

Chapter Title: THE MEDIEVAL ASS: RE-EVALUATING THE RECEPTION OF APULEIUS IN THE HIGH MIDDLE AGES

Chapter Author(s): ROBERT H. F. CARVER

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THE MEDIEVAL ASS: RE-EVALUATING THE RECEPTION OF APULEIUS IN THE HIGH MIDDLE AGES

ROBERT H. F. CARVER

What do we know for certain about the medieval transmission and reception of *The Golden Ass* or *Metamorphoses* of Apuleius? Our firmest evidence is codicological. The traditional stemma (fig. 1) shows some key moments, beginning, in the 1050s–80s, with the creation, at Monte Cassino, of F (Florence, Biblioteca Laurenziana 68.2), a manuscript containing the *Metamorphoses*, the *Apologia*, and the *Florida*.¹

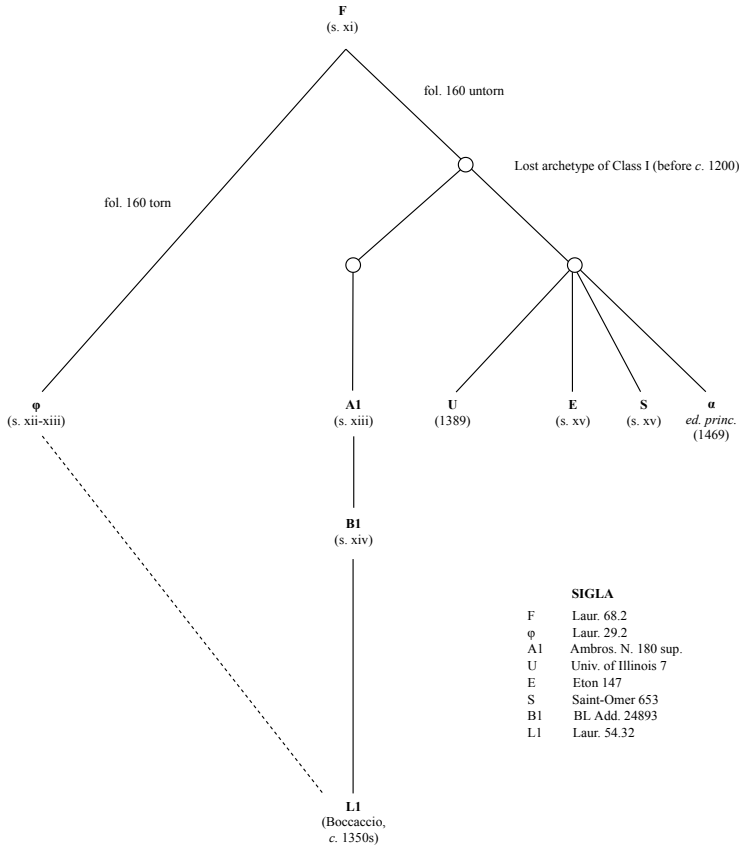


Figure 1. Traditional stemma.

The ink started to flake quite quickly from the flesh side of the parchment, and, around

1200, a copy of F was made which we call ϕ (Florence, Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, *Laurentianus* 29.2). Towards the end of the eleventh century (before 1086), Guaiferius, monk of Monte Cassino, makes undeniable use of the *Florida*, producing an almost cento-like effect. He also seems to extract details from Lucius' vision of Isis' mantle in *The Golden Ass* ('palla [...] nodulis fimbriarum', *Apul. Met.* 11.3), the 'threads of the mantle' which, despite being 'surrounded by ashes', have somehow remained 'intact' ('palle fimbrie cineribus involute sed integre').²

After Guaiferius and ϕ , however, the trail of Apuleian influence goes very cold indeed. One potential factor inhibiting the diffusion of manuscripts from Monte Cassino is the supposed difficulty of Beneventan ('Lombardic') script compared with Caroline minuscule. For a long time, it was believed that *The Golden Ass* only 'escaped' from the confines of Monte Cassino sometime around 1350, when Boccaccio or Zanobi da Strada 'rescued' the text. That myth has been exposed by scholarly analysis, but speculation about the availability of *The Golden Ass* has been hampered by a continuing fetishization of the roles of Monte Cassino and F. The logic, even of the traditional stemmatic model established by D. S. Robertson, demands that at least one copy of F (the lost ancestor of Class-1 manuscripts) had been made before folio 160 of F suffered a rent (that is to say, between 1050 or 1080 and the copying of ϕ around 1200).³

In recent decades, the date for diffusion outside Monte Cassino has been pushed back to the 1330s (Boccaccio's earliest works), the 1320s (Benzo of Alessandria), and (as I argued in 2007) the late 1310s (if we accept the internal dating of 1319 for Albertino Mussato's Latin poem describing a metamorphic journey).⁴ The recent redating of A1 (Milan, Biblioteca Ambrosiana N180 sup.) from the early fourteenth century⁵ to the late thirteenth century⁶ takes us into very interesting territory, but it still leaves a significant gap in the fossil record.

There have been various attempts to fill this gap, but none of them has been entirely convincing.⁷ The most compelling counter-evidence is the absence of a decisive mention of *The Golden Ass* in the places we would most expect to find it—monastic catalogues, medieval encyclopaedias, and learned commentaries, particularly relating to that notable exploiter and imitator of Apuleius, Martianus Capella.

If we *can* fill that gap, or find one or more of the 'missing links', it will have profound, indeed, radical implications for our understanding of the history of Western literature. The mid-twelfth to the mid-thirteenth century is a seminal epoch for imaginative fiction: it sees the revival of classical modes, epic, and comedy; the emergence of new modes, such as medieval romance; the Celtic or 'Breton' *lai* with its fabulous (or 'fairy-tale'-like) content; and the

² Carver, *Protean Ass* (n. 1, above) 63–65, citing O. Limone, 'L'opera agiografica di Guaiferio di Montecassino', in *Monastica III. Scritti raccolti in memoria del XV centenario della nascita di S. Benedetto (480–1980)*, Miscellanea Cassinese 47 (Monte Cassino 1983) 77–130 (104).

³ Carver, *Protean Ass* (n. 1, above) 67, extrapolating from D. S. Robertson, 'The manuscripts of the *Metamorphoses* of Apuleius', *CQ* 18 (1924) 27–42 and 85–99.

⁴ Carver, *Protean Ass* (n. 1, above) 121–22.

⁵ Robertson, 'The manuscripts' (n. 3, above) 29.

⁶ J. H. Gaisser, *The Fortunes of Apuleius and the 'Golden Ass': A Study in Transmission and Reception* (Princeton-Oxford 2008) 93 and 309.

⁷ E.g. D. Rollo, 'From Apuleius' Psyche to Chrétien's *Erec and Enide*', in *The Search for the Ancient Novel*, ed. J. Tatum (Baltimore 1994) 347–69; P. Dronke, 'Metamorphoses: allegory in early medieval commentaries on Ovid and Apuleius', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 72 (2009) 21–39; J. Fumo, 'Romancing the rose: Apuleius, Guillaume de Lorris, and moral horticulture', *Modern Philology* 107.3 (2010) 343–79. For a critical survey of the claims up until 2006, see Carver, *Protean Ass* (n. 1, above) 73–107. Neither the *Speculum stultorum* nor the *Asinarius* was considered in that monograph.

fabliaux, those bawdy verse narratives which feed directly into the comic achievement of Boccaccio and Chaucer, while also exhibiting (whether as a result of convergent evolution or actual filiation) some uncanny affinities with Milesian tales. If *The Golden Ass* was available to readers and writers at this time, it may have played a significant part in this efflorescence of fiction.

Our focus in this preliminary re-evaluation of the medieval reception of *The Golden Ass* will be two Latin poems whose protagonists share some significant features with Apuleius' hero-narrator: they both manifest a mind that is human (or nearly human) in a body that (for all or most of the work) is fully asinine.

Case-study 1: '*Speculum stultorum*'

The *Speculum stultorum* ('The mirror of fools') is a Latin satirical poem of 3,900 lines, composed (perhaps between November 1179 and March 1180) by an English monk, 'Nigellus', variously identified as Nigel de Longchamps, Nigel Wireker (or Whiteacre), or Nigel of Canterbury.⁸ In the introduction to his English translation, Graydon W. Regenos observes, in passing, that 'The means by which Nigellus wishes to convey his message is imitative of the method used by Apuleius in his *Golden Ass*'. However, the claim is neither substantiated nor developed.⁹

The *Speculum* owes an obvious debt to Avianus' fable of 'The Ass in the Lion's Skin'.¹⁰ But Apuleius' Lucius and Nigel's Burnellus share many characteristics, most notably a love of novelty ('nouitas') and forbidden things, and a desire for transformation. While Lucius travels to Thessaly in search of magic, Galienus sends Burnellus to Salerno (a centre of medical learning, and strongly connected with Monte Cassino) to purchase the requisites for a longer tail (619–20; R 51).¹¹ Galienus makes explicit the link between medicine and the divine: 'Sed deus est medicus nomine reque simul' ('God is doctor both in name and deed' (128; R 33). The tale ('narratio') that Galienus tells about Brunetta and Bicornis in order 'to turn the ass away from his foolishness' (205–594; R 36–50) has a structural affinity with Byrrhena's attempts to save Lucius from the consequences of his misplaced *curiositas* (Apul. *Met.* 2.5). And, like Apuleius, Nigel makes use of intercalated tales as a way of shortening a journey:

Simul iugi quod insurgimus aspritudinem fabularum lepida iucunditas levigabit.

⁸ A. G. Rigg, 'Canterbury, Nigel of [Nigel Wireker or Whiteacre (c. 1135–1198?)', *ODNB*.

⁹ G. W. Regenos, trans., *The Book of Daun Burnel the Ass: Nigellus Wireker's 'Speculum stultorum'* (Austin 1959)

9. For a narrative summary of the *Speculum stultorum*, see J. Mann, *From Aesop to Reynard: Beast Literature in Medieval Britain* (Oxford 2009) 312–13 (Appendix 2).

¹⁰ Avianus, *Fab.* 5.17–18, in *Minor Latin Poets*, eds and trans J. W. Duff and A. M. Duff, 2 vols (London 1934) II 680–749 (= Perry 358). Cf. *Speculum* 61–62: 'Pelle leonina tectum detexit asellum / Fastus et excedens Gloria vana modum' ('Vainglory and excessive pride betray / The ass, though he be decked in lion's skin' (trans. Regenos 31). All references are to the Latin text (cited by line numbers) given in Nigel de Longchamps, *Speculum stultorum*, eds J. H. Mozley and R. R. Raymo (Berkeley 1960), and to Regenos' English translation (n. 9, above), which will subsequently be cited in abbreviated form (e.g. 'R 31').

¹¹ Burnellus' desire for a longer tail ('De asino qui voluit caudam suam longiorem fieri', 81; R 32) and his grief at losing half his existing tail (847–48 and 861; R 62) contrast with Lucius' relief at finally losing the asinine attribute: 'quae me potissimum cruciabat ante, cauda nusquam' (Apul. *Met.* 11.13). J. N. Adams, *The Latin Sexual Vocabulary* (London 1982) 36, notes that 'Cauda = "penis" is securely attested only in Horace (*Serm.* 1.2.45, 2.7.49)' (cf. 35, 37, 221).

Besides, the charming delight of some stories will smooth out the ruggedness of the hill we are climbing.¹²

(Apul. *Met.* 1.2)

[...] et quod ingressui primum fuerit stabulum prandio participabo.

[...] and I will invite you to share dinner with me at the first inn after we come into town.¹³

(Apul. *Met.* 1.4)

Talia cum pariter gradientes plura referrent,
Parisius subeunt hospitiumque petunt.

Conversing thus together as they walked,
They came to Paris and they found an inn.

(1503–04; R 84)

Burnellus' inability to learn anything in Paris besides 'hy ha' might be compared with Lucius' inability to say anything but 'O':

Cum nihil ex toto, quodcunque docente magistro
Aut socio, potuit discere praeter hy ha.

Yet absolutely nothing had he learned
Of what his master taught except 'heehaw!'

(1545–46; R 85)

[...] sed viduatum ceteris syllabis ac litteris processit 'O' tantum [...]

[...] but all that came out was 'He [...]', missing all the other syllables and letters.

(Apul. *Met.* 8.29)

There is also a general similarity between the 'monstrous sharp-toothed hounds' ('immensos mordaci dente molossos') that Fromundus (one of the White Monks) sets on Burnellus as he crosses the fields (833; R 61), and the 'fierce, monstrous farm- and sheep-dogs' ('canes pastoricios villaticos feros atque immanes') that attack the boundary markers at the instigation of Apuleius' bloodthirsty landowner (Apul. *Met.* 9.36).

There are also some tantalizing moments where one might suspect that Nigel is using the geography of southern Italy ('Apulia') to play on the 'Apuleian' characteristics of his protagonist (a foolish ass with a misplaced yearning for philosophy and transformation).¹⁴ Reproaching himself for the 'follies' of his 'wasted youth' ('ineptae' / 'Damna iuventutis',

¹² All quotations from Apuleius are based on the Loeb edition, *Apuleius: Metamorphoses*, ed. and trans. J. A. Hanson, 2 vols (Cambridge, MA 1989).

¹³ Lucius fails to fulfil this pledge to Aristomenes when they reach Hypata at Apul. *Met.* 1.20–21.

¹⁴ On the representation of Frederick II (1194–1250) as the 'puer Apuliae' ('child of Apulia') and 'stupor mundi' ('wonder of the world'), see E. H. Kantorowicz's mythologizing biography, *Frederick the Second 1194–1250*, trans. E. O. Lorimer (London 1931).

571–72; R 86),¹⁵ Burnellus wishes that he had never ‘scaled the Alps’ to visit ‘the Paris schools’:

Appulus¹⁶ huc veni, sed Gallicus ecce revertor.
Burnellus tamen qui fuit ante manet.

Apulian came I here, a Gaul I leave,
Brunellus stays, however, just the same.
(1585–86; R 86–87)

A safe default position might be that *The Golden Ass* was known *about*, but not actually *known* first-hand at this point; desired but not possessed. Yet some features of the poem may make us question that assumption:

Mitra caput nostrum sine munere pontificali
Nulla deaurabit, auxiliante Deo.

The miter shall not gild this head of mine
Without the bishop’s powers, so help me God!
(1681–82; R 90)

Of all the metaphors available to him to describe the placing of a bishop’s mitre on the head of a donkey, why does Nigel choose ‘gilding’ (‘deaurabit’)? The immediate answer might be that ‘gilding’ conveys effectively the gap between semblance and substance—between the superficial pomp of office and actual ecclesiastical impotence.¹⁷ But if we loosen the shackles of that negative (‘nulla’) and relax the ‘bit’ of that future simple (‘deaurabit’), Burnellus becomes, if only for the most fleeting of moments, a ‘golden ass’, at least from the neck up. This is an illusion, of course—the thinnest layer of gold leaf—but it may also, just possibly, be an allusion to the title of Apuleius’ work (*De asino aureo*) as transmitted by Augustine (*De civitate dei* 18.18).

We might consider, finally, Burnellus’ escape from the blows of his master, Bernardus, and the brief idyll that he enjoys in his flight:

Aestus erat, lassus que fui voluique sub umbra
Ilicis optato **membra fovere toro**.
Carmina quae nuper me composuisse juvabat

¹⁵ Cf. Apul. *Met.* 11.15: ‘sed lubrico virentis aetatae ad serviles delapsus voluptates, curiositatis improsperae sinistrum praemium reportasti’ (‘but on the slippery path of headstrong youth you plunged into slavish pleasures and reaped the perverse reward of your ill-starred curiosity’).

¹⁶ Manuscript D (Dublin, Trinity College, ms 440; mid-fifteenth century; owned by Peter Lee, monk of Durham, student of Oxford [1511], and Bursar [1514], then Prior [1523] of Durham College, Oxford) reads *Anglicus* (‘[As] an Englishman’) for ‘Appulus’. See *Speculum stultorum*, eds Mozley and Raymo (n. 10, above), 9–10 and 134. The variant may reflect the satirical tradition (‘caudatus Anglicus’) of Englishmen having tails, explored by A. G. Miller, “‘Tails’ of masculinity: knights, clerics, and the mutilation of horses in medieval England”, *Speculum* 88.4 (Oct. 2013) 958–95 (960–61). Cf. ‘Arnold’s Story about the Priest’s Son and the Little Chick’: ‘Contigit Apuliae celebri res digna relatu, / Tempore Willelmi principis hujus avi’ (‘Apulia saw a strange event take place / When William ruled, the present duke’s grandsire’, 1255–56; R 75).

¹⁷ Note the discussion of sterility and genitalia in the lines that follow: Burnellus wants to be a horse and not a mule. There seems to be a sideways swipe at the Church’s hypocrisy regarding clerical celibacy: Arnoldus (1251ff.; R 75ff.) tells the tale of Gundulfus, the priest’s son.

Scribere conabar tutus ab hoste meo.
 Et locus et tempus, studio nimis apta, volentem
 Scribere cogeabant improbitate sua.
 Venter erat plenus, pes lassus, pagina prompta
 Excerptura nova carmina digna nota.
 Cumque manus calamum ferrumque teneret acutum
 Exciperetque novos pellis ovina tonos,
 Nescio quem prope me ramos super ilicis altae
 Audio garritum percipioque sonum.¹⁸

'Twas summer, I was tired, I chose to stretch
 On pleasant turf beneath a shady oak.
 A poem which I had just composed I tried
 To put in writing; safe was I from foe.
 Both time and place for study were just right,
 And since I wished to write, they urged me on. [132]
 My stomach was well filled, my feet were tired,
 The page was ready to record my song.
 And as I took my slender iron-tipped pen,
 And on the parchment was about to write,
 I heard nearby some kind of chattering,
 I heard the sound beneath the lofty oak.
 (2891–902; R 131–32)

The debt to Ovid's evocation of an erotic siesta in *Amores* 1.5.1–2 is obvious:

Aestus erat, mediamque dies exegerat horam;
 adposui medio **membra** levanda **toro**.

But there are also some interesting parallels with Lucius' flight from Corinth at the end of Book 10, and the moment of peace that he experiences as he stretches out beside the water before his vision of the goddess Isis (beginning at Apul. *Met.* 11.1). We note the elements in common: a donkey escaping from a town (2875–76: 'Nuper cum profugus fugerem festinus ab urbe, / Bernardum fugiens'); the hero's concern about being attacked by his master's animals (the wild beasts expected to devour the condemned woman while she mates with Lucius in the spectacle organized by Thiasus, see Apul. *Met.* 10.23, 10.29, and 10.34; the dogs accompanying Bernardus in his hunt for the fugitive Burnellus, 2879–80); a lying down to rest in a safe place (compare Apul. *Met.* 10.35, '**lassum** corpus porrectus **refoveo**', with Nigel's 'lassus [...] fovere', 2891–92); a vision, theophany, or epiphany of some kind.

The medieval convention would be for Burnellus to fall asleep at this point and have a dream vision—which is exactly the convention that Chaucer follows when he adapts the avian epiphany in his *Parlement of foules*. But Burnellus' vision of speaking birds occurs while he is awake, and it supplants the 'noteworthy new poems' ('nova carmina digna nota', 2898) of his own composition that he was intending to inscribe on parchment ('pellis ovina') with the 'slender iron-tipped pen' that he manages (despite his asinine form) to 'hold' in his 'hand' ('manus [...] teneret'). At the end of 'Cupid and Psyche' (Apul. *Met.* 6.25), the asinine

¹⁸ *Garritus-us* (m.) (Late Latin): Sidonius, *Ep.* 3.6 (med.).

Lucius laments that he does not have to hand ‘tablets and stilus’ (‘pugillares et stylum’) with which to ‘note down such a pretty little tale’ (‘tam bellam fabellam praenotarem’).

There is, of course, a huge amount in the *Speculum* that is not Apuleian at all, and there is no single detail that proves, decisively, direct acquaintance with a text of Apuleius’ *Metamorphoses*. But the number of correspondences that we have detected allows us, at the very least, to conclude that the poem emerges out of—and, in turn, functions within—a cultural milieu and a system of signification in which the idea of a ‘golden ass’ (a noted philosopher turned into a donkey) means *something*.

Case-study 2: Anon., ‘Asinarius’

Our second case-study, the anonymous *Asinarius*, is a much shorter work—a mere 404 lines (also in elegiac couplets)—composed, it is generally thought, around 1200, and usually associated with Frederick II (1194–1250) of the House of Hohenstaufen, Holy Roman Emperor and King of Sicily. The poem circulated widely in manuscript in France, Germany, and Italy (fourteen copies survive).¹⁹ In his *Registrum multorum auctorum* (c. 1280), Hugo von Trimberg numbers it among the Latin ‘comedies’ popular ‘within the schools’ (‘in scholis’).²⁰ However, the basic plot is best known today because the Brothers Grimm used the Latin work as the sole basis for their concocted folk-tale, *Das Eselein* (‘The little donkey’), first published in 1815.²¹

In this heavily pared-down folk-tale version, the plot may look barely Apuleian at all: instead of a man turning into a donkey for twelve months (as happens to Lucius), a donkey turns into a man on a nightly basis, and is only forced to stay permanently in human form by the Western King’s expedient of burning the donkey’s hide that his son-in-law has been taking off and then putting back on at dawn. The same device of asinine hide-burning is found in a Sanskrit tale (of doubtful date and origin) which supplies at least an analogue to the Western plot.²²

In 1983, the poem’s most recent editor, Simona Rizzardi, noted certain superficial resemblances between the *Asinarius* and the story of Cupid and Psyche.²³ But even six years after the appearance of Detlev Fehling’s iconoclastic monograph,²⁴ Rizzardi (still under the influence of the taxonomic tradition exemplified by Antti Aarne and Stith Thompson)²⁵ favoured the ‘universalist’ explanation of folk-tale studies: the Mysterious or Monster

¹⁹ Anon., *Asinarius*, ed. S. Rizzardi, in *Commedie latine del XII e XIII secolo*, 8 vols (Genoa 1983) IV 137–251 (173–86). Cf. S. Praet, ‘The Trojan ass: *Asinarius* as mock epic’, *Viator* 44.3 (2013) 157–73 (159).

²⁰ *Asinarius*, ed. Rizzardi (n. 19, above) 147–48.

²¹ J. and W. Grimm, *Kinder- und Hausmärchen*, 2 vols (Berlin 2015) II no. 58.

²² For a discussion connecting *Asinarius* to *The Story of Vikramaditya’s Birth*, see J. M. Ziolkowski, *Fairy Tales from before Fairy Tales: The Medieval Latin Past of Wonderful Lies* (Ann Arbor 2007) 219–25.

²³ *Asinarius*, ed. Rizzardi (n. 19, above) XX. Cf. Praet, ‘The Trojan ass’ (n. 19, above) 166 n. 35: ‘I shall not discuss the possibility of the *Asinarius* author having known Apuleius’ *Metamorphoses* here. While mainstream scholarship assumes the text was not well known at the time, Carver [*Protean Ass* (n. 1, above) 78] does discern a vague influence in 12th-c.y romance literature’.

²⁴ D. Fehling, *Amor und Psyche: Die Schöpfung des Apuleius und ihre Einwirkung auf das Märchen, eine Kritik der romantischen Märchentheorie* (Mainz 1977) 79–88.

²⁵ S. Thompson, *Motif-Index of Folk-Literature: A Classification of Narrative Elements in Folk-Tales, Ballads, Myths, Fables, Mediaeval Romances, Exempla, Fabliaux, Jest-Books, and Local Legends*, 6 vols (Helsinki 1932–36); J.-Ö. Swahn, *The Tale of Cupid and Psyche (Aarne-Thompson 425 & 428)* (Lund 1955); A. Scobie, *Apuleius and Folklore: Toward a History of ML3045, AaTh567, 449A* (London 1983).

Husband; the curious onlooker; the flight (or *attempted* flight) of the husband after the violation of a taboo. That folkloric bias explains her decision to choose the reading of *fabula* over *pagina* in the second line of the poem (a tendency followed by Jan Ziolkowski—*fabula* better supports his ‘Once upon a time’ translation of the opening).²⁶

Inevitably, perhaps, I favour *pagina*: too much emphasis on the supposedly ‘folk-tale’ or ‘fairy tale’ elements obscures the fundamentally ludic nature of the text. The *Asinarius* seems to me to be, above all, the work of a learned mind at play: it is funny, titillating, allusive, and highly performative. But if we choose to gaze intently, with Apuleian eyes, on the medieval Latin poem, we will also find, I believe, a pattern of close correspondence, in theme and function, sequence and structure, not merely with some version of the tale of Cupid and Psyche, but with the novel more widely. My hypothesis (and, indeed, my conclusion) is that the *Asinarius* is the work of a poet with an intimate knowledge of the totality of *The Golden Ass*, and a sophisticated understanding of how the parts of Apuleius’ work interconnect. The poet chooses to collapse the diegetic shells that separate those parts: he focuses on the embedded tale, ‘Cupid and Psyche’, which forms Apuleius’ centre-piece (*Met.* 4–6), but he maps onto it the asinine narrative as a whole (the *cornice*), recasting the secret husband Cupid (who has been depicted by the oracle, and by Psyche’s jealous sisters, as a serpent-monster) as a Lucius-like donkey-monster—a handsome young man hidden within the hide of a hideous beast. (The *asellus* is also a Psyche figure when he wants to return home.) In turn, the Western King’s daughter functions mainly as Psyche, but also, in part, as Photis (the slave-girl who initiates Lucius into the art of love-making); as the libidinous *matrona* of Corinth (the Pasiphae-figure of Book Ten); and, finally, as Isis (the salvific deity of Book Eleven who engineers his return to human form).²⁷

Is such an argumentative kite even worth flying? There is no objection in purely theoretical terms. The date usually assigned to the poem (c. 1200) coincides precisely with the production, at Monte Cassino, of ϕ , an apograph (or exact copy) of F, and our second-oldest extant manuscript of the *Metamorphoses*, the *Apologia*, and the *Florida*. The Hohenstaufen are well placed to facilitate the diffusion of such texts, given the long and intimate association of the German royal houses with the Abbey.²⁸ And, as we have noted above, even before the copying of ϕ (c. 1200), at least one copy of F (the ancestor of Class-I manuscripts) existed outside the confines of Monte Cassino.²⁹

²⁶ J. M. Ziolkowski, ‘The beast and the beauty: the reorientation of “The Donkey” from the Middle Ages to the Brothers Grimm’, *The Journal of Medieval Latin* 5 (1995) 53–94 (58); Ziolkowski, *Fairy Tales* (n. 22, above) 341. All subsequent quotations in English from the *Asinarius* are taken from the translation that Ziolkowski appends to these two publications.

²⁷ On the inter-relatedness of these female characters, see R. H. F. Carver, ‘Between Photis and Isis: fiction, reality, and the ideal in *The Golden Ass* of Apuleius’, in *The Construction of the Real and the Ideal in the Ancient Novel*, eds M. Paschalis and S. Panayotakis (Groningen 2013) 243–74.

²⁸ The German Richerius owed his appointment in 1038 as abbot of Monte Cassino to Conrad II, Holy Roman Emperor (and member of the Salian dynasty). On the occupation of the abbey by Hohenstaufen troops between 1239 and 1266, H. Bloch, *Montecassino in the Middle Ages: Volume II (Parts III–V)* (Rome 1986) 1005 n. 2, quotes *Regesti Bernardi I Abbatis Casinensis fragmenta*, ed. A. M. Caplet O.S.B. (Rome 1890), 145 no. 364: ‘Fredericus quondam Romanorum Imperator et post eum duo filii eius, Conradus videlicet et Manfredus [...] speluncam latronum de templo Domini facientes, viginti et sex fere annis ante ingressum nostrum in arcem dampnabiliter tenuerunt’ (‘for almost twenty-six years before our entry into the citadel, Frederick, the former Emperor of the Romans, and, after him, his two sons, namely, Conrad and Manfred, occupied [it] in damnable fashion, making a den of thieves of the temple of the Lord’).

²⁹ Carver, *Protean Ass* (n. 1, above) 67. On the possibility that Class-I MSS represent a tradition older than F, see O. Pecere, ‘Qualche riflessione sulla tradizione di Apuleio a Montecassino’, in *Le strade del testo*, Studi e commenti

The opening of the poem is suggestive of Apuleian influence, but not decisive:

Rex erat ignotae quondam regionis et **urbis**,
 Et nomen regis fabula³⁰ [**pagina**] nulla tenet.
 Is sibi consortem regni thalamique sodalem
 Sortitus fuerat nobilitate parem.

Once upon a time there was a king of an unknown region and city,
 and, what is more, no tale [page] tells the king's name.
 This king had acquired for himself as consort of his realm and
 companion of his bedchamber a woman who was his peer in nobility.
 (1–4)

Compare Apul. *Met.* 4.28:

Erant in quadam civitate rex et regina.

Once upon a time in a certain city there lived a king and queen.

We notice some overlap (king, queen, unspecified city), but these elements are also found in Fulgentius' *Mitologiae* (a work certainly known in the Middle Ages):

Apuleius in libris metamorphoseon hanc fabulam planissime designavit: dicens esse in quadam **ciuitate regem** & reginam [...]

Apuleius traced out this tale most clearly in [his] books of *Metamorphoses*, saying that there were, in a certain city, a king and queen [...]
 (Fulgentius, *Mitologiae* 3)

If we move to the two love-scenes near the end of the poem, we have more striking correspondences, particularly in the account of the wedding night of the 'fearless little donkey'. Some of the lineaments of 'Cupid and Psyche' appear to have been changed in order to accommodate an asinine spouse, but the response of the new bride to 'the noble body of a handsome man' (311) echoes Apuleius' passage (*Met.* 5.22), where the light of the lamp transforms the monstrous serpent of Psyche's expectations into 'the mildest and sweetest beast of all wild creatures', Cupid himself. Moreover, the erotic details of the *Asinarius* are resonant of Apuleius' accounts of Lucius' lovemaking (as man and as donkey) with (respectively) Photis and the Corinthian *matrona*:

Virginis intrepidus thalamum tunc intrat asellus,
 Ut sponse tenerum mulceat ipse sinum.
 Ergo subit thalamum dilecte virginis, in quo
 Lumina sunt posita rege iubente duo.
 Ut videat, quid agant hic asellus et hec domicella,³¹ [305]
 Sub velo servus nocte locatus erat.
 Omnibus egressis cum nullus adesse putatur,

5, ed. G. Cavallo (Bari 1987) 99–124.

³⁰ Thus manuscripts B, E, and G.

³¹ Cf. Apul. *Met.* 10.20 (Corinthian *matrona*): 'At intus cerei praeclara micantes luce nocturnas nobis tenebras inalbabanti'.

Munitur vectis obice valva domus.³²
 Extimplo sponsus asininum ponit amictum,³³
 Exposita veteri pelle **novus fit homo.** [310]
Virgo videns hominis formosi nobile corpus,
 Cuius iam pridem turpis imago fuit,³⁴
Mox incredibilem sponsi mirata decorum
In laqueum Veneris precipitata ruit.
 Tunc **simul ambo**³⁵ suis stringunt sua **colla lacertis**³⁶
 Et sua concedunt oribus ora suis.
 Protinus in lectum salit hic sequiturque puella.
 Quod sequitur, norunt novit et ipse thorus.
 Nec reor omnino latitantem posse latere,
 Qui qualesve ioci nocte gerantur ea. [320]
 Ille cupidineum pro tempore temperat estum
 Uxoris vices exhibet illa viro.
Dumque redit pulsus rutilans Aurora tenebris,
E gremio sponse prosilit ille sue.³⁷
 Inde revestitur asinino rursus amictu
 Et fit asellus item, sicut et ante fuit.

Then the fearless little donkey enters the maiden's bedchamber
 so that he may caress the tender breast of his bride.
 Therefore he enters the bedchamber of the beloved maiden, in which
 two lights have been placed at the king's bidding.
 So that he may see what this little donkey and this little lady do,
 a servant is present, having been placed by night behind a wall hanging.
 When everyone has stepped outside, when no one is thought to be present,
 the house door is barred and bolted.
 Immediately the bridegroom puts aside the donkey garb;
 when his old hide has been laid away, **he becomes a new man.**
 The maiden, seeing the **noble body of a handsome man**
 whose **appearance previously had been repulsive,**
 having *marveled* before long at the **unbelievable charm of her spouse,**
rushed headlong into the bond of lovemaking.
 Then at once the two embrace their necks with their arms
 and join their mouths to mouths.
 Immediately he leaps into bed and the girl follows.

³² Cf. Apul. *Met.* 10.20 (Corinthian *matrona*): 'Nec dominae voluptates diutina sua praesentia morati, **clausis cubiculi foribus** facessunt'; and *Met.* 3.15 (Lucius and Photis): '**pessulis iniectis et uncino firmiter immisso**'.

³³ Cf. Apul. *Met.* 10.21 (Corinthian *matrona*): 'Tunc ipsa cuncto prorsus spoliata tegmine [...]'.
³⁴ Cf. Apul. *Met.* 5.22 (Psyche): 'videt omnium ferarum mitissimam dulcissimamque bestiam'.

³⁵ Cf. Apul. *Met.* 2.17 (Lucius and Photis): '**simul ambo corruimus** inter mutuos amplexus animas anhelantes'.

³⁶ Cf. Apul. *Met.* 3.15 (Lucius and Photis): 'sic ad me reversa **colloque meo manibus ambabus implexa** [...]'.
³⁷ Cf. Apul. *Met.* 6.24: Cupid clasping Psyche in his lap ('maritus, Psychen gremio suo complexus'); 5.28: seagull diving 'ad Oceani profundum gremium'; 5.14: Psyche's sisters recklessly 'leap' ('prosiliunt') from the crag; 4.3: woman 'ad eum statim prosilit'.

What follows they know—and the bed itself knows.
 (Nor do I think that the man hiding could have failed to notice
 which games and what sorts of games were conducted there by night!)
 For a time he tempers the heat of amorous desire,
 and she fulfills the offices of a wife for her husband.
 And as soon as rosy dawn returns once darkness has been dispelled,
 he leaps up from the lap of his bride.
 Then he is again clothed in the donkey garb
 and becomes a little donkey just as he had been before.
 (301–26)

The detail of the mysterious husband leaving at dawn is common to Fulgentius *and* Apuleius:

Iamque aderat ignobilis maritus, et **torum inscenderat**, et uxorem sibi Psychen fecerat, **et ante lucis exortum prope discesserat**.

Now her unknown husband had arrived, had mounted the bed, had made Psyche his wife, and had quickly departed before the rising of daylight.
 (Apul. *Met.* 5.4)

Nocte enim adueniens maritus ueneris praeliis obscure peractis: ut inuise uespertinus aduenerat: ita crepusculo incognitus etiam discedebat.

For her husband, in the same way that he came to her unseen in the evening and waged the warfare of Venus in the dark, so too, at dawn, he went away, unknown.
 (Fulgentius, *Mitologiae* 3)

But in the next two passages we see the king taking the taboo-violating part of Psyche,³⁸ by spying upon his son-in-law and daughter while they lie in bed, deep in post-coital sleep.³⁹

Rex ergo **thalamum** sub opace tempore noctis
Intrat et ecce thorum nata generque premunt. [370]
 Et quia **post Venerem** mos est obrepere **somnum**,
Opressi fuerant ambo sopore gravi.
 Leniter accedens rex appropriansque cubile,
Formosum cernit **accubitare virum**.
Qui mox exuuias asinini veleris aufert [375]
 Et genero **minime comperiente** fugit
 Fornacem iubet **accendi** fomite multo
 In qua **fit pellis** rege iubente **cinis**.

Accordingly the **king enters the bridal chamber** at the time of **dark night**
 and look! His **daughter and son-in-law** lie **abed**.
 And because it is usual for **sleep** to creep up **after love-making**,

³⁸ Cf. Apul. *Met.* 5.22 (Psyche): ‘**sexum** audacia **mutatur**’ (‘in her boldness, she changes her sex’).

³⁹ Cf. Ov. *Met.* 8.82–86 (Scylla and the rape of Nisus’ lock): ‘with the shadows, her boldness grew. [...] the daughter steals silently into her father’s room, and (alas, the evil!) robs him of the fateful lock of hair’ (‘tenebrisque audacia crevit. [...] thalamos taciturna paternos / intrat et (heu facinus!) fatali nata parentem / crine suum spoliat’).

they both are **held fast by deep sleep**.⁴⁰
Gently approaching and drawing near the marriage-bed, the king
 perceives a **handsome man reclining**.
 A little later he **removes the skin of the donkey's hide**
 and escapes with his son-in-law **hardly noticing**,⁴¹
 and he orders a **furnace** to be set **ablaze** with much kindling
 In which at the king's bidding the **skin becomes ashes**.⁴²
 (369–74)

The king ‘perceives a handsome man reclining’ (‘Formosum [...] accubitare’, picking up Psyche’s first view of the recumbent Cupid at Apul. *Met.* 5.22: ‘formosum deum formose cubantem’).⁴³ Like Psyche, the king burns the young man’s skin, although, in his case, the act of burning is intentional and complete. Both young men respond to the violation with immediate flight (‘fuga’ is the common term), and, in each case, the violator does his or her best to block that departure, although only the king succeeds:

Ergo gener mane surgit sompno satiatus
 Pelle volens asini sicut et ante tegi.
 Quam non inueniens **multo stimulante dolore**
 De sola cepit **anxius** esse **fuga** [384]
Egrediturque foras, sed **rex foris obstat** aitque;
 ‘Quo properas, fili? Quid pateris? Quid habes?’
 Omnino certe cassabitur ista voluntas
 Atque **tuum** penitus **impediatur iter** [...]’

Therefore the son-in-law arises in the morning satisfied with sleep,
 Wishing to be covered with the donkey skin just as before.
 Not finding it and goaded by a **great grief**,⁴⁴
 he begins to be **anxious only about flight**,⁴⁵
 and he **goes outside**, but outside the **king blocks his way**⁴⁶ and says:
 ‘Where are you rushing, son? What are you suffering? What’s wrong?’
 Certainly this intention will be altogether in vain
 and your **route will be completely hindered**. [...]’
 (381–88)

⁴⁰ Cf. Apul. *Met.* 5.21: ‘Nox aderat et maritus aderat priusque **Veneris** proeliis velitatus **altum in soporem** descenderat’.

⁴¹ Cf. Apul. *Met.* 5.23: ‘de somni mensura metuebat’.

⁴² Cf. Apul. *Met.* 5.23: ‘lucerna [...] evomuit de summa luminis sui **stillam ferventis olei super umerum** dei dexterum. Hem audax et temeraria lucerna [...] ipsum **ignis** totius deum **aduris**, [...] Sic **inustus exsiluit deus** visaque detectae fidei colluvie protinus ex oculis et manibus infelicissimae coniugis **tacitus avolavit**’.

⁴³ Cf. Apul. *Met.* 5.22: ‘**videt** omnium ferarum mitissimam dulcissimamque bestiam, ipsum illum Cupidinem **formosum deum formose cubantem**’.

⁴⁴ Cf. Apul. *Met.* 5.26: ‘lucerna fervens oleum rebullivit in eius umerum. Quo **dolore** statim somno recussus [...]’.

⁴⁵ Cf. Apul. *Met.* 5.24: ‘te vero **tantum fuga** mea punivero’.

⁴⁶ Cf. Apul. *Met.* 5.24: ‘At Psyche, statim resurgentis eius **crure dextero** manibus ambabus **arrepto** [...]’.

Metamorphic modes

One obvious difference between the two works is the mode (and mechanism) of asinine–human transformation. The *Asinarius* poet sidesteps all of the standard medieval objections to actual human–animal metamorphosis⁴⁷ by having the queen simply give birth to a donkey:

Continuis igitur **precibus pia numina pulsans**,
 Ut mater fiat, nocte dieque rogat.
 Quod petit, assequitur et fit mater—sed aselli,
 Eius enim partus pulcher asellus erat.

Therefore, entreating the faithful gods with uninterrupted prayers,
 She asks by night and day that she be made a mother.
 What she seeks, she obtains and she becomes a mother—but of a little donkey,
 For her offspring was a beautiful little donkey!
 (21–24)

In his ability to doff and don his asinine hide, the ‘little donkey’ serves as an inverted image of Avianus’ fifth fable. Lucius, in contrast, undergoes a full-body metamorphosis (inside and out)—at the beginning and at the end of the novel (Apul. *Met.* 11.13).⁴⁸ Apuleius gives the asinine metamorphosis the full Ovidian treatment, showing us the stages of elongation, contraction, hardening, softening, and so on. There is no question of an outer skin merely being shed. Yet, at certain points in the novel, at least at the level of metaphor, the asinine identity *is* seen as a garment that can be taken off. Isis enjoins Lucius at Apul. *Met.* 11.6: ‘pessimae mihi que iam dudum detestabilis beluae istius corio te protinus exue’ (‘cast off at once the hide of that wretched beast which I have long detested’). And Lucius himself recounts at Apul. *Met.* 11.14: ‘Nam me cum primum nefasto tegmine despoliaverat asinus [...]’ (‘For as soon as the ass had stripped me of his abominable coat [...]’).⁴⁹

Putting poem and novel together, we could say that, instead of confirming the conventional wisdom of the Aesopic / Avianan apologue, the medieval poem realizes the potential of the Apuleian auctioneer’s mocking (indeed, multiply ironic) sales-pitch at *Met.* 8.25: ‘sed prorsus ut in asini **corio** modestum hominem inhabitare credas’ (‘You would really think that inside this ass’s hide dwelt a mild-mannered human being’). The poem mimics (and perhaps even mocks) standard medieval hermeneutics, particularly as applied to the apologue or fable—the notion that the fiction is merely a *cortex*, the bark, the shell, the outer casing that can be taken off and discarded, leaving behind the thing that actually matters, the *nucleus* or kernel of meaning.⁵⁰

The poet focuses, instead, on the normal (yet still ‘wonder-filled’) metamorphoses that can occur within (and between) human beings: physiological and pedagogical; textual as well as sexual (*cf.* Psyche’s change of sex at Apul. *Met.* 5.22: ‘sexum audacia mutatur’). Consider

⁴⁷ R. H. F. Carver, ‘Of donkeys and d(a)emons: metamorphosis and the literary imagination from Apuleius to Augustine’, and ‘Defacing god’s work: metamorphosis and the “Mimicall Ass” in the age of Shakespeare’, chapters 5 and 7 of *Transformative Change in Western Thought: A History of Metamorphosis from Homer to Hollywood*, eds I. Gildenhard and A. Zissos (London 2013) 237–46 and 284–300.

⁴⁸ If the second person of the Christian Trinity is theandric (fully God and fully Man), the *Esel-Mensch* may be said to be onandric: fully asinine and fully human.

⁴⁹ *Cf.* Thrasyleon’s fateful donning of the bearskin in Apul. *Met.* 4.14–21.

⁵⁰ *Cf.* *cortex / nucleus* reading / jewel in the dung-heap analogy endorsed by the *Speculum stultorum*.

the young donkey's encounter with a master harp-player whom he asks to teach him to play (57–66). In Apuleian terms, Music takes the place of Magic as the forbidden 'art' in which he wishes to meddle.⁵¹ The *mimus* or *citharista* attempts to dissuade him,⁵² invoking the conventional wisdom (*mos*) embodied in the fable of the *Asinus ad Lyram* ('The Ass with the Lyre') that donkeys can neither sing nor play:

[*Asinus ad Lyram*]

Quomodo ingenia saepe calamitate intercidunt

Asinus iacentem vidit in prato lyram;
accessit et temptavit chordas ungula.
sonuere tactae. 'Bella res mehercules
male cessit' inquit 'artis quia sum nescius.
si reperisset aliquis hanc prudentior,
divinis aures oblectasset cantibus.'
Sic saepe ingenia calamitate intercidunt.

The Ass and the Lyre

How genius is often lost through the accidents of fortune

An ass saw a lyre lying in a meadow.
He went up to it and tried the strings with his hoof;
they sounded at his touch. 'A pretty thing, on my faith,'
said he, 'but it has ended in failure, because I am ignorant of the art.
If only someone of greater skill had found this,
he might have charmed all ears with **notes divine.**'

Thus men of genius are often lost to fame through the accidents of fortune.⁵³

The donkey, however, insists, and he quickly surpasses his teacher in the musical arts. Yet this successful musical metamorphosis leads immediately to a painful *anagnorisis*: while playing his harp and singing, the donkey sees his own reflection for the first time and is appalled. Having escaped the shackles of one verbal and mental construct, he is immediately caught by a second: convinced that the 'golden' baubles of monarchical office will never sit comfortably on a 'little donkey' ('asellus'), he embarks on a ship which takes him to the western limits of the world, and an encounter with the king's daughter:

Virgo puellares tunc iam compleverat annos,
Iam dederant teneros membra pudenda pilos. [130]
Ubera mammaram dederant iam signa, quod ipsa
Vix queat absque viro sola cubare thoro.

⁵¹ Plato makes Music (more precisely, harmonics) the final subject in the advanced curriculum that he outlines in Book 7 of the *Republic*.

⁵² Cf. Photis (and Byrrhena) attempting to warn Lucius against meddling in the magic arts.

⁵³ Phaedrus, Appendix Perottina 14, in *Babrius and Phaedrus: Fables*, ed. and trans. B. E. Perry (London 1965) 390–91. Cf. Boethius, *De consolazione philosophiae*, I. Prosa iv, s. 1; W. S. Gibson, 'Asinus ad Lyram: from Boethius to Bruegel and beyond', *Simiolus: Netherlands Quarterly for the History of Art* 33.1 (2007/2008) 33–42.

At that time the maid had already completed her years of girlhood:
 her private parts had already given forth fine hairs,
 the nipples of her breasts had already given signs that she
 can hardly sleep alone on her bed without a man.
 (129–32)

We observe that the girl has recently undergone the natural transformations associated with puberty, but we might contrast her ‘fine’ pubic hairs (‘teneros [...] pilos’) with Lucius’ body-hair ‘thickening into bristles’ (‘plane pili mei crassantur in setas’) as the first stage of his metamorphosis into a donkey at *Met.* 3.24.⁵⁴

Another gap in the poem’s narrative is the fact that the donkey only seems to gain (or discover) the ability to doff and don his asinine hide on the night of his wedding. This sexual initiation of an adolescent ass (*asellus*) will, in all senses of the word, ‘make a man’ of him. We might compare Photis’ initiation of Lucius into the erotic and necromantic mysteries (beginning with ‘heus tu, scolastice’ at *Apul. Met.* 2.10). There is a kind of chiasmus at work: in *The Golden Ass* (at least according to traditional moralizing readings), sex and then magic turn a man into an ass. In the *Asinarius*, music and then sex turn an ass into a man.

Laughter

The donkey is initially denied admission at the king’s gate (*cf.* Photis’ initial reluctance to admit Lucius to Milo’s house at *Apul. Met.* 1.22),⁵⁵ but he wins over the gatekeeper with his music:

Hic rarus mimus, o rex, est foedus asellus,
 Qui psallit cithara psallit et ore simul.

This unusual mime player, O king, is a foul little donkey
 who makes music with the harp and makes music with his mouth at the same time.
 (155–56)

Immediately before the unknown husband makes Psyche his wife in bed, she is entertained by a banquet and by invisible performers, a singer and a lyre-player (*Apul. Met.* 5.3: ‘Post opimas dapes quidam introcessit et **cantavit invisus**, et **alius citharam pulsavit, quae videbatur nec ipsa**’). We note that the *asellus* singing and playing so harmoniously outside the king’s gate is heard before he is seen by the guests at table.

No one in the poem seems to be shocked that a donkey can speak (talking animals fit easily within the conventions of medieval Beast Fable). What does amaze onlookers is the donkey’s ability to sing and to play the harp:

⁵⁴ *Cf.* ‘squalens pilus’ (‘coarse bristles’) at *Apul. Met.* 11.13; ‘pilum liberali nitore nutriveram’ (the nourishing effect of the bakers’ dishes on his hide) at 10.15; the boar that attacks Tleopolemus (‘pilis inhorrentibus corio squalidus’) at 8.4. *Cf.* Photis’ ‘glabellum feminal’ (‘smooth-shaven pubes’) at 2.17, and Cupid’s hairless body (‘corpus glabellum’) at 5.22.

⁵⁵ Having heard the racket of the little donkey knocking, the doorkeeper asks, ‘Why are you shouting? You, who are you? From where do you come? Why do you beat so importunately at the king’s front door? [140] Why do you strike the door panels with such presumptuousness?’. *Cf.* *Apul. Met.* 1.22: ‘ianuam firmiter oppessulatam pulsare vocaliter incipio. Tandem adulescentia quaedam procedens, “Heus tu,” inquit “qui tam fortiter fores verberasti [...]”’. On the soteriological implications of importunate door-knocking, see Luke 13:22–27.

Tunc **mimus cordas asinino pollice tangens**

Ingreditur modulos articulando novos.⁵⁶ [160]

Quem rex intuitus **in risum laxat habenas**

Et tanti **risus** fit modus **absque modo**.

At regina suo ridens ridente marito

Nil poterat risu prepediente loqui.

Omnis condicio iuvenumque senumque **cachinnat**

Perstrepat et **risu curia tota** pari. [165]

Then the mime-player, striking the strings with the thumb of a donkey,
steps inside, fingering new melodies.

Having gazed at him, the king relaxes his restraints upon laughter,
and the measure of such great laughter becomes measureless.

For her part the queen, laughing as her husband laughs,
could not say anything because laughter prevents.

Every class of young people and old guffaws,
and the **entire court responds with equal laughter**.

(161–66)

In terms of its position in the narrative sequence, and the intensity and extent of the laughter, this scene may put us in mind of the conclusion of the *Risus* Festival in Book Three, when Lucius pulls back the sheet that covers the bodies of the men he has ‘murdered’ only to see that they are merely inflated goat-skins:

conspicio prorsus **totum populum**—**risu** cachinnabili difflebant—nec secus illum bonum hospitem parentemque meum Milonem risu maximo dissolutum [...] ‘insuper exitium meum **cachinnat**.’

I [...] caught sight of the audience: absolutely the entire populace was dissolved in raucous laughter, and even my kind host and uncle, Milo, was broken up by a huge fit of laughing [...] ‘[...] [He] is even laughing at my downfall.’

(Apul. *Met.* 3.7)

Tunc ille quorundam **astu** paulisper **cohibitus risus libere iam exarsit in plebem**. Hi gaudii nimietate gratulari, illi dolorem ventris **manuum compressione** sedare. Et certe laetitia delibuti meque respectantes cuncti theatro facessunt. At ego, ut primum illam laciniam prenderam, fixus in lapidem steti gelidus nihil secus quam una de ceteris theatri statuis uel columnis.

Then the **laughter**, which some people had **guilefully repressed** for a time, now **broke out unrestrainedly** among the **entire mob**. Some were rejoicing with excessive mirth, while others were **pressing their stomachs** with their hands to ease the pain. At any event they were all drenched with happiness, and they kept turning round to look at me as they made their way out of the theatre. As for me, from the moment I had pulled back that cloth I stood stock still, frozen into stone just like one of the other statues or columns in the theatre.

(Apul. *Met.* 3.10)

⁵⁶ Cf. ‘novos [...] tonos’ in the *Speculum stultorum* (2900; R 132).

In both cases, we note the tension between containment and release. But the contrast in *function* is quite marked: Apuleius' Festival of Laughter traumatizes the still-human Lucius: it isolates him from the society of Hypata (Apul. *Met.* 3.10–11); makes him suspect the good faith of his host, Milo (3.7), his aunt, Byrrhaena (3.12), and even his lover, Photis; and sets in motion the chain of events that will lead, quite quickly, to his metamorphosis into an ass (we notice that, as a consequence of this performance, he has already undergone a figurative—indeed, theatrical—transformation, into one of the stone 'statues or columns' of the theatre).⁵⁷

In the *Asinarius*, the laughter helps, instead, to integrate the donkey into his new society, and, in this respect, it is closer to the episode (or suite of episodes) in Book Ten that serves as an inverted image of the *Risus* Festival: the bakers' astonishment when they spy upon the asinine Lucius as he feasts upon sweet-meats; the delight of their master, Thiasus; the desire kindled in the Corinthian *matrona*; the fate assigned to Lucius of being exhibited (once again!) in a theatre, but this time as a sexually performing *mimus* in a pantomime, the climax of which is to be the eating alive (by a second beast) of a woman condemned for murder. And, finally, Lucius' escape from the theatre, his double vision of the goddess; his return to human form; and his decision to commit himself to the religious life, as a devotee first of Isis and then of Osiris.

The Baker Brothers

Et hora consueta velut balneas petitori, clausis ex more foribus, per quamdam modicam cavernam rimantur me passim expositis epulis inhaerentem. [...] mirati monstruosas asini delicias **risu maximo dirumpuntur**, vocatoque uno et altero ac dein pluribus conservis, demonstrant infandam memoratu hebetis iumentu gulam. **Tantus denique ac tam liberalis cachinnus** cunctos invaserat ut ad aures quoque praetereuntis perveniret domini. Sciscitatus denique quid bonum **rideret** familia, cognito quod res erat, ipse quoque **per idem prospiciens foramen** delectatur eximie. Ac dehinc **risu** ipse quoque **latissimo adusque intestinorum dolorem redactus**, iam patefacto cubiculo proxime consistens coram arbitratur. Nam et ego [...] gaudio praesentium fiduciam mihi sumministrante, nec tantillum commotus securus esitabam, quoad novitate spectaculi laetus **dominus aedium** duci me iussit, immo vero suis etiam **ipse manibus ad triclinium perduxit**, mensaque posita omne genus edulium solidorum et illibata fercula iussit apponi.

At their customary hour they locked the door as usual, as if they were going to the baths, and spied on me through a small crack. When they saw me tucking into the banquet which was spread all about [...], in their amazement at this monstrous taste in an ass, they split their sides laughing. They called a couple of fellow-servants, and then several more, to show them the unspeakable gluttony of a lazy ass. They were all attacked by such **loud and unrestrained laughter** that the sound even reached their **master's ears** as he was passing nearby. He inquired what in heaven's name [16] the servants were **laughing** at, and when he discovered what it was, **the master also peeped through the same hole**. He too was exceptionally amused, and **laughed so hard and long that his belly ached**. Then he had them open the door to the room so that he could stand close to me and watch openly. For my part, because

⁵⁷ Apul. *Met.* 3.10. See Carver, 'Of donkeys and d(a)emons' (n. 48, above) 233.

I [...] was inspired with confidence by the delight of the people in the room, I was not a bit disturbed, but unconcernedly kept right on eating. Soon the **master of the house**, delighted by the novelty of the spectacle, ordered me to be taken—or rather **conducted me himself with his own hands**—to the dining room; there he had a table set and all sorts of whole dishes and untasted plates put before me.

(Apul. *Met.* 10.15–16)

In the case of the bakers and Thiasus, we might note the double act of looking—first by the servants, then by the master. We will find the same pattern in *Asinarius*, where the servant (and then the king) spy on the donkey making love to the king's daughter.

The close personal attention paid by Thiasus ('the master of the house') to Lucius' dining arrangements is mirrored in the *Asinarius*, where the king goes to inordinate lengths to accommodate his asinine guest at table, even making him his daughter's dining-companion or 'messmate' (the same word, 'conviva', is also used by Thiasus).⁵⁸ Thiasus' freedman ('libertus') enrolls Lucius in an intensive course of instruction:

Et primum me quidem mensam accumbere suffixo cubito, dein alluctari et etiam **saltare sublatis primoribus pedibus** perdocuit, quodque esset apprime mirabile, verbis nutum commodare, ut quod nollem relato, quod vellem deiecto capite monstrarem, sitiensque pocillatore respecto, ciliis alterna conivens, bibere flagitarem. [...] Iamque rumor publice crebuerat, quo conspectum atque famigerabilem meis miris artibus effeceram dominum: 'Hic est qui sodalem **convivam**que possidet asinum luctantem, **asinum saltantem**, asinum **voces humanas intellegentem**, sensum nutibus exprimentem.'

First he **taught me to recline at table** leaning on my elbow; then he taught me to wrestle, and even to **dance with my forefeet in the air**. Most amazing of all, he taught me to respond to words with a gesture: I would show what I did not want by raising my chin and what I wanted by dropping it; and when I was thirsty I would look round at the cupbearer and wink my eyelids alternately to ask for a drink. [...] Soon word of me had spread among the public, and I had made my owner illustrious and famous with my remarkable talents. 'This is the man,' they said, 'who owns as **companion and dinner-guest** an ass who wrestles, **an ass who dances**, an ass who understands men's language and can say what he wants by nods.'

(Apul. *Met.* 10.17)

The *Asinarius* poet goes one stage further, by enabling a donkey to serve food and wine to a human. And for his account of the wedding festivities, the poet turns, I suggest, not so much to the conclusion of 'Cupid and Psyche', as to the pantomime at the end of Book Ten, where Lucius the donkey is billed to star as a sexually performing *mimus* in a mock marriage. Not only is the whole city ('polis', 291) decked out for the *Asinarius*' royal wedding so that it shines like heaven ('polus', 292), a huge swarm of *mimus*-performers ('mimorum magna caterva', 293) is called in, including a female mime-player who (perhaps in inverted mimicry of Lucius' unnatural bipedalism as an ass dancing with 'forefeet in the air', '**sublatis primoribus pedibus**', *Met.* 10.17), moves about on her hands.⁵⁹

⁵⁸ Cf. Apul. *Met.* 10.18 (Thiasus' view of Lucius' double function): 'summe se delectari profitebatur quod haberet in me simul et **convivam** et vectorem'.

⁵⁹ *Asinarius* 295–96: 'Crura levans sursum suspensa caputque deorsum / Ambulat, atque manus dat pedis officium'

Almost as soon as he enters the dining hall, the King asks the Little Donkey if he likes his daughter:

‘Pape, quid inquiris? O rex, quid nosse laboras?
 Cur non deberet ista placere michi?
 Immo placet, placet illa michi, multum placet,’ inquit [195]
 ‘**Ferreus** est certe cui placet illa nichil.
Candida delectat facies permixta **rubore**,
 Ac si contemplor lilia mixta **rosis**
Caesariesque placet, delectat **eburnea cervix**
 Et **corpus** fateor **omne** placere michi.’ [200]

‘Amazing! Why do you ask? O king, why do you labour to know?
 Why ought I not like her?
 On the contrary, I like her, I like her very much.’ He said,
 ‘Certainly the man who does not like her at all is **made of iron**.
 Her fair face, suffused with **rosiness**, brings delight,
 as if I should contemplate lilies mixed with **roses**.
 And I like her **hair**; her **ivory-white neck** brings delight;
 and I confess that I like her **whole body**.’
 (193–200)

Once again, we may detect echoes of Psyche’s vision of Cupid at Apul. *Met.* 5.22:

ferrum quaerit abscondere, sed in suo pectore. [...] Videt capitis aurei genialem **caesariem** ambrosia temulentam, **cervices lacteas genasque purpureas** pererrantes crinium globos decoriter impeditos [...] **Ceterum corpus** glabellum atque **luculentum** [...]

She tried to hide the weapon [lit. ‘**iron**’]—in her own heart. [...] On his golden head she saw the glorious **hair** drenched with ambrosia: wandering over his **milky neck** and **rosy cheeks** were the neatly shackled ringlets of his locks [...] The **rest of his body** was hairless and resplendent [...]

We should not make extravagant claims for these correspondences: white necks and rosy cheeks are standard catalogue items in a *blason*, or exercise in *effictio*, and the parallels are suggestive rather than decisive. But the use of ‘caesaries’ (‘hair’) in both passages is noteworthy, especially in a sequence which includes notions of ‘iron-heartedness’ (‘ferreus’) and ‘iron’ being ‘hidden in the heart’ (‘ferrum quaerit abscondere, sed in suo pectore’).⁶⁰ So too is ‘contemplor’.⁶¹ We might note, etymologically, the connection with ‘templum’ (and hence with augury or divination); and the fact that the donkey’s erotic devotion to a beautiful young woman whose face seems to be made up, in part, of roses (‘lilia mixta rosis’), will lead, in due course, to his being able to shed his asinine hide.⁶²

(‘A female mime-player, balanced with her feet upward and her head downward, walks and accords to her hands the function of her feet’).

⁶⁰ *Teste* Lewis & Short, *A Latin Dictionary*, 265, ‘caesaries’ is used most frequently of men. But *TLL* shows plenty of use for females in the Vulgate Bible, as well as in Catullus, Virgil, Claudian, and others.

⁶¹ *Cf.* ‘mihi reidentis fortunae contemplatus faciem’ at Apul. *Met.* 10.16.

⁶² *Cf.* Apul. *Met.* 11.6 and 11.13.

These acts of domestic service function as a kind of sexual—and textual—foreplay: Ovid is the obvious source for ‘Singula quid memorem?’ (‘Why should I recall the individual details?’),⁶³ and this passage becomes the conduit linking (mutually pleasing) service at table (‘discumbendo’) to (mutually pleasing) service in bed (‘concumbendo’, 221).

Ascendensque gradum sedem sortitur in alto
Convivamque locat hunc domicella sibi.
 Inter cenandum bene servit asellus eidem
 Comminuens panes colliridasque secans.
 Ipse ciphos paterasque levans offert bibiture
 Et mensale tenet, dum domicella bibit.⁶⁴
Singula quid memorem? Breviter simul omnia tangam:
 Omnia composite **doctus asellus** agit.
Nonnihil ergo suus placuit **conviva** puellae
 Sed, ni fallor, adhuc plus placiturus erit. [220]
Discumbendo placet, plus **concumbendo** placebit,
 Huic dum dilecto **nupserit** illa viro.

And **mounting** a step, he takes possession of a seat up high,
 and the little lady seats him as her **tablemate**.
 While dining the little donkey **serves her well**,
breaking the bread into pieces and cutting the cakes.
Raising goblets and drinking bowls, he himself **offers** to her when she wishes to
 drink,
 and he holds up the tablecloth as the little lady drinks.
Why should I recall every single fact? I should touch upon all of them succinctly
 in one statement:
 insofar as he is an ass, he does everything competently.
 Therefore her **tablemate** pleased the girl to no little extent
 but unless I am mistaken, he is going to please her even more.
 In sitting together he pleases; in lying together he will please more,
 when she has wedded him as her beloved husband.
 (211–22)

The last two lines form an astonishing prolepsis. ‘Nupserit’ may be the key term—all of the actual sexual activity in the poem takes place within the legitimizing confines of wedlock—but the leaps are still shocking, especially given the fact that bestiality is involved.

When the Little Donkey (in spite of the limitless wealth offered to him) becomes homesick (just like Psyche at *Met.* 5.6–7), the king plays his final card:

‘Una tibi’ rex inquit ‘adhuc datur opcio, fili,
 Quam si respueris, **semper asellus eris**.
 Vis, ut nostra tuas tibi filia detur in ulnas,
Tecum nocturnis ut vacet ipsa iocis?’

⁶³ Cf. Ov. *Am.* 1.5.23–26: ‘singula quid referam? nil non laudabile vidi, / et nudam pressi corpus ad usque meum. / cetera quis nescit? lassique requievimus ambo. / proveniant medii sic mihi saepe dies’.

⁶⁴ Note the significance of the wine cup going back and forth before Lucius and Photis make love for the first time (Apul. *Met.* 2.16).

‘One option is still to be given to you, son,’ said the king.

‘If you reject it, you will **always be a little donkey**.

Do you wish that **our daughter** should be **given between your arms**,
so that **she can occupy herself with you in night-time games?**’

(253–56)

What kind of father invites a donkey to have sex with his daughter? What kind of king asks the heir to his kingdom to marry an ass? The king’s generosity—his willingness to give his only child to a ‘foedus asellus’ (‘a foul little ass’)—only makes sense if he knows something that other people in the poem do not. He certainly seems to understand (in positive terms) the metamorphic power that sexual love can have, when he says that ‘If you reject this option, you will **always be a little donkey**’.

The donkey’s response hints at a soteriological dimension to the king’s offer: ‘as if awakening from a sleep’, the donkey recognizes the proposed union as a ‘porta salutis’, not merely a ‘door to well-being’ (as Ziolkowski puts it),⁶⁵ but a ‘gateway to salvation’:

Tunc velud evigilans a sompno⁶⁶ clamat asellus:

Hec place, hoc fateor, pactio sola michi.

Ista michi finis meroris et anxietatis,

Ianua leticie, **porta salutis** erit. [260]

Then, as if awakening from a sleep, the little donkey shouts out:

‘This arrangement alone pleases me, I admit this.

For me she will be the end of sorrow and anxiety,

the gateway to happiness, the door to well-being [...]

(257–60)

The *Asinarius* poet is here transforming or repurposing the apologue. Nigel’s *Speculum* is consistently anti-metamorphic. It reinforces the message of Avianus’ fifth fable, ‘De asino pelle leonis induto’: if you start life as a donkey, whatever you do (whether you put on a lion’s skin, as in Avianus; or do your best to lengthen your tail, or to acquire learning or high position, as with Burnellus), ‘you will always’ (as the final line of Avianus’ fable puts it) ‘be a little ass’ (‘semper asellus eris’).

The daughter’s response to her father’s offer (287: ‘**Non mea, sed patris fiat liberta voluntas**’) may sound shockingly blasphemous in its echo of Christ’s Agony in the Garden of Gethsemane (Luke 22:42: ‘dicens **Pater** si vis transfer calicem istum a me verumtamen **non mea voluntas sed tua fiat**’). Yet it also configures the king’s daughter as a sacrificial victim who, like Psyche (Apul. *Met.* 4.33–35), is willing to make a ‘monstrous’ marriage for the greater good.

We are dealing here with very complex webs of inter-textual play. But the king’s motivation is still one of the many gaping holes in the plot that I would see as being intentional *lacunae*—

⁶⁵ On the therapeutic potential of sexual intercourse, see Plin. *Nat.* 28.10 and 28.16. According to William of Newburgh (*Historia rerum anglicarum* 1.3.4), Thomas the Younger, Archbishop of York (d. 1114), preferred his chastity to his life when he disobeyed his doctors’ orders to engage in sexual intercourse as the sole remedy for his disease. Cf. Mozley and Raymo eds, *Speculum* (n. 10, above) 159, commenting on *Speculum stultorum* 1529–30; and the *De coitu* of Constantinus Africanus (monk of Monte Cassino in the late eleventh century).

⁶⁶ Cf. Lucius falling asleep (Apul. *Met.* 10.35) and waking to a theophany which seems to offer him ‘the hope of salvation’ (‘spem salutis’, 11.1).

gaps that should, or *can*, be filled by readers, depending on the extent of their learning. The poet will expect most, if not all, of his audience to pick up the allusions to the Aesopic fables and admire his bold inversions of them. A far smaller percentage of readers will have heard, thanks to Saint Augustine (*C. D.*, 18.18), of Apuleius the Platonic Philosopher's account of being turned into a donkey. Such readers may even have encountered a version of 'Cupid and Psyche' in Fulgentius or the first of the so-called 'Vatican Mythographers',⁶⁷ and, thus, albeit at second or third hand, they may have been able to spot some of the Apuleian links made in the poem.

However, it is also possible (this is our boldest claim) that the poet is working within an elite circle, a network (perhaps tiny) of people who have (or, at some point, have *had*) direct access to *The Golden Ass*. The evidence does not create a clear picture of the poet composing his poem with a manuscript of Apuleius lying open on his desk (in such a scenario, even after taking metrical issues into account, one might expect more mosaic or *cento*-like effects, with specifically Apuleian diction as in Guaiferius). But it does, I think, suggest that the poet has absorbed and digested Apuleius' work, and that he is redeploying its constituent parts, for his own pleasure, and for that of an esoteric readership.

'Spurcum additamentum'

If our hypothesis is correct, the *Asinarius* may provide a context for the composition and circulation of the so-called *Spurcum additamentum*, the obscene interpolation (literally, 'dirty addition') found in some manuscripts alongside Apuleius' account of the asinine Lucius' love-making with the *matrona* of Corinth (*Apul. Met.* 10.21). The author is anonymous (Eduard Fraenkel playfully dubbed him 'Spurcus') and the passage has been added to the margin, not of F but of ϕ , in a hand identified by Billanovich as that of the fourteenth-century humanist Zanobi da Strada. The text below is reproduced from Boccaccio's manuscript (L4) in order to indicate the level of corruption that seems to have already accumulated by the 1350s:

et hercle orcium pigam [H: bigam] perteretum hyaci fragrantis et chie rosacee lotionibus expurgauit [M: expiauit]. At dein **digitis**, ypate, lichanos, meso, paramese et nete hastam inguinis niuei mei spurciciei pluscule excorias [ϕ and M: **excorians**] emundauit. Et cum ad inguinis cephalum formosa mulier concitum [H: confestim] ueniebat ab orcibus ganniens ego et dentes ad Iouem eleuans priapo [H: Priapum; M: Priapion] frequenti frictura porrixabam ipsoque pando et repando uentrem sepiuscule tractabam [ϕ : tactabam]. Ipsa quoque inspiciens quod genius [H: genitus] inter anthteneras [H: anteas teneras; M: antheras] excreuerat modicum illud morule qua lustrum sterni mandauerat anni sibi reuolutionem autumabat.⁶⁸

And, by Hercules, she cleansed my round scrotum, my balls, with perfumed wine and **rosewater of Chios**. And then with her fingers, thumb, forefinger, middle finger, ring finger and little finger, she withdrew the foreskin, and cleared the shaft of my penis of the plentiful whitish dirt. And when the beautiful woman arrived very soon at the

⁶⁷ Carver, *Protean Ass* (n. 1, above) 41–47 (Fulgentius), 97–98 and 103 ('Vatican Mythographers').

⁶⁸ Text based on L4 (*Lawr.* 54.24), as presented in *Lucii Apulei Metamorphoseon libri XI*, ed. J. Van der Vliet (Leipzig 1897) 238–39, with emendations ('H' and 'M') in square brackets proposed, respectively, by L. Herrmann, 'Le fragment obscène de l'Âne d'or (x, 21)', *Latomus* 10 (1951) 329–32, and S. Mariotti, 'Lo *Spurcum Additamentum* ad *Apul. Met.* 10, 21', *SIFC* 27–28 (1956) 229–50. See Carver, *Protean Ass* (n. 1, above) 67–71; Gaisser, *Fortunes of Apuleius* (n. 6, above) 63–66.

top of my penis from my testicles, braying and lifting my teeth toward the sky, I got, through the regular friction, an erection of the penis, and while it moved up and down I often touched her belly with it. She as well, when she saw what came out of my penis among her perfumes, declared that that small delay, during which she had ordered our love-nest to be prepared, had been to her the orbit of a year.⁶⁹

In Apuleius, Lucius is concerned that, with his ‘huge legs’ and ‘hard hooves’ (*Met.* 10.22), he might hurt the soft-skinned *matrona*. Those fears turn out to be ill-founded, as she easily accommodates the full endowment of the ass. When the Little Donkey sees his image in the water for the first time, ‘he considers his **legs** and **feet**, and his whole body displeases him’.⁷⁰ Thinking himself unfit for kingly office, he leaves. But immediately prior to this, the lyre-player has objected to his attempting to learn to play on the basis of his physical attributes:

O rex, quid queris, quod non tibi competit? Eheu!
 Erras, deciperis, irrita vota geris.
 Discere nequaquam potes hanc **artem**, quoniam sunt
Enormes digiti, mi domicelli, tui.
 Ac si pace tua liceat michi vera fateri:
 Quod natura negat, hoc, domicelle, petis.
Non potes absque manu **cithare distinguere cordas**,
 Que puto dissilient, si pede tangis eas.
More suo rudit asinus, nunquam bene ludit, [65]
 Sacciferi vox est feda canentis ya.

O king, why do you seek what does not become you? Alas, alas!
 You are mistaken, you are deceived, you entertain idle hopes:
 you cannot **learn this art** at all, since
 your **fingers are enormous**, my little lord.
 And if, by your leave, it be permitted me to speak home truths,
 you seek, little lord, what nature denies.
 Without a hand **you cannot distinguish the strings of the harp**,
 which (I think) will blow apart if you touch them with a foot.
According to its custom, an ass brays and never plays well;
 the wild sound of a sack-bearing ass is hee haw.
 (57–66)

The *asellus* is told that, with his ‘enormous fingers’ (‘Enormes digiti’), he cannot even distinguish the strings of the harp, but he promptly proves his teacher wrong by mastering the instrument.⁷¹ In the *Spurcum additamentum*, the asinine narrator (let us call him ‘Pseudo-Lucius’) displays the knowledge befitting a *mimus* or *citharista*: in the midst of a sexual blending (or dissolution) of identities, the ass is (quite literally) able to ‘distinguish the strings of the harp’ by spelling out their names (‘At dein digitis, ypate, lichanos, meso, paramese et

⁶⁹ Translation from M. Zimmerman, *Apuleius Madaurensis Metamorphoses: Book X: Text, Introduction and Commentary* (Groningen 2000) X 434 (based on Mariotti’s Latin text).

⁷⁰ 91–92: ‘Luminibusque suis percurrrens **crura pedesque** / Respicit, et corpus displicet omne sibi’ (‘Surveying with his eyes, he considers his **legs** and **feet**, and his whole body displeases him’).

⁷¹ Cf. Lucius’ lament at Apul. *Met.* 10.29 that he cannot unsheath a sword (to kill himself, thus avoiding a public mating with a condemned women) because of his ‘round and misshapen hoof’ (‘ungula rotunda atque mutila’).

nete [...]’), but, in an erotic hypallage, he transfers that knowledge to his human lover’s fingers as she plays upon *his* instrument. The word ‘Excorians’ is noteworthy, as it helps to tie together both ass fables: as she pulls back his foreskin, the pseudo-*matrona* is both playing the lyre and ‘skinning the hide’ off the beast; while the donkey, in turn, is ‘singing’ (‘ganniens’, ‘growling’) to the tune of that lyre (‘asinus ad lyram’).⁷² Spurcus, it seems to me, is taking in hand a somewhat tired, indeed, flaccid common-place and perking it up—teasing it, and squeezing it to an unexpected climax.⁷³

More than a decade ago, I tentatively suggested as a plausible candidate for the authorship of the *Spurcum additamentum* the twelfth-century scholar Peter the Deacon (Petrus Diaconus; b. c. 1107; d. after 1153), Monte Cassino’s most accomplished forger.⁷⁴ Peter remains a suspect, but the circle should surely now be widened to include the German-Italian Hohenstaufen networks in southern Italy (e.g. Salerno, Naples, with links to Monte Cassino) and perhaps even Sicily.

Conclusion

Ziolkowski points, helpfully, to the pedagogic milieu of the *Asinarius* and its concern with liminal states, with puberty or adolescence.⁷⁵ The work may be aimed at (or speak to) those young men who do not feel called to the *vita contemplativa* of monastic life. It is not simply secular, but displays a complex blend of the subversive and the conservative. It manages to be both titillating *and* homiletic, anticipating that modern beatitude, ‘The Geek shall inherit the earth’. Even an ass can ‘get the girl’ (*and* the gold) if he is sufficiently learned.

But the *Asinarius* is also engaging, it would appear, with the complexities of the *translatio studii et imperii*, reflecting the political and cultural resonances (and anxieties) of German power operating within the heartland of the original Roman empire. The ‘little ass’ (‘asellus’) is not merely the son of a ‘king’ (‘rex’); he is a ‘pignus imperiale’ (an ‘imperial child’ or heir, but also, more literally, a ‘pledge’ or ‘proof’ or ‘assurance’ of the imperial line) and he wonders how well the purple will look upon an ass. In fact, he ends up inheriting both kingdoms (his father’s and that of his father-in-law).

As Apuleianists, seeing the ass finally identified at the end of the poem as Neoptolemus,⁷⁶ we may be reminded of Tlepolemus, the husband of Charite (the immediate recipient of the tale of ‘Cupid and Psyche’) and someone who claims (Apul. *Met.* 7.8) to have disguised himself as a ‘donkey woman’ (‘mulier asinaria’).⁷⁷ But a medieval audience, recalling Virgil’s image of Achilles’ son (Neoptolemus or Pyrrhus), ‘new and glittering’ (‘nouus [...] nitidusque’, Verg. *A.* 2.473), like a snake which has finally cast off its old skin, might be more responsive to the ‘Neo-’ part of the name (literally, ‘new warrior’), particularly in the context of Naples,

⁷² Gaisser, *Fortunes of Apuleius* (n. 6, above) 65, notes (following Mariotti), the *matrona*’s ‘sweet moans’ (‘dulces gannitus’) at Apul. *Met.* 10.22. We might also compare ‘sic nobis gannientibus’ (an alternative reading for ‘garrimentibus’) at Apul. *Met.* 3.20, where ‘libido mutua’ (‘mutual desire’) simultaneously ‘excites the minds and bodies’ of Lucius and Photis (‘et animos simul et membra suscitatur’).

⁷³ Cf. the hint of the metamorphic in the ‘rosewater of Chios’. See Gaisser, *Fortunes of Apuleius* (n. 6, above) 65.

⁷⁴ Carver, *Protean Ass* (n. 1, above) 70–71.

⁷⁵ Ziolkowski, ‘The Beast and the Beauty’ (n. 26, above) 58–60.

⁷⁶ See Apul. *Apol.* 13.

⁷⁷ The suggestive banter between the two in the cave offends the on-looking Lucius, but the situation is redeemed by the revelation that they are espoused (Apul. *Met.* 7.9–12).

the ‘new city’ (‘Neapolis’) which retained long memories of its Greek past.⁷⁸ The *Asinarius* can be read as a locus of hybridity and of cultural and imperial intersection: the Hohenstaufen dynasty is a relatively new entity but with an ancient lineage (possibly ‘degener’, as Priam describes Neoptolemus at *Aeneid* 2.549, although still *entitled* in all senses of the word). What we might be seeing is an early (if anxious) flexing of German intellectual muscle, something which the poet’s countryman, Konrad Muth (Conradus Mutianus Rufus, 1471–1526), would articulate in explicitly Apuleian terms three hundred years later:

Postquam vero renatus es et pro Iheger Crotus, pro Dornheim Rubianus salutatus, ceciderunt et aures prelonge et cauda pensilis et **pilus impexus**, quod sibi accidisse dicit Apuleius, cum adhuc asinus esset [...] restitueretur sibi, hoc est humanitati [...] facile cogniscis, quam **miseri sint**, qui nondum barbariam **exuerunt** [...]

But after you were reborn and greeted as Crotus instead of ‘Jaeger’, Rubianus instead of ‘Dornheim’, your enormously long ears fell off along with your drooping tail and uncombed hide, which is what Apuleius said happened to him when, having hitherto been an ass, [...] he was restored to his real self, that is, to humanity [...] You easily recognize the wretchedness of those who have not yet shed their barbarousness.⁷⁹

Reception and transmission are symbiotic: it is not simply a case of ‘reception’ being the cart pulled behind the horse (or donkey) of ‘transmission’: the copying and diffusion of texts may also depend on ‘receptivity’—on appetites, desires, expectations, and the perception of textual gaps by individuals and/or networks at particular times and in particular places. As academics, we have a duty to be sceptical, to wield Psyche’s *novacula* (as Bernardus Silvestris advises us) with the zeal of an Ockhamite in the service of Reason—in this case, cutting off the heads (or skins) of Apuleian imposters.⁸⁰ But after examining the *Asinarius* with a loving, yet scholarly gaze, one is tempted to say: if it looks like a Golden Ass, sounds like a Golden Ass, even *smells* like a Golden Ass, perhaps that is because, at the end of a long night of inter-textual games (‘ioci’), it actually *is* a *Golden Ass*.

If the foregoing hypothesis is accepted, and if the traditional dating of the *Asinarius* to c. 1200 is correct, then we have narrowed the gap between Guaiferius and the next demonstrable imitator of Apuleius’ novel (hitherto Mussato) by nearly 120 years. It is difficult to say, at this stage, whether the *Asinarius* poet had access to the Apuleian manuscripts most famously associated with Monte Cassino (F or φ), or whether his knowledge of the *Metamorphoses* depended on a lost ancestor (perhaps even the archetype) of Class-1 manuscripts which was already circulating beyond the immediate confines of the abbey (but probably still within southern Italy). From this new vantage point, however, we are now able to look more positively and receptively at other potential instances of Apuleian influence, such as the apparent echoes of Isiac theophany and pageantry (*Met.* 11) in a clear piece of Hohenstaufen propaganda, Pietro da Eboli’s account (completed, probably at Palermo, c. 1196–1197) of the triumphal entry of Empress Constance (mother of Frederick II) into Salerno, the capital of Apulia, after her husband, Henry VI’s conquest of the kingdom of Sicily. Constance is depicted as Salerno’s very own goddess Juno (l. 430). Her appearance at dawn seems to

⁷⁸ We might also note the bust of Pyrrhus (the Hellenistic general) at the National Archaeological Museum of Naples.

⁷⁹ See Carver, *Protean Ass* (n. 1, above) 247–49, quoting *Der Briefwechsel des Conradus Mutianus*, ed. K. Gillert (Halle 1890), no. 260, 344.

⁸⁰ On Bernard and Psyche, see Carver, *Protean Ass* (n. 1, above) 102–03.

trigger an immediate rush of devotees, reminiscent of the *praeludia* to the Festival of Isis.⁸¹ In each text, birds and people unite in voicing praise at the sudden end of winter and the arrival both of spring and its divine embodiment.⁸² The description of the ‘sandy shore’ (‘arenosum litus’, l. 424) where exotic fragrances ‘excite the nostrils’ (‘Cinnama, thus, aloë, nardus, rosa, lilia, mirtus / Inflammant nares’, ll. 426–27) as ‘each person brings new balsams to be poured out’ (‘Quod nova perfundi balsama quisque ferat’, l. 429) is fraught, I would suggest, with Apuleian resonances.⁸³

What remains to be established, however, is the precise point at which *The Golden Ass* moved north and crossed into France.⁸⁴ The testimony of the *Asinarius* and Pietro da Eboli potentially strengthens the case for thirteenth-century works such as the *Roman de la Rose* (written in two parts, c. 1230 and c. 1275) being beneficiaries of Apuleian influence. We are probably still not in a position to claim direct Apuleian input into the great French writers of the twelfth century—Chrétien de Troyes, Marie de France, Alanus de Insulis—but this new evidence suggesting that *The Golden Ass* was being read and imitated outside Monte Cassino in the late 1190s may add fuel to our suspicions and serve as a goad to further research.

University of Durham

⁸¹ Pietro da Eboli, *Book in Honor of Augustus (Liber ad honorem Augusti)*, trans. G. Hood (Tempe, AZ 2012) ll. 418–19: ‘Sol ubi sydereas ammovit crastinus umbras, / Urbs ruit et domine plaudit osanna sue’. Cf. Apul. *Met.* 11.7: ‘Nec mora cum noctis atrae fugato nubilo Sol exsurgit aureus, et ecce discursu religioso ac prorsus triumphali, turbulae complent totas plateas’. Cf. ‘influunt turbae’ (Apul. *Met.* 11.10) and ‘Occurrit [...] turba’ (l. 423).

⁸² ll. 432–34: ‘Ut modulantur aves foliis in vere renatis / Post noctes yemis, post grave tempus aque, / Non aliter verno venienti plauditur ore’ (‘As the birds sing in the spring when the leaves are reborn, / After the winter nights, after the season of heavy rain, / Not otherwise is her coming applauded by the voice of spring’). Cf. Apul. *Met.* 11.7: ‘Nam et pruinam pridianam dies apricus ac placidus repente fuerat insecutus, ut canorae etiam aviculae prolectatae verno vapore concentus suaves assonarent, matrem siderum, parentem temporum orbisque totius dominam blando mulcentes affamine’ (‘For a sunny and calm day had come close on the heels of yesterday’s frost, so that even the songbirds were enticed by the spring warmth to sing lovely harmonies, soothing with their charming greetings the mother of the stars, parents of the seasons, and mistress of the whole world’).

⁸³ Cf. Apul. *Met.* 11.9: ‘illae quae ceteris unguentis et geniali balsamo guttatim excusso conspargebant plateas’ (‘Still others shook out drops of delightful balsam and other ointments to sprinkle the streets’). But note also (especially in the light of our discussion of the *Spurcum additamentum*) the possible echoes of Lucius’ congress with the Corinthian *matrona* at Apul. *Met.* 10.21: ‘multo sese perungit oleo balsamino [F: balsamo] meque indidem largissime perficat, sed multo tanta impensius; tura [F: cura] etiam nares perfundit meas’ (‘she anointed herself all over with oil of balsam [...] and lavishly rubbed me down with the same, but with much greater eagerness. She even moistened my nostrils with frankincense [F: ‘with care’]).

⁸⁴ For potential pathways from Monte Cassino into France, see Carver, *Protean Ass* (n. 1, above) 73–76.