FOLK-TALE AND LITERARY TECHNIQUE IN *CUPID AND PSYCHE*[1]

THAT the story of *Cupid and Psyche* in Apuleius' *Metamorphoses* is a version of a common world-wide folk-tale has long been recognized. Scholarly debate[2] has concentrated on the conclusions to be drawn from this with regard to the *significance* of the story—mythological, religious, allegorical, and so on. With the additional information provided by Swahn's comprehensive monograph[3] on the subject an attempt can now be made to study some of the aspects of literary *technique* involved in the adaptation of the folk-tale. In what follows I have tried to avoid making any assumptions about a possible literary source of Apuleius' tale. I am concerned with the ways in which the literary version which we possess modifies the folk material, and not with the author of this modification.

The story in Apuleius is closely related, as Swahn points out, to his 'Subtype A'. This version of the tale is commonest in Scandinavia and the eastern Mediterranean, but is also found throughout most of Europe, Asia Minor, Persia, and India, not to mention among the Berbers and Hausa, and in Indonesia. Although some of the modern examples may have suffered literary contamination (see below), they are a tiny minority, and it is clear that some ancient antecedent of the modern eastern Mediterranean tradition must lie behind Apuleius. I now proceed to analyse the Apuleian version in terms of Swahn's 'List of Motifs' (op. cit. 24 ff.), omitting those motifs which have no bearing on Apuleius. I use his numeration, and also print verbatim his description of the motifs, thus avoiding any suspicion that they have been phrased in such a way as to support my arguments. Items which may throw some light on the Apuleian version but for which no clear relationship with it can be posited have been placed within square brackets.

[*I. Introductory Motifs*

5. The enchanted husband *proposes* to a girl, or *kidnaps* her by force.
6. He forces her father to promise him the girl.

The introduction in Apuleius, involving as it does the theme of the girl who is compared in beauty with Venus (cf. Chariton, 1. 14. 1; also Xen. Ephes. 1. 2, where Artemis is the goddess in question), Venus' consequent anger and desire for revenge, and the device of the riddling oracle, is highly literary in flavour and far removed from the folk-tale. The scene of Psyche's abandonment reminds us, also, of the classical legend of Andromeda. None the less, something from these two motifs may still survive in the way in which the father is compelled to give up the girl, and in the way in which she is carried off on the west[4] wind (*Met.* 4. 35. 4), presumably at the behest of Cupid. (On the lack of

[1] I am indebted to Professor P. G. Walsh and Professor D. A. West for helpful comments on an early draft of this article, and to Professor Walsh for the privilege of reading the manuscript of his book, *The Roman Novel*, Cambridge, 1970.

[2] Many of the most important contributions to this debate are now collected in *Amor und Psyche*, hrsg. G. Binder und R. Merkelbach, Darmstadt, 1968.

[3] J.-Ö. Swahn, *The Tale of Cupid and Psyche*, Lund, 1955.

[4] Zephyrus appears also as a heavenly carrier in Hellenistic poetry—Call. *Fr.* 110. 51–9 Pf.; Cat. 66. 51–8.

significance of the wind's appearance in a modern Italian version see Swahn, p. 374).]

II. The Supernatural Husband

The supernatural husband usually appears in one or other of the following apparitions:

3. Snake.
6. 'Beast' or 'Monster'.
8. The girl is promised to or marries an *invisible* being of whom she knows nothing but its voice.

The use of the snake motif was long ago explained by Friedlaender.[1] It is, however, such a good example of the way in which the folk-tale has been modified in Apuleius that it is worth looking at again.

The first description of the bridegroom is in the oracle:

> nec speres generum mortali stirpe creatum,
> sed saeuum atque ferum uipereumque malum,
> quod pinnis uolitans super aethera cuncta fatigat
> flammaque et ferro singula debilitat,
> quod tremit ipse Iouis quo numina terrificantur,
> fluminaque horrescunt et Stygiae tenebrae.
>
> *Met.* 4. 33. 1–2

There the terms are such that they could refer to almost any kind of winged monster, while at the same time being enigmatically indicative of Cupid and his hold over the gods themselves in the literary tradition. But the word *uipereum* is important. Alone it might be explained as an allusion to Sappho's *Ἔρος . . . γλυκύπικρον ἀμάχανον ὄρπετον* (fr. 130 L–P.)—but not when compared with what follows. For Psyche's sisters provoke the catastrophe by persuading her that her nightly lover is—a snake. *Pro uero namque comperimus . . . immanem colubrum multinodis uoluminibus serpentem, ueneno noxio colla sanguinantem hiantemque ingluuie profunda, tecum noctibus latenter adquiescere*, etc. (*Met.* 5. 17. 3 f.). Psyche believes them. The pedantic objection that she should be aware that she has not been sleeping with a serpent is irrelevant in the literary world either of Apuleius or of the folk-tale. But her reason is important. She does not know what her husband looks like! *Nec enim umquam uiri mei uidi faciem uel omnino cuiatis sit noui, sed tantum nocturnis subaudiens uocibus maritus incerti status et prorsus lucifugam tolero, bestiamque aliquam recte dicentibus uobis merito consentio* (*Met.* 5. 19. 2; cf. *Met.* 5. 11. 3 *Interea Psychen maritus ille quem nescit rursum suis illis nocturnis sermonibus sic commonet . . .*). Surely not only the snake motif, but also that of the invisible being is present here. The latter is useful from the point of view of plot-construction, and the former fits neatly with the description of Cupid as savage or beast-like in literature (e.g. Bion, fr. 9. 1 Gow *τὸν ἔρωτα τὸν ἄγριον*; 13. 13 *κακόν ἐντι τὸ θηρίον*; Meleager, *AP* 12. 48. 1 *ἄγριε δαῖμον*; 12. 144. 1 *ἄγρια τόξα* belonging to Love).[2] The actual description of the beast (*Met.* 5. 17. 3–4) may well owe something to Virgil (cf. *A.* 2. 206 ff.; *G.* 3. 425 ff.).

[1] In 1871 in an appendix to his *Darstellungen aus der Sittengeschichte Roms* = Binder–Merkelbach, 16 ff.

[2] Helm (*NJA* 33 [1914], 195 n. 97 = Binder–Merkelbach, 213) points out the close correspondence between the attributes of Cupid in the oracle and in Moschos, 1.

We must therefore assume that the original folk-tale told of a hero turned into a snake and making nightly visits to his beloved during which he could not (and might not) be seen. At the beginning of the story the idea of the lover as snake is played down for two reasons connected with the classical literary tradition:

(*a*) to permit a characteristically riddling response to be given by the oracle,

and (*b*) to allow the description to fit equally well with the picture of Cupid drawn in Hellenistic literature.[1]

Furthermore, the idea that the husband is a snake is ignored in the descriptions of Psyche's meetings with him until the point where it becomes useful for the progress of the plot and is revived by the sisters and accepted by Psyche. We shall see that these types of modification of the folk-material are regular throughout the work.

III. The Marriage

4. She [the heroine] has a nightly, invisible visitor.

Swahn's distinction between this and II, 8 above is perhaps somewhat unnecessary. It is interesting to note, however, under this head the discrepancies between *Met.* 5. 19. 2 quoted above, which embodies this motif, and other passages which partially ignore it: e.g. *Met.* 5. 5. 1 *Ea nocte ad suam Psychen sic infit maritus—namque praeter oculos et manibus et auribus ⟨ut praesent⟩ius nihil sentiebatur*, where tactile sensation is added to aural, whatever the precise text of the passage may have been; *Met.* 5. 13. 3 (Psyche speaking) *Per istos cinnameos et undique pendulos crines tuos per teneras et teretis et mei similes genas per pectus nescio quo calore feruidum sic in hoc saltem paruulo cognoscam faciem tuam*; and *Met.* 5. 13. 6 where the aforesaid *crines* are used to wipe away her tears! Strange words from the girl who is shortly to say [*non*] *omnino cuiatis sit noui*. But consistency beyond the dramatic needs of the moment is something we need never expect from Apuleius.

IV. The Breaking of the Taboo

1. Prohibition against seeing the husband by light. The heroine obtains a candle and looks at him. Usually she wakes him by dropping oil (*sic*) on his body.
2. Prohibition against telling anyone that her animal husband is a handsome youth at night.

[9. The husband is wounded by the trap set by jealous relatives, and disappears.

10. The heroine herself hurts her husband in some way, thus causing him to leave her.]

Cupid's reiterated warnings against inquiring about him, coupled with the fact that his visitations are nocturnal, would be enough to show that 1 is the relevant motif here. The case is clinched by the one word *lucifugam* (*Met.* 5. 19. 2 quoted above). The fact that jealous relatives precipitate the breaking

[1] No mention of flying is made in the later description of the snake and this was presumably not an attribute of the folk-tale snake. This indicates the amount of modification of the folk-tale demanded by the text of the oracle.

of the taboo, and that it is, in a sense, the heroine herself who injures her husband are testimony to the complexity of the plot in Apuleius, but do not permit any firm conclusions to be drawn as to whether they are deliberate modifications of folk material or not. The 'candle', in this case a lamp, is another matter. The elaborate conceit (*Met.* 5. 23. 4–5) by which the lamp is described as being endowed with a will of its own (whether motivated by good or evil), and thus itself spurting oil on to Cupid's shoulder is a most striking development of the folk motif. Here again the literary tradition is at work, the lamp being a regular feature of the bedroom in love poetry,[1] though here it may be of a kind with the speaking animals and things of Book 6.

It is hard to say whether 2 has any bearing on Psyche's first description of her husband to her sisters—*Met.* 5. 8. 4 *sed e re nata confingit esse iuuenem quendam et speciosum.* It will be clear from what has been said in connection with III that any attempt to reconcile this with her other descriptions or her actual knowledge of him would be futile—as, indeed, the story demands. This particular description, however, may reflect the normal tradition in these stories of the bridegroom as a handsome youth—a motif common in Turkey and the Balkans (Swahn, 236). Cupid's injury, too, serves to remind us of wounds suffered by gods in epic encounters. His subsequent convalescence and imprisonment assist the plot by providing part of the reason for the tell-tale bird's mission to Venus (*Met.* 5. 28. 2–5), and by keeping him out of the way while the story is concerned with Psyche's search and labours (see further below).

13. The husband disappears in the form of a bird.

Cupid's flight, with Psyche as a temporary appendage, is strikingly described in Apuleius (*Met.* 5. 24. 1). His perching on a tree to address Psyche (ibid. 2) is strongly reminiscent of this motif, but the idea of the winged Cupid is so normal that there may be no folk-influence here. The perching on the tree is no more remarkable than many other details of the story which owe nothing to the folk-tale.

V. The Search for the Husband

3. At the separation the heroine is pregnant and the husband tells her that she will not give birth to the child until she has found him.

This motif is exclusively Balkan (Swahn 244, where there is an interesting account of the importance of this motif in the folk-tale plots).

While I can find no trace of the latter part of this motif in Apuleius, Psyche's pregnancy is made to serve a variety of emotive purposes in the story. The possible divinity of the child affords an additional reason for Psyche's not telling anyone about Cupid (*Met.* 5. 11. 6), and for her happiness (ibid. 12. 1). Her sisters' jealousy is aggravated by this thought (ibid. 16. 4), as is Venus' wrath at the thought of becoming a grandmother (*Met.* 6. 9. 5; cf. 5. 29. 4–5). Psyche uses it as a ground of appeal to Juno (*Met.* 6. 4. 3), and the birth of the child provides an apt rounding off to the happy ending. Allegorizers may make what they will of its name—*Voluptas.*

[1] The lamp is addressed in *AP* 5. 7 (Asclepiades); 5. 166 and 5. 8 (Meleager); cf. Plut. *Mor.* 513 E. It is also mentioned in e.g. *AP* 5. 191; 6. 162 (Meleager), and at Prop. 2. 15. 3.

[4. During her wanderings the heroine is forced to pass by a lake or river.

The river into which Psyche throws herself after Cupid's disappearance (*Met.* 5. 25. 1–2) may represent this motif. What should be noted is that just as this passage contains the idea of suicide by Psyche which is her response to the tasks set by Venus (see below), so the river which helps by supporting her and setting her on dry land does so to please Cupid (*sed mitis fluuius in honorem dei scilicet qui et ipsas aquas urere consueuit metuens sibi . . .*—a playful reference to the amatory troubles of literary river-gods). This is the same situation as with the ants and the eagle (see below)].

VI. The Reunion. Sub-type A

1. The heroine arrives at the house of the witch who has cast the spell upon her husband.

The identification of the hero with Cupid and its corollary, the portrayal of Venus as the witch, opened the way to one of the most entertaining aspects of the tale from the literary point of view—the burlesque of the gods and their family relationships in the Alexandrian manner.[1] But the way in which the witch's treatment of the heroine is faithfully reproduced with literary variations in Venus' treatment of Psyche provides the most interesting examples of the modification of the folk-material in the Apuleian version.

3. The witch gives her difficult or seemingly impossible tasks to perform such as:

[*a.* carrying water in a sieve]
b. sort large quantities of seed, corn, etc.
[*d.* fill a jar with tears]
k. perform seemingly easy or harmless duties which reveal themselves to be difficult or dangerous, e.g. milk the witch's cows which turn out to be bears.
l. the given tasks must be performed in an impossibly short time.

Psyche's first task (*Met.* 6. 10. 3 ff.) is a straightforward example of *b* reinforced by *l* and requires no discussion. The second task (*Met.* 6. 11. 4 ff.), fetching wool from the flock of golden-fleeced sheep, seems to be of type *k*—not without an obvious reference to classical mythology. The fact that in other versions of the tale this motif is confined to Russia argues that here we have an invention in our literary version which has a parallel in a separate folk-tradition. There is a slight incongruity here, in that Psyche's intention to commit suicide (which is characteristically repeated in response to tasks 2, 3, and 4) is made to precede the knowledge of the potential dangers of the task and not follow it. The third task, collecting some of the waters of the source of the Styx falling from a sheer rock seems to have no straightforward folk parallel. We can discount any connection with the fetching of the water of life in

[1] Cf., e.g., *Met.* 5. 29–31 with A.R. 3. 22 ff., esp. *Met.* 5. 31. 2 *non dicendi filii* and A.R. 3. 129 ἄφατον κακόν; also the idea of Psyche as Venus' runaway slave—*Met.* 5. 31. 2; 6. 4. 5; 5. 3; 7. 3—with Psyche as a fugitive from Eros in Meleager, *AP* 12. 80. 5–6, and Eros as fugitive from Venus in Moschus, 1.

a modern Chilean version (Swahn's RS 12, p. 170).[1] I have included a^2 and *d* simply to indicate that some task connected with water is common, and this may lie remotely behind this invention in Apuleius. There is, however, a literary parallel in the journey of Iris to fetch the waters of the Styx in Hesiod (*Th.* 782 ff.).

4. She is assisted in the performing of the difficult tasks, generally by her husband . . .

While Psyche is performing these tasks, Cupid, as we have already observed, is shut up in his room and cannot help Psyche. She is assisted in turn by ants, a reed,[3] and an eagle. It should be noted that in two of these cases Cupid is mentioned as a reason for the help being given: *Met.* 6. 10. 5 *tunc formicula illa paruula atque ruricola . . . miserta contubernalis magni dei . . .*, cf. ibid. 6 . . . *miseremini et Amoris uxori . . . succurrite. Met.* 6. 15. 1–2 *nam supremi Iouis regalis ales illa . . . affuit rapax aquila memorque ueteris obsequii, quo ductu Cupidinis Ioui pocillatorem Phrygium substulerat, opportunam ferens opem deique numen in uxoris laboribus percolens alti culminis diales uias deserit . . .* The ant reminds us of the universal power of Cupid at all levels of life, the eagle provides an apt mythological illustration of this in line with the tone of burlesque adopted towards the gods throughout the work. Whether these examples hark back to an original where the hero assists the heroine is not clear, but surely Venus' response to the successful completion of each of the first two tasks does. In each case she claims to see the hand of Cupid in it: *Met.* 6. 11. 2 *non tuum, inquit, nequissima, nec tuarum manuum istud opus, sed illius cui tuo immo et ipsius malo placuisti. Met.* 6. 13. 3 *nec me praeterit huius quoque facti auctor adulterinus.* This although she had earlier found Cupid suffering from his wound (*Met.* 5. 29. 1), from which he does not appear to recover until Psyche has almost accomplished her fourth task (*Met.* 6. 21. 2), and although between the two accusations we are told that Cupid is being kept prisoner in his room (*Met.* 6. 11. 3)—presumably at Venus' behest. These discrepancies should surely be explained in terms of a non-uniform modification of this motif from the folk-tale. The witch's accusations are retained, but the factual grounds for them removed, the hero's part being taken over by these strikingly anthropoid animals and plant.

5. The heroine is sent on an errand to

   a. another witch who is the sister of the first witch

   [*b*. Hell].

6. There she is to

   b. fetch a box.

7. On the way she meets various people, animals, or objects which she must treat in certain ways so that they shall not kill her on her return:

   a. workers of various kinds who lack the necessary tools which she gives them.

[1] As will be clear, I reject the conclusions of Ludwig Bieler's learned and ingenious article: 'Psyches dritte und vierte Arbeit bei Apuleius', *ARW* 30 (1933), 242 ff. = Binder–Merkelbach, 334 ff. I give my reasons for this in an Appendix where I discuss the third task at greater length.

[2] This is, of course, essentially the punishment of the Danaids. See also the Appendix.

[3] For the talking reed cf. Ov. *Met.* 11. 190 ff.

c. various animals to which she gives food.
e. cattle which must be milked, clipped, etc.
g. tools which have been carelessly or wrongly placed must be put right.

8. The second witch offers her food which the heroine has, however, been warned not to eat.

9. On the way home she opens a casket or box which she has fetched from the witch and from it come

[*b*. dangerous animals].

It is in Psyche's errand to Prosperpina that we find the clearest and most interesting example of the literary transmutation of the folk-tale. For a classical author the paradigm of a perilous journey was the descent to the underworld, the κατάβασις, which had a long history from the *Odyssey* onwards. Thus it was an easy change to make the journey one to the underworld, all the more satisfactory in that Venus had there a sister, Proserpina, who could assume the role of the second witch. That this is, in any case, a natural enough transmutation is shown by the independent development of Hell as the destination in some Scandinavian variants (Swahn, 259). It may be useful to make here a general point which affects much of my argument. Some of the motifs of the κατάβασις are themselves folk-tale motifs—Cerberus, for example, is a typical dangerous beast acting as a guard—and this is true of many facets of mythology. While we can see that this is so, it would not have been obvious to an ancient author. In this case, for instance, he would see on one side the established scenery and characters of the κατάβασις, all part of a traditional, relatively fixed, and often-described world, and on the other the folk-tale depicting a single series of events involving characters and events peculiar to this story and not described elsewhere. Thus it is legitimate to talk of him from his point of view modifying the folk-tale themes in terms of mythology even when the latter has much in common with the folk-tale.

It is a tower[1] that gives Psyche her instructions for the journey (*Met.* 6. 18. 1 ff.)—the last of her miraculous helpers before Cupid reappears on the scene. With typical nonchalance the author tells us that she is now near Sparta and, consequently, Taenarum; the only reason for this is that it suits his story. Thither she is to repair, to the entrance to the underworld, taking barley and mead cakes in both hands and two coins in her mouth, return fares for Cerberus and Charon respectively (just as a coin was put in the mouth of the dead so that they could pay their *single* fare)[2]—cf. 7*c*. At various stages of her journey she will meet a lame ass and its driver who will ask her to help him reload, an old man who will ask to be taken aboard Charon's vessel, and some old women who are setting up work on a loom. These correspond to the people of 7. A good example of how the folk-tale heroine's disinterested help pays off can be seen in Dawkins, *Modern Greek Folk-tales*, No. 13 (65 ff.). But in Apuleius there is a vital, and deliberate, difference brought about by the change to the κατάβασις framework for the journey. The heroine must *not* help them—they are traps set by Venus (*Met.* 6. 19. 1 ff.) to make her open her mouth and so lose the coins, or lay down the cakes. In either case the result would be to rule out the possibility of her return, the very opposite of what happens in the

[1] Doubtless suggested by Ar. *Ra.* 127 ff.—again a literary insertion.
[2] e.g. Lucian, *Luct.* 10.

folk-tale, where it is her beneficiaries who make her return possible by refusing to assist the witch in her pursuit.

The motifs *e* and *g* do not appear in this part of the story in Apuleius, but they seem to be visible elsewhere. When Psyche in her wanderings comes to a temple of Ceres (*Met.* 6. 1. 2 ff.) she finds it in disorder, with all the implements of harvesting strewn about. These she tidies in the hope that it will earn her the gratitude of the goddess. The clipping of animals is, of course, apparent in the task of fetching the golden wool. It is hardly surprising to find these common forms of task inserted at a slightly different point in a narrative so complex and sophisticated as that which Apuleius produces.

When Psyche arrives, Proserpina will offer her a rich meal. This she must not eat. This is exactly parallel to the dangerous food offered by the witch in the folk-tale, 8, though here it may be reinforced by an idea from mythology that to eat the food[1] of Hades involves staying there (i.e. death), as does sitting in the chair that Proserpina offers.[2] Psyche is not to accept the hospitality of Hades, but is to sit on the ground and eat a crust of bread.

Finally the box, with the orders not to open it which are disobeyed, is regular in this sub-type (Swahn, 264). The parallel with Pandora's jar (Hes. *Op.* 69 ff.) would not escape a classical audience. The disobedience in this case, however, is especially appropriate as it is yet another instance of Psyche's fatal curiosity, which brought about the loss of her husband in the first place: *Met.* 6. 21. 4 *Ecce, inquit [Cupido], rursum perieras, misella, simile curiositate.* (For the emphasis on this aspect of Psyche's character cf. *Met.* 5. 6. 6; 19. 3; 23. 1; 6. 19. 7; 20. 5.)

Enough has been said to show the closeness of this section to the folk-tale. That its author deliberately constructed it with reference to the literary tradition can be shown by the quite remarkable number of verbal parallels between *Met.* 6. 18–19 and the 6th Book of the *Aeneid.* It is almost as if the author had sat down and read *A.* 6 before writing, an idea that is reinforced when we discover parallels with *A.* 6 earlier in *Met.* 6:

(*a*)	*Met.* 6. 10. 6	*terrae omniparentis agiles alumnae* (of the ants)
	A. 6. 595	*terrae omniparentis alumnum* (of Tityon)
(*b*)	*Met.* 6. 13. 4	*Stygias . . . paludes*
	A. 6. 323; 369	*Stygiamque paludem* (cf. 438–9)
(*c*)	*Met.* 6. 13. 4	*rauca Cocyti fluenta*
	A. 6. 327	*rauca fluenta*

But it is in the actual instructions for the descent itself that the parallels are most inescapable:

(*d*)	*Met.* 6. 18. 2	*Inibi spiraculum Ditis et per portas hiantes monstratur iter inuium . . .*
	A. 7. 568–9	*hic specus horrendum et saeui spiracula Ditis / monstrantur . . .*
(*e*)	*Met.* 6. 18. 3	*offas polentae mulso concretas.*
	A. 6. 420–1	*melle soporatam et medicatis frugibus offam / obicit.*
(*f*)	*Met.* 6. 18. 5	*ad ripam ulteriorem sutili cumba.*
	A. 6. 314	*ripae ulterioris amore.*
	A. 6. 413–14	*cumba / sutilis.*

[1] *h. Hym. Dem.* 371 ff., 398 f., with the commentary of Allen, Halliday, and Sikes. Cf. Ov. *Met.* 5. 529 ff.

[2] Cf. the experience of Theseus and Pirithous in Hades—Apollod. *Epit.* 1. 24; Paus. 10. 29. 9. Cf. Verg. *A.* 6. 617–18.

(*g*) *Met.* 6. 18. 7 *squalido seni* (of Charon).
A. 6. 299 *terribili squalore Charon.*
(*h*) *Met.* 6. 18. 8 The old man asking to be taken into the boat may correspond to Palinurus asking to be ferried across to the land of the blessed with Aeneas—*A.* 6. 337 ff.
(*i*) *Met.* 6. 19. 3 *Canis namque praegrandis teriugo et satis amplo capite praeditus immanis et formidabilis tonantibus oblatrans faucibus mortuos . . .*
A. 6. 417–18 *Cerberus haec ingens latratu regna trifauci / personat aduerso recubans immanis in antro.*
(*j*) *Met.* 6. 19. 3 *uacuam Ditis domum.*
A. 6. 269 *perque domos Ditis uacuas et inania regna.*

The impression of deliberateness is emphasized by the almost perverse way in which Virgil's plurals have been made singular in (*d*) and (*j*) and his singular plural in (*b*). In (*f*) and (*g*) the sense forbids any change, in (*a*) and (*e*) it demands it, and in (*h*) and (*i*) the verbal parallels are not close enough for the question to arise.

VII. Final motifs

8. The heroine's wicked sisters are turned into stone.

Whether the original folk-tale behind the Apuleian version contained any punishment of the wicked sisters (*Met.* 5. 26–7) we cannot tell. The way in which their death is brought about may well be the author's invention. What is notable is the manner in which their readiness to fall into Psyche's trap (remarkably cunning for one who is so often characterized as *simplex*!—*Met.* 5. 11. 5; 15. 4; 18. 4; 19. 5; 24. 3; 6. 15. 3) has been prepared in the story. The confidence with which they cast themselves off the rock expecting Zephyrus to carry them down (*Met.* 5. 27. 2) had already been visible and commented upon at 5. 14. 1–2 and 17. 1. They have good reason to expect their accustomed conveyance, and its non-appearance is all the more satisfactory on that account.

The conclusion in Apuleius with its council of the gods, parodying both epic convention and procedure in the Senate, is purely literary, but the wedding and rejoicing which conclude the story are straight from the world of the folk-tale, though not unknown to classical literature, in, for example, the κῶμος of Aristophanic comedy.

The aim of these notes has been to contribute towards the literary criticism of the text, viewed in isolation from problems of Apuleius' sources, which belong rather to the realm of literary history. The folk tradition is sufficiently well established by Swahn to be used as a basis for comparison despite the large gap in time between Apuleius and the earliest recorded folk versions. The correspondences are too close and too numerous to be ignored. We have in Apuleius a folk-tale embellished with a host of literary devices[1] borrowed from epic, love romance, satire, and, above all, Alexandrian poetry.

The comparison of the literary version with the folk tradition has revealed certain procedures of the sophisticated literary intelligence that reshaped the

[1] I have, of course, drawn attention only to those literary motifs which are directly related to the folk-tale. For fuller accounts see Helm, loc. cit., and the chapter on 'Cupid and Psyche' in Walsh.

simple tale which seem to me to have an interest in their own right, whether they contribute anything to the search for a literary source for Apuleius (Aristophontes of Athens—Fulgentius, p. 68, Helm) or not. That is a problem which is unlikely to find a universally acceptable solution. If I may in conclusion abandon my impartiality in this matter, I feel it would be foolhardy to attempt to separate two steps in the transformation from folk-tale to the finished Apuleian version, that is: (1) A Greek literary version embodying the Aphrodite–Psyche–Eros transformation and the Greek literary decoration that goes with it, and (2) Apuleius' development of (1), adding Roman colouring.[1] I find it hard to believe that the author of the second set of developments was not capable also of the first set, and there is no reason to think that the credit for the Roman elements should not go to Apuleius. A man with such a fund of popular stories as he could well have been acquainted with the folk-tale in its unadorned form. Its possibilities, both literary and allegorical,[2] must have struck him forcibly, and the result was one of the most engaging and entertaining episodes in all of Latin literature.

APPENDIX

Psyche's Third and Fourth Tasks

The essence of Bieler's position[3] is that the third and fourth tasks, the fetching of the water of the Styx and the journey to the underworld, are in fact one and the same thing, a journey to fetch the Water of Life, intended to be fatal. Apuleius, or his source, has started with a traditional three-task folk-tale scheme involving this motif and developed it by producing a doublet of the last task. My reasons for rejecting this view are as follows:

1. Swahn is right to distinguish in his list of motifs between the straightforward difficult and dangerous tasks which correspond to the first three tasks in Apuleius, and the more complex and subtle journey to the second witch which is clearly intended to be fatal. If I have made out a case for saying that the *κατάβασις* episode in *Cupid and Psyche* is a transformation of this journey in the folk-tale it must follow that this fourth task in Apuleius represents an integral part of the folk-tale separate from the first three.

2. The analyses of approximately eleven hundred recorded versions of the tale made by Swahn (38 ff.) show that three tasks is by no means the norm. One, two, three, or none appear indiscriminately, with or without the journey to the second witch. It is possible that Apuleius, with his love of repetition (e.g. the repeated visits of the sisters and the repeated warnings of Cupid), may have invented one or more of the initial tasks himself—but independently, not as variants on a search for the Water of Life.

[1] e.g. the imitations of Virgil, the references to the Roman law of marriage and that concerning runaway slaves, the parody of the procedure of the Senate, etc.

[2] For a sober discussion of this thorny problem see Walsh. I note only one point. The identification of the witch with Venus which is part of the very first stage in the transformation of the folk-tale is probably used for allegorical purposes as one of the links between *Cupid and Psyche* and the Isiac conclusion of the whole work in Bk. 11 (cf. *Met.* 4. 30. 1 and 11. 5. 1). This seems to offer some support for the view that the transformation was made by Apuleius with this sort of thing in mind.

[3] Loc. cit., (p. 278 n. 1 above). Its influence can be seen, e.g., in Grimal's note in his Commentary (Paris, 1963) on *Met.* 6. 17. 1: '*Velamento reiecto* . . .: tel est bien le sens de cette quatrième épreuve, ajoutée par Apulée aux trois épreuves traditionelles de la donnée folklorique.'

3. For the waters of the Styx which Psyche has to fetch are not in the underworld. They are the waters of the real waterfall near Nonacris in Arcadia and the *letalem difficultatem* of the task (*Met.* 6. 14. 1) arises from the natural situation of the stream. The danger of death is no greater here than in the approach to the golden sheep who are accustomed *in exitium saeuire mortalium* (*Met.* 6. 12. 3) without the benefit of an abode in the underworld. The reality of the fall is apparent from the close correspondence between the description of it in Apuleius (*Met.* 6. 13. 4–15. 6) and that of the actual fall in Pausanias (8. 17. 6–18. 6)[1] and modern eyewitnesses. I note the main similarities in summary fashion:

(*a*) The water flows or trickles down from the top of a high cliff.

(*b*) It appears to pass *through* the rock at some point (Paus. 8. 18. 4 τὸ δὲ ὕδωρ . . . ἐσπίπτει μὲν πρῶτον ἐς πέτραν ὑψηλήν, διεξελθὸν δὲ διὰ τῆς πέτρας ἐς τὸν Κρᾶθιν ποταμὸν κάτεισι: *Met.* 6. 14. 2 f. *namque saxum . . . mediis e faucibus lapidis fontes horridos euomebat, qui statim proni foraminis lacunis editi perque procliue delapsi et angusti canalis exarato* [*exarto* F] *contecti tramite proxumam conuallem latenter incidebant*: Frazer on Paus. 8. 17. 6 'At the foot of the cliff it formed a small stream, flowing down a very steep rocky bed into the bottom of the glen far below.')

(*c*) Its waters bring death. (Paus. 8. 18. 4 θάνατον δὲ τὸ ὕδωρ φέρει τοῦτο καὶ ἀνθρώπῳ καὶ ἄλλῳ ζῴῳ παντί: *Met.* 6. 14. 1 *letalem difficultatem*. The fatal properties of the water were too well known to require explicit emphasis by Apuleius. Cf. Plin. *Nat.* 2. 231; 31. 26; Strabo, 8, p. 389; Sen. *Nat.* 3. 25. 1.)

(*d*) Its waters are black (*Met.* 6. 13. 4 *fontis atri fuscae defluunt undae*. Cf. the modern name of the fall, *Mavronero*, and Frazer on Paus. 8. 17. 6.)

(*e*) It is protected on either side by fierce dragons (*Met.* 6. 14. 4. Cf. the other modern name *Dragon Water* cited by Frazer, loc. cit.)

To all this we must add the fact that Psyche is clearly envisaged as climbing to the Styx, with no hint of any journey to the underworld. Nor is any magic quality or use attributed to the water beyond its dangerousness, which is an attribute of the real river. On the other side all we have to set down are a comparatively perfunctory reference to the fall as a feeder of the Stygian marsh and Cocytus (*Met.* 6. 13. 4, which may have been motivated mainly by the imitation of Virgil already noted), and a reference to Styx as the oath of the Gods (*Met.* 6. 15. 4). Both of these are regular literary conventions and could easily be imported by an author so inconsistent as Apuleius into a setting which had little to do with their usual subject, the Styx of the underworld.

It is interesting to note that the vessel which Psyche is given to hold the water is made of crystal (*Met.* 6. 13. 5 *crustallo dedolatum uasculum*). Yet this was one of the many substances which the waters of the Styx were supposed to break (Paus. 8. 18. 5 and Frazer, ad loc.). Could it be that the well-informed reader is meant to see this as yet another factor in the difficulty of the task—making it in fact the folk-tale task of 'carrying water in a sieve'? No mention is made of this problem when the eagle fetches the water, but it is possible that

[1] This correspondence had been overlooked by modern writers on Pausanias according to Frazer in his splendid notes on the passage in his Commentary (London, 1898). Its relevance to Apuleius does not appear to have been widely recognized after him.

Apuleius with typical nonchalance either forgets about it or assumes that it is solved by the supernatural intervention of the eagle.

4. In order to show that these two tasks do not form a doublet it is sufficient to have demonstrated that one of the substances involved is not the Water of Life. For Bieler's argument to succeed, however, not only must the waters of the Styx represent the Water of Life but so must the *formonsitas* which Psyche is to fetch in the *pyxis* for Venus from Proserpina. The crucial passage is where Venus tells Psyche what she is to say to Proserpina: '*petit de te Venus*', *dicito*, '*modicum de tua mittas ei formonsitate uel ad unam saltem dieculam sufficiens. nam quod habuit, dum filium curat aegrotum, consumpsit atque contriuit omne*' (*Met.* 6. 17. 4 f.). Bieler (loc. cit. 245) takes this to mean that Venus has used up her own beauty *zur Heilung für Amor*, and that *formonsitas* is therefore *eine heilkräftige Schönheitssalbe*, from which it is a short step to identifying it with the Water of Life. In other words, Venus had a supply of an ointment called 'beauty' which she smeared on Cupid's wound to cure him, exhausting her supply, which she now wishes Proserpina to replenish. The name 'beauty' is only a thin disguise for the Water of Life which is the substance sought in the original folk-tale, possessing, as it does, the required curative properties.

My first objection to this is that Apuleius does not make it clear that the *formonsitas* was actually used to heal Cupid, but only that Venus' supply was used up during this process. It seems quite possible to me that Apuleius means that the labour and anxiety of caring for her son have told on Venus' looks which she must now repair. This fits very well with the satirical depiction of her as a vain Roman matron, which is heavily underlined in the words which follow those above and conclude her instructions: *sed haud immaturius reddito, quia me necesse est indidem delitam theatrum deorum frequentare.* My own feeling as I read the passage is that the *formonsitas* which Proserpina possesses and Venus has used up is their own abstract beauty of appearance and that it is a characteristic piece of wit on the part of the author suddenly to confirm that this is merely a supernatural cosmetic with the single word *delitam*, having prepared us by the use of *pyxis*, the *vox propria* for an unguent container. My second objection is that there is nothing in the folk-tale tradition concerning 'beauty' or any kind of healing agent as the object sought, with the solitary exception of a fragmentary modern Finnish tale (Swahn's FF 17, p. 62) where an 'eye ointment' is sent for. But this is as isolated an instance as the Chilean 'Water of Life' mentioned above and can hardly be related to an ancient Mediterranean tradition. We cannot, in my view, know what was the object or substance which the girl had to bring back in the folk-tale on which our version is based. We can, however, see that, whatever it was, the author deliberately chose *formonsitas* for its relevance to his own immediate literary purpose.

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