CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The Apuleian corpus

The scrupulous reader, according to the role that Apuleius has scripted, is one who closely observes details and will object to inconsistencies.[1]

Apuleius of Madauros, who lived in the second half of the second century CE in Roman North Africa, is best known today as the author of the *Metamorphoses* (aka *The Golden Ass*), a fictional narrative about the transformation of a man into a donkey. Yet, unlike other ancient fiction writers, such as Petronius, Longus, Heliodorus or Achilles Tatius, we are fortunate to have more than Apuleius' work of fiction to read. Even though much of Apuleius' literary production is now lost to us, and some of what has been ascribed to him is of disputed authenticity, we can still read five authentic works: a forensic defence speech (*Apologia*), a collection of excerpted epideictic orations (*Florida*), a popular philosophical lecture (*De deo Socratis*), a cosmological treatise (*De mundo*) and a handbook of Platonic natural and ethical philosophy (*De Platone et eius dogmate*).[2] These five works, taken together with the *Metamorphoses*, comprise a literary corpus that is comparable in diversity to that of any other ancient author.[3] In spite of this diversity, however,

[1] Winkler (1985) 61, in a discussion of the *lector scrupulosus* addressed by Lucius at *Met*. 9.30.

[2] As the debate stands, I agree with the consensus view that the *Asclepius* and *Peri hermeneias*, both of which have been attributed to Apuleius, are not authentic works. For a helpful summary of the arguments for and against, see Harrison (2000) 10–14. However, I am also well aware that this present study could provide some momentum to arguments that would reopen the authenticity debate of either work.

[3] While the claim could be made for the corpus diversity of several other authors (e.g. Cicero, Seneca, Plutarch) to compete with Apuleius, few, if any, of these corpora are more immediately divisive than the Apuleian. On the benefits of reading the Senecan corpus as a whole, see Ker (2006).

there have been several literally divisive issues that have prevented a full appreciation of the corpus as a whole. First of all, the *Metamorphoses*, as the undisputed masterpiece of the corpus, has dominated and directed any engagement with, and caused inconsistencies of attention to, the other extant works.[4] In addition, the corpus has too often been simplistically divided into 'literary' or 'rhetorical' works (*Metamorphoses*, *Apologia* and *Florida*) and 'philosophical' or 'Platonic' works (*De deo Socratis*, *De Platone* and *De mundo*).[5] That this division pressurises Apuleius' identity as an author is clear from two broad reconciliatory approaches that seek to understand Apuleius as either a novelist who dabbled in Platonism or as a Platonist who tried his hand at novel-writing.[6]

By way of introducing some of the debates surrounding how we read the Apuleian corpus, I shall first explore an alternative approach to the standard themes of the centrality of the *Metamorphoses* and the division between literature and philosophy. Then I shall show how the question of authorship, which was critical to these two traditional approaches, can actually lead the way in decentring and unifying the corpus in terms of Apuleius' particular approach to Platonism as inspired by a key moment in the reception of the Apuleian corpus: Walter Pater's *Marius the Epicurean*. Pater's approach leads us to an appreciation of Apuleius' identity as a Platonist that provides coherence to the corpus and not division. This coherence will then be explored in a series of passages of Apuleius' speeches from the *Florida* collection that not only emphasise the unity of his literary production with his philosophical activities, but also reflect

[4] For the primacy of the *Met*. and the role of the rest of the corpus as backdrop, see Winkler (1985) 5–6. All major studies of the whole corpus – Sandy (1997), Harrison (2000), May (2006) – make the *Met*. not only the end-point of their analyses, but the *telos* of their arguments.

[5] For how this division is grounded in the early transmission of Apuleius' works, see the illuminating and balanced discussion of Gaisser (2008) 1–41, especially comments at 36 and 40–1 with n. 3. On the manuscript tradition in general, see Reynolds (1983) 15–19.

[6] For the former, see Harrison (2000) 255, and Schlam (1992) 11, for the latter. It is the latter that Augustine and Macrobius refer to in their brief references to the *Met*. On an author's literary career as a totalising 'preparation' for a novel, see Léger in Barthes (2010) viii. 'it is unquestionably the totality of Barthes' oeuvre that can be heard throughout *The Preparation of the Novel*'.

on how he mobilises his cultural identity, in terms of his bilingualism to philosophical aims. This revisionist approach to the Apuleian corpus readdresses Apuleius' Platonism in terms of my main theme of the impersonation of philosophy.

Decentring the corpus: the Metamorphoses

The *Metamorphoses* is the undisputed masterpiece of the Apuleian corpus. It is often read separately from Apuleius' other works, and discussed in relation to other ancient novels and a range of traditions of Greek and Roman poetry and prose.[7] Even when the other works of the Apuleian corpus are discussed, the shadow of the *Metamorphoses* looms so large that it demands to be not only the end-point of the discussion of the whole corpus, but also the rationale for discussion of the corpus. In many ways, the other works of the Apuleian corpus, and even the very idea of an Apuleian corpus, have been understood as acting as so many footnotes to the *Metamorphoses.* Given this understandable gravitation towards Apuleius' masterpiece, any attempt to come to terms with the Apuleian corpus as a whole suffers an imbalance and is necessarily inconsistent. Highlighting this inconsistency is not merely my criticism of a blinkered scholarly approach, but also a way of showing how the corpus, itself a kind of consistency, has not been sufficiently theorised in Apuleian studies.[8] When we use the term 'corpus' to describe an author's body of work, his or her 'whole corpus' is more often than not understood. Thus, either an inconsistent reading of a corpus or a description of a corpus as inconsistent can undermine the status of a corpus *qua* corpus.[9]

[7] See Graverini (2007) for a fully developed reading of the *Met*. in terms of the range of Greek and Roman literature.

[8] The nearest we get to a critical account of the Apuleian corpus is in a passing comment in Too (1996) 152: 'Apuleius is the deity of the Apuleian corpus. Accordingly, efforts to pro-duce (*sic*.) representations of Apuleius other than the complex *personae* which he has authorised in his texts are sacrilegious acts against his true person.'

[9] Derrida (2001) 14 refers to his use of the 'old concept' of *oeuvre*, 'because the strategic wager I make at a certain point, when I say "this rather than that", means that, beyond the limits of this context, tomorrow, whatever the situation may be, whatever I say will still have a certain consistency – even if there is no scientific value that is omnitemporal and universal, what I say will still be considered an *oeuvre*.'

If surveys of the Apuleian corpus are too often guided by an attempt to make sense of one work (the *Metamorphoses*), then the very idea of a corpus as any kind of consistency or unity is simultaneously put in question.[10] Even so, the presence of a masterpiece like the *Metamorphoses* can also call for a particular consistency of approach to the corpus in terms of retroactive reading, i.e. the reading of one work back onto the whole.[11] Therefore, it is a more important question, albeit somewhat beyond the limits of the present study, to understand how the presence of a masterpiece like the *Metamorphoses* makes a corpus like Apuleius' at one and the same time both inconsistent and consistent, rather than passively accepting it as either the end-point or the rationale for discussing or dismissing the rest of the works in a given corpus. To give a concrete example, if Apuleius' *De Platone* is to be understood in terms of the Apuleian corpus, as in this present study, this dry Platonic handbook must first be approached from a position that resists, even if it does not directly disregard, the retroactive reading of the work under the need to understand the *Metamorphoses*. Yet resisting the pull of the *Metamorphoses* does not entail the traditionally polarised reading of *De Platone* that isolates it from the rest of the corpus and instead incorporates it into another discursive unity, e.g. 'Middle Platonism'. Indeed one could argue that there was as much of a push effect on the dry handbook from readers of the literary masterpiece as a pull effect from scholars of the history of Platonism. Instead, as we shall see, the decentring of the Apuleian corpus allows for a work like *De Platone*, as a two-book handbook of Platonic natural and ethical philosophy introduced by a brief biography of Plato, to occupy a mediating role between the two works on cosmology and demonology (*De mundo*, *De deo Socratis*) and the two works locating the philosopher-speaker in a community (*Apologia*, *Florida*). By placing another work at the

[10] On the problem of the corpus as a unity, see Foucault (1995) 27: 'The *oeuvre* can be regarded neither as an immediate unity, nor as a certain unity, nor as a homogeneous unity.' On Foucault's conception of the *oeuvre*, see Fisher (1999) and, for the related debate surrounding Foucault's own *corpus* after his death, see Jones (2000).

[11] For this idea of retroactivism, see Levinson (1996) 242–73 and Livingston (2005).

centre of my discussion of the Apuleian corpus I am by no means challenging the consensus view that the *Metamorphoses* is Apuleius' masterpiece. In fact, if you read my table of contents, you see that I too conclude my study of the corpus with a discussion of the *Metamorphoses*. Yet, as my own scrupulous reader will ascertain, unlike other comparable corpus-wide surveys, this book positions the novel as neither providing a *telos* nor a legitimating rationale for my reading of the rest of the corpus; rather, *Met.* and its discussion act as postscript or epilogue and, for my ideal reader, signal work still yet to come.

Unifying the corpus: literature and philosophy

Apuleius didn't know how Classics departments would compartmentalise the interface between literature and philosophy.[12]

Decentring the Apuleian corpus, by replacing the masterpiece *Metamorphoses* with a 'minor' work, like *De Platone*, has the effect of bringing attention to the issue of unity and, in particular, the division between literary and philosophical works. This division will not bridge the decentred corpus, since replacing a 'literary' work (*Metamorphoses*) with a 'philosophical' work (*De Platone*) will only tip the scale in the other direction. This division is deep-rooted and has persisted in the separation of Apuleian scholarship into studies of the philosophical works and the literary works.[13] This separation is extended to the types of readings the representatives of each side have elicited. For example, the literary texture of the *Apologia* has been emphasised over its Platonic significance.[14] While there have been some attempts at cross-fertilisation, especially surrounding the mediating role of *De deo Socratis*, the former

[12] Henderson (2001) 189, with n. 10, although the footnote tells tales on Apuleius' commentators for some adverbially tendentious interpretations, leaving the reader (*this* reader) to make the connection between the promised interface between literature and philosophy in Apuleius, which, you, scrupulous reader, can detect throughout the present book.

[13] At the bibliographical level, we have Schlam and Finkelpearl (2000) on the *Met.*; and Bajoni (1992) for the philosophical works.

[14] See the several discussions in Riess (2008a), including Harrison (2008), and my response in Fletcher (2009a).

has generally been grounded in the doctrinal wrangling of so-called Middle Platonism while the latter has emphasised the cultural contexts of the so-called Second Sophistic. We may understand the extent of this division by observing that these two problematic scholarly tags – Middle Platonism and the Second Sophistic – are rarely evoked in the same context.[15] Furthermore, this division has been exacerbated by the domineering presence of the *Metamorphoses*, for which the philosophical works have retroactively been mobilised to support 'philosophical' or 'Platonic' readings of the novel and the literary works to ground the novel within a broader cultural context of rhetorical performance.[16] Yet, if temporarily discounting the *Metamorphoses* can decentre the corpus and allow for its identity as a corpus to be better understood, then the same may be said of uniting the split between philosophy and literature. If, for example, the corpus was re-centred around, say, *De deo Socratis*, this would have a major impact on the ways in which the other works also bridge the imagined divide. Instead of 'philosophical' works (*De mundo*; *De Platone*) and 'rhetorical' works (*Apologia*; *Florida*), the popular philosophical lecture on Platonic demonology could unify the corpus with an emphasis on an aspect such as its methodological nuances. For example, its opening description of Plato's vision of the Universe not only recalls the cosmological focus of *De mundo*, but also the guiding role of Plato for Apuleius' defence in the *Apologia*. In addition, its concluding protreptic, calling for its audience to embrace the philosophical life, engages the opening biography and ethical second book of *De Platone* as well as the figure of the philosopher-speaker of the *Florida* collection. Again, as with the *Metamorphoses*, I am not claiming that the interface between literature and philosophy in the Apuleian corpus would disappear with a re-centred corpus based around *De deo Socratis*. In fact, to once again return to my table of contents, it looks as if I too am maintaining this separation by discussing the 'rhetorical' works (*Apologia* and *Florida*) in

[15] Fowler (2008) is an exception. [16] See Schlam and Finkelpearl (2000).

their own separate chapter. Nonetheless, to once again call on my *lector scrupulosus*, unlike my afterthoughts about the *Metamorphoses*, these 'rhetorical' works legitimate and act as the *telos* for the Apuleian corpus in terms of Apuleius' Platonism.

Imagining authorship

Through addressing the Apuleian corpus in terms of the two interrelated processes of decentring and unifying we reach, by different paths, the same issue: authorship. Attempts at making sense of the corpus both in terms of the status of the *Metamorphoses* as a masterpiece and through emphasis on the philosophical and literary divide have relied on painting the portrait of Apuleius as an author. To all intents and purposes, the centrality of the *Metamorphoses* means immediately that we are to understand Apuleius as a novelist. When extended to the literary/philosophical divide, we then ask: is the novelist a Platonist or a sophist, an orator, literary artist, intellectual or a philosopher?[17] In this mould, an 'Apuleius-as-Platonist' reading is ultimately a means of legitimating Platonic readings of the *Metamorphoses*.[18] Meanwhile, an 'Apuleius-as-sophist' reading, and its younger sibling, the 'Apuleius-as-intellectual' reading, both show how the *Metamorphoses* is a typical product of the Second Sophistic milieu.[19]

[17] Haight (1963) 89: 'Perhaps each one of us according to our temperaments will find Apuleius most successful, most real as man, novelist, lawyer, sophist, philosopher, or literary artist.' Platonist: Regen (1971) and Hijmans (1987); African Socrates: Schindel (2000) and Riess (2008a); Latin sophist: Harrison (2000); intellectual: Harrison (2008); orator: Hijmans (1994); literary artist: Harrison (2002). For literary artist, philosopher and magician, see Pennacini, Donini, Alimonti, Monteduro Roccavini (1979). For a choice between magician and Platonic philosopher, see Moreschini (2000). Sandy (1997) adopts various hybrid identities: Orator Sophisticus Latinus, Philosophus Sophisticus Latinus, Fabulator Latinus. But none of these top Apuleius: Orator Metasophisticus of Núñez (2009).

[18] O'Brien (2002) is a partial example of this. Her first chapter explores Apuleius' conception of philosophical discourse across the corpus, but the bulk of her book is squarely focused on the *Met*., with support from *Pl*. and *Soc*.

[19] Sandy (1997) and Harrison (2000). The inclusion of *Soc.* in Harrison, Hilton and Hunink (2001) shows its importance for the sophistic reading.

More nuanced attempts to view the corpus through the projected identity of the author of the *Metamorphoses*, however, create a fantastic re-imagining of the corpus as a representation of the novelist's literary career in its various phases.[20] Consider the following spoof account of Apuleius the pseudo-intellectual:

> Apuleius was a showman and a playboy, clever but shallow. He deserved to be condemned for seducing a rich widow, but had the temerity to ground his innocence in the intellectual community between himself and the judge (the *Apology*). His egotism made him publish four books of highlights from his display speeches (the *Florida*). Intellectual vanity made him write a hack account of *Socrates and his Deity*. Finally his talents found a legitimate outlet in a comic novel about a man's life as an ass (the *Metamorphoses*).[21]

Swain's wry re-imagining of Apuleius' literary trajectory projects the *Metamorphoses* as the 'legitimate outlet' for his talents and, as such, the fitting *telos* to a career of bombastic public intellectualism.[22] Swain's skit ultimately parodies those approaches to the Apuleian corpus that feel the need to see it as an extension of the curious personality of the author at its centre, while at the same time resisting the urge to reduce him to one particular totalising 'reading'.[23] In spite of its obvious humour, Swain's portrait of Apuleius the author helps make a serious claim on how the corpus should be viewed beyond the centrality of the novel and the division between literature and philosophy. On one level, Swain's approach may appear to focus on the *Metamorphoses* as retroactively legitimating the author's previous work, hinting at its status as authorial

[20] On the role of a creative narrative of the literary career for the re-imagining of the literary corpus, see Hardie and Moore (2010).

[21] Swain (2001) 269, repeated, straight-faced, at Swain (2004) 12.

[22] There is much to be gleaned from this caricature of the Apuleian corpus. The mention of Apuleius' 'temerity' in the *Apol.* paints Apuleius with the same brush he used on the prosecutor Aemilianus (*temeritas*, *Apol.* 1.1) and juxtaposes the reference to the 'intellectual community' between Apuleius and Claudius Maximus. *Soc.* is dubbed a 'hack account', on the grounds that other writers, such as Plutarch and Maximus of Tyre, wrote on the same Platonic topic, in order to undermine any philosophical credentials Apuleius may be thought to have.

[23] Although the sophist and, more recently, the intellectual are both bent on this all-encompassing, catch-all approach.

autobiography.[24] On another level, it shows in the career of a novelist before the novel how an author seeks the appropriate genre for his or her particular talents and thus portrays the works leading up to the novel as a whole and not somehow read through the *Metamorphoses*. Swain's Apuleius is also not somehow split between philosophy and literature; his character traits ('temerity', 'egotism' and 'intellectual vanity') are consistent across 'rhetorical works (*Apologia*; *Florida*) and 'philosophical' works (*De deo Socratis*). The latter being a 'hack' account betrays his misplaced philosophical pretensions. In this way Swain, a leading authority on the Second Sophistic period, shares the view of Apuleius' pseudo-philosophical identity with several exponents of Middle Platonism. Compare Dillon's claim that '[w]hat we must always bear in mind is that Apuleius, despite his protestations, is not a philosopher'.[25] For Dillon's 'protestations' read Swain's 'intellectual vanity'. Indeed, when Swain encounters a figure whom he considers to be a legitimate philosopher – Dio of Prusa – being compared to Apuleius, he imagines the former 'turning in his grave'.[26] In spite of this policing the borders of legitimate philosophical activity in the Roman Empire, Swain's playful approach has the benefit of successfully bestriding the division of literature and philosophy in the Apuleian corpus without relying on the *Metamorphoses* as anything but the legitimisation of Apuleius' mediocrity at both.[27] Nonetheless, as the present study will argue this can occur without the negation of Apuleius' philosophical significance; but to find support for such an approach we have to go back to the end of the nineteenth century and to a curiously Apuleian figure from Victorian England: Walter Pater.

In Walter Pater's novel *Marius the Epicurean* we are offered a fictional portrait of Apuleius and his literary career that begins with the boy Marius reading the *Metamorphoses* as the so-called 'Golden Book':

[24] For autobiographical readings of the *Met*., see Hicter (1944/5); Winkler (1985) 5, with n. 5.
[25] Dillon (1977) 311. [26] Swain (2001) 269.
[27] For a very different approach to Apuleius' 'mediocrity', see Chapter 4 below.

> The *Metamorphoses* of Apuleius, coming to Marius just then, figured for him as indeed *The Golden Book*; he felt a sort of personal gratitude to the writer, and saw in it doubtless far more than was there for any other reader. It occupied always a peculiar place in his remembrance, never quite losing its power in frequent return to it for the revival of that first glowing impression.[28]

Indeed, later in life we find Marius being invited to a dinner where his boyhood hero was set to perform. Before the dinner, the now mature Marius anticipates the event with a moment of reflective self-questioning and self-accusation:

> The great Apuleius, the literary ideal of his boyhood, had arrived in Rome, was now visiting Tusculum, at the house of their common friend, a certain aristocratic poet who loved every sort of superiorities; and Marius was favoured with an invitation to a supper given in his honour. It was with a feeling of half-humorous concession to his own early boyish hero-worship, yet with some sense of superiority in himself, seeing his old curiosity grown now almost to indifference when on the point of satisfaction at last, and upon a juster estimate of its object, that he mounted to the little town on the hillside, the foot-ways of which were so many flights of easy-going steps gathered round a single great house under shadow of the 'haunted' ruins of Cicero's villa on the wooded heights. He found a touch of weirdness in the circumstance that in so romantic a place he had been bidden to meet the writer who was come to seem almost like one of the personages in his own fiction.[29]

During the dinner party, Pater's Apuleius starts to speak, producing something like the epideictic orations we know from the *Florida* collection. After dinner, however, Marius gets a chance to meet Apuleius himself and the ensuing discussion – based on the account of Platonic demonology in *De deo Socratis* – both tallies with the 'weirdness' of the occasion, taking place before Cicero's ghost, and stages a revision of Marius' opinion of his and Apuleius' present significance. For Marius, the re-imagining of Apuleius exemplifies his own mixed conception of 'Platonic spiritualism' and 'relish for merely bodily graces'. Pater's Marius describes this Apuleius *redux* as follows:

[28] Pater (1885) 42. On Apuleius and Pater's Marius, see Haight (1963) 84–9, Brzenk (1978), Harrison (2004) and Sandy and Harrison (2008) 315–16.
[29] Pater (1885) 138.