

The “Riches” of Poverty:  
Literary Games with Poetry  
in Apuleius’ *Laus Paupertatis* (*Apology* 18)

THOMAS D. MCCREIGHT  
Loyola College in Maryland

*Introduction: Poverty both Good and Bad*

In this paper I focus on Apuleius’ original treatment of the ancient Greco-Roman literary portrait of the “poor” philosopher.<sup>1</sup> Greek literature had a rich tradition, too extensive to be reviewed here, that viewed poverty as dangerous and morally suspect because it left one dependent on another’s good will and, if severe enough, prompted criminal conduct.<sup>2</sup> This is alluded to already in Hesiod and developed further in archaic poetry. In the fifth century and especially after Socrates,<sup>3</sup> and later elaborated most fully by the Cynics, a contrasting philosophical tradition developed praising the independence and courage that poverty both provided and encouraged.<sup>4</sup> Later,

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<sup>1</sup> The fullest (but overall dismissive) treatment of Apuleius’ “praise of poverty” is Vallette 1908, 129–157. Stok 1985 supplies much-needed updates and corrections and a valuable discussion of parallel material, especially from Seneca. The commentaries of especially Butler – Owen 1914, Marchesi 1914, and Hunink 1997b (and to a lesser extent Hammerstaedt et al. 2002) contain good notes on individual passages in chapters 17–23, which is the main locus of this *laus paupertatis*.

<sup>2</sup> A good conspectus of especially Athenian attitudes is in Rosivach 1991, but the fullest and most nuanced account of Greek thought on the issue in general is Desmond 2006, esp. 22–24 (an overview) and 27–103. Brief but still useful is Voigt 1937. For the moral “problem” of poverty, cf. esp. Euripides’ *Electra* (375–376), where the aristocratic speaker describes poverty as an illness which ‘teaches men evil by need.’ Rosivach 1991, 190–191 with notes gives in brief compass many parallels from a range of literary genres.

<sup>3</sup> The sources are unanimous on Socrates’ poverty; for bibliography, cf. Desmond 2006, 211, note 48. On Apuleius as a Socrates figure, see Riess’ contribution to this volume.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Desmond 2006 *passim*. A good example is the personification of *Penia* in Aristophanes’ *Plutus* (415–609). She insists in lines 510–534 that she fosters invention to the

the Romans developed their own particular brand of this line of thought. They had a robust belief in the simple virtues of their poor early leaders (Apuleius mentions many of the canonical examples), but this set of beliefs clashed with their later embrace of wealth and luxury when they became imperial masters.<sup>5</sup> This set of contrasting attitudes to poverty created ample room for a talented orator like Apuleius to expatiate across the range of thought, exploiting both praise and blame when it suited him.<sup>6</sup>

Apuleius in a peculiar way was heir to both of these traditions: the Greek, that focused chiefly on the literary and philosophical,<sup>7</sup> and the Roman, that focused primarily on the social and political (if I may be permitted a very broad generalization).<sup>8</sup> He was active at the zenith of the Second Sophistic when wealth was indispensable for prestige and success. Passages that discuss wealth figure in his works across many genres, but I will concentrate here on his *Apology*, which appears to be a version of his self-defense speech on the serious charge of being a predatory sorcerer.<sup>9</sup> Apu-

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benefit of individuals and state. Voigt 1937, 496 compares Herodotus' contention (7,102; 8,137) that poverty and freedom occur together.

<sup>5</sup> Systematic research on poverty in the ancient world, especially in pre-Christian Rome, is relatively new. A helpful recent book in Roman studies is Atkins – Osborne 2006; cf. therein Osborne for an overview of contemporary approaches. Woolf 2006 focuses on literary representations of Roman poverty and is very helpful. While insisting on the lack of any real uniform picture, he speaks of a 'textualized poverty' (84), a kind of standard repertoire of images and descriptions of the poor across Roman letters. Some standard Roman approaches can be seen in Plautus' *St. 178*: [*paupertas*] *artis omnis perdocet*, 'poverty gives instruction in all the arts/skills' and Hor. *Ep. 2,2,51–52*: *paupertas inpulit audax ut versus facerem*, 'presumptuous poverty forced me to write poetry.' Cf. Voigt 1937, 496 for others.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Woolf 2006, 88–91 with notes on the "pros and cons" of poverty in *controversiae*, and *ibid.* 94–99 on the same in poets (especially Martial). For more on poverty in the poets, cf. Fitzgerald 1996 (earlier period) and Tennant 2000 (chiefly Juvenal and Martial).

<sup>7</sup> Cf. e.g., Desmond 2006, 143–167, and with more restricted focus on Plato, Griffin 1995 and Fuks 1977a and b.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. Woolf 2006 *passim* and Brunt 1973, esp. 19–34, who argues for a strong interpenetration of attitudes between the cultures.

<sup>9</sup> The debate on the historicity of the speech continues. In this volume representative positions can be found (pro) in Rives and Riess (likely a real trial, with our text containing germs of the actual proceedings) and (anti) Hunink (real trial questionable, and our version is primarily a sophistic *text* that concerns itself chiefly with literary self-presentation and display). As will be clear below, I incline toward Hunink's position. See in this volume Hunink, note 3 for fuller material and Schenk 2002, 39–46 (with notes). More recently, cf. the review of the material in Riemer 2006, with reasons against the historicity summarized in 186–188. There is a similar debate, e.g., on the "reality" of events and institutions described in Dio of Prusa's *Euboicus*: cf. Ma 2000. On the historicity of the speech in relation to the question of Apuleius "poverty," cf. Stok 1985, 368–370.

leius counters this accusation by depicting himself as a benevolent but misunderstood philosopher and intellectual. In the speech, Apuleius makes a case for the virtue of poverty that goes beyond philosophical commonplaces. He appeals to old-fashioned Roman heroes, but also interweaves, in original ways, many references to the literary heritage of both Greece and Rome. In a dense digression on the tradition of philosophical poverty he presents himself as the embodiment not only of historically validated virtues, both Greek and Roman, but also as the living exemplar of a philosophical and aesthetic tradition that reaches back for him almost a thousand years.<sup>10</sup>

*Method: Words and their History are Important*

First, some remarks on method. My approach in what follows is largely lexical. This focus is sometimes decried now as overly reductive, but it is also firmly established in our discipline. It also has genuine affinities with the dominant approach to literature in the age in which Apuleius wrote, as many of the papers in this volume and in other studies of the Second Sophistic testify.<sup>11</sup> During this period proper usage and an encyclopedic knowledge of words, their uses, and their range of expression across history, conveyed a kind of social prestige that is hard for us to imagine – perhaps especially difficult for American academics, who often face ridicule in popular culture. The itinerant intellectual orators active in Apuleius’ time enjoyed a cultural status nowadays reserved for management gurus and motivational speakers who trumpet the glories and impart the tricks of capitalist acquisitiveness. Thoroughly steeped not only in the thought, but also in the individual words of earlier ages, these writers were expected to be able to speak extemporaneously on minute details and resonances of individual words used by writers like Homer or Plato. Perusal of an author like Apuleius’ contemporary Aulus Gellius reveals the focus of the age on a sort of “cult of the past;” speakers, writers and audiences alike studied, revered, and imitated the style of authors lodged in the canon.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>10</sup> On the *Apology* as a piece typical of the Second Sophistic, cf. above all Helm 1955 (especially on technique) and Schenk 2002, 46–56 with notes on later scholarship.

<sup>11</sup> On the importance of words, and their pedigree, provenance, and proper deployment in the age in general, especially in Greek, cf. with notes Whitmarsh 2005, 40–52 and, with more examples, Anderson 1993, 69–126. For Apuleius’ place in the Second Sophistic, cf. Sandy 1997. For general remarks on the literary culture of the age, cf. also Borg 2004a.

<sup>12</sup> On the taste for old words shared by Apuleius, Gellius, and Fronto (see below), cf. Dowden 2001, 128 with note 18 and Holford-Strevens 2003, 134, 209.

Apuleius writes in this milieu, where attention to exotic and archaic vocabulary enjoyed great cultural cachet. Marcus Cornelius Fronto, the tutor to the emperor Marcus Aurelius, a fellow north African and contemporary literary luminary, reveals in his writings the importance of the odd, old word properly used in the right context. These authors knew large swaths of literature by heart, and a single unusual word or phrase could unlock a huge intertextual cabinet, filled with phrases, images and people known to at least the most learned part of the audience. Perhaps a better metaphor might be taken from archaeology; instead of an “intertextual cabinet” I could talk about literary stratigraphy, digging down through the accumulated usage of the ages. Learned readers would be aware of the layered history of use, misuse, re-use, correction, and re-application of unusual literary vocabulary across time. So, to return to where I started when talking about method, I would submit that this old-fashioned lexical approach is in sympathy with the style of reading commonly practiced in Apuleius’ day.

### *Background*

Before I dive into a discussion of Apuleius’ literary technique in his praise of poverty, however, some more background material on the speech itself is necessary.<sup>13</sup> The *Apology* is the only (purported)<sup>14</sup> piece of courtroom oratory from the Roman imperial period that we possess. There are many complicated subplots and features in the case, but in essence it concerns love, property, magic, and family wrangling. Apuleius has married a rich widow, Pudentilla, who had two sons. Various relatives and in-laws appear to have been dismayed at the prospect of this woman’s considerable fortune going to a newcomer in town instead of to the relatives of her former husband, and so they undertook a prosecution. They claimed that the eccentric Apuleius had illegally used magic in order to entice a woman long widowed and older than he was into a highly improbable marriage. In many ways Apuleius, the conspicuous intellectual and polymath, was an easy target.

As was usual in Roman criminal cases, Apuleius responds in varying levels of detail to many different so-called accessory or subsidiary charges.<sup>15</sup> These were things apparently alleged by the accusers in order to blacken his

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<sup>13</sup> Good outlines of the speech as a whole can be found in Asztalos 2005; Schenk 2002, 23–39; the longest and most detailed analysis in Harrison 2000, 47–86.

<sup>14</sup> See above, note 9.

<sup>15</sup> For a good, concise overview of these (multiple) allegations, cf. Harrison 2000, 48–49.

reputation. Their often questionable relevance to the actual case presented no obstacle to their being introduced; most ancient criminal trials were based upon the general “character” of the accused, and all evidence even tangentially pertinent could be adduced. The “accessory charge” that is the focus of this paper is Apuleius’ putative poverty, and the allegation that he is gold-digging, i.e., illicitly prospecting for the widow’s fortune because he is penurious himself. Apuleius uses a number of strategies to undercut this allegation by the prosecution; I will focus below on some literary strategies he employs.

One final prefatory comment: *paupertas* for the Romans did not mean what “poverty” means for us. For members of the ruling class (that is, Apuleius and his likely intended readers) it meant something like ‘modest means,’ not real subsistence or day-to-day, hand-to-mouth penury, which were designated by *penuria* or *egestas*. That is to say that the entire discussion takes place in an upper-class set of expectations and code-words. The *poverty* that Apuleius talks of here is contrasted to the staggering wealth of the highest classes who consumed literature like his; it did not mean genuine scraping for subsistence.<sup>16</sup>

### *The Praise of Poverty and the Poor Philosopher*

In chapters 17–23 Apuleius upbraids his accusers for their stupidity in focusing on his poverty as a disqualifying attribute for a philosopher. My decision to concentrate on this section of the speech is not arbitrary: as Harrison (2000, 57) notes, it is ‘the most extensive epideictic digression in the whole speech.’ The speaker launches into an elaborate encomium of the virtues of poverty, citing not only famous Greek philosophers but also notable Greek and Roman public figures. The scholarly commentators have teased out and discussed the conventional material in this section. This shows itself most frequently in *exempla* from both Greek and Roman history: namely, famous generals, politicians, and writers who became famous despite, and sometimes because of, being poor. My focus in this paper is not to review in detail the various antecedents of Apuleius’ use of these examples, but rather to focus on how he “plays” with the tradition of the *laus paupertatis* in a few isolated sections of the *Apology*. The most densely clustered set of literary games appears in chapter 18, shortly after the beginning of this section of

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<sup>16</sup> Good surveys of the semantic range of these words, especially with reference to the *litterati*, are in Osborne 2006, Woolf 2006, and Tennant 2000.

poverty. The introduction to this part, chapter 17, discusses the number of slaves Apuleius is alleged to have had and later to have manumitted. He claims that his accusers focused on this topic as a way of proving that he was poor (and thus had few slaves) before his marriage. The passage has a wide range of metaphor and reference, and I will concentrate only on parts of it. Words in boldface are discussed below.

[18] (1) *Idem mihi etiam paupertatem obprobravit, acceptum philosopho crimen et ultro profitendum.* (2) *Enim paupertas olim philosophiae **vernacula** est, frugi, sobria, **parvo potens, aemula laudis**, aduersum diuitias possessa, habitu secura, cultu simplex, consilio **benesuada**.* (3) *Neminem umquam superbia inflavit, neminem in potentia depravavit, neminem tyrannide efferavit, delicias ventris et inguinum neque vult ullas neque potest.* (4) *Quippe haec et alia flagitia divitiarum alumni solent. Maxima quaeque scelera si ex omni memoria hominum percenseas, nullum in illis pauperem reperies,* (5) *ut contra haut temere inter inlustris viros divites comparent, sed quemcunque in aliqua laude miramur, eum paupertas ab incunabulis nutricata est.* (6) *Paupertas, inquam, prisca aput saecula omnium civitatum **conditrix**, omnium artium **reperitrix**, omnium peccatorum inops, omnis gloriae munifica, cunctis laudibus apud omnis nationes perfuncta.* (7) *Eadem est enim paupertas apud Graecos in Aristide iusta, in Phocione benigna, in Epaminonda strenua, in Socrate sapiens, in Homero diserta.* (8) *Eadem paupertas etiam populo Romano imperium a primordio fundavit, proque eo in <h>odiernum diis immortalibus simpulo et catino fictili sacrificat.*

Translation (fairly literal):

The same fellow [Pudens, one of the prosecutors and a son of Apuleius' wife] even threw my poverty in my face, a charge *acknowledged* by a philosopher and even to be *proclaimed*. Indeed, poverty has long been native to philosophy, virtuous, sensible, strong in its straits, striving after praise, held fast in contrast to riches, secure in its possession, uncomplicated in its maintenance, a good advisor in planning. It has never swollen anyone with arrogance nor abused anyone out of lack of self-control nor driven anyone wild through tyranny; it neither wants nor is capable of any decadence – gastronomical or sexual. In fact, these and other vices tend to be the pupils of *wealth*. If you review each of the greatest crimes from all of human memory, you will find not a single poor man among them; likewise, but conversely, among illustrious men the rich turn up by no means readily. However, the one we stand in awe of and praise for

some reason is the one whom poverty has nursed from the cradle. Poverty, I tell you, through all time, is the first founder of all cities, the first discoverer of all the arts, free from all sins, bestower of every glory, and in all nations the recipient of every praise. This is the same poverty indeed that, among the Greeks, in Aristides was just; in Phocion benevolent; in Epaminondas dutiful; in Socrates wise; in Homer eloquent. This same poverty even established rule for the Roman people right from the beginning, and because of that even up until today they make sacrifices to the immortal gods with sacred vessels made of simple clay.

*Layers of Meaning: vernaculus*

Let us turn now to the literary layers of this excerpt. In section 18,2 we first read that *paupertas* is *olim philosophiae vernacula*. As commentators have pointed out, the connection with philosophy and the personification are fairly standard.<sup>17</sup> The phrase is a bit odd, however: the best options for translating *vernacula* are either as noun, ‘handmaid,’ or adjective, ‘native to.’ Hunink opts for the second, citing in support the choice made by the *OLD*, and also observing that the metaphors of feeding and nurturing that occur in 18,4 and 18,5 are consistent with this.<sup>18</sup> This makes perfect sense, but there is another possible connection that, if observed, makes tighter the transition from the previous section about the number of Apuleius’ slaves to this praise of poverty. *Vernaculus* is related to *verna*, a ‘home-grown slave,’ and is often used as a diminutive of that word.<sup>19</sup> Moreover, *frugi* and *sobria* are regular epithets of good servants.<sup>20</sup> If we want to look farther, we can observe that the word is also used to mean ‘low-bred,’ ‘proletarian,’ that Gellius uses it thus once to refer to *eruditio* and that it is used sometimes substantively in such a way.<sup>21</sup> Apuleius may be using *vernacula* to make the transition from a factual discussion about slaves into his *laus paupertatis*. Moreover, much of the material to follow is a reworking of commonplaces (done with remarkable literary skill and bravado) that were most frequently retailed by Cynic phi-

<sup>17</sup> As noted ad loc. by Hunink 1997b, 71 and Butler – Owen 1914, 52. Cf. with notes Stok 1985, 361–362.

<sup>18</sup> Hunink 1997b, 71 ad loc., citing *OLD* s.v. *vernaculus* 2. He translates (2001, 42) ‘has long been a member of Philosophy’s family.’

<sup>19</sup> Cf. *OLD* s.v. 1b.

<sup>20</sup> Butler – Owen 1914, 179, citing a remark by Purser.

<sup>21</sup> *OLD* s.v. 3.

losophers who often self-consciously played the buffoon.<sup>22</sup> In short, much of the vocabulary here may carry more weight than one would initially anticipate.

*Multiple Allusions: parvo potens*

If we move on to the expression *parvo potens* we are in less speculative territory. This has been variously rendered by different translators. Let us take ‘content with little,’<sup>23</sup> nicely compressed and pithy, but perhaps to be rendered differently once we examine the literary heritage of the phrase. The *pot-* root is associated in Latin with superabundance; its coupling with *parvo*, ‘in little’ or ‘with little’ is a self-conscious juxtaposition of opposites. It is alliterative but oxymoronic and thus attractive to a stylist like Apuleius who likes pointed antitheses. It is also a quote from Vergil, universally recognized in Apuleius’ day as the supreme Latin poet.<sup>24</sup>

I will expand here briefly on the context of the line to which Apuleius here alludes and which we find in the catalogue of Roman heroes in *Aeneid* Book 6: Aeneas visits his deceased father in the underworld and receives a vision about why he has to settle in Italy. Vergil has Aeneas’ father give him a sort of prophecy of many of the great Romans who will someday be descendants of Aeneas’ line. The immediate context is a list of great leaders who were personally poor. The pertinent line (*Aen.* 6,843–684) references a list of great Roman heroes from the past in a sort of “who could forget x?” format: *Scipiadas, cladem Libya, parvoque potentem / Fabricium, vel te sulco, Serrane, serentem*, ‘[Who could leave out] the scions of Scipio (who were the) destruction of Africa, and Fabricius, who was powerful in what little he had, or you, Serranus, sowing in your furrow?’ As we will see below and as all commentators point out, Apuleius in this *laus paupertatis* included a host of fairly conventional historical examples, frequently cited across

<sup>22</sup> Cf. Vallette 1908, 152–157; Stok 1985 *passim*, especially 364–367.

<sup>23</sup> Thus Hunink 2001b. Hammerstaedt 2002b, 89 is close to this, ‘*im Wenigen vermögend.*’ Unsurprisingly, different translators opt to stress different possibilities. Vallette 1971, 23 translates ‘*riche de peu,*’ as does Marchesi 1914, 35 ‘*ricca di poco,*’ taking *parvo* as ablative of origin or cause.

<sup>24</sup> The allusion is noted by Butler – Owen 1914, Marchesi 1914, and Hunink 1997b, 71 ad loc. Austin 1977, 260 ad *Aen.* 6,843–4 points out that there is a surprising bit of rhyme and alliteration of *s* in these lines in Vergil. Note the alliteration of *s* and *k* sounds in *Apol.* 18,2 and the rhyme in 18,3.



genres of virtuous "poor" men.<sup>25</sup> Thus his intertextual reference to a similar sort of catalogue is not surprising.

An important fact needs to be kept in mind however: For Vergil's readers, this list of heroes is **retro-**, not **pro-**spective, a catalog of illustrious heroes of the past. By quoting this phrase Apuleius reminds his readers of his learning, but he does more; those who recognize the context also take in the mutability of time implicit in the Vergilian passage. Vergil in the sixth book rewrites Plato's myth of Er in *Republic* Book 10 in service of a pageant of Roman heroes whose virtues his new/old hero embodies and anticipates. The Platonic intertext in Vergil no doubt would appeal to Apuleius the Platonist philosopher, especially in a section full of philosophical commonplaces. Like Vergil, Apuleius himself ranges back in history and forward to his own circumstances in order to construct his literary portrait of the virtuous philosopher of modest means, and invites the reader to go along with him by quoting a memorable oxymoronic phrase that mirrors his own (alleged) situation.

#### *Literary "Emulation:" aemulus*

*Aemula laudis* also has deep literary layers.<sup>26</sup> *Aemulus* can mean both 'striving for, passionately interested in' as well as 'a rival or competitor for.'<sup>27</sup> Apuleius' poverty has big literary ambitions and will, with him as guide, go looking for praise. But here again there is a layered pedigree. Cicero uses the phrase in the speech *Pro Caelio* in chapter 34 when he invites his audience to imagine that respectable old icons from Rome's past are present in the courtroom to behold the contrast between their austere virtues and the dissipation of Cicero's age. He conjures the old consular Appius Claudius Caecus to come forward and speak to Clodia and to ask her why an aristocratic woman of distinguished lineage would consort with a notorious figure like

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<sup>25</sup> On the proverbial "fame" of the poor Fabricius, cf. Williams 1972, 512 ad loc., who cites Cic. *Tusc.* 3,56 and Val. Max. 4,3,6. Serranus is the cognomen of Regulus, the famous general who left his plow to lead the army. Vergil derives his name from the plow.

<sup>26</sup> His use here of the faintly archaic *aemulus* with the genitive is fairly standard (cf. 37,1: *Sophocles poeta Euripidi aemulus*), but he uses it more boldly in the *Met.*, e.g., 1,19: *aemulus argento* and in 1,4: *aemulus in convivis*. Cf. Callebat 1964, 358. Geisau 1916, 244–245 lists this adjective with other archaic forms like *dispar* or *inops* (which also appears here in this passage) that take a genitive in Apuleius. The examples are primarily taken from poets.

<sup>27</sup> Cf. *OLD* s.v. *aemulus*<sup>1</sup> 1 and *aemulus*<sup>2</sup> 1 and 4.

Caelius: *Nonne te, si nostrae imagines viriles non commovebant, ne progenies quidem mea, Q. illa Claudia, aemulam domesticae laudis in gloria muliebri esse admonebat*, ‘If images of our family’s men didn’t move you, didn’t even my descendant, that Quinta Claudia, admonish you to be her rival in domestic praise when it comes to a female sort of glory ...’

There is more, however: Vergil also uses the phrase in *Aeneid* 10,371: *per ... / spemque meam, patriae quae nunc subit aemula laudi / fidite ne pedibus* (*Aen.* 10,370–373) ‘[Comrades, I beg you by the name of your leader and my father] ... and by my own hope, which rises now as a rival to my father’s fame ...,’<sup>28</sup> don’t trust in your feet, [but rather fight] ....’ Apuleius, as often, both quotes and corrects; here he goes back to the older and more “correct” use of *aemulus* plus the genitive in preference to Vergil’s use with the dative.<sup>29</sup> In addition to the word, however, there is play with the context. In the Vergilian passage the young hero Pallas is upbraiding his fellow soldiers who have started an unruly retreat in the face of an enemy attack. Pallas and his father Evander are depicted in Book 8 as pre-Roman Greek exemplars of primitive virtue; good, hospitable, dutiful, and upright despite their having nothing in the way of luxurious or imperial possessions. The use of the two juxtaposed phrases *parvo potens* and *aemula laudis* gives a picture of the old and the new, the Greek and the Roman, that echoes Apuleius’ syncretistic literary portrait of himself.

### *Good and Bad Advice from the Past: benesuadus*

*Benesuada* occurs first in our extant sources in this passage, but appears to have a long history. Its formation is not particularly odd; the prefix *bene* means ‘well’ or ‘good,’ and the rest is from the verbal root ‘to urge’ or ‘persuade.’ It is probably formed on the analogy of the almost equally rare *malesuada*, ‘urging evil or giving bad advice,’ which turns up first in Plautus’ *Mostellaria* 213.<sup>30</sup> There it is used of a prostitute who has given bad advice to a woman and corrupted her: *illa hanc corrumpit mulierem malesuada \*vitilena*. (The meaning of the last word is disputed).<sup>31</sup> ‘That [whore?], a

<sup>28</sup> The translation here is taken from Harrison 1991, 25. He discusses the use of *aemulus* plus the dative, but not the phrase itself.

<sup>29</sup> For “correction” in allusion, see below, note 35.

<sup>30</sup> Cf. Traina 1999, 84 for other Plautine examples of words like this, e.g., *maledica*.

<sup>31</sup> Cf. Plaut. *Curc.* 508: *hi male suadendo et lustris lacerant*, ‘these [pimps] do harm by giving bad advice and by their haunts (= brothels).’ Cf. with bibliography Traina 1999, 84, note 161 on *\*vitilena*. He points out that the text should mean something like *male-*

counselor of evil, has corrupted this woman.’ The word next turns up again in (you guessed it) Vergil, in *Aeneid* 6,276.<sup>32</sup> There Aeneas, like Dante later on, is walking through the underworld and observing its many horrors. Vergil describes many evils like disease, death and other misfortunes, and includes hunger and poverty: *Et Metus et malesuada Fames ac turpis Egestas*, ‘and Fear and Hunger, counselor of evil/giver of bad advice, and base/disgusting Want.’ Williams<sup>33</sup> thought that in using this phrase Vergil was thinking of Lucretius 3,65–67: *turpis enim ferme contemptus et acris egestas /... videtur .../ quasi iam leti portas cunctarier ante*, ‘base disgrace and sharp poverty almost appear ... to loiter as if before the gates of death.’ The context is apposite, for Lucretius in the following lines recapitulates standard material about how want forces men to pile up wealth and engage in war. There is another likely intertext, however: Lucretius’ account of the famous plague in Athens and the resultant sudden poverty that forced the inhabitants to terrible measures (6,1278): *multaque <res> subita et paupertas horrida suasit*, ‘the sudden event(s) and poverty urged/forced many terrible things.’

It would seem, then, that there are multiple connections to Apuleius’ apparent coining of *benesuada*. Plautus was a favorite mine of unusual archaic forms, and Apuleius and his contemporaries loot him repeatedly.<sup>34</sup> But in addition, the contexts of the various possible sources for this formation are also apposite. In the next sentence (18,3), Apuleius avers that modest circumstances prevent sexual and gluttonous overindulgence (*delicias ventris et inguinum*, ‘refinements of the belly and of the loins’); he then says in 18,4–5 that overabundance is conducive to them. Quoting and correcting Plautus on prostitutes thus makes associative sense; he uses the negative of the earlier

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*suada viti lena*, ‘*Messana cattiva consigliera vi vizio*’ and compares *Bacch.* 1167 *probri ... persuastrices*, ‘the women who urge disgrace/adultery.’ The last is a rare formation in *-trix*, common in Plautus and similar to the ones used here by Apuleius; see below.

<sup>32</sup> Austin 1977, 119 ad loc. notes that after Plautus and Vergil the word occurs only twice elsewhere ‘in classical Latin:’ *Sil.* 14,51 with *gloria*, and in *Stat. Th.* 656 with *amor*.

<sup>33</sup> Williams 1972, 476 ad line 6,276.

<sup>34</sup> Studies of Apuleian allusion abound, but concentrate mostly on the *Metamorphoses*. In general on debt to Plautus, cf. now May 2006; also May 1998, 136–137 with note 20; 148 with notes 45–7; for archaism and indebtedness to Plautus for specific words, cf. Harrison 2000, 18–19 and a review of the issue *ibid.* 87; Mattiacci 1986 *passim*. Desertine’s 1898 catalogue is still useful, esp. 104–130. For comic echoes in the *Apology*, cf. Hunink 1998a, especially 103 with notes on some individual words from the comic stage. On complex and multiple allusion, cf. the compact discussion in Harrison 2000, 146–147 with notes on *Soc.* 116–117, where there is a dense cluster of allusions to Vergil’s *Georgics*, Lucretius, and Cicero’s *Tusculan Disputations*.

word to argue a point opposed to the Plautine context. This kind of “correction” or modification of the intertext is common in Apuleius.<sup>35</sup> But he also brings in and quotes Vergil (and perhaps Lucretius); Hunger (*Fames*) and Want (*Egestas*) are associated with poverty in extreme cases.<sup>36</sup> The Vergilian and Lucretian description of hunger as ‘counselor of evil’ harkens back to the old Greek tradition of poverty acting as a spur to criminal conduct.<sup>37</sup> The Lucretian allusion (admittedly not as strong), if noticed, shows Apuleius’ making reference to one of the most famous episodes of Athenian history. Apuleius, however, uses a different form of a Vergilian word to update that notion and turn it on its head, making poverty into something that offers *good* advice, something like the English proverb that “necessity is the mother of invention” (on which see below). He expands on this idea in 18,6, calling *paupertas* the founder of cities and the inventor of arts.<sup>38</sup>

*Digression: Poverty the “Inventress” and Nouns in -trix*

I want to turn briefly now to this notion of poverty as an “inventor.” In 18,6 Apuleius uses new words that have old resonances. The suffix *-trix*, seen in *repertrix* and *conditrix*, is the feminine form of *tor*, meaning ‘one who does.’ In English this has died almost entirely except in the cases of ‘actor’ and ‘actress.’ In Apuleius’ day too the feminine ending was archaic. *Repertrix* and *conditrix* appear first here in all of extant Latin, but they are self-consciously supposed to sound like words from Plautus.<sup>39</sup> This sort of “neologizing through archaism” was common in both Greek and Latin in the Second Sophistic, but doing so with taste and restraint was important.<sup>40</sup> In this passage, the poetical arrangement, words that sound like archaisms and

<sup>35</sup> Cf. Finkelppearl 1998, 218: ‘even apparently straightforward and comic allusion engages with the source in ways that both incorporate and reject the model.’

<sup>36</sup> Finkelppearl’s 1998 discussion of multiple allusion is very helpful: cf. *ibid.* esp. 7–14 with notes on the centrality of Apuleian “play;” also *ibid.* 46 with notes on combination of Vergil with other archaizing authors. An excellent study of multiple allusion is Mattiacci 1993.

<sup>37</sup> See above, note 2.

<sup>38</sup> Cf. Butler – Owen 1914, 53 ad loc. for parallels from both Greek and Latin literature.

<sup>39</sup> Cf. Olcott 1898, 117–118, who notes that such formations turn up in authors who use a more colloquial vocabulary (Plautus, Pliny) and are rare in more ‘careful,’ classicizing writers.

<sup>40</sup> Cf. *GCA* (Keulen 2007a), 10–11 with notes 25–26 for apposite material from Gellius. For relevant material in Greek, cf. Whitmarsh 2005, 54–56 with notes. For theoretical considerations among the ancients on neologisms, cf. Masselli 2004, especially 200–206.

other stylistic oddities deepen the atmosphere of hoary antiquity.<sup>41</sup> So the appeal to the past is obvious, but there is also play with the past.

Let us turn now to *repertrix*, the feminine form of *reperor*, ‘originator, author, inventor, discoverer’ (*OLD* s.v.). The Thesaurus archives indicate that the word occurs first here in extant Latin, and then seven times thereafter, all in Christian writers, and usually, as here, with an objective genitive. Some of these passages mention a proverb which may shed some light on the passage here in Apuleius. In Jerome’s *Letters* 46,1,1 we read *vulgare proverbium: sus artium reppertricem*, ‘the common saying: the pig (instructs?) the discoverer of the arts.’ This appears to be a reference to a proverb in which a pig gives lessons to Minerva.<sup>42</sup> Otto’s collection of Roman sayings includes in the entry for *Minerva* (224) a citation of Festus 312M (408,15–17L): *sus Minervam in proverbio est, ubi quis id docet alterum, cuius ipse inscius est*, ‘the pig and Minerva is in the proverb where someone teaches someone else something about which he himself is ignorant.’ Otto also observes that the adage seems to have originated in some fable. There is an echo of this story in Isidore’s *Origines* 19,20,2: *olivae quoque hanc (Minervam) dicunt inventricem et fabricae multarumque artium repertricem*, ‘they say that she (Minerva) is also the inventor of the olive and the originator of crafts and of many other arts.’

The proverb may have developed after Apuleius, but this is unlikely, especially given the fact that Festus often draws on very old material. Rather, the passages mentioning the fable encourage the suspicion that Apuleius is being playful in his description of poverty. He has been at pains in 18,2–7 to depict poverty as simple and unaffected, i.e., *sine arte*, and here he uses phraseology reminiscent of the fable that was concerned with Minerva, the discoverer of art. *Repertrix* thus adds a level of lighthearted allusiveness to this passage; poverty, described in distinctly un-Olympian terms, appears as the cleverest of the gods.

Apuleius’ use of terms in *-trix* elsewhere in the speech strengthens the supposition that he is playing some learned linguistic games when he deploys them. Later in the speech he launches into a scathing invective of Herennius Rufinus, the father in law of Apuleius’ deceased stepson Pontianus. Apuleius contends that Rufinus was so poor and unscrupulous that he was willing to pimp his daughter to rich youth in order to get money. In other words, Apuleius uses the traditional material that found poverty suspect, and

<sup>41</sup> Cf. Butler – Owen 1914, 52 ad loc. This is the only attested use of *munificus* with the genitive. Geisau 1916, 244–245 lists *inops* plus the genitive as a Greek-style locution.

<sup>42</sup> Labourt 1951, 100.

uses it to construct a character assassination.<sup>43</sup> Some of the sentences here (*Apol.* 76,4–5) are even constructed with balance, rhythm, and rhyme reminiscent of the sentences in chapter 18:

(4) *Venit igitur ad eum [Pontianum] nova nupta securo et intrepida, pudore dispoliato, flore exsoleto, flammeo obsoleto, virgo rursus post recens repudium, nomen potius adferens puellae quam integritatem.* (5) *Vectabatur octaphoro; vidistis profecto qui adfuisistis, quam improba iuvenum **circumspectatrix**, quam inmodica sui **ostentatrix**.*

So there she came to Pontianus, the ‘young bride’: without a trace of nerves or anxiety. Her honour had been stripped away, her blossom grown stale, her veil past its best. After the recent rejection she was a ‘virgin’ once more, but with the name rather than the chastity of a girl, and she had herself carried on a litter with eight bearers. [*To the audience at large:*] All of you who were present must have seen how indecently she was looking around at young men, how immodestly she was displaying herself!<sup>44</sup>

Let us look more closely at these two words in *-atrix*. *Circumspectatrix* appears first and is apparently coined by Plautus at *Aul.* 41 of an old female slave who acts like a spy: *exeundum hercle tibi hinc est foras, circumspectatrix cum oculis emissiciis*, ‘you need to get outside, you female spy with emissary eyes.’ The next attested use is here in the *Apology*, but Apuleius plays an etymological game and changes its meaning to ‘one who goes around making eyes (at).’ This is one of the ways in which he describes the daughter (who is never named, making her into even more of a generic character from a comedy) as a prostitute looking for prey everywhere among the community’s eligible young men (*Apol.* 76,5): *vidistis ... quam improba iuvenum circumspectatrix*, ‘you see what a shameless looker-around at the young men [she is].’<sup>45</sup> After using a Plautine word and changing its meaning to suit his needs in this context, he makes up another one: *ostentatrix*, ‘one who makes an ostentatious display.’<sup>46</sup> The *ThLL* article demonstrates that Apuleius is the only one to use the word of an individual; in all the other instances it is applied to various abstract nouns like *vetustas*, *laetitia*, and

<sup>43</sup> This is standard procedure for constructing an invective: cf. McCreight 1990, especially 35–40.

<sup>44</sup> I adopt here Hunink’s translation (2001b, 97).

<sup>45</sup> *OLD* s.v. for both meanings and *ThLL* s.v. 1167.33–34.

<sup>46</sup> *OLD* s.v. feminine of *ostentator*; cf. *ThLL* 9.2.1143.44–51.

*continentia* in the formulation *ostentatrix sui*. Apuleius first uses the Plautine *circumspectatrix* with a twist, of one looking with a hungry rather than a suspicious eye, and adds *ostentatrix sui* to balance it. He used two similar forms in chapter 18, but with the context inverted.<sup>47</sup> Plautus comes to the rescue in every situation, it seems.

*More Good Advice: Vergil and Homer on Poverty*

But let us turn from Plautus and revisit Vergil. Critics agree that the Vergilian phrase *malesuada Fames* is itself a reference to a line from Homer.<sup>48</sup> In *Odyssey* 17,286–287 Odysseus talks to one of his servants before he walks into his own house to confront the suitors of his wife when he is **disguised as a destitute beggar**. In his remarks he blames his belly for his daring and effrontery in entering the building: γαστέρα δ' οὐ πως ἔστιν ἀποκρύψαι μεμαυῖαν, οὐλομένην, ἣ πολλὰ κὰκ' ἀνθρώποισι δίδωσι, 'it is impossible to hide a ravenous belly, a destructive thing that gives many evils to men.' He calls the belly 'hungry,' or 'striving' (μεμαυῖαν, from μέμονα,<sup>49</sup> like *aemulo* and the related *aemulus* in Latin), something that brings many evils to man (like *malesuada*, perhaps), and goes on to call it the reason for huge undertakings like war and sailing.<sup>50</sup> The reader knows that he is a king and uniquely experienced in the world, but Odysseus here is disguised as a poor worthless man. In short, Apuleius wants us to think about Odysseus as he gives this part of his own speech.

This may seem to be reaching too far, but observe section 18,7; we have famous Greek generals who were poor but virtuous; we have the famous Socrates, who was wise in his poverty; and at the end we have the poet Homer, in whom *paupertas* is *diserta*, 'eloquent.' Apuleius calls attention to the *poetic* history of the *philosophical* problem of poverty, reminds his readers of this pedigree, and re-writes it to his own advantage. At the top, most recent layer of this tradition he wants us to see himself as heir and champion

<sup>47</sup> The metaphor of prostitution occurs in Platonic philosophical texts with reference to Socrates' "competitors," the sophists. Plato refers to them as argumentative and money-grubbing prostitutes in *Resp.* 493a6–9, and the same comparison is put in Socrates' mouth in *X. Mem.* 1,6,B.

<sup>48</sup> Cf. e.g., Williams 1972, 476.

<sup>49</sup> Cf. *LSJ* s.v. 'to be furiously or very eager;' of the belly in this passage, 'ravenous.'

<sup>50</sup> Cf. Desmond 2006, 113 on Odysseus as the first exemplar in the tradition of the praise of martial poverty.

of an accumulated tradition whose foundational layer is the first and greatest poet, Homer.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> For more on Homer in the *Apology*, see Hunink's contribution to this volume.