

Vocis immutatio:
The Apuleian Prologue and
the Pleasures and Pitfalls of Vocal Versatility

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Introduction

The notion that the Prologue of Apuleius' *Metamorphoses* plays on the tension and interaction between different modes of representation, introducing on the one hand a written text to be read by the reader, and on the other hand an oral story to be heard by an audience, has been discussed in various contributions on this intriguing text, most recently by some of those collected in the Oxford volume on the Prologue edited by A. Kahane and A. Laird (2001). Thus, for example, Don Fowler (2001, 225) speaks of the *Metamorphoses* as a 'disjunctive work', containing a dialectic between an assumed orality (*fingierte Mündlichkeit*) and an actual written mode of representation. The Apuleian Prologue, Fowler argues, 'invites the reader to construct a scene of presence, in which the narrator of the story is imparting it to our *aures ... beniuolas*' (226). At the same time, for this 'imagined' scene of oral immediacy, the physical presence of the text is an indispensable prerequisite (cf. *Met.* 1, 1, 1 *At ego tibi sermone isto Milesio uarias fabulas conseram auresque tuas beniuolas lepido susurro permulceam, modo si papyrus Aegyptiam argutia Nilotici calami inscriptam non spreueris inspicere*).

Starting from Fowler's observation that 'the *Metamorphoses* exists for the reader as a written text in his or her hands, but the narrator invites him or her to participate in the adventures as if present at the adventures of the acting "I" or looking over the shoulder of the composing "I"', the present study intends to focus on the 'participating' activity of the reader in a slightly different way. Following the lead by the important article by C. Harrauer and F.

Römer, I will work with the Prologue's Roman terminology of rhetorical performance and vocal style,¹ elaborating upon its programmatic significance with regard to the activity of the Roman reader, in connection with the central themes of the novel, which involve fickle changes, unstoppable metamorphoses, dangerous magic and enticing rhetoric. In this study, the activity of the reader is viewed as a performative activity, a rhetorical action in which the reader assumes the *persona* of the narrating voice (he *becomes* the *ego*). In my view, the 'scene of presence' mentioned by Fowler is to be enacted not only in the mind of the Roman reader, but also in an active, physical sense, triggered by his rhetorical experience and practice. I will analyse the Prologue as a rhetorical programme that stages the activity of the reader as an impersonating performance, especially regarding the varied use of the voice. This reading of the Prologue is introduced by a discussion of possible reading practices against the background of intellectual culture in Antonine Rome, and against the pedagogical background of the elite Roman reader, who was well trained in Roman rhetoric, in which the use of voice

¹ There is little attention paid to the significance of Roman rhetoric in the Kahane-Laird volume, with the exception of the contributions by Anton Bitel ('Fiction and history in Apuleius' Milesian Prologue'), and Ken Dowden ('Prologic, predecessors, and prohibitions'). See my BMCR review of Kahane-Laird 2001 (2002.08.33). In a forthcoming study, Stefan Tilg offers a new reading of the Prologue as a metapoetic programme, focusing on genre (the Milesian Tale), rhetorical-literary composition and style (see also n. 53). Although we both interpret the Prologue against the background of Roman rhetorical theory, our emphasis is quite different, as Tilg's focus is on *elocutio* (the expression of a prose text or speech in words), while my approach stresses aspects of *actio* (performance), especially vocal aspects. Given the overlap and interplay between concepts of language, style, and genre in the Prologue, admirably demonstrated by Tilg, I acknowledge that the present reading in a 'performative' key may give an incomplete picture or unduly reduce the ambiguity of the text. Yet, my choice to focus on the performer's voice in the present volume is validated, on the one hand, by the programmatic significance in the *Met.* of the physical, audible 'voice' and its incantatory powers (e.g. 1, 1, 1 *susurro per-mulceam* [cf. 1, 3, 1 *magico susurramine*]; 5, 3, 5 *modulatae multitudinis conferta uox* [cf. 5, 15, 2 *dulcissimis modulis animos audientium remulcebant*]; 5, 6, 9 *ingerens uerba mulcentia*; 5, 6, 10 *ui ac potestate ueneri susurrus*), and, on the other hand, by the crucial role of the *actio* in the oratorical education and practice of Rome. This role was much more powerful than is generally recognised (see Cavarzere 2002). At the same time, its somewhat fraught position, given its dangerous proximity to 'acting', draws attention to fundamental issues of identity and gender in Roman society, issues that lie at the heart of Apuleius' literary text. In citing the *Met.*, I refer to the edition of Helm (³1931, repr. 1992), conveniently adding the paragraph numbers of Robertson.

played such an essential role. This also involves issues of gender and cultural identity.

As I intend to demonstrate, Apuleius plays on the significant tension between the educational benefits of rhetorical versatility and the conceivable risks of engaging with the spell-like qualities attached to a seductive oral performance. The cultural significance of this tension can be viewed from both a diachronic and a synchronic perspective. Being both a Roman eloquent performer and a Middle Platonist, Apuleius was undoubtedly aware of the various discussions about the ambiguous nature of vivid rhetorical and literary versatility, including a varied use of the voice to represent a whole range of characters. On the one hand, the pedagogical role of such rhetorical variety and versatility was acknowledged by many.² On the other hand, there was a persistent hostility to the expressive variety of having many voices, a hostility that we already encounter in Plato,³ but which lives on in the warnings of Roman professors of rhetoric against effeminate ‘singing’ delivery, which turns orators into actors and poses a possible threat to Roman masculinity.⁴ Without excluding the diachronic (Platonism) and synchronic (Plutarch, the Second Sophistic) perspectives on enchanting rhetoric and vocal acrobatics, this study will primarily focus on Apuleius’ treatment of these issues as an expression of contemporary *Roman* culture, the sophisticated elite culture of Antonine Rome.⁵

² Arius Didymus, court philosopher to the emperor Augustus, in his *Introduction to Ethics*, calls Plato πολύφωνος, ‘with many voices’, probably referring to his variety of style, which has a *pedagogical* function: vivid writing is needed to interest those unused to the joys of abstract argument (see Annas 1999, 16 f.; cf. below, nn. 30 and 46). For Roman appreciation of rhetorical change and variety see below, nn. 34, 57, 74.

³ Cf. Plato, *Republic* 392C–398B on the pernicious influence of dramatic recitation. Greek schoolboys were not allowed to repeat Homer or Aeschylus in a perfunctory gabble, but were expected to throw themselves into the story and deliver the speeches with the tones and gestures of an actor. This educational practice continued with the Romans. For the role of performance (*actio*, *pronuntiatio*, ὑπόκρισις) in Roman (reading) education see Jakobi 1996, 7–10 (on Donatus’ commentary on Terence); cf. also Diederich 1999, 15–21 (on Porphyrio’s commentary on Horace). The ἀνάγνωσις καθ’ ὑπόκρισιν with the *grammaticus* is a preliminary phase of the training in *actio/pronuntiatio* (ὑπόκρισις) with the rhetor, the latter consisting of modulation of the voice (*figura uocis*), facial expression (*uultus*), and gesture (*corporis motus*); see below, n. 26.

⁴ For Roman rhetoric as the performance of Roman manhood see Gleason 1995.

⁵ In a recent article on Roman identity in the *Met.*, G. Rosati (2003) stresses Apuleius’ creative role in the Latin language, and his function as a ‘cultural mediator’ between the Greek world and the Roman world, to benefit the latter. In the *Metamorphoses* we find a truly Apuleian synthesis between those two worlds: Apuleius created something authen-

The cultural context: performing and reading in Antonine Rome

How should we picture contemporary reading practices of Apuleius' *Metamorphoses*? Should we imagine Apuleius performing parts of the *Met.* in the theatre of Carthage? In his rhetorical works, Apuleius suggests that in Carthage he was both read as an author and heard as a performing speaker in the theatre (cf. *flor.* 18, 14 *quod sum uobis ... nec uoce inauditus nec libris inlectus improbatuſue*).⁶ However, the intimate atmosphere evoked by *at ego tibi sermone isto Milesio uarias fabulas conseram*, seems at odds with such a performance. Should we, with Dowden (1994), think of the literary society in Rome, in which the *litterati* of Apuleius' day (Fronto, Gellius, Favorinus) met to engage in intellectual discussions?⁷ Possibly, these *sermones* were a source not only of erudition and instruction, but also of sophisticated entertainment and delight, and could include a *sermo Milesius*.

In the age of Gellius and Apuleius, who were possibly acquainted through their studies in Athens,⁸ the Roman elite found a way of shining at cultured tables by discussing the language they heard at a reading of a piece of literature. We find an example of this in *Attic Nights* 19, 7, where Gellius and his companion discuss the striking words and phrases they heard at a reading of Laevius' *Alcestis*, during a dinner at the estate of the learned poet Iulius Paulus. Such lively discussions of literature, praising some words for being worthy of imitation and dismissing others for being too poetic and

tically Latin from something originally Greek, just as he claims in *Apol.* 38, 5 to stamp authentic Latin coinages for terms derived from the Greeks (Rosati 2003, 282 f.).

⁶ Apuleius seems to have performed in the manner of the Greek sophists of his day (see Harrison 2000, 124 on improvisation); on rhetorical performances before large audiences by sophists in the age of the Second Sophistic see e.g. Schmitz 1997, 160 ff. See below, n. 46 and 61.

⁷ For the meetings in the intellectual world of Fronto and Gellius, to which Apuleius too may have belonged, see Keulen 2004, 224–226, with further refs. According to Dowden (1994, 423 f.), Rome was the place where Apuleius actually wrote the *Met.* during his stay there in the early 150s, for an intellectual audience in the spirit of Fronto and Gellius. I prefer to take a 'Roman audience' in a wider sense, viz. a 'Latin-speaking audience' (see Holford-Strevens 2003, 13 n. 9; Graverini 2002, 73–4) with a Roman education. This education must have played a key role in the identification of the Latin-speaking provincial elite with Rome throughout the Roman Empire. This makes it very difficult to define a specific date or location for the *Met.*, e.g. the Roman capital or Carthage.

⁸ For the possible acquaintance between Apuleius and Gellius see Keulen 2004, 224.

inappropriate for use in prose, were a form of high-class leisure (cf. 19, 7, 12 *adnotatiunculis oblectabamus*).

Living in an age in which fashionable dinner conversation could include a discussion of the meaning of an old word, or the (in-)appropriateness of a neologism,⁹ those who heard Apuleius' Prologue would have been surprised at the expression *aerumnabilis* (1, 1, 4), which they would recognise as a rare word, smacking of archaism (cf. *aerumna*). Or, such an audience would have wondered whether they should deem the archaic expression *prosapia* dignified or stupid.¹⁰ Their ears would be charmed by hearing the rhythm and sound effects of Apuleius' poetic prose, though possibly offended at the effeminate Greek sing-song rhetoric, but at the same time this Roman audience would admire the bookish learning behind the facade of autodidactic inventiveness (*nullo magistro praeunte*), appreciating the hard work which made it sound so easy and fluent (*aerumnabili labore*).

Moreover, following an interesting suggestion by Dowden (2001), we could imagine that a contemporary Roman audience, who shared the literary and linguistic culture as exemplified by the tastes of Fronto and Gellius, might have been highly interested to hear Apuleius' frequent use of old-fashioned Latin words of the sort Plautus had used, and perhaps would have recognised in this archaizing tendency a significant influence of Sisenna, the translator of the *Milesiaka*, on our Latin *conditor Milesiae*.¹¹

Did the contemporary Roman reader recite the *Metamorphoses* to his friends, as a form of entertainment during or after dinner? To Romans who were able and eager to impress their table-companions by their literary erudition and their rhetorical panache, the Apuleian text would have offered a treasure of possibilities. As Kenney observes (1990, 28), the ear-pleasing

⁹ See Holford-Strevens 2004, 8 on the 'social erudition' in the time of Fronto, Gellius and Apuleius.

¹⁰ The archaism *prosapia* was a word which Cicero still used for the sake of a more adorned Latin when translating from Greek (*Tim.* 11, 39), but which sounded offensive to Quintilian (*Inst.* 1, 6, 40; 8, 3, 26) for being too archaic (see Keulen 2003, 74 f. on *Met.* 1, 1, 3 *mea uetus prosapia*).

¹¹ See Dowden 2001, 126–128; Sisenna was well-known to both Gellius (who refers to his *Historiae* in 9, 14, 12; 11, 15, 7; 12, 15) and Fronto, who refers clearly to the *Milesiae* itself in *Epist.* 4, 3, 2 (p. 57, 3) *Sisennam in lasciuis*. For Fronto's and Gellius' praise of the use of words from Plautus see Dowden 2001, 128 with n. 18; Holford-Strevens 2003, 134, 209; cf. Gell. 3, 3, 6 (Favorinus) *delectatus faceta uerborum antiquitate, meretricum uitia atque deformitates significantium* ('delighted with the wit of the archaic words that describe the ugly defects of harlots').

rhetorical style of the *Met.*, marked by an abundance of archaisms, neologisms, poeticisms and stylistic embellishments such as sound-effects (alliteration, assonance, rhyme, rhythm), seems to ‘cry out’ for reading the text aloud.¹² We know that the reading aloud from a written text provided the intellectual elite of Apuleius’ time with the aural delights they would welcome in a time of leisure.¹³

But would Roman intellectuals, as we see them in the Gellian vignettes, also appreciate Milesian fiction, and if they did, would they admit it? Gellius does not represent his admired teachers as reading novels, for understandable reasons, but this does not mean that educated Romans did not read them. As Leofranc Holford-Strevens points out to me, Gellius’ congenial teacher of rhetoric Antonius Iulianus would have appreciated Milesian fiction,¹⁴ but probably not his stern colleague T. Castricius. As Holford-Strevens also points out, the Antonine era was not so moralistic as it might sometimes pretend, and Gellius knew such works as Naevius’ *Triphallus* (2, 19, 6). What is more, it is interesting to note, incidentally, that both Fronto and Gellius wrote narrative fiction themselves.¹⁵

Assuming that Roman intellectuals did read fiction, would the participants of such literary gatherings actually recite the *Metamorphoses* themselves, or were they merely entertained by a *lector* or *anagnostes*, who was usually a slave? In Gellius’ *Attic Nights*, the latter seems to be the case in situations where recitation of literature is clearly represented as a form of entertainment, during dinner or in the theatre, such as the recitation of Laevius’ *Alcestis* mentioned above.¹⁶ In other cases, which are, however,

¹² As Zimmerman 2000, 263 remarks, ‘the *Met.* is pre-eminently a text to be heard’. See also Van Mal-Maeder 2001 (Introduction, 6), 25 f., with further references.

¹³ Cf. Gell. 20, 9, 1 *delectari mulcerique aures suas dicebat Antonius Iulianus figmentis uerborum nouis Cn. Matii, hominis eruditi, qualia haec quoque essent, quae scripta ab eo in mimiambis memorabat.*

¹⁴ Cf. Gell. 18, 5, 1 *Cum Antonio Iuliano rhetore, uiro hercle bono et facundiae florentis, complures adulescentuli familiares eius Puteolis aestiuarum feriarum ludum et iocum in litteris amoenioribus et in uoluptatibus pudicis honestisque agitabamus.* Cf. previous note.

¹⁵ Cf. Fronto’s ‘Fable of Sleep’ (p. 231, 14–233, 15), ‘The Ring of Polycrates’ (p. 222, 3–223, 19), and ‘Arion’ (p. 241, 1–242, 7); of the last story, Gellius tells a version too (16, 19; cf. Apul. *Flor.* 17, 15, in the context of the power of the human voice). On Gellius as a storyteller see Anderson 2004.

¹⁶ Cf. Gell. 3, 19, 1 *Apud cenam Fauorini philosophi cum discubitum fuerat [...], seruus assistens mensae eius legere inceptabat aut Graecarum quid litterarum aut nostratium; 18, 5, 2 Atque ibi tunc Iuliano nuntiatur ἀναγνώστην quendam, non indoctum hominem,*

directly connected with philological inquiry, the reading seems to be performed by the members of the intellectual circle themselves.¹⁷

In this article I would like to argue that, in view of their thoroughly rhetorical background, we have enough reason to suppose that the Roman readers Apuleius had in mind when composing the *Met.* would actually feel invited to read this text aloud, with appropriate use of voice and gesture (although this does not exclude the possibility of an individual, silent reading). Although the genre is quite different, we may illustrate such reading practices with an example from Fronto's correspondence. In one of his letters to his teacher of rhetoric Fronto, the future emperor Marcus Aurelius speaks with admiration of a speech of his beloved master, a part of which he even delivered with appropriate performance (ὕπεκρινάμην) to his father:

M. Aur. *epist.* 1, 6, 1 (p. 10, 4–7)

patri, domino meo, locum ex oratione tua, quem me eligere uoluerat, ὑπεκρινάμην commode. plane illa suum auctorem sibi dari flagitabant, denique mihi uix succlamatum est 'ἄξιός τοῦ ποιητοῦ'.

The passage from your speech, which the Lord my father wished me to choose out, I even declaimed with appropriate delivery. Needless to say, the words cried aloud for their own author to deliver them: in fact, I was scarcely greeted with *Worthy of the maker!*

The young Marcus, who had been trained in performance by the comic actor Geminus,¹⁸ performed Fronto's speech with appropriate delivery in a more private context, namely to his father, to the utter delight and honour of his master Fronto.¹⁹ However, Marcus preferred Fronto to perform the speech

uoce admodum scita et canora Ennii annales legere ad populum in theatro; 19, 7, 2 cum ad eum (sc. Iulium Paulum) cenassemus et apud mensam eius audissemus legi Laeui Alcestin.

¹⁷ Cf. e.g. Gell. 19, 10, 12–13 *Quocirca statim proferri Iphigeniam Q. Enni iubet. In eius tragoediae choro inscriptos esse hos uersus legimus [...] Hoc ubi lectum est, tum deinde Fronto ad grammaticum iam labentem: 'audisti ne,' inquit 'magister optime, Ennium tuum dixisse praeterpropter [...]?'.*

¹⁸ See van den Hout 1999, 38 on Fronto p. 14, 15.

¹⁹ Compare Fronto's reply in 1, 7, where he expresses his delight that his speech has been both delivered and copied out by Marcus: 1, 7, 2 (p. 14, 13 f.) *meae uero orationi M. Caesar actor contigit et pronuntiator tuaque ego opera et uoce audientibus placui, cum audiri a te ac tibi placere omnibus summe sit optabile; 1, 7, 3 (p. 14, 26 f.) mea contra oratio mediocris, ne dicam ignobilis, a doctissimo et facundissimo omnium Caesare illus-*

himself, since ‘the words cried out aloud for their own author to deliver them’ (*plane illa suum auctorem sibi dari flagitabant*).

In a similar way, it is likely that readers of Apuleius’ works, belonging to a Roman elite – who had at least their rhetorical *paideia* in common with Marcus Aurelius, whether they lived in Rome or Carthage – performed the *Metamorphoses* for each other in leisure time before a small circle of friends, trying to accomplish a delivery that was ἀξίως τοῦ ποιητοῦ, ‘worthy of the maker’. At the same time, it is just as likely that they preferred to hear and see the *auctor* from Madauros delivering his own work himself, for example in the theatre. Possibly, they had had the enthralling experience of hearing Apuleius performing ‘live’, just as the sophist Favorinus enthralled in Rome even those who could not understand Greek with his high-pitched voice, facial expression and rhythmical diction.²⁰ Of course, a speech by the future Roman Emperor’s master of rhetoric belonged to a different category than a work of narrative fiction by an African philosopher-orator. Still, as Dowden (1994) points out, the survival of the text of the *Metamorphoses* proves its circulation in Rome, and therefore its popularity; moreover, we have ancient testimony that Apuleius’ Milesian fiction was well-known in Roman senatorial circles, even if reading or writing works of this genre was, according to the same testimony, not considered particularly respectable.²¹

trata est. Nec ulla umquam scena tantum habuit dignitatis – M. Caesar actor, Titus imperator auditor!

²⁰ Cf. Philostratus, *Vit. Soph.* p. 491 ἀλλὰ κάκεινους ἔθελε γέ τῆ τε ἡχῆ τοῦ φθέγγματος καὶ τῷ σημαίνοντι τοῦ βλέμματος καὶ τῷ ῥυθμῷ τῆς γλώττης. Gellius too is full of admiration for his master’s ability to enchant the members of his intellectual circle with his elegant sweet speech (16, 3, 1 *tenebat ...animos nostros homo ille fandī dulcissimus ...; ita sermonibus usquequaque amoenissimis demulcebat*). Elsewhere, Gellius witnesses the tumultuous applause in Rome for Favorinus declaiming in Greek (9, 8, 3; cf. 14, 1, 1; 32).

²¹ Cf. Septimius Severus’ deprecatory remark in a letter to the Senate about Clodius Albinus (emperor in 193–197 AD), cited in *Hist. Aug. Alb.* 12, 12: ‘*Maior fuit dolor, quod illum (sc. Clodium Albinum) pro litterato laudandum plerique duxistis, cum ille neniis quibusdam anilibus occupatus inter Milesias Punicas Apulei sui et ludicra litteraria consenesceret*’. In *Hist. Aug. Alb.* 11, 8, it is even alleged that Clodius Albinus wrote ‘Milesian fiction’ himself (*Milesias nonnulli eiusdem esse dicunt, quarum fama non ignobilis habetur, quamuis mediocriter scriptae sint*).

Pedagogy and pleasure:
performance (*actio, pronuntiatio*) and vocal exercise (*declamatio*)

As I noted in the Introduction, the issue of reading practices (especially dramatic recitation) is closely connected with ancient education, in particular the attention to performance in grammatical and rhetorical *paideia*. In the present section, I will show that the pedagogical background of rhetorical exercises is important for both writing and reading narrative fiction. Scholars have for a long time observed the striking parallels between ancient fiction (the ‘novels’) and rhetorical exercises. Recent studies draw attention to the important role in the Greek and Roman novels of the well-known declamatory technique of impersonation (ἠθοποιία, *sermocinatio*), taught by the rhetorical exercise-books (*progymnasmata*) for the sake of characterisation and emotional effect.²² Moreover, scholars have frequently compared ancient fictional texts with the rhetorical exercise called ‘narrative about persons’ (*narratio quae uersatur in personis*), which was designed to entertain and to develop narrative skill, through vivid delineation of characters and emotions.²³

The ‘declamatory’ nature of Petronius’ and Apuleius’ novels was probably recognised also by Macrobius, who groups their fiction under the rhetorical category of *argumentum*, and who identifies the literary activity behind it with the verbs *se exercere* and *ludere*, while recalling the rhetorical programme of oral/aural delight from Apuleius’ Prologue (*aures ... permulceam – auditum mulcent*).²⁴ Significantly, the verbs Macrobius uses to de-

²² On the Greek novel see Birchall 1996; Hock 1997; on Petronius, see Jones 1991, 105 f.; Jenson 2004, 31 ff. See also Marincic in this volume, who connects the first-person narrative in Achilles Tatius to the broader cultural context of sophistic display and self-fashioning in the Greek Second Sophistic.

²³ Rhet. Her. 1, 12; Cic. Inv. 1, 27 *Tertium genus est remotum a ciuilibus causis quod delectationis causa non inutuli cum exercitatione dicitur et scribitur. Eius partes sunt duae, quarum altera in negotiis, altera in personis maxime uersatur.* The words *exercere* and *exercitatio* refer to the so-called *progymnasmata* (*praeexercitamenta*), of which the *narratio* is one of the first exercises imposed by the rhetor. For a critical assessment of the role of the rhetorical concept of the *narratio* in the ancient novels see Barwick 1928.

²⁴ Macr. Somn. 1, 2, 8 *auditum mulcent uel comoediae, quales Menander eiusue imitatores agendas dederunt, uel argumenta fictis casibus amatorum referta, quibus uel multum se Arbiter exercuit uel Apuleium non numquam lusisse miramur. hoc totum fabularum genus, quod solas aurium delicias profitetur, e sacrario suo in nutricum cunas sapientiae tractatus eliminat.* Macrobius’ description recalls the rhetorical category of *argumenta*

scribe the literary activity of Petronius and Apuleius (*se exercere* and *ludere*) highlight important aspects of the activity of composing these texts, aspects of rhetorical exercise and literary entertainment. The latter verb refers to the literary *lusus*, which Apuleius also alleges to have exhibited in his erotic verse, and which he does not consider unworthy of philosophers, including Plato (cf. *Apol.* 9–10). Macrobius expresses his surprise (*miramur*) at a fellow philosopher's unexpected choice of genre: *non numquam* also indicates Macrobius' awareness that Apuleius was more prominent in other genres, as opposed to Petronius, who engaged in such exercises considerably (*multum*).²⁵

What are the implications of these associations and connections for the Roman reader, thoroughly educated and trained in this kind of rhetorical exercise? For the Roman reader, reading the *Metamorphoses* may have been an experience which brought back memories of his school days, where frequent training in vocal and histrionic modes of representation (*performance*) served to develop his rhetorical skills. Fiction, then, is a playful exercise not only for the writer, but also for the reader, who actively engages in the 'orality' evoked by the dramatic fictions articulated in the text. Reading the *Metamorphoses* meant an occasion for the educated elite to amuse and to train themselves in a moment of leisure, engaging with a literary tour-de-force that challenged them to exercise the voice and to play with a variety of modes of vivid delivery. Apuleius' text offered the Roman reader a wealth of *personae* and emotions to impersonate, and as many challenges to savour and hone one's range of vocal and expressive skills.

Performance was a crucial part of Roman education, both with the *grammaticus* and with the *rhetor*;²⁶ it enabled the speaker to become any character, or to take on any mood or emotion he wanted. To be able to create

for fictional narratives of a plausible nature (Cic. *Inv.* 1, 27 *ficta res, quae tamen fieri potuit*), such as we find in comedy.

²⁵ According to Regali (comm. on Macr. *Somn.* 2, 8 *Apuleium nonnumquam lusisse miramur*), we should not read into Macrobius' words a sense of great disappointment about the error of a fellow Platonist, who is shocked that a philosopher like Apuleius engages in 'unphilosophic' erotic fiction, but rather as an expression of the wonder experienced while reading the literary *lusus* by Apuleius (cf. *Apul. Met.* 1, 1, 2 *ut mireris*). Macrobius probably knew the passage from the *Apology* mentioned above, in which Apuleius defends himself from the attacks of his erotic poems, by placing himself in the company of, among others, Plato.

²⁶ Cic. *Brutus* 142; *De orat.* 1, 260, with Leeman-Pinkster-Nelson *ad loc.* For 'dramatic' reading practices see above, Introduction, n. 3.

the impression of spontaneous orality, the Roman student of rhetoric had to practice a lot, and a central part of these exercises was formed by vocal training. The acquisition of vocal flexibility, or the ability to change the tone, intensity and force of his voice, was extremely important for the young Roman who worked hard to become a good speaker and a worthy Roman citizen. This vocal flexibility was to be mastered through exercises in declamation – notably, the earliest reference in Latin literature to the *declamatio* appears in connection with performance (delivery). For the author of the *Rhetorica ad Herennium*, *declamatio* amounted to vocal exercise.²⁷

The crucial role of *exercitatio* in rhetorical education is thus associated with *declamatio*, itself a rhetorical exercise, and originally focused on the use of the voice. But the status of rhetorical exercise is ambiguous. On the one hand, *exercitatio* brings in the aspect of thorough rhetorical preparation of Roman students, consisting of, for instance, the training of the voice and gestures, and the developing of *elocutio* by the reading, memorizing and imitating of poets, orators and other writers.²⁸ On the other hand, such rhetorical exercises and declamations could very well be identified with literary activities of an entertaining kind, and it is especially this aspect which makes them controversial. Rhetorical exercises and declamations were subject to critical debates, precisely for their lack of practical value: they were just exercises. To lose oneself in the (vocal) exercise of declamation is to lose touch with reality.²⁹

²⁷ Rhet. Her. 3, 20 *Mollitudinem uocis, hoc est ut eam torquere in dicendo nostro commodo possimus, maxime faciet exercitatio declamationis*. In this sense, *declamatio* probably renders the Greek ἀναφώνησις ('exercise of the voice'), see Bonner 1969, 20 n. 3.

²⁸ For the *exercitatio*, forming part of the traditional system *natura – ars – exercitatio*, see Cic. *De orat.* 1.147–159.

²⁹ Cic. *De orat.* 1, 149 *sed plerique in hoc uocem modo, neque eam scienter, et uires exercunt suas, et linguae celeritatem incitant, uerborumque frequentia delectantur*; Tac. *Dial.* 31, 1 *Hoc sibi illi ueteres persuaserant, ad hoc efficiendum intellegebant opus esse non ut in rhetorum scholis declamarent nec ut fictis nec ullo modo ad ueritatem accedentibus controuersiis linguam modo et uocem exercerent, sed ut [in] iis artibus pectus implerent in quibus de bonis ac malis ...disputatur*. As Roland Mayer points out in his commentary ad loc., this recalls the opening chapters of Petronius' *Satyrica*, where Encolpius and Agamemnon attack declamatory exercises in the rhetorical schools. Scholars often point to the paradoxical nature of this attack, voiced in a text that seems to be a pastiche full of pathetic and fantastic material borrowed from declamatory repertoire, not unlike the text of Apuleius. For the significant presence of declamation in the Latin novels see van Mal-Maeder 2003.

Therefore, the performance of a text like Apuleius' *Metamorphoses* not only confronted the reader with the pedagogical role of rhetorical and vocal versatility, but also with its treacherous and risky aspects, since the impersonation of a glib, fickle, and 'many-voiced' Greek sophist (Lucius),³⁰ or a braying ass, or a lusty drunk old witch (Meroe) contributed little to a solid construction of Roman manhood. The Roman reader of the *Metamorphoses* was also confronted with the other side of the coin of rhetorical *exercitatio*, a side he well knew, that of an empty rhetoric, produced merely for the sake of effect and pleasure, and for exercising the voice, without having any relevance to reality. As we will see in the next section, the Apuleian Prologue contains a rhetorical programme that instructs the reader to perform just such a rhetoric of pleasure.

The Apuleian Prologue and Use of the Voice

We are now going to take a closer look at the Prologue itself, focusing on its vocal instructions for the reader, which are programmatically connected to the contents, style, and genre of the *Metamorphoses*. Through the rhetorical terminology of the Prologue we hear the *exordium* (cf. 1, 1, 3 *exordior*) of an *ego* who presents himself as narrator *qua* narrator before his actual *narratio* begins, and commends his rhetorical prowess (*captatio benevolentiae*). At the beginning, the Apuleian Prologue is explicitly keyed in a low conversational tone, even a whispering voice (*sermo, susurrus*):

Apul. *Met.* 1, 1, 1

At ego tibi sermone isto Milesio uarias fabulas conseram auresque tuas beniuolas lepto susurro permulceam ...

Come, let me join various tales for you in this Milesian conversation, and let me beguile your ears into approval with a charming whispering...

³⁰ In an interesting passage on πολύφωνος ('many-voiced'), Annas 1999, 16 points out that the Middle Platonist Albinus in his *Introduction to reading Plato* says that in the Platonic dialogues the sophistic types should be represented through mimetic language as appropriately varied and fickle. Cf. Plato, *Republic* 604E–605A, where the mimetic artist is said to go for imitating the 'irritable and varied' character, which lends itself to imitation better than noble straightforwardness.

On the one hand, this recalls rhetorical recommendations for an unstrained use of the voice in the *exordium* to a speech, for the sake of both *captatio benevolentiae* and the stability of the speaker's voice.³¹ Prologues to speeches should be pronounced with a calm conversational voice, which helps to seduce the audience into accepting one's point of view. On the other hand, the sultry whisper suggested by *susurrus* promises a special kind of seduction, the magical enchantment of narrative fiction, which will seduce the readers' ears. The speaker playfully transforms the rhetorical commonplace of vocal restraint into a hint of moral laxity (cf. *sermo Milesius*), and introduces the reader into the spell-like qualities attached to oral performance. The significant link between the programmatic *lepidus susurrus* of narrative performance (1, 1, 1) and the *magicum susurramen* (1, 3, 1), the whispered spell that can reverse cosmological order, draws attention to the connections between enchanting orality and the novel's central themes of dangerous magic and ungovernable metamorphosis.

Other terminology in the Prologue is similarly ambiguous. We are to be captivated by the speaker's soothing voice (*permulceam*). An educated Roman reader in Apuleius' day would have been acquainted with the rhetorical skill of *ures permulcere* from his own rhetorical education. Cicero too stresses the importance of *permulcere* in the *exordium* of a speech as a form of *captatio* of the audience.³² Elsewhere, Cicero teaches that there are two things that charm the ear (*Orat.* 163 *permulceant auris*), namely sound and rhythm, two stylistic features which Apuleius gratefully used in his composition of the Prologue. The ears of the Roman *lector* would probably not be offended (cf. the remark in *Met.* 1, 1, 5): Cicero's teaching implies that these stylistic devices are to be used in a speech, not avoided.

Thus, the reader finds cues in the text that guide his own performance, and would deliver the words of the Prologue in a low-keyed tone, perhaps even a whispering voice, before the actual narrative begins.³³ He would

³¹ Rhet. Her. 3, 21 *Firmam ergo maxime poterimus in dicendo uocem conseruare si quam maxime sedata et depressa uoce principia dicemus*; 3, 22 *Utile est ad firmitudinem sedata uox in principio. Quid insuauius quam clamor in exordio causae?* Cf. Cic. *De orat.* 3, 227, cited below at n. 73.

³² Cic. *De orat.* 2, 315 *prima est enim quasi cognitio et commendatio orationis in principio, quaeque continuo eum qui audit permulcere atque allicere debet.*

³³ See Cavallo (1996, 41), who takes the phrase *lepidus susurro permulceam* as a kind of stage direction for the concrete reader, who reads the text aloud with an appropriate use of the voice, defined by the text as a *lepidus susurrus*.

know that such a low, conversational, or even murmuring voice is apt for introductions to a speech, as it serves the stability of the voice and has an agreeable effect on the listener. The audience of a recitation of the Prologue, then, could hear in the initial low and soothing tone of the performer's voice a silent announcement of different, more forceful uses of the voice yet to come in the ensuing part of the text, knowing the importance of change and variety in the use of the voice.³⁴

To a certain extent, the phrase *aures permulcere* from the Apuleian Prologue still chimes with the orality of Roman eloquence, and the Roman reader can identify with an *ego* whose competence and aims seem akin to those of the Roman orator. In the initial promise of verbal delight, voiced with a whisper that is *lepidus*, a Roman would not only appreciate legitimate aspects of wit and humour, but also of rhythm and use of the voice (*lepos, urbanitas, iucunditas*).³⁵ This sense of legitimacy and identification may however change when the speaker announces his origins:

1, 1, 3

Quis ille, paucis accipe: Hymettos Attica et Isth[o]mos Ephyrea et Taenaros Spartiaca, glebae felices aeternum libris felicioribus conditae, mea uetus prosapia est.

Who this speaker is, learn in a few words: Attic Hymettos and Ephyrean Isthmos and Spartan Taenaros, fruitful fields, whose memory is treasured up for ever in books more fruitful still, form my time-honoured pedigree.

This elaborate description of geographical regions is reminiscent of Greek poetry in both form and content; in addition, the Greek endings *-os, -ea* and *-iaca*, as well as the repetition *-os -a*, produce Greek sound-effects.³⁶ On the

³⁴ For the usefulness and the delight of variation in voice cf. Rhet. Her. 3, 22 *conseruat uocem continui clamoris remissio, et auditorem quidem uarietas maxime delectat, cum sermone animum retinet aut exsuscitat clamore*. See below, nn. 57 and 74.

³⁵ Edwin Ramage in his study of *urbanitas* (1973, 175 n. 24) remarks that Romans were much more aware of sound in speech than we are nowadays. For the link between the quality of the voice and *urbanitas*, Ramage (147) compares the *urbanitas* displayed by one of the characters in the *Met.* performing as sub-narrator, Thelyphron, whose speech is termed *lepidus sermo*, cf. 2, 20, 7 *more tuae urbanitatis fabulam illam tuam remetire, ut ... Lucius lepidi sermonis tui perfruatur comitate*; see Van Mal-Maeder 2001, 305 f. *ad loc.* and cf. 1, 1, 1 *lepidus susurro*, with Keulen 2003, 64.

³⁶ For a close analysis see Keulen 2003, 71–74. Innes 2001, 118 points out the Greek sounds of *h, ph, th, y*, and the softer *r* and *s*.

one hand, this again commends the verbal artistry of the *ego*, which is meant to impress his Roman audience. Our speaker affirms his mastery of Attic, which the Romans considered as the superior Greek literary dialect for its refinement and euphony (1, 1, 4 *linguam At<t>idem*). Using the poetic expression *Attis lingua*, he suggests that we should see his fundamental indebtedness to the Greek oral heritage in terms of elegance and sweetness (cf. 1, 1, 3 *Hymettos Attica*), which is an essential indebtedness in view of his rhetorical aims.³⁷

On the other hand, the stylish and poetic description of Greece seems to exemplify in form a rhetorical style about which Romans would be ambivalent. The description is emblematic of a use of Latin that breathes the spirit of Greek poetry rather than the *sermo forensis*, and therefore may well be offensive to the ears of the urbane Roman, who should avoid foreign excess and strangeness.³⁸ Significantly, when Cicero discusses the technique of embellishing a speech through the splendour of Greek geographical names (*Orat.* 163, cited above in a different context), he adds the significant caution that one should not use them too much. This inevitably entails a change of voice for the reader: reading the text aloud, the Roman reader would engage in something he would not recognise as a Roman kind of orality, but rather associate with a sing-song rhetoric reminiscent of Greek *cantilena*e. As we can see in an anecdote from Gellius, which possibly influenced Apuleius,³⁹ proud Roman intellectuals of Apuleius' time, in spite of their admiration for Greek literature, could disparage Greek poetry as wanton ditties (*Gell.* 19, 9, 8 *in cantilenarum ... mollitiis*).

Thus, the ambiguous nature of engaging in *ures permulcere* and performing the Prologue's sultry whisper is made even more ambiguous by the

³⁷ Possession of the classical Greek language and literature and the ability to reproduce them in Latin (cf. Hor. *Ars* 268 *exemplaria Graeca*) were essential features of Roman elite culture, demonstrating superiority over the Greeks, which they defined by their mastery of both cultures (see Swain 2001, 59 f.). The best example of this is Apuleius himself, a Roman (more precisely, an African Roman) who mastered both languages and cultures; see also below, n. 76 on Favorinus and Aelian.

³⁸ Cf. Ramage 1973, 75. The prologue seems to give an ironic twist to the Roman aversion towards *peregrina insolentia* (cf. Cic. *De orat.* 3, 44; see Ramage 1961, 489 f.), by associating 'foreign strangeness' with a superabundance of embellishments reminiscent of Greek poetry.

³⁹ *Gell.* 19, 9: a company of sophisticated Greeks or Romans engage in a polemic about the merits of Greek and Roman erotic poetry; see Holford-Strevens 2003, 22 f. on the possible influence of this chapter on Apuleius' *Apology* (e.g. 9, 12).

traditional Roman ambivalence about the cultural influence of Greece.⁴⁰ The educated Roman's proud voice runs the risk of degenerating from a legitimate *captatio benevolentiae* into a flattering Greek sing-song. The Roman *lector* sees his role as a performer reduced to gratifying his audience's ears, a rhetorical activity which was considered to belong to the poets,⁴¹ and, accordingly, associated with mere entertainment, and with lies and fiction.⁴² Moreover, Roman professors of rhetoric condemned such an exclusive striving for auditory pleasure, which had also immoral connotations.⁴³ Romans would perhaps not have liked being identified with an audience 'who, as well as the other vices of their life, are slaves to the pleasure of listening to sounds that soothe their ears wherever they are'.⁴⁴

That the ambivalence towards 'ear-charming' eloquence is a particular characteristic of the intellectual culture of Antonine Rome may be illustrated by Gellius' *Attic Nights*, in which he reports several critical attitudes against verbal artistry and vocal modulations at the cost of content. One of Gellius' teachers of rhetoric, the already mentioned Titus Castricius, warned that the ear-pleasing sound of a well-modulated phrase risks confounding our judgement of the sense of the speech (11, 13). His comparison (11, 13, 10) between elegant, beautifully sounding eloquence which has a trivial or frivolous content, and a ridiculous, histrionic performance of a buffoon on stage seems to illuminate the kind of rhetoric that the speaker of the Apuleian Prologue has in mind. The Platonist Taurus, Gellius' professor of philosophy at Athens, criticised pupils who were mainly interested in stylistic elegance and well-modulated phrases that entice the ear — among them, notably, Gellius himself (17, 20, 4 *heus ... tu rhetorisce*). In this chapter, written in Latin, Gellius seems to make something clear about the tastes of Roman intellectuals of his day, including himself, but also presents such tastes, possibly with a sense of self-irony, as something 'Greek', significantly nicknaming his

⁴⁰ On the Roman disapproval of indulging too much in Greek art see Ramage 1973, 45 f., Gruen 1992, 257 f.

⁴¹ Hor. *Epist.* 2, 1, 211 f. *poeta, meum qui pectus inaniter .../... mulcet*; Sen. *Ben.* 1, 4, 5 *istae uero ineptiae poetis relinquuntur, quibus aures oblectare propositum est*.

⁴² Cf. Strabo 1, 2, 5 γοητεύειν καὶ κολακεύειν τὸν ἀκροατήν; Plut. *De aud. poet.* 2 (*Mor.* 16a) πρὸς ἡδονὴν ἀκοῆς καὶ χάριν. For the 'sweet and dangerous' connotations of Lucius' ear-gratifying rhetoric in the *Met.* see also Graverini 2005.

⁴³ See Harrauer-Römer 1985, 360 f., comparing e.g. Quint. *Inst.* 2, 12, 6 *nihil ... aliud, quam quo uel prauis uoluptatibus aures adsistentium permulceant, quaerunt*.

⁴⁴ Quint. *Inst.* 11, 3, 60 *sunt quidam, qui secundum alia uitae uitia etiam hac ubique audiendi, quod aures mulceat, uoluptate ducantur*.

younger self (with Taurus as his mouthpiece) with a *Greek* word (ῥητορίσ-
κος).⁴⁵ Moreover, when Gellius (5, 1, 1) cites the words of the Stoic Mu-
sonius Rufus, who criticises those who express approval of a philosopher's
vocal modulations by loud shouts and extravagant demonstrations of praise
(‘they are not hearing a philosopher’s lecture, but an flute player’s recital’),
it is hard not to think of the overwhelming success of Favorinus’ enchanting
high voice in Rome, or of the triumphs of Apuleius’ recitals.⁴⁶ Similar warn-
ings about the conceivable dangers of listening to enchanting rhetoric are
found in the *De audiendo* of Plutarch (see also Graverini in this volume,
pp.158, 163), who was an authority admired by both Gellius and Apuleius.⁴⁷

As Graverini points out in the present volume (see pp.158-160), the dis-
cussion about ear-gratifying rhetoric and *bel canto* eloquence is not limited
to the Roman world: contemporary Greeks like Aelius Aristides, too, wrote
disparagingly about effeminate sing-song rhetoric, of which Favorinus was a
famous example. However, since in Apuleius’ prologue the speaker explic-
itly addresses a Roman audience, we should take into account the perspec-
tive of Romans, not of Greeks. The *ego* is aware of Roman ambivalence

⁴⁵ For a comparison between Apuleius and Gellius, both Roman ‘mannerists’ and possibly fellow-students at Athens, as representatives of Antonine intellectual culture see Keulen 2004; on possible self-irony in Gell. 17, 20, 4 see 243 f.

⁴⁶ For Apuleius’ and Favorinus’ successful performances see above, nn. 6 and 20; below, n. 61. For Musonius’ above-mentioned criticism see Gell. 5, 1, 1 *si uocum eius festiuitatibus, si modulis uerborum, si quibusdam quasi frequentamentis orationis mouentur, exagitantur et gestiunt, tum scias et qui dicit et qui audiunt frustra esse neque illi philosophum loqui, sed tibicinem canere*. The double pipes (αὐλός, *tibiae*), which has a large range of notes, is the symbol par excellence of ‘many-voicedness’ (πολυφωνία). Musonius’ use of the symbolic meaning of the pipes with regard to rhetoric is reminiscent of Plato’s views on education in his ideal state, in which he disapproves of the αὐλός (*Republic* 399C–E) precisely because it has a wider range of notes than any other instrument, giving it the widest expressive range. In Plato’s view, instruments and authors (mostly Homer) that exhibit such πολυφωνία display too much attractive variety, and so confuse and distract the soul, which ought to be intent on rational simplicity (see Annas 1999, 14). Paradoxically, Roman intellectuals in Apuleius’ and Gellius’ time (and earlier, see Introduction, n. 2) were highly attracted by the variegated style of Plato’s own eloquence; cf. Taurus’ objections against this susceptible attitude in Gell. 1, 9, 10–11 and the above-mentioned 17, 20. In *Flor.* 17, Apuleius compares the qualities of the human voice unfavourably with those of musical instruments such as the reed-pipe and the panpipe (17, 10 *si quidem uoce hominis ... et tibia questu delectabilior et fistula susurru iucundior*; cf. *Met.* 1, 1, 1 *lepido susurro*); he parallels himself with celebrated auletes in *Flor.* 3 and 4 (Harrison 2000, 98, 100). For Apuleius’ use of the reed-pipe and other musical instruments as symbols of corruption see below, n. 63.

⁴⁷ Keulen 2004, 225 f.; 244 n. 76. On Plutarch’s *De audiendo* see Korenjak 2000, 170–194.

towards Greece. Although both Apuleius and his narrator juggle cultural identities, the cultural-political connotations of the Latin *Metamorphoses* are Roman.⁴⁸ In the Apuleian Prologue, the ambivalence about enchanting eloquence and fiction has a specifically Roman colouring; the eloquence itself is associated with Greekness.

Moreover, the cultural opposition between Roman and Greek identity is underpinned by geographical terms. The different aspects of the speaker's rhetorical expertise are mapped onto the contrasting regions of Greece and Rome, which respectively symbolise the rich resources of poetical repertoire offered by Greek literature, and the strenuous discipline and training in pursuit of the *studia Quiritium*, meaning Roman rhetoric.⁴⁹ Also, by invoking the Greek geographical background (1, 1, 3), and by calling the narrative as a whole a *fabula Graecanica*, the prologue seems to call attention to the Roman perception of Greeks as the inventors of devious fiction (*fabulae, mendacia*; cf. Plin. *Nat.* 4, 1), which Romans deemed a very un-Roman form of eloquence: in Juvenal's sixth satire (6, 634–637), the speaker appeals to his Roman audience not to associate his narrative with fiction, identified with Greek tragedy, 'unfamiliar to the Rutulian hills and Latin skies'. The Greek parallels adduced by Graverini reveal important synchronic connections between Antonine Latin literary culture on the one hand and the Greek Second Sophistic on the other hand, where similar issues are discussed, but from a different cultural-political perspective.

Thus, the speaker's concern with rhetoric, both in terms of his own competence and in terms of his awareness of the hazards of his eloquence, is phrased in terms of a cultural clash between Greece and Rome, where Greece stands for the enchanting rhetoric of poetry, and Rome for rhetorical and literary pursuits in Latin (1, 1, 4 *studia Quiritium*; 1, 1, 5 *forensis sermo*). In view of his Greek background, and in spite of his thorough rhetorical training in Rome, the narrator still feels a newcomer there, and realises that he may

⁴⁸ See Rosati 2003, cited above, n. 5.

⁴⁹ The dichotomy between Greece and Rome as contrasting landscapes that foster contrasting forms of eloquence seems to recall the famous dichotomy between Asia and Attica from ancient discussions on rhetorical style, where Asia represents luxuriance and theatricality, and Attica simplicity and directness (see Connors 1997, 84–87). Paradoxically, Athens and the Attic language now seem to assume the role of Asia and Asianic style from the traditional dichotomy, symbolising the mellifluous luxury and elaborate art of Greek language and literature versus the unadorned Latin *sermo forensis* and *studia Quiritium*.

sound ‘novel’ to the Romans as well (1, 1, 5 *En ecce praefamur ueniam, siquid exotici ac forensi<s> sermonis rudis locutor offendero*). Being a foreigner, a Greek steeped in the *fabulae* and *cantilenae* of the Greek poets, the *ego* knows that his voice may sound ‘novel’ to the ears of his Roman audience, as he confronts them, albeit in their own language, with something unfamiliar (*rudis locutor*), which may even offend their ears (*offendero*). A ‘novel voice’ may at the same time imply the choice of a possibly ‘offensive’ genre, a genre of oral Milesian storytelling (1, 1, 1 *sermone ... Milesio*). Such a controversial choice, as is illustrated by a passage from Fronto, could be introduced in terms of a ‘new song’.⁵⁰ The *ego* is aware that this choice probably did not meet only with approval: the Roman audience of our *philosophus Platonicus* was probably used to hearing something different (cf. the *miramur* and *non numquam* in Macrobius’ comment cited above in n. 25, indicating his surprise at Apuleius’ choice of genre; significantly, Macrobius’ comment also highlights acoustic quality, *auditum mulcent*).

After this short apology, the Prologue ends with a confirmation of its programmatic choice, a confirmation which again has implications for the level of vocal performance, and simultaneously indicates that this performance will now begin for real:

1, 1, 6

Iam haec equidem ipsa uocis immutatio desultoriae scientiae stilo quem accessimus respondet. fabulam Graecanicam incipimus. lector intende: laetaberis.

Now this very modulating voice tunes with the kind of writing that I have turned to, involving the knowledge of, as it were, changing literary horses at a gallop. We begin a Grecian story. Reader, pay attention: you will be delighted.

The phrase *uocis immutatio* is generally interpreted as a reference to the switch from Greek to Latin, and, more specifically, to the translation of the Greek ass-story into Latin. In the following, I offer an alternative interpreta-

⁵⁰ Cf. Fronto *Princip. historiae* 2 (p. 203, 17 f. in marg.). ^a) *ab orationibus* [thus *b*; *oratoribus* Van den Hout] *ad historiam conuersus uereor ne qua nouitate et insolentia alias ad ignota, tum et a can -- ||* ^b) -- *era cantibus et modis, absonum quid modulatu et cantu cecinerim nouo --* (‘having turned from orations to writing history, I am afraid that through some novelty and unusualness ... with my songs and rhythms I might sing something discordant in a tune and a song that sounds novel’).

tion, which highlights more concrete, physical connotations of *uox*. These connotations do not exclude other meanings, given the Apuleian play with various overlapping notions of style, language, and performance in the Prologue. Yet, in this nexus of literary and rhetorical connotations, the concrete voice itself should not be unduly reduced; for the ambivalence we may see an instructive parallel in notions like *stilus*, *calamus* and *argutia* in the Prologue, which on the one hand refer to concrete writing instruments and their sharpness, and on the other hand suggest a choice of literary style and wit. As we saw in the Fronto passage above, a ‘changed voice’, singing with new modulations, can be used figuratively of the choice of a new genre, entailing a new style.

But what does the ‘change of *uox*’ mean in the Prologue, when thinking more concretely of a performer’s voice? In a wider sense, we may distinguish various levels of meaning. The *ego* in the Prologue is aware that his ‘*uocis immutatio*’ may offend the rhetorical and literary code of his Roman audience. The *uox* being ‘changed’ is perhaps what Cicero called the *uox Romani generis urbisque propria*.⁵¹ This explains the reference to the ‘foreign peculiarity’ for which the *ego* apologises to its Roman audience, his ‘Greekness’. Given the situation of a performative reading, the changed *uox* also refers to the un-Roman eloquence this text forces its Roman reader to hear or actively engage with as a performer. At the same time, the Ciceronian passage draws attention to accent: such a reference to an educated accent, free of anything unpleasant, again entails the issue of cultural identity, and we could raise the question of what sort of accent the African Apuleius had when speaking either Latin or Greek, performing in Carthage or Rome (cf. n. 61).⁵²

In a narrower sense, *uocis immutatio* can be interpreted as a technical term, referring to the modulations of the voice; thus, it means ‘*uocis modulatio*’.⁵³ Like *ures (per)mulcere* (see n. 44), the *uocis (im)mutatio*, ‘modula-

⁵¹ Cic. *Dde orat.* 3, 44; cf. Ramage 1961, 492. See above, note 38.

⁵² I thank Leofranc Holford-Strevens for pointing this out to me. Gellius’ teacher Antonius Iulianus spoke with a Spanish accent (19, 9, 2 *Hispano ore*).

⁵³ For *uocis (im)mutatio* as a term for ‘modulation of the voice’, used in the context of performance, cf. Cic. *Orat.* 55 *est enim actio quasi corporis quaedam eloquentia, cum constet e uoce atque motu. uocis mutationes totidem sunt quot animorum, qui maxime uoce commouentur*; Quint. *Inst.* 11, 3, 62 *...(uox) est enim mentis index ac totidem quot illa mutationes habet*; 11, 3, 183 (fully quoted below). See OLD s.v. *immutatio* 1, citing Vit. *Arch.* 5, 4, 2 *uox enim mutationibus cum flectitur, alias fiat acuta, alias grauis (...)*

tion of the voice', belonged to rhetorical terminology describing the part of the *actio* that deals with the use of the voice. As we have observed above, variation and modulation of the voice was a skill a good Roman orator should possess, and required not only talent, but also training.⁵⁴ Thus, the *uocis immutatio* in the Prologue, just like the beguiling tone of *lepido susurro permulcere*, indicates an enchanting oral performance, with emphasis on the variation in pitch, like singing in a modulated voice, which agrees with the content and style of the text (*respondet*).⁵⁵ The assumption of different *personae*, with different emotions, in a narrative of changes and reversals (1, 1, 2 *figuras fortunasque hominum in alias imagines conuersas et in se rursum mutuo nexu refectas*), entails a vivid, fluctuating performance with various tones and pitches of the voice (*uocis mutationes*).⁵⁶ In itself, there is nothing wrong with voice-modulations, as they served to express different emotions and characters. Moreover, a Roman would feel that the change and variation contributed to the rhetorical aim of pleasure for the ears.⁵⁷ Thus, the programmatic phrase *uocis immutatio* also links the Prologue with the rhetorical and vocal exercise (*declamatio*) we mentioned above. As we noted, such exercises had two sides, practice and pleasure.

Namque cum flectitur immutatione uox statuit se in alicuius sonitus finitionem, deinde in alterius, ... uti in cantionibus cum flectentes uocem uarietatem facimus. Stefan Tilg objects that this interpretation of *immutatio* in the sense of *mutatio* is not well supported by lexical evidence; indeed, the recent edition of Vitruvius by Gros (1997) prints *in mutatione*, following the edition of Rose/Müller-Strübing (1867). Tilg, whose main emphasis is on *elocutio* (see n. 1), makes a well-argued and well-substantiated case for *immutatio* as a category of linguistic and stylistic deviation, adapted to the Prologue as a metapoetic statement, with the genre of the Milesian Tale as its focal point.

⁵⁴ Cic. *Orator* 59 *Ac uocis bonitas quidem optanda est; non est enim in nobis sed tractatio atque usus in nobis. Ergo ille princeps uariabit et mutabit: omnis sonorum tum intendens tum remittens persequetur gradus.*

⁵⁵ As Harrauer-Römer 1985, 361 observe, the enigmatic term *desultorius* (*desultoriae scientiae stilo*), which properly refers to the acrobatics of jumping from horse to horse, seems to reflect the image of dancing/jumping which is also evident in *resultans* in Quintilian's description of a singing use of the voice (*Inst.* 11, 3, 183, quoted below).

⁵⁶ For the correspondence between vocal performance of a text and its content (characters, moods, emotions), cf. Longin. *Rhet.* I, 310, 21 Spengel; *Rhet. Her.* 3, 14, 24; Quint. *Inst.* 9, 4, 139; cf. also Varro apud Dos., *Gramm. Lat. ed. Keil*, VII, 376, 5 *lectio est uaria cuiusque scripti pronuntiatio seruiens dignitati personarum exprimensque habitum animi cuiusque*. See Jakobi 1996, 7; Diederich 1999, 15.

⁵⁷ Cic. *De orat.* 3, 225 *quid, ad aures nostras et actionis suauitatem, quid est uicissitudine et uarietate et commutatione aptius?* Cf. *Rhet. Her.* 3, 22, cited above, n. 34, and see below, n. 74.

But they also had a shady side, an aspect deeply distrusted by traditional Romans, both in republican and in imperial times. Indulging too much in modulation of the voice (singing) and gesticulation went against the Roman rhetorical ideal, since it more suited an actor from the comic or tragic stage. Already Cato had censured singing and dramatic recitation as un-Roman behaviour (frg. 85 Sblendorio Cugusi *praeterea cantat, ubi collibuit, interdum Graecos uersus agit, iocos dicit, uoces demutat, staticulos dat*).⁵⁸ Quintilian refers contemptuously to *illam uocis modulationem* (Inst. 11, 3, 59) when he fulminates against the effeminate, ‘singing’ style of performing a speech (there, just like *immutatio* in Apuleius’ Prologue, the singular *modulatio* indicates the modulating voice itself). In this negative sense, the Apuleian *uocis immutatio* can indicate a lack of restraint in vocal performance, which goes hand in hand (*respondet*) with the exuberant style and content of the written text. This is the kind of performance Roman professors of rhetoric warned about, because it made orators behave like actors (Quint. inst. 11, 3, 182 f.).⁵⁹ Earlier, Quintilian complained about the *modulatio scaenica* which had become fashionable in the rhetorical schools, a complaint which recalls the familiar attacks on declamatory exercises as empty forms of rhetoric without practical value.⁶⁰ The reader of the *Metamorphoses* realises that his performance of the text may become a *modulatio scaenica*, but is taught by the Prologue that this is the appropriate delivery for *this* narrative. Perhaps he even experienced a vivid recital of the *Metamorphoses* by Apu-

⁵⁸ See also Graverini in this volume, p.157. Another allusion in the Prologue to Roman anti-foreign sentiment, exemplified by the stern Cato, may be 1, 1, 1 *modo si papyrus Aegyptiam ... non spreueris inspicere*, recalling Cato *ad fil. frg. 1* (cited in Plin. Nat. 29, 14) *quod bonum sit illorum (sc. Graecorum) litteras inspicere, non perdiscere*. In both passages, *inspicere* connotes carefulness in taking a look at something written that is potentially treacherous to Romans.

⁵⁹ *Hic enim dubitationis moras, uocis flexus, uarias manus, diuersos nutus actor adhibebit. Aliud oratio sapit nec uult nimium esse condita: actione enim constat, non imitatione.* [183] *Quare non inmerito reprehenditur pronuntiatio uultuosa et gesticulationibus molesta et uocis mutationibus resultans.*

⁶⁰ Quint. Inst. 11, 3, 57 *Sed quodcumque ex his uitium magis tulerim quam, quo nunc maxime laboratur in causis omnibus scholisque, cantandi, quod inutilius sit an foedius nescio. Quid enim minus oratori conuenit quam modulatio scaenica et nonnumquam ebriorum aut comisantium licentiae similis?* Such practices occurred already before Quintilian: in *Suas.* 2, 10, Seneca the Elder reports that the *compositio* of Fuscus’ elaborate sentences was such that they almost demanded to be sung (*quas nemo nostrum non alius alia inclinatione uocis uelut sua quisque modulatione cantabat*). Cf. the sing-song performance of Vibius Gallus described in *Contr.* 2, 1, 25; see Fairweather 1981, 238.

leius himself, whose vocal pyrotechnics had set the example for a performance that was presented ἀξίως τοῦ ποιητοῦ, ‘in a manner worthy of the maker’.⁶¹

Indeed, this turns out to be a narrative with a strong bias towards theatricality, with characters one could imagine as performing on a comic or tragic stage.⁶² It requires a reading voice that is sufficiently prepared to articulate all the different emotions and characters introduced on the Apuleian stage, from pathetic lamentations (Socrates, 1, 7) to tragic outbursts of anger (Venus, 5, 28–31), from drunk old witches (1, 12) to effeminate libidinous eunuch priests (8, 26–30), who sing and play reed-pipes, drums, and cymbals.⁶³ Not unlike the practice of actors and orators, this reading requires a use of the full range of the voice, for which Romans were prepared by their ‘voice-culture’, the practice of exercising their voice by raising and lowering it through the scale of tones.⁶⁴ Indeed, in Cicero’s view, the voice of tragic

⁶¹ See above, p.112. Significantly, in a rhetorical showpiece on the human voice (mentioned above in n. 46), Apuleius contrasts the solitary singing (*in solitudine cantilauit*) of two legendary bards, Arion and Orpheus, with his own performance for the large and sophisticated audience of Carthage (see above, n. 6), though describing his own performance also in terms of ‘song’ and ‘singing’ (*Flor.* 17, 18–19 *enimvero qui pueris et adolescentibus et senibus utile carmen prompturus est, in mediis milibus hominum canat, ita ut hoc meum de uirtutibus Orfiti carmen est, serum quidem fortasse, sed serium, nec minus gratum quam utile Carthaginensium pueris <et> iuuenibus et senibus*). In my view, this should not be taken as a reference to a lost poem (see Hunink 2001, 179), but to Apuleius’ encomium on the virtues of the proconsul Scipio Orfitus (the text is not preserved), which he must have performed in public with an appropriate use of the voice, in front of a huge audience, after this introductory piece. In the comparison with Orpheus, Apuleius certainly hints at the irresistible fascination of his own vocal performance; for comparisons between sophists and Orpheus cf. Philostr. *Vit. soph.* p. 482 (Prodicus); Plat. *Protagoras* 315A; see also Harrison 2000, 122.

⁶² For theatricality in the *Met.* see Keulen 2000; 2006 (forthcoming); Graverini and May in this volume.

⁶³ In Book 8 and 9, the dissolute performance of the eunuch priests of the Dea Syria (8, 27 *euantes exsiliunt incitante tibiae cantu lymphaticum tripudium*; 8, 30, 5 *tinnitu cymbalorum et sonu tympanorum cantusque Frygii mulcentibus modulis*) symbolises a deliberately decadent and corrupt rhetoric. They seem to flesh out Quintilianic metaphors for effeminate style (*Inst.* 9, 4, 142; cf. 11, 3, 59); Fronto used similar imagery in his criticism of the effeminate Senecan style (p. 157, 10 f. *quin ad modum crotali aut cymbali pedem poneret*). As Graverini (2005, 180 n. 14) well observes, the ‘oriental’ singing of the lewd priests of the Dea Syria is ‘soothing’ (8, 30, 5 *mulcentibus modulis*), which reflects the tone of voice indicated in the Prologue.

⁶⁴ For actors exercising their voice cf. Apul. *Flor.* 17, 8 *tragoedi adeo ni cottidie proclament, claritudo arteriis obsolescit; igitur ... identidem hoando purgant rauim*. For Cicero’s restrictions against such practices being imitated by students of rhetoric cf. *de*

actors is one of the qualities required for the ‘finished’ orator (*De orat.* 1, 128). On the other hand, also according to Cicero, we should not work too hard at intonation, ‘that singular and unrivalled recommendation and prop of eloquence’ (1, 252). Declamatory practice in the sense of elaborate vocal training, like the one practised by tragic actors, is considered too remote from the requirements of reality by the Roman professors of rhetoric, as we have observed above, and runs the risk of degenerating into an empty, effeminate kind of eloquence.

It is against this background of voice-culture and performance that we can read the following sentence in the Prologue: *lector, intende*. This is not to deny that it also means: ‘Reader, pay attention’. In the latter sense, *intende* can be taken to imply *animus*, meaning ‘pay attention’, referring to the action of listening to the performer who presents himself in the text of the Prologue.⁶⁵ However, since reading the prologue also entails an active ‘performing’ from the part of the reader, an assuming of the *persona* whose voice he is impersonating, the *intende* can also be taken as a reference to voice. In rhetorical contexts, *intendere uocem* and *intentio uocis* are used for ‘raising’ the voice, or ‘pitching’ the voice to a certain tone. For example, Quintilian speaks of ‘*intentio uocis*’ in a context where the effect of modulation and variation of the voice upon the audience is discussed:

Inst. 1, 10, 25

Atqui in orando quoque intentio uocis, remissio, flexus pertinet ad mouendos audientium adfectus, aliaque et conlocationis et uocis, ut eodem utar uerbo, modulatione concitationem iudicis, alia misericordiam petimus, cum etiam organis, quibus sermo exprimi non est, adfici animos in diuersum habitum sentiamus.

Yet in oratory too, raising, lowering, or inflecting the voice is a means of affecting the hearers’ feelings; we use one “modulation” (if I may use the same term) of phrasing and of voice to arouse the judge’s indignation and a different one for arousing pity; why, we even feel that mental atti-

orat. 1, 251; cf. also Seneca the Elder, *Contr.* 3 praef. 3 (Fairweather 1981, 238). On voice-exercises for orators cf. Cic. *Orator* 59; Quint. *Inst.* 1, 11, 12–14; Sen. *Contr.* 1 praef. 16 (see Fairweather 1981, 236). For the sophists’ concern with the exercising and modulation of the voice see Harrison 2000, 122; Gleason 1995, 103–130.

⁶⁵ Cf. *Met.* 8, 3, 3 *spectate denique, sed, oro, sollicitis animis intendite, quorsum furiosae libidinis proruperint impetus*; 11, 5, 4 *ergo igitur imperiis istis meis animum intende sollicitum*.

tudes are affected in various ways by instruments which are incapable of articulate speech.⁶⁶

Thus, *intendere* and *intentio* refer to the *tension* in the voice, which is viewed as a kind of musical instrument, a stringed instrument that the student of rhetoric learns to play and control in order to achieve a successful performance.⁶⁷ Giving the voice a certain tension (*intentio*) is seen as opposed to a murmuring, whispering sound, which implies a voice without tension (Quint. *Inst.* 11, 3, 45 *summisso murmure, quo etiam debilitatur omnis intentio* ('always mumbling, which loses the tension altogether')).⁶⁸

In this light, the appeal to the reader of the Prologue, *lector, intende*, refers to the raising of his voice, now that the narrative is about to begin, and the initial murmuring tone of the *exordium* (*ures ... lepido susurro permulceam*) comes to a close: thus, it means *lector, intende uocem*, 'reader, raise your voice', possibly implying also 'tune your voice' (to the right tone or pitch), because we will now start the actual narrative. The first person-plural *fabulam ... incipimus* (just as the preceding *accessimus*), then, may be a reference to the joint undertaking of the act of narrating-reading ('we start the story'), in which both *ego* and *lector* closely cooperate: the *lector* has taken up the book to start his reading performance, a book in which the oral voice of the narrator-writer is eternalised in a codified form. The written *ego* starts his *fabula Graecanica*, but he cannot do so without the reader, who reads the *papyrus Aegyptia*, and starts his performance of the *fabula Graecanica* with the appropriate modulations and tensions of the voice.⁶⁹

⁶⁶ In the same context, Quintilian uses *intendere* in the sense of 'to pitch (a voice)': *Inst.* 1, 10, 27 *musicus fistula, quam tonarion uocant, modos quibus deberet intendi ministrabat.*

⁶⁷ *Inst.* 11, 3, 40 (*uox*) *utique habens omnes in se qui desiderantur sinus intentionesque et toto, ut aiunt, organo instructa.* For *intendere* in descriptions of the variations of the voice with the imagery of strings cf. Cic. *De oratore* 3, 216 *nam uoces ut chordae sunt intentae quae ad quemque tactum respondeant, acuta grauis, cita tarda, magna parua, quas tamen inter omnes est suo quaeque in genere mediocris*; Quint. *Inst.* 11, 3, 63 *Itaque laetis in rebus plena et simplex et ipsa quodam modo hilaris fluit; at in certamine erecta totis uiribus et uelut omnibus neruis intenditur.*

⁶⁸ Compare the expression *intenta* or *contenta uox*; cf. Apul. *Met.* 2, 27, 3 *uoce contenta... inquit*; 4, 10, 4 *contentissima uoce clamitans.* Gell. 19, 10, 9 *At enim Fronto iam uoce atque uultu intentiore...*

⁶⁹ See Fowler 2001, 228: 'The "we" of *incipimus* is on one level the "we" of the imagined company of actors who are putting on the *fabula* for us, the performers we are to watch. At another level, the "we" associates author and reader in the joint production that will follow: the joint production that *is* the act of reading.'

The active, performing role of the *lector* is also stressed in a later passage from the *Metamorphoses*, in which the reader is explicitly addressed. Again, we have a kind of prologue, but this time the address to the reader introduces an episode within the *Metamorphoses*, the story of the *nouerca*, reminiscent of the tragic Phaedra-story:

10, 2, 4

iam ergo, lector optime, scito te tragoediam, non fabulam legere et a socco ad coturnum ascendere.

Know now therefore, most excellent reader, that you are reading a tragedy, not a comic tale, and that you are rising to a higher level, exchanging the low slipper of comedy for the high boot of tragedy.

As Zimmerman observes (2000, 68), *lector optime* is not merely a polite formula, but can also be read ‘as an exhortation to the reader addressed here to apply himself to a *lectio optima* of this story’. We can even take this observation further: this is actually an instruction to the reader, not merely as to how to receive the story (‘rezeptionssteuernd’), but actually *how to deliver it*. The accusative with infinitive construction, *te ... legere et ... ascendere*, lays the emphasis on the shifting activity of the reader (*te*): it is the *lector* who is going to rise to a higher level in his act of reading (*legere*), not the story itself.⁷⁰ The activity of the reader is not only the mental activity of the *lector doctus*, to whose erudition the text appeals by means of numerous allusions to various literary models.⁷¹ It is also the physical activity of reading aloud this text.⁷² Just as he used to receive instructions as a pupil in reading class, or as a student of rhetoric while training his voice, the *lector* receives instructions by the narrator to apply his voice in the appropriate way. Given the rhetorical programme of performance in the Prologue, this means that the *lectio optima*, for which the *lector* again receives instructions in the passage quoted above, entails a reading aloud with a use of the voice that suits the following tragic story. The verb *ascendere*, in the context of the use of the voice, means the increasing of the volume or the intensity of the voice; thus,

⁷⁰ Contrast Juvenal, 6, 634 f. *Fingimus haec altum satura sumente coturnum/ scilicet* (“To fashion these tales do you think our satire takes up the lofty buskin of tragedy?”). For this passage, see also above, p. 123.

⁷¹ See also Zimmerman 2000, 78 on *Dii boni*.

⁷² For *legere* = ‘to read aloud’ see *OLD* s.v. *lego*² 8b; for recitation (usually by a slave) as a form of entertainment during dinner or in the theatre see above, n. 16.

ascendere, in our passage, implies: *legendo ascendere*.⁷³ In this light, the ‘rising to the high-boot of tragedy’ means that the *lector* should transform, as it were, into a *tragoedus* (‘tragic actor’) in his ‘performance’ of the text, which means an increasing of the volume or the intensity of his voice. These changes in the use of the voice (*uocis immutatio*) not only relate the reader’s activity to the central theme of this novel, but also contribute to the delight of reading, a ‘sweet and dangerous’ delight connected with exercise and entertainment: *Lector, intende: laetaberis*.⁷⁴

Conclusion

The lively dialogue between the ‘oral’ performer and his audience, which is textualised in the Apuleian Prologue, lends a strong pedagogical dimension to the activity of reading the *Met*. In the *Metamorphoses*, Apuleius—who played a significant cultural and pedagogical role in the Roman world of his days, especially *Africa Proconsularis*—,⁷⁵ stages an ingenious play, centred around the activity of his educated Roman reader, who is confronted with the pleasures, the pitfalls, the ambiguities, and internal conflicts of his own education. This education was fundamentally a process of cultural acquisition, learning how to behave and to speak like a Roman. In his oral performance of the *Met.*, the Roman reader time and again runs the risk of crossing boundaries which are fundamental to what it means to be a Roman, and,

⁷³ Cicero uses the verb *ascendere* in a passage which commends the use of variety in the voice in a speech, with a gradual increase of intensity after a low, subdued start: *De orat.* 3, 227 [antea: *ad aurium uoluptatem*] *in omni uoce ... est quiddam medium, sed suum cuique uoci. hinc gradatim ascendere uocem utile et suaue est – nam a principio clamare agreste quiddam est – [...]. haec uarietas et hic per omnes sonos uocis cursus et se tuebitur et actioni adferet suauitatem.*

⁷⁴ For delight in variation in voice see previous note and above, n. 34 and 57. Stefan Tilg objects to this interpretation that it is quite odd that the reader should delight *himself* (*laetaberis*) by raising or tuning the voice, and by hearing the acoustic effects produced by the variety of his own reading voice. However, I take this objection as ‘heuristic’, as it takes us to the heart of the paradox that our Prologue presents in terms of orality and writtenness. Although an audience-orientated situation is suggested at the outset, at the same time, as I stated at the beginning of this paper, this text plays upon the irresolvable tensions between various co-existing modes of representation. As a result of the floating boundaries between the ‘writing *ego*’, the ‘performing *locutor*’, the ‘hearing audience’, and the ‘reading/reciting *lector*’ in the intricate process of impersonation (cf. n. 22), the *lector* is unavoidably transformed into an *auditor*, even his own *auditor*.

⁷⁵ See Opeku 1993.

more important, to be a Roman man. These boundaries, connected with gender, status, and ethnicity, are enforced in the rhetorical training that forms an essential part of the Roman reader's education, together with the acquisition of correct and pure Latin. The *aerumnabilis labor* and *studia Quiritium* of the *ego* from the Prologue (1, 1, 4), struggling and exercising to attain the fluent Latin orality required to perform his rhetorical aim of *aures permulcere*, is not dissimilar to the efforts of the Roman students of Apuleius' time, who struggled all over the Roman Empire, from North Africa to Gaul, to become eloquent Roman citizens, able to perform their Romanness at public and private occasions, from court cases to dinner parties.

Reading the *Met.* meant giving voice to the narrator, which entailed the performance of a different identity, the process of becoming someone else. Becoming the *other* did not only mean becoming a different *persona*, but also becoming non-Roman, for the speaker in the Prologue presents himself as of Greek origin, who first acquired fluency in the Attic language. This reflects a central issue in Roman literary culture, which at the same time draws attention to an internal conflict concerning the cultural identity of Romans: the Romans' fundamental indebtedness to Greek literary (written) genres and to Greek oral poetic heritage forms both an essential part of 'Romanness' and at the same time calls it into question. Reading and writing Latin literature cannot be separated from the question of Roman identity, especially in relation to other cultural identities such as Greek, and it is precisely this relation of Roman to non-Roman culture, not without its internal tensions and conflicts, that the *ego* draws into his 'oral' conversation with his Roman reader. The Roman reader/impersonator of the *ego* transcends the cultural boundaries of 'being Roman' and gives voice to a Greek *persona* who poses as the narrator of this tale. The *ego* himself, the first-person speaker within the text, has transcended these boundaries of orality in a reverse mode, since he has become an inhabitant of Rome and a speaker of Latin. Crossing such cultural and oral boundaries seems to belong to a process of acquiring 'Roman identity' that was fashionable among the second century elite, a process in which Apuleius played an exemplary role.⁷⁶

⁷⁶ Another famous contemporary example is Favorinus, a Roman citizen who was fluent in Greek though being a Gaul (Philostr. *Vit. soph.* p. 489). See above, n. 20. In addition, Gellius represents him as an expert in the Latin language in his *Attic Nights*, although he makes Favorinus claim that he learnt Latin 'in an impromptu fashion' (Gell. 13, 25, 4). Philostratus' admiration (*Vit. soph.* p. 624) for the *πόνοϛ* (cf. *aerumnabilis labor*) of Aelian, a Roman rhetorician who managed to become fluent in Greek in a city that spoke Latin,

The concern expressed by the *ego* about the possible effects of his rhetoric (cf. *si papyrus ... non spreueris inspicere; siquid ... offendero*) presupposes the kind of critical readers that we can identify with the educated readership of Gellius and Fronto.⁷⁷ Thus, the role of the *lector* of Apuleius' *Metamorphoses*, when viewed against this cultural background, seems highly ambiguous. On the one hand, the text poses an intellectual challenge to its Antonine audience, inviting philological inquiry and the search for literary allusion (*lector, intende* in a 'mental' sense). On the other hand, as we have seen, cultured readers from the age of Gellius and Apuleius were also immersed in rhetorical *paideia*, in which reading and declaiming went hand in hand with vocal and physical performance (*lector, intende* in a 'vocal' sense). When it came too close to the role of a professional *lector*, a slave who performed to gratify the ears of free-born citizens, the role of Apuleian *lector* was a hazardous one, involving risks regarding the decorum and social standing of the Roman citizen who played this role. An essential part of the thrill of the Apuleian text seems to have been that it tempted its readers to perform roles, which – in more than one way – alienated them from their traditional roles in Roman society. The performance of an entertaining *lectio* of the *Metamorphoses* may well have been such an 'alienating' activity.

Metamorphosis and transformation entails the transgression of boundaries. Reading the *Metamorphoses* involved entering into both performative and imaginative games, in which many conceivable risks and transgressions were lying in wait. Throwing himself into the story and using the various tones of his voice to perform the Apuleian narrative, the Roman reader not only risked crossing the boundary between real Roman orator and effeminate Greek singer, but also risked becoming implicated in the spell-like power of the rhetoric of fiction, which could confuse cosmological order, turn master into slave, and transform man into animal. The reader had no choice but to become intensely involved in the dangerous magic of oral performance, on more than one level. The Prologue presents the reader not just in the role of a performing impersonator, but also in that of a gullible believer of fiction. Seduced by the enticing magic of the narrative, the reader becomes just like

is revealing for the kind of intellectual accomplishments that gave splendour and earned honour in the age of the Second Sophistic.

⁷⁷ For terminology of rhetorical criticism shared by Fronto, Gellius, and Apuleius see Keulen 2004, 227 with n. 19.

the protagonist himself, merging into an inquisitive human being who is ‘carried along by this ears’ (1, 20, 6) and even into a big-eared ass,⁷⁸ being fully exposed to endless asinine misfortunes, and becoming the eager audience of many an enchanting story.⁷⁹

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⁷⁸ For the seductive game with the reader in the Prologue, which brings the role of the reader down to that of an eavesdropping ass with big ears, see Gowers 2001.

⁷⁹ Much of the research for this article was done in the Fondation Hardt in Vandoeuvres, Switzerland, September 2004. The comments of the editor of the volume, Vicky Rimell, on earlier drafts of this paper greatly helped to improve its content and shape. I also thank Leofranc Holford-Strevens for very useful suggestions, and Luca Graverini for fruitful electronic discussions, by which we gave a truly contemporary example of ‘fictional orality’. I thank Nancy Evans for pointing out to me the discussion of *πολυφωνία* in Annas 1999. Last but not least, I am grateful to Stefan Tilg for allowing me to read a draft of his excellent forthcoming paper on the Prologue, and for his incisive comments on a draft of my paper.

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