

‘*larvale simulacrum*’: Platonic Socrates and the persona of Socrates in Apuleius *Metamorphoses* 1,1-19.

This first episode in Apuleius’ novel includes a story about Socrates related by his companion Aristomenes after Socrates has died. Using the Socrates name in the opening salvo of a novel rather than in a work on education, politics, rhetoric, or philosophy invites explanation. Central to Platonic dialogues the figure of Socrates came to be assessed and used in myriad different ways from Antisthenes onward. Socrates has been the focus of interest in fictional first-person narratives since Plato made him up in his dialogues.¹ Others have studied the persona of Socrates in Plato, Xenophon and Aristotle.² Therefore, the presence of Socrates in this tale by the second century Latin writer Apuleius is worthy of a brief note at least, hence this paper.³ Apuleius is attracted to the well known presentation of Socrates’ death in *Crito* and *Phaedrus*, the myth of Theuth in *Phaedrus*, the famous description of Socrates by Alcibiades in the *Symposium*, and the

¹ Goldhill, S. 2002. *The Invention of Prose, Greece and Rome New Surveys in the Classics*, Oxford, 88-9. Desjardin, R. 1988. ‘Why Dialogues? Plato’s Serious Play’: in C.L. Griswold (ed.), *Platonic Writings, Platonic Readings*, London: Routledge, 110-125; and on the perils of mixing philosophy and ‘literary studies’ see review article by. Griswold, C.L. 2008. ‘Reading and Writing Plato’ *Politics and Literature* 32, 205-216; Corrigan, K. and Glazov-Corrigan, E. 2004. *Plato’s Dialectic at Play: Argument, Structure, and Myth in the Symposium*, Pennsylvania State University Press; Trapp, M. 2007. ‘What is this *Philosophia* anyway?’ in J.R. Morgan and M. Jones (eds.), *Philosophical Presences in the Ancient Novel*, Groningen: Ancient Narrative Supplements 10, 1-22.

²For example, Navia, L.E. 1985. *Socrates: The Man and his Philosophy*, University Press of America, especially Chapter 4 ‘Socrates in the writings of Plato’, 147-210; Vander Waerdt, P.A. (ed.), 1994. *The Socratic Movement*, Cornell; Nehamas, A. 1999. *The Virtues of Authenticity: Essays on Plato and Socrates*, Princeton; and the use of Socrates as a hero by the Cynic movement, Desmond, W. 2006. *The Greek Praise of Poverty*, Indiana: Notre Dame, 157-161; Striker, G. 1994. ‘Plato’s Socrates and the Stoics’ in P.A Vander Waerdt (ed.), 241-251, and the Introduction by the editor 1-19; Blundell, R. 2002. *The Play of Character in Plato’s Dialogues*, Cambridge, especially Chapter 2 ‘Imitation of Character’, 53-102; Vlastos, G. 1991. *Socrates: Ironist and Moral Philosopher*, Cambridge; Stanford, W.B. 1968. *The Ulysses Theme: A study in the Adaptation of a Tragic Socratic Hero*, Oxford, 254; Montuori, M. 1981. *Socrates: the Physiology of a Myth*, Amsterdam: J.Gieben; Fitzpatrick, P.J. 1992. ‘The legacy of Socrates’ in B.S. Gower and M.C. Stokes (eds.), *Socratic Questions: the Philosophy and its Significance*, London: Routledge, 153-208.

³ *Crito* and other Platonic works were the substance of higher studies in the second century. It is inconceivable that the *Crito* was unread by Apuleius or unknown to him, the self-styled *Philosophus Platonicus*. Plato is Apuleius’ hero: *DP* 229; 183; 189 and *DDS* 123-126, cf *Apol.* 65. Cf. Diog.Laert. 3.49. Gersh, S. 1986. *Middleplatonism and Neoplatonism: The Latin Tradition*, Vol.1, Indiana, 221-222. Chroust, A.-H. 1988. ‘The Organisation of the *Corpus Platonicum* in Antiquity’ in N.D. Smith (ed.) *Plato: Critical Assessments* Vol.1, London. 3-16. On *Crito* in general, and the arguments contained in it Wozzley, A.D. 1979. *Law and Obedience: The Arguments of Plato’s Crito*, London; Weiss, R. 1998. *Socrates Dissatisfied: an Analysis of Plato’s Crito* Oxford; Navia 1985, 159.

one place where he describes himself as handsome in *Menexenus*. After some introductory remarks, we consider Platonic Socrates as interpreted by Apuleius. Specifically philosophical discourse and Socrates, Socrates as a ‘family man’ and Socrates appearance are discussed but always in the light of how these areas of interest are used and interpreted by Apuleius.

Introduction: A Platonic Palimpsest

Our Socrates, the traveller in Thessaly is ensnared by the charms of the witch Meroe in this very first story of the *Metamorphoses*.⁴ This story is one of fifteen so-called interpolated stories in the novel because it does not appear in the *Onos* of Pseudo-Lucian.⁵ After Socrates recounts stories about the old but not bad looking Meroe (*anum sed admodum scitulam, M.1,7,7*), Aristomenes tells us he himself is horrified by her powers and is especially afraid that this old lady *anus illa* will hear him and Socrates *talking* about her and take offence (*M.1,11,2*). Linking of discourse with the deceptive power of magic shows not only the nature of the magic but also of discourse. Aristomenes’ unnamed companion time and again warns (the hearer Lucius, the novel’s protagonist) about the substance of the tale: the words of the tale are absurd and monstrous (*M.1,2,5*), it is a lie *mendacium* equivalent to a magic spell (*M.1,3,1*).⁶ But Aristomenes himself asserts the truth of his tale citing the ‘fact’ that the next city of Thessaly will vouch for its veracity, since the events it describes are on the lips of all the citizens there. Thessaly is not well renowned for nourishing unvarnished truths. So for example, when the woman herself appears she has a wholly different view of her age and beauty, she tells us she is young, a Calypso to Socrates Ulysses (*M.1,12,6*). Socrates is compared to Endymion and to Ganymede (*M.1,12,4*).

⁴ See the recent paper on theatricality in this particular episode by Keulen, W. 2006. ‘The Wet Rituals of the Excluded Mistress: Meroe and the Mime’ in R.R. Nauta (ed.), *Desultoria Scientia: Genre in Apuleius’ Metamorphoses and Related Texts, Caeculus 5*, Leuven, 43-61. Also, Thibau, R. 1965. ‘Les Métamorphoses d’Apulée et le théorie Platonicienne de l’Eros’ *Studia Philosophia Gandensia* 3, 89-144, esp. 104-117.

⁵ Winkler, J.J.1985. *Auctor and Actor. A Narratological Reading of Apuleius’s The Golden Ass*, Berkeley: University of California Press, esp. 25-37.

⁶ Warnings repeated by Socrates to Aristomenes, *M.1.8*, and by Byrrhaena to Lucius *M.2.5*.

Eternal youth was granted to these and Calypso promises Ulysses eternal youth if he stays with her. In the Thessaly of the *Metamorphoses* Socrates is a barefoot traveler bereft of the bloom of youth whose poverty makes him unrecognizable - even his friend Aristomenes does not recognize him. Platonic Socrates stays at home, never really leaving Athens and wears poverty as a kind of familiar trademark: he is so of the city that Phaedrus can see that Socrates is very out of place even if he is only just outside the city walls (*Phaedrus* 230d).⁷ In *Phaedrus* Socrates is reputed to have gone barefoot all the time for example.⁸ Platonic Socrates is poor not because of robbers or witches but because of his unstinting loyalty and service to the god of wisdom.⁹ Platonic Socrates' poor and un-promising exterior opens to reveal a rich philosophical soul within as in the famous comparison by Alcibiades of Platonic Socrates to a Silenus in the *Symposium*.¹⁰ However, Apuleian Socrates speaks only of the magical spells of the witch Meroe. He is enervated, bereft of his philosophical voice. His outer appearance does not hide any richness of soul or philosophical acuity. He has moved so far from his philosophical *polis* that he is not himself anymore. Observe that it is outside the city walls in non-philosophical territory so to speak that Socrates makes his second speech, the rhetorical one, in *Phaedrus*. His characteristic *atopia* or strangeness becomes absolute in the *Metamorphoses*. So that by the time Aristomenes is telling his tale Socrates is dead, having breathed his last under a plane tree by a clear calm river.¹¹ The plane tree is mentioned twice, in case the alert reader should miss the reference to Plato's *Phaedrus*.¹² This episode in Plato fascinates Apuleius. It appears again in

⁷ Cf *Crito*, 52b, Socrates does not leave Athens except for military service, *Smp.* 219e and *Apol.* 28e. Also, *Phaedr.* 227d, 230d; *Phaed.* 99a.

⁸ Plato, *Phaedr.* 229a.

⁹ Plato, *Apol.* 23b.

¹⁰ Plato, *Smp.* 215; and *Tht.* 143e; and Xen. *Sym.* 4.19.

¹¹ *M.* 1.18 and 19. Plato *Phaedr.* 229b and 230b, a plane tree by river Ilissus. Cicero, *De Orat.* 1,1. and 1,28.

¹² Trapp, M.B. 2001. 'On Tickling the Ears: Apuleius' Prologue and the Anxieties of Philosophers' in A. Kahane & A. Laird (eds.) *A Companion to the Prologue of Apuleius' Metamorphoses*, Oxford, 41, for reminiscences of *Phaedrus* in the Prologue of the *Metamorphoses* alone.

his discussion of the *daemon* of Socrates, characterized as ‘a kind of voice’ in *De deo Socratis* (163). Here, in keeping with the accuracy of Apuleius’ use of Plato’s text, *uocem quampiam* translates *tina phonen* (*Phaedrus* 242c): ‘But Socrates claimed that he encountered not just a voice but ‘a certain kind of voice’, you may understand from this addition that no common or human voice is meant’ (*DDS* 165).¹³ It is fair to say that verbal dominance characterizes Platonic Socrates. Indeed his skill is such that he is sometimes called a wizard with discourse, and references occur for example in *Symposium*, *Phaedo*, and *Meno*, to name but three.¹⁴

1. A Philosopher’s Discourse

The very best speaker in Plato’s dialogues Socrates does not fare so well in this regard in the realms of the novel. Socrates dies due to a stabbing in the throat from where the voice issues, a gruesome scene reminiscent of Senecan drama.¹⁵ He is in truth a shadow of his Platonic self. For example, prior to his death, Platonic Socrates is left with his intimate friends discussing high philosophical ideas for example, how true philosophers are half-dead (*thanatōsi*, *Phaedo*, 64 b5) and how he despises the pleasures of food and drink, smart clothes and shoes and turns away from the body to the soul. Aristomenes comes upon his intimate friend Apuleian Socrates (*Socraten contubernalem* *M.* 1,6,1), now a veritable ghostly image (*larvale simulacrum*, *M.*1,6,3) just prior to his death. But these two do not discuss the immortality of the soul or the nature of justice or even of rhetoric they are more fascinated by the stories for which Thessaly is renowned. Thessaly, the word is repeated twice in the first sentence of the narration, in a reference to *Crito* (*M.*1,2,1).¹⁶ In Plato’s *Crito*, the region of Thessaly is named as the place suitable for discourse describing magic and stories with unexpected twists in plot. *Crito*’s other

¹³ Translation of Harrison, S.J. 2001. *Apuleius: Rhetorical Works*, translated by S.J. Harrison, J.L.Hilton and V.J.C. Hunink, Oxford, 211; Beaujeu, J. 1973. *Apulée: Opuscules philosophiques et fragments*, Paris, 242.

¹⁴ Plato, *Meno*, 80b, *Th.* 157c-d, *Mx.* 235a-b, *Smp.* 215c and d, *Phaed.* 78a and 77e.

¹⁵ On drama and mime in this episode specifically, see Keulen 2006, 50.

¹⁶ *Crito*, 53e.

friends in Thessaly certainly delight to hear such tales but these frivolities are not for Socrates: ‘That is the home of indiscipline and laxity, and no doubt they would enjoy hearing the amusing story of how you managed to run away from prison by arraying yourself in some costume ...and altering your personal appearance’.¹⁷ Apuleian Socrates has a really monstrous example of such a story in his repertoire, namely his erotic adventures with Meroe and how these adventures make him literally almost look like someone else (*paene alius* M.1,6,1). Well might Apuleian Socrates blush in shame.¹⁸ One presumes he does so because the subject of his tale is the witch Meroe and all her deeds, not the nature of rhetoric as in *Phaedrus*, for example, or the immortality of the soul or other philosophical subjects. Is it any accident that Meroe calls the deathly pale Apuleian Socrates *catamitus meus*, though this is usually translated ‘my Ganymede’ (M.1,12,4)?¹⁹ Apuleius’ Socrates is most unlike the Platonic Socrates, a fact emphasized by the skewed comparisons I have noted. He falls prey to the snares of Thessaly in exactly all the ways Platonic Socrates could not be persuaded to tolerate there even though death awaited him in Athens. To what purpose are we as readers being invited to note these variations on the persona of Platonic Socrates in Apuleian Socrates?

Let us turn to *Phaedrus*. In *Phaedrus* Socrates professes himself interested in speech and says Phaedrus’ eloquent speech is the magical recipe or spell (*to pharmakon*) which draws him.²⁰ Socrates is both the charmer and the bewitched. A sophist-philosopher like Apuleius would be attracted to such a paradoxical irony in Socrates attitude to discourse. Socrates’ second speech is a rhetorical masterpiece constructed for the purpose of drawing the normally un-philosophic

¹⁷ *Crito*, 53d, I use the translation of Tredenick, H. 1954. *Plato: The Last Days of Socrates*, Penguin.

¹⁸ M.1,6,4, *faciem suam iam dudum punicantem prae pudore obtexit*.

¹⁹ Unlike the chaste Socrates in the *Symposium* for example who did not succumb to the charms of Alcibiades, *Smp.* 219c-d; Aristophanes, *Clouds*, 1017.

²⁰ *Phaedr.* 230d.

Phaedrus to philosophize.²¹ The *Phaedrus* is has important links with the Apuleian episode under discussion. If one looks at the opening section of *Phaedrus* more closely, one observes that Socrates and Phaedrus walk.²² Lucius makes much of getting off his horse and walking along with Aristomenes and the unnamed companion. Platonic Socrates is outside the city walls, and humorously states that he is ready to walk towards Megara, such is his almost fevered desire to hear the speech, though it is well known that he never left Athens.²³ Indeed he is almost like a tourist says Phaedrus who walks with him.²⁴ Apuleian Socrates is a traveller too plying his trade between Macedonia and Larissa (*M.1,7,6*). Apuleian Socrates warns Aristomenes to moderate his ‘loose tongue’ in case he contracts a disease (*noxam contrahas. M.1,8,2*). Platonic Socrates portrays himself as so enthusiastic about the attractions of discourse that he appears ill with it (*Phaedrus*, 228b-c). He calls himself ‘one in love with speeches’ a lover of discourse (*Phaedrus* 228c) yet one who sees ‘speeches’ as a disease, since he is ‘a man who is sick (*nosounti*) with passion for hearing people speak’.²⁵ He characterises himself as ‘extraordinary’, out of place (*atopos, Phaedrus* 229c), because although he knows the story of Oreithuia and Boreas and believes it he has not the time to interpret such mythological stories. Since he does not know himself yet he will look into himself to see what kind of beast he is rather than ‘inquire into things (*ta allotria*) which do not belong to me’ (*Phaedrus* 229e). Yet he does realise the power these stories have and will create a myth for his own purposes use later in the text himself.

²¹ Nehamas 1999, 351.

²² *Phaedr.* 227d.

²³ *Phaedr.* 227d.

²⁴ *Phaedr.* 230c-d, and 228b-c where Socrates portrays himself as a traveller outside the walls of Athens, so enthusiastic about the attractions of discourse that he appears ill with it. He also calls himself a lover of discourse: 228c and characterises his daemonic guide as a certain voice which prevents him from crossing the river, for example *Phaedr.* 242c.

²⁵ *Phaedr.* 228b.

Interpreting myths is the work of a person ‘not altogether fortunate’, similar to the unfortunate Apuleian Socrates who is afflicted by evil fortune (*mala fortuna*, *M.* 1,7,10).²⁶

It is in *Phaedrus* that Socrates also professes himself a lover of words in books.²⁷ This is not a common reaction for Socrates.²⁸ The written word is not to be trusted because it cannot be interrogated. This attitude is clear in the Egyptian story he makes up about the inventor Theuth who invented writing (*Phaedrus* 274c-276e). Here writing is presented as a ghostly image, a phantom (*eidōlon* 276a9). Writing is an image of a living and animate speech of the one who knows. Words written with the pen (*kalamou*, 276c8), are incapable of speaking in their own defence and are incapable of teaching what is true, their only purpose being amusement (*paidias*, 276d2). Theuth tells king Thamus that his discovery of writing is such that it acts as a magical spell for the improvement of memory and of wisdom (*pharmakon* 275a6). Earlier Socrates had realized the attraction of words in books using the same word, *pharmakon* (230d). But the king replies that writing has in effect seduced Theuth first because he has fallen so in love with his discovery that he does not realize that this writing, this *pharmakon* (275a7) rather than help memory will encourage forgetfulness in the souls of those who allow themselves to be bewitched by its magical substance, ‘as through reliance on writing they are reminded from outside by alien marks, not from inside, themselves by themselves’ (275a5).²⁹ Now, this is where we see that the opposition of writing and speaking and the apparent denigration of writing as opposed to speech. It is true that writing, or as here the ‘alien mark’, seems to get the worst of it because other,

²⁶ *Phaedr.* 229d; Also *M.*1,7,1; *M.*1,6,4 for example.

²⁷ *Phaedr.* 230d-e Socrates says to Phaedrus ‘you seem to be capable of leading me round all Attica and wherever else you please by proffering me speeches (*logoi*) in books in this way’. Socrates never wrote anything, Plato, *Phaedr.* 275d; *Epist.* 7, 341c-d; *Epist.* 2, 314c.

²⁸ Noticed by Nehamas 1999, 330.

²⁹ Translation from Rowe, C.J. 1999. *Plato: Phaedrus, with Translation and Commentary*, Warminster: Aris and Phillips, 123.

different *'allogriōn'* may sometimes imply a bad comparison. The word is used earlier in the dialogue to describe myths (*ta allotria*, 229e) where myths are not denigrated but are edged out in favour of study of the soul. The writing is 'bad' because it is a *tupos*, an image, an imprint (to use more literal translation) of that which can be found 'inside' in the soul. But the image or mark is a reminder of what is inside. There is less of an opposition between speech and writing to the detriment of writing rather there is in reality recommendation to seek out that writing 'inside'. Dialogue, whether written or spoken constitutes a *pharmakon*, produced to draw those disinclined to be lovers of wisdom within, as for example Phaedrus, to philosophize. It is as if the 'image', the *tupos*, written and spoken, becomes the playful un-serious charm medicine that will both attract such a person and at the same time cure him so that he can proceed to the level of dialectic, to philosophize.³⁰ It can be observed that the 'image' (*tupos*) that constitutes the Theuth story is played with by Plato to achieve two things. First the myth is presented as the spoken word, emphasized in the repetition verbs of speaking and hearing: Socrates has 'heard' the story he will 'tell' Phaedrus, and Phaedrus asks Socrates to 'tell' him what he has 'heard', and Socrates begins with 'I heard' (*Phaedrus*, 274c1, 3, and 4). Then, the written version of the myth leads the reader to appreciate it as an image of dialogue between Phaedrus and Socrates. This appreciation in turn leads the reader to seeing both written and spoken words as the image (*eidōlon*) of that speech written in reality in the soul (*Phaedrus* 276a): Phaedrus' discourse, both spoken and written versions, cannot be the best 'animate' or so to speak, 'ensouled' (276a) discourse, it can only approximate the best speech 'genuinely written in the soul' (278a4). It is the encouragement to recognize that the one is an image of the other rather than a focus on the content of the Theuth myth about whether writing is better or worse than dialogue that Plato

³⁰ Corrigan and Glazov-Corrigan 2004, 214.

emphasizes. It is generally accepted now that both speech and writing are presented in the Platonic dialogues as instruments inadequate as one another in the philosopher's arsenal for the purpose of attaining to true knowledge yet the only way to present the intellectual content of a person's mind is through discourse whether that discourse is written or spoken.³¹ Elsewhere, for Socrates dialogue is a kind of medicine (*pharmakon*) for the soul because it makes one turn one's eyes inward.³² But nevertheless, the sort of man who can be an expert in the true speech is the one who knows how the speech written in the soul and is the sort of person Socrates and Phaedrus should hope they might become (*Phaedrus*, 278b2).

Where does this leave the reader of the *Metamorphoses*? Are the different written stories *varias fabulas* a starting point, a charm (*lepido susurro*) soothing to the ears of the hearers in the text? Change in the shapes and fortunes of people is promised (*figuras fortunasque hominum in alias imagines conversas*). The 'stories', the 'other images' (*alias imagines*) introduced in the famous preface of this novel as its charming subject matter are very similar to Plato's other images that may induce forgetfulness in the soul but can be viewed as an invitation to begin to philosophize by looking inward to the soul. Rather than allowing oneself to be seduced by 'other images' the images encourage one to see them as images only and to turn away from them and to begin to tread the path to true wisdom. This is why I believe that Socrates is introduced as a ghostly image equivalent to an *eidōlon* (*larvale simulacrum*, *M.1,6,3*). Far from encouraging his readers to forget themselves in other images, Apuleius too encourages attention (*intende*). The reader will wonder at the amazing 'restoration of the images into themselves' (*in se rursus mutuo nexu reffectas*). The novel is Apuleius *pharmakon* his magical spell to draw the reader to recognise the

³¹ Desjardins 1988, 111; Blundell 2002, 57.

³² Plato, *Charmides* 155e; Navia 1985, 164.

fact that the writing is actually an image (*tupos*), and the figure of Socrates is presented as an *eidōlon*, a *larvale simulacrum*, a phantom or ghostly image to further emphasise this point in the same way Plato uses the Theuth myth in *Phaedrus*.³³ Through this story at the beginning of the *Metamorphoses* Apuleius explores the contrasts between philosophic discourse (whether spoken or written) and entertaining, un-philosophic, rhetorical discourse. The one discourse strives to attain inwardness with dialectic the other looks out to the shape-changing transient world. The stories about Meroe and other witches contribute to this notion. Apuleius is writing a sophistic novel but one that has deep philosophical roots. In his novel Apuleius uses the persona of Socrates in a story about him and Meroe to illustrate the power of the discourse available to us as the only instrument for seeking truth. When ordinary speech and writing constitute *pharmaka*, this means that discourse, like magic is to the second century mind, is equally a force for truth or deception, since *pharmakon* can mean remedy or poison. The message of Apuleius' *Metamorphoses* is that truth can only be found by means of or even *in* this discourse. This is the *only* type of discourse (spoken and written) available to us. This discourse, this *pharmakon*, the written image of spoken discourse, is an 'image' constructed in the text to remind the reader to look inside 'themselves by themselves'. In the *Metamorphoses*, the antitype of Meroe, Isis, might converse with the soul of Lucius (*M.11,3,2*), but who can hear it? Lucius can repeat it by writing it, but by so doing he is falling into using just another aspect of discourse. Meroe is the purveyor of the deceptive, Socrates calls it poisoned (*noxam*), discourse that Socrates fears and to which he falls victim in the *Metamorphoses*. He dies an ignoble death. He has caught the disease and it is fatal. He grows pale, yet he greedily (*auide*, *M.1,10,7*) eats and drinks. Zombie like and apparently alive he makes to take a drink from the river on his journey forward but falls

³³ Schlam, C.C. 1992. *The Metamorphoses of Apuleius: On Making an Ass of Oneself*, Duckworth: The University of Carolina Press, 46-7.

dead on the spot. Platonic Socrates dies a noble death. He is expert in the use of discourse and aware of its power. He still dies, but he dies undefeated in his awareness of and skill in using discourse to seek out truth, and his soul lives on in the writings of Plato. The reader of the *Metamorphoses* has just met the mere image, the *tupos* of Socrates, a meeting about which the reader becomes even more acutely aware towards the end of the *Metamorphoses* when Lucius refers again to Socrates but this time to how Platonic Socrates was unjustly condemned even by those clever and skilled in distinguishing image from reality (*M.10, 33,3*). Lucius (who is about to be retransformed from donkey to human form) refuses to continue to speak of Socrates at this point anticipating that the reader will chide him for being a philosophising ass (*M. 10,33,4*).

2. A. Family man

Additional elements of the story of his Apuleian counterpart compare again in a skewed way with accounts of Platonic Socrates and contribute to the notion of Apuleian Socrates as a kind of anti-Socrates, a written *tupos*, of how not to philosophise.³⁴ Apuleian Socrates wife, unnamed in the novel, is remarkable mostly for her tears and lamentation. Her eyes according to Aristomenes are almost blinded with all the tears she has shed – though she has remarried. Platonic Socrates wife, the famous Xanthippe, has to be removed from his presence in his final hours due to her excessive weeping.³⁵ Platonic Socrates has children whose welfare he takes cognisance of before he dies.³⁶ But Apuleian Socrates becomes a slave to Meroe. She remarks on his plan to run away yet again (*uerum etiam fugam instruit M.1,12,5*). She is his good wife (*uxor bona, M.1,7,10*) who will cry in lamentation at his desertion (*M.1,12,6*), except that she herself will be the cause of his deserting her since she is going to kill him! If Platonic Socrates

³⁴ Thibau 1965,107, calls it 'le portrait *a contrario*'.

³⁵ Plato, *Phaed.* 60a-b and 117d-e. Later in Xenophon she is described as a difficult woman, *Mem.* 2.2.7. Also, *Apul. M.1,6*.

³⁶ Plato, *Apol.* 34d; *Phaed.* 116b.

deserts Athens and cheats death and flees to of all places, Thessaly, he will be forced to put on a disguise, a hard leather skin or leather jacket perhaps, or be metamorphosed or disguised in some other way.³⁷ This issue is dealt with elsewhere, but it still worth repeating that by placing his Socrates in Thessaly, Apuleius puts him where Platonic Socrates would not go.³⁸ The Laws' charge of wrongdoing against Socrates in the *Crito* is that as a good philosopher he will not abandon his family. Apuleian Socrates is a down on his luck poverty-stricken wretch, separated from his family, presumed dead to them. This means that his wife remarries, that his children are under the protection of the magistrates, and that he is pathetically grateful for a free meal. In *Crito* Socrates is told that he will be represented as irresponsible and be the victim of cruel jibes and laughter and he will be seen as someone who goes to a foreign land for material gain: namely, a free dinner if he leaves Athens.³⁹ Apuleian Socrates receives three free meals in the *Metamorphoses*: one from Meroe, and two from Aristomenes. As a fugitive, he will become a virtual slave to the people of Thessaly and engaging in all manner of dissipation in that country.⁴⁰ Apuleian Socrates has become a slave to Meroe selling himself into her service for many years (*M.1,7,9*).

3. A Beggar's Ghostly Appearance

Socrates' appearance shocks Aristomenes who asks: *Quae facies?* 'How ghastly you look!' (*M.1,6,2*).⁴¹ He has become enslaved to Meroe, but he attributes the cause of his downfall to a band of robbers who attacked him near Larissa. Aristomenes here refers to Socrates' appearance (*facies*, *M. 1,6,2*) as does Socrates (*ad istam faciem*, *M. 1,7,10*) the emphasis is on

³⁷ Plato *Crito*, 53d.

³⁸ O'Brien, M. 2002. *Apuleius' Debt to Plato in the Metamorphoses*, Lewiston: Edwin Mellen Press, 28-30.

³⁹ Plato, *Crito*, 53d; and 53a. For earlier mockery of Socrates cf. Aristophanes, *Clouds* 849. Montuori 1981, 3-10.

⁴⁰ *Crito*, 53e.

⁴¹ Traditional appearance of Socrates, see Zanker P.1995. *The Mask of Socrates: the Image of the Intellectual in Antiquity*, translated by A. Shapiro, Berkeley: University of California Press, 32-39.

outward appearance with the repetition of *facies*. Meroe then has put this guise or outward appearance on him, even though as he admits himself, he had nothing when he met her first having been deprived of everything by huge robbers, he gave her his ‘shabby clothes’ *ipsas etiam lacinias* (M.1,7,10). He has drawn disaster upon himself by a long and poisonous contact with Meroe (M.1,7,9). Socrates is described as *deformatus* – he has lost his shape, so to speak. In fact the same verb is used here, *deformare*, Socrates changes shape comparable to the fate suffered by Meroe’s other lovers.⁴² The magical discourse of Thessaly exemplified in Meroe wreaks havoc on Socrates.

Platonic Socrates only parodies the effect discourse has on him in, for example, the dialogue *Menexenus*: Aspasia’s soaring rhetoric has an effect diametrically opposite to that visited on Apuleian Socrates by Meroe’s discourse. Aspasia’s speech is replete with rhetorical tricks designed to captivate the hearer with its persuasive flattery. The presentation of the speech is artistically mannered: Aspasia of Miletus is supposed to have narrated it to Socrates, and he in turn is narrating it to us. Women rarely appear as players in Platonic dialogues. Aspasia is one of three women mentioned in Platonic dialogues.⁴³ Speeches such as hers can bewitch the souls of their listeners (Mx.234c-235a).⁴⁴ The hearer of Aspasia’s speech stands amazed ‘bewitched’ by the sound of the speech (Mx.235a).⁴⁵ The speech insinuates itself into the listeners’ ears ...’so that I myself, Menexenus, when thus praised by them feel mightily ennobled, and every time I listen fascinated I am exalted and imagine myself to have become all at once taller and nobler

⁴² M.1,9,3, and 4, where she change d (*deformavit*) one into a frog and another into a ram.

⁴³ Plutarch, *Pericles* 24, Diotima in the *Symposium* and Xanthippe in the *Phaedo* are the others.

⁴⁴ Mx.234c-235a, ‘And they praise in such a splendid fashion, that, what with their ascribing to each one both what he has and what he has not, and the variety and splendour of their diction, they bewitch our souls..’. The notion of speech uttered by women specifically as a powerful but harmful drug is analysed in New Comedy for example by Dutsch, D.M. 2008. *Feminine Discourse in Roman Comedy*, Oxford, 67-71.

⁴⁵ The verb *kēlein* ‘charm’ is used. Cf. *Smp.* 215c on the entrancing effect of Socrates words, which Alcibiades compares to the music of the Satyr Marsyas.

and more handsome' (*Mx.235c*). Witnesses to Aspasia's discourse scarce can remember themselves, and see that they are actually on earth and not in the Isles of the Blest (*Mx.235c*). Aspasia's art has a controlling or coercive effect on the citizens of Athens and they, and Socrates, seem to become what they are not in the sense they change shape and Socrates, whose ugliness is remarkable, seems taller and more handsome!⁴⁶ The opposite effect is induced by Meroe in the *Metamorphoses*. Even though Socrates *deformatus* has changed shape, the change is not for the better.

Apuleian Socrates' outward appearance has certainly changed for the worse. He is almost naked (*semiamictus*) except for a torn shawl, barefoot and filthy (*lurore*), he is the very image of a beggar (*M.I,6,1*). The fact that he is pale and wan and poor looking does bring to mind Platonic Socrates' traditional bare-footed image but it is a dejected and hopeless poverty in no way ideal or heroic.⁴⁷ *Miser*, poor or wretched, is the adjective most used to characterise Apuleian Socrates: *me miserum* (*M.1,7,6*), a wretched sight (*miserum aerumnae spectaculum M.1,6,5*), his wretched thinness changes him (*ad miseram maciem deformatus M.1,6,5*), his pallor and general wretchedness renders him almost unrecognisable to his friend who approaches him diffidently thinking he is someone else (*paene alius, M.1,6,1*). Such outer beauty is fleeting and of no consequence to the true philosopher. In the *Crito*, Socrates, if he goes to Thessaly, we are told will be 'shapeless' (*aschēmon*), in the sense that he will lose his present figure (*schēma*) by metamorphosing in some way or other.⁴⁸ This does happen to Socrates in the Thessaly of Apuleius' *Metamorphoses*. Finally, Aristomenes has to bury the lifeless body (*corpus exanimatum, M. 1,19,10*) of his poor friend (*comitem misellum, M.1,19,11*). The burial is referred

⁴⁶ *Mx. 235b*. The ugliness of Socrates, *Smp. 209c. Tht. 143e*.

⁴⁷ Thibau 1965, 106.

⁴⁸ Plato, *Crito* 53c-d and *M.1. 6*. Desmond: 2006, 211n.48 on the poverty of Socrates; *Apol.21c.; Mx.238d*.

to twice because the wretch Socrates dies not once but twice. He first is killed by Meroe in a gruesome night time murder after which Socrates breathes his last *spiritum rebulliret* (*M.* 1,13,6). *Spiritum* can mean ‘breath’ but also ‘soul’. He is apparently dead but his wound is plugged by a sponge which falls out when he drinks from the river flowing by the plane-tree. Socrates ‘awakes’ but is not refreshed due to the magical ministrations of Meroe. She does not make him beautiful. On the contrary he becomes almost transparent, paler than boxwood, he loses his healthy complexion (*M.*1,19,1-2). His unprepossessing outer appearance is the totality of him, a fact emphasized when he ‘dies’ and is buried by his friend Aristomenes under the sandy bank of the river forever (*sempiterna*) under the plane-tree.⁴⁹ The lush grass on which Platonic Socrates might lay his head has become sandy soil.⁵⁰ Socrates has indeed lost his soul and is a mere ghostly image in Apuleius’ *Metamorphoses*. It is as if his outward appearance is all there is: his famous ugliness does not hide a philosophical soul. Observe too how Platonic Socrates pulls his clothing up over his face while he is dying, and only uncovers his face to make a final famous parting shot to Crito about how he hopes to awake refreshed like those who are healed by incubation at the Asklepiion at Epidavros.⁵¹ Apuleian Socrates resists being uncovered, preferring *in extremis* to let fortune enjoy its victory over him (*M.*1,7,1). When dealing with such ‘unplatonian’ discourse, Platonic Socrates in contrast covers his face when reciting his first speech, an example of Isocratean discourse, in *Phaedrus*.⁵² But Apuleian Socrates is a statue, an image of his former self, and a statue or *simulacrum* once it is covered is voiceless since it cannot ‘speak’ to the viewer because it is covered and so unseen. His revival is apparent not real and he dies very soon afterwards. It is as if the very statue or image mentioned by Alcibiades in

⁴⁹ *M.* 1,19,11.

⁵⁰ *Phaedr.* 230c.

⁵¹ *Phaed.* 118a.

⁵² *Phaedr.* 237a.

the *Symposium* is what Socrates becomes in the *Metamorphoses*.⁵³ The ability to recognise that an external appearance is just that is lost in Thessaly where true philosophical inquiry cannot take place because the world of appearance, shifting and uncertain, is taken for reality there. Aristomenes says that Socrates is *larvale simulacrum*, aptly characterising this Apuleian variation of Socrates (*M.1,6,3*).

Conclusion

Apuleius uses Platonic philosophy when he sends Socrates to Thessaly, somewhere Platonic Socrates will not go in *Crito*. Unlike Socrates in *Phaedrus*, Apuleian Socrates is mesmerized by the bewitching qualities of discourse. He sails towards the Sirens rather than away from them (*Phaedr.* 259) something he scoffs at happening in *Menexenus*. In *Phaedrus* Platonic Socrates lies down on the grass by the riverbank under that tree, but he gets up again and again. The Socrates of the first episode of the *Metamorphoses* written by Apuleius' Nilotic reed (*Nilotici calami*) is in contrast, a pale imitation, *larvale simulacrum* (*M.I.6*), of the earlier Socrates. This reshaping of the philosophical Socrates in a novel is a transformation leading to pleasure, but pleasure tempered with attention because it reveals that the reshaped Socrates actually is a ghostly image, and this revelation constitutes the first pleasurable step on the road to true wisdom.

⁵³ Plato, *Smp.* 215b; Plato, *Euthyphro*, 11b where Socrates' verbal skill is compared with the skill of Daedalus and the note of Burnet, J. 1924, repr. 1977. *Plato: Euthyphro, Apology of Socrates, Crito*, Oxford: Clarendon, 130-131. Pausanias, 1,22,8 and 9,35,7. The author would like to thank Dr Konstantin Doulamis and the audience of the KYKNOS meeting held in August 2007 at University College Cork where an earlier version of this paper was delivered.

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