A Tale of Two Texts:
Apuleius' *sermo Milesius* and Plato's *Symposium*

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Diotimae Groningensi charisterion

Writing and speaking, dialogue and satire

The man who invented the word 'philosopher', the divine Pythagoras, passed on to us the insight that *seven* was the number most fitting to religious observance (*Met.* 11,1). He did not, however, write this down, or indeed any other part of his teaching. Nor did Socrates, a man himself more perfect than any other and to whose wisdom the god Apollo himself testified (*Soc.* 17, *Met.* 10,33). Once, then, Socrates had left mankind (*Plat.* 1,3), Plato, a man with the same birthday as Apollo and Diana (*Plat.* 1,1), turned to writing philosophy and he did so in the form of *dialogues*, a choice that is – and was – by no means obvious.

In the *Seventh Letter*, Plato (if it is him) is much concerned with the shortcomings of Dionysios. For Dionysios has written down the philosophy he supposes he has learnt from Plato and from others as 'his own *techne*' (341b), which suggests a didactic form, a closed system of information and instruction, in particular a rhetorical treatise. What follows is a statement which, if genuine, must bear on Plato's choice of the dialogue form (341c–d):

> οὔκουν ἐμόν γε περὶ αὐτῶν ἔστιν σύγγραμμα οὐδὲ μήποτε γένηται· ῥητὸν γὰρ οὐδαμῶς ἐστιν ὡς ἄλλα μαθήματα, ἀλλ' ἐκ πολλῆς συνουσίας γιγνομένης περὶ τὸ πρᾶγμα αὐτὸ καὶ τοῦ συζῆν ἐξαίφνης, οἷον ἀπὸ πυρὸς πηδήσαντος ἐξαφθὲν φῶς, ἐν τῇ ψυχῇ γενόμενον αὐτὸ ἑαυτὸ ἤδη τρέφει.

> So there is no writing of mine on the subject and there will not ever be, because it cannot just be enunciated like other disciplines. Instead, as a result of long conversation about the particular subject and sharing each other's company, suddenly – like a spark of light from the leaping of a flame – something arises in the soul and can now make itself grow.

It is out of the process of scrutiny and malice-free question-and-answer that the spark of understanding and intuition about each problem arises (344b). And the conclusion would apparently be justified that it is the function of Platonic dialogue, as a form of writing, to represent that 'anagogic' process.[1]

This brings us to a curious fact about the *Metamorphoses* observed by Irene de Jong. The opening of the novel may be regarded as being in dialogue form: she highlights the use of *at* to begin apparently in mid-conversation, the use of the second person pronoun in the phrase *ego tibi* and of the second-person demonstrative *isto*, and the apparent intrusion of a dialogue partner with *quis ille* (de Jong 2001, 202–203). She then considers how Platonic dialogues sometimes begin in mid-conversation and how the *Symposium* in particular provides a model for the repetition of a story already told, just as Aristomenes will repeat a tale for Lucius (1,2) and, we may add, Lucius is rehearsing his own story, the previously existing story of the Ass, for the Apuleian reader. The link to the *Symposium* for de Jong is a case of intertextuality and a 'literary model' (204). It is maybe a larger matter, however, that the *Metamorphoses* is initially marked as dialogue.

The dialogue form, as was observed long ago by Leo (see de Jong 2001, 202) and in modern times by Jim Tatum (1979, 26), is reminiscent of the manner of some Roman satire, which in turn has its own links to the serio-comic communication strategy of some Hellenistic philosophers, notably Menippos. So, Horatian *sermo*, and Persius and Juvenal's satiric manner, can hover tantalisingly between apostrophe and dialogue.[2] To Menippos of course we owe prosimetric Menippean Satire, constantly leaping from one horse to another; and this in turn leads to the challenging, provocative and destabilising environment of Petronius' *Satyricon*, as well as to the remark-

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[1] *anagogique*, Thibau 1965, 94; the *epanodos* (95) is indifferently that of Psyche, Lucius, or the reader.

[2] For the characteristics that Apuleius' narrator shares with the pose of the Roman satirist, such as a *sermo* with an imaginary audience or an apostrophe of the indignant moralist, see Zimmerman 2006, especially 99–100.

able mirage half a century ago of Petronius as moralist and satirist.[3] In different hands, a satiric method, much concerned with issues of moral and cultural authority, led to the never less than instructive disquisitions of Lucian. He too challenges the reader by bringing a world to life, registering its words and conflicts, sometimes expressly in dialogue form and always with an awareness of other, discordant, voices. Culture and values, whether moral or aesthetic, philosophical or rhetorical, attract dialogic presentation.

Narrative structure and prologue

It is not only the dialogic opening of the *Metamorphoses* but its whole structure that leads us back to Plato and to the *Symposium*.

The method of frame and insertion[4] in Apuleius has elicited comment over the years, whether on the basis of meaningfulness or of entertaining episodicity. However, on the middle ground, perhaps few would have difficulty with the idea that there is sufficient unity for the novel to function well for readers and there is a sense of theme and variations. In Merkelbach language,[5] we might say,

> Den irdischen Erlebnissen des Lucius und der Charite entsprechen die mythischen der Psyche. Es ist ein einziges Grundthema, das uns in verschiedenen Variationen entgegentritt.[6]

But, whatever the precise way in which you join Lucius, Charite and Psyche, there is a clear sense of theme and variation, something which is fundamental to Apuleius' metamorphic method throughout this novel.[7] A remarkable precedent for this structure, with an authority all its own, is of course the presentation of the theme of *eros* through a varied sequence of discourses in the *Symposium*. What other texts suggested this structure?

The origins of the *Metamorphoses* lie in the lost *Metamorphoses* of Loukios of Patrai, the *Vorlage* for both Apuleius's novel and the *Onos*. The

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[3] See Arrowsmith 1966.

[4] There is only the tale of Socrates to Aristomenes that is at one further level of depth in the hierarchy.

[5] Cf. Dowden 2005.

[6] Merkelbach 1962, 3, cited in the context of his discussion by Thibau 1965, 91 n. 5.

[7] Dowden 1993, esp. 96–107.

Onos, however, lacks the inserted tales – unless §34 counts, with its brief report of the cataclysm that overwhelms the unnamed Charite and Tlepolemos. As for the *Vorlage*, we may argue over the extent to which it possessed inserted tales. It is possible that it had none and that it is Apuleius' conception to introduce them. But the likeliest position is that the *Vorlage*, though it had some, had far, far fewer than Apuleius and it is a major part of Apuleius' method to introduce new, thematically appropriate, stories into the frame.[8] Thus the immediate origins of his text do not resolve the structural issue.

Perhaps he was aware of some Greek novels, depending on how you date the *Metamorphoses* and the novels, but it is unlikely they provided him with this method. He could have known Antonius Diogenes' *Wonders beyond Thule*[9] – and Photios certainly thought that Antonius Diogenes influenced the *Vorlage* (Photios, *Bibl.* 111b *fin.*). However, though there are many instances of subordinate narration in Antonius Diogenes, they seem to result from re-ordering the plot, telling what is not yet known, rather than from insertion of separate stories.

The *Odyssey* lies in the background of Apuleius's text, as of the other novels. But Odysseus' lying stories, Nestor's cattle-raiding, the story of Meleager are not specially close. The nearest is the sequence of adventures that Odysseus tells to Alkinoös, a sequence influential on Hellenistic and Roman thinkers, who perceived in them a unity that perhaps Homer did not.

The clearest and most sustained precedent in the immediate literary tradition is the *Milesiae* of Sisenna (or the Greek original of Aristeides). Apuleius' own prologue pays curious homage to this text, with its avowal of 'Milesian discourse' (s*ermone isto Milesio*) and its promise to enchant the ears (*aures … permulceam*), both surely drawn from the preface of the *Milesiae*,[10] to judge by the well-known reference to Aristeides in Lucian, *Amores* 1:

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[8] See Mason 1994, 1693–1695; Schlam 1992, 22–23. The corollary of Graham Anderson's argument, there cited, that some inserted stories must have been cut out in order to reduce 2 books of Loukios to 1 book of the *Onos*, is that a good deal more must have been added to make the 11 books of Apuleius.

[9] Early date for Apuleius (150s): Dowden 1994; very early date for Antonius Diogenes (100–130): Bowie 2002, 58–61.

[10] Dowden 2001, 127.

πάνυ δή με ὑπὸ τὸν ὄρθρον ἡ τῶν ἀκολάστων σου διηγημάτων αἱμύλη
καὶ γλυκεῖα πειθὼ κατεύφραγκεν, ὥστ᾿ ὀλίγου δεῖν Ἀριστείδης ἐνόμιζον
εἶναι τοῖς Μιλησιακοῖς λόγοις ὑπερκηλούμενος.

As first light approached, the enticing and lovely persuasion of your un-
restrained narratives utterly gladdened me, with the result that I almost
thought I was Aristeides being enchanted by the Milesian stories (*logoi*).

This work of Lucian's[11] is interesting in its own right too. This is a discus-
sion of two varieties of love, male and female, perhaps somehow connected
with the similar discussion at the end of Book 2 of the novel of Achilles
Tatius, maybe an older contemporary of Apuleius.[12] The reference indicates
that the *Milesiaka* were current and well known at the time, something which
also must be true in some sense of Apuleius' *Metamorphoses* (either the
Sisenna text is current, or Aristeides' original was). Both the Apuleian
Metamorphoses and the *Amores* verbally echo Aristeides' preface, and there
is some similarity in the narrative strategy of the two texts. The *Amores* is
characterised by the device of beginning in the middle of a conversation, the
method as we have seen of the *Symposium* and the stance struck by Apuleius
with his 'inceptive' *at ego*. And both present a sense of dialogue, together
with the internal narration of stories.

The *Amores* also displays striking intertextuality with Platonic dialogues
and above all with the *Symposium*. Thematically the *Amores* is united by its
discussion of the theme of *eros* and it reflects Plato throughout, constantly
mentioning Socrates quite apart from anything else. It also engages with the
model provided by the *Symposium* of a sequence of *logoi* trying to cast light
on the nature of *eros*. The novel of Apuleius, *philosophus Platonicus*, be-
longs in the same network – dialogue, internal narration, *Milesiaka*, certain
works of Plato. He has picked up the *Vorlage*, and increased its scale and
ambition with considerably more inserted stories, in the manner of Aristei-
des-Sisenna. We cannot know how the *Milesian Tales* were organised, but
Apuleius has certainly used them to produce a sequence of related stories,
many of them on the theme of love or passion, many of them I-narrated. And
in so doing his structure takes on overtones of the *Symposium*. It would
make sense if he had seen the *Amores* first. He did after all write a Latin

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[11] I see no reason to doubt its authenticity or believe the style to be obviously that of an
'imitator'.

[12] Cf. Bowie 2002, 60–61, though I continue to doubt the late dating of the *Metamorphoses*.

Amatorius or a Latin or Greek *Erotikos*,[13] which must have been in this sort of area, perhaps following either these *Amores* or the *Erotikos* of Plutarch.

Apuleius' prologue may also point to Platonic method with the words *varias fabulas conseram*. The verb *conseram* must primarily be from *consero* 'join together', not just because of our concern to have Apuleius tell us his method of construction but also because it evidently reflects a use of συνυφαίνειν ('weave together') in the *Vorlage*.[14] In the whole of the *Companion to the Prologue of Apuleius' Metamorphoses*, only Paula James entertained the idea that we should in part think of the other *consero*, 'sow plentifully'.[15] In this case, as Thibau suggested (1965, 94), the sentence 'I shall sow plentifully all sorts of stories', as though we were scattering the seeds of every variety of plant or crop over the ground, forms an arresting metaphor, arresting enough to send us back to Plato (*Phaedrus* 276c): ἐν ὕδατι γράψει μέλανι σπείρων διὰ καλάμου μετὰ λόγων … Thus the writer is, remarkably, depicted in the language of the farmer, sowing with *logoi* (*fabulae*) and the *calamus* of the prologue is already present in this favourite Platonic text. But the discourse, *logos* or *sermo*, will be in a particular register – the *Milesius*, not the satiric or the *Menippeus*. This is, structurally, the *Symposium* metamorphosed into the manner of Sisenna-Aristeides.

This *sermo* not only invites the reader into dialogue but requires challenge by the reader. As de Jong has observed (2001, 204), the opening of the *Symposium* plunges us into the prospect of repeating a story in the same way as *Met.* 1,2 with its two travellers encountered by Lucius – vigorously arguing as we meet them, just like the lead characters of *Amores* 5 (was there a model in Aristeides-Sisenna?).[16] The two travellers of the *Onos*, it seems, have been given a more substantial agenda. Part of this agenda, as Winkler so powerfully demonstrated (1985, 27–37), is to raise the whole issue of the credibility of stories and, with it, the credibility of the Apuleian, or rather Lucius's, narrative. This question of narrative adequacy is already present at the beginning of the *Symposium*, where the narrator, Apollodoros, tells how an acquaintance of his regarded the account given by Phoinix of the discussion of love at Agathon's banquet as unsatisfactory (172b): οὐδὲν εἶχε σαφὲς

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[13] Adapting Harrison 2000, 28.
[14] Photios *Bibliotheca* 129, with Scobie 1975, 65, 67–68.
[15] James 2001, 258.
[16] The connection of the Aristomenes story to the structural principles of the *Symposium* was made long ago by van der Paardt 1978, 82.

λέγειν ('he had nothing clear to say'). Apollodoros, then, is to give a better account, the one in front of the reader. It is however, itself, an indirect account. The narratology of this opening of the *Symposium* poses as many questions about the authenticity and reliability of a narration as does *Met.* 1,2. It is not enough for Lucius to reproduce entertaining stories, any more than it is in a Platonic dialogue: the reader must be alert, and aid in the reconstruction of the 'true' narrative. After Winkler it has been harder to believe in true narratives (1985, 200), but on the other hand Plato probably believed there was something beyond *aporia*, though he preferred to suggest rather than dictate, as we have seen. A Platonic *Metamorphoses* would not be a *techne*, but a dialogue to help the reader towards their own insights – not a huge distance from the world of Jack Winkler.

Socrates and symposium

The Socrates of the *Symposium* is in a sense present at the outset of our novel. Aristomenes' story is about a Socrates. We find this one at evening in the baths (*vespera oriente ad balneas processeram. ecce Socraten contubernalem meum conspicio*, 'as evening began I had gone to the baths. Lo and behold, I caught sight of my companion Socrates!', 1,5–6). This beginning has strange echoes of the ending of the *Symposium* (223d). There Aristodemos (cf 'Aristomenes') is concluding his tale and Socrates goes off to wash at the Lykeion; Aristodemus, 'as he usually did', followed him – because in effect he is a *hetairos* of Socrates (a *contubernalis*, 'companion'). Socrates spends the rest of the day there and then *in the evening* returns home, the key return that Apuleius' Socrates cannot make. And if we now look at the early part of the *Symposium* (174a)[17] we find Socrates once again having washed (i.e. bathed), extremely spruce and in good spirits, the diametric opposite of Apuleius's Socrates, whose presence in the baths is a bit of a mystery given his filthy state (Aristomenes must himself wash him at 1,7). This Socrates too, unlike Plato's who can outdrink and outlast all his companions at the *Symposium*, is not used to wine (*insolita vinolentia*, 1,11) and falls asleep readily. Echoes are of course not exclusively of the *Symposium*: he bathes at *Phaedo* 116a, and he covers his face – 1,6 *faciem suam*

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[17] Fick 1991, 127.

prae pudore obtexit – at *Phaedo* 118a, *Phaedrus* 237a.[18] The references to
the real Socrates add up and make Thibau's suggestion very tempting, that
this is the dead Socrates who actually did abandon his home and run away to
Thessaly, as Crito recommended (*Crito* 45c, 53e).[19] Thessaly is after all a
land of disorder and immorality where Socrates will have to change his ap-
pearance (*Crito* 53d), as Apuleius' Socrates, *paene alius* ('almost someone
else'), clearly has.[20]

We discover Socrates' story in 1,7 in interesting circumstances. Aristo-
menes bathes him and takes him to a hotel, where he sleeps a while. Then:
cibo satio, poculo mitigo, fabulis permulceo ('I fill him with food, calm him
with drink, enchant him with stories'). This is a sort of symposium where the
narrative action of the novel – stories and enchanting the ears, as announced
in the opening two lines of the novel – takes place in microcosm. This sym-
posium is the occasion for Socrates' own *fabula*. Not all Apuleian stories are
set at dinner-parties, but some are, particularly in the earlier part of the
novel, which we shall see is the more *Symposium*-based. 2,11 sees a bath and
a banquet, if rather a limited one, given by Milo. This is the setting for the
story about the Chaldaean astrologer Diophanes. At 2,19 Lucius is at the
banquet of Byrrhena, the scene for the story of Thelyphron. At 4,7–8, the
robbers bathe and preen themselves, when suddenly there is the arrival of
further brigands who also bathe, join the banquet and then tell their stories.
'Arrival of newcomers at banquet, narration renewed', is a motif we recog-
nise from Alcibiades's arrival at the *Symposium* (212d). Stephen Harrison
has identified other possible echoes of the *Symposium* too in 4,8–21.[21] The
motif may also be recalled when Tlepolemus arrives unexpectedly as 'Hae-
mus the Thracian' and, thanks to his story, is integrated into the banqueting
community (*in summo pulvinari locatus cena poculisque magnis inaugura-
tur*, 7,9).

The same motif is of course more visibly reprised in the arrival of
Habinnas the monumental mason in the *Cena Trimalchionis*, a text which is
modelled relatively closely on the *Symposium*.[22] Nor is this the only instance
in the ancient novel. A fragment of the *Metiochos and Parthenope* novel,

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[18] Thibau 1965, 106; van der Paardt 1978, 82; Fick 1991, 127.
[19] Thibau 1965, 106–107, and cf. van der Paardt 1978, 82.
[20] Fick 1991, 127.
[21] Harrison 2000, 224–225; Cucchiarelli was too sceptical in his review, *JRS* 91 (2001) 256.
[22] Bodel 1999, 40, observing a sequence of five speakers leading to a climactic sixth. See
also Cameron 1969.

which could antedate the *Metamorphoses*, presents a symposium apparently chaired by the presocratic philosopher Anaximenes at which the topic for discussion is Eros, plainly based on Plato's *Symposium*,[23] which after all invented the form of symposium-literature.[24] The novels display a number of verbal and situational references to this dialogue too, as one might expect in a genre centred on Eros.[25]

A tale of two sequences

The stories of Apuleius, inserted or not, form a sequence of episodes, or rather two sequences, as we shall see. The episodes embrace a number of issues, of which love or lust, the subject of the narratives in the *Symposium*, is an important one; even tales of magic are made to revolve around love. There are more themes, obviously, than just love in these books: witchcraft, religion, the pursuit of wealth and fame as goals, failed individuals and failed societies, individual choice and social compulsion, and an overall theme of direction and loss of direction, seen as a dependency on the untrustworthiness of Fortune (1,6; 11,15). But there remains a particular investment in love/lust throughout the novel.

Sequence I

The first sequence stretches from the false Socrates' dalliance with the witches to the robbers' camp and *Cupid and Psyche*, leading through sequential entertainments with maybe some hints at a truth – just as Agathon and above all Pausanias, with his doctrine of the two loves, Uranian and Pandemic, had done in the *Symposium*.[26] The inserted narratives, with the excep-

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[23] Holzberg 1995, 49, linking in Petronius at 66.

[24] Holzberg 1995, 66; Bodel 1999, 40.

[25] Achilles Tatius 1,2,2, see Whitmarsh 2003, 194 n. 15; Longus 1,15,1, see Morgan 2003, 182; 2004, 163; Longus *Prologue* 3–4, see Morgan 2004, 149–150, cf. also 179 (on 2,4, the description of Eros), 181 (2,5), 234–235 (4,17, Gnathon).

[26] Thibau 1965, 133 is illuminating on the nature of the contributions before Socrates', though he maybe overdoes the progressive nature of those contributions: 'Les discours de Phèdre, de Pausanias, d'Eryximaque, d'Aristophanes et d'Agathon évoquent successivement les diverses prises de conscience, les différents niveaux conscientiels qui mènent vers cette sublimation. Ce sont les premiers échelons à gravir'. Apuleius is certainly less progressive: clearly failed individuals and societies precede, but do not progressively

tion of *Cupid and Psyche* itself, are presented by named characters and are told in the first person (see below). This is the situation also in the *Symposium*, where Socrates' story too is exceptional in its narratology, being attributed to Diotime.

Cupid and Psyche, like the discourse of Diotime in the *Symposium* is set in a different, more mythic, register and they both deal with the Soul and Love. In literary terms, it can be seen by its reception to form a sort of climax in the novel, though a first reading may be deceptive while we have not seen Book 11: it seems for a while, like *Aeneid* 6, to be a 'central imbedded narrative' (Schlam 1992, 98), a unique place where light is cast on the novel's themes through a mise-en-abyme. Meanwhile, Plato's and Apuleius' stories are enunciated by strangely comparable old women, as is sometimes observed by writers of quite different persuasions: the old woman at the robbers' camp is a jarring variant on the Mantinean Diotime ('God-honoured from Prophetville').[27] Their subject is the *god* Eros/Cupid, and he is a '*great* god' in both, in the account of Agathon (178a, 201d), and in the account of the old woman narrator and Pan (magni *dei propitia tela*, 5,22 *fin.*; *Cupidinem deorum* maximum, 5,25 *fin.*).[28]

Sequence II

After *Cupid and Psyche*, the stories are somehow more coloured and more disturbing, beginning now to find a place for religious themes: here we find Syrian priests, the wicked monotheistic miller's wife, and the pandemic glitter of the *Judgment of Paris* show. The story of *Charite and Tlepolemus*, the link between the two halves of the book culminates in a barbarism that the wild and uncontrolled behaviour of Charite (4,24–27), little remarked upon, has foreshadowed.

There is a metamorphosis not only of the tone of the narrative, but also of its structure. The *Symposium* model, of a sequence of personalised 'I' narrators, mutates. Now we do not learn even the names of those who tell these stories in authorial mode. This happens quite abruptly from the end of

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lead up to, the aspirations of the Cupid and Psyche story. This also relates to attempts (cf. Riefstahl 1938, 95–125) to convert the *Metamorphoses* into an *Entwicklungsroman*. For Venus Vulgaria and Caeles, see Apuleius, *Apol.* 12.

[27] Harrison 2000, 225; Thibau 1965, 110.

[28] Zimmerman et al. 2004, 282 on 5,22 *magni dei propitia tela* also refer to 6,10 *contubernalis magni dei*.

the robber community, effectively at the beginning of book 8, as Ben Hij-
mans incisively showed (1978, 115). In terms of lust, from a minor tale of
servile adultery at 8,22, we continue with the debased lusts of the Syrian
priests (8,29), and go on to the tale of the adulterer and the storage jar (9,5–
7), the adulterer who left his shoes behind (9,16), the adultery of the miller's
neighbour's wife (9,23) and indeed of his own wife (9,26), the stepmother
maddened by Cupido or Amor (10,2), the copulation of the ass with a no-
blewoman (10,19) and the climactic prospect, against the backdrop of the
Judgment of Paris, of the exhibition of a newly debased form even of bestial-
ity, namely with a criminal.

Maaike Zimmerman has drawn attention to the key (and disproportion-
ate) role of Venus at this turning point in the narrative, commenting – with
her customary mixture of conciseness, acuity and energy – on 10,31 as fol-
lows:[29]

> In this passage, there are some verbal references back to Fotis and Psy-
> che as impersonations of Venus, and to Venus herself in the Amor and
> Psyche episode … It is significant that this last Venus figure, who kalei-
> doscopically combines all earlier Venus figures in the *Met.*, disappears in
> ch. 34 into a chasm at the bottom of the theatre, together with the illu-
> sionary mountain.

She captures well the way in which threads are being pulled together and the
figure of Venus, assembled from the preceding parts of the novel and evi-
dently pandemic, is collapsed. *Cupid and Psyche* itself is beginning to look
imperfect and limited: it is reaching the end of its shelf-life.

The novel is now ready for the ass to escape, presently to reach a higher
and purer relationship with the feminine, that with Isis in the eleventh book.
Once again we reach a different register from the main body of the narrative,
one that is in some way 'higher'. The second sequence has reached a new
climax, its own equivalent to the *Cupid and Psyche* story.

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[29] Zimmerman 2000, 375; 1993, 150–153.

SEQUENCE 1 (Symposium, I-stories)
   SEQUENCE 2 (distanced, he/she-stories)
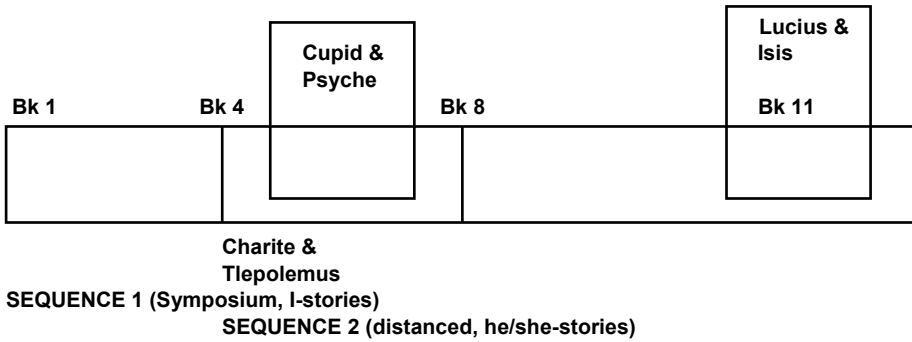
Triads, or the penalty for selecting the wrong Diotime

The *Symposium* is remarkable for giving the authoritative voice to Diotime, a religious woman able to delay the great plague at Athens (201d). From this point of view, it is tempting to regard the role of the feminine in the *Metamorphoses*, whose richness and intricacy Judith Krabbe showed, as in part a rhapsody occasioned by *Diotime (cf. Krabbe 1989, 95). The first witch we hear of, Meroe, looks particularly like Diotime, she is a *femina divina*, she is *saga* and has multiple powers over nature and the elements (1,8), which compares with a woman called *Diotime* who has an authority recognised by the *real* Socrates, who can postpone a plague because she has multiple skills (ἢ ταῦτά τε σοφὴ ἦν καὶ ἄλλα πολλά), and who is an expert in *erotika*.[30] Apuleius's is the wrong Socrates with the wrong Diotime and the wrong Aristodemos to report his story.

   Ultimately a triadic relationship, which Peirce would have recognised, is at issue. The first member of the triad is the interpreter, the fictional person who is seeking to enter into the relationship. The third member of the triad is the object, that to which the subject is seeking to relate. Between the two is a second member, the mediator that represents the object, and must be used by the interpreter to form an accessible and faithful idea of the object (this idea is Peirce's 'interpretant'). The real Socrates of the *Symposium* seeks to understand Eros; Diotime is the authentic mediator against whom others should be tested, is *this one* a Diotime, or *this one*? But she is concerned in turn to interpret Eros as a mediator. All the other discourses of the *Symposium* are,

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[30] Beginnings of this in Thibau 1965, 110, remarking also how Eros is (*Symposium* 202e) a δεινὸς γόης καὶ φαρμακεύς.

however entertaining and however suggestive, in some way flawed in comparison. But one of the participants, Pausanias, does reveal that there is a particular danger of transmuting the object into something 'pandemic', lustful and sexual rather than divine, an important conception for the Apuleian text. Beyond these players lie the internal and external audiences, emphasising the fact and nature of 'readership': the text is not absolute, but is designed to have an 'anagogic' effect on a reader envisaged almost as a philosopher's apprentice. The reader is the first term, the interpreter, in a new triad, for whom the mediator is the text.
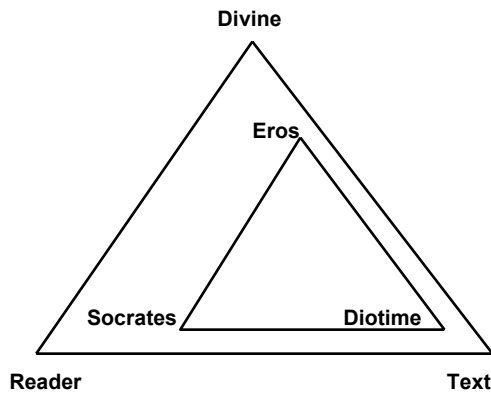
The false Socrates, dead and in Thessaly, selects a false Diotime, whose objects are lust and a power that can only be demonstrated by overturning of the natural order (1,8). The reader, Aristomenes, who chooses that story is drawn into it and destroyed by it – just as Lucius will become a *fabula incredunda*, and Thelyphron will turn out to be a player not just a watcher. The same borderline is threatened by Lucius' role in the otherwise mystifying Risus festival and the earlier part of the *Metamorphoses* overall tells us that the reader is in danger through the act of reading.

In the light of this triadic structure, we can also begin to see an important difference between *Cupid and Psyche* and the Eleventh Book. It has never been wholly clear how these two sit together if they are seriously meant. *Cupid and Psyche* is obviously Platonic and philosophical, whereas Book 11 is obviously religious.

A similar problem was discussed by Moreschini (1978, 28–32), who was concerned with the apparent gap between Apuleius in his *philosophica* and

the novel which gave the initiation into the Isis religion pride of place. If you date the *Metamorphoses* early, as Rohde did (and I do), then you might hold that the religious mentality of the *Metamorphoses* was juvenile and the philosophica reveal a mature Apuleius. Rohde believed this and it is of a piece with 19th-century rationalism. Alternatively, you might follow the theory that Moreschini sketched, with a late *Metamorphoses* and an implicit recognition that philosophy was no longer enough for the later Apuleius. Both theories, however, come to grief when one sees in the *Metamorphoses* that both views, platonic and religious, are presented, though if we follow Moreschini (1978, 30), the address of the priest (11,15) amounts to a statement that philosophy (*doctrina*?) is not sufficient.

Yet Middle Platonists were not obliged to follow Plato *au pied de la lettre* when he claimed that 'god with man does not mix' (*Symp.* 203a). It is difficult in any case to see how this squares with the ὁμοίωσις θεῷ ('assimilation to god') of *Theaitetos* 176b unless Plato was resting a lot on the 'as far as possible' that follows the words 'assimilation to god'. Plutarch, for one, in the closing paragraph of his 'discourse befitting the gods' in the *Isis and Osiris*,[31] remarks how Osiris represents the one god, in whom we cannot share *except by conceiving a faint dream through philosophy* (*Mor.* 382e–f). This would in the end become the 'First and yonder God' with whom Plotinos achieved union frequently and Porphyry once (Porphyry, *Life of Plotinos* 23). Interestingly, Porphyry says Plotinos achieved this *following the paths laid down by Plato in the Symposium* (κατὰ τὰς ἐν τῷ Συμποσίῳ ὑφηγημένας ὁδοὺς τῷ Πλάτωνι). Apuleius's *Metamorphoses* is somewhere on this trajectory, finding a way across the Platonic gulf.

Cupid and Psyche, it seems, was an interim stage in the novel. Psyche's success is qualified because it is still at the stage of *God with man does not mix* and Eros is, when all is said and done, an intermediary daimon. *Nam, ut idem Plato ait, nullus deus miscetur hominibus* (Apuleius, *Soc.* 4,3) and so transactions with men are actually carried on by daimones, *ut Plato in Symposio autumat* (*Soc.* 6,2). Amongst these are Sleep and Love with their diverse powers, *Amor vigilandi, Somnus soporandi* (*Soc.* 16,2).[32] It follows that though *Cupid and Psyche* establishes the right mediator, it does nothing

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[31] *Mor.* 383a–384c is a sort of appendix, cf. Froidefond 1988, 251 n. 3.
[32] Notably Cupid must awaken Psyche from her deep sleep at *Met.* 6,21, on sleep and on these passages, see Dowden 1998, 12–13; cf. Zimmerman et al. 2004, 522 on 6,21 *infernus somnus*, with further references.

to establish the object of the triadic relationship, which is the divine itself. Jupiter does not play that role and Venus is a hostile and predominantly pandemic force,[33] not yet metamorphosed into Isis. It is this limitation of *Cupid and Psyche* that demands the problematisation of Venus at the end of Book 10. Only then can the next story at our banquet be told, the story of another divine woman, Isis.

Book 11 is the myth that closes the novel, though it is unclear how it should be nuanced and whether it can be completely understood. Lucius achieves breakthrough to divinity itself and a number of the themes of the novel (e.g, adoration, love, hair, public ceremony, priesthood) metamorphose into perhaps more satisfactory forms. Isis somehow offers direct contact with divinity, a metamorphosis of Cupid's appearance to Psyche in her death-sleep into a transcendent, waking vision.

At the same time, the preludes continue, as the novel finds difficulty in ending:[34] is Isis herself an intermediary to something further? Thus the novel, in terms of its two sequences, is dynamic, even progressive. Its first, *Symposium*, sequence reaches whatever statement is inherent in *Cupid and Psyche*, but that statement, though modelled on the *Symposium* itself, has only reached the intermediary, demonic, level. It is the second sequence that leads to a new statement, maybe in turn only provisional, of the divine. For at 11,30 Osiris himself, the ultimate god according to Lucius and according to Plutarch, appears in a dream to Lucius, in surprisingly little detail but detail that may matter. He is greatest and more important than great gods (*deum magnorum potior* – such as Cupid?). He does not metamorphose into another person (unlike Lucius) and therefore specifically exhibits the stability of the Platonic god who does not appear sometimes in one form, sometimes in another (*Republic* 380d). We should perhaps take Osiris more seriously: he does allow the novel to close, and to close on a note of success.

At the end, we leave the novel in the same way as we entered it, in midstream, as we see a Lucius going about his business timelessly (in the imperfect tense), but now with shaven head (reproducing the baldness of Socrates?).[35] The *Symposium* does not end decisively either and the report of Aristodemos does not explicitly close. Our last picture is of Aristodemos accompanying Socrates *as he always does*, and of Socrates going to the Ly-

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[33] See the detailed discussion of Keulen (1998, esp. 179–186).
[34] See Finkelpearl 2004.
[35] For this idea see James and O'Brien in this volume, n. 20.

keion and washing and, *as he always did*, spending the rest of the day there and going home in the evening. Life goes on, whatever we have learnt.

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