

## A Pain in *The Ass*

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This article is but a small token of gratitude to Maaïke for her inspiring work on Apuleius from which I greatly profited, for her continuous support and unfailing guidance, and for her inexhaustible humour, which has always made our co-operation at Groningen a great pleasure.

Scholars currently agree that Apuleius' *Metamorphoses*, or *The Golden Ass*, is based on a lost Greek work attributed by the patriarch Photius (*Bibl.* 129) to a certain Lucius of Patras; a story that survives in the corpus of Lucian, entitled *Lucius, or The Ass*, is probably both an epitome of the lost *Metamorphoseis* and a work falsely attributed to Lucian. The complex relationship among these three versions of the ass-story has received considerable discussion, and the shorter Greek version (hereafter, *The Ass*) has been a useful tool in comparative analysis of the longer Latin text (hereafter, *The Golden Ass*).<sup>1</sup> In the words of the leading critic in this field, "the presence in the 'Golden Ass' of passages both of close translation and of varying degrees of free adaptation suggests that Apuleius composed his adaptation of the 'Metamorphoseis' incident by incident, reading the Greek version of an episode before composing his own, retaining typical phrases of the Greek in his memory as he wrote, but not actually "translating" at a word-by-word level".<sup>2</sup> This article focuses on the textual interpretation of a passage from *The Ass*, not *The Golden Ass*; it aims at demonstrating that the mere 'parallel' reading of the Greek and the Latin Ass stories, for all its usefulness, may

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<sup>1</sup> See, notably, Junghanns 1932; Van Thiel 1971, 1972. An account of recent criticism on the relation between Apuleius' novel and the Greek versions is conveniently found in Schlam and Finkelpearl 2000, 36–41; on the Greek tale of *The Ass* see Hall 1981, 354–367, who argues against Lucianic authorship; MacLeod 1994, 1384–1385; Hansen 1998, 76–79.

<sup>2</sup> Mason 1994, 1696–1700 (quotation from p. 1698); cf. Mason 1978 (= 1999). Very useful discussions also in Hijmans 1987, 399–406; Zimmerman 1995.

not be the best means of our appreciation of either Apuleius' or Ps.-Lucian's originality.

In the final chapter of *The Ass* (56), the hero Lucius, having regained his human shape by means of eating roses, returns to the wealthy matron with whom he, in the form of an ass with an enormous member, had spent a night of passionate sex (chs. 50–51). But as soon as he stands in front of her, wearing nothing but rose garlands and perfumes, the lady realizes that, after the transformation into a human, Lucius had lost the quality she valued most in him, his asinine member; enraged, she asks the servants to throw the man out of the house, where he spends the whole night as an 'exclusus amator'<sup>3</sup>:

καὶ καλεῖ εὐθὺς ἤδη τοὺς οἰκέτας καὶ κελεύει με τῶν νότων μετέωρον  
κομισθῆναι ἔξω τῆς οἰκίας.

The description is given in simple, straightforward language, and the meaning of the sentence is clear. But what exactly are we to imagine is happening here? How is Lucius being thrown out of the house, and what is the syntactic function of the genitive τῶν νότων? MacLeod's Loeb translation gives a precise and clear answer to this question: "she immediately called her servants and had me carried out of the house aloft on their backs";<sup>4</sup> similarly, J.P. Sullivan (in Reardon 1998) renders: "she immediately summoned her servants and ordered me carried from the house stretched high on their backs." Other translations of this passage at my disposal are less explicit about the notion of Lucius being carried on the servants' backs. Nonetheless, they suggest that Lucius is portrayed as a piece of burden; thus, E. Brandt and W. Ehlers (in Kytzler 1983) "mit diesen Worten rief sie einige Bediente und befahl ihnen, mich, wie ich war, aufzupacken, zum Hause hinauszutragen und mir die Tür vor die Nase zuzuschließen"; A. Angelini (in Cataudella 1992) "indi chiama i servitori, e di peso mi fa metter fuori della porta".<sup>5</sup>

<sup>3</sup> For the elegiac motifs in this episode see Bernsdorff 1997. The text of *The Ass* is given from McLeod's OCT edition of Lucian, vol. II (1974). The text in the passage under discussion does not differ in MacLeod's Loeb edition (1967), Van Thiel's synoptic edition (1972), or Jakobitz's Teubner edition (1873).

<sup>4</sup> Unless otherwise indicated, all subsequent translations of Greek and Latin passages are from the Loeb Classical Library.

<sup>5</sup> P. Turner's translation (in Hansen 1998) clearly omits the detail: "She then called her servants and told them to throw me out of the house."

However, a difficulty arises when one tries to explain the plain genitive τῶν νότων with a verb denoting carrying; the construction is both hard to parallel (cf. *LSJ* s.v. κομίζω II.4), and at odds with standard linguistic usage as attested not only in *The Ass* (chs. 29 ξύλα τοῖς ὄμοις ἐκόμιζον “[I was often sent up to the mountain] to fetch wood”; 37 and 41 τὴν ἐπ’ ἐμοὶ κομιζομένην θεόν “the goddess who rode on my back ... the goddess whom I had carried”; 48 κομίζειν τὸν δεσπότην ἐπὶ τοῦ νότου “to walk with my master on my back”, tr. M.D. MacLeod), but also elsewhere in Imperial Greek: see Philo *On rewards and punishments* 8 Τριπτόλεμον ... ἀρθέντα μετέωρον ἐπὶ πτηνῶν δρακόντων “Triptolemus borne aloft on winged dragons” (tr. F.M. Colson); Dio Chrys. *Disc.* 64,14 εἶ μέ τις ὑψηλὸν ἄρας ἄγοι μετέωρον ἐπὶ τινῶν ἢ Πηγάσου νότων ἢ Πέλοπος πτηνῶν ἀρμάτων “if some one should raise me aloft and transport me through the sky, either, as it were, on the back of some Pegasus or in some winged car of Pelops” (tr. H. Lamar Crosby); Dio *Roman History* 44,17,1 ὁ Καῖσαρ ἐπὶ ... τῶν νεφῶν μετέωρος αἰωρεῖσθαι “Caesar (dreamed) he was raised aloft upon the clouds” (tr. E. Cary).

Moreover, the very use of the term τὰ νῶτα seems enigmatic, and indeed pointless, especially in view of the term μετέωρον. The phrase μετέωρον κομίζεσθαι (or similar verbs) commonly refers to carrying a person aloft, but the specific detail of one’s arms or shoulders, on which that person is being carried, is hardly ever mentioned in the texts, although translators tend to include it. Lucian, *Anacharsis, or Athletics* 28, provides a good parallel for our passage, since both texts describe the carrying away of a person by force: “and as for picking up a man who is muddy, sweaty, and oily while he does his best to break away and squirm out of your hands, do not think it a trifle! All this, as I said before, is of use in war, in case one should need to pick up a wounded friend and carry him out of the fight with ease, or to snatch up an enemy and come back with him in one’s arms” (πολέμιον συναρπάσαντα ἦκειν μετέωρον κομίζοντα) (tr. A.M. Harmon); see also Achilles Tatius 3,12,2 ἀράμενοι οὖν αὐτὴν (Leukippe) μετέωρον ἀπάγουσιν “(the guards) took her up and carried her off on their shoulders” (tr. S. Gaselee); Apollod. 2,5,11 τούτῳ (Antaeus) παλαίειν ἀναγκαζόμενος Ἡρακλῆς ἀράμενος ἄμμασι μετέωρον κλάσας ἀπέκτεινε “Hercules hugged him, lifted him aloft with hugs, broke and killed him” (tr. J.G. Frazer).<sup>6</sup> On the other hand, when

<sup>6</sup> Similarly, Ps. Plutarch, *The Education of Children* 17 (*Moralia* 13B) κρονόληρος καὶ σοροδαίμων ἐστί, καὶ μετέωρον αὐτὸν ἀράμενοι τὴν ταχίστην ἐξοίσομεν “(your father)

Herodotus describes a deadly ritual among the Thracian Getae, in which a man is raised high and thrown on to spear-points, he mentions the body parts of the victim, not his executors: Herod. 4,94 ἄλλοι δὲ διαλαβόντες τοῦ ἀποπεμπομένου παρὰ τὸν Σάλμοξιν τὰς χεῖρας καὶ τοὺς πόδας, ἀνακινήσαντες αὐτὸν μετέωρον ῥίπτουσι ἐς τὰς λόγχας “others seize the messenger to Salmoxis by his hands and feet, and swing and hurl him aloft on to the spear-points” (tr. A.D. Godley).

Other literary accounts of similar episodes offer little help. Anderson 1976, 58 and 100–101 remarks that Lucius’ fate at the end of *The Ass*, when the rich woman’s servants throw him out naked on the street, is paralleled both in Apuleius’ Tale of Thelyphron, when Thelyphron is attacked by a widow’s servants and thrown out for making an inopportune remark (*Met.* 2,27,6–8), and in Petronius’ *Satyrica* 132, when Encolpius fails to satisfy Circe sexually, and is thrown out of doors (*uerberibus sputisque extra ianuam eiectus sum* “[I] was beaten and spat upon and thrown out of doors”). Petronius’ account, like our passage, involves the corporal punishment and humiliation of a young man by a group of slaves following the order of a sexually dissatisfied woman: 132,2 *manifestis matrona contumeliis uerberata tandem ad ultionem decurrit uocatque cubicularios et me iubet catomizari* “my open taunts lashed the lady; at last she ran to avenge herself, and called the chamber-grooms, and ordered me to be hoisted on their shoulders for flogging” (tr. M. Heseltine and G.H. Warmington). The rare verb used to describe this ceremony of humiliation is *catomizari*, a conjecture by Salmasius, which appears to be a Grecism and is probably related to κατομίζω, “frustare qualcuno appeso alle spalle (κατ’ ὄμον ο κατ’ ὄμους) di un altro.”<sup>7</sup>

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is an old twaddler with one foot already in the grave, and before long we’ll take his coffin on our shoulders and carry him out” (tr. F.C. Babbitt); Aelian, *On the Characteristics of Animals* 5,1 τὸν νεκρὸν ... ὑπὸ τῆς μητρὸς κομισθέντα μετέωρον “the actual dead body (of Memnon) was borne through the air by his mother” (tr. A.F. Scholfield).

<sup>7</sup> Cavalca 2001, 58. For this passage compare Apul. *met.* 9,28,2 *uocatis duobus e familia ualidissimis, quam altissime sublato puero, ferula nates eius obuerberans...* “he called two of his sturdiest slaves and had them raise the boy as high as possible, and thrashing his buttocks with a rod...” (tr. Hijmans et al. 1995, 244). According to the Groningen commentary ad loc. the scene is paralleled on Pompeian frescoes and may be visualized as follows: “one slave has pulled the boy over his shoulders, holding him by the arms, while the other holds the boy’s legs, keeping them off the ground” (Hijmans et al. *ibid.* 245).

We have thus far seen that literary descriptions of violence like the one we read at the end of *The Ass* are not uncommon, especially in the realm of ancient fiction. However, the linguistic usage in the passage under discussion is unusual and, although *The Ass* is known for its inconsistency of style and diction,<sup>8</sup> it seems to me that translators attempt to make sense by adding what is not included in the Greek text. The translation τῶν νότων “on their backs” is unsatisfactory; I would expect <ἐπὶ> τῶν νότων; the supplement ἐπὶ is, I should have thought, necessary, because it would produce a syntactically sound text; the author would then suggest that the hero, who has been a beast of burden for most of the story, becomes the burden itself at the end of the story.

However, I would also like to propose another emendation for this passage. I am inclined to think that the author wrote not τῶν νότων, but τῶν ὄτων, “by the ears” (κελεύει με τῶν ὄτων μετέωρον κομισθῆναι ἔξω τῆς οἰκίας). This is palaeographically plausible (τῶν ὄτων became τῶν νότων because of dittography), and syntactically easier to explain than τῶν νότων μετέωρον κομισθῆναι. Moreover, it has the advantage of introducing in the final episode of the story a significant gesture, namely to hold a person by the ears. In what follows, I will explain both the function of the genitive and the significance of the gesture.

Verbs denoting touching or holding regularly take not only an accusative designating a person as the object of the verb, but also a genitive which denotes the bodily part of the person that is being touched or held (one might expect ἀπό or ἐκ with the gen.); this construction occurs mainly in poetry and rarely in prose, and is also found with verbs that indicate dragging or fastening (cf. in our passage the term μετέωρος “raised off from the ground, hanging”), since a verb meaning ‘to hold’, ‘to touch’ may be understood from the context. Examples of this construction are attested from Homer onwards: e.g. *Il.* 14,477 ὕφελκε ποδοῖν; *Arist. Pl.* 312 (σέ ... λαβόντες) τῶν ὄρχεων κρεμῶμεν; *Xenoph. eq. rat.* 6,9 ἄγειν τῆς ἡνίας τὸν ἵππον.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>8</sup> See Van Thiel 1971, 211–222; Hall 1981, 360–363.

<sup>9</sup> Kühner and Gerth 1898<sup>3</sup>, 348 § 416 Anmerk. 5; Schwyzer and Debrunner 1950, 129–130.

It is undoubtedly significant that the hero Lucius, who, if my conjecture is correct, is led out of the house by the ears, has been transformed into an animal that is famous in both literature and real life for its long ears; *The Ass* 19 illustrates how the long ears of an ass can be used as the crude means by which this animal may be raised when it has fallen down: λαβόντες αὐτὸν οἱ μὲν τῶν ὠτῶν, οἱ δὲ τῆς οὐρῶς ἀνεγείρειν ἐπειρῶντο “some of them seized it by the ears and others by the tail and tried to get it on its feet” (tr. M.D. MacLeod).<sup>10</sup>

The gesture of holding or taking a person by the ears certainly indicates a firm hold upon that person, minimizes that person’s resistance, and has acquired the symbolic meaning of exercising control or violence upon someone.<sup>11</sup> Ancient wisdom preserves a wealth of figurative expressions in which people, animals, or objects are held, carried away, or even appear to be hanging “by the ears”; such expressions reflect in one way or another the meanings outlined above. Plutarch, for instance, conveniently cites two proverbial expressions in a single sentence: *Precepts of Statecraft* 5 (*Moralia* 802D) τὸν μὲν οὖν λύκον οὗ φασι τῶν ὠτῶν κρατεῖν, δῆμον δὲ καὶ πόλιν ἐκ τῶν ὠτῶν ἄγειν δὴ μάλιστα “the wolf, they say, cannot be held by the ears; but one must lead a people or a State chiefly by the ears” (tr. H.N. Fowler).<sup>12</sup> In another treatise the same author reports that the philosopher Bion the Borysthenite compares people who are persuaded by flatterers to undertake quarrels and prosecutions “to pitchers carried easily away by the ears” (ἀμφορεῦσιν ἀπὸ τῶν ὠτῶν ῥαδίως μεταφερομένοις) (*On compliancy* 18 = *Moralia* 536A, tr. P.H. De Lacy and B. Einarson; cf. *Table Talks* 7,5 =

<sup>10</sup> Apuleius renders this event as follows: *Met.* 4,5,2 *non fustibus, non stimulis ac ne cauda et auribus cruribusque undique uersum eleuatis temptauit exsurgere* “no cudgels, no goads, not even being pulled on all sides by tail, ears and legs could make him try to get up” (tr. Hijmans et al. 1977, 51).

<sup>11</sup> See *Oxford English Dictionary* s.v. *Ear*<sup>1</sup> I.1.c: “to have, hold, take by the ears: to keep or obtain a secure hold upon (a person); so also, to pull or drag by the ears, i.e. violently, roughly; to lead by the ears: to keep in abject dependence.”

<sup>12</sup> The proverbial phrase ‘to hold the wolf by the ears’ applies to people who find themselves in a dangerous situation, from which they are unable to escape; cf. Ter. *Phorm.* 506–507 *immo, id quod aiunt, auribus teneo lupum; / nam neque quo pacto a me amittam neque uti retineam, scio* “On the contrary, I’m holding the proverbial wolf by the ears. I don’t know how to let go or how to hold on to her” (transl. J. Barsby) (with Donatus ad loc.: *Graecum proverbium* τῶν ὠτῶν ἔχω τὸν λύκον, οὗτ’ ἔχειν οὗτ’ ἀφεῖναι δύναμαι). For more examples see Otto 1890, 199 s.v. *lupus* 9; and add Polyb. 30,20,9; Aristaen. *epist.* 2,3.

*Moralia* 705 D-E).<sup>13</sup> In Lucian's *Icaromenippus* or *The Sky-Man* 3–4 Menippus' interlocutor illustrates by means of the following double metaphor his eagerness to listen to the end of Menippus' story: "here I am in suspense, thanks to what you have said (μετέωρός εἰμι ὑπὸ τῶν λόγων), and already waiting with open mouth for the end of your tale. In the name of friendship, don't leave me hanging by the ears (ἐκ τῶν ὠτῶν ἀπηρτημένον) somewhere in the midst of the story". In his reply Menippus both repeats and comments upon the imagery: "Listen then, for a friend left in the lurch with his mouth open would be anything but a pretty spectacle (οὐ γὰρ ἀστεῖόν γε τὸ θέαμα), especially if he were hanging by the ears (ἐκ τῶν ὠτῶν ἀπηρτημένον), as you say you are" (tr. A.M. Harmon).<sup>14</sup>

However, the association of this gesture with a desire to cause pain or to exert control is not the only interpretation that may be put forward; for the gesture of holding a person by the ears also occurs (perhaps surprisingly) within the context of kissing and implies affection. Plutarch and other writers inform us of a specific type of kiss, the so-called χύτρα- or 'jug'-kiss (for its origins see Eunicus' *Anteia* frg. 1 = *PCG* V, 278 K–A λαβοῦσα τῶν ὠτῶν φίλησον τὴν χύτραν "take the jug by the ears and kiss it"), which is a favourite between little children and adult people,<sup>15</sup> yet occurs also between lovers.<sup>16</sup> Latin authors use both *auris* and *auricula* in this context (Tibullus 2,5,92 *natusque parenti / oscula comprehensis auribus eripiet* "and the child [shall] take hold of his father's ears to snatch the kiss", tr. J.P. Postgate),<sup>17</sup>

<sup>13</sup> See Teodorsson 1996, 77 ad loc.

<sup>14</sup> Similarly in the *Scythian* or *The Consul* 11 a person's charming tongue is said to enchain the listener's ears "and let him but speak and he will leave you with your ears enchained" (οἰχήσεται σε ἀπὸ τῶν ὠτῶν ἀναδησάμενος) (tr. K. Kilburn). Compare the imagery that relates storytelling to travelling "by means of the ears" in Apuleius' novel: 1,20,6 *quod beneficium etiam illum uectorem meum credo laetari, sine fatigatione sui me usque ad istam ciuitatis portam non dorso illius, sed meis auribus peruecto* "and in this favour my conveyer rejoices too, I believe: without tiring him I have ridden all the way to this city gate here, not on his back, but with my own ears" (tr. W.H. Keulen 2003, 337).

<sup>15</sup> "Most people in bestowing an affectionate kiss on little children not only take hold of the children by the ears (τῶν ὠτῶν ἄπτονται) but bid the children to do the same by them, thus insinuating in a playful way that they must love most those who confer benefit through the ears (τοὺς διὰ τῶν ὠτῶν ὠφελούντας)" (Plutarch, *On listening to lectures* 2 = *Moralia* 38C, tr. F.C. Babbitt). See Hillyard 1981, 55 ad loc.

<sup>16</sup> See e.g. Lucian, *Dialogues of the Courtesans* 3,2 "he laid hold of the tip of Thais' ear (τοῦ ὠτὸς ἄκρου ἐραψάμενος), bent her neck, and kissed her so hard, that she could scarcely get her lips free" (tr. M.D. MacLeod).

<sup>17</sup> See Murgatroyd 1994, 222–223 ad loc.

and the diminutive, which denotes not ‘a small ear’, but ‘the ear-lobe’,<sup>18</sup> occurs especially in passages from Roman Comedy and in scenes of flirtation between adults; thus, Plautus in the *Asinaria* 666–668 stages the slave Leonida addressing the courtesan Philaenium with the following affectionate words: *dic me igitur tuom passerculum, gallinam, coturnicem, / agnellum, haedillum me tuom dic esse uel uitellum, / prehende auriculis, compara labella cum labellis* “well then, call me your little sparrow, hen, quail, call me your little lambkin, kidlet, or calfyboy, if you prefer: take hold of me by the earlaps and match my little lips to your little lips” (tr. P. Nixon).<sup>19</sup> The fact that Lucius may be thrown out of the house by the ears, on the orders of his lady-lover, enhances the subversive comedy of the scene; the gesture that stands as the prelude to a passionate kiss would signify both an ejection and a rejection by a lover.

We have seen that holding, carrying away or even hanging someone by the ears describe painful situations that are common in figurative phrases; it would then seem that, if we read “by the ears” in chapter 56 of *The Ass*, Ps. Lucian exploits literally in the story an image usually employed in figurative speech.<sup>20</sup> It is fair to ask whether or not there are any literary parallels for the literal, not figurative action of taking a person away by the ears. I have been able to find only a few passages, the earliest of which is the most intriguing, for it is found in Apuleius’ *The Golden Ass*. The ninth book of this novel contains, next to the main story, a series of adultery tales and the tale concerning the death of three sons, which was foreshadowed by dire omens; this inserted material is notably absent from *The Ass*, and it is impossible to determine with any certainty whether or not the latter tale, a family tragedy, was already in the lost *Vorlage*.<sup>21</sup> In this inserted tale a greedy and arrogant landowner threatens the life and fortune of his poor neighbour, in spite of his fellow-citizens’ attempts to restore peace between the men.

sed illis clementer expostulantibus feruidosque eius mores blanditiis permulcentibus, repente suam suorumque carorum salutem quam sanctissime adiurans asseuerat parui se pendere tot mediatorum praesentiam;

<sup>18</sup> See Langslow 2000, 329–330.

<sup>19</sup> Also *Poenulus* 375 (the slave Milphio to the young Adelphasium) *sine te exorem, sineprehendam auriculis, sine dem sauium* “let me prevail upon you, let me take you by the ear-laps, let me give you a nice long kiss” (tr. P. Nixon); with Maurach 1988, 101 ad loc.

<sup>20</sup> On this topic in Apuleius see in this volume the contributions by Plaza and McCreight.

<sup>21</sup> See Van Thiel 1971, 145–146; Hijmans et al. 1995, 6; Zimmerman 1995, 107.



denique uicinum illum auriculis per suos seruulos sublatum de casula longissime statimque proiectum iri (*Met.* 9,36,1)

But when the others mildly expostulated and tried to soothe his hot-tempered disposition, he suddenly assured, swearing as solemn an oath as possible on his own life and that of his beloved ones, that he could not care less about the presence of so many mediators; that, in short, his slaves would pick that neighbor up by his ears and throw him far from his little house, and right away, too (tr. Hijmans et al. 1995, 299).

The *Groningen Commentaries on Apuleius* ad loc. observe the exceptional use of the term *auricula* (Apuleius always uses *auris* in the rest of the *Met.*), which may have no diminutive force and enhances the presence of a “ton volontairement familier” (Callebat 1968, 34) in this passage. But the term is notably found in the threatening words of the rich neighbour cited in indirect discourse, and, along with the diminutives *seruulos* and *casula*, may well have a pejorative connotation and suggest arrogance in that character’s speech. Moreover, *auricula* ‘the earlobe,’ as it has been noted above, is the usual term in expressions that denote touching or holding a person by the ears. Both Weyman 1893, 382 and the Groningen commentary ad loc. adduce as a sole parallel to this extract from Apuleius a passage from the Late Latin *Story of Apollonius, King of Tyre*, in which a brothel-keeper is arrested and taken by the ears to the market-place for his trial: *Hist. Apoll.* 46 RA *His auditis populi ab auriculis eum comprehenderunt. Ducitur leno ad forum uinctis a tergo manibus* “When the people heard this, they seized the pimp by the ears; he was led to the forum with his hands tied behind his back” (tr. E. Archibald 1991, 171).<sup>22</sup> There is, however, an important difference between the passage of Apuleius and the extract from the *Story of Apollonius*: in the latter, the brothel-keeper is being led to the market-place by the ears, because his hands are tied up and behind his back. On the other hand, the similarity in detail between the Apuleian passage and the Ps. Lucianic one (if we read “by the ears”) is striking (*denique uicinum illum auriculis per suos seruulos sublatum de casula longissime statimque proiectum iri* ~ καὶ καλεῖ εὐθὺς ἤδη τοὺς οἰκέτας καὶ κελεύει με τῶν ὄτων μετέωρον κομισθῆναι ἕξω

<sup>22</sup> Kortekaas 2004, 36–37 compares this passage with the Infancy Gospel of Thomas, Greek Text B 5 καὶ κρατήσας αὐτοῦ ἐκ τοῦ ὠτίου ἔθλιψε σφοδρῶς “and he took hold upon his ear and pinched it sore” (transl. M.R. James).

τῆς οἰκίας); the fact that the threat of holding someone up by the ears is actually realized only in the Greek text of Ps. Lucian does not undermine the resemblance of these two incidents.

To sum up. The gesture of raising someone high by the ears is very rarely attested in our extant literary sources. Furthermore, *The Ass* – to my knowledge, the only extant text which may share with Apuleius’ novel this detail – is ultimately derived from a source which has independently been used by Apuleius. Both of these factors increase the plausibility of the conjecture. Finally, it is intriguing that the Greek and the Latin extracts under discussion do not refer to the same point in the ass-story and radically differ in atmosphere. Van Mal-Maeder has recently revisited with an ingenious proposal what is arguably the greatest problem in Apuleian criticism, namely the dissonance between Books 1-10 and Book 11; this dissonance is felt even stronger when one considers the farcical qualities of the final episode of *The Ass* as opposed to the “serious tonality” of the Isiac conclusion of *The Golden Ass*. She proposes that a final confrontation between Lucius and the matron who fell in love with him in Book 10 was actually included at the very end of *The Golden Ass*, but has been lost in a gap which occurred in the textual transmission of the Latin novel.<sup>23</sup> On the basis of the conjecture τῶν ὄτων “by the ears” at the end of the Greek ass-tale and of its connection to the passage from the Ninth Book of Apuleius’ novel, I would like to argue that Apuleius did not reject the subversive comedy of the final scene of the Greek ass-story; rather, he detached this farcical detail from its original context in the *Vorlage*, and incorporated it elsewhere in Lucius’ narrative, in a different context which was serious, sinister, and tragic.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Van Mal-Maeder 1997, esp. 110–112, 114–116.

<sup>24</sup> I would like to thank Anastasios Nikolaidis, Costas Panayotakis and Wytse Keulen for their valuable comments on drafts of this paper.

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