

Ciceronian Humor in Apuleius' *Apology*

Link to abstract: <https://camws.org/sites/default/files/meeting2022/2649ApuleiusApology.pdf>

1. *Apologia* 2.1-2:

Igitur Pontianum fratris sui filium, quem paulo prius occisum a me clamitavit, postquam ad subscribendum compellitur, **ilico oblitus est**, de morte cognati adolescentis subito tacens.¹

Consequently, after loudly claiming a little while ago that I had killed his own brother's son Pontianus, as soon as he was forced to put his name to the charge, **he immediately forgot him**, and suddenly fell silent about his young relative's death.

2. *Apologia* 25.1:

Nonne vos puduit est haec crimina tali viro audiente tam adseverate obiectare, **frivola et inter se repugnantia** simul promere et utraque tamen reprehendere? At non contraria accusastis?

Were you not ashamed to hurl these charges so insistently in the hearing of such a man, to make two **frivolous and mutually incompatible charges** simultaneously and yet to find fault on both grounds? For were your accusations not contradictory?

3. *De Oratore* 2.238:

Itaque ea facillime luduntur, quae neque odio magno, neque misericordia maxima digna sunt. **Qua mob rem materies omnis ridiculorum est in istis vitiis quae sunt in vita hominum neque carorum neque calamitosorum, neque eorum qui ob facinus ad supplicium rapiendi videntur; eaque belle agitata ridentur.**²

Thus the things most easily ridiculed are those which call for neither strong disgust nor the deepest sympathy. **This is why all laughing matters are found among those blemishes noticeable in the conduct of people who are neither objects of general esteem nor yet full of misery, and not apparently merely fit to be hurried off to execution for their crimes; and these blemishes, if deftly handled, raise laughter.**

4. *Apologia* 46.5-6:

Quid expalluisti? Quid taces? **Hocine accusare est, hocine tandem crimen deferre, an Claudium Maximum, tantum virum, ludibrio habere, me calumnia insectari?**

Why have you blanched? Why fall silent? Is this what it means to prosecute? **Is this after all what it means to bring a charge? Or does it mean making a fool of a man like Claudius Maximus and heaping false accusations on me?**

¹ Translations of Apuleius are modified from Jones' Loeb.

² Translations of Cicero are modified from Rackham's Loeb.

5. *Apologia* 23.7:

Neque enim diu est cum te crebrae mortes propinquorum immeritis hereditatibus fulserunt, unde tibi potius quam ob istam taeterrimam faciem Charon nomen est.

For it is only a little while since the deaths of your relatives in quick succession made you rich from undeserved legacies, which is how you got the name of “Charon,” even more than from your hideous face.

6. *De Oratore* 2.246-7:

Temporis igitur ratio, et ipsius dicacitatis moderatio et temperantia et raritas dictorum distinguet oratorem a scurra, et quod nos cum causa dicimus, non ut ridiculi videamur, sed ut proficiamus aliquid, illi totum diem et sine causa.

Therefore, a regard for occasions, control and restraint of our actual raillery, and economy in bon-mots, will distinguish an orator from a buffoon, as also will the fact that we people speak with good reason, not just to be thought funny, but to gain some benefit, while those others are jesting all day, and without any reason.

7. *Apologia* 74.3-5:

quamquam omnis illa tam foeda animi mutatio et suscepta contra matrem simultas non ipsi vitio vertenda sit, sed socero eius eccilli **Herennio Rufino, qui unum neminem in terris viliorem se aut improbiorem aut inquinatiorem reliquit. Paucis hominem, quam modestissime potero, necessario demonstrabo, ne, si omnino de eo reticero, operam perdiderit, quod negotium istud mihi ex summis viribus conflavit.**

And yet all this shameful change of mind, and the quarrel he began with his mother, should not be blamed on him, but rather on his father-in-law here, **Herennius Rufinus, who has absolutely no equal at all on earth for vileness, immorality and depravity. I am obliged to characterize the man briefly, or else, if I remain silent about him, he will have wasted his time in using all his resources to bring this trouble on me.**

8. *Apologia* 74.7:

olim in pueritia, priusquam isto calvitio deformaretur, emasculatoribus suis ad omnia infanda morigerus, mox in iuventute saltandis fabulis exossis plane et enervis, sed, ut audio, indocta et rudi mollitia. **Negatur enim quicquam histrionis habuisse praeter impudicitiam.**

As a boy long ago, before that baldness of his ruined his looks, he complied with every unspeakable wish of those who made a eunuch of him; then in his youth he danced ballets like one entirely without sinew or bone, though I hear that he did so like an ignorant and clumsy pansy; **for they say there was nothing of the dancer about him except lewdness.**

Select Bibliography

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