

Eloquence as Innocence: Rhetorical Skill as Defense and Offence in Apuleius' *Apologia*

1. *De eloquentia vero, si qua mihi fuisset, neque mirum neque invidiosum deberet videri si, ab ineunte aevo unis studiis litterarum ex summis viribus deditus, omnibus aliis spretis voluptatibus ad hoc aevi, haud sciam anne super omnes homines impenso labore diuque noctuque cum despectu et dispendio bonae valetudinis eam quaesisset.* (Apuleius *Apol.* 5.1–2)

Now, concerning my eloquence (if I have any), it shouldn't be surprising or a cause for envy if perhaps, since I have dedicated myself from a young age exclusively to the study of literature of the greats and from that age separated from myself all other pleasures, I have achieved it more than any other human being by sheer amount of study day and night (with contempt for and at the cost of my health!).

2. *Quas Tannonius ille cum utriusque sexus genitalia intellegi vellet, sed eloqui propter infantiam causidicus summus nequiret, multum ac diu haesitato tandem virile "marinum" nescio qua circumlocutione male ac sordide nominavit; sed enim feminal nullo pacto repperiens munditer dicere ad mea scripta confugit et quodam libro meo legit: "interfeminium tegat et femoris obiectu et palmae velamento."* (*Apol.* 33.6–7)

That Tannonius intended those [accusations] to indicate the genitals of male and female fish, but he, such a great advocate, failed to speak clearly because of his babbling, since after much hesitation he called the male fish genitalia "the marine" by some weird and improper euphemism. Then for the female genitalia, meeting with no way to say it discreetly, he fled to my writings and read from a certain book of mine: "Let her cover her womanhood with both the shielding of her thigh and the concealment of her hand."

3. *hic etiam pro sua gravitate vitio mihi vertebat, quod me nec sordidiora dicere honeste pigeret. At ego illi contra iustius exprobrarim, quod qui eloquentiae patrocinium vulgo profiteatur etiam honesta dictu sordide blateret ac saepe in rebus nequaquam difficilibus fringuliat vel omnino obmutescat.* (*Apol.* 34.1–2)

And this one, for all his severity, blames me because I was not ashamed to speak a more foul word openly. But I might more justly turn against him, since he publicly promotes himself as the advocate for eloquence while he babbles even modest words with vulgar speech and often stutters or totally trails off over extremely simple matters.

4. *ita ut iam de versibus dissertabo quos a me factos quasi pudendos protulerunt, cum quidem me animadvertisti cum risu illis suscensentem, quod eos absone et indocte pronuntiarent.* (*Apol.* 5.6)

I will read from the verses of mine which they already brought forward as if I should be ashamed by them, when you [Maximus] noticed that I was indignant at them, but also scoffing because they read through those lines discordantly and in an uneducated way.

5. *nam si, quod ego apud plurimos lego, Persarum lingua magus est qui nostra sacerdos, quod tandem crimen est, sacerdotum esse et rite nosse atque callere leges caerimoniarum, fas sacrorum, ius religionum...* (Apol. 25.9)

But if, as I myself read among many, a magician in the Persian language is the same thing as what we call a priest, then what crime is there in being a priest or in knowing religious usages, or in being practiced in the laws of religious ceremonies, the sacred dictates, and the religious laws?

6. *Haec usque adhuc lecta sunt. Superest ea pars epistulae, quae similiter pro me scripta in memet ipsum vertit cornua, ad expellendum a me crimen magiae sedulo missa memorabilia fraude Rufini vicem mutavit et ultro contrariam mihi opinionem quorundam Oeensium quasi mago quaesivit... (5) O mirum commentum! O subtilitas digna carcere et robore! Quis credat effici potuisse, ut quae defensio fuerat, eadem manentibus eisdem litteris in accusationem transverteretur?... (82.5) Quid quaeris? Verisimile omnibus visum. Quae purgandi mei gratia scripta errant, eadem mihi immanem invidiam apud imperitos concivere.* (Apol. 81.1, 5; 82.5)

These things so far have been read. This part of the letter remains, which, although similarly written in my favor, turned at me with its horns. Although explicitly sent in order to save me from the accusation of magic, by a noteworthy trick, Rufinus changed it to the opposite and intended that certain people in Oea would have an opposite opinion of me, as if I were a magician... Oh wonderful illusion! Oh subtlety worthy of prison and chains! Who would believe he was able to pull this off! That he could transform what was once a defense into an accusation (with all the letters staying the same)!... What more do you want? It seemed true to everyone. Those things which were written for the sake of clearing my name brought great suspicion to me among those who are unlearned.

Works Cited and Further Reading

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