

A TRIMETER IN APULEIUS

Apul. Socr. 1 p. 116–7

(cernimus) diei opificem lunamque, solis aemulam, noctis decus, seu corniculata seu dividua seu protumida seu plena sit, varia ignium face, quanto longius facessat a sole, tanto largius conlustrata, pari incremento itineris et luminis, mensem suis auctibus ac dehinc paribus dispendiis aestimans.

Apuleius is a rhythmical writer; and this description of the moon is articulated by frequent internal clausulae: *protūmīdā seū plēnā sit* (resolved double cretic); *īgnīūm fāce* (cretic + iamb); *facēssāt ā sōle* (cretic + trochee); *itīnērīs ēt lūmīnis* (resolved double cretic); *mensēm sūīs auctībūs* (double cretic), *dispendiīs aestīmans* (double cretic), perhaps also *cōnlūstrāta* (double spondee). A different kind of rhythm is found in the sequence *lūnāmq̄ sōlis aemulām noctīs dēcus*. This is an iambic trimeter; various arguments suggest that it is a quotation rather than an accidental creation. Firstly it is a typical trimeter of imperial tragedy, with a tendency towards spondees in the first foot of each metron, restriction to iambs in the second, caesura after *solis* and a word of two syllables at verse end. The only point in which this differs from the majority of Seneca's verses is the iambic third foot. Seneca has a strong preference for a spondee in this position; but iambs are not infrequent.¹ Secondly there is a good fit between sense and metre. Thirdly the vocabulary is consistent with the kinds of works which share this metre (imperial tragedy, chiefly represented to us by Seneca and the *Octavia* and *Hercules Oetaeus* attributed to him). In fact the same line ending, *noctis decus*, is found in Seneca's *Phaëdra* 410, *clarumque caeli sidus et noctis decus* (also of the moon). Fourthly the *de deo Socratis* has many verse quotations, particularly at the beginning (four in the first two chapters). Admittedly those which are cited without being signalled as quotations are all from Vergil; but there are not enough quotations to establish this as a rule.² Fifthly an accidental verse is very unlikely in a passage where (as noted above) a writer is paying close attention to rhythm.

1) J. Soubiran, *Essai sur la versification dramatique des Romains* (Paris 1988), 33 gives figures for Seneca's *Phaëdra*: in 12.5% (or 14% with cases of uncertain scansion included) of trimeters the third foot is an iamb or tribrach.

2) Quotations without indication of author or context: 1 p. 116 (Verg. georg. 1,5–6); 2 p. 120 (Verg. Aen. 3,516); 14 p. 150 (Verg. Aen. 9,184–5); 23 p. 173 (Verg. ge-

If this is a quotation, can we say anything of its context or authorship? As to context, *solis aemulam* might suggest that the previous line had mentioned the sun, as Apuleius himself does; even this is of course uncertain.³ The question of authorship seems even harder. The similarity of the *Phaedra* verse cited above is clear; but which is imitating which? If our verse is the imitator, we may have the fragment of an anonymous author influenced by Seneca, in the same way as the authors of the *Hercules Oetaeus* and the *Octavia*. Less probably, the verse might have been created for its place here by Apuleius himself. Latin writers translating or adapting Greek material sometimes provided their own verse translations of quotations in the original text;⁴ and it is possible that Apuleius is adapting a Greek work, adorned, like his own, with verse quotations.⁵ On the other hand this quotation does not serve an argumentative function, which could have made Apuleius wish to take it over from his source (indeed it comes in a passage, which itself seems superfluous to the argument); and without any indication of origin, it also fails to let us know that we are in cultivated company. If Seneca is the imitator and our verse is the original, the author is again quite possibly unknown to us; but the recklessly optimistic might like to consider Ovid's *Medea* as a possible source. The surviving works of Ovid are among the most important influences on Seneca's tragedies;⁶ and so famous a work might qualify for anonymous quotation, in the manner of the unmarked Vergil quotations.⁷ But, as mentioned above, we have too little material to establish rules here.

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org. 3,80–1). Quotations with indication of author or context (excluding looser paraphrases): 1 p. 118 (Lucr. 5,576); 2 p. 121 (Enn. ann. 240–1); 5 p. 130 (Verg. Aen. 9,300); 5 p. 131 (Verg. Aen. 10,773); 10 p. 143 (Lucr. 6,96–8); 11 p. 145 (Hom. Il. 1,198); *ibid.* (Verg. Aen. 1,440); *ibid.* (Plaut. Mil. 4); 20 p. 165 (Ter. Eun. 454); 24 p. 176 (Acc. trag. 520ff.).

3) The closest parallel to the expression is in a parody of hackneyed poetic descriptions of night, Auson. 27,17 (409 S.), 4 *aemula fratris*.

4) On Cicero, cf. H. D. Jocelyn, Greek Poetry in Cicero's Prose Writing, YClS 23 (1973) 61–111, particularly 71–86. The *de deo Socratis* does in fact include one such translated quotation; but Apuleius there draws our attention both to the quotation and to his activity as translator: Apul. Socr. 11 p. 145 *versum Graecum* (Hom. Il. 1,198), *si paulisper opperiamini, Latine enuntiabo – atque adeo hic sit impraesentiarum. Minerva igitur ... Achilli moderando ... advenit: 'soli perspicua est, aliorum nemo tuetur'*.

5) On the possibility that Apuleius is using material from Greek philosophical works on the same subject, see S. J. Harrison, Apuleius, A Latin Sophist (Oxford 2000) 136–40.

6) See particularly R. Jacobi, Der Einfluß Ovids auf den Tragiker Seneca (Berlin and New York 1988). The passage from which the *Phaedra* verse (410) comes has some resemblance to a passage in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* (7,192–8), in which Medea calls on various gods for support in rejuvenating Aeson (Jacobi p. 72f.), a story that would not have featured in the tragedy.

7) Ovid is one of only five Roman tragedians named by Quintilian (inst. 10,1,97–8). His judgement (98), *Ovidi Medea videtur mihi ostendere, quantum ille vir praestare potuerit, si ingenio suo imperare quam indulgere maluisset*, suggests that the work may have had enough classical respectability to allow it to keep company with the other quotations in the work (see note 2), none later than Vergil.

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