

## STORYTELLERS, STORYTELLING, AND THE NOVEL IN GRAECO-ROMAN ANTIQUITY

Although much detailed and documented information on storytelling has been collected by folklorists in many countries<sup>1</sup>), almost nothing is readily available on the storyteller and his art in the Graeco-Roman world. Moreover, what little information there is, suffers from incompleteness, is difficult to trace, and is not mentioned at all in most of the standard works of reference on folklore and classical antiquity<sup>2</sup>). This paper therefore at-

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1) J.R.Adams, 'Folktale Telling and Storytellers in Japan', *Asian Folklore Studies*, 26 (1967) pp. 99-118; V.Hrdlicková, 'Japanese Professional Storytellers', *Genre* (Chicago), 2 (1969) pp. 179-210; *id.* 'The Professional Training of Chinese Story-tellers and Storytellers' Guilds', *Archiv Orientální*, 33 (1965) pp. 225-241; W.Eberhard, 'Notes on Chinese Story Tellers', *Fabula*, 11 (1970) pp. 1-31; J.Průšek, *Chinese History and Literature* (Dordrecht 1970) pp. 214-303; 366-384; 396-448. Průšek's work is particularly valuable in that he discusses in detail storytelling in the T'ang and Sung periods and the development of popular fiction under the stimulus of storytelling. Much valuable work has of course been done on storytelling in other parts of the world, for instance Ruth Finnegan's *Limba Stories and Story-Telling* (Oxford 1967) pp. 64-91, but I have confined myself to a selection of recent work in the area I have chosen for comparison with the Graeco-Roman world.

2) Brief and incomplete discussions: W.Aly *Volksmärchen, Sage und Novelle bei Herodot und seine Zeitgenossen*, (Göttingen 1969) pp. 15 ff.; *id.* in Pauly's *Real-Encyclopädie der classischen Altertumswissenschaft* (hereafter abbreviated to *R-E*), Supp. 6 (1935) cols. 13-15, s.v. "aretalogus"; *R-E* 17.1 (1936) cols. 1171-1179, s.v. "Novelle"; Crusius, *R-E*, 2 (1896) cols. 670-672; H.Blümner, *Fahrendes Volk im Altertum*, (Munich 1918) p. 8; E.Rohde, *Der griechische Roman und seine Vorläufer*<sup>1</sup>, (Hildesheim 1960) pp. 591 ff.; Sophie Trenkner, *The Greek Novella of the Classical Period*, (Cambridge 1958) pp. 16-22; R.Reitzenstein, *Hellenistische Wundererzählungen*<sup>2</sup>, (Stuttgart 1963) pp. 35 ff.; H.Werner 'Zum ΑΟΥΚΙΟΣ Η ΟΝΟΣ', *Hermes*, 53 (1918) pp. 236 ff.; O.Weinreich, *Fabel, Aretalogie, Novelle*, (Heidelberg 1931) pp. 5-8; *id.* 'Das Märchen von Amor und Psyche und andere Volksmärchen im Altertum' in: L.Friedländer, *Darstellungen aus der Sittengeschichte Roms*, Vol. 4 (Leipzig 1921 = Aalen 1964) pp. 89-132. J.Bolte, G.Polívka, *Anmerkungen zu den Kinder- und Hausmärchen der Brüder Grimm*, Vol. 4 (Hildesheim 1963) pp. 108-126; in the same volume there is a very useful list of 204 *testimonia* on storytelling from the time of Aristophanes till the turn of the last century, but the general discussion of storytelling in Greek and Roman times is now

tempts to set out and discuss some of the main features of storytelling in the Graeco-Roman world, and will deal with evidence relating both to non-professional and professional storytellers, whether itinerant or sedentary. One area of ancient oral narration will be omitted, namely, the activities of the Homeric rhapsode or „song-stitcher“, since much has already been written on the subject by scholars such as Parry<sup>3</sup>), Lord<sup>4</sup>), and Kirk<sup>5</sup>) whose work has for some time been known both to folklorists and classicists.

A word of explanation should be given about several allusions to Chinese storytelling in this paper. It is my belief that this comparative material helps to throw light on areas of Graeco-Roman storytelling about which we know almost nothing. At no point, however, do I wish to suggest that Greek or Roman storytelling is directly indebted to the methods of Chinese storytelling, or vice versa, even though there may be evidence to show that some stories which seem to make their earliest written appearance in the West later found their way into the repertoires of Chinese storytellers<sup>6</sup>). It will also be seen that even though the surviving evidence relating to storytelling in the Graeco-Roman world is very meagre, certain parallel lines of development can be seen both in the Roman world and China where it is universally recognised that storytelling was a popular art before the T'ang period (618–907) before it reached its peak under the Sung (960–1279)<sup>7</sup>). No doubt comparisons could have been

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inadequate. Cf. also W. B. Sedgwick, 'Oral Transmission in Ancient Times', *Folk-lore*, 58 (1947) pp. 288–291; E. O. Winstedt, 'Milesian Tales', *Folk-lore*, 60 (1949) pp. 393–395.

3) M. Parry, *L'Épithète traditionnelle dans Homère* (Paris 1928).

4) A. B. Lord, *The Singer of Tales* (Cambridge Mass. 1960).

5) G. S. Kirk, *The Songs of Homer* (Cambridge 1962).

6) I believe this is the case with the story of the "ass-man", best known from the Latin version of Apuleius and the Greek version of Pseudo-Lucian. A variant is given by Augustine *City of God* 18, 18, and it is this version which I believe found its way into T'ang China, perhaps via the overland Silk Route; for a discussion on this T'ang ass-story and a Kirghiz variant, see my 'Notes on Walter Anderson's Märchen zum Eselmenschen', *Fabula*, 15 (1975). It is also possible that the Lamia story was transmitted from the West to China at a very early date. On this see note 93 below. There is also a case to be made for the transmission of the tale of 'The Combat of the Pygmies and Cranes' from the West to China. See my 'The Combat of the Pygmies and Cranes in Chinese, Arab, and North American Indian Sources' *Folklore* (London) 1975.

7) Průšek, *op.cit.* passim.

made with the development of storytelling in other countries, but because of the attested antiquity of the storytellers' art in China, and because documentation about its development is relatively abundant, it seemed the best choice to make in selecting illustrative comparative material. Moreover, the undisputed influence of storytelling on the emergence of the Chinese novel provokes thoughts about certain features of Greek and Roman novelistic fiction. These thoughts may not strike the reader as being overwhelmingly convincing, but at least they might suggest a new way of approaching a genre which has always been regarded as a purely literary growth.

## I

It is sometimes claimed that the school<sup>8)</sup>, the bookseller<sup>9)</sup>, printing<sup>10)</sup>, the cinema<sup>11)</sup> and related fields such as television, are the enemies of oral literature. It is well known that during the first and second centuries A.D. a comparatively large quantity of literature circulated widely throughout the Roman empire, even though there were no printing machines to mass produce multiple copies of an author's work, or paper-making machines to create a plentiful supply of cheap paper<sup>12)</sup>. Educated slaves, on the other hand, seem to have been available in sufficient numbers and adequately performed the task of producing books. Naturally, we no longer possess precise records of the Roman booktrade, if such records ever existed, but the surviving literature of the first two centuries of the imperial period shows not only that much of this literature travelled well beyond the im-

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8) R. Carpenter, *Folk Tale, Fiction and Saga in the Homeric Epics* (Berkeley 1962) p. 3.

9) H. M. and N. K. Chadwick, *The Growth of Literature*, Vol. 3 (Cambridge 1940) p. 702; cf. Vol. 2 (Cambridge 1936) p. 291.

10) P. M. Pickard, *I Could a Tale Unfold: Violence, Horror and Sensationalism in Stories for Children*, (London 1959) p. 171.

11) T. A. Willard, *The City of the Sacred Well*, (New York 1926) p. 208; J. R. Adams, *art. cit.* 110-112.

12) See A. M. Guillemin, *Le Public et la Vie Littéraire à Rome*, (Paris 1937) pp. 63 ff.; the cost of papyrus was not excessive; see N. Lewis, *L'Industrie du Papyrus dans l'Égypte Gréco-Romaine* (Paris 1934) p. 156; L. D. Reynolds, N. G. Wilson, *Scribes and Scholars* (Oxford 1968) p. 23 f.; see also E. E. Best, 'Literacy and Roman Voting', *Historia*, 23 (1974) pp. 428-438, and Best's other articles on literacy cited on p. 428.

mediate confines of the city of Rome<sup>13</sup>) where most writers were inevitably attracted by imperial patronage, but also that the inhabitants of the Roman empire enjoyed a comparatively high degree of literacy, as one would expect if the booktrade was to flourish. Evidence for literacy must not, of course, be limited to statements in the works of extant authors, since most of these books were written by and intended to appeal directly to the ruling classes of Roman society. Of more interest and of greater validity are the thousands of wall-scrawls recovered from Pompeii and other less known and remote sites of the empire such as the garrison-town Dura-Europos on the Eastern frontier of the Roman empire. Graffiti from establishments such as inns, restaurants, barracks and brothels, suggest that slaves, legionaries, shopkeepers, mule-drivers and other members of the Roman working classes, enjoyed a reasonably high level of literacy. The bulk of the available evidence is, however, mainly urban, and reliable evidence for assessing standards of literacy in rural areas is not plentiful. That many workers in country districts were illiterate is to be assumed from several remarks in writers such as Quintilian and Strabo. The former, for example, mentions "rustics" and "illiterates" as being enthusiastic *listeners* to Aesopic fables<sup>14</sup>), and Strabo makes interesting remarks about the fondness of illiterate and semi-literate people for children's stories: "every illiterate and uneducated man is, in a sense, a child, and, like a child, he is fond of stories; and for that matter, so is the half-educated man, for his reasoning faculty has not been fully developed, and besides, the mental habits of his childhood persist in him"<sup>15</sup>). In the ancient world, as in the modern, it was often difficult to induce city-bred and trained teachers to seek employment in remote rural areas which were lucky enough to possess even a primary school<sup>16</sup>).

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13) Pliny the Younger expresses satisfaction on hearing that his books are on sale at bookshops at Lyons; *Letters* 9, 11; Martial boasts that his epigrams are read by soldiers in remote parts of the empire such as Rumania and Britain; *Epig.*, 11, 3, 3-5.

14) Quintilian, 5, 11, 19.

15) Strabo, 1, 2, 8. It has been shown that in some areas of the Roman empire which preserved their indigenous languages, "illiteracy" often means no more than an inability to read and write Latin or Greek. See H.C. Youtie, 'ΑΓΡΑΜΜΑΤΟΣ: An Aspect of Greek Society in Egypt', *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology*, 75 (1971) pp. 161 ff.

16) The emperor Vespasian exempted teachers from taxes at two small mining towns in the South of Spain in an attempt to attract staff to

Thus, given reasonably high standards of education<sup>17</sup>) and literacy, we are far from the conditions which prevailed in Homeric Greece when, before the advent and spread of writing, literature was entrusted to the trained memory of a bard. The school and writing certainly changed this situation, but did not eliminate either itinerant professional poets<sup>18</sup>), or, as will be seen, the more humble popular storyteller.

## II

The itinerant storyteller of antiquity was just one member of a large group of itinerant entertainers and rogues who earned a living by practising their assorted skills in the towns and villages of the Roman empire. Such were the variety artists (*circulatores*) who might offer such spectacles as sword-swallowing, snake-charming, fire-eating, or juggling<sup>19</sup>). Some of these artists not only travelled extensively within the Roman world, but are known to have journeyed as far as China. Such is the case with jugglers from Roman Syria who were prized at the court of a Chinese emperor in early imperial times<sup>20</sup>). There were other itinerant groups: Cynic street preachers who sometimes offended politically sensitive emperors<sup>21</sup>); musicians who orchestrated the

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otherwise unattractive positions. See R. K. McElderry, 'Vespasian's Reconstruction of Spain', *Journal of Roman Studies*, 8 (1918) pp. 53 ff.

17) For an account of the Roman educational system, see H. I. Marrou, *L'Histoire de l'Éducation dans l'Antiquité*, (Paris 1965) pp. 339-484.

18) As late as the fourth century A.D. the services of itinerant professional poets were in demand at the houses of the rich. It was naturally their ability to *write* poetry that earned them patronage, though doubtless oral recitation would also have been welcomed on appropriate occasions; see Alan Cameron, 'Wandering Poets', *Historia*, 14 (1965) pp. 470-509.

19) For a brief discussion of their activities, see H. Blümner, *op. cit.*, pp. 8 ff.; L. Robert, 'Epigraphica', *Revue des Études Grecques*, 42 (1929) pp. 433-438; for sword-swallowing see my note on Apuleius, *Metamorphoses* I, 4 in my commentary, *Apuleius Met. I. A Commentary*, (Meisenheim/Glan 1975) p. 85 f. There were also African snake-charmers, the Psylli, who were celebrated for curing snake bites. Augustus is said by Suetonius to have employed these people to cure Cleopatra's snake bite; *Life of Aug.* 17.

20) J. Needham and W. Ling, *Science and Civilisation in China*, Vol. 1 (Cambridge 1954) p. 197.

21) R. MacMullen, *Enemies of the Roman Order*, (Harvard 1966) pp. 59 ff.

carnage in the Roman world's numerous amphitheatres<sup>22</sup>); strolling players who in small groups could improvise skits before *ad hoc* audiences, or if they were lucky, receive invitations to entertain the guests of a rich host<sup>23</sup>). Troupes of dancing girls from Cádiz (*Gaditanae*) performed prurient dances at rich men's dinner tables, and are said to have been taken by Eudoxus of Cyzicus on his circumnavigation of Africa<sup>24</sup>). Other mobile groups who lived on their wits and exploited the credulity of the devout were the vagrant priests of the Syrian Goddess<sup>25</sup>), and the quack doctors who sold charms and incantations<sup>26</sup>). There were also astrologers and fortune-tellers who almost certainly toured round the provinces of the Roman empire, especially when a touchy emperor drove them from Rome<sup>27</sup>). Such were the associates of the itinerant storyteller.

### III

The Latin terms for storytellers do not indicate by themselves whether the people so designated were itinerant or not. Neither the word *fabulator* nor *aretalogus* conveys more than the basic meaning "storyteller". The Greek terms *μυθολόγος* and *λογοποιός* are far more elastic than their Roman counterparts and could be used to denote a) a historian or writer of prose, b) a professional speech writer at Athens, c) a writer of fables, d) a liar, e) a newsmonger. In some cases the two words were

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22) A well preserved mosaic from the North African site of Zliten shows an orchestra (included is a woman who plays a water-organ) providing background music while gladiators hack each other to pieces in the arena; an empty coffin is to be seen behind the orchestra; for plates and a discussion see G. Ville, in *La Mosaique Gréco-Romaine*, (Paris 1965) pp. 147-154; cf. W. Dorigo, *Late Roman Painting*, (London 1971) Plate 40. Juvenal, *Satires* 3, 35 mentions one of these musicians with characteristic contempt.

23) For a lively mosaic portraying such a group, see A. Maiuri, *Roman Painting*, (New York 1953) p. 96.

24) M. Dolç, *Hispania y Marcial*, (Barcelona 1953) pp. 49-53.

25) Such a group is sardonically portrayed by Apuleius, *Met.* 8, 24 ff.

26) For a "public physician", see Lucian's *Alexander the False Prophet*, 5. The discoverer of the priceless Tun-Huang library which contained examples of the earliest popular literature of China, was an itinerant seller of Taoist spells; A. Waley, *Ballads and Stories from Tun-Huang*, (London 1960) p. 236.

27) R. MacMullen, *op. cit.*, pp. 128-162; Artemidorus, *Dream Book*, 1, 69; Lucian, *Alexander*, 9; Apuleius, *Met.* 2, 13 f.; *Aesop* (Perry) 161 and 56.

interchangeable, as in Philostratus' *Life of Apollonius of Tyana* 5, 14 where both terms are applied with no apparent difference in meaning to Aesop. In the literal sense "storyteller" all these words are extremely rare.

According to a notice in the *Fibrist* of al Nadim, one of the earliest attested patrons of storytellers was Alexander the Great: "The truth is, if Allah so wills, that the first person to enjoy evening stories was Alexander, who had a group (of companions) to make him laugh and tell him stories which he did not seek (only) for amusement but (also he sought) to safeguard and preserve (them)"<sup>28</sup>). The reference to laughter suggests that Alexander observed a custom which his father Philip of Macedon, and other rich Greeks, no doubt, had followed, namely, the inviting of *γελωτοποιοι* to their dinner parties. The name of these storytellers, the earliest professional group we know of, indicates that they were tellers of humorous stories. "So great was their reputation for light humour that Philip of Macedon ... sent them a talent to have their jests written down"<sup>29</sup>). Philip is also said to have sent "a large quantity of small coin (representative of their usual takings?) to those who told witty jokes in the precinct of Diomean Heracles at Athens, and would order certain persons to write down what they said and report it to him"<sup>30</sup>). At Athens they formed an association of sixty members to form a type of "Narfenbund". It is clear that they were welcomed at dinner parties where they were expected to amuse the company with their buffoonery and antics<sup>31</sup>), and we are also told that

28) B. Dodge, (ed. and trans.), *The Fibrist of al-Nadim*, Vol. 2, (Columbia 1970) p. 714. The *Fibrist* was written in the tenth century. Cf. Lang Ying, *Ch'i-hsiu-lei-keao* (LVII) ch. 22, p. 8a-8b (23) ap. Průšek, *op. cit.* p. 101: "Popular stories originated in the reign of the emperor Jen Tsung (1023-1063), for the Great Peace was absolute and lasting during that period. In those days of leisure, the reigning house craved to hear some extraordinary incidents for the sake of amusement." The earliest known patron of (magic) stories is Cheops. This is recorded in the Westcar papyrus; see A. Wiedemann, *Popular Literature in Egypt*, (London 1902) p. 30; S. Thompson, "Story-Writers and Story-Tellers", in *A Folklore Reader*, edd. K. and Mary Clarke, (N. Y. and London 1965) p. 40. For other patrons of bards and storytellers see C. M. Bowra, *Heroic Poetry*, (London 1964) p. 412; Mary Boyce, "Zariadres and Zarer", *Bull. School of Oriental Studies* (1955) p. 476; D. L. R. Lorrimer, 'An Oral Version of the Kesar Saga from Hunza', *Folk-Lore* 42 (1931) p. 119.

29) Athenaeus, 14, 614E.

30) Athenaeus, 6, 260B; cf. 10, 435C.

31) Xenophon, *Banquet* 1, 11 describes the arrival of a buffoon at a dinner party, and gives a sample of his humour. Xenophon also witnessed

such parasite-clowns possessed what might be called "prompt books"<sup>32</sup>). Sometimes, however, the guests would laugh at their expense when they blackened the face of the jester with soot<sup>33</sup>).

The only other storyteller we hear of at Athens, apart from the Narrenbund, is mentioned in a scholion on line 177 of Aristophanes' *Plutus*. The scholiast explains that Philepsius "was a pauper. Accordingly he devised clever stories and enchanted (reading *ἔθελγε*) those who listened, and thus he provided himself with a living". It is further recorded that he was "a fantast and a babbler"<sup>34</sup>). This is the only other specific reference we have to a person who told stories in public at Athens to earn his living<sup>35</sup>). Unlike the *γελωτοποιοί* whose function was to tell witty anecdotes and win free dinners by clowning in the dining room, Philepsius seems to have been a teller of marvellous or fantastic tales who resided in Athens.

There must, however, have been a large number of storytellers travelling about the Greek world prior to its occupation by the Romans. We hear almost nothing of their activities because the authors of surviving classical Greek literature considered the activities of storytellers as unworthy of special attention and hardly even deserving of contempt. The charges of fantasy and garrulity which, as was seen, a scholiast reports of Philepsius reflects an opinion which would have been shared by most classical writers who were critical even of Herodotus, and even more

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the performance of *γελωτοποιοί* at a banquet given by the Thracian king Seuthes; *Anabasis*, 7, 3, 33.

32) Gelasimus in Plautus' *Stichus*, 400, 454, refers to his books of jests; cf. also *Persa*, 392.

33) Lucian, *Chronos*, 22; Alciphron, 3, 12, 2; John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Matthew*, 35, ε (Migne Vol. 57, p. 409). See further Trenkner, *op. cit.*, 18 f.; *R-E* 7 (1912) cols. 1019-1021.

34) Text in F. Dübner, *Scholia Graeca in Aristophanem*, (Paris 1877; Hildesheim 1969) pp. 333, 550; cf. W. J. W. Koster, *Scholia in Aristoph.* Pars IV. fasc. I (Amsterdam 1960), p. 56.; Aly, *Volksmärchen*, p. 18 n. 5 seems to think that Philepsius' *μύθους* are "speeches" (Reden), not "stories" (Erzählungen). I see no reason for adopting this interpretation.

35) Trenkner, *op. cit.*, p. 16 n. 4, gives eleven references which do not provide evidence for the existence of professional storytellers at Athens. The references nearly all allude to places like barbers' shops where gossips gathered to chat informally. The character portrayed in Theophrastus' *Characters*, 8, is a malicious manufacturer of news. For the term *λογοποιός* as used in this context see the discussion of P. Steinmetz, *Theophrast, Charaktere*, Vol. 2, (Munich 1962) pp. 112 ff. Aristotle, *Ethics of Nicomachus*, 3, 1117b, 33 ff. alludes to "those who are fond of hearing and telling stories". These are likely to be "gossips" rather than professional storytellers.

so of the earlier Ionian logographers. A similar attitude is found in Chinese sources where hostility on the part the literati is the order of the day. However, the Chinese seem never to have insisted on the same degree of rationalism and anthropocentrism<sup>36</sup>) as is evident in Greek literature as early as Homer. For even when Homer retells a folk narrative such as the tale of Polyphemus, he seems to suppress or drastically remodel the fantastic and marvellous elements of the folktale<sup>37</sup>). On the whole, the Greeks, at least in their written literature, tended to play down anything that seemed beyond the bounds of reasonable human capability<sup>38</sup>).

#### IV

Passing over for the moment the ἀρεταλόγοι<sup>39</sup>) who made their presence felt in Eastern parts of the Mediterranean at about the time of Alexander and his successors, evidence for the existence of storytellers in the Roman world may now be examined.

Just as Philip and Alexander had employed storytellers to amuse them, so Augustus is said by Suetonius to have employed them for two distinct purpose: firstly, to entertain guests at his dinner parties along with other entertainers: "he used to introduce musicians or actors or even common players from the

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36) Confucius was an apostle of the rational in literature as well as in life: "The rationalism of the Confucians was partly responsible for the fact that it is precisely in the 'little tales' (Hsiao-shuo) rather than in those genres such as lyric poetry, belles-lettres, and the essay . . . that there appear the strange, the miraculous, the extraordinary, and the supernatural in the polite literature of China," W. Bauer and H. Franke, *The Golden Casket. Chinese Novellas of Two Millennia*, trans. C. Levenson, (New York 1964) p. 5; cf. B. Watson, *Chinese Rhyme-Prose*, (Columbia 1971) p. 4. The attitude of the Confucians did not, however, effectively stifle the growth of the popular novella and novel in China. In Greece, on the other hand, the novella as an independent type of literature never gained respect and very few examples apart from Aristides' *Milesian Tales* are known.

37) D. Page, *The Homeric Odyssey*, (Oxford 1955) p. 9, calls Homer's version of the Polyphemus-tale a "realistic narrative in which the supernatural element is deliberately suppressed and obscured"; cf. *id. Folktales in Homer's Odyssey*, (Harvard 1973) p. 4, "supernatural elements are, for the most part, either suppressed or so modified as to seem credible..."; cf. L. Radermacher, *Die Erzählungen der Odyssee*, (Wien 1915) p. 27; Průšek, *op. cit.*, p. 32 "... the Chinese artist . . . had an even richer imagination than the Greek writer".

38) Cf. Carpenter, *op. cit.*, p. 70.

39) See below p. 241.

Circus, and more frequently, storytellers" (*aretalogos*)<sup>40</sup>). Secondly, to lull him to sleep on nights when his sleep was interrupted: "if, as often happened, he could not get back to sleep after it had been broken, he achieved his end by summoning readers or storytellers" (*fabulatores*)<sup>41</sup>).

Unluckily, Suetonius does not volunteer such information on the habits of any of Augustus' successors, nor is either context full enough to tell us whether a group of storytellers actually formed a permanent part of Augustus' household, or whether they were summoned at short notice by a palace servant whenever the emperor required their presence. It is well known from other Latin sources<sup>42</sup>) that readers were often highly trained slaves or freedmen kept as a permanent part of the household by the rich. They were often required to give readings while host and guests were dining. That Augustus also employed readers in this fashion need cause no surprise. However, no other source from the Roman imperial period mentions either professional *fabulatores* or *aretalogi* at the dinner table or even in the house of any other person of any class. We do not even hear anything of them in Petronius' *Satyricon* where the genial parvenu Trimalchio offers his guests a medley of vulgar food and entertainment including the antics of *circulatores*. It seems, therefore, that Augustus' tastes were in this respect unusual, even though Suetonius says nothing to this effect. It would also seem likely that his storytellers would be called in to his palace from public places at Rome such as the Circus Maximus, Forum, and other such locales where people congregated. Dio Chrysostom gives us our only glimpse of such entertainers at work in a hippodrome: "I once saw while strolling through the Hippodrome many people there variously occupied: one playing the flute, another dancing, another doing a variety act, another reading a poem, another singing, another telling some story or tale"<sup>43</sup>). Augustus seems to have invited a cross-section of such entertainers into his palace. No guest would have dared on such

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40) Suetonius, *Augustus*, 74.

41) *Ibid.*, 78. Cf. F. J. Oinas, 'Folklore Activities in Russia' in R. M. Dorson (ed.), *Folklore Research around the World*, (N. Y. and London 1973) p. 76: "rich men, suffering from insomnia, had their attendants tickle the soles of their feet and tell them stories". Cf. Y. M. Sokolov, *Russian Folklore*, (Hatboro 1966) p. 457.

42) Pliny, *Letters*, 5, 19; 8, 1.

43) *Oration*, 20, 10.

occasions to express his disapproval openly, but many would have wondered why his dinner entertainments were popular rather than aristocratic.

Also unattested elsewhere in literary sources for the imperial period is the use of popular storytellers as imperial soporifics. It is quite possible that this habit of Augustus was carried over from childhood into his adult life, since, as will be seen below<sup>44</sup>), it was common for nurses to tell old wives' tales (*aniles fabulae*) to send young children to sleep. The malicious critic could therefore have accused Augustus of having childish tastes, save that the emperor had apparently replaced his childhood *nutrix* with a *fabulator*.

Apart from Suetonius, the word *fabulator* in the sense professional storyteller (i.e. a person who made his living from storytelling) occurs only three times in the entire corpus of extant Latin literature. Seneca<sup>45</sup>) calls Albinovanus Pedo a *fabulator elegantissimus*, but this is merely a jocular aside since Pedo was a friend of Ovid's and unlikely to have indulged in more than witty table-talk. And Aulus Gellius calls Aesop a *fabulator*<sup>46</sup>), and Herodotus *homo fabulator*<sup>47</sup>).

One further piece of information on *fabulatores* is provided by Pliny in a letter which opens with the catch-cry of a professional storyteller: "Pay a penny and hear a golden tale"<sup>48</sup>). I have shown elsewhere that this is almost certain to be the cry of a popular *fabulator* addressing bystanders prior to giving a public performance, and not the cry of a *circulator*<sup>49</sup>). Similar formulae are known from Greek texts: "listen to the story", "listen to . . . an especially fine tale"<sup>50</sup>). No doubt there were many other variations on this theme<sup>51</sup>).

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44) See p. 244-251.

45) *Letters*, 122, 15.

46) *Attic Nights*, 2, 29, 1.

47) *Ibid.* 3, 10, 11.

48) *Letters*, 2, 20, 1.

49) *Aspects of the Ancient Romance and its Heritage* (Meisenheim/Glan 1969) p. 27f.

50) See M. Nøjgaard, *La Fable Antique*, Vol. 1 (Copenhagen 1964) p. 471 who correctly suggests that "Aesopic" fables belonged to the repertoires of early Ionian storytellers; cf. nn. 14 and 47 above and Philostratus, *Life of Apollonius*, 5, 14 where Aesop is regarded as a storyteller.

51) For similar expressions in Andersen's tales, see P. V. Rubow, *H. C. Andersens Eventyr*, (Copenhagen 1943) p. 191.

## V

The Latin transliteration of the word *ἀρεταλόγος* which seems to have been used by Suetonius as synonymous with *fabulator*<sup>52</sup>), is also found in Juvenal's fifteenth satire, a parody of a wondertale<sup>53</sup>) and therefore akin in purpose to Lucian's *True History*. In line fifteen of Juvenal's poem the satirist compares Odysseus narrating his fabulous adventures at Alcinoüs' court to a "lying storyteller" (*mendax aretalogus*). The word appears only twice elsewhere in Latin literature: firstly, in Porphyrius who notes in a gloss on Horace, *Satires*, 1, 1, 20 that "Plotius Crispus also wrote poetry, but in such a garrulous manner that he was called an aretalogus". Here again the charge of garrulity is associated with storytelling, as it had in the scholion on Aristophanes' *Plutus* 177. Such so-called garrulity is probably no more than the unsympathetic reference of a *writer* to the fuller, more circumstantial narrative style of an *oral* narrator. Hannan has noted similar features in early Chinese vernacular stories: "The vernacular narrative prose tends to be exhaustive and denotative". It aims at "particularity of person, of time, of place.... The vernacular is full of testifying detail". He further observes that "the vernacular fiction is narrated by an author who assumes the persona of the public story-teller addressing his audience"<sup>54</sup>).

The second appearance of the word *aretalogus* is in a note by a scholiast on the passage in Juvenal already mentioned. The note is of some importance since it explains the nature of the aretalogue's function more fully than does any other Latin author: "As some people interpret it, *aretalogi* are those who talk of marvellous things that is, the miracles of gods. In my opinion, mention is being made of those *aretalogi* who tell the common people those things which should not be uttered"<sup>55</sup>). The last

52) I retract an earlier opinion about Suetonius' use of these two terms in my *Aspects*, p. 26. P.G. Walsh rightly questioned this view in *Phoenix*, 25 (1971) p. 89.

53) For a detailed discussion of this view, see my *More Essays on the Ancient Romance and its Heritage*, (Meisenheim/Glan 1973) pp. 53-63.

54) P. Hannan, 'The Early Chinese Short Story', *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*, 27 (1967) p. 175 f.; cf. Carpenter, *op. cit.*, p. 15 f. who talks of the well known "colloquial loquacity" of oral literature.

55) P. Wessner, *Scholia in Iuvenalem Vetustiora*, (Leipzig 1967) pp. 227 and 286. Reitzenstein, *Hell. Wund.*, p. 8 n. 2 changes *dicta* of the MS to *ficta*, thus producing the translation "who tell fictitious tales to the common

part of the scholiast's explanation is thought to be a folk-etymology of ἀρεταλόγος = ἄροητα + λέγειν "to narrate things which are not to be divulged/shameful"<sup>56</sup>). As an etymology this explanation has for long been known to be incorrect, and it is recognised that the explanation rejected by the scholiast is the correct one: "to narrate miracles" (ἀρετὰς λέγειν). The scholiast adds "of the gods".

That some *aretalogi* told stories of a religious nature in which they promoted the interests of a deity whose "miracles" were the subject-matter of their stories is beyond doubt. As Merkelbach has pointed out, a statement in the *Liber Hermetis* indicates that *aretalogi* "busied themselves in sacred places and recited or expounded tales"<sup>57</sup>). There is also inscriptional evidence which shows that some *aretalogi*, in particular those in the service of Egyptian deities such as Isis, Osiris, Sarapis, were dream-interpreters. Such storytellers "enjoyed a professional dignity akin to that of a priest; his function was to narrate to the faithful the prodigies of the god, and thus he was a kind of preacher specialised in edifying narratives"<sup>58</sup>). These storytellers are unlikely to have been itinerant. It is also certain that their stories would not have been too obviously serious and edifying, since, initially at any rate, the clientele of the Isis cult for example, consisted of the lower classes (*humiles*): launderers, poulterers, barbers, restauranters, and so on<sup>59</sup>), who would expect their stories to be spiced with racy as well as religious material<sup>60</sup>).

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people". Reitzenstein's emendation simplifies the meaning, but is not necessary, and probably unwarranted.

56) R. Merkelbach, *Roman und Mysterium in der Antike* (Munich 1962) p. 88f. takes ἄροητα to mean "shameful"; cf. Aly, *R-E*, Sup. 6, p. 670, 48-53. It is quite possible that the scholiast is not referring to obscenities in the stories of *aretalogi*, but to indiscreet remarks about religious mysteries which should not be revealed to the uninitiated; see V. Longo, *Aretalogie nel Mondo Greco* Vol 1, (Genova 1969), p. 16 for related views.

57) *Loc. cit.* n. 5. Merkelbach takes *sacra loca* to mean "temples"; cf. p. 333: "Zentrale Bedeutung für die Entwicklung der neuen Gattung (i.e. the romance) haben die mündlichen Geschichtenerzähler im Dienst der Götter, die Aretalogen". Cf. also K. Kerényi, *Die griechisch-orientalische Romanliteratur*, (Darmstadt 1962) p. 91. For storytellers in mosques, see G. Clerk, *Historical Tales and Anecdotes of the Times of the Early Khalifabs, Ilam-en-Nas*, (London 1873) p. 158.

58) Longo, *op. cit.* p. 18.

59) V. Tran Tam Tinh, *Le Culte d'Isis à Pompéii*, (Paris 1964) p. 53.

60) Merkelbach, p. 88, points to the mixture of "Schertz und Ernst" in Apuleius' *Metamorphoses*.

Counterparts to the *aretalogi* who propagandised for religious cults are to be found in China where in early times Buddhist monks told stories and expounded sutras. As Liu puts it, during the T'ang period "there were two kinds of popular Buddhist preaching. In the first kind, the preacher would chant a sutra and add explanations in colloquial speech. In the second kind, the preacher would select episodes from a sutra and elaborate on them. . . . It was the latter kind that influenced the development of popular fiction, for once the preacher began to concentrate on the episodes instead of the text of the sutra, he would naturally try to make these as interesting as possible, while the audience would naturally become more and more engrossed in the story *per se*, rather than in the moral it was meant to point. Thus, this kind of popular preaching in fact became recitals of tales of the marvellous"<sup>61</sup>).

That some storyteller-monks deviated wildly from the edifying aim of their narratives is attested by a T'ang writer who reports that a certain Wen Shu was noted for "publicly addressing assembled crowds on the pretext of preaching on the scriptures, but his topics were all obscene or vulgar ones"<sup>62</sup>). One is here reminded of scabrous descriptions in Apuleius' *Isisorientated* romance where deviant sex is sometimes frankly portrayed with evident gusto and little moralising<sup>63</sup>).

For some time a somewhat unproductive controversy has raged among classical scholars in an attempt to determine whether secular itinerant *aretalogi* – of the kind mentioned by Suetonius and Juvenal – preceded or postceded temple-*aretalogi*<sup>64</sup>). The controversy has so far produced no definite, reliable conclusions, and given the present state and nature of the available evidence, can hardly be expected to do so. It is, however, reasonably certain that temple-storytellers would, through the very nature of their aim (to win the attention of the uninitiated), have to confine themselves to stories with a religious colouring, whereas the itinerant storytellers, in addition to telling secular

61) J. J. Y. Liu, *The Chinese Knight Errant*, (Chicago 1967) p. 99f.

62) Cited by J. L. Bishop, *The Colloquial Short-Story in China*, (Harvard 1956) p. 6; cf. Průšek, *op. cit.*, p. 244.

63) E. g. *Met.* 10, 20ff.; Werner, *art. cit.*, p. 240 rightly terms Apuleius' Greek original as "erbaulich-obszön".

64) A. Kiefer, *Aretalogische Studien*, (Leipzig 1929) pp. 31ff.; Aly, *R-E*, Supp. 6, *loc. cit.*; Reitzenstein, *op. cit.*, p. 34; Werner, *art. cit.*, p. 239; Longo, *op. cit.*, pp. 18ff.

stories, could, and probably did, tell religious stories if occasion demanded. What is certain, is that both types of storytellers must often have used the same popular tales. This much is illustrated by the three extant versions of the tale of the ass-man. In the abbreviated version of Pseudo-Lucian the story ends on a note of pure farce, with no hint of any religious moral, whereas in Apuleius the same story, greatly elaborated and enlarged, has been given an unmistakable religious colouring with its concluding Isis-aretalogy and the entry of the reborn hero into the goddess' priesthood. Later still, in the apocryphal *Arabic Gospel of the Infancy*, 20–21, the ass-man regains his human shape by having the Christchild placed upon his back. Here, then, is a Christian aretalogy fashioned from the same tale. A further illustration is provided by an etiological anecdote about how some rustics were turned into frogs by the goddess Latona in Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 6, 313 ff. A similar frog-metamorphosis occurs in Apuleius' *Metamorphoses*, 1, 9 where this time a witch turns an unco-operative innkeeper into a frog. Werner thinks that Ovid's story was originally "eine bloß unterhaltsame Zaubergeschichte, die von Ovid in eine Götteraretalogie umgewandelt wurde"<sup>65</sup>), in other words, Werner thinks Apuleius' version, or one like it, preceded the religious version. This is pure speculation.

The same sort of controversy apparently besets Sinologists who disagree over whether religious storytellers preceded profane ones, or vice versa. Bishop expresses his doubts as follows: "Whether monk-narrators recited both religious and secular *pienwen*<sup>66</sup>) or whether the latter were the productions of professional, secular narrators, we cannot be certain. One might suppose that the Buddhist monk-narrator was the prototype of the popular storyteller of the market place, just as secular *pienwen* grew out of religious *pien-wen*. *But it is inconceivable that popular story-tellers had not existed in China before then*"<sup>67</sup>).

In addition to sharing the same folktales, both lay and religious groups in the Graeco-Roman world and in China, employed basically the same techniques in presenting marvellous inci-

65) *art. cit.*, p. 239.

66) *wen* = texts: *pien* = relating strange incidents; Průšek, *op. cit.* p. 398; elsewhere (p. 240) Průšek translates *pien-wen* as "changing texts".

67) Bishop, *op. cit.* p. 6 (my italics); Průšek, p. 399 thinks Buddhist monk-narrators were prior to the lay professional storytellers who appeared under the T'ang; see too his account of Buddhist narrators in the Sung period, pp. 214–227.

dents in the most credible manner. To do this they employed authenticating devices such as the eye-witness account (“autopsyfiction”), the precise dating and localising of events, the invoking of independent witnesses to assert the “truth” of the story, and other such commonplaces<sup>68</sup>). In written versions of popular tales one naturally expects to find such devices used to the full but in oral presentations a storyteller would be able, as least approximately, to judge the credulity of his audience, sophisticated in the cities, less so in the country, and adapt his techniques accordingly. For the storyteller himself knew: “wenn der naïve Mensch irgendeine Erzählung hört oder liest, wird er nur selten zu fragen unterlassen, ob das Erzählte wirklich geschehen und wahr sei”<sup>69</sup>).

## VI

The Chadwicks noted in 1940 that “in modern times (the chief function of folktales) has been for the amusement of children by their nurses”<sup>70</sup>). Today, when most people cannot afford to employ nurses, children’s programmes on television have largely supplanted the traditional nursery “fairy-tale omnibus”, at least in the industrialised countries of the West.

The abundance of references<sup>71</sup>) in Greek and Latin literature to “old wives’ tales” shows very clearly that nurses, who in the ancient world were usually slaves, were the main repository of Graeco-Roman folktales. The term *anilis fabula*, and its Greek equivalent, was the ultimate insult that a literary critic could

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68) For a full discussion, see Werner, pp. 242–249; Scobie, *Aspects*, pp. 42 ff.; *More Essays*, pp. 35–46; cf. the remarks of E. D. Edwards, *Chinese Prose Literature of the T’ang Period*, Vol. 2. (London 1938) pp. 243 ff. who in discussing an early example of Chinese paradoxography says: “it reads as if he (sc. the author) had let his imagination run riot and then ingeniously pinned down every incident with a date to add conviction”; cf. Bishop, p. 39 f.; Hannan, p. 132. Phlegon’s *On Wonders*, written in the reign of Hadrian, uses the same methods as the paradoxographer mentioned by Edwards.

69) Werner p. 234.

70) *op. cit.* Vol. 3, p. 777. See also J. Gathorne-Hardy, *The Rise and Fall of the British Nanny*, (London 1972) pp. 282–288.

71) Bolte–Polívka, Vol. 4, pp. 41–47 (Zeugnisse 1 33) contains a large number of these references, but hardly any of them are discussed; there is a little more discussion in Weinreich, in Friedländer, *op. cit.*, 89 ff. An exhaustive list of references is supplied by A. S. Pease, *M. Tulli Ciceronis De Natura Deorum*, Vol. 2, (Harvard 1958 = Darmstadt 1968) p. 997 f.

apply to a writer's work, or that anyone could apply to another person's speech. The term among the literati was equivalent to "nonsense", "rubbish"<sup>72</sup>). Any *fabula* in fact which lacked a didactic message or which was not employed in an instructive context<sup>73</sup>), in short, any tale which was told for its own sake for entertainment only, was relegated by the ancient world's severest critics to the nursery. Such is the opinion of Macrobius who brackets together and condemns the romances of Petronius and Apuleius, and packs them off to the nursery (*in nutricum cumas*)<sup>74</sup>). The fables of Aesop, on the other hand, are not so treated, since they were thought to have an educative purpose<sup>75</sup>). It is no surprise, therefore, to find that Quintilian approves of the inclusion of Aesop's fables in his primary school syllabus for budding orators. He further says that the Aesopic fable is to replace the *fabulae nutricularum* on which the infant was nourished in the nursery<sup>76</sup>). It was because children first came into contact with life and literature through their nurses' tales that educationists cautioned parents to select their children's nurses with particular care and caution<sup>77</sup>).

From the passing allusions of several Greek and Roman authors we receive brief glimpses of the occasions on which nutrices told their tales, and of the nature and subject-matter of their stories. The references are usually so brief that in almost every case an attempt to reconstruct these stories and align them with modern analogues is a hazardous and purely hypothetical exercise. In some instances, however, the attempt is not entirely fruitless.

Gruesome stories were told to frighten children into obedience. Most of these must have been of the type "if you don't

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72) cf. Plato, *Theaetetus* 176b, γαῶν ὕβρις; Gorgias 527a; Clement of Alexandria, 58; in the *Augustan History*, Life of Clodius Albinus, Apuleius' *Metamorphoses* is contemptuously associated with *aniles fabulae*.

73) For example, Plato's use of the tale of Gyges and Candaules, *Republic* 2, 359d – 360b; cf. Herodotus, 1, 8–12. The former employs it to reinforce an ethical point, the latter uses it to create a minor tragedy; see further *Aspects*, p. 39 and nn. 33–34.

74) Macrobius, *Commentary on Scipio's Dream*, 1, 2, 6–12; for a full discussion of his important passage, see *Aspects*, pp. 14ff.

75) Not that everyone adopted this view. In Philostratus, *Apollonius* 5, 14, Menippus relegates Aesopic fables to the nursery. Criticism is also implicit in one of Phaedrus' prefaces, 4, prol., 15.

76) 1, 9, 2; cf. 1, 8, 19.

77) Plato, *Hippias Major*, 286a; *Laws*, 10, 887; Aristotle, *Republic*, 7, 17; Plutarch, *On Educating Children*, 5.

do such-and-such, so-and-so will come and eat you". In his fifteenth *Idyl*, Theocritus portrays a mother addressing a child in this way to induce it to stay at home while she leaves the house with a friend<sup>78</sup>). The monster conjured up by the mother, Mormo, was just one of a large gallery of horrific spectres and demons who possessed the power to change themselves into a variety of shapes and substances, and, as one would expect, they nearly all had an insatiable appetite for the flesh of young children. The main "bugbears" and "bogeys", all of them female, or at least partly female, were: Akko<sup>79</sup>), Alphito<sup>80</sup>), Empousa<sup>81</sup>) Ephialtes<sup>82</sup>), Gello<sup>83</sup>), Gorgo<sup>84</sup>), Karko<sup>85</sup>), Lamia<sup>86</sup>), Mania<sup>87</sup>), Mormo/Mor-

78) Line 40; see the comments of A.S.F.Gow, *Theocritus*, Vol. 2, (Cambridge 1950) p. 279; cf. also Xenophon, *Hellenica*, 4, 4, 17; Strabo, 1, 2, 8; Plutarch, *De Stoicorum Repugnantiis*, 15, 1040B.

79) W.H.Roscher, *Ausführliches Lexicon der griechischen und römischen Mythologie*, (Leipzig 1886-1937 = Hildesheim 1965) I. 1, p. 201f.; *R-E*, 1, 1172. For a well documented discussion of many of these demon figures, see H. Herter, 'Böse Dämonen im frühgriechischen Volksglauben', *Rhein. Jahrb. f. Volkskunde*, 1 (1950) pp. 112-143, esp. pp. 118-120 = *Kleine Schriften* (Munich 1975) p. 50f. I am gratefully indebted to Prof. Herter for drawing my attention to this article. See also G.A.Megas, *Folktales of Greece*, (London 1970) pp. liii-lvi.

80) Roscher, I, 1, p. 259; *R-E*, 1, col. 1637.

81) Roscher, I, 1, p. 1243f.; *R-E*, 5, cols. 2540-2543; Stith Thompson, *Motif Index*, Vol. 1, p. 358 (B 15. 6. 2).

82) Roscher, I, 1, p. 1281; *R-E*, 5, col. 2847 z).

83) Roscher, I, 2, p. 1610; *R-E*, 7, col. 1005f. said to be etymologically connected with the Arab "ghoul". M. Gaster, 'Two Thousand Years of a Charm against the Child-Stealing Witch', *Folk-Lore*, 11 (1900) pp. 143-148; H.A. Barb, 'Antaura, The Mermaid and the Devil's Grandmother', *Journal of the Warburg Institute*, 29 (1966) p. 5; D.B. Oeconomides, 'Yello dans les traditions des peuples helléniques et romains', *IV. Internat. Congress for Folk-Narrative Research* (Athens 1965) pp. 328-334.

84) Roscher, I, 2, pp. 1695-1727; *R-E*, 7, cols. 1630-1655; Stith Thompson, Vol. 3, p. 140 (F 526.3).

85) Roscher, II, 1, p. 960; *R-E*, 10, col. 1594.

86) The best known of all ancient "bugbears", thought to have been originally a vampire-demon; Roscher, II, 2, p. 1819 3); *R-E*, 12, cols. 544-546; Stith Thompson, Vol. 1, p. 365 f. (B 29, 1). Vol. 3, p. 298 (G 262.0.1.). Norman Douglas, *Siren Land*, (London 1927) pp. 125 ff.; J.C. Lawson, *Modern Greek Folklore and Ancient Greek Religion*, (New York 1965) pp. 174ff.; J. Fontenrose, *Python* (Berkeley 1959) pp. 44 and 102ff.; M. Delcourt, 'Ty-dée and Melanippe', *Studi e Materiali di Storia delle Religioni*, 37 (1966) p. 140. F. della Corte, 'Numa e le Streghe', *Maia*, 26 (1974) p. 3 f. For modern Arab descendants of Dio's desert Lamia, see E. Westermarck, *Ritual and Belief in Morocco*, Vol. I (London 1926) pp. 397-406. G.F. Abbott, *Macedonian Folklore*, (Chicago 1969) p. 265 ff.; R. Rodd, *The Customs and Lore of Modern Greece*<sup>2</sup>, (Chicago 1968) pp. 185 ff.

molyke<sup>88</sup>), Onoskelis<sup>89</sup>), Sybaris<sup>90</sup>). All these witch-like figures must have been employed as *Kinderschrecken* either in tales or simply as threatening figures, in the way the mother in Theocritus' XV refers to Mormo. A survey conducted by the Department of Folklore at the Memorial University of Newfoundland in 1966–7 indicates quite clearly that witches are still conjured up to terrify children into obedience: "The reasons why witches are threatened on children in Newfoundland are similar to those commonly found in other parts of the world. They fall into four main categories: General threats to discourage misbehaviour and encourage obedience; specific threats to get children indoors before dark and discourage them from going out at night; specific threats to keep children away from dangerous or forbidden places (e.g. the figure of the *Kornmutter* to keep children out of cornfields); miscellaneous threats involving other specific prohibitions"<sup>90a</sup>). Unfortunately we do not today possess a single Greek or Roman witch-tale in a form uninfluenced by literary convention. The story Trimalchio tells in the *Satyricon* 63, is perhaps the closest we can get to the spirit and language of such tales, but Trimalchio's tale is unspecific. The witches he mentions are not particularised.

87) Roscher, II, 2, p. 2323f.; *R-E*, 14, col. 1110 8. C.G. Leland, *Etruscan Roman Remains in Popular Tradition*, (London 1892) pp. 51–53, discusses superstitions in modern Tuscany about "Mania della Notte".

88) Roscher, II, 2, p. 3213f.; *R-E*, 16, cols. 309–311; said to be a personification of "dread", and etymologically connected with Latin "formido".

89) Roscher, III, 1, pp. 916–918; *R-E*, 18, 1, cols. 521–526, usually another aspect of Lamia and referring to her ass's legs. Westermarck, p. 267 "sometimes the jñūn appear as monsters with the body of a man and the legs of a donkey"; W. Deonna, 'Laus Asini', *Rev. Belg. de Phil. et d'Hist.*, 34 (1956) pp. 38, 213, 220, 354f. In an Indian variant of Midas with ass' ears, a Raja has an ass' foot; R. Lehmann-Nitsche, 'König Midas hat Esels-ohren', *Zeitschr. f. Ethnol.* 68 (1936) p. 293.

90) Roscher, IV, pp. 1609–1612; *R-E* (2nd series), 7, col. 1002. Other child-stealers were the Nereids; see F. Cumont, *After-Life in Roman Paganism*, (Yale 1922) p. 139; R. Rodd, *The Customs and Lore of Modern Greece*, (Chicago 1968) pp. 107, 184. P.P. Argenti, H. J. Rose, *The Folklore of Chios*, Vol. 2, (Cambridge 1949) p. 247. Other modern Greek witch figures are briefly mentioned by D.D. Lee, 'Greek Personal Anecdotes of the Supernatural', *Journ. Amer. Folk.*, 64 (1951) 307, 312; cf also O. Waser, *Volkskunde und griechisch-römisches Altertum*, (Basel 1916) p. 25 + n. 1.

90a) J. Widowsen, "The Witch as a Frightening and Threatening Figure", in Venetia Newall, *The Witch Figure* (London 1973) p. 212. Cf. Hand, W.D. (ed.) *North Carolina Folklore*, Vol. 7, (Duke Univ. 1964) p. 155, No. 5784. ("Old Raw Head and Bloody Bones").

How witch-tales could be adapted to suit Graeco-Roman literary conventions of didacticism is illustrated by three different versions of the Lamia-tale: the short account "Lamia or Sybaris" in Antoninus Liberalis' *Metamorphoses*, 8; the famous "Lamia of Corinth" in Philostratus *Apollonius*, 4, 25; and Dio Chrysostom's "African Tale" (5th. Discourse).

In Antoninus the Lamia is portrayed as a monster which made forays into the countryside around Delphi and carried off men and beasts. The Delphians are told by Apollo to expiate the animal by selecting a youth to place outside the monster's cave. While a victim is being led to the cave, a young noble spots the youth and falls in love with him. He is appalled to hear of the destination of the youth, and takes his place. He overcomes the monster, and throws her over a cliff, and she disappears. From the rock she struck flowed a spring which the local inhabitants named after her, and Sybaris in Italy is said to have been named after this spring<sup>91</sup>). This version need not detain us since it is a mythologised version which Antoninus says was taken from the *Metamorphoses* of Nicander. It is a very "impure" version of what the nursery tale must have been like. The description of the Lamia and her activities are told with no attempt to create horror or terror.

Philostratus' Lamia story is less literary than Antoninus' version. In Philostratus the action takes place at Corinth where a young student-philosopher falls in love with "a strange woman" of great beauty who is said to be a Phoenician. The young man forgets the lessons of philosophy and yields to temptation. At this point the Neo-Pythagorean sage, Apollonius, arrives in Corinth and tells the young man his beautiful bride-to-be is a Lamia. Such creatures, he advises, "have amorous appetites, but their chief appetite is for human flesh". Under the stern influence of Apollonius who is invited to the young man's wedding, the Lamia is forced to confess her true nature: she was accustomed "to feeding upon young and beautiful bodies, because their blood was fresh and pure"<sup>92</sup>). Philostratus concludes the story with an implicit apology. He has told the story because his source relates it. Again, there is little that is horrific in the presentation of the incidents, and the theriomorphic nature of the Lamia is only

91) M. Papatomopoulos, *Antoninus Liberalis, Les Métamorphoses*, (Paris 1968) p. 14f.

92) J. S. Phillimore, *Philostratus, In Honour of Apollonius of Tyana*, Vol. 2, (Oxford 1912) p. 24ff.

wanly reflected in Apollonius' figurative words to Menippus, "you cherish a serpent and a serpent cherishes you". This version also has a clearly corrective purpose: to demonstrate the supernatural powers of the thaumaturge Apollonius, and to warn would-be philosophers against temptations of the flesh<sup>93</sup>).

Dio's tale, on the other hand, seems to be closer in spirit to an *anilis fabula* than either of the two versions discussed above. Dio's introduction bears many marks of the disquiet he felt in using such a theme, and he labours the point that he is going to turn the story into "a parable of the real and the true". "When some useful and edifying moral is grafted onto an unprofitable legend, the latter is saved from being a mere idle tale"<sup>94</sup>). The story itself, which begins with the ageless formula "once upon a time" (*πάλαι ποτέ*) gives a detailed picture of the beast which fed on sailors shipwrecked on the coast of the Syrtis and lost among the sand-dunes of that part of the African coast. The horrific and the erotic both have a prominent place in the tale, and there can be little doubt that it is as close as we can get to the *anilis fabula*. The fact that Dio, on the completion of the story, quickly adds that it was "not invented for a child's benefit" (*οὐ παιδίῳ πλασθεῖς*) virtually gives the game away. Even after he has delivered a moralising tailpiece, he adds at the very end of his speech (24-27) a short sequel "to gratify the younger people among you"<sup>95</sup>). Here too horror and eroticism are patent.

93) This story and many of its analogues, both European and Chinese, have been examined in detail by Nai-tung Ting, 'The Holy Man and the Snake Woman', *Fabula*, 8 (1966) pp. 145-191. On p. 160 he claims that Philostratus' tale "was not indigenous to Greece, but imported from another country. There is no other version of the story - or even any tale remotely resembling it - in ancient or modern Greek literature". (Italics mine). He suggests it was introduced "probably from somewhere in Asia". It is true this particular version of the tale is not found elsewhere in Greek literature, but Dio's Lamia tale which is nowhere mentioned by Nai-tung Ting, offers at least a *remote resemblance* to Philostratus' version; the fact that she is said to be "Phoenician" in Philostratus suggests that he probably knew of the Libyan tale. There is no proof whatsoever that the story came from Asia. *The Libyan Lamia was probably known to Aeschylus*, and there must have been a very large number of stories about her which never found their way into literature; see further G. Thiele, 'Zur Libyschen Fabel', *Philologus*, 75 (1918) pp. 227-231. H. J. Mette, *Die Fragmente der Tragödien des Aischylos*, (Berlin 1959) p. 82 fr. 231. Fontenrose, *op. cit.*, p. 100 n. 17.

94) Prooem, 3.

95) Plutarch, *On Curiosity*, 515 d shows there was also a Lamia story in which she had detachable eyes; cf. Scholiast on Aristoph., *Peace*, 758. The swan-shaped Phorcides had a 'detachable and transferable eye and

Stories were also told by nurses to lull children to sleep<sup>96</sup>). In this connection we hear of yet another Lamia-tale which must have been less horrific than the others. Tertullian<sup>97</sup>), our only source for the tale, makes brief reference to the “towers of the Lamia” and the “combs(?)<sup>98</sup>) of the Sun” and says no more save that this story was told to children to make them sleep. Bolte-Polívka (4, p. 46) think *one* story is here being referred to and suggest a tale of the Rapunzel type in which a girl imprisoned in a tower by a witch (Lamia?) lets down her hair for the sun to shine on. This supposition is plausible in so far as the “towers of Lamia” are concerned, but it is difficult to see how “the combs of the Sun” are to be accommodated by such a thesis. On the other hand Crusius may be correct in associating the Sun’s combs with myths connected with “Lichtgottheiten”<sup>99</sup>). Whatever the exact nature of the story, it must have had a happy ending consisting of the defeat of the Lamia and the escape of her prisoner. Without such a conclusion it could hardly have functioned as a lullaby<sup>100</sup>).

Dio Chrysostom also mentions that after nurses have given children a thrashing, they tell them tales<sup>101</sup>), presumably to take their minds off their aches and pains, and Clement of Alexandria<sup>58</sup>) refers to the telling of stories to comfort dying children – an unpleasant reminder of the high child mortality rate in antiquity.

The best known and best preserved *anilis fabula* of antiquity,

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tooth’. J.D.P. Bolton, *Aristeas of Proconessus* (Oxford 1962) p. 102; other refs. in Fontenrose, *op. cit.*, p. 286 n. 20; J.S.Mbiti, *Akamba Stories*, (Oxford 1966) pp. 162–173; according to W.R.Halliday, *Indo-European Folk-Tales and Greek Legend* (Cambridge 1933) p. 42 the witches of Lapland, like the Lamia, have detachable eyes.

96) Aristides, *Orations*, 2, 475 calls such tales “sleep’s drugs”.

97) *Adversus Valentinianos*, 2.

98) *pectines*; *pecten* has a variety of meanings of which this is the most common. Whether one or two stories are meant is impossible to say.

99) See Weinreich in Friedl., p. 93 and n. 1. That the tale of Rapunzel originated in the Mediterranean area is recognised by M. Lüthi, *Es war einmal ... Vom Wesen des Volksmärchens*<sup>4</sup>, (Göttingen 1973) p. 81.

100) In chap. 20 of the same work Tertullian alludes to two further children’s tales built round the expressions “apples grow in the sea and fish in the trees”; Persius, *Satires*, 2, 37f. indicates further story material, such as the well known theme of roses growing where a person treads; see Bolte-Polívka 4, p. 45; Weinreich, p. 92; the transformation of human beings into birds, beasts, trees and flowers is mentioned as the subject of *aniles fabulae* by Minucius Felix, *Octavius*, 20, 4.

101) *Discourses* 4, 163.

the tale of Cupid and Psyche, exemplifies the kind of story that would be told to calm a distressed child. This is the stated purpose of the story in its Apuleian context where a young girl kidnapped by brigands is brought to their den and handed over to an old woman to comfort. She immediately tells the young girl: "Well now, I'll waste no time in distracting you with entertaining narratives and old wives' tales"<sup>102</sup>). She in fact tells Chaite only one tale, but it is a very long one which Apuleius narrates with consummate artistry and skill<sup>103</sup>).

Informal storytelling also took place while women were working at their spindles and looms<sup>104</sup>). Also, travellers exchanged stories to help alleviate the tedium of a journey<sup>105</sup>).

It is easy to forget that for reasons of climate and the shortcomings of their housing arrangements, the Greeks and Romans spent a large part of their lives in the open air with an almost complete lack of privacy. The difficulty and danger of even cooking a meal at home led to the practice of eating in a variety of cafes and inns<sup>106</sup>). Also, almost every Roman town could boast of possessing public baths which anyone could enter for the smallest fee, not merely to bathe, but to take advantage of a wide range of facilities. These baths often took the form of large quadrilaterals "flanked (externally) by porticos full of shops and crowded with shopkeepers and their customers: inside it were enclosed gardens and promenades, stadia and rest-rooms, gymnasium and rooms for massage, even libraries and museums"<sup>107</sup>).

102) *Met.*, 4, 7.

103) The literature on this tale is vast. Most of the important studies on it have been reprinted in one volume by R. Merkelbach and G. Binder (edd.) *Amor und Psyche*, (Darmstadt 1968) = *Wege der Forschung* Bd. 126. For analogues see J. O. Swahn, *The Tale of Cupid and Psyche*, (Lund 1955), and G. Megas, *Das Märchen von Amor und Psyche in der griechischen Volksüberlieferung*, (Athens 1971).

104) Tibullus, 1, 3, 83 ff.; Arnobius, *Adversus Gentes*, 5, 14; Virgil, *Georgics* 4, 345 says mythological love stories were told while women were spinning. In the fifth century we also hear of "sutores fabularum" Sidonius, *Ép.* 3, 13, 2; Augustine, *Contra Faustum Manichaeum* 22, 79.

105) This pretext for storytelling is frequent in ancient literature; see G. N. Sandy, 'Petronius and the Tradition of Interpolated Narrative', *Transactions of the American Philological Association*, 101 (1970) pp. 463-476, and my note 'Comes Facundus in Via pro Vehiculo Est', *Romanische Forschungen*, 84, (1972) p. 583 f.

106) Cf. T. Kleberg, *Hôtels, Restaurants et Cabarets dans l'Antiquité Romaine*, (Uppsala 1957) p. 106; MacMullen, *Social Relations*, p. 64.

107) J. Carcopino, *Daily Life in Ancient Rome*, (Harmondsworth 1962) p. 279.

Such places, including of course the forums and open air barbers' shops, would have provided storytellers with ample opportunity to ply their skills, and no doubt there would always have been competition in such places from other itinerant artists in search of a paying audience.

## VII

It is generally accepted by Sinologists that the development of the Chinese novel would have been inconceivable without the stimulus it received from oral storytelling<sup>108</sup>). Examples of growth through the accretion of popular stories are to be seen in such novels as *The Water Margin*, and *Monkey*<sup>109</sup>). Storytellers' "prompt books" also played a part in the development of the Chinese novel<sup>110</sup>). The imprint of the narrative technique of the oral storyteller on the narrative conventions of the Chinese novel is unmistakable, and is particularly noticeable in the formulae which conclude almost every chapter in a Chinese novel: "whether short or long, (whether literate or illiterate), nearly all traditional novels observe in their episodic structure the storyteller's mode of narration. It was customary . . . to end each day's recital on a note of suspense so as to induce his audience to return the next day to listen to the sequel. In like fashion, every Chinese novel is divided into chapters, each chapter except the final one ending with the formula, 'if you want to know what happened next, please listen to the next chapter'"<sup>111</sup>). Even in Cao Xueqin's *The Story of the Stone*, one of the most sophisticated Chinese novels as regards its narrative method, chapters still conclude somewhat incongruously with formulae such as "if you wish to know what further calamity this portended, you will have to read the following chapter"<sup>112</sup>).

108) R.G.Irwin, *The Evolution of a Chinese Novel*, (Harvard 1953) *passim*.

109) Liu, *op.cit.*, p. 108; G.Dudbridge, *The Hsi-yu Chi. A study of Antecedents to the Sixteenth Century Novel*, (Cambridge 1970); Hsia *op.cit.*, p. 8f.; Hannan, in Dawson, p. 124; J.L.Bishop, 'Some Limitations of Chinese Fiction', in J.L.Bishop (ed.), *Studies in Chinese Literature*, (Harvard 1965) p. 240; Průšek, p. 220f.

110) Průšek, p. 310.

111) Hsia, p. 17.

112) A comparatively late novel not printed till 1792; see the remarks of D.Hawkes in Vol. 1 of his translation (Harmondsworth 1973) p. 43. It is interesting to note that Apuleius ends five of his books (*Met.* 4, 6, 7, 8, 10,

A further mark of the oral storyteller is the frequent use of plot recapitulations or resumes, "helpful to an audience depending solely on its ears for understanding as well as to latecomers who thus could learn what they had missed"<sup>113</sup>). Also characteristic of oral presentation are self-conscious apostrophes of the storyteller to members of his audience about his narrative<sup>114</sup>). For instance, in one of the tales of the *San-yan*, "Chin-nu Sells Love at Newbridge", there occur such apostrophes as: "storyteller", you may ask, "what is this warning of yours against lust?"; "storyteller", you may be saying, "you have told us that all his life Wu Shan was straight-laced...<sup>115</sup>)".

Can similar traces of popular oral narration be found in surviving Greek and Roman novelistic fiction, and is there any evidence to suggest that the authors of these works in any way assumed the persona of a storyteller?

Although there is a large amount of folklore in these novels which awaits thorough investigation<sup>116</sup>), there are no really ob-

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on a note of high suspense with Psyche (4) or Lucius in danger of their lives. This is a near equivalent to the Chinese chapter endings.

113) Bishop, p. 34; Hannan, p. 173 f.

114) Hannan, p. 174.

115) Bishop, p. 67f.

116) A complete investigation of the folk elements in Graeco-Roman novelistic fiction has never been attempted. What T. Zielinski did for Attic Comedy in his *Die Märchenkomödie in Athen*, (St. Petersburg 1885), and what Trenkner, *op. cit.*, has done for Euripidean tragedy, Old Comedy, and Middle and New Comedy, *op. cit.*, pp. 31 ff., needs to be done for the utopian fragments of Theopompus, Onesicritus, Iambulus, and Euhemerus (cf. D. Winston, *Iambulus: A Literary Study in Greek Utopianism*, Diss. Columbia 1956). The fragments of the early verse travel-romance of Aristeas of Proconnesus have been thoroughly explored by J. D. P. Bolton, *Aristeas*, (Oxford 1962) who discusses much folklore from Eurasia; the wonder romance of Antonius Diogenes has been partly explored by Walter Anderson, 'Eine Märchenparallele zu Antonius Diogenes', *Philologus*, 66 (1907) pp. 606-608, O. Weinreich, *Antiphanes und Münchbausen*, (Wien 1942), and by K. Reyhl, Antonios Diogenes (Diss. Tübingen 1969) esp. pp. 100ff. Likewise certain aspects of folklore in Lucian's *True History* have been studied, e. g. the 'Walabenteuer' I, 30-2, 2, has been related to its many other analogues by H. Schmidt, 'Jona', in *Forschungen zur Religion u. Lit. des alt. u. neu. Test.*, Heft 9, 1907. Less has been done for Iamblichus' *Babyloniaca*, and the other sentimental love romances of Chariton, Achilles Tatius, Longus, Heliodorus, Xenophon of Ephesus, and others. Petronius and Apuleius have received more attention than any of the above romance writers, but more remains to be done. For further folkloristic studies of the ass-tale, see my commentary on *Met.* I pp. 26-46; 'Notes on Walter Anderson's Märchen zum Eselmenschen', *Fabula* 15 (1974) pp. 222-231; 'Ass-men in Middle, Central and Far Eastern Folktales', forthcoming in the same journal.

vious examples of the influence of oral narration to match the chapter endings of Chinese novels. But there are other indications of oral storytelling.

Of the Greek sentimental love romances those of Chariton and Xenophon of Ephesus are noteworthy for their simple and naive style, as is the recently discovered fragmentary *Phoinikika* of *Lollianos*<sup>117</sup>). The popular nature of Xenophon's romance was fully recognised by G. Dalmeyda who in his introduction to his edition of the romance devoted four pages to discussing it under the heading "physionomie de conte populaire"<sup>118</sup>). His remarks appear to have fallen on deaf ears. Dalmeyda instances the following characteristics which in his opinion give Xenophon's romance "un air de conteur populaire": stereotyped formulae; characters who appear only once in a very short episode are always named: "on dirait d'un conte fait à un auditoire d'enfants; ce caractère de conte un peu puéril est encore marqué par la façon dont les noms des personnages sont repris au commencement des phrases: ce Polyidos, ce Psammis" (xxviii). Formulaic clichés are repeatedly employed to characterise the high standing and influence of the main characters, and expressions of strong emotions, whether of love or astonishment, are also reduced to repetitive formulae. The simple, somewhat monotonous language and syntax of the work also help to give it the air of a popular story<sup>119</sup>). The use of recapitulation to refresh the memories of the audience is also to be noted<sup>120</sup>).

Also, the very nature of the story, which in more complex forms is found in all the other sentimental love romances, suggests that it might once have existed as an *amilis fabula*, suitable for narrating to children to console them or send them to sleep.

117) See A. Henrichs, *Die Phoinikika des Lollianos. Fragmente eines neuen griechischen Romans*, (Bonn 1972) p. 7 "Der Stil des L. ist einfalllos und monoton".

118) G. Dalmeyda, *Xénophon d'Éphèse, Les Éphésiaques*, (Paris 1926) pp. xxvii-xxxi; cf. also id. 'Autour de Xénophon d'Éphèse, *Bulletin Assoc. G. Budé*, 13 (1926) pp. 18-28. The most recent discussion of this author and his novel is by H. Gärtner in *R-E* 9A2 (1967) cols. 2055-2089.

119) Gärtner, cols. 2070-2072 analyses the style and syntax more closely and also recognises the "monotony" of its formulae (2070, 54-58), but says nothing about the possibility of the influence of oral narration on Xenophon's narrative technique. See Sophie Trenkner, *Le Style KAI dans le Récit Attique Oral*, (Assen 1960) pp. 74-78; in her *Greek Novella*, p. 185 Trenkner believes "the historical, marvellous and realistic types of novel found their subject-matter in the same source: popular story-telling".

120) Dalmeyda, *Bull. Budé*, p. 22.

It is, in fact, the sort of story that the old woman in Apuleius' Psyche tale could have told to Charite to calm her distress. J.H. Delargy mentions Irish oral narratives based on the same plots as are found in Greek romances, in his 'The Gaelic Story-Teller', *Proc. of the Brit. Acad.*, 31 (1945) 211f.: "The most usual plot was built on a simple formula: take two or more persons who belong together (for instance, a pair of lovers), . . . . separate them violently, subject them to all sorts of hair raising adventures by land and sea, reunite them at the end, cause them to recognise one another, and so let all end happily".

Xenophon's novel even begins with the traditional "once upon a time (there lived in Ephesus...)" This story deals with the falling in love of an aristocratic young man and woman who are carried off by pirates and undergo many separate adventures till they are safely reunited and marry at the end of the story. This is basically the plot of the Psyche *Märchen* where Psyche has to undergo many trials before she finally marries Cupid. In Xenophon, of course, the protagonists are mortals, but they attribute their ultimate happiness to the goddess Isis. This religious colouring need not have existed in a nursery version of the story, but could be added when the story was adapted for religious propaganda by an *aretalogus*<sup>121</sup>).

I have shown elsewhere how Chariton often assumes the persona of an oral narrator<sup>122</sup>). Such expressions as "all that has been set forth in the previous narration. I will now narrate the sequel", (5.1.2.) "well, on that day too the baleful demon was at work. In what way, I will tell in a little while. Before I do, I want to tell you about events at Syracuse..." (3.2.17). These are clearly expressions which are more appropriate to an oral narrator than to a writer. Like Xenophon, Chariton is also fond of clichés and formulae to describe the impact of strong emotion. People are repeatedly losing their voices and darkness inevitably descends over their eyes<sup>123</sup>). Recapitulations are also frequent. These summaries have been studied in some detail by Thomas Hägg who offers a variety of explanations for them, but concedes that the romance writer's "audience may have consisted more of listeners... than of real readers . . . . As we know from Homer and Herodotus, repetition of different kinds is an important

121) For an examination of this romance as religious propaganda, see R.E. Witt, *Isis in the Graeco-Roman World*, (London 1971) pp. 243-254.

122) Aspects p. 22f.

123) *Ibid.* p. 22 for further examples.

characteristic of oral performance, not only as points of rest for reciter and listener but also, of course, for clarity's sake.... I would suggest that precisely the frequent use of recapitulation in the romances of Chariton and Xenophon Ephesius reveals something about their 'Sitz im Leben', about the kind of audience these writers addressed themselves to"<sup>124</sup>).

Apuleius' romance which is unique in Latin literature as a repository of folktales of many kinds, exhibits more traces of popular oral narration than any surviving Greek romance. Its very first sentence sets the scene for a storytelling session: "Well now! I'm going to string together in the well known Milesian manner tales of various kinds, and I'll soothe your well-wishing ears with a witty whisper...." He then announces his main theme, shapeshiftings and changes of fortune. We have already seen above (n. 100) that according to Minucius Felix, the transformation of human beings into birds, beasts, trees and flowers was the subject of *aniles fabulae*, and that the tale of Cupid and Psyche is the best preserved old wives' tale we possess from antiquity. The main narrative, the ass-tale, must also be so classified since it can be recognised as pure folktale once Apuleius' sophisticated veneer of rhetoric and literary artifice has been stripped from it. There is no need to insist on the point, since it attracted the keen attention of Walter Anderson both while he was at Kazan and later at Kiel<sup>125</sup>).

That this framing tale grew through a process of gradual accretion is highly probable. Anecdotes about asses have been taken from many sources and woven together to form an episodic narrative which is held together by the fact that the author of the ass-romance assigned all the incidents in his tale to one hero<sup>126</sup>).

Further evidence of the oral origins of much of the material in the *Metamorphoses* can be found in Book six. When Charite thinks her attempt to escape on the ass's back is going to be successful, she says she will have a picture painted of her flight

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124) *Narrative Technique in Ancient Greek Romances. Studies of Chariton Xenophon Ephesius, and Achilles Tatius* (Stockholm 1971) p. 332.

125) *Roman Apuleya i Narodnaja Skazka* (Kazan 1914); 'Das sogenannte Märchen vom Eselmenschen', *Zeitschrift für Volkskunde*, 51 (1954) pp. 215-236; 54 (1958) pp. 121-125. For modern folklore parallels to the witch story told by Aristomenes see my commentary on *Met.* 1, 5 ff.

126) For an analysis of the proverb, fable, and other lore in the ass-tale see H. van Thiel, *Der Eselsroman I*, (Munich 1971) pp. 184-186.

and dedicate it in the atrium of her house: "People will look at it, and it will be listened to along with other stories, and the novel tale of 'the young princess who escaped captivity on the back of an ass' will be kept alive by the pens of learned men" (29)<sup>127</sup>). Here a distinction appears to be made between *fabula*, an oral version of the tale, and *historia*, a written version of the story<sup>128</sup>).

There are also self-conscious interruptions and asides made by the narrator which are suggestive of oral narration. Even though Apuleius on each occasion carefully addresses them to a reader (*lector*), and not to a listener, they are nevertheless the sort of comments a storyteller might make when anticipating interruptions from an audience: "But perhaps, critical reader, you will criticise my story and you will reason as follows – how, my cunning little ass, when confined to the miller's house, did you manage to find out, as you assure us you did, what those women were up to in secret. Listen, then, how I, an inquisitive man, . . . found out . . . (9, 30); "perhaps, eager reader, you are dying to know what was said and done then. I would tell you, were I allowed to tell you. . . . (11, 23)<sup>129</sup>). Also suggestive of the informal tone and manner of oral narration are some of the expressions Apuleius uses when he makes a transition from one narrative to another. From a literary point of view some of these transitions are bald and somewhat artless: "I got to hear of an amusing story about a case of adultery concerning a certain poor man, and I want you to hear about it too" (9, 4).

Thus it may be seen that although Apuleius gave his romance the respectable title *Metamorphoses*, as did the author of his Greek original, its alternative title, *Golden Ass* (*Asinus Aureus*), first found in Augustine, *City of God*, 18, 18 gives a better

127) According to J.G. Griffith, 'Apuleius, *Metamorphoses* VI, 29, 3', *Hermes*, 96 (1968–1969) p. 762, this title belongs to a verse fable on the same theme. Weinreich, *Fabel*, p. 17 had already pointed to similarities in Phaedrus, App. 14.

128) Apuleius does not always make such distinctions in using these two terms, see *More Essays* p. 42, n. 14.

129) Cf. the remarks at 10, 33 where the narrator anticipates criticism for digressing from his main story. Cf. R. Reitzenstein, *Das Märchen von Amor und Psyche* in Binder, Merkelbach p. 125 f.; B. Romberg, *Studies in the Narrative Technique of the First-Person Novel*, (Lund 1962) p. 133 "All the time Lucius tells his story to a presumptive reader – or listener – whom he is amused to address . . . this is an old epic and naive characteristic designed to indicate an oral relationship between narrator and reader or narrator and listener".

clue to the folk nature of much of its contents. Like the popular itinerant storyteller, Apuleius could have prefaced his romance with the words: *assem para et accipe auream fabulam, fabulas immo*<sup>130</sup>).

## VIII

To conclude: it seems that although the Greeks and the Romans belonged to a pre-industrial society which from a modern viewpoint may be regarded in many respects as underdeveloped<sup>131</sup>), the standard of literacy they enjoyed, at least during the first two centuries of our era, was comparatively high in large urban centres, and not completely lacking in smaller country towns. Elsewhere standards of literacy are likely to have been low or non-existent. Despite this seemingly high level of literacy, there was still a role for the popular storyteller to play in Graeco-Roman society from rulers (Philip of Macedon, Alexander the Great, Augustus) down to the ordinary man in the street. Some of the storytellers were itinerant and probably constantly moved about the main centres of the Roman empire making their visits coincide with local festivals and fairs, when people crowded in from the countryside to watch some public spectacle which would have attracted other itinerant artists such as musicians, animal trainers, rope-walkers, and many others.

Some storytellers, like Philepsius, might have remained in one city, if it was large and attracted large numbers of visitors, as Athens did in the classical period. Other storytellers in the Eastern Mediterranean were attached to religious centres, especially to those of Egyptian deities, and their main task was to popularise the miraculous deeds of the god or goddess whose cult they were promoting. The repertoires of both lay and temple storytellers must have been very similar in content, but dissimilar in emphasis – religious in the case of temple storytellers, purely entertaining in the case of secular storytellers. These differences may be seen in the two surviving versions of the ass-tale. That so little is recorded in ancient literature about the activities of all these professional storytellers, is due in part

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<sup>130</sup>) The style and diction of Apuleius' Latin is remote in its artificial mannerism from the vulgar speech of Petronius' freedmen whose folk-beliefs are expressed in folk-language.

<sup>131</sup>) Cf. M.K.Hopkins, 'The Age of Roman Girls at Marriage', *Population Studies*, 18 (1964-1965) p. 312.

to the anti-plebeian bias of most ancient literature, in part to the hostility of ancient literary critics towards literature which did not exhibit a recognisable didactic aim, or which did not pay proper attention to verisimilitude and conventional standards of literary decorum.

The only place where fabulous tales (*aniles fabulae*) were tolerated by Greek and Roman literati was in the nursery where nurses told young children gruesome tales to punish them, and stories with happy endings to send them to sleep, or to comfort them after a beating, or while they were dying. Very few of these stories survive in their original form, apart from the *Märchen* of Cupid and Psyche told by an old woman to a young girl to comfort her after she had been kidnapped on the day of her marriage.

The novelistic literature of the ancient world does not exhibit such obvious traces of oral narration as those found in early Chinese novels. Some traces are, however, found in the novels of Chariton and Xenophon of Ephesus in the repetition of descriptive formulae, frequent use of recapitulations, and the almost childish simplicity of their diction and style, in addition to the naivety of their stories with happy endings which are suggestive of nursery lullabies. Apuleius' *Metamorphoses* also betrays many traces of the folk origin of most of its tales and despite its author's literary artistry, traces of oral narration can be detected in this novel also.

Wellington

Alex Scobie