

Forward: Book I and Apuleius' Metamorphoses

Most of Book One of Apuleius' Metamorphoses is a "tale within a tale" related by a character, whose name we eventually find out is Aristomenes, to the narrator of the novel, whose name we eventually find out is Lucius. This story is a semi-autonomous tale, like numerous others in the novel; and the prologue to the work, indeed, states that what we are reading is a collection of such stories designed to titillate us. If someone read the tale of Aristomenes without continuing to read the rest of the novel, however, s/he would have a very incomplete sense of the kind of story the Metamorphoses is. For in addition to a series of amusing stories strung together by the narrator, the Metamorphoses has a main narrative storyline about how Lucius is turned into an ass by a magic potion, about his adventures as an ass, and about his eventual change back to human form. The final book of the novel, moreover, contains a startling religious conclusion to the adventures of Lucius that forces us to rethink what we have come to believe about what we have been reading. Once we have read the whole novel, the narrative of Book One seems in retrospect to resonate broadly with what now seem to be major themes and ideas of the whole novel, although there is still considerable disagreement on what the novel is really all about.

Some critics, such as J. J. Winkler, argue that the novel's overall purpose has to do with this gap between expectation and fulfillment, between form and transformation, and that the tale of Aristomenes is a good example of the way Apuleius teases us readers

in order to challenge us to rethink how and what we know. Indeed, with its odd mixture of terrifying witches and slapstick comedy, this tale is typical of much of the Metamorphoses. The tale is amusing, bizarre and surprising--not least because it ends up being not only a story by Aristomenes, but also a story about Aristomenes, who becomes an exile as a result of the events of the story he tells. In Winkler's terms, Aristomenes is both auctor and actor, both narrator and character. For someone familiar with the final book of the Metamorphoses, this outcome is not just surprising, but potentially significant; for the "I" of the whole novel (Lucius), not only narrates a whole series of amusing stories as he promises to do in the prologue--if indeed that is the same person--but is also the "me" of the novel; for he is also the narrator of his own transformation into an ass and his miraculous religious transformation at the end. Just as Aristomenes makes no mention at the beginning of the fact that this was also a story that led to his own transformation into an exile, so also Lucius makes no reference in the first ten books of the Metamorphoses to the fact that the outcome of his asinine adventures will be a religious conversion. The tale of Aristomenes can thus be seen as an anticipation of the shape of the entire Metamorphoses along with its serious conclusion.

But I have leapt "into the middle of things" by beginning my discussion of Book One with the tale of Aristomenes, for that semi-autonomous tale is situated in a narrative context that is just as surprising and problematic as the relationship of the tale to the whole novel. A critical discussion of Apuleius' text must consider a

number of issues of literary production and tradition: the biography of Apuleius, the literary heritage of the Metamorphoses, the religious and philosophical context of Apuleius, and the narratological conventions that structure the novel, beginning with the prologue. But my "leap" into the middle of Book One is not so unusual for a discussion of Apuleius, for it is a text for which a whole swarm of issues and questions vie immediately and simultaneously for the attention of the reader. In fact it has been noted that the first words of the prologue (At ego tibi...) open as if in the middle of a conversation. Indeed, the overriding impression one gets of the flow of the Metamorphoses is a kind of headlong rush forwards that periodically and inconsistently glances backward to make tantalizing programmatic and interpretative statements, that are elusive traces of meaning and purpose. Given this situation, interpretations of the novel must usually achieve consistency by ignoring certain things. Deciding what the novel is "really all about" thus often involves a certain "leap of faith"; but that might also be what the novel is all about. In this essay I will try to survey the kinds of approaches to the novel that have been most important, paying special attention to their pertinence to Book One.

As noted in the introduction above, most of what we know about Apuleius is derived from his own works. As is often the case with Apuleius, details of his life seem to have tantalizing connections with his novel, but it is often difficult to know what to make of them. Certainly his trial for casting a spell on his wife seems a possible reason for composing a story in which playing with magic has devastating consequences. His career as an orator giving

speeches in Latin and Greek associates him with the "second sophistic," a contemporary literary movement which sought to revive the glories of traditional Greek culture, especially the glory of Greek rhetoric.¹ His peculiar literary style, full of archaisms and unusual words, is no doubt due to the influence of this literary movement. His compilations and learned discussions of philosophical topics show that he had a keen interest in Platonic philosophy. All of these facts may be significant for a critical assessment of the Metamorphoses, but it is difficult to say how significant. Is the Metamorphoses a philosophical narrative that promotes Platonic ideas? Is it a cautionary tale about magic based in some way on Apuleius' own bad experiences? Or is it a "sophistic" display of learning with no higher purpose than erudite entertainment?

The prologue states that the Metamorphoses is a "Greekish story" (fabula Graecanica), and indeed there is another version of the story preserved in Greek among the works of Lucian, a contemporary of Apuleius. This work, called Lucius or the Ass, is much shorter than the Metamorphoses, but contains some passages that are almost identical, so that some relationship must exist between them. It appears that another longer version of the story also existed in Greek and was entitled Metamorphoses, and that Lucius or the Ass is an epitome of this version.² This longer version still existed in the middle ages, but is now lost. The similarities

¹For Apuleius' relationship to the second sophistic see G. Sandy, The Greek World of Apuleius (Leiden, 1997), and Harrison 2000.

²For these Greek sources see H. Mason, "The Metamorphoses of Apuleius and its Greek Sources," in Hofmann 1999.

between Apuleius' novel and Lucius or the Ass are most economically explained by the assumption that both used this lost earlier work as a source. It is tempting to triangulate between the lost Greek Metamorphoses, Lucius or the Ass, and Apuleius' Metamorphoses in order to speculate about what Apuleius added or subtracted from his original, but in the end nothing too specific can be deduced from this enterprise. None of the inserted tales, such as the tale of Aristomenes in Book One, are represented in Lucius or the Ass, but that doesn't mean they weren't in the Greek Metamorphoses. Similarly, the end of Lucius or the Ass is comical, but that does not prove that the Greek Metamorphoses did have not a serious ending like the Metamorphoses. The most that can be said is that Apuleius wrote his novel the way he did because it suited him to do so, irrespective of the sources that he used or transformed. However, Apuleius takes the trouble to introduce the information that this is a Greek story made into Latin and states in addition that this change of language (vocis immutatio) corresponds to the literary effort he is undertaking. Even without knowing anything about the Greek source, we are compelled to wonder about the significance of this multilingual heritage.

It is traditional to call the Metamorphoses a novel, along with Petronius' Satyricon, although the two works share little resemblance to each other, much less to the "Greek novels" which are roughly contemporary with them. Another generic term seems to be set forth in the first sentence of the prologue with the words sermone Milesio, which refer to certain erotic stories made famous by Aristides of Miletus, whose work is completely lost. The

prologue promises to "string together" a series of such amusing stories for the delight of the reader. Later the term Melesiae is used again in reference to the lengthy inserted tale about Cupid and Psyche, related by an old woman (4.32). These references to Milesian tales strike most readers of the Metamorphoses as misleading: the novel turns to be much more than just a stringing together of erotic stories, and the tale of Cupid and Psyche, with its allegorical overtones, seems to be much more than a Milesian tale. One lesson from this is that when the author makes explicit statements about what kind of story the Metamorphoses is we should not take them too seriously as articulations of a global strategy. But the question remains, What kind of story is this?

Extended prose fiction was never explicitly conceptualized as a literary genre in antiquity. Indeed, such works usually combine elements from numerous traditional genres in order to concoct a literary product that is more heterogeneous than any of its predecessors in antiquity. One inevitable consequence of this mixing of styles and genres is humor and parody. To juxtapose serious and comic elements, or humble and lofty language, calls attention to the artificial and mannered character of literary conventions. The Metamorphoses of Apuleius is certainly such a hybrid mixture of literary types: comedy and tragedy, myth and folk-tale, epic and history, philosophy and satire. This multiplicity of forms contributes to the confusion about the novel, since these genres imply different and partly incompatible visions of meaning and reality. M. Bakhtin, who has written extensively on the modern novel and its ancient predecessors, argues that what separates the

novel from other genres is the way it puts other literary styles and types into a "dialogue" with each other by juxtaposing them.

"To a greater or lesser extent, every novel is a dialogized system made up of images of 'languages,' styles and consciousnesses that are concrete and inseparable from language. Language in the novel not only represents, but itself serves as the object of representation. Novelistic discourse is always criticizing itself."³

That the Metamorphoses is such a "dialogic" work is reflected in descriptive terms like "serio-comic" or "philosophical comedy." The story of the ass-man, derived from the Greek source, is the main narrative frame of the novel into which a bewildering variety of materials have been incorporated. Accounting for this multiplicity makes it nearly impossible to pigeon-hole the Metamorphoses with a convenient tag. At the same time, Apuleius' choice of "form"--using that word loosely--means that he can go about his business with as little restriction as possible on what he can or can't do.

In another essay Bakhtin studies different forms of time, which he uses to create a typology of various sorts of narrative.⁴ One type he calls the "adventure novel of ordeal," in which an initial happy state (usually marriage) is interrupted by a series of adventures until the initial state is reestablished. This "adventure time" is abstract in the sense that the passing of time leaves no trace: the two lovers are the same before and after the series of adventures.

³M. Bakhtin, The Dialogic Imagination, tr. C. Emerson and M. Holquist (Texas, 1981). p. 49.

⁴M. Bakhtin, "Forms of Time and Chronotope in the Novel" in The Dialogic Imagination (n. 3) 84-129.

The Metamorphoses is the model of another type, the "adventure novel of everyday life," which also has a potentially unlimited number of adventures, but is grounded in a developmental plot which leads from guilt to retribution, redemption, and blessedness. The individual episodes, however, and especially the inserted stories, display a kind of "everyday time"; seamy and obscene, fragmented and cut off from the rhythms of nature and the norms of society, this everyday time is not parallel to the developmental trajectory of the novel, but "intersects it at right angles." (Bakhtin, 128). The adventures of Lucius function to give concreteness to his experience by making it correspond to an actual course of travel. He travels, observing and revealing the private lives of others, experiencing life from the outside, and the sum of this experience constitutes a kind of "descent" into the underworld. Bakhtin thus acknowledges the disparity between the seriousness of Lucius' story of guilt and redemption, on the one hand, and the comic aspects of Lucius' misadventures, on the other, but subsumes the latter under the former, which is the basic position of all religious or moral interpretations of the novel.

Religious or moral interpretations of the novel have the last word, so to speak, because the story ends with a religious message. However, their main drawback is that the vast majority of the book seems strangely devoid of any religious or moral content. It is possible, upon closer look, to find traces of moral fiber in the first ten books of the novel, but this sometimes requires real ingenuity. For example, Tatum notes the tale of Aristomenes presents the themes of curiosity (curiositas), base pleasure (voluptas) and the

fickleness of fortune (fortuna) in a way that is consistent with their presentation and relevance to Lucius in Book 11 (Tatum 1969). The harrowing tale of Aristomenes, with its lust, magic and witches, is thought to be a warning to Lucius which he subsequently ignores, as he plunges into a hot sexual relationship in order to gain access to forbidden knowledge. The vice of curiositas gives a plausible basis for a moral interpretation of the story, especially since it seems to be an Apuleian coinage to translate the Platonic term polypragmosyne, "meddlesomeness."⁵ But such moral interpretations do not seem adequately to account for the incongruity between the playfulness of tone with which all this seriousness is presented. Moral sentiment and judgment are certainly evoked in the novel frequently, but if that is what the novel is "really all about," it has been set forth in a very peculiar way.

Religious interpretations of the text usually focus on the figure of Isis, the Egyptian goddess who appears in a dream in Book 11 to lead Lucius into a new life. Isis is a goddess of "resurrection," who raised from the dead her brother and husband, Osiris, after he had been murdered by their enemy Set, whose association with the form of an ass makes that animal "most hateful" to Isis (Met. 11,6). Since the religion of Isis in imperial times was a "mystery" religion, with secrets and symbols, it has been argued that the peculiarities of the novel can only be properly understood when "decoded" by religious initiates.⁶ So, for example, the ludicrous incident that ends Book One, where the fish Lucius buys for dinner is destroyed by an irate

⁵ DeFilippo 1990; J. Penwill, "Slavish Pleasures and Profitless Curiosity: Fall and Redemption in Apuleius' Metamorphoses," Ramus 4 (1975), 49-82.

⁶G. Griffiths, The Isis Book of the Metamorphoses. Leiden, 1975.

official as a punishment to the fishmonger for overcharging, has been linked with a ritual trampling of fish in certain Egyptian temples (Scobie 1975: 127). That the novel is some kind of systematic coding of religious content under a “veil” of allegorical indirection has won few adherents, but there is no doubt that contemporary religious and philosophical ideas are important cultural resources upon which Apuleius draws to give a serious resonance to his story. Thus the white horse (peralbo equo) Lucius rides in Book One, which reappears at the end with the name Candidus, has been seen as a Platonic symbol of philosophy.⁷ The witch Meroe in the tale of Aristomenes, whose name perhaps recalls an important center of Isis worship, is the first of a series of powerful female figures that seem to culminate in some way in the epiphany of Isis in Book 11. However, if these serious meanings were paramount in Apuleius' mind, he made it difficult for us readers to grasp them on a casual reading of the novel.

Nancy Shumate takes another approach to the religious content by arguing that the novel tries to invoke the experience of conversion, an experience that is prompted by a series of existential crises.⁸ Lucius' transformation into an ass forces him to see himself and his world from a new angle and this reevaluation concludes when he turns forever from his old life and is "born again" into a new life. Such an invocation of the conversion experience does not mean that the text is an authentic autobiography in the mode of St.

⁷G. Drake, "Candidus, A Unifying Theme in Apuleius' *Metamorphoses*," Classical Journal 64 (1968), 102-9.

⁸Nancy Shumate, Crisis and Conversion (Ann Arbor, 1996).

Augustine's Confessions (indeed, it is a far cry from such works), but presents this religious experience while simultaneously critiquing it, without ever decisively taking one side or the other. Shumate argues that the reader is left to make his or her own decision about the validity of religious experience. This reading partially coincides with Winkler's view of the novel as a "philosophical comedy about religious knowledge" since both focus on the indeterminacies in the text caused by the hermeneutic playfulness of the author and his narrators. Apuleius seems to be peculiarly resistant to providing definitive versions of moral judgment and interpretation, and this resistance seems to dovetail with a number of narratological peculiarities in the story, to which we must now turn.

The key issue can be summarized by two words from the prologue: *quis ille?* "Who is that?"⁹ The prologue begins with someone encouraging us readers to enjoy the tales he is about to tell us. This narrator claims to be of Greek origin and to have learned Latin with some difficulty, so this is a fictive narrator not to be identified with the North African Apuleius. After the prologue, the story begins, again with a first person narrator whom we eventually discover is named Lucius and is from Corinth. It is never made crystal clear whether this Lucius, who turns out to be telling his story, is different from or the same as the speaker in the prologue, the one who had promised to "string together" tales of transformation in a sermone Milesio; but a scrupulous comparison

⁹Winkler 1985 is the key discussion for these narratological issues.

suggests that they are not the same.¹⁰ In the final book of the novel, moreover, a priest of Osiris is told in a dream to seek out and purify the protagonist, who is identified in this dream as Lucius of Madaura, which tradition identifies as Apuleius' hometown, but in any case is the hometown of neither Lucius nor the prologue speaker. There is really no way to eliminate completely these inconsistencies, although there have been many interesting attempts to explain these and many other apparent lapses of consistency in narrative voice.¹¹ It is possible, of course, that Apuleius just goofed, but there is a great deal else in the novel that makes it seem that he intended these riddles to provoke and tease the reader. To what purpose?

Winkler argues that the Metamorphoses is a kind of intellectual training ground where a scrupulous reader will come to recognize that no knowledge, not even the religious knowledge espoused at the end, is firmly authorized. By attaching primary importance to these narratological issues, he sees in Apuleius' very inconsistency another kind of consistency more important than Isis, philosophy or morality. Although Winkler has clearly shown us something important about the Metamorphoses, his interpretation of the novel requires a certain leap of faith, since there is something circular and paradoxical about speaking of "convention-breaking shifts as regular, as the predictable or characteristic behavior" of the Metamorphoses (Winkler 175). No more (or less) certain is

¹⁰See Harrison 1990; Laird 1993.

¹¹R. T. van der Paardt, "The Unmasked 'I': Met. 11.27," Mnemosyne 34 (1981), 96-106; and Smith 1972, both reprinted in Harrison 1999; Dowden 1982; and Edwards 1993.

Harrison's position that the entire novel, including Book 11, is the kind of erudite entertainment typical of sophistic display, with no serious message at all (Harrison 2000). What makes the Metamorphoses so maddening and so seductive is that we are given so little help in deciding how scrupulously we should read this text, in deciding whether something odd is a careless inconsistency or whether Apuleius, like Pee Wee Herman, "meant to do that."

Stephen Harrison has argued that the identity of the prologue is not a person at all, but the physical book itself, an example of the "talking book" theme of which there are other examples in Latin literature (Harrison 1990). Although this approach is not entirely satisfying either, it does make an important point about the Metamorphoses and novels in general. When we read an "ego" in a written text we immediately begin to speculate about the identity of this "I" and assume that it must represent some person or thing, just as the "tibi" must represent us readers. This is based on the analogy of live interaction or live performances, in which all that is spoken emanates from a represented "person" that temporarily inhabits a particular body. But in a text that is not organized around a performer--and this is the smaller part of what we call ancient literature--the "I" and "you" can be just textual markers that establish temporary relationships within the world of the text without necessarily being grounded in anything "outside" it. The stability of a performing presence is replaced by another sort of stability centered around the reader's activity. As we continue to read, speculating and modifying our sense of who is who, our activity as readers confers a certain concreteness on these textual

identities. If we are looking, they must be there to be found! It is important to recognize, however, that there need not really "be" a person or thing that is the source of the "ego" in the first sentence of the prologue, or even the "ego" in the first sentence after the prologue. The indirectness of the answer the prologue gives to the question "quis ille?" initiates a deferral of specificity that never really ends in the novel. At the same time, Apuleius provides just enough consistency to create a minimum of plausibility, and holds out just enough promise of eventual illumination to keep the reader continuing to look for definitive answers. Whatever effects the novel achieves depends on the reader accepting this impossible mission.¹²

There is another point about the prologue of the Metamorphoses that has special relevance to the first book of the novel: when was the prologue written? It is certainly a reasonable assumption that prologues and introductions are written last, when it is possible to know exactly what it is one must introduce, and this is the attested practice of a number of authors from antiquity.¹³ However, isn't it possible that the prologue was written first or at least near the beginning, at a point when the author had only a general idea what he was going to write about, with the bulk of the novel only vaguely outlined, along with a multiplicity of possible purposes and outcomes? This question has special relevance to Book One because there is slim lexical evidence that Book One may

¹²For a minimum of "plausibility" as the narrator's goal, see Dowden 1982. For Apuleius' inducements to the reader to continue seeking answers, see Winkler 60-9.

¹³T. Janson, Latin Prose Prefaces (Stockholm, 1964), 73-4.

have been composed a good deal earlier than the rest of the novel (Scobie 1975: 24-5). Even if that is not so, something had to be composed first and what was composed later may not have been written in entirely the same spirit. The more general question raised here is to what degree we should assume that the same purpose(s) are infused homogeneously throughout the entire work. When discussing a particular passage, literary critics typically take for granted that the rest of the novel is always already written, and hence that it is possible to read backwards and forwards from any point to find correlation for a particular interpretation. A more realistic assumption might be that the process of composing the work itself modified the author's purposes, or added to them. Book One of the Metamorphoses is a good example of the way surprising things seem to emerge from the events of the story according to rules that are being formulated and modified as we go along. Ellen Finkelpearl suggests that the key trajectory of the novel is not the transformation and redemption of Lucius, but the evolution and metamorphosis of the novel itself as a genre (Finkelpearl 1998). Her thesis is attractive in that it seeks not to explain inconsistency in the work by finding some more recondite consistency, but sees the novel as a project, something that is becoming what it is in the very process of its composition.

A related point is made by Judith Krabbe, who observes that the relationship among various thematic elements in the novel are best described as immutatio, the closest Latin word to the Greek word metamorphosis, and the very word used in the prologue to describe the novel's "change of language" from Greek to Latin (vocis

immutatio).¹⁴ But immutatio, she notes, is also the Latin translation from Greek of the rhetorical term metonymy (literally "change of name"), a basic form of figurative language by which things associated with something become substituted for them, such as Venerem habere = "to have sex." Metonymy relies on existing networks of connections among words (Venus is the goddess of sexual pleasure), but innovative figures of speech can also create new networks by positing new connections. Apuleius' Metamorphoses seems to be a world where new and unusual connections are being fabricated, not just where already established ones are being rehearsed. The linear unfolding of the narrative is like a series of "mutations," variations of scenes and themes growing out of each other, "things becoming other by association or contiguity" (Kraabe, 144). The last word of the Metamorphoses, "obibam," is an imperfect indicative: "I was going about...." Just as the opening "At ego tibi..." seems to start in the middle of a conversation, the end is not a traditional closure, which would require a perfect tense ("and that's how I came to be who I am today"), but seems to imply that more immutaciones are to come.¹⁵

The literary fortunes of the Metamorphoses itself have undergone immutaciones as remarkable as its hero Lucius. Once reviled as a patchwork resulting from Apuleius' "desultory psychosis" (Perry 1967), the novel has more recently been hailed as a masterpiece of intricate structure and ingenuity. If Perry's unsympathetic view of Apuleius is based inappropriately on

¹⁴J. Krabbe, The Metamorphoses of Apuleius (New York, 1989), p. 144.

¹⁵For the "imperfect" ending, see Winkler, 223-7.

expectations of narrative “unity” derived from the criticism of modern fiction, the view of Apuleius as the James Joyce of antiquity is equally problematic. A more moderate position is represented by Carl Schlam, who sees the action of the plot to be neither “tightly organized nor entirely chaotic,” with a kind of coherence resulting from an “abundant network of themes” connecting the stories so that they make “continuous commentary on themselves and on each other” (Schlam 1992: 6). In such a text it is a dubious strategy to take small selections of the story as a “part for the whole.” Book One is an appropriate introduction to the Metamorphoses only so long as we consider it in all its exuberant heterogeneity.

It is true, for example, that Book One sets out several key thematic elements that can be followed throughout the story: the danger of curiositas, the changeability of fortune, and the connection between magic and sensual pleasure. But the presentation of these themes in the tale of Aristomenes--with its mixture of serious and comic and its toying with appearance and reality--keeps us in suspense about the future of these ideas in the novel. Moreover, that tale itself is situated in an inconclusive discussion of the veracity of tales of magic, in which a contrast is drawn between the skepticism of Aristomenes' unnamed companion and the indiscriminate credulity of Lucius. We are invited to believe that things are more than they seem, but also to jeer at the gullibility of Lucius, who believes that all things are possible. Such internal commentary on aspects of story-telling occurs throughout the Metamorphoses, which makes it seem we are overhearing Apuleius thinking out loud about what he is doing. Before

Aristomenes tells his story, his companion produces a hackneyed list of the exploits of witches, sneering at such nonsense. However, in the tale itself a similar list of exploits is attributed to Meroe by her erstwhile victim, and vouched for by the experience of Aristomenes himself. This casual seepage between the main narrative frame and the stories within that frame occurs again and again in the Metamorphoses, blurring the boundaries between the lepidas fabulas and the account of Lucius' transformation, making us wonder what is frame and what is being framed.

The final episode of Book One, the trampling of the fish by the market official, is the kind of peculiar incident that cries out for some explanation for its inclusion in the story; but it is also like numerous other episodes that seem to go nowhere, whose inclusion seems to be a path followed for a while and then abandoned. By the time we realize this episode has gone nowhere, we have long replaced our question about its meaning with numerous others that seem more pressing and pertinent. Is it possible to read the banal ending of this episode as a reflection of some characteristic of the entire novel, just as we read the surprise ending of the tale of Aristomenes to be an anticipation of the novel's surprise ending?

The narrator mentions early on his relationship by blood to the Greek author Plutarch, an important contemporary literary figure who wrote a philosophical commentary on the religion of Isis and Osiris. Is this a clue about the philosophical character of the story? an anticipation of its Isaic conclusion? or a hint about its literary heritage in the revival of Greek learning in which Plutarch played a role? Although it could be one or all of these things, it is

equally pertinent that we still do not even know the narrator's name at this point; much less that the story is about to "morph" into an autobiography that will be much more than what the prologue promised. Apuleius' stinginess about crucial information, so well detailed by Winkler and others, is regularly accompanied by a surplus of potentially significant clues and insinuation, thematic correspondences that are "too exact to be accidental, too extraneous to be significant" (Winkler 118). One effect of this baffling combination is that Apuleius has a maximum amount of flexibility as the story unfolds to revise his purposes while maintaining continuity with what preceded, to confer retrospectively meaning on what he has written by further elaboration. Book One is an appropriate beginning for many possible novels, only one of which Apuleius actually wrote. That readers are so uncertain what the novel is "all about" may be due to the fact that Apuleius' own answer to that question evolves and changes as the novel unfolds.

Stephen Nimis

Miami University (Ohio)

nimissa@muohio.edu