

**Sixteenth-century French version of Apuleius' *Metamorphoses* with woodcuts by Bernard Saloman.**

Apuleius. *Metamorphose, autrement, L'asne d'or / de L. Apulee de Madaure philosophe platoniqu ; traduite de latin en nostre vulgaire par George de La Bouthiere Autunois.*

Lyon: Jean de Tournes & Guillaume Gazeau, 1553. 4 3/4 inches (120 mm), 646, [2] pp.

*The Golden Ass* is the only ancient Roman novel to survive complete—and the most influential. (Its distant rival, the *Satyricon* of Petronius, is preserved only in substantial but truncated fragments). The work recounts the adventures of a young man, dabbling in magic, who is transformed into an ass, hence the original title (as used in this edition) of *Metamorphoses*. Its most famous episode, endlessly reprinted on its own, is the tale of *Cupid and Psyche* (**Spreads 102–145**).

Apuleius was a sophist of the second century A.D., an expert rhetorician in full command of an extravagant style. A native of North Africa, he traveled throughout the eastern Mediterranean: many episodes of the novel clearly incorporate autobiographical elements. The *Metamorphoses* was one of the earliest classical Latin texts to be printed, the first edition appearing in Rome in 1469 from the press of the German wandering printers Sweynheym and Pannartz. The novel was frequently reprinted in Venice and in Florence, often with the illustrations that so vividly imagined a fiction almost demands. A first French translation (by Guillaume Michel) appeared in Paris in 1518, and another (by Jean Louveau) in Lyon in 1553.

This French version, also published in Lyon, but earlier in the year, is by Georges de La Bouthière. It is willfully inaccurate: as the translator observes in his Notes to the reader (**Spreads 8–10**), he has refused to translate “word by word, or sentence by sentence, as some do, thus despoiling our rich language of its native grace, renowned abundance and delicate charm.” Moreover, La Bouthière eliminated Apuleius’ last book, replacing it with a translation of the Pseudo-Lucian *Onos* (*Lucius the Ass*), explaining that he found that the original text showed “so little taste and grace that I could hardly be bothered to read it, ... and [was] so long-winded and tiresome that I couldn’t bear to include it.” He also eliminated episodes that he considered unsavory or unseemly,

justifying himself with a testimonial from Cicero. La Bouthière's motto, after all, was "*Rien par trop*," which is the old Greek maxim, "Nothing in excess"—it appears at the end of the book, on **Spread 326**. The translator embroidered on the text as well as abridging, adding contemporary references and fashionable proverbs. When, at **Spread 171**, Vulcan cooks the wedding feast, La Bouthière calls him "a second Taillevent," alluding to the 14th-century French royal chef, whose recipes formed the substance of an early cookbook.

Lyon was noted for its imitations (and even counterfeits) of the classical texts of Italian (especially Venetian) printers. In the same spirit, La Bouthière depended largely on Boiardo's Tuscan translation of Apuleius, following him in the use of the Pseudo-Lucian ending. Similarly, the engraver who produced the 64 woodcuts, the great and prolific Bernard Salomon (c. 1506–c. 1561) was inspired by earlier illustrated editions, although many of his renderings were original. He followed his translator in avoiding the depiction of certain off-color scenes that had appealed to Apuleius' Italian readers: somehow the episode of the Golden Ass defecating explosively on his attackers at **Spread 81** escaped censorship, as did the violent erotic scene of jealousy and incest at **Spread 308**. The illustrations to *Cupid and Psyche* (**Spreads 102, 107, 113, 125, 133, 135 and 142**) are among the most charming in the book.

Salomon was more or less house artist to the famous Jean de Tournes (1504–64), printer of this book, and founder of a dynasty of printers. The earliest of the de Tournes printer's marks incorporating a nest of vipers (symbolic of eternity) appears on the title-page, with a Latin motto that may be translated "Avoid doing unto others what you would not wish done to yourself." The earliest version of de Tournes' "prism" or "tetrahedron" device appears at **Spread 327**, with the motto "*Nescit Labi Virtus*" or "Virtue knows no fall." This latter device apparently belonged to Jean de Tournes' nephew (and fellow-printer) Guillaume Gazeau, whose name also appears on the title-page.

The Augsburg physician Hans-Joachim Trautner (1916–2001) was attracted to this book by its publisher. He collected (and published on) the de Tournes family: his bookplate appears on **Spread 2**.