

Jašková, Nina

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NINA JAŠKOVÁ (MASARYK UNIVERSITY)

PARODY AND IRONY IN THE WORKS OF PETRONIUS: ENCOLPIUS' WANDERING¹

This article deals with only one part of Petronius' work Satyricon, and that is Encolpius' wandering across the sea — the storm and shipwreck — and his subsequent arrival in Croton. The analysis is concentrated particularly on parallels between this tale and elements of the Homeric epic — namely Ulysses' wandering and the issues of slavery and enslavement — and parody connected mostly with sharp or light irony aimed against the Greek idealistic novel. In the chapter situated in Croton, attention is turned to Encolpius' failed love affair and his bisexuality. Intentionally, I did not interpret the story Matrona Ephesi and poem Bellum civile, because I believe both works deserve a separate and detailed presentation.

Keywords: Petronius, Satyricon, Irony, Parody, Greek Idealistic Novel

Encolpius' voyage and Priapus' rage

The events that take place before the boarding of the ship, the difficulties connected to the voyage, and eventually the shipwreck, rescue and arrival at Croton, markedly resemble the Homeric epic. Therefore, tempting ideas arise, such as *Satyricon* being interpreted as a direct parody of *Odyssey*.²

Though the parody of Homer's epic in *Satyricon* is rather obvious, as McDermott observes,³ and we cannot deny Petronius' attempt to ironically use Encolpius' character as a parody of the heroic Ulysses, opinions and

¹ This paper was written under the auspices of the *Centre for Interdisciplinary Research into Ancient Languages and Early Stages of Modern Languages* (research programme MSM 0021622435) at Masaryk University, Brno, Czech Republic.

² Conte, Gian B. 2003. *Dějiny římské literatury*. Překlad: kolektiv autorů pod vedením Dagmar Bartoňkové. Praha: Koniasch Latin Press, 415.

³ McDermott, M. H. 1983. "The *Satyricon* as a Parody of the *Odyssey* and Greek Romance." *Liverpool Classical Monthly*, 8, 82.

theories concerning this issue differ and it is not yet possible to come to a unanimous conclusion. We should therefore take into account the political context and the literary climate of the times in which Petronius worked, as well as the author's attitude towards religion and philosophy.

In one of the last passages of this text⁴, Encolpius complained he was pursued by Priapus' rage both on shore and the sea, just as Ulysses was pursued by Poseidon's⁵ rage because he had blinded his son, Polyphemus.⁶

Petronius' irony, which was aimed against the gods and their actions, could have had several causes. It involved especially the derisive attack against conventional traditions in literature packed with gods. But the author's ironic air could also have derived to a certain extent from his philosophical attitude.⁷ Petronius' eccentric behaviour and way of thinking was probably influenced by a circle of Epicureans.

Let's take Eumolpus' words as a fitting example⁸ — *hinc scies Epicurum hominem esse divinum, qui eiusmodi ludibria facetissima ratione condemnat*⁹. He used these words to invoke the "divine"¹⁰ Epicurus, thus fulfilling two tasks; Eumolpus prevented his partners from being captured and

⁴ Petr. Sat. 139,2: *Iunonem Pelias sensit, tulit inscius arma Telephus et regnum Neptuni pavit Ulixes. Me quoque per terras, per canis Nereos aequor Hellespontiaci sequitur gravis ira Priapi.*

⁵ Perry, Ben E. 1967. *The Ancient Romances*. Berkley — Los Angeles: University of California Press, 193.

⁶ Hom. *Od.* 1,68–71: *ἀλλὰ Ποσειδάων γαιήοχος ἄσκελὲς αἶεν / Κόκλωπος κεχόλωται, ὄν ὀφθαλμοῦ ἀλάωσεν, / ἀντίθεον Πολύφημον, ὄου κράτος ἐστὶ μέγιστον / πᾶσιν Κοκλώπεσσι: Θόωσα δέ μιν τέκε νύμφη.*

⁷ Cf. Ramage, Edwin S. — Sigsbee, David L. — Fredericks, Sigmund C. 1974. *Roman Satirists and their Satire. The Fine Art of Criticism in Ancient Rome*. New Jersey: Noyes Press, 104: "To complicate the issue, there are overtones of Seneca's philosophical writings in the *Satyricon*. His moralizing is often put in the mouth of a thoroughly unworthy character to be parodied by incongruity, while many Senecan conventions are mocked in the light of the Epicurean attitudes which set the tone of the *Satyricon*."

⁸ Cf. Peri, Giulia. 2007. *Discorso diretto e discorso indiretto nel Satyricon. Due regimi a contrasto*. Pisa: Scuola Normale Superiore, 95: "La sapienza di costruzione del brano dialogico iniziale culmina nella battuta di Eumolpo (104,3). Le sue parole non sono in alcun modo introdotte dal narratore, ma direttamente giustapposte a quelle di Lica."

⁹ Petr. Sat. 104,3. All contemporary editors note a space after *condemnat*. See Paratore, Ettore. 1933. *Il Satyricon di Petronio*. Firenze: F. Le Monnier, 335. With regard to Eumolpus' immense talkativeness we would expect the poet to talk much more, especially in this situation. Suspensions concerning the integrity of the excerpt are therefore absolutely justified.

¹⁰ Lucr. 3,15.

punished, thus expressing the heroes' philosophical loyalty, and at the same time the words referred to the philosopher Epicurus, who ridiculed the attribution of such dreams to gods. Of course, this does not mean that Eumolpus was a serious Epicurean, just as we cannot be sure of Petronius' philosophical orientation. Nevertheless, the subject of divine miracles and supernatural phenomena is made slightly ironic through the personality of Epicurus.

It seems that Encolpius' troubles had their origin in one of the opening stories,¹¹ in which our hero commits blasphemy and calls Priapus' rage upon himself.¹² On the one hand, Priapus' role in the story is occasional,¹³ but on the other hand it is clear that Priapus plays a significant role in the novel.¹⁴ Tryphaena's dream, in which Neptune's (=Poseidon's) statue reveals to her¹⁵ that she will find Giton aboard Lichas' ship, may be read as an ironic allusion to the *Odyssey*.

Epigrams in the *Palatine Anthology*¹⁶ cast Priapus in the role of a protector of sailors and they describe his appearance, towering on rocks and beaches. Regarding evidence in the epigrams of the *Palatine Anthology*, it seems that worshipping the god Priapus on board ships was not unusual; on the contrary, it was rather common.¹⁷

By placing the god Priapus in the story, Petronius could connect the erotic theme with epic wandering and, at least to some extent, parody the noble epic genre. It is for this reason that Encolpius is sometimes called *maior*

11 Petr. *Sat.* 16,4: *Nolite perturbari. Nec accusat errorem vestrum nec punit, immo potius miratur quis deus iuvenes tam urbanos in suam regionem detulerit.*

12 Cf. Courtney, Edward. 2001. *A Companion to Petronius*. New York: Oxford University Press, 153. The author states that Encolpius and his friends interrupted Priapus' rage, which arises from chapters 16–27, but in our text their difficulties are certainly not interpreted as a punishment for the interruption of the ceremony.

13 G. B. Conte (2003: 415).

14 Cf. Slater, Nial W. 2006. "Priapus and the Shipwreck (Petronius, « Satyricon » 100–114)." In Byrne, S. N. — Cueva, E. P. — Alvares, J. [eds.]. *Authors, Authority, and Interpretation in the Ancient Novel. Essays in honor of G. L. Schmeling*. Groningen: Barkhuis Publishing, 294: "The wreck of Lichas' ship in the Satyricon has long been connected with the theme, detectable, elsewhere in the novel as well, of the wrath of Priapus, one part of the novel's parody of epic."

15 Petr. *Sat.* 104,2: [...] *simulacrum Neptuni*.

16 *Palatine Anthology* 10,4; 10,6; 10,7; 10,8.

17 Cf. N. W. Slater (2006: 295): "A painting from the house of the Priest Amandus at Pompeii (I, VII, 7) shows an ithyphallic statue of Priapus on the shore and a galley at sea beyond. Evidence from ancient shipwrecks shows the presence of images of Priapus on board ships, perhaps in shrines to the deity. A small wooden statuette of Priapus as a youth was recovered from the Planier A shipwreck near Marseilles, dating from the first quarter of the first century A.D."

Ithacus.¹⁸ Also, the use of the god Priapus in a scene set on the ship entirely corresponds with reality, because Priapus' statuette was a customary means of protection for sailors on the seas.

The inclusion of parodied parts of Odysseus' troubled wanderings, in which Odysseus' name is explicitly mentioned, is the best proof of the fact that the author purposely referenced Homer's epic. Also, depending on the circumstances in which the name is used, we can also glean insights about Petronius' attitude towards the epic work.

Sometimes, Petronius is somewhat ambiguous in his work and rather difficult to understand. Therefore I present examples of his parodies of Odysseus' wanderings, which are extended with ironic remarks about human behaviour.

*"Fingite" inquit "nos antrum Cyclopi intrasse. Quaerendum est aliquod effugium, nisi naufragium +ponimus+ et omni nos periculo liberamus."*¹⁹

The parodied passage, delivered by the poet Eumolpus while thinking over a plan to get out of a difficult situation, resembles Homer's description of Cyclops Polyphemus.²⁰

*Miretur nunc aliquis Ulixis nutricem post vicesimum annum cicatricem invenisse originis indicem, cum homo prudentissimus confusis omnibus corporis indiciorumque lineamentis ad unicum fugitivi argumentum tam docte pervenerit.*²¹

Encolpius' reaction makes the reader smile; despite an embarrassing and delicate situation in which the hero found himself naked and facing a sinister enemy, the author bids him recall the famous episode. Encolpius was so captivated by his own literary knowledge that even such a dangerous situation could not distract him from making an academic speech.²² If Petronius, through his literary character, remembers Odysseus' wet-nurse Euryclea²³

18 E. Courtney (2001: 153): *fr.* 37 B=31 M=AL 469 R.

19 Petr. *Sat.* 101,7.

20 Hom. *Od.* IX,216–218: *καρπαλίμως δ' εἰς ἄντρον ἀφικόμεθ', οὐδέ μιν ἔνδον / εἴρομεν, ἀλλ' ἐνόμει νομὸν κάτα πίονα μῆλα. / ἐλθόντες δ' εἰς ἄντρον ἐθημέμεσθα ἕκαστα.*
Hom. *Od.* IX,299: *τὸν μὲν ἐγὼ βούλευσα κατὰ μεγάλητορα θυμὸν.*

21 Petr. *Sat.* 105,10.

22 Conte, Gian B. 1996. *The Hidden Author. An Interpretation of Petronius' Satyricon.* Berkeley — Los Angeles — London: University of California Press, 53: "Admittedly the distance between the ironic author and the narrating."

23 Hom. *Od.* XIX,467–472: *τὴν γρη῏ς χεῖρεςσι καταπρηνέσσι λαβοῦσα / γνῶ ρ' ἐπιμασσαμένη, πόδα δὲ προέηκε φέρεσθαι. / ἐν δὲ λέβητι πέσε κνήμη, κανάχησε δὲ χαλκός, / ἄψ δ' ἐτέρωσ' ἐκλίθη: τὸ δ' ἐπὶ χθονὸς ἐξέχυθ' ὕδωρ. / τὴν δ' ἄμα χάρμα καὶ ἄλγος ἔλε φρένα, τὼ δὲ οἱ ὄσσε / δακρυόφι πλησθεν, θαλερῇ δὲ οἱ ἔσχετο φωνή.*

and compares her with a rather unpopular character, which Lichas surely is, the entire passage must then be understood in a lightly ironic spirit.

The notion that Petronius parodied only a single genre does not correspond with the complicated structure of his work and the accomplished artistic vividness of the story. The author focused his sense of irony not only on Homer's style but also, as can be seen in previous chapters, on the type of narrative characteristic of idealising novels.²⁴

The shipwreck is a standard scene in Greek novels. Under dramatic and dangerous circumstances, it provides the most convenient opportunity for couples in love to escape the clutches of the enemy. Encolpius, like Kleitophon,²⁵ lamented that he would be separated from his lover because of the terrible disaster. Such a touching and dramatic scene, commonly concerning the fate of lovers, is emphasised with Encolpius and Giton: *hoc a diis meruimus, ut nos sola morte coniungerent. Sed non crudelis fortuna concedit.*²⁶

Petronius made ironic not only the theatricality of the words used in the novel, but even added an element of ridiculousness in the form of the homosexual couple's fear that after death, cruel fate will not allow them to stay together forever.²⁷

The triviality and emptiness of frequently used phrases is exemplified in the words spoken by Giton, although they are ostensibly meant to be serious.²⁸ Though we look on Petronius' words with a sense of humour, we cannot ignore the underlying atmosphere of a fear of death, which is a recurring theme in the entire work. Considering the philosophical debates of that time, which dealt with issues of the soul (including questions such as whether there is anything after death, whether the soul feels anything, or whether anything concerns the soul), we may find in the story of Encolpius'

²⁴ See also Mendel, C. 1917. "Petronius and the Greek Romance." *Classical Philology*, 12, 158–172; Perry, Ben E. 1925. "Petronius and the Comic Romance." *Classical Philology*, 20, 31–49.

²⁵ Ach. Tat. 3,5,4: "Ἐλέησον," ἔφην "δέσποτα Πόσειδον, καὶ σπεῖσαι πρὸς τὰ τῆς ναυαγίας σου λείψανα...ἐν ἡμᾶς κῆμα καλυψάτω. εἰ δὲ καὶ θηρίων ἡμᾶς βορὰν πέπτωται γενέσθαι, εἰς ἡμᾶς ἰχθῦς ἀναλωσάτω, μία, γαστήρ χωρησάτω, ἵνα καὶ ἐν ἰχθύσι κοινῇ ταφῶμεν." See also Stöcker, Christoph. 1969. *Humor bei Petron.* Erlangen — Nürnberg: Friedrich-Alexander Universität, 8.

²⁶ Petr. Sat. 114,8.

²⁷ Petr. Sat. 114,10: *Haec ut ego dixi, Giton vestem deposuit, mea que tunica contactus exeruit ad osculum caput. Et ne sic cohaerentes malignior fluctus distraheret, utrumque zona circumvenienti praecinxit...*[emphasis added].

²⁸ Ch. Stöcker (1969: 9).

wandering a hidden message bearing traces of the contemplation of human existence and life after death.

Slavery as an irony or parody?

The issues of slavery and the social positions of slaves and freed individuals were not unknown to Petronius. After all, Trimalchion's feast comically reflected the community of released Roman slaves. But in Petronius' writings we have the possibility of examining the issue of slavery from the point of view of Greek novels.

Encolpius, Giton and their new guide Eumolpus peacefully sailed the sea until an outraged male voice, accompanied by a passionate woman's cry, drew attention to Giton. When Eumolpus said the ship owner's name aloud, Encolpius sensed danger and turned immediately to the gods: *aliquando totum me, Fortuna, vicisti.*²⁹

This turn of events may be seen as divine intervention, as the goddess Fortuna appeared and played a significant role. In novels of this genre, desperate wailing and crying over the misfortunes of Fate often creates room for emotional declamation.³⁰ Although we consider Encolpius' despair a ridicule of sentimental scenes in literature, implacable Fate shall be fulfilled in the end, despite all comic attempts to avert it.

As soon as the three characters realised the danger they were in, they tried to think up a plan to outwit Lichas and save themselves. Eumolpus' crazy plans, sometimes very risky to life and limb — *ego vos in duas iam pelles coniciam victosque loris inter vestimenta pro sarcinis habebō* — were rejected through a ridiculous explanation: "*ita vero*" inquam ego "*tamquam solidos alligaturus, quibus non soleat venter iniuriam facere?*"³¹ In this way, the idealised escapes of heroes in novels³² are satirized.³³ Only after

²⁹ Petr. *Sat.* 101,1.

³⁰ Cf. Panayotakis, Costas. 1995. *Theatrum Arbitri. Theatrical Elements in the Satyrica of Petronius*. Leiden — New York — Köln: E. J. Brill, 197: "The episode abounds in well-known motifs found in the extant Greek novels and low drama, whose repertory is fruitfully exploited to produce a scenario, suggested by Eumolpus, which aim at deceiving Lichas and Tryphaena [...]"

³¹ Petr. *Sat.* 102,8–10.

³² Ach. *Tat.* 2,30,2: *δύο δὲ ἡμέρας διαλιπόντες, ὅτε καὶ ἀποδημῶν ἔτυχεν ὁ πατήρ, παρεσκευαζόμεθα πρὸς τὴν φυγὴν*; realisation of escape: Ach. *Tat.* 2,31.

³³ Petr. *Sat.* 102,10: *An tamquam eos qui sternutare non soleamus nec stertere? An quia hoc genus furti semel [mea] feliciter cessit?*

all unrealistic options were considered did the three conceive of a seemingly simple and pragmatic plan for escape from the enemy.

We must observe that two novelistic phenomena are reflected in this realistic suggestion — enslavement and sacrifice. Encolpius and Giton voluntarily came to Eumolpus as slaves and cut their hair and shaved their eyebrows as an external sign. Eumolpus himself then painted ink tattoos on them:³⁴ *sequar ego frontes notans inscriptione sollerti, ut videamini stigmatate esse puniti.*³⁵

In addition to the dream symbolism of E. Courtney and other references to slavery in novels,³⁶ to make sense of this passage we should take into account the nature of slavery in Roman society at the time. We can assume that, since the author ironically described Trimalchion's origin and his relation to the subjects, Petronius — in a different way — here refers to the position of slaves in Rome only to give a comic-ironic description of the relation between a master and his slaves.

After the sea storm, shipwreck and Licha's death, the friends headed to the town of Croton, where Encolpius and Giton decided to play the part of Eumolpus' slaves once again to gain better access to the local community. When they allowed Eumolpus to treat them like slaves they swore by the very same oath that would-be gladiators had to swear when hired by free men.³⁷

Based on this knowledge we can include Petronius in the group of authors who talked about Roman public performances to explain or comment on the issue of freedom — *libertas*. Encolpius reacted to his slave status — first, as a gladiator he wanted to surrender to the enemy (101,1); then he understood his escape from the ship as a form of release or liberation;

³⁴ Cf. Apul. *Met.* 9,12: *frontes litterati et capillum semirasi*. Jones, C. P. 1987. "Stigma: Tattooing and branding in Greco-Roman Antiquity." *Journal of Roman Studies*, 77, 139. Tattooing was regularly accompanied by head shaving because this way the tattoos were much more apparent.

³⁵ Petr. *Sat.* 103,2.

³⁶ We can find at least two types of enslavement in the Greek novel: the hero or heroine is enslaved by the enemy, or a lover gives himself to his lover — e.g. Ach. Tat. 6,20,1–2: *Ὁ Θέρσανδρος οὖν, τὸ μὲν πρῶτον ἐλπίζων εἰς τὸν ἔρωτα εὐτυχήσειν, ὄλος Λευκίπης δολὸς ἦν. ἀτυχήσας δὲ ὧν ἤλπισεν, ἀφῆκε τῷ θυμῷ τὰς ἡνίας. ραπίζει δὴ κατὰ κόρρης αὐτὴν* "Ἵ κακὸδαίμον ἀνδράποδον," λέγων, "... και μεγάλην εὐτυχίαν δοκεῖς τὸν σὸν καταφιλήσαι δεσπότην..." see also Connors, Catherine. 2008. "Politics and Spectacles." In Whitmarsh, Tim [ed.]. *The Cambridge Companion to the Greek and Roman Novel*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008, 171.

³⁷ Petr. *Sat.* 117,5: *Tamquam legitimi gladiatores domino corpora animasque religiosissime addicimus.*

and, finally, before entering the debauched city, he re-accepted his role as a slave — gladiator with the hope of a new life. Unlike a gladiator who, given amnesty and dismissed from the arena, was not actually free, it seems that Petronius connected *missio* with *libertas*, as C. Connors suggests.³⁸ As in the whole work, even here Petronius made a statement about the issue of human freedom and enslavement with astounding facility, using light irony in the words and behaviour of his “fictional” characters.

Encolpius’ love affair

In the Croton adventure the reader meets the above-mentioned phenomena with reference to the Greek novel and Homer. The least expected phenomenon found in Petronius is Encolpius’ orientation towards the female sex, with which we can make a comparison with stories in other novels.³⁹ Petronius made a comical-satirical reference in his choice of the name of Encolpius’ lover, Circe, which may have been intentionally chosen as a caricature of Homer’s witch, who had the same name.⁴⁰

The main storyline revolves around Encolpius’ not very successful love affair with the beautiful Circe.⁴¹ When Encolpius loses his manly strength, all the subsequent events are related only in his struggle to regain it. Searching for the cause of his weakness brings Encolpius to prayer, and again to the god Priapus, and the reader is thereby implicitly encouraged to philosophical and moral reflection.

The allusion to Homer’s witch is important because our Circe seems to disassociate herself from Homer’s witch when she ironically admits that she is not the daughter of a god like Homer’s Circe, but by mentioning divinity she shows her own extraordinariness.⁴²

³⁸ C. Connors (2008: 173–175).

³⁹ E.g. Achilleus Tatios, Heliodorus.

⁴⁰ Lefevre, Eckard. 1997. *Studien zur Struktur der “Milesischen” Novelle bei Petron und Apuleius*. Mainz — Stuttgart: Steiner, 37: “Es ist schwerlich zu bestreiten, dass Petron das ganze Circe-Abenteuer erfunden haben kann... Liegt zumindest dem ersten Teil eine griechische Quelle zugrunde, können die Namen Circe, Polyaeus und Chrysis, vielleicht auch Proselenos und Oenothea einen Weg weisen.” Pellegrino, Carlo [ed.]. 1975. *Satyricon. Introduzione, edizione critica e commentato*. Roma: Ateneo, 424. The author observes that Chrysis is ‘un nome di etera’, a name to be used in comedy as well: Pl. *Ps.* 659; Ter. *An.* 85.

⁴¹ See also Blickman, D. 1988. “The Romance of Encolpius and Circe.” *A&R*, 33, 7–16.

⁴² Petr. *Sat.* 127,6: *Non sum quidem Solis progenies, nec mea mater, dum placet, labentis mundi cursum detinuit; habebo tamen quod caelo imputem, si nos fata coniunxerint.*

A playful scuffle with sacred geese is a significant part of the story with Priapus' priestess. *Oblitus itaque nugarum pedem mensulae extorsi coepique pugnacissimum animal armata elidere manu. Nec satiatu defunctorio ictu, morte me anseris vindicavi.*⁴³

The comic fight between Encolpius and three geese is an example of a grotesque show set in a scene of exuberant magic and witchcraft, and may be characterised as a "comedy inside a farce" (compare 22,3ff.).⁴⁴

The act was placed by the author inside an epic scene and can be compared with the fight between Heracles and the Stymphalian Birds (*Tales Herculea Stymphalidas arte coactas / ad caelum fugisse reor, caenoque fluentes*) or the Argonauts' fight with the Harpies.⁴⁵ (*Harpurias, cum Phineo maduere veneno / fallaces epulae. Tremuit perterritus aether / planctibus insolitis, confusaque regia caeli.*)⁴⁶

Nevertheless, Encolpius was in an entirely different position because in reality, the sacred goose represented Priapus' favourite pet.⁴⁷ In his article, T. W. Richardson⁴⁸ reminds us that geese, the first domesticated birds in Europe, were pets and toys to please and delight especially women at least from the time of Homer.⁴⁹

Even in such a comic situation there is a probable connection between the work of Homer and Petronius, which further raises the issue of the role, position and respect of gods in literature. Encolpius' comic behaviour and his sober words after being accused of a serious crime regarding Priapus' goose prove that his earlier prayer to Priapus was just an ironic derision and his sacred relation to the god was only feigned. Petronius not only ironically ridiculed the silly worship of a questionable godling, but he also criticised those who hypocritically worshipped gods and maintained stupid ceremonies, as their "adherence" could be easily be purchased for "two florins".

43 Petr. Sat. 136,5.

44 C. Panayotakis (1995: 179).

45 See Beck, R. 1973. "Some Observations on the Narrative Technique of Petronius." *Phoenix*, 27, 58 and Courtney, Edward. 1991. *The Poems of Petronius. American Classical Studies* 25. Atlanta: Scholars Press, 45. The authors compare Encolpius' killing of the goose to the slaughter of Helios' livestock (Hom. *Od.* XII,260–453).

46 Petr. Sat. 136,5.

47 C. Panayotakis (1995: 179).

48 Richardson, T. W. 1980. "The Sacred Geese of Priapus? (*Satyricon* 136, 4ff.)." *Museum Helveticum*, 37, 102.

49 Hom. *Od.* XIX, 536–537: *χῆνές μοι κατὰ οἶκον ἐείκοσι πύρρον ἔδουσιν / ἐξ ὕδατος, καὶ τέ σφιν ἰαίνουμαι εἰσορόωσα.*

“*Ecce duos aureos pono, unde possitis et deos et anseres emere.*” *Quos ut vidit Oenothea, “ignosce” inquit “adulescens, sollicita sum tua causa.”*⁵⁰

“Croton is indeed the climax of the story,” Walsh observes, “and by a comic and ironical paradox the outcome is not the guarantee of a happy life together for the lovers, but the deliverance of Encolpius from his obsessive attachment and the recovery of his heterosexual appetite.”⁵¹

It is necessary to identify Encolpius not as a person as such but rather to view his acts as marks of Petronius’ hiding behind a see-through mask.⁵² I think that Petronius did not want to only parody this or that work, he wanted to create something of his own, something new, which would to a certain extent correspond to his original way of life, the specifics of the time and the influence of Nero’s court.

In my opinion, the novelty and originality of Petronius’ work lays in the way he handled the given material and how and where he worked individual passages into the text. Whether he was taking on the traditional epic wanderings of classical heroes, or the plots of romantic Greek novels, or the tragic Seneca, whom I did not consider in this article, Petronius always criticised and parodied the given genre, person or event, and also sought to make the reader uncertain and force him to think about where the parody is hidden, how it is situated in the work, to what extent it is a caricature and whether the reader is not trapped by the author’s devices.

⁵⁰ Petr. *Sat.* 137,6–7.

⁵¹ Walsh, Patrick G. 1970. *The Roman Novel. The “Satyricon” of Petronius and the “Metamorphoses” of Apuleius.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 79.

⁵² See also Jenson, Gottskálk. 2004. *The Recollection of Encolpius. The Satyricon of Petronius as Milesian Fiction.* Groningen: Barkhuis Publishing, 19.