

Eat Like An Egyptian: Cannibalism in Juvenal 15 and Achilles Tattius

Scholarly attempts at drawing connections between Roman Verse Satire and the Greek novels have been virtually nonexistent (exceptions include Goold 1995 and Lee & Barr 1987). Yet the earliest of the extant canonical Greek novels, Chariton's *Callirhoe*, is usually dated to the mid-first century BCE/CE, a time frame contemporaneous with both Horace and Persius. In this presentation, I will examine parallels between episodes involving cannibalism in Juvenal's 15th Satire and the third book of Achilles Tattius' *Leucippe and Clitophon*. Given the fact that Juvenal and Achilles Tattius both wrote during the early and late second century CE respectively, we need not be surprised that Achilles Tattius might have found inspiration for his passage from Juvenal. From an analysis of these two episodes, I will demonstrate that such connections between Roman Verse Satire and the Greek novel merit further study.

The association between Roman Verse Satire and the Greek novels that most call to mind appears in Persius, Satire 1.134. This poem ends with the well-known line, "*his mane edictum, post prandia Calliroen do*". This satire targets Roman literary trends of the day and features Persius' justification for writing satire, the only genre that remains unpolluted by contemporary poets. G.P. Goold asserts that the "Callirhoe" mentioned by Persius must be Chariton's (see also Schmeling 1974). Other scholars, however, are reticent to make such a claim (Dominik and Wehrle 1999; Freudenburg 2001). Regardless of the original allusion intended by Persius, the modern reader calls to mind the Greek prose romance written by Chariton, the only extant work from antiquity to have the title "Callirhoe."

More promising, however, is the connection between the Egyptians featured in Juvenal 15 (a satiric poem about a case of cannibalism in Egypt) and the *Boukoloï* (outlaw shepherds who inhabited the Egyptian Delta region) in the novel of Achilles Tattius. In both of these passages, the respective images of cannibalism are so similar that it warrants closer examination. For example, the act of cannibalism in both cases follows a clash between two distinct groups of Egyptians whose fighting techniques are uncannily similar. In Juvenal, the Egyptians throw stones at each other until one of the factions attacks with swords and bows, thus winning the battle. Similarly, the *Boukoloï* throw clods of dirt (which are harder than stones 3.13) at their enemies, who also fight with swords and spears. Likewise in both episodes, the actual act of

cannibalism is not solely for the enjoyment of one Egyptian but rather all partake in the meal. Additionally, both episodes are couched within a mythological framework that further underscores the similarities between the two passages (a clash between mortals and immortals is featured: Niobe in Achilles Tatius; Prometheus in Juvenal).

These correspondences (and others) between Juvenal 15 and Achilles Tatius are clear. As a result, we need to reexamine the interrelationship of these genres which, for the most part, has been overlooked by scholars and which might cause us to reconsider the audiences of these two seemingly unrelated genres.

Bibliographic Citations

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