

## A SACRED CEREMONY IN HONOUR OF THE BUTTOCKS: PETRONIUS, *SATYRICA* 140.1–11\*

The episode at Croton is the last series of events we possess from the surviving *Satyrিকা*, though not necessarily the last part of the novel in its original form. The action takes place in a town which no longer existed at the suggested time of the novel's composition.<sup>1</sup> The plot is focused, mainly, on two themes: legacy-hunting and Encolpius' impotence. His unsuccessful relationship with the nymphomaniac Circe (126.1–130.8) and his painful experience with the witch-like priestesses Proselenos and Oenothea (131.1–139.5) are manifestations of the latter theme. Philomela's prostitution of her children (140.1–11) is a brief example of the former theme and shows the kind of gifts the Crotonians offered Eumolpus in order to win his favour and a share in his vast legacy (124.4). The purpose of this paper is to demonstrate that the anecdote of the matron Philomela was composed by Petronius as a narrative equivalent of a theatrical farce. The paper is divided in two parts. The first aims to establish the theatrical (mimic) backdrop of the story, in front of which the ensuing action is going to take place. The second shows the theatrical nature of the anecdote itself, i.e. the structure, the characters, the staging, the language and the multiple levels of its description that demonstrate its theatricality.

### I

The introductory monologue (116.4–9) of a farm-bailiff provides his audience (namely, Encolpius, Giton, Eumolpus and Corax, but, also, the auditor or reader of the novel) with the necessary information about the status of legacy-hunting that has been established at Croton.<sup>2</sup> What strikes Eumolpus is not the moral decline of Croton (116.5–6), but the prominence the Crotonians give to wealth and social life (116.7–8); that is the significant detail which will lead him to his theatrical solution of the 'Dives Fugitivus', or the *Fugitive Millionaire-mime*.<sup>3</sup> Despite Encolpius'

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<sup>1</sup> See D. Schmid, *Der Erbschleicher in der Antiken Satire* (diss.) (Tübingen, 1951), pp. 26–7; P. G. Walsh, *The Roman Novel* (Cambridge, 1970), p. 104 and n. 1.

<sup>2</sup> On this strange description of Croton, see Schmid, op. cit. (n. 1), pp. 27–9; P. Fedeli, 'Petronio: Croton e il mondo alla rovescia', *Aufidus* 1 (1987), 8ff. and n. 8. On the shrewd practice of legacy-hunting in Rome, see Hor. *Sat.* 2.5.23ff.; Pers. 6.41–2; Juv. 3.129, 4.19, 12.93ff.; Mart. *Ep.* 4.56; Schmid, op. cit. (n. 1); V. A. Tracy, 'Aut captantur aut captant', *Latomus* 39 (1980), 399–402. P. Fedeli, 'Encolpio – Polieno', *MD* 20–21 (1988), 12, notes that the farm-bailiff functions in the narrative not only as a person who provides pieces of information but also as the 'Prologue' in the farce that Eumolpus and his troupe are going to perform at Croton.

<sup>3</sup> For a discussion of this mime in relation to the Petronian episode, see A. Collignon, *Étude sur Pétrone. La critique littéraire, l'imitation et la parodie dans le Satiricon* (Paris, 1892), p. 279, and M. Rosenblüth, *Beiträge zur Quellenkunde von Petrons Satiren* (Berlin, 1909), pp. 47–8. Both of them cite Cic. *Phil.* 2.66 and Sen. *Ep.* 114.6 as evidence for the popularity of the subject

hesitations (117.2), he immediately expresses his wish to have the appropriate theatrical equipment which would lend veracity to the scheme he has in mind (117.2).<sup>4</sup> Thus Eumolpus is presented as a comic poet who yearns to fulfil his ideas, but the lack of means puts a halt to his plans. The technical terms ('largior scaena', 'vestis humanior', 'instrumentum lautius', 117.2) taken from the stage<sup>5</sup> should not be seen as evidence to support the theory of an actual representation on stage of what has happened at Croton. Their significance lies in the fact that Eumolpus visualizes the behaviour, actions and appearance of himself and his friends, as a theatrical role-playing based on the infallible combination of deception (the figure of the childless and rich old man) and reality (the incident of the shipwreck), with no other purpose than the lucrative pleasures they are going to enjoy when they reach Croton (117.2), and the amusement the audience of the novel will derive from an episode structured in the manner of a mimic farce.

Eumolpus' scenario for a mime-piece ("quid ergo" inquit Eumolpus "cessamus mimum componere?" 117.4) is a typical one.<sup>6</sup> Eumolpus pretends to be a wretched millionaire who left his home because he could not bear the untimely death of his only son (117.6). His poor looks should be explained by the fact that he had just survived a shipwreck (117.7) (which is true; see 114.1-4, 115.1-5). Not everything in this scenario is strictly necessary for the ensuing plot. Eumolpus could easily have said that he did not have children at all and that the purpose of his trip, which ended in a shipwreck, was business. The additional details, however, give a melodramatic tone to the past life of that unfortunate millionaire who thus becomes a perfect bait for the legacy-hunters ('heredipetae') at Croton. It is interesting to note, also, that Eumolpus takes care to construct his scenario according to the clichés one would expect to find at a mime-performance (i.e. the 'mimica mors' of a non-existing son, the 'mimicum naufragium' of more than two million sesterces, the sudden change of fortune, expressed in the contrast rich/poor, happy/wretched).<sup>7</sup>

in the theatre of the mimes. O. Skutsch, 'Quotations in Cicero', *RCCM* 2 (1960), 197-8, speculates that the Ciceronian expression 'modo egens, repente dives' must have been not only part of a senarius of the mimic script but also the actual title of the mime. A treatment of the same theme seems to be implied in the title of a fabula Atellana: L. Pomponius, *Heres Petitor* 49-50. P. Frassinetti (ed.), *Atellanae Fabulae* (Rome, 1967), p. 103, prefers the vaguer interpretation 'candidato' to 'petitor hereditatis'. See, however, F. Leo, 'Die römische Poesie in der sullianischen Zeit', *Hermes* 49 (1914), 174, n. 7, who interprets 'heres petitor' as 'petitor hereditatis'.

<sup>4</sup> A detailed example of the theatrical material that was occasionally presented on stage in order to make a trick more plausible (the kind of material Eumolpus wishes he had) is shown in Plautus, *Miles Gloriosus* 1178-82: Pleusiples, the 'adulescens', is told by Palaestrio, the slave, to disguise himself as a ship-master in order to deceive Pyrgopolynices, the 'miles', and take Philocomasium, the soldier's concubine, away from him. Cf., also, the swindler's hat (which makes him look like a mushroom) and costume in *Trinummus* 851-60, or Simia's alleged military costume in *Pseudolus* 911ff. On props in some mimic productions, see H. Wiemken, *Der Griechische Mimos* (Bremen, 1972), pp. 191-7 and 202-4.

<sup>5</sup> On 'instrumentum' = 'apparatus', 'ornatus scaenicus', see Fedeli 1988 (op. cit., n. 2), 10, who refers to Festus ap. Paul. 45.19L ('choragium instrumentum scaenarum') and to Seneca, *Dial.* 6.10.1 'instrumentis scaena adornatur'. Cf. Plin. *Ep.* VII.17.9 'latis scaena et corona diffusior'; Suet. *Jul.* 'diuerso quemque [triumphum] apparatu et instrumento'.

<sup>6</sup> G. Sandy, 'Scaenica Petroniana', *TAPhA* 104 (1974), 345, refers to H. Reich, *Der Mimos* (Berlin, 1903), p. 319, n. 4 and notes that 'the ruse formulated by Eumolpus at 117.2-10 in such richly theatrical and mimic metaphors is specified in *Rhet. ad Her.* 4.50.63 as a trick of the mimic stage'.

<sup>7</sup> On the mimic death, see Plut. *De Sollert. Animal.* 973e-974a; the *Μοιχεύτρια*-mime (in *Greek Literary Papyri* [London and Cambridge, MA, 1942], pp. 350-61), lines 60-8; *Sat.* 94.15. Cf. Xen. *Ephes.* III.5; Achil. *Tat.* III.20, V.7; Iambl. *IV.* On mimic dances which ended in mimic

The element of role-playing is clear.<sup>8</sup> Eumolpus and his friends are already typecast theatrical figures: Encolpius and Giton, after having their heads shaved (103.3; do they still wear the blond wig and false eyebrows of 110.1–5?), are still posing as ‘mimi calvi’<sup>9</sup> or as ‘servi’ (117.6);<sup>10</sup> Eumolpus is *actually* an old man (83.7; 117.2) who plays the part of the ‘dominus gregis’ (117.6).<sup>11</sup> The theatrical dimension of the new personalities which the friends acquire before entering Croton is reinforced by their comparison with ‘legitimi gladiatores’ (117.5), figures of the ‘spectacula’ in the amphitheatre.<sup>12</sup> Corax, the ‘mercennarius Eumolpi’ (94.12; 99.6; 103.1; 117.11), is acting (117.12) like the buffoon slave of the *Χαρίτιον*-mime who used to complain and fart all the time.<sup>13</sup> Moreover, certain tricks are employed in order to stress Eumolpus’ pretended bad health (117.9–10). Forgetfulness and frequent cough occur in satirical contexts (Hor. *S.* 2.5.106–7) as symptoms of the imminent death of the rich old man whom the legacy-hunter must flatter, but Petronius’ comment in Eumolpus’ case (‘ne quid scaenae deesset’ 117.10) means that the general conception of the schemes in question is a theatrical and not a satirical one.<sup>14</sup>

## II

The Philomela-episode (*Sat.* 140.1–11) is one of the less frequently discussed scenes of the *Satyricon*.<sup>15</sup> Petronius sets forth the story of a matron ‘inter primas honesta’

deaths, see M. I. Davies, ‘The suicide of Ajax: a bronze Etruscan statuette from the Käppeli collection’, *Antike Kunst* 14 (1971), 152. For a discussion of the ‘Scheintod’-theme in the ancient novel, see F. Wehrli, ‘Einheit und Vorgeschichte der griechisch-römischen Romanliteratur’, *MH* 22 (1965), 142–8. On the mimic shipwreck, see Sen. *Dial.* IV.2.4–5; Tac. *Ann.* 14.6; Dio 62.12.2. On the mimic reversal of fortune, see Cic. *Phil.* 2.66.

<sup>8</sup> Collignon, op. cit. (n. 3), p. 276 interprets the verb ‘condiscimus’ (117.6) as a technical theatrical term in the sense ‘Ils apprennent leur rôles’. Cf., also, Schmid, op. cit. (n. 1), pp. 34ff.

<sup>9</sup> On the *μωρὸς φαλακρὸς* or ‘stupidus’, see Juv. *S.* 5.171ff. and J. E. B. Mayor, *Thirteen Satires of Juvenal*, ad loc.; John Chrysostom, *Περὶ Μετανοίας* b’ 291 [Migne, *P.G.* 59, 760]; Gregory of Nazianzus, *Carm.* II.ii. 85–9 [Migne, *P.G.* 37, 1583]; A. Nicoll, *Masks, Mimes and Miracles. Studies in the Popular Theatre* (London, Sydney and Bombay, 1931), pp. 47–50 and figures 31–7; Wiemken, op. cit. (n. 4), pp. 179–81; cf. *Sat.* 110.4.

<sup>10</sup> P. George, ‘Petroniana’, *CQ* 17 (1967), 132, following Fraenkel, suggests emending the participle ‘ficti’ (117.6), which is in plural and refers to Encolpius, Giton and Corax, to ‘fictum’, in order to refer to the singular accusative ‘dominum’ (‘the master of our own making’). Cf., however, Müller’s (31983) apparatus *ad hunc loc.*: ‘ficti ne deileamus neve fictum scribamus numerus obstat’.

<sup>11</sup> Fedeli 1987 (op. cit., n. 2), 16, notes the double function the word ‘dominus’ has for the narrative: ‘nella finzione del “mendacium” Eumolpo sarà “dominus gregis”, “inventor” e primo attore, ma nella realtà dovrà apparire come il vero e proprio *padrone* di quegli schiavi improvvisati.’ Eumolpus was responsible for the theatrical scenes at 94.15 and 106.1, as well.

<sup>12</sup> See their gladiatorial oath at 117.5, and cf. Schmid, op. cit. (n. 1), pp. 34–5 and p. 177, n. 16.

<sup>13</sup> See *Χαρίτιον*-mime (in *Greek Literary Papyri* [op. cit., n. 7], pp. 336–49), lines 4, 24, 44–5. Cf. Arist. *Frogs* 8ff.

<sup>14</sup> See Schmid, op. cit. (n. 1), pp. 26–53 and J. P. Sullivan, ‘Satire and realism in Petronius’, in J. P. Sullivan (ed.), *Critical Essays on Roman Literature – Satire* (London, 1963), p. 89, who regard the legacy-hunting episode in Petronius as a conventionally satirical theme.

<sup>15</sup> The interest of scholars is focused mainly on its textual problems or on its sexual dimensions. The most controversial passage in this scene for many years now has been *Sat.* 140.5 and the attempt to define what is the exact meaning of the ‘†pigiciaca† sacra’. J. P. Sullivan, *The Satyricon of Petronius. A Literary Study* (London, 1968), p. 75, notes the ‘wit of the prose’ and the ‘farical nature of the scene’, but is mainly concerned with the sexual point of view of the episode (pp. 239ff.). There are, however, a few scholars who have commented on the theatrical elements in this scene, though partially and briefly. C. Gill, ‘The Sexual Episodes in the *Satyricon*’, *CPh* 68 (1973), 180ff. considers this episode as an obvious example of the literary

(140.1),<sup>16</sup> who entrusts her children to Eumolpus' wisdom and benevolence ('prudētiaē bonitatique' 140.2)<sup>17</sup> with the hidden motive of gaining some of his wealth. The structure of the story, which Petronius ironically calls a 'tragedy' (140.6) is quite clear. At first, the narrator presents the preliminary pieces of information (*Sat.* 140.1–4), that is, the general plot and the persons who are going to take part in the episode, things which are necessary for the audience to know in order to understand the show that will follow (*Sat.* 140.5–11). In other words he introduces the 'argumentum' and the 'dramatis personae', to use the appropriate theatrical terms, and then goes on to describe the '†pigiciaca† sacra', the most extraordinary incident of this 'tragoedia'.<sup>18</sup>

At *Sat.* 116.7 we are informed that children in Croton were a sign of social isolation, since their parents were deprived of all advantages of Croton's social life, that is, dinners and shows ('non ad cenas, non ad spectacula admittitur', 116.7). Therefore, Philomela, a legacy-huntress who in the past had used her charms to extort legacies, prostituted her children to old, rich, and childless people and by this substitution succeeded in prolonging the use of her art ('per hanc successionem artem suam perseverabat extendere', 140.1). The reading of the woman's name is not the same in all manuscripts.<sup>19</sup> However, I am inclined to accept the reading 'Philomela' – which all editors follow – as correct for two reasons: the connection of that particular person with children, both in mythology and in this novel, and the fact that it is Petronius' habit to subvert mythological facts and turn them into amusing distorted tales.<sup>20</sup> Moreover, an interesting piece of evidence for the employment of that legend on the stage is provided by Juvenal, *S.* 7.92, where it is stated that high offices were distributed by actors and pantomimes (such as Paris) who performed 'fabulas salticas', such as the Pelops or the Philomela stories ('praefectos Pelopea

characteristics of the sexual scenes in this novel and N. W. Slater, *Reading Petronius* (Baltimore and London, 1990), pp. 131–2, notes the role-playing of the main characters. R. Dimundo, 'Il perdersi e il ritrovarsi dei percorsi narrativi. (Petronio, 140.1–11)', *Aufidius* 2 (1987), 47–62, notes the similarities of both subject-matter and verbal terms between the Philomela-episode and the two Milesian tales narrated by Eumolpus earlier on in the novel. Most of these parallels do exist; the reason, however, for their existence is not an intertextual relationship among the episodes of the novel, but rather that all three of the short stories have a common sub-literary source (Milesian tales, mime), in which farcical elements abound.

<sup>16</sup> 'Honestā' has the ironical meaning of a 'socially and morally irreproachable' woman. On 'honestā' as 'titulus honorificus' especially for women, see *ThLL*, s.v., I.A.1.II.

<sup>17</sup> The obscure content of 'bonitas' is cleared up at *Sat.* 140.7. The same combination of sex and moral education occurs in L. Pomponius, *Maccus Virgo* 71–2 (Frassinetti).

<sup>18</sup> The word 'tragoedia' which, in this scene, characterizes the unfortunate and unhappy future life of a childless 'podagricus', and comes in juxtaposition with the extremely funny sequence, occurs in the sense of a mock-tragic performance, i.e. of theatre and pretence in general, at *Sat.* 108.11, when Giton threatens to castrate himself. On the same meaning, cf. also Cic. *De Orat.* I.219; II.205; Quint. 6.1.36.

<sup>19</sup> The MS I has 'Philomena' while one scribe has written in the margin 'Philumene', which is the Latin transliteration of the Greek word *φιλουμένη*, the 'loved-one', a word appropriate to a prostitute. The classical 'Philomela' (= nightingale) becomes 'Philomena' in mediaeval Latin. That might be an explanation for the reading of I. However, we have a 'Philumena' as a character in a fabula palliata by Caecilius Statius, 141, and in Plautus' *Stichus*. For parallels in the *Corpus Inscriptionum Atticarum*, see Collignon, op. cit. (n. 3), p. 385.

<sup>20</sup> Dimundo, op. cit. (n. 15), 57–8, adds a third reason: 'potrebbe esistere un' intima relazione fra i nomi Filomela / Eumolpo, entrambi parlanti e dotati di un esplicito riferimento alla musica et al bel canto.' On the ironical use of mythological names in Petronius, see Sullivan, op. cit. (n. 15), p. 228; G. Schmeling, 'The Literary Use of Names in Petronius' *Satyricon*, *RSC* 17 (1969), 8; S. Priuli, 'Ascyllus. Note di onomastica petroniana', *Collection Latomus* 140 (Bruxelles, 1975), pp. 54–7.

facit, Philomela tribunos'). In the well-known myth she was involved in the murder of Itys, her nephew, by her sister Prokne.<sup>21</sup> In the *Sat.* she is playing the role of a procuress, a 'lena'. Apart from the obscure figure of a bawd<sup>22</sup> that we find in a fragment of Trabea's fabula palliata, *Ex inc. fab.* 1, this type occurs in two Plautine comedies and functions in a way which is similar to Philomela.<sup>23</sup>

Eumolpus plays the role of a victim of gout and weak loins ('podagricus lumborumque solutorum', 140.6) and the whole perverse joke that follows is based on that premise. The word 'podagricus' occurs twice more in the novel (*Sat.* 64.3 and 132.14; cf. 96.4), in its literal sense.<sup>24</sup> In Eumolpus' case, however, it is clearly a device ('et si non servasset integram simulationem, periclitabatur totam paene tragoediam evertere', 140.6), similar to the ones suggested to him by Encolpius, Giton and Corax on their way to Croton (117.9–10).

Encolpius and Corax are still pretending to be the slaves of the rich 'dominus' (117.6), that is, 'servi', one of the most famous types in theatre; as far as Philomela's children are concerned, both Plautus in some of his plays, and Choricus in his description of mime-characters affirm the existence of children in the cast of theatrical performances.<sup>25</sup>

So far we have in the cast a 'lena', a 'podagricus' and two 'servi'. The element of their acting, their role-playing is quite clear.<sup>26</sup> The sense of 'simulatio' is attributed both to Eumolpus (140.6) and to Philomela (140.4): she pretends religiosity and goes to the temple to pray for the fulfilment of her desires; he pretends to suffer from gout – a device that makes his complicated sexual teaching even funnier. Both Philomela's children are well-taught: the response of the 'speciosissima filia' to Eumolpus' invitation is characterized as an 'artificium' (140.8), i.e. not simply an art but an expertise, a profession, a craft.<sup>27</sup> Similarly, when Encolpius attempts to approach sexually the 'frater ephebus', he finds him a 'doctissimus puer' (140.11).<sup>28</sup>

<sup>21</sup> See *OCD*<sup>2</sup> s.v. and W. H. Roscher, *Ausführliches Lexicon der Griechischen und Römischen Mythologie*, III.2, 2343–8. M. Bieber, *The History of the Greek and Roman Theater*,<sup>2</sup> (Princeton, 1961), p. 29 and figure 105, speaks of *Tereus*, the lost tragedy of Sophocles (see *TrGF* IV, pp. 435–45, Radt), and gives an illustration of it, showing probably Tereus and Prokne or Philomela.

<sup>22</sup> Bieber, op. cit., p. 96 and figure 349 gives comments on and an illustration of the 'lena'. On the character of the mimic hag, see W. Headlam and A. D. Knox (edd.), *Herodas. The Mimes and Fragments* (Cambridge, 1922), Intro., pp. xxxii–xxxvi; Nicoll, op. cit. (n. 9), p. 93.

<sup>23</sup> In the *Asinaria*, Cleareta, the 'lena', will not allow her daughter Philaenium, the 'meretrix', to spend a whole year with Argyrippus, the 'adulescens', unless he brings her a certain amount of money. In the *Cistellaria*, if the 'lena' did not prostitute her daughter, Gymnasium, her household would perish by mournful hunger.

<sup>24</sup> The key for the assumption of that particular role by Eumolpus lies, I think, in the fact that 'gout was assumed to be a consequence of wealth; cf. *Juv.* 13.96ff.' (so M. Smith, *Petronii Arbitri Cena Trimalchionis* [Oxford, 1975], ad 64.3). Mayor 'II, ad loc.', also gives many parallels to support this; note, though, that Eumolpus adopts the role of a character we find in a mime by D. Laberius, *Aquae Caldae* 5.

<sup>25</sup> On the role of slaves in Roman Comedy, see G. Duckworth, *The Nature of Roman Comedy* (Princeton, 1952), pp. 249–53; C. Stace, 'The slaves of Plautus', *G&R* 2nd S. 15 (1968), 64–77; in the mimes, see Sen. *Ep. Mor.* 47.14; Choricus Gazaeus, *Apologia mimorum* (orat. XXXII) 26; 110. For children in Roman Comedy, see H. W. Prescott, 'Three puer scenes in Plautus and the distribution of roles', *HSCP* 21 (1910), 31–50; 'Silent Roles in Roman Comedy', *CPh* 31 (1936), 103, 110–11 and n. 15; in the mimes, see Choricus XXXII.16; 110. Bieber, op. cit. (n. 21), p. 251 and figure 836 gives additional pictorial evidence for the existence of children in a mime-cast.

<sup>26</sup> See Dimundo, op. cit. (n. 15), 58.

<sup>27</sup> For parallels, see *Sat.* 56.1; Sen. *Ep.* XV.7; Cic. *De Orat.* I.130.

<sup>28</sup> On the word 'doctus' in the same meaning of a person taught by practice, an expert, cf. *Sat.* 74.5; 84.5.

The staging of the scene is fairly simple. The place is a bedroom, Eumolpus' 'cubiculum' (140.4), in which Philomela left her children to the wholesome instructions ('salubribus praeceptis', 140.2) of a sick old man. The scenery consists of one bed (140.7), the floor ('pavimentum') of the room (140.7), and of a 'clostellum' (140.11). The narrator is working in a reductive way. As in the early mime-performances, in which the 'siparium' was mainly the only prop on stage<sup>29</sup> and the rest depended on the audience's imagination, so here we have not a complete description of the decoration of the rich Eumolpus's 'cubiculum' but reference only to what is needed for the '†pigiciaca† sacra' and Encolpius' sexual failure: a bed<sup>30</sup> and a key-hole.<sup>31</sup>

The show witnessed by the boy itself is the operation of 'a mechanism for sexual intercourse' and 'is depicted as an aesthetic spectacle, a source of admiration and amusement both to Philomela's admiring son and to the participants themselves.'<sup>32</sup> The puzzling '†pigiciaca† sacra' and its meaning in the passage are a topic of dispute among scholars.<sup>33</sup> The clue which leads to the most probable solution for the corrupt 'pigiciaca' is the *πυγῆσιακὰ* which a scribe wrote in ancient Greek in the margin of the manuscript. The scribe must have been simply transliterating a fictitious word which Petronius had written in Latin. There are many more Gracisms that Petronius uses in his novel<sup>34</sup> and similarly at 140.5 he needs the Greek ritual word to provide his mock-ceremony with the ridiculous authority of a pseudo-religious atmosphere. Therefore, the best reading is the one adopted by Ernout in the Budé edition<sup>5</sup> (Paris, 1962): 'pygesiacra sacra' = a sacred ceremony dedicated to *πυγή*. In spite of Eumolpus' homosexual preferences (85–7; 94.1–2) it is not so important and crucial to decide whether he and the 'puella' had vaginal or anal intercourse. More important for the audience is to understand that 'the whole scene is essentially a

<sup>29</sup> See Nicoll, op. cit. (n. 9), pp. 105–9; W. Beare, *The Roman Stage* <sup>3</sup>(London, 1968), p. 154 and pp. 267–74; Wiemken, op. cit. (n. 4), pp. 199–202.

<sup>30</sup> For the existence of actual beds on stage, when necessary in the mime-performances (especially, the adultery-mimes), see John Chrysostom 6.55B (= Migne, *PG* lvi. 543).

<sup>31</sup> B. Baldwin, 'Pigiciaca sacra. A fundamental problem in Petronius?', *Maia* 29–30 (1977–8), 120, observing that "clostellum" (presumably for "claustellum") seems unique to this passage, notes that there is an incongruity in the text: 'However in some way not explained in the narrative, the boy is got out of the bedroom, for when Encolpius attempts him, he is watching his sister in action "per clostellum", which appears to mean key-hole.' He offers three possible explanations to solve it: 'either the narrative of Petronius is a shade careless, or there is something missing from the text, or "clostellum" does not mean key-hole.' Indeed, there is something peculiar in the function of this unique word in the passage. The *OLD* interprets it as 'key-hole', referring only to this Petronian passage. The *ThLL* renders it as 'instrumentum claudendi', which does not make very good sense in the context. In the *Μοιχεύτρια*-mime the 'siparium' represents a door (line 162 *πορευθεῖς τῇ πλατῖᾳ θύρᾳ*). This could be the case here, as well: the boy is looking through a gap in the curtain. I believe, however, that none of Baldwin's suggestions is correct. The 'clostellum' is most probably a 'key-hole' through which the boy admires the 'mechanical movements of his sister' (140.11). This is not the first time that the peeping-through-a-hole motif occurs in the novel (cf. 26.4, 96.1 and, possibly, 11.2; see Sullivan, op. cit. [n. 15], p. 244 and n. 3). There is no reason at all for us to search for the exact moment in time when the 'puer' and Encolpius left the room. Baldwin's question is false because we do not need a logical explanation but we must just accept the fact that they have moved away from the 'lectum Eumolpi'.

<sup>32</sup> Gill, op. cit. (n. 15), 181. Mimic performances often enacted sexual intercourse on stage, in extreme cases quite realistically; see Nicoll, op. cit. (n. 9), p. 123.

<sup>33</sup> For a brief summary of the emendations suggested, see Gill, op. cit. (n. 15), 181, n. 29, and Baldwin, op. cit. (n. 31), 119–21. Müller<sup>3</sup> prints Bücheler's emendation, 'Aphrodisiacra sacra'.

<sup>34</sup> Cf. 'deuro de' (58.7); 'laecasin' (42.2); 'madeia perimadeia' (52.9); 'sophos' (40.1); 'topanta' (37.4).

game, played by the fictional characters with their bodies and by the author with his language'.<sup>35</sup>

Two phrases in the text must not escape the audience's attention: 'veluti oscillatione ludebat' (140.9) and 'sororis suae automata' (140.11). Regarding the former, one can note that the conception of having sex as a game is found again at *Sat.* 11.2 and 127.10.<sup>36</sup> Eumolpus' intercourse is just like a swing. He and the girl are sitting on the swing doing nothing while Corax (another of the 'speaking names' in the Plautine manner which Petronius employs in his novel)<sup>37</sup> is moving the swing to and fro and creates the actual intercourse.<sup>38</sup> The second phrase is more significant for the theatricality of the scene. The best interpretation of the Graecism 'automata' is given by *OLD* (= automatic or puppet-like movements) differentiating it, thus, from the other instances in the novel at which the word occurs in the sense of an automatic contrivance, an automaton.<sup>39</sup> The theatrical emphasis is much stronger if we bear in mind that the expression τὰ αὐτόματα (only in plural) is used for marionettes.<sup>40</sup> This word induces us to visualize Eumolpus' intercourse in the spirit of a puppet-show. One can easily imagine the 'puella' and the 'senex' as the lifeless puppets while Corax is the person behind the stage who moves them.<sup>41</sup>

If this scene of the *Fugitive Millionaire*-mime had been performed on stage, its farcical dimensions would have depended upon the mimic actors' gestures rather than

<sup>35</sup> Gill, op. cit. (n. 15), p. 182.

<sup>36</sup> Cf., also, Pomponius, *Adelphi* 1; Sen. *Contr.* 1.2.22; Catullus 61.204.

<sup>37</sup> The most recent discussion on the function of the name 'Corax' is M. Labate, 'Di nuovo sulla poetica dei nomi in Petronio: Corax "il delatore"?', *MD* 16 (1986), 135–46. Labate notes that 'Corax è nome di servo plautino e, insieme ad altri nomi di derivazione comica, dimostrerebbe una relazione privilegiata fra il *Satyricon* e appunto la commedia' (p. 138). However, since there is no evidence in the surviving novel which would demonstrate the greedy nature of Corax in the manner of a Plautine 'servus', Labate finally argues that Eumolpus' attendant has this particular name because, as the 'corvus' in Ovid, *Met.* 2.536ff., he is not going to keep his mouth shut but he will reveal the whole fallacy to the Crotonians. This view is as speculative as the previous one concerning the connection with Plautus; although there are hints of Corax's betrayal at 125.3, the legacy-hunters 'exhausti liberalitatem imminuerunt' (141.1), not because Corax has spoken to them but because time passes by and there is no sign of the wealth Eumolpus promised to them (141.1). The noun κόραξ signified also a military engine for grappling ships: see *LSJ*, s.v., II.1; *OLD*, s.v. 'corvus', 5.a; *ThLL*, s.v. 'corvus', V. In his position under the bed the servant Corax is transformed into a mechanical device which moves the αὐτόματα on top of the bed. Another suggestion is put forward by Schmeling, op. cit. (n. 20), 6, where he notes the existence of a 'lorarius' with the same name in Plautus' *Captivi* (657), without, though, stressing the point too much.

<sup>38</sup> See Gill, op. cit. (n. 15), 179: 'The rich artificiality of the language used to describe sexual events, and the disparity between verbal style and physical content (or sometimes between different styles in the same episode), do not reinforce the fictional reality of the action presented. Rather they tend to make each scene a temporary performance or display, the directness of the sexual impact undercut by the self-conscious style of the presentation. This quality of the language of the work is supplemented by the way in which characters are used, in the constructions of particular situations, to make scenes into theatrical spectacles.'

<sup>39</sup> See 50.1; 54.4, and cf. Juv. 4.122; Sen. *Ep.* 88.22; Mart. *Spect.* 2.2. See Dimundo, op. cit. (n. 15), 56: 'non siamo in presenza di macchine ma di esseri umani: la degradazione degli uomini è al tempo stesso la degradazione della macchina e l' automatismo che coinvolge Corace, Eumolpo e la fanciulla in un unico stravagante congegno, ha il potere di ridurli in una sorta di *automatum* del sesso.'

<sup>40</sup> See Aristotle, *De Generat. Animal.* 734b10 and Heron, *Περὶ αὐτοματοποιητικῆς* I.1. According to *OCD*<sup>2</sup>, Heron was a mathematician and inventor, known as ὁ μηχανικός, and his floruit was A.D. 62. It is likely that his treatises were known to the cultivated 'Arbiter Elegantiae'.

<sup>41</sup> On the popularity of puppet shows in Rome, see J. P. V. D. Balsdon, *Life and Leisure in Ancient Rome* (London, 1969), p. 288.

the verbal part of their role: Eumolpus, the archmime, is already lying in bed. Philomela enters on stage through the 'siparium' with her children. She addresses the man: 'Liberos meos tuae prudentiae bonitatieque commendo. Tu solus in toto orbe terrarum es, qui praeceptis etiam salubribus instruere iuvenes quotidie potes' (140.2). (To her children) 'Relinquo vos in domo Eumolpi, ut illum loquentem audiat' (140.3). Perhaps she corroborates the validity of her hypocritical intentions by adding a pseudo-moralistic argument: 'Quae sola potest hereditas iuvenibus dari' (140.3). She then exits and leaves her children in the room. Eumolpus does not hesitate to choose the young girl for his sexual lesson: 'Ad pygesiaca sacra te invito' (140.5). 'Supra commendatam bonitatem, amabo, sede. Lectum, Corax, subi positisque in pavimento manibus lumbis tuis me commove' (140.7). The young boy, not chosen by his tutor for a lesson of wisdom at that time, withdraws silently, perhaps behind the door, and watches his sister performing. The action is mainly focused on the area of the bed (140.7). Corax is lying under the bed, Eumolpus is lying on the bed, Philomela's daughter is lying on Eumolpus.<sup>42</sup> The audience's amusement must derive from the grotesque position of the three human bodies and the movements of the actor who plays the servant. Perhaps, the weight of Eumolpus' and the girl's bodies are too heavy for him to lift and he protests with comic grimaces of pain (cf. his buffoonish reactions at 117.12). He starts moving his buttocks up and down slowly at the beginning (140.8) but he proceeds in a faster rhythm when he hears Eumolpus shouting: 'Officium spissa' (140.9). At the same time Encolpius who might, or might not, have been on stage during these happenings, approaches the boy and starts flattering him in order to assault him sexually (140.11). In a theatrical representation of this incident even the space behind the 'clostellum' is included in the stage-action and forms part of the show. Eumolpus, the 'puella' and Corax are the first spectacle, the 'puer' is the audience. Nevertheless, this same audience, namely the 'puer' together with Encolpius, becomes the second spectacle for the audience in Nero's court and for the readers of every age thereafter. The double audience-actors structure of the scene is so clear that we could say that we have a play-within-a-play scene.<sup>43</sup> It is important to note that the eyes of an audience in a theatre must be focused on these two places *simultaneously* (i.e. Eumolpus – 'puella' – Corax and Encolpius – 'puer'), so that they can observe the victory of the first device and the failure of the second at the same time; the comic effect is derived precisely from that juxtaposition: Eumolpus wins again, Encolpius fails again. The best proof of Eumolpus' theatrical and sexual triumph is his laughter: 'hoc semel iterumque ingenti risu, etiam suo, Eumolpus fecerat' (140.10). One has to interpret his laughter with an eye on the function of the laughter-motif in the whole of the *Sat.*: it is usually not a natural expression of joy, but either invokes fear or it is so exaggerated that it becomes clearly theatrical.<sup>44</sup>

<sup>42</sup> The number of actors who enacted a mimic plot was regularly three. This is valid in the 'pygesiaca sacra' – spectacle, as well: Eumolus / 'puella' / Corax.

<sup>43</sup> One can find actual theatrical scenes in Plautus similarly structured: Pseudolus is watching Simia deceiving Ballio (*Pseud.* 959–1016). See N. W. Slater, *Plautus in Performance. The Theatre of the Mind* (Princeton, 1985). Cf. Gill, op. cit. (n. 15), 179–80.

<sup>44</sup> *Sat.* 19.1 'omnia mimico risu exsonuerant'; Quint. 6.3.8 'cum videatur autem res levis et quae ab scurris, mimis, insipientibus denique saepe moveatur'; Choricus, XXXII.30 *ἐπεὶ δὲ ὅλον παιδιὰ τίς ἐστι τὸ χρῆμα, τὸ πέρασ αὐτοῖς εἰς ᾧδὴν τινα καὶ γέλωτα λήγει. Πάντα εἰς ἀναφυγὴν μεμηχάνηται καὶ ῥαστώνη*; Johannes Lydus, *De Magistr.* 1.40 *μιμική ἢ νῦν δῆθεν μόνη σωζομένη, τεχνικὸν μὲν ἔχουσα οὐδέν, ἀλόγῳ μόνον τὸ πλῆθος ἐπάγουσα γέλωτι*. Sandy, op. cit. (n. 6), 339, refers rightly to the 'mimicus risus' as 'a studied type of laughter, perhaps stridently aggressive, possibly like that of the "moecha" in Cat. 42.' Beare, op. cit. (n. 29), p. 150,



If one captures the colour that all these pieces of evidence render to the episode as a whole, in general, and to the complicated sexual contrivance, in particular, then one can see in the story nothing else but a trick, a funny show organized by the clever wit of Eumolpus, performed by himself and the 'puella', and conducted by the servant Corax. It is improbable that the scene should be considered an example of the 'exclusus-amator' motif<sup>45</sup> or a sample of perverse imagination which casts a light on the author's psychology.<sup>46</sup> These interpretations miss clues that the text itself provides for its own understanding. The parody of ritual and sacred ceremonies<sup>47</sup> is inevitable but the ultimate purpose must be none other than fun.

The abundance of theatrical elements in the style and structure of the Philomela-episode does not suggest that Petronius wrote this particular anecdote in order to be performed in front of the literary court of Nero. After all, we can only speculate on the way in which his novel became known to the people of its age.<sup>48</sup> Nor should one argue that Petronius was re-working in a sophisticated way scenarios of mimic performances which he had himself watched or had included in his vast reading-repertoire. The artistic renaissance which took place during Nero's reign must have influenced somehow the creation of the sophisticated and elaborated, though at times ridiculous, literary atmosphere of Petronius' novel. What is not certain is precisely the degree to which this stylish environment, full of musical and dramatic events, influenced the *Satyricon*. However, the clearly theatrical conception of this scene, as

comments 'that an element of indecency clung to the mime from the beginning; its aim was mere amusement, the "mimicus risus".' This is the case in that Petronian passage, as well. On the 'rire ambivalent' as 'une structure profonde' in the novel which is connected to the recurrent theme of the deceiver and the deceived, popular in mime and comedy, see L. Callebaut, 'Structures narratives et modes de représentation dans le *Satyricon* de Pétrone', *REL* 52 (1974), 290–4.

<sup>45</sup> See G. Schmeling, 'The "Exclusus Amator" motif in Petronius', in *Fons Perennis. Saggi critici di Filologia Classica raccolti in onore del Prof. Vittorio D'Agostino* (Torino, 1971), p. 338.

<sup>46</sup> See Sullivan, op. cit. (n. 15), pp. 238ff.

<sup>47</sup> We do not really know the provenance of the ritual (if any) Petronius parodies here ('pygesiac *sacra*' 140.5). For a discussion of this topic with bibliography, see Schmeling, op. cit. (n. 45), 354–6. He speculates that Eumolpus' anal copulation with the young daughter of Philomela may signify that 'the sexual acts of a young girl or a young bride are anal on the first night, the *cunus* being reserved for Priapus under the *ius noctis primae*. Underlying Eumolpus' choice of the young girl's *culus* may be the ritual prohibition against breaking the hymen and shedding blood' (p. 355). It is worth noting, then, that Eumolpus' improvisational ritual should be related to the theme of parody-initiation (especially, Priapic rituals) in the *Satyricon* as a whole. The most prominent example is, of course, in the episode of Quartilla (16–26.6), on which see P. Cosci, 'Quartilla e l'iniziazione ai misteri di Priapo (*Satyricon* 20.4)', *MD* 4 (1980), 199–201; note, however, that the pseudo-rituals in both episodes are framed in a theatrical context of play-acting and pretence (on the mimic qualities of the Quartilla-scene, see Sandy, op. cit. [n. 6], 339–40; C. Panayotakis, 'Quartilla's Histrionics in Petronius, *Satyricon* 16.1–26.6', *Mnemosyne* 47 [1994], 319–36): therefore, they assume a predominantly theatrical appearance, whatever their source of inspiration for Petronius was. Parody of ceremonies was popular in the comic stage: see J.-P. Cèbe, *La caricature et la parodie dans le monde romain antique des origines à Juvénal* (Paris, 1966), 67–75; Reich, op. cit. (n. 6), pp. 80–8.

<sup>48</sup> I agree with Sandy, op. cit. (n. 6), 341, who does not believe that 'Petronius' work of comic prose fiction can be reduced to a string of low-comedy "skits" intended for performance'. His belief is 'that the underlying theatrical quality echoes a dominant interest in the court of Nero "Artifex".' On Nero's artistic interests, see M. P. Charlesworth, 'Nero: some aspects', *JRS* 40 (1950), 69–71; Sandy, *ibid.*, 342, n. 28; J. P. Sullivan, *Literature and Politics in the Age of Nero* (Ithaca and London, 1985), pp. 27–31.

well as of other scenes in the novel,<sup>49</sup> its specific comic elements and its farcical tone suggest its purpose and forbid us to accept it as anything else than amusement.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> Apart from the spectacular 'Cena Trimalchionis', see *Sat.* 26.4–5; 79.11–80.8; 92.6–10; 94.8–99.4.

<sup>50</sup> See W. Arrowsmith, 'Luxury and Death in the *Satyricon*', in *Essays on Classical Literature, selected from ARION with an introduction by Niall Rudd* (Cambridge and New York, 1972), p. 326 for a moralistic interpretation of the Philomela-episode and cf. the acute remarks made by G. Anderson, *Eros Sophistes. Ancient Novelists at Play* (Chico, 1982), p. 72 against this interpretation: 'the humour here is concerned with the ingenious ruse which Eumolpus needs to invent in order to seduce his pupil, while still concealing the fact that he is not a cripple... the physical arrangements are similar to those of the lovers on top of the tub in Apuleius (*Met.* 9.7) – with the same element of amused voyeurism as in the episode of the woman and the ass in the *Onos* (52). Both of the latter cases are morally neutral, and it is difficult to see what is different about this one.'