

# An Ass from Oxyrhynchus: *P.Oxy. LXX.4762*, Loukios of Patrae and the Milesian Tales<sup>1</sup>

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## *Summary*

This paper discusses text and authorship of *P.Oxy. LXX.4762*. The papyrus, portraying a woman kissing a donkey, seems to portray a sexually explicit scene similar to that between Lucius turned ass and the matron known from Apuleius *Metamorphoses* 10,21 and *Onos* 51. Although it is in some ways very close to both these scenes in choice of words and content, important discrepancies indicate it is probably not a fragment of the lost Greek original by “Loukios of Patrae”, but more likely a prosimetric Milesian Tale by Aristeides of Miletus. The relationship between novel and Milesian Tale may need to be reassessed.

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<sup>1</sup> This is a revised and updated version of a paper written while I was a graduate student in Oxford in 1999, when Dirk Obbink invited me to work with him on the text of this papyrus. As is usual manner in papyrological editions, Obbink primarily only acknowledged some of my readings and emendations in the *editio princeps*, and I am grateful to the editors of *Ancient Narrative* to allow me to publish this revised version of my contribution. The original version of this paper was written mainly to persuade Obbink that in the papyrus we had a fragment of the lost Greek original by ‘Loukios of Patrae’. Wisely, and as I now think correctly, he toned down these overenthusiastic remarks of a graduate student in the printed edition. Now I myself have changed my initial idea, and acknowledge that a much more complicated and richer tapestry of ass stories was available in the second century AD. Still, many readings, interpretations and supporting evidence found in the *editio princeps*, including e.g. the identification of the fragment as one of the various ass-stories circulating at that time, are based on my original work. I am grateful to Obbink, who kindly allowed me to work on this papyrus with him, the audiences at seminars in Manchester and Swansea, who heard earlier versions of this paper, Ewen Bowie, Stephen Harrison and Malcolm Heath, who commented on it, and importantly the anonymous referees for *Ancient Narrative*, who greatly helped me to improve the paper’s content and clarity.

*List of Key Words*

Apuleius, Aristeides of Miletus, Bestiality in Apuleius, Epitome, Literary Allusions in Apuleius, Loukios of Patrae, *Loukios or the Ass*, Lucian, *Metamorphoses*, *Milesiaka*, Milesian Tales, Novel fragments, *Onos*, Oxyrhynchus, Papyri, Pasiphae, P.Oxy. LXX.4762, Prosimetrum, Pseudo-Lucian, Sexuality in Apuleius, Sisenna, *Spurcum Additamentum*

*Autobiographical Statement*

Regine May is Lecturer in Classics at the University of Leeds. She has published *Apuleius and Drama. The Ass on Stage*. Oxford 2006, as well as articles on women and medicine in the ancient novel, and the prologue of Apuleius' *Metamorphoses*. Current research includes a translation and commentary on Apuleius *Metamorphoses I* for Aris & Phillips.