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Two Erotic Poems in Apuleius' *Apology**

In 158/159 the philosopher and author Apuleius was accused of practising magic. It was alleged that he had used illegal means to seduce the rich widow Pudentilla into marrying him. The long speech which Apuleius delivered in defence of himself, commonly known as the *Apology* (1), is still extant. It forms an unique specimen of Roman oratory from the middle of the second century.

In the first part of the speech, Apuleius deals with several minor points which have only been brought forward, as he argues, to damage his reputation. One of these is the charge that he had composed two erotic poems on boys. Apuleius deals with this issue at some length (9,1 - 13,4) and even recites the poems in full.

These two interesting poems have been somewhat neglected in scholarly literature. In the main commentary on the *Apology* by Butler and Owen, they are given only limited attention. The recent, monumental edition of the *Fragmentary Latin Poets* by E. Courtney hardly provides more than the texts of the poems with some notes. Stylistical and lexicographical studies into the verses have been made by Mattiacci and McCreight, but for these the poems, or separate words in them, were considered in isolation (2).

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(1) The speech should properly be referred to as *Pro Se De Magia*, the only title for which there is evidence in the MSS ; cf. B. L. Hijmans Jr, *Apuleius Orator : "Pro Se De Magia" and "Florida"* in *ANRW* II 34,2 (1994), p. 1708-1784, esp. p. 1712-1713. However, for the sake of convenience, I will use the common title *Apology*. All references to the *Apology* will be to the edition of Butler and Owen (see next note).

(2) Reference is made to the following editions and studies : H. E. Butler, A. S. Owen, *Apulei Apologia sive Pro se de Magia liber* with introduction and commentary, Oxford, 1914 ; E. Courtney, *The Fragmentary Latin Poets*, Oxford, 1993, p. 392-400 ; Silvia Mattiacci, *Apuleio "poeta novello"* in *Disiecti membra poetae*, a cura di V. Tandoi, Foggia, 1985, p. 235-77 ; Thomas Dean McCreight, *Rhetorical Strategies and Word Choice in Apuleius' Apology*, Diss. Duke University, 1991. References to the text of the *Apology* follow the division into paragraphs in : Paul Vallette, *Apulée, Apologie, Florides*, Paris, 1960 (Collection des Universités de France).

My aim, then, is to analyse the poems within their context in Apuleius' work. This involves his poetry on the one hand, and the *Apology* on the other hand. I will mainly focus on the rhetorical strategy in the speech. Apuleius' arguments and allusions present a flattering portrait of himself as a serious philosopher. Still, the reader is left with some questions and doubts. Are these poems really as simple and naive as we are supposed to believe ?

Playful poetry. — E. Courtney has ranged the two poems among the remnants of a collection entitled *Ludicra*. There is some external evidence that Apuleius did compose poems under this title (3).

There is a curious reference to it in a passage in the life of Clodius Albinus, in the *Historia Augusta*. Here a letter is quoted which was allegedly written by Septimius Severus, in which the Senate is scolded for its support of Clodius Albinus. The concluding sentence runs as follows : *maior fuit dolor, quod illum pro litterato laudandum plerique duxistis, cum ille neniis quibusdam anilibus occupatus inter Milesias Punicas Apulei sui et ludicra litteraria consenesceret* (*Vita Clod.Alb.* 12, 12) (4). Obviously, the words *Milesias Punicas* refer to Apuleius' *Metamorphoses* (5). If the letter is authentic, the African emperor Severus would be disparaging the literary work of his countryman Apuleius, whom posterity has found to be so profound and intriguing.

Another reference to the *Ludicra* is to be found in a quotation by the grammarian Nonius : *Apuleius in libro Ludicrorum : "sed fuisti quondam Athenis parcus atque abstemius"* (Nonius 68) (6).

(3) Before Apuleius, *lusus* is regularly used to refer to playful poetry, e.g. Plin., *Ep.* 7,9,10. *Ludicra* seems used in a still general sense in Hor., *Ep.* 1,1,10 : *nunc itaque et uersus et cetera ludicra pono*. After Apuleius, *Ludicra* as a term for specific poetry is more frequently used ; for references cf. *TLL* VII, 1763, 70. In general, see also H. Wagenvoort, *Ludus poeticus* in *LEC* 4, 1935, p. 108-120.

(4) "It is a greater source of annoyance, that most of you thought he should be praised as a man of letters, whereas he is occupied with old wives' songs, and becomes senile amid the Milesian stories from Carthage and the literary *ludicra* of his friend Apuleius".

(5) Cf. its very beginning, *Met.* 1,1 : *At ego tibi sermone isto Milesio uarias fabulas conseram.*

(6) "Apuleius in his book of *Ludicra* : 'but formerly, in Athens, you were sober and abstaining'". Possibly, Apuleius here addresses a friend who was a fellow-student in Athens, as Courtney, *Fragmentary Poets* [n.2], p. 392 supposes.

But the main evidence is supplied by Apuleius himself. Before the section with the poems on boys, he deals with another minor point, the allegation that he had made a special powder for tooth cleaning. This point has been illustrated by the quotation of a poem by Apuleius : *primo igitur legerunt e ludicris meis epistolium de dentifricio uorsibus scriptum ad quendam Calpurnianum* (6,1) (7). Apuleius counters the attack by reciting the poem loudly and clearly, and by cleverly making fun of his opponents' ignorance. The text is an epigram of 8 lines, recalling the style of Catullus, who is even quoted a few lines later (8). The lines describe the powder and humorously praise its cleaning properties. The poem is lighthearted and playful, and includes numerous striking diminutiva and neologisms. They all contribute to an atmosphere of elegant urbanity and witty erudition (9), which is probably what the title *Ludicra* refers to.

The two erotic poems with which I am concerned show the same characteristics. Moreover, they are quoted by Apuleius immediately after the poem on tooth powder. Therefore, the suggestion that they belonged to the *Ludicra* seems not unreasonable and is supported by many scholars (10).

The attribution by Courtney of some other poetical fragments to Apuleius' *Ludicra* seems rather doubful. Among these, there is a rather free translation of 24 lines by Apuleius of an erotic passage in Menander (11), and an intriguing, similarly free translation of a Platonic

(7) "First, then, they read one of my *ludicra*, a letter in verse about tooth powder, addressed to a certain Calpurnianus".

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(9) For an analysis of the style of this poem, see MATTIACCI, *Poeta Novello* [n. 2], p. 242-249. For Apuleius' rhetorical strategies here, see Thomas D. MCCREIGHT, *Invective Techniques in Apuleius' Apology* in *Groningen Colloquia on the Novel* 3, Groningen, 1990, p. 35-62, esp. p. 49-56.

(10) Cf. C. BÜCHNER, *Fragmenta poetarum Latinorum (...)*, Leipzig, 1982, p. 172-174 ; COURTNEY, *Fragmentary Poets* [n. 2], p. 394-395 ; MATTIACCI, *Poeta novello* [n. 2], p. 240. It may be objected that the poems are called *uorsus... amatorios* (9,1) rather than *ludicra* ; cf. also the the phrase *at enim ludicros et amatorios fecit* (9,5), which seems to make a distinction between two genres. But in both cases Apuleius is referring to words as used by his opponents. Later he will label his poetical activity *uorsibus ludere* (11,1).

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pederastic distichon, quoted by Gell. 19,11,3 (starting with the words *dum semihiulco sauio / meum puellum sauior...*). In style, erotic content and paraphrase technique, the latter fragment shows a remarkable resemblance to Apuleius' poems, and arguments for its authenticity seem strong indeed (12), but it remains a matter of speculation whether it actually belonged to the *Ludicra*.

The evidence for Apuleius' *Ludicra* is scarce, but firmly points to one direction : they must have been polished, playful poems of a highly literary nature.

Fires and Flowers. — To get a better understanding of the poems in question, we have to turn to the *Apology* and consider their function within this speech.

The relevant section follows after the one on tooth powder. After having ended this with sarcastic and self-assured remarks on the prosecution's ignorance and stupidity, Apuleius starts on the next point. Two other poems have been recited, he says, in which he had praised two *pueri* of his friend Scribonius Laetus.

Unlike the poem on tooth powder, these two poems are not immediately quoted, but are preceded by a number of strong preliminary justifications. First, the poems have been read in an unelegant, boorish way (*dure et rustice*, 9,1), Apuleius argues, with the aim to raise hatred against him. This remark prepares the audience for his own "correct", urbane recitation which is to follow shortly afterwards. Secondly, the audience is served a piece of sophistry : how can a praising poem be taken as proof of magic (13) ? Or is Apuleius to be considered a magician because he is a poet ? That would be ridiculous : if he has made bad verses, he may be reproached as a poet, not as a philosopher. If his verses were good, then what is the problem ?

With this quick and dazzling reasoning, Apuleius plays a clever trick on his accusers. He does not merely deny any link between magic

Jean BEAUJEU, *Apulée, opuscules philosophiques*, Paris, 1973 (Collection des Universités de France), prints this translation as a separate item in his collection of fragments.

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(13) Apuleius uses the words *magica maleficia* ; cf. also 1,5. Especially the abundant *magica* is striking here ; cf. A. ABT, *Die Apologie von Apuleius von Madaura und die antike Zauberei*, Giessen, 1908, p. 90-91. Part of Apuleius' strategy seems to be to shock the prosecution by daringly using such "dangerous" words rather than euphemisms.

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and poetry, but even obscures the force of *mala carmina*, explaining it literally as "bad poems", whereas it was a legal term for magical incantations ([14]). By exploiting the ambivalence of the term, Apuleius can ridicule his opponents and take the sting out of their reproaches.

Now he reinforces his position by making a third point : there are many illustrious authors of the past, both Greek and Roman, who have made lighthearted verse and love poetry. This goes even for philosophers like Solon, of whom an explicitly erotic line is quoted in Greek ([15]). Various other names are mentioned or indicated ([16]).

Having thus justified his poems on several levels beforehand, he feels safe to quote them, even adding that he does not regret having made them :

Et Critias mea delicia est et salua, Charine,
pars in amore meo, uita, tibi remanet.
Ne metuas, nam me ignis et ignis torreat ut uult ;
hasce duas flammas, dum potiar, patiar.
Hoc modo sim uobis, unus sibi quisque quod ipse est ;
hoc mihi uos eritis, quod duo sunt oculi. (9,12) ([17]).

Florea serta, meum mel, et haec tibi carmina dono.
Carmina dono tibi, serta tuo genio,
carmina uti, Critia, lux haec optata canatur
quae bis septeno uere tibi remeat,

(14) See A. Ronconi, *"Malum carmen" e "malus poeta"* in Id., *Filologia e linguistica*, Roma, 1968, p. 127-145, esp. p. 136.

(15) Throughout the *Apology*, Apuleius gives quotations in Greek without adding a translation. This strategy seems to serve different aims at once : the Greek illustrates Apuleius' wide range of culture and knowledge, and creates a link between himself, the educated judge and the *litterati* among the audience who knew Greek. By contrast, the opposition, whose ignorance is ridiculed again and again, is effectively excluded from this inner circle.

(16) E.g. *mulier Lesbia, lasciue illa quidem tantaque gratia, ut nobis insolentiam linguae suae dulcedine carminum commendet* (9,7), an erudite periphrasis of Sappho and her literary qualities, an allusion surely intended for literary connoisseurs only.

(17) For an English translation of the poems, cf. H. E. Butler, *The Apologia and Florida of Apuleius of Madaura*, Oxford, 1909, p.31-32. Here I add the charming, free version as given in the anonymous English translation of *The Works of Apuleius*, London/New York, George Bell and Sons, 1893, p. 255-256. "Thou, Critias, art my bosom's joy ; / Charinus too, my sun-bright boy, / Thy portion in my love's the same ; / I burn for both with equal flame. / And fear ye not - this double fire / I'll bear, to win my soul's desire. / Let me by both be looked upon / As by himself is each dear one ; / Look on me thus, and you shall be / As precious as two eyes to me".

serta autem ut laeto tibi tempore tempora uernent,
aetatis florem floribus ut decores.
Tu mihi da contra pro uerno flore tuum uer,
ut nostra exuperes munera muneribus.
Pro implexis sertis complexum corpore redde,
proque rosis oris sauia purpurei.
Quod si animum inspires, dona et ([18]) *iam carmina nostra*
cedent uicta tuo dulciloquo calamo. (9,14) ([19]).

Following the actual text of these apparently harmless poems, which deal merely with "garlands and flowers" as Apuleius underlines, some further arguments are given to justify them. An important issue is the use of pseudonyms for the boys addressed. As Apuleius argues, Catullus, Ticidas, Propertius, Tibullus, Lucilius and even Virgil use pseudonyms in their poems as well ([20]). He identifies with the "modest" Virgil in particular ([21]), and most of all with the philosopher Plato.

(18) There are some textual problems in the second poem. Here the text is adopted as in Hunink, *Commentary* [n.*], where further discussion may be found. The last two lines are commonly printed as follows : *quod si animam inspires donaci, iam carmina nostra / cedent uicta tuo dulciloquo calamo*. However, the emendation *donaci* is not necessary, since *dona et iam carmina* makes excellent sense : the poet's gifts are to be not merely answered by corresponding gifts, but even surpassed by them. This is a variation on an Alexandrean motif ; e.g. Meleager (*Anth. Pal.* 5,143). Here, the motif is extended to include the present poem as well : "If you can really inspire me, *my gifts and even this poetry of mine* will be surpassed, conquered by your music". So, the poem ends on an elegant pointe : it will be outdone itself by the beauty of the boy's talents and gifts.

(19) "Garlands and song I weave for thy sweet sake ; / This for thyself ; those let thy Genius take : / Song, to extol the happy day that brings / Fulfilment of my Critias' fourteen springs ; / Garlands, to crown thy brows in this glad time, / And deck with blooming flowers thy blooming prime. / For flowers of spring, give thy own spring to me, / And shame my gifts, repaid thus bounteously ; / For garlands twined, with twining arms caress me ; / For roses, with thy roseate kisses press me ; / And for my song, wake thy own vocal reed, / Gifts, song and all will be surpassed indeed". (transl. as in [n. 17] ; for the last two lines, see [n. 18]).

(20) This section in the *Apology* has become a key passage in studies on Latin poetry, since Apuleius supplies the "real" names for the persons in question. Cf. Gordon Williams, *Tradition and Originality in Roman Poetry*, Oxford, 1968, p. 526-542.

Whereas several elements may be explained as having to do with magic, the use of pseudonyms would indeed be highly inadequate : calling a person by his *proper* name was held essential for a magical effect ; cf. Abt, *Zauberei* [n. 13], p. 97-98. Apuleius does not openly make this point, possibly to avoid the suspicion that he possessed knowledge of magical practice.

(21) By contrast, the accuser Aemilianus is explicitly connected to the rustic Virgilian shepherds and cowherds (10,6). As McCreight, *Rhetorical Strategies* [n. 2], p. 336 has rightly argued, Apuleius here also exploits the bucolic atmosphere evoked by the

As a new climax, Plato's erotic epigrams on Aster and Alexis, and a fragment of the epigram on Dion are quoted in Greek (22).

Gradually, the whole question is taken out of the accusers' hands and brought to a level that is completely literary : Catullus, who was already quoted in c.6, is quoted again with his famous excuse for possible obscenities in his poetry :

> *nam castum esse decet pium poetam*
> *ipsum, uersiculos nihil necesse est* (Catul. 16,5-6) (23).

More authorities follow now. The former emperor Hadrian is quoted with a verse in the same spirit (11,3-4). In particular, the example set by Plato is dealt with at great length. First, the fact that his verses were open and frank is cited as proof of their innocence, secrecy being characteristic of one who does wrong (24). As the final number of this rhetoric show, Apuleius gives an extensive account of the Platonic theory of two types of Venus : the low sort of love directed to bodies and lust, as opposed to the elevated, heavenly love inspiring virtue and spirituality. It goes almost without saying that the love of which he and Plato sing is of the second sort. So, Apuleius triumphantly concludes, should he not be allowed to sing of such love, he is quite willing to be accused in the company of Plato (13,2).

Probably leaving the prosecution baffled by this eloquent defence, Apuleius can simply close the subject on a piece of conspicuous flattery addressed to the judge, who is praised for listening so attentively to

poems. The parallel between himself and Virgil is underlined by the use of *ludicrum : Quanto modestius tandem Mantuanus poeta, qui itidem* ut ego *puerum amici sui Pollionis* bucolico ludicro *laudans et abstinens nominum sese quidem Corydonem, puerum uero Alexin uocat* (10,5).

(22) The authenticity of the poems in question is not beyond doubt, especially since there may have been confusion with a Hellenistic poet called Plato. All together 31 epigrams are ascribed in the MSS to "Plato". The poems quoted by Apuleius are also attributed to the philosopher Plato by DIOG.LAERT. 3,29-31. For a full discussion, see HUNINK, *Commentary* [n.*] on 10,7.

(23) "It is fitting for a decent poet to be chaste, personally, but for his little verses this is not necessary at all". The Catullan lines are quoted by other authors too, cf. e.g. PLIN., *Ep.* 4,14. On Catullus' poem, see in particular T. N. WINTER, *Catullus Purified : a Brief History of Carmen 16* in *Arethusa* 1973, p. 257-265. For the topical excuse, cf. also e.g. PLIN., *Ep.* 5,3, who also refers to a number of precedents for writing playful verse ; see further Nial RUDD, *Lines of Enquiry, Studies in Latin Poetry*, Cambridge / London, 1976, p. 174-175.

(24) This is a clear allusion to magic, which is typically practised in secret, as Apuleius himself will note in c. 47. Throughout the *Apology*, the motif of "secrecy" as opposed to "openness" recurs ; cf. e.g. in 1 ; 16 ; 61-63 ; 85.

this and other *appendices defensionis*. The sheer flood of arguments given so far is likely to have filled the prosecution with fear of what was to come in the *real* defence.

Positive messages. — As we have seen, Apuleius explicitly enters upon a number of specific points, which seem to have been amassed in a rather haphazard way : Greek and Roman, old and recent, philosophical and literary, sophistic verbal tricks and abstract reasoning. What seems to unite all this is Apuleius' basic attitude, which may properly be called *defensive* : "the poems are not what the prosecution has declared them to be, but they are rather modelled on the example of impressive authorities". Explicitly, there is merely a rejection of charges and a denial of guilt, but on closer scrutiny, there are other, more positive associations as well.

Thus, the recitation of the poems implies Apuleius' courage and confidence in his cause, and by itself creates the impression of a counter-attack. It also implies that he has nothing to hide and is willing to fight the prosecution openly. Of course, the implication of his innocence to the charges is in the background all the time.

Furthermore, Apuleius' defense of the poems, negative as it is, involves a great number of Greek and Roman poets and philosophers, which produces the special effect of ranging Apuleius among them. He is thus not merely an individual defendant, but an associate of the most important authorities in politics, science and culture. In their ignorance, the accusers of Apuleius have in fact dared to attack philosophy itself, as represented by Apuleius.

This strategy of taking sides with the great, and of underlining his status of philosopher (25) is dominant throughout the *Apology*, from the first invective lines, which depict the accuser Aemilianus as a greedy, insubordinate coward attacking philosophy (26), to the very last page of the speech, in which Apuleius expresses his hope to have defended the honour of philosophy.

Thus, Apuleius seems to say, the poems are a proof of his education, his knowledge of Greco-Roman history and tradition, his good literary

(25) Cf. Alain MICHEL, *Sophistique et philosophie dans l'Apologie d'Apulée* in *VL* 1980, no 77, p. 12-21 ; B. L. HIJMANS Jr, *Apuleius Philosophus Platonicus* in *ANRW* II,36,1 (1987), p. 395-475.

(26) For a thorough analysis of the opening section, see also MCCREIGHT, *Rhetorical Strategies* [n. 2], p. 40-49.

taste and his Platonic way of following the "heavenly" Venus. These implicit messages are in full accordance with the overall self-portrait in the speech.

Defensive strategy. — Still, we may wonder why explicit, positive arguments are missing here. Surely, in an apology, denying the charges seems a natural way of defending oneself. But if Apuleius is so proud of the poems as to recite them again, why doesn't he add a word on the qualities of the poems ? Why doesn't he challenge the prosecution by explaining his real motives to compose them at all ?

On the basis of the *Apology* as a whole, several answers seem possible here. First, it might be argued that Apuleius recites the poems in such a brilliant way that they seem sufficient proof of his positive intentions. After his more constructive defence of the poem on tooth powder in c.6, he may have felt it sufficient simply to quote some more of his poetry. On other occasions in the speech, pieces of evidence are likewise read aloud without further clarifications ([27]).

However, if we look at the rhetorical defensive strategy on a more structural level, there seems to be more going on here. In successive points, there occurs much variation, with the speaker alternating between *a strictly defensive attitude*, in which he merely rejects or denies the charges, and *a more confident and daring attitude*, in which he justifies his behaviour and adds positive arguments for it. This may be illustrated by a brief list of issues dealt with, characterised by either the former approach (-) or the latter (+) :

beauty and eloquence (4-5) -
tooth care (5-8) +
boy love (9-13) -
mirrors (13-16) +
slaves set free (16-17) -/+ ([28])

(27) In particular, this seems true for some pieces of evidence indicated in the final sections of the *Apology*, which deal with various details concerning Apuleius' marriage with Pudentilla. Cf. the letter of Avitus (94), or the testimony of two tutors of Pudentilla (101). However, in these cases, the documents merely provide additional evidence, whereas in the present case, the poems themselves form the issue. Perhaps significantly, the text of most documents is not extant in our MSS of the *Apology*, whereas the poems are quoted in their entirety.

(28) On the specific point Apuleius is rather vague, but he enters into a lengthy praise of poverty, a set piece well known from philosophical diatribes.

place of birth (24-25) +
the use of fish (29-41) mainly -
the epileptic boy Thallus (42-47) -
the epileptic woman (48-52) +
the linen *sudariolum* (53-56) +
nocturnal rituals with smoke and feathers (57-60) -
a wooden statue of Mercury (61-65) + ([29]).

What seems striking is not merely the variation as such, but also the fact that the positive points all refer to matters of philosophy and religion. Thus, the present section on the poems is preceded and followed by sections involving a philosophical argument : an orator and philosopher as Apuleius should take good care of his mouth (7-8), and must also investigate the important phenomenon of mirrors (16). Surely, these are good grounds for his behaviour, Apuleius hints. Similarly, the later sections on the *sudariolum* and the wooden Mercury end in a religious, even mystical atmosphere (55 and 64-65) : whatever Apuleius did, was done for the noblest of reasons.

This way of organizing the speech by alternating defensive and self-assured sections, seems effective in several respects. Obviously, it produces a constant variety, bound to please the audience and strengthen the defendant's cause. It also enables him to build up the tension gradually, elevating the matter to an increasingly higher level.

But Apuleius may possibly have had another purpose here : since he uses philosophy and religion to make a number of strong points, this surely opens up the possibility of ranging some more questionable issues in between. Indeed, acts involving the use of fish or the execution of nocturnal sacrifices were difficult to justify at all. ([30]).

Given this general line of the arguments, we may be suspicious as to the section with the poems in question, being a "negative" one

(29) The final section of the speech, on the marriage with Pudentilla (66-101), is of a different nature. Here, Apuleius has convincing evidence at his disposal. Accordingly, his strategy becomes increasingly self-assured and challenging towards the end of the speech.

(30) Throughout the *Apology*, Apuleius must maintain the illusion that he is innocent and knows nothing about magic. But this disadvantage is turned into a mighty weapon : between the lines, Apuleius can now allude to magic all the time. On weighing the evidence found in the speech, it is generally argued that Apuleius knew much about magic, and must have practised it himself : cf. Abt, *Zauberei* [n. 13], passim ; further e.g. Fritz Norden, *Apulejus von Madaura und das Römische Privatrecht*, Leipzig, 1912, esp. p. 36-49.

between two "positive" ones. Is Apuleius hiding something here ? Giving a more elaborated explanation of the poems might well draw attention to issues which he preferred to remain silent on. If the poems could be seriously criticized, it would indeed be advisable for Apuleius to label them as trivial "play" and innocent *divertissement*. Actually, any form of analysis of the poems (31) might threaten the image of the serious philosopher he is so keen to build up.

Further questions. — Of course, it is impossible to reconstruct the exact charges made by the prosecution, since all we have is Apuleius' version (32). But the question remains : what have two innocent poems possibly been reproached for ? What dangers could be lurking under the surface ? Some points in Apuleius' text seem intriguing now.

To start on an important problem : it is not quite clear to whom the poems are addressed. All we hear is that the boys receive the Greek pseudonyms "Critias" and "Charinus" (33), and are called *pueri* (9,2). In the course of c.10, Apuleius eagerly supplies the real names for several pseudonyms : Lesbia, Perilla, Cynthia, Delia and Corydon. Thus it comes as a surprise that those of Charinus and Critias are missing, a fact that can easily escape the reader's attention, given the great number of names.

Now Apuleius reproaches Lucilius for publicly dishonouring (34) Gentius and Macedo in a satyrical poem by calling them *by their real*

(31) Significantly, Apuleius does not even digress on the polished, urbane style of the poems, which are crammed with literary allusions, neologisms and archaic words. Cf. for an analysis, MATTIACCI, *Poeta Novello* [n. 2], p. 249-261 ; and MCCREIGHT, *Rhetorical Strategies* [n. 2], p. 335-337. In other sections of the *Apology*, Apuleius claims much credit for his linguistic innovations : e.g. in 33-34 ; 36-38.

(32) Cf. rightly HIJMANS, *Apuleius Orator* [n. 1], p. 1712. Even if the *Apology* represents more or less the text as Apuleius pronounced it in court (a still debated and probably unanswerable question), he is bound to give a coloured, one-sided vision of the facts.

(33) Both Critias and Charinus are clearly literary names : the former obviously recalls Plato's Critias, the latter seems literary too : it occurs several times in MARTIAL (e.g. 1,77 ; 4,39 ; 5,39), though usually as the name of a profligate man. Charinus occurs as a name in LUCIAN and PLAUTUS (as a character in the *Pseudolus*). Both names show a touch of typically Apuleian "significance". The primary sense of the Greek may perhaps be rendered as "Chosen" and "Charming". In the *Metamorphoses*, Apuleius uses many such meaningful names : cf. B. L. HIJMANS Jr, *Significant Names and their Function in Apuleius' Metamorphoses* in *Aspects of Apuleius' Golden Ass*, a collection of original papers, edited by B. L. HIJMANS Jr. and R. Th. VAN DER PAARDT, Groningen, 1978, p. 107-122.

(34) Apuleius uses the strong verb *prostituo* here (10,4).

names, and praises Virgil for using the pseudonym of Alexis. This may indeed justify Apuleius' own use of pseudonyms in the poem itself, but not the omission of the real names in his defense, especially since he already reveals their identity as *pueros Scriboni Laeti amici mei* (9,2). Moreover, what "public dishonour" could possibly result from an "innocent" poem ?

Still more questions arise from *pueri*. Here, the word is often rendered by translators as "sons" or "children", but it is in fact a quite common word for "slaves" (35). Apuleius uses it in both senses in the immediate context (36), which makes *pueri* quite ambiguous here. The question is of importance, given the traditional Roman rules about pederasty : active homo-erotic contacts with freeborn boys were not tolerated, whereas it was accepted that slave-boys could be objects for men's desires (37).

Here a dilemma occurs : if the *pueri* were freeborn sons, Apuleius' erotic praise of them would be suspect, whereas if they were slaves, the sheer extravagance and urbanity of the poems would seem quite out of place (38). In both cases, more clarity would have been disadvantageous for Apuleius. Therefore he may have thought it wisest to leave the matter in the dark.

There is a second point to which I would like to draw attention. Apuleius takes great pains to justify the use of sexual themes in poetry, especially in his list of authorities in c.11. But why would he have to do so, if his poems are, as he contends, innocent literary games with nothing sexual to them ?

Now, on closer scrutiny, the poems appear unmistakingly erotic. The first epigram is largely traditional, with its imagery of love as fire, and

(35) In their commentary, BUTLER/OWEN explicitly decide upon "slaveboys". Translators who do not render *pueros* as "sons" tend to remain ambiguous, as in "boys" (BUTLER) or "Knaben" (HELM).

(36) In 10,5 the slave boy Alexis is called a *puer*, but the word is also used for Plato's young friends Aster, Alexis and Phaedrus (10,8-9).

(37) Cf. for a recent survey of this issue, EVA CANTARELLA, *Bisexuality in the Ancient World*, New Haven / London, 1992, p. 97-106.

(38) Even Martial, the nearest example in this respect, hardly ever went this far in his affectionate poems on slave boys. On Martial's sexual attitudes, cf. J. P. SULLIVAN, *Martial : the Unexpected Classic, a Literary and Historical Study*, Cambridge, New York, 1991, p. 207-210, further CANTARELLA, *Bisexuality* [n. 37], p. 148-152. It seems remarkable that Martial is not mentioned at all. Apart from Apuleius' preference for archaic authors over those of the Silver Age, he may have wished to avoid mentioning Martial, whose poems on slaves come rather close to his own.

of the beloved being as precious as one's eyes. The second poem seems more sophisticated. In its middle part, a striking number of correspondences is evoked in a highly polished style, marked by incessant word play : the flowers are to decorate Critias' head and illustrate his flower of youth ; the gift of spring is to be answered by a gift of Critias' spring ; the twisted garland is to result in entwined bodies, and the roses in kisses of the boy's reddish lips. At any rate, the poem clearly refers to physical, sexual contact. And no matter how much Apuleius refers to Plato as his model and to noble, Platonic love, such clear imagery is not to be found in Plato's epigrams.

What is more, for anyone unfavourable to Apuleius it seems not impossible to detect a trace of magic here. The correspondence between objects and the effects they are supposed to have, is typical for *sympathetic magic*. Though Apuleius is clearly aware of this sort of magic ([39]), dominant in antiquity, he carefully avoids any reference to it here.

Indeed, the implications would have been extremely dangerous for him : he would have appeared as the author of *carmina* invoking the love of a boy by means of "charming". In reality, Apuleius is probably indulging in what is merely a literary play hardly abnormal in the context of *Ludicra* ([40]). But isolated from its context, it may well have been regarded by the "illiterate" prosecution as evidence in support of their main charge : that Apuleius has conquered the love of the rich widow Pudentilla by means of magical practices. The use of specific objects and the singing of *carmina*, now in the sense of "magical formulas" ([41]), would seem means suited for that purpose.

Playing with fire. — Apuleius, then, is playing a dangerous game with these *Ludicra*. The two love poems hinted at by his opponents might

(39) Cf. the surprising denial of such magical effects in 30,4 and especially 34,4-6. However, Apuleius betrays himself elsewhere, e.g. in 30,6-10 and in 33 ; cf. ABT, *Zauberei* [n. 13], p. 183-185. Cf. further e.g. C. A. FARAONE, *Clay Hardens and Wax Melts : Magical Role Reversal in Virgil's Eighth Eclogue* in *CPh* 84, 1989, p. 294-300, who prefers the term "persuasive analogy".

(40) Magical themes had become widespread as literary motifs in Roman poetry ; cf. S. EITREM, *La magie comme motif littéraire chez les Grecs et les Romains* in *SO* 21, 1941, p.39-83 ; A.-M. TUPET, *La magie dans la poésie Latine*, I, *des origines à la fin du règne d'Auguste*, Paris, 1976. Of course, we cannot know for sure if Apuleius' intentions were strictly literary.

(41) For numerous parallels, see ABT, *Zauberei* [n. 13], p. 96 n. 1.

render him suspect. For a Roman, extravagantly singing the praises of boys is questionable by itself, whether they be free citizens or slaves. Doing so in *carmina* involving sexual imagery and patterns reminiscent of magic, might be explained as signs of knowledge and practice of magic.

To counter this threat, Apuleius adopts a double strategy : on the one hand he does not shrink back but openly quotes and discusses the texts, outrightly denying any negative intention. On the other hand, he seems to be dissimulating on purpose all dubious or weak points, such as the ambiguities of words like *carmen* and *puer*.

Explicitly and implicitly equating himself to great poets and philosophers, he manages to elevate the matter to the higher level of culture, the area in which he feels perfectly safe. As erudite pieces of literature, the love poems testify to Apuleius' high status and reputation. From a potential risk factor, they have turned into evidence in support of his reputation, and thereby of his case. To bring about such a change of affairs, one must be the "magician of words" that Apuleius was.

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