

Visualising Drama, Oratory and Truthfulness in Apuleius *Metamorphoses* 3

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In this paper I will expand both on van Mal-Maeder's work on reasons for inconsistencies in the *Metamorphoses*¹ and on Slater's recent work² on spectacular scenes in Apuleius to analyse how the language of theatre, of theatrical dialogue, as well as the non-linguistic representation of stage scenery and the like, has been integrated into a novel which itself may be orally performed, possibly in a theatre.³ The *Met.* includes a large proportion of dialogue scenes, which might have an impact on how the novel is seen to negotiate the boundary between written text and oral performance. Taking into account the possible theatrical performance context of the novel may problematise how we read oral performances within the text itself, especially alongside the self-conscious 'writtleness' of much of the *Metamorphoses*. Moreover, as I will suggest, the portrayal of theatre and oratory within the novel bears interesting consequences for our vacillating faith in the reliability of the author and his narratives. I will focus in particular on Apuleius' representation of the Risus festival in *Metamorphoses* 3 and the events leading up to it, and on how this episode influences the reader's perception of the

¹ Van Mal-Maeder 1995.

² Slater 2003.

³ Amongst others, Dowden 1982, 432 with note 61 discusses the probability of this performance type. He argues the theatre would be a good place to perform the *Met.*, but the novel would be too long for this venue. Still, a partial performance of the *Met.* as envisaged for purple passages of plays, is quite conceivable. Keulen, too, argues for the performance of the *Met.* in a theatre (in this volume). For other literary works (e.g. Virgil) performed on stage cf. Horsfall 2003, 56; for solo recitals in Rome cf. Serv. *Verg. Ecl.* 6.11, with Jory 1986, 146. Cf. also Macr. 5.17.15 (*Dido* pantomime); Ovid's poems were danced on the stage during his lifetime: *Ov. Tr.* 2.519; 5.7 and 25.

veracity of the described situation. This will lead to an assessment of Apuleius' strategy in prioritising purely oral and descriptive genres (like oratory) over the more multisensual entertainments of theatrical fiction. I will argue that the *Metamorphoses* manipulates the potentially very different, often opposing, associations of two overtly 'oral' genres (oratory and drama), adding a complicating dimension to what many critics have highlighted as the disjunctive interplay of oral and written representation in the novel.

It has been suggested before that the spectacle scenes of the *Metamorphoses* form a coherent, interactive group. The first of them is the *Risus* festival in book 3 (the other major spectacle scenes are the display of Lucius in Thiasus' Corinthian show in book 10, and the Isis procession in book 11).⁴ Here, Lucius is returning drunk from dinner at his aunt's, and finds the door of his host Milo beleaguered by what he thinks to be robbers. He draws his sword, kills the three thugs and flees into the house. The next morning he realises what he has done, and fearing for his life, he is arrested by the Hypatan magistrates and brought before the law-court. Since the crowd is too large, the Hypatans decide to move the trial from the forum to the theatre, and Lucius finds himself pleading for his life before the Hypatan audience, which is laughing unaccountably at whatever he says or does.

In the *Risus* festival, a farcical theatrical display turns the unsuspecting Lucius into a spectacle when he has to defend himself by employing oratory in the wrong generic environment, namely a theatre, which at first seems to have been chosen only for its capacity to host the number of spectators.⁵ His accusers, the witnesses and Lucius, who speaks in his own defence, have to perform their speeches on the theatrical stage of Hypata.⁶ Apuleius not only uses the imagery of spectacle here, but also employs language taken from archaic Latin drama, primarily archaic comedy and tragedy; these dramas already fluctuated between their written existence, (e.g. as school texts read

⁴ Cf. Riefstahl 1938, 75, Slater 2003.

⁵ Trials taking place in the theatre are not uncommon, cf. Handley 1965, 7 and on *Dysc.* 743f. for Phokion's trial in 318 BC in the theatre in Athens, or the trial in Chariton 3.4 as a parallel from the novels. In Apul. *Met.* 6. 23 the gods also assemble in the theatre.

⁶ Several different interpretations of this scene are possible, and range from a scapegoat scene (cf. Habinek 1990, James 1987, 87), ritual sacrifice (McCreight 1993), 46ff. community integration rite (Frangoulidis 2001, 49ff. and 2002, who also stresses the role-playing of all the participants in the 'drama') to a mainly theatrical interpretation, for which see e.g. May 2006.

and studied), and their performability on the contemporary stage, which in itself could often take the form of a recital rather than a full performance.⁷

Oratory and drama also intermesh to a considerable extent before and during Apuleius' time:⁸ Roman orators practice their rhetorical skills by studying with performers of comedy,⁹ while tragedy is increasingly performed as a static recital by one single performer rather than as a full-blown performance with several actors on stage. Drama, especially after Seneca, becomes an outlet for rhetorical display. At first glance, then, dramatic elements in Lucius' self-defence appear unsurprising, just elements of contemporary rhetorical training. But it is not only his speech, but the whole *mise-en-scène*, I would argue, which is inspired by drama, and as such not only by recital, but by a full-blown performance with different actors. The written texts of archaic drama, as they were read in schools, are rejuvenated in a more than oratorical performance which merges elements of recital and performance.

Interestingly, the events which lead up to the trial in the Hypatan theatre are told four times in the *Metamorphoses*, once by Lucius the *actor* without revealing the knowledge he had gained in the meantime, and three times in direct speeches. Van Mal-Maeder concentrates on Apuleius' 'economical' narration which introduces particular aspects to the story only when needed, and attributes these inconsistencies within the four narratives of the wine-skin murder event to the different agendas of the respective narrators.¹⁰ The rhetoric, she argues, is determined by the speakers' intentions.¹¹ The first version is told completely from the point of view of Lucius the *actor*, without employing any of the knowledge that Lucius the narrator has acquired in the meantime, leaving it to the second-time reader to catch his subtle hints as to what 'really happened'.¹²

⁷ Cf. *Fl.* 16 with Hunink 2001 and Lee 2005 ad loc. For evidence for the recitation of drama in the early Empire cf. Zwielerlein 1966.

⁸ Cf. e.g. Fantham 2002.

⁹ Cicero's teacher, the comedian Roscius, is perhaps the best-known example; Quintilian, too, compares the art of orators and actors. Marcus Aurelius is said to have had the comedian Geminus as one of his first teachers (cf. SHA *Marc. Aurel.* 2.2). Cf. Fantham 2002 for examples of the intermeshing of acting and oratory and a detailed discussion of the evidence.

¹⁰ Cf. van Mal-Maeder 1995, 117–123.

¹¹ Cf. van Mal-Maeder 1995, 112.

¹² On these terms cf. van der Paardt 1978, 75–94, esp. 76ff., Hofmann 1993. Only the second time reader will notice tell-tale signs which betray Lucius' drunkenness and the

But in addition, as we will see, these events also hint at an assessment of the truthfulness of oral-oratorical versus visual-dramatic representation. The first version at the end of book 2 (2.32), in the voice of Lucius the *actor*, narrates how he comes home drunk from a dinner at his aunt's, and finds his host's door attacked by three robbers (*nec cunctatus medios latrones involo ac singulis, ut quemque colluctantem offenderam, altissime demergo, quoad tandem ante ipsa vestigia mea vastis et crebris perforati vulneribus spiritus efflaverint*. 'Without hesitation I flew into the band of robbers, and drove my sword up to the hilt into each one that I encountered in the struggle. Eventually they lay before my feet, punctured by numerous gaping wounds, and they gasped out their last breath.').¹³ The version is short and apparently precise, giving the basic facts without any details.

After Lucius' arrest, he is eventually brought to the theatre of Hypata for his trial, where we hear the story of the slaying of the robbers for the second time, namely from the commander of the night watch. The tale is not much changed, but is viewed from a different perspective (3.3). The stress is mainly on the commander as an eye-witness, and words of seeing dominate his account: *cunctae civitatis ostiatim singular considerans circumirem, conspicio istum crudelissimum iuvenem mucrone dextrico passim caedibus operantem, iamque tres numero saevitia eius interemptos ante pedes ipsius spirantes adhuc, corporibus in multo sanguine palpitantibus*. ('I patrolled the city, scrutinizing in careful detail every area door by door. I caught sight of this most savage youth with his dagger drawn, wreaking slaughter all around, and before his feet I observed three victims slain by his savagery. They were still breathing, their bodies suffering convulsions in pools of blood.'). Even the 'gods' foresight' (*providentia deum*, another visual term) is invoked. Seeing the 'murder' committed with his own eyes proves an important part in his chain of evidence. This version offers no apparent contradiction to Lucius' first version, and since it is an eye-witness account, it carries credibility. Witnesses form one of the best non-technical proofs in rhetoric, although they are well-known for not always speaking the truth.¹⁴

real condition of the 'robbers', cf. van Mal-Maeder 1995, 117f. (with further lit. on the concept of the second-time reader).

¹³ All translations from the *Met.* are taken from Walsh 1994.

¹⁴ Cf. Quint. *Inst.* 5.7 on witnesses in rhetoric and the problem of their possible lack of veracity.

As evidence, witnesses are most desirable, and the account with its stress on visuality initially offers damning evidence against Lucius.¹⁵

Formally, the report of the nightwatchman resembles a tragic messenger speech – for example a watchman functions as the deliverer of the Messenger Speech in Sophocles' *Antigone*.¹⁶ Rather like a Euripidean messenger, however, the nightwatchman is not personally or emotionally involved with the events, but is merely a witness narrating what he has seen. Initially, he thus seems absolutely credible, for Euripidean messengers especially always tell the truth, and their persuasiveness in reporting 'real events' derives from their emphasis on visual clarity, for instance their reporting of physical detail, and their own observation of the events.¹⁷ In Euripides, messenger speeches convey the ultimately acceptable version and can lay claim to complete credibility. In the context of drama, the presence of this messenger suggests a 'verification apparatus'. However, in the course of the Risus festival performance this credibility is compromised because of the way in which the rest of the novel disproves the speaker's veracity.

Lucius is then exhorted to present his self-defence, and this elaborate speech is very different from his previous narration.¹⁸ Like the witness before him, Lucius, too, rises to the theatrical occasion. He obviously adapts his story to match the guard's, and himself now offers another kind of eye-witness account, his own. Now, he, too, stresses the visuality both of the situation he is in now as the accused in a theatrical court, and of the scene in which he was attacked in front of Milo's door (3.4). Furthermore, Lucius' self-defence practises one-upmanship by stressing not only visual, but also aural points.

In his vivid and imaginary account of the fight, he elaborates on the gesturing of the intruders, which he reports seeing clearly, and the historic present tense suggests immediacy: 3.5 *video quosdam saevissimos latrones*

¹⁵ For the prevalence in Roman thinking of seeing over all other senses cf. Var. *L.* 6.80: *video a visu, <id a vi>: qui<n>que enim sensuum maximus in oculis* ('I see' from "sight", that is from "vis / force": because in the eyes lies the greatest of the five senses.'). Cf. Fredrick 2002 for the importance of the visual in Roman culture.

¹⁶ Cf. the scene between the Guard and Creon in Sophocles' *Antigone*, esp. 223–277.

¹⁷ On Euripidean messengers cf. Barlow 1971, 61ff. and de Jong 1991, 9–12 (on messengers as eyewitnesses, with other references to autopsy being thought of as more reliable than hearsay), and especially p. 10 for the messenger's role as a substitute spectator of the events he narrates to and for the audience.

¹⁸ For an analysis of the speech's oratorical features cf. van der Paardt 1971, 63f, and Harrison 2000, 224 with note 77 for Ciceronian features.

aditum temptantes et domus ianuas cardinibus obtortis evellere gestientes, ‘I saw before the very entrance to the lodging some most ruthless robbers seeking to force their way in’. He even claims to have heard their dialogue (*secum iam de inhabitantium exitio deliberantes*, ‘the robbers were plotting with each other the murder of those within’), reporting the speech of their leader (*‘heus pueri...’*, ‘Come on, lads, ...’), and describing his physical appearance and that of his henchmen (*manu promptior et corpore vastior*, ‘more eager for action and of more imposing physique’; *illi barbari prorsus et immanes homines*, ‘those utterly savage and monstrous men’). Even though, he argues, they saw him brandishing a sword (*cum me viderent in ferro*), they still attacked him. He claims, finally, that he had always been respected by his own people, again using a visual word: (*sed probe spectatus apud meos semper*, ‘as one highly regarded in my community’). The ensuing fight, as Lucius stresses in this fictitious account, was fair, and is also described in more detail than in Lucius the *auctor*’s version in 2.32, which, as we have seen, is a terse and non-visual account. Finally, to round off his speech, Lucius again calls the gods to witness in a visual metaphor (3.7): *Solis et Iustitiae testatus oculum casumque praesentem meum commendans deum providentiae*. (‘I called to witness the eyes of the Sun and of Justice, and recommended my immediate plight to the gods’ future care’). The divergences between the guard’s and Lucius’ narrative cannot be bridged; both men claim to be truthful, and base these claims on the fact that they have witnessed the scene, with Lucius trumping the guard by adding more modes of perception to the evidence. The two less ‘truthful’ versions, that of the nightwatchman and Lucius’ during the trial, are conspicuously theatrical. The second-time reader especially will realize the comicality of the night-watch guard’s report,¹⁹ the vivid visual details of which are obviously unrealistic (e.g. the observation that the ‘bodies’ are still breathing). Lucius’ answer is intended to contradict the nightwatchman’s version, and he stresses seeing and hearing the brigands who were, as he says, attacking Milo’s door. Van Mal-Maeder attributes the flourishes in these two versions to the practice of rhetorical exercises.²⁰ As such they also form part of Apuleius’ hoodwinking of the reader through theatrical fiction.

¹⁹ Cf. Penwill 1990, 3; van Mal-Maeder 1995, 119.

²⁰ Van Mal-Maeder 1995, 121.

The final version is that of Photis (3.18), who tells Lucius how he came to kill the wineskins that he saw displayed in the theatre after the blanket had been lifted from his victims – her mistress Pamphile needed a young man's hair for a summoning spell, but Photis substituted goat hairs. The spell called the wineskins made from the goats to the door, and Lucius appeared.²¹ Photis' version agrees sufficiently with Lucius' first version to be credible to both first and second-time readers. Photis, on the other hand, stresses Lucius' myopia and inability to see the events clearly, since he is blinded by the night and his drunken condition: *improvidae Noctis deceptus caligine*. Furthermore, as in 3.17, seeing the goatskins shapes her resolve to deceive her mistress, and the sense of seeing is once again linked with deception: *conspicor quendam ... attendentem caprinos utres. Quos cum probe constrictos inflatosque et iam pendentes cernerem...* ('I saw a man paring some goatskins with scissors. I noticed that the skins were inflated, tightly tied, and already hung...').

Being both an ear- and an eye-witness is a greater claim to credibility than merely seeing the evidence, but the sequence of events remains unclear and inexplicable until Photis finally solves the riddle through her own version, which explains the presence of wineskins at Milo's door through magic. Until then, a first-time reader is easily confused by the divergent versions of the story told through different eyes, especially when everyone is claiming to have seen exactly how the events unfolded. Vision, and hence eyewitness accounts given in trials, or rather, people's claims to have seen things, invariably turns out to be unreliable: both the guard's version, a deliberate invention for the Risus festival, and Lucius' second version, despite its elaborate stress on dialogue, are false. Photis' version makes it clear that not much of the event would have been visible: the night was too dark. Seeing, and claiming to have seen events with one's own eyes, are ostenta-

²¹ *Cum ecce crapula madens et improvidae Noctis deceptus caligine audacter mucrone dextrico in insani modum Aiakis armatus, non ut ille vivis pecoribus infestus tota lanavit armenta, sed longe fortius qui tres inflatos caprinos utres exanimasti.* ('At that moment you appeared on the scene, drunk with wine and deceived by the darkness of the sightless night. You drew your short sword, and armed yourself for the role of the mad Ajax. But whereas he inflicted violence on living cattle and slaughtered whole herds, you much more courageously dealt the death-blow to three inflated goatskins. Thus you laid low the enemy without shedding a drop of blood, so that I can embrace not a homicide but an utricide.')

tiously linked with fictionality,²² and theatrical presentation in the *Met.* becomes less reliable.

This play on visuality and make-believe is intensified by Apuleius' use of theatrical props, including costumes, together with the setting in a theatre. Although contemporary theatrical performance integrates recital and oratorical display, in the *Risus* festival we watch the performance of a full-scale tragedy which turns into farcical comedy. The trial is set in a theatre, where the audience would be used to hearing plays recited, but this time the performance includes several full-length speeches for the prosecution and the defence, which instead of alluding to a scripted and time-honoured text for a play, are improvised, *ad hoc* performances.

Seeing a full-scale play acted out in a theatre which, as we have seen, conforms to the audience expectation of tragedy triggered by the theatrical setting, was, although not impossible at the time, still a rare event. Lucius the *auctor* offers a precise description of the emerging drama, detailing the messenger speech of the nightwatchman and the costumes worn by the women who subsequently enter the stage to mourn for their dead,²³ as well as their pathos-filled pleas for justice in long direct speech. Again, the visual impact this display has on Lucius and the audience is accentuated. The women's appearance, initially at least, enhances their credibility. From their looks and speech Lucius has to infer them to be the widow and the mother of the victims. Further, the revelation of Lucius' murdered victims is given the greatest visual impact, when the slaughtered corpses are raised up and displayed before the audience in the theatre. (3.9):²⁴ Theatricality of course enhances

²² Cf O'Brien 2002, especially 47–49, on the importance of magical discourse to illustrate the fictitiousness of the *Risus* festival. O'Brien relates this fictitiousness to the Platonic ideas of discourse and fiction, and appearance and truth.

²³ Both women wear black rags of mourning: *quaedam mulier per medium theatrum lacrimosa et flebilis atra veste contexta parvulum quendam sinu tolerans decurrit* 'a woman, sobbing and tear-stained, wearing mourning black and carrying a baby in her lap, came running down through the theatre' (*Met.* 3.8); *pannis horridis obsita* 'in repulsive rags' (*Met.* 3.8), which echoes tragic language, cf. van der Paardt 1971 *ad loc.*

²⁴ *Sed anus illa, quae fletibus cuncta turbaverat: 'prius', inquit, 'optimi cives, quam latronem istum miserorum pignorum meorum cruci adfigatis, permittite corpora necatorum revelari, ut et formae simul et aetatis contemplatione magis magisque ad iustam indignationem arrecti pro modo facinoros saeviat.*' – 'But the old woman whose weeping had roused general indignation said: "Good citizens, before you nail to the cross this ruffian who has murdered the wretched victims who are my dear ones, allow the corpses of the slaughtered men to be uncovered. By gazing on their youthful and handsome bod-

pathos in rhetoric, but in this theatrical setting it is an end in itself. From the very beginning, the emphasis is on the visual presentation of the building as a theatre, with its entrances, orchestra and stage building, even though it functions as a courtroom, and Apuleius again and again stresses the visual impact of the scene and the scenery, e.g. *Met.* 3.2:

aditus etiam et tectum omne fartim stipaverant, plerique columnis implexi, alii statuis dependuli, nonnulli per fenestras et lacunaria semiconspicui, miro tamen omnes studio visendi pericula salutis neclegebant. Tunc me per proscaenium medium velut quandam victimam publica ministeria producunt et orchestrae mediae sistunt.

‘They even jammed the aisles and the concourse at the top. Several wound their legs round columns, others hung from statues, a few were partly visible through the windows and ornamental trellis-work. All were indifferent to the hazards threatening their physical safety in this curious eagerness to observe the proceedings. Then the city officials escorted me like a sacrificial victim across the stage, and made me stand in the orchestra.’

The women themselves make use of the theatrical space for their entrance as well (*Met.* 3.8):

quaedam mulier per medium theatrum lacrimosa et flebilis atra veste contecta parvulum quendam sinu tolerans decurrit

‘a woman, sobbing and tear-stained, wearing mourning black and carrying a baby in her lap, came running down through the theatre’

Lucius’ reaction again underscores the visuality of the scene (3.9): *quae facies rei! quod monstrum!* (‘Heavens, what a sight met my eyes! What an extraordinary thing!’). These words paraphrase the idea of *peripeteia*²⁵ in a drama (*subito in contrariam faciem obstupefactus haesi*, ‘now I was stopped in my tracks and dumbfounded at this transformation’), and Lucius begins to

ies you may be further roused to just indignation, and inflict harsh punishment which fits the crime!’.’

²⁵ Cf. Aristotle *Poetics* 1452a21ff.

see the truth: *nec possum novae illius imaginis rationem idoneis verbis expedire*. ('I have no adequate words to explain the nature of that strange sight.') – and remains speechless for a time, even turning into a spectacular tableau himself, frozen, dumb and unmoving (3.10), incapable of continuing his own performance.

The spectacle obviously entertains the Hypatan audience. It becomes clear that the audience, once in the theatre of Hypata rather than in the forum, turns from being a trial audience quietly listening to evidence into observers of a theatrical spectacle, who still feel the need to watch Lucius even when they leave the theatre as if a performance has just finished and the curtain has fallen: (3.10): *et certe laetitia delibuti meque respectantes cuncti theatro facessunt* ('the entire audience was overcome with hilarity, and as they left the theatre, they kept looking back at me').

The scene is, as becomes clear in retrospect, not coincidentally acted out on a typical theatrical stage; the performance also has dialogue, a messenger speech, long monologues, several actors on stage acting their parts, an internal audience, some of which is actually sitting within the context of the stage building (*Met.* 3.2), acting like a chorus (laughter and applause punctuate the scenes between speeches),²⁶ and constant reminders in the text of the staginess of the scene, the visuality of the theatrical setting, and the impact of the performance on the audience. Unlike dramas usually performed or recited in Hypata's theatre, this play was not scripted in advance; its text and conclusion are fluid and depend on the improvisations of the actors in the know (the 'witnesses') and on Lucius' unscripted reactions.

After the revelation of the wineskins, the whole tragedy then suddenly turns into a harmless comedy, the wineskins are displayed for what they really are, and Lucius is released from his trial. Throughout the trial, visualisation is accented: visual descriptions, which should prove eye-witness factuality, turn out to be lies, pure fiction.²⁷ The women and the commander of the night guard act like actors in a tragedy, a tragedy which is conspicuously fictitious, as everyone on stage (with the exception of Lucius) and in the audience knows that no one has been killed; Lucius, moreover, is inventing

²⁶ On the audience of Hypata, especially those clinging to the theatrical architecture on stage itself, as part of the performance cf. Slater 2003.

²⁷ *Met.* 3.3 (the guard): *nec in hodiernum credo quemquam pervigilem diligentiam meam culpae posse* – 'I believe that my sleepless supervision can be censured by no one up to this very day'.

an *ad hoc* fictional account of what happened that night, which through its stress on visuality merges in fictionality with that of his accusers.

This impression of a spontaneous oral performance, together with the impossibility of drawing reliable conclusions from the staged performances, continues in the setting. At the end of the drama it emerges that the staging of the scene within a theatre has been far more important than Lucius previously realised: it turns out that the prosecution for murder is a farce performed for the god of Laughter, with Lucius acting as the city's unsuspecting scapegoat. Suddenly, then, for Lucius as well as the first-time reader, the hitherto incoherent stress on theatrical and visual language has some added meaning, because Lucius is revealed as an actor on a stage, under the constant observation of an admiring audience. The audience he had addressed previously metamorphoses from the 'men of the jury' into the laughing audience of the comic theatre.²⁸

In short, visual oral performance becomes associated in the novel with fiction, with the display of the theatre.²⁹ On the other hand, the account of Photis, which stresses the lack of visibility, is given enhanced credibility, (i.e. is more truthful in the world of the story), since it remains uncontradicted and becomes verified through subsequent events.

We might note that this problematisation of an orator's and possibly actor's art, as well as the dangers of privileging eyewitness over other kinds of accounts, is a recurring theme in Apuleius' work. Apuleius touches upon this specific conundrum himself at several points in the *Florida*,³⁰ e.g. in *Fl.* 2, where he quotes a comedy (Pl. *Truc.* 489: *pluris est oculatus testis unus quam auriti decem* 'one witness with good eyes is worth more than ten witnesses with good ears'), which gives rise to the commonplace often found in antiquity that 'seeing is believing'.³¹ Apuleius, however, characteristically rewrites the fixed, written text of the Plautine comedy to adapt it to his own thought: he would prefer to turn this image into *pluris est auritus testis unus quam oculati decem*, privileging *hearing* over *seeing* in the achievement of truth, when the real 'seeing' is that of the soul (through the means of the

²⁸ For a similarly successful link between dramatic and oratorical performance cf. Cicero, *Pro Caelio*, where Cicero, too, turns the audience of Caelius' trial into a theatrical audience as part of his defence strategy. On the *Pro Caelio* cf. Geffcken 1973.

²⁹ Cf. for a similar approach Graverini in this volume.

³⁰ All translations from the *Florida* are taken from Hilton in Harrison-Hilton-Hunink 2001.

³¹ For further examples see Hunink 2001, 64 and Tosi 1992, no. 309 (145f.): e.g. Heraclitus fr. 6 Marcovich, Hdt. 1.8.2 (Kandaules to Gyges), Lucian *Dom.* 20.

ears), not that of the eyes or general sensual perception, which can both be deceptive. He thus distinguishes between the insight the soul may achieve immediately through hearing a philosopher speak, and merely visual perception.³² This is of course the stance of an orator, a particular kind of oral performer, talking to his audience whilst standing in a theatre. In the *Florida*, Apuleius promotes his own trade, oratorical performance, as more credible than the theatrical performances of stage classics otherwise seen in this setting.

In *Fl.* 18, for instance, he calls himself a *philosophus* speaking to his audience in the theatre, where other mimetic or visual genres are also shown:

mimus hallucinatur, comoedus sermocinatur, tragoedus vociferatur, [...] histrio gesticulatur, ceterique omnes ludiones ostentant populo quod cuiusque artis est, sed istis omnibus supersessis nihil amplius spectari debet quam convenientium ratio et dicentis oratio.

‘... the mime actor hallucinates, the comedian blabs, the tragedian debates, [...] the actor gesticulates, and all the other players show their tricks to the people. But these things aside, nothing else ought to be looked at more closely than the enthusiasm of the audience and the vocalism of the speaker.’

The spontaneous, ostensibly non-scripted performance of an orator is privileged over the dramatic genres, which are portrayed as lesser arts and less credible, and as provoking a less enthusiastic reaction from the audience.³³

However Apuleius does not always treat drama as simply inferior to oratory. Sometimes the kind of visual imagination dramatists demand of their audience is similar to that evoked by the orator. Later in the same speech of the *Florida*, Apuleius also quotes a verse from archaic tragedy³⁴ and three further verses from the prologue to Plautus’ *Truculentus* in *Fl.* 18.7f. As he and his audience are both in the theatre in Carthage, he follows

³² See also Hunink 2001, 62. Cf. also Lee 2005, 68: ‘the importance of speech in determining character.’

³³ Cf. e.g. *Fl.* 18.5 with Lee 2005, 168.

³⁴ Cf. *trag. incert.* 217 RIBBECK (possibly Pacuvius *Antiopa*) and Hunink 2001, 184 for possible attributions.

the playwright's tradition and, like a prologue speaker, asks them to imagine being somewhere else:

Quapropter, ut poetae solent hic ibidem varias civitates substituere, ut ille tragicus, qui in theatro dici facit:

'Liber, qui augusta haec loca Cithaeronis colis',

item ille comicus:

'perparvam partim postulat Plautus loci

de vestris magnis atque amoenis moenibus,

Athenas quo sine architectis conferat'

Non secus et mihi liceat nullam longinquam et transmarinam civitatem hic, sed enim ipsius Carthaginis vel curiam vel bybliotheam substituere.

'And so, just as poets fabricate various cities on stages like this, such as the tragedian who makes an actor say in the theatre, "Liber, you who live on these famous slopes of Cithaeron", or similarly the comedian:

"Plautus asks for just a tiny space

from your extensive and lovely city walls

to which, without builders, he may bring you to Athens."

In the same way allow me to put before you no remote city overseas, but the senate house or the library of Carthage itself.'

In both these passages, Apuleius evokes places very different from the actual theatre the audience is sitting in, namely Cithaeron and Athens. He demands that his audience, like the audiences of the tragedian and Plautus, transports itself to the *curia* and library of Carthage, whilst he continues his performance as *rhetor*. He asks them to use their imagination, and the power of the orally evoked image of Athens or Cithaeron, or of the senate house of Carthage, suffices for the audience to imagine the locations: no visual indication of these places is needed, just mentioning them is enough. As the audience does not leave the theatre, this feat of the imagination is aided by the location, the theatrical space, the space of fiction. The dramatists here use the power of words alone to conjure up other places, which facilitates Apuleius' identification of actor and orator. Quoting from written dramatic sources within the theatre, where they might usually be performed, conflates the roles of the dramatic and oratorical performer.

Apuleius stresses the importance of hearing in his philosophy, too, where he utilizes Socrates for his rhetorical stance.³⁵ If hearing is used alone, without comprehension offered by the soul, it is dangerous, cf. *Soc.* 164f.: *non suo pte corde sed alterius verbo reguntur ac per angiporta reptantes consilia ex alienis vocibus conligunt et, ut ita dixerim, non animo sed auribus cogitant.* – ‘many ... are directed not by their own heart but by another’s words, and creep through alleyways gathering their wisdom from the chance utterances of others, thinking, so to speak, not with their minds but with their ears.’ Vision and oral perception combine in the philosopher’s heart to accomplish true comprehension and insight. In *Soc.* 165, he states explicitly that Socrates not only saw, but also heard his *daimonion*, using a quotation from Terence (the only one marked in his extant work): *ut ait illa Terentiana meretrix: ‘audire vocem visa sum modo militis.’* – ‘just as even that prostitute in Terence says: “I seemed just now to hear the soldier’s voice.”’³⁶ The thought of a visible *daimonion* itself is new to Apuleius,³⁷ but it is so important to him that he stresses both the audibility and visibility of Socrates’ *daimonion* several times: *quod equidem arbitror non modo auribus eum verum etiam oculis signa daemonis sui usurpasse* (‘indeed, I think that he picked up the traces of his daimon not only with his ears, but also with his eyes’, *Soc.* 166). It is the power of the words and Socrates’ privileged status as a philosopher, which, for Apuleius, help make the *daimonion* also visible to Socrates as an exceptional being.

Both in Apuleius’ philosophy and his display oratory, then, non-visual oral performance and aural perception are ranked above visual drama and visualisation in general. The visual is supportive of, but subordinated to, the oratorical, since purely oral performance is also able to create or evoke images of its own kind (written and memorized, and in important cases of the soul’s comprehension supported by vision), and to reuse well-known drama in an unexpected performative context. Only the visual, and visual drama, may deceive, while oratory, especially in the hands of a powerful philosopher-speaker, is on the whole more truthful and creates a more truthful vi-

³⁵ Apuleius frequently associates himself with Plato as a *philosophus Platonicus*, cf. *Fl.* 15.26, *Apol.* 10.6, 12.1, 22.7 etc.

³⁶ All translations from *De deo Socratis* are taken from Harrison in Harrison-Hilton-Hunink 2001.

³⁷ On the thought itself and its lack of precedent in Plato, see Beaujeu 1973, 242ff.

sion, i.e. that of the audience's imagination, which reacts immediately to the novelty of the performance.

This notion is also at the heart of the case in Lucius' Hypatan trial. Of the four versions of the wineskin-murder, the two told during the *Risus* festival (that of the commander of the night guard and that of Lucius in his defence), prove (despite their stress on visuality and autopsy) to be the most unlikely and fictitious. The slaughtered wineskins would not have been able to breathe, as the watchman describes them, nor would they have been able to talk and attack Lucius: the goatskins turned wineskins lack heads. Everything we see performed during the mock-trial in the theatre is fictional, lies told by either Lucius himself in his defence, or by the play-acting Hypatans as part of the festival. The other two versions (the first version of Lucius and Photis') are the more privileged and (within the world of the novel) 'truthful' versions, and neither is told through the use of visual expressions.

The fact that the two *less* truthful versions are integrated into a play, a *fabula* (cf. *Met.* 10.2 *scito te tragoediam non fabulam legere*, 'You should know that you are now to read a tragedy and no mere story'),³⁸ adds to their fictionality. As Quintilian (*Inst.* 2.4.2) states: *fabulam, quae versatur in tragoediis atque carminibus, non a veritate modo, sed etiam a forma veritatis remota*, '*fabula*, which is found in tragedies and poems, is remote not only from truth, but also from the appearance of truth'. None of the versions performed in the theatre is close to the truth, and only Photis' account, with its emphasis on blindness and the tragic error of Ajax, who *saw* sheep and believed them to be Greeks, is authoritative. She compares Lucius' killing of the three wineskins with a play, this time with the tragedy of Ajax, who mistakenly kills cattle instead of the Greeks (3.18), demonstrating for the last time in this sequence the unreliability of scripted drama, and within tragedy the specific deceptiveness of vision.

While Lucius' and Photis' versions are both oral, when juxtaposed they highlight the quite different connotations of various oral performances in the *Met.*: the first, retold by Lucius, is credible within the story as the experience of Lucius the *actor*, and the second is told in direct speech, but immediately 'proved true' by the further events in Pamphile's house, since the unavailability of Pamphile's lover results in her having to change into an owl in order to approach him. Apuleius the orator at this point seems to agree with

³⁸ Translation adapted. On the terminology cf. e.g. Bitel 2001, Keulen 2003 *ad loc.* This passage is also discussed in this volume by Graverini.

Quintilian, combining the idea of visibility and fictionality in the concept of dramatic performance without a truthful content. Drama, especially the mock tragedy Apuleius presents in the mock trial at the *Risus* festival, is fiction, and a *fabula* of this kind is not to be believed.

Lucius the *auctor* retells all four versions throughout the novel, giving each speaker a chance to present their version. By integrating all of them into the text of the novel, however, Apuleius throws doubt on the veracity of some, whilst ostensibly endorsing the credibility of others. The authoritativeness of Lucius' written tale, at first instance, thus reinforces the persuasiveness of oratory over fictionalized drama. Oratory, usually spoken in the persuasive first-person, is more credible than drama which allows several different, often contradictory, voices to speak simultaneously or in turn. Dialogue in drama, even within a lawcourt, appears here to be capable of only limited representations of the 'truth', whilst the first-person narrative representation of the novel, the voice of the speaker of the novel itself, is privileged over the roles the characters play within their *fabula*. The only person one can rely on for 'truthful narrative', it seems, is the first-person narrator of the novel himself. Both Lucius' first version and Photis' account cannot be discarded as obvious fiction within fiction, since they have the stamp of credibility given to them by the narrator and are not immediately contradicted through the events of the novel. A dramatic performance, however (i.e. what we see and hear in a theatre), since it is contradicted within the text itself, is more obviously fictitious than the storytelling of Lucius the *auctor*. This text itself is furthermore possibly part of an oral performance delivered by auctor-orator Apuleius to his contemporary audience.

Yet on the scale of the novel as a whole, drama and its problematic relationship with the concept of veracity frequently interferes with the credibility-commanding oratorical stance of the first-person narrator.³⁹ Crucially, the novel's prologue recalls ancient comedy, i.e. fictionalized drama, and the pseudodialogic form engages in an oral debate.⁴⁰ The prologue speaker associates himself with a character from a fictitious, untruthful genre, a genre which gets re-written to appear non-scripted and new.⁴¹ Lucius' own version

³⁹ This problem might be magnified not in a recital performance, but if the novel is read from a written version by a second-time reader, who reads the story from a critical distance.

⁴⁰ Cf. especially Dowden 2001, 128 with note 17, and Smith 1972=1999.

⁴¹ Cf. Keulen's discussion of the prologue in this volume.

of events is continuously questioned, too, by the dramatic elements included in his own narrative. Throughout the novel Lucius claims to have seen events with his own eyes – and believes he has understood their consequences because he has witnessed them (e.g. the *anteludia*, the Isis procession, or the diverse visions of Isis and Osiris in book 11): critics have explored the spectacular nature of some of these scenes.⁴² As Dowden points out, Apuleius ensures that Lucius can always give an eye-witness account and thus, within the world of the novel, his narration is plausible; plausibility does not however guarantee that it is not fictitious.⁴³ ‘Un-scripted’ oral performance clashes with drama, and the credibility-hugging stance of the first-person narrator is frequently undercut by dramatic intertexts. As I have underlined here, for example, eye-witness recapitulation of events, especially when these scenes are linked with spectacles and dramatic performances, is questioned by the programmatic scene in the Hypatan theatre. Lucius’ own versions of the events are thus continuously questionable as fictitious, or infected by dramatic fictionality.

Similarly, Lucius’ telling of his story contains a *fingierte Mündlichkeit* of a fictitious dialogue between narrator and audience. If Apuleius ‘performed’ the *Metamorphoses* in a theatre, he himself would take up the role of the reciter of a fictional work in a dramatic setting, where both he and his audience listen to a text which itself discusses the limitations of the credibility of a performance in a theatre. We might imagine a Chinese box effect, whereby the audience witnesses a series of oral performances layered inside Apuleius’ own performance. Consequently, the credibility of the novel itself, and Lucius’ own claim to veracity, are called into question. Despite the fact that Apuleius tells his story in the credibility-enhancing first-person, and hints at autobiographical detail (which prompted St. Augustine to play with the idea of believing Apuleius and Lucius to be one and the same),⁴⁴ at the same time the narrative presents itself as incredible and fictional, something that might have been enhanced even more if parts of the novel were performed in a theatre. Yet the highly visual descriptions and *ekphraseis* which Apuleius accumulates in the *Met.* are similar to the scenes he asks his audience to imagine in the theatre of Carthage in *Fl.* 18.7. A reading or recital of the

⁴² Cf. Slater 2003 for a detailed discussion.

⁴³ Dowden 1982, 431f. Cf. Quint. *Inst.* 4.2.53 on comedies and tragedies being plausibly constructed, although they are fictitious.

⁴⁴ On Augustine and Apuleius cf. Harrison 2000, 1 and 218 with further literature.

Met. in a theatre would explicitly merge ‘truthful’ oral performance with self-consciously fictional dramatic display.

I have suggested, then, that the fictionality of drama stands out as a major theme in the *Metamorphoses*. Theatrical performances bear the stigma of incredibility, as we see paradigmatically in the Risus trial, which is staged in a theatre and turns out to be based on false perceptions, despite the fact that it also employs some strong elements of dramatic verification such as the messenger speech. In the Risus festival, the novel gives far greater credibility to purely oral, quasi-oratorical descriptions with no visual component, like Photis’ explanation of the events leading up to the Risus festival. Yet the performance context continues to give prominence to the novel’s fictionality, denying readers access to the ‘true meaning’ of the text. By presenting his audience alternately as readers, listeners and spectators, and by interweaving different kinds of oral performances (with their various levels of association with truth and believability), into what is often an overtly inscribed and scripted text, Apuleius presents us with an often jarring novel which makes entertaining, provocative fiction from a hybrid of ‘truthful’ and fictional genres.⁴⁵

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⁴⁵ I am grateful to Andrea Cucchiarelli, Luca Graverini, Stephen Harrison, Nicholas Horsfall and the editor of the volume, Vicky Rimell, for their helpful suggestions on earlier drafts of this paper.

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