FICTIVE FAMILIES: FAMILY AND HOUSEHOLD
IN THE *METAMORPHOSES* OF APULEIUS

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"The line separating the historian from the novelist becomes faint; it is principally in their intentions that they differ. The novelist aims at a lifelike and coherent plausibility to illustrate universal aspects of human nature; for the historian plausibility is a tool by which he seeks to find what actually happened."

P. A. Brunt, *The Fall of the Roman Republic*

I

I BEGIN WITH A DESCRIPTION of a wealthy Roman family. Its head is a husband and father who owns urban property and estates in the country, together with many slaves who serve as domestics and farm workers. He and his wife belong to an extensive circle of relatives, *cognati* and *affines*, and their house in the city is full of *vernae* and *alumni*. It is also used to receiving clients. The husband and wife have a virgin daughter who is sought in marriage by two suitors, and it is they who decide which one she will marry. A rich man from a neighbouring city who brings gifts to further his cause they reject, deeming his character unsuitable; instead they choose their daughter's cousin, a young man who has grown up with the daughter in their own household and who is just three years older than she. A mutual affection between the two is recognised. The couple are formally betrothed, and in due course their union, a marriage *cum manu*, is celebrated. Almost at once, however, the new bride finds herself widowed when her cousin-husband is killed in a hunting accident. Then, making the decision herself, she agrees to marry the suitor her parents had originally rejected, on condition that the required mourning period for her first husband, a year, is properly observed (and that their compact is kept secret meantime). This arrangement, however, is sadly brought to nothing by the sudden deaths of both the young woman and the suitor, and so the parents are left childless and the prospects of the grandchildren the mother, in particular, had anticipated are completely destroyed. The future of the family consequently is thrown into jeopardy.

This is a fairly full account of a Roman family's history. But it is not comprehensive, and in this respect it is typical of all Roman family case-histories, which are never more than partially or episodically known, even in the best examples such as that of Cicero's family. The material available to historians wishing to reconstitute Roman family life is by definition severely defective. None the less, in this description any number of features historians have come to regard as characteristic of the lives of elite Roman families can be recognised: the way in which related children who were not siblings might be raised together in

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one household, the way in which parents are assumed to have responsibility for arranging a child's, especially a daughter's, first marriage, the importance to the family of character in the selection of a husband and of sexual innocence when a woman first marries, the rituals of courtship, the custom of betrothal and the formality of a *iustum matrimonium*, the reality of early widowhood and a woman's relative independence in the choice of a second partner, the hopes invested in marriage for descendants and family continuity, and, above all, the utter unpredictability of the life-cycle, which through untimely death could quickly doom a family to extinction. It would be easy, therefore, to think of this family as a senatorial family from the central period of Rome's history.[1]

Yet this is not the case. The family is not an historical family at all but a family from Apuleius' *Metamorphoses*, the story of the reckless Lucius and his dangerous pursuit of magic, which transforms him into an ass and subjects him to a series of trials and humiliations before he is eventually restored to human form through the beneficent intervention of the goddess Isis. It is the family in fact of Charite, the young woman who enters Lucius' story when she is abducted and held hostage by the brigands to whom at that stage of his adventures Lucius the Ass belongs (*Met.* 4.23–24, 26–27; 7.13–15; 8.1–14). It was misleading of me therefore to call this family a Roman family, and not only because its history comes from a fictional source: Apuleius' story is set in Greece, and Charite's family is thus if anything a Greek family. What I wish to propose in this essay, however, is that the *Metamorphoses*, although a fictional source, contains a great deal of information about family life under the high Roman Empire that captures Roman historical experience. I shall begin simply by describing some of the relevant information, and then contend that the *Metamorphoses* is a uniquely important source for historians of the Roman family. My argument assumes that a fictional source may well reflect the actual historical context in which it was written, despite, as in this case, the elements of fantasy that might obtrude.

<center>II</center>

As a starting-point I want to illustrate how the novel displays a wide range of family forms and household configurations (the two are not synonymous), and to show how it expresses a set of assumptions about what is normative in family life.

The familial universe

At the top of society, there are various decurial families, comparable to that of Charite, such as the family in whose household the Ass finds himself towards the end of his long ordeal (*Met.* 10.1–12). Like Charite's father, the decurion in

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[1] For the conventions of Roman family life (with reference particularly to elite families), see Rawson 1986; 1991; Bradley 1991; Treggiari 1991a (cf. 1991b); Dixon 1992; Saller 1994; Rawson and Weaver 1997.

this case is a wealthy owner of landed estates and slaves, and he has a wife and two sons, the younger of whom is precisely twelve years old. None of the family members has a name. The sons are, it happens, half-brothers, the product of two marriages. Their father's wife is his second wife, whom he married after his first wife's death. The current wife is much younger than her husband. In their story she becomes sexually attracted to her adult stepson, and with the help of a wicked slave sets in motion a dastardly plot to seduce him. Her scheme misfires, however, and her advances are rejected. She decides therefore to murder the young man, only to find her own son accidentally killed by the poison she has prepared for his brother. To save herself, the wife falsely accuses the older son of both killing his younger brother and making adulterous overtures to her. The wretched husband, who is hopelessly devoted to his wife, anticipates the loss of both sons, for the penalty the older child must pay is surely death. The older son is put on trial, but the truth is eventually revealed through the good graces of the doctor, also a decurion, who had made available the poison. Suspecting foul play, the doctor had provided the woman not with poison but a sleeping-draught. So the younger son is restored to life, the innocence of the older son is revealed, the wicked slave is executed, and the horrible stepmother is sent into exile.

At a lower social level, there are families of a type seen less frequently in most sources than elite families. One example is the three-generational family of Socrates of Aegium, a travelling merchant who, returning from a profitable journey to Macedonia, is first robbed by bandits and then reduced to beggary by a seductive innkeeper, a witch no less, at Hypata in Thessaly (*Met.* 1.5–8). He is met there by a fellow citizen, another itinerant merchant named Aristomenes, who tells him that after a nine months' absence from his home Socrates has been given up for dead. Socrates' wife, grief-stricken, has conducted his funeral, guardians (*tutores*) have been appointed for his children by a Roman official (the *iuridicus provincialis*), and his wife's parents are now urging her to find a new husband. A second example is the much smaller family of an anonymous day-labourer, an *operarius* who lives with his wife in no more than a tiny hut (*cellula*) (*Met.* 9.5–7); the family, that is, contains just two members. The couple are miserably poor—she spins wool day and night to help make ends meet—and own hardly anything other than a storage jar large enough to conceal the wife's lover. Comparable couples elsewhere in the novel are a market-gardener and his wife (*Met.* 4.3), and a fuller and his wife (*Met.* 9.24–25). There is also another doctor and his wife, the doctor this time not a decurion (*Met.* 10.28).

At the bottom of the social scale there are slave families, both rural and urban. The Ass tells of one slave family in a country village that met with tragedy (*Met.* 8.22). The husband was a farm bailiff who managed a farm, supervised the other slaves who worked there, and kept the estate's accounts. His wife was a fellow slave, and they had a newborn child. The husband, however, became involved with a free woman who lived off the estate. So in a burst of jealousy his wife wrecked her husband's accounts, destroyed the contents of a barn for which he was

responsible, and then killed her baby before taking her own life. When he learned what had happened, the slave's owner cruelly tortured the faithless husband until he too was dead. Another slave family appears in the urban household of a leading provincial citizen where the Ass finds himself while in the service of some priests of the Syrian Goddess (*Met.* 8.31). The husband is a cook, his wife a fellow slave, and they too have a child, a son. This family also has a brush with tragedy when a choice piece of meat meant for the master's dinner is stolen by a dog and the cook, terrified of incurring his master's anger, prepares to kill himself. Disaster is averted, however, when his loyal wife has the inspired idea of killing the Ass in order to replace the lost meat.

The household universe

The most impressive households in the *Metamorphoses* are those of provincial aristocrats. The household of Charite's father is a prime example, but there are other comparable households in the novel in which members of the elite are shown as wealthy property owners, often with sizeable complements of slaves. Spouses and children, however, may not always be brought to the fore. Thus in one case (*Met.* 9.33–39) a rich slaveowning *paterfamilias* appears no longer to have a wife at all, but he does have three adult sons who all seem to be living with him, all as yet unmarried as far as one can tell. In another, a rich young landowner who threatens to steal the holdings of a poor neighbour is a man of noble lineage with many slaves at his disposal, but no immediate relatives are associated with him (*Met.* 9.35–38). The household of Lucius' aunt Byrrhaena is especially magnificent (*Met.* 2.2–4, 19–20). Her house in Hypata has an atrium full of wonderful statuary and a dining room spacious enough to entertain a large number of guests, and any number of domestic servants to wait upon them. But Byrrhaena, although married, never identifies her husband nor does she say whether she has any children. Notably she does inform Lucius that she and Lucius' mother had been raised together, had shared the same nurse and grown up as sisters, and that she had helped raise Lucius himself as a child. (Similarly in the mythical story of Psyche and Cupid which appears midway through the novel Psyche's sisters presume that they will help rear her baby once the child is born [*Met.* 5.14].) The impression of communal childrearing Byrrhaena conveys is the same, therefore, as that already seen in Charite's household. Wealthy provincials, however, do not always live in large households. The decurion and moneylender Chryseros of Thebes lives all by himself in a hovel (*gurgustiolum*), concealing his cash to avoid the demands of civic responsibility (*Met.* 4.9–10), while Milo of Hypata, another niggardly moneylender and Lucius' host at the beginning of the story, also inhabits a *gurgustiolum*—a small, ill-furnished lodging, apparently, though it contains at least two *cubicula*, two storerooms, a room for eating, a space for cooking, and a stable (*Met.* 1.21–23; 3.22–28). The only other inhabitants of this residence are Milo's wife Pamphile and their one slave Photis.

At a much lower level are the households of the free but less privileged. The tiny shack of the poor day labourer and his wife has already been noticed (*Met.* 9.5–7). But there is also a second, impoverished, market-gardener who lives alone in a cottage (*casula*) (*Met.* 9.32), while an old woman of Thebes who is robbed while sleeping in the upper storey *cubiculum* of her little house (*turguriolum*) is also a solitary, though she has rich neighbours nearby (*Met.* 4.12). In contrast, a miller is prosperous enough to own some slaves to work his mill; he and his monotheistic wife are the neighbours of the fuller and the fuller's wife (*Met.* 9.10–17, 22).

Slaves in the *Metamorphoses* enjoy a variety of living arrangements, and in a sense comprise households within households. A pastry cook and a chef who belong to the rich Thiasus of Corinth are brothers, and eat and sleep in a cell (*cellula*) that is presumably small but large enough to accommodate the Ass as well at one point of his story (*Met.* 10.13). The town house of Demochares of Plataea, another wealthy decurion, also has cells (*cellae*) for the large retinue of slaves he maintains (*Met.* 4.18). In Milo's house, on the other hand, Lucius' slaves have to sleep on the floor outside his room (*Met.* 2.15), though this is obviously a temporary arrangement and Photis seems normally to have a room to herself. In the country, the herdsmen of Charite's family live with their wives and children in makeshift cottages (*casae*), forming as a result of the kind of work they do a clan-like community rather than a sequence of sharply defined nuclear families. When an emergency intervenes, they abandon their homes *en masse* under the leadership of the chief herdsman and flee together in search of a new place in which to continue to live as a group (*Met.* 7.15, 17–28; 8.15–23).

Family norms

When Lucius first meets his host Milo, the moneylender enquires of a mutual friend in Corinth: *"quam salve agit,"* inquit *"Demeas noster? quid uxor? quid liberi? quid vernaculi?"* (*Met.* 1.26: "Now," he asked, "how is my friend Demeas? and his wife? and the children? and the servants?" [tr. Kenney]). The combination of parents, children, and home-born slaves might be taken to represent the ideal urban household as conceived by a man like Milo, or so the storyteller, and the reader, might assume. But what precisely is the character of family life Apuleius presents as normative in the *Metamorphoses*? I consider now three aspects of family behaviour.

1. *Marriage.* The selection of a marriage partner in the world of the *Metamorphoses* is not a matter of individual will but a corporate family affair, at least in the case of a first marriage. The parental decision made for Charite illustrates this for elite society, despite the affection Charite and her cousin, whose name is Tlepolemus, share; and from an intricate tale the Ass tells about a woman condemned to the beasts who is to appear with him in a live sex-show, the example can be added of an unnamed upper-class brother who arranges to marry his sister to a friend and gives her a dowry from his own resources (*Met.*

10.23). At the level of society represented by the merchant Socrates, the wider family is also involved in encouraging a widow to take a new husband, no matter what the woman's personal inclination (*Met.* 1.5–6; there is something of a stigma to being a widow: *Met.* 5.30)—the prospect of union bringing joy to the whole family (*Met.* 1.6). Even in the story of Psyche and Cupid a father is assumed to have a special responsibility for securing a husband for his daughter (*Met.* 4.32), and it is important in his calculations that marriage be between social equals: status dissonance in marriage is a recipe for family dissension and might lead to questions about the very legitimacy of the union (*Met.* 5.24; 6.9, 23). It is appropriate that a decurion's wife should be a woman of good birth and great beauty (*uxorem generosam et eximia formositate*, *Met.* 9.17).

The ideal marital relationship in the *Metamorphoses* is one of harmony between husband and wife, as the miller's (ironic) words to his wife's lover make clear: *nam et ipse semper cum mea coniuge tam concorditer vixi ut ex secta prudentium eadem nobis ambobus placerent* (*Met.* 9.27: "I've always lived so harmoniously with my wife that, as the wise recommend, our views on everything have always coincided" [tr. Kenney]). There should be *fides* on both sides (*Met.* 5.13, 23), and ideally again marriage is to last for ever (*Met.* 6.23). The proper nature of marital affection, furthermore, is symbolised by the love (*sanctae caritatis affectione*, *Met.* 4.26: "chaste affection" [tr. Kenney]) shared by Charite and Tlepolemus: not a passionate love, which is a destructive force threatening to marriage, but something more restrained, a love better represented by Venus than by Cupid (*Met.* 4.30; 6.23; 5.28). Indeed, it is dangerous to love too much, as both the case of the wicked stepmother story mentioned earlier shows and the obsessive passion felt for Charite by her original suitor Thrasyllus (*Met.* 8.2–3). Yet there is no absence of sexual energy in the world of the *Metamorphoses*, and at every social level adulterous affairs seem to be the almost predictable, expected sequel to marriage, no matter what the token reproaches they might elicit (cf. *Met.* 1.8). Not only might an upper-class wife, and a respectable recent widow, be libidinous, but also a miller's wife, a fuller's wife, a moneylender's wife: their lovers are everywhere (*Met.* 2.27; 9.22, 24; 2.5). And there is no question of women being the worse offenders: married men such as Socrates and the slave *vilicus* are just as culpable (*Met.* 1.7; 8.22). It is significant that Lucius is conscious of the obligation to respect his host Milo and not to sleep with Milo's wife Pamphile, but his host's maidservant is another matter altogether (*Met.* 2.6).

2. *Children.* Children in the *Metamorphoses* are the anticipated and highly valued fruits of marriage, by definition a source of delight (*Met.* 5.28). Pregnancy is a cause of joy for the whole family (*Met.* 5.14), and new arrivals can be eagerly awaited by prospective grandparents (*Met.* 4.26). If bereft of a father, as seems to be the case in Socrates' family, children are to be given the protection of *tutores*, as Roman law required (*Met.* 1.6), or else the satisfaction of swift summary justice if foul play appears to have caused a parent's death (*Met.* 3.8). At times, however, a father might have to make a difficult decision about whether to raise all the

children born to him, and a man is found instructing his pregnant wife to kill the child she bears if the child turns out to be a girl (*Met.* 10.23). In turn a married woman has to contend with pregnancies and deliveries over a long interval of time, and other serious problems might arise: she might have reason for instance to fear incest between a son and a sister of whose true identity the son knows nothing (*Met.* 10.24).

Among the best families early child care lies in the hands of childminding slaves, who are readily available: Byrrhaena and Lucius' mother, recall, had shared the same nurse (*Met.* 2.3); a nurse still chaperones the widowed Charite (*Met.* 8.10); and the half-brothers almost destroyed by the cruel stepmother have respectively an *educator* and a *paedagogus*, the latter of whom is seen in his classic role of escorting a boy to and from school (*Met.* 10.4, 5). In slave families children have to learn to work at an early age: thus a boy in the community of herdsmen on Charite's rural estates is given the job of taking the Ass every day to gather firewood from a mountainside (*Met.* 7.17). He treats the Ass cruelly, but contributes to his family's well-being as elite sons do to theirs, and when he dies the grief of his slave parents is painfully intense (*Met.* 7.26–27). The dependence of the older generation on the younger operates at all social levels.

The continuing solidarity of the family and the support it offers its members are assumed to be vital and urgent. Thus the three generations of Socrates' family may not all live together, but the family members conceive of themselves as a tightly knit bloc (*domus*) which has to remain intact into the future and which cannot allow a widowed but fertile woman to remain unmarried indefinitely (*Met.* 1.5–6). The household (*familia)* is an entity that has to be safeguarded against imminent danger by every means possible, for example by fixing owls to the house's doorposts to avert evil (*Met.* 3.23). So it is a particular misfortune if children predecease their parents, not just because of the untimeliness of death itself but because of the dashed hopes for the family's future the children represent. The *paterfamilias* who finds his three adult sons killed in a dispute with a tyrannical landowner is so overwhelmed at their loss that he kills himself and brings the history of his family to a complete close (*Met.* 9.33–39); and an old, distraught man credibly in search of his missing grandson, his only relative, can be sympathetically received in his fear of foul play (*Met.* 8.20–21). Family misfortunes of this kind are palpably feared, and nothing is worse than the total destruction of the *domus* (*Met.* 4.34–35; 8.1; 9.31; contrast the joy that Lucius' restoration to human form brings to his family [*Met.* 11.18]). Children are valued not precisely for their own sake, but for the communal family potential they embody.

3. *Conflict.* Adultery provides one reason why a man might summarily divorce a wife and expel her from his home, as in the case of the well to do miller and his peccant partner (*Met.* 9.28). Remarriage might then be a possibility, and in turn the creation of a blended family, which itself could become the seedbed of familial tensions, as the example of the stepmother who tried to seduce her stepson suggests. The miller's wife was in fact already a second wife and a stepmother, as

becomes clear after the miller's death when a previously unmentioned daughter unexpectedly appears to mourn him. The daughter had left her father's house when she herself married and moved to another town (*Met.* 9.31). Her story too hints at conflict resulting from serial marriage. Whatever the cause, there was nothing to prevent a man abandoning his family and taking a new wife in a new city if he so chose: this is what the travelling merchant Aristomenes did, terror-stricken after witnessing the grisly demise of Socrates that the witch Meroe had contrived (*Met.* 1.19).

Anxieties might arise from many other circumstances. Perhaps not too much should be made of the sisterly jealousies that drive the story of Psyche and Cupid. But consider the story of a woman who is condemned to the beasts after murdering her sister-in-law, her husband, and her daughter, as well as the second doctor mentioned earlier. This is the woman who eventually finds herself on the point of appearing in a live sex-show with the Ass (*Met.* 10.23–28). The woman was the wife of the young man who took his considerably younger sister into their home and married her to one of his friends, which is when her problems began. In this complex domestic setting—the two married couples seem to have been part of the same household—the wife began to fear her sister-in-law as a rival for her husband's attentions and brutally despatched her. Her husband became sick with grief at his sister's death, so his wife decided to poison him too. Then, to remove his heir, she poisoned her own infant daughter, understanding the law well enough to know that she could inherit from her child. This is a sordid tale, and I am not suggesting that it should be read as a reflection of frequent events in everyday life. But it is interesting because it takes complex family living arrangements as a credible premise for the sensationalistic events recounted, and because it assumes that antagonisms naturally develop among the members of a domestic group of this sort. Indeed, this case was built on a prior anxiety of a different type. For the doomed sister was the child of the father who had ordered his pregnant wife to kill her baby if it turned out to be a girl. In his absence his wife (the young man's mother) had disobeyed her husband and had given the girl she bore to neighbours, telling her husband that the child was dead (*Met.* 10.23). She is shown torn between duty to her husband and her natural love for her child, a dilemma perhaps commonly faced by women in the ancient world. The narrative at least successfully evokes the psychological turmoil involved in the woman's decision, which the ancient reader was evidently expected to understand.

Altogether, then, the *Metamorphoses* unfolds a rich social tapestry before its reader's eyes. There is no single family or household form that predominates, but instead the novel reveals a series of domestic arrangements that range from the very simple—the household of the poor solitary or that of the rich solitary and his slaves—to the very complex elite household which contains a plurality of interrelated conjugal or nuclear units and many other comparable units among its dependants. Physically there is a similar span. Residential space runs from the primitive huts of rural herdsmen to the opulent urban mansions of the *domi*

nobiles. But rich and poor live cheek by jowl without any obvious discomfort on either side. As a social unit the "family" may be confined to, or extend beyond, a household's members, and it is often understood to embrace a wide network of kin. In elite households relationships between unrelated occupants, principally slaveowners and slaves, may attain an affective intimacy definable as familial in a broad sense, reflecting the fuzzy meaning of the Latin term *familia*—usually not a family in any modern sense but a domestic group, especially a group of slaves.[2] The family is strongly patriarchal in character, and comprises in the main a set of vertical relationships between a man and those subject to his authority, his wife, his children, and his slaves, though women by no means lack initiative or agency. Above all the family is a collective unit to which all its members must contribute for the good of the whole and in which individuality is subordinated to a communal ethic. It is a source of sustenance for its members, but equally a fragile entity prone to disruption resulting from untimely death or the hazards of human frailty. Slaves are especially vulnerable to the whims and dictates of those who own them, their prospects of family stability never more than precarious.

<div align="center">III</div>

The summary I have just given is, I believe, a faithful representation of the richness and diversity of family and household life in the Roman world of the Principate which should be accepted as historically authentic. But how justifiable is that belief, given that the portrait comes from a fictional source?

A fundamental difficulty to face is that the core story of the *Metamorphoses*, the conversion of a human being to animal form through the application of a magical spell and the subsequent restoration to human shape through the miraculous intervention of a goddess, is fanciful in the extreme and defies all claims to literalism. In the first instance the *Metamorphoses* is a work of the literary imagination. Every work of literature, however, no matter how unrelated on the surface its subject-matter might be to the everyday world of its author, is an historical document of some sort, expressing certain assumptions about the place and time and society in which it was created: no literary artist after all can live and write utterly free from contemporary influences, ideas, and social practices. Within the Western literary tradition, the "realistic" novel, in which a story is contrived but the setting and characters are drawn from an easily recognisable contemporary world, has a long pedigree, so that no-one will doubt that the novels of Balzac or Dickens, for example, communicate something of the historical character of French and English society in the nineteenth century. The same is true of many contemporary novels. Carole Shields's *Swann* is a convenient Canadian example. Its story concerns a perverse book collector who, in an effort to gain financial security, tries to acquire through a series of well-timed thefts all the copies of the obscure Mary Swann's one published volume of poems, the

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[2] Bradley 1991: 4–5.

manuscript of some verses discovered in her house after her death, all the known records and memorabilia of her life, and all the research materials of a cluster of scholars studying her poetry. It is an essentially implausible story, designed to entertain its reader through the creation of a mystery: what is happening to the records of Mary Swann's life and who is responsible for their disappearance? But it achieves credibility because it is set in a real world that the reader, and especially the academic reader, can recognise at once: as in the story, scholars in real life do write books and articles about poets and poetry, correspond with one another about their common intellectual passions, and gather together in comfortable hotels for symposia at which they share the outcome of their researches. The *Metamorphoses* is not a realistic novel in quite the same manner, but it has long been understood that it contains many legal, institutional and other topical elements that make the placement of Lucius' preposterous story in a perceptibly Roman imperial milieu indisputable. The political, administrative, and economic structures of the novel are those of Apuleius' own age, which means that it is a plausible corollary that its social structures are too, no matter what the degree of narrative exaggeration built upon them. It can scarcely be doubted for example that the Roman Empire of the first and second centuries was a world in which wealthy decurions commonly owned slaves who worked as cooks, doorkeepers, waiters, messengers, and footmen. And it is self-evident that the story of Lucius is not located in a make-believe world like that of the strange men and monsters on the moon conjured up in Lucian's *True History*. So whatever the elements of fantasy that Apuleius' story of Lucius involves, for present purposes it is the assumption of what is normative in the underlying portrait of society and of the structure of society that is of crucial significance.[3]

Another pressing problem arises from the fact that Apuleius' novel is not a completely original composition, but an adaptation, or perhaps at times a translation, of a lost Greek forerunner. How, therefore, unless an immediate adaptation, can it reflect his own contemporary society? The Greek forerunner is known only from an epitome, also written in Greek, the *Onos* ascribed to Lucian (though it is almost certainly not his creation), and so the extent to which Apuleius adapted or translated the Greek work is a question impossible to answer. Many of the basic elements of the story appear to be taken from the forerunner. Thus the households of Milo and Charite (including the rural slaves and the cruel boy) have their equivalents in the epitome, as do the households represented by the slave cook and his quick-thinking wife, the miller, the solitary market-gardener, and the two slave brothers. Commentators, however, tend to emphasise Apuleius' creativity in refashioning the story and to regard him as rather more than a slavish imitator. The story of Psyche and Cupid in the middle of the novel and the introduction of Isis at the end are notable of course

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[3] Realistic novel: Bakhtin 1981: 126–127, 246–247. Imperial milieu: Millar 1981; cf. Bradley 1998: 320, n. 7 for further references.

in this respect, but it is especially relevant that there is nothing in the epitome comparable to the tales of adultery which seem to have appealed to Apuleius so much. It does not follow, therefore, that the *Metamorphoses* lacks contemporary significance because of its derivation from a Greek prototype, which may well have been written not long before Apuleius' version in any case. The epitome is set in Greece, as the original doubtless was too, and towards the end of its story it brings in a figure who appears to be a Roman provincial governor (*Onos* 54). In all likelihood, therefore, the original was also set in the contemporary world of the Roman Empire. But whether that is true or not, there can be no doubt that allusions in the *Metamorphoses* to specific sites in Rome and to Roman laws and practices are anything but topical and realistic. To all intents and purposes, the novel is a novel of everyday life in the era of Apuleius himself.[4]

One sure way to assess the fictional details itemised above is to compare them with unquestionably "hard" historical evidence. The primary purpose of the stories Apuleius (or Lucius) tells is to entertain those who read them. But once their embellishments are set aside, the patterns of family behaviour and underlying household forms can be validated by material from non-fictional sources. Take for instance the story of the wicked stepmother. This is a classic example of a variation on a literary topos—its connection with, if not derivation from, the story of Phaedra is obvious—and a cautionary tale about the danger of an older husband loving his younger wife too much. But it contains all the same incidental features of a sort that are completely credible. Like the sons of Roman emperors, senators, and many others among the prosperous, the older son in the story, as noted above, has an *educator* on whom to call for advice, and the younger son a *paedagogus* to escort him home from school at lunchtime; and like innumerable real women in the Roman world, the stepmother herself has a dotal slave of her own to serve her (*Met.* 10.4, 5). Moreover, while a second marriage is required by the story in order to provide a stepmother, remarriage was a common fact of real life for elite families in the central period of Roman history, as were its direct consequences: households of half-siblings and stepsiblings and wives close in age to their stepsons. This is not to imply that all stepmothers in the real Roman world were like the wicked stepmother here; that would be nonsense. From the example of the stepmother of Helvia praised by Helvia's son Seneca, or that of the stepmother who adopted and gave her name to the future emperor Galba, there must have been any number of generous and caring stepmothers

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[4] Adaptation: on the relationship of the *Metamorphoses* to other versions of the ass story, see Schlam 1992: 22–28; Mason 1994 (proposing that the work Apuleius adapted was written in the late first century or the early second century); cf. Stephens and Winkler 1995: 322–325 on Apuleius and Lollianos. Commentators: Schlam 1992: 25, 124–125; Mason 1994: 1696–99. Tales of adultery: Bechtle 1995 considers the tales' literary value without commenting on their social significance; cf. Schlam 1992: 76–80. Equivalents: *Onos* 1–16 *passim* (Milo equivalent), 26–34 *passim* (Charite equivalent), 39 (slave cook), 42 (miller), 43 (market-gardener; cf. 18, where the first market-gardener appears, but without a wife), 46 (slave brothers). Allusions: Millar 1981.

in Roman society over the course of time. But it is to say that the tradition of
the wicked stepmother has an understandable origin under a demographic regime
which, with a substantial age difference between husbands and wives, a high
likelihood of remarriage, and the commonplace creation of step-relationships
in newly reconstituted families, constantly threatened to disrupt what had once
seemed to be social, and often economic, certitudes within families.[5]

Indeed, the story's literary antecedents notwithstanding, an affair between
stepmother and stepson was not at all beyond the realm of possibility when
women were closer in age to their husbands' sons than their husbands. The jurist
Marcian reports of Hadrian:

It is said that when a certain man had killed in the course of a hunt his son, who had been
committing adultery with his stepmother, the deified Hadrian deported him to an island
[because he acted] more [like] a brigand in killing him than as [one] with a father's right;
for paternal power ought to depend on compassion, not cruelty.

And even murder was not out of the question. The physician Galen records:

A doctor was accused because he supplied a harmful drug. But its purchaser was a servant
of the woman who needed it. And having got hold of it, she ordered a young man (who
was one of her stepson's attendants) to give it to him to drink; and it killed the boy.
Everyone was then indiscriminately condemned, along with the stepmother: the man who
administered the drug, the man who had bought it, and the doctor who had supplied it.

Galen's anecdote almost demands to belong to the world of fiction, but it is,
prosaically, a true story.[6]

Think also of the two slave families mentioned earlier. If the element of
melodrama is again set aside, what is left in the first instance is a *vilicus* and
vilica and their offspring, a *de facto* family of a sort assumed desirable and natural
by Roman writers on agriculture, and in the second instance two more fellow
slaves from a large urban *familia* who have formed a quasi-marital union and
reproduced in a way attested countless times by funerary inscriptions from elite

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[5] Entertain: *Met.* 1.1: *lector intende; laetaberis.* Literary topos: Watson (1995: 105–107) points
out that *Met.* 10.2–12 combines two stock themes, "the amorous stepmother and the woman who
administers poison to her stepson"; she also comments on the "folktale elements" in the story. *Educator*,
paedagogus: on such attendants in real life, see Bradley 1991: 37–75. Dotal slave: for the authentic
situation, Treggiari 1991a: 326, 327, 349. Remarriage: Humbert 1972; cf. Bradley 1991: 156–176.
Helvia: Sen. *Helv.* 2.4. Galba: Suet. *Galba* 4.1. Caring stepmothers: see Watson 1995: 149–150 for
other examples, and cf. the legal sources cited in Noy 1991: 347. Demographic regime: Saller 1994; cf.
Parkin 1992. Finkelpearl (1998: 159) maintains that the "central theme" of *Met.* 10 is the "confusion
and perversion of natural relationships" (in part) "among family members"; as a result, "kinship is
not viewed in a positive light" (161). If the family stories recorded in *Met.* 10 are considered from a
demographic perspective, this view becomes suspect.

[6] Marcian: *Dig.* 48.9.5; cf. Watson 1995: 136–139. Galen: *On Antecedent Causes* 14.183. (The
work, known only through the Latin version of Niccolò da Reggio, is tentatively dated to 169–174
by Hankinson [1998: 49–52]; the incident is represented as plausible to Galen's audience, but not
necessarily recent. I quote Hankinson's translation.)

Roman households. Even Milo's conception of how the household is composed—householder, wife, children, slaves (*Met.* 1.26)—recalls the formulaic elements of the prayers for the well-being of what might be regarded as an ideal or typical household the elder Cato prescribes in the *De Agricultura*, and the similar manner in which Cicero in his *Letters* often refers to his family and household. If Apuleius' stories, as stories, are sensationalistic, their social and demographic context is undeniably authentic.[7]

As I have already stated, there is no single predominant household form on display in the *Metamorphoses*, but a variety of living arrangements which are governed by a set of variable and interrelated factors: wealth, rank, occupation, age, geographical location, individual preference. In several instances, however, as literary circumstances demand, households appear at specific moments in their histories, which means that their members can be counted as if a census were being taken. Milo's household, for example, comprises just three people: Milo himself, his wife Pamphile, and their slave Photis. It cannot of course be assumed that the novel includes all the members of a given household when a household in a particular episode is described. A real census is impossible. But the results of assessing members of households in the *Metamorphoses* can be generally, and fruitfully, compared with those from the genuine census records of Roman Egypt, a body of data which offers the best evidence on household composition for the Roman imperial period as a whole. In broad terms the Egyptian households display a similar compositional variety to that evident in the *Metamorphoses*, ranging from households of solitaries or solitaries with lodgers or slaves, through households of co-residents (usually siblings) and of conjugal families, with or without slaves, to extended families and multiple families, again with or without slaves. And in both instances extended and multiple family households make up a considerable proportion of the total. The Egyptian census returns show also a diversity of social statuses among the declarants, from wealthy owners of relatively large complements of slaves to men who work as weavers, donkey-drivers, stonemasons, scribes, doctors, and stenographers. So despite the unique features of domestic life in Roman Egypt such as brother-sister marriage and the relatively low level of slaveowning, and despite the lack of complete information in the novel, the household world of the census returns appears to be basically the same as the household world of the *Metamorphoses*, and acts to confirm the essential realism of the picture Apuleius paints in his stories.[8]

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[7] Writers on agriculture: Varro *Rust.* 1.17.5; Col. *Rust.* 1.8.5; cf. Bradley 1987: 50–51. Funerary inscriptions: Rawson 1966; Treggiari 1975; 1981; cf. Bradley 1987: 77–78; Joshel 1992: 43–46. Cato: *Agr.* 134.2, 141.2, 141.3. Cicero: see references in Bradley 1991: 171–182.

[8] Counted: the families and households of the *Metamorphoses* are listed in the Appendix. Egyptian households: Bagnall and Frier 1994: 57–74 (additional materials in Bagnall, Frier, and Rutherford 1997 and Duttenhöffer 1997). Unique features: on brother-sister marriage, see Hopkins 1980 (cf. Shaw 1992); Bagnall and Frier 1994: 127–133; on slaveowning, Biezunska-Malowist 1977; cf. Bagnall and Frier 1994: 48–49.

As far as family norms are concerned, many of the features of family life seen a moment ago in the various fictional descriptions, not least in the specific example of Charite's family with which I began, are once more fully consistent with the historical aspects of Roman family life established by modern studies. It is not controversial, for instance, to say that Roman marriages were often unions formed with input and influence from a wide range of family members, that the interests of the wider family group were often taken into consideration, and that in contrast to the modern Western norm the emotional bond between the marrying couple, if present at all, was often only one of a sequence of factors controlling the alliance, not the dominating element. Certainly the concordant ideal of marriage is well-attested. Nor is it controversial to say that a certain degree of adultery was present in Roman society. As with divorce, its precise incidence is impossible to determine in the absence of quantifiable data, and literary scholars might maintain that notices of adultery preserved in "historical" authors such as Tacitus or Plutarch have more to do with men's anxieties about female (mis)behaviour than real life activity, or simply illustrate techniques of invective. But there must, I think, have been some perceptible behavioural basis behind an important initiative like the passage of the Augustan *lex Julia de adulteriis coercendis* and the subsequent development of this statute through the Severan period; and the cases of adultery recorded by ancient historians cannot all have been imagined.[9]

There is no doubt, moreover, that children were highly valued in Roman society at large, as artistic representations, for example, and the manner in which the untimely dead were fondly commemorated by their parents reveal, though that valuation was tempered by a severity of attitude when practical decisions had to be made about the disposal of those judged unviable or too heavy a burden for

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[9] Marriages: the degree of emotional commitment between husbands and wives at the time of first marriage is a complex subject (see variously Dixon 1985; 1992: 83–90, 210–212; Bradley 1991: 6–8, 126–130; Treggiari 1991a: 119–122), and no broad characterisations will cover all cases over an enormous chronological and geographical span of history; none the less, it seems to me that the starting-point of Roman marriage was culturally distinct from the modern Western norm, in which the decision to marry depends essentially on the wishes of the two principals concerned, no matter what other factors (e.g., wider family wishes, matters of social or economic status) might be peripherally involved. Note that Frangoulidis 1996 detects the influence of the Roman *deductio in domum mariti* in the story of Charite and Tlepolemus. Concordant ideal: Bradley 1991: 6–8; Treggiari 1991a: 251–253. (At *Met.* 9.27, *ex secta prudentium* perhaps refers to men such as Musonius Rufus and Plutarch and their relatively enlightened attitudes towards marriage, on which see Treggiari 1991a: 220–226.) On marriage between cousins (as with Charite and Tlepolemus), see Treggiari 1991a: 109–110, 112–118. Adultery: Treggiari 1991a: 262–319, 507–508, 509–510; cf. Richlin 1992: 215–219. Note especially Treggiari's comment on the Julian law on adultery: "The continuous interest of jurists in the law suggests that their concerns were not merely theoretical and that there was a critical mass of prosecutions" (297). However, to infer from a list of attested cases that the incidence of adultery was low may be optimistic: no ancient historian set out to provide a comprehensive list over a given interval of time in a modern statistical manner; the cases known are no more than incidentally or anecdotally reported and many others must have gone unrecorded. *Lex Julia*: for its provisions and development, see most fully McGinn 1998: 140–247.

the family to bear. Infant exposure was widely practised, even if its incidence is again difficult to measure. It can also be said that young and old in the Roman world were mutually interdependent, the latter looking to the former for support in old age or in continuing the family name and the family traditions in cult and public attainment, the former looking to the latter for education and preparation for adult life, and, in elite families at least, the provision of an inheritance and a marriage alliance.[10]

The family, furthermore, was a perennial source of potential conflict and tension as the pattern of marriage, remarriage, and family reconstitution repeated itself. The antagonisms in Cicero's family attested in his correspondence lend particular plausibility to the stories of conflict visible in the *Metamorphoses*. But the most appropriate evidence comes from Apuleius' own personal life and his marriage in Tripolitania to the widow Aemilia Pudentilla, which immediately brought with it the role of stepfather and embroilment in an extensive family dispute over the control of the widow's wealth. Finally, it is not controversial to say from a demographic point of view that Roman family life was extremely precarious, as modern reconstructions of Roman patterns of mortality and simulations of the life course clearly indicate.[11]

IV

None the less, in spite of the correspondences that can be drawn between Latin fiction and Roman reality, the fact remains that the story of Lucius is set in Greece. So to what extent can the evidence of the *Metamorphoses* be evidence of *Roman* family life?

One answer is that it is not, that whatever connections the novel has with social realism should be viewed only in the context of Greece and Greek society under the Roman Empire. The difficulty obviously enough is that of defining "Roman": is the term to be restricted to Rome the city, to Roman Italy, or to the Roman West, or can it apply to any region of the Mediterranean in the imperial age where aspects of Roman culture were present, as they were indeed in mainland Greece? In view of the Egyptian census material, it seems to me arguable that the households in the *Metamorphoses* are of kinds that could be seen throughout the Roman Mediterranean as a whole (whatever allowance must be made for regional peculiarities), and that the fictional diversity of domestic groups and family structures is likely to be as applicable to Roman Italy, or to the North African provinces, as to the novel's immediate geographical setting. What is assumed or implied about family life in the *Metamorphoses*, I suggest, should be

[10]Children: on the valuation of children, see, from various points of view, Garnsey 1991; Shaw 1991; Bradley 1994; Huskinson 1996; Rawson 1997; Bradley 1999; Corbier 1999. Infant exposure: Harris 1994.

[11]Conflict: Bradley 1991: 177–204; cf. Dixon 1997. Personal life: Bradley 1997; 2000. Reconstructions: Parkin 1992; Saller 1994; Bagnall and Frier 1994.

taken to have a very broad application, and to mirror much of a Mediterranean world that its author had seen for himself. At the same time, the manner in which Apuleius describes family life has to be related to the process of his own cultural formation.[12]

Apuleius was bilingual in Latin and Greek. Some of his scientific works he wrote in Greek, but he chose to write the *Metamorphoses* in Latin and so the terms in which he tells his family stories are traditional Roman terms. The decision to write in Latin implies that the audience to which Apuleius intended his novel to appeal was predominantly western rather than eastern, an audience able to recognise and identify cultural idioms familiar to all who had been educated as he had been in the Roman literary and rhetorical tradition. The conventional Roman patterns of culture found in the domestic episodes of the *Metamorphoses*, what might be called its inherent "family values," are, and remain, very striking.[13]

Think of the story of the mother who bears a daughter but gives her to neighbours to raise because of the father's instruction to expose the child. The traditional virtue of *obsequium* is given prominence throughout, negatively in the failure of a wife to obey her husband, and positively first in the willingness of a son to obey his mother when help for his sister is requested, and secondly in the unquestioning acceptance by a sister of what she believes to be her brother's instructions (*Met.* 10.23, 24). Familial hierarchies of deference are strongly on display. But there are other active virtues too: the son's kindly actions towards his sister are both an *officium*, an obligation he must fulfil to her, and attributable to *pietas*, family duty or responsibility. Moreover, when the family's guilty secret must be kept, *humanitas* can provide an appropriate cover for the son's actions, while the woman's disobedience of her husband is justified by the stronger claim of maternal *pietas* to her infant daughter (*Met.* 10.23, 26). The son's wife, in contrast, is able to turn *pietas* to wicked advantage in her dealings with the doctor, and she offends against all expectations of *fides*, loyalty to her husband, by plotting his death (*Met.* 10.25, 26, 27). Can anything be imagined that is more culturally characteristic than the concepts of *obsequium*, *officium*, *humanitas*, *pietas*, and *fides*? They may admittedly have had their counterparts in the original Greek version of the story (though there is little sign of them in the *Onos*), but as Latin terms deliberately chosen by Apuleius they communicate an ethos, a view of the world, that is by definition quintessentially Roman.

Traditional Roman virtues are equally prominent elsewhere. In the wicked stepmother story the older son is a young man marked by *pietas* and *modestia* (*Met.* 10.2). He displays *obsequium* when he visits his stepmother's bedroom at her command, and she in her infatuation for him loses all sense of *pudor* (*Met.* 10.3). His *educator*, meantime, is a man of *gravitas* (*Met.* 10.4). Again, the slave wife whose sagacity saves her husband the cook from their master's anger

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[12] Mainland Greece: Alcock 1993.

[13] For Apuleius' Greek works (now lost), see *Apol.* 36; *Flor.* 9.27–28; cf. Harrison 2000: 14–15.

is characterised as "loyal," *fida* (*Met.* 8.31), as though she were a free woman of respectable status (she compares favourably in fact with the sex-show wife), and the slave wife who kills herself and her infant does so because of the shame, *contumelia*, that falls upon her when she learns that her husband has a mistress (*Met.* 8.22). She too is only a slave but she shares the values of society at large. The disgrace of *contumelia* is also felt by Charite's rejected suitor Thrasyllus (*Met.* 8.2), and *contumelia* is enough to impel the fuller to kill his wife's lover (*Met.* 9.25). The slave brothers who live together are joined by *societas*, and threatened, when Lucius steals their food, by *discordia*, while in the story of Psyche and Cupid sisters are expected as a matter of course to recognise *pietas* towards one another (*Met.* 10.14; 5.19).

Female propriety is a particular concern of the *Metamorphoses*. Charite remains obedient, *obiens*, to her parents even in the distress of her husband's death, feels that it is a matter of *pudor* to observe a year's mourning for him, and still thinks of herself as a *pudica mulier* when she takes revenge on his murderer (*Met.* 8.7, 9, 12). The super-virtuous Plotina, who appears in an inserted story told by a brigand named Haemus (really Tlepolemus in disguise), is a Roman woman of exceptional *fides* and *pudicitia*, and in exemplary fashion fulfils the ideal of displaying the dutiful comportment expected of a wife (*uxoris officiosa facies*, *Met.* 5.10): Haemus says that she followed her husband into exile when he was falsely condemned by the courts (*Met.* 7.6–7), having properly provided for the future well-being of his family by bearing him ten children beforehand (not to be taken as an exaggeration). In the world of the *Metamorphoses*, it happens, the very name of mother carries an inherent *dignitas* (*Met.* 5.12), and not surprisingly Lucius' own mother is said to be a woman of *generosa probitas* ("breeding and modesty" [tr. Kenney]) to those who know her (*Met.* 2.2).

Female decorum, however, is more conspicuous in the *Metamorphoses* by its absence than its presence, and predictably so in the adultery tales. The story of the slaveowning decurion Barbarus, a celebrated lover who has an affair with a woman while her husband is away from their house, is a story that centres on a wife's loss of *pudicitia*, for money no less, and *castitas*, two virtues of which every ideal Roman wife was supposed to be the embodiment (*Met.* 9.17, 18, 19). The *operarius* who returns home to find his doors locked and bolted (his wife is inside with her lover) commends his wife for her *continentia*, which is a joke of course, but *continentia* is a virtue expected of a wife to prevent misfortune (the great fear of which has already been seen) afflicting her family (*Met.* 9.5; 5.12). The miller's wife is said in a catalogue of faults to be hostile to *fides* and an enemy of *pudicitia*, but then (ironically) is called a *pudica uxor* as she awaits her lover, and *pudicissima* once her adultery has been discovered (*Met.* 9.14, 22, 28). Her revenge against the miller, moreover, is motivated by the outrage, *contumelia*, she thinks she has suffered once her misbehaviour has been revealed (*Met.* 9.29). The fuller's wife is a woman whose *pudor* had also seemed beyond reproach, another loyal wife, *fida* (*Met.* 9.23, 24), or so it seemed to the miller, who tells her tale to his wife. The

latter, concealing her own lover as she listens, reproaches her neighbour as *perfida* and *impudica*, lacking the *dignitas* of a married woman (*Met.* 9.26).[14]

It is a familiar fact of Rome's history under the Principate that the ruling class was increasingly recruited from provincial, at first especially western, sources of supply. Men from families prominent in the cities of the Empire acquired through education and the service of the Caesars the culture and values of the capital, absorbed the richness of its historical tradition, and in due course left a legacy of *Romanitas* to their own descendants. Apuleius came from the relatively obscure city of Madauros in Africa Proconsularis, of decurial background though little is known in detail of his family. Because of the renown he gained, and still possesses, as a Latin author, it is easy to overlook his local origins and the way in which they might have shaped his early life, and easy to gloss over what was involved in his acquisition of a Roman cultural identity. For any aspirant provincial, whether or not the heights of a military or administrative career were in view from the outset, to be educated in the Roman tradition was a process that took time, required resources, and often, as in Apuleius' own case, demanded travel on an extensive scale.[15]

Through his education when a boy and young man in Carthage, Athens, and Rome, Apuleius made himself fully Roman in a cultural sense. The legal allusions and references that pervade the *Metamorphoses* reveal for example a man with considerable knowledge of the law of Rome, knowledge which forms just one aspect of Apuleius' "Roman" identity. Likewise the wealth of literary allusions in the novel, from Cato and Lucretius to Lucan and Tacitus, suggests a deep immersion in the Roman literary canon, from perhaps a very early stage in life, in a figure for whom Punic culture is likely to have been equally, if not more, familiar and influential. This, it must be emphasised, was all knowledge that had to be learned, through study and application, and, in the case of an individual from the fringes of empire where local traditions were as important and vibrant as those of the ruling power, through a conscious choice to master the ways of Rome. It was not axiomatic that every man from Madauros, even every man from its decurial order, should come in the second century to know the law and literature of Rome as well as Apuleius did.[16]

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[14] On virtues ideally expected of women in marriage, see Treggiari 1991a: 232–241. Lateiner (2000: 316) believes that "Lucius, if not Apuleius ... views marriage as undependable, sexual trust as unimaginable, and conjugality as a likely source of humiliation and amusement for others." This view depends on a rather simplistic equation between the content of Apuleius' stories and Lucius', if not Apuleius', views; the further notion (323) that "The pattern of discovering rot in the center of the essential social unit, the family, warns against sensual, especially sexual, pleasures and even against normal family life" raises the obvious but unanswered question of how "normal family life" is to be defined and characterised. Cf. similarly Finkelpearl 1998: 176 on "family relationships" in *Met.* 10: "These relationships are almost all perverse and contrary to the norm." How can that be known?

[15] For the bare facts of Apuleius' life, see Harrison 2000: 1–10; cf. Sandy 1997: 1–36.

[16] Legal allusions: Norden 1912; cf. Summers 1972. Literary allusions: Finkelpearl 1998, arguing that the manner in which Apuleius engages with the works of a whole sequence of earlier Latin

Consider just two items of Romano-African history that illustrate how important it is to understand that the author of the *Metamorphoses* was born into a society that had its own culturally distinct character. The first concerns the sanctuary of Tanit at Carthage which Apuleius can be presumed to have seen many times. When he studied there, roughly in the 130s, Carthage was in many ways an impressive imperial city whose grand public buildings and monuments proclaimed and advertised to everyone who saw them the city's facade of *Romanitas*. But local, pre-Roman forms of social activity had not been altogether swept away by the Romanising physical development of the city in the previous century and a half. In time the ancient Carthaginian goddess Tanit assumed the Latinate form of Juno Caelestis, and a clear break or disjunction in cult practices might, therefore, be assumed between the old (Punic) and the new (Roman). The archaeology of the sanctuary of Tanit, however, indicates the reverse: a close connection between the Punic and the Roman forms, which in turn suggests that there was little change over time in the way the goddess was worshipped and conceptualised by the local Carthaginian population. Indeed, as late as the fifth century Augustine (*De civ. Dei* 2.26; cf. 2.4) could describe the droves of worshippers who still flocked to the sanctuary to engage in ancient forms of worship. The rituals the worshippers performed outraged the vitriolic puritan. But to generations of pre-Christian Carthaginians (and still to some in Augustine's day) the combination of prayer-offerings to the virgin goddess and theatrical depictions of sexually explicit acts must have been perfectly normal, satisfying, and enjoyable. Before his departure from Carthage, Punic Tanit is likely to have been far more familiar to Apuleius than most of the other mother goddesses who could be subsumed under the Roman identity of Juno, and he can be presumed to have witnessed in the mid-second century the kinds of sights and rituals Augustine describes. He was at least conscious enough of the virgin goddess of lofty Carthage who was borne on the back of a lion to include her in the *Metamorphoses* (*Met.* 6.4).[17]

The second item is the mausoleum of the veteran soldier T. Flavius Secundus at Cillium, together with its long poem, or poems, that Flavius' like-named son commissioned in the middle of the second century to commemorate his father. The elder Secundus had probably served (for thirty-three years) as an auxiliary. He then settled at Cillium and prospered as a farmer, living to a great age.

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authors—Cato, Lucretius, Livy, Virgil, Propertius, Seneca, Lucan, Tacitus—provides the key to recognising his success in creating in the *Metamorphoses* an independent, original position for himself within the Latin literary tradition. In the *Apology*, the speech Apuleius gave when he was tried at Sabratha in Tripolitania on the charge of practising magic, Apuleius quotes from and alludes to previous writers from Homer to Hadrian, with ease and seeming omniscience, especially from the classical Greek philosophers; see Bradley 1997: 213.

[17] *Romanitas*: Bradley 2000: 216, n. 1 for references. Caelestis: Halsberghe 1984: 2204; Rives 1995: 65–66; Ben Abdallah and Ennabli 1998. Archaeology: Hurst 1999.

His grandiose mausoleum is a testament to the local distinction that he and his descendants came to enjoy, a distinction made plain by the titles of priesthoods and offices recorded on the family's epitaphs. T. Flavius Secundus' family was a typical "Romanised" African family, but one domiciled in a city that was at first no more than a military outpost on the edge of the desert that achieved municipal status perhaps only under Trajan. The commemorative poem is technically very sophisticated, and shows the particular influence of Statius. It stands as evidence of the high literary culture to which Secundus' family aspired, and of the "Roman" character the family wished to display to all who passed by the tomb. It also shows how Roman values came to be absorbed by a local community, for the poem is above all inspired by a son's wish to memorialise his father through an act of (Roman) *pietas*, a term to which the poet gives considerable attention. Yet for all its Roman pretensions, the mausoleum is anything but Roman in style: twelve metres or so in height and in three distinct architectural sections it displays elements of a native Libyan monumental tradition. The mausoleum again symbolises, therefore, the cultural mixture of old and new with which men like Apuleius were familiar from the earliest moments of their lives; and it helps make clear that a Roman concept such as *pietas*, to which, keep in mind, Apuleius pays considerable attention in the *Metamorphoses*, was not necessarily normative to all the inhabitants of a local African community such as Cillium or Madauros. Though largely now imperceptible, indigenous traditions were probably just as strong. It just happens that Plutarch, for no apparent reason, records a marriage custom at Lepcis whereby a new bride, on the day after her wedding, steeled herself to deal with the "stepmotherliness" of her mother-in-law by deliberately asking for something (a pot) she knew would be refused.[18]

The moralistic idiom in which the family stories of the *Metamorphoses* are told suggests a provincial author who had fully absorbed the traditional moral code of Rome, and one who wrote for an audience likely to identify with it: a Latinate audience of the educated like himself, both in the capital and throughout the Empire at large. When the novel was composed is unknown, but the most plausible view is that it belongs to the period Apuleius spent in Carthage in the 160s or later. But even if an earlier date cannot be ruled out, the work was written by a man who from boyhood had spent many years travelling the Mediterranean in pursuit of the literary and philosophical education that allowed him, by the time he was put on trial at Sabratha for allegedly practising magic (he was in his early thirties), to style himself a man of *doctrina*. Carthage, Athens, Rome—he knew all these cities intimately, and in travelling from one to the other had

[18] The development of Cillium is imperfectly known; see Gascou 1972: 86–89; Bassignano 1974: 70–71 for the possible dates of its foundation and elevation to municipal status. Poem: *CLE* 1552 = *CIL* VIII 212–213. Mausoleum: Pikhaus 1986; Lassère 1990; cf. Hitchner 1995: 495–496. Cultural mixture: for perspectives on the interaction involved, see Hitchner 1988; 1995; Mattingly 1997; MacMullen 2000: 30–49 (unconcerned about "post-colonial guilt" [134]). Plutarch: *Mor.* 143a.

passed, it can hardly have been otherwise, through innumerable cities, towns, villages, hamlets, and country estates. After Rome the journey for knowledge continued: following the great coastal highway across Tripolitania, Apuleius set out for Alexandria in Egypt where he planned to study further, though the journey was never completed. He was detained by illness in the town of Oea and there met and married Pudentilla. Altogether, however, his educational travels exposed Apuleius to the same range of social sights that Lucius witnessed in his peregrinations, to the men, women, and children, that is, of every conceivable description who populate the pages of the *Metamorphoses*: the *domi nobiles*, the merchants and manufacturers, the poor of the countryside and the beggars of the city, the farmworkers and day labourers, and slaves of every stripe. The debt of the *Metamorphoses* to the lost Greek original is undeniable and I have no wish to minimise it. But because of the clearly topical colouring of the work, it would be asinine to imagine that the novel is not in some measure the result of Apuleius' own life experience, in which his journeys for knowledge played a dominant role.[19]

Two second-century Greek works might be kept in mind in order to understand the nature and consequences of the travels Apuleius took: Pausanias' *Description of Greece*, in all its rich and abundant topographical detail, the result of the author's own painstaking travels; and Artemidorus' *Interpretation of Dreams*, which brings before its reader the vast array of people, of every sort and condition, the interpreter encountered when travelling across the Mediterranean in search of dreamers and their dreams. Apuleius' journeys were of a similar sort. They exposed him on the one hand to the kind of physical regimen that the *Description*

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[19] Composed: Harrison (2000: 9–10) summarises the possibilities, preferring himself a very late date (cf. 250–251). Trial: Bradley 1997. *Doctrina*: *Apol.* 48.12. It may be true that "in the second century it was fashionable to display the learning one possessed" (Finkelpearl 1998: 23), but the important, though often neglected, issue (it seems to me) is that of how and under what circumstances the learning was acquired. Alexandria: *Apol.* 72.1. Experience: I am not suggesting that the *Metamorphoses* is in any narrow sense an autobiographical work (for example, an account of how Apuleius became a devotee of Isis), only that the types of experience Lucius undergoes are broadly comparable to those Apuleius' education demanded of him (cf. Harrison 2000: 218). Finkelpearl (1998: 216) fuses the identities of Lucius and Apuleius in her claim that Apuleius' journey through the Latin literary canon, evidenced through the allusions she detects in the novel, is symbolised by Lucius' journey. I assume that in speaking of Apuleius the author it is legitimate to think in terms of a real historical character, who once chose, for reasons not altogether clear, to compose the *Metamorphoses*, but who existed independently of the learned writer he reveals himself to be in his novel. I make this point in the light of this statement: "the alluding text must be seen as the conscious creation of an author attempting to evoke a particular effect through the juxtaposition of texts. By the word *author*, however, I mean not the real-life Apuleius . . . but rather the characteristics of the text, the literary personality of the author" (Finkelpearl 1998: 6). I find this rather puzzling. How can an author be "the characteristics" of the text he creates, and how can such characteristics look to the "conscious creation" of specific effects? The puzzle is made more baffling by Finkelpearl's discussion (134–143) of the Romano-African milieu from which Apuleius sprang, and her great confidence in often knowing what was, or was not, in Apuleius' mind as he wrote (see 84, 87, n. 18, 163, 208, 214).

of Greece presupposes, slow and laborious travel by ship and foot, horseback and mule-drawn carriage, and on the other hand to the social gamut met in the *Interpretation of Dreams*: tax-collectors, priests, prostitutes, goatherds, sophists, innkeepers, shopkeepers, jugglers, dancers, seafarers, donkey-drivers, money-lenders, cooks, beekeepers, fruit farmers, beggars, philosophers, poets, criminals, midwives, labourers, doctors, soldiers, painters—the list of characters is almost limitless. Against this background, the *Metamorphoses* emerges as not so much a fiction about Greece as a story whose settings and characters are a composite reflection of all that Apuleius experienced on *his* travels in the world of Rome. For Apuleius as for Pausanias, or even Lucius, travel was or must have been physically arduous, often taking the traveller over difficult and remote terrain, and presenting the possibility of a series of dangerous assaults from local residents, outlaws, animals, and arrogant Roman soldiers; and for Apuleius as for Artemidorus, or even Lucius, there were or must have been millers and fullers, herdsmen and cheese merchants, moneylenders and donkeywomen, innkeepers, decurions, and soldiers to be seen everywhere he went. It follows naturally enough that the household and family situations portrayed in the novel should likewise be understood as faithful reflections of the real family and household configurations that existed across the Roman Mediterranean, that Apuleius himself witnessed and observed, and that he describes in terms of the traditional Roman culture he had chosen to make his own.[20]

<div align="center">V</div>

The *Metamorphoses* is first and foremost a work of the literary imagination. But it is also an historical document and must be recognised as such. Its "Roman" character can be understood in two senses: first in that it allows access to the rich diversity of life and society of the Roman imperial age, and secondly in that it expresses how the traditional culture of Rome the city, *Romanitas*, could be absorbed and accepted as his own by the provincial of means. For historians of Roman family life the work has a special importance, unfolding in a highly colourful manner the various household forms to be seen in the real world of Apuleius and his contemporaries, and bringing to life, across the whole range of society, the family norms and tensions of that world. Whereas epitaphs silently commemorate the families of the dead, and historical literature concentrates to the point of obscurity on the families of the elite, paradoxically the fictive families

[20] From a multitude of passages in the *Metamorphoses* referring to travel, note especially 1.2 (terrain); 1.7 (terrain, outlaws); 1.15 (outlaws); 2.14 (dangers of sea travel); 3.28–29 (terrain); 7.4 (outlaws); 7.6 (sea travel); 7.25–26 (assault); 8.15 (terrain); 8.17 (assault); 9.9 (terrain); 9.36 (assault); 10.1 (assault). Walsh (1970: 142) comments on the irrelevance to the novel of Apuleius' life and personality, remarking, "Study of daily life in second-century Carthage or Greece would be an unrewarding introduction to the *Metamorphoses*." I disagree. Contrast the sensible apophthegm of Griffin 1997: 54: "Literature is not a balloon floating in the air, but a plant with its roots firmly fixed in the earth."

of Apuleius reveal a society, in all its true complexity and infinite variety, of living men and women.[21]

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APPENDIX

FAMILIES AND HOUSEHOLDS IN APULEIUS' *METAMORPHOSES*

1. Family of Socrates (1.5–8):
    (i) Socrates, itinerant merchant; (ii) his wife; (iii) their children (number unknown); (iv) his wife's parents.
2. Family of Aristomenes (1.19):
    (i) Aristomenes, itinerant merchant; (ii) first wife in Aegium; (iii) second wife elsewhere.
3. Family and household of Milo (1.21–23, 26; 3.22–28):
    (i) Milo, *nummularius* (cf. Andreau 1999: 175 s.v. for the type); (ii) his wife, Pamphile; (iii) their slave, Photis.
4. Family and household of Lucius (1.23; 2.2–4, 15, 19–20; 3.12):
    (i) Lucius' mother's ancestors: Plutarch and his nephew Sextus; (ii) Lucius' father, Theseus; (iii) Lucius' mother, Salvia, his father's wife; (iv) Lucius' maternal aunt, Byrrhaena; (v) Byrrhaena's husband; (vi) Lucius; (vii) slaves: Byrrhaena's retinue and domestics, *nutrix* of Byrrhaena and Salvia, Lucius' *educatores*, Lucius' travel attendants.
5. Family and household of *matrona* (2.23–29):
    (i) husband of *matrona*, deceased; (ii) *matrona*, a widow; (iii) husband's maternal uncle; (iv) slaves: *matrona*'s *actor* and *ancilla*.
6. Family of market-gardener (*hortulanus*) (4.3):
    (i) *hortulanus*; (ii) his wife.
7. Household of Chryseros (4.9–10):
    (i) Chryseros, *nummularius*.
8. Household of old woman (4.12):
    (i) old woman.
9. Household of Demochares (4.18):
    (i) Demochares, decurion; (ii) slaves: large staff, including *custodes*, *ianitor*.
10. Family and household of Charite (4.23–24, 26–27; 7.13–15, 17–28; 8.1–14, 15–23):
    (i) Charite's father; (ii) his wife, Charite's mother; (ii) Charite, their daughter; (iv) Charite's first husband, her cousin Tlepolemus; (v) Charite's suitor, Thrasyllus; (vi) *cognati* and *affines*; (vii) *clientes*; (viii) slaves: Charite's father and mother have a large *familia*, including *vernulae*, *alumni*, *famuli*, Charite's *nutrix*, *pastores/rustici* (*equisones*, *opiliones*, *busequae* [including cruel boy and his mother and father, head herdsman and his wife, men, women, and children]).

11. Family of Plotina (7.6–7):
    (i) Plotina's husband; (ii) Plotina.
12. Family of slave *vilicus* (8.22):
    (i) *vilicus*; (ii) his wife, *conserva*; (iii) their infant child.
    Note: the family is part of a larger household of rural slaves owned by an anonymous slaveowner.
13. Family of slave cook (*cocus*) (8.31; 9.1–2):
    (i) cook; (ii) his wife, *conserva*; (iii) their son.
    Note: the family is part of a large household of slaves owned by a leading citizen that comprises domestics (including a *famulus*, *puer* [messenger], *mulio*, *cocus*, *cubicularius*, and a *medicus*) and rural workers (*coloni*).
14. Family of *operarius* (9.5–7):
    (i) *operarius* (*faber*); (ii) his wife.
15. Family and household of miller (*pistor*) (9.10–17, 22, 27–28, 31):
    (i) miller; (ii) miller's first wife (deceased?); (iii) their adult married daughter; (iv) their son-in-law, the daughter's husband; (v) miller's second wife; (vi) slaves: millhands (including lame *senex*).
16. Family and household of Barbarus (9.17–21):
    (i) Barbarus, decurion; (ii) his wife, Arete; (iii) slaves: Myrmex and *conservi*.
17. Family of fuller (*fullo*) (9.24–25):
    (i) fuller; (ii) his wife.
18. Household of market-gardener (*hortulanus*) (9.32):
    (i) *hortulanus*.
19. Family and household of *paterfamilias* (9.33–39):
    (i) *paterfamilias*; (ii) his three adult sons; (ii) slaves: considerable number.
20. Household of pauper (*pauper*, *agrestis*) (9.35):
    (i) pauper.
21. Household of rich young landowner (9.35–38):
    (i) landowner; (ii) slaves: considerable number, including *pastores*.
22. Family and household of decurion (10.1–12):
    (i) decurion; (ii) decurion's first wife, deceased; (iii) their adult son; (iv) decurion's second wife; (v) their twelve-year-old son; (vi) slaves: sons' *educator* and *paedagogus*, a *cursor*, second wife's dotal slave.
23. Family of slave brothers (10.13–17):
    (i) pastry cook; (ii) chef, his brother
    Note: the brothers are owned by Thiasus of Corinth, who also has at least one *libertus*, on an outlying estate; they have *conservi*. Finkelpearl (1998: 160) doubts that they are biological brothers.
24. Family of condemned woman (10.23–28):
    (i) father of young man; (ii) father's wife, mother of young man; (iii) their son, young man; (iv) their daughter, young man's sister; (v) her husband, young man's brother-in-law; (vi) young man's wife, the condemned woman; (vii) their daughter; (viii) *affines*; (ix) slaves: *familia* includes *cubicularii*.
25. Family of doctor (10.25, 27, 28):
    (i) doctor; (ii) his wife.

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