

VI

Synopsis and Conclusion



This study set out to advance our understanding of the *Satyrica* in two interconnected regards: 1) Petronius' indebtedness to the theatrical culture of his time, more exactly to (farcical) comic stage productions; 2) the character and function of Encolpius the narrator, particularly his role in adapting theatrical elements for narrative fiction. In this chapter, I will outline my findings in both fields, trying to paint a unified picture, as it were.

VI.1 Comic Elements

Before summarising the parallels between the *Satyrica* and the comic tradition, I should stress once more that many of the elements listed below are far from exclusive to comedy. Many of them also occur in (Menippean) satire, the ('idealising') novel, iambic poetry, epic, historiography, tragedy, love elegy, oratory, and likely elsewhere. The aim of this study was not to show that Petronius directly drew on extant comedies (intertextuality in the narrow sense) but to demonstrate that there is a strong presence of comic *topoi* in Petronius' work. These *topoi* constitute parallels (or: transtextual links) between the *Satyrica* and the comic tradition, regardless of whether Petronius deliberately engaged with stage productions or whether he drew on comic elements that had long become commonplaces of other literary genres. In both cases, Petronius may be envisioned as working along the same lines as ancient comic playwrights.⁶⁸³ To be clear, my analysis does suggest that some elements

683 Cf. esp. section I.4.1. Terminology and Preliminaries.

in the *Satyrica* were indeed inspired by theatrical performances of the Imperial era – but we have no way of (dis)proving this with regard to any specific element. I should also emphasise that I do not suggest comedy to be the most important – let alone the only – genre the *Satyrica* is worth comparing to. Rather, investigating parallels other than comic was merely beyond the scope of this study. Comicality is but one of many facets to the complex artifact that is the *Satyrica*.

I will now provide a synopsis of the comic elements I have identified in Petronius' work. Though this summary contains stock characters, plot elements, motifs, and techniques, I shall not try to divide them into neat categories. Rather, my overview is meant to show that all these elements are closely intertwined. I will use bold print for a few of the more prominent comic *topoi*.

Like so many plays from New Comedy onwards, the First Rivalry over Giton (§§ 9–11) is set in motion by (an attempted) **rape**. The rapist Ascyltus looks at this crime with the same light-hearted arrogance as the rapist Chaerea in Terence's *Eunuchus* (583–91). Both Ascyltus and Chaerea compare themselves to mythological/literary role models: Sextus Tarquinius and Jupiter respectively. In both cases, several factors come together to enhance the **parodic contrast** between these figures. The suffering of the rape victims, i.e. of Giton and Pamphila, is consistently downplayed, particularly with reference to their (perceived) low social status. In this regard, the First Rivalry over Giton strongly resembles comedies that revolve around **non-consensual sex with slave (-like) characters**, such as Plautus' *Casina* or *Mercator*. Just like Petronius' episode, these plays do not centre on the (social) consequences of rape but on the themes of **adultery and jealousy**. The analysis of Giton's (relatively) low status has also shown that he has many characteristics of comic *pueri delicati*, such as Olympio in Plautus' *Casina* or Paegnium in his *Persa*.⁶⁸⁴

The rape (attempt) leads to an altercation between Encolpius and Ascyltus, a **verbal duel** in the vein of Aristophanes (e.g. *Equ.* 276–87) and Plautus (e.g. *Pers.* 406–26). As in many comedies, there is a strong sense of playfulness, even **role-playing**, to the altercation in the *Satyrica*: None of the quarrellers appears to take the 'fight' seriously. In terms of theme, Encolpius' and Ascyltus' conversation revolves around matters of **sex and food**. In this regard, they do not only resemble 'low-

684 For some reflections on how to approach an episode like the First Rivalry over Giton in the 21st century, cf. Foreword: Reading the *Satyrica* in the 21st Century.

life' verbal duellers (e.g. the slaves Pinacium and Phaniscus in Plaut. *Mostell.* 885–98) but also the comic stock type of the **parasite** (e.g. Artogrotus in Plaut. *Mil.* 33–5). Ascyltus 'wins' the argument with Encolpius by **mirroring and exaggerating** his opponent's behaviour and by destroying every moral posture he tries on. The same dynamics are at play, for instance, in the altercation between the *adulescens* Diniarchus and the (prostitute) *ancilla* Astaphium in Plautus' *Truculentus* (138–63).

The verbal duel brings about a **role reversal**: Encolpius now plays the role of the rapist/adulterer, and Ascyltus plays that of the jealous spouse. The way Ascyltus now treats Encolpius resembles **spectacular punishments** meted out against adulterers or other disreputable characters on the comic stage: It features *Schadenfreude* in the form of laughter (cf. Plaut. *Cas.* 855–8), mocking applause (cf. Plaut. *Pers.* 791) as well as slapstick violence (cf. e.g. Herodas' fifth mimiamb or the ending of Plaut. *Cas.* and Plaut. *Mil.*). By using the strap of his bag for a whip, Ascyltus becomes a comic **lorarius** (cf. e.g. Plaut. *Rud.* 821–36). The passage is replete with (sexual) **puns** and **double entendres** (e.g. § 11.2, § 11.4), hallmarks of ancient comedy (e.g. Plaut. *Aul.* 280–8, Plaut. *Mil.* 1416).

The reconciliation episode (§ 91) can be read as a '**scene of seduction**' in the comic vein. Giton takes the role of the so-called *meretrix mala* or *meretrix callida* (cf. e.g. the Athenian Bacchis in Plaut. *Bacch.* or Phronesium in Plaut. *Truc.*). As these prostitutes do with reluctant customers, Giton twists Encolpius around his little finger, thereby bringing about another role reversal: The man 'in charge' ends up 'surrendering' to the seductress (cf. esp. Plaut. *Bacch.* 39b–104). The *puer delicatus* Olympio (Plaut. *Cas.* 734–40a) proves that Giton is not the first male character wielding the power of seduction. Encolpius is an **adulescens amans** torn between his desire and his 'better judgement' (cf. esp. Phaedria in Ter. *Eun.* 51–55).

In many regards, Eumolpus strikes us as a **senex amator**. He is an old man (*senex canus*, § 83.7) with a strong sexual interest in almost any (young) person he comes across, such as the Pergamene youth (§§ 85–7), Giton (§ 94.1–2), Encolpius (§ 140.5, 140.13), and Philomela's unnamed daughter (§ 140.1–10). As this list shows, in his lechery, Eumolpus does not make a difference between male and female objects of desire. The same is true, for instance, for Philocleon in Aristophanes' *Wasps* and Lysidamus in Plautus' *Casina*. In the Third Rivalry over Giton (§§ 92–96) Eumolpus unwittingly stumbles into a **sexual rivalry** with a much younger man (§ 92.1–94.7), which can also be said, for instance, about the *senex* Demipho in Plautus' *Mercator*. In the *Satyrica* the role of the

young rival – typically the *senex*' own son – is taken up by Encolpius. Just like Argyrippus in Plautus' *Asinaria*, he is an *adulescens* (e.g. § 3.1) in love who finds himself in a rivalry with someone he thought to be entirely harmless: an old man who endures **mockery** for attempting to be sexually active at his age (§ 100.1, cf. e.g. Plaut. *Merc.* 574–7). As these comedies, Petronius' episode heavily relies on a **difference in awareness** between its characters.

Believing to have lost Giton to Eumolpus, Encolpius attempts to commit a **lover's suicide** (§ 94.8–15). He is guided by the comic notion that being without one's beloved equals being dead (e.g. Plaut. *Cas.* 111 f., Plaut. *Merc.* 857–63). Lovers' suicides had been common at least since Menander (*Pk.* 504, 977; *Mis.* 710 f.). Encolpius and Giton engage in a playful '**suicidal contest**', an extraordinary passage that has a (less drastic) forerunner in the conversation between Argyrippus and Philaenium in Plautus' *Asinaria* (591–617). Again, both Petronius and Plautus rely on the techniques of mirroring and exaggeration.

Having turned the tables against Eumolpus (another role reversal), Encolpius enjoys watching the old man getting caught up in a **slapstick brawl**. When Eumolpus is hit by an earthenware jug (without being seriously hurt), he resembles comic parasites such as Curculio (Plaut. *Curc.* 397 f.) and Ergasilus (Plaut. *Capt.* 88–90). He is beaten up by cooks, (drunk) lodgers and a blear-eyed old woman – all 'armed' with everyday items. This is the stuff of 'battles' in the comic tradition (e.g. Aristoph. *Av.* 343–450, *Men. Pk.* 469–73). Having regained his Giton, we learn that Encolpius' love for the boy is not without limits: When Giton threatens to spoil his *Schadenfreude*, Encolpius hits him on the head (§ 96.3), just as Toxilus snaps at his beloved Lemniselenis in Plautus' *Persa* (803–43).

As this overview shows, comic elements in the *Satyrica* do not occur in isolation but are deeply entrenched in the structure of Petronius' work. For the parallels between Eumolpus and the *senex amator*, for instance, it does not suffice to say that Eumolpus is old and lecherous. Equally importantly, other Petronian characters interact with him as comic *dramatis personae* interact with *senes amatores* (e.g. by mocking them or by underestimating their abilities). We should also note that, when becoming aware of Eumolpus' flirt with Giton, Encolpius readily puts on the role of the jealous madman (§ 94.6): Histrionic postures are never far from his mind. What is more, the entire plot of the Third Rivalry over Giton is carefully designed so as to bring about a clash between the expectations of Eumolpus and Encolpius: The episode is no less a 'comedy of errors' than Plautus' *Mercator* or *Asinaria*.

It does not come as much of a surprise, perhaps, that the *Satyrice* shares particularly many elements with Plautus' oeuvre. I suggest that this is due to the fact that Plautine plays tend to be farcical – farcicality being the common denominator between 1) the *Satyrice*, 2) Plautine comedy, and 3) the Graeco-Roman mime, the comic genre Petronius' text most clearly evokes (e.g. § 19.1, § 80.9, § 94.15). From the very outset this study faced the challenge that the mime, though it was dominant in Petronius' day, is almost entirely lost to us. I attempted to show that appreciating the 'farcical overlap' between all known forms of ancient comedy can be a useful workaround, as it were, for approaching the 'mimic' quality of the *Satyrice*.⁶⁸⁵ The sum of my findings suggests that the presence of comic *topoi* in Petronius' narrative is far from incidental: We are dealing with a plot that seems to come right out of dramatic scripts, performed by characters inclined to play-act, presented to an audience imbued with the theatrical culture of their time.

VI.2 Narrator and Narrative Technique

VI.2.1 Stage-Like Storytelling

My analysis did not stop at identifying comic elements in the *Satyrice*. I was equally interested in how Petronius forms fully-fledged narrative episodes out of characters, plots, motifs, and techniques associated with the theatre. We have observed that, throughout a large portion of the episodes discussed here, Petronius employs what I have called stage-like storytelling: By emphasising the visual and auditory aspects of the story, the narrator creates the impression of a stage performance before the inner eye of the audience. Again, I will use bold print to highlight key findings or concepts.

Most features of stage-like storytelling can be subsumed under what Plato refers to as **μίμησις** (*Resp.* 392c–394) or what Genette (1980: 166) refers to as a '**narrative of events**': Encolpius the narrator foregrounds the words and actions of the story's characters, thereby reducing his own (perceived) presence to the bare minimum. This phenomenon is most obvious in the area of speech representation: The altercation between Encolpius and Ascylltus in the First Rivalry over Giton (§ 9.6–10.7), for instance, largely consists of **reported speech** (159 of 200 words). The

685 Cf. section I.3. Petronius and the Theatre.

narrator ‘quotes’ the quarrellers’ words in full even though – as the intermediary between the story and the audience – he is in a position to represent them in a number of different (less ‘mimetic’) ways. In terms of narrative speed, the result is a ‘scene’, i.e. a passage in which **story time equals narrative time**: Encolpius and Ascyltus hypothetically need about the same time to argue as we need to read/listen about it. The same would be the case, of course, if theatregoers were to watch the altercation performed on stage. When the narrator ‘intrudes’ into the characters’ conversation, he keeps his remarks brief and ‘objective’: He does not manipulate the story but merely gives the audience an idea of what the episode **looks and sounds** like (e.g. *intentavi in oculos Ascylti manus*, § 9.6; *longe maiore nisu clamavit*, § 9.7).

The above-mentioned technique pertains to what I have called ‘stage directions’ in a stage-like narrative: Petronius’ narrator usually does not spell out what characters feel (by naming their emotions), but he describes how these characters **physically express their emotions**, typically through gestures and facial expressions. In the reconciliation episode, for instance, the narrator does not simply state that Giton was glad when he saw Encolpius, but he describes that the boy *convertit ... solutum gaudio vultum*, § 91.2. He does not state that Encolpius was overwhelmed by his rekindled affection for Giton as well as by the pain their separation had caused. Rather, the narrator recounts *invado pectus amplexibus et perfusum os lacrimis vultu meo contero*, § 91.4. Since the narrator’s emphasis on emotive gestures can be observed throughout the corpus analysed here, I am convinced that we are not dealing with coincidences but with a deliberate narrative technique. The result, again, is that the action of the *Satyrice* is put before the inner eye of the audience. In terms of the impressions it creates, Petronius’ narrative is about as close as it can get to a stage performance.

Another, perhaps less obvious, phenomenon in this field is **paralepsis**, which means that the narrator occasionally discloses more information than he can technically possess. In other words: Encolpius briefly tells his story as if he was **omniscient**. In the First Rivalry over Giton, for instance, Encolpius tells us what Ascyltus was doing outside the room (*furtim se foribus admovit discussisque fortissime claustris*, § 11.2) even though he – as both protagonist and narrator – is not in a (plausible) position to know about this. I have stressed that we should not overinterpret such (minor) paralepses with regard to the ‘character’ of the narrator. Nor should we try to explain them away by coming up with elaborate theories as to how Encolpius might have gained the information after the

fact. My own suggestion is that *paralepses* bridge the gap between what Encolpius experienced at the time and what the audience would experience if they watched the *Satyrica* on stage. For, theatregoers would naturally be able to see not only Encolpius and Giton inside the room, but also Ascyllus approaching from the outside (this is what Panayotakis (1995) has called the ‘double audience-spectacle pattern’). For the sake of stage-like storytelling, Petronius here **dispenses with strict narrative plausibility**.

VI.2.2 Manipulations of the Story

We would not do justice to the *Satyrica*, however, if we claimed it was a stage-like narrative through and through. Equally importantly, Petronius’ narrator regularly manipulates the story in ways – or: to an extent – theatrical productions could not.

Several of Petronius’ narrative techniques **emphasise** specific elements of the story by directing the audience’s attention toward them. Typically, this is achieved through **variations in speech representation** and/or **variations in narrative speed**. When Encolpius finds Giton at the beginning of the First Rivalry over Giton, for instance, the narrator does not simply ‘give the stage’ to the characters of the *Satyrica*. Rather, he conveys the protagonist’s words in indirect modes of representation: transposed speech (*quid accidisset quaesivi*, §9.3) and narrated speech (*precibus etiam iracundiam miscui*, §9.3). This increases the perceived presence of the narrator and simultaneously accelerates the pace of the narrative (story time > narrative time). As soon as it is Giton’s turn to speak, however, the narrative slows down to a ‘scene’ (story time = narrative time), as the narrator presents the boy’s words in the mode of reported speech (*‘tuus’ inquit ‘iste frater ...’*, §9.4). The effect of this technique – which has no (readily available) equivalent on stage – is to highlight Giton’s rape accusation against Ascyllus (*coepitque mihi velle pudorem extorquere ...’*, §9.4). As the rape (threat) sets in motion the plot of the First Rivalry over Giton, the narrator’s emphasis is clearly in line with the overall design of the episode. As so often, **the story and its narrative representation work hand in hand**, as it were.

This technique can also pertain to actions rather than words. In the suicide passage of the Third Rivalry over Giton, for instance, Encolpius the narrator ‘spends’ only two sentences on telling us how he (in the past) decided to kill himself, made preparations for the suicide, and was

saved by Eumolpus and Giton at the last moment (§ 94.8). The narrator ‘fast-forwards’ the story (story time > narrative time) in a way theatrical productions could not. The narrative slows down as soon as Giton arrives. Rather than dwelling on his own (desperate) action, the narrator directs the audience’s attention to Giton’s *reaction* (the ‘suicidal contest’).

The opposite of emphasis is what I have called the **condensation** of the story, i.e. fitting a large amount of story elements into a relatively short episode. Apart from accelerating the pace of the narrative, Petronius’ narrator accomplishes this by means of **paralipsis**, i.e. by omitting elements of the story that are otherwise within the scope of the narrative. During the altercation between Encolpius and Ascyltus (§ 9.6–10.7), for instance, Giton is strikingly ‘absent’ – even though the quarrel was sparked by the boy’s rape accusation against Ascyltus! The point is not that Giton is absent from the story (as far as we can tell, he must be in the room the entire time), but that he simply is not mentioned. The boy becomes ‘**invisible**’: The narrator omits (or ‘sidesteps’) his presence, arguably because it might ‘spoil the fun’ of Encolpius’ and Ascyltus’ verbal duel. Incidentally, we may remember that the two do not mention Giton and/or the rape (attempt) themselves; they prefer to quarrel about sexual roles and dinner invitations. Again, then, the narrator’s representation enhances the effect that is inherent in the words and actions of Petronius’ characters. Similarly, Ascyltus is strangely absent when Giton accuses him of rape (§ 9.1–5), and Corax somewhat awkwardly ‘appears’ and ‘disappears’ in the course of the Third Rivalry over Giton (esp. § 94.12). In such cases, Petronius dispenses with characters deemed irrelevant to the passage at hand. Again, he **prioritises narrative efficiency rather than verisimilitude**.

At the end of the First Rivalry over Giton, the narrator condenses the story by means of a temporal **ellipsis**: The episode breaks off rather abruptly when Ascyltus, giving Encolpius a beating with his *lorum*, tells him: *sic dividere cum fratre nolito* (§ 11.4). On the one hand, Ascyltus’ words mark the role reversal between Encolpius and himself: Encolpius having suggested to split up their belongings (*communes sarcinulas partiamur*; § 10.4), Ascyltus now asserts that this agreement should include Giton, their ‘brother’ or male sex partner. On the other hand, Ascyltus’ words contain a *double entendre* (*dividere* meaning ‘to sexually penetrate’), hinting that he is punishing Encolpius for having sex with Giton behind his back. In a way, Ascyltus’ final remark fulfils the function of a **punchline** at the end of joke – and it should not come as a surprise, then, that this is where the episode suddenly comes to an end. Rather

than telling us how the situation eventually deescalated (which it must have done in the logic of the story), the narrator has the First Rivalry of Giton break off when the tension has reached its peak, creating the greatest possible effect.

Particularly sophisticated manipulations of the story can be found in the reconciliation episode (§91). As Giton slowly gains the upper hand over Encolpius, the elements of the episode's first half closely correspond to those of the second half (wiping away tears, sobbing/groaning, speaking etc.). While this **symmetry** already exists on the level of the story, the narrator brings it to full fruition, as it were. Perhaps most significantly, he makes sure no reader/listener misses the turning point of the action – the 'symmetry axis': Giton raises his eyebrow (*supercilium altius sustulit*, §91.7), his re-awakened haughtiness ringing in the role reversal between Encolpius and himself. The narrator 'zooms in' on a slight movement in the area around Giton's eyes – an effect that has no one-to-one correspondence on stage.

Further manipulations belong to the realm of **subjective storytelling**. As he tells his story, Encolpius the narrator regularly allows his personal standpoint or (past) emotions to shine through. Since this feature will also be relevant to the next section, I will confine myself to one example here: Often, Encolpius' narration is coloured by what he felt at the time of the action. This should be understood in the context of **experiencing focalisation** (= narrated I), which is clearly the narrator's default option for telling the story. After Encolpius' separation from Ascylltus in the First Rivalry over Giton, for instance, the narrator does not describe the matter in 'objective' – i.e. detached and disinterested – terms: Rather, he calls Ascylltus a *custodem molestum* (§10.7) and Giton *Gitone meo* (*ibid.*) – two subjective evaluations that correspond to how Encolpius the protagonist felt at the time. In the same breath, the narrator refers to his (past) split-up from Ascylltus as hasty and precipitate (*hanc tam praecipitem divisionem libido faciebat*, §10.7). This is not only a subjective evaluation, but – more importantly – it is an evaluation that judges the separation by its outcome (**narrating focalisation** or narrating I). Other than the protagonist, the narrator knows that Ascylltus' withdrawal was insincere, that he will be back shortly and punish Encolpius for his credulity (§11.2–4). The effect of the narrator's word choice, then, is to **foreshadow** the sudden turn of events the story holds, thereby building up **suspense**. Intriguingly, this technique not only involves a manipulation of the story, but it also tells us something about the stance and/or character of Encolpius the narrator.

VI.2.3 The Character and Function of Encolpius the Narrator

In the past decades Petronian scholars have put forward three major hypotheses as to the stance and/or character of Encolpius the narrator. The earliest of these is Roger Beck's (1973; 1975; 1982) view that Encolpius the protagonist and Encolpius the narrator should be regarded as markedly different characters: According to Beck, we are dealing with a sophisticated and ironic narrator who tries to amuse his audience at the expense of his past self, the naïve protagonist. Taking Beck's articles as a starting point, Gareth Schmeling (1994/95; 2018) argues that Encolpius is a *confessor gloriosus* and that the *Satyrica* is his elaborate confession of past sins and mistakes. According to Gian Biagio Conte (1996), however, the distinction between the protagonist and the narrator is much less pronounced. He claims that, above all, it is the function of the 'hidden author' (= implied author) to establish an ironic tension between Encolpius (as both protagonist and narrator) and himself. Typically, the implied author achieves this by exposing Encolpius' *mythomania*, i.e. his hubristic desire to identify himself with great mythical or literary role models. In Conte's view, then, it is not (primarily) the narrator but the implied author who tries to amuse the audience at Encolpius' expense.

This study has shown that each of these hypotheses – though being (in part) mutually exclusive – has considerable value for our understanding of Petronius' work. It has also emerged, however, that none of them can be fruitfully applied to the *Satyrica* as a whole.

VI.2.3.1 Encolpius Making a Confession

The most specific of the three hypotheses, perhaps, is Schmeling's suggestion that the narrator is a *confessor*. At first sight this interpretation is quite plausible, seeing that most of the *Satyrica* somehow puts Encolpius in a bad light. Encolpius tells us, for instance, about how he endured verbal abuse (§ 9.6–10.3) and physical violence (§ 11.4), lost his beloved Giton to a companion (§ 80.6–9), and failed at punishing both of them for their 'betrayal' (§ 82.1–4). If we imagine the narrator to have a "confession-compulsion" (Schmeling 1994/5: 221), this could explain why he – though he is in a position to do otherwise – places particular emphasis on his own failures and shortcomings.

Having a closer look at individual episodes, however, Schmeling's suggestion ceases to be thoroughly convincing. First of all, for his hy-

pothesis to make sense, Schmeling needs to assume that Encolpius the narrator can put words into the mouths of the story's characters. According to this view, for instance, it is the narrator who has Ascyltus call the protagonist a *gladiator obscene* and *nocturne percussor* (§ 9.8–9). In the introduction, I made clear that I find this methodological approach rather unfortunate, not least because it prevents us from systematically analysing the 'objective' story on the one hand and the narrator's (mis)representation of it on the other.⁶⁸⁶

Even if we accept Schmeling's methodology, however, considerable difficulties remain. In the First Rivalry over Giton (§§ 9–11), for example, how does it amount to a 'sin' or a 'mistake' on Encolpius' part that Ascyltus casts him in the penetrating role (e.g. *gladiator obscene* and *nocturne percussor*, § 9.8–9), i.e. the role that is in line with the norms of Roman masculinity? Possibly, the narrative about Giton's rape by Ascyltus amounts to a confession of how Encolpius failed to keep his beloved safe from harm. If this is the case, however, why does the narrator have the boy 'disappear' by means of paralipsis for the most part of the episode? Why does the narrator emphasise the farcical aspects of the story rather than Giton's suffering? In the reconciliation episode (§ 91), Schmeling must assume that the narrator – by the time he is telling the story – has seen through Giton's seductive ploy. Why, then, does the narrator not distance himself from the protagonist's gullibility but creates the impression that he is still as infatuated with Giton as on the first day? In short: While Schmeling's reading has some appealing qualities, it is insufficient to account for the wide range of narrative techniques we find in the *Satyrice*. At times, it is quite incompatible with the overall thrust of Petronius' episodes.

VI.2.3.2 *Mythomaniac* Encolpius

In a similar vein, I need to express reservations about Conte's hypothesis about the *mythomaniac* narrator and the implied author. At first sight, the First Rivalry over Giton (§§ 9–11) seems to confirm Conte's overall reading of the *Satyrice*. After all, the entire episode is modelled on an infamous mytho-historical precedent: the rape of Lucretia by Sextus Tarquinius according to Livy and Ovid. Arguably, Encolpius tries to identify himself with Lucretia's husband Collatinus, who plays an important

686 Cf. esp. section I.5.3. Narrator vs. (Implied) Author.

part in avenging the crime. The implied author, however, puts the resourceful Ascyllus in Encolpius' way, thus making sure Encolpius' attempt at greatness comes to nothing.

On closer inspection, however, the case is not as straightforward. While it is true that the narrator is responsible for some references to the Lucretia story (e.g. *precibus etiam iracundiam miscui*, §9.3. ~ *miscere precibus minas*, Liv. 1.58.3), the clearest reference of all is made by Ascyllus (quoted by Giton): *si Lucretia es ... Tarquinius invenisti* (§9.5). Clearly, then, the character who most arrogantly identifies himself with a mytho-historical role model is not Encolpius but Ascyllus. At the very least, we need to acknowledge that here, as in other cases, the characters around Encolpius are no less *mythomaniac* than himself. Claiming that the implied author's game pertains only to Encolpius does not do justice to Petronius' work. It might be more accurate to state that in the *Satyrica* there is some *mythomania* in the story itself (displayed by Petronius' characters) and some additional *mythomania* in its representation (displayed by the narrator). Both 'layers' of *mythomania* complement each other, enhancing their parodic effect.

My findings concerning the reconciliation episode (§91) are of a different nature. Here, it seems very clear that Petronius' readers/listeners are allowed to amuse themselves at Encolpius' expense: Giton twists the protagonist around his little finger, making him – quite unwittingly – take the blame for their separation earlier in the story. Arguably, again, this is part of the implied author's game: He exposes Encolpius' gullibility to the watchful eyes of the audience. Yet, several features of Conte's model are missing. Apart from a minor reference to Virgil's Lausus (§91.7 ~ Verg. *Aen.* 10.829f.), the passage holds virtually no sign of *mythomania*. Equally importantly, as I have shown at length, using the implied author to explain the reconciliation episode means to break a butterfly on a wheel, as it were. For, if we are looking for the 'mastermind' of this episode, we need not look any further than Giton: He is the one exploiting Encolpius' gullibility to his own advantage. The (amusing) contrast does not lie between the story and the narrator's misrepresentation of it – which is when the concept of the implied author is truly helpful –, but it lies between Giton's perspective on the one hand and Encolpius' perspective on the other. Picking up on various cues in the text, the audience eventually comes to share Giton's 'superior' point of view – and this, incidentally, is exactly what theatregoers would do if they watched the reconciliation episode performed on stage.

VI.2.3.3 Self-Ironic Encolpius

At several points in this study, my reading has been broadly in line with that of Beck and his followers. I have argued, for instance, that Encolpius' narrative techniques throughout the First Rivalry over Giton (§§ 9–11) work toward the amusement of his audience: The narrator foregrounds the farcical aspects of the story even if it is at the expense of his past self. We may remember, for instance, the slapstick punishment meted out by Ascylltus, in combination with the episode's 'punchline' (§ 11.4). At § 11.2 the narrator even introduces an amusing *double entendre* that is not part of the story as such: *opertum me amiculo evolvit*, punning on the ambiguity of *amiculo* ("cloak" and/or "little friend"). In this case, as in many others, it is indisputable that the narrator intentionally enhances the entertaining qualities of the story.

My findings concerning the suicide passage (§ 94.8–15) are equally compatible with Beck's views. At the end of the passage, the narrator divulges a key piece of information that the protagonist is not aware of at the time: the fact that the 'deadly' razor is blunt (§ 94.14–5), making clear that Giton's suicide attempt is nothing but a charade. What is more, the narrator explicitly describes the protagonist's suicide as 'mimic' (*mimicam mortem*, § 94.15) and as the product of play-acting (*fabula inter amantes luditur*, § 95.1). He thereby joins those who 'know better' (Giton, Eumolpus, Corax, and the audience) and makes his past self the sole butt of the joke. This, in fact, is a prototypical example of Beck's distinction between the naïve protagonist and the self-ironic narrator.

Yet, we have also observed that there are limits to Beck's reading. In the reconciliation episode (§ 91), for instance, there is no indication whatsoever as to an (ironic) distance between the two Encolpii. As far as we can tell, the protagonist is hopelessly infatuated with Giton, and the narrator – albeit 'older' – is none the wiser: It is the narrator's sincere aim to share his happy memory of having been reunited with his beloved Giton. The amusing qualities of the episode are not created by the narrator's ironic detachment, but (primarily) by Giton's manipulative skills and by the symmetry of the story elements.

Even in the case of the suicide passage, Beck's hypothesis requires qualification. For, we should not go as far as to posit a significant difference in character between the two Encolpii: The narrator's techniques outlined above do not amount to true 'maturity', but they are largely restricted to poking fun at one's own stupidity/gullibility after the fact. This is a 'character trait', however, that the narrator has in common with

the protagonist. It is Encolpius at the time of the action, for instance, who starts to thank a strange soldier for stopping his haphazard ‘killing spree’ (*coepi grassatoris audaciae gratias agere*, § 82.4). Self-irony, then, is clearly not restricted to the narrator. It is merely the case that the ‘older’ Encolpius – by virtue of looking back at the story – enjoys the benefit of hindsight much more frequently than his ‘younger’ counterpart.

VI.2.3.4 The Function of the Narrator

Throughout this study, I have pointed out that there are (at least) two sides to Petronius’ narrator that deserve scholarly attention. On the one hand, the narrator is the ‘older version’ of Encolpius the protagonist. As such, he has certain emotions and/or character traits that may shine through his words. As outlined above, we may sometimes gain the impression that the narrator is making a confession and/or trying to unduly exalt himself and/or aiming at amusing his audience. It can hardly be stressed enough, though, that clear cases of narrating focalisation are exceedingly rare, i.e. that in the vast majority of cases the narrator’s standpoint is indistinguishable from that of the protagonist.

On the other hand, we need to acknowledge that – simultaneously to being a (more or less distinct) character – Encolpius the narrator fulfils the basic function of being the intermediary between the story and the audience. Since Petronius chose to have a homodiegetic narrator tell the story, this narrator must do more than simply reflect his own (and/or the protagonist’s) point of view. In more general terms, he must make sure Petronius’ readers/listeners receive all information they need for understanding (and enjoying) the *Satyrice*. In other words: Encolpius the narrator needs to be the audience’s eyes and ears at all times.

This dual function of the narrator – being/representing a character in the story and being the audience’s only informer – is responsible for many of the inconsistencies that have stimulated scholarly debates.⁶⁸⁷

687 Cf. e.g. Winkler’s (1985: 75) remarks on similar phenomena in Apuleius’ *Metamorphoses*: “we may now say that *The Golden Ass* tries to get a combined maximum effect out of both heterodiegesis (sheer storytelling) and the several forms of homodiegesis (accountable narration of what happened).” Cf. also *ibid.* 81: “In modern mystery novels, even when there is a detective, the principle that governs the construction of the text is not the detective figure but the understanding of the reader. The function of the detective is that of an ideal reader, present in the text as a representative of the reader to review facts, draw partial conclusions, and pose the challenge of understanding the whole. The function is necessary, the character is not.”

This is the case for all *paralepses* mentioned in this study – these being prototypical examples of what happens when a homodiegetic narrator is required to look beyond his (plausible) field of vision. Other such inconsistencies include the fact that Encolpius, who is otherwise vainglorious, emphasises the farcical aspects of his own punishment at § 11.2–4; or that in the reconciliation episode (§ 91) the narrator brings out the symmetry of the story elements even though he (as a ‘character’) apparently has not understood that Giton turned the tables against him; or that in the suicide passage the narrator devotes only a few words to his own suicide attempt (§ 94.8) even though, not much earlier, his lament about a very similar situation had filled an entire chapter (§ 81). None of this makes sense if we assume that the narrator’s mode(s) of storytelling solely depend on Encolpius’ character or agenda. We need to acknowledge that the narrator’s stance, at least in part, changes according to the nature of the episode he is presenting to the audience. The effects certain narrative techniques create are not necessarily the same as what the narrator ‘wants’.

While my suggestion might seem unsatisfactory to those who seek a sense of ‘order’ in the *Satyricon*, it is important to note that the stance of the narrator is not the only area in which Petronius sacrifices strict plausibility for the sake of momentary effects. How else can we explain that Giton, when he finally talks about the rape (attempt) by Ascyltus, highlights the rapist’s penchant for role-playing (*si Lucretia es ...*, § 9.5) more so than his own suffering? Or that Encolpius the protagonist ‘has forgotten’ about Eumolpus’ excessive sexual appetite in the Third Rivalry over Giton (§ 92.1–94.7) even though he had listened to the old man’s tale about the Pergamene youth shortly before (§§ 85–7)? Or that Eumolpus, otherwise a desperately poor poet, can afford a personal servant exactly when the plot calls for a barber (§ 94.12)? The list could be much longer. My point is that, often enough, Petronius is concerned with creating certain effects – such as suspense, surprise or comic irony – much more than with creating a story/narrative of perfect verisimilitude.

Much of the same, of course, is true for many comedies discussed in this study. In Plautus’ *Miles gloriosus* (1416) the soldier Pyrgopolinices, who relishes nothing more than his ‘manliness’, makes an out-of-character pun about losing his testicles. Numerous slaves in the *fabula palliata* joke about sexual (and other forms of) exploitation even though they should be painfully aware of the suffering this entails (e.g. Plaut. *Mostell.* 894 or *Rud.* 1074). In Plautus’ *Menaechmi*, Sosicles travels around the world in order to find his twin brother; when people start mistaking

him for somebody else, however, it never occurs to Sosicles that these people must know the very person he is looking for. In comedies such imperfections are taken for granted, whereas in the case of the *Satyrica* scholars (myself included) often wish to resolve them through ever greater ingenuity.

My point is certainly not that the *Satyrica* is ‘flawed’ – after all, if you look closely enough, you will find inconsistencies in almost any extended piece of fiction. Rather, I hope to have shown that there is no one-fits-all answer to the (narratological) questions raised by Petronius’ text. The narrator shapes the story as much as the story shapes the narrator. As early as 1968, J. P. Sullivan noted this very fact about Encolpius – albeit about the protagonist rather than the narrator:

The character of Encolpius, alternately romantic and cynical, brave and timorous, malevolent and cringing, jealous and rational, sophisticated and naïve, is composed of *those traits, even if contradictory, which are appropriate responses to the demands of the particular episode*.⁶⁸⁸

I may conclude this study by adapting Sullivan’s words to the stance of Encolpius the narrator:

The narrator of the *Satyrica*, alternately sober and sentimental, witty and outwitted, censorious and flattering, omniscient and forgetful, self-abasing and complacent, is composed of *those traits, even if contradictory, which are appropriate responses to the demands of the particular episode*.

688 Sullivan (1968: 119), original emphasis.