

Vir Bonus or Slave? Risky Rhetoric in Apuleius' *Metamorphoses*

Link to Abstract:

<https://camws.org/sites/default/files/meeting2020/abstracts/2322VirBonusSlave.pdf>

Textual Passages

1) Apuleius *Met.* 3.10

et certe laetitia delibuti meque respectantes cuncti theatro facessunt. at ego ut primum illam laciniam prenderam, fixus in lapide<m> steti gelidus nihil secus quam una[m] de ceteris theatri satuis uel columnis. nec prius ab inferis emersi, quam Milon hospes accessit et iniecta manu me renitentem lacrimisque rursus promicantibus crebra singultientem clementi uiolentia secum adtraxit et obseruatis ui<ae> solitudinibus per quosdam amfra<c>tus domum suam perduxit, maestumque me atque etiam tunc trepidum uariis solatur affatibus. nec tamen indignationem iniuriae, quae inhaeserat altius meo pectori, ullo modo permulcere quiuit.¹

And assuredly steeped in their hilarity, they kept looking back at me as they left the theatre. But I, once I had seized that cloth, I stood fixed in place, frozen into stone, no different from one of the statues or columns of the theatre. Nor did I emerge from the dead until Milo, my host, approached me and, grabbing me by the hand, drew me along with himself with calm ferocity, as I was resisting and my tears were bursting out again and I was sobbing incessantly, and he led me by a circuitous route, where he found empty streets, to his home, and he consoled me, feeling dejected and even then still terrified, with various sayings. But nevertheless he wasn't able to soften in any way the indignation at the insult which clung so deeply to my heart.

2) Apuleius *Met.* 2.19

Tum infit ad me Byrrhena: 'quam commode uersaris in nostra patria?...certe libertas otiosa, et negotioso quidem aduenae Romana frequentia, modesto uero hospiti quies uillatica: omni denique prouinciae uoluptarii secessus sumus.'

*Ad haec ego subiciens: 'uera memoras **nec usquam gentium magis me liberum quam hic fuisse credidi.**'*

Then Byrrhena began to speak to me: 'How comfortably are you finding your sojourn here in our hometown?...To be sure, we provide freedom for the leisured-man, and the hustle of Rome for the businessman from afar, and the quiet of a country villa for the average guest: we are, in a word, the pleasure-retreat for the whole province.'

To this I responded, 'You speak the truth, **and I believe that I have not been freer in any other populated region than right here.**'

¹ Quotations from Apuleius' *Metamorphoses* are from Helm's 1992 edition; citations refer to book and chapter numbers. All English translations are my own.

3) Apuleius *Met.* 3.5

'fateor, Quirites, extremos latrones – boni ciuis officium arbitratus, simul et eximie metuens et hospitibus meis et mihi – gladiolo, qui me propter huius modi pericula comitabatur, armatus fugare atque proterrere eos adgressus sum. at illi barbari prorsus et immanes homines neque fugam capessunt et, cum me uiderent in ferro, tamen audaciter resistunt.'

'I confess, Quirites, that I accosted those debased robbers in order to rout and frighten them – **thinking it the duty of a good citizen**, and simultaneously fearing terribly for my hosts and for myself – armed as I was with my little sword that accompanies me for just this sort of danger. But those utter **barbarians** and immense men did not take flight and, although they saw I was armed, they nevertheless audaciously resisted.'

4) Apuleius *Met.* 3.5

'unus denique et manu promptior et corpore uastior his adfatibus et ceteros incitabat: "heus pueri, quam maribus animis et uiribus alacribus dormientes adgrediamur. omnis cunctatio, ignauia omnis facessat e pectore'

'One of them, both quicker of hand and huger of bulk, was inciting the others with his sayings: "Hey guys, let's attack those sleeping with **manly** courage and with **masculine** speed. Let all hesitation and all cowardice disappear from your breasts.'"

5a) Apuleius *Met.* 3.9

nam cadauera illa iugulorum hominum erant tres utres inflati uariisque secti foraminibus et, ut uespertinum proelium meum recordabar, his locis hiantes, quibus latrones illos uulneraueram.

For the cadavers of those slaughtered men were in fact three inflated goatskins slashed with various gashes, and, as I was remembering my evening battle, those gaping holes were exactly where I had wounded the robbers.

5b) Apuleius *Met.* 3.9

dii boni, quae facies rei? quod monstrum? quae fortunarum mearum repentina mutatio? quamquam enim iam in peculio Proserpinae et Orci familia numeratus, subito in contrariam faciem obstupefactus haesi nec possum nouae illius imaginis rationem idoneis uerbis expedire.

Good gods, what sight was this?! What portent?! What sudden change of my fortunes was this?! For although I thought I was numbered already among the slaves of Proserpina and Orcus, **suddenly confronted with the opposite appearance I stood there dumbfounded, immobilized, and I cannot conjure forth any words adequate to describe that new apparition.**

6) Apuleius *Met.* 3.18

'cum ecce crapula madens et inprovidae noctis deceptus caligne audacter mucrone destricto in insani modum Aiacis armatus, non ut ille uiuis pecoribus infestus tota laniauuit armenta, sed longe fortius qui<dem> tres inflatos caprinos utres exanimasti, ut ego te prostratis hostibus sine macula sanguinis non homicidam nunc, sed utricidam amplecterer[es].'

'Then voilà! You appeared, soused and sodden and deceived by the darkness, and you audaciously drew out your sword's point, armed like the insane Ajax, but where he, raging at living cattle, lacerated entire herds, you, much more bravely, de-animated three inflated goatskin bags, so that the enemy was prostrated without a drop of blood, and I may now embrace you, **not as a homicide, but as an utricide.**'

7) Apuleius *Met.* 3.8

prohinc tormentis ueritas eruenda. nam et qui comitabatur eum puer clanculo profugit et res ad hoc deducta est, ut per quaestionem sceleris sui participes indicet.

And so the truth must be extracted by means of torture. For the slave-boy who escorts him has fled in secret, and the matter has come to such a point that he must reveal through interrogation his partners in crime.

8) Apuleius *Met.* 3.9

cum ritu Graeciensi ignis et rota, cum omne flagrorum genus inferuntur. augetur oppido, immo duplicatur mihi maestitia, quod integro saltim mori non licuerit.

In accordance with Greek custom, fire and the wheel and every type of whip were brought in. My despondency verily increased, no, actually, my despondency doubled, seeing that I would not even be permitted to perish intact.

9) Apuleius *Met.* 3.9

luctantem me ac diu rennuentem praecedens facinus instaurare noua ostensione lictores iussu magistratuum quam instantissime compellunt, manum denique ipsam e regione lateris tudentes in exitium suum super ipsa cadauera porrigunt. euictus tandem necessitate succumbo et, ingratis licet, abrepto pallio retexi corpora.²

Although I was delaying and resisting, loathe to aggravate my previous crime with a new exhibit, the lictors, at the command of the magistrates, compelled me as urgently as possible, and, finally, **striking** my very hand away from my side, they stretched it out towards its own destruction over the corpses. Ultimately conquered by necessity, I succumbed, and, although unwilling, I pulled off the cloth and uncovered the bodies.

² I have replaced Helm's conjecture *trudentes* with the manuscript reading *tudentes*; see van der Paardt 1971 *ad loc.*

10) Apuleius *Met.* 3.10

*nec prius ab inferis emersi, quam Milon hospes accessit et **iniecta manu** me renitentem
lacrimisque rursus promicantibus crebra singultientem clementi uiolentia secum adtraxit*

Nor did I emerge from the dead until Milo, my host, approached me and, **grabbing me by the hand**, drew me along with himself with calm ferocity.

11a) Apuleius *Met.* 3.11

*'at tibi ciuitas omnis pro ista gratia honores egregios obtulit; nam et patronum scripsit et ut in
aere stet imago tua decreuit.'*

'But for you the entire city has offered outstanding honors in return for your favor to us; namely, it has inscribed you as its patron and has decreed that your image be erected in bronze.'

11b) Apuleius *Met.* 3.11

*Ad haec dicta sermonis uicem refero: 'tibi quidem', inquam, 'splendidissima et unica Thessaliae
ciuitas, honorum talium parem gratiam memini, **uerum statuas et imagines dignioribus
mei[s]que maioribus reseruare suadeo.'***

To this offer I responded in turn, 'Your city,' I said, 'is indeed the most splendid and unique city of Thessaly, and I record with matching gratitude such great honors, **but truly I urge you to reserve your statues and images for men worthier and greater than myself.**'

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