

Duped by an ass: Revisiting the chronology of Apuleius' *Metamorphoses*

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I. What is known and agreed upon

The most extensive study on the *Metamorphoses* has been conducted by the University of Groningen research group, led by Maaïke Zimmerman. Since 1977, they have published a series entitled *Groningen commentaries on Apuleius* (GCA), which in its entirety covers every book of the novel.¹ Complementary to the commentaries are the collections of essays compiled in the three volumes of *Aspects of Apuleius' Golden Ass* (1978-2012). As anthologies they prioritize research which applies modern theories of narrative techniques, which had been lacking in previous Apuleian scholarship, noting in particular the disregard of narrative rhythm (1978, vii). A first response to this scholarly hiatus is Rudolph Th. van der Paardt's essay on *Various aspects of narrative technique in Apuleius' Metamorphoses* (1978, 75-94), featured in the collection. He dedicates a whole chapter to a discussion on rhythm, concluding that the mirroring rhythm of books 1 to 10 and book 11 supports a unified reading of the novel (87).

Another study of Apuleian time that is due recognition is Mikhail Bakhtin's renowned essay *Forms of time and of the chronotope in the novel* ([1937]2006). Bakhtin introduces the term chronotope (literally 'time-space') which he defines as 'the intrinsic connectedness of temporal and spatial relationships that are artistically expressed in literature' ([1937]2006, 84). He explains how the chronotope establishes the boundaries of events—what can and cannot happen—and consequently determines the field of representation within the narrative. This leads to

¹ No Groningen commentary exists for book 3. However, van der Paardt wrote a dissertation on book 3 in 1971 before joining the research group.

Bakhtin's conceptualization of literary genres as chronotopes. Accordingly, an understanding of genre, particularly in literature, requires a study of the handling of time in a given narrative. His essay forms a historical poetics which follows the development of the chronotope, beginning with the 'adventure time of ordeal' in the Greek romance and concluding with the historical time of the modern European novel. As part of his analysis, Bakhtin studies the chronotope of Apuleius' *Metamorphoses*, which he categorizes along with Petronius' *Satyricon* as 'adventure novel of everyday life'. Contrary to the Greek romances, Bakhtin argues that the temporal sequence of the *Metamorphoses* is intertwined with the protagonist's development as a character:

It depicts only the exceptional [...] moments of a man's life, moments that are very short compared to the whole length of a human life. But these moments shape [...] his entire subsequent life (116).

The *Metamorphoses* narrates a moment of crisis in Lucius' life, the consequences of which, despite its brevity, extend beyond the chronology of the novel.

Taking the GCA and van der Paardt as my primary interlocutors, I am now in a position to construct an overview of what is known and agreed upon about Lucius' handling of time in the *Metamorphoses*.

1.1. Lucius' time awareness: establishing the story-time

Before examining Lucius' handling of time, the novel's story-time² must first be established. The ease of such an exercise is entirely dependent on a narrator's awareness of time and to what extent the reader can calculate the passing of time. As a narrator, Lucius' clarity regarding the passage of time varies significantly between the beginning of the *Metamorphoses* and its latter books. In books 1 to 4 the sequence of days is fairly strictly accounted for, and up until 3.29 Lucius specifies the duration of each ellipsis. Events are generally organised in reference to dawn and sunset.³ Tomas Hägg argues that this 'dawn-sunset' temporal frame-

² In *Narrative Discourse* (1980), Genette defines story-time ("erzählte Zeit") as the 'real' time covered by the *fabula*, and can only be conceived by reconstructing the narrative. Narrative-time ("Erzählzeit"), on the other hand, is the time it takes to narrate. This is most easily obtained by calculating the number of sections or pages it takes to narrate a certain event. Genette argues that this duplicate nature of a narrative's temporality presents the narrator with the opportunity to distort time for dramatic effect.

³ Books 1 and 2 end at nightfall when Lucius goes to sleep; books 2 and 3 begin as dawn breaks and Lucius wakes up.

work is the primary indicator of the passage of time in the ancient novel, as is particularly prominent in the Greek romance novel, *Callirhoe*, where it functions as the most important temporal expression of Chariton's narrative (1971, 43-44). As well as utilising these diurnal temporal units, Lucius also uses certain activities as temporal references, the most prominent being different mealtimes and attending the baths (GCA 2007, 5). Throughout the novel, it becomes apparent that certain times of day are associated with certain events. Most sexual, criminal, and magical instances occur after sunset⁴—each of Lucius' sexual encounters with Photis and the married woman occur at night just after supper (2.15ff.; 3.20ff.; 10.22f.) and his magical transformation occurs after sunset (3.21ff.). In addition, a large percentage of the inset stories in the *Metamorphoses* are told during a meal (Winkler 1991, 37). Lucius uses such temporal indicators not only to organise events chronologically but also topically.

The chronology starts to become ambiguous in book 4, which has an 'unsatisfactory time sequence' (GCA 1977, 6) due to Lucius' silence regarding the duration spanned by ellipses and summaries. This temporal ambiguity is characteristic of the Greek novel, noted for the 'vagueness and inconsistency with which the novelists mark time's passage, particularly its duration' (Kim 2007, 150). Calculating the passage of time is even more difficult from book 7 onwards, specifically following Charite's homecoming at 7.14 ff., as acknowledged in the GCA:

It is fairly obvious, then, that the time element, which can be accounted for with some accuracy for the first few days of Lucius' life as an ass becomes much vaguer in book 7 (1981, 3).

As I will later discuss, this is the result of a number of summaries and ellipses—the temporality of which are arguably not measured quantitatively but qualitatively according to Lucius' experience of time.

Despite this lack of temporal clarity, to my knowledge all Apuleian scholars follow the argument set out in the GCA that books 1 to 10 span the duration of one year. This supposition is based on the presence of roses in books 1 and 10 which they argue mark the transition from one spring to another (1977, 6). Seasons are of course important and obvious markers of time in the *Metamorphoses*. Lucius directly specifies the changing of seasons on four occasions: the advent of spring (7.15), the transition from autumn to winter (9.32), a second advent of spring (10.29), and the middle of winter (11.26). Although there is no explicit indication of the time of year until 7.15, it is possible to postulate the chronology

⁴ For a discussion on the link between sex and magic see the chapter on 'Sex and witchcraft' in Schlam (1992, 67-81).

of books 1 to 6 from descriptions of the weather and nature (primarily the presence of roses).⁵ Accordingly, the temporal structure of the *Metamorphoses* has generally been visualized as follows:

Spring₁ (bk. 1) ⇒ Autumn ⇒ Winter₁ ⇒ Spring₂ (bk. 10) ⇒ Winter₂ ⇒ Spring₃
(bk. 11)

The way Lucius indicates time in book 11 differs quite significantly from the remainder of the *Metamorphoses*. After his initiation, Lucius for the first time in the novel, provides an explicit date—the 12th of December (*quam dies insequatur [...] Iduum Decembrium*, 11.26) as his arrival date at Rome. A further implicit calendrical indicator is provided at 11.17 with the beginning of the sailing season (*rituque Graeciensi τὰ πλοιαφέσια*) which is known to have occurred on the 5th of March (cf. GCA 2015, 314). For the first time in the novel, this temporal marker locates the events of the story within realistic time.⁶ Despite these two clear dates, the duration narrated in book 11 remains an unresolved matter among scholars, due to the interpretive difficulty posed by the sentence *ecce transcurso signifero circulo Sol magnus annum compleuerat*, ‘When the sun had passed through all the signs of heaven and the year had come to an end’ (11.26). Whereas van der Paardt believes it signifies the end of the calendrical year (1978, 86), the GCA argues that it marks a whole year after Lucius arrives at Rome (2015, 22). I will be adopting the latter reading in my essay on two grounds. Firstly, Lucius introduces the sentence with *ecce*. This interjection arrests and directs the attention of the reader towards the ensuing information, implying its significance—the long period elided in this case. Secondly, the verbs *transcurrere* and *compleuere* emphasize the completion of a year, rather than its termination, thus in my view suggesting that an entire year has passed rather than merely two weeks. By choosing this interpretation, the story-time narrated in the *Metamorphoses* can be broadly calculated as spanning three years, where the first ten books narrate a year, and book 11 narrates two years.

⁵ It must be noted here, and for the sake of my forthcoming argument, that using the weather and fauna to calculate the time of year poses a certain risk. I acknowledge that concessions must be made for possible meteorological alterations between the late 2nd century AD and today. Later in my argument, in response to this, I will refer to authors contemporary to Apuleius as sources for the standard seasonal indicators of the period.

⁶ For the significance of this change see section 4.1.2 *The ‘cosmological’ and ‘calendrical’ dimension of book 11* in the introduction of the GCA (2015, 24-25).

I.II. *Rhythm*

One of the most notable stylistic features of Lucius' narrative style is its numerous rhythmic changes. As Genette notes, rhythm is the result of the narrative's distortion of the story-time (1980, 88). An obvious example of Lucius' rhythmic variation is illustrated by the argument of the previous section, as he switches from narrating a single year over ten books, to narrating two years within one. An insightful sketch drawn by van der Paardt of books 1 to 10 helps conceptualize these rhythmic changes⁷ (1978, 86):

Period 1: 1.2-3.28 (slow rhythm): 10 days are narrated in around 70 pages of the Teubner edition.

Period 2: 3.28-7.13 (slower rhythm): less than three twenty-four-hour sections are narrated in 91 pages.

Period 3: 7.14-10.35 (fast rhythm): over eleven months are narrated in around 122 pages.

This rhythmic agility is achieved through multiple time-handling modes. Genette identifies four narrative movements which affect rhythm (1980, 95): ellipsis (a period of story-time is elided in no narrative-time), summary (story-time exceeds narrative-time), scene (story-time and narrative-time are roughly the same), and descriptive pause (no story-time passes during the progression of narrative-time).

Lucius weaves all four of these elements into his narrative, however a greater variation occurs from book 7 onwards, at the precise moment the chronology becomes ambiguous. Whereas books 1 to 7 consist primarily of discursive scenes and inset stories, along with two *ekphraseis* and a handful of brief summaries, resulting in a generally slow rhythm, books 7 to 11 embrace all four time-handling modes to the extreme. There is an increase in both elaborate ellipses and *ekphraseis*, which not only accelerate the overall rhythm of the latter books, but cause a greater rhythmic variation.

Two time-handling modes are especially characteristic of Lucius' narrative: (1) rhythmic retardation through inset stories and descriptive pauses, and (2) rhythmic acceleration through implicit ellipses of unspecified duration. There are sixteen instances⁸ of internal narratives in the *Metamorphoses*, comprising over

⁷ Where van der Paardt uses the term 'tempo', here I adapt his terminology to be consistent with my own by using 'rhythm'. However, the page counts are his own calculations as noted in his essay.

⁸ I add Photis' divulgence of her mistress' involvement in magic (3.15-18) as a further inset tale to Winkler's calculation of 15 inset stories.

60 percent of the entire text (Winkler 1991, 26-27). Since the greater portion of the framing narrative is dedicated to the telling of inset stories, the progression of the main plot of the novel—Lucius’ adventures—is incessantly diverted. This has great implications for the rhythm of the narrative. Lucius as a narrator relates all the stories he has heard as reported speech, instead of summarising their content as narrated speech, apart from one occasion.⁹ By doing so, Lucius sets the narrative-time parallel with the story-time, hence securing a slow rhythm as is the case in **period 1** and **2** above. The delaying effect these inset tales have on the plot of the novel is clear when compared to Ps.-Lucian’s *Ἔρωτες*.¹⁰ It follows roughly the same story as the *Metamorphoses*, however, it does not include any of the inset stories. As a result, the rhythm of its narrative is much faster, with greater attention and time spent on the events of the main plot. Evidently, the inclusion of inset tales serves a significant function in delaying action time, temporally restraining Lucius’ progression towards his end goal of salvation.

Descriptive pauses are used to a similar effect. Their positioning, particularly before long-awaited events, succeeds in creating an atmosphere of suspense. This is best illustrated by the following two elaborate *ekphraseis*: (1) the Pyrrhic dance and the Paris pantomime during the games (10.29-34), and (2) the procession in honour of Isis (11.8-11). The temporality of *ekphraseis* is often difficult to calculate, since story-time can either be at a standstill, or, as Genette notes, the time it takes the focalizer to describe an object, person, or event (i.e. narrative time) can coincide with the time they spent looking at it in the first place (story-time) (1980, 100). Regardless, both *ekphraseis* occur just before a climactic event, long-apprehended by Lucius. The first takes place before he is forced to publicly have sex with a condemned woman as a spectacle piece during the games, and the second before he sees and eats the roses which will lead to his re-transformation. Therefore, the rhythmic retardation focalizes Lucius’ experience of how time unfolded prior to these events, giving the reader a sense of the suspense, dread, and apprehension.

Lucius’ narrative includes a mixture of both explicit and implicit temporal anachronies (Genette’s term). As we might expect due to its vague chronology, the number of implicit anachronies increases from book 7 onwards.¹¹ In the latter part of the novel, Lucius has a tendency to underplay the duration spanned by summaries and ellipses. Several weeks or months may pass by under the reader’s

⁹ When the slave relates the death of his master’s son (9.35-38).

¹⁰ For the relationship between the *Metamorphoses* and Ps.-Lucian’s *Ἔρωτες*, cf. Frangoulidis (2008:13-45), and Schlam and Finkelppearl (2000:36-41).

¹¹ Ellipses and summaries of uncertain duration from book 7 onwards occur at 7.17-20; 8.29; 9.8; 9.14ff; 9.41; 10.17; 10.19; 11.18; 11.20.

nose without any indication from Lucius. The best examples of this are the summaries in book 11. Roughly nine months pass between 11.1 (early spring) and 11.26 (12th December). However, Lucius withholds any significant comment upon the span of the summaries and ellipses leading up to his first initiation at 11.23, before the narrative regains some temporal clarity (GCA 2015, 22). The only temporal indicators provided while he awaits his summons for initiation is a shift in tense to the imperfect and the following markers: *iam dudum destinatum* (11.19), *haec identidem mecum reputans [...] differebam* (11.19), *nec minus in dies* (11.21), *iam dudum* (11.21), *quot dies* (11.22), *nec me fefellit uel longi temporis prolatione cruciauit* (11.22). Lucius similarly downplays the duration spanned at 11.26. According to the GCA, an entire year is summarised in the following sentences:

nec ullum tam praecipuum mihi exinde studium fuit quam cotidie supplicare summo numini reginae Isis [...] eram cultor denique adsiduus, fani quidem aduena, religionis autem indigena.

And my greatest desire there was to pray daily to the sovereign goddess Isis [...] I was a faithful worshipper, a stranger to her temple, but not unknown to her religion.

There is not so much as a single linguistic indicator towards the huge ellipsis that occurs within these sentences. Instead, Lucius decides to remark on his enthusiasm (*studium*) while conducting his daily prayers.

Two other examples come to mind. The first passage I would like to draw attention to comes from book 9 when Lucius as narrator gives a summary of his new routine after being purchased by the market gardener (9.32). Lucius explicitly says that he worked for the gardener as an ass during both autumn and winter. However, he does not specify exactly for how long he served the gardener: whether he spent the whole autumn with him, or only a portion of it. Instead, he focalizes the duration through his experiences—his untroubled rest during autumn and his suffering due to the winter cold.

A second summary can be found in book 10, when Lucius describes his time as an ass with the two cook-brothers (10.13-14). The only durational indicator in this passage is a simple *diu* (10.14). Lucius once again decides to put greater emphasis on the qualitative measurement of time in this passage, emphasizing the pleasurable time he had consuming his master's delicious leftovers.

One of the most significant insights gained from John J. Winkler's celebrated *Auctor & actor* (1991) is how unreliable Lucius is as a narrator. Winkler envisions the *Metamorphoses* as a detective story, where we as readers are meant to spot Lucius' lies and contradictions (1991, 60-93). Whereas Winkler refers to the unreliable *content* of Lucius' narrative, I believe that the temporal ambiguity of the latter half of the narrative similarly undermines Lucius' reliability as a narrator. The chronology of the narrative is elusive and potentially misleading, requiring a constantly alert reader. However, I believe that the temporal ambiguity of Lucius' narrative has been significantly underestimated by previous scholarship. This is the result of a repeated interpretive error resulting in the miscalculation of the story-time elided at 7.14. As will be discussed in my concluding remarks, this will have great rhythmic and interpretive implications.

II. The Temporal Problem

It has generally been accepted that books 1 to 10 span a duration of one year: 'the narrated period is a year, that is from rose season to rose season' (van der Paardt 1978, 85). I will now argue that this calculation overlooks key temporal indicators which in my opinion strongly suggest that the advent of spring in 7.15 (*ueris initio*) is nearly a year after Lucius' journey to Hypata, hence increasing the span of books 1 to 10 to two years.

Before commencing with my argument, I wish to make a few precautionary statements regarding my analytic approach, as well as my broader stance on the measurability of time in fictional narratives. Firstly, I acknowledge that determinations of time in fiction can have emotional as well as chronological value. There are a number of examples in ancient literature of temporal adverbs being used to mark intenseness of feeling rather than the chronotope of a narrative, and within my paper I will address individual instances where the value of such determinates are ambiguous. However, it must be remembered that adverbs of 'emotion' are *variations* of their primary value. Temporal adverbs first and foremost serve a chronological function, and this paper is driven by a commitment to challenge a tendency to avoid awkward temporal readings by dismissing linguistic markers as bearing emotional value, rather than considering their chronological significance. Secondly, I wish to defend my use of the weather as a chronotopical marker. Throughout my analysis, I will treat all descriptions of the weather as literary motifs partaking in the literary tradition of seasonal tropes. Descriptions will be matched with particular seasons on the basis of comparable literary examples,

thus avoiding an unreliable approach based on assumptions about the climate in ancient Greece.

The first explicit seasonal indicator in the *Metamorphoses* occurs at 7.15: *nanctaque libertate ueris initio pratis herbantibus rosas utique reperturus aliquas*. As discussed in the previous section, despite the lack of explicit seasonal references up to this point, Lucius as narrator provides implicit indicators in the form of roses, descriptions of the weather, and nature. The presence of roses is arguably the clearest signifier in the *Metamorphoses*. Prior to this scene, there are five other references to roses in the main narrative at 2.16, 3.25, 3.27, 3.29, and 4.2. Due to these references, it is possible to temporally locate the events which coincide with the presence of roses within the seasons when roses are in bloom, that is spring, summer, and early autumn.

At 7.15 the GCA asserts that (1977, 2-3):

only a few days have passed since Lucius' metamorphosis (see also 3, 27: 72, 5 and vdPaardt in AAGA 1978, 85): the indicator *ueris initio pratis herbantibus* (165, 11) confirms this.

This statement relies on the premise that the events from Lucius' arrival at Hypata in book 1 to his release to pasture as an ass at 7.14 occur during the same season—spring. It is possible that the Groningen group drew this conclusion by interpreting the constant presence of roses from book 1¹² to 7.15 as indicating the same season.

It is my intention to show that the statement quoted above is the result of two interpretive errors. Firstly, the GCA does not pay sufficient attention to other implicit indicators—the weather and nature. Book 4 opens at midday while Lucius-turned-ass takes up lodgings with an elderly acquaintance of the bandits: *diem ferme circa medium, cum iam flagrantia solis caleretur* (4.1). The GCA interprets the above description of the weather as follows (1977, 22):

The time indicator in Apuleius' narrative technique here seems to function as a level plain or valley between two rather steep emotional rises, the first of which consists in the temptation by the *rosae uirgines* of 3,29 (73, 24) the second in the threat of the *rosae laureae* of 4,3 (76, 2).

I see no reason why we should not accept *flagrantia solis caleretur* (the heat of the blazing sun) as a straightforward description of the climate. And neither do I accept its use as symbolism for Lucius' emotional state since, perhaps

¹² I make an assumption here that roses would have been present in book 1 since it is only a day before the first mention of roses at 2.16.

surprisingly, there are no other comparable instances in the *Metamorphoses*. It appears to me that this opening sentence has been labelled as symbolic since it does not suit as a description of springtime. However, by doing so, we are in danger of overlooking a crucial temporal indicator which has the potential to transform our understanding of the rhythm of the novel. It is now my intention to show that 4.1 is referring to summer.

Let's turn our attention to the phrase *cum iam flagrantia solis caleretur*, translated in the GCA as 'when it was already getting hot because of the blazing sun.' By looking at the use of the words *flagrantia* (cf. *TLL s.v.*, also *OLD s.v.1.c.b*) and *caleo* (cf. *TLL s.v.*) in the works of other Latin authors, it becomes apparent that they are most often utilized to describe summertime. Livy for instance refers to the sizzling sun, *incalescente sole*, of the scorching summer, *flagrantissimo aestu* (44.36), while describing the midday heat of a September day. Here, we see both *flagrantia* and *calere* associated with the intense heat of summer in contrast to the milder warmth characteristic of spring. This distinction between spring and summertime sun is articulated by Ovid in his *Fasti*, a poem which of course characterizes each month of the year and offers a helpful insight into the most prominent features of each season in Latin. Ovid identifies springtime with a mild, *tepidus* (6.602), sun. Bearing this in mind, it is difficult to consider the beginning of book 4 as an appropriate description of springtime.

Further indications of summer which are overlooked by the GCA are to be found in book 6, which similarly refer to the intense heat of the sun, when the robbers discuss the possible methods of punishing Charite and Lucius-turned-ass, *'asinum exponere et solis ardentis uaporibus tradere [...] et ignis flagrantiam, cum sol nimis caloribus inflammarit uterum'*, 'Then let us lay out the ass and hand him over to the boiling heat of the sun [...] she will endure the pain of the fire, when the boiling heat of the sun scorches the ass' stomach' (6.31-32).

Especially significant for the concern of this chapter is the appearance of *solis uapores* and *calores*. In Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, very similar language is used to describe the heat of the sun on a summer's day: *aestus erat mediusque dies, solisque uapore / concaua litorei feruebant bracchia Cancri* (10.126-127). In addition to this, *calor*, as well as having a general meaning of 'heat', is commonly used to mean 'summer heat' or 'the warmth of summer' (cf. *OLD s.v.2*: 'summer heat'), as used for example by Cicero on its own in his letters to Atticus: *uitandi caloris causa Lanuuii tres horas acquieueram* (13.34), and hence is also used for 'summer', as is the case in Lucretius when he explains how each season brings forth its own fruits: *frumenta calore* (1.174). The frequent affiliation between *calor* and the summer removes any previous doubt as to whether the beginning of

book 4 refers to the summer considering no more than two days can occur between books 3 and 4.

The second seasonal factor disregarded by the GCA is the handful of passages which describe the state of nature. The following passages provide the most substantial accounts. While exploring Thessaly in the beginning of book 2, Lucius listens to the birds singing, *aves quas audirem*, and notes that the trees have sprouted leaves, *arbores quae pomerium ambirent similiter foliatis* (2.1). Both of these descriptions indicate that spring is in full bloom and we are by necessity now headed towards summer. This narrows the initial temporal boundary established by the presence of roses—if it were the beginning of spring only buds would be on the trees, not leaves, and by autumn the leaves would be changing colour and beginning to fall.

When we revisit the moment in book 4 when Lucius spots the laurel-rose in the garden as mentioned above, a similar description of nature may be found. A fair amount of information may be drawn from passage 4.2. Lucius describes the wood as being thick in leaves, *frondosi*, suggesting once again that it is late spring or summer. Everything is in full bloom, *inter uarias herbulas et laetissima uirecta*, which again is indicative of summer.

The descriptions of the hot weather and nature in full bloom strongly suggest that the events in book 1 up to Charite's homecoming at 7.14 occur during late spring or summertime. As a final attempt to disprove the GCA's claim that the first books of the *Metamorphoses* occur during a single spring, I would like to pay particular attention to the phrase *ueris initio* (7.15). When Lucius-turned-ass is about to be released to pasture as a reward for his good service, he exults at the possibility of having access to roses since it is the *beginning* of spring. By modifying *uer* with *initium*, Lucius as narrator specifies that it is the moment of transition from winter to spring. The beginning of spring is characterized by blossoms and mild weather, and not the type of climate denoted in the quotations above. It is also peculiar that Lucius as narrator should mark book 7 as the 'advent of spring' when it has already been spring for a minimum of a few weeks or a month since book 1. This is bolstered by the technical and realistic term *admissuram ueterem* at 7.16, when Lucius-turned-ass enters the herd of horses. *Admissura* was the designated time for breeding which was performed *circa uernum equinoctium* (GCA 1981, 187) at the *beginning* of spring.

My analysis of the descriptions of the weather and nature indicates that the events prior to Charite's return home occur either during late spring or summer. This necessitates an ellipsis of nearly a year in section 7.14 following Charite's return home up until Lucius is freed to pasture at 7.15.

However, Carl Schlam supposes an ellipsis of a few weeks (1968:45) during this passage and the GCA an ellipsis of only a few days (1977, 2-3):

No passage of days and nights is mentioned between Charite's return home and her actual wedding, but the expression *ipsoque nuptiarum die* (164, 16) implies the passage of at least a few days. The ass is sent to the farm very soon after the wedding night (164, 22f.).

Their first claim that a period of *at least* a few days occurs before the wedding day is a sensible suggestion, and could be extended to a few weeks, but not much longer since we can suppose that the couple would not want to delay their union much longer than that. I am inclined, however, to disagree with their second claim that Lucius-turned-ass is released to pasture 'very soon' after the wedding night. It is my belief that this supposition is based on a second interpretive error in the GCA regarding the reading of the phrase *ergo [...] statim* (7.15). The adverb *statim* modifies the summoning of the herdsman, however the immediacy of his summoning is in relation to the decision of the council of herdsman. Lucius is sent to the farm immediately after the council agree on a suitable reward, not immediately after the wedding, as the GCA implies. By narrowing the duration of the two ellipses in this passage to a sum of only a few days, it is possible to neatly contain all the events until Lucius' release to the farm within a single season. Such a reading appeals on account of its conciseness, but neglects the evidence discussed above.

If my reading is accepted—that the events up until Charite's return home occur during the summer—we are now required to locate an ellipsis of nearly a year (or a minimum of six months) in passage 7.14. Despite its temporal vagueness, as acknowledged in the GCA (1977:3), we can identify four linguistic markers for the passing of time in passage 7.14.

1. *exin*
2. *curitabat*¹³
3. *post noctem unicam et rudimenta Veneris recens nupta gratias summas apud suos parentes ac maritum mihi meminisse non destitit, quoad summos illi promitterent honores habituri*¹⁴ *mihi*. 'Following that special night and her learning of the secrets of Venus, this newly wedded woman did not forget to

¹³ A *hapax legomenon*, cf. *OLD s.v.*, no doubt in keeping with the style of the novel.

¹⁴ Petschenig offered *habiturum iri* in place of *habituri* but the latter would constitute a Grecism, arguably part of Lucius' characterization.

commend me before her parents and husband, and did not desist until they promised to reward me with great honours.’

4. *denique*

exin as an adverb modifies *curitabat* by positioning Charite’s constant care of Lucius-turned-ass following her return to her family. The inceptive and frequentative imperfect of *curo* marks the transition to the narrative mode of summary of an iterative action. Lucius does not mention the duration of time that *exin* represents, but we can say that it lasts up until Lucius-turned-ass leaves her company to go to the farm, however long a period that is. The phrase *non destitit quoad* in 3 similarly marks the passing of time by iterative action. The use of litotes emphasizes the duration of Charite’s pleas and is thus suggestive that this sentence signifies a long period of time. In addition, the adverb *denique* signals her family’s submission to her pleas as her father assembles a council to discuss a suitable reward for Lucius-turned-ass’ valiance. In tandem with the inclusion of a litotes, *denique* too suggests that Lucius remains in Charite’s hometown for a long length of time.

Although it is impossible to establish the time span elided in passage 7.14, I don’t believe that there are any temporal indicators which limit its duration to a period of a few weeks as suggested by Schlam and the GCA. On the contrary, I believe the literary features discussed above signal that this is a lengthy period of time that is being narrated, that has the potential to extend to a duration of eight months.

This leaves us with an intervening winter elided in a brief passage without mention. Far from being a mistake on Lucius’ part, I believe this elision can be explained by Lucius’ mental state at the time. After his transformation, Lucius goes through an extremely miserable period in his life. The winter he spends at home with Charite is the first period in a long time during which he’s experienced happiness. There are three other comparable occasions later in the *Metamorphoses* where Lucius expresses his happiness: autumn with the gardener (9.32), his time spent with the cook and his brother (10.13), and his worship of Isis (11.26). Passage 10.13 in particular forms a certain symmetry with 7.14, in that both summarize a pleasant time in Lucius’ life, *haud ullo tempore tam benivolam fortunam expertus*, ‘never had I experienced such good fortune’ (10.13), and emphasize how food is a significant source of that joy. Charite fills his manger with hay and oats—enough to satisfy a camel of Bactria. During his stay with the brothers, Lucius enjoys the leftovers from the master’s supper. It could even be argued that Lucius’ consumption of human food in 10.13 alludes to his prior curse in 7.14 that Photis had not turned him into a dog rather than an ass so that he could enjoy the

leftovers from the wedding supper along with the other hounds, thus forming a thematic link between both scenes. Lucius does not mention the passing of winter because it was a pleasant period in his life. Disaster and misery are the instigators of events in the *Metamorphoses*. Therefore, Lucius—rather than waste narrative time on detailing the ‘good times’—elides them. Time flies, and evidently is forgotten, when Lucius is having fun.

I believe this to be a strong case for an ellipsis of eight months in passage 7.14, but I do not intend to underestimate nor discount the magnitude of this ellipsis. My reading of 7.14 necessitates that Lucius intentionally alters the chronology of Ps.-Lucian’s Ὀνοϛ, which clearly states that an assembly is gathered a few days after the wedding, ἡμέραις δέ ὕστερον μετὰ τὸν γάμον (27). However, this does not invalidate my argument, but adds to the recognized examples of Lucius’ temporal manipulation of the Ὀνοϛ, as I mentioned previously. It is possible to reconcile this vast temporal leap with Lucius’ broader narrative style, particularly in the later books. As was identified, such ellipses are a key feature of Lucius’ handling of time and we may take this leap as the first hint of the difficulties to come.

III. *The Implications*

If we are to accept my claim argued for in the previous chapter, a reassessment of Lucius’ handling of time is required. This ellipsis spanning roughly 8 months, contrary to the few days or weeks as suggested by both Schlam and the GCA, greatly alters our understanding of the handling of time in the *Metamorphoses*. In the GCA’s analysis of the rhythm—serving as an emendation of van der Paardt’s original effort (1978, 87)¹⁵—the novel is divided into three sections, characterized as follows: 1.2-3.28 (slow rhythm), 3.28-7.13 (slower), and 7.14-10.35 (faster). As part of this configuration, the GCA follows van der Paardt’s claim that 7.14-10.35 covers just over eleven months in approximately 122 pages, with an overall increasing rhythm (1978, 86). By applying our interpretation of the ellipsis in 7.14 the rhythm of this section is transformed. The rhythm is far faster and peaks at the beginning rather than increasing.

The ellipsis at 7.14 marks a sudden acceleration in the narrative rhythm, which plateaus to a high paced narrative over the next three books. A corresponding temporal leap of similar duration is detectable at 11.18. The description of Rumour spreading the story of Lucius’ re-transformation marks an increase in

¹⁵ As part of his analysis, van der Paardt argues that the tempo of book 11 reflects the tempo of books 1 to 10.

narrative rhythm which is sustained until the end of the novel by numerous summaries. However, the most significant ellipsis occurs at 11.26: *ecce transcurso signifero circulo Sol magnus annum compleuerat*, ‘When the sun had passed through all the signs of heaven and the year had come to an end’. Between his arrival in Rome on the eve of the Ides of December (*uesperaque quam dies insequeretur Iduum Decembrium* 11.26) and the apparition of Isis inciting him to partake in his second initiation, Lucius spends a year worshipping Isis, summarized in the brief sentence *eram cultor denique assiduus, fani quidem aduena, religionis autem indigena*, ‘I was her dedicated worshipper, a stranger to her temple, but not unknown to her religion’ (11.26). As is the case at 7.14, Lucius does not go further than switching to an imperfect verb and including the temporal adverb *denique* to signal the long duration this sentence summarizes. Apuleius arguably once more relies on his reader to realize this duration from the temporal markers he places on either side of Lucius’ iterative worship in Rome.

Another pair of ellipses occur during the inset tale of Cupid and Psyche. The first occurs following Psyche’s first sexual encounter with her *ignobilis maritus* and her consequent loss of virginity, which describes a long period of increasing pleasure and happiness (5.4). The mirroring ellipsis is positioned in the final sentence of the tale, following Cupid and Psyche’s wedding ceremony and feast, spanning the months up to the birth of their child, Pleasure: *sic rite Psyche conuenit in manum Cupidinis; et nascitur illis maturo partu filia, quam Voluptatem nominamus* ‘and thus Psyche married Cupid, and after her allotted time she gave birth to a daughter, whom we call Pleasure’ (6.24).

These temporal parallels signal mirroring themes. The ellipsis following Charite’s marriage summarizes her adoration and attentiveness over Lucius, while the ellipsis in book 11 spans Lucius’ worship and devotion towards Isis. All ellipses follow an initiation: Charite and Psyche’s sexual initiations (*uxorem sibi Psychem fecerat* 5.4, and *rudimenta Veneris* 7.14), and Lucius’ initiation into the cult of Isis. In accordance with these observations, I would like to introduce a defence for the ellipsis in 7.14, by claiming that Charite’s marriage, echoed by Psyche’s and her following adoration of Lucius, prefigures Lucius’ own initiation to the cult of Isis and his subsequent devotion to the goddess.

This temporal prefiguring is affirmed by the application of nuptial vocabulary and motifs to the descriptions of Lucius’ initiation ceremony, to the extent of portraying Lucius as a bride. It will become apparent that these marital allusions are both intertextual and partake in the broader literary genre of elegy, possibly drawing from Catullus’ two wedding hymns.

The significance of the wedding in ancient Rome as an abrupt moment of transition (Caldwell 2014, 135), particularly for the bride as she transforms from

uirgo to *uxor* upon her sexual initiation, explains the appropriateness of marital *topoi* for describing cultic initiation. The initiate is reborn,¹⁶ leaving behind their former way of living to assume a new identity as the subject of a deity. Anton Bierl acknowledges this parallel and reads Lucius' initiation as a metaphor for the 'pubescent initiation into adulthood', where marriage, especially for the bride, marks the critical moment of transition (2013, 61). As well as reaching maturity upon this metamorphosis, both bride and initiate concurrently become passive objects of adoration, assigning themselves to positions of servitude and complete obedience. Following Lucius' re-transformation, the high-priest Mithras gives a long speech, during which he establishes Lucius' new role as a subject of Isis:

*teque iam nunc obsequio religionis nostrae dedica et ministerii iugum subi
uoluntarium. nam cum coeperis deae seruire, tunc magis senties fructum tuae
libertatis.* (11.15)

dedicate your mind to the obeying of our religion and undertake a voluntary yoke of ministry: for when you begin to serve and honour the goddess, then you will truly feel the fruit of your liberty.

This chain of imperatives guiding Lucius towards submission reads like an epithalamium. In Catullus 61.144-145 the poet urges the bride to leave the bosom of her mother to join her groom, while relaying her new marital responsibilities. Mithras' command that Lucius should submit to the yoke of Isis¹⁷ partakes in the commonplace imagery in Latin literature of a bride yielding to her husband's yoke, as exemplified by Horace (*Odes* 2.5.1-2): *nondum subacta ferre iugum ualet / ceruice*. This feminine submissiveness is traced onto our impression of an initiate's subservient relationship to their deity. The bride's submission to a new master was symbolically materialized during the wedding in the ceremony of *deductio in domum mariti* (Caldwell 2014, 139), when the bride was seized from her mother and led to her husband's bedchamber, once the unmarried maidens were dismissed. This phrasing is replicated in Lucius' initiation, when Mithras leads Lucius towards Isis' shrine:

¹⁶ For imagery of initiation as rebirth, see the repetition of *renatus* in 11.6 during the crowd's response to Lucius' re-transformation.

¹⁷ Another example of this imagery is Lucius' submission to the yoke of abstention from meatless food before his third initiation: *inanimae protinus castimoniae iugum subeo* (11.30).

tunc semotis procul profanis omnibus linteo rudique me contectum amicimine arrepta manu sacerdos deducit ad ipsius sacrarii penetralia (11.23).

Then all of the profane were commanded to depart, and when they had put on my back a new linen robe, the priest took my hand and brought me to the most secret and sacred place of the temple.

Draped in white linen and removed from the gaze of the uninitiated, Lucius enters the shrine before completing his cultic initiation. His garments could be mistaken for a bridal costume, and the retinue of those yet to be initiated to the cult of Isis with Junia's virgin companions, still awaiting their own sexual initiation.

A second aspect of Lucius' re-transformation that partakes in a popular wedding motif is the plucking of flowers as symbolic for the loss of virginity. In book 3, Photis explains that the only cure for Lucius' re-metamorphosis is the consumption of roses (3.25). As J. Gwyn Griffiths notes (1975, 159) Apuleius flirts with the possibility of Lucius' salvation throughout the novel (3.27; 3.29; 4.2; 7.15; 10.29). However, the roses remain untouched until book 11, when Isis comes to Lucius' aid by instructing him to pluck the roses, *rosis decerptis* (11.6), from the priest's hand. Once the roses have been picked and consumed, Lucius is re-transformed. The transformative aspect of the *rosa decerpta* in Lucius' case is a literalization of an elegiac metaphor, where the plucking of roses symbolizes the seizing of a girl's virginity,¹⁸ either as consummation of marriage or out of wedlock, transforming her into a *mulier*. Catullus extends this imagery to convey the social pressure to secure a timely marriage before the girl's desirability decreases with age¹⁹ (62.56-59). This anxious anticipation of defloration is similarly prominent throughout Lucius' quest to secure his own salvation. Just as a girl's future security and happiness relied on succeeding in marriage and the consequential loss of virginity, so is Lucius' salvation dependent on his acquisition of flowers. It should also be noted that, just as Lucius obtains roses, he also commits to chastity,²⁰ thus making the reversal of the imagery complete.

As well as partaking in the elegiac tradition while framing Lucius' initiation, Apuleius draws specific comparisons between Lucius as initiate, and Charite and Psyche as brides. Lucius' fate is tightly bound to Charite's throughout the middle chapters of the novel (cf. Schlam 1992, 123-124), to the extent that they share

¹⁸ For examples of this motif, cf. Ovid's *Metamorphoses* 5.391-5 and Catullus 11.22-4.

¹⁹ Lauren Caldwell illustrates this social pressure which led to girls getting married before their sexual maturation (2014:4).

²⁰ Lucius is at first hesitant to become initiated due to the requirement of chastity: *castimiorum abstinentiam satis arduam* (11.19).

similar characteristics. Upon her arrival to the robber's cave, Lucius describes Charite as an attractive virgin, refined and of noble standing (4.23). Lucius' impression of Charite resonates with Byrrhaena's earlier description of Lucius. She mentions similar features, highlighting Lucius' maidenly qualities such as his rosy complexion, *rubor temperatus* 2.2, and blooming countenance, *os quoquouersum floridum* 2.2. In book 1, Milo also notes his androgynous features, by marking his 'virginal modesty': *deque hac uirginali prorsus uerecundia* (1.23). Just like Charite, Lucius is also high class, as both Milo (*generosa stirpe* 1.23) and Byrrhaena (*generosa probitas* 2.2) note. By drawing this parallel, Apuleius frames Lucius' state before his initiation in terms of female adolescence prior to sexual/religious maturation.

The structure of Charite and Psyche's wedding ceremonies foreshadows the stages of Lucius' re-transformation and initiation. Upon Charite's return, the entire town floods the streets to witness the homecoming procession: *pompam cerneret omnis sexus et omnis aetatis* (7.13). The detail that both sexes are present is reflected in the description of the procession at the festival of Isis: *magnus praeterea sexus utriusque numerus*, 11.9. The repetition of the first procession signals to the alert reader that a significant event, mirroring Charite's wedding, is about to occur. Likewise, the feast following Lucius' first initiation: *suaues epulae et faceta conuiuia* (11.24), is a repeat of Cupid and Psyche's wedding feast, lavishly described at 6.24.

This literary motif where initiation is figured as a marriage is closely associated with the popular religious concept of the sublimation of erotic love (Griffiths 1975, 53). In Plato's *Symposium*, Socrates famously describes how the path towards truth is founded on erotic sublimation. In literary terms, this transition from the carnal to the divine is manifest in the adoption of erotic vocabulary as part of the technical terminology surrounding religious mysteries. In the *epiphaneia* of Isis at 11.3-4, Lucius figures the goddess in erotic terms, resulting in a 'lusciously sensuous' image according to Griffiths (1975, 54). Particular attention is paid to her hair: *crines uberrimi prolixique* (11.3), which echoes Lucius' *ekphrasis* of Photis²¹ which similarly details on the lusciousness of her hair: *uberis enim crines leniter remissos et ceruice pendulos* (2.9). This re-attribution indicates a change in Lucius' character as he transitions from erotic adoration to divine reverence.

It is impossible to fully grasp the significance of this literary *topos* without paying due attention to the concept of *ἱερός γάμος*. It has been argued that the *Metamorphoses* has such a version of a 'sacred wedding' in the form of the inset tale of Cupid and Psyche. After suffering a series of impossible tasks set by Venus as vengeance, Cupid arrives providing Psyche's salvation. The pair are married

²¹ For a discussion on the similarities between Isis, Venus, and Photis cf. GCA 2015:124

and Psyche is granted immortality. Their marriage can be figured as a *ἱερὸς γάμος* in various respects. Psyche's downfall is her extreme beauty which leads to her being identified as Venus. By assuming this role as the Second Venus of the story, Cupid and Psyche's wedding as a result is a union of two deities. The alternative means of interpreting their marriage as a *ἱερὸς γάμος* is through the Platonic reading of their union (cf. Kenney 1990, 20-21). If we take Psyche to represent the soul (*ψυχή*), as her name invites us to do, her marriage to Cupid symbolizes the soul's elevation to the divine realm, signified by Psyche's subsequent immortality (6.23). From this reading, it is possible to understand the inset story of Cupid and Psyche as the literalization of the sublimation of erotic love, and hence functioning as an interpretive link between the erotic union of Charite and Tlepolemus and the spiritual union of Lucius and Isis.

What is most significant for us is that following their weddings/initiations, all three characters enjoy a long period of happiness summarised by an ellipsis. This temporal distortion conforms with a *topos* commonly found at the end of Greek romance novels. After the couple's reunion, sometimes followed by a wedding, the Greek novel concludes with an ellipsis which summarizes, in a sentence or two, many years of happiness, either spanning the birth of children or an entire lifetime. I am of the opinion that Apuleius applies this *topos* to his own novel in the instances discussed above. However, he employs it in such a way that manipulates the expectations of readers familiar with the Greek romance novel by forming two false endings within the novel: firstly, after Charite's wedding and the promise of salvation at the advent of spring (7.15) and secondly, following Lucius' first initiation (11.24).

A couple's wedding or reunion is the ultimate *τέλος* of the events of the Ancient Greek romance novel (cf. Fusillo 1997, 209-227). Succeeding this climactic moment is a stark rhythmic shift caused by a huge temporal leap, covering a duration that far exceeds the time span narrated throughout the rest of the novel. We can detect such a temporal distortion in Xenophon of Ephesus' *Anthia and Habrocomes*. Once the reunited couple reach Ephesus and accomplish various dedications, Xenophon concludes the novel with a one-sentence ellipsis spanning the rest of their lives (5.15.3). A shift in tense from the aorist to the imperfect serves as the only linguistic marker for this drastic rhythmic acceleration. The same *topos* is used by Longus at the end of *Daphnis and Chloe*. However, he does not conclude the novel with an ellipsis, but deviates from the sequential ordering of events. A description of the wedding feast is preceded by a prolepsis which covers the rest of their lives (4.39.1), including the birth of their two children (4.39.2). After this prolepsis, the narrative returns to the wedding night, as Daphnis and Chloe are led towards their bed chamber to consummate their marriage

(4.40.1). Here we see a more sophisticated handling of time by Longus as he explores an alternative positioning of the ‘happily ever after’ *topos*. Lucius seems to be taking this *topos* into a new direction as Ellen D. Finkelpearl recognizes in her study *The Ends of the Metamorphoses* (*Apuleius Metamorphoses 11.26.4-11.30*) (2004, 319-442) when she identifies a series of false closures from 11.26 onwards. She links this literary device to the narrative’s compulsion to restart: ‘it is a novel of continuity and rebirth’ (2004, 340). Whereas Finkelpearl’s study of false closures is limited to the latter half of book 11, it could also be applied to several other occasions earlier on in the novel: Lucius-turned-ass and Charite’s first attempt to escape (6.26-29), their successful escape and Charite’s wedding (7.14), Lucius-turned-ass’ near slaughter and castration (7.22-24), and his near death at 10.23ff.²² By involving such familiar *topoi* in his narrative, Lucius builds his readers’ expectations only to be shattered by his literary play. Just as Lucius is blind to what Fortune has in store for him, so are we as readers incessantly tossed about by the unpredictable current of the narrative.

We have therefore established that Lucius adopts a *topos* drawn from Greek romance novels to highlight that Charite’s marriage, reflected by Cupid and Psyche’s union, prefigures Lucius’ salvation and initiation. Prefiguring is a common literary device in the *Metamorphoses* which conforms with Lucius’ overall narrating style.²³ The best example is the use of inset tales. In his proem, Lucius states his intention as narrator: to charm the reader with entertaining stories that will leave them amazed (1.1). If we take this statement for face value, these inset tales serve purely as entertainment—their content and meaning are independent and irrelevant to the main plot of the novel. However, as many scholars have indicated, most prominently Winkler (1991, 25), the proem is the first indicator of Lucius’ unreliability as a narrator as he downplays the significance of the inset stories to the interpretation of the novel as a whole. Lucius’ transformation into an ass is anticipated notably at 1.7 ff., 2.4 and 2.21 ff. Both Aristomenes and Thelyphron’s tales highlight the dangers of meddling with witches and magic, while Lucius’ *ekphrasis*, a visual inset tale concerning Byrrhaena’s sculpture group depicting Acteon’s punishment, warns the viewer of the consequences of unbridled curiosity. The most obvious and lengthiest example of anticipation, however, is the story of Cupid and Psyche, narrated by the old-woman in the robber’s cave in an attempt to soothe the distraught Charite (4.28-6.24). Not only does the plot of the inset tale bear resemblance to Charite’s situation, but Lucius’ too,

²² Cf. GCA 2015, 12-14 for a discussion on openings and false closures.

²³ For discussions of prefiguring in Apuleius, cf. Gerald N. Sandy’s *Foreshadowing and Suspense in Apuleius’ ‘Metamorphoses’* (1973) and R. Th. van der Paardt’s *Various Aspects of Narrative Technique in Apuleius’ Metamorphoses* (1978, 80ff).

particularly their shared characteristic of curiosity which leads to both of their downfalls. Psyche, who has often been read to symbolize the Platonic soul (cf. Kenney 1990:16-17), prefigures Lucius' own salvation, as he too is unified with a deity in book 11.

The *Metamorphoses* requires an incessantly alert reader, with a willingness to read and re-read in order to spot similarities in both content and style between various episodes. The more one reads the *Metamorphoses*, the greater significance is devolved on features which initially seemed the most irrelevant to the overall plot of the novel—we are engaged in a constant battle with the narrative in fear of being duped by an ass.²⁴

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