

Anseres [sacri]: Restrictions and Variations in Petronius' Narrative Technique

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Those oft are stratagems which errors seem,
nor is it Homer nods, but we that dream.
– Pope

1. Introduction

Towards the end of the extant portions of the *Satyrica*, the protagonist, Encolpius, becomes afflicted with a case of impotence. Left alone in the hut of an old priestess who had promised to cure him, he finds himself the victim of a sudden attack – from geese:

All of a sudden, three [sacred] geese, who – I guess – were in the habit of demanding their daily rations from the old woman at noon, made an attack against me.

*cum ecce tres anseres [sacri] qui, ut puto, medio die solebant ab anu-
diaria exigere, impetum in me faciunt* (136,4).¹

Müller deleted the word *sacri*, arguing in his apparatus that Encolpius could not know that the geese were sacred until he learned it later. Courtney, however, argued that the narrator introduced the word *sacri* from his *ex eventu* knowledge (2001, 34, 204). This particular textual crux nicely illustrates the difficulties caused by a too simplistic approach to Petronius' narrative technique: how does first-person, or rather, homodiegetic narration function in Petronius?

¹ Translations, unless otherwise stated, are my own. The text is Müller (1995).

The question is not a new one, but most scholars have approached it from the author's role. Paul Veyne, for example, asked whether the narrative voice corresponds to the protagonist or to the author (1964, 301–2). He thought that there was a sort of play of perspective, a shifting back and forth between the views of Petronius and Encolpius. G.B. Conte, however, argued that there was a radical separation between the foolish narrator, whom he called mythomaniac, and the hidden author (1996, *passim*).² Both Conte and Veyne tend to assume a fundamental correspondence between the protagonist and the narrator, and so they do not examine the relationship, central to homodiegetic narration, of the protagonist and his latter self as narrator.

Unlike Veyne and Conte, Roger Beck does not consider the author's role, preferring to focus on the narrator (1973; 1975). Beck thus comes closest to the approach I take here, for he maintains the inescapable formal difference between the protagonist and his later self. However, Beck does not examine how this difference functions in Petronius. Instead, he asserts *a priori* that the formal distinction between protagonist and narrator signifies that the two are fundamentally different.

Now where we have, as we clearly do here, a narrator who is set at some temporal distance from the events which he relates, we must expect to find that we are dealing not only with two distinct persons but also with two rather different persons: the narrator as he is at the time of narration and the narrator – or perhaps protagonist would be a better term – as he was at the time of the events narrated. (1975, 271)

Although the narrator and protagonist must be distinct from a formal perspective, there is no inherent reason for them to be two different people. A subsequent narrator may become wiser and more sophisticated; he may even experience religious conversion, but there is no law of nature or of literature that requires it. What all these studies have ignored is how Petronius has managed the relationship from a technical, narrative perspective.

In homodiegetic narration, it is assumed, the narrator must tell his story from a restricted perspective. The narrator often displays these restrictions in telling his story – he tends to limit, for example, his story to events he ex-

² A precise delimitation of the author's role will ultimately depend on the interpretation of the text itself and is therefore difficult to answer. See, for example, the question of the author's voice in the poem at 132,15.

perienced. However, we risk concealing significant alteration in technique when we assume that homodiegetic narrators must *consistently* restrict their perspective, or that these restrictions are simple and constant. Maria Plaza makes this assumption when she describes the literary effects of homodiegetic narration:

Since we are presented with inside views of Encolpius' mind (and no other character's) and since we see the events he narrates through his eyes, from his consistently restricted perspective (he cannot see behind walls or know what happens in his absence), we initially tend to trust him, simply because, as Wayne Booth has said of another central consciousness, "in life the only mind we know as we know [his] is our own." (2000, 19-20)³

Plaza refers to restrictions that she seems to assume follow naturally from the decision to tell a story in the first person. She does not try, it is true, to investigate fully the narrative structure. Nevertheless, her assumption shows the danger that arises when arguments are based simply on the choice of narrating in the first-person: it cannot explain the variations within the restricted perspective. By treating restrictions as required by the form, we obscure rather than explain the narrative texture. As the crux of the sacred geese shows, the situation is not quite so simple. In fact, homodiegetic narratives are often limited in two ways: it can be limited to what the protagonist knew at the time (e.g. Müller) or it can include the narrator's *ex eventu* knowledge (e.g. Courtney). Even within this structure variations occur.

In order to describe more clearly the narrative technique employed in the *Satyrica*, I will closely examine the flow of information. The questions I ask are how much does the narrator tell and in what order. The method comes from Genette's study of focalization (1980, 189–211). As Conte saw (1996, 3), the term focalization presents the difficulties of a Hydra; instead of trying

³ It is not immediately clear why we should trust a narrator with a restricted perspective. Do we initially *trust* Encolpius more than the narrator of the *Aeneid*? Booth is not entirely consistent in his use of the concept of trust, for very early in the *Rhetoric of Fiction* he makes the claim: "we could never trust even the most reliable of witnesses as completely as we trust the author of the opening statement of Job" (Booth 1983, 3). This seems to me eminently true, and while we may *identify* with a "mind we know as we know our own" (Booth 1983, 279–81; analysis of Marcher), we only *trust* him because as a narrator he shares some of the implicit trust we tend to place in omniscient narrators.

to cut off unintended meanings at every turn, I use the term restriction.⁴ By tracing the restrictions of the narrative information, I can show how they vary within the overarching form, so that what are often seen as *characteristics* of certain types of narratives are much closer to *techniques* used for a variety of effects.

2. Temporal Distance and Restricted Perspective

There are two central features of the *Satyrical*: the narrator tells his story *after the fact* and his ability to tell this story is restricted. The text highlights the temporal distance in two ways – first, and most obviously, by the use of past-tense verbs.

We wanted to cry out in our wretchedness, but there was no one to help. On this side, Psyche was attacking my cheeks with her hairpin, while I wanted to make a public outcry; on that side, the girl was harassing Ascylos with the sponge that she had dipped in the aphrodisiac.

volebamus miseri exclamare, sed nec in auxilio erat quisquam, et hinc Psyche acu comatoria cupienti mihi invocare Quiritum fidem malas

⁴ The term ‘focalization,’ introduced by Genette (1980, 189-211), has led a troubled existence. It was modified by Bal, but the modifications were rejected by Genette (1988, 72-78). Much ink has been spilt pursuing focalization, both as a phenomenon and as a term (see, e.g., the controversy in *Poetics Today* 2.2 (1981) and some recent refinements, with bibliography (Jahn 1996, Nieragden 2002). Although it is a simplification, we may discern two approaches to focalization in classical studies: a Balian, exemplified by Irene de Jong (2004) and a Genettean, exemplified by Winkler (1985), who wisely does not use the term. This study falls into the latter camp and shares much with both Winkler’s study and the model of Lintvelt (1989); this study was used by the authors of the Groningen Commentary on Apuleius (Hijmans 1995, 7–12). Lintvelt’s model of “*centre d’orientation*” is similar to my discussion of ‘restrictions’ (I must thank the anonymous referee for pointing this out); however, I insist on the importance of the neutral type of narration in homodiegetic narrative. I have introduced the new term ‘restriction’ because it is an apt term for the phenomenon described by Lintvelt and Genette and because it stresses how the study is limited to what has been called “perceptual focalization” (Rimmon-Kenan 1978-80). Rather than distinguish types of focalization, I prefer to keep separate studies of ‘restrictions’ of information from ‘ideological focalization,’ which represents the opinions, thoughts, feelings of a character in the language of the narrator. This phenomenon, I believe, should be treated under the rubric of indirect discourse and thought representation; see, e.g., Fludernik (1993).

pungebat, illinc puella penicillo, quod et ipsum satyrio tinxerat, Ascylton opprimebat. (21,1)

These verbs clearly mark the narrating situation as subsequent. But since we lack the beginning and the end of the text, we cannot measure exactly the extent of the distance.

Second, the narrator reinforces the impression of subsequent narration when he calls attention to his act of narrating. This occurs three times in the extant story. In the *Cena*, the narrator qualifies his recollection of the disgusting dainties: “following this kindness were some dainties; even the memory of them, if you can believe it, disgusts me” (*hanc humanitatem insecutae matteae, quarum etiam recordatio me, si qua est dicenti fides, offendit* 65,1). A little later, he is ashamed to report an elegance of Trimalchio, the washing of his guests’ feet: “I am ashamed to relate what followed” (*pu-det referre quae secuntur* 70,8). Finally, he is unable to describe Circe’s beauty: “there is no language which can encompass her beauty, for whatever I say will be too little” (*nulla vox est quae formam eius possit comprehendere, nam quidquid dixero, minus erit* 126,14). Behind this last passage, one may discern a rhetorical motivation: saying Circe is too beautiful for words is another way of describing her magnificent beauty. Although a reader may interpret these references to narrating in many ways, they serve to highlight the narrator’s distance from the story and to generate the impression of a storyteller who is a person in his own right.⁵

In homodiegetic narrative, readers assume that the narrator is not omniscient but constrained by his normal human ability. This assumption is marked in the text by what the Russian critic Boris Uspensky calls *words of estrangement*; these are “special modal expressions (‘apparently,’ ‘evidently,’ ‘as if,’ ‘it seems,’ and so forth) which enable us to recognize... a description from the external observer’s point of view” (1973, 85). An exam-

⁵ See C. Stöcker (1969, 136-40) for instances in the *Satyrica* that suggest a “narrative distance.” For a discussion of his material, see Plaza (2000, 21–2), who adds to Stöcker’s list the phrase *longum erat singula excipere* (28,1). This cannot be a reference to narration since *excipere* cannot express “relate.” In context, the clause reads differently: “After emptying his bowels, he [Trimalchio] requested water for his hands, and sprinkling his fingers a bit, he wiped them on a slave’s head... it would have taken us a long time to pick out the details (*longum erat singula excipere*). Therefore we went to the bath and hopped from the hot tub to the cold pool” (27,6-28,1). See Smith (1975, ad loc.) and the translation of Branham and Kinney (1996).

ple from a character's speech illustrates how these words indicate restricted information. When Eumolpus tells the story of what happened to him at the bath, he describes Ascyrtos and his rescue thus:

He had such a large cock that you would have thought that the man was the appendage of his penis. Hard-working lad! I guess he begins yesterday and finishes tomorrow. Therefore, he quickly found help: for some infamous (so they said) Roman knight put his cloak around him and led him home so that (I take it) he could use his great good fortune all alone. *habebat enim inguinum pondus tam grande, ut ipsum hominem laciniam fascini crederes. o iuvenem laboriosum: puto illum pridie incipere, postero die finire. itaque statim invenit auxilium; nescio quis enim, eques Romanus ut aiebant infamis, sua veste errantem circumdedit ac domum abduxit, credo, ut tam magna fortuna solus uteretur* (92,9-10)

Eumolpus highlights his imperfect knowledge by the word *credo* and the phrases *nescio quis* and *ut aiebant*. The limiting words work in tandem with other features to create the impression of a personal, subjective narrator. The second person (*crederes*) reinforces the communicative bond between audience and narrator. Expressive features like the exclamation *o iuvenem laboriosum*, which represents an emotional response, and *puto*, which indicates not a restriction but an analysis, reveal a narrator responding to the events he tells. Eumolpus even suggests a causal link for what happened: *itaque statim invenit auxilium*. Eumolpus does not simply narrate the events, he responds and analyzes them subjectively. These features are very important for the construction of the narrator's persona.⁶ The *words of estrangement* function within this nexus of features, reinforcing the impression of a personal, subjective narrator but not in themselves creating it.

Although a reader can infer character traits from how a character interprets events, we need to keep these two levels of interpretation separate. When Eumolpus highlights his interpretation by *credo*, for example, he could be said to betray his interest in sex. A reader may find support for his inference in the surrounding expressive and analytic features and when the narrator later remarks explicitly on Eumolpus' voracious appetite: "[Eumolpus] was so restrained that even I seemed to him a good candidate for a lover" (*tam frugi erat ut illi etiam ego puer viderer* 140,3). One may say that

⁶ See Morales (2004, 106–130) on sententiousness in Achilles Tatius.

Eumolpus is a man of the world based on his interpretation of the events in the story, but our inferences about Eumolpus are a second level of interpretation, one that readers perform constantly in response to textual information. We need to maintain the distinction between marked inferences *in* the text and our inferences *from* the text so that we don't confuse the interpretations in the text with our interpretation of it.⁷

Although Encolpius as a narrator is often more restrained than Eumolpus, his statements also feature *words of estrangement*. When Trimalchio shows signs of wanting to take his mime act into the center of the dining room, Fortunata stops him: “and he would have proceeded to the center if she had not whispered in his ear; I believe she said that these lowly trifles did not become his importance” (*et prodisset in medium, nisi ad aurem accessisset; [et] credo, dixerit non decere gravitatem eius tam humiles ineptias* 52,10). When Habinnas' slave begins to sing, the narrator says: “the slave at Habinnas' feet cried out immediately in a shrill voice, commanded to act thus, I believe, by his master” (*servus qui ad pedes Habinnae sedebat, iussus, credo, a domino suo proclamavit subito canora voce* 68,4). On Lichas' ship, Giton ignores Encolpius, prompting the narrator to speculate: “I believe he was afraid to open up old wounds now that everyone was getting along” (*credo, veritus ne inter initia coeuntis gratiae recentem cicatricem rescinderet* 113,8). In the Quartilla episode, the narrator cannot hear what Psyche says to her mistress: “with a smile, Psyche approached her ear, and when she had whispered something, Quartilla said, ‘yes, of course’” (*ad aurem eius Psyche ridens accessit, et cum dixisset nescio quid, ‘ita, ita’ inquit Quartilla* (25,1).

Some verbs of perception can function as words of estrangement. For example, the narrator says that the giant crowd of *scholastici* flooded into the portico, “as it seemed, from somebody's *extempore* declamation” (*ingens scholasticorum turba in porticum venit, ut apparebat, ab extemporali declamatione nescio cuius...* 6,1). The restrictions, marked by words of estrangement, allow for some sophisticated rhetorical expressions: “Trimalchio began to mangle the songs of Menecrates, at least, those who could understand him said they were” (*[Trimalchio] coepit Menecratis cantica lacerare, sicut illi dicebant, qui linguam eius intellegebant* 73,3). This way of expressing

⁷ “We should not confuse the *information* given by a focalized narrative with the *interpretation* the reader is called upon to give of it (or that he gives without being invited to)” (Genette 1980, 197).

the incomprehensibility of Trimalchio's song is most natural for someone who was also a character in his story. Restricting the information generates expectations, which can be exploited for rhetorical effect. At the same time, these examples contribute to the reader's impression that the information is limited to the narrator's human ability.

These formal qualities produce expectations in the reader, which the text signals and exploits. One might expect that the narrator will limit his narrative to what he knew as a character. I call this technique protagonist-restricted narration. Since his narrative is retrospective, he can give more information based on his *ex eventu* knowledge. I call this narrator-restricted. The form requires neither technique; each is a strategy that the author can exploit for different effects.

3. Narrator-Restricted

The narrator may give more information than the protagonist had because he relies not on perception but on memory. In the *Cena*, the narrator draws attention three times to his memory. First, before he relates the inscriptions on the doors of Trimalchio's dining room, the narrator qualifies his description: "if I remember rightly" (*si bene memini* 30,3). Second, the narrator rounds out his description of some puns on food by saying: "There were six hundred of these things which I've already forgotten" (*sexcenta huiusmodi fuerunt, quae iam exciderunt memoriae meae* 56,10). Third, a dish of Trimalchio's draws this response: "following this kindness were some dainties – even the memory of them is offensive, if you can believe it" (*hanc humanitatem insecutae sunt matteae, quarum etiam recordatio me, si qua est dicenti fides, offendit* 65,1). Although it is striking that the narrator nowhere else refers to his memory, it is hard to imagine that he did not mention it somewhere else in the substantial, lost portions of the *Satyrical*. In any case, these explicit references to memory reveal the fictional source of the narrator's tale – his memory.

When the information is restricted to the narrator, the reader may expect that he knows more than his former self. This knowledge is marked in the text by the use of the imperfect tenses of verbs of perception like *puto*, *credo*, *scio*, and *videor*. Some examples will illustrate the effect. After the scene in the marketplace, Encolpius and company seem to have regained their ratty cloak, which has gold sewn within:

and when we had recovered (or so we thought) our treasure, we ran headlong into our lodging, and with the door closed we began to laugh at the cleverness of the dealers no less than that of our accusers because they had (we thought) shrewdly restored our money.

et recuperato, ut putabamus, thesauro in deversorium praecipites abimus praeculisque foribus ridere acumen non minus cocionum quam calumniantium coepimus, quod nobis ingenti callidate pecuniam reddidissent. (15,8)

Although the outcome of this episode is lost, we get the impression that it didn't turn out as they thought it would. The verb *putabamus* and the *quod* clause with the subjunctive mark the distance between how the narrator and how the characters assess the situation.⁸ Later, the protagonist does not know how much longer the *Cena* is to go on: “nor were we yet aware that we were struggling up only the middle of the hill, as they say” (*nec adhuc sciebamus nos in medio [lautitiarum], quod aiunt, clivo laborare* 47,8). After Lichas' death, the company sees a city, which they do not yet know is Croton: “because we were wandering lost, we did not know what city it was until a certain bailiff...” (*nec quod esset sciebamus errantes, donec a vilico quodam...* 116,2). These examples differ from the earlier use of verbs of perception cited above (p.7) since those do not reveal a difference in knowledge between the narrator and the protagonist.⁹ Despite sometimes revealing only the information held by the protagonist, the examples show Encolpius' initial ignorance and later knowledge, creating distance between the narrator and the protagonist.

4. Protagonist-restriction

Restriction to the protagonist is often apparent when a new character enters the story. The narrator, from his *ex eventu* knowledge, certainly knows the names of the characters in the story. However, the narrator at times gives only the information available to the protagonist. The first appearance of Trimalchio uses this technique to good effect. A slave of Agamemnon's informs Encolpius, Ascylos, and Giton that they are to dine that evening at

⁸ See below, p.18 for more on *quod* + subjunctive clauses.

⁹ Other examples: 7,2, 47,9, 65,4, 69,8, 80,1, 80,6, 136,12, 79,9.

the house of someone called Trimalchio, so they go to the baths where they come across a strange sight:

Suddenly we saw a bald man dressed in a red shirt playing ball surrounded by long-haired boys. We gapped, not so much because of the boys (although they were hot) but because of the paterfamilias himself... As we marveled at his elegance, Menelaus ran up and said "this is the man we are dining with. In fact, you are now watching the beginning of the dinner." While Menelaus was talking, Trimalchio cracked his knuckles...

cum subito videmus senem calvum, tunica vestitum russea, inter pueros capillatos ludentem pila. nec tam pueri nos, quamquam erat operae pretium, ad spectaculum duxerant, quam ipse pater familiae... cum has ergo miraremur lautitias, accurrit Menelaus et 'hic est' inquit 'apud quem cubitum ponitis et quidem iam principium cenae videtis.' etiamnum loquebatur Menelaus, cum Trimalchio digitos concrepuit. (27,1-5)

At first, the narrator describes the old, bald guy as if unaware that this is Trimalchio. Only after the protagonist learns the name from Menelaus does the narrator, who logically knew it all along, begin to use it, referring to Trimalchio by name. This technique of protagonist-restriction creates suspense and directs the reader's attention to the portrait.¹⁰ It also allows the reader to enter into the story on a level with the character, fostering engagement, an effect reinforced by the historical present *videmus*. This technique of protagonist-restricted narration is used for other major characters.

Fortunata enters the story through protagonist-restriction. The narrator withholds her name (*mulier illa* 37,1) until Hermeros informs the protagonist who she is and names her himself. As with Trimalchio, this technique highlights Fortunata and Hermeros' description of her. In contrast, the freedmen are simply named before they speak, in accordance with the expectations of narrator-restriction. If he had focused the reader's attention by the more elaborate technique of protagonist-restriction, the stress might have fallen on the men rather than their talk. By introducing the freedmen through the narrator, the author allows these interesting men to characterize themselves through their speech.

¹⁰ It is illuminating to compare how H and the L manuscripts treat the naming of Trimalchio. See Müller's introduction (1995).

Apart from the entry of a new character, other information may be restricted to the protagonist's knowledge. One use of protagonist-restriction is to create surprise. For example, when the pig returns cooked in chapter 49, the guests marvel at its swift arrival as well as its greater size. The cook, it seems, has forgotten to gut it. The whole farce continues with the cook stripped naked and begging the guests to save him from a beating. The protagonist, speaking directly to Agamemnon, complains that he would never forgive a cook who made such a mistake. The truth behind the whole scene, unclear to Encolpius at the time, is then revealed – it's not the same pig! By controlling the reader's expectations, the author can create moments of surprise quite effectively.

Habinnas enters the narrative in protagonist-restriction. Like other characters who enter the story through protagonist-restriction, Habinnas does not receive a name in the narrative. And yet the effect is different. Instead of fostering engagement, it highlights the protagonist's confusion.

Meanwhile, a lictor knocked on the doors of the dining room, and a reveler, dressed all in white, entered with a large crowd. Terrified by his dignity, I thought the praetor had come. Therefore, I tried to rise and put my unshod feet on the ground. Agamemnon laughed at my fear and said "restrain yourself, idiot. It's only Habinnas the sevir".

inter haec triclinii valvas lictor percussit, amictusque veste alba cum ingenti frequentia comissator intravit. ego maiestate conterritus praetorem putabam venisse. itaque temtavi assurgere et nudos pedes in terram deferre. risit hanc trepidationem Agamemnon et 'contine te' inquit 'homo stultissime. Habinnas sevir est.' (65,3-5)

The presence of *putabam* marks the faultiness of the protagonist's understanding, and the narrator explicitly calls Habinnas a *comissator* rather than *praetor*. This designation is beyond the understanding of the protagonist, since he mistakes Habinnas for the praetor. Nevertheless, the narrator withholds the name Habinnas. Therefore, this passage contains a mixture of protagonist and narrator-restriction. The narrator-restriction serves to warn the reader that the character is about to make another mistake, while the restriction of information to the protagonist highlights his confusion, the irony of which Agamemnon's comment drives home. This passage shows the complexity and sophistication of Petronius' narrative technique.

5. Paralepses

We have seen how features in the text generate and exploit readers' sense of the form. Since the first-person past-tense verb is one such feature, I agree with critics who call attention to the first-person narrator. When starting from the grammatical person, however, there is a tendency to substitute natural consequences for expectations: the narrator *naturally* cannot hear something whispered into the ear of Trimalchio nor can he know the motivations of Habinnas' slave, Eumolpus, or Giton. But look again at the story told by Eumolpus.¹¹ How does he *know* where the knight took Ascyltos? The last time this happened Ascyltos was led to a brothel (8,1). Clearly, Eumolpus could have learned this from somewhere, but the text is absolutely silent on the point. Why mark some pieces of information and not others? Would we have been any more upset if Eumolpus had said simply: then a notorious Roman knight put his cloak around the wanderer and led him home to use his great good fortune alone? The *words of estrangement* serve to underline the subjective quality of Eumolpus' story, but a lack of such words would not have undermined it.

Genette has dubbed this type of so-called error, where the narrator gives more information than is authorized by the overarching form, *paralepsis* (1980, 195). Other careful readers have found examples of *paralepses* in the extant text, although they do not analyze them in this way (e.g. Courtney 2001, 353-39). For example, the narrator's description of one of the dealers in 15,4: "one of the dealers – a bald, warty-faced man, who was accustomed now and then even to act as a lawyer – went for the cloak and claimed that he would exhibit it tomorrow" (*nescio quis ex cocionibus, calvus, tuberosissimae frontis, qui solebat aliquando etiam causas agere, invaserat pallium exhibiturumque crastino die affirmabat*). *Nescio quis* marks the narrator's imperfect knowledge. However, he gives the information of the dealer's legal activity as if he had the same access to that knowledge as he does to the man's appearance. He might conceivably have learned it later or been told by one of the crowd. But again, the text never says so. A similar difficulty surrounds the entrance of two Syrians at Quartilla's orgy. Courtney summarizes the scene and points out the difficulty:

¹¹ Discussed above, p.6.

In 22, while Encolpius and the other participants in the orgy have fallen into an exhausted sleep, two Syrian thieves enter the room and in a quarrel create a clatter, which awakens some of the drunken debauchees; the Syrians, unable to escape, lie down and pretend to have been asleep like everyone else. Encolpius has no means of knowing all this. (2001, 38)

How could the narrator know what happened when Encolpius the character and everyone else was asleep? It is true that one can find naturalistic explanations for this *paralepsis*; for example, we could assume that the Syrians told him what happened. Perhaps, there was a reference to Encolpius learning it, now lost in a lacuna. Petronius must be aware of the technique, “I don’t know but I heard from someone else,” for he uses it elsewhere. When Hermeros tells Encolpius about Diogenes, he says, “I don’t know, but I have heard” (*non scio, sed audivi*. 38,8). Could a similar statement have fallen out of the text? I can’t help feeling that such a justification would be clumsy. Nevertheless, nothing prevents us from assuming he did learn it from the Syrians, even if the text doesn’t tell us. But we move far from the text when we try to explain inconsistencies in presentation in this fashion and their improbability suggests that they are not a helpful way to conceive the narrative structure. Genette was right when he said, “The decisive criterion is not so much material possibility or even psychological plausibility as it is textual coherence and narrative tonality” (1980, 208).

If we look again at the scene of the Syrian thieves in terms of material possibility, we see that the *paralepsis* noted by Courtney begins before the entrance of the Syrians.

Even I, wearied by so many wrongs, had already taken just the smallest taste of sleep. Everyone, both inside and out, had done the same: some were lying spread about around the feet of the diners; others leaned against the wall; some slipped down on the doorway with their heads propped up against each other. The lamps were dying, giving only a spluttering light when two Syrians.

iam ego etiam tot malis fatigatus minimum veluti gustum haeseram somni; idem et tota intra forisque familia fecerat, atque alii circa pedes discumbentium sparsi iacebant, alii parietibus appliciti, quidam in ipso limine coniunctis marcebant capitibus; lucernae quoque umore defectae tenuae et extremam lumen spargebant: cum duo Syri (22,1-3)

It is materially impossible for Encolpius to know what the *familia* is doing outdoors even when awake. The narrator could have acquired this information later, but he never explains how. Besides, he has woven the description so seamlessly into the text that the *paralepsis* is hardly noticed – even by so careful a reader as Courtney! With hardly a blink the narrator has become omniscient. In terms of narrative coherence, this scene is an alteration, a momentary *paralepsis*, which does not undermine the overarching form. Restricting to the narrator or the protagonist appears to be, therefore, less a consequence of the form than a technique that can be used or disregarded. Could this scene have been managed so well without the use of *paralepsis*?

The narrator violates elsewhere the axiom that first-person narrators cannot narrate events unless present or informed by someone else. Of course, he can't do it everywhere any more than he can narrate an entire story in the historical present. In the extant text, Encolpius mostly confines his narrative to events at which he was present. For example, Eumolpus tells what happened after Encolpius and Giton left the baths (92,1ff, cited above). However, he can use other techniques. At 140,1-11, Encolpius tells us the story of Philomela, matron of Croton. I will quote the text in full:¹²

There was a very respectable married woman called Philomela, who in her youth had made it her business to win many a legacy. She was old now and past her prime and was forcing her son and daughter on childless old men as a way of passing on her trade. So she came to Eumolpus and entrusted her children...¹³ herself and her hopes to his 'wisdom' and 'goodness'. He was the only man in the world who could teach children a wholesome philosophy on a daily basis. In short, she was leaving her children in Eumolpus' house to listen to his eloquence – the only legacy that could be bestowed on youth. She did exactly that: she left in the old man's bedroom an unusually pretty girl along with her brother, just on the verge of manhood, and pretended that she was going to the temple to offer prayers of thanks. Eumolpus, who was so sexually frugal that he would regard even me as a boy didn't hesitate to initiate the girl in the rites of anal Venus.¹⁴ But since he had told everyone that

¹² Translation by Branham and Kinney, (1996, 149-150).

¹³ *Lac. ind.* Bücheler

¹⁴ *pigiciaca* : *Aphrodisiaca* Bücheler

he suffered from gout and weak loins,¹⁵ he risked ruining our whole plot if he wasn't careful to maintain the pretense. So, to keep up our lie, he persuaded the girl to sit down on top of his duly commended 'goodness', and ordered Corax to get under the bed he was lying on and keep his master in motion by putting his hands on the ground and thrusting his own loins¹⁶ against the bottom of the bed. He obeyed the command reluctantly and the girl was skillful enough to match him, thrust for thrust. When the business was reaching a climax, Eumolpus ordered Corax in a loud voice to 'redouble his efforts'. So old Eumolpus, sandwiched between his valet and his mistress, was riding a kind of seesaw. Eumolpus played the game again and again amid much uproarious laughter including his own. Well, use it or lose it, I thought, as I made an attempt to breach the brother's virtue, while he was watching his sister's antics through the keyhole. The well-schooled boy did not shun my advances but even there the gods were against me.

Clearly, this is a funny story well told. However, we are not told how the narrator knows it. He gives no sign that he was present at the conversation of the matron and Eumolpus. Moreover, how does he know the matron's past history? It could be true, as Courtney states, that the reader must assume Eumolpus and Encolpius know of the matron's past history from gossip (2001, 208). Then we have to assume that Eumolpus told the tale of the bouncing bed to Encolpius, who then narrates it to us, and it is still unclear how he knows that the matron only 'pretended' to go the temple. The lacuna before and after this story could have contained the kind of Scheherazade-like embedding of narrative imagined here. However, such twists of reasoning are hardly necessary: the inconsistency is slight when considered from the perspective of narrative texture rather than natural logic. As we have seen him doing elsewhere, the narrator steps out of his restricted knowledge

¹⁵ *lumborumque solutorum omnibus dixerat*. Courtney is right to state that Eumolpus has lumbago. "Weak loins," while technically correct, implies impotence, decidedly not the case here. If he has a bad back, however, it would be too painful to have intercourse in a normal fashion. This is the reason why Corax's help takes its special form.

¹⁶ *lumbis*. Again, this is somewhat confusing unless we understand it to mean the small of the back, for Corax is on all fours beneath the bed pushing up and down with his back. Having already succumbed to pedantry twice, I note that if Corax were facing the other way, he would have a good deal of trouble moving bed, Eumolpus, and girl at all, let alone fast.

to present a story without restriction, a story he could not otherwise have related without clumsy hedging.¹⁷

The author may make an ironic comment on this unrestricted form of narrative. In earlier scenes, the narrator has authorized his knowledge of events taking place behind closed doors by watching through a crack in the door or a keyhole.¹⁸ He does this when Giton and Pannychis have their ‘marriage’ (27,4-5) and when he watched Eumolpus get beaten up outside the *insula* (97,1-5). In the story of Philomela’s children, when the protagonist arrives, he finds the boy watching the scene through a keyhole – Encolpius, for once, was not the witness. It is as if the author was toying with the reader’s sense of the naturalism of autobiographical narrative.¹⁹

As with the other narrative techniques, *paralepsis* may provide a particular effect. After the *Cena*, Encolpius enjoys a night of bliss with Giton, which is described in a poem. The narrator picks up the story by undercutting the poems exuberance:

My self-congratulations were baseless. For when I fell into a drunken sleep and released my hold, Ascyrtos, the founder of every injury, stole away my boy at night. He secretly led him to his own bed and took too free a tumble with a companion who did not belong to him. Giton may not have realized what was going on or he pretended not to, but Ascyrtos slept, embracing another’s lover, forgetful of human law. Therefore when I arose and searched in my bed, which was robbed of its joy... if you can believe lovers, I wondered whether I should pierce both with my sword and connect their sleep with death.

sine causa gratulor mihi. nam cum solutus mero remissem ebrias manus, Ascyrtos, omnis iniuriae inventor, subduxit mihi nocte puerum et in lectum transtulit suum, volutatusque liberius cum fratre non suo, sive non sentiente iniuriam sive dissimulante, indormivit alienis amplexibus

¹⁷ Compare Hägg on Achilles Tatius (1971, 131-2).

¹⁸ “Mesurant le camp de ‘réalité’ sous l’angle de vision du personnage-narrateur, cette perspective constitue la justification immédiate des quelques scènes vues au travers d’une fente ou d’un trou de porte” (Callebat 1998, 48-9).

¹⁹ Apuleius may provide a parallel for this type of play with the reader, although Lucius tends to be more explicit with his rare meta-narratorial statements: ‘But perhaps being a reader keen on precision you will object to my tale and argue as follows: “But how could you, you clever ass, while pent up inside the mill’s confines know what the women had been up to – in private, as you affirm?”’ (Met. 9,30,1, transl. GCA 1995).

oblitus iuris humani. itaque ego ut experrectus pertrectavi gaudio despoliatum torum... si qua est amantibus fides, ego dubitavi an utrumque traicerem gladio somnumque morti iungerem. (79,9-10)

As at the orgy, the narrator relates events that he slept through as a character. The author may be playing on the reader's expectation that the narrator cannot *know* all this in order to suggest that the narrator is interpreting events rather than narrating facts. This impression gains strength from the rhetoric of the passage, a rhetoric that exculpates Giton while condemning Ascyrtos. Ascyrtos is the 'inventor of every injury;' Ascyrtos led away Giton secretly (*subduxit*); Ascyrtos 'forgets all human law.' Ascyrtos is the subject of all the verbs, while Giton's actions are presented through restriction: "Giton may not have realized what was going on or he pretended not to." *Paralepsis* is a narrative strategy with broad applications: in the earlier examples, it serves as a technical resource allowing the author to present material economically; here it enables the reader to recognize the narrator interpreting events subjectively, *cum ira et studio*.

The form creates other expectations, which the author may exploit by using different restrictions of information. We expect that the narrator can only narrate what goes on in his own mind (as character or narrator) and not in any other. This expectation allows the narrator to remain ignorant of Giton's motives while giving him scope to express his own. For example, the narrator tells us unambiguously why he wanted to ditch Ascyrtos: "desire produced this swift separation; I had long been eager to remove a troublesome guard so that I could return to my earlier ways with Giton" (*hanc tam praecipitem divisionem libido faciebat; iam dudum enim amoliri cupiebam custodem molestum, ut veterem cum Gitone meo rationem reducerem* 10,7). Purpose clauses can also express motivation. When Encolpius participates in the deflowering of Psyche, he claims to do so "so my companion might not suffer a worse injury in secret" (*ne maiorem iniuriam in secreto frater acciperet* 25,7). We expect the narrator to express his own desires and motivations, allowing the reader to enter into his mind. At the same time, we expect Encolpius to be unaware of other characters' desires and motivations. For example, when Giton ignores Encolpius after the fracas on the ship, the narrator speculates: "I believe he was afraid to open up old wounds now that everyone was getting along" (*credo, veritus ne inter initia coeuntis gratiae recentem cicatricem rescinderet* 113,8). As I've shown, the *credo* functions

as a *word of estrangement*, marking the fear clause as interpretation, an interpretation whose unbiased veracity a reader may doubt. Causal clauses can also express motivation, and with a subjunctive in such clauses, the narrator may state another's motivation without *paralepsis*. When Trimalchio's *puer delicatus* takes offence at his master's praise of the dog Scylax, the narrator states: "the boy was upset because Trimalchio praised Scylax so effusively" (*indignatus puer quod [Trimalchio] Scylacem tam effuse laudaret* 64,9). The nuance is difficult to represent in English, but the narrator's use of the subjunctive in this type of clause signals to the reader that the narrator does not vouch for the information: it functions as a *word of estrangement*.

The narrator's story could become bogged down if formal qualities constrained him to employ a *word of estrangement* every time he expresses another's motivation. Fortunately, he uses the technique of *paralepsis*, leaving statements belonging to other's minds unmarked. In the scene at the marketplace, the narrator says,

although the farmer and his wife wanted to exchange, the night guards, who wanted to make a profit, were insisting that each garment be deposited with them and that a judge look into the matter on the following day. *etsi rustico mulierique placebat permutatio, advocati tamen [iam pene] nocturni, qui volebant pallium lucri facere, flagitabant uti apud se utraque deponerentur ac postero die iudex querellam inspiceret.* (15,2)²⁰

Although we might expect the farmer and his wife to have made plain their eagerness, the *advocati nocturni* would surely have tried to hide their desire to profit on the scuffle. Of course, we can argue that *volebant* represents the narrator's interpretation, a particularly obvious one. We can claim the same for the following statements: "so as not to seem moved by the loss, Trimalchio kissed the boy and told him to get on his back" (*Trimalchio ne videretur iactura motus, basiavit puerum ac iussit supra dorsum ascendere suum* 64,11), "When the two Syrians entered in order to plunder" (*cum duo Syrii expilaturi... intraverunt* 22,3), "Tryphaena cried effusively at our false

²⁰ Müller (1961) originally excised *qui volebant pallium lucri facere*, feeling that it was an inept anticipation of 15,5: *ceterum apparebat nihil aliud quaeri nisi ut semel deposita vestis inter praedones strangularetur*. He subsequently returned the phrase to the text. The problem is the same as the geese, although Müller here seems to have decided the other way.

punishment, for she believed that the marks on the captives' foreheads were real" (*Tryphaena lacrimas effudit decepta supplicio – vera enim stigmata credebat captivorum frontibus impressa* 105,11). It is quite easy to understand these as only apparent *paralepses*, where the narrator simply makes a deduction from an explicitly stated story event – Tryphaena's tears demonstrate that she believed the marks were real.

Paralepsis, like variations between narrator and protagonist restriction, is a technique used for different effects. These effects range from simple, unobtrusive narrative economy to complex, ironic presentations that undermine the veracity of the narrator. As with other aspects of narrative technique examined here, there is no one to one correspondence between form and meaning. Each instance needs to be interpreted on its own. However, care must be taken not to apply rigid standards of naturalism to narrative inconsistencies because this leads to unjustifiable criticism or elaborate explanations.

An example of such an elaborate explanation is provided by F. Jones, who explains one such problem by employing the idea of 'extended perspective' (1987). When Ascyrtos hunts through the apartments for Giton, he finds a door locked. The narrator says, "and he became more hopeful when he found the doors carefully barred" (*et hoc quidem plenioris spem concepit quo diligentius oppessulatas invenit fores* 97,1). If we wonder, like Apuleius' *lector scrupulosus*, how the narrator knows what is going on in Ascyrtos' mind from the other side of the door, logic can give us an answer: "Signs of the excitement could doubtless be heard through the door and Encolpius' perception or imagination will have magnified the fear" (Jones 1987, 815). Although this inference is not impossible, it is neither necessary nor helpful. We learn of Ascyrtos' growing excitement to increase the scene's dramatic intensity. *Paralepsis* often tells the story in the most economical way without giving false importance to insignificant details (the greed of the *nocturni advocati* forms a hurdle for the characters to jump) or allowing a rapid character sketch (Tryphaena is credulous). Therefore, elaborate explanations are often unnecessary. However, the story of the matron of Croton shows that Petronius is well aware of the inconsistency, for he ironically comments on the naturalism of his story by having Encolpius not look through the crack, which elsewhere serves to authorize his knowledge. At the same time, *paralepsis* is not always insignificant. When Encolpius relates the infidelity of Giton, he narrates events he slept through as a charac-

ter. The rhetoric of the passage, designed to exculpate Giton at Ascyltos' expense, allows the reader to detect a narrator interpreting events. Here *paralepsis* serves to undermine the narrator. All the variations in restrictions are narrative techniques, providing Petronius with the means of creating the particular effect he wants.

Returning to the crux of the geese, what does this analysis show?

All of a sudden, three [sacred] geese, who – I guess – were in the habit of demanding their daily rations from the old woman at noon, made an attack against me.

cum ecce tres anseres [sacri] qui, ut puto, medio die solebant ab anu diaria exigere, impetum in me faciunt (136,4).

Although narrator and protagonist restriction are both technically possible here, Petronius tends to favor protagonist restriction, limiting the story to what the protagonist knew. Moreover, the word *ecce* brings the reader into the scene, which further suggests that we have protagonist restriction and that Müller is right to excise *sacri*. Restrictions are not formal properties, invariably required and obvious; they are strategies that an author may employ for a variety of effects, multiple and layered effects, effects serving simultaneously different functions. Narratology allows us to locate restrictions, it gives us a language for talking about them, but it cannot interpret them for us.

6. Conclusion

There are two definite conclusions that can be drawn from this analysis. First, it allows us to make some generalizations about Petronius' narrative technique and to place it within the context of similar narratives. Petronius tends to favor protagonist restriction and when he makes use of narrator restriction, it is often un-marked. This tendency allows the narrating persona to slip into the background and remain generally transparent. In this way, Encolpius is similar to Lucius as analyzed by Winkler and unlike Clitophon, whose narrative persona is far more visible.²¹ However, these generalities do

²¹ Winkler (1985). Hägg (1971) shows how Achilles Tatius favors the narrator filter after II.13 and doesn't hesitate to use *paralepsis*. Whitmarsh (2003) sees a "radical indetermini-

not tell the whole story and schematic classification tends to lay the narrative on a Procrustean bed of a too rigorous formalism. When Petronius constructed his story, he employed these degrees of restriction not because constrained by his choice of person, but rather because the different techniques gave him the tools to realize the effects he wanted. The variations in restriction are not formal properties but techniques that operate at a local level for different effects. As in the introduction of Trimalchio, protagonist restriction creates surprise and brings the reader into the story. Protagonist restriction can also be mixed with narrator restriction: when Habinnas enters, the narrator subtly undermines his former self. *Paralepses*, which are often difficult to differentiate from narrator restriction, can create quite sophisticated ironic effects or simply tell a story in the most economic way. Petronius is a sophisticated story teller, who is often more interested in local effects than in an overly rigid formal coherence.

Second, the method developed here can illuminate recent discussions of how to approach ancient novels. Steve Nimis has argued in a series of articles for an approach to ancient narrative that avoids the unifying formalism of traditional novel criticism.²² Although the approach to narrative taken here stems from a formal analysis, it overlaps significantly with the arguments of Nimis.

Prosaics thus sees the unfolding of a text as a *managerial* process that deploys various heterogeneous elements into a fabric with multiple and contradictory effects, and it notes how an author negotiates this heterogeneity, manages it, articulates it, operates within it, without seeking to reduce it to a spurious unity (1994, 401).

An analysis of the variations of restrictions certainly reveals how formal properties of the text can produce multiple and even contradictory effects. Petronius does not make formal unity a priority and any formal approach that seeks to connect form to a single meaning will certainly misrepresent the methods of Petronius and other ancient novelists. However, certain features of the novels may, in fact, relate to broader, more unified aims. Bartsch (1989) and Morales (2004) have shown the gains to be had from integrating

nacy” between the narrator Clitophon and the character, but Encolpius is so transparent it is difficult to tell the difference.

²² Nimis (1994, 1998, 1999).

seemingly disparate or inconsistent elements into a larger narrative project. Nonetheless, at the level of technique, Nimis is certainly correct. Our approach to Petronius's narrative technique, like our approach to the other novelists', needs to be wary of demanding a kind of formal consistency that the authors are not trying to produce. At the same time, we need pay close attention to the breaks and shifts of narrative perspective because these can provide significant insights into the meaning of the novels.²³

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