology: all he does is mediate between Lucius, who is identified with Typhon and thus, by extension, with absolute evil, and Isis, who stands for absolute good, and his mediation is meant to secure her victory.

So with respect to casting doubt upon the high priest’s character, it is possible that the name ‘gives one pause’ and perhaps a chuckle from those familiar with the differences between the Mithraic and Isiac cults, but it does not go so far as to throw the high priest’s sincerity into doubt nor satirise his mysteries. Indeed, it seems the significance of the name lies in the role of the priest in Lucius’ conversion experience.

Linked with Mithras’ Eastern name and his wisdom is his knowledge of Egyptian hieroglyphics. During a morning ritual he reads to Lucius from a book inscribed with unknown characters and pictures of animals. Edsall views this scene in connection

---


42 Ibid.


44 Ibid.

45 de opertis adyti profert quosdam libros litteris ignorabilibus praenotatos, partim figuris cuiusque modi animalium concepti sermonis compendiosa verba suggesterentes, partim nodosis et in modum rotae tortuosiss capitulatimque condensis apicibus a curiositate profanorum lectione munita. ('he brought out from the secret part of the sanctuary some books inscribed with unknown characters. Some used the
with his idealised portrayal, possessing wisdom, precise knowledge of rites, and capable of dream divination. Kirichenko, on the other hand, views Mithras’ use of a book containing hieroglyphs and curly writing as akin to the ‘gibberish’ used by the false prophet Alexander in his rituals, designed to astonish credulous followers by sounding like Hebrew or Phoenician (Lucian Alex. 13). Whatever the case may be, Lucius is clearly impressed, for he explains that he ‘eagerly and rather extravagantly set about buying these things [himself] or having them bought by friends’. This act shows another expense that might go some way in explaining Lucius’ later poverty. Nevertheless, this is not a clear indication of Mithras fleecing Lucius because he is not shown to instruct Lucius to buy them, and it is unlikely that any priest (holy or greedy) would discourage an eager follower from any aspect of his cult. The detail that Lucius had friends pay for some of these items, showing that he was not content to be without them, perhaps betrays Lucius’ value on the trappings of the cult rather than on any deeper meaning.

After Lucius’ initiation, he states that he was not able to reward Mithras as much as he deserved (11.25). This declaration does not express the idea that Mithras was expecting unreasonable reward for his rites, but, combined with the above financial information, indicates that Lucius is not that well off. Lucius earlier said that he gave shapes of all sorts of animals to represent abridged expressions of liturgical language; in others, the ends of the letters were knotted and curved like wheels or interwoven like vine-tendrils to protect their meaning from the curiosity of the uninitiated.’

Edsall (1996) 203. Edsall (ibid. 212-13) also highlights that no evidence survives of hieroglyphics being used in Greaco-Roman temples of Isis, which suggests that Apuleius is pushing for a larger-than-life literary creation.


naviter et aliquanto liberalius partum ipse, partin per meos socios coemenda procurro. (11.23)

Kirichenko (2010: 140) links this detail with Lucius’ fixation on the embroidered Olympiaca stola (11.24) he wears during his initiation. Kirichenko (136) also questions Lucius’ knowledge: ‘he [sc. Lucius] still has no idea as to what the Egyptian books mean, nor, as far as we can tell, is he ever going to find out.’

veniam postulabam quod eum condigne tantis beneficis munerari nequirem. (11.25)

Edsall (1996: 213): ‘Mithras’ willingness to accept less money than was commanded by Isis points to a disinterest in money which draws attention to his asceticism.’ Conversely, Kirichenko (2010: 139) sees the first initiation as all but bankrupting the fabulously wealthy Lucius, so that he has to pay for his second initiation by selling his clothes. That Lucius is fabulously wealthy is not apparent; he can barely afford the first initiation or the sacred books he purchases before it. Lucius also explains that it is the cost of his travels and living expenses in Rome that has reduced his ‘modest inheritance’ (11.28). Moreover, Lucius would not be able to afford the costly relocation to Rome if he was already impoverished from his first initiation.

---

46 Edsall (1996) 203. Edsall (ibid. 212-13) also highlights that no evidence survives of hieroglyphics being used in Greaco-Roman temples of Isis, which suggests that Apuleius is pushing for a larger-than-life literary creation.

47 Kirichenko (2010: 140) links this detail with Lucius’ fixation on the embroidered Olympiaca stola (11.24) he wears during his initiation. Kirichenko (136) also questions Lucius’ knowledge: ‘he [sc. Lucius] still has no idea as to what the Egyptian books mean, nor, as far as we can tell, is he ever going to find out.’

50 veniam postulabam quod eum condigne tantis beneficis munerari nequirem. (11.25)

51 Edsall (1996: 213): ‘Mithras’ willingness to accept less money than was commanded by Isis points to a disinterest in money which draws attention to his asceticism.’ Conversely, Kirichenko (2010: 139) sees the first initiation as all but bankrupting the fabulously wealthy Lucius, so that he has to pay for his second initiation by selling his clothes. That Lucius is fabulously wealthy is not apparent; he can barely afford the first initiation or the sacred books he purchases before it. Lucius also explains that it is the cost of his travels and living expenses in Rome that has reduced his ‘modest inheritance’ (11.28). Moreover, Lucius would not be able to afford the costly relocation to Rome if he was already impoverished from his first initiation.
as thanksgiving to Isis only what he was able and not the full amount. Furthermore, as the details of what Lucius was able to give Mithras are lacking, this passage, though admitting another expense, does not seem to be designed to reveal Mithras’ venality. On the contrary, the scene touches upon the warmth between the two; before Lucius departs for his home in Corinth, he embraces Mithras whom he now sees as a father (meum iam parentem; 11.25). Thus the last image we see of Mithras is a caring fatherly figure (albeit one that has just received a financial reward).

Mithras is given no physical description other than that he wears linen and carries a sistrum of the goddess—certainly nothing that would discredit him. Eastern priests that are the targets of satire generally are depicted as bald or balding, such as the wig-wearing Alexander (Lucian Alex. 59) and Philebus, the effeminate priest of the dea Syria who is bald on top with grey ringlets on the sides (Met. 8.24). Only Mithras’ temperament is presented, and it is done so favourably; he is adept, patient, respected, wise, holds ascetic values, and is clearly favoured by Isis (receiving two dreams involving Lucius). The charge that Mithras cynically manipulates Lucius is unfounded. When he asks Lucius to devote himself to the cult (11.15) he acts as one would expect of any priest in his position. Moreover, this invitation accords with Isis’ desire that Lucius worship her forevermore (11.6). If Apuleius is satirising Mithras as a false priest, he is not exploiting, or even hinting at, conventional motifs from the satire of Eastern priests (baldness, effeminacy, spouting false oracles, ecstatic self-flagellation). Mithras is only broadly associated with satirical themes: he takes payment for his services, and has an Eastern name; yet he is content to receive less reward than was

52 Sed tandem deae monitu, licet non plene, tamen pro meo modulo supplicue gratis persolutis… (‘Finally, however, on the goddess’s instructions I discharged my debt of gratitude—if not in full, at least humbly, in accordance with my small means…” 11.24).
53 The bald head of Zatchlas is noted (2.28). The initiated men in the Isiac procession are (humorously?) described, but Mithras is not included specifically: hi capillum derasi funditus verticem praenintentes—magnae religionis terrena sidera—aereis et argenteis (‘while the men’s heads were completely shaven and their skulls gleamed brightly—earthly stars of the great religion.” 11.10.). Van Mal-Maeder (1997: n. 67, 106) highlights this as clearly comic. Zimmerman (2012: 12-16) discusses three alternate explanations: 1) that Lucius is sincere, 2) that Lucius the auctor is poking fun at the awe felt by Lucius the actor, and 3) that the text is in error and needs emendation (see Chapter Five, n. 63). Zimmerman, however, does not consider the possibility that Lucius actor and auctor are sincere, but it is the author who is poking fun at both.
agreed, and his Eastern name reinforces his positive role in Lucius’ conversion. The expenses of joining and being part of the cult are included, but they are given by Isis, not demanded by Mithras, and the details of the amount are not included (which would benefit the satire greatly). Therefore, it is difficult to maintain that Mithras is intended to be understood as an insincere, greedy, or inept priest whom the reader understands is being satirised. So it seems that Edsall is justified in labelling Mithras an ‘idealized Egyptian priest.’

Asinius Marcellus the pastophorus

The pastophorus, Asinius Marcellus, performs the rites for Lucius’ second initiation, just as Mithras did for the first. But the presentation of each priest and the lead up to their initiations differ. Asinius is unknown to Lucius when he dreams about a second initiation. This shows that, unlike Mithras who has been involved with Lucius since his retransformation, Asinius cannot be seen to have influenced Lucius’ dreams towards receiving initiation (nor who is to perform the rites).

The name Asinius Marcellus immediately designates the pastophorus as a Roman citizen; this neither aids the satire of a foreign priest nor imbues him with any mystical significance. Yet Lucius finds it significant that the name ‘Asinius’ relates to his transformation (11.27), believing this to be a favourable omen that signals his suitability. It could be argued, however, that this conclusion recalls Lucius’ trait of misapprehension since the name could just as easily refer to his original transformation from man into an ass (symbolising his foolishness and wrong-headed decision making), thus becoming a name of ill omen.

Edsall connects Asinius’ common Roman name that recalls Lucius’ past with his lower priestly status and thus labels him an ‘inferior

54 Contrast the precise amounts of other financial transactions, the fish and Lucius as an ass (mentioned above); it thus seems that when the focus of the satire is the exorbitant price, the price is given.
56 The influence towards initiation seems to come from the ‘fellow-initiates’, who inform Lucius about the cult of Osiris (11.27); noted by Harrison (2000a: 247).
57 reformationis meae minime alienum nomen (‘a name not at all inappropriate to my metamorphosis’). Nicolini (2012: 29-30) suggests wordplay for the use of reformationis because it can refer to either Lucius’ transformation into an ass or his retransformation into a man.
Isiac priest’, compared to Mithras.\(^{58}\) Griffiths explains that a *pastophorus* is between a priest and a temple servant.\(^{59}\) The entry for *pastophori* in the Lewis-Short Latin Lexicon reads: ‘a kind of priests who carried about the images of their deities in a little shrine for the purpose of collecting alms.’ Fittingly, Asinius merely hangs garlands around the statue of Osiris (in his dream at 11.27), whereas Mithras actually leads a procession and conducts a ceremony. Yet this is the figure Isis and Osiris have apparently selected to initiate Lucius. Egelhaaf-Gaiser notes that the elevation of a *pastophorus* to the role of a priest (i.e. functioning as a mystagogue) is strange, but attributes this to literary licence, suggesting that Asinius anticipates ‘the final image of the bald-headed Lucius on the board of the college of *pastophori.*’\(^{60}\) Of course, if one views Asinius as an inadequate and venal figure, this identification becomes less than flattering for Lucius.\(^{61}\) Indeed, the clue to Asinius’ character could lie in the role of the *pastophorus* as a collector of alms—the taking of material wealth as a measure of religious devotion.

Another difference in the portrayal of the two priests is that insights to Mithras’ character are given but no physical description, whereas Asinius is given a detail of physical description but no clue as to his character. The left ankle of Asinius is ‘slightly twisted’ (*reflexo paulalum*) causing him to walk with a limp (11.27). This defect perhaps explains his lower ranking in the cult (he might be permitted or able only to fulfil light duties, such as hanging garlands rather than leading processions). Yet it is surprising that he is given a priestly position at all, as priests were required to be pure of body and mind.\(^{62}\) In the *Metamorphoses* the adjective *purus* is used (seriously) only in association with the cult of Isis (11.10, 16, 21), whereas its antithesis (*impurus*) is
applied to the priests of the *dea Syria* (9.9, 10) and to the wicked soul of the wealthy landowner (9.38). Associating purity with the cult of Isis and then having a lame figure initiate Lucius is as conspicuous as it is disconcerting (given how ancient literature treated physical deformity), leading one to question why the gods would choose such a figure for Lucius’ second initiation in the first place (and perhaps leading one to suspect they have not chosen him). Perhaps of interest is Plutarch’s explanation of Typhon (Seth) as the part of the body ‘destructible, diseased and disorderly’ (τὸ ἐπίκηρον καὶ νοσοῦν ἀρχακτικόν; *De Is. et Os.* 371b).

Plutarch goes on to explain that Seth means ‘turning back, return’ (ἀναστροφήν) and ‘overbearing’, and how Bebon (another name for Typhon) is a hindrance when things are going well. Could this reflect the role of Asinius, an obstruction to Lucius’ progress when things have finally started to go his way? In any case, the detail remains a peculiar choice—if a specific feature was required to identify the priest of the dream, why not something less disfiguring, such as a memorable voice, mannerism, or body type?

So perhaps his name, deformity, and lower status combine to show that he is unworthy of his role in Lucius’ tale, and even hint at a negative character.

Of possible significance is a detail near the conclusion of Psyche’s adventure; she is told by a ‘far seeing tower’ (*turris prospicua*) that on her journey to the land of the dead

---

63 *GCA* (1985) 289, *purissimam castimoniam* is used sarcastically of the priests of the *dea Syria* when they are discovered molesting a ‘sturdy country fellow’ (8.29). Similarly, *purissimi illi sacerdotes* is applied to the priests by Lucius-narrator when they are about to employ an all-purpose oracle (9.8). Interestingly, the kisses of the *matrona* are described as ‘pure and uncorrupted’ (*pura atque sincera*; 10.21), which, given the circumstances, seems to be Apuleius’ irony, rather than the narrator’s.

64 Translation by Babbit 2003.

65 ἀπειμαίνει δὲ τούτοις κάθεξιν ἢ κῶλον, ὡς τόσο πράγμασιν ὄνν ἂδιέξοι καὶ πρὸς ὁ χρήματος ἐνυπημένης τῆς τοῦ Τυφώνος δυνάμεως, διό καὶ τῶν μὲν ἴμφων ζώων ἀπενέμοναν αὐτῷ τὸ ἐμάθεστόν, ὡν τὸν δ’ ἐγγύον τὰ θηριώδεστα, κροκόδειλον καὶ τὸν ποταμόν ἵππον· (‘The name signifies ‘restraint’ or ‘hindrance,’ as much as to say that, when things are going along in a proper way and making rapid progress towards the right end, the power of Typhon obstructs them. For this reason they assign to him the most stupid of the domesticated animals, the ass, and of the wild animals, the most savage, the crocodile and the hippopotamus.’ *De Is. et Os.* 371c) Translation by Babbitt 2003.

66 Finkelpearl (2004: 334) notes the suggested explanation of Asinius Marcellus’ deformity by Coarelli that it is a biographical detail of someone Apuleius personally knew (his patron to be exact). This is based on the archaeological find at Ostia of a lead pipe inscribed with the name L. Apuleius Marcellus and a nearby inscription that mentions the consular Asinius Marcellus. Finkelpearl acknowledges that this explanation is ‘tenuous’. Harrison (2000a: n.2, 1) also discusses this suggestion, arguing against it due to the absence of evidence from Apuleius’ other works that he resided in Ostia or had a patron of Consular family, which would have been useful to mention in the *Apologia*. 
she will encounter a lame ass led by a similarly disabled driver.\textsuperscript{67} She is instructed to ignore him when he asks for her help to pick up twigs. Could this seemingly harmless (yet somehow perilous), lame duo, consisting of a man and an ass, anticipate the unthreatening and lame \textit{pastophorus} whose name recalls Lucius’ asinine form? The connection is strengthened when one considers that Osiris was the Egyptian god of the dead, and Lucius does meet Asinius on his path to this chthonic god just as Psyche will meet the lame ass and man on her journey to the underworld. If this similarity is intended by Apuleius, this would lend weight to the idea that Lucius’ dream of Asinius is a warning that advises him to ignore the \textit{pastophorus}.

While most adherents to the religious interpretation of the \textit{Metamorphoses} are at a loss to explain Asinius’ deformity, Egelhaaf-Gaiser has recently argued against its significance. She bases this upon aristocratic busts that represent shaven-headed men that bear identical scars on the left temple. These busts have been said to represent Isiac priests, and the presence of ritualistic scars leads Egelhaaf-Gaiser to conclude that Asinius’ deformity should not be held against him because ‘bodily stigmata were not only tolerated, they were sought and artificially created with carved scars.’\textsuperscript{68} But several problems undermine this suggestion. First, Asinius has a congenital deformity—it has not actively been ‘sought’ or ‘artificially created’ and is thus far removed from ritualistic scarring to signify membership in a group or service to a god. Second, no such scars are mentioned in the \textit{Metamorphoses} (it could have been used as a less disturbing identifier for Asinius) or in literature about Isiac priests. Third, it is not conclusively proven that the busts even represent Isiac priests; they are also said to be followers of Mithras.\textsuperscript{69} Of some relevance might be Tertullian’s statement that Mithras ‘sets his marks on the foreheads of his soldiers’ (\textit{signat illic in frontibus milites suos; De praescriptione haereticorum} 40).\textsuperscript{70} Fourth, the assuredly scar-inducing self-flagellation of the Syrian priests is ridiculed by Lucius as a mistaken form of ritual (8.27), indicating

\begin{footnotes}
\item[67] \textit{claudum asinum lignorum gerulum cum agasone simili} (6.18)
\item[68] Egelhaaf-Gaiser (2012) 52.
\item[69] Ibid. 47-48, especially n. 23
\item[70] Tertullian might be referring to the crown worn at initiation; cf. Tert. \textit{De Cor. Mil.} 15.
\end{footnotes}
that he would likely not approve of ritualistic scarring.\textsuperscript{71} And last but not least, the adjective \textit{deformis} (‘deformed’) and the verb \textit{deformare} (‘to deform, spoil’), are only used in uncomplimentary or pejorative senses in the \textit{Metamorphoses} (as one would expect). Deformity can represent an abnormal or pitiable state,\textsuperscript{72} sometimes even causing derisive laughter.\textsuperscript{73} The dead are associated with deformity,\textsuperscript{74} as are victims of transformative magic.\textsuperscript{75} The only non-negative use of this adjective is in the procession of sacred objects, the symbol of justice being a ‘deformed left hand’ (\textit{deformatam manum sinistram}; 11.10).

Elsewhere in ancient literature deformity is used as an outward manifestation of a negative character.\textsuperscript{76} Homer describes the insolent Thersites as being bandy-legged (\textit{φολκὸς}), amongst other deformities, and walking with a limp (\textit{χωλὸς δ’ ἔτερον πόδα; II.2.217-19}). These features contrast with the eloquence and bearing of god-like Odysseus or the martial prowess of \textit{swift-footed} Achilles.\textsuperscript{77} Another famous character with foot trouble is Oedipus (‘Swollen Foot’), the archetypal tragic hero of Greek myth.

\textsuperscript{71} It is unlikely that Lucius would appreciate the practices of the priests of the Anatolian Cybele known as \textit{galli}. In a similar ecstatic trance to that of the priests of the dea Syria, \textit{galli} ritually castrated themselves in imitation of Attis. Lucius refers deprecatingly to the many-tongued whip as the implement of the ‘half-men’ (\textit{semiviris}), another term for eunuchs (8.28).

\textsuperscript{72} Aristomenes’ friend Socrates is said to be ‘deformed and shrunken’ (\textit{maciem deformatus; 1.6}), representing his downtrodden state at the hands of the witch Meroë. Likewise the slaves at the mill are ‘hideously sallow’ (\textit{lurore deformis; 9.12}), showing their pitiable plight and weak state. The love-sick stepmother is said to have an ‘abnormal pallor’ (\textit{pallor deformis; 10.2}), which is part of her unhealthy obsession with her step-son and therefore represents her negative character. Aristomenes tells Socrates that his mourning wife is ‘disfigured with grief’ (\textit{maerore ... deformata; 1.6}). In the tale of Cupid and Psyche, Venus’ temples fall into ‘disrepair’ (\textit{deformantur; 4.29}) and she later calls Psyche a ‘hideous slave’ (\textit{deformis ancilla; 6.10}), reflecting Psyche’s fall in social status.

\textsuperscript{73} Thelyphron’s face is ‘mutilated and disfigured’ (\textit{deformato truncatus; 2.20}), which draws mocking laughter from Byrrhaena’s guests. Similarly, Lucius-ass is described as ‘deformed from pain’ by the auctioneer when he is on sale (\textit{dolore deformem; 8.23}); these remarks provoke laughter from the crowd. The effeminate priests that purchase him paradoxically ‘beautify themselves hideously’ with makeup (\textit{deformiter ... formati; 8.27}), which is clearly a laughable feature.

\textsuperscript{74} The shade of Tlepolemus is ‘misshapen’ (\textit{deformem; 8.8}), representing the horror of the underworld (whence he was treacherously sent by Thrasylus), whereas the shade commanded by a witch to kill the miller appears to be ‘ravaged by some grief’ (\textit{tristitie deformis; 9.30}).

\textsuperscript{75} Lucius’ asinine form is described as being a ‘deformity’ (\textit{deformitatis; 9.14}), which makes him ‘ugly’ (\textit{deformi, 10.22; deformem, 11.6; deformis; 11.13}). Meroë’s witchcraft ‘transforms’ her victims into frog and a ram (\textit{deformavir; 1.9}).

\textsuperscript{76} This appraisal of character by appearance is called physiognomy. It is discussed by Keulen (2006) 168-202.

\textsuperscript{77} The tradition of the heel of Achilles being his vulnerable spot by which he is killed is significant. This suggests that by receiving injury to his heel, thus being lamed and no longer \textit{swift-footed}, Achilles would surely die.
His feet were mutilated after being pinned by his fearful father and he was (rather cruelly!) named after these injuries by his adoptive parents. The adult Oedipus is not depicted as lame, yet his disfigurement lives on in his name. Admittedly, any connection between Oedipus and Asinius is tenuous at best, but perhaps the mere association of the ill-omened nature of the former with the latter is all that is required.

Another foot-related ailment that was seen to be an outward manifestation of a negative character is gout. Gout sufferers (podagra) are common in satire because of its link to overindulgence. In Petronius’ Satyricon, one of Trimalchio’s dinner guests suffers from gout, preventing him from horse riding (Sat. 64.3). Similarly, the superintendent Bargates, whose dinner has been interrupted by Eumolpus’ fighting, has to be carried in a litter because he suffers from diseased feet (pedibus aeger; Sat. 96.4). Later, Eumolpus pretends to be a wealthy, heirless millionaire for his scam at Croton, and to make it more convincing he fakes gout (Sat. 140.6). This attitude to gout is confirmed by Lucian, who viewed gout as the curse of wealthy people lacking in self-discipline (Gall. 23). Lucian has the foolish Eucrates suffer from gout (Philop. 6-7), for which his ‘philosopher’ friends offer quack magical remedies and laugh at Tychiades’ healthy scepticism (Philop. 7-8). Here gout helps to characterise Eucrates as someone who is generally unsound (bodily and mentally). As well as its association with gluttony, gout was also linked to overindulgence in lustful activities. This could be the connection intended by Lucian’s detail that the false prophet Alexander died of a disease that spread from his foot to his groin (τὸν πόδα μέχρι τοῦ βουβίονος; Alex. 59). Individually, it must be admitted, none of these examples would seem to have influenced Apuleius’ depiction of Asinius, but together they illustrate the overall negative connotations of a character suffering from the type of deformity that Asinius bears.

Another difference between Mithras and Asinius lies in one of the requirements for their initiations. For Mithras’ initiation, Lucius abstains from wine and meat (11.23),

---

which has a tangible physiological dimension.\textsuperscript{79} Lucius repeats this for Asinius’ mysteries, but he also shaves his head, which, Plutarch notes, merely imitates the image of an ascetic Isiac priest, just as wearing a beard imitates the image of the philosopher (\textit{De Is. et Os.} 352c). Significantly, the role of Lucius is indistinguishable from that of a \textit{calvus minus}, a bald actor of mime, throughout the \textit{Metamorphoses}.\textsuperscript{80} The key trait of this figure is demonstrated by the etymology of the lexicographer Nonius Marcellus, who connects the archaic verb \textit{calvor} (‘I deceive’) to the adjective \textit{calvus} (‘bald, hairless’) for the simple reason that the \textit{calvus minus} was ever being deceived.\textsuperscript{81} Thus Lucius shaving his head for Asinius’ mysteries and not for those of Mithras could indicate that he was a dupe for the venal Asinius, but not for the idealised Mithras. Thus his bald head would symbolise the foolish choice for Lucius to undergo the unnecessary initiations that Isis tried to warn him about.\textsuperscript{82} Conversely, Lucius’ baldness could be said to demonstrate an increase in devotion since Lucius is not required to shave his head for Mithras. To this effect, the loss of Lucius’ blond locks, considered with his erotic obsession with women’s hair, symbolises his escape from what Mithras labelled ‘slavish pleasures’ (\textit{serviles … voluptates}; 11.15).\textsuperscript{83} Thus Lucius shaving his head for Asinius’ initiations and the omission of the details of the priests’ shaven pates can be argued to contribute to the satire or to the religious fervour of Book 11.\textsuperscript{84}

The initiations of Mithras and Asinius also contrast in the dream material preceding them. In the dream featuring Mithras at 11.20, the high priest offers gifts to Lucius that represent his returned possessions. But in the dream preceding his third initiation (11.29), Lucius is told by the ‘kindly figure’ that he must be initiated again to receive a new cloak (evidently \textit{this} possession cannot be returned from Cenchreae). As

\textsuperscript{79} Note the belief regarding food and wine affecting dreams (discussed in Chapter One).

\textsuperscript{80} Kirichenko (2010) 35.

\textsuperscript{81} Kirichenko (ibid. n. 87) notes that modern linguistic analysis proves Nonius’ etymology to be incorrect; nevertheless, the insight into the figure of the \textit{calvus minus} retains its value.

\textsuperscript{82} Edsall (1996: 218) believes the omission of baldness from the descriptions of Mithras and Asinius, whilst being the only detail of Lucius’ priesthood, helps to satirise the shaven-headed Lucius as a materialistic priest in the same vein as Zatchlas and the priests of the \textit{dea Syria} (the detail presumably losing its desired effect if the baldness of every priest is highlighted—especially for one not satirised, such as Mithras).

\textsuperscript{83} Englert and Long (1973) 239. More recently, this position is advanced by Smith (2009) 56-57.

\textsuperscript{84} The significance of Plutarch’s passage and Lucius’ shaven head is discussed further in Chapter Five.
recompense for his rites, Mithras happily receives less than he deserves, while Asinius dreams that, as payment for performing his rites, he will receive a ‘great reward’ (grande compendium; cf. the grande praemo Zatchlas receives for his services at 2.28).\(^{85}\) Furthermore, while Mithras is given detailed information about Lucius from Isis (11.15), Asinius’ Osirian dream is vague and, taken directly, contains incorrect information; Lucius is a Greek from Corinth,\(^ {86}\) but Asinius calls him ‘Madauran’.

Moreover, whereas Mithras could not have fabricated his first dream about Lucius (and most certainly did not fake his second dream), Asinius could easily have spotted Lucius’ poverty and (incorrectly) guessed at his birthplace.\(^ {87}\) But there is an unrecognised intertextual significance for the choice of Madaurensem and pauperem as two features of Asinius’ dream.

Asinius Marcellus was not the first to put together the ideas of Apuleius’ hometown and poverty. As can be deduced from the Apologia, the prosecution in the case against Apuleius tried to portray him as coming from a backwater town and having formerly been impoverished.\(^ {88}\) Hailing from such a place that would not have provided many opportunities for advancement carries the connotation that a poor Apuleius left to find advancement through (or rather, at the expense of) others; and so, being clever and familiar with the esoteric, he advanced by means of magia, which he used to seduce Pudentilla in order to acquire her fortune (cf. carmina et venena; Apol. 69.4). Before he

\(^{85}\) Edsall (1996: 216) sees this as another example of contrast between the asceticism of Mithras and greed of Asinius. Smith (2012: 208), following a suggestion of Harrison, suggests that grande compendium refers to fame rather than material wealth. Not only would this be an unusual use of compendium, but the social currency of fame would also be a strange reward for a supposedly ascetic devotee of Isis and Osiris.

\(^{86}\) Smith (2012: 203), however, notes that Lucius does not call Corinth his patria when he returns there.

\(^{87}\) Harrison (2000a: 230-31) notes that Asinius’ description of his dream uses a great many pronouns that cannot but confuse an already gullible and enthusiastic Lucius; moreover, Asinius has misidentified Lucius as Apuleius, who is to encounter Asinius when putting him in his book—thus the literary glory Osiris predicts belongs to Apuleius. Recently, Harrison (2012: 84) has argued that the use of Madaurensem is ‘part of the destabilising tendency connected with the narrative voice as a whole, a tendency which precisely prevents a straightforward reading as parallel to Apuleius’ own life’. Schlam (1992: 10) believes that Apuleius is referring to himself, but that this does not make it an autobiography. Carlisle (2008: 232-33) sees the reference to the world of the reader as Apuleius’ challenge to the reader to take meaning from the conclusion of this clearly fictional tale. Smith (2012: 212) sees it as Apuleius’ way of showing the reader that the story has changed from fiction to autobiography.

\(^{88}\) i.e. Madauros, the detail of the name is missing from the speech (presumably because it was a well known fact); Madauros as Apuleius’ hometown is provided by Augustine (Ep. 102.32, De civ. D. 8.14.2), Sidonius (Epist. 9.13.8), and Cassiodorus (Inst. 2.5.10).
addresses the charge of being a *magus* proper, Apuleius confronts the issue of his ‘poverty’ and hometown sequentially (*Apol.* 17-23, 24). He takes a leaf out of the Cynic’s handbook to explain that a true philosopher cannot be poor because poverty is measured by one’s desire for material things—thus a content but poor man is in fact wealthier than a rich man who continually desires more. This indeed, Apuleius throws the accusations of a backwater origin, greed, and former poverty back against one of the men behind the prosecution, Aemilianus (*Apol.* 23, 24). Apuleius, by contrast, was bequeathed two million sesterces by his father, so he can hardly be described as having been poor.

Therefore, it is perhaps significant that Asinius, who literally dreams of receiving wealth for initiating Lucius, applies to Lucius two of the things laid against Apuleius by the prosecutor who, according to the *Apologia*, figuratively dreams of receiving reward for prosecuting Apuleius. This thematic link of greediness would further implicate Asinius and provide a key to distancing him from Mithras.

**The Case for the Satire of a Greedy Asinius and a Gullible Lucius**

From the above analysis of the two priests there is a stark contrast between them. Mithras’ name relates to a divinity (associated with light and the sun and order), while ‘Asinius’ is a common Roman name that relates to Lucius’ misadventures and to the animal hateful to Isis, representing Seth-Typhon (the force of darkness and chaos). Mithras has high status, ascetic, offers good advice, and shows affection for Lucius, as well as a connection to Isis with a detailed and insightful dream. Asinius has much

---

89 This Cynic sentiment is also found in the words of the last surviving brother in the tale about the murderous and greedy young nobleman. The brother points out that this nobleman will always have a neighbour no matter how large his property grows (9.36).

90 Apuleius claims that Aemilianus is nicknamed ‘Charon’ because he gained his wealth through the death of several relatives (*Apol.* 23). Interestingly, in the tale of Cupid and Psyche, Charon is labelled a tax-collector (*exactor*) and greed is said to be alive among the dead (*Ergo et inter mortuos avarita vivit*; 6.18). Perhaps it is significant that Aemilianus is said to have ploughed his small plot with one ass (*quem tibi unicum pater tuus reliquerat, solus uno asello ad tempestuam imbrem triduo exarabas*), just as Psyche is told to ignore the lame man with his lame ass in the underworld, who can be connected with Asinius Marcellus—the one who like Aemilianus, mentions Apuleius’ homeland and Lucius’ poverty.

91 Cf. Plut. *De Is. et Os.* 373e, where Typhon is said to cause lunar eclipses as well as the waning of the moon, which is, of course, the goddess to whom Lucius prays before Isis reveals herself to him.
lower status, is deformed, and provides a strange dream that is left unexplained. Mithras appears in the text while the religious fervour is high; Asinius appears while the theme of finances resurfaces and doubt creeps its way into the narrative.

The satire of a venal Asinius Marcellus would present itself in the following manner. First, Isis sends a vague dream about an initiation (11.26). Lucius is eager for more religious experiences and is told by initiates that the dream signifies the goddess’s desire for him to join cult of Osiris. Then Isis sends another dream about Asinius as a warning of his intention, but Lucius misinterprets it as a call for a second initiation. Asinius is the man from the dream and tells Lucius he was instructed by Osiris to initiate him into his (expensive) mysteries. Asinius is, to the reader, far less ideal than Mithras, but the joke is on Lucius because he cannot spot the difference between them. Lucius thus becomes the superstitious man despised by Plutarch because he holds all of his dreams to be true (even the strange ones that attempt to justify his repeated initiations).

By showing two contrasting religious experiences, Apuleius demonstrates how easy it is for an impressionable devotee to be misled, the account of Lucius being a warning to those whose religious zeal is their Achilles’ heel. For just as he was beast of burden, carrying the spoils of deceitful priests of the Syrian goddess, Lucius is an ass for Asinius, who sends him out to make money only to hand it over in exchange for more initiations. The theme of avarice and pilfering, and preying upon the weak from the first ten books is continued with Asinius Marcellus. The shaving of Lucius’ head is ironic—despite his many transformations he is still a bit of a fool. Indeed, this contrast between the first initiation and the last two could explain the many changes in the final four chapters.

By all accounts there is an undeniable difference between Chapters 1-25 and 26-30. A year has passed since Lucius’ first initiation and he is now in Rome. His adventure is over, having already regained his human form, having returned home from his

---

92 That Schlam (1992: 30) labels the fourth and last section of the Metamorphoses (i.e. Book 11) ‘Transformation and Further Adventures’ [my emphasis] itself suggests the separation (if not superfluous) of Lucius’ activity in Rome to the preceding storyline.
unsuccessful business trip, and having found a new calling as a devotee of Isis. Finkelpearl explains this perspective change in the last four chapters by viewing them as an epilogue. What the epilogue does, explains Finkelpearl, is inform the curious reader what became of Lucius after his adventure—he continued with his devotions, gained a position as a pastophorus, and pursued a career as a successful advocate in the Forum of Rome. Moreover, the temporal gap between the initiation in Cenchreae and the events in the epilogue is not conducive to viewing the process of Lucius’ initiations as arduous or costly. Therefore, satire of religious conversion is not present. Finkelpearl agrees that there is humour in the epilogue, but this is derived from its form rather than its content. The play with false endings (one for each initiation) is reminiscent of the prologue’s play with beginnings.

Despite the important points made by Finkelpearl about the length of the temporal gap and the similarities between the prologue and ‘epilogue’, the conclusion that there can be no satire or humour derived from the content of the ending(s) is unsatisfactory for several reasons. First, a temporal gap between the Isiac and the Osirian initiations does not alter their presentation. If the initiations are presented one after the other, each seemingly the last, then it would not matter if several years separated each because they will still come across as unexpected and unnecessary (to the plot) and thus arduous to a reader anticipating an ending. In fact, it is the play with the form of endings itself that contributes to the arduous nature of the initiations despite the temporal gap. Moreover, the second (supposed) call to initiation is as surprising to the reader as it is to Lucius. This surprise introduces a newfound degree of uncertainty (in general and) in the perceived reliability of Lucius’ dreams (since most cannot be checked against reality or

---

94 Ibid. 321, 326.
95 Ibid. 329.
96 Ibid. 327-28, 330, 333-36.
97 Weiss (1998: 81, 84) acknowledges that the conversion is unnecessary to the basic plot and that the multiple initiations must be intended to convey an impression about Lucius, specifically that he is ‘caught in a cycle of self-persuasion and manipulation.’
the dreams of others to verify their status). By the time of the third ‘call to initiation’, this uncertainty even causes Lucius to question the integrity and credentials of his priests (11.29). The purpose of introducing doubt after the apparent happy ending of the story (i.e. in the ‘epilogue’) is left unexplained.

The second point is that a happy ending with a genuine conversion experience under Mithras does not eliminate the possibility of an ‘epilogue’ with comic or satiric content. Edsall argues for a gradual spiritual decline in the priestly figures in Book 11, ending with Lucius the pastophorus whose materialistic concerns and secular career contrasts with the pure asceticism and spirituality of Mithras. Thus the temporal gap between the first and subsequent initiations (along with the change in location, priest, and god) could even lead one to question the relation of the latter initiations to the former so that a contrast is discerned, rather than more of the same.

The Case against the Satire of a Greedy Asinius and a Gullible Lucius

While several aspects in the presentation of Lucius’ later initiations lend weight to a religious satire, some aspects remain problematic. First, Lucius is not the juiciest target for a greedy priest because living in Rome has drained his financial resources (Lucius notes his poverty; 11.28). Therefore, one wonders why Asinius, whose dream (whatever its status) confirms this impoverishment, would bother to swindle a poor

---

99 Cf. Winkler (1985: 219): [regarding Madaurensem] ‘The problem is not that ‘Madauran’ could not be made to make sense but that we are forced to guess what it means precisely at the moment when a new answering god appears on the scene. There is an escalation of provocative uncertainty rather than a surcease of doubts and a blinding flash of light at last.’

100 This doubt is especially concerning since many of the stories in the earlier books took delight in unexpected twists near their endings (Aristomenes, Thelyphron, Risus festival) or dashing reader expectations (the philosophically charged ‘old wives’ tale’ of Cupid and Psyche, the ‘tragedy’ resembling the story of Hippolytus and Phaedra that ends happily, or the story of the miller that seems to end on a comic note only to end tragically with a mysterious murder). Smith (2009: 59) views the doubt of Lucius as a consequence of his financial hardship, which in turn highlights his self-sacrifice and devotion.

101 Winkler (1985: 217, 221, 223) identifies the multiple endings (11.26-30) as epilogues that potentially contain satire; Finkelpearl (2004: n. 10, 322), however, believes that Winkler does not treat the last four chapters as a true epilogue in any formal sense. Nonetheless, the notion that Apuleius would play with the form of an epilogue by introducing satiric content (Lucius attempting to show his advancement in the cult of Isis and Osiris, only to reveal that he is still a dupe) does not seem beyond comprehension; cf. Weiss (1998: 78-79) on Lucius the inconscient narrator.


Lucian’s false prophet Alexander, by contrast, sinks his greedy fangs into a wealthy and superstitious Roman senex, Rutilianus (Alex. 30-35). It is not until after Lucius’ initiations that he wins fame and an income as a lawyer—gaining financial security after being duped makes little sense if the object of the satire is to show a greedy and manipulative priest and his gullible target. The final word about Lucius’ successful career gives the impression that he was right to sell his clothes to pay for initiation when he did, rather than holding back from initiation.

Whilst Asinius’ dream suggests he has a non-ascetic nature, the typical traits from the satire of greedy and fraudulent, foreign priests are difficult to assign to Asinius. Asinius has a Roman name, thus is not foreign (to a Roman reader). Like Mithras, his shaven-head is not highlighted. In addition, the significance of Madaurensem and pauperem to recall the accusations of Aemilianus in the Apologia, and thus tarnishing Asinius with a greedy association, is not enough to condemn him to the level of Philebus and his depraved troupe of Syrian priests. Asinius is merely promised by Osiris to be greatly rewarded if he initiates Lucius (11.28), but the reader is not shown the value of this ‘great reward’ or even if Asinius ever receives it (the priests of the dea Syria, by contrast, are shown to receive their ill-gotten gains; 8.28, 9.8).

While it is possible that Asinius was one of the anonymous figures at 11.27 who informed Lucius about the cult of Osiris, Lucius’ initial dream (at 11.26) calling him to a second initiation occurred before they met. This accords with what Mithras has already said about the gods choosing the time, cost, and priest for the initiation. It is thus Lucius’ dreams—not the priests—that instruct him about, and later justify, his initiations. Yet if the priests were the target of the satire, being avaricious and

---

104 If Asinius is trying to persuade Lucius to undertake initiation with report of a false dream, he would not be motivated by the promise of a great reward because he would have fabricated this detail himself.
105 The detail of Lucius’ poverty has been said to serve purposes other than as part of the financial theme relevant to satire. Kirichenko (2010: 93) points out that the emphasis on Lucius’ lack of financial resources is a motif from philosopher biographies in which poor prospective students offer nothing but themselves to their teachers. For this Kirichenko (96) offers the example of Aeschines offering himself to Socrates (Diog. Laert. 2.34). Smith (2012: 216) argues that Lucius’ poverty follows the motif of ‘an objection as to why the outsider might be rejected’ by a holy figure who would instruct him. One could argue, however, that the rejection of the poor on a financial basis aids the idea of a satire of a venal cult; cf. Van Mal-Maeder (1997) 103.
manipulative, one would expect that they would be in focus during all of these steps along the path of Lucius’ conversion. This is not so, and, indeed, the priestly element is entirely missing from the third initiation; there is no double-dream with a priest who will initiate him. It is only Lucius and his dreams that are the focus of the last initiation.

The greatest problem with viewing Book 11 as the satire of manipulative priests, who rightly understand all dreams to be meaningless and take advantage of this fact, is that from Books 1-11.25 all dreams are presented as true or potentially true, never patently false. It would therefore be inconsistent of Apuleius to suddenly true the reader to understand Lucius’ dreams to be meaningless. It also seems odd, within the narrative context of a story involving magical transformations of men into animals and the raising of the dead (topics from myth and folktale), to suddenly balk at the use of god-sent dreams (also from myth and folktale, and yet considered possible by many philosophers, including Apuleius), especially when the first dream of Book 11 is undeniably god-sent. If one accepts that Lucius is not dreaming his whole experience as an ass, then god-sent dreams do not seem at all out of place.

It was suggested above that the dream about Asinius (11.27) is god-sent but misinterpreted by Lucius (i.e. is a warning rather than a proposition). Assuming that is true, there is no reason why Isis would not appear again, this time directly commanding him to beware of Asinius.107 Moreover, if Isis abandons Lucius, leaving him to follow meaningless dreams and to be fleeced by a venal priesthood, this would contradict her promise to protect him from Blind Fortuna (11.6, 11.15). It seems, then, that while some aspects of Lucius’ experience in Rome lend themselves to the satire of a venal priesthood that manipulates a gullible convert, there are more aspects that countermand this idea.

107 Quintus Cicero recalls a story about Hercules appearing to Sophocles in a dream in order to give him the identity of a thief who stole from his temple, but Sophocles ignores the dream. It recurs many times until he tells some judges and the man confesses to the crime; Cic. Div. 1.25.55. Artemidorus places importance in recurring dreams, the repetition of which suggests a matter of importance (Artem. 4.27). If someone is to be shown to be foolish for ignoring a dream, a warning is given in the dream about what will happen if the god or goddess is not heeded; when this repercussion threatens to occur, the dreamer acts as the god or goddess instructed; ps.-Lucian Syr. D. 19.
Conclusion

It makes sense that the narrating Lucius would be offended, as a pastophorus, by the thieving priests of the dea Syria and would rightly enjoy satirising them. Obviously, if Apuleius chose to do the same with the priests of Isis and Osiris, he would have to go about it obliquely rather than in the straightforward manner of Lucius since this would clash with narrator’s stance as a proud pastophorus of Isis and Osiris. The satiric content would have to go unnoticed by narrator-Lucius and yet still be discernable to the reader (creating an ironic gap between reader and narrator). If the deception of Lucius by a greedy priesthood starts with the appearance of Mithras (11.12), Isis has foolishly selected the wrong priest. But contrary to some interpretations, there is little that is satiric about Mithras. By contrast, the pastophorus Asinius, who features only briefly, is clearly less impressive than the devout and ascetic Mithras, whose part in the story has a far greater significance. Asinius’ status, deformity, his dream promising him great reward, and his identification of Lucius as a ‘man from Madauros’ all raise questions, but at the same time it is difficult to view him as a greedy and deceitful manipulator, like the false Syrian priests of Books 8-9, since it is the gods that direct the initiations. Moreover, if the first dream of Isis is god-sent (just as those from Books 1-10 are also oneiroi) whilst the later dreams are merely products of manipulation, it would be inconsistent of Apuleius as author to suddenly change his stance on dreams and expect the reader to recognise this. So it seems that Mithras and Asinius are genuine in their devotion to the gods and do share god-sent dreams with Lucius (unlike the Syrian priests with their false confessions and contrived oracles). And yet, because greed and the misapprehension of Lucius, as well as his inconscience as narrator, are themes from Books 1-10, it would not be a surprise if they were employed in the final book. Thus the possibility remains that the satire is the opposite to that of the priests of the dea Syria, so that the priests are merely the innocent pawns of the gods, who seek to exploit Lucius. Thus the later initiations, with their uninspiring dreams, the shaving of Lucius’ scalp, the strange choice of Asinius as mystagogue, and the reintroduction of the financial theme, could be designed to create doubt and aid this interpretation of Isis
and Osiris as being just as flawed as some of the figures from Books 1-10. To test this hypothesis the presentation of these gods will have to be examined as well as their relationship to Lucius.
CHAPTER FOUR

Isis and Osiris

The previous chapter concluded that neither Mithras nor Asinius are being satirised in the same manner as the priests of the dea Syria. Whilst each priest differs greatly in characterisation, neither one is cynically manipulating Lucius’ dreams nor lying about his own in order to profit from the initiations. They all receive god-sent dreams that do not appear to be misinterpreted. This calls into question the gods’ involvement in Lucius’ multiple initiations. Moreover, given that the theme of Lucius misreading situations and overlooking the obvious is so well established, one is wise to be suspicious about his behaviour. Indeed, it has been said that Lucius merely transfers his obsession from magic to religion in Book 11 and has thus not changed much at all.\(^1\) Therefore, because Lucius’ connection with religion—and that of the priests—ultimately comes from the gods, it is important to question the nature of his relationship with them. This chapter thus seeks to examine the presentation of Isis and Osiris by comparing them with figures from Books 1-10.

**Isis, Divine Mistress**

Isis in the *Metamorphoses* has been connected with many of the female figures from Books 1-10. Generally, though, Isis is said to contrast with the witches, her magic being good, while that of the witches is bad.\(^2\) This is similar to the idea that Blind Fortuna is a


\(^2\) James (1987) n. 13, 257. Massey (1976: 49) states that Isis represents religion, ‘which distinguishes between the human and the divine, rather than magic, which attempts to cross the forbidden boundary.’ Schlam (1992: 122): ‘The witches are an antitype to the goddess.’ Frangoulidis (2008: 6) argues that the witches practice ‘catastrophic’ magic, which contrasts with the ‘positive’ magic of Isis. The idea of ‘good
wicked witch to whom Lucius is a slave (in Books 1-10), whereas Isis is Seeing Fortuna, who guides Lucius with her providence, protecting him from ill fortune (Book 11). This idea of contrast is also present in the view that Isis represents *Venus caelestis* while Photis and the witches represent the *Venus vulgaris*. Since Lucius becomes a celibate priest, Isis is a chaste figure in contrast with the libidinous witches, whose magic is used primarily to satisfy their sexual appetites. Moreover, at the conclusion of Book 11, Lucius differs from the figures affected by the ‘catastrophic’ magic of the witches in Books 1-3. Socrates is quite unhealthy when found by Aristomenes, and is eventually killed by magic. Similarly, the miller is mysteriously murdered by magic. Those who survive are forced to live with the consequences: Aristomenes is forced to live in exile, whereas Thelyphron is disfigured and becomes a laughing stock. And, of course, Lucius is transformed into an ass, suffering under various abusive masters. In short, all who are involved with witches are killed or become unhappy social outcasts. In Book 11, by contrast, Lucius ends up happy, part of a religious community, and balances a successful rhetorical career with his position in the priesthood of Isis and Osiris. In the past he was a victim of ‘slavish pleasures’ (*serviles ... voluptates*; 11.15), but ends up a happy servant of the gods, free from the turbulence of Blind Fortuna. From this assessment, Lucius’ relationship with the gods appears to be absolutely

---

3 Based upon the distinction that is made in the speech of Mithras at 11.15. Heiserman (1977: 160) states that ‘Fortune … is a witch, an insatiable tormenter and enslaver of men.’ He then notes (161) that all the wicked women of the first ten books ‘prepare us for the good woman, Isis, who is called the goddess of Good Fortune.’

4 Apuleius discusses the theory of two Venuses (*Apol.* 12). This is based upon the speech of Pausanias about Aphrodite Pandemos and Aphrodite Ourania in Plato (*Symp.* 180c-185a). For the Platonic interpretation of Isis (true) and Photis (false), see the discussion in Harrison (1996) 512-13. cf. Sandy (1978: 135), who contrasts the vulgar *serviles voluptates* of magic and the heavenly *servitium deae* in Book 11.

5 Frangoulidis (2008: 40, 209) discusses Lucius’ celibacy and contrasts Isis and the libidinous witches (172, 195).

6 Ibid. 46.

7 That is, if their stories are to be believed; see Chapter Two for Aristomenes and Thelyphron as professional storytellers.

8 Ibid. 60, 106.
faultless. But if there is satire in Book 11, this optimistic image of Lucius’ conversion needs to be readdressed.

Magic

Isis can be seen as the anti-Circe, changing Lucius from a dumb animal to a talking man, in contrast to the archetypal witch of the *Odyssey* (Hom. *Od.* 10.229-43). There are, however, other factors that make the dichotomy of ‘positive’ magic and ‘catastrophic’ magic in the *Metamorphoses* unlikely.\(^9\) For instance, the necromancy of Zatchlas can be viewed as both good and bad. In the narrative it is used for a noble end (catching a murderess), but the service does not come cheap and necromancy itself was illegal and considered immoral.\(^10\) Whilst seduction by means of spells was not originally outlawed under the Lex Cornelia, the debate about whether it should be shows that considered unwholesome, which is why Photis is shooed away from the barber shop while collecting hair for Pamphile’s magic (3.16).\(^11\) Yet Isis and Osiris can be linked to this magic by collecting hair, for Lucius is made to shave his head for his initiations.\(^12\)

Pamphile transforms herself into an owl to fly to her Boeotian lover (3.21), which is followed by Photis transforming Lucius at his request (3.23-24). This transformative magic is also outlawed.\(^13\) But if transforming oneself or another person is bad magic, it does not make sense to praise Isis while condemning the witches since transformation is

---

\(^9\) Cf. Apuleius at *Apol.* 25-26. He speaks about the Persian *magi* but downplays their association with the services of street magicians (dream interpretation, astrology, exorcising demons) and instead focuses on their religious roles as priests, having knowledge of rituals and religious laws; Harrison, Hilton, and Hunink (2001) n. 78, 50.

\(^10\) Griffiths (1978: 144) notes that Pierre Grimal ‘affirms that necromancy does not appear in Egypt except very late and on the margin of the official religion.’ Cf. Calasiris, the Isiac priest in Heliodorus’ *Aethiopica* who condemns necromancy (Heliod. *Aeth.* 6.14.7), discussed in the previous chapter; n. 6, 80.


\(^12\) Van Mal-Maeder (1997: 106): ‘By obtaining the hair of her worshippers, Isis acts exactly like the magicians who collect the hair of their victims to bewitch them even better.’ Hair was used in votive offerings to Osiris; see Fletcher (2004) 100-101. The myth of Isis and Osiris perhaps explains some of the significance; Isis cuts off a tress of her hair when she learns of Osiris’ death (Plut. *De Is. et Os.* 356d).

\(^13\) Isis says that no one will accuse Lucius of sorcery (11.6), implying that in another context Lucius would be charged under the laws against magic for his transformation; cf. Ps.-Lucian *Onos* 54.
exactly what Isis provides for Lucius. Admittedly, Isis is providing a cure, yet the cure itself only draws another connection between the goddess and the witches. The cure does not derive from divine power but is simply the antidote of roses that Photis specified in the first place (11.6; cf. 3.25). This leads van Mal-Maeder to argue that Isis has not actually done very much for Lucius, certainly not enough to warrant a life of servitude.  

Another parallel between the magic of Isis and the witches relates to the theme of castration. Lucius’ restoration to human form by Isis implies that he loses the large member he considered the main consolation to becoming an ass (3.24), which van Mal-Maeder argues is similar to castration, reminding the reader of the man whom it was said Meroë turned into a beaver—an animal thought to castrate itself when pursued (1.9.8). Yet another parallel is found with Meroë’s partner in crime, Panthia. She has the power to extend Socrates life after his death by inserting a sponge as a replacement heart (1.13). This is similar to Isis’ words to Lucius: ‘I—and I alone—can even prolong your life beyond the limits determined by your fate’ (ultra statuta fato tuo spatia vitam quoque tibi prorogare mihi tantum licere; 11.6). For both Pamphile and Isis, there is a need for secrecy for those who witness their hidden mysteries, thus linking their presentation as sorceresses (3.15; 11.23). These parallels are confirmed by the similar

---

14 It is interesting to think of the connection between Isis and Diana (the name by which the Cretans know her; 11.5). Diana features in the statue at Byrhhena’s house that depicts Actaeon being transformed into a stag for spying on her. Byrhhena says to Lucius ‘all this is yours’ (with the authorial double meaning—Lucius has access to her home, but also he will be a victim of transformative magic; cf. Winkler (1985) 168). This clearly associates Isis-Diana with the figure of the dangerous witch who transforms men; cf. Clarke (1987: 19): ‘Both Diana and Pamphile represent the realm of the daemonic female in relation to which the oedipal son-figures, whether peeping voyeuristically at chaste goddesses, or defying the wishes of unchaste matrons, end up embarrassingly transformed.’

15 Photis calls this an ‘easy’ cure (facilior). Van Nuffelen (2011) 94. Frangoulidis (2008: 171) highlights that Isis offers Lucius the roses that Photis only promised. Whilst this is true, it is unlikely that Photis would not have been able to procure some (there were indeed some available in the shrine to Epona; 3.27); it was merely Lucius’ bad luck (or Isis’ providence?) that he was stolen by the robbers before she could get them.

16 Van Mal-Maeder (1997) 101; see also, May (2006) 319. Note that spring has arrived at the time of Lucius’ transformation (11.7), meaning that roses are would have been widely available to him without Isis’ procession.

17 Van Mal-Maeder (1997) 108-09. Lucius is also forced into celibacy, which has the same result as castration. Lateiner (2000: 325-26) mentions the exotic nature of this requirement with respect to Greek and Roman religious practice.

18 Griffiths (1978: 143) connects the name Panthia (‘all-divine’) to Panthea, an epithet of Isis.

descriptions of the power over nature that Isis and the witches possess (1.8, 2.5, 3.15; cf. 11.25). The only difference is that the witches usurp this power, which to Isis comes naturally.

Thus the idea that Isis’ magic is good while that of the witches is bad cannot be sustained. Indeed, the distinction does not seem to be based on the magic itself but instead upon the practitioner; Isis is a goddess, whereas the witches are merely mortal women aspiring to divine power (which they use to satiate their sexual desires). It is important to remember the myth of Isis and Osiris. The mythic Isis collects the body parts of the dismembered corpse of Osiris, but the penis was lost, so Isis fashions a replacement (Plut. De. Is. et Os. 358a-b). Collecting body parts of the dead and fashioning magical prosthetics are tasks in which the unnamed witches in Thelyphron’s tale are well versed (2.30). Osiris returns from the dead, like the dead Thelyphron, and consorts with Isis, who thus conceives Harpocrates (Plut. De. Is. et Os. 358e). While Isis’ motives may be more wholesome than the witches, there is no difference in the magic used.

This lack of distinction is likely why Apuleius does not defend himself, in the Apologia, against the charge of being a magus by arguing that he was practicing the ‘good magic’ of Isis. He instead states that he aspired to know philosophical truths and religious knowledge that touch upon man’s relation to the gods, knowledge that the Persian magi of old taught to the sons of kings and that famous philosophers before him sought to attain (Apul. Apol. 25-26). The religious knowledge Apuleius identifies as ‘good magic’ in the Apologia has little to do with Isis retransforming Lucius from a beast into a man or constantly appearing in his dreams.

---


21 Frangoulidis (2008: 64-65) notes that the power of the gods establishes cosmic order, whereas the witches’ power inverts the natural order (revealing the former magic to be good and the latter kind to be bad). I would argue that, rather than designed to show a dichotomy of good and bad, this distinction relates to status: the witches, being mortal, are dabbling with divine powers, whereas by rights divine power belongs to Isis. To put it another way, witches are so powerful they can change nature, whereas the gods inherently govern nature as it is.
Moreover, this image of Isis as a good magician in contrast to bad magicians is not supported by other literature. Indeed, Isis and Osiris were closely associated with practitioners of magic, as can be discerned from the various references to Isis and Osiris in the Greek Magical Papyri.\footnote{For Egyptians in the Graeco-Roman magical tradition, see Ogden (2008) 91-100.} In these texts there is an incantation that invokes Isis’ love for Osiris to give it added power; unlike the love magic of the witches from the \textit{Metamorphoses}, however, this spell is designed for males, requiring a lotion to be applied to the penis in order to win the undying love of a woman.\footnote{\textit{PGM} 36.283-94 (Ogden (2009) passage #212). A \textit{histriola} in a magical context is a reference to a relevant myth that is supposed to add its thematic significance to the power of the spell.} For the purpose of scrying by lecanomancy, it is recommended that one who wishes to call upon Osiris or Sarapis use river water.\footnote{Lecanomancy is a type of divination by which one interprets light on the ripples of water that has been poured into a bronze bowl; \textit{PGM} 4.222-60 (Ogden (2009) passage #163).} The principle behind this is similar to the lamp divination (lycanomancy) of Pamphile at 2.11. Later in Book 2, the Isiac priest Zatchlas shows proficiency in magic involving corpses (2.28-29); this can also be found in the Greek Magical Papyri. To place a ‘restraining seal’ upon a skull deemed unsuitable for divination by necromancy, the dirt from the doors to a temple of Osiris is used to seal its mouth and an engraving made of a lion that is to have a ‘crown of Isis’ instead of a head.\footnote{\textit{PGM} 4.2125-39 (Ogden (2009) passage #162).} In another necromantic rite, Osiris is named in a formula for calling a ghostly assistant for the purpose of bringing someone to the sorcerer.\footnote{\textit{PGM} 4.2006-2125 (Ogden (2009) passage #161).} This is identical magic to that used to send the shade that causes the miller’s death at the behest of his evil wife (9.30). These examples show that the magic used in the \textit{Metamorphoses} had a historical connection to the gods Isis and Osiris.

It is not surprising, then, that Isis is connected with magic in other literature. Lucian mockingly uses Isiac knowledge of the arcane to characterise dubious mystical sages. The transmigrated soul of Pythagoras, a self-proclaimed sophist (in the form of a cock!), tells Micyllus that he had travelled to Egypt in order to study the sacred books of Horus and Isis before landing in Italy to be treated like a god (\textit{Gall.} 18). Even more
impressively, Isis teaches magic to an Egyptian scribe named Pancrates for twenty-three years in an underground crypt (Lucian Philops. 34).

Thus it can be observed that while Thessaly was a home of magic, so was Egypt. There does not seem to be an opposition between Thessalian and Egyptian magic in literature. Indeed, in the *Metamorphoses* there is a connection between the two homes of magic in the figures of Zatchlas and Meroë. Zatchlas is, of course, an Egyptian priest of Isis who just happens to be wandering the streets of a town in Thessaly (Larissa). Meroë, as an innkeeper and a bibulous witch, bears a name that is a pun on undiluted wine (*vinum merum*), yet it is also the name of a city on the banks of the Upper Nile, and thus is the first connection in the *Metamorphoses* to the Nilotic reed comment from the prologue. A reference to the location Meroë in the context of Isiac worship occurs in Juvenal as a faraway place whence the devout worshipper would fetch water for Isis’ temple, should the goddess wish it (Juv. 6.522). So this comment in the prologue prefigures both the witches and Isis equally. It does not appear, then, that Lucius goes from bad to good magic with his initiations into the cult of Isis and Osiris; he merely turns to the best practitioners of magic.

---

27 This story is narrated by the untrustworthy Eucrates, who also explains that he was sent to Egypt for his education (*Philops.* 33). It just so happens that Pancrates taught one of the gullible philosopher friends of Eucrates, Arignotus, who earlier related a story about how he exorcised a haunted house using his knowledge, noting: εἰ οἱ δὲ μοι Ἀγαπήτοι μᾶλα πολλαὶ [sc. βιβλία] περὶ τῶν νοεύτων (‘I have a vast amount of Egyptian [books] on these matters’; *Philops.* 29-31).

28 Ogden (2009: 204, 139-40) states that Zatchlas combines Thessalian and Egyptian elements in his necromancy. Griffiths (1978: 143-44) observes that the old man (presumably of Larissa) that calls upon Zatchlas names four Egyptian sanctities in his speech (2.28): Coptus, the flooding Nile, Memphis, and Pharus. All of these references, explains Griffiths, have significance to Isiac religion.

29 Panayotakis (1998: 126) states that Meroë and Panthia’s names are associated with wine, which is of particular importance to Aristomene’s story since he and Socrates both get drunk then dream of the witches.

30 *modo si papyrum Aegyptum argutia Nilotic calami inscriptam non spreveris inspicere* (‘if only you will not begrudge looking at Egyptian papyrus inscribed with the sharpness of a reed from the Nile’; 1.1). Griffiths (1978: 143) also notes this connection; he notes that at 11.5 the Ethiopians know the true name of Isis, adding that Strabo (17. 822) includes Isis among the principal gods of the Ethiopians. There is another, minor connection between Meroë and Isis in that the witch calls Socrates ‘my Endymion’ (1.12). She thus equating herself with the moon (who fell in love with him), which is, of course, the goddess to whom Lucius prays (11.2).

31 Cf. Kirichenko (2008: 347): ‘One could even say that in ancient imagination Thessaly occupied the niche of a perhaps somewhat low-class counterpart of Egypt, in the sense that, like Egypt, it was universally considered to be a mysterious country of occult lore but, unlike Egypt, it did not evoke any lofty quasi-philosophical associations: instead of awe-inspiring priests of an ancient religion we encounter in Egypt, in Thessaly we have to do with rather folksy witches.’
with an obsession for Thessalian magic, only to supplant this with the cult of Isis and Osiris in the conclusion of the tale.

**Love and Slavery**

Like the opposition of good and bad magic, there is said to be an opposition in the two types of love on display in the *Metamorphoses*. Following Pausanias’ description of the two types of love in Plato (Symp. 180c-185e), Isis is said to represent the idea of the meaningful, cerebral love of Aphrodite Ourania whilst the witches (and Photis) represent the sensual lust of Aphrodite Pandemos. This Platonic idea is itself referenced elsewhere by Apuleius (Apol. 12), and is thus seen to be repeated in the *Metamorphoses*. In this view, it is fitting that Isis requires the chastity of Lucius, whereas the witches use sex to enslave their victims. Yet, like the idea of good and bad magic, this picture of a chaste Isis contrasting with libidinous witches is not so straightforward.

Isis is connected to Lucius’ lover Photis in that he provides an *ecphrasis* for both of them (2.7, 9; 11.4). Each *ecphrasis* touches upon similar details, including clothing, adornments, and hair. Regarding the connection of Photis to Isis, Schmeling and Montiglio discuss the recurring imagery of waves that link the themes of food, sex, and magic. The undulating wave is especially prominent in Lucius’ affair with Photis, occurring during her *ecphrasis* and love-making scenes, but also when Lucius watches Pamphile transform and later when he watches both the Judgement of Paris pantomime

---

32 Aphrodite was closely associated with Isis, whose cult was seen to be promiscuous; the story related by Josephus about the Isiac priests effectively prostituting a worshipper against her will would not have helped with this image; Joseph. AJ 18.65. Bradley (1998: 329-30) discusses a shrine of Isis at Athens that housed two statues, one of Isis, the other of Aphrodite: ‘The juxtaposition in the sanctuary of the two statues of Isis and Aphrodite is as clear an illustration as one could hope to have of the cross-identification of divinities generally characteristic of religious life in classical antiquity. The statues are symbols of how the adoption in a community of a new divinity did not normally drive out an old, pre-existing one, but of how the common attributes the gods shared fused their identities into one, even as they maintained their own individuality.’

33 Frangoulidis (2008: 179) and Lateiner (2000: 325) believe this vow of chastity was lifelong, which would explain Lucius’ doubts about whether he could live up to the standards of the cult (11.19).

34 Schmeling and Montiglio (2006) 28. Note that the *ecphrasis* for Cupid (5.22) likewise begins with a description of hair. Interestingly, the use of wave imagery is absent. Possibly, this is due to it being reserved for the Venus figures of Photis, the mimic Venus of the pantomime, and Isis.
and gives Isis’ *ecphrasis*. This leads Schmeling and Montiglio to conclude: ‘The image of the wave […]’, because of its sensual connotations in the *Metamorphoses*, also brings out elements of eroticism in Lucius’s initiation. The initiation stands in a relationship of continuity with, rather than of opposition to, his erotic passion for Photis leading to his discovery of magic.’\(^{35}\) They also point out that the image of Venus rising from the waters is used for Photis (in imitation; 2.17, 2.38) and Isis (literally; 11.3), and note the proximity of Isis’ *ecphrasis* to the pantomime scene that focuses upon Venus.\(^{36}\) The description of the mimic Venus is erotically charged, and thus the appearance of a goddess closely linked to Venus so soon afterwards, for whom Lucius gives a description using similar vocabulary, suggests that he has an erotic fascination with his saviour goddess.\(^{37}\) So whilst Lucius refers to ‘heavenly Venus’ (*caelestis Venus*; 11.2) in his prayer, his appreciation for Isis’ appearance suggests that she also functions as a *Venus vulgaris* for him.\(^{38}\)

Because an *ecphrasis* of this type was commonly used in the Greek romances for the male protagonist to describe his lover, and has been used by Lucius for this purpose with Photis, this places Isis in the role of Lucius’ mistress. This is fitting since the goddess has replaced the wicked woman with whom Lucius was to copulate in the amphitheatre at Corinth. Moreover, there is irony in that the hero would typically describe his lover as if she were a goddess—for Lucius she is one. This trope is parodied in Petronius’ *Satyricon* when Encolpius, under the name Polyaenus, meets a woman named Circe,\(^{39}\) whom he compares to the goddess Diana (*Sat.* 126.13-17).\(^{40}\) Encolpius and Lucius pay tribute to the beauty they behold in similar fashion:

---

35 Ibid. 37.
36 Ibid. 38: ‘It is not by chance that Venus makes a glamorous appearance in the pantomime scene at 10, 32, 3, shortly before Isis appears to Lucius.’
37 Note that Lucius is sure to point out that the mimic Venus wears a blue robe ‘because she comes up from the sea’ (*amicus carulus, quod mari remeat*; 10.31); Isis soon rises from the sea when she appears to Lucius in his dream (11.3).
38 Lucius says that Isis’ face is so stunning that it is worthy to be venerated by the gods themselves (*pelago medio venerandos diis etiam vulus atollens emergit divina facies*; 11.3), before describing her hair, crown, and dress.
39 Zimmerman (2006: 89) indicates that a parody of this type of *ecphrasis* featured in Roman Satire as far back as Varro. If indeed Apuleius was drawing upon this for Photis’ *ecphrasis*, its reuse for Isis would inform how the reader is to understand Lucius’ relationship with Isis from the perspective of satire.
mulierem omnibus simulacris emendatorem. nulla vox est quae formam eius possit comprehendere, nam quicquid dixero, minus erit. crines ingenio flexi per totos se umeros effunderant, frons minima et quae radices capillorum retro flexerat, (Sat. 126.13-15)

No statue could match her perfection, no words could do justice to her beauty; any description of mine would be an understatement. Her hair fell in natural waves all over her shoulders; from her narrow forehead to her hairline receded in curls;"^^41`

Eius mirandam speciem ad vos etiam referre conitar, si tamen mihi disserendi tribuerit facultatem paupertas oris humani, vel ipsum numen eius dapsilem copiam elocuitilis facundiae subministra verit.

Iam primum crines uberrimi prolixique et sensim intorti per divina colla passi
dispersi molliter defluebant. (Met. 11.3)

I shall try to describe its [sc. the radiant vision’s] marvellous appearance for you too, if only the poverty of human speech allows me the means of expression, or the deity herself supplies me with rich abundance of rhetorical skill.

First of all her hair, thick, long, and lightly curled, flowed softly down, loosely spread over her divine neck and shoulders.

As well as admiring Isis’ appearance, Lucius responds to her salvation in the same way he reacts to Photis’ sex appeal and Pamphile’s magic. As he gazes upon Photis’ body whilst she turns the cooking pot, he becomes ‘transfixed by the sight, utterly stunned’ (aspectu defixus obstuput; 2.7). When Pamphile transforms into an owl, Lucius is ‘transfixed with awe at the occurrence’ (facti stupore defixus, 3.22). "^^42` Lucius was ‘completely dumbfounded and stood speechless’ immediately after he regained his human shape from Isis’ roses (stupore nimio defixus; 11.14). "^^43` These three scenes effectively connect sex, magic, and Isis. Thus Lucius is ‘transfixed’ before each of the three major ‘initiations’ he experiences: sex (with Photis), magic (also with Photis), and religion (with Isis)."^^44` As well as being transfixed, Lucius also displays great eagerness before these ‘initiations’. He is eager before his sexual union with Photis (2.10, 2.16)."^^45`

---

"^^40` The other reference to a mortal viewing a goddess in the Metamorphoses is with the statues of Actaeon and Diana at Byrrhaena’s house (2.4). Byrrhaena tells Lucius that everything he sees is his (2.5), meaning that as a guest he will have access to her house, but there is a deeper meaning in that he will be transformed into an animal (just as Actaeon had been). But it can also be said that Byrrhaena’s words foreshadow him viewing a goddess who will also transform him.

"^^41` Translation by Walsh (1999a).

"^^42` Schmeling and Montiglio (2006: 36): ‘This identical response connects Lucius’ erotic passion and his passion for magic.’

"^^43` Ibid.: ‘The third woman who has the power to render Lucius defixus is Isis’.

"^^44` Lucius claims to have disdained the embraces of women before Photis (3.19).

"^^45` Nec diutius quivi tantum cruciatum voluptatis eximiae sustinere, sed pronus in eam, (‘I could no longer endure the excruciating torture of such intense pleasure, but rushed towards her…’; 2.10); nec animo
Likewise, Lucius heedlessly plunges into his chance to experience magic (3.24). And finally, Lucius shows his customary eagerness (sollicitius) in his desire to be initiated into Isis’ mysteries (11.21). It is therefore no surprise that many critics have claimed that Lucius transfers his desire for sex and magic to the figure of Isis.

For Lucius and Isis, however, their relationship is never physical. Despite this, an image used for Lucius’ and Photis’ first night together is reused in Isiac ritual. During their affair Lucius and Photis use the food and wine sent by Byrrhena to provision their ‘Ship of Venus’ (navigium Veneris; 2.11). This introduces the ‘sea of love’ metaphor that accompanies the image of the wave that is used for erotic effect. This marine theme is reintroduced in Book 11 with the Isiac ritual signalling the start of the sailing season (the navigium Isidis), in which a ship of Isis is loaded with baskets and put to sea. It thus seems that the imagery of Photis’ and Lucius’ love affair is reused in the Isiac encounter, but for the celibate Lucius, sexuality is transformed into ritual.

This connection between lovers and ritual is suggested again with Lucius’ initiation into the mysteries of Isis, which in many ways resembles a wedding. Lucius puts away the clothing of youth (i.e. his asinine covering; 11.13-14), just as a Roman bride, and

---

*tantum verum etiam corpore ipso ad libidinem inquiès alioquem petulans,* (‘I was naturally both mentally and physically restless and eager with desire’; 2.16).

*Quam ego amplexus ac deosculatus prius, abiectis propere laciniis totis, avide manus immersi et haurito plusculo cuncta corporis mei membra perfacui.* (‘First I embraced and kissed the jar and prayed to it to bless me with a lucky flight. Then I hastily threw off all my clothes, greedily plunged my hand into the jar, pulled out a largish daub, and rubbed my body all over.’)

*Nec minus in dies mihi magis magisque accipendorum sacrorum cupido gliscebat,* (Furthermore, day by day my desire to receive the rites of initiation grew greater and greater.).

*Weiss (1998: 94-99) discusses Lucius’ cupido and states that his desire for magic and religion stem from a desire for the supernatural, and thus he has not changed in this respect. Vander Poppen (2008: 172-73): ‘Lucius’ encounter with Isis does not cure him of his curiositas and serviles voluptates, but instead provides a new object of addiction, one fostered by the priesthood of Isis.’ Van Mal-Maeder (1997: 97) notes that Lucius’ wish to be initiated into magical arts under Photis leads to catastrophe. But in the end ‘his encounter with Isis, the goddess-magician, and his initiation into these new mysteries permit Lucius to finally realize his dearest wish, this time without risking his skin.’ Schlam (1992: 39): ‘Essentially it [sc. Book 11] completes Lucius’ quest for what is rare and marvellous (rara miraque), as he finds satisfaction in the revelation of the goddess.’

*In Petronius’ *Satyricon*, the widowed matron of Ephesus and the soldier share wine and a meal, which the tale’s narrator implies naturally leads to sex: ceterum scitis quid plerunque soleat temptare humanam sattetatem. (*Sat.* 112.1).

*Schmeling and Montiglio (2006) 34. For the prominence of marine and nautical themes with relation to love and sex in Greek and Latin literature, see Murgatroyd (1995).*
has a special bath with attendants (11.23).\textsuperscript{51} There is a festive banquet and Lucius wears a \textit{stola} (11.24), symbol of a Roman woman’s marital status.\textsuperscript{52} Afterwards, Lucius hugs the officiating priest (whom he calls \textit{parens}), visits home briefly, and then leaves to begin his new life in Rome. Thus Lucius undergoes a kind of gender-inverted imitation of a Roman bride’s experience.\textsuperscript{53} This, however, is not Lucius’ first pseudo-wedding; he undergoes a parody of one with the lustful \textit{matrona} while he is an ass (10.19-22). Moreover, whilst he performs the groom’s role during their ‘nuptials’, the arrangement itself has been made as if he were the bride, with the \textit{matrona} as the groom, and Lucius’ trainer as his father.\textsuperscript{54} Thus Lucius ‘wedding’ with Isis can be seen as a repeat of this earlier ‘marriage’ to the \textit{matrona}.

\textbf{Isis as domina}

The gender-inverted ‘wedding’ that is Lucius’ initiation into the cult of Isis highlights the essentially passive nature of Lucius. This is not a new development in his character—he is passive throughout the \textit{Metamorphoses}.\textsuperscript{55} This is true for Lucius’ affair with Photis and his relationship to Isis—in each case he willingly submits to his mistress.\textsuperscript{56} This dynamic crops up in other male-female relationships; Weiss illustrates the similar roles of Pamphile, Meroë, and Photis, stating: ‘Each of these witches share

\textsuperscript{51} Lateiner (2000: 326-27) lists these and many other aspects of Book 11 that suggest Roman wedding imagery.

\textsuperscript{52} Frangouliidis (2008) 127. Frangouliidis (39) also notes that the spectacle of the choral dances and the pantomime of the Judgment of Paris scene suggest that the copulation of the ass-Lucius with the condemned woman is a type of mock wedding.

\textsuperscript{53} It should be noted that the retransformation (and de-masculinisation) of Lucius by Isis not only causes his penis to shrink (as in the \textit{Onos}) but also causes him to comically adopt the pose of Venus (thighs together with a hand shading the privates) that Photis seductively employed during their love affair (11.14; cf. 2.17). The theme of gender inversion is employed earlier in the \textit{Metamorphoses} with the tale of Haemus-Tlepolemus (7.6-8). For the inversion of gender roles in Augustan elegy, see Wyke (2002) 166-178.

\textsuperscript{54} Cf. Massey (1976: 51): ‘the tables between men and women seem to have been turned in this book. Lucius himself is caught up in a kind of parody of the woman’s role, as the passive object of exchange, who loses his personal identity in the eyes of his successive owners, and who must even ‘serve’ sexually at one point in order to fulfill [sic] the terms of a contract not of his own making.’

\textsuperscript{55} Massey (1976: 44) notes that Lucius is submissive to Photis and Byrrhena and concludes: ‘In fact, he remains bound to some of the most persistent difficulties of his previous condition both as ass and as man. He is still in a passive role.’

\textsuperscript{56} Winkler (1985: 175-76, 179) discusses Photis’ and the \textit{matrona}’s dominance of Lucius.
with Isis … the role of the domina: they have extensive powers, they enjoy the desire of their subjects, they demand obedience and fidelity, they administer the experience of the supernatural, and they transform their subjects.”

At the start of Book 11, Lucius resembles Socrates of Book 1. Lucius is in a desperate state when he meets Isis (having fled from the amphitheatre), just as Socrates is distressed when he meets Meroë (having fled from robbers). Both Meroë and Isis offer aid in exchange for the constant attendance and financial obedience of their suppliant. Isis makes Lucius’ decisions for him, such as how much to pay for his initiation (11.22), when to go to Rome, and to have more initiations (11.26; cf. 1.7).

Indeed, Weiss sees the theme of the lover’s poverty connecting Meroë and Isis, concluding: ‘Socrates and Lucius are victims of a supernatural female.’ Yet there is a key difference in that Lucius ends up financially comfortable whereas Socrates dies with nothing to his name but his rags. Thus it seems that Isis’ authority over Lucius’ finances and career is not to present her as a thief, but rather as a domina who controls the finances of her husband. This is a common theme from satire and can be found in Petronius and Juvenal. The wealthy freedman Trimalchio is described as being so dominated by his wife Fortunata that if she told him day was night he would believe her (Sat. 37.5). It is also implied that it was not until she became involved with his business ventures that he found success. Likewise, Juvenal presents the wife who lords her large dowry over her husband and demands all sorts of extravagances (6.136-60). Those whose husbands love them will use this to control his financial transactions (6.212-13).

Whilst Socrates came to Meroë as a suppliant (like Lucius to Isis), Lucius initially plans his relationship with Photis as a means to gain him access to Pamphile’s magic

---


58 The theme of money-oriented woman is present in elegy; cf. Propertius’ Cynthia: semper amatorum ponderat una sinus. (Prop. 2.16.12)

59 Weiss (1998) 97. Cf. van Mal-Maeder (1997: 102): ‘Both Lucius and Socrates are thus robbed by two magicians.’ Weiss (ibid., 88-89) sees Meroë (1.7.9-10) and Isis (commanding him via the dream at 11.28.4) as linked since both are required to hand over their rags (laciniae) despite suffering financial hardship.

60 [sc. Fortunata] est sicca, sobria, bonorum consiliorum – tantum auri vides’ (‘she’s sober, sensible, offers sound advice—you see all this gold!’; Sat. 37.7). Trimalchio says that Fortunata sells her jewellery (after his financial losses), which provides him with the capital to make his millions (76.7-8).
This would appear to give him authority in the relationship, but this is not so, for he soon forsakes his home (3.19) and swears to be her eternal slave (3.22). This reference to not returning home recalls Socrates, who is ensnared by Meroë on his homeward journey and forced to stay at her inn (1.7). This follows the tradition of seductresses who attempt to prevent the hero from returning home. Similarly, Lucius, having rented a room in the temple precinct, struggles to leave Isis to go home (11.24). Even then he only remains there for a few days before she sends him to Rome (11.26). This obedience is laid down on their first meeting, Isis demanding that Lucius worship her until his last breath—and even after death (11.6). Moreover, she appears nightly in his dreams with instructions and commands to be initiated (11.19), thus keeping a strict watch over her faithful new ‘lover’. Indeed, Isis inspires the speech in which Mithras demands slavery from Lucius, saying only this will truly free him.

Some critics claim that the difference between Lucius’ slavery to Photis and to Isis is that for the former Lucius is a slave to passion whilst for Isis he makes a conscious decision to offer himself to a higher power. Therefore, like the two types of magic and the two types of love, there is good slavery (to the gods) and bad slavery (to the

---

61 Winkler (1985) 175. James and O’Brien (2006) n.8, 241. Massey (1976: 36) points out the difference between Socrates and Lucius, for Lucius becomes a willing slave to Photis through his desire to experience magic (3.22), whereas Socrates is ensnared by Meroë but did not seek her out at all (1.7).

62 These are the goddesses Calypso and Circe for Odysseus (Od.1.13-15, 7.245-66; 10.455-86). For Aeneas, the foreign temptress is Dido, but his ‘home’ is yet to be found in Italy. This idea of a foreign mistress who enslaves her lover is found in the Roman perception of Cleopatra, who just so happened to call herself the ‘new Isis’ (Plut. Ant. 54.6). Dio Cassius says that Cleopatra believed she had won the love of Octavian after defeat at Actium because she had previously enslaved (ἐδεδούλωτο) Caesar and Antony in similar fashion (Dio Cass. 51.9.5).

63 Nam cum coeperis deae servire, tun magis senties fructum tuae libertatis; (‘for as soon as you become the goddess’s slave you will experience more fully the fruit of your freedom.’ 11.15) Griffiths (1975: 255-56) notes the paradox found in Seneca (Ep. 47.17) about the free man that is a slave to his passions. The paradox also occurs in the Pauline epistles: Paul is a slave of Christ (Rom. 1.1), yet in this state gains true freedom (Gal. 5.1). The message of Mithras is that becoming an initiate of Isis will free Lucius of the lustful obsessions that led to his asshood. Whilst the sentiment is positive, the language used raises the idea of the enslavement to powerful women from Books 1-3. Moreover, the metaphor of the ‘willing yoke’ (iugum ... voluntarium; 11.15) places Lucius again in the role of the ass—a passive and voiceless beast of burden.

64 Frangoulidis (2008: 45-46) and n. 277, 187; James (1987) 243-46; Smith (2009: 61) views Lucius’ slavery to Isis as entailing a renunciation of his former slavery to pleasures.
passions and emotions). But, like the idea of two types of magic and love, this approach is not borne out by the text.

During Lucius’ time as an ass, he regularly is miserable and fears for his life, so it is no surprise that the emotion mentioned most during his conversion is its exact opposite: joy (the source of which is Isis). Shumate presents the primacy of Isis in Lucius’ life as a convert:

His desire now has a constant object, his pleasure a constant source. In Book 11 the vocabulary is transferred to Isis along with the emotions: his studium, his cupidó, his desiderium long for Isis alone (1.4, 21.2, 21.3, and 24.6, where he is caught in the ardentissimi desiderii retinacula); from that same sole source emanates all his pleasure (24.5, inexplicabili voluptate simulacri divini perfruebar). At last true, enduring gaudium is his (7.1, 7.3, 15.4, 17.4-5, 29.4-5); significantly, the novel closes on a definitive note of resounding joy (gaudens obibam, 30.5). Lucius’ passion for Isis is not portrayed as merely the latest in a series of passing obsessions; she is not meant as just another wonder to engage his attention temporarily.

Like a true love, Isis means everything to Lucius. But whilst he might no longer be a slave to ‘servile pleasures’, the above quote shows that he enjoys the ineffable pleasure of gazing upon the image of the goddess (11.24). This is similar to Psyche gazing upon the face of Cupid, satisfying her curiosity and reviving her spirit, when she finally sees her lover’s true form (5.22). It is here that Psyche accidentally pricks herself with the arrow of Cupid. Likewise, while gazing upon the holy image of Isis, Lucius (as if pricked by that same arrow) mentions his ‘fervent yearning for her’ (ardentissimi desiderii retinaculis). This is the same type of language Lucius used with regards to Photis. Indeed, the phrase irremunerabili beneficio (‘an unrepayable favour’) is used for both Lucius’ pledged debt to Photis for showing him magic first hand (3.22), and for Isis for saving him from his transformed state (11.24). Moreover, whilst Lucius was bound to Photis by their sexual relationship, Lucius’ chastity is the means by which Isis

---

65 The idea that one should surrender reason to the emotions or base passions was to be avoided; cf. Sen. Ep. 47.17.
68 Similarly, Lucius’ spirit is revived (recreabar animi) when he glances at Photis during a meal with Milo and Pamphile (2.11)
enslaves him; for in this way she does not have to share Lucius with other women.\(^69\) So, as far as Lucius’ psychological state is concerned, it seems he is in much the same place, only the object of his desire and reverence has changed from Photis to his saviour, Isis.\(^70\)

Furthermore, while it is undoubtedly true that Lucius is a willing servant of Isis, the idea that he has a choice in the matter neither takes into account his innate curiosity (particularly for the supernatural), nor the words of Isis herself:

‘Plane memineris et penita mente conditum semper tenebis mihi reliqua vitae tuae curricula adusque terminos ultimi spiritus vadata. Nec iniurium, cuius beneficio redieris ad homines, ei totum debere, quod vives.’ (11.6)

‘You will clearly remember and keep forever sealed deep in your heart the fact that the rest of your life’s course is pledged to me until the very limit of your last breath. Nor is it unjust that you should owe all the time you have to live to her by whose benefit you return to the world of men.’

It is inconceivable that Lucius would refuse Isis’ command that he worship her after she saves him from his asshood, especially when she is visits his dreams on a nightly basis (11.19). But to make the ‘offer’ more appealing, like the Venus (\textit{vulgaris}) from the Judgement of Paris pantomime, Isis promises Lucius the gifts of happiness, glory, and even a longer life in exchange for ‘choosing’ her.\(^71\) The choice for Lucius, it seems, is to become a lifelong servant of Isis or to show ingratitude to a powerful goddess who offers him protection from misfortune. Van Mal-Maeder thus sees Lucius’ submission to Isis as the culmination of him being handed from one master to another as an ass.\(^72\) 

Thus she connects Lucius’ shaven head in the final scene with his slavery to the gods.\(^73\) 

One might object that, far from Socrates’ enslavement to Meroë, or even Lucius’ willing slavery to Photis, the converted Lucius is free to travel and earn his livelihood

\(^{69}\) Lateiner (2000: 329) views Lucius’ celibacy under Isis as a means of binding him to her. He also (n. 33, 332) compares the concept of nuns as ‘Brides of Christ’.

\(^{70}\) Lucius’ emotions are discussed in Chapter Five. The image of Lucius rubbing his tear-stained cheeks upon the feet of Isis’ statue (11.24) recalls the image of Lucius, the lustful ass, kissing Charite’s ‘lovely feet’ (\textit{pedes decoros}) as she makes her escape on his back (6.28).

\(^{71}\) Murgatroyd (2004: 319-20) notes the connection between the judgement of Paris pantomime and the subsequent meeting of Lucius and Isis.


\(^{73}\) Ibid.101.
pleading cases in court. This, however, merely reflects the mortal limitations of the witches, dependent on the proximity to their love-slaves; this does not limit Isis.\(^{74}\) Lucius the lawyer-priest may be free to roam about in Rome, but he is never free from Isis, who is always in his dreams. Therefore, where Meroë and Photis fail, Isis succeeds, for just as she controls nature (rather than usurping its power), Isis, as a goddess, controls her ‘lover’ more effectively than they can. Indeed, as well as a ‘lover’, she is a surrogate mother to Lucius, guarding him from misfortune.\(^{75}\) The only other motherly figure Lucius had in the tale is Byrrhena, but she neither protects him from humiliation nor magic.\(^{76}\) In the end, Isis is the preeminent dominant female in the *Metamorphoses*.

Another dominant female is Venus in the tale of Cupid and Psyche. Like Isis with the witches, Venus has a mortal woman usurp her sphere of influence; Psyche is said to be a mortal version of Venus, with beauty that causes people to ignore the shrines of the goddess (4.29). Thus a mortal woman has usurped the status of a goddess as one worthy of worship. This is essentially what has occurred with Lucius and Photis; when he pledges himself as her slave he says: ‘make me stand beside you now, a winged Cupid next to my Venus’ (3.22).\(^{77}\) This same usurpation caused the Venus of the tale to plan a cruel vengeance upon Psyche (4.29-31). Could Isis, who is indeed Venus, resent Photis, a mere witch’s apprentice, for attaining a degree of devotion that is more appropriate to a goddess? The desire to restore her proper status (just like Venus) could underlie her

---

\(^{74}\) Photis initially does not want Lucius to dine at Byrrhena’s house, but allows him (*inculsit*; 2.18). When he wishes to transform into an owl, she fears that he is going to meet other lovers (3.22).

\(^{75}\) Clarke (1987: 16) lists the dominant female figures of the text, which culminates in the goddess worship of Book 11. He (16-17) divides the dominant female figures into dangerous witches and protective mothers. Heisserman (1977: 156) discusses Lucius’ obsession with powerful women and his turning to mother Isis who demands his celibacy.

\(^{76}\) James and O’Brien (2006: 237-38) suggest that when Byrrhena notes Lucius’ good looks (2.2), she treats him in just as an animal that is to be selected for sacrifice. This is relevant to the Risus festival, during which Lucius describes himself as a sacrificial victim (3.2). It thus appears that he had been selected for public humiliation by the same woman who offers him her hospitality. When speaking of the festival of Laughter, Byrrhena says: *Hunc tua praesentia nobis efficies gratiorem.* (‘By your presence you will make this a happier occasion for us.’ 2.31). Lateiner (2000: 327) also questions Byrrhena’s involvement in Lucius’ humiliation. He (n. 35, ibid.) mentions her ‘sadistic treatment of Thelyphron’ and wonders if her invitation to dinner after the Risus festival is to get Lucius to tell his story, just as Thelyphron had done; this perhaps is implied by Lucius’ fear of going to her house (3.12).

\(^{77}\) ‘*ac iam perfice ut meae Veneri Cupido pinnatus assistam tibi.*’
decision to save Lucius in addition to the pity she felt during his prayer to the moon (11.5).

In summary, many themes, including waviness, the ship on the sea, sex and magic, and initiations and weddings, all are used to indicate that the relationship of Isis and Lucius recalls the love affair of Lucius and Photis. Both offer Lucius a connection to the supernatural, but since Isis is divine she cannot make the same mistake as the witch’s apprentice. While their relationship is chaste, it has the same hold upon Lucius as sex ever did. Thus it would appear that, in Lucius’ case, there is little difference between the Venus caelestis and Venus vulgaris. Like the witches and their lovers, Isis takes on a dominant role in Lucius’ life, making major decisions for him that involve his finances. Lucius may no longer be a slave to servile pleasures, but the ineffable pleasure he gets from contemplating her image fills the same psychological niche. Therefore, Lucius’ conversion to the Isiac faith contains a great deal of irony in that he is ensnared by Isis as Socrates was by Meroë, and transformed by Isis like he had been by Photis. Lucius is essentially the submissive and devoted lover of elegy, and Isis is his divine mistress.

**Osiris, Divine Mentor**

If Lucius plays the role of lover to Isis, the question of what he is to Osiris still remains. In the *Metamorphoses*, however, the presence of Isis dwarfs that of Osiris to the extent that he is largely ignored by many interpretations of Book 11. As such, his connection to the previous books is much less apparent than that of Isis and her connection with magic and powerful females. Yet there is one man in the *Metamorphoses* whose relationship to Lucius can be seen to have a bearing upon Lucius’ relationship to Osiris.

Before this connection is explored, it is important to establish the general thematic thread linking Osiris to Books 1-10. The myth of Isis and Osiris seems to be evoked in the *Metamorphoses* through the theme of the murdered husband, in which the widow’s relation to the murder and the husband’s shade paying a visit from the underworld are important features.
In the above section on magic, the myth of Isis and Osiris was connected to the story of Thelyphron. Of particular note were the ideas of women collecting body parts of the dead and a widow mourning for a husband, though it is only feigned grief in Thelyphron’s tale. The priest Zatchlas, following Isis’ example, uses magic to revive the dead husband; thus like Osiris, this unjustly murdered husband makes a return from the land of the dead, but instead of coupling with his wife he condemns her. The mercenary nature of Zatchlas, who charges a ‘great price’ (*grandi praemio; 2.28*) to a grieving family that seeks justice, is recalled with Asinius Marcellus, who informs Lucius upon meeting him that he has been promised ‘ample recompense’ (*grande compendium; 11.27*) by Osiris for the service he will perform. Thus the episode plays upon the Isis and Osiris myth with the murdered husband revived by magic, but also foreshadows the pecuniary theme (associated here with a priest) that is reintroduced late in Book 11.

Another episode in the novel that touches upon aspects of the Isis and Osiris myth is the tale of Charite and Tlepolemus. In this tale, Thrasyllus treacherously plots against and murders Tlepolemus, just as Seth-Typhon treacherously kills Osiris by tricking him to enter a coffin, which he seals and dumps in the Nile (Plut. *De Is. et Os*. 356c). But Charite, like Isis, defeats her husband’s slayer and is reunited with him (*unita sepultura ibidem marito perpetuam coniugem reddidere; 8.14*). Before this happens, Tlepolemus’ shade appears to Charite in a dream (8.8), thus the theme of a visit from the dead husband, also found in Thelyphron’s tale, resurfaces.

The last episode involving a murdered husband is that of the miller and his wicked wife. She hires a witch to force her husband to love her again or, failing that, kill him for divorcing her (9.29). Here the wife is the antithesis of the mythic Isis. Interestingly, the theme of necromancy is reused with the witch summoning a ghoul to kill the husband. The night after his death the shade of the miller appears to his daughter

---

78 Charite’s references to her vengeance (*vindictam, 8.12; vindicavi; 8.13*) resurface in Isis’ list of names—the goddess includes Rhamnusia, a cult-title of Nemesis (11.5), which otherwise seems out of place given the context of speaking with a suppliant. Heiserman (1977: 160) notes another connection between Isis and Charite in that Charite escapes from the robbers on the back of an ass (6.27-29), just as a virgin rode upon an ass in Isiac ritual, symbolising victory over Seth-Typhon.
revealing the mother’s treachery. Thus the theme of a visit of the murdered husband from the underworld unites all of these episodes.

These episodes demonstrate that Apuleius has worked into the text aspects of the Isis and Osiris myth using the theme of murdered husbands and an interest in the widow’s relationship to the deceased (as perpetrator of his murder or avenger of it). None of these Osirian figures, however, has a relationship to Lucius. Nevertheless, there is one husband who does have a relationship with Lucius and is connected to Osiris. Milo is linked to Osiris not through the story of his death, but by having a powerful wife who practices magic. Indeed, Lucius’ asinine adventures are framed by both his relationship to Milo and Pamphile and later his relationship to Isis and Osiris. Fittingly, when Lucius is transformed into an ass by the magical ointment of Milo’s wife, it is the wife of Osiris who undoes this magic. Thus it is important to examine Lucius’ relationships to both Milo and Osiris in order to assess Lucius’ experience at the end of Book 11.

Several themes can be seen to connect the episodes at either end of the *Metamorphoses*. Milo’s home and the cults of Isis and Osiris can be connected with their frugal approach to meals. Preceding his initiations Lucius must submit himself to a meatless diet (*inanimis contentus cibus*; 11.28) with no wine (*invinius essem*; 11.23). This recalls the insubstantial ‘meal of words’ (*cenatus solis fabulis*) and ‘famished banquet’ (*famelicum convivium*) to which Lucius was subjected in the house of Milo (11.26). Moreover, the ‘banquet of great sanctity’ that Asinius presides over in Lucius’ dream at 11.27 has to be provided for by Lucius (Asinius places the sacred objects at his household gods, indicating that it is indeed Lucius’ house and, therefore, he is responsible for providing the meal). Similarly, Lucius has to provide his own meal when he arrives at the miserly Milo’s house (1.24).

---

79 That is, a relationship to him as a man. The miller, and technically Tlepolemus, owned Lucius as an ass.
80 Vander Poppen (2008: 157-74) discusses the relationship between Lucius and Isis (along with her priests) in terms of *hospitium*, comparing Lucius’ stay in Milo’s home as his guest with Isis and her cult.
81 Griffiths (1975: 332-33) does not see this meal as a part of Lucius’ initiation rites because it precedes them (rather than following them, like that for the Cenchreaean initiation) when Lucius would be abstaining from meat and wine. He instead considers it a type of convivial meeting for the guild of worshippers.
Both Milo and Osiris become particularly demanding when Lucius’ enthusiasm wanes. Milo seeks to offer the hospitality of his house when Lucius wishes to go to bed after his long travels; the not so gracious host insists that Lucius stay up and talk with him by swearing an oath that he will not leave him alone until he does so, keeping Lucius from much needed sleep (1.26). Similarly, when Osiris seeks to offer Lucius the benefit of his cult, Lucius hesitates for lack of funds, so the god intrudes upon his dreams and presses him again and again to be initiated (identidem numinis premebar instantia; 11.28). Osiris even demands that Lucius sell his clothes to pay for the initiation.

This particular demand of Osiris ties in with the pecuniary theme and the miserliness of Milo. When Lucius is forced to sell his clothing for his second initiation, not only does this recall the poverty of Socrates at the hands of Meroë (1.7), discussed above in the section on Isis, but also the thrift exhibited by Milo, who, despite his wealth, shamelessly dresses like a beggar (1.21), and who does not even have enough furniture to accommodate a single guest (1.23). The point, here, is not to show that Lucius and Milo are alike by dressing in rags, but rather that Osiris encourages in Lucius the thrifty attitude shown by Milo in Book 1, which reveals that both Milo and Osiris hold strong views regarding money. Furthermore, the financial focus of Osiris becomes clear when he announces that Lucius is to be initiated, despite his poverty, because he will be a success story, thus providing Asinius with the ‘ample recompense’ that one would not otherwise expect to be used to entice a priest (11.27). Viewing Lucius as a good investment that will bring a return is a mode of thinking that a money lender like Milo would well understand. Similarly, Osiris is aware of the worth in associating with a success story, just as Milo is conscious of the recognition he will receive by housing a young noble from Corinth (1.23).

This literary destiny of Lucius is alluded to at Milo’s table and by Osiris. After revealing the Chaldaean Diophanes to be a fraud, Milo nevertheless hopes that the false

---

82 Note that Lucius undergoes his third initiation to get a new cloak (11.29), whereas Socrates was dressed only in a patchwork cloak (1.7). Weiss (1998: 97-98) connects the experience of Socrates and Lucius by the use of lacinitis (1.7; 11.28).
prophet’s prediction for Lucius’ literary fame (at 2.12) turns out to be true (2.14). In Book 11, it is Osiris himself who states that Lucius will receive fame for his studies (11.27).

Having made this prediction and having invested in Lucius, it is perhaps no surprise that Osiris takes an interest in Lucius’ rhetorical career. Osiris encourages Lucius to continue to win fame in the courts and to ignore the slanders of detractors (11.30). This reference to both mockery and pleading in the courts recalls Lucius’ earlier attempt at oratory during his defence at the mock trial of the Risus Festival. There, Lucius actively drew laughter from the crowd with his display, and his host Milo was chief among the ‘detractors’ (3.7). Lucius thinks he is to be condemned and already counts himself dead (in peculio Proserpinae et Orct familia numerates; 3.9). So, when the bodies of the slain turn out to be wineskins, Lucius is dumbstruck; significantly, it is not until Milo approaches him that Lucius rises ‘from the dead’ (Nec prius ab inferis emersi quam Milon hospes accessit; 3.10). This reference subtly reintroduces the theme of necromancy and the realm of the dead that belongs to Osiris. In the tale of Cupid and Psyche (6.18), Charon is said to be a tax-collector (exactor) and greed is said to be alive among the dead (Ergo et inter mortuos avarita vivit; 6.18), thus providing a thematic bridge between Milo, money, the dead, and Osiris. Indeed, Osiris promotes Lucius to the college of pastophori and the quinquennial board of directors only after Lucius wins fame in the courts (11.30)—it seems to be a reward for his rhetorical fame rather than for any religious knowledge. So in the end Osiris honours Lucius with a promotion for the fame he won in court, just as Milo had come with the town magistrates to honour Lucius with a statue for his performance in the mock ‘courtroom’ of the Risus festival (3.11).

---

83 Ironically, Lucius has become an actor in a stage piece but does not know it. This is perhaps relevant for the finale, where Lucius looks like a calvus mimus but does not realise it.

84 The above correlations are not intended to claim that Milo and Osiris are exactly alike, or that Milo should be interpreted as Osiris in human form (as James (1987: 241) considers Byrrhena to be Isis). There are differences; for instance, Milo, at 2.11, is sceptical of his wife’s divination (and likely dream divination, to which Osiris plays an active part with Asinius Marcellus and Lucius).
Thus it can be seen that, in addition to the themes of magic and eroticism (discussed above in relation to Isis), Lucius’ time in Milo’s house at the beginning of the *Metamorphoses* shares many themes at the end of the novel with his time under the power of Osiris, including money, miserliness, frugal meals, rhetoric, and fame. As far as Lucius’ relationship to Osiris is concerned, it can be said to resemble that of Milo and Lucius since one is an experienced older male guiding the other, a handsome youth still to make something of himself. This relationship is akin to the master-student pairing of Socrates and Alcibiades (Plut. *Alc.* 4.1-3), the master-slave pairing of Trimalchio and his favourite slave boy (Petron. *Sat.* 74.8), or even that of a patron of literature and his client author. For, like Milo with Lucius, Osiris appears to reveal a degree of self-interest concerning Lucius’ fame.

**Conclusion**

The relationship of Lucius to both Isis and Osiris can be seen to have been foreshadowed by earlier figures in the *Metamorphoses*. These characters are connected by themes that weave in and out of the text, such as magic, money, sex, domination, de-masculinisation, and death. A careful reading of these figures informs the nature of Lucius’ relationships with Isis and Osiris. Thus to Osiris, Lucius is an investment and someone to mould; and to Isis, Lucius is someone to control and from whom to demand worship and adoration. This provides an amusing twist to Lucius’ conversion and ties Book 11 to Books 1-10 with clever irony. Lucius is saved from his servile pleasures of sex and magic by a goddess closely associated with both. He pledges himself as a slave to Photis in order to experience magic, but when this fails he is eventually saved by Isis, who then commands him he to be her slave. Moreover, Lucius begins as a guest in the miserly Milo’s home only to be exploited for his status. There, Lucius chooses not to

---

85 Trimalchio claims to favour the boy for his mind and talents, wishing to benefit him with his favour (75.4), much like Trimalchio himself received for ‘serving’ his master well (75.10-11). Note also that Trimalchio attended his master and his mistress in like fashion, but while this was a point of contention for the couple, for Isis and Osiris this is not an issue—they seem happy to share a devoted Lucius. Zimmerman (2006: 103), discussing echoes of satire in Book 11, notes that Lucius’ relationship to Isis is viewed as that of *clerus* with *patronus*. Note also that the crowd who witnessed Lucius’ restoration consider him thrice blessed to have ‘patronage from heaven’ (*de caelo patrocinium*; 11.16).
pursue his host’s wife and in Book 11 he becomes the chaste ‘lover’ of his divine mentor’s consort. But while the above connections are important for informing an interpretation of Book 11, the question as to why Lucius’ relationships with the gods take this form remains. Therefore, the focus must shift from the gods to Lucius himself.
CHAPTER FIVE

The Transformed Man

The previous chapters have established that Lucius is not satirised as a gullible convert who believes the words of false priests and the messages of wish-fulfilling dreams. As such, his relationships with Isis and Osiris are real, but they mirror those he has already experienced in Books 1-10. Yet whilst revealing authorial irony, this in itself does not constitute the satire of Book 11. It does, however, draw attention to Lucius’ character and help to undermine the presentation of his conversion. Therefore, a close examination of Lucius before and after his encounter with the gods is necessary in order to properly assess the satire in Book 11. This chapter will present the character of Lucius before he meets Isis and discuss the character of the converted Lucius as put forward by those who interpret a reformed protagonist. Following this, the ‘reformed’ Lucius will be reassessed for evidence of personal growth and a changed mindset. And finally, the contentious passage that seems to unite protagonist and author will be discussed to appreciate fully what and who Lucius really is to Apuleius.

Lucius, Pre-Conversion

To identify change in Lucius, one must determine his character before his conversion. While there is no single passage explaining who Lucius is, his identity can be constructed from pieces of information scattered throughout the first few books. Lucius is from an illustrious family based in Corinth.\(^1\) His mother, Salvia (evidently a Roman citizen, judging from the name), is from Thessalian stock and descends from Plutarch.

---

\(^1\) Corinth (1.22, 2.12), Milo notes the status of Lucius’ family (1.23), Byrrha; the magistrate notes Lucius’ high status and his family’s position in his apology for the Risus festival (3.11).
and Sextus (1.2; 2.3). Lucius is likely to be a Roman citizen, judging from his praenomen. His father is apparently named Theseus (1.23) and is of distinguished status (2.3). Unsurprisingly, Lucius has been provided with an aristocratic education, studying at Athens (1.24; 3.15, 11.15). Regarding his character, it is interesting to note Lucius’ shyness in front of his aunt (2.2, 2.3) as well as his claim to have avoided the embraces of women before he met Photis (3.19). This is important because it shows that Lucius’ newfound sexual lust is intrinsically linked with his desire to experience magic. This desire reveals Lucius’ interest in strange and supernatural matters, which he sometimes tries to explain using his basic knowledge of philosophical principals. Lucius’ curiosity and meddlesomeness are illustrated in the very first scene, in which he interrupts the conversation of two strangers because he is intrigued—he says he is not curious, but likes to know about everything (1.2). Yet his very attempt to deny his curiosity indicates a degree of affectation in his character; he wants to appear to be an intellectual, but his interests (the conversation is clearly about magic) and the manner of his pursuit of them (interrupting strangers on the road) suggest that he is not. Indeed, his impetuousness and gullibility are displayed by his manic search for magic (2.1-2), his assault on the animated wineskins when he is drunk (2.32), and his pledge of slavery to

---

2 This change in Plutarch’s homeland will be discussed below. Finkelpearl (2012: 200), following Krabbe, posits a connection between Lucius’ mother ‘Salvia’ and Lucius’ salvation in the mother goddess Isis. This would add significance to the observation of Clarke (1987: 17): ‘The root of Lucius’s metamorphic career is his lust to be privy to female and maternal powers.’ The Freudian implications of Lucius spying on Pamphile and his adoration of Isis’ image would lend weight to the idea that, psychologically, Lucius remains much the same after his salvation as he had been before it.

3 Harrison (2000a) 216.

4 Harrison (2000a: 215) suspects that the name is merely used for the literary allusion to Callimachus’ Hecale. It would seem a strange allusion for Milo to make, however, if the name were inaccurate.

5 Photis playfully refers to Lucius as scholasticus ‘schoolboy’ (2.10). Harrison (2000a: 215-220) provides a good overview of Lucius’ education and intellectual pretentions.

6 Despite playing the role of lover, Lucius does not truly love Photis, for when she mistakenly transforms him he contemplates killing her but decides against it because she might still be able to cure him (3.25). Sandy (1978: 131) argues that Lucius is not a complete sinner, for he judges Charite for her supposed fickleness, exposes an adulterer, exposes the Syrian priests when they try to debauch a young man, and chooses to pursue Photis rather than his host’s wife. But Lucius still spies on his host’s wife and seduces his serving girl, which are both highly inappropriate breaches of the guest-host relationship.

7 An interest in things difficult to understand, including magic (1.3-4, 2.1); the Pliny the Elder-esque defence for the strange that turns out to be true (1.3-4); a knowledge of the Stoic idea of sympathy between celestial fire and regular fire (2.12); Pythagoras and the sacred number seven (11.1). Kirichenko (2008: 352) notes that Lucius’ defence for the strange is similar to Pliny the Elder. Harrison (2000a: 217) views the mention of descent from Plutarch and Sextus as suggesting that ‘Lucius has inherited some of his family’s intellectual interests’.
Thus Lucius shows himself to be a naïve young man despite his education.

This behaviour appears to be at odds with a comment made by Photis that suggests Lucius is an initiate of many cults (*sacris pluribus initiatus*; 3.15). Lucius’ status as an inveterate initiate would connect him to Apuleius due to a similar detail found in his defence speech (*Apol.* 55). Indeed, it has been suggested that such a clear autobiographical detail is part of Apuleius’ larger plan to express his own religious feelings at the novel’s conclusion. Such an explanation, however, ignores the context in which this comment is made and therefore the purpose of its speaker. The claim that Lucius is an initiate of many cults is made by Photis after she has just praised his education, high birth, and character. It is therefore part of the flattery she employs to soften him up before she explains how she is to blame for his public humiliation at the Risus festival. Furthermore, the reference to mystery cults is entirely appropriate because the explanation she is about to offer requires her to reveal the secret of her mistress’s ‘mysteries’ (*secreta*). Stating that he is already an initiate of many cults, therefore, is her way of saying that she deems him to be trustworthy enough for the secret that her mistress is a powerful witch. In addition, by taking for granted that he has been initiated into many cults (as if to say that someone as dignified as him surely has been), she is challenging him to maintain the secrecy required of an initiate. Far from a biographical detail about Lucius, it is a cunning device by Photis.

Another telling factor against taking this detail literally is that nowhere else in the work is Lucius said to be an initiate of any other mystery cults—not even in the speech of Mithras that notes how Lucius’ education failed to prevent him falling prey to servile pleasures. Surely it would be worth mentioning how, as a member of other mystery cults, he should have known better than to become involved with magic. Therefore, the

---

8 Griffiths (1975) 1-7 (esp. 3-5).
9 Winkler (1985: n.77, 319) points to a similar use by Achilles Tatius whereby being initiated means being trustworthy (*Leuc. et Cleit.* 5.26.3). The irony, of course, is that Lucius is already aware of this secret and that this is why he pursued Photis in the first place. Alternatively, Harrison (2000a: 217) thinks this detail is included to highlight Lucius’ status and education: ‘a by-product of education and travel; those visiting famous cult-sites in the Greek world could have themselves initiated into the cult, just as (for example) Augustus was initiated into the Eleusinian mysteries’.

---

a slave girl in order to experience dangerous magic (3.22). Thus Lucius shows himself to be a naïve young man despite his education.
notion that a naïve Lucius is a veteran of multiple mystery cults who regresses into magic only to find salvation in another mystery cult makes little narrative sense. Most importantly, associating Lucius with experienced initiates is incongruous with his character and, in particular, his obsession with magic.

The case of someone saying something about Lucius that clearly is not true occurs elsewhere. After Mithras draws the moral lesson for Lucius’ adventures and explains that asshood was the ‘perverse reward’ (sinistrum praemium) of his ‘ill-starred curiosity’ (curiositatis impropserae; 11.15), the people watching then offer their own interpretation. They believe that Lucius has been favoured with this transformation because of his innocent and faithful life (innocentia fideque; 11.16), which creates disharmony in this otherwise miraculous scene.\(^\text{10}\) In light of the speech of Mithras (and the facts of the story), this is clearly a case of authorial irony. Indeed, Isis says that she saves Lucius because she was moved to pity by his prayer (1.5), not because he was innocent or had shown repentance for the sins that led to his asshood.\(^\text{11}\) Thus, up until his vision of Isis, Lucius has not given up on the curiosity that led to his transformation into an ass and has therefore shown neither moral progress nor wisdom gained.

**Lucius, Post-Conversion**

Lucius the Isiac adept is seen by some to be the antithesis of his former self. Frangoulidis argues that Lucius’ lust gives way to celibacy while his foolishness is replaced with divine knowledge.\(^\text{12}\) Lucius even demonstrates his wisdom by warning the reader not to become too curious about his initiation (11.23), thus showing mastery over

\(^{10}\) Winkler (1985: 210-15) believes that this passage creates doubt because two opposing interpretations are presented one after the other. Kenny (2003: 160) says that this scene reminds the reader that Lucius has been saved because of his faith rather than his deeds.

\(^{11}\) Jones (1995: 13) argues that asshood is neither a punishment for sins nor a purgatory experience because Lucius has not shown repentance as an ass. He is still lustful (6.28; 7.16; 10.21-22), gluttonous (4.1; 10.13), and shows his characteristic curiosity (9.13; 9.42). He is saved by Isis because she pities him (11.5) when he calls upon the moon as the ‘queen of heaven’ (11.2), not because she has been impressed by his gradual progression. Shumate (1996: 122) puts Lucius’ salvation down to the grace of Isis.

\(^{12}\) Frangoulidis (2008: 174): ‘Thus she [sc. Isis] rushes to ass-Lucius’ aid and restores him to his human form, giving him back his self-dignity, of which Photis deprived him, and simultaneously removing all negative features associated with the metamorphosis into an ass: sexuality gives way to abstinence, and foolishness is replaced by true knowledge, which the hero made a misguided attempt to obtain through Photis’ catastrophic magic.’
his most troublesome trait.\textsuperscript{13} This wisdom is the reward of Isis.\textsuperscript{14} Lucius’ fasting is connected with his celibacy (as requirements for initiation), and his adherence to both illustrates a greater self-control than he previously exhibited.\textsuperscript{15} James and O’Brien state that Lucius comes to love his soul and thus is able to use his ‘eyes of the soul’ to behold Isis, who is herself a metaphor for divine knowledge.\textsuperscript{16} Graverini sees evidence for Lucius’ wisdom at the opposite end of Book 11, stating that Lucius achieves Odyssean wisdom with the phrase \textit{laboriosa doctrina} (11.30).\textsuperscript{17} This contrasts with the ‘bookish and arrogant \textit{doctrina} of the young \textit{scholasticus} Lucius’.\textsuperscript{18} Representing another approach is Shumate; for her, Lucius abandons his many lusts, which highlight his connection to the false values of the chaotic world in Books 1-10, and instead finds a new set of values anchored upon Isis.\textsuperscript{19} In various ways, then, these studies endeavour to show that Lucius finally attains wisdom, overcomes his curiosity, renounces his lust for food, sex, and magic, and thus demonstrates a reformation of values.

From the analysis of Lucius’ relationship to the gods in the previous chapter, however, it seems inaccurate to say that Lucius has completely changed. But to state that he has undergone no change after his adventure would be equally untrue. The key, then, is to examine how he has changed and how he has not. This will be done by assessing the character of narrator-Lucius in light of his conversion and evaluating Lucius in Book 11 for evidence of higher wisdom or divine knowledge. Accordingly,
two passages of utmost importance to any interpretation of the *Metamorphoses* will be discussed. These are Lucius’ proud display of baldness (11.30) and his identification with Apuleius in the dream of Asinius Marcellus (11.27).

**The Inconscient Narrator**

One of the most striking aspects of Lucius’ narration, and most troublesome in terms of interpretation, is the absence of comment upon or condemnation of his past behaviour. Winkler calls this the ‘suppression of the *auctor*-narrator’, through which the idea of the religious conversion is hidden from the reader until the end.\(^{20}\) This contrasts with the narrative of *Confessiones*, in which Augustine describes his pre-conversion life from his post-conversion perspective.\(^{21}\)

Shumate believes that the lack of comment on past actions is designed to recreate the mindset of a Lucius who was oblivious to his need for a realignment of values, so that his conversion comes as much a surprise to the reader as it did to him.\(^{22}\) Weiss, however, takes another view. He believes narrator-Lucius lacks the subtlety to have held back such condemnation in order to emphasise the grace of Isis and Osiris: ‘Lucius is unaware of the conflicts he creates. It is indeed an Isiac convert that narrates the *Met*. from beginning to end, but it is an inconscient convert, not an omniscient one.’\(^{23}\) Weiss thus concludes that ‘Lucius knows only the story of the *Met*. … and not the plot; he has an ironically insufficient conception of his own narrative.’\(^{24}\) Thus the narrator has no purpose in assuming the actor’s perspective and failing to comment upon his past actions; this simply reflects Lucius’ focus upon the stories themselves, rather than on

\(^{21}\) Ibid. 41: ‘The present narrator [Augustine] invades his past as an enemy territory, using his god as a powerful ally to destroy the lingering vestiges of the pleasure he originally felt. Apuleius’ narrator, though he is a deacon of Isis, describes in luscious detail his seduction dialogue, his foreplay, and each sexual position he assumed with Photis’.
\(^{22}\) Shumate (1988) 42.
\(^{23}\) Weiss (1998) 104. *Inconscience* is the trait belonging to an unreliable narrator whereby ‘the narrator is mistaken, or believes himself to have qualities which the author denies him’, which thus creates an ironic gap between what the narrator expresses and what the author presents to the reader; the quote is from Booth (1983) 159. For a discussion of Lucius’ inconscience, see Weiss (1998) 77-79 (esp. n. 15, 78).
\(^{24}\) Ibid.
his present feelings regarding their content or implications. This accords with actor-Lucius’ enjoyment of stories for their own sake (cf. 1.20) as well as narrator-Lucius’ desire to tell tales he hopes the reader will enjoy as well (8.22, 9.4, 9.14).

This trait of the narrator being inconscient fits with the gullible and misapprehending nature of actor-Lucius discussed in Chapter Three. Indeed, Lucius fails to realise that by telling the story from the ‘experiencing I’ and not commenting on his past, he creates tension between his eventual status as a pastophorus of Isis and Osiris and the Milesian-style tales that have filled Books 1-10. Consequently, Winkler sees irony in Lucius refusing to couple with the condemned woman because she is attainted and yet taking delight in telling her horrible tale as a narrator. Similarly, Lucius’ vows of chastity do not harmonise with the erotic detail of his earlier encounters with Photis (2.7-10, 16-17, 3.20), the matrona (10.21-22), and the description of the mimic Venus (10.31), all of which suggest—if not a lingering appreciation for these things—at least, a desire to titillate the reader that is so strong it supplants any sense of decorum one would expect from a priest. This is the comic premise to the Metamorphoses that no interpretation of

---

25 Kenny (2003) 167. Lucius’ lack of reflection is a trait of the actor and the narrator (i.e. this is unchanged by his conversion). He enjoys stories for their salacious detail and twists of fate, but he fails to take into account the suffering involved. Thus he, as actor, labels the story of Aristomenes’ exile and loss of his friend as a ‘charming and delightful story’ (lepidae fabulae festivitate; 1.20), and as narrator, he refers to the tale of the miller’s death at the instigation of his wicked wife a ‘good story’ (fabulum… bonam; 9.14); cf. Kenny (170): ‘Lucius’ description of the story of the miller’s wife as delightful entertainment is eloquent testimony to his failure to exercise prudentia, how to tell good from bad, on what his ears tell him. He shows himself to be, in any philosophically respectable sense, incapable of learning.’

26 Jones (1995: 14): ‘Lucius’ experience is as much comprised of what he hears as what actually happens to him.’ Needless to say, Lucius is unaware of the thematic relationship between the stories he tells and his own.

27 Van Mal-Maeder (1997: 89) talks about the surprise of the narrator being a priest—yet it is a long way from the Confessions of Augustine. ‘Lucius tells the story from the ‘experiencing I’ rather than the ‘narrating I’. Winkler (1985: n.16, 9): ‘Lucius’s vocation in Book 11 makes him precisely such a person as could not have narrated the preceding ten books.’ And yet it is also very fitting that Lucius would not notice this; cf. Massey (1976: 42): ‘Yet this almost ludicrous degree of submissiveness to a faith can be foreseen from the very beginning of the book. Lucius’ curiosity is only matched, (and perhaps justified), by his credulity.’

28 Winkler (1985) 147. Winkler also shows that it is not ‘a new moral consciousness’ that puts Lucius off coupling with the condemned woman, it is her status as a criminal, the publicity of the act, and the chance he will be killed by the beasts. The bashful Lucius of 2.2 would have fled from the amphitheatre at 10.35 too.

29 Van Mal-Maeder (1997: 107): ‘The shaving of his head has often been interpreted as an act of renouncement of carnal pleasures. However, it is the initiate of Isis who, in book 2, engages in an eulogy on feminine hair whose sensuality seems to betray that he has not given anything up at all.’ Similarly, Zimmerman-de Graaf (1993: 149) points out that the Judgement of Paris scene would have stirred up the
Book 11 as depicting a sincere and edifying religious experience can deny: Apuleius creates a wonderful sense of irony by presenting a narrator who delights in telling a succession of stories full of adultery, greed, bestiality, violence, and murder, only to reveal that he left that world behind and found religion in the end. That is to say, for the reader, Lucius' unconscience creates an ironic gap between narrator and author that cannot help but undercut his conversion.\footnote{Similarly, Harrison (2012) interprets scenes from Book 11 from the ironic perspective of the author, which is distant from that of Lucius-auctor.}

Yet there is a deeper significance to Lucius' love of storytelling for its own sake (i.e. without edification). This gossipy nature of Lucius' storytelling is itself an aspect of \textit{curiositas}.\footnote{Kirichenko (2008) 351. It is significant that the first words of Lucius-actor (to the two men whose conversation he has just overheard) are a display his curiosity whilst at the same time an attempt to deny it: ‘\textit{Immo vero’ inquam ‘imperite sermon non quidem curiosum, sed qui velim scire vel cuncta vel certe plurima.’} (‘I asked, “Please let me share your conversation. Not that I am inquisitive, but I am the sort who wants to know everything, or at least most things.”’ 1.2). Kirichenko (352–4) views Lucius’ quest for knowledge as matching that of Pliny the Elder, but lacking in the ability to distinguish between \textit{fabulosa} (supernatural phenomena) and \textit{mirabilia} (rare or unusual natural phenomena).}

That is, learning scandalous secrets is only half of role of the busybody; the other half is sharing them with others.\footnote{Plut. \textit{De cur.} 519c: \textit{\`α γάρ ἡδέως άκοικουν \`αδέως καλοῖσι, καὶ \`α παρ᾽ άλλον σπουδὴ συλλέγονται πρὸς ἕτεροις μετὰ χαρᾶς ἐκφέροντον. (‘For what the curious delight to hear they delight to tell, and what they zealously collect from others they joyously reveal to everyone else.’). Translation by Hembold 2000. Kirichenko (2008: 355) lists all the stories that Lucius-actor hears and Lucius-narrator relates for the reader, stating: ‘What all these stories have in common is that they happen to relate events that Plutarch describes as particularly fascinating to the \textit{πολυπρόφημοι [busybody]}’.}

Indeed, Lucius even gets carried away when telling his readers about his initiation:  

\begin{quote}
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, ista impiae loquacitatis, illae temerariae curiositatis. Nec te tamen desiderio forsitan religioso suspensum angore diutino cruciabo. Igitur audi, sed crede, quae vera sunt. Accessi confinium mortis et, calcato Proserpinae limine, per omnia vectus elementa remeavi; nocte media vidi solém candido coruscantem lumine; deos inferos et deos superos accessi coram et adorai de
\end{quote}

\footnote{Many scholars have noted that Lucius reveals too much when he discusses his first initiation; Harrison (2012) 82–83; Van Nuffelen (2011) 95; Schmeling and Montiglio (2006) 39; Weiss (1998) 100. Even Griffiths (1975: 308), who sees Book 11 as a fictionalised account of Apuleius’ own religious conversion, admits that Lucius has said too much. Note that the secrecy of mystery cults is imbedded in the name: \textit{μύστης} ‘one initiated’ in τὰ \textit{μυστήρια} ‘the mysteries’, derived from the verb \textit{μυεῖν} ‘to close, shut’; the penalty for revealing the secrets of these cults to the uninitiated was death. Pausanias relates two stories in which inquisitive men died after telling others what they saw after sneaking into forbidden areas of Isiac shrines (Paus. 10.32.17–18).}
proxumo. Ecce tibi rettuli quae, quamuis audita, ignores tamen necesse est. Ergo quod solum potest sine piaculo ad profanorum intellagentias enuntiari referam. (11.23)

Perhaps, my zealous reader, you are eager to learn what has been said and done next. I would tell if it were permitted to tell; you would learn if it were permitted to hear. But both ears and tongue would incur equal guilt, the latter from its unholy talkativeness, the former from their unbridled curiosity. Since your suspense, however, is perhaps a matter of religious longing, I will not continue to torture you and keep you in anguish. Therefore listen, but believe: these things are true. I came to the boundary of death and, having trodden the threshold of Proserpina, I travelled through all the elements and returned. In the middle of the night I saw the sun flashing with bright light. I came face to face with the gods below and the gods above and paid reverence to them from close at hand. Behold I have told you things which perforce you may not know, although you have heard them. Therefore I shall relate only what can be expounded to the minds of the uninitiated without atonement.

Lucius first titillates his readers, warning that their inquisitiveness is a religious transgression, but concedes that it may stem from religious longing. He then begins to describe that which he had just said it was sinful to tell. Realising he has said too much and recognizing that his readers (being profani) would not know what to make of the things he has just said, he pulls himself up (ecce). He then says that he will only relate what would be intelligible to them and permissible for him tell. It thus becomes clear that Photis’ comment at 3.15 that Lucius is one who can keep secrets with regards to mysteries is loaded with a great deal of authorial irony come Book 11. The further irony is that, by titillating his reader’s curiosity about the initiation, Lucius treats the story of his profound religious experience just as he treats stories of adultery and magic.

Another instance of narrator-Lucius displaying the traits of a busybody occurs at the only point in the narrative in which he comments upon his adventures from his own perspective, rather than the actor’s. This happens after highlighting his degradation in the miller’s service and finding only one consolation to having become an ass.

Nec immerito priscae poeticae divines aucto apud Graios summae prudentiae virum monstrae cupiens, multarum civitatum obitu et variorum populorum cognitu summas adeptum cirtutes cecinit. Nam et ipse gratas gratias asino meo memini, quod me suo celatum tegmine variisque fortunis exercitatum, etsi minus prudentem, multiscium reddidit. (9.13)

34 Kirichenko (2008: 366) notes that Lucius equates curiosity driven by religious feelings with sacrilegious curiosity. Kirichenko (367) also notes that Plutarch states that religious yearning should be without περιεργία ‘intermeddling’ (Plut. De Is. et Os. 352b).
Homer, that divinely inspired founder of Greece’s antediluvian poetic art, certainly had his reasons, when he wanted to put on display a hero of the greatest wisdom and forethought, for singing that he had gained the greatest virtues and strengths by visiting many cities and learning about many peoples. And I myself give thanks, great thanks, to the ass that I was then, for when I was hidden under its disguise and trained in fortunes of all sorts, it made me too quite the polymath, though admittedly not so wise as Ulysses was.\(^{35}\)

Having expressed his thanks for all the knowledge he was able to gain as an unassuming ass, the narrator (who is no Odysseus, but claims to be wiser than before), then gives an example of this wide-learning by telling ‘a tale better than the others’ (\textit{Fabulam denique bonam prae ceteris}; 9.14). True to the figure of the busybody, the tale focuses on the miller’s wife, whose discussion about her adulterous desires he was able to overhear with his enlarged asinine ears. Lucius the \textit{pastophorus} actually admits that he does not regret having become an ass because it better enabled him to satiate his curiosity!\(^{36}\) Yet this is the very trait that Mithras condemned in his speech (11.15) and led to Lucius wearing the asinine form so hateful to Isis. The narrator either fails to understand this (he is inconscient), or does not care about his priest’s message (he is a hypocrite). Neither is flattering, though the former is most likely.

Plutarch points out that scandalous gossip, such as that about the miller’s wife, is the most attractive to the busybody.\(^{37}\) To avoid this behaviour, Plutarch recommends directing such curiosity towards natural philosophy or history rather than the private

---

\(^{35}\) Translation by Relihan 2007. I have chosen Relihan’s translation for this passage because he seems to be correct in taking the comparison \textit{minus prudentem} with the previous sentence about Homer’s Odysseus (who was \textit{summae prudentiae}), rather than understanding it strictly to be a comparison between Lucius the actor and Lucius the narrator (i.e. Lucius was less wise than he is now) or speaking about him now, but taking \textit{minus} to mean ‘not very’ and thus admitting to not being wise at present despite knowing a lot. Nevertheless, in this passage, the narrator is implying that he is wiser now than he was before because he is comparing the his experience to that of Odysseus; he too has travelled far and gained knowledge by observing many people, but (wishing to show some modestly) he admits that he is less wise than Odysseus, hence \textit{minus prudentem}. For an in-depth discussion on this problem, including bibliography, see Kenny (2003) 175.

\(^{36}\) Graverini (2012: 92-93) seems to understand that it is actor-Lucius that is \textit{minus prudentem} but \textit{multiscium}. This, however, makes little sense since it is the narrator who is remembering and who is thankful; cf. Winkler (1985) 167. Kenny (2003: 161-62) argues that this passage helps to illustrate that Lucius’ period as an ass helped him as a literary artist, pointing out that \textit{multiscium} is used by Apuleius elsewhere (\textit{Apologia} and \textit{Florida}) only for ‘artistic excellence’, rather than scientific knowledge. This reference to Homer could perhaps be Lucius’ way of comparing himself to the ‘divinely inspired’ poet.

\(^{37}\) οὕτω τὰ τῶν πολυπραγμονῶν ὡτά τοὺς ζαυξωλοῦτοις λόγοις ἐπιστάται (‘so the ears of busy bodies attract the most evil stories’; Plut. \textit{De cur.} 518b). Translation by Hembold 2000.
lives of others (*De cur. 517c*-)). This desire of Lucius to expose the dirty secrets of others, both as character and narrator, is said by Plutarch to point ultimately towards a ‘vicious nature’ (*κακοήθεια; De cur. 518c-d*). Naturally, this is not to be found in a true philosopher, and thus makes the idea that Lucius finds wisdom with his conversion to Isis very hard to believe.39

**Lucius and Wisdom**

Lucius’ account of his post-conversion experiences is singularly lacking in philosophical or serious religious insight or perceived progress towards any sort of newly-achieved epistemological position.40

At no point in Book 11 does Lucius, as actor or narrator, reflect upon his adventures or draw any conclusions of his own about them. Therefore, it is difficult to discern any wisdom he is said to have gained. Even after Mithras condemns the boundless curiosity that led to Lucius’ slavish pleasures, he does not take the opportunity to comment upon his story. Lucius contemplates the goddess and adores her image (11.19, 24), but this is not presented as introspection, merely ‘mindless adoration’.41 It is her divine face that he imagines and keeps stored in the recesses of his heart (11.25), not the wisdom that is her reward. This instead paints the picture of someone enraptured by the goddess who saved him from his torments.

When Lucius does have doubts it is his god-sent dreams that provide the answers. He is afraid that he will not be able to comply with the strictness of the rules on chastity and that he lacks the ability to guard against life’s misfortunes. Lucius ponders these as he delays (11.19). This proves he is taking his initiation seriously, yet it is significant that Lucius does not come to any conclusions or make any decisions based on his own thoughts; instead, Isis sends him a dream (11.20) that fires his desire to be initiated

39 Cf. Kenny (2003: 168): ‘Critics have sometimes been puzzled to discern the relevance to Lucius of the inserted stories in the later books of the novel as opposed to those in Books 1-3. Properly understood in the light of *Lucius auctor’s* treatment of them, their role emerges clearly: to expose the narrator’s failure to profit from the philosophy that should have been his guide.’
41 The phrase is from Kenny (2003) 177.
Later, when Lucius doubts his own priests, he does not overcome these doubts with sound reasoning; instead, he is instructed by the ‘kindly image’ in his dream not to fear and is assured that he is a special case (11.29). Similarly, Lucius does not make a choice to go to Rome after self-deliberation; instead, the goddess commands Lucius and he hastily obliges (11.26). In the same way, Lucius’ patience before his first initiation does not display wisdom or self-restraint; it instead shows his obedience to Mithras, who tells him not to hasten unbidden (11.21).

The closest Lucius comes to reflecting on his past is when he says that he explained his former sufferings and present joys to his relatives (11.19); but there is no indication that he meditated upon his story to gain personal insight. If fact, he relates his story to family and friends ‘out of courtesy’ (ex officio), but performs this ‘quickly’ (propere), so that he may return to his greatest delight (gratissimum), namely, ‘contemplating’ (conspectum; or just ‘gazing upon’?) Isis. Whatever Lucius means by this, it does not appear to have brought him much knowledge of the cult, for, having been an initiate for a year in Rome, he is still completely unaware of the cult of Osiris (11.26). This glaring ignorance is extremely difficult to reconcile with the idea that Isis has granted wisdom to Lucius.

A lack of introspection is also present with narrator-Lucius’ comments about Photis and her magical mishap. Lucius’ blame of Photis, including violent thoughts (3.26) and anger (7.14, 9.15), might be somewhat understandable during his transformation, but for the ‘wise’ Isiac to continue to blame Photis (as he does at 11.20) is unacceptable. It illustrates his lack of responsibility for his own actions—Photis did not wish to use magic on him (3.22); he persuaded her to show him (3.23). Thus Mithras correctly

---


As, for instance, in Frangouli (2008) 173-74, 187.

Smith (1993: 1593-94) notes that Lucius lacks development with regards to Photis, having similar feelings during his conversion at 11.20 as at he did at 3.26 just after he was transformed. Winkler (1985: 144) states that there are two perspectives: Lucius’ former love for Photis and his present bitter hatred for her. He suggests that this shows the hypocrisy of his earlier feelings of love towards her. The change from him enslaving himself to her to calling her a vile criminal is immediate. Frangouli (2008: 174) claims that it was Photis who changes Lucius and deprives him of his dignity and that it is Isis who restores it. This merely follows the perspective of an unreflective Lucius; in truth, he deprived himself of dignity.
blames Lucius’ curiosity rather than Photis for getting involved in the slavish pleasures of sex and magic (11.15). This lack of introspection indicates that Lucius merely heard the words of Mithras, but did not take them to heart. This is the very fault Plutarch seeks to cure in *de Curiositate.* Significantly, Lucius failing to understand Mithras’ message has already been noted with reference to the narrative intrusion, at 9.13, in which Lucius demonstrates that he is still a busybody rather than a man of divine wisdom.

Mithras’ speech commented upon education and how it did not help Lucius. But judging from Lucius’ fascination with magic and astrology *despite* his education, it seems that Lucius was not the ideal student. That said, one aspect of his education does prove useful: rhetoric. This is the *doctrina* at which Lucius labours and excels after his conversion. Yet even prior to this, Lucius appears to be quite skilled: he gives a Ciceronian performance at the Hypatan Risus festival (3.4-6), which may have persuaded the audience had they not pre-arranged the whole affair; Lucius persuades Photis to permit him to view Pamphile performing magic (3.19), and then to show him magic first-hand (3.23); he moves Isis to pity with the words of his prayer (11.5), and it is his career in legal oratory which pays for his later initiations and wins him fame (11.28, 30). But fame and skill in the law court is not the product of divine wisdom or religious knowledge.

Of relevance to the focus on rhetoric at the conclusion of the *Metamorphoses* is a recent discussion by Kirichenko. He argues that the plot of Lucius being initiated into

---

45 Plutarch says that one should turn his curiosity on himself in introspection, rather than on others (*De cur. 515e-f*).

46 *Nec tibi natales ac ne dignitas quidem, vel ipsa qua flores usquam doctrina profuit* (‘Not your birth, nor even your position, nor even your fine education has been of any help whatever to you’). From this comment it has been argued that Mithras is anti-intellectual; Weiss (1998: 92), Van Nuffelen (2011: 97). This seems to be stretching his words somewhat, for Mithras would have to be against high birth (*natales*) and social status (*dignitas*) as well. What Mithras is actually saying is that Lucius had all the advantages (i.e. things that usually help people) of noble birth, social position, and education, but his curiosity was so strong that it overrode even these good aspects of his life and led to him becoming an ass.

47 Weiss (1998: 157): ‘much of the *Metr.* seems, in fact, expressly designed to illuminate the contrast between Lucius’ supposedly great *doctrina* and his repeated inability to apprehend the full reality of a given situation.’

48 Cf. Harrison (2000a) 219-20. Weiss (1998: 157-9) makes a distinction between the *doctrina* that never profited Lucius (philosophy) and the *doctrina* (rhetoric) that does offer a career for Lucius at the conclusion of the *Metamorphoses*.

the cult of Isis and then becoming a successful orator is influenced by the plot of Aristophanes’ *Clouds*, in which Pheidippides is initiated into the *phrontiserion* of Socrates and becomes a rhetorical maestro. But Kirichenko concludes that because Apuleius took a much more moderate view of rhetoric than the negative view held by Plato (and Aristophanes), the comparison of Lucius with the detestable Pheidippides is relatively positive. But if Lucius is a skilled orator without wisdom, then he edges closer to Pheidippides than an orator like Apuleius. Indeed, the contradiction of Lucius making a tirade on judicial corruption (10.33) yet having made his fame and career in the courts thus comes to resemble the trick-arguments Plato attributes to the sophist who would argue for whatever was convenient to be true. So, whilst a successful rhetorical career might provide Lucius with material wealth and a comfortable living, if he does not supplement this with deeper understanding, then his conversion would appear to be wasted on him. It is this material success at the end of the *Metamorphoses* that some critics have found disconcerting. For instead of urging Lucius towards philosophy and asceticism, Osiris raises him to the college of *pastorphori* as if to reward his worldly success as a shrewd forensic orator.

**Lucius and Appearances**

Having established that Lucius appreciates tales for the detail of their content rather than the content’s overall meaning, and having demonstrated that Lucius has likewise missed the message of Mithras’ speech, it can be observed that Lucius values surface details more than deeper meaning. This characteristic is present during Lucius’

---

51 Ibid. 158-59. Kirichenko calls Lucius a ‘triumphant ( sophistic) orator’. Plato contrasted philosophy, which seeks truth, from sophists’ rhetoric, which seeks to make truth from falsehood and the implausible plausible (akin to magic which seeks to make the impossible possible); Pl. *Euthyd. 288b,* *Prt. 315a,* *Soph.* 234b-235c. It is thus ironic that Lucius had an obsession with magic pre-conversion, only to find a rhetorical career; cf. Kirichenko (2010) 157.
52 Lucius’ rhetorical ‘tricks’ can be observed in the *narratio* of his defence speech at Hypata (3.5-6); his version of events is greatly embellished from the picture he provides in his narration of it (2.32).
54 Kirichenko (2010: 140) calls this the ‘outward glitter’.
conversion. When the time has been announced for Lucius’ initiation, Mithras retrieves books written with unknown (ignorabilibus) characters from the most secret part of the sanctuary (de opertis adyti; 11.22).55 These details reveal that Lucius’ curiosity has been awoken (his fascination can be understood from his detailed attempt to describe the writing), so much so that he goes out of his way to buy them—borrowing from friends to cover the costs—despite being unable to read them. He is not asked to purchase them and they do not appear to be required for his use as an initiate (there is no indication that he ever learns to read from them), yet because they are a peculiarity of the cult that he wishes to join, he must have them.56

After narrator-Lucius checked himself when describing his first initiation, one might expect that he would continue by expressing how moved he was or how he gained such wisdom that he saw the error of his ways. Instead, Lucius provides a detailed description of the outfit he was given to wear:57 an elaborately embroidered garment which made him the focus of attention (conspicuus; 11.24), an Olympian stola covered in pictures of animals, and a crown of palm leaves that stood out like rays of the sun. Thus arrayed, Lucius seems to have enjoyed being the object of interest with people coming to view him. Whilst an interesting image, such detail hardly conveys any sense of profound significance.

Similarly, the very last image of Lucius also has a focus on display:

Rursus denique quaqua raso capillo collegii vetustissimi et sub illis Sullae temporibus conditi munia, non obumbrato vel obtecto calvitio, sed quoquoversus obvio, gaudens obibam. (11.30)

Then, once more shaving my head completely, neither covering up nor hiding my baldness, but displaying it wherever I went, I joyfully carried out the duties of that ancient priesthood, founded in the days of Sulla.

This final passage has understandably been widely discussed. Those who interpret satire in Book 11 often refer to Plutarch’s comment about truly wise philosophers and Isiac

55 Ibid.
56 Kirichenko (2010: 136) points out that the strange script is designed to keep the message hidden from the curiosity of the profani—yet Lucius is unable to read them on the eve of his initiation (i.e. when he should not still number among the profani).
57 Ibid. 140.
priests keeping their wisdom hidden within rather than seeking to display stereotypical features of identification (beards and cloaks or linen and bald heads).\textsuperscript{58} Such critics also point to the bald heads of slaves, freedmen, and the \textit{calvus minus} as the image most familiar to Romans regarding this conspicuous appearance; these critics cite the many uses of baldness for satiric effect in Petronius, Martial, Juvenal, Lucian, and even elsewhere in Apuleius.\textsuperscript{59} Van Mal-Maeder succinctly expresses this view:

\begin{quote}
Isis’ priest is not the man, dressed in linen, deprived of his hair, but he who submits to reason all he has been taught and who exercises himself in deepening the truth through philosophy. Therefore it is not a \textit{pastophoros} whose richness consists of knowledge and wisdom that book 11 shows us, but an initiate who has obtained material wealth, parading his shiny shaven skull.\textsuperscript{60}
\end{quote}

Those who advocate a profound change in Lucius and interpret a genuinely edifying conversion take the shaven pate of Lucius to symbolise the renouncing of his past obsessions and attaining higher knowledge.\textsuperscript{61} Frangoulidis expounds this view:

\begin{quote}
Lucius’ ostentatious display of his baldness, however comic it may be, may be read along the lines of his progressive self-assertion of his new identity as an Isiac
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{58} οὔτε γέρος φιλοσοφίας παγινοτροφία, ὡς Κλέα, καί τριβονοφορία ποιούσαν οὔτε Ἰσιακοῦς αἵ λινοστολία καὶ ξυρήματα ἄλλοἱ Ἰσιακοὶ ἐστιν ὡς ἄληθιός ὁ τὰ δεικνύμενα καὶ δρώμενα περί τούς θεοὺς τούτους. οὕτως νόμῳ παραλάβη, λόγῳ γητῶν καὶ φιλοσοφῶν περί τῆς ἐν αὐτοῖς ἄληθείας. (‘It is a fact, Clea, that having a beard and wearing a coarse cloak does not make philosophers, nor does dressing in linen and shaving the hair make votaries of Isis; but the true votary of Isis is he who, when he has legitimately received what is set forth in the ceremonies connected with these gods, uses reason in investigating and in studying the truth contained therein.’ Plut. \textit{De. Is. et Os.} 352c) Translation by Babbit 2003. Apuleius displays similar thinking when he mentions beggars wearing the cloaks of philosophers (\textit{Flor.} 9.9). Winkler (1985) 225-6; Kirichenko (2010) 124; Murgatroyd (2004) 321.

\textsuperscript{59} Mart. 12.28.19; Juv. 6.532-34. In his first satire, Persius mentions the baldness of a patron to emphasise his debauched and lustful nature (1.55). In Petronius’ \textit{Satyrina}, Trimalchio is likewise described as being bald (27.1), possibly as a reminder of his slave origins and/or of his insistence upon mimic performances; Encolpius and Giton have their heads’ shaved to disguise themselves as slaves, which, after their discovery, causes Eumolpus to sing ridiculous songs about baldness (109.9-10). Lucian’s false-prophet, Alexander of Abenoteichos, is revealed to have been bald (having worn a wig) after his death; the baldness of the Isiac priest is noted (\textit{Philops.} 34). In Apuleius, one of Psyche’s sisters has a husband that is bald rather than a pumpkin (\textit{Met.} 5.9). In the \textit{Apologia}, Apuleius claims the drunkard, Iunius Crassus, has written a false testimony against him and mentions his premature baldness (amongst other things) in order to highlight his untrustworthiness and laughable character (\textit{Apol.} 59).

\textsuperscript{60} Van Mal-Maeder (1997) 107-08.

\textsuperscript{61} Englert and Long (1973) 239. James and O’Brien (2006: 246-7) see Lucius’ bald scalp as symbolic of his status as an intellectual who does not concern himself with outward appearances. Smith (2009) 56-57. Egelhaaf-Gaiser (2012). Lucius’ baldness has also been said to liken him to depictions of Socrates, supposedly aiding a Platonic interpretation of the \textit{Metamorphoses}; Dowden (2006: 56) and James and O’Brien (2006: 248). There is, however, a considerable difference in the image of a balding and bearded Socrates and a clean-shaven Isiac priest with a religious tonsure; this observation is also made by Egelhaaf-Gaiser (2012) 47. Griffiths (1975: 193) notes that bearded Isiac priests were in the small minority in terms of artistic representations.
priest. His pride in baldness creates an effective contrast with his own extensive praise of Photis’ hair, thus serving as an indication that he has learned to distinguish external appearance from what is important (2.8-9).62

Whilst there is indeed a marked contrast between the shaven-headed priest and the handsome youth with his blond locks, there is a difference between appreciating the beauty of women’s hair and shaving one’s own head. It should also be remembered that it is narrator-Lucius who makes the speech about hair and thinks that Venus would be ugly if she were bald. The beauty of women’s hair aside, there is some confusion caused by Lucius’ view on male baldness. He mocks the priest Philebus by highlighting his balding scalp with ringlets on either side as well as his use of a wig (8.24), and yet he admires the bald heads of the initiates that shine like ‘earthly stars of the great religion’ (magnae religionis terrena sidera; 11.10).63 This could signal that Lucius is a hypocrite or that he is completely oblivious to this inconsistency (just as he moralises against corrupt judges when he makes a living in that very court system).64

There are several aspects that point to the interpretation of Lucius’ baldness as the satiric coup de grâce. The final passage contains the odd statement that his order is ‘most ancient’ (vestustissimi), dating back to the days of Sulla. Compared to Egyptian worship of Isis and Osiris, the days of Sulla were hardly ‘ancient’. Moreover, Kirichenko finds it strange that Lucius does not link the cult back to Isis in time immemorial, just as Plutarch does (De Is. et Os. 361d-e).65 Murgatroyd suggests that ‘founded days of Sulla’ phrase is included for the connotation of corruption and rapaciousness, which does not flatter the already questionable Isiac clergy (at least those

---

63 Griffiths (1975: 192-3) follows van der Vliet’s transposition of magnae ... sidera so that it is in apposition with the high priests (antistites) rather than the throng of initiates. Zimmerman (2012: 16), however, disagrees with this transposition ‘because interfering with the word order is merely an easy way out of one of several important questions that the whole of the eleven books of Apuleius’ Metamorphoses keeps confronting the reader with.’
64 GCA (1985: 288-89) mentions the difference between a balding and shaved head being the difference between Lucius at 11.30 and Philebus. The commentator suggests that Lucius is trying to ‘underline the dissimilarities’ between the foreign religions that would appear similar to an outsider. This ‘dissimilarity’, however, is inconsequential since all kinds of baldness were open to ridicule.
65 Kirichenko (2010) 140.
in Rome). 66 This naïve boast about his guild’s venerable status and ancient origins fits with Lucius often missing the point due to his inconscience. 67

With regards to Plutarch’s passage concerning image versus substance (De Is. et Os. 352c), it is significant that the bald head is the only description of Lucius as a priest. As was noted in Chapter Three, this satiric detail is missing for Mithras and even Asinius Marcellus. Moreover, there is a sense that the passage in Plutarch is to be kept in mind due to a detail in the Isiac procession. Among the parade of costumed individuals is a man with a stick, a cloak, and a beard who is pretending to be a philosopher (nec qui pallio … et hircino barbito philosophum fingeret; 11.8). 68 If this is an allusion to the passage in Plutarch, then all that is missing is someone presenting the appearance of an Isiac priest but lacking substance—this would be Lucius at 11.30.

Yet, ironically, the aspect of this final image of Lucius that condemns him the most—even more than the baldness itself—is what is on the inside: his motivation. James and O’Brien indicate that it was contrary to Isiac custom for priests to display their baldness in public other than in a religious context; they would wear wigs during secular activities. 69 Thus it is clear that Lucius’ display is a personal statement. In the aforementioned quote from Frangoulidis, the use of the term ‘pride’ is appropriate. Lucius is joyfully sporting his bald head, which one can only imagine would have caused a great deal of shame to the shy Lucius who blushes in front of his aunt. Lucius has clearly changed, but only in so much as he values baldness now that he is a member of the Isiac priesthood. His pride at publicly asserting this fact is a clear demonstration that, contrary to the idea that Lucius distinguishes appearance from what is important, his appearance is all important to him. He is focussing on the external, just as he enjoyed the robes of initiation and the hieroglyphs in the holy books. Not only does this

67 Could there be a link between this comment about the days of Sulla and the lex Cornelia de sicariis et veneficiis, which was also ‘founded’ in the days of Sulla? This law was likely the one by which Apuleius was prosecuted.
68 Van der Stockt (2012: 172-3), however, discusses this passage in relation to Plutarch (De Is. et Os. 352c), noting that Lucius is merely amused by the parading ‘philosopher’ and concluding that there is no cause for the reader consider the ideas of ‘inner devotion versus display’; by doing so one would ‘[rain] on both Lucius’ and Apuleius’ joyful parade.’
run counter to the idea of hidden wisdom in Plutarch, but also to a passage in Apuleius’ own works. Apuleius says that outward appearance is of the least concern to the wise:

Sapientia amatorem boni adulescentem facit, sed eum qui probitate ingenii sit ad artes bonas promptior. Nec deformitas corporis talem abigere poterit adpetitum; nam cum ipsa anima conplacita est, homo totus adamatur; cum corpus expetitur, pars eius deterior est cordi. (*De dog. Plat. 2.22 (251)*)

It is the wisdom of a good man that wins him a youthful admirer, but one who is by the integrity of his character more inclined towards the higher arts. An unattractive physique will not be able to drive away such a longing; for when the soul herself is filled with delight, the whole of a person is cherished; but when the body alone is desired, the worse part of him is valued.

Indeed, in the *Apologia*, Apuleius makes a point of commenting on his own unkempt hair as a sign that he is a philosopher who does not concern himself with appearances (*Apol. 4*). Thus Lucius’ decision to display his shaven pate is not a conscious rejection of former lust for Photis or her hair, because at no point has he reflected upon these things.\(^\text{70}\) To Lucius, his stereotypically bald head gives him status in the eyes of the god and goddess he so adores. He has not reached enlightenment; he just wants everyone to know that he is one of the chosen of Isis and Osiris.\(^\text{71}\) The final image of Lucius as a proudly bald *pastophorus* symbolises his whole conversion; outwardly he has changed—he is a priest and a successful lawyer who has divine sponsors—but internally Lucius is still the same, valuing the wrong things and missing the point. The ultimate irony is that, just as it remained when he transformed into an ass, his perception remains unchanged when he is transformed into the bald *pastophorus* at the end. He is no wiser and thus appears to be something that he is not.

**Lucius and Emotion**

This desire to look the part does not deny Lucius’ devotion or his newfound joy during his conversion. Indeed, Lucius’ emotions are one of the strongest aspects of his

---

\(^\text{70}\) It should be remembered that the erotically charged description of Photis’ hair is given by Lucius the narrating *pastophorus*.

\(^\text{71}\) Lucius is told by the *clemens imago* that he should consider himself blessed to be initiated three times while most are not even initiated once (*11.29*).
religious experience and a driving force behind the initiations. Finkelpearl accepts the opposition to Lucius’ philosophical progress when compared to the Platonic approach to Isiac religion in Plutarch’s *de Iside et Osiride*. She then salvages Lucius’ conversion by arguing for an emotional interpretation of his conversion experience, stating: ‘In Book 11, emotion is favoured over intellect and Lucius’ narrative prefers to leave things irrational and unexplained—but this is not foolishness, this is religion.’ Thus she argues that, in Book 11, Apuleius presents the mystical nature of Isiac religion using emotion in contrast to Plutarch’s intellectual approach.

While this interpretation makes many pertinent observations, there are still problems with a positive interpretation of Lucius’ emotionally driven conversion. For instance, Lucius’ emotional volatility is crucial to both his initiation into magic and into Isis’ mysteries. Preceding Lucius’ botched ‘initiation’ into magic, he encounters the animated wineskins. This leads to the humiliating trial that is the Risus festival, during and after which he is an emotional wreck. A similar emotional rollercoaster can be discerned before Lucius’ initiation into Isis’ mysteries, starting from his fearful flight from the amphitheatre in Corinth to his final appearance as a joyful *pastorhorus* in Rome.

---

73 Finkelpearl (2012) 194-96. Though, at n. 36 she sees room for the argument in favour of Lucius’ moral progress.
74 Ibid. 196.
75 Ibid. 197-99, 201.
76 Frangoulidis (2008: 175-203) argues that the lead up to and initiation into the mysteries of Isis (Book 11) is a successful and positive version of the failed initiation into magic in Book 3. He compares the daring flight of Lucius (at the end of Book 10) and subsequent exhaustion and sleep (start of Book 11) with the daring attack on the ‘robbers’ followed by his exhaustion and sleep (at the end of Book 2).
77 Lucius shows daring (2.32), anguish and bewilderment (3.1); he weeps with a wretched conscience, but becomes bold enough to speak in self-defence (3.4); next he weeps sorrowfully in supplication, then becomes indignant at Milo’s laughter (3.7); he is filled with gloom at the prospect of a torturous death, and is subsequently dumbfounded by the truth (3.9); he becomes downhearted, fearful, and weeps again (3.10); he is then afraid of attending Byrhenia’s party and is very embarrassed (3.12); he becomes curious and eager to learn the story of Photis (3.14), and afterwards grows amorous (3.20); he is transfixed by his amazement at Pamphile’s magic (3.22), and is finally filled with anger and resentment at his own transformation (3.26). Weiss (1998: n.20, 94) also lists the varied emotions that Lucius displays during the episode of the wineskins and the Risus festival.
78 Before his conversion, Lucius is ashamed and fearful of the prospect of the arena (10.34); he is then awed by the sight of the moon and offers a tearful prayer to her (11.1), during which he is miserable (11.3); his dream leaves him feeling a mix of fear and joy (11.7). He feels joy at the sight of the roses but is afraid to disturb the procession (11.12). He is transfixed and greatly joyful after his retransformation (11.14), and then nagged by self-doubt about the Isiac requirements (11.19). His nightly dreams make...
This illustrates a connection between Lucius’ strong and constantly shifting emotions and his initiatory experiences. In addition, it reinforces the idea of Lucius’ intense emotional (irrational) link to his saviour goddess. Nonetheless, one might point out that the most prominent emotions during Lucius’ time in Hypata were fear, misery, and embarrassment, whereas the most prominent emotions during his conversion were anxiety, awe, and joy. This seems to indicate that Lucius’ Isiac initiation was a positive experience (leading to happiness), whilst his initiation into magic was a bad mistake (leading to misery). This is indeed true—Lucius does experience a happy ending. The reader would not only expect this, but requires it. Lucius ending up destitute and unhappy would not be satisfying because the reader’s underlying pity for Lucius demands his deliverance from hardship at the mercy of Fortuna. But a happy Lucius does not equal a positively portrayed conversion nor does it demonstrate his emotional development.

In Book 11 Lucius still bears the same hatred for Photis that he has carried since first becoming an ass. One might even view his hatred of Photis as fuelling his worship and desire for Isis—after all, he hates Photis for the mistake she made in transforming him, and since the goddess cured him of that mistake, it is only natural that he would love her instead. As was discussed in the previous chapter, Lucius’ emotional response to Isis is much the same as it had been with Photis. There is no development here, merely a divine recipient for his emotional attachment. Most importantly, it is this kind of overbearing emotion that was discouraged by philosophers, including Apuleius. In de Platone, Apuleius claims that,

\[\text{cum optima et rationabilis portio et quae etiam imperitare ceteris debet, seruit aliis, illae uero uitiorum ducatrices, iracundia et libido, ratione sub iugum missa dominantur.} \]
\[(\text{De dog. Plat. 2.4 (225)})\]

when the best, rational part of a man, which ought to command the rest, is instead enslaved by the other parts, those leaders of the vices, anger and lust, are indeed supreme, with reason dismissed and placed under the yoke.

him overly eager (11.21), but he is calmed by Mithras (11.22); he is tearful in gratitude as he offers a prayer to Isis (11.24). In Rome, he is confused and then made eager by the prospect of a second initiation (11.27). His ‘poverty’ leaves him anxious (11.28). But he is astonished by the third call to initiation and again nagged by doubt (11.29). Finally, he is joyful as he performs his priestly duties (11.30).
Apuleius might here be singling out anger and lust, but the idea that misplaced joy could prevent one from a strong rational mind is equally plausible. For instance, Seneca contrasts the frivolous joy of the masses with the profound joy of philosophy (Sen. Ep. 23).79

Overpowering emotion was not just viewed negatively for subordinating rational thought, but also because, with respect to the gods, it led to superstition. Weiss indicates that emotion is at the heart of Plutarch’s de Supertitione and points to this as a key to Lucius’ conversion.80 Many aspects of Lucius’ conversion can be found in this work. Indeed, Van Nuffelen states that, to Plutarch, ‘superstition is essentially a misinterpretation of religion by the uneducated.’81 This would suggest that, despite his schooling, Lucius approaches religion in an uneducated manner—just as he approached magic.

When Lucius rents an apartment in the temple precinct, he does so that he may constantly be close to the goddess—‘inseparable from the priests and a constant worshipper of the great deity’ (sacerdotem individuus et numinis magni cultor inseperabilis; 11.19). Plutarch states that whilst shrines and altars are places to which slaves, robbers, or men having fled battle may find respite:

> ὁ δὲ δεισιδαίμων ταύτα μάλιστα φρίττει καὶ φοβεῖται καὶ δέδοικεν, ἐν όις οἱ φοβοῖμενοι τὰ δεινότατα τῆς ἐπιλίδας ἐχοῦσι. μὴ ἀπόστα τὸν δεισιδαίμονα τῶν ἱερῶν ἐνταύθα κολάζεται καὶ τιμωρεῖτα. (De sup. 166e-f)

These are the very things that most inspire a shuddering fear and dread in the superstitious man, and yet it is in them that those who in fear of the most dreadful

---

79 According to Seneca, the foundation of a sound mind is not rejoicing in empty things (Huius fundamentum [sc. bonae mentis] quod sit quaeris? Ne gaudeas vanis; Ep. 23.1). As such, ‘[r]eal joy … is a stern matter’ (verum gaudium res severa est; 23.4). Seneca then goes on to contrast being carefree with having learnt to despise death, material wealth, and fleeting pleasures. Here he also speaks out against the type of surface glitter that holds Lucius’ attention and advocates introspection: ‘The yield of poor mines is on the surface; those are really rich whose veins lurk deep, and they will make more bountiful returns to him who delves unceasingly.’ (Levium metallorum fructus in summo est; illa opulentissima sunt, quorum in alto latet vena adsidue plenius responsura fodienti; 23.5). Translation by R. M. Gummere 1979.

80 Weiss (1998) 94. Plutarch (De sup. 165b-c): ‘But, on the other hand, superstition, as the very name (dread of deities) indicates, is an emotional idea and an assumption productive of a fear which utterly humbles and crushes a man, for he thinks that there are gods, but that they are the cause of pain and injury. … Whence it follows that … superstition is an emotion engendered from false reason.’ All translations of de Superstitione by F. C. Babbit 1998.

fate place their hopes. Do not drag the superstitious man away from his shrines, for it is in them that he suffers punishment and retribution.

The idea of slavery to Isis is mentioned in the speech of Mithras. Thus Isis says that she will protect Lucius from Blind Fortuna, who has caused him such distress. The themes of emotion, enslavement, and escape from distress, all feature heavily in the superstitious man:

ταύτῃ δὲ τὸ ἐμπαθεῖς, ὥσπερ έιρηται, καὶ ἐλκώδες καὶ ταρακτικόν καὶ καταδεδουλωμένον εὐθύς πρόσεστι τῇ δόξῃ. (*De sup.* 167b)

But superstition is attended by emotion, as has already been said, and by sore distress and disturbance and mental enslavement from the very beginning.

It was observed above that awe and anxiety were two of the more prevalent emotions that Lucius experiences during his conversion. These emotions are directly linked in the superstitious man:

μόνος δὲ ὁ φόβος, οἷς ἦττον ὄν τόλμης ἐνδεής ἢ λογίσμου, ἀπρακτὸν ἐχει καὶ ἀπορον καὶ ἀμήχανον τὸ ἀλόγιστον. ἢ καὶ δείμα καὶ τάρβος αὐτοῦ τὸ συνήθεν ὦμοι τὴν ψυχὴν καὶ ταράττον ὄνομασται. (*De sup.* 165d)

But fear alone, lacking no less in boldness than in power to reason, keeps its irrationality impotent, helpless, and hopeless. It is on this ground that the power of fear to tie down the soul, and at the same time to keep it awake, has come to be named both terror and awe.

Lucius would certainly not disregard a dream command because he would be too afraid to do so—hence his obedience when, already struggling financially, he sells his clothes to pay for his second initiation.82 When his dreams are not so clear he seeks out others (twice at 11.27; 11.30). This is the type of behaviour noted by Theophrastus in the description of the superstitious man (*Thphr. Char.* 16.11). It was noted in Chapter Two that it is Lucius’ god-sent dreams that justify his initiations when in Rome, allaying his doubts. But the reasons themselves appear to be invalid. Lucius mentions not having been initiated into the cult of Osiris, and yet he says the cult of Isis is united with that of

82 As May (2006: 316) points out, ‘Isis has fulfilled her function as a saviour already, and the second and third initiations of Lucius may function as a hint for the reader to take the mystery narrative less seriously, and may make him/her understand their function as a tool to reinforce the reader’s impression that Lucius is still as credulous as before.’
Osiris (11.27), leading the reader to ask why he needs to be initiated into both.  

For his last initiation, Lucius is told by the kindly dream figure that he needs to get a new cloak for worshipping on holy days because his original cloak is still in Greece (11.29). By all accounts, this is a bizarre and underwhelming reason for another initiation. Before his first initiation, his conscientious doubts (11.19) are dispelled by a dream (11.20). Thus his dependence on his dreams for answers becomes clear. This same sensitivity to dreams for the superstitious man is recorded by Plutarch:

μόνη γὰρ οὐ σπένδεται πρὸς τὸν ὑπνον, οὐδὲ τῇ ψυχῇ ποτε γούν δίδωσιν ἀναπνεύσαι καὶ ἀνασάρχησαι τὰς πικρὰς καὶ βαρεῖας περὶ τοῦ θεοῦ δόξας ἀπωσιμένη (De sup. 165e-f)

for superstition alone makes no truce with sleep, and never gives the soul a chance to recover its breath and courage by putting aside its bitter and despondent notions regarding God.

And to this he elsewhere adds:

ἔστι δὲ καὶ πρὸς τὸν δειοδαίμονα ἐσπένειν, ὡς τι τὸν ὑπνον οἱ θεοὶ λήθην κακῶν ἔδοσαν ἡμῖν καὶ ἀνάπασαν, τι τούτῳ κολαστήριον σειστῷ ποιεῖ θέμον καὶ ὀδυνηρόν, τῆς ἀθλίας ψυχῆς εἰς ἄλλον ὑπνον ἀποδράναι μὴ δυναμένην; ... οὔτε γὰρ ἐγείρησοσ τῷ θρονοῦντι χρήται οὔτε κοιμόμενος ἀπαλλάττεται τοῦ ταράττοντος, ἀλλ’ ὀνειρώστει μὲν ὁ λογισμὸς, ἐγείρησοσ δ’ ὁ φόβος ἅνει, ψυγῆ δ’ οὐκ ἔστιν οὐδεὶς μετάστασις. (De sup. 166c)

But to the superstitious man it is possible to say, ‘The gift of sleep which the gods bestow on us as a time of forgetfulness and respite from our ills; why do you make this an everlastingly painful torture-chamber for yourself, since your unhappy soul cannot run away to some other sleep?’ … for neither when awake does he use his intelligence, nor when fallen asleep is he freed from his agitation, but his reasoning power is sunk in dreams, his fear is ever wakeful, and there is no way of escape or removal.

Indeed, as noted above, Lucius’ primary waking concern is contemplating the image of the goddess (11.19), which he had earlier seen rising from the sea in his dream (11.3).

In the prayer he makes after his initiation, having wept with his face pressed to her statue’s feet (11.24), he promises to keep this vision of her divine face close to his heart

---

83 Griffiths (1975: 330): ‘Apuleius is at pains to justify the additional initiations in Rome. Isis, Osiris and Sarapis all had some distinctive rites at this time. The temples were in the name of Isis or Sarapis, but an Osirian element was present in all the ceremonies.’
(11.25). Plutarch, however, considers focus on mere representations of gods as the product of superstition:

εἴτ' χαλκοτόποις μὲν πείθονται καὶ μιθοξόδοις καὶ κηροπλάσταις ἀνθρωπόμορφα τῶν θεῶν τὴ εἰδὴ ποιοῦσι, καὶ τοιαῦτα πλάττουσι καὶ κατασκευάζουσι καὶ προσκυνοῦσι (De sup. 167d-e)

Then again such persons give credence to workers in metal, stone, or wax, who make their images of gods in the likeness of human beings, and they have such images fashioned, and dress them up, and worship them.

Another trait found in the superstitious man is the need for purification with seawater (cf. Theoph. Char. 16.13). Indeed, Plutarch makes a special mention of those who act irrationally because of their dreams, including dipping themselves in the ocean (De sup. 165f-166a). Significantly, after waking from sleep and being awed by sight of the moon, one of Lucius’ first acts in Book 11 is to purify himself in the sea, making sure to dip himself seven times because of the number’s significance to Pythagoras (11.1).85

Therefore, it is clear that many traits of the superstitious man can be found in Lucius. Yet one of the central aspects, as presented by Plutarch, is absent from Lucius’ characterisation. This is the unhappiness that arises from the superstitious man’s secret hatred and fear of the gods, to whom he attributes every evil he suffers (Plut. De sup. 170e). Lucius, then, appears to be something of a paradox: a happy, superstitious man. The explanation for this lies in the dichotomy created in Book 11 by the identification of two Fortunae, one Blind and the other Seeing (11.15). Naturally, Lucius reserves his hatred for the former as the cause of his ills, whereas the latter he views as his saviour, to whom he gives his unfailing devotion. Yet by blaming Fortuna, Lucius still conforms to the trait of the superstitious man in taking no responsibility for the actions that led to his misfortunes.86 Moreover, whilst Lucius escapes the influence of Blind Fortuna (no

84 Also noted by Keulen (2003) 126.
85 Harrison (2000a: 240; 2012: 77) states that this is surely a comic detail when one recalls that this is an ass bathing in the sea. In this context the Pythagorean detail comes across as more trite than pious.
86 This is part of the ‘lack of introspection’ discussed above. May (2006: 319-25) identifies Isis and Fortuna-Tyche, who occurs throughout Greek and Roman drama (tragedy and comedy) and in the Greek romances. So whilst Isis is Seeing Fortuna, Blind-Fortuna appears to be Isis with her eyes closed to Lucius’ suffering.
The transformed man

longer fearing her), he is still god-fearing when it comes to Isis and Osiris—he obeys their commands, even when he is unsure, because he fears losing their support.87

The most important factor in determining why Lucius is not depicted as secretly hating Isis is for narrative reasons. Isis is Lucius’ saviour. Indeed, by saving and healing Lucius, the story comes to resemble an aretalogy.88 Additionally, by narrating his own salvation, it also fits the mould of the confessor tale.89 As such, it would not make narrative sense for Lucius to blame his saviour and hate her for his prior misfortune. In this way, the narrative presents the superstitious man from his own perspective, rather than that of a critic. Thus, Isis and Osiris in Book 11 are the gods of a superstitious man come to life. So his dreams are true and the gods’ commands are meaningful, but the presentation is still of a passive and irrational man whose continued emotionality reveals a lack of philosophical depth. He is as much a submissive slave to the gods as is the superstitious man, except by being saved from his (literal) slavery as an ass, he actually enjoys this new (figurative) servitude. Thus the gods have enslaved him more comprehensively than Photis ever could, and, like the witch’s apprentice, they have transformed him into something he did not anticipate becoming: a superstitious pastophorus. The cure for Lucius’ asshood was roses; it seems that, as far as Plutarch is concerned, the cure for his superstitious enslavement would be a bouquet of philosophical insights.

Lucius and Apuleius

There is one ‘transformation’ in Book 11 that still needs to be addressed. How the reader interprets this ‘transformation’ is of supreme importance for any reading of

87 For instance, unexpectedly moving to Rome, selling his clothes to pay for his initiation because he is poor, undergoing seemingly unnecessary initiations for strange reasons, and pursuing a legal career in conjunction with his priesthood.
89 Winkler (1985: 238-42) discusses the similarity between Lucius and the bald-headed confessor, who would relate the tale of his own salvation, most commonly as a survivor of a shipwreck. Winkler concedes that, whilst similar, the absence of any statement that this is the nature of the tale (combined with the withholding of Lucius’ Isiac salvation and his status as a pastophorus) indicates that the Metamorphoses can only be partly modelled on the confessor-tale. It appears that Apuleius drew upon aretology and confessor tales in writing Book 11.
Lucius’ conversion as satire. So, before it can be accepted that Lucius’ conversion leaves him unenlightened, passive, and displaying superstitious behaviour, it is necessary to discuss the dream of Asinius Marcellus in which Apuleius appears to identify himself with Lucius.

\[ \text{de eis ore … audisse mitti sibi Madaurensem sed admodum pauperem, cui statim sua sacra deberet ministrare; nam et illi studiorum gloriam et ipsi grande compendium sua comparari providentia. (11.27)} \]

he [sc. Asinius Marcellus] heard from the god’s own mouth … that a man from Madauros was being sent to him; the man was quite poor, but it behoved the priest to administer the god’s initiation rites to him at once, since by the god’s providence the man would acquire fame for his studies and the priest himself ample recompense.

It has been established that the dream is god-sent and that Asinius is not deceiving Lucius, though he seems overly eager for the promised reward. As discussed in Chapter Three, there appears to be an intertextual connection between this passage and *Apologia* (17-25). But the connection of Apuleius and Lucius at 11.27 is not drawn to demonstrate the unity of author and auctor-actor, thereby giving the nod of approval to Lucius’ conversion experience and his approach to religion.\(^90\) I propose that the reverse is true: the connection is made to fix Lucius as a fictional alter-ego of Apuleius who is far removed from his real life counterpart—a debasement and a parody of Apuleius. Thus, instead of establishing Lucius and Apuleius as one and the same, this passage confirms they are one and the opposite.\(^91\) The playful use of the author’s self as a character (i.e. adopting a persona) is familiar from other satirists, such as Horace and

---

\(^90\) Cf. Smith (2012: 212) asserts that this passage changes the *Metamorphoses* from fiction to biography, thus displaying Lucius’ own conversion to the worship of Isis.

\(^91\) Heiserman (1977: 149-51) suggests that Lucius is a comic version of Apuleius and this is why the author identifies himself with his character. The effect of this would have been heightened if Apuleius gave readings of his novel. The idea behind Apuleius using a version of himself in the work would have been suggested to him by the original ass-tale that he adapted. The protagonist of this tale was a young man named Loukios, who became involved in magic. If Apuleius’ praenomen was ‘Lucius’, which seems to be confirmed by Augustine believing that Apuleius was writing about himself (*De civ. D.* 18.18. Note that Augustine was educated in Madauros, where it is likely a statue of Apuleius—bearing his name—was erected; cf. Harrison (1996) 492), the main character’s involvement with magic and the accusation that he was a magician (cf. ps.-Lucian Onos 54), would have undoubtedly recalled Apuleius’ own trial, inspiring him to adapt the ass-tale into a Latin version with his own additions.
Lucian.\(^\text{92}\) Similarly, having an I-narrator who is a comic figure that expresses views not necessarily shared by the author is found in Petronius’ *Satyricon* with Encolpius.\(^\text{93}\) Other authors express a distance between themselves and their works. Catullus makes it clear that it is important for the poet to be moral but not so his poems (16.5-6), and that he is not a sop just because he writes love poetry (16.12-13). Similarly, Ovid (*Tr.* 2.353-546; 3.2.5-6) and Martial (1.4; 11.15) distance themselves from the personae they adopt for their poetry.\(^\text{94}\) Pliny the Younger is also of the opinion that his lascivious poetry should not be held against him since it is merely a common, amusing pastime (*Ep.* 4.14, 5.3). It seems clear that an author’s writings could contain personal elements and yet be held separate from their professional life and personal opinions.\(^\text{95}\) Returning to Apuleius’ *Metamorphoses*, it is instructive to examine the playful treatment of other historical figures to better understand how Apuleius develops the alter-ego that is Lucius.

In Book 1, directly after the problematic prologue, Apuleius reveals an important detail regarding Lucius’ lineage:

---

\(^\text{92}\) Gowers (2003) argues for elements of autobiography contained in Book 1 of Horace’s *Sermones*, whilst still allowing for artistic construction in the depictions of himself as both the refined ‘philosopher-poet’ and a ‘bumbling oaf’. Lucian’s *Verae Historiae*, by contrast, is a complete fiction told from Lucian’s perspective (the protagonist is confirmed to be Lucian at 2.28); but while it is possible that ideas of the author come through (regarding such things as the Homeric question and in the descriptions of philosophers in the underworld), Lucian can still playfully attribute unflattering motives to himself, such as the reason for his adventure being mere curiosity (περιεργασία, 1.5; φιλοπραγματικός, 2.10), which is the exact trait that Apuleius attributes to “himself” with Lucius.

\(^\text{93}\) For instance, Encolpius expresses trite opinions on rhetoric in his discussion with Agamemnon (1.1). These comments are unlikely to have been included by Petronius to offer his own opinions on the matter but rather to characterise the speakers (cf. Walsh 1999a: 156-57). It is possible that Encolpius is grasping at an invitation to dinner and is merely trying to impress Agamemnon, so even he may not agree with what he is saying. Encolpius is often the butt of jokes (falling over when looking at the painted dog, saying foolish things during the *Cena*, shaving his head to be a slave). The address to his flaccid penis is seen to be the voice of Petronius defending his work from Cato-type moralists (but, as I elsewhere argue, the very context of this defence suggests that it is merely a parody of a defence). This, however, is not to deny that an author can express his own views through the mouths of otherwise laughable characters.

\(^\text{94}\) Mayer (2003: 55-80), however, denies that ancient authors used persona in the way that it is employed by modern authors. Ancient readers, he argues, even readers who were themselves writers, always treated what characters—especially I-narrators—said as the author’s own opinions. The above references to Catullus, Ovid, and Martial, for Mayer (66-71), do not reflect a commonly held view of the distance between a author and his work precisely because these authors make such statements only in self-defence. This topic of persona in ancient literature is vast and therefore beyond the scope of this thesis to address in any depth; it should be noted, however, that Mayer’s stance is not shared by the majority of scholarship in this field.

\(^\text{95}\) This separation of author and work, however, was not always maintained. The *Metamorphoses*, by acknowledging itself as ‘Milesian’ from the outset, was a type of literature that could be held against both its author and its readership; see Introduction, 4-5 (and n. 14).
I was travelling to Thessaly, where the ancestry of my mother’s family brings us fame in the persons of the renowned Plutarch and later his nephew, the philosopher Sextus. Thessaly, I say is where I was heading on business.

That this statement occurs in the first sentence of the story proper—just after the reader is told to pay special attention (lector intende)—seems to suggest that it is programmatic. It can be inferred, then, that knowledge of Plutarch’s work is especially important for understanding the Metamorphoses. Moreover, it can be understood that, whilst he is a literal ancestor of Lucius, Plutarch is a literary and philosophical ancestor of Apuleius. Thus it is interesting that Apuleius has, for Lucius, relocated Plutarch’s homeland from Chaeronea (in Boeotia) to Thessaly. It should be remembered that Thessaly was seen as a haven of witchcraft that was an intellectual backwater to other Greeks. It is to this Thessaly that Loukios of the Onos goes to investigate magic, which characterises him as a misguided intellectual. As such, this association instantly puts a question mark over Lucius’ ancestor. Indeed, the epithet philosophus is credited to Sextus (the lesser known figure) rather than to Plutarch, thus showing the famous biographer has somehow lost his status as a philosopher—clearly this Thessalian Plutarch is lesser version.

This same debasement is present in the figure of Socrates from the tale of Aristomenes. This Socrates is a pleasure seeker and profit-hungry merchant who becomes embroiled in a sexual liaison with a witch (1.7). He has characteristics of the superstitious man in his histrionic behaviour, groaning about his victimhood at the hands of Fortuna. This behaviour leads Keulen to call him an ‘icon of the philosopher

97 Ibid. 349.
98 Finkelpearl (2012: 199): ‘This Thessalian Plutarch, Apuleius may be saying, is a different sort of Plutarch from what I might use in my philosophical works.’
99 Ibid.
100 Keulen (2003: 109) notes that the false Socrates is like Lucius in his pleasure seeking and highlights the connection between Socrates and Lucius as storytellers, relating their misfortunes with histrionics with comparisons to Odysseus (121).
101 Keulen (2003: 123-24) sees the raging histrionics about avenging furies as symptomatic of Socrates’ superstitious fear, viewing him not wanting to leave his spot (letting Fortuna have her victory) as the
Indeed, several aspects of his character set him at odds with the Socrates found in Plato. For instance, Plato’s Socrates rejects the advice of Crito to flee to Thessaly rather than face execution (Cri. 45c; 53d-54d). Aristomenes’ friend, on the other hand, seems to represent the kind of Socrates that would have made this unheroic escape. Plato’s Socrates, although not one to partake in drinking bouts often, can drink as much wine as he likes without being affected (Pl. Symp. 214a, 220a), and thus is the last one at Agathon’s symposium to continue in the discussion before he leaves, all his companions having fallen asleep (223c-d). Apuleius’ version, however, becomes drunk and passes out before Aristomenes (1.11). The next morning, after the eventful night during which they were attacked by the witches, the two companions sit under a plane tree (1.18), which is a clear reference to Phaedrus 229a. In Plato’s version, Socrates and his companion recline under the tree with the intention of reading the speech of Lysias on love; for the debased Socrates, however, the literally heartless state in which his sordid love encounter has left him results in his death (1.19). Through these clever allusions it can be seen that Apuleius has consciously referenced Plato’s Socrates in order to construct a humorous and pathetic version of his own.

Finkelpearl believes that this debasement of Plutarch and Socrates in Book 1 is designed to urge the reader to put aside philosophy when reading the novel since philosophers are employed comically. On this reading, Lucius’ religious finale can only be viewed positively when read without the burden of philosophical insight. But by connecting Lucius with Apuleius at 11.27, the philosophy of the author automatically springs to the reader’s mind. Furthermore, suggesting that the reader put aside philosophy does not fit with the inclusion of the highly philosophical myth of Cupid and Psyche. Moreover, even if the reader has managed to put aside philosophy, the
heightened tenor of Book 11, and especially the moralising of Mithras (drawing a message from Lucius’ experience in Books 1-10), has the effect of awakening the contemplative impulse.

Turning now to Lucius’ relation to Apuleius, the superficial connections between them are obvious. They share a high social standing, have received an education in Athens, and use their rhetorical skills to win fame. Other, more specific allusions can be discerned; the Hypatan magistrates offer to erect a statue of Lucius (3.11), which was an honour Apuleius himself received (Flor. 16). Photis refers to Lucius as an initiate of multiple mystery cults (3.15), which is a claim Apuleius makes about himself (Apol. 55). Apuleius also claims to have been a high priest (antistes) of Aesculapius (Fl. 18.39) and was said by Augustine to have been sacerdos provinciae ‘priest of the province’ (i.e. Africa proconsularis; August. Ep. 138.9), which is similar to Lucius in that he attains a priestly position. Apuleius’ high status, however, greatly overshadows that of Lucius as a pastophorus. There is even an idea of literary glory for Lucius: Diophanes predicts that Lucius will become a book of many volumes (2.12), Osiris forecasts the studies of Lucius that will bring him fame (11.27), and Isis says that Lucius will live in glory under her tutelage (11.6). This, obviously, relates to Apuleius as widely known orator and author. But whilst Lucius is shown to be a successful legal orator, there is no indication that he is a philosopher who gives public lectures aimed to educate as well as entertain his audience, as is the case with Apuleius. First and foremost, Apuleius considered himself to be a Platonic philosopher (Apol. 10; cf. August. De civ. D. 8.19), but the superficial Lucius is clearly not. This is the main difference between them and thus the focus of the satire.

Following the intertext of the Apologia and Metamorphoses discussed in Chapter Three, a greater examination of Lucius with Apuleius (from the Apologia) is instructive. In the Apologia, Apuleius defends himself against the charges of magic by claiming that

---

106 Cf. Harrison (2000a) 217-18. Apuleius’ wealthy family (August. Ep. 146.19); his substantial inheritance and father’s position as duumvir (Apol. 23.1); Apuleius’ education in Carthage (Flor. 18.15, 20.3), then in Athens (Flor. 20.4). Apuleius staying at Rome (Flor. 16.36-37). Apuleius wins fame as a public speaker (Apol. 55.10, 73.2).

107 Apuleius’ priesthood is discussed in the Introduction, 2 (and n.3).
his peculiar interests all relate to him being a philosopher rather than a magus. Lucius, by contrast, seeks out magic; but rather than use it to seduce an older woman, as the prosecution asserted (cf. Apol. 90), Lucius seeks to imitate the magic of an older woman by transforming himself in the same way. Additionally, while Apuleius was falsely accused of using magic, Lucius, who did use it, was not put on trial for it because Isis protects him from this fate (11.6; 11.13).

Another point of contrast is Apuleius’ ability to keep a secret. In the Apologia he makes a point not to reveal the nature of the objects he received after initiation and the name of the divine king he is said to worship (Apol. 55, 64). Lucius, however, lets too much information slip when discussing his initiation (11.23).

Apuleius defends himself against the accusation of being handsome and using a mirror (Apol. 4). Elsewhere he says that appearance is of little consequence (De dog. Plat. 2.22 (251)), whereas Lucius puts much focus on outward appearances and his good looks are noted by Milo and Byrrhena (1.23; 2.2). True to Apuleius’ stance against mere appearances, he gives his protagonist in the Metamorphoses good looks and yet leaves him full of character flaws. Indeed, Keulen views Lucius as the immoral man from Apuleius’ de Platone, with his unquenchable thirst for pleasure, lack of self-knowledge, and fixation on appearances. Lucius is not philosophically minded and with his curiosity, gluttony, and superstition, would have been quite the disappointment to the real Plutarch were he his descendant.

The general difference between Apuleius’ Apologia and the Metamorphoses, with respect to philosophy and religion, has been noted by van Nuffelen. He indicates that in the Apologia, religion and philosophy are intrinsically linked, whereas in the

---


109 This contrasts with the Onos, in which Loukios does have to defend himself when he transforms in the amphitheatre (54-55).


111 Keulen (2006: 193-4) sees Lucius as the immoral man from De dog. Plat. 2.16 (242-43). This immoral man has an unquenchable thirst for all sorts of pleasures and cannot see true beauty due to his fixation on surface appearances; he also lacks self-knowledge. Cf. Apul. De deo Soc. 23 (172-75).
Metamorphoses, religion is absent of philosophy.\textsuperscript{112} This is essentially the same point made by Finkelpearl, but the reasoning behind this presentation differs.\textsuperscript{113} Van Nuffelen indicates that in the Apologia, like Plutarch in de Iside et Osiride, Apuleius advocates the use of philosophy to check religion, which helps avoid superstition and enables better understanding.\textsuperscript{114} Thus having the protagonist of the Metamorphoses end up with his reason dominated so greatly by his emotional experience of religion would not provide a satisfying conclusion for a Platonist like Apuleius, unless the point was to satirise such failings.

Lucius and Apuleius are thus related, but they are not the same. In the Metamorphoses, Apuleius has taken real philosophers and transformed them. This is exactly what Lucius is to Apuleius, a fictionalised debasement of a true Platonist. This is the humour behind the Madaurensem passage, it evokes the real Apuleius, but this only highlights the inadequacy of the fictional version. This is important when considering Lucius’ dubious second and third initiations and the last image of him as a bald pastophorus happily going about his duties.

Thus the religious conclusion is instrumental to the satire of Lucius as un-philosophical.\textsuperscript{115} With his wrong-headed approach to the gods, it is only fitting that, for him, they are also debased (as the previous chapter has shown). For Plutarch says that the name ‘Isis’ is Greek, implying a link to the verb εἰδέναι ‘to know’ (De Is. et Os. 351f),\textsuperscript{116} but in the Metamorphoses Isis does not require Lucius to attain knowledge, she

\textsuperscript{112} Van Nuffelen (2011: 92-93). Cf. Rives (2003: 326): ‘Furthermore, although Apuleius treats philosophy as the non-deviant term against which the deviant term magic is defined, a modern observer might classify much of what he discusses as religion: the secret object hidden among the lares, the performance of sacra nocturna, the allegedly demonic object of cult, perhaps even the enchantment of a boy, all relate in some way to interactions with the divine.’

\textsuperscript{113} Van Nuffelen (2011: 91) says that, in the Metamorphoses, Apuleius takes advantage of the ‘ambivalent nature of religion’ and that ‘the Apology exploits the idea that religion and philosophy converge in the same truths, whereas the Metamorphoses can be read as describing religion as heavily tainted by superstitious and untruthful accretions and is, as such, a satire on unphilosophical interpretations of religion.’

\textsuperscript{114} Van Nuffelen (2011: 91) points out that Apuleius used philosophy to check religion, by using Plato to say that Apuleius rejected cult statues made other than with wood (cf. Apol. 65; Pl. Leg. 955e).

\textsuperscript{115} Van Nuffelen (2011: 97 and n. 54) sees Apuleius invoking religion to critique it: he thus views it as moral satire, with a deep sense of irony.

\textsuperscript{116} Also noted by Frangoulidis (2008: 173) and Kirichenko (2010: 151).
only desires his ceaseless worship and obedience. This is where one might argue that this possessive Isis merely symbolises wisdom, and thus Lucius’ subservient relationship to the goddess is to be viewed positively (after all, ceaseless devotion to wisdom is exactly what the philosopher seeks). Yet this idea contradicts the lack of wisdom and introspection that Lucius displays. That is to say, he could have been depicted as both devoted to Isis as well as introspective and having attained wisdom, but he is not, which strongly suggests that Isis should not be understood symbolically.

Conclusion

Lucius started off his adventure naïve and eager for sensual experience (magic, sex, food). With his conversion, he is rid of these individual obsessions and changes his career, appearance, and surroundings. Most importantly, he escapes Blind Fortuna and enters the protection of Isis’ providence, thus ending up financially secure and free of misery. This is one of the biggest changes in Lucius’ life: his focus shifts from unstable magic to stable religion, which leaves him full of joy. In this sense, Lucius is a man transformed.

Yet much about Lucius has not changed. He did not develop (philosophically) through his adventure because, in the end, he is still obsessive and now focuses this urge upon an irrational approach to religion. The Isiac protégé of Book 11 and the narrator of the Metamorphoses do not display wisdom and self-knowledge, but rather a lack of it. Lucius’ focus on appearances and his emphasis on a purely emotional connection to the gods are equally undesirable. He is thus the image of the superstitious man in many respects. So while religion has enabled him to escape Blind Fortuna, without philosophy it has not enabled him to escape his own faults. Lucius is still passive, impressionable, overzealous, irrational, and emotional. Whilst he uses his rhetorical education, philosophy remains out of his reach, just like the elusive roses when he was an ass. But although Isis provides roses for Lucius to eat, she does not give him a taste for philosophy; indeed, Lucius’ version of Isis and Osiris do not require religion to be

accompanied by philosophy, which goes against the views of Plutarch and Apuleius. Therefore, Lucius converts to the worship of Isis not as an inward-thinking philosopher, but an impressionable and often overzealous devotee who is too impressed by surface appearances, just as he been when he approached magic. His reliance upon god-sent dreams rather than his reason recalls the superstitious man ridiculed by Plutarch. Unfortunately for Lucius, his conversion presents the wrong approach to religion; the flourishing religious fervour of Book 11 attached to the back of the ass-tale (Books 1-10) thus recalls the last image in the prelude to the Isiac procession: an ass with wings glued onto it standing in place of the wondrous Pegasus (11.8)—a laughable imitation.\textsuperscript{118} The conversion of Lucius thus comes up short; it is as lame as the priest in whose limping footsteps Lucius follows by becoming a pastophorus.

Book 11 reconnects with Book 1, for whilst Lucius is superstitious, he inhabits a superstitious world in which Plutarch and Socrates have lost their philosophical nous, through connection with Thessaly, and in which Isis and Osiris are demanding and inspire superstition rather than wisdom. This is a world where ‘Apuleius’ did become involved with magic, but far from his Platonic, real-world counterpart, he ends up a bald priest-lawyer with little insight.

Thus the Metamorphoses ends like the Onos in that it concludes with a joke on the protagonist. Loukios is restored to humanity and is understandably happy, but the joke is on him when he returns to his lover, the matrona-figure, who preferred him when he was an ass (ps.-Lucian Onos 56). For Lucius, the joke is that the story which he hoped would bring him literary glory (the story of many volumes at 2.12 being his autobiographical account of his adventures—i.e. the Metamorphoses) itself reveals his failure to attain wisdom. The difference from the Onos is that Lucius is quite unaware

\textsuperscript{118} This pageant of comic figures has in the past been said to represent figures from Lucius’ adventures; Fick-Michel (1991: 421-23) and Harrison (2000a: 241-42). Fittingly there are eleven figures, just as there are eleven books of the Metamorphoses—although, it is not so simple that each figure corresponds to a book. The pageant then can be seen to represent the novel as a whole; thus, Apuleius seems to have carefully chosen the last figure in the pageant to be the duo of Bellerophon and Pegasus. Not only do they allude to references to these characters earlier in the work (6.30, 7.26, 8.30), but the use of an ass clearly brings to mind the ass-tale itself, whilst the conspicuous addition (the wings) would suggest the additions of Apuleius (including the religious ending of Book 11)—yet the overall image is still said to be laughable (tamen rideres utrumque).
of the joke, and thus the last image of the joyful Lucius going about his business shows a figure exhibiting the bliss of ignorance. Nevertheless, for the reader, it turns out just as the Hypatan magistrate at 3.11 promises: ‘That god [Risus] will propitiously and lovingly accompany the man who has been his producer and performer, wherever he may go.’ Laughter, to be sure, has accompanied Lucius throughout his adventure—and even to the final moment of its telling.

119 Ire(deus auctorem et actorem suum propitius ubique comitabitur amanter, nec umquam patietur ut ex animo doleas, sed frontem tuam serena venustate laetabit assidue.)
Conclusion

This study began with the aim of deciphering the satire in Book 11 of Apuleius’ *Metamorphoses*. Since the dreams of Lucius are intrinsically linked to his conversion, understanding their function was the first key to unlocking the satire. It was shown that Apuleius most likely agrees with Plutarch and Plato that people can have signifying dreams (*oneiroi*). The person who experiences such dreams, however, would have to be mentally, emotionally, and physically pure. Moreover, this type of divination would only occur through the intercession of *daemones*, not with the direct appearance of gods in dreams, as is the case with Lucius. So it is clear that Apuleius is employing literary dreams in the *Metamorphoses*, which is not surprising given that this kind of divine dream is a common feature of prose and poetic narrative fiction.

In this literary context, it is no surprise that the dreams are consistently true and meaningful (with the caveat that one may misinterpret them). This being the case, Lucius is not satirised for believing meaningless dreams, either influenced by his psyche or programmed by his priests, nor are the priests lying about their own dreams. Isis and Osiris are in contact with their priests and with Lucius. Consequently, the satire is not the same as it is for the corrupt priests of the Syrian goddess in Books 8 and 9, with Lucius playing the dupe who sees what he wants to see, whilst the ungodly priests duly prey upon this vulnerability.

Nevertheless, the priests themselves are sharply contrasting figures. Mithras is an idealised *summus sacerdos*, whilst Asinus Marcellus is a deformed *pastophorus* of questionable character. The unexpected entrance and unflattering portrait of Asinius taints the overall conversion by devaluing rather than improving upon the act of
initiation. Moreover, by eagerly accepting initiations from both priests equally, Lucius demonstrates his inability to tell the difference between an adept priest who cares for him and one that offers him nothing new and seems to care primarily about material rewards.

This raises the issue of money. Whist greed and theft are prominent themes throughout Books 1-10 of the *Metamorphoses*, the re-emergence of the financial theme in the latter half of Book 11 is not included to show that Lucius is being exploited. Rather, it is a part of the general tainting of the overall conversion experience, focussing on the material expenses and benefits, rather than on the spiritual or intellectual rewards. This helps to induce doubt in the reader’s mind, particularly when Lucius questions his priests’ sincerity and credentials after learning about the need for a third initiation. Whilst his fears are misplaced, it nonetheless helps to create an ironic distance between the reader and Lucius so that, when he is subsequently reassured by his dream, the reader is still left wondering if everything is as it should be.

The reassurance Lucius receives from dreams raises the issue of his relationship to Isis and Osiris. Whilst he does have a personal relationship to the divine, it is far from ideal. Lucius is wholly passive and his newfound celibacy serves to bind him to the controlling Isis, who demands worship even after his death. Financially, this passivity pays off, since Osiris directs Lucius to a profitable career, rewarding him for success with a minor priesthood. But from a narrative perspective, the Osirian initiations are underwhelming and unnecessary since they do not add any impact to the first. In fact, they take away from it due to the questionable reasoning behind them—Lucius readily agrees to be initiated a third time because he needs a new cloak to worship on holy days. Thus for him the final initiation does not offer a spiritual breakthrough but a mere trapping of the cult, which helps to highlight his fixation on appearances that runs against the message of Plutarch. In addition to confirming Lucius’ fixation on appearances, the multiple initiations are also necessary to show how Lucius deals with this doubt. Having been driven to the point of madness (*ad instar insaniae*), he then receives a god-sent dream, which alleviates his concerns. Lucius’ dependence on
CONCLUSION

dreams, rather than his own rational thought, highlights his superstitious and passive character. This unhealthy relationship to the gods reveals a Lucius that sublimes his reason to the gods’ nocturnal instruction so completely that he resembles the superstitious man who must constantly appease the demanding divinities that appear in his dreams. The gods for Lucius are a crutch in lieu of rational thought. That the dreams are really god-sent thus parodies the superstitious man by showing his condition from his perspective. Whilst extra initiations are not necessary to advance the narrative of a positive conversion, they are essential for showing how Lucius’ conversion is not the change he requires.

For whilst some aspects of his character have changed, Lucius’ Inconscience as a narrator helps to show that he is fundamentally the same as his past self. Moreover, his Inconscience helps to distance his perspective from that of the author and the reader. The way has told his story—and the stories of others—confirms the curious nature that landed him in trouble in the first place; his is still the busybody who mistakes the obvious, for he cannot see the incongruity of an Isiac priest telling Milesian-style tales. This puts a large question mark over his judgement in general.

Moreover, the revelation that Lucius is Apuleius at 11.27 forces the reader to compare the protagonist to his author. Not only has a questionable figure revealed this seemingly important information, but the inevitable comparison is not favourable to Lucius. For whilst Apuleius defends himself against a charge of being a magus by appealing to the connection between religion and philosophy, Lucius becomes embroiled with magic and turns into an ass. When he is saved from this miserable fate, he does not find philosophy and religion together; instead, he desires to be a slave in order to experience the supernatural, just as he had earlier promised Photis. The last image of Lucius as a bald priest illustrates that while he may look different, he is still focussed on the outer rather than the inner part of himself.

Indeed, Apuleius elsewhere relates that the disease of the soul (aegritudinem mentis) is folly (stultitiam; De dog. Plat. 1.18 (216)). This takes two forms: ignorance (inperitia) and madness (insania). The disease of ignorance comes from boasting of
knowledge which is actually lacking (De dog. Plat. 1.18 (217)), whereas that of madness arises from living a life dominated by desire and filled with bad habits. Lucius’ madness is exhibited during his quest for magic on his first morning in Hypata (2.1-2), which is later exacerbated by his affair with Photis; his quest for religion substitutes celibacy for sex, and yet he is still driven to the point of madness (insania) when he frets about his third initiation (11.29).¹ Lucius’ continued ignorance is exhibited by his fixation on appearances, by not accepting responsibility for his transformation into an ass, and by the narrator-Lucius comparing himself to the wise Odysseus and then showing a lack of wisdom by relating a story that reveals his continued fascination with unseemly gossip.

This clearly demonstrates that Lucius has not taken to heart Mithras’ words to him after his transformation. In fact, the contrast of Mithras with Lucius is instructive. Each has a personal relationship to the divine (receiving dreams from Isis and Osiris), and yet while Mithras’ relationship is healthy (reflecting his disease-free soul), Lucius’ is not (reflecting his stultitia). For Mithras, Isis is as she should be, but for the ‘superstitious’ Lucius, she is a divine version of the powerful witches from Books 1-3. Indeed, it is impossible to imagine Mithras telling Lucius’ tale with anywhere near the same style, content, or focus. This is because Lucius does not set out to provide an edifying ending; he merely relates his experiences, as a young man, as an ass, and as an Isiac initiate. He does not condemn his past behaviour, but instead relishes in the telling of each story—the more scandalous the better.

The last connection between Lucius and Apuleius is that in the Metamorphoses, Apuleius is, in effect, telling the same stories as his inconscient narrator. Apuleius, however, gives more than just pleasurable entertainment as promised by the prologue; he gives a display of a misguided alter ego, a priest who is not at all introspective despite his utterly outlandish experiences, and who would thus make a very asinine philosopher indeed. This is what Macrobius and ‘Severus’ failed to appreciate when

¹ The noun insania is used elsewhere in the Metamorphoses when describing the madness of Ajax (3.19) and that of the wicked neighbour (9.36).
dismissing the *Metamorphoses* out of hand because its genre was used for entertainment. The ass story, with its ‘educated’ young protagonist becoming involved in magic, has enabled Apuleius to entertain whilst engaging with themes that were relevant to his own story. Yet it has also allowed Apuleius to make a philosophical point through satire. For amidst the entertainment, he demonstrates that even those who aim for piety are doomed to fail without the correct philosophical disposition. Of this, however, Lucius remains blissfully unaware.
BIBLIOGRAPHY

Ancient Sources: Texts, Translations, and Commentaries

Achilles Tatius

Aelius Aristides

Anonymous

Apuleius
http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3atext%3a2008.01.0501
BIBLIOGRAPHY


**Aristotle**


**Artemidorus**


**Augustine**


Cassiodorus


http://www9.georgetown.edu/faculty/jod/texts/cassinst2.html

Charisius


Chariton


Cicero


http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text;jsessionid=FEDD95D93D7A8BF7A69805E070078D6E?doc=Perseus%3atext%3a2007.01.0033


Dio Cassius


Diogenes Laertius


Eusebius


Heliodorus


Herodotus


Hesiod


Historia Augusta


Homer


**Horace**


**Josephus**


**Juvenal**


**Longus**


**Lucian [Ps.-Lucian]**


**Lucretius**

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Macrobius

Marcus Aurelius

Martial

Moschus

Origen
  http://openlibrary.org/books/OL195133M/Origenes_Werke

Ovid

Petronius

**Persius**

See entry for Juvenal (G. G. Ramsay).

**Philostratus**


**Photius**


**Plato**


**Pliny the Elder**


**Pliny the Younger**


**Plutarch**


**Propertius**


**Quintilian**

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Quintilian


Seneca the Younger


Sidonius Apollinarus


Strabo


Suetonius


Tertullian


http://www.tertullian.org/latin/de_corona.htm

Theophrastus


Vergil


Xenophon of Ephesus

See entry for Longus.
**Modern Sources**


Kim, L. (2010). Homer: Between History and Fiction in Imperial Greek Literature. Cambridge: Cambridge UP.


