

THE ANCIENT NOVEL AND BEYOND

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*The Winged Ass. Intertextuality and Narration
in Apuleius' Metamorphoses*

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THE WINGED ASS.
INTERTEXTUALITY AND NARRATION
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Apuleius' *Metamorphoses*, as Ellen Finkelpearl has pointed out in her recent book,¹ contains a number of passages that can also be interpreted as reflections about the 'Novel' and the features of this new and unstable literary genre; it is also possible to encounter images which are well suited to symbolizing the lively coexistence of the 'high' and 'low' intertexts that characterize it. I do not presume to attribute such a symbolic valency to Apuleius himself; though I have chosen for the title of this study the image of the winged ass acting the part of Pegasus (the character which closes the prelude to the great Isiac procession²): a zoological and literary hybrid which incorporates the features of the lowest animality as well as ethereal divine immortality. I also intend to conclude my paper by proposing a related but different image, in a manner that is more circumstantial and coherent with the subject.

At this point I would like to proceed to an intertextual analysis of certain passages in the *Metamorphoses* connected with the act of narrating, which is, of course, quite a common situation in a novel so rich in stories inserted into the main plot. Quite a number of these secondary narrations seem to be a sort of experimentation by Apuleius with different literary genres; in some cases they are also prefaced by more or less explicit genre markers. It is not possible here to list many examples, but it is worth mentioning at least the apostrophe to the reader in 10.2.4 where Lucius says "know that you

¹ Finkelpearl (1998); cf. e.g. pp. 58 ff. ("Self-Conscious Reflection on Epic, Novel, and Genre") and 62 ff. ("Hair, Elegy, and Style").

² *Metamorphoses* 11.8.4: "I saw... an ass with wings glued on his back, walking aside a decrepit old man, so that you would call the one Bellerophon and the other Pegasus, but laugh at both." All translations of Greek and Latin texts are from the Loeb collection: Hanson (1989), Apuleius; Seaton (1912), Apollonius Rhodius; Murray (1919), Homer; Fairclough (1926), Horace; Fairclough-Goold (1999), Vergil. The Latin text of Apuleius' *Metamorphoses* is from Robertson, Vallette (1940-45).

are reading a tragedy, and no light tale,”³ or the story of Lucius’ service with the gardener, which is rich in references to historiographic literature, and is introduced in 9.32.1 with an *incipit* of clear Sallustian flavour: “circumstances require me, I think, to describe the regime of this new slavery of mine as well.”⁴

The most extensive tale inserted in the *Metamorphoses* is the well-known fable of *Cupid and Psyche*. The story is narrated because of its power to distract and comfort a character, Charite, who had been kidnapped by brigands just as she was about to get married; twice the girl bursts into tears (4.24.3; 4.25.1), and tells what happened to her (4.24.4-5; 4.26.3-8). To make matters worse, the poor girl relives her misfortunes in a dream (4.27.2-4). An old woman, whom the brigands had asked to look after Charite and keep her calm, maintains that it is not worth worrying about bad dreams since they often foretell quite opposite events. She then begins to entertain the girl and to renew her hope with the long tale of *Cupid and Psyche*, whose main character, after living some frightening adventures, succeeds in realizing her own love dream.⁵

The narrative is very rich in associations with a multiplicity of literary texts and genres. Nevertheless, Stephen Harrison, among others, has clearly highlighted the dominating role assumed by the epic model, on a structural, narratological and textual level.⁶ Because of its distinctive feature of being a ‘long inserted tale’ *Cupid and Psyche* can usefully be compared, at least structurally, with books 2 and 3 of the *Aeneid*, where the Vergilian hero recounts his own wanderings to Dido; but—as Harrison correctly points out—the very choice of the narrator represents a first important point of divergence which transforms “the lofty world of the epic into the more dubious domain of the novel.”⁷ In place of Aeneas we find a “crazy, drunken old

³ *Scito te tragoediam, non fabulam legere*. Cf. e.g. GCA (2000) *ad loc.*: “it is clear to any lettered reader that he must watch for references to the Phaedra-Hippolytus tragedy.”

⁴ *Res ipsa mihi poscere videtur ut huius quoque serviti mei disciplinam exponam*. About this kind of historiographical *incipit*, see Graverini (1997) 248-54.

⁵ Winkler (1985) 56 sees a malicious purpose in the old woman’s story: “the narrator is Charite’s enemy and her tale is specifically designed to lull her fears by using a mirror image to turn her away from reality.” The dream of Charite seems to conceal many hints about the events that will be narrated in Book 8: see Frangoulidis (1993).

⁶ Harrison (1998a) 52 ff.; Smith (1998) 73 ff. prefers to stress the connections with the genre of tragedy.

⁷ Harrison (1998a) 53.

woman” (*delira et temulenta... anicula*: we will come back to the two adjectives later on), a female character who is quite secondary in the economy of the novel. Her tale is heterodiegetic and—at least from a superficial reading—its subject is fantastic and frivolous, whereas the story told by Aeneas is homodiegetic, and its subject matter heroic and military.

Yet, it should be noted that, although there is certainly a strong opposition between the old woman and the narrator Aeneas, the fact that *Cupid and Psyche* is a tale of entertainment does not necessarily take us very far from the world of the epic. The three songs of Demodocus in *Odyssey* Book 8, for example, enliven the banquets and the athletic games of the Phaeacians, even though they have no consolatory purpose. And if we want to go even further with the analogies, we can point out that they are heterodiegetic narratives, and that in the second case the subject (the illicit love affair between Ares and Aphrodite) is not at all ‘epic’. The first and the last songs of Demodocus deal instead with the Trojan war, and both of them spark an emotional response from Odysseus. In the first case (vv. 83-92) the hero repeatedly covers his head with his cloak, so as to hide his tears from the Phaeacians; yet the fact does not pass unnoticed by Alcinous, who interrupts the banquet out of respect for his guest. When Odysseus sheds tears for the second time (vv. 521-31) Alcinous, who is still unaware of his guest’s true identity, asks him who he is and why he is there; thus Odysseus begins his long narration, occupying books 9 to 12. So, as in Apuleius, in *Odyssey* Book 8 we find a tale (by Demodocus) and a moment of tears (by Odysseus) that are preludes to a long inserted tale. Odysseus’ tears initially provoke the opposite reaction to those of Charite, since they cause the interruption of Demodocus’ song. Nevertheless, it is those very tears that, through Alcinous’ intervention, will lead to the long tale in the following books.⁸

⁸ In Vergil, the corresponding tale narrated by Aeneas to Dido is also preceded by the performance of a minstrel, but there is no causal connection since Iopas’ song has a cosmological content. Thus Aeneas has no reason for being deeply moved like Odysseus at the banquet; the scene of the crying hero is instead exploited by Vergil when Aeneas, while still invisible and alone with Achates, admires the scenes of the Trojan War portrayed on Iuno’s temple in Carthage (1.459 ff.; cfr. also 2.8). As I will try to demonstrate in the following pages, the *Odyssey* provides a more specific intertext than the *Aeneid* for our Apuleian passage.

A useful comparison can be drawn between the repeated weeping of Odysseus, broken by the athletic games, and Charite's tears, which are also repeated and interrupted by a short sleep. The last time Odysseus weeps is described by Homer through a simile (*Odyssey* 8.521 ff.):

This song the famous minstrel sang. But the heart of Odysseus was melted and tears wet his cheeks beneath his eyelids. And *as a woman* wails and flings herself about her dear *husband*, who has fallen in front of his city and his people, seeking to ward off from his city and his children the pitiless day; and *as she beholds him dying and gasping for breath*, she clings to him and shrieks aloud, while the foe behind her smite her back and shoulders with their spears, and *lead her away to captivity* to bear toil and woe, while with most pitiful grief her cheeks are wasted: even so did Odysseus let fall pitiful tears from beneath his brows.

Charite, who has just awakened in tears, tells the brigands' old servant how she had been kidnapped (4.26.3 ff.), and immediately afterwards she describes her terrifying dream. This dream follows the previous narrative closely enough, but is different from it in at least a couple of important details: in the dream Charite sees herself as already married (whereas in 4.26.8 she had recounted that she had been kidnapped "right from my mother's trembling arms": that is, before the wedding); and the bridegroom dies while pursuing the kidnappers and urging the people to do the same (whereas the 'real' kidnapping took place without anyone daring to oppose the brigands, and as far as we can see it occurred in a purely domestic context). Here is the text (4.27.2 ff.):

I saw myself, after I had been dragged violently from my house, my bridal apartment, my room, my very bed, calling my poor luckless *husband's* name through the trackless wilds. And I saw him, the moment he was widowed of my embraces, still wet with perfumes and garlanded with flowers, following my tracks as I fled on others' feet. As with pitiful cries he lamented his lovely *wife's* kidnapping and called on the populace for aid, one of the robbers, furious at his annoying pursuit, picked up a huge stone at his feet, struck my unhappy young *husband*, and killed him. It was this hideous vision that terrified me and shook me out of my deathly sleep.⁹

⁹ ...*visa sum mihi de domo de thalamo de cubiculo de toro denique ipso violenter extracta per solitudines avias infortunatissimi mariti nomen invocare, eumque, ut primum meis amplexibus viduatus est, adhuc ungentis madidum coronis floridum*

Of course there are some differences, but the nucleus is closely similar to the Homeric comparison. In her dream Charite, like the woman in the *Odyssey*, is kidnapped and is upset by the sight of her husband's death. This episode does not appear to happen in private, but in front of the people of the town. So it is precisely the details that differentiate Charite's dream from the 'reality' which link the oneiric vision to the Homeric text. Other less important analogies can be found in these chapters: Charite thinks that her own destiny is to become a slave (4.24.4 "turned into a slave," *mancipium effecta*); the brigands' attack is described as if it were a military episode, as is customary in Apuleius (4.26.7 "suddenly a gang of gladiators came bursting in, fierce with the look of war, brandishing their bared and hostile blades"). If the comparison between the two texts is right, an ornamental detail in the epic becomes a narrative element in Apuleius (albeit indirectly, as in the case of a dream); it is an interesting practice, other examples of which could be found in the *Metamorphoses*.¹⁰

In a sense Charite's dream represents a sublime re-narration of the misfortunes she underwent. Her kidnapping, as she had previously narrated it, had not brought about any heroic acts, and it would seem the maiden herself regrets it ("no one in our household fought back, or even offered the slightest resistance," 4.26.8); it is true that the tale ends with a mythological comparison ("thus our wedding, like that of Attis or Protesilaus, was interrupted and broken up"), but this serves mainly to highlight, by means of elegiac tones, how pathetic Charite's situation is. In her dream, however, thanks to the modification of certain details and to the closeness to the Homeric text, Charite can try to dignify her own adventure by joining the number

consequi vestigio me pedibus fugientem alienis. Utque clamore percito formonsae raptum uxoris conquerens populi testatur auxilium, quidam de latronibus importunae persecutionis indignatione permotus saxo grandi pro pedibus adrepto misellum iuvenem maritum meum percussum interemit. Talis aspectus atrocitate perterrita somno funesto pavens excussa sum.

¹⁰ This imitative technique has been first described by Finkelpearl (1998) 57 f.: the scene of the ass freely wandering in the fields (*Metamorphoses* 7.16.2 *at ego tandem liber asinus*) recalls a Vergilian simile describing Turnus' eagerness to join the battle (*Aeneid* 11.492 ff. *qualis... tandem liber equus*). I offered another example in Graverini (1998) 142 f.: the episode narrated at 8.17.1 ff. (the slaves, with whom the ass is travelling, are attacked by a group of peasants, until one of them obtains peace with a pathetic speech) echoes the very first simile in the *Aeneid* (1.148-53: the sea is calmed by Neptune, just like a rebellion is soothed by the sight of "a man honoured for noble character and service," *pietate gravem ac meritis... virum*).

of epic heroines who lament their kidnapping, desertion or widowhood.

It is worth remembering here a couple of examples of the *topos* deriving from our Homeric simile. A female adaptation of it can be found in Apollonius Rhodius' Medea. The heroine dreams of getting married and fleeing with Jason, but she wakes up terrified by a feeling of imminent misfortune; so,

As when a bride in her chamber bewails her youthful husband, to whom her brothers and parents have given her ... and some doom has destroyed him, before they have had the pleasure of each other's charms; and she with heart on fire silently weeps, beholding her widowed couch... like her did Medea lament (3.656 ff.).

These verses seem to constitute an extremely interesting link between Homer and Apuleius, given the connection between the weeping and the dream as well as the application of Ulyssean features to a female character, while the Homeric simile of the crying woman is re-elaborated with the introduction of the element of the unfulfilled marriage.

Maybe it is worth taking a step along the path of literary imitation, to move from Ulysses and Medea to Dido. Vergil describes her dream in *Aeneid* 4.465 ff., a passage that shows certain textual similarities with Apuleius:

In her sleep fierce Aeneas himself drives her in her frenzy; and ever she seems to be left lonely, ever wending, companionless, an endless way, and seeking her Tyrians in a land forlorn (*agit ipse furem / in somnis ferus Aeneas, semperque relinqui / sola sibi, semper longam incommitata videtur / ire viam et Tyrios deserta quaerere terra*).

If we read again the words with which Charite begins to narrate her own dream,

I saw myself, after I had been dragged violently from my house... calling my poor luckless husband's name through the trackless wilds (*nam visa sum mihi de domo ... violenter extracta per solitudines avias infortunatissimi mariti nomen invocare*).

we can note a generic lexical similarity (*visa sum mihi... invocare / sibi ... videtur... quaerere*), and the shared insistence on the woman's solitude.¹¹ Thus Charite relives her adventures in her dream,

¹¹ A feature that the dreams of Dido and Charite share also with that of Ilia in Ennius, *Annals* 1.25 ff.: *ita sola... errare videbar... et quaerere te*. See Mignogna

though distorted by the literary filter. If we adapt the critical terminology elaborated by Gian Biagio Conte¹² for Petronius' characters to our own case, we could define Charite as a 'mythomaniac dreamer'.

Stephen Harrison notes that "as the primary narratee of Cupid and Psyche, Charite clearly bears some resemblance to Dido, the primary narratee of Aeneas' narrative."¹³ This is of course only a first instance of an analogy which Apuleius will develop thoroughly in Book 8;¹⁴ to this we can now add the parallel between the dream of the two heroines. However, we are still at the very beginning of this process of identification, and her character is not yet clearly defined. The crying Charite, therefore, also exhibits some characteristic features of Odysseus, in particular the more feminine ones, and those more likely to be assimilated by a female character: pain, tears, homesickness (*Metamorphoses* 4.24.4: "Poor me,... torn from a wonderful house, my big household, my dear servants, and my honorable parents"; *Odyssey* 9.34 "nought is sweeter than a man's own land and his parents"). What is more, Charite's tragedy of separation from a lover is shared by Odysseus at the court of Alcinous not in one but in two respects. Besides the forced separation from Ithaca and Penelope, the missed marriage of the hero with Nausicaa has been seen since ancient times as somehow regrettable, as it would have been appreciated by Nausicaa, Alcinous, and (maybe) Odysseus himself: so much so that Hellanicus (*FGrH* 1a, F. 156) tried to put matters right by getting Nausicaa to marry Telemachus.

Charite's dream and tears not only have the function of introducing a narrative digression; thanks to the comparison with Odysseus' crying and with the other literary models examined above, they also seem to provide some early information about the main features of the tale that will be narrated immediately after. Indeed, the old woman is unexpectedly able to adapt herself to Charite's expressive register: in so doing she narrates an adventure with an epic flavour, but with many

(1996) 98 for the parallel with Ennius, and *GCA* (1977) 204 for the analogy with Dido's dream. As regards the obvious links between Dido and Apollonius' Medea, already noted in Macrobius, *Saturnalia* 5.17.4, see e.g. Pease (1935) 13-14.

¹² Conte (1997).

¹³ Harrison (1998a) 55.

¹⁴ The parallel between the two characters has been well pointed out by Forbes (1943); but see also the important discussion in Finkelpearl (1998) 115-48.

'feminine', sentimental and novelistic features. The character Psyche herself, with whom the old woman would obviously like Charite to identify, clearly exhibits many other 'Ulyssean' features: in fact, she will be the protagonist of adventures that are traditionally a prerogative of the epic hero, such as the descent to the underworld; like Odysseus and Aeneas she will be persecuted by the wrath of a goddess, and like Aeneas she will be deified. But she will also be involved in a tragic love affair (a secondary, though not unrelated element in the characterization of the Homeric or Vergilian hero), and will suffer a long and painful separation from her husband.

As I have already stated above, it is difficult to compare the old woman to the narrating Odysseus or Aeneas. Her being a minor character and the fact that her tale is heterodiegetic, epic and entertaining could perhaps bring her very close to a singer such as Demodocus; but the text itself does not seem to suggest this comparison explicitly. However, it is clear that it is precisely her role as an heterodiegetic, omniscient narrator that enables her to insert a divine apparatus, with the wrath of Venus working as the motor of events. An example of such a narrator is Phemius in *Odyssey* 1.338, whose songs were about "deeds of men and gods."

Finally, we should consider again the epithets *delira et temulenta* (6.25.1) with which Lucius, at the end of *Cupid and Psyche*, qualifies the old narrator by using the insults the robbers had hurled at the woman in 4.7.3. It is probably not out of place if we go beyond the literal sense of these words, and note that *furor* and inebriety are traditionally characteristics suitable for a poet, especially an epic poet. As an example, it is sufficient to quote Horace, *Epistles* 1.19.6-8

From the moment Liber enlisted brain-sick poets among his Satyrs and Fauns, the sweet Muses, as a rule, have had a scent of wine about them in the morning. Homer, by his praises of wine, is convicted as a winebibber. Even Father Ennius never sprang forth to tell of arms save after much drinking.¹⁵

¹⁵ *Ut male sanos / adscriptis Liber Satyris Faunisque poetas, / vina fere dulces oluerunt mane Camenae. / Laudibus arguitur vini vinosus Homerus: / Ennius ipse pater numquam nisi potus ad arma / prosiluit dicenda.* For a discussion of the topos, and a list of useful parallels, see Mayer (1994) 259; Nisbet, Hubbard (1978) 316 on Horace, *Odes* 2.19; GCA (1981) 24 f. on *Metamorphoses* 6.25.1 (the commentators also note that the characterization of the old woman as *temulenta* could be "a veiled hint that the tale has a deeper meaning").

Thus Lucius' words, at the end of a tale endowed with such a refined literary texture, can be considered as a sort of unintentional gloss, an ironic acknowledgement of the unexpected narrative talent of the brigands' old servant.¹⁶

Besides the old woman, the only 'Demodocean' narrator, there are also many narrators in the *Metamorphoses* who could be defined 'Ulyssean'; a rough list could include the robbers, Thelyphron, and of course Lucius himself. In *Metamorphoses* 2.14.1-3 Diophanes, a charlatan fortune-teller, narrates his adventures to a friend he had casually met in the public square, calling them a "really Odyssean voyage," *Ulixea peregrinatio*:¹⁷ it is a story of journeys, tempests, shipwrecks and brigands. The tale is short and in the first person, so that no divine apparatus can be found there. This is a feature that differentiates Diophanes' narration from *Cupid and Psyche*, but is common, for example, to the homodiegetic parts of the *Odyssey* and the *Aeneid*. In this kind of narration the adventures and sufferings of the main character are brought into the foreground with greater vividness, and it seems that they are dominated more by a blind fate than by providence or destiny. In particular, I believe that such 'short Odysseys' in the novel, narrated in the first person, can be connected not so much to the lengthy tale recounted by Odysseus to the Phaeacians but rather to the short tales the hero told when he reached Ithaca, where he pretends to be a Cretan reduced to poverty. They too are tales about journeys, pirates, tempests and betrayals, in which the gods play an almost non-existent and completely conventional role: real miniature novels (*Odyssey* 13.256 ff.; 14.199-359; 17.419 ff.; 19.165 ff. Cf. also Theron's repeated false claim to being an ill-fated Cretan traveller in Chariton 3.3.17 ff.).

They are of course thoroughly mendacious narratives,¹⁸ to the point that Athena, to whom Odysseus had unwittingly told the first of these tales, defines him "bold man, crafty in counsel, insatiate in deceit" (*Odyssey* 13.293). The status of liar is perfectly suited to the charlatan Diophanes though, while he usually lies in his role of

¹⁶ For the topos of madness in the epic poet, cf. Hershkowitz (1998) 61-7.

¹⁷ Cf. Graverini (1998) 139 f. for some Vergilian and Homeric echoes in Diophanes' narration.

¹⁸ As regards the narrative strategies involved in these false stories, and for a comparison between them and the ancient novels, see Barchiesi (1997) 126 ff.

prophet, it would appear that he tells the truth when he narrates his own adventures. He does so to the extent that it is precisely his improvident narration before the people that undermines his credibility as a fortune-teller – one who has been unable to avoid even his own misfortunes.¹⁹ As J. Winkler has shown, to disguise truth as lies and vice versa seems to be a favourite artifice of Apuleius and his characters.²⁰

Odysseus tells all his Cretan stories but the first one after having been transformed by Athena into a ragged beggar: this can remind us of another ‘short Odyssey’ contained in the *Metamorphoses*. During a business trip Socrates is first robbed by a gang of thieves, then trapped in a ruinous sexual affair with an old woman, Meroe, who—we will discover later—is a powerful witch. It is therefore impossible for him to return home, where his wife believes him to be dead and is about to remarry. His friend Aristomenes meets him at Hypata, almost unrecognizable on account of his pallor, thinness and ragged clothes: he decides to help him, and to bring him back to his homeland, but he has to deal with the old witch, who refuses to be abandoned. A comparison with Odysseus, already suggested by the narrative itself, is also justified by the old witch’s angry words: “shall I, forsooth, deserted like Calypso by the astuteness of a Ulysses, weep in everlasting loneliness?” (1.12.6). Aristomenes dresses, washes and feeds the friend (and it is difficult not to recall the attentions of Eurycleia and other maidservants on Odysseus in *Odyssey* 19.317 ff. and 503 ff.); Socrates at last finds the strength to tell him his adventures (1.7.5 ff.).

In this context, we should not be surprised by the fact that, when Aristomenes meets Socrates and reminds him of his country and family, Socrates’ behaviour makes him look like Odysseus. At the beginning of this essay we considered the Homeric hero’s reaction to the third song of Demodocus; now we can read the description of the first time Odysseus cries (*Odyssey* 8.83 ff.):

This song the famous minstrel sang; but Odysseus grasped his great purple cloak with his stout hands, and drew it down over his head, and hid his comely face; for he had shame of the Phaeacians as he let fall

¹⁹ About this complex situation, see *GCA* (2001) 212 f. and Graverini (2001) 184 ff.

²⁰ Winkler (1985) 121 f.; on Diophanes, 39–44. See also Laird (1990) 164; Laird (1993).

tears from beneath his eyebrows. Yea, and as often as the divine minstrel ceased his singing, Odysseus would wipe away his tears and draw the cloak from off his head, and taking the two-handed cup would pour libations to the gods. But as often as he began again, and the nobles of the Phaeacians bade him sing, because they took pleasure in his lay, Odysseus would again cover his head and moan.

Socrates behaves exactly the same way: “he covered his face, which had long since begun to redden from shame, with his patched cloak” (*sutili centunculo faciem suam iam dudum punicantem prae pudore obtexit*, 1.6.4).²¹ As regards the “great purple cloak” of Odysseus, there remains in Socrates only the purple blush of shame and a miserable *centunculus*, clearly much less abundant and not suited at all to the situation. Apuleius in fact goes on: “...baring the rest of his body from his navel to his loins” (*ita ut ab umbilico pube tenus cetera corporis renudaret*). The desperate and half-naked Socrates becomes, like the winged ass, a perfect image of the degradation of epic poetry into the novel, of the simultaneous presence of *pathos* and *bathos* which is one of the most remarkable features of Apuleius’ work; and with his patched mantel he can symbolically recall the programmatic declaration of the novel’s prologue, “I would like to tie together (*conserere*) different sorts of tales for you in that Milesian style of yours.”

Apuleius’ novel, as we have seen, introduces many narrating characters who are provided with different features. Only one of them, the old drunken housekeeper who narrates the tale of Cupid and Psyche, is a heterodiegetic and omniscient narrator (like Demodocus, and Homer himself); all the others, including the main character Lucius, have the more limited perspective of ‘I-narrators’. The narrative often exploits the epic intertext, and sometimes tends to expand and

²¹ Of course, for the whole tale of Aristomenes as well as for this particular scene, the Platonic model has also a remarkable importance: see e.g. Mattiacci (2001) 482 and Smith, Woods (2000) 112. In *Phaedrus* 237a the philosopher, beginning a speech about Love, covers his head, since the sight of his friend makes him feel embarrassed: the behavior of the Apuleian character, given his name and the love affair which caused his misfortunes, is clearly related to Plato’s text. Anyway, there are some elements (e.g. the grief caused to Socrates by the memory of his misfortunes, and the following narration of them) which our passage shares with the *Odyssey*, and not with the *Phaedrus*; and it could be noted that also in the *Phaedrus* Socrates begins his speech with a mock-poetic (dithyramb-like, for Reale [1998] *ad loc.*) invocation to the Muses. So, the combination of two different (but not completely unrelated) models is not surprising in Apuleius.

give prominence to 'minor' episodes and ornamental details; in particular, Odysseus weeping at the banquet of Alcinous somehow lives again in the characters of Charite and Socrates. However, the apparently inconspicuous move from the supposed birthplace of Homer, Ionian Chius, to Ionian Miletus, where Apuleius declares his style originated, involves a radical metamorphosis in the characterization of heroes and narrators: the physical and spiritual virtues typically shown by the epic hero are replaced by more bourgeois and everyday features.²²

²² I am grateful to Alessandro Barchiesi and Marco Fucecchi for their helpful advice. Errors and omissions, of course, fall to my own account.