

W. RIESS (ed.): *Paideia at Play: Learning and Wit in Apuleius*
Ancient Narrative Supplements 11
2008. XXI, 302 pp. Groningen: Barkuis Publishing & Groningen University
Library. Hardback €85.00
ISBN 978-90-77922-41-5

Reviewed by Paula James, Open University, Milton Keynes

Overview

This is an elegant production from a tasteful choice of cover to the learned content of its chapters. The contributions are scholarly engagements with two key Apuleian texts which, it is argued, embody, transform and transmit the essence of ‘paideia’ (in a distilled definition, the “wit and learning” of the title) through the medium of these literary ‘tours de force.’ The first half of the book focuses upon his *Pro se de Magia*, or *Apologia*, a written account of Apuleius’ self defence at a trial that took place in Oea, North Africa during the second century CE. It emerges during this lengthy speech that the youthful Apuleius was charged with employing magic to gain the affections and the fortune of a middle aged widow, Pudentilla.

The second set of chapters in *Paideia* conjures with the rich cultural texture of Apuleius’ fictional first person novel, *The Metamorphoses*, aka *The Golden Ass (GA)*, in which the themes of magic and metamorphosis drive the narrative. This is the story of a man changed into an ass, and it is based upon a Greek novel, but the relationship of Apuleius’s adventures of the hero Lucius to his source is not a straightforward one.

Even though the *GA* is derivative, it is inevitable that the author’s own life experience of being on trial (but we rely on his evidence alone for this episode which he no doubt elaborates or perhaps has invented – more of which later) intrudes upon interpretations of this Latin version of a Greek story. The contributors are interested in the way Apuleius is presenting himself to his reading and listening public in these distinct works and consequently they develop a complex consensus about the social and literary identity of this educated Roman provincial author and the particularities and peculiarities of his historical context.

The shared goal and methodological anchor of the book’s contributors is to demonstrate to the reader that these two works of Apuleius reflect the cultural forces and social environment that produced and nurtured him; the

bolder claim is that Apuleius in turn is responsible for taking the modes of expression and performative displays that characterise 'paideia' onto new levels of literary sophistication. His abilities to manipulate reader response and also audience participation go far beyond rhetorical powers of persuasion and in the novel "show us the virtuoso Latin sophist pushing against the very bounds of sensual experience and its describability" (Slater, 250.)

Riess's helpful introduction sets the scene for the age of the so-called 'Second Sophistic', in which Apuleius operated. This cultural period was characterised and dominated by the discourse of an educated elite most usually associated with Greek texts and Greek orators. The latter were famous for public displays of knowledge throughout the Roman Empire and for motivating and rivalling each other in public exposure and learned literary output. They were all the proud possessors of 'paideia' which involved: "the highly self-reflexive and artificial harking back to the guiding paradigms of the past in the form of memorable events, traditions and narrative stock motifs" (ix). Its practitioners were primarily associated with the Greek past and prided themselves upon their ability to write in classical Attic diction.

R. summarises the attributes of the 'pepaideumenoí', as those keen to acquire: "the whole spectrum of contemporary knowledge" (x), but they clearly competed with each other for honours, public acclaim and material advancement in a world where this type of cultural cachet "had far-ranging social and political implications" (*ibid.*). However, R. rightly observes that "the notion of 'paideia' in the Latin world is under-researched" (xi) in spite of the productivity of Aulus Gellius, Pliny the Younger, Fronto and Quintilian, all of whom exhibited their fair share of antiquarian knowledge, exuded the spirit of learned display across genres and were no strangers to the performative potential of their chosen media from the epistle to the panegyric.

Enter Apuleius, an exuberant practitioner of Greek and Latin discourse and a clear candidate for the title Latin Sophist (an aspect of his literary *persona* and his social standing already explored by Stephen Harrison, the first contributor in this book, in his *Apuleius: a Latin Sophist*, Oxford, 2000). Apuleius' autobiographical defence and his first person fiction (the novel) are re-assessed as vehicles for his creative adaptation of the concept of 'paideia.' A primary aim of the book is to demonstrate that Apuleius had a conscious agenda of broadening the cultural appeal both linguistically and geographically of works steeped in this particular Greek style of wit and learning.

A book of this nature boasts its own community of scholars, not all of them closely associated with Apuleius or the ancient novel but all of them

stakeholders in the study of ‘paideia’ and the rich literary textures manifest in the works of ‘pepaideumenoí.’ It is irresistible for the reviewer (or this one anyway) to receive this array of interpretations as in itself a display of wit and learning to be primarily appreciated by an academic audience steeped in the study of the *Apology* and the *Metamorphoses* in their cultural context.

However, *Paideia at Play* need not be confined to a rarefied readership as interest in the Second Sophistic, and the development of prose fiction is growing so rapidly. The recent International Conference on the Ancient Novel held at Lisbon (July 2008) was numerically huge (with hundreds of papers as well as participants). The genre itself seems to have become so inclusive that it threatens to break its boundaries and swallow up history, biography, fable, epic, as well as the oral and anecdotal – and, indeed, the slippery status of the novel genre and its similarity to satire in this respect is raised here and there by the contributors to this volume with due acknowledgement to Ellen Finkelpearl’s observations in her influential book, *Metamorphoses of Language in Apuleius: a Study of Allusion in the Novel*, Ann Arbor, 1998.

One area which future scholarship (inspired by this book) might wish to expand upon is the direct influence manuals of Greek rhetorical theory (quite an industry from the second century CE) might have had upon the *Apology* (elements and structure) as well as upon the oratorical disquisitions within the *Golden Ass*. It would be interesting to map upon both these works the categories of invention, disposition, expression, memory and delivery as defined by handbooks on speechmaking.

All the authors address Apuleius’ strategies for successfully conveying the playful scholarship of the Greek ‘pepaideumenoí’ to a Latin audience. With varying degrees of emphasis the contributors work with the complex notion of the “construction of identity via the display of learning – that lies at the heart of both Apuleius’ *Apology* and *The Golden Ass*” (xi). More explicit reference to the ‘persona’ debate would not have gone amiss at times during the chapters of *Paideia at Play*, but the final essay by Slater does raise the issue of writing ‘in character’ and the assumptions Apuleius’ reading public might bring to a clearly fictional first person.

Paideia at Play approaches the Apuleian texts in terms of Sophistic playfulness and authorial irony, and this allows contributors to discuss the challenge of the authenticity of the trial along with the literary status and impact of Apuleius’ case for defence. In his introduction R. highlights Apuleius’ sense of fun with the traditions of ‘paideia’ itself and suggests that his liter-

ary programme is one which places joking and earnestness in an indissoluble union. With this concept of Apuleian 'paideia' as a 'Leitmotif' it is to some extent irrelevant whether the contributors believe that the trial took place or to what extent the author of the *Apologia* was really under threat of a punitive judgement. Whatever the truth of the matter, the consensus amongst the contributors is that this was an accomplished piece of epideictic oratory and helped to establish Apuleius' literary career.

Similarly, when it comes to the *Golden Ass*, the 'Ernst' part of the 'Scherz und Ernst' equation (combining entertainment and edification) is a slippery concept, because it does not lead many of the contributors to the conclusion that Apuleius has serious intentions in the resolution of his novel (the joyous conversion to Isis once the hero Lucius has sloughed his asinine exterior and become his human self again.) However serious, spiritual or satiric and even slapstick the finale seems to the different commentators, they tend to agree that its designer, Apuleius, is ultimately driven by a desire to display his credentials as a 'pepaideumenos' and that he invents new games of literary allusiveness along the way.

The Essays

Apologia / Pro Se De Magia

Stephen Harrison sets the tone for the first half of *Paideia at Play* with a succinct chapter on Apuleius' display oratory at his trial. ('The Sophist at Play in Court.') H. views the *Apology* as a piece of self promotion from a young man on the brink of a brilliant literary career and also as a defining moment in the exploitation of elite education as social cachet reaching beyond the boundaries of the Greek speaking half of the Roman empire. H. concludes that "even discounting its unique status as the only Latin forensic oration from the second century CE, its literary quality makes it more than worthy of the attention of scholars." (p.15).

The *Apology* is a showpiece for Apuleius masquerading as a response to false accusations during a trial, the historical veracity of which is under question. The novel (*GA*) is not alluded to in the defence speech and, not surprisingly, H. assumes it postdates Apuleius' defence on the grounds that "Apuleius could not have resisted advertising an ambitious work such as the *Metamorphoses*." (p.10).

Rives in a substantially longer essay ('Legal Strategy and Learned Display') reconstructs the circumstances of the trial as an actual event and goes

into the legal niceties of the charges and the legitimacy of the hearing. He buys into the belief that the subsequent publication of the defence speech furthered Apuleius' career but he detects a genuine strategy for acquittal at work in that the defendant is at pains to present his knowledge as harmless and trivial. R. has a useful discussion on the pejorative associations of certain terms and labels and generally this contribution is quite a mine of information on things legal and general.

For instance, R.'s exposition upon the encyclopaedic knowledge of the 'literati' (and Apuleius was striving and succeeding to be part of this charmed circle) and their love of lists and hierarchies of genres, topics, and authors (pp. 38-43) makes fascinating reading. I gained an intriguing picture of the second century CE 'sophists' as the computer databases of the ancient world. They honed their brains by ranking in order of merit writers, literary categories and 'topoi.' R. sees Apuleius' trial speech as an opportunity for this new man to parade his learning (and his listing) as unthreatening and insignificant (the core of his defence) but simultaneously playful and witty in the best traditions of the educated elite in display mode.

Riess's and Hunink's chapters on 'Apuleius Socrates Africanus' and 'Homer in Apuleius' *Apology*' grapple with Apuleius' choice of historical and mythical exemplars, pointing to both positive and negative resonances in identifying with Paris, Odysseus and the historic figure of Socrates (noting in the case of the latter that Socrates is realised through a number of literary constructs and that Apuleius expects the educated amongst his listeners to recognise and enjoy levels of irony in the portrayal of himself as a philosopher on trial.)

Riess accepts the trial as authentic and suggests that the speech is too structurally wayward (p. 67) to be a polished rhetorical foray, but he also reinforces the notion of Apuleius' didactic skills in demonstrating to the court the value and integrity of the philosopher. Apuleius emulates Socrates as 'vir bonus dicendi peritus' (n. 131), and in relating to a composite image of the famous Greek philosopher he shows his versatility in accessing different traditions. R. ties this into the 'desultoria scientia' (ability to change horses in mid gallop) that the narrator of the novel boasts about in the prologue of the *GA*. For R. Apuleius is also paradigm shifting in his defence speech.

At this point in *Paideia at Play* I did find myself wearying just a little at the notion of playful Apuleius (though I must confess to being rather wedded to the word myself through various articles and essays!). Hunink continues the celebration of Apuleius' playful and imaginative use of past texts and

traditions with his emphasis on Homeric heroes with whom Apuleius aligns himself. H. does not dismiss the trial as a non-event (not happening or not very serious if it did?), but he analyses the speech as something very much worked over for a literary readership or even for a theatrical audience (pp. 86-87, n. 32).

Whoever the target audience might have been, H. agrees with the previous contributors that Apuleius seeks to impress his less well-educated listeners and reveal the extent of his learning to his educated peers. In locating his intellectual pursuits within the prestigious tradition of 'paideia' he defends and promotes his place as a Latin speaking 'pepaideumenos'.

Thomas McCreight's 'The "Riches" of Poverty' is a further exploration of the philosophical 'persona' Apuleius presents at his trial. Turning the accusation that he is impecunious, and therefore on the make in his marriage to Pudentilla, to his advantage, Apuleius argues persuasively that being of modest means is the mark of a true philosopher. M. adds yet another set of nuances to Apuleius' rhetorical strategies in the *Apology*. M. also writes with a lightness of touch (and exhibits a certain sense of playfulness himself!) and so draws the reader into his scholarly discussion of 'paupertas', its range of meanings in the ancient world, and associated epithets which invariably have a philosophical timbre.

I do wonder if Williams' article of 1983, 'Vox clamantis in theatre; Juvenal, 3,153,' *Papers of the Liverpool Latin Seminar*, vol. 4, 121-127, might be worth revisiting in further discussions of 'paupertas' in Apuleius (Juvenalian techniques in the *GA* are highlighted in Greene's essay). A satiric personification of Poverty as the voice of social snobbery might have appealed to Apuleius and may just lurk in his speech as yet another learned allusion (as well as the poverty of philosophy perhaps!).

Stephan Tilg's 'Eloquentia ludens' discovers or rather uncovers yet another kind of 'persona' for Apuleius, a young orator, armed with unabashed 'eloquentia' and committed to outspokenness and truth telling, who came across to me as a rather refreshing WYSIWYG (what you see is what you get). T. pinpoints Apuleius' possession of a statuette of Mercury as especially apt for an orator; the constant companionship of the wordsmith god presumably reminds its owner that there is even a "cheerful side of standing trial", since he can speak his mind with jouissance on any and every topic (in response to such a wide range of calumnies and accusations).

At first sight this approach derails theories that Apuleius is hiding his identity behind multiple 'personae' and that he is using the motif of the mirror as a metaphor for fragmentation (see T.'s response to Yun Lee Too, pp.

126-127 and note 43). Nevertheless, T. manages to accommodate aspects of his fellow contributors' emphasis upon a more mannered and artificial self-fashioner as the author of the *Apology*. He offers a stimulating discursus on Apuleius' use of 'lepidus' and 'festivus' and their function in the repertoire of canonical classical authors.

He accepts the mantra of playfulness but concludes (pp. 131-132): "I do not think that we should reduce Apuleius' idea of playing with literature to showing off 'conspicuous leisure' or accumulating 'cultural capital' to name but two key concepts, suggested by Veblen and Bourdieu respectively, of practically useless culture put to the use of social distinction." For T. Apuleius "is indeed a player, but one who plays his game in earnest."

To sum up my reactions to the first half of *Paideia* as one who has been less intimately involved with the *Apology* text, I found the essays wonderfully informative about this unusual piece of oratory and the issues of genre and structure it has raised amongst scholars of Apuleius. The contributors also have much to offer the student of the Second Sophistic, as it is so vitally important to the social and cultural context of the work.

The Golden Ass / Metamorphoses

There is no-one better placed to introduce this second part of *Paideia at Play* than Maaike Zimmerman, who has been centre stage of the scholarship on Apuleius' novel before and during its exponential growth in popularity amongst academic commentators. In 'Cenatus solis fabulis?' Z. gives a symposiastic reading of Apuleius' novel which she judges to be peppered with the kind of scenes, 'topoi' and stock figures characteristic of festive writing in the ancient world. The banquet was the best environment for the consumption of such a work by a literary and knowing audience and the mixture of entertainment and edification within the content of *GA* reinforces its suitability as intellectual fare for the elite dinner party.

Z. is sensibly cautious in her comments upon the dynamics of the 'instruct and delight' agenda of the 'symposia' experience and how this might actually be working as a dialectic within the novel. She gives a stimulating survey of Greek and Roman 'convivia' and their social and cultural functions, drawing upon a wide range of classical authors who exploited the motif of dining for satirical, didactic and dramatic purposes. As Z. points out (p. 152) Apuleius himself produced a *Quaestiones Conviviales* (one of the lost works), as did Plutarch and, according to classical commentators, both of these were serious in nature.

Z. ends with a tantalising coda suggesting animal fables as yet another genre that unites Apuleius' novel with agendas of 'spoudaiogeloion' ("the dynamics of entertaining and serious elements" p. 155). This line of enquiry could clearly be taken further. At the risk of overloading the table, but in the light of Z.'s elegant exegesis on the symposiastic aspects of the novel and its reception, I am now prompted to revisit John Heath's article 'Narration and Nutrition in Apuleius' *Metamorphoses*' *Ramus* 11 (1982), 55-77 and rethink my article 'Keeping Apuleius in the Picture,' *AN* 1 (2002), 185-207, in which I looked at rituals of dinner in *GA* and Buñuel's film, *Discreet Charm of the Bourgeoisie*.

Robert Vander Poppen's 'A Festival of Laughter' creatively develops the theme of 'hospitium' (hospitality) that featured in Z.'s essay. V-P's opening remarks upon the practical necessity of having elite connections when travelling through the empire enrich his critique of the host and guest roles in the novel. 'Hospitium' is an essential social cement for safe journeys, so the cracks that appear within this reciprocity are significant and help drive *GA*'s narrative.

V-P concentrates upon Lucius' experience of hospitality as a human, demonstrating how hosts and guests alike distort the rituals and the norms of this practice. Everyone seems to behave badly or at least inappropriately from Milo the miser to Isis the goddess and Lucius himself frequently exhibits an imperfect understanding of his role as receiver of guest friendship. At other times he offers misplaced loyalty to an uncaring and unprotective host (Milo at the Risus Festival, pp. 161-162) and is duped by more than one manipulative 'hostess with the mostess', culminating in Isis, divine status notwithstanding (pp. 170 ff.).

This might have been a moment for engagement with Greimasian theories of shifting role play as applied to the novel (see S. Frangoulidis, *Roles and Performances in Apuleius' Metamorphoses*, Stuttgart, 2001) and a nod towards R. May's discussion of subversion of social niceties and solecisms as farce in *Apuleius and Drama: The Ass on Stage*, Oxford, 2006. However, the value of V-P's essay is the way it prompts the reader to see the *GA*'s more theatrical moments and 'genre scenes' from yet another perspective. In drawing attention to Lucius' place on the margins of Hypatan society V-P has reinforced my view (not that he necessarily takes this position!) that the hero is most definitely being groomed for his humiliating part in the Risus Festival, as he is looked over by Milo and Byrrhena as a suitable scapegoat for their rituals. V-P's essay views Lucius' relationship with Isis as evidence that he has not changed or learned from his experiences as a guest. Restored

to human form he carries on with an OCD tendency (obsessive, compulsive disorder) in his desire to belong to a tightly knit and exploitative community.

In her 'Social Commentary in the *Metamorphoses*: Apuleius' Play with Satire' Elizabeth Greene covers similar territory within the novel to Zimmerman and Vander-Poppen but assesses the scenes and encounters in common as satiric vignettes resonating with Juvenalian attitudes to the human condition and its comic fallibility. She explores Apuleius' treatment of the dinner party, the journey, and the narrator's self mockery in embarrassing situations, identifying their parodic tone with Horace and satiric traditions in general. G. neatly summarises the principal discussions to date about Apuleius' novel as satire or as part of the problematic satiric genre.

G. is boldly positivist in her approach to Apuleius' satiric voice as that of a social critic. This is where she draws the closest parallels between Apuleius and Juvenal with the latter's attacks upon avarice, adultery, corruption and the particular focus upon the vices of the nobility (an elite group that needs reminding about ethical best practice). G.'s paper at the International Conference in Lisbon demonstrated that she is introducing additional subtleties into the equation; for instance the ambiguous and dual intentions underlying the moralistic poses both authors adopt.

Her essay identifies Apuleius' focus on Fortuna as inspired by but distinct from Juvenal's, because the novelist holds out hope for a benign providence and presents his fall from high social status to the lowest of the low, an enslaved ass, as a learning curve, a salutary lesson in what true nobility means. Lucius needs a metamorphosis to see society as it really is. G. might like to pursue contrasts and comparisons with Apuleius' medium of a fictional character and Juvenal's very conscious call upon 'Indignatio' as a quirky muse and certainly a force that needs to fire him with righteous anger in *Satire One*.

Amanda Mathis takes yet another path through Apuleius' multilayered fiction with her focus on the elegiac tropes and characters (or caricatures) the novelist introduces at regular intervals in the narrative. In her essay 'Playing with Elegy' she proposes yet another strong genre presence, which the reader should recognise, and details the derailment of traditional elegiac behaviour from figures who are elegiac poetry's stock in trade. Like Vander-Poppen's essay this contribution, too, skirts around the edge of theories about regular and irregular role play.

Lucius and his fictional associates seem incapable of fulfilling the roles literary traditions have ascribed to them and this is apparent from the first two books where lovers have clearly not absorbed the appropriate elegiac

manuals of Ovid, Tibullus or any author in the Augustan coterie! The strength of M.'s contribution is its coherent overview of the elegiac timbres and the questions she poses about Lucius as the primary internal 'lector': "His ability to read (or, most often, misread) the conflation of elegiac roles depends upon the presence of elegiac discourse and imagery which creates a richly allusive theme of eroticism within the narrative." (p. 197).

M. builds upon past scholarship that has identified elegiac affinities in the early narratives of sex, witchcraft, jealous lovers and sudden death (though James' 1987 discussion on 'paraclausithyron' and 'Türöffnung' in books 1 to 3 is absent in n. 14, p. 205, which acknowledges 1990s' commentators on the elegiac mise-en-scene in Aristomenes' story). M. makes more of these motifs than all of us, however, and argues that these examples are cumulative as well as comical and programmatic as well as paradigmatic.

By the end of the second book the reader is "playing at a literary 'who's who' game, which importantly connects with the 'quis ille' notion introduced in the prologue to the work." (p. 213). M. certainly metamorphoses our previous tentative moves with motifs from elegy into a more satisfying evaluation of Apuleius's strategy: "The multi-faceted identities with which he endows his characters not only reflect the Second Sophistic interest in identity but also 'solicit the pleasure, admiration and respect of the audience' through a virtuoso performance that resembles that of a circus rider." (*ibid.*).

I turn now to dream time in Apuleius and David Carlisle's contribution, '*Vigilans Somniabar: Some Narrative Uses of Dreams in Apuleius' Metamorphoses*'.

This is yet another essay that responds creatively to scholarly speculations so far on an important feature of the novel. C.'s task is less straightforward (and correspondingly the trajectory of his analysis is more convoluted) as he is entering the realms of ancient social psychology with his critique of dreams and dreaming in Apuleius' novel. What the fictional characters do with or say about their visions in sleep can be confirmed or contradicted by conventional (or popular) wisdom about dreams and their functions in the second century CE (rightly or wrongly, this is one of the messages I received in reading this essay).

C. covers the blurred boundaries between dreamlike states and actual dreams and nightmares in the narrative. Charite's dreams and their context feature strongly in the essay. They relate to her reality and predict her future tragedy in equal measure so the homespun philosophy of dreams uttered by the robber housekeeper is subsequently revealed as false comfort within the unusual, exceptional and nightmarish world of the *Golden Ass*. Visions and

ghosts can be deceptive sources of information but C. argues that this does not undermine dreams as vehicles for truth: “Not only does the dream provide important information which would otherwise be inaccessible, it also authorizes the truth of that information.” (p. 227).

C. has interesting things to say about Aristomenes’ denial of reality and how he embraces the explanation that he has dreamed Socrates’ murder by the witches. For Aristomenes the dream he has conjured up is a misleading and false vision. The truthfulness of disturbing dreams and ghostly visions is vindicated in literary anecdotes (witness Pliny the Younger and Cicero), but Aristomenes is led to believe that his friend’s death was a bad dream and a deceptive one at that.

C. observes that Lucius cannot always distinguish between his waking and sleeping state, and describes (p. 221) the hero’s out of body experience (I paraphrase) when he spies upon Pamphile at the moment of her transformation into a bird. Lucius is the recipient of apparently authoritative dreams with a divine and mantic provenance during Book 11, but these can be viewed by the sceptical reader as the mind tricks perpetrated by the cults of Isis and Osiris. By this stage, the reader has been encouraged to believe that dreams matter and “still *meant* something in the fictional universe to which they referred.” (p. 233).

C. has one last surprise up his sleeve in suggesting that the priest of Osiris dreams a dream that reaches out beyond the text to its readers. The mention of the man from Madauros refers to the author and his real world, which in its time meant the world of the reader. I take issue with C.’s assumption that this is also “the world of you and me”, but I may be missing a subtlety here. Nevertheless, I very much enjoyed the intriguing note on which C. concludes his essay and feel sure future commentators will take up his challenge to find meaning outside the novel for the dreams that take place in its fictional universe.

Paideia at Play’s last contributor is Niall Slater and he brings the collection to an end with a fitting flourish, ‘Apuleian Ecphraseis: Depiction at Play’. S. sees the novel as a virtuoso display in which Apuleius in the ‘*melete*’ tradition (but stepping into a fictional character as opposed to making an historical declamation in character) presents the reader with further adventures of Lucius. This is a clever way of relating the *GA* to its Greek source because it assumes a readership familiar with the hero of the Ass story and ready to receive additional entertaining and edifying episodes in his fictional life. As S. puts it: “Apuleius took over the armature of an earlier transformation story, including many specific incidents in the same sequen-

tial order, and made of them something distinctly different and altogether his own.” (p. 235).

S. suggests in a footnote (p. 236, n. 3) that this process of re-fashioning an established text has a modern parallel in fan-authored fiction and cites the speeches and narrative which devotees of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* continue to produce some time after the last season was shown on television (but it continues in graphic novel form!). There is no reason why heroes and heroines of ancient romances should not have attracted extra layers of narrative material (like the familiar figures of myth and legend) and this might be worth pursuing across the genre!

S. draws upon the work of Bartsch and Webb on ancient readers as active in the construction of meaning to re-assess the role of Apuleius’ intended audiences (whether watching, listening or reading – S. makes a nice observation on those at Apuleius’ trial needing to play Athenian jurors in their own minds once the defendant styled himself as an African Socrates, p. 236). He has selected ‘ecphrasis’ (elaborate description especially of artistic works) in the *GA* to tease out Bartsch’s theory that ancient readers would expect an ‘ecphrasis’ to be worthy of interpretation and significant to the overall narrative but that this might be an illusory power of decoding (the play of readerly detection and readerly deception, p. 237).

S. deconstructs key visual moments in the novel from the non-ecphrastic event of Lucius’ city sight-seeing of Hypata (which is actually a tour through Lucius’ fevered imagination about magical transformations lurking at every corner) to the lifelike sculpture of Diana and Actaeon in Byrrhaena’s courtyard and the glittering banquet that follows shortly after. Cupid’s palace is likened to an enlarged elaborate jewel box and S. sees cunning interplay between scale and point of view in Psyche’s first sight of her *carcer beatus* (the blessed prison as she is later to designate it).

Apuleius’ vision of superhuman artistry with its animated surfaces requires poetic repertoires for a full appreciation, such as the Sun God’s magnificent abode, an ecphrasis that opens Book Two of Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* – except that Apuleius out visualises Ovid with sheer sensuousness and invites the reader to enter into the reciprocity of image receiving and image constructing at key moments in the novel. S. introduces the tactile dimensions of ancient theories of vision towards the end of his essay (pp. 249-250): “theories of intromission and extramission of *simulacra* flowing into the viewer’s eyes or rays emerging from them to touch the objects of sight, competed and sometimes converged in antiquity and in particular in the ancient novels.”

He then suggests that “the image of what is *not* seen seizes the viewer’s soul more powerfully than what *is* seen”. The final visions for contemplation are that of Isis and Lucius as the worshipper the goddess has “manufactured out of our narrator.” If S. had wanted to end his essay and the book on a truly mischievous note, he might have invited us to decode the secrets of the sanctuary that Lucius (the acolyte entitled to a private viewing) sketches out for the reader at 11.23. Are these glimpses of supernatural wonders simply smoke and mirrors (part of the title of a stimulating paper on Isis as divine spin doctor given at Lisbon by Brigitte Libby of Princeton University)?

In that case the reader detects what deceives the internal viewer (but not the author? – discuss!) and this seems a fitting place to end this review, restoring confidence to Apuleian readers of this century that there is still plenty left to see in his skilful and sophistic displays, so much so that even a book of the breadth and depth of *Paideia at Play* has not had the last word.