

## HELLENISTIC POETRY, MAGICAL GEMS AND ‘THE SWORD OF DARDANUS’ IN APULEIUS’ *CUPID AND PSYCHE*\*

### ABSTRACT

*Apuleius’ tale of Cupid and Psyche is shown to feature detailed knowledge of ancient magic integrated into the plot, especially the magic of the so-called ‘Sword of Dardanus’ spell and of other papyri with Middle Platonic content. A recently published gemstone from Perugia testifies to the wide distribution of the ‘Sword’. Apuleius’ allusion to the erotic spell involves both Cupid and Venus torturing Psyche. Although Venus’ intentions are to prevent the bond between the lovers, her actions inadvertently echo those depicted in the ‘Sword’ and contribute to the couple’s eternal union. Ancient magic is therefore shown to be potent and effective, despite Venus’ plans. This is a methodology Apuleius is known to use widely, for example in his obvious allusions to, and adaptations of, Hellenistic poetry in the story. Magic joins poetry and philosophy as a category of texts shown to be playfully integrated into Apuleius’ construction of the plot of Cupid and Psyche.*

**Keywords:** ‘Sword of Dardanus’; Apuleius; *Cupid and Psyche*; erotic epigram; gemstones; *Greek Magical Papyri* (henceforth *PGM*); magic

While the nature of magic in Apuleius’ *Metamorphoses*, a story where a young man is turned into a donkey by magic, has received much attention,<sup>1</sup> the amount of magic in the novel’s inset tale and centrepiece *Cupid and Psyche* is still somewhat understudied. Images of Cupid and Psyche, a divine boy with bird wings and a human girl with the wings of a butterfly whose name means ‘soul’ as well as ‘butterfly’, precede the

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<sup>1</sup> There are some overview studies: for example R.A. Jr. Seelinger, ‘Magical motifs in the *Metamorphoses* of Apuleius’ (Diss., University of Missouri–Columbia, 1981); C. Ruiz-Montero, ‘Magic in the ancient novel’, in M. Paschalis, S. Frangoulidis, S. Harrison, M. Zimmerman (edd.), *The Greek and the Roman Novel: Parallel Readings* (Groningen, 2007), 38–56, but most discussions of the *Metamorphoses* tend to focus on the witches in *Met.* Books 1–3 and on Isis as a figure of magic and witchcraft; see, for example, T. McCreight, ‘Sacrificial ritual in Apuleius’ *Metamorphoses*’, *Groningen Colloquia on the Ancient Novel* 5 (1993), 31–61; D.W. Leinweber, ‘Witchcraft and Lamiae in “The Golden Ass”’, *Folklore* 105 (1994), 77–82; W. Fauth, ‘Magie und Mysterium in den *Metamorphosen* des Apuleius’, in E. Dassmann, K. Thraede, J. Engemann (edd.), *Chartulae: Festschrift für Wolfgang Speyer* (Münster, 1998), 131–44; S. Frangoulidis, *Witches, Isis and Narrative: Approaches to Magic in Apuleius’ Metamorphoses* (Berlin, 2008); R. May, ‘Magic and continuity in Apuleius: Isis from witchcraft to mystery cults’, in E. Cueva, G. Schmeling, P. James, K. Ní Mheallaigh, S. Panayotakis, N. Scippacercola (edd.), *Re-Wiring the Ancient Novel. Volume 2: Roman Novels and Other Important Texts* (Groningen, 2018), 157–77; L. Costantini, ‘The real tools of magic: Pamphile’s macabre paraphernalia (Apuleius, *Met.* 3.17.4–5)’, *AncNarr* 15 (2019), 75–88.

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story as written by Apuleius, as do some of their appearances in Hellenistic poetry. Apuleius was however almost certainly the inventor of the story as we have it, by placing the two lovers into a coherent narrative which he based on preceding and contemporary monuments, images and poetry,<sup>2</sup> where Cupid and Psyche hurt each other with burning torches or threaten each other with arrows.

Ager has shown in a recent article that the portrait of Psyche's sisters and of Venus as well as Psyche's discovery of Cupid's identity are informed by magical papyri and that several scenes of the story find parallels in magical texts, especially *agōgē* (ἀγωγή) or summoning spells.<sup>3</sup> The present article moves beyond Ager's approach, first, by integrating the study of magical objects and spells with a look at the portrait of Cupid and Psyche in Greek Hellenistic epigrams in order to explore how these separate enticements to love have influenced Apuleius' plot and, second, by setting them against Apuleius' Middle Platonist background. My aim is to show that there is indeed much magic, especially erotic magic, in Apuleius' conception of his love story, and that Apuleius' tale is to varying extents influenced by the portrait of Cupid and Psyche and their interactions in Hellenistic poetry and on magical gemstones, and especially by magical spells found in papyri, which Apuleius integrates with some irreverent humour in the plot and in his protagonists' behaviour. At the same time, Apuleius has also made significant innovations by turning the forced involuntary love of poetry and binding spells into reciprocated and eternal love.<sup>4</sup> I will argue in particular that a recently published gemstone from Perugia which illustrates the so-called 'Sword of Dardanus' love spell shows how close and yet innovative Apuleius' aim is to create a story of reciprocated love which evokes poetry and magic, and how his interest in Middle Platonist demonology interlaces with contemporary developments in magic. First, I will investigate how *Cupid and Psyche* alludes to Hellenistic epigrams, which will then be set into the context of Cupid and Psyche portraits on gemstones and magical spells preserved in papyri. Second, I will show how Apuleius uses all these different intertexts to portray reciprocal love, which deviates from the portrait of love in elegy and magic, while adapting their imagery very closely, even to the extent that specific magical spells and gemstones with a specific Middle Platonist context are crucial in the conception of the plot of *Cupid and Psyche*, and of the *Metamorphoses* as a whole.

<sup>2</sup> See, for example, C.C. Schlam, *Cupid and Psyche: Apuleius and the Monuments* (University Park, PA, 1976); E.P. Cueva, 'The art and myth of Cupid and Psyche', in S.N. Byrne and E.P. Cueva (edd.), *Veritatis Amicitiaeque Causa: Essays in Honor of Anna Lydia Motto and John R. Clark* (Wauconda, IL, 1999), 52–69; A. Stramaglia, 'Le Metamorfosi di Apuleio tra iconografia e papiri', in G. Bastianini and A. Casanova (edd.), *I papiri del romanzo antico. Atti del convegno internazionale di studi. Firenze, 11–12 giugno 2009* (Florence, 2010), 165–92.

<sup>3</sup> C. Panayotakis, 'Vision and light in Apuleius' tale of Psyche and her mysterious husband', *CQ* 51 (2001), 576–83 sees Psyche's lamp as a sign of foreboding and witchcraft. S. Parker and P. Murgatroyd, 'Love poetry and Apuleius', *CQ* 52 (2002), 400–4, at 400 merely footnote *Met.* 5.13.6 but do not discuss the passage. B. Ager, 'Necromancy, divine encounters, and erotic magic in Cupid and Psyche', *AJPh* 140 (2019), 317–43 provides a detailed overview over some aspects of magic in the story, with a focus on comparison between the magical papyri and Apuleius' text as a means for varying characterizations of Cupid, Psyche and Venus, respectively.

<sup>4</sup> Ager (n. 3) shows that other scenes in the story, including Psyche's arrival at Cupid's palace in *Met.* 5.1–4 and the appearance of Psyche's sisters, owe some imagery to magical spells in the *PGM*.

## LOVE IN EPIGRAM: DESIRE AND VIOLENCE

Love in antiquity, especially the ardent physical desire described in epigrams and called for in magical documents, is a violent affair. Once burned by its powerful tools, nobody can escape it. Consequently, violence between lovers is a common topos in Hellenistic epigrams: the beloved is wounded by love, and torching and wounding with Cupid's arrows are acceptable images for love presented in epigram. Importantly, in this kind of poetry love tends to be one-sided or fleeting, threatened or changeable, often since the poet tries to cajole a recalcitrant love object;<sup>5</sup> despite the difference between one-sided poetry and Apuleius' happy ending, scholars have rightly seen Hellenistic epigram as one of the sources of influence on Apuleius.<sup>6</sup>

Apuleius' familiarity with Hellenistic poetry, as often observed, humorously integrates famous poems such as Moschus' *Erōs Drapetēs* ('Runaway Eros') into his plot. He plays with its imagery in *Met.* 6.7–8, including a comic inversion of the personnel involved: Apuleius' Venus declares Psyche her runaway slave girl and publicly promises a reward, including some of her very own steamy kisses, for her slave's return. This knowingly mirrors Moschus' poem, where Aphrodite promises a similar reward for the capture of the runaway Eros.<sup>7</sup> This tongue-in-cheek inversion is a celebrated example of Apuleius' working method, and, as we shall see, he applies similar methods to his use of magical imagery, too.

Cupid's weapons of choice, in Apuleius' portrait as in Hellenistic poetry, are of course torches and arrows,<sup>8</sup> and love hurting the beloved is not rare in Hellenistic poems.<sup>9</sup> Eros can be bound and threatened by his own weapons, with the poet gloating about Eros' plight: for example, Satyrus (*Anth. Pal.* 16.195) and Antipater (*Anth. Pal.* 16.197) describe statues of Eros bound with chains against a pillar. In these poems, Eros, the god of love and desire, is himself the one bound, captured by the emotion he causes, with his weapons useless beside him. Eros either tortures the poet or himself becomes the victim at least of binding, but there is always a conqueror and a conquered, and no celebration of reciprocated affection and love. The poetry notably does not glory in the lovers' union, and at most may hint at its possibility, as something to be desired. An anonymous poem in *Anth. Pal.* 16.251 shows the nearest to reciprocity these poems get, as φλέξει τις πυρὶ πύρ· ἥψατ' Ἐρωτος Ἐρωτος 'Someone will burn fire with fire, Eros has touched Eros' (line 6). The repetition of the name, as we shall see below,

<sup>5</sup> On the shifting and fleeting nature of love, especially in Meleager's poetry, see K. Gutzwiller, 'The paradox of amatory epigram', in P. Bing and J.S. Bruss (edd.), *Brill's Companion to Hellenistic Epigram down to Philip* (Leiden, 2007), 313–32, at 330–2.

<sup>6</sup> On Apuleius and Hellenistic poetry, see L. Graverini (transl. B.T. Lee), *Literature and Identity in The Golden Ass of Apuleius* (Columbus, OH, 2012), 1–42; Schlam (n. 2).

<sup>7</sup> See *Met.* 6.7–8 and Moschus' *Erōs Drapetēs*, with E.J. Kenney (ed.), *Apuleius: Cupid and Psyche* (Cambridge, 1990), 190; M. Zimmerman, S. Panayotakis, V.C. Hunink, W.H. Keulen, S.J. Harrison, T.D. McCreight, B. Wesseling, D. van Mal-Maeder, *Apuleius Madaurensis: Metamorphoses. Books IV 28–35, V and VI 1–24. The Tale of Cupid and Psyche (Groningen Commentaries on Apuleius)* (Groningen, 2004), 416 ad loc., who also point to the parallel with Moschus.

<sup>8</sup> E.g. Meleager in *Anth. Pal.* 12.48.

<sup>9</sup> Collected in *Anth. Pal.* 16.195–9, including poems by Satyrus, Alcaeus of Messene, Antipater of Sidon, Maecius and Crinagoras. For a link between gems and Hellenistic poetry, see, for example, V. Platt, 'Burning butterflies: seals, symbols and the soul in antiquity', in L. Gilmour (ed.), *Pagans and Christians: From Antiquity to the Middle Ages* (Oxford, 2007), 89–99, at 91–2 on Alcaeus of Messene, 16.196, which seems to compare the art of the stonecutter (λιθοξόος, line 5), who created this paradoxical scene of the most powerful god bound in submission, with the magical power of the image of the god manifest on the gem.

is also in evidence in Apuleius and in some of the magical papyri. Here, Eros is bound, but another Eros (Anteros) tortures him, urged on by Nemesis, and reciprocity lies, at best, only in the future, while the god is still an unwilling helpless victim. Even when Psyche appears in Hellenistic poetry alongside Cupid, the love is still one-sided.<sup>10</sup>

More brutal even than these literary images is love's portrait in ancient magic, which was used to force love on an unwilling partner, and which seems to have been widely used for that purpose in antiquity.<sup>11</sup> Recently, the similar aesthetics of epigrams and gems have received much attention,<sup>12</sup> and I will now turn to magical gems to illustrate the concept of enforcing love on unwilling victims embodied as Cupid and Psyche. After that I will parallel these with magic spells in order to make a case that Apuleius is using magic and imagery in his own love story but as an innovative means of instigating reciprocal erotic desire.

### LOVE ON GEMS: BURNING AND TORTURE

The idea of binding the beloved as represented in some of these poems finds its counterpart in other media, specifically gemstones, where similar themes to those in the poems sit alongside a more frequent use of Cupid and Psyche as enactors of the spells. Magical gemstones were collected by Bonner in 1950, and are now easily accessible in the Campbell–Bonner magical gems database (henceforth *Cbd*).<sup>13</sup> The database is admittedly selective, since it does not include all gems featuring Cupid and Psyche, as more gemstones show the couple or specifically Cupid alone but not with a discernible magical connotation. Expanding the group to include possible non-magical stones, however, does not contradict my findings here.<sup>14</sup> The Campbell–Bonner database gives us about twelve entries where Psyche can be seen as a girl with butterfly wings.<sup>15</sup> Eight or nine more entries have Psyche portrayed as a butterfly, often tortured by Cupid with flaming torches.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Both *Anth. Pal.* 12.132 and *Anth. Pal.* 5.57 feature souls as the victims.

<sup>11</sup> On the ubiquity of erotic magic, see C.A. Faraone, *Ancient Greek Love Magic* (Cambridge, MA, 1999).

<sup>12</sup> See, for example, Platt (n. 9); E.M. Rush, 'Writing gems: ekphrastic description and precious stones in Hellenistic epigrams and later Greek prose' (Diss., UCLA, 2012).

<sup>13</sup> C. Bonner, *Studies in Magical Amulets: Chiefly Graeco-Egyptian* (Ann Arbor, MI, 1950). A.M. Nagy, K. Endreffy, K. Bélyácz (edd.), *The Campbell Bonner Magical Gems Database* (no year): [http://cbd.mfab.hu/visitatori\\_salutem](http://cbd.mfab.hu/visitatori_salutem) (last accessed 05/07/2022).

<sup>14</sup> The Beazley archive, for example, features numerous unpublished gems from the Tassie collection in Edinburgh, while M. Henig, *Classical Gems: Ancient and Modern Intaglios and Cameos in the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge* (Cambridge, 1994) includes others from Cambridge.

<sup>15</sup> In addition to *Cbd* 1555, *Cbd* 453 shows Cupid with a torch facing Psyche; 488 shows Psyche bound to a column with a griffin looking down on her; 489 is broken, only the bottom half is visible, with Cupid and Psyche facing each other; 1166 shows Cupid and Psyche facing each other, with Psyche handing Cupid a garland; 1725 has Psyche bound to a column, with her griffin looking down on her, and Cupid threatening her with bow and arrow, a burning torch rests behind him; 1726 shows Psyche again bound with her griffin looking down; 1793 shows Psyche sitting bound against a pillar, again there is a griffin; 2167 has a front image of Bes-Pantheos, and the back has Cupid and Psyche embracing; 2385 has Cupid and Psyche embracing on the front; 2455 has Psyche rejecting a begging Cupid; 3598 features the couple embracing; 3677 is fragmentary, 3678 and 3681 have variants of Cupid burning Psyche with a torch; 454, 3635 and 3679 are unusual, since the roles are inverted: here Eros is bound to a column with his griffin, and it is Psyche who threatens to burn him. See also Schlam (n. 2), 15–16 for Eros himself being tortured on a late Etruscan scarab with his hands bound behind him.

<sup>16</sup> *Cbd* 2243(?); 3676; 4043; 4069; 4104; 4105; 4107; 4118; 4214.

There are certain clusters of imagery: for example, several of the gems feature a burning torch which sometimes is used to threaten one of the couple.<sup>17</sup> Other gems show one of the couple bound, a visual representation of binding spells, either alone or with the other one threatening them.<sup>18</sup> Interestingly, the gemstones feature Psyche, too, frequently tied to a column on which a griffin is sitting, with one of its paws on a wheel.<sup>19</sup> This is the symbol of Nemesis in her function as guardian of retribution and reciprocity in love.<sup>20</sup> For example, *CBd* 488<sup>21</sup> shows Psyche bound to a column, along with griffin and wheel. There is no comparable image of Psyche bound in the poems. Bonner, though rightly associating that griffin with Nemesis, thinks (arguably erroneously) that this gem might be popular with lovers who had rid themselves of the feelings of love.<sup>22</sup> It is, however, more likely that the gems are a visual expression of binding spells, or the desire of a hopeful lover to find reciprocity for their love via magical means. The gems' inscription often declares the binding of the victim as 'just', *δικαίως*, and the emblem of Nemesis shows that reciprocal love is aimed for but not yet present: the means are violent and forceful, intended to bend the beloved's will.

Cupid and Psyche united in an embrace in magic is not an uncommon image of 'love', but it is achieved entirely through forcing one of the couple into it via binding magic, and thus against their will. Gems which show the couple embracing, either as the gem's only image or together with a more violent scene on the obverse, show the spellcaster's wishful thinking and hope for that particular outcome.

#### LOVE IN MAGIC: 'THE SWORD OF DARDANUS'

While Hellenistic epigram precedes Apuleius, several of the stones that are dateable appear to be of similar date to Apuleius, thus indicating contemporary interest in the magical uses of Cupid and Psyche.<sup>23</sup> There seems to be a clear overlap between the portrait of love as painful and inflicted by various weapons on the gemstones and poetry, even to the extent that Nemesis (or at least her griffin) is taking part in the torture. In both poetry and magic there is an active and a passive partner, and on gems the latter

<sup>17</sup> *CBd* 453; 454; 1555; 1725.

<sup>18</sup> *CBd* 454; 488; 1725; 1726; 1793. There are gems (not in Bonner) which show Eros/Cupid bound, for example the first-century A.D. carnelian gem 297 in Henig (n. 14), which has a bound Cupid looking at a butterfly. Henig no. 296 from the same period shows Eros torturing a butterfly with a torch. C. Holm, *Amor und Psyche: Die Erfindung eines Mythos in Kunst, Wissenschaft und Alltagskultur (1765–1840)* (Berlin, 2006), 68 argues that a first-century A.D. gem associates Psyche with Nemesis in iconography where the female figure lifts their gown; Holm (this note), 69–71 discusses some non-magical gemstones of Psyche bound.

<sup>19</sup> Further griffins: *CBd* 454, where Eros is bound to the griffin's pillar; 488, 1726 and 1793 show how Psyche is bound to a pillar by herself, 1725 shows Psyche bound and Cupid threatening her with his bow and arrow, while a torch is found nearby. Note too Schlam (n. 2), 15: 'on a gem of the early Empire preserved in Berlin, Psyche, with her hands behind her back, sits looking up at a statue of Nemesis. Since Eros is often shown punished by Nemesis, Psyche in this representation may be interpreted as praying to Nemesis for vengeance against her persecutor.'

<sup>20</sup> See E. Stafford, 'Tibullus' Nemesis: divine retribution and the poet', in J. Booth and R. Maltby (edd.): *What's in a Name? The Significance of Proper Names in Classical Latin Literature* (Swansea, 2006), 33–48.

<sup>21</sup> Second or third century A.D. in London, British Museum.

<sup>22</sup> Bonner (n. 13), 121.

<sup>23</sup> *CBd* 2455 is one of the earliest, dated to the first/second century A.D.; 1725 to the second century A.D.; 488, 1166 and 1726 are dated to the second/third century A.D., and 489 to the third century A.D. The rest are undated.

can take on the personality of Psyche, the soul, who tends to be the helpless victim of a love that tortures her.

Love on magic gems is straightforwardly more torturous than in the poems, as it turns the violent metaphors into actual pictures of torment. They focus entirely on the goal, bending the victim's will by all means possible to achieve erotic fulfilment, and move beyond the scenario of the poems which focus on the unbending nature of the beloved and look forward to the union in the future.<sup>24</sup>

The *PGM* spells show a similar imagery to the gemstones. But nowhere is the interaction between papyri and gemstones clearer than in the following two extraordinary examples, which display the multiple wounding of the beloved while also uniquely featuring Cupid and Psyche. *Cbd* 1555 from Syria is one of the most unusual gemstones in the Bonner database; the stone itself is lost, but an impression of both of its sides is available online.<sup>25</sup> On the front, a nude Aphrodite is sitting on top of a crudely sculpted winged Psyche, holding her own hair in her hands in the *Anadyomenē* style.<sup>26</sup> Underneath Psyche, Cupid stands on a globe and lifts a torch to burn Psyche from below. The back has Cupid and Psyche embracing, offering an extraordinary before-and-after image, suggesting the spell's success.

There is at least one<sup>27</sup> further Cupid and Psyche magic gemstone, a very new addition to the database (as 4265), which shares some imagery with 1555, and which has only recently been published by P. Vitellozzi. Now in Perugia, this more sophisticated representation provides crucial evidence for the importance and widespread nature of this kind of image, and for Apuleius' knowledge of this kind of magic.<sup>28</sup> Again, we see Aphrodite riding on the back of (a dressed) Psyche, but here grasping for Psyche's hair with one hand while reaching out for her own with the other.<sup>29</sup> Psyche flies and is burnt from underneath by Cupid, who lifts a torch towards her. Obviously, what we see is Love hurting the Soul as part of a love spell, and magnetite, used here, is a stone associated with attracting love.<sup>30</sup> The reverse shows Cupid and Psyche embracing, just like 1555, so the gemstone again portrays a before and after scene, where torturing by Cupid and Venus leads to reciprocated love in the end.

<sup>24</sup> *PGM* IV.115–22, from the Great Paris Papyrus, is a typical example: see the translation of M.W. Meyer in H.D. Betz, *The Magical Papyri in Translation* (Chicago, IL, 1986), 39: 'Every flaming, every cooking, every heating, every steaming, and every sweating that you [masc.] will cause in this flaming stove, you [will] cause in the heart, in the liver, [in] the area of the navel, and in the belly of NN whom NN has borne, until I bring her to the home of NN whom NN has borne, and she puts what is in her hand into my hand, what is in her mouth into my mouth, what is in her belly onto my belly, what is in her female parts onto my male parts, quickly, quickly; immediately, immediately.'

<sup>25</sup> See <http://cbd.mfab.hu/cbd/1555/?sid=6247> (last accessed 05/07/2022).

<sup>26</sup> See D. Ogden, *Magic, Witchcraft, and Ghosts in the Greek and Roman Worlds* (Oxford, 2002), 263–4 for an opal-stone amulet from the fourth century A.D. with Aphrodite holding up her own hair, which Ogden rightly connects with binding magic.

<sup>27</sup> *Cbd* 3553 seems to show Aphrodite, her hand raised in a greeting gesture, sitting on a bent-over Psyche. The rest of the iconography does not seem to echo the 'Sword of Dardanus'.

<sup>28</sup> See P. Vitellozzi, 'Relations between magical texts and magical gems: recent perspectives', in S. Kiyarad, Ch. Theis, L. Willer (edd.), *Bild und Schrift auf 'magischen' Artefakten* (Berlin, 2018), 181–253, at 185–91, with an image of the gemstone at 185, and also available here: <http://cbd.mfab.hu/cbd/4265/?sid=6247> (last accessed 05/07/2022). The stone is a magnetite housed in the Museo Archeologico Nazionale dell'Umbria in Perugia; Perugia, Museo Archeologico Nazionale dell'Umbria (inv. no. 1526).

<sup>29</sup> On the magical nature of Aphrodite twisting Psyche's curls, see Vitellozzi (n. 28), 187.

<sup>30</sup> On magnets in magic and its anthropomorphic properties, see Rush (n. 12), 109–19, especially 114–16 for the 'Sword of Dardanus' and similar gems.

Though only eighteen gems are mentioned in magical papyri, and only half of these required engravings,<sup>31</sup> Vitellozzi argues persuasively that both the Perugia and the Syrian gems were manufactured based on the instructions of the so-called ‘Sword of Dardanus’, a love spell in the Great Paris Papyrus, associated with Dardanus, the founder of the mysteries of Samothrake.<sup>32</sup> The ‘Sword’ is unique, as it is extremely unusual for descriptions of amulets in the *PGM* to correspond this closely with extant gems, even extending to the *uoces magicae* underneath the couple (*PGM* IV.1721–45):

λαβὼν λίθον μάγνετα τὸν | πνέοντα, γλύψον Ἀφροδίτην | ἱπιστὶ καθεμένην ἐπὶ Ψυλλῆς, τῆ  
ἀριστερᾷ χειρὶ κρατοῦσαν, τοὺς βοστρύχους ἀναδεσμιευομένην, καὶ ἐπάνω τῆς κεφαλῆς  
αὐτῆς· ἀχμᾶγε | ραρπεψει· ὑποκάτω δὲ || τῆς Ἀφροδίτης καὶ τῆς Ψυχῆς | Ἔρωτα ἐπὶ  
πόλου ἐστῶτα, λαμπάδα κρατοῦντα καομένην, φλέγοντα τὴν Ψυχὴν. ὑποκάτω δὲ τοῦ  
Ἔρωτος τὰ ὀνόματα || ταῦτα· ἀχαπα Ἄδωναίε | βασμα χαροχω Ἰακὼβ | Ἰάω η· φαφαρηή  
· εἰς δὲ τὸ | ἕτερον μέρος τοῦ λίθου Ψυχὴν | καὶ Ἔρωτα περιπεπλεγμένους ἑαυτοῖς καὶ  
ὑπὸ τοὺς πόδας τοῦ Ἔρωτος ταῦτα· c c c | c c c c c, ὑποκάτω δὲ τῆς | Ψυχῆς: η η η η η η  
η η [...]

Take a magnetic stone which is breathing and engrave Aphrodite sitting astride Psyche | and with her left hand holding on her hair bound in curls. And above her head: ‘ACHMAGE RARPEPSEI’; and below | Aphrodite and Psyche engrave Eros standing on the vault of heaven, holding a blazing torch and burning Psyche. | And below Eros these | names: ‘ACHAPA ADONAIE BASMA CHARAKO IAKOB IAO E PHARPHARĒI.’ On the other side of the stone engrave Psyche and Eros embracing | one another and beneath Eros’ feet these letters: ‘sssssss’, and beneath Psyche’s feet: ‘EEEEEEEE’.<sup>33</sup> (There follow instructions to put the carved stone under one’s tongue and to proclaim the so-called ‘Hymn to Eros’ which follows, as well as further instructions.)

Scene by scene this spell corresponds with our two gems from Syria and especially Perugia with their unusual before-and-after scenarios: Psyche, the soul of the beloved, is tortured by both Aphrodite and Eros, her hair torn and her body burnt, and her passivity and humiliation by Aphrodite indicate the bending of the beloved’s will.<sup>34</sup> All this is done with the explicit aim to achieve the union between two lovers,

<sup>31</sup> Vitellozzi (n. 28), 182.

<sup>32</sup> For a detailed analysis of the spell’s mythological background and instructions for gems’ consecrations to acquire magical power, see A.D. Nock, ‘Magical notes’, *JEA* 11 (1925), 154–8. See also the discussion in A. Delatte and P. Derchain, *Les intailles magiques gréco-égyptiennes* (Paris, 1964), 233–9. They list comparable gems, such as no. 322, where a female figure rides on the back of another one but does not grip the prone figure’s hair. Numbers 324 and 325 show Eros torturing Psyche, either as a woman bound against a tree or as a butterfly, or Psyche bound against a column without Eros present (328). Number 324 is discussed in detail, including a reference to the ‘Sword of Dardanus’, in Ogden (n. 26), 262. See also R. Merkelbach, ‘Das Schwert des Dardanos’, in G. Binder and R. Merkelbach (edd.), *Amor und Psyche* (Darmstadt, 1968), 433–4 for a brief discussion of the gem, without seeing the connection between pulling hair and Apuleius’ story. S. Michel, *Die magischen Gemmen: Zu Bildern und Zaubersformeln auf geschnittenen Steinen der Antike und Neuzeit* (Berlin, 2004), 203–7 analyses the magical significance and symbolism of the elements on the gem. The Great Paris Papyrus itself dates to the fourth century A.D., but the texts it contains are earlier, though not entirely datable. The so-called ‘Liturgy of Mithras’ in the same papyrus has, for example, been dated to the early second century A.D. by its first editor, A. Dieterich, *Eine Mithraslithurgie* (Leipzig, 1903), 43–6. Ager (n. 3), 333–7 also briefly connects the ‘Sword of Dardanus’ with Cupid and Psyche, and discusses the pulling of hair by Aphrodite in the spell and in Cupid and Psyche as a possible magical theme, but focusses on the spell merely as a means of characterizing Cupid, Psyche and Venus, while also using *agōgē* (that is, summoning) spells as possible comparanda. She does not compare any of the gems.

<sup>33</sup> E.N. O’Neil’s translation in Betz (n. 24), 69–70.

<sup>34</sup> On torture as a method in *agōgē* spells, see Ager (n. 3), 335–6.

as the reverse of the gem illustrates, where it has indeed taken place. There is one crucial difference here, though, with the Perugia gem importantly showing Aphrodite becoming more active in the torture by reaching for Psyche's hair with one hand rather than lifting up her own hair with both hands, as seen on *CBd* 1555. The union of the lovers, as the gems and the spell suggest, is achieved only by Eros and Aphrodite working together on Psyche; Eros requires his mother's help to attain the desired union with his lover.

Furthermore, there is only one more extant magical papyrus in the *PGM* which mentions both Cupid and Psyche: it forces Eros to become a magical assistant or *daimōn*, a preoccupation of the *PGM*. Its imagery is more subdued and not predominantly linked to love spells:

*PGM* XII.14–95 Eros as assistant/*daimōn*:

Π[ά]ρεδρος Ἔρωϛ· || Ἔρωτος τελετή, καὶ κ[α]τασκευή· πο[ι]εῖ δὲ πράξε[ι]ς ταύτας καὶ ὄνει-  
[ρο]ποιεῖαν, ἀγρυπνίαν ποιεῖ κ[α]ὶ διαλάσσει κ[α]κοδαίμο[νο]ς, [έ]άν ὀρθῶς αὐτῷ χρησι-  
κα[ί] ἀγνώϛ. ἔστιν γάρ ἔχων πάσαν πράξιν. λαβῶν [κηρῶ]ν [τ]υρρηνικ[ό]ν μείζον αὐτῷ  
π[ί]αν γένος ἀρωμάτων καὶ πο[ι]ήσων Ἔρωτα δακτύλον [ό]κτώ μῆκος λαμπαδηφόρον, |  
ἔχοντα β[ά]σιν μακράν, ἔκδεξι[ί]ν [τ]ῶνδε. [ἡ δ' ἄριστε]ρά χεῖρ κρατεῖτω τόξον || καὶ  
βέλος. καὶ Ψυχὴν τέλεσον ταῦτόν ὡς Ἔρωτα.

A ritual of Eros: consecration and preparation (among his operations, he sends dreams or causes sleeplessness; and he releases from an evil spirit, if you use him in a proper and holy manner, for he can perform every operation). Take [wax] of Etruria and mix with it [every] kind of aromatic plant. Then make a statue of a torch-bearing Eros that is eight dactyls high and has a large base to support it. Put a bow | and arrow in [his left] hand, and fashion a Psyche of the same sort as Eros.<sup>35</sup> (lines 14–20) (followed by a three-day ritual involving spells and burnt offerings)

This spell is not *prima facie* a love spell, but Eros and Psyche have a similar power structure to that in the 'Sword': Eros and Psyche are statues specifically made of wax, although Psyche does not feature in the papyrus again. Still, Eros holding a torch and his weapons just before we are told to make a Psyche, too, may again suggest a scene of violence, inflicted upon her with Eros' usual torturing weapons. Psyche here is Eros' equivalent, made from the same material, wax, which makes both figures vulnerable to burning. But Eros is not an all-powerful, all-conquering god here, as he becomes the *daimōn* assistant of the spellcaster, and the enactment of his presumed torture of Psyche anticipates the bending of his own will. Both spells and gems show Psyche initially as victim, but stress Cupid's intermediate nature between power and powerlessness.

We have seen that epigrams, magical spells and the papyri all tell the same story of brutal burning and wounding with arrows as a sign of enforced love. Gems and papyri are specifically concerned with forcing the reluctant lover into submission to the spellcaster's will. Even if reciprocal affection were promised on the gems' reverse, an uneven power balance between lover and beloved remains.

### LOVE AS *DAIMŌN* IN MIDDLE PLATONISM

Of the two spells featuring Cupid and Psyche, the invocation of Eros as a *daimonic* assistant in one spell is significant, since this makes Cupid a go-between or *daimōn* between

<sup>35</sup> Transl. H. Martin in Betz (n. 24), 154–6.



gods and humans. This character of *daimones* is one of Middle Platonism's particular interests,<sup>36</sup> and Apuleius is one of its chief proponents whose views on Cupid's nature are relevant here. His work *De deo Socratis*, for example, features Middle Platonist demonology, and in *Flor.* 10 Apuleius indicates that Cupid is one of the *daimones*, whom he identifies as *mediae deum potestates* ('intermediary divine powers'):<sup>37</sup>

sunt et aliae mediae deum potestates, quas licet sentire, non datur cernere, ut Amoris ceterorumque id genus, quorum forma inuisitata, uis cognita

There are also other, intermediary divine powers, which we can sense but cannot see, such as Love and the other gods of this kind, whose form is invisible but whose power can be recognized.

Although there is a difference between Middle Platonic *daimones* as mediators between humans and the divine and the usual *daimones* of the papyri, who are mere magical assistants, the use of the same terms and the shared function of intermediaries allow Apuleius to explore his interest in both magic and philosophy, an interest he also showcases in the *Apologia* as a whole.<sup>38</sup>

Pachoumi, in a longer treatment of the link between Apuleius and the 'Sword of Dardanus', argues that 'philosophical texts can use the same erotic vocabulary as erotic texts',<sup>39</sup> and that erotic language can express the search of the soul for the divine. She traces the links between Eros and philosophical depictions of the creation of the cosmos, and concludes that, for example, the 'Eros as assistant' spell in *PGM* XII.14–95 is influenced by Platonic philosophy as set out in the *Symposium*, reflecting the union and reunion of separated souls. It could be added that Apuleius is especially interested in the Platonic idea of love entering the soul through the eyes (his discussion of optics in *Apol.* 15, for example, draws on the *Phaedrus* and the *Symposium*). If we accept this connection, there is then an interesting link between the magical gemstones, the papyrus instructions on how to fashion a gemstone portraying Cupid and Psyche, the increase in the number of gemstones from the second century A.D. featuring the couple, and the contemporary re-evaluation of Cupid as *daimōn*. Pachoumi sees Apuleius close to the centre of this nexus, driving these innovations.<sup>40</sup> The Middle Platonist Apuleius knows the Hellenistic epigrams and, as we shall see, the magical gems and spells quite well, as he fashions his characters of Cupid and Psyche after these intertexts and adapts the portrait of love found in these texts in his own tale.

#### LOVE IN *CUPID AND PSYCHE*: ATTRACTION, VIOLENCE AND RECIPROCITY

If we look again at how love is portrayed in the inset tale in the *Metamorphoses*, first via intertextuality with Hellenistic epigram, and then via the magical–Platonic nexus, it

<sup>36</sup> The description of Cupid as *daimōn*, though Middle Platonist in nature in the two papyri, could also be anticipated by Meleager in *Anth. Pal.* 12.48, which at least identifies Cupid as a *daimōn*, even though this is not in the philosophical sense. In *Cupid and Psyche*, both Venus and Cupid alternate between baser and loftier characterizations; see Kenney (n. 7), 20.

<sup>37</sup> C. Moreschini, *Apuleius and the Metamorphoses of Platonism* (Turnhout, 2015), 54.

<sup>38</sup> For magic in the *Apologia* and its link to philosophy, see L. Costantini, *Magic in Apuleius' Apologia: Understanding the Charges and the Forensic Strategies in Apuleius' Speech* (Berlin, 2019), with further bibliography.

<sup>39</sup> E. Pachoumi, 'Eros and Psyche in erotic magic', *C&M* 62 (2011), 39–49, at 43.

<sup>40</sup> E. Pachoumi, *The Concepts of the Divine in Greek Magical Papyri* (Tübingen, 2017), 89.

becomes clear that there is also a remarkably close engagement with the ‘Spell of Dardanus’ and the Perugia gem. The Platonic link allows the Platonist Apuleius to play knowingly with magical imagery.

There are several sections in *Cupid and Psyche* where the characters show a surprising amount of violence towards each other, which, I would argue, transgresses the fairly common portrait of love in Hellenistic poetry and steps into the realm of magical texts and artefacts. The first example of violence between the couple is fairly unerotic, yet familiar in its imagery: Psyche contemplates murder by stabbing as a kind of self-defence (*Met.* 5.20); Psyche had been married to her unseen husband on the command of Apollo’s oracle, and still does not know who he is. Psyche’s sisters suggest to her that she should kill him with a sharpened razor, and they describe him as a serpent intent on devouring her and her unborn child.<sup>41</sup> Psyche follows their advice and prepares her lamp and dagger. When she lifts the lamp to find the best spot to cut his head off, she realizes that her husband is Cupid himself. Her lamp, suddenly personalized and given agency by Apuleius, drips a boiling drop of oil onto her sleeping husband’s shoulder while Psyche is occupied with staring at Cupid’s body (*Met.* 5.22–3):

ante lectuli pedes iacebat arcus et pharetra et sagittae, magni dei propitia tela. ... lucerna ... euomuit de summa luminis sui stillam feruentis olei super umerum dei dexterum

At the foot of the dainty bed there were lying a bow, a quiver and arrows, the auspicious weapons of the mighty god. ... and the oil lamp ... sputtered from the top of its flame a drop of boiling oil on to the right shoulder of the god.<sup>42</sup>

Cupid, though a god who should be above this kind of insignificant injury, is, of course, the son of the goddess wounded by Diomedes in *Il.* 5.297–430 who even drops her son Aeneas and needs some time to recover from the pain of what appears only a trifling cut.<sup>43</sup> Cupid’s small wound is magically and emotionally significant, and incapacitates him during the latter part of the story and forces him to take refuge at his mother’s house until he is recuperated.

Psyche does not burn Cupid deliberately, nor out of any desire at this stage to force him into erotic passion through torture. Cupid is, however, wounded, accidentally burnt not by a torch but scalded by a tiny and less dangerous drop of oil. The sensation of burning and the efficacy of the wound are the same, although Cupid gets away fairly lightly: a large burning torch becomes a rather harmless droplet of oil.<sup>44</sup> The god who usually burns his victims as a representation of a common metaphor of burning love is now himself burnt in a reinvention and sharpening of the motif.<sup>45</sup> Still, the

<sup>41</sup> On the recurrent image of Cupid as a wild beast, see, for example, Kenney (n. 7), 131 on 4.33. On the image of Cupid as a snake or a *lamia*, see D. Felton, ‘Apuleius’ Cupid considered as a *Lamia* (*Metamorphoses* 5.17–18)’, *ICS* 38 (2013), 229–44.

<sup>42</sup> Translations of *Cupid and Psyche* are taken from R. May, *Apuleius, Cupid and Psyche: Translation, Introduction and Notes* (Manchester, 2019).

<sup>43</sup> On humans wounding gods, see Z. Stamatopoulou, ‘Wounding the gods: the mortal *theomachos* in the *Iliad* and the Hesiodic *Aspis*’, *Mnemosyne* 70 (2017), 920–38. Psyche is an unlikely *θεόμαχος*, given how different she is to heroes such as Diomedes or Hercules who can injure Olympians because of their extraordinarily favoured status and are supported by other gods at the specific moment of wounding an Olympian.

<sup>44</sup> On the lamp as a sign of evil magic, see Panayotakis (n. 3), and on the scene as a representation of *systasis* spells—namely, spells used in the magical papyri to summon a deity in a personal encounter—which often involve lamps as magical aid, see Ager (n. 3), 328–32.

<sup>45</sup> From the beginning of *Cupid and Psyche*, Cupid is associated throughout the tale with flames

imagery familiar from the poems and the gemstones, though miniaturized, is clear, especially since Cupid is momentarily helpless and his weapons are useless by his side. The normal means of torture and erotic magic are made harmless, the force used is much less, and the perpetrator has no intention to force the wounded into erotic attraction, as the wounding is accidental. At this stage the wounding and torture appear one-sided, like an ephrasis in a Hellenistic epigram. But there is a difference: love poetry promises that the torture of the beloved results in an erotic union, while here, unexpectedly, the opposite happens: the encounter results in the lovers' separation, as Cupid flees the scene, thus raising immediate questions whether this miniaturized and unintentional wounding is insufficient to cause love. As it turns out, Apuleius is playing again with poetic conventions, as the scalding was not required to stir love in Cupid—he had already wounded himself deliberately, in another Apuleian innovation, since he confesses in *Met.* 5.24 that he flew to Psyche as her lover (*ipse potius amator aduolauit tibi*) instead of making her fall in love with a lowborn human as his mother had demanded. This voluntary wounding is unexpected, too, as Cupid's falling in love at first sight with Psyche merely requires a harmless symbolic reinforcement.<sup>46</sup> As he tells Psyche, Cupid had decided to prick himself with his own weapon a while ago, after seeing Psyche for the first time (5.24): *praeclarus ille sagittarius ipse me telo meo percussi teque coniugem meam feci* 'I, that famous archer, struck myself with my very own weapon and made you my wife'.

Cupid's first voluntary graze is again miniaturized, harmless yet effective in causing the wounded to feel erotic desire in a way that follows normal iconography. This effectiveness is echoed when Psyche falls in love with Cupid, too (5.23), in yet another inversion of the typical scenario from poetry where it is the man who watches his sleeping beloved:<sup>47</sup> the bow remains untouched, she merely handles Cupid's arrow and nicks herself with it, to fall deeply in love. Both lovers take turns in gazing each other, and love becomes mutual through these glances in this Middle Platonist author's tale. The torture of both is here a miniaturized version of what the epigrams represent, the metaphor has become 'real', a lot less harmful, yet no less effective, and Apuleius has toyed with his readers' expectations of what should happen when the couple handle the powerful weapons of love, fire and arrows:

[Psyche] depromit unam de pharetra sagittam et puncto pollicis extremam aciem periclitabunda trementis etiam nunc articuli nisu fortiore pupugit altius, ut per summam cutem rorauerint paruulae sanguinis rosei guttae. sic ignara Psyche sponte in Amoris incidit amorem.

[Psyche] took out one single arrow from the quiver. She was about to test its sharp point with the tip of her thumb, but pricked it a little too deep with rather too strong an effort of her trembling fingers, so that tiny little drops of rose-red blood were trickling over the surface of her skin. So, unknowingly, by her own doing, Psyche fell in love with Love.

Falling in love for the couple is not simultaneous, there is a temporal distance, but it is a voluntary act (*sponte*) on both sides.<sup>48</sup> The paronomasia *Amoris/amorem* recalls the

and fire: see *Met.* 4.30, 4.31, and so on, with Zimmerman et al. (n. 7), 68 and 88 on the fire imagery. The rather stale metaphor is imbued with new life, as it moves from metaphor to the character's own personal experience.

<sup>46</sup> See Zimmerman et al. (n. 7), 297–8 for the novelty of Cupid's voluntary wounding himself and the ironic and self-referential phrase *praeclarus ille sagittarius*.

<sup>47</sup> Zimmerman et al. (n. 7), 287 discuss the inversion of scenes from elegy and epigram.

<sup>48</sup> On the oxymoron *ignara sponte* and the voluntary nature of the action, see Zimmerman et al. (n. 7), 285–6, who also identify the phrase in *Amoris incidit amorem* as mere wordplay (paronomasia).

wordplay in epigram (see *Anth. Pal.* 16.251 cited above), but Hellenistic poetry stops at the wounding of a single person, the object of desire, to force love, and so does the portrait of wounding on most gems. But the gems produced to work alongside the ‘Sword of Dardanus’ look to the idea of reciprocating love, even if only one victim of two torturers is shown, as Psyche is tortured by both Cupid and Venus. The result of this is the reciprocal affection promised on the back of the gemstones where the lovers gaze into each other’s eyes, and the result of Apuleius’ double wounding is therefore closer to the outcome of magic than to that of poetry, symbolized by both Cupid and Psyche in Apuleius suffering from recognizable signs of love sickness. This kind of love is powerful, nobody can resist it, not even twice-wounded Cupid, since he too suffers from the normal symptoms of love (*Met.* 6.22): *interea Cupido amore nimio peresus et aegra facie* ‘in the meantime, Cupid was consumed by excessive love and looking sick’.

Psyche, too, feels this kind of malaise, as she is correctly diagnosed by the wise old god Pan, whose language explicitly yet humorously invokes magical procedures of divination (*Met.* 5.25):

‘uerum si recte coniecto, quod profecto prudentes uiri diuinationem autumant, ab isto titubante et saepius uacillante uestigio deque nimio pallore corporis et assiduo suspiritu, immo et ipsi maerentibus oculis tuis, amore nimio laboras.’

‘Now, if I guess correctly—that is surely what wise men call divination—from your wavering and quite often staggering gait, from that extreme pallor of your body and your constant sighs, and even more so from your grieving eyes, you are suffering from desperate love.’

Each lover on their own seems to suffer like characters in epigram, where reciprocity is wished for but not lastingly achieved. Still, both are burning for each other, in reciprocated love, each made to do so by the same tools of torture.

#### BEYOND CUPID’S LOVE: THE TORTURES OF VENUS

What makes Apuleius’ story different and unusual is the involvement of Venus in the affair, which is not the case in Hellenistic poetry or on most gemstones, apart from the Syrian and the Perugia stones influenced by the ‘Sword of Dardanus’, where both Cupid and Venus torture Psyche. The element of torture and the course of love in Apuleius before the couple’s final union takes another turn with Psyche’s vicious treatment by Venus and her minions in remarkably cruel scenes that can be associated with magical imagery.<sup>49</sup> Reciprocal wounding leading to reciprocal affection already suggests the use of imagery beyond that of epigram, but the involvement of Venus as well firmly suggests the magic of the specific gemstones. Once Psyche has surrendered herself to her mother-in-law Venus, she is treated appallingly. First, Venus’ servant *Consuetudo* grabs Psyche’s hair (*Met.* 6.9): *et audaciter in capillos eius inmissa manu trahebat eam* ‘[*Consuetudo*] boldly grabbed Psyche’s hair with her hands and dragged her in’.

<sup>49</sup> Also seen by Ager (n. 3), who points out the similarities between the ‘Sword of Dardanus’ and Venus’ actions, but is unaware of the Perugia gemstone which specifically shows Venus’ intervention by grasping for Psyche’s hair.

Immediately, Venus has Psyche tortured (*Met.* 6.9):

‘ubi sunt’, inquit, ‘Sollicitudo atque Tristities, ancillae meae?’ quibus intro uocatis torquendam tradidit eam. at illae sequentes erile praeceptum Psychen misellam flagellis afflictam et ceteris tormentis excruciatam iterum dominae conspectui reddunt.

And then she called out: ‘Where are Worry and Sadness, my handmaidens?’ After these two had been called in, Psyche was handed over to them to be tortured. They followed their mistress’ orders, and after whipping poor little Psyche and tormenting her with all other kinds of torturing equipment, they returned her to the presence of their mistress.

This treatment (whipping, tearing of clothes, beating and branding) is characteristic punishment for runaway slaves, and Venus consistently treats Psyche as a slave girl, from the moment of Mercury’s proclamation of Psyche, which echoes—as we have seen—Moschus’ poem (at *Met.* 6.7 she is called *Veneris ancillam*), to *Met.* 6.10, where Venus orders her *ancilla* Psyche to complete impossible tasks.<sup>50</sup> Furthermore, Venus goes on to torture her daughter-in-law herself like a slave (*Met.* 6.10): *his editis inuolat eam uestemque plurifariam diloricat capilloque discisso et capite conquassato grauius affligit* ‘When she had finished, Venus flew at Psyche and ripped her dress in many places, tore her hair, boxed her head and beat her up badly.’

This behaviour does not occur in poetry and is seemingly unworthy of a dignified goddess, but it can uniquely be paralleled in the ‘Sword of Dardanus’<sup>51</sup> and in the Perugia (as opposed to the Syrian) gem, where Aphrodite reaches for Psyche’s hair while riding on her back as a symbol of full domination. In particular, the pulling of hair and the submission to Venus are more common in magical than in Hellenistic poetic imagery. Only on the Perugia stone and the papyrus does Venus/Aphrodite join Cupid during the torture of Psyche, while the Syrian stone shows Aphrodite merely holding up her own hair. The grasping of Psyche’s hair on the stone functions similarly to a binding spell, as a sign of exerting specifically erotic power. In the *Greek Anthology* the only poems with similar imagery are 5.230 and 5.248 by the sixth-century A.D. poet Paulus Silentiarius, and thus post-date Apuleius.<sup>52</sup> This image is therefore less related to love poetry but clearly belongs to magic,<sup>53</sup> and Venus’ antagonistic involvement in Apuleius’ version seems to become necessary for the fruition of the love story. Venus’ intentions, however, from a magical point of view, are transformed, tongue-in-cheek, as Venus unwittingly supports the love affair by enacting her magical representation’s labour during her attempts to separate the couple, to treat Psyche as her runaway slave, and to torture the girl into leaving her son alone.

Luckily for everyone involved, Jupiter in the end interferes on Cupid’s request and solves all problems, by reconciling Venus to Cupid and Psyche’s happy marriage—a good ending for the couple, and certainly also the desired and anticipated ending for love magic. Venus’ final dance at the end of the story, which signifies her

<sup>50</sup> Treatment as a runaway slave: see Zimmerman et al. (n. 7), 423.

<sup>51</sup> As also noted by Ager (n. 3), 335–7, who compares the violent treatment of the victims of *agōgē* spells in the *PGM*. Kenney (n. 7), 20 with further references attributes this behaviour to Venus’ incarnation as *Venus uulgaris*, whereas her more dignified behaviour is that of *Venus caelestis*; both characterizations, Platonic in nature (see Pausanias’ speech in *Symp.* 180d–181c; Apuleius makes the same distinction in *Apol.* 12.1–3), are intermittently found in Apuleius’ Venus.

<sup>52</sup> In 5.230 Doris binds her lover with her hair, while 5.248 describes the cruel pulling of hair.

<sup>53</sup> The whip, a frequent sign of love pangs, is at least associated with Eros in Marcus Argentarius (*Anth. Pal.* 9.221), who describes a signet ring on which Eros steers a chariot with a pair of lions.

reconciliation to the marriage,<sup>54</sup> is thus clearly motivated (*Met.* 6.24): *Venus suavi musicae superingressa formonsa saltavit* ‘Venus stepped out to the tune of sweet music and danced beautifully.’

Apuleius obviously plays with the tropes from literature *and* magic, and the wounding is especially fateful for both lovers.

Poems about love show Cupid bound with his weapons lying useless, and the magical papyri featuring Cupid and Psyche indicate that Cupid is vulnerable as well as mighty, an intermediary whose power is situated between that of gods and humans. What makes Apuleius’ version so unusual is that both lovers hurt themselves, and both are in the end equally in love with each other. The reverse of the two gems shows this successful union of Cupid and Psyche, the obverse indicates that it requires Venus’ involvement to flourish, and this is the happy ending shared with Apuleius’ story.

### APULEIUS’ TOYING WITH MAGIC

Interestingly, *Cupid and Psyche* is a story first invented and told by a man who himself was accused in A.D. 158/9 of having used love magic, specifically binding spells, on his unwilling wife to force her into marrying him; Apuleius knows all too well the presumed consequences of ancient magic on its victim and how powerful it was believed to be. His surviving defence speech *Apologia* shows how well acquainted with the rules of love magic Apuleius was. Crucially, Apuleius’ knowledge of the use of gemstones in magic was extensive, and so was that of his audience; he ridicules his boorish opponents in the *Apologia* for not knowing about the magical powers of gems, which he claims to be common knowledge (*Apol.* 31.8):

at uos soli reperti estis ex omni memoria, qui uim herbarum et radicum et surculorum et lapillorum quasi quadam colluione naturae de summis montibus in mare transferatis et penitus piscium uentribus insuatis.

But you are the only people found in all human memory who transfer the power of herbs, roots, twigs and pebbles in some sort of confusion of nature from the highest mountains into the sea, and who sew them deep into the bellies of fish.

Stones used in magic also feature in the *Metamorphoses*, where magic is a common leitmotif. Stones are used to characterize witches as practitioners of magic in the novel, for example the dangerous Pamphile in *Met.* 2.5, who specializes both in forcing gods to obey her will and in love magic on her own behalf:<sup>55</sup>

maga primi nominis et omnis carminis sepulchralis magistra creditur, quae surculis et lapillis et id genus friuolis inhalatis omnem istam lucem mundi sideralis imis Tartari et in uetustum chaos submergere nouit.

[Pamphile] is believed to be a witch of the first order and an expert in all kinds of sepulchral incantation, and by breathing on twigs and pebbles [*lapillis*] and this kind of stuff she knows how to plunge all the light of the starry skies into the depths of Tartarus and primordial Chaos.

In *Met.* 3.15–18 magic is seen in action, when Pamphile, rather than creating cosmic destruction, performs harmful binding magic intended to force a reluctant Boeotian

<sup>54</sup> Reconciliation: see, for example, Zimmerman et al. (n. 7), 550–1.

<sup>55</sup> On the realism of Pamphile’s magical ingredients, see Costantini (n. 1).

youth into her bed by using one of the most common forms of magic expressed in magical papyri. Her *agōgē* spell requires some of the beloved's hair to work, an indication of how important ownership and manipulation of hair is in magic throughout.<sup>56</sup> It is only because Pamphile's assistant cannot get hold of the Boeotian's hair and substitutes it with that of some slaughtered goats that Pamphile's spell misfires: instead of the beautiful young man, it is three goat skins that try to enter her house after they are summoned. Pamphile's otherwise successful binding spell is only thwarted by her assistant's incompetence. It worked, but not quite as the spellcaster intended. It is clear that Apuleius knows of the magic properties of hair as well as of *agōgē* spells,<sup>57</sup> and that he can portray magical procedures as a humorous plot element, where magic works but not quite as expected by the spellcaster.

Binding magic is exactly what Apuleius himself was accused of performing, for the purpose of allegedly forcing the reluctant widow Pudentilla into madly falling in love with him. Apuleius knows what he is doing when he portrays magical practitioners, and magic in the *Metamorphoses* always delivers, though not always in the way that its practitioners want it to work. This is an indication that Apuleius and many of his readers know contemporary magical procedures so well that they can appreciate it when Apuleius manipulates its execution or outcomes in his novel. Love magic works in *Cupid and Psyche*, too; love becomes especially cruel when magic imagery and Cupid's mother get involved: Venus' torturing of Psyche is not toned down, Psyche's hair and clothes are torn by Venus herself. It is therefore very likely that Apuleius' erotic triangle of Cupid, Venus and the hapless Psyche knowingly echoes a well-known magical situation as set out in the 'Sword of Dardanus' and the gemstones, in a recognizably magical scenario.

If, as most scholars suspect, the *Metamorphoses* was written after Apuleius' trial for witchcraft and magic in A.D. 158/9, then this is significant.<sup>58</sup> Apuleius knows he is sailing close to the wind; his story uses topoi from poetry (bow, arrow, torches), but adds elements that are clearly taken from magic (Venus tearing Psyche's hair) to achieve mutual love as specified in particularly Middle Platonist takes on magic. During his trial, Apuleius declares in his defence that he knows of the philosophical aspects of magic, but has no idea of its baser versions, despite giving enough examples of the latter, and where he also blames his extensive knowledge of magic on his interest in (Middle) Platonist philosophy.<sup>59</sup> A similar claim of innocent knowledge may be at play in *Cupid and Psyche*, as both the 'Sword of Dardanus' and the 'Eros as assistant' spells have Middle Platonic undertones.

It is not initially clear what role Apuleius plays in the inclusion of Eros and Psyche in the papyri. Edwards is non-committal as to what comes first, Apuleius or the 'Sword of Dardanus' spell, while Pachoumi states that Apuleius' influence is felt in the papyri.<sup>60</sup> Neither of these scholars is aware of the Perugia gem, but it has become clear how much

<sup>56</sup> Hair in love magic: Ogden (n. 26), 263–4; Faraone (n. 11), 8, 87–8; but see also the nuanced discussion of hair as an element of magic vs beauty in Costantini (n. 38), 45–9.

<sup>57</sup> For Apuleius' fascination with hair in the *Metamorphoses*, see J. Englert and T. Long, 'Functions of hair in Apuleius' *Metamorphoses*', *CJ* 68 (1973), 236–9.

<sup>58</sup> For a discussion of the date of the *Metamorphoses*, see S.J. Harrison, *Apuleius: A Latin Sophist* (Oxford, 2000), 9–10.

<sup>59</sup> On Apuleius and different types of magic, see May (n. 1); on magic in the *Apologia*, see Costantini (n. 38).

<sup>60</sup> M.J. Edwards, 'The tale of Cupid and Psyche', *ZPE* 94 (1992), 77–94, at 82; Pachoumi (n. 39), 40–1.

closer even than previously thought Apuleius engages with magical imagery on gems. Its image of Venus about to tear Psyche's hair suggests to me that Apuleius is aware of this specific spell, the popularity of which is evinced by its manifestation on two or possibly even more gems we know of.<sup>61</sup> Apuleius has playfully integrated its imagery into his own tale, just as he played with Moschus' *Erōs Drapetēs*, driven by his interest in the Middle Platonist portrayal of Eros as a *daimōn* in magical texts. We can be fairly confident that Cupid and Venus wounding Psyche, resulting in the couple's final union, is a playful allusion to magical practice. This is just as irreverent fun as Apuleius' playful allusion to Platonic mythology in *Met.* 5.24, where Psyche, hanging on to the fleeing Cupid's feet, comically enacts Pl. *Phdr.* 248c, the passage where Plato explains that the souls which are heavy with absentmindedness and evil lose their wings and fall to earth.<sup>62</sup> The only two spells we have that mention both Cupid and Psyche show some engagement with Middle Platonist demonology, a link shared with the Middle Platonist Apuleius who explains his own interest in magic with his interest in philosophy. Knowing a spell such as *PGM XII*, 14–95 could cast him as a practitioner of magic by his enemies and as a Middle Platonist by his well-wishers. He gives a similarly playful yet entertaining image of magic in the rest of the novel. Magic is always powerful, especially love magic, and in *Cupid and Psyche* the gods bow to it, too, just as forcing the gods to the practitioner's will becomes a concern in the magical scenes of the *Metamorphoses* as a whole.<sup>63</sup> *Cupid and Psyche* is a storified version of the power of love magic. Venus' involvement adds to the story's irreverent strand, as the goddess of love does not realize that her torture facilitates the couple's happy union that her very actions were intended to avoid.

## CONCLUSION

Apuleius therefore found ingredients for his love story in areas he knew very well: Greek poetry and Greek magic, and combined them effectively. Apuleius' tongue-in-cheek image of Venus, the screeching jealous mother-in-law, I would argue, also pokes fun at the image of the powerful Aphrodite in the papyrus. When Apuleius' Venus tortures Psyche, the couple has already been driven apart by Psyche's transgression, though their separation leads to unspeakable love sickness for both. It is Venus, as she wants to punish Psyche for her mere existence and to keep her apart from her son, who actually executes a kind of binding spell on Psyche, like the binding spell shown on the Perugia gem, which in the event reunites the couple. Indeed, it can even be suggested that the couple's temporary separation necessitates Venus' involvement and torture of Psyche, with an outcome opposite to Venus' own intentions, to achieve a happy ending. Venus unwittingly enacts the final ingredient, a binding spell to unite the lovers, and so Love magic, again, has worked in the *Metamorphoses*, though again not in the way that the spellcaster intended, just as Pamphile's binding spells go 'right' in the wrong kind of way, too.

<sup>61</sup> Vitellozzi (n. 28), 191 points to two more gems possibly inspired by the 'Sword of Dardanus'.

<sup>62</sup> Zimmerman et al. (n. 7), 294 point to the inconsistencies of any philosophical content here and highlight an irreverent and comic interpretation of the passage.

<sup>63</sup> See R. May, *Apuleius, Metamorphoses Book I: With an Introduction, Translation and Notes* (Oxford, 2013), 36–41.



*Cupid and Psyche* therefore integrates the magic of the gemstones and the papyri as well as Hellenistic poetry into the very essence of its plot. *Cupid and Psyche* is an inset tale in the *Metamorphoses* and echoes many of its themes; magic has generally been deemed to take a back seat in the inset story, but I hope to have shown that Apuleius extends his playful appropriation of previous literature, poetry and Platonism to ancient love magic, which becomes an essential feature in the plotting of this tale of reciprocated divine and eternal love.

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