

*Declamator Furiosus: Encolpius and Plato's Phaedrus in Petronius' Satyrice*  
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The opening chapters (1-6) of Petronius' *Satyrice* find Encolpius declaiming on the madness of the declaimers. Primarily because of the interpretative challenges posed by the lacunose state of the text and in spite of Kennedy's (1978) plausible and attractive reconstruction, the so-called Agamemnon episode has received little scholarly attention. By reading this scene in conjunction with Plato's *Phaedrus* – another work concerned with rhetoric and the problems that it poses – this paper seeks to shed further light on the context and dynamics of the episode.

As Kennedy saw some thirty years ago, Encolpius, posing as a *scholasticus* (“declamation-buff”), is standing in front of a rhetorical school in search of an invitation to dinner. Upon meeting Agamemnon and sizing him up, Encolpius delivers a speech that, through its disdain for contemporary declamatory practices and attack on its teachers, actually seeks to impress the pedagogue. Praising Encolpius for his good taste and critical judgment, Agamemnon takes the bait and invites the young critic to dinner in a no-longer extant portion. One of the more intriguing but less substantiated aspects of Kennedy's reconstruction is his explication of Agamemnon's blithe acceptance of the criticism; the latter is sexually interested in Encolpius and hopes to cash in on his praise and invitation to dinner.

Two significant problems hamper Kennedy's interpretation: the lack of concrete evidence for the putative sexual attraction and the notion that Encolpius astutely sizes up his opposition and successfully hoodwinks Agamemnon, which presumes a certain amount of potency generally not found elsewhere in our protagonist (e.g. 19 ff.; 80-2; 97-8). Reading this episode intertextually with Plato's corpus – particularly, the *Phaedrus* – elucidates the sexual undertones as well as provides new insight into who is hoodwinking whom.

Encolpius' speech, which ranges from invective to sweeping laudation, manipulates a number of arguments from the *Phaedrus* to contrast the past glory of *eloquentia* with its contemporary, decayed incarnation of declamation. But in the very process of decrying declamation (1-2), Encolpius is possessed by a declamatory madness (6.1; cf. 1.1; 3.1), thereby himself becoming a *declamator furiosus*. In Plato's *Phaedrus*, the *locus classicus* for the collocation of madness and rhetoric, mania – specifically, one that is inspired by the locale, companionship, and subject matter – plays a prominent role in both its dramatic setting and argumentation (cf. Ferrari 1987). Inspired by his locale, the divine presence therein, and his conversation partner, Socrates delivers an apology of love as a madness at the same time he himself is subject to that madness. Thus, just as Nymphs, cicadas, and the very topography inspire Socrates' madness, so does Encolpius' declamation against declamation spring forth in the portico of a rhetorical school – while a declamation is going on inside. In both the *Phaedrus* and the Agamemnon episode, then, the very space possesses the speakers and inspires the subject of manic discourse.

The Platonic echoes do not escape Agamemnon's notice. Picking up on the madness motif (3.1-2), Agamemnon also enjoins Encolpius to “release the reins” (*mittere habenas*; 3.1) of rhetoric upon becoming “full of the Socratic herd” (*Socratico plenus grege*), which I argue is both a reference to Socrates' description of the soul as a charioteer (*Phaedrus* 254b-e) and a shrouded request that Encolpius submit to the teacher's sexual advances. This episode, then, not only draws its inspiration (madness) and topic (rhetoric) from the *Phaedrus*, but even dramatizes another of the latter's recurring themes, namely, homosexual pederastic love, through the competing speeches of the younger Encolpius and older Agamemnon. Thus, Kennedy's argument that the rhetorician has been unknowingly deceived simply cannot be right. Instead, we should understand Agamemnon as apprehending, trumping, and, effectively, reversing

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Encolpius' literary gambit to make a pass at the young man. Once again, Encolpius' learnedness fails him.

Ferrari, G. R. F. (1987). *Listening to the Cicadas*. Cambridge University Press.

Kennedy, G. A. (1978). "Encolpius and Agamemnon in Petronius." *AJPh* 99:171-8.