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THE SATYRICON OF PETRONIUS

GENRE, WANDERING AND STYLE

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CONTRIBUTION TO THE DEFINITION OF THE
RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN THE *SATYRICON* OF PETRONIUS
AND MENIPPEAN SATIRE

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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 aevi 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 Varroian satires, in imitation of his; of whom the chief is Petronius Arbitrator, 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 mixed⁶, 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 *sylllepsis* 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 Aurelius 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 Menippean 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 caricatured, 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 English 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 Praxis*, 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 Xeniadēs (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 Ascyrtos, 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, Proselenus 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' sacred ganders and, with two gold coins and a banquet, buys the support of the representatives of god, Proselenus 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 attention 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 (*religiosison 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 Alcibiades 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, Laertius 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 criticizes. 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, Varro may be thinking of a kind of conciliation between these aspects and more specific ones from the Menippean 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 Menippus' 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 *Satyricon* 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, attentive 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 – '*spoudogeloiος*'.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 *peritropon*, 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 *neoterioi* 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 Geminus (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? / Sermone 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 *peritelos*; 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 dixerò 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 *Catonēs* 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 mummery 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 relates what at sometime in the past happened to him. The interfering author is a relatively common practice in Greek 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 consider 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 remaining 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 presumes 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 procedure, because, as Koenraad Kuiper demonstrated, satire 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.

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