METAMORPHIC REFLECTIONS

Essays presented to Ben Hijmans
at his 75th Birthday

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THE *PERSONA* IN APULEIUS' FLORIDA

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In literary studies, the word 'I' has lost its innocence. No longer can it be taken for granted that every 'I' simply refers to the person who is supposed to be speaking, let alone that it represents the author of the text. A speaking character in a drama may, in fact, be voicing insights not of himself but of others (such as the actual author or part of the audience), whereas a seemingly direct assertion by the author can turn out to be the result of a role that is played to achieve some special affect.

The assumption that the 'I' who is telling a text normally refers directly to the author himself, the so called 'biographical fallacy', continued to live particularly long in Classical Studies. It was the mainstream idea from classical antiquity until at least the last decades of the 20th century, and the notion is not completely obsolete today. The cause for this seems evident: given the scarcity of documentary material from antiquity, literary texts are often the only possible source of information about an ancient author. Hence, it becomes tempting to use the literary texts for reconstructions of the author's life and personality.

For instance, who can resist a biographical reading of the works of Tacitus, whose very name seems to underscore the nearly complete absence of reliable information about him? Or what about Lucretius, about whom we know hardly anything at all, even if we mine his *De rerum natura* for possible indications of his personal life? In the case of several other Latin authors too, their works easily seduce the reader to a biographical approach. Examples quickly come to mind: Catullus, Ovid, Seneca, Pliny the Younger, and, not least of all, Apuleius.[1]

[1] It is, of course, no coincidence that this list includes some of the Latin authors that have been studied by Ben Hijmans during his long career. His contributions to Apuleian studies may count as his most important and lasting achievements as a classical scholar. Personally, I have been inspired by these studies to pursue my own research in this field. The present paper is intended as a token of my recognition and respect for this great Apuleian scholar from the high North of Gronin-

However, caution is necessary. Generally, all forms of Latin poetry have become 'suspect' as sources for biographical information. This goes particularly for Roman elegy and love-poetry, for satire and epigram. I mention the groundbreaking work of Susan Braund in the field of Roman satire,[2] where she has developed the notion of *personae*, masks put on by the narrator to perform specific roles. For example, the speaking 'I' in Juvenal's famous third satire cannot be said to express the critical ideas and feelings of the real Juvenal who is fed up with Rome, but represents a certain exaggerated and hypocritical attitude that even seems to be exposed to ridicule.

Recently, the *persona* notion has been extended to other works, such as the epigrams of Martial.[3] Not every 'I' in the epigrams that is complaining about poverty, uncaring patrons, or lack of freedom necessarily voices a reality experienced by the real Martial. The epigrammatist rather plays with notions known to all and elements which have become properly literary motifs.

Modern research in the field of the Roman novel too has fundamentally discarded the biographical approach. The surge of Apuleian studies since about 1975 has produced many examples of sensible, careful analysis of the *Metamorphoses*, in which the text is not reduced to a directly accessible mine of information about the author, or, for that matter, Roman Imperial society in general. The rise of narratology in Classical Studies has still further diverted the attention away from such positivistic interests towards questions of literary play and strategy, including intertextuality.[4]

Curiously, Apuleius' so called 'minor works', which have always been so dear to Ben Hijmans, have only marginally profited from the modern scholarly developments sketched above. The *Florida* and above all the *Apology* are almost invariably treated as relatively uncomplicated sources for information[5] about the author

gen. I thank André Lardinois for his comments on the first version of the text.

[2] See Braund 1992 and 1996.

[3] See notably Holzberg 2002.

[4] The now classical study in this field is Winkler 1985. See further various essays in Kahane and Laird 2001.

[5] It may be relevant to briefly review the main details in the *Florida* that are commonly interpreted as biographical facts about Apuleius. For discussions of the passages in question, see the respective notes in Hunink 2001.

Fl. 16,37 is often used for an approximate date for his birth: a reference to a known magistrate suggests that he, and by implication Apuleius himself, must have been born in the 120s. / *Fl.* 18,15 seems to confirm a birthplace of the author in Africa, but the text remains vague, let alone that it mentions Madauros,

of the *Metamorphoses*, a work now commonly seen as a piece of fiction and a highly rated one at that.

The present contribution focuses on Apuleius' *Florida* in an attempt to take a fresh look at the instances of 'I' in this collection of fragments from speeches. It will consider the texts as literary creations that do not tell us anything about the author directly, but draft a specific, deliberately modelled picture of him, a *persona*.[6] It is to be seen to what extent this self-representation is a *persona* truly distinct from biographical reality, as in the case of the satirists and epigrammatists.[7]

Uncertainties

At first sight, the *Florida* constitutes a literary work unsuitable for a narratological, literary research. Unlike the *Apology*, it is not a single speech, but a collection of fragments from speeches, whose

commonly taken as the place in question. In the corpus of Apuleian texts the name only occurs in the infamous passage *Met.* 11,27 *Madaurensem, sed admodum pauperem*, and in *Peri Herm.* 4 (267). The former, highly controversial passage (for which see e.g. Van der Paardt 1981 in Harrison 1999) comes from a fictional context, the latter from a work of dubious authorship (cf. Harrison 2000, 12-13), and so both remain inconclusive as well. / *Fl.* 18,15 also suggests that its author has been trained in Greece, in Athens. Another passage refers to travels to Samos (15,1-6), while *Fl.* 17,4 is often quoted as proof for a stay of Apuleius in Rome. Strictly speaking, the relevant passage proves no more than the existence of contacts between the speaker and people in Rome. / The speaker also tells in great detail how he twisted his ankle; see notably *Fl.* 16,19-23. But such technical remarks rather reflect his interest in medicine and show him to be a man of his time.

All in all, even if the *Florida* were to be used for biographical purposes, the possible evidence about the author's life remains scanty indeed.

[6] In secondary literature on Apuleius, the *Florida* are only rarely analysed as literary texts. Some notable modern exceptions are Sandy 1997, 148-175 and Harrison 2000, 89-135, but these two scholars concentrate on rhetorical techniques in general rather than self-representation.

[7] Apart from the studies mentioned so far, this paper was also inspired by Ludolph 1997. In this modern study of the letters of Pliny the Younger, the author carefully analyses a group of letters, showing that far from being a collection of private, spontaneous documents, haphazardly put together, as Pliny wants us to believe, the letters are artful compositions arranged in such a way as to give a most flattering portrait of their author. Pliny is on top of things all the time, selecting and rewriting his material to compose a self-portrait that is entirely designed. As in the case of Martial, so it seems, his choice of a 'low profile' literary genre for his high literary aspirations is deliberate: it effectively protects the author from public *inuidia*.

exact number is even a matter of debate.[8] Worse, we can hardly say anything about major issues such as the criterion of selection, the amounts of text omitted before or after the selected texts, the identity of the anthologist, or his intentions in composing the anthology in the first place.[9]

If a strictly 'scientific' approach were to be adopted and only hard facts and reliable evidence were to count in the discussion, a nearly complete silence about these *Florida* would be in order. For lack of certainty about the anthologist, it would not even be possible to say anything about authorial intentions. For are we reading texts selected by Apuleius on the basis of a specific personal agenda, or a later selection by someone else?

It would be a pity, however, to discard the *Florida* on this account. For one thing, we have these fascinating and unique Latin texts themselves, no matter their origin. The least we can do is to compare the fragments with other texts by Apuleius, notably the *Apology*, and see to what extent 'I' passages show marked differences.

In the following pages, I will adopt two working hypotheses: first, I assume that the texts are more or less representative of the lost Apuleian corpus of speeches. Here it does not really matter whether or not the anthologist was Apuleius himself. In their range of themes and interests, the *Florida* do not give the impression of a one-sided collection focusing on untypical aspects of Apuleian rhetoric. Secondly, it can safely be supposed that the 'I' fragments are carefully written to convey a special message about the speaker. Given the Roman literary context as we see it today, the author is likely to have been very self-conscious in making first person statements, whatever their original context.[10]

[8] The principal point of controversy here is the so called 'prologue' to *De Deo Socratis*, a set of five fragments that is considered by many scholars to have been a part of the *Florida*. For the opposite view that they do belong to *De Deo Socratis*, cf. Hunink 1995 (taking up some points from Hijmans 1994, esp. 1771). For the discussion see also the remarks by S. Harrison in: Harrison 2001, 177-180.

[9] Cf. Hunink 2001, 12-18.

[10] Ben Hijmans has always adopted a methodologically strict attitude, constantly defending scholarship based on facts rather than 'unsupported opinion' (Hijmans 1994, 1781). It may be added, however, that between the lines he was also charmed by more speculative approaches (cf. idem, 1782). So I hope he will forgive me if I occasionally have to cross the line between fact and speculation.

Religion

What image do we get from the 'I' in the *Florida*? First, let us turn to the opening passage, *Florida* 1. The first thing we hear about the speaker is that he is a very religious man.

> *Vt ferme religiosis uiantium moris est, cum aliqui lucus aut aliqui locus sanctus in uia oblatus est, uotum postulare, pomum adponere, paulisper adsidere: ita mihi ingresso sanctissimam istam ciuitatem, quanquam oppido festinem, praefanda uenia et habenda oratio et inhibenda properatio est.*
>
> *Neque enim iustius religiosam moram uiatori obiecerit aut ara floribus redimita aut spelunca frondibus inumbrata aut quercus cornibus onerata aut fagus pellibus coronata, uel enim colliculus sepimine consecratus uel truncus dolamine effigiatus uel cespes libamine umigatus uel lapis unguine delibutus. Parua haec quippe et quanquam paucis percontantibus adorata, tamen ignorantibus transcursa.*[11]

This wonderful, short fragment comes from a speech delivered by the speaker shortly after entering a town, possibly Carthage. It is typical for the *Florida* both on account of its lofty content, focusing on religion, and on account of its style: one may note the strange, long words, the combinations of similarly structured sentences and clauses, the use of rhyme and other sound effects.

The fragment forms one long comparison: 'Apuleius' argues that it is his duty to deliver a speech, no less than he would have to call a halt to his journey on religious grounds when coming across a spot marked by devotional symbols. This, of course, is a great honour for the city where the speech is delivered. The comparison implicitly also works the other way around: the present speech is a sacred task and its speaker appears to be something like a holy man. The images of the speaker and a worshipper are effectively combined and fused in the notion of the 'traveller'. The interest of Apuleius in pagan religion is well attested,[12] and so the fragment may be said to be fully in accordance with the general image of Apuleius as it can be formed on the basis of his other works.

In another fragment, the speaker even tells that he was a priest of Aesculapius (*Fl.* 18,38),[13] in which function he composed speech-

[11] Latin quotations from the *Florida* are taken from Hunink 2001, 27. For a translation by John Hilton, see Harrison 2001, 137.

[12] Cf. not only individual statements such as *Apol.* 55,8-11, notably 8 *sacrorum pleraque initia in Graecia participaui*. The whole of the *Metamorphoses* and *De deo Socratis*, to mention only manifestly authentic works, clearly attest the point.

[13] *Fl.* 16,38 *suscepti sacerdotii* may refer to the same priesthood, though Augustine *Ep.* 138,19 also reports that A. was *sacerdos provinciae Africae*, and

es and hymns about the god. The reference is clever, in that it simultaneously reinforces the portrait of himself as a devout worshipper of the Gods and as a prolific writer.

Literature

The second major element in the self-portrait of the speaker is certainly a literary one. Time and again he shows himself to be familiar with the great literature of the past, freely combining Socrates with Plautus (*Fl.* 2), producing anecdotes about Greek presocratics and sophists (*Fl.* 9; 15 and 18) and later Greek philosophers (*Fl.* 14 and 22), and quoting Lucilius (*Fl.* 21,4), Accius (*Fl.* 10,1), Plautus (*Fl.* 18,7), and Vergil (*Fl.* 11,2; 16,33; 17,15). This too is quite like the Apuleius as he is known from his *Apology*.

Modesty concerning his own literary achievements was obviously not the author's fundamental attitude. Already in the *Apology* he repeatedly dwelled with pride on this theme,[14] but the *Florida* go much further here. The work contains two passages with an explicit celebration of his literary talents.

In the first of these, *Fl.* 9, a long discussion of the manifold talents of the sophist Hippias leads up to a short comparison of the sophist with the speaker himself, who, so he argues, does not care for some of the arts and crafts exercised by Hippias:

> (...) *sed pro his praeoptare me fateor uno chartario calamo me reficere poemata omnigenus apta uirgae, lyrae, socco, coturno, item satiras ac griphos, item historias uarias rerum nec non orationes laudatas disertis nec non dialogos laudatos philosophis atque haec et alia eiusdem modi tam Graece quam Latine, gemino uoto, pari studio, simili stilo.* (9,27-29)

As the text shows, some of the words involve textual problems, but the general idea is quite clear: the speaker claims to write poetry and prose in nearly all possible genres, both high (tragedy, oratory, philosophical dialogues) and low (comedy, satire), and in both Greek and Latin. His high aspirations are met with praise by experts, most explicitly so in the case of his speeches and dialogues.[15]

this may be the function meant here.

[14] To mention just a few instances: cf. *Apol.* 4-5 (eloquence); 6 and 9 (own poetry); scientific works (36); and speeches (55,10-12).

[15] For a detailed discussion of the various genres mentioned in this and the following fragment, see Hunink 2001, 115-117 ad loc. and 204-205 ad loc.; further

The second passage occurs nearly at the end of the collection, in *Fl.* 20. The short piece starts from an ancient maxim about drinking, comparing the various stages of basic education to successive 'bowls'. The speaker shows that he has enjoyed more than just elementary education:

> *Ego et alias creterras Athenis bibi: poeticae comptam, geometriae limpidam, musicae dulcem, dialecticae austerulam. Iam uero uniuersae philosophiae inexplebilem scilicet et nectaream. Canit enim Empedocles carmina, Plato dialogos, Socrates hymnos, Epicharmus modos, Xenophon historias, Crates satiras: Apuleius uester haec omnia nouemque Musas pari studio colit, maiore scilicet uoluntate quam facultate, eoque propensius fortasse laudandus est, quod omnibus bonis in rebus conatus in laude, effectus in casu est...* (20,4-6)

In this panegyric of his own culture and erudition, literature is given a prominent place: various forms of poetry, dialogues, historiography and satire are specifically mentioned.[16] Finally, some expressions of false modesty serve to lessen the potentially harmful effect of the exuberant *laus sui*.

Interestingly, the speaker also mentions his own name here, in a truly Caesarean style, using a third person singular, but the self-ostentation is immediately softened by the clever reference to the public: I, the famous writer, am '*your* Apuleius.' (I will return to this point shortly.)

One can consider the above two fragments as key texts to the whole collection and read the rest of the *Florida* in the light of these. Other fragments too seem to celebrate the speaker's own literary and philosophical talents, mostly as indirect testimonies. Thus, many negative elements discussed by the speaker can be interpreted as mirrors for an implicit, positive contrast, to be formed by the speaker himself. For instance, the 'poor in virtue' of *Fl.* 11 or the simple parrot of *Fl.* 12 may well have served to underscore the image of the versatile and erudite 'Apuleius'. Due to the fragmentary nature of these texts, it is often difficult to prove such an

Harrison 2000, 14-16. The vaguest reference here is probably the one to *historias uarias rerum*, which may be indicative of either historiography or of miscellaneous works like Gellius' *Noctes Atticae*.

[16] Interestingly, in neither list the *Metamorphoses*, undoubtedly the work that has immortalized Apuleius' name, is mentioned. This would seem to suggest a late date of publication of the novel. For a detailed discussion of this issue, see Hunink 2002.

intention, but in combination with *Fl.* 9 and 20, a case for it can certainly be made.

Africa

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, apart from presenting himself as a religious, widely-travelled and well-educated author of first class Greek and Latin poetry and prose in many genres, the 'I' also pictures himself as a V.I.P. who remains loyal to his African cultural background and even brings home some cultural prestige to his native land.

The protagonist in these rhetorical fragments does not hesitate to put himself on a par with some of the highest authorities in ancient culture. I already mentioned his easy handling of all earlier literature. Furthermore, the *Florida* also show some striking expressions such as *maior meus Socrates* (2,1) or *noster Plato* (15,26). By using such expressions, a direct link is established with the great Greek philosophers of the past. More indirectly, his discussions of the wise *gymnosophistae* (6), of Alexander the Great (7), and above all of the Sophists (Hippias in 9; Pythagoras in 15; Protagoras, Euathlus, and Thales in 18) clearly reflect on himself and his own standing.

Moreover, the speaker shows an ardent concern to show his familiarity and good relations with local proconsuls. Several of the longer pieces are addressed to proconsuls on some formal occasion, such as their leave of office: Severianus in 9; an anonymous proconsul in 15 (cf. *tuis antecessoribus* 15,27); and Scipio Orfitus in 17. As in the *Apology*, where Apuleius constantly flatters the presiding magistrate Claudius Maximus, readers are clearly invited to think of a very famous man, a man of culture, who can side with the great men from both past and present.

But the important thing is that all this personal glory is not presented merely for its own sake: it becomes a decisive factor for other, further purposes in the extant fragments. Fragment 9 about Hippias, partly discussed above, is a case in point. After the speaker's exuberant self-advertisement, he says he wishes he could offer all his talents to the departing proconsul, who is then lavishly praised. The self-praise reinforces the persuasive character of the speech. That is, the orator first 'establishes' himself as a worthy and important speaker, before using his powers of speech to praise the local magistrate. This official duty is performed on behalf of the whole province before the official representant of

Rome. By implication, then, the whole of Roman Africa is made to benefit from the speaker's talents.

Something similar happens in *Fl.* 16, where he delivers a *gratiarum actio* (speech of thanks) for a statue granted to him by the city of Carthage.[17] The anecdotes about his strained ankle and an oratorical performance interrupted by rain construct the image of the speaker as a fascinating, brilliant, and highly popular man. It is only then that he addresses his thanks for the statue, which is due to the excellent magistrate and the whole city, and he promises to hail them throughout the world.

> *Quibusnam uerbis tibi, Aemiliane Strabo, uir omnium, quot umquam fuerunt aut sunt aut etiam erunt, inter optimos clarissime, inter clarissimos optime, inter utrosque doctissime, quibus tandem uerbis pro hoc tuo erga me animo gratias habitum et commemoratum eam, qua digna ratione tam honorificam benignitatem tuam celebrem, qua remuneratione dicendi gloriam tui facti aequiperem, nondum hercle repperio. Sed quaeram sedulo et conitar, 'dum memor ipse mei, dum spiritus hos regit artus.'* (16,31-33)

We may note the proud display of a famous Vergilian phrase,[18] which is suggestive not only of the speaker's fine erudition, but also of his confidence and self-esteem: he applies words of Rome's national poet to himself.

Meanwhile, a closer reading of the whole piece shows that Apuleius is *postponing* his definite praise until the city has actually erected the statue for which a place has already been allotted, and perhaps he is even asking for a second statue.[19] In other words, his self-advertisement strengthens his praise now, and this praise in turn serves another purpose: an exhortation to further favours, which will be followed by more praise. In the end it is the benefactors, the proconsul and the townsmen, who will be immortalized by the speaker:

> *Sed de hoc tum ego perfectius, cum uos effectius. Quin etiam tibi, nobilitas senatorum, claritudo ciuium, dignitas amicorum, mox ad dedi-*

[17] On *Fl.* 16, see also the separate edition and commentary by Toschi 2000.

[18] Verg. *Aen.* 4,336. Interestingly, in Vergil's text, the line is spoken by Aeneas to Dido, the symbol of pre-Roman Carthage. The whole context of Vergil's tale of Dido and Aeneas must have been particularly familiar to Apuleius' Carthaginian audience. Cf. also Finkelpearl 1998, 134-44, who suggests that Apuleius in his *Metamorphoses* (in the tale of Charite) offered his readers a more favourable view of the Carthaginian queen.

[19] The interpretation of *Fl.* 16 presents some problems on these points. See notes in the commentaries of Toschi 2000 and Hunink 2001.

cationem statuae meae libro etiam conscripto plenius gratias canam eique libro mandabo, uti per omnis prouincias eat totoque abhinc orbe totoque abhinc tempore laudes benefacti tui ubique gentium semper annorum repraesentet. (16,47-48)

The speaker's personal prestige and glory will achieve their ultimate effect in the glorification of his surroundings.

Occasionally, the 'I' of the *Florida* states even more directly that everyone will profit from his words. In *Fl.* 17 he boasts that a poem of his about another magistrate, Scipio Orfitus, will be both very useful and highly appreciated by the Carthaginian people of all ages, who all benefited from the proconsul (17,18-20): thus the activities of the proconsul and the speaker in a way unite their forces, to the benefit of all.

Throughout the *Florida*, Carthage is presented in a favourable light, something which can even be seen as a connecting element of the whole anthology.[20] Several fragments, mostly the longer ones, show a remarkable attention for the city of Carthage, esp. *Fl.* 9, 16, 17, 18. Other fragments could possibly be connected here; the *sanctissimam istam ciuitatem* of *Fl.* 1 may be Carthage, and the theatre of *Fl.* 5 may be the same place as the one in *Fl.* 18, situated in Carthage.

Not only the city itself, but also its famous men are celebrated by the speaker. In 18,37-42, he announces a Greco-Latin hymn to the city's favourite God Asclepius, followed by an equally bilingual dialogue in which famous local speakers will be the main speakers: Safidius Severus (who speaks Latin) and Iulius Perseus (who speaks Greek).[21] Even Carthaginian buildings are given attention: 18,1-8 contains what amounts to a description of the local theatre, which is clearly presented as a worthy place for the speech. Finally, the *curia* and *bibliotheca* of the town are mentioned (18,8-9).

The finest celebration of Carthage is no doubt to be found in *Fl.* 20, a passage that has already been mentioned above in connection with the various literary genres exercised by the speaker. Having celebrated his own talents, education and literary versatility, the man who calls himself *Apuleius uester* then turns to a panegyric of the town as the very centre of culture:

[20] The assumption, then, would be that the anthologist, whether Apuleius himself or someone else, made his selection from a personal sense of national pride, or with his eyes set on a clearly marked audience, e.g. the city elite in Carthage. It remains impossible, of course, to provide any proof on such matters.

[21] Both men may well have been pupils of Apuleius; for this suggestion see Harrison 2000, 125.

Quae autem maior laus aut certior quam Karthagini benedicere, ubi tota ciuitas eruditissimi estis, penes quos omnem disciplinam pueri discunt, iuuenes ostentant, senes docent? Karthago prouinciae nostrae magistra uenerabilis, Karthago Africae Musa caelestis, Karthago Camena togatorum! (20,9-10).

This is striking praise indeed. Carthage, once Rome's primary enemy, is now hailed as the centre of culture, the Greek and Roman Muse. That is, the city shares in the cultural prestige of the ancient world and can proudly face even mighty Rome. Praise and glory, culture and erudition have been brought home to Carthage.

The self-praise of the speaker has effectively been transferred to the town and the audience at large. Together they celebrate each other and their town and society. This may well be called an interactive process, since each party gains strength from the other party: the speaker glorifies himself; his glory reflects upon the city, which in turn adds to the status of the speaker, in a potentially endless process of self-promotion.

Culture

In the end, the *Florida* do not so much provide us with reliable evidence about the author, much as we would wish so, but gives us a fine insight in how a man of culture such as Apuleius wished to be thought of, how he wanted to be perceived by his fellow-citizens and fellow-Africans: as a man of great religious and cultural prestige, a well-travelled man who knows his way in Athens and Rome, a student of the wise, a friend of the mighty, a benefactor who deserves much praise and in turn makes his fellow citizens and his whole fatherland share in his glory.

This was not a simple, one-sided affair, but a complex process of constant interaction with the local audience. One feels tempted to regard the *Florida* as the expression of a growing local self-conscience of countries distant from Rome and Athens, although everything is still duly expressed in terms of classical Greco-Roman culture.[22]

[22] Cf. Finkelpearl 1998, 143 'To say that Apuleius identified himself with Africa and wrote very much with an African (and especially Carthaginian) intellectual elite in mind is not to deny that the culture within which Apuleius and those elites operated was highly Romanized.'

Of course, I have not been able to highlight all aspects of the 'I' in the *Florida*, nor to discuss every instance of the first person singular. But what has emerged clearly is the highly stylized and conscious nature of the 'I' statements. The speaker carefully constructs and expands his image as a brilliant man of culture, a worthy representant of Roman Africa. We may well entitle this the Apuleian *persona*. It was partly known already from the *Metamorphoses* and *Apology*, but in these works the local, African element was less pronounced.

Whether the Apuleian *persona* closely corresponds to the biographical facts of the author's life is something we will never know: we only have his literary texts by which to judge. In any case, the closeness of the 'I' of the *Florida* to that of the other speeches, *Apology* and *De deo Socratis*, and to the general image we get from the author of the *Metamorphoses*, underscores the unity of Apuleius' literary works.[23]

As in the case of most ancient genres mentioned at the start of this paper, modern readers do not have access to the 'real life' of the respective authors. What we see, what we read and have to interpret, is only the outer mask, the façade. We cannot know the real Apuleius any more than the real Seneca or the real Pliny the Younger.[24] Fortunately, it is not real life that eventually counts in literature, but ideas and style. And for this, ancient literature in general and Apuleius in particular have much to offer.

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[23] It could even indicate that it was the same writer, Apuleius, who was the anthologist of the *Florida*: it is difficult to imagine a more effective, more favourable self-portrait. For a different view, see e.g. Harrison 2000, 135, who seems inclined to identify the anthologist as Crispus Sallustius, the teacher and scholar working in Rome at the end of the fourth century A.D.

[24] Educated, experienced readers, for their part, do not necessarily open their hearts and minds to everything they read: they too often construct protective layers and defensive walls, behind which their private life remains out of immediate reach of the texts. If we see the literary process as a process of communication, the balance between authors and readers is even.

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