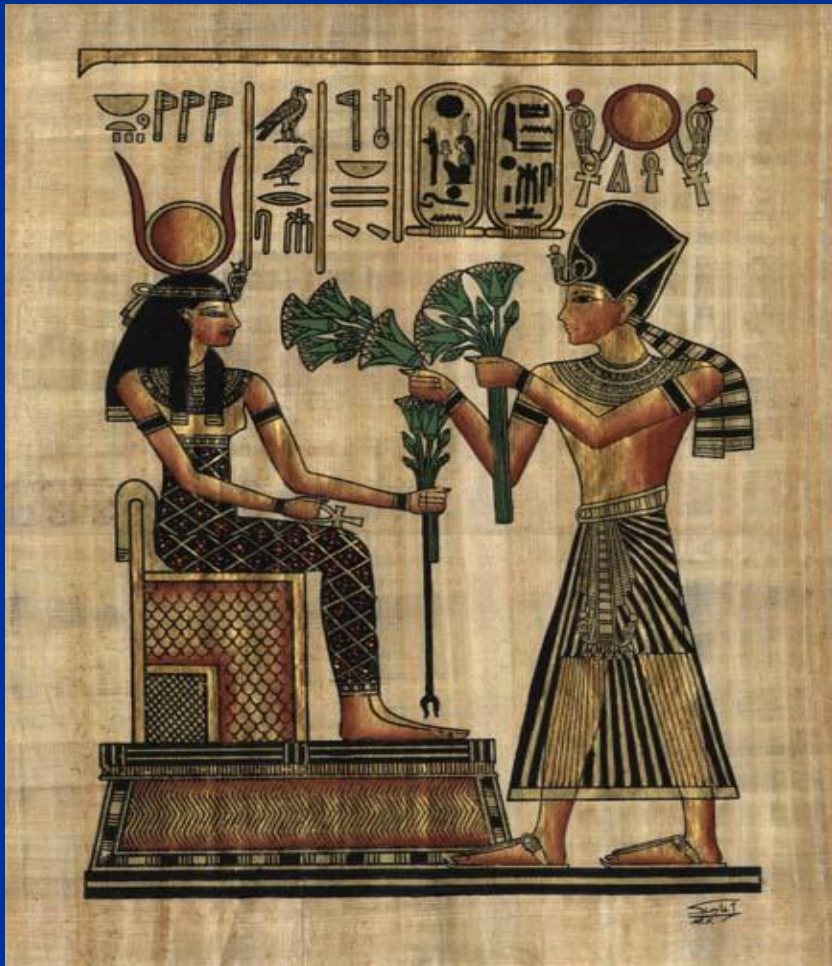


CLCS4009

READING ANTIQUITY: A SURVEY OF ANCIENT LITERATURE



Lecture 27: Love and
Magic in the Roman
Novel (Apuleius'
*Metamorphoses/The
Golden Ass*)

Dr. Crystal Addey

Research Seminar

Thursday 8 December 2011 @ 6.00 p.m.

Founders Library,
University of Wales, TSD

Dr Crystal Addey

(University of Wales TSD)

“The Inspiration of Homer:

Oracles, Allegory and Homeric Text in Late
Antiquity”

All welcome

The Roman Novel

- 'Novel' – a contemporary term.
- The Roman Novel: the only two texts of prose fiction in pre-Christian Latin which are Roman originals (rather than translations of Greek texts:
- Petronius' *Satyrica*
- Apuleius' *Metamorphoses* (also called *The Golden Ass*)
- Both are long Latin fictional narratives with Roman imperial settings and date.
- Combination of first-person narrative and inserted tales.

Apuleius

- Born in Madauros in Roman North Africa in the mid-120s AD.
- A Latin sophist and philosopher (identifies himself as a 'Platonic philosopher' (*Apologia* 10.6)).
- Other works by Apuleius:
- *Apologia*: Apuleius' defence-speech in court refuting the charge that he used magic to seduce his wife, who had been a wealthy (and much older) widow when he married her.
- *De Deo Socratis* (*On the God of Socrates*)

Apuleius' *Metamorphoses*

- Main frame: A blend of erotic adventure, romantic comedy, and religious fable.
- Lucius, the narrator, gets turned into an ass through magical experiments. Due to his unusual predicament, he sees and hears many unusual events.
- At the end he escapes via unexpected means.
- Book 11: the initiation of Lucius into the mysteries of the goddess Isis.



Magic in the Metamorphoses



- Lucius gets turned into an ass because of his curiosity and desire to see and practice magic.
- When staying in the house of Milo and his wife Pamphile, who is a witch, Lucius gets the opportunity to dabble with magic.
- With the help of the slave girl Photis he tries to turn himself into a bird; it goes wrong and he is instead transformed into an ass.

Inserted Tales and Stories



- Aristomenes' Tale (Book 1)
- Thelyphron's Tale (Book 2)
- **The Tale of Cupid and Psyche (Books 4-6): the longest inserted tale.**
- The Tale of the Wife's Tub (Book 9)
- The Tale of the Jealous Husband (Book 9)
- The Tale of the Murderous Wife (Book 10)

The Tale of Cupid and Psyche



- Folktale origins?
- An allegory of Lucius' own adventures: Psyche struggles with *curiositas* (meddlesomeness) and *fortuna* (luck / fortune) too.
- An allegory of every human soul's journey through life?
- The Cupid and Psyche story shows clear knowledge of the account of the soul in Plato's *Phaedrus* 248c.

Curiositas in the Golden Ass

■ Lucius' *curiositas*:

“But I, being otherwise *curiosus*, as soon as I heard the long hoped for name of the art of magic, so far was I from being cautious of Pamphile, that I wilfully longed to hand myself over to such a teacher along with an ample supply of money” (2.6.1-4).

■ Psyche's *curiositas*:

“But he [i.e. Cupid] repeatedly warned and even frightened her [i.e. Psyche] lest, persuaded by the pernicious counsels of her sisters, she should try to see her husband's form, and because of her *sacrilega curiositas* deprive herself of the height of fortune” (5.6.14-17)

Curiositas in the Golden Ass

- A deeply ingrained and habitual aspect of Lucius' character, before and after his transformation into an ass.
- Plato's *Republic* 433a-b, Socrates: "We have heard from many others and have often said ourselves that justice is doing one's own and not meddling."
- 443c-d (referring to tripartite division of the soul):
"Justice was truly some such thing, so it seems, though not with regard to doing one's own externally, but rather internally, concerning what is truly one's self and one's own; that is, one does not allow the parts of one's soul each to do another's work, or to meddle with another."

Curiositas in the Golden Ass

- In Book 11, Mithras explains to Lucius (after his transformation back into a man):

“Neither did your lineage nor your dignity nor the education in which you abound did you any good, but down the slope of verdant youth did you slip into slavish pleasures and gather the sinister reward of your unlucky *curiositas*.”

- Lucius’ transformation into an ass is both caused by and emblematic of his *curiositas*, the quality of soul which is the cause of meddlesome behaviour and itself is the meddlesome hindrance of the rational faculty by one’s appetites and desires.

- Lucius becomes outwardly what he had previously been only inwardly – a meddlesome ass.

- The intervention of Isis (goddess and principle of rationality and order) which allows the man inside Lucius to rule over the whole person, just as in Platonic psychology only the just soul is ruled by the man within and not by a horde of bestial appetites.

Intellectual Influences

- Apuleius' *Metamorphoses*: a reflection in Latin of the contemporary Second Sophistic. Dense literary allusion is designed to display the learning of its author.
- The intellectual colouring of the novel with Platonism.

The *Metamorphoses* / *Golden Ass*

- Why does the work have two titles, or a double title?
- All of the manuscripts give the title as *Metamorphoses*.
- Augustine, *City of God*, 18.18.1 (5th century AD): calls the work the *Golden Ass* (*Asinus aureus*).
- Many Greek novels have a double title: ps. Lucian, *Lucius* or *the Ass*; Xenophon's *Ephesiaka* or *Anthia and Habrocomes*, Heliodorus' *Aethiopika* or *Anthia and Habrocomes*.

Greek Novelistic Sources

- Scholars generally agree that the surviving ps.-Lucian's *Onos* and Apuleius' *Metamorphoses* are separately derived from a lost Greek *Metamorphoses* attributed to Lucius of Patrae.
- Apuleius' main change to the plot of the Greek ass tales: the introduction of the religious (cult of Isis) conclusion to Book 11 (replacing a comic ending in the Greek tradition).
- The long tale of Cupid and Psyche (4.28-6.24) is Apuleius' addition.

The Narrator

- What is the relationship between author and narrator?
- Prologue: scholarly debates around the identity of the unnamed speaker – Apuleius the author, Lucius the narrator, a combination of the two, or even the book itself?
- 11.27: The priest of Isis tells the narrator that he had been told in a dream a man from Madauros (Apuleius' birthplace) would come to him for initiation and achieve great glory in literature. Conflation of author and narrator? Is this a playful literary gesture (transformation of identity between author and narrator paralleling Lucius' transformation into an ass) or does it mark Book 11 as a serious religious discourse, an autobiographical account by Apuleius?



Questions?

Further Reading

- Apuleius, *The Golden Ass*, translated by Robert Graves, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1950 (reprint: 1956).
- J. DeFilippo, “*Curiositas* and the Platonism of Apuleius’ *Golden Ass*,” in S.J. Harrison (ed.), *Oxford Readings in the Roman Novel*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999, pp. 269-289.
- E. Finkelpearl, “Psyche, Aeneas and an Ass: Apuleius, *Metamorphoses* 6.10-6.21,” in S.J. Harrison (ed.), *Oxford Readings in the Roman Novel*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999, pp. 290-306.

Further Reading (2)

- F. Millar, “The World of *the Golden Ass*,” in S.J. Harrison (ed.), *Oxford Readings in the Roman Novel*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999, pp.247-268.
- H.J. Mason, “*Fabula graecanica*: Apuleius and his Greek Sources,” in in S.J. Harrison (ed.), *Oxford Readings in the Roman Novel*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999, pp. 217-236.
- J. Tatum, “The Tales in Apuleius’ *Metamorphoses*,” in in S.J. Harrison (ed.), *Oxford Readings in the Roman Novel*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999, pp. 157-194.

Further Reading (3)

- A. Scobie, *Apuleius Metamorphoses (Asinus Aureus) I: A Commentary*, Meisenheim: Anton Hain, 1975.
- W.S. Smith Jr., “The Narrative Voice in Apuleius’ *Metamorphoses*,” in S.J. Harrison (ed.), *Oxford Readings in the Roman Novel*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999, pp. 195-216.
- A. Barchiesi, “Traces of Greek Narrative and the Roman Novel: A Survey,” in S.J. Harrison (ed.), *Oxford Readings in the Roman Novel*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999, pp. 124-141.