

Robbers and Soldiers: Criminality and Roman Army in Apuleius' Metamorphoses

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ABSTRACT

This paper aims at discussing the relationship between ancient robbers and Roman army in Apuleius' *Metamorphoses*. As Apuleius' *Metamorphoses* has a great deal of information about banditry, deserters and ex-soldiers that can be explored in different ways, I suggest that this ancient author can provide us the possibility to rethink some historiographical approaches used to study the Roman *plebs*.

Key words: Banditry, Roman army, Roman novel, *Satyricon*, *Metamorphosis*, Roman Empire.

RESUMEN

Este artículo presenta un breve análisis de la relación entre los ladrones y el ejército romano en *Las Metamorfosis* de Apuleyo. Como *Las Metamorfosis* de Apuleyo ofrece muchas informaciones acerca de la vida de los bandoleros y desertores, es posible proponer que esta novela es una importante fuente para cuestionar diversos aspectos de las obras historiográficas modernas y sus interpretaciones acerca de la *plebs* romana.

Palabras clave: Bandolerismo, novela romana, Satiricón, Metamorfosis, Imperio romano.

INTRODUCTION

The present paper draws upon a specific point: the relationship between the Roman army and the robbers in Apuleius' *Metamorphoses*¹. The main reason for choosing this subject is deeply related to our daily life². Violence and criminality is a problem that still with us in almost all countries and it has been discussed more frequently in the social sciences. Anthropologists, sociologists and historians have been studying these phenomena and the discussions have resulted, for instance, in the development of interpretative concepts that have been used for a better understanding of the subject.

Although this subject has been largely discussed of late, criminality is not pre-

¹ This paper is part of a study that was developed between 1998 and 1999, when I discussed the different images of banditry in two novels, Apuleius' *Metamorphoses* and Petronius' *Satyricon*. In this study I focused upon the lower classes and the diversity of daily crimes that were committed by the *pauperes* on both novels. See Garraffoni, R.S., 2002.

² For the influence of the present on the choices of historians, cf.: Bloch, M., 1965; Dias, M.O.S., 1998; Foucault, M., 1997; Foucault, M., 1971; Jenkins, K., 1999 and Joyce, P., 1998.

sent only in the modern world; in different moments of history we can find many sources that mention it. If on one hand, one can easily find many sources, on the other, it is very important to have in mind that conceptions of criminality change from epoch to epoch, i.e., it is not a monolithic phenomenon and it must be considered as a social and historical construct.

This assumption has drawn me to the second century A.D., when *Metamorphoses* was written. In this novel there is detailed information that leads modern readers to a particular world. Many scholars discussed the reasons and intentions that could have lead Apuleius to write the story. Some has argued that the main reason was to emphasize a particular elite's moral philosophy and others have pointed to the development of a singular Roman literature style that focuses on comic situations (Dihle, A., 1994; Hägg, T., 1992; Harrison, S.J., 1999; Walsh, P.G., 1995). Although there are different points of view about this issue, most authors agree that the diversity of tales, sometimes comic and other times horrifying, were written at the beginning of the Roman Empire and they are important sources for the study of the daily life of poor men and women.

In considering this particularity, Apuleius' novel has a great deal of information about banditry, deserters and ex-soldiers that can be explored in different aspects (Hidalgo de la Vega, M.J., 1986; Hooff, A.J.L. van, 1998; Shaw, B.D., 1991). It also provides us the possibility to rethink some historiographical approaches used to study Roman popular culture. In sum, I shall explore on the following pages how Apuleius describes the robbers and the parallels that can be established with the Roman army. The main point is based on the argument that this story can provide us different images of Roman society. In discussing these topics, I will adopt an approach that emphasizes the importance of studying this novel as a discourse written within a particular historical context.

DRAWING PARALLELS BETWEEN ROBBERS AND SOLDIERS

Perhaps the approach I suggest will strike some readers as odd, leading them to ask a reasonable question: how can an institution, which symbolizes order and *status* such as the Roman army, can be compared to some poor robbers? To understand how I dare to propose this analogy I need to say few words about the studies developed on the Roman army and banditry.

The studies of the Roman army started before the investigation of robbers' daily life. Since the nineteenth century, the Roman army has been a subject discussed by scholars and different kinds of approaches have been established. The army was once a symbol of war, Roman power, conquests and maintenance of the Empire's *limites*, acculturation and a useful way to capture slaves for different tasks such as to fight as gladiators in Roman arenas, to work the lands or in the mines. Although studies that follow these models are still performed, over the past few decades some scholars have been modifying their approaches. Instead of interpreting the army only as an instrument of power, many scholars have started looking for other roles that were developed by the institution. In this context, the studies of the relationship

between the army and Roman economy and society, based on archaeological *data* and written sources, are changing the investigations of the Roman world. They also create new possibilities to study other forms of interaction between the army and Roman society (Erdkamp, P (ed.), 2002; Carreras, C. et Funari, P.P.A., 2000; Remesal, J., 1986; Whittaker, C.R., 1994).

If on one hand the Roman army has been studied for more than a century, on the other the investigation of Roman robbers is more recent. Hobsbawm, in the 1960s, was one of the first scholars to study the robbers in the social history (Hobsbawm, E., 2000). Although the concepts he developed in this book, especially the argument that robbers are “primitive rebels”, have been criticized and Hobsbawm himself has rethought some of his proposals, this study has influenced to different degrees the scholars who have looked for robbers in Roman society (Hooff, A.J.L. van, 1998; Shaw, B.D., 1991).

Hobsbawm's book is not unique. In the 1960s, the concept of “history from below” has emerged and many human groups that were excluded and did not appear in more traditional historiographical approaches have become visible and their roles in history emphasized³. This new way of thinking and writing history has also deeply changed the studies of the Roman world. Prostitutes, robbers, gladiators, poor soldiers, slaves and others segments of the Roman *plebs* became the central focus of many studies, while new concepts were created to approach on them.

In their investigation of Roman robbers, some scholars have pointed to an interesting phenomenon: many robbers were army deserters (Hidalgo de la Vega, M.J., 1986; Hooff, A.J.L. van, 1998; Shaw, B.D., 1991). This relationship seemed to me an important point to be explored. In this context I will discuss, in the following section, how a comic novel such as Apuleius' *Metamorphoses* can provide us contributions to understanding different aspects of this phenomenon. I will adopt an approach emphasizing the diversity and heterogeneous aspects of Roman's *plebs*. In this context, I do not claim to look for the ideal “Roman robber” or how “he/she really lived”, but I will read Lucius' adventures among the bandits as a discourse written by a member of the Roman elite and will suggest that Apuleius organized his novel according to his own experience and values, using military metaphors.

MILITARY METAPHORS AND ROMAN ROBBERS IN APULEIUS' *METAMORPHOSES*

Eleven books comprise *Metamorphoses* and they tell us of the adventures of a Greek man named Lucius⁴. Lucius himself is the storyteller, he is curious, he loves to listen stories and he is always traveling around and talking to different people.

³ Regarding the new subjects and approaches that emerged in the 1960's, see: Burke, P., 1992; Le Goff, J., 2001; Poster, M., 1997 and Schmitt, J-C, 2001.

⁴ I follow Loeb's Latin and English text: APULEIUS, *Metamorphoses*, (J. Arthur Hanson), London, Harvard University Press, Loeb, 1989, vols. I e II.

When he arrives at Thessaly he spends some days at the house of Milo, one of his friends whose wife is considered a witch. One day Lucius sees Milo's wife changing herself on a bird. He becomes fascinated by the idea of being a bird; he seduces Photis, a slave girl, and he asks her to get the magical *unguentum* for him. As Photis fears that her mistress will discover the plan, she takes the first pot that she can see. When Lucius spread the *unguentum* over his body he becomes an ass instead of a bird: Photis, in her hurry, had grabbed the wrong *unguentum*⁵.

When Photis realizes what she has done, she gets desperate and drives Lucius-turned-ass to the stable, where he is supposed to spend the night with his horse. She promises him that the next morning she will bring some roses, the only thing that could bring him back to human form. Unfortunately, during the night, some robbers attacked Milo's house and they used Lucius-turned-ass to carry away the things they steal. At this moment his adventures as a human mind inside an ass' body begin providing numerous jokes. He suffers different kinds of humiliations until the goddess Isis saves him, in the end, giving back his human form. Grateful, Lucius becomes a priest of Isis' cult.

Lucius mentions the robbers in many different moments during his adventures. The terms that Apuleius uses to refer to them are not always the same; they change according to the circumstances. Let's take two of them as examples: *antesignani* and *commilitoni*⁶. *Antesignanus*, *-i* is a word that comes from *signum*, *-i*, which means, "sign" and it has also a special meaning in a military context, i.e. *antesignanus* is someone who is before the standard and the plural form (*antesignani*) refers to a chosen band of Roman soldiers who fought before the standards and served for their defense. If we consider that Lamachus, who is one of the robbers' leaders in the novel, is always called as *antesignanus*, it is probably that Apuleius used this term to characterize him as one of the best in his group and its commander.

The other word, *commilitoni*, also has a military means: *commilito*, *-onis* comes from *miles*, *-itis*, which means soldier⁷. *Commilito*, *-onis* (m.) is frequently used by the bandits on the novel; its declination form (*-o/-onis*) comes from a popular context and it can be translated as "fellow" or "companion in war".

However, *latro*, *-onis* is the term more frequently found⁸. It usually appears in two different situations: to insult somebody's moral⁹ or to refer to a person who is a robber, regardless of whether he/she is violent. The etymological origin of this term is also related to a military context; the former sense was a "mercenary Greek soldier", a "deserter" or an irregular soldier and consequently, it came to mean "rob-

⁵ The novel is also known as *Golden Ass* because of Lucius' transformation.

⁶ The analyses of the following words was based on: Ernout, A., 1967 and Lewis, C.T., 1987.

⁷ The neutral form (*commilitium*, *-ii*) is found in some episodes and it is a word used after Augustus' time. It means "fellowship", "companionship".

⁸ "Ladrão" in Portuguese, "ladro" in Italian or "ladrón", in Spanish are modern terms that mean "thief" or "robber" and they come from the Latin word *latro*, *-onis*.

⁹ Shaw and Hoff assert that *latro* could also be used to declare someone as a political enemy. In the same way, Habinek affirms that Cicero used this term while he mentioning the names of Catilina or Verres in his discourses. See: Habinek, T.N., 1998; Hooff, A.J.L. van, 1998: 114 and Shaw, B.D., 1991: 359.

ber”, “thief”, and bandit¹⁰.

The diversity of terms originating in a military context led me to think about how Apuleius wrote his novel and also how he represented the world of these outlaws. In that investigation I was introduced to Hidalgo de la Vega's thesis, *Sociedad e ideología en el Imperio Romano: Apuleyo de Madaura*, which was published in 1986. In this book she discusses the Apuleian works and their relationship with Roman society during the second century A. D. In the fourth chapter she focuses on Apuleius' *Metamorphoses* and affirms that the robbers and their adventures are very common in Roman literature¹¹ and that the Apuleian novel is a good example of this tradition.

She analyzes the episodes that Lucius-turned-ass described while he was living with the bandits and emphasizes two main points: the poverty in which they lived and the military organization of their attacks. Hidalgo de la Vega asserts that the military rules of the bandits' group are related to a common situation, i.e., many robbers were ex-soldiers or deserters and they could have introduced the rules. According to her argument, it was not so difficult for a soldier, which had received military training and had access to weapons, to leave the army and to join groups of robbers.

Vallejo Girvés (Vallejo Girvés, M., 1993) has studied the Roman army and she asserts that the desertion was a phenomenon frequently mentioned in written sources. These sources, which could be official or literary, show us the Roman preoccupation to the betrayers of the military *sacramentum*, because they provide two problems: on one hand, the legions to which they belonged were humiliated and, on the other, they became a threat to the society living as outlaws¹².

The punishment for deserters who were caught and their accomplices was not always the same. In peacetime, they could have their property confiscated or they were sent into exile, but during wartime they were executed. Punishment of these betrayers was deemed necessary because of their dangerousness and the problems they could spread throughout society. Deserters and fugitive soldiers were considered persons who had failed the military *sacramentum* and, in doing so; they became enemies of the Roman Empire.

If we consider Hidalgo de la Vega's argument that soldiers could frequently become deserters and, in consequence, robbers, it is probable that they introduced new rules to outlaw groups: they stated new values as well as new experiences to maintain the groups' unity. This explanation seems coherent to me; however I would like to emphasize another point that she does not explore. If we read Apuleius' novel,

¹⁰ I would like to emphasize that other terms such as *latrocinium, ii; latrocinor, are; tirocinium, ii* come from *latro* and they also refer to a military context.

¹¹ Hidalgo de la Vega, M.J., chapter IV.

¹² “Es evidente el daño que causaba a la rígida composición orgánica del ejército el hecho de que un soldado abandonara las insignias y faltara a su juramento militar (*sacramentum*), especialmente en tiempo de guerra, pero este daño es igual o superior al que se causaba a la población civil puesto que una constante una constante que aparece tanto en la documentación literaria como en la legal es la ‘reconversión’ de los soldados desertores en vagabundos y bandidos asaltantes de los viajeros que transitaban por caminos y rutas y lógicamente también interesados en los bienes de propiedades fundiarias” (Vallejo Girvés, M., 1993: 245).

we can find not only military rules inside the group but also many different military terms used to describe robbers' attitudes and actions. In considering this, I will assume that the novel shows the author's military point of view. The *uirtus*, an important male value for some of the elite's members, is mentioned in different robbery scenes. These episodes, which produced a riot of jokes, show us the complexity of his narrative style.

Although we can find many robbers' tales spread throughout the eleven books, there is a part where these stories are more concentrated. From the end of the third book until the middle of the eighth they become the main struggle of the novel: Apuleius describes the attack on Milo's house, the moment that Lucius-turned-ass is stolen and his way to the bandits' fortress. In this part of the story the reader is introduced to the thieves' world; we read about their adventures such as kidnappings, robbery and fights or about their parties and ceremonies in honor of the god Mars. It is also important to remember that while Lucius-turned-ass is trapped in the robbers' cave he listens the Psyche's story, which is told to Charity and he also helps Charity's fiancé to rescue his beloved girl and destroy the bandits.

Finally, who are these bandits described by Apuleius? They are always terrifying the other characters and they are also poor people. Many of them describe themselves as ex-soldiers or ex-peasants and they argue that they are living as bandits because they did not have any chance. In Apuleius' discourse, the bandits act in different ways, but there are some features that are common and characterize them: they rob treasures and kidnap people, their crimes are violent and they are always fighting with different kinds of weapons to survive¹³. In almost all situations they are organized as groups, they hide outside of the city in the mountains, they attack during the night and they use military strategy:

Et ecce nocte promota latrones expergiti castra commovent, instructique varie,

¹³ It is important to emphasize that violence is an Apuleian particularity. Petronius, for instance, also has described situations in which poor young boys (Encolpius, Asciltus or Giton) rob other people. Generally, they steal ordinary things such as food, sandals or clothes at public baths. Although Petronius also used military expressions, he did not emphasize violence, but the youths' intelligence in deceiving their victims. In Apuleius' novel, this kind of robbery is shameful as we can read in the following passage: "*Tunc inter eos unus, qui robore ceteros antistabat, 'nos quidem' inquit 'Milonis Hypatini domum fortiter expugnauimus. Praeter tantam fortunae copiam, quam nostra virtute nacti sumus, et incolumi numero castra nostra petiuius et, si quid ad rem facit, octo pedibus auctiores remeauimus. At vos, qui Beotias urbes appetistis, ipso duce vestro fortissimo Lamacho deminuti debilem numerum reduxistis, cuius salutem merito sarcinis istis quas advexistis omnibus antetulerim. Sed illum quidem utcumque nimia virtus sua permit, inter inclutos reges ac duces proeliorum tanti viri memoria celebrabitur. Enim vos bonae frugi latrones inter furta parva atque servilia timidule per balneas et aniles cellulas reptantes scrutariam facitis.*" – *Metamorphoses*, IV, 8. ("Then one who surpassed all the others in brown spoke up 'we have stormed the house of Milo of Hypata, a fine job! Beside the great quantity of fortune we acquired by our courage, we not only returned to camp with our company intact, but even – if it means anything – augmented our forces by eight feet. But you, who attacked the cities of Beotia, brought your company back weakened by the loss of you general himself, the valiant Lamachus, whose life I would rate, with good reason, above all those bundles you brought in. In his case, however, it was his fearless courage that destroyed him, and this great hero's memory will live in company of renowned kings and generals. But you, honest robbers, with your petty, slavish pilfering, are just junk – dealers creeping timidly through baths and old ladies' apartments"). For the difference between the discourses of Petronius and Apuleius and the images of robbery constructed by each one, see Garraffoni, R.S., 2002: 104-120.

partim gladiis armati, partim in Lemures reformati, cocito se gradu proripiunt. *Metamorphoses*, IV, 22¹⁴.

These lines are a good example. The robbers, here called *latrones*, were armed, they use a costume to realize their plans and they always attack their victims from a strategic point. I shall emphasize again the relationship with a military vocabulary. *Castra* is the word used by Apuleius to mention the hidden place of the robbers. Its singular form, *castrum*, means any fortified place, a castle, a fortress, for instance, or it can also mean a military camp. In this specific episode the members of the *castra* are not soldiers to protect the city, but bandits prepared to attack it.

In this context, the readers are introduced to groups that lived outside of the cities. They have strategies, attack plans and use different weapons. They also sacrifice animals to ask for protection or to thank Mars for what they have stolen. It is during these celebrations in honor of Mars or their meals prepared by the old woman who works for them that they tell their companions of the adventures they have lived and what they have managed to steal and they also glorify the memory of their dead friends.

If we consider the narrative as a role, there is only one crime that Lucius-turned-ass really sees with his own eyes: the robbery of Milo's house. During the other episodes, Lucius-turned-ass is trapped inside the robbers' hideout and only listens to what his new masters are saying, while the bandits are having their meals. This literary arrangement allows the construction of an original discourse; Apuleius organizes his text in such a way that Lucius-turned-ass can judge the robbers' attitudes because he is always observing what happens and does not participate directly in the scenes. Comparing the tales that are told by the robbers and their attitudes while they are observed by Lucius-turned-ass the reader finds two different images: while the robbers describe themselves as heroes and brave warriors, Lucius-turned-ass emphasizes how barbarian their attitudes are. I consider this opposition (brave warrior/barbarian) an interesting literary strategy, which allows a funny situation and inspires a riot of jokes. Let's read two examples:

1) Tunc sorte ducti ministerium faciunt. Estur ac potatur incondite, pulmentis acervatim, panibus aggeratim, poculis agminatim ingestis. Clamore ludunt, strepitu cantilant, conviciis iocantur, ac iam cetera semiferis Lapithis Centaurisque similia. – *Metamorphoses*, IV, 8¹⁵.

2) Tunc ego sensim, gliscente adhuc illo tumultu, retrogradi fuga domo facesso, sed plane Thrasyleonem mire canibus repugnantem latens pone ianuam ipse prospicio. Quamquam enim vitae metas ultimas obiret, non tamen sui nostrique vel pristinae virtutis oblitus, iam faucibus ipsis hiantis Cerberi reluctabat. – *Metamorphoses*, IV, 20¹⁶.

The first one is a meal to celebrate the robbery of Milo's house and it is told us

¹⁴ "Then suddenly, well into the night, the robbers woke up and decamped. Variouslly equipped – some armed with swords and others disguised as goblins – they rushed off at the double".

¹⁵ "Then they determined by lot who would do the serving. They ate and drank in utter disorder, swallowing meat by the heaps, bread by the stack, and cups by the legion. They played raucously, sang deafeningly, and joked abusively, and in every other respect behaved just like those half-beasts, the Lapiths and Centaurs".

¹⁶ "Hiding behind the door, however, I got a good view of Thrasyleon marvelously defending himself against those dogs. Although he was near the end of life, he never forgot himself or us or his courage of old as he wrestled now against the gapping jaws of Cerberes himself".

by Lucius-turned-ass. In considering his description one can imagine a very noisily meeting. There are men shouting, singing, eating and drinking a great deal of food and wine. The adverbs used to compose the text, *aggeratim* and *agminatim* are unusual and their origins are military and rural. *Aggeratim* means “in heaps” or a “collection of things lying one upon another so as to form an elevated mass”. It can also indicate the tribunal, in a camp, formed of turf, from which a general addresses his soldiers. This last meaning recalls its origins: *aggeratim* comes from *agger, ris*, which means “things brought to a place in order to form an elevation above a surface or plane” and it can be translated as a “mountain” or as “city wall”, for instance, according to the context.

Agminatim is another adverb that can be used with the same meaning as *gregatim*, i.e. “in crowds” or “by troops”. These adverbs help to emphasize a crowd, a noisy and poor atmosphere. Lucius-turned-ass also tells us that they eat *pulmentum*, a kind of food that is supposed to be eaten with bread. As the readers are introduced to the robbers' cave by Lucius-turned-ass' eyes, we find bandits acting as barbarians and they are described like some kind of beast, as we can read in the end of the first selected text (*semiferis Lapithis Centaurisque similia*). These details, which can be found in many others episodes, allow me to affirm that Lucius wants to make clear that he does not accept the bandits' values and lawlessness: although he has an ass' body, his human mind criticizes the violence, especially when animals or persons are tortured by his masters.

The second selected text is completely different. The words that we read did not come from Lucius-turned-ass, but from one of the bandits who is telling the story of Thrasyleon's death. According to the bandit's narrative, Thrasyleon had dressed himself as a bear to go inside a rich man's house that was supposed to give a *munus*. According to the plan, at night Thrasyleon was supposed to take out his bear's costume and open the gate for his companions. He had encountered difficulties and the plan did not come to fruition. Thrasyleon, as a brave soldier, faced death fighting with savage dogs and helped his friends to get out of the house. The text is very different from the former: although the dogs are violent, Apuleius emphasizes Thrasyleon's fight for life. The words that are used in this tale are noble; Thrasyleon “(...) never forgot himself or us or his courage of old (...)”. The bandit, who is telling the story, uses the word *uirtus*, a condition of soldiers or Roman citizens to express his fellow courage.

Glory, courage, honor and friendship are values always found in the bandits' speeches. Almost all of them describe themselves as brave heroes who divide what they steal¹⁷. Depending on what they have got, they could also negotiate with friends who live in the cities, which indicates to us that the robbers were not alone on their crimes. Last but not least, it is necessary to observe that friendship and other kinds of relationship can be found in the bandits' tales. Although they are poor, these *latrones* are not entirely excluded from society, they have alliances with friends who are not necessarily violent or robbers. This diversity is one of the main points of the

¹⁷ For others tales that emphasizes honor and friendship among the bandits, see, for instance: *Metamorphoses* IV, 22; VII, 4.

Apuleian text.

CONCLUSIONS

The fragments and terms analyzed show us the complexity of Apuleius' novel. If on one hand the robbers describe themselves as brave men who glorify Mars, who make multiple plans and strategies to realize their tasks and who are always worried about their companions, on the other, Lucius-turned-ass emphasizes to readers the violence and poverty in which the outlaws live. In other words, Apuleius uses a military vocabulary to characterize the robbers and their values but through Lucius-turned-ass' narrative the readers have an image of chaos and barbarism.

The presence of military values in bandits' characterization should seem strange, but in Apuleius' text it becomes a particular discursive structure, which emphasize the dangerousness of being an outlaw. Although the robbers are daring and courageous, Lucius-turned-ass always reminds the readers that they are cruel and violent, that they tortured and murdered men, women, elder people and animals. To reinforce this cruelty they are frequently represented among other *infames*, such as prostitutes or gladiators and they are compared with beasts in many episodes¹⁸. This opposition (brave man/barbarian) is an important feature of Apuleius' discourse and it seems to me an emphasis of a moral point of view. Although the bandits are described as courageous men they are always punished: in all episodes many bandits die in a violent way, what leads me to suggest that the episodes can be read as a kind of moral fable and that punishment has an important role.

As Apuleius has described the robbers in such a realistic and detailed way, scholars from the 1960s through the 1980s have used this novel as a source to study the daily life of the "Roman bandit". According to many of these scholars, the "Roman bandit" lived in groups out of the cities; they were armed and they had rules like those of the Roman army. However, if we consider the Apuleian literary style as a particular discourse I think that the relationship source/"real life" is not so simple and direct. First, I would like to remind the readers that Apuleius describes different kinds of robbers, for instance, the one that is criticized by his fellows because he has stolen ordinary things at the public bath, which means that we can not simply assert that all the Roman bandits lived armed in the mountains. It is important to consider that robbers who live outside the city walls act differently from the poor man who occasionally steals ordinary things in public places.

Second, I suggest that Apuleius' *Metamorphoses* is not a reflex of the "real" Roman world. I prefer to assume that the episodes in which robbers are characterized as soldiers do not show us how the bandits "really" lived, but they show us how some elite's values are re-thought and the ideal moral for which Apuleius searches.

If we consider the situation in which Lucius is living, it is probable that it has provided a myriad of jokes to the Roman reader. In another way, it has also symbolized a moralistic thought: if somebody breaks the laws he/she must be punished,

¹⁸ See, for instance, *Metamorphoses*, VII, 1.

regardless of whether they are brave. This principle is present throughout the eleven books and it means that the bandits' tales must be included in a larger context in which Lucius, a very curious man, was turned into an ass and was humiliated in many situations, which included the obligation to serve violent robbers. Only in the end, once he regrets and changes his mind, does the goddess Isis saves him.

In this context, the opposition transgression/punishment is one of the main points of Apuleius' novel. According to this opposition, Apuleius organized the tales in a way that some characters can repent and they have a second chance and others are punished with death. Approaching bandits and soldiers, in actions or vocabulary, Apuleius provides jokes that emphasize the military's values, such as *uirtus*, and also advise the readers about the risks of breaking the laws or the moral philosophy in which he believes.

In sum, I suggest that the army had an important role in the construction of some elites members' values. In considering this, the Apuleian text does not only show us that there were deserters living among robbers but also suggests that the army, its rules and linguistics terms, can be re-thought or re-signified and used as a symbolic way to emphasize ideal behaviors for an elite man in the beginning of the second century A.D.

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