

TASTING TEACHER:
A LOOK AT CANNIBALISM IN PETRONIUS' *SATYRICON* 141

By

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Chapter 141 of Petronius' *Satyricon* is a shocking tale of mortuary cannibalism. Eumolpus' ruse is at an end, as the *captatores* have been drained dry. Anxiously they have awaited their reward, but they can wait no longer. Eumolpus has no choice but to finally fulfill his promises and deliver to them their long-awaited reward, which takes the form of a "Thyestean" feast. But to what effect?

The purpose of this study is to better understand Petronius' motives in the Croton-scene. For this, the following chapters will lay out the typical characteristics of cannibalism in mythology, history and philosophy in an attempt to decipher the mystery that is Petronius' *Satyricon* 141. It is the intention of the first chapter to introduce the mythic cannibal and to discuss his influence on Greek and Roman drama. Chapter 2 will set out the historical cannibal, his customs and his impact on society. In the third chapter, the effect of cannibalism on philosophy will be examined, particularly how Plato defines it, the stoics and cynics redefine it, and the Pythagoreans forbid it. The fourth and final

chapter will then utilize the findings of the previous three chapters in order to better understand *Satyricon* 141.

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

Chapter 141 of Petronius' *Satyricon* is a perplexing tale of mortuary cannibalism. On the one hand, the section is highly fragmentary, consisting of at least three lacunae. In fact, the *Satyricon*, in its entirety, is severely lacunose. Of what Sullivan believes was once twenty-four books, only sections of three (books 14, 15 and 16) remain.¹ On the other hand, it deals with the unusual request of Eumolpus that all those, who are beneficiaries in his will, must partake in his flesh after his death, a proposal that most of us would pass on. Unfortunately, the text breaks off there, leaving us to imagine the outcome of the tale. Yet we have no real evidence, with which we might attempt a reconstruction of the scene.

For this reason, this section has both baffled and, at the same time, intrigued scholars. Raith claims that the section is a cynical farce, while Rankin proposes that it is a *topos*, drawing off the fifteenth book of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. Conte chimes in, stating that Eumolpus fills the role of mentor. He resembles Ovid's Pythagoras in the scene, thus lending credibility to Rankin's ideas. Rimell, then, connects the work of her predecessors in an attempt to demonstrate the cannibalistic nature of education.² Finally, there are those scholars who attempt to analyze the scene as a parody of the Christian belief of the Eucharist. In fact, it was such a belief that served as the initial impetus of this paper. However, after closer inspection into the ancient Graeco-Roman views on

¹ Sullivan (1968) 36.

² Though I do not agree with her argument in its entirety, we have arrived at similar theories regarding the Croton scene.

cannibalism my opinion on the subject had been altered. Thus I propose that through a detailed investigation of the ancient views on cannibalism we might move closer to a better understanding of *Sat* 141. However, it may aid our investigation to first define cannibalism.

Cannibalism is generally defined as the consumption by an individual of flesh, belonging to an individual of like kind. Thus, for a human, the consumption of human flesh is regard as an act of cannibalism. That definition, however, is too narrow as most scholars will at least include the consumption of blood in their definition of cannibalism as well. Tannahill attempts to extend this definition to include even blood transfusions, yet for our purposes cannibalism shall be confined to oral consumption of the human body. With this established, we then push the definition a little further to include, as Rimell does, a level of metaphorical cannibalism, especially the cannibalistic pursuit of knowledge. In this paper, the wide spectrum of various definitions is taken into account and, in fact, employed, starting with the concrete examples and moving to the abstract. With that said, let us begin.

CHAPTER 2 CANNIBALISM AND ENTERTAINMENT

We are what we watch, or at least that is what modern scholars lead us to believe. The reason for this lies in the fact that we generally watch for entertainment, and what entertains us is that with which we are familiar. Because of this, the shows we watch today are to some degree based on our reality. The situation was undoubtedly the same in ancient Rome and Greece as is clearly demonstrated by Aristophanes of Byzantium's comments on Menander. Aristophanes is quoted as saying, "Menander and Life, which of you imitates the other?" However, to claim that every play on the ancient stage was factual would be ridiculous, as even today so-called reality television is often quite different from everyday life. If our entertainment were an exact reproduction of our lives, it would not be able to hold our attention. Not even Menander could sell the audiences of his day on that idea, as out of 108 known plays only eight were successful. But rather, these shows are necessarily exaggerated forms of our reality. Often they employ forms of parody to add a touch of social criticism. In this way, they then become not only entertaining and meaningful to those within the culture, and highly educational to those on the outside, looking in. With this in mind we must remember that a look at cannibalism on the ancient stage might not tell us whether such practices were indeed a common occurrence, but it will clearly display what the Greeks and Romans perception of cannibalism was. Therefore, we shall investigate the nature of cannibalism by looking at two popular forms of ancient entertainment, myth and drama, in order to gain a better understanding of the ancient cannibal.

The Mythic Cannibal

Mythology is a very powerful, and important, aspect of any culture, because within such stories lie the beliefs of those who tell them. That is to say the mythology of a people is the vessel of their own needs, desires, hopes and fears. Thus the telling of myth is a very important to a civilization's development, and it is that importance which secured their preservation, while the level of entertainment that they offered, and continue to offer, has ensured their transmission through the generations, even many centuries after they ceased being believed. Some of these myths seek to explain life, nature and the interaction of the both. Others discuss the gods, their roles in the world, and their respective temperaments. While still another class puts forth the virtuous deeds of valiant heroes or the grievous misfortunes, plaguing wicked individuals, in an attempt to provide a model by which one should orient his life. The types of myths, which will be discussed in this chapter, fall into this last category. They are stories about individuals who break the rules, transcend the boundaries of what is considered proper, and commit one of the most extreme pollutions.¹ So what causes good people to go cannibal?

Simply put, those individuals, who partake in cannibalism, cannot abide by Apollo's maxim, μηδὲν ἀγάν. Some are weak, lacking a strong sense of self-control. Eventually, these individuals succumb to their excessive desires. Others are driven mad by the gods, particularly Dionysus, and thus they lose all inhibitions imposed on them by the laws of civilization. In their own ways, both traverse the boundary that separates the

¹ Parker (1983) 305. However, unlike Parker, I do believe many of these myths have a firm foothold in reality.

civilized and uncivilized worlds. As a result, these once good people undergo a metamorphosis, becoming savage monsters, like the Cyclopes² and the Minotaur.

One of the earliest accounts of cannibalism is told by Hesiod, who recounts the succession of Kronos by Zeus, and Kronos' opposition to it, in attempt to explain Zeus' dominion over the world (*Th* 435-506). According to Hesiod, Kronos learned from Gaia and starry Ouranos that a child of his was fated to dethrone him, as he did his father, despite all of his might. Fearing this, Kronos took to eating each child as it was born in the hopes of hindering his dreadful fate. Rhea, however, deceived her husband by exchanging her youngest son, Zeus, with a rock wrapped in swaddling clothes. The Roman poet, Hyginus, presents another version of the myth, citing that Kronos instead cast Poseidon into the sea, Hades down into the depths of the Underworld, and attempted to eat only Zeus, who was hidden by Hera (*Fab* 139). Either way, Zeus eventually returned to save his siblings,³ castrate his father and send him into exile.⁴ And so, despite (or perhaps because of)⁵ Kronos' attempts to safeguard his throne, he suffered the ultimate loss of power.

² Polyphemus and the Cyclopes have traditionally been seen as symbols of an uncivilized society. However, more recently scholars have begun to call the image of the savage Cyclops into question. In particular, Glenn (1972) argues the depiction of Polyphemus, even in the *Odyssey*, is often too human for him to be considered a savage monster. Hernandez also disputes the claim of savagery, mentioning how idyllic the island of the Cyclopes is until Odysseus' arrival. Seaford, though, argues that Polyphemus is more human than beast, which is what he considers to be the source of his savagery.

³ Hesiod (*Th* 492-500) claims that Gaia, either with or without Zeus' assistance, induced the vomiting that spared the gods. Apollodorus (*ApB* 1.2.1), however, states that it was Metis who induced Kronos' vomiting.

⁴ Where Kronos went after being dethroned is debated. Some ancient authors claim he was imprisoned in Tartaros, such as Homer and Hesiod (*Il* 8.478-81; 14. 203-4, 273-4, 278-9; 15.225; *Th* 851). Others, such as Vergil and Ovid, claim he went to Italy, ushering in the Golden Age. And yet others assert that he establish a new reign over the Isles of the Blest (*WD* 173 a-c).

⁵ Hook (1992: 24) argues that Kronos' ignorance towards deciphering his fate causes him to react in such a way as to set the fate in motion. This is a common theme in tragedy, cf. Oedipus.

After dethroning Kronos, Zeus traversed the earth five times, assigning positions of power to all those close to him and imparting upon mankind laws and customs. In addition, he placed a ban on cannibalism and established as food grain. However, it was not long before the son became like the father. Zeus, upon hearing that his child, born of Metis, would usurp his throne, devoured her. Nevertheless, the child, Athena, was born, birthed by Zeus, not Metis. In this way, he was able to circumvent the prophecy.⁶

Such power struggles, though, are not confined just to the realm of the gods. However, one major difference exists amongst the mortal cannibals, namely that the cannibalism found in such myths does not occur in an individual's attempts to maintain his power, but as a result of his pursuit of power. The most notable of these is the story of Thyestes.⁷ Thyestes, desirous of Atreus' power, seduced his wife and managed to steal the golden lamb, thought to be a symbol of power and right to rule, given to Atreus by the gods⁸. Zeus intervened, changing the course of the sun and stars in order to assist Atreus regain his throne. Seeking vengeance, Atreus slaughtered his brother's children and fed him them. Thyestes then, blinded by his rapacious lust for power, crossed many of the boundaries of the civilized world, particularly by seducing Aerope⁹, later Pelopia, and partaking in the "Thyestean" feast. He becomes a monster, having committed many deeds deemed destructive to a *polis*.

⁶ Hook (1992: 32) suggests that the act of digesting wisdom (Metis), though considered by the Greeks to be morally reprehensible, is the key factor that separates Zeus from his father. Kronos' ignorance and lust for power did him in, while Zeus' wisdom ensures that he will not suffer the same fate.

⁷ Original accounts (i.e. *Iliad*) suggest that the transfer of power was conducted peacefully. The first extant version of conflict and cannibalism is Aeschylus' *Agamemnon*, which Gantz (1993: 546) states must have been well-known by then as per Cassandra's dark hints and allusions.

⁸ The epic *Alkaionis* established that Hermes sent the lamb to instigate the struggle between Atreus and Thyestes, while Pherekydes claimed that it was Artemis, who sent the lamb to Atreus.

⁹ Gantz (1993: 546) believes that Euripides' *Kressai* established the affair between Thyestes and Aerope as long standing, so that Thyestes' children were perhaps born by Aerope.

Whereas Kronos, an immortal, had to remove any successors to his throne to maintain his power, humans have a different problem, limitation of mortality. Thus the only possible way for Thyestes to obtain the level of power which both he and Kronos¹⁰ desire, is through his progeny. He seduces his brother's wife and by doing so disrupts Atreus' household, but simultaneously increases his own with illegitimate children, which may also serve to disrupt his household. If Aristotle is correct, then Thyestes' actions not only effect Atreus' household but it disrupts the entire *polis* as well. Furthermore, he defies the laws of civilization by partaking in human flesh; the fact that the victims are his own children only serves to heighten his crime. Therefore, through his act of cannibalism, Thyestes ensures the end of his dynasty. The subsequent rape of his own daughter is yet another 'unspeakable' crime¹¹ committed by Thyestes, which serves to send both the *oikos* and the *polis* into further chaos. Thus he merits the punishment of the gods and the wrath of Atreus. The act of cannibalism is the most gruesome, most painful punishment he could suffer; it serves to complete his transformation into a savage uncivilized individual that began with his blind lust of power.¹²

Another individual, punished with such an abominable feast, is Tereus. Again the elements of the ruthless pursuit of power and an act of vengeance are present, yet this story is not quite what one might expect. The power Tereus strives for is not that of Thyestes, who wanted a great tyranny. Tereus' desired power comes from the dominance

¹⁰ Glenn (1978: 141-55) sees this myth as a reproduction of the struggle for power on Olympus, listing the similarities between Kronos and Thyestes, as well as those between Zeus and Atreus.

¹¹ Incest and cannibalism are the most extreme crimes the Greek mind could imagine. As a result, the tragic stage was filled with accounts of these crimes, the most famous of these being the tales of Oedipus and Thyestes.

¹² It is worth noting that Thyestes committed the crimes of incest and cannibalism neither willingly nor knowingly.

of one individual over another, specifically the dominance of Tereus over Philomela. When the opportunity arises for Tereus to satiate his desires, he rapes her for as Achilles Tatius states, *BarbavroiV dev, wJV e[oiiken, ojuc iJkanh; pro;V =Afrodivthn miva gunhv* (5.5.2). Thus, like Thyestes, Tereus not only disrupts his own household with improper sexual actions but he also impacts the *polis* with it.

After the rape, Tereus attempts to leave Philomela powerless. However, he as a man is ignorant to the true nature of her power. He thinks in terms of military campaigns and law courts, for it is in those places that a man's power is most frequently displayed. He knows that she does not have the physical strength to cause him any harm, but he also realizes that she is not all together powerless. She has the power of speech, which indeed is a dangerous power. Thus he removes her tongue, leaving her, in his opinion, powerless. But as a woman, Philomela's powers rest neither on the battlefield nor in the law courts, but within the home. She uses her domestic skills of weaving to communicate the crime committed against her to Procne, who takes it upon herself to avenge her sister. This vengeance takes shape in the dismemberment, and subsequent serving, of Itys to his father, Tereus. In the end, it is Tereus' lack of self-control and lust for power that leads him to partake in cannibalism as a form of punishment.

The next myths deal less with a pursuit of power, though there will continue to be an element of it found in each, and more with revenge. Among the gods, the story of Dionysus Zagreus stands out as an example. According to the myth a vengeful Hera, angered by the infidelity of Zeus and the subsequent birth of Dionysus, sends the Titans to slaughter the youth. They do it and proceed to feast on his limbs; the only part spared was his heart from which he is resurrected. Discovering the crime, Zeus strikes down the

Titans with his lightning bolts and from the ashes forms mankind. This myth, odd as it seems, has had a profound impact. The Orphics, as will be discussed in chapter 3, base their principles prohibiting murder and the consumption of meat on it. Furthermore, the followers of Dionysus turned this myth into ritual. A practice arose in which an individual, representing Dionysus, was sacrificed and consumed by the god's followers. Pliny informs us that this practice was so widespread in Rome that the Senate deemed it a large enough problem as to need to ban it. Many of these followers must have been women as stories of women possessed by the god, who rip apart live animals (*sparagmos*) and feast upon the raw flesh (*omophagia*), emerged. The daughters of Minyas demonstrate the dangers of these women. According to the myth, these women, Alkathoe, Leukippe and Arsippe, refuse to properly worship Dionysus and as a result are punished. They are driven mad and in their frenzy slay and eat Leukippe's son, Hippasos. The women of Thebes, too, are driven mad by the god, when Pentheus refused to honor him. Agave, dehumanized by Dionysus, leads the Theban woman against her son, Pentheus, and slaughters him in accordance with Bacchic ritual. Though no actual cannibalism takes place, Euripides implies that it would have occurred had Cadmus not brought Agave back to her senses. In fact, many scholars believe that most stories which involve women going into a Bacchic frenzy not only rend their victims apart but in order to complete the ritual they must also partake in the flesh of their victim.¹³

Mythology also demonstrates that the passion of warfare diminishes the civilized individual to a savage state. In book 4 of the *Iliad*, Zeus suggests that Hera devour Priam and his sons to assuage her anger and fulfill her need of revenge (*Il* 4.34-6). Such a suggestion is clearly not intended to be taken seriously, but is merely meant to be a kind

¹³ Cf. Euripides' *Hecuba*.

remind of the consequences, at least in the mortal realm, of such excessive hatred. Later, Achilles wishes to exact his revenge on Hector by consuming his body (*Il* 22.346). This again shows the pitfalls of excessive emotions. Achilles' anger causes him to become less human and more bestial. Fortunately, Achilles is strong enough to resist the transformation, as well as his cannibalistic urges. Similarly, Hecuba wishes that she could eat Achilles' liver in the hopes of avenging her son, Hector (*Il* 24.212).¹⁴ She, however, is not so strong. After the war, while a prisoner in Thrace, Hecuba discovers that Polymestor has killed her son.¹⁵ She, along with other women of Troy, in a bacchic frenzy rends apart their host and presumably dines on his remains. Thus Hecuba has gone too far. She has allowed her excessive hatred to dominate her actions, resulting in an act of cannibalism. Furthermore, her cannibalism is in direct violation of the sacred relationship between guest and host. Hecuba has crossed the boundary that divides men from the beasts and cannot return. Her internal transformation, thus, is externalized as she undergoes a physical metamorphosis into a dog. Also among the war stories is Tydeus, who has learned that his is destined to die at the hands of Melanippus.¹⁶ Subsequently, when wounded in battle by him, Tydeus is filled with rage. So when Amphiaraus kills Melanippus. Tydeus is persuaded by his comrades to consume his adversary's brain. Athena, disgusted at the sight, drops the cure she was bringing for him, dooming Tydeus.

¹⁴ Cf. Polyphemus' response in Ovid *Met* 14.

¹⁵ This story was made famous in Euripides' *Hecuba*.

¹⁶ Sophocles (*Seven against Thebes*) is the main source of this myth, other sources include: the *Iliad* scholia (AbT), Pherekydes, Apollodorus (ApB 3.68).

Another famous myth of power and revenge is the myth of Lycaon. According to tradition¹⁷, his daughter, Callisto, a follower of Artemis, was raped by Zeus. Afterwards, she attempted to continue her relationship with the goddess, but she was punished for her lack of virginity, being transformed into a bear¹⁸. She is hunted by her son, Arcas, and rescued by Zeus, who placed her amid the constellations. Angry at Zeus, Lycaon intends to trick him into committing an act of cannibalism. He mixed human flesh¹⁹ with the sacrificial offerings, which he served Zeus. Detecting the deceit, the god punished Lycaon, turning him into a wolf. Ovid tells another story.²⁰ In his version, Lycaon concerns himself not with vengeance, since Ovid places the rape subsequent to Lycaon's crime, but acted out of a desire to obtain power over the gods via his trickery.²¹ Like Lycaon, Tantalus too tried to trick the gods and serve them an unholy sacrifice. However, Tantalus acts merely out of a lust of power not for vengeance.

The final subject to be dealt with in myth is the issue of civility. People, who commit acts of cannibalism, are breaking the laws, which Zeus put in place. These laws govern every well-managed *polis* and all of human civilization. The Minotaur is a good example for, though he was born of a mortal woman, he possesses the form and nature of a beast, requiring annual human sacrifice and then feasting upon the remains. Moreover, there exists further physical separation between him and civilization as he is entrapped within the labyrinth. Recent archaeological findings make this myth more interesting. In

¹⁷ Apollodorus *ApB* 3.8.2; Hyginus *De Astronomia* 2.1.2-4, 2.4.1.

¹⁸ Likewise, Hippolytus is punished for preferring the pastoral setting to his proper role in the *polis*.

¹⁹ The versions differ in the identification of the victim. Some claim it was a Molosian hostage, others his son Nyktimos, while still others claim it was his grandson Arcas. For all the variants, see Burkert.

²⁰ Ovid *Met* 1.211-61.

²¹ The best example of the power of trickery is Odysseus.

Anemospilia, four human skeletons were found, who judging from the positions of their bodies died in an earthquake. Also in the room on a platform was a burnt human skeleton, curled into the fetal position. Another skeleton was found near *Kamares* jar, the type used for animal libations. The Sakellarakises believe that this was the site of a human sacrifice, perhaps to ward off the impending earthquake. The latter two skeletons are thought to be the victims.²² In Knossos, skeletal remains of children, between the ages of 8 and 12, show that human sacrifice was indeed practiced there. These bones date back to approximately 1450 BCE, which coincides with when we believe the decline of the Minoan civilization occurred. Originally, these findings were interpreted to be a sort ritual to avert impending doom of that chaotic time. However, cuts discovered in the bones suggest that the victim were not only sacrificed, their flesh was also flayed from the bone in preparation for eating. Moreover, the bones, six non-striated phalanges and a cervical vertebra, were found amidst the shells, edible snails (mpoupou:reV)²³, still enjoyed as a delicacy in Greece today, and animal bones²⁴, particularly a sheep vertebra, also showing signs of flaying, which was a common ingredient in stews. In another room, 371 human bones, of which ninety seven displayed cut marks, mixed in with 251 animal bones. Is this proof that the ancient Greeks were cannibals? Did the Minotaur really exist?²⁵

²² Sakellarais (1979) 331-92. Dennis Hughes (1991:13-48) disagrees, claiming that there is no forensic proof of this theory.

²³ Wall (1986) 345.

²⁴ Wall (1986:386) states that bones, both burnt and unburnt, of cattle, sheep, goats, pigs and dogs were found in the room.

²⁵ Such findings, though they do not prove cannibalism occurred, strongly suggest that the practice was followed. As for the Minotaur, there may indeed be a hint of truth to the myth. Unfortunately, Hughes (1991:18-24) disagrees, claiming that the bones must have been undergoing a second burial.

Another humanlike monster is Polyphemus, who defies the sacred relationship between the guest and host by eating his guests. In this way, he was thought to be representative of an uncivilized society.²⁶ However, recent scholarship is shedding a new light on the subject. Polyphemus is quite similar to the myth of Zeus and Kronos. Glenn (1978) points out that each myth contains three main characteristics which make them similar: imprisonment, cannibalism and a physical mutilation, representing a loss of power.²⁷ If it is indeed molded after Kronos, then this myth must be more than just an indicator of an uncivilized world. It represents a power struggle. Hernandez supports this theory, commenting on how the Cyclopes are peaceful and idyllic before, and after, the arrival of Odysseus. The only time savageness is an issue is in the presence of Odysseus. Thus Odysseus seems more to represent a hostile attacker, a symbol of civilization invading the pastoral setting, than Polyphemus a savage monster.

These myths reinforce the idea that the cannibal is someone driven by his passions to excess and in the process traverses the boundaries of humanity. By doing so, these individuals lose a part of it. The cannibal, though, is not inherently wicked or dangerous. As long as the cannibal remains outside the parameters of the *polis*, no danger exists. Kronos, the Maenads, and Polyphemus are, when in the wild, never chastised for their cannibalism. However, within the confines of the *polis* there is no room for such individuals in a civilized society. Moreover, cannibals are savage monsters, driven by excessive greed lust and anger.²⁸ They are primitive, representing an

²⁶ Cf. the Laestrygones.

²⁷ Glenn (1978: 152) claims that psychoanalysis has proven that people consider blindness and castration synonymous.

²⁸ Cf. Hecuba, Lycaon.

earlier stage in human evolution, a form of man that existed before Zeus gave the laws and joined men within the confines of the *polis*.²⁹ They are ignorant, blind to the crimes they commit. But most importantly, they are dangerous. In short, they are everything an upstanding member of a *polis* should not be.

The Cannibal on the Roman Stage

Despite the general disdain of actors and the lack of a permanent theater, the love of drama flourished in Rome.³⁰ People were drawn to the theaters and it was the playwright's duty to keep them there.³¹ In order to do this, they drew off other popular forms of entertainment, in particular myth. Myth represented the society's core belief structure, particularly the views of origin, history and religion. Drama, on the other hand, distorts reality ever so slightly to create a sense of social criticism. Both being forms of education as well as entertainment, they supplement each other well. However, these playwrights could not merely reheat old leftovers, by simply retelling old stories. They needed to spice things up. Alterations were then necessary to keep things fresh. Euripides does just this in his *Medea*, claiming that she killed her own children.³² Thus drama is good indicator of the profound impact of myth and how it adapts.

The first place one would look for cannibalism in drama is the works of the tragedians, for tragedy is filled with it. Tragedians drew their inspiration from mythology, and so these accounts are based on the tragic principles of the mythic cannibal. Each character undergoes, for the most part, some transformation in the

²⁹ Cf. Kronos, Polyphemus & the Laestrygones.

³⁰ Shelton (1998) 346-7.

³¹ Terence, *Hecyra* 28-57.

³² According to D. C. Young, Euripides is the first to state that Medea killed her children.

different versions. Thus Seneca's *Thyestes* would necessarily be quite similar to Euripides', however they would not be exactly the same. Each tragedian adds his own personal touch to the story, altering it to a degree. Therefore, I do not believe there is substantial enough change to warrant recounting every minor alteration. Instead, we turn where one would not think to look; we turn to comedy.

However, when looking at cannibalism in comedy, I do not intend to focus on the minor accounts of man-eating fish that plague shipwrecks, but instead to give attention to two stock characters, whose very being symbolizes the nature of the cannibalism: the *lena* and the parasite.

The *lena*, though a stock character in Roman comedy, was home also in elegy, satire and the novel. She is a prostitute, well past her prime. She is often old, ugly, and worn out. Furthermore, she possesses all the characteristics of a cannibal. She is governed by excessive desires of both wine and money. In the *Curculio* (110), the *lena* is said to consume 8 gallons of wine in one swallow, to which the slave Palinurus claims an entire year's vintage would not be enough to satiate her.³³ This rapaciousness, or perhaps the failure to control it, causes a metamorphosis in the *lena*. Frequently, the *lena* is transform into a wolf for her greed.³⁴ Another form the *lena* can take is that of a dog.³⁵ However, the strangest form would perhaps be the one found in *Amores* 1.8. Here Dipsas is introduced. Though she is quite human, she shares her name with a small snake, known for its fierce thirst. This thirst was contagious. If, bitten by the snake, the thirst

³³ See also Propertius 4.5.2, 4.5.75.

³⁴ This is perhaps the most obvious of the transformations, given the dual meanings of *lupa*. It is worth noting the similarities here between the *lena* and Lycaon.

³⁵ See Propertius 4.5.3, 4.5.73; Tibullus 1.5.56.

would infect the victim. Thus she poses a threat to civilized society. Not only could she pass on her fierce thirst and poverty as the dipsas can, but she was also witch, whose powers often were a threat to male potency. Added to this, she is no longer of any use, but merely survived by the handouts of others. She is outsider and does not belong in a civilized society. Therefore, it would not be surprising to see her as a cannibal. The ancient Romans thought so too. For both in Tibullus (1.5.49) and Apuleius (?), the *lena* takes that final step, actual consumption of human flesh, and becomes a cannibal.

The parasite,³⁶ also a stock character in comedy, did not stay put, wandering into satire, Atellane farce, mime, and oratory. His role is to leech off of the other characters, often just a single host, the *rex*. But, rather than actual bloodsucking, the parasite clears his patron's tables and drains his pockets. This ravenous hunger is one characteristic, which equates the parasite with the cannibal. However, there exists a control, preventing him from becoming a cannibal, for the parasite that the others did not have. He has a patron. In return for the food given, the patron demands services, mainly in the form of running errands, as a sort of payment. Thus a balance exists, which results in fairly symbiotic relationship between host and parasite. However, the parasite has a natural aversion to work. In an attempt to avoid his duties, he often employs his intellect to either get someone else to do the task or to find a way to avoid it completely. Serres points out that this causes "a glitch in the system". The parasite's desire to get something for nothing upsets the balance of society, a common theme in our accounts of cannibalism. Moreover, without the control nothing stops his transformation into a cannibal. Yet, if he is a leech on society, why is tolerated? It is because he is a trickster. He uses his wit to deceive his patron into believing that the balance exists. Frequently

³⁶ See Plautus, *Captivi* 1.1 for an ancient account of the parasite.

the patron is blind to the parasite's actual nature, and so he is tolerated. Even in this the parasite resembles the cannibal, who employs deception in order to assert his authority over others.³⁷ Despite the similarities,³⁸ the parasite, unlike the *lena*, never is accused of cannibalism. However, the parasite had a real-world counterpart, the *cliens*. And though the parasite escaped the moniker, Juvenal in his fifth satire attacks the *cliens* for his cannibalistic characteristics.

In conclusion, by observing the trend in the mythic cannibal, we realize that he is someone driven by excess. This excess blinds him, leading him to do things he would normally never have done. He embarks on a quest to fulfill his every desire and by doing so traverses the boundaries of humanity, often by committing unspeakable crimes. If he goes too far, he undergoes a transformation becoming more bestial in nature and perhaps even in form. He is the greatest threat to the *polis* that exists. However, myth relegates him to gods and kings of the past. The present common man is spared. However, when cannibalism hit the stage, much changed. Desires were blown out of proportion for comic effect. The criminal aspect was removed, yet the danger heightened. Finally, the cannibals themselves were made part of the *polis*, as the cannibal was no longer some mythic king, but rather the average common person.

³⁷ Cf. Lycaon

³⁸ The parasite is even bestialized as the cannibal, often taking the form of a dog.

CHAPTER 3 THE HISTORICAL CANNIBAL

Cannibalism, as far as the ancient historical sources are concerned, was relegated to the outermost edges of human existence. As opposed to here and now, acts of cannibalism occurred either long ago in a time before civilization¹ or at the ends of the earth, where civilization has yet to take root. The former recalls the mythical Golden Age, when Kronos ruled the earth and Zeus had not yet imposed laws and culture upon mankind. The latter, however, are lawless, primitive, immoral and violent. They are in every way the antithesis of the Greek and Roman cultures, or at least that is how the Greeks and Romans cared to view it.²

Our greatest ally in the discussion of historical cannibalism is Herodotus as he provides us with a good deal of information on the cannibals dwelling at the far reaches of the world. In fact, he lists at least six different tribes who apparently pursued cannibalistic practices. The most famous of these cannibalistic peoples are perhaps the Scythians. A nomadic people, the Scythians “know nothing of justice nor do they obey any law” (4.106). Herodotus claims that these warlike individuals would drink the blood of the first man they kill in battle (4.64). This ritual was also brought to light by Pliny the Elder, who cites Isigonus of Nicaea as his source for this information (*NH* 7.12). Pliny also mentions that, like the Cyclopes and Laestrygones, the Scythians would consume

¹ Athenion claims that mankind’s first state was one of cannibalism.

² Accusing a member of an alien society of cannibalism serves to create separation between the accuser and the accused.

human flesh (*NH* 7.9).³ Pomponius Mela (2.11) adds the Tauri observed similar practices, however Herodotus does not mention cannibalism among the many gruesome acts that the Tauri commit.

These types of cannibalistic should not shock us as many early warlike peoples would follow such rituals. The belief was that a person's strengths were housed in his body. Thus, if the blood contained a person's natural abilities, then the transference of an individual's blood to another individual would allow that individual's natural abilities to be transferred as well. In addition, blood was a person's life force. This too could be transferred from one individual to another. For this very reason, warriors would consume part of their enemies in order to obtain both their abilities, particularly their strength, and life essence. In fact, the ritual was so idealized that Scythian warriors could not partake in the rewards of victory, neither the feast nor the booty, unless they brought back the head of the man, whom he killed in battle that day.

Another group introduced by Herodotus consists of the people, who would consume the bodies of the dead. The "mortuary cannibals", as modern anthropologists call them, were the Issedones (4.26) and the Callatiae (3.38).⁴ The Callatiae ate their parents, thinking it a crime to either cremate or bury the dead.⁵ As for the Issedones, Herodotus claims that it was their custom that whenever a man's father died he would make a sacrifice of the best sheep and mix the flesh with his father's in preparation of a

³ Pliny does not discuss the nature of their victims. However, the comparison with the Laestrygones and the Cyclopes might suggest that they consumed the bodies of their enemies, not their relatives as some tribes did.

⁴ The archaeologists E.M. Murphy and J.P. Mallory claim that Herodotus was mistaken in his accounts of mortuary cannibalism. They claim that he must have misinterpreted the ritual defleshing in preparation for burial as act of cannibalism.

⁵ I wonder if this is not in some way connected with the theory of the immortality of the soul.

feast. Strabo adds that this custom was even practiced in Ireland. He claims the Irish would both consume their dead relatives as well join in sexual intercourse without whatever women, even their own sister's and mother's. He, however, then qualifies his statement as being without credible witness (4.5.4).⁶ As with the warriors discussed above, these people thought they could absorb the qualities of their fellow tribesmen through cannibalism. In this way, the wise man's genius and the warrior's strength could be recycled into a new body and continue to serve the community, even after death. This idea of recycling an individual's abilities shares many similarities with the ideas of the immortality of the soul and the transference of matter, to which the Greek philosophers of the Classical Age ascribed. This may have had an impact on the stoic philosopher Zeno, who in his discussion of cannibalism asserts that the eating of one's parents is a permissible form of anthropophagy. The stoic Chrysippus, in fact, is to have claimed that it was not only permissible but also obligatory, himself having partaken in it.⁷

Not all tribes waited for its members to die a natural death before the consumed their bodies. Herodotus mentions that the Massagetae (1.216) and the Padaei (3.99) would eat the old and sick of their tribes, thinking it was sinful to allow good meat go to waste because of disease. The Massagetae thought those men who died via sacrifice were the happiest of men. Again, this was done in hopes of preserving the beneficial qualities of that individual. Thus in old age they would be offered up in sacrifice, together with an offering of cattle, by their nearest kin. After the sacrifice, the kin would eat the mixture. However, if the old fell ill before they could be sacrificed, no one would

⁶ Theophilus (SVF 1.254) and Philodemus (19.23-20.3) also mention peoples who eat the dead, particularly sons who eat their fathers.

⁷ This is most likely just slander against him.

eat their body but instead it would be buried. The deceased's natural abilities (his soul?) thus died with him. This was believed to be the worst punishment a person could suffer. The Padaei⁸, on the other hand, are perhaps our most interesting case. According to their beliefs, only men could consume the body of a man, and women could only eat that of a woman.⁹ In addition, Herodotus claimed that they consumed all meat raw.¹⁰ In fact, cannibals generally ate their food raw, as Segal remarks, as not only is it the natural way, the way all primitives eat their food, but it also serves to create a barrier between civilized and savage, us and them.¹¹

Finally, Herodotus mentions the "man-eaters" who resemble the Scythians in many ways. It is they whom Herodotus names the most savage of all men (4.106). However, even the most savage, 'real' cannibals are not as disturbing as one would expect individuals, who are that dangerous, to be. The reason for this is that, as with the mythic cannibals of old, there exists a physical separation of many thousands of miles between the civilized and cannibalistic worlds. As long as that separation remains intact, the cannibals cannot reach us, and so they pose no threat. Instead their curious behavior piques our interests and we delight in hearing stories about them, just as we might enjoy looking at a lion in zoo more so than if we were in the wild. However, the boundary, which separates our worlds, does on occasion get breached. Three things, in particular,

⁸ Tannahill (1993: 58) claims that the Padaei are the modern day Bithors, who do practice cannibalism but only on relatives.

⁹ Tannahill (1993: 13) mentions how ancient opinions of the inferiority of women, in fact, saved them from falling victim to cannibalism.

¹⁰ Diodorus (1.14) establish that 'raw' often connotes cannibalism. Cf. Thyestes and Dionysus who are called the "raw eaters".

¹¹ Segal (1974: 291) also mentions how Herodotus juxtaposes the Padaei are with another, unnamed Indian tribe that "will kill no living creature" (3.100) and eats their food cooked, which elevates them above the level of the cannibals, yet they still are not considered 'civilized'.

possess the ability to traverse this boundary: famine, war and Dionysus. Thus it is through dire necessity and divine authority that cannibalism was introduced to the civilized world.

As Garnsey laments, little is known about famine and food supply in the ancient world. Few authors discuss the topic; even fewer do so well. We rarely receive any quantitative data. Instead these authors focus on the outrageous, such as claims of cannibalism. Fortunately for us, it is exactly those outrageous acts of cannibalism that we intend to investigate.

In the five centuries that Rome existed as a republic, a food shortage occurred roughly every nine years. From 123-50 BCE, the rate increased to one in every five years. Garnsey claims that the worst famines struck during the Punic wars, the Social wars, and surprisingly the reign of Augustus.¹² As for Athens, the fifth century saw little in the way of food shortages. However, from the fourth century on famine was a major problem. Despite this, no tales of cannibalism survive.¹³ Accounts of cannibalism, however, are recorded for the famines that hit Potidaea and Jerusalem, among others. Thucydides' account of the famine at Potidaea is brief and of little help (2.70). Josephus' too is of little help. However, he does include a description of a mother who consumes her own children in order to survive, which may be of use. The most interesting account comes from 2nd *Kings* as it describes the order, in which people would consume unaccustomed food during a famine.¹⁴

¹² Garnsey (1988) 14-5.

¹³ That is, assuming that these accounts ever existed.

¹⁴ Garnsey (1988: 28) lists them as livestock, cereals, animal fodder, natural products (bark, twigs, roots, et al.) and finally human flesh.

Warfare, specifically siege warfare, also reduces people to the point of committing cannibalism. Diodorus and Clearchus are perhaps the most interesting in this category. Diodorus discusses the slave revolt of 135 BCE, which led the Roman general Rupilius to siege Tauromenium (34.2). In order to survive, the children, then women and finally men were consumed. Clearchus tells of another revolt in Sicily, in which the Dionysius' wife and children were consumed to reap revenge for Dionysius' many crimes. To these, Petronius adds the sieges of Saguntum, Petelia, and Numantia. And so, we see that famine and war have the ability to transform rational human beings into beasts. They are desirous of their own survive; their judgment clouded. Thus all the ingredients laid out in chapter 1 come together with one result, the besieged become cannibals.

However, the nature of warfare introduces a new side of cannibalism; it seems to have introduced a sense of morality to these acts. War being a separation between us and them already, it is only natural that a moral characterization grew out of it. Caesar employs it to dehumanize his enemy when he recounts how Critognatus was willing to force cannibalism upon his own people rather than surrender to the Romans. On the other hand, the siege of Athens and subsequent cannibalism of the Athenians has the opposite effect. As the Athenians are a civilized people, unlike the Gauls, Sulla's actions against them and their acts of cannibalism that follow work only to vilify him.¹⁵ But war wasn't the only instance where cannibalism was employed as a form of slander.

The introduction of Dionysus, the raw-eater, brought about slanderous accounts of cannibalism. He is the personification of boundary-transgression. All who follow him, and some who reject him, end up traversing the boundaries that separate the human,

¹⁵ Cf. Plutarch *Sulla* 13. However, Plutarch makes no mention of cannibalism during the siege.

bestial and divine, thus themselves becoming more savage.¹⁶ It is not my intent here, however, to repeat the mythic accounts of the god, but rather to discuss the historical implications that his cult had on society. If we can take Euripides' *Bacchae* as an indicator, Dionysus' arrival into civilization was both unwelcomed and often violent. His followers also found no place within society. Pliny points out that with the Senate's *consultum de Bacchanalibus*, passed in 186 BCE, followers of Dionysus were looked down upon as dangerous entities. Thus, religious intolerance is one of the factors behind some historical accounts of cannibalism.

However, this did not apply solely to the Bacchics. Any foreign cult received similar treatment. The Pythagoreans, though vegetarians, were often accused of cannibalism. Likewise, Christians were also accused of being cannibals. Starting around 180 CE, numerous accounts are known which claim the connection between Christianity and cannibalism. Some even state that Pliny the younger knew and mentioned these rumors in his letter to Trajan (10.96). Whether this stems from a misinterpretation of the Eucharist or that fact they were seen as a threat is hotly debated. It suffices to know that peculiar religious sects often faced the charge of cannibalism.

After awhile, foreign wars gave way to domestic conflicts, and personal enemies were transformed into cannibals. The problem with these new cannibals was that they were not banished to the outer extremities of human existence, but they existed within the confines of the city. No longer far off, they posed a new threat for the *polis*.

These cannibals often took the form of conspirators. Herodotus transmits the tale of a certain Harpagus (1.108-119). Conspirators wanted to include him in their plot against the Great King Cyrus, however he refused. As punishment, the conspirators feed

¹⁶ Even if they traverse the boundary more to the divine side, they are seen as non-human and bestial.

him his own son, whom they had previously dismembered. A similar tale of cannibalism occurred in Rome. Sallust recorded that the members of the Catilinarian conspiracy drank blood to seal their oath (*BC* 22). Plutarch in his *Life of Cicero* claimed they sacrificed and ate a human to show their loyalty to one another (10.4). Finally, Dio Cassius made the victim a small child (37.30). Clearly a gruesome progression. Then there is the account of Diodorus Siculus, who states that Apollodorus sacrificed a child and mixed his entrails with wine before consuming them.

In each case, there exists a perversion of ritual. The Bacchics, conspirators, and even the barbarian tribes, are joined in this way. The barbarians are merely a curiosity from a far off land. But the Bacchics and Christians, as well as the conspirators, are in clear and present danger. Both are secretive; both are subversive. Thus they are demonized in order to restore the separation between civilized society and those who clearly do not belong there.

CHAPTER 4 A MAN-EATER AMID WISE MEN

Having looked at both the mythological and historical (actual?) accounts of cannibalism in the Greco-Roman world, we now turn to the works of the philosophers, since they in fact found a great deal of inspiration within the different mythic accounts of cannibalism, especially the myth of Thyestes. Some, like Empedocles, Pythagoras and the Orphics, condemned the practice, claiming that men should shun all meat, be it human or animal, and strive after a life of vegetarianism. On the other hand, the stoic and cynic philosophers, most notably the cynic Diogenes and the stoic Zeno, found cannibalism to be harmless and at times even permissible. These philosophers, with the exception of Empedocles, all established new schools of thought that lasted well after their deaths. Moreover, at some point they all were themselves said to have taken part in such cannibalistic practices.¹ Whether those accusations are true, or not, cannot be properly determined, however it is most probable that these philosophers are the victims of the type of propaganda discussed in chapter 2. In addition to these two types, a third category of philosophers exists. This category is not interested in the moral implications of cannibalism as much as they are interested in discovering the factors which instigate such reprehensible actions. Plato is one such philosopher.

Among the philosophers, Plato emerges as the one to deal with the topic most frequently. He devotes sections of his works, particularly the *Republic*, but also the

¹ McGowan (1994: 425) mentions how philosophers, who preached vegetarianism, in particular the Pythagoreans, were often accused of cannibalism. Daraki (1982) states that the view of the philosopher being an individual, who crosses the boundaries that are established between animal, human and divine, may account for the acceptability of the cannibalistic imagery associated with these philosophers.

Cratylus, the *Statesman* and the *Laws*, to the discussion of cannibalism. In the *Republic*, Plato introduces the view that cannibalism is the result of tyranny, or more specifically the result of the ignorance and greed, which Plato associates with the tyrant. To Plato, the tyrant is an individual driven by a blind greed. Moreover, this greed reveals itself both internally and externally, as Plato, in the guise of Socrates, asserts a correlation exists between the manner in which one interacts with one's body and how one relates to the *polis* around him. Thus any man, moved to tyranny in the *polis*, must himself be governed internally by part of his soul, which is in its very nature tyrannical. Plato calls this part of the soul the *ejpikoumhtikovn*; it is the part of the soul that governs one's desires.

The *ejpikoumhtikovn* knows nothing of satisfaction or satiety, nor does it know any boundaries or limits, unconstrained by shame or reason. It does nothing other than desire and want more. When this part of the soul becomes too powerful, that individual becomes a slave to his passions. His passions then are the source of his motivation to pursue a political career, which in turn leads to his attempts to initiate a tyranny of his own. Naturally, the new tyrant's priorities shift from carving out a tyranny for himself to maintaining the one he possesses.

This image of the tyrant calls to mind the cannibal of mythology and their various attempts to obtain and maintain power. In fact, Plato most likely drew his tyrant off the tragic stage, which in turn drew heavily from the mythic tradition.² Thus it is not surprising that many of the analogies of the tyrant involve eating, specifically the eating

² Hook (1992) posits that Plato was undoubtedly thinking of Thyestes, though he never names the tyrant in his *Republic*.

of human flesh. Yet the tyrant is not only a man-eater, but he even goes as far as to become a cannibal of his own kin.

The first mention of the tyrant as a cannibal is found in the eighth book of the *Republic*, where Socrates draws a parallel between the evolution of the tyrant and the myth of the werewolves, which inhabit the sanctuary of Zeus Lykaios. Socrates introduces the idea that the tyrant has his origins in necessity. In times of need the people would choose one person to lead them through the dangers. Often this process was unsuccessful as the individual chosen to be the protector of the state would rectify the situation and relinquish all power and return to being a private citizen.³ However, this protector, if he were internally governed by an excessively strong *ejpikumhtikovn*, would slowly grow accustomed to the power imparted upon him by the people and become like Kronos in his attempts to safeguard his authority, even sometimes eating the flesh of his enemies. In this way, the tyrant is like the Arcadian king, Lycaon, who slaughtered one of his enemies, a Molossian hostage⁴, and with his flesh attempted to assert his power over the gods. Moreover, like Lycaon, the tyrant undergoes the metamorphosis into a rapacious beast; he is a man turned wolf.⁵ He reacts violently to his enemies and refrains from the murder of neither his kinfolk nor fellow citizens.⁶

³ Cf. Cincinnatus.

⁴ The identity of the victim varies from author to author. Ovid (*Met* 1.99-243) claims that the victim was a Molossian hostage. For an extensive recounting of all the variants, see Burkert (1983: 86-87).

⁵ Hook (1992) raises the objection that wolves are not necessarily cannibalistic. However, whether wolves are truly cannibalistic is not the issue for clearly they were perceived to be such.

⁶ Plato considers the citizens of the *polis* as part of an extended family, thus any violence that the tyrant commits against his fellow citizens can be perceived as violence committed against his kin. It is worthy noting that most often acts of violence, specifically cannibalism, are committed within the household as an indication of larger social problems, yet Plato here seems to do the opposite, focusing the larger social issues onto a single household.

At the beginning of the ninth book, Socrates moves on to examine the tyrannical man, who possesses the soul of a tyrant but none of the authority of the latter. He is ruled by the tyrannical part of the soul, which governs one's desires, especially those ones which are beyond law. These desires, according to Plato, exist within all people at birth, yet most of them are stamped out by the laws of the *polis*. The few, if any, remaining in adulthood are generally very weak. However, this is not the case with the tyrant. In him these beastlike desires are strong, offering him his every motivation in his quest for a long-lasting tyranny. Moreover, Socrates asserts that the tyrannical soul does many things that the wolf-tyrant has already been said to do, namely it pollutes itself with murder and eats forbidden food. In fact, the verb of pollution (*miaifovnew*) is same in both sections (*Rep* 565e, 571d).⁷ Thus beginning with Lycaon and progressing to Oedipus, Plato demonstrates that the tyrant is hindered by no taboo, neither incest nor cannibalism. He also refrains not from any terrible bloodshed or food or deed (*Rep* 574e).

Another peculiarity in the *Republic*, as Hook points out, is the use of the word, *broma*. It is a fairly generic word, simply meaning food or meat, and is quite infrequently employed by Plato.⁸ However, the more usual word for food employed by Plato is *sitos*, which designates grain-food as opposed to meat. Its appearance alongside *broma* suggests that in this context, if not all of Plato's dialogues, it means meat, standing in contrast to *sitos*, grain. If *broma* truly means meat, then the food, from which the

⁷ Hook (1992: 14) also mentions that it the same verb used of Oedipus' murder of his father. Pollution by murder is a very common theme in Greek tragedies. Moreover, Plato establishes a connection between his tyrant and two tragic figures: Oedipus and Lycaon. In light of this, I agree that Plato's tyrant, though unnamed, must be Thyestes.

⁸ Plato employs it in the following places: *Rep* 571d, 574e; *Critias* 115b; *Leges* 638c, 782a, 932e & 953e. The reason for its use only in late dialogues is unknown.

tyrannical soul does not refrain, is sacrificial in nature, since the Greeks customarily consumed meat only in the context of sacrifice. Thus, again, it seems Plato intends us to read the tyrant as being the tragic figure, Thyestes.

The last, and most specific, reference to cannibalism in the *Republic* comes in the tenth book. Here Socrates retells the myth of Er, particularly the endless cycle of souls. When the souls arrive at the place of judgment, they are given lots to determine the order of choosing. The lives for them to choose from are spread out before them, some of these being tyrannies (*Rep* 618a). The soul, which receives the first lot, immediately chooses the greatest tyranny (*Rep* 619b-c). However, in return for his power he discovers that he is destined to eat his children. At this, the soul shows signs of regret for his hasty choice. In this way, this scene of cannibalism differs greatly from Plato's previous accounts. Before Plato focused on cannibalism as being the result of gluttonous greed, but now he introduces the two new factors the level of awareness exhibited by the cannibal and his intent. Previously, Plato stated that tyrant (*Rep* 565e) and the tyrannical soul (*Rep* 571d) are conscious and willing to transgress that taboo against cannibalism, even if it is against their own kin. The chooser of tyranny (*Rep* 619b-c) also transgresses this boundary, but he does so both out of ignorance and against his will. By doing so, Plato generalizes the cannibal. He separates the cannibal from his mythic description and attempts to change him into an average individual. He is not necessarily wicked⁹, but he is greedy. The tyrannical part of his soul was too powerful and led him blindly into tragedy. His internal behavior shaped his external actions, driving him to do what a cannibal does best.

⁹ Though not necessarily wicked, Plato neither portrays him in a positive light nor sympathizes with his plight. For instead of accepting the consequences for his bad choice, he blames everyone else, including the gods. These actions then seem to justify his punishment later.

In the *Cratylus*, a dialogue concerned with the correctness of words and names, Plato introduces an argument between Hermogenes, who states that the names of things are purely conventional, and Cratylus, who believes that they are based on the essence of the thing. For answers they turn to Socrates, who amongst other things discusses the appropriateness of Atreus' name. Both characters decide that it fits well, because both his murder of Chrysippus and the heinous acts committed against Thyestes are all "ruinous and baneful to his virtue".¹⁰ Hook points out the Socrates is playing with the meanings of *wjma;*, as not only can it mean "ruinous" but it can also mean "uncooked, raw", thus alluding to the feast he prepared for Thyestes. This adjective is fitting for it has long standing connection to Thyestes; in Sophocles Thyestes is referred to as *wjmobovroV*.

Socrates goes on to suggest etymologies of the names found within the myth. He starts with Orestes the "mountain man" (*ojreino;n*), who receives his name from the fierceness of his nature, and works his way backwards to Tantalus the most wretched (*talavntaton*), which is an adjective used frequently in tragedy¹¹. He claims Atreus is derived from *ajthrovV* for his deeds were ruinous.¹² As for Thyestes, Socrates posits that his name is derived from a form of *quvw*, thus connoting the slaughter with sacrifice and adding a sense of ritual to it.

Once again in the *Politicus*, Plato brings up the myth of Thyestes. However, he does so in an attempt to discover what constitutes a proper statesman. Plato utilizes an

¹⁰ *Crat* 395b: *wjma;*, *ajthra;*.

¹¹ The superlative adjective is found most frequently used by Aeschylus (*Prometheus* 746, *Agamemnon* 1483, *Eumenides* 1007).

¹² Hook (1992) insists that it is false cognate.

analogy of a shepherd to demonstrate the proper behavior that must be exhibited by politicians. However, neither Atreus nor Thyestes, though, are proper statesmen; both worry more about their influence than they do their flocks. Thus, like the city's protector, both are well-intentioned in the beginning but soon become consumed by the urge to safeguard their power. In this way, Plato demonstrates the blind greed for power can lead any man to become a tyrant.

In Plato we see the mythic cannibal emerge, filtered through the screen of tragedy. He is an individual governed by greed so strong that he cannot control it, but instead is controlled by it. In addition, there exists an element of ignorance. Blinded by his insatiable desires, the soul in Er's account chooses a life in which it is destined to eat its own children. Kronos, Tereus and Thyestes also all committed acts of cannibalism as a result of their ignorance. But the frightening part of Plato's account is the criminal goes unnamed. Because of this, we have no identity to pin the blame on. It is not some guy in history, who committed these heinous acts, but rather it could be anyone, who gets a taste of power and then will stop at nothing to maintain it, with cannibalism being just one of the extreme repercussions of his actions.

Later philosophers, who considered themselves Socratic, often took issue with Plato, viewing him as a corruption of Socratic principles. Consequently, these philosophers often wrote treatises in opposition to his views. The cynic Diogenes and the stoics Zeno and Chrysippus wrote their own *Republics*, in which they reject Plato's principles, including the crime of cannibalism.¹³ To further underscore this point,

¹³ Little is known about Diogenes' *Republic*. Hook (1992) asserts that, if he did indeed write such a work, he would clearly have tied his views of the permissibility of cannibalism to the natural world through specific examples.

Diogenes wrote a *Thyestes*, and a work of the same title is credited to Persaeus, a disciple of Zeno.¹⁴

For Diogenes¹⁵ (and, through him, all subsequent Cynic philosophers), there were no absolute prohibitions. No crime, not even incest and cannibalism, was always, under every circumstance, to be avoided. As a result, they attempted to explain cannibalism as a permissible action. Diogenes in *Thyestes* claims that “nothing is unholy in the partaking of human flesh, as is clear from foreign customs.”¹⁶ For someone of right reason, all things are “in every other thing and through every other thing.”¹⁷ Then, since the same elements are shared by all things, meat is a constituent part of bread, bread of vegetables, and everything of everything else. For this reason, they thought it ridiculous to forbid one type and allow all others. Thus no type of food was considered verboten. As we will see later, this blending of elements is shared by many philosophers, such as Empedocles, Pythagoras and the Orphics, but the conclusions reached from examining the evidence will be much different.

Diogenes and the cynics were often criticized for their overwhelming view of permissibility, especially when pertaining to cannibalism. However, Diogenes seems to have had problems with cannibalism, as he betrays his own theory of permissibility by limiting it exclusively to the wise man. The common individual is not given the same free reign. Diogenes is clearly not trying to promote cannibalism as a daily practice on

¹⁴ Both Philodemus and Diogenes Laertius mention that Diogenes wrote a *Thyestes*. However, D.L. also expresses doubt as to whether Diogenes ever actually wrote tragedies.

¹⁵ Diogenes' views on cannibalism come to us from the following sources: D.L. 6.73; *SVF* 3.750: Philodemus *De Stoicis* 16.20-17.4.

¹⁶ D.L. 6.73.

¹⁷ D.L. 6.73.

should observe, but rather he is setting forth an example that no crime should be held up to an absolute prohibition.

The stoics too argued that cannibalism was morally acceptable. In his *Republic*, Zeno¹⁸ taught that there could be no absolute prohibition forbidding cannibalism, but at the same time he knew that it could also not be universally permissible. Thus Zeno stressed that cannibalism was to be practiced by only the wise men and only in times of great need. Thus he would find the actions of those citizens in the besieged towns, discussed in chapter 2, acceptable as the situation was one of extreme need. However, he would draw the distinction between the ordinary citizens and the wise men. Accordingly, everyone would be permitted to partake in the acts of cannibalism, however the wise men could do it without rebuke. Now, without the constraints of famine or siege, such actions are not permitted, not even for the wise men. However, there are more boundaries imparted by Zeno. In his opinion, murder was not to be rationalized or accepted. Thus the cannibal must seek out a victim already dead. For this reason, Zeno would not have chastised Tereus or Thyestes for eating their own children as much as he would have punished Ponce and Atreus for their respective murders.

Zeno's *Republic* went on to become his greatest work; it was one of the most influential documents of Hellenistic philosophy. However, it was also the cause behind his greatest criticism. In fact, later stoic philosophers, embarrassed by it, refused to acknowledge. Philodemus suggest this was due to the cynic elements within it, which perhaps are the influence of his teacher Crates.¹⁹

¹⁸ The sources on Zeno's views on cannibalism are: D.L. 7.121; *SVF* 3.745-46.

¹⁹ Hook (1992) 117.

With the stoics, Cleanthes and Chrysippus²⁰, Zeno's ideas were carried even further. For them, an action is not wrong inherently, but when performed without wisdom it is. Thus cannibalism is not inherently wrong. And so it is permissible for all people to partake in it, but still the wise are said to do it better. This is due to the fact that they believed a soul ungoverned by reason is easily thrown out of control. A wise man can then partake in cannibalism safely, while the common man may not be able to. Similarly, Zeus who has wisdom (Metis) inside him can safely partake in cannibalism, while Kronos could not.

Finally, Chrysippus took the stoic permissibility to the limit. It is said that he preached that one should eat the bodies of the dead, a practice which he himself took part in. He was reportedly so involved that he claimed all who did not participate on the rite should themselves be slaughtered and consumed. The likelihood that he indeed promoted those teachings is slim, at best, but it does go to show that he had his critics who wished to silence his voice and debunk his beliefs. Clearly, the early stoic and cynic ideas of cannibalism were too much for the average Greek mind. So does that mean Theophrastus was right when he said that humanity was originally vegetarian and cannibalism had to be forced onto mankind through dire need. The Orphics would say so.

The earliest accounts of vegetarianism in the ancient world would probably be the Orphics. According to Orphic thought, every living creature had a soul. This soul was an incarnation of Dionysus, who they believed was killed, eaten and then reformed into man. Furthermore, they thought both the soul and the body were recycled into a new form after death. Thus not only did they think everything shared the same basic matter,

²⁰ The sources on Chrysippus' views on cannibalism are: *SVF* 3.743-53.

but they all possessed a soul and part of Dionysus. For this reason, sacrifice could be seen as murder, and consumption of meat cannibalism, which was forbidden as one would be consuming the god as the Titans did. Orphic thought was very influential on later philosophers, particularly Pythagoras.

As we learn from Ovid (*Met* 15), Pythagoras preached his own version of Orphism. He taught abstinence from meat, which he claimed was harmful to one's body.²¹ Flesh is for beasts to appease the pangs of hunger, he asserted. Furthermore, he stressed the inappropriateness of the slaughter of cattle and sheep, since they serve us more alive. On the other hand, it was permitted to sacrifice, if sacrifice were required to appease some god, swine and goats as they profit us nothing. Moreover, he is credited with the cultural revival of Croton and with guiding Numa Pompilius, Rome's second king. As the Orphics inspired him, he served to inspire those who followed, most notably Empedocles.

Whether a philosopher or an ancient shaman, Empedocles' views on cannibalism were highly influential. In his *Kartharmoi*, of which 450 lines remain, he draws a connection between cannibalism and sacrifice. In his opinion eating sacrificial meat and partaking in human flesh were one and the same, both being inappropriate and sinful. The reason behind this, as he argues, is that all things are composed of four elements, which when combined by love or separated by strife, form new beings. Thus in all beings there is a mixture of these elements. In addition, Empedocles claims that in each living being is also a soul. Early generations of men knew this, and so they abstained

²¹ Theophrastus claims that humanity was originally vegetarian and cannibalism had to be forced on humans through dire need. Plutarch also argues that flesh-eating had not always occurred, asserting that the human body requires a vegetarian diet since it lacks both the means necessary to tear flesh and the proper digestion.

from all meat. It was a time when “no altar was drenched with the unmixed slaughter of bulls.” However, men began to offer sacrifices to the gods, a crime most horrible, committed for a holy purpose. Empedocles claims that it was the greatest pollution among men, “having torn the soul out, to eat the strong limbs.”²² Because the same elements are found within all things, there is virtually no difference between an animal and a human. Thus sacrifice could be considered murder, and the consumption of sacrificial meat cannibalism. But this was only the first step. Men would eventually progress from this form of virtual cannibalism to actually committing true cannibalistic acts. And so, Empedocles preached that one ought to abstain from consuming sacrificial meat, but beyond merely banning the consumption of meat, Empedocles also attempted to enlighten his fellow citizens of Acragas that the main cause behind these criminal acts is ignorance. He argued that the average meat-eater does not know that he is committing a crime; he does not know that all things share the same base elements. If the cannibal did, he too would abstain as the wise man does.

Cannibalism offered inspiration to many philosophers, each one finding in it some support for their theories. Thus each account is slightly different as different philosophers have different goals in mind. Plato sought to demonstrate how the average democratic man could become a tyrant. He focuses on the soul and its uncontrollable desires. The stoics and cynics used it as an extreme example of permissibility. To them, there were no absolutes. And the vegetarian philosophers used it to emphasize their ban on the consumption of meat. However, there is one detail that is present in all these accounts, a single thread that ties everything together. Ignorance. In each case,

²² Diehls B 128.8-10.

ignorance is the cause behind the crime committed and each time the philosopher states that the wise man would have avoided it. He alone is safe.

CHAPTER 5 PETRONIUS AND THE MORTUARY CANNIBALS

In this last chapter, we turn our attention to *Satyricon* 141. The scene is set in Croton, where after sometime the *captatores* have been drained dry and are slowly growing impatient. They are anxiously awaiting Eumolpus' demise and their subsequent inheritances. Here we also encounter the testament of Eumolpus, which calls for the legacy-hunter to engage in acts of cannibalism. Finally, Gorgias gives a defense of cannibalism, citing historical examples in order to motivate the apprehensive bystanders. Nothing else survives, leaving us to use our imaginations in order to understand Petronius' intentions.

Many scholars have attempted to answer this question. Raith suggests that it is "eine kynische Posse."¹ Rankin believes it is a *topos*, such as were commonly employed by ancient Rhetoricians. Rimell argues that it demonstrate the cannibalistic nature of education seen throughout the *Satyricon*, while Conte proposes an emendation that might change the way we look at the chapter, and perhaps even the entire work. However, none of them have a definitive answer. Likewise, I do not claim to have discovered the answer. However, I believe by studying the cannibalistic traditions as we have in the previous chapters, we might take one step closer to unveil Petronius. Thus I propose that Eumolpus' last words symbolize his final condemnation of the civilized world. This condemnation exists in two forms, an attack on contemporary culture and an indictment of the current state of education, the former being the result of the latter. However, the

¹ Raith (1963) 52.

attack is ultimately futile, as Petronius demonstrates, because those who object to it either are too engrained in it to fully separate themselves or they have no idea how to combat these evils.

From the discussion of the mythic cannibal in chapter 1, it was concluded that the cannibal was an individual driven by excessive greed. He desires power, vengeance, or perhaps just food. Overtime this greed leads him to cross the boundaries separating the human world from those of the divine and bestial, mainly because he is ignorant of where these boundaries lie. As a result, the cannibal loses his humanity and becomes more beast-like. The comic stage inherited this cannibal, introducing him into the *polis*. Here he received a new name and identity as the parasite of Roman comedy.

In the *Satyricon*, both Eumolpus and the *captatores* are parasitic in nature. Eumolpus is the classic parasite; he arrives in Croton and immediately is looking for a free meal. He employs the trickery, which is characteristic of the parasite, to portray himself as a wealthy man in order to achieve his goal. Thus he is able to receive everything he needs from the legacy-hunters. The parasitic nature of the legacy-hunters, however, is demonstrated by their hopes to secure a wealthy man's fortune after his demise. For this, they don the disguise of patrons, who will care for the newcomer. They cater to him for the lone purpose of obtaining his wealth. Thus Petronius pits two parasitic forces against each other. One might expect these two forces would balance each other, and so avoid the consequence of such desires, namely cannibalism. However that is not the case as Eumolpus is far better suited for the role of parasite. For this reason, there can be no balance. The scales tip in favor of Eumolpus.

Eumolpus is declared the winner because he possesses knowledge, which he acquired on his approach to Croton. He developed the plot and assumed the role of a wealthy man, knowing that it would work. He then tricked the *captatores* into believing his ruse. When the legacy-hunters show signs of unrest, he adapts the plan to fit the new situation. In fact, he is always one step ahead of the rest. The legacy-hunters, however, are duped every step of the way. They fail to realize that Eumolpus is not a wealthy man, nor do they comprehend that their reward is not guaranteed, and in fact not likely.

This should remind us of the struggle of Kronos and Zeus. Kronos, in order to maintain his rule, commits acts of cannibalism, but he does so without wisdom. Subsequently his actions set his fate, the same one he was trying to prevent, in motion and he is punished. Zeus, on the other hand, acts with wisdom when confronted with the same problem. Though his actions are identical, the fact that they are done by a wise man makes them permissible. At least that is what the stoic Zeno would have us believe. We recall from chapter 3 that both cynic and stoic philosophers believed that all things, even cannibalism, were permissible for the wise man. Eumolpus is that wise man²; his deeds are justly done.

However, a hint of irony exists in that among the *captatores* is a certain Gorgias, who automatically draws our attention to the famous sophist. Sophists, as we know, were teachers of higher rhetoric. They represent the system of education, which Petronius rails against in the beginning of the *Satyricon*. He accuses them of gutting oratory³, which recalls the ritual nature of cannibalism. The sophists are the priests, preparing to offer up

² Perhaps I should qualify that, as far as this scene is concerned, Eumolpus is the individual with the most knowledge of the way things work in Croton.

³ Sat 2.3: *corpus orationis enervaretur*.

education as a sacrifice. But they aren't just priests. Petronius goes on to condemn the sophists for being parasites, as Gorgias is in Croton. Like fishermen, he says, they bait their hooks hoping to catch a sucker, someone who will take them in and fill their bellies (*Sat* 3.3-4). However, fed on their gutted education, they are no match for a true wise man. And so Gorgias, though symbolizing a teacher of rhetoric and indeed assuming that role within the scene, cannot educate the inhabitants properly. He merely hands out ineffectual knowledge that is not only irrelevant but also devoid of reality. As a result, he compels the legacy-hunters to commit acts of cannibalism. And though this is perhaps the best advice he can give, he does it for the wrong reasons, as we will soon see. The legacy-hunters, who follow Gorgias, are as doomed as he is. As Petronius, "those, who are nourished by these things, are no more able to learn than those, who dwell in the kitchen, are to smell good."⁴ They think they possess knowledge; they think that their goals will be attained. Without true knowledge they will not be able to successfully fulfill their desires, yet they wish these desires to be fulfilled nonetheless.

Eumolpus, as wise man or perhaps a man of common sense, recognizes the danger. To satisfy the mob he must find a way to restore the balance, or at least convince the legacy-hunters that it has been restored, hence the will. Knowing what we do about the nature of testaments, they were not typically revealed until after the testator's death. Eumolpus then must no longer be among the living in Croton; at the same time I do not believe he is dead.⁵ Instead I imagine that Eumolpus staged his death in a manner similar to Achilles Tatius' account of the sacrifice of Leucippe, complete with fake intestines.

⁴ *Sat* 2.1: *qui inter haec nutriuntur non magis sapere possunt quam bene olere qui in culina habitant.*

⁵ Schmeling agrees with my opinion that this is not the end for Eumolpus. He observes that characters in the *Satyricon* generally appear three times, leaving Eumolpus with some work left to do.

This, I believe, would be more in character of both Eumolpus and the novel.⁶ Yet there exists no evidence for this, and I am hesitant to put words in the mouth of Petronius.⁷

Eumolpus' testament calls for all those who have legacies in it to consume his body before an audience. On the one hand, this seems to be yet another way Eumolpus can assert his power over the legacy-hunters. He forces them to commit the lowest crime known to man in an attempt to satisfy their greed, thus truly turning them into parasites. As for the audience, Rankin suggests that "if a tabu is to be broken, there must be proof that it is broken."⁸ They are to witness it and undoubtedly be disgusted by it. In this way, it seems to take the form of a precautionary act. Is Eumolpus warning the inhabitants to mend their wicked ways?

Whether this is the ultimate punishment for the legacy-hunters, with whom Eumolpus has been struggling for power or perhaps a wake-up call to the bystanders as to the true nature of their city and leaders is hard to discern. Clearly Eumolpus is more concerned with his own welfare than he is the legacy-hunters'. However, if he is not advocating a better life, the next section seems a bit out-of-place. In this section, the testament proceeds to cite the 'Herodotean' examples of mortuary cannibals, discussed in chapter 2, in order to persuade the legacy-hunters to partake of Eumolpus' flesh.⁹ In particular, attention is drawn to the Massagetae and Padaei, who thought that by

⁶ If my theory is correct, it would yet another instance in which Eumolpus is able to outsmart the *captatores*.

⁷ This sentiment I share with Conte (1987: 530) and Thiel (1971: 50-1). See Wehrli (1965: 142-8) for information on the 'Scheintod' in the ancient novel.

⁸ Rankin (1969) 381.

⁹ Rankin (1969: 382) believes that there is no necessity in to suppose that Petronius was directly acquainted with the works of Herodotus. Müller (1961), however, claims that Petronius is clearly alluding to Herodotus 3.99.

consuming the dying they could preserve that individual's abilities within the tribe. If he truly has these examples in mind, it would seem that Eumolpus is indeed advocating proper behavior to the inhabitants of Croton. He requests that the *captatores* consume his body, thereby inheriting his wisdom, as the examples of cannibalism given would imply. However, this act of cannibalism is to be done with an audience, who would clearly be repulsed by them. The average individual would not be well versed in the traditions of barbarians, who dwell at the ends of the earth. All they see are sinners, who break the laws against the consumption of human flesh. As a result, they would most likely cease their idolization of these false educators, represented by Gorgias. However, as Rankin points out, we have no evidence that Petronius knew the works of Herodotus.¹⁰ No where else does Petronius seem to draw off Herodotus, which given his fondness of parody comes across as a bit odd. This leads Rankin to claim that the example is merely an example, devoid of Herodotus, employed by Eumolpus to convince the legacy-hunters to commit the worst crime imaginable. However, there are countless examples of cannibalism Eumolpus could have employed. A few lines later, Gorgias draws from siege-warfare for examples, citing the sieges of Saguntum, Petelia, and Numantia. Clearly, Petronius could have found a better example if he only wanted an example. Instead, as any author, he knew the implications of his example and he chose it accordingly.

Finally, we come to the last line of Eumolpus' will. Can our view of Eumolpus as savior hold up? Here Eumolpus calls upon his friends to devour his body in the same spirit as they damned his soul.¹¹ Conte mentions the "exegetical discomfort" that

¹⁰ Rankin (1969) 382.

scholars seem to have with this passage.¹² He mentions that *devovere* must be understood as synonymous with *exsecrari*, which would invoke the religious connects to the *devotio*.¹³ Though the connection to religious practices is in keeping with accounts of cannibalism, the interpretation that it implies is inappropriate in the context of the situation. If correct, it would seem to mean that the *captatores* have begun to curse Eumolpus, who is living longer than they had originally expected. Conte finds this problematic, as the object of scorn should be Eumolpus himself not his spirit.¹⁴ Moreover, it would put an end to the charade before its climax. Eumolpus will in essence be unmasking the legacy-hunters as the hypocrites they are. However, this does not seem to the sincere sentiments of the line (*his admoneo amicos meos ne recusent quae iubeo*)¹⁵. I truly doubt that he would address individuals, whom he is about to call out, as friends. Gorgias' reactions is not that of a man recently called a fraud, but as a loyal friend carrying out the testator's final wish, albeit for his own nefarious purposes. Moreover, this would ruin any comic effect that the subsequent would have. This leads Conte to suggest an emendation.

Conte posits that the passage read *devorarint*.¹⁶ In his opinion, this would suggest that the *captatores* pursued Eumolpus with an insatiable appetite. This reveals itself not only in the legacy-hunters' excessive desire to acquire Eumolpus' fictitious wealth but in

¹¹ *Sat* 141.4: *sed quibus animis devoverint spiritum meum, eisdem etiam corpus consumant.*

¹² Conte (1987) 529.

¹³ Conte (1987) 530.

¹⁴ Conte (1987) 530.

¹⁵ *Sat* 141.4.

¹⁶ Conte (1987) 531.

the form of moral guidance as well. Eumolpus then becomes their apparent mentor. They seek his knowledge, if only for the purpose of ingratiating themselves with him. In turn, Eumolpus then assume the role of educator. His demands for cannibalism are thus an initiatory rite, a form of communion, by which the captatores will share in the wealth of knowledge Eumolpus has to offer.

In short, Petronius gives the example to motivate the *captatores* actions. He wants them to partake in Eumolpus' flesh. He intends for this to be both the greatest crime that they could commit as well as the worst punishment they could endure. Through this punishment, the legacy-hunters will gain the knowledge.¹⁷ Thus the punishment will serve to rehabilitate these criminals, or at least attempt to. The audience too shall be rehabilitated by their disgust, which witnessing the crime will induce. And Eumolpus will, like any wise man, "enjoy someone else's troubles for the sake of moral correction."¹⁸

There exists, however, one problem. Eumolpus isn't the wise man he thinks he is. Though he realizes the shortcomings of the educational system of his day, he in fact exhibits many of those shortcomings. His speech is more like a poet's than that of a normal person, clearly a sign of his education. He can only be as knowledgeable as those, whose knowledge he devoured, were. Furthermore, his rants against education, specifically its use of declamations, are themselves declamations, as he knows no other way of expressing his ideas. Thus his knowledge is quite limited. He possesses no actual knowledge, at least what he considers actual knowledge, and so he can offer no real solution to the malady plaguing the educational system. In fact, the only reason he is

¹⁷ See Rimell (2002), who asserts that eating is the primary model for learning.

¹⁸ Diogenes Laertius 10.1.121.

considered a wise man in Croton is the information he consume on his way into the city. Without it, he would not have survived against the sophistic parasites of Croton. As a result, Eumolpus' plans of imparting wisdom are bound to fail. He himself does not contain wisdom, so he cannot pass it on. Thus we are thrown back into the real world, where Gorgias and the sophists are in control.

Towards the end of the scene, Gorgias takes charge as his knowledge is revealed.¹⁹ He proposes that the captatores follow Eumolpus' wishes and consume his body. However, he warns them of the difficulty in such a task, as no meat is pleasant by itself.²⁰ This is especially true for the body of Eumolpus, which is not only devoid of true wisdom. For this reason, it is prone to get the legacy-hunters vomit, as Rimell suggests the educational system is wont to do.²¹ Furthermore, it lacks the artistic flourish of the sophists as well, thus lowering Eumolpus below the level of the sophists he despises. Gorgias, though, has the ability to season Eumolpus' body properly. In addition, he knows which examples will be most persuasive, citing case of sieges, even though they are not at all applicable. Thus we are left with this gutted education that is ornate but without substance.

In the end, we must choose between Eumolpus' failed attempt at true knowledge or Gorgias' artistic creations. Do we wish to realize the shortcomings of our education, yet be powerless against it? Or do we wish to express ourselves through flowery

¹⁹The speaker here is unclear. Schmeling makes a compelling argument for Eumolpus as the speaker. I, however, choose to leave the interpretation as is, as there is no definite evidence either way.

²⁰ *Sat* 141.8: *neque enim ulla caro per se placet.*

²¹ Rimell (2002) 177.

nonsense? Neither option is particularly enticing. Thus we look to Petronius for an answer, yet he is silent.

CHAPTER 6 CONCLUSION

The cannibal was well at home in ancient literature. In myth, he found a place as an individual driven by blind greed. He constantly wants more but is ignorant of the consequences. From myth, the cannibal made his way into drama. While the tragic stage was content to present an exaggerated form of the mythic cannibal, comedy gave the cannibal a new identity as the comic parasite. The parasite, in keeping with the cannibal, was ruled by an excessively desirous belly. History attempts to reconcile these two, but in the end it must embrace the two: the curious barbarian inhabiting the far reaches of the world and the secretive troublemaker within the city's walls. Finally, philosophy comes and preaches the overwhelming permissibility of all things, especially cannibalism.

Clearly Petronius knew the implications of employing cannibalism and chose to do so anyway. The interesting twist is that he employs it not only physically but also metaphorically, and in fact he does it so well that one cannot easily be separated from the other. The physical is the actual cannibalism called for in Eumolpus' testament. The metaphorical comes through in the form of the comic parasite. Although the parasite himself is never associated with cannibalism, he has all the characteristics of one. He is the male counterpart of the *lena*, both governed by tyrannical stomachs. She is made into a cannibal, he is not. He also shares characteristics with the philosophical cannibal. And, of course, there is the physical cannibalism that they are about to partake in. In Petronius' *Satyricon* 141, two parasitic forces come head to head. Thus a balance is

expected, but one party possesses an amount of wisdom that the other does not. Thus they are not equal; no balance can be made.

This relationship gives way to an interpretation, following abstract notions of cannibalism, of the cannibalistic nature of education. But, despite Petronius' problems with the state of education in Rome, he offers no solution to the problem.

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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

David Schiedler was born in Hanau, Germany, on September 16, 1981. In 1986 he and his family left Germany and moved to Fountain, Colorado. It was here that he attended school, until he was accepted by the Congress-Bundestag exchange organization to attend a German Gymnasium during the 1998-1999 school year. He graduated from Fountain Valley School in 2000. After high school, he attended Saint Olaf College in Northfield, Minnesota, graduating in 2004 with a Bachelor of Arts in both classics and German. He will receive a Master of Arts in Latin from the University of Florida in 2006.