

## Apollo's Sn(e)aky Tongue(s)

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Schiermonnikoog

...keeping the dragon population under control...  
J.K. Rowling 2005, 11

When in the grey mists of subrecent antiquity the Apuleius project was started – a cooperative undertaking in accordance with the wishes of the then prevailing managerial thinking – many aspects were less than obvious. One of these was what language was going to be employed; another who was going to participate and what form participation was going to take. I suppose that, having recently returned from Canada and the USA, I was partly responsible for the use of English; but the help of a native speaker was still necessary and we were very fortunate in being able to enlist Philippa Forder-Gould who, being a keen classical scholar, actually did a great deal more than ‘mere’ language correction.

So there we were, solemnly discussing in Dutch a Latin text of a possibly trilingual author (as Stephen Harrison emphasizes in *Ancient Narrative* [2002a, 162]) for the sake of a commentary that was to appear eventually in English. A generation earlier the language of choice would have been (philological) Latin. Would we have adopted a Mommsen-, Norden- or Helm-like stance with such a choice?

Roughly at the same time I met a lady (in a small amateur orchestra) whom I vaguely remembered from many years before. She, too, had returned from foreign parts; re-acquaintance led to her taking up her classical studies again; and we all know to what pinnacles she has risen since: there is no need to describe them, except to say that without Maaïke the Groningen Apuleius project would have foundered.

When in the tale about Cupid and Psyche the *anus narratrix* – whose name we never learn – is about to cite Apollo’s oracle, she prefaces the god’s response by saying (4,32: 100,18–20):

*Sed Apollo, quanquam Graecus et Ionicus, propter Milesiae conditorem sic Latina sorte respondit.* ‘Apollo, although a Greek and an Ionic Greek at that, answered with an oracle in Latin to show favour to the author of this Milesian tale’.<sup>1</sup>

In the previous sentence Apollo is described as *deus Milesius*. The adjective clearly points at the famous oracle of Apollo at Didyma which had been refurbished in the time of Alexander the Great and would still be consulted by Diocletian. Though there was rivalry with Apollo’s oracle at Claros (cf. Tacitus, *Annals* 2,54: Germanicus’ visit),<sup>2</sup> Didyma was well-known in Apuleius’ time.<sup>3</sup> The oracle is referred to as *dei Milesii vetustissimum... oraculum*, a phrase which may well refer to its mythical origin (cf. Fontenrose 1988, 5), but which surely also underscores the importance of this as against other Apollinic oracles.<sup>4</sup> Some difficulties in this passage have long been noted and much discussed. Part of the following discussion will focus on parallels with other writers moving Greek material to Latin, especially Ovid.

1. Greek gods, the *anus* implies, usually do not speak Latin, and according to Cicero (*div.* 2,116) Apollo never did. But Cicero does not mention the tradition that Apollo spoke in a barbarous tongue not understood by any Greeks when consulted by Mardonius, as related by Plutarch (*de defectu oraculorum* 5, *Mor.* 412A; cf. also the multilingual prophet encountered near the Red Sea, *ibidem* 21, *Mor.* 421B). Parke (1972, 105) mentions the fact that Mardonius consulted the oracle, but does not mention the language of the reply.

On the other hand, we find a reference to Q. Fabius Pictor who after the battle of Cannae read translations of Delphic oracular utterances to the Ro-

<sup>1</sup> The edition used is Helm <sup>3</sup>1931, repr. 1992; the translations of the *Met.* are from Hanson 1989.

<sup>2</sup> For the flourishing of the oracle of Claros in the second century see Goodyear on Tac. *Ann.* 2,54,2 *ut Clarii ... uteretur.*

<sup>3</sup> See e.g. Parke 1972, 121 and Fontenrose 1988, 22.

<sup>4</sup> Why the expression should be regarded as representing the author’s point of view (cf. Moreschini 1994, 188 on 4,32,5 *vetustissimum*: “sembra essere più una annotazione di Apuleio che della vecchia che racconta”) is not clear to me.

mans (Livy, *Ab urbe condita*, 23,11,1-4), and apparently Apollo spoke no Latin on that occasion. Moreover, among the careful listing in Fontenrose 1988 of Apollo's utterances at Didyma there is only this Apuleian one in Latin (see also Parke 1972, 131). Of course there are many oracular utterances in Latin poetry, especially in Vergil (e.g. *Aeneid* 3,94 ff. and the Sibyl as Apollo's mouthpiece at *Aeneid* 6,101 ff.) and Ovid (e.g. *Met.* 15,637 ff.), and it might be worthwhile to list them. The several situations are similar to the one here except for the fact that the *anus narratrix* stresses so strongly that Apollo is speaking himself in addressing Psyche's father and also that he does so in Latin, mindful of the *conditor Milesiae*.

2. The *narratrix* tells her tale in a Greek setting, her audience being a Greek girl and an ass who presumably will know no Latin until he has been re-transformed and has travelled to Rome.

Admittedly the old woman, however afraid of, but at the same time attached to,<sup>5</sup> the robbers whom she serves, is apparently not only well versed in the interpretation of dreams,<sup>6</sup> but also in the management of diverting tales,<sup>7</sup> and thus able to divert both listeners and first-time readers from noticing curious inconsistencies. Indeed several scholars have remarked in recent years that this *anicula delira et temulenta* is a highly accomplished rhetorician whose management of the several voices or *personae* greatly resembles the accomplishments of the novel's author, to whom she herself refers – daringly it would seem.<sup>8</sup> Nowhere do we learn that she knows no Latin. Of course not, for she is speaking it all the time, *propter Milesiae conditorem*. But it is only when citing the oracle that it is worth her while to mention the *conditor Milesiae*. The situation somewhat resembles the scene with the *hortulanus* at 9,39. He is *latini sermonis ignarus* and thus irritates the Roman soldier who then is forced to repeat his question in halting (?) Greek.

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<sup>5</sup> The old woman describes herself as very much attached to her employers (*Met.* 4,7; 4,25), but one (i.e. the re-reader) gets the strong impression that her attachment is laced with fear and apprehension. Indeed, when she has lost Charite and the ass, she commits suicide (6,30).

<sup>6</sup> Cf. 4,27 (96,5-14) and see *GCA* 1977, 205.

<sup>7</sup> Even if the tale of Cupid and Psyche is to be seen as a single whole, the plural *in narrationibus lepidis anilibusque fabulis* should not be treated as a 'poetic plural'; see also *GCA* 1977, 207 on 4,27 (96,14 f.).

<sup>8</sup> See Warren S. Smith in *AAGA* II, 74; Van Mal-Maeder and Zimmerman in *AAGA* II, 89 f.

The scene is reported by the narrator who has witnessed it when an ass but who does not report that when an ass he had not yet learnt any Latin.<sup>9</sup>

3. Scholars are now agreed that the *conditor Milesiae* is the author of the text we are reading. I leave aside here the still debated distinction between abstract and concrete author (however, see below, section 12).<sup>10</sup> In other words, this *anus narratrix* against all rules of narratological engagement refers back to her creator / manipulator and *en passant* gives an indication as to the generic habitat of her own tale and of the text as a whole. Fortunately Apuleius was an unruly author – or, rather, one who loved flouting generic rules (or conventions).<sup>11</sup>

4. Should the word *milesia* be included in the title of the work as we have it? In the prologue we encounter both *sermo Milesius* and *fabula Graecanica*. The generally accepted titles *Metamorphoses*, though mentioned in F, and *Asinus Aureus*, mentioned by St. Augustine and paralleled by the title of the *Onos*, find little support within the text.<sup>12</sup> This is not the place for a thorough study of the possible influence on Apuleius of Aristides/Sisenna, the latter being mentioned by Ovid (*Tr.* 2,413).<sup>13</sup> The mention of the *Milesiaca*, however, points to significant connections with roughly contemporary Greek literature, especially with Plutarch. In addition to the mention of *Milesiaca*, some recurrent motifs in Apuleius' novel, especially processions, have parallels in the famous anecdote on Crassus by Lucius' ancestor.

<sup>9</sup> See *GCA* 1995, Introduction, 8 n. 12 with references to the relevant and agonizing literature concerning the relationship between the *ego* of the prologue and the *ego* of the actor-ass. See also Clarke 2001, 106, who points out that the alien nature of the Latin language stressed in the prologue recurs in *Met.* 4,32 and 9,39. For a different view see in this volume Finkelppearl, n. 29, and van Mal-Maeder, n. 35.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. Bitel's somewhat scathing comment (2003, 190).

<sup>11</sup> Cf. 5,27 (124,21) *proinde ut merebatur* with *GCA* 2004, 322 ad loc. See also *GCA* 2000, 349 on 10,28 (259,21 f.) *minus quidem quam merebatur*, where Maaïke Zimmerman conscientiously notes that it is not entirely clear whose opinion is referred to.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. Photios, *bibl. cod.* 129; Macrobius, *somn.* 1,2,7-8 has no more than the scornful expression '*argumenta fictis casibus amatorum referta*' with reference to both Arbiter and Apuleius (see Graverini in this volume). For the attested titles of Apuleius' text see Bitel (2000-2001).

<sup>13</sup> Cf. Fronto *epist.* 4,3,2 (p. 57,3 v.d.H<sup>2</sup>) *Sisennam in lasciuuis*. For the influence of Sisenna on Apul. see e.g. Dowden 2001, 126-128 and Dowden in this volume. On the influence of Aristides' *Milesiaca* on Petronius' and Apuleius' fiction see Harrison 1998; Jensson 2002; Jensson 2004, chapter 3.2 'the Hidden Genre', esp. 3.2.3 'Milesian Fiction'.

In Plutarch's *Life of Crassus* (32), with the explicit reference to Aristides' *Milesiaca* – 'highly obscene books'<sup>14</sup> – we read about a mock-triumphal procession. In this procession, Crassus' severed head is carried and displayed like that of Pentheus during a recitation of Euripides' *Bacchae*.<sup>15</sup> The severed head detail turns up in Apuleius when the sisters urge Psyche to get rid of her bed-fellow and say (5,20: 118,25): *nisu quam valido noxii serpentis nodum cervicis et capitis abscinde* ('with as strong a stroke as you can, sever the knot that joins the poisonous serpent's neck and head').

We may ask whether this scene as rendered by Plutarch is *a.* related (however remotely) to the myth of Orpheus' severed head (and hence perhaps prophecy) and *b.* the Etruscan heads on ancient gemstones discussed in Zazoff (1983, 256) and their connection with the tale of prophetic Tages as related in Cicero's *On Divination*.<sup>16</sup> The triumphal procession in the life – or rather death – of Crassus may well be compared with the Apuleian procession in the festival of Laughter, the sad procession of Psyche to her rock, but especially the *anteludia* in *Met.* 11,8.<sup>17</sup> Apart from the general similarity of these three scenes as (playful) processions, they include rather significant elements of 'romanitas': in the case of the Risus festival magistrates with *lictors* (moreover, the insistence that instruments of torture are to be brought in *ritu graeciensi* appears to be directed at a Roman audience), in the *anteludia* magistrates with *fasces* and gladiators in typical armour, and in the case of Psyche's funereal *pompa* the Latin oracle of Apollo himself.

5. Apollo gives his oracle not just in Latin, but in elegiac distichs. It should be noted that Cicero (*Div.* 2,116) is arguing against divination in general and that his point concerning Latin (i.e. Ennius' rather clever rendering of a Greek phrase) thus serves a rhetorical purpose (see also Pease ad loc.).<sup>18</sup> As

<sup>14</sup> See Jenson 2004, 264, who points out that Plutarch (*Crassus* 32,3–5) uses the adjective ἀκόλαστος three times in his reference to the work of Aristides (cf. Ps.-Lucian *Amores* 1, where the phrase ἀκόλαστα δηγήματα is used in the context of a reference to the *Milesiaca*; cf. Dowden in this volume, n. 11, who sees no reason to doubt the authenticity of the *Amores*).

<sup>15</sup> Jenson 2004, 298 f. points out that Plutarch's scandalous and sensational description significantly follows upon his references to the *Milesiaca* and the *Sybaritica*.

<sup>16</sup> See Cic. *Div.* 2,50 with Pease extensively ad loc. as well as Ovid *Met.* 15,553 ff. with Bömer ad loc.

<sup>17</sup> For the *anteludia* see Gwyn Griffiths 1975, 172 f. on 11,8 (272,3) *anteludia*.

<sup>18</sup> See Skutsch (1985, 333 f.) on the ambiguous oracle in Enn. *Ann.* 167 *Aio te, Aeacida, Romanos uincere posse*, quoted by Cicero: "Ennius, as Cicero observes, has invented the

to the metre, it must be admitted that both Didyma and Claros generally gave their responses in hexameter form.<sup>19</sup> But here it is perhaps interesting not to confine the comments to a reference to Pease on Cic. *Div.* 1,81, who notes an oracle in iambs such as the priests of the Dea Syria devised in *Met.* 9,8,<sup>20</sup> but also to consult Lucius' uncle again: Plutarch notes that the Pythia has stopped giving her oracles in verse (actually not just heroic, but all manner of verse) and now responds in prose (*de Pythiae or.* 19, *Mor.* 403A). Mattiacci (*AAGA* II, 137) has parallels for oracular responses given in elegiac couplets from the Greek novels, but does not mention the inscriptions Fontenrose B 2 and B 5; interesting in this context is Plutarch's rejection of Euripides' remark that Eros teaches the poet – elegiac verse being the traditional erotic metre and therefore especially apt for the substance of *this* oracular utterance.<sup>21</sup>

6. Apollo is specified here as the *deus Milesius*, and commentaries quite rightly point out the link with the *conditor Milesiae*. But in fact there may be another reason for the choice of this particular oracle. The *anus narratrix* tells her tale in the robbers' den,<sup>22</sup> somewhere in mainland Greece, presumably in Boeotia or thereabouts, and thus Delphic Apollo might have been more reasonably selected here. However, she has introduced the tale with the word *avocabo* (cf. 4,24: 93,10 *avocari* and 93,14 f. *saxeo carcere*): she not only means to distract the girl, but also quite literally calls her away to another country, at first unspecified (*in quadam civitate*), but now obviously not too far from Miletus, though at the same time the contrast emphasized in *GCA* between the claustrophobic robbers' den (cf. *saxeo carcere*) and the wide universe described in the tale hints at virtual space.<sup>23</sup>

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oracle himself, presumably imitating the ambiguity of the famous oracle given to Croesus" (cf. Herod. 1,54). Skutsch also points out (with lit.) that Cicero's statement that in Pyrrhus' day Apollo had ceased to make responses in verse is wrong.

<sup>19</sup> Cf. Parke 1972, 137, and Lucian, *Alex.* 29, who adds the oracle at Malos.

<sup>20</sup> See *GCA* 1995, 85 on 9,8 (208, 9-11).

<sup>21</sup> See Plut. *de Pythiae or.* 23, *Mor.* 405E and Eur. F 663 Kannicht ποιητὴν δ' ἄρα / Ἔρως διδάσκει, κἄν ἄμουσος ἦ τὸ πρὶν ('Love instructs a poet, then, though he before was songless'). Cf. also Plut. *Quaest. Conv.* 1,5 (*Mor.* 622C).

<sup>22</sup> See *GCA* 2004, 13 = Introd. 2.2.1.

<sup>23</sup> For the 'virtual' dimensions of the world in *Cupid and Psyche* see Harrison 2002b, 48-52 (section 5 'A Fantasy World? Literary Topography in *Cupid and Psyche*); cf. also Zimmerman 2002, 96.

7. Is Apollo speaking directly? Fontenrose 1988, 199 remarks that the phrase Θεὸς ἔχρησεν followed by direct quotation in dactylic hexameters is characteristic of Didymaeian responses after the revival of the oracle. No mention is made in our text of any priest or priestess of Apollo. In Hellenistic times a *prophètēs* was appointed yearly for the oracle, but his precise role is conjectural; is he the counterpart of the Pythia in Delphi? *Der Neue Pauly* uses the term 'Quellorakel',<sup>24</sup> and Strabo 17,1,43 seems to imply that no words were audible, but signs had to be interpreted by a prophet; a *prophētis* is also mentioned.<sup>25</sup> The expression *affatu sanctae vaticinationis accepto* (4,33: 101,5) seems to leave open the possibility of just such an intermediate agent. At 5,17 (116,19) Psyche's sisters (nastily exaggerating the oracle's wording) speak of a *sors Pythica* and thereby seem to refer to Apollo's slaying of Python, as *GCA* (2004, 239) ad loc. rightly remarks, but at the same time may well imply an intermediary Pythia. That seems to be the opinion of Parke 1985, who gives an extensive reconstruction of the ritual in his Appendix II (p. 210–218), partly based on Iamblichus' *De mysteriis*.

8. Apollo's message concerning Cupid seems downright hostile to his young fellow-divinity, at least at first glance; Eros is described as at best a nasty and disruptive character/power (4,33). It is significant that the oracle does not mention a name; the recognition scene is to be delayed, and the description of the *malum* (Mattiacci in *AAGA* II 139 n. 41 notes the synonymy with *monstrum*) is in keeping with the anger of Venus when she calls upon this son: 4,30 uses much the same picture (see below, section 8a.), though not nearly as harsh as the oracle.<sup>26</sup> But, more importantly, Psyche, when she has gone to her rock, clearly accepts Apollo's harsh description of her intended husband, and actually adds to it (4,34: 102,12 f.): *quid differo, quid detrecto venientem qui totius orbis exitio natus est?* ('Why should I postpone and shun the coming of him who was born for the whole world's ruin?'). Psyche has heard (of) the prophecy, but in her reaction she does not mention the snake element. How does she, the victim, understand the meaning of Apollo's words?

In this context it is perhaps useful to remember the scene in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* 1,452 ff. when Apollo has just slain monstrous Python and

<sup>24</sup> See *DNP* s.v. Didyma (Δίδυμα), 544 (K. Tuchelt).

<sup>25</sup> See Fontenrose 1988, 55.

<sup>26</sup> *GCA* 2004, 62 on 4,30 (98,19-23) notes the Hellenistic image; cf. Ovid, *Amores* 1,1.

subsequently proudly as well as fiercely upbraids Cupid who is busy with his bow and arrows – such weapons aren't for a boy (Apollo addresses him with the phrase *lascive puer*), who should be content with his torch. Cupid's angry revenge (*saeva Cupidinis ira*) is effective and results in the pursuit and loss of Daphne. Later on, in her bid for universal power, Venus makes use of her armed son whom she addresses in the words (5,365) *arma manusque meae, mea, nate, potentia* ('my son, mine only stay, my hand, mine honour and my might') whereupon even the *rex silentum* is hit by Cupid's arrow. Venus' appeal to her son in Ovid has definite similarities with the appeal in Apuleius *Met.* 4,31.

8a. The first description of Cupid is given by the *anus narratrix* (4,30: 98,19 f.):

*et vocat confestim puerum suum pinnatum illum et satis temerarium, qui malis suis moribus contempta disciplina publica, flammis et sagittis armatus, per alienas domos nocte discurrens et omnium matrimonia corrumpens, impune committit tanta flagitia et nihil prorsus boni facit.* 'She quickly sent for her son, that winged and headstrong boy, who, with his bad character and his disdain for law and order, goes running about at night through other folk's houses armed with flames and arrows, ruining everyone's marriages, and commits the most shameful acts with impunity and accomplishes absolutely no good.'

This characterisation rather closely resembles the one given by Apollo in his oracle and one might be inclined to accept the *narratrix*' verdict on Cupid's character except for the fact that later on in the tale his personality turns out to be much more complex. Moreover the *anus narratrix* is a brilliant rhetorician who does not voice here her own characterisation of Cupid (whose name we have yet to learn), but one she knows Venus needs: 4,30 (98,24 f.) *Hunc, quamquam genuina licentia procacem, verbis quoque insuper stimulat* ('even though he was naturally unrestrained and impudent, Venus verbally goaded him on even further').

Apollo – for unstated reasons – adds his own venom in his Latin translation of Venus' wishes. Psyche on the other hand is prepared to translate Apollo's oracle into terms she can deal with. With bitter sarcasm she says (4,34: 102,11 f.):



*Festino felices istas nuptias obire, festino generosum illum maritum meum videre. Quid differo, quid detrecto venientem, qui totius orbis exitio natus est?* 'I hasten to enter into this happy marriage, I hasten to see this high-born husband of mine. Why should I postpone and shun the coming of him who was born for the whole world's ruin?'

Psyche's reaction is wholly consistent with an acceptance of death. But in her reaction any reference to the element *vipereum malum* is lacking. Apollo indeed orders Psyche's father to abandon his daughter on a rock. But at whose bidding does Apollo do so? Clearly he is not taking the terms of Venus' request literally, nor for that matter Cupid's. Indeed Venus' request is addressed to Cupid who interprets it in his own disrespectful way after he has been shown this beautiful girl.

8b. In Apuleius Venus' boy is winged and provided with fire and arrows;<sup>27</sup> in Apollo's oracle the *vipereum malum* is equally provided *flamma et ferro*; the true monsters – the sisters – admonish Psyche to provide herself with a flaming light and a sharp knife (5,20). It is noteworthy that the military metaphor used by the sisters suddenly becomes literally weapons in Psyche's nervous hands, while her husband lies unarmed and sleeping (Mattiacci in *AAGA* II, 146).

9. Throughout the tale the reader/listener encounters snakes, serpents, dragons and even a gecko (5,30: 127,12). The contexts are admittedly varied, but the frequency is remarkable. The oracle itself uses the expression *vipereum malum* – a snakelike evil – which is presently provided with wings so as to be able to fly into the bedrooms of unsuspecting victims. In the sisters' insistent *amplificatio* this snakelike evil becomes a huge and fearsome dragon threatening to devour Psyche's child as soon as it is born. The sisters themselves are actually carriers of the *vipereum virus* as is pointed out by the *anus narratrix* and rightly emphasized in *GCA* (2004, 190 f.) on 5,12 (112,22 f.). Of course in Greek myth and Ovid's use of its tales, serpents, snakes and dragons are commonplace and though often deadly dangerous, not always harbingers of evil. Thus Cadmus needs to slay a murderous dragon (and he does so in a way which is somewhat similar to the method

<sup>27</sup> *Met.* 4,30 (98,21) *flammis et sagittis armatus*; cf. 5,30 (127,19 f.).

Psyche's sisters advise her to use, see above under point 4.),<sup>28</sup> but he himself is finally transformed into one of the non-murderous sort. A similar ambivalence may be noted in Apuleius' use of the motif. But the *anus narratrix* has sufficient rhetorical know-how to let the danger or evil aspect depend on the character of the sub-narrator.

9a. In Ovid (*Met.* 3,8 ff.) Cadmus faces the dragon (a Martian one) as a derivative result of Apollo's oracle – Apollo himself does not mention any dragon, but when Cadmus contemplates the serpent he has slain he hears a voice saying (3,97 f.) '*quid, Agenore nate, peremptum /serpentem spectas? Et tu spectabere serpens*' ('Agenor's son,/ what gazest thus upon this snake? The time will one day come/ That thou thyself shalt be a snake').<sup>29</sup>

Cadmus' dragon has three tongues (3,34 *tres...micant linguae*) as have the serpents that guard the waters of Cocytus and Styx in Apuleius at 6,15 (140,5) *trisulca vibramina draconum*, but also the dragon that is supposed to protect Iason's golden fleece (Ovid, *Met.* 7,150).

9b. Psyche is badly frightened by the description her sisters give of the beast 'as seen by neighbours and passers-by' (5,17). She does not have the presence of mind to ask: 'what neighbours?' and thus the characterisation (5,18: 117,11) '*utpote simplex et animi tenella*' seems justified, all the more since she has to admit that she has never actually seen her lover/husband and has been warned against *curiositas* as to his *vultus*. *Utpote ...animi tenella* in the immediate context means 'easily taken in', 'easily persuaded'. In view of the later development of the tale I would prefer to avoid the term 'innocent'. She appears less than innocent when she lies to her sisters, thus causing their deaths.<sup>30</sup> Nevertheless she is regarded at 6,15 (139,10 f.) as an *innocens anima*: there it should be remembered that *providentia* must be interpreted as applicable in a particular situation; not as a general divine force.

When the sisters describe the serpent (5,17: 116,16 f.), they paint *immanem colubrum multinodis voluminibus serpentem* ('a monstrous snake

<sup>28</sup> See next section.

<sup>29</sup> Translations of Ovid are by A. Golding (edited by Madeleine Forey, 2001).

<sup>30</sup> Psyche tells her sisters of Cupid's beauty and adds that he has divorced her in order to marry that sister; surely a revenge, but the decision to act on this lie is the responsibility of that sister.

gliding with many-knotted coils').<sup>31</sup> The sisters continue: *veneno noxio colla sanguinantem hiantemque ingluvie profunda* ('its bloody neck oozing noxious poison and its deep maw gaping wide').<sup>32</sup> Thus the sisters underscore the very point Psyche had glossed over in her acceptance of Apollo's oracle.

On the other hand there are some non-dangerous dragons and serpents; Cadmus has been mentioned above, but he plays no part in Apuleius' tale. The dragons that pull Ceres' wagon are mentioned in Psyche's appeal to the goddess at 6,2 (130,9); Jupiter's disguise *in serpentes* is referred to at 6,22 (145,13). The reference is elucidated in Arachne's tapestry at Ovid's *Met.* 6,114.

In this context the *stelio* is rather interesting.<sup>33</sup> In Ovid (*Met.* 5,446 ff.) the gecko is the result of a transformation effected by Ceres who is angered because a young boy tauntingly accuses her of greediness.<sup>34</sup> The metamorphosis essentially consists in a process of diminution: the gecko is rather like a dragon in miniature. Here in Apuleius Venus sarcastically asks whether she needs the help of Sobrietas – her enemy and in a sense also the opposite of Aviditas.<sup>35</sup> If the Ovidian metamorphosis has an echo in Venus' use of *stelio*, the huge serpent/dragon described by Psyche's sisters has suddenly become a very small crook in Venus' angry outburst.

In general: the description or even just the naming of the snakes/serpents/dragons is entirely dependent on the viewpoint involved or implied.

10. The link with Apollo, the Greek, and indeed Ionian, god who is speaking Latin in Didyma near Miletus lies in the fact that the *conditor Milesiae* em-

<sup>31</sup> Cf. Ovid *Met.* 3,41 *ille volubilibus squamosos nexibus orbes/torquet...* ('the speckled serpent straight/ comes trailing out in waving links and knotty rolls of scales').

<sup>32</sup> Cf. Ovid *Met.* 3,49 *hos necat adflatu funesti tabe veneni* ('and others some again/ he stings and poisons unto death till all at last were slain').

<sup>33</sup> Cf. Venus' angry complaint in 5,30 (127,12) *quibus modis stelionem istum cohibeam?* 'How am I going to repress this gecko?' (see *GCA* 2004, 344 f. ad loc. on *stelio* as a term of abuse).

<sup>34</sup> In Ov. *Met.* 5,460-461, the Muse offers an aetiology of the name *stellio*: *aptumque colori / nomen habet variis stellatus corpora guttis* ('he ... took a name to fit the disgrace of a body starred with varied spots', tr. D.E. Hill); see D.E. Hill 1992, 159-160 ad loc.

<sup>35</sup> Cf. Apul. *Met.* 5,30 (127,12 f.) *'petamne auxilium ab inimica mea Sobriestate, quam propter huius ipsius luxuriam offendi saepius?'* ('should I ask for help from my enemy Temperance, whom I have so often offended precisely because of my son's extravagance?'). See *GCA* 2004, 345 ad loc. and cf. 6,22 (145,1 f.).

loys the same type of metamorphic reflection he ascribes to his *anus narratrix*.<sup>36</sup>

11. At 6,14–15 the dragons guarding the Stygian waters are described with phrase *trisulca vibramina* (cf. 9a) – as in Vergil their tongues are split showing three (thin) trembling prongs.<sup>37</sup> they are just as trilingual as the *conditor milesiae* is said to have been.

12. It is not impossible that the *conditor Milesiae*, i.e. Apuleius, visited Asia Minor. In *De mundo* 17 he – the concrete author whatever Bitel’s objections to the term – adds a passage (not in *peri kosmou*) concerning an oracle near Hierapolis, where fumes of a deadly dangerous type, not unlike those at Delphi, produce the predictions.<sup>38</sup> Beaujeu (1973, 326) ad loc. notes that there is no independent confirmation of such a visit. Do we need such confirmation?

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<sup>36</sup> For a link between Apollo and ‘serpent-like’ appearances cf. *Met.* 1,4, where the snake dance of the contortionist conjures up the symbol of Asclepius (*diceres dei medici baculo ... serpentem generosum lubricis amplexibus inhaerere* [‘you would have said it was the noble serpent clinging in its slippery embrace to the Physician-God’s staff’]), son of Apollo and one of Apuleius’ favourite deities (cf. *Flor.* 18,37). Notably, Apuleius uses the adjective *generosus* (‘noble’, ‘high-born’) both of the *serpens* in 1,4 (4,12) and of Cupid in 4,34 (102,12) *generosum illum maritum* and 5,29 (126,20) *te solum generosum* (see *GCA* 2004, 103 on 4,34: 102,12 *generosum*).

<sup>37</sup> See *GCA* 2004, 483 on Apul. *Met.* 6,15 (140,5) *trisulca uibramina draconum*, comparing Verg. *Aen.* 2,475 and *georg.* 3,439 *linguis micat ore trisulcis*.

<sup>38</sup> Cf. *GCA* 2004, 499 on *Met.* 6,18 (141,19) *spiraculum Ditis*.

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