

Paideia at Play: Learning and Wit in Apuleius

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Learning and Wit in Apuleius

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Image on cover: detail of folio 93 v. of the *Editio Princeps* of the collected works of Apuleius (Andrea Giovanni de'Bussi, Roma 1469: Sweynheym and Pannartz). Folio 93 v. shows the end of the *Florida* and the opening of the *Apology*. Location: The Special Collections department of the Leiden University Library.

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Introduction

The idea of education and learning (*paideia*) was central to ancient Greek thought.¹ With Plato and Isocrates, at the latest, the yearning for knowledge became the hallmark of civic identity. As early as Hellenistic times, the ideal of the *pepaideumenos*, the learned and cultivated man who put his intellectual gifts at the service of the *polis*, found wide-spread expression all over the Greek-speaking world.² With the incorporation of the Greek East into the Roman Empire, the concept of *paideia* underwent profound changes and served new purposes. By the second century CE, the so-called age of the Second Sophistic, *paideia* became associated with Greek civilization and culture. In a society that looked back to an idealized past of the fifth and fourth centuries BCE, having access to the “archives” of knowledge became a marker of Greek identity in relation to the foreign and dominating superpower of Rome. In recent years, Barbara Borg, Ewen Bowie, Jaap-Jan Flinterman, Thomas Schmitz, Simon Swain, and Tim Whitmarsh, to name just a few scholars, have described and analyzed this phenomenon in detail. They argue that the highly self-reflexive and artificial harking back to guiding paradigms of the past in the form of memorable events, traditions, myths, and narrative stock motifs was more than just a literary phenomenon. In combination with the ability to Atticize, to speak and write in classical Attic diction, a language that had become obsolete by the second century, these intellectual endeavors of the educated elites expressed a ‘value system and mode of thought.’³ The possession of these mainly literary and declamatory skills constituted a cultural code, via which Greek and Roman *pepaideumenoí* could recognize and communicate with each other.⁴ It was only through socialization in the appropriate elite circles and years of hard study that one could acquire these skills. The immersion in linguistic, rhetorical, literary, and philosophical training from

¹ The most comprehensive, but not undisputed study on classical Greek *paideia* remains Jaeger’s three-volume work *Paideia: the Ideals of Greek Culture*.

² Scholz 2000 (with epigraphic material).

³ Borg 2004b, 2.

⁴ Borg 2004b, 1 emphasizes this ‘communication on a symbolic level.’

childhood on instilled the pupil with more than just antiquarian knowledge about the past. The acquisition of a *paideia* that encompassed the whole spectrum of contemporary knowledge equipped the successful student with a highbrow personal pose, a ‘complex and elaborate behavioral etiquette,’⁵ that differentiated him from the uneducated masses. In endowing the *pepaideumenos* with symbolic capital in Bourdieu’s sense, encyclopedic knowledge and its ostentatious display fulfilled eminently social and political functions. This latter aspect deserves special attention. Just because learning had become a social marker that constructed identity and asserted one’s claim to power, its performative demonstration became more important than ever before. From the time of the middle Republic on, Romans had also embraced Greek *paideia*. Cicero, Varro, and Seneca, to name just a few Roman intellectual giants, were extremely proud of their knowledge of all matters Greek. But they did not show off their learning as conspicuously as the second-sophistic star orators. The public performance of *paideia* reached new dimensions during the Roman Empire and clearly served the purpose of aggressive self-advertisement and aggrandizement more than ever before. Thus, *paideia* had won new qualities, comparable to those of Latin epigraphy, which experienced its heyday during the second century as *the* medium of self-representation.

The fact that erudition pervades all genres of second-century Greek (and Roman) writing as well as material culture suggests again that *paideia* was more than just a literary phenomenon. In the hands of the second-century declaimers and *hommes de lettres*, *paideia* became a tool of identity construction on multiple levels. It was a vital component of one’s claim to a high social standing and an indispensable prerequisite for all those vying for political power in the Roman system of provincial and imperial administration. Given this competitive and culturally conservative climate, the Second Sophistic with *paideia* at its core was a cultural phenomenon with far-ranging social and political implications.

Since *paideia* was predominantly a Greek phenomenon and the quest for Greek identity under Roman rule an exclusively Greek issue, it comes as no surprise that modern research has focused mainly on *paideia* and its cultural, social, and political ramifications in the Greek world. The relative dearth of Latin sources testifying to this intellectual movement is another

⁵ Whitmarsh 2001, 243.

reason why the notion of *paideia* in the Latin world is under-researched.⁶ While Greek literature of the second century was extremely prolific—in quantity it surpasses the literature of the fifth and fourth century BCE—only one Latin speech is extant: Apuleius’ speech in his own defense, the so-called *Apology*. This singular status makes the speech an even more precious document for any attempt to define more closely than before the position, significance, and function of *paideia* in Latin literature. By the same token, Apuleius’ *Metamorphoses* is the only complete Latin novel we have. Since we are relatively well informed about Apuleius’ intellectual cosmos from his other writings, above all the *De Deo Socratis*, *De Mundo*, and his *Florida*, it seems almost mandatory to ask how Apuleius fits into this larger framework of the Second Sophistic by probing into the way in which he adapts and conveys to his Latin audience the Greek concept of *paideia*, as expressed in his main works, the *Apology* and the *Metamorphoses*. Although the quest for cultural identity is less intense in second-century Latin than in Greek literature, construction of identity via the display of learning also lies at the heart of both Apuleius’ *Apology* and the *Golden Ass*. In the speech, regardless of its historical authenticity and the substantive charge brought against the defendant, Apuleius tries to prove the innocence of his rhetorical persona, which, in the end, remains elusive. In the *Metamorphoses*, the identity of the highly sophisticated narrator is impossible to pin down. The vexed question of the notorious *quis ille* (‘who speaks there?’) programmatically stands at the beginning of the novel.⁷ Rather than searching for these enigmatic speakers, the contributors to this volume have undertaken a different enterprise, to discern the specific forms of *paideia* and their functions in the works of the Latin *rhetor* and author. Investigating from this angle the *Apology* and the *Metamorphoses* in close correlation to each other reveals that Apuleian *paideia* shows similar traits in both works, but fulfills different purposes in each genre. In the *Apology*, the performative display of literary erudition serves a concrete social purpose, i.e., to portray the defendant as culturally and morally superior to his rustic accusers and thus prove his innocence. In the *Golden Ass*, the complex and highly artificial texture with its more or less

⁶ Other major Latin texts of the Second Sophistic are Aulus Gellius’ massive *Noctes Atticae*, Pliny the Younger’s and Fronto’s letters, and Quintilian’s *Institutio Oratoria*. On the Latin literature of the second century, cf. Steinmetz 1982.

⁷ Kahane – Laird 2001.

fictional allusions to every-day occurrences, social practices, and locations serves mainly literary ends.⁸

Although Apuleius' *paideia* found different expressions in the speech and in the novel, even a cursory reading of Apuleius' writings lays bare a unifying factor, the joking character of Apuleius' *paideia*. To second-sophistic authors, learning and wit were inextricably intertwined, each being the carrier and reinforcement of the other. The old concept of *spoudaiogeloion* (mixture of serious and comic elements) reached new heights in second-century literature.⁹ As we especially see in Book 11 of the *Metamorphoses*, a half-serious message could be transmitted by poking erudite fun at traditional tales of religious conversion. Despite the interconnectedness of *paideia* and joking, this playful use of learning is relatively understudied. One exception is Graham Anderson, who, in his book *The Second Sophistic. A Cultural Phenomenon in the Roman Empire*, dedicates a whole chapter to humor and wit in second-sophistic authors.¹⁰ He rightly discerns 'the art of play ... as an asset of sophistic writers in general.'¹¹ And indeed, many sophists, such as Lucian, Aelius Aristides, and Dio Chrysostom, playfully adapted and appropriated their literary heritage. Blending various literary traditions and genres, they created something new and enhanced their symbolic capital within their respective societies.

In Apuleius' writings specifically, entertainment and reflexivity go hand in hand, *paideia* being almost always bound up with wit and humor. This programmatic combination testifies to Apuleius' highly self-reflexive treatment of Greek *paideia*. As a Latin *orator*, he could only appropriate it with a mischievous smile. In spite of his studies in the Greek East and his thorough familiarity with Greek language and literature, his world was the Roman West. Unlike Aelianus, Favorinus of Arles, and Lucian, he did not emulate the Greek masters of old in Greek, but chose to write in his native tongue Latin. However, he did study closely the Greek sophists' modes of expression and working techniques and transferred them into Latin, a cultural achievement of prime importance. This process of appropriation and

⁸ Cf. now Gaisser 2008, 1–39 with excellent remarks on Apuleius' self-image and role-play in the context of the Second Sophistic. Unfortunately, this rich monograph came to the attention of the contributors to this volume too late to be considered in full.

⁹ Cf. Anderson 1993, 179.

¹⁰ Anderson 1993, 171–199 ('*Adoxa Paradoxa*, the *Pepaideumenos* at Play'); Cf. also id. 1989, 104–136 on the *pepaideumenos* and his *paideia*; id. 1990, 101.

¹¹ Anderson 1993, 238.

adaptation created something different from the Greek model, a Latin sophisticated, which stood in a certain distance from and tension to its Greek counterpart. Apuleius was self-confident enough to mark and express this difference with wit and humor. One may understand this technique as a form of irony in an age of uncertainty and increasing quest for redemption or, more simply, as the refined game of a Latin *pepaideumenos*, who was fully aware of and played up his “Latinness” and created something new by playing his sophisticated game with Greek traditions and genres with a twinkle in his eye.

It is the entertaining and hilarious note in Apuleius’ *paideia* that makes it a highly dynamic concept. The indissoluble union of *Scherz und Ernst* is Apuleius’ literary program and establishes not only the thematic unity of *Apology* and *Metamorphoses*, but possibly also the unity of the author figure in both works. From the perspective of learned fun, joking *paideia* becomes an over-arching concept that fulfills a literary, cultural, and social role. Through this integrative concept of the erudite laugh, literature and life merge into an inseparable unity. In the Latin West, Apuleius is the *littérateur* – for whom this converging movement is best observable. This fact alone makes *paideia* in Apuleius, with all its lighthearted trifles and ludic digressions, an object worth studying.

The contributors to this volume take a fresh look at the *Apology* and the *Golden Ass* from this perspective. They focus on the questions of where, how, and to what purpose Apuleius embraced elements of play. Examining the playful side of Apuleian *paideia*, they go beyond a mere literary analysis of intertextuality. In line with the social and political dimensions of *paideia*, they rather investigate the concrete social and at times even provocative dynamics of playful intertextuality and learning. The papers demonstrate that the artful adaptation of and playing with older and contemporary literary motifs, genres, and voices, as well as the allegedly pompous display of knowledge, are not vacuous oratorical exercises, but fulfill vital functions in the cultural matrix of the Second Sophistic. Syncretism and eclecticism are more than intellectual peculiarities: they are part of a grand rhetorical strategy and in fact constitute a literary program and artistic form of self-fashioning, if not a personal *habitus*. In fleshing out these literary, cultural, and social intricacies of Apuleius’ writings and thus putting him into the larger context of Latin and Greek literature of the second century CE, we hope to make a worthwhile contribution to the study of Latin letters and the Second Sophistic in general. It is our goal to come to a better un-

derstanding of the rhetorical and literary persona of the forensic orator and narrator of the *Ass* story and his underlying literary program.

Stephen J. Harrison structures the multiple allusions to Greek and Latin learnedness in the *Apology* afresh and in doing so, convincingly argues that the speech not only serves the purpose of self-defense, but also constructs and promotes Apuleius' literary and social career in North Africa. Apuleius' wide-ranging education shows him in different roles, all merging into the portrait of a polymath, a scholarly intellectual, and veritable *homme de lettres* near the beginning of his career. Apuleius presents himself as a prolific and mature author starring as poet, scientist, art critic, and famous orator. At the same time, the display of his encyclopedic reading encompassing Greek and Latin literature underlines his claim to scholarly fame and elite status. Within Apuleius' unfolding of his erudition and literary accomplishments, however, one work is conspicuously absent: the *Metamorphoses*. Given the orator's carefully crafted self-image as literary figure, it is hard to imagine that he would have bypassed the unique chance to talk about and promote his greatest literary achievement, his novel, which, most artfully, renders the Greek *Ass* story in Latin and thereby profoundly transforms it. This absence suggests once more a late date for the *Golden Ass* and attributes a key role to the *Apology*: that of self-consciously spelling out Apuleius' literary merits and ambitions in a high-profile case and thus boosting his subsequent literary and social career.

James B. Rives concentrates less on the contents of the erudition that Apuleius ostentatiously displays than on the form in which he presents his knowledge. Scholars have seen for a long time that Apuleius' enumeration of the minutiae of antiquarian learning fulfills practical purposes, i.e., to portray himself as superior *pepaideumenos* and to curry favor with the highly educated judge, the senator Claudius Maximus. But Rives goes one step further and provocatively argues that the orator deliberately chose to present harmless, if not boring knowledge, and most importantly, to transmit it in socially respectable, familiar, and completely innocent forms: the quotation, the list, and the problem. This formal and stylistic choice becomes clear when one reads Apuleius' speech against the backdrop of other Second-Sophistic writings concerned with the transmission of "superfluous" knowledge, such as Aulus Gellius' *Noctes Atticae* and Athenaeus' *Deipnosophistai*. By conveying his innocuous knowledge through established models of displaying *paideia*, Apuleius was able to provide an appropriate answer to the vague accusation of magic on a formal as well as

discursive level. If magic was broadly understood as the possession and performance of subversive knowledge, Apuleius bolstered his claim to innocence by showing off the harmlessness of his learning in very traditional ways.

But the *Apology* is not only concerned with the effective presentation of innocuous knowledge. It also gives us a wonderful insight into the highly self-conscious process of artistic self-fashioning. Apuleius perceives himself as the ultimate *pepaideumenos* and therefore crafts his rhetorical persona along different, sometimes even overlapping and conflicting identities. One such character upon whom Apuleius partly projects his self is the historical Socrates as portrayed by Xenophon and Plato. At first glance, the role of Socrates offered itself to Apuleius' court case. The innocent philosopher who has to defend himself against rustic blockheads was an ideal paradigm to draw from. At the same time, however, Apuleius could not stretch the association with Socrates too far, for Socrates was executed in the end. In my contribution, I attempt to show that Apuleius was well aware of this tension and to illuminate how he playfully coped with it. Apuleius unfolds a complex game with shifting identities, at times associating himself more closely with Socrates, at times distancing himself from him. Apuleius' real identity is thus masked and dissimulated. The listeners and readers are left puzzled, but one certainty emerges: Apuleius' rhetorical "I" is a hybrid artifact, an object of supreme literary and rhetoric craftsmanship.

The game with Greek identities and Greek self-stylization serves in other ways as well to make the accusers look even more rustic. Vincent Hunink demonstrates that Apuleius intended to increase his cultural capital by showing off his familiarity with Homer and playing with multiple references to the arch-poet. Two peculiarities stand out. First, by employing different forms of Homeric allusion—they range from full quotes in Greek to Latin translations and to Homeric subtexts only—Apuleius targets different groups in the audience. For someone to appreciate all the subtle allusions, however, Apuleius presupposes that the listener be a *pepaideumenos*. Second, Apuleius' cunning intertextual play with *Homeric* sometimes verges on brinkmanship. The self-identification with Paris, one of the most handsome men of Greek mythology, is funny, but dangerous, because Paris triggered a horrible war by abducting Helen. Apuleius' association with Odysseus is equally bold: Odysseus was the ingenious traveler, but also a notorious liar and deceiver. Is this daring and overly self-confident stance

just supposed to provoke the opponents and impress the judge, or does it in the end undermine the speaker's own argument? Could a real defendant in court afford such risky, albeit amusing comparisons? However one wants to evaluate the dense literary texture of the speech, it should make us suspicious of the authentic character of the "speech in self-defense" and invite us to consider more seriously than before the possibility that it was all a fictional show piece performed in front of appreciating literary connoisseurs.

Thomas D. McCreight zooms in on a passage renowned for its brilliantly dazzling rhetoric, the most extensive epideictic digression in the whole of the showpiece, i.e., chapter 18, Apuleius' self-portrayal as a poor philosopher. The *laus paupertatis* was an established and common motif in Greek and Latin literature by the second century CE, and Apuleius fully exploits it to his own ends. A careful interpretation of Apuleius' literary contextualization of the *paupertas*-motif through alluding to and playing with literary predecessors (above all Plautus, Vergil, Lucretius, and Homer) reveals the dense intertextuality of the passage. A close lexical reading of this 'intertextual cabinet' brings to light different strata and demonstrates that ch. 18 is steeped in literary references that endow it with multiple layers of meaning. The analysis of *vernacula*, *parvo potens*, *aemula laudis*, *benesuada*, *repertrix*, and *conditrix* serve as telling examples of Apuleius' literary technique and supreme craftsmanship. He aims at more than proving the innocence of his "modest means." He sets his intellectual lifestyle against a literary background and presents himself as the legitimate heir of a grand tradition that traces the 'poetic history of the philosophical problem of poverty.'

Stefan Tilg widens the scope of literary analysis and offers a re-interpretation of the dense literary texture of the *Apology*. In a highly self-conscious way, Apuleius gives meta-rhetorical statements on eloquence itself and its role in constructing his identity as innocent philosopher. Drawing from neoteric poetry, Apuleius defines *eloquentia* as outspokenness (*e-loquentia*), cheerfulness, and charm. This playful concept is developed in chs. 5–13 of the *Apology*, but has considerable bearing on the rest of the speech. The inside-outside motif, closely related to the definition of eloquence as outspokenness, underlines the correspondence between inner character and outer behavior. Both are impeccable so that Apuleius has nothing to hide. The wooden statuette of Mercury becomes a metaphor of the orator's sunny playfulness. In a similar vein, Apuleius praises Lollianus

Avitus, Claudius Maximus' predecessor, as the ideal orator in cheerful, neoteric terms, thus expanding neoteric concepts to a high official of the Roman governmental system and linking him closely to his own person. These semantic characteristics and ideological, philosophical, as well as literary ramifications of *eloquentia* strongly support Apuleius' case in court, but they constitute more than just a clever strategy. Beyond serving utilitarian ends, this kind of playful eloquence forms a rhetorical program, an artistic concept of cheerful eloquence that informs not only the *Apology*, but also the *Metamorphoses*. Once more we see how closely related, if not intertwined the artistic acts of crafting one's rhetorical self and writing literature are.

This insight into the analogy between 'self-making and text-making,'¹² to use Whitmarsh's words, makes for a smooth transition to the *Metamorphoses*. Searching for the *Metamorphoses*' *Sitz im Leben*, Maaïke Zimmerman suggests a symposiastic reading of the novel, thus firmly anchoring it in ancient banquet literature. Reading the *Golden Ass* against the backdrop of the Latin *cena* (Horace, Aulus Gellius) and especially Greek symposiastic literature as preserved, for example, in Athenaeus' *Deipnosophistai* and the skoptic epigrams of the *Anthologia Palatina*, reveals once more the jesting side of the text. At the same time, however, the mocking laughter during *cenae* is almost always urbane, charming, and at times even instructive. Very clearly, these scenes evoke Plato's *Symposium*, thus making for an earnest subtext. A symposiastic reading, then, is the appropriate way to comprehend the dialectic dynamics of entertaining and serious elements. As in the *Apology*, *spoudaiogeloion* is a central feature of the satiric text (see below Elizabeth M. Greene's contribution) and key in understanding its cryptic message. The seriousness of playing is achieved by the subtle blending of Platonic elements with the tradition of joking Greek and Roman banquet literature. These frequent allusions to a cultural practice that was also firmly established in the Roman world as *convivium*, combined with the strongly discursive character of the text, may support the idea that the *Metamorphoses* was originally read to a small circle of elite friends on the occasion of a *convivium*. If this was the case, the symposiastic elements in the text connected the novel during the reading to the world of its producer and recipients.

¹² Whitmarsh 2001, 115. Cf. *ibid.* 123.

Clearly connected to the *symposion* is another powerful cultural convention, the guest-host relationship (*hospitium*). Robert E. vander Poppen argues that this social practice is an intrinsic part of the novel's literary program and a device that drives the plot forward. Important relationships between protagonists, such as Lucius and Milo, Lucius and Byrrhena, and last but not least, Lucius and Isis, are cast in terms of *hospitium* relations. Since this set of values evoked plenty of associations and expectations in contemporary listeners and readers, Apuleius decided to play with the significance of *hospitium* and the obligations resulting from it. From this perspective, Lucius' quest for redemption can be phrased as the search for proper *hospitium*. He breaks the compact of *hospitium* with Milo and is transformed into an ass as a consequence, not least because he had ignored Byrrhena's warnings and repudiated her *hospitium*. Lucius' final rescue by Isis appears at first glance to be the safe haven of a felicitous *hospitium*, but it turns into exploitative servitude so that Lucius is duped again. The category of *hospitium* thus demonstrates how a social practice of daily life becomes a literary topos and fulfills eminently literary functions in the highly allusive texture of the *Metamorphoses*.

Similarly historically oriented is Elizabeth M. Greene's contribution on the satirical character of the *Metamorphoses*. Strangely enough, Apuleius' novel is generally considered to be less of a satire than Petronius' *Satyrica*, although the first seems to provide social commentary on and criticism of human vices and flaws of imperial and provincial administration through the narrator Lucius, whereas the latter's narrator abstains from social criticism. Even though Apuleius plays with the genre of satire and manipulates it, there are enough characteristics to be found that echo the tradition of satirical writing. Thematic similarities to Juvenal in particular suggest that the *Golden Ass* might indeed be regarded as a kind of satire. Apuleius' narrator insists that true nobility is based on virtue rather than noble birth. Virtue can even overcome the whims of blind Fortuna. The way in which this common motif is phrased comes so close to Juvenal's wording that Apuleius' intentional drawing from Juvenal is beyond doubt. And yet, a moralizing and a mocking posture, social criticism and entertainment do not exclude each other, as we can see, for example, in the grim scene of the baker's mill, where Lucius fosters emotional involvement by exposing the exploitation and violence the slaves have to suffer from, but at the same time creates emotional detachment by distancing hardship and toil from the

reader through dazzling rhetoric. As so often in Apuleius, *spoudaiogeloion* is the artistic concept that precludes any definitive readings.

Apuleius plays not only with the genre of satire. Amanda G. Mathis demonstrates how and to what end the narrator in the *Metamorphoses* also plays with Latin love elegy in the first two books of the novel. Close similarities in wording establish an unmistakable link between Apuleius and Propertius, Ovid, and Tibullus. All stock figures of elegy have their *mise-en-scène* in the *Metamorphoses*, the *puella* (girlfriend), the *domina* (cruel mistress), the *lena* (procuress, go-between), the *anus* (old hag), and the *saga* (professional witch). They do not fulfill, however, their traditional functions in the novel. The narrator embarks on a complex literary game with the elegiac tradition, sends the reader on a literary “who’s who” game, and sheds new light on Meroe, Photis, Pamphile, and last, but not least, Lucius. The constant role-changing endows the female protagonists with multiple identities so that they gain heightened significance in the narrative. Meroe stars simultaneously as *saga*, *domina*, and even *exclusus amator*, Photis is a *puella*, but in spite of her sexual affair with Lucius, never advances to the status of *domina*, the true elegiac mistress holding the *amator* in her power. Lucius exploits her as a *lena* figure, but she fails in her function as a successful procuress. Comparable to Meroe, Pamphile enjoys the powerful status of *saga*, *domina*, and *lena*. In the midst of these shifting elegiac roles of females, Lucius is eager to assert his part as a bold *amator*, but being an inattentive reader he cannot follow the complicated game and thus falls short of elegiac expectations, a serious failure that directly leads to his loss of human shape.

Similarly to the social category of *hospitium*, the biological category of *dream* and *dreaming* found its literary expression in the novel. David P. C. Carlisle uncovers the narrative use of dreams in the *Metamorphoses* by analyzing how Apuleius made playful use of the ambiguous status of dreams with regard to waking reality. Dreams permeate the *Golden Ass* more than any other ancient novel, to the extent that sometimes they blur the line between dreaming and waking reality. Dreams, located at crucial points in the narrative, fulfill two vital, albeit sometimes conflicting functions that can go hand in hand. On the one hand, they assume a communicative role. They reveal things and thus provide the dreamer (and the readers) with information that would not be accessible otherwise. On the other hand, they lend authority to improbable, if not wholly impossible events by anchoring them in a dreamworld. By rendering unlikely occurrences plau-

sible and believable, dreams protect bizarre happenings from being rejected. We can also speak of the suspension of disbelief. As a consequence, Lucius' experiences are never dismissed as lies. This awareness of the two-fold role dreams play in this literary cosmos has serious consequences for the interpretation of Book 11. Lucius' religious conversion depends on dreams and it is up to us to re-assess the conversion story with our understanding of dreams. Apuleius' literary game with dreams is clear enough: they all mean something in the fictional fabric of the novel. When finally the priest of Osiris, Asinius Marcellus, is informed in a dream about Lucius as fictional protagonist, created by a man from Madauros, the referent of the dream is no longer the world of the novel, but the world of the reader. A dream has thus transgressed the boundaries of fiction and possibly expanded its relevance into our own lives.

Epidictic rhetoric as examined in the *Apology* found its novelistic equivalent in literary ecphrasis. Originally, the visual arts played only a minor role or were not part of *paideia* at all (Aissen-Crewett 1989). This was to change, however, with the novelists, who attributed more importance than ever to the gaze and to seeing in general. Ecphraseis became dynamic forms of expression to characterize protagonists, build up atmosphere, comment on the plot, and anticipate future events. Niall W. Slater contrasts two ecphraseis in the *Metamorphoses*, in which the erotics of vision are diametrically opposed. The city ecphrasis opening Book 2 is a highly visual description of Lucius not seeing, but experiencing the town with other senses. Because of his excessive desire to experience magic, he cannot see. Totally different is the ecphrasis opening Book 5, where Psyche wakes up in the idyllic landscape of Cupid's Palace. Her experience is 'relentlessly visual.' Unlike in Lucius' situation, vision and desire are here in proportion with each other, both being rhetorically inflated. Put into the context of ecphraseis in the Greek novel, these Apuleian ecphraseis reveal their obsession with the dialectic relationship between vision and desire. In the Greek version of the *Ass* story, nothing remotely similar can be found. Apuleius' role as an innovator emerges then once more: in his game with the conventions of visual depiction, he not only tests the limits of visual descriptibility by pushing them to the extremes, but also offers his novel as a *melete* of the earlier Greek version. The character of ecphraseis as epidictic show along with their underlying literary program connects their author-figure to the orator at play in the *Apology*.

Serious playfulness and learned wit render the speech and the novel deliberately ambiguous. The best evidence for this ambivalence is the interpretive tension between some of the papers presented here with regards to specific questions. Hunink and McCreight on the one hand and Rives and Riess on the other take almost diametrically opposed positions about the fictionality or historicity of the speech. The vexed question whether or not Book 11 is meant to be serious—Carlisle and Vander Poppen argue for more seriousness than Harrison has done in previous publications—poses a problem along similar lines. We could say that the double-edged sense of *spoudaiogeloion* is woven into the fabric of both texts and deliberately allows for different interpretations. If the contributions to this volume have brought out some of these tensions more clearly than before, they have reached one of their goals. These contradictions, however, do not detract from the unifying elements running through all the papers. They cohere in their investigation of the way in which Apuleius plays with different genres and playfully quotes from and alludes to previous literature for serious and less serious reasons, for literary as well as personal ends. The shared themes and motifs that permeate the *Apology* and the *Metamorphoses* make not only for the unity of Apuleius' literary work, but also for that of this volume.

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