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Interpreting the *Anteludia* (Apuleius, *Metamorphoses* 11.8)[1]

Abstract: I hope to show that the *anteludia* at *Metamorphoses* 11.8 are symbolic recapitulations of previous events in the novel's plot, and that in particular, they recall past moments of peril for Lucius-ass, at an appropriate point where he is about to regain his human shape and pass into the apparent safety of the Isis-cult, escaping the dangers of his previous existence. This stresses the narrative continuity between Books 1–10 and Book 11, a continuity which earlier Apuleian criticism often doubted.

Keywords: Apuleius, analepsis, *Metamorphoses*, *Anteludia*, Isis, cult of, metafiction

1. Introduction

In the eleventh and last book of Apuleius' *Metamorphoses*, the novel's principal narrator Lucius, still in asinine form but awaiting the re-transformation back to human shape just promised him by the goddess Isis in her epiphany at 11.15–16, watches a procession associated with the *Navigium Isidis*, a spring festival of the goddess. The first part of the procession consists of *anteludia*, elements which provide a prelude to the main *ludus* or celebration of the festival (11.8):

Apuleius *Met.* 11.8 Ecce pompae magnae paulatim praecedunt anteludia uotiuis cuiusque studiis exornata pulcherrume: hic incinctus balteo militem gerebat, illum succinctum chlamide crepides et uenabula uenatorem

1 This article is derived from my work on this chapter for the Groningen Commentaries on Apuleius project, currently working on a commentary on *Metamorphoses* 11 under the direction of Wytse Keulen at Rostock. I am most grateful to him (especially) and to my fellow-members of the commentary team for extensive discussion and suggestions, and to the audience at Thessaloniki for their comments. The text and translation of Book 11 used here are the current provisional versions for our commentary (to be published in 2013); this article expands and modifies my first, briefer attempt to interpret this chapter in Harrison 2000, 240–43.

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fecerant, alius soccis obauratis inductus serica veste mundoque pretioso et adtextis capite crinibus incessu perfluo feminam mentiebatur, porro alium ocreis, scuto, galea ferroque insignem e ludo putares gladiatorio procedere: Nec ille deerat, qui magistratum facibus purpuraque luderet, nec qui pallio baculoque et baxeis et hircino barbitio philosophum fingeret, nec qui diuersis harundinibus alter aucupem cum uisco, alter piscatorem cum hamis induceret: uidi et ursam mansuem ⟨quae⟩ cultu matronali sella uehebatur, et simiam pilleo textili crocotisque Phrygiis Catamiti pastoris specie aureum gestantem poculum et asinum pinnis adglutinatis adambulantem cuidam seni debili, ut illum quidem Bellerophontem, hunc autem diceres Pegasum, tamen rideres utrumque.

Look, the advance show for the great procession gradually came in front of it, finely elaborated by the desires of each participant offered as vows to the goddess. One, girded with a sword-belt, bore the guise of a soldier, another, with his cloak gathered up, was made a hunter by his sandals and hunting-spears, another, wearing gilded slippers, by means of a silk garment, costly ensemble and a hairpiece woven onto his head, counterfeited a woman with flowing gait, and yet another, conspicuous with greaves, a shield a helmet and sword you would think was coming out of a gladiatorial training-school. Nor was there absent one to play a magistrate with torches and purple cloak, or one to depict a philosopher with cloak and staff and sandals and goatish beard, nor a pair who presented two characters with different rods – one a fowler with lime, the other a fisherman with his hooks. I saw also a tame she-bear which was riding in a sedan-chair in the dress of a married woman, and a monkey in a woven cap and Phrygian saffron garments in the guise of the shepherd-boy Ganymede, bearing a golden cup, and an ass with wings stuck on walking alongside a decrepit old man, such that you might call him a Bellerophon and the ass a Pegasus, and yet laugh at them both.

The *anteludia* thus contain a number of figures dressed up in various ways, representing the following:

(i) a soldier
(ii) a hunter
(iii) a man disguised as a woman
(iv) a gladiator
(v) a magistrate
(vi) a philosopher

(vii) a bird-catcher
(viii) a fisherman
(ix) a tame she-bear dressed as a woman
(x) a monkey dressed as Ganymede
(xi) an ass with wings and an old man

Unlike the Isiac procession which follows (11.9–12), this initial parade has no explicit relevance to Isiac ceremony in the text; the figures are all devotees who appear to be honouring the goddess by their fancy dress (*votivisque cuiusque studiis*), but seem to have no further technical function in the festival.

The three general lines of approach to the interpretation of the *anteludia* have been usefully laid out by Gianotti 1986, 78–95:

(i) many scholars have believed that the *anteludia* as described here actually formed part of the Isiac rituals or try to connect them with Egyptian origins (the 'positivistic' approach, e.g. Berreth 1931, 50–55; Wittmann 1938, 41–42; Merkelbach 1995, 275–6); some of these interpretations point to the *anteludia* as a possible origin of medieval carnival – for a Bakhtinian reading of the *anteludia* and *pompa* as showing the carnivalesque nature of the *Met*. as whole see Teuber 1993.

(ii) other scholars fail to see any religious symbolism in the *anteludia*. Within this line of interpretation, more recent studies have focused on the allusive function of the figures of the *anteludia* regarding earlier episodes in the *Metamorphoses* (Harrauer 1973, 47–54; Fick-Michel 1991, 420–423), which some scholars employ in their argument for an exclusively comic interpretation of the *anteludia* (Harrison 2000, 260; May 2006, 324–327); such emphasis on their narrative function is also found in the view that the *anteludia* provide some retardation before the climactic moment of Lucius' retransformation (e.g. Bernhard 1927, 282).

(iii) A third, intermediate group refrains from linking the *anteludia* with Isiac ritual, but still considers a more general symbolic, religious meaning possible, even if there is not a particular one-on-one relationship with the symbols of Egyptian cult: (e.g. Griffiths 1975, 173; Griffiths 1978, 158–159, Egelhaaf-Gaiser 2000, 129–30). In particular, Gianotti 1986, 87 points to general parallels with Roman cultic practice (e.g. Cybele or the Saturnalia), such as masquerades and transvestism, and argues that the ac-

tors enact the broad range of social roles and forms of human life that have a place in the universalising Isiac cult. Thus, the *anteludia* vividly represent the universal nature of Isiac religion, and look forward to the description of the *pompa* in 11,10,1 *uiri feminaeque omnis dignitatis et omnis aetatis*. Gianotti 1986, 93–4 also suggests that the figures in the show look on a symbolic, Platonising level to the happy future a devotee of philosophy can expect, and that the *anteludia* as a whole serve to make central philosophical topics 'accessible' to the readers of the *met*.

Of these three views, Gwyn Griffiths (1975, 171–80 has made a good case against (i), arguing persuasively that in several cases the supposed Isiac or Egyptian connection is tenuous or non-existent, while (iii), which could be said to be the current *communis opinio*, seems to provide an incomplete level of explanation when the items in the succeeding main parade have clear individual significance: there ought to be a good explanation of why these elements and not others are chosen for description. I shall here argue (once again) for (ii), and try to show that all the elements of the *anteludia* are carefully chosen to remind the reader of particular episodes in Lucius' previous life as narrated in the earlier books of the novel.

2. *Looking back through the* Metamorphoses – *the* anteludia *as analepsis*

In narratological terms, what we have here (I submit) in the account of the *anteludia* is an analeptic ekphrasis, a description which symbolically recapitulates events in the narrative in which it is situated, or even a *mise en abyme*, an internal miniaturisation of the key elements of a work's plot.[2] The element of analeptic ekphrasis matches and balances the proleptic ekphrasis, symbolically anticipating the plot, at *Met*.2.4–5, when Lucius in the house of Byrrhena sees and describes a statue of Actaeon at the moment of being turned into a stag which clearly prefigures his own later asinine metamorphosis, caused through the same ill-starred curiosity.[3] In both cases Lucius is looking at something which has importance for his own life, though in neither case does he realise this. For the general technique we might compare the description of the pictures of the Trojan War in the temple of Juno at Carthage described in *Aeneid* 1.453–93. That

2 For *mise en abyme* see the key study by Dällenbach 1989.
3 See the scholarship gathered by van Mal-Maeder 2001, 91–2.

ekphrasis can be seen as both analeptic (obviously looking back to the Trojans' role in the Trojan War, as Aeneas interprets it), and proleptic (looking forward to their role in the later books of the *Aeneid*, where the Trojan War will be in a sense fought again, with new characters reprising the roles of their Homeric predecessors, a perspective which is open to the reader but not to Aeneas himself).[4]

Two general features suggest that this notion of recapitulating the novel's plot is the most plausible line of approach to this passage. First, the overall theme in the *anteludia* of disguise and temporary change of form obviously fits the basic story of the *Metamorphoses*, in which Lucius is transformed into an ass and back again to human form; the fact that two of the figures are animals dressed up as humans seems to make this point explicitly. Second, it is highly appropriate for Lucius to see a representation of his past life in the novel at this point in the plot: in the rest of Book 11 he is to undergo a crucial double change, first back to human form and then into a devotee of Isis, and it is fitting for him to have his 'unregenerate' life pass before him at this moment, just before he leaves it for ever. The climax of the procession to which the *anteludia* form the opening is the appearance of the priest Mithras, who will himself look back on Lucius' unregenerate previous life as a necessary prelude to his salvation (11.15):

> sed lubrico virentis aetatulae ad serviles delapsus voluptates, curiositatis improsperae sinistrum praemium reportasti. sed utcumque Fortunae caecitas, dum te pessimis periculis discruciat, ad religiosam istam beatitudinem improvida produxit malitia.

But on the slippery path of your green youth you plunged into slavish pleasures and gained the grim reward of your unlucky curiosity. But the blindness of Fortune, while torturing you with the worst of dangers, has somehow brought you in its unforeseeing malignity to this blessedness.

That the *anteludia* should remind Lucius of his p*essima pericula* in recalling figures he has met in his travels is therefore fully appropriate, and this is in fact the case. I now proceed to examination of each of the figures shown in the parade.

(i) **The soldier:** *hic incinctus balteo militem gerebat.* This figure surely recalls the soldier who commandeers Lucius-ass from a poor gardener at 9.39. There too the soldier is known by his dress (*quidam procerus et, ut indica-*

4 For a brief discussion of the passage along these lines see Harrison 2001, 87–8.

bat habitus atque habitudo, miles e legione). He is not the only soldier in the novel, but is certainly the most individualised and prominent, and to recall him here is appropriate since his act of commandeering is an important stage in the novel-plot, preventing Lucius from spending a long period of drudgery working for the gardener.

(ii) **The hunter:** *illum succinctum chlamyde crepides et venabula venatorem fecerant*. This figure alludes to the tragic end of the Charite story in Book 8, where Charite's husband Tlepolemus is treacherously killed by his friend Thrasyllus when both are engaged in hunting (8.4–6); Tlepolemus, like the hunter of the *anteludia*, bears a *venabulum* on this expedition (8.5 *en cape venabulum*). Again, this is an appropriate reminiscence, since the death of Tlepolemus showed the depths to which human vice could sink, depths from which Lucius is rescued in Book 11.

(iii) **The man disguised as a woman:** *alius soccis obauratis inductus serica veste mundoque pretioso et attextis capitis crinibus incessu perfluo feminam mentiebatur.* Another allusion to Tlepolemus, at the earlier stage of his story in Book 7 where he tells the robber band of a supposed daring exploit from which he escaped only by disguising himself as a woman: his imagined elaborate description of his disguise is clearly picked up here (7.8) – *sumpta veste muliebri florida in sinus flaccidos abundante, mitellaque textili contecto capite, calceis femininis albis illis et tenuibus indutus et in sequiorem sexum incertus atque absconditus*. The two descriptions share a particular interest in coloured footwear (*soccis obauratis / calceis … albis*) as well as elaborate female dress in general. The look back to the robbers' cave is fitting, since that was a place where Lucius-ass was in great danger, from which he was in fact saved by Tlepolemus' arrival. The robbers had decided to kill Lucius-ass along with Charite for helping her in her escape attempt (6.31–2), but are dissuaded from that plan by Tlepolemus (7.9).

(iv) **The gladiator:** *porro alium ocreis, scuto, galea ferroque insignem e ludo putares gladiatorio procedere.* This recalls the *ludi* from which Lucius-ass has escaped at the end of Book 10, since these were principally gladiatorial games (10.18). Once again the allusion is suitable, since it was at these games that Lucius was to undergo his greatest humiliation, public copulation as an ass with a condemned woman (10.29).

(v) **The magistrate:** *nec ille deerat qui magistratum fascibus purpuraque luderet.* This recalls Lucius' school friend Pythias, the officious magistrate who de-

prives Lucius of his dinner at the end of Book 1, especially as Lucius remarks there on Pythias' similarly conspicuous insignia (1.24): *nam et lixas et virgas et habitum prorsus magistratui congruentem in te video.* The reminiscence is apt: Lucius is now beyond such petty humiliations as he approaches the service of Isis (or is he?).

(vi) **The philosopher:** *nec qui pallio baculoque et baxeis et hircino barbitio philosophum fingeret*. No philosopher as such appears in the plot of the *Metamorphoses*, but this figure recalls a recent statement of Lucius-ass at the end of Book 10, where, stimulated by the pantomime of the Judgement of Paris, he makes a spirited attack on judicial injustice and corruption, citing the example of Socrates as the paradigmatic undeserving victim. Lucius himself comically sees this as taking up for the moment the role of a philosopher, inappropriate for an ass, and returns to his narrative (10.33): *sed ne quis indignationis meae reprehendat impetum, secum sic reputans: 'ecce nunc patiemur philosophantem nobis asinum', rursus unde decessi revertar ad fabulam*. In effect, Lucius-ass momentarily plays the role of a philosopher, like the devotee in the parade. This role-playing occurs just before making his escape from the worst possible degradation of public sexual congress (10.35): once more the picture recalls Lucius' *pessima pericula*, looking back over his life in the novel. There may also be an allusion to Apuleius' own status as a *philosophus Platonicus*: see below.

(vii) and (viii) **The bird-catcher and fisherman:** *nec qui diversis harundinibus alter aucupem cum visco, alter piscatorem cum hamis induceret*. The specific role of the bird-catcher seems to find no echo in the previous text of the novel, though it goes naturally with the fisherman and hunter in Roman culture (cf. Varro *RR* 3.3.4 *aucupes venatores piscatores*): the nearest parallel is the false tale of the old man who later turns out to be a monster in disguise, who claims that his grandson has fallen into a ditch while trying to capture a bird in a hedge (8.20), but that passage has no mention of a bird-rod or bird-lime. The role of the fisherman, on the other hand, recalls the similar *piscator* who at the end of Book 1 (1.24) sells Lucius the fish which the magistrate Pythias bizarrely orders to be trampled into pieces, a scene already recalled in the *anteludia* with the representation of the magistrate (see (v) above). This would be another appropriate echo, since the fish-trampling scene has been interpreted as an anticipation in the plot of Isiac ritual:[5] to recall it here when Lucius is about to enter the cult of Isis is clearly fitting.

5 See the discussion in Keulen 2007, 449.

(ix) **the tame she-bear dressed as a woman:** *vidi et ursam mansuem cultu matronali, quae sella vehebatur.* Apart from the obvious relevance of this figure to the general idea of man/beast metamorphosis, this bear in human disguise looks in particular like a reversal of the scene where the bandit Thrasyleon disastrously disguises himself as a bear, also a she-bear (4.15–21). Once again, a moment of peril for Lucius-ass is recalled: he heard the story of Thrasyleon while in the dangerous lair of the bandits, who so nearly put a particularly unpleasant end to his existence (see (iii) above). Commentators have suggested that in the immediate context of the parade this figure is meant to suggest Callisto, metamorphosed into a bear by Juno for having an affair with Jupiter (Ovid *Fasti* 2.177–86),[6] and this seems likely enough, given the connection of the next figure with Ganymede, another sexual partner of Jupiter resented by Juno (cf. e.g. Vergil *Aeneid* 1.28).

(x) **the monkey dressed up as Ganymede:** *et simiam pilleo textili crocotisque Phrygiis Catamiti pastoris specie aureum gestantem poculum*. Again, there is a general link with the theme of man/beast metamorphosis. There are no other monkeys in the novel (for a possible echo of its Greek model see below), but at *Met.*1.12 Socrates is ironically compared to Ganymede by the witch Meroe (*Catamitus meus*): this parallel is suitable for Lucius looking back at his previous life, since the dire fate of Socrates in perishing because of excessive interest in sex and magic is an obvious (but unheeded) warning for Lucius himself, who goes on to get involved in much the same way with Photis in Hypata. The Phrygian dress of Ganymede and the fact that he is named as *pastor* (though the latter detail reflects the standard story that he was kidnapped while tending sheep on Mt Ida – cf. *Aeneid* 5.254–7) also recalls the pantomime of the Judgement of Paris in Book 10, the intended prelude to Lucius' greatest humiliation of public sexual congress, an area of the plot already alluded to in the *anteludia* in (vi) above. There Paris appears, similarly in Phrygian costume and as a shepherd on Mt Ida (10.30): *in modum Paridis, Phrygii pastoris, barbaricis amiculis umeris defluentibus pulchre indusiatus adulescens*. Lucius is here appropriately reminded of a recent moment of peril.

(xi) **an ass with wings and an old man:** *et asinum pinnis agglutinatis adambulantem cuidam seni debili, ut illum quidem Bellerophontem, hunc autem*

6 See Gwyn Griffiths 1975, 179.

diceres Pegasum, tamen rideres utrumque. It is difficult to resist the association of this figure with the ass that Lucius still is: Lucius surely sees a version of himself and his adventures in this comic ass with wings. Lucius-ass's own interpretation of the two figures as a comic Pegasus and Bellerophon also recalls earlier comic comparisons of Lucius-ass to Pegasus (6.30, 8.16) and of one of his riders to Bellerophon (7.26). The links of Pegasus and Bellerophon with Corinth, where the procession is taking place, have been particularly stressed by commentators here, and are no doubt relevant, but Lucius is surely seeing a comic version of himself and the various human owners he has had during his wanderings as Lucius-ass, a fittingly climactic conclusion to this review of his past life.

3. Conclusion – further metaliterary allusions?

I hope to have shown that the *anteludia* at *Metamorphoses* 11.8 are symbolic recapitulations of previous events in the novel's plot. In particular, they recall past moments of peril for Lucius-ass, at an appropriate point where he is about to regain his human shape and pass into the apparent safety of the Isis-cult, escaping the dangers of his previous existence. This line of argument does not carry with it an assumption that *Metamorphoses* 11 is a serious and sincere representation of the Isis-cult (indeed, I hold the opposite view);[7] but it does stress once again the narrative continuity between Books 1–10 and Book 11, a continuity which earlier Apuleian criticism often doubted.[8]

This angle of approach is supported by three further considerations of details in the *anteludia* which point similarly to its metafictional nature, the way in which it comments on the novel and its author. First, the figure of the philosopher, with staff and dishevelled hair (see (vi) above), could be an allusion to the novel's author, self-characterised as *philosophus Platonicus* (*Apol.*10.6) with cloak and staff (*Apol.*22.1) and unkempt coiffure (*Apol.*4.12): this would be fitting in *Metamorphoses* 11 where the author Apuleius makes another, famous entrance near the end in the allusion to his place of birth (11.27.9 *Madaurensem*). Second, the monkey disguised as Ganymede may supply a subtle allusion to the Greek model of the *Metamorphoses.* The pseudo-Lucianic *Onos*, generally agreed to be an epitome

7 See e.g. Harrison 2011.

8 For some history of the question see conveniently Harrison 1999, xxxii–iii.

of the Greek *Metamorphoses* ascribed to 'Lucius of Patras' which Apuleius adapted in his novel,[9] has near its end (*Onos* 56) a comic scene in which the lady who had enjoyed Lucius' sexual favours as an ass re-encounters the newly human but phallically reduced Lucius, and voices her disappointment in the claim that that he has been metamorphosed into a mere 'monkey'. Finally, it is perhaps not insignificant that the number of figures in the parade of the *anteludia* amounts to eleven, plus an ass; if the episode looks back over the novel, this number may well be deliberately chosen to match the eleven books of the novel, even if not every book of the novel is specifically alluded to.[10] This would be an effective and pointed *mise en abyme* in the work's last book.

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9 For a summary of the scholarship this issue see conveniently Harrison 1999, xxx.

10 The analeptic allusions I have argued for in the *anteludia* above do not include material from Books 2, 3,4, or 5, though they do cover all the books for the whole of which Lucius narrates the adventures he experienced in asinine form (7–10), the misfortune from which he is about to be delivered in Book 11.

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