

# Riding the Waves of Passion: an Exploration of an Image of Appetites in Apuleius' *Metamorphoses*<sup>1</sup>

GARETH SCHMELING  
University of Florida, Gainesville

SILVIA MONTIGLIO  
University of Wisconsin-Madison

The interrelation of Lucius' passions for food, hair, sex, and magic is signposted in the narrative by the recurrence of undulating movements. Moreover, similar images reappear emphatically in the description of Isis in book 11, a construct which bears out the continuity in Lucius' journey between his passion for magic and his religious initiation. Our analysis of the image of the wave in the *Metamorphoses* will support the interpretation that Lucius' initiation in book 11 is an evolvment, rather than an antithetical development, of his metamorphosis from man to ass in book 3.

The motif of the wave of emotion has most recently been studied by Stephen Harrison, who analyses Apuleius' exploitation of the epic metaphors of *fluctus* and *aestus* as signifiers of strong and often conflicting emotions.<sup>2</sup> We shall focus on a different application of the image, the kind of metaphor which stands closer to the proper use of the word than to the figurative, the literal meaning of the word retaining its original visibility:<sup>3</sup> waving hair, waving dresses, waving bodies, and their enticements.

---

<sup>1</sup> Maaïke Zimmerman has for many years stood at the center of studies on the ancient novel. She has been a role-model for, and an avid supporter of, young scholars, and an inspiration to her colleagues all over the world. The combination of a keen mind, a warm heart, and a ready smile has won for her a legion of friends, among which I am delighted to number myself (GS). We wish to thank the editors of this volume for helpful suggestions.

<sup>2</sup> Harrison 2005. See also Murgatroyd 1995.

<sup>3</sup> On this kind of metaphor, see McLaughlin 1990, 84.

Lucius' fascination with hair is well known, and it might reflect even Apuleius' own: his lush hair was a bone of contention in his trial (*Apologia* 4,11–13), the prosecution allegedly claiming that it was a mark of beauty, and Apuleius that it was shaggy and unkempt.<sup>4</sup> Though disparaging the state of his own hair, Apuleius goes to great length and rhetorical effort to describe it and perhaps 'doth protest too much.' He also discusses the presentation of male hair at *Florida* 3,8; 3,10; 15,7.<sup>5</sup> Lucius' own hair catches the reader's attention via Byrrhena's brief description of it at *Met.* 2,2,9: *flavum et inadfectatum*.<sup>6</sup>

After drawing a word-picture of Photis' allurements (2,7), Lucius breaks off to give a long *ekphrasis* on the beauty and importance of a woman's hair in general (2,8–9)<sup>7</sup> before resuming his description of Photis, this time of her hair. The *ekphrasis* on hair fits within contemporary rhetorical set-pieces, such as descriptions of women's hair in the ancient novel. Lucius praises hair as the main adornment for a woman, superior to robes, jewels, and even a perfect body. In this he would agree with St. Paul (*1 Corinthians* 11,15): 'But if a woman have long hair, it is a glory to her.'

Lucius, however, has more sophisticated coiffures before his eyes: the ideal woman's hair is anointed with perfumes and has deep and warm shades of color (2,8–9). By contrast, of Photis' hair he does not admire the color. In fact he does not even mention it. In light of his admiration for hair color in the *ekphrasis*, as well as of a literary stereotype going as far back as Homer (for instance in the epithet in *Il.* 15,133 *xanthos Menelaos*; *Il.* 1,197 Achilles has blond hair and at 2,673–674 is called the most handsome of the Greeks; *Od.* 13,399 Odysseus has blond hair; surprisingly so has Dido in *Aeneid* 4,590),<sup>8</sup> the lack of any reference to the color of Photis' hair is intriguing.

<sup>4</sup> See Walsh 1970, 152; Englert/Long 1972, 236–237; Hunink 1997, vol. 2, *ad loc.*; Harrison 2000, 53.

<sup>5</sup> See the comm. of Hunink 2001, 144 on *Florida* 15,7 and see Hilton 2001, 155 for a lively translation. That the beauty of hair or the lack thereof on men is discussed with some frequency in the early centuries A.D., see Petronius *Sat.* 109,8–10 for a poem referred to as a *capillorum elegidarium*; Suetonius *Dom.* 18 recalls that Domitian was sensitive about his baldness and wrote a tract *de Cura Capillorum*; in his *Encomium on Baldness*, Synesius preserves the short essay of Dio Chrysostom *Encomium on Hair*.

<sup>6</sup> All references to the text of Apuleius' *Metamorphoses* follow Robertson (1940–45). For Byrrhena's description of Lucius' appearance see Keulen in the present volume.

<sup>7</sup> See van Mal-Maeder (2001, 159–180), and her article on *ekphrasis* in this volume.

<sup>8</sup> Lucius' own hair, as we have seen, is praised at 2,2,9 for being *flavum*; van Mal-Maeder 2001, 76–77. Celebrating blondness is such a commonplace that it appears even in lower-

Rather than being taken by its color, Lucius is seduced by its casualness and, in particular by its unkempt waves loosely tied in a simple knot. Again in sharp contrast with the *ekphrasis*, which ends with the identification of hair and ornament (*nisi capillum distinxerit, ornata non possit audire*), Photis' hair derives its grace from an *inornatus ornatus*.<sup>9</sup> Its disorderly exuberance is conveyed by such terms as *dependulos* and *sensimque sinuato patagio residentes*.

Hair flowing with a natural waviness is considered a token of beauty in Greek and Roman antiquity. Though a how-to manual such as Ovid's *Ars Amatoria* realistically suggests that different hairdos suit different faces (3,133–168), and though wealthy Roman women tended to follow the latest fashion,<sup>10</sup> idealized pictures of female beauty consistently privilege naturally wavy hair. This preference is manifest in the ancient novels. Both Xenophon of Ephesus and Heliodorus picture their heroines as gifted with flowing locks. Thus Anthia's hair is 'golden — a little of it plaited, but most hanging loose and blowing in the wind' (1,2).<sup>11</sup> Likewise Charicleia boasts of hair 'neither tightly plaited nor yet altogether loose: where it hung long down her neck, it cascaded over her back and shoulders, but on her crown and temples, where it grew in rosebud curls golden as the sun, it was wreathed with soft shoots of bay that held it in place and prevented any unseemly blowing in the breeze' (Heliod. 3,4).<sup>12</sup>

---

class epitaphs, as in the one of Allia Potestas (*aurata capillis*): *CIL* 6,37965,17. On this inscription see Horsfall 1985.

<sup>9</sup> *inornatus ornatus* Lipsius in Oudendorp (1786): *inordinatus ornatus* F, edd. The reading of F mixes the 'cosmic' [*inordinatus* is regularly used for celestial bodies but never applied to hair; Lipsius adduced *de Mundo* 2 *inordinatum ... ordinem servant (stellae)*] with the 'cosmetic' (*ornatus*). But *inornatus ornatus* responds perfectly to the Greek expression κόσμος ἄκοσμος: 'cosmic' in *AP* 7,561,5–6, 'cosmetic' in *AP* 9,323,3. Lipsius grasped the parallels in the *figura etymologica: inornatus ornatus ~ inordinatum ... ordinem*. Not only is *inornatus* used of loosely hanging hair [Ovid *Met.* 1,497–498; Tibullus 2,3,25–26; see also van Mal-Maeder 2001, 178–179], but together with *ornatus* reflects Apuleius' fondness for paronomasia (*Met.* 5,1,6 *domus sine pretio pretiosae*; see Zimmerman et al. 2004, 120). Further, *inornatus* makes a better antithesis with *operosus* (*sed in mea Photide non operosus, sed inornatus ornatus addebat gratiam*). Apuleius often sets up an interplay of stylistic notions with concrete notions of ornament (hair-style); see Finkelpearl 1998, 62–63 (who, however, reads *inordinatus*). Cf. Callebat 1998, 177, who cites *inordinatus ornatus* as an example of oxymoron combined with antithesis.

<sup>10</sup> See Gross 1979.

<sup>11</sup> Translations from the Greek novels are those in Reardon 1989.

<sup>12</sup> See also Achilles Tatius 1,4: 'light blond hair — blond and curly;' 1,19: 'her hair had more natural curls than spiral ivy.'

These descriptions, however, share only partial traits with Lucius': neither Anthia or Charicleia has unkempt hair. Moreover, the natural movement of their hair is only one aspect of its beauty. Color is as important, and tresses replace the simple knot on Photis' head.<sup>13</sup> The description of Charicleia's hair in particular calls to mind the image of the Grace *Pulchritudo* in Botticelli's *Primavera*. As Edgar Wind has finely noted,<sup>14</sup> the three Graces, whom Vasari named (from left to right) Pleasure, Chastity and Beauty, allegorize contemporary Neoplatonic ideals by means of their demeanors, dresses, and hairdos: Pleasure leans forward, wears a richly draped and flowing robe and very luxuriant hair, a part of which is loosely bound in serpentine knots; Chastity stands discreetly and wears a suitably plain dress and neatly plaited hair; Beauty, who Neoplatonically represents the synthesis and the culmination of the triad, wears hair which is neither too loose nor too tight.

Photis' hair seems to resemble Pleasure's rather than Beauty's: it is voluptuous, exuberant, and loosely bound. As we shall see, the knot, probably meant to prevent her hair from falling into the pot which she is stirring, also has a clear symbolic meaning, for Photis will 'bind' Lucius by erotic and magic charms. Indeed, the spectacle of Photis' hair has an unbearably erotic effect on Lucius. Unable to endure any longer 'the excruciating torture of such intense pleasure' (*voluptatis eximiae*),<sup>15</sup> he plants a kiss on her neck, exactly where her hair rises.

Another important difference between the description of the hair of Photis and that of the heroines of other ancient novels is that in the latter case, the beautiful movement of the hair matches the equally beautiful movement of a long dress and jewels (as in the description of life-like serpents encrusted on a gold band around Charicleia's breast in Heliodorus 3,4), whereas Photis' undulating hair is complemented not by the flowing movement of an ornate robe but by the undulations of her body. Xenophon and Heliodorus combine hair and clothes into dress. Lucius, on the other hand, in his *ekphrasis* at 2,8–9 claims that hair is the *only* true dress for a woman. To be stripped of hair is tantamount to being stripped of clothes (2,8,5: *si ... caput*

<sup>13</sup> *Contra*: van Mal-Maeder 2001, 182, who sees more similarities between Photis' and Charicleia's hair. We find her reference to Horace, *Odes* 2,11,23–24 more relevant for the description of Photis' hair: *incomptum Lacaena / more comae religata nodum* (the subject is a *scortum*). See the comments of Nisbet/Hubbard 1978.

<sup>14</sup> Wind 1968, 113–119.

<sup>15</sup> The translations of Apuleius' *Metamorphoses* are from Hanson 1989.

*capillo spoliaveris et faciem nativa specie nudaveris*). A woman might wish to take off her clothes to show her beauty, but should she remove her hair, not even as Venus would she appeal to Vulcan. Lucius is fantasizing about a naked woman adorned only by her hair.

Photis will turn out to be just such a woman. But let us first take up Lucius' description of Photis immediately prior to his *ekphrasis* on hair. This description directs the reader both to the enticing smell of food and to the equally enticing movement of Photis' body in the preparation of it. The dominant note in her movement is again undulation. She is wearing only a tunic, and Lucius, as it were, sees through it. His eye is entirely captured by the sinuous rotations and shaking of her limbs, hips, and spine; *undabat*, the last word in the description, sums up the scene. The effect on Lucius is so strongly erotic that in the end he imagines Photis stirring the pot no longer with her hands, as at the beginning (2,7,3 *vasculum floridis palmulis rotabat in circulum*), but with her buttocks: *quam pulchre ... ollulam istam cum natibus intorques* (2,7,5). The ambivalent *cum natibus*, 'by means of which' as well as 'together with,' suggests that Lucius has come to identify the preparation of food with the undulation of Photis' lower body.<sup>16</sup>

Photis' undulating body parts are put into a frame of reference of food preparation, the description of which provides a transparent disguise for hors d'oeuvre as sexual foreplay (2,7,3-6): *cibarium vasculum floridis palmulis rotabat in circulum ... inquam 'Photis mea, ollulam istam cum natibus intorques ... felix et <certo> certius beatus, cui permiseris illuc digitum intingere.'*

A *vasculum* is a small vessel (*vas*) with two handles, which Photis turns with her hands and shakes, but it quickly becomes an *ollulam ... cum natibus*. It seems that the *vasculum*, 'with the *ansae* perhaps suggestive of the testicles,'<sup>17</sup> is transferred by Apuleius from its reference to a male sexual organ to the female: the concave shape of the *vasculum* overrides its usual meaning of a male tool with two testicles, and then further it is transferred to an *ollulam* = *cunus*,<sup>18</sup> with two *natibus*. The playfulness of words is contrived here to allow Lucius to employ a consistent erotic image of body parts

<sup>16</sup> On *cum* with the ablative of instrument/accompaniment/manner, see Hofmann/Szantyr 1965, 126, 259. The rotating movement of Photis' buttocks recalls various dance-figures performed by courtesans, which involve the gyration of the lower body; see McClure 2003, 121.

<sup>17</sup> See Adams 1982, 41.

<sup>18</sup> See Adams 1982, 29.

and parts of meals leading to his concluding statement that ‘it would be a lucky man to whom you would grant the right to dip his finger there’ — and thus get a taste of your cooking. For now Lucius is not suggesting full-blown sex, but just a little appetizer of the main course which he would taste by dipping his finger into it.

Both Photis and Lucius enjoy the foreplay in the vocabulary of hors d’oeuvre, and both are emphatic about extending the duration of that foreplay. Photis says to Lucius (2,7): *discede ... procul a meo foculo, discede*, and Lucius takes to delivering a long *ekphrasis* on hair (2,8–9), and then goes off to Milo’s table (2,11–15) — where we learn that Photis serves the food (2,11) but not that anyone eats it or what it tastes like. Photis’ comments on the long foreplay and on Lucius’ mounting eagerness at 2,10, when he kisses her hair, *dulce et amarum gustulum carpis*, indicate even more sexual appetizers. When, however, at 2,15 Lucius finds food and wine in his room, which again he refers to as appetizers before Venus’ gladiatorial games (*gladiatoriae Veneris antecenia*), the hors d’oeuvre have been stretched as far as possible, and the *cena* is about to be served.

In his lengthy description of foreplay as hors d’oeuvre, which whet the appetite for the banquet to come, Apuleius seems to have Petronius’ *Satyrica* in mind. Petronius at 24,7 in a *pervigilium Priapi* describes sex as a meal with many courses: Quartilla employs the word *vasculum* to describe a youth’s sexual organ and then adds a somewhat dark reference to an *asellus*: *pertracto vasculo tam rudi ‘haec’ inquit ‘belle cras in promulside libidinis nostrae militabit, hodie enim post asellum diaria non sumo’* (Then she slipped her hand into his clothes and felt his immature tool. ‘Tomorrow this will serve nicely as hors d’oeuvre to tempt my appetite,’ she said. ‘For the present, I don’t want any ordinary stuffing after such a nice cod-piece.’<sup>19</sup>). Apuleius must have smiled at the use of *vasculum* and courses of food to indicate ever more serious sexual levels but then laughed out loud at *post asellum diaria non sumo*. To Petronius *asellus* is a person who like an ass has an uncommonly large sexual appetite: *Priapea* 52,9–10; Juvenal 9,92. When Quartilla mentions *asellus*, she is probably referring to a recent coupling with Ascyltus who is described (Petron. 92,9) as having huge sexual equipment. At *Met.* 10,22,1 Apuleius has a *matrona quaedam* seek out Lucius the ass, because he has a *vastum genitale*, after which (*post asellum*) everyday fare will not measure up.

<sup>19</sup> Translated by Sullivan 1986.

Lucius and Photis have been provisioning the ‘Ship of Venus’ (*navigium Veneris*, 2,11,3) with food and wine to prepare for their sexual journey. The image of the ‘Ship of Venus,’ which casts sex itself (rather than its appetizers) as a wavy movement, is a variation on the familiar metaphor of ‘the sea of love.’<sup>20</sup> An interesting elaboration of this image appears in Achilles Tatius’ novel (5,16,2–8). Clitophon and Melite, who are sailing to Ephesus after their wedding, disagree on the suitability of a ship for sex. The reluctant man claims that a ship is unfit for the consummation of their *gamos*: ‘Do you wish to have a wedding-bed that moves?’ he asks Melite. We are reminded of Odysseus’ unmovable bed, carved from an olive-tree still rooted in the soil, a bed that stays firm (*empedon*) unless its base is cut off (*Odyssey* 23,203–204). The stability of the wedding-bed signifies the stability of marriage. Melite, in contrast, argues that a ship is the ideal setting for sex, because Aphrodite was born from the sea, and she even finds features of the ship to be emblems of marriage.

The Ship of Love of Lucius and Photis is about to sail on rolling waves. When the lovers finally meet at night, more undulating movements — this time of both Photis’ body and her hair — animate their erotic encounter (2,16–17). Pained by a penis stretched as tightly as a bow-string about to break, the first favor Lucius asks Photis is not to relieve his tension but to loosen her hair and then to embrace him ‘with your hair rippling like waves’ (*capillo fluenter undante*). Photis herself is a creature of the sea, a Venus just rising from the waves (*quae marinos fluctus subit*). Like the woman of his fantasy, she has only her undulating — and still colorless — hair as dress: ‘Having stripped herself of all her clothes and let down her hair ...’ The movement of her body in love-making repeats the movement of her hair as it first appeared to Lucius (2,17,4 *pendulae Veneris* of her body; see *dependulos* of her hair at 2,9,7; *super me sensim residens* of her body; see *sensimque sinuato patagio residentes* of her hair at 2,9,7).<sup>21</sup> Photis’ hair waves and sprawls over her shoulders just as her body waves and sprawls over Lucius. The movement of her body in love-making also repeats the sinuous motion

<sup>20</sup> On the metaphor, see Murgatroyd 1995; Ieranò 2003 develops intriguing parallels between the exploitation of this image in classical literature and in more modern traditions.

<sup>21</sup> Elsewhere in the *Metamorphoses*, *pendulus* connotes erotic lubricity: it describes Cupid’s curls viewed through the eyes of Psyche (*pendulos* at 5,13,3, *alios antependulos*, *alios retropendulos* at 5,22,5), as well as the hair of the *cinaedi* priests of the Syrian goddess (8,24,2 and 8,27,5), and of the beautiful widow at 2,23. The adjective itself has an obscene meaning when applied to the *membrum virile*; see Adams 1982, 57.

of her limbs, as she is preparing that delicious food (see especially *mobilem spinam quatiens* at 2,17,4, repeating *spinam mobilem quatiens placide decenter undabat* at 2,7,3).<sup>22</sup>

The description of the swinging/undulating motion of Photis' body, as she begins to make love to Lucius (2,17), *super me sensim residens ... mobilem spinam quatiens, pendulae Veneris*, apparently reproduces a popular representation of sex and is strikingly similar (Apuleius borrows once again from Petronius or from a common source) in spirit and detail to the scene in the *Satyrica* 140,7–9, where the swinging motion of the coupled bodies of Philomela's daughter and Eumolpus is referred to as a game called *oscillatio*: *puellam quidem exoravit ut sederet super commendatam bonitatem ... sic inter mercennarium amicumque positus senex veluti oscillatione ludebat* ('... he begged the girl to sit on top of the upright nature to which she had been entrusted ... Placed in this way between his servant and his lady friend the old man looked as though he was playing on a swing.'). Jacobelli 1995, Tav. II provides photographs from Pompei of just such a *pendula Venus* or *oscillatio*.<sup>23</sup>

The story of Cupid and Psyche emphasizes the allurements of wavy movements of hair and body by attributing opposite qualities to the unappealing husbands of Psyche's sisters: one is 'balder than a pumpkin' (5,9,8), the other, plagued by arthritis, has fingers so *duratos* (5,10,2) that he could not 'dip them into any pot,' as Lucius undoubtedly can (2,7); quite the opposite, that arthritic husband hardly ever pays tribute to his wife's Venus.<sup>24</sup>

Photis' undulating movements, however, cause a very different kind of stiffness on Lucius. P.G. Walsh comments that 'Photis *enchants* [our emphasis] the hero with her physical attractions ...'.<sup>25</sup> The description of Photis' attractions ends with *undabat*, and the magic of her charms renders Lucius *defixus*, stunned by magic, and immobile (*obstupui et mirabundus steti*) except for his member which 'stands at attention' (*steterunt et membra*, a pun: *steti/steterunt*). The first words he is able to utter are again a fantasy on the powers of Photis' gyrating body, and in particular of her buttocks which, as we have seen, to Lucius' eyes seem to be stirring the pot. The references to

<sup>22</sup> For the repetition, see van Mal-Maeder 2001, 151.

<sup>23</sup> See also the Appendix II in van Mal-Maeder 2001, 413–415, with further references.

<sup>24</sup> Cf. *Met.* 5,10,1 *rarissimo venerem meam recolentem*, with Zimmerman et al. 2004, 173 ad loc.

<sup>25</sup> See Walsh 1970, 152.



agitating motion continue when Photis adds in conclusion, connecting food and sex: ‘I know how to shake (*quatere*) a pot and a bed to equal delight.’

The next woman whom Lucius sees naked is Pamphile (3,21). Like Photis, she is shaking her limbs (3,21,4 *membra tremulo succussu quatit*) in fluctuating movements (3,21,5 *fluctuantibus*). This spectacle elicits the same response in Lucius as his viewing of Photis’ undulating body while she cooks (3,22,1 *stupore defixus*; see 2,7,4 *defixus obstupui*). This identical response connects Lucius’ erotic passion and his passion for magic. He had already identified these two appetites when he had begged Photis to introduce him into the secret world of magic. He had called himself *magiae noscendae ardentissimus cupitor* (3,19,4) and acknowledged her role as both lover and magician: Photis is no inexperienced practitioner of magic, since she initiated him into the pleasures of a woman’s embraces, which he had formerly spurned, to the point where he no longer plans to go home (3,19,6). She turns out to be a reincarnation of Homer’s Circe, the only attraction who makes Odysseus forget his journey home.<sup>26</sup> The connection between Lucius’ erotic passion and his passion for magic is brought to the forefront again in his reply to Photis’ concern for his possible lack of faithfulness. He swears, quite uncommonly, by her hair, and more precisely *per dulcem istum capilli tui nodulum, quo meum vinxisti spiritum* (3,23,2; see *in summum verticem nodus astrinxerat*, 2,9,7).<sup>27</sup> The binding is both erotic and magical.

The third woman who has the power to render Lucius *defixus* is Isis: after he recovers human shape, he stands *stupore nimio defixus* (11,14,1). Lucius’ experience of Isis closely resembles his experience of Photis. In addition to leaving him spellbound, it has the long-lasting effect of alienating him from his home. We have just seen that Photis/Circe makes him forgetful of his journey home. Similarly Lucius finds it very difficult to break the bonds of his longing for the goddess and go back home (11,24) — where he

<sup>26</sup> *Odyssey* 10,472. See Montiglio 2005, 58–61. Lucius’ description of Photis’ hair can be read as an expansion of the Homeric epithet *kalliplokamoio*, which is applied to Circe (*Odyssey* 10,220). Another feature which Photis shares with Circe is her active role in love-making: just as Circe takes the initiative, Photis sits on top and ‘plays the boy’ to an exhausted Lucius (3,20,4. The meaning of *puerile corollarium* is not clear, but doubtlessly Photis is the one who takes the initiative).

<sup>27</sup> Van der Paardt 1971, 172 lists no other such oaths for *nodulum/capilli* and comments on the magic power of knots/binding. On the magic power of knots, see also Unnik 1947, 84. Pamphile’s love-charm at 3,18,2 involves the tying of hair in a knot.

will stay only briefly, the goddess urging him after a few days to leave again, this time for Rome.

Like Photis, Isis is characterized by images of waviness. As she appears to Lucius in a dream, the first feature that he admires is her hair: *iam primum crines* ... (11,3,4). As has been noted,<sup>28</sup> this obsession for hair and the description of Isis' hair which follows hark back to the scene in which Lucius is equally taken by Photis' hair.<sup>29</sup> Both descriptions emphasize the flowing of the woman's hair: Isis' is loosely spread over her neck in thick curls.<sup>30</sup> Her dress waves like her hair — and like Photis' body. The latter association is suggested by verbal echoes: *dependula* and especially *decoriter confluctuabat*, which resonate with *decenter undabat* describing the movement of Photis' body stirring the pot at 2,7. Isis' dress is graced by the same sensuality as Photis' body (see also *perfluebat ambitus* at 11,4,1). Griffiths 1975, 54 comments that Isis' 'epiphany and image in chs. 3–4 is lusciously sensuous.'

The recurrence of the image of the wave in the description of Isis might be grounded in her cultic connection with the sea. Isis carries a boat-shaped object (11,4), and she herself highlights her function as the protector of sailors when she orders Lucius to join the holy procession which opens the sailing season (11,5–6; see 11,17).<sup>31</sup> An untried keel will be dedicated to the goddess 'as the first fruits of voyaging.' Among the sacred objects carried by the initiates there is a lamp fashioned like a boat with a large flame at its center (11,10,3).<sup>32</sup> The image of the wave, however, because of its sensual connotations in the *Metamorphoses*, also brings out elements of eroticism in Lucius' initiation. The initiation stands in a relationship of continuity with, rather than of opposition to, his erotic passion for Photis leading to his discovery of magic. Lucius' experience of Isis is described in language similar to that of his introduction to magic: then (3,15,5) he is asked to keep (*custodias*) his knowledge of magic locked in 'the inner temple of your god-fearing heart (*religiosi pectoris tui penetralibus*);' now (11,25,6) he will store the

<sup>28</sup> See Englert/Long 1972–73; van Mal-Maeder 2001, 21–22; 259.

<sup>29</sup> We might look at Delia in Tibullus 1,3, in which she is portrayed as a devotee of Isis who worships the deity (1,3,31) *resoluta crines* and thus also stirs the emotions of Tibullus, as a general model for the religious follower = erotic partner = woman with unbound hair.

<sup>30</sup> Griffiths 1975, 123–124 notes that Isis' coiffure can show hair that is 'thickly entwined' or 'tresses falling loosely on the shoulders ...'

<sup>31</sup> On Isis' connection with the sea, sailors, and boats, see Griffiths 1975, 31–37.

<sup>32</sup> Though it is not specified that the boat belongs to Isis, it is very likely, because the boat is the first cultic object mentioned in a procession celebrating her mysteries.

ineffable image of the goddess ‘in the secret places of my heart (*intra pectoris mei secreta*), forever guarding (*custodiens*) it and picturing it to myself.’ Moreover, as Danielle van Mal-Maeder points out, the parallels between the descriptions of Photis’ and Isis’ hair suggests thematic continuity.<sup>33</sup> Lucius’ expression of devotion for Isis at 11,25 can indeed be read, with Carl Schlam, ‘as an ironic echo... of Lucius’ earlier remark on his policy of contemplating the beauty of a woman’s head of hair.’<sup>34</sup> Just as he was accustomed first to contemplate a woman’s hair in public, then to enjoy it at home (2,8,2), he will picture the ineffable image of the goddess in the recesses of his heart. Faced with the difficulty of giving voice to an unspeakable spiritual joy, Lucius remembers his private erotic enjoyment of a woman’s most appealing feature.

The continuity between Lucius’ erotic passion and his religious experience is enhanced by another implicit connection between Photis and Isis through their shared association with Venus rising from the waters. As we have seen, Photis is compared to Venus at 2,17,1. Isis, like Photis/Venus, also rises from the sea (11,3,2). It is not by chance that Venus makes a glamorous appearance in the pantomime scene at 10,32,3, shortly before Isis appears to Lucius. And we are not surprised to discover that here Venus advances with undulating movement: *leniter fluctuante spinula*, an unmistakable echo of *spinam mobilem quatiens placide decenter undabat* and *mobilem spinam quatiens*, which describe Photis’ swirling body at 2,7 and 2,17. Finally, Photis’ pot and indeed the very stirring of it (2,7,3 *vasculum floridis palmulis rotabat in circumum*) are reinterpreted as one of Isis’ cult objects, itself a *vasculum*, and one ‘rounded like a breast’ (11,10,6 *in modum papillae rotundatum*). Into a cult whose leader is closely connected with images of waves, even transvestites who walk ‘with a swirling gait’ (11,8,2 *incessu perfluo*) are admitted.

So what about the end of the *Metamorphoses*, where Lucius, the hero gifted with *flavum et in affectatum capillitium* (2,2,9) and obsessed with women’s hair and its waves, walks out of the narrative, proud (*gaudens*) of his baldness, to meet (*obvio*) his next challenge? Might this scene suggest a radical change in the young man’s and in Apuleius’ values, in keeping with

---

<sup>33</sup> See van Mal-Maeder 2001, 22.

<sup>34</sup> See Schlam 1980, 133.

their new-found religion? Probably not.<sup>35</sup> As Stephen Harrison has amply demonstrated, Apuleius in the *Metamorphoses* is not promoting the Isis-cult but displaying his intimate knowledge of it.<sup>36</sup> Apuleius' playfulness in treating the motif of mystical silence emphasizes his unrelenting epideictic exuberance. At 11,23,5 Lucius first refuses to speak of forbidden rites, but then says: 'Since your suspense, however, is perhaps (*forsitan*) a matter of religious longing, I will not continue to torture you and keep you in anguish.' Though he claims that his descriptions are no longer meant to satisfy the reader's curiosity, he hardly observes the secrecy that the cult requires, and justifies his decision to speak openly by mocking the reader's truest motives for wanting to be privy to secret knowledge: *perhaps* you want to hear my story owing to your religious feelings — but perhaps for less elevated reasons. Lucius himself admits to having broken the rule of silence: 'Behold, I have told you things which perforce you may not know, although you have heard them.'

Within such an interpretive framework Lucius' display of baldness is simply a feature of the Isis-cult, knowledge of which Apuleius is proud to display. It does not mean that Apuleius has renounced his passion for hair. Instead, we would like to suggest that the emphasis on baldness in the final scene indicates that the *Metamorphoses* is over. A narrative that has sprawled ivy-like from story to story, as luxuriant and undulating as the hair which Lucius so much admires, is cut off at the same time as his own hair.<sup>37</sup>

---

<sup>35</sup> *Contra*: Englert and Long 1972, 239, who argue that Lucius' initiation brings about a 'total release' from his earliest vices, the latter being epitomized by his obsession for hair, now cut: 'freed from sexual bondage, he is freed also from what was the principal feature of his earlier condition: his obsession with hair.' Hunink 1997, vol. 2, 25 follows this interpretation. Nethercut 1969, 128 thinks along similar lines: 'That the attractions hair holds for Lucius now belong to Isis underlines the transference of his affections and may be thought to point up his conversion from one manner of living to another, *drastically opposed*' (our emphasis). As we have noted, however, the sensuality of Isis' hair speaks rather in favor of a continuity between Lucius' erotic drive and his religious experience. Contrary to Nethercut 127, we think that Lucius' initiation does not even entail a vow of chastity, but only the observance of periods of chastity. Apuleius calls them *castimonia* (11,6,7; 11,19,3). As Griffiths 1975, 291 indicates, *castimonia* are periods 'of abstinence from food and sexual intercourse,' and *castimniorum abstinentiam* at 11,19,3 is translated by him (p. 273) as 'abstinence consisting of rules of chastity.' The plural indeed suggests ritual rules, not a permanent condition.

<sup>36</sup> See Harrison 2000, 226 and 243.

<sup>37</sup> For a different reading of Lucius' baldness at the end of the *Met.* see James and O'Brien in this volume.

## Bibliography

- Adams, J.N. 1982. *The Latin Sexual Vocabulary*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Callebat, L. 1998. 'Formes et modes d'expression dans les *Métamorphoses* d'Apulée', in: L. Callebat, *Langages du roman latin*, Hildesheim–Zürich–New York: Olms, 123–180 (originally appeared in *ANRW* II 34.2, 1616–1664).
- Englert, J., Long, T. 1972. 'Functions of Hair in Apuleius' *Metamorphoses*', *CJ* 68, 236–239.
- Finkelpearl, E. 1998. *Metamorphosis of Language in Apuleius. A Study of Allusion in the Novel*, Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- Griffiths, J. Gwyn. 1975. *Apuleius of Madauros: the Isis-Book (Metamorphoses, Book XI)*, Edited with an Introduction, Translation and Commentary, Leiden: Brill.
- Gross, W.H. 1979. 'Haartracht', *Der Kleine Pauly*, Munich: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, coll. 897–899.
- Hanson, J.A., ed. and trans., 1989. *Apuleius Metamorphoses*, 2 vols., Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Harrison, S. 2000. *Apuleius. A Latin Sophist*, Oxford: OUP.
- Harrison, S. 2005. "'Waves of Emotion": An Epic Metaphor in Apuleius' *Metamorphoses*', in: Harrison, S., Paschalis, M., Frangoulidis, S. (eds.), *Metaphor in the Ancient Novel (Ancient Narrative, Suppl. 4)*, Groningen: Barkhuis Publishing & The University Library Groningen, 163–176.
- Hofmann, J., Szantyr, A. 1965. *Lateinische Syntax und Stilistik*, Munich: Beck.
- Horsfall, N. 1985. 'CIL VI 37965 = CLE 1988 (Epitaph of Allia Potestas): a Commentary', *ZPE* 61, 251–272.
- Hunink, V. 1997. *Apuleius of Madauros: pro se de Magia (Apologia)*, Edition and Commentary, 2 vols. Amsterdam: Gieben.
- Hunink, V. 2001. *Apuleius of Madauros. Florida*, Edited with a Commentary, Amsterdam: Gieben.
- Hilton, J.L. 2001. 'Apuleius, *Florida*', in: Stephen Harrison (ed.), *Apuleius: Rhetorical Works*, Translated and Annotated by Harrison, S., Hilton, J., and Hunink, V. Oxford: OUP, 121–176.
- Ieranò, G. 2003. 'Il mare d'amore', in: Belloni, L. et al. (eds.), *L'officina ellenistica: poesia dotta e popolare in Grecia e a Roma*, Trento: Università degli studi di Trento, Dipartimento di Scienze filologiche e storiche, 199–238 (Labirinti, 69).
- Jacobelli, L. 1995. *Le pitture erotiche delle Terme Suburbane di Pompei*, Roma: L'Erma di Bretschneider.
- Mal-Maeder, D. van. 2001. *Apuleius Madaurensis Metamorphoses, Livre II*, Groningen: Egbert Forsten.
- McClure, L. 2003. *Courtesans at Table*, New York: Routledge.
- McLaughlin, T. 1990. 'Figurative Language', in: Lentricchia, F., McLaughlin, T. (eds.), *Critical Terms for Literary Study*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 80–90.
- Montiglio, S. 2005. *Wandering in Ancient Greek Culture*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- Murgatroyd, P. 1995. 'The Sea of Love', *CQ* 45, 9–25.
- Nethercut, W. 1969. 'Apuleius' *Metamorphoses: the Journey*', *AGON* 3, 97–134.
- Nisbet, R.G.M. and Hubbard, M. 1978. *A Commentary on Horace: Odes, Book 2*, Oxford: Clarendon Press.

- Paardt, R.T. van der. 1971. *L. Apuleius Madaurensis. The Metamorphoses: a Commentary on Book III with Text and Introduction*, Amsterdam: Hakkert.
- Reardon, B.P., ed., 1989. *Collected Ancient Greek Novels*, Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Robertson, D., ed. 1940–45. *Apulée les Métamorphoses*, Paris: Les Belles Lettres.
- Schlam, C. 1980. 'Man and Animal in the *Metamorphoses* of Apuleius', in: B.L. Hijmans et al. (eds.), *Symposium Apuleianum Groningantum*, Groningen: Klassiek Instituut van de Rijksuniversiteit, 115–139.
- Sullivan, J.P., trans., 1986. *Petronius Satyricon*, Harmondsworth: Penguin.
- Unnik, W.C. van 1947. 'Les cheveux défaits des femmes baptisées: un rite de baptême dans l'ordre ecclésiastique d'Hippolyte', *Vigiliae Christianae* 1, 77–100.
- Walsh, P.G. 1970. *The Roman Novel*, Cambridge: CUP.
- Wind, E. 1968. *Pagan Mysteries in the Renaissance*, New York: W.W. Norton.
- Zimmerman M., Panayotakis S., Hunink V., Keulen W.H., Harrison S.J., McCreight T.D., Wesseling B., van Mal-Maeder D. 2004. *Apuleius Madaurensis Metamorphoses, Books IV,28 – VI,24. Cupid and Psyche. Text, Introduction and Commentary*, Groningen: Egbert Forsten.