

## BOOK REVIEW

*Apuleius and Africa*. Edited by BENJAMIN TODD LEE, ELLEN FINKELPEARL, AND LUCA GRAVERINI. New York and London: Routledge, 2014. Pp. xvi + 344. Hardcover, \$140.00. ISBN 978-0-415-53309-6.

This provocative collection of essays, arising from a 2010 conference at Oberlin College,<sup>1</sup> emphasizes the importance of Apuleius not only as a Latin author and translator of Greek, but also as a provincial writer from Roman Africa. The editors' introduction outlines the volume's theoretical underpinnings in studies of Roman imperialism (or Romanization), identity, and North African material culture, followed by thirteen essays examining historical and cultural contexts and new theoretical approaches to Apuleius' works. Most essays focus on the rhetorical works, the *Apology* and *Florida*, or Apuleius' novel, the *Metamorphoses*. There is little discussion of the philosophical works (*De deo Socratis*, *De Platone*, *De mundo*), which have generally received less scholarly attention.<sup>2</sup>

The first two essays in the first section, "Historical Contexts," examine the *Apology*, Apuleius' defense against charges of magic supposedly delivered before the proconsul at Sabratha in 158/9 CE. Although Keith Bradley's article summarizes material he has previously written,<sup>3</sup> he frames it through an evocative reconstruction of the visual, aural, and olfactory environment of ancient Sabratha. Carlos Noreña argues that Apuleius' strategy is to subordinate his intellectual authority to the absolute power of the Roman Empire, and his identity as African and Latin-speaking to his sense of himself as an imperial subject.

<sup>1</sup>The conference website remains accessible (<https://sites.google.com/site/apuleiusandafrika/HOME>) and includes a helpful introductory bibliography and discussion of previous scholarship, further fleshed out in the introduction to this volume.

<sup>2</sup>Though see recently Fletcher, R. 2014. *Apuleius' Platonism: The Impersonation of Philosophy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

<sup>3</sup>See especially his 2012 *Apuleius and Antonine Rome: Historical Essays*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

The next articles turn to transmission and reception. Julia Gaisser traces the survival of the *Metamorphoses* through several key historical points. Like Bradley's, her article summarizes earlier work,<sup>4</sup> with an emphasis on the role that Augustine played in Apuleius' survival as a fellow African. Joseph Farrell's contribution examines Apuleius' place in—or rather, displacement from—the canon. He suggests that Apuleius' exclusion stems from his status as “African” and from early 20<sup>th</sup> century assertions that his literary style represented an “African” dialect of Latin (*Africitas*). Farrell, one of the few contributors to challenge the application of the broad term “African” to Apuleius, critiques “the modern concern with Apuleius' Africanism” (76) as one that marginalizes the author.

The five essays in “Cultural Contexts” include linguistic, philological, historical, archaeological, and comparative literary approaches. Silvia Mattiacci's article is a fine companion to Farrell's, providing a thoughtful overview of the charged history of “African Latin” in Classical scholarship. She concludes that there is evidence for certain stylistic tendencies among African writers of literary Latin, attributing Apuleius' unique style to his education in the rhetorical schools of North Africa and his plurilingualism as a speaker of Latin, Greek, and Punic.

Luca Graverini and Wytse Keulen approach the topic of Apuleius and Africa by comparing Apuleius with other Roman authors. Graverini contends that the *Metamorphoses* reveals an “African” engagement with Latin literature through its reception of Vergil's *Aeneid*, as Apuleius reworks Juno in her Carthaginian aspect to make a place for Carthage within the Roman world. Keulen's comparison of Fronto's and Apuleius' uses of provincial, outsider stances to fashion their Romanness is likewise fruitful, with Fronto described as “an African intellectual in Rome,” while Apuleius is “a Roman intellectual in Africa” (138).

David Stone provides a valuable critique of biographical approaches to Apuleius by arguing that we should examine *identification* as a process exhibited by characters within Apuleius' works rather than focusing on the *identity* of the enigmatic author. He rightly concludes that identification in Apuleius focuses not on nationality or ethnicity, but on factors such as social status, age, gender, religious practices, language, literacy, and education.

In a highly original contribution, Emmanuel and Nedjima Plantade examine seven Berber folktales with similar structures and motifs to the *Tale of Cupid and Psyche*. They argue that Apuleius incorporated Berber folkloric elements into the

<sup>4</sup> Gaisser, J. 2008. *The Fortunes of Apuleius and The Golden Ass: A Study in Transmission and Reception*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Greco-Roman literary tradition, supplementing existing work on his adaptation of Near Eastern and Greek folktales. They plan to study more folktales in the future, and their approach offers a fresh take on Apuleius' "Africanism" as well as how local traditions may have been absorbed into the dominant Greco-Roman cultural discourse.

Daniel Selden opens the final section, "Theoretical Approaches," by proposing that Apuleius' style should be considered within Afroasiatic rather than Indo-European poetic traditions. Selden's comparanda are interesting, but this article would have benefited from more discussion of these, consistent attributions for the numerous images, and a consideration of Latin prose as well as poetry.

Sonia Sabnis applies postcolonial theory to argue that Apuleius' depictions of India in the *Florida* reflect upon the fraught place of Africa in the Roman imagination by presenting the perspectives of both colonizer and colonized. Her conclusion that Apuleius simultaneously participates in and questions the project of empire is nuanced and persuasive.

Richard Fletcher argues that Apuleius introduces his African origins in *Apolo-ogy* 24 only to challenge the concept of origins from a philosophical perspective. His discussion is especially ambitious in its comparison of Apuleius with North African writers of the 12<sup>th</sup> through the 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.

Benjamin Lee's concluding essay draws on the work of sociologist Pawan Dhingra to note that an individual's identity is performed and contextual, making him and Stone the only contributors to acknowledge explicitly this commonplace of the social sciences. Like Sabnis, Lee employs postcolonial theory to argue that Apuleius utilizes strategies of both inclusion and exclusion when addressing his African audiences.

Although this volume does not solve the question of Apuleius' identity or offer a definition of broad terms like "Africa" and "African" (or "Roman," "Greek," "Punic," etc.), its diverse contributions offer new and stimulating approaches to the relationship(s) between Apuleius and his homeland.

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