TELLING TALES IN THE *METAMORPHOSES* OF APULEIUS

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ABSTRACT

The narrative of the *Metamorphoses* is enlivened by the insertion of tales, with a variety of narrators. The purpose of this article is to examine the interweaving of narrators and inserted tales with the main narrative narrated by Lucius, the role of the storyteller and relationships with audiences, not least being that of the reader. This technique of various narrators within the text raises concepts such as ‘tale within a tale’ and the ‘audience within an audience’, which contribute to the work’s narrative style. The presentation of the tales as a performance deserves consideration, as many tales are presented for specific situations. Patterns emerge in the introducing and ending of tales which contribute to the interweaving texture of the tales and main narrative. A significant aspect of the tales’ presentation is the use of authenticating devices to make the tales within the text more credible. The narrative is carefully constructed to accommodate these aspects which culminate in a demonstration of the narrative’s full capacity.

Tales are an essential element of the construction of the work, the *Metamorphoses* by Apuleius, and perform a function which conforms to an extensive literary tradition. A significant aspect of this novel is the complex ‘tale within the tale’ concept, and this deserves attention because of its significant contribution to the structure of the work. In addition, there are the functions of the narrator and audience, primary and secondary narrators, and the role of a storyteller in general. The reaction to the tales of the audience (who listens, and who tells the tales) is integral to the work, particularly in the perspective of the overall tale being told by Lucius. The structure of the tales and their purpose within the main narrative must also be examined. The insertion of the tales contributes to the extremely skilful and complex structure of the work as a whole. They are interwoven for a variety of reasons, generally to provide entertainment, decoration and diversion, but there are also deeper meanings to the tales which provide thematic links to the main narrative. The general structure of the book is an extended narrative concerning the adventures of Lucius, with a varied selection of tales embedded.
in that narrative.¹

‘At ego tibi sermone isto Milesio varias fabulas conseram auresque tuas beniuolas lepido susurro permulseam . . . ’ (1.1). This opening prepares the reader to expect a series of tales ‘stitched’ or ‘woven’ together into the thematic fabric of the entire work,² but without suggesting a single or primary plot.³ The tales are an essential aspect of the work, and most scholars have deviated from Perry’s claim that they are ‘incongruous’,⁴ towards the more accepted argument that the tales ‘cannot be detached from the main frame-narrative without substantially weakening the structure and meaning of the whole work.’⁵ They are interwoven for a variety of reasons, generally to provide entertainment, decoration and diversion,⁶ but thematic links can be found which connect tales to each other and to the main narrative.⁷ The narrative continually fluctuates between comic and serious elements, and grim themes such as murder, vengeance and adultery are presented in the

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light-hearted form of a tale, in contrast to the often miserable external world. 8

The structure of the work highlights the interweaving of tales and themes, and demonstrates that the themes in the tales are carefully coordinated with themes in the main narrative. With reference to the opening of the work, the *Metamorphoses* is introduced as a collection of Milesian tales woven together. The influence of the Milesian tales upon the *Metamorphoses* has attracted considerable interest, particularly in relation to their context and structure. 9 The insertion of tales into a main narrative was an accepted device in other literary genres, including epic, such as Homer’s *Odyssey*, which follows a similar structure of tales embedded in a main narrative. The feature of tales inserted into the main narrative is also evident in Petronius’ *Satyricon* (for example The Widow of Ephesus’ Tale), but the extent of Petronius’ influence on Apuleius is arguable. 10 It is possible that the Greek original of the tale by Lucius of Patrae, no longer extant, was a primary influence for Apuleius’ insertion of tales as narrative interruptions. 11 A briefer version known as *Loukios or the Ass*, attributed to Lucian, is extant, and presents the main narrative without the inserted tales. However, the usual presumption is that the original Greek *Metamorphoses*, rather than this abbreviated version, is the source for Apuleius’ text. 12

The primary narrator of the work is Lucius, but subordinate tales are introduced within the encompassing tale, comprising tales which are either narrated by a secondary character in the first or third person (offering an alternate view to that observed or experienced by the principal narrator)

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8 Recent criticism supports the argument that the work is one of philosophical entertainment which also includes a religious initiation. Winkler (note 2) 125; S.J. Harrison, ‘Apuleius’ *Metamorphoses*’, in G. Schmeling (ed.), *The Novel in the Ancient World* (Mnemosyne Suppl. 159, Leiden 1996) 511-12.


11 Scobie (note 2) 43.

or by Lucius himself as he observes them. In this aspect, Lucius acts not only as narrator and participant in the events, but also as observer and categoriser of tales which he overhears.\textsuperscript{13}

**Storytellers and their audiences**

The role of the storyteller is a significant feature of the work. Studies have shown that professional storytelling was a popular form of entertainment akin to performances by acrobats and musicians.\textsuperscript{14} Indeed, many of the characters seem prepared to perform for their audience, for example Aristomenes, who is content to tell his tale to Lucius in exchange for a meal at the next inn (1.4). When called upon by Byrrhena to tell his tale, Thelyphron feigns reluctance and embarrassment at speaking, but it is obvious that he tells his story well because Byrrhena, who has already heard it, describes it as 'lepidus sermo' (2.20). Once he has agreed to speak, the description of his preparation is elaborate:

\begin{quote}
Ac sic aggeratis in cumulum strangulis et effultus in cubitum suberectusque in torum porrigit dexteram et ad instar oratorum conformat articulum duobusque infimis conclusis digitis ceteros eminens [porrigens] et infesto pollice clementer subrigens infit Thelyphron ... (2.21)\textsuperscript{15}
\end{quote}

This description emphasises that Thelyphron is not merely telling the story, but is expected to perform for his audience.

Another, similar occasion where the storyteller appears experienced in telling tales is that of the Old Woman’s Tale (4.28-6.24),\textsuperscript{16} which is told to console a distressed young woman (Charite). Although Lucius describes the old woman who tells the tale as ‘delira et temulenta’ (6.26), she seems

\textsuperscript{13} W.S. Smith, ‘The narrative voice in Apuleius’ *Metamorphoses*, *TAPhA* 103 (1972) 523.

\textsuperscript{14} For example, Suetonius, *Aug.* mentions the employment of storytellers at dinner-parties (74), and to help Augustus sleep (78). For further study of storytellers, see A. Scobie, ‘Storytellers, storytelling and the novel in Graeco-Roman Antiquity’, *RhM* 122 (1979) 233; A. Scobie, *Apuleius and Folklore. Toward a History of ML3045. Aa* , 567, 449A ( London 1983).

\textsuperscript{15} C.M. Mayrhofer, ‘On two stories in Apuleius’, *Antichthon* 9 (1975) 75.

\textsuperscript{16} Terming this tale the Tale of Cupid and Psyche destroys the technique of delay in naming the characters in the tale. See Winkler (note 2) 89.
prepared to present a tale of unusual skill and structure. This fairy story with a happy ending appears appropriate to the situation of consoling a young girl kidnapped on her wedding night.17 This tale is by far the longest in the entire work, yet the nature of the tale, which revolves around the love of a couple, does not seem incongruous at this point in the narrative.18 It is noticeably the only tale in a mythological setting. This tale holds the central position in the complete work, and its removal would result in disruption of the entire narrative,19 and even a different interpretation of the tale itself.20 It is mentioned specifically to console Charite, and themes of love, separation of lovers, and marriage, echo immediate events in Charite’s life.21 A great deal has been written on this tale, particularly its origin,22 and it is considered a blend of mythic, folkloric and literary elements.23 The application of this tale as an allegory for Lucius’ own life and journey and its Platonic implications has also received considerable attention.24 Lucius does not recognise (or does not state that he recognises) that this tale contains any moral elements or that he learns anything from it, but merely describes it as ‘bella fabella’. Despite these arguments of its origin and deeper meanings, the tale is an indication of Apuleian invention for the literary purposes of the entire work. It plays a significant role within the work, and particularly the surrounding events in the plot for Lucius and Charite.

17 Scobie (note 14) 22.
18 For a detailed examination of the structure of this tale, see L.S. Stabryla, ‘The functions of the Tale of Cupid and Psyche in the structure of the Metamorphoses of Apuleius’, Eos 61 (1973) 261-72, who sees this tale as similar in structure to the Charite saga; also Schlam (note 3) 82-83.
20 Stabryla (note 18) 271.
21 Stabryla (note 18) 268.
22 For differing opinions, see J.R.G. Wright, ‘Folk-tale and literary technique in Cupid and Psyche’, CQ 21 (1971) 273-84, who analyses the tale in terms of the folkloric tradition, and C.C. Schlam, ‘Cupid and Psyche: folk tale and literary narrative’, in Hofmann (note 5) 63-73, who reconsiders the folktale and mythic tradition, arguing that the folktales with similar plots do not directly refer to Cupid and Psyche.
23 Schlam (note 3) 35.
The tales are adapted to suit the particular tone of the situation, and fulfill what the audience wants to hear, which is a feature of the subplot narratives. Tlepolemus in his guise as Haemus, the notorious bandit, arrives at the robber’s cave prepared to tell a tale of his cunning and bravery worthy of his audience (7.5-8). The robbers elect him as their leader on the basis of his exaggerated tale of bravery and cunning as a robber. The old woman, described as ‘illa sermocinatrix inmodica’ (9.17) in the Adultery Tales frame of Book 9, tells to the baker’s wife the tale involving the quick-thinking and amorous youth, Philesitherus, so that the wife will choose him as her new lover (9.16-21). Although the majority of such tales are designed to entertain the audience, the more tragic tales are presented by the storyteller in a manner which will create maximum sympathy, for example the Tale of Charite, Tlepolemus and Thrasyllus (8.1-14). Therefore, even in enhancing sympathy, storytellers in the book are prepared to give a polished performance.

The performance of the storyteller is illustrated also in the exaggerated tale told by Lucius in his defence at the Risus trial. The reader is already aware of Lucius’ perspective of the previous night’s events, but in addition, at the Risus trial in his defence, Lucius presents an exaggerated story with rhetorical structure, designed to create maximum sympathy on his behalf. Lucius gives a performance in a similar manner to that given by Thelyphron as he describes his actions following his speech:

Haec profatus rursum lacrimis obortis porrectisque in praeces
manibus per publicam misericordiam, per pignorum caritatem
maestus tunc hos, tunc illos deprecabar. (3.7)

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Such rhetoric perhaps anticipates and enhances his becoming a lawyer upon his retransformation to help pay for his initiations. Lucius, like other storytellers in the book, is prepared to give a performance for his audience.

Audiences (invited and uninvited)

A complicated feature of the entire narrative is the aspect of the narrator within the narrator of the tales. The reader is aware that the 'narrating I' is Lucius, a relationship which Lucius enjoys emphasising, and he frequently interrupts his narrative to give his own opinions on the tales in an aside to the reader, as in a comedy. This relationship is first noticed in the prologue in words or phrases such as 'ego tibi' and 'lector intende: laetaberis' (1.1). Throughout the narrative and the narration of tales, particularly following his metamorphosis, Lucius frequently brings to the reader's attention reasons for his knowledge of particular tales, as if the reader himself has charged him with this question:

Sed forsitan lector scrupulosus reprehendens narratum meum sic argumentaberis: 'unde autem tu, astutule asine, intra terminos pistrini contentus, quid secreto, ut adfirmas, mulieres gesserint, scire potuisti?' (9.30)

There are devices used in the work which contribute to the relationship between the reader and the narrator, such as

'delays in coming to the point of the story; the piling up of circumstantial details, not merely for reasons of verisimilitude, but also to suggest false clues, invite wrong clues and side-track attention; the rehearsal of events in strict chronological order and the avoidance of any "wisdom after the event" in the commentary: all such devices increase the reader's suspense and uncertainty and compel him to share the point of view of the narrator.'


30 Kenny (note 29) 191. However, 'wisdom after the event' is not always avoided, and some tales are introduced in the format of a tale by the narrator. Frequently the events involving
Content and the means to an outcome are the chief aspects of narration. Lucius presents a conversational tone to his own audience, the reader, in order to maintain a special relationship corresponding to the relationship of narrator and audience within the work.

While Lucius develops the relationship with his audience, the subordinate tales emphasise the complicated concepts of narrator within a narrator and audience within an audience in the text. In the three books prior to Lucius’ metamorphosis (3.24), Lucius is the main audience to whom the tales are directed. Secondary characters narrate many of the tales, and many of these are not even intended for the ears of Lucius as an ass. Many tales are narrated to a particular invited audience. The narrator often gives an introduction to the tale as enticement for its audience to ask for the tale’s narration. For example, Byrrhena invites Thelyphron to tell his tale:

‘immo, mi Thelyphron’, Byrrhena inquit, ‘et subsiste paulisper et more tuae urbanitatis fabulam illam tuam remetire, ut et filius meus iste Lucius lepidi sermonis tui perfruatur comitate.’ (2.20)³¹

The reader must bear in mind that all the tales are narrated for different purposes in the narrative, some for enjoyment or diversion, others to fill in the plot or to give news. Therefore the audience is often forced to listen to a tale which is from a messenger or bearer of news (7.1; 8.1-14; 9.35-38), in which the audience is directly affected by the news of the tales. The Account of Milo’s House (7.1) following the robbery emphasises the paradox of invited and uninvited listeners, because the messenger brings to the robbers news of Milo’s house after the robbery. The irony is that the robbers are unaware that the ‘suspect’ of the robbery is actually overhearing the tale, yet unable to come to his own defence. Lucius, as uninvited listener, is emphasised particularly at the end of the Old Woman’s Tale (6.25), where Lucius laments his not having writing materials to record the story, even

Lucius concern some disaster such as death or castration about to befall him – yet the reader is aware that Lucius is present to narrate the story after the event.
³¹ For example Lucius to Aristomenes: ‘sed iam cedo tu sodes, qui coeperas, fabulam remetire’ (1.4); and the baker’s wife to the old woman ‘minime gentium’, inquit, ‘sed nosse ualde cupio et oro, mater, ordine mihi singula retexte’ (9.17).
though the tale was intended to console the kidnapped young girl (Charite).

All the tales in the books are presented either as being invited by their audience to be told to that particular audience, or because they tell important news. The Old Woman’s Tale is not narrated upon request but in return for a tale, when Charite says: ... ‘parce’, inquit, ‘mi parens, et durissimo casui meo pietatis humanae memor subsiste paululum’ (4.26). Charite then tells the old woman her story of ‘calamitas’ and in exchange the old woman helps interpret her dream and tries to alleviate her worry with her tale.33

There is a second listener to the Tale of Socrates, the travelling companion, who acts as the disbelieving voice at the content of the tale. His dissenting opinion acts primarily as part of the invitation process device to invite Lucius’ attention to the tale and is the chief instigator in bringing about the telling of the tale.34 In Book 2, Pamphile is also a silent listener, whose comment on the prediction of the weather reminds Lucius of the Chaldaean prophet, which in turn initiates Milo’s tale.35 This section is significant to the main narrative in a variety of ways, because it emphasises Milo’s unawareness of his wife’s activities (although Lucius and the reader are aware), since he scoffs at the idea of the serious use of predictions and astrology. However, it is not certain whether Pamphile is still present when the tale is told. Milo’s tale of Diophanes’ inability to predict his own sea travel emphasises the irony of Diophanes’ prediction to Lucius. Diophanes predicted for Lucius that: ‘... nunc enim gloriam satis floridam, nunc historiam magnam et incredundam fabulam et libros me futurum’ (2.12). Unknown to Lucius at the time, the prophecy has been realised, but not in a manner which he could possibly have imagined. The Metamorphoses is the realisation of this prophecy, but does not relate glorious adventures of a hero. Thus the reader is aware of the accuracy of the prophecy, but also still, like Lucius, unaware that the tale will involve metamorphosis into an ass rather than the adventures of a hero.36

But the tales following his metamorphosis are presented for an

32 Stabryla (note 18) 269 n. 23.
33 Winkler (note 2) 50-52.
34 Cf. Winkler (note 2) 28: ‘The cynic’s command to stop the story is the author’s way of inviting our attention to it.’
35 Winkler (note 2) 41-43.
36 Smith (note 13) 533.
audience other than Lucius (the robbers, the baker’s wife, Charite), and the narrators are unaware of an uninvited listener paying considerable attention to the tales, namely an ass. Therefore within this main narrative there are two audiences listening to the tales, the invited and the uninvited, which is Lucius, who is consequently telling the tales to his audience, the reader. It is interesting to note that towards the end of the work, the introduction of a secondary character to narrate a tale is less common, and Lucius simply tells the tale as something he heard in passing through a village or at an inn (9.5; 10.2). Lucius changes the style of narration from narrator within a narrator to simply that of sole narrator to the reader. This aspect of the audience inviting the narrator to tell the tales can conversely be seen as the narrator inviting the audience to invite the narrator to narrate the tale. Despite the fact that Lucius is an uninvited listener to the majority of the tales, and this occurs only when he is an ass, he invites his own audience to listen to or read his tales in the same manner as such narrators:

... fabulam denique bonam prae ceteris, suauem, comptam ad auris uestras adferre decreui, et en occipio. (9.14)

However, Lucius withdraws his invitation to his audience to hear the rites of initiation in Book 11:

Quaeras forsitan satis anxie, studiose lector, quid deinde dictum, quid factum; dicerem, si decere liceret, cognosceres, si liceret audire ... ecce tibi rettuli, quae, quamuis audita, ignores tamen necesse est. Ergo quod solum potest sine piaculo ad profanorum inteligentias enuntiari, referam. (11.23-24)

Lucius is now aware of the limits to which the sacred must be kept secret. Lucius, as uninvited listener, learns and hears stories and events which he would never have heard otherwise and passes them on to his own audience.

The element of tale within a tale becomes even more complicated when the tale being told by a character contains a tale told by another narrator within that tale. There are two primary examples of this complicated motif: the Tale of Thelyphron (2.21-30) and the Adultery Tales of Book 9. In the Tale of Thelyphron, the corpse of Thelyphron 2 – the widow’s husband,
who, as we are to discover (in his tale) bears the same name as Thelyphron (the narrator) – is reanimated in order to prove or disprove the guilt of his wife in his murder. In his tale, the corpse fills in events which occurred during the night when Thelyphron fell asleep, events of which Thelyphron would have had no knowledge. Consequently the roles of narrator and narrated become reversed, with the narrator Thelyphron becoming the primary subject of the corpse’s tale. The basis for this structure is that the tale is a compound of three separate tales, and under analysis becomes illogical and inconsistent. This form of telling a tale within a tale effectively builds up the comic-horror suspense surrounding the witchcraft from the previous night.

The second example of the tale within a tale is the Adultery Tales of Book 9. The framing tale is the Tale of the Baker and his Wife which is told by Lucius. Within this framework are two tales which concern similar themes of adultery, where one is told by the old woman to the baker’s wife and the other is told by the baker. These tales are based on the same simple plot pattern: the departure of the husband followed by the wife receiving her lover; the return of the husband and the hiding of the lover; the husband focusing his attention on an object related to the lover; the lover betrayed, and either receiving punishment or evading punishment by outwitting the husband.

Lucius draws attention to his own presence in his framing tale by deliberately drawing attention to the lover by treading on his fingers. This simple act distinguishes this tale from the tales told within, by the intervention

37 Winkler (note 2) 114, who states that terming this tale the Tale of Thelyphron refers to ‘both its teller (noseless Thelyphron) and its apparent subject (corpse Thelyphron), both its real subject (noseless Thelyphron) and its crucial teller (corpse Thelyphron).’
38 Perry (note 4) 264-73; Schlam (note 3) 39. Mayrhofer (note 15) 79-80 points out that such inconsistencies are common in stories of the supernatural, and set the tone of the work. The inconsistencies are listed at 76: (1) The mourning widow seems sincere in contrast to her nature as murderer in the second half of the tale. (2) The anticlimax of finding the corpse intact. (3) The false climax of Thelyphron being chased from the house. (4) The ‘feeble’ explanation by the corpse for finding the corpse intact, that he and Thelyphron bear the same name, when there is no previous warning of this. Kenny (note 29) 190 emphasises the inappropriateness of questioning inconsistencies in such a work.
39 The second part of the tale is anticipated by the warning of the old man: ‘... siqui non integrum corpus mane restituerit, quidquid inde decerptum deminutumque fuerit, id omne de facie sua desecyo sarcire compellit.’ (2.22)
of an unrelated character, Lucius, who is also narrating the tale. Lucius invites himself into the plot. In this way, by participation in the main plot of the framing tale, Lucius brings the series of tales back to the main narrative.

The perspective of the audience within an audience is presented to great effect in Milo’s narration of the Tale of Diophanes (2.11-15). Milo is narrating the account of Diophanes’ shipwreck which was told by Diophanes within the tale. The audience is divided into four parts. First there is Lucius, as audience to Milo’s tale. But within that tale, Diophanes is narrating his tale to an old friend, and is overheard by Cerdo and also by the crowd of people of which Milo is a member. The different audiences are affected by the story in different ways: the friend listens to the tale with sympathy, Cerdo runs off with the money he had laid down for his prediction at the discovery of Diophanes’ deceit. The crowd, including Milo, breaks into laughter at this comical scene.

These examples reflect the complicated structure of narration in the work, and the reader is constantly reminded of this structure.

Introducing and ending a tale

Patterns emerge in the introduction and conclusions of the tales. Firstly, I shall examine the tales which are narrated by secondary narrators, where the stories are about or concern themselves. Both Aristomenes and Thelyphron begin their tales in a similar manner, whereby both are invited to tell their tales, and they introduce themselves in a certain manner. Like the introduction of the *Metamorphoses*, they give an introduction and reason for their travelling, for example Aristomenes:

‘... sed ut prius noritis, cuiatis sim, qui sim: Aristomenes sum, Aegiensis: audite et quo quae st me teneam: melle uel caseo et huiusce modi cauponarum mercibus per Thessalium Aetoliam Boeotiam ultro citro discurrens.’ (1.5)

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41 Bechtle (note 40) 109.
42 Schlam (note 3) 30.
43 Winkler (note 2) 39-40.
44 Winkler (note 2) 38.
Thelyphron’s introduction is similar:

‘Pupillus ego Mileto profectus ad spectaculum Olympicum

cum haec etiam loca prouinciae famigerabilis adire cuperem

...’ (2.21)

All fulfil their intention for the benefit of the audience, such as diversion and
entertainment. Aristomenes diverts Lucius from the hill, and Thelyphron’s
tale entertains at a dinner party (although Lucius does not report his individual
reaction to this tale). In a similar manner Haemus provides an elaborate
introduction to himself. These tales all present reasons for the narrator’s
present state or purpose, such as why Aristomenes cannot go back to his
country Aegium for fear of being branded a murderer and why he is still in
Thessaly; Thelyphron tells the reason for his bandaged nose and hair-covered
ears; and Haemus supposedly wishes to become the robber’s leader. For
each of these tales there is an introduction and ending indicating that this is a
set manner for telling the tale, and providing a reason for having reached this
situation in life. The *Metamorphoses* is presented in a similar manner, and
the narrator provides an introduction and reason for his travelling (1.1-2)
and ends with the culmination of his journey.

Tales narrated by secondary narrators about other characters also
provide some kind of motive for the narration of a tale. The Old Woman’s
Tale is introduced as a ‘lepida fabula’ at 4.27 with the purpose of diversion,
its truth and identity established from the beginning. Such narrators give a
foretaste of the ending before the tale is begun and give an introduction to
the tale before beginning the actual episode:

‘Equisones opilionesque, etiam busequae, fuit Charite

nobisique misella et quidem casu graiissimo nec uero

incomitata Manes adiuit.’ (8.1)45

45 All narrators know the conclusion of their tale. Winkler (note 2) 100. For example The Old
Woman’s Tale of Book 9 is presented as: ‘dignus hercules solus omnium matronarum deliciis
perfrui, dignus solus coronam auream capite gesture uel ob unicum istud, quod nunc nuper in
quendam zelotypum maritum eximio studio commentus est. audi denique et amatorum diversum
ingenium comparac’ (9.16). Even the Tale of the Three Sons, which is reported by a slave, is
introduced as one of disaster: ‘adhoc omnibus expectatione taeterrimae formidinis torpidis
accurrut quidam seruulus magnas et postremas domino illi fundorum clades adnuntius’ (9.35).
Introductions of this kind are a key feature of the presentation of the tales. The importance seems to depend on the manner and style of narrating, rather than the conclusion.

The other tales narrated by Lucius, where he does not participate in the action, are introduced in a similar manner, giving the reason Lucius wishes to tell the tale to his reader:

...cognoscimus lepidam de adulterio cuiusdam pauperis fabulam, quam uos etiam cognoscatis uolo. (9.4)46

Lucius introduces stories which are directly connected to the main plot in this manner, enforcing the notion of stories woven together from the prologue.

These tales return to the main narrative, frequently because their ending brings about a change in circumstances for Lucius, or its conclusion continues the conversation which it interrupted. Lucius the narrator comments on his enjoyment of the tale after its conclusion (for example 1.20 and 6.26), or he makes a comment on the contents of the tale because they relate to his own circumstances, for example at the end of the Tale of the Condemned Woman:

Talis mulieris publicitus matrimonium coniarreaturus ingentique angore oppido suspensus expectabam diem muneries ...
(10.29)

On most occasions, a phrase is inserted to indicate the conclusion of a tale:

Haec ille longos trahens suspiritus et nonnunquam inlacrimans grauiiter affectis rusticis adnuntiabat. (8.15)47

46 For example: ‘inibi coeptum facinus oppido memorabile narrare cupio’ (8.22); ‘fabulum denique bonam praeceteris, suaeum, comptam ad aures uestras adferre decreui, et en occipio’ (9.14); ‘sed ut uos etiam legatis, ad librum profero’ (10.2). Similarly, for an event in the main narrative: ‘hic ego me potissimum capitis periclitatum memini’ (8.31).
47 For example: ‘Haec Aristomenes’ (1.20); ‘Cum primum Thelyphron hanc fabulam posuit’ (2.31); ‘Sic captivae suellae delira et temulentia illa narrabat anicula’ (6.25); ‘Haec eo narrante …’ (7.2); ‘Hactenus adhuc anicula garriente suscipit mulier …’ (11.22); ‘Haec recensente pistore …’ (9.26); ‘Haec erant quae prodigiosa praesagauerant ostenta … Ad istum modum puncto breuiissimo dilapsae domus fortunam hortulanus ille miseratus …’ (9.38-39).
On other occasions, there is no such conclusion, but an abrupt return to the narrative. These are the tales which are narrated by Lucius as a narrator:

Hac quoque detestabili deserta mansione, paganos in summo luctu relinquentes ... (8.23)\(^48\)

The Tale of the Baker and his Wife involves Lucius, and the narrator does not return to his own narrative until events concerning the baker are completed. The conclusion of this tale results in new circumstances for Lucius as he is sold to a gardener.

A significant feature of the structure of the tales is the technique of bestowing tales with two endings. This device is used several times in the text and frequently serves as a transitional device to transport Lucius from one set of circumstances to another. The events surrounding Tlepolemus and Charite, with their affinity to the Greek novel, would presume that their role in the narrative would conclude with their escape from the robbers and the celebration of their marriage. However, following an episode describing Lucius’ position in the main narrative, there is a surprising return to Charite and Tlepolemus which ends in tragedy and death for both of them. This tale alters the circumstances for Lucius in the main narrative and marks the beginning of his adventures on the road. In this way, there is an interconnection between tales and main narrative, heightening the unity of the work. The repeated appearances of Charite are sustained in an interwoven texture of main narrative, subplot and tales. The reader is confronted with an unnamed girl kidnapped by the robbers, who tells the old woman of how she was kidnapped on her wedding night. Lucius becomes more involved with the girl as they try to escape. They are recaptured and the robbers discuss an appropriate form of execution for them. The robbers then introduce Haemus who proposes prostitution as punishment. Lucius then informs the reader of his discovery that Haemus is Charite’s husband, Tlepolemus. Tlepolemus overcomes the robbers and the pair are escorted back to their village, where there are joyful celebrations and a wedding night. The narrative then returns to the subject of Lucius as people propose different rewards for the ass

\(^{48}\) See also 9.8; 9.32; 10.34.
who helped in the rescue of Charite. The reward is to send him to the country for an idle existence, and the plot redirects from Charite and her husband Tlepolemus to Lucius and the villagers he encounters. However, the story returns with a dramatic and tragic tale of revenge and murder, introducing a new character Thrasyllus. This tale enhances the structure of the work, and further acts as a convenient diversion in Lucius’ travels. In the tale, Lucius is rescued from a ‘double death’, physical death and castration, binding further implied themes and giving greater cohesion to themes in other tales and circumstances. On the day before this tale (7.26), one of the villagers had promised to castrate and behead Lucius as a punishment for killing his boy minder. Lucius says at the conclusion of the tale of Charite, Tlepolemus and Thrasyllus:

nec me pondus sarcinae, quanquam enormis, urguebat, quippe gaudial i fuga detestabilem ilium exectorem virilitatis meae relinquentem. (8.15)

Its tragic outcome is in contrast to the Old Woman’s Tale (which was perhaps intended to echo the safe return of Charite to her husband), where the couple live happily ever after.

The framing adultery tale involving the baker and his wife also develops further than the tales it frames (9.14-31). Although the tale has one ending according to the simple plot pattern, where the adulterer and wife are punished, there is a further development. The wife, having been turned out of the house, employs the help of a witch (the use of magic recalls themes from the first three books) and the tale concludes with the murder of her husband. Consequently the death of the baker leaves Lucius without an owner. His sale to a new master heralds further adventures.

Other tales which are narrated by Lucius (representing tales he has overheard, such as at 8.22, 9.14 and 10.2-12), are placed in a fixed location (generally a village Lucius is travelling through), and concern contemporary events. The Tale of the Baker and his Wife is also directly connected to the

49 P. James, Unity in Diversity: A Study of Apuleius’ Metamorphoses, with Particular Reference to the Narrator’s Art of Transformation and the Metamorphosis Motif in the Tale of Cupid and Psyche (Hildesheim 1987) 235.
plot of the main narrative, which emphasises the credibility of the tale.

The role of the tales

As shown by the prologue of the work, the tales are an extremely significant feature of the book, and are interwoven into the main narrative by way of thematic patterns corresponding to the main narrative. The diverse function of the roles contributes to the close connection between the tales and the main narrative. The primary purpose of the tales is to entertain the audience within the narrative, but the tales also appear to anticipate and/or explain previous events, to report accounts, to divert and console, and to moralise on the vices and ‘seruius voluptates’ illustrated both within and without the tales. All of these purposes link the tales to the main narrative.

Lucius promises his reader: ‘lector intende; laetaberis’ in the prologue, and he continually emphasises the entertainment value of the tales. In the introduction or conclusion of tales, Lucius often gives some opinion on the tale, frequently describing a tale as ‘lepida fabula’ (such as 9.4 and 9.14, where the Tale of the Baker and his Wife is described as ‘bonam prae ceteris, suauem, comptam’, and the Old Woman’s Tale is called ‘bella fabella’ at its conclusion at 6.25).

The main objective for the narrator is to tell a story which will please the intended audience. In the tales of Aristomenes and Thelyphron, the heightened aspect of comic-horror relief increases entertainment for the listener, where the subject matter would normally require ‘respectful phrases or decent silences’. Lucius thanks Aristomenes for telling his tale as it has provided him with entertainment for his journey. A similar occasion is when Haemus relates his fictitious tale to the bandits, parodying their own style of amplifying their mock-heroic deeds, which is guaranteed to please his audience (7.5-8).

The occasions for the telling of a tale also signal that the tale is intended to entertain, particularly while travelling (Aristomenes’ Tale, 1.2-20; The Tale of a Steward, 8.22), or at the dinner table (Milo’s Tale, 2.11-

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50 Scobie (note 2) 48.
51 Tatum (note 2) 492-93.
52 Tatum (note 2) 490.
53 Mayrhofer (note 15) 74. Examples of such subjects are the themes of death and facial mutilation.
The enjoyment of the tale of Thelyphron, which is told at a banquet after the guests have eaten and drunk, is contrasted with Milo’s narration of Diophanes’ tale over a sparse dinner table:

Haec Milone diutine sermocinante tacitus ingemescbam
mihique non mediocriter suscensebam, quod ultro inducta
serie inopportunarum fabularum partem bonam uesperae
eiusque gratissimum fructum amitterem. (2.15)

Therefore, within the narrative, the tales are presented with the primary prospect of entertainment, and if the setting does not suit the audience, then the element of pleasure is reduced or even absent. This is regardless of any outer meanings, warnings or allegorical implications the reader may interpret, because the ‘experiencing I’ remains oblivious to such readings.

The tales anticipate, echo, or develop themes and events contained in the main narrative.\textsuperscript{54} In particular, the tales of Aristomenes and Thelyphron both contain themes of witchcraft and the dangers of practising magic, which could be interpreted as warnings to Lucius against pursuing the witch Pamphile and meddling in witchcraft. These tales of witchcraft are carefully coordinated to correspond to Lucius’ pursuit of witchcraft in the main narrative.\textsuperscript{55} In a similar manner, the tale of Charite, Tlepolemus and Thrasyllus (8.1-14) anticipates the gloom of future themes of desire, revenge and death contained in tales such as those of the Stepmother (10.2-12) and the Condemned Woman (10.23-28). The Old Woman’s Tale echoes and contrasts with the happy wedding intended for the young girl, Charite. The device of embedding into the main narrative is employed in the Account of the Kidnapped Young Woman (Charite) and the Tale of Charite, Tlepolemus and Thrasyllus continue the chronicle of events concerning Charite and Tlepolemus which take place in the main narrative. The first Tale of Adultery, which ends happily, acts as an introduction to this theme in the Adultery Tales in Book 9. The Tale of the Rich Man’s Three Sons (9.35-38) also explains the grim portents which are described as occurring in the main narrative. Alternatively it would appear that themes of human criminality are maintained throughout the work, and themes such as adultery, theft, revenge and murder are primary themes in

\textsuperscript{54} Tatum (note 2) 525.
\textsuperscript{55} Schlam (note 3) 31.
the work, even when they are achieved by the practices of witchcraft.

Some tales explain previous events which are either not observed from Lucius’ point of view, or have no real connection to the main narrative. The purpose of Photis’ story is to present the real account of events concerning the murder of the wineskins (3.15-19). As in the tale of Thelyphron, where the corpse explains events of the night not witnessed by Thelyphron, so Photis explains to Lucius events not previously known to Lucius. The Account of the Kidnapped Young Woman (4.26-27) is used merely as an introduction to Charite and to explain her distress.56

The Tales of the Robbers Lamachus, Alcimus and Thrasyleon (4.9-21) are three tales of the heroic deeds of three robbers, all of which end in disaster. These tales are independent of the main plot and the tales serve to complete the tone of ineptitude and mock-heroism of the robbers, which is later reflected in the tale of Haemus (7.5-8).57 The ineptitude of the robbers in these tales also serves to portend their overall destruction by Tlepolemus with the use of deceit and trickery.58

Many of the tales are a source of diversion from the main narrative. The opening tale of Aristomenes diverts Lucius from concentrating on travelling up an arduous hill, for which he thanks the narrator most graciously:

sed ego huic et credo hercules et gratas gratias memini, quod lepidae fabulae festiuitate nos auocauit, asperam denique ac prolixam uiam sine labore ac taedio euasi. (1.20)

The verb ‘auocare’ is also used by the old woman to introduce her tale to the young woman. This tale is told primarily to console the girl in her distress and to divert her from her troubles: ‘sed ego te narrationibus lepidis anilibusque fabulis protinus auocabo’ (4.27).

56 This tale also serves to anticipate the later story of Thrasylus, despite her complete unawareness of the dangerous suitor at this time.
58 Scobie (note 2) 53.
Not only does Lucius include these tales as mere anecdotes that he has overheard from different areas, but also they frequently provide a welcome break, particularly when the main narrative is concerned with great hardship and Lucius wishes to divert himself as well as the reader. The Adultery Tales are told at a time when Lucius describes his present position as: ‘...ad ultimam salutis metam demtrusus ...’ (9.13). By the use of similar themes, the tales maintain a close relationship to the main plot.

Credibility

One of the noteworthy features of the tales is the use of authenticating devices to make the story more credible. The entire work is created within its own story world and it is the credibility of the story world within the work which is important, rather than the factual basis of the entire work. Apuleius maintains a standard of verisimilitude within this framework of ‘fantastic literature’ and includes authenticating devices to ensure the credibility of tales. Examples of such devices are the presentation of a tale as an eyewitness account, and the placing of events in a contemporaneous time and particular place. The presentation of an eyewitness account as an authenticating device is important to ancient literature, and the belief in certain unbelievable facts is dependent upon an eyewitness account. Most or all of these devices are used in all the tales but one, the Old Woman’s Tale (4.28-6.24), which involves mythological settings and deities. Aristomenes, who introduces his tale as being strange but true, presents it as an eyewitness account, contemporaneous with the main narrative and set in Larissa (1.2-20):

sed tibi prius deierabo solem istum omniuidentem deum me uera comperta memorare, nec uos ulterior dubitabitis, si Thessaliam proximam ciuitatem peruenistis, quod ibidem passim per ora populi sermo iactetur, quae palam gesta sunt.

(1.5)

60 Scobie (note 14) 244.
61 Laird (note 59) 155.
The tale is initiated by Luicus when he meets two travellers who are arguing over the truthfulness of the tale. Aristomenes’ audience contributes to his affirmation of its veracity by the sceptical companion and Lucius arguing both sides as disbeliever and believer respectively. Lucius reprimands the other for failing to keep an open mind. He advises him to suspend his judgement, and adds his own ‘amazing’ anecdotes of witnessing a sword-swallow and almost choking to death on cheese. Such anecdotes illustrate the theory that he would never have believed such a tale had he not witnessed these incidents. Lucius’ comments at this point are pertinent to the entire work, and he demonstrates how difficult it is to believe the fantastic unless one is a witness to it. In Book II, Lucius exhorts the reader to believe these things which are true within his world: ‘igitur audi, sed crede, quae uera sunt’ (11.23). Whether or not the tale is true, the narrator maintains some standards of credibility for his tale, despite the inconsistencies which the reader might discover in the tale.

Thelyphron’s tale is also presented as an eyewitness account, and supposedly his mutilations prove the truth of his story:

‘... sed capillis hinc inde laterum deiectis aurium uulnera celaui, nasi uero dedecus linteolo isto pressim adglutinato decenter obtexi.’ (2.30)

The other guests and Byrrhena do not seem to pity Thelyphron for his foolishness, but instead laugh unrestrainedly. The events narrated in the tale occurred some time ago, when Thelyphron was a ‘pupillus’, and he seems

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62 Cf. Winkler (note 2) 32: ‘Without the fiction of the strange-but-true, the mutually satisfying exchange of audience and narrator could not take place.’

63 These incidents in Lucius’ life seem to echo events in Aristomenes’ own tales. Aristomenes is a cheese merchant, and he witnesses the witches pull Socrates’ heart out by plunging ‘her sword down through the left side of his neck all the way up to the hilt’ (1.13), and Socrates and Aristomenes have a meal of bread and cheese, in which Socrates: ‘et optimi casei bonam pattern auide deuorauerat ...’ (1.19). W.S. Smith, ‘Interlocking of theme and meaning in The Golden Ass’, in Hofmann & Zimmerman (note 5) 82.

a welcome guest if he tells his entertaining tale (because in retrospect it does not really present Thelyphron as being a particularly clever or reliable person). As well as being an entertaining tale, it adds to warnings given to Lucius on the dangers of witchcraft.

In general, the tales are represented as recently occurring events, or within the lifetime of a particular character in the main narrative (the exception is the Old Woman’s Tale of 4.28-6.25). As an ass and under ownership of various masters who travel from village to village, Lucius recalls tales from the various places he has stayed. Some tales are heard at an inn (9.5-7). The location of the tales and their origin (for example a direct source, Charite, a slave) is a further feature in presenting tales. An example is the Tale of the Stepmother. At the beginning of the tale, Lucius says that these events occurred when he was at the Councillor’s house: ‘Post dies plusculos ibidem dissignatum scelestum ac nefarium facinus memini …’ (l 0.2), and later in the story Lucius says: ‘haec ad istummodum gesta compluribus mutuo sermo cingantibus cognoui’ (10. 7).

Lucius presents the Tale of the Steward as events which occurred at a particular village. Lucius sees the gleaming bones of the punished man as he passes the village, which suggests that the events occurred not so long ago. In addition, he says that he and his travelling companions left the village in a state of mourning. Before the tale begins, Lucius comments:

\[ \text{celerrime denique longo itinere confecto pagum quendam accedimus ibique totam perquiescimus noctem. (8.22)} \]

The tale is heard at the inn where the villagers were staying, but does not imply that the events actually occurred while Lucius is there. Similarly the Tale of the Tub (9.5-7) is told as an amusing anecdote, with no indication of truth to the story or its temporal relationship to the main narrative.

There is a fine line drawn between actual true stories (in the sense of the story world), and those considered falsehoods. When tales are told to fill in events for the main narrative, on some occasions, they are not true. That must have an effect on the ‘true account’ emphasis of the work. In some tales or parts of the plot, the narrator stresses and persuades his audience that the events are true (such as Aristomenes in Book 1, and Lucius in Book 11.23). The reader only gradually becomes aware that a tale is a false account at the same time as the ‘experiencing I’ (for example
Haemus’ tale 7.5-8). The Risus trial presents a confusing example of the dichotomy between illusion and reality. The reader is aware that Lucius exaggerates his second version of accounts of his fight with the ‘three robbers’ at the Risus trial, in comparison to his previous account (2.32). Both the old man and Lucius present their ‘version’ of the previous night’s events, which accord with each other. The old man’s account is a conceivable interpretation of Lucius’ actions from an outsider’s perspective. The reader is forewarned of some joke by Byrrhena on the previous night, when she informs Lucius of the Risus festival. The reader recognises that some joke is being played on Lucius when he informs the reader that the whole crowd are all bursting with laughter:

... nam inter tot milia populi circumfundentis nemo prorsum, qui non risu dirumperetur, aderat. (3.2)

When Lucius uncovers the wineskins, he is reminded of the celebrations in honour of the god Risus: ‘nam lusus iste, quem publice gratissimo deo Risui per annua reuerticula sollemniter celebramus ...’ (3.11). Yet confusion arises when Photis gives her version of accounts, because the magistrate’s speech implies that this was a plot devised for the particular purpose of the Risus festival: ‘... semper commenti nouitate florescit’ (3.11). Perhaps the knowledge or the consideration that this was the cause of witchcraft is ignored for the sake of this special day. Photis never explains how it comes to be used for the Risus festival, and the city folk’s attitude towards her and Pamphile is such that the reader would consider that people want nothing to do with them or witchcraft:

‘quos me sedulo furtimque colligentem tonsor inuenit et quod aliquoquin publicitus maleficae disciplinae perinfames sumus ...’
(3.16).

Lucius does not explain the true account of events and he never inquires about how the people of Hypata regard the ‘utricide’. These events are not

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related in the epitome attributed to Lucian, *Loukios or the Ass*, so are possibly an invention of Apuleius, an elaboration of the original plot. Perhaps it gives Lucius a chance to speak more in public before he is transformed into an ass, and is designed to echo or anticipate his becoming a lawyer in Book 11. The genre of the Greek novel frequently includes a courtroom scene, so this could be seen as following this tradition. It is, however, a clear illustration that things can never be what they seem, and that there is always another explanation for the facts. The same question of credibility applies to Haemus’ tale. Lucius and the robbers are duped by his elaborate tale of his escape from Caesar and his offer of 2,000 gold pieces to elect him as leader. The ‘narrating I’ reveals Haemus’ identity as Tlepolemus at the same moment the ‘experiencing I’ discovers it.

The interweaving of primary and secondary narratives contributes to the enveloping structure and reinforces thematic links significant within the framework of the novel. Even the tales which appear to be detached from the main narrative have a firm connection to that narrative, contributing to the varied intricacies of the narrative technique.
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