Cláudia Teixeira
Delfim F. Leão
Paulo Sérgio Ferreira

The Satyricon of Petronius

Genre, Wandering and Style

Cláudia Teixeira
University of Évora

Delfim F. Leão
University of Coimbra

Paulo Sérgio Ferreira
University of Coimbra

The Satyricon *of Petronius*

Genre, Wandering and Style

CONTENTS

Preface

The studies of Petronius presented in this book discuss three different perspectives that, despite being independent, aim at giving a general approach to the *Satyricon*. The first chapter explores the relation between the novel and Menippean satire: basing itself on the evolution, from Renaissance to modern times, of the various theories of Menippean genre and mode, it seeks to prove that, according to the theory of modern satire, the title of Varro's *Saturae Menippeae* may be understood as an expression of genre, and also that Petronius tried to adapt some Menippean generic features to his own work.

The second chapter argues that the relationship of the anti-heroes of the *Satyricon* with the surrounding world is developed within a system of wandering, marked by constant escapes and immanent demands. However, this random and erratic movement does not prevent the anti-heroes from coming into contact with cohesive and intrinsically consistent systems. Among these systems are especially highlighted the *Cena Trimalchionis* and the city of Croton, an urban space that also configures a dystopia.

The last chapter focuses primarily on the characters of Giton and Eumolpos, who are two of the most curious Petronian inventions. The analysis of their behaviour and style provides us with a clarifying example of the care taken by Petronius in the construction of the main characters of the *Satyricon* and of the different levels of reading that he intentionally created, through the confluence in a single character of multiple lines deriving from literary and cultural tradition.

These studies are as well a way of thanking a very special person, someone who was a teacher and master of the book's three authors: Professor Walter de Medeiros. Apart from being an enthusiastic reader of Petronius and a scholar with rare knowledge and sensibility, Professor Medeiros is also known for his kindness and rare personal qualities, all of which make of him a man who uniquely expresses academic *humanitas*.

May this volume pay humble and sincere homage to him.

Cláudia Teixeira   *Delfim F. Leão*   *Paulo Sérgio Ferreira*

Contribution to the Definition of the Relationships between the *Satyricon* of Petronius and Menippean Satire

Paulo Sérgio Ferreira
University of Coimbra

To Justus Lipsius falls the merit of having been the first humanist and, in the opinion of Relihan and Branham, the first critic to give the expression *Satyra Menippea* a generic status, in a 1581 work subtitled: *Somnium. Lusus in nostri aeui criticos*.[1] Among the first and known defenders of the inclusion of the *Satyricon* in the genre of Menippean satire were Isaac Casaubon, *De Satyrica Graecorum Poesi et Romanorum Satirica* (1605), and John Dryden in "Discourse concerning the Original and Progress of Satire," which prefaced his translation of Juvenal (1693).[2] These critics' point of view collided with the many that sought to fit the Petronian work into a novelesque genre of Greek origin. This conflict allows us to say that the first attempts to explicitly configure the genre of Menippean satire occurred around the time of the polemic that surrounded

---

[1] Relihan (1993) 12, and Branham (2005) 10.
[2] Cf. Dryden (1926) 66: "Which is also manifest from antiquity, by those authors who are acknowledged to have written Varronian satires, in imitation of his; of whom the chief is Petronius Arbiter, whose satire, they say, is now printed in Holland, wholly recovered, and made complete: when 'tis made public, it will easily be seen by any one sentence, whether it be supposititious, or genuine."

the first attempts to generically define the *Satyricon* of Petronius.

For the commentators of the 17th and 18th centuries, the satire in verse consisted in the praise of a particular virtue and the criticism of its complementary vice.[3] For this reason, it is not at all strange that, in *Diui Claudii Apocolocyntosis*, by Seneca, or in the *Caesares*, by Julianus, what has most caught the attention of these critics has been the punishment of the emperors, even in the beyond, for crimes committed during life. Following Seneca and Julian, 18th century Menippean practice adapts, in Weinbrot's words, "Roman formal verse satire's insistence on overt norms, however limited they might be."[4] Due to this, to a more than probable lack of knowledge of the works of Bion of Borysthenes and of Menippus of Gadara and to a quite limited knowledge of the *Saturae Menippeae* of Varro, it is not surprising that there is a preference among authors of the 17th and 18th centuries for the moderation and elegance of conservative aristocrats, like Varro and Seneca, who, in addition to having revealed a liking for philosophy, proposed solutions and positive rules, to the detriment of impudence, derision and an over-indulgent life stuffed with the vices of the Greek authors, Bion and

---

[3] Weinbrot (2005) 2.

[4] Weinbrot (2005) 6 and 23-4: "Over several centuries and cultures some kinds of Menippean satire adapted a key structural and more device of Roman and later French and British formal verse satire. Those forms include the praise of virtue opposed to the vice attacked, while still preserving Menippean resistance to a dangerous false orthodoxy."

Menippus. As to Petronius, a large part of the critics of the 18th century believed that the *Satyricon* criticized the vices of Nero and of his court, without praising the contrary virtues.

Among the modern theorists that have pondered Menippean satire, we can count Northrop Frye, who, in his *Anatomy of Criticism*, of 1957, distinguishes four types of fiction: *novel, confession, anatomy* and *romance*.[5] Admitting the fact that the different forms of fiction are found to be mixed[6], and defining the first two and the last types referred to, Frye proceeds to the configuration of the *anatomy*, commonly known as Menippean or Varronian satire. Considered to be a form in prose, it must have begun with the progressive inclusion, in texts in verse, of passages in prose, while the poetry itself became increasingly sporadic.[7] Centered not so much on types, but rather on the attitudes of the characters, *anatomy* portrays abstract ideas and theories, and, in a stylized way, characters which are no more than "mouthpieces of the ideas they represent."[8] Though *anatomy* can deal with a great variety of subjects, some of the most recurring have to do with disturbances, mental obsessions and social vices such as philosophical pretension and pedantry. The *anatomy* expands intellectual fantasy, and the result consists in not only a structure whose violent dislocations alter the normal narrative

---

[5] Frye (1957) 303ss.
[6] Frye (1957) 305.
[7] Frye (1957) 309.
[8] Frye (1957) 309.

logic, but also in the exaggerated humor of caricature.[9] In addition to being synonymous with *mythos*, the term "satire" may designate a structural principle or an attitude. As far as attitude is concerned, it combines fantasy with morality, while, as a form, it can exclusively reflect the fantastic (for example, in fairy tales), or exclusively reflect morality. "The purely moral type is a serious vision of society as a single intellectual pattern, in other words a Utopia."[10] The most abbreviated form of Menippean satire is usually that of a dialogue or colloquy that, without being necessarily satirical, can be wholly entertaining or moral, and have as its scenario a *cena* or a *symposium*.

Regarding the authors that interest us, Frye admits the possibility that it was Varro who would have associated the exhibition of erudition with the Menippean satire. He situates Petronius in the footsteps of the *uir Romanorum eruditissimus* and considers that the *Arbiter* used a "loosejointed narrative," that, in spite of being commonly confused with the romance, does not, as the romance does, center on the heroes, but on the free play of intellectual fantasy and in the humoristic observation that leads to caricature. In the end, Frye considers the *Cena Trimalchionis* as an example of the abbreviated form of Menippean satire.

The *spoudogeloion* according to Bakhtin, was intimately related with the carnival and characterized by an amusing relativism, by the contemporaneity

---

[9] Frye (1957) 310.
[10] Frye (1957) 310.

of the subjects dealt with, by the importance of experimentation and free invention, by the plurality of styles and voices.[11] This plurality of styles and voices is characteristic of *heteroglossia* and *polyphony*. Though Holquist says, in the "Glossary" of *The Dialogic Imagination*, that "dialogism is the characteristic epistemological mode of a world dominated by heteroglossia," where "there is a constant interaction between meanings,"[12] Plaza establishes the following distinction between *heteroglossia* and *polyphony*: while the first one requires only *sometimes* that the speech styles "should reflect and interpenetrate each other; [….] polyphony always requires an interpenetration of the different styles ("dialogue"), as well as the suspension of authorial command over the work."[13] Bakhtine also thought that the carnival, the epic and rhetoric are the basis for the novelistic genre. It is in the context of these considerations that the theoretician in the *Problemy poetiki Dostoïevskovo*, reflects upon the Socratic dialogue and the Menippean satire. The theoretician tells us that the second appeared out of the decomposition of the first, but its roots draw deeply on carnivalesque folklore, and that, because

---

[11] These features, according to Bakhtin (1981), 21-22, are present in the mimes of Sophron, in the bucolic poems, in the fable, in the early memoir literature (The *Epidemiai* of Ion of Chios, the *Homiliae* of Critias), in pamphlets, in the Socratic dialogues (as a genre), in the Roman satire (Lucilius, Horace, Persius and Juvenal), in the literature of the Symposia, in the Menippean satire (as a genre) and in the dialogues of Lucianic type.

[12] Bakhtin (1981) 426.

[13] Plaza (2005) 193-4.

of its protean nature, it is "capable of penetrating the other genres."[14]

Following this, Bakhtin specifies the fourteen characteristics of the genre which, for convenience, he had begun to call simply *ménippée*: 1) a presence of the comic element far greater than that which occurs in the Socratic dialogue; 2) a freeing up of historical limitations, of the demands of verisimilitude, and a "liberté *exceptionnelle de l'invention* philosophique et thématique;"[15] 3) the recourse to the fantastic, with a purely ideal or philosophical intention, that is, in order to investigate, provoke and test the idea of the philosophical truth of the wandering sage;[16] 4) a mixture of philosophical dialogue, phantasmagoric and symbolic dialogue with a "*naturalisme des basfonds* outrancier et grossier,"[17] that, probably, goes back to the first Menippean authors (cf. Bion of Borysthenes); 5) a notable philosophical universalism, a meditation on the world carried to the limit, and, after all, a reflection on the "ultimes questions";[18] 6) development of action on three levels, or in three spaces: earth, Olympus, and the underworld, and the presence of the "dialogue sur le seuil";[19] 7) experimental fantasticality, that is,

---

[14] Bakhtine (1970) 159, cf. 151-8.

[15] Bakhtine (1970) 160.

[16] Bakhtine (1970) 161: «Dans ce sens, on peut dire que le contenu de la ménippée est constitué par les aventures de *l'idée*, de la *vérité* à travers le monde: sur la terre, aux enfers, sur l'Olympe.»

[17] Bakhtine (1970) 161.

[18] Bakhtine (1970) 161.

[19] Bakhtine (1970) 162.

observation from an unusual standpoint, for example, from the heights, of phenomena that, from this perspective, acquire other dimensions; 8) moral and psychological experimentation, which translates into the epic and tragic monism, through the representation of uncommon and abnormal psychic states: manic-depressive dementia, double personality, extravagant fantasies, bizarre dreams, passions that border on madness, suicides, etc.; 9) a taste for scandalous scenes, for eccentric behavior, for altered intentions and manifestations, for everything that is an affront to decency and the etiquette of a given occasion; 10) a preference for violent contrasts, for oxymorons, for abrupt transformations, for unexpected reversals, for the majestic and the base, for the elevation and the fall, for unexpected approaches to distant and varying objects and every kind of combination; 11) occurrence of the elements of social utopia, namely in dreams and on journeys to inexistent countries; 12) the abundant recourse to genres which could be called "intercalaires",[20] like novellas, letters, the discourses of orators and, among others, the *symposia*, and mixtures of prose and verse, which are generally employed with a certain humor; 13) "le pluristylisme et la pluritonalité"[21] stemming from a new vision of the word as literary material, a vision that had been perpetuated through a dialogic current in literary prose; 14) opting for sociopolitical actuality, which, in

---

[20] Bakhtine (1970) 165.
[21] Bakhtine (1970) 165.

treating ideas of the moment, confers a dimension of the "journalistique"[22] on the genre.

Before enumerating the characteristics of the *Menippea*, Bakhtin alerts us to the importance, in the development of the genre, of Antisthenes, the author of Socratic dialogues, of Heraclides Ponticus, of Menippus of Gadara, of Bion of Borysthenes and of the *Diui Claudii Apocolocyntosis* of Seneca, considered a classic example of Menippean satire. "De même, le *Satiricon* de Pétrone, à ceci près qu'il est élargi aux dimensions d'un roman."[23]

As far as polyphony in Petronius' *Satyricon* is concerned, Plaza demonstrated that the different voices, instead of engaging with each other in dialogue, compete for supremacy, in order to impose their truth on other voices and on the reader.[24] That is why some scenes may be interpreted in two ways, which G. Schmeling called *syllepsis* and G. Huber, *relativisation* of viewpoints.[25] This relativisation leads, in Petronius, to scepticism based on the inexistence of truth, while polyphony aims to produce concord, the conclusion that the truth is somewhere in the dialogue.[26]

Petronius' *Satyricon* resists, according to Branham, fitting into the fourteen characteristics Bakhtin finds in Menippean satire: the novel's realism, underlying the

---

[22] Bakhtine (1970) 165.
[23] Bakhtine (1970) 158.
[24] Plaza (2005) 219-20.
[25] Plaza (2005) 206.
[26] Plaza (2005) 220.

use of class and regional dialects in the characterization of the freedmen, collides with point 2. The popular echoes of Epicurus' teachings and the demonstration of the validity of magic do not illustrate conveniently point 5, mainly inspired by the impossible quests of Aristophanic heroes. The absence of a constructive message denies a social utopia of the kind we find in Seneca's allusions to Nero in *Apocolocyntosis*. The three-levelled construction will be considered below. Points 3, 7, 8, 9, 10, 12 and 13 remind us of "significant features of Petronius. Branham goes on to say that Petronius' use of these elements often seems idiosyncratic rather than representative of *Menippea*."[27]

Relihan affirms that the presuppositions underlying Bakhtin's theory coincide with a Hellenistic *Weltanschauung* whose elasticity confers a false unity to nearly six hundred years of history (until Marcus Aurealius and Saint Augustine); that Bakhtin sees *Menippea*, in integrating ideas and inexplicable and contradictory feelings, as a factor of cohesion and for the integration of so much diversity; that Bakhtin's theory does not reflect upon the way various 'serious-comedy' genres attack the myth of the tragic and epic totality of life; and that Frye and Bakhtin did not take into account the specificity of Varro, Seneca, Petronius and Apuleius, but only used them as a starting point, unitary and decontextualized, for the consideration of more recent works and authors. Relihan also notes that

---

[27] Branham (2005) 15.

in the debate the expression "Menippean satire" was not used as much as the terms "anatomy", "Menippea", "prosimetrum" and *spoudogeloion*.[28]

He goes on to define Mennipean satire in the following terms: "I urge that the genre is primarily a parody of philosophical thought and forms of writing, a parody of the habits of civilized discourse in general, and that it ultimately turns into the parody of the author who has dared to write in such an unorthodox way. What I see as essential to Menippean satire is a continuous narrative, subsuming a number of parodies of other literary forms along the way, of a fantastic voyage to a source of truth that is itself highly questionable, a voyage that mocks both the traveler who desires the truth and the world that is the traveler's goal, related by an unreliable narrator in a form that abuses all the proprieties of literature and authorship. In this genre, fantasy is rarely liberating: in insisting on the value of what is commonplace and commonsensical, Menippean satire creates fantastic worlds that are suspiciously like the flawed real world, which the voyager has foolishly left behind."[29]

If, as we can see, Relihan's conception of Menippean satire does not imply the existence of a poetic speaker, invested with moral authority, that critiques the social vices that surround him, Weinbrot's perspective does not presuppose such a relativistic vision of society, because it proposes that, through the mixture of at least two languages, genres, rhythms and styles or historical periods

---

[28] Relihan (1993) 7-9.
[29] Relihan (1993) 10.

or different cultures, this type of satire aims "to combat a false and threatening orthodoxy. It does so in either a harsher and severe or a softer and muted way [….]. It is a genre for serious people who see serious trouble and want to do something about it – whether to awake a somnolent nation, define the native in contrast to the foreign, protest the victory of darkness, or correct a careless reader."[30]

The divergences between Relihan, a classicist, and Weinbrot, a professor of English Literature, can be understood in light of the interference, more or less conscious, of the readings that French and English authors of the 17th and 18th centuries conducted of the Greco-Latin classics, and of the general principle that the conception of genre evolves throughout history.

Before such profound and perspicacious reflections upon Menippean satire, what is important, at the moment, is to justify the pertinence of our reflection in light of the radicalism that has led some scholars to consider the *Satyricon* a Menippean satire *tout court* and others who purport that the genre and the work have nothing in common.

The final justification for the divergences between Relihan and Weinbrot is a good pretext for us to consider, provisionally, the relationships between genre and mode and of the form which the distinction between the two is reflected in the treatment that will be given to the evolution of Menippean satire and to its influence on the *Satyricon* of Petronius.

---

[30] Weinbrot (2005) xi.

The definition of genre is invariably connected to two types of problems: one, circularity, and the other, what Alastair Fowler, in *Kinds of Literature* (1982: 261), called "ineradicable knowledge".[31] In one of those questions of the type which wonders over which came first, the chicken or the egg, Paul Hernadi, paraphrasing Günther Müller, interrogates himself about how it would be possible to define tragedy, without the tragic texts, or how we might consider, without having any definition as a base, that a given text is tragedy.[32] The other problem asks us to consider genre from a synchronic perspective, that is, to try to understand what it began by being, so that, in the second instance, we can look at this same genre from a diachronic point of view, that is, by trying to understand what it has turned into.

Consequently, genre will consist in the activation, in the memory of each reader, or reader/author, of those texts already read or written which are most similar to the text he is reading or writing. To this end, it is worth recalling the definition that Aguiar e Silva gave it. "Literary genres [....] are made up of codes that result in the particular correlation of phonic-rhythmic codes, metrical codes, stylistic codes and technical-compositional codes, on the one hand, and semantic-pragmatic codes on the other, under the influx and conditioning of a specific literary tradition and in the context of certain socio-cultural coordinates. Literary genres, because of

---

[31] Apud Wicks (1989) 3.
[32] Apud Wicks (1989) 3.

their connection with literary modes, depend on certain eternal and universal factors, but constitute themselves and function semiotically, as much in relation to the emitter/author as in relation to the receptor/reader, above all as historical and socio-cultural phenomena, conditioned and oriented by the intrinsic dynamic of the literary system itself and by the correlations of this system with other semiotic systems and with the generality of the social system."[33]

It would be appropriate, however, to keep in mind that the generic reading reflects one of the dimensions that Kristeva, in the tradition of the Bakhtinian concept of *dialogism*, tempered with the Chomskian notion of *transformation* and stemming from the studies of Saussure on the relation between the anagram and the words from which it is formed, called *intertextuality*. In the wake of Russian formalism, literature is faced with a closed system, in which the historical-social context appears on the same level as the literary context (anterior texts) and "même le destinataire est présenté comme texte."[34]

What is known about the work of Menippus is insignificant.[35] It is from the behavior of the Cynic, according to what Diogenes Laertius 99-101 and

---

[33] Aguiar e Silva (1994) 390-1.

[34] Rabau (2002) 55.

[35] Cf. Diogenes Laertius 6.101, where he refers to the following works of Menippus: *Necromancy; Wills; Epistles Artificially Composed as if by the Gods; Replies to the Physicists and Mathematicians and Grammarians; The Herd (or Birth) of Epicurus; and The School's Reverence for the Twentieth Day.*

Lucian, in *Icaromenippus, Necyomantia* and *Dialogi mortuorum*, tell us, and from his relationships, affinities and differences with Diogenes and Bion, that scholars have tried to reconstruct the beginnings of the Menippean genre. Thus, it is easy to see why the view of the formalists and of Kristeva theoretically justify this kind of biographical and fictional approach.

On the biographical level, there are various points of confluence between the individuals referred to, beginning with their quite humble origins: Diogenes, Bion and Menippus were slaves who became philosophers (Aulus Gellius 2.18. 6-7, Macrobius, *Sat.* 1.11.42 and Diogenes Laertius 4.46 and 6.99), but only the parents of the first two – according to one of the versions of the life of Diogenes – had committed financial frauds, that, in the case of the native of Sinope, caused him to have to go into exile and voluntarily leave the city. In Bion's case, these frauds caused him and the rest of his family to pass into the condition of slavery. If the first two appear connected to Sinope of Pontus (Laertius 4.20, 6.95 and 99) the first and the last, at least, passed through Athens (Laertius 4.47 and 6.21-22). Of Diogenes and Menippus it is said, in another version of the life of the first, that they participated in shadowy financial negotiations (Laertius 6.20-21, 71 and 99), and – in versions that do not agree – either committed suicide or died from eating raw food (Laertius 6.76-77 and 6.100, schol. in *DMort*.1.1, and *DMort.* 4.2 e 20.11). In the description that Lucian gives, in *DMort.* 1.2, of the rags that Menippus wore, Relihan guesses

that this is a habitual characterization of Diogenes.[36]

Regarding these points, we can find a certain consensus, but this is not the case when we try to understand what kind of relationships existed between the three historical figures: using morality underlying behavior and the words as a basis, French and English satirists of the 17th and 18th centuries did not establish a significant difference between Bion and Menippus, who, in the eyes of the first, appeared, as cultivators of Menippean satire, and were judged to be incoherent, depraved and, without presenting any edifying alternatives, were, besides, foul-mouthed.[37] In the wake of the French and English critics, Bakhtin attributed Bion with the authorship of Menippeas.[38] Convinced of the collapse of the traditional Greek education system, of the ancient Olympian religion and the small local cults, Highet and Knoche consider Menippus and Bion to be followers of Diogenes and of Crates, and, as a consequence, they see the two as literary missionaries or propagandists of Cynical thought.[39] On the contrary, Relihan considers Bion the representative of a milder Cynicism and tries to demonstrate that Menippus' targets of criticism and his caustic derision are the philosophers with their dogmas and their certainties, and Cynical antiphilosophy and its representatives. Menippus lacks any proposal for moral edification or of moderation. In the *Necyia*, Menippus would have staged or described his death

---

[36] Relihan (1993) 42.
[37] Weinbrot (2005) 24ss.
[38] Bakhtine (1970) 161.
[39] Highet (1962) 31 e Knoche (1975) 56.

in a way that was very close to Diogenes, and would have fallen into ridicule; and, according to the *Suda*, s.v. *phaios*, would have arrived from Hades in the figure of a bearded Fury, with tragic high buskins and a mantle, to observe human vices on earth.[40]

Before we take a position relative to these two opposing points of view about Menippus, it would be worth noting that, in the *Icaromenippus*, Lucian had described the ascension of Menippus to Heaven to find the truth about the nature of the universe, while in *Menippus siue Necyomantia*, the author from Samosata portrays the descent of the protagonist into Hades to discover the correct way to live. In both works the philosophers' disagreements about the subjects dealt with are criticized. Seneca may have been inspired by the *Necyia* and perhaps a work by Menippus to describe Claudius' path to Heaven and, through earth, to hell.

In the *Satyricon's* case, the path is not a vertical or perpendicular movement, but, in trying to escape from Trimalchio's house, the *scholastici* suddenly find a dog that clearly evokes Cerberus. Giton uses a similar strategy of distraction to that employed by the Virgilian Sibyl (Petr. 72.9-10 and *A.* 6.417-24, esp. 420). Just as the guard tells the intellectuals they cannot leave through the same door through which they

---

[40] Relihan (1993) 40-8, esp. 44: Menippus «must be seen as a lone wolf on the fringes of the Cynic movement [….] a dog of the underworld, whereas Diogenes [….] is the dog who lives in heaven [….] a mad Diogenes.»

had entered, so Anchises leads Aeneas and the Sibyl to the exit, and tells the son that *Somnus* has two doors: one of horn through which the real shadows pass and the other of ivory through which the dreams of the night that the *Manes* send to heaven proceed (Petr. 72.10 and *A.* 6.893-9). Aeneas' death was temporary and the Shades of the underworld gave him indications that were perceived as fragments of reality. The Homeric model underlying the Virgilian passage is *Od.* 19.562-7. By the way that Menippean satire and Petronius parody the same epic subject we can see that the *Satyricon* cannot be considered a work of the first genre referred to, but rather, partly because of the limitations in the recourse to the fantastic, a novel with influences from Menippean satire.

Regarding the philosophers, besides being caricaturized, as we shall see below, in the figure of Eumolpos, we also find them criticized explicitly in Trimalchio's epitaph, where the repugnance of the freedman for that particular class of intellectuals makes him proud of never having heard one of them. (71.12): *nec umquam philosophum audiuit.*

Without taking up an exhaustive analysis of the arguments invoked by Relihan, it would be worth our while to briefly consider some of the more significant ones: one has to do with the nearly total or even complete lack of knowledge on the part of the philosophical and literary traditions of Menippus' work, and with the absence in these traditions of any relationship between Diogenes and Menippus, a character that, without any

exemplary qualities or moral authority, is usually referred to, above all, jokingly.[41]

In speaking of those who had convinced her to give them more time, Philosophy, in Lucian, *Fug.*11, mentions Antisthenes, Diogenes, and presently Crates and *Menippos houtos*. Though the use of the demonstrative pronoun, with a derogatory connotation and suggesting exasperation ('damn'), is interpreted by Relihan as a sign that Philosophy in some way distinguishes Menippus from his predecessors,[42] the truth is that, according to Harmon, the use of the demonstrative results from the fact that, when Lucian wrote the *Fugitiui*, Menippus, partly because of the treatment that Lucian himself had given him, enjoyed great popularity among readers and so the pronoun would signify 'the known, the famous.'[43] It is certain that, for example, in *Photii Myriobiblion, siue Bibliotheca librorum quos legit et censuit Photius Patriarcha Constantinopolitanus*, who lived between c. 810 and c. 893 AD, Menippus is not mentioned in the context of the *Cynicorum secta*, but Bion is excluded from it as well, and both names figure in the group of the *poetae*.

Despite the abundance of Bion's celebrated sayings (4.47-53), the fact of having taught philosophy in Rhodes (4.49), the description of the philosophical path of the character himself (4.51-52), Laertius does not transcribe,

---

[41] Relihan (1993) 40 e 42.

[42] Relihan (1993) 43 e 231 n. 23.

[43] *Lucian*, with an Elglish translation by A. M. Harmon, vol. V, Cambridge (Massachusetts) – London, 1936, repr. 1955, 67 in loc.

in the *Menippi uita* (6.99-101), a single famous sentence by the philosopher of Gadara, nor does he suggest any activity or educative and edifying intention. We should, however, emphasize that, after having, in Rhodes, persuaded the sailors to adopt a student's demeanor and follow him, Bion frustrated the expectations of those who were prepared to listen to him and went into the *gymnasium* (4.53). Besides this, Relihan notes that Laertius quotes the testimony of the *Diogenous Prasis*, by Menippus, because of the paradox of the slave who feels he can rule men, and that he also quotes the homonymous work of Eubulus to give more detailed information about the educational program to which Diogenes submitted the sons of Xeniades (6.29-30). In spite of this, the truth is that, without the textual context of Diogenes' words in Menippus' work, we should not exclude the possibility that the author may want to say that a man, independent of his social condition, can be the master of himself and an example to others. In any case, it seems legitimate to suppose that they both shared a contempt for formal and traditional education.

After having considered Menippus a Cynic and having said that the rich usurer had fallen into penury, victim of a trap and an assault, Laertius observes that, without understanding what it is to be a Cynic, the philosopher from Gadara had committed suicide by hanging himself (6.99-100). From this passage Relihan deduces that, for Laertius, Menippus is not in any way a

Cynic,[44] but what Laertius may want to underline is the inconsistency between words and actions that, after all, would be shared by Diogenes and Bion.

One of the proofs that the Cynical inconsistency, connected to the ambition of wealth, had become proverbial and one of the topics dear to satire may be found in Petr. 14.2.3-4., when Ascyltos, reflecting upon how he might recover the tunic with the gold and justifying the necessity of buying it, declaims: *Ipsi qui Cynica traducunt tempora pera / non numquam nummis uendere uerba solent.*

Still under the sign of inconsistency between words and actions and reactions, we may find other points of confluence between the historical figures considered above and the *scholastici* of the *Satyricon*. In spite of having denied the existence of the gods, of not even having looked at the temples, and making fun of those who made sacrifices to the gods, Bion, when victim of a prolonged illness, not only burned incense and fats to the gods and acknowledged his mistakes, but also submitted himself to the spells of an old woman and, at the hour of his death, saluted Pluto. Likewise, despite the intellectuals' skepticism about the freedmen's superstition, at the end of the Milesia of Niceros and that of Trimalchio – the former which is about a werewolf and the latter about witches –, the *scholastici* cede to the general amazement that had invaded the room (*attonitis admiratione uniuersis* 63.1; *miramur nos et pariter credimus* 64.1).

---

[44] RELIHAN (1993) 43.

The episode of Circe, Encolpius-Polyaenus, Pros-
elenus and Oenothea inverts the sequence of the Bion
episode but has the same meaning. Desperate with the
cadaveric state of his member, Encolpius seeks help
from Oenothea, but, in a clear mythological parody of
the figure of Hercules, who had subdued Stymphalus's
fowls and the Harpies, he ends up killing Priapus' sa-
cred ganders and, with two gold coins and a banquet,
buys the support of the representatives of god, Pros-
elenus and Oenothea, and, in the end, divine pardon
(136.6ss.).[45] As to the state of *religio*, precisely, it is
Ganymedes, a *laudator temporis acti*, who calls atten-
tion to the present realities, by contrasting ancient and
true devotion, which was rewarded by the gods, with
the contemporary indifference to the divinities, due to
the lack of devotion in the people of his time (*religiosi
son sumus. Agri iacent* – 44.18).

Bion, criticized for his indifference to a young
man, observed that a buttery cheese cannot be held by
a hook (Laertius 4.47). Regardless of this, he continues
to insist that if Socrates felt desire for Alcibiades and if
he refrained, he was crazy, but, if he felt nothing, then
he did not do anything extraordinary (4.49). Of Alci-
biades himself, it is said that, during his childhood, he
took husbands away from their wives, and, in his youth,
wives away from their husbands (4.49). Besides this, La-
ertius informs us in 4.53 that Bion used to adopt young
men in order to satisfy his sexual necessities and as a way

---

[45] Cf. Ferreira (2000) 120-1.

of feeling protected by his own benevolence (4.53); and that one of his intimates, Betion, had even confessed that he had not felt the worse for spending the night with the sage of Borysthenes (4.54).

In telling Encolpius the story of the boy from Pergamum, a clear sign that a new rival in the dispute over Giton was preparing to enter the scene, Eumolpos refers to the fact that whenever sexual relations with boys were talked about at the table, he became so pale with rage and refused to hear obscene conversation that the boy's mother saw him as *unum ex philosophis (Petr.* 85.2*).* If, as Dimundo says, Eumolpos would like to suggest that the mother considers him a Socrates, then it would be in the *Puer* that Alcibiades would find his parallel; and many are the similarities that, to justify this interpretation, can be established between Plato's *Symposium* and the *Milesia* of the *Satyricon.*[46] It is important, however, after Sommariva, not to forget the fact that having, in the course of the action related, traded roles and transformed the harassed *puer* into the harasser, Petronius not only emphasized the hypocrisy of the youth but also parodically inverted the situation described in Plato's work.[47]

Besides also referring to the Platonic hypertext, the sequence of the *uita Bionis* (staying with the motif under consideration) has obvious affinities with the

---

[46] Dimundo (1983) 257.

[47] Sommariva (1984) 25-6. On the parallel between the arrival of Habinas at Trimalchio's banquet and that of Alcibiades at the Plato's *Symposium*, see Ferreira (2000) 83s.

Petronian *Milesia*: Laertius begins in the same way by referring to Alcibiades as an occasional target of Socrates' sexual desire, and to the boys harassed by Bion, in order, once again, to describe Alcibiades, the boy, as a conqueror of men, and of Alcibiades the young man, of women; and to speak of the individual that so habitually slept with Bion that he hardly felt, for this, a worse person. If we are to think that Laertius is posterior to Petronius, this would not be to preliminarily exclude the influence of the latter on the former, but, as happens in the relationship between the *Satyricon* and the surviving sentimental Greek novels, the most natural thing is that Laertius reproduced stories and sayings that a tradition previous to Petronius bequeathed him. Though, there are those who consider Eumolpos to be an "Epicurean Socrates", who opposed the Stoic model, the truth is that we should not exclude the hypothesis that, in the eyes of a *sophistes poikilos* (4.47), his depraved behavior is not that distant as, at first it might appear, from the Platonically immaculate Socrates.

As complement to a relatively late reception, like the one we have been considering until now, that joined biographical stories of dubious veracity and of anecdotal character with sparse information on the works of Menippus and Bion, we should be able, at least partially, to understand the celebrated affirmation of Quintilian, *Inst.* 10.1.93: *Satura quidem tota nostra est.*[48] Following the quoted affirmation, the Rhetorician weaves certain considerations

---

[48] Cit. of Quintilien, *Institution oratoire*, t. VI, l. X et XI, texte établi et traduit par Jean Cousin, Paris, 1979, 95.

upon Lucilius and Horace, and speaks about another type of satire (10.1.95): *Alterum illud etiam prius saturae genus, sed non sola carminum uarietate mixtum condidit Terentius Varro, uir Romanorum eruditissimus.* The problem is that from the point of view of Quintilian, conditioned by a certain "nationalist" pride, he does not take an older reception into account, like that of Varro himself and of Horace, and, consequently, closer in time to Menippus and Bion.

In *Ep.* 2.2.60, in the context of a reflection upon the preferences of the public concerning the genres that he, himself, cultivated, Horace alludes to the reader who delights *Bioneis sermonibus et sale nigro*. Bion was the author of *diatribes*, that were informal homilies delivered in public on ethical aspects, and could also contain literary portraits, literary parody, animal similes and dialogues with imaginary interlocutors. From Horace's words we grasp that, contrary to what occurred in later criticism, the poet took into account only Bion's work.

In *AP* 7.417.3-4 and 7.418.5-6, Meleager, compatriot of Menippus, admits his debt to Menippean *Charites*, and Athenaeus 157A says that the former had written Cynical works entitled *Charites*. In recording slaves that become celebrated philosophers, Aulus Gellius writes (2.18.7): *Ex quibus ille Menippus fuit cuius libros M. Varro in satiris aemulatus est, quas alii 'Cynicas', ipse appellat 'Menippeas'.*[49] Relihan considers the expression "Menippean Graces" and the title of the Varro's collection oxymoronic, on the basis of a concept of satire that

---

[49] Aulu-Gelle. *Les nuits Attiques*, Livres I-IV, texte établi et traduit par René Marache. Paris, 1967, 108.

presupposes the moral authority of the one who criti-
cizes. But, the word *satura* originally characterized a
lanx garnished with every kind of fruit and vegetable.
It also defined a literary form cultivated by Ennius and
Lucilius, considered the true father of satire. Since this
literary form mixed different kinds of verse, echoes of
Hellenistic culture, moral censure, ethical dialogue,
authorial presence and parody of literary genres, Var-
ro may be thinking of a kind of conciliation between
these aspects and more specific ones from the Meni-
ppean satire of Greek tradition, such as the presence,
in the same composition, of prose and verse.[50] Finally,
Relihan may not have paid attention to the possibility
that Varro had ignored occasional self-parody in Me-
nippus' work and focused his attention on the diatribe
and invective. It is worth noting, however, that the
title of Petronius' novel, *Satyricon*, is the genitive of
the neuter plural adjective *satyrica*, related to the satyrs
that participated in the Greek Satyric drama, which
could parody the three previous tragedies. The *Satyri-
con* adopts this same tradition of parody and applies it
to many different genres.

---

[50] As to prosimetrics, Astbury (1970), 23, concludes that this
feature is the only similarity between Varro and Petronius, but, at-
tentive to other points of convergence between the Latin novel and
the ancient form of the Greek novel, the most probable conclusion
is that Petronian prosimetrics are inspired by the homonymous
Greek genre. However, Relihan (1993), 199-201, convincingly
demonstrated that Petronius returned the prosimetric romance to
its Menippean origins and "it cannot be maintained that Greek
prosimetra require that we separate the *Satyricon* from Menippean
satire" (201).

In Lucian, *Bis acc.* 33, the Dialogue complains of Menippus, a prehistoric dog, with high-pitched yelps and sharpened canines, being really frightening, because while smiling he unexpectedly bites. Based on this passage, Relihan is convinced that Menippus' attitude surpasses the *spoudogeloion*. The critic also invokes the fr. 518 Bücheler (=518 Cèbe) of Varro's *Taphe Menippou,* which he translates as "The funeral of Menippus", to say that *sed ut canis sine coda* characterizes Menippus as a dog that constantly bites, because he doesn't wag his tail as a sign of affection.[51] Cèbe rightly observes that the title should be translated as 'la tombe de Ménippe'[52]; that, for the greater part of the Cynics, it is a point of honor to exhibit socially a provocative irascibility against friends and enemies; and that Varro is Menippean because, in the cited words of Astbury, 'il montre le même esprit de derision envers ses contemporains que Ménippe, parce qu'il est' – as Strabo (1st cent. B.C. / 1st cent. A.D.) 16.2.29 and Stephanus of Byzantium acknowledge – '*spoudogeloios*'.[53]

As the criticism is divided about the relationship between Menippus and the School of the Cynics,[54] it is, therefore, not possible to find much consensus regarding the way in which Varro would have dealt with

---

[51] Relihan (1993) 44.

[52] Cèbe (1972-1999) 12. 1980.

[53] Cèbe (1972-1999) 12. 1988, cf. 1987, and 3. 314.

[54] Knoche takes the contrary point of view (1975), 56, stating that "Menippus himself was looked upon by the ancients not as a Cynic – quite the opposite, his way of life was completely contrary to the Cynic manner of living, as the biography in Diogenes Laertius, for example, shows – but rather as an especially successful literary propagandist for Cynicism."

traditional Roman satire and the influences that the diatribe had on it.

Based on the contrast between Menippus' life, his social level and his attitude toward reality, on the one hand, and, on the other, these same features in the life of Varro, and in light of the values and moral intentions which are grasped from the other works of the latter, Knoche and Cèbe defend that Cynicism and Menippus, in their humble origins and in their cosmopolitanism, intend, through perspicacious and humoristic phrases thrown to the crowd, to challenge it to live in accordance with nature, to control its desires and to be liberated from all the ties in which it can become entangled (religion, the state, society, family, convention and, in the end, civilization). In contrast, Varro, coming from a distinctive family, target of a careful education, committed to the traditional values of his background and pondering a powerful elite, criticized contemporary corruption and suggested, as an alternative, the recovering of virtues underlying the *mos maiorum*. He also exhibited an indistinguishable pride in leaning, teaching and philosophy.[55]

In Cicero, *Ac.* 1.8-9, Varro affirms that he had added *hilaritas* and *philosophia* to his imitation of Menippus, and Cicero himself recognizes that Varro brought great brilliance to the Latin poets, to Latin literature and language. He had composed poetry in various meters and, in many places, he had treated philosophical topics that, though interesting enough to stimulate his readers, reveal

---

[55] Cèbe (1972-1999) I 4, and Knoche (1975) 56-7.

themselves inadequate to the task of instructing them (*ad edocendum parum*). It was precisely the final part of this intervention that inspired Relihan to conclude that, without any moralizing intention, Varro's *Menippeae* parody the encyclopedic knowledge of the *uir Romanorum eruditissimus*, the diatribe and Cynicism. They also have recourse to meta-language in order to criticize themselves and make ridiculous the ignored reformer of Roman society.

These discrepant interpretations of Varro require some attention. Let us consider the way in which they deal with the same topic: for example, the figure of the narrator or of the poetic subject. In analyzing Varro's *Bimarcus* 'The author divided in two,' *Marcipor*, 'Marcus' slave' and *Marcopolis* 'Marcus' city', Relihan shows himself to be aware of the difficulties originating in the large lacunae and the impossibility of determining precisely who addresses Marco and who is the speaker and the public. However, the critic mentions the importance of the first *Menippea* for the representation of Varro, and admits the hypothesis that in the second and third ones the author appears "as the chief actor in fantastic tales that result in the narrator's embarrassment."[56] It is certain that, for example, in fr. 60 Bücheler (=46 Cèbe) of the *Bimarcus*, someone reprehends Marcus for having promised Seius that he would write a work *peri tropon*, and, instead of this, *ruminatur* 'he dwells on' the *Odyssey* of Homer. In the *Menippean* where, according to Cèbe, Varro detaches himself from the liberal arts

---

[56] Relihan (1993) 50.

and rhetoric, to dedicate himself to morality, the French critic begins by affirming that the second Greek term could have the following meanings: 'transformation', 'habit', 'figure of style', and 'trope', and ends up, quite plausibly, to suggest the hypothesis that Marcus' critic is one of the *neoteroi* or *poetae docti* who has not even understood that *polytropos*[57] is an epithet for Ulysses. In the end is it not Varro whose discernment was clouded over by drink – the sentence referred to begins with the expression *ebrius es* – but rather his antagonist.

The criticism of the philological pretensions of certain intellectuals was a subject dear to certain philosophical currents (cf. Seneca, *Ep.* 108.24 and 30s., and *Dial.* 10.13.1.ss.), and to satire in general, and, in particular, to Menippean. It is not, indeed, by chance that, in coming upon what Hercules fears to be his thirteenth work, Seneca's character, in *Apoc.* 5.4, resorts to the words that Telemachus had addressed to Athena disguised as Mentor, in Homer, *Od.* 1.170, to ask Claudius *Graeculo* who he is, where he comes from, and who are his parents. The author registers these questions in order to caricature the taste of the dead man in questions of philology (cf. Suetonius, *Cl.* 42.1). It is not indeed by chance that the narrator notes the pleasure with which the Claudius welcomes the words of Hercules: *Claudius gaudet esse illic philologos homines*, following which Claudius responds in Homeric citations. If, in the words of intellectuals, it was not in good taste to use Greek words

---

[57] Cèbe (1972-1999) 2. 211 and 220.

and citations in public, in the mouth of the freedmen with aspirations to culture and the supposed good taste of the *scholastici*, other citations, even Latin ones, sounded even more ridiculous.

The Petronian Trimalchio is a good illustration of this case: with the first plate finished and the wine being served, the host insists that his guests drink and, after asking them if they thought that he would be happy with what they had seen on the tray, cites the words with which Laocoön used to alert his fellow citizens to the dangers that horse could bring (*sic notus Vlixes*? 39.3), and concludes (39.3-4): *Quid ergo est? Oportet etiam inter cenandum philologiam nosse*. As far as this is a kind of bad imitation of the normal practice of the intellectuals, the Virgilian citation does not only caricature the pretensions of the *parvenu*, it creates ironic distance from the attitudes of the intellectuals in terms of the subject under discussion.

Let us return to the characterization of the narrator of the Menippean satire and to the reflection on the relationship he maintains with the textual author and the empirical author. The traditional, historiographical prefaces were composed with a progressive specificity in terms of the theme under discussion, with an affirmation of impartiality and of reliability, and by the indication of sources. In parodying this structure as well as aretology, Seneca is looking, in the beginning of *Apocolocyntosis*, to discredit the source and, finally, the

heterodiegetic narrator.[58] Relihan mainly bases himself here, and in the subsequent process of discrediting the greater part of the divinities that are now to be found in heaven or in the underworld and/or that judge Claudius, to demonstrate that the dead man is no more than a naïf and a fool who stresses the ridiculousness of those who promoted him to the condition of divinity and of everything that in the heavens and in the underworld reflects Roman corruption. After all, the most morally superior character is a human elevated to the condition of a god, and the conventions *Concilium deorum* are the same as those of the Roman senate.[59]

On the contrary, those who try to connect the *Menippean* with traditional Roman satire never forget

---

[58] In spite of proposing to describe only what occurred in heaven on the 13th of October of 54 BC., the narrator shows great satisfaction with the hope in a new era of prosperity (*anno nouo, initio saeculi felicissimi* 1.1); and though he affirms that he will tell the truth (*haec ita uera* 1.1), he does not abstain from illustrating, with the possibility of choosing between the contempt for desire for one who questions him and the indication of the source, the freedom that he had enjoyed since the one, whose life demonstrated the proverb that each of us should be born a king or mad, had died (*Si quis quaesiuerit unde sciam, primum, si noluero, non respondebo. Quis coacturus est? Ego scio me liberum factum, ex quo suum diem obiit ille, qui uerum prouerbium fecerat, aut regem aut fatuum nasci oportere.* 1.1). The obligation verified and the reticence vis-à-vis the identification of the informer overcome, the narrator says that it is Livius Geminius (or Geminus), the superintendent of the Via Appia who had not only sworn before the senate that he had seen Drusilla, sister and lover of Caligula, rise to the heavens, but has also been present at the transfer of Augustus and Tiberius to the side of the gods. We should, however, remember that Tiberius never received divine honors.

[59] Relihan (1993) 75-90.

Seneca's criticism of the indiscriminate and exaggerated distribution, on Claudius' part, of citizen's visas, or the caricature of the dead man, the criticism of the philological pretensions of the emperor, of his arbitrary exercise of justice and the consequent deaths of family members. These scholars also do not forget the fact that in life and after death Claudius was not more than a puppet in the hands of the freedmen; nor do they forget the hope in the possibility that Nero, in contrast with Claudius, established on earth a more just order; lastly, they do not forget the fictionally immaculate character of the main judge: Augustus, nor Claudius' punishment. Even if the textual author can identify with the narrator, and in this way, also be made to seem ridiculous, the truth is that the opinion of the empirical author, the historical Seneca, even if it is peppered with irony throughout the entire manifesto, is surely much closer to Augustus than to that of his narrator.

In the referred to process of belittling the gods, whose vices are hardly inferior to those of certain mortals, and of belittling the institutions, whose functioning and whose terrible bureaucrats are a copy of Roman reality of the period, there is a moment in which Father Janus intervenes and, based on the opposition *olim / iam*, accounts for the contrast between the great honor that in the past the recognition of a person of divine status represented and the contemporary trivialization of this recognition (*Apoc.* 9.3): *'Olim'* [….] *'magna res erat deum fieri: iam Fabam mimum fecisti.'* In the same manner, after affirming that no one had contemplated

with impunity what was forbidden him, Quartilla's slave adds, in Petr. 17.5: *Vtique nostra regio tam praesentibus plena est numinibus ut facilius possis deum quam hominem inuenire*. According to how we understand these words and, for example, the story of the boy from Pergamum, where Eumolpos, aware of the insomnia of the student and of his ability to hear him, makes his vows known to Venus, and it is the *puer* who is charged with fulfilling them – the *Satyricon* does not even need to allude to the imperial institution of the apotheosis to deify, not emperors, but much more common people.

After having alluded to the ingenuity that Claudius of the *Apocolocyntosis* and Encolpius of the *Satyricon* have in common,[60] and referred to the distance between the Encolpius-character and the Encolpius-narrator, Relihan maintains that, following the invective directed by Encolpius against his member, whose flaccidity prevents him from responding to Circe's advances, it is Petronius himself who, via the mouth of the aforementioned character, addresses the reader in the following terms (132.15): *Quid me constricta spectatis fronte Catones | damnatisque nouae simplicitatis opus? | Sermonis puri non tristis gratia ridet, | quoque facit populus, candida lingua refert. | Nam quis concubitus, Veneris quis gaudia nescit? | Quis uetat in tepido membra calere toro? | Ipse pater ueri doctos Epicurus amare | iussit et hoc uitam dixit habere* τέλος.'[61]

---

[60] Relihan (1993) 83.
[61] Cited from Konrad Mueller, *Petronius. Satyricon reliquiae*. Stutgardiae et Lipsiae. 1995, 160.

While Relihan considers that it is Encolpius who echoes the thoughts of Petronius, Collignon tells us that the cited verses are spoken by the author himself.[62] Predating Relihan, and citing O. Raith, Pellegrino had agreed that it was part of the author's poetic program and added that underlying the passage was an ethical conception that prescribed the primacy of the individual over the writer.[63] In the wake of Collignon and Relihan, but "technically" closer to the second, because they both consider Encolpius the spokesman of the Arbiter, Leão and Courtney believe, based on deduction, and other passages, that, like Cleitophon, Encolpius could be telling his story to a listener, and that, for this reason, the term *opus* can only refer to the *Satyricon*, to whose realism Petronius would be, at this moment, creating an *apologia*.[64]

Based on the episode related by Plutarch, in *Cat. Min.* 1.2, concerning the departure of the protagonist from the room, to initiate the habitual striptease; in the use, at the end of the poem, of the term *telos*, clearly parodying the work of Epicurus *peri telous*; and in the evidence that Cicero gives, *Tusc.* 3.41, and Athenaeus 7,280 a-b, on the cheeky Epicurean association of the "good" with physical pleasures; and from Seneca, *Ep.* 25.5-6 and 11.8-10, on the

---

[62] Collignon (1892) 53.

[63] Pellegrino (1975) 432, in 49. *Chiragrici*.

[64] Leão (1998) 135-6, and Courtney (2001) 199-200. The passages referred to by Courtney are: 30.3, 56.10, 65.1 (*si qua est dicenti fides*), 70.8 (*pudet referre quae secuntur*) and 126.14 (*quicquid dixero minus erit*).

position of Epicurus concerning the inhibiting power of shame and on the substitution, in Roman reality, of Epicurus's vision for that of Cato the Censor, Scipio and Laelius – Connors glimpses, in the Petronian opposition between *Catones* and Epicurus, a parody of the Senecan passages.[65]

Connors' position is relatively dubious, given that she does not clearly state that Petronius is an Epicurean and, consequently, identifies himself with his character that, in this moment, could be used up in the parodic inversion of the Senecan adaptation. The same thing cannot be said, however, with the positions of Conte, Slater and Panayotakis, who see a certain distance between Encolpius and Petronius.

Though he admits that the poem of 132.15 is a programmatic manifesto of realism, Conte stresses, following the others, among them Slater,[66] that, in the mouth of one who had just revealed his impotence and frustrated Circe's expectations, vv. 5-8 strike one as incongruent. The recollection of Epicurus' doctrine on the argument for life is, for Conte, one more manifestation of the rhetorical culture of this mythomaniac character, under which, and with ironical distance, the author is hidden, a realist in his way of representing his anti-realist character.[67] Though the manifesto on realism anticipates poetical principles that we will find in authors such as Juvenal 1.85s. and Martial 10.4.7-10,

---

[65] Connors (1998) 73-4.
[66] Slater (1990) 129.
[67] Conte (1996)187ss. Cf. 25 n. 27.

the truth is that, in order to speak of his unfortunate experience and, finally, of his life, Encolpius still had recourse to such an abundant source of literature that, perfectly cut off from reality, he would be able to speak with his *mentula*, as though it were a person or, giving him the benefit of the doubt, like Ulysses reprimanding his heart. The use of the term *opus*, is justified, in Conte's words, because "the whole affair takes place in a city created and composed out of *literature*. For Croton is a hyper-realistic city, in the sense that it is not just a corrupt city, but rather the corruption of a city. Better: Croton is the rhetorical topos of the "corrupt city," as it was codified in moral and satirical writing – a rhetorical topos that has gone and turned itself into narrative reality. That is why Croton is a hyper-realistic city, because it is produced by the literary illusion of reality; it arises not directly from reality, but from an *idea* of realism. A realism of this sort, a realism of the second degree, like the kind that arises from the realistic literature of satire – how can this still be realism?"[68]

Conte's conclusions are given their full due for the obvious implications they hold for our more general reflection on the relationship between the *Satyricon* and Menippean satire, but to return to the Petronian passage under scrutiny, it would be well to keep in mind that, for Slater, it is not about the theory of literature, but rather a rhetorical and elegant theatrical exit from the ridiculous situation in which Encolpius finds himself,

---

[68] Conte (1996) 192.

and a strategy to once again gain, even if temporarily, the sympathy of the reader.[69]

By comparing the passage cited with the apostrophes that Eumolpos addresses, either to the *fallax natura deorum*, that robs us of our hair (109.9), or to Jupiter himself (126.18), or by comparing it with the second verbal person with which Encolpius addresses the reader (*quod uis, nummis praesentibus opta / et ueniet*, 137.9; *uultum seruatis, amici*, 80.9), Slater concludes that, in the passages where the narrative frame is lacking, Encolpius devotes himself to the creation of a reader for the poem and for his story, who, in turn, faced with the diversified nature of the voice that is addressing him, will feel free to vary his response. Slater also adds that, due to the necessities of characterization, Petronius plays with the elegy in the context of the tendency toward privatization that presides over the mixture of genres in the *Satyricon*. In fact, simplicity, flexibility and intimacy make this genre propitious to the embodiment of Encolpius' poetic voice, while the epic and the drama, in their public character, better organize and interpret experience.[70]

Panayotakis puts the words in 132.15 on the same level as those which Encolpius employs for his invective against Agamemnon in the initial chapters of the teaching of the art of declamation.[71] This suggests that the theatrical interpretation that he proposes for both

---

[69] Slater (1990) 165ss.
[70] Slater (1990) 165ss.
[71] Panayotakis (1995) 2.

passages will make it difficult to achieve identification between author and character. Though the comparison with the characters of tragedy and comedy, who speak directly to the spectators (for example, Mercurius in the Prologue of Plautus, *Amph.* 486-95) does not convince, since they could be simply mouth-pieces for the dramatist in his dialogue with the public (cf., for example, Mercurius in the Prologue of Plautus' *Amphitryo*, or Tiresias, or some of the words of the chorus in Seneca's *Oedipus*). The same, however, does not hold for the hypothesis that the passage reflects the influence of mummery. If the possible staging of female nudity, of sexual relations on stage, of the lascivious gestures and vulgar, sexualized discourse characteristic of mummary are appropriate to Encolpius, they are not, on the contrary suitable to the refined Petronius, in whose novel the explicit character of the scene is inversely proportional to its level of "pornography".[72]

The fragmented and lacunal state of the *Satyricon* doesn't allow us to have a clear and objective notion of

---

[72] Panayotakis (1995) 175s. On 176, we read: «A plethora of sexual euphemisms, metaphors, irrelevant images, and a highly rhetorical tone create an impression of bookishness around the obscene act itself and present it in a grotesque mode which approaches the comically bizarre manner in which the mimic theatre must have presented sexual situations. A proper evaluation of the novel's dense literary texture renders it anything else but pornography, but, on the other hand, it does not offer firm grounds for arguing that Epicurean theories are put forward as a design for living. The risible context of this apologia undermines any serious intentions one may have wished to apply to either the narrator or the author.»

the circumstances in which Encolpius remembers and re-
lates what at sometime in the past happened to him. The
interfering author is a relatively common practice in Gre-
ek and Latin literature (cf., for example, Virgil, *A.* 3.56-7
or 10.501-2). In spite of this, it seems to us that it is
Encolpius who speaks vv. 132.15. Otherwise, we would
be obliged to consider the verses corresponding to 80.9
and 137.9 as authorial interferences as well, or to consi-
der Petronius as an adept of the popular version of the
Epicurean philosophy. The authorial intrusions like those
above, scarce and insignificant as they are, in the remai-
ning part of the work, are not enough to characterize the
author in a plausible fashion, or to lower him to the level
of his character, that is, to identify him with Encolpius.
Besides, this would destroy the irony that the reader pre-
sumes to be underlying the author's creation.

A common denominator in the methodology
to reconstruct the beginnings of Menippean satire has
been the reliance upon the reception and consequent
valuation of certain interpretations and specific bits of
evidence, to the detriment of other readings and other
testimonies. This would seem to be the correct proce-
dure, because, as Koenraad Kuiper demonstrated, sati-
re has nothing to do with form and function in itself,
but depends solely upon the reader's perception of form
and function.[73] This means that in an Horatius *sermo*,
satire is neither defined by verse form, nor by capacity
or incapacity to change the life of the one who reads

---

[73] Kuiper (1984) 459.

it, but rather by the way the last reader has perceived it. Keeping in mind that for Kuiper, C designates the creator, or the empirical author; C', the inferred creator or textual author; S, the state of things; a, the cultural act or artifact and, in the end, the object of the satire; a', other acts or artifacts with which a has similarities and, finally, the antecedents of a; and P, the perceiver – for an act a to be apprehended by P as satire, the following conditions need to come together:

1) that P thinks that, by means of a, C' intends that the perceiver adopt a negative vision of S;

2) that P thinks that, by means of a, C' intends that the perceiver find formal similarities with a';

3) that P thinks that C' intended that the similarities referred to above were humorous.[74]

If the existence of C' doesn't even depend on the perception by P that a can change his perspective on S; if the intention of C' doesn't result from the perception of similarity of form or from the perception of humor, then the intentionality underlying this perspective is very weak and matters little for the definition of satire. But if, concerning the three conditions considered above and for us to be sure that the acts and artifacts taken into account are nothing other than satires, we consider the problem of intentionality, not from the point of view of P in relation to C', but of C relative to P, we will have strong intentionality, that, after all, considers satire to be only the cases in which C and P coincide respectively

---

[74] Kuiper (1984) 463.

in terms of intentions and in their interpretation of them. The limits of this point of view are obvious because it does not admit the possibility of existing satires of anonymous authors, and where it is not possible to demonstrate restrictedly the formal parallels, and where it is enough for the perceiver to imagine that *C'* intends him to find humor in the composition. Kuiper adds a fourth condition to the three distinguished above, and presumed in the refutation conducted below: "The actual creation of *a'* antedates the actual creation of *a*."[75] But, in the case that *a'* is posterior to *a*, we can't demand that *P* consider the similarities between *a* and *a'*, when neither *C* nor *C'* were able to take them into account.

Besides considering the parody as a particular kind of satire, where *S* is *a'*, and admitting the possibility of uncertainty to be inherent in the various conditions, Kuiper defends the importance of the context in the determination of what constitutes the satirical character of an object or act. However valuing these specific cultural elements depends on pragmatic factors. This means that the conditions of perception vary qualitatively from situation to situation and from perceiver to perceiver. The optimizing of the perception of something as satire depends on the following types of local conditions: contextual, which imply the knowledge by *P* of certain examples of *a'*; related to the historical and literary context, namely with the *P*'s conscience of the practice, in a given moment, of satirising *a'*; and

---

[75] Kuiper (1984) 466.

sociocultural, concerned with the knowledge that *P* must have of the existence and of some characteristics of the targets. The critic concludes: "Thus strong intentionalism can be seen as part of the theory of pragmatics which follows from the central theory of the perception of satire but which is not part of that theory. So it might be unusual for *P* to suppose that *a* is a satire in the mistaken belief that *a'* antedates *a*. But it is not impossible that he should do so and the theory predicts that it is in the nature of satire that it should be possible (but unlikely)."[76]

We reflected long on Kuiper's theory because of the fact that it adds a new urgency to the possibility that, in the title *Saturae Menippeae*, more than a simple reference is implied – on the part of the perceiver Varro – to the occasional mixing of prose and verse in Menippus' work. Besides, it still allows us to take account the modernity and timelessness of the satirical side of Petronius' novel. It is the cultivated reader who must detect the refined irony that presides over the incoherence between words and actions of the *scholastici*. This, in turn, reveals the fact that the intellectuals are simply not well adjusted to the world around them, impelling them to invoke the values celebrated by the literature of the past, so that, via parody, the decadence of the present becomes even bitterer. Ultimately it is the vices of the past which are invoked in order to show their continuity with the contemporaneity,[77] or even to adapt the Menippean

---

[76] KUIPER (1984) 472.

[77] Deceit, disguise, luxury, futile relationships and sacrilege,

conventions to the novel.[78] In the end, it is the reader-*perceiver* who is charged with finding the fictions of death in the *Satyricon*, like the one that originates in the parallels between, for example, the unfinished character of the *Bellum ciuile* and Lucinan's homonymous epic: a clear allusion to the relation between the death of the poet and the forced ending of the poem.[79]

that, according to the *Troiae halosis*, were at the base of the destruction of Troy, are, as Zeitlin demonstrates (1971) 56-82, esp. 66, the subjects of the *Satyricon*.

[78] Though our text infers many of the characteristics that Courtney (1962), 100, deduced from the many parodies in the *Satyricon* – namely the synthesis, in a sentence or in an epigrammatic summary, of the morality underlying a given situation, or the contrast between the serious tone and the sordid context – it seems to us that Courtney (1962), 100, is right to conclude that, most of the time, the parody does not go beyond a "mere epideictic pleasure in his literary versatility."

[79] This subject is developed by Connors (1998) 101, 139 and 141.

Bibliography

Aguiar e Silva, Vítor Manuel de (1994). *Teoria da literatura*, 8ª ed. Coimbra.

Astbury, Raymond (1977). "Petronius, *P. Oxy.* 3010, and Menippean Satire," *CPh* 72: 22-31.

Bakhtin, M. M. (1981). *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, ed. By Michael Holquist, trans. by Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist. Austin, TX.

Bakhtine, Mikhaïl (1970). *La poétique de Dostoïevski* (trad. de Isabelle Kolitcheff a partir de *Problemy poetiki Dostoïevskovo*, Moscou, Écrivains soviétiques, ²1963). Paris.

Branham, R. Bracht (2005). "The Poetics of Genre: Bakhtin, Menippus, Petronius," in R. Bracht Branham ed. *Ancient Narrative. The Bakhtin Circle and Ancient Narrative*. 3-31. Groningen: Barkhuis Publishing & Groningen University Library.

Cèbe, Jean-Pierre (1972-1999). *Varron, Satires Ménippées*, éd., trad. et commentaire, 13 vol. Palais Farnèse, Rome.

Collignon, A. (1892). *Étude sur Pétrone. La critique littéraire, l'imitation et la parodie dans le* Satiricon. Paris.

Connors, Catherine (1998). *Petronius the Poet: Verse and Literary Tradition in the* Satyricon. Cambridge.

Conte, Gian Biagio (1996). *The Hidden Author: an Interpretation of Petronius'* Satyricon. Berkeley – Los Angeles – London.

Coutney, Edward (1962). "Parody and literary allusion in Menippean satire," *Philologus* 106: 86-100.

—— (2001). *A companion to Petronius*. Oxford.

Dimundo, Rosalba (1983). "Da Socrate a Eumolpo. Degradazione dei personaggi e delle funzioni nella novella del fanciullo di Pergamo." *MD* 10-11: 255-265.

Dryden, John (1900). "A Discourse Concerning the Original and Progress of Satire" (1693), in W. P. Ker, ed. *Essays of John Dryden*, vol. II, 15-114. 2nd impr.: 1926. Oxford.

Ferreira, P. S. M. (2000). *Os elementos paródicos no* Satyricon *de Petrónio e o seu significado*. Lisboa.

Frye, Northrop (1957). *Anatomy of Criticism. Four essays*. Princeton, New Jersey.

Highet, Gilbert (1962). *The Anatomy of Satire*. Princeton, New Jersey.

Knoche, Ulrich (1975). *Roman Satire*. Transl. by E. S. Ramage. Bloomington & London.

Kuiper, Koenraad (1984). "The nature of satire." *Poetics* 13: 459-73.

Leão, Delfim Ferreira (1998). *As ironias da* Fortuna*: sátira e moralidade no* Satyricon *de Petrónio*. Lisboa.

Panayotakis, Costas (1995). *Theatrum Arbitri. Theatrical Elements in the* Satyrica *of Petronius*. Leiden – New York – Köln.

Pellegrino, Carlo (1975). *Petronii Arbitri Satyricon*. Introduzione, edizione critica e commento. Roma.

Plaza, Maria (2005). "The limits of polyphony: Dostoevsky to Petronius," in R. Bracht Branham ed. *Ancient Narrative. The Bakhtin Circle and Ancient Narrative*. 193-223. Groningen: Barkhuis Publishing & Groningen University Library.

Rabau, Sophie (2002). *L'intertextualité*. S. l.

Relihan, Joel C. (1993). *Ancient Menippean Satire*. Baltimore and London.

Slater, Niall W. (1990). *Reading Petronius*. Baltimore and London.

Sommariva, Grazia (1984). "Eumolpo, un 'Socrate epicureo' nel *Satyricon*." *ASNP* 14: 25-53.

Weinbrot, Howard D. (2005). *Menippean Satire Reconsidered: from Antiquity to the Eighteenth Century*. Baltimore.

Wicks, Ulrich (1989). *Picaresque Narrative, Picaresque Fictions. A Theory and Research Guide*. New York – Westport (Connecticut) – London.

Zeitlin, Froma I. (1971). "Romanus Petronius: a study of the *Troiae halosis* and the *Bellum ciuile*." *Latomus* 30: 56-82.

Two closed universes in the *Satyricon* of Petronius: the *Cena Trimalchionis* and the city of Croton[1]

Cláudia Teixeira
University of Évora

1. The *Cena Trimalchionis*

Petronius' novel is traversed structurally by the theme of the journey. The relationship between the heroes and the world that surrounds them develops via a system of wandering, marked by constant searches and endless escapes. However, this movement, that gives the journey of Encolpius and his companions an erratic and aleatory character, does not impede the anti-heroes from coming into contact with systems that are cohesive, intrinsically coherent and structured; systems that, in spite of being configured like a stage on which the characters can act, will not change the erratic configuration of the anti-heroes' journey, nor will they be modified by the actions of Encolpius, Giton, Ascyltos and Eumolpos. This is because these universes are configured as closed universes.

The creation of closed universes is not, by any means, a Petronian novelty. The literature of adventure is prolific in the creation of universes of this kind, or rather, of locations with an intrinsic and autonomous

---

[1] A part of the study which is presented here uses conclusions arrived at in earlier works: Teixeira (2005) and (2007).

structure, or rather structures which are separable from the central world of the narrative and that, whether by the fascination that they exert upon the traveler, or through the power that they have to subjugate him, normally end up being systems of imprisonment.

This independent structure does not imply, however, the lack of a natural interaction with anterior and posterior episodes. In truth, and because these universes occur predominantly within a system of the journey, it is enough to recognize the existence of a syntagmatic axis, which is constituted by a group of successive episodes, to accept that these episodes are, if not interdependent, at least related. In the case of the *Satyricon* of Petronius, the first example of a closed universe, which the fragmentary nature of the text leaves open to consideration, is constituted by the *Cena Trimalchionis*. This type of categorization is based, essentially, on two factors: firstly, it constitutes a social, physical and psychological macrospace with self-determining values of signification within the context of the novel; secondly, it takes shape as a system capable of interrupting the universe of the novel, a universe that is dominated by the constant shifting of the anti-heroes from one place to another.

The emergence of this universe becomes evident with the relationships suggested by the parodic foundation underlying the novel. A variety of studies have pointed to the relation of the *Cena* to a system of death, a fact that immediately links this episode to a catabasis. Then there is the fact that the episode of the cortege,

which brings the characters to Trimalchio's house, is similar to a funeral procession,[2] and that the ekphrasis represented in the atrium of the freedman's house is decorated with the typical icons of a "(…) mausoleum, a house of the dead."[3] All of this reinforces the idea that Trimalchio's banquet represents "un parcours initiatique qui conduit d'abord dans le royaume des morts (…)".[4]

Affinities with the universe of the catabasis become evident when compared to the episode of the descent into the underworld in the *Aeneid*.[5] In effect, if the catabasis, conceived by Virgil, combines elements of a religious nature (that express theories relative to *post-mortem* life and to the organization of the underworld), of a philosophical nature (above all from Orphism and Pythagoreanism) and of an historical nature (present in the prophecies of Anchises), we can see the same conceptual matrix in the Petronian episode. First there is the philosophical level based, though only

---

[2] Gagliardi (1994) 286, observes that "Perché questo strano corteo (….) adombra (….) la *facies* d'un piccolo corteo funebre, nel quale Trimalchione sembre aver l'aria del defunto accompagnato all'estrema dimora. Il testo offre appigli sufficienti in tal senso. Non solo per l'architettura del brano, disposta in movenze idonee a raggiungere quest'effetto complessivo; ma ancora per taluni particolari che danno la sensazione di riflettere momenti tipici del rito funebre (quali il cospargere di profumi il corpo del morto o l'avvolgerlo in un manto) (....)"

[3] Bodel (1994) 243.

[4] Martin (1988) 244.

[5] Courtney (1987), 409, adopts the position that the *Cena* was not inspired by Virgil, but in "(….) Plato, whose *Symposium* contributed so much to the structure of the *cena* (…..). This time, however not from the *Symposium*, but from the *Protagoras*."

materially, on the conception of the symposium; then an historical level (in which the prophetic dimension is substituted by the realism of the daily life of a group of individuals, concretely situated in one of the stratum of Roman society); and, finally, there is a religious level (which expresses a existentialist vision, not on the level of solemnity and profundity demanded in the context of an epic catabasis, but on the level of the apprehension and practical experience of the concepts of life and of death, as expressed in the daily life of this particular group of individuals).

Nevertheless, the true conceptual affinities that exist between parody and the text parodied lead to the fact that the relationship between epic catabasis and the episodes of the novel are to be felt, above all, in the passages which describe the entering and the leaving of Trimalchio's house. If, in the epic, the hero, during the process of descent, discerns either the knowledge that is directly related with the mission and it allows him a sense of unity between the past, present and future, or a more universal knowledge, and, for that, he has to carry out a long, continuous, non-linear journey, crisscrossed by difficulties, encounters and dangers, then, contrastingly, in the *Satyricon*, we see that the anti-heroes utilize the trip to Trimalchio's house for merely immanent goals, finding refuge and obtaining dinner. In this way in the process of the journey, they are only truly active during the journey there and during the escape, while the intervening space that, in the epic, is constituted by a long walk through the space of the

Inferna, is substituted, in the Petronian novel, by the stasis of the banquet, dominated by Trimalchio and, in his absence, by the freedmen.

However, if we leave out precisely those episodes of the arrival and leave-taking, the Trimalchio episode presents the configuration of a closed universe; a configuration which will result from the fact that the *Cena* stresses how tightly the freedman controls and dominates those aspects which define any system: space, time and movement.

This control is revealed right away at the entrance to the house: notations like that of the warning expressed in 28.7 (*quisquis seruus sine dominico iussu foras exierit, accipiet plagas centum*), or like that which is expressed by the contradiction between the greeting at the arrival of the visitors by a (28.9) *pica uaria* and the image of the dog, above which can be read the famous warning, *Caue canem*, and then there is the obligation that they enter the house with their right foot. All of this shows us that the space created by the freedman is like a microsystem that, though it is an integral part of the novel, will function with its own rules and reasons.

The domination exercised by Trimalchio over this space is not confined to the house. If the description of events occurring on his properties is subject to extremely rigorous rules of control, as is proved in 53.5,[6]

---

[6] *Incendium factum est in hortis Pompeianis, ortum ex aedibus Nastae uilici 'Quid?' inquit Trimalchio 'quando mihi Pompeiani horti empti sunt?' 'Anno priore', inquit actuarius 'et ideo in rationem nondum uenerunt.' Excanduit Trimalchio et 'quicunque' inquit 'mihi fundi empti fuerint, nisi intra sextum mensem sciero, in rationes meas*

the reference the freedman makes to the extension of his material dominions lends this attempt to control a generalizing character (48.3): *'Nunc coniungere agellis Siciliam uolo, ut cum Africam lubuerit ire, per meos fines nauigem.'* The pretension, more than constructing a form to demonstrate the economic power of the freedman, seems to reveal, as Slater observes, "(…) Trimalchio's desire to build a self-sufficient kingdom which neither he nor any member of his *familia* will ever need to leave."[7]

In this way, Trimalchio's use of physical space thus becomes one man's creation of a universe, with delimited and watertight boundaries that aim for a total separation between internal and external worlds. The meaning of property functions, similarly to that which happens with the space of the house, as the expedient that allows for the creation of a system of spatial autonomy, regulated by its own rules, which give its creator the ability to move about without the restrictions and the constraints characteristic of movement in the exterior world.

More explicit, by virtue of the innumerable situations that occur during the banquet, is the attempt to control the social space. The freedman's omnipresence, dictated *a priori* by the fact of being the party's host, increases by virtue of his dictatorial management of the banquet's discursive stratum. In effect, with the

---

inferri uetuo.'
[7] SLATER (1990) 56.

exception of Niceros[8] and Habinnas, all of the dialogic assertions attempted by the guests are interrupted or impeded by Trimalchio. One example of these attitudes is the interruption of the parallel conversation between Hermeros and Encolpius (39.1 *Interpellauit tam dulces fabulas Trimalchio.*); another example is in the impediment to Ascyltos's response to the invective that he suffers from a freedman (59.1 *Coeperat Ascyltos respondere (....) sed Trimalchio delectatus colliberti eloquentia 'agite' inquit 'scordalias de medio.'*)[9]; and the way he systematically interrupts Agamemnon, when the latter tries to respond to the questions asked by Trimalchio himself (48.4-6: '*Sed narra tu mihi, Agamemnon, quam controuersiam hodie declamasti?'* (...) *Cum dixisse Agamemnon: 'Pauper et diues inimici erant', ait Trimalchio 'Quid est pauper?';* 48.6: *'Si factum est, controuersia non est; si factum non est, nihil est.'*).[10]

---

[8] The tight control of the discursive stratum contains only one exception that consists in the appeal to have Niceros tell a story. However, contrary to what happens with the interrogations of Agamemnon, Trimalchio's request (61.3 *'Oro te (....), narra illud quod tibi usu uenit*), does not take daily life as a reference. The expression *usu uenit*, in pointing to a spaciotemporal coordinate similar to those that introduce stories and fairy tales, conditions the tone and the image of adventurous, fantastic and unreal nature that, indeed, Niceros' story will develop. However, if it is true that Trimalchio does not interrupt Niceros' story, then it is also certain that he is worried about telling his own story of sorcerers right after (63.3-10), preventing, in this way, the appropriation by another guest of the discursive space as it relates to the supernatural.

[9] In 54.4, Trimalchio asks Agamemnon about the qualities of Cicero and Publilius and responds to his own question, citing a group of verses, probably imitations of Publilio.

[10] Vide also Sat. 54.4.

In this way, Encolpius' commentary while leaving Trimalchio's house, in 41.9, well expresses the feeling of verbal oppression generated by the freedman, in the ambience of the *Cena* (41.9): *sine tyranno (….), coepimus inuitare conuiuarum sermones*. Also the sense in which the conversation of the freedmen unfolds after Trimalchio's momentary exit is revealing not only of the lack of freedom which we are made to feel during the *Cena*, as it is of the difficulties that Trimalchio raises to the expression of his guests who go along with the attempt to silence all information relating to the world outside his universe. As such, it is only in the absence of the host that the meaning of the conversation will unfold in an axis of meaning sufficiently distinct form that which, until then, had dominated the banquet,[11] since the dialogue brings to the surface the aspects that each of the speakers considers and privileges as sources or stratagems for the regulation of daily life and that, in the last analysis, constitute the aspects that, in the understanding of each one, give meaning to that same life.

Along with the attempt to control the space, the attempt to control time reveals itself to be even more

---

[11] The presence of the practical aspects of life in the conversation had already been introduced in the parallel conversation that was taking place between Hermeros and Encolpius (37-38), in which the freedman speaks of the favorable economic situation of Fortunata and Trimalchio and tells of the antagonistic paths of two of the guests (Diogenes and Proculus). This path reveals what for the freedman constitutes the parallel antagonists of life: success and financial misfortune, given that, in his words, such factors manifest themselves as supreme conditions of existence.

obsessive. If space presents a strictly material nature and, consequently, susceptible to a more assertive regulation, the double conception of the element of time – which combines, in the same principle, physical and existential time – determines not only the existence of different mechanisms of control, but also different results, as consequence of the application of these mechanisms.

The presence of the temporal element makes itself felt in the first reference to Trimalchio (Agamemnon's slave defines him as the possessor of a clock and of a cornet player whose function was to count the time left in the freedman's life) in close combination with the existential element. And, in this way, those mechanisms of control which come under the temporal category will show a double nature, in accordance with the paradigms that, on the human plane, represent it, that is, the paradigms of life and death.

The notion of life is found, in the thinking of Trimalchio, to be intrinsically linked to the notion of *Fortuna*, as the iconography of the ekphrasis in the entrance clearly indicates, in which the images of Parcae and of *Fortuna*[12] express, respectively, the inexorable march of time and the contingencies which will determine whether this march is positive or negative, just as the successive commentaries that he will be making about the temporal coming into being and about the

---

[12] DESCHAMPS (1988) 33: "L'attitude de Trimalchion repose sur une certaine vision de la vie. Lui et ses amis placent dans l'inopiné le grand ressort de l'existence. (....) Selon eux, le monde est en perpétuel changement, sans cesse en proie aux vicissitudes de la Fortune."

march of life (39.13-14: *'sic orbis uertitur tanquam mola, et semper aliquid mali facit, ut homines aut nascantur aut pereant.'*; 55.3: '*Quod non expectes, ex transuerso fit; | et supra nos Fortuna negotia curat'*.).

The lack of constancy represented by *Fortuna* gets its response in a praxis – astrology – which in the view of the freedman, functions as regulating principle of life capable of counterbalancing the arbitrariness that *Fortuna* stamps on the determination of events. Its importance in the life of the freedman is clearly visible in the house's entranceway, in the inscription described in 30.3-4 ('*III et pridie kalendas Ianuarias C. noster foras cenat', altera lunae cursum stellarumque septem imagines pictas; et qui dies boni quique incommodi essent, distinguente bulla notabantur*), and develops in the explanation that it gives of the attributes of men that are born under each of the signs,[13] especially his (39.8): *In Cancro ego natus sum. Ideo multis pedibus sto, et in mare et in terra multa possideo*.

If astrology constitutes an attempt to explain the future, as far as, in Trimalchio's view, it furnishes a group of principles for the guidance of human life and, consequently, removes some of the arbitrariness from it that, by nature, is imbued with by the notion of *Fortuna*, the problem of the ephemeral is still felt to be impossible to control. This is revealed in the observations that

---

[13] The previous scene had introduced the theme. The slaves carry a salver, on which was represented the signs of the zodiac; and the placement of the food on the tray was done according to a logic that, though typical of common sense, expresses a non-arbitrary connection between cause and effect, since each sign corresponds to a single food which is related to it.

Trimalchio makes throughout the *Cena* (34.7): *'Ergo diutius uiuit uinum quam homuncio;* 34.10: *'Eheu nos miseros, quam totus homuncio nil est! / Sic erimus cuncti, postquam nos auferet Orcus. /Ergo uiuamus, dum licet esse bene.'* ; (55.3) '*Quod non expectes, ex transuerso fit./ et supra nos Fortuna negotia curat ./ Quare da nobis uina Falerna, puer'* .

Similar to what happened with the recourse to astrology, the expedient discovered to compensate for the consciousness of this ephemerality does not translate into the search for a means of control, but into the simple appeal to the pleasures of the table[14] and above all of wine, which, in the Trimalchian world, become instigating expedients of the illusion and of unconsciousness.

As the various episodes clearly demonstrate, the game of illusion is one of the aspects that recurs more often and with more definition in the *Cena*, as in the one that celebrates the first discursive contribution which Tramalchio brings to the dinner (33.5: *'Amici'* – *ait* – *'pauonis oua gallinae iussi supponi. Et mehercules timeo ne iam concepti sint; temptemus tamen; si adhuc sorbilia sunt.*[15] *Sorberi possunt.'*), or as the one that

---

[14] Arrowsmith (1966), 310, observes "That this is Petronius' theme – the death which *luxuria* brings in sex, food, and language, that is, in the areas of energetic desire and social community – is made abundantly clear in the *Cena*. (....) Those who will reread the episode with the connection between satiety and *luxuria* and death firmly in mind will quickly recognize the deliberate symbolic intent beneath the comic realism."

[15] We followed the punctuation of Ciaffi.

celebrates the double correspondence between the task and the name itself of the executor (36.7: *Carpe, carpe*), or as that of the wild boar, served with a one of the freedman's woolen hats, and that, carved in the presence of the guests, releases living thrushes from its gut (40.3-6); or even the ludicrous situation described in 49. 4-10; or the presence of cakes and fruits that once touched spray crocus juice (60.4-7) and the desert, prepared by Daedalus the slave, in which delicacies presented in the form of birds are in the end sculpted from pork (70.1).

In this sense, the matrix of illusion that underlies all of these enigmas seems to translate into a characteristic belonging to the system created by Trimalchio. The disjunction that is established between being and seeming is neither arbitrary, nor casual. Similar to what happens in the episode of the *Lotophagi* in the Odyssey, it constitutes an instigating expedient of alienation. In effect, the food, in parallel with the abundance of wine that Trimalchio makes a point of serving throughout the dinner, constitute mechanisms that bring on the dysphoric bewilderment of the anti-heroes, created by the sensorial mutations (and that invariably progress from expectation to repulsion) that such delicacies provoke.

The control of space and time can be extended to movement. Though the *Cena* is frequently considered as an episode in which chaos reigns supreme, in which the exploration of *nonsense* constitutes a *Leitmotiv* for the criticism of the customs that indeed exist in the work, nevertheless, in that which touches upon its

internal formulation, an analysis of the episode leads to the opposite conclusion.

In truth, if the elements of the entrance referred to above, such as slaves being prohibited to leave (28.7) and the obligation to enter the house with the right foot reveal a double value with respect to the control of space and of movement, this does not prevent the *Cena* from distinguishing itself for the way that it brings together a group of incidents that illustrate an atmosphere of chaos: from the slave who drops a bowl, saved from punishment thanks to the intervention of the guests (52.4-6), to the fall of the acrobat (54.1), the incitement to a dog fight (64.9-11), to the singing (67.4) and pantomimes (59.4-7), to the boxing match between the slaves, until all of the slaves are sent to sit down at the table (70.10-11); the banquet moves from agitation to tumult.

However, in spite of the great quantity of happenings and the chaos that dominates it, the *Cena* is configured as one of the most static episodes in the novel,[16] as it is surely significant that no one, outside the house

---

[16] Hubbard (1986), 194, observes that the *Cena* "represents an extended pause or intermezzo in the dramatic action (….)." and idem, 195, that the static character of the banquet is conditioned, in part, by the circular character of the internal structure of the episodes: "In fact, it can be observed that this ring-structure pervades the entire length of the *Cena*, and provides the governing principle for Petronius' arrangement of the various entertainments and events (....)" Vide schematization of this structure in a ring, pp. 196-197. Segura Ramos (1976) observes that "La pieza entera presenta una composición anular, comezando por un baño (cap. 28) e terminando por otro (cap. 72.3)"

of the freedman, participates in this chaos.[17] In truth, with the exception of the slaves and of Fortunata, who move about in fulfillment of their functions, Trimalchio is the only character that, as the banquet unfolds, shows any mobility at all, when he leaves the room in 41.9, to return once again in 47.1.

In this way, the atmosphere saturated by the constant presence of games of illusion, alternating with various references, verbal and material, to death, and in which Trimalchio is expected to be the master of the space, as the one who directs the verbal flow of the feast and possesses mobility, taken together, create of the *Cena* a system of representation of a static world which configures a symbolic attempt to illude the march of life.

However, if the banquet functions as an expedient to illustrate that Trimalchio's house represents a closed universe, it is also evident, as it unfolds, that the collapse of this system will make itself known. The point of rupture coincides with the arrival of Habinnas,[18] a character who displays a certain freedom, whether of movement, or verbal assertiveness, very much greater than the others participating in the banquet[19] and who will alter the sense in which the

---

[17] The same chaos expressed in the *forma mentis* of Trimalchio, whose geographic, mythological and literary references reveal the same chaotic conception. And just as happens regarding the *Cena*, no one intervenes in an attempt to reduce or annul the chaos.

[18] The process if Habinnas' arrival at the feast suggest certain affinities with the arrival of Alcibiades at Plato's *Symposium*, as observes Ferreira (2000) 83-84.

[19] Certain examples of this freedom constitute the fact that Habinnas sits in the place of honor, interrogating Tramalchio

subject of life and of death has developed up to that point. In spite of having come from a funeral – a fact which creates no thematic rupture between the atmosphere experienced in the *Cena* and the entrance of the character – Trimalchio's sudden interest (visible in the questions he asks about the funeral) in real and everyday life, which, until that moment had been kept out of his discourse, constitutes the first indication that the world governed by the freeman will begin to confront the reality that it has been avoiding. And this alteration coincides with the beginning of the freedman's loss of control of the world he has created for himself and which will begin to become ungovernable and present signs of internal fractures, such that by the final phase of the *Cena* "(….) il tempo e la morte si unificano in un movimento dominante."[20]

If, up until the arrival of Habinnas, the subject of death had developed in a conceptual, abstract and impersonal form (all considerations relative to death are of an existential tenor), after the arrival of the character, conceptual existentialism will gave way to an approach in which death appears, for the first time, delineated by real and personal contours, as the words of the freedman betray in 71.1: *(….) 'amici' inquit 'et serui homines sunt et aeque unum lactem biberunt, etiam si illos malus fatus oppresserit. Tamen me saluo cito aquam liberam gustabunt.'*

---

about the absence of Fortunata and ordering his own slave who declaims before the guests.

[20] Barchiesi (1981) 136.

Trimalchio begins by speaking of his own death, a circumstance which he has avoided personalizing. The change of direction in the subject becomes more explicit when he decides to read his will and announce the motives behind his testamentary dispositions (71.3): *ut familia mea iam nunc sic me amet tanquam mortuum.*

After the reading of the will, Trimalchio interrogates Habinnas, in 71: '*Quid dicis' inquit 'amice carissime? Aedificas monumentum meum, quemadmodum te iussi?*' Along with the reading of the will, the description of his tomb, which explains the influence Habinnas has over the freedman, definitively brings the subject of real death into the narrative. But the representation of real death functions for Trimalchio as an attempt at prolonging earthly existence, in all of its aspects. This idea becomes explicit, whether in the iconography that the freedman would like to have for his last address (which includes natural elements, scenes which represent the branches of his economic activity, representations of the *familia* and of earthly entertainments, and elements of a psychological and sentimental nature, such as magnanimity, excellence and merit), or in the consideration that he makes about the care that should be taken in the construction of the house in which humans spend the most time.[21]

The suggestion of physical death, centered in Trimalchio himself, provokes, nevertheless, a rupture

---

[21] Bodel (1994), 243, observes that the decoration of the tomb is evidence of "(....) Trimalchio's failure to distinguish between the artistic conventions of life and death that he not only decorates his tomb like a house but decorates his house like a tomb."

in the system (71.1): *Haec ut dixit Trimalchio, flere coepit ubertim. Flebat Fortunata, flebat et Habinnas, tota denique familia, tanquam in funus rogata, lamentatione triclinium impleuit.* The lamentation puts in high relief the idea that death constitutes a reality that cannot be sidestepped, an idea that Trimalchio had tried to repress through an appeal to the mechanisms of illusion and of unconsciousness. This sudden acquisition of conscience benefited still from an attempt at inversion. Apart from the fact that the description of the tomb had motivated an approximation to the idea of real death, Trimalchio will still make use of a strategy which will serve to console him to the conceptual idea of death. The consciousness of death ends with an appeal to life and to happiness, that, in a way similar to what happened in the first part, is materialized in a sensorial expedient: the bath.

The loss of control that the idea of real death brings to the closed universe created by Trimalchio is extended to movement. The preparation of the bath, which forces a change in the action to another space, makes it possible that, for the first time during the *Cena*, an attempt at mobility on the part of the guests begin to take shape. This is based in the antihero's attempt to escape to the outside.

Their flight evokes once again the Virgilian catabasis, above all in the stratagem used by Giton in order to deceive the guard dog, identical to that used by the Sibyl in the *Aeneid* (6. 417-424) to distract Cerberus (72.9-10); and the relative similarity in the fact that

the exit cannot be made through the same door as the entrance (72.10). But the characteristics that configure Trimalchio's house like an imprisoning space continue to generate effects. Though the collapse of the system has allowed for the attempt to escape, the space, since it is constituted effectively as the most static and inflexible category of this closed universe, ends up frustrating it. So, despite the internal ruptures that the system begins to manifest, the space will constitute the final redoubt, representative of this system, that still fulfills the function it exercises within the system. So, prevented from their attempt to escape the house, the antiheros return to the atmosphere of the *Cena* and it is once again through the eyes of Encolpius that we experience the definitive rupture of the universe created by Trimalchio. As such, the discussion with Fortunata serves as a vehicle for the expression of a new sentiment,[22] leading to the question of the lasting quality of life (74.16): *Agatho (....) inquit* '*Non patiaris genus tuum interire'.* The considerations of a personal nature, that Trimalchio avoids throughout the banquet, are now brought to the foreground: the freedman will relate the story of his life,[23] which ends

---

[22] Vide, with respect to Trimalchio's human character, Leão (1996) 161-182; and Gagliardi (1994), 15.

[23] Gagliardi (1994), 20, observes that, in the account, Trimalchio "(....) accumulando ricordi e sensazioni, ci consegna dunque dei lucidi brani di memoria emergenti dal deposito d'emozioni addensate nel corso d'una vita, e nei quali passato e presente s'intrecciano e si confondono in virtù del fluire d'un discorso intessuto da colorite rispondenze e di sapienti contrasti. (....) Ed anche questo svariare di sensazioni è profondamente vero, in quanto rispecchia una delle constanti dell'animo umano."

with a new reference to the plane of life and of death (an astrologist had predicted to him (77.2) *restare uitae annos triginta et menses quattuor et dies duos*). The idea of death that he had tried to exorcise throughout the banquet with constant appeals to sensorial pleasures[24] is suddenly inverted with the simulation of his own funeral. And the development, even if it is simulated, of the scene that represents the breakdown of the system created by Trimalchio, will coincide with the escape of the antiheros. That escape conforms to the typical relationship between the wanderer and closed universes, which in spite of initially begin able to give rise to reactions of fascination, are subject to the action of the passage of time that normally modifies this reaction. As P. Fedeli observes "la casa di Trimachione sembra rappresentare un'oasi per i protagonisti dopo le continue traversie: ma essa svelerà presto la sua vera natura. Gradualmente si è introdotti nell'ambiguità che regnerà nella cena, così come gradualmente si percorrono i corridoi di un labirinto, da cui non si può uscire senza rimuovere le cause motrici della situazione e senza ripristinare un ordine originario."[25]

As such, the *Cena* is more than a catabasis in the context of the novel. It evokes the conception of a closed universe. If the epic catabasis has a prospective structure oriented towards the future, the Trimalichio

---

[24] Barchiesi (1981), 138-139, observes that "In certo senso tutta la *Cena* è un esorcismo contro il tempo (....); ed un esorcismo simile è anche la finita morte del finale (che ha un precedente senechiano)."

[25] Fedeli (1981) 63.

episode attempts to get around time and paralyze it and its ultimate consequence: death. For the antiheros the *Cena* represents contact with a world replete with the mechanisms of illusion and demands of those who enter a sense of profound alienation relative to everything that defines them in their interaction with the external world. However, this result is not entirely achieved, since their reactions, as observed in 36.7, 37.1, 41.2, 57.1, 58.1, 69.9, etc., demonstrate that they are not totally absorbed by the oppressive atmosphere of the banquet.[26] Nevertheless, physical autonomy does not correspond to this relative mental autonomy, since leaving this static system (in which the characteristics of space, time and movement oppose, in their configuration, those of the novel) not only depends on a process of escape, but above all on a process of escape which is only made possible by the internal rupture of the system. In addition to this, and contrary to what happens in the epic, in which the heroes end up leaving or escaping, motivated by the teleological conclusion of their mission – and this in spite of the fact that closed universes present characteristics so imprisoning that they can bring about the end of the journey – in the *Satyricon*,

---

[26] The idea of mental distancing relative to the atmosphere of the *Cena* fades only in the reaction of the antiheroes to the supernatural stories told by Niceros and Trimalchio (63.1: *Attonitis admiratione uniuersis;* 64.1: *Miramur nos et pariter credimus, osculatique mensam rogamus Nocturnas, ut suis se teneant, dum redimus a cena.*). However, it is still significant that both of the stories evoke the dangers of the world outside Trimalchio's world, in which danger is consolidated as unpredictable and capable of destroying, whether physically or existentially, men who move through it.

the *Cena*, clearly adjusted to the presuppositions of the novel, constitutes only one of various episodes that successively imprison the antiheroes, but allows them to return to the erratic system in which they wander, as, following their escape, the reappearance of the universe of the novel will prove. (79.1-2): *Neque fax ulla in praesidio erat, quae iter aperiret errantibus, nec silentium noctis iam mediae promittebat occurrentium lumen. Accedebat huc ebrietas et imprudentia locorum etiam interdiu obscura.*

2. Croton

The Croton episode marks the antiheroes contact with another closed universe – the city of the *heredipetae* – and, in addition to this, it has the peculiarity of being configured as a dystopia. Inserted into the system of the troubled journey of the three antiheroes, the episode recycles traditional motifs for entering utopic/dystopic systems: those who will have contact with the city are a group of travellers, the circumstances which lead them to the region are the result of a shipwreck, we witness the arrival of a guide in the form of a local peasant, who will provide them with their first information about the space into which they are about to enter; information that, in accordance with the dictates of the tradition, reveal little or nothing about the causes and about the process by which the dystopia was created. Finally we can add spatial isolation (Croton is located on the summit of a mountain, the *sine qua non* condition for the creation of utopian and dystopian systems, since a distancing indicative of the exceptional character of

the space is necessary to the verisimilar creation, which must present conceptual and functional characteristics distinct from the run-of-the-mill.

Equally, the critical vision of the society underlying dystopian systems emerge, in the Petronian text, from the description of the inhabitants of the city and the activities in which they are engaged (116.4-9):

> '*O mi – inquit – hospites, si negotiatores estis, mutate propositum aliudque uitae praesidium quaerite. Sin autem urbanioris notae homines sustinetis semper mentiri, recta ad lucrum curritis. In hac enim urbe non litterarum studia celebrantur, non eloquentia locum habet, non frugalitas sanctique mores laudibus ad fructum perueniunt, sed quoscunque homines in hac urbe uideritis, scitote in duas partes esse diuisos: nam aut captantur aut captant. In hac urbe nemo liberos tollit, quia quisquis suos heredes habet, non ad cenas, non ad spectacula admittitur, sed omnibus prohibetur commodis, inter ignominiosos latitat. Qui uero nec uxores unquam duxerunt nec proximas necessitudines habent, ad summos honores perueniunt, id est soli militares, soli fortissimi atque etiam innocentes habentur. Adibitis – inquit – oppidum tanquam in pestilentia campos, in quibus nihil aliud est nisi cadauera, quae lacerantur, aut corui, qui lacerant.*'

The description of Croton, filtered through the consciousness of the guide facilitates our understanding of the dysphoric nature of the city. Topics such as the loss of individuality, in which the different characteristics of the individuals seem to have disappeared giving way to a catechism on unified behavior, such as

the association between lying and wealth (which anni-
hilates justice), such as the abandonment of knowledge
(the study of the humanities and eloquence) and the
abdication of a valorizing identity (simplicity and good
customs) constitute features which stifle reflection upon
the characteristics of an uncritical conformity and pave
the way to accepting social control, which communi-
cates, satirically, the most alarming tendencies of real
society; a society that has a counterpoint[27] in an illustri-
ous past (116.2: *Crotona, urbs antiquissima et aliquando
Italiae prima*), that the reader would associate, immedi-
ately, to Pythagorism and to the most illustrious com-
munity of those founded by the philosopher of Samos
on Italian soil.

   In the case of the Petronian novel, the character-
istics of the city of Croton furnish a reason for empa-
thizing with the antiheroes' way of life. In this way, in
spite of possessing nothing, they will offer themselves
to the material exploitation by the society: Eumolpos
makes himself pass for a man who is in the possession
of great wealth in Africa, whose only son had died, and
recent victim of a shipwreck in which he had lost all of

---

   [27] FEDELI (1987), 11, observes that that inversion is not "(....)
costituita in un semplice passaggio dall'antica grandezza all'attuale
decadenza, ma abbia dato origine ad una sorta di mundo alla rove-
scia è preannunciato sin dalle prime parole del *uilicus*: mentre tutti
i mercanti devono tenersi alla larga da quel luogo, sono proprio
gli uomini senza scrupolo e abituati alla menzogna che lì hanno la
possibilità di arricchirsi. È la menzongna, quindi, ad apparire come
l'elemento indispensabile per ottenere successo e fortuna e al tempo
stesso a proporsi quale chiave d'interpretazione delle vicende che a
Crotone vedranno coinvolti Encolpio e i suoi amici."

his belongings; all that remained were two slaves (roles represented by Encolpius and Giton) and a mercenary (Corax). And so the situation would become more appetizing to the *heredipetae*, he would simulate signs of ill-health (coughing a lot and refusing to eat – 117.9) and he would alter, from time to time, the dispositions of his will (117.10).

If, following certain literary sources (namely Horace, *Serm.*, 2.5; and later, Martial, *passim*), the fiction that this group theatrically offers evokes Roman society,[28] this negative evocation will also unfold in the narration of the *Bellum ciuile*, a poem that (along with the *Toiae halosis*, which had also represented itself as an explanation of the historical and civilizational decadence from a macrostructural perspective), in developing historically and temporally proximate elements, encourages a new parallel with the decadence of Rome, expressing well the extent to which the dystopic text satirizes the features of contemporary society, by characterizing the present in all of its epochal dynamic, as negative, in opposition to the didactic reversion to a past that would now seem to be constructive and exemplary.

In returning to the Crotonian universe, the inheritance hunters react as planned. After hearing the story of the great wealth of the poet, a discussion begins to unfold immediately about who would put his wealth at Eumolpos' disposition (124.3). This sudden change in the antiheroes' luck, that, for the first time, brings

---

[28] Vide Zeitlin (1971) 74.

them material comfort, does not prevent, however, new worries from emerging, as the fear felt by Encolpius in 125.1-4, well expresses:

> (….) *Eumolpus felicitate plenus prioris fortunae esset oblitus statum, adeo ut suis iactaret neminem gratiae suae ibi posse resistere, impuneque suos, si quid deliquissent in ea urbe, beneficio amicorum laturos. Ceterum ego, etsi quotidie magis magisque superfluentibus bonis saginatum corpus impleueram, putabamque a custodia mei remouisse uultum Fortunam, tamen saepius tam consuetudinem meam cogitabam quam causam, et 'Quid, – aiebam, – si callidus captator exploratorem in Africam miserit mendaciumque deprehenderit nostrum? Quid, si etiam mercennarius praesenti felicitate lassus indicium ad amicos detulerit, totamque fallaciam inuidiosa proditione detexerit? Nempe rursus fugiendum erit, et tandem expugnata paupertas noua mendicitate reuocanda. Dii deaeque, quam male est extra legem uiuentibus! Quicquid meruerunt semper expectant.'*

In spite of the tension between the totality and the fragment, which results from the mutilation of the text, the traditional, rudimentary plot of the utopian narrative, which begins with the narrator/protagonist entering the utopia and ends with his return home, benefits from amplification in the dystopia, since the framing of the novel allows for the enlargement of the range of interactions. In this way, if in the utopian narrative the fictional mechanism that facilitates the connection with the utopia is frequently that of the wanderer, who observes it and witnesses a more perfect society, in the

dystopia a space is opened for individual action.[29] However, in spite of benefiting from the framing of the novel, the actions which will develop in Croton are still, as is illustrated in the Encolpius' reflections, adapted to the ideological space of the dystopia; a space which stands out for the value it places on the public character of life, and in which adherence to the social ideal implies, whether the progressive and systematic loss of individuality, or permanent subjugation of individuals to public scrutiny.[30] And, in this way, the tightened vigilance that the Crotonian world exerts on the antiheroes and that they feel as well the need to exert over themselves in order to not be given away, translates into another form of imprisonment.

In spite of the fact that the consequences of individual actions are adjusted to the dystopic system, it is the image of one of these actions that could present the biggest objection to the configuration of Croton and a closed universe. In effect, it is precisely the narrative sequence in which the Encolpius and Circe episodes unfold that the problem of the *ira Priapi* arrises – a subject in no way self-determinable in the central world of the novel (132.13-14):

> *'Quid autem ego – inquam – male feci, si dolorem meum naturali conuicio exoneraui? (....) Non et Ulixes cum corde litigat suo, et quidem tragici oculos suos tanquam audientis castigant? Podagrici pedibus suis male dicunt, chiragrici manibus,*

---

[29] Ferns (1999) 109-110.

[30] Ferns (1999) 112.

> *lippi ocullis, et qui offenderunt saepe digitos, quicquid doloris habent, in pedes deferunt.*

If, with respect to the amorous[31] episodes experienced between the two characters, there exists nothing that will not adapt itself to the occurrence of the anger of the god (as that anger unifies the conflict, the attempt to resolve it and the failure), Encolpius' reflection[32] seems to bring to the narrative context the expression of a topic of a theoretical nature.[33] In effect, the comparison of his act with that of Ulysses and of tragic characters seems to constitute more than just a justified comparison of his behavior, since this reference produces a strong resonance of the genre to which these characters belong. This resonance is produced not only nominally, but also metaphorically. In effect, the reference to the *partes peccantes* of the epic and tragic heroes – the most noble of the human body – constitute, simultaneously, metaphors of the type of divinity – the major gods – that persecutes them and of the conflict

---

[31] Vide Fedeli (1988), 77-78.

[32] Sullivan (1968), 70, considers Encolpius' invective as "(....) a mock-epic description of his attempt at self-castration, followed by an indignant speech against the recalcitrant member. Encolpius is overcome by a feeling of shame at this unseemly behavior, but he defends what he is doing by comparing the ways other people, including tragic heroes, address different parts of their bodies."

[33] Slater (1990), 129, affirms that "(....) Encolpius' role-playing as tragic, star-crossed lover has gotten him into a ridiculous position, and 132.15 is a rethorical / theatrical way of extracting himself."

in which they are involved; a conflict which, while it is not overcome, represents the hero's failure to achieve his destiny. In similar fashion, in the novel, the status of the god adjusts itself to the hero. This kind of hero, a minor one, persecuted by a minor god, does not see his destiny put into question, but only a small and petty part of that destiny. And it is in this sense that Encolpius complains, in the same way that the common man does, of the evils that afflict him in daily life, in a reflection that continues in the following verses (132.15):

> *Quid me constricta spectatis fronte Catones,*
> *damnatisque nouae simplicitatis opus?*
> *Sermonis puri non tristis gratia ridet,*
> *quodque facit populus, candida lingua refert.*
> *Nam quis concubitus, Veneris quis gaudia nescit?*
> *Quis uetat in tepido membra calere toro?*
> *Ipse pater ueri doctus Epicurus in arte*
> *iussit, et hoc uitam dixit habere* τέλος.

The passage cited immediately raises the question often discussed by the critics who are apologists for realism in the novel.[34] The described topoi in the passage consist of an embodiment of the metaphorical aspect discussed in the previous passage, a statement

---

[34] Sullivan (1968) 70, observes that "As for indignity of the object, he justifies this in a poem which reads like the author's own *apologia pro opere suo*, as it defends the tone and many of the subjects of the whole *Satyricon*. It is a realistic work, dealing with ordinary everyday matters, including sex, in a simple, new, and straightforward style."

on the formal aspect of the *Satyricon*. Looking again at the opposition epic– tragedy/novel, the authorial voice quite probably would propose to describe [contrary to the epic and tragic genres, in which the sublimation of characters mandates that they be of "great reputation and fortune, like Oedipus and Thyestes" (*Poet.* 1453 a), and that bring to bear actions out of the ordinary (*Poet.* 1454 b)], with a language of the *populus*, the actions of this same *populus.*

These presuppositions recontextualize the definition of the *ira Priapi*, which, though it constitutes an *aemulatio* of the aesthetic model of the epic poem, it appears in the narrative differently from the divine wrath of the epic narrative. With the exception of the Quartilla episode, the rage of god is not found, whether underlying or present in the greater part of events. The divine action that in the *Odyssey*, for example, is present as the great conditioner of the action, is substituted, in the Petronian novel, by the category of incident and by chance. It is, indeed, the incident that provokes the episodes of the discussions in the *forum*, as well the sinking of Licas' ship; and chance seems to from the basis for the meeting with Eumolpos in the pinacotheca and underlying the fact that the shipwreck leaves them virtually at the gates of Croton.

In these terms, just as with the explanation in 132.15 indicates, the *ira Priapi* does not manifest itself as an impediment to the fulfillment of the hero's destiny, as happens with divine wrath in the epic. As such, though the fragmentary character of the residual text does not

allow us to conclude with complete security, the *ira Priapi* is not the driving force of the novel, but only one of many elements that, in specific circumstances, foments a specific type of crisis, limited to a single character. In this way, the announcement of Encolpius' cure, in 140.12, achieved through the intervention of Mercury, does not signify the alteration of the universe of the novel, since divine wrath (contrary to what happens in the epic) does not extend throughout the whole of the narrative, nor does it express an absolute conflict. It is, more than anything else, an anger that, in an exercise of accommodation to the systematic perversion of the intertexts, can be seen as being at the service of the realist formulation of the novel and, as a consequence, adjusts itself to the measure of the hero that suffers it. And, in this way, the narrative opens space so that, unlike what happens, for example, in *Asinus aureus* by Apuleius, the ending of the individual conflict of one of its protagonists does not signify the reconciliation with the multiple structures that comprise the novel. This presupposition seems to be equally true with respect to Eumolpos. In fact, the probable death of Eumolpos, that would seal the conclusion of his participation in the novel, would likewise represent the collapse of the Crotonian fiction. And this collapse would imply, in accordance with the terms that Encolpius proclaimed in 125.1-4, a probable return to flight and to mendicity, that is, to the search that, from the first episode preserved, has determined that the action of the antiheroes in the novel will be marginal, psychological and socially disturbing.

In equal fashion, the action of the antiheros also does nothing to alter the configuration of the closed universe underlying the space of Croton. It's self-determining character with its values each with their own meanings in relation to the central universe of the novel as constituted by the saga of the antiheroes, is clearly visible in the final scene, in which the presentation of the clauses of Eumolpos' will and the predisposition of the *heredipetae* to accept them suits the central characteristic of closed universes, which is that they remain equal to themselves independent of the actions that unfold within them.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

ARROWSMITH, William, "Luxury and death in the *Satyricon*", *Arion* 5 (1966) 304-331.

BARCHIESI, Marino, "L'orologio di Trimalcione. Struttura e tempo narrativo in Petronio", *I Moderni alla ricerca di Enea* (Roma, Bulzoni, 1981) 109-146.

BODEL, Jonh P., "Trimalchio's underworld» in TATUM, James (ed.), *The Search for the Ancient Novel* (Baltimore, JHUP, 1994) 237-259.

CIAFFI, Vicenzo, "Intermezzo nella *Cena* petroniana", *RFIC* 32 (1955) 113-145.

CONTE, Gian Biagio, *The Hidden Author. An Interpretation of Petronius* Satyricon (Transl. by FANTHAM, Elaine) Berkeley – Los Angeles – London, UCP, 1996.

COURTNEY, Edward, "Petronius and the underworld", *AJPh* 108 (1987) 408-410.

DESCHAMPS, Lucienne, "L' ΑΠΡΟΣΔΟΚΗΤΟΝ dans le festin chez Trimalchion du *Satyricon* de Pétrone", *Platon* 40 (1988) 31-39.

FEDELI, Paolo, "Petronio: il viaggio, il labirinto", *MD* (1981) 91-117.

FEDELI, Paolo, "Petronio: Crotone o il mundo alla rovescia", *Aufidus* 1 (1987) 3-34.

Fedeli, Paolo, "La degradazione del modello (Circe e Polieno in Petronio *vs* Circe e Odisseo in Omero)", *Lexis* (1988) 67-79.

Ferns, C., *Narrating Utopia. Ideology, Gender, Form in Utopian Literature* (Liverpool, Liverpool University Press, 1999).

Ferreira, Paulo Sérgio, *Os elementos paródicos no* Satyricon *de Petrónio e o seu significado* (Coimbra, Colibri – Faculdade de Letras da Universidade de Coimbra, 2000).

Gagliardi, Donato, "Il corteo di Trimalchione", *RFIC* 112 (1994) 285-287.

Gagliardi, Donato,"L'umanità di Trimalchione («*Satyricon*» 76-77») ", *Orpheus* 15 (1994) 13-20.

Hubbard, T. K., "The narrative architecture of Petronius' *Satyricon*", *AC* 55 (1986) 190-212.

Leão, Delfim Ferreira, "Trimalquião: a *humanitas* de um novo-rico", *Humanitas* 48 (1996) 161-182.

Leão, Delfim Ferreira, *As ironias da* Fortuna. *Sátira e moralidade no* Satyricon *de Petrónio* (Coimbra, Colibri – Faculdade de Letras da Universidade de Coimbra, 1998).

Martin, René, "La *Cena Trimalchionis*»: les trois niveaux d'un festin", *BAGB* (1988) 232-247.

Segura ramos, Bartolomé, "El tempo narrativo de la *Cena Trimalchionis*", *Emerita* 44 (1976) 143-155.

SLATER, Niall W., *Reading Petronius* (Baltimore – London, The Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1990).

SULLIVAN, J. P. *The* Satyricon *of Petronius. A Literary Study* (London, Faber and Faber Limited, 1968).

TEIXEIRA, Cláudia, "A odisseia romanesca do *Satyricon* de Petrónio: a *Cena Trimalchionis*", *Humanitas* 57 (2005) 137-157.

TEIXEIRA, Cláudia, *Estrutura da viagem na épica de Virgílio e no romance latino*, Lisboa, Fundação para a Ciência e Tecnologia – Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian, 2007.

ZEITLIN, Froma I., "*Romanus Petronius*: a study of the *Troiae halosis* and the *Bellum ciuile*", *Latomus* 30 (1971) 56-82.

Petronius and the Making of Characters: Giton and Eumolpos[*]

Delfim F. Leão
University of Coimbra

The preserved part of the *Satyricon* is essentially comprised of three geographical spaces that serve as the backdrop to the narrative: the labyrinthian half-light of the *Graeca urbs*, the closed universe of Lichas' boat as it floats on the immense sea and, finally, the stripped clarity of Croton. In addition to Encolpius, there are two more important characters who move through these three spaces: Giton (the inconstant boyfriend of the autodiegetic narrator) and old Eumolpos, who enters upon the scene to replace the young Ascyltos in the love triangle that occupies the other two figures, a topic that represents one of the sources of energy that enlivens the diegetic structure of the work.

The following analysis will center primarily on the characters of Giton and Eumolpos, who must be two of the more curious Petronian creations. The adolescent is not only a *puer delicatus*, with his traditional emotional and sentimental lack of gravity,

but he also has certain defects, as well as qualities more generally attributed to women, among which we might highlight, to begin with, beauty, as well as intuition and a diplomatic touch when it comes to delicate situations. As to Eumolpos, here we have a character that takes on a series of contrasting roles throughout the course of the *Satyricon*. The first time we encounter the *senex* with Encolpius, at the pinacotheca, he quickly assumes the function of preceptor and guide, and boasts about a youthful amorous adventure with the *puer* of Pergamon. However, a bit later in declaiming the poem to *Troiae halosis*, the image comes to the surface of the bothersome and wretched bard, whose inspiration gathers no applause from the public other than a barrage of stones. Nevertheless, we must recognize that if Eumolpos does not gain acknowledgement as a poet, he surely does achieve it as a storyteller, as not only the already mentioned autobiographical episode of the *puer* of Pergamon demonstrates, but also, and above all, the account of the conduct of the *matrona* of Ephesus related in Lichas' boat. And the self-proclaimed indigent cultivator of letters will return to surprise us with the ability with which he will exploit the crowd of *heredipetae* who, in Croton, wait for the aged, wealthy and childless, as well as in the sardonic irony with which he imagined a ridiculous will, which spurs on the scene of anthropophagism with which the preserved part of the work ends. Lastly, and in similar fashion, he is a composite – following one of

Petronius's recurring discursive strategies – of important literary and cultural illusions that greatly enrich our possible readings of this curious character.

1. Giton or the Art of Ambiguity

One of the constant worries of Encolpius consists, precisely, in guaranteeing the fidelity and love of Giton and so he has been particularly wounded by the fact that the adolescent has thrown away, with apparent thoughtlessness, an already long-term relationship. The pain of betrayal leads the narrator to abandon the inn where he had been lodged with his companions of the moment and to seek refuge in another boarding house at the seaside, in order to mourn alone the grief of abandonment.

There he evokes, with growing resentment, those responsible for his state of desolation: Ascyltos, a companion of many adventures, whom jealousy has transformed into an enemy; and Giton, above all Giton, to whom Encolpius had dedicated his love, but who, at the last moment – and against what might be predicated from a long relationship – had traded him for Ascyltos. It is for this reason that, doubly offended, Encolpius remembers the *puer* in this way (81.5):

> *Quid ille alter? Qui die togae uirilis stolam sumpsit, qui ne uir esset a matre persuasus est, qui opus muliebre in ergastulo fecit, qui postquam conturbauit et libidinis suae solum uertit, reliquit ueteris amicitiae nomen, et, pro pudor, tamquam mulier secutuleia unius noctis tactu omnia uendidit.*

This outpouring permits us, from the beginning, to clarify one of the aspects of the *Satyricon*, that is, the fact that, in part, it constitutes a parody of the Greek sentimental novel. One of the general characteristics of this type of novelistic writing is based on the fact that the relationship of the *Liebespaar* is of a heterosexual character, despite each of the lovers being able to inspire homoerotic passions in third parties. In the *Satyricon*, the *opus muliebre* is enacted by Giton,[1] something that Encolpius disdainfully points out, in the just cited passage. But the literary parody goes even further. In the Greek novel, before the lovers can be finally unified, they have to confront a variety of dangers, including, among other evils of humanity, thieves, pirates and wars. However, in the web woven by the caprices of *Tyche/Fortuna*, they manage by adapting and through strength of will to remain faithful to each other. Yet, in this very moment, Encolpius ends up being the victim of betrayal by his lover, a gift with which Giton will castigate him repeatedly[2] and that Encolpius will explain away, since the eyes insist in not seeing what the heart won't recognize.

As such, Giton can be analyzed in light of a sensibility which is, in a certain way, "feminine". But the

---

[1] In the ridiculous marriage between Giton and Pannychis (the *uirguncula* that accompanies Quartilla), the young man assumes a masculine role, although the scene has the markings of child's play (*lusus puerilis*), pushed on by the lasciviousness of the priestess of Priapus.

[2] Cf. the ambiguity in the relationship between Giton and Eumolpos (92.3 sqq.) and Tryphaena (113.7-9).

feminine figures who appear in the *Satyricon* are generally lascivious, dominating, perfidious and cruel, such that the young man with his languid and ambiguous gaze stands out rather positively. After all, he has some of the qualities that have, since time immemorial, been attributed to women: he knows how to cook; he demonstrates providence, intuition and diplomacy (necessary, more than on one occasion, to calm the exalted temper of Encolpius); and, above all, he is gifted with a beauty that charms and disarms everyone.[3] Of course, there are still the easily shed tears and the crises of nerves, but these will by analyzed below, in a different context and with a somewhat different characterizing function.

1.1. The literary (de)formation of the *scholastici*

The four characters which we have, until now, referred to (the narrator Encolpius, Giton, Ascyltos and Eumolpos), as well as the director of the school of rhetoric – Agamemnon – and his *antescholanus*, Menelaus, comprise, in the universe of the *Satyricon*, a group apart.[4] They are the representatives of the *scholastici*, and as such contribute toward our ability to create a portrait that depicts the form in which "intellectuals" conducted themselves in a rapidly evolving social universe. There is,

---

[3] E.g. 9.1; 16.1; 79.1-4; 98.7-9; 105.7. Vide also the revealing, although brief, portrait Fisher gives of Giton (1976) esp. 11-13.

[4] This caricatural correspondence between the name of the two Atreidai and that of these teachers of rhetoric constitutes another very evident example of the parody of the Homeric epic. For a critical analysis of the various types of parody in the *Satyricon*, vide Ferreira (2000).

indeed, a latent conflict between them and the stars of the moment: the freedmen. That cold war, created out of a self-interested coexistence, produces its first major verbal confrontation at the *Cena* given by Trimalchio and the only reason it does not overflow into physical violence is because the host, amused and playing the peacemaker, intervenes.[5] The incident, however, would make perfectly clear the fact that the *scholastici* had been invited to dinner simply for offering one more mark of refinement, in order to be exhibited like antiques fallen into disuse.

In truth, the *scholastici* themselves were not unaware of this difficulty in connecting themselves to the real world. As proof of this, we have the argument between Encolpius and Agamemnon at the beginning of the *Satyricon*, over the best educational practices. It is Encolpius, besides, who begins to go on the offensive in an exalted discourse (1.1-2.2), but the reader should not be fooled by the polish of the proffered words, as the orator lacks all conviction. Indeed, the decadence of rhetoric has constituted, for the longest time, a *topos* of the *declamationes*. And the youth that now becomes so ardently incensed against them is in fact producing his own *declamatio*, with which he tries to impress the head of the school and thus win an invitation to the dinner, which is exactly what will happen. Agamemnon,

---

[5] Cf. 57.1 sqq. The argument, motivated by Ascyltos's indecorous guffaws, will create an opposition between this young man and a co-freedman of Trimalchio – Hermeros –, later extending to Giton, who at the time was pretending to be Ascyltos and Encolpius' slave.

for his part, attempts a defense, arguing that the masters of rhetoric see themselves as obliged to proceed in this fashion, in obedience to the necessity of having students. According to him, it was the parents, with their ambition, who are responsible for the wanting preparation of their children.[6] Of course, there is also nothing new in these arguments. What gives them critical value and turns them, possibly, into a vehicle for the ideas of Petronius is the fact that they are seen to be confirmed by the *Weltanschauung* present in the *Satyricon*. The *scholastici*, especially the younger and less experienced ones (Encolpius, Ascyltos and Giton), are the palpable result of the incompetence of this educational system designed to prepare students for life. What is more, the victims of such (dis)information are unable to distinguish between reality and the *exempla* used in their school exercises. Indeed, the discourse itself that they use is unable, most of the time, to exceed the limits of rhetorical *ornatus*, and so are therefore unable to achieve any effect of spontaneity.[7]

This is visible, especially, in the behavior of Giton. In spite of being one of the only characters, along with Encolpius, that is present from the beginning to the end of the novel and constituting a constant reference for the narrator, even so speeches in direct discourse that are attributed to him hardly extend to more than ten. It

---

[6] Cf. 4.1 sqq. For a more detailed analysis of the behavior of the *scholastici*, vide Leão (2004*a*).

[7] George (1966) has already urgently defended a similar perspective.

is for this reason that they are so important in terms of his characterization. As we will see below, the dominant line in his discourse is its stereotyped and *artificial* (i.e. affected and feigned) character, so artificial that it nearly becomes caricatural. It is these aspects that will now be the subject of analysis, taking into account three factors: Giton's style, the context in which it is presented and the personality of the young man (as an example of a faulty education and as an expression of a more "feminine" sensibility).

1.2. Giton: provident Ariadne and prudent Lucretia

A little while after the exchange of ideas with the professor of rhetoric, Encolpius tries to make his way to the inn where we find him staying, along with Ascyltos and Giton. However, the *Graeca urbs* where we find them was unknown terrain and will soon reveal itself to be a true labyrinth.[8] This is when a most fortunate Ariadne comes on the scene (9.5):

> *Quasi per caliginem uidi Gitona in crepidine semitae stantem et in eundem locum me conieci... Cum quaererem numquid nobis in prandium frater parasset, consedit puer super lectum et manantes lacrimas pollice extersit. Perturbatus ego habitu fratris, quid accidisset quaesiui. At ille tarde quidem*

---

[8] The motif of the labyrinth has merited the attention of a variety of studies. There are two which are particularly important, which treat the subject in a clear and systematic fashion: Fedeli (1981*a*); (1981*b*).

> *et inuitus, sed postquam precibus etiam iracundiam miscui, «Tuus» inquit «iste frater seu comes paulo ante in conductum accucurrit coepitque mihi uelle pudorem extorquere. Cum ego proclamarem, gladium strinxit et «Si Lucretia es» inquit «Tarquinium inuenisti».*

The appearance of Giton begins by being providential. Lost, Encolpius (the new Theseus), meets Ariadne, who allows him to escape from the urban labyrinth, as well as from new encounters with the Minotaur.[9] Joined to this bit of "feminine" providence is the detail that he had remained at home to prepare the meal. Other fine points contribute to the coherent and studied nature of the scene: interrogated, the young adolescent sits on the bed[10] and wipes away his tears, one more efficacious recourse well-known to women.[11] Before going forward, the one thing that is needed is to create more expectation in his lover, making him wait (*ille tarde quidem et inuitus, sed postquam precibus etiam iracundiam miscui*). When he speaks, it is with the modesty of an innocent and dedicated wife (*tuus iste frater seu comes; coepitque mihi uelle pudorem extorquere*) whose honesty has been

---

[9] Giton plays an analogous – and also positive – function when they escape Trimalchio's house. They are able to find the inn once again due to the fact of having previously marked the return route with chalk (79.1-5). Cf. as well 72.7-9.

[10] It is not by chance that this is the preferred place for the consummation of his love for Encolpius. Cf. 79.8-9 (and, implicitly, 11.1).

[11] Though doing it with his thumb might indicate a certain superficiality of sentiments.

assailed.[12] Everything is prepared for an ostentatious denouement (*ego proclamarem, gladium strinxit*), which reinforces the alleged attack against Giton's honor and dedication.

On the other hand, this same passage can also be analyzed according to the criteria of the *ars oratoria*. Giton's sobbing and defenseless attitude serves as *exordium* to the discourse, through the expectation that it creates in the public/judge (Encolpius) and through the excitation of *pathos*. The *narratio* that follows is geared toward communicating the state of the cause; though of limited duration, this *narratio* is, initially, a *diegematikon*, due to the quality of expression, since the informer (Giton) relates the actions and the discourse; but it ends more impressively, as it becomes a *mikton*, since Ascyltos's final threat is reproduced in direct discourse. The *argumentatio* is represented through the words themselves of Ascyltos, which constitutes an historical *exemplum simile* taken from the glorious past of Rome (*si Lucretia es, Tarquinium inuenisti*). Giton does not need to present the *conclusio*, as Encolpius goes immediately to the sentence, attacking Ascyltos and insulting him. Encolpius ends up not understanding the strategy that is being used so efficiently against him, since he immerses himself in the same atmosphere of artificial sentimentality.

---

[12] The difference between the terms used by Giton and those used by Ascyltos to describe his adventure with the *pater familiae* is significant (8.4): *coepit rogare stuprum*; *nisi ualentior fuissem, dedissem poenas*. In effect, Giton, even in his discursive options, provides in a certain way the guidelines that orient Ascyltos's response.

1.3 Giton: cruel and unstable lover

At that point, the anti-heroes make their peace, but the seed of discordance has already been sown and the future separation will grow out of it. Indeed, after the banquet at Trimalchio's house, Encolpius hopes to enjoy a calm and delightful night with his lover, but by morning he has discovered that Ascyltos has stolen the target of his passion.[13] The rupture was inevitable and, before it takes place, the fight. It is then that Giton, the eternal cause of all misunderstandings, intervenes dramatically, in terms that are worth recording (80.3-6):

> *Inter hanc miserorum dementiam infelicissimus puer tangebat utriusque genua cum fletu petebatque suppliciter ne Thebanum par humilis taberna spectaret neue sanguine mutuo pollueremus familiaritatis clarissimae sacra. «Quod si utique» proclamabat «facinore opus est, nudo ecce iugulum, conuertite huc manus, imprimite mucrones. Ego mori debeo, qui amicitiae sacramentum deleui.» Inhibuimus ferrum post has preces, et prior Ascyltos «Ego» inquit «finem discordiae imponam. Puer ipse quem uult sequatur, ut sit illi saltem in eligendo fratre salua libertas.» Ego qui uetustissimam consuetudinem putabam in sanguinis pignus transisse, nihil timui, immo condicionem praecipiti festinatione rapui commisique iudici litem. Qui ne deliberauit quidem, ut uideretur cunctatus, uerum statim ab extrema parte uerbi consurrexit et fratrem Ascylton elegit.*

---

[13] Before this, Ascyltos had already found the two lovers *in flagrante*. Cf. 11.1 sqq.

The image of the lover fought over by two devotees is a constant. Apparently, Giton does not want things to go badly for anyone and, for this reason, puts himself in the middle of the fight, with great pomp and with an attitude appropriate to the supplicant (*infelicissimus puer tangebat utriusque genua cum fletu petebatque suppliciter*).[14] His literary imagination is also coming to the surface (*ne Thebanum par humilis taberna spectaret*). Ascyltos and Encolpius are thus elevated to the height of Etheocles and Polynices, who killed each other in a singular struggle. Giton, the object of the dispute, would correspond, in his turn, to the rule of the city of Thebes. But the youth carries the parallel even further, and expands upon it. If someone has to pay it is him; for this reason, he offers his life, with a kind of tragic grandiosity which can only be compared to an Antigone (*quod si utique facinore opus est, nudo ecce iugulum, conuertite huc manus, imprimite mucrones*).[15] Antigone would challenge the edict of Creont by burying the brother who had attacked Thebes and, with this, will sacrifice her life, even though youth, royalty and love still smile upon her. Giton proposes to offer himself as reparation for having caused the

---

[14] The supplicant's attitude goes back to the Homeric poems (e.g. the supplication of Thetys on Olympus, *Iliad*, 1.493-527). In terms of the *figurae sententiae*, Giton is obviously making use of the *obsecratio*.

[15] Note the care taken by Petronius in the construction of Giton's discourse: three similar syntactic constructions, with the verb at the beginning (*nudo, conuertite, imprimite*; in the last two cases in the imperative) and the direct object at the end (*iugulum, manus, mucrones*).

amicitiae sacramentum to fail. In truth, he knows that he runs no risk of having his proposal accepted. And when, finally, he is invited to choose his lover, the memory of his proclaimed *sacramentum* does not even make him hesitate in his choice: thus he completely defrauds the legitimate expectations of his erstwhile companion, exposing the traditional levity in terms of sentiments that characterize the *pueri delicati*.

In spite of the enormous affront, which leads him to break off with his old companions, Encolpius's resentment will be of short duration. When, through a new turn of *Fortuna*, he reencounters his *frater* at the public baths, he rapidly forgets the offence he had suffered.[16] And he accepts – even with a certain demonstration of respect and emotion – the reasons Giton gives him with great contrition as a way of justifying his behavior. (91.8):

> *«Quaeso» inquit «Encolpi, fidem memoriae tuae apello: ego te reliqui an tu me prodidisti? Equidem fateor et prae me fero: cum duos armatos uiderem, ad fortiorem confugi.»*

Although being quite brief, this discourse still appeals to a variety of *figurae sententiae*. He begins via the *licentia*, to indirectly reprehend Encolpius, a recourse employed together with the *interrogatio* (*ego te reliqui an tu*

---

[16] Giton, naturally ignoring the attitude that Encolpius would adopt, begins to express a cautious *confiteor* (91.2), but when he discovers that he continues to be loved, he right away lets the usual arrogance emerge (91.7).

me prodidisti?); then he continues with the *concessio*, admitting that he had opted for the stronger side, but let it be glimpsed that he had done it more because of his worries for the security of Encolpius than out of selfishness (*equidem fateor et prae me fero: cum duos armatos uiderem, ad fortiorem confugi*).

1.4. The *ambiguitas* of behavior and style

If we were to look to the *ars oratoria* for some designation to define Giton, that which would perhaps best suit him would be a kind of *status ambiguitatis*. Such ambiguity is visible in, before anything else, his lack of definition, both in terms of sexuality and love, but also in the other two lines chosen for analysis: his manner of acting and the language he uses, or his style. In the previous section, we have already witnessed an example of this *ambiguitas*: Giton's attitude towards Encolpius is one of remorse, but the reader does not know if this contrition is sincere or not. This difficulty we have in clearly interpreting the behavior of the *puer* recurs in the way in which Giton is characterized and for this reason reflects Petronius's options when constructing this character. Let us look at a few more passages in which the same narrative strategy is resorted to.

With the departure of Ascyltos, the initial amorous triangle is broken. So it becomes necessary for Petronius to find a substitute capable of keeping the motor of the action running. The third element will

logically be Eumolpos. As soon as he sees Giton, the old poet, without yet knowing that this was Encolpius's fugitive lover, shows signs that the youth has awoken his interest. (92.3) *«Laudo» inquit «Ganymedem. Oportet hodie bene sit.»* As his insinuations increase in tone so will Encolpius's animosity, to the point that, finding himself unexpectedly locked in the bedroom, the youth decides to commit suicide. (94.8-15):

> *Inclusus ego suspendio uitam finire constitui. Et iam semicinctio lecti stantis ad parietem spondam uinxeram ceruicesque nodo condebam, cum reseratis foribus intrat Eumolpus cum Gitone meque a fatali iam meta reuocat ad lucem. Giton praecipue ex dolore in rabiem efferatus tollit clamorem, me utraque manu impulsum praecipitat super lectum et «Erras,» inquit «Encolpi, si putas contingere posse ut ante moriaris. Prior coepi: in Ascylti hospitio gladium quaesiui. Ego si te non inuenissem, periturus praecipitia fui. Et ut scias non longe esse quaerentibus mortem, specta inuicem quod me spectare uoluisti.» Haec locutus mercennario Eumolpi nouaculam rapit et semel iterumque ceruice percussa ante pedes collabitur nostros. Exclamo ego attonitus, secutusque labentem eodem ferramento ad mortem uiam quaero. Sed neque Giton ulla erat suspicione uulneris laesus neque ego ullum sentiebam dolorem. Rudis enim nouacula et in hoc retusa, ut pueris discentibus audaciam tonsoris daret, instruxerat thecam. Ideoque nec mercennarius ad raptum ferramentum expauerat nec Eumolpus interpellauerat mimicam mortem.*

Encolpius's resolution to end his life is sincere, and it will be with the same conviction, a little while

later, that he tries to unite himself in death with his lover whom he imagines definitively lost. But Giton does not offer the same guarantees. At first, the argument that he presents for having tried to commit suicide in Ascyltos's house seems promising, but it depends on his word alone, which is subject to the fluctuations discussed above. Second, it is not certain that Giton, by nature so perspicacious, would not know in advance that Eumolpos's servant's knife was blunt and that he ran no risk of really being wounded by stabbing himself with it. On the other hand, we should not forget that here as well the same level of literary parody is at play. After all, the suicide of lovers is a stock feature of tragedy. It is enough to recall an example for which Giton himself has a predilection: Haemon, Antigone's fiancé, killed himself with a sword upon seeing Oedipus's daughter hung.

On the other hand, in Greek tragedy, the actual death of someone is not usually shown on stage; rather we only see the effects of the act of violence. With mime, on the contrary, a genre in which Romans wanted to see the cruel truth, these scenes could be represented live. For this reason, it is perhaps of interest that the narrator considers the episode as *mimica mors*. Hypothetically, we might even suppose that all of this was staged with the connivance of Eumolpos himself (*nec Eumolpus interpellauerat mimicam mortem*).

This suspicion becomes even more consistent if we keep in mind the fact that Giton repeats the scene on Lichas's boat with identical pomp (108.10-11):

> *Tunc fortissimus Giton ad uirilia sua admouit nouaculam infestam, minatus se abscisurum tot miseriarum causam, inhibuitque Tryphaena tam grande facinus non dissimulata missione. Saepius ego cultrum tonsorium super iugulum meum posui, non magis me occisurus, quam Giton quod minabatur facturus. Audacius tamen ille tragoediam implebat, quia sciebat se illam habere nouaculam, qua iam sibi ceruicem praeciderat.*

This farce constitutes a clarifying complement to the passage that was analyzed above. In the same way that Giton, recognizing himself, earlier, as the cause of the separation of Encolpius and Ascyltos, had offered himself as expiatory victim, he now threatens to cut off the source of the present misery at the roots (*fortissimus Giton ad uirilia sua admouit nouaculam infestam, minatus se abscisurum tot miseriarum causam*). The intention to fulfill the resolution is not greater this time than it was the first (*non magis me occisurus, quam Giton quod minabatur facturus*). But, as always, he gets what he wants (*inhibuitque Tryphaena tam grande facinus non dissimulata missione*), since he knows the impressionable personality of his spectators intimately and he is a better actor than his lover (*audacius tamen ille tragoediam implebat, quia sciebat se illam habere nouaculam, qua iam sibi ceruicem praeciderat*).

Apart from Giton's real intentions, what is certain is that the *ambiguitas* in his behavior is consistent, handily adapting to each new situation. So it would be curious to see if this same *ambiguitas* is found to be equally active with respect to the language the youth

employs, and the ending of the episode on Lichas's boat furnishes a curious example for testing this possibility. Indeed, the calm that results from the burlesque scene of civil war acted out on board has allowed Petronius to introduce a new variation in the narrative, creating conditions for the existence of a conciliatory banquet full of salacious jokes, among which the famous account of the false modesty of Ephesus's *matrona* stands out. *Fortuna*, nevertheless, is still armed and unleashes a tempest that ends in shipwrecking the boat. When confronting real and generalized danger, Encolpius and Giton prepare themselves for graveside wedding, the terms of which it would be advantageous to evoke (114.8-11):

> *Applicitus cum clamore fleui et «Hoc» inquam «a diis meruimus, ut nos sola morte coniungerent. Sed non crudelis Fortuna concedit. Ecce iam ratem fluctus euertet, ecce iam amplexus amantium iratum diuidet mare. Igitur, si uere Encolpion dilexisti, da oscula, dum licet, ultimum hoc gaudium fatis properantibus rape.» Haec ut ego dixi, Giton uestem deposuit, meaque tunica contectus exeruit ad osculum caput. Et ne sic cohaerentes malignior fluctus distraheret, utrumque zona circumvenienti praecinxit et «Si nihil aliud, certe diutius» inquit «iuncta nos mors feret, uel si uoluerit mare misericors ad idem litus expellere, aut praeteriens aliquis tralaticia humanitate lapidabit, aut quod ultimum est iratis etiam fluctibus, imprudens harena componet.»*

The danger, this time, is not made up. In spite of this, even Encolpius seems to be using overly *artificial* language to match the affliction and urgency of the

moment.[17] Maybe he does that because he feels himself to be a protagonist of one of those harsh situations, that used to be imagined in the *declamationes* and which the young man himself, as was seen, condemns in the opening of the *Satyricon*. As to Giton, even if sincerity can still be recognized in the vows that he formulates, it is certain that his discourse maintains certain marks of *ambiguitas*: indeed, in the expression *praeteriens aliquis tralaticia humanitate lapidabit*, the term *lapidare* can be interpreted in two different manners: "cover with stones" in the fulfilling of a funeral ritual, or "to stone" as a condemnation for the behavior of the youths. We should recognize that the context at issue and the reference to *tralaticia humanitas* favor the first interpretation; in spite of this, the other meaning still remains a possibility, which, in the end, is the goal of this analysis: to show the latent ambivalence in the way this character behaves and expresses himself.

It is worthwhile bringing in another example. Already in Croton, Encolpius/Polyaenus seems to recall the affront he received when Ascyltos robbed Giton from him. For this reason, he attempts to clarify a doubt that still survives within him (133.1-2):

> *Hac declamatione finita, Gitona uoco et «Narra mihi,» inquam «frater, sed tua fide: ea nocte, qua te mihi Ascyltos subduxit, usque in iniuriam uigilauit an contentus fuit uidua*

---

[17] Indeed, there are many passages in which Encolpius's clear literary (de)formation is equally noted, but for the moment it is not his personality that we are concerned with analyzing.

pudicaque nocte?» Tetigit puer oculos suos conceptissimisque iurauit uerbis sibi ab Ascylto nullam uim factam.

This time, Giton's response is furnished in indirect discourse, through Encolpius's point of view, so that the information we get loses some objectivity. Even so, the stylized ambivalence continues to be present (*sibi ab Ascylto nullam uim factam*). The meaning of this passage can be interpreted in two completely distinct forms: Ascyltos caused him no insult, because he contented himself with a *uidua pudicaque nocte*; or else because Giton, similar to the *puer* of Pergamon, accepted everything of his own free will.

To summarize: throughout the first part of this study, the attempt has been made to elucidate two distinctive, yet complementary, aspects of the same character. As a member of the group of the *scholastici*, Giton exhibits that literary (de)formation that Encolpius has begun by criticizing in the opening of the novel. As a consequence, his language loses spontaneity and a propensity for theatrical behavior and falsity impose themselves. Secondly (and, in a certain way, as a continuation of the previous aspect), the *ambiguitas* of the character has also been explored. It is visible, first of all, in Giton's ambivalent sexuality, who willingly prepares himself for playing the *opus muliebre*; then, in his impassioned behavior, in which dependency favors hypocrisy, putting the sentiments he proclaims more or less consistently in doubt; finally, we

even find these marks of ambivalence and alterity in his style.

Through the confluence of this multiplicity of factors, Petronius gives us an elucidating example of the careful and studied way he works his literary creations at distinctive levels of characterization.

2. Eumolpos or the Art of Survival

One of the aspects that finds reasonable consensus among Petronian critics is the recognition of an ironic, even critical description of the decadence of Imperial Rome in the *Satyricon*. Symptoms of this crisis of values can be found in the arts, in the behavior of teachers and students, as well as in the breakdown of the normal bulwarks of the *mos maiorum*, of which the ancients, the aristocracy and the priestly class represented prominently.[18] The inoperativeness of the classical ethical models led man to feeling frequently lost in a world of labyrinthine disturbances, of calculating connections of self-interest, which corresponded, on the worldly level, to the sense of impotency and, and on a divine level, to a recognition of the ominous and unstable actions of *Fortuna*.

It is not unusual to say that, in periods marked by skepticism and by the lack of belief in traditional values and religiosity, society seeks the moral support of rituals with greater energy, which, because of their

---

[18] On the crisis of traditional paradigms in the *Satyricon* and the sensation of insecurity that resulted, vide Leão (2004*b*).

mystical nature, create more stable links between initiates and entice with the promise of a happy life in the beyond. Scholars have recognized the existence in the *Satyricon* of one of these currents in the cult dedicated to Priapus, who, indeed, represents one of the driving forces of the action, in his persecution of the *scholastici*, especially Encolpius, who finds himself momentarily deprived of his virility.[19] Priapus' irritation corresponds, on the other hand, to the *Leitmotiv* of divine anger, present since Homer, and constitutes, as such, one more of the frequent parodic elements that Petronius inserts into the novel.

Certain apotropaic practices are situated in the same sphere, which tend as well to impact the figure of the protagonist. In truth, Lichas, irritated with Encolpius, insults the young man by calling him a *pharmace* (107.15). This word can indicate the person, generally a beggar or a vagabond, who is chosen, due to the repulsion that he used to provoke in other members of the community, to be used in a cathartic ritual.[20] The fact of someone being chosen to carry out such a mission obviously did not constitute a motive for pride, such that the information, which Lichas makes the most of, and which goes back to the part of the

---

[19] Among the various studies that ponder the question, vide e.g. Rankin (1969); Cosci (1980); Richardson (1980). On the restitution of Encolpius' virility by Mercurius and the relation with the ithyphallic god, vide Conte (1997). On the figure of Priapus in Greek and Latin literature, vide as well the study by Neto (2006).

[20] On the ancient sources and other variations of the use of *pharmakos*, see Burkert (1985) 82-84.

Satyricon which is lost, has the advantage, above all, of helping to reconstruct the "record" of the adolescent in question.[21] In Croton, as well, Encolpius/Polyaenus is once again involved in ceremonies of purification, this time aimed at pleasing Priapus, who had robbed him of his sexual potency.[22]

In any case, our objective is not to argue over these details, which have already been repeatedly dealt with by a variety of philologists. In mentioning them, we are merely interested in recording the fact that the cult of initiation is present in an explicit form in the *Satyricon*, at first sight functioning merely in a ludic and parodic fashion. In this, the second part of our study of the process of character construction in Petronius will center the analysis on the figure of Eumolpos, whose relationship with the main currents of the Greek mystery religions has not yet – at least as far as we know – been considered by Petronian criticism.[23] Such an omission could perhaps be explained by the fact that, in the case of the old poet, there seems not to exist the same type of references already evoked summarily in the case of Encolpius. In reality, the situation ends up being quite distinct. There is a variety

---

[21] The work holds other indications in relation to this problem (e.g. 9.8-10). Possible reconstitution of these events of the past in Bagnani (1956); Pack (1960).

[22] Cf. 131.4-7; 134.3-4.

[23] Except for the references to the Orphic-Pythagorian tradition of Croton, which has attracted a certain attention from scholars. However, even in the case of Orphism and Pythagorism, the established relation is connected directly to this city of Magna Graecia where the last part preserved of the *Satyricon* is played out, and not to Eumolpos in particular.

of indicia that suggest this reading (beginning with the name of the character), but which have remained disregarded in the midst of the voluminous flow of literary and cultural allusions that pass through the *Satyricon*.

2.1. The incontinent poet

One of Eumolpos' characteristics, from the first time that he appears in the story, emphasizes the *topos* of the incontinent poet, for this bad habit leads him to declaim verses in the pinacotheca and in the baths, attracting the anger of everyone present. It is this very same poetic enthusiasm that seizes him at that moment when a tempest assaults the group of *scholastici* and causes a shipwreck (already referred to in relation to Giton), whose first victim will be Lichas himself. In clear contrast with the other crewmen, who either attempt to save their lives, or face up to imminent death, Eumolpos takes advantage of the moment to dedicate himself to artistic production (115.1-2):

> *Audimus murmur insolitum et sub diaeta magistri quasi cupientis exire beluae gemitum. Persecuti igitur sonum inuenimus Eumolpum sedentem membranaeque ingenti uersus ingerentem.*

In a first reading, it would perhaps be legitimate to think that Eumolpus' state of alienation gets close to the *furor* characteristic of poetic inspiration. So, the *belua* anxious to be liberated would be the composition itself, which he sets down in lines, verse after verse, on the parchment. We would, however, have to add another

hypothesis to this one, one that consists in seeing this same *belua*, in addition to a case of poetic fertility, as the emergence of a new personality. Indeed, a bit further on, after the corpse of Lichas is washed up on the coast, motivating in Encolpius bitter reflections over the human condition, there is another indication that seems to reinforce this conjecture (115.20):

> *Et Licham quidem rogus inimicis collatus manibus adolebat. Eumolpus autem dum epigramma mortuo facit, oculos ad arcessendos sensus longius mittit.*

Casting one's glance off into the distant countryside is a normal gesture for the artist looking for inspiration. In this sense, the attitude continues to be well suited to Eumolpos's poetic side. However, the act of scrutinizing the line of the horizon also represents a customary prop for one whom, consciously or not, betrays apprehension before an uncertain destiny, or interrogates himself over the next step to be taken. Perhaps these impressions would be totally unfounded if the survivors of the shipwreck did not leave, immediately, for Croton, a city whose past is of a certain importance and where the wandering group of *scholastici* will undergo a curious evolution. On the other hand, the fact that this change is motivated by a grave threat at sea, that, nevertheless, spared Eumolpos and his companions, could also have noteworthy implications. It is these aspects which we will explore below.

2.2. The officiator of mystery cults

Just as happens with so many other characters in the *Satyricon*, the name of the old poet was not arbitrarily given: firstly, it can be interpreted as the "good singer". Indeed, the old man does not squander this *nomen omen*, as his frequent recitations and the Milesian fables that he narrates with notable fluency illustrate.[24] Nevertheless, it seems to have gone overlooked by Petronian scholars that Eumolpos was also the name of the first celebrator of the mysteries of Eleusis, the same figure precisely to whom Demeter herself revealed the secrets of the cult. In addition to this, according to the tradition, he would even be the son of Poseidon.[25] As such, it is perhaps not strange that Eumolpos did not fear for his life during the shipwreck (after all, he was in the dominion of the father of his homonymic ancestor) and the hypothesis must be considered that this episode has awoken in him the fervor of the initiate, as has been suggested above. It should be noted, still, that one of the attractions of the cult of Demeter – and the mystery religions in general – is in the promise of happiness and consolation, in this life and in *post mortem* existence.[26] As such, the evocation, in the present context, of this type of religiosity would also be an appropriate

---

[24] In fact, the Milesian fables draw a much more favorable reaction than the poetic declamations. On this question, the observations of Medeiros (1993) are very elucidative.

[25] Vide Mylonas (1961) 14 and 19. For practical reasons, divinities are referred to using the Greek designation, although the cult of mystery religions extended throughout the Roman epoch.

[26] Cf. Burkert (1985) 285.

response to Encolpius' bitter reflections about human fragility (115.7-19).

The end of the brief funeral ceremony in honor of Lichas serves as a transition to a different episode and atmosphere. It will be useful to evoke the terms in which the change is described (116.1-2; 116.9):

> *Hoc peracto libenter officio destinatum carpimus iter ac momento temporis in montem sudantes conscendimus, ex quo haud procul impositum arce sublimi oppidum cernimus. Nec quod esset sciebamus errantes, donec a uilico quodam Crotona esse cognouimus, urbem antiquissimam et aliquando Italiae primam. [....] «Adibitis» — inquit — «oppidum tamquam in pestilentia campos, in quibus nihil aliud est nisi cadauera quae lacerantur aut corui qui lacerant.»*

The occurrence of a lacuna immediately before this extract prevents us from securely evaluating the weight of the expression *destinatum iter*. It could just as well have an innocuous value, in the sense of indicating the direction that the survivors have agreed to follow, as it could have a more transcendent meaning, by referring to the direction they should take at that moment in their lives. However we interpret this, it will be the fruit of speculation, so that it would seem preferable to abandon this path and attend to other more secure elements of interpretation.[27] Among these we would place the difficulty of achieving some desired objective (*in montem sudantes conscendimus*)

---

[27] Even so, cf. 115.7.

and the momentary disorientation in which the journey has left them (*nec quod esset sciebamus errantes*). Both the obstacles placed in the way of progress as well as the preliminary errancy are consistent with the image of the phases that the aspirant to *mystes* must overcome to complete any kind of initiation.[28] In these conditions, the recreated atmosphere continues to be that of the mystery religions. Indeed, the cult of Demeter and Persephone celebrated in Eleusis included, each year, the realization of the Great Mysteries, which integrated a ceremonial procession (*pompe*) in which the sacred objects of the cult (*hiera*), previously taken to Athens, came back to Eleusis.[29] It thus becomes pertinent the hypothesis that the journey of the anti-heroes, with the goods rescued from the shipwreck, constitutes a parody, not only of the ritual of initiation itself but also of one of the important moments in those festivities.

On the other hand, the agrarian nature of this cult is well known. Its etiological origin must be connected to the fertility of the fields. Yet the city where Eumolpos and his companions are heading is very much the image of sterility and death (*oppidum tamquam in pestilentia campos*), the same which struck the earth when Demeter shut herself inside the temple, before teaching the kings of Eleusis about agriculture and the mysteries. For this reason, the presence of Eumolpos, parody

---

[28] Examples in BURKERT (1985) 260-264.
[29] Details in MYLONAS (1961) 243 sqq. This question will again be taken up below.

of the legendary hierophant of this cult, is really neces-
sary in Croton.[30]

Finally, and also of interest to the present analysis,
is the unusual fact of Petronius identifying by name the
urban context in which the last part of the *Satyricon*
unfolds. In reality, Croton was, in the past, a flourishing
center, characterized by a strong Orphic-Pythagorean
tradition and where, indeed, Pythagoras himself carried
out a greater part of his activity. Therefore, and once
again through a clear indication, the reader finds
himself back in the world of the mystery religions, of
which Orphism and Pythagoreanism, as well as the cult
of Eleusis, are the most important examples.[31] And in
the same way that the name Eumolpos links him to
Demeter, also the fact that he presents himself as a poet
and a singer gives him a certain proximity to Orpheus,
in addition to which his profile as a philosopher likewise
favors an affinity with Pythagoras.[32]

---

[30] It is certain that the inhabitants of the city were not interested
in altering the situation in which they lived, but this detail belongs
in the context of the mechanism of inversion that will be spoken
about below.

[31] Although the rigidity of precepts observed by Pythagoreans
makes this sect somewhat close to religious legalism. Petronian
scholarship has identified the Orphic-Pythagorean traces in the
Croton episode, but tends to focus only on the corruption of the
ideas of these sects in the mechanism of inversion operative in Cro-
ton. Interesting, at this level, the article by FEDELI (1987); some
of his positions were picked up and expanded upon by NARDOMA-
RINO (1990).

[32] It should not be forgotten that, in Pergamon, the wife of Eu-
molpos' host considered him *unum ex philosophis* (cf. 85.2).

2.3. The comic actor and hypostasis of Dionysus

The information of the *uilicus*, about the unusual atmosphere that existed in Croton, did not affect the determination of the travelers, but rather ended up causing the contrary. In effect, Eumolpos sees in the curse of the *heredipetae* an ideal opportunity to take advantage of the situation. In order to put the plan into action, the connivance of his companions is necessary, who promptly agree to become the old poet's slaves and, thus, contribute to the fiction engendered. In the construction of the ruse, no detail is overlooked (117.4-6):

> «Quid ergo» — inquit Eumolpus — «cessamus mimum componere? Facite ergo me dominum, si negotiatio placet.» Nemo ausus est artem damnare nihil auferentem. Itaque ut duraret inter omnes tutum mendacium, in uerba Eumolpi sacramentum iurauimus: uri, uinciri, uerberari ferroque necari, et quicquid aliud Eumolpus iussisset. Tamquam legitimi gladiatores domino corpora animasque religiosissime addicimus. Post peractum sacramentum seruiliter ficti dominum consalutamus, elatumque ab Eumolpo filium pariter condiscimus, iuuenem ingentis eloquentiae et spei, ideoque de ciuitate sua miserrimum senem exisse, ne aut clientes sodalesque filii sui aut sepulcrum quotidie causam lacrimarum cerneret.

One of the aspects that has justifiably merited the attention of Petronius' critics has to do with the theatricality of many of the *Satyricon's* episodes.[33] The passage

---

[33] Among the various works that explore the problem, consider especially the study by Panayotakis (1995).

transcribed here illustrates one of these examples, as is emphasized, indeed, by the words of Eumolpos (*quid ergo ... cessamus mimum componere?*). Yet the histrionic side of the novel allows us to also take into consideration the third great current of the Greek Mystery Religions: the Dionysian cult. Curiously, this aspect has also not captivated the attention of scholars, although the connection between Dionysus and the drama is well known and generally accepted.[34] In this scene, Eumolpos assumes a role that raises him, in a certain fashion, to the heights of a parodic Dionysus: in addition to being the best candidate for the main character, he is also the author of the plot and the *dux gregis*. He therefore intervenes on all fronts and controls all of the moments of the performance. Besides, he is careful to join his companions through an oath (*in uerba Eumolpi sacramentum iurauimus*), that parodies the ceremony conducted by the gladiators (*tamquam legitimi gladiatores*), and shares as well an important aspect with the mystery religions: secrecy.[35] What is more, the vocabulary chosen suggests an ambience of sacredness (*religiosissime*). Finally, we should note that Petronius does not let us lose sight of the concomitance with other religious cults to

---

[34] For an example of this, vide the systematization done by LESKY (1972), 40-42, that aligns, among other factors, the place of representations, the occasion on which they were made, the footwear and the costumes of the actors of tragedy, as well as the Dionysian ecstasy, and its proximity to the cathartic effect induced by the theatre.

[35] Responsible, as a matter of fact, for the greater part of existent doubts in relation to these religious manifestations.

which we have already referred. It is in this way that the biography invented by Eumolpos is to be understood. It is certain that it was conceived in the sense of meeting the expectations of the *heredipetae*, but, in a certain fashion, it also evokes the saga of Demeter. According to the myth, as soon as Persephone had been carried off by Hades, her mother went looking for her, wandering for various days, until she finally arrived at Eleusis, where she remained inconsolable and hidden, until the infertility of the fields led Zeus to intervene. Eumolpos, the parodic priest of the goddess, is also found to be in false voluntary exile, motivated by the disappearance (definitive, in this case) of an imaginary son.

In any case, Eumolpos's reading according to a Dionysian key seems to be strengthened right after, when the survivors of the shipwreck, the details of the *mendacium* in order, decide to overcome the distance that separates them from Croton. It is at this moment that the performance really begins, since until then they have been working behind the scenes (117.11-13):

> *Sed neque Giton sub insolito fasce durabat, et mercennarius Corax, detractator ministerii, posita frequentius sarcina male dicebat properantibus affirmabatque se aut proiecturum sarcinas aut cum onere fugiturum. «Quid uos?» — inquit — «Iumentum me putatis esse aut lapidariam nauem? Hominis operas locaui, non caballi. Nec minus liber sum quam uos, etiam si pauperem pater me reliquit.» Nec contentus maledictis tollebat subinde altius pedem et strepitu obsceno simul atque odore uiam implebat. Ridebat contumaciam Giton et singulos crepitus eius pari clamore prosequebatur.*

As it can be verified, in this passage of the *Satyricon* we find certain ingredients characteristic of the comedy. First, there is the indispensable presence of the old man and his slaves – here, as well, bowed under the weight of the baggage. In Giton's case, we can guess at his difficulty in tolerating the load (*neque Giton sub insolito fasce durabat*), but it is above all in Corax's threats that comedy is expressed in ringing tones (*detractator ministerii, posita frequentius sarcina male dicebat properantibus affirmabatque se aut proiecturum sarcinas aut cum onere fugiturum*; *iumentum me putatis esse aut lapidariam nauem? Hominis operas locaui, non caballi*). In adherence to the usual model, Corax takes revenge against the work (*strepitu obsceno simul atque odore uiam implebat*), an attitude that is imitated by Giton, which illustrates, as well, the expected reaction of the public (*ridebat contumaciam Giton et singulos crepitus eius pari clamore prosequebatur*). Perhaps it would be pertinent to recall that, at the beginning of the *Frogs*, where Aristophanes summons the presence of the god, himself, of theatre, the comediograph has recourse to this same kind of impish behavior. It is a low comic expedient designed to draw out the easy laugh, but which Aristophanes knew how to use intelligently, by placing it in the mouth of Dionysus, as one who laments a condemnable practice, which is at the same time recognizably efficacious.[36]

---

[36] Panayotakis (1995), 159-169, also recognizes the influence of Aristophanes.

On the other hand, to add to these theatrical reminiscences there is in this passage, as well, indications that allude once again to the currents of the mystery religions. In the first place, if we accept the hypothesis that certain traces of Dionysus exist in Eumolpos, then it would seem reasonable to see in the retinue that heads to Croton echoes of the *thiasos*, the mythical procession during which the god would surround himself with satyrs and maenads, and wander towards the mountains.[37] On the other hand, in the major festivities connected to the cult of Demeter, the culminating day corresponded, as mentioned above, to the solemn procession (*pompe*), that marked the return of the *hiera* to Eleusis. We have already suggested the hypothesis above that the journey of Eumolpos and his companions towards Croton could equally constitute a parody of this ceremony, which is also designated as *Iakchos*. This term designated a divine personality associated with the agrarian cult, but who did not take part in it, since he represented the personification of foppery and of the enthusiasm characteristic of the *pompe*. However, with time, Iakchos merged with Dionysus, albeit the latter divinity was not truly object of adoration in the mystery religions of Eleusis.[38] Lastly, when crossing a certain bridge, still during

---

[37] In the *Satyricon*, the feminine element would be marked by the ambiguous Giton; Encolpius could occupy the post of the satyr, due to the multiple amorous adventures in which he tends to get involved, even though, in Croton, he ends up being afflicted with impotence.

[38] Cf. Mylonas (1961) 238; 252 sqq. This equivocation strengthens the interpenetration of the specific dominions of these gods, at least in the common mind. In any case, Dionysus *Zagreus*, also called "the first Dionysus," was considered to be the son of Zeus

the procession, there was an exchange of jokes and even obscene sayings (*gephyrismoi*), certainly with an apotropaic objective. It happens to be the same farcical licentiousness that is represented in the passage just analyzed.[39]

2.4. The necrophagic will and the theme of the *captatores captati*

Not withstanding the concurrence of the various indications that have been commented upon thus far, the most significant passage for our understanding of the relation between Eumolpos and the mystery cults occurs when the anti-heroes are already in Croton. The importance that the *faux riche* Eumolpos will assume in the city remains coherent with the prestige that the hierophant of the cult possessed, whose name headed, in Athens, the list of the *aeisitoi*, that is, those personalities who were supported at public expense in the Prytaneion. At this point in the *Satyricon*, the old man is also living at the expense of the *heredipetae*, who cover him with benefits, in the hope that they may get a better award.[40] This expectation, which will fail (as the reader

---

and Persephone, thus establishing the connection with the chthonic deities adored in Eleusis. Cf. WEST (1983) 152-154. This legend belongs to the theogony of the Orphic mysteries, which will be taken up again below.

[39] When the offerings that took part in the *pompe* were excessively heavy, beasts of burden were used, especially the donkey. In the *Frogs* (v. 159), the slave Xanthias had already complained of seeming like the donkey of the mysteries. It's curious to note that Corax, in the *Satyricon*, laments for the same reason (*iumentum me putatis esse aut lapidariam nauem? Hominis operas locaui, non caballi.*).

[40] E.g. 124.4-125.1.

knows from the beginning), represents one more excellent example of Petronius' sardonic irony.

It is with reason that scholars have identified in the final scene of the conserved part of the work the recourse to the well-known theme of the *captatores captati*. To speculate over how the *Satyricon* might have ended is an option that is open to serious doubts and uncertainties. Even so, the image with which the novel closes, now permeated with tragic pessimism, allows us perhaps to identify as well a ray of hope. For this reason it is important to recall the moment in which Eumolpos reveals the final provisions of his will (141.2):

> *Omnes qui in testamento meo legata habent, praeter libertos meos, hac condicione percipient quae dedi, si corpus meum in partes conciderint et astante populo comederint.*

The anthropophagous perspective is integrated in the already referred to mechanism of inversion operative in Croton, the old bulwark of Orphism. One of the practices connected to this sect consisted in the observation of vegetarianism.[41] In this case, if the consumption of food of animal origin were already an infraction, the act of cannibalism would be an even greater one, especially since it presupposed the spilling of blood, also forbidden to the initiates.[42] As a consequence, the recreated atmosphere becomes part of the portrait of a certain decadence with which the *Satyricon* portrays

---

[41] Cf. Euripides, *Hippolytus*, 952 sqq.
[42] Cf. Aristophanes, *Frogs* (v. 1032).

the ambiance of imperial Rome. However, once more, the connection of the episode with mystery cults seems to have gone unnoticed by scholars of Petronius, a fact which is even more surprising especially as it is certain that some critics have already documented the relationship with Orphism.[43] Yet according to the theogony attributed to this sect, Dionysus *Zagreus* would be the son of Zeus and Persephone. Some time after his birth, Zeus would have installed the boy on his throne, informing the other gods that he would now become the new king. It is at this juncture that the Titans draw him into a trap and end up killing him. The body of the little god is cut into seven pieces, which the giants boil, roast and, finally, eat. Furious, Zeus strikes the Titans with his lighting bolt and out of the resulting soot humanity is created. Finally, out of the still palpitating heart of the child, which has been guarded over by Athena, a new Dionysus is modeled.[44] So, the death of the god did not end in destruction, since he himself is reborn, not to mention the fact that out of the ashes of his executors humanity arises. For this reason, death and consequently rebirth is a frequent motif in the rites of initiation, which presuppose that the neophyte must abandon his previous existence to be able to enjoy the privileges of the true *mystes*. In other words, these details and the fact that Croton had been a flourishing center of Orphism,

---

[43] It is worth pondering the observations of Cameron (1970), esp. 413; Fedeli (1987) 20-21; Nardomarino (1990) 57.

[44] Vide the suggestive analysis of the myth by West (1983) 140-175.

would seem to support our seeing in the end of the *Satyricon* the parodic celebration of the ritual sacrifice of Dionysus *Zagreus*. Indeed, the public nature of the act (*astante populo*) seems to reinforce this hypothesis.[45]

In his will, Eumolpos omits the form in which his carcass must be consumed. However, in the discussion that follows the reading of the conditions to be fulfilled, the condiments with which meats are seasoned are referred to (141.8), such that we should not eliminate the hypothesis that the body of the old man could be cooked, a detail that has some importance in the Orphic version of the myth.

On the other hand, it so happens that the Dionysian cult has certain elements that have a certain affinity with the *Satyricon*'s final scene. In fact, it was characteristic of the ritual of the bacchants that, at the peak of their delirium, a wild animal should be caught by them, which they then would tear to pieces with their bare hands (*sparagmos*) and finally eat raw (*omophagia*). With these final phases complete, the celebrants were capable of acquiring momentarily the Dionysian vitality. What is more, there are some indications that, initially, the victim has perhaps been human, the possibility of which the myth of Pentheus could be reminiscent.[46] In general terms, therefore, it would not be utterly unmerited to interpret the closing of the *Satyricon* in light of this ritual: the *heredipetae* were at the point of fulfilling the last

---

[45] We should also note that, in the myth, Orpheus himself was torn to pieces by the furious Thracian women.

[46] Vide Burkert (1985) 161-167; 290-295.

phases of the Dionysian ritual, with the goal of reaching ecstasy, which in this case would be the supposed wealth of the old man, Eumolpos (hypostasis of the theatrical divinity).

Until now, the similarities that we have proposed between Eumolpos and the three great Greek initiation cults (the Eleusinian mysteries, the Dionysian cult and Orphism/Pythagoreanism) have always been seen from the perspective of parody. This reading is legitimate, as parody, satire and caricature itself are amply used by Petronius throughout the whole of the novel. However, it is unknown how the work finishes and that contingency should dissuade us from overly bold speculations upon the final significance of the work. In spite of this, perhaps there would be some advantage in postulating a more serious reading of the final scene of the *Satyricon*. Maybe the evocation of the sacrifice of Dionysus *Zagreus* (which caused, in accordance with the myth, the creation of humanity) aims to suggest a "rebirth" of the novel's characters, once the old life of schemes and wandering is abandoned. Maybe the symbolic freeing of Eumolpos's companions might signify a passing of the baton to the new generations, once the period of apprenticeship and initiation have concluded. In this sense, would gain consistency the hypothesis that, along with the ironic portrait of a decadent society, the *Satyricon* also transmits certain hints of hope and regeneration.

Apart from the real pertinence of this interpretation, what is certain is that the analysis of the figure of Eumolpos (as earlier that of Giton) provides us with a clarifying example of the care taken by Petronius in the construction of the main characters of the *Satyricon* and of the different levels of reading that he intentionally created, through the confluence in a single character of multiple lines deriving from literary and cultural tradition. This is as well one of the most important aspects, that guarantee the interest and the lasting quality of such a unique work as the *Satyricon*. That is why it cannot also be overlooked.

Bibliography

Bagnani, Gilbert (1956): "Encolpius *gladiator obscenus*", *CPh* 51, 24-27.

Burkert, Walter (1985): *Greek Religion* (Cambridge, Harvard University Press).

Cameron, Averil M. (1970): "Myth and meaning in Petronius: some modern comparisons", *Latomus* 29, 397-425.

Conte, Gian Biagio (1997): *The Hidden Author. An Interpretation of Petronius'* Satyricon (Berkeley, University of California Press).

Cosci, Paola (1980): "Quartilla e l'iniziazione ai misteri di Priapo (*Satyricon*, 20.4)", *MD* 4, 199-201.

George, Peter (1966): "Style and character in the *Satyricon*", *Arion* 5, 336-358.

Fedeli, Paolo (1981*a*): "Il tema del labirinto nel *Satyricon* di Petronio", *MCSN* 3, 161-174.

—— (1981*b*): "Petronio, il viaggio, il labirinto", *MD* 6, 91-117.

—— (1987): "Petronio: Crotone o il mondo alla rovescia", *Aufidus* 1, 3-34.

Ferreira, Paulo Sérgio Margarido (2000): *Os elementos paródicos no* Satyricon *de Petrónio e o seu significado* (Coimbra, Edições Colibri).

Fisher, Julia (1976): "Métaphore et interdit dans le discours érotique de Pétrone", *CEA* 5, 5-15.

Leão, Delfim F. (1998): *As ironias da* Fortuna. *Sátira e moralidade no* Satyricon *de Petrónio* (Coimbra, Edições Colibri).

—— (1999): "Eumolpo e as correntes místicas gregas", *Humanitas* 51, 85-97 [= F. de Oliveira, P. Fedeli & D. F. Leão (coords.): *Romance antigo – origens de um género literário* (Coimbra e Bari, Instituto de Estudos Clássicos e Dipartimento di Scienze della'Antichità, 2005), 105-118].

—— (2000): "Gíton ou a arte da ambiguidade", in Actas do Congresso *A retórica greco-latina e a sua perenidade*, vol. II (Porto, Fundação Engº António de Almeida), 527-541.

—— (2004*a*): "Parodia a la retórica en el *Satiricón* de Petronio", in J. A. Sánchez Marín & M. N. Muñoz Martín (eds.) *Retórica, poética y géneros literarios* (Granada, Universidad de Granada), 139-149.

—— (2004*b*) "O *Satyricon* de Petrónio e a crise dos paradigmas tradicionais", in Actas do Congresso *Antiguidade Clássica: que fazer com este património?* (Lisboa, Centro de Estudos Clássicos), 223-232.

Lesky, Albin (1972): *Die tragische Dichtung der Hellenen* (Göttingen, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht).

Medeiros, Walter de (1993): "O Bom Cantor e as suas falácias — a história da Matrona de Éfeso", in

Actas do Congresso *As línguas clássicas. Investigação e ensino* (Coimbra), 289-304.

Mylonas, George E. (1961): *Eleusis and the Eleusinian Mysteries* (Princeton, University Press).

Nardomarino, Francesca (1990): "Petronio, *Satyricon* 141. Il testamento e la scelta necrofagica", *Aufidus* 11-12, 25-59.

Neto, João Ângelo Oliva (2006): *Falo no jardim – priapéia grega, priapéia latina* (Campinas, Editora Unicamp e Ateliê Editorial).

Pack, Roger (1960): "The criminal dossier of Encolpius", *CPh* 55, 31-32.

Panayotakis, Costas (1995): *Theatrum Arbitri. Theatrical Elements in the* Satyrica *of Petronius* (Leiden, E. J. Brill).

Rankin, H. D. (1969): "Petronius, Priapus and Priapeum 68", *C&M* 27, 225-242 [= *Petronius the Artist. Essays on the* Satyricon *and its Author* (The Hague, Nijhoff, 1971), 52-67].

Richardson, T. Wade (1980): "The sacred geese of Priapus? (*Satyricon*, 135.4f.)", *MH* 37, 98-103.

Soverini, Paolo (1985): "Il problema delle teorie retoriche e poetiche di Petronio", *ANRW* II.3, 1706--1779.

West, M. L. (1983): *The Orphic Poems* (Oxford, Clarendon Press).