

RE-ENACTMENTS OF THE PROLOGUE IN CUPID'S PALACE: AN IMMERSIVE READING OF APULEIUS' STORY OF CUPID AND PSYCHE*

ABSTRACT

This article offers a new interpretation of Apuleius' story of Cupid and Psyche. Most scholars have previously offered a second-time reading of this story, according to which the reader reaches Book 11 and then looks back at Psyche's story of fall and redemption as a parallel for Lucius' life. Following Graverini's and other scholars' emotional approach to the *Metamorphoses*, I argue that the ecphrasis of Cupid's palace within the story of Cupid and Psyche includes multiple re-enactments of the novel's prologue. These re-enactments invite the reader to undertake a first-time and immersive reading of this story, which focusses on Psyche's experience of Cupid and her reaction to his epiphany. In its use of immersion, this article draws from recent developments in cognitive narratology and pushes scholars of Apuleius to focus on the reader's immersive and emotional response in order to reassess the value of a second-time reading of the *Metamorphoses*.

Keywords: Cupid and Psyche; first-time reading; emotions; immersion; prologue; seriocomic

In recent decades, Apuleius' *Metamorphoses* has received a large amount of scholarly attention.¹ As argued by Benson in his 2019 book, 'the impressive array of monographs on the *Metamorphoses* published since 1985 [the date of Winkler's *Auctor & Actor*] is a testament to ... the high interest in Apuleius'.² The *Metamorphoses* has increased in popularity especially in light of both the embedded story of Cupid and Psyche (hereafter, C&P) and the controversial Book 11; while the first ten books of Apuleius' novel focus on the entertaining adventures of the protagonist Lucius, who undergoes a metamorphosis into an ass, the final book surprises readers by narrating his conversion to the Egyptian goddess Isis along with his transformation back into a man.

For the purpose of this paper, I will only discuss what I consider to be the two most relevant tenets of Apuleian scholarship.³ First, since Late Antiquity many scholars have tried to establish whether the *Metamorphoses* has a serious nature, based on Lucius' conversion in Book 11, or a comic one, as suggested by the previous ten books and

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¹ Throughout the paper, *AAGA* 2 stands for M. Zimmerman et al., *Aspects of Apuleius' Golden Ass, II: Cupid and Psyche* (Groningen, 1998); *GCA* 2004 stands for M. Zimmerman et al., *Apuleius Madaurensis Metamorphoses Book IV 28–35, V and VI 1–24. The Tale of Cupid and Psyche. Text, Introduction and Commentary* (Groningen, 2004).

² G.C. Benson, *Apuleius' Invisible Ass. Encounters with the Unseen in the Metamorphoses* (Cambridge, 2019), 26 n. 97. Cf. J.J. Winkler, *Auctor & Actor: A Narratological Reading of Apuleius's The Golden Ass* (Berkeley, 1985).

³ See Benson (n. 2), 26–7 n. 97 for a survey of the scholarship with bibliographical details.

the arguable irony hidden in Book 11.⁴ More recently, interpreters have replaced the serious reading of Apuleius' novel with seriocomic ones.⁵ Second, many scholars have stressed the importance of a second-time reading of Apuleius' *Metamorphoses*, since it sheds new light on the apparent disconnect between Books 1–10 and Book 11.⁶

C&P is a prime example of the value of a second-time reading, since this famous, embedded narrative, which lies at the very centre of the novel, is usually read in the light of Book 11.⁷ According to this reading, Psyche's life becomes parallel to Lucius': both characters share an initial exposition to malignant deities, a fall owing to their immoral curiosity, and a final, undeserved salvation from a divine entity (Cupid and Isis respectively). As a result, readings of Book 11 determine the interpretation of C&P.⁸

On the other hand, some Apuleian scholars have tried to distance themselves from this established framework by arguing that the *Metamorphoses*, through its focus on curiosity, wonder and pleasure, highlights the importance of Lucius' emotions.⁹ I define this approach as a first-time reading of the *Metamorphoses*, as it does not require readers to reach Book 11 in order to appreciate the novel. Generally, this reading is less popular

⁴ For a survey of serious and comic views, see S. Tilg, *Apuleius' Metamorphoses: A Study in Roman Fiction* (Oxford, 2014), 87–93.

⁵ On this shift, see *GCA* 2015 = W.H. Keulen et al., *Apuleius Madaurensis Metamorphoses XI* (Groningen, 2015), 6. For a survey of seriocomic readings of the novel, see Tilg (n. 4), 93–105. For major seriocomic readings, see L. Graverini (transl. B.T. Lee), *Literature and Identity in The Golden Ass of Apuleius* (Columbus, OH, 2012) and Tilg (n. 4).

⁶ For examples, see again Tilg (n. 4), 87–105.

⁷ See P.G. Walsh, *The Roman Novel: The Satyricon of Petronius and the Metamorphoses of Apuleius* (Cambridge, 1970), 190–3; P. James, *Unity in Diversity: A Study of Apuleius' Metamorphoses* (Hildesheim, 1987), 125–30; E.J. Kenney, *Apuleius: Cupid & Psyche* (Cambridge, 1990), 12–17; N. Shumate, *Crisis and Conversion in Apuleius' Metamorphoses* (Ann Arbor, 1996), 251–62; and W.S. Smith, 'Cupid and Psyche tale: mirror of the novel', in *AAGA* 2 (n. 1), 69–82.

⁸ For serious readings of C&P, see K. Dowden, 'Cupid and Psyche: a question of the vision of Apuleius', in *AAGA* 2 (n. 1), 1–22; M. O'Brien, 'For every tatter in its mortal dress: Love, the Soul and her sisters', in *AAGA* 2 (n. 1), 23–34; C. Panayotakis, 'Vision and light in Apuleius' tale of Psyche and her mysterious husband', *CQ* 51 (2001), 576–83. All of these three readings are allegorical and use Platonic philosophy to see C&P as the narration of the soul's failed attempt to become one with divine love. For seriocomic readings of C&P, see Graverini (n. 5), 95–131 and S. Harrison, 'Divine authority in "Cupid and Psyche": Apuleius *Metamorphoses* 6, 23–24', in S.N. Byrne, E.P. Cueva, J. Alvares (edd.), *Authors, Authority, and Interpreters in the Ancient Novel* (Groningen, 2006), 172–85. For comic readings of C&P, cf. *GCA* 2004 (n. 1), especially 3, and R. May, *Apuleius and Drama. The Ass on Stage* (Oxford, 2006), 208–48. For other readings of C&P which highlight the literary and intratextual quality of this story without directly addressing the serious-comic debate, see e.g. E.D. Finkelppearl, 'Psyche, Aeneas and an ass: Apuleius *Met.* 6.10–6.21', *TAPhA* 120 (1990), 333–48. For a folkloric reading of C&P, see G. Anderson, *Fairytales in the Ancient World* (London and New York, 2000), 61–71.

⁹ See e.g. C.C. Schlam, *The Metamorphoses of Apuleius. On Making an Ass of Oneself* (Chapel Hill and London, 1992); J. Heath, *Actaeon, the Unmannerly Intruder: The Myth and its Meaning in Classical Literature* (New York, 1992); N.W. Slater, 'Passion and petrification: the gaze in Apuleius', *CPh* 93 (1998), 18–48; K. Freudenburg, 'Leering for the plot: visual curiosity in Apuleius and others', in M. Paschalis, S. Frangoulidis, S. Harrison and M. Zimmerman (edd.), *The Greek and the Roman Novel: Parallel Readings* (Groningen, 2007), 238–62; A. Kirichenko, 'Satire, propaganda, and the pleasure of reading: Apuleius' stories of curiosity in context', *HSPH* 104 (2008), 339–71; L. Graverini, 'Come si deve leggere un romanzo. Narratori, personaggi e lettori nelle *Metamorfosi* di Apuleio', in M. Carmignani, L. Graverini, B.T. Lee (edd.), *Collected Studies on the Roman Novel. Ensayos sobre la novela romana* (Cordoba, 2013), 119–39; Benson (n. 2). Not all of these authors explicitly define their interpretation as a first-time reading of the *Metamorphoses*; the use of this terminology is my own.

than a second-time reading and, although it covers most books of this novel, it has difficulty in taking account of C&P.

In 2019 Benson tried to overcome this difficulty. Relying upon Walter Pater's interpretation of this story,¹⁰ Benson argued that 'C&P is written in such a way that readers see Psyche's world',¹¹ and his analysis stresses the narrative's focus on her imagination and vision.¹² As it develops, however, this promising study seems to contradict its own premises, since it draws from Book 11 of the *Metamorphoses*. Benson discusses how repetitions of motifs in C&P foreshadow events of Lucius' life narrated in the following books,¹³ thus diverting the readers' attention away from their first-time response to the story. Ultimately, Benson turns out to offer another fascinating second-time reading of C&P.

This article will reinforce the growing scholarly interest in first-time readings of the *Metamorphoses* by taking C&P as a story centred around the readers' immersion in the account of Psyche's experience of Cupid. As I will explain shortly, I draw the notion of immersion from recent developments in cognitive narratology, according to which certain triggers within narrative texts allow the readers to be immersed, namely 'to be absorbed in a virtual world such that one experiences it—to a certain extent—as if it were the actual world'.¹⁴

My choice of a reader-response analysis of C&P is indebted to Winkler's above-mentioned monograph *Auctor & Actor*, which, among its numerous merits, has made reader-response theory a fruitful tool with which to understand Apuleius' *Metamorphoses*. Winkler's reader-response criticism is primarily informed by the works of Wolfgang Iser, Stanley Fish and Hans Robert Jauss, all of which focus on readers' search for meaning within texts.¹⁵ In the light of this model, Winkler identifies in the *Metamorphoses* a 'hermeneutic entertainment'¹⁶ that is born from the presence of 'many jokes, structural ironies, and explicit discussions concerning stories that take on new meanings at the end, particularly those that require a category shift or radical revision of sense'.¹⁷

However, in his same work Winkler combines this intellectual model of reader-response with the readers' emotional participation in the narrative. In chapter 6, Winkler draws the important distinction between Lucius the narrator (*auctor*) and

¹⁰ See W. Pater, *Marius the Epicurean* (London, 1885), 65.

¹¹ Benson (n. 2), 121.

¹² See Benson (n. 2), 103–12. A partial precedent to Benson's attempt is G. Sissa, 'In touch, in love: Apuleius on the aesthetic impasse of a Platonic Psyche', in A. Purves (ed.), *Touch and the Ancient Senses* (London, 2016), 150–66. Sissa reads C&P with a focus on Psyche's multisensory experience of Cupid in bed. In the second part of her contribution (155–68), however, she shifts her attention away from C&P to superimpose other texts onto her reading, namely Platonic and Aristotelian reflections on aesthetics. In this way, Sissa's first-time reading of the story is undermined.

¹³ See Benson (n. 1), 131–6.

¹⁴ R.J. Allan, I.J.F. de Jong and C.C. de Jonge, 'From *enargeia* to immersion. The ancient roots of a modern concept', *Style* 51 (2017), 34–51, at 34. For the foundational work on immersion, see M.L. Ryan, *Narrative as Virtual Reality: Immersion and Interactivity in Literature and Electronic Media* (Baltimore, 2001).

¹⁵ See W. Iser, *The Act of Reading: A Theory of Aesthetic Response* (London and Henley, 1978); S. Fish, *Is There a Text in This Class? The Authority of Interpretive Communities* (Cambridge, 1980); H.R. Jauss, *Ästhetische Erfahrung und literarische Hermeneutik* (Frankfurt, 1982).

¹⁶ Winkler (n. 2), 11.

¹⁷ Winkler (n. 2), 12. For an earlier suggestion of a reader-response approach to the *Metamorphoses*, see J.T. Svendsen, 'Apuleius' *The Golden Ass*: the demands on the reader', *Pacific Coast Philology* 13 (1978), 101–7.

Lucius the character (*actor*)¹⁸ before arguing that in Apuleius' novel 'each event of the past is told for immediate effect ...',¹⁹ so that 'the first-reader requires no explanation for the many kinds of novelty, reversal, and unprepared shock in the *AA*'.²⁰

While throughout his book Winkler prioritizes the readers' intellectual response over their emotional one, the latter has been taken seriously by the scholars whom I listed earlier as first-time readers of Apuleius (that is, Heath, Slater, Freudenburg, Kirichenko, Graverini and Benson), with the sole exception of Schlam and the addition of Kenny.²¹ In different ways all of them argue that the readers' response to specific sections of the *Metamorphoses* consists in their identification with Lucius' thoughts and emotions, a model of reading which includes the intellectual response but goes beyond that. My paper builds upon Winkler's and these other scholars' focus on identification with Lucius by exploiting the so-called second wave of cognitive studies, which has offered a new, embodied model of reader-response, focussed on the interaction between the reader's mind and body, including emotions and movements.²² Immersion is one of the major effects triggered by this embodied model of reading.

In Part 1 of my article, I will look at the prologue to the *Metamorphoses* and relate its metaliterary agenda to the cognitive and literary notion of immersion. In Part 2, I will argue that the motifs in the prologue are re-enacted during the scene of C&P which is set in Cupid's palace, so that its metaliterary agenda *may* apply to this tale as well. In Part 3, I will show how this immersive reading *does* apply to selected sections of C&P by highlighting the story's focus on Psyche's experience of Cupid. I will then conclude by discussing ways in which this article reinforces the importance of an immersive reading to an understanding of the entire novel.

PART 1: THE PROLOGUE'S CONTRACT AND ITS INVITATION TO AN IMMERSIVE READING

The famous prologue of Apuleius' *Metamorphoses* offers the reader a 'contract' of expectations, which is then 'carried out as the reader proceeds linearly through the text'.²³ Many aspects of this prologue are much debated among scholars. In this paper, guided by my interest in a first-time reading of the *Metamorphoses*, I focus on the prologue's direct engagement with the readers and interpret it as inviting an immersive reading of the entire novel.²⁴ The prologue begins thus (1.1.1; my transl.):

¹⁸ See Winkler (n. 2), 140–53.

¹⁹ Winkler (n. 2), 141.

²⁰ Winkler (n. 2), 144.

²¹ See the introduction and n. 9 above for details of these scholars' work. For Kenny's emotion-driven approach to reading-response, see B. Kenny, 'The reader's role in *The Golden Ass*', *Arethusa* 7 (1974), 187–209.

²² On the second wave of cognitive studies, see K. Kukkonen and M. Caracciolo, 'What is the "Second Generation"?', *Style* 48 (2014), 261–74. On the embodied model of reading, see K. Kukkonen, 'Presence and prediction: the embodied reader's cascades of cognition', *Style* 48 (2014), 367–84.

²³ N.W. Slater, 'The horizons of reading', in A. Kahane and A. Laird (edd.), *A Companion to the Prologue of Apuleius' Metamorphoses* (Oxford, 2001), 213–21, at 213. On the prologue, see A. Kahane and A. Laird (edd.), *A Companion to the Prologue of Apuleius' Metamorphoses* (Oxford, 2001).

²⁴ I leave aside intertextual and allegorical interpretations of this passage which do not capitalize on first-time readings of the novel, for which J. Ulrich, 'Choose your own adventure: an εἰκὼν of Socrates in the prologue of Apuleius' *Metamorphoses*', *AJPh* 138 (2017), 707–38 is a very good representative; cf. also C. Schlam, 'Platonica in the *Metamorphoses* of Apuleius', *TAPhA* 101 (1970), 477–87.

at ego tibi **sermone** isto Milesio uarias fabulas **conseram**

Come, **let me stitch together** various tales for you in this Milesian **conversation**²⁵

Here the *Metamorphoses* is introduced as 'an oral story to be heard by an audience'.²⁶ The phrase *uarias fabulas conseram* exploits the famous metaphor of weaving for storytelling,²⁷ and the adjective *uarias* hints at 'the Greek poetic concept of ποικιλία'.²⁸

Second, the identity of the speaker is debated.²⁹ Since no information is given about the speaker's appearance, we can define him as an anonymous disembodied voice.³⁰

Third, the prologue makes mention of sweet entertainment, seduction, curiosity and wonder, which are key elements of the contract which the prologue-speaker establishes with the reader (1.1.1):

aturesque tuas beniuolas lepido susurro permulceam

and **let me beguile your ears** into approval **with a sweet whispering**

The phrase *lepido susurro*, taken in combination with the previous mention of the Milesian tales,³¹ offers the reader sweet entertainment, while *atures tuas beniuolas permulceam* promises seduction. Moreover, since the verb *permulcere* is a close Latin equivalent to the Greek verb θέλγειν, which in Homer is the marker of the Sirens' enchanting song, the seductive voice of the speaker in the prologue can even be associated with that of the Sirens.³² Immediately after this, the reader is asked to be curious (1.1.1):

modo si papyrus Aegyptiam argutia Nilotici calami inscriptam non spreueris **inspicere**

at least if you will not disdain **to take a look at** Egyptian pages written with the cleverness of a Nilotic pen

²⁵ The text of Apuleius' *Metamorphoses* is taken from M. Zimmerman, *Apulei Metamorphoseon libri XI* (Oxford, 2012), while the translations are taken from the various *Groningen Commentaries on Apuleius* with the exception of Book 2, for which I use E.J. Kenney, *The Golden Ass or Metamorphoses* (London, 1998). With the phrase 'my transl.', I acknowledge the addition of minor adaptations to the listed translations.

²⁶ W.H. Keulen, 'Vocis immutatio: the Apuleian prologue and the pleasures and pitfalls of vocal versatility', in V. Rimell (ed.), *Orality and Representation in the Ancient Novel* (Groningen, 2007), 106–37, at 106.

²⁷ See Ulrich (n. 24), 712–16 on the Homeric origin of this metaphor and on other semantic connotations of *consero*. For further interpretations of the oral nature of the *Metamorphoses*, see e.g. Keulen (n. 26).

²⁸ See *GCA* 2007 = W.H. Keulen, *Apuleius Madaurensis Metamorphoses Book I* (Groningen, 2007), 65. On the relationship between the word *uarius* and the reflection on ποικιλία within ancient criticism, see R. Faber, 'The description of Staphylos' palace (*Dionysiaca* 18.69–86) and the principle of ΠΟΙΚΙΛΙΑ', *Philologus* 148 (2004), 245–54, at 246–7.

²⁹ Scholars have identified him with Apuleius the author, Lucius the narrator, or the book itself of the *Metamorphoses*; see e.g. Tilg (n. 4), 21–4. For other options, see Ulrich (n. 24), 708 n. 3.

³⁰ For a recent interpretation of this voice as disembodied and having a daemonic nature, see Benson (n. 2), 28–61.

³¹ The interpretation of Apuleius' reference to the Milesian tales is highly debated among scholars. Graverini (n. 5), 48 convincingly takes this genre as 'entertaining literature and fictional narrative'.

³² See Graverini (n. 5), 33–6. This association is confirmed by Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, which describes the Sirens' voice as 'a melody born to caress the ears' (*canor mulcendas natus ad aures*, 5.561). For a second-time allegorical interpretation of *permulcere* as derived from the Greek ἐπάδειν, see Ulrich (n. 24), 717–18 based on Schlam (n. 24), 479–80.

As argued by *GCA* 2007, 'here, in view of the ambiguous status of "Egyptian" writings and the possibly negative attitude implied by *spreueris*, *inspicere* may connote carefulness in taking a look at something potentially treacherous'.³³ This carefulness in turn implies curiosity, since *inspicere* in its only other occurrence in the *Metamorphoses* is used when Psyche is urged not to look (*ne uelis ... inspicere*) inside the jar she has to carry to Venus (6.19.7).³⁴

Finally, the reader is promised to be astonished by the text (1.1.2, 1.1.6):

figuras fortunasque hominum in alias imagines conuersas et in se rursum mutuo nexu reffectas **ut mireris, exordior**. ... lector intende: **laetaberis**.

How **men's forms and fortunes** are transformed into other appearances and then in mutual reciprocity restored again to their former state, **I start telling, to make you marvel**. ... Reader, pay attention: **you will be delighted**.

The final pledge of this passage, 'you will be delighted', reinforces the above-mentioned invitation to enjoy the story's sweet entertainment.

In sum, the prologue offers readers a contract which promises that the novel will entertain, seduce and astonish them, and stimulate their curiosity.

In the first books of the novel, Lucius dutifully fulfils this contract, since he experiences a range of emotions in his many adventures, and in most cases these experiences are thematically connected to the prologue.

At the beginning of Book 2, Lucius thus describes himself as follows (2.1.1; my transl.):

nimis cupidus cognoscendi quae rara **miraque** sunt

too desirous of finding out the rare and **the miraculous**

While the word *mira* implies Lucius' desire to be astonished, which reflects one of the prologue's invitations (*ut mireris*), the phrase *cupidus cognoscendi* expresses his curiosity. Furthermore, Photis' seduction leads Lucius to experience 'pleasure' (*uoluptas*),³⁵ as he himself declares before kissing her (2.10.1; my transl.):

nec diutius quivi tantum cruciatum **uoluptatis eximiae** sustinere

I could not stand the exquisite agony **of this uncommon pleasure** any longer

Since pleasure is an intensified form of entertainment, Lucius' relationship with Photis reinforces his experience of the prologue's message.

Later in Book 2, Lucius again fulfils the same contract while contemplating Byrrhaena's atrium:³⁶ *dum haec identidem rimabundus eximie delector* 'As I was examining every detail of the group with the utmost enjoyment', 2.5.1. Here Lucius

³³ *GCA* 2007 (n. 28), 71.

³⁴ On curiosity as 'l'un des thèmes majeurs dans les *Métamorphoses*', see e.g. *GCA* 2001 = D. van Mal-Maeder, *Apuleius Madaurensis Metamorphoses Livre II. Texte, Introduction et Commentaire* (Groningen, 2001), 17 and Schlam (n. 9), 48–57.

³⁵ For the key role of *uoluptas* in Book 2 and in the *Metamorphoses* as a whole, see *GCA* 2001 (n. 34), 23.

³⁶ For copious bibliography on this passage, see *GCA* 2001 (n. 34), 91–9. R.G. Peden, 'The statues in Apuleius' *Metamorphoses* 2.4', *Phoenix* 39 (1985), 380–3; Heath (n. 9); Slater (n. 9); M. Paschalis, 'Reading space: a re-examination of Apuleian *ekphrasis*', in M. Paschalis and S. Frangoulidis (edd.),

expresses curiosity and enjoys entertainment, both of which are key features of the prologue. This statement is highlighted by the adjective *rimabundus* ('examining'), which 'is likely to be Apuleius' own invention, built on analogy with adjectives of the *mirabundus* type'.³⁷ This memory of *mirabundus*, 'full of wonder', reinforces Lucius' execution of the prologue's contract. Furthermore, this sentence is followed by Byrrhaena's promise to Lucius: *tua sunt ... cuncta quae uides* ('All that you see is yours', 2.5.1),³⁸ which emphasizes his full participation in the house's beauty.

As suggested by Graverini, throughout these passages Lucius' feelings and responses are offered to the readers as an appeal to identify with him, so that they may also fulfil the prologue's contract through their own reading of the novel.³⁹ This identification also applies to other characters of the *Metamorphoses*, starting from the first secondary narrator of Book 1, Aristomenes, who expresses curiosity (1.18.1) and wonder (1.11.1).⁴⁰ The latter feeling arises in response to Socrates' narrative (1.11.1):

'*mira*', inquam, 'nec minus saeua, mi Socrates, memoras. denique mihi quoque non paruam incussisti sollicitudinem, immo uero formidinem'

'You relate **astonishing tales**', I said, 'and no less harrowing, my dear Socrates. Yes, you have struck me too with no slight anxiety, or rather fright'

Here *mira* again represents a pointed echo of the prologue's verb *mireris* ('to make you marvel'). Moreover, since Socrates' narrative, because of its focus on transformations, resembles the novel as a whole,⁴¹ Aristomenes' wonder is offered to the readers as a model response to both this passage and the *Metamorphoses* as a whole. Similarly, curiosity is presented to readers throughout the novel until Book 11.⁴²

Overall, taking up Benson's recent suggestion, Apuleius' extension of this contract and the readers' fulfilment of it through different sections of the *Metamorphoses* can be better understood through the lens of the cognitive and literary notions of immersion.⁴³ Apuleius' repeated focus on different emotions (entertainment, seduction, wonder and curiosity) invites readers to identify with the characters who experience them and to be immersed in the storyworld.⁴⁴ This argument is reinforced by the mention of

Space in the Ancient Novel (Groningen, 2002), 132–42 and Freudenburg (n. 9) are especially interesting.

³⁷ Freudenburg (n. 9), 243.

³⁸ This translation is from Freudenburg (n. 9), 240.

³⁹ See Graverini (n. 9), 122–4 and 132–6.

⁴⁰ For Aristomenes' curiosity, see 1.18.1: 'And so I anxiously (*curiose*) and attentively looked at the throat of my companion'. For his wonder, see the following passage in the main text.

⁴¹ See especially 1.9 and S.A. Frangoulidis, 'Cui uidebor ueri similia dicere proferens uera?: Aristomenes and the witches in Apuleius' *Tale of Aristomenes*', *CJ* 94 (1999), 375–91, at 379.

⁴² See Kirichenko (n. 9), 360–7.

⁴³ Benson (n. 2), 240–51 argues that 'reading the *Metamorphoses* is an immersive experience, and Apuleius employs a number of formal literary devices that make it seem as though Lucius' world is right in front of readers—that "produce presence"'. Benson draws this last phrase from the title of H.U. Gumbrecht, *Production of Presence: What Meaning Cannot Convey* (Stanford, 2003). Benson, however, does not offer a detailed discussion of how the narrative of the *Metamorphoses* offers the readers this 'immersive experience'. In the present article, I offer precisely this, with a focus on C&P. Graverini's study often hints at the notion of immersion, but never adopts it explicitly: for example, 'the ancient novels [including Apuleius'] represent ... an audience that is ... willing to be emotionally and almost physically "transferred" into the narrative world they create' (Graverini [n. 9], 138–9).

⁴⁴ Here, and throughout the paper, I use 'readers' to refer to any kind of ancient readers of Apuleius, who the literary context of Apuleius' work leads us to assume were educated and acquainted with literature.

seduction and the possible association between the voice of the speaker in the prologue and that of the Sirens, since, as recently argued by Grethlein,⁴⁵ the Sirens from Homer to Heliodorus have been used to embody the immersive quality of literature.

Finally, as I have shown above, an immersive reading of the *Metamorphoses* as a whole is strongly encouraged by intratextual echoes of the prologue. On first glance, since these echoes direct the readers' attention back to an earlier passage of the novel rather than keep their focus on plot development, they may seem to prevent the readers from immersing themselves in the story. On a closer analysis, however, this phenomenon does not pose an objection to my immersive reading but rather reinforces it. As is argued by Grethlein in his study of Heliodorus' *Aethiopica*, 'our response to narrative in various media oscillates between reflection and immersion',⁴⁶ and 'some passages simultaneously highlight the narratorial mediation and enhance the absorption of the reader'.⁴⁷ For example, there is a famous passage of Heliodorus' novel in which the prophet Calasiris is narrating the foot-race which took place in Delphi (4.3.2–4.3.4), and the Athenian Cnemon interrupts him by saying: 'Even now I fear for Theagenes and beg you to make haste and tell me whether he was proclaimed victor' (4.3.4). While Cnemon's request interrupts the readers' immersion in Calasiris' story and flags the narrative reflection, it also retards the story. This postponement, especially Cnemon's words 'to make haste and tell me', heightens suspense and compels the readers to become more deeply immersed into the plot.⁴⁸

Following Grethlein's approach, I treat all echoes of the prologue throughout the *Metamorphoses*, especially in C&P, as moments of reflection that deepen the readers' immersion in specific sections of the text.

PART 2: MULTIPLE RE-ENACTMENTS OF THE PROLOGUE'S CONTRACT WITHIN THE ECPHRASIS OF CUPID'S PALACE

Interpreters of C&P have traditionally identified only two specific echoes of the prologue. The first is to be found in the old narrator's comment: *sed ego te narrationibus lepidis anilibusque fabulis protinus auocabo* ('Come, I shall straightaway **distract** you **with sweet fairy-tales** and old women's stories', 4.27.8; my transl.). In this sentence, both *ego te ... lepidis* and *auocabo* recall the prologue's first sentence.⁴⁹ Scholars have contended that this sentence affects the internal audience of the story, namely poor Charite kidnapped by bandits,⁵⁰ but its impact on the external audience is difficult to decipher. The second echo is found at the end of C&P, when we hear about the birth of Psyche's daughter 'Pleasure' (*Voluptas*, 6.24.4). As I argued earlier, pleasure is an intensified version of entertainment which is a key feature of the prologue.⁵¹

⁴⁵ See J. Grethlein, *Aesthetic Experiences and Classical Antiquity: The Significance of Form in Narratives and Pictures* (Cambridge and New York, 2017), 1–17 and 119–20.

⁴⁶ J. Grethlein, 'World and words. The limits to mimesis and immersion in Heliodorus' *Ethiopica*', in J. Grethlein, L. Huitink and A. Tagliabue (edd.), *Experience, Narrative, and Criticism in Ancient Greece: Under the Spell of Stories* (Oxford, 2019), 127–47, at 132–3.

⁴⁷ Grethlein (n. 46), 147.

⁴⁸ In this sentence I am slightly rephrasing Grethlein (n. 46), 145.

⁴⁹ See Winkler (n. 2), 53 and Smith (n. 7), 70.

⁵⁰ *GCA* 2004 (n. 1), 37.

⁵¹ Some scholars have identified an additional possible echo of the prologue. When Apollo's oracle is said to deliver its prophecy in Latin rather than in Greek *propter Milesiae conditorem* ('for the sake

This limited number of echoes of the prologue is an additional reason why, as I mentioned in the Introduction, scholars do not extend to C&P the immersive reading characteristic of other sections of the *Metamorphoses*.

Very recently, however, Benson has challenged scholarly consensus by showing that 'the *narratrix* uses key terms from the novel's prologue throughout the tale'⁵² and by suggesting an analogy between the prologue's disembodied voice and the voice that speaks to Psyche in the palace at 5.2.3.⁵³ Benson's list of correspondences between the prologue and C&P is helpful and correct,⁵⁴ but, as noted by Soldo, his interpretation of these connections is not satisfactory.⁵⁵ In what follows, I will expand on Benson's approach, and argue that the scene in Cupid's palace includes multiple re-enactments of the prologue's contract:

- a) for a first-time reader of the story, the palace represents certain general features of Apuleius' novel, and Psyche represents a reader who fulfils the contract of the prologue;
- b) the voice of the servants' leader echoes that of the prologue-speaker;
- c) the chorus singing at Psyche's banquet also echoes the prologue-speaker's voice;
- d) a few chapters later, Psyche uses her voice to imitate that of the prologue-speaker and to emphasize its seductive power.

Overall, these multiple re-enactments of the prologue allow for readerly reflection and show that the prologue's contract extends to C&P, as I will explain in detail in what follows.

a) Psyche as a reader who fulfils the prologue's contract

At the beginning of Book 5, as soon as Psyche reaches Cupid's palace, the text focusses on her exploration of the divine dwelling, which lies at the core of the well-studied ecphrasis of Cupid's palace.⁵⁶ Following van Mal-Maeder's suggestion,⁵⁷ in the palace there are multiple references to general features of Apuleius' novel that a reader is able

of the author of the Milesian tale', 4.32.6), some scholars argue that 'the reference is ... to the narrating I of the novel, the *ego* of the opening sentence' (*GCA* 2004 [n. 1], 85). However, unlike the old narrator's comment discussed in the main text, this additional echo is not relevant to our interpretation, since it does not address the prologue's contract. Similarly, Yun Lee Too sees a connection between the prologue and C&P which is different from mine: in her view, 'the Prologue's unstable rhetoric of identity' is reflected in how the story asks 'questions about [the] textual identity' of the involved characters: see Y.L. Too, 'Losing the author's voice: cultural and personal identities in the *Metamorphoses* prologue', in A. Kahane and A. Laird (edd.), *A Companion to the Prologue of Apuleius' Metamorphoses* (Oxford, 2001), 177–87, at 183–4.

⁵² Benson (n. 2), 138. For a list of these words, see Benson (n. 2), 131 n. 113.

⁵³ See Benson (n. 2), 40–6.

⁵⁴ In my own discussion of the re-enactments of the prologue in this section, I will include three of the words mentioned by Benson (n. 2), 131 n. 113, namely *mulcentia* (*Met.* 5.6.9), *susurrus* (5.6.10) and *remulcebant* (5.15.2).

⁵⁵ See J. Soldo, 'Review of G.C. Benson, *Apuleius' Invisible Ass. Encounters with the Unseen in the Metamorphoses*', *CR* 70 (2019), 131–2, at 132: 'While I agree with B. that the prologue's disembodied voice sets the unsettling tone of the narrative and foreshadows the important role that invisibility plays in the novel, the relationship between the disembodied voice in the prologue and the voice that Psyche hears giving her instructions remains unclear.'

⁵⁶ See P. Murgatroyd, 'Apuleian ecphrasis: Cupid's palace at *Met.* 5.1.2–5.2.2', *Hermes* 125 (1997), 357–66; S. Brodersen, 'Cupid's palace – a Roman villa (*Apul. Met.* 5.1)', in *AAGA* 2 (n. 1), 113–25; D. van Mal-Maeder, 'Le décor réflexif dans le conte d'Amour et Psyché: d'Apulée à Jean de la Fontaine', in B. Pouderon (ed.), *Lieux, décors et paysages de l'ancien roman des origines à Byzance* (Lyon, 2005), 153–61.

⁵⁷ See van Mal-Maeder (n. 56).

to recognize straightaway. From its very beginning, this ecphrasis makes mention of the divine artistry of the palace (5.1.2):

medio luci meditullio ... domus regia est **aedificata non humanis manibus sed diuinis artibus.**

At the very centre of the grove ... is a royal house, **constructed not by human hands but by divine skills.**

The palace's divine construction points to the importance of gods and the supernatural within the *Metamorphoses*, which is visible in the use of Diana and Venus as counterparts to Pamphile (2.4.3 and 2.5.3)⁵⁸ and Photis (3.22.5), and in the importance of witchcraft throughout the text.⁵⁹

In addition, Cupid's palace includes distinctive wall decorations (5.1.3 and 5.1.4; my transl.):

parietes omnes ... conteguntur **bestiis** et id genus **pecudibus**

all the walls ... are covered with **beasts** and **animals** of that kind

mirus prorsum {magnae artis} homo, immo semideus uel certe deus, qui magnae artis suptilitate tantum **efferauit** argentum.

It was indeed a wonderful man, no, rather a demigod or even a god, who with the refinement of great art **had turned into wild animals** so much silver.

bestiis, *pecudibus* and *efferauit* are echoes of the monster mentioned in the oracle (4.33.1–2) which lies at the origin of Psyche's visit to this palace;⁶⁰ moreover, these echoes stand as possible reflections of Lucius' transformation into an ass, which is of course a key motif of the *Metamorphoses*.

The same ecphrasis includes a reference to mosaics made up of precious stones: in the sentence *pauimenta ipsa ... in uaria picturae genera discriminantur* ('the very floors ... are divided up **into different sorts of pictures**', 5.1.5; my transl.), the phrase *uaria genera* summarizes the status of the *Metamorphoses* as a combination of different genres, such as the novel, Milesian tales, epic, drama and Hellenistic poetry.⁶¹ This reading is reinforced by the echo in *uaria genera* of *uarias fabulas* ('various tales', 1.1.1) from the prologue.

Finally, at the beginning of the ecphrasis, the palace is said to be located in a special setting (5.1.2):

uidet lucum **proceris et uastis arboribus** consitum, uidet **fontem uitreo latice perlucidum.**

She sees a grove thickly planted **with huge, tall trees**, she sees **a glistening spring of crystal-clear water.**

The location of Cupid's palace is characterized here as a *locus amoenus* because it includes soft wind, fresh grass, high trees for shade, and a stream of clear water; later

⁵⁸ See Heath (n. 9), 106.

⁵⁹ See, for example, Schlam (n. 9), 67–81. The second-time readers of this ecphrasis would include Isis' appearance in this list.

⁶⁰ See Murgatroyd (n. 56), 360.

⁶¹ See e.g. Smith (n. 7), 77; Graverini (n. 5), 133–64; and Tilg (n. 4), 37–55.

the palace is similarly defined as a 'delightful residence' (*amoenum diuersorium*, 5.1.3). By definition any *locus amoenus* ('pleasant place') is characterized by evasion and pleasure.⁶² Within this tradition, the presentation of Cupid's palace as a *locus amoenus* fits well into the *Metamorphoses* when experienced by the readers for the first time, as it reflects the entertaining function that is mentioned programmatically in the prologue.

In sum, the ephrasis of Cupid's palace reminds the readers of some of the main features of the *Metamorphoses*, including its key themes, generic complexity and entertaining nature. In light of this analogy between Cupid's palace and the *Metamorphoses*, the reader could then view Psyche's reaction to her visit to the palace as the first re-enactment of the prologue's contract in C&P (5.2.1–2):

inuitata Psyche talium locorum **oblectatione** propius accessit et paulo fidentior intra limen sese facit. mox **prolectante** studio pulcherrimae uisionis **rimatur singula**, et altrinsecus aedium horrea sublimi fabrica perfecta magnisque congesta gazis. nec est quicquam quod ibi non est. sed **praeter ceteram** tantarum diuitiarum **admirationem** hoc erat praecipue **mirificum**, quod nullo uinculo, nullo claustro, nullo custode totius orbis thensaurus ille muniebatur. haec ei **summa cum uoluptate** uisenti ...

Psyche, attracted by **the enticement** of such surroundings, came closer and as she gained a little more confidence, crosses the threshold; soon, **seduced** by her eagerness for the beautiful spectacle **she examines all the details** and on the other side of the palace she discovers storehouses built with lofty craftsmanship crammed with vast treasures. Nothing exists which is not there. But **beyond the rest of her admiration** at such enormous wealth, what was especially **amazing** was that this treasure-house of the entire world was protected by not a single chain, by no lock and by no guard. As she looked at all this **with the greatest pleasure** ...

In her visit to the palace, Psyche's attitude matches the reaction prescribed by the contract introduced in the prologue. In this way, she is presented as a model for readers to follow. First, Psyche experiences **seduction**, since she is 'attracted by the enticement of such surroundings' (*inuitata talium locorum oblectatione*, 5.2.1) and 'seduced by her eagerness for the beautiful spectacle' (*prolectante studio pulcherrimae uisionis*, 5.2.1). Second, Psyche looks with **curiosity**, since 'she examines all the details' (*rimatur singula*, 5.2.1) of the palace. Then, she experiences **wonder**, as suggested by the phrase 'beyond the rest of her admiration at such enormous wealth' (*praeter ceteram tantarum diuitiarum admirationem*, 5.2.2). In addition, she finds it especially 'amazing' (*mirificum*, 5.2.2) that nobody is standing guard over this treasure, and she also finds **pleasure**, since 'she was looking at all this with the greatest pleasure' (*ei summa cum uoluptate uisenti*, 5.2.3).⁶³

In view of this description, Psyche's visit to Cupid's palace, a key episode near the beginning of C&P, offers a profound moment of reflection for readers. Not only do we meet a character (Psyche) who experiences the emotions which are part of the prologue's contract, but the object triggering these emotions, the palace, can be understood to stand

⁶² See E.R. Curtius, *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages* (New York, 1953), 195–200 and P. Haß, *Der locus amoenus in der antiken Literatur: Zu Theorie und Geschichte eines literarischen Motivs* (Bamberg, 1998), 98–115. Apuleius' familiarity with this literary motif is further proven by the inclusion of another *locus amoenus* in Book 1 (1.19.7), which is soon transformed into a *locus horridus* (1.19.9–11). The readers' recollection in Book 5 of this earlier and darker *locus amoenus* would likely reinforce the connotation of delight regarding Cupid's palace.

⁶³ See Murgatroyd (n. 56), 366: 'The effect of the setting on Psyche is shown ... by allusion to her pleasure, curiosity and wonder.'

for the *Metamorphoses* as a whole. As a result, this passage strongly reminds the readers of the prologue's contract, and invites them to fulfil it as they read C&P.

Support for this reading also comes from the close relationship between this narration of Psyche's visit and Lucius' response to the ephrasis of Byrrhaena's house in Book 2, another passage which, as I argued earlier, strongly recalls the prologue's contract. More specifically, the mention of Psyche's curiosity (*rimatur*) and pleasure in Book 5 recalls Lucius' curiosity (*rimabundus*) and delight in what he saw there (2.5.1).⁶⁴

b) The disembodied voice of the servants' leader as an echo of the prologue-speaker

While Psyche is looking at the palace, the following servants appear (5.2.3–3.1):

haec ei summa cum uoluptate uisenti offert sese **uox quaedam corporis sui nuda**, et 'quid', inquit 'domina, tantis **obstupescis** opibus? tua sunt haec omnia. prohinc cubiculo te refer, et lectulo lassitudinem **refoue**, et ex arbitrio lauacrum pete. nos, quarum uoces accipis, tuae famulae sedulo tibi praeministrabimus, nec corporis curatae tibi regales epulae morabuntur.' **sensit Psyche diuinae prouidentiae beatitudinem**, monitusque **uocis informis** audiens et prius somno et mox lauacro fatigationem sui diluit;

As she looked at all this with the greatest pleasure, **a sort of disembodied voice** came to her and said: 'Why, mistress, **are you so astounded** at this great wealth? All of it is yours. So retire to your bedroom, **soothe** your weariness with your bed and take a bath as you please. We whose voices you hear are your servants who will diligently wait on you, and when your body is refreshed a royal banquet for you will be swift to come.' **Psyche felt the blessedness of divine providence** and, obeying the instructions of **the shapeless voice**, she dispelled her weariness first with sleep and then with a bath.

In this passage, the voice of the servants' leader echoes the disembodied voice of the prologue-speaker in both its form and its message. First, after her fulfilment of the prologue's contract, Psyche (as the character who represents the reader) hears a voice that is deprived of its body, as we read in the phrases 'a sort of disembodied voice' (*uox quaedam corporis sui nuda*, 5.2.3) and 'shapeless voice' (*uocis informis*, 5.3.1). Second, this voice highlights Psyche's experience of two features of the prologue, namely wonder (*obstupescis* 'are you astounded', 5.2.3) and relief (*refoue* 'soothe', 5.2.3); the latter is an echo of the seduction mentioned in the prologue. Finally, the text further stresses that the servants' voice is disembodied, like the speaker of the prologue: *nec quemquam tamen illa uidere poterat, sed uerba tantum audiebat excidentia et solas uoces famulas habebat* 'Yet she could see no one, but merely heard words coming out and only the voices she had as her servants', 5.3.4.

c) The chorus singing at Psyche's banquet as a further echo of the prologue-speaker

After her rest Psyche is offered the promised banquet and, immediately afterwards, she hears new disembodied voices, including a chorus which is described in two different

⁶⁴ This connection between *rimatur* and *rimabundus* is reinforced by the fact that the verb *rimor* is used on only two other occasions in the *Metamorphoses* to describe Lucius' curiosity (*rimabar singula* at 2.26.2 and *rimatus angulum* at 4.22). In addition, the memory of Lucius' response to the ephrasis at Byrrhaena's house is highlighted by the following phrase heard by Psyche: *tua sunt haec omnia* 'All of these things are yours', 5.2.3; this phrase closely recalls Byrrhaena's promise *tua sunt ... cuncta quae uides* 'All that you see is yours', 2.5.1, transl. Freudenburg (n. 9), 240; see *GCA* 2004 (n. 1), 125 for the discussion of this intratextual allusion.

sections of the text. The first description comes at the end of the ecphrasis of Cupid's palace (5.3.5; my transl.):

post opimas dapes quidam introcessit et cantauit inuisus, et alius citharam pulsauit, quae uidebatur nec ipsa. **tunc modulatae multitudinis conferta uox aures eius affertur**, ut, quamuis hominum nemo pareret, chorus tamen esse pateret.

After the sumptuous dinner someone came in and sang, unseen, and someone else played a cithara, which was invisible too. **Then the concerted voice of a melodious crowd comes to her ears**, so that, though none of the men appeared, yet there was obviously a choir.

In this passage, the choir seems to represent a further echo of the prologue's voice. To begin with, here as in the prologue a voice with an invisible body reaches the ears of Psyche, whom we know already to represent the reader. In addition, the same chorus is thus described in chapter 15 (5.15.2):

quae cuncta nullo praesente **dulcissimis** modulis animos **audientium remulcebant**.

All these things, although no one was there, **were caressing** with the **sweetest** tunes **the listeners'** spirits.

This combination of *remulcebant* with *animos audientium* echoes the prologue's phrase *aures permulceam*.⁶⁵ Moreover, *dulcissimis modulis* thematically recalls the prologue's *lepido susurro* and its promise of sweet entertainment. Hence, the chorus in Cupid's palace indeed echoes the prologue's voice with a focus on the soothing effects wrought on the reader.

I also add a speculative piece of evidence to this demonstration. I would like to adopt Oudendorp's conjecture⁶⁶ and offer a new textual reading of the first description of the chorus, in which I replace *conferta* with *conserta* (5.3.5; my transl.):

tunc modulatae multitudinis **conserta** uox aures eius affertur.

Then the **joined** voice of a melodious crowd comes to her ears.

In my view, *conserta* works better than *conferta* in this sentence because of its agreement with *uox*: in its usage both in the *Metamorphoses* and in Latin literature as a whole,⁶⁷ *confercio* ('to pack closely together')⁶⁸ is used only literally (cf. 4.18.6, 5.14.3, 8.16.2, 8.16.7, 8.29.6, 9.37.1 and 10.7.7, with the only exception of 9.11.6), whereas *consero* ('to fasten together')⁶⁹ encompasses the figurative meaning of 'compose',⁷⁰ which is attested in both the prologue to the *Metamorphoses* (*uarias fabulas conseram*) and elsewhere in Latin literature.⁷¹ In this new suggested rendering of the above phrase, *conserta* is a pointed allusion to the prologue's first verb *conseram*.

⁶⁵ See J.K. Krabbe, *The Metamorphoses of Apuleius* (New York / Bern / Frankfurt / Paris, 1989), 6 and Schlam (n. 9), 46, both of whom argue that in the *Metamorphoses* all verbs in *mulc-* recall the metaliterary agenda of the prologue.

⁶⁶ Here I follow Kenney (n. 7) against Zimmerman (n. 25).

⁶⁷ See *TLL* s.v. *confercio*.

⁶⁸ *OLD* s.v. 1.

⁶⁹ *OLD* s.v. 1.

⁷⁰ *OLD* s.v. 6.

⁷¹ See *TLL* s.v. *consero*.

d) *Psyche's imitation of the prologue-speaker's seductive voice*

After her first encounters with Cupid, Psyche persuades her reluctant husband to let her sisters enter his house (5.6.9–10):

et imprimens oscula suasoria et **ingerens uerba mulcentia** et inserens membra cogentia haec etiam blanditiis astruit: 'mi mellite, mi marite, tuae Psychae dulcis anima'. **ui ac potestate uenerii susurrus** inuitus succubuit maritus et cuncta se facturum spondit, ...

And pressing persuasive kisses on him, and **plying him with soothing words**, and entwining him with her compelling limbs, she added to her caresses words like 'my honey-sweet, my husband, your Psyche's sweet soul.' **By the force and power of these amorous whispers** her husband reluctantly succumbed, and he pledged that he would do everything ...

In light of the re-enactment of the prologue at the beginning of Book 5, the phrase *ingerens uerba mulcentia*, with the verbal stem *mulc-* (*mulceo*), helps to draw a parallel between Psyche's seduction and the seductiveness of the prologue's voice. The phrase *ui ac potestate uenerii susurrus* reinforces this interpretation, since in the first five books of the *Metamorphoses* *susurrus* occurs only in the phrase *lepido susurro* of the prologue and in the word *susurramen* at 1.3.1.⁷² As a result, the readers of C&P, when approaching this section of the story set in the palace, might see in Psyche's rhetoric a re-enactment of the sweet and seductive voice of the prologue-speaker. This instance completes the dense web of echoes of the prologue which characterizes this section of C&P.

As I argued at the end of Part 1, throughout the *Metamorphoses* the recurrent allusion to the readerly contract established in the prologue invites readers to immerse themselves in several sections of the novel. My analysis of Psyche's visit to Cupid's palace shows that, contrary to traditional scholarly belief, C&P is no exception to this general pattern, since it contains many echoes of the prologue's contract and emphasizes even more strongly Psyche's fulfilment of it. In the final section of this paper, I will show how key episodes of C&P meet the expectation from the prologue's echoes by triggering the readers' immersion in the narrative world in a way that lends support to a first-time reading.

PART 3: IMMERSION IN THE NARRATIVE OF C&P, WITH A FOCUS ON PSYCHE'S EXPERIENCE OF CUPID

This section argues that relevant parts of C&P invite readers to participate in Psyche's experience of Cupid. Before getting into the details, some theoretical background first needs to be discussed. While in the Introduction I offered a definition of immersion, here I list Allan's inventory of immersive elements which includes the following components:⁷³

⁷² For the only other occurrence of *susurrus* in the *Metamorphoses* after C&P, see 8.10.3, where Thrasyllos' 'shameless whispers' (*susurros improbos*) to Charite are mentioned.

⁷³ R.J. Allan, 'Narrative immersion. Some linguistic and narratological aspects', in J. Grethlein, L. Huitink and A. Tagliabue (edd.), *Experience, Narrative, and Criticism in Ancient Greece: Under the Spell of Stories* (Oxford, 2019), 15–35, at 18. What follows is a simplified version of Allan's list at 18–19.

- (I) **Verisimilitude:** The text evokes a lifelike ('vivid') mental representation of persons, objects, actions and their setting. A lifelike representation:
- (a) focusses on concrete, physical objects;
 - (b) provides graphic sensory details;
 - (c) provides detailed spatial information;
 - (d) progresses at a relatively slow pace (*scene* narration: narration time approximates narrated time);
 - (e) advances in chronological order (no flashbacks/flashforwards) ...
- (II) **Perspective:** The text ... takes the perspective of (is focalized by) a character with whom the addressee may identify and feel empathy. Specific linguistic indications of this perspective shift are:
- (a) *proximal* ('here' and 'now') deixis (for example historic present);
 - (b) imperfect aspect (indicating an 'internal viewpoint');
 - (c) subjective-evaluative vocabulary which can be ascribed to a character.
- (III) **'Transparency' of the Text:** The text directs the addressee's attention to the storyworld, that is, it defocusses from the text itself as a medium and from the narrator as a mediating voice ... More specifically, we will find:
- (a) no metanarrative elements (for example narrator comments);
 - (b) direct or free indirect discourse;
 - (c) no elements drawing attention to the conventionality of the textual (literary) genre.
- (IV) **Interest and Emotional Involvement:** The theme of the text is of strong interest to the addressee. The text contains elements eliciting the addressee's emotional response ... The text is crucial to the main storyline and creates *suspense*.
- (V) **Principle of Minimal Departure:** The storyworld should not (or only minimally) depart from the 'real world' as we know it ... Departures may be tolerated if they can be explained by generic conventions.

I will now use this inventory to show how at least three relevant scenes of C&P are conducive to the readers' immersion. Two features mentioned by Allan, 'Transparency of the Text' and 'Principle of Minimal Departure', hold true for all the passages that I am going to discuss, which are characterized by an absence of metanarrative elements and the construction of a storyworld that departs from the 'real world' only with regard to Cupid. This departure, though apparent, can be tolerated in light of the epic undertones that characterize C&P from its beginning.⁷⁴ The three remaining features of Allan's list are present in more specific ways.

The first scene which I consider to be immersive is one of the peaks of the story, namely Psyche's discovery of her husband's identity. In chapter 33 of Book 4, Apollo prophesies that Psyche will marry 'a savage and wild, viperous monster' (*saeum atque ferum uipereumque malum*, 4.33.1),⁷⁵ and in chapter 22 of Book 5 this monster's identity is finally revealed to her. This chapter, which narrates Cupid's epiphany, starts with Psyche's entrance into her husband's room with a dagger and

⁷⁴ See Harrison (n. 8) and *GCA* 2004 (n. 1), 2.

⁷⁵ See S. Mattiacci, 'Neoteric and elegiac echoes in the tale of Cupid and Psyche by Apuleius', in *AAGA* 2 (n. 1), 127–49, at 137–40 for a detailed literary analysis of Apollo's oracle.

lamp, since she wants to obey her sisters' orders to kill him. Precisely at this moment, the narrative rhythm slows down, and Psyche's relationship with Cupid is narrated mostly through a 'scene' narrative which advances in chronological order. This thereby displays Allan's category of 'Verisimilitude'. In addition, the narrative highlights Psyche's 'Perspective', as it is focalized by her, and the historical anaphoric present (*uidet*) stresses both her sight and her proximity to the god (5.22.1):

sed cum primum luminis oblatione tori secreta claruerunt, **uidet omnium ferarum mitissimam dulcissimamque bestiam** ...

But as soon as the mysteries of the bed are revealed by the presentation of the lamp, **she sees of all wild beasts the meekest and sweetest animal** ...

The final sentence also steers the readers' 'Interest and Emotional Involvement', in Allan's terms, since the sisters' previous dialogue with Psyche has created suspense about the latter's encounter with the husband, and this suspense is now released by Psyche's discovery of his identity. Moreover, 'the oxymoronic juxtapositions',⁷⁶ with their combination of wild beasts with the sweetest animal, vividly express Psyche's astonishment at her discovery, and further highlight her 'Perspective'.

Finally, this same category is further emphasized when, immediately after, the readers are given access to Psyche's emotions and thoughts (5.22.3–4):

at uero Psyche tanto aspectu **deterrita** et impos 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 euolasset. iamque lassa, salute defecta, dum **saepius** diuini uultus intuetur pulchritudinem, **recreatur animi**.

But Psyche, **terrified** by the overwhelming sight, loses her self-control and, **weakened and pale**, she almost faints; **trembling** she sinks deep down onto the backs of her knees and tries to hide the weapon—but to hide it in her own breast; **she would no doubt have done so**, had not the weapon itself, out of fear for such an enormous crime, slipped away and escaped from her rash hands. And now, weary and bereft of a means of salvation, while she **again and again** contemplates the beauty of the divine appearance, **she regains her inner strength**.

In this passage, *deterrita* ('terrified'), *marcido pallore defecta* ('weakened and pale') and *tremens* ('trembling') all stress Psyche's fear at the god's appearance, which leads her to attempt suicide. Moreover, the phrase *quod profecto fecisset* ('she would no doubt have done so') is a counterfactual clause, which further enhances the readers' immersion in the narrative, since, as argued by Grethlein and Huitink, 'counterfactuals alert the reader to the openness of the past for various developments and thereby restore presence to the action'.⁷⁷ Finally, in the last sentence, the mention of Psyche's lengthy contemplation encourages the readers to identify with her curiosity.

In light of this, I conclude that, as soon as Psyche separates herself from her sisters and goes to see Cupid, the narrative of her encounter with the god displays a highly immersive character. As a result, readers are invited to identify with Psyche and experience her emotional turmoil, which includes two features of the prologue's contract, namely wonder and curiosity.

⁷⁶ *GCA* 2004 (n. 1), 273.

⁷⁷ J. Grethlein and L. Huitink, 'Homer's vividness. An enactive approach', *JHS* 137 (2017), 67–91.

This identification becomes even more compelling when, at the end of this epiphanic scene, Psyche notices Cupid's weapons lying at the foot of the bed (5.22.7). The narration of her handling of these weapons is highly immersive (5.23.1–2):

quae dum **insatiabili animo** Psyche, **satis et curiosa**, **rimatur** atque **pertractat** et mariti sui **miratur** arma, **depromit** unam de pharetra sagittam et puncto pollicis extremam aciem periclitabunda **tremētis** etiam nunc **articuli** nisu fortiore pupugit altius, ut per summam cutem rorauerint paruulae sanguinis **rosei guttae**.

While Psyche **with insatiable spirit**, and **being very curious**, **scrutinizes** and **handles** these, and **marvels** at the weapons of her husband, **she takes** one arrow from the quiver, testing the sharpness of its point, and with a strongish push of **her hand**, which was still **trembling**, she pricked too deep, so that **tiny little drops** of rose-red blood moistened the surface of her skin.

This passage displays Allan's category of 'Perspective', since it is focalized by Psyche, who describes her multisensorial perception of the weapons, first through sight (*rimatur* and *pertractat*), and then, from *depromit* onwards, through the movement of her hand. The changes in the surface of her skin are also described in detail.⁷⁸ In addition, we are given access to Psyche's feelings and emotions, ranging from her curiosity (*insatiabili animo* and *satis et curiosa*) to her wonder (*miratur*) and fear (*articuli tremētis*). Furthermore, the time that is taken to read this passage is commensurate with the realistic duration of Psyche's actions (*scene* narrative, 'Verisimilitude'), and the mention of blood drops at the end of the passage arouses suspense about what may happen to her. All these elements convey the immersive nature of the narrative, whereby readers participate in Psyche's experience and especially in her curiosity and wonder, whose mutual connection is emphasized by the anagram *rimatur ... miratur*.⁷⁹

Finally, other sections of C&P display an immersive quality, even if they do not contain specific references to the prologue's emotions, thereby highlighting the wide appeal of this immersive reading while still confirming its focus on Psyche's relationship to Cupid. For example, as soon as the latter decides to fly off and leave the former, we read (5.24.1–3):

at Psyche statim **resurgētis eius crure dextero** manibus ambabus **adrepto** sublimis euectionis adpendix miseranda et per nubilas plagas penduli comitatus extrema consequia tandem fessa **delabitur solo**. nec deus amator humi iacentem deserens **inuolauit proximam cupressum** deque eius **alto cacumine** sic eam **grauiter commotus** adfatur: 'ego quidem, simplicissima Psyche, parentis meae Veneris praeceptorum immemor, ...'

But Psyche as soon as **he soared up seized his right leg** with both hands, and formed a pitiable appendage to his aerial elevation and the very tip of the tail of the escort which was floating through the cloudy regions; at last **she fell** exhausted **down to earth**. But the god who loved her did not desert her as she was lying on the earth; **he flew to a nearby cypress** and **from its lofty crest, deeply moved**, addressed her thus: 'I, indeed, my too trusting Psyche, disregarded my mother Venus' instructions ...'

This passage has been analysed often because, as is summarized in *GCA* 2004, it 'no doubt refers to Plato's *Phaedrus* 248c, where Socrates explains the fate of those souls

⁷⁸ See Sissa (n. 12), 152–3.

⁷⁹ Sissa (n. 12), 151 analyses 'the sensuous, sensual and synaesthetic intimacy of Cupid and Psyche in bed', suggesting a way in which this immersive reading may extend to chapter 13 of Book 5 and to the last paragraphs of chapter 22.

who cannot follow in the train of a god and fall to earth'.⁸⁰ While Penwill, for example, has used this passage to offer his second-time reading of C&P,⁸¹ it remains possible to highlight its immersive quality. The first-time readers, before studying the further implications of this Platonic reference, are drawn into the storyworld by the 'Verisimilitude' of the narrative. The 'scene' and the chronological narrative are combined here with a focus on the characters' motions and spatial details. While Cupid rises and then positions himself on the summit of a nearby cypress (*resurgentis and inuolauit proximam cupressum ... alto cacumine*), Psyche first tries to seize the god's right leg and afterwards sinks to the ground (*crure dextero ... adrepto and delabitur solo*). In addition, Cupid's deeply emotional speech to Psyche heightens the 'Interest and Emotional Involvement' of this passage. Overall, this narrative leads to readerly immersion, and allows the readers to experience the height of Psyche's drama in the very moment in which she is abandoned by Cupid.

In light of my analysis of these three passages, the reflection set within Cupid's palace matches the immersive quality of various sections of the narrative of C&P, all of which narrate aspects of Psyche's relationship with Cupid, mostly through an epiphanic discourse. Following the multiple re-enactments of the prologue at the beginning of Book 5, readers are invited to immerse themselves in the text of C&P so that they may participate in Psyche's experience of her divine husband.

CONCLUSION

As I summarized in the Introduction, most scholars of the *Metamorphoses* have offered second-time readings of this novel, which are either comic or seriocomic and are concerned with the novel as a whole; fewer scholars have offered first-time immersive interpretations which cover most of the novel with the exception of C&P. This paper offers a new interpretation which extends this first-time reading to C&P. An immersive reading of this section of the novel is suggested by multiple re-enactments of the prologue in the text itself (Part 2) and leads to a new response to this story, one which is focussed on Psyche's experience of her divine husband (Part 3).

In the limited space of this conclusion, I will show two different ways in which this new reading of C&P may be relevant to Apuleian scholarship. To begin with, I see this first-time reading of C&P not as an alternative but as a possible counterpart to the second-time interpretation of the same story, which focusses on Lucius' and Psyche's parallel patterns of downfall followed by divine salvation. When the second-time readers of the *Metamorphoses* who are inclined to offer a serious or seriocomic reading of the text speak about Psyche's emotions, they usually highlight the curiosity that got her into trouble,⁸² focussing on Mithras' moral criticism of Lucius' curiosity in Book 11 (11.15.1–4):⁸³

⁸⁰ *GCA* 2004 (n. 1), 294.

⁸¹ See J.L. Penwill, 'Reflections on a "happy ending": the case of Cupid and Psyche', *Ramus* 27 (1998), 160–82.

⁸² See e.g. Kenney (n. 7), 15 who in the list of parallels between Psyche and Cupid's lives mentions only Psyche's *inprospera curiositas* among her emotions, and then comments: 'Both human protagonists obstinately persist in the path to ruin, blind and deaf to repeated warnings ...'.

⁸³ On Mithras as a reader of C&P, see e.g. G.N. Sandy, '*Seruiles uoluptates* in Apuleius' *Metamorphoses*', *Phoenix* 28 (1974), 234–44 and Graverini (n. 5), 114–18.

sed lubrico uirentis aetatulae **ad seruales delapsus uoluptates, curiositatis inprosperae** sinistrum praemium reportasti.

but on the slippery path of your green youth **you plunged into slavish pleasures** and gained the grim reward of your **unlucky curiosity**.

On the contrary, my first-time immersive reading of C&P highlights a variety of emotions felt by Psyche that seem not to carry negative connotations, and that could enrich the second-time reading of the novel.

This possibility is especially suggested by the ecphrasis of Cupid's palace which lies at the core of this article. Since Murgatroyd noted over twenty years ago that 'this *ekphrasis* has attracted little scholarly attention so far',⁸⁴ more studies of this passage have appeared (see Part 2). Surprisingly, however, the second-time readings of C&P, which highlight the parallel between Psyche's and Lucius' lives, still omit Psyche's visit to Cupid's palace.⁸⁵ In my view, the reason for this omission is that, as I argued in Part 2, Psyche in Cupid's palace experiences seduction, wonder, curiosity and pleasure, but none of these emotions carries any immoral or negative connotations. Psyche's curiosity starts to be immoral only in chapter 6 of Book 5, when Cupid warns Psyche to resist her sisters' request and to avoid using her 'sacrilegious curiosity' (*sacrilega curiositate*, 5.6.6) to try to see his face.⁸⁶ Hence, I think that second-time readers of Apuleius have likely decided not to focus on Psyche's visit to the palace because her emotional experience does not fit within Mithras' harsh assessments of Lucius' emotions. However, by considering more precisely those emotions that are highlighted by the immersive reading, the second-time reading of the *Metamorphoses* would gain a new level of complexity, since it would show that some emotions may contribute to Psyche's (and possibly Lucius') growth and not to their decadence.

Second, my immersive reading of C&P may also contribute more broadly to the second-time serious and seriocomic readings of the novel through my focus on Cupid's epiphany and Psyche's encounter with this god. In Apuleian studies, scholars have expressed a strong interest in the ecphrastic quality of the scenes depicting encounters with gods, such as those involving Lucius with Diana (2.4), Photis (2.16 and 2.17) and Isis (11.3–4),⁸⁷ as well as Psyche's discovery of Cupid (5.22).⁸⁸ Overall, the scholarly interest in these scenes is mostly rhetorical and, as a result, the characters' encounters with the gods do not lie at the core of the existing seriocomic readings of the text. In 2007, however, Elsner used the brief epilogue of his monograph to suggest that Apuleius uses ecphrases to construct the gaze of 'intense personal revelation', which can be either 'sexual' as with Photis, or 'sacred' as with Isis, or both 'sexual' and 'sacred', as happens with Psyche in Cupid's epiphany.⁸⁹ My analysis

⁸⁴ Murgatroyd (n. 56), 357.

⁸⁵ See Smith (n. 7), 78–82 and Kenney (n. 7), 12–17, both of whom omit any reference to Psyche's visit to Cupid's palace. Cf. also Dowden (n. 8), 13 and Panayotakis (n. 8), 579, who make only a brief reference to this episode. Shumate (n. 7), 255–7 is the only real exception to this trend, but she looks at the palace scene because, against the evidence, she takes Psyche's emotions there as a sign of her 'attitude of mindless diversion' (256).

⁸⁶ Cf. GCA 2004 (n. 1), 138 on 'the dangers of [Psyche's] misplaced curiosity'.

⁸⁷ See e.g. A. Laird, 'Description and divinity in Apuleius' *Metamorphoses*', GCM 8 (1997), 59–85 and GCA 2015 (n. 5), 123–5.

⁸⁸ See GCA 2004 (n. 1), 272–4.

⁸⁹ For the entire epilogue, see J. Elsner, *Roman Eyes: Visuality and Subjectivity in Art and Text* (Princeton, 2007), 289–302. All quotes come from page 300.

of C&P, with its focus on Psyche's encounter with Cupid, invites scholars to reassess these key encounters with the gods within the novel, since they may play an additional role in the *Metamorphoses* by arousing different emotions in the readers and by thus affecting their serious or serio-comic approach to Lucius' and Psyche's lives. In this respect, Psyche's immersion in Cupid's epiphany seems to introduce a wider variety of emotions than the sensual pleasure provided by Lucius' encounter with Photis.⁹⁰

Finally, thanks to this new reading of C&P, which fills a gap within Apuleian studies, the immersive and first-time reading can now be said to apply to most sections of the *Metamorphoses*. I therefore hope that future interpreters of this novel will offer a comprehensive immersive reading of this novel. Perhaps surprisingly, this emphasis on immersion and the readers' experience is not altogether new, as it was part of the first application of the reader-response theory to the *Metamorphoses* in Kenny's 1974 article: 'Apuleius employs a *dramatic* rather than a *narrative* method of presentation', which 'has to do with the creation of an illusion of immediacy, of being present at an event rather than receiving a second-hand account of it'.⁹¹ In his brief but helpful analysis, Kenny articulates the immediate experience of any reader of the *Metamorphoses*, an experience that in recent decades has been downplayed by the poststructuralist interest in a more intellectual and detached response to this text.

Following the emerging experiential turn within Classics,⁹² this article aims to recover the most immediate level of the readers' response to the *Metamorphoses* using the cognitive tool of immersion, while, at the same time, encouraging all scholars to use the first-time reading of the *Metamorphoses* to reassess the main tenets of the second-time readings of this fascinating novel.

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⁹⁰ For this parallel, see Smith (n. 7), 80 and S. Frangoulidis, 'Transforming the genre: Apuleius' *Metamorphoses*', in M. Paschalis, S. Frangoulidis, S. Harrison and M. Zimmerman (edd.), *The Greek and the Roman Novel: Parallel Readings* (Groningen, 2007), 193–203.

⁹¹ Kenny (n. 21), 193.

⁹² See e.g. M. Anderson, D. Cairns and M. Sprevak (edd.), *Distributed Cognition in Classical Antiquity* (Edinburgh, 2018); J. Grethlein, L. Huitink and A. Tagliabue (edd.), *Experience, Narrative, and Criticism in Ancient Greece: Under the Spell of Stories* (Oxford, 2019).