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‘*Non humana viscera sed centies sestertium comesse*’ (Petr. Sat. 141,7): Philomela and the Cannibal *Heredipetae* in the Crotonian Section of Petronius’ *Satyricon*

Abstract: The article first highlights the symbolic link between the ‘body’ of Rome in the Petronian *Bellum Civile* and the body of Eumolpus in the Philomela episode of the *Satyricon*. Following this argument, it claims that not only the Philomela myth, but also, more specifically, the Procne and Philomela episode in the sixth book of Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* is a direct intertext for the Crotonian section of the novel.

The Crotonian episode in the *Satyricon* has been fruitfully analyzed with respect to the images of body and food, in the frame of Petronius’ general discourse on eloquence and literature. Croton’s paradoxical society and the cannibalistic feast envisaged on the body of Eumolpus have been contrasted with the Pythagorism of Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*’ last book and connected with the mythological memory of the name *Philomela*.¹

In this paper I shall add some further considerations on two related points. Firstly, I shall highlight a specific link between the ‘body’ of Rome in the Petronian *Bellum Civile* and the body of Eumolpus in the Philomela episode. Then, I shall argue that not only the Philomela myth, but also, more specifically, the Procne and Philomela episode in the sixth book of Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* are direct intertexts for the Crotonian section of the *Satyricon*.²

1 Bodies

The metaphor of the ‘body’ of eloquence and art notoriously plays an important role in the *Satyricon*. In the first extant section of the novel, Encolpius and Agamemnon discuss corrupt rhetoric and schooling, while constantly using such

¹ See especially Conte 1996, 134–139 and Rimell 2002, 77–97 (chapter 5, *Bella intestina*); 140–158 (chapter 9, *Ghost Stories*); 159–175 (chapter 10, *Decomposing Rhythms*).

² I would like to express my sincere gratitude to Sylvia Hakopian, graduate student in Italian at the Department of Romance Studies at Cornell University, for her valuable help during the preparation of this paper.

metaphors as weight, flavor and illness (*Sat.* 1–4) that allude to the *corpus orationis* (*Sat.* 2,3). As a result of the moral decay of society, the ‘body’ of rhetoric is badly fed, ill and swollen.³

In chapter 118, before reciting his *Bellum civile*, Eumolpus lectures us about epic poetry. After alluding to the *body* of the text (*Sat.* 118,5: *corpus orationis*), he claims that epic poetry in general and the topic of the civil war in particular are too heavy a *burden*, under which a number of young and illiterate would-be poets are destined to fall down (*Sat.* 118,6):⁴

ecce belli civilis ingens opus quisquis attigerit nisi plenus litteris, sub onere labetur.

In the proem of the epic poem the metaphor of a body’s physical illness is applied to Rome and its people twice. A first time in vv. 51–55:⁵

*praeterea gemino deprensam gurgite plebem
faenoris illuvies ususque exederat aeris.
nulla est certa domus, nullum sine pignore corpus,
sed veluti tabes tacitis concepta medullis
intra membra furens curis latrantibus errat.*

and a second time in vv. 58–60:⁶

*hoc mersam caeno Romam somnoque iacentem
quae poterant artes sana ratione movere,
ni furor et bellum ferroque excita libido?*

³ *Sat.* 1,1; 1,3–2,1; 2,3 (*corpus orationis enervaretur et caderet*); 2,4; 2,6–8; 4,3 (*iam illa grandis oratio haberet maiestatis suae pondus*); and 5,1 vv. 15–16. See Conte 1996, 134–139 and Rimell 2002, 18–22.

⁴ Rimell 2002, 197 compares Quint. *Inst.* 11,2,27: *proderit per partes ediscere; laborat enim maxime onere*. No need to say that the decadence of poetry is closely linked to the declamation schools, and therefore to corrupt rhetoric. Cf. *Sat.* 118,2: *sic forensibus ministeriis exercitati frequenter ad carminis tranquillitatem tamquam ad portum feliciorum refugerunt, credentes facilius poema extrui posse quam controversiam sententiolis vibrantibus pictam*. The imagery of illness appears in Eumolpus’ poetics as well (*Sat.* 118,3), although in a controversial passage, where our manuscripts read *ceterum neque generosior spiritus sanitatem amat*. The passage has been variously corrected, but the text of almost all testimonies, that I suggest we might accept, reads that a talented soul willing to write epic poetry does *not* love mental health. In other words, an inspired poet must be a little crazy. On Eumolpus’ poetics of enthusiasm, see Labate 1995, 153–175 and in particular 174, with further bibliography.

⁵ In v. 52 I accept *illuvies*, which is the reading of all manuscripts, and tend to interpret it as ‘filthiness’, although the other interpretation of ‘inundation’ could be possible too. Note that *exederat* expresses the idea of a disease that consumes, that is *eats*, the body.

⁶ Cf. the description of Troy asleep in Verg. *Aen.* 2,265: *invadunt urbem somno vinoque sepultam*.

where Rome is pictured as a mortally ill *body* lying down in the mud of its own vices. This passive body needs some external force to *move* it up, but unfortunately this will only happen under the stimulus of *furor*, *bellum* and *libido*, three forces that will lead her to self-destruction through civil war.

In the rest of the poem, the image of a passive body to be borne recurs again and again. In the verses to follow, the corpses of Caesar, Pompey and Crassus become an excessive burden for *tellus*.⁷ Within the ensuing dialogue between Dites and Fortuna, Rome is again depicted as a doomed body, a burden too heavy for the shoulders of Fortuna. The goddess has borne it so far, and now wants to get rid of it.⁸

After the declamation of the *Bellum Civile* and the Circe episode, Eumolpus celebrates his sexual *pygesiaca sacra* with Philomela's daughter. It is a sex scene, but a special one indeed. At the centre of the stage, Eumolpus' body is heavy and passive, a swollen, gouty body, lying down mortally ill.⁹ Of course, the ill and passive body here is not that of Eumolpus the poet, who is quite healthy and very active, but that of Eumolpus in the character of the old millionaire. However, Eumolpus will soon *become* his own character, since he heads towards a (pretended or real) destiny of death in Croton. Due to a bizarre fate, he will end up trapped in his own role.¹⁰

I argue that in this scene of Eumolpus' *mimus*, his body looks suspiciously like the one of the corrupted eloquence in the first chapters of the extant *Satyricon* and – less predictably – like the personification of Rome in the *Bellum Civile*.

As we saw, in his introduction to the *Bellum civile* (*Sat.* 118) Eumolpus had compared epic poetry to a heavy burden which the poets have to bear upon their shoulders. Now, in the main sex scene of the Philomela episode, it is Eumolpus' body that needs to be borne by Corax on his shoulders (*Sat.* 140,7–8):¹¹

7 The earth cannot support them and scatters their sepulchres all over the world (*Bell. civ.* 65–66): *et quasi non posset tellus tot ferre sepulcra, / divisit cineres. hos gloria reddit honores.*

8 *Bell. civ.* 82–83 (Dites to Fortuna): *ecquid Romano sentis te pondere victam, / nec posse ulterius perituram extollere molem?*

9 Rimell 2002, 172 n. 27 sees in Eumolpus' gout (*Sat.* 140,6) an allusion to 'Oedipus' mutilated foot, dredging up similar stories of incest and blindness'.

10 Real death or 'Scheintod'? I would subscribe to Conte's words (Conte 1987, 530): 'Whether at the end of his stay Eumolpus really does die, or merely pretends to die in order thereby to escape the consequences of his deception, is irrelevant for the present discussion. Anyway it is impossible to decide on the basis of our fragments.' See Conte 1987, 530 and n. 2 and Rimell 2002, 167 n. 15, both providing further bibliography.

11 Although *lumbi* refers to the loins, and therefore not necessarily to the back, the general usage of the term, as well as likelihood, make me think that Corax here is doing something resembling 'push-up' exercises.

Sed et podagricum se esse lumborumque solutorum omnibus dixerat ... itaque ut constaret mendacio fides, puellam quidem exoravit ut sederet supra commendatam bonitatem, Coraci autem imperavit ut lectum, in quo ipse iacebat, subiret positisque in pavimento manibus dominum lumbis suis commoveret, ille lente parebat imperio puellaeque artificium pari motu remunerabat.

Other than the resemblance with the burden of epic poetry, what strikes me is that Eumolpus' body seems to mirror the passive body of corrupt Rome. Compare *Bellum Civile*, lines 58–60:

*hoc mersam caeno Romam somnoque iacentem
quae poterant artes sana ratione movere,
ni furor et bellum ferroque excita libido?*

Eumolpus, just like Rome, must be moved by external forces. The textual parallels (*iacentem* ~ *iacebat*; *artes* ~ *artificium*; *movere* ~ *commoveret* ... *motu*) are quite self-evident. Eumolpus is not 'moved' by a *libido* excited by the iron of the sword, like Rome had been, but by a much more common, sexual *libido*. Yet his lust will bring him to a much more real anthropophagy.

As it is clear now, what I am arguing is that in Philomela's episode Eumolpus *embodies*, in a very literal sense, not only the ill, swollen body of eloquence and the heavy body of epic poetry, but also the mortally ill body of corrupt Rome – which represents a new direct link between the Croton episode and the *Bellum Civile*.¹² Therefore, he must finally undergo a deserved self-destruction. In a way, he must be sacrificed.¹³ With this sacrifice, rhetoric, poetry and Rome itself will symbolically die in him.¹⁴

12 The ties that connect the *Bellum Civile* to the rest of the novel have been underlined, among the others, by Zeitlin 1971; Connors 1998, 100–146; Cucchiarelli 1998; Rimell 2002, 77–97.

13 Nardomarino 1990, 37–48 has an interesting discussion on the sacrificial aspects of the cannibal feast that is going to take place on Eumolpus' body.

14 I explored further connections between the corruption of Rome in the *Bellum Civile* and the decadence of eloquence and art in the whole *Satyricon* in a paper, entitled 'Il sonno della ragione nel *Bellum Civile* petroniano (Sat. 119,58–60)', delivered at the conference *Incontri sulla poesia latina di età imperiale III – Itaque conabor opus versibus pandere* (Sat. 89,1). *Tra prosa e poesia: percorsi intertestuali nel Satyricon* (Palermo, 3–4 December 2007).

2 Ovid's Philomela

In fact, there are a number of reasons why Eumolpus had to die *that way*, with an anthropophagic banquet. First, the widespread metaphor of the legacy-hunters as prey animals pointed in that direction;¹⁵ second, there was no funnier way to die in Pythagoras' city;¹⁶ third, as a rhetoric teacher – and therefore a 'fisher of students' – he owed revenge to his pupils.¹⁷ Furthermore, as we just saw, he had to die this way because in the sex scene with Philomela's daughter he fully embodied the ill bodies of eloquence, epic poetry and Rome.

In addition, Victoria Rimell has clearly shown how the mythical memory recalled by the name of the *matrona* Philomela in the Crotonian section orients the narrative and the destruction of Eumolpus' body towards anthropophagy.¹⁸

I would like to carry my analysis a little further. My aim in the second part of this paper is to point out that the Procne and Philomela tale in the sixth book of

15 The Crotonian farmer had defined the city as a field piled with dismembered cadavers, and the *heredipetae* as crows (*Sat.* 116,9: '*adibitis*' inquit '*oppidum tamquam in pestilentia campos, in quibus nihil aliud est nisi cadavera quae lacerantur aut corvi qui lacerant*'). Conte 1996, 137–138 has a discussion on the satiric *topos* of legacy-hunting (for which an important model is Hor. *Sat.* 2,5). Also see Tracy 1980; Fedeli 1988a, 31; Nardomarino 1990, 27–31; Tandoi 1992, 632; Courtney 2001, 178–179 and 212; Rimell 2002, 166–170; Stucchi 2005, 83–85. Conte 1987 makes a very interesting point on the Crotonians' 'hunger for virtue': they are 'avid' disciples of the wise Eumolpus. Conte therefore interprets the expression *devorare spiritum* in *Sat.* 141,4 as a metaphor for this attitude, feigned by the *heredipetae*.

16 Also this aspect has been noted by many scholars, including Paratore 1933, 376; Ciaffi 1955, 126; Conte 1987, 532; Dimundo 1987, 54–57; Fedeli 1987, 20–21; Nardomarino 1990, 52–59; Conte 1996, 139; Courtney 2001, 212; Stucchi 2005, 84 and 94. Rimell 2002, 15–16; 84–88; 152 has acknowledged the role of the Pythagorean fifteenth book of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* as an important intertext for the Crotonian section of the *Satyricon*.

17 Compare *Sat.* 3,2–4 (the students are the fish, the teachers the fishers) with *Sat.* 140,15 (Eumolpus' ruse against the Crotonian legacy-hunters is described in very similar terms). See Rimell 2002, 22–23; 168–169.

18 The scholarship on the names of the characters in the *Satyricon* is rich and very interesting. From among many critics, one could recall Barchiesi 1984 on Lichas and Petronius' 'poetics of the names'; Petrone 1988, 66–69; Fedeli 1988a and 1988b on Polyaeus and Circe; Labate 1986 on Corax 'the delator'; Goldman 2008. On Philomela's name, before the deep analysis by Rimell 2002, 171–175, only shorter comments had been written, mostly related to the fact that she offers Eumolpus her children allowing him to 'eat' them sexually. See Paratore 1933, 433–434; Ciaffi 1955, 124–125; Walsh 1970, 108; Sullivan 1977, 65 n. 55; Labate 1986, 142 and n. 23; Dimundo 1987, 57–58; Fedeli 1988a, 17; Cicu 1992, 163–167, with interesting considerations; Panayotakis 1994, 461–462 and 1995, 183; Landolfi 1996, 168; McGlathery 1998, 5–6; and, more recently, Stucchi 2005, 78.

Ovid's *Metamorphoses* constitutes a relevant intertext for the whole Crotonian section of the *Satyricon*.

A number of elements in the Petronian text recall Ovidian details, often not found in other narratives of the story. Let us explore them in detail.

2.1 Ingesta orbitas

Philomela's main business consists in offering her children to old men without heirs. The verb used by Petronius for this activity is, quite unusually, *ingerere* (*Sat.* 140,1: *filium filiamque ingerebat orbis senibus*). As Labate has noted, *ingerere* is unparalleled in this general meaning of 'offering', while it is commonly used for 'serving' food or beverages.¹⁹ Derivatives of *gero* had been used by Petronius himself to describe the Crotonians throwing their *opes* on Eumolpus (*Sat.* 124,3: *congesserunt*); by Ovid in the *Metamorphoses* for Tereus' banquet (*Ov. Met.* 6,651: *congerit*); and by Seneca for Atreus' meal in a passage intertextually related to Ovid's Tereus episode (*Sen. Thy.* 282: *ingesta orbitas*).²⁰

The same intertextual pattern may be identified in two more details connected with cannibalism in Petronius' text.

2.2 Intus

The Crotonian Philomela leaves her children *in domo Eumolpi* (*Sat.* 140,3). Both Ovid and Seneca had insisted on the tragic irony of a father who has his own children *inside* not because they're at home, but because he just ate them. In the Ovidian text, when Tereus asks for Itys, Procne replies (*Met.* 6,655–656): *'intus habes, quem poscis' ait: circumspicit ille / atque, ubi sit, quaerit*. Tereus does not understand the *double-entendre* implied in *intus*, which normally means 'inside, home', and therefore looks around the room. Seneca extends the effect of Atreus'

¹⁹ See Labate 1986, 142 n. 23, who says that he has developed these considerations together with Alessandro Barchiesi. See Stucchi 2005, 78 and n. 35. McGlathery 1998, 3 has a different explanation for *ingerere* ('to heap or thrust upon'), related to 'the sexual position she (sc. Philomela's daughter) assumes'.

²⁰ *Sat.* 124,3: *qui* (sc. heredipetae) *statim opes suas summo cum certamine in Eumolpum congesserunt*; *Ov. Met.* 6,650–651: *ipse sedens solio Tereus sublimis avito / vescitur inque suam sua viscera congerit alvum*; *Sen. Thy.* 281–283: *tota iam ante oculos meos / imago caedis errat, ingesta orbitas / in ora patris*. The Senecan parallel is suggested by Labate 1986, 142 n. 23.

sadistic wordplay (Sen. *Thy.* 976–982; 997–1004), although he uses a different metaphor: not *intus* but *in amplexu patris* (*Thy.* 976).

2.3 Nausea

When the legacy-hunters will be required to eat Eumolpus' corpse, they will have to deal with the *stomachi recusatio*, the rebellion of their stomach.²¹ In Ovid's narrative of the Philomela story, when Tereus understands that he has devoured his son's flesh, his reaction involves the desire to take out from his body the food he has just eaten.²² An even more conspicuous precedent is the reaction of Thyestes in Seneca's tragedy when he realizes that he has devoured his own children.²³

It is thus arguable that Petronius had two related intertexts in mind: Ovid's narrative in the *Metamorphoses* and Seneca's *Thyestes*, a tragedy whose intertextual relationship with the Tereus section in the sixth book of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* is well known.²⁴

2.4 Sacra

In the *Satyricon* at a certain point Philomela's plan requires that she pretends to go to the temple for some religious practices. Immediately after, Eumolpus organizes the *pygesiaca sacra*, the 'sacred ceremony in honor of the buttocks' with Philo-

21 Cf. Sat. 141,6: *de stomachi tui recusatione non habeo quod timeam*; and 141,8: *neque enim ulla caro per se placet, sed arte quadam corrumpitur et stomacho conciliatur averso*. On the ancient Roman concept of *fastidium*, and on the connections between taboos like incest and cannibalism, see Kaster 2001. Rimell 2002, 167–168 suggests that the nausea that awaits those who will eat Eumolpus' *noxissimum corpus* might symbolize the risk that we run by reading the *Satyricon* itself: 'Who knows (apart from the writer) what we are really eating when we chew over the *Satyricon* narratives?'

22 Ov. *Met.* 6,663–664: *et modo, si posset, reserato pectore diras / egerere inde dapes semesaque viscera gestit*.

23 Cf. Sen. *Thy.* 999–1001: *quis hic tumultus viscera exagitat mea? / quid tremuit intus? sentio impatiens onus / meumque gemitu non meo pectus gemit*; and 1041–1044: *volvuntur intus viscera et clusum nefas / sine exitu luctatur et quaerit fugam: / da, frater, ense (sanguinis multum mei / habet ille): ferro liberis detur via*. See Stucchi 2005 77–78; 86–87 and n. 65.

24 On this relationship, see Mantovanelli 1984, 62–64 and 97–100; Picone 1984, 51–61; Monteleone 1991, 355–360; Marchesi 2000, 185–188; Monella 2006.

mela's daughter.²⁵ In Ovid's text, Procne used the pretext of the *sacra ... trieterica Bacchi* (Ov. *Met.* 6,587) to disguise herself and rescue her sister. She induces Tereus to eat his cannibal feast without witnesses, *pretending* that it is a *sacrum*, a sacred ceremonial meal to be eaten alone (Ov. *Met.* 6,648: *patrii moris sacrum mentita*). I think that this could help to explain Petronius' *pigiciaca* (or *pygesiaca*) *sacra*.

2.5 Boys and Blindness

Immediately after these words, in Petronius' text, we find a note not completely clear in itself (*Sat.* 140,5): *Eumolpus, qui tam frugi erat ut illi etiam ego puer viderer, non distulit puellam invitare ad pygesiaca sacra*. If Eumolpus is going to have sex with a girl, why does Encolpius quote his passion for all sort of (male) *pueri* instead? Mainly to say that he is not particularly fastidious, when it comes to sex. But another reason could also be involved: both Tereus and Eumolpus make evaluation errors when it comes to *pueri*. Eumolpus calculates wrong targets for his pederastic appetites. Tereus' 'error' is much more tragic, for he does not mistake an adult for a *puer*, like Eumolpus, but his own *puer* for a dinner. Still, Eumolpus is making a big error too by 'sexually eating' Philomela's *puella*, because this will lead him to a no less tragic outcome, involving a cannibal banquet – his own.

Although they belong to a degraded world animated by 'low' instincts, the legacy-hunters are oddly described as wretched and blinded tragic heroes (*Sat.* 141,5): *excaecabat pecuniae ingens fama oculos animosque miserorum*.²⁶ Blindness is another aspect of the Crotonian cannibal banquet that sounds very 'tragic' as well as very Ovidian. Ovid had complained about the 'blindness' of the characters

²⁵ *Sat.* 140,4–5: *nec aliter fecit ac dixerat, filiamque speciosissimam cum fratre ephebo in cubiculo reliquit simulavitque se in templum ire ad vota nuncupanda. Eumolpus, qui tam frugi erat ut illi etiam ego puer viderer, non distulit puellam invitare ad pygesiaca sacra*. The text is uncertain here: manuscripts read *pigiciaca*. Müller (Müller and Ehlers 1983) (whose text is my reference for quotations in this article) prints *Aphrodisiaca*, originally proposed by Bücheler. I sympathize with the emendation *pygesiaca* (Ernout 1962), which has the advantage of making the sexually oriented parody more explicit (see Panayotakis 1994, 463, and 1995, 185–186). Baldwin 1977–1978 has a more detailed discussion on the question. The English translation for *pygesiaca* that I am adopting comes from the title of Panayotakis 1994. On the *sacra* of Eumolpus and Philomela's daughter, see Schmeling 1971, 354–356; Gill 1973, 181 n. 29; Panayotakis 1994, 466 n. 47 and 1995, 75.

²⁶ The character that speaks in *Sat.* 141,7 – probably Gorgias – suggests that the would-be cannibals close their eyes in order to be able to carry on the anthropophagy: *operi modo oculos et finge te non humana viscera sed centies sestertium comesse*.

of the Tereus story twice: a first time about Pandion, who is unable to see the malice of Tereus, and a second time about Tereus himself, unaware that he is eating his son's flesh.²⁷

2.6 Birds

A further funny 'Ovidian' detail hides in Eumolpus' room. In the *Metamorphoses*, on top of the nuptial bed of Tereus and Procne a *profanus ... bubo* sits, an ominous owl.²⁸ But if we look well under the bed where Eumolpus' 'strange love' is consumed we shall find a bird, too, and it will bring no good luck to the groom and his friends, as a suspected traitor: it is Corax 'the crow' (*Sat.* 140,7):

Coraci autem imperavit ut lectum, in quo ipse iacebat, subiret.

2.7 Civilisation Clash, Civilisation Collapse

In the myth Philomela, after being raped by Tereus, defeats him through the *ars* of weaving (a metaphor for literature and poetry). Petronius does not miss this occasion to pursue his metaliterary discourse on eloquence and literature through the contrast between the *matrona* Philomela and Eumolpus, appointed in *Sat.* 140 as a teacher of rhetoric and, alas, virtue. Victoria Rimell has explored this aspect thoroughly,²⁹ so I would just like to add some brief considerations about the role

27 Cf. Ov. *Met.* 6,472–473 (on Pandion): *pro superi, quantum mortalia pectora caecae / noctis habent!*; and Ov. *Met.* 6,650–652 (on Tereus): *tantaque nox animi est*. See Rimell 2002, 172 and n. 32. The allusion to the blindness of the human soul, which cannot see its misfortune coming, is particularly appropriate in a myth that had strong tragic connotations due to the very famous Sophoclean tragedy entitled *Tereus* (fr. 582–595b Radt), an important source for Ovid himself: see Monella 2005, 79–125, with further bibliography. I suspect that while the Polyænus-Circe episode can be seen as a parody of the epic *genre*, the Philomela episode is a degraded tragedy. The relationship of Eumolpus' invention with theatrical *genres* is a complex issue, on which see Fedeli 1988a, 9–12; Panayotakis 1994 and 1995, 182–190; Conte 1996, 96; Genoni 1997; Rimell 2002, 175. I tend to agree with McGlathery 1998, 5–6, who acknowledges the 'mythological resonance of the name Philomela' and the literary memory of Sophocles' tragedy *Tereus*, and speaks of a 'paratragic mime'.

28 Ov. *Met.* 6, 431–432: *tectoque profanus / incubuit bubo thalami in culmine sedit*.

29 Rimell 2002, 171–175. The competition between Philomela and Eumolpus on the ground of simulation and vicious eloquence has also been noted by Dimundo 1987, 58; Cicu 1992, 166; Panayotakis 1994, 462 and 1995, 184; Landolfi 1996, 171; McGlathery 1998, 1.

played by the dichotomy between civilisation and *barbaries*, tyranny, bestiality in the myth and, by comparison, in Petronius' episode.

The counter-attack of the Athenian sisters Procne and Philomela against the Thracian Tereus, in the legendary tale, begins with Philomela, who uses the arts connected with her superior Greek culture, including weaving and writing, to deceive the barbaric, though deceptively eloquent, tyrant.³⁰ Then the two sisters together use Tereus' own weapons against him: treachery, hypocrisy, fallacious eloquence, even murder; and overdo him. Procne persuades Tereus to do the thing most contrary to human civilisation: eating his own son's body. The paradox lies here: in order to beat the barbarian offender, the Athenian civilized sisters break the taboo of familial cannibalism, and the final result is the descent of them all below the level of humanity itself, that is to the realm of bestiality, through the final *metamorphosis* into birds.

In Philomela's episode of Petronius' *Satyricon*, Eumolpus is not a barbarian, yet he is a foreigner in a Greek city, as is emphasized by his character's vaguely remote origin, his fantastical African properties³¹ and by the 'rites of passage' that mark the entrance of the protagonists in the city.³² His very name, other than sounding nicely 'musical' ('sweetly singing'),³³ had belonged to a mythical Thracian king who had fought against Athens.³⁴

30 See Rimell 2002, 171–172. Being a woman, Philomela weaves on a texture; being an Athenian literate princess she *writes down* her story in a message for Procne (in Ovid's text, at least); and being a future nightingale, she apparently writes down a *carmen miserabile*, almost an elegiac poem (Ov. *Met.* 6,582): (*sc.* Procne) *fortunaque suae carmen miserabile legit*.

31 Cf. *Sat.* 117,8: *praeterea habere in Africa trecenties sestertium fundis nominibusque depositum; nam familiam quidem tam magnam per agros Numidiae esse sparsam, ut possit vel Carthaginem capere*; 125,3: *'quid' aiebam 'si callidus captator exploratorem in Africam miserit mendaciumque deprehenderit nostrum?'*; 141,1: *ex Africa navis, ut promiseras, cum pecunia tua et familia non venit*. Of course, this does not prove that the old millionaire presented himself as based in Africa, since owning large estates overseas was quite possible for a wealthy Roman. But the mention of Africa might be meant to give both an idea of hyperbolic extension and an aura of exoticism, as in Trimalchio's allusion in *Sat.* 48,3: *nunc coniungere agellis Siciliam volo, ut cum Africam libuerit ire, per meos fines navigem*.

32 See Fedeli 1987, 13–14.

33 On the connection with the Greek root **mel* (song), see Dimundo 1987, 57–58 and McGlathery 1998, 1.

34 See Cicu 1992, 166. According to Apollodorus (3,201–203) an Eumolpus, ancestor of the Eleusinian clan of the Eumolpidae, after trying to rape his sister-in-law in Ethiopia, had sought refuge in Thracia, then in Eleusis, and finally had become king of Thracia. As such, he fought against the Athenian king Erechtheus during the war between Eleusis and Athens. On this mythical *Eumolpus*, see Engelmann 1884; Kern 1907; Rose 1970.

Also, if he is not a tyrant, he certainly exerts a very imperious political supremacy. In fact, shortly after his arrival in Croton he had become a *patronus* not only of political prestige and influence but also of arrogance on such a scale as to remind us of Seneca's words about the *regnum* of rich old men without heirs in greedy Roman society (*Const. Sap.* 6,1: *dives aliquis regnum orbae senectutis exercens*).³⁵ In Petronius' description of Eumolpus' influence we find terms like *gratia*, *beneficium* and *amicus*, bearing a specific political relevance (*Sat.* 125,1):³⁶

dum haec magno tempore Crotone aguntur ... et 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 amiconum laturos.

Ovid's Thracian Tereus, one could object, was a 'real' tyrant with military connotations: he had gathered a *clarum nomen* by helping Athens victoriously in a recent war against the barbarians.³⁷ However, the first thing that our heroes have learned from the *vilicus* about Croton was that, after having been the most important city of Italy, it found itself in a 'post-bellum' phase at the moment.³⁸ After all, also Petronius' Eumolpus started to qualify for a fame of *military* virtue in Croton as soon as he presented himself as a rich man without children. In the Crotonian farmer's words, those who do not have family relationships *ad summos honores perveniunt, id est soli militares, soli fortissimi atque etiam innocentes habentur*.³⁹ In fact, shortly afterwards, during the organisation of Eumolpus' ruse, his fellows pretended to be his slaves, and even took the gladiatorial oath at his hands.⁴⁰

35 The Senecan passage is mentioned in Tracy 1980, 401 n. 15 together with *Mart.* 1,49,34 (*imperia viduarum*) and 2,32,5–6 (*orba est, dives, anus, vidua*).

36 A brief allusion to the pretended clients of the millionaire family in his own city had already appeared in *Sat.* 117,6: *ne aut clientes sodalesque filii sui aut sepulcrum quotidie causam lacrimarum cerneret*. This passage also hints at another conspicuous feature that Eumolpus' fictional character shares with Tereus: he too has lost his only son (see Rimell 2002, 175).

37 *Ov. Met.* 6,421–425.

38 *Sat.* 116,3: *post attritas bellis frequentibus opes*.

39 *Sat.* 116,8.

40 *Sat.* 117,5: *in verba Eumolpi sacramentum iuravimus: uri, vinciri, verberari ferroque necari, et quicquid aliud Eumolpus iussisset*. See Rimell 2002, 140: 'the "invasion" of Croton by the leader Eumolpus and his "army" of "gladiator" slaves, followed by their greedy exploitation of foreign luxuries ... and Encolpius' fear of vengeful Fortuna ... restage the scenes at the beginning of the *Bellum Civile*, where war is precipitated by insatiable imperialistic greed and directed by Fortuna.' Rimell 2002, 88–89 stresses 'the barbaric, war-like hierarchies that structure life in Croton (Eumolpus rules supreme as tyrannical master over his tortured, worthless slaves)', where the slaves are Eumolpus' own gang. I suggest that we should also take into account his rule *de facto* over all Crotonians.

I therefore suggest that Eumolpus may be seen, like Tereus, as a *foreign tyrant* defeated through perverted yet sophisticated rhetoric by a degraded version of Greek civilisation. The names evoked in the Philomela episode recall the highest cultural achievements of Greek (literary) culture. Philomela represents the contrast with barbarism but above all is, as nightingale, a major symbol of the poet in Greece and Rome. Gorgias, the legacy-hunter who is ready to execute Eumolpus' will⁴¹ recalls Gorgias of Leontini, a crucial figure in the history of rhetoric.⁴² Corax himself, the *mercennarius* of Eumolpus' band in Croton,⁴³ shares his name with Corax of Syracuse, another father of rhetoric.⁴⁴

However, both in the myth and in the Petronian narrative the revenge of the Greek Philomela against the powerful and sexually greedy foreigner will lead to the collapse of the boundaries between civilisation and barbarism, humanity and bestiality.⁴⁵ Thus the shadow of the mythical memory, through the mediation of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, has served as one of the main textual strategies of the *Satyricon*: blurring boundaries, questioning civilisation and literature, increasing textual entropy.

41 Cf. *Sat.* 141,5: *Gorgias paratus erat exsequi*.

42 See Ciaffi 1955, 126; Stucchi 2005, 81–82; Conte 1992 and 1996, 134–139; further bibliography is in Conte 1996, 134 n. 44.

43 Cf. *Sat.* 117,11; 140,7; 140,9.

44 Although not as famous as Gorgias, Corax of Syracuse is no less interesting: he 'is said to have been the first teacher of rhetoric. He perhaps taught the division of a speech into προοίμιον, ἄγων, and ἐπίλογος' (Russell 1970a). He is also believed to have been (with Tisias) 'the first to write handbooks (τέχνηαι, *artes*), concentrated on forensic speaking' (Russell 1970b, 920). More detailed information in Aulitzky 1922. The hypothesis of the connection of the Petronian Corax with the forensic rhetorician has been suggested, although dubiously, by Paratore 1933, 380 and Conte 1992, 309 n. 2. Corax's name has received a number of different explanations. I think that a number of different resonances of Corax' name may be active in different phases of the narrative, since they are not contradictory with each other: as *feralis bubo* and as a 'siege engine' (see McGlathery 1998, 7 and Panayotakis 1995, 186 n. 69), he lay under Eumolpus' bed in *Sat.* 141,11; as a mythical crow, and therefore a delator (see the Coronis story; see Labate 1986) he later betrayed Eumolpus and friends; and in the lost parts of Petronius' narrative he could have had lots of occasions to show rhetorical talent (in comic contrast with his 'croaking' name; see Goldman 2008).

45 In Petronius' Croton the confusion between civilisation and its opposite is thorough (see Fedeli 1987, 12 and 1988b, 72). In particular, in *Sat.* 141,3–4 cannibalism is attributed to exotic people, but not in order to mark it as a barbarian custom. It is instead taken as a model, with a sort of cultural relativism (cf. Hdt. 3,99 and the other ancient passages quoted by Rankin 1969, 381–382; Nardomarino 1990, 3; Courtney 2001, 211).

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