

Paideia at Play: Learning and Wit in Apuleius

ANCIENT NARRATIVE

Supplementum 11

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Barkhuis Zuurstukken 37 9761 KP Eelde the Netherlands
Tel. +31 50 3080936 Fax +31 50 3080934
info@ancientnarrative.com www.ancientnarrative.com

Paideia at Play:
Learning and Wit in Apuleius

edited by

Werner Riess

BARKHUIS PUBLISHING &
GRONINGEN UNIVERSITY LIBRARY
GRONINGEN 2008

Book design: Barkhuis
Cover Design: Nynke Tiekstra, Noordwolde
Printed by: Drukkerij Giethoorn ten Brink

ISBN-13 978 90 77922 415

Image on cover: detail of folio 93 v. of the *Editio Princeps* of the collected works of Apuleius (Andrea Giovanni de'Bussi, Roma 1469: Sweynheym and Pannartz). Folio 93 v. shows the end of the *Florida* and the opening of the *Apology*. Location: The Special Collections department of the Leiden University Library.

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Homer in Apuleius' *Apology*

VINCENT HUNINK
Radboud University, Nijmegen

For many Greek authors that belong to the Second Sophistic, Homer counted as one of the most important ancient authorities: he was simply the Poet *par excellence*.¹ Things were hardly different for the Latin authors of the second century CE, who may be considered the Latin representatives of the same movement, notably Apuleius of Madauros. Throughout his works references and allusions to Homer abound.

The present contribution focuses on one of Apuleius' so-called 'minor works': the lengthy speech *Pro se de magia*, commonly known as the *Apology*—while also paying attention to the collection of various epideictic rhetorical fragments entitled *Florida*.² In the *Apology*, we can detect interesting traces of Homer. More importantly, Apuleius seems to make a particularly clever use of Homeric texts and subtexts. These references form part of his overall strategy to turn a self-defence into a literary text that is not only erudite but also witty. The present contribution focuses on these literary aspects of the speech, with particular attention to its teasing, playful qualities.³

¹ Cf. Kindstrand 1973. For literary culture in the Second Sophistic, cf. e.g., Borg 2004a; in general recently Whitmarsh 2005; for Apuleius and the Second Sophistic, cf. Sandy 1997.

² For the *Apology*, cf. Hunink 1997a and b; for the *Florida* Hunink 2001a. English translations from either text are from Harrison – Hilton – Hunink 2001, occasionally with minor changes.

³ Only recently, the *Apology* has begun to be studied primarily as a literary text; cf. Sallmann 1995 and Hunink 1997a, 24–27. For the *Apology* as a typical piece of the Second Sophistic, cf. notably Sandy 1997, 131–148 and Harrison 2000, 86–88. Recent literary studies of the speech include Schindel 2000, who argues that it shows important influences of Plato's *Apology* in argumentation, perspective, and general strategy, Deremetz 2004 on connections of the *Apology* with Quintilian and Philostratus' *Life of Apollonius of Tyana*, and Asztalos 2005 on rhetorical strategies in the *exordium* (1–3), which mirrors the composition of the speech as a whole. On the other hand, some scholars continue to focus on the documentary and historical features of the *Apology*, notably in the fields of

Quoting Greek

One might be tempted to doubt whether Apuleius, as a second century orator from Africa, knew the Greek texts of Homer at all.⁴ Certainly he knew of Homer's reputation as the number one poet. In the *Apology* Homer is first referred to without his name as 'the foremost poet' (*poeta praecipuus*; *Apol.* 7,4), a qualification that is literally repeated in 32,5. At two other places, he is actually named and called 'Homer, the poet who knows so much, or rather, who is the outstanding expert on all possible themes' (*Homerum, poetam multiscium uel potius cunctarum rerum adprime peritum*; 31,5), and 'the most reliable authority of antiquity, Homer' (*omnis vetustatis certissimus auctor Homerus*; 40,4). Similar terms may be found in the *Florida*, where Homer is introduced simply and anonymously as 'the excellent poet' (*poeta egregius*; *Fl.* 2,7) and mentioned once more by name (15,21).⁵ Such honourable mentions prove that Homer's reputation as a source of poetry, wisdom, and knowledge was well established even in the Latin west of the Roman Empire.

Any remaining doubts about Apuleius' acquaintance with Homeric Greek are easily dispelled after as little as three pages of the *Apology*. Having introduced his speech and his case in general, Apuleius starts dealing with various minor charges that have been leveled against him. His main rhetorical strategy here is to make the most of apparently casual remarks by his opponents, to ridicule what they brought forward, and to launch eloquent and erudite attacks against them, bringing in as much of ancient philosophy, science, and literature as he possibly can.⁶

magic and Roman law: cf. Hammerstaedt et al. 2002, 285–350; Rives 2003. See also his and Riess' contributions to this volume; further McCreight 2004 (on Apuleius' use of a magic *historiola* in *Apol.* 37, the story about Sophocles in court). The historicity of the speech is also discussed at some length by Riemer 2006, who, interestingly, pleads *against* it in the end. For historical use of the *Met.*, cf. e.g., Riess 2001. In Puccini-Delbey 2004a, Apuleius is taken seriously as a Platonic philosopher.

⁴ The presence of Homer in Apuleius' works has not attracted much scholarly attention until recently. For some general remarks, cf. e.g., Schlam 1992, 19–21. Some cases of Homeric intertextuality in Apuleius' *Met.* are discussed e.g., in Harrison 1990 and Harrison 1998, 58–60.

⁵ For mention of Homer in other works by Apuleius, cf. notably *Soc.* 17 and 24 and *Met.* 10,30 (261,4): *vates Homerus*.

⁶ For Apuleius' strategy, cf. the detailed observations in Hunink 1997b *passim*. A convenient paraphrase and analysis of the whole speech is provided by Harrison 2000, 39–88, esp. 42–50; cf. further Schenk 2002, 23–39.

The first of these allegations concerns the claim that he is 'a philosopher who is handsome and who, in both Greek and Latin... is a very skilful speaker' (*philosophum formosum et tam Graece quam Latine... disertissimum*; *Apol.* 4,1). Apuleius' reaction is rather surprising (*Apol.* 4,3–5):

I wish they were true, these serious charges of beauty and eloquence! It would have been easy for me to answer what Homer's Alexander says to Hector:

'not to be flung aside are the glorious gifts of the gods, even all that of themselves they give, whereas by his own will could no man win them',⁷

that is, the splendid gifts of the gods should by no means be rejected: it is they who grant them and many who wish to receive them do not get them. That is what I would have answered about my 'beauty'.

Rather than directly denying the point, the speaker teasingly argues that he would like it to be true, because on the authority of a Homeric line from the *Iliad*, such divine gifts would deserve one's gratitude more than anything else. The quotation from the *Iliad* is given in Greek. This partly explains the following paraphrase in the text, for Apuleius' African second-century audience could hardly be expected to have recognized the reference.⁸ That is, the Greek seems to have been inserted to make a deep impression upon the audience: the speaker presents himself as a man both well versed in World Literature and willing to translate its contents to his contemporary, somewhat less well educated countrymen.

Meanwhile, the elite members of his audience, notably judge Claudius Maximus (proconsul of Africa in 158/9 CE) who presided over the trial, may have appreciated and understood not only the Greek as such, but also the Latin explanation. He and others could feel themselves as being on the same high level as the defendant, far above the normal people attending the trial. We could easily imagine Maximus smiling at the Greek quotation which he, of course, immediately recognized. The impression made by the speaker on experts must have been, therefore, hardly less great. Thus, by using the

⁷ Hom. *Il.* 3,65–66, translated by A. Murray (Loeb Classical Library), with a small change. Translated passages from Homer later in this article are equally from Murray's Loeb edition.

⁸ For the use of Greek language in Roman Africa, cf. Hunink 2001a, 117 on *Fl.* 9,29: *tam Graece quam Latine*, with further references.

Greek original text, Apuleius is relating to different groups in his audience in different ways at the same time.

Such complex use of Greek quotations, intended for various groups among the audience, can be found throughout the *Apology*.⁹ In addition, numerous Greek words and titles are scattered throughout the text, enhancing the general impression of erudition and higher education. Since Apuleius' other works do not employ Greek to such an extent,¹⁰ this must be considered a deliberate strategy.

Alexander Associations

The line from the *Iliad* deserves some further attention. Being the first quotation in Greek and the first reference to Homer in the speech, we can expect it to be, in a way, programmatic: this quotation reveals the defendant's rhetorical strategy.

First, we can observe that Apuleius explicitly identifies himself with the mythological figure of Paris. This inevitably brings in the connotation of surpassing beauty for which Paris was universally known, that is, the very quality Apuleius has been accused of and which he so strongly rejects.¹¹ To relate to none but Paris in defending oneself against the allegation of being handsome is surprising, to say the least.

One may also wonder why Apuleius calls him *Alexander* rather than *Paris*. The answer may be simply that he follows Homer, who uses both names indiscriminately, and who introduces Paris' direct speech at *Il.* 3,59–75 with the former name: Ἀλεξάνδρος θεοειδής. But perhaps there is more to it: Apuleius may deliberately be playing with the name of *Alexander the Great*, a truly famous historical figure considerably nearer in time, who may well have been better known to Apuleius' African audience than Paris. Alexander the Great was a popular theme in Second Sophistic literature in

⁹ To mention the most important cases, there will follow Greek poetic quotations of Solon (9,9), epigrams attributed to Plato (10,8–10), Crates (22,5), and an anonymous verse (88,6), as well as Greek prose quotations of Plato's *Alcibiades* (25,11) and *Laws* (65,5 and 7), and a Greek letter of Apuleius' wife Pudentilla (83,1). See also Harrison's contribution to this volume.

¹⁰ In fact, neither *Fl.* nor *Soc.* contains any Greek at all.

¹¹ In his commentary on the *Iliad* passage, Kirk 1985, 273 remarks that Paris actually did choose the gifts of the gods by assigning the prize in the beauty contest to Aphrodite. Paris' well known love of beauty adds to the irony of the *Apology* passage.

general.¹² The great general and conqueror was celebrated, among many other things, for his physical beauty. Apuleius deals at some length with him in *Fl.* 7, a section devoted to Alexander's obsessive care with his public image. Here, Alexander's physical beauty is described in some detail.¹³ Surely this physicality and concern with public image is a highly relevant element in the *Apology* passage as well.

Of course, Apuleius cannot have intended to refer to Alexander the Great at the first level of his reference in *Apol.* 4,3. What I would suggest, though, is that he deliberately alludes to both Paris and Alexander the Great, bringing in positive associations of both characters and perhaps even blending their images in the eyes of some members of the audience.

Comparing oneself to Paris is daring enough, one would say, but the intertextual play reaches even further. Implicitly a comparison is suggested here between Apuleius' wife Pudentilla and Paris' wife, the legendary Helen, whose abduction by Paris constituted the main cause for the Trojan War. This complimentary and comic association will no doubt occur to any reader or listener who is even faintly familiar with the story of Troy as told in the *Iliad*. The attentive reader or listener, or a possible second reader, will observe that later in the *Apology*, Apuleius will consistently describe his wife Pudentilla in rather less complimentary terms as 'not a beautiful young girl but an average-looking mother of children' (73,4) and 'a widow of average looks but more than average years' (92,5). Apuleius did not marry her out of greed or lust, he then argues, but in compliance with a request by her son and on account of a sense of a philosopher's duty. So the notion of Pudentilla as Helen sharply contrasts with the picture drawn of her in the rest of the speech. This gives further depth and wit to the intertextual reference.¹⁴

The equation of Apuleius with Paris and of Pudentilla with Helen casts a dubious light upon his role. For Paris is almost invariably seen in antiquity as the culprit, whose behaviour led to catastrophe for his people: his seduction of Helen and her abduction caused war and destruction. Surely, these are worrying associations for a person standing on trial for seducing and

¹² Cf. Sandy 1997, 64–66.

¹³ Cf. *Fl.* 7,8 on Alexander's idealized portrait, showing in all its representations 'the same fierce and martial energy, the same noble and distinguished quality, the same vigorous and youthful beauty, and the same grace in his elevated forehead'. This may have made Apuleius think of himself, too.

¹⁴ Elsewhere in the speech there are obvious allusions to Pudentilla acting like Penelope, with the implication that Apuleius himself is like Odysseus. Cf. Hunink 1997b, 181–182 on *Apol.* 68,4–6. The latest study on Pudentilla is De Marre 2004, who argues that it is quite likely that she was a well-educated matron, much as Apuleius depicts her.

misleading a rich widow by magical means in order to obtain her ample dowry.

Finally, it is relevant to read somewhat further in the Homeric passage. For Paris has more to say than his one line about the ‘glorious gifts of the gods’. Answering some harsh criticism of Hector, he politely rejects the charge and even challenges his brother to a duel: ‘and whichever of us twain shall win, and prove him the better man, let him duly take *all the wealth and the woman*, and bear them to his home’ (Hom. *Il.* 3,71–72; my italics). This seems a perfect Homeric subtext for a defiant Roman defendant in court, who scolds his accuser for acting from greed and jealousy.¹⁵

On closer scrutiny, the innocent looking reference to a line of the *Homericus Alexander* evokes manifold associations and links that must have impressed readers familiar with Homer. Some of these seem pleasant and comic, others ironic or even daringly provocative. The overall effect must have been one of amazement and amusement alike.

Wall of Teeth

Some other references to Homer in the *Apology* seem rather more straightforward and less playfully layered. For instance, after the ‘charge’ of beauty, there is the allegation that Apuleius wrote a poem about brushing teeth. Apuleius not only quotes the poem in question, a funny Catullan-style poem of eight hendecasyllabi, but also defends the practice of brushing one’s teeth and oral hygiene in general. In the course of such an argument, a half-serious reference to the well known Homeric phrase of the ἔρκος ὀδόντων, the ‘wall of teeth’¹⁶ comes in almost naturally (*Apol.* 7,4–6):

Every human activity is preceded by speech that, as the great poet says, ‘departs from the wall of the teeth’. Suppose a speaker using a similarly lofty style were standing here, he would say in his own manner that those particularly who cherish the gentle art of speaking need to impart

¹⁵ The relevance of the Homeric context, deliberately brought into play here, is also mentioned by Schenk 2002, 50: as the Homeric lines argue that beauty and heroic courage are compatible, the Latin speaker transposes this tension to his own situation, stating that beauty can be combined with the profession of a philosopher. This analysis is correct but seems to miss the irony and playfulness of the Apuleian passage. Similarly, Puccini-Delbey 2004a, 228–233 (not mentioning the Homeric quotation) considers the *Apology* passage as a sincere philosophical defence of beauty and eloquence.

¹⁶ Cf. Hom. *Od.* 1,64 and many other instances.

greater attention to their mouth than to any other part of their bodies, since it is the forecourt of the soul, the door of speech, the assembly point of thoughts. But if you ask me, I would just say that nothing suits a free and noble man as little as a dirty mouth.

By cleverly alluding to the Homeric pre-text, Apuleius can show his erudition and invite his audience to recognize the familiar image, as well as bring in the Homeric authority, while also making fun of grandiloquent speakers using great words for trivial causes, such as his opponents, and distancing himself from them. It is a nice little game which the speaker is playing here, which is easy to follow and to appreciate for most of his audience.¹⁷

On a more intriguing note, Apuleius again refers to Homer in the context of his discussion on 'poverty', yet another allegation leveled against him, which prompts him to defend it as something properly good and positive. Greek tradition too, would seem to confirm this (*Apol.* 18,6–8):

Poverty, I say, is the age-old, universal founder of communities and inventor of arts, destitute of moral offences, but bountiful with glory, and praised in every manner by all nations. Among the Greeks this same poverty is honest in Aristides, kind in Phocion, valiant in Epaminondas, wise in Socrates, and eloquent in Homer. For the Romans, the same poverty founded their Empire from the start, and for this reason even today they sacrifice to her in pottery vessels and bowls.

As the context shows, the rhetorical message presented here is exclusively positive: poverty is intimately connected with virtues such as wisdom, honesty, and courage, and is therefore to be recommended. But how does Homer come in here? Why is poverty 'eloquent in Homer' (*paupertas... in Homero disertata*)? Since Apuleius does not elaborate on this point, we have to guess.¹⁸

The normal Greek word for poverty, *πενία*, occurs only once in the Homeric corpus: *Od.* 14,157, where the anonymous Odysseus assures the swineherd Eumaeus that 'Odysseus' will come home to Ithaca, and asks for a reward as soon as this will come true, not accepting anything beforehand: 'for hateful in my eyes as the gates of Hades is that man, who, yielding to the stress of poverty, tells a deceitful tale' (*Od.* 14,156–157). There seems to

¹⁷ Elsewhere in Apuleius' works, the famous expression is varied twice: cf. *Fl.* 15,23: *murum candentium dentium*; and *Pl.* 1,14: *dentium vallum*. On Homeric metaphors for teeth, tongue, and words, cf. further Griffith 1995.

¹⁸ For the passage on poverty, see Thomas McCreight's contribution to this volume.

be a certain irony in the Homeric passage by itself: here we see Odysseus, the canny liar,¹⁹ detesting lies and in all honesty predicting something that will actually come true. But it seems unlikely that Apuleius alludes to this specific passage: it is not so famous that it could be easily identified by just two words, and the Latin context offers no further signs in support of this or any other specific passage.

It seems better, therefore, to interpret the text as a rather general reference to Odysseus, who during much of the *Odyssey* is in the situation of a poor man (a shipwrecked sailor at the court of the Phaeaceans, a ‘beggar’ on arrival at Ithaca) and invariably beguiles everybody with his persuasive tales, in which truth and fiction freely merge.

If this last suggestion is relevant, the *Apology* passage would, again, gain in ambivalence for the expert reader or listener. For the notion of Odysseus as a *deceitful* speaker is somewhat disturbing if we consider a situation in court where a speaker is eloquently defending himself. Whoever associates himself with Odysseus brings in positive associations of practical virtue, ingeniousness and wisdom,²⁰ but also associations of lies, unreliability and manipulation—surely not the qualities any defendant wishes to be credited with.

Again we would have Apuleius deliberately alluding to a Homeric sub-text that for an informed reader seems to be not quite fitting for the judicial circumstances evoked in the *Apology*. Such a daring, provocative play to score off his opponents may well have been appreciated as highly witty and amusing.

Magic

Leaving aside one or two less interesting references to Homer in the *Apology*,²¹ I finally would like to analyse a cluster of Homeric intertextual ele-

¹⁹ For Odysseus as a teller of both true and false tales, cf. e.g., Emlyn-Jones 1998.

²⁰ Cf. *Soc.* 24, the final section of *Soc.*, which presents the image of Odysseus as a symbol of profound wisdom. Cf. Baltes et al. 2004, notes 263–273 with further literature and Harrison 2000, 172. However, such praise of Odysseus is clearly adapted to the purpose of *Soc.*, a practical philosophical discourse. In other Roman genres, the image of Odysseus can vary considerably. Cf. Schmitzer 2005, 43–48. On Odysseus in Latin literature in general, cf. also Farrell 2004.

²¹ For the sake of completeness these references are: *Apol.* 22,4–5 a humorous Greek quotation from the Cynic philosopher Crates, who parodied a Homeric line on Crete (*Od.* 19,72) by adapting it to his purpose (*flexis ad hoc Homericis uersibus*); 30,11 a casual

ments in *Apol.* 31. The larger context here (chapters 29–41)²² is the accusation that Apuleius has provided himself with fish for magical purposes to bewitch some innocent victims. The speaker rejects the accusation and ridicules the claim at great length, suggesting that all known magical practices involve neither fish nor any marine elements at all but, by contrast, natural elements of the earth, such as certain herbs, twigs, or small animals. His denial of 'fish magic' is truly amazing, given the wealth of evidence from antiquity about this kind of magic.²³ Given Apuleius' knowledge of ancient magic, manifest in the *Apology* as a whole, his outright denial of what must have seemed established fact to all seems an effective rhetorical move. It reduces his opponents to silence, for if they offered solid evidence on the existence of fish magic, they would prove their own familiarity with the phenomenon.

To underscore the general point on magic, the authority of Homer is adduced (*Apol.* 31,5–8):

That poet who knows so much, or rather, who is the outstanding expert on all possible themes, attributed all effective medicine not to the sea, but to the earth, in his following description of a witch:

'all the herbs the wide earth nourishes she knew'.²⁴

And similarly at another place in his poems:

'she, for whom the grain-giving land produces herbs, many wholesome, many baneful'.²⁵

Homeric characters never use anything from the sea or anything fishy for treatment with drugs: neither Proteus for his appearance, nor Odysseus for his pit, nor Aeolus for his bag, nor Helen for her mixing-bowl, nor Circe for her cup, nor Venus for her girdle. You appear to be the only ones in history who transpose the powers of herbs, roots, twigs, and peb-

mention of Homer along with Theocritus and Orpheus as rich literary sources for information about magic involving herbs; and 40,4 a simple and unambiguous allusion to a passage in the *Odyssey* where the blood from a wound of Odysseus is stopped by means of an incantation, the reference being to *Od.* 19,455–458.

²² For the first part of the section (*Apol.* 30–35), cf. now Masselli 2004, who concentrates on Apuleius' use of euphemisms in naming some fish.

²³ The evidence is collected and discussed by Abt 1908, 61–157. Cf. also a possibly magical ritual involving fish in Apul. *Met.* 1,24–25 with *GCA* (Keulen 2007a), 427–429 and 449 ad loc.

²⁴ Hom. *Il.* 11,741.

²⁵ Hom. *Od.* 4,229–230.

bles, in some sort of upheaval of nature, from the highest mountains to the sea and sew them deep into the bellies of fish.

The first Homeric reference seems unproblematic. *Il.* 11,741 describes the specific knowledge of Agamede, the daughter of king Augeas. She was noted for her skill at using herbs for healing.²⁶ Her name does not occur elsewhere in Homer, and she may therefore be called a minor Homeric character. In the second quotation, things are rather different. Almost imperceptibly, Apuleius gives it a twist by omitting the beginning of the first line. The Greek line with some context reads as follows (*Hom. Od.* 4,227–230):

τοῖα Διὸς θυγάτηρ ἔχε φάρμακα μητιόεντα,
 ἔσθλά, τὰ οἱ Πολύδαμνα πόρεν, Θῶνος παράκοιτις
 Αἴγυπτίη, τῇ πλεῖστα φέρει ζείδωρος ἄρουρα
 φάρμακα, πολλὰ μὲν ἔσθλά μεμιγμένα πολλὰ δὲ λυγρὰ

Such cunning drugs had the daughter of Zeus, drugs of healing, which Polydamna, the wife of Thon, had given her, a woman of Egypt, for there the earth, the giver of grain, bears greatest store of drugs, many that are healing when mixed, and many that are baneful.

From this passage Apuleius quotes only the last words, starting with τῇ in line 229. This word, however, cannot mean ‘for whom’ (for the witch) as the *Apology* passage seems to suggest. Surely it is a relative pronoun with Αἴγυπτίη, an adjective referring to Polydamna, the wife of Thon. But the Homeric passage explicitly refers to the soothing and healing quality of the herbs she has given, whereas the relative clause refers to beneficial *and* evil herbs. Therefore, the connection of the relative pronoun is a little more complex: it refers more broadly to Egypt, the leading land of magic producing all kinds of herbs, and it should probably be translated as ‘where’.

Even if this subtle distinction has escaped Apuleius, and no deliberate manipulation of the Homeric text is to be assumed, there is a striking element in the quotation itself. It acknowledges the existence of harmful magic for the first time in the entire *Apology*, after one third of the whole text has consistently denied and ridiculed it. Of course, most people in the audience knew better: malevolent magic must have been as common and as widespread in Africa as anywhere else in the Roman world.

²⁶ The translation of the Latin *saga* as ‘witch’ may sound somewhat too negative; the sense ‘wise woman’, also given in OLD s.v. seems better here.

Better still, the original Greek passage pictures a scene involving none other than Helen, who at the time of the Homeric narrative has returned to Sparta with her first husband Menelaus. For it is Helen (mentioned in line 219) who administers the soothing drug, mixed in wine, 'to quiet all pain and strife, and bring forgetfulness of every ill' (*Od.* 4,220–221). Here we would not see Apuleius practicing magic, but Helen, the woman who has been equated shortly before with his own wife, Pudentilla: a surprising reversal of roles.

Those who knew the *Odyssey* text used here and who also remembered the distinct allusion to Helen as the woman of Paris in *Apology* 4 must have admired the orator's superb and cunning handling of the Greek to make it serve his purposes in producing a dazzling literary and rhetorical show. It may have produced a respectful laugh from the most erudite members of the audience.

Literary Play

Finally, no less than six Homeric passages are referred to in the rest of the quoted passage from *Apol.* 31, each allegedly involving non-marine magic. The episode of Proteus adopting different forms is found in *Od.* 4,382–569. Odysseus digs a pit in the ground to prepare for his descent into the underworld in *Od.* 11,23–50; Aeolus' bag of winds occurs in *Od.* 10,19–22; Helen adds a drug to wine in *Od.* 4,219–32 (the passage from which two lines were quoted above in the Latin text); Circe's harmful potion is mixed and given to Odysseus' comrades in *Od.* 10,233–243; finally, the magic girdle of Aphrodite is mentioned in *Il.* 14,214–23.²⁷

As if to exaggerate his provocative play with Homeric subtexts, Apuleius has collected six well known Homeric stories which do not literally testify to the existence of marine magic (that is, magic involving fish), but in which the sea is never distant. Proteus is a sea-god from the land of Egypt (!), whose metamorphoses²⁸ take place on the shore. At one moment he even transforms himself into 'flowing water' (ὄγρον ὕδωρ, *Od.* 4,458). In the second passage, Odysseus performs his magic ritual at the shore of the river

²⁷ Other Homeric passages involving magic could have been mentioned. Cf. Abt 1908, 169 for some relevant passages not referred to in the *Apology*.

²⁸ Surprisingly, Proteus, the very mythological symbol of metamorphosis, does not occur in Apuleius' novel *Metamorphoses*. He is mentioned, however, in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, e.g., 8,731–737 and 11,249–256.

Oceanus (*Od.* 11,21), and three of the four substances poured into the pit are fluids (milk with honey, wine, and water, only the fourth item being ‘earth-like’: barley meal); the sacrifice continues and involves blood of sheep killed by Odysseus on the spot (line 36).²⁹ Aeolus, who hands his bag of winds to Odysseus, is located explicitly at sea, on a floating island (*Od.* 10,3), and the hero will be able to use the winds for a quick passage with his ship crossing the sea. Finally, the girdle of Aphrodite remains much of a mystery in Homer’s text, but it is said that in it there are ‘all manner of allurements’, such as ‘love’, ‘desire’, ‘dalliance’, and ‘beguilement that steals the wits even of the wise’ (*Il.* 14,216–217). Clearly, no mention of fish or even the sea is made here, but natural elements from earth are not even alluded to.³⁰

There are firmly established connections between ‘fish and sea’ and especially love magic; this is central in several of the Homeric passages so lightly touched upon, notably the last one concerning the love goddess herself.³¹ And as appears from the survey of these passages, the element of sea is dominant in most of them. So in the end, here too, the speaker seems to be playing his erudite, daring game with Homeric models in order to stun and silence his opponents and to make his supporters and social equals laugh and admire him.

Homer is not the only great author who is made to do some of the defendant’s dirty work in the *Apology*. The speaker also uses Virgil, Catullus, and Plato in similar fashion, to mention only a few names. In this ever fascinating speech intertextual play is not merely a funny trick or a superficial embellishment of a formal and judicial argument: literary play and provocative, tongue-in-cheek humour are central to what the *Apology* is all about.³²

²⁹ Likewise, the potions administered by Helen and Circe are clearly mostly liquid rather than solid in character.

³⁰ Apuleius’ play with Homeric subtexts is continued in *Apol.* 32,5 with an ironical reference to Menelaus’ and his comrades’ fishing in Hom. *Od.* 4,368–369, and possibly extended in 32,6 with a joke on the sea-monster *Scylla* (*Scilla*), as I argued in Hunink 1997b. The objection raised in Hammerstaedt et al. 2002, 252–253, note 254 that the monster does not fit in here because of its ‘supernatural danger’ seems odd; as the final item in a list of marine creatures it would strike a mythological note and form a rather fitting, humorous climax.

³¹ Cf. Abt 1908, 61–157 *passim*, e.g., 141–142; further Nelson 2001. Nelson’s strong claim about ‘Apuleius’s mendacity’ (85) on this point seems to take the *Apology* too seriously as a historical document.

³² In this contribution I have maintained the basic, generally accepted notion of the *Apology* as a speech delivered in court, possibly reworked to some extent for publication. However, the more I come to read and study it, the more I feel inclined to consider it as a literary showpiece that has only little to do with an authentic self-defence actually pronounced in court. The target audience of the *Apology* may rather have been an erudite

readership (or, alternatively, a live audience in a theatre, as in many of the *Florida*) rather than a real judge and a partly hostile audience. Given the speaker's play with literary sources and his daring and provocative stand (notably betraying a considerable familiarity with magic), it seems hard to imagine this speech being pronounced in a serious trial where the speaker's life was at stake. Other arguments against the historicity of the speech are given by Riemer 2006, 186–188. If the speech is indeed fictional, the speaker's basic attitude would, of course, not so much be one of provocation and of heroically facing danger. Instead the literary 'I' would be seen to play the *role* of a defendant to produce a wonderful, amusing literary show for the literary connoisseurs.

