

The word *prorsus* (or *prorsum*) appears in Apuleius' *Metamorphoses* a staggering 85 times. It has long been recognized as one of Apuleius' favorite adverbs, used most often as an intensifier, modifying an adjective, participle, or verb, occasionally strengthening the conjunctions *ut* and *quasi*. Though *prorsus* derives from *pro-uorsus*, its original meanings of *straight ahead* and *directly* are superseded by its usage as an intensifier: *absolutely, wholly, utterly* (Rolfe 1920: 32). Yet the nature of this intensification is difficult to describe: aside from its tendency to appear in close proximity to negatives, its placement in a Latin sentence is variable and frequently compels a difficult translation choice or even, like, an omission (Rolfe 1920: 380). For instance, in the following sentences *prorsus* may be interpreted as modifying both the preceding and the following words:

1. *Met.* 7.5: *totamque prorsus deuastauit Macedoniam*: "I totally wasted all of Macedonia" and "I laid waste to utterly all of Macedonia"
2. *Met.* 10.3: *cui morituram prorsus seruabis uxorem*: "you will absolutely save his wife who is about to die" and "you will save his wife, who is totally going to die"
3. *Met.* 10.21: *cuncto prorsus spoliata tegmine*: "with absolutely all clothing removed" and "with all clothing totally removed"

Following the earlier studies of Rolfe and the more recent entry in the *Thesaurus Linguae Latinae*, I argue that our understanding of *prorsus* can be aided by a comparison with contemporary studies of the word *like* in vernacular English as an approximative adverb and discourse particle (D'Arcy 2007). This comparison illuminates colloquial, ironical, or hyperbolic uses of *prorsus*, as in the first and second examples above, both of which are situations of direct discourse in which the speaker is trying to persuade the addressee. Dailey-O'Cain 2000 (73) found that the use of *like* made speakers seem more friendly and interesting; *prorsus* functions similarly in examples 1 and 2 above. *Prorsus* helps to distinguish the amicable bravado of *totam . . . Macedoniam* in the first example from the sinister imperialism of (e.g.) *totam Galliam in nostram dicionem esse redigendam* (Cic. *Prov.* 32); the intensification works ironically, such that for some audiences, "I wasted, like, all of Macedonia" may better convey the tone of the speaker than either of the translations above.

Long recognized as part of *sermo cotidianus* (Rolfe 1920: 37, Callebaut 1967: 537-8), *prorsus* in Apuleian direct discourse performs almost as many functions as vernacular *like*. I will focus on its usage in Apuleius' *Metamorphoses* but will also draw upon data from Apuleius' other works as well as from Cicero, Gellius, and Plautus. A detailed study not only adds nuance to our understanding of Apuleian style, characterization, and storytelling, but also contributes to our knowledge of colloquial Latin in many periods.