

R.R NAUTA (ed.): *Desultoria Scientia. Genre in Apuleius' Metamorphoses and Related Texts (Caeculus, Papers in Mediterranean Archaeology and Greek and Roman Studies 5)*

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This little book contains six essays on the theme of “genre” in Apuleius’ *Metamorphoses*, *Apology* and *Florida*, and in various dialogues of Lucian, originally delivered at the fifth Fransum Colloquium in May 2002. We are given in the Preface the pleasing story behind the Fransum Colloquia, founded by Marianne Kleibrink in 1992: PhD candidates at the University of Groningen in the final stages of their research are given the opportunity to designate a problem connected with their dissertation research and to invite scholars from Holland and abroad to discuss it with them. The colloquia take place in a Romanesque church in the countryside north of Groningen. The topic and speakers at this particular colloquium were selected by Wytse Keulen who was just finishing his commentary on Apuleius *Metamorphoses* Book 1.1–20, now complete and covering the whole book, published with Egbert Forsten.

It is worth noting that most of the essays are not formulating questions about the genre of the *Metamorphoses* and related texts—whether there is any such thing as a novel, for example, and how it would be defined—but in them, the ways that these texts juxtapose diverse generic elements, creating hybrids, generating new forms, constructing creative and surprising juxtapositions. Some of the essays also explore the ways images may partake in and allude to stylistic polemic or offer a visual equivalent of proper modes of stylistic mixture. As is the norm with such collections, the essays cohere loosely and suggest cross-currents and common issues rather than attacking the field systematically.

Although the arrangement of the volume is alphabetical by author, it opens appropriately with an essay on the Prologue by Luca Graverini (“*A lepidus susurrus*. Apuleius and the fascination of poetry”) who generously (and he says hastily) offered his contribution in place of that of Stelios Panayotakis who was unable to prepare his paper for publication. Graverini provocatively suggests that the mysterious *at* which begins the *Metamorphoses* is not merely a sign of the conversational or storytelling nature of the novel, but is a statement about literary genre and style. The words imply not

a preceding *tu mihi*, but, evoking the prologue to Callimachus' *Aetia* as well as Augustan "recusationes," presuppose *alii tibi*, emphasizing the difference between Apuleius' style and literary project and those of others: "Let others tell of x in x style, but *I*..." Callimachus had opposed the soothing and slight song of the cicada to the loud braying of the ass. Graverini suggests that the prologue speaker, unlike Callimachus, takes on both styles: the refined Callimachean one, and that of the poet's rivals, those braying asses, which G. interprets as a long narrative with epic flavor. There follows a long section in which G. links the cicadas of Callimachus with bees in Virgil *Eclogue* 1.53–55 who hum with a *leui susurro*, and finally with the cicadas of Plato's *Phaedrus* 3.16 which Socrates finds to be sleep-inducing and a dangerous allurements away from philosophy. The image suggests not something bucolic, but the seductive and enchanting quality of writing which the prologue speaker provocatively espouses, a style which, as Keulen says, "avows exactly the kind of rhetoric against which the professors of rhetoric warned...a corrupt, hyperurbane style." (G. p. 15, quoting Keulen 2003, 18). Apuleius had enemies who could attack this choice of style, and the words evoke a long-standing debate between the psychagogic approach to literature and the moral/pedagogic one. G. asserts that the novel in fact is more allied with poetry than traditional prose in its aim to allure, distract, and entertain. Yet, G. argues, we should not conclude that the whole novel is "just like the chirp of a cicada." The prologue speaker is notoriously untrustworthy and soon hints at his other identity as a *rudis locutor*—where G. accepts the link with braying via the pun in *rudere*. (Presumably here G. means that the speaker also aims to present something anti-Callimachean which he has defined as a long narrative with epic elements.) Finally, G. notes the break from this identity in the "second prologue" at 11.14 where "we have silence instead of enchanting words, human instead of animal voice, a grateful devotee instead of a brilliant performer" (18). G. leaves us with a sense of inconclusiveness about the permanence of the new identity.

Graverini's main point about the adversative and Callimachean nature of *at* is an attractive new approach that deserves serious consideration and transforms the rest of the prologue into more of a stylistic statement than it is sometimes read to be. It is not clear why he is so hesitant to make claims for any Callimachean intertext *a priori*, which, in any case, he demonstrates via Latin texts as intermediaries. The links to Callimachus are subtle, but he proves quite convincingly that adversatives are a frequent element in stylistic declarations among Latin poets claiming allegiance to Callimachus. Whether or not we accept G.'s link between the Virgilian murmuring bees and the

cicadas detrimental to philosophical discourse, the general sense that the prologue speaker is outwardly advocating something psychagogic rather than morally improving seems indisputable. G. presents an interesting way to read the stylistic pronouncements embedded in Lucius' asinine state by linking him with Callimachus' enemies and presenting the novel as multi-form with refined elements as well as long narrative/epic form, but I am not entirely convinced that the braying of asses can be read in the *Aetia* prologue in this way. Though Callimachus opposes the long and the short, the epic vs. the refined, he seems at this juncture to be merely attacking the bad poetry of the braying asses. How exactly the ass, as a figure elsewhere as well for the bad poet or the bad listener (Midas), figures in relation to Apuleius' poetics is still problematic. It also seems to me that the ending could have been developed in other ways; does the desire to entertain have to preclude moral improvement altogether? Do we have to be left only with inconclusiveness and unreadability? However, positioning the novel in relation to the aesthetic considerations of poetry rather than prose is an important contribution.

Stephen Harrison ("Literary Texture in the Adultery-Tales of Apuleius, *Metamorphoses* Book 9") argues that "literary entertainment and not moral enlightenment" (as Tatum and others had suggested) is the aim of these tales. Starting with the premise that Apuleius pays particular attention to those traditions to which he specially wishes to articulate his connection, he elucidates the "interplay of different generic traditions" in these tales, ranging from the mime to Milesian tale to elegy, epic and tragedy. The most interesting sections of the essay investigate the connections of the plot elements of the tales to adultery mime, neatly signalled at 9.15 with the word *scaenas*. Harrison points out that the tale of the fuller (9.23–25) exploits the apparently stock comic character of the fuller who was the subject of several *fabulae Atellanae* of the Sullan era. The sense that fullers were somehow inherently comic in antiquity adds considerably to the texture here. In other sections, Harrison argues that e.g. Myrmex at 9.17 who is set as a guard on the chastity of Barbarus' wife, Arete, is allusively linked with the bard who is instructed to watch over Clytemnestra at *Odyssey* 3.262–72. At the same time, the wife Arete is supposed to recall Alcinous's wife, and Philesitherus, the lover, is both a "low-life Hippolytus" because his name suggests a love of hunting and because of his youth and also a "low-life Aegisthus" in the context of the Odyssean allusions. Some of the allusions Harrison posits in the later part of the article seem to me less convincing and more like parallel generic situations.

Harrison's conclusion is essentially that the complex literary texture adds considerably to the literary entertainment. In connection with the Homeric echoes, he states that "the transformation of this Homeric adultery tale for its new context shows the realistic and low-life character of the novelistic world, with its bleak and cynical view of the vice and weakness of human nature" (31). This point goes in directions which would have been interesting to see pursued at more length in several respects. In the first place, it hints at a darker point about the bleakness of the world of Book 9 which Harrison had seemed to have passed over at the beginning of the piece, in rejecting the moral tenor of Tatum's reading of the role of these tales. Do the epic references thus remind the reader of another world with which these characters are at odds? Critics have read these tales not only as negative moral *exempla* (if you commit adultery, bad things will happen), but also as a portrait of a depraved and progressively darker world, a world and a set of happenings at odds with the announcement that the following tale will be *lepida* (9.4) and *bonam prae ceteris, suaue comptam* (9.14). Secondly, as Harrison looks at a variety of texts, it might have been interesting to hear how different generic levels as inserted into the tales might have different effects.

Vincent Hunink's essay, "Some Cases of Genre Confusion in Apuleius," treats questions of genre not only in the *Metamorphoses*, but also in the *Apology* and *Florida*. His essential point is that in each of these works (which are all of different genres) Apuleius plays with genre and jumps around confusingly from one to another, mixing them into something unique. In the *Apology*, we find elements of both comedy and tragedy: Aemilianus is Thyestes, Rufinus is a *leno* from Roman comedy and mime, and references at the same time appear to Homer, Virgil, Pythagoras and numerous others of many genres. Hunink briefly suggests that we might even consider the *Apology* as Menippean satire on account of the many verse insertions, "But it may equally be seen as a comedy, a philosophical and scientific text, or a novella" (37). Similarly, in the *Florida*, we see particularly drama, but also "a panorama of genres" such that we do not know clearly what genre we are in. In the *Metamorphoses*, Hunink especially points to Lucius' "judicial speech," at the Risus festival which in itself also contains other genres: the epic heroism attributed to the "speaking" wineskins, comedy, epideictic rhetoric, and others. In the end, "the confusion of genre has become a specific genre convention by itself" (42).

It is hard to argue with much of what Hunink says and his essay brings out clearly the extent to which Apuleius mingles different sorts of literature

in different ways within one text. Some additional perspective would have helped to locate this practice within the normal constrictions of genre: how pure is any one “genre” ever? Does Cicero not intersperse poetry and poetic references in his speeches and shift registers to create variety and engage the audience? Does comedy not often include tragedy and tragic scenes? Hunink mentions that Petronius similarly confuses genre, but does not pursue the question of whether this is a particularly novelistic convention (though his essay implies it is Apuleian rather than novelistic). As in several of these papers, a working definition of “genre” or a consideration of the issues involved would have helped.

With Wytse Keulen’s essay, “The Wet Rituals of the Excluded Mistress: Meroe and the Mime,” one gets a sense of the ways that Keulen himself, as the impetus behind the topic of this Fransum colloquium, was thinking about genre. For him, the incorporation of different genres in the highly theatrical Meroe episode is all about boundary-crossing, the dynamism of transgressing the *limen* and the confusion of traditional patterns as a feature of the *Metamorphoses*. In re-telling the Meroe/Socrates episode, Keulen vividly brings out the highly theatrical nature of the action: the *grabattulus* as stage-prop, the extreme version of door-banging to introduce a new character, the farce of the overturned bed in which Aristomenes becomes his own audience, the horror made real in Aristomenes’ sweat and the tearing out of Socrates’ heart (this one Senecan), the ritualistic nature of the witches “wetting” their victim, and finally, the conclusion of the episode made concrete by the return of the doors to their posts, rather like the drawing of a curtain. The ancient reader would have recognized many elements from popular mime and comedy and, in reading aloud, might have taken on roles and impersonated the witches with a feminine voice and gesture. Insisting that “reading the *Metamorphoses* was not only a thrilling experience, but also a directly satisfying one” (61), Keulen attempts to reconstruct that vividness and immediacy which is so difficult for “bookish” moderns to recover.

The essay also explores in a more directly textual way the intersection of various genres, texts, and generic levels. Keulen particularly focusses on the ambiguity of Meroe’s status as an *exclusa amatrix*, already an inversion of the traditional gender roles, but he also shows her as a hybrid of various traditions forged into a new dynamic character. He compares her with Cynthia of Propertius 4.8 who likewise crosses the *limen* and takes on a more aggressive role than her lover. We experience a simultaneous crossing of gender and genre boundaries. This boundary-crossing appearing so early in the novel becomes for Keulen emblematic of the programme of the novel

which constantly flirts with the boundaries between waking and sleep, reality and dream, truth and fiction. Further, Apuleius' text crosses boundaries of decency, for which (in part) he apologizes in the Prologue. By bringing "low-life" elements of cross-dressing and gender-bending performance into a sophisticated text, Apuleius has created something thrilling, something that combines elements a bit alien to us today except on the margins of society (and yet not only the gay scene as Keulen asserts).

Keulen's rich essay holds much more than the summary above suggests and is particularly successful at going beyond the mere listing of intertextual passages and elements to show the vitality as well as self-consciousness involved in creating a new generic hybrid. Keulen's vision of a transgressive Apuleius who takes risks in creating something rather new contrasts dramatically with the Apuleius of Harrison and Hunink: a more cerebral intellectual fond of self-aggrandizing yet tame display, rather than a socially transgressive boundary-leaper.

Peter von Möllendorff's complex piece, "Camels, Celts and Centaurs. Lucian's Aesthetic Concept of the Hybrid," explores a number of related concepts: Lucian's creation of a hybrid genre—his comic/satiric philosophical dialogues—out of a merging of Old Comedy and the Socratic dialogue, Lucian's anxiety as a second century writer about the creation of new genres in a highly imitative age, his aesthetic considerations about what makes a successful vs. an unsuccessful hybrid, which he articulates mainly via images—of camels, Celts (minimally), Egyptians and especially centaurs. In the course of these considerations, von M. also distinguishes *charis* from *kallos* and delineates subtly what elements are needed, according to Lucian's aesthetic, to create a hybrid possessing *charis*. In one of the central images discussed in the piece, von M. discusses Lucian's description in the *Zeuxis* of that artist's depiction of a family group of centaurs lounging about in a verdant meadow. Lucian makes clear that he admires the painting of the centaur family because Zeuxis has achieved a perfect blend of human and animal and avoided several potential defects: the animal and human nature are both preserved, excess and sensationalism are avoided, and the junctures of human and animal bodies are invisible. Further, von M. argues that the particular *charis* of the scene is not merely achieved by successful mingling of the two species, but by Lucian's transformation of the centaurs into characters via an intertextual link to the farewell scene between Hector and Andromache in *Iliad* 6. As *charis* in Lucian, by von M.'s definition (73–75), is the production of sudden pleasure in the recipient, here "it would therefore be the hermeneutic activity of the recipient which would bear ultimate re-

sponsibility for the painting's effect of *charis*: the representation achieves *charis in the very moment* in which the recipient recognizes its Homeric background." (78) Von M.'s discussion of *charis* and of the hybrid do not always seem closely joined—here it is not the hybridity that creates the moment of *charis*—though he does obviously discuss the two in tandem. This essay is obviously a bit of an anomaly in the collection because it is the only essay not on Apuleius, nor does it attempt in any way to connect thoughts about genre in Lucian with genre in Apuleius. However, it is also anomalous in the collection as the only essay really to address what it would mean to a second century author to be creating a hybrid genre, and to think about such generic mixing not simply in terms of a jumble of miscellaneous texts set next to each other, but in terms of the images used by the author to convey his aesthetic concept of what makes a successful mixing and what is shocking, incompatible and above all unnatural. In this respect, von M. takes a much closer look than the others at what an author of that age felt about the purity of genres and about the problem of creating new ones that gain legitimacy by their incorporation of established forms. Though the essay obviously stands on its own as a reading of Lucianic images of hybridity, it could also be linked with Apuleius more directly. The novel is often described—indeed often in this volume—as a hybrid genre, though it is more multiform than this dual melding of the Socratic dialogue and Old Comedy. Yet, I have argued elsewhere that Apuleius' novel does self-consciously explore its identity by inserting other genres in more and less appropriate contexts, as a way of establishing and legitimizing itself. While it is difficult to find images of hybridity explored in Apuleius the way von M. does in Lucian, Marsyas in *Florida* 3 comes close. As a satyr with characteristics of both humans and goats, as a Phrygian in a Graeco-Roman world and as a musician with his own claims to artistic achievement, Marsyas might be seen as something of a kindred Apuleian statement about the anxieties of hybridity.

The volume's final essay is Maaïke Zimmerman's "Echoes of Roman Satire in Apuleius' *Metamorphoses*." Her focus is on 'Systemreferenz' or the relation of the *Metamorphoses* with a group of texts, the genre of satire, rather than with particular passages or authors. After considering the possibility that the *Metamorphoses* is a particular type of satire, Menippean (provisionally accepting Fusillo's looser definition of *Menippea* as a cultural trend characterized by stylistic and formal liberty, rather than a more restricted formal category), she concentrates on both the shared topics of Satire and the *Metamorphoses* and on the similarities in narrative voice. As Zimmerman points out, satire and the novel similarly treat a mixture of high and

low genres, incorporating the low ones and often debunking the high, and both are hybrid, parasitic genres, exploiting and reforming other texts. They also share themes and types such as *avaritia* (seen in the miserly Milo in the *Metamorphoses*) and the infidelity of women. They both create caricatures: Zimmerman cites the portraits of petty officials in Apuleius' Pythias (1.24) and Persius' officious aedile who breaks substandard pints (1.129–30).

Central to the essay is a close analysis of the satirical elements in the curious passage in Book 10 in which Lucius (or perhaps the auctorial narrator) launches into an unexpected tirade about bribery and injustice. The ambiguity over whose voice we hear, that of actorial or auctorial narrator has always been problematic, and Zimmerman now argues that the narrator assumes here the character of a satirist filled with Juvenalian *indignatio*. Z. shows in detail that many of the rhetorical devices used by the narrator here are well known in satire, and the passage also shares with that genre the address to an imaginary interlocutor, as both genres are engaged in a type of *sermo*, a constant conversation.

From here Z. reaches the most interesting part of the essay, on “unauthorized texts,” starting from a quotation from Braund on the way that the author of satire “tends to play games with us by creating a mask or voice” which is persuasive and seductive, but then undermines the authority he has established which creates a destabilizing effect (101). Z. compares Winkler's reading of the *Metamorphoses* as an “unauthorized text” with its ambivalences in authorial voice, as well as the self-satire or self-ironizing *persona* of the narrator at certain points (e.g. 7.10), which is a feature of Menippean Satire. Irony and satire at one's own expense are a feature of Satire which becomes rather prominent in the *Metamorphoses*. Finally, Z. argues that this self-satire reaches its pinnacle in the final book of the novel in which the narrator presents himself, his earlier self, as an object of implicit satire since he is, according to the readings of Harrison and others which Z. accepts, a gullible dupe who is fleeced by the greedy priests of Isis and Osiris. She brings the connection to satire full-circle by pointing out that both Juvenal and Persius attack the venality of Egyptian priests.

This exploration of the novel's connections to Satire in a broad sense, especially in terms of voice, self-satire, and the self-ironizing narrator, outside of particular individual allusions is very useful. It is interesting to consider the conversational nature of the *Metamorphoses* in light of Horace's conversations (*sermones*) with some imaginary interlocutor or in connection with Juvenal ranting to an audience on the street-corner. Though the constructed orality of the *Metamorphoses* is most often thought of as reproduc-



ing the sense of the itinerant story-teller narrating his tales, as Z. reveals, sometimes the element of *indignatio* is dominant. Above all, the two genres seem linked in being more hybrid than others and in re-shaping material from elsewhere into a loose amalgam united more than anything else by the narrating voice, a voice which, as Z. shows, is itself unstable.

One might expect from the title of this volume—which is not something general like “Papers on the Completion of Wytse Keulen’s Doctorate”—that the essays would cohere and tackle more systematically questions of genre and the novel, but it remains fundamentally, as Ruurd Nauta says in the preface, “an instance of *desultoria scientia*, jumping from one text or question to another” (IX). Nor does any of the authors delve into genre theory at all; there is almost nothing of a theoretical nature in the bibliography. These are not necessarily criticisms, but simply a way of defining what the book is and is not. What the volume achieves as a whole is to remind us that the question of the genre of Apuleius’ *Metamorphoses* is even more complicated than we might previously have thought, that the novel is not the only hybrid genre (witness Lucian’s dialogues), or the only genre that mixes high and low or gives a significant place to the low. We are constantly brought back to such issues as that of narrative voice, the effects of literary intertexts, particularly the less studied influences of theater (formal and mime), satire, and even Callimachean aesthetics. Precisely because the novel is uncertain, hybrid, and polyphonic, it must define itself by the nature of its subtle interactions with other genres. These essays constitute another important chapter in the ongoing analysis of these interworkings.