

D. van Mal-Maeder: *Groningen Commentaries on Apuleius – Apuleius Madaurensis Metamorphoses – Livre II – Texte, Introduction et Commentaire*.

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Reviewed by Anton Bitel, Oxford

E-mail [anton.bitel@corpus-christi.oxford.ac.uk](mailto:anton.bitel@corpus-christi.oxford.ac.uk)

The beginning of the third millenium is proving to be a productive time for Apuleian scholarship. The new Groningen Commentary on Book 2 of Apuleius' *Golden Ass* (*GCA 2*) by Danielle van Mal-Maeder (MM) appears only a year after Maaïke Zimmerman's excellent Groningen Commentary on Book 10, and will itself be followed shortly by a grand-scale Groningen Commentary on Books 4.28–6.24 (the Psyche tale), and another (the last in the Groningen Commentaries series) on Book 1.

This is the first Groningen Commentary on Apuleius to be written in French, rather than in English; and whereas many of the Groningen Commentaries on Apuleius have been written by a committee, MM's *GCA 2* is, like Zimmerman's *GCA 10* (and Wytse Keulen's forthcoming *GCA 1*), a solo effort, expanded from her 1998 doctoral thesis (Groningen). This enables MM to insert into the tried and tested format of the Groningen Commentaries her own personal, often unorthodox, approach to Apuleius' text, making for a commentary which combines rigorous scholarship with provocation, so that there is something here to please Apuleius' most conservative, as well as his most wayward, readers.

The introduction includes clear and informative sections on: the content and structure of Book 2 (1–4); its narrative techniques and terminology (4–10); its passages involving description or eulogy (10–11); its inserted tales (12–14); its thematic connections to the rest of the novel through a range of recurring motifs including magic, curiosity, credulity vs. scepticism, narration, laughter, hair, virility, pleasure, adultery and poisoning (14–25); its language and style (25–26); its intertextuality with the Greek *Metamorphoses* and *Onos*, and with a range of other texts (26–30); a note on the adopted text (31–32); a note on MM's original (French) translation (32); and a (modest) note on the much grander scope of *GCA 2* in comparison with

the only other dedicated commentary on Book 2, which was written in Latin and dealt almost exclusively with philological matters (32–33).<sup>1</sup>

As is customary for the Groningen Commentaries on Apuleius, the text of Book 2 (37–50) largely follows the most recent Teubner impression of Helm's text; and while there is no 'apparatus criticus', all deviations from Helm are listed (35–36), and discussed at length in the appropriate sections of the commentary. The commentary itself (51–408) also follows a format familiar from the other Groningen Commentaries: the book is divided into its thirty-two chapters, which each come with a synoptic subtitle, and sometimes a general introduction; these chapters are then subdivided into pericopes of a sentence or so, which are translated into French and then further subdivided into phrasal lemmas for detailed comment and analysis. Here one sees on display a veritable *desultoria scientia*, as MM leaps effortlessly from issues of text, context (social/historical) and intertext, with thorough cross-referencing of secondary literature and of the other Groningen Commentaries on Apuleius.

There are three relatively brief appendices, in which MM expands upon ideas which have emerged from the commentary, examining the character of Photis, the significance of her sexual position on top of Lucius, and the significance of the tale of Thelyphron in the *Golden Ass* (409–422). There is of course a full bibliography (425–453), although not the usual updated list of all 'Apuleiana' published since the last Groningen Commentary (presumably because of the very brief interval between the publication of *GCA* 10 and *GCA* 2). Finally there are three useful indices: by topics (455–461), by vocabulary items (463–71), and by textual citations (473–488).

MM has already written several authoritative articles on Apuleius' *Golden Ass*, and the commentary form enables her to test her prior theories against close line-by-line readings of a single book: thus her comments on the various uses of *quidam* in Book 2 (132, 210, 222, 223, 224, 313, 326, 359, 405) draw upon her previous study of the subject;<sup>2</sup> her comments upon the way in which Lucius' shifting mood affects his characterisation, from moment to moment, of Milo (200–202, 240–241) reinforce an earlier article

<sup>1</sup> De Jonge, B.J. 1941. *Ad Apulei Madaurensis Metamorphoseon Librum Secundum Commentarius Exegeticus*, Diss. Univ. Groningen.

<sup>2</sup> MM 1994. "Sens et fonction du pronom/adjectif *quidam* dans les *Métamorphoses* d'Apulée", *MH* 51, 214–225.

on Lucius' subjectivity;<sup>3</sup> comments on Lucius' eulogy on hair (see esp. 160–162) represent a practical illustration of MM's previous argument that the born-again narrator responsible for the novel's descriptive passages appears to be no less lubricious than his pre-Isiac self;<sup>4</sup> and other parts of the commentary (e.g. 15–22, 180 and Appendix 1) are shown to corroborate MM's prior claims that the relationship between the witches earlier, and Isis later in the novel, is one of continuity rather than contrast, and that Lucius' fanaticism for Isis appears to be as naive, credulous and foolish as his earlier obsession with witches.<sup>5</sup> By subjecting the interpretations found in these articles to the kind of line-by-line scrutiny afforded by a commentary, MM only adds to their persuasiveness. However, MM's commentary also tries half-heartedly to resurrect another of her arguments, that the original *Golden Ass* was longer than our received text, with an ending more like that preserved in the *Onos* (15, 422 n.3; cf. MM 1997 *op. cit.*, 112f.). I shall not here restate my reasons, put elsewhere at some length, for finding this last argument to be as unnecessary as it is unconvincing.<sup>6</sup>

*GCA 2* is an outstanding contribution both to the Groningen series and to Apuleian scholarship, offering highly assured, exceptionally well researched guidance through the many memorable passages to be found in Book Two (the Diana-Actaeon statuary, the hair eulogy, Lucius' flirtation and sex with Photis, the twin tales of Dyophanes, the tale of Thelyphron, and the slaying of the three skin-ny housebreakers). In what follows I offer a few humble criticisms, differences of interpretation, and addenda.

The *Golden Ass* is constructed as an elaborate enigma, full of puzzles, ellipses and equivocations, so that problems found *in* the text need not always be regarded as problems *of* the text. Accordingly, for the most part MM follows established *GCA* practice by maintaining as far as possible the text of the principal manuscript F (32). At times, however, she does accept or propose emendations, some of which I would question. E.g. MM prefers to emend

<sup>3</sup> MM 1995. "L'Âne d'Or ou les métamorphoses d'un récit: illustration de la subjectivité humaine", *GCN* 6, 103–126.

<sup>4</sup> MM 1997. "Descriptions et descripteurs: mais qui décrit dans les *Métamorphoses* d'Apulée?", in Picone, M.-Zimmermann, B. (eds.) *Der antike Roman und seine mittelalterliche Rezeption*, 171–201.

<sup>5</sup> MM 1997. "Lector, intende: laetaberis. The enigma of the last book of Apuleius' *Metamorphoses*", *GCN* 8, 87–118.

<sup>6</sup> Bitel, A. 2000. *Quis ille?: alter egos in Apuleius' Golden Ass*, diss. Oxford, 245–272.

the name *Dyophanes* found in the mss. (220, on *Met.* 2.13.1) to *Diophanes*, on the grounds that: 1) *Diophanes* is a real name, attested in both Greece and Rome; and 2) *Diophanes* makes sense as a speaking name (“le porte-parole de Zeus” or “brillant de l’éclat de Zeus”). However, in defence of the mss. orthography, I would argue that: 1) names in the *Golden Ass* do not have to reflect names in reality (see e.g. *Byrrhena*, *Zatchlas* and *Thelyphron* in Book 2 alone); and 2) variant spellings of names are possible (see e.g. 32, 86 & 134 on the variants *Byrrhena/Byrrhena* and *Photis/Fotis*); and 3) while arguably the name *Dyophanes* is close enough in sound and spelling to *Diophanes* to be interpreted as MM would like, it would also enable an *additional* interpretation as ‘Appearing twice’ – as indeed *Dyophanes* does, in the contrasting narratives of *Lucius* and *Milo* which form a diptych.

Similarly, in an otherwise excellent note, MM dismisses the mss. reading of the name *Myrrhene*, preferring Beroaldus’ correction *Myrrhine*, a well-attested ‘real’ name (which she concedes has various orthographies) with appropriately erotic associations (336, on *Met.* 2.24.8). However, while the mss. reading would hardly involve the sacrifice of these erotic associations, it has the advantage of being in closer echolalic correspondence with *Byrrhena*, the name of the sub-narrator’s hostess – which provides a hint, if nothing more, that far from being a true story about his own mutilation, the sub-narrator may just be telling a tall tale, with some of its improvised details reconstituted from his immediate environment – a method of impromptu story-telling which will be familiar to anyone who has seen ‘The Usual Suspects’. One might compare the fatal cheese-eating incident in the tale of *Aristomenes*’ adventures (*Met.* 1.19.6–9), which seems to reconstitute elements from an anecdote which the sub-narrator had heard from *Lucius* earlier, also concerning the dangers of cheese-eating (1.4.1); and, as with the tale of *Aristomenes*’ adventures, and indeed the principal narrative, so too in the case of the tale of *Thelyphron*, there is a real question mark over whether the tale should be regarded as its narrator’s true autobiography, or rather as fiction. In any case, the echo of *Myrrhene/Byrrhena* seems apt in a story which hinges upon the sharing of names.

At *Met.* 2.12.2, F’s reading *nec mirum... igniculum... memorem... illius maioris et caelestis ignis velut sui parentis, quis esset editurus in aetheris vertice divino praesagio et ipsum scire et nobis enuntiare* lacks an object for *editurus*. MM (208) adopts Rohde’s emendation *quid is esset*, preferring it to Oudendorp/Eyssenhardt’s *quid esset* or van der Vliet’s *quid is sit*. While I

accept that some correction of the text seems necessary here, I would prefer an altogether different solution, retaining F's *quis esset*, and instead emending *divino praesagio* to *divina praesagia*; on this reading, *quis esset* would be an 'I-know-thee-who-thou-art' question with *ignis* as its antecedent, and *praesagia* would be the common object of *editurus*, *scire* and *enuntiare*. Thus, the lamp's flame, because it recalls the identity of the celestial, quasi-parental fire which is the source of divine predictions, can itself know and utter such predictions. The advantage of such a reading is twofold: 1) it would, I think, have been easier for a scribe to miscopy *praesagia* as *praesagio* than *quid* as *quis*; 2) it preserves the question of identity (*quis esset*) in F, which echoes the prologue's programmatic question *quis ille?* In this text, it is impossible to make knowledgeable pronouncements unless one is mindful of who one's *auctor* is (on *editurus* as a word appropriate for authorial activity, cf. *GCA* 2, 208 ad loc.) – a principle which is as true for a predictive lamp as it is for any character, or indeed for any interpreting reader.

Last but not least, MM wishes to emend the words in F with which the corpse introduces his grim account of the previous night's events (*Met.* 2.30.1 ...*quod prorsus alius nemo cognominarit indicabo*), preferring Robertson's "conjecture très ingénieuse", *cogno<rit vel o>minarit* (386). While it is true, as she argues, that this emendation would perfectly encapsulate the nature of this inset tale, which is, as she demonstrates in her third appendix, constructed in such a way as to frustrate all the expectations of the reader, I nonetheless find it an entirely unnecessary correction which removes from the text a typical piece of Apuleian wordplay. The difficulty of F's reading is how one should understand *cognominare* and its relationship with *quod*. After (correctly) rejecting Armini's suggestion that *cognominare* can mean 'indicate', MM concedes that a part of the corpse's revelations concerns the fact that he bears the same name as the tale's protagonist, but then argues that this does not justify the use of *cognominare* (normally, 'to give a name (to)'), which has the neuter *quod*, rather than a person, as its object. Yet if one reads *quod* as an internal object, and allows *cognominare* to mean 'name together' or 'give a common name (to)' – the kind of etymological wordplay of which Apuleius is so fond in his use of compound words<sup>7</sup> – then the reading of F could mean something like 'I shall reveal the

<sup>7</sup> See e.g. *GCA* 6.25–7 (1981), 233 on *detestatione*; *GCA* 9 (1995), 95 on *manipulis*; and *GCA* 10 (2000), 59–60 on *dissignatum*, 352 on *depudescerem*, and 405 on *decepit*.

common (*cog-*) name which absolutely no-one else has named (as common)'. The advantage of this reading is twofold: 1) the wording proves surprisingly accurate – the corpse does not go on to specify either his own name or the protagonist's name, but rather reveals precisely that they have a name in common (*Met.* 2.30.4) – something which, indeed, no-one else has done; and 2) preserving F, the corpse's words, for all their accuracy, are phrased in a sufficiently obscure fashion that neither the protagonist nor the reader guesses what is meant until it is too late – this enigmatic obscurity is part and parcel of the sub-narrator's overall strategy of surprise (as outlined in MM's third appendix), and should not be regarded as grounds for emending the text.

MM's narratological scheme, set out with great clarity (4–10), is for the most part adapted from Genette, while occasionally reverting to the (not dissimilar) typology of Lintvelt preferred by *GCA* 9 and *GCA* 10,<sup>8</sup> and I am delighted that MM follows Genette in dispensing with the unhelpful distinction, so cherished by the previous two *Groningen Commentaries on Apuleius*, between 'concrete author' and 'abstract author'.<sup>9</sup>

Following her careful distinction between the actorial type of narrative (the dominant mode of focalisation in the *Golden Ass*, reproducing the limited perspective of the *ego*-protagonist Lucius) and the auctorial type of narrative (reproducing the broader perspective of the *ego*-narrator), MM gives an outstanding analysis of the encomium on hair (*Met.* 2.8.2–9.5) as a rare explicit example of auctorial narrative, thus belying the commonplace assumption that the (post-initiation) *ego*-narrator has now renounced his former pleasure-seeking ways (see esp. 11 & 160–2). This is a subtle interpretation, with extraordinary ramifications for the way in which one constructs an identity for the principal narrator (*quis ille?*).

I found myself less convinced, however, by MM's attempts to attribute certain other episodes to the perspective of the *ego*-narrator. For example, when Lucius initially ignores Byrrhaena's warning, instead rushing back to Milo's house in his desire to subject himself to Pamphile's magic arts, MM claims that the characterisation of Lucius as rushing headlong *in ipsam*

<sup>8</sup> Genette, G. 1972. *Figures III*, Paris; Lintvelt, J. 1981. *Essai de typologie narrative: Le "point de vue"*. *Théorie et analyse*, Paris.

<sup>9</sup> Genette, G. 1983. *Nouveau discours du récit*, Paris, 94f.; cf. my forthcoming review of *GCA* 10 (2000) in *CR*. [Published in *CR* 53 (2003), 381–383 - ed.]

*barathrum* (*Met.* 2.6.2) and being *vecors animi* (2.6.3) and *amenti similis* (2.6.4) can only represent the auctorial, ‘post eventum’ perspective of the narrator, knowing now the consequences of the choice that he made at that time (130–132). On the contrary, this is surely a vivid presentation of Lucius-actor’s ‘akrasia’ at the time – Lucius-actor *already* knows that to cultivate Pamphile would be an act of madness, as Byrrhena has just warned him in the most explicit terms of the likely consequences (2.5.2–8; at *GCA* 2, 130–131, MM strangely insists that the phrase *in ipsum barathrum* must be assigned to the perspective of the *ego*-narrator, even though she herself concedes that it clearly echoes words just addressed to Lucius-actor by Byrrhena at 2.5.4: *imis Tartari et in vetustum chaos*). The proof that Lucius-actor already recognises the rash madness of allowing himself to fall under Pamphile’s spell comes immediately afterwards, when Lucius-actor, in a self-apostrophe, persuades himself to change his course of action for one which he deems altogether more sane: avoid Pamphile and instead go after the maid Photis (2.6.4–8).

After stating (correctly) that the Dyophanes-tale lacks critical distance in relation to Dyophanes’ prophecies precisely because it is narrated according to the perspective of Lucius-actor (who does not know any better), MM then contrasts the more polemic tone found in the episode of the Syrian goddess (209). Citing *GCA* 8, 287f., MM claims that this latter episode is narrated according to the auctorial perspective of the *ego*-narrator, an Isiac initiate who is concerned to debunk the followers of a rival religion. However, this polemicism could well have arisen instead entirely from the perspective of Lucius-actor, whose antagonism and aversion towards the priests becomes clear from the moment he first encounters them (*Met.* 8.25.5; cf. *GCA* 8, 297 “There is no question of an initial sympathy for the Dea Syria which later turns to antipathy”).

Similarly in the tale of Thelyphron, when the widow, who had previously been presented as inconsolable in her grief, is suddenly described in aggressively judgemental terms (*Met.* 2.29.6 *Tunc uxor egregia capit praesentem audaciam et mente sacrilega coarguenti marito resistens altercat*), MM insists that the source of this negative characterisation must be the auctorial perspective of the narrator, who she argues is now convinced, from what is revealed to him later in the tale, that the dead husband’s accusations against his wife must be true (382). Yet it seems entirely possible that the *ego*-protagonist, presented with the corpse’s shock accusation, finds that he

is as convinced of the widow's guilt as are some of the other onlookers (2.29.6 *populus aestuat, diversa tendentes, hi pessimam feminam viventem statim cum corpore mariti sepehendendam, alii mendacio cadaveris fidem non habendam*), just as his earlier characterisation of the widow's tears as 'carefully contrived' (2.27.7 *emeditatis...fletibus*) suggests that he was as convinced of the uncle's plausible accusations as the rest of the crowd (2.27.6 *saevire volgus interdum et facti verisimilitudine ad criminis credulitatem impelli*; see *GCA* 2, 365). Such a reading requires no further appeal to the perspective of the *ego*-narrator; and it would provide a thematic link with the principal *ego*-protagonist, Lucius, who is himself, against the better judgement of the principal *ego*-narrator, temperamentally inclined to leap to rash judgements about the guilt of women (*Met.* 7.10.3–4).

Of course, it is at least possible that, in some or all of the passages above, MM is right after all to believe that the broader perspective of the *ego*-narrator has been allowed to intrude; but it is important to acknowledge, where appropriate, the alternative possibility (i.e. that the focalisation is restricted to the perspective of the *ego*-protagonist, as happens in most of the *Golden Ass*), simply because the less certain that one is about the views, perspectives and ideologies held by the *ego*-narrator, the more problematic it becomes to find a solution to the prologue's programmatic question regarding that narrator's identity (*quis ille?*).

MM has long been an opponent of the widespread view that Books 1–10 of the *Golden Ass*, once re-read in the light of the Isiac initiations of Book 11 and in particular of the Isiac priest's moralising sermon on Lucius' pre-Isiac life (*Met.* 11.15.1–5), are transformed unexpectedly into an account of a fallen soul in need of divine salvation (see esp. MM 1997, *op. cit.*). In Appendix 1 and 2 MM consolidates her opposition to this allegorical reading by attacking two of its mainstays: 1) the commonly held view that Photis is depicted as an 'anti-Isis' and that Lucius' relationship with her represents one of the 'slavish pleasures' (11.15.1 *serviles...voluptates*) from Lucius' pre-conversion life against which the Isiac priest so strongly rails; and 2) that the sexual position which Photis adopts 'on top' (*Venus pendula*; 2.17.4) places the well-born Lucius in a hierarchic position of inferiority which is both abnormal and immoral. MM is right to assert that there are dissonant elements in Book 11 which call into question its seriousness, and she makes a very good case for the possibility of reading Lucius' relationship to Isis as



being in continuity, rather than opposition, with his relationship to Photis; however, the Isiac priest's reading of Lucius' life should not be entirely rejected, but rather regarded as just one of several competing interpretations of Books 1–10; and the prevalence of elegiac motifs in the Photis episodes, amply demonstrated by MM, does not in itself discredit the priest's surprise re-reading of Lucius' life so much as distract the first-time reader's attention from the possibility of such a moralising reading. In other words, while MM is thoroughly convincing in her argument that Photis does not, on first reading, appear to be an anti-Isis, this is still not enough in itself to prevent Photis appearing (to some) to be an anti-Isis on subsequent re-readings. Indeed, by focussing on Photis' intertextual resonances for first-time readers, MM comes close to stating a truism: of course first-time readers of Book 2 are not going to regard Photis as an anti-Isis (how could they?). Prompted, however, by the Isiac priest's words, some second-time readers might, and can. The priest's reading of Books 1–10 certainly need not be the 'right' one, and its authority can and should be questioned – but his moralising re-interpretation at the very least calls into question the first-time reader's hitherto 'elegiac' horizon of expectations, and can be seen as a critique of Lucius' elegiac outlook.

In her third appendix, MM summarises previous readings of the tale of Thelyphron, before attempting a conciliatory reading according to which the tale is, like the principal narrative which frames it, a first-person exercise in misdirection, false leads and red herrings, designed to conceal from the reader a surprise ending which hinges upon a crucial but hidden detail about the narrator's identity. While I embrace wholeheartedly her overall conclusion here, I disagree with several of the details in her argument. E.g. the readings of Steinmetz and Ingenkamp, who each present a (different) argument that the narrator intends his tale as fiction (for Steinmetz, the narrator merely pretends to be mutilated; for Ingenkamp, the narrator's story conceals the real reason for his mutilation, which is in fact a punishment for his adultery),<sup>10</sup> are both rejected by MM (418; cf. 390) on two grounds: 1) that both are 'rationalist' types of reading, erasing the narrative's fantastic character and effacing its 'zones of shadow'; and 2) that in effect they involve a re-writing of Thelyphron's story. Now, although I would certainly not wish to

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<sup>10</sup> Steinmetz, P. 1982. *Untersuchungen zur römischen Literatur des zweiten Jahrhunderts nach Christi Geburt*, Wiesbaden, 244f.; Ingenkamp, H.G. 1972. "Thelyphron. Zu Apuleius' *Met.* 2.20ff.", *RhM* 115, 337–342.

suggest that the readings of Steinmetz or Ingenkamp are the only correct readings of the tale possible, nonetheless I find MM's objections to them problematic. In the first place, in both readings, the narrative in fact remains unchanged, and therefore retains its fantasy character rather than effacing it. All that Steinmetz and Ingenkamp have changed in their interpretations is the nature of the narrator's relationship to this fantastic tale; all the fantasy elements are still there, but they are now ascribed not just to the fiction of Apuleius, but to the dissembling of the narrator. A ghost story is a ghost story, no matter who tells it – but it is perfectly valid to wonder, as Steinmetz and Ingenkamp do, why a particular narrator chooses to tell one – especially in a text which explicitly problematises not just the identity of the principal narrator (*quis ille?*), but also of the sub-narrator of this particular tale (first introduced at *Met.* 2.20.4 with the sentence *et nescio qui simile passus ore undique omnifariam deformato truncatus est*). Ingenkamp's reading in particular – in which a criminal uses the supernatural as a cover for his crimes – finds an echo in the principal narrative, where robbers disguise themselves as ghosts (4.22.5), and may well suggest one possible explanation as to why our principal narrator, who has himself been accused of a crime (7.1.5–2.3), dresses up his first-person narrative with supernatural details (magic and metamorphosis) that serve to exonerate him from guilt.

The problem with MM's second objection – that one should not rewrite the story – is that it assumes that the story as it stands is complete, and in need of no supplementation. This however is simply not the case; for this tale about missing parts is itself full of missing parts, so that anyone who tries to read it in a meaningful fashion will inevitably end up also having to write part of it for themselves. Is Zatchlas a holy man, a dealer in the black arts or a charlatan (see 367, 369–70 & 375)? Is the widow in the end found guilty (see 394)? How does the corpse remember the manner of his death, even though he has by now drunk of Lethe's draughts of forgetfulness (2.29.3; a detail which seems not to trouble MM at 379)? Does the protagonist share his name with his narrator as much as he does with the corpse (389)? Does the narrator share his *ego*-protagonist's deformity or not (394–5)? Do the Hypatan banqueters laugh because a deformed narrator has both suffered a humility and then added to it by telling his own sorry tale, or do they laugh because a full-faced narrator has delayed till the very end of his tale the fact that his *ego*-protagonist is deformed, and that the whole tale has therefore been a fiction (21, 302 & 395)? These questions reflect genuine

ambiguities in the text, and while different readers may well supplement the text's missing parts in different ways – e.g. by simply assuming that the corpse is telling the truth about the widow (or not), that the corpse can still, post Lethe, remember his past life (or not), and that the narrator is deformed (or not) – there is nothing in the text itself which will resolve these problems decisively. By assuming in her own reading of the tale that the protagonist is called Thelyphron, and that the narrator has no ears or nose, MM is herself guilty of substantially rewriting the tale as it appears in the text. If she can do it, so can Steinmetz and Ingenkamp.

Furthermore, in the third appendix (418), as elsewhere (8 n.16, 13 n.32, 302, 389, 395), MM states that the position of my thesis is that the guest at Byrrhena's party who narrates this story is not telling his own history, but rather inventing a fictive persona for himself, in the interests of raising a laugh (Bitel 2000, *op. cit.* 190f.). Yet I do not in fact state a preference for such a reading over its alternative, according to which the narrator and his protagonist are the same person. Rather I argue that either reading is entirely consistent with the words in the text, confronting readers with an interpretative ambiguity concerning the identity of the sub-narrator which reflects, and informs, a similar problem involving the identity of the principal narrator, and his relationship to the principal first-person protagonist, Lucius.<sup>11</sup> MM paints a picture of first-time readers who are manipulated, seduced and deceived by the tale of Thelyphron until all is revealed, suddenly and unexpectedly, in the end. This however is to imply that the conclusion of the tale somehow resolves all its ambiguities. For me, this is no more true of the end of the tale of Thelyphron than it is of the end of the entire *Golden Ass* – although of course, as I mentioned above, MM likes to imagine that the *Golden Ass* has a lost ending which would resolve all the problems left unresolved by the extant ending.

Finally, commentaries can never be exhaustive, and it is inevitable at times that their users find themselves wishing that this or that point had been made. Here is a selective list of addenda to MM's commentary.

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<sup>11</sup> I also do not state, as MM claims (304–305), that 'Thelyphron' is an adjective employed substantively in the vocative by Byrrhena, and then misunderstood by Lucius as the narrator's actual name; rather, I suggest that this is a possible reading enabled by the text, no better or worse than the alternative possibility of reading 'Thelyphron' as an actual name (Bitel 2000, *op. cit.* 191f.).

MM is right to assert that Lucius' reference to Aristomenes as 'best companion' (55, on *Met.* 2.1.2 *optimi comitis Aristomenis*) is explained by Lucius' appreciation, expressed earlier, of his companion's diverting tale (1.20.5); I would only add that: a) *optimus* ('best') involves an etymological pun on the first part of Aristomenes' name (*aristo-* is Greek for 'best'); and b) while Lucius' story-telling interlocutor turns out indeed to be a very good companion to Lucius, within his tale Aristomenes has Socrates as his 'comrade' (1.6.1 *contubernalem*), 'fellow-traveller' (1.15.4 *convectore*) and indeed 'companion' (1.17.4 *comes*), yet his advice to Socrates to flee (1.11.3) results ultimately in Socrates' death, so that Meroe's reference to Aristomenes as 'the good adviser' (*Met.* 1.12.7 '*bonus...consiliator Aristomenes*'), also punning on his name, is pure sarcasm. All of which ironises Lucius' belief in Aristomenes' excellence as a companion.

MM correctly translates the widow's phrase *cenas et partes requiris* (*Met.* 2.24.6) in context as "réclames une part de repas" (335); I would only add that the last two words of the widow's phrase can also have a rather different sense, presumably unintended by the widow herself, but of grimly pertinent significance for the second-time reader: 'you have parts missing'. And so her addressee will have...

Commenting on the deformed protagonist's humiliated flight before the outcome of the corpse's accusations can become known, MM is right to observe that Apuleius enjoys parodying the rules of narrative by failing to give any answer to questions posed (394). She might have made a similar point in her otherwise excellent discussion of the debate between Lucius and Milo regarding the veridicality of divination. For while this debate ends up focussing upon the figure of Dyophanes and the question of whether he is a true prophet or a venal charlatan, it should not be forgotten that the whole argument is triggered by Pamphile's prediction that it will rain tomorrow (*Met.* 2.11.5f.), leading Milo to ridicule such predictions, and Lucius to defend them. In typical fashion, Apuleius documents their ensuing debate in great detail, but neglects entirely to reveal whether it does in fact rain on the following day or not – a crucial detail which, if included, would offer us a clear resolution to the problem raised.

Last but not least, amidst MM's impressive discussion of the socio-historical associations of the maid Photis' sexual position on top of Lucius (Appendix 2), she mentions only in passing, with documentation, that the position (*Venus pendula*) is more often designated in the ancient world by

the metaphor of horse-riding (413). I would prefer greater emphasis to be placed on this aspect of the specified position, which is surely, amongst other things, an elegant and economical symbol of Lucius' future status as a quadruped being taken for a ride.

Of course criticism is an essential part of the rhetoric of reviewing, but I would not wish to leave the impression that MM's commentary is somehow flawed or riddled with mistakes. On the contrary, *GCA 2* succeeds in achieving what is seldom possible in academic writing; for it manages to combine painstaking erudition with pellucid clarity, and to offer a word-by-word, phrase-by-phrase analysis that both informs, and remains consistent with, MM's broader interpretation of Apuleius' text. While MM engages fully with other scholars' opinions, she offers many new astute observations of her own which provoke radical reassessments of previous interpretative assumptions about the text. In short, *GCA 2* is a superlative commentary, and will prove indispensable both to the fully committed onomaniac and to the more casual ass-essor.