

Dire Developments of Dissembling: Duplicity in Apuleius' *Metamorphoses*

Cupid and Psyche have long been given undue significance in the *Metamorphoses* of Apuleius (Tatum 1994); recent scholarship, however, has drifted towards an examination of the “interpolated” tales¹ throughout the narrative (Schlam 1992, Frangoulidis 2001). That characters repeatedly encounter misfortunes after the usage of deceit, whether the misdirection is intentional or otherwise, marks a provocative statement from the author himself, whom, we, his readers, are not entirely sure we can trust, being simultaneously *auctor et actor* (Winkler 1985). Through an analysis of Apuleius' language used in deceit, I hope to show that the prevalence of deception in the novel is a deeper criticism of social behavior in the Greco-Roman world, as demonstrated through the cost that one pays for utilizing misdirection.

In this paper I examine two categories, i.e. love of money and love gone awry, within these embedded stories, for the episodic tales have greater implications than previously acknowledged. “Any fool can tell a lie, and any fool can believe it; but the right method is to tell the truth in such a way that the intelligent reader is seduced into telling the lie for himself” (Winkler 1985). Duplicity frequently plays a role in the shaping of events through characters' actions. Milo, the protagonist Lucius' host, is a wealthy man that pretends at poverty to dissuade potential thieves - a futile endeavor since his wealth is public knowledge (1.21-24; 3.27-9).² His conceit is thus on display through his misdirection, for which he receives the reward of his illusory demeanor becoming his reality.

In contrast, the servant's tale of the unfortunate love triangle between Charite, Tlepolemus, and Thrasyllus intimates a more bloody punishment (8.1-14).³ Thrasyllus murders

¹ Walsh, *The Roman Novel*, 147, who provides a synoptic table of contents, of Apuleius' *Metamorphoses* and Lucian's *Lucius, or the Ass*.

² Cf. Thelyphron's tale (2.21-30) and the robbers' tales (4.9-21).

³ Cf. the series of agonized lovers (8.22, 9.5-7, 9.16-31, 10.2-6, 10.23-8).

his friend Tlepolemus in a “hunting accident,” but rather than gaining his desire, i.e. Charite’s hand in marriage, Thrasyllus receives his just desserts with Charite’s avenging hand gouging his eyes out. In return for the deceitful death, life becomes Shakespearian with the demise of all involved. From these two examples alone, it becomes apparent that there is always a price to be paid for utilizing deception.

Works Cited

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