

*VIGILANS SOMNIABAR AND NEC FUIT NOX UNA: A STUDY OF THE DREAM AS A  
NARRATIVE DEVICE IN THE METAMORPHOSES OF APULEIUS MADAURENSIS*

by  
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## ABSTRACT

DAVID PAUL CHRISTIAN CARLISLE: *Vigilans Somniabar* and *Nec Fuit Nox Una*: A Study of the Dream as a Narrative Device in the *Metamorphoses* of Apuleius Madaurensis (Under the direction of Werner Riess)

In the *Metamorphoses* of Apuleius, dreams, however bizarre, seem to have real significance for the waking world. The exact relationship of dreams to waking reality, however, is made ambiguous. Apuleius is thus able to present the most extraordinary event of all, the revelation of Isis and Lucius' conversion to her religion, in such a way that the narrative is protected from disbelief: since it is entirely directed and confirmed by a series of dreams, the possibility is left of interpreting it as a real event or as a fantasy. Two important effects result: 1) any reader's incredulity, which is inevitable, is directed towards the authority of dreams, rather than the authority of the narrator; 2) the suggestion is made that the story (especially since stories are closely related to dreams in this novel), no matter its relation to the real world, may still have real counsel for the reader.

To Christopher Merlyn Carlisle, *fratri carissimo meo*:

**ΕΙΣ ΕΜΟΙ ΜΥΡΙΟΙ ΕΑΝ ΑΡΙΣΤΟΣ ΗΙ**

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## CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION .....	1
I. <i>VIGILANS SOMNIABAR</i> : LUCIUS IS TRANSFORMED .....	13
Introduction.....	13
1. The Fortune of Socrates.....	14
2. Lucius' Dream Comes True.....	28
II. <i>CUMULATUR INFORTUNIUM MEUM</i> : THE TRAGIC TALE OF CHARITE .....	36
Introduction.....	36
1. Charite's First Nightmare .....	37
2. Charite's Second Nightmare .....	56
3. Charite's Revenge .....	68
4. The Baker's Daughter Learns the Truth .....	72
III. <i>NEC FUIT NOX UNA</i> : LUCIUS MEETS ISIS.....	78
Introduction.....	78
1. Lucius Prays.....	79
2. The Queen of Heaven .....	96
3. Lucius is Blessed by Dreams .....	102
4. The Man from Madauros .....	109
CONCLUSION .....	113
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	121

## INTRODUCTION

Questions about Apuleius' *Metamorphoses* are often asked, and seldom answered to the satisfaction of every scholar. Above all the others one question looms, which continues to be hotly debated, despite Winkler's convincing argument in his 1985 book *Auctor & Actor* that the answer is not only uncertain, but intentionally so.<sup>1</sup> This question has been put in many ways, but in its simplest terms can be phrased: is Lucius' conversion to Isiac religion in book 11 meant seriously, and if so, how does it connect to his adventures in books 1-10? I am in general agreement with Winkler that the answer is to a large degree dependent upon the reader: indeed, the very fact that so many answers have been given and continue to be given, and that nearly all of them are strongly supported by textual, historical, or other persuasive forms of evidence, suggests that the answer is that there is no *one* answer. As for my own answer, I find myself inclining towards an interpretation of the *Metamorphoses* that I believe is closest to that formulated by Schlam,<sup>2</sup> and to some degree, even earlier by Tatum.<sup>3</sup> The classic opposition of serious/humorous or entertainment/enlightenment, in all its subtle variations, seems to me unnecessarily constraining. On the one hand, there are undeniably humorous elements, and any interpretation that strives to make this work a somber religious

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<sup>1</sup> See Winkler (1985), and my discussion below.

<sup>2</sup> See Schlam (1992), e.g. 122: "We cannot exalt the religious content of the book by ignoring its comic dimensions. The comedy is rooted within a narrative and thematic framework that extends over the entire eleven books and provides a coherence which allows comedy to carry serious meanings."

<sup>3</sup> See Tatum (1979), e.g. 19-20.

or moral sermon is doomed to failure: such an interpretation has no place, for example, for a scene like the Pythias fish-stomping episode (1.24-25). On the other hand, an interpretation which seeks to deny the novel any religious seriousness or sobriety must also ignore important passages, such as the beautiful description of Lucius' dream of Isis (11.3-6), or his passionate prayer to Isis before leaving her shrine (11.25).

It seems odd to me, however, that we should ask for a univocal seriousness or comedy from this novel, when our own literary creations are so decidedly lacking in univocality (and, indeed, it might even be said to be the mark of a *poorly* written work to present the human condition from one perspective only). The connection between our own literary world and that of the ancients is clearly a tenuous one, but it is nonetheless inconsistent to laud a modern literary creation for its multivocality and at the same time deny that multivocality to Apuleius. A modern novel, chosen literally at random from a shelf, reveals the aesthetic of modern literary tastes. On the back of the 1985 Ballantine paperback edition of John Irving's *The Cider House Rules* (a "#1 Bestseller," a band across the cover informs us) no less than four newspaper critics are cited, as they rave about the quality of this novel. Phrases like "epic yearning" or "thought-provoking dilemmas" or even "victims of tragedy, violence, and injustice," imply that the novel is very serious indeed. The reviewer for *The Philadelphia Inquirer* seems closest to implying a truly serious message to the novel: "At the base of Irving's own moral concerns is a rare and lasting regard for human kindness." Other phrases, however, begin to sound like praise that might be given by a proponent of the "entertainment" school of Apuleian interpretation:<sup>4</sup> "Entertaining and affecting..." "colorful incidents and crochets of character...A truly astounding amount of artistry and ingenuity."

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<sup>4</sup> Harrison (2000) is the strongest recent proponent I am aware of on this side of the argument.



Apuleius is nothing like Irving, and I am not trying to suggest any connection between the two beyond the creation of a literary work of tangible artistry (although I think I would place Apuleius somewhat higher on the scale in that regard). What is interesting is that there is no demand among readers of modern fiction that a novel be *either* serious or humorous; there is nothing that precludes a moral message couched in entertaining, comic, even ribald episodes. Entertainment and enlightenment, to borrow Harrison's terms,<sup>5</sup> need not be mutually exclusive categories.

Of course, the fact that we read Irving with this openness to multivocality does not at all prove that ancient readers would ever have read with the same attitude, or even that we can read Apuleius the same way. It simply illustrates that a third way to approach the novel exists: one which does not, on the one hand, demand a moral message for the *Metamorphoses* to the subordination or even exclusion of its value as entertainment, but which does not, on the other hand, insist that Apuleius' construction of a serious religious experience and inclusion of moral lessons be read as nothing more than another way for him to entertain his audience. It is possible to conceive of a reading that is not *between* these two extremes, so much as *inclusive* of them both: a reading, in short, like Schlam's, which strives to show that entertainment and enlightenment, comedy and wisdom, can be part of the same process.<sup>6</sup> The question that then remains is to what degree such a reading is allowed by the text and context of the novel: can evidence be found to suggest that such a reading is not only possible, but may be more advantageous than one which stresses a particular function in the novel as more important than any other?

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<sup>5</sup> Harrison (2000), 259.

<sup>6</sup> Schlam (1992), 1-2: "The chief problem...has been to claim exclusive validity for either a comic or serious reading of the work."

My belief is that the answer to this question is “yes, decidedly.” But my chief concern in this thesis will not be to prove that I am right in this: I know full well that this is a question which must be answered by every reader of Apuleius on his own terms, and the more forcefully I argue my own position, the more I will overstate that position and flatten a brilliant and rich text, changing wine to water, so to speak. My purpose in discussing the topic here at the beginning of this study is to make the reader aware of my own particular bias in reading the text, my own interpretive stance. The goal of this thesis is not to validate my interpretation or to challenge that of any other reader (although I do so occasionally when the argument calls for it), but to examine in detail a particular aspect of the novel which, as I argue, any interpretation must take into account: the role of dreams in the narrative.

The final book of the *Metamorphoses* presents what is, without doubt, the most difficult interpretive problem, the sudden and unexpected conversion of Lucius, following his restoration to human form, to the religion of the Egyptian goddess Isis. Any interpretation of the novel depends to a great extent on how this conversion is read: if it is taken seriously, and Lucius is believed to have achieved a truly blessed union with the divine, the meaning is drastically different from one in which Lucius is seen as a fool, a dupe who is again and again deceived by a false belief in a religious redemption that never takes place. The matter is further complicated by the separation of author and narrator: even if Lucius is taken to have achieved a profound conversion, what is Apuleius’ attitude towards this conversion? Is it simply a cheap hat trick, a way of concluding his novel with a flourish? Does he mock the idea of religious fanaticism, or does he advocate it? Finally, there are countless variations on these themes: interpretations that take more or less stock of Lucius’ earnestness, the author’s distance from the narrator, the comedic and ironic elements, the connections or disjunctions

with the first ten books, and the many other complications in the conclusion that make a definite interpretation of the novel very difficult to find, and even more difficult to argue for conclusively.<sup>7</sup>

Interpreting the novel requires, then, that some conclusion be reached about the nature of Lucius' conversion and its relationship to the books that precede it. That much is generally recognized to be the case, but what is often overlooked is the crucial role dreams play in Lucius' conversion. Every vision of Isis or Osiris, every command, every experience which establishes or strengthens his relationship with the divine, takes place while he is dreaming. Moreover, the very nature of his religious blessedness seems to be characterized by a constant flow of dreams, while in the first ten books, by contrast, he dreams at most only once.<sup>8</sup> One might be tempted to dismiss this all by arguing that dreams are just the standard way for the divine to communicate with mortals in the ancient world, and that any description of a religious relationship must necessarily make extensive use of dreams. There are two reasons, however, why such a dismissal would be misguided. The first is that despite divine dreams being a general topos, the role of the dream as a divine revelation is by no means secure: belief in the veracity of dreams is a complicated topic, and there are many varying theories on the status of dreams.<sup>9</sup> Cicero, for example, although he himself makes

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<sup>7</sup> For an entertaining and highly informative survey of the various positions that have been taken with regard to the novel, and especially the final book, see Winkler (1985), 227-247; a more recent survey which has the advantage of being part of a larger argument on the role of dreams in the novel, and thus is particularly suited to the purposes of this thesis, can be found in Gollnick (1999), 19-26, although it lacks a few important points, most notably the interpretation offered by Shumate in her book *Crisis and Conversion* (Shumate 1996); this is doubtless because the proximity of publication prevented Gollnick from consulting her work: he does reference an earlier article which introduced some of the ideas she developed further in *Crisis and Conversion*.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. Annequin (1996), 181: "Ainsi, pour le première fois, au début du dernier livre des *Métamorphoses*, Lucius a un songe..." Annequin assumes that the scene in which Pamphile transforms herself into an owl, when Lucius suggests that he might be dreaming, but never answers the question conclusively, is not a dream at all (which is the logical conclusion).

<sup>9</sup> Cf. Harris (2003); or Gollnick (1999), 31-48, although he puts a decidedly religious spin on it.

use of a literary dream to discuss philosophical matters in his famous *Somnium Scipionis*,<sup>10</sup> seems to have taken a disbelieving, or at the very least an agnostic, stance with regard to the possibility of divine communication through dreams.<sup>11</sup> Apuleius evinces a knowledge of some of these varying theories in the *Metamorphoses*,<sup>12</sup> as we shall see, and so he could not possibly have introduced a religious conversion dependent entirely on dreams without being aware that some of his readers would not interpret those dreams as divine messages at all, or would at least have been quite skeptical about the legitimacy of Lucius' religious experience.

The second, and even more compelling, reason to examine dreams is that Lucius' religious experience has been and continues to be questioned. If it were generally accepted that Apuleius' intention was to show a serious, profound conversion, to depict a religious experience and nothing more, and that Lucius' experience is to be taken at face value, is a completely uncomplicated example of communication with the divine, then it would perhaps be enough to say that dreams are simply the standard way for gods to communicate with mortals, and to leave it at that. But Lucius' conversion is constantly questioned, constantly examined, doubted, and even dismissed as a cheap trick or a ridiculous satire. If Winkler is correct (and I think he is), the very narrative itself calls Lucius' experience into question, and only the reader can supply the missing steps in the argument to answer that question.<sup>13</sup> Since this is the case, Lucius' relationship to Isis and Osiris cannot be taken for granted, nor can the medium, therefore, through which that relationship is established: the dream.

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<sup>10</sup> Cicero, *De Re Publica*, 6.9-29; see Zetzel (1995).

<sup>11</sup> If the standard interpretation of the *De Divinatione* is correct; see Pease (1963), 12-13.

<sup>12</sup> In the speech of Aristomenes at 1.18, for example, or the old woman's discussion at 4.27, where the criterion for the veracity of a dream is simply whether it occurs during the day or the night, Apuleius betrays an awareness of some of the alternative possibilities of dream interpretation.

<sup>13</sup> See Winkler (1985), 247 e.g.

A study of dreams in an ancient text encounters at least three obstacles to the clarity of its conclusions. First, and perhaps most significant, is the problem of the nature of dreaming itself: dreams were not understood in the ancient world, and there is no universal agreement on how to interpret them even today. Although the paradigm with which we study dreams has shifted somewhat, so that they are now almost universally believed to be *internally* generated, while in the ancient world they were more often than not believed to be *external* to the dreamer, they remain, nonetheless, a mystery. Moreover, the theories that have been proposed in the modern era to explain dreaming, such as Sigmund Freud's famous approach, are of limited relevance to the ancient experience of dreaming.<sup>14</sup> Since there is no more of a universally accepted interpretation for dreams now than there was 2,000 years ago, the scholar is left without a definite point of departure in studying the phenomenon of dreaming.

Moreover, even if one particular theory of dreaming could be proven to be "correct," it would be of limited value for studying the dreams in an ancient text, since they remain, fundamentally, just that: dreams *in a text*. This is the second obstacle to achieving clarity in studying the dreams in an ancient text: they are literary creations, not real dreams, and they serve the purposes of a literary artist.<sup>15</sup> Not only are they obscure by virtue of being dreams, a poorly understood phenomenon in general, they are driven further from any prospect of analysis by their fictional status, as products of art rather than nature: their relationship to the phenomenon of dreaming is thus not one of exact equivalency, and they may have more in common with ancient *ideas about dreams* than with ancient dreams themselves. Studying a

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<sup>14</sup> Cf. Nussbaum (1994), e.g., or Kessels (1978), 14.

<sup>15</sup> See, e.g., Kessels (1978), 15: "Dreams in literature should be viewed first of all as literary creations. Even if they are considered to exist only in the author's mind, it is doubtful whether they reveal anything about his own ideas, or anything beyond what any literary product can tell us about its writer."

literary dream as if it were a real dream is akin to performing an autopsy on a sculpture of a dead human. This can be seen from the fact that works of literature are often subjected to the same theories of psychoanalysis as dreams. If this approach is valid, what are we to make of the dreams that may exist within those texts? If, on the one hand, they are to be treated as dreams, what is the rest of the text around them, and what validates the treatment of *it* as a dream as well? On the other hand, if the text surrounding the dream is to be treated as a dream text, what are we to make of the dreams within it? There seems to be no distinction between the two: literary creations can be explained using dream analysis, but dreams *within* literary creations may be subjected to the same treatment. In this case, some explanation must still be offered for the function of the literary dreams within their own fictional universe: how do they relate to the non-dreaming portion of the text, and what is their purpose, then, *within* the text itself?<sup>16</sup>

The third major difficulty is a correlate of these first two. Because ideas about dreams are so diverse, and because the dreams in an ancient text are literary creations, and will thus be influenced more by ideas about dreams than by dreams themselves, the use of dreams in ancient literature varies greatly from author to author, and from era to era.<sup>17</sup> This places great constraints upon the use of comparative material from other authors, and even calls into question the relevance of comparative data from the same author (since an author's ideas about dreams could certainly have changed over time). There is clearly a great difference between Aeneas' dream of Hector in Vergil (*Aeneid* 2.268-297) and Pompey's dream of his

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<sup>16</sup> For some useful articles on literary dreams, dreams within texts, see Rupprecht (1993).

<sup>17</sup> For a survey of dreams and ideas about dream interpretation from a sociohistorical perspective, see Naf (2004). For a more literarily minded survey, which is unfortunately limited to poetry, see Walde (2001); for an examination of the phenomenon of dreaming and ideas about dreams in the later Roman world, with special attention to ideas about religion and the supernatural, see Amat (1985) and Miller (1994). Harris' (2003) article gives a good sense of the wide range of ideas about and uses of dreams in a relatively brief but very enlightening and much needed discussion.

triumph in Lucan (*De Bello Civili* 7.7-24), for example, and even greater difference between both of these and Lucius' first dream of Isis in Apuleius (*Metamorphoses* 11.3-7). The advantages of comparing Apuleius' use of dreams with other authors' are, then, severely limited: one cannot prove much more by this approach than the innovation and artistry of Apuleius by comparison with that of other authors. Before such a comparison is even relevant, however, Apuleius' own use of dreams must be understood within their own context, without reference to those of other authors.

Despite these problems, the fact remains that dreams play a very important role in the *Metamorphoses*. A few scholars have recognized this, and at least two long articles and one monograph, dedicated to the sole purpose of examining the dreams in Apuleius, have been published in recent years.<sup>18</sup> The first of these, published by Jacques Annequin in 1996, examines the role of the dream in the novel from various angles, focusing especially on the novelty of Apuleius' use of dreams in his narrative; a rather lengthy part of the article examines the other ancient novelists and their use of dreams. This article is by far the best work that has been done on dreams in the *Metamorphoses*: it touches on some very important points. But much work still remains to be done; most importantly, the *reason* for using dreams must be examined more closely. Annequin explains well many of the things that dreams do in the novel, and how Apuleius is very innovative in these uses of them; the next step is to ask *why* Apuleius uses dreams: how do dreams help to achieve his rhetorical effect? For Apuleius was a great orator, and knew how to put words together to achieve a particular effect on an audience. Annequin's relative silence on the question of the status of the novel,

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<sup>18</sup> These publications, in chronological order, are Annequin (1996), Gollnick (1999), and Lev Kenaan (2004).

in terms of overall interpretation or meaning, indicates that this is the next step to take: to ask *why* Apuleius used dreams in the way he did.

Gollnick's examination of dreams in the *Metamorphoses* is also a valuable contribution, and touches on many important points, although it too leaves many questions to be answered. It focuses more on the psychological side of the dreams in the novel: Gollnick, in addition to his scholarly work, is a practicing psychoanalyst. The psychological discussions are interesting and rich, but in general Gollnick's attitude to the dreams in Apuleius is one-sided: he discusses the transcendent side of dreams very seriously, and clearly means to show that Lucius' experience is meant in all earnestness. But he doesn't take into account the possibility that dreams could, by contrast, help to *weaken* the authority of an experience: Aristomenes' interpretation of the murder of Socrates as a dream, for example, allows him to dismiss it as irrelevant (1.18). What prevents a reader from treating Lucius' dream of Isis the same way? Despite many weak points, however, the work remains a valuable examination of the dreams from a primarily psychological perspective. My own addition to what Gollnick and Annequin have achieved will be to examine the dreams in the novel more from a rhetorical perspective: my principle question for each of the dreams will be why the phenomenon of dreaming has been used, and what it adds to the effect of the passage.

One other publication remains to be mentioned: Lev Kenaan's 2004 article in *Classical Antiquity*. There is little to say about this work: it is useless for the purposes of this thesis. Its argument is that Apuleius drew from psychological dreams, as distinguished from predictive dreams, for literary inspiration. Apuleius, however, is unique in that he does not once betray an awareness of or belief in the existence of the *insomnium* which Lev Kenaan



argues was his primary source of inspiration. Moreover, what concerns me in this study is not the degree to which the entire *Metamorphoses* may resemble a dream, or may be read as a dream, or may have borrowed from dreams in constructing its narrative logic. I am concerned, instead, with the dreams themselves that are contained within the novel, and how they fit into the rest of the text as a narrative trope.

My approach, then, will be very simple: I will limit my discussion as much as possible to the dreams that appear within the *Metamorphoses*, to understand their function within the text itself. Because this is my focus, psychological studies are of limited use, as are comparisons to other texts: my goal will be to illuminate the use and effect of dreams *within the narrative universe of the Metamorphoses alone*. My approach differs fundamentally from the studies mentioned above, and from many of the various other approaches that have been taken towards dreams in ancient literature, in that I am concerned only with the dream as it appears and is used within a single specific literary creation. To achieve insight into this question, I will on occasion turn to some of Apuleius' other works, under the assumption that they are the product of the same mind, and probably reflect that mind's attitude towards dreams, with the caveat that works clearly composed at different points in an author's life may themselves show differences in ideas about dreams, and that the argument should not hang too heavily upon Apuleius' ideas as they appear in other works.

As will be seen, the brilliance of Apuleius' use of dreams lies in his exploitation of their uncertain nature, strangeness, universality, and general acceptance. Thus the dream becomes, for Apuleius, a sign of the bizarre, but at the same time a sign which anyone can understand, since everyone has bizarre dreams. The openmindedness with which one dreams,

combined with the uncertainty about the relationship of dreams to waking life, allows him to narrate certain events which would certainly not be believed by some if narrated as actual occurrences, protecting them from immediate dismissal by creating doubt about whether they are dreams or not. This creates an air of uncertainty for a reader of the novel: he does not know how to interpret Lucius' story, or Apuleius' novel, in reference to his own reality. It is this uncertainty which many scholars have found disturbing, and which makes the novel so problematic for any interpreter. Yet it is this very uncertainty, created in part by Apuleius' exploitation of the uncertain nature of dreams, which protects his narrative. This will become clearer when we examine the novel itself. We begin, then, with two chapters on the dreams in the first ten books of the novel, one devoted to dreams before Lucius' transformation, the other to the dreams after; the third chapter explores the dreams in book 11, and is followed by a short conclusion.

## I. *VIGILANS SOMNIABAR*: LUCIUS IS TRANSFORMED

### Introduction

In contrast to the eight or more dreams described in Book 11 alone, Books 1-10 of Apuleius' *Metamorphoses* contain only four dreams: Socrates' dream of his own murder (1.18.13-18), Charite's dream of Tlepolemus' death (4.27.1-14), Charite's dream of her dead husband (8.8.14-8.9.5), and the baker's daughter's dream of her father's death (9.31.1-8). In addition to these there are two dreamlike occurrences whose status as dreaming or waking events is never definitively determined: Aristomenes' observation of the death of his friend Socrates (1.11.14-1.14.4; 1.18.1-12) and Lucius' observation of the transformation of the witch Pamphile (3.21.10-3.22.6). Finally, there are two passages in which dream theory is discussed (in connection to the dreamlike vision of Aristomenes and Charite's first dream: 1.18.7-12 and 4.27.15-24, respectively) and a strange passage in which Charite relates her revenge on her husband's murderer to dreaming (8.12.6-21). These passages comprise all the episodes explicitly related to dreaming in the first ten books of the novel.

Various scholars have commented on the dreamlike quality of Lucius' narrative, and have argued for an interpretation of specific parts of the novel as dreams, dreamlike, or following a dreamlike logic.<sup>19</sup> These arguments are only meaningful, however, with

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<sup>19</sup> See especially Lev Kenaan (2004); Gollnick (1999); Annequin (1996); Winkler (1985), notably, points out that the novel might make more sense if the entire first ten books were read as a dream; he then rejects this idea by pointing out that there is nothing in the text to support that (9). This is an important

reference to the place established for dreams within the narrative itself. It may be interesting to assert that the first ten books, or all of the inserted tales, or the Cupid and Psyche story, can be read as a dream or series of dreams, but this only has meaning if dreams themselves have a role in the world of the novel. This chapter and the one that follows examine the passages that are specifically related to dreams in the first ten books: this chapter examines the passages relating to dreams that occur *before* Lucius becomes an ass, and the following chapter examines the passages that occur *after* he has become an ass. More specifically, they look for the clues in the first ten books that help establish the relationship of dreams to waking experience, and help to set up the eleventh book, where dreams play such an important part in the resolution of the novel. The question addressed is not what parts of the *Metamorphoses* are dreamlike, or whether they are, but rather what it means, in this novel, for an experience to be dreamlike: what are dreams *themselves* like, and what is their function in Lucius' narrative and Apuleius' novel?

### 1. The Fortune of Socrates

The first ten books of the *Metamorphoses* present us with a strange nightmare world of adultery, murder, robbery, suicide, and horrible, painful death.<sup>20</sup> The prologue gives little

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observation: the desire to explain the first ten books, and the disjunction between them and the final book, by treating certain experiences as dreams must reveal something about Apuleius' narrative technique. In a sense, this is the question this thesis seeks to answer: there may be no textual support for a reading of the entire first ten books as a dream, but what textual evidence is there that can help us understand Lucius' story in relation to the experience of dreaming? See also the following note.

<sup>20</sup> Shumate, in her recent study of the conversion narrative of the *Metamorphoses*, sees an important connection between Lucius' experiences in the first ten books and the "nightmare" experience: "As far as we can tell, Lucius is not dreaming, but his newly anomic world resembles a dream, as Berger describes it. It is volatile down to its very physical matter, and its unstable character raises the suspicion that anything could happen, that 'shattering metamorphoses' could occur at any moment" (Shumate 1996, 170). Earlier in her study,

indication that the novel will be so gruesome, promising merely “various stories” (*varias fabulas*, 1.1.1) told in the “Milesian speech” (*sermone isto Milesio*, 1.1.1), whose common theme will be the transformation of the shapes and fortunes of people (*figuras fortunasque hominum*, 1.1.4-5) and their restoration (*in se rursum...refectas*, 1.1.5-6). There is even a suggestion that the tales will be light and pleasurable (*lepido susurro permulceam*, 1.1.2-3): certainly the point of the novel is supposed to be wonder (*ut mireris*, 1.1.6) and delight (*laetaberis*, 1.1.17).<sup>21</sup> It is not until Lucius hears the story Aristomenes tells of the weird and frightening death of his friend Socrates that he encounters the bizarre and horrifying world in which much of the novel takes place. That tale, then, in many ways introduces Apuleius’ novel more accurately than the prologue: in the story of Aristomenes we have a model for the themes and events of the rest of the work.<sup>22</sup> At the center of his story lies a passage that is

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Shumate points out that blurring of the line between dream and reality helps to create an atmosphere in which Lucius seems to be experiencing a “disintegration of the ontological and conventional categories that would have been the mainstays of his quotidian thinking and organization of reality” (62): “Confusion between the waking or dreaming states blurs the picture even further...In Lucius’ world reality itself is assuming the puzzling nonlinear quality ordinarily associated exclusively with the ‘empty fictions of dreams’ [*vana somniorum figmenta*] (4.27)” (65). This observation is very important, but raises more questions than it answers, of which the most obvious is this: if we accept that the dreaming state provides a model for Lucius’ perspective in the first ten books, how are we to take the dreams in book 11?

<sup>21</sup> As Krabbe points out, the phrase *sermone isto Milesio* seems to a first reader to point to the *Milesiaka*, the bawdy “Milesian tales” named for Aristides of Miletus (Krabbe 2003, 1): this would, in that case, be another argument for “entertainment” as the explicit expectation set up by the prologue. As she observes, however, the term turns out to be polysemic; it signals simultaneously pure entertainment and sophisticated seriousness: “Apuleius,” she observes, “manages to have it both ways” (1). “Apuleius *fabulator* and Apuleius *philosophus Platonicus* are one and the same man. His use of the expression *sermone isto Milesio* is the first clue to his *modus ludendi* in his game of *serio ludere*,” (38), and later “*Milesio sermone* points to the double nature of the *Metamorphoses* as entertaining narrative (in the vein of the Milesian tales) with philosophical overtones (in a tradition that began with Thales of Miletus)...” (39).

<sup>22</sup> Cf. Tatum (1969), p. 499: “Aristomenes has anticipated not only the events in Books 1 to 3 which lead up to Lucius’ metamorphosis, nor merely the atmosphere of magic and intrigue therein, but also the ultimate interpretation of the entire work. This tale is, in practical terms, an extension of the prologue, an expansion of the essential theme of *figuras fortunasque* in the first chapter.” The tale is clearly programmatic, and we would expect, since the question of dreaming versus waking and the relation between the two is crucial to Aristomenes’ narrative, that the same theme would appear in the rest of the novel. It does, in fact, turn up several times in books 1-10, but the most striking use of dreams in the narrative appears in book 11, where the very state of being blessed by a relationship with the divine is characterized by dreaming at every possible moment: *Nec fuit nox una uel quies aliqua uisu deae monituque ieiuna* (“Nor did a single night or any sleep

crucial for our understanding of the role of dreams in this novel, a passage which examines the question of the relation of dreams to waking life.<sup>23</sup>

Aristomenes encounters Socrates, an old friend of his, by accident during a business trip to Hypata. Socrates has been given up for dead some time before, after he failed to return from a working sojourn in Macedonia. His wife at home (who thinks she is his widow) is being pressured by her family to remarry. Aristomenes is understandably surprised, then, when, as he is making his way to the baths in Hypata, he happens upon Socrates sitting on the ground like a beggar. He seems even more surprised, however, by Socrates' appearance, which is apparently nothing like it was when Aristomenes last saw him. He barely even recognizes him: "*paene alius lure, ad miseram maciem deformatus, qualia solent fortunae decermina stipes in triviis erogare. hunc talem, quamquam necessarium et summe cognitum, tamen dubia mente propius accessi*" ("practically someone else in his paleness, misshapen to the point of pitiable thinness, the sort of refuse of fortune that is accustomed to beg for scraps at crossroads. Since he looked like this, although he was a good friend and very well known

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lack an apparition and warning of the goddess," 11.19.7-8). Even before this, when Lucius is about to experience the metamorphosis that drives the plot of the novel, and gives it both its alternate titles, he first witnesses the transformation of the witch Pamphile, whom he is trying to imitate when he changes himself into an ass. At the crucial moment after he has seen her change into an owl with his own eyes, he questions whether he is awake or dreaming: *defrictis adeo diu pupulis, an vigilarem, scire quaerebam* (3.22.5-6). We will examine these passages in greater detail below, but for the moment we should simply observe that dreaming is another important theme in the novel that is introduced by the tale of Aristomenes, and we must first examine this programmatic tale to understand the role dreams play in the rest of the work.

<sup>23</sup> Cf. Gollnick (1999), 59: "Aristomenes' story sets the tone of the entire book, and creates an ominous sense of uncertainty about waking and dream realities and the relationship between them." Winkler (1985) also discusses the programmatic nature of the tale, in terms of its narrative structure: "This first tale is programmatic not only for the hermeneutic game of 'What is true?' but also for the game of 'Who is responsible for the crime [*auctor criminis*]?" (117); earlier he argued that "The fantastic suspension between two modes of reality vanishes when the narrative concludes in favor of the supernatural. The reality Aristomenes experienced seemed dreamlike because it was determined all along by higher-than-natural laws" (86). I examine below how the answer to the first question ("What is true?") can be found in this latter observation: the truth, in this case, is revealed through dreams; it is that which gives Aristomenes' tale its dreamlike quality. The tale ends in favor of the supernatural, but it is the sort of supernatural that appears in dreams: dreams, then, can provide insight into the question "what is true?" and the appearance in our dreams of the supernatural is confirmation of its existence.

to me, nevertheless I approached him hesitatingly,” 1.6.3-7). This sudden and strange appearance of Socrates is, in fact, our first metamorphosis: Socrates has undergone significant alteration in both appearance and circumstances.<sup>24</sup> When Aristomenes asks the cause of this transformation, Socrates reminds him of the caprice of fortune: “*Aristomene,*” *inquit, “ne tu fortunarum lubricas ambages et instabiles incursiones et reciprocas vicissitudines ignoras”* (“Aristomenes,’ he said, ‘you yourself aren’t unaware of the slippery twists and turns, and the volatile attacks, and the back and forth switches of fortunes,’” 1.6.16-18). When Aristomenes tries to help him up, he resists, and emphasizes again that he is the victim of malicious Fortune: “*sine, sine,*” *inquit, “fruaturs diutius tropaeo Fortuna, quod fixit ipsa”* (“Leave me, leave me,” he said, “let Fortune enjoy her trophy longer, which she herself set up,” 1.7.1-2).

Although the tale introduces many of the themes that will reappear often in the novel (witchcraft and magic, magical transformations, suicide, murder, robbers), one of the main ideas it explores is the role of Fortune in human life: our lives are at her mercy, and she may completely transform our circumstances at any moment.<sup>25</sup> Our knowledge of the world, however, is limited by our experiences (which are dictated by Fortune), so that many things that others have seen or suffered may seem unlikely or even impossible to us, because such things lie outside our own experience. Thus, when Aristomenes’ traveling companion (we never learn his name) asks Lucius if he really believes the story, Lucius’ answer does not directly concern the credibility of magical occurrences, but the unpredictability of human experience: “*Ego vero,*” *inquam, “nihil impossibile arbitror, sed utcumque fata decreverint,*

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<sup>24</sup> Cf. Panayotakis (1997), 124.

<sup>25</sup> Cf. Tatum (1969), 494: “...fortune first appears vividly in the description and lamentations of Socrates...”

*ita cuncta mortalibus provenire: nam et mihi et tibi et cunctis hominibus multa usu venire mira et paene infecta, quae tamen ignaro relata fidem perdant* (“I, in fact,” I said, “reckon nothing to be impossible, but think that just exactly as the fates have decreed, so does everything turn out for mortals: for many wonderful things happen to me and to you and to all people, even things that are almost impossible, which nevertheless, when told to someone who is unaware, lose their credibility,” 1.20.7-11). This is a statement, not so much about the credibility of magic as about the possibility of knowing the truth from personal experience. The point he makes is that not having experienced something ourselves is no proof of its impossibility, since our experiences are determined by the fates, and they can make anything happen. If we can say that something is impossible, that in itself implies that the power of Fortune is limited, and that she is in some way predictable, since there are certain things she cannot do, and therefore certain things we know she *will* not do. It is a clever (though rather sophistic) argument: chance can bring anything, because everything is up to chance. Most importantly for our purposes, however, it illustrates nicely the connection between the bizarre, illogical, magical and mysterious world of the *Metamorphoses* and the idea of the unpredictability of fortune.

Fortune is a central theme, not only for this story, but for the entire novel, so much so that when the priest of Isis interprets Lucius’ experience in book 11, at 11.15, he blames everything on Fortune:

Multis et variis exanclatis laboribus magnisque Fortunae tempestatibus et maximis actus procellis ad portum Quietis et aram Misericordiae tandem, Luci, venisti...utcumque Fortunae caecitas, dum te pessimis periculis discruciat, ad religiosam istam beatitudinem improvida produxit malitia (11.15.1-9).

Many trials of all different sorts have been completed, and driven by the great storms and enormous squalls of Fortune you have come at last,



Lucius, to the port of Rest and the altar of Pity...but somehow the blindness of Fortune, while she was tormenting you with the worst sort of dangers, has unintentionally brought you, with her malice, to this pious blessedness.

We will consider the significance of this passage in greater detail when we examine book 11 in the third chapter, but for the moment it is enough to observe that the bulk of the novel, the various adventures of Lucius, are all considered the product of some malicious Fortune. This is by no means a minor theme in the novel, but is an organizing principle around which the various tales are put together.<sup>26</sup>

In fact, the stated subject of the novel, the unifying theme that connects all of the tales to each other and gives the work its title, is transformation. The transformations our narrator promises are not, however, merely metamorphoses of the physical body, but are also changes of fortune: *figuras fortunasque hominum in alias imagines conversas et in se rursus mutuo nexu reffectas* (“the figures and fortunes of people altered into another appearance and restored to themselves again by a common thread,” 1.1.4-6). As the connective *-que* suggests,<sup>27</sup> and as we observe in the tale of Aristomenes, the two go hand in hand: transformations of the physical body imply transformations of fortune, and vice versa. These transformations all reflect the power Fortune exercises over human experience: she is able at any moment to alter our form or our circumstances beyond recognition. Lucius sees the fact of this power of Fortune as proof that nothing is impossible, and uses it to oppose disbelief in the stories of others, and in particular, in the tale Aristomenes tells at the start of the novel.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Cf. Tatum (1979), 22; *pace* Scobie (1975), 94; his argument confuses Isis-Tyche with the cruel Fortune of the first ten books; they are in fact explicitly separated (in the very passage he quotes).

<sup>27</sup> Gildersleeve and Lodge (1895), 300 (section 476): “-que (enclitic) unites things that belong closely to one another. The second member serves to *complete* or *extend* the first.”

<sup>28</sup> Cf. Tatum (1979), 32: “This is a more elaborate theme than the comparatively simpler statement that opens Ovid’s poem, because it links the theme of metamorphosis with the additional idea of fortune’s varied and unpredictable ways.”

When Aristomenes witnesses the murder of his friend, he has no doubt that the event actually occurred, because he has seen it with his own eyes, and because the body of his friend is lying in front of him to prove that it has really happened.<sup>29</sup> When, however, Socrates wakes up and speaks, Aristomenes is too surprised and overjoyed to think about his experience of the night before. Finally, when he has time to question it, as he and Socrates are walking on the road, he comes to the conclusion that he dreamt the whole thing:

Aliquantum processeramus, et iam iubaris exortu cuncta conlustrantur. et ego curiose sedulo arbitrabar iugulum comitis, qua parte gladium delapsum videram, et mecum: “vesane,” aio, “qui poculis et vino sepultus extrema somniasti. ecce Socrates integer, sanus, incolumis. ubi vulnus, ubi spongia? ubi postremum cicatrix tam alta, tam recens?” et ad illum: “non,” inquam, “immerito medici fidi cibo et crapula distentos saeva et gravia somniare autumnant; mihi denique, quod poculis vesperi minus temperavi, nox acerba diras et truces imagines optulit, ut adhuc me credam cruore humano aspersum atque impiatum” (1.18.1-12).

We had got on some way, and already everything was lit by the rising of the sun. And I myself kept examining my comrade’s throat most carefully, in the spot where I had seen the sword go in, and I said to myself: “you crazy fool, you were buried in your cups and your wine, and had terrible dreams. Look, Socrates is whole, healthy, unharmed. Where is the wound, where the sponge? Where, finally, is the scar, so deep and so fresh?” and to him I said: “Those honest doctors are not without reason when they assert that people who are engorged with food and boozing dream of serious and wild things; for example, because I didn’t quite hold back last night with my drinks, the bitter night brought me fierce and terrifying images, so that even now I believe that I am spattered and fouled with human gore.”

Like his future traveling companion, Aristomenes is a skeptic.<sup>30</sup> We know this from his initial reaction to Socrates’ revelation that Meroe is a witch: “*Oro te,*” inquam, “*aulaeum tragicum dimoveto et siparium scaenicum complicato et cedo verbis communibus*” (“I beg you,” I said, “remove the tragic curtain and fold up the theatrical screen, and change to common speech,” 1.8.14-15). This reaction is very similar to his traveling companion’s first

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<sup>29</sup> See Scobie (1975) on the supposed illogicality of this episode (110, first note on I, 14).

<sup>30</sup> Cf. Tatum (1969), 497.

rejection of his story: “*parce,*” *inquit,* “*in verba ista haec tam absurda tamque immania mentiendo*” (“‘Leave off,’ he said, ‘telling in such words these ridiculous and enormous lies,’ 1.2.16-17). *Verba ista* are precisely the opposite of the *verba communia* that Aristomenes asks Socrates to use: the attack on the type of speech used highlights the bizarreness and, to these listeners, the incredibility of the events being recounted. When Aristomenes witnesses the murder of his friend in his presence, of course, he cannot dismiss it as a lie. When, however, he observes Socrates alive and well, and can see no sign of the wound, his assumption is not that Socrates has been reanimated by magic. Despite the *stories* he has heard from Socrates about the powers of these witches (one of the several powers he attributes to Meroe is *manes sublimare*: the power to raise the dead, 1.8.11-12), he searches for some other explanation. Even the fact that he has seen the murder himself, and that even now he is drenched with urine from the experience, does not lead him to think his vision might have been real. Instead, he concludes that he suffered a nightmare because of excessive drinking and eating the night before.

In response to his statement on dreaming, Socrates narrates a dream of his own, after reminding him that he is still soaked in urine:

Ad haec ille subridens: “At tu,” *inquit,* “non sanguine sed lotio perfusus es, verum tamen et ipse per somnium iugulari visus sum mihi. Nam et iugulum istum dolui, et cor ipsum mihi avelli putavi, et nunc etiam spiritu deficior et genua quatuor et gradu titubo et aliud cibatus refovendo spiritu desidero” (1.18.13-18).

At this, he, smiling, said: “But you are not soaked with blood, but with piss; regardless, I too, myself, in fact, seemed to myself in a dream to have my throat cut. For I was both wounded in the throat, and thought that my heart itself was plucked out, and now I am rather short of breath and my knees are shaking and I’m stumbling as I walk, and I want something to eat to restore my strength.”

Socrates, too, has had a dream in which he had his throat cut and his heart removed, and he is still weak from the experience. The narration of that dream then starts a sequence of events in which it becomes clearer and clearer that Aristomenes' nocturnal vision should not have been so lightly dismissed, but in fact reflected the waking world. When he gives Socrates some food, he devours it ravenously, becoming paler and paler (1.18.19-1.19.3). As Aristomenes observes this, he begins to be afraid again: *sic denique eum vitalis color turbaverat, ut mihi prae metu, nocturnas etiam Furias illas imaginanti...* ("Finally, the mortal color so altered him that because of my fear, as I recalled those Furies of the night before..." 1.19.3-5). The less likely it seems that the murder of Socrates was "just a dream," the more afraid he becomes, until, when Socrates has died in such a way as to make it obvious that his "dream" took place in the waking world too, he can no longer even return home, but lives in exile, out of fear.

The oddest thing about this whole story is the reanimation of Socrates' corpse. It is certain that it is this element that Aristomenes' companion objects to so vehemently, since the rest of the story is a frightening but relatively ordinary tale of murder. The fact that Socrates gets up, converses, walks, eats, and drinks after having his heart removed is the only part of Aristomenes' story that seems impossible (with the possible exception of the restoration of the locks on the doors after the witches depart). And it is precisely this bizarre element that leads Aristomenes to interpret the experience as a dream. The implication is that the bizarre, the macabre, and the magical—what some would call the impossible—belong in dreams or nightmares, but not in the waking world. What is more, since the same element that leads Aristomenes to interpret his experience as a dream and thus to dismiss it also leads his traveling companion to dismiss his entire story as a lie, a connection is made between

dreaming and storytelling: both stories and dreams can be separated from the “real” world, and rejected as false on the basis of their bizarreness or supposed impossibility.<sup>31</sup>

The oddest element of the story in terms of narrative technique, however, is without doubt the second dream, in which Socrates experiences his own death. What is the purpose of this dream? Why include it in the story? At first it seems extraneous: one can imagine the story without it, and it seems just as effective a tale. But one element is missing from the final effect of the story, if we leave out Socrates’ dream. When the wound opens up in Socrates’ neck and the sponge drops out, we realize at that moment that Aristomenes was wrong to interpret the events of the previous night as merely a nightmare: they had a real significance, and here is the proof. So far the story has illustrated that events that would normally seem feasible only in a dream can occur in waking life as well. But by conjoining Aristomenes’ pseudo-dream with Socrates’ dream, Apuleius not only makes life dream-like, he also makes dreams life-like. At the same moment that we realize, thanks to Aristomenes, that dream-like events can occur in waking life, we also realize, thanks to Socrates, that waking life can appear to us in dreams. This is a complete refutation of the relegation of bizarre events to a dream world separate from the “real” world. The implication is not only

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<sup>31</sup> There is a strong connection between storytelling and dreaming, which could bear further investigation, though it mostly lies outside the scope of this thesis. For the connection between the two specifically within the *Metamorphoses*, seen from a different approach from my own, cf. Lev Kenaan (2004), especially 251-258. For an interesting study of the psychological similarities between the two phenomena, see States (1993). His essential thesis (though it is a rich and interesting study, well worth reading, and this is only one of the more prevalent ideas in the work) can be found in his final paragraph (203-204) “Dreams and fictions have in common the ability to condense being into narratives of condensed meaning...I am somehow confident that they have nothing to do with message sending, trashing excess memory, symbolic disguise, suppression, random nonsense, or recommendations for better living. All these things may be got out of them, or read into them, but what is always left behind is the dimension of meaning that cannot survive translation out of the storytelling mode—that is, the mode in which experience itself unfolds.” This sounds very much like what Winkler has said of the final book of the *Metamorphoses*: that meaning can be read into it, but is not authorized. More importantly, it is a powerful reminder to anyone who should become too attached to his own personal interpretation of this novel, or any other work that is essentially a *story*, for that matter, that no matter how well supported, any interpretation is no better than a *translation*; as classicists, we are as aware as any of the impossibility of achieving a perfect translation, and of how much is lost in the process.

that the reality of the world we live in can be bizarre, magical, and macabre—that is, nightmarish—but more significantly, that the relationship isn't only one of life borrowing from dreams, but works the other way around as well. Dreams borrow from life, and that is why they are so frightening and strange: they offer us a vision of life beyond our limited experience, of life as it has the potential to be, and in fact *is*, if Fortune so chooses.

This, then, is the connection between dreams and the strange events of the *Metamorphoses*: the bizarre events, magical transformations, and macabre murders are all things that seem normal only in dreams or fantastic stories. The reason, however, that such things appear in dreams is that dreams reflect life; they offer us a vision of life as it really is, the life that lies hidden behind appearances and beyond our limited experiences. It might be tempting to make sense of the bizarre events in the novel by saying that they *are* dreams, that Lucius is dreaming, and this is why such strange things happen to him. But Aristomenes' story of the death of Socrates makes such an approach pointless: that story shows that even if one argues that a particular event is a nightmare, that does not make it less significant, since nightmares reflect waking life. In this story, it is the waking world that is blind, that cannot see that the man walking beside us and speaking to us has already been foully murdered by witches, and is even now swiftly approaching his doom. Dreams, on the other hand, reflect life as it really is, populated by ghosts and witches, brigands and monsters, any of which may dramatically alter our life at the provocation of Fortune. So relegating the entire first ten books of the novel to a dream, presumably dreamt by Lucius before his conversion to Isiac religion,<sup>32</sup> does not change a thing, since dreams, in this novel, reflect the waking world, and can even be more accurate than the often deceptive appearance of that waking world.

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<sup>32</sup> A theory suggested, but discarded, by Winkler: see footnote 19 above.

It may be possible, then, to interpret Lucius' speech on the possibility of any event (in 1.20) as a discussion on dreams.<sup>33</sup> Such an interpretation, though partially correct, would somewhat miss the point. When Lucius argues that anything is possible because each of us is subject to the will of the fates, he isn't talking about dreams, but about *stories* and their relationship to waking life. His argument is that we should not dismiss another person's *story* as a lie merely because certain elements in it lie beyond our ken, since our knowledge of the world is limited by our experience, which Fortune may change drastically at any moment. This is not a statement about dreams at all, then, but about storytelling. The connection between the two, however, should be evident: stories closely parallel dreams, in that it is possible to dismiss someone else's tale as "merely a story," just as it is possible to dismiss something seen in a dream as "merely a dream."<sup>34</sup> In both cases, the dismissal results from a belief that one's experiences in life provide an accurate gauge of the possibilities of the "real" world. Anything that lies outside those experiences can then be relegated to a world of non-existence, of fantasy or imagination: in the case of stories, this is the world of fiction; in the case of dreams, it is the world of the false dream, the sort of dream Aristomenes and Socrates believe they have had.<sup>35</sup> Lucius' speech at 1.20 argues, however, that the stories of

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<sup>33</sup> As Lev Kenaan (2004), seems to do: see 265-266.

<sup>34</sup> The two are even closer than that, if we consider that dreams were considered by many, including Apuleius to be communications from the divine. Dismissing a dream as "just a dream," then, is nearly the same thing as dismissing a story as "just a story," with the small difference that the storyteller in the case of a dream is a god. See, for example, *De Deo Socratis*, Chapter 6.

<sup>35</sup> As discussed in the general introduction to this thesis, many different theories of dreams appear in the ancient world; although there are exceptions, one general principle among these theories seems to be that dreams can be either true or false (cf. the famous image of the two gates of dreams in the underworld, one for the true dreams and the other for the false ones: see Austin (1977), 274-276 on the subject). The important point here is that Aristomenes and Socrates are undisturbed by their experiences of the night before, once they have interpreted them as dreams. This can only mean that for them, the dream experience is a fictional one, one which has no analogue in the waking, "real" world. The interesting thing is that Apuleius almost seems not to believe in the "false" category of dreams, although he illustrates with this passage and again in 4.27 his awareness of the theories of their existence. His other works reveal either a blindness to or a disbelief in dreams that are not the product of divine communication: see *Apol.* 43, *DDS*.

others should not be dismissed on the basis of one's own experiences, just as the tale of Aristomenes *demonstrates* that dreams should not be dismissed on the basis of one's waking life: in both cases, the argument against such a dismissal is that Fortune controls one's waking experiences, and she can easily accomplish whatever she wishes. The implication is that dreams and stories both provide a perspective that is otherwise unattainable except through personal experience; to dismiss dreams or stories as lies is to close oneself off to a reality that one may eventually be forced to accept by a change in fortune.

This first inserted tale, then, illustrates a complex relationship among these elements in the novel: storytelling, dreaming, Fortune, experience and knowledge. In the simplest terms possible, without being too reductive, the relationship might be expressed as follows: knowledge of the world is limited by our experience, which is itself controlled by Fortune. Dreams and stories both offer an alternative perspective: they can provide an awareness of things beyond personal experience. The problem is that they can also lie or deceive: fictions can be composed that never really happened; similarly, dreams can be dreamt that do not seem to have any analogue in waking life. On the one hand, the fact of the potential for lying or deception in both dreams and stories can provide comfort: a dream or a story that is too bizarre or frightening can be dismissed on the basis of its difference from waking experience. How often does one wake from a nightmare and reassure himself with the awareness that it was "only a dream"? Similarly, how often does one read a frightening book, or hear a frightening story, and comfort himself with the dismissal "it is only a story"? On the other hand, this practice can be taken too far. Dreams and stories, no matter how bizarre, can tell the truth as well, as Lucius asserts in 1.20. Dismissal is then foolish, and betrays a lack of awareness of the power of Fortune to bring anything to pass. Stories, but also dreams (as the



tale of Aristomenes shows) may have real counsel, and to dismiss them as falsehoods on the basis of previous experience is simply ignorant, as Lucius asserts at 1.3: *Minus hercule calles prauissimis opinionibus ea putari mendacia quae uel auditu noua uel uisu rudia uel certe supra captum cogitationis ardua uideantur; quae si paulo accuratius exploraris, non modo compertu euidencia uerum etiam factu facilia senties* (“You are not, by Hercules, terribly clever in your excessively perverted belief that those things are to be reckoned lies, which seem either strange to your hearing, or new to your sight, or certainly difficult beyond your comprehension; which, if you only look into them a little more carefully, you will perceive that they are not only obvious in the discovery, but are really even easily accomplished,” 1.3.10-14).

The programmatic tale of Aristomenes thus introduces the dream into this novel as an important symbol: the dream is the link between the unbelievable in fiction and the truth of the waking world. This tale, as Shumate observes, blurs the distinction between dream and reality, but the matter is far more complex than that.<sup>36</sup> By allying waking experience with dreams, the story introduces a point of reference for understanding the world of the novel: dreams, even nightmares, are something everyone experiences. The story and Lucius’ reaction to it suggest, however, that the bizarre experiences we have in dreams can take place in waking life as well. The story is immensely unsettling, as many of the events in the *Metamorphoses* will prove to be, because it suggests that the things experienced in nightmares can be experienced in waking life as well, at the whim of Fortune. The bizarre episodes in the novel can be understood as dreams, not because they are unreal, but because they take place in a world that most of us, so far, have only encountered in dreams. The point, then, is not that we should dismiss Lucius’ experiences as lies or dreams or any other

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<sup>36</sup> See note 20 above.

sort of fiction, but rather the opposite: Lucius' story, as bizarre as it may seem, is no stranger than a dream, and dreams are strange not because they are separated from waking reality, but because they offer a perspective on waking reality that extends beyond our limited experience.

## 2. Lucius' Dream Comes True

When dreams are next mentioned, a connection is once again drawn between the bizarre world of witchcraft, magic, and metamorphosis, and dreaming. Lucius finally finds what he has spent the first three books looking for: he gets to witness a real witch in the act of transforming herself into an owl:

*fit bubo Pamphile. sic edito stridore querulo iam sui periclitabunda paulatim terra resultat, mox in altum sublimata forinsecus totis alis evolat.*

*Et illa quidem magicis suis artibus volens reformatur, at ego nullo decantatus carmine, praesentis tantum facti stupore defixus quidvis aliud magis videbar esse quam Lucius: sic exterminatus animi, attonitus in amentiam vigilans somniabar; defrictis adeo diu pupulis, an vigilarem, scire quaerebam. tandem denique reversus ad sensum praesentium...(3.21.18-3.22.8).*

Pamphile becomes an owl. Then, letting out a mournful shriek and testing her new shape, she leaps up from the earth, and raised up high she soon flies out of the house and away upon outstretched wings.

And she, at least, is willingly transformed by her own magic arts, but I, not enchanted by any spell, but paralyzed with amazement only at the feat before me, seemed to be anything rather than Lucius: thus out of my mind, thunderstruck to the point of madness, I was dreaming while awake; I rubbed my eyes for so long a time, wishing to know whether I was awake. Then finally I returned to an awareness of the situation at hand...

This metamorphosis forms a turning point in Lucius' story: immediately following, in an attempt to imitate Pamphile's transformation, Lucius will turn himself into an ass. His experiences as an ass provide the substance of the remainder of books 1-10, and it is his wish

to escape his asinine form that eventually leads him to the conversion to Isiac religion that so surprises us in book 11 and forms the conclusion to the novel.

Lucius has at last come into direct contact with the world of magic: he has actually witnessed a miraculous metamorphosis. Despite his earlier profession of belief in magic (1.3, 1.20, 2.12, e.g.), however, he cannot believe his eyes when he sees a woman transform herself into an owl. And at this crucial moment, the moment that will have such drastic consequences for his life from this point forward, the moment that dramatically alters his fortune and forever changes his understanding of the world, he tries to explain what he cannot believe by calling it a dream. A scholar who wished to show that Lucius' entire experience should be interpreted as a dream might well choose this passage as evidence. The fact that Lucius asks the crucial question when confronted with Pamphile's transformation "am I awake?" and that that question *is never explicitly answered*, suggests more than any other point in the novel that Lucius might well *be* dreaming at this point. If we take Pamphile's metamorphosis as a dream, however, it seems all the more logical to interpret Lucius' entire experience as an ass (and possibly many of his experiences before his transformation) as "merely a dream."

Such an interpretation, however, hardly does justice to the ambiguity of this passage. It is true that the question "am I awake?" is never explicitly answered, but this is no more an argument for one answer than it is for another. What *is* significant here is not the answer, but the question itself, and, more importantly, the events that lead Lucius to ask it. The question itself stems from the phrase Lucius uses to describe his reaction to Pamphile's transformation, a phrase that captures in two words the key role dreams play in this novel, and the nature of their relation to the waking world: *vigilans somniabar*.

As R. T. van der Paardt informs us, the phrase is proverbial (van der Paardt 1971, 165): he quotes several passages from Plautus to support this claim. The phrase may well be proverbial, and thus have no implication that the referent might actually be dreaming, in those passages and in many others; there are two problems, however, with reading the phrase proverbially in this passage. The first is that Lucius describes his state of mind exactly as a dreamer describes a dream experience: he uses a passive first person form of the verb *videre* combined with an infinitive describing the dream content.<sup>37</sup> The second, and more significant, is that Lucius actually tries to determine whether he is awake or not: *defrictis adeo diu pupulis, an vigilarem, scire quaerebam* (“I rubbed my eyes for so long a time, wishing to know whether I was awake,” 3.22.5-6). If he were using the phrase in a strictly proverbial sense, this second part would make no sense, since *proverbially* the phrase must say nothing about sleeping or waking.

The phrase must, then, be taken at face value: Lucius actually questions whether he is asleep or awake. The problem he faces is that *he seems to be both awake and dreaming at the same time*. On the one hand, he has just witnessed an event so incredible that the only way he can make sense of it is to call it a dream: *somniabar* (3.22.5). In this way, he behaves as Aristomenes does when he sees that Socrates is (seemingly) still alive and well. Events (like metamorphosis) or forces (like magic) that seem unreal or impossible in waking life are perfectly ordinary in dreams. On the other hand, the problem is that he is pretty certain he is awake: *vigilans* (3.22.5). To make sure of this, he rubs his eyes for a long time, but of course there is really no way to tell for certain. Thus he is confronted with events that belong in dreams, but sees them while awake: this leaves him completely stunned.

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<sup>37</sup> Compare, in the *Metamorphoses*, Socrates’ dream (*visus sum*, 1.18.15) and Charite’s first dream (*visa sum*, 4.27.3).

In this passage, Lucius confirms that dreamlike events can occur in the waking world as well. As was seen in the case of Aristomenes' reaction to the murder and reanimation of Socrates, there is a suggestion that it is normal to dismiss bizarre dreams as insignificant, on the grounds that they bear no relation to the waking world. The eventual outcome of Socrates' death suggests that such a dismissal is foolish, since the connection between dreams and the waking world is such that dreams cannot be dismissed as belonging to a separate reality. Dreams themselves can depict waking reality, and the presence of the strange and macabre in dreams therefore suggests (rather than disproves) their existence in the waking world. Even for someone as open-minded as Lucius, however, this is not really confirmed until he witnesses a dreamlike event himself. A direct confrontation with the bizarre while awake is the only thing that can really impart a belief in the impossible: only when a person witnesses something extraordinary with his own eyes does he begin to realize that such extraordinary things do exist.

Even more interesting, however, is Lucius' reaction to this realization: he is completely thunderstruck (*attonitus*, 3.22.4), struck dumb (*stupore defixus*, 3.22.3), even transformed by what he has just witnessed (*quidvis aliud magis videbar esse quam Lucius*, 3.22.3-4). His "dream" here predicts his physical transformation a few chapters later; it also seems, however, as though another metamorphosis has already taken place. Although Lucius has not yet been changed in form, his fortune has already been altered: as a witness to the bizarre and miraculous transformation of Pamphile, he has had visual confirmation that the kinds of things one hears about in stories, or witnesses in dreams, can really happen. Lucius has already been transformed, at least in his outlook on life.

The connection between stories and dreams is also strengthened here. Since Aristomenes' tale of the death of Socrates in Book 1, Lucius has heard several stories about witches and witchcraft. His very presence here outside Pamphile's room is the result of his curiosity about magic, a curiosity which has been piqued by the various stories he has heard.<sup>38</sup> Yet at the moment when he actually witnesses a magical transformation, his first reaction is to interpret it as a dream. However much belief he may have professed in the stories of witchcraft he has heard, this reaction illustrates that, as stories, he still understood them as part of a different world, one that is not normally encountered *except in dreams*. Dreams thus again serve as a link between our ordinary everyday experience and the bizarre events of the *Metamorphoses*. Everyone dreams; not everyone gets to watch a woman change into an owl in waking life. It is in dreams that each of us has experienced things as bizarre or extraordinary as the transformation Lucius has just witnessed.

Far more importantly, Lucius' position as an audience for Pamphile's transformation is parallel to our own position as the audience of Lucius' transformation. The key difference, of course, is that Lucius witnesses the transformation himself, while we hear about his transformation in a *story*. His reaction is to suspect that his vision is a lying dream; our own may well be to assume that his story is a lie, and react as Aristomenes' companion reacted to Aristomenes' tale. Such a reaction has, however, been precluded in both cases by Aristomenes' tale. The suggestion that was made by the tale of Aristomenes, and is strengthened again here, is not that we should read Lucius' experience *as a dream*, and thus as an insignificant illusion. Rather, we should understand that the transformation was something the like of which is normally only seen in dreams. This is not to suggest that it *is* a dream, but rather that the world in which the *Metamorphoses* is set is one that most of us

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<sup>38</sup> For the significance of curiosity as an important theme in the novel, see DeFilippo (1999).

have thus far only experienced in our dreams. It is not an attack on the credibility of the story, but a way of establishing its bizarreness.<sup>39</sup> The dream serves as the symbol of the bizarre and strange, to make Lucius' experience comprehensible to an audience that has not yet experienced such events anywhere *except* in dreams. By evoking the dream experience, Apuleius provides a point of reference, then, for understanding the strangeness of the magical transformation Lucius witnesses.

As will be seen later, Lucius' transformation into an ass provides him access to information that would otherwise have been unavailable to him.<sup>40</sup> From his altered perspective as an ass with human intelligence, he is able to see and hear things that no other human would be able to. This makes his transformation very dreamlike in another sense: not only is it very strange, but, like Socrates' and Aristomenes' dreams before, and like Charite's and the baker's daughter's dreams later, the experience provides him with a perspective that allows him to know things that he could not know from his human existence (which parallels the waking experience) alone.<sup>41</sup> It is not too early to suggest that the two functions of the dream are not as different as they might seem, but are in fact closely related: bizarre dreams, like bizarre stories, are strange precisely because they present a vision that lies outside of ordinary experience. It is only by escaping ordinary experience, however, that we are able to gain an alternate perspective on the world around us; conversely, that alternate perspective can present very bizarre images, because they are visions or ideas that are not available to us in an ordinary state of mind.

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<sup>39</sup> The question of the bizarreness of dreams is an interesting one; it is examined in detail by States (1993a), in his article "Bizarreness in Dreams and Other Fictions."

<sup>40</sup> See the discussion of 9.13 in chapter 3 (especially 85-92).

<sup>41</sup> For Charite's and the baker's daughter's dreams, see my discussion in the next chapter.

The dream is thus a marker of strangeness, newness (which are very closely related in the Latin language), and an alternate perspective all at once. The description of Pamphile's transformation as a dream is an invitation to understand the oddness of the sight, and more generally the world of magic and bizarre transformation in which the novel is set, in terms of dream experiences. At the same time, however, in the attitude to dreaming that is established in the novel, it is a suggestion that this seems strange not because it couldn't and therefore didn't really happen, but because our own *waking* experience and perspective is limited, even close-minded.

The connection with Fortune is again felt: Lucius is so taken aback by the vision that he is *transformed*, he does not recognize himself. As we have seen, transformations of appearance imply transformations of fortunes and *vice versa*; both are the sign of the caprice and power of Fortune. The close-mindedness of the waking perspective, which is evidenced in the dismissal of "strange" stories and "bizarre" dreams, is shattered by an experience like this, which can only come through the influence of Fortune, and which throws anyone who experiences it into a state of confusion by completely altering his perspective. Dreams and stories can reveal things that lie outside our own ken; the problem is that they can easily be dismissed as belonging to a fictional world. Lucius' experiences and Apuleius' novel both circumvent that tendency through exploration of the dream and its relation to the waking world. The suggestion that is made is again that dreams can come true: events that seem normal only in dreams can and do occur in waking life as well. The dismissal of dreams (and other "bizarre" fictions, by extension, including Apuleius' novel) as pure fantasy is not wisdom, but the limitation of knowledge and perspective, a limitation that makes it all the



more shocking when Fortune finally presents an experience that is radically new or unexpected.

## II. *CUMULATUR INFORTUNIUM MEUM*: THE TRAGIC TALE OF CHARITE

### Introduction

Half of the passages in the first ten books of the novel that deal with dreams are part of the tragic tale of the kidnapping, rescue, bereavement, revenge, and suicide of Charite. Charite's first dream (4.27.1-14) motivates both the most explicit discussion of dream theory (4.27.15-24) and the telling of the longest and perhaps most significant (certainly the most discussed and debated) of the inserted tales, the so-called tale of Cupid and Psyche (it is also the longest of the inserted tales: stretching from 4.28 to 6.24 it occupies approximately one sixth of the novel).<sup>42</sup> Her second dream, which reveals the meaning of the first, motivates her revenge on her husband's murderer (a revenge which she relates to the experience of dreaming in a very interesting way) and her own suicide. Taken together, these four passages form the closest parallel to the rich dream world of the eleventh book, and provide the most clues about the role of the dream in this novel outside of book 11.

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<sup>42</sup> The entire second volume of *Aspects of Apuleius' Golden Ass* (Zimmerman 1998) is dedicated to the tale of Cupid and Psyche. The tale has been variously interpreted, although the general consensus seems to be that it must be very significant for the rest of the novel; for discussions and interpretations, see any of the studies of Apuleius' *Metamorphoses* listed in my bibliography, especially Gollnick (1999), Tatum (1979), and Schlam (1992).

## 1. Charite's First Nightmare

The first dream of Charite provides an interesting contrast with the dreams examined so far. In the case of both Aristomenes and Lucius, events they witnessed which seemed strange because of their incongruity with the things they were used to experiencing while awake, were interpreted as dreams. The reason for this interpretation of those events as dreams was that it allowed the events temporarily to be explained in a way that posed no challenge to the “dreamers’” waking understanding of the world.<sup>43</sup> When Aristomenes interprets his experience the night before as a nightmare, he is able, at first, to use that explanation to relieve his worries. As was seen, however, Socrates’ dream provides the key element that allows the conclusion of the story not only to prove that nightmare events can occur in the waking world, but also that nightmares themselves contain material from the real world. Thus the narrative moves, in a matter of paragraphs (chapters 18 and 19), from a world view in which dreams are completely separate from life, and the kinds of things that happen in dreams can confidently be dismissed because they don’t or didn’t happen in the “real” world, to a perspective in which the waking world is no more safe than the world of dreams, and, more significantly, the dreams cannot be dismissed as belonging to a separate reality. Similarly, Lucius at first interprets the transformation of Pamphile as a dream image; only afterwards, when he has himself undergone a metamorphosis, is he forced to recognize that his dream (if it was a dream) was nonetheless inseparable from his waking reality.

The initial reaction to a bizarre vision is to interpret it as a dream, which at first allows the “dreamer’s” perspective to remain unchanged: if Aristomenes can interpret the murder of Socrates as a nightmare, he does not have to start believing in magic, in the

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<sup>43</sup> Cf. Porter (1993), 46.

reanimation of corpses, or in the transformation of humans into animals.<sup>44</sup> Similarly, if Socrates can prove that his dream is psychosomatic (he imagines that food will restore his strength) and has no relation to his waking world, he also does not have to believe that he will die from the wound dealt by the witches (since that wound would then only be a dream and have no relation to his waking life). Finally, if Lucius can interpret the transformation of Pamphile as a dream, he need not change his waking perspective at all, but can continue to relegate the existence of magic to entertaining stories.<sup>45</sup>

Charite's first dream presents a situation that seems strangely the reverse of these: Aristomenes and Lucius interpret visions that seem to occur while awake as dreams, to separate them from their waking lives and be able to dismiss events that they would have thought impossible outside of dreams as mere dreams; Charite, by contrast, who has a frightening vision while asleep, is motivated to action *as if the dream had occurred in waking life*. When Charite wakes up from her dream, she is not relieved at all by the realization that it was a dream, but is even more agitated than she had been when she fell asleep. She is so upset, in fact, that she considers suicide:

at commodum coniuerat nec diu, cum repente lymphatico ritu somno  
recussa longae uehementius adflictere sese et pectus etiam palmis infestis  
tundere et faciem illam luculentam uerberare incipit et aniculae, quanquam  
instantissime causas noui et instaurati maeroris requirenti, sic adsuspirans  
altius inquit: "em nunc certe, nunc maxime funditus perii, nunc spei saluiferae  
renuntiaui. laqueus aut gladius aut certe praecipitium procul dubio  
capessendum est" (4.25.1-9)

But as soon as she had fallen asleep, not much time had passed, when suddenly in a crazed fashion she was shaken from sleep and began to punish

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<sup>44</sup> The credibility of Socrates' tales of Meroe's powers, several of which involve metamorphosis, is greatly strengthened by the murder of Socrates, if it really happened, but made less disturbing, like the murder itself, if it was all just a dream. Cf. Annequin (1996), 170-171.

<sup>45</sup> It is especially strange that Lucius, who has professed not only a sincere belief, but even a burning curiosity about magic, it highlights the fact that no matter what he may believe *cerebrally*, his perspective is nonetheless based on his waking experiences.

herself much more passionately, and even to beat her breast with harmful blows, and to lash that grief-stricken face. And although the old woman asked her most insistently the reasons for her new and repeated grief, she answered her thus, sighing rather deeply: “Ah, now for certain, now I am completely destroyed; now I have given up life-bearing hope. A noose or a sword or at any rate a jump must now without doubt be undertaken.”

We find out later what her dream was actually about, but for the moment, it should be noted that her suicidal intentions reflect Aristomenes’ reaction to his “dream” when he realizes he cannot escape from the inn: *Ac recordabar profecto bonam Meroen non misericordia iugulo meo pepercisse, sed saeuitia cruci me reseruasse. In cubiculum itaque reuersus de genere tumultuario mortis mecum deliberabam* (“And I realized for certain that Meroe had not spared my throat out of pity, but had saved me for the cross out of savagery. And so, having returned to my bedchamber, I contemplated a swift sort of death,” 1.15.18-1.16.2). The main difference, however, between the two instances is that Aristomenes, at the point in the story when he contemplates suicide, does not yet believe his experience was a dream. Charite, however, knows full well that she has just woken up: she calls her vision a “most savage dream” (*saevissimo somno*, 4.27.1). When Aristomenes begins to think that he had a bad nightmare, he is relieved, because it seems to him that Socrates is now safe: the nightmare is reassuring because the very fact that it is a nightmare allows him to separate it from his waking world. It is only when it becomes more and more obvious that his “dream” wasn’t “only a dream” at all that he becomes frightened again. Charite, by contrast, is fully aware that what she has just witnessed was no more than a dream, yet she is just as upset *as if she had seen it while awake*, and even contemplates suicide *because of a dream*.

Charite, then, does not separate dreams from her waking experience as confidently as Aristomenes does at first, and we should then ask why: what is it about Charite here that leads her to give credence to her dream, rather than dismiss it as “only a dream,” as

Aristomenes or Socrates might have? The answer lies in the dream itself, which Charite eventually narrates to the old woman:

sed ecce saeuissimo somnio mihi nunc etiam redintegratur immo uero cumulatur infortunium meum; nam uisa sum mihi de domo de thalamo de cubiculo de toro denique ipso uiolenter extracta per solitudines auias infortunatissimi mariti nomen inuocare, eumque, ut primum meis amplexibus uiduatus est, adhuc ungentis madidum, coronis floridum consequi uestigio me pedibus fugientem alienis. utque clamore percito formonsae raptum uxoris conquerens populi testatur auxilium, quidam de latronibus importunae persecutionis indignatione permotus saxo grandi pro pedibus adrepto misellum iuuenem maritum meum percussum interemit. talis aspectus atrocitate perterrita somno funesto pauens excussa sum (4.27.1-14).

“But behold! My misfortune is now even renewed for me, or rather, indeed, heaped higher, by a most savage dream; for I seemed to myself to have been violently dragged off from my home, from my chambers, from my bedroom, even from my very bed, and to be calling out through trackless deserts the name of my most misfortunate husband. And he, as soon as he was deprived of me, still damp with perfume and flowery with garlands, seemed to be following in my tracks, as I fled on the feet of another. And when he called for the aid of the people, complaining of the kidnapping of his beautiful wife with a loud shout, one of the robbers, enraged at the importunate pursuit, snatched up a huge rock that lay at his feet, and striking the wretched youth, my husband, he slew him. I woke from my deadly sleep afraid, terrified by the horror of such a sight.”

The first half of this dream is in fact little more than a reiteration in a dream context of the kidnapping Charite has just suffered.<sup>46</sup> Immediately before telling the old woman this dream she has summed up the misfortune she had suffered at the point at which she had the dream:

tunc me gremio suo mater infelix tolerans mundo nuptiali decenter ornabat mellitisque sauiis crebriter ingestis iam spem futuram liberorum uotis anxiis propagabat, cum inruptionis subitae gladiatorum <fit> impetus ad belli faciem saeuens, nudis et infestis mucronibus coruscans: non caedi, non rapinae manus adferunt, sed denso conglobatoque cuneo cubiculum nostrum inuadunt protinus. nec ullo de familiaribus nostris repugnante ac ne tantillum quidem resistente miseram, exanimem, saeuo pauore trepidam, de medio matris gremio rapuere (4.26.16-26)

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<sup>46</sup> Cf. Winkler (1985), 52: “Her dream has repeated the awful experience she just lived through, adding the detail that the bridegroom was killed while pursuing the bandits,” and later “The two versions, her real life and her dream, differ only in the ending...”

“Then my misfortunate mother held me on her lap and was adorning me fittingly with bridal regalia, and smothering me with kisses; she was advancing her future hope of children with anxious prayers, when there was an attack of swordsmen who broke in suddenly, raging in the appearance of war and flashing their naked and lethal blades: they did not set their hands to slaughter or to rapine, but in a closely packed phalanx they suddenly broke into our bedroom. Not a one of our household fought back, or offered even the slightest resistance; they tore me from the middle of my mother’s lap, wretched as I was, fainting and frightened with a fierce terror.”

In both this scene and the first part of the dream, Charite is forcibly taken from her bedroom (*cubiculum* is used in both passages) by a sudden attack; the phrase in the dream *quidam de latronibus* seems to imply that in the dream, too, she has been abducted by thieves. Emphasis is placed in both on how close the abduction is in time to her marriage night: Tlepolemus, as he pursues her captors, is described as “still damp with perfume and flowery with garlands” (*adhuc unguentis madidum coronis floridum*, 4.27.7-8); in her narration of the actual attack of the robbers, Charite tells the old woman that it occurred while her mother “was adorning me fittingly with bridal regalia” (*mundo nuptiali decenter ornabat*, 4.26.17-18).

The dream is, then, already closely connected with Charite’s waking existence, because she has just experienced something almost exactly the same. In this context we can understand the words she uses to introduce the dream: *sed ecce saeuissimo somnio mihi nunc etiam redintegratur immo uero cumulatur infortunium meum* (4.27.1-3). The dream doesn’t introduce a completely bizarre world, a world she has never experienced and whose existence she has reason to doubt; it reflects, rather, her current unfortunate circumstances, and adds new information that reveals how much worse her misfortune really is. Charite has already experienced a complete reversal of fortune, has already undergone her metamorphosis: that happened when she was kidnapped by robbers, completely unexpectedly, just before her wedding; that is what is meant here by *infortunium*. The nightmare doesn’t introduce

something completely new, but worsens a misfortune that is already real. Hence, she uses the verb *redintegratur*, which refers to the first half of her dream, in which she re-experiences her kidnapping, followed by the correction *immo vero cumulatur*, which refers to the second half of the dream, in which her betrothed is slain.

Charite doesn't dismiss her dream, then, because it seems at least in part to reflect her waking life. One can easily imagine that, had she had this dream a few nights earlier, before she was kidnapped, it might have disturbed her, but she certainly would not have planned suicide. It would then have seemed bizarre, perhaps worrisome, but easily separable from the waking world: she would observe that her betrothed was alive, that she had not been kidnapped, in short, that everything was fine; she would then dismiss it as nothing more than a bad dream. Because she has already experienced something every bit as unexpected and frightening as the first half of her nightmare, because her fortune has already been completely transformed, however, the nightmare seems almost an extension of her waking reality: the boundaries have been blurred, and so she is just as ready to commit suicide because of a dream as she would have been had she witnessed Tlepolemus' death while awake.

Initially, then, the dream of Charite connects with the dream of Socrates and the supposed dream of Aristomenes in that all three present the dreamer with frightening events that reflect real occurrences in waking reality. If these events lie outside the experience of the dreamer (as in the case of Socrates and Aristomenes, and, we can imagine, Charite, had she only had her dream a day earlier), they are lightly dismissed as illusions. The world they reflect is, however, a broader perspective on waking reality; to Charite, who has already



experienced this nightmare side of waking reality, the dream in which it appears again seems not only possible, but real.<sup>47</sup>

The nightmare world of Charite's dream and Aristomenes' waking reality after he has witnessed the strange death of his friend Socrates are one and the same: Charite is dragged from her pillow "through trackless deserts" (*per solitudines avias*),<sup>48</sup> while her husband follows her "as I fled on the feet of another" (*pedibus fugientem alienis*); Aristomenes, too, because he is so frightened by the death of his friend, "fled through various and trackless deserts" (*per diversas et avias solitudines aufugi*, 1.19.26-27). Although their situations are somewhat different (Aristomenes' flight is voluntary while Charite is forced into hers; Aristomenes is afraid for his own life while Charite is much more concerned for the life of her betrothed), both are led into flight by a sudden and strange reversal of fortune, both wander alone, both end up losing their homes and loved ones; most significantly, however, for our purposes, both are led by their sudden misfortunes into a realization that nightmares,

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<sup>47</sup> An observant reader may argue here that Socrates, too, has experienced this nightmare side of reality, and should therefore accord his dream more significance than he does. Certainly, it is problematic that he seems no more disturbed by his nightmare than Aristomenes was by his. We should observe that the story is told from Aristomenes' perspective, and we don't really have any idea for certain how disturbed Socrates actually is by the dream. Even if we accept, however, that he is unshaken by it, we can point out that at this point he seems to have escaped from the witches, and so may think he has been saved from the nightmare. We can also point out that there was nothing in his dream that connected it with the gruesome world he has been living in up to this point. Thus, although he clearly has had the boundaries of his beliefs greatly stretched, the idea that he is already dead though he seems to be alive may still seem inconceivable to him. Although he has entered a nightmare world as certainly as Charite has, there is no reason for him to believe his nightmare to be part of that world because there was nothing in the nightmare that reflected his current situation (unlike in Charite's dream): we notice that he never states *who it was* that murdered him in his dream. Had he stated explicitly that Meroe and Panthia were responsible, then we might wonder why he didn't give the dream more credit, but as it is, until the shocking reappearance of his wound and the sponge replacing his heart, he, Aristomenes, and most likely anyone reading the story, are all still making the mistake of separating dreams from the waking world. It is this sudden reversal of waking reality to reflect events witnessed in dreams rather than waking appearances that sets the tone that allows Charite's unquestioning belief of her dream to seem reasonable to us.

<sup>48</sup> There are several parallels between this dream and both the dream of Ilia in Ennius' *Annals* (fr. 1, 29 Sk., 34-50) and the dream of Dido in Virgil's *Aeneid* (4.465-8); for the former, see Mignogna (1996); for the latter, see the *GCA* on book 4 (Hijmans 1977), 204; also see Finkelpearl (1998), chapter 6, for the connections between Dido and Charite in general.

far from representing imaginary, insignificant events, are in fact a reflection of waking life. Aristomenes lives in fear and exile because he has come to the realization that anything that can happen in a nightmare can happen in waking life. Charite, similarly, is frightened by her nightmare even after she knows it was a dream, because her most recent experience in itself confirms that nightmarish events occur while we are awake.

The old woman to whom Charite tells her dream, however, tries to reassure her by asserting that dreams are often either false (if they occur during the day) or reveal the very opposite of what they seem to predict:

tunc fletibus eius adsuspirans anus sic incipit: “bono animo esto, mi erilis, nec uanis somniorum figmentis terreare. nam praeter quod diurnae quietis imagines falsae perhibentur, tunc etiam nocturnae uisiones contrarios euentus nonnumquam pronuntiant. denique flere et uapulare et nonnumquam iugulari lucrosam prosperamque prouentum nuntiant, contra ridere et mellitis dulciolis uentrem saginare uel in uoluptatem ueneriam conuenire tristitiae animi languore corporis damnisque ceteris uexatum iri praedicabunt. Sed ego te narrationibus lepidis anilibusque fabulis protinus auocabo” (4.27.15-29).

Then the old woman, sighing at the girl’s tears, began thus: “be of good cheer, mistress, and do not be frightened by the empty fabrications of dreams. For besides the fact that the images of daytime rest are clearly false, then even nighttime visions sometimes predict opposite outcomes. Therefore, weeping and being beaten and sometimes even having one’s throat cut signify a profitable and prosperous outcome; on the other hand, to laugh and to stuff one’s belly with honeyed sweetmeats or to come together in pleasurable sexual intercourse will predict that one will be harried by a sadness of the spirit and a weakness of the body and all the other difficulties. But I will distract you right away with some pleasant storytelling and with an old woman’s fairy-tales.”

This speech then leads immediately to the tale of Cupid and Psyche.<sup>49</sup> The old woman's chief goal in expounding on dream theory here is to reassure Charite that she need not be so upset by her dream, certainly not to the point of committing suicide. Thus the discussion of dreams and the tale of Cupid and Psyche are both introduced to serve the same purpose: to comfort Charite after she has had a bad dream. The tale is introduced as a distraction; to understand the relation of the tale to the dream Charite has just had, however, we need to examine the old woman's tactics more closely.<sup>50</sup>

Her approach has a tripartite, crescendo structure: she begins with the simple observation that some dreams, specifically those that occur during the day, are generally false. Following this, she observes that *sometimes (nonnumquam)* dreams predict events completely the opposite of what they depict. She then illustrates this with specific examples. Finally, she moves on to a simple distraction technique: she tells the girl a story to comfort her. The speech thus moves from a very short dismissal of daytime dreams, through a slightly longer explanation of nighttime dreams as often predicting opposite things from what they seem to, to a very long story meant to help Charite *forget* the dream.

The first piece of information, that daytime dreams are all false, is useless, since Charite had her dream at night (otherwise the old woman wouldn't have to say anything about nighttime dreams).<sup>51</sup> The second part contrasts sharply with the tale of Aristomenes:

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<sup>49</sup> I agree with Winkler in his objections to this name for the longest inserted tale in the novel (Winkler 1985, 89-90); on the other hand, as it is referred to as such by convention now, and since I wish myself to be understood, I will continue to use the title. As for the tale itself, I think the observations made by Tatum on the importance of the narrative context of the story (Tatum 1978, 62-68), are brilliant and too often neglected. The sharp contrast between the hopeful message of the tale and the old woman's suicide shortly after (6.30) is shocking, and too often ignored altogether. As it is, the contrast intensifies the sense of the capriciousness of Fortune and the wretchedness and helplessness of humans, no matter how naïve or idealistic: sooner or later they are forced to recognize the cruelty of the world.

<sup>50</sup> For the tale as a distraction, cf. Winkler (1985), 52-56.

there, Aristomenes and Socrates both seemed to accord no significance to their dreams, although they occurred at night, yet the old woman implies here that *all* nighttime dreams are significant, if sometimes deceptive. This is very important because it shows that the old woman is perfectly aware that the world of nightmares is a reflection of the waking world. Her argument, then, is not that Charite should dismiss the dream as “just a dream,” but rather that she should not give up *all* hope, because sometimes dreams predict their opposites.

Her illustration of this principle is meant to reassure Charite, but for Lucius it must have a very sinister undertone: “weeping,” she asserts, “and being beaten, and sometimes even having one’s throat cut signify a profitable and prosperous outcome” (*flere et uapulare et nonnumquam iugulari lucrosum prosperumque prouentum nuntiant*, 4.27.19-21). Perhaps so, but for anyone who has heard Aristomenes’ tale, the word she has chosen to describe a dream death, and emphasized by adding a second *nonnumquam*, has a very specific association, especially when used in the context of dreaming: by far the most frequent use of the verb *iugulare* in the novel is to describe the death of Socrates, a death which appeared to him in a dream: *verum tamen et ipse per somnium iugulari uisus sum mihi...*<sup>52</sup> Socrates dreamt of dying by having his throat cut, and that dream had anything but a prosperous outcome. For those who know his story, her words sound empty; the comfort they bring to Charite must be very limited as well: the old woman does not deny that her dream may predict her betrothed’s death, but merely points out that it *could* predict a happy outcome instead.

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<sup>51</sup> See *GCA* (Hijmans 1977), 205.

<sup>52</sup> Forms of the verb appear 11 times in the novel (see Oldfather 1934 on *iugulo*); of these, no two or more uses describe the same death except in the case of Socrates’ strange, dreamlike murder, which accounts for *four* of the 11 uses of the verb.

The old woman seems aware that her analysis of the relationship of dreams to their outcomes can hold little comfort for Charite, and so she turns next to a different technique: she distracts Charite with a story, the famous tale of Cupid and Psyche. This abrupt shift in tactics raises two important questions. First, what is the role of the dream in this context: what does the dream add to the narrative that would have been absent had the old woman simply told the story to comfort Charite when she was first brought in and was immensely upset? Why, that is, use a *dream* to introduce the tale of Cupid and Psyche? This formulation of the first question leads to the second: given the relationship that has already been established between dreaming and storytelling, how does the opposition of the old woman's dream theory and her story fit into this relationship? When the novel presents the sequence of Charite's description of her misfortunate kidnapping followed by her dream, then followed by the old woman's dream theory and finally the tale of Cupid and Psyche, what relationships among storytelling, dreaming, Fortune, experience and knowledge are established by this sequence?

A simple answer to the first question might be that Charite's dream serves to foreshadow the murder of Tlepolemus, as well, possibly, as her own death.<sup>53</sup> This explanation has some value, but there are too many complications to accept it absolutely. To begin with, the dream does not correspond precisely with the actual murder of Tlepolemus. In fact, it could even be argued that the old woman's theory of interpretation by opposites is correct: initially, at any rate, it is not the robbers who kill Tlepolemus, but he who kills them; Charite is not stolen from Tlepolemus by the robbers, but stolen from the robbers by Tlepolemus.<sup>54</sup> When Tlepolemus is eventually slain, it has nothing to do with these robbers

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<sup>53</sup> For this possibility and some of its proponents, see *GCA* (Hijmans 1977), 203-204.

(to whom one assumes the dream refers), nor with Charite's kidnapping. Yet another complication is added by the fact that even if one is willing to accept that this dream is predictive, and that it predicts the demise of Tlepolemus, the old woman's discussion of dream theory throws some doubt on the power of the dream to reflect the future directly: even if the dream is eventually meant to be understood as a reference to Tlepolemus' death, at this point, at any rate, it is not explicitly interpreted as such. Finally, even if the old woman's speech is not persuasive, and it is still convincing that the dream, if not definitely predictive, at least introduces Tlepolemus' murder as a distinct *possibility* or even probability, this observation still does not sufficiently answer the questions originally posed: why is it introduced here, why in a dream, and why Tlepolemus' death?

The placement of this dream is crucial. It occurs shortly after the robbers bring a very distraught captive Charite to their cave, and shortly before the tale of Cupid and Psyche. One important thing to observe is the fact that Charite is already very upset before her dream, if not to the point of suicide, at least to the point that she is not sure if she can go on living. The old woman tries to comfort her before her dream as well, although she will have none of it:

nec tamen puella quiuit ullis aniculae sermonibus ab inceptis fletibus auocari, sed altius eiulans sese et assiduis singultibus ilia quatiens mihi etiam lacrimas excussit. ac sic: "an ego" inquit "misera tali domo tanta familia tam caris uernulis tam sanctis parentibus desolata et infelicis rapinae praeda et mancipium effecta inque isto saxeo carcere et seruiliter clausa et omnibus deliciis, quis innata atque innutrita sum, priuata sub incerta salutis et carnificinae laniena inter tot ac tales latrones et horrendum gladiatorum populum uel fletum desinere uel omnino uiuere potero?" (4.24.5-16)

The girl was, nevertheless, unable to be distracted from the weeping she had begun by any of the old woman's words, but crying more deeply and shaking herself and her belly with her frequent sobs, she even forced tears from me. And she spoke thus: "Alas, wretched girl that I am, deprived of such a home, such a large household, such dear servants and such sainted parents, and made the prey and property of a miserable kidnapping; locked up in this

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<sup>54</sup> Cf. Winkler (1985), 53.

rocky prison like a slave and deprived of all the delights among which I was born and raised, faced with uncertainty regarding my fate and with the threat of hideous torture, among so many robbers of this sort, a horrifying populace of swordsmen, how shall I be able to stop weeping, or even to live at all?"

Charite is certainly very upset over her current misfortune, to the point that she even questions her ability to live under such circumstances. The nurse is trying to distract her, and the word that is used to describe her goal in speaking to the girl is *avocari*<sup>55</sup> exactly the word with which the nurse explains her intentions in narrating the tale of Cupid and Psyche only a few chapters later. It is not at all unreasonable, then, to observe that Apuleius could easily have introduced the tale of Cupid and Psyche at this point in the narrative, as an attempt by the old woman to comfort Charite by distracting her from her misfortune. Instead, he introduces the episode not with Charite's actual misfortune, but with her dream of a further misfortune and the nurse's interpretation of it. The only significant elements added by this dream are the idea of Tlepolemus' murder and the old woman's explanation of the relationship of dreams to the waking world. There must, then, be something essential about these elements, something that is required for the narration of the story.

The introduction of the idea of the death of Tlepolemus is what nearly drives Charite to suicide. It is because the main elements of her dream correspond to her waking reality that she gives it so much credit for telling the truth. The old woman's response to her credulity is not to dismiss the dream as Aristomenes or Lucius might have, but to point out, rather, that although dreams reflect the waking world, the correspondence is not always direct. Dreams, in their relationship to stories, have already been used as proof that dismissal of either dreams or stories because of their bizarreness is foolish: both can present events that are only bizarre because they have not yet been experienced by the dreamer or the audience, and which are

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<sup>55</sup> See the discussion below (52-55).

nonetheless very real. The old woman's dream theory, then, followed as it is by the tale of Cupid and Psyche, introduces a modification of that relationship of dream to story to waking "reality": dreams (and stories) certainly do reflect the real world, but it is naïve to assume that they can always be interpreted literally. As if in illustration of this point, the woman then launches into what appears to be a long and elaborate allegory.<sup>56</sup> A literal interpretation of the Cupid and Psyche episode is unthinkable (the very setting of the tale in a non-existent fairytale land rules that possibility out completely); only two options are left: to dismiss it as insignificant, or to interpret it allegorically. The first option seems absurd, given not only the position and magnitude of the story, but the very status of stories in this novel; the allegorical interpretation is the only valid option.

There is no general agreement about the meaning of the Cupid and Psyche tale, and that fact alone makes it a question that lies beyond the scope of this study.<sup>57</sup> The temptation some scholars have felt to interpret it as a dream is a good indication of the important role that Charite's dream and the old woman's dream theory play in introducing the story; as with Lucius' discussion of the credibility of strange stories, however, there is no reason to read it as such: dreams and stories are closely allied in this novel; they share important characteristics and one could easily provide a way for a character to discuss the properties of the other.<sup>58</sup> What is important about the Cupid and Psyche myth for a study of the dreams in the novel is that it is introduced as a consolation for a realization that came in a dream.

All allegorical interpretations aside, one very simple point the tale makes is that, on the one hand, events that seem insufferably tragic can lead to a newer and more complete

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<sup>56</sup> For the Cupid and Psyche tale as allegory, cf. Kenney (1990), 12-17.

<sup>57</sup> See footnote 42 above.

<sup>58</sup> See Gollnick (1999), 81-126.



happiness, while on the other hand, things that many might consider good fortune can lead to misery and unhappiness.<sup>59</sup> Psyche is very beautiful, even to the point of being worshipped for her beauty, and one might expect that this would make her very happy. Instead, she is alone, unloved, and eventually even hated by Venus for a quality of birth over which she had no control. A terrible oracle, however, which leads her to fear the worst sort of fate (marriage to a horrid and frightening monster), turns out instead to predict a happy and even blessed sort of life as the lover of *Amor* himself.<sup>60</sup> That happiness is marred by only one thing: she is not allowed to see her lover. Thanks to the doubt-mongering of her sisters, this restriction eventually leads her to offend the god. It is really, again, not entirely her own fault: she is a little naïve (and perhaps a little curious) and trusts her sisters too much, and so believes that she is acting as she should. Her attempt to observe and even slay her lover, however, combined with the anger of Venus over not only her hubristic beauty but also her affair with Venus' son, leads to the worst sort of trials and tribulations imaginable, culminating, even, in a journey to the land of the dead. At various points in the tale, Psyche's misfortunes lead her very near suicide, but in each case she is rescued or prevented, and carries on.<sup>61</sup> This turns out well for her, since at the end of the tale she is happily married to Cupid, with a daughter, and granted immortality.

On a very simple level, then, whatever the allegorical meaning of the tale, it serves as an illustration of the old woman's principle of dream interpretation: things that appear bad at

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<sup>59</sup> Compare Winkler (1985), 56.

<sup>60</sup> The interpretation of this oracle parallels the point the old woman was just making about dreams (a kind of oracle) predicting their opposites.

<sup>61</sup> Suicide is a recurrent theme in the novel, and is especially prevalent in the Charite episodes: the story is introduced by her suicide threat; shortly after it ends, the old woman who told it herself commits suicide; the death of Tlepolemus turns out to have been correctly predicted, and once he dies, Charite first attempts suicide by starvation, then later actually commits suicide; cf. *GCA* (Hijmans 1977), 188. For interesting connections between the phenomena of dreaming and suicide, see MacAlister (1996).

first may turn out to be just the opposite. Psyche's fall from grace with Cupid seems very unfortunate to her, and even leads her to (failed) suicide. Not only do things turn out well for Psyche, however, they are even improved by her suffering: had she never fallen from grace with Cupid, she might never have been allowed to see his face, and though their daughter would have been immortal, she herself would have lived a mortal life. The point that even the worst suffering can herald an improvement in circumstances is essentially an extension of the old woman's dream theory. It is illustrated first in relation to dreaming, then again through storytelling. Her point in both is that the truth is not known until it is known. For Charite to assume that a dream that *seems* to predict her true love's death is the *same* as his death, simply because the rest of her dream is the same as her current situation, is equivalent to Psyche (or someone listening to her story) *assuming* that her separation from Cupid is the end of their relationship, or that her suffering at the hands of Venus can only have a negative outcome: in short, assuming that because the story is unhappy now, it will end unhappily.

In effect, both the discussion of dream theory and the tale of Cupid and Psyche are attempts by the old woman to allow Charite to separate the fantastic from the real again: in her discussion of dream theory, by asserting that the correspondence of dreams to reality is not always one-to-one, she tries to distance dreams from waking reality (although she betrays an awareness that dreams do reflect reality in some way; to assert otherwise in this situation would be absurd, since Charite has obviously just had a dream that was, in part at least, about something real). When this obviously fails, when, that is, Charite is still unable to ease her mind by treating her dream as something separate from her waking existence, the woman turns to a different tactic: if she cannot remove the dream from Charite's waking awareness, she can remove Charite's awareness from the dream. She literally "calls her away" (*avocabo*,

4.27.25), by allowing her to participate in an alternate reality: essentially, telling the story is similar to giving her a dream, this time one with a happy conclusion. Again the parallel between dreaming and storytelling is evident: when one upsets, the other can console; the best way to counteract an unhappy dream is with a happy story (or better yet, an unhappy story with a happy ending). To prove that the story here is functioning similarly to a dream, one need only consider the word used to describe the tale's intended action. *Avoco*, not a particularly uncommon word in general, nevertheless appears only three times in the Apuleian corpus, all in the *Metamorphoses*.<sup>62</sup> Besides this particular spot, and earlier in the same book, when the old woman specifically *failed* to distract Charite, the one other occurrence is in book 1, when Lucius describes the effect of Aristomenes' *story* on him: he has been distracted, and scarcely noticed the hardships of the road (1.20). The result, then, is precisely that which the old woman wishes to achieve with Charite: Lucius has been made unaware of his surroundings, of the world around him, to the point that he does not experience it; instead, like someone who is asleep and dreaming, he is made a participant in another plane of experience, a world that is in some way separate from his own. The description suggests, at any rate, a connection with sleep and dream, but the connection is confirmed by the one other use of a word connected to *avoco* in the Apuleian oeuvre. Although not a form of *avoco per se*, the noun form *avocamentum* would certainly be used to describe a similar idea; it appears only once in Apuleius, at *Apology* 43.7.

Apuleius is defending himself against the charge of magical practices, and is addressing specifically the accusation that he caused a certain boy to fall into an epileptic fit. In response, he discusses the perfectly acceptable practice of divination through a medium,

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<sup>62</sup> See Oldfather (1934).

and argues that not only are there instances in Roman history of this practice, but that Platonic philosophy even makes allowances for this sort of thing:

quamquam Platoni credam inter deos atque homines natura et loco medias quasdam diuorum potestates intersitas, easque diuinationes cunctas et magorum miracula gubernare; quin et illud mecum reputo posse animum humanum, praesertim puerilem et simplicem, seu carminum auocamento siue odorum delenimento soporari et ad obliuionem praesentium externari et paulisper remota corporis memoria redigi ac redire ad naturam suam, quae est immortalis scilicet et diuina, atque ita uelut quodam sopore futura rerum praesagare (*Apology*, 43.3-12).

Although I would believe Plato, that between gods and men there are certain divine powers intermediary in both position and nature, and that they govern all divinations and miracles of magicians; in addition to this, I myself consider it possible for the human soul, especially when youthful and simple, whether either by the *distraction* of songs (incantations) or by the soothing of scents to be put to sleep and driven out to forgetfulness of its surroundings, and with the memory of the body removed for a little while, to be restored and return to its own nature, which of course is immortal and divine, and so just as if from some dream, to foretell the futures of things.

Here we can see that the idea of “distraction” is crucial for understanding the dreaming state; the soul is able, through “distraction” to be removed from an awareness of its present circumstances, just as Charite and Lucius are removed from an awareness of their surroundings by listening to stories. Dreaming and listening to stories are thus closely allied: both are capable of removing the individual from the sensory world and giving him access to a reality untrammelled by his sensory perceptions or his own preoccupations.

When Lucius witnesses the transformation of Pamphile, his first reaction is to interpret the experience as a dream; unable to determine whether it is indeed a dream or not, he eventually “returns to an awareness of the situation at hand,” (*reversus ad sensum praesentium*, 3.22.6-7). The term used to describe his return to an awareness of his surroundings, *ad sensum praesentium*, is precisely the opposite from the term used by Apuleius in the *Apology* to describe the dreamlike trance state of the medium: *ad obliuionem*

*praesentium*, “to forgetfulness of (its) surroundings,” 43.8-9. What is more, the feeling of forgetfulness of his surroundings that was induced in Lucius in book 3, a feeling that he describes in very dreamlike terms (he is clearly aware, in a literal sense, of his surroundings, since he has just seen Pamphile transform herself into an owl), is specifically marked as having arisen without the help of magical spells: *at ego nullo decantatus carmine praesentis tantum facti stupore defixus* (3.22.2-3). The implication, here, is that the normal way such a dreamlike state is induced is through the use of an incantation (*carmine*); in this case, however, it is the very spectacle of the magical transformation which has this effect on Lucius (*praesentis*, which is echoed below by the phrase *praesentium*, helps to blur the boundary between dreaming and waking even further: Lucius has been put into what seems to be a dream by the “present deed,” but as he returns from this state, he returns to an awareness of “the situation at hand”—which was the very thing that made him think he was dreaming in the first place). This connects to the phrase *carminum avocamento*, in the passage from the *Apology* (43.7-8): one of the normal ways of achieving a dreamlike state is through the “distraction” of incantations. Finally, the phrase Lucius uses to describe his distracted state *exterminatus animi*, “out of my mind,” (3.22.4) bears close resemblance in both form and meaning to the description *animum...externari* “for the soul...to be...driven out,” (*Apol.* 43.6-9). All of this points to a connection between dreaming and distraction, between magic and dreaming, and between stories and dreams.<sup>63</sup>

It is possible, then, to read the old woman’s tale as something whose goal is to create a dreamlike state in the listener: to distract Charite from her present circumstances by allowing her to escape into a fictional fantasy that, just as dreams often are, is easily

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<sup>63</sup> There is even a particular type of ancient magic, of some interest in this context, which seeks to induce a sleeping state and even to send dreams of a particular nature to its object: see Eitrem (1991).

separable from her waking world. It is not surprising that when Charite has reached a state in which her dreams have blurred with her waking world, the old woman, having failed to separate the dreams out again, offers Charite an alternative to dreaming, a dreamlike experience (listening to a story) to distract her from her newly encountered nightmarish existence.

## 2. Charite's Second Nightmare

The problem, of course, is that Charite's dream is predictive. Although the old woman's discussion of dreams and subsequent narration of the tale of Cupid and Psyche suggest that dreams and stories, though reflective of reality, should not always be taken at face value, and offer Charite an illustration of that principle by distracting her from a dreamlike experience by offering an easily separable and clearly not literal story, the fact remains that Charite's dream has not only reflected her current misfortune, but has also foretold the future death of her husband. As Winkler observes, this causes problems for our interpretation: "The naïve conclusion is that the young woman's story may have as happy an outcome as Psyche's. But for her audience the most important point about the meaning of the old woman's tale is that it is a lie," (Winkler 1985, 55-56). The story is not "a lie" *per se*, because it does not claim to predict the outcome of Charite's situation: the implication that she will end as happily as Psyche is *suggested*, but never made explicit. The problem, then, is that one is tempted by the correspondences between Psyche's situation and Charite's to read the story as predictive: to treat it, in effect, as a portent, like a dream, which reveals through the symbolic correspondence Charite=Psyche that Charite's story, too, will have a happy

ending. Indeed, that is the intended rhetorical effect of the story: it replaces the dream and offers Charite an alternate image of human existence in which sorrowful beginnings end happily; as Winkler puts it, the story “is specifically designed to lull her fears by using a mirror image to turn her away from reality” (Winkler 1985, 56).

The dream of Charite and the old woman’s interpretation followed by the tale of Cupid and Psyche thus reflect each other in what seems to be a mutual contradiction. Both play upon correspondences between Charite’s present situation and the images they present to offer opposing predictions about her future.<sup>64</sup> In the end, however, the old woman’s tale is proven to be, not a lie precisely, but certainly deceptive. In fact, neither the dream nor the tale is directly predictive, but both reveal some aspect of the truth: on the one hand, Charite is eventually rescued from her hardships and married to Tlepolemus; on the other hand, Tlepolemus is eventually slain by a man who is trying to steal Charite from him. The juxtaposition of the two, however, illustrates the close connection between dreaming and storytelling; the old woman’s expression of dream theory centered between the two serves as a commentary on both. In this position, it warns against assuming that the meaning of a dream (or a story, a reader should infer) is always explicit, but suggests as well that dismissing dreams (or stories) as insignificant or unrelated to waking experience is equally dangerous: they can be predictive, either directly or in reverse. As it turns out, too literal or too dismissive a reading of either Charite’s dream or the tale of Cupid and Psyche will lead to disaster.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> Cf. Winkler (1985); see note 46 above.

<sup>65</sup> The interpretation of the tale of Cupid and Psyche turns out to be more important for Lucius than for Charite. The main mistake she makes in her reaction to the tale is that she seems lulled by it, as the woman intends her to be, into separating her dream from her reality again; in a way, the tale replaces her dream as a portent of her fortune. The mistake here is the same as for the dream: she has interpreted the tale literally, at the cost of having dismissed the dream. Neither, in fact, should be taken at face value, but require careful

Could Charite have prevented Tlepolemus' death had she correctly interpreted her dream? It is an interesting question to ponder, but undoubtedly impossible to answer. The important observation to make is that Charite dreams of Tlepolemus' death; her dream turns out to have foreshadowed an actual event, although in a way that she clearly did not expect. The actual murder of Tlepolemus, as Lucius learns from a slave who learned it from Charite herself (she in turn having learned it from her second dream), was accomplished by a certain man, named Thrasyllus, who lusted after Charite. There are significant correspondences between his murder of Tlepolemus and Charite's dream, sufficient to make it certain that the dream could be said to have predicted, on one level at least, this murder. To begin with, the murderer of Tlepolemus in Charite's dream is accomplished by a man who is a robber: *quidam de latronibus* (4.27.10). In Charite's current situation when she has the dream, the word *latronibus* seems to point definitively to the robbers who have her in custody. When they are all killed, one assumes that the dream was either wrong, or predicted an opposite outcome (as the old woman suggests). When, however, the slave introduces the character of Thrasyllus (who is Tlepolemus' real murderer) at the start of book 8, he tells his audience that he was a man "wickedly associated with bands of robbers" (*factionibus latronum male sociatus*, 8.1.16).<sup>66</sup> He tries to marry Charite, but is rejected by her parents; when she marries

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interpretation. Both possibilities represent the same mistakes: dismissing the counsel of one in favor of the literal prediction of the other.

<sup>66</sup> Cf. *GCA* (Hijmans 1985), 5: "That dream [Charite's first nightmare] does not come true, but there seems to be a link between the robber-element there and the characterization of Thrasyllus in the present tale as *factionibus latronum male sociatus* (177, 8)." I suppose that the assertion that the dream "doesn't come true" is meant to indicate that Charite's dream does not correspond precisely with what actually occurs: in that case, the commentator here is absolutely correct. But I do not think that the criterion for a dream "coming true," in the sense that the outcome it predicts actually comes to pass, should be whether events unfold exactly as they appeared in the dream: if that is the case, then Lucius' dream of his "slave" "Candidus" and of the many gifts that Mithras gives him (11.20) doesn't "come true," nor does Asinius Marcellus' dream that he will meet a "man from Madauros (11.27)," since, after all, Lucius is not from Madauros at all. Should we then reject those dreams as lacking predictive power, since the correspondence between dream and outcome is not direct? If so, it



Tlepolemus, he befriends them out of a desire for revenge. Eventually, he kills Tlepolemus in order to steal Charite from him, because it is Tlepolemus who stands in his way. In doing so, he makes use, not of a stone, but of a lucky (for his purposes) accident: while hunting deer, he and Tlepolemus chance upon a wild boar; Thrasyllus encourages Tlepolemus to attack the boar, then hamstring his horse and lets the boar do the rest (at least at first; after Tlepolemus has already been wounded he stabs him with his spear to make sure he dies).

A boar is not a stone, it is true, nor is bludgeoning a man with a stone the same as running him through with a lance. One might twist the dream to fit the outcome, and argue that the stone signified a force of nature that the murderer happened upon, and made use of (rather than using his sword). This may seem a little far-fetched, and it is: the important thing is not that the dream corresponds directly with the actual murder, but the possibility that the death might have been prevented, had Charite given her dream more credit. For whatever reason, (most likely because Tlepolemus killed all the robbers, who had been her assumed referent for the murderer in the dream), once she is restored to a happy life with Tlepolemus, Charite seems to have forgotten her dream. Had she recalled her dream, and considered it relevant, she would have been far less likely to allow a strange man, one who had a reputation for having associated with robbers, to befriend her household and even to accompany her husband on a hunting trip (especially when she will not even let her Tlepolemus hunt any dangerous animals).<sup>67</sup> Again, then, Apuleius presents a situation in

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is yet another strike against the seriousness of the book and against the traditional basis for identifying Lucius with Apuleius. But perhaps we should not ask that dreams be so literal in order to be predictive.

<sup>67</sup> Finkelpearl points out that there are many allusions in this episode to other literary works, among them Herodotus' tale of the death of Atys (Herodotus' *Histories*, 1.34-48; Finkelpearl 1998, 117). The *GCA* (Hijmans 1985, 6 and again at 47) also comments on this parallel, citing other scholars who have pointed it out. What is interesting is that in Herodotus, Atys' father Croesus at first wants to prevent his son from hunting a boar *because of a dream* which (he believes, and rightly), predicts his son's death (cf. Finkelpearl *ibid.*). So far the correspondence is not that striking, but in addition to this—and this is worth thinking about—Atys finally

which a dream reveals something absolutely crucial about the dreamer's world, something very dark and nightmarish, which is *eventually* discounted, to the dreamer's detriment. Here, Charite is at first inclined to believe that her dream has shown her something real, since it connects directly to the situation she is in. She is eventually convinced, however, by the old woman's words and later by Tlepolemus' appearance and rescue of her, to discard the dream, to separate it from her current situation and not to assume that it means what it seems to mean. She turns out to have been misled: certainly the old woman was correct that the dream should not have been taken literally, but that very fact should have prevented Charite from dismissing it upon the death of the robbers. The realization that a dream does not mean exactly what it seems to mean, that it will not turn out exactly as expected, should not invalidate the dream. If this is extended to stories, the point that is made is that even the realization that a story does not mean what it seems to mean, or that it won't end exactly as it was expected to end, should not invalidate the story. One might already detect that this is setting up the eleventh book.

Charite's second dream is what finally gives her the key to unlock the first. After Tlepolemus has been slain and she has undergone a period of mourning, Thrasylus makes advances, far too soon. To this point, Charite has been unaware of Thrasylus' intentions, but she now understands what he wants.<sup>68</sup> It is at this moment, when Charite has already been

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persuades his father let him go on the hunt by reinterpreting the dream for him, *this time too literally*. Adrastus then kills him (by accident: Apuleius' modification of this gives his story, as Finkelppearl observes, a more sinister tone; see Finkelppearl *ibid.*), *proving the dream and Croesus' initial interpretation of it correct*. Like Thrasylus, Adrastus then commits suicide on the tomb of the man he has slain. Even more interesting is the placement of the tale: it occurs immediately after the departure of Solon from the court of Croesus; Solon, only two chapters before, lectured Croesus on the uncertainty of fortune and the mistake of judging a man "happy" before he has died: even the most fortunate man may soon be utterly ruined by a change of fortune (1.32). This moral lesson, which closely parallels some of the key ideas discussed above in reference to the *Metamorphoses*, is then proved correct by the tale of the death of Atys, which has at its heart a (misinterpreted) dream.

given some reason to doubt the honor of Thrasyllus' intentions and actions, that Tlepolemus appears to her in a dream and reveals the circumstances of his murder (and indeed the very fact that he *was* murdered):

tunc inter moras umbra illa misere trucidati Tlepolemi sanie cruentam et pallore deformem attollens faciem quietem pudicam interpellat uxoris: "mi coniux, quod tibi prorsus ab alio dici iam licebit: etsi in pectore tuo non permanet nostri memoria uel acerbae mortis meae casus foedus caritatis intercidit, quouis alio felicius maritare, modo ne in Thrasylli manum sacrilegam conuenias neue sermonem conferas nec mensam accumbas nec toro adquiescas. fuge mei percussoris cruentam dexteram. noli parricidio nuptias auspicari. uulnera illa, quorum sanguinem tuae lacrimae perluerunt, non sunt tota dentium uulnera: lancea mali Thrasylli me tibi fecit alienum" et addidit cetera omnemque scaenam sceleris inluminauit.

At illa, ut primum maesta quieuerat, toro faciem impressa, etiamnunc dormiens, lacrimis emanantibus genas cohumidat et uelut quodam tormento inquieta quiete excussa luctu redintegrato prolixum heiulat discissaque interula decora brachia saeuientibus palmulis conuerberat (8.8.14-8.9.5).

Then during her delays the shade of the wretchedly slaughtered Tlepolemus bore before her his face bloody with gore and misshapen with pallor, and interrupted the chaste rest of his wife: "my wife, a thing which will now be allowed to be said to you by no other: even if the memory of me no longer remains in your heart, or the accident of my bitter death has severed the pact of love, marry more happily whomever else you wish, only do not join with the sacrilegious hand of Thrasyllus, nor converse with him, nor lie down to sup, nor bed down with him. Flee the bloodstained right hand of my murderer. Do not seek auspices for marriage to a parricide. Those wounds, whose blood your tears did wash away, were not all the wounds of tusks: wicked Thrasyllus' lance made me a stranger to you" and he added all the rest and illuminated the whole scene of the crime.

But she, her face sunk in the bed just as when she had first fallen asleep in her sorrow, moistened her cheeks with streaming tears, and shaken from her restless rest as if by some instrument of torture, wailed for some time, her grief renewed, and shredding her nightgown she beat her lovely arms with savaging hands.

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<sup>68</sup> The dream thus seems valid to her (she acts upon it without hesitation; cf. Annequin 1996, 173) in part because it corresponds with a shocking reversal of fortune that has already occurred in her waking life: Thrasyllus has undergone a sort of metamorphosis, from devoted friend of her and her husband to rival to her (dead) husband for her affection. In a sense, then, her belief in the dream is similar to her belief in her first dream: it corresponds to things she knows to be true from her waking life, and so seems true to her.

As the Groningen Commentaries point out, in this dream “we are dealing with a topos: the appearance of the dead lover with all his wounds” (GCA 1977, 204). The best known example, as they observe, is Dido’s dream of Sychaeus; that, combined with the many other connections between Charite and Dido, confirm that this dream is allusive.<sup>69</sup> What is interesting for the purpose of this study, however, is not the way this dream fits with Virgil or any other author, but rather how it functions within its own context.

The relationship of this dream to those in the earlier books, especially Charite’s first dream, is significant. There is one important respect in which this dream differs from the first four: it is not a scene, but a monologue. Up to this point, the dreams have been *experiences*, that is, they have involved the dreamer in an *event* as either a participant or a witness. In this dream, however, the ghost of the slain Tlepolemus appears to Charite and *tells her a story*, the story of his treacherous murder. It is a perfect illustration of the connection between dreaming and listening to stories: here, Charite does both. Both the dream and the story reveal to her what happened when Tlepolemus died: both (since they are one and the same) convey crucial information which she could not, except by dream or word of mouth, have access to. This information is of vital importance for three reasons: first, it will prevent Charite from making the terrible mistake of joining with her husband’s murderer (she is not likely to do this, but it is his worry that she will that motivates Tlepolemus to appear to her), or even simply of remaining his friend (eating with him or even conversing with him are forbidden). Second, it reveals to Charite that the situation she is in is far worse than she had known: not only is her beloved husband dead, but the very man who seemed to be his best friend, and is now pretending to be hers, is actually responsible for his death. This corresponds to the role of dreams in foreshadowing abrupt changes in fortune and drastic

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<sup>69</sup> See Finkelpearl (1998), chapter 6.

alterations of perspective or appearance.<sup>70</sup> Finally, it compels her to act: to take revenge and commit suicide. All three reasons are, of course, closely related, but the important thing is that they all consist in Charite knowing something that she could not possibly know from personal experience: it is only through the story within a dream of Tlepolemus that she is able to know something about her situation that is of vital importance.

Although the dream differs from earlier dreams (or earlier stories) in its form, the information it provides to the dreamer fits perfectly with those earlier examples. Thus Charite discovers that her husband is not merely dead, but has been brutally murdered by a supposed friend: like the dreams of Aristomenes and Socrates, as well as Charite's first dream, the revelation provided shows that the dreamer's life is much worse than it appears. The dream offers an alternate perspective on waking existence by revealing things that are otherwise hidden; the unseen that is revealed in the dream, however, is a dark, depressing, and even destructive truth. By observing this, one can understand Charite's initial reaction to her first dream, the old woman's intervention, and Charite's reaction to her second dream.

The image of her existence that is presented to Charite in each of these dreams is insufferable, and moves her to suicide: *she tries to escape from an existence that has become unbearable*. The reason for her desire to escape is that her life has become a nightmare: her evil dreams are so blurred with her waking life that she is unable to separate them out, to escape from them into a waking state. Normally, a nightmare sufferer is able upon waking to dismiss his dream by separating it from the "real world" of his waking experience. This tendency gives rise to the understandable desire, illustrated by Aristomenes and Lucius, to explain away frightening or disturbing images by interpreting them as dreams. The programmatic tale of Aristomenes, however, illustrated that this is a mistake, not only

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<sup>70</sup> See the discussion in the first chapter above, especially 27-28.

because life can sometimes draw on dreams, but more importantly because *dreams are a reflection of waking life*. Charite, unlike Aristomenes when he thinks he has dreamt his friend's death, is unable to separate her dreams from her waking life, *to escape the nightmare by entering a waking state*. She seeks escape, instead, through suicide. The old woman, however, offers her an alternative form of escape: if she cannot escape her nightmare by waking up, she can escape her waking state by listening to a happy story (which is akin to falling asleep). The story forms an extension of the old woman's dream theory, and is a way for her to separate Charite's consciousness from the nightmare: first by arguing that dreams do not always correspond to reality directly, then by offering her escape into a story.

After Charite's second dream, by contrast, she is once again driven to suicide, this time as well by the realization that her waking existence is nightmarish. In this case, however, she eventually does carry out her resolution to kill herself: there is no old woman to explain her dream away. Not only has Charite come to realize that her existence is a nightmare, her second dream confirms her initial reaction to her first one: the old woman's dream theory was deceptively reassuring, since Tlepolemus *was* murdered after all, in a manner that corresponded with her first dream. The visitation of Tlepolemus, which functions as both a dream and a story, thus not only confirms Charite's initial reaction to her first dream, proving to her that dreams *do* reflect reality, it also invalidates the old woman's separation of nightmares from the waking world through deceptive storytelling (just as the old woman invalidated it herself, in a sense, when *she* committed suicide because of a misfortunate occurrence). This time Charite does not hesitate to act on the perspective she

acquires through her nightmare: she only delays her suicide long enough to exact revenge upon Thrasyllus.<sup>71</sup>

In the tale of the murder of Tlepolemus and Charite's revenge, this dream plays an important role not only in developing the narrative, but also in *authorizing* it. As Winkler points out, the story, as it is first presented to Lucius and the other slaves of the house of Charite, is told from a heterodiegetic "narrative posture"; the story suddenly shifts to one told from a homodiegetic perspective at the moment that Charite narrates the contents of her dream before committing suicide:<sup>72</sup> *et enarratis ordine singulis quae sibi per somnium nuntiauerat maritus quoque astu Thrasyllum inductum petisset...* (And when she had narrated one by one in order the things which her husband had told her through the dream, and the trickery by which she had attacked Thrasyllus after he had been ensnared... 8.14.1-3). Winkler points out: "It now becomes possible to reread the tale and think of each scene as an event communicated by one of its participants to another, who survived, so that the present audience is linked to the original events by a chain of communicating narrators" (Winkler 1985, 72-73). He goes on to discuss the implications of the transition from narrative stances for the interpretation of the novel; for a study of the dreams in the novel, however, this is the crucial observation. The authorization of the tragedy of Charite as a *true story*, as a story, that is, that has a direct relationship with the "real" world, is first provided by a dream: the crime of Thrasyllus has been concealed from everyone, but is finally told to Charite in a dream; it is from that dream that the entire story as we know it, as Lucius hears it, and as the slave

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<sup>71</sup> See Annequin (1996), 173.

<sup>72</sup> Winkler (1985), 72: he borrows the terms from narratological theory, as an alternative to the traditional first person vs. third person narrative opposition. The point is that a story, which at first seems to be narrated from an omniscient perspective (and is thus initially interpreted by the audience as a *fiction*, since it is following the narrative conventions of *fictional* writing/storytelling) is later authorized as a real story by the switch in narrative convention.

narrates it, is first revealed: *et addidit cetera omnemque scaenam sceleris inluminavit* (and he added all the rest and illuminated the whole scene of the crime, 8.8.26-27). It is not just any dream, either, but one in which Charite's husband told *her* a story: a story which she could have no other way of knowing except by dreaming (since Thrasyllus is not likely to tell her). Similarly, Charite passes on the knowledge she has gained through her dream by *retelling the story* told to her by Tlepolemus' ghost. It is this chain of word-of-mouth accounts which validates belief in the whole tale of Charite;<sup>73</sup> ultimately, however, the chain derives its authority from a story that is told in a *dream*.<sup>74</sup> At the end of the tale, of course, the dream is confirmed by Thrasyllus' reaction upon hearing what Charite has done: he commits suicide by shutting himself up in Tlepolemus and Charite's tomb, convinced that death by the sword

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<sup>73</sup> There is an interesting parallel in the oral, though not illiterate, society of medieval Islam, where a tale often seems to derive its authority from its pedigree. Stories are thus introduced with often lengthy accounts of the chain of communication of the narrative. For some examples, see Lewis (1987): 2 (1): "Hisham ibn Muhammad told me on the authority of Abu Mikhnaf, who said: 'Abdallah ibn 'Abd al-Rahman ibn Abi 'Umra, the Helper, told me...'; or (11): "I heard from al-Harith, who heard from Ibn Sa'd, who heard from Muhammad ibn 'Umar, who heard from Abu Hazra Ya'qub ibn Mujahid, on the authority of Abu Amr Dhakwan, who said..." One can observe this same narrative technique also in the opening of Plato's *Symposium* (thanks to Professor Race for pointing out the parallel).

<sup>74</sup> Winkler claims that the authority of the dream (as well as the story, since Charite is about to kill herself when she tells it) derives from the fact that it is a *dead* man who tells it: the story is thus an example of a "dead man's tale." In seeking to explain the solution to the meta-narrative problem posed in 9.31 (see below), he asserts that the story is authorized by the fact that it is initially told by a dead man: "But at some point it may dawn on the truly scrupulous reader that there are at least four other places in the *AA* where we are similarly given a dead man's tale, each time in a way that communicates secret knowledge and authorizes the tale to be told as a true account" (Winkler 1985, 70). The problem with the "dead man's tale" as the common element is that the mere fact that a story is spoken by the dead or dying does not really seem to authorize the truth of the tale. Looking at the examples Winkler cites, this becomes apparent. The reanimated corpse who first tells Thelyphron of his unfortunate mutilation does so precisely because he is *not* believed: he must produce some further element to prove that his account (that his wife murdered him) is accurate (2.30). In this case, it is Thelyphron's nighttime experience which authorizes *the dead man's* tale; that is an experience in which at least one scholar has seen connections with dreams (e.g. Gollnick 1999, 60-61). Furthermore, the tale of the dying robber (4.12), as well as the tale of the condemned woman (10.26, 10.28) can scarcely be said to be authorized by the fact that their narrators are dying: they are authorized, instead, by the fact that their narrators are eyewitnesses or even participants in the stories they narrate. In these cases, the information the dying narrators provide is scarcely secret (although it soon will be, once they are dead). Finally, the authorization for the tale of Aristomenes doesn't come from the fact that Socrates is dead, but from the status of Aristomenes as *eyewitness* to his death. In fact, when Socrates tells his dream, it serves, as we have seen, not to authorize the tale by appeal to the authority of a dead man, but to establish the authority of a dream, by showing how it reflects the truth. Some other explanation, then, must be sought for the authorization of these stories (Charite, the Baker's Daughter) through dream visions.



would be insufficient punishment for his crime (8.14).<sup>75</sup> But this conclusion to the tale offers the final confirmation of the truth of an account that already depended upon a dream for its authority and its original transmission. The tale thus not only confirms the validity of Charite's first dream, it also helps to establish dreaming both as an important source of hidden information and as the stamp of authority which vouches for the truth or relevance of that information.

The second dream of Charite, therefore, marks a turning point in the novel for the role and status of dreams. Apuleius' use of dreams has progressed from the first inserted tale, in which dreams were used proverbially for the false or fictional by Aristomenes, and provided him a way of dismissing real, shocking, and horrifying events as insignificant or irrelevant for his waking life, through the first dream of Charite, where dreams certainly reflected a darker side of the waking world, but could still be separated from waking life by denying them a one-to-one correspondence with that waking life, to this point in the narrative, where dreams not only play an important role in the communication of crucial, otherwise inaccessible information about the waking world, they even *authorize* that information. An appeal to a dream as the source of a story or a piece of information no longer proves that

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<sup>75</sup> The *GCA* (Hijmans 1985, 4-6) presents a challenge to the authorization of the tale through a dream. Notably, the commentators argue that at the beginning of the tale, it seems to be authorized by the idea that the drovers were eyewitnesses to Tlepolemus' murder: an interesting challenge to Winkler (both were published the same year, so neither had the chance to respond to the other). More interesting for our purposes, however, is the suggestion that the possibility exists of interpreting Charite's revenge as unjustified, and the tale as unauthorized. I do not disagree with the commentators in the least on this point: in fact, it is one of the crucial reasons why Apuleius chose to authorize this tale with a dream, which gives it an ambiguous relationship to "reality": see my discussion in chapter 3 and in the conclusion. My argument, and I scarcely think it could be debated, is that on one level, and one of the more prominent ones at that, the suggestion is made that dreams can authorize stories, that they are a stamp of "truth." Whether we accept this suggestion or not is entirely up to us. The fact that, by interpreting the dream as a deception, we can also interpret the story a different way, is not a problem for the effect of the novel: instead, it sets up an ambiguity of authorization that will prove crucial to protecting Lucius' story and Apuleius' message (if he has one) in the eleventh book. The *suggestion* that dreams can provide an anchoring point for "truth," however, is made more strongly, I think, than the idea that they can provide misinformation: this implies that the "serious" interpretation of the novel is *suggested* more strongly than not: for all of this, see my third chapter.

story false, nor even calls its veracity into question: on the contrary it is an appeal to an even higher authority than a waking eyewitness account. Dreams have progressed from being a symbol, synonymous with the false, fictional, irrelevant or insignificant in storytelling to being the ultimate mark of the truth of a story.

### 3. Charite's Revenge

This use of dreams to authorize stories reaches its peak for the first ten books in the story of the baker's daughter, which contains the last dream before book 11. We will examine that passage shortly, but first more should be said about the content of Charite's second dream, and the nature of her revenge. As mentioned above, the dream confirms her initial reaction to her first dream, in book 4: there, she resolved to commit suicide, as a means of escape from her waking reality which had then become indistinguishable from a nightmare. Her second dream not only explains and confirms the relevance of her first, it also reintroduces this image of the waking world as nightmare. The verb *redintegro*, which Charite used of the effect of her first dream (her *misfortune* is renewed by the dream: *sed ecce saeuissimo somnio mihi nunc etiam redintegratur immo uero cumulatur infortunium meum*, 4.27.1-3), is used again to describe the effect of her *second* dream: *inquieta quiete excussa luctu redintegrato* (shaken from her restless rest...her grief renewed... 8.9.3-4).<sup>76</sup> Charite's reaction upon waking from the dream is also very similar: she beats herself very savagely (compare *adflictare sese...pectus etiam palmis infestis tundere...faciem...verberare*

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<sup>76</sup> The verb is relatively rare in Apuleius (see Oldfather 1934); it occurs only one other time, in book 5 (5.11.4), where it is used in the active voice to describe Psyche's two sisters renewing their mourning for the supposedly dead Psyche; there, too, it is being used of the resumption of a negative emotional state that had been temporarily relieved.

[4.25.3-4] with *decora brachia saevientibus palmulis converberat* [8.9.5]), and resolves to commit suicide (compare 4.25.6-9 with 8.9.8-9).<sup>77</sup>

The fact that the information revealed in the dream, since it is unavoidably connected with her waking existence and is of a distinctly black and dismal nature, has transformed Charite's waking life into a nightmare is confirmed, not only by her decision to escape it through suicide, but also by her speech to the sleeping Thrasyllus, before she blinds him:

non ego gladio, non ferro petam; absit ut simili mortis genere cum marito meo coaequeris: uiuo tibi morientur oculi nec quicquam uidebis nisi dormiens. faxo feliciorem necem inimici tui quam uitam tuam sentias. lumen certe non uidebis, manu comitis indigebis, Chariten non tenebis, nuptias non frueris, nec mortis quiete recreaberis nec uitae uoluptate laetaberis, sed incertum simulacrum errabis inter Orcum et solem, et diu quaeres dexteram quae tuas expugnauit pupulas, quodque est in aerumna miserrimum, nescies de quo queraris (8.12.7-16).

“I will not attack you with a sword, not with iron; let it not be that you be made equal with my husband by a similar kind of death: alive, your eyes will die, nor will you see anything except while sleeping. I will make you to feel that the murder of your enemy was more fortunate than your own life. You will certainly not see the light of day, you will lack the hand of a companion, you will not hold Charite, you will not enjoy marriage; neither will you be refreshed by the rest of death, nor will you enjoy the pleasure of life, but you will wander, a shadowy image, between Hell and the sun, and you will long seek the right hand which put out your pupils, and, what is most miserable in suffering, you will not know about whom you complain.”

This passage presents a powerful image of Charite's psychological state. One of the most remarkable things is the nature of her revenge: she will punish Thrasyllus not with death, which would make him the equal of her husband, but with life as a blind man. The strategy might seem odd, but in fact it very convincingly reflects Charite's attitude towards life at this point. Death has become, for her, hardly a negative force at all: it is her means of escape from the nightmare of her waking life. To kill Thrasyllus, then, from her perspective, would

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<sup>77</sup> See note 61 above.

hardly be just punishment: it would allow him “rest” (*quies*) by which he would be “refreshed” (*recreaberis*, 8.12.13).<sup>78</sup>

Instead, she chooses to blind him, which might seem an odd sort of punishment, except for the phrase which helps to explain it: *nec quicquam uidebis nisi dormiens* (“nor will you see anything except while sleeping,” 8.12.9). Thrasyllus will not obtain escape from life through death, but he will also not be able to enjoy life (*nec vitae voluptate laetaberis*, 8.12.13). The reason he will be unable to enjoy life is that he will be unable to see *except in dreams*. This state, from Charite’s perspective, is worse than death: he will wander on earth (between Hell and the sun, a very odd way of phrasing it)<sup>79</sup> a “shadowy image” (*incertum simulacrum*, 8.12.13-14), which again seems an odd way of expressing the thought: there is nothing about being blind that makes a person any less real. It makes sense, however, if one considers that the only world Thrasyllus will really inhabit, since it is the only world he will be able to see, is the world of dreams: *simulacrum* is, among other things, a standard term for describing a dream image.<sup>80</sup> Charite’s vengeance, then, considered in terms of the relationship between her waking reality and her dreams, seems just. Thrasyllus, through his actions, has shown her that her waking life is a nightmare; the most accurate and true perspective she has on the former comes to her through the latter, and the two are no longer

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<sup>78</sup> See the *GCA* (Hijmans 1985), appendix II (280-285), for an interesting discussion of this passage, which, the commentators inform us, has received surprisingly little comment (280). Their conclusion is that “Apuleius manages to condense the three levels at which our text can be approached into one sentence by means of peculiar phrasing...” (285). My focus here is on the level of the character of Charite: how does this speech reflect her emotional state, and how does that relate to the dream she has just had?

<sup>79</sup> See *GCA*, *ibid.*

<sup>80</sup> See the *OLD* (Glare 1982), definition V for *simulacrum*.

distinguishable. The only means of separating them she has, as far as she is aware,<sup>81</sup> is suicide: only by death can she escape the nightmare into an alternate reality (just as with the distraction offered by the old woman, since she can no longer escape the dream by waking up, she must escape her waking world, which has blurred with the dream, by falling asleep: either by becoming the audience for a story, or in this case by dying). To treat Thrasyllus to this same death would hardly punish him justly: he would escape a world that—as Charite now knows through her dreams—is worse than death. Instead, she will make his existence inseparable from nightmares, just as he did to her: she will blind him, so that he will live, but the only world he will see will be that of dreams.

Perhaps such an interpretation pushes this speech of Charite too far. There is, nonetheless, one undeniable aspect of Charite's attitude towards death that it reveals: death is the relief, the escape from an earthly existence of pain and suffering. She will not give Thrasyllus that relief, but instead will condemn him to a life of misery. That misery, on the one hand, will stem from his blindness: for whatever reason one may deduce, blindness is here considered a fate worse than death. On the other hand, she seems unconcerned that he will still be able to see when dreaming. She must believe that dreams can reveal the truth about the waking world: besides the reasons discussed above, she would not be acting now as she does, if she believed otherwise (since her knowledge of Thrasyllus' treachery is authorized by a dream). Yet Thrasyllus' punishment will be just as effective, though he will still be able to dream. Not only, then, do dreams reflect waking life, but the side of waking life they reflect is hardly the pleasant or delightful: Thrasyllus will not enjoy being alive at all, once he is blinded. It will be a fate worse than death, even if he is dreaming.

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<sup>81</sup> Lucius, of course, facing a similar situation, happens upon another means of escape: divine salvation. In this way, he indicates that he has understood the old woman's story better than either Charite or the old woman: see my discussion of book 11 in chapter 3 and Tatum (1979), 61.

#### 4. The Baker's Daughter Learns the Truth

The last dream that occurs in the first ten books provides the conclusion to a complex web of narratives that Lucius himself describes as “a good tale, more sweetly polished than all the rest” (*fabulam...bonam, prae ceteris suave comptam...9.14.1-2*).<sup>82</sup> It very nicely illustrates many of the aspects of dreams that have been examined so far, and provides a good concluding point for the discussion of the dreams before the Isis book. There are four important points to make about this dream, each of them a development and fortification of some of the observations that were made earlier about the role of dreams. First, the baker's daughter's dream functions within the narrative to reveal to the dreamer hidden information about her waking reality—information which she could not have discovered without the help of the dream. Second, the nature of that information is such as to reveal to her the presence of a dark, evil, unjust side of human existence—an aspect of life that is controlled or even produced by cruel and capricious Fortune. Third, this hidden side of life that is normally only seen in dreams is closely connected to the practice of magic, especially witchcraft. Finally, however, and most importantly, the dream marks the final stage in the development of the relationship between dreams and storytelling. Dreams, initially the sign of the impossible and therefore fictional, parallel to lying stories, have been elevated in status to the point that not only do they now serve to reveal important, otherwise inaccessible information to the dreamer (much as a story or oral account can do for a listener), but stories or information that

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<sup>82</sup> See the *GCA* (Hijmans 1995) on what, precisely, is meant by this phrase; I agree with them that this is most likely meant to refer to the entire chain of narratives (133); I am doubtful, however, as to whether it is preferable to read *prae ceteris* as anything but literal (134): it may well be that the phrase is meant figuratively, but I, at least, can find nothing to indicate that, and think we should perhaps try to explain why Lucius would consider these tales to be the most polished in the novel, before attempting to explain it any other way. In any case, it is strong praise; other than their complexity, there seems to be nothing particularly striking about the tales, so they should perhaps be given closer scrutiny.

originate in dreams are authorized by that very fact. The dream, still a symbol of the bizarre, once a symbol of the unreal and fictional, is now specifically marked as the very source of hidden truth. This role Apuleius establishes for dreaming as a narrative device prepares his audience excellently for what will happen with dreams in book 11.

The baker at whose mill Lucius is currently a worker has been betrayed by his wife; upon discovering her with her lover, he spent the night with the boy, then lashed him and set him free; he divorced his wife and drove her from his house. She, incensed at being thus insulted (although she was guilty), hires a witch to set things right with her husband, either by reconciling him or by killing him. She fails to accomplish the first option, so she sends the ghost of a violently murdered woman to destroy the baker. This is the first time since Lucius' transformation that he has encountered witchcraft, and the description of the old witch echoes the descriptions of witches in the earlier books: *quae devotionibus ac maleficiis quidvis efficere posse credebatur* (who was believed to be able to accomplish anything through her curses and evil acts, 9.29.5-6); in the next sentence she is called *saga...et divini potens* (witch...with supernatural power, 9.29.11), which is precisely the turn of phrase used by Socrates to describe Meroe (1.8.9). The novel, then, is back in that nightmare world of witchcraft with which it began. What seemed until this moment to be a straightforward (though complex) tale of marital infidelities, in fact a relatively mundane tale, has returned once again to the bizarre and frightening world of murderous witchcraft.

Then, suddenly, Lucius interrupts his tale with a strange aside to the "scrupulous reader": *sed forsitan lector scrupulosus reprehendens narratum meum sic argumentaberis: "unde autem tu, astutule asine, intra terminos pistrini contentus, quid secreto, ut adfirmas, mulieres gesserint, scire potuisti?"* (but perchance as a scrupulous reader, you, objecting to

my narrative, will argue thus: “but from where were you, you clever ass, shut up inside the confines of the mill, able to learn what the women did in secret, as you affirm?” 9.30.1-4). What is the point of this aside? Why should Lucius or Apuleius<sup>83</sup> wish suddenly to invoke a fictitious *lector*, whose description as *scrupulosus*, as the Groningen commentators observe, “makes implicit demands on the concrete reader” (*GCA* 1995, 257)? The answer to the question of this hypothetical *lector* is postponed by Lucius until the conclusion of the tale: *accipe igitur, quem ad modum homo curiosus iumentum faciem sustinens cuncta, quae in perniciem pistoris mei gesta sunt, cognovi* (“hear, therefore, in what manner I, a curious human bearing the appearance of a beast of burden, learned everything that was done for the destruction of my baker,” 9.30.4-7). Lucius goes on to tell of the arrival of a woman of singularly frightening and wretched aspect; she approaches the baker and they withdraw to his room as if to discuss something in private. Eventually the workmen at the mill must ask the baker for more grain, since they have finished that which they were working on; the door is locked from the inside, and the baker will not answer their calls. Upon breaking down the door, the workmen discover the baker hanged by the neck: the woman is nowhere to be seen. Thus far, Lucius’ could conceivably know all of this from having witnessed it himself.

The question still remains, however, as to how he could possibly know that the baker’s wife was responsible, or that she hired a witch to kill the baker. The answer finally comes in the next chapter. The baker’s daughter arrives from the next town, where her husband lives, grieving for her father:

die sequenti filia eius accurrit e proximo castello, in quod pridem denupserat, maesta atque crines pendulos quatiens et interdum pugnis obtundens ubera, quae nullo quidem domus infortunium nuntiante cuncta cognorat, sed ei per quietem obtulit sese flebilis patris sui facies adhuc nodo

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<sup>83</sup> Whichever of the two is responsible for this aside: another important question raised by the passage; see the *GCA* (Hijmans 1995), 257.



reincta ceruice, eique totum nouercae scelus aperuit de adulterio, de maleficio, et quem ad modum laruatus ad inferos demeasset (9.31.1-8)

The following day his daughter ran up from the nearest village, into which she had earlier been married, sad and shaking her loose hair and occasionally beating her breasts with her fists; she knew everything, although no one had announced to her the misfortune of the house, but the image of her poor father came before her in her sleep, with the noose still tied around his neck, and had laid open to her the whole crime of her stepmother: the adultery, the curse, and how he had descended to the underworld under the compulsion of a ghost.

In answer to the question, then, which Lucius (or Apuleius) imagines his reader asking—how could you possibly know this?—comes the dream of the baker’s daughter. What is most surprising about this conclusion to the tale of the baker is that Apuleius, for the first time specifically raising the question “how could you know this?” and acknowledging that there may be readers who doubt the truth of his novel, gives a dream as the ultimate source and stamp of the truth of a story. Not only does the dream provide important information which would otherwise be inaccessible, it also authorizes the truth of that information.

In this final dream in the first ten books, one finds, then, a neat summary of the various aspects of dreams discussed thus far. The dream is a reflection of, and offers knowledge of, the bizarre and supernatural world of magic and witchcraft: it reveals to the baker’s daughter the reality of these forces. It also functions as a source for the dreamer of hidden information which would be impossible to know without the dream. Most importantly of all, however, it confirms the role established for dreams of confirming the truth of a story, of simultaneously providing the truth and authorizing that it is the truth.

Of course, the problem remains that it is always possible to reject the story on the very basis upon which it is supposed to be accepted: to dismiss this tale, that is, on the

grounds that it is derived from a dream, and cannot, therefore, be believed.<sup>84</sup> That possibility always remains, and, as will be seen in the next chapter, it does not disappear before the end of the novel. This problem will be discussed further below, but for the moment one might tackle it by posing a deceptively simple question, one which, it is clear, concerns Apuleius greatly in the construction of his novel: how does one convince a reader or a listener that what he is saying is true? The fact is that as readers and listeners, we are constantly dismissing stories or statements because they do not tally with our own image of the world. I have argued in this and the previous chapter that Apuleius' treatment of dreams in the first ten books establishes them as parallel to storytelling: a form of communication that can reveal to us a perspective inaccessible in the waking/experiencing world. By the end of the first ten books, Apuleius has suggested that dreams provide crucial information unattainable through experience, and, far from being rejected on the basis of previous experience, should be considered not only the source, but also the confirmation of the truth of such information.

More importantly, however, the fact that authorizing stories or information with dreams leads to the possibility that they will be disbelieved need not be seen as a flaw in Apuleius' narrative technique at all. On the contrary, it has a very important effect upon his novel. By authenticating strange, cruel, or shocking stories with dreams, which have an ambiguous, undefined relationship to waking reality, he protects those stories from dismissal by skeptics.<sup>85</sup> Had Lucius offered some more definite proof of the truth of this tale, any

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<sup>84</sup> See the *GCA* (Hijmans 1995), 266; Winkler (1985) provides a good analysis of the problems entailed here (60-76), concluding that the contrast between the idea that a story be held accountable for its veracity, and that that veracity should be confirmed by a phenomenon that is generally considered to be fantastic ("the paradox of using the implausible to authenticate the unknown," 70), suggests that a narrative game is being played (76). I could not agree more that this is a narrative trick, and that the lack of authority of what is presented as the authorization of the tale is inherent to the narrative technique (although I disagree slightly about what that authorization is; see my note (74) above. See my discussion here and below for my own theories about the narrative game that is being played, and the reasons for it.

reader who did not believe in magic curses or ghosts or any of the less credible elements in the tale, would have discarded the story as a lie. As it is, since the incredible aspects derive their authority from a dream, that reader is able, if not to believe the story, at least to listen to it, and to search for its meaning. Essentially, then, authorizing the story with a dream makes the story itself dreamlike, not because it is bizarre or unlike reality, but because its relation to reality is ambiguous. And just as anyone who dreams is able to search his dreams for some meaning, without necessarily believing that they would actually happen, the reader is able to hold this tale in that same attitude of belief/disbelief: it is true, in the sense that the dream is a real dream,<sup>86</sup> even if (or, for the skeptic, *for the very reason that*) the ambiguous relationship of dreams to reality means it is not necessarily “real” in an absolute sense. The story is thus ensured consideration as a vehicle for meaning no matter how improbable or impossible the events are judged to be:<sup>87</sup> it borrows the open-mindedness of the dreaming state to allow its acceptance into the psyche. This function of the dream becomes crucial as we move into the controversial eleventh book.

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<sup>85</sup> See my general conclusion below for more on this.

<sup>86</sup> Cf. *GCA* (Hijmans 1995), 266: “...the sudden arrival of the daughter leaves the narratee...little room to doubt that she has had a dream...the fact that much of the information concerning the end of the *pistor* is based on a dream seems designed to create doubts as to the ‘veracity’ of that information.” What is missing from this comment is the observation that the very parts of the story that are based on the dream are those which would make the tale incredible: the idea that the woman was a ghost, e.g., or that she was summoned using magic (compare the skeptic’s reaction to Aristomenes’ tale in 1.3: his *comparanda* for what he deems a ridiculous story are the alleged powers of witches). If these elements are disbelieved on the basis of the ambiguous status of dreams, the tale becomes an unlikely, *but not at all impossible* story of murder or suicide. At the same time that the ambiguity of dreams protects this story from the dismissal of the skeptics, however, the events that occur in the novel suggest time after time that dreams *can and do* carry more authority than waking life.

<sup>87</sup> Cf. States (1993), 140.

### III. *NEC FUIT NOX UNA*: LUCIUS MEETS ISIS

#### Introduction

In Book 11, Lucius' life is turned around by an epiphany of the goddess Isis, who comes to him in answer to a prayer he voices at the start of the book. Following her instructions in this and subsequent visions, he escapes his asinine form, becomes a devotee of Isis, is initiated into her cult twice and into the cult of Osiris once, and is eventually made a low-ranking priest of the Isiac religion. He moves to Rome and starts a successful legal practice there, and begins to lead a happy life. All of this has received due comment, and been interpreted in various ways, ranging from the satiric (this is Apuleius' final and most spectacular joke) to the profound (Lucius, at any rate, has experienced a powerful religious conversion).<sup>88</sup> In the end, the interpretation arrived at depends on the reader, and on how seriously or satirically he chooses to take Lucius' conversion experience.<sup>89</sup> In making that choice, however, there is a very important aspect of Lucius' story that must be acknowledged

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<sup>88</sup> See my general introduction for more on the manifold interpretations, especially note 7.

<sup>89</sup> The theory that the meaning of the text is even more a product of the reader's own decisions and biases in the case of the *Metamorphoses* than in many other literary creations, and that it is the text itself that generates the ambiguity of interpretation, requiring each reader to assemble its parts as he sees fit, has been most elegantly put forward by Winkler (1985); since his contribution to the field, scholars of Apuleius have been more or less forced to abandon a positivist approach and to acknowledge the limitations of their own interpretations, no matter how well supported. For a good example of this new refinement of the field, see the introductions of Gollnick (1999) or Shumate (1996), both of whom must define their approaches in terms that take into account the inherent ambivalence of the text.

and interpreted: every single appearance of Isis or Osiris, every single contact he has with the divinities who completely alter his life, occurs while he is asleep, in his dreams.

This chapter asks the question, then, upon which any interpretation of the novel must at least partly depend: what is the role of these dreams? Do they establish or undermine the credibility of Lucius' account? Do they reveal the profundity of his religious contact, or do they communicate a more pessimistic or satirical message to the audience of Lucius' tale? Does, or should, the fact that Lucius communicates with Isis only through dreams change one's understanding of the "message" or "meaning" of the novel? It could be argued that Lucius' dreams are in large part responsible for the varied responses Apuleius' novel can evoke. Winkler is certainly correct that any authoritative reading of the novel must supply elements from the outside, must fill in the gaps that have been left for the reader.<sup>90</sup> One of the important questions that the novel leaves open, however, is that of the relationship of dreams to waking reality. Before the novel can be interpreted, that relationship must be clarified, and the final interpretation will depend to a large degree on how it is. The manifold interpretations that have been proposed for the novel, and most especially of the final book, may in part reflect the many beliefs or theories about dreams that are held to be true by the various readers. Deciding what to believe about dreams is thus an important step in deciding what to believe about the novel.

### 1. Lucius Prays

At the start of the 11<sup>th</sup> book, Lucius wakes up, suddenly afraid, and gazes at the full moon: *Circa primam ferme noctis uigiliam experrectus pauore subito, uideo praemicantis*

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<sup>90</sup> Winkler (1985), 247.

*lunae candore nimio completum orbem commodum marinis emergentem fluctibus...* (Around the first watch of the night, roused by a sudden fear, I see the full disk of the moon, shining with extreme brightness, suddenly emerging from the ocean waves... 11.1.1-3). As Griffiths points out, the reason for Lucius' sudden fear is not given.<sup>91</sup> It is important, nevertheless, to try to determine what Lucius is afraid of, since it is this fear that inevitably leads to his conversion to Isiac religion.

When Mithras, the priest of Isis, reinterprets Lucius' experiences as an ass in terms of his redemption by Isis (11.15), there is another important question that he is unable to answer. Although he explains why Lucius suffered, who it was that tormented him,<sup>92</sup> why Isis has saved him, and what the implications of his redemption by Isis will be, he is unable to provide a satisfactory explanation for how Lucius came to Isis. He says simply that Fortune blindly brought him to her: *sed utcumque Fortunae caecitas, dum te pessimis periculis discruciat, ad religiosam istam beatitudinem inprovouda produxit malitia...* ("But somehow the blindness of Fortune, while she was tormenting you with the worst perils, has with her aimless spite brought you to this religious blessedness..." 11.15.7-9). The uncertainty of *utcumque*, along with the weakness of the argument that Fortune simply didn't realize what she was doing, leaves an important question unanswered: what brought Lucius to Isis?

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<sup>91</sup> Griffiths (1975), 111

<sup>92</sup> This is Fortuna; see my discussion above (Chapter 1, especially 27-28) about the role of dreams in foreshadowing unexpected twists of fortune.

This is by no means an insignificant question, despite the priest's brush-off, since Lucius' conversion to Isis is the most controversial part of the entire novel.<sup>93</sup> The controversy it has given rise to, however, stems from the fact that readers seem to have difficulty fitting it in with the first ten books of the novel. Although the priest's words here help somewhat with that difficulty by providing a unifying interpretation of Lucius' story that includes his rescue by Isis as its *telos*, they are disappointingly vague on the question of the narrative connection between books 1-10 and book 11: why did Lucius turn to Isis? What in his experiences in books 1-10 led to this strange, sudden, and unexpected conclusion?<sup>94</sup>

The answer is that *she appears to him in a dream* and offers her help in restoring him to his human form. We shall examine that dream in greater detail later, but for the moment we must examine its cause. Lucius has not had a dream since he saw Pamphile transform herself into an owl, and the status of that vision as a dream was ambiguous. Why does he dream now, so vividly? More importantly, how does this dream, with its life-changing, inexpressibly powerful message of hope and salvation, connect with the dark, depressing, even horrific dreams of the first ten books: dreams which more often than not end in suicide, either attempted or actual? This question concerns not only dreams, but the interpretation of the entire novel, since the eleventh book suddenly introduces a world in which dreams reflect a hidden side of human existence, but not one of murder, tragic turns of fate, or bizarre black magic, but of divine providence. If one is to reconcile this conclusion with the first ten books,

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<sup>93</sup> Judging from the scholarship I have consulted on the *Metamorphoses*: the trend in attempting any interpretation seems to be to resolve the "problem" of the eleventh book. See especially Winkler (1985) 7-8; Schlam (1992), 1-4, who argues that this "problem" is not a problem at all.

<sup>94</sup> Winkler's (1985) answer is that the surprise we feel at 11.15 is the point: as in a mystery novel, we are supposed to be kept guessing until the very end (8-10 and elsewhere). This explanation, however, though useful, is still missing the crucial link to the first 10 books: even if we accept that 11.15 is intentionally surprising, we must still ask how it develops out of books 1-10. Although the priest's words explain how and why Lucius suffered, and that it is Isis who will save him from this suffering, he does not give a satisfactory reason for Lucius' conversion: how did Lucius find Isis in the first place?

and understand what the significance of the novel is, he must ask why the dreams change so suddenly, since as the dreams change, Lucius' waking world seems to change with them.

The reasons Isis gives for her appearance in his dream are twofold: she was moved by Lucius' prayers (*tuis commota, Luci, precibus*, 11.5.1) and she has taken pity on his misfortunes (*tuos miserata casus* 11.5.17-18). The second, however, we can understand as the result of the first: because Lucius has prayed to her, she has taken pity on him. Otherwise we would wonder why she did not take pity on him earlier: certainly he has been worse off before this, closer to death or in more pain. The motivation for his dream, then, in which Isis appears to him, is his prayer addressed to her a few chapters earlier. An examination of this prayer gives some insight into the function of the dream, and can help to illuminate the relation of the dreams in book 11 to those in the earlier books.

Lucius begins his prayer with a lengthy invocation in which he calls upon the goddess of the moon by every possible name he can imagine; he follows this with his actual request:

...tu meis iam nunc extremis aerumnis subsiste, tu fortunam conlapsam adfirma, tu saevis exanclatis casibus pausam pacemque tribue; sit satis laborum, sit satis periculorum. depelle quadripedis diram faciem, redde me conspectui meorum, redde me meo Lucio, ac si quod offensum numen inexorabili me saeuitia premit, mori saltem liceat, si non licet uiuere (11.2.17-22).

...help thou now in my worst trials, shore thou up my sunken fortune, offer thou a pause and a peace to cruel misfortunes endured to their end; let there be an end to labors, let there be an end to dangers. Drive off the wild countenance of this four-legged creature, return me to the sight of my own, return me to my familiar Lucius, or if some offended power oppresses me with inescapable wrath, at least let me die, if I may not live.

Griffiths gives a good analysis of the prayer in his commentary on book 11; as he shows, the structure is traditional, symmetrical, and beautifully conceived.<sup>95</sup> One of the more striking parts of the prayer, however, is the note of despair at its conclusion: *mori saltem liceat, si non*

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<sup>95</sup> Griffiths (1975), 114-123.



*licet uiuere*: “let me die, if I may not live.” This phrasing, in fact, is so surprising that it has even led one critic to restore the word <*hominem*> to the second clause, to make more sense of the sentiment.<sup>96</sup> There is no need, however, to modify the phrase: it makes perfect sense as it is, if we take account of what has preceded.

The reference to death as an escape from the suffering of life reiterates one of the recurrent themes in the first ten books, and one that has very recently been raised by Lucius.<sup>97</sup> On hearing the nature of the woman with whom he must copulate in public, Lucius contemplates suicide:

talis mulieris publicitus matrimonium confarreaturus ingentique angore oppido suspensus expectabam diem muneris, saepius quidem mortem mihi met uolens consciscere, priusquam scelerosae mulieris contagio macularer uel infamia publici spectaculi depudescerem. sed priuatus humana manu, priuatus digitis, ungula rutunda atque mutila gladium stringere nequaquam poteram (10.29.1-7).

Because I was going to be publicly married to this sort of woman, I awaited the day of the games tortured by great anguish, and indeed again and again wished to contrive death for myself, before I should be stained by the contagion of the wicked woman, or be shamed by the infamy of a public spectacle. But deprived of a human hand, deprived of fingers, I was in no way able to draw a sword with my round and misshapen hooves.<sup>98</sup>

The phrase *liceat mori* makes sense, then: Lucius would rather die than go on as he has been, and if he can not be saved, he would at least wish to be able to commit suicide. It is not yet clear, though, what is meant by the rather curious *si non licet uiuere*. In what way is Lucius

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<sup>96</sup> van der Vliet; see Griffiths (1975), 123 in his note on *vivere*.

<sup>97</sup> See my discussion in chapter two above about Charite’s suicide, especially note 61.

<sup>98</sup> Compare this with the mock-heroic suicide of Lamachus (4.11); he, too, has been transformed by an unexpected misfortune (he has had his arm cut off), and is no longer able to live life as he knows it (for how could a robber live without the hand that robs?). His way out from an existence that has become (for him) a nightmare is to commit suicide. The interesting thing is that he is a nightmare force in other people’s lives, which makes this an odd sort of irony. Lucius here is in an even more deplorable state, because where Lamachus was deprived of *one* hand, and was able to use the other to commit suicide even though he was deformed, Lucius has *no* hands left [thanks to Professor Riess for pointing out the parallel].

unable to live? The temptation to supply a word like *hominem* as van der Vliet has done is understandable. With such a reading, it is possible to take Lucius to mean simply that he would rather die than go on as an ass. The problem with this solution is that there is nothing in the previous books that suggests that he needs Isis' help to become human once more: up to this point, it seemed as though to restore his human shape, he needed simply to eat a few roses.<sup>99</sup>

The passage just cited above, in fact, in which Lucius contemplates suicide, is followed immediately by a reference to this means of restoration:

plane tenui specula solabar clades ultimas, quod uer in ipso ortu iam  
gemmae floridis cuncta depingeret et iam purpureo nitore prata uestiret et  
commodum dirrupto spineo tegmine spirantes cinnameos odores promicarent  
rosae, quae me priori meo Lucio redderent (10.29.7-12).

I took solace in these dire circumstances from what was clearly a slender hope, the fact that spring in its very beginnings was now painting everything with flowery jewels and was already clothing the meadows with a rosy sheen, and the roses, their spiny coverings burst open, were suddenly blossoming out, breathing cinnamon scents: roses which could restore me to my old Lucius.

It is a slender hope, perhaps, but the only one he has at the moment: there is no mention of Isis. Part of the surprise of book 11 is this: the appeal to Isis seems to have nothing in the books before to suggest it. As far as he knows by the end of book 10, the way for Lucius to

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<sup>99</sup> See, for example, 3.25.10-12; cf. Winkler (1985), 130: "It is momentous news too that his adventures are disasters of the sort that might need a goddess's rescue rather than mere roses." This realization, Winkler claims, takes us off guard together with the crucial point in 11.1, the point which serves as the pivot for the transition into the eleventh book: Lucius describes himself as *certus*. It is this certainty which leads, Winkler observes, to his prayer and consequently to his conversion (*ibid.*). The question remains, however, what the source of his certainty is: *why* is he suddenly certain that he needs a goddess' help? I suggest here that it is because his experiences as an ass have finally opened his eyes to the wretchedness and helplessness of the human condition, and he has finally realized that the help he needs is more than physical. The fact that it is his experience as an ass that allows him to see this, given the dreamlike nature of his asinine experience, suggests that we are again dealing with a revelation and authorization of crucial information through dreams. That Lucius has just woken up when he experiences this pivotal certainty strengthens the association.

become a human again is to find a rose bush and eat some of its flowers.<sup>100</sup> What, then, gives him the foresight to turn to Isis (which turns out to be the right choice in the end)? Clearly he is asking for more than roses; he needs something more than a simple restoration to human form. The clue lies in his prayer; more specifically, it can be found in the last words he speaks: *si non licet uiuere*; “if I may not live.”

Just like the dreams in books 1-10, Lucius’ life as an ass has shown him a side of life he could not have seen otherwise, but, just as in those dreams, it is a dark, dreary, depressing side of life, full of suicides,<sup>101</sup> murders, robbers, witches, and above all, injustice: a world controlled by a capricious, malicious fortune. He makes a reference to this result of his life as an ass in a passage that has caused several problems for interpreters:

talis familiae funestum mihi etiam metuens exemplum veterisque Lucii fortunam recordatus et ad ultimam salutis metam detrusus summisso capite maerebam. Nec ullam usquam cruciabilis vitae solacium aderat, nisi quod ingenita mihi curiositate recreabar, dum praesentiam meam parvi facientes libere, quae volunt, omnes at agunt et loquuntur. Nec inmerito priscae poeticae diuinus auctor apud Graios summae prudentiae virum monstrare cupiens multarum civitatum obitu et variorum populorum cognitu summas adeptum virtutes cecinit. Nam et ipse gratas gratias asino meo memini, quod me suo celatum tegmine variisque fortunis exercitatum, etsi minus prudentem, multiscium reddidit. Fabulam denique bonam prae ceteris, suave comptam, ad auris vestras adferre decrevi, et en occipio (9.13.10-14.3).

I was fearful at the example of such a household, which seemed it would be my doom as well; recalling the luck of the old Lucius, and worn down to the last lap of my life, with my head downcast I grieved. Nor was there any comfort anywhere at hand, except that I was refreshed by my inborn curiosity, as long as everyone, thinking little of my presence, did and said freely what they wished. Nor did the god-like creator of ancient poetry do wrong when, since he wished to show the man of the highest wisdom among the Greeks, he sung of one who had obtained the highest virtues by going around many cities and getting to know various peoples. For I myself remember my ass with grateful gratitude, since, hidden beneath his covering and tried by various fortunes, he made me very knowledgeable, even if less

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<sup>100</sup> See the previous note.

<sup>101</sup> See above (Note 61).

wise. I have decided, therefore, to bring to your ears a tale that is good beyond the rest, sweetly polished; and so I begin.

Immediately after this, Lucius tells the complex series of tales within tales that end with the death of the baker, a passage we have already examined in the second chapter of this study. This passage has caused difficulty for scholars, because of the implication it seems to make about Lucius' wisdom at the time that he narrates this story.<sup>102</sup> If one considers only what Lucius says, however, without allowing a knowledge of the conclusion that book 11 brings to cloud his judgment, he can see that Lucius states forcefully and self-reflectively that he is (even now, even after Isis, one must presume) deeply grateful to the ass he used to be for giving him an Odysseus-like knowledge of the world, even if it made him less prudent—than Odysseus.<sup>103</sup> We need not read any self-criticism into this statement, nor need we save it the

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<sup>102</sup> Shumate (1996), 246-247 n.36 provides a good summary of some of these problems: "These musings of Lucius have presented critics with a number of problems. First, there is the apparent implication that Lucius the convert is still only *multiscius*, which is a state that results from the indiscriminate application of curiosity, when we might expect him to be more advanced at that point...Second: what are we to make of the exemplum of Odysseus? It seems to imply that curiosity is not always a bad thing, that it can bring *prudencia* and *virtutes*, that it can have proper objects, or at least better and worse objects." Shumate dismisses the first difficulty by arguing that it rests upon our reading of the verb *reddidit* as a present perfect rather than a simple past. If we read it as a simple past (which, she claims, is just as feasible), this problem goes away: "What Lucius meant to say is 'at that time the ass rendered [not *has rendered*] me *multiscius*, which was better than nothing—it was somewhat comforting'" (Shumate 1996, *ibid.*). Shumate is aware that there are arguments against this reading, and points particularly to Winkler, who does in fact argue well against it. One of the strongest points he makes is that the wish to read *reddidit* as a simple past belongs entirely to the second-reader: "The second-reader may inventively search for a supplement to pull the sentence in line with what he or she supposes the novel *has* to mean...this is a misreading...an addition whose only virtue is that 'it *has* to be right' in order to make the narrator's narrating here cohere with a certain interpretation of Book 11" (Winkler 1985, 267). There is, in fact, no compelling reason to read *reddidit* as a simple past *unless* we have already read book 11, where readers might detect a contradiction between the transcendental state of Lucius the convert, and the seemingly self-deprecatory *minus prudentem* of this passage. To a first-reader, however, Lucius' comment *cannot* have the meaning Shumate gives it. To begin with, the verb *memini* very strongly marks this as a comment spoken by the present narrator; taken in combination with "the untutored enthusiasm of *gratas gratias*" (Winkler 1985, 167), the reader's inclination should be to interpret this as a serious comment on the meaning of Lucius's experiences as an ass, made by the auctorial narrator of the novel. If his gratitude for being made *multiscius* were for no other reason than because it was "better than nothing—it was somewhat comforting," he would not have marked this gratitude so clearly as something that he feels so strongly even now.

<sup>103</sup> The commentators of the Groningen Colloquia correctly point out that Winkler (and those who follow him) misread this passage: the phrase *minus prudentem* is not a reflection at all on Lucius' prudence in comparison to himself at some past or future time; rather, it is a comparison to Odysseus: he was not as prudent as Odysseus was; see *GCA* 1995, 132

way Shumate tries to:<sup>104</sup> it would be a bold claim for Lucius to say he was made as wise as Odysseus, especially following the equally bold claim (which he does seem to make) that he was made as knowledgeable as Odysseus.

The point to the statement is not that Lucius is not *prudens*, but rather that his experience as an ass made him *multiscius*, an Odyssean quality, for which he is even now very grateful.<sup>105</sup> It may seem strange that Lucius, who is presumably speaking from a post Isis perspective,<sup>106</sup> expresses gratitude for help achieving a state that was the product of *curiositas*: a *curiositas* which was, according to Mithras, his fault in the first place.<sup>107</sup> The contradiction that some have seen, however, stems from too heavy a reliance on Mithras' authority. As we observed above, Mithras is unclear on one crucial point: how Lucius came to Isis. He merely offers the vague explanation that it was the "blindness of Fortune" (*caecitas Fortunae*) which "somehow" (*utcumque*) brought Lucius under Isis' protection. It seems likely, however, that it is precisely this *multiscientia* Lucius has gained as an ass, this Odysseus-like knowledge of the world, that leads him to Isis. It is through his awareness of the unpredictability of Fortune, an awareness that has come about through the dreams and stories in the first ten books, that he has realized that roses alone will not save him. His suffering is a result of the cruelty and caprice of Fortune, and to conquer it, he needs the help of a goddess of similar power.

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<sup>104</sup> See note (102) above.

<sup>105</sup> For a discussion of this and other parallels with the character of Odysseus, who seems to be something of a favorite for Apuleius, see Harrison (1996). Tatum discusses the popularity of Odysseus as a model of wisdom among the sophists; see Tatum (1979), 119-122, and my discussion below.

<sup>106</sup> See *GCA* 1995, 132: "The phrase clearly indicates that now the auctorial narrator is speaking (*memini* referring to the time of narration) and that in the next few lines he offers an 'interpretation'."

<sup>107</sup> 11.15; see also Griffiths' note on *curiositas* in this passage (Griffiths 1975, 248-250).

Why does he pray specifically to the goddess of the moon? The prayer is, as Griffiths observes, not directed to Isis (Lucius does not even seem to know of her existence before he dreams of her) but to the goddess of the moon: Lucius is not certain *which* moon-goddess she might be, so he addresses as many possibilities as he can think of, ending with the phrase *quoquo nomine, quoquo ritu, quaque facie te fas est invocare* (“by whatever name, whatever rite, whatever appearance it is proper to invoke thee,” 11.2.15-16).<sup>108</sup> He does not really know who the goddess is, then: the important thing is that she is the goddess of the moon. Why, one might ask, does he fix upon her? The answer can be seen in the opening of the chapter and in the prayer itself, where Lucius hints at the attribute that is peculiar to her as the goddess of the *moon*. The most obvious characteristic of the moon, her defining feature, in a way, is the cycle she goes through, waxing and waning, changing from a state of complete darkness to a state of complete brightness. This is Lucius’ final point as he describes her immense power, before he turns to his own concerns: *certus...ipsa etiam corpora terra caelo marique nunc incrementis consequenter augeri, nunc decrementis obsequenter imminui...* (“[I was] certain that the very bodies even, on land and in the sky and the sea, are now increased as a result of her waxings, now diminished following her wanings...” 11.1.8-10). Lucius turns next to his own concerns, signaling that he has made his point: the rise and fall, the increase and diminishment of things on earth, follows the waxing and waning of the moon. Winkler has noted that the crucial point here, which forms the pivot between books 1-10 and the radically different book 11, is the word *certus*: Lucius is for the first time *certain* of something.<sup>109</sup> What Lucius is certain *of*, is that the moon has control of capricious Fortune: her waxing and waning parallels the rise and fall characteristic of

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<sup>108</sup> Griffiths (1977), 115.

<sup>109</sup> See note (99) above.

Fortune, the constant state of flux and change to which humans, as creatures of the earth, are subject. Lucius turns to her, then, because he has become aware of the unpredictability of Fortune, and seeks refuge from it; that awareness, however, could only come to him through his experience as an ass.

If this interpretation is correct, there is no contradiction, no problem with Lucius' gratitude in 9.13: he is grateful to the ass that he was, *because it led him to Isis*. Isis does not simply rescue Lucius from being an ass: she rescues him from the world he lived in even before his transformation, though he wasn't aware of it until he became an ass. There are many points that confirm this interpretation. To begin with, there is a connection, as Tatum has very rightly observed, between Lucius' conversion to Isiac religion and Odysseus' role in the myth of Er that concludes Plato's *Republic*.<sup>110</sup>

In the Myth of Er, when all the dead are choosing their lives for reincarnation on earth, Odysseus spends a great deal of time hunting around for the life of a private citizen, because of his memories of his suffering in his previous life.<sup>111</sup> Odysseus is made vastly knowledgeable, even very wise, by his many travels and trials. The end result of all of his experiences, however, according to Plato, is that he chooses the life of a private citizen—the very sort of life that is best for a philosopher, and the very sort of life that Lucius chooses to lead by devoting himself to Isis. As Tatum puts it: “Only an Odysseus—that is, only a man of sufficient experience and understanding of the world—is capable of choosing a life such as Lucius elects in Book 11” (Tatum 1979, 91). Lucius, *even after he has devoted his life to Isis*, is still deeply grateful to the ass that he was for showing him the world, since it was this knowledge of the world that brought him to Isis. The fact that his *multiscientia* was the

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<sup>110</sup> Tatum (1979), 91. See the discussion below for explanation.

<sup>111</sup> *Republic* 10.620b-d.

product of *curiositas* makes perfect sense: although his suffering (from Mithras' perspective) may have been punishment for his *curiositas*, without that suffering, he would never have come to Isis. This is the point that the priest misses, but that is clear to Lucius' audience, who are in possession of all the details of Lucius' experience before his conversion: as negative a force as *curiositas* may be, it has, nevertheless, led Lucius to Isis, and he is far happier now (it would seem) than he ever was before being turned into an ass.<sup>112</sup>

If we turn to another work by Apuleius, the *de Deo Socratis*, we can see this interpretation of the reference to Odysseus not only strengthened, but refined and made more relevant to the discussion of dreams. The *de Deo* is a lecture written for a public recitation on the subject of Platonist demonology.<sup>113</sup> The lecture can be broken down into four parts: a description of men and gods and their relation to each other; a description of the *daimones* and their powers; a specific examination of the *daimon* of Socrates; and an exhortation to

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<sup>112</sup> Tatum states it brilliantly, showing that "serious and frivolous" are simply reactions to the two models of wisdom Apuleius uses, that of Socrates and that of Odysseus: "one's desire for knowledge and one's thirst for new experiences must be tempered by prudence and caution. Curiosity may lead to all kinds of adventures, even to exaltation, but it requires an Athena—or an Isis—to ward off the dangers that invariably ensue" (Tatum 1979, 122).

<sup>113</sup> For more on demonology, see Habermehl (1996); he provides a nice summary of the doctrine set forth in the *DDS*, as well as parallels in Apuleius' other works. He also briefly addresses the question of the degree to which a demonological doctrine can be found in the *Metamorphoses*; for this question, see also Hunink (1997), 130. I agree completely that there is no strong indication of the presence of demons in the *Metamorphoses*, but wonder to what degree this might be the result of the persona Lucius' ignorance of them, more than an indication that a different philosophical system is being adopted by Apuleius. If, in fact, we hypothetically assume consistency in theological systems between the two works, this would add nicely to our understanding of the tangible distance (on which see below) between Apuleius the author and Lucius the narrator. The critical distance of Apuleius and gullible naïveté of Lucius which some readers inevitably perceive (see the discussion below; also Winkler 1985, 227-247) may then be in part a product of a difference between the philosophical systems of the author and his fictional character. Thus the Osiris which *Lucius* sees as the supreme god is simply the *daimon* of a deceased person for *Apuleius*. Apuleius understands what is really happening to Lucius: he has developed a relationship with his *daimon*. This superior understanding of theological processes gives him some critical distance, yet at the same time, both men, author and narrator, are concerned with the same problem: how do humans transcend the mortal coil and enter into a relationship with the divine? For the connections between demonology and dreams in the *Metamorphoses*, see also Annequin (1996), 153-168.



follow Socrates' and, finally, Odysseus' example.<sup>114</sup> In the second section, when he introduces the concept of the *daimones*, he argues that it is these divine demi-gods who are responsible for communication with the divine and for *the effects of magic: per hos eosdem, ut Plato in Symposio autumat, cuncta denuntiata et magorum uaria miracula omnesque praesagiorum species reguntur* ("through these same beings, as Plato states in the *Symposium*, all of the messages from the heavens and the various miracles of magicians, and all types of presages are controlled," 6.13-15). Each *daimon*, he claims, is given a specific provenance; he then goes on to elaborate on the various types of portents, starting the list off with dreams: *vel somniis conformandis* (6.18). What is most interesting about this is that Apuleius lists *magorum varia miracula* as things akin to *praesagia* and *denuntiata*. Metamorphosis, at least the sort Lucius experiences when he changes into an ass, must be classified as a *magorum miraculum*: in that case, it is logical for Lucius' metamorphosis to bring him privileged information: it is a *miraculum* effected by a *daimon*, and as such is akin to dreams and other sorts of portents.

Although Apuleius lists many types of *daimones*, classifying them according to whether they ever inhabited a human body, whether they inhabit one still, and how high or low, benevolent or malevolent they are, his real point about the *daimones* is that they can serve as guides for human beings: on this note, he ends with the example of Odysseus:

nec aliud te in eodem Vlixē Homerus docet, qui semper ei comitem uoluit esse prudentiam, quam poëtico ritu Mineruam nuncupauit. igitur hac eadem comite omnia horrenda subiit, omnia aduersa superauit. quippe ea adiutrice Cyclopi specus introiit, sed egressus est; Solis boues uidit, sed abstinuit; ad inferos demeauit et ascendit; eadem sapientia comite Scyllam praeternaugauit nec ereptus est; Charybdi consaeptus est nec retentus est; Circae poculum bibit nec mutatus est; ad Lotophagos accessit nec remansit; Sirenas audiit nec accessit (24.13-23)

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<sup>114</sup> Following Harrison's analysis; see Harrison (2001), 192.

Nor does Homer teach you any differently regarding that same Ulysses, who chose to make that man's companion always Wisdom, whom he named, in poetic fashion, Minerva. Therefore with this same goddess as his companion, he escaped all horrors, and conquered all difficulties. Certainly, with her as his helpmeet he entered the cave of the Cyclops, but escaped; he saw the oxen of the Sun, but abstained; he descended to the underworld and climbed up again; with this same Wisdom as companion he sailed past the Scylla and was not snatched up; he was constrained by the Charybdis and was not captured; he drank Circe's potion and was not changed; he visited the Lotus-Eaters and did not stay; he heard the Sirens and did not visit them.

When this passage is read in combination with 9.13, where Lucius compares his experiences as an ass to Odysseus' travels, the correspondence becomes clear: Lucius, like Odysseus, has seen a side of the world that few others have seen, and this has made him very knowledgeable (*multiscius*). Both, however, had to have the help of a *daimon* in gaining this privileged perspective: Odysseus was only able to survive his adventures because he had the aid of Minerva; Lucius was only able to gain access to the alternative perspective which allowed him access to an Odysseus-like knowledge because he had been transformed into an ass. Finally, the knowledge of the world that is granted, although certainly something that Lucius is grateful for, is by no means positive: like the dreams seen in books 1-10, Lucius' experience as an ass has shown him how similar his waking existence is to a nightmare.

This perspective on the nature of human existence Lucius obtains may explain the sudden fear he feels on waking. It is true that he has just escaped the danger of having to perform a distasteful act in public, a performance that he assures us he would rather commit suicide than see through. In part, then, this may be the source of his fear. If that were the case, however, we would expect some sign of fear *before* going to sleep as well: instead, we are told that a "sweet sleep" (*dulcis somnus*) overtook him after he had given himself to rest; if anything, he seems at peace and not at all alarmed any longer. In fact, the sudden fear on waking seems more like the result of a nightmare than anything else: Charite, for example,

after dreaming of Tlepolemus' murder, describes her emotional state as one of fear (*somno funesto pavens excussa sum*, 4.27.13-14). Lucius, however, has not just woken from a nightmare: he is *living* in one. He may have escaped the danger that threatened at the festival games, but his state of mind has nevertheless been severely disturbed by what he has seen as an ass. His psychological state, his perspective on the world, is reflected well in his last aside to his readers as an ass, a tirade against injustice which is ignited by a perfectly innocent mime of the judgment of Paris.

The mime itself is very beautiful, as can be determined from his description, and its subject is certainly innocent enough, yet it provokes an angry dismissal by Lucius of the legal system. He begins with the judgment of Paris, then moves to Ulysses and Ajax, before concluding with the example of Socrates:

quale autem et illud iudicium apud legiferos Athenienses catos illos et omnis scientiae magistros? nonne diuinae prudentiae senex, quem sapientia praetulit cunctis mortalibus deus Delphicus, fraude et invidia nequissimae factionis circumuentus uelut corruptor adolescentiae, quam frenis cohercebat, herbae pestilentis suco noxio peremptus est relinquens ciuibus ignominiae perpetuae maculam, cum nunc etiam egregii philosophi sectam eius sanctissimam praeoptent et summo beatitudinis studio iurent in ipsius nomen? sed nequis indignationis meae reprehendat impetum secum sic reputans: "ecce nunc patiemur philosophantem nobis asinum?" rursus, unde decessi, reuertar ad fabulam (10.33.12-24).

And, moreover, what sort of judgment was that famous one given by the law-giving Athenians, those sage masters of every science? Was not that old man of divine wisdom, whom the Delphic god placed before all mortals in sagacity, ambushed by the deceit and envy of the most vile gang as if he were a corruptor of the youth, whom he held in check, and slain by the deadly juice of the baneful plant, leaving a stain of eternal shame upon his fellow citizens, while even now the best philosophers choose his most sacred sect, and swear by his name in their lofty dedication to happiness? But lest someone should censure the attack of my indignation, thinking to himself "look, now we have to put up with an ass spouting philosophy to us?" back to the tale, from whence I came, I will return.

Lucius is fed up.<sup>115</sup> He has seen the world as few before him have; he has seen into men's hearts (because they hid nothing from him, thinking him no more than an ass), and he knows now how cruel, unjust, and dangerous the world can be. The Socrates here (even though his name is not given) corresponds nicely with the other Socrates (whose name cannot be a coincidence) we met in book 1: the story of the death of the merchant Socrates introduces the nightmare world of books 1-10, serving as a symbol of the capriciousness of fate and the dark, cruel, and unjust aspect of life, which appears to most of us only in dreams. Here, the death of the historical Socrates is a symbol of that same injustice and cruelty: that the wisest man of all would be forced to drink poison for corrupting the youth, *when in fact he held them in check*, is intolerable. Lucius' reaction to a harmless mime reflects at once both his psychological state and the extent of his knowledge of the world, the *multiscientia* which being an ass has given him. This is a complete reversal of the situation at the start of the novel: there Lucius' reaction to gruesome, frightening, and tragic tale of the death of a Socrates was to call it a "charming tale" (*lepida fabula*) and to refer to its "festiveness" (*festivitas*); here his reaction to what we might well call a charming tale, certainly one with some festiveness, is to dwell upon the death of another Socrates, and to be indignant at the corruption of the legal system, and the injustice of the world.

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<sup>115</sup> Winkler (1985, 146 forward) argues against an interpretation in which the conversion to Isis makes logical sense because we can tell that Lucius is disillusioned, fed up with all the corruption of the world, and wants out. His principle arguments against this are that Lucius still seems to take great pleasure in sensuality and sexuality, and (his default argument against many interpretations) that such an argument can only belong to a second reader. I agree with Winkler that it is impossible to argue that Lucius is *sexually* disillusioned, but that is as far as I will take his examples opposing this interpretation. As for the second argument, it is always impossible, of course, to be certain that one's knowledge of the ending is not forcing an interpretation upon the novel that would not be feasible for a first reader. But that is a danger that we must face. In addition, I cannot see anything particularly special about the first reading that we should privilege it so highly: as with many experiences in life, books often do not take on their full significance until we are able to reflect on them. If there we limit our discussion of a text to the understanding of it that we have while reading it the first time, there is really little point writing anything about the text at all: we should simply read, and not discuss, since as soon as we discuss we are interpreting, condensing, summarizing and analyzing from the perspective of a *whole*, whether sentence, paragraph, chapter, book, or novel.

Lucius has learned a great deal since he first set out for Thessaly. As an ass he has been witness to the corruption and wickedness of mankind, and has seen that things most of us normally only see in nightmares are not only real, but seemingly unforeseeable and inescapable. Like the dreams in books 1-10, the magical transformation he has undergone has given him privileged information about the possibility that things are worse than they seem; like those dreams, it has blurred his waking reality with a nightmarish state, so that he can no longer relegate dark stories or dreams to a world of fiction. His state of mind is similar to that of Charite after her dreams: he contemplates suicide to escape the nightmare his waking life has become. It is in this psychological state that he falls asleep on the beach; when he wakes up, he is greatly afraid. It is a fear we have seen before: Aristomenes felt it after witnessing Socrates' death (both times); Charite felt it after dreaming that Tlepolemus was slain. It reflects an awareness of the close relation between waking life and nightmares: the horrors normally limited to dreams can attack any of us at the whim of capricious Fortune. This awareness could only come from experience, unless one heeds the warnings of dreams and stories, and does not dismiss them as mere fiction.

Lucius prays out of fear, with tears in his eyes, because he has come to understand that the world is a cruel place controlled by a crueler Fortune. He is not asking merely for a restoration of his physical form: he is asking for a restoration of his security, his happiness, his life. And so he dreams, for the first time since he saw Pamphile transform herself, and entered the world of waking nightmares. But this dream is different.

## 2. The Queen of Heaven

Lucius' famous life-changing vision of Isis is a dream. This aspect of the vision deserves more attention than it usually receives, since by setting the vision as a dream, Apuleius necessarily allies it in some way with the nightmares of Aristomenes, Socrates, Charite, and the baker's daughter, as well as Lucius' vision of the transformation of Pamphile.<sup>116</sup> There is no doubt that this moment is crucial, perhaps the most important scene for the interpretation of the novel; it is impossible to understand its meaning, however, until one has determined the relationship of dreams to the waking world, and how this particular dream stands in relation to the phenomenon of dreaming in the novel. An interpretation, for example, which sees Lucius' conversion and dedication to the cult of Isis as a sincere but rather naïve devotion to a religion that takes advantage of him, must necessarily, whether consciously or not, presuppose that dreams can be deceptive, that they can mislead the dreamer into a false belief.<sup>117</sup> Yet every dream that has occurred in the novel up to this point has not been deceptive at all, but has actually provided a more accurate perspective on waking reality than the waking perceptions themselves. If, indeed, this is to be understood as the first deceptive dream in the novel, there must be something that establishes the change in the relationship between dreams and waking reality a little more forcefully than the uneasy

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<sup>116</sup> For the most extensive discussions of the implications of setting this vision in a dream, see Gollnick (1999) or Annequin (1996). With the exception of these and a few other scholars, most barely mention that the vision is a dream, or if they mention it do not discuss it at all.

<sup>117</sup> For an example of this interpretation, see Shumate (1996), 325-6. It is strange that none have considered the implications of leveling the charge of venality upon the priests: Lucius has received instructions for every sum of money he has paid to the religion *through his dreams*, which means that an idea that the priests are conning Lucius must imply that they have some way of manipulating his dreams. This is not an altogether preposterous proposition; for the manipulation of dreams through magic, see Eitrem (1991); it does not seem to be what Lucius has in mind when he questions the good faith of the priests (11.29), however: that seems to me to indicate no doubt in the *religion*, only in the *priests* (they did a bad job of initiating him). Any more than that must be implied by the reader.

feeling that Lucius is being cheated, because he has to keep paying money for his initiations.<sup>118</sup>

Moving from the level of Lucius to that of Apuleius, if one wishes to establish that he meant the dream to be read as an illusion, or as a psychological phenomenon, it is necessary to establish that his ideas about dreams and their relation to the waking world allowed for such a possibility. Yet there is nothing in his extant writings that suggests that he held such a view: the psychosomatic theory offered up by Aristomenes, in addition to being embedded in several layers of narration, so that it would be difficult to argue that it is a theory Apuleius supports, is directly controverted by the subsequent events in the novel. Similarly, the old woman's dream theory in book 4 (4.27), whether we can take it to express Apuleius' own ideas or not, is again controverted by the subsequent events. Charite's suggestion that Thrasyllus might be dreaming of embracing her when he is actually about to be blinded by her (8.12), besides being difficult to develop into an actual theory of dreaming (it is expressed simply as a possibility), again cannot really be put into Apuleius' mouth. Besides these, no extant discussion of dreams by Apuleius suggests the possibility of dreams being deceptive.

It is necessary, then, to examine the dream of Isis, as well as the subsequent dreams in the final book, in relation to the dreams from books 1-10 discussed above. Such an examination will help clarify the possible significance of the Isis vision *qua* dream, and the limits of interpretation for the novel established by that vision and the subsequent dreams in the final book. Most importantly, it will address the question, which has just been shown to be of no little significance to our reading of the *Metamorphoses*: why *dreams*? What is the

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<sup>118</sup> See Shumate again (*ibid.*).

narrative effect of motivating both of Lucius' transformative moments with dreams, and filling his subsequent converted life with so many dreams that, as he informs his readers in Book 11, *nec fuit nox una vel quies aliqua visu deae monituque ieiuna* (Not a single night, nor any sleep, was free of the vision and instruction of the goddess, 11.19.7-8)?

Lucius' dream of Isis differs from the earlier dreams in the novel in several important ways, yet it remains, fundamentally, the same phenomenon: a vision during sleep that communicates something very important about the dreamer's waking life, something that he could not know without dreaming. This fundamental role of the dream, to provide knowledge, is nowhere illustrated more definitively than here. Despite Isis' supreme power (1.5), despite the pity she feels for Lucius and her wish for him to rid himself of his asinine appearance (1.6), *she does not restore him to his human form*. Instead, she *instructs* both Lucius and Mithras, telling them where to go and what to do, in order that Lucius might become human again. If Isis really is as powerful as she claims, it would be a simple matter for her to change Lucius back into a human; this is not, however, the function of the dream. The role of the dream in this novel is to provide information, nothing more. How the dreamer acts upon that information remains his choice.

The function of the dream to provide knowledge does not, however, make Lucius' dream of Isis any less powerful. The most surprising thing about this dream is that it introduces into the narrative world of the novel something that is almost completely new and unprecedented: the presence of a benevolent divine power. The one other occurrence of this idea is in the tale of Cupid and Psyche, which took place in a fictional world separate from the main narrative. On the one hand, then, this appearance of Isis is a confirmation of the



truth, in a sense, of the Cupid and Psyche tale.<sup>119</sup> On the other, it marks a very important turning point in Lucius' life, because it provides him with information that confirms the existence *in his own world* of a divine presence. The dream is once again the marker and confirmation of an extraordinary experience, of something that lies beyond the dreamer's ken, but this time it is not a negative, macabre, monstrous experience, but something transcendent in a very different way: it is a vision of the divine.

Lucius' dream of Isis is thus opposed to his "dream" of Pamphile, the only other place in the book where he describes his own experience as a dream. There, the dream vision provided confirmation of the truth of the stories he had heard about witchcraft.<sup>120</sup> Although he professed belief in them, the very fact that he interprets Pamphile's transformation as a dream shows that that belief was tentative, more open-mindedness than real belief. When he witnesses the transformation, however, it provides him with *knowledge*, of the sort that can only be gained through experience: it is not based on faith in another person's word, but on something personally witnessed. His choice to *act* on that knowledge, once he has returned to waking state, is what leads to his transformation into an ass. By contrast, his vision of Isis provides him with the same kind of *knowledge*: it confirms the benevolent presence of the divine, something that until his dream he could only take on someone else's word. His decision to *act* on that knowledge is once again what leads to his transformation, this time back into a human.

The role of the dream in this novel, then, as observed in the last chapters, and as confirmed by Lucius' vision, is first and foremost the communication of knowledge—

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<sup>119</sup> For the parallels between the Cupid and Psyche story and the novel itself, see, for example, Tatum (1979), 49-68; also Smith (1998).

<sup>120</sup> For this and the following ideas about the vision of the transformation of Pamphile, see also my discussion in chapter 1 above of the Pamphile episode.

knowledge which is otherwise inaccessible to the dreamer, but which is of crucial importance to his waking life. Lucius' dream of Isis not only tells him where to find the roses he needs to change back into a human; it also confirms the presence of a divine power watching over human affairs. The powerful effect of that knowledge is first confirmed by Lucius' immediate reaction to the dream: the vision leaves him frightened, but also, a first for a dream in this novel, *happy: somno protinus absolutus pavore et gaudio...*(suddenly freed from sleep with fear and joy... 11.7.2-3). It is the same joy which, at the end of the novel some chapters later, marks Lucius' life after his conversion and threefold initiation: the last words of the *Metamorphoses* are *gaudens obibam*, "I went about (my duties) joyfully" (11.30.24).

More illustrative, however, than even this is Lucius' prayer to Isis before he leaves her shrine at Cenchreae:

tu quidem, sancta et humani generis sospitatrix perpetua, semper fouendis mortalibus munifica, dulcem matris adfectionem miserorum casibus tribuis. nec dies nec quies ulla ac ne momentum quidem tenue tuis transcurrit beneficiis otiosum, quin mari terraque protegas homines et depulsis uitae procellis salutarem porrigas dexteram, qua fatorum etiam inextricabiliter contorta retractas licia et Fortunae tempestates mitigas et stellarum noxios meatus cohibes... nec mihi uocis ubertas ad dicenda, quae de tua maiestate sentio, sufficit nec ora mille linguaeque totidem uel indefessi sermonis aeterna series. ergo quod solum potest religiosus quidem, sed pauper alioquin, efficere curabo: diuinos tuos uultus numenque sanctissimum intra pectoris mei secreta conditum perpetuo custodiens imaginabor (11.25.1-9; 20-24).

"Thou in truth art the holy and eternal saviour of the human race, ever beneficent in helping mortal men, and thou bringest the sweet love of a mother to the trials of the unfortunate. No day nor any restful night, nor even the slightest moment passes by untouched by thy blessings, but ever on sea and land thou art guarding men, and when thou hast stilled the storms of life thou dost stretch out thy saving hand, with which thou unravelest even those threads of fate which are inextricably woven together; thou dost pacify the gales of Fortune and keep in check the baleful movement of the stars...Nor have I the rich power of speech to express what I feel about thy majesty; indeed a thousand mouths and tongues are not enough for the task, nor an

everlasting sequence of tireless talk. Therefore I shall try to do the only thing possible for one who is devoted but indigent; I shall keep for ever, stored in my inmost heart, the memory of thy divine countenance and most holy godhead.”<sup>121</sup>

Perhaps it is an obvious question, but the picture of human existence this prayer presents is in complete opposition to everything Lucius saw and experienced in the first ten books of the novel. What of Charite and Tlepolemus?<sup>122</sup> What of Aristomenes and Socrates? What of the baker, or the slave eaten alive by ants, or the kindly gardener accidentally given away by Lucius’ shadow, or the landowner who committed suicide after all three of his sons died fighting for the rights of their neighbor?<sup>123</sup> How do they fit into the scheme described by *dulcem matris adfectionem miserorum casibus tribuis* (11.25.2-3)? Lucius’ certainty of Isis omnipotence, omnipresence, and benevolence mark a powerful shift in world view, one which is brought about by his dream and the subsequent events: that dream not only showed him how he might be saved, but that the entire human world is also under the watchful eye of Isis. It was, in short, not only a revelation of salvation, but also of *meaning* lurking behind the seemingly cruel and meaningless caprice of Fortune, of *divine love* lurking behind the malice of the human world. Lucius’ final words really get to the heart of the matter: the way he feels about Isis cannot really be put into words, cannot really be communicated. It is something personal, something that he can keep in his heart, but cannot communicate adequately. It is not the sort of thing that can be learned from another; it is a knowledge that can only come through *experience*, which is why his keeping of Isis’ memory must be done through *imagery* (*imaginabor*): human speech cannot communicate the perspective granted

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<sup>121</sup> Griffiths’ translation; see Griffiths (1977), 100-103.

<sup>122</sup> See the discussion above (Chapter 2).

<sup>123</sup> For the baker, see above (Chapter 2); the slave eaten alive by ants, 8.23; the kindly gardener, 9.39-42; the landowner, 9.35-38.

Lucius through his dream. Lucius expressed the same doubt in the power of human speech when he described the vision of Isis;<sup>124</sup> here, he drives the point home: this kind of perspective, though it might be described in words, can only really come through personal experience. This is completely typical of the dreams in this novel, which communicate something to the dreamer which he cannot otherwise know. In this case, it is the power and benevolence of the divine.

### 3. Lucius is Blessed by Dreams

The vision of Isis is not Lucius' last dream. Rather, it is the first in a long series of dreams that continue to the end of the novel and, one supposes, probably continued on for the rest of Lucius' life. In fact, in describing his life after he has been rescued by Isis, Lucius characterizes his new relationship with the goddess by stating that not a single night passed without a dream visitation from her: *nec fuit nox una vel quies aliqua visu deae monituque ieiuna* (Not a single night, nor any sleep, was free of the vision and instruction of the goddess, 11.19.7-8). The several dreams that follow, then, are not even the only dreams Lucius has after establishing the relationship with Isis: they are simply the most noteworthy ones. Each of these dreams reveals something to Lucius which is later confirmed to be true; in each case they play the same basic role that Lucius' first vision of Isis did: they provide information that would otherwise be impossible for Lucius to know. Most take the form of instruction, telling Lucius to undergo an initiation, for example: the information that is revealed here is the *will of the goddess Isis*. The fact that she can only instruct Lucius through

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<sup>124</sup> See 11.3.7-11: *eius mirandam speciem ad vos referre conitar, si tamen mihi disserendi tribuerit facultatem paupertas oris humani vel ipsum numen eius dapsilem copiam elocutilis facundiae subministraverit.*

dreams, and that her will can only be determined by dreaming of her, does not undermine the seriousness of Lucius' relationship with her. On the contrary, since the dream is the sign, in this novel, of the bizarre but true, the extraordinary but real, her appearance *only* in dreams confirms the relationship while at the same time making it more exceptional.<sup>125</sup>

Lucius' first dream given any sort of description after his vision of Isis is the dream of his white horse (11.20). It seems to predict his future gain, and it is the positive outcome of this dream which finally gives him the courage to become an initiate of Isis: *quo facto idem sollicitius sedulum colendi frequentabam ministerium, spe futura beneficiis praesentibus pignerata* (When this had happened I more eagerly went about the same assiduous service to the cult, since future hope had been pledged by the present benefits, 11.21.1-3). Then follow several dreams, each of which deals with one of his series of initiations into the cult of Isis and later Osiris. It is, in fact, on the authority of these dreams that Lucius becomes a religious devotee, and experiences the progressive stages of religious development which provide a rather surprising and highly debated conclusion to the novel.

The basic question that faces any reader of the *Metamorphoses* when he encounters the religious odyssey described in book 11 is whether Lucius' experience should be taken seriously or not: is Lucius a sage or a buffoon?<sup>126</sup> The question itself is, as Winkler has very clearly shown and as others have argued, inherent in these final books: there is something about the way Lucius' religious experience is presented that raises the question.<sup>127</sup> Two

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<sup>125</sup> This corresponds to the doctrine which is essential to the theological model adopted by Middle Platonist demonology: the true gods are perfect, and to maintain that perfect they must have no contact with the base world of human existence. On the other hand, they do care about human beings, and watch over them, which is where the *daimones* come in: they are responsible for bringing the perfect gods, who can have no direct contact with humans, into contact with humans, who need divine help, by serving as intermediaries. These *daimones* are responsible for, among other things, dreams and magic. See my note (113) above.

<sup>126</sup> Winkler (1985), 226-7.

things stand out: the repeated initiations and the stress on the financial side of his relationship with the priests of Isis.<sup>128</sup> Taken together, these elements suggest the possibility of reinterpreting Lucius as a dupe, the victim of “a con game by venal priests,”<sup>129</sup> to the point that even Lucius, when he finds out about the third initiation, begins to have his doubts:

nec leui cura sollicitus, sed oppido suspensus animi mecum ipse cogitationes exercitius agitabam, quorsus noua haec et inaudita se caelestium porrigeret intentio, quid subsiciuum, quamuis iteratae iam, traditioni remansisset: “nimirum perperam uel minus plene consuluerunt in me sacerdos uterque”; et hercules iam de fide quoque eorum opinari coeptabam sequius (11.29.3-9).

I was not troubled by a light concern, but greatly distraught in my mind, I kept turning thoughts over more anxiously with myself where this new and unheard of will of the gods was heading, what leftover part remained to an initiation which had already been repeated: “Both the priests clearly advised me badly, or at least incompletely”; and, by Hercules, I even began to think differently of their good faith.”

Lucius’ concerns are soon put to rest *by a dream*; he then gladly undergoes a third initiation. What is important to note here is that Lucius does not question his religious devotion for an instant—only the competence or honesty of the priests. When he receives a dream explaining the reason for his third initiation, he accepts it without hesitation, even gladly. Lucius has no reason to doubt his religious experience, since it is based not upon what the priests have told him, but upon his own dreams and their relation to his waking life. When he receives another dream relieving his concerns, he no longer doubts the priests, but places his fullest trust in them, once again undergoing an initiation: in this he *obeys the command of his dream*. Winkler is correct that “the author’s narratology has invested the reader with the opportunity, the materials, and the necessity for *interpreting* Lucius’s narrative one way or another”

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<sup>127</sup> Winkler (1985), *ibid.*

<sup>128</sup> Shumate (1996), 325; Winkler (1985), 217.

<sup>129</sup> Winkler (1985), 221.

(Winkler 1985, 222). That interpretation rests, however, not upon how one reads Lucius' honesty as a narrator or gullibility as a judge of character, but instead upon *how much authority one is willing to give to dreams*.

As for the charge of venality, if it is to be placed upon anyone, it should once again be Lucius' dreams.<sup>130</sup> In the case of his first initiation, the amount he is required to spend is specified not by the priests, but by Lucius' own dream: *...noctis obscurae non obscuris imperiis euidenter monuit aduenisse diem mihi semper optabilem, quo me maximi uoti compotiret, quantoque sumptu deberem procurare supplicamentis...* (“...she warned me clearly through the not obscure commands of an obscure night that the day I had always wished for had arrived, on which she would grant me my greatest wish, and with how great an expenditure I ought to prepare for the supplications...” 11.22.5-9). It is again his *dream* which commands him to sell his own clothes to raise money for his second initiation, and for the third, as discussed, it is in a dream that Lucius is both instructed to undergo a third initiation, and is reassured when he has doubts. In the last paragraph of the book, he attributes his good fortune, the very fact that he has the money to pay for this initiation, to his religious devotion.<sup>131</sup> Lucius gets just as much out of the religious devotion as he puts into it, it would seem. The financial position in which Lucius' religious devotion places him is scarcely enough, then, to weaken the sincerity of his experience; if it does indeed have that effect for a reader, however, the blame is due not to the priests or the cult of Isis, but to Lucius' dreams, which must then be taken to be misleading.

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<sup>130</sup> There is, of course, always the remote possibility that the priests are manipulating his dreams as well (although how that could account for the first dream of Isis is questionable): see note (117) above.

<sup>131</sup> A fact which Winkler glosses over (Winkler 1985, 222) calling it simply a “windfall.” See 11.30.9-11: *...quidni, liberali deum providentia iam stipendiis forensibus bellule fotum*.

It is, of course, possible to interpret his dreams this way: if his dreams are misleading, Lucius is a dupe, a buffoon. The possibility of interpreting the eleventh book this way is neither proof positive that this is the proper interpretation, nor the perverted imagining of cynical critics who refuse to believe a serious religious experience when they see (or read) it. It is, rather, an inherent and even crucial aspect of the novel itself, as Winkler has shown.<sup>132</sup> One element that is missing, however, from Winkler's brilliant and groundbreaking discussion is recognition of the fact that this ambivalence of interpretation stems, at least in part, from the location of every one of Lucius' religious epiphanies within a dream.

This parallels the use of dreams that was first introduced in the novel, in the tale of Aristomenes, and which was used again in Lucius' reaction to the transformation of Pamphile. Aristomenes and Lucius were both able to question the reality of something they themselves witnessed by interpreting it as a dream. The occurrence of those events in dreams would then have allowed them to be dismissed as unreal or insignificant. Similarly, by placing every one of Lucius' visions and instructions from Isis in his dreams, making his relationship with the goddess, indeed the very substance of his religious experience, dependent on the veracity of those dreams, Apuleius has made it possible for anyone listening to Lucius' story to take a skeptical attitude, and to view Lucius as a naïve fool who is being duped.<sup>133</sup>

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<sup>132</sup> Winkler (1985), especially 247.

<sup>133</sup> Compare Winkler's discussion of the function of the skeptic in the Aristomenes story (Winkler 1985, 27-29); he observes: "That cynic is not so much a character as he is an emblem of one way of perceiving the tale" (28). He goes on to argue, however, that we are not really meant to adopt this position, though it is presented as one which is open to the reader: "In his debate with the cynic we are certainly meant to regard him as giving better counsel..." (29). We are thus led towards a credulous interpretation while the skeptical interpretation is explicitly made open to us. This is exactly parallel to the role of dreams being discussed here: they allow for a skeptical interpretation, but lead towards a credulous one, rather than forcing a decision of the two upon the reader and thus causing those who are naturally cynical to doubt the tale (since they would then have to decide whether Lucius is a liar or telling the truth: no other options would be open).



Why, one might ask: why would an author undermine the authority of his narrative in this way? Such a question is of course impossible to answer with certainty, and is directly concerned with issues that are at the very heart of every discussion on the *Metamorphoses*. By posing the alternate question, however, greater clarity may be reached: why did Apuleius not have Lucius visited by Isis while awake? Surely that would have given his tale more authority; but if he wanted Lucius' experience to be interpreted as a deceit, why not show it more clearly, rather than simply hint at the possibility? The question illustrates the inadequacy of the binary opposition "true/false" when applied to Lucius' experience, and also gives some idea why it was a brilliant stroke of narrative genius for Apuleius to use so many dreams in his ambiguous conclusion. Had he made the appearance of Isis a *waking* revelation, he would not have eliminated the possibility of rejecting Lucius' religious experience, but would have made the basis of rejection not the well-known questionability of the relationship of dreams to waking reality, but the very honesty of Lucius himself. Many readers would still have rejected Lucius' experience, because it lay outside their own system of beliefs or personal experience of the world: such a rejection is an inevitable possibility given the extraordinary nature of Lucius' experience. If Lucius' vision were a waking epiphany, however, it would call into question, not the relationship of dreams to reality, but the very credibility of Lucius himself. Instead of the two alternatives "Lucius' dreams are false / Lucius' dreams are true," a reader would only be left with "Lucius is telling the truth / Lucius is a liar." If the last alternative is chosen (as it must be, if, for example, a reader doesn't believe in the existence of Isis), it could lead to the rejection of the entire novel as a lie (as pure fiction, that is).

The casting of Lucius' religious relationship in dreams, although it presents an ambiguity about the exact nature of Lucius' relationship to the divine (parallel to the question of the relationship of dreams to waking reality), thus serves to *protect Apuleius' novel and Lucius' story*. It is as though Apuleius is aware that his lesson will be rejected by some and accepted by others; by writing the ambivalence into the novel, using the dream with its perpetually dubious status to achieve his effect,<sup>134</sup> he dictates the terms upon which that rejection (or acceptance) takes place. The success of this brilliant rhetorical technique can be easily demonstrated: of all the myriad interpretations of the final book, I do not know of a single one which tries to argue that *Lucius* is a liar; that the *actor* makes it all up. Whatever we believe about Isis, or Apuleius, or Mithras, *Lucius'* credibility has been assured. Thus we may look upon him and sneer, or laugh, or weep, but we listen to his story and do not call it a lie; that is the important thing. Apuleius is a wise orator and philosopher:<sup>135</sup> he knows that it is impossible to convince an audience using brute force; one must coax them and persuade them, and above all keep their trust and attention. If a reader does not trust Lucius, he will never even think about the novel, will never play the game of (re-)interpretation which Winkler highlights,<sup>136</sup> and will never even seek a moral to the tale, let alone find one.<sup>137</sup>

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<sup>134</sup> For the uncertain status of the dream in antiquity, cf. Harris (2003), who challenges the normal flattening of the attitude towards dreams (18): "Scholars normally assert that almost everyone in antiquity believed in the mantic potential of dreams, without asking what counted as a prediction in the classical world, or what it meant to 'believe', or how one might find out what was believed by 'almost everyone', or how reactions might have changed." In the *Metamorphoses*, for example, the very first inserted tale depicts at least one character who does not seem to believe in the mantic potential of dreams, since he dismisses his nighttime dream as nothing more than the product of too much wine. If one can argue that the reaction of the cynic is introduced as a symbol of a possible interpretive stance that will be open to the reader (see the previous note), it is surely feasible to argue that Aristomenes' interpretation of dreams is left open as a possible attitude the reader can have or adopt towards the dreams in the *Metamorphoses*. For the complexity of the question of ancient beliefs about dreams, see also MacAlister (1996), 4-6.

<sup>135</sup> For the confusion of the two terms during this period, see Tatum (1979), 18.

<sup>136</sup> Winkler (1985), 320-321.

#### 4. The Man from Madauros

The assertion that some ambiguity of interpretation is written into the novel is an easily defensible position for a scholar to take now; it takes far more courage after Winkler to propose any interpretation as one with more validity than others. Certainly any interpretation is in part the product of the interpreter.<sup>138</sup> But it is possible that certain clues left by the author are more persuasive than others; it is, in other words, possible to argue for a particular interpretation, not as *the* meaning of the novel, but as one that is perhaps suggested more strongly than others. An interpretation that focuses on the dreams in the novel must recognize two important facts: 1) that the final interpretation of Lucius' religious experience will depend on how the cluster of Isis-dreams is seen to relate to the waking world, 2) that, within the narrative universe of this novel, dreams are never false, and are always borne out by subsequent events. They both authorize stories and are themselves authorized by actual events. For example, in the tale of Charite's revenge, her dream of Tlepolemus' death both authorizes the tale of Thrasyllus' treachery, and is authorized by Thrasyllus' subsequent suicide.<sup>139</sup> There are two caveats to add to these facts: 1) all of the dreams can, through very contorted logic, be explained away as being meaningless: this is the element that ultimately

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<sup>137</sup> This idea of using a dream to protect a story by allowing for its separation from the waking world reflects Freud's famous theory of dreams in an interesting way: see *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1954), 141-144, e.g. Freud argues that the use of symbolism in dreams is a psychological product of the need to get certain things past a kind of mental censorship, to prevent the outright rejection of a message. It is this constraint, supposedly, which results in the famous bizarreness of dreams. Apuleius' novel does something very similar, in an attempt to get certain things past our "censors": the personal beliefs which would lead to the rejection of his novel as something utterly fictional and without truth. By casting certain elements as dreams, he takes advantage of the characteristic open-mindedness of the dreaming state to get certain elements at least nominally accepted. Any message that the tale carries is thus incorporated into our psyche, whether we "believe" it or not.

<sup>138</sup> Cf. Winkler (1985), 247.

<sup>139</sup> See my discussion in chapter 2 above.

protects the narrative from straightforward dismissal;<sup>140</sup> 2) some of the dreams (Charite's first dream, for example, or Lucius' dream of Candidus at 11.20—see below) are not directly predictive, but use slightly obscure symbolism to communicate their message.

The conclusion that can be drawn from this is obvious: in the simplest terms possible, Lucius' religious experience depends on his dreams; the narrative *suggests* that dreams correspond to waking reality, and can reveal waking reality from a perspective that is new, but not false; Lucius' religious belief, then, is not false belief. This does not, of course, solve the riddle of the "message" of the novel, but that riddle will never be solved: it has been woven into the fiber of the novel itself. Nor should it be taken as a flattening of the very diverse and colorful web of stories that comprises the *Metamorphoses*. It is no more than an observation: the dreams in the novel tend to lead towards a belief in their authority. Belief in the authority of those dreams, however, implies belief in the sincerity of Lucius' religious experience; that, in turn, suggests a moral message inherent in the novel.

The authority of dreams is argued for most strongly in the celebrated passage from book 11, when a glimpse is caught of Apuleius the author lurking behind Lucius' identity. The priest of Osiris, Asinius Marcellus, who was shown to Lucius in a dream before they

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<sup>140</sup> See, for example, the *GCA* (Hijmans 1995) on the questionability of authorizing the tale of the baker's daughter with a dream (266); Annequin (1996), addressing the question of the truth of the Aristomenes tale (which Winkler proposed as an exemplary model for how the entire novel might be read; see Winkler 1985, 33), sums up nicely the effect upon the reader of the dreams in the story, which allow two interpretations depending upon how dreams are interpreted, at the same time suggesting one more strongly than the other, and masking a third possibility for interpretation: that the whole story is a lie (170-171): "Si on croit à la magie, Aristomène et Socrate n'ont pas rêvé, ils ont respectivement vu et vécu une opération magique; si on ne croit pas aux sortilèges, ils ont l'un et l'autre rêvé. Que croire? Apulé nous suggère une réponse en apportant une preuve inattendue de la véracité des meurtres par magie... Il reste encore au lecteur une possibilité, rejeter d'un bloc tout le récit!" This last option is, of course, always open to the reader or listener of any account, just as it is open to any dreamer: until an event is actually experienced, it can always be dismissed as impossible. As we have seen, however, the suggestion made again and again in the novel is that such a dismissal is a mistake; by authorizing his tales with dreams, Apuleius makes the dismissal less likely: one is more likely to look for meaning in dreams that are exceedingly bizarre, dreams which are already considered to be fictional in the sense that they do not belong to this world, than in stories that lose their credibility once they are assumed to be fictions.

ever met, recognizes Lucius immediately, and explains that he had a dream vision in which Osiris told him that he would meet Lucius the next day: *nam sibi uisus est quiete proxima, dum magno deo coronas exaptat, \* \* \* et de eius ore, quo singulorum fata dictat, audisse mitti sibi Madaurensem, sed admodum pauperem...* (“For the previous night he had seemed to himself, while he was preparing crowns for the great god, ... and from that one’s mouth, with which he pronounces the fates of each person, to have heard that a man from Madauros was being sent to him, but one who was quite poor...” 11.27.27-30). That this is a dream is confirmed by the language: a passive form of the verb *videre* with the dreamer as its subject, introducing infinitives describing the dream content. And in this dream comes the simplest and yet most powerful confirmation of the authority of the dream that can be imagined: the dream not only knows who Lucius is, it knows it better than he himself does. The awareness that Lucius is “a man from Madauros” is a paradoxical moment of super-narrative: of course, Lucius *himself* is not really a man from Madauros, any more than his white horse was literally a “slave named Whitey” (11.20). The dream offers a perspective that is not available to any of the characters in the novel in their waking reality: the perspective from which they can see that they are all fictional, literary creations, all the product of a Madauran author. This dream, then, offers the deepest truth of all: Lucius is “a man from Madauros,” (the word “man” isn’t actually present: the word simply means “Madauran”) in as far as he was created by someone who came from Madauros.<sup>141</sup>

As a reader is reading these final chapters and wondering what to make of all Lucius’ dreams and his religious conversion, this simple truth stands out: this is a novel, a fictional creation, by Apuleius, the man from Madauros. That is the one thing about this novel of which he is certain; it is part of his own waking life, the link between this strange tale and the

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<sup>141</sup> See Winkler (1985), 219, for the “paradoxical structure of authorization.”

world he lives in. Then, suddenly, one of the characters in the fictional world betrays an awareness of the reader's world, the place where *Madaurenses* finds its referent. It is the supreme way of achieving a realism for this artistic creation, similar to the trick of a painting which climbs out of its frame and reaches into the world of the viewer from the world of the viewed. If there is any way to authorize any voice in a fictional creation, this is it: the dream of Asinius Marcellus is given an authority that transcends the fictional universe of the novel, and reaches into the world of the reader to assert its truth. And all of this appears in a dream: if a stronger argument could be made for taking the dreams in the novel, and especially in the eleventh book, seriously, I cannot imagine how it might take shape. As has been seen, however, Lucius' religious experience is validated by a correspondence between dreams and reality; the correspondence between this particular dream and a transcendent reality, the reality of the reader, makes a very strong suggestion that Lucius' religious experience is real, or at the very least has real implications for the reader.<sup>142</sup> Of course, the ambiguity remains inherent, and this is no more than a strong suggestion: the novel remains a complex, polysemous tapestry. Like Isis' robe, which displays every possible flower and fruit with its billows, one has only to give it a gust of wind, a breeze in the right direction, and it will show something else altogether.

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<sup>142</sup> The less roundabout, but less defensible way of putting this is that suggested by Griffiths (1977, 6): "With certain reservations, therefore, which concern consistency in the presentation of the main character, Apuleius may be regarded as conveying in Book XI his own experience as an Isiac initiate."

## CONCLUSION

Dreams are an important narrative tool for Apuleius in the construction of the *Metamorphoses*. The most cogent demonstration of this is the cluster of dreams at the end of the novel, in Book 11; there are also, however, several dreams and passages discussing dreams scattered throughout the first ten books. In each of these passages, Apuleius has used the idea of dreaming to achieve a crucial effect in the narrative. Each case is slightly different, but they all share certain similarities, and take advantage of certain aspects of dreams that allow the desired effect to be achieved. There are four things especially that make the dream a valuable narrative device for Apuleius: 1) dreams are a universal experience; 2) dreams can portray events that would seem bizarre or impossible in waking life; 3) the status of dreams in relation to waking life is uncertain 4) dreams can present a fictional (i.e. unreal) experience that can nevertheless offer a new, possibly clearer perspective on waking life. Because dreams are a universal experience, by comparing certain events in Lucius' tale to dreams, or suggesting that they may be dreams, Apuleius is able to provide an imaginary space in which his novel can unfold: none of us, I would imagine, has ever seen a woman transform into an owl, or has ever been transformed into an ass. Yet by suggesting that this occurrence is dreamlike, could even be read as a dream, Apuleius accesses a part of the imagination that is not constrained by everyday experiences: most of us have not seen a magical metamorphosis, and might have some difficulty imagining what it would be like to see one; anyone can easily imagine, however, *dreaming* of such a

metamorphosis, and that forms a link between the events of the *Metamorphoses* and the imagination of the reader.<sup>143</sup>

This is a lot like the dream *simile* that occurs at the end of Vergil's *Aeneid* (12.908-912): *ac velut in somnis, oculos ubi languida pressit | nocte quies, nequiquam avidos extendere cursus | velle videmur et in mediis conatibus aegri | succidimus; non lingua valet, non corpore notae | sufficiunt vires nec vox aut verba sequuntur* (And just as in dreams, when sluggish sleep has closed our eyes at night, in vain we seem to want to advance our hasty steps and in the middle of our attempts, ill, we fail; the tongue has no power, the accustomed strength does not support the body, nor do the voice or the words follow). It is telling that Vergil chooses the first person plural here: the implication is not only that his readers will recognize the nightmare he describes, but that it is something we have all experienced. What is even more interesting, however, is that at this crucial moment in his narrative, when Turnus' strength fails him and he stares death in the face, Vergil has chosen to use a dream experience as a *simile* to help his readers understand what Turnus experiences. Without generalizing too much, I think it is safe to observe two general rules about similes: they depend upon the simile material being a scene or experience that is relatively universal,

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<sup>143</sup> Gollnick (1999) recognizes that the universal experience of bizarre dreams allows the dreaming state to set up a "narrative genre" that is significantly more open to odd occurrences (3-4): "If someone greets you in the morning saying 'I am amazed; I fell through the atmosphere for miles and landed softly in a lush flowering meadow,' you have no way to understand the meaning or intention of this communication until you have an idea of its context. But if the person prefaces the statement with 'I had the most extraordinary dream last night,' you suddenly have a meaningful context for the seemingly bizarre context. Noting that it is a dream immediately affects your reasoning process and allows you to take into account the dream mode of expression." (See also Lev Kenaan (2004) for more on the "dream logic" in the *Metamorphoses*; he essentially develops this idea from a different angle, though he does not seem aware of Gollnick's work). But I wonder how definite a "genre" the dreaming experience can really be considered to be. In Gollnick's example above, for instance, suppose the speaker *actually did fall for miles and land in a lush meadow*. If the speaker was anything like the characters in Apuleius, he would then have supposed that he was dreaming. Does this mean that we use "narrative genres" to interpret our own experiences? For example, when Lucius sees Pamphile transform into an owl, and guesses that he is dreaming, is he telling his experience to himself as a story, using the narrative genre of dreaming? Or how are my dreams any different: are they actually real experiences that I have chosen to tell to myself in the narrative genre of dreaming? If so, what prevents Lucius' dreams in book 11 from being interpreted the same way? Clearly the matter is more complicated than Gollnick suggests.



that the majority of readers/listeners will understand, and they are used to explain scenes or events that might not be very easy to imagine. Essentially, then, they form a link between the ordinary and the extraordinary. The important thing about this passage is that it illustrates that *dreaming* can form that link: not all of us have fought a losing battle against an epic hero, but all of us have had nightmares, and drawing the comparison makes it easy for us to put ourselves in Turnus' place. So, too, in the *Metamorphoses*, dreams form an important link between the ordinary and the extraordinary, although there the comparison works on a higher level of the narrative than a simile: the entire book could even be understood through reference to experience of dreaming.

The function of the dream to link the extraordinary to the ordinary already begins to merge with the second important aspect of dreams that Apuleius takes advantage of—the relatively common appearance in dreams of events that would seem bizarre in waking life. By using dreams as a link between the ordinary world of the reader and the bizarre world of his narrative, Apuleius also suggests that the strange events in our dreams are possible in the waking world as well: they are simply less common there. At the same time, by taking advantage of the ambiguous relationship of dreams to reality, the third item on the list above, he allows the novel to be read even by the most dyed-in-the-wool skeptic, who can, if determined enough, read all the bizarre and unlikely occurrences in the novel as dreams. The blurring between dream and reality thus achieved is absolutely crucial: it provides a framework for understanding the strange episodes in the novel, and allows a reader to move with relative ease from his own experience of strange events in dreams to Lucius' experiences of strange events in his waking life. At the same time, however, it allows the skeptic to dismiss anything too strange by calling it a dream, and separating it from his own

reality as an unreal creation. Of course, even without the blurring of dreams and reality, that option would remain open, and in fact still remains open, to the skeptic: in Annequin's terms: "Il reste encore au lecteur une possibilité, rejeter d'un bloc tout le récit!" (Annequin 1996, 171). Through his use of the ambiguity, strangeness, and universality of dreams, however, Apuleius manages to minimize the possibility of this reaction. A skeptic is far more likely to reject Lucius' *experiences*, perhaps, as figments of his imagination, but *the authority of the narrator* remains intact: he is not a liar, just a bit naïve.

The reason it is so important to preserve the narrator's honest intentions at the expense of his sound judgment can be seen from the fourth and last aspect of dreams in the list above: dreams can offer a perspective to the dreamer not available in his waking experience. In this sense, they are parallel to stories: both can present the listener/dreamer with experiences that lie outside his ken. His ability to experience these things for himself is dependant on the whim of Fortune. In this way, dreams and stories can both provide knowledge of what *might* happen in one's own life if Fortune chooses to bring it to pass. The problem is that stories may also be falsified: people can lie, can twist the facts, and provide a deceptive or even completely fictional account of events. If a storyteller is thought to have lied, any message his story may have carried, any lesson to be learned from it, any new perspective it offered, is in danger of being lost, because it is then dismissed as the product of a fictional account. Moreover, the basis for judging something to be a lie is often that it seems impossible, extraordinary, or bizarre. It is crucial for the *Metamorphoses*, then, if it is to avoid the fate of Aristomenes' tale with his cynical traveling companion, to appear to be the product of an honest, if somewhat foolish, narrator. If the *Metamorphoses* is to carry any message, to have any meaning, Lucius' honesty must not be called into question. Yet a

skeptic's own biases may lead him to question Lucius' account, if it does not conform with what he believes is possible in the "real" world. By blurring the boundary between dream and reality, then, and hinting that the more impossible events derive their authority from dreams, may even *be* dreams, Apuleius thus protects Lucius from the charge of lying, of deceiving the reader. A skeptic may disbelieve that Lucius actually experienced what he claims to have experienced, but it is no longer because Lucius is lying, but because he is dreaming. And even if he believes that dreams have no meaning, he will still listen to the story, still believe that it happened, in Lucius' mind at least, if not in the objective "real world." If, finally, he is led again and again to believe that dreams may actually have some relation to reality, he may begin to believe that he has something to learn from Lucius' story...

This role of the dream is nowhere illustrated more obviously than in the episode of the baker's daughter. There, as was seen above, Lucius or Apuleius invoked a particularly skeptical kind of reader, the *lector scrupulosus*—one gets a sense of a picayune hairsplitter who looks for the slightest hint of a logical contradiction to allow a dismissal of Lucius' story—who would supposedly question Lucius' account at this juncture by pointing out that he could not possibly know what he claims to know, if he has been telling the truth: the possibility is raised for the first time that Lucius may be lying. Lucius, however, puts the objection to rest by appealing to a *dream* as the source of his tale. This may be sufficient explanation for some, and immediately validate his account; for others it may not make the tale any more believable. This does not mean, however, that it has no effect upon the latter category of readers' attitude towards the tale: on the contrary it yields a very important result. By giving a dream, a phenomenon of questionable status, as the origin and authorization for his story, Lucius casts the doubt upon a dream *and removes it from himself*. Thus the skeptic

is allowed to go on being skeptical, but no longer about Lucius' honesty, only about the veracity of a dream.

This use of the dream becomes crucial when the novel reaches the eleventh book. Lucius, through his adventures as an ass, achieves an awareness of the fragility and baseness of human existence. By finding roses he may be able to resume his human form, but it is only with divine intervention that he will be able to escape the nightmare that his world has become. When Lucius wakes up with fear to see the full moon rising out of the sea, it really does not matter whether his experience as an ass took place in waking reality or in a dream: the point is that it gave him a perspective on his life that revealed things he could not have known before. It is possible to dismiss Lucius' adventures in his asinine form as dreams or fantasies, but to consider seriously their critique of human life nonetheless, for the very reason that they *can* be read as dreams. The dreams thus help to establish a "willing suspension of disbelief," which we tend to take for granted as readers of modern fiction, but which may not have been as natural to an ancient reader. Of course it would be absurd to believe that one's dreams actually took place in the waking world: if that were the case, they would not be dreams at all. Yet the very fact that they are dreams allows them to be held at a certain distance from waking experience, yet considered "true" in the sense that they truly were experienced, and may hold some meaning. Similarly, for a skeptic to believe that Lucius actually became an ass would be impossible and absurd; by suggesting that it may all have been a dream, however, Apuleius draws the attention away from the "truth" of Lucius' account, and moves it to the "meaning." In the eleventh book, then, this technique becomes essential: many may doubt the reality of Lucius' religious experience, but they are less likely

to doubt that Lucius is giving a true account, to the best of his ability, since the authorizations of his experience are his dreams.<sup>144</sup>

The dream thus allows Apuleius' novel to be doubted on Apuleius' terms, rather than the readers'. The importance of this cannot be overstated: essentially it allows the novel to take up a position of truth, of a kind, in even the most skeptical reader's mind. It may be dismissed as untrue, but in the way that dreams rather than lies are dismissed as untrue. There are few who wake up from their dreams and believe that they actually took place. At the same time, there are very few who do not look for some significance in those dreams, who do not accord them some sort of elevated status, a status which a lie someone simply made up is less likely to receive.<sup>145</sup> The question of the truth of Lucius' tale becomes irrelevant: the question that is asked instead is what the significance of his story is. The entertainment and enlightenment schools of interpretation reflect two attitudes towards dreams: that they are vain fancies of the night, or that they carry important messages from the subconscious or from some higher power. The important thing, however, is that Lucius' story is always taken seriously, in a sense, even if it is only to show that its only meaning is the entertainment it

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<sup>144</sup> One cannot help being reminded of the conclusion to the classic, though decidedly hackneyed, novelette by Charles Dickens, *A Christmas Carol*. The protagonist of the story has spent the night before Christmas being haunted by several ghosts, who take him on a tour of various Christmasses, as experienced by various people. As he is guided by the ghosts, he is able to see and hear things he would otherwise be unable to, since his presence goes completely unnoticed (very much like Lucius, in 9.13). The upshot is that he repents of his wicked ways, only to find that he has woken up from what, to the reader, seems to have been little more than a nightmare: yet he believes the experience to have been real. The narrative intent of the final scene, in which the last and most frightening of the ghosts transforms into a bedpost, and Ebenezer Scrooge wakes up from a dream, is obvious: the credibility of the story would be at risk if it were suggested that the nocturnal visions were real. This would strain the belief of any even slightly skeptical reader, and the danger would be that he would then dismiss the story as a lie before considering the message it carries. As it is, it is possible for even the most dyed-in-the-wool skeptic, who must acknowledge nothing more than that strange things often come to us in our dreams, to consider the lesson Scrooge receives without accepting that his experiences were "real" in any absolute sense. Dickens may or may not have known Apuleius, but that is hardly the point: here we have the same use of the dream as a literary figure to insure that a story is examined for its meaning despite elements that suggest that it could never have taken place in the "real" world.

<sup>145</sup> Cf. States (1993), 140.

provides: it is never dismissed as *Lucius'* lie, no matter how tongue-in-cheek Apuleius is believed to be. And so any important message or moral lesson it may have enters the psyche, no matter how skeptical one may be about the relationship between dreams and reality, and thus about the relationship between Lucius' story and his own waking world.

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