

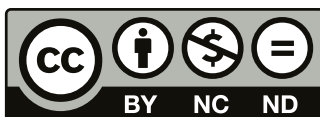
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THE AFTERLIFE OF APULEIUS

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THE GOLDEN ASS UNDER THE LENS OF THE ‘BOLOGNESE COMMENTATOR’: LUCIUS APULEIUS AND FILIPPO BEROALDO

ANDREA SEVERI

As everyone who is familiar with the topic is aware, Julia Haig Gaisser and Robert Carver have written many very interesting things about the reception of Apuleius’ *Golden Ass* in general, and about its first great commentator, Filippo Beroaldo, in particular. Indeed, so comprehensive are their volumes that proposing something original in the wake of these impressive works is no easy task.¹ This is why I will not discuss one of the most beautiful and exciting aspects of Beroaldo’s commentary, the peculiar digressions that are able to ‘bring antiquity to life’, for Gaisser has already addressed this dimension of his work in the most brilliant fashion. However, Beroaldo’s commentary on *The Golden Ass*, the most important work by the ‘Bolognese Commentator’, is truly immense: in it you can find (almost) whatever you seek. Consequently, by bravely rowing across the ocean that is Beroaldo’s scholarship in their own little boat, every scholar is able to find something new. Or at least that is my hope.

Anyone who has crossed paths with the writings of the Bolognese humanist and professor Filippo Beroaldo the Elder remembers at least one passage of his seemingly endless commentary on Apuleius’ *Golden Ass*, that found at the beginning of the tale of Cupid and Psyche (*Met.* 4.28). After reporting the rhetorical difference between *fabula*, *argumentum*, and *historia*, and then reviewing the most famous interpretations of this myth,² Beroaldo closes his long didactic digression as follows:

Sed nos non tam allegorias in explicatione huiusce fabulae sectabimur quam historicum sensum, et rerum reconditarum verborumque interpretationem explicabimus, ne philosophaster magis videar quam commentator.³

But, explaining this myth, I will not chase after the allegories but rather the historical significance, and I will explain the meaning of ancient things and words, in order to appear not a *philosophaster* but a commentator.

¹ R. H. F. Carver, *The Protean Ass: The ‘Metamorphoses’ of Apuleius from Antiquity to the Renaissance* (Oxford 2007) 174–182; J. H. Gaisser, *The Fortunes of Apuleius and the ‘Golden Ass’: A Study in Transmission and Reception* (Princeton-Oxford 2008) 197–242. But see also: K. Krautter, *Philologische Methode und humanistische Existenz: Filippo Beroaldo und sein Kommentar zum ‘Goldenen Esel’ des Apuleius* (München 1971); J. Robert, ‘Apuleius, Beroaldus und Celtis’, in J. Robert, *Konrad Celtis and das Project der deutschen Dichtung: Studien zur humanistischen Konstitution von Poetik, Philosophie, Nation und Ich* (Tübingen 2003) 211–218; B. Plank, *Johann Sieders Übersetzung des ‘Goldenen Esels’ und die frühe deutschsprachige Metamorphosen-Rezeption: ein Beitrag zur Wirkungsgeschichte von Apuleius’ Roman* (Tübingen 2004) 34–43; S. Chaudhuri, ‘Lucius, thou art translated: Adlington’s Apuleius’, *Renaissance Studies* 22.5 (2008) 669–704 (681–85); G. M. Anselmi, ‘Codro e il mito classico: Bologna crocevia’, in G. M. Anselmi, *Letteratura e civiltà tra Medioevo e Umanesimo* (Roma 2011) 173–196.

² Cf. C. Moreschini, *Il mito di Amore e Psyche in Apuleio* (Napoli 1999) 7–67.

³ Filippo Beroaldo, *Commentarii in Asinum aureum Lucii Apuleii* (Bologna, 1500 GW2305), 95v. All translations from Beroaldo’s commentary are my own.

This is, without doubt, the single most significant passage in the text for arriving at an understanding of Beroaldo's approach to Apuleius' masterpiece. It is not by chance that this passage has been quoted in almost all modern writings devoted to the Bolognese Commentator.⁴ None, however, highlight the term *philosophaster*, which here is so crucial to the meaning of the sentence that I have decided not to translate it. *Philosophaster* is a neologism coined by Augustine to define Cicero. It originates in a muchdebated passage of the *De civitate Dei* (2.27.1: 'Vir gravis et philosophaster Tullius' some manuscripts read, while others give 'Vir gravis et philosophus Tertullius'), recovered by humanistic scholarship during the fifteenth century. Valla was the first to reuse it in his *Elegantie latine linguae* (I 7), assigning it the non-pejorative meaning of 'imitatorem philosophorum'. Niccolò Perotti inserted the term with the same meaning into his *Cornu copiae* (III 167) and Poliziano used it at the end of his *Lamia*.⁵ The *Elegantie* and the *Cornu copiae* were the two most important lexicographical works of the fifteenth century, while Poliziano was a friend and correspondent of Beroaldo. As such, it is very likely that Beroaldo took the term over from these predecessors. Hence, Beroaldo's *philosophaster* is better translated as 'would-be philosopher' than 'bad philosopher'. However, what is more important is that this rather uninteresting linguistic caveat alerts us to the cultural tradition to which Beroaldo alludes in his main work: philological scholarship, 'l'umanesimo della parola', to use the title of one of Vittore Branca's famous books.⁶

Before moving on to consider further the significance of this term, I must confess that this passage had always sounded rather strange to me. In the final years of his life and career, Beroaldo seems to have changed the direction of his studies from the literary to the philosophical arena: in 1496 he published his commentary on Cicero's *Tusculan Disputations* (a great *summa* of key ethical doctrines of the Greek philosophical schools);⁷ in 1498, he gave his academic proslusion on the *Seven Sages of Greece*;⁸ in 1501, he published Alamanno Rinuccini's Latin translation of the *Life of Apollonius of Tyana* (without commentary), a biography of an individual considered to be a holy man, a second Christ, and a miracle worker;⁹ finally, in 1503, less than two years before dying, he gave the last proslusion of his academic career on the *Symbola Pythagorae*.¹⁰ It is useful to remember that Beroaldo seems to have already shown an interest in Platonism in 1487, in the preface to his commentary on Propertius, in which he claims for the role of the commentator the same divine *furor* that Plato's *Phaedrus* and *Ion* bestow upon the figure of the poet. Beroaldo had felt the influence of the Florentine circle since 1486, in the wake of an Easter trip to Florence with his friend

⁴ Carver, *Protean Ass* (n. 1, above) 181–82; Gaisser, *Fortunes of Apuleius* (n. 1, above) 231; Krautter, *Philologische Methode* (n. 1, above) 149 n. 1; M. Acocella, 'L'Asino d'oro' nel Rinascimento: dai volgarizzamenti alle raffigurazioni pittoriche (Ravenna 2001) 57.

⁵ Angelo Poliziano, *Lamia: praelectio in priora Aristotelis analytica*, ed. A. Wesseling (Leiden 1986) 18: 'Me enim vel grammaticum vocatote, vel, si hoc magis placet, philosophastrum, vel ne hoc ipsum quidem' (112 for the linguistic commentary on this word). See also J. Ramminger, 'philosophaster', in J. Ramminger, *Neulateinische Wortliste: ein Wörterbuch des Lateinischen von Petrarca bis 1700* [www.neulatein.de/words/0/003348.htm (accessed 14.08.20)].

⁶ V. Branca, *Poliziano e l'umanesimo della parola* (Torino 1983).

⁷ Cicero, *Tusculanae disputationes*, ed. and comm. F. Beroaldo (Bologna 1496, ISTC ic00640000).

⁸ F. Beroaldo, *Heptalogos sive septem sapientes* (Bologna 1498, ISTC ib00487000).

⁹ Philostratus, *De vita Apollonii Tyanei scriptor luculentus a Philippo Beroaldo castigatus* (Bologna 1501 Edit16 CNCE 36020).

¹⁰ F. Beroaldo, *Symbola Pythagorae moraliter explicata* (Bologna 1503).

Mino de' Rossi during which he met Pico, Poliziano, and perhaps Ficino and Lorenzo the Magnificent. However, if we move beyond simply flipping through the catalogue of his works to actually reading them, we come to realize that Beroaldo, despite changing the subjects of his academic courses and prolusions, does not change his own method and approach towards literary texts over time: his focus remains on their grammatical, lexicographical, and philological aspects.

Nine years before Beroaldo's *Apuleius* was published, Poliziano decided to teach an academic course on Aristotle's *Prior Analytics*. By opening that course with his famous oration, the *Lamia*, he gave himself, as a grammarian, the power to comment on the philosopher Aristotle. I think that, in the passage quoted above, Beroaldo wished to claim a similar power for himself: he, as a professor of Grammar and Rhetoric, assigns to himself the power to comment on Apuleius, an author who was, in Augustine's opinion, considered to be a Platonic philosopher. The importance of this decision (the decision to provide, as a grammarian, a commentary on Apuleius' *Golden Ass*) becomes increasingly significant if we recall that Apuleius' masterpiece was printed for the first time, together with his other rhetorical and philosophical works, in Rome in 1469 by Giovanni Andrea Bussi. Moreover, this occurred against the backdrop of the general cultural framework of the promotion of Platonism that took place during the famous controversy between supporters of Aristotelianism and Platonism, led by George of Trebizond and Johannes Bessarion respectively. However, the provocation that Beroaldo directed against the philosophers by setting up his own discipline as in some sense superior was stronger than that of Poliziano, as the Bolognese professor is the first author of a complete commentary—a word-by-word commentary—on *The Golden Ass*. Furthermore, he endeavoured to print his commentary in two thousand copies, so that his wealthy students could follow his lessons with their own copy at hand and then, upon their return home, spread it all over Europe.¹¹

However, despite this very important difference, it is also necessary to underline the similarities between the bishop working in Rome and the Bolognese commentator: 1) both Bussi and Beroaldo greatly appreciated Apuleius' luxuriant prose, and they both considered the Madaurensis to be an *arbiter elegantiarum*; 2) they were both attracted to the narrative flow and the inclination towards realism of the *Asinus*. Let us examine these two points carefully, beginning with the stylistic features.

Perhaps, as Sesto Prete and Francesca Brancaleone have argued,¹² Beroaldo was not the first scholar to have been fond of Apuleius' prose, since a humanistic interest in his work can be traced back to Niccolò Perotti and his *Cornu copiae* (printed in 1489 but composed between 1450 and 1480). Nevertheless, it is difficult to deprive Beroaldo of the prize of 'alter Apuleius', for it is hard to deny that in his orations, prolusions, and letters he was the first to have used—and abundantly so—puns (anaphors, polyptotons, etymological figures, chiasmus, and so on) and the ornate and elaborate *copia verborum* that is so peculiar to Apuleius' Silver Latin. Against the supporters of Cicero, and by distancing himself from

¹¹ 'Et sane impressor optimus operam dedit ut volumina commentariorum circiter duo milia formis excussa divulgarentur', cf. Beroaldo, *Commentarii* (n. 3, above) f. a4v, dedication letter to Peter Varadi, Archbishop of Calocsa. For Beroaldo's dedication letters to very important lords, see M. Menna, 'Epistole prefatorie di Filippo Beroaldo il Vecchio (1453–1505): esempi illustri di *ars scribendi* nelle lettere ai vescovi mitteleuropei', *Esperienze letterarie* 40.1 (2015) 95–108.

¹² S. Prete, 'La questione della lingua latina nel Quattrocento e l'importanza dell'opera di Apuleio', in *Groningen Colloquia on the Novel*, ed. H. Hofmann, 9 vols (Groningen 1988–98) I (1988) 123–40; F. Brancaleone, *Citazioni 'apuleiane' nel 'Cornu copiae' di Niccolò Perotti* (Genova 2000).

the so-called ‘eclectics’ as well, Beroaldo and his ‘Asian’ fellows filled their prose with words and phrases taken from Plautus, Pliny the Elder, Aulus Gellius, and, obviously, from Apuleius. Was it only an affectation, a charm, a grace? I do not think so. Yes, it was also a peculiar seal of the Bolognese school,¹³ useful for distinguishing the professors of the *Studio Bolognese* from those teaching in other Universities (let us recall that Antonio Urceo Codro, who was praised by Beroaldo in one of the digressions typical to his comments, also used the *sermo cotidianus*).¹⁴ However, I think that this stylistic choice also had both pedagogical and political causes. First, Apuleius’ rich prose—‘florulenta’ and ‘bracteata’, as Beroaldo describes it—was very useful for young pupils studying Latin and aiming to build their own Latin vocabulary. Second, although this is a more personal opinion of mine, Apuleius, who was born in Africa, was a significant example, useful to the hundreds of foreign students following Beroaldo’s courses, of the fact that good Latin was not necessarily a prerogative of the Italian population; everybody, irrespective of their place of birth, could become a good Latinist.

With regard to our second point in particular—the narrative flow and the inclination towards realism of the *Asinus*—it is necessary to keep in mind that our contemporary perspective on this subject is influenced by Erich Auerbach’s *Mimesis* (even if this book does not have a chapter dedicated to Apuleius’ novel).¹⁵ Beroaldo, like Bussi, held the belief that the Latin used by Apuleius was the natural language of the street, and he was particularly fascinated by this aspect of Apuleius’ writing. In his commentary, he often tries to link the supposed popular words he found in *The Golden Ass* with the vernacular language of his own days, a particularly interesting aspect of his work for later Italian scholars studying the history of Italian language.¹⁶ From this specific point of view, we can say that Beroaldo’s *opus magnum* on Apuleius is also, or above all, a strangely shaped dictionary of the Latin language, a dictionary that the Bolognese Professor considered to be a living one. However, as Gaisser has pointed out, the belief shared by both Bussi and Beroaldo that the so-called ‘Realien’ used by Apuleius in his masterpiece were part of the *Umgangssprache*, the everyday language of common people, is a great blunder. Gaisser writes very pointedly that: ‘The language he admires is not that of ‘cookshops or lodging houses’ but rather of a highly educated man writing for a sophisticated audience about cookshops or lodging houses, which is a very different matter’.¹⁷ So the stylistic realism used by Apuleius does not transport us

¹³ For this aspect, see J. D’Amico, ‘The progress of Renaissance Latin prose: the case of Apuleianism’, *Renaissance Quarterly* 37.3 (1984) 351–92.

¹⁴ See A. Urceo Codro, *Sermones I–IV: filologia e maschera nel Quattrocento*, eds L. Chines and A. Severi, intro. E. Raimondi (Rome 2013) 60: ‘Accipite laetis animis, viri clarissimi, sermonem meum, si modo meus est qui sit a virorum doctissimorum sententiis concinatus [...] Praeterea ego quoque quotidie fere Luciani et Apuleii asinos in manibus habeo, unius breviter et inventum, alterius copiam admirans atque elegantiam’ (*Sermo* I, 1–4); and cf. Beroaldo, *Commentarii* (n. 3, above) f. 94: ‘Codrus collega meus in professione litteraria homo impense doctus et utriusque linguae callens, qui plus habet in recessu quam ostendet in fronte, qui in pensandis tam priscorum quam recentiorum libris iudicio est praecellentis praeditus’.

¹⁵ E. Auerbach, *Mimesis: Dargestellte Wirklichkeit in der abendländischen Literatur* (Bern 1946).

¹⁶ See the following examples (Beroaldo, *Commentarii*, n. 3, above, 28, f. 78v): ‘Utendum enim est vulgaribus verbis et vernaculis dictionibus ad rem dilucidandam’; ‘Verba non pauca sunt vernacula ac plebeia atque in opificum sermonibus usitata quae cum dehonesta deculpataque videantur, tamen latina sunt et in usu quoque eruditorum frequentantur, quo ex genere est istud ‘rumigare’ quod et rustici et foeminae usurpant quod ferme idem significat’. For a provisional catalogue of vernacular words accepted in Beroaldo’s Latin, see M. T. Casella, ‘Il metodo dei commentatori umanistici esemplato sul Beroaldo’, *Studi medievali* s. 3.16 (1975) 627–701 (658–59).

¹⁷ Gaisser, *Fortunes of Apuleius* (n. 1, above) 169.

back to the road of a Roman province in the second century AD, or to the inside of a tavern or pub, since it is a literary experiment for educated people.

One aspect of his interest that Beroaldo did not declare—and this is why it is also the most interesting—was his fascination for what we nowadays call ‘storytelling’. Beroaldo is a rare bird among his fellow humanists, who, as is well known, were not great lovers of prose fiction because it was not considered to reside amongst the noble literary genres according to the rules of classical rhetoric.¹⁸ It is emblematic, for instance, that the father of Humanism, Francesco Petrarch, disliked Boccaccio’s *Decameron*: when his pupil Boccaccio sent him a copy of his masterpiece, Petrarch hid with difficulty his contempt for all the novellas, with the exception of the last about Griselda. On the contrary, Beroaldo held Boccaccio’s *Decameron* in such high esteem that he translated three of its novellas into Latin. Moreover, in commenting on book 9 of *The Golden Ass*, he praised Boccaccio as the author of the *Decameron*, not as the author of the *Genealogia deorum gentilium* or any of the other scholarly works appreciated and usually cited by humanists.¹⁹ We can say that here the *Decameron* provides some sort of ‘mise en abyme’ of *The Golden Ass* and Boccaccio is like an ‘alter Apuleius’: Apuleius is a great storyteller because he succeeds in showing the reader the images he is talking about (rhetorically speaking, the name of this ability is ‘hypotyposis’, cf. Quint. *Inst.* 9.2.40). Beroaldo insists more than once on this capacity of Apuleius. Commenting on the phrase ‘Erat in proxima’ (*Met.* 8.1), he writes: ‘narratio secundum paerceptiones rhetoricas, lucida brevis probabilis, qua singula ita decenter ita graphice describuntur ut non legere te putes sed cernere’.²⁰ Commenting on ‘aper immanis’ (*Met.* 8.4), he then explains:

Magna virtus est res de quibus loquimur clare atque ut cerni videantur enunciare [Quint. *Inst.* 8.3.62]. Hoc cum pluribus locis tum in hac descriptione decenter facit Lucius noster, qui describit, immo depingit aprum tam graphice, tam scite, tam eleganter, ut eum oculis repraesentet, per illam exornationem rhetoricam, quam Graeci enargian, nostri repraesentationem atque evidentiam [Quint. *Inst.* 8.3.61] appellat.²¹

It is a great virtue to succeed in describing the things we are talking about clearly and as if we could see it. As in many other passages, in this description our Lucius does it very well: he describes, or rather depicts so well, cleverly, and tastefully the boar that he represents it to the eyes, thanks to that figure of speech which Greek scholars call ‘enargia’ and Romans ‘repraesentatio’ and ‘evidentia’.

In commenting on ‘recalcans vestigias’ (*Met.* 9.11), the *Commentator bononiensis* finally repeats: ‘Per quamdam evidentiam et illustrationem totum hoc negocium graphice depictum

¹⁸ F. Rico, ‘Classicismo e realtà’, in *Letteratura europea e tradizione latina*, eds G. M. Anselmi and F. Florimbii (Bologna 2009) 37–45; F. Rico, *Il romanzo, ovvero le cose della vita* (Torino 2012).

¹⁹ In his comment on ‘gracili pauperie’ in *Met.* 9.5, the beginning of the story of the smith and his unfaithful wife, Beroaldo writes: ‘Iohannes Boccacius eloquio vernaculo disertissimus condidit centum fabulas argumento et stilo lepidissimo festivissimoque inter quas Apuleianam hanc inseruit transposuitque commodissime, non ut interpres, sed ut conditor, quam foeminae nostrates non surdis auribus audiunt neque invitae legunt. Nos quoque mythopoion, hoc est opificem fabellae Lucium nostrum lataliter personantem et graphice lepidissimeque explicantem inaudiamus, legamus pensitemus auribus oculis animis lubentibus, cum talibus egressionum amoenitatibus non solum lectores, verum etiam commentatores reficiantur. Inter paupertatem et pauperiem differentia haec est [...]’. Cf. Beroaldo, *Commentarii* (n. 3, above) f. 193v.

²⁰ Beroaldo, *Commentarii* (n. 3, above) f. 166.

²¹ Beroaldo, *Commentarii* (n. 3, above) f. 168; cf. also Krautter, *Philologische Methode* (n. 1, above) 63.

subiicitur oculis lectorum, ut non tam legere quam videre videantur'.²² It is, thus, clear that Beroaldo is very attracted to the figurative force of Apuleius' prose.

What, however, did Beroaldo think about the literary genre of *The Golden Ass*? There are at least two places where Beroaldo addresses this issue: on the first page of his work, by trying to explain 'fabula milesia', and in book IV, when he introduces the story of Cupid and Psyche. In both cases Beroaldo cites many *auctoritates*, but we struggle to understand what Beroaldo really thinks about it. For example: is 'fabula milesia' a licit, good, adequate literary genre according to him? How does Beroaldo reply to the detractors of the 'fabula milesia' who think that it has no beginning or end, and is thereby useless because it lacks a moral teaching ('epimythion')? Unfortunately, he does not give us an answer. His gloss to Apuleius' novel often consists of quotations of a large quantity of *auctoritates* regarding lexicographical or philological problems, but only occasionally does he take sides. Hence, we can say that, above all on hermeneutical or exegetical issues, Beroaldo reveals himself very little. As an example, we can take the brief history of 'fabula milesia' presented by Beroaldo at the beginning of his comment.

Sermone milesio (I 1): idest fabuloso, lepido, iocoso, delicato, ludicro hoc enim significat sermo Milesius a Milesiorum Ioniae populis dictus, qui deliciis luxuque notabiles fuere, quorum est illud memoratissimum 'Nemo nostrum frugi esto, alioqui cum aliis eiiciatur' [Strab. 14.25].²³ Hinc Milesias prisca appellaverunt poemata et fabulas lascivientes sive, ut quidam putant, Milesiae dicuntur fabulae aniles et vanidicae in quibus nec pes nec caput [Hor. *Ars* 8] appareat, nec instat apologorum epimythion ullum morale continens. Iulius Capitolinus in Clodio Albino [Hist. Aug. *Alb.* 11.8] sic ait: 'Agricolendi peritissimus, ita ut etiam Georgica conscripserit, Milesias nonnulli eiusdem esse dicunt quarum fama non ignobilis habetur, quamvis quanti mediocriter scriptae sint'. Extat epistola Severi imperatoris ad senatum missa, in qua id quod ad hanc rem maxime pertinet scriptum legimus; sic enim ait: 'Maior fuit dolor quod illum pro litterato laudandum plerique duxistis, cum ille neniis quibusdam anilibus occupatus inter Milesias Punicas Apuleii sui et ludicra letteraria consenescoeret' [Hist. Aug. *Alb.* 12.12]. [...] Marcianus quoque Capella in libro de nuptiis philologiae [II, 100] "poeticae, inquit, diversitatis delicias Milesias". Aristides poeta Graecus composuit Milesias, hoc est poema milesiacon perquam impudicum, cuius rei Plutarcus [*Crass.* 32.4] et Appianus meminerunt, quod et Ovidius libro *Tristium* secundo [2.413–14] aperte docet sic scribens: 'iunxit Aristides Milesia carmina secum, / pulsus Aristides nec tamen urbe sua est'. Emaculandus est hoc loco maculosus divi Hieronymi codex, ubi de Milesiis hisce fit mentio, et in sinceram lectionem restituendus. Namque in libris contra Ruffinum [I, 17] sic passim legitur, 'quasi non curatorum turba Milesiorum in scholis figmenta decantent', ubi non 'curatorum' sed 'cirratorum' legendum est, hoc est comatulorum puerorum.²⁴

Sermone milesio (I 1): that is fabulous, amusing, playful, entertaining, this is the meaning of 'Milesian speech', called in this manner because it comes from the Ionic people living in Milesia, who were famous for their luxury and riches and whose sentence is very worthy of remembrance, 'None of us has to be useful, otherwise he

²² Beroaldo, *Commentarii* (n. 3, above) f. 197v; cf. also Krautter, *Philologische Methode* (n. 1, above) 63.

²³ Probably read in the Latin translation by Gregorius Tiphernas.

²⁴ Beroaldo, *Commentarii* (n. 3, above) f. 3.

must be ejected with others' [Strab. 14.25]. Hence ancient people called 'Milesia' licentious poems and tales or, as some people think, Milesias are those tales told by old women and full of emptiness where you can find no rhyme or reason, and where there is no final 'epimythion' containing a moral teaching. Julius Capitolinus reports in the life of Clodius Albinus: 'In the cultivation of land he was thoroughly versed, and he even composed Georgics. Some say, too, that he wrote Milesian tales, which are not unknown to fame though written in but a mediocre style' [Hist. Aug. *Alb.* 11.8].²⁵ We have a letter sent to the Senate by the emperor Severus where we can find the peculiar features of this literary genre; we read: 'It is even a greater source of chagrin, that some of you thought he should be praised for his knowledge of letters, when in fact he is busy with old wives' songs, and grows senile amid the Milesian stories from Carthage that his friend Apuleius wrote and such other learned nonsense' [Hist. Aug. *Alb.* 12.12]²⁶ [...] Marcianus Capella too in the book of the Wedding of Philology says [II, 100]: 'Milesian delights of poetical diversity'. The Greek poet Aristides wrote *Milesias*, that is an extremely dirty Milesian poem: Plutarch [*Crass.* 32.4] and Appianus remembered this, and Ovid too, in the second book of his *Tristia* where he reveals this by writing: 'Aristides connected the vices of Miletus with himself, yet Aristides was not driven from his own city' [2.413–14].²⁷ We must correct the manuscript of Saint Jerome on that page where he makes mention of Milesian tales, and give back the authentic lesson. In fact, in the books against Ruffinum we read [I, 17]: 'quasi non curatorum turba Milesiorum in scholis figmenta decantent' where we should not read 'curatorum' but 'cirratorum', which means 'of the children having thick hair'.

As Robert Carver has pointed out with regard to Beroaldo's style of commentary, 'in general the accretion of glosses seems rather indiscriminating, particularly to anyone of a narratological bent', and, more generally, 'Renaissance collations are generally philological rather than hermeneutic'.²⁸ This is why an unidentified hand in this until now unknown copy of the *editio princeps* of Beroaldo's comment reports an annotation taken from Johannes Baptista Pio's *Annotamenta* (n. 40, ed. 1505, f. G3v) in order to examine in depth the phrase 'papyrus Aegyptiam' at the beginning of *The Golden Ass*. When Beroaldo explains it with the words 'est enim papyrus sive papyrus, utroque enim modo dicitur, frutex nascens in palustribus Egypti, aut quiescentibus Nili aquis. Unde Niliacas papyrus appellavit epigrammarius poeta etc',²⁹ the anonymous reader writes in the lower margin of the page:

Existimo *papyrus Aegyptiam* genus dicendi molle et lascivum significare, qua mollitate male audiebant Aegyptii: quam ob rem Varroni Canopitici libidinosi sunt.

²⁵ Translation by D. Magie in *The scriptores Historiae Augustae* (Cambridge, MA-London 1960) I 483.

²⁶ Trans. D. Magie (n. 25, above) 487.

²⁷ Translation by A. Leslie Wheeler in Ovid, *Tristia, ex Ponto* (Cambridge, MA-London 1953) 85.

²⁸ R. H. F. Carver, 'Quis ille? The role of the prologue in Apuleius' *Nachleben*', in *A Companion to the Prologue of Apuleius' Metamorphoses*, eds A. Kahane and A. Laird (Oxford 2001) 163–174 (165). Carver continues by offering an example: 'in glossing *Taenaros* Beroaldus notes that "there is also a breathing vent with the same name from which the descent to the underworld lies revealed" ('est et spiraculum eodem nomine ex quo descensus ad inferos patet') but gives no indication that he has made an interpretive link between the Prologue and Psyche's *katabasis* at *Met.* 6. 18–20'.

²⁹ Beroaldo, *Commentarii* (n. 3, above) f. 3.

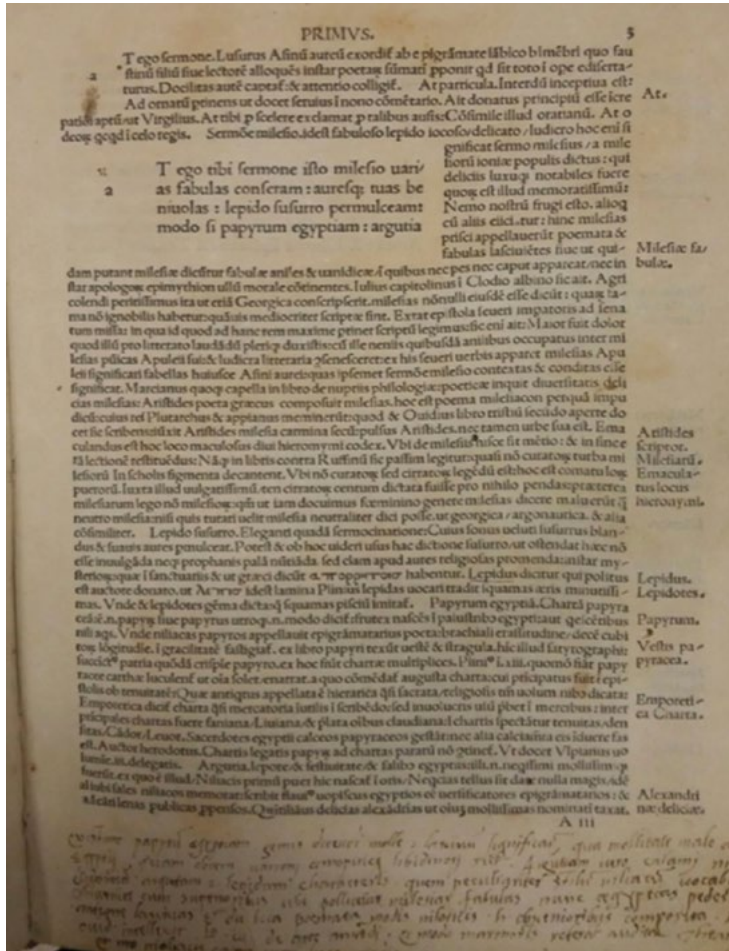


Figure 1. P. Beroaldo, *Commentarii in Lucii Apuleii Asinum aureum* (Bologna 1500), p. 5 (University of Bologna, Department of Classical and Italian Studies; Camporesi W I 001).

*Argutiam vero calami nilotici elegantiam argutam et lepidam [...]*³⁰

I think that ‘papyrus Aegyptiam’ means a flabby and lascivious literary genre, and for this licentiousness the Egyptians did not approve it: this is why, according to Varro, Canopities are lustful. ‘Argutiam vero calami nilotici’ is a witty and humorous politeness [...]

This comment evidently reflects the fact that the unidentified reader was dissatisfied with Beroaldo’s gloss on the passage, which is a digression focused on the material support (‘papyrus’) and not, as in the case of Pio, on the literary genre to which ‘papyrus’ might refer. It is clear that this reader required a less encyclopedic and a more hermeneutic contribution from the commentator. This copy of the *editio princeps* belonged to the scholar and professor Piero Camporesi (1926–1997) and is now kept in the Library of the Department of Classical Philology and Italian Studies of the University of Bologna (shelfmark Camporesi W I 001).

It is true that Beroaldo leaves the modern reader, particularly those more interested in Apuleius’ masterpiece than in Renaissance culture, largely empty-handed. The word or the

³⁰ G. B. Pio, *Annotamenta* (Bologna 1505) f. G3v (chapter 40, but ‘Puto ego papyrus [...]').

phrase from *The Golden Ass* that Beroaldo analyses in his commentary is often (almost always) used as a starting-point for a lexicographical tour of the grounds of Latin Literature, or to brilliantly emend a passage of Apuleius, or even of other authors. So, if we may put the point in the form of a joke, Beroaldo's *Asinus* seems more like a text formed of thousands of beautiful words or phrases than a work full of deep meanings. Beroaldo, as a diligent commentator, explains in the *Scriptoris intentio atque consilium* that the story of *The Golden Ass* has an allegorical and moral meaning (and, as Walsh and Schlam have pointed out, the echo of Beroaldo's words reverberated perhaps as far as the first German translator of *The Golden Ass*, Johan Sieder, and the first English translator, William Adlington).³¹ However, this allegorical interpretation is not where his attention is focused. In contrast to Bussi, Beroaldo is not interested in a complete interpretation of Apuleius and his major work.

On the one hand, this is because Beroaldo wants to exhibit his classical knowledge with his humanist colleagues in mind. On the other hand, it is a consequence of the fact that his great work is not only, and not chiefly, a commentary on *The Golden Ass* but also a dictionary or, better, an encyclopedia,³² of the Latin world that each of Beroaldo's pupils, upon returning home, brought with him and kept for life. This is why, in the second half of the sixteenth century, the Bolognese naturalist Ulisse Aldrovandi (1522–1605) compiled a very detailed manuscript index (running to 80 pages!) of names and subjects taken from Beroaldo's commentary and bound it to the end of his own copy,³³ a copy that is now preserved in the University Library of Bologna (shelfmark A.V.KK.VII.38).

Ultimately, I think Beroaldo would have approved of this use of his *Commentarii* since, at the end of the prologue (*praefatio*), he speaks to his reader and encourages them to become familiar with Apuleius' masterpiece and to consider it (of course with his own commentary) as a handbook, a textbook:

Te, lector, oro, moneo, hortor ut familiaris tibi fiat hic scriptor sitque tuum manual et enchiridion in quo si quid durum videbitur id nostrorum commentariorum expolitione emollietur ac levigabitur.³⁴

Reader, I pray, I encourage, I urge you in order for this author to become familiar to you and a sort of a handbook and a manual, where, if you find something difficult, it will be smoothed over by the polish of my comment.

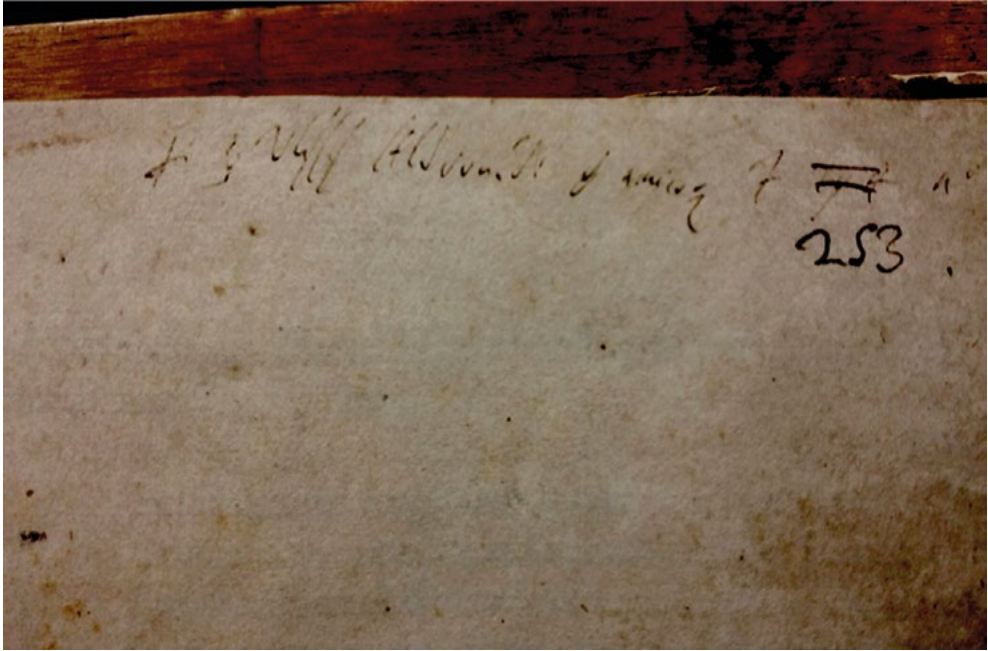
The use of the classical text as a pretext for showing off the scholar's culture was a very widespread custom during the Humanistic period. Rather less widely diffused was Beroaldo's peculiar custom of acting as *interpres* to provide a gloss we can often define as 'politically correct', namely a gloss in which the Bolognese professor tries to account for the various positions on a given subject, sometimes without making his own position clear. This could

³¹ P. G. Walsh, 'Petronius and Apuleius', in *Aspects of Apuleius' 'Golden Ass': A Collection of Original Papers*, eds B. L. Jijmans Jr and R. Th. van der Paardt (Groningen 1978) 17–24 (32); C. C. Schlam, *The 'Metamorphoses' of Apuleius: On Making an Ass of Oneself* (London 1992) 1. According to Schlam, Beroaldo and Adlington 'saw the work as edifying and having religious depth'.

³² Cf. *Renaissance Encyclopedism: Studies in Curiosity and Ambition*, eds S. W. Blanchard and A. Severi (Toronto 2018).

³³ It is worth recalling that the *Tabula Apulei* ('Habes lector humanissime L. Apulei de Asino aureo tabulam vocabulorum et historiarum') mentioned by Carver is present only in some copies of the *editio princeps: Protean Ass* (n. 1, above) 190.

³⁴ Beroaldo, *Commentarii* (n. 3, above) f. 1v.



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Figures 2. and 3. Beroaldo's *Commentarii in Lucii Apuleii Asinum aureum* (Bologna 1500), copy belonged to Ulisse Aldrovandi (Bologna, University Library of Bologna, A.V.KK.VII.38). Note of ownership at the beginning 'Ulissis Aldrovandi et amicorum' (f. a1r) and manuscript index of remarkable things at the end (f. 1r). Modern numbering in pencil at the bottom right.

also be due to the fact that, in contrast to many of his colleagues, he had a peaceful nature and did not like to engage in controversy. When Beroaldo tries to explain what ‘crepitaculum’ in *Met.* 11.4 means, he reports the version of the story given by Lucian, the use of the term in Livy and Pliny, and the conflicting opinions of the Platonists and the Aristotelians on celestial harmony:

Dextra ferebet crepitaculum (11.4): Lucianus simulacrum deae describens [...] cuius rei praeter poetas Livius [26.5.9] quoque et Plinius [2.54] meminere [...] De musico mundi concentu et syderum tinnitu Plato et platonici omnes scribunt [...] Quod Aristoteles et aristotelici alacriter inficiantur [...].

Dextra ferebet crepitaculum (11.4): Lucian by describing the statue of the goddess [...] besides the poets also Livy [26.5.9] and Pliny [2.54] remember it [...] About the harmonious concert of the world and the hum of the stars, Plato and all Platonists write [...] This is clearly denied by Aristotle and the Aristotelians [...].

He then concludes this review as follows:

Caeterum cum commentatoris officium sit varias interpretationes afferre et non solum quid sibi sed quid et aliis videatur ostendere, dixi opiniones aliorum super hac re mysticas, quas qui volet sequi possit. Ego vero existimo per crepitaculum hoc significari sistrum, quod Isis dea Egyptiorum gestat in dextra.³⁵

After all, since the duty of the commentator is to report different interpretations and to show not only his own opinion, but also those of others, I report the mystical opinions of others on this matter, so that (he) who wants to follow them can do so. However, I think that this ‘crepitaculum’ means ‘sistrum’, which Isis, Egyptian goddess, wears on her right hand.

This programmatic statement about the task of the commentator is the same as we find at the end of the Proclusion of Beroaldo’s first great commentary to Propertius (1487), where he clearly cites the source of the idea of writing commentaries on texts, that is Jerome’s *Contra Rufinum* (I 17).³⁶ It is, thus, not surprising that Beroaldo’s glosses grow year after year, eventually drowning out Apuleius’ text. This is why Beroaldo’s commentary also represents today a *summa* of fifteenth-century Humanism and a kind of ideal index of Beroaldo’s previous works, which he often refers to for further information about the meaning of a word or the amendment of a passage.³⁷

³⁵ Beroaldo, *Commentarii* (n. 3, above) f. 255v.

³⁶ F. Lo Monaco, ‘Alcune osservazioni sui commenti umanistici ai classici nel secondo Quattrocento’, in *Il commento ai testi: atti del Seminario di Ascona 2–9 ottobre 1989*, eds O. Besomi and C. Caruso (Basel-Boston-Berlin 1992) 103–39. Beroaldo often lets the reader decide on the correctness of a reading or interpretation, with formulas such as the following: ‘Habes, o lector, utramque sententiam ut si haec nostra curiosius pensitata sordescit sequaris alteram vulgatiorem nec ob id me arguas inscientiae aut superstitiose curiositatis’; ‘sive haec sive illa lectio magis placet habe utriusque interpraetamentum’; ‘Hoc ego sentio, ita interpraetor cum primis hoc meum commentum est, haec mea interpraetatio quae si cui non probatur is habet alteram’; ‘Haec lectio, haec distinctio, haec interpretatio magis placere magisque quadrare videtur quam illa superior sed hoc totum diiudicandum pensitandumque lectoris relinquo’; cf. Casella, *Il metodo* (n. 16, above) 650.

³⁷ See the following two examples taken from Beroaldo, *Commentari* (n. 3, above) f. 6, 252v: ‘non quidem Curio sum’ [*Met.* 1.2, but today: ‘curiosum’]; ‘in libro annotationum nostrarum [cf. F. Beroaldo, *Annotationes centum*, ed. L. Ciapponi (Binghamton NY 1995) 112, § 51.4] hic locus copiose satis opinor explicatus est, ex quo poteris siquid amplius desideraveris mutuari, ubi docuimus Curionem pro ministro atque praeconem usurpari’; septies submerse

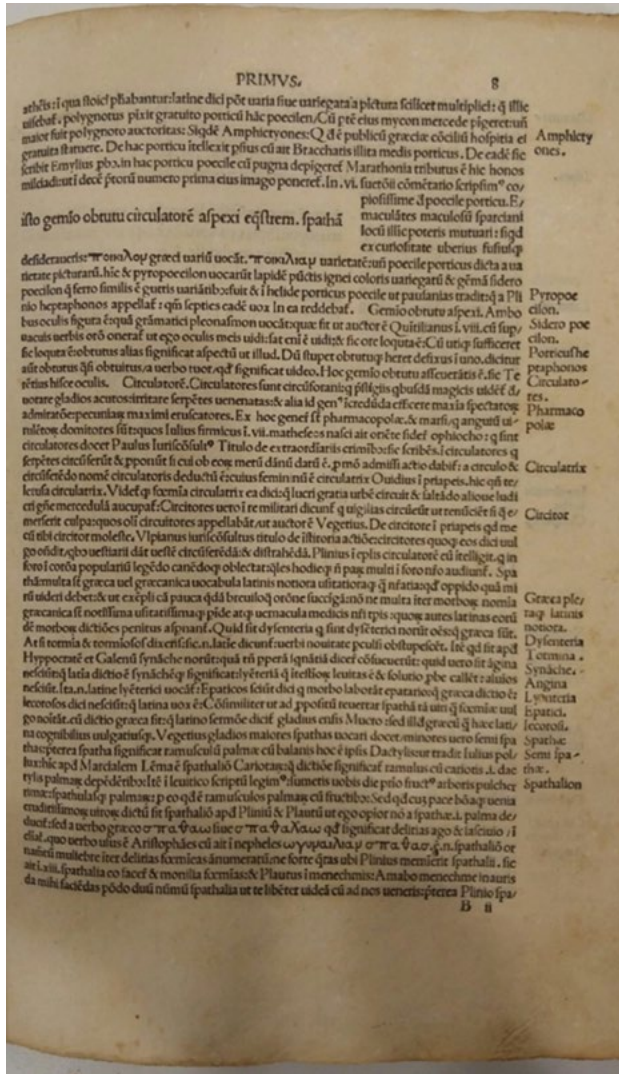


Figure 4. P. Beroaldo, *Commentarii in Lucii Apuleii Asinum aureum* (Bologna 1500), f. Bii.

I use the phrase ‘grow year after year’ because Apuleius is, like Pliny the Elder, one of the loves of Beroaldo’s life. However, in contrast to his love for Pliny (his personal copy of which, full of marginal annotations, was lost by Beroaldo), that for the Madaurensis was consolidated in an edition. In one of his glosses, Beroaldo tells the reader that for many years he had taught Apuleius to his more familiar pupils in private lessons, from which statement we learn that the course held in 1500 was not his first on Apuleius but, rather, his first *public* course. As we read at f. 77:

Causae remissionem: Corrigo causae remissionem in causariam missionem et ita aliquot ab hinc annis corrigendum docui, cum privatim intra cubiculum discipulis familiarioribus Apuleium enarrarem.

capite [*Met.* 11.1]: ‘[...] de vi et potentia septenarii numeri scripsi copiose in libello qui inscribitur heptalogos sive septem sapientes [*cf.* n. 8] de septenario numero, qui graece dicitur heptas sic scribit Martianus in arithmetica [...]’.

Causae remissionem: I amend ‘Causae remissionem’ into ‘causariam missionem’ and so I have warned for some years that this reading has to be amended, since I taught Apuleius to the closest students of mine who frequent my home for private lessons.

Why did Beroaldo love Apuleius so much? So much so, in fact, that we can call him, in addition to the Bolognese Commentator par excellence, an ‘alter Apuleius’, a ‘second Apuleius’? This is not an easy question to answer. Apuleius and Beroaldo certainly had many things in common. First of all, they were both wonderful rhetoricians, whose verbal performances were followed by large crowds. For both of them, variety (‘varietas’) and the pleasantness of literary forms were, as Lara Nicolini has pointed out with reference to Apuleius, a sort of ‘religion’.³⁸ Both Apuleius and Beroaldo liked to play with masks and, like Apuleius, Beroaldo chiefly presented his image and life through his orations and commentaries³⁹ (in doing so, Beroaldo believed himself to be legitimized by Apuleius’ *Golden Ass*, since, like his contemporaries, he takes for granted the identity of the *Metamorphoses*’ author with the main character of the work).⁴⁰ Furthermore, they both have an artisanal idea of literature, according to which writing a literary work means, as Apuleius says in his *Florida* (9.24 sqq.), ‘reficere poemata omnigenus’, that is, reviving the different forms of literary expression,⁴¹ or, in short, taking already-used stories and phrases and using them to create something new. Last but not least, Apuleius and Beroaldo share the belief that speaking well means living well, and that the highest form of philosophy is moral; the *studia humanitatis* teaches nothing of heavenly things or the afterlife of men (one of Beroaldo’s favourite mottos is from Socrates: ‘quod supra nos, nihil ad nos’, ‘What is above us, is nothing to us’), but it can teach the best way of living in this earthly life (cf. Apul. *Flor.* 7.10: ‘disciplinam regale tam bene dicendum quam ad bene vivendum repertam’).

Unfortunately, Beroaldo never wrote any narrative texts, in contrast to another important Apuleian fan and Italian Renaissance genius, Leon Battista Alberti, who wrote the masterpiece *Momus sive de principe*. In spite of everything, Beroaldo’s prose is generally full of humour and jokes, undoubtedly reaching the apex of his humorous writing in 1499 with the *Declamatio lepidissima ebriosis, scortatoris, aleatoris de vitiositate disceptantium* (‘Very funny declamation of a drunkard, a womanizer, and a gambler talking about debauchery’).⁴² This declamation was very popular in Europe (it was translated three times into German, then into French and English), although it was generally perceived by religious scholars to be a satirical piece directed against the vices of men, such as priests, and thus as valuable for teaching purposes (typical of the medieval manner). Very few scholars noted and appreciated

³⁸ L. Nicolini, ‘Introduzione’, in Apuleio, *Le metamorfosi o ‘l’asino d’oro’* (Milano 2013) 5–57 (52).

³⁹ Gaisser, *Fortunes of Apuleius* (n. 1, above) 5.

⁴⁰ Gaisser, *Fortunes of Apuleius* (n. 1, above) 30. The famous ‘Quis ille’ in the prologue of Apuleius’ novel is annotated as follows by Beroaldo: ‘significatur autem ipsemet Apuleius’, cf. Beroaldo, *Commentarii* (n. 3, above) f. 3v. For the hermeneutical and theoretical problems of the ‘Quis ille’ see: S. J. Harrison, ‘The speaking book: the prologue to Apuleius’ *Metamorphoses*’, *Classical Quarterly* 40.2 (1990) 507–13; R. Nicolai, ‘Quis ille? Il proemio delle *Metamorfosi* di Apuleio e il problema del lettore ideale’, *Materiali e discussioni per l’analisi dei testi classici* 42 (1999) 143–64.

⁴¹ G. De Trane, *Scrittura e intertestualità nelle ‘Metamorfosi’ di Apuleio* (Lecce 2009) 9. Beroaldo’s colleague, Antonio Urceo Codro, expressed very clearly this idea at the beginning of his *Sermo* I, through words to which Beroaldo would certainly have subscribed: ‘Accipite laetis animis, viri clarissimi, sermonem meum, si modo meus est qui sit a virorum doctissimorum sententiis concinatus [...] Praeterea ego quoque quotidie fere Luciani et Apuleii asinos in manibus habeo, unius brevitatem et inventum, alterius copiam admirans atque elegantiam’. Cf. Urceo Codro, *Sermones* (n. 12, above) 60.

⁴² F. Beroaldo, *Declamatio ebriosis, scortatoris et aleatoris* (Bologna: Benedictus Hectoris, 1499 ISTC ib00471000).

the Apuleian wit and humour that permeate the text. Among them we can count the German humanist Wolfgang Schenk, who, in 1501 in Erfurt, decided to publish a new edition of Beroaldo's *Very funny declamation*.⁴³ From the dedication letter of the editor Maternus Pistoriensis to Andrea Delicensis we understand that Beroaldo's humour and style delighted them. It is not by chance that the publisher, the above-mentioned Wolfgang Schenk, chose to translate his own name from German into Latin with the term 'Pocillator' ('cupbearer'), a rare Apuleian word used three times in *The Golden Ass* (6.15; 6.24; 10.17). While this is only a small example, I suggest that this love for precious and rare Apuleian words is, much more than Platonic or Neoplatonic allegories, the real bequest that Beroaldo passed down to European scholars through his commentary.

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⁴³ A. Severi, *Filippo Beroaldo il vecchio un maestro per l'Europa : da commentatore di classici a classico moderno (1481–1550)* (Bologna 2015) 121–33.