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CURIOSITAS AND PSYCHE'S GROWTH IN APULEIUS' *METAMORPHOSES**

In the tale-within-tale 'Cupid and Psyche' narrated in Apuleius' *Metamorphoses*, the female heroine Psyche goes through a series of wanderings and tasks as punishments for seeing her husband Cupid's real form out of curiosity. Psyche's curiosity connects this internal tale with the external narratives in *Metamorphoses*, the protagonist of which, Lucius, shares a similar curiosity that leads to his downfall. While scholars attribute favourable qualities to Lucius' curiosity despite its negative consequences, they deny the same value to Psyche's curiosity. In this paper, I argue against the condemnation of Psyche's curiosity due to the stereotype of transgressive females. Instead, I propose to view her curiosity as the drive for her awakening, empowerment, and growth, which transforms her into a fully powered agent and leads to her final reunion with Cupid in immortality.

Keywords: curiosity, Apuleius, *Metamorphoses*, Cupid and Psyche, female empowerment, female enlightenment, gender stereotype, gender bias

Introduction

In Apuleius' *Metamorphoses*, the Cupid and Psyche tale occupies more than two of the eleven books and is considered 'one of the richest and most complex sections of the *Metamorphoses*'.¹ The female heroine Psyche undertakes a series of wanderings, tasks, and an underworld

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¹ W. S. Smith, 'The Narrative Voice in Apuleius' *Metamorphoses*', in S. J. Harrison (eds.), *Oxford Readings in the Roman Novel* (Oxford, 1999), 221.

experience like those of the male protagonists in other classical literature,² in order to make amends for having viewed her husband Cupid's real form out of curiosity (*curiositas*). Psyche's curiosity, although considered by most scholars as the major evil leading to her downfall, also leads her to reuniting with Cupid and to immortality. In this paper, I argue that Psyche's curiosity is not so much an evil but a catalyst that enables her to reach and reap the ultimate reward of reunion.

Due to the beauty and richness of the Cupid and Psyche tale, critics have been generally divided into two major interpretations. Some examine the tale as a smaller version of the experience of Lucius, the male protagonist throughout *Metamorphoses*. Scholars regard the tale as 'a fairy tale version', or *mise en abyme*, of Lucius' experience,³ and Psyche's story 'recapitulates Lucius' career and foreshadows his eventual salvation'.⁴ Most scholars agree that Psyche's chief similarity to Lucius is her *curiositas*, which leads to the downfall of both characters: Psyche loses her husband Cupid when she is too curious, and Lucius is transformed into an ass when he explores magic out of curiosity. The downfall of both characters instigates their quests and ordeals.⁵

While scholars who establish the parallel between Psyche and Lucius acknowledge some favourable qualities of Lucius' curiosity despite its negative consequences, they almost always condemn Psyche's curiosity as evil. For example, C. Schlam views Lucius' curiosity as the force

² Book 11 of the *Odyssey* describes Odysseus' experience in the underworld; Book 6 of the *Aeneid* narrates Aeneas' trip to the underworld; Ovid briefly mentions Hercules' capture of Cerberus in the underworld in Book 7 of his *Metamorphoses* (VII.409–19); and in Book 10, he recounts Orpheus' trip to underworld to rescue his wife Eurydice (X.1–85).

³ Sandy considers the tale as a fairytale version of Lucius, and Tatum says this tale is an allegory of Lucius' adventure. See G. Sandy, 'Knowledge and Curiosity in Apuleius's "Metamorphoses"', *Latomus* 31 (1972), 180, and J. Tatum, 'The Tales in Apuleius' *Metamorphoses*', *TAPhA* 100 (1969), 509–10. Other scholars consider this tale as the allegory of love and soul: see E. J. Kenney (ed.), *Cupid & Psyche* (Cambridge, 1990), 16–17, 27–8. For extended discussion on the dissent in various allegorical interpretations, see M. Zimmerman, S. Panayotakis, V. C. Hunink, W. H. Keulen, S. J. Harrison, T. D. McCreight, B. Wesseling, and D. van Mal-Maeder (eds.), *Apuleius, Metamorphoses: Books IV 28–35, V and VI 1–24 The Tale of Cupid and Psyche* (Groningen, 2004), 133.

⁴ See C. C. Schlam, 'The Curiosity of the Golden Ass', *CJ* 64 (1968), 122.

⁵ Besides Sandy (n. 3), Tatum (n. 3), and Schlam (n. 4), other scholars also talk about the parallelism between Psyche and Lucius in their sufferings due to *curiositas*. Here are a few examples out of the extensive corpus: A. Labhardt, 'Curiositas: Notes sur l'histoire d'un mot et d'une notion', *MH* 17 (1960) 206–24; S. Lancel, 'Curiositas et préoccupations spirituelles chez Apulée', *RHR* 160 (1961), 25–4; L. MacKay, 'The Sin of the Golden Ass', *Arion* 4 (1965), 474–80; P. G. Walsh, *The Roman Novel* (Cambridge, 1970), 190–3; P. G. Walsh, 'The Rights and Wrongs of Curiosity (Plutarch to Augustine)', *G&R* 35 (1988), 73–85.

leading to him being turned into an ass, but recognizes its value 'as a source of intellectual satisfaction'.⁶ Moreover, he points out 'a favourable view of curiosity' in its role as a 'consolation in a world full of evil, misery and danger, a world from which the ass finally flees in despair'.⁷ However, Schlam considers Psyche's curiosity as 'an example of the violation of a taboo... a sense of violating the divine... an unholy penetration of divine mysteries'.⁸ Similarly, P. G. Walsh believes that Lucius' curiosity has an intellectual value, whereas Psyche's 'wrong form of curiosity' is a 'form of impiety'.⁹ Another positive aspect of Lucius' *curiositas* is his increased knowledge throughout his quest identified by B. Romain and G. Sandy in Book 9 of *Metamorphoses*, where Lucius associates himself with Odysseus to claim that he has achieved the 'highest wisdom',¹⁰ but none of these positive attributes are given to Psyche's curiosity. Even scholars such as A. Kirichenko, who holds a neutral view of Apuleius' portrait of curiosity as lying between a noble intellectual pursuit and a vulgar meddlesomeness, consider Psyche's curiosity as a form of violation that leads to her abandonment by her divine husband Cupid and a punishment that results in a death-like sleep (6.21).¹¹ Scholars in this interpretive camp regard Psyche's curiosity as an impious violation of the divine that echoes with the negative aspect of Lucius' curiosity, but do not recognize her increased knowledge through her travels, a positive outcome of her curiosity similar to that of Lucius'.

Beyond the link to Lucius' narrative in *Metamorphoses*, scholars have also established parallels between the Cupid and Psyche tale and the Platonic tales as well, especially *Phaedrus*.¹² Based on the Platonic

⁶ Schlam (n. 4), 123.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 123.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 122.

⁹ Walsh 'The Rights and Wrongs of Curiosity' (n. 5), 77.

¹⁰ See Sandy (n. 3), 181, and B. Romain, 'Who Knows What? The Access to Knowledge in Ancient Novels: The Strange Cases of Chariton and Apuleius', in M. Paschalis, S. Frangoulidis, S. Harrison, and M. Zimmerman (eds.), *The Greek and Roman Novel. Parallel Readings* (Groningen, 2007), 183.

¹¹ A. Kirichenko, 'Satire, Propaganda, and the Pleasure of Reading: Apuleius' Stories of Curiosity in Context', *HSPH* 104 (2008), 359.

¹² There is a widely established scholarship on the link between Cupid and Psyche and *Phaedrus* (and other Platonic works). Some examples here are: W. Hooker, 'Apuleius' Cupid and Psyche as a Platonic Myth', *Bucknell Review* 5 (1955), 24–38; Walsh *The Roman Novel* (n. 5), 55, 195, 206; J. L. Penwill, 'Slavish Pleasure and Profitless Curiosity: Fall and Redemption in Apuleius' *Metamorphoses*', *Ramus* 4 (1973); N. Shumate, *Crisis and Conversion in Apuleius' Metamorphoses* (Michigan, 1996); K. Dowden, 'Cupid and Psyche: A Question of the Vision of Apuleius', in

interpretations, Psyche's union, separation, wandering, and return to Cupid can serve as an allegory for the soul's pursuit of the ultimate Wisdom and Beauty (Eros) in heaven, as represented by the image of a winged chariot with two horses flying toward heaven in *Phaedrus*.¹³ One of these two horses is white and noble, and the other is black and filled with low desires, betraying the charioteer to a fall. Only by subduing the black horse can the charioteer return the chariot to its path toward heaven. According to J. G. DeFillipo, the black horse in *Phaedrus*, comparable to *curiositas* in *Metamorphoses*, represents the 'daemonic, Typhonic or asinine condition of being under the control of one's appetites and the pleasures which motivate them'.¹⁴ The Phaedrean reading (and other Platonic readings) regards Psyche and Lucius' *curiositas* as the black horse – low desires and temptations, which the soul must control before uniting with divine wisdom.¹⁵

Although scholars in the Platonic modes of interpretation consider the black horse as excessive, they regard it not as a simple 'evil' but an innate drive to seek the divine. As E. Belfiore and G. Ferrari argue, the black horse in *Phaedrus* initiates movement and serves as an antidote to the excessive restraint of the white horse; therefore, it should not be repressed but be integrated within the whole soul.¹⁶ However, scholars holding the Platonic view of the Cupid and Psyche tale, like those who interpret it as a parallel to Lucius' adventure, denounce Psyche's *curiositas* as excessive, rash, and pleasure-seeking. For example, DeFillipo claims that Psyche's *curiositas* is impetuous, sacrilegious, and leads to her misfortunes, first when she disobeys her husband Cupid's divine order not to see his real form, and later

M. Zimmerman (ed.), *Aspects of Apuleius' Golden Ass. Volume II: Cupid and Psyche* (Groningen, 1998); M. O'Brien, 'For Every Tatter in its Mortal Dress: Love, Soul, and her Sisters', in M. Zimmerman (ed.), *Aspects of Apuleius' Golden Ass, Volume II: Cupid and Psyche* (Groningen, 1998), 22–34.

¹³ Hooker (n. 12), 36, mentions the image of winged chariot and its link with Cupid and Psyche.

¹⁴ J. G. DeFillipo, 'Curiositas and the Platonism of Apuleius' Golden Ass', *AJPh* 111 (1990), 491.

¹⁵ M. J. Edward, 'The Tale of Cupid and Psyche', *ZPE* 94 (1992), 92. Edward regards the black horses as temptations, and DeFillipo (n. 14) establishes the link between *curiositas* and the typhonic, beastly black horse.

¹⁶ E. Belfiore, 'The Myth of the Chariot in Plato's *Phaedrus*', *AJPh* 127 (2006), 186. Similar arguments can be found also in G. Ferrari, *Listening to the Cicadas. A Study of Plato's Phaedrus* (Cambridge, 1987), 194; C. Griswold, *Self-Knowledge in Plato's Phaedrus* (Yale, 1986), 135.

when she disobeys the tower's instruction not to open Persephone's beauty lotion. J. Penwill regards Psyche's curiosity as excessive and rash.¹⁷ Moreover, he argues that Psyche forms a contrast to Lucius in her lack of spiritual or mental development and her inability to restrain her curiosity. Scholars with Platonic interpretations for Cupid and Psyche deem Psyche's curiosity as excessive and impious without acknowledging its similar momentum as the black horse toward finding herself and her divine husband Cupid, the symbol of divine beauty and wisdom.

Psyche's female curiosity fits her into the stereotype of transgressive female figures in classical literature such as Pandora and Eve,¹⁸ and, as a result, the positive aspects of her *curiositas*, like those of Lucius and the black horse, are often ignored. This gender prejudice in scholarship leads to a naïve and disobedient Psyche, whose learning, courage, and self-empowerment in terms of her actions are overshadowed by the gender-stereotypical focus on her awakened erotic desire and the curse of her transgressive curiosity. This gender bias also exists in the novel. Psyche's character is inconsistent: sometimes she seems resolute and assertive, but other times she seems rather plain and flat, becoming a paragon of the traditional female qualities. Such paradoxical feminine actions and behaviour also exist in ancient Greek novels, where the heroines are portrayed in the world of men to entertain the educated class.¹⁹ Although they know how to 'handle their situation so as to get what they want out of it',²⁰ as Psyche does in the latter part of the story, they remain stuck within the bounds of typical female behaviour. While trapped in this gender prejudice, the Classical scholarship on Psyche marks out the transgressive aspect of Psyche's curiosity but does not give enough credit for her growth and self-empowerment induced by the same curiosity.

In this paper, I deconstruct this female stereotype of Psyche by showing how *curiositas* pushes her forward to discover her love, endure hardship, and achieve her goals. I analyse the Cupid and Psyche tale

¹⁷ Penwill (n. 12), 49.

¹⁸ Walsh 'The Rights and Wrongs of Curiosity' (n. 5) links Psyche with Pandora at the moment when Psyche opens the box of Persephone's beauty lotion. Psyche's innocence when she was residing in Cupid's hidden palace also resembles Eve in the paradise before the fall.

¹⁹ S. Wiersma, 'The Ancient Greek Novel and Its Heroines: A Female Paradox', *Mnemosyne* 43 (1990), 109–23.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 121.

as a *Bildungsroman* (education novel) in which Psyche undertakes travels and travails in order to become an emotionally mature and independent human being.²¹ Contrary to the widely agreed-upon criticism of Psyche's transgressive *curiositas*, I argue that it enables her self-empowerment via growth, as with other feminist *Bildungsroman*, and such empowerment involves her self-discovery, discernment, self-knowledge, and self-assertion;²² Psyche develops her own subjectivity and agency, initiates her journey and labours, and finally unites with love in immortality. Similar to Lucius, Psyche's *curiositas* initiates her travels and ordeals by which she becomes more 'worldly wise'.²³ Like the black horse, which provides the momentum to approach the divine, Psyche's *curiositas* also drives her forward to discovering herself and reaching her love. I will identify instances where the word '*curiositas*' appears within the Cupid and Psyche tale, discussing the positive aspects of the consequences it brings to Psyche. My reading reveals how *curiositas* propels Psyche onward to new experiences and results in her psychological development from an innocent girl into a fearless and resolute woman, a fully powered agent, and a divine mother.

In the palace: *curiositas* and Psyche's awakening

The Cupid and Psyche tale begins with the story of three sisters, daughters of the king and queen. The youngest, prettiest princess, Psyche, has been dedicated to a 'monster' that even Jupiter fears (Cupid), according to Apollo's oracle. When the word *curiositas* first appears in the tale-within-tale, Psyche has been living in Cupid's palace after her funeral wedding.²⁴ After Psyche becomes accustomed to living

²¹ For the detailed definition of *Bildungsroman*, see K. Morgenstern. 'On the Nature of *Bildungsroman*' (trans. by T. Boes), *PMLA* 124 (2009), 647–59. Lucius seems to lack development in the latter books, as claimed by Sandy (n. 3), 235, and J. T. Winkle, 'Necessary Roughness: Plato's *Phaedrus* and Apuleius' *Metamorphoses*', *AncNarr* 11 (2013), 117. Penwill argues the same lack of development for Psyche (n. 12), 58. However, if we examine Cupid and Psyche's tale through the lens of a *Bildungsroman*, then we can discover Psyche's growth as the story unfolds.

²² See C. Schultze, 'Psyche and Cupid in the Novels of Charlotte M. Yonge and Sylvia Townsend Warner', in R. May and S. J. Harrison (eds.), *Cupid and Psyche. The Reception of Apuleius' Love Story Since 1600* (Berlin, 2020), 300–1.

²³ See J. Morwood, 'Cupid Grows Up', *G&R* 57 (2010), 113.

²⁴ See S. Papaioannou, 'Charite's Rape, Psyche on the Rock and the Parallel Function of Marriage in Apuleius' *Metamorphoses*', *Mnemosyne* 51 (1988), 317. The author laid out the details of the original text where multiple places about the wedding allude to a funeral.

in a grandiose palace with disembodied voices as servants,²⁵ Cupid, as yet unseen by Psyche, warns her not to ruin herself due to her 'sacrilegious curiosity' (*sacrilega curiositate*).²⁶ Since the term *sacrilegus* and *sacer* indicate the divine nature of Psyche's husband Cupid,²⁷ Psyche's disobedience of her husband's order is considered by many scholars as a violation of the divine in a religious sense. E. J. Kenney points out that this sacrilegious curiosity is the 'first overt reference to the failing' that leads to Psyche's ruin later.²⁸ It should, however, be noted that Psyche does not yet know her husband's identity, and thus she does not think of her husband's words as a divine order.²⁹ If considering Psyche's domestic identity as a wife, then, as J. Morwood puts it, 'to suggest that, if a wife wants to know what her husband looks like, she is guilty of an impious display of the quality is surely unreasonable'.³⁰ Yet Morwood still views this first instance of defying her husband's will as tragic and as the Aristotelian moment leading to a hero's (Psyche's) downfall,³¹ since Psyche suffers from wandering and tasks and separation from Cupid due to this curiosity. Nevertheless, I argue that seeing her husband's real form out of curiosity leads her to a clearer vision of love and herself, even when the journey to get there is full of suffering.

Before seeing her husband's true form, Psyche has not been able to see her own true self either. Her actions both before and after marriage, up until *curiositas* gets the 'better' of her, are more or less responding to

²⁵ In McIntosh's article, the palace of Cupid is where Psyche struggles to adjust herself to the new place and new identity, because Psyche sometimes feels 'the greatest rapture' (*summa cum voluptate*, 5.2) and other times thinks of the palace as a 'blessed prison' (*beati carceris*, 5.5), see G. McIntosh, 'Articulating the Ineffable, Structuring the Abstract: Apuleius and Cupid's Domus Regia', *REL* 91 (2013), 175–6.

²⁶ Zimmerman et al. (n. 3), 148, mention that the *curiositas*, i.e. the desire to look at the husband, is not Psyche's but due to the sisters' inducement.

²⁷ Zimmerman et al. (n. 3), 148, on *sacrilega curiositate*. They also point out that the term *sacrilegus* 'indicates the divine nature of Psyche's husband', the quality Psyche herself does not notice, because she leaves this word out when she repeats the warning to her sisters (5.19). As for the secondary sources considering Psyche's *curiositas* sacrilegious, see Kirichenko (n. 11), 359; Schlam (n. 4), 123, also confirms that Psyche's curiosity is against the divine will, and therefore is sacrilegious. According to Zimmerman et al. (n. 3), Apuleius is the first to combine the adjective *sacrilegus* with *curiositas*. Later this combination is used in Christian authors, especially Augustine; see Zimmerman et al. (n. 3), 148. This is the only time in the text where Psyche's *curiositas* is referred to as '*sacrilega*'. Later, when Psyche decided to open the perfume box of Persephone, the narrator called her *curiositas* '*temeraria*' (heedless) in 5.20.

²⁸ Kenney (n. 3), 147.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ Morwood (n. 23), 110.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 112.

others instead of emanating from her own will. Before marriage, she is worshipped as a perfect statue but is lonely without a husband whose position would elevate her (though still limited) womanly status.³² Such a marriage is primarily an obligation that she, like her sisters and other girls her age, must fulfil. Marriage for her is a triangular desire, a longing not born of her own subjectivity but through a mediator – her sisters.³³ It is not the result of her falling in love or a desire out of her own heart. Her speech encouraging her parents to stop mourning before her funeral wedding, although prophetic, firm, and hinting at a more empowered voice that is ‘highly implausible’ according to scholars,³⁴ is still a display of compliance with her fate without much questioning (4.34). After marrying Cupid, Psyche’s desire to see her sisters is provoked when her husband orders her not to respond to them.³⁵ Her desire to see them is, again, externally conditioned. Later, her intention to view Cupid’s true form and kill him is encouraged by her sisters. They remind her about Apollo’s prophecy, indicating that her husband is a monster and will devour her when she is in the last stages of pregnancy (5.17–18). So, Psyche picks up the lamp and the razor, but she does this more out of fear (based on her sisters’ warnings) than out of her own will. During this episode, her conscience is torn. She is still ‘*et corporis et animi alioquin infirma*’ (weak in body and soul, 5.22), because she is ambivalent: ‘*in eodem corpore odit bestiam, diligit maritum*’ (she hates the beast and loves the husband within the same body, 5.21).³⁶ Up until this moment

³² Ibid., 108.

³³ The ‘triangular desire’ is described in detail in the work of R. Girard, ‘*Triangular Desire*’, *Deceit, Desire, and the Novel* (Baltimore, 1965), 1–25. A desire is said to be a triangular one when the subject desires the object through a mediator, and a famous example is where Don Quixote desires a type of life mediated through all the heroes in the chivalric fictions. Here, Psyche desires a marriage not because she herself desires someone as a husband, but because all her sisters are married. Therefore, her sisters become the mediators for her desire.

³⁴ This speech of Psyche has been found by most scholars as ‘implausible’ in terms of Psyche’s character development, since the ‘strong, self-conscious, bitter, ironical and provoking tone’ contrasts with the underdeveloped girl who is frightened and crying; see Zimmerman et al. (n. 3), 98. Both Zimmerman et al. and Kenney (n. 3), 98, point out the intertextual nature of this speech in its resemblance to heroic speech in tragedies, given Psyche’s not-yet developed characterization at this stage other than a ‘passive’ character.

³⁵ Cupid’s warning appears in the first paragraph of 5.5, and Psyche first agrees and then laments all day long afterwards in the later part of 5.5, saying that she is ‘*beati carceris custodia septa...ac ne videre eas quidem omnino posset*’ (caged in this blessed prison...and not able even to see them at all).

³⁶ Zimmerman et al. (n. 3) indicate that the asyndeton with parallel word order reveals the paradox. Moreover, the commentary points out the intertextuality to the famous *odi et amo* of Catullus 85 and to the lyric complaint from Sappho 130 for love as a bitter-sweet serpent. These

– at the tipping point of change – her dramatic actions are still in response to others. Her divided conscience results from her 'situational' passivity and an unconscious reaction to the undeveloped self. She is accustomed to responding to what life has thrown at her, instead of having a clear sense of what she wants and who she really is.

Everything changes after she sees Cupid's real form. As Psyche holds up the '*lucernae lumen*' (light of the lamp), its flame that quickens with joy symbolizes the quickening of her own heart:

Sed cum primum luminis oblatione tori secreta claruerunt, videt omnium ferarum mitissimam dulcissimamque bestiam, ipsum illum Cupidinem formosum deum formose cubantem. Cuius aspectu lucernae quoque lumen hilaratum increbruit et acuminis sacrilegi novaculam paenitebat. At vero Psyche tanto aspectu deterrita et impositi animi, marcido pallore defecta tremensque desedit in imos poplites et ferrum quaerit abscondere, sed in suo pectore. Quod profecto fecisset, nisi ferrum timore tanti flagitii manibus temerariis delapsum evolasset. Iamque lassa, salute defecta dum saepius divini vultus intuetur pulchritudinem, recreatur animi. (5.22)

But when the secrets of the bed were first revealed by the presentation of the light, she sees the gentlest and sweetest of all creatures, that handsome god Cupid himself, handsomely lying. Because of the sight of him, even the light of the lamp became stronger out of joy, and the razor was repenting for its sacrilegious sharpness. But Psyche, terrified at such a great vision, her spirit totally overwhelmed, grows faint with weak paleness. With knees trembling deeply, she falls. She tries to conceal the weapon, but in her own breast! She would have certainly done so, if the weapon had not rushed out, fallen from her reckless hands, horrified by such a crime. Exhausted and with salvation bereft, Psyche gazes upon the beauty of the divine face over and over, and then she revives her spirit.

Psyche's reaction, as indicated by this passage, quickly shifts from the purely visual stimuli to the perception of her husband as the '*mitissima*' (gentlest) and '*dulcissima*' (sweetest) beast and to a recognition of what she has done ('*deterrita*', horrified).³⁷ Her feelings are mixed: on the one hand, once she sees the face of Cupid, she is '*deterrita et impositi animi, marcido pallore defecta*' (terrified at such a great vision, overwhelmed, faint with weak paleness); on the other hand, only after gazing at the '*saepius divini vultus...pulchritudinem*' (the beauty of that divine face

allusions imply Cupid's real identity as the god of love, but do not necessarily serve as evidence for Psyche's own falling in love, which I argue happens at the moment when she sees Cupid's real form.

³⁷ C. Altieri, *The Particulars of Rapture* (Ithaca NY, 2003), 46–50. Altieri delineates levels of affects from the senses, to feelings and moods, and then to emotions that are more self-aware and defined, and finally to passion with resolution.

over and over) does she ‘*recreatur animi*’ (revive her spirit).³⁸ In other words, her spirit comes back to life or, more likely, is ignited for the first time, after seeing her husband’s vulnerability.³⁹ Since Cupid is considered ‘the only source of genuine and eternal light in the tale’,⁴⁰ Psyche’s sight of Cupid’s real form is her first glimpse of the truth and a notion of her husband’s divinity. This is not only the first moment that she sees her husband’s identity; it is a moment of enlightenment. Psyche’s vision of her divine lover turns from darkness to light,⁴¹ and this vision initiates her curiosity to know more about him later – examine his weapon, prick the arrow, and fall in love with him. At this moment, wherein she sees the dazzling vision of Cupid, her feelings are intensified and eventually lead her to a more self-aware state of being.⁴²

Scholars have argued that the *pallor* (paleness) of Psyche after seeing Cupid may indicate that she has fallen in love, and thus this moment can be regarded as ‘love at first sight’.⁴³ However, as Zimmerman et al. state, the ‘first and foremost’ effect on Psyche beholding Cupid is the ‘regaining of her inner strength’.⁴⁴ I would rather consider this moment as a recognition and awakening, a preliminary but necessary step before falling in love. After all, one has to see the lover and herself before discovering and developing love and passion. The successive reactions after Psyche’s recognition of her husband’s divinity insinuates the future falling in love. After her fear and escape,⁴⁵ and after her

³⁸ Zimmerman et al. (n. 3), 276, point out that this expression of *recreatur animi* is also used when Lucius is looking at Fotis (2.11), and in Book 11 when he beholds the image of Isis (11.22).

³⁹ This moment of enlightenment and beholding of the divine beauty is considered to be ‘translation’ or alluding to Plato’s *Phaedrus* on the amazement and consternation when the soul beholds its object of love. See L. Graverini, ‘Amore, ‘dolcezza’, stupore. Romanzo antico e filosofia’, in R. Uglione (ed.), *Lector, intende, laetaberis, Il romanzo dei Greci e dei Romani. Atti del Convegno Nazionale di Studi Torino, 27–28 aprile 2009* (Mappa, 2010), 78 ff.

⁴⁰ C. Panayotakis, ‘Vision and Light in Apuleius’ Tale of Psyche and her Mysterious Husband’, *CQ* 51 (2001), 581.

⁴¹ Romain (n. 10), 186, considers the following ekphrasis of the god Cupid as Psyche’s enlightenment. Since both the ‘ekphrasis’ and the passages quoted above belong to the same scene and are adjacent to each other, I do not think my claim contradicts those of Romain.

⁴² If taking this moment of enlightenment in the Platonic sense, this is also a moment that is similar to a philosophical initiation when the soul beholds its true love. See Graverini (n. 39), 78.

⁴³ Zimmerman et al. (n. 3), 274, indicate that Psyche’s pallor might be considered as falling in love at first sight, since Pan later interprets Psyche’s pallor as a sign for love. Kenney (n. 3), 169, states that Psyche’s symptoms are ‘classical, those of a woman in love’. Zimmerman et al. also mentions the ‘love at first sight’ as a common theme in Greek love romances.

⁴⁴ Zimmerman et al. (n. 3), 274.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 275: the authors claim that Psyche has also undergone her first suicide attempts in ‘*et ferrum quaerit abscondere, sed in suo pectore*’ (and she tries to conceal the weapon, but in her own breast). The main reason they provide is that the word *abscondere*, which I translated as ‘conceal’,

regaining of spirit by looking at the divine image again and again, Psyche recognizes her lover and revives herself. It is the viewing of '*divini vultus pulchritudinem*' (the beauty of the divine face) that revives Psyche's spirit. This awakening power, together with the restoration of self, is gained through the recognition and vision of the divine – an enlightening process for Psyche not only to know who her husband is, but also to discover her own desire and passion.⁴⁶

When Psyche is awakened by the vision of Cupid, with an '*insatiabili animo*' (insatiable spirit) and out of 'great curiosity' (*satis et curiosa*), she pulls out an arrow from the quiver (5.23):

...Psyche, satis et curiosa, rimatur atque pertrectat et mariti sui miratur arma, depromit unam de pharetra sagittam et, puncto pollicis extremam aciem periclitabunda, trementis etiam nunc, articuli nisu fortiore pupugit altius, ut per summam cutem roraverint parvulae sanguinis rosei guttae. Sic ignara Psyche sponte in Amoris incidit amorem. Tunc, magis magisque cupidine flagrans Cupidinis, prona in eum efflictim inhians patulis ac petulantibus saviis festinanter ingestis de somni mensura metuebat.

...and Psyche, sufficiently curious, examined and studied and was amazed at her husband's weapon. She drew out one arrow from the quiver and, testing its sharp tip with her thumb, and trembling, she pricked her finger with a stronger push, so that very small drops of the red blood moistened through her whole skin. Thus the unknowing Psyche willingly fell in love with Love. Now burned with a more and more burning desire for the god of Desire, she leaned over him, desperately pressing extensive and lascivious kisses upon him rather eagerly, until she was afraid that she might wake him. (5.23)

This is the first time in the text where Psyche is called *curiosa* by the narrative voice but not in other characters' direct discourse.⁴⁷ As Zimmerman et al. note, *curiositas* has become a 'characteristic of Psyche' from this moment onward.⁴⁸ By pulling the arrow from the quiver, Psyche acts for the first time out of her own *curiositas* – the first act of her own will. After pricking the arrow, she experiences

can also be used to mean thrusting a weapon into someone. While acknowledging the possibility, I consider the suicidal attempt at this moment unlikely, but the action of hiding the weapon more likely.

⁴⁶ Interestingly, Apuleius' descriptions project Psyche's newly animated subjectivity onto the inanimate objects in the scene. The effect is to emphasize the intensity of her emerging thoughts and feelings: the lamp's flame feels 'cheer' or joy; the razor feels regret; and, more specifically, the razor's blade feels horror. Apuleius fills this scene not only with emotion but also layers of emotion and, eventually, passion (as seen later in the passage).

⁴⁷ The earlier reference of *curiositas* is in 5.6 and 5.19 when Cupid warns Psyche of the consequences of *curiositas*, and her sisters reproach her for being *incuriosa* (5.17).

⁴⁸ Zimmerman et al. (n. 3), 284.

desire, and she leans over and kisses Cupid. Cupid's arrow is a signifier of passionate love,⁴⁹ and at the moment Psyche pricks the arrow, she falls in love with Love. The sequence of events matters. After Psyche's enlightenment, comes her curiosity; and after her pursuit of curiosity, comes her decisive action born from passionate love. Her passion comes not only from the prick of the arrow, but also from the accumulated 'chemical reactions' – her senses and feelings after seeing the divine Cupid and her voluntary action of pulling out the arrow driven by *curiositas*. Her awakened agency together with her *curiositas* enable all these wilful actions of love. After her enlightened vision of the divine love, her desire is no longer triangular but originates directly from within.

However, many scholars consider this moment not as a change for the awakened self and love, but a display of Psyche's curiosity as a 'besetting sin'.⁵⁰ Shumate points out that the combination of *insatiabili animo* and *curiosa* indicates that curiosity in the novel 'is identified with pleasures that cannot ever satisfy'.⁵¹ While connecting curiosity with insatiable pleasure can be regarded as one type of interpretation, the 'besetting sin' of Psyche's curiosity reminds us of the stereotype of female transgression given the biblical hue of the word 'sin'. While pointing out the negative connotation of *insatiabili animo* and its connection with *curiositas*, Zimmerman et al. also indicate the allusion of this negative term to Plato's *Phaedrus*, where Socrates tells how the soul 'regrows its wings through the perception of physical beauty' and how 'the lover's soul... beholds the beauty of her beloved and at that moment tastes intense pleasure'.⁵² This connection with *Phaedrus* reveals the prejudice against Psyche's curiosity in scholarship. How, then, could the same term underline Psyche's 'besetting sin' of curiosity, while also alluding to a Platonic moment full of delight and inspiration? Similar to the soul in *Phaedrus*, Psyche here also 'beholds the beauty of her beloved husband' and 'tastes the intense pleasure', and this enlightened pleasure ignites her curiosity just like the soul

⁴⁹ Since the arrow might be considered a phallic symbol, some Freudian interpretations consider the arrow and the Cupid behind as representation of sexuality. They then consider this moment of enlightenment as a sexual awakening for the first time. See B. Bettelheim, *The Uses of Enchantment. The Meaning and Importance of Fairy Tales* (USA, 1977).

⁵⁰ Kenney (n. 3), 171, citing from Purser on 6.14.4.

⁵¹ Shumate (n. 12), 255.

⁵² Zimmerman et al. (n. 3), 283.

'regrows its wings'.⁵³ If we hold a Platonic interpretation of this tale, we would then argue for similar delight and enlightenment at this moment.

This moment of enlightenment together with the aroused curiosity also signifies a change for Psyche in her awakened self, desire, and relationship with her husband. Before Psyche's instigation of love and desire, there had been no feelings of warmth or eroticism between her and the god of love. Their first sexual exchange is described as brief, procedural, and lacking in affection: '*Iamque aderat ignobilis maritus et torum inscenderat et uxorem sibi Psychem fecerat et ante lucis exortum prope discesserat*' (And now that unknown husband came and mounted in bed and made Psyche a wife for him and left quickly before the rising dawn, 5.4). Even later, when such intimacy becomes pleasure, it is '*per assiduam consuetudinem*' (through constant habit, 5.4) and still lacks affection and passion. Her unknown husband was the solace of her solitude but not her soul's companion. He was not the object of her affection or desire. Even when Psyche offers some soft words and gentle embraces to beseech Cupid (5.6), her seemingly 'affectionate' behaviour has persuasion as its primary purpose and lacks sincerity.

Unlike the feigned affection and habitual intimacy before seeing Cupid's real form, Psyche's enlightenment and curiosity here unleash her burning desire and kindle a love that has been previously absent. Her desire is described as '*flagrans*' (burning)⁵⁴ and her kisses are described as '*patulis ac petulantibus*' (extensive and lascivious). Psyche's new vision of Cupid, of love, exposes her to the real form of 'eternal light'⁵⁵ and kindles her love and desire. That desire, which becomes frustrated when Cupid flies away from her, fleshes out into love. It is curiosity that offers Psyche the enlightenment to discover her real love, the type of emotion that later becomes a strong passion and allows her to endure her difficult journeys and labours.⁵⁶

⁵³ The quoted words are from Zimmerman et al. (n. 3) on *Phaedrus*, p. 283.

⁵⁴ Kenney (n. 3), 171, points to 4.31 with the same word but in superlative form. At that point Venus orders Cupid to bind Psyche to the lowest human with the most burning passion.

⁵⁵ Panayotakis (n. 40), 31.

⁵⁶ R. Wollheim, *On the Emotions* (New Haven, 1999). In Wollheim's theory, the agent works out their identities through formulating their attitude in the emotion-generating process, which involves the satisfaction or frustration of desire, either real or imagined. Psyche's passion toward Cupid is certainly reinforced after she first experiences the desire and then the frustration of her desire once Cupid abandons her.

On the journey: *curiositas* and Psyche's liberation

Enlightenment and curiosity bring out Psyche's love, passion, and agency, which expands and initiates her actions after Cupid's departure – whether seeking revenge on her sisters (5.26–27) or going to the temple of Venus (6.5) – which are also of her own choosing, just as her first voluntary act of pulling the arrow out due to *curiositas*. She is no longer merely complying with fate or being externally persuaded to act in some almost predetermined way. If Psyche's moment of enlightenment gives her familiarity and intimacy with her divine husband, through her own *curiositas* she transforms herself from a passive to an active agent.

Along with a developed agency is Psyche's expanded subjectivity after the enlightenment. After Cupid leaves her, Psyche's psychological progression and maturity are more visible. Psyche gains discernment, a quality that Schulze points out as a key element in female empowerment and something the initially guileless Psyche lacked.⁵⁷ After the enlightenment, and bereft of her love, she discerns the evil scheme of her sisters and takes her revenge by a newly gained cleverness – she utilizes the '*vesanae libidinis et invidiae noxiae*' (the frenzied desire and the noxious jealousy) of her sisters to bring forth their destructions (5.27). She also experiences denial, escape, and fantasy before finally reaching a state of acceptance and surrender. When Cupid flies away, Psyche becomes suicidal and tries to drown herself in a river (escape) but fails (5.25). She is afraid to face his mother, Venus, and so seeks help from Juno and Ceres instead (denial, 6.1–4). She imagines that prayers to those two goddesses might bring Cupid back (fantasy, 6.5). During this psychological progression, Psyche finally recognizes that her only and best option – though also the toughest – is to surrender herself to Venus (6.5).⁵⁸ We hear of this last and most promising approach in her monologue:

Iam quae possunt alia meis aerumnis temptari vel adhiberi subsidia, cui nec dearum quidem, quamquam volentium, potuerunt prodesse suffragia? Quo rursus itaque tantis laqueis inclusa vestigium porrigam quibusque tectis vel etiam tenebris abscondita magnae Veneris inevitabiles oculos effugiam? Quin igitur masculum tandem sumis animum et cassae speculae renuntias

⁵⁷ Schulze (n. 22), 301.

⁵⁸ Wollheim (n. 56) regards fantasies as a key component, or even one of the final products of emotion. Through fantasy, the agent becomes active in the expression of emotion.

fortiter, et ultroneam te dominae tuae reddis et vel sera modestia saevientes impetus eius mitigas? Qui scias an etiam, quem diu quaeritas, illuc in domo matris reperies? (6.5)

Now what else can be tried, or what other reliefs can be applied for my trouble, since my prayers to those goddesses could not help, although they are willing? Where can I extend my step again, for I am trapped in such a trap? Under what roofs or darkness can I escape the unavoidable eyes of the great Venus by hiding? Why not then, finally take up the manly heart and reject the hollow hopes with strength? Why not go back to your mistress willingly, and soothe her assaults with modesty at a late hour? Who knows if you may find the one you've long searched for, there in his mother's house?

The entire monologue opens with Psyche's assessment of her current situation and continues with a sequence of self-admonishing questions. Sandy categorizes this type as a special kind of hortatory soliloquy that is unique in Apuleius' *Metamorphoses*, unlike other soliloquies consisting of complaints when facing dire situations in tragedies and Greek novels.⁵⁹ These questions also remind us of the questions Psyche once asked her parents before her funeral wedding (4.34). Whereas most scholars consider the funeral wedding speech as highly implausible and out of character, none of them has made similar comments on this hortatory soliloquy, despite the shared intertextuality of tragic heroines⁶⁰ and the strong, self-conscious voices to confront reality instead of avoiding it. The major difference in these two speeches lies in the timing for Psyche's character development and Psyche's motivation, which informs and fuels her courage and resoluteness. At the time of the funeral wedding, Psyche's character has not developed much other than passive responding. Even with a strong speech to her parents, she still accepts her fate as it was declared by Apollo's oracle (4.34). But now, after seeing Cupid's real form and discovering her own passion, the strong and self-conscious voice becomes more reasonable. Moreover, her questions reveal her hope to change the fate Fortune has prescribed for her, even though that means she needs to submit to Venus' power first in order to achieve her goal of seeing Cupid later. She has tried every way she can think of to change her fate and to win back her divine husband, and she encourages herself to attempt the most difficult route now. This

⁵⁹ G. N. Sandy, *Comparative Study of Apuleius' Metamorphoses and Other Prose Fiction of Antiquity* (Ohio, 1968), 137. Other 'hortatory' soliloquies in *Metamorphoses* can be seen in 2.6 (Lucius), 4.30 (Venus), 7.11 (Lucius).

⁶⁰ See Zimmerman et al. (n. 3), 396, with examples from Ennius and Virgil, and Kenney (n. 3), 195, with examples from Ovid and Catullus.

newly gained self-assertion belongs to a type of female empowerment via growth in Schultze, a decision out of Psyche's own choice instead of the obedience to whatever fate has imposed upon her.⁶¹ We see Psyche transforming from the brave girl at her funeral wedding to the fearless woman who is actively pursuing a solution.

These self-hortatory questions also illustrate Psyche's transition away from despair towards the development of a '*masculus animus*' (masculine animating force) that allows her to face her challenges and fears by deliberating for herself.⁶² The gendered hue in the phrase '*masculum animum*' may be the result of gender stereotypes in antiquity, when courage is often referred to as a masculine trait, and in the situation of non-masculine courage the adjective *masculus* is then emphasized. Within *Metamorphoses*, the 'masculine' traits are mentioned for three other people besides Psyche. The same phrase has been used in Lucius' hortatory soliloquy as the man in the ass (6.26), and, according to scholarship, has indicated only courageousness rather than 'typically masculine behaviour',⁶³ and the emphasis on masculinity is 'to be taken in contrast with his asinine shape'.⁶⁴ Plotina in Book 7 is also characterized as having an *ingenio masculo* (masculine nature) to endure all the hardships when she follows her husband into exile (7.8). In Book 8, Charite is described as performing her action with her *masculis animis* (masculine animating forces, 8.11). If the commentaries are right to state that all these incidences of *masculus* refer to courage but not any other typical masculine behaviour,⁶⁵ courage within *Metamorphoses* then appears to be categorized as a masculine trait. Whenever courage appears on any non-masculine characters, Apuleius employs this adjective *masculus* to make an emphasis and contrast. Psyche's *masculus animus* then underlines her courage and her non-masculine gender.

Psyche's impressive passion and determination in her *masculus animus* are the result of her enlightenment, which was sparked by her

⁶¹ Schultze (n. 22), 300.

⁶² Interestingly, some Jungian interpretations consider the whole Cupid and Psyche tale as a development of the 'male *anima*', and Psyche seems to obtain this '*masculus animus*' even before she completes her tasks. Once her *curiositas* has transformed into passion and determination, she has achieved a majority part of her adolescent growth. About the 'male *anima*', see J. Hillman, *The Dream and the Underworld* (New York, 1979); A. Ulanon, *The Feminine in Jungian Psychology and Christian Theology* (Evanston, 1971).

⁶³ Zimmerman et al. (n. 3), 398.

⁶⁴ Apulée, and B. L. Hijmans, *Apuleius Madaurensis Metamorphoses: Books VI, 25–32* (Groningen, 1981), 38.

⁶⁵ Zimmerman et al. (n. 3), 398; Hijmans (n. 64), 38.

feminine transgressive *curiositas*. Before her enlightenment of Cupid's identity, Psyche had also shown masculine courage when she '*sexum audacia mutatur*' (in her boldness changes her sex, 5.22) and takes up the lamp and dagger ready to kill her husband. Whereas Psyche's manly courage in Book 5 is mainly induced from fear instigated by her two sisters, her *masculus animus* in Book 6 comes from her determined pursuit of Cupid, the divine beauty she beholds and falls in love with out of her curiosity. If she had not seen Cupid's real form, she would not have fallen in love with him. Without falling in love, she would have remained easily influenced by other people's words – such as the negatively consequential temptations of her sisters.⁶⁶ Psyche has evolved out of that innocent (but unknowing) and unseeing new bride once locked up in a golden palace,⁶⁷ where she could only resort to her 'feminine' charms to persuade her husband with tears and lamentations. After her psychological growth from her suicidal attempts and quest for her lover, now she accepts her reality, faces the difficulties, and decides to take action. She recognizes that she needs divine assistance and assumes the courage to seek it. She has become an independent subject and agent.

Psyche's independence is reflected not only in her courage to face Venus' rage, but also in her endurance and resolution after seeing the goddess. After Psyche comes to Venus' temple, Venus receives her with insults and torture and sets four tasks for her. According to Morwood, Psyche shows an 'impressive, if at times wavering, resolution'.⁶⁸ She survives all the challenges with strength. The four seemingly impossible tasks that Venus demands Psyche complete are approximate tests that ancient male heroes were expected to pass in the mythic and folklore traditions.⁶⁹ The first, with Platonic overtones, required Psyche to sort

⁶⁶ One might argue that Psyche falling in love because her sisters tempted her to see and kill Cupid – and this love originated from her sisters' persuasion – shows Psyche's passivity in love. First, Psyche does not kill Cupid as her sisters have suggested. This reveals Psyche's independent thought after seeing Cupid's real form, i.e. her moment of enlightenment. Further, even if Psyche is passive by listening to her sisters' advice, her love, desire, and passion are not caused by her sisters but, rather, a consequence after her sisters' temptation.

⁶⁷ Psyche's situation in the palace is similar to the 'innocent' Eve once locked into a beautiful Edenic, but limiting, garden.

⁶⁸ See Morwood (n. 23), 114.

⁶⁹ When it comes to tasks in myth, Hercules' twelve labours are some of the most famous. Other heroes are also required to finish almost impossible tasks, such as Jason being asked to bring the Golden Fleece, Bellerophon asked to kill Chimera, Theseus to kill Minotaur, and Perseus to kill Medusa. E. Plantade and N. Plantade, 'Libyca Psyche: Apuleius' Narrative and Berber Folktales', in B. T. Lee, E. Finkelpearl, and L. Graverini (eds.), *Apuleius and Africa*

out a pile of grains (6.10). As Milton once noted in *Areopagitica*, Psyche's labour is an essential step toward enabling human beings to distinguish false knowledge from genuine truth.⁷⁰ The second task, of gathering golden fleece, likens Psyche to the hero Jason (6.11–12). Psyche receives help from Jupiter's eagle when fulfilling her third task of obtaining the water from the River Styx (6.13–15). Finally, the fourth task requires Psyche to journey into the underworld (6.16–21), from which she ultimately emerges. Her journey can be likened to that of the ancient epic heroes Orpheus, Hercules, Odysseus, and Aeneas.⁷¹

On her way back from her heroic underworld journey, Psyche opens the box of Persephone's beauty lotion out of curiosity. One might argue that in this instance her *curiositas* appears to do her more harm than good, since she does so against the advice of the tower and afterwards falls into a sleep that resembles death. Her *curiositas* here is considered by some scholars as 'immature and trivial'⁷² or a 'religious violation' similar to the first incidence when she sees her husband's real form.⁷³ However, she opens the box of beauty lotion in the hope of pleasing her divinely beautiful lover. Her goal behind *curiositas* this time is the same as that of her earlier commitment to *masculus animus* (6.5), to win Cupid back. Therefore, although her *curiositas* might seem like it was leading to another downfall, it can also signify a measure of her passion and will to (re)gain the highest degree of love that she desired. Moreover, her falling asleep leads to Cupid's reappearance to rescue her. Although the god of love does not love his wife's *curiositas*, he nevertheless 'has learnt to understand and accept human weakness'.⁷⁴ Psyche's experience of *curiositas* seems to imply that 'true enlightenment cannot be finally discovered without divine aid'.⁷⁵ After Cupid saves Psyche, he seeks Jupiter's approval of marriage. Jupiter agrees,

(London, 2014), 174 ff., talks about the influence of Berber oral tradition in African folktales on Apuleius' Cupid and Psyche tale.

⁷⁰ J. Milton, 'Areopagitica', in M. Hughes (ed.), *Complete Poems and Major Prose* (Indianapolis, 2003), 728.

⁷¹ Finkelpearl discusses the detailed allusions to Virgil's *Aeneid* in Cupid and Psyche: see E. Finkelpearl, 'Psyche, Aeneas, and an Ass: Apuleius' *Metamorphoses* 6.10–6.21', *TAPhA* 120 (1990), 333–47.

⁷² Morwood (n. 23), 114.

⁷³ Schlam (n. 4), 122.

⁷⁴ Morwood (n. 23), 114.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

sends Hermes to escort Psyche to heaven,⁷⁶ and holds a joyous wedding for the couple (6.22–23). Finally, Psyche becomes immortal and reunites with love.

In ancient Greek and Roman narratives, a trip to the underworld could portend a victorious future: Hercules becomes a divinity, Odysseus becomes a cult hero through which he achieves immortality.⁷⁷ In Virgil's *Aeneid* Book 6, the Sybil's voice mentions that only those whom 'aequus amavit / Iuppiter, aut ardens evexit ad aethera virtus' (the fair Jupiter loved, or the glowing excellence lifted up to heaven, 6.129–31) could go down to the underworld and come back to life again. In light of the Platonic allegory, Psyche's immortalization signifies her liberation from ignorance into wisdom and from worldly falsehood into divine truth. *Curiositas* then, while integrated into but not repressed by Psyche's psyche, provides the momentum to her liberation and reunion with the divine. Without *curiositas*, Psyche would not have embarked upon a journey that gave her such liberation.⁷⁸ *Curiositas* drives her out of that lonely golden palace to embark on journeys and labours that eventually lead to her reunion with her husband in heaven. At the same time, *curiositas* also enables her to undertake an internal journey of self-discovery and self-empowerment.

Conclusion

The internal and external journey of Psyche fits the Cupid and Psyche tale into a *Bildungsroman*, a type of story that emphasizes

⁷⁶ Harrison points out that the language describing Psyche's culturally familiar narrative of immortalization – at its final-test stage in the final divine wedding – resembles the ancient Roman legal language regarding the freeing of a slave. Psyche's transition from mortal to immortal, when she is led by Hermes to heaven, can be equated with her gaining freedom from the authoritarian hold of Venus, who had been treating her as a *fugitiva*, a runaway slave. See S. Harrison, 'Divine Authority in 'Cupid and Psyche': Apuleius *Metamorphoses* 6,23–24', in S. N. Byrne, E. P. Cueva, and J. Alvarez (eds.), *Authors, Authority, and Interpreters in the Ancient Novel* (Groningen, 2006), 172–85.

⁷⁷ G. Nagy, 'Hour 9: The Return of Odysseus in the Homeric Odyssey', in *The Ancient Greek Hero in 24 Hours* (Cambridge MA, 2013).

⁷⁸ One may argue that since Psyche and Lucius do not know about the actual outcome of their acts, their curiosity should not be attributed to their final liberation, but instead an original sin in the Christian sense. How to evaluate human curiosity is an ongoing ethical debate that still lasts today, and is therefore out of the realm of discussion of this paper. The main purpose of this paper is to argue for some beneficial aspects of Psyche's curiosity that is similar to Lucius' case but not fairly treated in a similar way due to the gender stereotype.

the psychological development of its main character from youth to adulthood and illustrates how the hero/heroine learns to think independently, integrate socially, and develop personal subjectivity and agency through setting off on a challenging quest of self-discovery.⁷⁹ At the earlier stage of the tale, Psyche was a newlywed and newly pregnant. Her pregnancy represents, perhaps, the internal and external growth she is experiencing during her metamorphosis into proper adulthood as a mother. Through seemingly impossible trials, Psyche's ability to love and the durability of that love have been strengthened to the degree that her growing understanding of love now matches that of her divine husband, the god of love. Psyche has developed an immortal capacity. From this perspective, Psyche's growth is driven by *curiositas*, and it is three-fold: (1) she integrates with the mortal world by her journeys and wanderings; (2) she discovers her passion and desire, through the pursuit of which she becomes a mature individual; (3) she acquires the strength and courage to face even the hardest reality despite her fear, surviving Venus' torture and becoming a divine mother. All of her growth ultimately comes from that moment of enlightenment when, out of *curiositas*, she takes her first voluntary step.

One could claim that, without *curiositas*, Psyche would have still cohabited with Cupid in a loveless marriage and given birth to an immortal child;⁸⁰ but when facing such a husband who conceals his 'identity from her, threatens her, reproaches her for weeping', it is hard to imagine such a relationship could last.⁸¹ As Morwood states, 'Cupid's self-indulgence has locked her in a psychological immaturity that is devastatingly exposed by her novelettish fantasies', and it is hard to imagine such simple innocence would befit the mother of a divine being.⁸² Psyche's own *curiositas* catalyses her psychological and emotional development, enabling her to step out of the prison-like palace of her own will and wander the world outside looking for her beloved. In the process, she becomes more worldly, wiser,

⁷⁹ Brzenk discussed how the Golden Ass and its later influence in Water Pater's *Marius the Epicurean* fit the criterion of a *Bildungsroman* in his article; see E. J. Brzenk, 'Apuleius, Pater and the *Bildungsroman*', in B. L. Hijmans Jr. and R. T. Van der Paardt (eds.), *Aspects of Apuleius' Golden Ass* (Groningen, 1978), 231–7.

⁸⁰ Apul. *Met.* 5.11, Cupid told Psyche that if she keeps the secret, their child will be divine, i.e. 'si texeris nostra secreta silentio, divinum'.

⁸¹ Morwood (n. 23), 108.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 111.

and more resolute in pursuing what she wants. It is only after such growth and change that the human Psyche is lifted up to become a goddess and to unite with her beloved husband in an everlasting marriage that leads to her giving birth to a child named Voluptas (Pleasure).

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