

# *Nomen omen* – Narrative Instantiation of Rhetorical Expressions in Apuleius' *Metamorphoses*

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In Apuleius' *Metamorphoses* words are turned into flesh. By “words” I here understand various verbal expressions, such as metaphors, similes, proverbs, or even ceremonial formulae. By “flesh” I understand the reality of the novel's universe: its characters, scenes, and themes. Thus when the proverbial *utres inflati*, mentioned by a Petronian freedman, metamorphose into actual participants in Apuleius' plot in Books 2–3, this is an example of the transformation I have in mind. To a certain extent, turning words into flesh is a feature of all fiction; if strictly formalized, it becomes a description of allegory. However, I wish to argue that in the *Metamorphoses*, the move is sufficiently specialized to become a distinct narrative device, while being broader and more varied than mere allegory.<sup>1</sup> In what follows, I will discuss some examples of this recurrent device, relate it to the overarching motif of metamorphosis, and suggest a couple of consequences of the device: a textual emendation and a thematic hint for the novel as a whole.

A very special instance of this kind of narrative instantiation is the story about how Lucius got his white horse back, because there the device itself is explicitly described and the description made part of the tale. The episode takes place in the mysterious eleventh book, after the narrator and protagonist Lucius has already changed his asinine shape back to a human one and become a devotee of the goddess Isis. Learning from a prophetic dream that

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<sup>1</sup> A reading informed by much the same spirit as the present paper is Panayotakis 1997. There, Panayotakis argues that the three dangerous encounters awaiting Psyche in the underworld – a lame ass with his lame driver, a dead man, and some old crones – function as abstract notions (of Old Age, and of Mortality) turned into flesh. Since the likeness between that article and the present one lies in the overall conception rather than in any details, I generally state my sympathetic outlook here.

a slave of his named Candidus will be sent to him, he wonders about that message, since he has never had a slave by that name, and the enigma is not solved until his dazzlingly white horse (*equus candidus*) arrives, as follows:

<sup>1</sup>*Nocte quadam plenum gremium suum uisus est mihi summus sacerdos offerre ac requirenti, quid utique istud, respondisse partes illas de Thessalia mihi missas, seruum etiam meum indidem superuenisse nomine Candidum. <sup>2</sup>*Hanc experrectus imaginem diu diuque apud cogitationes meas reuoluebam, quid rei portenderet, praesertim cum nullum umquam habuisse me seruum isto nomine nuncupatum certus essem.* <sup>3</sup>*Utut tamen sese praesagium somni porrigeret, lucrum certum modis omnibus significare partium oblatione credebam. Sic anxius et in prouentum prospiciorem attonitus templi matutinas apertiones opperiebar.* <sup>4</sup>*Ac dum, uelis candentibus reductis in diuersum, deae uenerabilem conspectum adprecatur, et per dispositas aras circumiens sacerdos, rem diuinam procurans supplicamentis sollemnibus, de penetrali fontem petitum spondeo libat:* <sup>5</sup>*rebus iam rite consummatis inchoatae lucis salutationibus religiosi primam nuntiantes horam perstrepunt.* <sup>6</sup>*Et ecce superueniunt Hypata quos ibi reliqueram famulos, cum me Photis malis incapistrasset erroribus, cognitis scilicet fabulis meis, nec non et equum quoque illum meum reducentes, quem diuerse distractum notae dorsualis agnitione recuperauerant.* <sup>7</sup>*Quare sollertiam somni tum mirabar uel maxime, quod praeter congruentiam lucrosae pollicitationis argumento serui Candidi equum mihi reddidisset colore candidum.*<sup>2</sup> (Met. 11,20,1–7)*

One night the chief priest appeared to me in a dream, offering me an armful of gifts. When I asked the meaning of this, he replied that they had been sent to me as my belongings from Thessaly, and that there had also arrived from the same region a slave of mine by the name of Candidus. On awakening I pondered this vision long and repeatedly, wondering what it meant, especially as I was convinced that I had never had a slave of that name. But whatever the prophetic dream portended, I thought that in any case this offering of belongings gave promise of undoubted gain. So I was on tenterhooks, beguiled by this prospect of greater profit as I awaited the morning opening of the temple. The

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<sup>2</sup> All references to the text of Apuleius' *Metamorphoses* are to Robertson's second edition, 1956.

gleaming curtains were parted, and we addressed our prayers to the august image of the goddess. The priest made his rounds of the altars positioned there, performing the liturgy with the customary prayers, and pouring from a sacred vessel the libation-water obtained from the sanctuary of the goddess. With the ceremony duly completed, the initiates greeted the dawning of the day, and loudly proclaimed the hour of Prime. Then suddenly the slaves whom I had left at Hypata, when Photis had involved me in those notorious wanderings, appeared on the scene. I suppose that they had heard the stories about me; they also brought back that horse of mine which had been sold to various owners, but which they had recovered after recognizing the mark on its back. This caused me to marvel more than anything else at the perspicacity of my dream, for quite apart from getting confirmation of its promise of profit, by its mention of a slave Candidus it had restored to me my white horse.<sup>3</sup>

(emphasis mine)

Lucius expects his dream to be prophetic, because in his experience this is a way for Isis and Osiris to communicate with people (ever since his prayers were first heard in 11,3), and especially because this dream features a high priest of the cult. The new believer eagerly interprets the gifts offered as a promise of gain, but is at a loss when it comes to understanding the words about Candidus, since on the straightforward reading they have no referent. The move from words to novelistic reality here takes the form of a riddle. It is only after Lucius has understood that “candidus” is to be taken as an adjective and “servus” in a transferred sense, that the prophecy springs into a meaningful figure. As ancient prophecies go, this is certainly nothing unusual, and what is important for the present argument is rather the narrative pattern: the *words* arrive on the scene first, and the *thing* is made to follow – as Lucius puts it, the cleverness of the dream (*sollertia somni*) has given him his horse back (*reddidisset*).

While it is common for form to imitate theme in a literary work, what we have here seems to be an inversion of that phenomenon. A remarkable trait about this particular instance is that both ingredients – the verbal expression and its thematic materialization – are spelled out, and so is the riddle-like relation between them: *argumento serui Candidi equum mihi reddidisset*

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<sup>3</sup> Unless otherwise stated, all English translations of the *Metamorphoses* are from Walsh 1994.

*colore candidum*. In this connection, it is perhaps significant that the gift in the riddle is the noble white horse, on which Lucius set out on his journey at the beginning of the first book, *in equo indigena peralbo uehens* (“riding on my home-bred horse, which is pure white in colour”, 1,2,2), and which is again mentioned at 7,2,1, *equum namque illum suum candidum uectorem* (“that white horse of his to carry him”, my trans.). It has been suggested that this horse is an allusion to the white thoroughbred that constitutes the better half of the two-horse carriage in Plato’s myth of the soul (*Phaedrus* 246a–b, 247b, 253d–255a),<sup>4</sup> and this seems persuasive, though the compositional and thematic importance of Lucius’ stallion is not dependent on this allusion. The horse still stands for a way of travelling (and by extension of *living*) comfortably and in style, a privilege which the protagonist does not appreciate until he loses it and has to walk on his own feet, as that ignoble parallel to the horse, an ass.<sup>5</sup> When redeemed to humanity at the end of the novel, he is given back his horse by Isis/Osiris and thus fully equipped to start a new glorious life of spiritual candour. It is surely important that the time between his prophetic dream and the (re)appearance of the *equus candidus* (11,20,3–5) is filled with the description of a new dawn as well as the stately Isiac celebration of it – and the incipient day is even greeted with the opening of *gleaming white* curtains, *uelis candentibus!* The white colour, further highlighted by the riddle, symbolizes the spiritual purity and nobility of the protagonist’s new state. In fact, just after his transformation into a man, he had himself been clad in a white robe and admonished to be as white on the inside as on the outside: *Sume iam uultum laetiores candido isto habitu tuo congruentem* (“Show now a happier face in keeping with your white garment”, 11,15,4). With this dawn Lucius, born anew as an Isiac,<sup>6</sup> learns how to interpret signs in Isis’ religious universe.

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<sup>4</sup> Drake 1968; Fick-Michel 1991, 266–267. The latter believes that the motif of “candidus” does have a serious, spiritual significance, but stops short of fully accepting the thesis of its Platonic reference. *Contra* Sandy 1978, 127, but without much argument. See Keulen 2003, 94, for further details and literature.

<sup>5</sup> For an analysis of Lucius’ actual and metaphorical journey, see Zimmerman 2002. When Lucius’ horse is mentioned in Book 7, its absence stresses the contrast between the hero’s dreary ass-existence and what could have been.

<sup>6</sup> When Lucius was transformed into a man again, he had been hailed as “renatus” by the devout crowd (11,16,4). See Frangoulidis 2005 for a pertinent discussion of images of death and rebirth in the *Metamorphoses*, including *Lucius renatus*.

In other cases, the instantiation emerges only when matters outside Apuleius' text are considered. For instance, a curious fish-trampling scene in the first book (1,24–5) gains meaning when regarded as a veiled allusion to the Egyptian religious ceremony which entailed a priest ritually trampling fishes in a public sacred place. In the ritual the fish symbolizes the enemy (in one variety specifically the enemy of the local king), who is thus rendered powerless and extinguished. Scholarship first pointed out the connection between the ritual and the Apuleian passage in 1958, and the interpretation has since been further developed.<sup>7</sup> The episode in the *Metamorphoses* occurs after Lucius, recently arrived in Hypata and suffering from his host Milo's misery, has bought himself some fish for supper, whereupon he encounters an old acquaintance, Pythias, now a town magistrate. Pythias asks Lucius where he got his poor-looking fish, and upon hearing that he bought it for twenty denarii from an old fisherman selling his goods right there on the market, Pythias goes up to the fish-vendor and loudly scolds him in his best magistrate's tone, rounding off with:

*'...Sed non impune. Iam enim faxo scias quem ad modum sub meo magisterio mali debeant coerceri', et profusa in medium sportula iubet officialem suum insuper pisces inscendere ac pedibus suis totos obterere.*

(*Met.* 1,25,4)

'...But you won't get away with it. I'll make you realize how unscrupulous traders are to be kept in check while I'm in charge.' With that he threw the parcel of fish on the ground in front of us, and ordered his attendant to jump on the fish, and crush them all underfoot.

At a pragmatic level, the magistrate's fatuous "punishment" hurts no one but Lucius, as he wryly comments (*et nummis simul priuatus et cena*, "robbed of both my money and my supper", 1,25,6), but at the symbolic level, the fish-

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<sup>7</sup> Derchain – Hubaux 1958; the thesis was developed by Pierre Grimal (1971). Winkler 1985, p. 318 n.25, mentions the thesis and also points to a passage in Hölbl 1978 (52) where the more general importance of fish in the cult of Isis (exemplified by the presence of a fisherman in the procession seen by Lucius in *Met.* 11,8) is connected to the Egyptian hieroglyph for "secret", written with the images of a foot and a fish.

erman is annihilated.<sup>8</sup> It has also been suggested that, since the Egyptian rite commemorated the Sun-god's victory over a human rebellion, in Apuleius the allusion to the rite may foreshadow the larger scenario to be: that Lucius will rebel through the hubristic curiosity of his all-too-human self, and that this part of him will be annihilated by the rays of divine illumination. As that part of his self is thus never warmed by the sun of the divine principle of the universe, it remains cold as the fish in the allegorical scene in the marketplace. This reading is strengthened by the magistrate's name, Pythias – fitting for one who offers prophetic warnings about the future.<sup>9</sup>

Although the Egyptian ritual that Apuleius uses as his matrix in this case is not, strictly speaking, a verbal expression, it still resembles one in being a pure concatenation of signs which can be iterated at different times in different places, but with the same meaning. In the *Metamorphoses*, this signification has been turned into a unique, "rounded" scene of fictional life, verisimilar and fitted to the progress of Lucius' adventures. It may well be read without knowledge of the religious rite behind it – and yet the event narrated has that strange, dream-like quality which invites the reader to interpret it as Lucius will later try to interpret his actual dream about Candidus.<sup>10</sup>

If the fish-trampling is the transformation of a religious practice, other passages are created by means of the transformation of a literary intertext, yet still in the same manner of turning a two-dimensional expression *saying* something into the three-dimensional *showing* of much the same thing. So it has been noticed, for instance, that a metaphorical expression in the Pseudo-Lucianic *Onos*<sup>11</sup> is revitalized by being converted into a narrative event in

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<sup>8</sup> Derchain – Hubaux 1958, 104. This is especially so since in the logic of magic, what is done to an object is also done to the person to whom that object belongs or with whom it is otherwise associated.

<sup>9</sup> Grimal 1971, 344–345.

<sup>10</sup> See Kenaan 2004, for the outlining of a dream "grammar" in Apuleius' novel, with the market episode as a major instance (discussed on pp. 270–273). She further discerns both a parallelism and a significant juxtaposition between the psychological dream quality encountered in the first ten books and the revelatory dreams in the eleventh book: "The *Metamorphoses* ... constitutes a narrative in which the highly elevated dream revelations of its final book and the psychological dimension of dreams characteristic of the rest of the novel can meet" (280).

<sup>11</sup> This work is probably an epitome of a Greek *Metamorphoses* serving as the *Vorlage* to Apuleius' novel. A lucid summary of this issue, and the scholarly controversies around it, is found in Harrison 2003, 500–502.

Apuleius' *Metamorphoses*.<sup>12</sup> In the *Onos*, the maid Palaestra, a veritable man-eater, informs the protagonist that she knows how to cook a man, and particularly relishes getting her hands on his heart:

οὐ γὰρ μόνα ταῦτα φαῦλα ἐδώδιμα σκευάζω, ἀλλ' ἤδη τὸ μέγα τοῦτο καὶ καλόν, τὸν ἄνθρωπον, οἶδα ἔγωγε καὶ σφάττειν καὶ δέρειν καὶ κατακόπτειν, ἥδιστα δὲ τῶν σπλάγχθων αὐτῶν καὶ τῆς καρδίας ἄπτομαι.

(*Onos* 6)

...it's not only these common dishes I prepare, but now this great lovely dish called man. I know how to butcher him, skin him, and chop him, and the sweetest part is getting hold of his very innards and heart.<sup>13</sup>

Now Apuleius makes his witch Meroe, a *femme fatale* of a much more direct and deadly kind, actually insert her hand into the wound of her victim Socrates and poke around among his innards until she hauls out his heart:

*Nam etiam, ne quid demutaret, credo, a uictimae religione, immissa dextera per uulnus illud ad uiscera penitus cor miseri contubernalis mei Meroe bona scrutata protulit*

(*Met.* 1,13,6)

Then the good lady stuck her right hand deep into the wound, probed around for my poor friend's heart, and drew it out. No doubt she wished to observe the proprieties of a sacrifice.

Not only is the metaphor of holding a man's heart in one's hand revived here, but the words from the *Onos* (and quite possibly from the longer Greek novel before that) grow into virtual reality, in a move that parallels the magic of the witches who tear out Socrates' heart.

This literary magic is even more explicit in the example of the inflated wineskins, mentioned above. *Utres inflati ambulamus* ("we walk around like wineskins with wind in them"), was a proverbial expression used in a pessi-

<sup>12</sup> Richard Hunter has put forward this suggestion in an oral paper given at the Rethymnon International Conference on the Ancient Novel (*RICAN*) in 2005. I am grateful for his permission to quote it.

<sup>13</sup> Translation by J.P. Sullivan, printed in B.P. Reardon (ed.), *Collected Ancient Greek Novels*, 1989.

mistic statement by one of the freedmen at Trimalchio's dinner party in Petronius' *Satyrica* (42,4). It seems probable that Apuleius' treatment of the phrase was a direct allusion to the work of his fellow novelist,<sup>14</sup> especially since the scene where Lucius fights off the wineskins recalls another passage in the *Satyrica*, namely the protagonist Encolpius' fight against the sacred geese (*Sat.* 136,4–6).<sup>15</sup> Like Lucius' battle, Encolpius' battle against the geese is one that he will soon regret. In the *Metamorphoses*, the windy wineskins are actually made human through a piece of misfiring magic, and this stunning transmogrification, of some importance to the plot, is only gradually revealed to the hero, as well as to the reader. In the second book the protagonist spends an evening at his relative Byrrhaena's, and when it is almost time to go home, she mentions that tomorrow is the festival of the god Laughter, *Risus*, and asks Lucius to honour the god by some merry exhibition of his wit. Lucius promises to do his best (2,31). Returning to the house where he is staying, he sees what he takes to be three robbers shamelessly trying to break in through the front door, draws his sword, and kills all of them (2,32). The next day he is unexpectedly arrested and taken to stand trial for murder in front of all the people in Hypata – at first the trial is due in the forum, then, in order to accommodate the big audience, removed to the theatre. The accused, who of course believes that he has killed three citizens (as does the first-time reader), is made to listen to the accuser's speech and then allowed to speak in his defence, before the opposing side insists that the corpses be shown to the public (3,9). Despite his protests, Lucius is made to uncover the evidence, and – they turn out to be sacks instead of men:

*Nam cadauera illa iugulatorum hominum erant tres utres inflati uari-  
isque secti foraminibus et, ut uespertinum proelium meum recordabar,  
his locis hiantes quibus latrones illos uulneraueram.* (Met. 3,9,9)

<sup>14</sup> Ciaffi (1960, 106–108) and Grimal (1972, 457–458) have both seen this as a direct allusion to Petronius, although Grimal adduces other examples of the proverbial use of the expression: see Epicharmus fr. 166 Kassel-Austin and Sophron fr. 4,43 Kassel-Austin (PCG vol. I) with the commentary of Hordern 2004, 141 ad loc. Cf. also M.S. Smith 1975, 100, and Brancaleone – Stramaglia (2003), who argue that Apuleius indulges in a kind of intertextual game with several antecedent expressions about “inflated sacks” as a metaphor for men.

<sup>15</sup> Ciaffi 1960, 104–105.

those corpses of the slain turned out to be three inflated wineskins which had been slit open in various places. The gaping holes appeared where, as I cast my mind back to the battle of the previous night, I recalled having wounded those brigands.

Instead of a *homicida* (manslayer) the poor man has been an *utricida* (slayer of wineskins), as it is put somewhat later on (3,18,7). The tragic court process is sharply reversed as, at this point, everyone except Lucius bursts out in violent laughter. The whole false trial turns out to have been a practical joke, played out as a celebration of *deus Risus* on his festive day. In the evening Lucius' lover, the maid Photis, explains how the wineskins became alive in the first place: unable to carry out the order of her magic-wielding mistress to fetch her some hair from a certain young man, Photis had taken some goat hair instead. As the mistress worked her magic on the hair, its owners, the sacks made of the goat skins, came to her door (3,15–18). Thus the metaphor, *utres inflati ambulamus*, had, as metaphors do, stated an equation that was not literally true – “wineskins = human beings” – and the magic wielded by a character in the *Metamorphoses* made it literally true. It should not be considered too fanciful, I believe, to say that what the witch does as a character is paralleled by Apuleius at a higher level, as the creator of a fictional universe. The world of the *Metamorphoses* is, albeit temporarily, *altered* to mimic a rhetorical figure.

We can take a further step and say that reality is accommodated to underline the idea of the metaphor. A metaphorical term, by its nature, offers cognitive elucidation of that to which it is applied,<sup>16</sup> and here the elucidation is *lived*. The wineskins actually come walking (*ambulant*) up to Lucius' door, and he could well learn a lesson about the vanity of human endeavour – but he cannot read the sign behind the event. Unlike the case of the dream of Candidus discussed above, where both the sign and its enactment are spelled out in the text, here, before the Isiac conversion, only the enactment is. Here, where the magic involved is human not divine, and bad not good,

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<sup>16</sup> For an excellent discussion of the nature of metaphor, from a classicist's point of view, see Crowther 2003. On page 86 he claims that a central issue of metaphor is “how it is possible for a metaphorical term to offer cognitive elucidation of that to which it is applied.”

the sign behind the action is hidden, at least to Lucius. Yet the “principle” of a verbal expression being converted into fictional reality is much the same.<sup>17</sup>

While the transformation of the wineskins aims at a moral lesson, the whole of the mock trial in honour of Laughter contains an allusion of another kind, where the main consequence is literary-generic. As I have argued elsewhere, the end of the *Risus* episode in the *Metamorphoses* may be seen as an allusion to the final joke of Horace’s programme satire, *S.* 2,1.<sup>18</sup> There, just as in Apuleius, an accusation in court is dissolved in laughter, and the protagonist, in that case the satirical persona of Horace, is allowed to leave a free man. The whole action is hypothesized in the persona’s conversation with the jurist Trebatius, and it is he who speaks first in the quotation:

*si mala condiderit in quem quis carmina, ius est  
iudiciumque.* ‘*Esto, si quis mala; sed bona si quis  
iudice condiderit laudatus Caesare? si quis  
opprobrii dignum latrauerit integer ipse?*  
*‘Soluentur risu tabulae, tu missus abibis.’*  
(Horace, *S.* 2,1,82–6)

If someone composes foul verses against another man, he will be tried in a court of law.’ ‘Very well, for foul verses, but what if someone composes fine verses, and is praised by Caesar? If someone, himself blameless, barks at one who deserves censure?’ ‘Then the document will be dissolved in laughter, and you will be free to go.’ (my trans.)

There are a number of similarities between the court episodes in Horace and Apuleius respectively. In both cases we see the following sequence of

<sup>17</sup> It has repeatedly been pointed out that the magic wielded by witches, which leads to Lucius’ transformation into an ass and his suffering, is in many respects parallel to the beneficent magic of Isis, which redeems Lucius and promises him eternal bliss; see e.g. Gwyn Griffiths 1975, 47–51; Frangoulidis 2005, esp. 203.

<sup>18</sup> Plaza 2003. Now there is a discussion of satiric echoes in the *Metamorphoses* in general by Maaike Zimmerman, “Echoes of Roman satire in Apuleius’ *Metamorphoses*”, 2006. Her statement on the relationship between Juvenal’s sixth satire and the *Metamorphoses* is very much in line with my present thesis: “In fact, it would be rewarding to investigate how many of the adulterous and murderous women of Juvenal’s sixth satire feature as ‘real’ characters in the tales of books 9 and 10 of the *Metamorphoses*.” (p. 93). Cf. also, on a lesser scale, Smith-Werner 1996. For a discussion of the importance of the *Risus* episode to the whole novel, see Frangoulidis 2002.

events: an accusation of offence against the law – court procedure (*iudicium* Hor., *S.* 2,1,83; *iudicia* Met. 2,1) – a verbal defence by the main character – a sudden turn of the accusation by means of a joke – laughter – dismissal of court and freedom for the defendant. As they defend themselves, both heroes object that they have only attacked those who deserved it (Hor., *S.* 2,1,85; Met. 3,6). The characters who undergo this sequence are important, and close, to their respective authors: the satirical persona in one case, the narrator-protagonist in the other. The actual laughter is described as very violent by both authors, *dissolving* the laughs and the whole situation. In Horace we read *Soluentur risu tabulae, tu missus abibis*; Apuleius says that the people of Hypata *risu cachinnabili difflebant*, and Milo is depicted as *risu maximo dissolutum*, Met. 3,7.<sup>19</sup>

The main difference between them, on the other hand, is that while Horace's satirical persona steers clear of being laughed at, the novelistic hero Lucius is made the butt of the joke. Laughter, a token of the humour that is one of the main ingredients in the *Metamorphoses*, is made a deity after the pattern of Eros or Aphrodite in the Greek novel of love and adventure.<sup>20</sup> Lucius' double function, as both the unfortunate hero and the brilliant narrator in the novel, is alluded to in the formula with which *Deus Risus* promises to protect him.<sup>21</sup>

*Iste deus auctorem et actorem suum propitius ubique comitabitur amanter nec umquam patietur ut ex animo doleas sed frontem tuam serena uenustate laetabit adsidue.*  
(Met. 3,11,4)

<sup>19</sup> "splitting its sides with laughter", "Milo...was laughing loudest of all." It is interesting to note that these formulations are quite in line with Cicero's suggestion that humour can be used to resolve difficult situations in a process: *...est plane oratoris mouere risum, uel quod ipsa hilaritas beneuolentiam conciliat ei, per quem excitata est...maximeque quod tristitiam ac seueritatem mitigat ac relaxat odiosasque res saepe, quas argumentis dilui non facile est, ioco risuque dissoluit* (*de Orat.* 2,236) ("surely it is the orator's business to make people laugh, because the merriment itself creates goodwill towards him who has caused it,...especially, however, because it alleviates and relaxes strict severity, and often dissolves in humour and laughter difficult points, which cannot easily be refuted with argumentation," my trans.).

<sup>20</sup> Although other references to a god of Laughter (*Risus*, Γέλως) do exist, it is highly unlikely that Apuleius' creation had anything to do with them; see van der Paardt 1971, 2–3.

<sup>21</sup> Winkler 1985 bases his narratological reading on this formula, see esp. 13, 109; some caveats may be found in Harrison 2000, 220 n.47, 226–235. A more mystical interpretation is offered in Fick-Michel 1991, 418–420.

This deity will favourably and affectionately accompany everywhere the person who arouses and enacts his laughter, and he will never allow you to grieve in mind, but will implant continual joy on your countenance with his sunny elegance.

As becomes his genre, Apuleius has turned the Horatian passage into a three-dimensional episode, with laughter not only an indication of a positive audience reaction (this he inherited from Horace), but also a full-blown deity acting in his novelistic universe. *Deus Risus* accompanies Lucius – and the reader – through the first ten books of the *Metamorphoses*, until they are handed over to grander, serious gods in the eleventh.

To stay with the theme of laughter and humour, let us turn to a tongue-in-cheek version of the kind of narrative instantiation under discussion: the inverted proverb(s) in 9,42. The scene occurs when Lucius the ass and the gardener who is his master at the moment are in hiding. The background is that upon a conflict with a soldier encountered on the road, the gardener has beaten the soldier, escaped, and hidden from retribution in a friend's house: himself in a chest, the ass on the upper floor. In the meantime, the soldier has brought along some fellow soldiers, as well as the magistrates, and circled in on the house in question. Here the soldiers and magistrates are, for a spell, unable to find their antagonist, and the quarrel between them and the owner of the house is growing violent. At this point Lucius, true to his fatal curiosity, sticks out his neck to see what is happening:

*Qua contentione et clamoso strepitu cognito, curiosus alioquin et inquieti procacitate praeditus asinus, dum obliquata ceruice per quandam fenestram quidnam sibi uellet tumultus ille prospicere gestio, unus e commilitonibus casu fortuito conlimatis oculis ad umbram meam cunctos testatur incoram.*  
(*Met.* 9,42,2)

This argument conducted with noisy altercations reached my ears, and being a naturally inquisitive ass imbued with restless impulses, I craned my neck and tried to peer out through the small window to see what all the noise was about. It so chanced that one of the soldiers caught a glimpse of my shadow, and called all of them to witness it on the spot.

Both he and the gardener are found and brought out, and the finders cannot stop laughing. This, the narrator tells us, is the birth of that common proverb about the ass' snooping and his shadow:

*...summoque risu meum prospectum cauillari non desinunt. Unde etiam de prospectu et umbra asini natum est frequens prouerbium.*  
(*Met.* 9,42,4)

They could not stop laughing and joking at my peering out; this is the origin of the much-quoted proverb about the peeping ass and its shadow.

As commentators have noticed,<sup>22</sup> this is a combination of two proverbial expressions, one about an ass' snooping, and a different one about an ass' shadow. The first of these is already present in the *Onos*:

πάντες δὲ ἄσβεστον ἐγέλων ἐπὶ τῷ μηνύσαντι ἐκ τῶν ὑπερώων καὶ  
προδόντι τὸν ἑαυτοῦ δεσπότην· κάκ τότε ἐξ ἑμοῦ πρώτου ἦλθεν εἰς  
ἄνθρώπους ὁ λόγος οὗτος, Ἐξ ὄνου παρακύψεως. (*Onos* 45)

They all laughed uncontrollably at the informer from upstairs, who had turned in his own master. Therefore, because of me, there originated that common saying among people “from the snooping of an ass”.

(Trans. Sullivan)

Thus the twist of staging an already existing expression, and then, backwards as it were, claiming to have presented its origin, was already there in the *Vorlage*.<sup>23</sup> Apuleius, however, goes one better in adding the well-established proverb of the ass' shadow, which, unlike the snooping, has a meaning rather different from the situation of Lucius.<sup>24</sup> Instead of going from an expression

<sup>22</sup> E.g. Robertson's edition of Apuleius, 1956<sup>2</sup>, 101.

<sup>23</sup> Sullivan 1989, ad loc., points out that this tag is found in Menander's comedy *The Priestess* (see fr. 189 Kassel-Austin, PCG vol. VI,2), where it refers to lawsuits brought on ridiculous grounds. Van Thiel (vol.1, 179–184; the snooping ass on p.181) gives some comments about Apuleius' way with proverbs in general, which he relates to the rhetorical exercise of providing an existing maxim with an aetiological story.

<sup>24</sup> See Otto 1962, 41–42. The origin of the proverb is the tale of a man who had bought an ass and wanted to rest in its shade; he was told that he had bought the ass, but not its shadow. See Hijmans *et alii* 1995, 353–355, for fuller references and some pertinent re-

to a novelistic moulding of it, here the author merely pretends to do so, and, in spelling out the proverbs, provides the reader with the key to the game played on him.

On the evidence of these examples, I would like to suggest that the narrative instantiation of verbal expressions (or in the case of the fish-trampling, of a ritual sign formula) is a conscious literary device on the part of Apuleius, repeated with variations throughout the novel. The device is profoundly akin to the main theme of Apuleius' novel in being a kind of metamorphosis. It also provides an emblematic illustration of what literature in general is about – shaping words into (fictional) reality.<sup>25</sup> In conclusion, I would like to make two points.

The first point is textual. In the eleventh book, when, after the initiation to the rites of Isis, Lucius learns that he must undergo a second initiation into the cult of Osiris, he is forewarned in a dream about the priest he is about to meet. The dream soon comes true, and here, at 11,27,7, the text adopted by Robertson reads as follows:

*Nam de pastophoris unum conspexi statim praeter indicium pedis cetero etiam statu atque habitu examussim nocturnae imagini congruentem, quem Asinium Marcellum uocitari cognoui postea, reformationis meae <minime> alienum nomen.*

(non-italic characters represent editor's emendations)

Confirmation was forthcoming, for I at once set eyes on one of the *pastophori* who coincided exactly with the vision of the night, not only by the evidence of his foot, but also by the rest of his build and by his dress. I later discovered that he was called Asinius Marcellus, a name quite relevant to my transformation.

The best and earliest MS, F (a Beneventan MS of the 11<sup>th</sup> century), has “as-inum Marcellum” and then “reformationis meae aljnu”, where, according to Robertson's apparatus, another hand seems to have added an ‘e’ above the ‘j’. In  $\phi$ , a MS copied from F in s. xii/ xiii, a more recent hand has according

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marks on the contrast between the frivolous point of the ass' “revelation” and the frame situation of the innocent *hortulanus* about to be condemned to death. For Apuleius' associative technique of allusion, cf. Brancaloneone – Stramaglia 1993, 40.

<sup>25</sup> So James 1987, 2–3 and *passim*.

to Giarratano (1929) changed “asinum” to “asinium”; in the second passage  $\phi$  has “alimum”, which, given the variation of ‘i/j’ and the abbreviation of nasals, is the same reading as in F. The easily established reading “reformationis meae alienum” has bothered editors, since the priest’s name, Asinius, is relevant, i.e. the opposite to being “alien to my transformation”. Thus Beroaldus (1500) emended to “non alienum”, and Robertson to the ingenious “minime alienum”, where “minime”, abbreviated “me” with a dash over it, can easily have fallen out after the medieval spelling of the possessive pronoun, “mee”. I propose reading *quem Asinium Marcellum uocitari cognoui postea – reformationis meae <in> asinum nomen* (“I later learned that he was called Asinius Marcellus – the very word for my transformation into an ass”), for the following reasons. (1) Orthographically this is an easy emendation, since ‘s’ and ‘l’ are very similar in several scripts, and ‘in’, written as ‘i’ with a dash, often falls out. “Asinum Marcellum” may perhaps have been a mistake occasioned by the nearby “asinum”. (2) It solves the difficulty that Apuleius usually constructs *alienus* with the dative, not the genitive.<sup>26</sup> (3) It establishes for this passage the same pattern of connection between words (*Asinius, nomen*) and novelistic reality (*reformationis meae in asinum*) as we have seen in the example with Candidus, a pattern which is based on the device analysed in this paper. Although “in asinum” is not strictly necessary for the meaning, its presence would have been justified by its function to emphatically underline the priest’s connection to this central transformation/metamorphosis. The parallelism with the dream of Candidus, where the connection is likewise explicit, is worth noting: *seruum ... nomine Candidum – argumento serui Candidi equum ... colore candidum*, 11,20,2 – 11,20,7.

My second point is thematic. There is, I think, in this device a hint as to the world-view of the *Metamorphoses*. The pure concatenation of verbal

<sup>26</sup> A form of *alienus* is constructed with the dative at *Met.* 8,8,9 and 8,13,4, as well as a couple of times in Apuleius’ other works (*Fl.* 18; *Soc.* 18; *Pl.* 2,8); occasionally it is constructed with *ab* + the ablative. The reconstruction of the passage at *Met.* 9,27,7 would seem to be the only example of construction with the genitive in this author. While it is, of course, not impossible to imagine this (existing Latin) construction being used only once by Apuleius in this admittedly unique passage, I still find that when viewed together with the other arguments, the grammatical point does carry some weight.

Parallels for the construction *aliquem reformare in + acc* are found at: *Met.* 2,5,7: *...in saxa et in pecua et quoduis animal ... reformat*; 4,22,5: *in Lemures reformati*; 6,22,4: *in serpentes in ignes in feras in aues et gregalia pecua ... reformando*. (I am grateful to Stelios Panayotakis for drawing my attention to these.)

signs, which is always primary in this novel,<sup>27</sup> may be seen as parallel to the Platonist notion of ideas, and the secondary embodiment of the signs into novelistic theme is then parallel to the world of the senses, likewise secondary in Platonist thought.<sup>28</sup> In its small way, the device discussed here points to an artistic universe where the ideal is primary to the material. The novelist then lets his readers unearth the ideas behind the themes, whether playfully as with the proverbs in 9,42 or seriously as in the dream of Candidus.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Even in the inverted last example, where it has to be primary in order for the inversion to work its joke.

<sup>28</sup> Apuleius was called a *philosophus Platonicus* (*Apol.* 10,6; Augustine *Civ.* 8,19), and it seems probable that he was familiar with Plato's theory of Forms. The presence of Platonic influence in the texture of the *Metamorphoses* is well established, unlike the controversial issue of whether the author means this seriously or not (see Harrison 2003, esp. 491–492, 512–513). It will be clear that I – cautiously – side with those who believe in Apuleius' seriousness as regards Plato and the Platonist interpretation of Isis, which he could have taken over from Plutarch, *De Iside et Osiride* (for this, see Walsh 1995<sup>2</sup>, 182–185).

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