

Feminine Discourse in Apuleius' *Metamorphoses*

In Apuleius' *Metamorphoses*, two figures bracket Lucius' metamorphosis: the slave Photis, Lucius' lover who accidentally transforms him into an ass, and the goddess Isis, who facilitates his anamorphosis back into a man. These physical transformations are accompanied by changes in social status: when Lucius becomes an ass, he experiences a loss of voice and physical autonomy akin to that of a slave (Bradley 2000). When he returns to human form, he gains an elevated status as a triple initiate in the cults of Isis and Osiris and a member of Osiris' priesthood; he also gains a new voice as a successful advocate in the law courts of Rome. This paper will focus on how these transformational experiences are framed by Lucius' interactions with Photis and Isis. While these are described in similar terms - as servitude, military service, and the education of an inexperienced boy -, I argue that their outcomes are quite different.

Photis and Isis have been connected frequently in Apuleian scholarship, with Photis characterized as either a parallel or an antitype to Isis. Both have asymmetrical relationships with Lucius: Hindermann 2009 demonstrates how Lucius' interactions with each are framed as an elegiac *servitium* and *militia amoris*, May 2015 draws attention to Photis' sexual domination, and van Mal-Maeder 2015 describes Isis as both a mother and a patron figure. Reading the novel with an eye to Apuleius' status as a self-proclaimed Platonic philosopher, Penwill 1975 identifies Photis as the false path of earthly love, while Carver 2013 understands her as an intermediary figure who paves the way for Lucius' eventual knowledge of the divine. While Hindermann, van Mal-Maeder, and Penwill read Lucius' relationship with Isis as a complete loss of control, I follow Carver in viewing his voluntary submission to Isis and Osiris as training in self-control: by observing the requirements of their cults, he gains a mastery over his voice and body that he could not attain with Photis or as an ass. My focus is thus not on Lucius' new access to divine

knowledge at the end of the novel, but on how he has learned through his exchanges with Photis and Isis to leverage that knowledge for social power.

I begin with Lucius' interactions with Photis in Books 2-3. In each of their encounters, Lucius verbally and physically cedes power to Photis: she has the final word in all but one of their conversations (2.7, 2.10, 2.17, 3.20, 3.23, vs. 2.18), she takes control during their sexual encounters (2.17, 3.20), and Lucius is characterized throughout as a junior partner: Photis calls him *scolastice*, "young scholar" (2.10), and challenges him to demonstrate his masculinity through warlike lovemaking (2.17), while Lucius describes himself as her slave, reversing their social roles (3.19, 3.22, 3.23). Lucius' relationship with Isis is more familial and affective: he is under her *tutela* or guardianship (11.6, 11.15), she is like his mother (11.25), and her priest is a father figure (11.21). While the language of servitude is also used here, it is qualified: '*Nam cum coeperis deae servire, tunc magis senties fructum tuae libertatis,*' "For when you begin to be a slave to the goddess, then you will feel all the more the fruit of your freedom" (11.15). The priest Mithras' words prove true: while Lucius' interactions with Photis resulted in a loss of voice, agency, and status, making him a slave in truth, his relationship with Isis provides him with a new voice, elevated status, and self-control. By the end, he is no longer a slave, but master of himself and of his speech.

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