

Listening to Eumolpus: A Reevaluation of the *Satyricon*'s Sweet-singing Songster

A. *Troiae Halosis* (89)

1. *cum Delio profante [ferro] caesi vertices
Idae trahuntur scissaque in molem cadunt
robora, minacem quae figurabunt equum.* (4-6)

When, with Apollo speaking out, the cut-down peaks of Ida are dragged and the split oaks, which will fashion the menacing horse, fall into a heap.¹

2. *huc decenni proelio
irata virtus abditur, stipant graves
Danai recessus, in suo voto latent.* (8-10)

Here, the manly band enraged by the ten-year war is concealed, the heavy Greeks through the inner cavities, they lie hidden in their own offering.

3. *hoc titulus fero
incisus, hoc ad furta compositus Sinon
firmabat et mens semper in damnum potens.* (12-4)

These things provided confidence: the inscription carved into the wild horse, Sinon, composed for tricks, and his mind, always capable of harm.

B. *Elegidarion*: in lamentation of hair loss (109.9-10)

4. *quod solum formae decus est, cecidere capilli,
vernantesque comas tristis abegit hiemps.
nunc umbra nudata sua iam tempora maerent,
areaque attritis ridet adusta pilis.
o fallax natura deum: quae prima dedisti* 5
aetati nostrae gaudia, prima rapis

*

*infelix, modo crinibus nitebas
Phoebo pulchrior et sorore Phoebi.
at nunc levior aere vel rotundo
horti tubere, quod creavit unda,* 10

¹ The text is from Müller's Teubner; all translations are my own.

*ridentes fugis et times puellas.
ut mortem citius venire credas,
scito iam capitis perisse partem.*

That which is the lone adornment of beauty, hair, has fallen out, and gloomy wintertime has expelled the spring locks. Now the temples grieve, stripped of their shade, and a burned-up bald spot smiles with the hairs worn away. O deceitful nature of the gods: the first joys you've given to our age are the first ones you snatch away! Unhappy man, just now you were shining with your hair, more beautiful than Phoebus and Phoebus' sister, but now, smoother than bronze or a round truffle of the garden, which water has made grow, you flee and fear laughing girls. So that you may believe that death approaches rather quickly, know that a part of your head has already died.

C. Public attitudes toward poetry

5. *nam si aliquis ex is, qui in eodem synoecio potant, nomen poetae olfecerit, totam concitabit viciniam et nos omnes sub eadem causa obruet.* (93.3)

If one of our fellow lodgers will have gotten a whiff of the word "poet," he'll stir up the whole neighborhood and crush us all for the same reason.

D. Horace's mad poet, a prototype for Eumolpus (*Ars Poetica* 472-6)

6. *certe furit, ac velut ursus,
obiectos caveae valuit si frangere clatros,
indoctum doctumque fugat recitator acerbus;
quem vero arripuit, tenet occiditque legendo,* 475
non missura cutem nisi plena cruoris hirudo.

He certainly rages, and like a bear, if he could break the bars of his cage, the harsh reciter sends the ignorant and learned alike packing; indeed, anyone whom he has grabbed he holds and kills by reading -- a leech who won't let go of the skin until he's full of blood.

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