

The Ass's Ears and the Novel's Voice.
Orality and the Involvement of the Reader
in Apuleius' *Metamorphoses*

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‘Todo puede ser – respondió el Canónigo – ... Mas puesto que conceda que está allí, no por eso me obligo a creer las historias... de tanta turbamulta de caballeros como por ahí nos cuentan, ni es razón que un hombre como vuestra merced... se dé a entender que son verdaderas tantas y tan extrañas locuras como las que están escritas en los disparatados libros de caballerías’. ‘¡Bueno está eso! – respondió don Quijote –. Los libros que están impresos con licencia de los reyes y con aprobación de aquellos a quien se remitieron, y que con gusto general son leídos y celebrados... ¿habían de ser mentira?... ¿hay mayor contento que ver, como si dijésemos, aquí ahora se muestra delante de nosotros un gran lago de pez hirviendo a borbollones...’ (Cervantes, *Don Quijote*, 1,49–50)

Don Quixote is certainly the best modern paradigm for a credulous and visionary reader, so affected by the books he reads that he mistakes the narrative world for ‘real’ life. In this paper, I will argue that the ancient novels, and Apuleius’ *Metamorphoses* in particular, construct their ‘fictive’ reader¹ as a similarly gullible character; or, more exactly, that the ancient novels represent themselves as texts that demand a complex reading, and an audience that is not only diligent in understanding their literary sophistication but is also willing to be emotionally and almost physically ‘transferred’ into the

¹ ¹ For this terminology see e.g. Zimmerman 2000, 27 ff., with further references.

narrative world they create. In Apuleius' novel, the pretence of oral dialogue between narrator and reader is in my opinion part of a narrative strategy aiming at the involvement of the reader. Not unlike those of the ass-narrator, the reader's ears, addressed in the prologue and in the narrative proper, are (or should be) curious, gullible, and ready to be charmed by a fascinating story: orality is indeed the best means for a good story to exert its sweet and absorbing power on such a reader.

1. Ears and Curiosity

Lucius, leading a miserable existence in a mill, broods over his misfortunes, and concludes that after all every cloud has a silver lining. He is transformed into an ass and is forced to turn the millstone, but his animal shape makes it possible for him to see and listen to everything that happens around him from a privileged standpoint: all the people near him act and speak freely (*et agunt et loquuntur*: 9,13,3) as if they were alone, and this allows Lucius-ass to satisfy his *ingenita curiositas* more than if he were in human form. What Lucius is really interested in is hearing and relating amazing stories; his gossipy *curiositas*, however, is soon sublimated into a more respectable thirst for knowledge, that puts our hero almost on the same level as Homer's Odysseus (9,13,4):

That divine inventor of ancient poetry among the Greeks, desiring to portray a hero of the highest intelligence (*summae prudentiae virum monstrare cupiens*), was quite right to sing of a man who acquired the highest excellence by visiting many cities and learning to know various peoples. In fact, I now remember the ass that I was with thankful gratitude because, while I was concealed under his cover and schooled in a variety of fortunes, he made me better-informed, if less intelligent (*etsi minus prudentem, multiscium reddidit*).²

This well-known and much studied³ passage is, after all, not really surprising: it is a common practice for the ancient novels to associate their charac-

² The English translation of Apuleius' novel used in this paper is Hanson 1989.

³ Cf. e.g. Winkler 1985, 165–168 and 289 n. 24; Harrison 1990, 193 f.; James 1991, 164 ff.; Kenney 2003; Graverini 2005a, 191 ff.

ters with Homer's wandering hero in some way. In Heliodoros' *Aithiopika*, for example, Kalasiris says that his guest Nausikles 'is a merchant... and... leads a nomadic existence; he has visited many cities and seen into the hearts and minds of many men' (2,22,3);⁴ in Heliodoros as well as in Apuleius, the allusion to the first lines of the *Odyssey* is transparent. Odysseus' exemplarity, however, goes well beyond narrative literature; for writers of any time, he became the model of the wise and experienced man, guided by reason and eagerness to know.⁵ Desire for knowledge, and the different ways of acquiring it, are exactly the central issue of the Apuleian passage quoted above; as I will show in the following pages, the implicit association of Lucius with Odysseus, besides entertaining the reader with a witty allusion, helps to focus his attention on this point.

The phrase at 9,13,4 closely recalls a passage in Polybius, where the historian quotes the first lines of the *Odyssey* to support Heraclitus' statement that eyes are better witnesses than ears. According to Polybius, the good historian should relate events known to him through direct inquiry or because he took part in them himself, and not things he has only learned from books; since for Polybius the ears are the means through which one consults books and written documents, the opposition between direct experience and bookish information roughly corresponds to the difference between sight and hearing.⁶ Timaeus, who chose to use his ears instead of his eyes, took the easiest and most pleasing way, but also the worst one (ἡδίω μὲν, ἦρτω δὲ: 12,27,2); direct experience is always to be preferred, and Homer himself gives evidence for this statement:

⁴ Cf. also Xenophon of Ephesus 1,10,3, where Habrocomes and Anthia leave 'to see some other land and other cities'. All the English translations of ancient Greek novels are from the collection edited by Reardon 1989.

⁵ Cf. e.g. Cic. *Fin.* 5,49 where Odysseus *post variis avido satiatus pectore Musis / doctior ad patrias lapsus pervenerit oras*. See Stanford 1954, 75 ff., 124, and *passim*; Barnouw 2004, 75 ff.

⁶ Actually, Polybius specifies (12,27,3) that one can also gain knowledge through hearing in two ways, by reading books (ὑπομνήματα) and by direct inquiry (ἀνάκρισις); Timaeus used his ears instead of his eyes, and did it the worst way, resorting more to ὑπομνήματα than to ἀνάκρισις. At *Theaet.* 201b-c Plato connects hearsay with ἀληθῆ δόξα, and personal experience (seeing) with ἐπιστήμη.

Wishing to show us what qualities one should possess in order to be a man of action (βουλόμενος ὑποδεικνύειν ἡμῖν οἶον δεῖ τὸν ἄνδρα τὸν πραγματικὸν εἶναι), he [i.e. Homer] says: 'The man for wisdom's various arts renowned / long exercised in woes, O muse, resound / wandering from clime to clime' (Polybius 12,27,10).⁷

The close similarity between Polybius' βουλόμενος ὑποδεικνύειν ἡμῖν οἶον δεῖ τὸν ἄνδρα τὸν πραγματικὸν εἶναι and Apuleius' *summae prudentiae virum monstrare cupiens* (both phrases introducing an allusion to or quotation of the beginning of the *Odyssey*) is indeed striking, almost a literal translation. It could very well be a direct allusion by Apuleius, who frequently exploits historiographical literature for his own purposes,⁸ but there is also a broader context to take into consideration. As it seems, ancient historians were particularly fond of the hero's common characterization as an experienced man and, like Polybius, Diodorus also refers to the beginning of the *Odyssey* in his programmatic prologue:

...although the learning which is acquired by experience in each separate case, with all the attendant toils and dangers, does indeed enable a man to discern in each instance where utility lies – and this is the reason why the most widely experienced of our heroes suffered great misfortunes before he 'of many men the cities saw and learned / their thoughts' – yet the understanding of the failures and successes of other men, which is acquired by the study of history, affords a schooling that is free from actual experience of ills (1,1,2).⁹

Polybius and Diodorus have a slightly different agenda. Polybius' position is that personal research and experiences, as opposed to hearsay evidence, form the basis for the historian's work, and that the best historian is a man of action like Odysseus (12,28,1 'it appears to me that the dignity of history also demands such a man'); Diodorus, who has no interest in demonstrating that only a man of action can be a good historian, maintains that history is superior to personal experience (cf. also 1,1,4). However, he obviously agrees that seeing with one's own eyes (αὐτοψία) is necessary for the historian, so

⁷ Transl. Paton 1925.

⁸ Cf. Graverini 1997.

⁹ Transl. Oldfather 1933.

much so that he travelled extensively through Asia and Europe to avoid the errors made by less accurate writers (1,4,1); and at 1,83,9, after having related an anecdote, he points out that he knows the story not by hearsay (ἐξ ἀκοῆς), but because he witnessed what happened with his own eyes.

Sight and hearing, ὄψις and ἀκοή, are the metaphorical poles of the typical opposition between personal experience and indirect knowledge. Historians (and philosophers), of course, usually sided with the former, and censured those writers who relied on the latter.¹⁰ Lucian was even harsher: according to him, Ctesias of Cnidos wrote ‘things that he did not see in person, neither heard from others’ (*VH* 1,3).¹¹ Homer comes again into play; with a special and truly Lucianic witticism, the first progenitor of lying historians like Ctesias (and, ultimately, like Lucian himself) is said to be Odysseus, the same Odysseus that was a model for the perfect historian in Polybius:

¹⁰ On this topic see Walbank 1967, 408 (who also quotes a paradoxical reversal of the topos by Isocrates, *Panath.* 150); Schepens 1970; further bibliography in Mazza 1999, 144 n. 71. More extensive treatment of the subject, not limited to historians, can be found in Solimano 1991 and Napolitano Valditara 1994; a large wealth of information is provided by Wille 2001. See also Liviabella Furiani 2003 with particular reference to Heliodorus. The excellence of sight compared to hearing also recurs at the beginning of Philostratus’ *Heroikos* (7,9): the Phoenician declares that he is distrustful of myths (τὰ μυθώδη), because nobody has ever seen the events they narrate personally, but everyone has heard them told by others; the vine-dresser is instead reliable because he is an eye-witness. However, Keulen 2004, 239 f. convincingly points out that ‘such a confirmation of autopsy had become commonplace in paradoxography, and could therefore be interpreted as a marker of fiction’: some irony, for example, is to be understood in Gellius’ exploitation of the topos at 9,4,13 (Pliny wrote in the seventh Book of his *Natural History* ‘things he did not heard or read, but only things he knew and had seen in person’; cf. also 5,14,4). So, Philostratus is probably pointing out the fictive nature of the vine-dresser’s account by qualifying him as an eye-witness; if what I will be saying in the following pages is right, Apuleius does the same in a more traditional (but not less ironical) way, by emphasizing Lucius’ dependence on his own ears.

¹¹ Lucian is probably criticizing Ctesias by adopting his very words. According to Photius, *Bibl.* 72,36a, Ctesias ‘claims to have been an eye-witness (αὐτόπτην) to most of the events he narrates; and that, when this was not possible, he has heard them directly (αὐτήκοον) from the Persians themselves’. Cf. also *Hist. Conscr.* 29,3, where Lucian teases an historian who never left Corinth, but who nevertheless said that ὅσα ὀφθαλμῶν ἀπιστότερα. γράφω τοίνυν ἂ εἶδον, οὐχ ἂ ἤκουσα.

The founder of this school of literary horseplay is Homer's Odysseus, with his stories at Alcinous's court... he spun many such fanciful stories to the Phaeacians, who knew no better (*VH* 1,3).

Odysseus is here the perfect liar; his narrations have nothing to do with real life and personal experience, but they are sheer fiction.¹² Indeed, Homer's hero can be an extremely flexible image, and the contrast between Polybius' ἀνὴρ πραγματικός and Lucian's charlatan could not be any sharper.

The historiographical debate about truth and the opposition between sight and hearing offers a helpful context for our understanding of Lucius' statement at 9,13,4. Apuleius' narrator, in accordance with the general trend of many ancient novels, sometimes poses as an historian, and before telling some stories he explains why and how he has come to know them to the reader. However, Apuleius' stance on the fictionality or veracity of his own narration is more complex, or more fluctuating, than that of Polybius or Lucian; his Odysseus is neither the prototypical historian of the former, nor the hardened liar of the latter. On the one hand, personal experience is clearly the (pretended) basis of Lucius' knowledge; on the other, this personal experience is mostly acquired through ἀκοή more than through ὄψις, and the historians' scale of values is thus subverted. Lucius' reliance on his ears is exposed in a passage very close to that just cited:

...although I was deeply angry at Photis' mistake in making me an ass when she was trying to produce a bird, nevertheless I was at least heartened by this one consolation in my painful deformity: namely, with my enormous ears I could hear everything very easily, even at a considerable distance (9,15,6).¹³

The two images, the experienced Odysseus and the big-eared ass, overlap but of course cannot blend very well, and the result is a comic and parodic picture: Lucius, experienced ass and big-eared Odysseus, falls short both of

¹² A similar view in Philostratus' *Heroikos* 25,13 and *passim*: most of Odysseus' adventures are a forgery by Homer. Palamedes refuses to acknowledge Odysseus as a wise man at 33,8. But already in Sophocles' *Philoctetes* 'Odysseus represents one of the worst products of the fifth-century sophistic movement – the quibbling, unscrupulous, corrupt, ambitious, self-seeking sophist, rejoicing to make the worse argument appear the better, delighting to corrupt the youth of Athens with insidious arts' (Stanford 1954, 110).

¹³ Cf. also 6,32,3 on the ass' *magnae aures*.

the hero's wisdom and the historian's accuracy.¹⁴ An asinine Odysseus is a witty image, but not necessarily an original one; the hero's thirst for knowledge probably degenerated into unquenchable and aural curiosity outside narrative literature, and probably before the birth of the novel itself. According to Ptolemy Chennos (in Photius 190,147a), for example, Odysseus' original name was Οὐτίς, 'Nobody', because he had big ears, διότι ὄτα μεγάλα εἶχεν: a verbal pun that is certainly to be connected to the hero's traditional desire for knowledge, and that might date back to Middle Comedy.¹⁵

Lucius was an eager listener much before his metamorphosis into an ass. His first significant action, at the very beginning of the *Metamorphoses*, is to eavesdrop on the conversation of two passers-by (1,2,6), and this is how the first inserted tale of the novel is introduced. This tale (1,5–19) satisfies Lucius' curiosity, exposed here for the first time; Lucius, however, is clearly ashamed to acknowledge his *curiositas* and to call it by its proper name (1,2,6 'not that I am inquisitive, *curiosus*, but I am the sort who wants to know everything, or at least most things'), and masks it with the desire to alleviate the effort of the journey with a pleasant conversation (1,2,6 'the charming delight of some stories will smooth out the ruggedness of the hill we are climbing'). Even though Lucius fails to understand what the tale should teach him about the dangers of magic, at least he gets what he had asked for:

¹⁴ He is not *prudens* like Odysseus, but only *multiscius*. On the important distinction see the different but compatible analyses by Kenney 2003 and Graverini 2005a, 191 ff.; cf. also Keulen 2004, 237 f. Of course, Lucius' long ears are not enough to explain his knowledge of several details of the story he narrates; the historian's mask does not completely hide the novelist.

¹⁵ Cf. Chatzis 1914, LXXX; on Odysseus' curiosity see Barnouw 2004, 75 ff. Chennos (or his source) is humorously elaborating on a verbal pun already exploited in the *Odyssey*: Polyphemus, after Odysseus revealed his true name to him, says he has been blinded by 'a man of naught and a weakling', ολίγος τε καὶ οὐτίδανος (*Od.* 9,515). Perhaps, it should be noted that the pun Ptolemy Chennos makes on Odysseus' name also fits the title of Apuleius' novel: *Asinus aureus* because it has big *aures*? (A similar pun is perhaps exploited at 5,8,1). Actually, James 1991 suggested that the novel's true title should be *Asinus auritus*: on James's 'mischievous' proposal, and on the pun *aureus/ares*, cf. Bitel 2000-2001, 218 f.

I am... extremely grateful to him for diverting us with a charming and delightful story. I have come out of this rough long stretch of road without either toil or boredom. I think my conveyor is happy over that favour too: without tiring him I have ridden all the way to this city gate here, not on his back, but on my own ears (1,20,5).

Lucius' ears are not yet ass-like, but evidently they can metaphorically play his horse's role. His *curiositas* and eagerness to hear are connected with a discussion about the veracity of stories on this occasion too, but the focus is on a slightly different point. Lucius is not trying to show off (and/or ridicule) the excellence of his historiographical method by reassuring his reader that the information conveyed to him has travelled through trustworthy channels: he and his comrades debate directly the fundamental problem of the veracity of the story itself, at its sources. The narrator of the story is its co-protagonist Aristomenes, who of course claims to be a truthful chronicler (1,5,1);¹⁶ his partner believes instead that he is an outrageous liar (1,3,1; 1,20,1), while Lucius is easily taken in (1,3,2 'you... with your thick ears, *crassis auribus*, and stubborn mind, are rejecting what may be a true report'; cf. 1,4,6, and 1,20,3 'I consider nothing to be impossible'). It has already been noted that the discussion between Lucius and his fellow-travellers 'has the overtones of a philosophical debate';¹⁷ I will now try to take this argument a few steps further.

That a good tale, or a delightful song, has the power to lighten toil is a familiar notion in ancient literature: e.g. Virgil, *Ecl.* 9,64 'so that we may go singing on our way: it makes the road less irksome' (cf. also Theocritus 7,35–36), or Heliodoros 6,2,2 where Kalasiris says to Knemon 'now it is the time for you to tell it [i.e. 'your story'], and in so doing you will not only be granting the request of Nausikles here but also making our journey less arduous'.¹⁸ It is after all an implicit acknowledgement of the charming power

¹⁶ But immediately after this statement Aristomenes adds *nec vos ulterius dubitabitis si Thessaliae proximam civitatem perveneritis, quod ibidem passim per ora populi sermo iactetur quae palam gesta sunt*; Keulen 2003 *ad loc.* correctly comments that 'while apparently intended to underline the truth of the following account, the reference to hearsay simultaneously functions to expose the story's fictionality'.

¹⁷ Keulen 2003, 107; cf. also James 2001, 263.

¹⁸ Cf. also Ovid, *Met.* 14,121 where Aeneas, walking out of the Underworld, *cum duce Cumaea mollit sermone laborem*; the Sibyl tells her story to the Trojan hero. Another tale

of poetry and narrative, which, by absorbing a listener in an imaginary world, allow him to forget the hardness of life.¹⁹ But, even though it was probably a common topos, one text in particular can offer us some insight about Lucius' disposition towards fabulous stories. At the beginning of Plato's *Phaedrus*, Socrates says to his friend Phaedrus: 'I'm so eager to hear about it [i.e. Lysias' speech] that I vow I won't leave you even if you extend your walk as far as Megara, up to the wall and back again'²⁰ (227D; at 230D Socrates declares that he does not like to go out of the city, but Phaedrus, who is stirring his passion for λόγοι, has found a way to bring him out). Actually 'eagerness to hear' is too bland an expression to define Socrates' passion for hearing λόγοι, and very soon the philosopher adopts vivid metaphors of illness and love (228B τῷ νοσοῦντι περὶ λόγων ἀκοήν; 228C τοῦ τῶν λόγων ἐραστοῦ). However, it is to be noted that Socrates' fondness for λόγοι is connected with a deep concern for truth. At 242E–243A he realizes that his first speech about love is false and gives offence to the true divine nature of Eros, so much so that a palinode is needed; the necessity of knowing and telling the truth is pointed out at 245C and 247C, and is finally reasserted in the dialogue's conclusion (277B). Socrates is also very selective in his quest for truth. The problem of ἀλήθεια arises for the first time very early in the dialogue, when Phaedrus asks the philosopher if he believes that the myth of Boreas is true (229C). Socrates' answer is ambiguous and rather dismissive: he says that, while 'the wise men' are sceptical on that matter, he believes in the myth; but he also thinks that it would be nonsensical to look for a rationalistic and credible interpretation of this and other myths. He has no time to waste on such absurdities: 'consequently I don't bother about such things, but accept the current beliefs about them, and direct my inquiries... rather to myself' (230A).

At the beginning of the *Metamorphoses*, as at the beginning of Plato's *Phaedrus*, we find a discussion about truth and falsehood,²¹ the main character's eagerness to hear stories is emphasized, and the topos that a good story can lighten a long walk is exploited. After this, it should be no surprise that

on the road is Plato's *Symposium*: cf. 173b 'the road up to town is indeed well suited for telling and hearing'.

¹⁹ The same function is found in the tale of *Cupid & Psyche*, which is told in order to distract and comfort (4,27,8 *avocabo*) the disconsolate young Charite.

²⁰ Transl. Hackforth 1952.

²¹ The theme is also echoed inside Aristomenes' story: cf. Keulen 2003, 299 and 310 on *Met.* 1,18.

the main character of Aristomenes' tale is named Socrates, and that the unravelling of the story itself is located in a *locus amoenus* characterized by a plane-tree, clearly reminiscent of the *Phaedrus*' celebrated setting (1,18,8; 1,19,7–8).²² Lucius, dominated by an indiscriminate curiosity, is a sort of Socrates lacking that self-restraint that directs the philosopher's attention not to myths, but to truth and to the knowledge of himself: this is the reason why, throughout the whole novel, he is so persistently deaf to the meaning that the several stories he listens to can have for his own destiny.

Even though Lucius' programmatic statement at 1,20,3 'I consider nothing to be impossible' is verbally similar to the sceptical and dismissive 'todo puede ser' of Cervantes' canon, the attitude of Apuleius' main character clearly recalls the visionary knight's total adhesion to the stories he reads in his books. Lucius not only believes in the tales he listens to: he is also deeply influenced by them, to the point that he evidently tends to superimpose the narrative world on his own 'real' life in a way that can remind us of Don Quixote. At the beginning of Book 2, this is how he looks at the city of Hypata:

Considering... that the story told by my excellent comrade Aristomenes had originated at the site of this very city, I was on tenterhooks of desire and impatience alike, and I began to examine each and every object with curiosity. Nothing I looked at in that city seemed to me to be what it was; but I believed that absolutely everything had been transformed into another shape by some deadly mumbo-jumbo... (2,1,2–3)

A first conclusion that we can reach about orality in the *Metamorphoses*, then, is that it helps construct the narrative as a mythical and fabulous story, and to mark its difference from other literary genres, like historiography, in which truth and rationality play a more important role.²³ Of course, it also contributes towards constructing a kind of reception that is suitable for such a narrative. Lucius' curiosity and eagerness to hear stories, concretely repre-

²² Cf. Keulen 2003 *ad loc.*

²³ A different approach to the same subject is offered by Regine May in her contribution to this volume: while we share the general view that Apuleius' text repeatedly points out its own fictionality, the hierarchy she establishes between sight and hearing is quite the opposite to the one I propose here.

sented by the ass' ears,²⁴ is indeed a moral flaw, and it will be the cause of his wretched metamorphosis. Nevertheless, I am going to suggest that it also can be, and indeed should be, considered as a possible model for the novel's reception: we will see that the pretence of oral dialogue between narrator and reader/listener calls to the foreground, in the prologue and elsewhere, the (asinine?) ears of the reader, and it is difficult not to make a comparison with the ears of the ass. In leading up to this conclusion, the following section of this paper will deal with the *Metamorphoses*' ambiguous but recurrent pretence of orality, that in some cases even becomes a pretence of theatricality. I will argue that this is a narrative device aimed to give the reader/listener an 'effect of presence', making it easier for him to identify with the characters of the story and share their joys and sorrows. This way, the reader is invited to replicate Lucius' total immersion in Aristomenes' narrative world.

2. Listening, Seeing, and Staging

Lucius is not only a hearer of stories; he is of course also a narrator, and a competent one. As a storyteller, as we will see, he appeals both to the eyes and ears of his audience, in order to offer them a more varied experience and a better entertainment; however, he has to address his audience indirectly, through a written book, and this leads to some interesting consequences. The *Metamorphoses* presents itself both as an oral account and as a written text: the prologue urges the reader to *inspicere*, 'to look at', an Aegyptian papyrus, but also promises to titillate his ears with a sweet *susurrus*. After such a preamble, the prologue's final incitement, *lector intende*, can only be ambiguous: *intende aures* and *intende oculos* are equally acceptable interpretations.²⁵ This ambiguity has intrigued many a scholar: Don Fowler, for example, points out the 'disjunction... between an assumed orality and an actual written reception', and Ahuvia Kahane discusses 'the paradoxes of written voices'.²⁶

It is indeed a paradox, but not one peculiar to Apuleius alone. In Virgil's *Eclogues*, for example, Pollio is *lector* of Damoetas' poetry (3,85), even

²⁴ The connection of *ares* with *curiositas* is explicit at 11,23,5: *sed parem noxam contraherent et aures et lingua, <ista impiae loquacitatis,> illae temerariae curiositatis;* the passage is discussed below.

²⁵ For a different interpretation, see Keulen in this volume, p.129f.

²⁶ Fowler 2001, 225; Kahane 2001, 238.

though the shepherd is obviously singing and not writing: such an ambiguity is almost unavoidable in 'performative' texts, like the *Eclogues*²⁷ and, in Gottschalk Jenson's view, Petronius' *Satyricon*.²⁸ A written voice, and the ambiguity of a text that can be both 'looked at' and 'listened to', easily characterize a narrative that aims at transcending its own writtenness in order to obtain oral immediacy and performative qualities.

True performativity, of course, is out of the reach of a written text; but there are some viable compromises. A text, as Wytse Keulen shows in his contribution to this volume, actually *becomes* performance when it is read aloud; but it can also *suggest* performance by evoking that multi-sensorial full-immersion that can be experienced only in a theatre. For example, putting aside Apuleius for a moment, we could read (or listen to...) a famous passage from Heliodoros' *Aithiopika*. At 3,1 Knemon asks Kalasiris not to neglect, in his narration, the accurate description of a procession that the Egyptian priest had only mentioned in passing: Knemon is eager to *hear* the whole narration, and wants to *see* it with his own eyes (3,1,1 ἀυτοπτήσαι). Likewise, Kalasiris should also sing the hymn that had been sung by the maidens: Knemon wants to be both θεατής and ἀκροατής (3,2,3), viewer and listener of the procession.²⁹ Kalasiris' description is so effective that it can induce a quasi-hallucinatory state. When he describes Theagenes and

²⁷ A similar paradox can be found in *Dirae* 26 *nostris cantata libellis*. The 'performative' nature of the *Eclogues* facilitated their adaptation for the stage; on theatrical performances of Vergil's *Eclogues* see Tacitus, *Dial.* 13,2; Donatus, *Vita Vergilii* 26–27; Servius, *Buc.* 6,11; Gianotti 1991, 123 ff. There is also some evidence of an osmosis between narrative literature and theatre: see below, n. 50. More generally, on the typical self-representation of the poet as a writer, see La Penna 1992.

²⁸ Cf. Jenson 2004, 44 f. about a 'dichotomy of the written and the spoken' in Petronius; the *Satyricon* 'seeks to hide its own textuality, leaving the impression of a living voice telling the story'. While performance is indeed a useful interpretative category for our understanding of the ancient novel, its importance should not be overemphasized; a balanced assessment is offered by Nimis 2004, 181: 'The ancient novels are an important transitional moment in that trajectory [i.e. the 'transformation from performance into reading']: still beholden for the most part to the protocols of performance, but with an emerging sense of a discourse no longer centered around the activity of a performer'. Plato's *Phaedrus* exposes the same paradox: not only is it a written dialogue, it also points out the philosophical excellence of orality over writing. 'Writing performance', of course, was an issue in the chapters of rhetorical handbooks devoted to *actio*: cf. Gunderson 2000, 29–57.

²⁹ On this aspect of the dialogue between Knemon and Kalasiris see e.g. Liviabella Furiani 2003, 434 ff.; Crismani 2003. On sight and hearing stimulated by *ekphraseis* see Bartsch 1989, 17–19, with an example from Philostratus' *Imagines* 1,17.

Charikleia, Knemon exclaims: ‘They are not here, Father; but your description portrayed them so vividly... that they seemed to be before my eyes’ (3,4,7).³⁰ Knemon, who ‘enjoys listening and has an insatiable appetite for good stories’ (3,4,11) is similar to Lucius, and can be considered both a model for and a parody of the reader/listener of the novel.³¹ When the narration conforms to his tastes and satisfies his eagerness to see and listen, it is easily and naturally assimilated to the only other literary genre that is able to offer its audience a similar experience. It is not by chance that Knemon adopts a theatrical metaphor: when Kalasiris only mentions the procession without really describing it for Knemon, he ‘rings up the curtain and brings it down again all in one phrase’ (3,1,1).³²

We might compare Apuleius’ visual/auditive characterization of his own narrative (already hinted at, as we have seen, in the prologue), even though he adopts different and more stylised forms. At 6,29,3 Charite says that her adventure with Lucius, a story entitled ‘A royal maiden flees captivity riding an ass’, will be painted on a votive tablet, and therefore admired through the eyes (*visetur*); but it will also be heard as a tale (*in fabulis audietur*) and put in fine writing (*doctorumque stilis... perpetuabitur*). In several passages the

³⁰ An exclamation by Knemon leads Kalasiris into error, and the priest asks Knemon where the boy and the girl are: there is a very similar scene at Philostratus, *Her.* 10,5. Winkler 1982, 335 points out that it is an ‘old comic gag’, cf. Plautus, *Ps.* 35 f.; Hardie 1998, 29 states that this and other passages are ‘symptomatic of the text’s wider tendency to confuse art and reality’.

³¹ See Winkler 1982, 41 on how Heliodorus’ readers both identify with and dissociate themselves from Knemon; cf. also Fusillo 1989, 176, for whom Knemon is ‘il lettore tipo di questo genere letterario popolare, e quindi il lettore per nulla ideale del romanzo eliodoreo’. Winkler’s position is challenged by Morgan 1991, who states that ‘Knemon presents an exact fit, cognitively and affectively, with the reader’ (99), and is reassessed by Hunter 1998b, 53.

³² The *αὐτοψία* so valued by the historians is so degraded in Knemon that it becomes merely a hypnotic suggestion induced by a narration. It should be noted that not only theatre, but also rhetoric, insofar as it becomes theatrical, is able to stimulate such an involvement in its audience. According to Solimano 1991, 16, ‘l’*actio* dell’*orator*... è paragonabile ad una messa in scena, protesa a “far vedere” e a suscitare emozioni immediate negli ascoltatori-osservatori, attraverso i movimenti del corpo e le modulazioni della voce dell’oratore-attore’. Cf. *her.* n. 77 at p. 28, with further bibliography and examples from Cicero and Quintilian, to which I would add Cleon’s reproaches to the Athenians in Thucydides 3,38,4–7: ‘it is your wont to be spectators of words and hearers of deeds... you are in thrall to the pleasures of the ear and are more like men who sit as spectators at exhibitions of sophists than men who take counsel for the welfare of the state’ (transl. Smith 1930)

narrator addresses his reader and says that, if he had been present, he could have seen with his own eyes the scene that is being described: for example, a joyful procession at 7,13,2 (*pompam cerneret... et hercules memorandum spectamen*), and a pack of ferocious dogs assaulting runaway slaves at 8,17,3 (*cerneret non tam... memorandum quam miserandum etiam spectaculum*). Remarkable in both passages is the adoption of two terms like *spectaculum* and the less common *spectamen*, which can be connected to the theatrical world.³³

These passages, together with the prologue and other passages I will mention, suggest that reading a novel is a complex act, one that generates a virtually multimedia experience that involves both viewing and listening, and appeals both to eyes and ears. Notably, not even the mention of the concrete materiality of the book reduces the act of writing to a purely referential activity. Particularly interesting is the introduction to the wicked stepmother's story at 10,2,1: 'a few days later, I recall, an outrageous and abominable crime was perpetrated there, which I am adding to my book so that you can read it too' (*sed ut vos etiam legatis, ad librum profero*). This story is the most explicitly connoted as suitable for the stage³⁴ but, oddly enough, we are called to be readers more than spectators of it, and we are not invited to 'see' and 'listen to' it. However, this is a particular kind of writing, that of course calls for a particular kind of reading. The odd expression *ad librum profero*³⁵ suggests that, even in a book, theatricality is still an important feature; we can translate it simply as 'I am adding to my book', but this makes us miss the pun based on the technical value of *profero ad* and related expressions in theatrical language ('to stage, to produce'): see for example Plautus, *Amphitruo* 118 *veterem atque antiquam rem novam ad vos proferam*; or Laberius in Macrobius, *Saturnalia* 2.7 *quid ad scaenam adfero?*³⁶

³³ Cf. also 8,28,1 *specta denique*; 8,28,3 *cerneret*. This technique is also adopted by secondary narrators: e.g. the robber at 4,14,3 *cerneret*, and Charite's slave at 8,3,3 *spectate denique*. In his descriptions, Apuleius commonly adopts ecphrastic elements that enhance the 'effect of presence' of the reader, who is thus encouraged to become a spectator too; see the commentaries by Keulen 2003 at 1,4,5 *diceret* and by Van Mal-Maeder 2001 at 2,4,3 *ecce*, with further references.

³⁴ Cf. also below on 10,2,4; on its theatrical antecedents see especially Fiorencis-Gianotti 1990; Zimmerman 2000, 417–432.

³⁵ Cf. also 10,7,4 *ad istas litteras proferam*.

³⁶ Cf. also Cicero, *Planc.* 29 *omitto illa quae, si minus in scaena sunt, at certe, cum sunt prolata, laudantur*; Valerius Maximus 8,10,2 *in scaenam referrent*; and also Seneca, *Ep.* 90,28 where *sapientia... protulit mentibus the spectaculum* of the universe's true nature.

A weird but more accurate translation could be ‘I stage, I put on in this book’. Writing a novel is somehow like staging it; reading a novel is somehow a substitute for going to the theatre.³⁷

The book’s concrete form, or the written transmission of the story, is hinted at several other times in the novel. To the already quoted passages we can add:

When I asked him about the outcome of this trip of mine, he gave several strange and quite contradictory responses: on the one hand my reputation will really flourish, but on the other I will become a long story, an unbelievable tale, a book in several volumes (*historiam magnam et incredundam fabulam et libros*: Diophanes’ prediction to Lucius at 2,12,5).³⁸

So ran the story told to the captive girl by that crazy, drunken old woman. I was standing not far off, and by Hercules I was upset not to have *tablets and stilus to write down* such a pretty tale (Lucius’ comment at the end of *Cupid & Psyche*, 6,25,1).

Other examples in ThLL vol. X 2 p. 1682.31 ff. and 1686.40 ff. In Apuleius, *Fl.* 9,13 *ad vos protuli* probably refers to the public delivery of speeches (so La Rocca 2005, 182), even though Hunink 2001, 109 argues that it indicates rather the publication of written speeches. We might also compare Photius’ definition (86,66a) of Achilles Tatius’ novel: ἔστι δὲ δραματικόν, ἔρωτάς τινας ἀτόπους ἐπεισάγον, where ἐπεισάγειν corresponds to our *profero*: on this kind of theatrical terminology see Marini 1991, 240 and n. 49. Zimmerman 2000, 61 (who translates our passage ‘I will put it on record’ at p. 59) points out that *profero* is suited to the presentation of a new literary creation dealing with ‘a theme that has been treated in literature in many different ways’, but both her examples (Plautus, *Am.* 118 and Horace, *Ars* 129 f.) refer to the theatre.

³⁷ It may be noted that this is consistent with the theatrical culture of Apuleius’ times: by the 2nd century the great classical dramas had been for a long time almost completely banished from the stage to the advantage of more popular genres like mime and pantomime, but they were still alive and well in libraries and in the bookish instruction of educated men. See e.g. Schouler 1987, 274: ‘si la tragédie et la comédie occupent les esprits, c’est principalement en tant que référence livresque’; Questa-Raffaelli 1990, 175 ff. If Apuleius’ *Phaedra* aims at joining the more renowned *Phaedrae* and the nobler *Hypolititi* that preceded it, it has inevitably to take the form of a book; this is not the case, of course, for different and less textualized forms of spectacle present in the *Metamorphoses*. A catalogue of mime-related scenes in the *Metamorphoses* can be found in Fick-Michel 1991, 115–117; cf. also Hijmans et al. 1985, 214 *ad* 8,25; Keulen 2003, 43; Keulen forthcoming. For pantomime, Zimmerman 2000, 366 ff. *ad* 10,30,1; Zimmerman et al. 2004, 550 f. *ad* 6,24,3.

³⁸ On this passage, cf. Graverini 2005b.

I shall tell you what happened from the beginning – such events as could justly be *written down on paper* in the form of a history by persons better educated than I, whom Fortune provides with the gift of the *pen* (Charite's slave introduces the narration of his mistress' death at 8,1,4).

But perhaps as a careful *reader* you will find fault with my story, reasoning as follows: "How did it happen, you clever little ass, that though you were shut up in the confines of the mill you were able to find out what the women were doing in secret, as you insist?" So let me tell you (*accipe*) how I, an inquisitive man (*homo curiosus*) under the guise of a beast of burden, discovered all they did (Lucius' apostrophe to the reader at 9,30,1).

It should be noted, however, that such a list would be misleading as a demonstration of the narrator's concern to emphasize the written nature of his account; on the contrary, we can read these passages as evidence that the novel tries to present itself in a form that includes writing, but also goes beyond it. The second and the third passages only deny the written form of the story, while in the first (like at 6,29,3, already quoted) oral and written transmission, *fabula* and *libri*, seem to coexist.³⁹ The last passage is an apostrophe to the *reader*; however, the imagined dialogue with him is represented vividly, and gives the impression of a lively and realistic conversation (also enhanced by *accipe*, which recurs in the prologue and is typical of direct speeches).⁴⁰

Furthermore, it is obvious that all the inserted tales narrated by secondary characters (Aristomenes, Thelyphron, the robbers and their old servant, and so on) are presented as oral accounts made to Lucius or overheard by him: we readers are supposed to listen to them through Lucius' ears, and thus to identify ourselves with him to some extent. The main narrator himself sometimes displays, when addressing his audience, the same pretence of

³⁹ See Van Mal-Maeder 2001, 215 *ad loc.*

⁴⁰ Cf. Fowler 2001, 228 f.: 'the exposure of textuality is accompanied by gestures of pretended presence: the reader is taken aside and into the narrator's confidence, as if they were in the same room'.

orality, overlooking the fact that it is actually an audience of (mainly, or at least also)⁴¹ readers; besides the prologue, relevant passages are:

And so here is a story, better than all the others and delightfully elegant, which I have decided to bring to your ears (*ad auris vestras adferre decrevi*: 9,14,1).⁴²

Perhaps, my zealous *reader*, you are eager to learn what was said and done next. I would tell (*dicerem*) if it were permitted to tell; you would learn if it were permitted to hear (*audire*). But both ears and tongue would incur equal guilt, the latter from its unholy talkativeness, the former from their unbridled curiosity (*parem noxam contraherent et aures et lingua, <ista impiae loquacitatis,>*⁴³ *illae temerariae curiositatis*: 11,23,5–6)

The first passage introduces the tale of the miller's wife, where the theme of (over)hearing is central: so much so that Lucius, as we have seen, praises his big asinine ears at 9,15,6. The narrator explicitly declares how he comes to know some details: 9,16,1 'one day... there came drifting to my ears the following remarks (*sermo talis meas adfertur auris*)'. The closeness of *meas adfertur auris* to 9,14,1 *ad auris vestras adferre* suggests that an ability and eagerness to hear put narrator and reader on a par.⁴⁴ Lucius' apostrophe at 11,23,5–6 is again ambiguous: he addresses his *lector*, but also mentions *dicere* and *audire, aures et lingua*. The pretence of oral dialogue, which immediately replaces the suggested image of a reader with a book in his hands, represents more vividly the close connection between narrator and reader/listener, who in this case share a strong temptation to surrender to *loquacitas/curiositas*. Involved in a dialogue with the narrator, the reader shares Lucius' joys and sorrows more easily, becoming part of his narrative world.⁴⁵

⁴¹ See below, n. 66.

⁴² Cf. also 9,16,3 *audi denique...*

⁴³ The emendation is by van der Vliet, and is accepted by Robertson.

⁴⁴ On the reader's ass-like ears cf. James 1991, 170; Graverini 2005a, 177 and 193 f.

⁴⁵ The distinction between readers and listeners is also relevant in Chariton's novel where, according to Hunter 1994, 1070 f., it is connected with the debate about *utile* and *dulce* in historiography; *contra*, Laplace 1997, 70 and n. 71.

The theatricality of the novel combines with this narrative strategy aiming at the involvement of the reader. At 10,2,4 the narrator says 'So now, excellent reader, know that you are reading a tragedy, and no light tale, and that you are rising from the lowly slipper to the lofty buskin' (*iam ergo, lector optime, scito te tragoediam, non fabulam legere et a socco ad coturnum ascendere*). The reader is invited to take off the *soccus* and to put on the *coturnus* (the footwear of the comic and tragic actors respectively) in order to anticipate the 'tragic' character of the story; but the metaphor also suggests a curious exchange of roles between narrator and reader, since of course it is the former and not the latter who should metaphorically change his shoes to adapt his tone to the drama of the new tale.⁴⁶ With the most striking of the 'effects of presence', the audience is invited on stage; narrator and reader are again put on a par, and the apostrophe suggests some sort of complicity between them in the production of the narrative.

The experience of reading a novel is thus implicitly compared to that of being in a theatre, as audience of or even actors in a play. As is well known, theatricality is an important feature of Apuleius' *Metamorphoses*, and the apostrophe at 10,2,4 is perhaps the best confirmation of this. The wicked stepmother's tale is introduced as a 'tragedy', but in doing so the narrator clearly points out the 'comic' qualities of what precedes it, and virtually of the whole novel: *tragoediam, non fabulam* defines the characters of both the tale that is beginning (a *tragoedia*) and the narration that contains it (a *fabula*).⁴⁷ Even though the word *fabula* recurs several other times in the novel with the more generic meaning of 'story',⁴⁸ in this passage the opposition with *tragoedia* and the parallelism with the expression *a socco ad coturnum* compel us to understand *fabula* in the strict sense of 'comedy'. Of

⁴⁶ Like e.g. in Martial 8,3,13. Keulen, in this volume pp.131-132, discusses this same passage by Apuleius, and argues that '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. It is also the physical activity of reading aloud this text'.

⁴⁷ So Schlam 1992, 44 and Finkelppearl 1998, 151 f.; Zimmerman 2000, 69 gives a stricter interpretation: '*a socco* obviously refers back to the comedy in the description of the *miles gloriosus* in the preceding episode'.

⁴⁸ *Fabulae* are the story of Aristomenes (1,2,6; 1,4,6; 1,13,3; 1,20,2; 2,1,2) and that of Thelyphron's (2,20,7; 2,31,1), *Cupid and Psyche* (4,27,8), Charite's flight from the brigand's cave (6,29,3), some adultery tales (9,4,4; 9,14,1; 9,17,2; 9,23,5), the story of the heinous murderess (10,23,2). Last but not least, the whole novel is defined a *fabula* at 2,12,5 and 11,20,6. For discussion of the meaning of the term in the *Metamorphoses* see Van Malmaeder 2001, 56-57 and 214-217; a broader view in Lazzarini 1984.

course, we should not take the narrator's statement too literally: after all, for obvious reasons the wicked stepmother's tale cannot really be defined as a tragedy, and it would not be appropriate to describe the *Metamorphoses* as a comedy *tout court*. However, Apuleius' novel undoubtedly contains comic and theatrical elements;⁴⁹ defining it as a (theatrical) *fabula* is correct, at least to the extent that it includes some narrative material that could be easily adapted for the stage. Generally speaking, novel and comedy are closely related literary genres: the ambiguous meaning of the word *fabula*, that identifies both prose narratives and theatrical plays, is not due to chance.⁵⁰

The prologue reproduces and concentrates the semantic fluctuations of the term *fabula* that we have seen above. Its first phrase introduces the novel as an interweaving of *variae fabulae*, and here *fabula* clearly means 'story'; but theatricality bursts into its ending, with the phrase *fabulam Graecanicam incipimus*. As Don Fowler points out, '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 is the act of reading'.⁵¹ The metamorphosis of writtenness (the Egyptian papyrus) into orality and performance – a transformation that, as we have seen, is echoed several times throughout Apuleius' novel – is thus already suggested in the prologue, and it is clearly connected with the close relationship, and even identification, between narrator and listener.

In the next and final section we will see that, in the *Metamorphoses*, the novel itself tries to control its own 'performance', since the prologue announces a narrating voice that will be melodious and fascinating, similar to that of an actor: theatricality is a relevant feature not only of the narrative material included in Apuleius' novel, but of its rhetorical self-representation

⁴⁹ See e.g. Zimmerman 2000, 417–432; Keulen forthcoming; May 1998, Frangoulidis 1997, 145 ff. and 2001, Fiorencis-Gianotti 1990.

⁵⁰ On the relationship between the ancient novel and theatrical genres see, among many others, Fusillo 1989, 33–55, or Morales 2004, 60 ff. on Achilles Tatius; a book on *Apuleius and Drama*, by Regine May, is forthcoming. As it is well known, there are some traces of an osmosis between narrative literature and theatrical performances: for example, Lucian mentions Ninus, Metiochus, and Parthenope as characters in mimes and pantomimes (*Pseudol.* 25; *Salt.* 2 and 54). See also Mignogna 1996 for a mimic Leucippe; and Reardon 1996, 315–317 for the *Callirhoe* of Persius 1,134.

⁵¹ Fowler 2001, 228. On the theatricality of Apuleius' prologue cf. also Smith 1972; Dowden 1982, 428; Winkler 1985, 200–203; Harrison 1990b; Dowden 2001, 134–136.

as well. This will lead us to some concluding remarks about the 'psychagogic' qualities of the *Metamorphoses*: by advertising them in the prologue, Apuleius adopts, and enhances, a common genre marker of the ancient Greek narrative tradition.

3. The Novel's Voice

Wytse Keulen, in his commentary and in his contribution to this book, shows very well how the prologue speaker advertises the novel as a 'singing' performance, a narration adopting an effeminate and theatrical style⁵² that is at odds with the rules set by classical Roman rhetoric; these ideas are suggested by the prologue's promise to *permulcere* the reader's ears, and by its mention of a *vocis immutatio*. Roman rhetors had a grim view of those who strived exclusively for auditory pleasures, and 'it was held that indulging in *aures permulcere* could lead to a corrupt, hyperurbane style'.⁵³ As regards modulations of the voice, Cato the Elder, for example, sternly reprimanded a certain senator Caelius for his habit of *voces demutare* (frgs. 84–85 Sblendorio Cugusi = 114–115 Malcovati, preserved by Macrobius *Sat.*3,14,9), and Quintilian contemptuously mentioned the *modulatio scaenica* of the voice exhibited by many speakers (11,3,57 ff.): both Cato's and Quintilian's polemical targets behave and speak like actors or mimes on the stage, and this is perceived as a sin against rhetoric.⁵⁴ Keulen stresses in particular that this performance style was 'contrary to the Roman rhetorical ideal', and that the phraseology adopted in the prologue evokes 'a cultural clash between Greece and Rome, where Greece stands for the enchanting rhetoric of poetry, and Rome for rhetorical and literary pursuits'.⁵⁵ The prologue speaker is therefore adopting a rather provocative stance; he consciously advertises a style that at Rome was normally perceived as being foreign, and that may have offended highbrow readers.

This is certainly an excellent point; the rhetorical fault of an excessive and theatrical *vocis immutatio* was connected with the moral vices of ef-

⁵² On the connection between theatricality (especially that of mime and pantomime) and effeminacy see also Morales 2004, 73 ff.

⁵³ Keulen 2003, 18. See also Graverini 2005a and 2006, esp 15ff.

⁵⁴ Keulen 2003, 16–19 and 83; on the uncertain boundaries between rhetoric and theatre see Gunderson 2000, 111 ff.

⁵⁵ Keulen 2003, 83; and Keulen's paper in this volume.

feminacy and debauchery,⁵⁶ and it was a typical Roman attitude to attach such flaws to Greek culture. This reading of the prologue is particularly influenced by the selection, that is indeed a good and relevant one, of Latin rhetorical treatises as primary texts for comparison; however, there are also other options, and other (albeit not incompatible) perspectives.

First of all, I would also like to take *Greek* rhetorical theory into consideration briefly, since, as I have shown elsewhere, the juxtaposition between ‘enchanting/poetic’ and ‘persuasive’ rhetoric was not a peculiarly Roman issue. In Apuleius’ time, for example, Aelius Aristides censures those rhetors who are used to γαργαλίσαι τὰ ὦτα (*Or.* 34,16: the Greek rhetor adopts a turn of phrase that corresponds exactly to Apuleius’ *ures permulcere*), to titillate the ears of their audience, instead of trying to persuade them (34,17 ἄγειν καὶ πείθειν), and thus reveal their weak and effeminate nature (34,16 μαλακίζεσθαι).⁵⁷

Neither was the polemic against an excessively modulated and theatrical *pronuntiatio* peculiarly Roman, and Quintilian himself bears witness to the fact that the polemic against the excessive modulation of the voice was Greek in origin. At the end of Book XI, he explains the difference between theatrical and rhetorical *actio*: an orator pronouncing a passage from Terence’s *Eunuchus* (vv. 46–48), for example,

will introduce pauses for hesitation, inflections of voice (*vocis flexus*), various hand-gestures, and different movements of the head. Oratory has a different flavour: it does not wish to be too highly spiced, because it is a real activity, not an imitation. There is therefore every reason to object to a delivery that pulls faces, irritates by its gesticulations, or jumps from one tone of voice to another (*vocis mutationibus resultans*). It was a use-

⁵⁶ On the connection between theatricality and effeminacy cf. also Quintilian 1,10,31 and 9,4,141; Lucian, *Salt.* 2; 3; 28. Quintilian 1,8,2 recommends a *lectio* that is not *in cantico dissoluta nec plasmata... effeminata*.

⁵⁷ Several other examples in Graverini 2005a, 180 ff., to which add Plutarch, *De recta ratione audiendi* 41D: αἱ δὲ τῶν πολλῶν διαλέξεις καὶ μελέται σοφιστῶν... τὴν φωνὴν ἐμμελείαις τισὶ καὶ μαλακότησι καὶ παρισώσεσιν ἐφηδύνοντες ἐκβακχεύουσι καὶ παραφέρουσι τοὺς ἀκροωμένους, κενὴν ἡδονὴν διδόντες.

ful borrowing that our old writers took from the Greek, and Popilius Laenas from them, to call this sort of pleading *mocosa* (11,3,182–183).⁵⁸

Quintilian is not completely insensitive to the new rhetorical fashion, which demands a lively and varied *actio*; but he concludes that moderation is needed, and that the orator should not, like an actor, seek elegance to the detriment of *auctoritas*. Aelius Aristides shows us that the debate concerning the correct modulation of the voice was relevant in second century Greece as well:

Indeed, I once actually caught one of those who grovels before the masses causing an effect opposite to what he intended. For to gratify his audience, he sang, modulating his voice (ἦδε μὲν γὰρ ἐγκλίνας τῶν χαρίτων ἔνεκα), while he added the same final clause at the end of each sentence, as if in a song (ὥσπερ ἐν μέλει). But his darling audience was so amazed and enraptured by the song that when it reached the phrase, it itself with a laugh supplied it... ahead of time (*Or.* 34,47).⁵⁹

Actually, in Greece as well as in Rome, a theatrically modulated voice was an essential aspect of an ‘enchanted’ rhetoric, that tries to *permulcere* or γαργαλίζειν⁶⁰ an audience rather than adduce rational and convincing reasonings. Let us read further Aristides’ tirade, that explicitly links this kind of *elocutio* to performative practices:

The orator, the philosopher, and all those involved in liberal education should not, I think, please (τέρπειν) the masses in the same fashion as these servile fellows, dancer, pantomimes, and tricksters... who is there who does not think that he is better than every dancer? Or who would permit the pantomime to speak off stage? But they are titillated (γαργαλίζονται) for the moment (34,55–57).

⁵⁸ Transl. Russell 2001. The final word, *mocosa*, is uncertain, and the text is marked with a *crux* in Radermacher’s 1971 Teubner edition (Cousin’s 1979 Budé prints *inotiosam*); the general meaning, however, is clear enough.

⁵⁹ Transl. Behr 1981; see his n. 33 at p. 399 for further Greek references on the practice of modulated speaking.

⁶⁰ Other possible lexical choices are θέλγειν and κηλεῖν, on which see Graverini 2005a, 180 ff., and τέρπειν, adopted by Aristides, *Or.* 34,55 quoted in the text.

After all, Aristides' reaction if he read Apuleius' prologue would not be so different from that of a Roman reader concerned, like Quintilian, with *gravitas* and *auctoritas* – the only difference being that, as Keulen shows, this hypothetical Roman reader would probably also criticise the Greekness of Apuleius' 'sweet' and theatrical style.

If we examine the other extant Greek novels and some evidence offered by their ancient readers, Apuleius' rhetorical stance will appear, if not less provocative towards a Roman audience, at least less isolated. In fact, in the wide spectrum of choices between the opposing poles of *utile* and *dulce*, the novel as a genre finds its place near the latter. Relevant passages are:

I think that this last chapter will prove very agreeable (ἡδιστον) to its readers (Chariton 8,1,4).

Literary people... will find this interlude agreeable if they choose as company such works as not only afford wit, charm, and distraction pure and simple (ψιλήν... ψυχαγωγίαν), but also provoke some degree of cultured reflection (Lucian, *VH* 1,2).

'Well sir, by Zeus and by Eros himself, please don't hesitate to gladden me with your narration, even though it is storied' (μη κατοκνήσης... ταύτη μάλλον ἦσειν, εἰ καὶ μύθοις ἔοικε: Achilles Tatius 1,2,2).⁶¹

I... produced the four volumes of this book, as an offering to Love, the Nymphs, and Pan, and something for mankind to possess and enjoy (κτῆμα...τερπνόν: Longus, *prol.* 1,3).⁶²

We have no prologues or programmatic statements in other novels, but there are a few remarkable texts that preserve some critical observations by an-

⁶¹ I have varied here on J. Winkler's translation, which obscures the verb ἦσειν.

⁶² The best discussion of 'sweetness' in Longus is in Hunter 1983, 47-52 (and cf. 92-98). He concludes that 'in stressing his work's fictional nature and its academic affiliations within the long-established division of literature into the *dulce* and the *utile*, Longus lays playful claim to both of these virtues' (52). Hunter also rightly compares Apuleius' prologue and Achilles Tatius 1,2,2 with Longus' programmatic statement; but he considers Chariton in opposition to these three novelists since 'he begins his narrative by announcing its strict historicity (πάθος ἐρωτικὸν ἐν Συρρακούσαις γενόμενον διηγήσομαι)' (48); cf., however, Chariton's statement at 8,1,4 quoted above.

cient readers. Macrobius, as it is well known, joins Petronius and Apuleius as authors of *fabulae* that *auditum mulcent* (*Somn.* 1,2,8). Antonius Diogenes' romance is for Photius 'most agreeable' (πλεῖστον ἔχει τοῦ ἡδέος: 166,109a); likewise, the patriarch says that Iamblichus' vocabulary

is flowing and gentle (ῥέουσα καὶ μαλακή). As for its sonorous qualities, the words have not been given rhythmical force so much as titillating and, so to speak, mincing movement (οὐ πρὸς τόνον τινὰ ἀλλ' ἐπὶ τὸ γαργαλίζον... καὶ βλακῶδες παρακεκίνηται: 93,73b).

There is a good chance that Photius' assessments are influenced by the prologues of the books he is reviewing,⁶³ and Macrobius' phraseology could be reminiscent of the beginning of the *Metamorphoses* too. Also a passage from the beginning of the pseudo-Lucianic *Erotes* is perhaps connected with a lost prologue, that of Aristides' *Milesiaka*. Lycinus says to his friend Theomnestus:

This morning I have been quite gladdened by the sweet winning seductiveness (αἰμύλη καὶ γλυκεῖα πειθῶ) of your wanton stories, so that I almost thought I was Aristides being enchanted (ὑπερκηλούμενος) beyond measure by those Milesian Tales.⁶⁴

Photius also provides us with a good example *e contrario* of the standard connection between fiction and 'soothing the ears': the merit of Eudokia's *Metaphrasis of the Optateuch* is, he says, that 'she does not strive, like the poets, to blandish the ears of the young, misrepresenting the truth with fictive narrations' (183,128a: οὔτε γὰρ ἐξουσία ποιητικῆ μύθοις τὴν ἀλήθειαν τρέπων ἠδύνειν σπουδάζει μειρακίων ὦτα).

So, the prologue speaker's promise to 'titillate the ears of the reader with a sweet whisper' can also be read as a genre marker that prepares the audience

⁶³ On Photius' usage of prologues in his reviews see Mazza 1999, 92 n. 41 and 134 n. 33, with further references. Winkler 1985, 183 and n. 3 on Photius' report on Lucius of Patrai reflecting probably the prologue to his lost *Metamorphoses*. Ψυχαγωγία was also typically considered an attribute of *mythoi* in rhetorical *progymnasmata*: see Kennedy 2003, 135 (Nicolaus) and 180 (John of Sardis).

⁶⁴ Transl. Macleod 1967. On this passage and its connections with Aristides' work see Jensson 2004, 263 ff.

for an entertaining work of narrative literature. Apuleius is clearly elaborating on a topos that is also typical of Greek narrative literature; while it was particularly prominent in texts pertaining (probably) to the 2nd century CE (Lucian, Achilles Tatius, Longus, Antonius Diogenes, Iamblichus), the topos dates back at least to Aristides' *Milesiaka*, which can be considered an important reference point for the birth and formation of the ancient novel.⁶⁵

By claiming its relative independence from the laws of *utile*, and by advertising its nature of 'sweet' and psychagogic entertainment, the novel as a genre defined its literary space and marked the difference from older and more 'classical' literary and rhetorical canons. More than any other ancient novelists, Apuleius emphasizes, in the prologue as well as in the narrative proper, these 'sweet' and psychagogic qualities of his own novel. The presence of orality is part of this picture: a listener is in a more immediate relationship with the narrator than a reader, he is more easily involved in the narration and ready to identify himself with the main character.⁶⁶ A listener's

⁶⁵ On the importance of Aristides/Sisenna for Apuleius and Petronius see especially More-schini 1994, 77–90, Harrison 1998, and Jensson 2004, 255–271. Dowden 2001, 127 points out the connection, probably mediated by Sisenna, between the description in the pseudo-Lucianic *Erotes* of Aristides 'ὑπερκηλούμενος by Milesian fables' and Apuleius' *sermone isto Milesio... permulceam*. He also strongly affirms (126) that 'there is no such thing as a genre of Milesian Tales', reminding us that we know almost nothing of Aristides, Sisenna, and other possible unknown practitioners of the 'genre'.

⁶⁶ Heliodorus describes clearly the stronger psychagogic powers of auditory experiences compared to the visual ones: 'so exquisite were the harmonies of the singers... that one's ears charmed one's eyes to be blind to what they saw' (3,3,1; see also Plutarch, *De recta ratione audiendi* 41D, where it is told that a certain Melanthius, asked about a tragedy by Diogenes, answered that he could not see it (κατιδεῖν), since it was obscured by too many words). Heliodorus, however, does not go so far as to present his whole novel as an oral dialogue with his audience, and in the final *sphragis* he describes it as a σύνταγμα (10,41,4). The same is true for the other Greek novelists, who frequently emphasize the written nature of their narratives: cf. Chariton 8,1,4 σύγγραμμα; Lucian, *VH* 1,4 γράφω; Longus, *prol.* 2 βίβλους; the main character (and, as it seems, fictive author) of the pseudo-Lucianic *Onos* is also a συγγραφεύς (55). Apuleius, disguising his novel as a conversation with the reader, is maybe introducing an innovation, or more likely he is adopting Aristides' (or Sisenna's) stance. However, as Hägg suggests (1994, 58), 'it is probable that the... dissemination of the novels down the social scale, as far as it did take place, was primarily by means of recitals within the household, among friends, or even publicly – i.e., the novel in such circumstances had an "audience" proper rather than a "readership"'. Hägg is mainly referring to the early, 'non-sophistic' Greek novels, but it would not be inconceivable, in my view, to consider such a possibility also as regards Apuleius' *Metamorphoses*; a useful discussion on this subject is to be found in Keulen's contribution to this volume.

ears, as we have seen, are a traditionally discredited means of perception, not suitable for the 'useful' purposes of history and philosophy⁶⁷ and more exposed to delusions and enchantments; but it is for this very same reason that they are suitable for the suggestions that any good fiction must induce. Hearing was considered the most subject to passion (*παθητικωτάτη*) of all senses,⁶⁸ and it is not by chance that Apuleius invites his reader to become, like Aristides, *ὑπερκηλούμενος* by the tales he listens to. It is not a kind of intellectual and rational listening, but one that leads the audience to wonder and amazement (*ut mireris*) and clearly contributes to the disassociation of the novel from the realm of 'useful' literature: Plutarch, following Pythagoras, states that 'philosophy... removes any feeling of wonder and amazement (*θαῦμα καὶ θάμβος*) stemming from ignorance and uncertainty'.⁶⁹

To sum up, the prologue speaker addresses an audience that is willing to listen to a melodious and enchanting voice, and that has no *crassae aures* like Lucius' interlocutor at 1,3,2; such an audience is ready to believe in the events narrated, and to be enchanted and swallowed up by the narration. The *optimus lector* of the *Metamorphoses* is certainly *doctus*,⁷⁰ but he is also curious and gullible like Lucius; like Lucius (and Timaeus) he is guided by his ears and takes the most pleasing way, without caring too much about whether it is also the 'worse' one.

Of course, it would be unwise to completely identify this 'fictive' reader with the concrete, contemporary reader of Apuleius' novel, even though some overlapping between the fictive and the real world is allowed and even suggested by the text of the novel (cf. e.g. the notorious *Madaurensem* passage at 11,27,9). However, entertainment and escapism are certainly among the reasons why any reader chooses to set out on a journey in a narrative

⁶⁷ Even though the dialogue is extremely important in philosophical teaching and writing practice, the supremacy of sight over hearing holds true also for philosophers: cf. Solimano 1991, 13–15.

⁶⁸ Plutarch, *De recta ratione audiendi* 38A, quoting Theophrastus.

⁶⁹ *De recta ratione audiendi* 44B (but of course other approaches were also possible: cf. e.g. Plato, *Symp.* 208b on Socrates' amazement for Diotima's teachings). See also Keulen 2003, 68 for a connection between ear-pleasing rhetoric and the astonishment of the audience.

⁷⁰ Cf. Zimmerman 2000, 78 (commenting on 10,2,8 *dii boni, quam facilis licet non artificii medico, cuivis tamen docto Veneriae cupidinis comprehensio*): 'the narrator... has created a kind of alliance between the *docti* among the audience and himself, as being superior to the actors in the story'.

world; this is true also in a novel such as this one, which exhibits an extremely elaborate literary texture and possible religious-philosophical overtones.⁷¹

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⁷¹ A more detailed assessment of the balancing of entertainment, escapism, religion, philosophy, and satire in the *Metamorphoses* goes well beyond the limited scope of this paper. Even our final appreciation of the attitude of the 'ideal' reader of the novel is by definition influenced by our overall interpretation of Apuleius' novel. At 11,23,5-6, when the *studiosus lector* is addressed with the words *audi, sed crede, quae vera sunt*, we can imagine that Lucius, now concerned with truth more than with entertainment, has finally learned his lesson, and that the reader is urged to do the same; or we can suspect that his preceding demeanour casts a shadow of doubt on Lucius' final claim to truth, thus allowing a 'resistant' reading. I will broach these subjects more thoroughly in Graverini forthcoming (b).

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