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APULEIUS  
METAMORPHOSES

BOOKS I-VI



*Edited and Translated by*  
J. ARTHUR HANSON

APULEIUS

METAMORPHOSES

BOOKS  
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WITH AN ENGLISH TRANSLATION BY

J. ARTHUR HANSON

藏书章



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## FOREWORD

JOHN ARTHUR HANSON died suddenly on March 28, 1985, less than a month after his 54th birthday. Two years earlier he had completed his replacement of the Loeb 'Golden Ass' commissioned by my predecessor, but the Library's large backlog of prior commitments prevented immediate publication then and has compelled postponement to the present date.

Had he lived to write a preface he would have stressed that his foremost aim was to bring out the enchanting qualities of his author, which he feared an emphasis on scholarship would obscure. For detailed textual information he expected readers to consult the critical editions in the Teubner or Budé series, and so he limited himself to indicating departures from the text of the tradition and adjusted the Latin spelling to imperial norms. We had agreed that when publication was imminent, he would be allowed, in the process of copy-editing, to submit any additions and changes of opinion he then desired to make.

*Haec prius fuere*: as it is, these volumes constitute an achievement of Arthur Hanson to which he

## FOREWORD

was unable to give a final polish. In seeing his work through the press I have added a few items to the bibliography, compiled an index (largely adapted from the old volume), and made such changes as I am confident he would have approved, as my own small tribute to a fine scholar and teacher, whose death caused all who knew him a lasting sadness.

December 29, 1988  
Yale University

G. P. GOOLD  
General Editor

## INTRODUCTION

APULEIUS was born in the Roman province of Africa about A.D. 125, probably in the town of Madauros. The date of his birth, as well as most other facts about his life, are inferred from his *Apology*, which purports to be a speech delivered in his own defence before the proconsul of Africa, and from the *Florida*, a small collection of "purple" passages from his other orations. He studied at Carthage and in Athens, travelled extensively, including at least one visit to Rome, and apparently settled in Carthage. He claims to have been left a comfortable inheritance by his father, who had been a successful local magistrate. By profession he was a lecturer and philosopher, who engaged in a wide variety of scholarly and literary pursuits. According to his own estimation he composed "poems for the baton and the lyre, the slipper and the buskin; also satires and riddles, not to mention various prose histories and speeches praised by orators and dialogues praised by philosophers—and all these in Greek as well as in Latin with twin desire, equal zeal, and like style."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> poemata omnigenus apta virgae, lyrae, socco, coturno, item satiras ac griphos, item historias varias rerum nec non orationes laudatas disertis nec non dialogos laudatos philosophis, atque haec et alia eiusdem modi tam graece quam latine, gemino voto, pari studio, simili stilo (*Florida* IX 27–29).

## INTRODUCTION

Of these works only a handful have survived, all in Latin and all in prose. *De deo Socratis* ("Socrates' God") is a lecture about *daemones*, the spirits which people the world between transcendent gods and mortal men, mediating between pure divinity and humankind. *De Platone et eius dogmate* ("Plato and his Doctrine") is a philosophical handbook beginning with a biography of Plato and summarising the metaphysical and ethical teachings of the Platonic school of Apuleius' time. *De mundo* ("The Cosmos") is a description of the physical universe and meteorological phenomena, ending with a virtual hymn of praise for the eternal god who controls the world. This last short treatise is an adapted translation of an extant Greek work, *Peri kosmou*, of the first century B.C. or the first century A.D., which circulated under the name of Aristotle.<sup>1</sup> Taken together, these three works reveal the mind of an intelligent dabbler in philosophy, eclectic in his reading but strongly drawn to Plato and contemporary Platonism, and with a special interest in the religious aspect of philosophical teaching.

The *Apology* is a long, playfully learned speech in which the author defends himself against the charge of having employed magic to beguile a wealthy woman much older than himself, a widow named Pudentilla, to marry him. Whether the facts

<sup>1</sup> See the introduction by D. J. Furley to his translation of the work (Loeb Classical Library: Aristotle, *On Sophistical Refutations*, etc. (1955), 333 ff.).

## INTRODUCTION

of the case are autobiographical — as they are usually assumed to be — or not, the oration as a whole is a tongue-in-cheek defence of the scholar-philosopher against his boorish contemporaries, with elements of parody of Plato's *Apology*.

The chief claim to fame, in modern times at least, of this "Platonic philosopher from Madauros"<sup>1</sup> is the long fictional narrative known first as *Metamorphoses*, but later called "The Golden Ass". It recounts, in the first person, the story of a certain Greek named Lucius, who, because of his curiosity to learn about magic, is transformed into an ass; in this form he is variously used and misused by robbers, farmhands, mendicant priests, a miller, a gardener, a soldier, and a pair of cooks, until at the end of a year he regains his human form through the intervention of the goddess Isis, whose devotee he then becomes. Both before and after taking on his ass's hide, he hears a large number of tales, some entertaining, some gruesome, which he includes in his narrative so that his reader too may enjoy them.

This same story of Lucius, without any inserted tales and with a strikingly different ending, exists in a Greek version ascribed by the manuscripts to the second-century sophist Lucian, under the title

<sup>1</sup> Philosophus Platonicus Madaurensis, as he is labelled in several of the later manuscripts of his works.



## INTRODUCTION

*Loukios e onos* ("Lucius or The Ass").<sup>1</sup> The ninth-century Byzantine scholar Photius knew yet another Greek version, which he describes as "The *Metamorphoses* of Lucius of Patras, a work in several books." Photius concluded that "Lucius or The Ass" was a condensation of this Greek *Metamorphoses*, and most modern scholars (who deny the work to Lucian) concur. The Greek *Metamorphoses* may also have served as Apuleius' model for *The Golden Ass*.

Critical estimates of Apuleius' book vary greatly, as do opinions about its form and function. At one extreme it has been viewed as an ill-organised collection of scabrous tales loosely hung on the ludicrous story of the Man-turned-Ass, solely for the entertainment of the reader; at the other extreme, as the serious confession of an Apuleius saved from the errors of the flesh by the grace of Isis, and desiring to thank the goddess and convert the reader. It can be, and has been, read as Platonic allegory, psychic autobiography, *Bildungsroman*, and literary parody. It is a complex and carefully wrought work whose ass-man narrator is often ironic and frequently warns the reader against accepting his words at face value.

"Pay attention, reader, and you will find delight."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Translated by M. D. Macleod in the Loeb Classical Library, Lucian, vol. VIII: see his introduction (pp. 47–51) on the question of authorship.

<sup>2</sup> Lector intende: laetaberis (Apul. *Met.* I 1).

# INTRODUCTION

## TEXT AND TRANSLATION

The text of the *Metamorphoses* has come down to us in approximately 40 manuscripts, of which all the later ones are almost certainly direct descendants of the earliest, produced in the Beneventan monastery of Monte Cassino in the eleventh century: Codex Laurentianus 68,2, known as F. Modern editors, therefore, have rightly seen their task as reproducing a legible text of F, making use of other manuscripts and conjectures only where F is unreadable or patently in error. I have followed the same principle, making use of the excellent editions of Helm, Robertson, and Giarratano-Frassinetti. The purpose of my critical apparatus is practical: to signal those words in the Latin text which the reader may need to regard with suspicion. These include (1) significant emendations of F, whether these are found in later manuscripts or have been proposed by modern scholars, and (2) places where, although I have printed the reading of F, there are strong arguments which might support emendation. Except in a few cases I have made no attempt to show the sources of emendations or to discuss variant readings: such information is readily available in the critical apparatuses of the editions mentioned above, especially that of Robertson.

I have modernised and regularised the Latin spelling throughout, making no attempt to repro-

## INTRODUCTION

duce the orthographic variations of the eleventh-century manuscript. Likewise I have punctuated according to modern English practice, rather than in the continental style still adopted in most Latin texts.

The virtues of Apuleius' style in the *Golden Ass* would be regarded for the most part as faults in contemporary English prose: exaggeration and repetitiveness, archaism and preciousness, sonority and lyricism. A translator, obliged to make orderly sense out of Apuleius' wonderfully ordered sounds and images, too frequently corrects the faults of his Latin author in the interests of a precision and lucidity foreign to his original. I have tried to avoid this insofar as my childhood English teachers and my academic habits would allow. My success has been limited, and all too often a Latin phrase which was intended as boldly inventive has suffered metamorphosis into standard English. In cases of uncertainty as to the sense of a passage I have tried to hedge the translation where possible, but otherwise not to burden the reader with caveats and alternative translations. The notes to the translation are largely limited to explanations of proper names and allusions necessary for a literal understanding of the text.

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# CONTENTS

FOREWORD	vii
INTRODUCTION	ix
BIBLIOGRAPHY	xv
THE METAMORPHOSES	
Book One	2
Book Two	58
Book Three	126
Book Four	182
Book Five	252
Book Six	312

THE METAMORPHOSES  
OF APULEIUS



# APVLEI MADAVRENSIS METAMORPHOSEON

## LIBER I

- 1 At ego tibi sermone isto Milesio varias fabulas conseram, auresque tuas benivolas lepido susurro permulceam, modo si papyrus Aegyptiam argutia Nilotici calami inscriptam non spreveris inspicere, figuras fortunasque hominum in alias imagines conversas et in se rursum mutuo nexu refectas ut mireris. Exordior. Quis ille? Paucis accipe. Hymettos Attica et Isthmos Ephyrea et Taenaros Spartiaca, glebae felices aeternum libris felicioribus

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<sup>1</sup> The work opens as if in the middle of a literary discussion.

<sup>2</sup> This is usually taken to refer to so-called "Milesian tales", pornographic stories named for Aristides of Miletus, whose Greek fiction was translated into Latin by the Roman historian Sisenna in the first century B.C. It may also suggest "Asiatic" or florid in style, in contrast to the purer "Attic" style sought by some of Apuleius' contemporary writers. Cf. also IV 32 and note.

<sup>3</sup> Papyrus imported from Egypt was a common writing