

Literary Topography in Apuleius' *Metamorphoses*

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Scholarly interest in the topography of Apuleius' *Metamorphoses* has largely been concerned with the study of its description of landscapes with an eye to realism, or with exploring Apuleius' use of symbolic or conventional descriptions of nature.¹ Here I want to look specifically at literary topography, and two interconnected aspects in particular: the way in which some geographical locations mentioned and described in the *Metamorphoses* look back to and reflect significant literary sources, and the way in which some place-names and their associations consequently suggest or point to important themes and ideas in the novel. This amounts to considering topography as part of the work's literary programme, as part of its self-construction and message to the reader.

Prime amongst the extant literary texts related to the *Metamorphoses*, of course, is the *Onos* attributed to Lucian. I (with many scholars) regard this work as an accurate epitome of the lost Greek *Metamorphoses* attributed to Lucius of Patras, which in turn I regard as Apuleius' major model.² Here I am interested in how far the locations of the original Greek *Metamorphoses*, which (I believe) can be accessed by us through the *Onos*, underlie Apuleius' version of the story and how far they have been adapted for a Roman readership. But there are also many other literary sources which the descriptions of place in the *Metamorphoses* evoke, from a wide range of texts and genres, further evidence of the rich literary texture and epideictic demonstration of learning which I believe to be fundamental to the *Metamorphoses*.³

¹ E.g., De Biasi 2000 for the first, Schiesaro 1988 and Trinquier 1999 for the second.

² For the issue see Lesky 1941, Walsh 1974, Holzberg 1984, Mason 1999.

³ Cf. Harrison 2000, 211–235.

1 The Tale of Aristomenes (1.5–19)

Omitting the complexities of the prologue, now extensively illuminated by the volume edited by Ahuvia Kahane and Andrew Laird,⁴ the first significant element of literary topography is to be found in the self-identification of Aristomenes near the beginning of his tale at 1.5: <*Aristomenes sum*>, *Aegiensis*. There is of course an issue of whether Aristomenes' name should be supplied here:⁵ given Apuleius' well-known habit of postponing naming for new characters,⁶ most obviously for Lucius himself, not named until 1.24, it may well be right to keep the transmitted text and not supply the name. But more interesting than the name is the indication of origin: Aristomenes is from Aegium, a small town east of Patras. This piece of evidence has not as far as I know been taken into account in the long-standing scholarly discussion on whether the tale of Aristomenes in fact derives at least part of its content from an original tale in the lost Greek *Metamorphoses*.⁷ This seems to be clear in its implication: Aristomenes comes from the area of Patras just as his tale comes from the *Metamorphoses* attributed to Lucius of Patras.

Likewise, the friend whom Aristomenes finds filthy and destitute, the ironically named Socrates,⁸ also goes to places of literary association. He states that he set off for Macedonia on business, but got only as far as Larissa in Thessaly before being attacked by robbers. The reader infers that Socrates comes from the same region or even city as Aristomenes, since when Aristomenes meets Socrates the first thing he says is that his family at home have given Socrates up for dead (1.6); there is no way of telling whether or not this is an element from the Greek *Metamorphoses*. Aristomenes encounters Socrates at the place to which both he and Lucius are travelling as the tale is being narrated, Hypata in Thessaly. As has been pointed out,⁹ this coincidence is meant to be a warning for Lucius that if he goes to Hypata he too will encounter danger in the context of sex and magic, a warning which Lucius characteristically ignores. Scholars have sometimes been puzzled by the hyperbolic description Aristomenes gives of Hypata, *quae*

⁴ Kahane and Laird 2001. The contributions of Katherine Clarke and Doreen Innes to that volume (101–122) both treat in detail the topographical allusions in the prologue.

⁵ See the discussion by Scobie 1975, 89–90, and that of Keulen 2000, 312.

⁶ Cf. Brotherton 1934.

⁷ Cf. esp. Lesky 1941, Keulen 2000.

⁸ Cf. e.g. van der Paardt 1978, 82.

⁹ Cf. Tatum 1969, 497 (reprinted in Harrison 1999, 166).

civitas cunctae Thessaliae antepollet (1.5), since in the Roman Empire Hypata seems to have had some economic importance but was not the most important city in Thessaly, which was Larissa. This phrase appears to be a pun on the derivation of the name ‘Hypata’ from the Greek adjective ὑπατός, ‘highest, outstanding’ or verb ὑπατεύω, ‘be highest, be outstanding’ explicitly made after Apuleius in Heliodorus’ *Aethiopica* (2.34.2): ὑπάταν, ἀπὸ τοῦ τῶν ἀλλῶν ὑπατεύειν καὶ ἄρχειν ὀνομασμένην.¹⁰ Since Hypata is Lucius’ destiny in the *Onos* too (*Onos* 1), there is every likelihood that Heliodorus shares this etymological play with the lost Greek *Metamorphoses*, and that its slightly confusing appearance here is a literary allusion rather than a report on the city’s current socio-political status, and possibly also a source of humour.¹¹

Aristomenes’ tale also contains two well-known topographical allusions to Plato, as one might well expect in a narrative where one of the main characters is called Socrates. The Apuleian Socrates in the story is attacked en route to Larissa (1.7); the mention of this Thessalian city as a destination seems to recall a famous philosophical example put by the Platonic Socrates to the Thessalian Meno in Plato’s *Meno*, arguing that a man who knows the way to Larissa would be able to guide others there (*Meno* 97a). Equally literary is the moment when Aristomenes invites his friend the Apuleian Socrates to sit down by a plane tree (1.18) which turns out to be beside an attractive river (1.19); this, as many have noted,¹² recalls the famous invitation of Phaedrus to the Platonic Socrates in Plato’s *Phaedrus* to sit down à deux under a plane tree next to the attractive river Ilissus (*Phaedrus* 229a–b). The effect of these two allusions is in my view a double one: not only literary allusion to some well-known texts (these are not the most obscure Platonic dialogues, and the author’s reading of Plato is meant to be noted),¹³ but also a programmatic suggestion early on in the novel that Plato may have some importance. This is not to say that the novel is in any sense a Platonic allegory, but rather that knowledge of certain Platonic dialogues will be a useful

¹⁰ Scobie 1975, 91 cites the Heliodorus passage but does not note the shared pun. It is noted by Gianotti 1986, 12 n.4, who there regards this praise of Hypata as a major city as simply conventional (but see next note).

¹¹ Gianotti 1986, 22 attractively suggests *en passant* that the pun is ironically used – Hypata has a big name but a small reality.

¹² E.g. Tatum 1979, 27–8.

¹³ On the prominence of the *Phaedrus* in the second century AD cf. Trapp 1990, esp. 171 on the popularity of the famous *mise en scène* in literary imitations.

tool for the reader's literary repertoire (to use a reader-response term)¹⁴ in interpreting the *Metamorphoses*.

2 Lucius, Corinth and Patrae

One of the clearest modifications to the geography of the *Onos* in the *Metamorphoses* is the replacement of Patrae by Corinth as the home city of Lucius.¹⁵ The identity of Lucius' home city is (like Lucius' name) something that we learn only late in Book 1 of the *Metamorphoses* and then only by implication (1.22), typical of indirect Apuleian naming technique.¹⁶ This alteration seems to be for the benefit of the Roman reader, for whom Corinth was a much more prominent city than Patrae, both because of its richer cultural history and earlier contact with Rome¹⁷ and because of its greater administrative and economic importance as the capital of the Roman province of Achaia by the second century A.D. (cf. *Met.*10.18 *Corintho, quod caput est totius Achaiae provinciae*). But it is also for the benefit of Apuleius' plot: this relocation of Lucius allows his appearance in the arena at Corinth and his arrival at the Isis-festival at Cenchreae, the port of Corinth, to be a journey home, a kind of *nostos*, one of a number of ways in which the *Metamorphoses* echoes the plot-shape of the *Odyssey*.¹⁸ Consequently, in the *Metamorphoses* Corinth and Achaia replace the Thessalonica and Macedonia of the *Onos* (49) as the scene of Lucius' appearance in the arena which forms the dénouement of the plot. This seems unlikely to be an alteration for the benefit of the Roman reader, since by the second century Thessalonica was the capital of the province of Macedonia and one of the major cities of the Empire; it may be that Apuleius wants to restrict his locations to central rather than northern Greece, perhaps reflecting his own career travels (though that can only be speculation).

¹⁴ Associated with Wolfgang Iser (cf. Iser 1978). 'Repertoire' is conveniently defined by Maclean 1986, 131 as 'the set of social, historical and cultural norms which the reader supplies as the necessary adjunct of his reading, but which the text calls forth and in some sense contains'.

¹⁵ For other discussions of the motivation of the change see Luca Graverini's paper in this volume, and especially Zimmerman 2000, 18 (with bibliography).

¹⁶ Cf. n.6 above.

¹⁷ See especially Luca Graverini's paper in this volume.

¹⁸ On the *Odyssey* and the *Metamorphoses* see the material gathered at Harrison 2000, 223.

Apuleius' change of Lucius' birthplace is accompanied by other significant changes in the names of his family and associates. Lucius' father in Apuleius is Theseus (1.23), a detail I have argued to be an invention for literary effect in evoking Callimachus' *Hecale*;¹⁹ in the *Onos*, the name of Lucius' father is famously missing when Lucius identifies himself to the magistrate at the arena in Thessalonica (55), most likely through textual damage, but since he is Lucius and identifies his brother in the same passage (55) as Gaius, picking up the two most common Roman *praenomina*, his father seems unlikely to have had the name of a Greek mythological hero. Lucius' mother in Apuleius is named as Salvia (2.2), a firmly Roman name, with possible connections with high-ranking Romans of the period;²⁰ in the extant *Onos* the name of Lucius' mother is not recorded.²¹ The person who provides letters of introduction for Lucius in Hypata in the *Onos* is Decrianus of Patrae, a sophist (2); as we would expect, the *Metamorphoses* changes this person's origin to Corinth (1.22), but also suppresses his profession and changes his name to Demeas. The suppression of the word 'sophist' may again be a concession to a Roman readership, for whom the word was not so significant; the change of name is certainly such a concession, since it bestows on the character a name which would be readily recognisable as belonging to New Comedy; characters named Demea(s) occur in the fragments of Menander, Caecilius and (most famously) Terence's *Adelphoe*; this is one of many indications of Apuleian interest in Roman New Comedy, typical of his archaising age.²²

3 Thelyphron – Miletus and Larissa (2.21).

In the major tale of Book 2, Thelyphron narrates his own story of how he lost his nose and ears through contact with witches. This begins with two

¹⁹ Cf. Harrison 1997, 56–7.

²⁰ Cf. Harrison 2000, 215. It is not clear how this can be related to the claim that Lucius' mother is related to Plutarch, L. Mestrius Plutarchus (*Met.*1.2; Harrison 2000, 252). For more symbolic interpretations of the name Salvia cf. Van Mal-Maeder 1998, 82.

²¹ It is quite possible that it too has fallen out at *Onos* 55 (though the Greek Lucius of the *Onos* elsewhere makes nothing of his maternal lineage, something important to Apuleius' Lucius because of its supposed connection with Plutarch (see n.18 above).

²² This aspect of Apuleius will be fully treated in the forthcoming Oxford doctoral dissertation of Regine May, 'A Comic Novel: Roman and Greek New Comedy in Apuleius' *Metamorphoses*'.

geographical indications. First, Thelyphron tells us that he comes from Miletus, originally came to mainland Greece to visit the Olympics, and that he only got as far as Larissa where he had his unfortunate experience as a watcher of corpses (2.21): *Pupillus ego Mileto profectus ad spectaculum Olympicum... peragrata cuncta Thessalia fuscis avibus Larissam accessi*. This story-pattern of only getting as far as Larissa on a longer journey, and of encountering there a life-changing, ghostly and magical experience, clearly links him with the Aristomenes of Book 1, and Thelyphron's tale clearly resembles that of Aristomenes in providing another unheeded warning to Lucius about the dangers of Thessalian magic.²³ It is hard here to attribute any further literary significance to Larissa, apart perhaps from a small Platonic allusion. But plainly literary is Thelyphron's Milesian origin. As I have noted elsewhere, Thelyphron's claim to come from Miletus is a claim that his tale is Milesian in literary colour,²⁴ showing the low-life sensationalism and (perhaps) witty reversal associated with the tradition of Milesian Tales associated with Aristides in Greek and Sisenna in Latin. Here a place has almost generic significance as a literary indicator; Thelyphron's tale may be set amongst the witches of Thessaly, but its literary level and values are firmly Milesian.

4 Failed Expeditions: History, Epic, Tragedy and Robber Tales (4.9–21)

The robber tales of Book 4, which may pick up some similar tales from the lost Greek *Metamorphoses*,²⁵ have been discussed in various ways – as indicative of a whole tradition of robber-tales shared as a source with Greek novels,²⁶ as echoes of suicides in historiography,²⁷ as a confirmation of the existence of divine justice,²⁸ and as parodies of epic heroism.²⁹ Here I want to follow these general lines but to introduce new angles of literary allusion.

²³ Cf. Tatum 1969, 500–03 (reprinted in Harrison 1999, 168–71).

²⁴ Cf. Harrison 1998a, 69; the article as a whole attempts to reconstruct the character of the Milesian tradition.

²⁵ See still Lesky 1941, 54–5 and *Onos* 21 where there are clear indications that (similar?) narratives by the robbers have been omitted in the summarising process.

²⁶ Cf. Mackay 1963.

²⁷ Cf. Loporcaro 1992.

²⁸ Cf. Gianotti 1986, 53–77.

²⁹ Cf. Westerbrink 1978, Frangoulidis 1991, 1992.

In this group of tales (*Met.*4.9–21) three sequential stories of robber-expeditions which are presented as glorious failures are narrated by an anonymous survivor who is anxious to defend his part of the robber-band for having seized little plunder. All three episodes concern heroic and tragic deaths of robber commanders – Lamachus, Alcimus and Thrasyleon. The last two names are clearly speaking names (‘Mighty’ and ‘Bold as a Lion’);³⁰ I shall return to the name Lamachus in due course, but what is interesting from the perspective of literary geography is the pair of locations at which these deaths take place: Thebes and Plataea.

The expedition led by the bold Lamachus to Thebes, I would argue, is a parody of the legendary epic and tragic expedition of the Seven Against Thebes. When Thebes is first named in the tale, it is named with a reference to its traditional seven gates which specifically recalls the seven doomed heroes of the mythological expedition, one at each gate (4.9 *vix enim Thebas heptapylos accessimus*).³¹ Furthermore, there is a clear structural parallel between the heroic failure of the Seven and the heroic failure of Lamachus, praised for his courage as if he were a legendary king or hero (4.8): *inter inclitos reges ac duces proeliorum tanti viri memoris celebrabitur*. That Lamachus gets his arm nailed to a door trying to break into a house, has to have it amputated to escape and then dies by suicide of course suggests that his expedition is a low-life and incompetent version of that of the Seven Against Thebes, but here as often we are dealing with the accommodation of high literary material of epic and tragedy to the more low-life and humorous world of the novel. In both cases we have a bold heroic enterprise which comes unstuck in ways appropriate to the particular literary genre.

While the location of Thebes and the stress on heroic failure look back to the expedition of the Seven in epic and tragedy, Lamachus’ name looks back to another tragically failed expedition, this time from Athenian history. Both in name and in fate he recalls the Lamachus who perished as joint commander of the Sicilian expedition of 415 B.C. The Athenian Lamachus, the initial advocate of a full frontal attack on Syracuse, was killed with a few men in 414 after crossing a ditch and becoming isolated from the rest of the Athenian forces (Thucydides 6.101); this characteristic fatal overboldness is precisely picked up by the similar qualities of the Apuleian Lamachus, who is specifically said to have perished from excessive bravery (*Met.*4.8.8 *sed*

³⁰ Cf. e.g. Walsh 1970, 158.

³¹ The seven gates of Thebes of course go back to Homer – cf. Hijmans et al. 1977, 78.

illum quidem utcumque nimia virtus sua peremit). The bodies of both commanders are recovered and honourably disposed of by their troops; as has been noted, the maritime burial of the Apuleian Lamachus (4.11 *mari celandum commisimus*) is topographically very improbable as he dies at Thebes, a considerable distance from any coastline, but would be very suitable for the Thucydidean Lamachus killed in Sicily.³² This has been taken by earlier interpreters as a sign of Apuleian carelessness,³³ but is better seen as an indication of a literary source and a direction of the reader's attention to a classic heroic death.³⁴

This echo of Athenian history, and of a tragic episode of Thucydides, is consistent with the location of the last of the three stories of heroic failure. There the robber-band, now under Thrasyleon, 'bold as a lion', move on to Plataea after their disasters at Thebes, where Thrasyleon perishes gloriously after a cunning plan to disguise him as a bear goes disastrously wrong. Again to readers of Athenian history this line of march has a notable model, namely the march of Mardonius, Persian commander and brother of Xerxes, towards the battle of Plataea: in Herodotus' account Mardonius goes to Thebes, a friendly power, and then on to defeat and death at nearby Plataea (Herodotus 9.13ff). There are resemblances between Herodotus' Mardonius and Apuleius' Thrasyleon other than the place of their death, though as ever the Apuleian version is a comic low-life parody. Both Mardonius and Thrasyleon perish fighting bravely, and in both cases the fate of the hero's body is somewhat indeterminate: Thrasyleon's body is abandoned to the men of Plataea still wrapped in its bearskin and nothing more is heard of it after the skin is taken off (4.21), while that of Mardonius disappears and there are many who claim to have buried it (9.84). Once again the echo is culturally plausible: Herodotus' account of the Persian Wars was eagerly read by the Greeks of the Second Sophistic in their nostalgia for Hellenic greatness, and here, as in his use of Thucydides and in many other aspects of his work, Apuleius reflects the tendencies of the Greek literary culture of his own time.³⁵

³² Cf. Walsh 1970, 158. There is no extant account of how the Athenian Lamachus was in fact buried.

³³ Cf. Walsh *loc. cit.*, Perry 1967, 254.

³⁴ We may compare the evocation of the death of Pompey in that of Priam at Vergil *Aeneid* 2.554–8, which also involves logistical difficulties – cf. Austin 1964, 214.

³⁵ On the uses of Herodotus and Thucydides in the second century cf. Swain 1996, 89–100, 486, 498.

5 A Fantasy World? Literary Topography in Cupid and Psyche

5.1 Where does Psyche come from?

The inserted tale of Cupid and Psyche is notoriously unspecific about its location, especially at its famous beginning, *Erant in quadam civitate rex et regina* (4.28),³⁶ where neither city nor king and queen are named, an anonymity which persists throughout the tale; Psyche's evil sisters and their husbands are never named, and even Psyche herself is named only after the tale is well under way (4.30). This lack of specific detail has been viewed as evidence of folk-tale origin, but it is rather a literary feature which is characteristic of this work in particular: the delayed naming of Psyche is a standard technique in the *Metamorphoses*,³⁷ while the lack of specific names and location is a common feature of many of the inserted tales, perhaps something owed to the similarly anonymous scenarios of Roman declamation, which clearly exercises some influence on the plots of Apuleian sub-narratives.³⁸ With *in quadam civitate* we may compare (for example) the opening of Seneca *Contr.*1.7: *quidam alterum fratrem tyrannum occidit, alterum in adulterio deprecante patre interfecit*.

This unspecific monarchy is clearly not at Rome but is likely to be in the Greek world, probably in the Aegean; this can also be inferred from 4.29, which talks of the fame of Psyche's beauty passing from her native city to neighbouring islands, and from 4.32, where Psyche's father consults Apollo's oracle at Didyma, presumably because Delphi is harder to get to. When Psyche is whisked off to the palace of Cupid, all specific geographical hints are abandoned, and the wanderings of Book 5–6 are not located in any recognisable landscape, apart from the use of Laconian Taenarus as the entrance to the underworld (see below). They do, however, as we shall see, refer to specific literary topographies.

³⁶ On the literariness (and novelistic colour) of the 'once upon a time' formula cf. Harrison 1998b, 64.

³⁷ Cf. n.6 above.

³⁸ Cf. Hijmans et al 1995, 297, Zimmerman 2000, 426, 428, and a paper by Danielle van Mal-Maeder at ICAN 3 2000 in Groningen, 'La mise en scène déclamatoire chez les romanciers latins' (summary in Zimmerman et al. 2000, 69–70). We look forward to her further researches on this topic.

5.2 The irruption of Rome

Given this general and unspecifically Greek character of the setting of Cupid and Psyche, it is all the more surprising when at *Met.* 6.8 Venus' advertisement for the supposed runaway slave Psyche makes specific allusion to a well-known feature of the landscape of the city of Rome:

Si quis a fuga retrahere vel occultam demonstrare poterit fugitivam regis filiam, Veneris ancillam, nomine Psychen, conveniat retro metas Murcias Mercurium praedicatorem...

Here there is a clear reference to the long-established temple of Venus Murcia in the environs of the Circus Maximus, scornfully referred to by Apuleius' fellow-African Tertullian a generation later in his attack on the immorality of the Circus (*De Spectaculis* 8).³⁹ While any consistently realistic effect here is undermined by the evident contradiction that a king's daughter is a slave-girl, there is clearly a reality jolt for the Roman reader, called back from the fantasy world of Cupid and Psyche to a very specifically Roman environment. This detail surely cannot belong to the perspective of the narrator of the tale of Cupid and Psyche, an anonymous and poor old woman who keeps house for a robber band in Boeotia; nor is it much more likely to belong to the reteller of the story, Lucius of Corinth the ex-ass, even though he will have been living in Rome for some time by the point at which he narrates the events of the *Metamorphoses*.⁴⁰ Here we see one of the reminders in the *Metamorphoses* that its ultimate narrator as author, its extradiegetic narrator, is Apuleius of Madauros, who here refers to a Roman landmark to show his readers his cosmopolitan acquaintance with the great metropolis of Rome itself.⁴¹ The reference is there for the Roman reader to get a handle on this otherwise unspecifically located tale, but it is also there as an index of the Latin culture of the writer, working in a province in Roman North Africa which is relatively close to Rome itself and could assume in its élite a knowledge of the imperial capital's topography.⁴²

³⁹ Cf. further the discussion of this allusion in Luca Graverini's paper in this volume.

⁴⁰ On the diversity of viewpoints in the narrative of Cupid and Psyche see Van Mal-Maeder and Zimmerman, 1998.

⁴¹ On Roman colour in the *Metamorphoses* see Dowden 1994.

⁴² On the Roman culture of Apuleius see esp. Harrison 2000, 1–3.

In fact, this evocation of the Roman world in the midst of a Greek environment should not have come as a surprise in the context of the tale of Cupid and Psyche. For already there has been a strong indication of the Roman identity of the ultimate written narrator of the tale, in one of the more famous passages of the novel. At 4.32, when Psyche's anonymous but kingly father enquires of Apollo's oracle at Didyma as to what he should do about his daughter's ill-health, the god replies in Latin:

Sed Apollo, quamquam Graecus et Ionicus, propter Milesiae conditorem sic Latina sorte respondit ...

This reply in Latin is motivated by the Roman identity of the author of this Milesian tale (*propter Milesiae conditorem*); this can only be an allusion to Apuleius himself, as has been rightly emphasised,⁴³ but it re-introduces an important literary toponym in the form of *Milesiae*. Here the Milesian links of the novel are stressed, just as they were in its prologue (*sermone isto Milesio*, 1.1) and in the tale of Thelyphron (see section 2 above). This has seemed paradoxical to some, since the tale of Cupid and Psyche in which this reference occurs is in many ways the least 'Milesian' part of the whole novel, with less low-life and sensationalist material. But as I have argued elsewhere, this allusion to Milesian tales may point not to their obscene content but to their narrative framework of inserted tales, a framework which the tale of Cupid and Psyche particularly exemplifies.⁴⁴

5.3 Epic Topographies in Psyche's Labours?

I have argued elsewhere that the four labours set by Venus to Psyche and performed by the latter at *Met.* 6.10–21 are a suitable reduction in both scale and tone for the context of the novel of the twelve labours of Hercules from Greek epic and tragedy.⁴⁵ The first labour of sorting out seeds and grains has no specific location (6.10). The second labour of obtaining a tuft of wool from the flock of fierce golden sheep (6.11) is evidently something of a parody of the heroic quest for the Golden Fleece, as has often been noted. But commentators have not noted that the topographical details themselves too

⁴³ Cf. van der Paardt 1981 (reprinted in Harrison 1999, 237–46).

⁴⁴ Cf. Harrison 1998a, 69–70.

⁴⁵ Harrison 1998b, 61–3.

look to the story of the Argonauts. The sheep with golden wool which are evidently a living version of the Golden Fleece also resemble the Fleece in their location as announced by Venus as she assigns the labour to Psyche (6.11):

Videsne illud nemus, quod fluvio praeterluenti ripisque longis attenditur, cuius imi frutices vicinum fontem despiciunt? Oves ibi nitentis auri vero decore florentes incustodito pastu vagantur. Inde de coma pretiosi velleris floccum mihi confestim quoquo modo quaesitum afferas censeo.

Here the sheep wander in a fearsome grove next to a river. This is surely an amusing version of the grove of Mars in the Argonaut saga, where the Golden Fleece is guarded by a fierce serpent, which is also close to the great river Phasis by which the Argonauts reach Colchis. In Apollonius' account, which Apuleius surely knew, the Argonauts can see this grove as they sail up the Phasis (*Arg.*2.1268–9), and when they go to get the fleece they do so in the *Argo*, since the grove is close to the bank of the great river (*Arg.*4.100–211).⁴⁶

The third labour of fetching water from a fountain enters a conventional literary topography, that of the Underworld, but the only specific allusion there is to the waters of the infernal rivers of Styx and Cocytus. These conventional streams of the Underworld do suggest a Greek location, since Apuleius' contemporary Pausanias at least identified them with two real Greek rivers; but their pairing here does not point to a realistic geographical location, since the 'real' river Styx was thought to be in Arcadia (Pausanias 8.17.6), the 'real' river Cocytus in Epirus (*id.*1.17.5). The fourth labour, that of bringing back some of the beauty of Proserpina from the Underworld, puts us firmly in the realm of the epic *katabasis*, though once again this is tempered by comic and parodic details which remind us that we are still in the world of the novel: the only route Psyche can initially think of to the Underworld is through suicide (6.17), but the tower from which she is about to jump in one of the traditional forms of suicide (a version of an old joke

⁴⁶ These details occur only in the Apollonian version (that of Valerius Flaccus does not describe the grove), though of course the lost version of Varro Atacinus may have been a source here. For the likelihood that Apuleius knew Apollonius directly cf. e.g. Mattiacci 1998, 130, 134 and the list of allusions in *Cupid and Psyche* at Kenney 1990, 240.

from Aristophanes' *Frogs*)⁴⁷ tells her of another way. Here we find a quite specific geographical location, for the first time in the tale (6.18): *Lacedaemo Achaiae nobilis civitas non longe sita est: huius conterminam deviis abditam locis quaere Taenarum*. 'Sparta, that noble city of Achaea, is located not far away; look for its neighbour Taenarus, concealed in an out-of-the-way region'. Here we have a famous Greek city (Sparta) and its contemporary location in a province of the second-century Roman empire (Achaia), presumably as some kind of realistic detail for the Roman reader who would certainly recognise these names; but we are not dealing with great precision here, since Taenarus, said here to be close to Sparta, is in fact more than fifty miles away across the great range of Taygetus.

Taenarus itself, a location which has already occurred in the prologue to the *Metamorphoses*, apparently as a metonym for Sparta (1.1.*Taenaros Spartiatica*), has a strongly literary role in Psyche's katabasis, since (as I have argued elsewhere) it points us towards one of the two Vergilian sources for Psyche's descent to the world below.⁴⁸ That Psyche's katabasis is a version of that of Aeneas in the sixth book of the *Aeneas* is well known,⁴⁹ but that katabasis of course took place through an Italian entrance to the Underworld at Lake Avernus on the Bay of Naples. Taenarus as gateway to the world below comes from the other great Vergilian katabasis, that of Orpheus in *Georgic* 4: *Taenarum* at *Met.*6.18 picks up *Taenarias... fauces* at *Georgics* 4.472. This is clearly symbolic and intertextual topography, indicating that Psyche's katabasis will have a significant relationship to that of Orpheus, as indeed it will: both Psyche and Orpheus go to the Underworld to fetch something back to the world above but ruin their enterprises by looking at the object they have been ordered to fetch but also not to look at,⁵⁰ though of course Apuleius' story, being in a novel, ends in a happy result which Vergil's tale does not.

6 Haemus the Thracian (7.5–8)

The story of Charite, the narratee of the tale of Cupid and Psyche, who is melodramatically rescued by her fiancé Tlepolemus disguised as a robber,

⁴⁷ *Frogs* 129–135; Cf. e.g. Kenney 1990, 212.

⁴⁸ Cf. Harrison 1997, 68.

⁴⁹ Cf. esp. Finkelpearl 1990 (reprinted in Harrison 1999, 290–306).

⁵⁰ Cf. Kenney 1990, 216–7.

and who then perishes in an equally melodramatic episode of revenge and suicide, is one of the passages from the original Greek *Metamorphoses* which is most obviously expanded and modified in Apuleius' version. The Greek original has a much smaller role for the unnamed fiancé, also fails to give any name to the Charite character, and has her and her new husband perish in a tragic accident rather than in a lurid cycle of murder and suicide. Apuleius' version of Charite's end has long been observed to owe much to the suicide of Dido in Vergil's *Aeneid*,⁵¹ and his version of the false story told by Tlepolemus of his daring deeds as the robber-chief Haemus is also heavily elaborated with detail which we can assume is Apuleian, not least the way in which Tlepolemus, with his cunning disguise, his lying tale, his defeat of a hostile group against the odds and his recovery of his rightful wife is a clear version of the Homeric Odysseus.⁵²

Here, however, I want to concentrate on the topography of the lying tale of banditry which Tlepolemus, presenting himself as Haemus, tells to the robbers. The topographical references found near the beginning of the tale clearly form a strategy of detailed authentication, urging respect for and belief in the speaker through detail, as well as a further handle for the Roman reader in mentioning the real province of Macedonia (7.5):

Nam praefui validissimae manui totamque prorsus devastavi Macedoniam. Ego sum praedo famosus Haemus ille Thracius cuius totae provinciae nomen horrescunt, patre Therone aequae latrone inclito prognatus ...

As has been pointed out,⁵³ Haemus' name both alludes expressively to his bloodthirstiness through its association with Greek αἷμα and points to the mountain-range of Haemus in his supposed home region of Thrace. But as has also been pointed out,⁵⁴ the reference to Haemus' father Theron ('Hunter') is a literary allusion, to the robber Theron in Chariton's *Callirhoe*, who kidnaps Callirhoe and sells her into slavery in the first book of that novel but later gets his just deserts in the third where he is crucified. The effect of the double fictionality of Haemus, named with clear improvisation after a Greek mountain landscape and after a previous fictional robber, is here surely

⁵¹ Cf. Harrison 1997, 63–5.

⁵² Cf. Harrison 1990, Frangoulidis 1992.

⁵³ Cf. Hijmans 1978, 115.

⁵⁴ Hijmans 1978, 116 n.46.

a clever hint to the reader (if not to the listening Charite) that Haemus' claimed descent is as fictional and pretended as the rest of his disguise.

The main content of the false Haemus' tale is the story of Plotina, a noble lady who was instrumental both in saving her husband and in destroying Haemus' own previous robber-band, clearly intended to suggest that Charite too will be reunited with her husband and that the robbers will be destroyed. Here once again we are given some realistic locations: Plotina (a good Roman name, possibly echoing that of Trajan's empress Pompeia Plotina)⁵⁵ and her unnamed husband clearly originate in Rome, since the husband is *multis officiis in aula Caesaris clarus atque conspicuus*, 'famed and renowned for his many services at the court of Caesar' (7.6), and their place of exile is set as the Greek Ionian island of Zacynthos (Zante), which they head for by ship. It is on this journey that they supposedly encounter the robber-band of Haemus at a very specific location (7.7): *Sed cum primum litus Actiacum, quo tunc Macedonia delapsi grassabamur, appulisset ... invadimus et diripimus omnia* – 'but as soon as he landed on the Actian shore, where we were then in operation having come down from Macedonia ... we charged in and ransacked the whole lot'.

Haemus' band has come to the western edge of the Roman province of Macedonia, to the shore of Actium. This is a realistic point to intercept a sea-voyage from Rome to Zante, but it is also of course an extremely famous military location, and in Latin before Apuleius the adjective *Actiacus* is used largely in contexts referring to the battle of Actium in 31 B.C.⁵⁶ What we have here is a second, novelistic battle of Actium, suitably transformed to suit the different genre – not a mighty conflict on sea and land to determine the fate of the known world, but a one-sided affair in which the land-based robbers pillage a ship which has put at the shore. The very Roman and virtuous Plotina, travelling supportively with her unnamed husband to exile, can also be seen as an inverted version of the historical Cleopatra, a foreign paramour, but similarly defeated with her husband (though in different ships) at the same place.

In conclusion, these examples show that topographical references in Apuleius' *Metamorphoses* can operate as bearers of intertextual literary allusion, either by themselves or as part of a larger complex. This is true not

⁵⁵ Cf. Hijmans et al. 1981, 121.

⁵⁶ Propertius 2.15.44 *Actiacum ... mare*, Manilius 5.52 *Actiacosque sinus* (= Petronius *Sat.* 121v.115).

only in respect of the Greek *Metamorphoses*, the major putative model of Apuleius' novel, but also in respect of a wide range of other literary texts. It is therefore not surprising that most of the literary topographical allusions occur in the inserted tales, which allow Apuleius the greatest flexibility of invention. These allusions, characteristically, not only demonstrate knowledge of famous and elevated genres and events (epic, tragedy, the great battles of Greek and Roman history and literature), but also adapt those elements by parody and ironic reprocessing for their reappearance in the less elevated genre of the Roman novel.⁵⁷

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