

Seneca's *Apocolocyntosis* and Petronius' *Satyricon*

MICHAEL PASCHALIS
University of Crete

Introduction

In chapter 5 of Seneca's *Apocolocyntosis* it is announced to Jupiter that a weird character has arrived in heaven, who is shaking his head all the time and dragging his right leg and when asked about his nationality, replies in a confused, unintelligible language that is neither Greek nor Latin, nor of any known race. Jupiter orders Hercules, who was widely traveled and was thus expected to know all nations of the world, to go and find out who this character is. Hercules is shocked at the shape of this unusual fellow, his limping gait and his hoarse, inarticulate voice, reminiscent of a sea animal.¹ He begins to think that his thirteenth labor has arrived when on closer inspection he realizes that the beast may be some kind of human being.

Being a 'Greekling' (*Graeculus*), Hercules addresses him with a Homeric verse: 'Who are you and from where? What are your city and parents?' In *Odyssey* 1,170 this line² is addressed by Telemachus to a female goddess (Athena) disguised as a male (Mentes); here it is appropriately adapted to render the ambiguity of race and species surrounding this character. Hercules' question provokes the following reaction from the newly arrived, who is none other than the deceased emperor Claudius: 'Claudius rejoiced that there were *philologi* up there; he began to hope that there would be some place for his historical works' (Eden's translation). So he, too, used a verse of Homer (*Odyssey* 9,39) to indicate that he was a Caesar and said: 'The wind, bearing me from Ilion, brought me to the Cicones'. In Homer the line is spoken by Odysseus to the Phaeacian King Alcinous and begins the account of his *nostos*. Claudius uses Ἰλιόθεν ('from Ilion'), Odysseus' place of departure, to allude to the fact that he is a Julian emperor, descended from

¹ Cf. Lund 1996; all text references are made to Roncali 1990.

² The Homeric line reads 'where then is your city' (πόθι τοι, instead of ποίη).

Trojan Aeneas, the son of Venus and father of Iulus.³ The narrator steps in to supplement the next line in the Homeric passage, which in his view tells a greater truth: 'There I sacked the city and destroyed the people'. The reader is expected to supply 'Rome' as the city destroyed by Claudius,⁴ in place of Thracian Ismarus cleverly omitted by the speaker in quoting the Homeric passage. The goddess Fever, who has accompanied Claudius to heaven, fails to understand his learned allusion and steps in to explain that Claudius is lying about his country of origin, because he was actually born at Lyons. Claudius is angered and protests in a language that is unintelligible; only his outstretched hand suggests to those who know that he is ordering that the goddess be taken out and beheaded. No one, however, pays any attention to him; it is as if he were talking to his freedmen (chapter 6).

In introducing himself to Hercules Claudius poses as Odysseus. The line he quotes (5,4) begins the account of his *nostos* which the Achaean hero gives to king Alcinous (*Odyssey* 9,39) and tells that the wind brought him from Troy to the land of the Cicones. On a second reading Claudius' Odyssean voyage 'from Ilion' (Ἰλιόθεν) alludes to the Julian claim of descent from Aphrodite's (grand)son, and therefore Claudius poses also as another Aeneas, father of Iulus-Ascanius.⁵ A Virgilian allusion elsewhere in the text establishes a relationship between Claudius and Iulus in a very sarcastic vein. In the proem of the *Apocolocyntosis* the limping Claudius is said to have made the journey to heaven '*non passibus aequis*' (1,2: 'with unequal steps'). The Virgilian quotation parodies the gait of the boy Iulus in *Aeneid* 2, as he is trying to keep up with his father's longer strides at the moment of departure from burning Troy. Commenting on the Virgilian quotation Leach notes: 'As Ascanius was to Aeneas, so Claudius to Augustus and Tiberius, yet who would consider him a replica of Rome's founding son?'⁶

Claudius poses as both Odysseus and Aeneas also upon his arrival in the underworld: the dead, who are Claudius' victims, give him a ceremonial welcome and Claudius exclaims: 'Friends everywhere! How did *you* come to be here' (13,6). Suetonius records that he was an amnesiac and used to wonder why the people executed on his orders did not show up a bit later (*Cl.* 39,1). But *quomodo huc venistis vos* is also a parody of Odysseus' address to the shade of Elpenor, the first shade to approach him in the Homeric first *Nekyia*: 'Ἐλπήνορ, πῶς ἦλθες ὑπὸ ζόφον ἠερόεντα;' (11,57). Aeneas' simi-

³ Eden 1984, 86.; for the exchange of Homeric verses cf. O'Gorman 2005.

⁴ Eden 1984, 87.

⁵ Eden 1984, 86.

⁶ Leach 1989, 206.

lar question to the shade of his pilot Palinurus during the hero's *katabasis* (*Aen.* 6,341-342) adapts the Homeric line: '*quis te, Palinure, deorum / eripuit nobis medioque sub aequore mersit?*' As will be seen in greater detail below, Claudius' *katabasis* alludes to the Vergilian passage as well.

Seneca's *Apocolocyntosis* is the only specimen of Menippean satire that has survived from classical Rome and, as a matter of fact, it is the earliest extant example of any Menippean satire.⁷ What a Menippean satire might actually be remains a vexed issue.⁸ Relihan's definition comprises the following features: mixture of prose and verse, fantastic narrative, burlesque of language and literature, jokes at the expense of learning, and relation to three main subtexts (Homer's *Odyssey*, Old Comedy, and Platonic Myth, especially the myth of Er).⁹ Several of these elements are relevant to Seneca's *Apocolocyntosis*, but this satire is also special in certain respects. A characteristic feature of Claudius' afterlife adventure is what Bakhtin calls a 'three-planed construction' of Menippean satire: Olympus, earth, the underworld.¹⁰ But the *Apocolocyntosis* is the *only* example of this kind among extant ancient Menippean satires. In *Icaromenippus* and *Nekyomantia* Lucian treats the voyages to heaven and earth independently of each other. Another fundamental difference is that Claudius is neither a mere *observer* of things in heaven and the underworld nor some character involved in a quest for knowledge and truth. He is a dead character who believes he is still alive¹¹ and who undergoes 'judgment', first in heaven as regards his request for deification and next in the underworld for his crimes, a place from where he never returns. Also, during his brief passage from earth on the way to the underworld his (dis)abilities, habits and achievements are given a mock 'judgment' by the crowd and the mourners.

As noted above, Relihan lists the *Odyssey* as one of three major subtexts of Menippean satire. The intertextual relevance of the *Odyssey* lies in the fact that it is 'an account of a man who travels at great length through a fantastic world, often learning of supernatural truths (in the underworld), and tempted by immortality (on the island of Calypso)'.¹² The world of the *Apo-*

⁷ For a chapter to chapter reading of the *Apocolocyntosis* as a Menippean satire see Weinreich 1923.

⁸ See Riikonen 1987; Relihan 1993; Branham 2005, 3-31, on Bakhtin; and briefly Rimell 2005, 164-168. Bakhtin 1984, 113 describes the 'Menippea' as 'extraordinarily flexible and as changeable as Proteus'.

⁹ Relihan 1993, 12-36.

¹⁰ Bakhtin 1984, 116.

¹¹ See below and in greater detail Paschalis 2009.

¹² Relihan 1993, 31; cf. Courtney 1962, on literary parody in Menippean satire.

colocyntosis is in several respects an inverted Odyssean world. As noted above, Seneca's Claudius lives in a 'fantastic' world while alive and continues to do so after death. He does not travel to the underworld but is dragged down there for punishment, and is definitely not interested in supernatural truths, but is eager to become one of the immortals and so ascends to heaven. Finally, Seneca's account takes Claudius, deified by the Senate, first to heaven, where his admittance to the council of the gods is rejected, and then to the underworld where, unlike Odysseus, he remains forever.

Petronius' *Satyricon* has frequently been treated as a Menippean satire and situated within the Roman literary tradition, though the discovery of papyrus fragments of prosimetric Greek novels has expanded the literary horizon.¹³ As regards specifically the relationship with the *Apocolocyntosis*, the two texts are, according to conventional dating, products of the same era and the same Neronian context. It has been repeatedly argued that the (anti-Stoic) *Satyricon* echoes or parodies Seneca's tragedies and philosophical works,¹⁴ and that the author of the *Satyricon* was familiar with Seneca's Menippean satire.¹⁵ One specific parallel that has been discussed is Claudius' resemblance to Trimalchio.¹⁶

Below I draw attention to features that, to the best of my knowledge, have not been discussed before: analogies between Claudius and Encolpius, and the interplay in both works of fiction, history, and judicial language. The study assumes that Petronius is likely to have been a 'reader' of the *Apocolocyntosis* and treats Claudius and Encolpius as 'readers' of Homer, Virgil and other literature.

Claudius and Encolpius

The protagonist of Petronius' comic novel leads an adventurous life wandering from place to place. His journey, like Claudius', reproduces the journeys of Odysseus and Aeneas both as frame and in specific episodes and events. Claudius' is of course an afterlife journey; but it has been noted that in the

¹³ For views on the relationship of the *Satyricon* to Menippean satire see Adamietz 1987; Relihan 1993, 91-99; Conte 1996, 140-170; Schmeling 1996; Cristesen and Torlone 2002; Rimell 2005.

¹⁴ See for instance Collignon 1892, 291-311; Walsh 1970, *passim*; Perutelli 1985; Currie 1998; Courtney 2001, 217-218.

¹⁵ Collignon 1892, 309-311; Courtney 2004.

¹⁶ Focardi 1999.

Satyricon the theme, thought and situations of death play a unifying role.¹⁷ Furthermore Claudius' comic descent into the underworld has at least two parallels in the *Satyricon*: Encolpius' experience at Trimalchio's banquet, which has been seen as 'an allegorical trip to the underworld'; and Encolpius' trip to Croton as an intertextual *katabasis*. Both have strong links to Virgil's underworld and on a second level to Homer's *Odyssey*.¹⁸ The metaphorical, intertextual underworld trips of Encolpius present an inverted analogy with Claudius' afterlife journey: in Menippean satire journeys to heaven and hell are commonly undertaken by living characters, but Claudius is dead and just happens to believe he is still alive. He realizes that he is dead only on the way to the underworld, when he witnesses his own funeral procession on the *via Sacra* (chapter 12). But even this recognition sounds like a sarcastic comment, since Claudius will continue to act as if he were alive to the very end of the satire.¹⁹

At every step the *Apocolocyntosis* implies that Claudius had always been living in his own isolated and fantastic world and that his after-life journey is more or less a continuation of his earthly life.²⁰ Encolpius also lives in a world of his own. He frequently imagines himself to be larger than life, almost a reincarnation of characters from myth, epic, and tragedy.²¹ From this viewpoint Claudius and Encolpius are both portrayed as making fictional and literary journeys of adventure. Encolpius identifies himself with Odysseus, Aeneas, and Hercules, as Claudius does (in *Apocolocyntosis* 7,4,4-5,4 Claudius even performs in Rome one of Hercules' labors, a metaphorical cleaning of the stables of Augeas²²). They are both readers of Homer and Virgil; they play out scenarios written by themselves or the respective narrators or both. But these scenarios avail them nothing, since they both fail to come to grips with the problems they encounter. Claudius' major literary scenario uses Homer and Virgil as a subtext to support his descent from *divus Iulius* and *divus Augustus*, and hence to advance his claim to *be admitted to the council of the immortals*. The claim is ridiculed by an unknown god at the council of the gods. It is later supported by the god Diespiter (9,4-6) but the deified Augustus demolishes it in his intervention (10,4): 'This man you see has been all along masquerading under my name (*per tot annos sub meo nomine latens*).

¹⁷ Herzog 1989; Döpp 1991.

¹⁸ See especially Zeitlin 1971; Bodel 1994.

¹⁹ See further Paschalis 2009.

²⁰ See further Paschalis 2009.

²¹ Conte 1996, chapter 1.

²² Eden 1984, 97-98.

Suetonian and Senecan Claudius are both portrayed as fools; Encolpius' reactions to what he sees and hears at Trimalchio's banquet range from naïve admiration and *stupor* to manifestations of sheer stupidity (he is called *homo stultissime* by Agamemnon (65,5), and he even becomes self-sarcastic about his lack of intelligence (69,9).²³ Claudius has no consciousness of reality, whatever that is; he is totally cut out from the world around him both in life and after death. To adapt Conte's words about Encolpius, nothing is capable of 'mortifying Claudius' illusions'.²⁴ When at the end of the *Apocolocyntosis* the dead emperor is condemned to play dice using a box with holes in it and eventually to become the clerk for petitions to the freedman Menander, no complaint or protest comes from his lips. His Sisyphean dice-playing and his becoming a freedman's clerical slave are not punishments but a mere continuation of his earthly life, activities and conduct.²⁵ I think we can credit Petronius, a likely 'reader' of the *Apocolocyntosis*, with having created in Encolpius a much more complex hero than Seneca's Claudius.

Encolpius is a student of literature, and the Greek and Latin scenarios that he writes, re-writes or merely performs have been adapted from the greatest literary texts and myths. He also writes Latin poetry. His speech on the harmful effects of declamation on Roman education that opens the surviving part of the *Satyricon* displays familiarity with the greatest tradition of Greek poetry and prose. The literary *personae* he later adopts confirm the initial impression. But when the time comes for him to take a Greek language test he fails: he thinks an *embasicoetas* means only 'drinking-cup', but Quartilla's Greek turns out to be much better, because she serves him with a 'cinaedus', another meaning of the word" (24,1-4);²⁶ and of course Encolpius utterly fails to understand Trimalchio's *Latin* puns and despairs of his dullness (41,5 *damnaui ego stuporem meum*).

The learning of the historical Claudius was admirable.²⁷ His writings encompassed a vast area. Among other things, he wrote Roman histories in Latin, and an Etruscan and Carthaginian history in Greek. His love of Greek was notorious: in the words of Suetonius 'he took every occasion to declare his love for that language and its superiority' (42,1 *amorem praestantiamque linguae omni occasione professus*). He liked to quote Homer in court and to

²³ The text is that of Mueller 1995.

²⁴ Conte 1996, 90. Cf. however Courtney 2001, 54 on the unreality of declamation themes.

²⁵ See Suet. *Cl.* 33,2,6-8 on his obsession with dice-playing; 25,5,8-12 on his being the pawn of his wife and freedmen.

²⁶ On the Greek word see Cavalca 2001, 83-84.

²⁷ Huzar 1984.

speak Greek publicly and in official capacities, something for which he was ridiculed (Suet. *Cl.* 42; Dio 60,16,8).

Claudius' Odyssean journey thematizes the dead emperor's obsession with Homer. In heaven he displays his Homeric Greek by quoting *Odyssey* 9,39. He is, however, satirized for omitting the next Homeric line and implicitly for using *Greek* to declare his identity as a *Roman* emperor (*Homericus versus Caesarem se esse significans*). The truth is that Claudius manipulates *Odyssey* 9,39 like another Odysseus, with philological 'shrewdness': his aim is to promote his Julian descent and hence he quotes Ἰλιόθεν, Odysseus' place of departure, but skips Ἰσθάριον, Odysseus' destination. His reason for condemning the goddess Fever to death is her audacity to challenge his divine-imperial descent which springs from ignorance of Homer.

Seneca believed that true learning did not come from *philologia* but from philosophy (*Ad Luc.* 108, 23-38). In chapter 13 of the *De brevitate vitae* he calls the former 'a Greek disease' (*Graecorum ... morbus*) that has affected the Romans as well, with specific reference to Homeric philological questions. Trimalchio's comic engagement with philology and proud rejection of philosophy (56,7; 71,2) might imply that Seneca himself was a probable target.²⁸ Did Petronius have Seneca's Claudius in mind when he portrayed Trimalchio's ridiculous notion of *philologia* and study of Homer? Is Trimalchio in this respect a caricature of a caricature? A similar assumption could apply to Encolpius who fails language tests and misses linguistic puns.

Claudius was an easy target as regards a specific weakness. The narrator of the *Apocolocyntosis* hammers on his inarticulate and unintelligible language and sarcastically describes his advocate in the underworld as a *homo Claudiana lingua disertus* (14,2,3). In light of the fact that Augustus is introduced in chapter 10 as a man of *summa facundia*, Seneca may be making a point about the decline of *eloquentia* within the imperial line by using Claudius' speech defect to mark the change. This is how Augustus protests at the council to the gods: 'How can you make this man a god who cannot say three words in quick succession?' (11,3).²⁹ Is the *Apocolocyntosis* also making a comment on the decline of *eloquentia* as a broader issue, a favorite topic of the early Republic and so prominent in the *Satyricon*?³⁰

²⁸ Cf. Amat 1992 on Trimalchio as a caricature of Seneca.

²⁹ On the meaning of *tria uerba cito dicat* see Eden 1984, 125.

³⁰ The key passages are the exchange between Encolpius and Agamemnon that opens the surviving part of the *Satyricon* and the pronouncements of Eumolpus (88, 118); basic reading are Kennedy 1978; Kibel 1978; Heldmann 1982; Soverini 1985.

Fiction, history, and judicial language

In *Apocolocyntosis* 5 Claudius uses a Homeric line as a literary testimony to his alleged descent from Troy (and hence from Trojan Aeneas), while the narrator adduces the next Homeric line as evidence for Claudius' metaphorical sacking of Rome and the killing of its people. The goddess Fever takes Claudius' learned allusion as a statement of fact and proceeds to give formal testimony as to his true place of origin; Claudius is angered and sentences her to death. Claudius' dialogue with Hercules and the reaction of the goddess Fever mark the role assigned to witnesses and testimonies of various kinds (including literary material) in the satirical account of Claudius' afterlife. Below I discuss only one other such case,³¹ one that is more relevant to the present comparative reading of the *Apocolocyntosis* with the *Satyricon*.

In the proem the narrator adduces as potential witness for his fictional account of Claudius' ascent to heaven the superintendent of the Appian way, who had in the past sworn before the Senate to have seen Julia Drusilla, Caligula's sister, rise to heaven; since nobody believed him, he solemnly swore never again to bear witness to what he has seen, even if it were a murder in public place; so he only spoke in private to the narrator (1,2-3). The proem parodies the use of witnesses to imperial ascension³² and also the historians' conventional assurance of truthfulness.³³ In addition it subtly alludes to Claudius' passionate engagement with the administration of law, which is satirized in chapter 5 (above) and elsewhere in the *Apocolocyntosis*. In particular, the arbitrary nature of the informant's testimony and phrases like 'nobody ever demanded from a historian to produce sworn witnesses (*iuratores*)' or 'I will say whatever trips off my tongue', remind the reader of the fact that occasionally Claudius' trials became a mockery of justice and invest the conception and writing of this fictional account of the emperor's afterlife with the arbitrariness of his verdicts (Suet. *Cl.* 14,1-15,1).³⁴

There is one chapter in Petronius' *Satyricon* where fiction, history and judicial language also come together. It is Eumolpus' well-known discourse on the nature of true poetry (118) which is followed by his own poem on the Civil War (119-124). The paragraph most pertinent is 118,6 (translation by P. G. Walsh):

³¹ For a full discussion see Paschalis 2009.

³² For recent discussions of the *Apocolocyntosis* with regard to the ritual of imperial apotheosis see Price 1987; Fishwick 2002; Gradel 2002, 325-330.

³³ Eden 1984, 62.

³⁴ Cf. Hurley 2001, 118; Levick 1993, 115-118.

For example, the person who tries his hand at the lofty theme of the Civil War must be steeped in literature or he will sink under the burden of the subject. Historical events are not to be treated in verses, for historians handle such material far better. The free spirit of genius should plunge headlong into oracular utterances, the succour lent by the gods, and the Procrustean control of lapidary phrases; the result should appear as prophetic frenzy rather than as trustworthy, scrupulous accounts attested by witnesses.

The ultimate source of the statement that recording historical events is not a poet's but a historian's job is of course chapter nine of Aristotle's *Poetics*, on the distinction between history and poetry:

... the one relates actual events (*ta genomena*), the other the kinds of things that might occur (*hoia an genoito*). Consequently, poetry is more philosophical and more elevated than history, since poetry relates more of the universal, while history relates particulars...³⁵

In Rome historical material was from the very beginning of Latin Literature the subject-matter also of poetry. The chief exponent was historical epic but other kinds of poetry were also involved. Thus the Aristotelian distinction between history and poetry assumed a different character: how history could be turned into poetry. The Romans understood that poetry was not produced by simply 'putting Herodotus into verse', as Aristotle had pointed out (*Poetics* 1451b1-4). What they did was apply in addition Greek epic conventions to the Roman historical subject-matter. Eumolpus' poetic manifesto reflects the complexities of writing historical epic in mid-first century A.D., but here too transforming history into poetry remains a central issue. In his view necessary ingredients are 'being steeped in literature' (*plenus litteris*), divine action, invention (fiction, *fabulosum*), and above all *furor*, poetic 'inspiration'.³⁶

The contrast between history and fiction in Eumolpus' theory indirectly concerns also the narratives of the *Satyricon* and Seneca's *Apocolocyntosis* vis-à-vis their historical context. They are both works of fiction set in mid-

³⁵ The translation is by Stephen Halliwell, 1995. According to Von Fritz 1958, 115-116, 'more' (*mallon*) goes with both halves of the sentence.

³⁶ On Eumolpus' poetic manifesto and the *Bellum civile* see Soverini 1985, 1738-1771; Labate 1995; Conte 1996, 68-72. Cf. Dehon 2000, on the transformation of Livian prose into poetry.

first century Rome but adopt an entirely different approach as regards political history. The *Apocolocyntosis*, a Menippean satire on Claudius' deification, is the most direct political satire of a Roman Emperor that has come down to us from the Early Empire. By contrast, the *Satyricon* does not take an open position as regards contemporary history and consequently the work's (narrator's, author's) political intent and attitude towards Nero remains a matter of scholarly speculation.³⁷ Eumolpus' *Bellum civile* is significantly the only section of the surviving *Satyricon* which deals openly with Roman history and especially with the sensitive issue of the civil war between Caesar and Pompey, the outcome of which produced the reigning Julio-Claudian dynasty. But the intent of the *Bellum civile* and its relation to authorial views are hotly debated issues, one reason being the poor credentials of the *character* Eumolpus and another the poor quality of the poem itself.³⁸

The poem is, however, relevant to the present comparative discussion of the *Apocolocyntosis* and the *Satyricon* as regards Claudius' historiographical production, in which he displays great pride upon arrival in heaven: 'Claudius rejoiced that there were men of letters there: he hoped that there would be some place for his historical works' (*Apoc.* 5,4,5-6, Eden's translation). One of his works was a Roman history and, according to Suetonius, Claudius' original plan covered ground that was as sensitive as Eumolpus'. He began his history with the murder of Julius Caesar, but later changed course and made a fresh start at the end of the civil war: being under pressure from his mother and his grandmother 'he realized that he would not be allowed to give a frank or true account of the earlier times' (Suet. *Cl.* 41,2).

Concerning the interplay of history and fiction with judicial language, we have seen that the narrator of the *Apocolocyntosis* uses judicial language in order to deconstruct the historians' conventional assurance of truthfulness, reproduce Claudius' arbitrary administration of justice and blur the boundaries between history and fiction. Eumolpus assigns it a different role: he employs the metaphor of 'accurate and truthful testimony before witnesses' (*religiosae orationis sub testibus fides*) in order to describe the job of a historian, which is dealing with bare facts. But there is also another function of judicial language that derives from the context of Eumolpus' discourse and poem. All accounts of the decline of literature (poetry, rhetoric) in the *Satyricon* are in one way or another associated with decadence and

³⁷ For a couple of views see Sullivan 1985; Rudich 1993.

³⁸ Scholarly views are summarized in Connors 1998, 100-101; Beck 1979 distinguishes between the mediocre 'Eumolpus *poeta*' and the brilliant 'Eumolpus *fabulator*'.

moral decline.³⁹ This is true of Eumolpus' two discourses (in the art Gallery and on the way to Croton) and of the dialogue between Encolpius and Agamemnon at the school of rhetoric. In the first two cases these claims are supported directly or indirectly by respective poetic compositions: Eumolpus' discourse on the decline of art and literature (88) is followed by his poem on the Fall of Troy; his discourse on the decline of poetry (118) is followed by the *Bellum civile* where the moral degeneration of Rome, rising from *avaritia and luxuria*, is identified as the major cause of the Civil War.

Eumolpus is notorious, however, for preaching one thing while doing another. The narrative frame of his discourse on poetry and the recitation of the *Bellum civile* is the legacy-hunting fraud and the profit he expects to get from his phony will (116-125). The hypocrite Eumolpus plays the role of a shipwrecked millionaire who has lost a son and is constantly revising the clauses in his *testamentum* (117,10 *tabulasque testamenti omnibus <mensibus> renovet*) as prospective victim of legacy-hunters, while Encolpius and the others play his slaves. But immediately next Eumolpus invokes the great poets of the past (118,5) as 'witnesses' to his call for reversing the decline of poetry and creates a poem which laments Roman degeneration as the cause of the Civil War. I would think that the solemn invocation of literary *testes* is undermined by the ongoing *testamentum* fraud.⁴⁰ The subtle parody has a probable parallel in the *Apocolocyntosis*, where Claudius' arbitrary administration of justice is reflected in the arbitrary character of the narrator's account of his afterlife based on an unreliable testimony.

Within the same context I would assume that Eumolpus' criticism of (contemporary) historical epic is suspicious. If the target is Lucan, then the charge that the *Pharsalia* handles events as 'truthful statements made before witnesses' (*religiosae orationis sub testibus fides*) and is consequently identifiable with plain history does not have much basis. Eumolpus' language looks like an inversion of the comment in the proem of the *Apocolocyntosis* that one should not demand of a historian to produce sworn witnesses. But in Seneca it is used as a mere cover for telling his invented tale. Is Petronius alluding to the proem of Seneca's satire in order to warn his readers against the seriousness of Eumolpus' criticisms?

³⁹ Heldmann 1982; Elsner 1993.

⁴⁰ *Testamentum* derives from *testor* (<*testis*) = 'bear witness'; 'publish one's last will or testament, make a will'; 'invoke someone as a witness'.

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