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Benjamin Todd Lee, Ellen Finkelpearl, Luca Graverini (ed.), *Apuleius and Africa. Routledge monographs in classical studies, 18.* New York; London: Routledge, 2014. Pp. xvi, 344. ISBN 9780415533096. \$135.00.

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Recent years have seen a steady flow of studies on Apuleius, which focus not only on his famous novel *Metamorphoses* but also on his rhetorical works, notably the *Apology* and the *Florida*. The present volume has gathered some of the most prominent Apuleian scholars around a theme that can be called both traditional and new: Apuleius and Africa.

Possible connections between Apuleius and Africa seem manifold, if only given the fact that the author was of African birth. His native town was situated on the boundary between Numidia and Gaetulia, as Apuleius himself declares in a well-known and often quoted passage, *Apology* 24. Here he proclaims himself to be 'half Numidian' and 'half Gaetulian', adding this is nothing to be ashamed of, since what really counts is not where a man is born, but how he lives his life. In addition, he argues, there is even reason to feel proud about his native town.

African 'couleur locale', on the other hand, does seem relatively scarce within Apuleius' extant works. In the *Metamorphoses* it is conspicuously absent (if we label the 11th book on Isis as Egyptian rather than African). Most strikingly, there is no reference to Africa in the (in)famous prologue to the novel, for all its varied geographical names referring to the Greek and Roman world. There are some passages, in the *Florida*, however, which seem distinctly 'African', or more specifically, Carthaginian, such as the extravagant praise of Carthage in *Florida* 20 '*Carthage, the respected teacher of our province, Carthage, the heavenly Muse of Africa, Carthage, the inspiration of those who wear the toga*' (tr. John Hilton)

On the level of Latin, the 'African' element has been the interest of generations of scholars, who discussed the extent in which his Latin style may be said to be specifically 'African'. Accordingly, the concept of alleged *Africitas* dominated much of early 20th century scholarly literature on Apuleius, and, for that matter, other African authors such as Fronto and Augustine. Roughly after 1945, the interest in this *Africitas* diminished and the whole debate could until recently be considered buried and dead.

In April 2010, however, the theme was put back prominently on the agenda, on the occasion of a conference at Oberlin College (US) devoted to Apuleius and Africa. Scholars from various fields redirected their attention to Africa, but of course in a broader sense. Inevitably, the 'old' strictly linguistic concept of *Africitas* was discussed, but most scholars highlighted wider issues such as Apuleius' African heritage, his Romano-African identity, and possible connections with material and literary culture of Africa.

Thirteen conference papers have now been published in an inspiring Routledge volume, edited by Ellen Finkelpearl, Luca Graverini, and Benjamin Todd Lee. The editors have produced an interesting book, which will certainly provoke further discussion and thus promote Apuleian studies. All texts have been extensively reworked with many cross-

references underscoring the cohesion and inner unity of the volume as a whole. The result is a valuable and mostly very readable contribution to scholarship of Latin literature.

If the volume as a whole may be argued to form a 'unity', this does not imply that all thirteen contributions are much alike or show considerable agreement on any scholarly issue or even the relevance of the 'African' element to begin with.

Apart from a preface and an introduction, the volume consists of three main parts: 'Historical contexts' (comprising four papers), 'Cultural contexts' (five papers), and 'Theoretical approaches' (four papers). These headings are general enough, of course, to allow for papers on virtually any topic, and one may actually question the inclusion of some papers in a specific section. In addition, some overlap of themes may be discerned. But in a volume of conference papers, this is inevitable, and so it seems better to concentrate on some of the main issues discussed.

Most importantly, perhaps, is the very concept of *Africitas*. Opinions about this vary greatly, even to mutual exclusion. On the one hand there are scholars who subscribe to what may be called the 'communis opinio' from the last decades, namely that Africanism is not really an issue at all. Thus, in a discussion on Apuleius' position in the classical canon, Joseph Farrell argues that 'modern concern with Apuleius' Africanism is greatly exaggerated and quite possibly fundamentally mistaken' (p.76). Of course, investigation of African themes is worthwhile, he adds, but he rejects 'the hypostatization of Apuleius' African origins to a linguistic and literary-historical issue' (p.76). Nonetheless, Farrell makes the sympathetic suggestion that other African authors such as Perpetua and Fronto should be given a place in the canon.

Silvia Mattiacci, on the other hand, proposes to redefine the concept of *Africitas*, so as to include the notion of a spoken form of Latin with regional, African characteristics, and the notion of African schools with special features that may have influenced literary Latin (pp.92-93). One might remark here that it seems widely accepted that regional variants of spoken Latin have existed. However, no similar scholarly debate discussion on, say, 'Germaniitas' or 'Brittitanitas' has ever come up. Moreover, any influence of spoken Latin on Apuleius' rather idiosyncratic Latin style seems questionable. As to the Latin taught in schools in Africa, there is little to say with certainty, and African Latin authors show only limited stylistic similarities. All in all, the renewed concept of *Africitas* in this sense does not seem particularly helpful.

Other scholars shift the approach and discuss whether or not Apuleius can be argued to have emphasized an African 'cultural identity'. Here too, opinions differ. In his fine paper on the *Apology*, Carlos Noreña aptly remarks that a Roman criminal trial was, perhaps, not a very suitable place to assert one's cultural identity. Apuleius rather 'subordinates his intellectual achievements to the higher principles of Roman law and justice and, in the process, exposed his own, imperial, subjectivity' (p.46).

Likewise, in his paper on 'identity and identification' in Apuleius' rhetorical works, David L. Stone observes that Apuleius employs a variety of means of identification for himself and other characters, such as social status, wealth, age, gender, language, literacy, and religious practice. Scholars 'seem to have overemphasized', he adds, 'what is Roman, Greek, or African about him at the expense of considering these other features.' (p.166).

At the other end of the spectrum, however, there are scholars such as Sonia Sabnis ('Apuleius and India') and Richard Fletcher ('Apuleius, the Afro-Platonist'), who clearly wish to bring some form of Africanism to the foreground, on the basis of philosophical and theoretical approaches such as post-colonial theory. It is with interest that I read the ardent pleas for application of post-colonial notions to Apuleian studies, but I have not yet been able to see what helpful new insights into Apuleius' texts we may gain from them. Perhaps, our corpus of Apuleian texts, and of clearly 'African' Latin texts in general, is just too small to allow for far reaching conclusions on regional cultural identity.

Moving away from such 'essentialist' issues, or avoiding them, are other papers in the volume, that highlight some form of African influence or African background to specific issues in Apuleius' works. In her informative paper, Julia Gaisser discusses the transmission of Apuleius' texts, and his reception in Africa (with a useful survey of the scanty relevant material in four 'phases': ca.170-ca.300; ca.300-ca.400; ca.412-425 Augustine; ca.430-530 allegories; pp. 55-59). In her view, the main 'African connection' in the transmission is the interest in Apuleius shown by Augustine.

Benjamin Todd Lee zooms in on a rather inconspicuous element, the Latin abbreviation 'A.V.' (*Africae viri*, used once in the transmitted text of the *Florida*, suggesting that this points to an African origin of the text. Luca Graverini even tries to bring in something of Africa into the *Metamorphoses*, arguing for instance that the city of Hypata in Met. 2 is modeled on Virgil's description of Dido's city, and therefore, Carthage.

Some scholars venture still further. Emmanuel and Nedjima Plantade suggest that Apuleius' myth of Cupid and Psyche is not a personal, literary invention, but rather owes much to the Berber folkloric tradition. They analyse a number of stories as they were still told in the early 20th century, and point to some intriguing similarities with the Apuleian tale. A number of methodological issues, however, could be raised here. For one thing, it appears to be tacitly assumed that the Berber tales have been orally transmitted for so many centuries without undergoing substantial changes or influences. In fact, we hardly know a thing about Berber oral folklore in Apuleius' days, and it seems a little hazardous to extrapolate from modern material into such a distant and unknown past.

In what is by far the longest paper in the book (counting no fewer than 66 pages), Daniel L. Selden makes the equally bold claim that Apuleius' flowery, 'Asianist' rhetorical style is due not merely to archaizing in the Roman literary tradition, but also to Libyac-Punic norms of poetic expression. In the wealth of interesting African material adduced by Selden, with a great number of pictures and texts in exotic languages, it is easy to forget that there is actually very little evidence for anything he claims. It is, perhaps, significant, that Selden closes his impressive showpiece with a soberingly small list of eight 'facts' followed by four 'conjectures'.

All of this is interesting reading and food for thought. Skeptical readers, meanwhile, may feel that in some papers the dangers of attributing too much importance to small elements loom rather high.

I personally liked best those papers that remain close to the texts and aim at somewhat less adventurous conclusions. For instance, Wytse Keulen draws a learned comparison of the careers of these two second-century Roman Africans, Fronto and Apuleius, who are said to 'embody two different ways of being an African intellectual in Roman Africa' (p.142). And

Carlos Noreña makes a number of acute remarks on the *Apology*, opening up new ways to approach the text. For instance, there is his luminous idea that the two parts of the speech are, in fact, united at a higher level by the picture of Apuleius as an authoritative interpreter of written texts (p.37). The speaker consistently constructs his authority as a learned scholar and man of literature, so as to find belief as an interpreter of e.g. Pudentilla's Greek letter (p.40). Noreña's synthesis of the *Apology* is a convincing advance, which will guide future readings of, especially, the somewhat neglected second half of the speech.

All in all, the volume offers much for various groups of readers. Historians, Latinists, lovers of literary and cultural theory, scholars looking for daring new ideas: all will find something here that suits their tastes. By all means, Apuleius is really 'hot', so it seems, and is drawing scholarly attention from various angles. That by itself is good news indeed.