

Werner Riess: *Apuleius und die Räuber: ein Beitrag zur historischen Kriminalitätsforschung*.

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Originally a Heidelberg dissertation, completed in 1999 under the aegis of Géza Alföldy, this imposing work represents one of the most concerted and extensive attacks yet on the problem of the representation of banditry in the prose literature of the high empire, most specifically in the *Metamorphoses* of Apuleius. Following hard on Thomas Grünewald's recent analysis of Roman robbers, *Räuber, Rebellen, Rivalen, Rächer: Studien zu Latrones im römischen Reich*, Riess's monograph both extends the conclusions of that work and develops his own specific theses on the relationship between history and fiction.¹ In several respects, the two books overlap, a 'double coverage' that is especially true of the first half of Riess's book which, like Grünewald's, is devoted to the realia of banditry in the empire.² For the historian, although less so for the scholar of Apuleian studies, the title is pleasantly misleading, since the manner in which Riess elaborates his thesis takes him over a far wider range of evidence than a specific concern with the portrayal of robbers in Apuleius' novel. In some ways, the book might usefully be conceived as two separate works bound into one: the first a detailed study of what is known about 'actual' robbers and brigandage in the Roman empire and the second an exploration of how Apuleius' portrayal of robbers and banditry relates to this reality.

¹ It should be noted that Riess was permitted to see Grünewald's work in advance of publication; the reviewer should also note his views on this earlier work: Thomas Grünewald, *Räuber, Rebellen, Rivalen, Rächer: Studien zu Latrones im römischen Reich*, Stuttgart, Franz Steiner Verlag, 1999 [Heinz Bellen ed., *Forschungen zur Antiken Sklaverei*, Bd. 31] [in] *The Bryn Mawr Classical Review*, vol. 11 (2000.02.12), electronic text at: <http://ccat.sas.upenn.edu/bmcr/2000/2000-02-12.html>

² In other important respects, however, they differ substantially. Grünewald is devoted to the development of a complex typology of bandits and robbers, whereas Riess is satisfied with a very general twofold division into 'inside' and 'outside' robbers (pp. 89–90), a division which does not much affect what he subsequently has to say in any event.

The section of the book that is specifically devoted to Apuleius' novel, entitled 'Apuleius und die Räuber,' comes near the book's end. Given the title of the work, its comparative brevity is perhaps surprising. The rest of the volume, the first two thirds and more, is devoted to providing the context for understanding Apuleius' fictional representation of bandits: it is the foundation on which the specific study of the novel is constructed. The first section of the book is introduced with a 'Methodische Hinführung' (pp. 7–44) that outlines the existing work on banditry in the Roman empire, as well as some of the author's working premises. This introduction is followed by the longest part of the whole book, entitled 'Die römische Gesellschaft und die Räuber' (pp. 45–236), a finely detailed analysis of the place of bandits in the Roman social order based on various kinds of empirical data. This bulky core of the book is divided into five subsections that deal sequentially with the social background of brigandage, the activities of bandits, the values and ideals that such men espoused, the structure of the brigand gangs and, finally, the nature of their marginalization in the mainstream social, legal, and political order.

Only following this expansive undergirding of positive facts about robbers does Riess finally approach the ostensible subject of his research: a specific consideration of the picture offered by Apuleius of the organization and behavior of bandit gangs. This analysis is followed immediately by a broad overview that attempts to treat the general problem of the relationship between fiction and history by inverting both possible approaches: the nature of fictive elements in historical narratives and the use of historical reality in fictional tales. The bibliography is wide-ranging, and the indexes are sufficiently detailed to be useful. The whole is supplemented by a valuable *Anhang*: a collection of records on the actions of robbers attested in papyri from Roman Egypt. In his judgments on what constituted the 'objective conditions' of bandits and brigandage in the empire, the papyrological evidence is particularly significant for Riess, since it offers some hope of a reportorial benchmark against which the fictive assertions of Apuleius' picture of brigandage can be assessed.

Beyond its technical competence, methodological clarity, and extensive coverage of the data, the book has several other unusual strengths. For a work in ancient history, the consistent use of a range of materials on brigandage in early modern Europe, especially a range of works on banditry in German-speaking lands in the period that are not likely to be common

knowledge even to many modern historians, is a real boon.³ What is more, the comparative material is used carefully and judiciously. Riess does recognize that in some very important respects — for example, the efficiency and predictability of land communications along roads — conditions in the Roman empire in the most complex phases of its development were closer to those that prevailed in early nineteenth-century western Europe rather than they were to those of earlier periods of European history (pp. 244–45).

The different research styles of history and literary studies are reflected in the prose and composition of the two parts of the book. The first part is a careful and near-exhaustive record and delineation of evidence and fact, a careful arraignment of data and deduction to construct a plausible empirical picture of bandits, gang formation, brigand operations, and their repression and punishment. The second part of the book, on the other hand, begins with the portentous announcement that we live in ‘the Post-Winklerian Era’ of literary aesthetics (p. 247). This latter part of the volume, devoted specifically to Apuleius’ text, consists of a commentary-like exegesis of the bandit narratives in the *Metamorphoses* read against the reality of brigandage outlined in the first two-thirds of the work.⁴ Riess begins by pointing out the importance of this singular source to the subject: ‘Der Goldene Esel enthält die ausführlichsten Räuberdarstellungen der lateinischen Literatur. Mehr als ein Drittel des Textes handelt von ihnen.’ And he recognizes the place of the ‘bahnbrechenden Studie von Winkler,’ a new approach to Apuleius that forefronted our recognition of the author’s constant subversion of the reader’s assumptions, his penchant for playing with expectations, hiding knowledge, and delaying conclusions that might be held by the reader. Riess also notes, albeit in a cautious footnote (p. 247n4), some of the negative reactions to this narratological project, of which Winkler was, at that time, in the vanguard. He clearly wishes to eschew some of the more radical claims

³ I noted about two dozen of these modern studies of banditry in late mediaeval and early modern German lands. I was previously acquainted with only three or four of them.

⁴ Although Riess offers a modest explanation (p. 249), it is still difficult for the reviewer to accept that the extended parts of Apuleius’ text that are quoted for analysis are presented in a standard German translation rather than in the original Latin. Although the reviewer is not opposed in any way to the wider dissemination of ideas, especially to those in related fields of historical and literary inquiry, I think that it would have been better to furnish the Latin text in addition to the German translation. At many points, readers will surely wonder what Apuleius’ actual words were, and they will therefore have to keep the Latin text to hand alongside the book.

sometimes associated with the post-structuralist ideas of text and prefers instead to locate the author and text in a 'real world' context.

Riess states the aims of his query with laudable clarity, and more than once: to what extent is the content of Apuleius' bandit narratives representative of his social class, in what sort of total social discourse is the author located, and what elements in the mass of data that fill the novel are relevant to the history of criminality in the Roman empire (p. 24 f, 248)? Laudably, Riess is not willing to dispense with a whole range of items in the last category simply because they are labeled 'literary commonplaces' by scholars, with the sensible warning that 'auch Topoi stellen zumindest einen Weg dar, Realität zu erfassen.' But in many cases, he is reduced, as historians often are, to saying that this or that event or practice is 'plausible,' that a given text contains 'einen kleinen Kern an Plausibilität' (p. 281). Or that a statement in Apuleius is 'confirmed by other data.' In one case, that 'diese Überlegung nicht aus der Luft gegriffen ist' (of *Met.* 7.9.4–6) 'zeigen die vielen antiken Nachrichten über den Frauenraub' (p. 284). Although certainly not 'aus der Luft,' the incident could just as easily be prompted by Apuleius' reading of those same other ancient literary sources on *Frauenraub* (i.e., that such kidnapped women not infrequently ended up in brothels or other kinds of servitude) to which we have access and which we, like Riess, are using to check Apuleian authenticity. Another test is logical consistency. While I would often agree with Riess, some of the cases, again, seem open to question, such as 'die logischen Brüche' in the famous scene where the gardener's ass is seized by a soldier (*Met.* 9.39). On closer inspection the 'logical inconsistencies' seem, to my eyes, less 'inconsistent' than Riess asserts.

As for the objective tests against which Riess tests the authenticity of the Apuleian account, the faith that he places in the documents from Roman Egypt, for example — papyrus records of appeals, judicial responses, court judgments, and other orders issued by authorities — sometimes seems open to question. Historians have long been aware of the significant fictive elements that are also embedded in the narratives that appellants and defendants tell to courts. In fact, it is a typical social area of 'story telling' and in more than one sense.⁵ What did and did not get before the Roman

⁵ Natalie Zemon Davis, *Fiction in the Archives: Pardon Tales and their Tellers in Sixteenth-Century France*, Stanford, Stanford University Press, 1987, provides an extreme example of the sort of 'fictionalizing' tendencies that lie behind simple claims placed before a court in

authorities and in what form is not something that can be read in a straightforward way, even from these brief and apparently objective administrative documents. For example, there is the problem of violence conducted in the context of robberies in which Riess quite correctly argues that the surviving records indicate the ‘Seltenheit des Mordes’ (p. 118 f). The problem with this is that the records that have survived are those kept by private persons who survived in order to lodge complaints and to lay charges with Roman courts. Naturally, such records do not tend to contain references to homicides that were committed in the context of violent robberies and assaults where no-one survived to tell the tale. On the other hand, his comparative crosschecks with criminality do yield interesting observations. In the case of the highwayman and highway robbery (*Straßenräub*) as the standard image of the typical act of brigandage, Riess notes that only six of his 138 cases from Egypt, or about 4–5%, fall into this category and that this matches the incidence found in certain counties of sixteenth and seventeenth-century England (p. 109, 111n123, based on Cockburn’s work). The observation is well taken, but it should perhaps lead one to query the categorization of *Straßenräub* as a genuine form of banditry, whereas misdeeds like breaking and entering that dominated both civil societies were probably thought of as the acts of common criminals.⁶

Another problem with reading the papyrological evidence as a straightforward guide to other societies in the Roman empire is the standard and vexatious problem of the typicality of Egypt. The concern is not a trivial one since, as Riess himself notes (p. 119n7), even regions within a nation state as small as pre-modern England reveal substantial differences in the incidence of homicides committed in the course of violent robberies. The fact that only two or three of his 138 cases of violent robbery reveal a death committed in the course of the assault can be accepted only with some caution. Although he rightly questions the statistical significance of some of the epigraphical texts that are frequently arraigned in studies of Roman bandits (typical ones, for example, that attest to a victim ‘interfectus a latronibus,’ *vel sim.*), it is not clear that the records of the papyri on ‘policing conditions’ in Egyptian towns and villages necessarily provide a good guide

the more fully elaborated ‘pardon tales’ forged by petitioners to the French crown.

⁶ One wonders if some of the problem in seeing the distinction lies in the fact that the German *Räuber* does not mark this difference as clearly as does the English distinction between ‘robber’ (almost always used of the common criminal) and ‘bandit’?

to conditions of violence that was typical of the more remote rural regions of the western and northern empire where most of these inscriptions are found. As he himself shows by a collation of the available evidence, these inscriptions are concentrated in the very same regions where the imperial forces of the state were used in much larger anti-bandit repression operations than the low-level policing normally found in Egypt (p. 17, nn55–56). The large-scale repressive actions involving units of the army surely demonstrates that in some parts of the empire there were gangs of the type envisaged by Apuleius and that their operations were unlike the housebreakings committed by a few individuals in Egyptian villages.

Similarly, in his discussion of the structure of bandit gangs, Riess leans on the fact that the papyrological data show that attacks by large gangs were rare to argue that Apuleius' portrait of large gang operations is exaggerated and aberrant (p. 301 f). The context of armed robbery in Egypt, however, where, apart from the special case of the border peripheries and the delta, one is dealing with small and strongly interdependent village milieux, would seem to suggest that robbery similarly would have been a small-scale, internal affair. A further problem with the Egyptian data is that the society of the villages of upper Egypt (the source of all of Riess's papyri) was a civilly ordered society in which it is possible to speak of 'ordinary criminals' and crime rather than bandits and brigandage. The distinction is critical, and Hobsbawm (whatever misgivings one might have about his 'social bandit' thesis) was surely right to make it.⁷ It is interesting to see that many of the complainants configure the wrongdoers as brigands rather than mere thieves, surely knowing that this was, rhetorically, a far more powerful castigation in the eyes of the authorities.

In making these objections, I must make clear that I do not reject all implications drawn from the papyrological data, but simply that the normal procedural processes of the Roman judicial system on the one hand, and the peculiar ecological conditions of village life along the Nile on the other, should be taken fully into consideration. Given these caveats, it is not clear that the levels of violence in the empire were necessarily as low as Riess seems to think, or that the putative lower level is to be explained by the

⁷ Hobsbawm, *Bandits*, rev. ed., London, Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2000 (New York, New Press, 2000), p. 17 f., with detailed bibliographical updates and commentary (original edition: London, Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1969); it is a distinction accepted by most subsequent students of the phenomenon.

impact of the norms of upper class culture and behavior filtering down through the social ranks to civilize the behavior of ordinary people in the empire, in a manner analogous to the ‘civilizing process’ that, as Norbert Elias argues, domesticated early modern Europeans. Otherwise, Riess is surely right strongly to contextualize brigand violence as one segment of the much larger history of the *Randgruppen* of the empire. He is also right to attempt some sort of comparative history of bandits and their actions. Just how violent were the societies of the Roman empire by comparison with other pre-modern societies close to them in type and structure? What is to be our standard of judgment? Several long-term studies have shown just how much more violent social orders of only a few centuries ago were than our own in terms of interpersonal civil violence.⁸ Such facts affect not only our judgment of what is violent in a given text, but also what the writers of the time would have considered particularly violent by their own standards.

Establishing that picture is important. In Riess’s somewhat more pacific view of the empire and brigand violence, Apuleius’ picture seems exaggerated if not comically overdrawn — and therefore his conclusion about the novel follows: where the most blood flows, the novel is at its most fictional (‘wo am meisten Blut fließt, die Literarizität des Textes am größten ist’: p. 293). But when he appeals to the descriptions of robbers in the papyri to dispute that most armed attempts were not as ‘spectacular’ as some of those depicted by Apuleius (267), he is probably on much stronger ground. The literary depictions, he argues, I think convincingly, are not drawn from any actual quotidian incidents of which Apuleius himself had experience, but are drawn mostly from literary prototypes. So, for example, the details of the bandits’ attack on the house of Chryseros (*Met.* 4.9–12) is modeled on accounts of the sieges of cities in epic, with conscious textual recollections of literary prototypes, like those found in *Seven Against Thebes* (pp. 268–71). The referentiality, however, is easily spotted since Apuleius himself ostentatiously indicates as much (see *Met.* 4.9 and 4.13, gross hints unlikely to be missed by an ancient reader). Given Apuleius’ rhetorical training, it is also difficult to avoid seeing stories and narrative materials as arranged purposefully in artificial triads, again dependent on the mode of the literary pastiche (p. 275n56). Riess thus makes his case for this dominant intertextual mode as characterizing Apuleius’ portrait of the bandits. In

⁸ L. Stone, “Interpersonal Violence in English Society, 1300–1980,” *Past & Present* 101 (1983), 22–33.

several of the examples that Reiss examines, however, he could have made it even better by exploiting the obvious parallels and patterns available to the author from his own works, especially in the *Apologia*, written and experienced some time, perhaps a decade or more, before his writing of the novel. In Apuleius' portrait of the structure and operations of bandit gangs, Reiss accepts the consensus of some recent Apuleian scholarship in seeing the heavy hand of parody everywhere in the mannered fashion so typical of the baroque prose of the period: the egalitarian spirit of the gang is a play on the norms of radical democracy, the organization of the band is a humorous play on that of an urban *collegium*, the brigand sacrifices are parodies of the proper religious ceremonials of any good civic community, and so on. Another palpable creation of the novelist is the speech used by the bandits, a mode too literary and improbably correct for the real criminal (p. 310 f.).

In an echo of the dyadic structure of the book — the deliberate contrast between an empirically established picture of 'real bandits' and the imaginative representations of writers of fiction — the question that Reiss has of the novel is less its relationship to reality (in terms of representation) than it is an attempt to gauge or to measure the distance between fictive and real-life bandits. His principal methods are to contrast the conditions in the novel with the world reflected in literary sources (legal texts, historian's accounts) and more objective records (legal papyri from Egypt, inscriptions, the norms of the law codes), and then to apply normative standards of 'probability' and 'likelihood.' Of course, canons of 'plausibility' and 'likelihood' are themselves open to constant query. For example, in judging it unlikely that robbers would have left one of their own behind in a town as a spy after a raid (p. 302), Reiss appeals to the probability that such a plant would be immediately unmasked because of his status as an outsider or stranger. In the small and comparatively stable villages of Upper Egypt that would perhaps have been true. But if other Mediterranean towns were as mobile and shifting as Horden and Purcell argue, then the presence of drifters, wanderers, shepherds, itinerant traders, migrant laborers, soldiers in transit, and other such mobile persons would have formed a normal floating world in the population in which it would have been difficult so easily to identify the appearance of a given outsider as unusual. Reiss's preference is that the incident of 'the plant' is actually present because of the narrative demands of the story. This is persuasive, but the point seems to be made better by the literary analysis of the bandits in the text rather than by any

comparison with reality. He also judges the author of the *Onos* as having a much better grasp of the *demimonde* of friends, supporters, suppliers, receivers, and informants that populated the underworld of the robbers (p. 303). But the problem with this is Riess's good observation, made much earlier, that all of these literary forms are deliberately engaging the reader with an erethetic experience, that they were purposefully selecting 'an extreme form' of reality to emphasize (p. 44).⁹ But the quality of any novelist's constructed relationship to reality is therefore bound to be a species of exaggeration. It is inherently part of the rhetoric of the genre.

Using a combination of both methods (and with a detail that can only be hinted at in a brief review), Riess presents a credible case for a very strong kind of skepticism of those who would hold the Apuleian portrait of bandits as having much to do with the real-life conditions of robbers and bandits in imperial society. At best, he argues, Apuleius deploys general background structures that might pertain to real-life brigandage, but he had little connection, if any at all, with the actual day-to-day life of bandits. He was therefore dependent on a pastiche of literary prototypes, technical themes, rhetorical types, and his own imagination to create his fiction. On the other hand, the way in which Apuleius assembles and orchestrates these elements is a good guide to the *mentalité* (Mentalitätstand) of the elites of the empire (p. 312). Riess's bedrock skepticism about Apuleius' portrait of robbers as being one that is empirically true is surely well founded. But as Iger and Assman argue (p. 356–59), this empirical shortfall is surely located less in the 'testable' individual details in his account (as those in a Dickensian novel) that are part of the 'general background' furnishing the novel with its credibility, as it is in the 'forefront' of assemblage and interpretation. The whole aura of Apuleius' narration, while referring to an understood reality 'out there,' is embedded within the ideological structure of his class and its interpretation of that reality in his own age, and so highlights elements of parody, irony, and satire in his narration.

Such distortions were necessary parts of the artistic canon of representation in his age. Riess does make judicious use of Auerbach's

⁹ A tactic also used by later Christian writers, for example, in connection with their portraits of the poor; P. Brown, *Poverty and Leadership in the Later Roman Empire* (Hanover-London, University Press of New England, 2000), 45 f., draws attention to the same process of selection amongst Christian writers in their descriptions of the poor – for what seem to me analogous structural reasons.

Mimesis on the general inability of fictional representation in the literature of the age to present the reality of living conditions of persons outside the upper classes ‘as is,’ but rather the constant need to distort, to misrepresent, and to degrade them as humorous or farcical in kind. But this use seems tentative and not as daring as Auerbach’s thesis would suggest. It only hints at a deeper division between reality and its representation that somehow makes the very canons of that world different from ours. This takes us back to a possible problem of a conception of the problem itself. Riess lays heavy emphasis on the sociological insights of criminology (p. 7 f), a specific study of a general type of misbehavior that emerged in Europe and America over the course of the late eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries. The genre of modern prose fiction that most corresponds to this development, indeed emerges in tandem with it is the modern murder mystery, the detective novel, from Holmes to Hammett. The genre simply does not exist in the Roman world (but it did, significantly, in pre-modern China). However good they might be in their own way, Steven Saylor’s literary efforts rightly strike a quite discordant note in any modern Roman historian. It is rather the pirate and the bandit that are at the heart of ancient prose fiction – and so, again, it is critically important to make the distinction between the common criminal and the bandit.

The final, specifically Apuleian section of the book is developed like a running commentary: a selection of the text is presented (in German translation) and is then followed by Riess’s exegesis. For each of the sections of commentary, one can naturally think of additions and extensions. And sometimes the few paragraphs that link a piece of quoted text with the next seem too brief to offer a fully satisfying analysis. For example, in his discussion of the youthful ruffians of Hypata who threaten Lucius with harm to ‘get their kicks’ (*Met.* 2.18 & 2.32 f), Riess rightly draws attention to the activities of the *jeunesse dorée* known from the urban centers of early modern western Europe, and he also notes some general works on Roman youth.¹⁰ But there is no systematic investigation of the place of the *iuventus* organizations in Roman towns and their relationship to the problem of controlling and channeling the activities of potentially violent young men — like the ‘Hell-Raisers’ or *eversores* of Augustine’s youth at Carthage (*Conf.*

¹⁰ Mentioning Eyben, for example, but not the equally important work by Marc Kleijwegt, *Ancient Youth: the Ambiguity of Youth and the Absence of Adolescence in Greco-Roman Society*, Amsterdam, J. C. Gieben, 1991.

3.3.6). Nor is there use of the wide range of Maria Jaczynowska's scholarship and, perhaps important, the presence of these organizations in the municipal towns of north Africa where Apuleius might well have confronted their members.¹¹ Despite the length and detail of the book, it is perhaps surprising that some good opportunities to confront Apuleius' text with his own experiences have been lost.

In a real sense, the book proper ends with this last third that is devoted to Apuleius' text. The reader, however, is asked to forge on through a fourth part entitled 'eine theoretische Nachbetrachtung' (pp. 349–74). Its utility to the whole is questionable. Having completed the core of the book, the reader is confronted with a generalizing diptych on 'Die Geschichte in der Fiktion' and 'Die Fiktion in der Geschichte.' Neither chapter contains much actual content on Apuleius, on the *Metamorphoses*, or references to bandits in imperial literature. Rather, each is a consideration of some problematic aspects of the relationship between historical and fictional writing. Alas, neither is detailed enough to offer more than a synopsis of the views of a few current thinkers on the subject. The first is more useful in that it highlights recent German scholarship by Kate Hamburger and, especially, the theoretical ideas of Wolfgang Iser, and extensions of the latter's work by Aleida Assman — concepts that might not be well known to those who study the construction of ancient fiction and historical texts.¹² These particular parts of the chapter are interesting, since Riess attempts to demonstrate how their ideas can usefully be applied to an analysis of Apuleius' text. Even as a theoretical excursus, however, the second of the two final chapters, that on fiction in history, is, I think, rather less successful. It replays Hayden White's dubious hypotheses as if they were part of a broadly accepted consensus amongst historians, and White's conceptions of the relationships between the generic elements of fiction/rhetoric and history as if they were canonical expositions on the subject. In any event, the content of these

¹¹ M. Jaczynowska, *Les associations de la jeunesse romaine sous le Haut-Empire*, transl. I. Woszczyk, Warsaw, Polish Academy of Sciences, 1978, encompassing a large number of article publications by her on the subject.

¹² K. Hamburger, *Die Logik der Dichtung*, Stuttgart, 1994 and A. Assmann, *Die Legitimität der Fiktion: Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der literarischen Kommunikation*, Munich, 1980. The works by Iser are better known; several of his standard works relevant to the problem of creation of fictive literature are in English translation (e.g., his *Fiktive und das Imaginäre* of 1991 was made available in English in 1993). But Riess uses the much wider range of Iser's work that is available in German, and to good effect.

additions might better have been relegated to appendices or, perhaps better, dispersed throughout the analysis in the text itself.

What final judgments might an historian essay? Not only does Riess offer the finest exposition of the problem yet attempted, but his powerful analysis logically indicates avenues of more exciting and innovative work that can be explored. It might be said that Riess's technically competent and comprehensive analysis has just about exhausted the limits of what can be gained by assembling the canonical evidence. His careful compilations of the literary sources, epigraphical texts, numismatic data, and legal norms, and his development of typologies and first-order explanations have taken the subject to a sort of asymptotic limit of what can be done by means of a thorough-going empirical approach that is both critical and imaginative. Any new study must depart from the picture that he has established and (it is to be hoped) not reiterate, yet again, the range of known cases and stereotypical examples of banditry in the Roman world, including those from the novelists. Riess has shown the distance that separates Apuleian fictions from the actual modalities of banditry in the empire, and he has surely vitiated once and for all any simple pillaging of Apuleius' text for neat examples of Roman social life at the margins. These are questions that excite and agitate the historian. And to have answered them is no small achievement. As for the functions, modalities, and significances of the fiction itself, it must be confessed that this whole aspect of the problem does not fit easily under the rubric of *Kriminalitätsforschung*. Trying to unravel this knot will involve the sorting out of the complex interplay between the internal structures of the fiction, its literary models, the audiences and their expectations, the author's intentions and assumptions, and the social reproduction of texts. One has only to consider, to take a few examples, the fictions of John Gay's *Beggar's Opera*, Schiller's *Die Räuber*, or, better, the cycle of Robin Hood stories, mutating over time, through different genres, altering the structure and status of the bandit world in the process, to have some sense of how difficult this problem will be. Riess's work persuasively demonstrates what Apuleius' novel is not, but precisely what it was as a cultural artifact of imperial literature and, more particularly, why bandits were placed in it in the fashion that they were is the difficult question that remains.