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UNIVERSITY OF GLASGOW, COLLEGE OF ARTS, DEPARTMENT OF CLASSICS,
MASTER OF RESEARCH

Religion and Narrative in the “Metamorphoses” of Apuleius

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Introduction

Apuleius of Madauros, the North African rhetorician and Platonic philosopher, lived during very interesting times. The *pax augusta* must have by now seemed like a distant memory, and it was not only war that threatened peace in the empire, but also civic unrest from a source that would one day envelope the entire Roman world, Christianity. It is unclear just how visible or widespread Christianity was at this time. Nevertheless, we know from Pliny's *Letters* (10.96-97) to the Emperor Trajan – in which he discusses the trials of Christians and the abandoning of the Pagan sacred rites by the people – and from our record of Apuleius' own life – such as the *Apologia*, in which he is accused and tried of practicing magic – and his philosophy – such as the *De Deo Socratis*, which Augustine in his *Civitas Dei* (Books 8-9) was so keen to refute as an inferior model to the divine mediation of Christ – that the various crises and controversies that would emerge in the AD third and fourth centuries were simmering beneath the surface in the time of Apuleius.¹

The aim of this thesis is to explore the role of religion within the narrative of the *Metamorphoses*. I will begin by exploring a narratological paradigm which could make sense of the novel as a whole without depending upon prior knowledge of the final book (that is, from the perspective of the first time reader), namely conversion narrative. The outline of conversion experience given here is based on Shumate's book (1996) ch. 4 *passim*, and provides the basis for much of Shumate's discussions on the *Metamorphoses* and other works analysed in her book. The authors from whom she develops her definition of conversion are Batson (1993), Batson and Ventis (1982), and James (1958). Although these works focus much more on personal psychological experience and employ – as far as possible – a scientific method, James' work, the earliest and most influential work in the field of psychology of religion, is based largely upon evidence found in the religious tracts of early twentieth-century USA (i.e. pamphlets that recounted [largely American protestant] Christians' experience of salvation and deliverance from certain ailments, addictions, or feelings of being hell-bound/un-saved). This would imply, therefore, that to discuss matters of conversion is not too far from discussing matters of conversion narrative, as the psychological concept of conversion is largely based on evidence which we can consider 'conversion narrative'.²

¹ An extensive bibliography on Christianity during the time of Apuleius is given below in chapter 4

² Batson (1993) builds upon the work of Batson and Ventis (1982), and so it is the former work that I refer to *passim* in this thesis. Furthermore, Batson (1993) looks more specifically at the individual's religious experience, even if not explicitly focussed on conversion. See also Nock's *Conversion* (1933:138-155) which discusses the conversion of Lucius' and in which Nock states that the only thing that came close in Pagan antiquity to what he called conversion is the story of Lucius (p. 14). For Nock it seems that the only religion that one can truly convert to are the ones that Nock calls prophetic religion, which require not only the

I will establish whether or not such a paradigm is at all relevant – given that many of the works that use such a paradigm come from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries – and then explore if such a paradigm truly is present in the novel. I believe that to speak of Apuleius' *Metamorphoses* as a conversion narrative is ultimately misleading and unhelpful in analysing and interpreting this novel. There is one element, however, of conversion narrative that is, I believe, wholly present in the *Metamorphoses*: the presence of chaos and disorder in the protagonist's life and surroundings that is finally restored to good order (normally through the divine). Chaos and disorder is quite clear in the largely dystopian and macabre world of the *Metamorphoses*' first ten books. It can be seen in the subversive practices of magic, so dominant in the city of Hypata that its citizens cower in fear at witches such as Meroe and Pamphile; the lack of hospitality and general civic virtue, as displayed by Milo and Apuleius' ordeal at Hypata's Risus festival; the perverse and unmasculine (at least in accordance with Roman mores) sexual proclivities of many of the characters of the novel – including Lucius himself; and the masculinisation of the female and feminisation of the male, which is displayed above all in the dominant position certain female characters have in the novel to their male counterparts.

It is from this point that I discuss another narratological paradigm which Apuleius may have had in mind when writing his work, and which best exemplifies this one element of conversion narratives mentioned above, narratives of metamorphosis. In chapter 3 I explore the theme of metamorphosis in other texts, especially – but not exclusively – Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, in order to establish that the motif of disorder and chaos restored through the divine is a common, if not all-prevailing, theme in narratives of metamorphosis.

Finally, I move on to an analysis of the final book of the *Metamorphoses* and the socio-cultural significance of Isis and Osiris in Apuleius' time. It is here that the place of religion and of Isiac religious practice in the contemporary Greco-Roman world is discussed in relation to the novel. Given the rising prominence of the cult of Isis and Osiris in the 2nd Century AD, and the cult's use in Imperial propaganda, such as the gods' depiction alongside members of the imperial family on coins, it is clear that the crowning of the novel – chaotic, low and vulgar as it is for the first 10 Books – with

fulfilment of certain rites and civic obligations but deeply held moral/theological convictions (pp. 7-10). The approach which I adopt from Shumate has a much more subtle and well thought out definition of conversion and of conversion narrative

the solemn religious ceremonies of Isis and Osiris is in fact entirely fitting to the rest of the novel when seen as a “narrative of metamorphosis”.

My approach combines the literary analyses of scholars such as Winkler, Shumate and Tilg, with the more historical approach to Apuleius and his work taken by Bradley, along with the historical place of Isis and Osiris in contemporary Roman society as portrayed by Takacs, Witt and Donalson. When discussing narratology, my analysis will depend greatly on an intertextual reading of the novel; for I believe that it is only in the exploration of other literary works that a firm narratological paradigm can be outlined, and demonstrated to be plausible and useful in exploring the *Metamorphoses*. Given the great amount of Apuleian scholarship, the brevity of this thesis, and my own ignorance of other languages, I can only consider a select - but well focused - amount of English scholarship carried out upon the novel and its author. This thesis does not seek to provide a definitive or exhaustive analysis of the novel and the perennial questions surrounding its narrative and interpretation; but provides, rather, a new, balanced perspective upon such questions, and attempts to provide a reading of the novel that neither lays greater emphasis upon Books 1-10 (and thus seeking to ignore or read away the seriousness of the final book), nor depends upon the reader’s knowledge of the final book as providing an interpretive key to the novel (and thus trying to impose the serious tone and themes of the final book upon the rest of the novel).

Conversion: a Narratological Paradigm

The *Metamorphoses* of Apuleius has intrigued and perplexed scholars throughout the ages.³ Despite ten of the eleven books of the novel being so racy and provocative that parts of it could not be translated for the polite society of Victorian Britain,⁴ its final book displays a sharp, jolting and religious change of tact – even providing us with our main source of information on the liturgical and ritual proceedings of the cult of Isis in the Roman world of the second century AD.⁵ But does the

³ Perplexity over the *Metamorphoses* can be found as early as the period of Augustine, when he declares his uncertainty as to whether the novel is fact or fiction (*Civitas Dei* 18.18). Winkler notes that writers such as G.C. Drake and R. Merkelbach have read the novel as, what he calls, a ‘solvable allegory’ (1985: 58). See also Heller (1983), in which he attempts to demonstrate a symbolic (and Platonic) significance to the unusual number of the Books of the *Metamorphoses*. Other writers, such as Winkler himself and Shumate (1996) – whose work I will discuss in more detail below – take a much more nuanced (or poststructuralist) approach to the novel, i.e. they hesitate to give the novel any definitive meaning or interpretation.

⁴Take for example S. Gaselee’s (1915) revised version of W. Adlington’s 1566 translation.

⁵ See J.G. Griffiths (1975). See, also, Nicolini’s article (2012), in which she analyses the etymological wordplay of the final book. She notes that, although there is still an element of wordplay in the final book, ‘...the style, though still ‘Apuleian’, is more monotonous; there is a lesser variety of register; the structure is **entirely**

content of the final book, which dramatically shifts the tone and register of the novel, make the *Metamorphoses* a conversion narrative? In order to answer this question, we must first define what is meant by conversion, and, more specifically, by ‘conversion narrative’. The thought-provoking work of Nancy Shumate (1996) provides a satisfactory definition of ‘conversion narrative’, but as to whether or not the *Metamorphoses* provides an example of conversion narrative, this will be the main topic of this and the following chapter.⁶ In this chapter I will begin by defining what a “conversion narrative” is. From here, I will go on to explore whether or not such a narratological paradigm was present in the literary culture of Apuleius’ contemporaries, Dio and Lucian (using Augustine’s *Confessions* as a touchstone),⁷ before then moving on to the *Metamorphoses* in order to explore whether or not the novel can be considered as a sustained conversion narrative, or at least containing elements of conversion narrative.

I

Nancy Shumate in her book *Crisis and Conversion in Apuleius’ Metamorphoses* (1996) deals primarily with texts written after – often well after – the time of Apuleius. This is not a criticism per se, for Shumate’s main aim seems to be to try and establish the *Metamorphoses* as the first of a series of literary ‘conversion narratives’ (the type is much more prevalent in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries⁸), in which the *persona* undergoes a period of personal crisis. During this period old conceptions of the world and society fall away, and this is followed by a conversion experience, often, but not always, of a religious nature. Shumate mentions only in passing in her introduction (pp. 31-32) two texts written by two writers more or less contemporary with Apuleius. They wrote narratives which, to her mind, fit to some extent the model(s) of ‘conversion narrative’, which she sets out: the

without narrative insertions; and all of this ... serve to confirm in my view a certain fundamental seriousness, an absolute respect in his presentation of Isis.’ (p. 41).

⁶ Shumate herself does not explicitly say that the *Metamorphoses* is a conversion narrative, but she concludes her work by stating (p. 327): ‘The *Metamorphoses* is, of course, not *exactly* (her italics) like the conversion narratives of Tolstoy, Dante, or Augustine, in spite of the parallels I have drawn ... [T]he Latin novel is simultaneously an invocation and critique of religious experience ... But the path of the narrative that I have followed ... has very much in common with those later sober narratives of conversion.’

⁷ Augustine’s *Confessions* is widely considered as the first conversion narrative written in Western literary culture. Apuleius clearly had an influence upon him (Book 18.18 talks about the possibility of metamorphosis and explicitly mentions the *Golden Ass*. See also Shumate (1988) ‘The Augustinian Pursuit of False Values as a Conversion Motif in Apuleius’ *Metamorphoses*’, an article that is clearly a precursor to her later book on conversion motifs and Apuleius’ *Metamorphoses*.

⁸ Such as Tolstoy’s *Confession* first published in 1882 or Thomas Merton’s *The Seven Storey Mountain* first published in 1948.

thirteenth discourse of Dio Chrysostom, and the *Nigrinus* of Lucian.⁹ A brief exploration of these two works would provide not only a more in-depth examination of Shumate's model(s) of conversion (outlined below) in relation to works of the second century AD, but also a contrast between the *Metamorphoses* and these two works – quite possibly known to Apuleius – which seem to exemplify certain aspects of Shumate's model(s) of conversion narrative.

But first we must define conversion, how it occurs, and what it entails for the convert. Initially, the convert begins to challenge the values, which he/she once held. Epistemological and metaphysical preconceptions start to change and slowly fall away, leading to a gradual disillusionment with the conventional systems of goals and rewards that had constituted the core of their habituated structure of meaning (Shumate, 1996: 138). As the epistemic and moral foundations of the pre-convert fall away, he/she re-evaluates his/her activities in the context of a heightened sense of mortality, which the convert experiences in the epistemic and ontological void left by the re-evaluation of his/her core values. The convert becomes disconnected from wider society and its system of values and valorisation (i.e. how it affirms, awards and recognises those working within the societal norms). The convert, therefore, ultimately becomes hyper-critical of the society around him/her, such as Augustine, or Tolstoy, who 'writes ruefully and at some length about how he came to see the fame and money accruing from his literary endeavours as surrogate gods at the centre of the false religion of the intelligentsia and the literati' (1996: 152).¹⁰ Augustine in his *Confessions* 8.2.3 recites the story of the orator Victorinus, who was honoured as a teacher of noblemen with a statue in the forum, and was a long-time advocate of the Pagan gods into his old age:

non erubuerit esse puer Christi tui et infans fontis tui, subiecto collo ad humilitatis iugum et edomita fronte ad crucis opprobrium.

The strong language used here by Augustine draws a clear contrast between Victorinus' former life which won him honour *quod cives huius mundi eximium putant* and his converted life in Christ, much more reminiscent of the life of a slave through Augustine's word choice (e.g. *subiecto collo ad humilitatis iugum et edomita fronte ad crucis opprobrium*). Conversion ultimately involves a

⁹ For bibliography on Lucian in general see below. Whitmarsh (2013) tells us briefly about the little information we have on Lucius from Patras (pp. 75-77), and provides interesting insight to the Second Sophistic and Lucian's place in this second-century movement. See Chs. 4 and 5 for his discussion on Lucian's *Lucius or the Ass* and Apuleius' *Metamorphoses*. It is the common consensus of scholars today that Lucian did not write the epitome *Lucius or the Ass*. This is the opinion of Harrison (2000). See also Hall (1981: 354-367) for a detailed argument in favour of a pseudo-Lucianic author of the *Onos*.

¹⁰ Shumate here is referring to Tolstoy's *Confession*.

paradigm shift from one set of values and beliefs to another “true” set, founded in a new metaphysical reality of the world, a reality which is often critical of the society which the convert has left behind.

The thirteenth discourse of Dio Chrysostom provides many points of contact with the definition, outlined above, of conversion experiences. Dio was born in the middle of the first century AD in Prusa, Asia Minor. He was considered a *rhetor* and sophist, and delivered many extant speeches around the Roman world, such as in Athens, Alexandria and Rome. Around the year 84 he was exiled from Rome by the emperor Domitian for his relationship with Flavinus Sabinus, a supposed conspirator and cousin of Domitian. His return was permitted in 96, and the oration was possibly delivered in 101 at Athens (Jones 1978: 53). The oration recounts the cause of his exile; the process by which he comes to the decision to lead the life of a poor, wandering philosopher; the speech that (*the?*) Socrates would deliver concerning the right way of living and educating others; and finally the speech ends incomplete, when Dio addresses the citizens of Rome.¹¹

Firstly, Dio’s world collapses when he is sent into exile and this sudden loss of his former world and society leads to a reconsideration of his values (13.2):

τότε δ’ οὖν, ἐπεὶ με φεύγειν ἔδοξεν, ἐσκόπουν πότερον ὄντως χαλεπὸν τι καὶ
δυστυχεὲς εἶη τὸ τῆς φυγῆς ὥς κατὰ τὴν τῶν πολλῶν δόξαν ...

He begins to bring the opinion of the majority of people into question, that is, the people with whom he once associated; perhaps exile could be heavy for some but light and easy for others (3.13). Dio begins his discourse by outlining the disadvantages of exile. Homer’s Odysseus, despite his many valorous and praise-worthy deeds, and despite even the offer of immortality, wanted nothing more than to see his home of Ithaca again; Electra, when she enquires about her exiled brother, is told by the oracle that the exile’s life is really no life at all; finally, Dio recounts those who fought wars and battles to be reinstated to their homes, even if it meant death on their own soil (13.4.-6).¹² All of these things, according to Dio, με ἐξέπληττε, and he begins to consider his exile as δεινὸν and βαρὺ (13.6). Dio’s fear is powerful, and his choice of verb (ἐξέπληττε) suggests that his fear makes him lose full use of his mind and faculties. This fear is clearly brought about by a fear of death, for the exiles return to their homeland to fight for their right to stay, εἰ καὶ δέοι τελευτᾶν μαχομένους ἐν τῇ αὐτῶν γῇ (13.6). The finality of death – here emphasised by the verb τελευτᾶν – makes it clear that Dio sees

¹¹ For details of Dio’s life, exile, and return see Jones (1978) Ch. 6 and *passim*. For an in-depth analysis of Dio’s ‘internal’ and ‘external’ audience, as Moles puts it, in the thirteenth oration, see Moles (2005). Swain (2000) provides in-depth analysis of Dio’s philosophy (Ch. 9-11). See also Berry (1983).

¹² Dio is referring here to Homer’s *Odyssey* 1.48-59 and Euripides’ *Electra* 233-236.

any return, not just to his homeland, but to his old life and former outlook upon the world, as impossible. There is no returning to the opinions of the majority.

It is at this point in his discourse that Dio begins to consider the possible advantages of his exile. He reflects how the king of Lydia, Croesus, was advised by Apollo in an oracle to leave his country even if people thought it a cowardly thing to do (13.7). Thinking that Apollo would never give wrong advice, especially to Croesus, who was very pious and generous in his offerings to the gods (13.8), Dio decides to go himself to the god's temple for sound advice. The god Apollo advises him to continue his wandering, since it is honourable and appropriate, until he comes to the ends of the earth (13.9). After considering the god's words Dio tells us (13.10):

Οὕτω δὴ παρακελευσάμενος ἑμαυτῷ μήτε δεδιέναι μήτε αἰσχύνεσθαι τὸ πρᾶγμα,
στολὴν τε ταπεινὴν, ἀναλαβὼν καὶ ἄλλα κολάσας ἑαυτὸν ἠλώμην πανταχοῦ.

Here we see a great emphasis on Dio's self. Twice we see the reflexive pronoun *emautos*, first to describe his interior dialogue and then to describe the "pruning away" that he undertakes of his exterior appearance and possessions. He seems no longer concerned with external affairs, but with himself, and his own life. Dio in this discourse very much embraces the separation that is created by his exile, and his adoption of the cynic/philosopher persona that he assumed after his conversion experience.

It is interesting to note that two of the characters that Dio seeks to imitate in this discourse – such as Odysseus and Socrates – were in many ways "lone wolves", Odysseus being lost far from home and without his crew, Socrates being a philosopher who was set above and apart from his contemporaries. This interior dialogue with the self, leading to a separation or self-alienation from society, is an integral part to the paradigm of conversion outlined above. Both St. Paul's flight into Arabia and St. Augustine's embrace of asceticism exemplify to varying degrees a self-dialogue that leads to deliberate estrangement from society¹³. In his *Confessions* 9.2.2, Augustine recounts his desire to come away from a public life of rhetoric:

*et placuit mihi in conspectu tuo non tumultuose abripere sed leniter subtrahere
ministerium linguae meae nundinis loquacitatis, ne ulterius pueri meditantes non
legem tuam, non pacem tuam, sed insanias mendaces et bella forensia, mercarentur
ex ore meo arma furori suo.*

His language here shows that he wants to withdraw from the loudness and madness of public life, its insanity (*insaniae*) and public litigations (*bella forensia*), into the quiet of God's gaze, his *lex* and *pax*.

¹³ Paul's letter to the Galatians 1: 15-17 recounts his going away to Arabia. See also 9.8.17, which recounts his desire to live with other men in religious life devoted to God.

Augustine's *Confessions* yet again exemplifies (just as in the case of Victorinus above) the rejection of society and its education system, a typical trope of conversion narratives such as Dio's.

Dio's self-separation from society and men is nowhere better exemplified than in these lines which follow soon after his description of his roaming (13.13):

Ἐδόκουν δέ μοι πάντες ἄφρονες, ὡς ἔπος εἶπεῖν, καὶ οὐδεὶς οὐδὲν ὧν ἔδει πράττειν
οὐδὲ σκοπεῖν ὅπως ἀπαλλαγεῖς τῶν παρόντων κακῶν καὶ τῆς πολλῆς ἀμαθίας καὶ
ταρχῆς ἐπεικέστερον καὶ ἄμεινον βιώσεται, κυκώμενοι δὲ καὶ φερόμενοι πάντες ἐν
ταυτῷ καὶ περὶ τὰ αὐτὰ σχεδόν, περὶ τε χρήματα καὶ δόξας καὶ σωμάτων τινὰς
ἡδονάς, οὐδεὶς ἀπαλλαγῆναι τούτων δυνάμενος οὐδὲ ἐλευθερῶσαι τὴν αὐτοῦ ψυχὴν.

The passage of St. Augustine quoted above is not explicitly concerned with glory, money or bodily pleasures, but its language implicitly holds these ideas which are explicit in the quotation of Dio's thirteenth oration above. The 'mendacious madnesses' (*insaniae mendaces*), the 'war of words' (*bella forensia*), and the pupils' *furor* described above all recall epic poetry, but also elegiac poetry and the madness provoked by carnal desire. Dio in his philosopher-persona, also, no longer has any worldly desires, being no longer confounded and carried about by desires for money and glory as he once was. The world he once inhabited now comes to symbolise the "false" values that a convert leaves behind. *All* men are fools, *no one* does what he needs to do, and while they are tossed about in cares of money, glory and pleasures of the body, Dio is completely free from these; for as an exile he has no money or glory, and he has taken up rags for clothing – a symbol of the absence of bodily pleasure.

What we have discussed so far is the ontological shift in Dio's conversion experience. He goes from being an accepted and high-ranking member of the Roman upper echelons to a wandering, penniless, cynic philosopher. But the rest of the discourse that is still extant is dedicated to what we might call the epistemological shift in Dio, exemplified in his discourse on education (13.17-27). One must not teach one's children how to box, wrestle, play the lyre, recite poetry or learn rhetoric, but to study philosophy. One can only live a good and well-ordered life, once philosophy alone is studied. Dio even goes so far as to say that, if even a Scythian or an Indian could be found who could teach temperance, manliness and justice, they should take such a man into their homes and city, set him upon the acropolis and get both young and old to learn from him (13.32-33). He then goes on to say that Rome will only be a true empire when it increases in manliness, temperance and justice, to the

diminishment of its luxurious lifestyle. In his *Confessions* Book 1.16.25, Augustine recounts succinctly his negative view of the normal education of his time:

quis autem paenulatorum magistrorum audit aure sobria ex eodem pulvere hominem clamantem et dicentem: 'fingebat haec Homerus et humana ad deos transferebat: divina mallem ad nos'? sed verius dicitur quod fingebat haec quidem ille, sed hominibus flagitiosis divina tribuendo, ne flagitia flagitia putarentur et ut, quisquis ea fecisset, non homines perditos sed caelestes deos videretur imitatus.

Again we see points of contact between Dio and Augustine. The reference to the school as *pulvis* (literally 'dust') can specifically refer to dust resulting from destruction or death, and is a metonymy for the arena¹⁴, a place of war which (we have stated above) is symbolic of unruly/fleshly desires. Furthermore, the rejection of Homer - and by extension all the other poets - as fiction, and the desire for the learning of things divine are very much in line with the sentiments of Dio on education described above. Such statements show not only that Dio has truly left behind the old ontological paradigm held by the majority (where Romans and/or Greeks were held above other races [*barbaroi*], and material objects and pursuits were held in higher regard than the spiritual), but also that he has embraced a new understanding of the world, and a new means by which he might understand the world (i.e. a change in his epistemology from sophistry to philosophy).¹⁵

In considering Dio's exile, we have seen that Dio, after a period of ontological and epistemological instability, undergoes a paradigm shift characteristic of our outline of conversion narrative. Dio's narrative emphasised the role of education in society, and how – from his post-conversion perspective – he felt that it must be changed in order for society to produce better men. We have mentioned above that this emphasis on education can be found in Augustine also. There is, furthermore, in Dio mention of the decadence of Roman society, which must be lost in order for Rome to become truly imperial and to grow in virtue. The topic of decadence and effeminacy in society is a topic which is much more prevalent in Lucian's *Nigrinus*.

¹⁴ OLD² s.v. *pulvis* 2b and 3.

¹⁵ J.L. Moles (1978) deals with the question whether Dio really does change from sophist to philosopher. His argument that the transition is not a straightforward one is quite convincing; but our discussion so far has been considering whether or not the thirteenth oration is a 'conversion narrative'. Moles does not deny that Dio in his thirteenth oration wants us to believe that he goes from sophist to wandering, cynic philosopher, but his point is rather that, by considering Dio's corpus as a whole, we see that the transition is not as straightforward as Dio would like us to think.

Lucian was born around 120 AD (died *circa* 180) in the province of Syria in the ancient royal city of Commagene – an ex-client kingdom annexed by Vespasian - called Samosata. The city's ethnicity was Iranian with Semitic influences, but Hellenisation had been under way in the city since the first century BC. We have very little biographical information concerning Lucian, but much of his work (which is by-and-large a collection of satirical dialogues) is extant. The *Nigrinus* recounts Lucian's dialogue with a friend about his travels to Rome, where he goes in search of an eye-doctor. After speaking with a Platonic philosopher at Rome called Nigrinus, Lucian undergoes a complete change of life, and decides to devote his time to philosophy and the memorisation of Nigrinus' *logos*. The work contains traditional philosophical tropes against wealth and decadence which were so prevalent in second-century Rome¹⁶.

Lucian's narrative begins with his travelling to Rome, wishing to see an eye-doctor for a cure for the increasing pain in his eye. Deciding to pay his respects to Nigrinus, he visits him and begins to talk to him. In the course of the discussion Lucian recounts that he took in Nigrinus' words ἀτενῆ καὶ ἀναπεπταμένη τῇ ψυχῇ ('with soul intent and unfurling') (ch. 4). An interesting contrast can be made between the state of Lucian's eye and his soul. In ch. 2 Lucian states the reason for his trip to Rome:

τὸ γάρ μοι πάθος τὸ ἐν τῷ ὀφθαλμῷ μᾶλλον ἐπετείνετο.

Where Lucian's eye ἐπετείνετο (with connotations of torture), his soul was ἀτενής (literally 'strained tight'). The strain on Lucian's eye hints at the difficulty he is having at perceiving, seeing, and understanding the world around him; Lucian is in the midst of a crisis, or paradigm shift. This is contrasted by the tightening focus that Nigrinus' speech has on Lucian's soul. Again we see in the convert a shift from exterior things (of the eye) to interior things (of the soul). Lucian's first reaction (ch. 4) to Nigrinus' speech was confusion, then grief/annoyance that all the things he had held dear (wealth, money, reputation) were refuted and shamed, and this led to tears. Finally, however, he

¹⁶ Little scholarship has been done specifically on the *Nigrinus*. For a general introduction to the life and works of Lucian, and the impact he had on later generations, see Robinson (1979). Chapman (1931) in his work on Lucian and Plato believes that Lucian was a more serious thinker than Plato, whom he considers to be more of an artist, keen to keep the memory of his beloved master alive, than a philosopher. Robinson, on the other hand, believes that there is nothing philosophical, never mind Platonic, about Nigrinus' wisdom (1979: 53), but K. Schlapbach (2010) provides a more nuanced and thorough analysis of the work (p. 273): 'In *Nigrinus* the proliferation of *logoi* testifies to the failure of philosophical teaching rather than to its success. Nigrinus failed to create in the Convert (and his friend) the attitude of serene detachment that he recommends in his discourse, but on the contrary made them "sick" for more talk.' Bompaigne in his book *Lucien écrivain: imitation et création* – as noted by Sims' review (1960:212) - believes that the dialogues of Lucian would have been performed. This, I think, would have given Lucian's *Nigrinus* a comic element (or at least, to my mind, would be easier to imagine performed comically). Lucian might be a failed convert to philosophy; nevertheless, we find here much in *Nigrinus* in common with conversion narratives, as I will argue below.

found gladness for the clarity and light that Nigrinus brought. Nigrinus has not only shattered the old paradigm, bringing Lucian to a state of confusion and distress, but replaced it with the light of philosophy.

While Dio's narrative emphasises reform of education in light of his conversion to philosophy, Lucian's focuses upon another important topic for converts such as Augustine, namely, the decadence of society around him. When Augustine taught rhetoric, he moved from Carthage to Rome, being put under the impression that the students are not as riotous as they are in Carthage. But Augustine soon finds out that the pupils in Rome have a different vice. Roman students might not be as riotous as their African counterparts, but they show little respect for their teachers, and even conspire against them so that they might cheat their teachers out of their well earned wages. The pupils' deception show they have little care for the education they receive, so long as they can keep their money whilst receiving it. This love of money is related to their fornication and their love of nonsense (*ludibria*); the very desire to grasp it makes them filthy (*Confessions* 5.12.22).

From chs. 13-34 Lucian praises poverty and philosophy – exemplified by the city of Athens – and denounces the decadence and luxury of Rome. After telling us that Nigrinus' greatest detestation was of the Roman practice of having a slave announce to their masters that they were about to approach a step, Lucian says (Ch. 34):

δεινὸν οὖν ἐποιεῖτο, εἰ στόματος μὲν ἀλλοτρίου δειπνοῦντες μὴ δέονται μηδὲ χειρῶν,
μηδὲ τῶν ὧτων ἀκούοντες, ὀφθαλμῶν δὲ ὑγιαίνοντες ἀλλοτρίων δέονται
προοιχομένων καὶ ἀνέχονται φωνὰς ἀκούοντες δυστυχέσιν ἀνθρώποις πρεπούσας καὶ
πεπηρωμένοις.

Although decadent and luxurious Romans are healthy in body and (ὑγιαίνοντες would imply¹⁷) mind, they still act like unfortunate and crippled men. Not only do they fail to look deep within themselves and use their sound minds to be educated properly, i.e. in philosophy, but also they do not wish to use their healthy bodies; they rather wish to be led and treated as the blind are. What this implies – and, indeed, the same goes for Dio's oration – is that the pre-convert in his stupour cannot see past the material world to the world of the inner-self, the *psyche*. Augustine's experience in Rome (quoted above) exemplifies further the preference that the more worldly Romans have for bodily pleasure, money and glory, over a *good* education.

¹⁷ LSJ s.v. ὑγαίνω 2

We can see, therefore, in Dio and in Lucian a conversion narrative that is very much akin to the *Confessions* of Augustine. The pre-convert (Lucian, Dio, Augustine) enters a period of confusion/uncertainty, which produces a period of ontological and epistemological crisis brought about through an ailment, misfortune and/or an external figure such as Nigrinus and Jesus; and finally is resolved in the replacement of the old paradigm (whether it be religious or philosophical) with a new one, entailing a complete overhaul in the convert's ontological and epistemological outlook. This new paradigm leads the convert to be willingly separated from the rest of society, its customs and *mores*, even if this means enduring the suffering of exile or (in Lucian's case) choosing a life of toil for the sake of obtaining the truer pleasures which are dispensed by philosophy (ch. 33). Furthermore, the convert seeks to preach to the society of which he was once a member – or at least share his new outlook with others who are still adherents to the paradigm which the convert has left. But the question remains: can we see any of these elements in the *Metamorphoses* of Apuleius?

Apuleius' *Metamorphoses*: Conversion Narrative?

Thus far we have discussed the concept of “conversion narrative”, a narrative in which the protagonist experiences feelings of mental and emotional disorientation, and undergoes a metaphysical and epistemological crisis, followed by the replacement of the protagonist's old conceptions of the world, the divine, right living, and morality with new conceptions of these things. We have seen that this kind of narrative is not only confined to works of the nineteenth or twentieth centuries, which have Augustine's *Confessions* as their prototype, but can also be found in works which pre-date the writing of the *Metamorphoses*, and with which Apuleius may have been familiar: Dio Chrysostom's thirteenth oration and Lucian's *Nigrinus*. From this we can conclude that the paradigm of “conversion narrative” is a useful and valid narratological paradigm for exploring works that pre-date Augustine's *Confessions* and that Apuleius may have been familiar with such narratives. Therefore, it is worth considering whether the *Metamorphose* contains any elements of conversion narrative, or if it could even be considered as a sustained conversion narrative. In my analysis of the novel I try as far as possible to take the view of the first time reader – that is, the reader that has no idea at all that Lucius will become a devotee of Isis and Osiris at the end of the novel. It is quite clear that much of the narrative before the final book can be read in a different light once the reader knows how exactly Lucius will finish his journey as an ass.

This chapter will look at the prologue in-depth, as this much analysed opening of the novel (see bibliography below) can help us better read and understand the rest of the novel, but should, nevertheless, not be trusted entirely in analysing the novel as a whole. From there I will examine key episodes of the novel such as the story of Aristomenes and Socrates; the Risus festival; the catamite priests; the baker's wife; and finally an analysis of the penultimate book of the novel.¹⁸ From here we can then come to a conclusion as to whether or not the novel can be read as a conversion narrative or if elements of conversion narrative are contained within the novel. In reading the novel from the perspective of the first time reader – the reader who has no inkling of the overtly religious nature of Book 11 – we can conclude that the novel is indeed not a conversion narrative and lacks many of the markings of a conversion narrative as discussed above.

If we are to begin at the opening prologue of the *Metamorphoses*, one finds no hint or indication of the religious character of this novel, or of conversion experience (1.1):

*At ego tibi sermone isto Milesio varias fabulas conseram, auresque tuas benivolas
lepido susurro permulceam, modo si papyrus Aegyptiam argutia Nilotici calami
inscriptam non spreveris inspicere, figuras fortunasque hominum in alias imagines
conversas et in se rursum mutuo nexu refectas ut mireris, exordior.*

One could note that the presence of *papyrus Aegyptiam* and *Nilotici calami* point to the end of the novel and the conversion of Lucius to the cult of Isis. However, this allusion can only be detected by a second reader of the novel. The style of Apuleius' prologue has much more in common with the speech given by a Plautine *prologus* than an introduction to a serious, reflective, and thought provoking account of one's personal journey through a period of existential crisis that is finally resolved by one's old conceptions being replaced through a conversion experience with a new and much more strongly held view of the world. '*Quis ille?*' ('Who is that?') someone interjects during Apuleius' prologue, '*paucis accipe*' ('Here's the short answer') replies the narrator. One can imagine the Plautine stage already set, and the *prologus* mingling with his audience whilst he delivers the opening speech of the play. Indeed the prologue closes not with the promise of religious knowledge or revelation, but enjoyment (1.1):

*Iam haec equidem ipsa vocis immutatio desultoriae scientiae stilo quem accersimus
respondet. Fabulam Graecanicam incipimus. Lector intende: laetaberis.*

¹⁸ The episode of Cupid and Psyche will be discussed in Chapter 3, and the final book will be discussed in Chapter 4 of this thesis.

The low tone of the prologue is continued through to the end as Apuleius compares his work to the “science” of horse jumping. The novel’s identification as a *fabula Graecanica* further invokes Plautus, who Romanised Greek tales and used similar archaisms for his *prologus* in such plays as the *Menaechmi*.¹⁹

The prologue proves to be a *mutuus nexus* with its effortless shifting from high to low registers. The narrator’s response to the audience member’s heckling ‘*Quis ille?*’ is replete with the loftiest conventions of Latin literature: his origins are described metonymically by three mountain ranges in Greece that correspond to three of its main cities, *Hymettos Attica et Isthmos Ephyrea et Taenaros Spartiatica*. Athens, Corinth and Sparta are invoked respectively by the three mountains which are local to each area. Such invocation of Greek mountains is reminiscent of the learned poetry of Ovid.²⁰ May (2013: 95) notes in her commentary on book 1 of the *Metamorphoses* that ‘Ephryean Isthmus’ is a unique turn of phrase describing Corinth ... Ephyre is an archaic name originally for a place near Argos, but later for Corinth ... the name was then revived by the archaists ...’. The speaker of the prologue then goes on to talk of his studies at Rome, where he was an *advena studiorum Quiritium*. *Quirites* is an archaic word to describe the citizens of Rome. These remarks upon his origins and education are then followed by the above quotation concerning his novel, and his comparison of the novel to the art of horse jumping. Low Latin is quickly followed by lofty, and the reader struggles to register the tone or content of the novel, as he is metaphorically dragged from pillar to post. At first the audience is a crowd who can interject and ask questions of our narrator (*Quis ille?*), but finally the narrator’s audience is confined once and for all to the role of *lector*. This tension within the work as to whether the audience is a crowd gathered for a play that unravels in lively detail before one’s eyes, or the reader of a book, is seen in the strange turn of phrase *desultoriae scientiae stilo*. *Stilo* more often than not means ‘pen’, and its use here to refer to an art form or style seems rather out of place, given that the art referred to is one of a physical (and low-brow) display of

¹⁹ Winkler (1985: 184) makes the same connection between *fabula Graecanica* and Plautine drama. The *Menaechmi* is most pertinent to our discussions in that the *prologus* of this play uses archaisms as in the prologue of the *Metamorphoses* (such as the infinitive ending of *mutarier* (line 74), which Gratwick (1993: 134) points out was an archaism by the time of Plautus). *Graecanicus* is found in Cato’s *Agricola* (See OLD²), thus giving it an archaic flair. The *prologus* also promises to keep it short as Apuleius does above (*paucis accipe*), but rambles on – like Apuleius – for longer than one would expect. Furthermore, the *prologus* of the *Menaechmi* uses two words, *graecissat* (line 11), which (according to the OLD²) – apart from Plautus – is only used by Apuleius in his *Apologia* ch. 98; and *atticissat* (line 12), which is used by Apuleius in his *Florida* 18 and only used by Plautus before him. It would seem, therefore, that Plautus had great influence upon the style and vocabulary of Apuleius. I agree with Harrison (2013: 69-79) that the *prologus* is in fact the book itself, and is the only suitable character who can fit all the information given in the prologue. See also Pasetti’s book *Plauto in Apuleio* (2007) which discusses Apuleius’ use of Plautine language and the intertextual references such language invokes. Although I cannot access the text itself, see Zimmerman (2008) for a review and summary of the book.

²⁰ For example, Ovid uses the adjective *Ephyreus* at *Ars Amatoria* 1. 335.

horse acrobatics.²¹ The juxtaposition of *stilo* - which can refer to the art or style of writing, thus giving it a tone of sophistication - and *desultoriae scientiae* – a turn of phrase that seems to give the art of horse-jumping an air of sophistication – is in many ways oxymoronic. As a reader, one cannot be quite sure what to expect from this work as its register oscillates from high to low in its opening lines. The reader might struggle to identify what the text is, he may even struggle to define his relation to the text (whether as reader or spectator);²² and the reader will perhaps struggle to identify who the *prologus* is – despite the lengthy reiteration of his *curriculum vitae*.²³ But what would not come into his mind at all at the opening of the *Metamorphoses* is the question: is this a “conversion narrative”?

When we look at the beginning of the other works which we have examined above, their openings make it clear that elements of “conversion narrative” are present. Dio’s thirteenth oration opens with an inquiry as to whether or not exile is as bad as everyone says it is (13.2). Dio is in a state of crisis (exile) and he begins to question the beliefs of the majority. It seems quite clear from the start that the reader (or listener) is about to embark on a journey of the mind, on which commonly held notions will be questioned and rejected for other ones. The impression given at the beginning of the oration by Dio’s raising of this question, sets an expectation for his audience that Dio will eventually take a view that is different from that of the majority of men, and Dio meets that expectation.

In the *Nigrinus*, the dialogue between Lucian and his friend begins with his friend’s comment on Lucian’s aloofness (ch. 1):

Ὡς σεμνὸς ἡμῖν σφόδρα καὶ μετέωρος ἐπανελήλυθας· οὐ τοίνυν προσβλέπειν ἡμᾶς
ἔτι ἀξιοῖς οὐθ’ ὁμιλίας μεταδίδως οὔτε κοινωνεῖς τῶν ὁμοίων λόγων, ἀλλ’ ἄφνω
μεταβέβλησαι ...

²¹ The *OLD*² gives four entries for the word *stilus*. 1-3 all refer to physical objects; 4a refers to the stylus as used in literary composition, and 4b notes that the word may be used with reference to mode of style or composition.

²² Graverini also points out this ‘constant oscillation between the written and the oral mode’ in Apuleius’ novel as noted by Kirichenko (2009:517) in his review of Graverini’s monograph *Le Metamorfosi di Apuleio: Letteratura e Identità*.

²³ Although I state in the footnote above that the *prologus* is in fact the book itself, I still believe that the contemporary reader of the novel may still struggle to discern this for himself. Harrison (2013: 73-4) gives some literary examples of the speaking book in Latin literature, but even then the examples he provide show that the speaker is clearly marked as the book, and so little interpretive or analytical legwork is needed from the reader to figure it out. It is clearly quite different in the *Metamorphoses*, however. One only has to look at how much scholarship has been generated over these opening lines of the novel over recent years (see above for bibliography).

The very opening of the dialogue marks a change in Lucian's way of acting towards others and in general. The word *σεμνός* seems to imply that Lucian has almost a divine air about him, and his physical, intellectual and emotional distance from his social group is greatly emphasised here.²⁴ Straightaway, the reader will expect to find out more about what has caused this change in Lucian, and why he no longer associates with his peers as he once did. Certainly Lucian's friend is eager to hear about the cause of his changed state, and becomes irritated by Lucian's constant delays (8-10). Lucian has changed, and as readers we expect to find out why this change has occurred, and expect to hear about the journey upon which Lucian embarked in order to come to this changed state. From this brief examination of Dio and Lucian we can see that the openings of these texts all point towards certain themes and motifs that are typical of conversion narratives. Apuleius' *Metamorphoses* on its surface shows none of these themes at all. The reader is promised entertainment, and nothing more.

The argument, therefore, for the *Metamorphoses* containing any elements of "conversion narrative" seems unable to get off the ground from the very start. The religious ending of the novel is not made explicit, and there is no suggestion that the protagonist will undergo any sort of crisis that might question his core held beliefs and values, but only the promise of aesthetic titillation and pleasure is offered to the reader. However, I believe that Apuleius' art is much more subtle than to give away everything at the beginning, as the *prologus* of the *Menaechmi* does at the opening of Plautus' play. I would argue that the oscillation between high and low registers, and between the comic stage and the reader's page, the sweeping geographical invocations from the Egyptian Nile to the mountains of Greece and the *Vrbs Latina*, all create within the reader a sense of disorientation, who is unable to comprehend at all what the novel which he is about to read will entail, where it will take place, and how it will be portrayed. In a way, the prologue, by confusing and disorientating the reader – as opposed to clarifying for him what the novel might entail, and, therefore, how the reader might relate to the work which he is reading – fulfils the traditional function of a prologue; for what the novel entails is in fact a string of *fabulae* that serve to throw not only the *actor* Lucius' epistemological and ontological beliefs into confusion, but also the beliefs of the readers'.²⁵

²⁴ For the divine connotations of *σεμνός*, see *LSJ* s.v. *σεμνός* 1.

²⁵ Winkler (1985) dedicates chapter 7 of his *Auctor & Actor* to the prologue of the *Metamorphoses*. Winkler believes that the speaker of the prologue is neither Apuleius nor Lucius, and that, therefore, the *Metamorphoses* 'does not allow us to shift all the responsibility for its meaning onto the person Lucius or the person Apuleius. It insists instead on being, like the prologue, a nexus of connected identities, an enigma that offers itself to be resolved, humorously overcoded as a challenge for every kind of reader from the naive to the sophisticated to give an answer to the question *quis ille?*' (203). May, in her discussion of the three Greek mountains of the prologue, notes that *Taenaros Spartiatica* 'has no clear connection with Lucius'. She goes on to suggest that, as there is a cave on this mountain that is associated with the descent of heroes into the underworld, a cave which Psyche uses to go to the underworld, and since Psyche is considered a mirror of Lucius, 'Taenarus may be foreshadowing her chthonic adventures which are eventually reflected in Lucius'.

After the prologue, Book 1 opens with an account of Lucius' travels to Hypata, on which he meets with Aristomenes, who recounts a tale of magic and witches that culminates in his friend Socrates' death and his own exile (1.6-19). One day, Aristomenes went to Hypata on an unsuccessful business trip. On his way to the baths, he sees Socrates, thin and dejected, a man from his home town who was long thought dead. Aristomenes takes Socrates to the baths with him, cleans him up, and takes him back to his lodgings where he feeds and cheers his long lost comrade. Eventually, Socrates tells of how he was robbed by bandits and then taken in by an old but not un-pretty inn keeper by the name of Meroe. Meroe eventually seduces Socrates into her bed and from that point on Socrates is trapped and controlled by her – even giving her the rags which the robbers gave him to wear (1.7). Aristomenes rebukes him robustly for abandoning his hearth and children for an old prostitute (1.8). Socrates has not only abandoned the duties of home, but also any sense of piety or duty towards the gods – as denoted by the term *lar*, which can mean the home, but more specifically identifies the household gods. Socrates is terrified by Aristomenes' insult of Meroe, believing that she can hear them at this very moment, for she is a very powerful witch (1.8):

... *divini potens caelum deponere, terram suspendere, fontes durare, montes diluere,*
manes sublimare, deos infirmare, sidera extinguere, Tartarum ipsum illuminare

Meroe is so powerful that she can usurp the social and ontological order of all things. She can turn the world on its head. This dominion which she has over nature is, for Socrates, most frightfully manifested in the dominion which she has over her male lovers. She can make not only locals fall in love with her, but men from all over the world (1.8). Those men who dare to fall out of her favour face such punishments as being turned into a beaver (who chew off their genitalia to avoid being captured) (1.9), or, in Socrates' case, death. When the pair settles down for the night, Meroe with her accomplice Panthia burst into their room. Meroe calls Socrates her Endymion, her Ganymede (1.12). These two young men from mythology recall episodes in which divine beings (the former Hecate and the latter Zeus) take advantage of mortal men in order to satisfy their sexual desires. Ganymede is especially interesting in this case, for Ganymede, as a boy who was the subject of male desire, must be considered the feminine/passive/penetrated partner in the sexual act, and thus emasculated in comparison to the dominant role played by the older, male lover. It is clear here that Meroe is the one

initiation in *Met.* 11.23, which includes a metaphoric descent into the underworld' (2013: 96). Innes (2001) notes that *Isthmos Ephyrea* may act as a sort of geographical/symbolic link in the novel between the sweetness connoted with *Hymettos Attica* - a place where honey is produced and associated with the high poetry of Greece - and the seriousness connoted by *Taenaros Spartiatica* – associated with *katabasis* (such as that of Psyche's) and Platonic philosophy. More will be said about Winkler's views below, but it suffices to say at this point that, whether or not one believes the speaker is or is not Apuleius or Lucius, Winkler rightly states that there is a sense of missing/uncertain identity for the narrator and the work as a whole, which could be defined in terms of the ontological and epistemological uncertainty that is characteristic of a conversion narrative.

with masculine dominion over Socrates, thus inverting the established norm of sexual conduct for Romans, and providing our first example of a world in ontological disarray.²⁶ Socrates in the end is killed by the witches, and Aristomenes must go into exile, believing that he will be suspected of murdering Socrates. This tale is the first of many tales that touch upon recurring themes. Meroe is the first in a long line of women who serve as the worst of the worst characters in the novel. Women such as Pamphile, Photis, and the baker's wife all share similar traits and characteristics to Meroe. Each woman is an embodiment of the chaos and disorder which is so prevalent throughout the novel, as we shall see. It is also the first in a series of tales that have tragic endings, tales which end either in death, exile, or humiliation for the good men and women involved.

Book 2 begins with Lucius rising early to go and explore this magical city. It is interesting to note how Lucius interprets the tale of Aristomenes and his view of the city, so terrified of the witches that inhabit it (2.1):

*Reputansque me media Thessaliae loca tenere, quo artis magicae nativa cantamina
totius orbis consono ore celebrentur, fabulamque illam optimi comitis Aristominis de
situ civitatis huius exortam, suspensus alioquin et voto simul et studio, curiose
singula considerabam.*

One would think that Lucius had not heard the tale of Aristomenes at all. It is thanks to Socrates' involvement with a witch, who can change the forms of her ex-lovers (1.9) and keep the whole town of Hypata under house arrest (1.10), that he is dead and Aristomenes an exile from his own land. The city – as we later learn from Byrrhena (2.5) and Photis (3. 16) – lives in fear of magicians such as Meroe and Pamphile. One is led to believe that Lucius' cognitive faculties and perception of the world is in some way impaired by his desire and curiosity for magical arts. This cognitive impairment is further exemplified by Lucius' description of the city that follows. *Nec fuit in illa civitate quod aspiciens id esse crederem quod esset* (2.1). Inanimate objects threaten to come to life; animals seem on the verge of reciting an oracle. Lucius admits to being unable to make any sense of the physical world around him, and so he fumbles around the city dumbfounded and in awe.²⁷ He wanders about *nescius* (unawares) until he comes to the market in which he meets his aunt Byrrhena, and the chance meeting allows the story to move on.

²⁶ I will explore in more detail the role of sexuality in the *Metamorphoses* below. For the most thorough and comprehensive discussion of Roman sexual conduct, see Craig A. Williams *Roman Homosexuality* (2010) – a work also discussed in more detail below.

²⁷ Shumate (1996) discusses this passage in her work (p. 61): '...Lucius' altered perception represents the first instance of the blurring of familiar boundaries that will come to characterize his world in *all* its spheres ... Here Lucius' vision is marked by the collapsing together of categories ordinarily thought to exist in opposition to one another: the animal and the human, the animate and the inanimate, art and life.'

At the end of Book 2, Lucius attends a banquet organised by Byrrhena. It is here that we first learn of the altogether unique festival to the god of laughter, Risus. Byrrhena invites Lucius to attend and contribute to the festival (3.31). The first-time reader will expect to see Lucius at the festival reciting some speech in honour of the god, a fairly standard oratorical set piece. But the second time reader will know that it will in fact not be something which Lucius produces that will be an offering to the god, but Lucius himself. The end of Book 2 nicely sets up the events of Book 3. As Lucius returns home, his torch is blown out, and he and his slave must fumble around in the darkness until they reach Milo's house exhausted. There Lucius finds three "robbers" attempting to break into the house. Lucius takes his sword and stabs them all repeatedly. Photis lets him in, and Lucius collapses in a drunken and exhausted heap in bed. Given Apuleius' detailed and intricate description of everything thus far in Book 2, the description of the robbers seems all but scant (2.32): *ecce tres quidam vegetes et vastulis corporibus fores nostras ex summis viribus irruentes*. The whole event happens in the dark with Lucius' mind and senses dulled, and this cognitive confusion does not stop for Lucius come the next morning.

As soon as Lucius awakes in the morning, he knows what awaits him: a public trial and quite possibly death. As sure as fate, the townspeople led by the magistrates burst into the house and lead Lucius away without any resistance from him. The whole city floods the streets and follows Lucius (1.2):

Et quamquam capite in terram, immo ad ipsos infernos, iam deiecto maestus incederem, obliquato tamen aspectu rem admirationis maximae conspicio. Nam inter tot milia populi circumsedentis nemo prorsum qui non risu dirumperetur aderat.

A parallel is drawn here between Aristomenes and Lucius, for at 1.15, when the door-keeper suggests that Aristomenes might have killed Socrates, Aristomenes sees the bottom of Tartarus. Lucius too looks down into Hades, but despite the extreme dejectedness of Lucius and the alleged seriousness of the matter, the whole crowd are laughing. It is impossible for Lucius to process what he is seeing, and it quite frankly does not make sense. Why would the whole city be interested in such a trial? Why would they laugh at what would seem like a very serious and sombre time? Lucius is struck dumb and quite appropriately compared to the sacrificial animal that is led around a city before its slaughter. Eventually, the procession comes to the theatre for the trial to be heard. The captain of the night watch makes the case for the prosecution, and Lucius eventually finds the strength to deliver his own speech, which includes words fabricated by Lucius attributed to one of the "robbers". It is perhaps the knowledge of this fabrication and Lucius' pathetic state that leads to the crowd's second outburst of

raucous laughter. Even Milo his host is laughing; and Lucius denounces his lack of *fides* (loyalty) and *conscientia* (remorse). Such a lack of civic and filial virtue on the part of Milo, who should naturally be in defence of his guest who tried to protect his property, further shows the dystopian and macabre character which this episode exhibits. Society is turned upon its head, and Lucius with the first-time reader cannot make sense of it at all. The bodies of the slain robbers are present throughout the trial, and the trial ends with Lucius being forced to remove the pall which covers their corpses. He is dumbfounded to find that the three corpses are in fact three inflated wineskins (3.9). Laughter ensues, and Lucius is frozen to the spot just like one of the stone statues in the theatre (3.10). His lack of physical and emotional response is understandable, given the strange and outlandish episode that has just occurred. The first-time reader will sympathise with Lucius in many respects. The world seems completely turned on its head. Nothing follows from reason, and the social order of things seems suspended so that Milo can appear without loyalty or remorse.

From our discussion of the *Metamorphoses* thus far, we have seen that the ontological and epistemological uncertainties that are important to the construction of conversion narratives are wholly present. However, this in itself does not make the novel a conversion narrative, as I shall discuss below. From the prologue, the first-time reader will find himself in a state of uncertainty as to just what exactly he is reading. He will experience, along with Lucius, the somewhat dark and macabre sights, peoples and tales of the magical land of Thessaly and its city Hypata. He will be amazed at the many sudden transformations of fate that happen, such as that of Socrates (1.5-19) who dies, resurrects, and dies again; the story of Thelyphron (2.21-30), who not until the very end of his account reveals all the details to his sorry tale – thus transforming our image of Thelyphron and the corpse’s wife all at once; and the events that occur upon the festival of laughter. What all of these tales have in common is that the truthfulness of all of these strange and wonderful stories is verified by a miraculous event and/or by a character with a magical revelation. The witches’ storming of Aristomenes and Socrates’ lodgings and slaying of Socrates is verified when, on the next day, Socrates dies after drinking from the stream and the sponge, which Aristomenes saw the witches insert into Socrates’ neck, pops out; Thelyphron’s tale (as well as his disfigurement) is proven true by the Egyptian prophet Zatchlas who brings the corpse back to life to tell of his wife’s betrayal and verifies this account by giving information which no one else could know or even divine (2.30), which is the mutilation of Thelyphron; and Photis reveals the magical circumstances which leads to the animation of the wineskins and their subsequent banging at the door of Lucius’ lodgings (3.15-18). The holding off until the very end of a tale for a valid or sound interpretation of the tale is a common feature within the many *fabulae* of the *Metamorphoses*, and of the novel as a whole. In short, these tales undergo at the end a *repentina mutatio* that often transforms the meaning and significance of the beginning of each story. It is a theme that I will develop further below, but for now it is sufficient to

say that Books 1-3, which lead up to Lucius' transformation into a donkey, clearly display the ontological and epistemological confusion so characteristic of the conversion narratives of Dio and Lucian examined above.

After Lucius' transformation into a donkey, tales and adventures of a similar vein are recounted. His first owners, the robbers, provide an example of society turned on its head, as the robbers (naturally characters which one would expect to exhibit vice and villainy) display features of a heroic and virtuous society, such as at 4.11, where the mutilated Lamachus begs his comrades *per fidem sacramenti* to kill him instead of risking capture. Various tales of adultery and hypocrisy told by Lucius also add to the sense of dystopia in the social world of the *Metamorphoses*. There are two episodes in the latter half of the novel which are of particular interest: Lucius' travels with the catamite priests of the Syrian goddess (8.26 - 9.10) and the story of the baker's wife and his demise (9.14-31). In Book 8 Lucius is sold at auction to a catamite priest called Philebus ('boy-lover'), who then takes him back to his group's lodgings (8.26):

"Puellae, servum vobis pulchellum en ecce mercata perduxī." Sed illae puellae chorus erat cinaedorum, quae statim exsultantes in gaudium fracta et rauca et effeminata voce clamores absonos intollunt ...

Apuleius greatly emphasises here the effeminacy of the priests. The whole account of Lucius' wanderings with the priests is replete with words denoting effeminacy in a derogatory fashion. When the priests begin to go into a frenzy and begin to gash themselves with whips and swords, the ground is described as becoming wet *spurcitia sanguinis effeminati*. The priests are also described as *semiviri* (half-men) (8.28). The priests have a slave boy who says to Lucius when he first enters their lodgings:

Venisti tandem miserrimi laboris vicarius. Sed diu vivas et dominis placeas et meis defectis iam lateribus consulas.

Given that the priests are considered *puellae*; that Lucius the ass – a symbol of male virility and lust – is to be another slave (and husband) for the priests (8.26); and that, when they do engage in sex with the slave boy and are caught red-handed by some of the locals, their sexual proclivity is a source of shame, it is clear that the priests engage in the feminine sexual role. Such effeminacy and sexual conduct was frowned upon in wider Roman society, and it would seem too that Lucius frowns upon this behaviour as well.²⁸ When the priests put on their brightly coloured garments and make-up

²⁸ Williams (2010) makes it quite clear that '[a]ccording to the prime directive of masculine sexual behaviour, a Roman man who wished to retain his claim to full masculinity must always be thought to play the insertive role in penetrative acts ... Effeminacy ... was a disorder embodied in various symptoms, only one of which ... was a predilection for being anally penetrated' (137-8). Williams also notes that effeminacy could also be denoted

(another sign of effeminacy), Lucius describes them as *deformiter formati*. In a world full of transformations and *repentinae mutationes*, these catamite priests are a category that is not quite masculine or feminine. They are hideous, and not only an affront to Lucius, but also to society as a whole.

The priests are not only effeminate, but hypocrites. When they are caught engaging in sex with the slave boy, the townspeople are described as *insuper ridicule sacerdotum purissimam laudantes castimoniam* (8.29). The priests' demise comes about when they are caught yet again, but this time their crime is theft – and from a temple no less (9.9-10). The priests steal a goblet from the shrine of the Mother of the gods and leave before dawn, but are overtaken by a band of citizens. Worse still, the crime was committed through the priests' treachery, for they said that they needed the shrine space to practice "secret rites". The priests claim that the Mother of the gods offered the Syrian goddess the goblet as a gift, but neither the townspeople - nor Lucius - believe their story. In the tale of the catamite priests, a link is made by Apuleius between sexual depravity, hypocrisy, and irreligiosity. All of these vices within the priests can be boiled down to being simply anti-societal behaviour. They are yet another example of society turned on its head: their sexual desires are effeminate and un-reproductive; their religious practice is frenzied, effeminate, and nothing more to Lucius than the horrible thievery of charlatans. Their hypocrisy ultimately upsets the towns and villages through which they travel plying their trade.

This same mixture of sexual depravity, hypocrisy, and irreligiosity can be found in the next episode of Book 9, the account of the baker's wife. This character of all the ones that Lucius describes is the most nefarious (9.14):

*Saeva scaeva, virosa ebriosa, pervicax pertinax ... inimica fidei, hostis pudicitiae. Tunc spretis atque calcatis divinis numinibus in vicem certae religionis mentita sacrilega praesumptione dei, quem praedicaret unicum ...*²⁹

by a desire for over grooming one's self (139-44) – a vice which the priests display - or through lack of ability to control sexual desire and a propensity to commit adultery (145-8, 156-7) – which will be of importance when we discuss the story of the baker's wife. Although the adulterer is not effeminate per se, Williams notes that 'a man labelled as effeminate might just as easily be represented as pursuing sexual relations with women, either in a general unrestrained way or specifically by pursuing such inappropriate women as other men's wives' (p. 157).

²⁹ There is much to suggest that Apuleius has Christianity in mind here and not Judaism. Harrison (2000:249) agrees. Tripp (1988:251) notes that 'Judaism ... is too long established a religion for its doctrine to be *mentita ... praesumptio* or for its rites to be *confictae observationes*.' Schmidt (2003) builds on Tripp's analysis by focusing on the baker's wife's drunkenness and possible allusion to incest in Apuleius – two charges that

The opening phrase with its sibilance and homoeoteleuton makes Lucius' venom for the woman quite poignant and clear. She is a serial adulteress, and yet, when her husband tells her the story of his friend's wife's adultery, she condemns her in the harshest terms, but all the while her lover is in hiding in the same room (9.26). As the adulterer is hiding beneath the floor, Lucius, eager for revenge, steps on his fingers poking through the grate on the floor, and thus reveals the adulterer's presence to the baker. Surprisingly, the baker's reaction to this revelation is calm and measured (8.27):

*Nihil triste de me tibi, fili, metuas ... ac ne iuris quidem severitate lege de adulteriis
ad discrimen vocabo capitis tam venustum tamque pulchellum puellum.*

The baker's gentle words are clearly quite mocking for the adulterer. By calling him a *pulchellus puellus* the baker draws attention to the effeminate nature of the adulterer. *Puellus* is very close to the feminine *puella*, and in an erotic context can be used to denote a catamite;³⁰ the choice of the former here is not accidental. As I indicated in footnote 26 above, it is not only the preference for being the penetrated partner in intercourse that makes a man effeminate, but also his lack of control in sexual desires. An adulterer is an example of one who lacks dominion over his erotic desires. The baker goes on to take the adulterer into his room and to engage in intercourse with him. The next morning he orders two slaves to string him up and flog his bottom, and Lucius comments that *tamen nates candidas illas noctu diuque dirruptus, maerens profugit* (9.28).³¹ It is clear that the baker is asserting his masculine dominance over the adulterer, thus making clear the effeminate (and subversive) nature of adultery. It is also clear from the way in which Lucius portrays the catamite priests and the baker's wife that his views are very much in line with the majority of literate Roman society's view of sexuality, and of the subversive or destructive consequences any deviation from this majority view might have for society.

Having shamed the adulterer and at once sent his wife away in divorce, one could believe that – after a series of tales about catamites and adulterers - social order has at last been restored. However, the divorced wife plots her revenge and employs the services of a sorceress in order to either soften her husband's anger to allow her to come back or to send a spirit to kill him (9.28). In

were regularly levied against Christians of the time. Such a reference to Christianity will become significant to my concluding thoughts of this paper.

³⁰ OLD² s.v. *puellus* 1b.

³¹ The Groningen commentary by Hijmans et al. (1995) notes that the thrashing which the adulterer receives is a punishment reserved for naughty school boys. This punishment coupled with the baker's buggery of the adultery emphasise 'the low social status of the victim' (1995:245). They also state that the *Lex Julia de adulteriis coercendis* would allow a husband who caught his wife and her lover in the act to kill the lover (under certain circumstances) but never the wife (p. 239). Treggiari (1991:271-275) seems to be less certain what the Augustan laws actually permit, and she shows just how varied the opinions were in antiquity as regards proper interpretation of the law/customs surrounding adultery.

the end, the baker is found hung in his room after he was seen entering it with a dishevelled looking woman, who is later nowhere to be found (9.30). It is interesting to note that there is an affinity between the baker's wife's religious practice and the sorceress' witchcraft. The baker's wife's religion is described by Lucius as being made up of *confictae observationes vacuae* (9.14). The sorceress *devotionibus ac maleficiis quidvis efficere posse credebatur* (9.29). Although there is no direct verbal connection between the two passages, both *observatio* and *devotio* can have religious connotations. *Observatio* here is clearly in a religious context; *devotio* can mean both a devotion of a general and his army to the infernal gods on his country's behalf, and a curse – according to the *OLD*². In this context it probably is more accurate to translate as curse, but the idea of devotion or prayer to the infernal gods is certainly not lost in the context of Apuleius' novel. Both the wife and the witch are deceptive, for the sorceress' witchcraft is clearly wicked, and the baker's wife's religious observances are described as deceiving all men. We see here the same characteristics displayed in the catamite priests, for the baker's wife is a sexual deviant, irreligious and disrespectful to the *divina numina* (just as the priests think little of stealing a goblet from the temple of the Mother of the gods), and a hypocrite. In some respects she is the opposite of the catamite priests; for where the priests are effeminate and make themselves *semiviri*, the baker's wife plays the male role in being the one who actively seeks out a sexual partner.³² Furthermore, she seeks revenge on her husband – even though he was well within his rights to do what he did, and much worse. The catamite priests and the baker's wife are *semiviri*. Both are an example of society gone terribly wrong; both are hypocritical, both are irreligious, and both are sexual deviants and a menace to the social fabric of the world. One could say that the sense of disorder and confusion only heightens as the novel progresses. By this point in the novel, two things should become clear to the reader: (1) that women or effeminate men - such as Pamphile, who is an adulteress and sorceress; Photis, who exercises a certain sexual dominance over Lucius, makes him her slave, and forgetful of his *lar* (home) (3.19);³³ the catamite priests, who enjoy playing the woman's role in self; and the baker's wife when not under male control, are the cause of social disorder and (through the magical arts [*familiares feminarum artes* (9.29)]) ontological and epistemological chaos; and (2) that sexual deviancy, hypocrisy, magic and irreligiosity all go hand in hand.

Book 10 is the culmination of Lucius' experience of ontological and epistemological uncertainty and eventually leads him to his conversion experience in Book 11. It is in this book that

³² This can be seen from the baker's wife's conversation with the old hag (9.16-22).

³³ As noted in our discussion of the tale of Aristomenes, *lar* has deeply religious connotations, and evokes a sense of filial piety. Lucius' desire for sex and magic has made him not only irresponsible for caring little for his family, but also irreligious. Furthermore, Apuleius has drawn a direct parallel between Socrates and Lucius, for just as Meroe makes Socrates choose sex over *lari et liberis*, so too does Photis make Lucius choose sex and magic over family and piety.

the two points made above become most clear to the reader, and the sense of social, ontological, and epistemological chaos reaches its height. Book 10 more or less begins with the story of the treacherous stepmother (10. 2-12), who falls in love with her husband's son by a previous marriage. Echoing the story of Hippolytus and Phaedra, the stepmother falls in love with her stepson, and confesses her love to him only to be rejected. Hurt by this, the stepmother devises to poison her stepson, but poisons her own son instead. She then attempts to pin the murder on her stepson. The matter is brought to trial and almost won, but for the last-minute testament of the respected physician who sold the poison to the stepmother's treacherous slave. He also reveals that – since he was suspicious of the slave – he gave the slave a soporific drug and not a poison. The gathered citizens proceed to the boy's tomb to find him awake and well. The stepson is found innocent, the stepmother is sent into exile, and the slave crucified. We see here in the antepenultimate book of the *Metamorphoses* an echo of two stories retold at the beginning of the novel, the tale of Thelyphron (Book 2) and the trial at the festival of Risus (book 3).

The trial aspect of the tale calls to mind Lucius' mock trial at the Risus festival, and the last-minute revelation of the wife's guilt through the doctor's intelligence and craft – as well as the reanimation, of sorts, of the deceased son – call to mind Zatchlas in the tale of Thelyphron. The story not only invokes the two tales cited above, but also the prologue of the novel. Lucius begins this tale by introducing a broad outline of the plot – almost like a Plautine *prologus*. He gives enough information for the reader to be put immediately in mind of the tragedy of Euripides or Seneca concerning Phaedra and Hippolytus. But he then interrupts the beginning of his tale in order to address the reader (10.2):

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

The reader will now quite rightly expect this tale to have a tragic ending, and for death to ensue. At the beginning of the novel, the prologue speaker promises the reader a *fabula Graecanica* at the beginning of the novel, and does not disappoint here by promising a tragic tale of Greek origin. He also promises entertainment in the Milesian (low/comic) style. The narrator clearly departs from this promise here, but tragedy can be entertainment nonetheless. What is most surprising about the narrator's address to the reader at the beginning of the tale in Book 10 is that the tale turns out to be not tragic at all. The whole tale is written and portrayed in the tragic style, and one presumes right up to the very end of the tale that the tragic ending would be delivered, but not so. Much the same can be said for the prologue which opens the novel, for it too promises a Milesian-styled work that will bring joy – and nothing more – to the reader. Nevertheless, the novel ends with what comes across as a

deeply sincere conversion experience to the cult of Isis.³⁴ This tale sets the reader up for what will be the ultimate *repentina mutatio* of the novel. The reader has not a clue that Lucius would be saved from his predicament by the goddess, much less that he would devote his life to her cult. Even if the reader picks up on the ontological and epistemological confusion portrayed throughout the novel, and which is elementary to conversion narrative, he could never suspect that Lucius would come to this deeply religious end. This opening tale of Book 10 sets the novel up for its wondrous finale. It echoes the prologue to the novel and the tales which feature in Books 2 and 3. Going by the tales which the reader has read before Book 10, he would rightly expect this tale to have a horrid ending, just as the tale of Thelyphron, or Lucius at the Risus festival, or Charite after the death of her husband, or the fate of the baker for divorcing his unfaithful wife; and he would also be justified in expecting the narrator to keep his promise of tragedy, for, after all, he has told us a string of Milesian tales, just as he promised in the prologue, up to this point. However, as much as he echoes the beginning of the novel, he ultimately looks toward the end of the novel, the final *repentina mutatio* that will conclude the novel, and deliver Lucius through his conversion to the cult of Isis.

Despite this hope-filled tale that begins the penultimate book of the *Metamorphoses*, the rest of the book contains some of the most perverse scenes in the novel. After the above story is recounted, Lucius is sold to two brothers, one a cook, the other a pastry chef. They live together and serve a common master, Thiasus. At the end of each day they have many leftovers of the food they have cooked, and each day they bring them back to their lodgings. Whenever they leave for the baths, Lucius eats some of the leftovers, making sure he eats enough to allow him to go unnoticed. However, the brothers eventually realise that food is going missing and begin to blame each other (10.13-14). They then swear that neither of them had stolen any food and – despite the fact that it is unheard of for an ass to be interested in such human fare – begin to suspect Lucius of the crime. They leave the house for the baths as usual and then spy on Lucius through a hole. They then catch him red-handed eating their food and begin to burst out laughing at such a marvellous spectacle. Their laughter attracts more and more servants to the sight, and the laughter becomes so great that even Thiasus hears them and asks what is going on. He laughs so hard at the sight of the ass that his sides split. They lead Lucius to the dining room and proceed to dine with him. So amazed is Thiasus by Lucius that he buys him from the two cooks for a considerable price. Thiasus treats him almost like a son. He teaches him to dine, to wrestle, and to dance (10.15-17). Like at the Risus festival, Lucius is the object of voyeuristic delight and laughter, and made again into a spectacle.

³⁴ More will be said below concerning Book 11 and the views of various scholars on the last book and the novel as a whole.

There is a significant absence of women and children in the book thus far. The two brother cooks live together, implying they have no family to speak of, and even Thiasus himself seems to have no wife or children of his own. A subtle hint at this seeming baroness can be found in the banqueting scene, in which they offer the ass meats drenched in sylphium (10.16). The fact that they offer any meat to an ass is bizarre in the first place, but by drenching the meat in sylphium sauce (a condiment that was normally used in very small quantities to tenderise the meat and give it a tart taste),³⁵ they would make it almost inedible for a human to eat - never mind an ass. Sylphium, furthermore, was known in antiquity for its use as an infertility drug.³⁶ Thiasus' *domus* is not the first to have a noticeable lack of children. Milo and his adulterous sorceress wife Pamphile have no children; Byrhena has no children to speak of; Charite's life is cut short thanks to the adulterous desires of Thrasyllus before she could have children; the baker has no children by his wicked wife who is the cause of his downfall (he does have a daughter by a previous marriage); the foolish construction worker of 9.5-7 has no children with his adulterous wife. We have seen that sexual immorality of both men and women, and the (womanly) practice of magic is the cause of society's disorder, and that a product of this disorder is barrenness. The hint at infertility here is quite subtle, but nevertheless we can see from the rest of the novel that the world which Lucius inhabits is in many ways unconventional and un-Roman. Furthermore, Thiasus has a strange attachment to Lucius the ass. Lucius is Thiasus' *sudalis et conviva* (buddy and table-mate), Thiasus teaches him to dance, wrestle and dine properly. His education by Thiasus is reminiscent of the bad education which Romans give their children as described by Dio in his thirteenth oration (Chs. 18-19). All that has been discussed above calls to mind a world trapped in the low and vulgar concerns and pastimes of the "unconverted". The depiction of a world and society turned upon its head continues as it has done thus far throughout the novel. But it is in the penultimate book of the novel that we see the perversity, vulgarity, and disorder of the world of the *Metamorphoses* reach its pinnacle.

Thiasus travels with Lucius as his steed to his native Corinth. There the townspeople come out in their droves to see the marvellous ass. Thiasus charges the people to allow them to see one by one Lucius perform certain tricks. Amongst the crowd is a wealthy *matrona*. She too sees Lucius and

³⁵ See Zimmerman (2000:234)

³⁶ Connors (1998:53-6) discusses *Satyricon* 35.6, in which reference is made to a mime called "The Sylphium Gatherer". Here too she notes the plant's use as a condiment in small quantities, and as an anti-fertility drug (p. 55): 'In this case, Petronius may introduce this mime performance as part of a larger pattern in ... the *Satyricon* of images and symbols of thwarted reproduction ... In the *cena*, it is implicit that Trimalchio and Fortunata have had no children of their own; readers guess at their infertility during the zodiac course when Encolpius learns about Fortunata and the whole household, with no mention of any children. [So the mime] may reflect Trimalchio and Fortunata's rich and childless state.' Thiasus is a Trimalchio of sorts here. Rich and, as far we know, childless, he is focussed upon the lowly entertainments which his wealth and Lucius as ass can offer him.

becomes so enamoured with him that she desires and arranges with Thiasus to spend one night of passion with him. Lucius' keeper accepts a high price for the ass' services (10.19). After supper, Lucius finds the *matrona* waiting in his bedroom. To his great surprise, a rich and opulent bed spread is being organised by four eunuchs, who leave once they have finished their preparations (10.20). As soon as the slaves leave the *matrona* strips off all her clothes and begins to anoint herself and Lucius with precious balsam oil. The *matrona* lays him down, leading him by the halter, and, despite Lucius' fears that she would be unable to take his penis, the *matrona* engages lasciviously and frenziedly in passionate love-making with the ass. Many scholars, such as Winkler and Shumate, have commented upon the surprising tenderness which is found in this otherwise grotesque scene. But the affection is entirely that of the *matrona* towards the ass. She rubs Lucius' nose with the balsam oil *tanta cura* (with great care), and kisses him (10.21):

*Non qualia in lupanari solent basiola iactari vel meretricium poscinumma vel
adventorum nega<n>tinumma, sed pura atque sincera instruit ...*

During foreplay she whispers sweet nothings to Lucius such as '*Amo*' et '*Cupio*' et '*Te solum diligo*' ('I love you, I want you, I cherish you alone') (10.21). During coitus she tells him *Teneo te ... teneo, meum palumbulum meum passarem* ('I'm taking you; I'm taking you, my little dove, my sparrow'). It is quite clear that she is enamoured with the ass, and Lucius seems quite happy (once his fear that she will be harmed and he thrown to the beasts is dispelled) to have sex for the first time in a while. The care and affection is entirely the *matrona*'s; Lucius' concerns are purely for his own safety and gratification. Nevertheless, it is clear that a tone of care and tenderness are present in the sex scene, unlike any other sex scene in the *Metamorphoses*.

Winkler (1985:177) notes that there is no explicit condemnation of the *matrona* in the text, and that those who think that it is morally reprehensible 'supplement the sense of the text to fit an imposed moral pattern.' Shumate (1996:125-8) along with Zimmerman (2000:276) show that the description of the *matrona*'s kisses as *pura atque sincera* show the genuine purity and sincerity of the *matrona*. The adjective *purus* occurs only in the eleventh book in relation to Isis and in its superlative form to describe ironically the purity of the catamite priests of the Syrian goddess. As cliché and soppy as the *matrona*'s words might be in this passage, one could still argue that they are, nevertheless, genuine. However, I believe much can be said, based on the text, against such a position. We can see from the continuous reference to the woman as *matrona*, that it is made quite clear that she, like the baker's wife and other women portrayed in the novel thus far, is an adulteress. The episode ends with the *matrona* avoiding the *lucis conscientia* ('the remorse of daylight') and agreeing upon another night in the future (10.21). If there really is nothing to be guilty about, then why must she avoid the light of day? If she truly loves the ass as much as she says, then why not buy him off

his owners, instead of renting him out like a prostitute? Furthermore, even though Winkler, Shumate, and Zimmerman see no hint of irony in this episode, we do find one such hint in the prelude to the final episode of book 10, in which Lucius is arranged to have sex with a condemned woman. When discussing who could possibly sleep with an ass in public, Lucius' owner concludes (10.23):

*Et quoniam neque egregria illa uxor mea propter dignitatem, neque prorsus ulla alia
inveniri potuerat grandi praemio, vilis acquiritur aliqua sententia praesidis bestiis
addicta ...*

The fact that only a convicted woman could be found to engage in such an act of copulation shows just how shameful the *matrona*'s actions were. We have noted above already certain elements of ring composition found in book 10, and I believe there is another here. At 1.7 Aristomenes refers to Meroe as his *bona uxor* (good wife). Here Lucius ironically refers to the *matrona* as *egregria illa uxor mea*. In this phrase, Lucius puts the *matrona* among the ranks of Meroe, Pamphile, and the baker's wife, the deceptive and cunning women who embody all that is wrong with society through their shunning of social and natural norms by their practice of adultery and/or magic.

Furthermore, after the descriptions of the *matrona*'s affection and tenderness towards the ass, 10.21 ends with describing the seedier side of their romantic encounter. It is worth quoting the passage here in full (10.21):

*Artissime namque complexa totum me prorsus, sed totum recepit. Illa vero quotiens
ei parcens nates recellebam, accedens totiens nisu rabido et spinamprehendens
meam adpliciore nexu inhaerebat, ut hercules etiam deesse mihi aliquid ad
supplendam eius libidinem crederem nec Minotauri matrem frustra delectatam
putarem adultero mugiente.*

This chapter of book 10 begins with the most detailed description of Lucius' asinine form apart from when he first turned into an ass. This draws attention to his physical grotesqueness and external beastliness. The chapter ends, on the other hand, by highlighting the feral nature of the *matrona*. Where Lucius tries to withdraw and hold back during coitus, the *matrona* thrusts frenziedly, thus engaging in what seems to be the more active role of sex. The use of the word *rabido* to describe her sexual advances invokes not only the frenzied and libidinous nature, but also the feral and bestial nature of her sexual appetites.³⁷ Furthermore, it is interesting to note that all we know of the *matrona* is that she is a *matrona quaedam pollens et opulens* (10.19). Treggiari in her extensive study on Roman marriage notes that the word *matrona* 'describe the legally married Roman woman', and that

³⁷ See Zimmerman (2000:287)

the word ‘denotes the married woman in a less private context. She was recognizable by her dress, the long robe worn out of doors, called the *stola*. Grammarians derive the name from her motherhood or potential motherhood’ (1991: 7,35). So we see that, for the Roman, the word has connotations of chastity and fertility, two publicly approved female virtues, and that these virtues were displayed in public through her dress (the *stola*) and status as *matrona*. But in private, however, we know that the *matrona* is anything but chaste.

The final episode of this book describes Lucius’ angst at having to perform a shameful act of coitus in public with a condemned woman, and the possibility that he might be devoured by wild beasts in the process. Chs. 23-8 describe the heinous crimes of the condemned woman. This is followed by a description of the theatrical performance that precedes the execution (chs. 29-32): the judgement of Paris. Afterwards the stage is struck, and preparations begin for the main event, the copulation of an ass with a condemned woman. The readers familiar with Ps-Lucian’s *Onos* will realise the connections made between the two texts, as the couch in each text is made with Indian tortoise shell (*Onos*, Ch. 53; *Metamorphoses* 10.34). In the *Metamorphoses*, Lucius is left unattended by his minders, and one would expect that – just as in the *Onos* – Lucius would find roses being carried in by someone; he would eat them, and be transformed back into a human being. But this is not the case. Instead he runs six miles to Cenchreae on the Aegean coast. Everything described thus far has pointed to this being the final book of the novel. There are clear echoes found throughout book 10 to earlier events in the novel, and one can clearly see that a ring construction is present. Even if the reader knows that another book is coming, he would most likely imagine that book 10 would recount his transformation, and the final book 11 might be an elaboration on Lucius’ reintegration to human life, his reunion with his family, a comic elaboration on the *matrona*’s rejection of his love now that he is a man as found in the *Onos* (ch.56), and perhaps an elaborate description of the sacrifices offered once he arrived back home. The reader is ultimately thrown off guard by this end to book 10, and in some respects, the sense of uncertainty so characteristic of conversion narratives could be said to deepen here, for the reader no longer has the crutch that is the *Onos* to help understand and possibly interpret where this elaborate Milesian tale is going.³⁸ All the preconceptions

³⁸ Stefan Tilg (2014) has argued that the *Metamorphoseis* of Lucius of Patras may have had a religious ending similar to Apuleius’ ending. Tilg himself states that this is only a hypothesis, and, furthermore, the only evidence we have of the *Metamorphoseis* from the ninth century Byzantine Patriarch Photius (*Bibliotheca*, 129) sheds little light on the lost work. Tilg argues that the *Onos* is a translation of the first two books of the *Metamorphoseis* and that a third – and possibly fourth – book of the *Metamorphoseis* would contain an Isis narrative (pp. 7-9). All we can tell from Photius’ rather muddled account of the ass stories is that the beginnings of the *Onos* and the *Metamorphoseis* are extremely similar. Given that he has read λόγοι διάφοροι (several books) of the *Metamorphoseis*, we do not really know if what Photius means is that the whole of the *Onos* is the same as the first two books of the *Metamorphoseis* or simply that the little he has read of the *Metamorphoseis* is similar to only part of the *Onos*.

which the reader might have had, and that the author quite explicitly encourages, are now gone. The paradigm offered by the author at the beginning (a Milesian tale with Plautine/comic/tragic overtones) is all but lost. Where exactly will the novel go, and how will it end?

From our analysis of the novel thus far one thing should be certain: that the world of Books 1-10 is a world full of disorder, chaos and dystopia. Society and the cosmos are turned on its head by the forces of magic, the machinations of bandits, and the perfidious undertakings of adulterers, effeminate, and charlatans. Lucius the ass travels through a world of uncertainty, and he is ever subject to the changes of Fortune. Certainly this disorder is resolved in Book 11 and order is restored (as I will argue below) both in society and in Lucius' life through Isis. But does that mean that the novel is or contains elements of "conversion narrative"? Do we gain a better understanding of the novel through this narratological paradigm? I believe that we do not, for ultimately many key elements of conversion narrative are missing from the novel. Lucius unlike Dio, Lucian, or Augustine, does not show any sort of awareness of being on a spiritual journey or of going through any sort of existential crisis. He is certainly at times confused, dazed or stunned, but he never really expresses any sort of sentiment that would imply that he has abandoned any sort of previously held beliefs and that he is moving towards a new set of beliefs. I will argue below that Lucius' dedication to the cult of Isis is sincere and taken up of his own free will, but nevertheless, the novel has not been an explicit journey towards this point, for the final book is for both the first time reader and Lucius himself an unexpected and marvellous ending (much like many of the tales discussed above). Furthermore, many of the episodes from the *Metamorphoses* discussed in this chapter also occur in the *Onos*, which does not have a religious ending (let alone a virtuous one, since its protagonist seeks to have sex with the *matrona* even after his re-transformation!), and could easily be interpreted in the same way – that is, as occurrences of social and metaphysical disorder, finally restored in the end with the protagonist returned to human form, society and his family – without the religious ending. Therefore, we can say that the presence of disorder and chaos throughout the novel that is finally remedied through the intercession of Isis does not make the novel a conversion narrative, and is nothing new to the *Metamorphoses*, in that the theme of chaos and restoration of order is already present in the *Onos* upon which much of the *Metamorphoses* is based. Finally, there is nothing new, strange, or novel about his commitment to the cult of Isis. By and large what Lucius does is not in any way counter-cultural or critical of Roman society, but rather the final book, as I will argue, is a reinstatement of Roman social and cosmic order in the world. All of this begs the question: Is there perhaps another narrative tradition that could provide answers to questions of interpretation in the novel? It is to this question that we now turn.

Metamorphosis in the *Metamorphoses*

It is clear from our above discussion that reading the novel as a “conversion narrative” is an ineffective means of interpreting the novel or of making any interpretative sense of the final book’s place within the novel as a whole. However, there is one element of “conversion narrative” that is present: social and cosmic confusion in the protagonist’s life which is finally restored through the intervention of the divine. This in itself does not constitute a conversion narrative, and many of the elements essential to this narratological paradigm are missing from the novel. I began chapter two by looking at the prologue of the novel, but let us go further back to the title(s) which the manuscript traditions attribute to the novel. The two titles of the work that are extant are *Asinus Aureus* and *Metamorphoseon*. *Metamorphoseon* is widely considered to be the genuine title, but Winkler (1985: 292-8) makes quite a convincing argument for two titles of the novel actually being a singular title in the form: *Asinus Aureus peri Metamorphoseon*. Winkler cites the extant titles of Varro’s work which have a similar title structure thus giving his hypothesis some weight. Nevertheless, it is clear that the title *Metamorphoses* is well attested, and that the novel was clearly considered to be *peri Metamorphoseon*. What then could other narratives which have as their theme – or title – metamorphoses tell us about Apuleius’ novel?

In this chapter, I will argue that the presence of social and cosmic disorder finally rectified through the intervention of the divine should not be considered as a part of “conversion narrative”, but rather a predominate theme in narratives concerned with metamorphosis. Needless to say, such narratives have developed and changed since the time of Homer and the tragedians, all the way up to Ovid and Apuleius’ time; nevertheless, I believe that the core myths and stories in which metamorphoses occur can be interpreted (at least in a broad sense) as narratives concerned with social and cosmic disorder (and the restoration of said orders).³⁹ I will focus specifically on three myths of animal transformations that occur in Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*: Lycaon, Io, and Actaeon. Each myth in some way embodies the concept of disorder discussed above, and highlight certain aspects of

³⁹ I am very much indebted to the work of Forbes Irving *Metamorphosis in Greek Myth* (1990), in which he states (p 62): ‘There is, however, perhaps one basic element in common in all these cases [of transformations of humans into animals]. In each story the transformation into an animal is part of a wider disruption of order. It is very often associated with madness or pollution and, of course, a taking to the wilds ...’. Feldherr (2002) takes a similar view when talking about metamorphosis and its use in poetry. Judith Krabbe’s Chapter on Ovid and Apuleius’ *Metamorphoses* (1989: 37-73) draws many more parallels between the two works focussing specifically on lexical and thematic similarities. She seems, however, to hold to the view repudiated above that Lucius’ experience can be described in the language of conversion and redemption, language which, I believe, is unhelpful in understanding Apuleius’ novel.

metamorphosis that are present in Apuleius' novel, which will be discussed in more detail below.⁴⁰ I will focus specifically on Ovid's work – but with reference to Vergil and Horace – and venture little into the realms of Greek literature. Although writers such as Wheeler (2000) and Fratantuono (2011) lament the fact that many scholars and students only ever access or research the *Metamorphoses* of Ovid piecemeal, without acquiring a fuller picture of the poem, my aim here is not to provide an analysis or interpretation of the poem as a whole but simply to look at narratives of metamorphosis as they occur in Roman literature in general, and how this can in turn help us in understanding Apuleius' novel.

Lycaon:

Ovid's *Metamorphoses* 1. 163-252 recounts the council of the gods called by Jupiter who was angered by the wickedness of men - especially of King Lycaon, Jupiter's host during his stay in Arcadia. Lycaon violates the most basic *nomoi* of Graeco-Roman society by attempting to kill his guest, and by tempting/disbelieving in the divinity of a god that has clearly been made manifest (1. 220-1). After trying to serve the cooked flesh of a hostage slaughtered by Lycaon himself to Jupiter, the god, who identifies the meat as human flesh, brings down the roof upon Lycaon's *Penates* – described as *dignos domino* (1. 231). Lycaon flees into the wilds, loses his ability to speak and turns into a wolf, still revelling in slaughter amongst the cattle (234-5). Like Lucius, Lycaon keeps some aspects of his human form (237-9). Fratantuono (2011: 11) in his commentary on the poem notes that 'in a Roman context it is of the greatest significance that the first transformation in the poem of a mortal man is into a *wolf*, the animal that more than any other symbolizes the city [Rome]'. But ultimately our context is not Roman, but Greek, for the setting of this myth – and many of the tales throughout Ovid's poem – is Greece. In particular one could be put in mind of Alcaeus' exile poetry (Fr. 130. 24-5):

φεύγων ἐσχατίαις, ὥς δ' Ὀνυμακλέης
 ἔνθα[δ'] οἶος ἐοίκησα λυκαίμiais

D.A. Campbell (1982: 297) notes that the word possibly derives from λύκος and αἰμός, and could either be accusative plural object of ἐοίκησα (thus meaning 'I dwelt among the wolf-thorns') or nominative singular (thus meaning 'I, a wolf-thorned man'). One is tempted to also possibly read the word αἶμα (blood), which in its plural form can mean bloodshed – thus further invoking the savagery

⁴⁰ See also Krabbe (2003: 415-433) who draws a parallel between the episode of Salmacis and Hermaphroditus in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* 4.285-388 and Apuleius' Cupid and Psyche.

of the wolf. Regardless of how one interprets the word, it is clear from the fragment that Alcaeus is lamenting his exile and longs to hear again the summons to the council-hearings (18-20). But he is like the wolf, living alone and far from civilisation and the *domus*.

Immediately after Ovid recounts Lycaon's transformation he tells us that Lycaon's *domus* falls (240). Forbes Irving (1990: 90) notes that this myth deals directly with a theme which he believes underpins all other myths of animal transformation: the opposition of the house and the wilds. How one eats is 'one of the main ways of characterizing the social order of the community on the one hand and the primitive man and animals on the other: the latter are seen either in a positive way as vegetarians or a negative one as cannibals' (p. 93). Lycaon clearly embodies the negative view. Lycaon's transformation was fitting punishment for a man who disrespected human *nomoi* as regards the treatment of hostages and right treatment of one's guests and the gods. His transformation shows him to be the embodiment of the wicked man's disregard for social convention and a symbol of social disorder. It is ultimately Lycaon's actions – and the plethora of other *domus* deserving of the same punishment (1.240-1) – that leads to the flood in Ovid's poem and the literal turning of the world on its head,⁴¹ until the *virtus* and *pietas* of Deucalion and Pyrrha respectively cause Jupiter to relent and restore mankind to the face of the world (1. 253-415).⁴²

Io

Later on in Book 1 we have the metamorphosis of Io (588-746), who was turned into a cow after her rape by Jupiter. Unlike Lycaon, Io is not transformed into an animal as punishment for her actions⁴³ and the cow in no way symbolises Io's lust or desire; rather, her transformation is an embodiment of the pollution and social exile that a woman endures by being raped, the shame and (possible) madness it brings. This myth 'is not a direct illustration of Greek [or Roman] moral thinking: [myths] are nightmarish fantasies which nevertheless have a sort of logic and are a distorted imitation of the patterns of real life' (Forbes Irving 1990:69).

⁴¹ See Ovid 1. 293-300 and Horace's *Odes* 1.2.9-12, in which, for example, fish dwell in trees and seals dwell where the goats once grazed. Although Horace's ode does not have a metamorphosis *per se*, it does have the apotheosis of Augustus who will save Rome – flooded by the Tiber in this ode – and restore order after the chaos of the civil war.

⁴² See also Krabbe (1989: 46-47) who notes some similarities between Ovid's Lycaon and Lucius and also similarities between Deucalion and Pyrrha and Charite as '[e]xceptions to the evil prevailing' in the world of each work.

⁴³ However, Forbes Irving (1990: 68-9) makes the point that Athenian law makes no distinction between the adulterous wife and the victim of rape. One must keep in mind that, although in today's age such a woman as Io would be considered (by most civilised people) blameless, the Romans of Ovid's day might have taken a different few.

Elements of shame and madness are apparent in this particular myth as told by Ovid. After attempting to woo Io into a secluded spot in order to take her, Io takes flight only to be stopped by the power of the god, who shrouds the earth in mist in order to rape her (l. 599-600). The shameful nature of Jupiter's actions is exemplified by his need to shroud the earth in mist to hide his rape, which ultimately takes away the womanly virtue vital to Io's maidenhood (and her familial status as *virgo*), her modesty. When Juno sees Jupiter and the cow and inquires where it came from, Jupiter lies and says it was born from the earth (615). Although this is clearly a lie, it might as well be true. To be earth-born is to have no origin or lineage before you – in other words, to have no familial ties. In raping Io Jupiter has ostracised and polluted Io through his actions. Although Inachus does not seem to be aware that the cause of Io's transformation was her rape, nevertheless he espouses the concerns a Roman *paterfamilias* would have over his raped daughter. He had hoped to find her a husband and have grandchildren, but now *de grege nunc tibi vir et de grege natus habendus* (660). The idea of monogamy amongst cattle would be quite ridiculous to a Roman, and her children would be - like the child of a mother suspected of promiscuity – of unknown paternity.⁴⁴ The ever-watchful Argus takes her away from her father and family, the very things which gave her a place and purpose in human society.

Once Argus is slain by Mercury, Io is tormented in Ovid's account by a Fury, a clear indication of the madness caused and exemplified through Io's rape and transformation. Once Io has been driven throughout the world and reaches the Nile, she – like Lucius at Cenchreae – takes up the position of a suppliant on the Nile's edge. Her prayer – directed at no particular god – is heard by Jupiter and he begs his wife to relent, which she does. After Io is re-transformed to her original form, she is recognised as a goddess. Io's kneeling at the Nile's edge before her transformation points to the purification which she must undergo in order to have her form restored.⁴⁵ Forbes Irving notes that a number of vases depict this scene of transformation with Jupiter touching Io, marking a contrast with 'Io's previous unapproachability' (1990: 71). This makes Jupiter the *ephaptor* ('Toucher'). Although it is not quite clear who transforms Io in Ovid's account, her son's name Epaphus, points to this idea depicted on vases, in which the god Jupiter touches Io, thus indicating her restored purity. Epaphus, furthermore, has a divine father that is widely recognised by the Egyptians in Ovid's account, and he even shares divine status with his mother (748-50). He is by no means a child of uncertain paternity –

⁴⁴ I have in mind here in particular Vergil's *Eclogue* 6. 53-5, in which he describes the plight of Pasiphae struck by love for the bull: *Ille ... aliquam in magno sequitur grege ...* The bull, as an animal, cares little for love or even monogamy as he pursues no particular cow.

⁴⁵ See Krabbe (1989: 49-50) who notes some lexical similarities between the re-transformation scene of Io in Ovid's work and that of Lucius in Apuleius' novel.

unlike Phaethon who becomes the subject of Book two of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* – and we can see that Io has found a place yet again in the established order of the world.

Actaeon

The final episode of interest that appears in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* (3. 138-252) is the metamorphosis of Actaeon. In Ovid's account, Actaeon discovers a grove in the wilds in which Diana is nude and bathing with her nymphs in attendance. Actaeon is spotted and Diana in her wrath splashes him with water and turns him into a stag to be hunted by his own dogs. This slaughter is then cheered on by his companions who wonder why he is not here to see the display, and Actaeon eventually dies a gruesome death. In most versions of the myth Actaeon either challenges the goddess to a hunting competition, or violates her sanctuary, or attempts to rape the goddess.⁴⁶ Ovid's account is deliberately much more ambiguous, in that his crime is no more than accidental (stumbling upon Diana naked and bathing), and the severity of Diana's punishment is openly questioned – half believing it too severe, the other half, just (253-5). The view of Anderson and other scholars is that Ovid's narrative is that of 'human innocence abused', as Actaeon means no harm and has no chance to repent or defend himself (p. 351).⁴⁷ However, I believe that there is evidence in the text to suggest that the ever-looming threat of disorder and chaos that often accompanies or is a result of metamorphosis can be seen in the narrative.

Ovid sets the scene by describing the end of a day's hunting (143-7):

*mons erat infectus variarum caede ferarum,
iamque dies medius rerum contraxerat umbras
et sol ex aequo meta distabat utraque
cum iuvenis placido per devia lustra vagantes
participes operum conpellat Hyantius ore*

There is a striking symmetrical order to the lines quoted above. Lines 143-4 and 146-7 are heavily dactylic, whereas line 145 is heavily spondaic. In some ways this balance highlights the two extremes of Ovid's description. For, on the one hand, you have the mountain steeped in the blood of animals,

⁴⁶ See Forbes Irving (1990: 80) and Anderson (1996: 351). Apuleius' account will be dealt with below.

⁴⁷ Fratantuono holds a similar view (2011: 65)

thus highlighting the extent of their slaughter; and on the other, you have the peaceful voice of Actaeon urging on his comrades. This tension between order and peace and the disorder and chaos of bloodshed and the wilds is exemplified in the word *lustra*. *Lustrum* can invoke religious connotations, as it can mean ‘a purificatory sacrifice’, but in this case it is used to describe the den of an animal. This word, however, can also be figuratively used to describe a brothel and debauchery in general.⁴⁸ Despite the masculine pursuit of hunting that is on display here, beneath the surface there is an element of *furor* that was characteristic of the effeminate man in Roman society.

Forbes Irving believes that Actaeon’s crime is an important part of the story, even though there are various versions. In every version ‘it is always Artemis that punishes him, and his crime has something to do with women’ (1990: 81). He also notes that the hunters of Greek myth take on the savage character of the animals they kill, and that the hunter is a trespasser or intruder in the wilds, which is a place of danger and mystery (pp. 82-3). In Ovid’s account, Actaeon seems to be punished not so much for the crime that he commits – although one could argue that his crime is trespassing on the sacred grove of Diana – but for a crime that he had the potential to commit, i.e. the rape of Diana. Actaeon has just slaughtered enough animals to paint the mountains in gore,⁴⁹ he is in the wilds – a place without civilisation; and separated from his party – the only group that could embody any sort of civilisation in the setting of the hunt. The savagery shown in the hunt can easily translate into savagery towards woman, and Actaeon has shown what he is capable of.⁵⁰ That Actaeon was in the wrong to some extent seems not to be questioned in Ovid’s account, but whether or not the punishment truly fitted the crime is what is debated once news spreads of Actaeon’s demise, with each view having a case to support it (3.255). One could argue that the looming threat of the hunter’s possible *furor* caused Diana to (over)react in dealing with Actaeon’s intrusion, and the possible havoc this intrusion could cause in the sacred enclosure. One can see what chaos was caused by the unchecked desire of Nisus and Euryalus. It threatened the future of the Trojans in Italy and cost them their lives. Such chaos and disorder ever looms beneath the surface of the Actaeon story, and is ever present for any man who chooses to inhabit the wilds and leave the safety of civilisation behind him.

Nevertheless, Actaeon is no Lycaon, and even if he were in the wrong, Actaeon clearly feels guilt in Ovid’s account. As soon as his transformation to a stag is complete, fear is added (198). Actaeon with mind intact but voice gone – just as Io and Lucius – thinks to himself whether he should

⁴⁸ OLD² s.v. *lustrum*, 3.

⁴⁹ The image of slaughter is further developed in his speech (148): *lina madent, comites, ferrumque cruore ferarum*

⁵⁰ See Forbes Irving (1990: 83-4) for the sexual savagery typical of the hunters of Greek myth.

go back to his palace, or hide in the woods. Shame prevents his return home and fear stops him staying in the woods where he will inevitably become prey (204-5). Fear is also a sign that Actaeon has changed from a virile and (overly) masculine man to an effeminate and cowardly stag. Much like Lucius, Actaeon is a victim of the vagaries of fortune. Thinking before that the day had held enough fortune (149) he now finds that he *fugit, per quae fuerat loca saepe secutus* ('he flees through the places in which he had often made the pursuit.') (228). Ovid himself says that Actaeon committed no *scelus* but an *error* (literally 'wandering'), and that the *crimen* is ultimately that of Fortune (141-2). Innocent as some may think Actaeon is, the fault is still partially his own; for by entering the wilds and partaking in the slaughter of the hunt, he (knowingly, as his mention of Fortune in his speech to his comrades quoted above indicates) submits himself to the vagaries of ever-changing fortune and the looming threat of chaos, disorder and death that is present in the wilds. Through his *error* he essentially left the only society and keeper of order that there is in the wilds, the hunting party, and thus fell victim to fortune.

II

From the above discussion we can discern three major causes of metamorphosis which all link back to the theme of social and natural (dis)order in the world. (1) Metamorphosis is brought about as (divine) punishment for wickedness, misdeeds or transgression of established societal norms (such as Lycaon). (2) Metamorphosis symbolises one's uncleanness/madness (brought about through one's own or another's actions) which results in exile from society (such as Io and Actaeon). (3) Metamorphosis symbolises a change/reversal in one's status when one becomes subject to the vagaries of fortune (such as Actaeon). I have already discussed above and at length the social disarray found in the *Metamorphoses*. I will now go on to tie this into a reading of the narrative as one of "metamorphosis", and to discuss three episodes in the novel which I have not yet discussed: the *ekphrasis* of the metamorphosis of Actaeon, the metamorphosis of Lucius, and the tale of Cupid and Psyche. Through this I will show that metamorphosis is an embodiment and result of the disarray and chaos that permeates Lucius' life before and as an ass. For, as seen in the discussion above, metamorphosis is not only a result of one's own actions or (wicked) way of life, but also an embodiment of one's estrangement from society (and from sanity) either through the actions of oneself or of others. It is here that I hope to explore the role of *curiositas* in the novel, and how this plays into the overarching narrative of (dis)order in the world of the novel.⁵¹

⁵¹ Walsh (1970) and Winkler (1981) discuss *curiositas passim* in their works. Walsh's 1988 article 'On the Rights and Wrongs of Curiosity' give a more detailed account of this concept as used by writers from Plutarch's *Peri Pragmosunes* to Augustine's *Civitas Dei*. Shumate (1996:243-4) sees "curiosity" as 'one of the primary forms that the displaced desire for God can take.' Curiosity is a false desire that leads to trivial knowledge but

Soon after Lucius comes to Hypata, he bumps into his aunt Byrrhena, who invites him to her house. In the atrium, there is a group of statues showing the grove of Diana, the goddess, and Actaeon peeping on her whilst she bathes (2.4). Unlike Ovid's Actaeon who stumbles accidentally upon the goddess, Apuleius' Actaeon seems to be a much more willing and ready voyeur. In amongst the foliage Actaeon looks on *curioso optutu* waiting for Diana, already turning into a stag and described as bestial (*ferinus*). DeFilippo (1999) believes that, given Apuleius' Platonism, it is likely that *curiositas* - a word that has little history before Apuleius - means not simply 'curiosity' but 'meddlesomeness'.⁵² DeFilippo explores Plato's *Republic* (443c9-d3) and how the just man is considered as one who minds his own business and does not meddle in the affairs of others (p. 278). Plato goes on to develop this idea as pertaining to the soul of the man and not just his dealings with others. The soul for Plato is tripartite: rational (symbolised by man), spirited (symbolised by the lion), and appetitive (symbolised by a multiform and many headed beast). 'Within the soul of the unjust man ... the lion and multiform beast are dominant ... they starve and weaken the man, and are able to drag him wherever they chose to go. The unjust man therefore presents the outward appearance of a human being, while inside, where it really counts, he is more a wild and uncivilised beast' (p. 279). By trespassing in Diana's grove, Actaeon here meddles in the business of the goddess, sees what is not his to see and desires what he ought not to desire. Therefore, he becomes externally what he is internally, a wild beast controlled by his desires. For Plato, the unjust man - like so many characters who undergo metamorphosis such as Lycaon, Actaeon and Lucius - is only a man superficially, for his inner man (his rationality) is impaired by the spirited and appetitive parts of his soul.

Lucius is no different in his *curiositas*, for soon after he hears from Byrrhena just what kind of host Lucius has in Pamphile - a witch that is described more or less in the same way as Meroe is described earlier in the novel - he runs back to Milo's hovel, and even describes himself as *curiosus* and *vecors* (2.5-6). It is clear that Lucius' desire to meddle in magic has removed all rationality from his soul, as he is unable to pick up on the clear dangers Pamphile (or the city as a whole as noted above) presents to him. Even before Lucius is turned into an ass he has already submitted himself to his wild and beastly desires, and has forsaken his *lar* (symbolic of both the *domus* and piety towards

not wisdom. DeFilippo's essay on *curiositas* and Platonism in the novel (1999) will be discussed further below. Basing his argument on Apuleius' Platonism, the essay further develops the Platonic idea of *polupragmosune* and argues that *curiositas* is more than mere 'curiosity' but also 'not minding one's own business'. See, also, Kirichenko (2008), who argues that any reference to philosophy in the novel is 'used to enhance the novels comic effect and thus, paradoxically, serve to warn the reader against the temptation to read the novel as a straightforward philosophical allegory' (p. 89).

⁵² For DeFilippo's dissatisfaction with the translations of *curiositas* as curiosity, see pp. 275-7. See also p. 277 footnote 20 for the scholarly evidence on the link between *curiositas* and the Greek concepts of *periergia* and *polupragmosune* which the word attempts to translate.

the gods), the very thing which gives him his standing within the social order. Lucius does not even prepare his *domuitio* but puts his relationship with Photis before all else (3.19). After his transformation, Lucius continues to try and satisfy his *curiositas*. At 9.12 he chooses to satisfy his curiosity and observe the mill over eating, despite his hunger and weariness. Lucius even directly meddles in the baker's wife's affair by standing on the adulterer's hand poking through the grate on the floor and revealing his presence to the baker (discussed above). That Lucius moves from inhabiting the stables and mills of his owners to dining with them at table (and even making love to a married woman in a bed) emphasises greatly the increasingly disordered nature of society and the people who inhabit it.⁵³ They may not be beasts as Lucius, but they are, like he, controlled by the lower parts of their souls.

It is interesting to note that both Actaeon and Lucius are attracted to feminine powers.⁵⁴ Actaeon eagerly awaits a glimpse of Diana's beauty, and Lucius wishes desperately to learn the magical arts through subordination to women such as Photis and Pamphile.⁵⁵ There is, however, a crucial difference between the metamorphosis brought about by Diana and that brought about by witches such as Meroe and Pamphile. Diana punishes Actaeon for his *curiositas* and the threat that this has to the established order of things. Her punishment lets people know that *curiositas* and subjection to the lower parts of one's soul ultimately lead to your ejection from the social order and a terrible fate. The witches, on the other hand, embody chaos and disorder in society, and so inflict transformation on those who are enslaved by their desires and who meddle in what is not theirs to meddle, namely magical arts that give, as they give the witches Meroe and Pamphile, almost divine status. These witches are the greatest of meddlers, as they are able to make whole cities quake in fear, bring the dead to life, and turn the world itself on its head. Although scholars disagree over just how central the theme of *curiositas* is in interpreting the novel, it is clear that this concept - understood in light of Apuleius' Platonism and the novel as a whole - is the main cause of disorder in the world of the novel.

⁵³ It is worth noting here that Plutarch in his *De Curiositate* states that the meddlesome man loves to learn of others' misfortunes (ch. 515), and that he is a force of destruction specifically in the household (ch. 516).

⁵⁴ Peden (1985) makes an interesting observation about a group of statue in Byrrhaena's atrium briefly mentioned before the Actaeon scene. The group is centred round a *palmaris dea* whom Peden takes to be a mixture of Isis-Victoria-Fortuna. I agree with Peden's conclusion but wonder if the contemporary first-time reader would pick up on the allusion.

⁵⁵ Photis' counterpart in the *Onos*, Palaestra, shows herself to be a far keener *dominatrix*, for she not only teaches Lucius the art of "wrestling" (Lucius even addresses her as *didaskale* (ch.10)), but even slaps him when he complains that she gives too many orders at once (Chs. 9-10).

Psyche is yet another example of *curiositas*, to whom many similarities with the myth of Io can be attributed. Their ill-fate is by and large something inflicted on them by others. Io's rape was unavoidable when confronted with the almighty Jupiter, and Psyche cannot help but be beautiful. It is this very beauty that – like Io's rape – estranges her from society, but instead of being transformed into a cow, she becomes a false goddess. Like Io, however, she too is earthborn, symbolising her estrangement from society (4.28). Both Io's rape and Psyche's breath-taking beauty result in exile, for no one wishes to marry her, and she is simply a *simulacrum fabre politum* to the masses (4.32), and 'an exile within her own society' (James, 1987:142). Psyche, however, is somewhat at fault in Apuleius' tale, for it is her *sacrilega curiositas* that results in her separation from Cupid. It is clear that when Cupid warns her that her *curiositas* may lead to the loss of her good fortune the translation 'meddlesomeness' makes more sense than simply 'curiosity'. Indeed, what makes Psyche's *curiositas* 'sacrilegious' is that she is meddling in the affairs of Cupid by disobeying his commands and finally seeking out his face altogether – the very thing that ends their "marriage". We could say, therefore, that the concept of *curiositas* contains an element of disobedience, for Psyche's *curiositas* leads her not only to seek Cupid's face, but also to open the jar of Proserpina's beauty, thus disobeying Venus' orders.⁵⁶ Lucius' *curiositas* is no different, for as soon as Byrrhena tells him to beware of Pamphile the very first thing he does is to race off to Milo's house in order to learn about the very things Byrrhena warned him against (2.6).

In many respects the story of Cupid and Psyche can be read as a tale of lovers joined through disobedience and disorderly passions, which cause wider havoc in the world, with order finally being restored through a widely recognised marriage. Psyche's beauty causes the whole world to abandon the established shrines of Venus and to worship Venus falsely in the human image of Psyche (4.29). This incurs Venus' wrath, and so she summons her son Cupid who is described in unflattering terms (4.30):

et vocat confestim puerum suum pinnatum illum et satis temerarium, qui malis suis moribus contempta disciplina publica, et flammis et sagittis armatus, per alienas domos nocte discurrens et omnium matrimonia corrumpens, impune committit tanta

⁵⁶ Psyche could be said to be not only a type of the Ovidian Io but also of Ovid's Phaethon, who meddles to some extent in his father's divine affairs and suffers for it. Such a link between Psyche and Phaethon is strengthened by the clear resemblance in Apuleius' novel to Ovid's book structure in his *Metamorphoses*. As Harrison (2013: 186-187) notes, Book 4 of Apuleius' work ends with Psyche being carried away to a place of rest – thus creating a sense of suspense, a cliff-hanger (a technique 'derived from Ovid's homonymous *Metamorphoses* (2013: 185)) – and Book 5 opens with a description of Cupid's palace. This is quite similar to the end of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* Book 1 which introduces Phaethon and the opening of Book 2 that has the description of the palace of the Sun. See also Krabbe (1989: 56-59) for the various verbal parallels found in Ovid's description of the Palace of the Sun and Apuleius' description of Cupid's Palace.

flagitia et nihil prorsus boni facit.

Cupid brings disaster wherever he goes and most especially he destroys marriages and households – the setting in which most of the drama (and dystopia) of the novel takes place.

When the couple come together in “marriage” the disorder in the world only increases all the more. With the world thinking that Venus and Cupid have gone away the bird reports to Venus that (5.28):

...non voluptas ulla, non gratia, non lepos, sed incompta et agrestia et horrida cuncta sint, non nuptiae coniugales, non amicitiae sociales, non liberum caritates sed enormis colluvies et squalentium foederum insuave fastidium.

It is true that when Cupid and Psyche make love for the first time Cupid is said to have made Psyche his *nupta* and he is described as her *maritus*, but there is still something off about their marriage. They must make love in the dark without seeing each other, and Psyche knows nothing of her supposed spouse. Cupid must even flee before the coming of daylight just like the *matrona* who desires Lucius the ass in Book 10. That the couple are not in a legitimate union is the opinion of Jupiter at the end of the tale who believes that Cupid has simply chosen a *puella* and *virginitate privavit* (6.23). Cupid and Psyche’s union is a lowly one formed out of desire and disobedience to Venus’ orders. Instead of bringing social cohesion as marriage should do, it instead brings chaos and disorder to the whole world. It is only at the very end of the tale that the couple are married in a manner recognised by all. Psyche *convenit in manum Cupidinis*, and Apuleius here uses a very ancient and Roman legalistic term to describe their marriage (6.24).⁵⁷ Where the couple’s previous union brought disharmony, chaos, and *nulla voluptas* to the world, this union, before all the gods who sit in order from Jupiter and Juno down to the Satyrs playing their reed pipes (6.24), gives birth to *voluptas*. It brings order again to the world and an end to what Jupiter calls Cupid’s daily tales of ‘adulteries and every corruption’ (6.23).

⁵⁷ Treggiari (1991: 16-17) states that ‘As far as we know, marriage in early Rome was usually accompanied by *manus*.’ This meant that one was legally under the power of another, such as a husband or *Paterfamilias*. Apuleius here even uses the legalistic phrase *convenire in manum* in order to describe the couple’s marriage. There are several other references to Roman law and custom throughout the tale. Juno is prevented by law from receiving Psyche as she is considered a fugitive slave (6.4); Venus talks about the crime of ‘illegal concealment’ at 6.7; and there is even reference to the *Lex Julia de adulteriis* (6.22). For details of this law see Treggiari (1991: 277-298).

May's dramatic exegesis of the tale adds further depth to our interpretation. May (2006:208-248) notes that the tale of Cupid and Psyche is very much influenced by the language and tropes of tragedy and comedy comparable to Plautus' *Amphituro*, a *tragicomoedia*. Comedy seems to prevail in the end with the legitimate and recognised marriage of Cupid and Psyche, and the very tragic beginnings of the tale are transformed with a comic ending in another *repentina mutatio* with the marriage restoring peace and harmony to the world. As we have seen from our analysis of book 10 above, Apuleius explicitly promises tragedy in the tale of the wicked stepmother but delivers, not comedy, but an ending that has the disruption and chaos caused by the stepmother to the family resolved through the doctor's testimony and the resurrection, of sorts, of the young boy. The tale of Cupid and Psyche certainly acts as a mirror of the novel (especially its ending), and one could say that what I have termed a "narrative of metamorphosis" could quite simply be viewed as a comic ending (in as far as order is restored – even if not in the form of a wedding). However, the lack of comedy and satire (as I will argue below) in the final book leads to the conclusion that more is involved in this novel's ending than in the endings of other comedies or novels, for certain themes and ideas are present in the *Metamorphoses* which are not (necessarily) present in comedy. Therefore, to call the resolution of chaos and disorder in the novel's ending as comic does not do it justice.

Lucius is fortunate enough to be brought back into the fold of society through the intercession of Isis, and gains divine protection from such forces of chaos when he does away with his *curiositas* (11.23) and pursues knowledge with the rational part of his soul, and within the acceptable practices of Roman society. In short, Lucius chooses to practise *religio* and not *superstitio*.⁵⁸ Psyche in a similar fashion chooses to do the same when she takes Pan's advice (5.25) and seeks the help of any and all gods whose shrines she comes across (6.1-4). It is ultimately her choice to obey the will of Venus, and Cupid and Jupiter's intercession that leads to her legitimate marriage with Cupid and her re-integration into society – something which she never even had before her encounter with Cupid since she was outcast by her own beauty. The tale of Cupid and Psyche is replete with references to Roman laws and customs thus giving this fairy-tale world a sense of familiarity for its Roman audience.

We can see, therefore, that the presence of social and cosmic confusion in Lucius' life, which is finally restored through the intervention of the divine, is in fact characteristic of narratives of (animal) metamorphosis; and that this paradigm gives us much more explanatory power in

⁵⁸ Plutarch, whose treatise on *curiositas* was certainly influential upon Apuleius, may also have been familiar with his *De Superstitione*, in which Plutarch states that the practice of magic is a consequence of holding superstitious beliefs (ch. 166).

interpreting the novel as a whole – neither having its dependence on the final book and knowledge of the events that occur in it, nor giving too much weight to the first ten books of the novel – than the paradigm of conversion narrative. Given what we have discussed in this and the previous chapter, Apuleius seems to adhere to Roman social and ethical mores through Lucius’ various denouncements of adultery, effeminacy, and (in Book 11) *curiositas* (a Platonic idea, but, nevertheless, not un-Roman). It is in the next chapter that we will see how this narrative of metamorphosis reaches its fulfilment in the restoration of order through the intercession of Isis and Osiris, two deities which may seem to be very far from any ideal of *Romanitas* in the ancient world. The introduction of the cult of Isis and Osiris may seem to be a strange ending to a novel that has by and large been an uncouth and lowly Milesian tale, and an unlikely symbol of the order of Roman society. But it is in my next chapter that I will explore this very question: Why is Isis at the end of the novel?

Book 11 and the Place of Isis in the Narrative

Before we explore why the novel ends with the revelation of the goddess Isis, we must begin where we left off in chapter 2 of this thesis and read the final book of the *Metamorphoses* in light of the recurring theme of metamorphosis in the novel: the social and cosmic disarray caused by or embodied in metamorphosis which can only be reversed by the intercession of the divine. From here we can ask more fully the question “why does Isis feature in this novel”. The answer to this question not only lies within the novel itself, but also in an analysis of the place of the cult of Isis (and Osiris) in Roman culture before, during, and after the time of Apuleius. The question of Isis’ presence in the novel has become one of the perennial questions of Apuleian scholarship with various answers (or dismissals of the very question) being offered by scholars throughout time. Walsh (1970) represents the view more prevalent in the early twentieth century that the final book is indeed a serious and solemn ending to an otherwise erotic and vulgar novel. Winkler (1985) – with Shumate (1988) following him – holds the ending in a more ambiguous light, leaving the final interpretation of the novel in the reader’s hands. Harrison (2000:238-252) – basing his interpretation heavily on Winkler’s work but rejecting Winkler’s ambiguity – believes that the ending is ultimately a comic one, and Lucius is just as much an ass at the end as he was in the beginning, thus making the novel a mere cultural and sophistic entertainment.⁵⁹ B.B. Libby’s article (2011) argues that the perversity that occurs in Books 1-10 of the novel only deepens in Book 11, and that Lucius is ultimately the butt of Apuleius’ satirical jokes. Bradley (2012:206-211) takes a similar view and argues that Lucius in fact becomes a slave to Isis, and that Apuleius is perhaps critiquing the spread of (eastern) superstitions throughout the Roman

⁵⁹ See also Harrison (2012; 2013: 109-122)

world, which has led to the decline of reason. Frangoulidis (2014:282) following Vander Poppen also notes that there is ‘a contrast between the *hospitium* offered by Isis and the *servitium* of her priesthood, which is read as an indication of the flaws in the *hospitium* even of the goddess, or at least her earthly representatives’. Much of the discussion surrounding whether the ending of the novel is a serious, religious ending or in fact a continuation (or even an intensification) of the comedy of Books 1-10 relies, I believe, upon the readers’/scholars’ personal views on religion.⁶⁰ My interpretation, however, is very much indebted to the recent work of Tilg (2014), who believes that the ending is in fact serio-comic, believing that the comedy of the final book is found in its form and language, but that the ideas contained within this final book are no less serious for it.⁶¹ Although I have thus far focussed upon the novel and other texts (especially Ovid) to construct an accurate narratological picture of the novel, I believe that it is only by exploring the socio-religious aspects of the cult of Isis in the Roman world at the time of Apuleius that we can see exactly why Isis crowns a novel which, this thesis argues, is a narrative of metamorphosis.

Lucius, having fled from Corinth and arrived exhausted on the shores of Cenchreae, awakes to see the splendour of the moon and decides to pray to the goddess under its many names. After praying, Lucius falls asleep again and awakes to find the goddess before him in person.⁶² She identifies herself as (11.5)

*rerum naturae parens, elementorum omnium domina, saeculorum progenies initialis,
summa numinum, regina manium, prima caelitum, deorum dearumque facies
uniformis*

She brings order to the world above and below, rules the lives of the living and the dead, and is worshipped under many names throughout the world, but her true name is Isis. It is clear from her titles that she is ruler both of the cosmos (*rerum naturae parens*) and of human society (*saeculorum*

⁶⁰ Batson’s study on religion and the individual (1993: 193-299) looks at whether religion is indeed a form of freedom or of bondage and shows just how nuanced and ambiguous the answer to this question is. Much the same can be said when he looks at the question of religion as a cause of mental health or sickness. He notes that, if one were to take the Italian medieval mystic and friar Francis of Assisi to various leading psychotherapists, “Freud and Ellis would almost certainly have diagnosed sickness ... Jung ... would likely have contended that Francis’ religion was an important source of mental health. We, if not Francis, would have been left very confused’ (p. 291).

⁶¹ See also Drews (2012) who argues for a serio-comic reading of the novel that builds upon the Platonic-allegorical reading of the novel of earlier (German) scholars cited by Drews.

⁶² It is interesting to note that, if one draws a parallel between Ovid’s account of the Iphis story in Book 9 in which Isis appears and the apparition at Cenchreae (as Krabbe (1989: 50-51) does), Lucius’ account of what he sees has a greater tone of certainty than Ovid’s account. For where Ovid says that Isis *stetit aut visa est* (9. 688), Lucius states *constitisse visum est* (11.3) thus, as Krabbe states, ‘reducing the element of doubt’. This is important when one assesses the veracity and genuineness of Lucius’ account.

progenies initialis). Unlike the witch Meroe, she does not bring down the stars or raise the dead, but keeps them all in order and rules them.

On the next day, Lucius arrives at Cenchreae to view the beginnings of the festival. The procession is preceded by the *anteludia* that feature various men dressed up as soldier, huntsman, man in woman's clothing, gladiator, magistrate, and even a tame she-bear *cultu matronali* and a monkey playing the part of Ganymede (11.8). Clear allusions are made to characters that have come before in the novel such as the soldier and the effeminate priests who take ownership of Lucius the ass, and the *matrona*, whose beastly traits were discussed above.⁶³ This gives the impression that all that has come before the final book is in some way a series of *anteludia* that heralds in the final and important ending of the novel in Isis. Such a combination of serious and comic spectacles would not be entirely alien to the Roman mind. Roman funerals could at times be followed by a procession of satyrs mimicking the serious and sombre procession that had just passed.⁶⁴ Given our discussion in chapter 2 of how Apuleius seems to mislead his audience at times as to what will happen (such as in the opening story of Book 10), this suggestion, I believe, is not too far-fetched.

Nevertheless, scholars have been divided over this important question of interpretation: namely whether the novel is ultimately comic or serious.⁶⁵ In Tilg (2014: 85-105) we find a nuanced response to the question of the tone of the novel as a whole. Tilg argues convincingly that the comic elements in the final book are ultimately confined to matters of form and language – with puns and little jokes – and the serious elements pertain to the meaning and ideas conveyed within the novel. It is what you might call a *spoudaiogeloion*, a story which tells the truth whilst laughing.⁶⁶ Once the procession proper comes carrying the symbols of Isis and her statue – resembling neither animal nor human form – Lucius spots the priest carrying the roses needed for his re-transformation. He slowly approaches the priest and consumes the roses. What is notably absent from the description of his re-transformation is the shrinking of his phallus to normal size. The very thing that was a source of comedy in his initial transformation (3.24) is not mentioned at all. We can see here that comedy has

⁶³ See also Harrison (2000:241-242) who lists whom he believes all of these characters in the *anteludia* represent. Some of his interpretations vary from mine but, nevertheless, show that the *anteludia* does in fact echo various characters that have been present in the previous books.

⁶⁴ Gowers (2012:91)

⁶⁵ See above for bibliography

⁶⁶ Horace *Satires* 1.1.24-5: 'What's to stop me from telling the truth whilst laughing?' It is not the aim of this thesis to go into this debate in detail. Tilg (2014: 85-105) I believe responds adequately to the view of some scholars that the novel is ultimately satirical and comic, whilst also pointing out the flaws in scholarly interpretations that take an overly serious view of the novel as a whole. See also Shumate (1996:9).

receded with the *anteludia*, which recall the events of Books 1-10, and what is left is the account of salvation offered by Isis and Osiris.⁶⁷

Furthermore, Frangoulidis (2014:282-83) notes the contrast between the citizens of Hypata and those of Cenchreae. In Hypata, Lucius was mocked and derided by the citizens at the Risus festival and shown little hospitality at Milo's house. The Cenchreans, on the other hand, treat Lucius (even in the form of an ass) hospitably, as they make way for him during the festival so that he might reach the priest to eat the roses, and they give him a white garment to cover his nudity after his transformation. Just as Lycaon's inhospitable behaviour towards Zeus merited his transformation and exemplified the disorder of his and the many other *domus* around the world at that time, so too does the Cenchreans' *hospitium* show that order is finally restored to the world and the dystopian society of Hypata is left far behind.

Once Lucius is transformed, the priest Mithras gives a speech which interprets what has gone before in Lucius' journey as an ass (11.15). It is Lucius' *improspera curiositas* that has caused his misery at the hands of blind Fortune, the very trait associated with disorder and chaos in the world of the *Metamorphoses* as discussed above. Nevertheless, it is the blindness of Fortune that has led him by chance *ad religiosam istam beatitudinem*. Some have argued – such as Winkler (1985: 212-215) and Harrison (2012:80) – that the comment of the crowd (that Lucius must have been virtuous in his former life) after the priest's interpretation of the novel somehow debunk or deflate the solemnity of this occasion. One has to remember that, firstly, the crowd's comment only goes to show their ignorance of all that is gone before. It should also be said that, given Mithras' recognition in his speech of Lucius' former deviant ways, the crowd must either not have listened well to Mithras' speech to make such a comment or the crowd 'infer from the fact that Isis saved Lucius that he evidently deserved this salvation ... due to his preceding virtuous life', as the *scilicet* in 11.16.4 would imply (see the Groningen commentary on Book 11 (Keulen, Tilg, et al., 2015:298). Let us not forget, however, that Lucius does have his moments of virtue, such as when he resolves not to violate Milo's marital bed in order to get close to his sorceress wife (2.6), when he helps Charite escape from the bandits (6.27-28), and even when he reveals the location of the Baker's wife's lover (meddlesome as that act may be) (9.27). Furthermore, Graverini (2012:101) notes that Mithras'

⁶⁷ My view seems to be the complete opposite of Harrison's (2013: 116) who states: '... Book 11 seems to me to have a parabolic structure, rising in religious credibility to the high point of this speech of the priest of Isis at 11.15 and then gradually descending into irony and farce as the corrupt nature of Isis's cult is revealed and as Lucius undergoes more and more cynical manipulation.'

praise of Lucius' *natales, dignitas, doctrina* and the crowds belief that he was *innocentus* in his preceding life 'fit the Senecan idea that Fortune puts good men to the test ... Fortuna wants to annihilate her victims, but she only succeeds in making them better and in offering them as a paradigm of virtue to be admired ...'.

The noun *religio* and the adjective *religiosus* appear several times throughout Book 11.⁶⁸ It is clear from Mithras' speech, however, that *religio* for Apuleius had positive connotations, as the *religiosi* are set against the *inreligiosi* (11.15): *Videant inreligiosi, videant et errorem suum recognoscant*. *Religio* did not always have positive connotations in Roman thought. For the Epicurean, *religio* was used to describe the superstitious notions that entrapped man into a life of fear and misery through servitude to gods who could not hear or answer prayers.⁶⁹ But given the positive – and clearly non-Epicurean - view of religion which the novel has in Book 11, we can see that *religio* is positively and traditionally portrayed as a reciprocal relationship between man and god. Lucius may have to dedicate the rest of his life to the cult of Isis, but in return he is to receive eternal bliss. Lucius does not go from the servile life of an ass to the servile life of a brain-washed cultist (as Bradley (2012:205-228) believes), but to the life of freedom through the cult of Isis.⁷⁰ Mithras finishes his speech by pointing out that, in joining the cult of his own free will, he will better perceive the fruit of his *libertas*.⁷¹ And it is *libertas* from Lucius' former unruly passions and unreasonable behaviour that is emphasised in Book 11.

After Mithras' speech, the *ploiaphesia* takes place; the ship is set to sail and all return to the temple of Isis where both the initiated and the laity gather (11.17). It is here that a lector reads out the closing prayers (11.17):

*Fausta vota praefatus principi magno senatuique et equiti totoque Romano populo,
nauticis navibus quaeque sub imperio mundi nostratis reguntur, renuntiat sermone
rituque Graeciensi πλοιαφέσια. quam vocem feliciter cunctis evenire signavit populi
clamor insecutus.*

⁶⁸ At my count, *religio* occurs fourteen times and the adjective *religiosus* occurs eight times, with one occurrence of *inreligiosus*.

⁶⁹ See Howe (1957) for Lucretius' understanding of *religio* in *De Rerum Natura*.

⁷⁰ Bradley (1998:323) himself says that 'the object of Lucius' prayer is ... very traditional, and very Roman, in its objective practicality ...' He further notes that the demands of Isis and the rewards for fulfilling her demand – life-long service to her cult – is very Roman in its contractual, *do ut des*, nature. (p. 324-25).

⁷¹ 11.15: *teque iam nunc obsequio religionis nostrae dedica et ministerii iugum subi voluntarium. nam cum coeperis deae servire, tunc magis senties fructum tuae libertatis*.

Although prayers for the emperor and the Roman people may have been common to all Roman rituals, there are some peculiar features here. The phrase *princeps magnus* is unusual and possibly derives from Greek or Egyptian phrases used in prayers for ruler-cults.⁷² Furthermore, despite the action being in Greece and celebrating a rite of Egyptian origin, the prayers are said first in Latin and then in Greek. Great emphasis is placed here on the Roman hierarchy and Roman superiority in the world. In a world that was once, for Lucius, filled with cosmic and social chaos and disruption we now have order through the religious ritual of Isis, an order that is both caused by (in the case of Lucius' life) and exemplified in the cult of Isis; and through this order joy is brought to the people.⁷³

After the closing prayer the crowd disperse back to their homes, but as for Lucius (11.17):

*Nec tamen me sinebat animus ungue latius indidem digredi, sed intentus in deae
specimen pristinos casus meos recordabar.*

Some interesting parallels can be made between the festival of Isis and the Risus festival of Book 3. At 3.10, once Lucius discovers that he is the butt of the town's joke, the crowd no longer contain their mirth but are *laetitia delibuti*, just as the crowd before the end of the *ploiaphesia* are *gaudio delibuti*. In both scenes Lucius is transfixed and unmoveable. At 3.10 he is as stone, unable to move or act of his own accord until Milo drags him back to his lodgings; but at 11.17 Lucius is immersed in the image of the goddess, and this causes him to pause and ponder all that has gone before. It is a positive experience, and a choice that he has made. Some scholars (such as those noted above) argue that Lucius is duped or even forced into the cult of Isis. But we can see from what follows that, once Lucius meets again with his family, he chooses not to return to his *domus* in Corinth but to dwell within the temple just as he chose to stay and dwell upon the goddess' image (11.19). It is only in Book 11 that we see Lucius thinking, pondering and considering his actions, unlike in the previous books where Lucius rushes to and fro in search of magical knowledge. At 11.20 he ponders the meaning of a vision he receives (*apud cogitationes meas revolvebam*). His temperament is no longer described as *festinus* or *vecors* (2.6), but he dwells *miti quiete et probabili taciturnitate* (11.22).

⁷² See Griffiths (1975:267).

⁷³ Shelton (2005) discusses similar concepts of hierarchy and social order within the novel, but with a greater emphasis on gender theory and upon the women within the novel.

Indeed, even the scruples that Lucius has, once he has to undergo yet a third initiation, could be evidence not for his gullibility but of his free and unhindered ability to reason.⁷⁴ Once Lucius has been in Rome for a year, he is disturbed again by the *numinis benefici cura peruihilis* who urges him to another initiation (11.26). It is not the priests who urge this but Isis herself (or perhaps Osiris). The text makes it quite clear that Lucius comes to a conclusion as to why he must be initiated again of his own accord (11.27):

*Ac dum religiosum scrupulum partim apud meum sensum dispute, partim sacratorum
consiliis examino, nouum mirumque plane comperior.*

That it takes a year for Lucius to have yet another vision would, I believe, suggest that he is no mad man, nor anyone's fool. Furthermore, no one tells him that he must be initiated into the cult of Osiris (even though he consults with the other initiates); the text suggests that he comes to the conclusion by himself. The call for Lucius to undergo a third initiation comes yet again from the gods and not the priests. This third call leads Lucius to doubt the priests' good faith, but just as *insania* threatens to invade his world again, the *clemens imago* instructs him in another nocturnal vision (11.29). All of this would suggest that Lucius is no gullible adherent to a cult but a man who continually questions within himself his new found faith, and seeks to delve ever deeper into it without any coercion from superiors within the cult. Lucius is no longer a man tossed about by the unruly and chaotic forces of magic and disorder, for the lower parts of his soul which had taken hold of him throughout the novel – as discussed above – are finally brought under the control of his reasoning and allows him to freely take up a life dedicated to the cult of Isis and also to the practice of law at Rome. It is the order and stability provided by his position within the cult and the courts that gives him the *doctrina* and the *gaudium* that he had once pursued through magic.

Lucius begins his journey in the wilds of Thessaly, a place filled with bandits, witches and all manners of lawlessness. He has no thought for his *domuitio* (3.19), as he tells Photis, but is concerned only with the pursuit of knowledge through magic.⁷⁵ His journey ultimately ends with not only a *domuitio* to his family in Corinth but also with a journey to Rome, the centre of order and Empire in the Roman world, and as far away from the life of the Thessalian wilds as one could get. Lucius' goal is not obtained through the pursuit of magic that causes disorder and chaos in the world and society, or through indulgence in the lowly passions of the soul, but through a return to order and the practice of *religio* and *ratio* – two concepts central to Roman order and masculinity. Nevertheless, in a novel

⁷⁴ Furthermore, see Bradley (2012:214), where he makes the point that the money associated with Lucius' religious initiations is not proof for the comic or parodic nature of his religious experience, and that financial requirements for members of *collegia* were quite normal.

⁷⁵ 3.19: *nec larem requiro nec domuitionem paro ...* The word *domuitio* appears again at 11.24 when he tells us that, at the behest of the goddess, *tardam satis domuitionem comparo*.

which, as I have argued, is deeply (if not centrally) concerned with the theme of order and disorder, as embodied or caused by metamorphosis, and which supports Roman norms of social order and masculinity, why does its author choose an ending with a deeply descriptive and emotionally charged account of an initiation into the cult(s) of two Egyptian deities, Isis and Osiris? The answer to this question, I believe, can be best answered through an exploration of the cult's history in the Greco-Roman world.

II

The cult of Isis and Osiris had a chequered history in the Roman world.⁷⁶ Coming to Italy through trade in the first century BC the cult spread rapidly amongst the masses but faced opposition from the political class when the Senate in 59 BC ordered the destruction of all the altars of Serapis, Harpocrates and Anubis – with similar decrees being made by the Senate in 53 and 50 BC (Donalson 2003:120-121). Augustus officially banned the Isis-rites within the *pomerium* in 28 BC (Donalson 2003:131) – hence the reason why the Temple that Lucius joins at Rome is in the *Campus Martius* – and in AD 19 Tiberius destroyed the Temple of Isis, threw her statue into the Tiber, and crucified her priests, owing to their complicity in the adulterous affair between Decius Mundus and a married patrician lady called Paulina (2003:138). Heyob (1975: 111-127), however, shows that the portrayal of the cult of Isis as a source of (sexual) immorality by Roman writers is greatly misleading, citing much epigraphic evidence and the relative silence (or even praise) of Christian writers concerning the moral practices of the Egyptian cults. It is with Caligula that we see the slow acceptance of the cult of Isis and Osiris into the upper echelons of Roman society, and the beginning of the cult's use as a propaganda tool for the Imperial family.

The most pertinent example of imperial propaganda to our subject can be found in the reign of Marcus Aurelius, who very likely was emperor during the time Apuleius was writing his *Metamorphoses*. During Marcus Aurelius' war with the Germanic tribes, a rain miracle happened at a battle taking place in AD 172/3. With the Romans facing certain defeat, Marcus Aurelius is said to have prayed and a sudden thunderstorm occurred with a lightning bolt striking one of the enemy's siege works. Later historians attribute the divine intervention to various gods such as the Christian god or Hermes, but the account of Cassius Dio has an Egyptian sage named Arnouphis who brought

⁷⁶ I rely here mainly on Donalson (2003) and Takacs (1995), but there is very little disagreement in other accounts of the cult of Isis in the Greco-Roman world. See also Witt (1971), Griffiths (1975), Orlin (2008), and Bowden (2010: 156-180)

about the miracle, and whose historicity is verified by an inscription from Aquileia (1995: 110-111). The emperor also issued coins in which his wife, Faustina II, and Isis share the reverse (Takacs 1995:110-111). As a Stoic, Marcus Aurelius certainly believed in the value of *religio* and that all Roman rites and liturgies would be futile unless the gods could actually intervene. The rain miracle is further proof of his Stoicism.⁷⁷ Takacs points out that Egyptian priests and astrologers were known to have ancient and magical knowledge that was millennia old, and Marcus Aurelius put this knowledge to use by having such Egyptian priests in his entourage and bringing them on campaign. By this time, Isis and Osiris were deities of the Roman pantheon, and were ‘the divine equivalent to the living *augustus* and *augusta*’ (1995:111-112). Marcus Aurelius’ son and successor Commodus continued more openly the link between the cult of Isis and Osiris and the cult of the Emperor, being himself a member of the cult of Isis. He also issued coins featuring depictions of himself with Isis and Osiris, thus continuing a numismatic tradition that went as far back as Hadrian (1995:106). The cult of Isis and Osiris may have fallen in and out of favour with the Roman ruling class throughout Rome’s history, but in the time of Apuleius and immediately after his death, Isis and Osiris were symbols of power for the imperial family and a useful propaganda tool for their advantage. For by associating themselves with the deities Isis and Osiris, whose cult was cultivated throughout Rome’s history by its people (at some times more than others, as evidenced by the many decrees of the Senate issued against the cult from about 59 BC [noted above]), they helped to legitimise and secure their rule, and to display the gods’ favour upon the Roman world under their rule through such military victories as those won by Hadrian and Marcus Aurelius. Isis and Osiris, therefore, became symbols of order and stability under the Imperial family throughout the Roman world.⁷⁸

Given also Apuleius’ reputation as a Platonic philosopher, we must consider Plutarch’s *De Iside et Osiride* as an influence on Apuleius’ conception of the cult. It seems clear to me that the supposed relation Lucius has to Plutarch (*Met.* 1.2) – even if it is not the Plutarch of history but a fictionalised, Thessalian Plutarch (as Finkelpearl (2012: 199) notes) – makes a reading of Plutarch’s work *De Iside et Osiride* (as well as his *De curiositate* and *De Superstitione* mentioned above) important, if not essential, to interpreting the final book of the *Metamorphoses*. However, I agree with Finkelpearl in that the views of Lucius and of Plutarch concerning Isiac worship are quite different, as Lucius takes a more mystical and exotic approach to the cult and Plutarch attempts to rationalise and Hellenise the Egyptian cult. Nevertheless, I believe that this treatise of Plutarch can be helpful in further supporting the interpretation of the novel taken in this thesis, that the novel’s

⁷⁷ See also Solmsen (1944), in which he discusses *religio* and *superstitio* in Cicero’s *De Natura Deorum*.

⁷⁸ Graverini in her essay on *prudentia* and *providentia* in the *Metamorphoses* (2012:102-103) briefly discusses the Imperial aspect of *providentia*, which is very much present in the final book. *Providentia*’s worship was cultivated in the early empire, and her cult was quickly associated with the Imperial cult. Isis and Sarapis were also associated with the Imperial cult, as Graverini notes – also following Takacs.

narrative is one in which chaos and disorder within society are finally brought to order and peace through the intervention of the divine (in this case Isis and Osiris).

Throughout the work the two gods are referred to as source (Osiris) and receiver (Isis) of good and of order. Isis is 'the feminine principle of nature', and is called 'nurse' and 'all-receiver' by Plato and 'many-named' by the masses 'for, directed by reason, she receives every shape and form' (*De Is. et Os.* 53). Where Isis receives the forms of all things, Osiris contributes them, and so to revere Isis and Osiris is to revere and honour what is orderly and good (*De Is. et Os.* 64). Plutarch uses the myth of Typhon's scattering of the limbs of Osiris as an allegory for the Platonic idea of forms. The forms of all things are only impressed on matter 'like wax' and can be easily destroyed. Typhon is the principle of destruction and Isis is the principle which seeks out the good and the good's creation in the world, just as Isis seeks out the parts of Osiris and puts them together again, 'for that which exists and is knowable and good is more powerful than destruction and change' (*De Is. et Os.* 53-54). This would suggest that the divine actions of Isis in the *Metamorphoses* can be considered as the force and embodiment of good overcoming the destructive and disordered force of Typhon (often associated with the ass),⁷⁹ and thus restoring order not only in the life of Lucius, but also, as I have argued, in the wider social and ontological world.

We have seen how the theme of metamorphosis is prevalent throughout the novel. The various references to significant events, which occur in the novel throughout Books 1-10 (noted above), show this continuity clearly in the final Book. Furthermore, Apuleius' technique of promising one outcome and delivering another is also clearly manifested in this final book, as the tone becomes much more serious and sincere than the tone of almost all the previous books, and humour is confined to the realms of form and language. Given the historical and philosophical significance of the cult of Isis and Osiris in Apuleius' life and times, we can see that the interpretation of the novel as a story in which chaos and disorder in society are exemplified through metamorphosis, only to be remedied through divine intervention and conformity to established Roman norms of religion and masculinity, is a feasible interpretation. Such a novel would have clearly appealed to a wide audience, not in spite of, but because of its virtuosic range in tone, style and ideas. It would have appealed to the learned, the philosophically minded, and the upper echelons of Roman society, in which both the aesthetic Egyptomania that took hold of Roman society in its love for Nilotic scenes of art and the much more religious/spiritual strand of Egyptomania (whether or not it was used purely as Imperial propaganda) took hold. Nevertheless, it could still be asked why the novel ends with Isis and Osiris when there are

⁷⁹ See *De Iside et Osiride*, ch. 30.

certainly other deities of greater relevance to Roman society than the Egyptian gods.⁸⁰ It is beyond the scope of this thesis to delve into this question in great detail, but I believe that there is evidence to suggest that Apuleius was, if not an adherent to the cult,⁸¹ at least genuinely interested in more spiritual/middle-Platonic forms of religious expression than was characteristic of traditional Roman *religio*.⁸² Furthermore, I believe that Apuleius was also interested in defending traditional Roman (pagan) society against the rise of Christianity, which would have been quite visible in his home-region in Carthage and Madauros.⁸³ Bradley (2012:104-125) argues convincingly that the Christian religion was a threat to the Roman family, as Christians were more willing to suffer martyrdom for Christ than to live and re-integrate into family life and Roman society. In other words, Christianity was a cause of *impietas* in Roman society; the Christian – much like Lucius at the beginning of the *Metamorphoses* – became forgetful of his *Lares* (that is, not only his *domus*, but his gods) in order to pursue personal salvation through Christ, even at the expense of the good of the family.

⁸⁰ This question was posed by Winkler, who believed that a Jewish ending to the novel could have been possible (1985:277).

⁸¹ Rives (1994) discusses the priesthood of Apuleius. The evidence would suggest that he was a priest of the Imperial cult, but Rives believes that he was possibly a priest of Asculapius' cult. My thesis would perhaps be strengthened if we were to believe that he was in fact a priest of the Imperial cult, given Apuleius' use of two gods used in Imperial propaganda.

⁸² Take, for example, Cicero's *Somnium Scipionis* in which Scipio tells his grandson that, to obtain the blessed afterlife which Scipio inhabits, he must serve his country above all else (21). Clearly Apuleius' idea of the *religiosus* is more nuanced and personal than Cicero's, although I have tried to make it clear that adherence to Roman social norms was indeed important to Apuleius, as exemplified by the theme of metamorphosis identified in his novel. Nevertheless, much more could be said concerning what Apuleius exactly means when he uses the term *religio*, given the term's various meanings and usages, but this is beyond the scope of this thesis.

⁸³ Walsh (1970: 186-89) makes a similar point, citing Tertullian as evidence of a significant Christian presence in North Africa at the time of Apuleius. Walsh's view has more recently been backed up by Moss (2012:123), who also notes that Christians' social and religious non-conformity challenged established Roman power structures (p. 82). Hunink (2000:80) notes that the description of the baker's wife (9.14) uses 'terminology current in religious confrontations between Christians and pagans, which seems an indication that the novel was actually also intended as a reaction to Christianity'. Bradley (2012:104-5) discusses the Scillitan martyrs who were martyred at Carthage in 180 – and, therefore, quite possibly within the lifetime of Apuleius. W.S. Smith (2001) draws parallels between Apuleius' Lucius and Luke's St. Paul, noting various similarities in the narratives of the *Metamorphoses* and the 'Acts of the Apostles'. Smith in two later essays (2012 and 2015) gives further evidence for Apuleius' familiarity with Christian/Jewish literature (especially apocalyptic literature), and, furthermore, expresses a similar view to my own that Lucius is by no means made exotic or an alien to Roman mores by his religion and that the novel is pro-Roman (2012:81). See also Nordenfalk (1968:130): 'Then, toward the end of the second century, the charge of adoring the head of an ass was transferred from the Jews to the Christians, as we are told by Tertullian and by Minucius Felix. In the well-known graffito from the Palatine, a Christian, Alexamenos, is represented worshiping Christ crucified who appears with the head of an ass.'

Conclusion

Although it would not be anachronistic to call the *Metamorphoses* a conversion narrative, the novel is, nevertheless, not a story of a man who retrospectively looks back upon an interior journey that begins with the loss of one set of beliefs, followed by a period of confusion, and ends with the protagonist possessing strongly-held convictions as regards the world and the meaning of life. Rather, the *Metamorphoses* seems to be an instance of a much older narratological paradigm, in which social and cosmic disarray is exemplified in or caused by metamorphosis, and remedied by the intervention of the divine. One can say, therefore, that it is not only Lucius that undergoes a metamorphosis, but society as a whole. For the novel's trajectory begins with the sorry tale of one man, Socrates, taken in and (sexually) dominated by a witch's charms, only for the chaos to quickly swell and envelope the whole of society (as exemplified in the city of Hypata and its Risus festival) and all the various peoples and families within it. The world of Books 1-10 is a world where everything is turned upon its head; where women dominate men – both sexually and intellectually through their cunning; where men are *semiviri* and effeminate; where *ratio* and *virtus* have entirely fled; and where no principal of order can be found. It is only when Lucius reaches the city of Cenchreae that we find a people who display great civic hospitality (even to a man that transforms from an ass before their eyes!) and a true *gaudium* that is not won at the expense of Lucius, unlike the citizens of Hypata. Cenchreae is the ideal *polis*, a city from which Lucius finally journeys to the city of all cities, Rome, the centre, summit and provider of all order in the world. In short, the cacophony of chaos that fills the world of the *Metamorphoses* only finds resolution under the guidance of Isis and Osiris, the principals of order and good in the world. The novel, therefore, is a narrative concerned with metamorphoses (*peri metamorphoseon*). It is the rarer kind of metamorphic narrative, in which the protagonist undergoes both transformation and retransformation, the former caused by and symbolic of his immoral/irrational/un-Roman lifestyle, the latter brought about by his repentance and successful prayer to the divine.

The *Metamorphoses* is concerned with religion only inasmuch as it is concerned with society and the many people that live within (and outside) it. Religion and society did not live in dichotomy in Apuleius' time, and Isis and Osiris act as a religious type of the Imperial family; for both the Egyptian gods and the Imperial family were the source and summit of order in society. They provided order, ensured peace and stability in the daily lives of their people, warded off evil and rewarded the good. At the end of the novel, Lucius, as priest and lawyer, is not an oddity in Roman society (despite his shaven head, thus marking him out as a member of the Egyptian cult). He has not been "easternised" but, rather, "Romanised" through his contact with Isis and Osiris. Through his free acceptance of Isis'

salvation and the terms that come with it (namely service to her cult), Lucius leaves behind the sexual licentiousness and mindless *furor* that exemplified the unmanly man in mainstream Roman society. Through Isis, he regains not only his human form, but also his human *ratio*; for throughout the final book he slowly realises and discerns Isis' and Osiris' plan for him and his salvation. We can say then that Lucius does change for the better in the end of the novel – even if the novel is not a conversion narrative. He does not go from the servile ass to the servile cultist, but from the mindless state of *furor* of a man, who is controlled by his lower desires and is subject to the vagaries of fortune to the state of a (Ro)man who is in full possession of *ratio* and feels secure within the bounds of society. It is in reading the novel as a narrative of metamorphosis that, I believe, we can provide a holistic interpretation of the novel that neither disregards Books 1-10 once the reader reaches the 'Isis book', nor needs the final book as a definitive interpretative key.

As noted in my final chapter (pp. 54-54), Apuleius' motives for writing this work may have been more than literary, for there were now those in Roman society whose religion was not in harmony with society, and who – like the witch, the adulterer, the baker's wife or the catamite priests, who are prime examples of the *inreligiosi* and societal disorder – upset or even destroyed the basic social unit that provided the setting for many of Apuleius' *fabulae*: the family. Ultimately we can only speculate as to what Apuleius' motives were in writing this novel. From his prologue we know that he aimed to entertain – and entertain he most certainly does. The prologue in itself, however, poses more questions than it does answers for the reader, and my analysis of the novel has shown that quite often Apuleius misdirects the reader by offering one thing but actually giving something else. It would be rash to say, therefore, that Apuleius offers us amusement and nothing else. In short, what I have attempted to demonstrate is that the *Metamorphoses* is a literary work that (for all its marvel and magic) is set in and is heavily (if not primarily) concerned with contemporary Roman society.

This thesis does not claim to be an exhaustive or definitive work on questions of narrative and religion within the *Metamorphoses*. A deeper analysis and exploration of what a narrative of metamorphosis is – with reference to other works written in Latin and Greek, poetry and prose – would be necessary to give more weight to my hypothesis; and much more could be said about the influence which contemporary Roman society may have had on the novel, and the possible relevance that the novel's themes may have had to contemporary Roman society. Rather, this thesis provides a fresh perspective on some of the perennial questions surrounding the novel, and another means of examining and interpreting the various narratives that make up the novel. Apuleius describes his work in the prologue as a story of men's forms and fortunes transformed and restored by a mutual connection (*mutuo nexu*) (1.1). One cannot help but think of the act of braiding or knotting that the

word *nexus* implies.⁸⁴ In many respects the novel is a *nexus* of various tales, themes, motifs and interpretations. It is inevitable that in examining this work one highlights or unravels certain strands of the novel over others. But no matter how one reads or what one reads into the novel, for the *lector* who pays close attention to this wondrous display one thing is certain: *laetaberis*.

⁸⁴ *OLD*² s.v. *Nexus*³, 1 and 4

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