THE AUGUSTINIAN PURSUIT OF FALSE VALUES AS A CONVERSION MOTIF IN APULEIUS' *METAMORPHOSES*

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THE COMMON NORTH AFRICAN origins and mutual rhetorical professions of Apuleius and St Augustine have suggested comparison of the *Metamorphoses* and the *Confessions* on some points, e.g., the notion of *curiositas*.[1] Nevertheless, an apparent generic gap continues to separate the two works in most readers' minds. Yet the *Confessions*, which most would name as the quintessential personal conversion account in Western literature, offers a means of placing the pagan work in the same tradition and of demonstrating its essential religiosity through the presence in the novel of universal conversion themes rather than the Isiac elements which have been the usual focus of religious interpretation.[2] The process of comparison will incidentally imply

The following works are cited by author's name alone: William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (New York 1958, originally published 1902); R. O'Connell, *St. Augustine's Confessions: The Odyssey of Soul* (Cambridge, Mass. 1969); J. O'Meara, *The Young Augustine* (London 1954). Augustine is cited from the Teubner edition of M. Skutella (Stuttgart 1981), Apuleius from the Budé edition of D. S. Robertson (Paris 1972⁴).

[1]On curiosity as a link between the two works, see H. J. Mette, "*Curiositas*," *Festschrift B. Snell* (Munich 1956) 227–235; A. Labhardt, "*Curiositas*: Notes sur l'histoire d'un mot et d'un notion," *MusHelv* 17 (1960) 206–224; R. Joly, "*Curiositas*," *AntCl* 30 (1961) 33–44 and "Notes sur la conversion d'Augustin," *AntCl* 35 (1966) 217–221; see also P. G. Walsh, "The Rights and Wrongs of Curiosity: Plutarch to Augustine," *G&R* 35 (1988) 73–85, which appeared after the present paper was completed. The works share similar critical histories as well as thematic parallels: both, for example, have been bedeviled by questions of "unity," i.e., how to reconcile the novel's "comic" and "serious" or "religious" portions (Books 1–10 as against Book 11) and the *Confessions*' "autobiographical" and "exegetical" halves (Books 1–9 and Books 10–13). The latter's shift in tone elicited from J. O'Meara (13) the Perryesque pronouncement that Augustine's is a "badly composed book;" cf. also H. Marrou, *Saint Augustin et la fin de la culture antique* (Paris 1938) 61. Likewise, both works have long histories of source-criticism; R. O'Connell's *caveat* (5) with regard to Augustine applies equally well to Apuleius: "The danger with all such source-research is . . . that of deforming the author being studied. One may see so much Plotinus, Porphyry, or Cicero in Augustine that one fails to see Augustine himself. Looking for the message of one or the other book or author deemed decisive, one may miss the meaning of the *Conf.* as Augustine himself intended it." Cf. C. Schlam: "Apuleius . . . has shaped and ordered material drawn from various sources to . . . express meanings of his own . . . Whatever sources he drew upon, he stamps upon the material his own style and intent" (*The Narrative Structure of the* Metamorphoses *of Apuleius*, [diss., Columbia University 1968] 8–12).

[2]E.g., A. Festugière, *Personal Religion Among the Greeks* (Berkeley 1954) 68–84, and A. D. Nock, *Conversion: The Old and the New in Religion from Alexander to Augustine of Hippo* (Oxford 1933) 138–155, in discussing the ways in which the *Met.* enhances our understanding of pagan "personal religion" and "conversion" respectively, drew almost exclusively on the

a generic pattern in the experience of religious conversion itself, regardless of the theological construct superimposed on the psychological phenomenon.

In spite of the space Augustine occupies here, especially in the first section, this paper is ultimately about the *Metamorphoses*. Its interest is in the *Confessions* as a "story of a typical conversion,"[3] whose value will lie in the light the Christian work can shed on Apuleius' novel as at base an intimate account of this process.

I

The basic common thematic feature of the *Confessions* and the *Metamorphoses* goes deeper than the conventional act-oriented notion of "sin" and "redemption."[4] It involves rather the exposure of *fallacia*—deception—everywhere in the natural world, or, in the words of a recent interpreter of the *Confessions*, the conviction that the soul is immersed in "a bodily world of mendacious imitations of Truth" (O'Connell 15). Both future converts find themselves entangled in a widely accepted web of false values. The web begins with misguided desires; precisely because of the short-sightedness of these desires, any pleasure their fulfilment may produce is doomed to be fleeting, and consequently any happiness deriving from such pleasures to be an illusion. In accordance with this formula, a whole range of frivolous to "serious" secular pursuits is indicted as empty and mendacious in each of these apparently disparate accounts of conversion. In its own distinct way, each work exposes an assortment of values from the unabashedly hedonistic to the supposedly respectable as perverse.

What troubles both our pilgrims and leads each of them to a solution in the form of a definitive religious conversion could thus be called a crisis in values. Both Lucius and Augustine grow increasingly dissatisfied with the

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Isis-book. R. Merkelbach, *Roman und Mysterium in der Antike* (Munich 1962), and P. Scazzoso, *Le Metamorfosi di Apuleio* (Milan 1951), have been the main proponents of the idea that the novel's religious significance is to be found in the references to Isiac cult and ritual allegedly permeating the text.

[3]In response to questions about the historicity of the *Conf.* and its value as autobiography strictly speaking, O'Meara maintains that Augustine never intended his work to be a "purely personal history" (5), but rather, at least to some extent, a paradigmatic or generic account. P. Courcelle develops the suggestion of conventional elements in the *Conf.* at length in *Les Confessions de saint Augustin dans la tradition littéraire: antécédents et postérité* (Paris 1963). Such elements, of course, in no way diminish the force and truth of the work as a spiritual autobiography.

[4]Which is as far as those who *have* looked beyond the Isiac elements for a basic moral or religious scheme in the novel have gotten: see, e.g., W. Adlington in the introduction to his 1566 translation, pp. xvi–xvii in the Loeb edition of Apuleius, rev. S. Gaselee (Cambridge, Mass. 1977); Festugière (above, n. 2) 77; P. Vallette in his introduction to Robertson's edition of Apuleius (xxxiv); P. G. Walsh, *The Roman Novel* (Cambridge 1970) 177; R. Graves, *The Golden Ass* (New York 1951) xiii.

pleasures and successes human society has to offer. Endowed with prophetic vision or Jamesian "melancholy," with whatever gift of insight or quirk of temperament that causes some to develop the conviction that there must be more to life than meets the eye, they are driven by divergent roads to seek "more" than others seek.[5] In the case of Lucius, his level of self-knowledge and capacity for introspection are so rudimentary that he scarcely appears conscious of his restlessness. Nevertheless, his behavior throughout his memoirs, and their culmination in his exclusive devotion to Isis, tell the same tale as Augustine's tortured self-examination. For his part, the latter is of course acutely aware of his sense of life's hollowness, and engages in a conscious intellectual struggle to discover in it system and meaning.

Throughout the *Confessions* Augustine explicitly points to the "falseness" of human wishes and of the enjoyment of their fulfilment. He designates these misplaced desires with a variety of *cup*-rooted words (*cupiditas, cupire, concupiscentia*), as well as with (less frequently) *desiderium* and *studium*. It comes as no surprise that he condemns the classic Christian bugaboo, sexual desire, on the grounds that it wastes the energies of its victims on a futile and spiritually destructive obsession which by its cyclical nature can never be truly satisfied (e.g., 6.12.22, *consuetudo satiandae insatiabilis concupiscentiae me captum excruciabat;* cf. 8.7.17, *timebam enim, ne me cito . . . sanares a morbo concupiscentiae, quem malebam expleri quam exstingui*). What is remarkable is how Augustine employs the same language of misguided desire to describe all the other sustained and momentary urges which divert his attention and prevent him from recognizing his *true* desire, the *desiderium dei.*

The saint traces the beginnings of his career of perversity to his early childhood. Recalling his notorious pear theft, a formative experience to which he attaches extreme importance, he laments the familiar impetus behind it (2.8.16, *pruritus cupiditatis*). Earlier in the work he had likewise identified the motive for his boyish hooky-playing as an itch to gratify his

[5]James organized a central section of his book under the rubrics "The Sick Soul," "The Divided Self, and the Process of its Unification," and "Conversion." The chapter titles encapsulate a progression from despair of mortal life to religious resolution which James had observed in the records of many converts. It will become clear that this progression is the substance of the accounts of both Augustine and Lucius. James surmised that those whose temperaments naturally inclined toward "melancholy"—characterized by depression of spirits, pessimism, brooding, an inability to take pleasure in the ordinary pursuits and values of life (anhedonia), and an obsessive consciousness of mortality: in a word, existential *Angst*—were more susceptible to radical religious conversion than the more settled and sanguine "once-born." Some may question the utility of the studies of this Victorian empiricist for modern interpretation, but I tend to agree with G. Sandy that James (particularly in its collection and classification of case histories) "remains . . . the only useful guide to the psychology of conversion" ("Book 11: Ballast or Anchor," *Aspects of Apuleius' Golden Ass,* ed. B. Hijmans and R. van der Paardt [Groningen 1978] 138, n. 23).

amor ludendi, studium spectandi nugatoria et imitandi ludicria (1.19.30). The lure of public games and shows is a trap which later snares even the virtuous Alypius upon his arrival in the big city:

gurges tamen morum Carthaginiensium, quibus nugatoria fervent spectacula, absorbuerat eum in insaniam circensium . . . sed enim de memoria mihi lapsum erat agere cum illo, ne vanorum ludorum caeco et praecipiti studio tam bonum interimeret ingenium (6.7.11–12).

These last two passages have a significance beyond their portrayal of "blind and headlong desire:" they fault what we will soon see is one of the most pervasive symptoms of moral malaise in the *Metamorphoses* also: the jaded quest for diverting *spectacula.*

But to return to the theme of false desires, two others which seem to Augustine to pose a threat have as their objects quasi-gods as disparate as food and drink on the one hand and natural beauty on the other. It is notable that in discussing the dangers of the desire for enjoyment from these sources Augustine makes explicit reference to the "deceptive" nature of that desire. He warns that in order to avoid being tricked into the sin of gluttony, one must determine whether one is continuing to eat out of necessity or out of pleasure: *saepe incertum fit, utrum adhuc necessaria corporis cura subsidium petat an voluptaria cupiditatis fallacia ministerium suppetat* (10.31.44). If one fails to stop at necessity, one falls victim to *fallacia* on two counts: the self-deception of allowing oneself to believe first that it is survival and not sensuality that motivates self-indulgent behavior, and then that the indulgence of this sensuality will make a real contribution to one's happiness. Deceptiveness is the hallmark as well of the love of natural beauty, which rends the soul with *desideria pestilentiosa,* and lulls the lover, stuck in the *gluten amoris,* into a precarious comfort derived from things which will only wither and die (*non stant: fugiunt*). From this passage (4.10.5) it is clear that the transitory nature of their objects lies at the core of Augustine's notion of the mendaciousness of temporal desires.

The same principle emerges in the scorn he heaps upon the values of his former profession as a teacher of rhetoric. He makes it clear that it is fundamentally desire behind this activity as well, the objects in this case being fame and fortune. Augustine's inculcation with the values of the profession begins at a tender age: *imbecilla tunc aetate discebam libros eloquentiae, in qua eminere cupiebam* (3.4.7); the choice of the final verb is, I think, not a careless one. Later in the work he describes himself as an *aequissimus malarum cupiditatum servus,* now using *cupiditas* in the context of his scholarly activities and professional ambitions. He continues that these pursuits *in meretriciis cupiditatibus* wasted his innate quickness at learning (4.16.30); the scathing adjective gives a new vividness to false charms and specious attractions, which Augustine here locates in the intellectual sphere.

But at least his voracious reading, as misguided as it often was, was inspired by a desire to get at Truth. By contrast his advancement in the field of rhetoric had no redeeming value whatsoever. The most effective way for Augustine to convey his enlightened view of the utter worthlessness of rhetorical education is to characterize the forces behind it in language reminiscent of that which he uses (6.12.22) to condemn sexual desire:

illi [his teachers] *enim non intuebantur, quo referrem, quod me discere cogebant, praeterquam ad satiandas insatiabiles cupiditates copiosae inopiae et ignominiosae gloriae* (1.12.19).

The spurious (and insatiable) desires at work here, then, are for wealth and fame (framed, by the way, in a neat rhetorical jingle). It is this *cupiditas* of professional ambition which drives Augustine to leave Carthage with its rowdy students and come to Rome. He describes this move as a time *cum et me cupiditatibus meis raperes ad finiendas ipsas cupiditates* (5.8.15) (an indication that God himself is not above a little *fallacia* on occasion).

What is objectionable to Augustine about professional achievement, therefore, is that like so many other activities it is motivated by unhealthy desires and delusions. But rhetoric is additionally abhorrent for its sophistic amorality, its cavalier willingness to argue either side of a question. Augustine later was to disparage his former position as the *cathedra mendacii*, after all (9.2.4.; cf. 6.6.9, *cum pararem recitare imperatori laudes, quibus plura mentirer, et mentienti faveretur ab scientibus*). It was a position in which the praise won was in proportion to the deception perpetrated (*hoc laudabilior, quo fraudulentior*, 3.3.6); it deliberately disseminated fraud in a world where there was a natural abundance of it already. So, as in the case of excessive eating and drinking, success in rhetoric was built on two kinds of *fallacia:* the kind that the art of persuasion is by definition, and the one that allows its practitioners to believe that its rewards are what they really want.

Augustine only grew more aware that for all the success he had met in realizing his desires, not only did his declamations have the quality of a lie about them, but so did his whole life. In Book 6 he describes the disillusionment which overwhelmed him after years of following conventional roads to a persistently elusive happiness. Having dutifully pursued for some thirty years the desires of his class for social and professional status, material wealth, and good marriage, Augustine here despairs of their ever leading him *ad securam laetitiam*. On the contrary, these *cupiditates* bring him no end of trouble (*amarissimas difficultates*) in the conflict they cause in his soul; moreover, the attainment of their objects, contrary to expectation and conventional wisdom, only seems to engender ever more *infelicitas* and *dolor*. Paradoxically, the more Augustine participates in this system of values, the heavier the burden of his unhappiness becomes (*sub stimulis cupiditatum trahens infelicitatis meae sarcinam et trahendo exaggerans*,

6.6.9).[6] He realizes that he is caught in a system which feeds on itself, in which desires fulfilled yield not an end to desire, but new desires, and he resolves *relinquere omnes vanarum cupiditatum spes inanes et insanias mendaces* (6.11.18).

If the initial desire was wrong-headed, then the pleasure afforded by its fulfilment inevitably falls short of the expected result, and is therefore to Augustine's mind as "mendacious" as the initial impulse. As with desire, it is sexual *voluptas* which provokes perhaps the shrillest condemnation; but here again, Augustine speaks with equal disappointment about a whole range of worldly pleasures (he calls them *voluptates, suavitates, iucunditates, delectationes,* and *deliciae*), from the childish excitement of the pear caper to the fruits of his study of literature, mythology, and rhetoric. The theft of the pears, which inspires all the more guilt as being enjoyed for its own sake, is linked to an act so apparently dissimilar as the sexual one by the use of *voluptas* to designate the desired goal in the former case as well: *in illis pomis voluptas mihi non erat, ea erat in ipso facinore,* 2.8.16.

Augustine took pleasure in his education as well, but it was an empty pleasure—he calls its staples *vana*—and so insidious that it made him a miserable sinner without his even knowing it (while providing, contrary to his teachers' intentions, the discipline for his later mission: *haec didici et eis delectabar miser . . . [sed] tu disciplinam dabas mihi et in eis vanis peccata delectationum mearum dimisisti mihi* [1.15.24–16.26]). Of particular interest is his suspicion of the pleasures associated with eating and listening to music—even sacred music, after his conversion—since he says here specifically that they are characterized by the *fallacia* he implies of other worldly pleasures. What they all offer is "delight full of danger" (*periculosa iucunditas*) through their insidious diversionary power (10.31, 10.33.50; cf. 10.34.52, *illecebrosa ac periculosa dulcedo*, of temporal gratification in general).

Augustine's problem is that satisfaction eludes him; his desires cannot seem to be filled, his pleasures do not seem to last. It is this vague sense of spiritual malaise that causes him to begin suspecting his pursuits and values of "falseness." Until his conversion, all his happiness, resting as it did on tenuous foundations, had a hollow ring. Augustine observes the syndrome in others as well, most of whom lack the introspective power to recognize it in themselves. For example, he recalls in this connection the pride of his father, overcome by narcissistic joy at the prospect of having grandchildren

[6]The prevalence in the *Conf.* of the image of mortal concerns as oppressive "baggage" invites comparison with the repeated literal oppression of Lucius, the recalcitrant beast of burden, with all manner of *sarcina* whose weight only grows heavier with the journey. Cf. *Conf.* 4.7.12, 8.5.12, 8.7.18, 9.1.1 (in contrast, God's *sarcina* is light, cf. *Matt.* 11:30), 10.40.65 (*sarcina consuetudinis*: see below, 55 on the force of habit as an obstruction to conversion) with *Met.* 4.4.2; 3.28; 6.25,26; 7.15,17,18,19; 8.15,28,30; 9.29; 10.1.

to perpetuate his line.[7] Augustine himself is aware of the "falseness" of the happiness that attended his youthful studies and consequently his successful academic career, to name but one source of *falsa felicitas*.[8] Two related qualities of temporal happiness particularly frustrate Augustine: its precarious ephemerality (*vae prosperitatibus saeculi semel et iterum a timore adversitatis et a corruptione laetitiae*, 10.28.39; cf., e.g., 5.12.22, *turpes sunt tales . . . amando volatica ludibria temporum . . . et amplectando mundum fugientem*), and its reliance on transitory material phenomena, mere *imagines* which hungry but misdirected souls vainly "nibble at with starving minds" (*famelica cogitatione lambiunt*, 9.4.10). He moves from these observations to the conclusion that temporal happiness must therefore be "false," a monumental ruse, and that "true" happiness would be by definition enduring and divorced from the sensible world and its mortal inhabitants.

At the height of his success and the depth of his malaise, Augustine sees a beggar in Milan and reflects on this man's lot as compared with his own (6.6). Naturally, the beggar lacked true happiness (*verum gaudium*); but Augustine's *ambitiones* and his *doctrina* made the *gaudium* he sought by circuitous routes (*aerumnosis anfractibus et circuitibus*), but failed to find (*non inde gaudebam*), much more false (*multo falsius*). In this passage, Augustine likens the whole of his existence before his enlightenment to an insentient drunken stupor. Elsewhere, he compares adult life and its conventional concerns to a children's game, and seeks in vain for the rationale that assigns the former more value than the latter.[9] Whether it is in an elaborate metaphor or an incidental observation,[10] Augustine never loses an opportunity to trivialize the system of goals and rewards that constitutes the *raison d'être* of the bulk of humanity.

II

To the reader seeking a fundamental theme of the *Confessions*, it will be clear that it is to be found in the stress the work lays on the blind pursuit of false values. The variety of manifestations this familiar idea takes in the

[7]*ubi me ille pater in balneis vidit pubescentem . . . quasi iam ex hoc in nepotes gestiret, gaudens matri indicavit, gaudens . . . de vino invisibili perversae atque inclinatae in ima voluntatis suae* (2.3.6).

[8]As he calls the lure exerted by Rome with, among other things, its greater opportunities and better working conditions for teachers (*ego autem qui detestabar hic* [at Carthage] *veram miseriam, illic* [at Rome] *falsam felicitatem appetebam*, 5.8.14).

[9]*maiorum nugae, negotia vocantur . . . nisi vero adprobat quisquam bonus rerum arbiter vapulasse me, quia ludebam pila puer et eo ludo inpediebar, quominus celeriter discerem litteras, quibus maior deformius luderem*, 1.9.15.

[10]As at, e.g., 8.6.13, Augustine's mention of Nebridius' avoidance of implication in the affairs of "persons of importance by the world's standards" (*cavens innotescere personis secundum hoc saeculum maioribus*), in order to have peace of mind for reading and thinking; 4.14.22, *tunc amabam homines ex hominum iudicio; non enim ex tuo, deus meus, in quo nemo fallitur.*

Confessions has been examined at length above because it is precisely this theme—the pursuit of false values and the discovery of true value in the divine—that also makes the *Metamorphoses* from beginning to end a religious novel and a typical account of the process of conversion. Yet this aspect of the pagan novel's complex identity has largely been lost on generations of critics.

The reason for this would seem to lie in the fact that Apuleius has Lucius tell his tale as a simple narrative without commentary. Although Lucius and most of his fellow characters chafe under the same malaise that besets Augustine, in the *Metamorphoses* the lesson is implicit in the action and the way it is described; its ramifications are not belabored, but rather left to the inferential power of the reader. The lack of satisfaction attending the attainment of conventional values is shown by the marked, repetitive, and often extreme behavior of the characters, beginning with Lucius, who never (with one notable exception, see below, 48) consciously diagnoses the syndrome which he observes in others and from which he himself suffers. Nor does this narrator ever specifically designate the desires and pleasures which motivate most of the action as "false," but that they are to be viewed as such is made clear in other ways.

Apuleius' narrative technique results in an apparent absence of any conscious awareness on Lucius' part that either he or the people he encounters are in crisis, and the reader is, I think, meant to understand that indeed Lucius' journey was characterized by such an absence. While both narrators tell their tales from an enlightened perspective, Augustine imbues his account with the self-critical spirit that characterized every step of his conscious spiritual journey; his misguided behavior had consisted as much in earnest experimentation with heretical doctrines as in the complacent acceptance of worldly values. In contrast to Augustine's soul-searching, Lucius in telling his story would appear to recreate the oblivious attitude of a far less introspective experience.[11] Furthermore, the Apuleian narrative exploits a *reductio ad absurdum* to make its point. Whereas Augustine's pursuit of false values is represented primarily by his systematic fulfilment of societally sanctioned ambitions, that of Lucius is ultimately reduced to a compulsive and undirected absorption in the most fleeting, frivolous, and random of amusements. The ass itself is central to the reduction; what better symbol of a distractable, myopic, and intransigent soul could Apuleius have adopted?

Misguided desires and misbegotten pleasures are at the heart of human (and asinine) delusion in the *Metamorphoses* no less than in the *Confessions*. It is not difficult to show that desire motivates a large proportion of the

[11]See below, n. 21, for a possible psychological explanation of Lucius' attitude; his unconsciousness of his own spiritual crisis and change can be compatible with an interpretation of the *Met.* as religious *Bildungsroman*, on both the psychological and (as I maintain throughout section II) the literary level.

novel's action. Again, its sexual manifestation has been considered the most significant, to the extent that critics have assumed that it is this "sin," along with the other of dabbling in black magic, that earns Lucius the "punishment" of metamorphosis.[12] To be sure, philandering is a way of life in the novel. The trysts of Lucius and the slave girl Photis provide extended erotic interludes throughout the first three books, described in terms similar to those Augustine assigns to his dalliances (e.g., *cupido*, *Met.* 2.10.5, 2.16.6). Lucius' susceptibility to sensual temptation is not diminished after his transformation into an ass, as he demonstrates as soon as he finds himself in the same pasture with a herd of attractive fillies (7.16). The distracting sexual passions of others mirror the hero's weakness in this area. Socrates' affair as related by Aristomenes in 1.5–20 and the extramarital escapades of the baker's wife (9.22–31), for example, are initially light-hearted diversions, although each is not without its own unpleasant outcome. In the tales of Thrasyllus (8.1–14) and the treacherous stepmother (10.2–12), on the other hand, we see sexual desire at its most obsessive and destructive. Both accounts rely on terms which Augustine regularly applies to false desires generically—e.g., *cupido* and *studium*.[13]

But in the *Metamorphoses* as in the *Confessions* sex is only one of a whole range of objects of desire, and the application of equally strong language to other types of desire (from potentially dangerous to apparently benign) suggests that it is not any particular act the desire engenders which is being indicted so much as desire itself, for its "falseness," i.e., its focus on nugatory objects. Foremost on the list of offending objects of desire is knowledge of magic. Lucius describes his interest in magic in language that is, if anything, more passionate than that which he enlists in his recollection of Photis' charms. He remembers being *cupidus cognoscendi quae rara miraque sunt* at the outset of his sojourn in Thessaly's enchanted regions, as well as being in the grip of a *studium* in this regard (2.1.1–2). Lest the reader still not appreciate the power (and the agony) of his desire, he goes on to call it a *cruciabile desiderium* and a *cupido* in the next chapter (2.2.1, *sic attonitus, immo vero cruciabili desiderio stupidus nullo quidem initio vel omnino vestigio cupidinis meae reperto*); and in his attempt to gain Photis' aid in satisfying it, he impresses upon her that he is *magiae noscendae ardentissimus cupitor* (3.19.4). The prospect of witnessing a magical event is equally compelling to others, such as the crowd captivated by the feats of the necromancer Zatchlas, who *studium praesentium ad miraculum tantum certatim adrexit*,

[12]See above, n. 4. In my reading, Lucius' "sin," like Augustine's, is his wilful wrongheadedness in general; cf. L. Mackay, "The Sin of *The Golden Ass*," *Arion* 4 (1965) 474–480.

[13]Thrasyllus: 8.2.6, *in profundam ruinam cupidinis;* 8.2.1, *summo studio*; 8.7.3, *studium contrectandae mulieris*; 8.10.4, *uno potiundi studio postponens omnia.* The stepmother: 10.2.4, *cupido* (probably personified, as at 2.16.6).

and the unfortunate Thelyphron, who is glued to the same scene *curiosis oculis* (2.28.6, 29.1, where *curiosis oculis* = *cupidis oculis*, [see below, note 16]).

But, as in the *Confessions*, misdirected desire can be the driving force behind a variety of behaviors outside the rather more sensational realms of carnal lust and magical spells. *cupido* is used as a synonym of *avaritia*, where the slave Myrmex allows his loyalty to be corrupted by greed for money (*nec . . . cupido formonsae pecuniae leniebatur, sed nocturnas etiam curas invaserat pestilens avaritia*, 9.19.2). Also, it is ultimately desire that lies behind a widespread tendency of people in the *Metamorphoses* to be instantly transfixed by any novel sight or story. Idle curiosity is usually named by critics as the culprit in these cases, and this is surely right; but that the indulgence of curiosity is to be regarded as another of several manifestations of wasted desiderative energy is clear from the words Apuleius chooses to describe these incidents, as at 8.6.6, when all the citizens strain for a glimpse of the slain Tlepolemus (*cuncta civitas vacuatur studio visionis*), or at 10.19.9, where the Corinthian crowds which assemble to be amused by the novelty of a trained ass are *mei conspectus cupientes*.

Lucius himself, as a man and as a beast, is of course the worst offender in this regard; if he had an epithet, it would be *curiosus*. He boasts at 1.2.6 that he is the sort *qui velim scire vel cuncta vel certe plurima*. He does not say explicitly that he is consumed by a *desire* to accumulate all manner of knowledge and experience indiscriminately, but his compulsive endeavors to do so throughout what remains of the novel are clearly fuelled by precisely that—the burning desire to know for knowing's sake. Furthermore, his mention in the passage just cited of *iucunditas* as the reward he will reap if the traveller obliges him with a story further strengthens the identity of curiosity as a type of desire, since *iucunditas* is what one ordinarily experiences once a desire has been satisfied—witness Augustine's warning that eating more than one needs to live can produce a forbidden *iucunditas* (see above, 40).[14]

Now, to the casual reader Lucius' desire to be entertained by an amusing story, and the stepmother's desire to commit incest with her stepson (10.2–12), may seem qualitatively different. But even as Augustine equates the desire that motivated his empty social and academic ambitions and his early sexual exploits with that which caused him as a child to neglect his studies in order to view the *nugatoria et ludicria* of the theater (1.19.30), so Apuleius asserts that the same unhealthy syndrome is in evidence whether

[14] *Met.* 1.2.6, *simul iugi quod insurgimus aspritudinem fabularum lepida iucunditas levigabit.* That *cupidus* and *curiosus* are at times interchangeable adjectives, or more precisely, that *curiositas* is a category of false desire, has been argued in the preceding discussion (37 ff.). This is most apparent in the case of the magical aspirations of Lucius, whose interest is clearly motivated by curiosity, but who enlists "desire" words to describe his feelings (2.1–2, 3.19). To strengthen the identification, *curiositas*, sated, produces the *voluptas* (or *delectatio*) usually associated with fulfilled desire: see below, 45–46, and n. 16. Augustine shares this analysis of *curiositas* as "intellectual lust" (below, 52).

the desire is directed in such a way as to produce grave or benign results. In a sense the consequences are incidental; it is the persistent if often randomly directed impulse of his characters to grasp at any sort of worldly gratification that is meant as a measure of their unwitting spiritual desperation.

The fleeting pleasures that follow upon the attainment of misdirected desires are as central to the *Metamorphoses* as they are to the *Confessions*. Again, sexual pleasure has received the most attention, and Lucius does indeed speak of *voluptas* as the fruit of his intercourse with Photis, as, for example, when he describes his sensation, while watching her provocatively stirring a cauldron of stew, as *tantum cruciatum voluptatis eximiae* (2.10.1; cf. 2.17.5, and his *cruciabile desiderium* for something magical at 2.2.1).[15] Likewise sexual *voluptas* is named as the lure that leads Socrates (1.8.1), Thrasyllus (8.9.4), and the Phaedra-like stepmother (10.4.2) astray. But this type of pleasure, and the words used to describe it, come as no surprise when compared with the other sources of pleasure featured in the novel. These are pleasures related on the whole to the waylaying impulse of curiosity, with the exception of the *voluptas* that Myrmex anticipates his ill-gotten gain will bring (9.19.1, *illic fides, hic lucrum, illic cruciatus, hic voluptas*, he thinks as he vacillates between rejecting and accepting the bribe). Curiosity is at the root of Lucius' (and others') obsession with magic; it is also a synonym for the desire that drives him to seek pleasure indiscriminately in *any* novel sight, tale, or experience.[16]

The compulsion of Lucius is set against the ubiquitous casting about by chronically curious minor characters (or amorphous crowds) for the idle pleasure of an unusual sight. Socrates' troubles begin when he makes a detour to take advantage of the *voluptas gladiatorii spectaculi* (1.7.5) (as do

[15]With 2.17.5 (with Photis), *lassitudinem refoventes et libidinem incitantes et voluptatem integrantes*, compare *Conf.* 10.34.53, *et ibi est et non vident eum, ut non eant longius . . . nec [fortitudinem] spargant in deliciosas lassitudines.*

[16]Sights: e.g., his pleasure at the scene the rescued Charite and he present (8.13.2, *memorandum spectamen*), and at the resemblance of the robbers' old cook reining in the ass to a scene from mythology (6.27.5, *memorandi spectaculi scaena*); his hope of gratification at the prospect of witnessing the bandits' capture (8.13.5, *alias curiosus et tunc latronum captivitatis spectator optabam fieri*), and his enjoyment of the show in Corinth while waiting for his own cue to perform (10.29.3, *curiosos oculos spectaculi prospectu gratissimo reficiens*). Experiences: e.g., his enjoyment, simply because it was new to him, of the miserable conditions at the mill (9.12.2, *familiari curiositate attonitus . . . inoptabilis officinae disciplinam cum delectatione quadam arbitrabar*). Tales: e.g., the "Tale of the Tub" (*lepida fabula*, 9.4.4), the grisly tale of the bailiff (*facinus memorabile*, 8.22), of the adulterous baker's wife (*fabula . . . suavis*, 9.14–31), and the countless other *lepidae fabulae* that absorb his attention in the course of his wanderings. To the weakness for *spectacula/spectamina* epidemic in the novel, cf., e.g., Augustine's *studium spectandi nugatoria et ludicria* (1.19.30), or Alypius' *caecum et praeceps studium* for the *nugatoria spectacula* (6.7.11–12) of Carthage. With the vicarious pleasure derived from stories compare Augustine's regret of his idle enjoyment of Virgil's tall tales (*dulcissimum spectaculum vanitatis*, 1.13.22) rather than of practical studies like mathematics.

the woes of Thelyphron: his story begins *profectus ad spectaculum Olympicum,* 2.21.3). Further, the rich man Democharis knows he can curry public favor by financing entertainment to provide the citizens with *voluptas* (4.13.2). This quest for pleasurable *spectacula* reaches a peak of frenzy when news of the trained ass circulates in Corinth. Lucius' current master, Thiasos, takes pleasure in the novelty of the sight (*delectatur . . . novitate spectaculi laetus dominus,* 10.16.1–3; cf. 10.17.2, where Lucius' trainer teaches him new tricks to increase the master's pleasure: *studiosissime voluptates [domini] . . . instruebat*). The public is quickly infected with Thiasos' enthusiasm for the diversion (10.17.6); later when it expands to include bestiality, interest in the *voluptarium spectaculum* (10.35.1) is all the more rabid. And so, here as elsewhere in the novel, Lucius' bad habits are put in high relief against a background of like behavior in others.

These examples have shown that the importance of desire and pleasure as motivational forces in the novel's action is not difficult to discern. It is Apuleius' consistent application of what might be called the Augustinian vocabulary of spurious desire and pleasure to a similarly wide range of activities which suggests that both accounts are making the same point about all these activities, regardless of their relative status on conventional morality's scale of taboos. The failure of Apuleian characters to find satisfaction in worldly pursuits is pointedly illustrated through their patterns of behavior. The narrator never labels their (or his own) paltry desires and pleasures "mendacious" or "fallacious,"[17] but the overall, carefully wrought impression the novel gives, particularly in the books immediately preceding the intervention of Isis, of a whirlwind of frenzied activity going nowhere carries this message as effectively as Augustine's moralizing. The novel's inhabitants are the victims of an unconscious, unarticulated restlessness that drives them to seek relief in everything from the most consuming to the most inane of pleasures.

Perhaps the foremost symbols of this syndrome are the idle, diversion-

[17]Although the narrator refrains from such explicit criticisms, these ideas are incorporated into the novel in other ways: lies and deception motivate the action in the major episodes of *Met.* 7 through 10, and their description depends on an elaborate vocabulary of deceit, much of which is applied by Augustine to false values, e.g., *mendacium, mentiri, fallacia, fallax, fallaciosus, simulare, dissimulare, simulatio, decipere, fraus, fraudulens, fingere, fallere, imago, similitudo, persona/personatus.* See the episodes of: the eunuch priests (8.24–9.10, esp. 8.27.6–28.1, 29.1; 9.9.5); Charite, Thrasyllus, and Tlepolemus (8.1–14, esp. 2.5, 6.2–3, 7.1, 7.3, 9.3, 9.5, 10.2, 10.4, 11.2, 11.4, 12.1); the baker's wife (9.14–31, esp. 23.3); the Phaedra-like stepmother (10.2–12, esp. 2.5, 5.1, 5.3–6, 6.2, 7.7–10); and the Corinthian murderess with whom Lucius is to perform in the arena (10.23–28, esp. 24.5, 27.1–3). Minor incidents, pointedly described, support the theme, e.g., the virtuous (and fictitious) Plancina's husband is ruined by false charges (7.6.3); Barbarus is duped by a contrived explanation of how a playboy's shoes got into the bedroom of Barbarus and his wife (9.21.7); Lucius, lamenting the corruption of justice, offers as *exempla* Palamedes and Socrates, who were both victims of false charges (10.33.2–3).

seeking mobs appearing at intervals throughout the novel, with their tendency to drop everything to gape whenever something out of the ordinary happens to engage their attention.[18] These crowds' powers of concentration are minuscule. Any object of their attention quickly must lose its novelty, and we can imagine them moving listlessly on to another source of amusement, which will soon tire them in its turn. Indeed this is the way Lucius himself conducts his entire life. Ultimately, it is this mindless, distracted behavior, more than any sexual tryst, that best represents the Augustinian idea of spiritual malaise, because of the absurd and desperate cast it puts on the search for worldly pleasure. In the eyes of both converts, the mobs' insipid stupefaction would epitomize gratification arising from any temporal source.

The point is further dramatized in the novel by the frequency with which Lucius and others are instantly transfixed (*attonitus, defixus*) or paralyzed by *stupor* when they stumble onto a magical, erotic, or simply novel situation.[19] The vivid image of thoughtless distraction which they then create is integral to the device of reducing to absurdity a view of human endeavor expressed more abstractly by Augustine. Yet the latter's metaphor equating his life before conversion with a drunken stupor (*ebrietas*, 6.6) should not be forgotten in this connection.[20] Moreover, at least twice he uses *stupere* in the Apuleian sense of being gullibly impressed, even mesmerized, by something which is, in a word, not God: at 4.4.16 (*stupentes*) of men's awe at an

[18]The crowds are riveted at the sight of necromancy (2.28, 10.12), dead bodies (8.6), captive bears (4.16), a trained ass (10.15–17), and the impending pornographic performance at Corinth (10.35). The pathology of these crowds would seem to be rooted in boredom; by contrast, the rather sinister crowd at the Risus Festival (3.1–10) is motivated additionally by a streak of sadism.

[19]Lucius is *attonitus, immo vero . . . stupidus* with his desire to witness something magical (2.2.1), and *stupidus defixus . . . attonitus in amentiam* at the sight of Pamphile's transformation into a bird (3.22.1); upon encountering the tempting Photis in the kitchen, *defixus obstupui mirabundus*, he says (2.7.4), entirely forgetting his magical obsession of a few moments earlier; the household of Thiasos is *voluptario spectaculo attonita* in anticipation of the unnatural sex to be displayed in the Corinthian arena (10.35.1); Lucius is *curiositate attonitus* at the unfamiliar surroundings of the mill (9.12.2).

[20]Nor should James' choice of words in paraphrasing the newly anhedonic Tolstoy's estimation of the conventional pursuits of men of his class: they were diversions, thoughtlessly utilized to avoid the stark reality of the human condition; they were a kind of anaesthesia bringing on senseless "stupefaction" (132). Tolstoy, who published an account of his own spiritual crisis in 1880, provided James with one of his fullest case studies of conversion. His case presents several parallels with those of Augustine and Lucius, among them, the social status, education (cf. Augustine's and Lucius' ultimately empty *doctrina*, e.g., *Conf.* 6.6.9, *Met.* 3.15.4), and professional success which make his conversion all the more dramatic. H. Mason has shown ("The Distinction of Lucius in Apuleius' *Metamorphoses*," *Phoenix* 37 [1983] 135–143) that Apuleius has given his hero a distinguished pedigree, with its concomitant social status and educational privilege. But, as Mason notes, "Lucius' distinction is of an entirely conventional kind . . . The lesson that Lucius appears to learn [is] to distinguish conventional social distinction from the true glory he obtains through Isis and Osiris" (141, 143).

orator's skill, and at 5.3.28 (*stupent*) of their amazement at the calculations of astronomers.

Thus the energetic pursuit of largely "respectable" diversions in the *Confessions* is reduced in the *Metamorphoses* to a passive susceptibility to any diversion. A related difference is in the degree of awareness of his own "quiet desperation" that each narrator infuses into his account. On the one hand, Augustine portrays himself as having been keenly aware of a feeling of emptiness in his life, and his search for a system of belief to fill it coexisted alongside a more complacent fulfilment of natural and conventional desires. On the other hand, the only possible trace of perspicuity displayed by Lucius in this regard occurs in the sordid surroundings of the mill, where he reflects thus: *nec ullum uspiam cruciabilis vitae solacium aderat, nisi quod ingenita mihi curiositate recreabar* (9.13.3). Here the ass seems to recognize at some level that the pleasures he reaps by indulging his curiosity (and by extension, any "false" desire) constitute momentary relief (*solacium*) rather than genuine or lasting satisfaction. Apart from this rare reflective moment, however, Apuleius has Lucius recount a progress toward Isis devoid of any conscious spiritual need or quest. Indeed, his thoughts never extend beyond the moment—usually the crisis—at hand. This approach is both dramatically effective, as the finishing touch on the reduction to absurdity, and psychologically plausible.[21]

[21]According to James' theory (now, of course, widely accepted, in areas beyond the psychology of religion) of the "subconscious incubation of motives deposited by a growing . . . sensible experience (whether inattentively or attentively registered)," and of "their elaboration . . . into results that end by attaining such a tension that they may at times enter consciousness with something like a burst," i.e., a sudden and apparently unadumbrated conversion. Moreover, James continues, it is often only with exhaustion of the will that unconscious forces can move into action—the kind of exhaustion that Lucius exhibits when he finally races from Corinth and collapses on the seashore. His state of mind before this moment of surrender can be seen in Jamesian terms: "A mental system can be undermined or weakened by . . . interstitial alteration just as a building is, and yet for a time keep upright by dead habit, all the while forces of mere organic ripening within are going on towards their own prefigured result . . . and the rearrangement toward which all these deeper forces tend is . . . different from what [the convert-to-be] consciously conceives and determines" (James 190, n. 4, 173, 163, 171). James' analysis suggests that the more sudden the conversion, the less justified we are in expecting evidence of conscious awareness of any need. He includes cases of sudden conversion where the subject displayed even scantier "predisposing conditions" than Lucius does (181–183). Although Augustine's own conversion is a protracted and self-conscious affair, he is impressed by the story of the sudden conversion of an imperial official (8.6.15). It should be noted that Lucius' aimless casting around for fulfilment is in itself evidence of searching, however misdirected. Moreover, Photis' mention of his prior initiations into other unnamed mysteries (3.15.4) raises the possibility that Lucius was not quite as oblivious to his religious need as he appears to be. Still, these early experiments have had little discernible impact on his basic attitude or the conduct of his life. Given the overwhelming portrait of an impulsive, uncritical, and thoughtlessly hedonistic ass, it is difficult to imagine that we are meant to see in Photis' one incidental reference any true parallel to Augustine's systematic search for answers in Platonism and Manichaeism.

The corruptibility of happiness based on false desires and pleasures is amply illustrated in the novel by its structure around an endless series of rising and then disappointed expectations. This cycle is the stuff of the ass's life until Isis rescues him from it. Lucius' tantalization three times in rapid succession (3.27, 3.29, 4.2) by roses which might restore his human form best exemplifies the elusiveness of the ingredients for lasting happiness. Each time an obstacle to eating the roses appears at the last minute, or they are discovered to be mere facsimiles; the real thing can come, significantly, through Isis alone (11.12).

But this is only the beginning of the ass's dashed hopes. Every time he seems to have reached a respite from his travails, his joy is shattered by impending disaster. To name but a few instances: Lucius is *gaudens laetusque* at the promise of a life of leisure as his reward for rescuing Charite, only to discover that *nullae deliciae ac ne ulla quidem libertas* await him, but rather forced labor at the flour mill (7.15.1–3);[22] he is *laetus et . . . gestiens* at the prospect of being put out to pasture with a herd of eligible mares, but immediately finds himself fending off a vicious attack by jealous stallions (7.16);[23] he rejoices (*gaudebam*) at his escape from a cook who was preparing to disguise him as venison for dinner, but immediately must face another danger when he is suspected of having rabies (9.1–3); he is *gaudio . . . securus* upon becoming a pampered circus novelty after being mistreated for so long, but the horror and danger of the act he is expected to perform soon emerge.[24]

One can almost hear the echoes of Augustine's exclamation, *vae prosperitatibus saeculi semel et iterum a timore adversitatis et a corruptione laetitiae* (10.28.39). The figure which represents instability in human affairs in the novel is, of course, that of Fortuna. In abstract terms she stands for the precariousness of happiness based on false values; true values, embodied in Isis, are not susceptible to disruption by external forces. At one point (7.2.4–6) Apuleius specifically identifies Fortuna with "competing mistaken opinions" (*variae opiniones immo contrariae*) when he says she is responsible for the misconceptions people hold about the character of others. This

[22]Here Lucius' short-lived *laetitia* stems also from his anticipation of finding roses when he is freed; thus the important leitmotif of his frustrated search for roses reappears in the novel's later books.

[23]For *gestire* in the sense of complete absorption in the (false) desire or pleasure at hand, cf. 2.6.2 (of Lucius' desire to be privy to Pamphile's secrets); 10.19.2 (of the Corinthians' obsession with the novel animal act); and *Conf.* 2.3.6 (above, n. 7).

[24]As usual, the experiences of others mirror that of Lucius. For other instances of teasing *gaudium/laetitia* with disaster close on its heels, see, e.g., 1.17.19 (Aristomenes); 2.26–30 (Thelyphron); 4.16–18 (Democharis); 7.13, 8.1–14 (Charite and Tlepolemus). Occasionally, a reversal results in a happy ending, e.g., when the father of the victimized stepson has both his children restored to him (10.12), but given the novel's dominant patterns, we must view any joy as precarious (except in the case of Psyche [6.23–24], where happiness is divinely bestowed).

can be compared to Augustine's assertion that *errores et falsae opiniones* arise *si rationalis mens ipsa vitiosa est* (4.15.25), where the "corrupted rational mind" is one influenced by the principle of irrationality and disorder which in the novel's concrete terms is called Fortuna. For both Lucius and Augustine, adopting "true" beliefs and values means finding a realm beyond the reach of this principle. Indeed, once Lucius devotes himself to Isis, he is at last safe from Fortuna (11.15) and secure in his happiness. In both cases, conversion reveals a world of "true" desire, pleasure, and happiness, and exposes the temporal versions of these as traps which kept the converts mired in Fortuna's realm.

III

The crisis in values which the *Confessions* and the *Metamorphoses* describe can have radical consequences for the subject's perception of mortal life and human endeavor. Both works portray this altered worldview through some of the same metaphors and images. To begin with, conventional human life, with its mistaken premises and spurious goals, is seen as a mad delusion, a frenzied, often unconscious search for meaning which alights instead on diversions. It is an interminable lurching between desire and satiety, in which the soul is "spilled out in a diversity of activities" (O'Connell 25) with no focus or tenable rationale.[25] Only through obedience to God, Augustine says, *colligimur et redigimur in unum, a quo in multa defluximus* (10.29.40).

The idea of frenetic, deluded, and futile activity is dramatized by the use of metaphors of madness and rash abandon in both works. Augustine vows in the midst of his inquiry that once he finds truth (*sapientia*), he will renounce the "mad delusions" (*insaniae mendaces*, 6.11.18; cf., e.g., 8.2.4) upon which his current life is based. He likewise describes in terms of insanity his wrong-headed theological formulations (*mea insania*, 7.14.20), as well as the less well-intentioned errors of accepting conventional values (*furens aut in omnibus rebus errans*, 10.37.61) in order to garner praise in human society, of aiding and abetting the practitioners of rhetoric (who propagate *insaniae mendaces*, *furor*, and *deliramenta*, and whose admirers are *insani*, 9.2.2, 1.17.27, 8.2.5), and of succumbing to teenage lust (*vesania libidinis*, 2.2.4). A blind, headlong (*praeceps*) rashness combines with such hallucinations of value to hurl the soul into the "abyss of corruption." *praeceps ibam tanta caecitate*, Augustine recalls of his youthful impulses toward perdition (2.3.7); the language is repeated to describe Alypius' *caecum et praeceps studium* for the *insania circensium* (6.7.11–12). The stark image of the abyss (*abyssus*) as a symbol of spiritual ruin occurs frequently in the *Confessions* (e.g., 2.4.9, 9.1.1, 13.13.14, 13.14.15).

[25]The notion, with variations, is a religious-philosophical commonplace, and not only among Christians, Platonists, Isiac initiates, and combinations thereof: cf. Lucretius 3.1053–1084, and cf. particularly his *sitis* (1084) to that of Augustine and Lucius (see below, 52).

The quickening pace of frenetic and counterproductive activity in the *Metamorphoses* (particularly in Books 7 through 10, as the conversion draws closer) in itself constitutes an impression of *insania*. But in several passages in the novel, as in the *Confessions*, the language of madness, and of reckless and wilful persistence in self-destructive behavior, is enlisted to support the point. For example, Lucius is pictured as being out of his mind with excitement at the spectacle of Pamphile's transformation (3.22.1, *exterminatus animi attonitus in amentiam*); earlier, in spite of (or perhaps because of) his Aunt Byrrhena's warning to avoid the sinister proceedings in Milo's house, he is in a blind frenzy of desire to be admitted to them:

tantum a cautela Pamphiles afui ut etiam ultro gestirem . . . me volens . . . prorsus in ipsum barathrum saltu concito praecipitare. festinus denique et vecors animi . . . ad Milonis hospitium perniciter evolo (2.6.1–3).

Here, Lucius' image of wilful self-destruction—"hurling himself headlong (*praecipitare*), with quickened step, into the abyss" (here, *barathrum*)—is strikingly similar to the ones used regularly by Augustine. The novel, in fact, teems with mad passion and fury. Often it is provoked by erotic desire (the wicked stepmother is *vaesania praeceps*, 10.4.5; cf. Thrasyllus, who *in profundam ruinam cupidinis sese paulatim nescius praecipitaverat*, 8.2.6; and the Corinthian matron, possessed of a *vaesana libido*, 10.19.3). But it can also be driven by greed and pride, as is the case, for example, with the arrogant young landlord (*vaesanus, furiosus latro*) at 9.36.1, 9.38.5.

What motivates all this wild casting about? In Augustine's more fully formulated view, it is an innate and often unconscious "desire for God" which is deceived and diverted toward a myriad of temporal god-surrogates. As he puts it at 10.27.38, *ecce intus eras et ego foris et ibi te quaerebam*. The diversion of this desire results in a grotesque parody of holiness, with the deceived serving a demon who "imitates God in a perverse and distorted way" (*te perversa et distorta via imitanti*, 10.36.59; cf., e.g., 2.6.14). Augustine repeatedly refers to the *desiderium dei* as a (spiritual) hunger or thirst.[26] Of special interest are the passages in which he speaks in retrospect of his diffuse activities as a response made to this desire when it was only vaguely apprehended and not yet recognized for what it was. The activities in question could be as diverse as his early studies in science and philosophy (e.g., 3.6.10) to the effort to find "someone or something to love" (*quod amarem*) upon arriving in Carthage (3.1.1). In both these passages, Augustine speaks of himself as sampling diverse *fercula* in an effort to satisfy an *esurio* and a *sitis* which were actually for God.

Such remarks are relevant because they best correspond to Lucius' altogether oblivious experience of the *desiderium dei*. He gropes about with no awareness of his true need until it quite unexpectedly catches up with

[26]E.g., at 3.1.1, 6.10; 7.17.23; 9.4.10; 10.27.38; 11.1.1, 2.3, 30.40; 12.11.13; 13.13.14, 17.21.

him at the beginning of Book 11 (see above, 48 f., and note 21). He unwittingly diagnoses his own disease, however, when he styles himself a *sititor novitatis* at 1.2.6. Like Augustine, he knows that he thirsts after something; but at this rudimentary stage in his spiritual development he persists in attempting to extract from "novelty" the kind of satisfaction he can only find in Isis. In one word, *novitas* designates all the sources of false pleasure enumerated in the first two sections of this paper, inasmuch as the pleasure lies in their newness, which inevitably fades, and with it the pleasure.

A desire for the divine, then, is the sublimated cause of misguided behavior; allied with it to "turn the soul outward" is the inborn human drive of curiosity. According to Augustine, curiosity was one of the three main sins, along with pride and carnal lust, because it "goads [the soul] to taste of experience of every sort" (see O'Connell 25). This has the result of keeping man distracted from God, even as do the false desires and pleasures to which it is related. Curiosity has a wide range of objects in the *Confessions*. They include: *spectacula* of various sorts, from theatrical productions (1.10.16) and gladiatorial games, where Alypius is *curiositate victus* (6.8.13), to the *curiosae visiones* conjured up by sacrilegious rites (10.42.67); the *falsae fabellae* of drama (1.10.16) or of other literature (1.13.22); unfamiliar experiences (e.g., when Alypius contemplates getting married out of sheer curiosity about the married state, 6.12.22); and new pieces of scientific or miscellaneous knowledge (5.3.4; cf. 10.37.60, *curiositas supervacua cognoscendi*, and *Met.* 2.1.1, *cupidus cognoscendi*).[27] It is worth noting that in the above passages, *curiositas* is equated with desire (*desiderium*, *cupido*) in two of them (6.12, 10.42), and associated with pleasure (*voluptas*) in two others (6.8, 10.37).

Confessions 10.35 contains a lengthy discussion of curiosity and of why it is viewed as being spiritually destructive. Augustine essentially asserts that curiosity is to the mind what lust is to the body: it is a mental desire (*cupiditas*), a thirst for "gratification of the eye," since knowledge derives from actual or figurative seeing.[28] He condemns curiosity as a "lust for experience and knowledge" (*experiendi noscendique libido*) for its own sake which provokes people to direct their attention even toward ghastly sights (the example of a mutilated body is given; cf. *Met.* 8.6.6, the citizens' *studium* to view Tlepolemos' body) in order to create in themselves sensations of sorrow or horror.

[27]For general condemnations of curiosity in the *Conf.* see, e.g., 1.14.23; 3.3.5; 10.3.3; 13.20.28, 21.30.

[28]*inest animae . . . experiendi per carnem vana et curiosa cupiditas nomine cognitionis et scientiae palliata. quae quoniam in appetitu noscendi est, oculi autem sunt ad noscendum in sensibus principes, concupiscentia oculorum eloquio divino adpellata est;* cf. 1 *John* 2:16, and *Conf.* 10.34.52, *resisto seductionibus oculorum, ne inplicentur pedes mei . . . et erigo ad te invisibiles oculos.*

Consolidating his list of common objects of curiosity, Augustine also mentions freaks and prodigies displayed in public shows (*in spectaculis . . . miracula*), natural phenomena, the theater, astrological inquiry, and sacrilegious rites. Of special interest in relation to Lucius' weaknesses is the inclusion in this list of "magical arts," in particular necromancy, as well as foolish tales and unexpected (though often quite mundane, e.g., a spider catching flies) sights. What is the harm in giving free rein to these impulses? They focus on "trivial and insignificant matters" which clutter the mind and distract it from serious thoughts. When these diversions appear, they reduce people to idle gaping (*vanus hebescere*); once they are stored in memory as *nugatoriae cogitationes*, they interrupt efforts to reflect and pray. (In addition, of course, dabbling in black magic and other unorthodox rites introduces thorny questions of sacrilege and blasphemy.)

No one would deny that curiosity is one of the primary engines of action in the *Metamorphoses*. Many of the important instances of the indulgence of curiosity in the novel have already been enumerated (see above, 44–45 and note 16; also 45–47, and note 19). Here I would only reiterate that Lucius, at the story's very outset, identifies himself as one who is "curious about everything" (*curiosus alioquin*, 2.6.1), and *qui velim scire vel cuncta vel certe plurima* (1.2.6); and that in the course of the novel the objects to which he applies this urge include but are not limited to the Augustinian sources of nemesis: black magic, with its promise of altered states and wondrous sights; non-magical *spectacula* from the institutionalized (i.e., shows and games) to the most random; and the numerous allegedly "pleasant" (*lepidae*) *fabulae* which bind the novel together. In the scenes in which Lucius comes to a dead stop in the midst of a pressing crisis to take blithe note of an unusual sight (e.g., at 8.17.3, in the midst of an attack of mad dogs; and at 10.29, immediately preceding his dreaded performance in the arena), the warning of Augustine that curiosity has the power to distract us from serious thought is graphically illustrated.

All of these diversions are united by the common property of *novitas*, the thirst for which, it will be remembered, Lucius admits is at the heart of most of his actions (1.2.6). The search for novelty motivates others in the novel as well, for example, the crowd gathering to get a glimpse of Democharès' new "bear:"

ut novitas consuevit ad repentinas visiones animos hominum pellicere, multi numero mirabundi bestiam confluebant, quorum satis callenter curiosos aspectus Thrasyleon . . . impetu minaci frequenter inhibebat (4.16.4).[29]

[29]Cf. 10.16.3, the glee of Thiasos at the *novitas spectaculi* of an ass eating human food, and 10.23.1, Lucius' keeper sees the potential of pleasing his master with a *novum spectaculum*. Somewhat different, but related, are the sadistic enjoyment of the citizens of Hypata of the "contrived novelty" (*commenta novitas*, 3.11.3) of the Risus Festival; and the temptation of

Augustine never explicitly connects curiosity with *novitas,* but the implication in 10.35 and elsewhere is certainly that the thrill of novelty is the lure of activities inspired by curiosity. Moreover, he identifies the appeal of what is new as at least the partial culprit in his perverse behavior when he refers to the newfound worldly vices of his youth as *novissimarum rerum fugaces pulchritudines* (2.2.3), and to the Manichaean teachings of which he was enamored as the *novitas haeresis illius* (3.12.21).

But the issue here is not whether the theme of curiosity is shared between the two works, for it inarguably is. The question is rather whether the *Metamorphoses* condemns curiosity in the same way as the *Confessions* does. From the similarity of curiosity's objects and of the behavior resulting from its indulgence in both works, and from the fact that in the novel curiosity is portrayed as harmful at worst and as insipid at best, it is clear that Apuleius anticipated Augustine's condemnation of curiosity. An explicit statement of disapproval comes in the *Metamorphoses* at 11.15.1, where the priest of Isis includes among the aspects of Lucius' old life to be renounced his *curiositas inprospera.*

But the most important point of community (and the point that has been missed) between the two treatments of curiosity lies in the rationale for its condemnation: it is not so much that curiosity is responsible for the violation of sexual and metaphysical taboos, as that chronic curiosity in itself, whatever its objects, is a primary symptom of incorrect spiritual orientation in general. In a very real sense, it is incidental whether curiosity motivates a foray into the forbidden realm of black magic, or momentary, idle diversion by some apparently benign sight or sound. One is deliberate, dangerous in its own right, the other impulsive, inconsequential; but both betray the same need, consciously or unconsciously perceived, and the same reliance on surrogate sources of satisfying it. This attitude is condemned as "sinful," more than the acts it spawns. Both authors make this clear by the range of objects each ascribes to curiosity, with the implication that these are being equated and that the differences among them are only of degree.[30]

Myrmex by gold coins gleaming with *nimia novitas* (9.18.4). The latter use carries a double meaning, I think, in that the coins were literally new, i.e., newly minted, and at the same time offered to Myrmex a "novel" experience, that of possessing wealth.

[30]See above, n. 1, for citations of studies of *curiositas* as a link between the two works; see also S. Lancel, "*Curiositas* et préoccupations spirituelles chez Apulée," *RHR* 160 (1961) 25–46; C. Schlam, "The Curiosity of *The Golden Ass*," *CJ* 64 (1968–69) 120–125. These articles concentrate on ideas of curiosity as the impulse behind the deliberate search for illegitimate knowledge, be it in the form of unsanctioned intellectual and spiritual fare or illicit sexual pleasure. But in both works the *curiosi* are just as likely to be distracted spontaneously as they are to be engaging consciously in a directed quest; by including instances of the first type of curiosity, Apuleius suggests and Augustine makes it quite clear (esp. in 10.35) that they are not to be simply overlooked as insignificant, but rather viewed as a telling manifestation of a larger pattern of behavior.

Two final forces help to keep human beings on a crooked path, according to the two converts: wilfulness and complacency or habit. Augustine speaks frequently of the necessity to struggle against his own "iron will" (*ferrea voluntas*) with its myopic desires (8.5.10, *et passim*). Lucius too would have done well to resist the *perversitas voluntatis detortae in infima* (*Conf.* 7.16.22). Apuleius draws attention to the obstinate wilfulness of Lucius' self-destructive behavior when he has him describe himself as leaping *volens* into the abyss of magical experimentation (2.6.2). Likewise, albeit with less cataclysmic results, Lucius allows himself to become a "willing slave" to the voluptuous Photis (*in servilem modum addictus atque mancipatus . . . volens*, 3.19.5; cf. 3.22.1, where Pamphile is transformed into a bird *volens*).

Augustine connects the twin weights of will and habit at 8.5.12:

lex enim peccati est violentia consuetudinis, qua trahitur et tenetur etiam invitus animus eo merito, quo in eam volens inlabitur.

Many times elsewhere he stresses the nearly insurmountable difficulties of breaking out of familiar modes of behavior and thought, which one must do if one is to know God.[31] At 7.1.2, he berates himself for being hindered by a mind "stopped up" (*incrassatus corde*, cf. *Matt.* 13:15) with conventional images which circumscribe his efforts to formulate a Christology. Lucius has his own opinions about this problem, as he reveals when he attacks the rationalistic incredulity of Aristomenes' unnamed fellow traveller in 1.3.2–3. The traveller should loosen his "clogged ears and stubborn heart" (*crassae aures et obstinatum cor*) in order to comprehend that part of reality which is "beyond the grasp of (conventional) thought" (*supra captum cogitationis*). This is Lucius' advice. Yet at this point it is only with respect to his belief in wonder-tales that Lucius himself displays an unfettered mind; in all other regards his thoughtless and compulsive behavior is that of a complacent creature intrepidly "keep[ing] upright by dead habit," to borrow James' eminently applicable description of a subject unwittingly slouching toward conversion (see above, note 21). Yet in the end it is Lucius' trusting and credulous nature which enables him to accept Isis, the true wonder.

Devaluation of worldly activity causes the sensible world around both narrators to show itself to them in a new light. Many of the same metaphors occur to both converts to express the unreality of what they had accepted as reality. With the actions within it stripped of meaning, their environment acquires a correspondingly nebulous and threatening quality.[32] To Augus-

[31]E.g., 3.7.13; 7.17.23; 8.7.18; 9.2.1 (*sed aegritudo animi est, quia non totus assurgit veritate sublevatus, consuetudine praegravatus*), 9.11.26; 10.30.41, 40.65.

[32]James 128–130, 167 discusses the "altered and estranged aspect which the world assumed" in the eyes of many of those caught in the throes of a conversion crisis, as a result of its phenomena losing the value that had been attached to them. "The world now looks remote, strange, sinister, uncanny . . . double-faced and unhomelike . . . ."

tine, his earthly sojourn was a tentative wandering "on a dark and slippery path" (*per tenebras et lubricum,* 6.1.1; cf. 4.2.2, where his *fides* is described as *lapsans in lubrico*). Naturally, he was constantly losing his footing on this treacherous ground, covered as it was at every turn with traps and snares (*insidiae* and *laquei*) in the form of worldly values and false beliefs.[33] After his conversion he sees these temptations for the illusions they are: *dilexeram enim vanitatem et quaesieram mendacium . . . in phantasmatis enim, quae pro veritate tenueram, vanitas erat et mendacium* (10.4.9, drawing on *Ps.* 4:3; also 3.7.2, *et passim*). In view of the unreliability of evidence collected by the senses, Augustine stresses the need to evaluate appearance according to the absolute standards of truth which the mind must struggle to keep continually in sight: *illi* [*apparentem speciem*] *intellegunt, qui eius vocem acceptam foris intus cum veritate conferunt* (10.6.10).

Lucius too finds his footsteps planted on *terra infirma.* Like Augustine, he spent his life before conversion on the "slippery path" (*lubricum*) of uncritical youth, as the priest reminds him at 11.15.1 (cf. 1.6.4, where Socrates warns Aristomenes to beware of the "slippery meanderings" [*lubricae ambages*] of Fortuna). He is beset by actual *insidiae* and *laquei* (e.g., at 2.18.4, 7.25.3, 8.15.8, 8.16.6) even as Augustine is by metaphorical ones. These physical pitfalls moreover have their figurative counterpart in the malignant deception routinely practiced in the novel's human society.[34]

The deceptiveness of appearances which Lucius encounters constantly in the course of his travels is vividly epitomized at 2.1.3–5. On his first morning in Hypata, he explores the city with an overwhelming sensation of the murky surrealism of his surroundings: *nec fuit in illa civitate quod aspiciens id esse crederem quod esset, sed omnia prorsus ferali murmure in aliam effigiem translata.* He goes on to describe his impression that the stones upon which he treads, as well as the birds, trees, and fountains, have somehow materialized *de corporibus humanis;* and that the statues are on the verge of taking steps, the walls and mute beasts of speaking. In this passage Lucius is shown groping tentatively, suspiciously (and with breathless excitement) along shifting ground where the evidence of the senses is not to be trusted.

An obvious explanation for this kind of scene is that one of the main subjects of the novel is, of course, magic, particularly magical metamorphosis, and that such scenes help to create the proper atmosphere for magical doings. After all, Apuleius announces in the proem his intention to relate *figuras fortunasque hominum in alias imagines conversas et in se rursum mutuo nexu refectas,* and thus to "enchant" (*permulcere*) the ears of his

[33]E.g., 3.6.10; 4.6.11;5.3.3, 7.13; 6.12.21; 7.21.27; 10.31.44, 34.52, 35.56, 36.59.

[34]See above, n. 17; add to those passages 10.24.2 (to commence her crime spree the Corinthian *vilis coepit puellam . . . crudelissimis laqueis mortis insidiari*); 10.24.5 (the girl *laqueos insidiarum accessit*); 10.27.3 (the doctor's wife is *laqueis fraudium . . . inducta*).

listeners (1.1.1–2). But the methods of the *Metamorphoses* in portraying other religious ideas suggest that magic too is to be taken as an overarching metaphor for the natural transience and instability of the material world, in which we are lulled and bewitched by appearance and apparent value. In this connection Apuleius' use of *defixus* to illustrate some of the more extreme forms of spiritual derailment should be remembered: a secondary meaning of this participle is "magically bewitched or enchanted" (cf. *defixionum tabellae,* tablets of magical incantations). Significantly, the same use of magic as metaphor comes naturally enough to Augustine, who, quoting Paul (*Gal.* 3:3), asks this rhetorical question of the unconverted: *o stulti Galatae, quis vos fascinavit*: "who has cast a spell on you?" (13.13.14).[35]

In a world view characterized by the perception of seductive falseness everywhere, a spirit of paradox prevails. Augustine realizes that what he had thought to be a life of perfect freedom was in fact one of utter slavery to false desire and paralyzing habit. It was a *falsa libertas* (3.8.16, cf. *passim*) which he enjoyed. Typically, he traces even the pear raid to an ongoing effort to experience, slave though he was, an "imperfect freedom" (*manca libertas*); *ecce ille servus fugiens dominum suum et consecutus umbram,* he rues (2.6.14). Likewise Lucius acknowledges that he is a slave to Photis and the tempting diversions she represents (3.19.5, *in servilem modum addictus atque mancipatus*); and at 11.15.1 the priest chides him for having fallen *ad serviles voluptates,* where his devotion to magic and sex are particularly alluded to, but by extension all the other forms that false pleasure had assumed for him. As with his Christian counterpart, it is only through service to his goddess that he can, paradoxically, know true freedom (*cum coeperis deae servire, tunc magis senties fructum tuae libertatis,* 11.15.5).

It is not surprising that the view of a dangerous and inhospitable world which the two converts share would engender a feeling of being dispossessed, an exile in search of a home. Augustine says that God's realm alone is his true *patria* (7.20.26; cf. 7.21.27), and remembers his misguided past as a time when he wandered "far from God into a distant region" (*in longinquam regionem,* 4.16.30; cf. 12.11.13, *anima cuius peregrinatio longinqua facta est*). Exile is a common fate in the novel also: both Aristomenes and Thelyphron are barred from their homelands and consigned to rootless wandering the rest of their days (1.19.12, *per diversas et avias solitudines aufugi et . . . relicta patria et lare ultroneum exilium amplexus;* 2.30.9, *nec . . . Lari me patrio reddere potui*). Lucius, on the other hand, with characteristic brazen-

[35]Cf. 10.42.67, where fallen Christians are spoken of as having been deceived by the magical powers of demons (*potestates aeris huius, a quibus per potentias magicas deciperentur*); but this magic would appear to be more literal than metaphorical. In fact, it is difficult to separate literal from metaphorical references to magic in authors who lived in a world where magic was taken seriously by virtually everyone, and often seen as the nemesis of true religion; both authors seem to me to interweave elements of both uses.

ness, embraces a voluntary exile as a man when he pledges to Photis, *iam denique nec larem requiro nec domuitionem paro et nocte ista nihil antepono* (3.19.6).[36] He willingly (and wilfully) postpones his homecoming for the pleasure of the moment, little suspecting the extent of the exile this is inviting upon himself.

CONCLUSION

Previous efforts to trace the development of a religious undercurrent beneath the fun and games in Apuleius' novel have rested on the claim that Isiac elements pervade the entire work, or the assumption that the acts of indulging in sex and magic are the particular "sins" from which Isis "redeems" Lucius. The foregoing pages have revealed, however, the presence of the more fundamental religious theme of the pursuit of false values, one which the novel shares, *mutatis mutandis*, with the unmitigated conversion account of Augustine. This theme provides the key to the inveterate question of the novel's unity as well: the false values of the old life are finally set right in Book 11, replaced by divine truth; Lucius' experiences before conversion are like the negative of a photograph, which is only fully developed, so to speak, in the final book. The unity of the work lies in the inverse relationship between the pre-conversion and the post-conversion books.[37]

Once Lucius leaves behind the world of variety and begins to participate in the transcendent, eternal order which Isis represents, he finds an unchanging focus for the energy which before had been dissipated on a wide and varied range of objects. His desire now has a constant object, his pleasure a constant source. In Book 11 the vocabulary is transferred to Isis along with the emotions: his *studium*, his *cupido*, his *desiderium* long for Isis alone (1.4, 21.2, 21.3, and 24.6, where he is caught in the *ardentissimi desiderii retinacula*); from that same sole source emanates all his pleasure (24.5, *inexplicabili voluptate simulacri divini perfruebar*). At last true, enduring *gaudium* is his (7.1, 7.3, 15.4, 17.4–5, 29.4–5); significantly, the novel closes on a definitive note of resounding joy (*gaudens obibam*, 30.5). Lucius' passion for Isis is not portrayed as merely the latest in a series of passing obsessions; she is not meant as just another wonder to engage his attention temporarily. These eleven books are all the evidence Apuleius has given us; the journey of Lucius ends here. In view of this, it is more natural to infer that he is intended to be seen as having finally found the true object of his soul's distracted longing.

Here too, Lucius' experience forms a fictional counterpart to that of Augustine. Speaking throughout the *Confessions* in the voice of one now

[36]Cf. Socrates, who prefers *voluptatem Veneriam et scortum scorteum Lari et liberis* (1.1.8).

[37]For a summary of other schools of thought on the unity problem, consult the annotated bibliography of C. Schlam, "The Scholarship on Apuleius since 1938," *CW* 64 (1971) 293–299.

enlightened, Augustine meditates at intervals on God's revelation of true value, as compared with the paltry substitutes he used to accept, and the cheap imitations human pride constructs (see especially 2.6.13–14). With his *desiderium* accurately identified, Augustine knows that there is only one source of genuine pleasure (*iucunditas*, e.g., 8.5.10; *suavitas*, e.g., 9.1, contrasted with the *suavitates nugarum; delectatio*, e.g., 11.29.39, *nec veniens nec praeteriens*, 8.1.2, 13.18.23; *deliciae*, e.g., 12.16.23 and 13.21.29, where the *deliciae mortiferae* are opposed to the *puri cordis vitales deliciae*); and ultimately of true joy and happiness.[38] Furthermore, Augustine understands his conversion figuratively as a metamorphosis. Before, he was *deformis* with corruption (10.27; cf. 8.8.12, it pleased God *reformare deformia mea*); conversion rescued him from "distraction and [psychic] deformity" (*a dispersione et deformitate*, 12.16.23)—an apt description of what Lucius, with Isis' help, escapes in the flesh.

Augustine clearly was familiar with both the novel and the philosophical treatises of his compatriot (*De Civ. Dei* 4.2; 8.10–27; 9.2–8). Although it seems unlikely that he would deliberately look for inspiration to a pagan whom he regarded as a spinner of dangerous tales, the closeness of the verbal parallels and the similarities in the formulation of the problem suggest some degree of debt on Augustine's part nevertheless. Yet for the basic scheme of false values as opposed to true, he need not have drawn from anything beyond his own experience: comparison with other personal accounts shows that the same spontaneous disillusionment with the sensible world's values generally prefigures conversion to a "higher" system of value, whatever its details.[39] Only those who are temperamentally predisposed to be unhappy with the world as it is are attracted to dualistic systems. Experience tends to initiate conversion, and doctrine to follow, and although there is a point where the two overlap, where experience is codified into doctrine and doctrine could suggest experience, all in all it is, I think, experience and not doctrine which both Augustine and Apuleius describe.

[38]For *gaudium* see, e.g., 2.2.2; 2.10.18 (where God furthermore provides "satiety without end"—*insatiabilis satietas*; cf. 10.31.43, *satietas mirifica*); 7.7.11; 8.3.8; 9.4.7, 10.25 (following the mystical experience at Ostia), 10.22–23; 11.2.3; 12.16.23, *et passim*; *laetitia*, e.g., 9.4.10.

[39]See, e.g., James' chapters on conversion (6–10); E. R. Dodds, *Pagan and Christian in an Age of Anxiety: Some Aspects of Religious Experience from M. Aurelius to Constantine* (Cambridge 1965), esp. ch. 1, "Man and the Material World." Dodds' usefulness for our purposes obtains regardless of one's judgment of the validity of his construct. That James and Dodds shared the goal of divesting the "underlying personal experience" of its formal trappings is confirmed when Dodds states explicitly that he means to pursue the suggestion of Nilsson that "for a study of the religious experience of late antiquity in William James' sense there is abundant material" (2). Nock (above, n. 2) 171, 173–174, 179–182, 185, like Dodds, saw that religious and philosophical conversion could be psychologically and functionally comparable, and reminds us that the very idea (and image) of conversion had originated in philosophical, specifically Platonic, discourse (*Rep.* 518d–519b), but had come to be applied much more generally.

For this reason it is not necessary to invoke common philosophical sources to explain the similar pattern of the two works. The Platonic studies of both authors are well known, and the works in question may indeed contain Platonic references and Platonizing elements.[40] However, the scheme discussed here is too generic to be attached by Apuleius' time to Platonism alone, in spite of its superficially Platonic ring. Lucretius expressed similar ideas; so did Dante.[41] No Platonists these—just sundry "converts" in the broadest sense, expressing the fundamental attitudinal reorientation which characterizes the adoption of virtually any religious or philosophical system. In view of this, I think that the pre-conversion portions of the accounts of Apuleius and Augustine are to be taken at their word as preparation for conversion to Isis and Christianity respectively rather than as coded Platonic treatises.

What all this could mean for the question of the degree to which the novel is autobiographical is well beyond the scope of this study. Yet whether it can be said that the parallels revealed here argue for further revision of a still too common notion of pagan conversion in the real world (as opposed to a fictional version) as a rather bloodless affair, long on ritual but short on emotional satisfaction, depends to some extent on the reality of Apuleius' account. Suffice it to say here that if the sudden intrusion of *Madaurensis pauper* (11.27.9) and the apparently sincere fervor and accurate detail of *Met.* 11[42] convince the reader that Apuleius is telling his own story of conversion to Isis, then the element of personal experience suggested by Lucius' Augustinian perceptions throughout the novel supports a view that the books dealing with his misadventures before conversion constitute the prerequisite account of the author's progress toward her.

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[40]For possibly Platonic aspects of the *Met.* see, e.g., R. Thibau, "Les Métamorphoses d'Apulée et la théorie platonicienne de L'Erôs," *StudPhilosophCandensia* 3 (1965) 89–144; C. Schlam, "Platonica in the *Metamorphoses* of Apuleius," *TAPA* 101 (1970) 477–487; also C. Moreschini, "La demonologia medioplatonica e le *Metamorfosi* di Apuleio," *Maia* 17 (1965) 30–64; D. Pottle, *The Platonic Elements in the Metamorphoses of Apuleius* (diss., Tufts University 1978). Most Platonic interpretation focuses for obvious reasons on the story of Cupid and Psyche; for a summary of theories see P. Grimal's commentary on the tale (Paris 1963) 1–31.

[41]See above, n. 25; in the *Divine Comedy*, e.g., *Purg.* 10.1–3, 16.85–93, 30.130–132, 31.34–36; *Par.* 1.130–135.

[42]On the abrupt identification of author with narrator see most recently R. van der Paardt, "The Unmasked 'I'," *Mnemosyne* 36 (1981) 96–106, where a brief history of opinions on the matter is given. J. Griffiths' commentary on *Met.* 11 (*The Isis-Book* [Leiden 1976]) offers abundant substantiation of Apuleius' picture of Isiac initiation.