

## APULEIUS SOPHISTA

S. J. HARRISON: *Apuleius. A Latin Sophist*. Pp. vi + 281. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000. Cased, £45. ISBN: 0-19-814053-3.

This book aims to provide Latinists—Latin is not translated—first with a ‘literary handbook’ to A.’s works other than the well-studied *Metamorphoses*, and secondly a study of all his works ‘against their intellectual background’, which means A.’s career as a ‘performing intellectual, a sophist’ in Africa, and also ‘the larger contemporary framework of the Greek Second Sophistic’ (p. v). The first aim is carried out, though with a varying degree of satisfaction; the second, in my view, is not.

The main problem is that H. offers virtually no indication of what he understands by the ‘Second Sophistic’ or of how he thinks the Greek politico-cultural set-up of the first three centuries (for which ‘Second Sophistic’ is a convenient label suggested by Philostratus) could be or was transferred to the Latin-speaking West. There was no Latin Second Sophistic, not only because there was no Latin First Sophistic but also because the driving political Hellenism of the Greek East had no parallel in the Roman West.

It is a constant strategy of H.’s book to make comparisons with Greek authors of the period. Even on an exclusively intellectual or literary level A.’s range and standard make him look quite different. A. was a showman and a playboy, clever but shallow. He deserved to be condemned for seducing a rich widow, but had the temerity to ground his claim to innocence in the intellectual community between himself and the judge (the *Apology*). His egotism made him publish four books of highlights from his display speeches (the *Florida*). Intellectual vanity made him write a hack account of *Socrates and his Deity*. Finally his talents found a legitimate outlet in a comic novel about a man’s life as an ass (the *Metamorphoses*). The crucial underlying claim of A. is his knowledge of Greek. This bilingualism has implications for his position as an intellectual which H. never comments on. Greek authors notoriously avoid mentioning Latin literature or Roman culture, though they naturally had an interest in Roman history. Latin authors were obsessed with Greek culture and literature—and were bored with Greek history. From the time of Cicero, who pretty well invented Roman bilingualism, the Roman claim to bilingualism was not a claim to parity between Greek and Latin but an assertion of the superiority of Latin through its appropriation of classical and Hellenistic Greek learning. This is the intellectual background against which A. should have been examined. Antonine philhellenism is the political manifestation of this background in A.’s time. There is no mention of it. Gellius, Fronto, and Marcus offer obvious authorial parallels—but they are neglected.

And what of Greek authors? Only the *Florida* looks like the sort of thing Greek rhetors had to do. But sophists? A. did not write fictitious speeches or (pseudo-) historical declamations. He did not write exercise books of rhetoric and it is not clear that he had pupils. He was not a sophist. But his style of writing was ‘sophistic’, i.e. jingly-jangly, ecphrastic, archaizing, obscure, pretentious. True: there are many comparisons—but what do they add up to? In any case, A. claimed to be a ‘philosopher’. Yet writing a ‘sophistic’ account of Socrates’ *daimonion* did not bring intellectual credibility. Dio Chrysostom is several times mentioned by H. in passing as a comparable ‘philosopher’. He would turn in his grave. As to novels, the major Greek writers appear never to have written them. Perhaps that does not matter, since A.’s *Metamorphoses* has nothing in common with Greek novels anyway (in so far as the term may be restricted to what was once called the ‘ideal’ novel of Longus et al.).

Details. H. starts with a chapter on A.'s life, most of which consists of a catalogue of his fragmentary works. Chapter II does the same for the *Apology*. This consists of a useful summary of the work with very little literary analysis. The comparison with Cicero's forensic work is interesting: A. exploits his Greek learning in a way that would have been unacceptable to the grand man (or should we not wonder more about extensive rewriting of this speech?). H. ends with a section on 'Apuleius' *Apologia* and the Second Sophistic' (pp. 86–8). The parallels produced are superficial. Where is information about the development of rhetoric in this period—surely relevant? Next come the *Florida*. This chapter shows H. at his best, particularly because he does here give a literary analysis of the texts. The intellectual background is again missing (e.g. on *Fl.* 18). Chapter IV takes us to the *De Deo Socratis*. Certainly the theme is a commonplace of Greek authors (but one swallow does not make a summer). H. is good on the Latinized/Romanized version of the topic of daimons, and brings out well (pp. 144 ff.) the influences of Cicero, Seneca, Virgil, and Lucretius. Chapter V is problematical. Here H. tries to prove (or assumes) the authenticity of the *De Mundo* and the *De Platone et eius Dogmate*. The obstacle is the work of Axelson on the use of accentual rhythms in these two works, which suggests a date too late for A. This is honestly confronted by H. at pp. 178–80, who argues that A. dumbed-down in these scientific works and felt no need to keep to Ciceronian rhythms. In one way the works are more interesting if they are not by A. (as seems on balance to be the case, though H. puts up a stout defence), since they then represent (along with the *Peri Hermeneias*, also attributed to A.) evidence of Middle Platonism in Latin. In either case they show well enough the Roman tendency to appropriate Greek culture, since they hide the texts on which they depend (clearly in the case of *De Mundo* Pseudo-Aristotle, *On the Kosmos*).

Adaptation of Greek texts into Latin is central to the final chapter on the *Metamorphoses*. H. aims to place the work in its intellectual context and relate it to A. *qua* sophist (pp. 210–11). The protagonist, Lucius of Corinth, is evidently a man of high culture and status; but there is nothing to suggest he is a sophist (as claimed by H., pp. 215–20), nor do the 'sophistic' trappings (pp. 220–6) add up to anything significant. The main 'auctor/actor' problem of the *Met.*, which H. discusses learnedly (pp. 226–35), seems irrelevant to the stated aims, since this problem has no real analogue in the Greek novels (pp. 234–5). In the next section H. scrutinizes the widely held belief that the novel's last book about Isis is serious about religion, pointing out (pursuing the line of Winkler) that the presentation of Isiac cult is by no means straight (but there is nothing on cultic religion in A.'s age). H. mentions Lucian's *Alexander* and *Syrian Goddess*, but makes little of them. Rather, he develops the idea that the *Met.* ends up as a satire on Aristides' *Sacred Tales*. But aside from the problem of date, aside from the problem of A.'s satirizing a work in honour of his own favoured god (Aesculapius), if *Met.* 11 is a satire of the *Tales*, it is so different from its target that not many readers would get the joke. Finally (pp. 252–9), H. not unreasonably sees Platonic references as part of the general merry-making with intellectual/cultural expectations.

It is easy to criticize. H. has produced a well-written book which will be of value to those who want basic information on A. What he has not done—despite repeated claims—is to explain Roman intellectual life in the second century and the relationship between this and the Greek Second Sophistic.

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