

Aulus Gellius defines his work, the *Noctes Atticae*, as a *commentarius* (*NA* pr. 3). This designation (in Gellius's era at least) implies an autobiographical component as well as an idiosyncratic ordering system (Riggsby 2006, 137-8). The *NA* as a whole does serve as a kind of intellectual autobiography, ostensibly being a record of all the things that Gellius saw or heard that seemed worthy of noting down (*NA* pr. 2, cf. Vardi 2004, 184). But there is also more explicitly autobiographical content in the *NA* in the form of anecdotes that deal with Gellius's interactions with contemporaries in Rome and Athens and his experiences in the bookstalls, port-towns, and sumptuous villas of Italy and Greece. These anecdotes have been sifted for clues to piece together a coherent life story for Gellius and to establish his dates (Holford-Strevens 2003, 11-26). This method reads against the grain of Gellius's self-conscious choice of random order for the *NA*. I contend that the fragmented life story is an important feature of Gellius's miscellaneous theory of knowledge, in which knowledge gains meaning and utility through disorder.

In this paper, I argue that Gellius's disordered autobiography is a productive component of his multi-level model for intellectual practice. Gellius uses the representation of time in the *NA* in order to highlight his disordered organization and to invite the reader to collaborate in the project of the *NA*. This disordered life thus is fragmented into generalized scenes typical of an ideal intellectual lifestyle, but it also invites readers to actively collaborate in the *NA* as they read. For example, anecdotes from one journey by sea from Greece to Italy are recounted in non-chronological order in three separate books of the *NA* (9.4, 16.6, 19.11). The first lines of these three chapters clearly mark them as linked to the same journey, and yet the reader is left to piece them together. Reconstructing the narrative of Gellius's intellectual biography encourages readers to look for connections and juxtapositions between other individual chapters and to recombine Gellius's information in their own ways. Disordered biography is thus one technique by which the *NA* trains readers in the intellectual skills necessary to succeed in the competitive social world Gellius imagines they face.