

# ANIMALIZING THE SLAVE: THE TRUTH OF FICTION\*

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I

In his discussion of natural slavery in the first book of the *Politics* (1254a17–1254b39), Aristotle notoriously assimilates human slaves to non-human animals. Natural slaves, Aristotle maintains (1254b16–20), are those who differ from others in the way that the body differs from the soul, or in the way that an animal differs from a human being; and into this category fall ‘all whose function is bodily service, and who produce their best when they supply such service’. The point is made more explicit in the argument (1254b20–4) that the capacity to be owned as property and the inability fully to participate in reason are defining characteristics of the natural slave: ‘Other animals do not apprehend reason but obey their instincts. Even so there is little divergence in the way they are used; both of them (slaves and tame animals) provide bodily assistance in satisfying essential needs’ (1254b24–6). Slaves and animals are not actually equated in Aristotle’s views, but the inclination of the slave-owner in classical antiquity, or at least a representative of the slave-owning classes, to associate the slave with the animal is made evident enough. It appears again in Aristotle’s later statement (1256b22–6) that the slave was as appropriate a target of hunting as the wild animal.<sup>1</sup>

I say ‘inclination’ because this mode of thought was far from unusual in the classical world. It is especially noticeable for example in writers on domestic management. When recommending how to instil obedience in slaves, Xenophon (*Oec.* 13.9) states that slaves should be treated in the same way as wild beasts by being given as much food as they want. The elder Cato (*Agr.* 2.7), ordering the farm-owner to dispose of everything superfluous as he inspects his estate, lists (*inter alia*) worn-out oxen, inferior cattle and sheep, and old and sickly slaves all in the same breath, as if they constitute a common category. And Varro (*Rust.* 1.17.1), defining the means with which land is worked, distinguishes slaves from animals by virtue of slaves’ ability to speak but still perceives a common bond between them because like waggons they both fall under the rubric of ‘means’. On the subject of the ideal villa and its constituent elements, Columella (*Rust.* 1.6.8) moves easily from the topic of how to accommodate slaves to that of how to accommodate livestock, prescribing, in particular, that ‘Cells for the herdsmen and shepherds should be adjacent to their respective charges (*pecora*), so that they may conveniently run out to care for them’. The ease of association between slave and animal, it might be concluded, was a staple aspect of ancient mentality, and one that stretched back to a very early period: the common Greek term for ‘slave’, *andrapodon*, ‘man-footed creature’, was built on the foundation of a common term for cattle, namely, *tetrapodon*, ‘four-footed creature’.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> cf. also Arist., *Met.* 1075a20–2: in the household slaves and animals show little responsibility and generally act at random. Quotations: trans. Barker. For discussion of Aristotle’s views, see P. A. Brunt, ‘Aristotle and slavery’, in *Studies in Greek History and Thought* (1993), 342–88; P. D. A. Garnsey, *Ideas of Slavery from Aristotle to Augustine* (1996), 110–15.

<sup>2</sup> Xenophon: S. B. Pomeroy, *Xenophon Oeconomicus: A Social and Historical Commentary* (1994), 319, compares *Cyrop.* 8.43–4. Columella quotation: trans. Ash. *Andrapodon*: M. I. Finley, *Ancient Slavery and Modern Ideology* (1980), 99; F. D. Harvey, ‘Herodotus and the man-footed creature’, in L. Archer (ed.), *Slavery and Other Forms of Unfree Labour* (1988), 42–52, at 42.

As Aristotle's evidence indicates, the association itself was due above all to the tendency to categorize the slave as human, but animal-like, property. And perhaps nothing illustrates the point more clearly in the Roman evidence for classical slavery than the Lex Aquilia, the statute passed at latest by the early third century B.C. from which all Rome's law of damage to property subsequently evolved. Its first provision reads: 'If anyone shall have unlawfully killed a male or female slave belonging to another or a four-footed animal (*quadrupedem pecudem*), whatever may be the highest value of that in that year, so much money is he to be condemned to give to the owner.' The provision assumes that slaves and animals are commodities that by definition fall under the ownership of an *erus* and that they are comparable commodities. That notion was reaffirmed almost five hundred years later by the jurist Gaius when commenting on the Lex Aquilia, still in use in his own day, as, indeed, it was still of interest and meaning to the compilers of the *Digest* in the early sixth century: 'It thus appears', Gaius stated (*Dig.* 9.2.2.2), 'that the statute treats equally (*exaequat*) our slaves and our four-footed cattle (*quadrupedes*) which are kept in herds, such as sheep, goats, horses, mules, and asses (*asini*).' The same idiom is found in the Edict of the Aediles, which required the seller of beasts of burden (*iumenta*) to disclose any disease or defect in animal merchandise just as it required the seller of a slave to do the same. Failure to disclose provided grounds for cancellation of a sale. Commenting on the regulation that pertained to livestock, Ulpian wrote (*Dig.* 21.1.38.2–3): 'The reason for this edict is the same as that for the return of slaves. And in effect, the same applies as in respect of defects in or diseases of slaves, so that what we have said of them should be transferred to the present context.'<sup>3</sup>

Why was animalizing the slave such a persistent mode of thought in classical antiquity? What is its significance for understanding the history of the relationship between master and slave? These are the questions with which this paper is concerned. But before suggesting a possible way to answer them, I want to emphasize the importance of looking at the questions within their specific historical and cultural context by briefly comparing and contrasting some evidence of the connection made between slave and animal in later slave societies. It happens that the assimilation of the slave to the beast, particularly the black slave, has been a common phenomenon in the history of slavery at large. Thus an Arab poet wrote of the tenth-century black slave ruler of Egypt, Abu'l-Misk Kafur, 'I never thought I should live to see the day when a dog would do me evil and be praised into the bargain'; while the New Jersey Quaker David Cooper wrote in 1772: 'The low contempt with which they are generally treated by the whites, lead (*sic*) children from the first dawn of reasons to consider people with a black skin, on a footing with domestic animals, form'd to serve and obey.' Here it is notable that the reference to 'domestic animals' fits well with the references to both tame and domestic animals given by the classical authors I cited earlier. But as both statements imply, an important distinction has to be drawn between the association made between slaves and animals in slave-owning regimes where owners were white and slaves were black, and that made in classical antiquity where slavery was not tied to race and skin colour.<sup>4</sup>

When English adventurers of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries first began to encounter West Africans in their homelands, they were forcibly struck by African cultural characteristics and practices very different from their own — differences of

<sup>3</sup> Aristotle's evidence: cf. *Pol.* 1253b: 'the slave is an animate article of property' (Barker). Note also *Pl.*, *Plt.* 289b; Dio Chrys., *Or.* 15.24. Lex Aquilia: see M. H. Crawford (ed.), *Roman Statutes* (1996), 723–6 (J. A. Crook). First provision: translation as in Crawford (loc. cit.) from the reconstructed text (cf. J. A. Crook, 'Lex Aquilia', *Athenaeum* 62 (1984), 67–77, especially 72 for the inclusion of *pecudem* in the first provision); whether the third provision originally specified damage to slaves and animals is unknown (Crawford, op. cit., 726), but note Gai., *Inst.* 3.217 (cf. 3.212, 3.219); *Dig.* 9.2.27.6. Compilers: see *Dig.* 9.2 *passim*. Edict of the Aediles: *Dig.* 21.1.1.1, 21.1.38 pr. For criticism of treating slaves as beasts of burden, see Plut., *Cato Maior* 5.

<sup>4</sup> Common phenomenon: K. Jacoby, 'Slaves by nature? Domestic animals and human slaves', *Slavery & Abolition* 15 (1994), 89–99, at 89–90, followed by D. B. Davis, 'The problem of slavery', Introduction to S. Drescher and S. L. Engermann, *A Historical Guide to World Slavery* (1998), ix–xviii (first published as 'At the heart of slavery', *New York Review of Books* 43.16 (October 17, 1996), 51–4). Arab poet: al-Mutannabi, quoted by B. Lewis, *Race and Slavery in the Middle East: An Historical Enquiry* (1990), 59–60. David Cooper: quoted from W. D. Jordan, *White Over Black: American Attitudes Toward the Negro 1550–1812* (1973), 276.

colour and religion especially, but also differences in the way Africans dressed, lived in huts, in how they farmed, spoke, went to war, and governed themselves. These aspects of life they regarded as not just radically different from but essentially inferior to their own. Africans after all were 'heathens'. Together with the way they were captured, enslaved, and traded, this perception of Africans made the connection with animals easy and swift; and it was facilitated by the entirely fortuitous fact that early penetration of West Africa exposed adventurers for the first time not only to an enslavable indigenous human population but also, and simultaneously, to the higher forms of apes. Many shared characteristics between the two were immediately postulated, and, in particular, sexual union between African and ape was commonly assumed. Such views were long maintained, giving rise to various debates about the place of Africans and their slave descendants in the New World in the Great Chain of Being — the notion, very prevalent in the late eighteenth century, that all life forms could be positioned on a scale rising from lowest to highest. To some, notably Thomas Jefferson, it seemed that Africans were to be classified on a *scala naturae* as creatures standing midway between beasts and human beings like themselves. Proximity to the beast — and in this instance it is the wild beast — thus reinforced and compounded the inferiority of the African established by the difference of race, which itself provided the basic foundation for the growth and development of slavery systems in the New World.<sup>5</sup>

The origins of the idea of the Great Chain of Being have been found in classical antiquity, in the 'principle of plenitude' evident in the philosophy of Plato and the 'principle of unilinear gradation' in that of Aristotle. But debates about the place to be assigned in a classificatory scheme to African slaves could never be a major concern to classical philosophers, not because African slaves were altogether unknown, but because slavery in antiquity was never racially grounded as it was in the New World. There is little in fact to suggest that racial prejudice of the kind all too familiar from recent and contemporary history reached any serious level in antiquity at all. Classical slavery, it must be remembered, was an equal opportunity condition, available to men, women, and children of every sort and condition. For Greeks and Romans, the association between the slave and the animal was undoubtedly due in part to the way in which both society and the natural world at large were hierarchically ordered: the slave by definition was inferior to the master and so closer to even more inferior forms of life. But the association can have had little to do with racial prejudice — there was no physiological or physiognomical imperative to drive it — but only with the commodification of the slave, the fact that a human being reduced to the status of a slave could be bought and sold, like livestock, as a piece of property. On the other hand, because classical slavery was not closely connected with race, the prospect that anyone at any time might become its victim was far more real than it could ever have been in the slave societies of the New World. A moralist such as Seneca (*Ep.* 47.10) might point this out for rhetorical effect, but as many examples show — Caesar's capture by pirates is sufficient — it was inescapably true.<sup>6</sup>

## II

It happens that the ability of the capricious goddess Fortuna to render a man powerless is revealed in the opening pages of Apuleius' *The Golden Ass*, or *Metamorphoses*, in the story of the travelling merchant Socrates (told by Aristomenes) who was

<sup>5</sup> See Jordan, *op. cit.* (n. 4), 3–43, 232–4, 482–511; D. B. Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in Western Culture* (1966), 453–64. For animalizing views of Blacks in Muslim sources, see Lewis, *op. cit.* (n. 4), 52–3.

<sup>6</sup> Origins: A. O. Lovejoy, *The Great Chain of Being: A Study of the History of an Idea* (1936), 52–8. Racial prejudice: A. N. Sherwin-White, *Racial Prejudice in Imperial Rome* (1967); F. M. Snowden, Jr., *Before Color Prejudice: The Ancient View of Blacks* (1983); L. A. Thompson, *Romans and Blacks* (1989). Natural

world: cf. M. Beagon, *Roman Nature: The Thought of Pliny the Elder* (1992), esp. 124–58. Hierarchically ordered: for texts on the theme of the supposed superiority of animals to human beings, predicated on the opposite starting assumption, see A. O. Lovejoy and G. Boas, *Primitivism and Related Ideas in Antiquity* (1935), 389–420. Commodification: also present in later European attitudes towards Africans but inextricably enmeshed with racial views. Caesar's capture: Plut., *Caes.* 1.4–2.4; Suet., *Jul.* 74.1.

reduced to beggary by brigands and a beguiling witch. And the subjection of Lucius, the novel's main character, to fortune's dictates is of course one of the major themes of the work as a whole. As far as I know, there is no ancient source which reveals directly the social impact of the convention of assimilating the slave to the beast; but to the extent that it deals fictively with the transformation of a human being into one of Gaius' types of four-footed animals, the *Metamorphoses* is a work that raises the possibility of understanding something of the process of animalization its story unfolds. In what follows therefore I propose to explore the ramifications of the connection between animal and slave as revealed in Apuleius' account of the adventures of his protagonist Lucius, whose dangerous desire to dabble in magic causes him to be turned into an ass and to endure a series of terrible misfortunes before being restored to human form through the intervention of the goddess Isis. I shall contend that the transformation of Lucius can be taken as a paradigmatic illustration of the animalization of the slave in real life, and as a guide to the meaning of animalization in the master-slave relationship. I shall suggest first that the *Metamorphoses* shows how animalizing the slave served the interests of slave-owners by functioning as a mechanism of control and domination, and secondly that the novel reveals the limits of how far manipulation of the slave could be taken. The abruptness in the *Metamorphoses* of the transformation of Apuleius' Lucius into a beast of burden might be compared to the suddenness of the transformation which any enslaved captive, such as Caesar, underwent in antiquity. And what I want to argue is that in this and various other respects the *Metamorphoses*, perhaps uniquely in classical literature, captures the essence of the process of enslavement and what that process meant in human terms through the connections it establishes between animal and slave.<sup>7</sup>

The transformation of Lucius occurs towards the end of Book Three of the novel (*Met.* 3.24), by which time his identity has been firmly established. A young man of impeccable character and family pedigree, well educated and well travelled, Lucius is a cultured citizen of Corinth, who by his handsome looks, fine clothing, and modest demeanour communicates to everyone he meets that he belongs to the upper reaches of society. As the work opens, he poses the (in) famous question of himself, 'Quis ille?' (*Met.* 1.1), and literary critics speculate endlessly on what an answer might be. But at the level of plain storytelling there is no doubt that by the time he becomes an ass the hero of the *Metamorphoses* is a young man, much like Apuleius himself, who belonged to the decurial sector of provincial Roman society, with all that that label implies about social origins, wealth, and education. (The novel is set in Greece, keep in mind, against the background of the Roman Empire of the second century.)<sup>8</sup> The asinine form into which he is suddenly changed, but however, presents a total contrast: not a change simply from human to animal, but a change from the heights of human physical perfection to the depths of bestial ugliness: hair turns to bristles, skin to hide, fingers and hands become hooves, a tail grows, the face becomes enormous, with mouth distended, nostrils

<sup>7</sup> Opening pages: *Met.* 1.6–8. Major themes: C. C. Schlam, *The Metamorphoses of Apuleius: On Making an Ass of Oneself* (1992), 58–66. On slavery in the *Metamorphoses*, see also J. Annequin, 'Métaphore de l'esclavage et esclavage comme métaphore', in P. Brulé and J. Oulhen (eds), *Esclavage, guerre, économie en Grèce ancienne: Hommages à Yvon Garlan* (1997), 101–19; cf. also W. Fitzgerald, *Slavery and the Roman Literary Imagination* (2000), 87–114.

<sup>8</sup> Transformation: G. F. Gianotti, 'Asini e schiavi: zoologia filosofica e ideologia della dipendenza nelle "Metamorfosi" apuleiane', *Quaderni di storia* 9 no. 18 (1983), 121–53, draws attention (127–8) to relevant Platonic correspondences (e.g. *Phdr.* 249b, *Ti.* 91d–92c, *Phd.* 81c (especially interesting for its reference to the ass)). Firmly established: a comprehensive portrait of Lucius is not given at the beginning of the *Metamorphoses* but is only revealed gradually through various passing references; for the relevant details up to the moment of transformation, see *Met.* 1.1, 1.2,

1.20, 1.23, 1.24, 1.26, 2.2, 2.3, 2.31, 3.11, 3.15. 'Quis ille?': on the fundamental theme of identity, see M. M. Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, edited by M. Holquist (1981), 111–29; for a summary of the problem of who is speaking at the beginning of the novel, see S. J. Harrison, *Apuleius: A Latin Sophist* (2000), 228, with references. Decurial sector: Lucius is never so identified, but it is clear that he belongs to the same social level as, for instance, the decurion introduced at *Met.* 10.1 or the Corinthian magistrate Thiasus, introduced at *Met.* 10.18; see H. J. Mason, 'The distinction of Lucius in Apuleius' *Metamorphoses*', *Phoenix* 37 (1983), 135–43, who makes the suggestion that Lucius may even have been of senatorial origin, and cf. Harrison, op. cit., 215–20, who sees Lucius as an aspirant sophist. Background: F. G. B. Millar, 'The world of the *Golden Ass*', *JRS* 71 (1981), 63–75 = S. J. Harrison (ed.), *Oxford Readings in the Roman Novel* (1999), 247–68 (a fundamental study).

spreading, lips drooping, and ears long and hairy. The only consolation of which Lucius is aware is an increase in the size of his penis.<sup>9</sup>

The description of the metamorphosis is surely meant to be comic, in keeping with the narrator's early announcement of his intention to entertain his reader ('Lector intende: laetaberis' (*Met.* 1.1)). But humour quickly gives way to something more disquieting, even disturbing, as the narrator becomes aware that the change from the type of the civic decurion to the archetypal beast of burden is, quite literally, a true *degradation*, a descent from very near the top of a chain of being to very near the bottom. And the fall is one of which the human mind trapped within the body of the beast is very conscious and which induces severe emotional turmoil. For Lucius retains his human mind and personality within the body of the ass, and so almost immediately realizes that he cannot speak or gesture in any normal human way, that he is no longer himself but a dumb animal and a beast of burden. Instinctively (as it were) he thinks of retaliating against or protesting his plight by physically attacking and killing the agent of his misfortune, his lover Photis, the slave of his host Milo; but he is forced to abandon the idea because he knows that his hopes of restoration to human form depend on her. In the stable where his horse is housed, he tries to eat some roses, the antidote that Photis says will restore him to his proper form, but instead he finds himself humiliatingly beaten by his own slave. The slave has become the master and the master the slave. Then he is dragooned into service by some robbers who attack Milo's house and use him to help carry off the property they steal, beating him frequently in the process. He considers the option of appealing to Caesar — a plainly topical note — but he has no voice with which to speak: he has become an 'instrumentum inuocale'; and although another opportunity arises to eat some roses, his fear of being killed by the robbers deters him from taking it. Very quickly, it appears, Lucius has been tamed.<sup>10</sup>

Altogether, therefore, it can be said that in the immediate aftermath of his transformation Lucius undergoes an agonizing crisis of identity. Every facet of the human being that has been carefully revealed in the story so far is stripped away, and Lucius becomes utterly depersonalized as a result — unrecognizable and isolated, a dehumanized outcast. He is fully aware of his fall, finds it shaming, and learns that he must internalize his misfortune and resign himself to it. Is he still really Lucius or just an ass? The question, and the crisis of identity on which it depends, offers in my view a perfect metaphor for the situation of captive slaves, who, while not losing their voices in quite the same manner as Lucius, certainly lost the ability to speak openly and freely, and who, forfeiting identity with freedom, were able to form a new sense of being only in relation to the owners into whose power they had fallen. Varro (*Ling.* 8.9.21) tells how a slave bought at Ephesus might be named by his new master either after his previous owner, after the region in which the city was located, or after the city itself. But how did slaves actually respond to the imposition of a new name and a new identity? That is a question difficult to answer, but from the description of Lucius' metamorphosis the

<sup>9</sup> Asinine form: *Met.* 3.24: 'sed plane pili mei crassantur in setas, et cutis tenella duratur in corium, et in extimis palmulis perditio numero toti digiti coguntur in singulas unguilas et de spinae meae termino grandis cauda procedit. Iam facies enormis et os prolixum et nares hiantes et labiae pendulae; sic et aures inmodicis horripilant auctibus. Nec ullum miserae reformationis uideo solacium, nisi quod mihi iam nequeunt tenere Photidem natura crescebat.' See Schlam, *op. cit.* (n. 7), 99–112, on the theme of animal and human in the *Metamorphoses*, but with no reference to slavery (cf. 7 briefly). Gianotti, *art. cit.* (n. 8), maintains that loss of freedom is a key ethical theme in the novel. Ugliness: cf. K. Hopkins, 'Novel evidence for Roman slavery', *P&P* 138 (1993), 3–27, at 13, 15, on the appearance of Aesop; and for some examples of a Roman taste for deformed slaves, see R. Garland, *The Eye of the Beholder: Deformity and Disability in the Graeco-Roman World* (1995), 46–8.

<sup>10</sup> *Met.* 3.26–9 (note especially 3.25, 'humano gestu simul et uoce priuatus'; 3.26, 'perfectus asinus et pro Lucio iumentum'). Descent: cf. the literary use of animal metaphors to connote an absence of civilization observed by T. Wiedemann, 'Between men and beasts: barbarians in Ammianus Marcellinus', in I. Moxon, J. D. Smart and A. J. Woodman (eds), *Past Perspectives: Studies in Greek and Roman Historical Writing* (1986), 180–229; the connection made by F. Dupont, *The Invention of Literature: From Greek Intoxication to the Latin Book* (1999), 190–1, between Lucius' change of form and a putative abandonment of erotic interest for storytelling seems to me highly implausible. Topical: cf. K. R. Bradley, *Slaves and Masters in the Roman Empire: A Study in Social Control* (1987), 123–6. Tamed: confirmed at *Met.* 4.2, 'pecori'; cf. 7.13, 'iumentorum'.

function of animalization in destroying identity and replacing it with a sense of deracination is evident enough.<sup>11</sup>

Once the transformation has taken place, much of the remainder of the *Metamorphoses* is taken up with its practical consequences: Lucius' loss of independence and the exploitation of the Ass by a succession of characters into whose ownership he falls. Three rubrics can be set out, summarizing variations on recurring elements suggestive for understanding the animalization process, all of which link the animal to the slave.

First, stress is continually placed on the fact that Lucius the Ass is a beast of burden, and a beast almost always at work. The Ass labours as a pack-animal for the robbers for a considerable interval, but subsequently carries burdens for a sequence of other figures: a cruel slave boy whose daily job it is to gather firewood, a group of herdsmen belonging to the noblewoman Charite who set off to find a new home when their mistress dies, some itinerant Syrian priests who use the Ass to carry, among other things, the image of the goddess they worship (the Dea Syria), a market-gardener who transports his produce to town every day, a swaggering soldier who requisitions the Ass for his commanding-officer's use, two slave chefs, brothers, who need transportation for their baking equipment. The Ass is also twice set to the drudgery of turning a mill, a place long understood in literature as a suitable site for the punishment of slaves. All of this he finds demeaning and scarcely tolerable, but the Ass is completely unable to control the circumstances which surround him or to free himself from the life of unremitting toil into which he has been plunged. Unceasing physical labour of a servile sort is one immediate consequence of the dehumanization to which animalization has exposed him.<sup>12</sup>

Secondly, stress is continually placed on the fact that the Ass not only can but almost must suffer physical maltreatment. As with slaves in real life, who could pay in no other way, the Ass is answerable to his owners with his body alone, so that cruel floggings appear with numbing frequency throughout the story. The Ass is beaten for the first time, as already mentioned, by his own slave when he is still at Milo's house (the irony is that even a slave can beat a dumb animal), but afterwards, and always with impunity, by practically everyone he encounters. On one occasion the Ass falls lame from a beating, at other times he suffers truly sadistic treatment, from the cruel boy and the boy's mother, the Syrian priests, and a miller's wife; even the charitable Charite beats him. In turn the Ass has to learn how to deal with habitual, randomly inflicted violence or its threat — the barbaric threat of castration for instance — as an elemental part of his new animal existence. Again he cannot control or prevent it; he can only learn to withstand it. Nor can he do anything to prevent the verbal attacks and abuse which might accompany the physical trials. When the cruel boy falsely accuses the Ass of bestiality and his mother berates him for causing her son's death, loss of voice makes defence against the charges impossible.<sup>13</sup>

Sexual exploitation is a related form of physical abuse to which the powerless Ass, again like the slave in everyday life, is exposed. Not unreasonably, the corrupt Syrian priests imagine that their leader Philebus has bought the Ass for their bestial pleasure: they already have a slave piper, purchased from the block, who doubles as a group

<sup>11</sup> Unrecognizable: *Met.* 3.26, 'agnitione'. Isolated: *Met.* 3.27, 'in solitudinem'; cf. 4.1, 'solitudo'. Aware: *Met.* 3.26, 'pro Lucio iumentum'. Shaming: *Met.* 3.26, 'contumelia'. Learns: *Met.* 3.26, 'melior me sententia reuocauit'. Resign: *Met.* 3.29, 'casum praesentem tolerans'. Ability: cf. Sen., *Ep.* 47.3; on loss of voice and loss of identity, see E. D. Finkelppearl, *Metamorphosis of Language in Apuleius: A Study of Allusion in the Novel* (1998), 192; the effect is not the same in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*; see J. B. Solodow, *The World of Ovid's Metamorphoses* (1988), 190–1.

<sup>12</sup> *Met.* 7.17 (cruel boy), cf. 7.18, 7.20; 8.15 (herdsmen), cf. 8.16; 8.27 (Syrian priests), cf. 8.28, 8.30, 9.4; 9.32 (market-gardener), cf. 9.33; 9.39 (swaggering soldier), cf. 10.1; 10.13 (slave chefs); 7.15, 9.11 (mill). Long understood: see L. A. Moritz, *Grain-Mills and*

*Flour in Classical Antiquity* (1958), 65, for a list of passages from Plautus connecting slaves with punishment in the mill; cf. F. G. B. Millar, 'Condemnation to hard labour in the Roman Empire, from the Julio-Claudians to Constantine', *PBSR* 52 (1984), 124–47, at 143–4. Cf. Schlam, op. cit. (n. 7), 99.

<sup>13</sup> *Met.* 6.25 (lame); 7.17, 7.28, 8.30, 9.15 (sadistic); 6.28 (Charite); 7.23–4 (castration); 7.21–2 (bestiality); 7.27 (mother). See also *Met.* 3.29, 4.3, 4.4, 7.15, 7.25, 9.11. Cf. Schlam, op. cit. (n. 7), 72–3: 'Being beaten is the Ass's most frequent experience.' Answerable: on the association between beating and servitude, see Finley, op. cit. (n. 2), 93–5; cf. R. P. Saller, 'Corporal punishment, authority, and obedience in the Roman household', in B. M. Rawson (ed.), *Marriage, Divorce, and Children in Ancient Rome* (1991), 144–65.

*concupinus*, and, adding to their sense of anticipation, the piper welcomes the Ass as his *uicarius*. If in the event anticipation goes unrealized, this is not the case when an oversexed Corinthian noblewoman pays the Ass's keeper to bed him, a bargain in which the Ass again has no say, though on this occasion he becomes a willing victim. However, once his owner, the decurion Thiasus, spots the chance to make money by publicly exhibiting him engaged in sex acts — there is nothing to stop him and a depraved female criminal is found to serve as partner — the sense of shame the Ass experiences becomes unendurable and he bolts from Corinth to Cenchreae.<sup>14</sup>

Thirdly, consider the number of times the Ass, like the slave piper (who might represent any slave in real life), is sold. First by Charite's herdsmen to Philebus; to a miller by some villagers who take the Ass from the Syrian priests; to the market-gardener by the miller's daughter after her father's death; to the two slave brothers by the swaggering soldier; and finally to their owner Thiasus by the slave brothers. (Each time, incidentally, the price paid for the piece of property, unrealistically and insultingly low, is indicated.) On no occasion is the Ass able to do anything but passively accept the result of the transaction and to bow repeatedly to decisions made for him by others. The contrast with the independence and active pursuit of learning by the human Lucius in the early part of the story is obvious but important. As the commodity to which animalization has reduced him, the Ass has altogether lost the individual autonomy of the human being, and his inability to speak with a human voice only emphasizes how impotent, what a non-person, he has become. He cannot protest when he hears that Lucius has been falsely accused of having robbed Milo; nor can he vent his outrage when the Syrian priests bring a young man home with them from the baths for dinner and group sex: no words, only braying sounds, will leave his mouth. He is not the ass of Phaedrus' fable who can voice the wisdom of the suffering servant. The Ass therefore is compelled to accept his powerlessness, but this leads only to confusion and under extreme circumstances — the prospect of castration or public sex — the contemplation of suicide. Even pleasure, on the rare occasions it is felt, has to be enjoyed within and in silence. The frustrations of impotence become palpable.<sup>15</sup>

The result is that in being transformed from human to beast Lucius the Ass becomes a passive commodity who, or which, can apparently be turned to any purpose his various owners wish, and to whose servitude there is no easily foreseeable end. Animalization converts Lucius to a state of mute acceptance of all that is required once his human identity and independence have been removed, and it seems to give his owners complete control over him with little danger of their will being denied. For the Ass's owners, in other words, Lucius' animalization emerges as a mechanism of empowerment.

<sup>14</sup> Syrian priests: *Met.* 8.26; cf. Hopkins, art. cit. (n. 9), 16–17, on the sale of Aesop. Corinthian noblewoman: *Met.* 10.19–22. Willing victim: cf. the reference in Lewis, op. cit. (n. 4), 97, to 'a Persian manuscript of the famous *Masnavi* of Rumi, completed in Tabriz in about 1530, illustrating an episode in the poem in which a woman discovers her maidservant copulating with an ass and tries, with disastrous results, to do the same' (Illus. 22). It is notable that scenes of sexual union between women and quadrupeds (perhaps asses) appear on Greek lamps of the imperial age from Athens and Corinth, and may have a connection with a pre-Apuleian version of the ass story; see Ph. Bruneau, 'Illustrations antiques du *coq* et de l'*âne* de Lucien', *BCH* (1965), 349–57. Publicly exhibiting: *Met.* 10.23, 10.29 (note 'ingentique angore oppido suspensus', 'clades ultimas'), 10.34–5 (note

'praeter pudorem obeundi publice concubitus'). Cf. Schlam, op. cit. (n. 7), 72–3. For sources on the sexual exploitation of slaves, see J. Kolendo, 'L'esclavage et la vie sexuelle des hommes libres à Rome', *Index* 10 (1981), 288–97.

<sup>15</sup> Times: *Met.* 8.23–5, 9.10, 9.31, 10.13, 10.17. Unrealistically: R. Duncan-Jones, *The Economy of the Roman Empire* (1974), 249. Protest: *Met.* 7.3. Vent: *Met.* 8.29. Fable: *Phaedr.* 1.15. Suicide: *Met.* 7.24, 10.29. Pleasure: *Met.* 7.26, 'tacitus licet serae uindictae gratulabar'. On the psychological effects of sale, note the response of the Tolpuddle martyr James Hammet when asked why he refused to talk about his experiences as a convict labourer: 'If you'd been sold like a sheep for £1 would you want to talk about it?' (E. P. Thompson, *Making History: Writings on History and Culture* (1994), 191).

## III

For many slaves, obviously enough, unremitting labour, harsh physical treatment (including sexual abuse), and arbitrary disposal by sale were staple aspects of life, just as they are for the Ass. Any ancient reader of the *Metamorphoses* therefore might well have thought of the Ass as a slave. Apuleius leaves the matter in no doubt, for his protagonist is identified or identifies himself as a slave or being in a state of servitude several times. As the Ass he is the 'fellow-slave' (*conseruus*) of his own horse and the cruel boy; he enters a state of 'slavery' (*seruitium*) when consigned to the mill or sold to a new owner; and the priest Mithras who presides over his reformation considers his whole experience as the Ass a period of servitude (*seruitium*). Lucius, moreover, can be condemned for a propensity for pursuing 'servile pleasures', a notoriously provocative phrase. The truth is that like a real slave Lucius the Ass comes to find himself regarded as non-existent — as humans for example engage in conversation around him — to be living as if in a state of death.<sup>16</sup>

Two passages make the assimilation of the Ass to a slave impossible to avoid. First, the account of his sale to Philebus (*Met.* 8.23–6). Here, the careful inspections the Ass undergoes from potential purchasers and the description the auctioneer gives of his qualities match, and parody, the manner in which slaves were treated on the block, so that the whole episode is bound to have been understood by contemporary readers as a version of a slave sale. Making an obvious servile allusion, the auctioneer jokingly refers to the Ass as a 'Cappadocian' before Philebus takes away what he calls his 'novice servant' (*noVICIUM famulum*), a phrase which also puns on servile language. The account as a whole is in fact full of servile vocabulary. Livestock for sale were of course disposed of in the same way: 'et de sanitate ac noxa solet caueri', Varro (*Rust.* 2.6.3) observes of the sale of an ass; a statement which actual sales documents verify. But that is the point: the sale of an animal and the sale of a slave were indistinct from one another, as the Aedilician Edict proves. Secondly, the Ass's description of his fellow victims in the second mill in which he works (*Met.* 9.12–13). The workers fall into two pitiful groups: the (human) slaves, filthy, emaciated men who wear nothing but rags, whose bodies are marked by brands and scars, whose feet are shackled; and the other asses who turn the mills — mangy, sickly animals worn out, even deformed, from constant toil and beatings. Again, there is no difference between man and beast, and together they constitute a *familia*. The authenticity of the collocation is confirmed by iconographic sources — the tomb of the baker M. Vergilius Eurysaces in Rome is a notable example — in which the presence of the whip is a common feature.<sup>17</sup>

In the *Metamorphoses* the Ass is in many respects a figure of fun. The reader after all knows throughout the story that the Ass is really Lucius, and that the change from human to animal is essentially a comic fiction. None the less, the Ass is a particularly suitable symbol of servitude given the reputation of the ordinary ass, the 'uilis . . . uulgarisque asellus' (Col., *Rust.* 7.1.1), in everyday life. Varro, Columella, and the elder Pliny all make clear how valued and serviceable the animal was, capable of performing a variety of jobs at relatively little cost to its owner: turning mills, hauling waggons,

<sup>16</sup> *Met.* 7.3, 7.27 (fellow-slave); 9.11 (mill); 9.32 (new owner); 11.15 (Mithras, 'servile pleasures' (on which see the Appendix)); 7.12 (non-existent: 'contempta mea praesentia quasi uere mortui'; cf. 3.29, 'nihil a mortuo differebam'). For the notion of slavery as social death, see O. Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death: A Comparative Study* (1982); cf. in a different sense Gianotti, art. cit. (n. 8), 136–7. G. W. Bowersock, *Fiction as History: Nero to Julian* (1994), 109, draws a connection between death and 'the servility of a captive' through Apuleius' use of the phrase 'postliminio mortis' at *Met.* 10.12 (cf. 2.28, 3.25).

<sup>17</sup> 'Cappadocian': *Met.* 8.24 (cf. Mart. 6.77, 10.76).

'Novice servant': *Met.* 8.26. Servile vocabulary: *Met.* 8.24, 'ciuem Romanum pro seruo', 'bonum et frugi mancipium'; 8.26, 'seruum . . . pulchellum', 'hominem seruulum', 'seruum', 'uicarius'. Sales documents: for a catalogue of 157 attestations of donkey sales from Egypt (mid-second century B.C.–sixth/seventh century A.D.), see N. Litinas, 'P. Lond. III 1 128: sale of a donkey', *ZPE* 124 (1999), 195–204. *Familia*: *Met.* 9.13 (which to my mind resolves the doubts of Millar, art. cit. (n. 12), 129–30, on the workers' servile status). Iconographic sources: Moritz, op. cit. (n. 12), 78–9; cf. 100. Tomb: E. Nash, *Pictorial Dictionary of Ancient Rome* (1981), II, 329–32.



carrying panniers, pulling a plough. The ass was an important asset to farmers, and also to merchants who traded in such commodities as oil, wine, and grain. It required little upkeep, rarely fell ill, needed little supervision, and could put up with hard labour, hunger, and beatings. Prize specimens from Arcadia in Greece or Reate in Italy commanded high prices, and the quality of the animal would have been something to think about when mule breeding was at issue. Moreover, as other evidence indicates, agents of the emperor himself relied on the animal for transportation when conducting official business. The ass, therefore, was the ideal servant, adaptable, hard working, and compliant — a model in fact of what the slave should be. A graffito from a paedagogium on the Palatine accompanying a sketch of an ass turning a mill suggests how the animal popularly connoted routine toil, even to a child: 'Labora, aselle, quomodo ego laboravi, et proderit tibi'; while a terracotta image of a classroom whose pupils are rows of monkeys shows the schoolmaster as a — presumably long-suffering — ass. The picture of the Ass in the *Metamorphoses*, enduring constant work, incessant beatings, and also poor food, is very much drawn from the real world, and no ancient reader is likely to have missed the servile associations of the animal whose form Lucius adopts. To the contemporary interpreter of dreams Artemidorus, the ass was the very symbol of misery and slavery.<sup>18</sup>

It becomes possible consequently to posit that if in the *Metamorphoses* the animalization of Lucius is a literal, fictive phenomenon, the metaphorical animalization of the slave in real life was an empowering device of considerable value to the slave-owner. Lucius' transformation suggests that as a strategy of control and domination, animalization was a means of depriving slaves of their personal identities and of inculcating in them an ethic of shameful non-personhood, a strategy that was perhaps immediately effective at the moment of enslavement when the significance of the shift from freedom to slavery arguably first made itself felt. It offered the prospect of converting human beings to a state of mute and unquestioning docility and obedience, in which there were virtually no limits to the demands of work, punishment, and disposal that might be made of them, and in which slaves' ability to exercise their will and make independent decisions might be completely destroyed. Freedom of movement and reproductive capacity for example were two aspects of personhood that translation to the state of the tamed animal took away from slaves; and as noted earlier even the ordinary human function of speech could be restricted. Animalization also served to sanction and to justify the way masters treated their slaves, in the sense that once slaves were set on the level of beasts all need to cater to their human sensibilities was removed. It did not matter any more what slaves were given to eat, or to wear, what they felt or thought, what human bonds they had formed once their humanity had been negated; masters had only to meet the requirements of sensible proprietorship, as with any other item of livestock (an ass for example). Moreover, in a slave society where race did not immediately connote and could not compound servile associations, the strategy perhaps

<sup>18</sup> Varro: *Rust.* 2.1.14, 2.6.1–6, 3.17.6. Columella: *Rust.* 7.1.1–3. Pliny: *NH* 8.167–70. On the ordinary ass, see K. D. White, *Roman Farming* (1970), 293–4, 299–300; J. M. C. Toynbee, *Animals in Roman Life and Art* (1973), 192–7; cf. at great length *RE* VI, 1 s.v. 'Esel' (Olck). Agents: asses are required of the city of Sagalassus in Pisidia for official imperial use, in the event of an absence of mules, in an inscription from the early reign of Tiberius published by S. Mitchell, 'Requisitioned transport in the Roman Empire: a new inscription from Pisidia', *JRS* 66 (1976), 106–31; with the common abuse of local facilities

(Mitchell, art. cit., 114–15) cf. *Met.* 9.39. Graffito: *CLE* 1978, shown in S. F. Bonner, *Education in Ancient Rome: From the Elder Cato to the Younger Pliny* (1977), 123 (fig. 12); cf. Moritz, op. cit. (n. 12), 83. Terracotta: shown in Bonner, op. cit., 124 (fig. 13). Poor food: for references to the Ass's food supply, see *Met.* 3.29, 4.3, 7.14, 7.15, 9.32, 10.13, 10.16; cf. J. R. Heath, 'Narration and nutrition in Apuleius' *Metamorphoses*', *Ramus* 11 (1982), 57–77. Very symbol: Artem. 1.24, 1.37; cf. Gianotti, art. cit. (n. 8), 131–2.

had a special importance in supporting the other instruments of control masters deployed to instil in their slaves a psychology of subordination.<sup>19</sup>

Evidence from later slave societies lends this notion of empowerment a certain plausibility. The American fugitive Harriet Jacobs wrote in her autobiography of the depths to which the slave reduced to the level of the brute might sink: 'Some poor creatures have been so *brutalized* by the lash that they will sneak out of the way to give their masters free access to their wives and daughters', and she makes clear how a white woman could exploit the brutalized black male for her own sexual satisfaction. She was aware, too, of how the tie between slave and animal might render some slaves positively insensate: 'I know that some are too much *brutalized* by slavery to feel the humiliation of their position'. Another fugitive, Frederick Douglass, wrote of the levelling effects, the loss of dignity involved, of putting slaves up for sale not just in the manner of, but together with, livestock, when recalling how his first master's property had been assessed upon the master's death; he communicated simultaneously how the tie affected both slaves and their masters: 'We were all ranked together at the valuation. Men and women, old and young, married and single, were ranked with horses, sheep, and swine. There were horses and men, cattle and women, pigs and children, all holding the same rank in the scale of being, and were all subjected to the same narrow examination. Silvery-headed age and sprightly youth, maids and matrons, had to undergo the same delicate inspection. At this moment, I saw more clearly than ever the brutalizing effects of slavery upon both slave and slaveholder.' The point is further illustrated by a report written in 1843 by H. Augustus Cowper, British Consul in Recife, Brazil, on slave conditions in the province of Pernambuco. Although aware that the treatment of slaves varied from place to place and that some owners were relatively benign, Cowper observed that in most of its victims slavery destroyed all power of reason and intellect, and that this loss enabled them, by a sort of transference of power, to tolerate the physical hardships and degradations of slavery in a way that human beings normally could not. There were other burdens to bear: no civic or legal rights of any kind, and no natural rights — in matters of sex for example. Cowper concluded that 'the endeavour of the master is to suppress alike the intellect, the passions, and the senses of these poor creatures, and the laws aid them in transforming the African man into the American beast'. Seneca (*Ep.* 47.5), lamenting his peers' abuse of their slaves as if they were not men (*homines*) but beasts of burden (*umenta*), would have understood. Sympathetic to the slaves but undeniably authentic, Cowper's account actualizes the figurative account of Apuleius and makes unmistakable the controlling consequence of animalizing the slave.<sup>20</sup>

## IV

According to the elder Pliny (*HN* 8.169), asses in antiquity needed to be quartered in wide stalls because of their habit of kicking while asleep. If an ass such as the single specimen with which Apuleius in the *Apology* (23.6) says his Tripolitanian kinsman Sicinius Aemilianus worked his farm in Zarath were to have kicked, or perhaps bolted, while turning a mill or carrying a load, the driver always had the option of beating the

<sup>19</sup> Docility: *Met.* 8.24, 'de mansuetudine'; cf. 10.35, 'tam mansuetum . . . asinum'. Other instruments: Bradley, op. cit. (n. 10), *passim*. Note that Jacoby, art. cit. (n. 4), draws a parallel between the domestication of animals following the Neolithic Revolution and the rise of slavery (especially in Mesopotamia), thereby characterizing slavery as a domestication of human beings in which the urge to control was as strong as in the domestication of wild beasts. The parallel has much appeal, but the overall argument, covering an enormous amount of time and space, is clearly very speculative. It is accepted wholeheartedly by Davis,

art. cit. (n. 4). Significantly the 'progressive juvenilization' morphologically visible in domesticated animals is not evident in historical slave populations.

<sup>20</sup> Harriet Jacobs: J. F. Yellin (ed.), *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl Written by Herself, by Harriet A. Jacobs* (1987), 44, 28 (my emphasis; cf. 52 'She selected the most brutalized, over whom her authority could be exercised with less fear of exposure'). Frederick Douglass: H. L. Gates, Jr., *The Classic Slave Narratives* (1987), 282. H. Augustus Cowper: R. E. Conrad, *Children of God's Fire: A Documentary History of Back Slavery in Brazil* (1983), 71–6.

animal into submission. And the ass was almost proverbial in antiquity for the physical abuse to which it was subjected. As I have noted, the Ass in the *Metamorphoses* endures innumerable beatings, among other misfortunes, sometimes stoically. But from the earliest moments of the transformation his ability to 'kick' not in sleep but while awake is brought out in the way he almost kills the gardener who gives him one of his earliest floggings. Indeed, his ability to respond to the suddenly imposed state of servitude is evident in the debate he immediately has with himself whether to assault and murder Photis. The Ass therefore is not an utterly passive being, and on many occasions he takes action, or at least contemplates action, to alleviate his sufferings. Apart from trying to appeal for help to the emperor, he can form a plan to stand rooted to the ground in the hope that the robbers will abandon him, or run away from their cave (after careful deliberation about a safe destination) when he hears of their plan to kill him. He twice considers suicide, as already seen, can shower dung on the cruel boy's mother when she tortures him with a firebrand, or hide in the middle of the pack of the herdsmen's baggage animals when he fears being attacked by wolves. He runs away when threatened with execution by a slave cook, bolts again when attacked by servants who believe he is rabid, pretends not to know how to turn a mill in order to avoid work (only to be beaten into compliance). He takes revenge on a cruel woman by revealing her adultery to her husband, pilfers food from his owners the chef and the pastry cook, runs away once more when he cannot allow himself to appear in the public sex show. All in all, when opportunity permits the Ass devises whatever tricks (*dola*) and schemes (*fraudes*) he can to extricate himself from the torments and indignities of being a beast of burden, the simple art of dissembling included.<sup>21</sup>

All these actions depend on Lucius' retention of his human mind in his animal body and his ability to respond to servitude, sometimes successfully, sometimes not, by exercising his human will. In the first instance this is no more than a conceit necessary for the telling of the story. But it presents the Ass with a predicament — to act or not to act — that seems to me to correspond closely to the plight of slaves, and especially newly captive slaves, who retained human intelligence and emotion in bodies no longer their own, and whose freedom to act on the impulse of intelligence and emotion was threatened with near extinction by submission to a superior force. Even the comfort of sleep, the novel suggests, was not to be taken for granted. Under such circumstances, the human responses available, as the history of both ancient and modern slavery shows, have covered a spectrum of options, ranging from total accommodation to submission at one extreme to outright revolt against it at the other. In the *Metamorphoses* the behaviour of the Ass covers a comparable range. At times he is acquiescent when acquiescence is the more sensible course, learning from the fate of his peers, even rejecting the chance of freedom if liberty should seem to lead to death; at others, as the catalogue I have just given indicates, when the pressures and tribulations of servitude can no longer be borne, he resists.<sup>22</sup>

The story of Lucius, therefore, communicates the reality that slave-owners have always had to face, that all slaves cannot be reduced to a condition of total subservience and compliance all the time, that the human will cannot always be completely suppressed. Reducing the slave to the level of the domesticated animal remained in the last analysis only a slave-owner's aspiration, no matter what stress men such as Cicero (*Off.* 2.24) placed on using force to maintain the slave's subjection, and it remains a fact that throughout antiquity many slaves drew upon their human capacity in order to defy their owners. The relationship between the master and the slave, it follows, could never be as one-sided as that between the master and his livestock (if 'relationship' is the right

<sup>21</sup> Bolted: cf. *Dig.* 9.2.27.34. Proverbial: Plaut., *Pseud.* 135; Ov., *Am.* 2.7.15–16. Gardener: *Met.* 4.3. Photis: *Met.* 3.26. Many occasions: *Met.* 3.29 (emperor), 4.4 (rooted), 6.26 (run away; cf. also 6.27), 7.24, 10.29 (suicide), 7.28 (dung), 8.16 (hide), 9.1 (slave cook), 9.2 (bolts again), 9.11 (mill), 9.26–7 (takes revenge), 10.13–14 (pilfers), 10.35 (once more), 4.5 (tricks, schemes, dissembling); cf. also 8.25.

<sup>22</sup> Human mind: see Schlam, op. cit. (n. 7), 153 n. 5 for passages stressing the Ass's 'sensus humanus'. Sleep: cf. *Met.* 9.2. Human responses: K. R. Bradley, *Slavery and Society at Rome* (1994), 107–31, with reference to comparative material. Acquiescent: *Met.* 4.5; 3.29.

word there). Like Lucius the Ass, and like the slave, a real ass could be enticed to work by the prospect of a reward (becoming a breeder of mules) and be treated kindly afterwards. It could also be beaten, stubbornly refuse to carry its load, even run away. But it could not reflect on the misfortunes of Fortune and lament the fall to quadruped state — the lowest condition of all that bent the animal to the ground, in contrast to the erect posture of a man — as if conscious of its liability under the *Lex Aquilia*; it could not deliberate whether to take its own life or think in terms of taking revenge against its owner; it could not feel the shame of being exhibited as a public spectacle, or the shame of subservience. These were human responses, which lead in the story to actions that in turn require further responses from the Ass's various owners. The autonomy of Lucius is in fact never utterly destroyed by his animal form but only diminished, and as long as a vestige of agency remains his owners have to react accordingly, especially because of his value as a commodity to them. Here again the correspondence with the real world of slaves and masters seems to me compelling, because the forms of behaviour the Ass adopts to express his resistance — physical assaults, running away, deceit and trickery — have much in common with those recorded of real slaves in the everyday life of classical antiquity. Because they were valued as commodities slaves were never altogether powerless, and so the relationship with the owner was one which had to be continually defined, adjusted, and redefined, as their response to slavery manifested itself from moment to moment.<sup>23</sup>

Was it Apuleius' intention to reveal the historical truth that the slave-owner could never count on converting the slave into a tamed animal? That is a question impossible to answer. Important critical studies have shown that the *Metamorphoses* is a complex work in which the search for meaning is if not illusory then certainly arduous. On one highly influential view the novel can apparently mean anything the reader wants it to mean because nothing is 'authorized' by its author. On another, the meaning lies in recognizing that the basis of the novel is a conversion narrative chronicling Lucius' fall from grace and subsequent redemption. On yet another, it lies in seeing the parallel between Lucius' journey towards self-discovery and the creation of a new form of literature. The choice is wide open, and it may be that the full complexity of the work is still to be revealed, even if the fundamental pattern of Lucius' progression from guilt to punishment to redemption to blessedness, which implies of course a strong authorial interest in personal spirituality, is largely uncontroversial. Against this background, however, and given the perennial danger of ascribing intent to any author of fiction, I hesitate to speculate on Apuleius' object in composing the *Metamorphoses*. But I think it plausible all the same that the theme of animalization that I have outlined is an expression, perhaps unconscious for the most part, of a wider social issue — the problematic human relationship between master and slave — that to judge from surviving classical literature was never faced squarely, but that in ordinary life was always in the forefront of slave-owners' minds.<sup>24</sup>

Slaves at least are ubiquitous in the novel, as they were in classical life and culture at large. The wealthy have their domestic entourages to cater to their every need, and rural slaves to work their landed estates and mills. Lucius himself has a slave

<sup>23</sup> Reality: cf. Davis, art. cit. (n. 4), xv. Enticed: Bradley, op. cit. (n. 10), *passim*. Reward: *Met.* 7.15; cf. 7.16 ('liber asinus laetus'). Quadruped: *Met.* 4.1, 6.27, 6.28, 7.3 (note 'in bestiam et extremae sortis quadrupedem' with Bakhtin, op. cit. (n. 8), 121 for the notion that the condition of the ass was lower than that of the slave); cf. also 7.27, 11.12. Forms of behaviour: Bradley, op. cit. (n. 22), 107–31; cf. P. A. Cartledge, 'Rebels and Sambos in Classical Greece: a comparative view', in P. A. Cartledge and F. D. Harvey (eds), *Crux: Essays Presented to G. E. M. de Ste. Croix on his 75th Birthday* (1985), 16–46. Valued: cf. *Met.* 8.29: the Ass as a valuable piece of livestock to be tracked down if stolen.

<sup>24</sup> Influential view: J. J. Winkler, *Auctor & Actor: A Narratological Reading of Apuleius's The Golden Ass* (1985). Another: N. Shumate, *Crisis and Conversion*

*in Apuleius' Metamorphoses* (1996); cf. K. R. Bradley, 'Contending with conversion: reflections on the reformation of Lucius the Ass', *Phoenix* 52 (1998), 315–34. Yet another: Finkelpaerl, op. cit. (n. 11). Full complexity: Bakhtin, op. cit. (n. 8), 115 (for a sound introductory study, see Schlam, op. cit. (n. 7), 1992); cf. Harrison, op. cit. (n. 8), stressing the importance of 'literary entertainment and cultural display' (259) in the work). Fundamental pattern: Bakhtin, op. cit. (n. 8), 118; cf. 121 (the Christianizing terminology is problematical, but that may be the responsibility of the translators rather than the author *ipse*). Faced squarely: for discussion of the problem of slavery in antiquity, see Garnsey, op. cit. (n. 1); cf. K. R. Bradley, 'The problem of slavery in classical culture', *CP* 92 (1997), 273–82.

accompanying him on his travels, and even the niggardly Milo cannot do without Photis. Moreover, the treatment and behaviour of the Ass are consistent with the treatment and behaviour of the novel's other slave characters. In the way that the Ass is repeatedly and capriciously tortured, so an adulterous steward is executed by his owner in a wonderfully grisly manner: the errant slave, covered in honey, is tied to a fig-tree, and then slowly eaten to death, right down to the bones, by the ants that nest inside the tree-trunk. As the Ass becomes a fugitive, so Charite's herdsmen, alarmed by the news of their mistress's death and afraid of what a new owner might have in store for them, flee en masse from their homes, taking their wives, children and all that they can carry on their pack-animals in search of a more secure place in which to live. And as the Ass in the depths of desperation thinks of suicide, so a terrified cook prepares to hang himself when faced with his master's demand to serve for dinner a stag, given as a special gift, that a dog has stolen. These incidents are fabrications, but they reflect what was taken as normative when the *Metamorphoses*, an 'adventure novel of everyday life', as it has been called, was written. Slaves in antiquity *did* commit suicide and run away in response to the rigours of servitude. And slaves *were* sadistically punished by their owners: recollection of Vedius Pollio — who incidentally once had an interest in the wild asses of central Asia Minor — is enough to make the point and to validate Apuleius' (at first blush preposterous) story of death by ants. With its record of acts of crude emasculation, injecting pepper vinegar into women's vaginas, and boiling alive in a sugar boiler, the report of H. A. Cowper mentioned earlier is a reminder that human ingenuity in inflicting forms of punishment upon slaves has been limitless.<sup>25</sup>

There is a tendency in criticism of the *Metamorphoses* to regard the work as if it exists in a hermeneutic vacuum. But like any other work of literature, the *Metamorphoses* is first and foremost a cultural artefact, the product of an author who can be located in time and place. It is a work therefore of historical significance, and a presumably recoverable significance. Its date of composition is unknown and unknowable, and its plot is not original. The story was adapted from a Greek precursor, and while critics agree that there are many portions of the *Metamorphoses* which are Apuleius' own creation, the elements of hard labour, beating, and disposal of the Ass by sale are aspects of the basic story Apuleius took over, as the surviving epitome of the Greek original, the *Onos* attributed to Lucian, shows. None the less, whatever Apuleius' debt to the earlier, though perhaps not much earlier, Greek version, it seems that just as his work clearly mirrors the political, administrative, and economic structures of the Roman Empire of the mid-second century, so it conveys a sense of contemporary social structures and general social assumptions. The story of the Ass is set in an historically recognizable world and a world, it must follow, that is drawn to a considerable extent from Apuleius' own experience.<sup>26</sup>

Apuleius came from the relatively obscure Romano-African city of Madauros. But he was of decurial background, and privileged enough in his early life to travel to Carthage, Athens, and Rome in order to acquire the literary and philosophical education that eventually propelled him to distinction. Consequently he can be presumed to have fully absorbed the idioms of the slave-owning classes by the time he reached maturity. He himself was a slave-owner: when he arrived in the Tripolitanian city of Oea c. 156, en route to Alexandria where he intended to study further, he was travelling with at least

<sup>25</sup> Domestic entourage: *Met.* 2.19; 4.24, 7.13; 8.31, 9.2; 10.13, 10.15, 10.16, 10.17, 10.20. Rural slaves: *Met.* 7.15–16, 7.17–28, 8.1, 8.15–23; 9.10–13. Lucius himself: *Met.* 2.31, 3.27; cf. 11.18, 11.20. Milo: *Met.* 1.21, 1.23, 1.26. For a list of slave personnel in the *Metamorphoses* and Apuleius' other writings, see F. Norden, *Apulejus von Madaura und das römische Privatrecht* (1912), 72 n. 1. Adulterous steward: *Met.* 8.22. Herdsmen: *Met.* 8.15–23. Terrified cook: *Met.* 8.31. Note how at *Met.* 9.2 Myrmex is depicted as a typical thieving slave — one who will steal shoes at the baths, and who becomes the object of violence from a free citizen without any discomfiture on his owner's part (cf. J. A. Glancy, 'Slaves and slavery in

the Matthaean parables', *Journal of Biblical Literature* 119 (2000), 67–90, at 80). Called: Bakhtin, op. cit. (n. 8), 111. Commit suicide: Bradley, op. cit. (n. 22), 44, 48, 110, 111–12. Run away: Bradley, op. cit. (n. 22), 117–21, 126–8. Vedius Pollio: R. Syme, 'Who was Vedius Pollio?', *JRS* 51 (1961), 23–30 (= *Roman Papers* II (1979), 518–29), at 23–4, 29; cf. Bradley, op. cit. (n. 10), 121, 126. Cowper: Conrad, op. cit. (n. 20), 73–5.

<sup>26</sup> Date of composition: Schlam, op. cit. (n. 7), 12. Adapted: Schlam, op. cit., 22–8. Aspects: *Onos* 15, 16, 18, 19, 22, 24, 29, 30, 42 (beatings); 16, 19, 28, 34, 37, 39, 41 (labour); 35, 42, 43, 46, 48 (disposal). Mirrors: Millar, art. cit. (n. 8).

one slave attendant and the enemies he made in Oea could later claim that he had manumitted three others in a single day, as if there were something sinister to the matter. His marriage in Oea to the wealthy widow Aemilia Pudentilla joined him to a slave-owner on the grand scale, a woman who was able on one occasion to transfer control of four hundred of her slaves to her sons from a previous marriage.<sup>27</sup>

Oea, moreover, and its companion cities on the Tripolitanian coast, Lepcis Magna and Sabratha, were important centres of a trade that brought black slaves along desert passages from sub-Saharan Africa to the shores of the Mediterranean. The Garamantes, an intractable people with whom Rome never seems to have achieved stable relations, were its essential intermediaries. Conceivably the trade benefited Pudentilla and Apuleius. It is reflected at least both in the occasional literary source such as an epigram from Hadrumentum that suggests the shock that the sight of a black slave could produce locally, and in the mosaics and other objects of art with which members of the Romano-African élite like Apuleius and Pudentilla decorated their houses and villas — mosaics showing camel-drivers or stoker-slaves at bath-houses, and objects such as statuettes of captives, an image of perpetual appeal to Romans. Its extent is difficult to determine but the trade seems to have long outlived Roman rule and to have survived, even flourished, along the same oasis routes well into the nineteenth century. During the years he spent in Tripolitania, Apuleius can hardly have been unaware of it, any more than he can have been unaware of the general presence of slavery all around him. There were even fourteen slave witnesses at the trial he underwent at Sabratha in 158/159 on the charge of having practised magic. Nor can he have failed to know the importance in ordinary daily life of the ass — still highly visible as a beast of burden on the coastal plain of Tripolitania today — as his denigrating comment on the farmer of Zarath reveals.<sup>28</sup>

## V

The story of Lucius' metamorphosis is the story of a man temporarily living in the body of an ass. But it is also a story of a fall into and eventual rescue from slavery. Its special significance for slavery historians is that it allows the process of animalization, a common aspect of the relationship between master and slave in classical society, to be seen, and its immediate consequences to be understood, in a remarkably graphic manner. To animalize the slave was to project ugliness, always a mark of inferiority, onto a human victim for whom a condition of subservience others had determined; and it was to ostracize the slave from free society by denying the slave any shred of personal identity or human capacity. To assimilate the slave to a lower life form was to assert an incontestable domination of the slave, to adopt a strategy of total commodification physically and of total humiliation psychologically. The functional value of the strategy

<sup>27</sup> Maturity: for details of Apuleius' biography, see G. M. Sandy, *The Greek World of Apuleius: Apuleius and the Second Sophistic* (1997), 1–36; Harrison, op. cit. (n. 8), 1–10. Slave-owner: Apul., *Apol.* 17; cf. V. Hunink (ed.), *Apuleius of Madauros Pro Se De Magia* (1997), II, 68–71. Four hundred: Apul., *Apol.* 93–4.

<sup>28</sup> Trade: R. C. C. Law, 'The Garamantes and trans-Saharan enterprise in classical times', *Journal of African History* 2 (1967), 181–200. It is worth noting that slaves are mentioned together with various animals (and other commodities) — horses, mules, asses, cows, bulls, pigs, sheep, goats — in the Zarai tariff inscription (*CIL VIII.4508*); cf. T. Frank (ed.), *An Economic Survey of Ancient Rome, Volume IV* (1938), 80–2 (R. M. Haywood). Epigram: *Anth. Lat.* 183; cf. Snowden, op. cit. (n. 6), 83–4; Thompson, op. cit. (n. 6), 36–8. Mosaics, objects of art: J. Desanges, 'The iconography of the Black in ancient North Africa', in J. Vercoulter, J. Leclant, F. M. Snowden, Jr., and J. Desanges (eds), *The Image of the*

*Black in Western Art* (1976), I, 260–5; K. M. D. Dunbabin, *The Mosaics of Roman North Africa* (1978), 274, 275 (cf. 162); Snowden, op. cit. (n. 6), 88. J. M. Blásquez, 'Representaciones de esclavos en mosaicos africanos', *L'Africa romana* 12 (1998), 1029–36. Perpetual appeal: it is enough to refer in general to relevant scenes from the Column of Trajan and the Column of Marcus Aurelius (see N. Hannestad, *Roman Art and Imperial Policy* (1988), 160–1, 238–41), and for local manifestations of the image in Tripolitania to the Arch of Marcus Aurelius at Oea and the Arch of Septimius Severus at Lepcis Magna. Extent: Desanges, op. cit., 254, 257 (highly sceptical); cf. Snowden, op. cit., 123 n. 71. Nineteenth century: J. Wright, 'Murzuk and the Saharan slave trade in the 19th century', *Libyan Studies* 29 (1998); cf. Lewis, op. cit. (n. 4), 11–13, 41, 57–9, 72–3. Slave witnesses: Apul., *Apol.* 44.6–7, 45.1. Trial: cf. K. R. Bradley, 'Law, magic, and culture in the *Apologia* of Apuleius', *Phoenix* 51 (1997), 203–23. Daily life: cf. Plin., *HN* 17.41 on the ass used for ploughing in Byzacium.

for slave-owners is self-evident: together with the rewards and punishments of the kind Lucius comes to know after his fall, animalization was a mechanism by which slave-owners in antiquity sought to control and manage their slaves, and as with other mechanisms it was apparently successful enough to be maintained over an enormous period of time. But the *Metamorphoses* also shows that animalization could no more guarantee the slave-owner success in the management of his slave property than any other means of control; and it reveals what the experienced slave-owner feared all along, that if the demands of servitude were pressed to an unbearable limit the response of resistance might always present itself. The humanity of the slave, that is to say, could never be altogether eradicated. Offering truly novel evidence for classical slavery, the *Metamorphoses* is a cautionary tale which compels its reader to acknowledge that in any slave society, and particularly perhaps in a non-racial slave society, the slave who took the risk of running away, as the Ass finally ran from Corinth to Cenchreae, might always stand a chance of reclaiming liberty and, with liberty, a once lost identity; for it was in resistance that the key to the slave's recovery of personhood lay. Harriet Jacobs knew that slaves could easily think of themselves as the tamed animals their masters wanted them to become: dogs, horses, cattle, pigs; but she also knew that what she tellingly called the 'wild beast of Slavery' was a beast that could be overcome if the 'tamed' slave grasped the chance to become free, to draw, as she did, on the inner reserves of an untamed animal such as the tiger, and to flourish under freedom. Apuleius conveys to his reader the knowledge that for every slave in his world there was always the promise of a beautiful, gleaming rose to inspire hope.<sup>29</sup>

The vast chronological duration of classical slavery cannot to my mind be overemphasized. Of a later age the suggestion has been made that the impossibility of fully bestializing the slave 'provided the substance for a revolution in moral perception' from which the abolition of slavery was eventually to follow. The substance of that revolution, 'a recognition that slaves could become masters or masters slaves', was equally well known to classical antiquity, and finds one expression in Apuleius' story of a slave-owner who himself becomes a slave. Yet never in the ancient world did this knowledge stimulate any comparable impetus to change. While it may be true, therefore, to believe that the slave's essential humanity presented classical society, as later slave societies, with a practical, mechanical problem, the more fundamental issue is that for a thousand years and more slavery never produced any serious moral crisis in the classical world at all.<sup>30</sup>

#### APPENDIX. 'SERUILES VOLUPTATES'

Mithras speaks: 'Nec tibi natales ac ne dignitas quidem, uel ipsa, qua flores, usquam doctrina profuit, sed lubrico uirentis aetatae ad seruiiles delapsus uoluptates curiositatis inprosperae sinistrum praemium reportasti' (*Met.* 11.15).

The phrase 'seruiiles uoluptates' draws a connection between Lucius (not Lucius the Ass) and slavery. In the ordinary logic of the story the phrase can refer only to his adventures with Photis, from which his ordeal as the Ass results. That is, adventures in sex and magic. Critics have nuanced the fact, variously emphasizing one element over the other. A link is often made with *Met.* 3.19, where Lucius uses the language of slavery to describe his infatuation with Photis: 'in seruiilem modum addictum atque mancipatum teneas uolentem.' Photis herself is of course a slave. It can be said therefore that Lucius is metaphorically 'enslaved' by Photis, or by his desire for her. It is unlikely, however, that the reader of *Met.* 11.15 will immediately and automatically

<sup>29</sup> Novel evidence; cf. Hopkins, art. cit. (n. 8). Tamed animals: Yellin, op. cit. (n. 20), 21, 22, 48, 76, 92, 106, 156; cf. 161, on considerate treatment from sympathetic Northerners: 'How gratifying this was, can be fully understood only by those who have been accustomed to be treated as if they were not included within the pale of human beings.' 'Wild beast of Slavery': Yellin, op. cit., 35. Tiger: Yellin, op. cit., 199, Jacobs

writing in reference to her daughter: 'I thought of what I had suffered in slavery at her age, and my heart was like a tiger's when a hunter tries to seize her young.' Rose: *Met.* 3.29, 'spe salutis alacer'; 4.1, 'candens . . . rosarium'; 11.13, 'rosis amoenis'.

<sup>30</sup> Suggestion: Davis, art. cit. (n. 4), xviii (quoted). Issue: Bradley, art. cit. (n. 24), 282.

recollect the precise vocabulary of *Met.* 3.19; and because the adjective 'seruilis' means 'belonging to or appropriate to a slave', the phrase 'seruiles uoluptates' cannot obviously mean the sexual enjoyment of a slave woman in a narrow sense, with specific reference to the slave Photis. It is difficult consequently to understand what it means to interpret 'slavish pleasures' as 'sexual obsession' or 'sexual slavery', a type, that is, of 'slavish sensuality' (P. G. Walsh, *The Roman Novel* (1970), 177); to see how 'slavish pleasures' can be construed to mean servitude to pleasure (G. M. Sandy, 'Serviles voluptates in Apuleius' *Metamorphoses*', *Phoenix* 28 (1974), 234-44) or how 'in seruilem modum' at *Met.* 3.19 can be taken as an 'obvious reference to "slavish pleasure"' (J. L. Penwill, 'Slavish pleasures and profitless curiosity: fall and redemption in Apuleius' *Metamorphoses*', *Ramus* 4 (1975), 49-82, at 70, my emphasis); and it is extremely difficult to believe that the phrase picks up an elaborate economic metaphor introduced by 'mutuo nexu' at *Met.* 1.1 (Winkler, op. cit. (n. 24, 1985), 188-91). Sex and magic were not by definition in antiquity the exclusive province of slaves, and slavery was not a condition normally associated with pleasure. So why can sex and magic be called 'slavish' or 'slavelike' or 'appropriate to slaves'?

Through Mithras Apuleius projects onto slaves the idea of pleasure, assuming that the delights of sex and magic will somehow be recognized as servile by his readership. In what other context are pleasurable activities attributed to slaves? A key passage is Col., *Rust.* 1.8.1-2: 'Igitur praemoneo ne uilicum ex eo genere seruorum, qui corpore placuerunt, instituamus, ne ex eo quidem ordine, qui urbanas ac delicatas artes exercuerit. Socors et somniculosum genus id mancipiorum, otiis, campo, circo, theatris, aleae, popinae, lupanaribus consuetum, numquam non easdem ineptias somniat.' Here the ability of slaves to enjoy a variety of amusements is understood, but the passage, clearly moralistic, indicates strong disapproval: slaves who engage in the forms of pleasure listed are irresponsible and unsuitable for elevated positions in the slave labour hierarchy. In other words they are bad slaves.

Lucius' birth (*natales*), social standing (*dignitas*) and learning (*doctrina*) fit him for serious concerns — the concerns of the decurial order. He is not supposed to devote himself to frivolity. But he does and in so doing behaves like a stereotypically bad slave. Sex and magic are 'servile' pleasures for Lucius, therefore, because they represent a lack of responsibility on his part, a failure to live up to expectation that is comparable to the failure of slaves who waste time at entertainments instead of doing their jobs. In the absence of slave testimony, what slaves really regarded as pleasure cannot be known. Only slave-owners branded and condemned behaviour as 'slavish'.

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