

Ad amussim congruentia:
Measuring the Intellectual in Apuleius

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Introduction: viewing and reading Lucius' physiognomy

In this article I focus on some aspects of vision and visual relations in a scene from Apuleius' *Metamorphoses* (hereafter the *Met.*).¹ Here the gaze is directed at the physiognomy of the protagonist Lucius while he still has his human shape (*Met.* 2,2, quoted below). My discussion of Lucius' appearance is anchored in a close examination of two words in this passage that have posed textual difficulties to editors. These words focus my discussion of Lucius' physiognomy on the notion of the 'norm' or 'yardstick' (*amussis*, section I) and the notion of the 'curse' (*execrabiliter*, section II). A closer look at these two notions may yield important information for deepening our own view of Lucius and our perception of the persons who 'physiognomise' him, including the sophisticated reader (*lector doctus*) presupposed by the Apuleian narrative (section III). In this introduction, after quoting the crucial passage, I present some aspects of Apuleius' interest in 'physiognomising' characters, and place this interest in the context of Antonine intellectual culture, exemplified by the writings of Gellius and Apuleius, in which 'measuring the intellectual' and 'questioning authority' were key issues.

¹ My approach to vision in this article is indebted to the excellent study on Achilles Tatius by Helen Morales (2004); see p. 8 n. 39 for studies on ancient visuality. On the gaze in Apul. *Met.*, focusing especially on the Actaeon sculpture group (*Met.* 2,4), see the important article by Niall Slater (1998; cf. also Slater 2003); on mirrors and sculptures in Apuleius see Too 1996. On visuality, the body, and desire in ancient Greek culture see Stewart 1997; on the Roman gaze see Fredrick 2002.

In the first and the second book of the *Met.*, Lucius after his arrival in Hypata experiences two encounters with local prominent figures who receive Lucius as a guest: the miser Milo, who hosts Lucius in his house, and his aunt Byrrhena, who warns Lucius against Milo's wife – a dangerous witch – and tries to persuade him to stay at her place. Both are leaders of local society,² who take their time to contemplate and interpret Lucius' physical appearance. Both portrayals appear very positive, praising Lucius' physical and moral qualities and his noble origin. Just as Milo did,³ Byrrhena observes signs of modesty in Lucius' complexion, which she links to his aristocratic breeding:

2,2 *'uereor', inquam, 'ignotae mihi feminae' et statim rubore suffusus deiecto capite restiti. At illa optutum in me conuersa: 'En', inquit, 'sanctissimae Salviae matris generosa probitas, sed et cetera corporis execrabiliter ad [regulam qua diligenter aliquid adfingunt] <amus>sim congruentia: inenormis proceritas, succulenta gracilitas, rubor temperatus, flauum et inadfectatum capillitium, oculi cae[ci]si quidem, sed uigiles et in aspectu micantes, prorsus aquilini, os quoquouersum floridum, speciosus et immeditatus incessus.* "I am embarrassed in front of a woman whom I do not know," I answered, suddenly blushing; and I just stood there looking at the ground. Then she turned and stared at me. "He inherited that well-bred behaviour," she said, "from his pure and virtuous mother Salvia. And his physical appearance is a damnably precise fit too: he is tall but not abnormal, slim but with sap in him, and of a rosy complexion; he has blond hair worn without affectation, wide-awake light blue eyes with flashing glance just like an eagle's, a face with a bloom in every part, and an attractive and unaffected walk.

² Cf. *Met.* 1,21 *Milonem quendam e primoribus*, 'Milo, one of the foremost citizens'; 2,19 *utpote apud primatem feminam flos ipse ciuitatis*, 'since she was one of the first ladies in town, the very flower of society was there'. I refer to the edition of Helm (³1931, repr. 1992). Translations are by Hanson 1989 (occasionally modified) unless stated otherwise.

³ 1,23 ... *me ... etiam nunc uerecundia cunctantem adrepta lacinia adtrahens: 'adside', inquit, 'istic'. (...) 'ego te ... etiam de ista corporis speciosa habitudine deque hac uirginali prorsus uerecundia, generosa stirpe proditum et recte conicerem'. '...I still hesitated out of modesty, but he grasped the hem of my tunic and pulled me towards him. "Sit down right here," he said (...). "In itself your beautiful physical stature and your quite virginal modesty would lead me to conjecture, and quite rightly, that you come of a noble family".'*

The detailed description of Lucius' physical attributes is typical of the ancients' approach to physiognomy, "the discipline that seeks to detect from individuals' exterior features their character, disposition, or destiny".⁴ 'To physiognomise', according to the explanation of Apuleius' contemporary Gellius (*Attic Nights* 1,9,2), "means to inquire into the character and dispositions of men by an inference drawn from their facial appearance and expression, and from the form and bearing of their whole body".⁵ Gellius describes the function of physiognomic analysis as an 'admissions test' for the community of the philosopher Pythagoras.⁶ Thus, Gellius stresses the value of physiognomic judgement as a tool for exercising social control and for forming an intellectual elite group. Apuleius testifies to the same belief in physiognomy as an instrument of selection and configuration of a philosophical elite. In his story about the origins of Plato in *De Platone et eius dogmate* (1,1), Apuleius relates that Socrates, before accepting Plato as a student, acknowledged his future pupil's *ingenium* by judging his looks (*quem ubi adspexit ille ingeniumque intimum de exterioro conspicatus est facie*).⁷ Both Gellius and Apuleius, then, shared a belief in a 'genuine' physiognomical method of recognising true philosophical qualities, which they illustrate by means of anecdotes on 'physiognomical recruitment' that are situated in a context of a distant past associated with the origins of philosophy.⁸ Their approach to physiognomics as an 'assessment tool' and a 'method of character analysis' reflects Greco-Roman traditions of physiognomic learning, which contrast with 'outlandish' Babylonian or Chaldaean traditions where physiognomics is a form of divination, a method to read a person's destiny.⁹

⁴ See Barton 1994, 95. For a full discussion including ancient definitions of physiognomy see Popović 2006, esp. chapter II, "To Read Strange Matters from the Human Body: Physiognomics in Babylonian and Greco-Roman Literature".

⁵ ... ἐφυσιογνωμόνει. *Id uerbum significat, mores naturasque hominum coniectatione quadam de oris et uultus ingenio deque totius corporis filo atque habitu sciscitari.*

⁶ For similar anecdotes on Pythagoras cf. Iambl. *Vit. Pyth.* 17,71 and 74; Porph. *Vit. Pyth.* 13 and 54.

⁷ Plato's name derived from his broad (πλάτος) stature (Apul. *Plat.* 1,1 p. 180 *Platoni habitu-do corporis cognomentum dedit*).

⁸ Philostratus recounts a similar anecdote about the procedures of admittance of the 'wise men' in India; cf. *Vit. Apoll.* 2,30; see Flinterman 1995, 105 n. 73.

⁹ For this general contrast see Popović 2006, Ch. II (above, n. 4). In the *Met.*, Lucius' glorious literary future is predicted by a Chaldaean fortune-teller (2,12), possibly by means of physiognomical analysis. Cf. Plut. *Sulla* 5,5–6 where a Chaldaean predicts Sulla's glorious future after carefully studying his physiognomy (I owe this reference to M. Popović).

Here, in the *Met.*, Apuleius sets the scene for a ‘physiognomical recruitment’ of his protagonist not in a philosophical circle of the distant past, but in a civic community situated in the ‘present’ scenery of the Roman province Thessaly, which is at the same time a ‘distant’ realm of the fictional (‘witch-country’) and the literary.¹⁰ Despite these differences, Lucius’ physiognomic scrutiny has connotations similar to a ‘screening’ of someone’s suitability for a ‘select few’, a civic elite with a philosophical pedigree. Lucius himself explicitly connects the destiny of his journey with his intellectual credentials, boasting descent from Plutarch and Sextus (1,2).¹¹ After his arrival in Hypata, Lucius’ encounters with Milo and Byrrhena, both prominent members of the Hypatan elite, have a strong undercurrent of a ‘trial’ experienced by a young aristocrat who wishes to be accepted and recognised in his peer-group abroad. Lucius’ physiognomy functions like the credentials he brings along in the form of a letter of recommendation which enumerates *in text* the same virtues that Milo is able to observe *visually* in Lucius’ demeanour.¹²

Both Milo and Byrrhena, then, refer to an external (written) source of information which functions as a frame of reference to confirm and legitimise their ‘measuring’ of Lucius: just as Milo’s visual judgment of Lucius is ‘matched’ by Demeas’ written words, Byrrhena’s description of Lucius’ body evokes the ‘written measures’ of physiognomical theory. These frames of reference give their perceptions an aura of objectivity, since they highlight the aspect of ‘authorised judgment’ rather than the emotional effect Lucius’ appearance has on them as viewers. One of the ‘threads’ of this article is to learn more about this ‘procedure of judgment’, and to what purpose Byrrhena is ‘physiognomising’ Lucius. Just like Lucius, Byrrhena claims descent from Plutarch, recognising him as a ‘member of the family’ – but this ‘kinship diplomacy’ also functions to establish her own credentials as a *matrona docta*.¹³ Her way of looking at Lucius tells something about her view

¹⁰ For the literary nature of the topography in the *Met.* see Harrison 2002.

¹¹ 1,2 *Thessaliam – nam et illic originis maternae nostrae fundamenta a Plutarcho illo inclito ac mox Sexto philosopho nepote eius prodita gloria<m> nobis faciunt – eam Thessaliam ex negotio petebam.* ‘To Thessaly – for there too are the foundations of my ancestry on my mother’s side, which, established by the famous Plutarch and next by his descendant, the philosopher Sextus, bring me glory – to this Thessaly I was headed, in pursuance of my business’ (tr. Keulen 2003a, 87). See Keulen 2004a, 261.

¹² 1,23 *sed et meus Demeas eade<m> litteris pronuntiat,* ‘but my friend Demeas also affirms this in his letter’.

¹³ Cf. *Met.* 2,3 (Byrrhena on Lucius’ mother Saluia) *Nam et familia Plutarchi ambae prognatae sumus,* ‘we are both descendants of Plutarch’s family’; cf. n. 11 above.

of Lucius' social identity, but it also defines her own social role in the world of the *Met.*¹⁴ Byrrhena's active female gaze disrupts the usual order of Graeco-Roman visuality where the woman is displayed for the man, an anomaly that adds a 'mythical' dimension to the present encounter in the magical world of Hypata.¹⁵

However, Lucius is gazed at not only by the local aristocracy from Hypata, but also by the reader. Just like Byrrhena or any other spectator of Lucius' appearance, each reader defines his or her own identity and social role by the way s/he looks at Lucius. On the level of the reader, then, there is another 'trial' taking place, a 'judgment' of Lucius' appearance and character formed during the act of reading. Again, this 'judgment' pertains to ways of selecting, defining, and maintaining a certain elite and its identity. The reader of the *Met.* is 'looking over Byrrhena's shoulder', and is thus dependent on the information given by her. On the other hand, this reader also has his own independent viewpoint, standing outside the interaction between the two characters gazing at each other in the present scene.¹⁶ As Slater (1998, 18) points out, the question of 'who sees' is related to issues of power and control; moreover, Slater observes that in the *Met.* the control of the gaze and the power inherent in it are matters that are continually contested. The power of each spectator/reader was defined by his/her own particular frame of reference.

As Maaïke Zimmerman notes in her excellent commentary on Book 10, a 'physiognomical repertoire' formed part of the general outlook and interest in Apuleius' time.¹⁷ We may expect then, that the Apuleian reader was supported by this physiognomical 'background' in picturing and 'judging' Lucius' appearance, as he read Byrrhena's description of him. Moreover, standing outside the encounter between Lucius and Byrrhena, the reader seems able to get a 'fuller' picture of him than Byrrhena, observing things that Byrrhena did not or could not observe. Where Byrrhena observes unaf-

¹⁴ See Morales 2004, 23.

¹⁵ See Morales 2004, 27 on the 'oppositional gaze'. Cf. Petron. 126,2–3, where Circe's slave girl (!) Chrysis 'physiognomises' Encolpius.

¹⁶ See Slater 1998, 44 on the 'third point of view' of the reader.

¹⁷ See Zimmerman 2000, 66 on *Met.* 10,2. For Apuleius' use of physiognomy see Opeku 1979 (esp. on *Flor.* 3 and 15); in the *Met.* see Mason 1984 (cf. below, n. 49). As a diagnostic method physiognomy was closely related to medicine (cf. Galen's *That the Faculties of the Soul Follow the Mixtures of the Body*; see McCreight in this volume, n. 150); see Barton 1994, 97–99; Martin 1995, 18–20. Cf. below, n. 95.

fect modesty, the reader detects calculated opportunism or even greed.¹⁸ Moreover, the Apuleian reader's frame of reference for 'measuring' – and 'visualising' – Lucius was not limited to physiognomical theory and practice. As Slater has demonstrated, Apuleius manipulates in his hermeneutic games the reader's knowledge of a 'visual repertoire' of artistic representations.¹⁹ When reading visual descriptions, the Apuleian reader is partly cast in the role of an 'art critic';²⁰ a similar thing seems to be going on in the description of Lucius' body, as we will see. But, as Maaïke Zimmerman (2000, 430 f.) has shown in her Appendix I: *Apuleius' Phaedra*, the reader of the *Met.* is also cast in the role of a 'literary critic', interpreting (and 'seeing') the Apuleian characters as intertextual reincarnations of famous mythical figures immortalised in the literature of the past.

In a parallel way, Apuleius also relies on the reader's ability to flesh out mental pictures of various 'character types'.²¹ The theatricality of these characters possibly imbued the reading of the narrative with vividness and some visual contours, although it is difficult to trace the role of the visual. As I have argued elsewhere, these character types, along with the character portrayals in Plutarch's *Moralia* such as the *πολυπράγμων* ('busybody', reflected in Lucius' *curiositas*), guide the Roman readers in their 'judgment' of the Apuleian characters.²² What is more, the Apuleian readers were also familiar with Platonic doctrine, for example through Apuleius' own philosophical writings. This doctrine constitutes another important frame of refer-

¹⁸ As Van Mal-Maeder (2001, 79) notes, Byrrhena calls Lucius' gait an 'unaffected walk' (2,2 *immeditatus incessus*; cf. below, n. 59), whereas the reader knows that Lucius was running around like a madman at the very moment he encounters Byrrhena. Lucius consciously quickens his pace (*adcelerato uestigio* belies the *immeditatus*) to catch up with this woman, whom he recognises by her gold and jewellery as 'the wife of an important man'.

¹⁹ See Slater 1998, 19 (cf. Zeitlin 2003, 72 on Chariton: "*Phantasia* often draws upon the cultural storehouse of a visual repertoire"). For the role of *euidencia* (*enargeia*, the vivid visual impression generated in the mind during perception/reading) in the *Met.* see Keulen 2003a, 119 and Van Mal-Maeder in this volume. See also Keulen 2003a, 46 f. with n. (on *phantasia*); Morales 2004, 90.

²⁰ See Zimmerman et al. 2004, 74 (with lit.) on Apuleius' indebtedness to art in his 'tableau vivant' of Venus in 4,31; p. 276 on the *ecphrasis* of the sleeping Cupid in 5,22.

²¹ Scholars have emphasised the parallels and correspondences of the physiognomic descriptions of ethical types with character types from comedy and treatises like Theophrastus' *Characters*. See Barton 1994, 110; Sassi 2001, 52.

²² See Keulen 2004a.

ence for the ‘measuring’ of the characters of the *Met.* (see esp. section III below).

Thus, physiognomic scrutiny is just one of the multiple frames of reference through which the reader is to picture and to judge Lucius’ external and internal qualities. Apuleius plays with a multiplicity of representations which picture Lucius’ personality in terms of a fluctuating ‘metamorphosis’ rather than as a coherent, unequivocal image.²³

We can see various possible ways of ‘reading Lucius’ dramatised by different characters in the narrative, such as the surprised reply of the sceptic to Lucius’ credulity (outlined in detail in the first book), before he arrives in Hypata. The sceptic’s reaction in that early scene, staged in a kind of travesty of contemporary intellectual controversies,²⁴ implies that Lucius’ actual philosophical stance is unworthy of the culture and status that he *visually* displays.²⁵ Some Apuleian readers would have felt more affinity with the exploring gaze and inquisitive behaviour of the nagging old cynic Milo,²⁶ others would have recognised their particular way of reading in the sensuous pleasure of Lucius’ voyeuristic gaze as he contemplates Photis (2,7–8) and Pamphile (3,21).²⁷ But ‘reading Lucius’ can also be inspired by his own famous curiosity,²⁸ as he invites his audience to scrutinize more meticulously (1,3 *si paulo accuratius exploraris*) and to detect hidden meanings.²⁹

Although the reader looks over Byrrhena’s shoulder at Lucius’ own body, this body is put on display ultimately by Lucius-narrator himself in his *ego*-narrative. Does this say something about the narrative’s ‘autobiographical’ status? Apuleius wrote a self-contained work of fiction and did not portray the world around him in a one-to-one correspondence. Still, his choice

²³ Compare Cupid’s various ‘faces’ in the *Met.*; see Zimmerman et al. 2004, 62 (with lit.).

²⁴ Keulen 2004b, 232 f.

²⁵ *Met.* 1,20 *tu autem ... uir, ut habitus et habitudo demonstrat, ornatus accedis huic fabulae?* ‘but you (...) a man, as your appearance and attitude show, of culture, – do you go along with this fairy story?’ Cf. Morales 2004, 94 f.: “by dramatising the various ways of reading, the narrative pre-empts, reflects and positions its own readers.”

²⁶ See above, n. 3 and cf. *Met.* 1,26 and 2,13.

²⁷ Cf. 2,8 *nec tamen ego prius inde discessi, quam diligenter omnem eius explorassem habitudinem*, ‘but I did not move away until I had carefully scrutinised every aspect of her appearance’.

²⁸ Cf. Morales 2004, 86 on ‘reading with *polupragmosune*’.

²⁹ See Keulen 2003a, 131 on 1,4 *diceret*. Cf. also 2,1, where Lucius examines each and every object with curiosity (*curiose singula considerabam*), believing that the scenery in Hypata was a potential source of prophesies and oracles.

of images and themes in the *Met.* connects the narrative and its hero with the cultural-educational context of the Antonine age, which provides an important interpretative framework for the reader/viewer. The marked use of physiognomy in the early scenes evokes associations with notions of ‘trial’ and ‘questioned identity’ that were vividly present in the world that Apuleius and his readers inhabited, and form an area of concern throughout the *Met.*³⁰ The programmatic scene between Lucius and the sceptic reflects that judging and describing each other’s appearance took place in a context of intellectual conflict and strife, in which the force of the gaze functioned to structure mutual power relations. Just as the sceptic ‘measures’ Lucius’ appearance, judging that his ideas do not live up to the social status and culture he displays, we see in Gellius’ *Attic Nights* various scenes of unmasked charlatans who look or behave like philosophers but do not live up to this title.³¹

Both Apuleius and Gellius were familiar, by virtue of their own experience, with the opportunities, dangers and risks involved in the use of the powerful ‘physiognomical gaze’ in contexts of intellectual competition. Just like Apuleius, Gellius’ beloved mentor Favorinus had become the victim of charges which employed representations of his physical appearance to undermine his authority as an intellectual.³² More importantly, the emphasis on the beauty of the young and eloquent intellectual Lucius, who is elsewhere also praised for his *doctrina* (3,15; 11,15), and who calls Plutarch his ancestor,³³ recalls Apuleius himself, who can be seen as a sort of spiritual father to Lucius. In his *Apology* Apuleius defends himself against the charge that he, being a philosopher, was both beautiful and eloquent.³⁴ In my opinion, we do not have to go so far as to assume, as some scholars have done in the past,³⁵ that the visual representation of Lucius in 2,2 is in fact Apuleius’ self-portrayal. Still, I believe that there is a degree of self-revelation in the *Met.*, and that through Lucius’ physiognomy in the *Met.* and through his self-presentation in the *Apology*, Apuleius reveals an important phenomenon of

³⁰ Cf. the Prologue’s *quis ille*; or Cupid, whose face (*uultus*), and therefore his true identity, Psyche is not allowed to see; see Zimmerman et al. 2004, 250 on 5,19.

³¹ Cf. e.g. Gell. 9,2,2–6, where the true character of a pseudo-philosopher is revealed; cf. Apul. *Flor.* 7,9–10 and see Keulen 2004b, 230 with notes 29 and 31.

³² For the role of physiognomy in the conflict between Polemo and Favorinus see Barton 1994, 117 f.; Gleason 1995, 7, 27–28, 46–48; Holford-Strevens 2003, 98–102.

³³ See above, n. 11.

³⁴ Cf. *Apol.* 4,6; 4,9.

³⁵ See Hicter 1944, 13; more references in Van Mal-Maeder 2001, 74.

the intellectual culture of his day, the dynamic process of ‘measuring’, ‘judging’, or even ‘condemning’ moral and intellectual qualities by means of mutual assessments of physical appearance and performance.

The cultural preoccupations of the Antonine age are reflected in its literary imagery. Both Gellius and Apuleius use the Varronian expression *ad amussim* (‘by the setsquare’, ‘with precision’),³⁶ applying it to a context of ‘measuring the calibre’ of persons or writings in intellectual, moral, or literary terms. Through this image, both authors represent the spirit of an age obsessed with the notion of the κανών, looking for a ‘rule’ or ‘norm’ that enables one to judge true from false behaviour, authoritative intellectuals from dispensable ones, and commendable language from that to be avoided.³⁷ The image of the *amussis*, on which I will focus especially in section I of this article, derives from a specialist term, denoting a mason’s or carpenter’s rule or line (cf. *regula*, *linea*). As Blümner points out, we should not identify the *amussis* strictly with one particular instrument, but rather perceive the original image of an instrument that guarantees regularity, mathematical precision, symmetry and balance in a given construction.³⁸

The architectural imagery (*ad amussim*), applied to the context of putting someone’s moral and philosophical qualities to the test, recalls the figure of Socrates, who, according to the tradition, was a stonemason by profession,

³⁶ ‘Nach der Richtschnur’: Otto, *Sprichwörter*, p. 24. The expression *ad amussim* is plausibly restored in *Met.* 2,2 by Plasberg, see below, section I. For the connotation of ‘judgement’ cf. Gell. 1,4,1 (on Antonius Iulianus) *scripta omnia antiquiora tam curiose spectabat et aut uirtutes pensitabat aut uitia rimabatur, ut iudicium esse factum ad amussim diceret*, ‘he inspected all the earlier literature with such care, weighing its merits and ferreting out its defects, that you might say that his judgment was perfect’ (tr. Rolfe in the Loeb). Cf. Gr. παρά στάθμην (Theognis 541). For the Varronian tone of *ad amussim* see Holford-Strevens 2003, 160 f., who points out that Gellius does not use the Plautine *examussim*. For Apuleius’ use of *examussim* cf. *Met.* 2,30; 4,18; 10,2; 11,27; see Hijmans et al. 1977, 138. See Harrison in this volume, who discusses Koch’s conjecture *examussim* in *Met.* 10,7.

³⁷ Rutherford 1998 uses the concept of the κανών in his discussion of the use of stylistic models in the Antonine age; see Nauta 2005 on the concept of the classic(al), starting with the passage in Gellius (19,8,15) from which later uses of the term derive.

³⁸ See Blümner 1912, 237: the literary use of the *amussis* encompasses the *linea* or *regula* (κανών), the *perpendicularum* (στάθμη), the *libella* (διαβήτης), and the *norma* (γνώμων); see also Müller 1974, 41 f. In *Socr. prol.* 3 p. 106–108 Apuleius uses similar architectural imagery in his comparison between extempore speech and the building of a rough wall, contrasted with the precision and polish of studied oratory. Apuleius is the first to use *perpendicularum* in a transferred sense (see *ThLL* s.v. 1616, 5 f.). In a context of ‘moral judgment’, this use was picked up by Ausonius, Ammianus and Ennodius; cf. n. 109.

but whose true *πρῶγμα* was to ἐξετάζειν (‘examine’) and ἐλέγχειν (‘refute’).³⁹ In this aspect, the works of Apuleius and Gellius follow a long tradition of representations, starting with Aristophanes, picturing Socrates as a man who teaches others to ‘know themselves’ by his method of ‘examining and refuting’.⁴⁰ In the tradition of the Socratic dialogue, Gellius and Apuleius themselves make sparing use of visual details to depict their characters, preferring to ‘portray’ and to ‘judge’ them through what they *say*.⁴¹

This brings us back to the central issue of this article, ‘measuring the intellectual’, which entails ‘looking at a person’, but also ‘looking at a text’, and ‘visualising through words’. In the following, we take a closer look at the Apuleian intricacies of vision in the encounter between Byrrhena and Lucius, focusing on the intriguing problem of ‘adequate view’ and its accountability. Who is ‘seeing through’ Lucius? Byrrhena? The reader? Whose view is reliable – and why?⁴²

I Byrrhena’s ‘admissions test’: Lucius the καλὸς κἀγαθός

An intriguing textual problem in our central passage (2,2, cited above) is associated with the above-mentioned issue of seeing and interpreting ‘correctly’ and the related question of a ‘norm’ or ‘criterion’ that authorises and confirms the ‘correctness’ of this perception. This textual problem was brilliantly solved by Plasberg (followed by most of the edd.), who assumed that the words *regulam qua diligenter aliquid adfingunt* (‘a rule, by which they

³⁹ See Koster 1974, 596 f. Cf. Plat. *Charm.* 154b, where Socrates says that he is not a measurer (οὐδὲν σταθμητόν) of beautiful people, calling himself “a mere ‘white line’” in measuring them (ἀτεχνῶς γὰρ λευκὴ στάθμη εἰμι πρὸς τοὺς καλοὺς). For this architectural metaphor (related to *amussis*, κανών etc.) cf. Gell. praef. 11 *alba ... linea*; Otto, *Sprichwörter* s.v. *albus*, p. 11.

⁴⁰ Cf. Aristoph. *Nub.* 842 (Strepsiades answering Pheidippides’ question what anyone could learn from Socrates) γνώσει δὲ σαυτὸν ὡς ἀμαθῆς εἶ καὶ παχύς, ‘You’ll see how thick you are, how stupid’; cf. Keulen 2003a, 115 on *Met.* 1,3 *crassis auribus*. For γνώθι σαυτὸν see below, n. 107. On Socrates in Gell. and Apul. cf. Keulen 2004b, 228–230.

⁴¹ Cf. Apul. *Flor.* 2,1; see Holford-Strevens 1997, 96; Keulen 2004a, 266 with n. 21.

⁴² For the concern of exploring the basis for knowledge claims cf. the programmatic discussion about Aristomenes’ story in book I (see Bitel in this volume), or Apuleius’ use of external ‘bodies of knowledge’ such as physiognomy and medicine (see McCreight in this volume).

fashion something’) are a gloss explaining the archaism *amussim* (of which F transmits only *sim*).⁴³

In the present passage, the expression *ad amussim* modifies *congruentia*, and since the latter word is generally interpreted in the sense of ‘corresponding’, *ad amussim* is by consequence interpreted as ‘precisely’, ‘exactly’, indicating the exact correspondence Byrrhena perceives in Lucius’ bodily features to the *generosa probitas* that – in the eyes of Byrrhena – is embodied by his mother Saluia.⁴⁴ For Byrrhena, the ‘exact match’ is that of the ‘family member’ (the implied dative would be ‘*generosae probitati*’), and this ‘match’ is denoted by *congruentia*.⁴⁵ By praising the likeness between Lucius and his family, Byrrhena confirms the genuineness of their shared lineage, and interprets Lucius’ appearance in terms of the stability and continuity guaranteed by a lawful marriage and family (2,3 *clarissimas ... nuptias*). Moreover, it is suggested that Lucius’ beauty is an outward manifestation of his high birth.⁴⁶

However, since there is no dative here, *congruentia* also allows a different interpretation, ‘well-proportioned’.⁴⁷ This connotation of *congruentia* is implied in the variant *exaequaliter* in ζ for *execrabiliter* (F), as well as the correction *inter se aequaliter* proposed by Nolte.⁴⁸ The notion of the right proportion was an important feature of physiognomical descriptions, and this is reflected in the emphasis on the golden mean in the description of Lucius’

⁴³ The word *amussis* and expressions that employ it (*ad amussim*, *examussim*, *emussitatus*) are frequently explained in ancient Glossaries (e.g. *amussis: regula fabri exaequalis, qua tabulae diriguntur*; *emussitatus: <ad a>mussim exactus*; *emussitata: ad amussim facta*; *examussim: integre, sine fraude*). For a similarity in phrasing to the gloss in the Apuleian manuscript F compare the explanation in Paul. Fest. p. 6 *amussim regulariter, tractum a regula, ad quam aliquid exaequatur, quae amussis dicitur*.

⁴⁴ See Mason 1984, 307.

⁴⁵ Apuleius uses *congruere* also elsewhere in the *Met.* in contexts of recognising (family) identities by tokens of conduct or appearance, cf. e.g. 5,29 (Venus says to Cupid in a sarcastic tone) *honesta ... haec et natalibus nostris bonaque tuae frugi congruentia*, ‘what honourable behaviour ... befitting our descent and your virtuous character’ (tr. Zimmerman et al. 2004, 334).

⁴⁶ Cf. Perkins 1995, 53 on Chariton.

⁴⁷ Cf. Suet. *Tib.* 68,1: *ceteris quoque membris usque ad imos pedes aequalis et congruens*, ‘he was well-proportioned and symmetrical from head to foot’. See Vogt 1975 ad loc. (with references): “ebenmässig und proportioniert”.

⁴⁸ For the transmitted *execrabiliter* and other conjectures see below, section II.

physique.⁴⁹ In this interpretation (“But your physical appearance is damnably precisely proportioned too”), the idea of the *amussis* as an instrument securing balance, symmetry and precision strengthens the notion of balance and symmetry (*congruentia*) in Lucius’ physical ‘build’, a notion that it is illustrated in the rest of the sentence with words like *inenormis ... temperatus ... inadfectatum ... immeditatus*: everything in Lucius’ appearance is in proportion. If we read the phrase *cetera corporis ... ad amussim congruentia* in this way, Byrrhena describes the balanced proportions in Lucius’ physique without making an explicit connection with a ‘model’ which this physique resembles. At the same time, the words *Sed et* indicate that in Byrrhena’s eyes Lucius’ well-proportioned physique is only further proof of the *generosa probitas* that she has already observed in Lucius. *Cetera corporis ... congruentia*, then, denotes a quality in itself that chimes with Byrrhena’s idea of *generosa probitas*, viz. a quality of internal and external balance. The *amussis* is the touchstone of this balance.

The emphasis on perfect balance and symmetry (*ad amussim congruentia*) in Lucius’ physiognomy evokes the image of the free Greek male as the embodiment of the ‘ideal of the mean’, and ideal of which slaves, women and barbarians generally fall short.⁵⁰ This is the ideal type of the καλὸς κἀγαθός, whose ideal physiognomy reflects emotions that are well-balanced and free from contrast. In Apuleius’ time these virtues are still attested as the distinctive qualities for aristocratic elite identity.⁵¹ Given the ancient belief in a correspondence between physical equilibrium and moral excellence, the metaphor of the *amussis* becomes a touchstone not only of the perfect physical proportions of Lucius’ build, but also of his character.⁵² The moral connotations of *ad amussim* go back to similar metaphorical uses of Greek

⁴⁹ See Evans 1969, 73; Martin 1995, 34–36; Sassi 2001, 47–48; Van Mal-Maeder 2001, 75. As Mason 1984, 308 with n. 10 points out, the mean is especially praised in the Latin *Physiognomoniae liber*, which uses the Apuleian word *medietas* (but is probably not written by Apuleius himself).

⁵⁰ On notions of balance and proportion, which are central to all branches of Greek culture from the archaic period onward, see Sassi 2001, 45 f.

⁵¹ Honorary and funeral inscriptions in the 2nd century AD repeatedly stress moral virtues such as καλοκἀγαθία, σωφροσύνη, etc., in combination with the literary and rhetorical qualities (παιδεία, λόγοι) of the honoured individual; see Schmitz 1997, 136–141.

⁵² Cf. Plaut. *Mil.* 632.

words for ‘rule’ (κανών, στάθμη), which illustrate the ‘straight’, ‘true’ nature (εὐθύς, ὀρθός) of a person.⁵³

The *amussis*, however, at the same time evokes the imagery of constructing, building, and moulding. An ancient glossary interprets *amussis* as ‘λιθοξόου κανών, *norma*’, which can mean both ‘the rule of the stone- or marble-mason’ and ‘the rule of the sculptor’. Moreover, the gloss in our passage explains *amussis* as ‘a rule, by which they fashion something’, using a verb (*adfinere*, with *ad-* reflecting the preposition in *ad amussim*) that denotes the process of forming and shaping in sculpture.⁵⁴ Thus, in the present passage, the image of a Greek sculpture can be evoked, marked by a perfection in solidity, proportions and symmetry that guarantees that the statue will stay upright and endure the wear and tear of time (see below). Byrrhena, who has a true passion for sculpture (cf. 2,4), turns her gaze on Lucius’ beautifully symmetrical appearance almost as if he were a perfectly polished and balanced statue⁵⁵ – not unlike Psyche’s divine beauty, which is literally compared to a skilfully polished sculpture (cf. 4,32 *mirantur quidem diuinam speciem, sed ut simulacrum fabre politum*, with Zimmerman et al. 2004, 80 ad loc.).

The admiration of the physical beauty of a male protagonist in terms of a sculpture recalls the use of ἄγαλμα in Plato’s *Charmides* (cf. above, n. 39), where all those present have eyes only for the beautiful youth Charmides, gazing at him as if he were a statue (154c πάντες ὥσπερ ἄγαλμα ἐθεῶντο αὐτόν). Moreover, we are also reminded of Chaereas, the male protagonist of Chariton’s novel, whose beauty is described in terms of artistic portraiture.⁵⁶ In the present passage, however, the notion of *amussis* (‘κανών’) highlights

⁵³ Cf. notes 36, 38. Cf. Theognis 804 f.: the man who is going to consult the Delphic oracle should be εὐθύτερος than ‘a circle, a plumb line and a setsquare’; see Diétel 1939, 33. For the use of κανών in moral contexts see Oppel 1937, 23 f.; cf. Lucian’s use of κανών with reference to Demonax as a ‘role-model’ (*Dem.* 2); see Schmidt 1897, 90.

⁵⁴ See *OLD* s.v. *finco* 1c ‘to mould, knead (materials) into shape’. Cf. Apul. *Apol.* 14,7 *quod luto fictum uel aere infusum uel lapide incussum uel cera inustum uel pigmento illitum uel alio quopiam humano artificio adsimulatum est*, ‘what is formed in clay, moulded in bronze, hewn in stone, expressed in wax, or made to look similar by any other human craft’ (tr. Hunink 2001); for *adsimulare* cf. *Flor.* 7,6 cited below, n. 57.

⁵⁵ The balance and regularity observed by Byrrhena in Lucius’ chiselled features contrast with the suggestion of unsteadiness and imbalance in her own sculpture garden (2,4); cf. Merlier-Espenel 2001, 137.

⁵⁶ For Chariton’s use of ἄγαλμα and of associations with artistic portraiture as a touchstone of beauty (cf. 1,1,3, describing Chaereas) see Zeitlin 2003, 80 with n. 24.

the aspect of *judging* or *measuring* beyond admiration. Through the word *amussis* and its connotations of physical perfection and symmetry related to sculpture, the Apuleian reader, ‘looking over Byrrhena’s shoulder’, may be reminded of the famous statue of the spear-bearer by the Argive sculptor Polycleitus, who was commended by Apuleius in the *Florida*.⁵⁷ Interestingly, according to Oudendorp’s edition, Sopingius conjectured *Polycleiti ad regulam* for *execrabiliter ad regulam* in our passage in F. Polycleitus’ famous work of art, which was given the significant name *Κανών*, ‘aimed at the mean’⁵⁸ and proclaimed an ideal of male self-discipline.⁵⁹ Hence it became a widely influential model (‘*κανών*’) for statues of the male body, developing a particular popularity in Roman imperial sculpture (see plate 1).⁶⁰

Thinking of a perfectly proportioned body like Polycleitus’ *Κανών*, the Apuleian (re-)reader is invited to compare the present passage with other passages that associate the hero of the *Met.* with a written, painted, or sculpted work of art, eternal in its perfection, to be forever gazed upon and admired by endless numbers of spectators.⁶¹ The rest of Byrrhena’s physiological description also suggests that Lucius is not only modelled after the

⁵⁷ Apuleius acknowledges Polycleitus’ reputation as an exemplary sculptor in *Flor.* 7,6, where the anachronism confirms this artist’s absolute paradigmatic status: (Alexander) *edixit uniuerso orbi suo, ne quis effigiem regis temere adsimularet aere, colore, caelamine, quin saepe <scripsit>, solus eam Polycleitus aere duceret ...* ‘he issued a decree to the whole of his empire that no one should simply go ahead and make a likeness of the king in bronze, paint, or stone, but that Polycleitus alone should cast copies of it in bronze ...’ (tr. Hilton 2001); see Hunink 2001b, 96–97 ad loc. (with lit.).

⁵⁸ Galen, *De temp.* p. 36,16 f. Helmreich (566 K.). Polycleitus also wrote a book called *Κανών* based on his statue in which he described a system of proportion whereby every part of the body was related mathematically to every other and to the whole; cf. Galen, *De plac. Hipp. et Plat.* 5,3,15–16 in De Lacy 1978, 308 f.; see Opper 1937, 14 f.; Stewart 1997, 88.

⁵⁹ “The statue’s unhurried movement, self-contained pose, foursquare physique, and tightly circumscribed forms announce not only the defining constituents of true human greatness, but how such greatness may be controlled, disciplined, and sustained.” (Stewart 1997, 92). Cf. above, n. 18.

⁶⁰ Cf. Plin. *nat.* 34,55; see *OCD* s.v. *Polycleitus* (2); Kreikenbom 1990.

⁶¹ Writing: 2,12; sculpture: 3,11 (cf. 3,10); painting: 6,29. Cf. 11,24, where Lucius, standing in front of Isis’ statue, is exhibited to the crowds as a statue himself and thus becomes part of a sculpture group with Isis, while standing under her gaze (Slater 1998, 39 f.). For a possible connection with Apuleius’ own concerns about the dangers for the individual arising from a ‘public image’ fashioned by society, e.g. in the form of a statue (cf. *Flor.* 16), see Too 1996, 134–141. Cf. below, nn. 74 and 97.

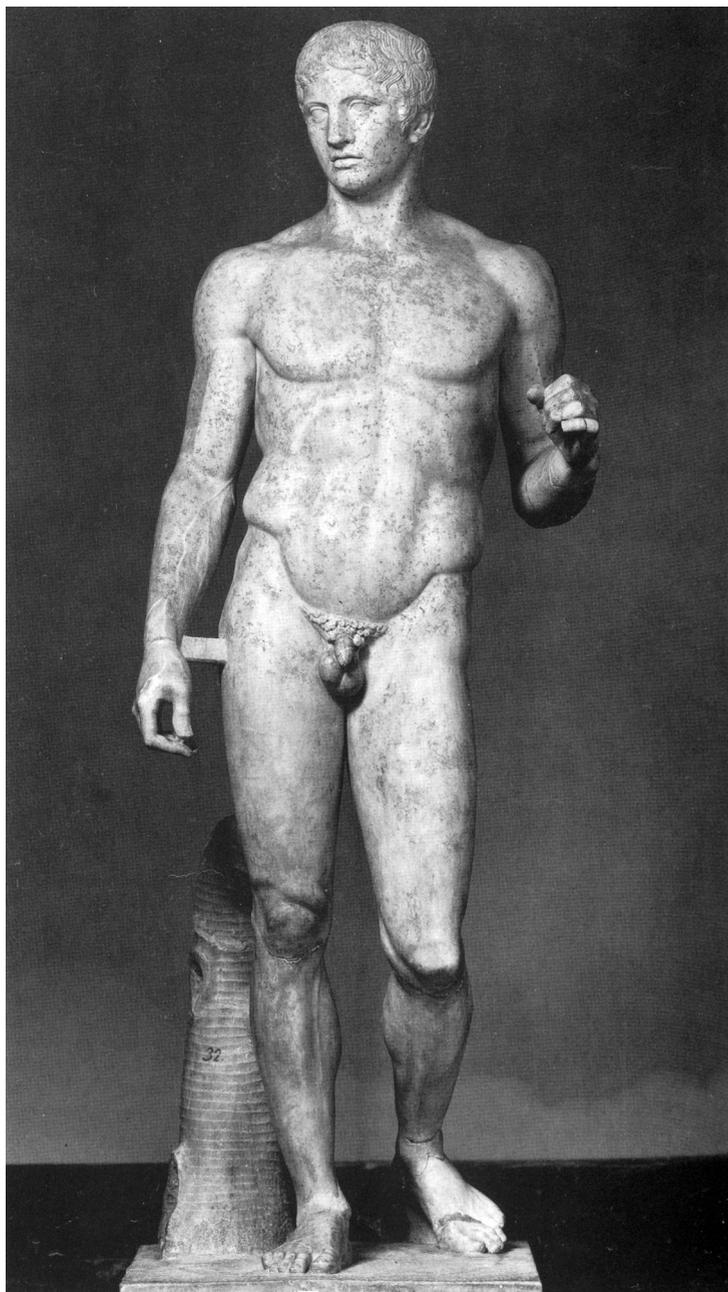


Plate 1. Roman sculpture (Claudian age) after Polycleitus' Spear-bearer.
Kreikenbom 1990, 163 (no. III 3).

physical ideal of the ‘perfect free man’, marked by symmetry and perfect proportions,⁶² but also embodies an intellectual ideal, as a ‘man of letters’, which is appropriate for the future writer of his own adventures.⁶³ His sparkling eyes even resemble panegyric descriptions of emperors, suggesting that Lucius belongs to a ‘ruling class’ of aristocrats.⁶⁴

The identification of Lucius’ appearance as that of the ‘ideal intellectual’ by the *lector doctus*, who is looking at Lucius’ appearance over Byrrhena’s shoulder, may coincide to a certain extent with Byrrhena’s own vision of Lucius. Byrrhena presents herself as a *matrona docta*, sharing Lucius’ kinship with the philosopher Plutarch. However, Byrrhena also looks at Lucius from her role as a prominent member of Hypatan civilised society. She invites Lucius to participate in the opulent parties organised in her house for the *flos ciuitatis*, the ‘high society’ of Hypata, which is dedicated to the pleasures of food, wine, laughter, jokes, and storytelling (2,19).⁶⁵ In addition, in her responsibility for the ritual activity of the local elite related to the god Risus, Byrrhena observes in Lucius’ innate qualities of wit a welcome potential to add allure and prestige to the religious cult of the deity of laughter, to be celebrated on the next day:

2,31 *hunc tua praesentia nobis efficias gratiorem. Atque utinam aliquid de proprio lepore laetificum honorando deo comminiscaris, quo magis pleniusque tanto numini litemus.* “By your presence you will make this a happier occasion for us. And I hope you will invent something cheerful from your own wit to honour the god with, to help us appease this powerful deity better and more thoroughly”.

⁶² “Measure personified and the very epitome of male *sophrosyne*, he represents Polykleitos’s fantasy of the most perfect, most complete, freest, and therefore most powerful male ego in the world. (...) Striving for both the most rigorous abstraction (the Kanon) and the most thoroughgoing corporeality, he sought to use each to reinforce the other.” (Stewart 1997, 92).

⁶³ See Mason 1984; van Mal-Maeder 2001, 74 f.

⁶⁴ Cf. Suet. *Aug.* 79 and see Couissin 1953, 243 f.; Bollók 1996, 11 f.; Gleason 1995, 45 (Polemo’s description of Hadrian’s eyes). Cf. Amm. 25,4,22 (on emperor Julian) *uenustate oculorum micantium flagrans* (see below, n. 68), with Den Boeft et al. 2005, 159–161 ad loc. (see also Den Boeft et al. 2005, 336–337 on Amm. 25,10,14 *oculis caesis*). For Lucius’ physical resemblance to emperors cf. also above, n. 47.

⁶⁵ Cf. 2,19 *iam inlatis luminibus epularis sermo percrebuit, iam risus adfluens et ioci liberales et cauillus hinc inde*, ‘soon lamps were brought in and the table-talk increased, with plentiful laughter and free wit and banter on every side’. Cf. n. 69.

By calling Lucius' wit (*lepos*) "your own" (*proprius*),⁶⁶ Byrrhena demonstrates that she has detected Lucius' natural talent for humorous invention (cf. *comminiscaris*),⁶⁷ which may be a family trait that Byrrhena particularly appreciates. Moreover, Byrrhena proudly adds to her physiognomic description of Lucius that he is the product of her own education (2,3 *ego te, o Luci, meis istis manibus educaui*). The power of Lucius' physical presence (*tua praesentia*), especially his sparkling eyes (2,2 *oculi ... in aspectu micantes*), which also have erotic connotations, could well have been read by Byrrhena as physiognomic indicators of his clever humour and wit.⁶⁸ Evidently, Lucius passed the physiognomic admittance procedure for the local elite of this intriguing community. In Byrrhena's eyes, Lucius' beautiful appearance and entertaining characteristics make him an ideal candidate for the social and religious activities of Hypatan urbane society, which is governed by a *libertas otiosa*, and centred both in the opulent entourage of her house and in the theatre of Hypata.⁶⁹

II Looking at cursedness (*execrabiliter*)

In his/her assessment of Byrrhena's perception of Lucius' physiognomy, the reader is confronted with the enigmatic use of the adverb *execrabiliter*, which according to some scholars cannot be correctly transmitted, since they expect a positive adverb in this context.⁷⁰ How do we explain that *execrabi-*

⁶⁶ For this use of *proprius*, referring to innate qualities that define someone's identity, cf. Apul. *Flor.* 16,31 *est enim tantus in studiis, <ut> praenobilior sit proprio ingenio quam patricio consulatu*, 'for he has such a reputation as a scholar that he is much better known for his own talent than for his patrician consulship'; see *ThLL* s.v. *proprius* 2100, 69 f.

⁶⁷ Cf. 3,12 *quem ipse fabricaueram risum*, 'laughter which I myself had manufactured'.

⁶⁸ Cf. Amm. 25,4,22 (above, n. 64) *uenustate oculorum micantium flagrans, qui mentis eius argutias indicabant*, 'his eyes were delightful and flashing, an indication of the nimbleness of his mind'. Lucius shares his *micantes oculi* with Photis (*Met.* 3,19 *tuis istis micantibus oculis*) and Venus (5,31 *tantam uenustatem micantium oculorum*); see Mason 1984, 308 n. 19. The association of wit and *eros* (cf. Keulen 2003a, 171) is especially present in the communication between Lucius and Photis, cf. 2,7; 3,19–20.

⁶⁹ On the Roman terms of refinement and sophistication depicting Byrrhena's tastes see Van Mal-Maeder 2001, 305 f. on 2,20. See Frangoulidis 2002 for a persuasive reading of the Risus Festival as a community integration rite.

⁷⁰ For attempts at emendation cf. e.g. *inextimabiliter* proposed by Hildebrand. For an extensive discussion of the proposed solutions see Van Mal-Maeder 2001, 73. For Nolte's solution *inter se aequabiliter* see above, section I with n. 48.

ter, which is attested here for the first time and in other passages always has negative connotations, is used here to modify an expression that praises Lucius' beautiful physical appearance? What is the significance of the notion of a 'curse' in a praise of beauty? Such problems cannot be explained away by assuming that this is a colloquial expression or enhances the comic characterisation of Byrrhaena – this may be true, but does not give the whole picture.⁷¹

In my opinion, this issue is related to the question of the 'control of vision', a problem often raised by the Apuleian narrative, albeit without providing unambiguous answers. It challenges the reader to read more perceptively, to become a *lector scrupulosior*. A *lector scrupulosus* ('careful reader')⁷² may note that Lucius is 'cursed with' an extraordinary beauty, not unlike Psyche or heroes and heroines from Greek romances.⁷³ If this reader is familiar with themes and motifs from ancient narrative, s/he may see in Lucius' 'cursed beauty' a sophisticated metaliterary reference to his future fate as a celebrity, becoming the *auctor et actor* ('author and actor', cf. *Met.* 3,11) of his own written adventures.⁷⁴

A *lector scrupulosior* may see even more in Lucius' cursedness. If we take a closer look at curses in the *Met.*, we see that they are frequently directed against outrageous conduct, especially against outrageous sexual behaviour.⁷⁵ Moreover, Apuleius also applies the notion of 'cursedness' to *seeing* those who are morally depraved. An excellent example is the 'detestable sight', the *execrabilis conspectus* (10,4) of the stepmother in the tenth book, which her stepson, the object of her illicit passion, tries to avoid. As Maaïke Zimmerman notes,⁷⁶ there is an active and a passive side to *execrabi-*

⁷¹ Cf. e.g. Thomas 1912, 65; Hofmann, *Lateinische Umgangssprache*, 78.

⁷² Cf. *Met.* 9,30 with Hijmans et al. 1995, 257 (with lit.) on the limited perception of the narrator and the demands on the reader (*lector scrupulosus*) made by the narrative.

⁷³ Cf. Xen. Eph. 2,11,4 διὰ τὴν ἄκαιρον εὐμορφίαν (2,1,3), 5,5,5 ὃ κάλλος ἐπιβουλον ... ὃ δυστυχῆς εὐμορφία, Char. 5,5,3 κάλλος ἐπιβουλον (6,6,4). Like the heroines in Greek romances, Psyche 'curses' her own beauty (see Zimmerman et al. 2004, 82 on 4,32 *odit in se suam formositatem*). For the fatal beauty of the heroine as a leitmotiv of the Greek novels see Kenney 1990, 135 on Apul. *Met.* 4,34 *nomine Veneris* (with references).

⁷⁴ For the 'curse' of absolute beauty leading to celebrity status see Schmeling 2005, 42–44, who points out that this motif may go back to Helen (Hom. *Il.* 6,357–358). Cf. nn. 61; 97.

⁷⁵ See Zimmerman et al. 2004, 440 on 6,10 *saevitiam execrata*.

⁷⁶ See Zimmerman 2000, 103 on 10,4 *execrabilem ... conspectum*.

lis:⁷⁷ the virtuous young stepson avoids the sight of the stepmother as something both repulsive and harmful to him (a few lines earlier it is called a *noxius conspectus*, ‘offensive sight’). This lexical link, noticed by the scrupulous re-reader, with the *execrabilis conspectus* of the stepmother leads us to the question of what kind of ‘curse’ is expressed by the *execrabiliter* in our passage. If we take *execrabiliter* in an active sense, then it ominously refers to a threatening ‘doom’ embodied by the perfect physical beauty of Lucius, a ‘curse’ which is going to come down upon the viewer from the impact of *seeing Lucius*. If we take it in a passive sense, it refers to a ‘cursedness’ that implies that the beauty itself is ‘doomed’, and hence *being seen* is an inescapable fate.

It appears, then, that Byrrhena perceives the young, modest Lucius as a kind of Hippolytus-figure exposed to the active ‘gaze of desire’ of an elderly female, a figure who resembles the above-mentioned young pious and modest son with the good liberal education from *Met.* 10,2 (see plate 2).⁷⁸ This startling observation does not only reveal something about Lucius, but also about the present beholder herself. Looking at her younger relative, Byrrhena becomes a quasi-Phaedra to Lucius’ Hippolytus.

Thus, Byrrhena gaze’s turned upon the young Lucius elucidates and prefigures her anxiety about what will happen when the wife of Lucius’ host Milo, the witch Pamphile, casts her glance on Lucius:

⁷⁷ For the capability of adjectives in *-bilis* to be both passive (much more common) and active cf. e.g. Apul. *Apol.* 14,3 *culpabilis* (not found before Apul.), clearly passive, and *Apol.* 35,7 *uincibilis* (1st attestation in active sense); for the active use see Koziol 1872, 290; Löfstedt 1936, 84–88; Leumann-Hofmann-Szantyr, *Lateinische Grammatik*, I: *Lateinische Laut- und Formenlehre*, 348 f. (on ‘instrumentales *-bilis*'). I thank Thomas McCreight for pointing out these references. For the contemporary interest in adjectives that can be both active and passive cf. Gell. 9,12.

⁷⁸ Cf. *Met.* 10,2 *iuenem filium probe litteratum atque ob id consequenter pietate, modestia praecipuum, quem tibi quoque prouenisse cuperes uel talem*, ‘a young son with a good liberal education, who was consequently unusually obedient and modestly behaved – indeed the kind of son you would wish to have as your own’. See Fiorencis-Gianotti 1990, 113 f. for the parallelism between this *iuenis* and Lucius, and the connection between Lucius, whose father is named Theseus (1,23), and Hippolytus, a connection visualised in Lucius’ appearance (see above, n. 3). Cf. Appendix I: *Apuleius’ Phaedra* in Zimmerman 2000, 430 f. For Hippolytus as a paradigm of male beauty in sculpture and paintings cf. Char. 1,1,3 (above, n. 56).



Plate 2. Illumination by Andrea da Bologna (in MS Vat. Lat. 2194 F. 57 v.) of the capital D at the beginning of Book Ten, representing on the left the 'noxious gaze' of the lovesick stepmother trying to seduce her stepson. Zimmerman-de Graaf 1992, cover illustration.

(2,5) *Nam simul quemque conspexerit speciosae formae iuuenem, uenustate eius sumitur et ilico in eum et oculum et animum detorquet. Serit blanditias, inuadit spiritum, amoris profundi pedicis aeternis alligat.* No sooner does she catch sight of some young man of attractive appearance than she is consumed by his charm and immediately directs her eye and her desire at him. She sows her seductions, attacks his soul, and binds him with the everlasting shackles of passionate love.

Byrrhena's anxious warnings reveal the inauspicious implications observed by her in Lucius' charming appearance. She refers both to the consuming power of Lucius' looks (cf. *uenustate ... sumitur*) and to the impending dangerous response to his sight if Pamphile reciprocates it with the spell-binding power of her own erotic gaze.⁷⁹ We can view Byrrhena's conception of Lucius's *uenustas* as a 'curse' with both an active and a passive side, a 'fatal attraction' which threatens to boomerang against him as soon as Pamphile looks back and binds him with the shackles of her passion.

Byrrhena's warnings thus illustrate and lay out explicitly the terms of the curse denoted by *execrabiliter*, the adverb that refers to the mathematical perfection (*amussis*, κανόν) of Lucius' physical charm. In the view of Byrrhena, who is worried about Lucius, the 'curse' applies in the first place to the *object* of the gaze (Lucius, whose beautiful body will be seen by Pamphile, with fatal consequences). In the present passage (2,2), Lucius is the object of the gaze too, while the subject of the gaze is Byrrhena. Her ideas about Pamphile in 2,5 mirror her own unstated desire for the young Lucius, as if she is cast in the same 'Phaedra'-role as the evil stepmother. The object of her gaze, Lucius, is cast in the role of a Hippolytus, who averts his own gaze from this powerful female, just as he will protect himself from the gaze of Pamphile.⁸⁰

Moreover, the passive aspect of Lucius' 'curse' as related to Byrrhena's warnings implies that Lucius does not *wish* to ensnare women with his physical allure, and that he has this effect on others *despite himself*. His avoidance of the female gaze by averting his own gaze signifies his shame (*rubor*, αἰδώς),⁸¹ but also characterises him as an unwilling participant in the encounters with the two elderly females with their penetrating gazes. His unwilling exposure to their voyeuristic gaze is an illustration of the 'cursedness' of his beauty in a passive sense, as something not chosen by him but

⁷⁹ For erotic empowerment and binding by the eyes see Barton 2002, 224; Morales 2004, 161.

⁸⁰ Cf. 2,2 *statim rubore suffusus deiecto capite restiti*, 'suddenly blushing, I just stood there looking at the ground' (since Van der Vliet, all editions print Colvius' emendation *deiecto*, whereas Van Mal-Maeder 2001, 71 prefers to read the transmitted *reiecto*); 2,11 *quam pote tutus ab uxoris eius aspectu, Byrrhenae monitorum memor, et perinde in eius faciem oculos meos ac si in Auernum lacum formidans deieceram*, 'as protected as possible from his wife's gaze, mindful of Byrrhena's warnings. When I cast my eyes upon her face, I was as fearful as if I were looking into Lake Avernus'.

⁸¹ For the concept of shame (*pudor*, *uerecundia*, αἰδώς) related to seeing and visibility and 'acted out' by averting the gaze, see Barton 2002; Morales 2004, 162 (with lit.).

determined by some higher force or fate, like the beauty of novelistic heroines. This representation is completely at odds with other scenes that show Lucius as far from restrained in using the power of his physical charm to obtain what he wants from females (cf. 2,6).⁸² Is his so-called *uerecundia*, his apparently modest resistance to the penetrating gaze of his hosts, just a calculated strategy and a devious demonstration of Lucius' ability to control his outward physical manifestation in order to pursue a hidden agenda?⁸³ Is he a so-called 'physiognomical impostor', whose true immoral nature is concealed under a deceptively modest behaviour, a protocol that begs to be decoded by the clever viewer/reader?⁸⁴

At the same time, Byrrhena also recognised an inauspicious, 'harmful' sign in Lucius' appearance, illustrating the *active* side of the 'curse'. An instructive parallel for the active 'curse' of Lucius' looks is provided by a passage from Apuleius' contemporary Athenaeus (*deipn.* 13, 564b), who gives various examples of lovers gazing upon their beloved. For the 'shame' (or 'modesty') characterising Lucius (*rubor, probitas*),⁸⁵ which is the first thing Byrrhena notices when she turns her gaze upon him, Athenaeus offers two illuminating parallels (fragments from Lycophronides and Aristotle) on the 'modesty' (αἰδώς) observed by lovers in the eyes of their loved ones. Then, Athenaeus cites a fragment from Sophocles in which Hippodameia is discoursing on the beauty of Pelops, in a scene where they stand on the chariot, conquered by each other's looks. This scene probably belonged to the 'visual repertoire' of the Apuleian readers.⁸⁶ In the description of Lucius' beauty by Byrrhena, who is captured, among other things, by his eyes, a visual allusion to the famous scene from Sophocles is established through

⁸² Cf. Lucius' 'protocol of shamelessness' when he shows his genitals to Photis (2,16) without any trace of shame or modesty; see Keulen 2003b, 114–116 for the symbolism of Lucius' exhibitionistic gesture for the role of the satirist.

⁸³ For Lucius' manipulative *uerecundia* in his encounter with Milo see Keulen 2004a, 272. Compare Photis, who *apparently* attempts to resist the gaze of Lucius by modestly covering her pubes, but in fact shadows it on purpose, which implies that her conduct is a strategy to further arouse Lucius' desire rather than genuine modesty (2,17); see Slater 1998, 24.

⁸⁴ See Gleason 1995, 76–81 on 'physiognomical deception', who demonstrates that both the desire to improve one's physiognomical profile and the eagerness of physiognomists to detect false deportment are two sides of the same coin, reflecting the dynamics of the agonistic intellectual society with its competitive pressures. Cf. above, *Introd.*, nn. 31–32.

⁸⁵ The notion of *probitas* often includes that of *uerecundia*, *modestia*, and *pudor*; see *ThLL* s.v. *probitas* 1457, 74 f.

⁸⁶ See n. 19. The scene is also represented in Philostratus' *Imagines* (1,17).

the parallels with the charm of Pelops' flashing eyes and the imagery of the craftman's rule (Soph. F 474 Radt):

τοίαν Πέλοψ ἕγγα θηρατηρίαν
 ἔρωτος, ἀστραπήν τιν' ὀμμάτων, ἔχει·
 ἢ θάλλεται μὲν αὐτός, ἐξοπτᾷ δ' ἐμέ,
 ἴσον μετρῶν ὀφθαλμόν, ὥστε τέκτονος
 παρὰ στάθμην ἰόντος ὀρθοῦται κανών.
 "Such is the charm to ensnare love,
 a kind of lightning-flash that Pelops has in his eyes;
 with it he is warmed himself, but scorches me with the flame,
 measuring a glance to equal my own, just as the craftman's
 rule is laid straight while he moves along the line."⁸⁷

Lucius' portrayal by Byrrhena reflects Pelops' portrayal by Hippodamia through his 'flashing eyes' (*oculi ... in aspectu micantes*), but also through the great impact that the precision of the 'craftman's rule' (*κανών, amussis*) in his appearance makes on the beholder. In the case of Pelops, this precision refers to the glance of his eyes, whereas in Lucius' case it refers *also* (*sed et*) to 'the rest of his body' (*cetera corporis*), including his flashing eyes, which are the most prominent part of his physiognomy and the most important index of his identity.⁸⁸

The 'exact matching' of the glances of Pelops and Hippodameia, then, is re-enacted when the *optutus* of Byrrhena (2,2 *optutum in me conuersa*) 'touches' the *aspectus* of Lucius.⁸⁹ The Sophoclean allusion vividly pictures the visual and erotic reciprocity of their glances, and plays on the notion of the 'cursed hero' (Pelops). Moreover, their encounter takes place in 'the market of desire' (*forum cupidinis*), in the middle of Lucius' restless quest

⁸⁷ For the interpretation of these difficult lines see the edition of Radt, *TGF* p. 384. The present translation is a modified combination of Gulick (Athenaeus, Loeb) and Ellis (quoted by Radt). Cf. Ach. Tat. 1,4,2–3 and see Morales 2004, 158 for many parallels.

⁸⁸ For the importance of the eye and the look in ancient physiognomists see Gleason 1995, 32; Bollók 1996, 11. The emphasis on the light radiated by Lucius' eyes implicitly points to the etymology of Lucius' own name (*lux*), just as Plato's name was explained by Apuleius through an allusion to his stature (*Platoni habitudo corporis cognomentum dedit*; see above, n. 7). Notably, Photis, whose name is often etymologically explained through φως ('light'), has sparkling eyes too (3,19); see above, n. 68.

⁸⁹ See Morales 2004, 29 for the 'haptic' and 'corporeal' nature of vision in ancient optics.

(2,2 *cuncta circumibam*) to satisfy his suspicious desires (*cruciabili desiderio; cupidinis meae*). The intensity of this desire evidently shone through in Lucius' eyes.

It seems that Byrrhena is not unaffected by Lucius' erotic powers. Byrrhena's recognition of Lucius' erotic allure is reflected in various words and actions performed by her, such as the presents she will send to Lucius at Milo's house, which are full of erotic connotations.⁹⁰ But at the same time this does not prevent her from being a sensitive observer as well. To Byrrhena, who is Lucius' aunt, his eyes looked familiar, and reminded her of Lucius' mother – they may even be a family trait, shared by Byrrhena herself as well. Possibly, Byrrhena saw herself reflected in the 'mirror' of Lucius' eyes.⁹¹ Did Byrrhena also see an 'ancestral curse' in it?⁹²

Her recognition of Lucius' 'cursed' identity makes Byrrhena herself a deeply ambiguous figure. Byrrhena appears to be an authority figure who seems to 'know more'⁹³ – indeed, Lucius' blush, a symptom that invites multiple readings, perhaps reveals his sense of being 'observed' in his deepest essence. Lucius' blush in Byrrhena's company could be interpreted by a *lector doctus* as a blush of heightened self-awareness, as Lucius realises that the person who gazes at him may guess something significant about him.⁹⁴ The chapters after their first encounter can be read as a confirmation that Byrrhena has 'guessed' Lucius' ill fate.⁹⁵ After recognising Lucius' 'true nature' behind his sculpture-like perfection, Byrrhena decides to show Lucius her own sculpture garden, with a hidden message to Lucius, embodied by the statues of Diana and Actaeon. Possibly, Byrrhena was struck by the similarity between the 'inquisitive stare' (*curiosum optutum*) of Actaeon

⁹⁰ See Van Mal-Maeder 2001, 196 f. on 2,11 (the tokens of her 'friendship').

⁹¹ For the idea of the viewer (lover) being mirrored in the viewed's (loved one's) eyes (cf. Plat. *Phaedr.* 255b–e) see Bartsch 2000, 76–77; Morales 2004, 132.

⁹² For the idea of ancestry reflected in one's eyes cf. the physiognomical description of Phaedra by her *nutrix* in Sen. *Phaedr.* 379 f. *qui ferebant signa Phoebeae facis / oculi nihil gentile nec patrium micant*, 'those eyes, the very torches of the sun, reflect no trace of what was once their birthright' (tr. Watling 1966), but cf. l. 364.

⁹³ On Byrrhena as an ambivalent figure, with predictive powers and with Isiac connotations (e.g. through the associations of Diana with Isis) see James 1987, 241 f.

⁹⁴ On the various meanings of blushes in Plato see Gooch 1988. For blushes in ancient fiction see Lateiner 1998.

⁹⁵ For the 'conjectural' diagnosis of erotic symptoms as a form of divination cf. Pan's diagnosis of Psyche's 'disease' in *Met.* 5,25; see Zimmerman et al. 2004, 307 ad loc. and see McCreight in this volume with nn. 125–126.

and the rashness that could be read from Lucius' eyes.⁹⁶ Her 'Chaldaean' recognition of Lucius' impending bad fortune may also be implied by her famous comment addressed to Lucius with regard to the sculpture group (2,5 *tua sunt ... cuncta quae uides*, "Everything you see ... belongs to you").

However, Byrrhena's good intentions are as questionable as Lucius' beautiful appearance. Byrrhena introduces Lucius to her house, which represents a miniature of the *Met.*, a lush world of seductions where anything is possible and where storytellers become the object of ridicule and the victim of magic and metamorphosis (Thelyphron).⁹⁷ Byrrhena's gaze at Lucius anticipates his initiation into an uncanny world where he will be fashioned into an image for public viewing, both in human and asinine shape, attracting the attention of many who turn their gaze towards him in ridicule or admiration.⁹⁸

III The *comprehensio* of the *lector doctus*

The link of *execrabiliter* in our passage with the *execrabilis conspectus* of the stepmother in Book 10 introduces another issue, the question of the power of the *lector doctus* to judge outward symptoms, a power sometimes superior to that of characters in the story such as the learned young stepson – a metaliterary question to which Apuleius alludes explicitly in 10,2.⁹⁹ The stepmother's beautiful appearance, which does not reflect a noble character (cf. 10,2 *sed nouerca forma magis quam moribus in domo mariti praepolens*), creates an ominous parallel with Lucius, underneath whose attractive *forma* may be *mores* that are far from attractive. The *lector doctus*, then, is

⁹⁶ I thank Stelios Panayotakis for pointing this out to me. See Van Mal-Maeder 2001, 111 f. for the significance of *curiosum optutum* for the interpretation of the *ecphrasis* in 2,4 as a "mise en abyme proleptique" of Lucius' adventures; for the correction *curiosum optutum* (Kirchhoff) for *curioso optutu* (F, followed by most editions) see p. 110 f. For Lucius' flashing eyes as a sign of rashness bordering on insanity see Mason 1984, 308.

⁹⁷ See Van Mal-Maeder 2001, 287 on 2,19 *quicquid fieri non potest ibi est* (with lit.).

⁹⁸ Cf. 3,2; 10,19; 11,24. See Zimmerman et al. 2004, 42 on 4,28 *quos ... rumor ... congregabat* for the parallels between Lucius and Psyche's situation as the centre of attention, and cf. nn. 61 and 74 above.

⁹⁹ *Dii boni, quam facilis licet non artifici medico, cuius tamen docto Veneriae cupidinis comprehensio, cum uideas aliquem sine corporis calore flagrantem*, 'Good gods, how simple is the recognition of love's passion, if not for a medical practitioner, then certainly for any educated person, when you see someone all in a flame without the body being overheated!' (tr. Zimmerman 2000, 78). Cf. above, n. 95 and McCreight n. 110.

invited to subject Lucius to his own independent penetrating scrutiny, investigating whether this man is not only καλός, but also ἀγαθός.

The enigmatic adverb *execrabiliter* may imply that Lucius' appearance embodies a 'curse' also in the perception of the reader. The adverb itself gives us an important clue as to what 'harm' Lucius' appearance may betoken. It is not likely to be a coincidence that Apuleius uses another similar neologism, viz. the noun *exsecrabilitas*, in the context of his portrayal of the immoral man in his *De Platone et eius dogmate* (2,16 p. 243):¹⁰⁰

pessimo ... deterrimoque non ea tantum uitia quae contra naturam sunt pariunt exsecrabilitatem, ut est inuidentia ... sed etiam quae natura non respuit, uoluptatem dico atque aegritudinem, desiderium, amorem, misericordiam, metum, pudorem, iracundiam. "in the immoral and depraved man, not only those vices that are against nature produce an abominableness, such as envy, ... but also those which nature does not reject, for example 'pleasure' and 'illness', 'desire', 'love', 'pity', 'fear', 'shame', 'anger'".

For a reader who 'sees through' Lucius' immoral character, the portrayal of the immoral man in Apuleius' *De Platone* seems a commentary on the behaviour and demeanour of Lucius as it unfolds in the *Met.*, with his general lack of restraint, his immoral desires,¹⁰¹ and his unquenchable thirst for forbidden fruits of various kinds.¹⁰² Moreover, the immoral type's love of soft and effeminate appearances contains verbal parallels with Lucius' fascination with the snake-like *puer* in *Met.* 1,4.¹⁰³ The 'immoral man' significantly does not know himself (*Plat.* 2,16 p. 242 *quod ipse etiam sibimet sit ignotus*), and is unable to recognise true beauty (p. 243 *ignorans ueram pulchri-*

¹⁰⁰ A paraphrase of Plat. *Phaedr.* 239c–d; see Harrison 2000, 201 f. for Apuleius' use of Platonic dialogues in the *De Platone*.

¹⁰¹ Cf. Apul. *Plat.* 2,16 p. 243 with Lucius' frenzy in *Met.* 2,1–2 and 2,6.

¹⁰² *Plat.* 2,16 p. 243 *inexplebili[s] siti haurire auet omnia genera uoluptatis*, 'with unquenchable thirst he longs to deeply imbibe all sorts of pleasures'; cf. *Met.* 1,2 *sititor alioquin nouitatis* 'being generally thirsty for novelty'; see Keulen 2003a, 44 on thirst as a symptom of moral and psychological ailments.

¹⁰³ *Plat.* 2,16 p. 243 *corporis effetam et eneruam et fluxam cutem deamans*, 'in his passion for a feeble and limp and flabby skin'; cf. *Met.* 1,4 *puer in mollitiem decorus ... eneruam et exossam saltationem explicat cum omnium, qui aderamus, admiratione*, 'a boy ..., graceful to the point of effeminacy, unfolds a limp and loose dance with sinuous twists, to the amazement of all of us there' (see Keulen 2003a, 128–130 ad loc.).

tudinem), because he is deluded by superficial appearances.¹⁰⁴ Via the lexical connection between *execrabiliter* – *execrabilitas*, two striking Apuleian neologisms, the *lector doctus* is invited to associate Lucius' physiognomy with the portrayal of the immoral man from Platonic doctrine.

The *lector doctus*, then, with a philosophical background that included reading Plato,¹⁰⁵ Plutarch,¹⁰⁶ and Apuleius' own Platonic writings, is invited to subject Lucius to a scrutiny '*ad amussim*' that goes beyond physical appearance, and to reveal his internal substance or expose the lack of it. In fact, this kind of scrutiny of others and of oneself, looking at the true person within, is advised by the *philosophus Platonicus* Apuleius in his treatise on the *God of Socrates* (23 p. 174). Of no value are 'extraneous aspects' defined by Apuleius as 'those which are engendered by one's parents and bestowed by fortune', such as 'nobility of birth', 'ancestry', and 'distantly stretching lineage' (*generositatem ... prosapiam ... longos natales*). Keeping this advice in the back of his mind, the Apuleian reader meets in Lucius a young intellectual who claims to descend from philosophers, but who seems far from inclined to 'know himself' ('*γνῶθι σαυτόν*'),¹⁰⁷ being quite the opposite of a *uir bonus et sapiens*, who examines his own character as a *iudex ipse sui*.¹⁰⁸ Instead, the 'probing' and 'measuring' of his personality 'by the *amussis*' is assigned to others who gaze at him and claim to possess a certain power to

¹⁰⁴ Compare Lucius' purely aesthetic pleasure in contemplating Byrrhena's works of art (for which see Merlier-Espenel 2001). For (lack of) self-knowledge see below, n. 107.

¹⁰⁵ See above, n. 40, below, n. 107. For the role of *Platonica* in the *Met.* see also the contributions to this volume by Dowden, Graverini, and Plaza (n. 28).

¹⁰⁶ For Plutarch's use of the imagery of the 'rule' (*κανών*) and of the unbalanced sculpture to illustrate the uneducated ruler's failure to cultivate the interior qualities of wisdom and intelligence cf. *Ad principem ineruditum*, *Mor.* 780b; cf. also *Praecept. ger. rep.*, *Mor.* 807d.

¹⁰⁷ For Socrates as a proponent of self-knowledge, connected with the advice to look in a mirror frequently, see Apul. *Apol.* 15,4–6. Cf. Plat. *Charm.* 164c–165b, where Critias talks about the relationship between *σωφροσύνη* ('temperance') and the Delphic inscription *γνῶθι σαυτόν* (cf. also *Phaedr.* 229e–230a); for the connection of self-knowledge with mirroring and vision cf. Plat. *Alcib.* I 132c–d and see Morales 2004, 14; Bartsch 2000. For Lucius' (apparent) oblivion to his own moral faults see e.g. *Met.* 1,2 *non quidem curiosum*, with Keulen 2003a, 103 ad loc.

¹⁰⁸ In his poem *De uiro bono* (14,20, p. 114 Green), Ausonius pictures the wise man as someone who is his own judge, using the image of the 'architect', who ensures the precision of the building by means of the *amussis* (9–11); see Koster 1974.

identify him – both to those within the world of the narrative, such as his aunt Byrrhena,¹⁰⁹ and to those without, the readers of the *Met*.

Although Byrrhena praises Lucius, and by praising him proves that she knows him, her eulogy is limited to the ‘extraneous aspects’ listed by Apuleius in the above-mentioned passage from *Socr.* (see Van Mal-Maeder 2001, 75). In fact, the only qualities that Byrrhena praises are the qualities Lucius has inherited from his family, which not only goes for his physique, but also for his *probitas*, which is a *generosa probitas*, i.e. it is not an independently acquired moral quality, but a ‘family trait’. The words ‘*generosus est*’: *parentes laudas* (“‘He is well born’: it is his parents you praise”) from *Socr.* 23 p. 175 put Byrrhena’s compliment to Lucius in a less favourable or even narcissistic light: in fact she praises herself, being one of Lucius’ *parentes*, through Lucius.

For the *lector doctus*, this reinforces the impression of a dichotomy between external appearance and internal substance in Lucius’ characterisation, which foreshadows the ‘lesson’ taught to Lucius in the final book, where he learns that ‘extraneous features’ like noble birth turn out to be of little moral worth.¹¹⁰ Moreover, in the eyes of the re-reader, this dichotomy and the ‘curse’ implied by Lucius’ beauty anticipate a different dichotomy between external appearance and internal essence, ensuing from Lucius’ impending metamorphosis into a ‘cursed animal’, the ass.¹¹¹

Conclusion

In this conclusion I foreground some metaliterary aspects of Lucius’ physiognomy as a site of multiple readings and of detecting both the limitations and the depths of individual perceptions. ‘Physiognomising’ Lucius represents ‘reading’ in its narrowest, but also in its widest and deepest sense. It

¹⁰⁹ For the use of architectural imagery (*perpendicularum*) with regard to moral ‘judgment’ cf. Auson. 10,5,8 (164 S.) (on his grandmother) *non delictis ignoscere prompta ... ad perpendicularum seque suosque habuit*. Cf. Amm. 29,2,16; Ennod. *opusc.* 3,109 p. 359, 10. Cf. above, n. 38.

¹¹⁰ *Met.* 11,15 (cf. James and O’Brien in this volume); see Mason 1984, 309. Cf. Bollók 1996, 9 on an reverse kind of duality, viz. between the negative physiognomic characteristics and the internal sanctity of the apostle Paul.

¹¹¹ Cf. 11,6 (Isis speaks to Lucius) *pessimae mihi que iam dudum detestabilis beluae corio te protinus exue*, ‘cast off at once the hide of that wretched beast which I have long detested’.

opens up synchronic and diachronic perspectives. Reading Lucius' face means both 'measuring' him by the *κavón* and 'recognising', 'predicting' his (future) 'celebrity status' – his *cursedness*. Lucius' physiognomical screening in the context of a fictional civic community becomes a self-reflective metaphor for reading Apuleius' text within the context of Antonine intellectual society and as part of a long venerable literary tradition.

The intricacies of viewing Lucius' physiognomy (2,2) introduce us to the intricacies of power in the *Met*. The notions of the 'rule' (*amussis*, *κavón*) on the one hand and the 'curse' on the other hand bring out 'measuring' and 'Chaldaean' powers of reading and viewing. Images of visual and erotic reciprocity are conjured up, in which viewers become viewed.

Gazing at Lucius' 'sculpted body' (*ad amussim congruentia*), Byrrhena, a passionate collector of sculptures (cf. 2,4), discovers a welcome addition to her aesthetic world of lush dinners, captivating glances, and urbane wit, a world of living statues (cf. 2,1). Byrrhena represents the local elite of Hypata (the 'web of power'),¹¹² a community with mythical dimensions and uncanny rituals, where Lucius loses both his freedom and his human status.¹¹³ Just as Lucius tries to avoid Byrrhena's 'measuring' gaze and her invitations to participate in her fancy parties, Lucius declines the statue offered by the Hypatan elite.¹¹⁴

Behind the civic facade of local ritual, however, an immeasurable force turns out to govern events that Lucius does not avoid, but, on the contrary, eagerly tries to encounter and embrace. As a result, his noble traits suffer a metamorphosis that replaces the ideal of human masculine beauty and self-mastery (the *Κavón*) with the lowest of animal appearances, the 'cursed ass', until a new authority figure from a different cult turns her 'benevolent gaze' on him in the final book, changing his 'curse' into the 'blessing' of a rhetorical career in Rome.¹¹⁵ The gazes of Byrrhena, Pamphile, and Isis prefigure

¹¹² For the term 'web of power' cf. Edwards 1993.

¹¹³ For the irony of 2,20 *nec usquam gentium magis me liberum quam hic fuisse credidi* ('I think I have never been freer anywhere in the world than here') see Van Mal-Maeder 2001, 295 ad loc.

¹¹⁴ This behaviour, as Frangoulidis (2002, 184 f.; 187) has suggested, amounts to Lucius' refusal to integrate into the local community. Cf. n. 69.

¹¹⁵ In my opinion, to argue for a linear development in Lucius' role from being a spectator in the beginning to becoming a 'spectacle' at the end of the novel (thus Slater 1998; 2003) is oversimplifying the matter; rather, we can observe from the beginning until the end of the narrative a continuous intricate dialectic between those two opposed roles of Lucius.

Lucius' immutable future on the pages of the man from Madauros that describe his constantly changing past.

Lucius' symmetrical proportions (2,2) indicate a noble origin, and thus seem to symbolise the endurance and changelessness of a genuine aristocratic lineage – his physiognomy reflects a true *uetus prosapia*, recalling the words from the Prologue where the *ego* celebrates the venerable Greek literary tradition as his 'time-honoured pedigree'.¹¹⁶ Although he is endowed with a magnificent physique worthy of kings and emperors, Lucius' subversive personality forms a disconcerting microcosm of social disruption and instability. Instead of embodying an elite idealised dream of a local Greek aristocracy,¹¹⁷ Lucius embodies a 'comic nightmare' of the Antonine ruling class.

This draws our attention to the imagined reaction of the Roman spectator/reader to Lucius' Greek body, in which we can feel a different sort of power, the power of the 'Roman gaze'. This is the power of the readers who stand outside the world of the narrative and read the text, 'measuring' Lucius from the frame of reference of their own society. This power is defined by the *paideia* that these readers bring to their reading of Lucius.¹¹⁸ To a Roman reader, Lucius' portrayal may have invited a range of different perceptions and (conflicting) judgments. At the same time, each individual way of reading represented a way of fashioning one's own identity and role in Roman society, defined (among other things) by gender and ethnicity. In view of the traditional function of physiognomics as an 'assessment tool', we can see the activity of 'reading Lucius' as a reflection of the dynamics of Antonine intellectual culture as a continuous competitive and pluriform process of 'measuring' others and self.¹¹⁹ The measurer becomes 'measured'.

Some Romans may have seen in Lucius an object of ridicule, an effeminate Greek pretender whose fantasy runs away with him – we can observe a reflection of this 'Roman gaze' in the narrative in the view of the sceptic travelling companion (1,3; 1,20).¹²⁰ Others may have enjoyed the rhetoric of

¹¹⁶ Lucius' *prosapia* makes him a local celebrity in Hypata (cf. 3,11). Cf. the *prosapia* mentioned in *Socr.* 23 p. 174 (quoted above, section III). Cf. Bitel in this volume, n. 4.

¹¹⁷ See Perkins 1995, 44 on the beautiful heroes of the Greek novel.

¹¹⁸ For the notion of 'reading power' see Whitmarsh 1998.

¹¹⁹ Cf. Introduction. For reading the *Met.* as a performative activity viewed in the 'face-to-face' context of Antonine literary culture see Keulen 2006 (forthc.).

¹²⁰ The *ego* of the Prologue, who emphasises his Greek identity, anticipates possible criticism of his Roman audience towards his effeminate, ear-pleasing fiction; this critical atti-

Lucius' description in a purely aesthetic way, just as Lucius enjoys the visual enthrallment of the art of sculpture in 2,4 (cf. n. 104). While being cast into the roles of 'art critic' and 'literary critic', and guided by 'the cultural storehouse of a visual repertoire' (cf. n. 19), some readers could detect a wide spectrum of (meta-)literary facets in Lucius' 'cursed beauty'. Looking at Lucius, those readers who knew their Plutarch and Plato – and their contemporary *philosophus Platonicus*, Apuleius – would be encouraged to read more perceptively than others, than Byrrhena at least.¹²¹

Finally, a Roman intellectual from the Antonine age who heeded the Socratic instruction to 'know thyself'¹²² may have used Lucius' portrayal to investigate his own soul. In scrutinising and measuring the demeanour of this 'ideal man of letters', the Roman reader may have recognised an accurate reflection of the particular tastes of his own age, such as an eager *curiositas* for marvels that becomes especially harmful to those who do not have their desire under control.¹²³ Such a Roman reader may have heard in the sceptic's words (cf. 1,20) a playful reference to his own reading activity: 'but you, a man, as your appearance and attitude show, of culture – do you go along with this fairy story?' Thus, the contemporary reader who was drawn into the Apuleian narrative and eagerly looked over Byrrhena's shoulder may have viewed Lucius' portrayal as a kind of mirror, with an unsettlingly precise reflection, '*execrabiliter ad amussim congruentia*', of his own curious soul.¹²⁴

tude is dramatised in the narrative by the sceptic travelling companion. See Keulen 2003a, 18–19; 79; Keulen 2006 (forthc.).

¹²¹ Cf. Dowden in this volume for the Apuleian reader envisaged almost as a 'philosopher's apprentice'.

¹²² See above, nn. 40, 107.

¹²³ Gellius' caution concerning *mirabilia* reflects a similar consciousness (10,12,4): *de istiusmodi admirationum fallaci inlecebra ... , qua plerumque capiuntur et ad perniciem elabuntur ingenia maxime sollertia eaque potissimum, quae discendi cupidiora sunt* 'the fallacious seductions of marvels of that kind, by which the keenest minds are often deceived and led to their ruin, and in particular those which are especially eager for knowledge'. For the tension between Gellius' Roman aim of utility and his taste for telling tales of marvels (cf. also 9,4,5) see Holford-Strevens 2003, 41; 166. Cf. also the warnings against indulging in the pleasure of 'ear-charming rhetoric' in Gell. 11,13,5; for Apuleius see Graverini 2005, esp. 193. For attitudes of self-irony in Gellius and Apuleius cf. Keulen 2004b, 243 f.

¹²⁴ For the suggestion of an analogy in Apuleius between mirrors and written texts see Too 1996, 143 f.; for the idea of a text as a 'mirror' cf. Apul. *Socr.* 17 p. 158. See also above, n. 107.

I can find no more appropriate way of concluding this article than by quoting Maaïke Zimmerman's observation on the use of *inspicere* in the Prologue, where the reader is asked not to decline to examine this papyrus: "... even when Apuleius talks about *inspicere in speculum* ('looking into a mirror'), he presents looking into a mirror as an eminently philosophical occupation. As actual readers we too are invited to carry on our careful examination of the text of the *Met.*, reflecting on what we see reflected there."¹²⁵

I dedicate this article to Maaïke Zimmerman, who has been a *κωνών* for me in many ways.

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¹²⁵ Zimmerman 2001, 255. I thank Stephen Harrison, Luca Graverini, Stelios Panayotakis, Mladen Popović, and especially Thomas McCreight for their help with this article.

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