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Apuleius Madaurensis

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Summary

Apuleius Madaurensis has written his Eleven Books *Metamorphoses* (or *The Golden Ass*) in the late second century of our era. This is the first fully extant specimen of an extended Latin work of prose fiction. It is written in a Latin which on the one hand shows elements of the everyday speech and of the colloquial language of the period, but on the other hand incorporates these elements in a prose which bears the more general characteristics of an archaizing artificial language. For the study of Latin prose art as well as of the development of the Latin everyday speech this work is an important monument, representative of the Latin prose art of the period. Apart from a purely philological and linguistic point of view this work is equally important for the study of the development of Latin and European Literature. Virtually lost during the Middle Ages, the *Metamorphoses* came to be known and imitated from the fourteenth century onwards, and has undoubtedly played an important role during the emergence of the novelistic literature of Western Europe.

The ever increasing interest in studying the Ancient Novel is reflected by the many recent scholarly publications in this field. This commentary on the tenth book of Apuleius' novel forms part of a long-standing tradition of Groningen Commentaries on Apuleius.

Since the protagonist of the *Metamorphoses*, Lucius, has been changed into an ass (*Met.* 3,24), he has gone through many and various adventures. The tenth book contains the description of the final adventures of Lucius/ass before his re-metamorphosis through the grace of Isis, which will take place in the eleventh book. A Roman soldier, who had confiscated the ass, leaves him at the house of a member of the local council of a small Thessalian provincial town. Here the ass is an ear-witness to 'The Story of the Enamoured Stepmother', presented by the narrator to his public as 'a tragedy, not a *fabula*'. Lucius/ass is then sold to two cooks, who are in the service of a rich man. Soon they discover the taste of the ass for human food. When the rich master of the cooks gets to hear about it, he has the ass demonstrate his human abilities and preferences at a dinner to the great pleasure of all present. Thiasus, the rich man, buys the ass from his cooks; the fame of the trained ass spreads very quickly. Thiasus, a high official from Corinth, after having bought wild animals in Thessaly for a show in the arena, now returns to Corinth with the ass as his personal companion. In Corinth the keeper of the ass earns a lot of money by showing him off to inquisitive bystanders as a curiosity. A distinguished Corinthian lady falls in love with the ass and spends passionate love-nights with him. When Thiasus hears about this, he decides to give a show in the theatre, the climax of which shall be the copulation of Lucius/ass with a convicted murderer. Here the story of the crimes and the conviction of this woman is inserted. On the appointed day the ass is brought to the entrance of the theatre and from there he can witness the preludes to his own performance: in an artful *ecphrasis* the

description of a 'Pyrrhic Dance' and a sensually performed Pantomime portraying the Judgment of Paris are inserted into the main story. During the preparations for his own performance Lucius/ass, in great fear that it will end with both the murderer and himself being torn to shreds by the wild animals in the arena, sees a chance to escape. He trots to the beach of Cencreae and falls asleep there. This is the closing chapter of the tenth book.

The intertextual relation between the Greek Μεταμορφώσεις (described by Photius, *Bibl.* 129, as the work of 'Loukios of Patrai') and Apuleius' *Metamorphoses* forms an intriguing chapter in Apuleian studies. Of the lost Greek work an epitome has come down to us in the MSS of the works of Lucian, it is being referred to as the pseudo-Lucianic *Onos* (Λούκιος ἢ ὄνος). By comparing the much more complex and multi-dimensional Latin work to the *Onos*, an insight can be gained in the intention of the author of the Latin *Metamorphoses*. The Latin work has many embedded tales and additional episodes, which have been shown to stand in a meaningful, associative, often anticipatory relation to the main story. Yet the Latin *Met.* keeps following the pattern of the series of events recounted in the *Onos*. It is in the ending, from the final chapters of the tenth book onwards, that the Latin *Met.* veers off to a completely different conclusion than the *Onos* presents: The *Onos* ends in the same spicy-burlesque atmosphere which has been maintained right from the beginning; the *Metamorphoses* of Apuleius concludes with the conversion of the re-metamorphosed Lucius to the cult of Isis and Osiris. The tenth book on the one hand presents the culminating phase of the adventure-books, on the other hand leads over to the surprise-ending of the novel. In the Introduction to this commentary and in many of the notes attention is paid to this 'key-function' of the tenth book. Also the structure of themes and motifs, already shown by many scholars to form a unifying element in this polyphonic and loosely organized novel, are discussed. Some details in the text of the tenth book are shown to be specular images of scenes and episodes in previous books, and thus to contribute to the coherence of the eleven books.

In the commentary narratological annotations are included, whenever these may contribute to a deeper understanding of the often quite sophisticated narrative techniques employed in this first-person novel, structured as a frame story.

The main emphasis of the commentary being exegetical and interpretive, no new investigation of the MSS of the *Met.* is attempted, and the Latin text of Helm's final Teubner edition is adopted. Critical problems are, however, reconsidered, and sometimes the text in this commentary will differ from Helm's last edition. Departures from Helm's text have been listed separately.

Morphologic and syntactic characteristics of the Latin of Apuleius' *Met.* are discussed in their synchronic and diachronic aspects. Lexical coinages, innovative phrases and combinations first attested in Apuleius' *Met.* often can be shown to recur in

the Latin of the Fathers of the Church. Apuleius' tendency to use existing words in a hitherto unexampled sense, and his reviving of old words or forms which had fallen out of general use is regularly signalled.

Apuleius has a highly personal way of introducing and incorporating literary evocations and reminiscences in his narrative, and playing with literary motifs. This is often noted in the commentary, and in Appendix I one extended literary 'tour de force' in the tenth book, the Apuleian reworking of the Potiphar-motif, is discussed at length. The second Appendix discusses the two embedded tales of this book and their mutual coherence as well as their associative relation to the main story.