

goal, which is even more surprising since it comes completely unexpectedly. The reader knew Psyche as an able user of the rhetoric of persuasion – does not her husband give in to all her whims?⁴¹ – , but the image of the young princess is one of a naive and tender person.⁴² Even after this double fratricide Psyche is presented as an innocent soul (6,15: 139,10 *innocens anima*). This vengeance, an act of retaliation, is justified by arguments of poetic justice. The meanness of Psyche's sisters must be punished, in accordance with the laws of these kind of tales.⁴³ A parallel for Psyche's vengeance can be found in book 8 of the *Met.*, when Charite, another pure and innocent victim, punishes Thrasyllus for his treason.⁴⁴ Moreover, the image of Psyche's purity should be considered in relation to the profoundly subjective nature of the narration of the old woman who, as mentioned before, unconditionally chooses Psyche's side (see above, 1.2). This is the reason she does not judge negatively the fact that Psyche lies. She barely mentions that Psyche's second sister *et ipsa fallacie germanitatis inducta ... simile mortis exitium cecidit*: she too, likewise led on by her sister's false story ... fell to the self-same deadly doom. (5,27: 125,2–5)⁴⁵

With its multiple voices relaying one another, the tale of *Cupid and Psyche* illustrates in exemplary fashion the power of words, their capacity to persuade every listener willing to lend an ear, to manipulate, mislead or simply to divert. The fact that the author of this carefully orchestrated symphony of dissonants was a rhetor-philosopher of the Second Sophistic does not fail to recall the Platonic debate between Gorgias and Socrates in which truth and justice are set against appearances and deception.⁴⁶

41 Cf. 5,6 (107,11–14; 107,17–21; 108,1–7); 5,13 (114,4–6), where Cupid is said to be *decantatus* by her kisses and words.

42 Cf. e.g. 5,5 (106,15) and 5,12 (113,8) *Psyche dulcissima* ('o my sweetest Psyche'); 5,18 (117,11) *Psyche misella, utpote simplex et animi tenella* ('poor little Psyche, artless and tenderhearted as she was'); 5,24 (122,1) *simplicissima Psyche* ('my poor naive Psyche'); 6,15 (139,17) *simplex alioquin et expers rerum talium* ('naive and inexperienced as you are in such matters').

43 This point has been discussed by S. Panayotakis in his unpublished dissertation (Univ. of Crete, Rhetymnon 1996). It will be the subject of an appendix in the forthcoming *GCA* on the tale of Cupid and Psyche. See also the discussion of Psyche's revenge in Frangoulidis 1995. On the ancients' attitude concerning vengeance and compassion, see Dover 1974 and Schrijvers 1986, 105 ff. with further literature.

44 Cf. 8,9–13 (184,5–187,26).

45 The narratrix does not, on the contrary, miss any occasion to underline the hypocrisy and the lies of Psyche's two sisters: cf. 5,14 (114,14–16); 5,16 (116,5–7); 5,19 (117,18–20); 5,20 (118,5–8); 5,27 (124,12–13).

46 Cf. in particular Pl. *G.* 453a–457c. See also O'Brien's article in this volume.

The use of narrative tenses in Apuleius' *Amor and Psyche*

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In his book on the style of Apuleius in his *Metamorphoses* Callebat (1968, 363) concludes that the way in which Apuleius uses the tenses does not deviate much from their use in Classical Latin. There are a few deviations from the *consecutio temporum*, but the author's freedom 'repose ordinairement sur une connaissance précise de la valeur complexe des temps et des modes'. Bernhard (1927, 152–153) has no more than some forty instances of remarkable and, in his opinion, arbitrary coordination of different narrative tenses. Commentators usually refer to the same instances and, just like Bernhard, regard them as arbitrary and unexplicable¹. There are two more recent studies on the use of the narrative tenses in the story of Amor and Psyche, viz. Dragonetti (1981) and Mellet (1985).

The first thing that strikes one when reading these two articles is that, although they are based upon the same material, the statistics are different. Mellet has more narrative tense forms, among which especially more present and less perfect forms². As we will see the relative proportion of the tense forms plays some role in her argument.

1 Some of the instances in Bernhard can be explained. Kenney 1990a (*ad* 5.7.1) gives an explanation for the sequence *sorores ... adveniunt ibique difflebant oculos et plangebant ubera* ('the sisters hurried to the rock and there they cried their eyes out and beat their breasts'): "having arrived, they begin to weep". I would rather consider this an instance of Apuleius' manner of accelerating the progress of events (see below): "no sooner had they arrived than they were crying".

2 Both authors restrict themselves to the narrative proper, excluding direct discourse – Dragonetti says so explicitly (1981, 72). Dragonetti also excludes subordinate clauses. These may be included in Mellet's figures. The figures are the following:

Dragonetti's main aim is to show that Weinrich's well-known distinction (1964) of two levels of narrative ("background and foreground" or: "description and progression") and the assignment of the imperfect to the first and of the perfect to the second, respectively, is too simple. Apuleius frequently interrupts the progress of the story (Dragonetti counts 24 of such interruptions) and the segments of the narrative preceding the interruptions and those following them are related in a more complex way than Weinrich's ideas would predict. In fact, according to Dragonetti (1981, 74), at least 9 types of transition can be distinguished. Only one or two easily fit in with Weinrich's ideas. The use of the tenses on both sides of the interruptions is determined by the semantic value – or, in Dragonetti's words, aspect³ – of these tenses (1981, 78). The present is used both in situations in which an imperfect and in situations in which a perfect tense form might have been used instead.

Dragonetti's argument that Weinrich's ideas⁴ are not easily applicable to Apuleius' narrative is convincing. The main reason for this lies in the nature of Apuleius' narrative technique. In his highly structured narrative – with episodes encapsulated in episodes, episodes consisting of successive actions forming the background of new actions – the old and simple, but basically correct, rule "perfecto procedit, imperfecto insistit oratio" cannot be mechanically applied to every linear order of perfect, imperfect, and (historical) present tense forms. We need to unravel the structure of the narrative first, having a clear eye for other structuring elements. Doing so Dragonetti shows that Apuleius' use of the tenses is in accordance with what one would expect.

Mellet's aim is different from Dragonetti's⁵. Starting from the observation that the present tense is by far the most frequent narrative tense occurring in the story of Amor and Psyche she argues (1985, 150), firstly, that this very frequency is a counterargument against claiming that the present is used to create a dramatic effect or tension, as suggested by various authors, among whom Weinrich. Secondly, she argues that the use of the present tense can best be explained

	Dragonetti (1981, 72)	Mellet (1985, 150)
imperfect	64	83
perfect	101	86
historical present	233	286
= imperfect	88	
= perfect	145	

I myself counted – only main clauses in indirect discourse – 65 unambiguous perfect forms and 13 ambiguous forms which I tend to interpret as perfect forms.

3 My own definition of the value of the tenses is not essentially different from Dragonetti's. See Pinkster (1990, ch. 11) and below.

4 Dragonetti only refers to Weinrich's original edition (1964).

5 She does not refer to Dragonetti's article.

by regarding the present as the unmarked element in the tense system, some sort of basic form that can be used in all (past, present, future, and generic) sorts of sentences. The third point Mellet wants to make is that instead of trying to explain the occurrence of the (historical) present it is better to pay attention to the perfect, the much less frequent use of which may be interpreted as a sign of its special function in the overall narrative as indicating a 'rupture stylistique'⁶.

As for the first two arguments, I have recently given my view on them (Pinkster 1998, cf. Pinkster 1990, ch. 11). I will briefly repeat a few elements of the discussion. Firstly, it is not productive to identify the reasons why a language user uses the historical present (in order to create "tension", "vividness", or what have you) with the semantic value of the tense, although this use must be compatible with, or based upon, the semantic value. The imperfect tense, for example, may be used in many languages in situations in which the speaker wants to be polite or less direct, as in the Plautine example *sed si domi est, Demaenetum volebam* ('but I wished to see Demaenetus, if he is at home', Pl. As. 452). However, this does not make the imperfect a 'politeness tense'. The imperfect can be used in a politeness context because of its semantic value 'presenting a state of affairs as taking place at some time before the communicative situation', usually before the "now" of the speaker or writer. By using this tense in a 'present' situation the language user suggests that his wish is less direct, less urgent than when he would have used *volo*. Similarly, the fact that in many languages the present tense is used in "peaks" of the narrative (a narrative of past events) is based upon its semantic value 'presenting a state of affairs as taking place in the communicative situation', usually the "now" of the speaker or writer⁷.

In the plays of Plautus and in the narrative parts of the orations of Cicero, both imitations or reproductions of oral presentations, this use of the present is quite common. It is, of course, essential that there is enough "past material" in the surrounding context (such as adverbs, participles, finite past tense forms) in order to avoid ambiguity. Given its semantic value the present is particularly appropriate if the language producer presents a set of events in greater detail, thus giving the addressee (reader) the feeling that he or she is witnessing what is going on. It is, as a consequence, no coincidence that we do not find historical presents in the summarizing *periochae* of Livius. From the same endeavour to present the events in detail follows the fact that the historical presents tend to occur in clusters. Usually the use of the historical present coincides with

6 A similar type of reasoning can be found in Von Albrecht 1970.

7 It will be obvious that I do not agree with those who, like Mellet, regard the present as an unmarked tense. I do not repeat the arguments here.

other linguistic features, such as word order, sentence length, asyndeton and – in modern languages – intonation. These features underline the idea that the report of the events deserves special interest on the part of the addressee. The combination of the tense and these features may create the side effect of “tension”, “dramaticity”, “speed”, etc.

By the time of Vergilius the use of the historical present had become a “mannerism” (Quinn 1968, 93, note 1) in narrative epic and in narrative prose⁸. An important difference in the use of the historical present between Vergilius and Apuleius, on the one hand, and Plautus and Cicero, on the other, is that with the former the use of the present is no longer restricted to events that constitute the progress of the story, particularly actions of the main participants. The present is also used to describe “stative” situations, thoughts and ideas of the participants, as well as non-successive or simultaneous actions. In other words, the present is to some extent equivalent to both the imperfect and the perfect. A striking instance of this is *nec est quicquam quod ibi non est* (‘there was nothing that was not there’, *Met.* 5.2.2. – Kenney’s translation⁹). Nevertheless, Apuleius’ use of the historical present has some of the features mentioned above, such as

- i short, asyndetic sentences: *maeretur, fletur, lamentatur diebus plusculis* ‘There followed several days of mourning, of weeping, of lamentation’ (*Met.* 4.33.4 – Kenney’s translation);
- ii clustering: the *tableaux vivants* at the end of *Met.* 4.31 and in 5.1 are beautiful instances; the alternative would be the imperfect, as in 6.24; however, there the imperfect is more appropriate because the tableau constitutes the background of the following perfects;
- iii co-occurrence with expressions indicating immediacy or speed, such as *confestim, ilico, statim, protinus, nec morata/nec mora cum, repente, properiter, festinanter*: there are twenty unambiguous present forms, one unambiguous perfect (5.25.2), and two ambiguous, but probably present forms (5.13.6; 5.27.2); Apuleius has other means at his disposal to accelerate the narrative; the one I like best is *Met.* 5.4.2. *Iamque aderat ignobilis maritus et torum inscenderat et uxorem sibi Psychen fecerat et ante lucis exortum propere discesserat* (‘Now there entered her unknown husband; he had mounted the bed, made her his wife, and departed in haste before sunrise – Kenney’s translation); Cf. 5.21.5.

⁸ I hope to show elsewhere that Aeneas’ account of the fall of Troy in the *Aeneis* shows some of the features mentioned above.

⁹ The first *est* can be understood as an actual present: ‘nothing exists that was not there’.

The fact that the present may be used instead of the imperfect or perfect does not mean that it can be used everywhere. If, for example, Apuleius would have used a present tense instead of an imperfect in *Met.* 5.2.2. *hoc erat praecipue mirificum* (‘this was particularly astonishing’) the expression might have been understood as an author comment, outside the storyline.

As for Mellet’s third point, the special function of the perfect, one must be careful in using frequency data *in vacuo*. The passage of Cicero discussed in Pinkster (1998) contains 29 perfect forms and 56 historical present forms, roughly the same proportion as we find in this story. This means that there is *a priori* no reason to limit a study of the contextual conditions in which Apuleius prefers one narrative tense over another, “equivalent”, tense to the perfect. However, since Mellet has chosen to do so, I will examine her argument in some detail.

In the Latin tense system the perfect has the semantic value ‘presenting a state of affairs as having occurred, or having finished, before the communicative situation’, usually before the “now” of the speaker or writer. In a narrative text it may be used for successive events in the story, but also for author comments outside the storyline. I will indicate these different uses as “narrative” and “authorial” perfects. An example of an authorial perfect can be found in an explicative relative clause in *Met.* 4.28.4 *Iamque ... fama pervaserat deam quam caeruleum profundum pelagi peperit ... in mediis conversari populi coetibus* (‘Meanwhile the news had spread that the goddess born of the blue depths of the sea was mingling with mortal men’). The distinction is not always easy to make, as we will see. Given its semantic value the perfect is especially appropriate to mark the boundaries of episodes, including pieces of direct discourse.

Mellet mentions three types of use of the perfect, two of which correspond to the use of the perfect just mentioned. She notes that out of 47 pieces of direct discourse 21 are followed by a historical present, 17 by a perfect – roughly one fifth of the total number of perfect forms in Mellet’s count, 9 by an imperfect or – rarely – a pluperfect¹⁰. Furthermore, the perfect is comparatively often used when people leave the scene. As I said, it is no surprise that in these situations the perfect occurs comparatively frequently. However, Mellet also claims that it is not just a difference in frequency between the perfect and historical present. According to her, there are also differences in the way the two tenses are used. The present, she claims, is much more often combined with expressions like *tunc, sic effata*, etc. This confirms the idea that the present needs contextual

¹⁰ Again, my own figures are different: 58 pieces of direct discourse, 30 present tense forms, 18 perfect, 8 imperfect, 2 pluperfect forms.

features to do its job as a boundary marker, whereas the perfect does not¹¹. The perfect might be said to have these additional features as part of its semantic value. Unfortunately, my own reading of the text does not support her claim at all. I find, for example, four instances of *tunc* followed by a historical present and three followed by a perfect form¹². The contextual features of the historical present and the perfect are identical.

The third type of use of the perfect that Mellet distinguishes is its use as a sign of dramatic tension (1985, 155). Before entering into a discussion of this part of her paper it may be useful to give some statistics about the distribution of the perfect tenses in this story. Whereas the present typically occurs in clusters, as we have seen, most perfect forms occur isolated. In my count there are 37 sentences with one perfect form and 8 with two or more coordinated forms. The number of clusters of independent sentences with a perfect tense is extremely low, as is the case in Cicero (see, once more, Pinkster 1998). There are two instances of a sequence of two independent sentences that both have a perfect form (*Met.* 6.16.1; 6.24.3) and one instance of a sequence with five perfect forms (*Met.* 5.27). The latter sequence of five perfect forms (actually, there is one more ambiguous form) is in the section of the story in which Psyche takes revenge of her sisters, an analytical summary without details.

According to Mellet, the perfect tense forms that do not function as boundary markers in the sense discussed above¹³ tend to cluster in episodes which are of special interest. One example of hers is a "group" of 12 perfect forms in the passage 5.22–25, where Psyche sees Cupid for the first time and hurts herself. Three comments are in order.

Firstly, the average frequency of perfect forms in this tale is – in my count – two to one page in main clauses in indirect discourse (in Kenney's edition). The passage under discussion counts almost 5 pages. The fact that we find a "group" of 12 perfect forms (subordinate clauses included!) is not that impressive.

Secondly, the "groups" distinguished by Mellet are not real groups. The perfects are most of the time separated by other tense forms and sometimes even coordinated with a present tense. The following may serve as an illustration (the perfects are underlined, the intervening forms – not quoted in Mellet, apart from *depromit* – are in italics):

(*Tunc Psyche et corporis et animi alioquin infirma Fati tamen saevitia subministrante viribus roboratur, et prolata lucerna et adrepta novacula*

11 For Mellet this is another argument for regarding the present as the unmarked tense.

12 *tunc* + present: 5.6.4; 5.7.4; 5.18.4; 5.19.5. *tunc* + perfect: 5.28.9; 5.31.3; 6.17.1.

13 Some of Mellet's instances discussed under this heading do, in fact, occur as boundary markers.

sexum audacia mutatur.) Sed cum primum luminis oblatione tori secreta claruerunt, videt omnium ferarum mitissimam dulcissimamque bestiam, ipsum illum Cupidinem formosum deum formosae cubantem, cuius aspectu lucernae quoque lumen hilaratum increbruit et acuminis sacrilegi novaculam *paenitebat*. At vero Psyche tanto aspectu deterrita et impositi animi marcido pallore defecta tremensque desedit in imos poplites et ferrum *quaerit* abscondere, sed in suo pectore; quod profecto *fecisset*, nisi ferrum ... *evolasset* ... Iamque lassa ..., dum ... *intuetur* pulchritudinem, *recreatur* animi. *Videt* ... caesariem ..., quorum splendore ... lumen lucernae *vacillabat*. Per umeros ... pinnae ... *candicant* et ... plumulae ... *lasciunt*. Ceterum corpus glabellum et ... quale ... non *paeniteret*. Ante lectuli pedes *iacebat* arcus et pharetra et sagittae, magni dei propitia tela. Quae dum insatiabili animo Psyche, satis et curiosa, *rimatur* atque *pertractat* et mariti sui *miratur* arma, *depromit* unam de pharetra sagittam et puncto pollicis extremam aciem periclitabunda tremens etiam nunc articuli nisu fortiore pupugit altius, ut per summam cutem *roraverint* parvulae sanguinis rosei guttae. Sic ignara Psyche sponte in Amoris incidit amorem, etc. (*Apul. Met.* 5.22–23.3)

'Then Psyche, though naturally weak in body and mind, rallied her strength as cruel Fate reinforced it, brought out the lamp, seized the blade, and took on a man's courage. But as soon as the light was presented and the secret of their bed became plain, what she saw was of all wild beasts the most soft and sweet of monsters, none other than Cupid, the fair god fairly lying asleep. At the sight the flame of the lamp was itself gladdened and flared up, and her blade began to repent its blasphemous edge. Psyche herself was unnerved at the sight and was no longer mistress of herself: feeble, pale, exhausted, trembling, she crouched down and tried to hide the steel – in her own bosom; and she would certainly have done it, had not the steel flown out of her hands. Now, worn out, as she gazed on the beauty, her spirits returned. She saw his hair [etc.], by the splendor of which the lamplight flickered. On the shoulders wings sparkled and the edges quivered. The rest of the body was smooth and such as [...] not [...] to be ashamed of [...]. At the foot of the bed lay a bow, a quiver, and arrows, the gracious weapons of the great god. Psyche could not refrain herself, in her innate curiosity, from examining and handling and admiring her husband's weapons. She took one of the arrows out of the quiver and tried the point by pricking her thumb; but as her hands were still trembling she used too much force, so that the point went right in and tiny drops of blood bedewed her skin. Thus unknowingly Psyche through her own act fell in love with Love' – translation Kenney (abridged).

Even if we hypothesize that the fact that we find here five perfect tense forms on one page is related to the dramatic character of this recognition scene, we ought to see whether in this scene the actions expressed in the perfect are the most dramatic ones. To me the historical present *videt* (first position in its clause!) seems to be more dramatic than the preceding *claruerunt* (temporal subordinate clause). I do not feel much difference in this respect between *desedit* and *quaerit* (coordinated!) nor between *depromit* (first position in its clause!) and *pupugit* (coordinated!).

Thirdly, the most important thing to know is whether there is a reason why the perfect is used and whether, instead of the perfect, present forms could have been used. Mellet (1985, 160) rejects the idea that the assumed dramatic function of the perfect in Apuleius is an inherent property of the perfect¹⁴, without, however, indicating which linguistic property underlies its "dramatic" use. I do think that here, as in Cicero and Vergilius, at least a number of perfect forms are selected because of the semantic value of the perfect. In this passage the perfect *incidit* is well in place in the concluding, evaluating statement introduced by *sic*. *Pupugit* is also explainable. It describes not the deliberate continuation of *depromit* as part of a series of controlled activities of Psyche, but rather the unfortunate consequence of Psyche's trembling, presented in retrospect by the commenting narrator (an authorial perfect). Further evidence for this is the use of the perfect form *roraverint* in the consecutive subordinate clause.

Along the same lines I do not believe that the perfect is used because it is 'introduisant l'oracle fatal qui va bouleverser la destinée de Psyché' (1985, 150) in *Met.* 4.32.6: (Psyche's father consults the oracle of Apollo in Miletus) *Sed Apollo, quamquam Graecus et Ionicus, propter Milesiae conditorem sic Latina sorte respondit* ('But Apollo, though Greek and Ionian, in consideration for the writer of a Milesian tale replied in Latin' – Kenney's translation). Rather it is 'The most striking, one might almost say blatant, manifestation of the authorial presence' (Kenney 1990a, 23). Apuleius intervenes in the story with all sorts of comment¹⁵. The tense most suitable for such comments is the perfect. Another example of an authorial perfect that cannot easily be replaced is *Met.* 6.15.1 *Nec Providentiae bonae graves oculos innocentis animae latuit aerumna* ('But the suffering of this innocent soul did not escape the august eyes of Providence' – Kenney's translation). The sentence marks the start of a new episode (imperfect forms precede). It is negated (negations are usually judgments by the author) and it has an abstract noun as its subject (which can hardly be dealt with

¹⁴ In fact, she does not believe that the present is unsuitable in this kind of situation.

¹⁵ A remarkable instance is the address of the *lucerna* (in second person singular) in *Met.* 5.23.5. See also van Mal-Zimmerman in this volume.

as a participant in the main line of events). The perfect suits these contextual conditions best.

In conclusion, both Mellet's claim that the perfect deserves more attention than the historical present and her claim that the perfect is especially used in dramatic situations are unconvincing. I agree with the authors referred to in the beginning of this paper that – with few exceptions that deserve further examination¹⁶ – Apuleius sticks quite closely to the classical rules for using the historical present and the perfect.

¹⁶ One difficult case is *Met.* 4.28.1 *Hi tres numero filias forma conspicuas habuere* ('They had three beautiful daughters'). The only alternative would be the imperfect, as in the surrounding context. But this would be awkward for this kind of factual information (cf. Ronconi 1968, 62–63). The sentence also serves as a transition, indicating what happened in the situation described in the first sentence and at the same time introducing the description of the situation in which Psyche and her family lived. For the almost "ingressive" value of *habuere* cf. *Thes. L. L.* s.v. 2432.33 ff.

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