

Apuleius and the Classical Canon

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I begin with the question, “Is Apuleius a canonical author?” Any answer that one might give would of course raise other questions; and in the context of this volume, the most important of these would be whether Apuleius’ African origin enters into it. But before confronting that question, I have to address a few others that are more basic. For one can hardly get started on this problem until asking, what *is* the canon and what forces govern its formation?

My inclination is to approach these questions practically as well as historically. During the “culture wars” of the nineteen-eighties and -nineties, the questions of what did or didn’t belong in the canon of western literature, why it did or didn’t belong, and whether there should even be such a canon and what legitimate purpose it might serve, were all hotly debated.¹ It would be difficult to maintain that the matter was ever officially settled; but one result of that turmoil has been a greater openness to difference in the popular and professional evaluation of literature. Within the academy as a whole there is no question but that the range of authors taught and studied as literature is much larger than it was until thirty or even perhaps twenty years ago. And within Classical Studies specifically, where the amount of literature that survives from Greek and especially Roman antiquity is so small, there has nevertheless been a noticeable increase in the number of works that scholars study more or less for their own sake instead of for secondary purposes.² But breadth of general interest may not tell us much about how the profession actually defines the canon; and if that is what interests us, then our inquiry more or less reduces to the mundane question of whether a writer’s name appears on graduate school reading lists.

¹ For a convenient survey of these debates see Star 2002.

² Although it has to be said that the recent expansion of interest in texts that were formerly little read is in large part due to a significant shift in what constitutes literary study away from *belle lettres* in the direction of social and cultural history.

Such lists can hardly be said to stir the passions of great numbers of people, and even as instruments for enforcing rigid standards of professional training they may be honored in the breach about as often as they are observed, with free substitution of one item or author for another characterizing the preparation of many students. But notwithstanding their practical flexibility, just because they are ubiquitous and, at least apparently, definite and explicit elements of all PhD programs, they are probably the most readily available indicator of what our discipline regards as the indispensable core of classical literature that an aspiring professional must know. So, what do they have to tell us?

First, and unsurprisingly, such lists are fairly consistent from one program to the next. A group of about two dozen authors predominate on every list, and another dozen are usually represented in some form. And by this criterion, I am happy to report that Apuleius does seem to qualify as a canonical author. He is present on every list that I checked, along with authors such as Cicero, Catullus, Vergil, Horace, Livy, Seneca, and Tacitus, and on more lists than authors such as Seneca the Elder, Persius, Statius, and Suetonius.³ I believe, though—and here I am relying on memory and inference rather than on actual research—that Apuleius' status by this measure is fairly recent. I can remember quite clearly that in the late seventies and early eighties, Apuleius was not on the reading list of my own program or of several others about which I knew.⁴ So I infer that Apuleius' canonical status is relatively recent and that it has a lot to do with the heroic achievements of John Winkler, the Dartmouth Novel Conference, and a number of other individual scholars, including several represented in this volume.⁵ But I am inclined

³ My survey consisted of ten randomly chosen North American PhD programs whose Latin reading lists were available on their web sites at noon on August 27, 2012.

⁴ My memory of the program at Chapel Hill involves an episode in which one of my professors, in a course on Latin prose composition, was surprised when we students told him that there was no Apuleius on the PhD reading list, his opinion being that there should be because including Apuleius would help to represent the diversity and flexibility of the language. And it happens that I still have in my possession a copy of that reading list, which does in fact exclude Apuleius. In a discussion of Apuleius' absence from 1980s reading lists at the Oberlin conference, Ellen Finkelppearl confirmed that he was not on the Harvard reading list, either, and that it was precisely this non-canonical status that attracted her to studying him.

⁵ Winkler 1985; Tatum 1994; one should also mention Schlam 1971 and 1992. The Groningen commentaries have their own, unique importance, although they began in an era when Apuleius was still

to consider his canonical status somewhat tenuous, partly because it *is* recent and partly because only one work, the *Metamorphoses*, tends to be required of PhD students; and it is unusual to require them to read much of that. In fact, there is even a sense in which these requirements are quite misleading, because they usually involve only the Cupid and Psyche episode, which is in many ways the most unrepresentative section of the novel, to say nothing of the remaining corpus.⁶ So Apuleius *has* become a canonical author, but for all these reasons perhaps a slightly marginal or eccentric one.

Apuleius is marginal in another way as well, because on some reading lists he is the *latest* author represented. Where he is not the absolute latest, he generally precedes the next latest, if it is Ammianus, by a least a century and, if it is Augustine, by much more than that.⁷ And, if I am not mistaken, both of these authors are also fairly recent additions to these lists. But what is of special importance for our purposes is that Apuleius, along with Augustine when he is included, is the only African writer to be found, with the interesting exception of Terence, who has always been a fixture on all reading lists since antiquity. Now, someone might point to Terence, or indeed to Augustine, as proof that Apuleius' place in the canon or out of it has nothing to do with the fact that he was from Africa. But the situation is rather more complex than that.

regarded by many as orbiting well beyond the Kuiper Belt of Classical Studies, and later volumes retain more than a little of the project's originary spirit, even if one can detect the progressive influence of the *Zetigeist*, as well.

⁶ Instructive is the way in which Apuleius is represented in another quasi-canonical form, the estimable series of Cambridge Greek and Latin Classics, popularly known as "green and yellows." The point is that Kenney 1990 is not green and yellow, but two shades of purple, because it belongs to the "Imperial Library," which, in the words of the press, "has been established as a part of Cambridge Greek and Latin Classics to accommodate titles that fall outside the conventional canon but are works of genuine interest and literary quality" (http://www.cambridge.org/us/knowledge/series/series_display/item3936987/?site_locale=en_US, retrieved 3:43 pm EDT on August 27, 2012). As of this writing there are four volumes in this series, as against eighty-six green and golds. As in many reading lists, the only Latin author represented besides Apuleius is the much later Augustine, and the only portion of Apuleius' novel represented in the Cupid and Psyche episode. See O'Donnell 1991.

⁷ The Brown program was the only one I found that requires students to read authors such as Ausonius, Boethius, Claudian, Macrobius, Mamertinus, Prudentius, Sidonius, and Symmachus.

Without question the most influential person in shaping our idea of the classical canon is Quintilian. We owe to him most of the specific names found on our reading lists and many of the reasons why we think they belong. He names Cicero and Vergil quite explicitly as the chief Roman authors of prose and poetry; and the typical modern reading list requires more of them than it does of any other author.⁸ There follow Sallust, Livy, Horace, Tibullus, Propertius, Lucretius, and a few others, reading list fixtures all. But even if Quintilian excluded many good writers from his canon (to prevent it, as he says, from becoming an actual library),⁹ some whom he did include—Ennius, Accius, Pacuvius, Lucilius, Caelius, Calvus, Pollio, Messala, and quite a few others—were winnowed out in late antiquity and in the middle ages.¹⁰ On the other hand, very few writers whom Quintilian does not name were ever added to the canon.

Quintilian's canon reflects the opinions that he formed over his entire career, but he cannot have changed or added to them much later than 95.¹¹ Those few canonical authors who postdate Quintilian were mainly younger contemporaries whom, following convention, he did not name—writers like Martial, Pliny, Tacitus, and perhaps Juvenal.¹² I do not wish to focus on poetry, but Juvenal's case is too instructive to pass by. It is hard to say just when he was born, but his career belongs to the second century, definitely after

⁸ Vergil's oeuvre is typically the most voluminous that is required to be read in its entirety or, short of that, more lines of Vergil are required than of any other poet, just as more pages of Cicero are required than of any other prose writer.

⁹ *Inst.* 10.1.57.

¹⁰ It is interesting that Quintilian names many Republican poets but few of post-Augustan date, but no prose author who antedates Cicero and many who lived after him.

¹¹ Jerome says that Galba brought Quintilian to Rome in 68, and Quintilian says that he taught there for twenty years before eventually beginning to compose his *magnum opus* (*Inst.* 1 pr. 1), on which he says (in the introductory epistle to Trypho the bookseller) he worked for a little more than two years before taking Horace's advice (*AP* 388) and laying it aside for nine more. All of this, particularly if twenty is just a round number and the Horatian conceit is not pressed too hard, is compatible with a date of publication not long before the assassination in 96 of Domitian, who is flatteringly addressed at 10.1.9.

¹² Quintilian makes his policy clear at 10.1.96 when he says that one might add the recently deceased Caesius Bassus along with Horace to the canon of lyric poets, although there are living authors far more talented than he. If Quintilian is thinking strictly of lyric poets, then presumably he has Statius in mind.

Quintilian drew up his canon.¹³ He is never mentioned by the grammarian Donatus or by the chronicler Jerome, which implies that his standing as an *auctor* was not very high within a century or two of his death. But in the late fourth or early fifth century, Servius cites Juvenal more than eighty times in his Vergil commentary.¹⁴ If these citations are, like much in Servius' commentary, tralatitiant, then they could attest an interest in Juvenal among earlier commentators. If not, they could betoken a sudden, unexplained rise in Juvenal's reputation during Servius' own time. They could also indicate great insight (or perhaps mere eccentricity) on the part of Servius himself.¹⁵ However this may be, it is quite possible that the enormous popularity of Servius' commentary as a medieval school text did something to ensure Juvenal's reputation and perhaps even his survival. And until recently, of course, it was Juvenal who stood at the outer limit of most graduate reading lists. This is just one of the capricious ways in which the dynamics of canon formation determine the horizon of modern possibilities.

What prose writers after Quintilian's time have enjoyed the status of *auctores* for most of the modern period? None, I think, who lived after the second century, and probably none who lived after the reign of Trajan.¹⁶ (That is one of the factors that makes Juvenal's membership in the canon so significant.) And it is interesting to consider the

¹³ We really have no reliable information at all about Juvenal's life. Syme 1979, 260, cited with approval by Braund 1996, 16 n. 41 (from the reprint in Syme 1984), states that "There is no sign, let alone proof, that Juvenal published or even wrote anything before 115, or indeed before 117," i.e. before the very last years of Trajan's reign or even the accession of Hadrian.

¹⁴ The citations are discussed and evaluated in different ways by Fendrick 1971 and Monno 2009.

¹⁵ Monno 2009 infers from the distribution of citations between Servius and DServ that Servius was more interested in Juvenal than were his predecessors.

¹⁶ Among Antonine writers Gellius has always been the most widely read, but has been viewed mainly as a source rather than an object of study in his own right. Holford-Strevens 1988 marked a sea-change, and Gleason 1995, though not specifically focused on Gellius, was very influential, as well: see e.g. Beall 1997, 1999, 2001; Vardi 2000, 2001; several of the essays in Holford-Strevens and Vardi 2005; Keulen 2009; Gunderson 2009. Fronto's writings of course were basically unknown until 1815, when Angelo Mai began to discover his works in palimpsests (for details see Reynolds-Wilson 1983, 173-74); thereafter he too was long valued mainly as a historical and biographical witness, until Champlin 1980 and Van den Hout 1999 prepared the way for him to be studied in his own right: see e.g. Fleury 2003, 2006; Richlin 2006) and specifically as an African intellectual at Rome (Fleck 2006; Claassen 2007, 2009; Degn 2010). Neither author as yet appears on any graduate reading list that I have seen. On Apuleius and Antonine culture, see now Bradley 2012.

pronounced stylistic differences among the chosen—mainly Pliny and Tacitus, but also the more marginal Suetonius. Of the three, it is Suetonius whose claim to canonicity is now based almost exclusively on his value as a historical source, and not to his considerable literary influence or, certainly, to his extremely undistinguished style.¹⁷ Pliny and Tacitus on the other hand are both accomplished stylists as well as important historical sources, though they are both of these things in very different ways. To this extent they are (I think it is fair to say) canonical authors in a fuller sense than Suetonius, but the roads by which each of these writers reached canonical status were quite different.

Pliny obviously imbibed and exemplified the Ciceronian literary ideals of his teacher Quintilian, and in some sense he owes his place in the canon mainly to this fact.¹⁸ He is not Cicero, by a very long shot, but his patterning of himself upon Cicero—and, perhaps as important, his willingness and even eagerness to be seen as adopting and exemplifying the Ciceronian standards promulgated by Quintilian, but without really affecting to challenge Cicero, provided an accessible and appealing model for later writers, like Sidonius Apollinaris and, much later, for neo-Latin writers who accepted Ciceronianism as a norm.¹⁹ Today as a result few may regard Pliny as the most *inspiring auctor* in the classical canon.²⁰ Nevertheless, it is hard to argue that he doesn't belong.

If Tacitus was also a pupil of Quintilian, then he rejected many of his teacher's ideas and went in a quite different direction.²¹ It is not clear whether this independence cost him in the short run, for we have no early commentary on his style, but there is little

¹⁷ *De uita Caesarum* effectively determined the form of literary and especially regal biography in the west for the writers of the *Historia Augusta*, for Einhard in his life of Charlemagne, and for Petrarch in his *De uiris illustribus*. Hurley 2001, 20-22 succinctly outlines the ancient and medieval reception.

¹⁸ Pliny refers to Quintilian as one of his teachers at *Epist.* 2.14.9 and 6.6.3.

¹⁹ On Pliny's imitation of Cicero (and others) see Marchesi 2008. Sidonius programmatically declares his allegiance to the example of Pliny along with his own unwillingness to be seen as rivaling Cicero (*Epist.* 1.1; cf. 4.22.2, 8.10.3, 9.1.1). Twice he includes Apuleius along with Pliny in lists of authors whom he admires (2.10.5, 4.3.1; cf. 2.9.5).

²⁰ That said, Pliny no less than Gellius and Fronto is undergoing a significant critical reevaluation. Besides Marchesi 2008, see Ludolph 1997; S. Hoffer 1999; Henderson 2002; Gibson-Morello 2003, 2012; Castagna-Lefèvre 2003.

²¹ The relationship is often supposed, but we have no actual evidence.

to suggest that Tacitus was a very popular author in later antiquity.²² It is true that he was read by other historians, and in the fourth century Ammianus regarded him as the standard authority on the early principate, as appears from the fact that his own history is a continuation of Tacitus.²³ But other references to Tacitus occur only sporadically down into the fifth century.²⁴ Already in the Severan period he begins to be remembered disparagingly as a traducer of the Christians.²⁵ And in other respects as well Tacitus' fortunes are greatly reduced. Here his brilliant but unusual style may come into play: at any rate, in the surviving commentaries of late antiquity, he is never cited as an *auctor*.²⁶ Perhaps for this reason, at least in part, he was anything but popular in the middle ages, not even being mentioned during the seventh and eighth centuries. Only in the early modern period did he start coming into his own as one of the great, and arguably the greatest of Latin authors.

So, then, Suetonius, Pliny, and Tacitus, all owe their positions within the canon, central or marginal as they may be, to important differences between them in form, style, and content, and to a comparably varied history of reception. There will be more to say about that; but what of Apuleius? How did his reputation fare in later antiquity, what were his early experiences with regard to the modern classical canon, and can these experiences explain why his attainment of this honor is so recent and, perhaps, still somewhat questionable?

²² For the essential data concerning the reception of Tacitus from antiquity to the Renaissance, see Mendell 1957, 225-55. What follows here covers only a selection of the material that he discusses.

²³ Jerome sheds further light on how Tacitus the historian was understood in later antiquity. At *Comm. in Zacchariah* 14.1-2, he calls Tacitus the author of "the lives of the Caesars following Augustus to the death of Domitian" (*post Augustum usque ad mortem Domitiani uitas Caesarum*), as if he wrote in the manner of Suetonius. Mendell (1957, 228-29) observes that there is nothing in this notice to suggest that Jerome had read or even seen either the *Annals* or the *Histories*, and suggests that he merely knew of the two works at second-hand as a chronologically continuous, unified *corpus* of thirty books.

²⁴ Sidonius speaks of Tacitus with obvious respect (*Epist.* 4.22.2, 4.14.1, *Carm.* 2.192, 23.154). Orosius in *Adu. pag.* 1 (5.1, 10.1) cites *Hist.* 5.7 and 5.3. In book 7 he cites otherwise lost portions Tacitus' works (collected by Mendell 1957, 231-32, Koestermann 1969, 238-39). In the mid-sixth century Cassiodorus (*Var. lib. epist.* 2.2) and his pupil Jordanes (*Getica* 2.13) become the last authors of antiquity to quote Tacitus, whom they know simply as "Cornelius."

²⁵ Tert., *Apol.* 16, cf. *Ad. nat.* 1.11, 2.12; Sulpicius Severus of Aquitaine, *Chronicorum libri* 2.29-30.

²⁶ Servius quotes a lost portion of the text in his commentary on the *Aeneid* 3.399.

The general answer may seem obvious, but perhaps it should not. It is true that by the criteria I have been considering, Apuleius apparently had a lot going against him. Born perhaps around 125, he was of a decidedly later generation than Pliny and Tacitus, Suetonius, and even Juvenal. But this is disadvantageous only from a modern perspective. Presumably no one understood in advance that canon-formation would basically come to a close with the death of Trajan, and it is definitely the case that late antique authors like Sidonius speak of Fronto, Apuleius' contemporary, and of Apuleius himself alongside Pliny with evident respect.²⁷ One might suppose it was disadvantageous to leave behind a corpus of writings that is so sharply bifurcated between the oratorical and philosophical works on the one hand and on the other the novel.²⁸ Of course, one can find elements of unity between these two major components of Apuleius' oeuvre, and it may be that critics nowadays are much more inclined to do so than they were in the recent past.²⁹ Nevertheless, although for us the versatility that it required to produce such a body of work is impressive, one can understand how either of these components alone might, in the eyes of a less sympathetic age, have worked against canonization. And for that matter, if Apuleius had left only the *Apology*, the *Florida*, and the rest of the shorter works, would he have been admitted to the canon? This is not to disparage the *opera minora*; it is the same as asking whether Vergil would have gained admission without the *Aeneid*, or Tacitus without the *Histories* and *Annals*. From this point of view, it is the *Metamorphoses*, an ambitious and, to a modern judge, a brilliant work conceived on a large scale, that bears the identifying signs of a true masterpiece. And it is all the more dazzling, as well, because it is our only complete specimen of the

²⁷ Sidonius, *Epist.* 4.3.1.

²⁸ Note, however, that earlier ages may not have viewed this bifurcation in the same way as we do. The manuscript tradition divides Apuleius' works in two, but groups them differently. One tradition (the "philosophical" works) consists of *De deo Socratis*, *De Platone*, *De mundo*, and the falsely ascribed *Asclepius*; the other ("literary") group includes *Apologia*, *Metamorphoses*, and *Florida*. See Marshall 1983 and Gaisser 2008, 40.

²⁹ I just note in passing that other authors whose works have been perceived as bifurcated in some other way, such as Seneca (philosophy and drama) and Ovid (pre- and post-exilic poetry), have also enjoyed a major upsurge in critical interest at roughly the same time as Apuleius, and that in their cases as well the nature of the relationship between the two different components of their oeuvres has been a significant focus of attention.

Roman novel. But in antiquity, this genre seems, as everyone knows, not to have been much esteemed by the literary establishment. And stylistically, by comparison with Petronius or indeed with the Greek romances, this unique specimen is very eccentric, and all the more so when judged by Ciceronian standards. One can easily imagine Quintilian pronouncing the same judgment on Apuleius that he leveled against the author of those other *Metamorphoses*—that he was too *lascivus*, that he indulged his talent rather than disciplining it.³⁰ But since Quintilian does not even recognize prose fiction as a genre, Apuleius would not have received from him the ambiguous honor of disapprobation tempered with grudging praise such as Ovid obtains. Even if Apuleius' novel is a masterpiece, that is to say, it is obviously not the sort of masterpiece likely to get the person who wrote it admitted into the charmed circle of canonical authors.

It is odd, then, that in spite of these supposed disadvantages, Apuleius seems to have had at least some status in later antiquity—a higher status in fact than such pillars of the modern classical canon as Pliny and Tacitus. That is among the lessons taught by Julia Gaisser and Robert Carver in their two wonderfully complementary books on the reception of Apuleius, which demonstrate that Apuleius was in fact held in some esteem from a period shortly after his death at least until the early fifth century.³¹ As an indication of this, we may briefly consider the Trier cathedral ceiling and also the sculpture gallery in the Baths of Zeuxippus, both of which Gaisser discusses.³² On the Trier ceiling Apuleius appears together with Vergil and another figure, whom Erika Simon in her reconstruction identifies as Heraclitus.³³ Vergil is identified through motifs inspired by the Fourth Eclogue, Apuleius by images of Cupid and Psyche. To appear in such company is a testimony to Apuleius' high standing.³⁴ But it may be even more significant that in the sculpture gallery in Constantinople, Apuleius and Vergil are the

³⁰ E.g. *Inst.* 4.1.77, 10.1.98.

³¹ Carver 2007; Gaisser 2008. Cf. also Stramaglia 1996.

³² Gaisser 2008, 25-28.

³³ Simon 1986, 19-37.

³⁴ In view of my earlier point about a perceived bifurcation between the novel and the *opera minora*, it may be significant that the iconographic program of the Trier ceiling seems to allude to the Cupid and Psyche story as a philosophical allegory. This would point to the perception of an underlying unity at least between the novel and the philosophical works. See Simon 1986, 19-37; Gaisser 2008, 25-27.

only Roman authors included among dozens of Greek poets, philosophers, and historians (as well as gods, goddesses, and figures of myth). The program of the sculpture gallery is not well understood as a whole, but I wonder whether the inclusion of Apuleius and Vergil alone among Roman authors might not be interpretable and perhaps might even be able to shed a bit of additional light on the paintings found at Trier.³⁵ In addition to including Apuleius and Vergil individually in both cases, could there not also be a collective and representative element at work? For instance, might the names of Apuleius and Vergil, one beginning with the first letter of the Latin alphabet, the other (in effect) with the last (since there are no Latin authors with names like Xenophon or Zeno), represent the alpha and the omega of Roman authors; and, in this sense, might they by themselves be taken as representing the entire Latin canon? Alternatively, or in addition, the pair could be taken to represent prose and poetry, perhaps even as the most esteemed writers of the two forms, which would amount to a remarkable revision of the Ciceronian norm advocated by Quintilian.³⁶ This is of course very speculative, and I offer the idea in that spirit. But however this may be, it is obvious that Apuleius' presence in these monuments attests the considerable esteem in which he was held at Constantine's court.

Between the seventh and the eleventh centuries Apuleius' trail becomes difficult to follow.³⁷ After his rediscovery in the Renaissance he has certainly had his champions, but only recently has he begun to regain some measure of the prestige that he apparently enjoyed at Trier and Constantinople in late antiquity. That the process of regaining

³⁵ We know of the sculpture gallery from a verse ephrasis by Christodorus of Thebes, *Description of the statues in the public baths named for Zeuxippus*, which forms the second book of the *Anthologia Palatina*. The arrangement of the poem obviously need not reflect that of the gallery itself, which may also have contained holdings beyond what the poem describes. Specifically Roman figures are very few: besides Apuleius (303-5) and Vergil (413-16) they include only Julius Caesar (92-96) and Pompeius (398-407). Among mythological figures there is, however, a strong Trojan representation that includes Aeneas (143-47), though as a strictly Homeric character. There is also a representation of the Vergilian characters Dares and Entellus (221-27). Apuleius is followed by Artemis (306-10) and then by Homer (311-350), the longest single entry in the poem. Vergil himself occupies an honorific position as the last figure mentioned. He is immediately preceded by a second Homer (407-13), son of Moero and himself a tragedian.

³⁶ I am grateful to Stephen Harrison for this suggestion.

³⁷ For details and some interesting possibilities for Apuleius presence in vernacular literature during the middle ages see Carver 2007, 61-107.

canonical status has been difficult is perhaps a vestige of Quintilian's criteria in our own ideas about canon formation. Apuleius' masterpiece, as I mentioned before, is a work of prose fiction, a genre that Quintilian did not even recognize; and in the modern period, widespread interest in the ancient novel is still a relatively new thing. With regard to his other works, Apuleius' claim to be a philosopher was more compelling in his own time and for several centuries thereafter than it is today—or, perhaps, than it would have been if he had lived a century earlier than he did. It is hard to imagine that Quintilian would have found a place in his canon for someone like Apuleius, as he might well have done for Pliny or Tacitus. And perhaps this difference in perspective explains everything: perhaps the intellectual climate in which Apuleius lived had changed sufficiently from that of the Flavian and even the Trajanic period that it makes sense for modern students of antiquity to see the death of Trajan as marking the end of an era, an end that calls for the closing of the classical canon. In this case, Apuleius' greater celebrity during late antiquity, as compared with that of Pliny and Tacitus, would by itself prove that he was already part of a world that was less classical than theirs, and would prove that he did not really belong in the classical canon.

The case has never been made, so far as I am aware, in quite these terms—in part because appreciation of Apuleius' fame in late antiquity is itself a relatively recent phenomenon. But the fact remains that Apuleius, despite what seem from a modern perspective to have been insuperable disadvantages, nevertheless did manage during late antiquity to achieve a reputation greater than that of Pliny or Tacitus. The fifth century was a great leveler, however, and during most of the middle ages neither Pliny, Tacitus, nor Apuleius was widely known. In a sense, the slate was wiped clean and they all had to start from scratch when Renaissance scholars began the modern game of classical canon formation. It was Pliny, for reasons that I have explained, who made his way into the canon with the least difficulty, and he has remained there ever since. Tacitus caused much more excitement, meaning that he attracted both ardent supporters and ardent opponents, not least on historical and political grounds.³⁸ Stylistically, his case parallels

³⁸ On Tacitus' early modern reception in history, politics, and literature see, variously, Schellhase 1976; Momigliano 1990, 109-31; Luce and Woodman 1993; Mellor 1993, 140-57; Krebs 2005 and 2009; Gajda

that of Apuleius to a certain extent, in that both authors became implicated in controversy over their flouting of Ciceronian norms.³⁹ But the specific charges leveled against each of them are different in quite interesting ways, which are easiest to grasp if they are stated in their most extreme forms.

Although Tacitus was an extreme stylistic non-conformist, ever since antiquity the main thing that his enemies held against him was the belief that he was a liar who invented episodes that never happened and reported them as fact. Tertullian was the first to make this charge; Voltaire was the first modern writer to pick up on the idea.⁴⁰ Eventually, the notion that Tacitus fabricated historical events mutated into the theory that most of his works were the fabrications of a much later age.⁴¹ It is a rather strange story, and its details need not concern us; but one thing that is notable, for our purposes, is that Tacitus' distinctive and un-Ciceronian style plays so little part in these arguments.⁴² And by the same token when the tide in Tacitus' fortunes began to turn in the mid-sixteenth century, they did so not so much because tastes had changed regarding his style, but because his historical perspective proved congenial to commentators on

2009, 253-68.

³⁹ On Tacitus and the early modern controversies surrounding Ciceronianism see Croll 1966, 163-202; Salmon 2003, 27-53.

⁴⁰ On Voltaire and Tacitus see Volpilhac-Auger 2009, 141-42, with further references.

⁴¹ The facts, which are often reported inaccurately, are these. First Ross 1878, while accepting the authenticity of the *Histories*, *Germania*, and *Agricola*, attempted to prove that the great humanist Poggio Bracciolini was the real author of the *Annals*. Then Hochart 1890 expanded the thesis to include the *Histories*. Finally, Wiener 1920 argued on a different basis and without reference to the authenticity of the other works, that the *Germania* was a forgery emanating from Arabic Spain. No scholar takes or ever did take these arguments seriously, but doubts about the authenticity of Tacitus' works persist as a kind of urban legend on the internet.

⁴² It is particularly ironic that Ross and Hochard nominated Poggio, a staunch Ciceronian, as Tacitus' forger. But Ross does occasionally convict Poggio of betraying himself by elements of his Ciceronian style (e.g. 108, 111, 117, 361). Comparing the Latinity of what he regards as Tacitus' authentic works to that of the *Annales*, he opines that "The eloquence of Tacitus is grave and majestic, his language copious and florid. The language of the author of the *Annales* is cramped; and he maintains a dignified composure, rather than majesty" (115; cf. 285). It goes without saying that neither Ross's method nor his taste is beyond cavil. Wiener for his part does detect the occasional Arabism in the *Germania*, but says nothing about the style of the other works.

political developments that were taking place throughout early modern Europe.⁴³ Then eventually, with progress in editing and explicating Tacitus' challenging prose style, appreciation of his artistry increased as well, to the point where he is now regarded as one of the best thinkers *and* one of the best stylists that Latin literature has to offer. But it seems important that it was appreciation of what Tacitus had to say that led the way, and that appreciation of how he said it followed on.

Apuleius, too, challenged the literary expectations of early modern intellectuals. As was the case with Tacitus, from the Ciceronian controversies of the Renaissance until quite recently the merits of Apuleius' style have been vigorously debated and, gradually, vindicated.⁴⁴ But throughout the modern period, critical reception of Apuleius has continued to be conditioned more by style than by content. It is in connection with a category of style that the particular objection that interests me has surfaced—intermittently and only in part, but persistently and unmistakably as well—namely, an interest in Apuleius' status as a provincial and, specifically, as an African. This is of course the aspect of his reception that is most germane to the concerns of this volume, and it will occupy our attention for the remainder of this paper.

To frame my discussion of Apuleius as an African author, let us conduct a brief, very modest thought-experiment. Perhaps it is appropriate in light of Apuleius' distinction as a novelist to view his canonical status through the lens of an idea about the novel promulgated by Mikhail Bakhtin, namely, that of the chronotope.⁴⁵ This is the word that Bakhtin coined to designate the peculiar way in which, as he argues, every literary genre defines itself by virtue of its treatment of space and time. My idea is to borrow this concept and to apply it to the “genre” of Latin literature as a whole, or to the canon of Latin literature, and in this light to ask how space-time behaves within this genre's precincts. Rome of course is the center of this chronotope. But as the canon moves forward in time, it also expands in space, in the sense that later canonical authors tend to be born farther and farther away from Rome. This ever-expanding canon-chronotope thus bears some resemblance to the physical universe as described by the “Big Bang” theory

⁴³ Salmon 2003, 37.

⁴⁴ D'Amico 1984; Gaisser 2008, 168-69, 202-3.

⁴⁵ Bakhtin 1981, 84-258.

of cosmology. In the chaotic early period, canonical authors might come from anywhere—Greece, Puglia, and even Africa itself—until, after this initial period of chaos settles down, the chronotope of the literary canon expands at an even rate for a long period of time. Earlier authors all come from Italy, initially from a moderate distance away from Rome (Lucilius, Accius, Cicero, Sallust; then Horace, Propertius, and Ovid), but then they are joined and eventually outnumbered by writers from Cisalpine Gaul (Catullus, Vergil, Livy, Pliny, Tacitus). By the same token, the Italians are eventually joined by writers from more distant provinces, like Hispania (Seneca, Lucan, Columella, Quintilian, Martial). What is more, under the principate an additional feature comes into view, which is that the literary chronotope comes to be related to a different one, which it anticipates and even predicts. That is, if we can extend this thought experiment to include the provenance of the emperors, we find that we get great Italian provincial authors (under Augustus) several decades before we get Italian provincial emperors (the Flavians), and great Hispanic provincial authors (under Nero and the Flavians) before getting Hispanic emperors (like Trajan, Hadrian, and Marcus Aurelius). According to this model, the next step should be great *African* authors appearing in advance of African emperors—which is, in fact, just what we do get in the form of Apuleius and Fronto heralding the accession to the purple of their fellow Africans in the form of the Severan dynasty.⁴⁶ Then, perhaps, if we can recur once more to cosmology as a model for literary-imperial Latin space-time, comes the Big Crunch of the third century, when everything collapses back into chaos. What could be clearer?⁴⁷ A Bakhtinian history of Latin literature would be founded on such principles as these, rather than on the usual, boring

⁴⁶ Nor of course does the parade of African writers stop with them: it continues into the early third century, but mainly with Christian authors, like Tertullian, whom literary historians seem to consider beyond the pale of the classical, and even with Christian women, like Vibia Perpetua (on whose marginal position see Farrell 2001, 74-83 and Farrell 2012).

⁴⁷ Amusingly, chronotope theory “explains” both of the previous major crises that beset the principate, as well, namely the failure of the Latins Galba and Vitellius or the Etruscan Otho to consolidate their power in 69, and also the Latin Nerva’s need in 96 to adopt the Hispanic Trajan. Only Antoninus Pius, born in Lanuvium of a family from Nîmes, breaks the pattern, anticipating by centuries the appearance in any quantity of writers from Gaul.

ones of gold and silver or the ages of man.⁴⁸ But we don't seem to believe in this model. Why not?

This Bakhtinian experiment, however whimsical, has the virtue of focusing our attention on the fact that the ever-expanding universe of the Latin canon stops at Africa. The model does not tell us why it stops there or why it should, nor is it obvious why it should. But, conventionally, it seems to do so, and this fact helps to focus our attention on how Apuleius' Africanism has complicated the history of his modern reception.⁴⁹

One of the first if not the first critics to impugn Apuleius' style, along with that of Tertullian, as provincial and specifically African, is none other than Desiderius Erasmus.⁵⁰ A weighty opinion, then; but it is amusing that in the same letter where this occurs, Erasmus contrasts Apuleius with Augustine—who himself of course speaks of Apuleius as a fellow African!⁵¹ Perhaps it is Augustine's status as an orthodox Christian as much as his occasionally orthodox Ciceronian style that allowed him to rise above his African origins in Erasmus' eyes, while a heretic like Tertullian and a magician like Apuleius could not. But Apuleius' more secularly-minded editors have occasionally shown similar concerns. David Ruhnken in his preface to Frans Oudendorp's posthumous edition of Apuleius criticized his author's Africanism in terms like those used by Erasmus.⁵² Similarly G.F. Hildebrand, in his edition of 1842, contrasted the exuberance

⁴⁸ On these tropes of literary history see Farrell 2001, 84-94.

⁴⁹ The following summary is much indebted to Harrison 2002.

⁵⁰ *Mihi ueterum dictionem uariam consideranti uidetur uix ullos prouinciales feliciter reddidisse Romani sermonis simplicitatem praeter aliquot, qui Romae a pueris sunt educati. Nam et Tertulliano et Apuleio suus quidam est character et in decretis Afrorum, quae multa refert Augustinus contra Petilianum et Crescentium, deprehendas anxiam affectationem eloquentiae, sed sic, ut Afros agnoscas (Ep. 1334, from 1523: "On considering the varying styles of the ancients, it seems to me that hardly any writers of provincial origin have successfully rendered the purity of the Roman language, except for those who were educated at Rome from their youth. For Tertullian and Apuleius have their own particular stylistic stamp; in the decrees written by Africans, too, which are cited in abundance by Augustine writing against Petilianus and Crescentius, you will find an anxious affectation of style, but such as to enable you to recognise them as Africans").*

⁵¹ August. *Epist.* 138.19 *Apuleius enim...qui nobis Afris Afer est notior....*

⁵² Ruhnken (in Oudendorp 1786, i-v) begins by comparing Apuleius and Gellius, whom he considers the greatest writers of the Antonine period, and noting how far and in what ways each of them, by a lapse of judgment, fell short of the standard established by Cicero and other writers of his age. He praises Gellius

of the *Metamorphoses* with the more austere, Ciceronian style of Apuleius' other works, finding in the style of the novel (which he regarded as a youthful work) evidence of an Africanism that Apuleius had not yet purged from his system.⁵³ The idea of African Latinity more generally enjoyed some currency in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries; more recently one tends to hear that it is an idea whose time has gone. But it keeps resurfacing, as it has in the work of Serge Lancel and Hubert Petersmann.⁵⁴ And Jonathan Powell in his contribution to Kahane and Laird's *Companion* accepts the idea that the provincial accent of Madaurus is on display, even if only to a small extent, in the prologue to the novel.⁵⁵ Now in this very volume Dan Selden puts forth some impressive arguments to suggest that the non-Latinate cultures of Africa, Egypt, and the Near East may have played an important role in determining elements of Apuleius' rhetorical style. My own view is that Selden's approach is the most cogent that has been advanced so far, but that I will need time to make up my mind about his results; and if I may continue in the meantime to approach the problem from a pre-Selden perspective, I would be inclined to go along, at least in part, with Mark Edwards' judgment in *his* contribution to the prologue companion:

When we call Apuleius an African, do we speak of "African Latin"? Not if that connotes the barbarous dialect of the province, which exists indeed, but only in official documents. The Latin of the African literati was no dialect, no pidgin; from the middle of the second to the middle of the fourth century, the Africans are almost the only Latin writers extant. Of course they have Roman models, but they excel them both in brilliance and in bathos,

for tempering his penchant for archaism by confining his lexicon for the most part to that of Plautus and Terence, and he chides Apuleius for his unrestrained love of far-fetched words. Ruhnken further complained that he found Apuleius' *tumor Africanus* particularly irritating in those works that he expected the learned to read—works, then, other than *Apology*, which he goes on to praise for being free of such faults, or, presumably, the novel.

⁵³ Hildebrand 1842, xxiv-xxv makes much of the stylistic differences between *Metamorphoses* on the one hand and all of his other works—which he regards as not far short of Cicero's standard—on the other. He posits that the novel was written at Rome but in Apuleius' youth, before he had lost those provincial qualities—mainly, a love of archaism—that, in Hildebrand's view, he shared with Tertullian, Cyprian, and African authors, but exaggerated even more than they because of his presumed youth.

⁵⁴ Lancel 1987; Petersmann 1998. On the issue of African Latin cf. Mattiacci in this volume.

⁵⁵ Powell 2001.

monotonously exhausting all varieties, and frequently as strict in imitation of the ancients as they are fertile in the invention of new forms. For all that, though the tone is not provincial, Roman Africa is a province, and the truth in such a phrase as “African Latin” is that, like the Punic capital, it brings together the margins and the centre. The Latin culture of Africa is the best, if not the only, Latin culture of its time; yet its exponents know that they are not at the heart of the Roman world.⁵⁶

This carefully nuanced statement takes us some way towards the answer we have been seeking, but not all the way. Edwards is saying that a provincial and specifically African *dialect* is not on display in the prologue to the novel. The question is what he means by focusing our attention in the way that he does on the provincial *consciousness* of Apuleius and other African writers. It is certainly not obvious, as I think Edwards himself makes clear, that this is a specifically linguistic trait. If he means to say that Apuleius in the *Metamorphoses* thematizes provincialism, placing the issue of provincialism before the reader in ways that are ironic and thought-provoking, then I certainly agree. But the provincialism of the prologue can be read as advertising a certain cosmopolitanism as well. Miletus, Egypt; Attica, Corinth, and Sparta; Athens again and, finally, Latium and Rome are all invoked, in just this order, before we are told that we should attend to and enjoy a tale “Greek in origin but adapted for Latin use.”⁵⁷ The itinerary implied is not quite a complete tour of the empire such as we encounter so often in imperial literature, but it is close: imperial cosmopolitanism, then, but viewed perhaps from a *provincially* cosmopolitan point of view?⁵⁸ In any case, one province that is not mentioned here is Africa Proconsularis, nor is any part of the novel set there; so that if Apuleius the writer wished to thematize his own specifically African origin, he could have been clearer about his intent.⁵⁹

⁵⁶ Edwards 2001, 48.

⁵⁷ *fabulam Graecanicam*, with the commentary of Harrison and Winterbottom 2001, 15.

⁵⁸ In contrast, then to the centrist imperialism of Ovid (see Habinek 2001, 151-70) or Martial (*Spect.* 1, 3).

⁵⁹ Keith Bradley’s insistence in his paper at the Conference that one take seriously the ancient Roman conception of Africa as the basis for understanding Apuleius as an African writer is very much to the point.

But let us suppose that provincialism in some sense is under consideration in Apuleius' writings. Is this true generally of African writers in the second century in ways that it was not true of Hispanic writers in the first? Is Apuleius' interrogation of provincialism a function of his Africanism, or something that he shares with other African writers? At the linguistic level, certainly not. As Stephen Harrison has pointed out apropos of the style of the *Metamorphoses*, "if learning Latin in an African context engendered such a style, we would expect more of it in writers of similar background such as Fronto, who shares Apuleian archaism but not his exuberance."⁶⁰ This is perfectly correct, and one might go farther: if Fronto, who was much esteemed and very influential in his own day, and praised by Sidonius for his *grauitas*, had been discovered along with Pliny, Tacitus, and Apuleius during the Renaissance, then modern intellectuals might have formulated their ideas about Africanism differently than they in fact did.⁶¹ This might have meant that arguments such as the one that Wytse Keulen makes in this volume might have been formulated earlier, so that we would all be thinking differently about the relationship between Fronto and Apuleius precisely as African authors. But as things happened, Fronto's works remained unknown until the great palimpsest hunter Angelo Mai discovered them in 1815, by which time the conditions that governed the initial reception of new works of classical literature had changed enormously and many of the basic conceptions of classical antiquity that obtain today had already become firmly entrenched.⁶² So we will never know how the Renaissance discovery of Fronto would have affected the reception of Apuleius.

Other African writers may share specific traits with Apuleius (or with the Apuleius of the *Metamorphoses* as opposed to the rest of his corpus; or vice versa), but it is hardly clear that these individual shared traits add up to something we can call Africanism or even to a persistent and characteristic interest in provincialism as such. In fact, it seems to me far from clear that African writers can really be defined as a coherent group any more,

⁶⁰ Harrison 2002, 62.

⁶¹ Sidon. *Epist.* 4.3.1. He praises Apuleius alongside Fronto, but a textual uncertainty makes it tantalizingly uncertain whether the quality that Sidonius admires in Apuleius is the impact (*fulmen*) or the copious stream (*flumen*) of his eloquence.

⁶² On the transmission of Fronto, see Reynolds in Reynolds and Wilson 1984, 173-74.

really, than Hispanic writers can. Africanism is always available as a category, but what purpose it serves is always open to interpretation. And here I would just bring up in passing E. J. Kenney's idea about Apuleius and Nabokov.⁶³ This is definitely suggestive and where these two modern writers are concerned, the idea that exuberance is the likely result of writing literature in a language not one's own certainly seems apt. But I am not sure it has any real general validity. If we considered Roman comedy, for instance, Kenney's idea would be much truer of the exuberant Italian Plautus than of the more restrained Terentius Afer, that *puri sermonis amator* whose African background is of practically no interest to anyone. And in modern literature, I cannot see that the idea applies to such writers as Joseph Conrad or Samuel Beckett, or perhaps even to those Italian writers who grew up speaking a regional dialect before learning to write in standard Italian almost as in a foreign language.

All of this suggests, in my view, that the modern concern with Apuleius' Africanism is greatly exaggerated and quite possibly fundamentally mistaken. That does not mean that investigation of African themes in Apuleius' writings is also mistaken; far from it. Rather, what I question is the hypostasization of Apuleius' African origins to a linguistic and literary-historical issue.

To return in conclusion to the idea of Apuleius' place in the canon, I believe that the modern focus on Africanism does much to explain Apuleius' marginality. He really is, literally, marginal. He is not only the first African author, other than the altogether exceptional Terence, to be included in the canon, but also the first post-Trajanic author to win that distinction. But there is more at stake than the place of Apuleius alone. For if we take at all seriously the idea of Africanism, or even if we merely ask why an author should be excluded from the canon, however we define it, simply because he is African, then we must face a whole series of other questions in the form of petitions from other African authors clamoring for admission. Perhaps the problem is that antiquity, apparently, has to end somewhere; but literary Latinists persist in ending it earlier than do others. To put it simply, why do we not accept the results of our earlier Bakhtinian experiment and expand the precincts of the canon to admit not only writers like Fronto

⁶³ Kenney 1990, 29.

and Apuleius, but Perpetua, Tertullian, Minucius Felix, and others as well? Here no doubt the issue of Christianity as well as Africanism complicates the decision. But historians, art historians, and archaeologists have by now long been used to living in such a heterogeneous world. Literary Latinists, in contrast, mainly persist in ending antiquity with the death of Trajan, classifying most later writers as para-literary—encyclopedists, commentators, grammarians, lexicographers, and so forth—and dealing with others chiefly in terms of reception or else leaving them to specialists in late antiquity. Accepting Apuleius into the canon challenges this way of doing things—not a lot, because what is *one* exception, after all? But if we think through the issues and the reasons that are involved, the implications of this challenge are not small, and they are potentially fundamental.

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