

bathing was just before the *cena*, but the gluttons of this time had discovered that digestion was temporarily promoted by the unhealthy practice of bathing in very hot water immediately after the meal'. Modern medical research has shown why this practice was very unhealthy indeed. As a meal is digested, the pulse rate is elevated, and bathing in hot water increases it even further.⁶ The consumption of alcohol, such as that described at Persius 3.92–3 and 99–100, would further accelerate the heart beat.⁷ The synergistic effect of these three circumstances, digesting a heavy meal, metabolising a large dose of alcohol, and bathing in hot water, was liable to cause a heart attack in an overweight man whose arteries were clogged with cholesterol. The heart attack would reduce the flow of oxygen to the brain and thereby produce a convulsive seizure such as that described by Persius at 3.100–2.⁸ Once the proper medical context has been recognised (I have never seen it pointed out before), it is readily apparent how a heavy meal followed by a hot bath would produce 'subitae mortes'.

Two millennia after decadent Romans accidentally found a novel way of killing themselves, it was rediscovered by decadent Americans. Today the technique is called bathing in a 'hot tub'. There have been reports in the popular media⁹ on how this practice is particularly dangerous for those who suffer from cardiac disease. This point is especially worth making in an era when the classics are often dismissed as irrelevant to the modern world.

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⁶ S. Bellet, *Clinical Disorders of the Heart Beat*³ (Philadelphia, 1973), 132.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 207.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 655.

⁹ E.g. *The New York Times* (4 October 1980), 11.

THREE NOTES ON APULEIUS¹

(i) *Isis' crown*

Met. 11.3 corona multiformis variis floribus sublimem destrinxerat verticem, cuius media quidem super frontem plana rutunditas in modum speculi vel immo argumentum lunae candidum lumen emicabat, dextra laevaue sulcis insurgentium viperarum cohibita, spicis etiam Cerialibus desuper porrectis.

I quote Griffiths' translation:² 'A crown of many designs with all kinds of flowers had girt her lofty head; in its centre a flat disk above the forehead shone with a clear light in the manner of a mirror or indeed the moon, while on its right and left it was embraced by coils of uprising snakes; from above it was adorned also with outstretched ears of corn'. This is the detailed description of the crown worn by Isis in her epiphany to Lucius at Cenchreae. 'Sulcis' is strange; it can only refer to the tracks or furrows left by snakes, a notion wholly irrelevant here – we require a noun referring to actual physical parts of the two snakes (or rather reproductions of snakes) which border Isis' moon-disk on either side, preferably a reference to their hanging coils – so Griffiths' translation runs 'on its right and left it was embraced by coils of uprising snakes', though this does not render his text, which keeps 'sulcis'. Read 'spiris', a word of similar shape to 'sulcis'; 'spirae' is twice used of the coils of snakes by Vergil, at *Aen.* 2.217 and 12.848; 'serpentum spiris' in the latter passage may

¹ My thanks to Professor R. G. M. Nisbet for helpful criticism.

² J. Gwyn Griffiths, *Apuleius, Metamorphoses XI: The Isis Book* (Leiden, 1975).

influence Apuleius' 'spiris...viperarum'. The alliteration and assonance of 'spiris' and 'spicis' would be very much in Apuleius' manner as a jingle involving the change of a single consonant between two words – cf. *Florida* 3 (p. 5.10–11 Helm) 'ita Marsyas in poenam cecinit et cecidit', *Apologia* 85 (p. 94, 12–13 Helm) 'acerbiores morsus viventi et videnti offeruntur' and H. Koziol, *Der Stil des L. Apuleius* (Vienna, 1872), 204–5.

(ii) *Psyche and Troy*

Despite some work on Vergilian allusion and parody in Apuleius' *Metamorphoses*, particularly in the elevated episode of Cupid and Psyche,³ many detailed reminiscences remain to be discovered. At *Met.* 5.14 Psyche's two evil sisters are called 'iugum sororium consponsae factionis', 'a sisters' yoke of conspiring faction'. The language clearly belongs to the high style; in fact 'iugum', qualified as it is by an abstract phrase in the genitive, recalls Aeschylus' description of the two sons of Atreus in the parados of the *Agamemnon* (42–4):

Μενέλαος ἀναξ ἡδ' Ἀγαμέμνων,
διθρόνου Διόθεν καὶ δισκῆπτρου
τιμῆς ὄχυρόν ζεύγος Ἀτρεϊδῶν

'Lord Menelaus and Agamemnon, the mighty yoke of the Atreidae of twin-throned and twin-sceptred honour from Zeus'.⁴ Thus an analogy is suggested between the enterprise of the two brothers in Aeschylus, the sack of Troy, and that of the two sisters in Apuleius, the downfall of Psyche. That this analogy is real and unfortuitous⁵ is proved by a passage a little further on, where the sisters push the vacillating Psyche into the deed which is to prove her undoing (5.19):

tunc nantiae iam portis patentibus nudatum sororis animum facinerosae mulieres, omissis tectae machinae latibulis, dstrictis gladiis fraudium simplicis puellae paventes cogitationes invadunt.

This is clearly a collection of military metaphors from the act of taking a city by surprise and deception ('portis patentibus', 'nudatum' (cf. Caesar, *Gall.* 7.70.7, Livy 38.7.4), 'tectae machinae latibulis', 'gladiis fraudium'), as commentators have pointed out. What has not been noticed is the relevance of these terms to the taking of Troy as described in the second book of Vergil's *Aeneid*. 'Portis patentibus' and 'invadunt' come from the description of the Greek warriors emerging from the Trojan Horse at *Aeneid* 2.265–7:

invadunt urbem somno vinoque sepultam;
caeduntur vigiles, portisque patentibus omnis
accipiunt socios et agmina conscia iungunt.

Similarly, 'tectae machinae latibulis' alludes not to a military 'penthouse' or 'martlet' as one editor has suggested,⁶ but to the Vergilian characterization of the Trojan Horse, twice called a 'machina' (*Aeneid* 2.151, 237) and twice referred to as 'latebrae' (*Aeneid* 2.38, 55), a word closely cognate with Apuleius' 'latibula'.

These two allusions to the story of Troy support each other: the analogy with the

³ Cf. e.g. P. G. Walsh, *The Roman Novel* (Cambridge, 1970), 48ff., A. G. Westerink in *Aspects of Apuleius' Golden Ass*, ed. B. J. Hijmans Jr. and R. Th. van der Paardt (Groningen, 1978), 63–73.

⁴ Cf. also Euripides' imitation of Aeschylus at *Helen* 392, Ἀγαμέμνων...τε Μενέλεων, κλεινὸν ζυγόν.

⁵ Use of Aeschylus is supported by the quarrying of his *Supplices* and of *Prometheus Vincitus* elsewhere in the episode of Cupid and Psyche: cf. Walsh, op. cit. 52–3.

⁶ L. C. Purser in his edition of the Cupid and Psyche episode (London, 1910).

great undertaking of the Atreidae is established at the beginning of the sisters' enterprise and stressed at its crucial moment. They give literary colour to the story, and like many such reminiscences in the *Metamorphoses* are intended for the delectation of the learned reader. Finally, it is no doubt by an irony appropriate to their epic undertaking that the bodies of the evil sisters meet with an epic fate: compare 5.27 'laceratis visceribus suis alitibus bestiisque ferens pabulum interiit' with *Aeneid* 9.485–6 'canibus data praeda.../alitibusque iaces', 10.559 'alitibus linquere feris', and *Iliad* 1.4–5 αὐτοὺς δὲ ἐλώρια τεύχε κύνεσσιν|οἰωνοῖσί τε πᾶσι, *Odyssey* 24.292 θηρσὶ καὶ οἰωνοῖσιν ἔλωρ γένετ'.

(iii) *Rufinus and Cacus*

That Aemilianus, the opponent against whom Apuleius' *Apologia* is largely directed, is likened to Vergil's sordid Charon and impious Mezentius is well known (*Ap.* 23, 53 with Butler and Owen's note, 56, 89). It would therefore be no more than appropriate if Rufinus, Aemilianus' alleged accomplice, were also compared to a Vergilian villain. Though unobserved by commentators, this seems to happen at *Ap.* 83, where Apuleius claims to have revealed Rufinus' devious schemes:

patent artes tuae, Rufine, fraudes hiant, detectum mendacium est: veritas olim intersersa nunc se effert et velut alto barathro calumnias emergit.

This passage has much in common with *Aeneid* 8.241ff., where Hercules similarly reveals to the world (though by a more physical means) the cave in which the devious Cacus had hidden his stolen cattle:

at specus et Caci *detecta* apparuit ingens
regia, et umbrosae penitus *patuere* cavernae,
non secus ac si qua penitus vi terra *dehiscens*
infernās reseret sedes et regna recludat
pallida, dis invisā, superque immane *barathrum*
cernatur, trepidant immisso lumine Manes.

'Detectum' in Apuleius seems to echo 'detecta' in Vergil, and 'patet' to echo 'patuere', while 'hiant' may be suggested by 'dehiscens' and the rare noun 'barathrum' occurs in both passages. The implication for the educated auditor or reader is clear: just as Aemilianus is characterized as a Charon by the Vergilian tag 'crudae senectutis' at *Ap.* 53, so Rufinus is to be seen as a Cacus, devious and monstrous, through this allusion to an equally well-known passage of Rome's national poet.

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TWO GIRAFFES EMINDED

In 1880 Spyridon Lambros discovered in the library of the Dionysiou monastery on Mount Athos a manuscript containing, among other things, the missing second book of a compilation of zoological lore made for the emperor Constantine VII Porphyrogenetos (912–59), generally referred to as the *Sylloge Constantini*.¹ The first book, already known from a manuscript in Paris,² proclaims in its heading that the

¹ Dionysiou 180 = S. P. Lambros, *Catalogue of the Greek Manuscripts on Mount Athos* (Cambridge, 1895), no. 3714.

² Paris supp. gr. 495, edited by V. Rose, *Anecdota Graeca et Graecolatina* (Berlin 1864, reprinted Amsterdam, 1963), ii.1ff.