

## A Few Considerations on Names in Apuleius’ *Metamorphoses*

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### Abstract

In order to deal with literary onomastics in Apuleius’ *Metamorphoses*, we will focus on some special functions such as the speaking words, the mirror words and the ambiguity of the words, which increase the prominence of the characters participating at the plot. By designating and characterizing the heroes, Apuleius’ onomastics reveals its multiple aesthetic connotations.

**Keywords:** *theonyms, antroponyms, literary purpose, aesthetic function*

From a diachronical, synchronical or etymological perspective, onomastic studies are centered upon different types of names such as: theonyms, antroponyms, toponyms and zoonyms. Scholars from different fields such as: linguistics, folklore, ethnography, anthropology contribute to enlarging the way in which names can be reconsidered in cultural history. The literary onomastics developed in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century “within the more general field of onomastics and as a way of linking the study of language to literature.” (Debus, 2002, 12, my translation) As Grant remarked, within traditional onomastics we can place literature in the context of artistic functions rather than in the one focusing on forms: “That is to say, all works of literature are presumed to have an artistic purpose, and so the primary interest of a literary scholar is to show how the words, including names, function to achieve that purpose” (2005, 10).

No author ever chooses the names of his characters at random. Names outline the characters in their form and essence, and also give depth to the entire work. They become tools establishing, as Benedicta Windt pointed out, class distinctions and social positions, alluding to history, creating an atmosphere, emphasizing allegory (2005, 43). We could say that naming things was the most ancient concern of mankind that tried to discover and to understand the universe it belongs to, and most of all to use what nature offered or conflicted it with. If naming different phenomena or parts of the universe is the consequence of an involuntary action caused by fear, by the astonishment, by the joy or by the pleasure of an archaic observer, the process of naming people involves a ritual. For instance in *Theaitetos*, Plato said that the name was given to a child in his first ten days during a ceremony ἁμφιδρόμια, kept around the domestic altar as a sign that the baby was recognized by his father and received in the family. After that, the family declared the name in front of the authorities in order to be registered in the civic list. (160e) The significance, the importance and the functions of names are also discussed in *Cratylus* where Plato rises the question if names correspond to their referent, that is if names lead us to the world of ideas: Ἐχε δὴ πρὸς Διός· τὰ δὲ ὀνόματα οὐ πολλάκις

μέντοι ὠμολογήσαμεν τὰ καλῶς κείμενα εἰκότα εἶναι ἐκείνοις ὧν ὀνόματα κείται, καὶ εἶναι εἰκόνας τῶν πραγμάτων;<sup>1</sup> (438d-439b) The stress upon identification can be also observed in Cicero's essay, *De inventione: Nomen est quod uni cuique personae datur, quo suo quaeque proprio et certo uocabulo appellatur*<sup>2</sup> (I, 34).

The ancient Greek names differ radically from the Latin ones. Unlike their Greek counterparts, Latin names are more carefully chosen and the simplicity of a personal Greek name based on its etymological significance is replaced in the civic Roman area with a complex structure. Such a critical assertion does not mean that Greek names lacked literary meaning. They “could come alive in literature and, usually in the case of main heroes, establish a deeper link between a name and the essence of a person” (Kanavou, 2011, 2). Romans changed the simple citizen's appellation with a *sintagma* made up of three components. In this manner not only do they call someone, but they also dissociate the Greek *onoma*, preferring to identify the person by its *praenomen*; the individual's social status or historical lineage results from *nomen*; the third component, the *cognomen* characterizes a fellow in a positive or negative way. Still, in literature, they adopt, in most of the cases, the same preference for a single name, a feature which can be perceived in their literary genders and species as a mark of strong Greek and oriental influences. In literature, Roman authors prefer using only an appellative through which the process of calling, identifying or characterizing the individual is summarized and gets a much greater impact.

Petronius' *Satyricon* and in particular Apuleius' *Metamorphoses*, which my article examines, support this idea. There are only few Roman names used by the *philosophus Platonicus* and most of the rest are borrowed from Greek or are invented by the author himself. The author's choice for that becomes obvious from the very title. *The Metamorphoses*, a noun in nominative plural, alludes to physical and spiritual changes of the main hero, but also to some secondary characters. The subtitle, *Asinus aureus*, points out the concrete transformation of Lucius in an ass whose colour seems to preserve his human complexion and anticipates the symbolical meaning, which “is generated contextually and interactively.” (Grant, 2005, 18) The symbolism of the ass is complex because it signifies ignorance, darkness and evil forces. The adjective *aureus* confers him a higher status and refers to Lucius' capacity to preserve his human subconscious through which he presents and interprets the facts he witness. *Aureus* also implies a reddish yellow colour which alludes to Seth-Typhoon symbolism<sup>3</sup>. In Egypt, according to Chevalier and Gheerbrandt “the red ass is the most dangerous entity the soul meets in his after-life journey” (Chevalier, Gheerbrandt, 1995, II, 293, my translation). By means of regression Lucius chooses a voluntary death. This symbiotic existence of the human psychic with the body of a beast is needed as a guarantee of and a step forward to the final redemption. The ass resembles with Typhoon because “it represents the genius of the rebellion against the natural order imposed by Osiris” (Filipescu, 1979, 56). Lucius' change is invested with mystic symbolism and it is

<sup>1</sup> “Well, but reflect: have we not several times acknowledged that names rightly given are the likenesses [sic!] and images of the things which they name?” (Benjamin Jowett's translation).

<sup>2</sup> “The name means what is given to each person, that is a proper and a certain word by which a person is called.” (my translation).

<sup>3</sup> Some considerations regarding the symbolism of *aureus*, *metamorphoses* and the correspondence between some characters and the Egyptian goddess, Isis, have been made in my previous study “The Cult of Isis in Apuleius novel, the *Metamorphoses*”. *Buletinul Universității Petrol-Gaze din Ploiești. Seria Filologie*, Vol.LVIII nr.2, 2006.

imposed for the final redemption; “he is punished, but at the same time he is brought to the goddess feet.” (Filipescu, 1979, 56).

Compared to the fictionalized world of Petronius, where Latin names are reserved only to the low figures of the narration such as Quartilla, Scintilla or Fortunata, in Apuleius’ novel we discover the opposite at the human level. Not the same thing happens with the divine world. *The Metamorphoses* receive in its crowded Greek and oriental gallery just a few Latin names. Some of them belong to the divine apparatus such as Iupiter, Venus, Ceres, Iuno, Cupid, or Mercurius which Apuleius subordinates to the oriental gods. The “divine names tend to be etymologically significant or contain significant (sic!) elements, which in real life are connected with a cult or function or artistic representation of a god” (Kanavou, 2011,16). According to the epic tradition the deities have three functions: the eschatological one as primary entities of the *cosmos*<sup>4</sup>, the allegorical function resulted from the transposition of the primordial elements into anthropomorphical shape in order to be better represented for the human beings, and the symbolical function through which the behaviour of gods towards mortals is explained, these ones being compared with the kings who look after their *oikos* relying on their subjects. A good example in this sense remains the Homeric epos, the *Iliad*. Lucius does not show a respectful attitude towards the Roman gods and is more attracted by Isis and after that to Osiris, the Egyptian deities who gained enough devotees. Isis, the multivalent and supreme goddess of the novel, counterparts with Venus, driven only by her ego and her ferocious desire to be the single creature worshipped by her unique beauty. Ceres and Iuno withdraw with fear in front of Venus’ anger, They assume an inferior condition, improper to their rank, especially in Iuno’s case, and they refuse to help Psyche. Mercury is no longer the subtle herald of the divine will, but the frivolous messenger of Venus’ reward:

Sic quis a fuga retrahere vel occultam demonstrare poterit fugitivam regis filiam, Veneris ancillam, nomine Psychen, conveniat retro metas Murtias Mercurium praedicatorum, accepturus indicivae nomine ab ipsa Venere septem savia suavia et unum blandientis adpulsu linguae longe mellitum (VI,8)<sup>5</sup>.

Initially Cupid, behaves like a little boy, still obedient to his mother and ready to give up his bride. The wound of love, the period of separation from his wife and the fear he will lose her forever are the elements that contribute to the god’s humanization. He symbolizes “love induced in the soul by the recollection of perfect beauty” (Schlam 1992, 95).

Furthermore, Iupiter, the supreme god of the Roman pantheon is put in contrast with the mighty Osiris. Meanwhile the Roman god requires in exchange for his aid an extremely beautiful young girl from Cupid, Osiris reveals his real face and will to his devotee and gains confidence and respect:

Denique post dies admodum pauculos deus deum magnorum potior et potiorum summus et summorum maximus et maximorum regnator Osiris non in alienam quamquam personam

<sup>4</sup> This portmanteau word is made up of *cosmos* and of the word *chaos* and it means chaos about to be organized by the settlement of the original elements.

<sup>5</sup> “If there were anybody who could bring back or say something about the king’s fugitive daughter, the servant of Venus, named Psyche, let him come to Mercury, behind the Murtian temple, and as reward he will receive seven sweet kisses from Venus and another one sweeter than honey given by her divinely loving tongue.” (my translation).

reformatus, sed coram suo illo venerando me dignatus adfamine per quietem recipere visus est<sup>6</sup> (XI, 30).

It goes without saying that the names of the gods, apart from being primarily speaking words, receive a “figurative meaning” defined in case of the Roman gods by irony and on the oriental side carrying “symbolic associations to their referents”(Grant, 2005, 19). The irreverence towards gods “may have become an intellectual trend in the context of the contemporary sophistic movement, but it was also a literary habit that went back to Homer” (Kanavou, 2011, 17).

The story of Apuleius begins with a homodiegetic narration, through which the main hero as an ego-narrator warns the fictive reader about the type of the novel he is going to read, the influences which inspired it, and the goal of the subjective author and of the novel itself:

At ego tibi sermone isto Milesio varias fabulas conseram auresque tuas benivolas lepido susurro permulceam — modo si papyrus Aegyptiam argutia Nilotici calami inscriptam non spreveris inspicere — , figuras fortunisque hominum in alias imagines conversas et in se rursus mutuo nexu reflectas ut mireris<sup>7</sup> (I,1).

Nevertheless, the name of the protagonist remains hidden during almost the entire first book. The author inserts Lucius' revealing in the story gradually, referring firstly to the hero's native place: “Litteras ei a *Corinthio* Demea scriptas ad eum reddo”<sup>8</sup> (Apuleius, I,22), secondly to his genitor, Theseus (Apuleius, I, 23) (whose appellative may implicitly send to the labyrinth Lucius enters due to his curiosity )and finally to the hero's name (Apuleius, I,24). Lucius is recognized and named for the first time at the fishing market by a former schoolmate. In this way, the reader finds out that the main hero is well educated and mysterious enough because he does not share to his acquaintance the aim of his journey. The technique of “indirect naming” (Harrison S.J, 2002, 43) is characteristic of Apuleius and has an important impact not only on the novel's character, but also on the reader because it appears “only when the action has started to unfold; thus it signals the progress of the plot in the direction planned” (Kanavou, 2011, 12). In this way a psychological distance is imposed and the reader's interest is maintained. The name of the protagonist derives from the Latin root *\*luc-*, (Ernout, 2001, 372) which means “light” and alludes to his beautiful and harmonious physical aspect (Apuleius, II, 2) and to the symbolical meaning of the hero's evolution who will surpass his inferior condition as a human being obsessed by curiosity and the desire to gain knowledge by magical means, for acceding to a divine marriage under Isis' protection. Apuleius uses another connotative name for light and this designates Photis, Pamphilas' servant. The two appellatives may be considered as *mirror words*. Thus, we could explain their attraction, and also the difference between *intellectual light* (represented by Lucius) and *sensual light* (veiled in the Greek etymon of the heroine).

<sup>6</sup> “Finally after a few days the great god Osiris, the much more powerful god of the greatest gods, the mightiest of the greatest, the greatest of the mightiest, and the ruler of the greatest appeared in my sleep, not disguised in any other form, but in his own essence.” (my translation)

<sup>7</sup> “But I would like to gather for you different stories in that Milesian style, and enchant your kindly ears with a pleasant whispering, if only you do not disregard to glance at an Egyptian papyrus inscribed with the sharpness of a reed from the Nile. My aim is to depict how men's shapes and fortunes are transformed into different appearances and regain into themselves by mutual connection, that you may wonder at it.”(my translation).

<sup>8</sup> “I'll bring him a letter of Demeas from Corinth” (my translation).

Photis as *anima* corrupts Lucius' *animus* for a while with erotic desire and magic hope. She opens for Lucius the door to a magic status, but she does this in a deceiving manner. When she is asked by her lover to allow him to use the magical ointment of Pamphila she reacts as a woman about to lose her prey: "Ain, inquit vulpinaris, amasio, meque sponte asceam cruribus meis illidere compellis? Sic inermem vix a lupulis conservo Thessalis. Hunc alitem factum ubi quaeram, videbo quando?"<sup>9</sup> (Apuleius, III.22). Furthermore, she does not precede her "gratuitous help" with the usual ritual of their hot dates. She seems to forget spreading the bed with petals of roses<sup>10</sup>, the very antidote of the ass shape. She tries to diminish her guilt, apologizing for her lack of magical experience or her inexplicable emotions, but she does not hurry to get the roses as a real lover would do and postpones looking for them the next morning.

Lucius is in his way to Hypata, the most outstanding city in the region of Thessaly, as the Greek root suggests,<sup>11</sup> a very well known place for its magical art. He receives many advertisements regarding magic through the stories he heard from his journey's companions. The reader is implicitly warned about the importance of being familiar with Plato's work. The story of Aristomenes<sup>12</sup> and Socrates is representative. The name of Aristomenes "owes its meanings to a real (pre-existing) bearer (historical figure) outside the literary work" (Kanavou, 2011, 4) and anticipates by opposition the fate of the Apulean Socrates. Aristomenes reproaches Socrates for his inexplicable disappearance and persuades him to get rid of Meroë, but in Meroë's presence, immobilized under the bed as a turtle, he becomes inactive, being overwhelmed by fear and transformed in an accomplice to murder. The references to Plato's Phaedrus have been made by S.J. Harrison<sup>13</sup> in the study mentioned above. The fate of Apulean Socrates is merely the same with the Platonic character. They both are sentenced to die, one by the witches he abandons, the other one by the community who does not need him any more. Whereas the Platonic Socrates willingly and with dignity accepts his death, the Apulean Socrates wants to escape, using any help he may get, be this the unlucky and unworthy one of Aristomenes.

Another victim of the sorcery is Telyphron, the mutilated man whose story Lucius finds out in Byrrhena's house. S. J. Harrison presents in his cited study (2002, 43) the link between Thelyphron and Aristomenes as narrators of the miraculous stories, but also as wanderers who fail to pass beyond Larissa. Thelyphron's account represents also

<sup>9</sup> Are you about to deceive me now, my sweetie, like a fox, and force me to cut the branch under my feet? I hardly saved you, you poor man without defense, from these she-wolves of Thessaly, and then if you be winged where shall I seek you? And when shall I see you? (my translation).

<sup>10</sup> In *A History of Roman Literature. From Livius Andronicus to Boethius* roses are a recurrent element of imagery. There are two sides to it: an erotic and a mystic one. Roses are attributes of the feast of love (*met.* 2. 16. 2) and of Venus herself (*met.* 6. 11. 2), and *roseus* refers to feminine charms (*met.* 2. 8. 13; 2. 17. 5; 4. 31. 2), 1455.

<sup>11</sup> ὑπάτος means highest, outstanding. (see Harrison, 2002, 42).

<sup>12</sup> Aristomenes is a Greek hero, a leader of a rebellion about 650 B.C. of the so-called Messenian War. The antagonism of the Greek hero with his anti-hero in the novel remains implicit.

<sup>13</sup> The Apuleian Socrates in the story is attacked en route to Larissa (I.7); the mention of this Thessalian city as a destination seems to recall a famous philosophical example put by the Platonic Socrates to the Thessalian Meno in Plato's Meno, arguing that a man who knows the way to Larissa would be able to guide others there (Meno, 97a). Equally literary is the moment when Aristomenes invites his friend the Apuleian Socrates to sit down by a plane tree (I.18); this recalls the famous invitation of Phaedrus to the Platonic Socrates in Plato's Phaedrus to sit down à deux under a plane tree next to the attractive river Ilissus (Phaedrus, 229a-b). (Harrison. 2002, 42-43).

an advertisement, as that of Socrates for Lucius in his attempt to accede to the knowledge of using magic. To this interpretation Stavros Frangoulidis adds that:

Lucius differs considerably from Socrates, who merely happened to meet the powerful old witch Meroe, and who lost his life when his friend Aristomenes came to town and devised a plan to save him. The contrasting fates of the two men can be explained by the fact that Lucius decides to woo the amateur witch Photis, rather than her mistress Pamphile, whose powers are similar to those of Meroe (2008, 46).

In point of the law of hospitality and the duty of marriage, we can compare the equation Lucius, Socrates and Thelyphron with a Homeric reminiscence. Both Socrates and Thelyphron have been invited to stay in a witch's house or to guard a corpse against the witches. They enjoyed the "right of a stranger not to be treated with hostility when they arrived on someone else's territory." (Derrida, 2000, 4) They were fed and welcomed but they have not had Odysseus' wisdom to refrain from the unknown and from the deceiving meal: "cenae gratae atque gratuita"<sup>14</sup> (Apuleius, I,7). After "being oneself in one's own home" (Derrida, 2000, 4) the condition of the gift and of hospitality has changed. Their *hospites* become their *hostes*. Socrates realizes Meroe's hostility in her sexual dominance and Telyphron, the widow's aggression, in his mutilation. They have been forced to forget about their *nostos* or about their goal and to pay for their *hybris* with "death or the social death of permanent exile." (Frangoulidis, 2008, 48) In case of Lucius, Byrrhena's advice to stay away from Pamphila's magic corresponds to Hermes' aid that prevents Odysseus' metamorphosis in a pig in the kingdom of Circe. Lucius does not violate the laws of hospitality nor the host's marriage because Milo invites him only to talk instead of eating and because the young man prefers having a sexual relation with Pamphilas' servant to seducing the mistress herself. Milo breaks from the beginning the "unwritten code (...) of universal right of humanity" (Derrida, 2000, 5), because he is no longer the real master of the *oikos*, the master of his wife or the husband of his wife. He obeys to Pamphila's advice, allows her to fly away as a bird and to have relations with other men. His only role consists of vain and abundant talk, becoming rude and even hostile to his tired guest. Lucius experiences "the hostage of the other, delivered passively to the other" (Derrida, 2000, 9) – through Demeas' recommendation – but he is no longer delivered to his-self.

Thelyphron's adventure also emphasizes the ambiguity of words. (II.30) The guardian, as well as the dead husband, has the same *onoma*. The meaning of *theluphron* is "effeminate" and sends to the mutilation of an apparent corpse instead of the real one. (Frangoulidis, 2008, 101) The entire visit to Byrrhena is set under the veil of an ambiguity not easy to be grasped by Lucius. When he admires the statuary of Actaeon's metamorphosis into a quadruped his aunt insists in "his curiosity in words that function on two levels: "Tua sunt «ait Byrrhaena» Cuncta quae vides""<sup>15</sup> (Apuleius, II.5). What he first interprets as a sign of Byrrhena's generosity proves to be a terrible anticipation of his own transformation.

The limits between the sorcerers and their victims are not very strictly defined. A good example in this sense is Diophanes who becomes the tricked trickster. The name's etymology (Δίος + φανής) "makes an overt allusion to his alleged capacity as a seer. It is taken to suggest either a person who speaks the language of Jupiter or a figure

<sup>14</sup> "a pleasant and a free meal" (my translation).

<sup>15</sup> The comparison appears in Heinz Hofmann, 2005, 113. "Byrrhena said: Everything you see is yours." (my translation).

through which Jupiter manifests himself” (Frangoulidis, 2008 71). He anticipates the same misfortune regarding the priests of the Syrian goddess whose convenient prophecies do not prevent them from being declared as thieves. The magic of the male practitioners is exceeded by the female witches defined as “nequissimae mulieres”<sup>16</sup> (Apuleius, II,22). Pamphila and Meroë impress their victims with their overwhelming power upon nature and people. Whereas the name of the former (πᾶν + φίλος – Loving all) suggests an overt propensity for sexual relation, the root \*Mer- (being close)<sup>17</sup> anticipates the hidden behavior of the witch who first enchants Socrates and then clarifies her intention to dominate others. This Egyptian root could also suggest a link between Meroe and Isis. The witch corresponds to Isis as a significant deity of the Egyptian divine apparatus who has revealed her dark side when she attempted to dethrone Ra and to steal his supreme power. In this way, the magic and the marvelous of a tutelary goddess come together through mirror words and end the novel in a circular manner. Moreover, we believe that the female witches are surpassed only by two male magical practitioners the Egyptian priest Zathclas, who opposes to the sorcerers his humble aspect and his power submitted to justice and truth, and Asinius Marcellus, the priest who facilitates Lucius’ initiation to the superior mystery of Osiris. My own interpretation of the text is that the two priests are symbolically connected. While Zathclas animates a corpse to reveal the mystery of its death to the world, Asinius Marcellus helps the soul of a living creature to be illuminated with supreme knowledge. In conclusion, all the short stories inserted in the novel by Apuleius have an implicit and symbolical connection not only with the main hero and his destiny, but also with the secondary characters’ fate.

Another significant example in this sense could be the triad of the thieves Lamachus, Alcimus and Thrasylleon. As speaking names, all onomata “draw their meanings from assumptions about the significance of their roots” (Kanavou, 2011, 2-3). Lamachus means “Brave”, Alcimus, “Mighty” and Thrasylleon “Bold as a Lyon”. Though in literature their “straightforward meanings are indeed laden with various degrees of semantic ambiguity, in other words they have connotations that can be interpreted in different ways” (Kanavou, 2011, 3-4). The thieves’ self confidence in their strength, their lack of attention and haste rally them in fatal experiences anticipating Lucius’ regression. Some of the textual references are paradoxical as Harrison suggests: “The expedition of Lamachus to Thebes is a parody for the legendary epic and tragic expedition of the Seven Against Thebes, seven gates *heptapylos* recalls the seven doomed heroes of the mythological expedition one at each gate” (2002, 46).

The most refined story inserted in the novel remains the tale of Cupid and Psyche (Love and Soul). Many critics interpreted the plot and its correspondence to the main frame of the novel. The short story interrupts the flow of the protagonist’s happenings and the succession of many other inserted episodes and rises from another frame short-story, that of Charite and Tlepolemus. Psyche shares the same feature of *curiositas* with Lucius and becomes his female symbolical pair. She infringes Cupid’s interdiction, loses her husband and after that initiates the quest of her immortal pair. Their happy reunion anticipates and also predicts the fate of the main hero. The names of Cupid and Psyche reveal also the allegorical sense we encounter in Plato’s dialogue, *Symposium*. The soul is always in search for love, for his perfect match. Psyche mirrors the fate of Lucius. At first she is the victim of blind destiny because she must submit to the voice

<sup>16</sup> “Villain women” (my translation)

<sup>17</sup> See the interpretations in Gabor Takacs (2007, 814).

of the oracle. In contrast, Lucius consciously goes to Hypata, the land of all magic possibilities. After violating the interdiction of seeing her husband's face, Psyche becomes conscious of her assumed destiny and decides to look for her husband and to punish her evil sisters. On the other hand, Lucius opens in his asinine form the doors to the blind destiny. At the end of the novel this chiasm is neutralized by the light destiny that rewards both of them. If the divine marriage of Cupid and Psyche annihilates the *daimon* of the god including him in a domestic frame, the union of Lucius with Isis gets him out from the same domestic pattern. Lucius renounces to "arcana secreta"<sup>18</sup> (Apuleius, III.15) for "arcana purissimae religionis secreta"<sup>19</sup> (Apuleius, XI.15). Psyche's story has many similarities with Lucius' one and both of them can be identified with Isis in a symbolical acception. She perceived the secrets of life by sharing beautiful moments with Cupid, by initiating the quest of her husband or by solving the impossible requests of Venus. She also perceived the mysteries of death through her journey to Proserpine and the miracle of the resurrection thanks to the elixir of youth offered by her husband. Her curiosity helped her "heal herself of the sin of knowledge by opening new gnoseological horizons" (Filipescu, 1979, 61). The same attributes identify Isis seen as "a sapiential goddess, possessing the art of magic, of healing and of resurrection" (Kernbach, 1983, 307).

Not less important is the story of Charite that frames the tale of Cupid and Psyche. The name of the heroine comes from the Greek word: *Χάρη*, *Χαρίτις*, which means full of grace. If Psyche competes with Venus her almost divine beauty, Charite's human beauty assures her many suitors; yet she prefers only one, Tlepolemus. On the day of their wedding, Charite is kidnapped by the thieves and only her lover's audacity sets her free. But the end of their love-story cannot be quantified with Greek patterns. Their wedding, as fulfilment of their pure love, is prevented from the intervention of a rival who meanly kills the groom. Henceforward Charite's destiny seems to be similar to Isis' fate, a symbol of "marital harmony and of a woman's loyalty to her husband, even after his death" (Kernbach, 1983, 307). Being attacked, she becomes ruthless and revengeful. The final gesture of Charite equals her wedding to death and anticipates Lucius' abandon of mortal life, but moreover the joy of the spiritual reunion with her/his pair.

Another female name worth investigating is Plotina, another symbol of chastity and marital loyalty (Apuleius, VII, 6-7). Her name, as the previous one of Aristomenes, comes from a real person "mirroring the historical model of the wife of the emperor Trajan" (Müller, 2008, 619). Müller underlined the similarity of the character with Isis as an ideal woman not interested in luxury. Plotina foreshadows Lucius' fate. After giving birth to the 10th child Plotina seems to be fulfilled. The journey of asinine Lucius ends after ten books too. The exile of Plotina's husband imposes a radical change in her life. Another form of exile could be considered the metamorphosis of Lucius and his forced journey. Apart from these considerations the connection between this short story and Tlepolemus' metamorphosis leads us to new interpretations. The need of Plotina to cut her hair and to wear male clothes alludes to Tlepolemus' disguise. Led by the same intensity towards his fiancée as Plotina is devoted to her husband, Tlepolemus must act bravely to be able to save Charite. Through this story he warns Charite and the reader about his metamorphosis and also about his intention, to get rid of the thieves as his female fictitious character did.

<sup>18</sup> "Secret mysteries" (my translation).

<sup>19</sup> "Secret mysteries of the most pure religion" (my translation).



Women in Apuleius' novel can be villain or ideal. Irrespective of this, their encounter with Lucius is necessary. Through them he discovers his male subconscious initially hidden under female *curiositas*. By sufferance and ideal examples, submitting to the female's power or advice Lucius learns the detachment required in asceticism and prepares his soul for the final redemption: his union with Isis and then with Osiris. The correspondence between the name and heroes is carefully mastered by Apuleius. Starting with the etymological or the concrete sense the names "become filled in while we read and learn more and more about the character" (Windt, 2005, 46).

I have tried to describe and to interpret some significant names in Apuleius' novel, referring to a broad range of essays. However, no collection of essays can reflect the wide variety of interpretation about the Apuleius' novel. I am hopeful that this article will reflect among other scholarship the usefulness of literary onomastics in the *Metamorphoses* in order to deeply understand the meaning of the plot, the evolution of the characters and the connection between them and the frame.

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## **Câteva considerații asupra numelor în romanul lui Apuleius, *Metamorfoze***

Pentru a pune în lumină importanța onomasticii literare în romanul lui Apuleius, *Metamorfoze*, ne vom referi la câteva funcții speciale ale acestui domeniu de cercetare cum ar fi: „cuvintele care creează”, „cuvintele în oglindă” sau „ambiguitatea cuvintelor”, rolul lor fiind acela de a spori importanța sau complexitatea personajelor care iau parte la acțiune. În romanul lui Apuleius, onomastica literară nu numai că identifică și caracterizează (anti)eroii, ci își dezvăluie și multiplele conotații estetice.