

for displaying their own talents. His many fine points include the distinction between *variatio* and grammatical necessity in changing constructions (6.4); sensitivity to the humorous banter that occasionally underlies the debate (e.g. 14.4, 16.4); the ways in which an interlocutor's style reflects and supports his main claims (30.4–5 on Messalla); and numerous comments on not only the use but also the effect of such commonly recurring features as unusual word order, tricolon, and anaphora. In fact, a particularly distinctive feature of the commentary is M.'s unwillingness simply to identify stylistic phenomena. Gudeman and others had already noted exhaustively the places where Tacitus echoes Cicero's treatises, especially *Brutus* and *De Oratore*. M. is excellent in suggesting the ways in which these variations and complications of the Ciceronian model, in both language and setting, enhance an understanding of the *Dialogus*. To cite one example: the interruption of Messalla at §14 is, we are told, meant to recall not only Alcibiades' intrusion into Plato's *Symposium* but also that of L. Furius at Cicero's *De Republica* 1.17. With these literary antecedents established, M. proceeds to show how the interruption functions internally: (i) since Messalla is stepbrother to the *delator* Regulus, it is politic that he not be present at the critique of contemporary oratory; and (ii) the debate has reached a stalemate at this point, and a new perspective must be introduced for the argument to proceed further. The student of intertextuality will have much to ponder in M.'s remarks.

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APULEIAN ROLE-PLAY

S. FRANGOULIDIS: *Roles and Performances in Apuleius' Metamorphoses*. Pp. 197. Stuttgart and Weimar: Verlag J. B. Metzler, 2001. Paper. ISBN: 3-476-45284-0.

This book is a somewhat tantalizing contribution to studies of Apuleius' novel, a text that has become the site of so many scholarly discussions on narratological strategies and authorial intentionality. F. detects a pattern in the narrative structure that might, if applied inflexibly, have reduced the story lines to a rather constricting model of semiotic abstraction. F. can, within his theoretical framework, produce some intriguing insights into selected dramatic episodes, some more persuasive than others and not all equally or objectively indebted to the Greimasian model he has adopted.

F. starts out by proclaiming allegiance to A. J. Greimas's post-Proppian structuralist approach which allows meaning to surface by ascribing certain rôles to 'actors' in the narrative. This approach shifts the focus of interpretations to underlying structures—put crudely, how stories tell themselves—thus marginalizing the search for what model (or models) of narration the author is consciously manipulating. The Greimasian actants are figures or can be forces that initiate or hinder the action towards specified goals. They can in turn function as senders, receivers, helpers, and opponents in relation to the desires and aversions of others, and in tension with their own perceptions of the parts they play.

F. demonstrates that actant rôles can shift or mirror each other regardless of the goals and motives of the characters and concepts that play them out. This process reconstitutes relationships and redistributes power and initiative simultaneously. In the first chapter, 'Unwittingly Successful Performances: The Triumph of Magic', F. reappraises Aristomenes' rôle as helper of his old friend Socrates and opponent of the witches Meroe and Panthia. However, Aristomenes is ultimately manipulated by these

witches into behaving as a hostile actant responsible for completing Socrates' death cycle (pp. 16–17). F. implies that this 'clever shift of rôles by all the major characters in the tale resulting from the execution of Meroe's vengeful plan' (p. 17) absolves Apuleius from the charge of inconsistency ('the breakdown in the pattern of causality').

In Chapter 2, 'Fatally Successful Performances', F. examines how Tlepolemus enters the stage as a resourceful saviour of his bride Charite, astute enough to don a convincing disguise, but bold and cunning enough to drop hints about his true nature. As F. suggests, Tlepolemus dies himself gullible and deceived, unable to recognize that Thrasylus is in reality mirroring the rôle of ruthless brigand that had been Tlepolemus' masquerade in the robbers' cave. The turn of events in this instalment of Charite's story thwarts our expectations of Tlepolemus' strength and acuity because Apuleius has moved him from the optimistic genre of romance (where couples are reunited) into the territory of tragedy where human failure and even death hold dominion. F.'s Greimasian concepts of active and passive actants (senders, receivers) might have been teased out more explicitly here to highlight how Tlepolemus' various personae express behavioural types demanded by the discourse.

Chapter 4, 'Man and Animal' (pp. 133–47), tells the tale of Thrasyleon who undertakes the part of the bear to advance a daring robbery but is forced by bizarre circumstances to act out the spectacle of a fatal charade of punishment (his own) in amphitheatrical style. Thrasyleon forms part of the entertainment programme, the beast show, designed by the robbers' intended victim, Demochares, and does so by sustaining to the end his imitation of a dying bear. Thrasyleon is therefore transformed into a 'helper' actant of Demochares. The grand plan of Thrasyleon's partners in crime (to rob Demochares) comes to nothing but the courageous robber, as 'helper' actant of his comrades sacrifices himself so that their criminal plot goes undetected.

In complex texts, especially in a novel about metamorphoses that permeate the main tale and the secondary stories, actants perform their rôles in a semi-supernatural environment of deceptive appearances. Lucius, a key carrier of actant functions, is the most vulnerable to metamorphosis and multiformity in his behaviour both as a naïve young man and then as an ass. F. argues that it is only when the hero submits consciously to the part of devoted acolyte of Isis that he ceases to be cast into a bewildering variety of rôles by the dissembling world of magic. As priest of Isis and Osiris, he performs his part in harmony with the divine and benign objectives of the twin deities. F. is out of sympathy with ironic readings of Lucius' 'happy ending'.

I have endeavoured in this brief review to conjure with a few implications of F.'s theoretical stance in a spirit of constructive dialogue. F. himself is generous in his citations of fellow scholars who have analysed the same episodes with different critical models in mind. He might at appropriate junctures in his book have engaged more polemically with commentators who have pursued the narratological line (especially Winkler who could surely now, nearly twenty years since the publication of *Auctor & Actor*, be approached without incense!)

In his introductory chapter (pp. 1–14), F. suggests he is simplifying Greimas' terms 'so as not to discourage interested non-theoretical readers' (p. 5). However, his book represents a move away from mere identification of theatrical aspects in Apuleius as the author having a game with genres. F. has raised issues about the rôles and performances in the novel that he and other Apuleian scholars could take further whatever critical interpretative model they espouse to enrich their reading of the *Metamorphoses*.

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