

SPATIAL CONTROL: A REFLECTION OF LUCIUS' PROGRESS IN THE *METAMORPHOSES*

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In the course of Apuleius' *Metamorphoses*, Lucius undergoes several physical and spiritual transformations. At the most basic level, he changes from a man to an ass and back to a man. On another level, he progresses from a man curious¹ about the realm of magic but powerless to achieve access to its forbidden secrets,² to a man who becomes the object of curiosity and attains unlimited access and beneficent salvation in the cult of Isis.³ Apuleius uses spatial imagery to emphasize the various stages of Lucius' progress. In the earlier portions of the story, closed doors and confined spaces reflect Lucius' inability to exert control or to attain his desires. Later, open doors and unrestricted access demonstrate the changes in Lucius' condition. In this study we will examine the way in which the spatial imagery reinforces the portrayal of Lucius' varying states.

Early in the novel Lucius' essential powerlessness is apparent in the two confrontations which he has at the door of Milo's house. When he

¹ For the theme of curiosity, see esp. C. Schlam, *The Structure of the Metamorphoses of Apuleius* (Diss. Columbia 1968) 66–96 and "The Curiosity of the Golden Ass," *CJ* 64 (1968) 120–25; A. Wlosok, "Zur Einheit der Metamorphosen des Apuleius," *Philologus* 113 (1969) 68–84; A. Scobie, *Aspects of the Ancient Romance and its Heritage* (Meisenheim am Glan 1969) 71–80; H. J. Mette, "Neuiger und Neuzeit. Ein unzeitgemäßes Problem?" *A&A* 16 (1970) 1–11; R. T. Van der Paardt, *The Metamorphoses, A Commentary on Book III* (Amsterdam 1971) 208–9; and G. N. Sandy, "Knowledge and Curiosity in Apuleius' *Metamorphoses*," *Latomus* 31 (1972) 179–83.

² For the theme of magic, see esp. P. Scazzoso, *Le Metamorfosi di Apuleio* (Milan 1951) 41–90; Schlam, *Structure* (above, note 1) 97–118 and "Sex and Sanctity: the Relationships of Male and Female in the Metamorphoses," in B. L. Hijmans, Jr. and R. Van der Paardt ed., *Aspects of Apuleius' Golden Ass* (Groningen 1978) 95–105; J. Tatum, "Tales in Apuleius' *Metamorphoses*," *TAPA* 100 (1969) 487–527, esp. 493–502; G. N. Sandy, "Serviles Voluptates in Apuleius' *Metamorphoses*," *Phoenix* 28 (1974) 234–44; and "Book 11: Ballast or Anchor," in *Aspects of Apuleius* (cited above) 123–40; and V. Schmidt, "Apuleius *Met.* III.15f., Die Einweihung in die falschen Mysterien," *Mnemosyne* 35 (1982) 269–82.

³ For the themes of fortune and divine salvation, see esp. L. A. Mackay, "The Sin of the Golden Ass," *Arion* 4 (1965) 474–80; Schlam, *Structure* (above, note 1) 120–42; Tatum (above, note 2) 487–527; and J. L. Penwill, "Slavish Pleasures and Profitless Curiosity: Fall and Redemption in Apuleius' *Metamorphoses*," *Ramus* 4 (1975) 49–82.

first arrives at Hypata, he finds Milo's door barred tight and must negotiate with Fotis to gain entrance to the house:⁴

et cum dicto modico secus progressus ostium accedo et ianuam
firmiter oppessulatam pulsare vocaliter incipio . . . et cum dicto
rursum foribus oppessulatis intro capessivit modico deinde re-
gressa patefactis aedibus: "rogat te," inquit. (1.22)

Fotis' ability to control access to Milo's house stands in contrast to Lucius' inability to do anything other than request admittance. Thus a locked door is here introduced as an image that reflects Lucius' limitations.⁵

Reinforcing the picture of Lucius' lack of power is the fact that he plays the role of an *amator exclusus*, a figure who is clearly denied access to the object of his desires.⁶ In this light the scene foreshadows Fotis' control of their affair. Thus the erotic motif suggested by the locked door further stresses Lucius' powerlessness.

Lucius' second experience with a closed door occurs when he returns from Byrrhena's banquet after listening to the tale of Thelyphron.⁷

⁴ The text of Apuleius is from R. Helm, *Apuleius Metamorphoseon Libri XI* (Leipzig 1968³).

⁵ Such an image to illuminate power versus lack thereof is introduced earlier in the story of Aristomenes (1.5–19). Aristomenes' powerlessness is especially evident at 1.11, 1.14, and 1.15. At 1.11–1.14, a contrast is set up between Aristomenes' inability and Meroe's ability to lock and unlock the doors of the inn room. At 1.15, Aristomenes is unable to persuade the doorman to unlock the stable doors. Aristomenes' difficulty with locking and unlocking doors shows his general inability to control the course of events. The story of Aristomenes imagistically and thematically foreshadows the events that will soon happen to Lucius. For the story of Aristomenes, see B. E. Perry, *The Ancient Romances* (Berkeley 1967) 259–64; Tatum (above, note 2) 493–502; H. van Thiel, *Der Eselroman*, vol. I, *Zetemata* 54.1 (Munich 1971) 45–63; and B. Effe, "Der missgluckte Selbstmord des Aristomenes," *Hermes* 104 (1976) 362–75.

⁶ For the theme of *exclusus amator*, see F. O. Copley, *Exclusus Amator, A Study in Latin Love Poetry* (Baltimore 1956). On the significance of the house door in general, see E. H. Haight, *The Symbolism of the House Door in Classical Poetry* (New York and Toronto 1950).

⁷ The imagery in the story of Thelyphron foreshadows the imagery used in the narration of Lucius' own experiences. Thelyphron's limitations are shown by the fact that, in contrast to the widow, the witches, and Zatchlas, he exerts no control over doors or confined areas. In the case of the widow, special attention is drawn both to her enclosing Thelyphron in the room with her deceased husband at 2.23, and to her opening of the room at 2.26. At 2.30, we learn from the revived corpse that witches entered the locked room and put Thelyphron to sleep. Zatchlas exerts control over doors and space when he recalls the dead man who has passed beyond the threshold of death and restores his faculties of sight and speech by opening his eyes and mouth (2.28–29). Thelyphron has neither the normal mortal powers of the widow nor the supernatural ones of the witches and Zatchlas. His failure to control doors and space reflects his passivity and inability to impose his will on the affairs at hand.

On the story of Thelyphron, see esp. Perry (above, note 5) 264–73, and C. M. Mayrhofer, "On Two Stories in Apuleius," *Antichthon* 9 (1975) 68–80. For Zatchlas, see

When he arrives at Milo's house, he encounters what he believes are three *latrones* trying to break down the doors of the house (2.32).⁸ After slaying the supposed *latrones*, Lucius must still rouse Fotis in order to gain entrance to the house: "sic proeliatu, iam tumultu eo Fotide suscitata, patefactis aedibus anhelans et sudore perlutus inrepto . . ." (2.32). Here again Lucius' powerlessness is emphasized by his inability to enter Milo's house without assistance.

Although Lucius embarrassingly discovers at his mock trial that the *latrones* were only wineskins, he does not learn the full details surrounding the incident until Fotis informs him. When she comes to his room and contritely begs forgiveness for causing his humiliation, her position as the person in control is suggested by the fact that *she* rather than Lucius locks and bolts the doors:

"patere," inquit, "oro, prius fores cubiculi diligenter obcludam, ne sermonis elapsi profana petulantia committam grande flagitium," et cum dicto pessulis iniectis et uncino firmiter immisso sic ad me reversa colloque meo manibus ambabus inplexa . . . (3.15)

Fotis' insistence on having the door closed and her embrace of Lucius unite the motif of a closed room with that of sexual bondage.⁹ This coincidence of motifs ominously demonstrates the situation into which Lucius has fallen. Despite what Lucius may believe, his actions, in contrast to those of Fotis, do not show or even suggest the ability to exert tangible control over anything.

The image of a closed room occurs again when Fotis leads Lucius to the upper chamber where Pamphile is preparing to perform her love ritual:

iamque circa primam noctis vigiliam ad illud superius cubiculum suspensio et insono vestigio me perducit ipsa perque rimam ostiorum quampiam iubet arbitrari, quae sic gesta sunt. (3.21)

Here the closed doors separate Lucius from Pamphile's magical practices. In other words, the doors are both a physical and symbolic divider between Lucius, the uninitiate of magic, and Pamphile, the accomplished practitioner. Since Lucius desires to transform himself into a

A. Souter, "'Zatchlas' in Apuleius Met. II.28," *JThS* 37 (1936) 80, and J. G. Griffiths, *Apuleius of Madauros, The Isis-Book* (Leiden 1975) 29 and 351. For Zatchlas' ceremony reflecting the Egyptian rite of the "Opening of the Mouth," see J. G. Griffiths, "Isis in the *Metamorphoses*" in *Aspects of Apuleius* (above, note 2) 141-66; and P. Grimal, "Le Calame égyptien d'Apulée," *REA* 73 (1971) 343-55. For the widow having characteristics similar to those of the witches, see Schlam, "Sex and Sanctity" (above, note 2) 95-105.

⁸ For Lucius' confrontation with the wineskins, see Perry (above, note 5) 273-80; and P. G. Walsh, *The Roman Novel* (Cambridge 1970) 154-56.

⁹ For this scene see Schmidt (above, note 2) 268-82. For the emphasis on Lucius' sexual passivity, see J. Winkler, *Actor & Auctor* (Berkeley 1985) 176.

bird as he has just seen Pamphile do, he persuades Fotis to fetch the magic ointment that Pamphile used in her secret process. To comply with his wishes Fotis hesitantly enters the *cubiculum*:

Haec identidem adseverans summa cum trepidatione inrepat cubiculum et pyxidem depromit arcula. (3.24)

Lucius can only vicariously enter Pamphile's *cubiculum* through the agency of Fotis. He is powerless to do so himself.

Apuleius draws a contrast between the magical abilities of Pamphile, Fotis, and Lucius by demonstrating the degree to which each has access to the *cubiculum*. Pamphile, the expert magical practitioner, has full access to the room; Fotis, Pamphile's servant and assistant,¹⁰ has partial, or in the present circumstances, improper access; and Lucius, the uninitiate, has no access but can only surreptitiously peer into the room from behind closed doors. Lucius' transformation into a lowly ass is the ultimate proof of his lack of power in the realm of magic.

Later in the novel there are several scenes in which the limited nature of Lucius' condition is reinforced by the image of a closed room (8.31f., 10.15f., and 10.18f.). In the first scene, the sequestered ass is observed from the outside by a wary household that fears he is rabid (9.3). In the second scene, the cook and baker spy on their ass in order to determine if he is the cause of their disappearing food (10.15). In the third scene, Thiasus has begun charging admission to watch the ass behave like a human.¹¹ As it turns out, one particular matron wishes to do more than just observe, and pays the trainer for the privilege of spending the night with the ass behind closed doors (10.19). When Thiasus learns of Lucius' new trick, he decides to include it in an elaborate spectacle. In all three scenes the closed rooms emphasize the nature of Lucius' helplessness to escape or change his physical condition.

The description of the spectacle at 10.29 marks the beginning of the novel's denouement. In this scene an important change in perspective is occurring. It should be remembered that just prior to his transformation (3.21) Lucius is on the outside looking into Pamphile's room whereas in the scenes at 9.3, 10.15, and 10.19, Lucius is the party being observed. The contrast of perspective can be expressed in terms of one of the major themes of the *Metamorphoses*. That is, whereas in the early part of the novel it is Lucius' curiosity which causes him to pursue or look into affairs he should avoid, in these later scenes (9.3, 10.15, and 10.19), Lucius has become the object of curiosity. At 10.29, the

¹⁰ For Fotis' involvement with Pamphile's magic, see Schlam, "Sex and Sanctity" (above, note 2) 97-98.

¹¹ For the sequence of stories about adultery, see E. Paratore, *La Novella in Apuleio* (Palermo 1942²) 190-209, and Walsh (above, note 8) 13-14 and 168.

perspective is transitional. On the one hand, Lucius is the curious spectator of the Pyrrhic dance and short drama ("... subinde curiosos oculos patente porta spectaculi prospectu gratissimo reficiens"), while on the other hand his role as the scheduled main attraction of the spectacle obviously makes him the premier object of curiosity.

As the perspective on curiosity changes, so too does Lucius' condition of powerlessness begin to change. Previously, his lack of power was reflected by locked doors and closed rooms. The description of the gate lying open (*patente porta*) is instrumental in showing that Lucius will no longer suffer the same limitations that he has in the past. Thus, the scene at 10.29 is pivotal since it both echoes as well as contrasts aspects of the scenes at 3.21, 9.3, 10.15, and 10.19, and thereby prepares the setting both thematically and imagistically for the subsequent action of the novel.

After the short drama has concluded, a soldier orders the murderess chosen as Lucius' mate to be led into the arena. As the scene is being set, Lucius expresses his shame at having to perform sexually in public, his disgust at coming into contact with the polluted woman, and finally his horror at the prospect that the wild beasts may mistakenly devour him as well as the condemned woman (10.34). Taking advantage of the crowd's distracted attention, Lucius furtively edges his way out the gate and then runs for his life:

... paulatim furtivum pedem proferens portam, quae proxima est, potitus iam cursu me celerrimo proripio ... (10.35)

In essence, Lucius demonstrates a form of power and control over his predicament by using the door as a means of escape.

Lucius runs to the town of Cenchreae, where, as night descends, he falls asleep. Later that night Lucius has a vision of Isis and learns that he will soon be restored to his human form. Imagistically, Lucius' escape through the open gate marks an end to the particular type of situation which the locked door has repeatedly indicated. After he watched Pamphile transform herself from behind the locked door (3.21), Lucius' original idea of only viewing Pamphile's magic develops into a desire to participate in it. Since he is without Pamphile's power, which is demonstrated by her control of access to the *cubiculum*, his participation results in his transformation into an ass. In the other scenes in which a locked or closed door occurs (9.3, 10.15, and 10.19), Lucius' status as the object of curiosity is emphasized. At 10.35, where the image of the locked door is abandoned, the scene is set for this status, at least in the form it has taken thus far, to be relinquished. Whereas Lucius is transformed into an ass immediately after his complete lack of power is emphasized by Pamphile's locked doors, he is restored to human form shortly after he escapes from the arena through the open gate.

In Book 11, Lucius' religious progress is marked by the degree to which he has access to the special inner areas of the sanctuary of Isis. This is apparent at Chapter 17, when Lucius, now restored to human form, is part of the general crowd of worshipers who proceed to the temple of Isis but who, in contrast to the chief priest and particular initiates, are not allowed into the inner sanctum of the precinct.¹²

At cum ad ipsum iam templum pervenimus, sacerdos maximus
quique divinas effigies progerebant et qui venerandis penetralibus
pridem fuerant initiati, intra cubiculum deae recepti disponunt
rite simulacra spirantia. (11.17)

Lucius, however, separates himself from the general mass of Isiac followers at Chapter 19, when he chooses to take lodging within the temple precinct.¹³ Nevertheless, at this point he does not yet assume the vows or lifestyle of an initiate, and therefore does not have access to the inner sanctum of the temple (cf. 11.20 and 11.23). He is only allowed into the innermost recesses of the temple when he undergoes initiation.

The initiation itself is marked by references to enclosed spaces and special areas. As part of the ceremony, Lucius is personally led into the inner sanctuary by the officiating priest:¹⁴

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

As for the particular details of his initiation, Lucius says that it is lawful neither for him to reveal nor for the uninitiate readers to hear. Lucius says only that he has made a visit to the underworld, been carried through the "elements," seen the sun shining at the dead of night, approached both the gods above and those below, and worshiped them face to face (11.23).¹⁵ Despite the general nature of Lucius' account, it is apparent that his initiation is conceived of in spatial terms: "accessi confinium mortis et calcato Proserpinae limine per omnia vectus elementa remeavi . . ." (11.23).¹⁶

¹² Griffiths (above, note 7) 264.

¹³ Ibid. 271 and 355.

¹⁴ Ibid. 292–93.

¹⁵ Ibid. 296–308.

¹⁶ Control or overcoming of *elementa* is attributed to Pamphile at 3.15 (*serviunt elementa*) and to Isis at 11.5 (*elementorum omnium domina*) and 11.25 (*serviunt elementa*). R. Merkelbach, *Roman und Mysterium in der Antike* (Munich 1962) 13–14, 151, and 156 interprets the phrase *per omnia vectus elementa* (11.23) as a reference to simulated journeys which were part of the initiation into certain mystery religions. For a skeptical appraisal of Merkelbach's thesis, see Walsh (above, note 8) 203, note 1. Griffiths (above, note 7) 297–308 discusses the possible relationship between Egyptian funerary ideas and the term *elementa* in the context of 11.23.

When Lucius has completed his initiation, he is placed on a special wooden platform which is surrounded by curtains that can be drawn open so that he can be viewed by the public (11.24).¹⁷ Once again spatial terms are used to differentiate special individuals from the general populace. In this case, Lucius as a new initiate is physically set apart from the crowd by being placed on the raised platform where he sits as the object of reverence.¹⁸ Likewise, Lucius now has full access to the innermost recesses of the sanctuary. Thus throughout Book 11, Apuleius has consistently used spatial imagery to demonstrate Lucius' religious progress in the cult of Isis.¹⁹

In the above discussion we have shown how Apuleius has used references to doors and space to reflect Lucius' various physical and spiritual metamorphoses. In essence, an understanding of this motif allows us to appreciate one of the more subtle ways by which Apuleius has unified the diverse elements of the novel.²⁰

¹⁷ Griffiths (above, note 7) 306–7.

¹⁸ Lucius as object of reverence stands in contrast to his former status as object of curiosity. See Schlamm, "Sex and Sanctity" (above, note 2) 103; and Winkler (above, note 9) 178.

¹⁹ Apuleius uses similar spatial imagery in the story of Cupid and Psyche to demonstrate the varying powers of both Cupid and Psyche (4.28–6.24). Cupid's temporary loss of power is reflected by his confinement in Venus' *thalamus* and his physical separation from Psyche who is locked in another room of Venus' palace (6.11). His ability to escape from the locked room and to enclose sleep within the box rashly opened by Psyche shows his regained power (6.21). Psyche's control over doors and space and, in turn, over her entire situation is inferior to that of Cupid. In fact, she needs the help of others to acquire whatever power she has. The talking tower tells her how to make her descent to the underworld (6.18–20); Cupid rescues her after she opens the box of beauty (6.20–21); and by Jupiter's intercession she is allowed to ascend to heaven (6.23).

As Schlamm notes ("Curiosity" [above, note 1] 122–23, and "Sex and Sanctity" [above, note 2] 99–100), the story of Cupid and Psyche is an analogue to that of Lucius, and Psyche's ultimate success after setbacks caused by her curiosity foreshadows Lucius' own fortunate outcome.

²⁰ I would especially like to thank Pamela Draper, Charles Saylor, and the anonymous referees and the editor of *TAPA* for their comments and suggestions.