

Greedy Gentlemen: An Expansion of (Stereo-) Typical Views in Apuleius' *Metamorphoses*

In analyzing the ancient Roman novel, the variety of stereotypes used as characterizations escape attention, yielding often to the fornicating femme fatale. Sexuality inevitably rises to the fore: a negative stereotype that is perpetuated in literature, from platonic to erotic love (Konstan 2014). This paper, however, aims to push past the sexual sensation, and focuses instead on women's foil: male characters and their transgressions, namely greed.

Apuleius of Madauros writes in the cosmopolitan world of the second century C.E., and his *Metamorphoses* thus addresses an audience who has long since been accustomed to warnings about the 'cost' of Greek luxury. The world as Apuleius presents it reveals a deep intermingling of Greek, Roman, and Egyptian ideas, a fact that is itself revealed through his use of various cultural stereotypes (Cueva 2014). Each of Apuleius' characters display elements of a great many different attitudes—the question is, which trait is dominant? I argue that the stereotypes skillfully and (gender) selectively utilized by Apuleius throughout his novel proffer a warning to his (male) peers, about the dangers inherent in their pecuniary obsessions.

Lucius is the well-known protagonist of this tale; however, it is upon the minor male figures throughout the story that I focus, three of which I shall briefly touch on here. Lucius himself is, suggestively enough, seemingly free from financial preoccupation, as his foible is – indubitably – curiosity. His curious nature leads him to unearth such stories as Aristomenes' tale of woe about his friend Socrates, whose troubles circle back to financial business and the compulsion to spend money (*Met.* 1.5-19). Milo (Lucius' host in the early books,) by contrast, is an extremely wealthy man, a miser who hoards his gain (*Met.* 1.21-24; 3.27-9). All of his attempts to protect his wealth end in vain, however, when he is robbed – becoming *miser* indeed. Still, the very robbers of Milo themselves become afflicted with misfortune when they seek to not only

gain lucrative profit on the job, but to make out like bandits with everything, a course of action which causes them to lose everything, including the most precious commodity of all, their lives (*Met.* 4.8-22).

The desire for monetary possessions thus is a double-edged sword, conferring status and power whilst simultaneously bestowing the tools for one's own ruin. This fluidity of gain, particularly monetary gain, and the fluctuations of gender performance, as demonstrated famously by Charite's "manliness" (Frangoulidis 2001), are well suited to the genre of the ancient novel (*Met.* 8.14). The characterization of the figures in the *Metamorphoses* thus reveals the idealized gender roles that held sway during Apuleius' life, as well as the influence of contemporaneous social issues on Apuleius himself.

Bibliography

- Cueva, E. P. and S. N. Byrne, ed. (2014.) *A Companion to the Ancient Novel*. Oxford: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.
- Frangoulidis, S. (2001.) *Roles and Performances in Apuleius' Metamorphoses*. Stuttgart and Weimar: Verlag J.B. Metzler.
- Konstan, D. (2014.) *Sexual Symmetry: Love in the Ancient Novel and Related Genres*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.