

## Asinarius, or The Donkey Tale

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### Translator’s Introduction

The Latin narrative poem *Asinarius* (*The Donkey Tale*) was written sometime around 1200. We do not know the identity of its author, but both its form and content seem to suggest someone from the world of the medieval cathedral schools, maybe a teacher or a student looking to regale his classmates with an amusing literary treat. In any case, if we believe the assessment of one medieval German schoolteacher, the poem had become a popular classroom text by the end of the thirteenth century (Hugo von Trimberg 191). Without a doubt, the *Asinarius* is also one of the most fairy tale-like Latin texts to have reached us from the High Middle Ages. So much, in fact, that upon encountering a manuscript of the poem at the Strassburg municipal library, the Brothers Grimm decided to adapt it into German prose for inclusion in the second volume of their *Kinder- und Hausmärchen* (1<sup>st</sup> ed. 1815, No. 144) as “Das Eselein” (“The Little Donkey”) (Ziolkowski 190-191).

In trying to account for the genesis of the *Asinarius*, it has been speculated that its basic plot may have been derived from a popular tale, perhaps of Indian descent. Scholars have referred to two Sanskrit tales in particular, contained in a couple of manuscripts of the *Pančatantra* (*Five Treatises*, Purnabhadra-redaction 1199) and *Simhāsana Dvātrimśikā* (*Thirty-Two Tales from the Throne of Vikramāditya*, redaction ca. 1300), that share several conspicuous motifs with the Latin tale (Le Clerc 432; Rizzardi 140-147; Wesselski 194; Ziolkowski 219-225).

Meanwhile, relatively little scholarly effort has gone into situating the *Asinarius* within its most obvious, direct context of origin, namely the multi-lingual literary field of high medieval Europe.<sup>1</sup> This of course has consequences for how we as modern readers interpret and experience this poem. While from a present day, post-Grimmian perspective, the *Asinarius* might appear to be a rather typical fairy tale, its novelty and sophistication as a work of humorous literature would not have been lost on its earliest audiences. Indeed, only when we approach this poem against the backdrop of contemporaneous European literatures (and iconography), including the Latin tradition as the backbone of medieval schooling, do we begin to see what makes it tick: how it revels in Ovidian language and imagery, how it puts a comical spin both on classical/classicist epic and medieval chivalric romance, how it seemingly subverts bookish proverbs, fables and beast epics before playing its final joke on the reader, and how it cheekily employs Biblical and Patristic phrases and ideas.

Notwithstanding the hermeneutic challenges that come with this poem, readers will be happy to hear that even without taking into account its extensive intertextual games, the *Asinarius* still remains a thoroughly enjoyable read. Whether or not the same can be said of my translation, I will gladly leave up to others' judgment.<sup>2</sup>

A brief note regarding this translation: the Latin text of the *Asinarius* is composed in elegiac distichs, unrhymed couplets that consist of a dactylic hexameter followed by a dactylic pentameter. Its meter is determined not qualitatively (by syllabic stress), but quantitatively (by syllabic length), as is the norm for classical and classicizing Latin poetry. While one could argue that the narrative character of this text makes it a suitable candidate for a translation in prose (like the one by Jan Ziolkowski), I have chosen to retain its poetic aspects. In doing so, I have gone with unrhymed couplets made up of *qualitative* iambic hexameters and pentameters with the potential omission and/or addition of an unstressed syllable respectively at the beginning and ending of each verse. I believe this meter helps

carry the energetic narrative pace of the original, which runs the risk of going slack when stretched out into prose.

The *Asinarius* employs a straightforward Latin and makes only sparing use of rhetorical figures. Clearly, its strength lies less in precious versification and breathtaking flourishes than in its amusing plot and literary play – though the occasional ambiguous phrasings and word placements do add to its comical effect. Hopefully, my English recreation will reflect that as well. This translation is largely based on the most recent critical Latin text edition by Simona Rizzardi (194-251).

### Translation

In days gone by and lands unknown, there lived a king; 1

no page that will reveal his name to us.<sup>3</sup>

The king had found himself a bedfellow and wife

whose nobleness was on a par with his.

But though they had been blessed with royal majesty, 5

with piles of riches adding to their fame,

averse Lucina kept denying them a child,

and so their Venus-games were played in vain.<sup>4</sup>

This pained them both and both were plagued by endless sighs,

because their kingdom did not have an heir. 10

At last the queen, commiserating with her spouse,

repeatedly complained along these lines:

“What will we do? It is no use! I’m tired of life

and sick of always playing nightly games.

I am a wretched woman, who like barren earth 15  
in vain consumes spilt seed inside her furrows.  
Rightly I do think myself a punctured sack  
that swallows eagerly, then spits it out.  
Alas, what good are titles, riches, royal glory,  
if the Fates will not provide an heir?" 20  
And so with endless prayer she begged the pious gods,  
day in day out, that she might be a mother.  
*That* she would, just like she asked – but of an ass;  
indeed, her newborn was a lovely foal!  
It's quite a sight, to see a woman drop a donkey. 25  
Awesome, yes, but awful even more...  
The mother, looking at her young, while joyful once  
to be with child, regretted giving birth.  
"Much rather dam to none than to an ass", she thought  
and ordered he be served up to the fish. 30  
The mother's undeserved command soon reached the king,  
who cried out: "No! This monster shall not die!  
The queen's son" he continued, "shall not die! Indeed,  
I say that he must live, this boy of mine!"  
Whatever god it was who brought our scion here, 35  
the boy shall sit as king upon my throne  
and he will wear his father's crown upon his head,  
and all his father's glory will be his."

Thus on his sire's orders he was raised with honor.

After all, he was the royal heir. 40

He thrived and grew and raised his ears towards the sky;

by now he was a youth of quality.

Throughout the realm they justly called him "Little Lord".

All men at court observed him with respect.

From time to time, he'd tour the towns and see the cities, 45

reveling in his banter and his games.

But mostly he delighted in the lyre's play

and eagerly, Fate willing, sought to learn it.

Often he paid visits to a man of skill,

a famous master in that very art. 50

He went to him and asked him in these very words:

"Dear lyricist, consent to be my tutor!

Teach your Little Lord the art that you possess,

so that he may surpass you in that art."

The lyricist replied to what the ass had said: 55

"What do you ask of me, your servant, lord?

My prince, why ask what you cannot achieve? Alas!

You err, deceive yourself, have idle plans.

You cannot hope to learn this art, because you have

enormous fingers, Little Lord, you do. 60

And if you will allow me here to speak my mind:

you ask, my lord, what Nature has denied.

Without a hand you cannot pluck the lyre's strings.

I surely think they'd snap when touched by hooves.

The ass brays as he will, he cannot hold a tune. 65

A beast of burden harshly sings "hee-haw!"

Thus spoke the troubadour. The donkey winced and snorted,  
barely could subdue his raging heart.

He answered: "Am I not of noble parentage?  
Do you not know I am your lord and prince? 70

From where this sheer presumption of your words, you cur,  
that you should dare to speak to me this way?

Who do you think I am, you lecherous buffoon?  
Do you deny I am the royal heir?"

"My Little Lord," said he, "I don't and never will; 75  
indeed, I trust and know you are my lord!"

"You will obey my orders then without delay –  
if you desire to stay in Father's kingdom.\*"

"Lord, restrain your anger, please!" the servant said.  
"Look, look! I'll gladly do what you command." 80

So from his lyre he brought forth some dulcet ditties,  
which the docile donkey matched with verve.

In hardly any time he grew so good at it,  
that he, the ass, became his master's master.

He would sing like minstrels with his striking voice. 85  
His barnyard thumb played lovely melodies.

When one day he was walking down the riverbank,

the stream revealed his ugly face to him.<sup>5</sup>

Considering his head and ears on top, he said:

“Dear me, I wonder what this guise could mean!” 90

His gaze now slid across his legs and feet. He looked

and was displeased with his entire self.

He gnashed his teeth and driven by a spiteful fury

hissed from his blaspheming mouth these words:

“He is not worth one single as, whatever god 95

it was who molded me and gave me life.<sup>6</sup>

An ass like me can hardly take the royal crown.

They very well can’t call me “King and Ass”.

A crown will never decorate this ass’s brow,

a golden scepter does not fit this hand. 100

Away then with this golden chain around my neck,

these purple fineries around my hide.

Oh, at my father’s death, they’ll keep me from the throne

and see to it I suffer grievously.

Thus better it would be to leave while he’s alive 105

than wait until they run me out by force.”

And so he met up with a servant, one of many,

who had often proved his loyalty.

He opened up his heart to him with all its burdens,

named him his companion for the road. 110

The latter nodded his acceptance to his master,

swearing solemn oaths to be his aide.

The ass then packed him with a load of instruments  
and led his biped with him in the night.

They came onto the ocean shore – lo and behold: 115

a ship! They duly paid the voyage fare.

The sails were raised, they plowed the surface of the sea,  
their little vessel flew upon the winds.

The skipper spoke: “To carry such a prince as you, 118a

my lord, is all the honor I could want.”<sup>7</sup> 118b

The donkey roamed the endless ocean, far and wide,

in search of someplace in the world to live, 120

until at last he longed to see the world’s edge,

where Phoebus’ tired steeds plunge into sea.<sup>8</sup>

A certain king had built his lofty city there,

a noble man of virtue and descent.

He only had one daughter, so the story goes. 125

Apart from her, he had no other heir.

Fortuna and the Fates be willing, he had sanctioned

she would be the heiress to his throne.<sup>9</sup>

The maiden was already past her childhood years:

between her legs she sprouted downy hairs. 130

By now, the nipples on her breasts betrayed that she

would rather have a man to share her bed.

The ass arrived and went on to the royal hall.

He pounded on the door and cried aloud:



“Pray open up the gate to let a pilgrim in! 135

A guest is standing here, so open up!”

The doorman who had heard the donkey’s din replied:

“What is that noise? Who’s there? Where do you come from?

Why do you so rudely ram the royal doorway?

Why do you so brashly beat these doors?” 140

The ass responded: “Open up, I say, and quick!

A noble minstrel’s standing at your door.”

And with his hoof he started plucking at his lyre,

singing dulcet tones, his mouth agape.

The doorman, when he heard that lovely harmony, 145

burst out to see just who and what it was,

to find the figure of a crude, unshapely ass.

It baffled him that he could play so well.

He did not wait, but charged into the royal halls,

so that he could reveal this wondrous sight. 150

“My noble king,” said he, “do I have news for you!

I’ll tell you all about it, if you want.

The strangest minstrel’s standing outside at the door,

the strangest one of all, in my opinion.

My king, this minstrel is a lowly little ass 155

who plays the lyre and can also sing.

He asks to be let in and will at your command.

The king replied: “Well, let him enter then!”

And so the minstrel did, while with his ass’s thumb

he strummed the strings and played some novel tunes. 160  
 No sooner did the king perceive him than he smiled,  
 and soon that smile turned into boundless laughs.  
 The queen, meanwhile, was laughing at her husband's laughter,  
 laughed so hard she could not say a thing.  
 Regardless of their age or standing, they all roared.  
 The court was wholly booming with their laughs. 165  
 While all of them were reveling in the donkey's song  
 the setting sun brought closure to the day.  
  
 A banquet was prepared, according to decorum.  
 Throngs of guests came flowing to the keep. 170  
 The king and queen were seated on the royal bench,  
 the girl sat down along her mother's side.  
 Then those who wore the coat of knighthood took their seat,  
 and somewhat lower, finally, the staff.  
 A certain court official now approached the ass 175  
 to have him take a seat among the servants.  
 "Never! I don't dine with vassals", said the ass.  
 "The rank of servant hardly suits me well.  
 I'm not some common ass or barnyard animal;  
 I'm guided by refined nobility! 180  
 "Then would you rather have a seat among the knights?"  
 "No, never! I don't like that any better.  
 I have always been a guest at royal tables,

perched up high, enjoying lavish meals.”

“So what do you want me to do?” the steward asked. 185

“Appoint me to the table of the king.”

The monarch heard and told the donkey to approach;

the latter came as soon as he was called.

The king gave him a friendly, even playful smile.

“You find my daughter pleasing, little ass?” 190

The donkey raised his head towards the little damsel,

gazed at her and finally replied:

“My word, the very question! King, what do you think?

How in the world could I find her displeasing?

Yes, she’s pleasing, pleasing to me, very pleasing! 195

Whom she does not please, is made of stone.

Delightful is her pallid face imbued with red,

like seeing roses bloom between the lilies.<sup>10</sup>

Lovely is her hair, her alabaster neck...

Her body, too, is pleasing, I must say.” 200

The king asked: “Would you like to be her tablemate?”

to which the exiled ass said in response:

“I’d like that, yes! How she ensnares my wretched heart!

This seat, this place will do just fine for me.

I’d happily have dinner with this little damsel, 205

that is all the honor that I need.

The king spoke: “As you will! You’ll sit down with this maid,

and I decree that one dish feed you both.”

“Oh truly king, you have my gratitude”, he said,

“Because of you, great honor does befall me.” 210

Stepping up the dais, he chose a lofty seat.

The damsel let him sit down by her side.

The little donkey served her well throughout the meal.

He broke the bread and cut the cakes for her.

When she would drink, he offered her the bowls and goblets, 215

afterwards presenting her a napkin.

Why go on and list it all? Suffice to say

that for an ass he did it all quite well.

The maiden was delighted by her tablemate –

although I think she’ll like him even more: 220

he’ll serve her better in her bed than with the bread,

as soon as she is wedded to her dear...

The king was taken by the donkey’s probity,

for he was not as stubborn as a mule.

The knights as well sang praises in the donkey’s honor; 225

all the city deemed he earned its praise.

But after he had spent some time in exile there,

he longed to see his household gods again.

And so he walked into the royal chambers, sadly,

with his head downcast, and started thus: 230

“One’s native soil is usually more sweet than exile;

that which pleases others, pleases me.

If you will be so kind to let me speak my mind:

I'm leaving, king, and bid you my farewell."

To which the king said: "There will be no partings here, 235

we will be torn apart by naught but death.

I swear by Jove that you no longer have that choice

and will not have the chance to leave this place.<sup>11</sup>

Are you not pleased, my son, with our esteem for you?

Are you not pleased to be a son of mine? 240

Pray tell, what troubles you, my son? Why are you sad?

From where this torrent of torment? Please, speak!

You are not just a guest or deemed an exile here;

you are as good as any citizen.

Perhaps you have a thirst for piles of coins, my son? 245

By Hercules, I'll give them without measure!

Surely, it's not clothes and horses that you want,

and all those things that fops desire and crave?

I pledge by all the heavenly and peasant gods:

I'll share my realm with you, if you so want." 250

The ass was not dissuaded by these promises;

he spurned it all for his beloved home.

"I'll give you one more option, son", the king now said.

"If you refuse, you'll always be an ass.

Would you prefer I put my daughter in your arms 255

and that she play some nightly games with you?"

As if he woke up from a dream the donkey cried:

“I must confess that only this would please me.  
 She will be the end to all my doom and gloom,  
 My Door to Happiness, Salvation’s Gate.<sup>12</sup> 260  
 If you will match your words with deeds, oh King of Kings,  
 I’ll call myself superior to Jove.  
 Let Jove in heaven keep his Juno for himself;  
 this Royal Virgin here on earth will do.<sup>13</sup>  
 Let what is yours be yours, my king, keep all of it. 265  
 But let me have the girl, she’s all I want.  
 I’ll be content with nothing else but with this girl.  
 No longer will I mourn my exile, king.  
 She’ll be my homeland, honor, Glory of the Realm,  
 and all the treasure I will ever need.” 270  
 The king replied: “You’ll have the lover I have promised.  
 Only deign to be my son-in-law.”  
 And so His Royal Majesty called for his daughter.  
 She obeyed and came. Her sire asked:  
 “My princess, would you like to wed a youthful man? 275  
 If you so want, my girl, then marry him!”  
 As he said this, the maiden blushed, as was her way,  
 and turned her shining eyes towards the ground.  
 At first, she did not speak, but briefly thought about  
 what she would say in answer to her father. 280  
 Finally, she gave her mouth some rein and charged:  
 “I have to listen to my father’s word.

Indeed, my father's will be done and not my own.

My father, I commend myself to you.

I'll wed this man to whom I'm promised, if you wish. 285

You'll be his in-law, as he will be yours."

With joy the king spoke to the donkey: "Take this girl  
and be her husband, as she'll be your wife."

The ass received the maiden with her father's blessing  
and the king decreed a wedding date. 290

The city was adorned and shone with majesty;  
it outperformed the firmament by far.

Like bees a throng of entertainers swarmed together.

Masters in their art, they gave their best.

An acrobat with feet aloft and head down low 295  
was walking round and made her hands her feet.

Then later on, the commoners arrived to dine.

The day became a font of merriment.

As Hesperus brought forth the hour of sleep  
which couples rightly spend by making love,<sup>14</sup> 300

the ass stepped eagerly into the maiden's room  
so that he could caress her tender breast.

He came into the room of his beloved girl  
in which the king had had two candles placed.

So as to spy on what the ass and girl would do, 305

a servant spent the night behind the curtain.

When he thought that all had gone and none were left

the donkey barred the doorway to the room.

The groom then suddenly took off his donkey cloak.

The old skin gone, he was a man made new. 310

The maiden saw her gorgeous husband's noble form,

which used to be ungainly to behold.

She marveled at the wondrous beauty of her spouse

and headlong rushed into the snares of Venus.

Then they put their arms around each other's necks, 315

surrendering their mouths to one another.

Swiftly, he jumped into bed; the girl pursued.

What happened next, they and their mattress know –

although I hardly think the hidden servant missed

what kind of games were played there in the night. 320

The youth contained his lustful fervor for a while,

while she performed her wifely tasks for him.

When rubicund Aurora pushed the shadows back,

he broke out of his bride's embrace with haste.<sup>15</sup>

He then put on his asinine disguise again 325

and turned into the ass he was before.

The king came knocking on the door and cried: "Come on,

your father's at the door, girl, open up!"

She quickly took away the bars and greeted him:



“Oh, you are more than welcome, father mine! 330  
 Oh father, rightly I do give you countless thanks.  
 Because of you, I’ve wed this dearest man.”  
 “Is he so dear to you, your husband?” asked the king.  
 She beamed with joy and told in him in response:  
 “In all the world, there’s none as dear to me as he. 335  
 I truly love this man with all my heart.”  
 But she let nothing slip about his proper form,  
 about the man beneath the ugly hide.  
 He left his son-in-law and daughter presently;  
 he took his leave, got up and left the room. 340  
 The zealous servant followed in the king’s pursuit –  
 the one who’d spent the night behind the drapes,  
 ordained to be a nighttime watchman by the king  
 to spy on what the newlyweds would do.  
 Thus, eager to expose what he had heard and seen, 345  
 he trickled it into His Kingship’s ears:  
 “Triumphant king, exultant king, most noble king,  
 please deign to listen your servant’s words.  
 Last night, as I was lying hid behind the drapes,  
 I saw a truly wondrous thing unfold: 350  
 Your son-in-law, believing he was there alone  
 by night with no one else besides his wife,  
 at once took off his customary donkey skin  
 and looked just like an emperor’s effigy.

Need I detail, my lord, what they did after that? 355

Just know that they made love throughout the night.

And when the groom had bid his games and bride farewell,

he put his former skin back on again.

Now lord, if you would like to see what I've described,

look here, just try it for yourself this night: 360

tonight, you'll secretly proceed into the room

in which your son-in-law and daughter rest.

Then after you have found the donkey skin in there,

you take it and you throw it in the hearth.

And when the roaring fire has consumed that rag, 365

he'll stay a man until his dying day."

"Just so!" the king said, "I will heed your words tonight.

Perhaps this night will grant my heart's desire."

Thus in the darkest night he went into the room,

and look: the pair was lying on the bed. 370

As slumber often enters after making love,

they both were overcome by deepest sleep.

The king stole ever closer to their resting place,

where he discerned a handsome man recline.

He quickly snatched away the cast-off donkey skin 375

and left his son-in-law in ignorance.

He ordered that a stove be lit with ample wood

in which he had the skin burned into ash.

Because the king desired to see the boy's response  
 he stayed awake all night outside his door. 380  
 Come morning, when the boy had slept enough, he rose  
 and wanted to put on his donkey skin.  
 Not finding it and driven by tremendous grief,  
 he anxiously considered running off.  
 He snuck outside and ran into the waiting king. 385  
 "Where to, my boy? What's ailing you? What's wrong?  
 Be sure of it: we will not let your plan succeed.  
 All manners of escape will be closed off.  
 Do not protest the taking of your donkey skin,  
 for you are such a fine and well-groomed man. 390  
 As long as I'm alive, I'll share my realm with you.  
 Then after I am gone, you'll have it all."  
 His son-in-law said: "Yes, I will remain with you  
 and pray that what has started well ends well."  
  
 Accordingly, the state was split in two: a part 395  
 went to the youth, the other to the elder.  
 After this division, not a year went by  
 before the old king fell beneath Death's sword.  
 Now Neoptolemus was monarch of the realm,  
 for he alone laid claim to all of it.<sup>16</sup> 400  
 Moreover, he obtained his father's throne, so that  
 as king he ruled two kingdoms of two kings.

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Notes

<sup>1</sup> I am currently working on a monograph, entitled *Fairy Tales and the Latin Tradition: The Case of the Donkey Prince*, that will situate the *Asinarius* in this European literary context. For the connection between this poem and the twelfth- and thirteenth-century text corpus now designated as the “Latin elegiac comedy,” also see Rizzardi 150-161. For the purpose of this translation, I will limit my notes mostly to basic clarifications regarding classical names that appear in the text.

<sup>2</sup> To my knowledge, this is the first attempt at an English *verse* translation of the poem. For one in English prose, see Ziolkowski 341-350. Other translations exist in Dutch (Praet, *Het verhaal*), German (Ackerman; Langosch) and Italian (Rizzardi 194-251). This is not counting the Grimms’ version, which on the spectrum between translation and adaptation tends more towards the latter.

<sup>3</sup> The manuscript tradition offers two different readings: “pagina nulla docet” (“no page will teach”) and “fabula nulla docet” (“no tale will teach”). In her text edition, Rizzardi opts for “fabula” (with its etymological connotation of “to speak”), though she admits her choice to be arbitrary, motivated mainly by her adherence to the notion that the *Asinarius* is the adaptation of an orally transmitted tale, and that it better suits its fairy tale-like quality (195n2). Ziolkowski sees the divide itself as an attestation to the “ambivalence about [the poem’s] fundamental orality or literacy [...], caught between the written and the spoken” (225). My own choice for “pagina nulla docet” stems from the fact that this phrase also appears in Simon Aurea Capra’s *Ylias* (early 1150s), which I have argued elsewhere (Praet, *Trojan Ass* 167-170 and *Pagina nulla* 21-25) seems to be one of the *Asinarius*’s hypotexts.

<sup>4</sup> Lucina is the Roman goddess of childbirth, Venus the goddess of love and sex.

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<sup>5</sup> This is one of those moments in which the story's logic seems to falter somewhat. Is it only now that the Prince (fully) realizes that he is shaped like a donkey?

<sup>6</sup> An as is a Roman coin of little value. While the pun does work in English, it is less pronounced in the original Latin (cf. *as*/"as" and *asinus*/"ass").

<sup>7</sup> This couplet appears in only one branch of the manuscript tradition. I have followed the text editor's verse numbering.

<sup>8</sup> Phoebus Apollo is the Roman god who in a chariot drawn by flying horses pulls the sun across the skies. Cf. Virgil's *Aeneid* XI vss. 912-914 and Ovid's *Metamorphoses* VII vss. 325-325.

<sup>9</sup> While Fortuna is the Roman personification of fickle, ever-changing fortune, the Fates decide each mortal's immutable destiny.

<sup>10</sup> This particular description of the princess' appearance can be traced back to classical poets such as Virgil (e.g., *Aeneid* XII vss. 68-69) and Ovid (e.g., *Amores* II.5 vs. 37) and is commonplace in high medieval love lyric and courtly romance. Note how the girl's pallor is not considered as sickly, but as an asset of beauty.

<sup>11</sup> Jove/Jupiter is the Roman god of thunder and king of the gods.

<sup>12</sup> Along with "Royal Virgin" in vs. 264, these epithets attributed to the princess are more typically reserved for the Virgin Mary.

<sup>13</sup> Juno is the Roman goddess of marital life and queen of the gods.

<sup>14</sup> Hesperus is the personified Evening Star.

<sup>15</sup> Aurora is the Roman goddess of daybreak. We might ask ourselves why the Prince does not realize any earlier that he can take his donkey skin off, why he would want to put it back on, and why later on in the story, he panics when he cannot find it. In any case, the poem does not tell.

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<sup>16</sup> Only now, the Donkey Prince's name is revealed. Or is it just an ironic nickname given to him by the narrator? In any case, this may be a playful over-the-top allusion to the classical epic hero/villain prince Neoptolemus, son of Achilles. Virgil (*Aeneid* II vss. 259-264, 547-558) recounts how Neoptolemus is one of the warriors hiding inside the Trojan Horse, who in this "equine disguise" finds entrance to the city of Troy under much revelry, works his way into the citadel, brutally murders king Priam with his sword, and takes the latter's daughter-in-law for his unwilling concubine (in one famous Old French telling of the story by Benoît de Sainte-Maure, ca. 1165: his daughter) (Praet, *Trojan Ass* 170-172 and *Pagina nulla* 26-27).