

Apuleius, Aelius Aristides and Religious Autobiography

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Summary

This paper argues that Lucius' narrative of religious conversion in *Metamorphoses* 11 uses and parodies in its detailed comic presentation of a personal religious testament the similar but seriously presented narrative of Aelius Aristides' *Sacred Tales*. In the familiar tradition of sophistic attacks on rivals, Apuleius is targeting a famous contemporary intellectual and his self-important self-presentation as a specially privileged religious figure. Since the *Sacred Tales* were published at some point between A.D. 171 and A.D. 176, this relationship between the two texts would give a late date for the *Metamorphoses*.

I Apuleius and Aristides – some general connections

In his *Personal Religion Among the Greeks*, André-Jean Festugière famously brought together the eleventh book of Apuleius' *Metamorphoses* and the *Sacred Tales* of Aelius Aristides as joint evidence for the presentation of genuine religious experience and for an increased interest in personal spirituality in the Roman Empire of the second century A.D.¹ However, here as in so many other aspects of the interpretation of the *Metamorphoses*, Winkler's *Actor and Auctor* has given us food for thought; it is difficult after Winkler to take the account of Lucius' religious experiences in the Isis-cult in Book 11 as a genu-

¹ Festugière 1954, 85–104

inely straight and ‘sincere’ presentation of religious experience.² Nancy Shumate has recently attempted to reconcile a reading of Lucius as someone undergoing a genuine set of religious experiences, an existential crisis followed by the security of conversion, with Winkler’s ambiguous interpretation of Book 11;³ but as I have argued in my review of this interesting book⁴ her emphasis on the importance of religious experience is in the end at odds with her commitment to Winkler’s ambiguous interpretation, and does not allow enough to humorous and satirical elements in Book 11. What I aim to do in this paper⁵ is to argue a view of *Metamorphoses* 11 which is fundamentally influenced by Winkler but which is even more sceptical and satirical, and to connect this with a possible relationship between Apuleius’ *Metamorphoses* and Aristides’ *Sacred Tales*; as we will see, such a relationship would have tangible consequences for the notorious problem of the dating of the *Metamorphoses*.

First, some brief background on Aristides and the *Sacred Tales*.⁶ Aristides was born in Mysia in 117. After study in Athens and Rome, he began a career as a rhetorical performer in the Greek East, but in 144 after a visit to Italy was struck down by the first of a series of illnesses that seriously affected his literary career and led to him spending long periods during the rest of his life at the health resort and sanctuary of the Asklepeion at Pergamum. He lived otherwise in Smyrna and managed to continue a copious writing career, together with rhetorical performances at the chief sophistic centres of Asia and occasional visits to Rome, before retiring in the 170’s to his estate at Laneion in Mysia, dying after 180. Perhaps the most interesting of the more than fifty extant works attributed to Aristides are the *Sacred Tales* (*Hieroi Logoi*), *Oration*s 47–52 in the standard numeration of Keil. These six books (in effect five, since only the opening lines of the sixth are preserved), which plainly make up a unitary whole, contain a sort of diary of physical and spiritual health, a detailed catalogue of Aristides’ illnesses and his consequent experiences at the

² Winkler 1985, 204–50. For the ‘sincere’ or ‘straight’ use of *Metamorphoses* 11 as evidence for conversion-experience and the Isis-cult cf. Nock 1933, 138–55 and Turcan 1996, 111–6.

³ Shumate 1996.

⁴ Harrison 1997.

⁵ This view is now outlined in summary form in Harrison 2000, 250–2; the current publication should be taken as replacing the ‘Harrison 2000’ cited there (p.250 n.183), which did not in fact appear in the form given there owing to the cessation of *GCN*.

⁶ My information is here taken from Behr 1968 and 1994.

Asklepeion. It is an extraordinarily self-important and self-absorbed narrative: as we shall soon see, its chief themes are the constant visitations and instructions experienced by Aristides from the god Asclepius and other divinities, and the positive effect of such divine help and support on Aristides' literary career.

The *Sacred Tales* were certainly published after 170 A.D, possibly in 170–1 A.D., the date given by Charles Behr,⁷ though Charles Weiss has recently argued that they are likely to date to 175–6.⁸ The crucial piece of evidence is the identity of the Salvius mentioned at *Or.*48,9 as τοῦ νῦν ὑπάτου, 'the present consul'. Behr has twice emended this passage, most recently by reading εἰς τῶν ὑπάτων, 'one of the consulars', and interprets the reference as being to L.Salvius Julianus, the consul of 148 A.D (*PIR* S 103).⁹ Weiss argues for keeping the transmitted text and identifying Aristides' Salvius with the consul of 175, P. Salvius Julianus (*PIR* S 104), possibly the son of the consul of 148.¹⁰ This would give a firm *terminus post quem* for the *Sacred Tales* of 175, and the mention of a serving consul in a literary work would be a common type of compliment¹¹ as well as an explicit indication of date. Weiss has also argued that the *Sacred Tales* were intended to be presented to Marcus Aurelius and Commodus on their imperial tour of the Greek East in 175–6, during which they met Aristides at Smyrna in spring 176 (cf. Philostratus *VS* 2,10), and that the constant element of self-promotion in the work reflects Aristides' candidacy for the post of rhetorical tutor to the young Commodus.¹² This remains speculative, but a *terminus post quem* of 175 for the *Sacred Tales* seems not unlikely.

⁷ In both Behr 1968 and 1994.

⁸ Weiss 1998, 37–46. In this dissertation Weiss juxtaposes rather than compares the conversion narratives of Lucius and Aristides, and though he floats in his conclusion (163–5) the possibility that Apuleius knew Aristides (citing Harrison 1996), he is equally happy to suggest that conversion is a generic experience of sophists, citing the cases of Isaeus (Philostratus *VS* 2,20) and Dio Chrysostom.

⁹ See the discussion at Behr 1994, 1155–63. His strongest argument is that the crucial reference occurs in a vision dated to 144 A.D. and that the consul of 175 would have been a young boy then, but such a thing would not be impossible, as Weiss 1998, 38 n.55 argues.

¹⁰ Weiss 1998, 38–9; the date is also favoured by Bowersock 1969, 79–80.

¹¹ Cf. Vergil *Ecl.*4.3 *silvae sint consule dignae* (Pollio in 40 B.C.), Horace *Odes* 1.4 (Sestius in 23 B.C. – cf. Nisbet and Hubbard 1970, xxxvi) and the likely dating of the publication of Velleius Paterculus' history to the consular year (A.D. 30) of its dedicatee, M. Vinicius – cf. Woodman 1977, 127.

¹² Weiss 1998, 37–46.

My argument here is that Apuleius knew and used the *Sacred Tales* in his account of Lucius' religious experience in *Metamorphoses* 11. This entails that the *Metamorphoses* was written later than 171 and possibly later than 175 A.D. I am amongst the many modern scholars who would in any case incline towards a late date for the *Metamorphoses*; I hold that the *Metamorphoses* is certainly after the *Apologia* and consciously alludes to its events several times,¹³ and that its general sophistication suggests a late date in Apuleius' career; and though we have no other clear evidence that Apuleius survived into the 170's, he would have only had to have reached the age of fifty to see the publication of the *Sacred Tales* even as late as 175, and might well have lived into (and written the *Metamorphoses* during) the reign of Commodus (180–92).

In order to suggest a relationship between the two texts, a motive must be supplied. Apuleius, I would argue, is parodying Aristides' self-important and bizarre narrative of religious experience. The two are rough contemporaries – Aristides being born in 117, as we have already seen, and Apuleius in the mid-120's.¹⁴ And though they came from very different parts of the Mediterranean world, they are likely to have met in Athens or the sophistic centres of the Greek East; there is no reason why Apuleius should not have visited Pergamum or Smyrna in his extensive travels in the 140's and early 150's, which seem to have included some visits to Asia Minor.¹⁵ Despite his health problems, Philostratus' enthusiastic appreciation of him in his *Lives of the Sophists* (2.9) confirms that there is some truth to Aristides' assertion of his own supreme status as a rhetorical performer, and it is difficult to think that Apuleius had not encountered him at least in reputation. Their circles of acquaintance may have connected at at least one point: as Champlin has ingeniously argued, the Julius Perseus who participates in Apuleius' performance in Carthage at *Florida* 18,39, probably delivered in the late 160's, described as a man who has done some public service, is likely to be identical with the T. Julius Perseus commemorated in an inscription set up by the praetor Sex. Iulius

¹³ Cf. Harrison 2000, 9–10, and e.g. van der Paardt 1971, 89 and 91, Kenney 1990, 203. For a brief summary of some arguments on the dating of the *Metamorphoses* see Walsh 1970, 249–51.

¹⁴ For a summary of the evidence see Sandy 1997, 3 and Harrison 2000, 3.

¹⁵ Cf. *Apologia* 23,1 *longa peregrinatione*; *Florida* 15,4 implies a visit to Samos, *De Mundo* XVII, 327 a visit to Phrygian Hierapolis, assuming that the *De Mundo* is an authentic Apuleian work (for the arguments see Marchetta 1991 and Harrison 2000, 174–80).

Maiores Antoninus Pythodorus in the Asclepeion at Pergamum.¹⁶ The dedicator of this inscription is in turn likely to be identical with the Pythodorus whose son appears in one of Aristides' many visions in the *Sacred Tales* (*Or.*47,35); the father is by implication known to Aristides.

The likelihood that Apuleius knew Aristides at least by reputation, and the possibility that the two were at least indirectly linked by acquaintance, gives us a motive for the satirical allusions to the *Sacred Tales*. In the *Metamorphoses*, a work written for a wide and Rome-centred audience,¹⁷ it does not seem at all unlikely that Apuleius might have given his readership some indirect parody of an extraordinary and famous text recently published by an international sophistic superstar. That the parody is indirect might be attributed again to the readership; a Roman and Western readership might not be particularly interested in Greek sophists and their detailed doings. The strongest general counter-argument which can be made against allusions to the *Sacred Tales* in *Metamorphoses* 11 is that Aristides' obsession with his physical health, which is so fundamental to the whole character of the *Sacred Tales*, is not anywhere picked up in Apuleius' novel; this might seem an obvious target, and an obvious way of drawing attention to the text of Aristides. But perhaps the satire was intended to be oblique, as in the attack on the baker's wife in *Metamorphoses* 9, whose monotheism is so vague that scholars have long disputed whether Judaism or Christianity is alluded to.¹⁸ There is also the problem that Lucius' story is essentially a conversion-narrative, while Aristides presents himself as someone with continuous access to the divine rather than being granted a single life-changing religious experience and its consequences. But the fundamental link between the two, as we shall see, is that Aristides claims that his work is a personal testament of his privileged encounters with the divine, just as the narrator Lucius does in *Metamorphoses* 11.

II Detailed connections between the *Sacred Tales* and *Metamorphoses* 11

Fundamental to any satirical allusion to the *Sacred Tales* in *Met.* 11 is the character of the protagonist and narrator Lucius. My argument requires that the

¹⁶ Cf. Champlin 1980, 155 n.70.

¹⁷ For the Roman colour of the *Met.* and its readership see Dowden 1994 (though I do not agree with his early dating of the work).

¹⁸ *Met.*9, 14: 213.19–23. I am inclined towards Christianity: for a recent advocacy of this view see Schmidt 1997.

general self-characterisation of Lucius should be a plausible version of the self-characterisation of Aristides. Lucius has two basic features which link him with Aristides: he is in some sense an intellectual with a divinely-supported literary career, and he chronicles with detail and naïve enthusiasm his own experience within a religious cult. We shall consider these two aspects separately, though as we shall see they are firmly connected in both narratives. I will conclude by pointing to what I believe is a particularly telling detailed satirical allusion. In general, it is important to see the gullible and naïve narrator Lucius, so easily taken in by apparent religious experience, as a satirical comment on the sweeping and self-confident assertions of Aristides, likewise retelling his religious experiences in considerable detail, but questioning nothing of these bizarre incidents or his reactions to them. The gullible and inexperienced youth is a telling Apuleian comment on the self-important and self-aggrandising narrative of the middle-aged sophistic superstar. Aristides, it is suggested, may have been deluded in precisely the manner of Lucius.

II.1 The sophistic status and careers of Lucius and Aristides

High social status is one of many features Lucius shares with Aristides and indeed with most Greek sophists of the first and second centuries AD; as Ewen Bowie has argued,¹⁹ these men came almost entirely from the prosperous élites of Greek cities in the Roman Empire. Hugh Mason has convincingly shown²⁰ that Lucius is an élite Greek, almost certainly with Roman citizenship (note his *praenomen*, the only name we hear of) and able to speak Latin, from a socially elevated background in the important Greek city of Corinth (upgraded in Roman terms from the less important Patras of the Greek *Metamorphoses*). This background is more or less identical with that of Aristides: a Roman citizen, evidently from an élite background (a highly-educated landowner of considerable wealth), and linked with a famous Greek city (Smyrna).

Lucius also has intellectual status.²¹ Like his Greek original as seen through the *Onos*, he is also often credited in the novel with the literary and oratorical skills typical of sophists. In Book 11 in particular, he is rebuked for not living up to his high learning by the priest Mithras at 11,15,1 (*nec tibi natales ac ne dignitas quidem, vel ipsa, qua flores, usquam doctrina profuit*), and

¹⁹ Bowie 1982.

²⁰ Mason 1983, to which much of the following is indebted.

²¹ See Harrison 2000, 215–20.

comments on his own learning in oratory at 11,30,4 (*studiorum meorum laboriosa doctrina*). There are also two well-known passages where future literary glory of some kind is apparently foretold for Lucius: at 2,12,5 he himself reports a Chaldaean prophet at Corinth as predicting that *nunc enim gloriam satis floridam, nunc historiam magnam et incredundam fabulam et libros me futurum*, a passage to which we shall return, while at 11,27,9 the priest Asinius Marcellus reports to Lucius a vision he experienced of the god Osiris concerning the future intellectual glory of the ‘man from Madauros’ (*Madaurenses*), apparently taken by Lucius to refer to Lucius himself: *nam et illi (Lucius?) studiorum gloriam et ipsi (Asinius) grande compendium sua (Osiris’) comparari providentia*.²² There is no doubt, indeed, that Lucius has a high level of rhetorical skill. He can produce a persuasive and brilliantly inventive forensic oration of Ciceronian character²³ when required to at the mock trial in Book 3 (3,4–3,7), showing a level of improvisation which Aristides himself would have envied (Philostratus tells us specifically (*VS* 2,9) that Aristides was no good at improvisation), and can turn easily to earning money in the Roman law-courts (11,28.6).

Though Aristides rejected the title ‘sophist’ himself and expressed some contempt of the class (cf. e.g. *Or.* 34, *Or.* 51,39),²⁴ there seems little doubt that he is to be classified as a sophist in the sense of ‘professional rhetorical performer’.²⁵ The *Sacred Tales*, especially the fourth and fifth (*Or.* 50 and 51), make constant allusions to what is evidently a sophistic career – for example 50,8, where Aristides makes a comeback tour of declamatory performances in the Greek cities of Asia. Stress is naturally laid on the success of his oratorical career through the help of Asclepius and other gods; in particular, *Or.* 50,14–70 contains a retrospective account of divine help in rhetoric and poetry over a ten-year period, including personal visions of literary greats such as Plato, Lysias and Sophocles. Even the tactics used to defeat sophistic rivals, the normal business of competitive professional life in such circles,²⁶ are ascribed to divine help: at *Or.* 51,30–34 Aristides recounts with barely concealed glee the success of his tactic in holding a performance in the Council Chamber in

²² For a fuller discussion of the referential complexities here cf. Harrison 2000, 228–31.

²³ See the evidence gathered in Harrison 2000, 224 n.77.

²⁴ For a full discussion of Aristides’ attitude to the term ‘sophist’ cf. Behr 1994, 1163–77.

²⁵ On the problems of defining the term ‘sophist’ in this era see the helpful article of Stanton (1973).

²⁶ For professional rivalries and quarrels in the Second Sophistic see Bowersock 1969, 89–100, Anderson 1986, 43–50, 64–6, Anderson 1993, 35–9, Schmitz 1997, 110–33.

Smyrna, packed with auditors, scheduled simultaneously with a performance by his unnamed rival, held in the larger Odeion but attended by only seventeen individuals. In general, there are multiple incidents of divine career support which are conveniently summed up by Aristides himself at *Or.* 51,36:²⁷: ‘But it is necessary to try to make clear all of my oratorical career that pertains to the god and, as far as I can, to omit nothing of it. For it would be strange if both I and others would recount whatever cure he gave to my body even at home, but would pass by in silence those things which at the same time raised up my body, strengthened my soul and increased the glory of my oratory’.

Lucius’ oratorical career in *Metamorphoses* 11 is rather more prosaic, being a career of forensic advocacy forced upon him by the undignified need to earn money. Nevertheless, it, like that of Aristides, is supported by divine power. At *Met.* 11,30,2 the naïve Lucius reflects to himself that his devotion to the god Osiris was well worth its considerable financial cost, since he was able through the god’s help to earn the necessary funds through advocacy: *nec hercules laborum me sumptuumque quidquam tamen paenituit, quid ni? liberali deum providentia iam stipendiis forensibus bellule fotum*, ‘nor, by Hercules, did I feel any regret for my efforts and expenses. Why should I, nicely cherished as I was by by earnings in the courts, through the foresight of the gods?’ Here, I would argue, we can see a low-life version of Aristides’ glittering rhetorical career – everyday speaking in the law-courts instead of glamorous public declamation, motivated by the need to eat and pay for religious initiation rather than the spur of fame and reputation. The lowering of tone is thoroughly appropriate to the novelistic genre, but also makes fun of Aristides’ sweeping claims of divine support.

II.2 Two varieties of religious experience.

As I noted at the beginning of this paper, critics have long seen a resemblance between the religious experience of Aristides in the *Sacred Tales* and that of Lucius in *Metamorphoses* 11, and this resemblance has been taken as arguing for a common real interest in personal spirituality in both authors. I have already argued that such a ‘sincere’ reading is not appropriate for Lucius, and inferred that part of the function of Lucius’ cult-experience as narrated in the novel is to allude to and poke fun at the cult-experience of Aristides. For both characters, their religious experience is centered on a single cult and an intense

²⁷ Translation by Behr 1986.

loyalty to it as thanks for personal salvation – Lucius and the cult of Isis/Osiris, Aristides and the cult of Asclepius. The two cults were actually related in practice, with Hygieia, ‘Health’, being one of Isis’s divine forms (though not in fact mentioned as such in Apuleius’ list at *Met.* 11,5,2-3.²⁸

For both Aristides and Lucius, this profession of devoted service partly takes the form of loyalty to a particular religious locale: as Aristides himself says (*Or.* 50,104), ‘I have never stopped being a worshipper in the precinct of the temples in the shrine of Asclepius’,²⁹ referring to the Asclepeion of Pergamum. For Apuleian readers this inevitably recalls the false ending of Book 11 at *Met.* 11,26,3, where Lucius devotes himself to the shrine of Isis on the Campus Martius.³⁰

nec ullum tam praecipuum mihi exinde studium fuit quam cotidie supplicare summo numini reginae Isidis, quae de templi situ sumpto nomine Campensis summa cum veneratione propitiatur. eram cultor denique assiduus, fani quidem advena, religionis autem indigena.

‘nor did I have any especial desire from then on except to pray every day to the supreme divine power of Queen Isis, who is propitiated with the greatest reverence under the title of ‘Campensis’, taken from the location of her temple. In short I was an ever-present worshipper, a stranger to the shrine, but a native to the cult’.

Just as we expect this to be the end of the novel, so we expect this devotion to be a lifelong loyalty, as suggested earlier in the book; but in fact it is another god, if a related one, Osiris, whom Lucius ends up serving for life only a few pages later. Again, we may have a deliberate undermining of the grand and portentous claims of Aristides.

Another interesting parallel between the two texts is the matter of initiation. The cult of Asclepius at the Pergamene Asclepeion was not a mystery-cult with formal initiation, though it shared the element of incubation with the Isis-cult and had some esoteric features, and Aristides can compare an experience at another shrine of Asclepius in Mysia to an initiation-ritual (*Or.* 50,7): ‘it was all not only like an initiation into a mystery, since the rituals were so

²⁸ Burkert 1987, 15.

²⁹ Translation of Behr 1986.

³⁰ On false endings in *Met.* 11 see Winkler 1985, 215–223.

divine and strange, but there was also coincidentally something marvellous and unaccustomed. For at the same time there was gladness, and joy, and a contentment of spirit and body'.³¹ This mysterious joy is picked up in Lucius' account of the aftermath of his first mystery-initiation at 11,24,5 (*paucis dehinc ibidem commoratus diebus inexplicabili voluptate simulacri divini perfruebar*, 'then, staying a few days in that same place, I continually enjoyed the *inexplicable pleasure* of [gazing at] the divine image'), and in the joy of his service to Osiris in the closing words of the novel (11,30,5 *munia ... gaudens obibam*, 'I went about my duties *with rejoicing*'), but these joys are of course tempered for the reader by thoughts of Lucius' gullibility: the ecstatic devotee may be the victim of manipulation by the cult. Again we find a potential undermining of the serious religious experience of Aristides.

Aristides does in fact describe an initiation-experience in the *Sacred Tales*, though it is not connected with Asclepius. At *Or.* 49,48 he appears to undergo an initiation into the cult of Sarapis, often viewed as the Hellenised form of Osiris:³² 'But that which appeared later contained something much more frightening than these things, in which there were ladders, which delimited the region above and below the earth, and the power of the gods on each side, and there were other things, which caused a wonderful feeling of terror, and cannot perhaps be told to all, with the result that I gladly beheld the tokens. The summary point was about the power of the god, that both without conveyance and without bodies Sarapis is able to carry men wherever he wishes. Such was the initiation, and not easily recognised, I rose'.³³ This description shares a number of key features with Lucius' description of his first Isis-initiation (*Met.* 11,23,7):

accessi confinium mortis et calcato Proserpinae limine...vidi solem candido coruscantem lumine, deos inferos et deos superos accessi coram et adoravi de proximo. Ecce tibi rettuli, quae, quamvis audita, ignores tamen necesse est.

³¹ Translation by Behr 1986.

³² Though Sarapis/Serapis is strictly a combination of Osiris and the bull-god Apis (Plutarch *De Os.et Is.* 29, 362c); this Apuleian 'correction' may (characteristically) be a piece of rhetorical one-upmanship rather than based on meticulous antiquarian scholarship.

³³ Translation by Behr 1986.

'I reached the boundary of death and trod on the threshold of Proserpina ... I saw the sun which flashes with bright light, and reached the gods above and the gods below, worshipping them from close proximity. Look, I have told you things which, though you have heard them, you must nevertheless know nothing of'

Both narrators describe an out-of-body experience, involving intense contact with the gods below and above the earth and esoteric elements not to be communicated to the profane. Aristides states explicitly that his is an intense, life-changing experience; though the same is not openly claimed by Lucius in his retelling of the initiation, it is clear that this is the case from his later speech of thanks to the goddess (11,25,1-6) and his subsequent career as a devotee.

Aristides' experience is also linked with Sarapis, the popular Hellenised 'equivalent' of Osiris.³⁴ If there is an echo here, Apuleius in Lucius' initiation-experience with Isis then recalls the initiation-experience of Aristides with Osiris/Sarapis, the god into whose cult Lucius is eventually going to be initiated. This would be a clever allusion. There may also be an element of learned one-upmanship here. Apuleius in *Met.*11 chooses consistently to present the truly Egyptian Osiris rather than the 'bastardised' Hellenic Sarapis, perhaps 'correcting' Aristides;³⁵ this mild piece of learning is consistent with other elements in Book 11 which show detailed knowledge of Egyptian cult, whether or not Apuleius himself was in fact a initiate of Isiac religion.³⁶ The crucial point is a self-promoting display of esoteric knowledge on the author's part, allied perhaps with a mild rebuke of Aristides: the true connoisseur of Egyptian religion will of course use the Egyptian names for its gods.

There are also many minor parallels between the two narratives of religious devotion to a single deity. Both narrators tell of their constant obedience to instructions given by gods and their representatives in predictive dreams and visions, which are very frequent occurrences in both texts (there are several dozen of these experienced by Aristides in the *Sacred Tales*, and some nine experienced by Lucius in *Metamorphoses* 11); the types and details of

³⁴ With the *caveat* of n.32 above.

³⁵ And perhaps also Plutarch's *De Osiride et Iside* ?

³⁶ The commentary of Griffiths 1975 makes it clear that *Met.*11 shows considerable learning in Isiac religion. Apuleius was certainly initiated into some Greek cults (*Apol.*55,8); whether he was also an Isiac initiate is unclear, though the knowledge shown in *Met.*11 might suggest that he was. This, of course, need in no way entail that *Met.*11 is 'sincere' or 'autobiographical'.

these visions are often similar, though this is perhaps only natural in two cults where divine commands derived from incubation were a common feature.³⁷ At *Or.* 49,21–2 a predictive dream of Aristides is confirmed by an official of the cult when encountered in the temple: this is clearly parallel to *Met.*11.27, where Lucius' predictive dream is confirmed by his meeting with the priest Asinius Marcellus in the temple. Likewise, the sudden command of Isis to Lucius to travel to Rome (*Met.*11,26,1) is matched by several occasions when Aristides receives equally abrupt divine instructions to make a journey (*Or.* 51,1, 51,17).³⁸ More generally, both narrators comment explicitly on the frequency of their divine dream-visions. In the programmatic opening of the first of the *Sacred Tales*, Aristides points to his nightly visions from Asclepius (*Or.* 47,3): 'For each of our days, as well as our nights, has a story, if someone who was present at them wished either to record the events or to narrate the providence of the god, wherein he revealed some things openly in his own presence and others by the sending of dreams'.³⁹ Likewise, as he waits for his first initiation, Lucius too is constantly in receipt of dreams from Isis (*Met.*11,19,2 *nec fuit nox una vel quies aliqua visu deae monituque ieiuna*). Lucius' frequent visions, and his slavish obedience to them, even when such obedience looks utterly naïve and gullible and leads to financial exploitation and poverty, can be plausibly read as a satirical comment on the self-important religious experience of Aristides; the Apuleian text suggests that the life of a divine devotee may be less impressive and less genuinely religious than in the grand and self-promoting presentation of Aristides.

II.3 The case of Diophanes: a specific allusion?

I conclude with perhaps the most specific example of Apuleian allusion to the *Sacred Tales*. In the first of the *Sacred Tales* (*Or.* 47,46–9) Aristides recounts one of his many self-congratulatory visions; he dreams that he is staying in the Imperial palace in Rome, and that the two emperors Marcus and Verus helped him with his career and complimented him on his rhetorical achievements. He then has another dream which reinforces these imperial honours (47,49): 'I dreamed that an acquaintance, named Diophanes, spoke to me of these ex-

³⁷ Cf. Cox Miller 1994, 110–11.

³⁸ Both narrators also claim that they are unable to express the majesty of the god with whom they are connected – cf. *Met.*11,3,3 and *Or.* 48,8, 48.49.

³⁹ Translation by Behr 1986.

ceedingly great honours, as if he were present and witnessed them'.⁴⁰ Here, then, we have a character named Diophanes confirming the literary distinction of Aristides and his consequent fame. I would argue that the *Metamorphoses* contains a satirical imitation of this incident. At *Met.*2,12,5 Lucius, in conversation with his host Milo in Hypata, tells of the prophet Diophanes, who predicted that Lucius' journey to Thessaly would lead to his future fame as the subject of an extraordinary literary narrative in several books:

Mihi denique proventum huius peregrinationis inquirenti multa respondit et oppido mira et satis varia; nunc enim gloriam satis floridam, nunc historiam magnam et incredulam fabulam et libros me futurum.

'When I enquired about the outcome of these travels he gave me a long answer, which was both quite extraordinary and somewhat diverse: for now my glory would fairly flourish, now I would become a great story, an incredible tale, the subject of books'.

As Warren Smith has noted, this is clearly a metaliterary reference to Lucius' appearance as the protagonist of the work the reader is currently engaged in, the *Metamorphoses* itself.⁴¹

These two passages evidently have in common the theme of a character named Diophanes who confirms the narrator's literary distinction, though in the case of the Apuleian passage the distinction belongs to the future and not the present. This is enough to suggest an allusion. The differences between the two passages are also instructive. In Aristides the words of Diophanes are to be taken as confirmation of Aristides' own vision, as a ratifying element immediately supporting his self-important dream. In Apuleius, on the other hand, Diophanes' apparent prophetic authority, confirming Lucius' literary importance, is immediately thrown into question by a comic narrative twist. Lucius' host, Milo, at once claims that he too has encountered Diophanes, and that the latter was so poor a prophet that he was unable to predict his own misfortunes, though he claimed to be able to predict the misfortunes of others (2,13–14). Though Diophanes' prediction about Lucius is in some sense fulfilled by the act of the reader in reading this passage, we can see that Diophanes' function of confirming the narrator's literary status is amusingly complicated by Apu-

⁴⁰ Translation by Behr 1986.

⁴¹ See especially Smith 1972, 532–3, Penwill 1990, 216–7, Harrison 2000, 231–2.

leius; this is not merely a simple confirmation of the narrator's literary glory. More significantly, we may indeed wonder how much glory is reflected on Lucius, rather than Apuleius, by the text of the *Metamorphoses*: is Lucius really glorified by a narrative which relates his youthful foolishness and religious gullibility? The suggestion may be that Aristides, like Lucius, though he aims to bring glory on himself through his literary narrative, in fact only exposes his own foolishness and self-importance, a natural reaction to reading the *Sacred Tales*. In this specific example, as in the whole interface between the *Metamorphoses* and the *Sacred Tales*, we see two interlinked aspects of this intertextual relationship: Apuleius pokes satirical fun at the grandiose personal and religious claims of Aristides, and does so in an entertaining and debunking manner which thoroughly suits his different literary genre.⁴²

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⁴² An earlier version of this paper was given at a symposium at Groningen in June 1998 and at Royal Holloway, London in May 1998. I am grateful to Maaïke Zimmerman and Susanna Morton Braund for their kind invitations to speak, to Charles Weiss for helpful discussion and for kindly supplying me with a copy of his doctoral dissertation, and to the referees for *GCN* for their useful comments.

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