

Apuleius, *Der goldene Esel oder Metamorphosen*, Lateinisch-Deutsch, herausgegeben und übersetzt von Niklas Holzberg, mit einer griechisch-deutschen Ausgabe von (Ps.?)Lukian, *Lukios oder Der Esel* von Rolf Kussl, De Gruyter, Sammlung Tusculum, ISBN 978-3-11-100058-9; 732 p.

In the last fifty years, Apuleius' great novel *Metamorphoses* has received a great deal of attention. Several bilingual editions have appeared, both in English and in other languages, there is an Oxford Classical Text by M. Zimmerman (2012), and commentaries are now available on all eleven books. The major scholarly project 'Groningen Commentaries on Apuleius' has been completed with the publication of the volume on Book 11 (by Wytse Keulen et al., Leiden 2015). The scholarly interest in the *Metamorphoses* is also manifested in the large number of scholarly essays and studies on Apuleius' novel, which is still growing. So what is still missing?

Perhaps a decent, modern bilingual edition in German. True, the *Metamorphoses* have been included in the well-known Tusculum series since 1958 (a volume edited by Edward Brand and Wilhelm Ehlers). But although the Brandt/Ehlers edition has been reprinted several times, most recently in 2012, it is clearly outdated in several respects, as Niklas Holzberg notes in his new Tusculum edition of 2023.

Firstly, a great deal of scholarly progress has been made in the interpretation of the novel over the years. New developments in linguistics and lexicology, as well as literary approaches such as narratology, have deepened our understanding of Apuleius' novel. Second, Brandt/Ehlers use a form of German that sounds outdated and, worse, out of touch with contemporary sensibilities about women, homosexuals and other non-dominant groups. At the same time, their translation is too evasive and too vague in the case of words with a sexual meaning or connotation, as was common practice in the classics well into the mid-20th century. Thirdly, paradoxically, the existing German translations also seem too free with regard to the Latin. Modern readers, Holzberg argues, are less well versed in Latin than previous generations, who could be expected to consult even a free rendering quickly because their grasp of the Latin was much firmer. So what is needed? A new edition that both takes account of the results of modern research into Apuleius' novel and uses a German that is not only precise and accurate, but also as close as possible to the Latin.

Holzberg's new Tusculum does just that, and the volume is therefore most welcome. The Latin text follows Zimmerman's OCT, and the German translation does its job well. The text is preceded by a relatively short but excellent introduction, and as a bonus there is a bilingual edition of the Greek *Onos*.

Holzberg's new translation is an improvement in many ways. At the same time, however, some of its principles may be called into question. Is it really the task of a bilingual edition to provide a translation that makes it as easy as possible to consult the original? Is this the ultimate goal? Should the translation not be the primary focus of the editor, and therefore more literary than literal? Interestingly, Holzberg mentions some specific points where his literal German rendering cannot, or does not want to, match the Latin. First of all, there is the mixture of present and past tense verb forms that is familiar to any reader of the novel. This peculiarity of Apuleius' Latin cannot be reproduced in German, says Holzberg. Now, as a

non-native speaker, I cannot judge this claim as far as German is concerned, but in my own language, Dutch, such a mixing of verb forms seems perfectly acceptable. And as Holzberg admits, Helm's older German translation did indeed try to follow Apuleius in this respect. So, while Holzberg argues for greater closeness to the Latin, he in fact departs from this principle on an important stylistic point. Secondly, there is the element of mixing literary styles. Apuleius moves easily from highly literary language to vulgar words and neologisms, often adding sound effects and puns. All of this, Holzberg argues, cannot be expressed in the German translation. Again, the older version by Brandt/Ehlers at least tried to express such features of Apuleius' Latin.

The new translation is therefore correct and reliable in so far as it tries to express clearly and precisely what the Latin words mean. But it is also a little less lively and sparkling than some readers might expect. It lacks, so to speak, a touch of wit and charm, of literary self-consciousness. There is simply nothing extra about it, it is 'just' a faithful rendering of the Latin that helps the reader who wishes to study the Latin.

Of course, this basic help is a great help indeed, and I trust that many German and non-German Latinists will benefit greatly from this new *Tusculum*. When I was revising my Dutch translation of the novel, I used Holzberg's version all the time, and it certainly proved very useful. But I would not recommend the new German translation to anyone as a stand-alone. It should only be used as a tool for approaching the Latin. This is Holzberg's explicit aim, and he certainly delivers what he promises. Nevertheless, I would have liked a little more. Let us hope that Niklas Holzberg will produce another, more adventurous translation of the novel, perhaps in an edition without the Latin.

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