IN THE COURT OF TIME:[1] THE RECKONING OF A MONSTER IN THE *APOCOLOCYNTOSIS* OF SENECA

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I. THE GENRE AND THE GENERATION: "O MISER INQUE DIES ULTRA MISER"

Seneca's *Apocolocyntosis* shines light on the obscurities that engulf the Roman tradition of Menippean satire. Readers can gather an overall sense of rhythm, structure, and proportion in a nearly complete work as they can in no other surviving fragments of the genre—the remaining sections of the Petronian *Satyrica* provide an obvious contrast.[2] A balanced critique of this satire, from beginning to end, is therefore possible in regard to: narrative points of emphasis (and evasion);[3] distinctions between verse and prose; repetitions; changes in plot, scene, and character; modulations of rhetorical

1 Solon 36.1–5 (Arist. *Ath. Pol.* 12.3): ἐγὼ δὲ τῶν μὲν οὕνεκα ξυνήγαγον / δῆμον, τί τούτων πρὶν τυχεῖν ἐπαυσάμην; / συμμαρτυροίη ταῦτ' ἂν ἐν δίκηι Χρόνου / μήτηρ μεγίστη δαιμόνων Ὀλυμπίων / ἄριστα, Γῆ μέλαινα. (Of the goals for which I convened the assembly, from which of these did I cease before achievement? There would testify to these things best in the court of Time the greatest mother of Olympian divinities, dark Earth.)

2 The major lacuna between sections 7 and 8 would have resulted from the loss of at least one complete page of the archetype according to Weinreich 1923.84 and Eden 1984.99.

3 Eden 1984.8–17 identifies and interprets Seneca's composition squarely in the satiric tradition of Lucilius, Varro, Horace, and beyond. This edition will be the source of the Latin quotations and English translations of the *Apocolocyntosis* that follow. All other translations, except as noted, are my own.

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register; and innovative systems of myth, trope, and imagery. The *Apocolocyntosis* presents a burlesque of the *res gestae* and demise of Claudius, as well as a panegyric to Nero, and it contains numerous scenes and characters that would have resonated with an imperial audience.

These events, however, are repeatedly subordinated to and framed by an elaborate series of temporal transitions[4] and periphrases[5] that lend a peculiar distortion to the narrative. The transitions all ultimately derive from such formulae as the Homeric Ἦμος δ᾽ ἠριγένεια φάνη ῥοδοδάκτυλος Ἠώς, "And when the child of morning appeared, rosy-fingered Dawn" (*Odyssey* 2.1). But in the *Apocolocyntosis,* a pervasive rhetorical inversion[6] confuses the satire's expected temporal background and foreground, as the ostensible main subjects of the satire, Claudius and Nero, are postponed or

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4 For example, the author uses the temporal *ex* with the ablative in transitions or reminiscences six times in a short work (1.15, 3.1, 3.2, 4.2, 9.5, 10.1); this suggests an obtrusive legalese forcing order into the narrative.

5 This is the term preferred in Braund 1996 ad Juv. 4.56–59, Eden 1984.68, Curtius 1953.275–78, and Weinreich 1923 and 1937 following Quint. 8.6.59–61: "Pluribus autem uerbis cum id quod uno aut paucioribus certe dici potest explicatur, periphrasin uocant, circumitum quendam eloquendi, qui nonnumquam necessitatem habet, quotiens dictu deformia operit, ut Sallustius 'ad requisita naturae,' interim ornatum petit solum, qui est apud poetas frequentissimus: tempus erat quo prima quies mortalibus aegris / incipit et dono diuum gratissima serpit [*Aen*. 2.268–69]." ("When there is an expression of many words of what could be said clearly with one or few, the term is 'periphrasis,' a kind of circumlocution, which is sometimes necessary whenever it can mask what is unseemly to say, as in Sallust 'to the calls of nature'; sometimes it is used only for ornament, which is most common among the poets: 'Time it was when first rest for weary mortals begins, and by the gift of the gods comes most welcome.' ")

Seneca's temporal periphrases in the *Apocolocyntosis* would appear to invert the euphemistic or ornamental practice described by Quintilian and deliberately introduce disorder into his text.

6 This corresponds to the satire's Saturnalian background, as described by Nauta 1987.84: "The Saturnalia as a festival is marked by (temporary) *inversion*: norms which hold true for the rest of the year are *not* valid during the Saturnalia. The communicative effect of this is enhanced when the norms are not simply suspended, but turned upside-down." The *Apocolocyntosis* relies heavily upon parody (even of Senecan drama, as in 7.1–2) and fragmented, de- and re-contextualized quotation to present its carnivalesque world view. Its audience, as Nauta 1987.73 observes, is "expected to be able to appreciate parodies of historiographic, epic and tragic styles, to know the rudiments of Stoic and Epicurean theology (8.1), and to identify some quotations from standard authors—there are only a few passages where the humor is lost if the provenance of a quotation is not recognized, notably 1.2 (Virgil), 5.4, 9.3 and 11.1 (all Homer) and 11.6 (Catullus)." According to Bakhtin 1984.127: "Parodying is the creation of a *decrowning double*; it is that same 'world turned inside out' . . . like an entire system of crooked mirrors, elongating, diminishing, distorting in various directions and to various degrees."

supplanted by intrusive expatiations upon time and the risings and settings of heavenly bodies. Indeed, "quid actum sit in caelo," "the business transacted in heaven" (1.1), could be interpreted in this context to have as much reference to stargazing[7] as it does to the fate of emperors.[8] The following analysis will attempt to demonstrate how the motif of time, in and of itself, is molded by Seneca to provide particular perspective to the characters of the *Apocolocyntosis.* Temporal transitions and periphrases are transformed into narrative devices that often dwarf the characters and events that they would be expected merely to frame. As silent, but all-pervasive, elements throughout the narrative, representations of time and history come to rescale and to consume the satire's characters and to offer tacit critiques of Claudius—and Nero.

Satire composed during Nero's reign relied heavily upon what Frederick Ahl (1984.187) calls "figured speech . . . criticism from which the speaker or writer himself stands back. He is safe because the critical links in thought must be established by the reader or listener: the text is incomplete until the audience completes the meaning." The *Apocolocyntosis* presents its audience with a variety of conundrums, incompletenesses, and rhetorical culs-de-sac. The reader must establish why the satire is so disproportionally informed by its temporal periphrases and how such a scheme fits the apparent purpose of the satire: to praise Nero and blame Claudius. Both of these emperors' images are reflected in the mirror of *imperium*: Claudius as an utter travesty and Nero as model ruler and complicitous imperial audience to the satire. But this was a precarious balance for Seneca to strike as the princeps was inextricable from the institution of the principate.[9] The

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7 The dense section 8, following the *Apocolocyntosis*' major lacuna, appears to concern both the emperor and stargazing, and also contains an embedded Ennian paraphrase (8.3, with Eden 1984 commentary): "quid in cubiculo suo faciat nesci[o]et: iam caeli scrutatur plagas": "a clear allusion to his μετεωρία, 'star-gazing,' with perhaps a side glance at his aspiration to a place in heaven . . . *quid* . . . *nesciet* . . . must . . . refer to Claudius's characteristic heedlessness of what was going on under his nose in his own and his sexual partners' affairs."

8 Latin syntax also frequently reverses expected temporal relationships, as in the common *cum inversum* construction: "l'action de la proposition temporelle *est postérieure* à celle de la principale" (Ernout and Thomas 1964.360d; emphasis in original).

9 The satirists of this time remained ever cautious about offending the emperor, to the extent that Cornutus, according to the *Vita Persi*, sanitized a Persian hemistich that might have been construed as subversive after posthumous publication. Cf. Clausen 1992.34, Griffin 1984.156–57, Gowers 1994.132, Conington and Nettleship 1874, and Gildersleeve 1875 ad Pers. 1.121, with the supposed change to "auriculas asini quis non habet?" from "Mida

genre of satire challenged the boundaries between the author and his audience and the ability of either to "stand back" from a distorted satirical reality. Incongruities abound in the peculiar discursiveness of the *Apocolocyntosis*, with its juxtapositions of mock-epic and mock-tragedy, of Claudius the clown prince and the "Apollonian" Nero[10]—all of which are backlit by the ambiguous afterglow of astronomical phenomena scavenged from the transitions of epic.

The figured speech of Seneca's Menippean satire reflects a fractured point of view. Its fundamental scheme—the alternation of prose with verse—suggests a patchwork quilt rather than the woven fabric of epic or lyric; it embodies a rhetoric of intrusion. The *Apocolocyntosis*, with its stark, satirical transitions and juxtapositions,[11] elevates the Horatian *purpureus pannus* to a cardinal (dis)organizing principle.[12] In this way, every character or event that is described in the *Apocolocyntosis* is assimilated into its skewed satirical design: the so-called panegyric for Nero—problematized doublespeak in this satirical environment, to borrow Shadi Bartsch's terminology—appears little less absurd than the meaningless temporal periphrases and buffooneries of Claudius that surround it.

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rex habet." Bartsch 1994.70: "The emperor . . . whether present or absent at the actual moment of performance, could act with terrifying capriciousness in discovering insult and innuendo in the works of contemporary poets and historians . . . This situation in turn appears to have produced a countering move in the literature of the times; disavowals of intentional allusion become public, a part of literature itself and, of course, by their very existence a comment on the circumstances that necessitated such avowals in the first place."

10 Freudenburg 2001.126–27 on Persius, treats this characterization of the emperor as "a story always under construction." "Perhaps most notable of these discredited narratives was the story of Nero as Rome's Apollo, bringer of enlightenment and a new Golden Age."

11 Cf. Bakhtin 1984.118: "The menippea is full of sharp contrasts and oxymoronic combinations [. . . and] loves to play with abrupt transitions and shifts, ups and downs, rises and falls, unexpected comings together of distant and disunited things, mésalliances of all sorts." The paradoxical character of Claudius suits the genre perfectly and must invite oxymoronic descriptions. What to call him? The learned fool? The debilitated potentate? The aristocrat of the freedmen? The Gallic Roman, etc.?

12 Similarly Henderson 1991.132 on Pers. *Sat*. 1: "Suddenly, then, a *poet*—but a poet without an audience. No one to write for, none worth writing for (1ff. and *passim*). A poet, this, who can write bad poetries, poetry for bad audiences. A poet who writes good parodies—parodies far too good for any (of its) readers? *Just* what is (supposed to be) wrong, so clearly wrong, with the samples and scraps of bad poetry written into the poem, its purple patches, and what does the lapse represent (esp. 79, 93–102)?"

Mid first-century satirical consciousness often seems preoccupied with the interpretation and construction of time itself. Emily Gowers (1994) argues that the satire of Persius is informed by a sense of precocity that is paradoxically undercut by its own anxious belatedness: an emperor, a society, and a genre of poetry all boiled down and abased in capitulation to their pervasive inadequacies. In satire, time and destiny intrude upon men, and the petty human behavior of the present contrasts with the transcendent ideals of the Roman philosophical and poetic traditions. Satire concentrates its attack upon the ephemeral, and in the *Apocolocyntosis*, the hijacking of narrative by temporal periphrases rescales the satirical present.

Such a rescaling of time forecloses any possibility of linear narrative in the satires of Persius and Seneca, whose rhetoric and structure offer mutual illumination. Intrusive dialogue and temporal obsession and distortion inform Persius's *Third Satire*—apparently a harangue directed toward an unspecified "student would-be crammer" (Henderson 1991.133) caught in the entanglements of his debauches of the day (61–65):

> an passim sequeris coruos testaque lutoque,
> securus quo pes ferat, atque ex tempore uiuis?
> elleborum frustra, cum iam cutis aegra tumebit,
> poscentis uideas; uenienti occurrite morbo,
> et quid opus Cratero magnos promittere montis?
>
> Are you chasing after ravens everywhere, potsherd and clod in hand, unconcerned where your feet may take you, as you subsist from moment to moment? You may see men beg for hellebore too late, once their infected skin will already have swollen: confront disease when it approaches, and what need will there be to guarantee a mountain range to Craterus?

The vaguenesses of time (*ex tempore*) and place (*passim*) are associated with the undisciplined character of a callow ephebe. He has been wasting his life, sleeping when he should be awake, and afflicted with a spiritual myopia that prevents him from assessing the consequences of his irresponsibility. He is an unwise and distracted individual who disregards timely action. Seneca similarly argues in his letters that untimely fools must appear ludicrous in all that they do, in their disregard of the natural progression of

time, and the philosopher parodies the presumption of such people in *Epistle* 122.9:[13]

> Cum instituerunt omnia contra naturae consuetudinem velle, novissime in totum ab illa desciscunt. "Lucet: somni tempus est. Quies est: nunc exerceamur, nunc gestemur, nunc prandeamus. Iam lux propius accedit: tempus est cenae. Non oportet id facere quod populus; res sordida est trita ac vulgari via vivere. Dies publica relinquatur: proprium nobis ac peculiare mane fiat." Isti vero mihi defunctorum loco sunt; quantulum enim a funere absunt et quidem acerbo qui ad faces et cereos vivunt?
>
> Once they have begun to desire everything contrary to the norms of Nature, ultimately they deviate from [Nature] altogether. "Daylight: time for sleep. Rest time: now let's get moving, now on the road, now lunch. Already daybreak draws closer: time for dinner. Shun the activities of everyone else; a sorry thing it is to let life follow the beaten and common track. Reject the day of the masses: let's make the morning our private property." Truly these men seem to me as good as dead; for how short is the space that separates them from their funeral—and an untimely one at that—when they lead their lives according to torches and tapers?

The anonymous characters in these two passages from Persius and Seneca possess constitutions addicted to an ancient equivalent of recurrent jet lag: they exist in their own private time zone where they carouse, eat, and sleep with no concern for the rest of the world around them. Like Claudius in the *Apocolocyntosis,* they represent an aberration of nature; they are isolated and insensible to reality and to the dictates of time. In the *Third Satire*, character is so diminished in its rhetorical environment that editors and commentators have disagreed radically about speaker division and iden-

13 *Epistle* 122, treated below, discusses at length the relationship of character to timeliness. See also Motto and Clark 1993.41–65 for Senecan attitudes to time in his other prose works and tragedy.

tity.[14] Its initial fragmentary *chronographia*, comparable to the extended temporal schemes in the *Apocolocyntosis*, provides a reluctant wake-up call to its hung-over dramatis personae (1–7):

> Nempe haec adsidue. iam clarum mane fenestras
> intrat et angustas extendit lumine rimas.
> stertimus, indomitum quod despumare Falernum
> sufficiat, quinta dum linea tangitur umbra.
> "en quid agis? siccas insana canicula messes
> iam dudum coquit et patula pecus omne sub ulmo est"
> unus ait comitum.

> It never ends; already the bright morning is coming in through the window-shutters, expanding their narrow cracks with light. We're snoring enough to blow the fizz off that formidable Falernian, while the fifth hour's shadow reaches the sundial's mark. "So what are you doing? The mad Dogstar has been roasting the crops dry for some time, and the whole herd is taking refuge beneath the spreading elm," says one of our cronies.

This vivid opening to the *Third Satire* shares several stylistic elements with the *Apocolocyntosis*: ambiguously defined characters or events beginning *in medias res*; intrusive, undesignated, disembodied voices; characters whose engagement with and interpretation of their surroundings is inadequate; the obscuring and diminution of characters' identities as they are subordinated to the satire's rhetoric; and, finally, an exchange of emphasis between the temporal background and narrative foreground. The characters at the beginning of the *Third Satire* are left to snore through morning light, sundial shadows, the rising of Sirius, and pastoral summer heat; the who and the what have been supplanted by the when.

II. THE HOLLOW GOURD

The *Apocolocyntosis*' complexity and sketchy transmission introduce numerous interpretive challenges. Even its title is disputed (Eden

14 See Hooley 1997.202–05 for discussion of competing theories.

1984.1–4), and the first two pages, a parody of historical specificity, appear to be introducing events of cosmic significance with highly rhetoricized references to sources and veracity—all underscored by an incongruous obsession about just *when* "it" happened, without letting the audience know exactly what "it" was or what possible significance "it" might have. The first mention of Claudius in the satire is oblique and suggests a central theme: his insignificance and the ambiguity of his very existence (1.2):

> tamen si necesse fuerit auctorem producere, quaerito ab eo qui Drusillam euntem in caelum uidit: idem Claudium uidisse se dicet iter facientem "non passibus aequis." uelit nolit, necesse est illi omnia uidere quae in caelo aguntur: Appiae uiae curator est, qua scis et diuum Augustum et Tiberium Caesarem ad deos isse.
>
> But if it is obligatory to produce the originator of this account, let the inquirer ask the man who saw Drusilla on her way to heaven: he will say that he saw Claudius making the same journey "with unequal steps." Like it or not, he cannot help seeing everything that goes on in heaven: he is superintendent of the Appian Way, along which, as you know, both the deified Augustus and Tiberius Caesar went to join the gods.

Questions about the origin and authenticity of the account distract from the event itself, Claudius's ascension to heaven, just as his illustrious forebears (Drusilla, Augustus, Tiberius) overshadow Claudius himself. As the audience learns, the witness to Drusilla's apotheosis has attracted the greatest suspicion, and he is to be the source consulted about Claudius, who made "the same journey." At 3.2, Mercury casts doubt on Claudius's very existence: "nemo enim umquam illum natum putauit" ("For nobody ever thought that he existed"), so here at 1.2, the fact of Claudius's death is similarly held in suspense. P. T. Eden (1984 ad loc.) correctly observes in reference to the Virgilian allusion: "Iulus's steps were unequal to his father's, Claudius's were unequal to each other." But the allusion could just as easily suggest the difference between Claudius and the other *principes* who have been mentioned, whose steps he could have never hoped to equal.

Claudius's dying and death are anything but conventional, and Mercury's conventional role as psychopompos is similarly contorted in the

Apocolocyntosis. Mediating between gods and men, he provides a brief meta-narrative from contemporary Roman astrological lore to discuss Claudius's time and future with the Fate Clotho (3.1–2):

> annus sexagesimus et quartus est, ex quo cum anima luctatur. quid huic et reipublicae inuides? patere mathematicos aliquando uerum dicere, qui illum, ex quo princeps factus est, omnibus annis omnibus mensibus efferunt. et tamen non est mirum si errant et horam eius nemo nouit: nemo enim umquam illum natum putauit. fac quod faciendum est.
>
> For sixty-four years he has been struggling with the breath of life. Why do you bear a grudge against him and against the state of Rome? Let the astrologers tell the truth *some time*: they have been burying him every year, every month, since he became emperor. And yet it is no wonder if they are wrong and nobody knows his fated hour, for nobody ever thought that he existed. Do what must be done.

There are several inversions of forensic commonplaces suggested in Mercury's speech. Rather than continuing her grudge against the emperor and the republic, Clotho is urged to grant Claudius the justice not of life but of death. Apparently the astrologers have been writing his death-date into calendars for decades. But even they are bound to get it right at least once—after the fact. And, according to Mercury, the unreliable astrologers have had a plausible excuse: if Claudius's birth was a fiction, how could anyone possibly know *quem finem di dederint*? ("what end the gods have given"). Eden 1984 translates "nemo enim umquam illum natum putauit" as "nobody ever thought that he existed." The *umquam* could also be construed with *natum*: "nobody thought that he was ever born,"[15] and such an interpretation—Claudius was never born—exemplifies the theme of time used to emphasize the insignificance of Claudius's existence. The preceding surfeit of meaningless temporal periphrases canceling each other out has turned

15 E.g., cf. 14.3: "stupebant omnes nouitate rei attoniti, negabant hoc umquam factum," "Everybody was struck dumb, shattered by the unprecedented ruling, and said that this had never been done before."

Claudius's birth, life, and death into non-events that might as well have never happened—a kind of anti-myth.[16] If, indeed, he had been born, his ignominy and his monstrous appearance relegated him to the most ambiguous plane of existence, casting doubt on his identity as a human being: *uisus est quasi homo* ("the impression of something like a human being," 5.4)[17] and "mater Antonia portentum eum hominis dictitabat nec absolutum a natura sed tantum incohatum" ("His mother Antonia often called him 'a monster of a man, not finished but merely begun by Nature'").[18]

It is tempting to view the abrupt transitions among sections of the *Apocolocyntosis* as reflecting the facts of dynastic succession during the early principate. These transitions are also reflexes of the broader satirical genre, exaggerated still more in the shifts between prose and verse in the Senecan version. Sections 1.3–2.2 contain a brilliant parody of a poetaster and solicitous historian having trouble getting his facts and sources straight:

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16 This may represent an infantilizing of the narrative and an implicit comment upon Claudius's character in a mythologizing "abolition du temps" as described by Pépin 1962.62–63: "On a souvent observé que la plupart des mythes, pour ne pas dire tous les mythes, ont pour terrain d'élection l'extrême du passé ou l'extrême du futur; ils sont des genèses ou des apocalypses; d'un côté comme l'autre, leurs références chronologiques se perdent dans les formules les plus vagues: *in principio, in illo tempore, olim,* à l'âge d'or, 'il était une fois.'" The *Apocolocyntosis*, of course, does invoke a Golden Age (in a golden line [4.1]: "aurea formoso descendunt saecula filo," "a Golden Age spun down on a beautiful thread"), with the effect of diminishing Claudius to the status of a minor fairy- or folk-tale character—with pointed irony, in view of the emperor's recent death. As Versnel 1993.99 observes, "This ambiguity [of the *aurea saecula* of Saturn] is common to various representations of the alternative world: images of the hereafter, the new heaven and earth of messianic movements, the Never Never land of fairy tales, and fantastic descriptions of foreign nations." Eden 1984 notes in regard to the immediately preceding section (3.4) that the names Augurini, Babae, Claudii "sound like the beginning of a nursery mnemonic in verse . . . to learn the order of letters in the Latin alphabet."

17 Cf. also 4.2, the moment of his death, in which the mere *appearance* of being alive is stressed: "et ille quidem animam ebulliit, et ex quo desiit uiuere uideri" ("And he did indeed gurgle his life out, and from then on ceased to have even the appearance of existence").

18 Suetonius *Claudius* 3.2 from Braund and James 1998.297. Cf. 1998.298: "The Claudius of the Senecan satire represents the grotesquerie of an historical period which was, in every sense, an aberration of the Roman experience." The satire dehistoricizes the aberration of Claudius and his reign through its systematically deliberate temporal intrusions, distortions, and dislocations. There could be no time or place in the Eternal City for such a monster.

> ab hoc ego quae tum audiui, certa clara affero, ita illum saluum et felicem habeam.
>
> > iam Phoebus breuiore uia contraxerat arcum
> > lucis et obscuri crescebant tempora Somni,
> > iamque suum uictrix augebat Cynthia regnum,
> > et deformis Hiems gratos carpebat honores
> > diuitis Autumni iussoque senescere Baccho
> > carpebat raras serus uindemitor uuas.
>
> puto magis intellegi si dixero: mensis erat October, dies III idus Octobris.

> What I heard from him I am reporting plain and clear—as surely as I wish him safe and sound.
>
> > Phoebus had already drawn in the arc of his light with a shorter path, and the periods of darkling Sleep were growing, and Cynthia was already triumphantly extending her sway, and foul Winter was snatching at the welcome splendours of wealthy Autumn, and, with Bacchus commanded to age, the belated grape harvester was plucking the sparse grapes.
>
> I think this is better understood if I say: the month was October, the day the thirteenth.

Otto Weinreich (1937.8–12) identifies these passages in the *Apocolocyntosis* as the first attestations of "Doppelform von Periphrasis plus Prosaglosse," in which prose restates pedantically a poetic periphrasis or the periphrasis inflates a banal prose idea. But in the context of the beginning of the *Apocolocyntosis*, we can see that the repetitiveness of the passage above extends even further. "Mensis erat October, dies III idus Octobris" is an almost verbatim repetition from the first sentence of the satire, and the highly redundant temporal clichés, with their tedious metonymy and anaphora—Phoebus, Cynthia, Bacchus, Somnus, Hiems, Autumnus, *iam . . . iam*—parody the affectations of pretentious poets, who attracted the ridicule of Latin masters from Catullus through Juvenal. If there was ever any doubt about the inert filler that the six hexameters represent in the argument of the *Apocolocyntosis*, they are exposed for what they are with the author's offer of simultaneous translation: "puto magis intellegi si

dixero." This is yet another evasion from disclosing the subject of the satire instead of its attendant circumstances (τὰ μετέωρα καὶ τὰ ὑπὸ γῆς, "the things of heaven and beneath the earth"); the satire continues in the same manner with a prose frame around a repetitive temporal periphrasis (2.2–4):

> horam non possum certam tibi dicere (facilius inter philosophos quam inter horologia conueniet) tamen inter sextam et septimam erat. "nimis rustice! <adeo his> adquiescunt omnes poetae, non contenti ortus et occasus describere, ut etiam medium diem inquietent: tu sic transibis horam tam bonam?"
>
> > iam medium curru Phoebus diuiserat orbem
> > et propior Nocti fessas quatiebat habenas
> > obliquo flexam deducens tramite lucem:
>
> Claudius animam agere coepit nec inuenire exitum poterat.
>
> I cannot tell you the exact hour (it will be easier for philosophers to agree than clocks!) but it was between twelve noon and one o'clock. "Far too unsophisticated! All poets, not satisfied with describing sunrises and sunsets, indulge themselves in these practices so much that they disturb the noontide siesta as well: will *you* pass over such a good hour like this?"
>
> > Phoebus in his chariot had already passed the middle of his orbit and, closer to Night, was shaking his weary reins, leading down his redirected light by a sloping path.
>
> Claudius began to gasp his last, and could not find any way to go.

The long-awaited entrance of Claudius (in a description of his abortive exit[19]) is anti-climactic. After some forty lines of calendar-flipping and

19 Weinreich 1923.52–53 observes that the soul was conceptualized as an independent living entity in Seneca's time that would exit by a bodily orifice at the time of death: "Für den *exitus* kommt in erster Linie der Mund in Betracht, man 'haucht' die Seele aus, dort kriecht das Seelentier heraus, aber barocke Phantasie kann auch andere Körperausgänge benutzt

name-dropping, the author's memory has been jogged: "Oh yes, and by the way, this is when Claudius died—or tried to." The transitional dead ends of the introduction have impeded Claudius's own final transition. Just as the indirect reference to the dubious Livius Geminius (Eden 1984.65), the *Appiae uiae curator* mentioned at 1.2, foreclosed any possibility of historical veracity in the subsequent narrative, numerous additional doubts are introduced here with all of the hedgings, parentheses, and editorial intrusions. The chatter of ill-informed voices takes over before Phoebus is pressed into service one more time to tell the hour: a recapitulation of the October periphrasis of 2.1–2.

The prose interruption *nimis rustice* . . . provides a key to the patterned rhetorical (dis)order of the *Apocolocyntosis.* The unidentified voice (reminiscent of the anonymous interlocutors in Persian satire) that interrupts the plodding temporal researcher suggests a revision of the unfolding narrative with its observation about a tempting opportunity to slip in a couple of hexameter periphrases: "tu sic transibis horam tam bonam?" This rhetoric of intrusion informs the whole work and offers one of many

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werden lassen." "Claudius animam agere coepit nec inuenire exitum poterat" ("Claudius began to gasp his last, and could not find any way to go") therefore indicates that his soul could not immediately find its way out of his mouth. This must correspond to his overall oral inadequacy and muttering that are lampooned in the *Apocolocyntosis*, e.g., 5.2: "[Claudium] respondisse nescio quid perturbato sono et uoce confusa; non intellegere se linguam eius; nec Graecum esse nec Romanum nec ullius gentis notae" ("[Claudius] had made some reply with a confused sound and in an unintelligible voice; the messenger did not understand his language: he was neither Greek nor Roman nor of any known race"); 5.3: "uocem nullius terrestris animalis sed qualis esse marinis beluis solet, raucam et implicatam" ("The voice like that of no land-animal but typical of sea-beasts, hoarse and inarticulate"); 6.2: "excandescit hoc loco Claudius et quanto potest murmure irascitur. quid diceret nemo intellegebat" ("At this point Claudius glowed white hot and showed his anger with the most muttering he could muster. Nobody tried to understand what he was saying"); 7.2: [Hercules] "quid nunc profatu uocis incerto sonas?" ("What noises makest thou now with indistinct utterance of thy voice?"); 7.4: "itaque quantum intellegi potuit, haec uisus est dicere" ("So far as he could be understood, this is what he seemed to say"); and 11.3: [Augustus] "ad summam, tria uerba cito dicat et seruum me ducat" ("In short, let him utter three words in quick succession and he can take me as his slave"). It is more than hinted at that his soul's final exit was a perverted, anal speech act (4.3): "ultima uox eius haec inter homines audita est, cum maiorem sonitum emisisset illa parte, qua facilius loquebatur: 'uae me, puto, concacaui me.' quod an fecerit, nescio; omnia certe concacauit" ("This was the last utterance of his to be heard in this world, after he had let out a louder sound from that part by which he found it easier to communicate: 'Oh dear, I think I've shit myself.' I rather suspect he did. He certainly shat up everything else").

challenges to the illegitimate authority of Claudius. The rhetorical organization of the *Apocolocyntosis* reinforces the caustic critique of his principate offered throughout.

Claudius's character, then, is depicted as passive and subordinate to a narrative that obscures and devalues his significance with its continual interruptions and reversals. Now the arbitrary prosecutor has become the untrustworthy defendant. The symmetries of received myth and belief enable the agencies of judgment and justice to operate, at least on the plane of fiction, and, sooner or later, every villain will receive his or her comeuppance. The punishment must match the criminal and the crime and so defines them retrospectively. Claudius's final judgment, like the reified anality of his last act and *ultima uox* (see note 19, above), tells who he is. He has presided over summary, truncated trials, and now Aeacus need not waste time hearing Claudius's defense. In 14.2–3, the *lex talionis* is connected with "a hard core" of "mythical malefactors" "made up of Tantalus, Tityus, Sisyphus and Ixion" (Eden 1984.146) as a prelude to Claudius's sentencing. Not only will Claudius's sentence fit his crimes; so will his trial:

> incipit patronus uelle respondere. Aeacus, homo iustissimus, uetat et illum, altera tantum parte audita, condemnat et ait: αἴκε πάθοις τὰ ἔρεξας δίκη εὐθεῖα γένοιτο. ingens silentium factum est. stupebant omnes nouitate rei attoniti, negabant hoc umquam factum. Claudio magis iniquum uidebatur quam nouum.
>
> The defence-counsel showed signs of wanting to reply. Aeacus, the essence of justice, told him not to, and condemned Claudius with only one side of the case heard, quoting:
>
> > Shouldst thou suffer what thou wroughtst, justice would be done direct.
>
> A deafening silence followed. Everybody was struck dumb, shattered by the unprecedented ruling, and said that this had never been done before. Claudius thought it unfair rather than unprecedented.

The *Apocolocyntosis*, from its introductory temporal periphrases, is informed by its deliberate rhetorical inversions and imbalances. The several

references above to rhetorical interruption, shock, and silence suggest a threat to the cultural penchant for *facundia*, "eloquence," in the imposition of an incongruous aphasia associated with Claudius's tyrannical and imbecilic character. For all his tendency to display his familiarity with classical authors, Claudius was incapable of participating in the most fundamental process of dialectic; he lacked the intelligence and awareness to hear and weigh both sides of an argument.[20] A good leader was a good thinker, a fair judge, and an effective speaker, and Seneca's Claudius, the dilettante who became emperor, is an imperious monster who, like King Richard, was "deformed, unfinished, sent before his time into this breathing world scarce half made up."[21]

III. DYNASTY'S DARK BACKWARD AND ABYSM

The *Apocolocyntosis* collapses time and events in its satirical juxtapositions of the character and *res gestae* of Claudius, from when "he had resolved to see all Greeks, Gauls, Spaniards, and Britons wearing the toga" ("constituerat . . . omnes Graecos, Gallos, Hispanos, Britannos togatos uidere") and diluted the prestige obtaining in Roman citizenship (3.3)[22] to when he represented little more than a lethal virus circulating among the Julio-Claudians. Augustus offers this précis of the career of his unworthy successor (10.4):

> iste quem videtis, per tot annos sub meo nomine latens, hanc mihi gratiam retulit, ut duas Iulias proneptes meas occideret, alteram ferro, alteram fame; unum abnepotem L. Silanum.

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20 Similarly at 10.4: [Augustus] "quare quemquam ex his, quos quasque occidisti, antequam de causa cognosceres, antequam audires, damnasti?" ("Why did you convict any of these men and women, whom you killed, before you could examine the case, before you could hear the evidence?") and 12.3: "deflete uirum, quo non alius / potuit citius discere causas, / una tantum parte audita, / saepe neutra" ("Lament for the man than whom no other could more quickly master his briefs, after hearing only one side of the case, and often neither").

21 Cf. Braund and James 1998.288: "The concept of 'monstrosity' covers a considerable range of physical, moral, and, by extension, political ideas in Roman thought . . . with a central notion of something unnatural, deformed, or prodigious which readily shades into the realm of the barbaric and the bestial."

22 Regarded by Eden 1984.152–55 as satirical fiction.

> The specimen you see, lurking under my name for so many years, paid me such thanks as to kill two Julias, my great-granddaughters, one by the sword, the other by starvation, and one great-great-grandson, L. Silanus.

Augustus's denunciation of a *latens* murderer indicts an impostor leading an existence contrary to nature—the antithesis of an ideal Stoic character.[23] Seneca typically portrays Claudius's public failure as simply ἁμαρτία: he was not man enough for the job, and the grotesque physical portrait, the affectations of learning and eloquence, and the pervasive vulgarity of the "man" (a term to be used advisedly here) throughout the *Apocolocyntosis* provide exempla for everything that a princeps should shun.

The most grave charge against Claudius is summed up by Augustus: he has murdered, he has disgraced the aristocracy, but, above all, he is an ignorant, incompetent, excuse-monger—the most damning obloquy from the pen of a philosopher and mentor to Nero (11.1):

> tu Messalinam, cuius aeque auunculus maior eram quam tuus, occidisti. "nescio" iniquis? di tibi malefaciant: adeo istuc turpius est quod nescisti quam quod occidisti.
>
> *You* killed Messalina, whose great-great-uncle I was just as much as yours. "I don't know" you say? May the gods curse you: the fact that you didn't know is far more disgraceful than the fact that you killed.

The repetition within a short space of forms of *nescio* mocks this travesty of a learned emperor in Hades, who "gaudet esse illic philologos homines: sperat futurum aliquem historiis suis locum" ("rejoiced that there were men of letters there; he hoped that there would be some place for his historical

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23 Roller 2001.78–83 considers the Stoic connotations and implications of *gratia* to Seneca, which illuminate Augustus's *hanc mihi gratiam retulit* and the perverted social conscience that went far beyond the surface irony of Augustus's words (79): "*Gratia*, then, is said to have regard for social position (*honor*) and friendships—hence is explicitly concerned with one's relations to one's community—and this regard is maintained through *both* memory of *and* concrete reciprocation for services rendered: that is, both the mental state and the overt act of reciprocation are central, inseparable aspects of this value" (emphasis in original).

works," 5.4). His joyful expectation of publication in Hades and for learned recognition there suggest at once both a conspicuous naiveté and an ineptitude that would have precluded any chance of intellectual immortality among the living—irony that is underscored by his brief exchange of Greek quotations here with *Herculi minime uafro* ("Hercules who was not exactly shrewd," 6.1). "His histories" must be taken both as his writings and as the disgraceful account of his own life and career. He had good reason to expect to find in Hades a fitting space for *historiis suis*: Claudius was incapable of knowledge, and, within him, there was nothing and nobody worth knowing.

Commentators on the temporal periphrases of the *Apocolocyntosis* call attention to Seneca's *Epistle* 122, in which this style of composition is mentioned. The overall context for the efforts of the *tolerabilis poeta* Iulius Montanus may also suggest perspectives for interpreting the *Apocolocyntosis* (*Epistle* 122.10–13):

> Hanc vitam agere eodem tempore multos meminimus, inter quos et Acilium Butam praetorium, cui post patrimonium ingens consumptum Tiberius paupertatem confitienti "sero" inquit "experrectus es." Recitabat Montanus Iulius carmen, tolerabilis poeta et amicitia Tiberi notus et frigore. Ortus et occasus libentissime inserebat; itaque cum indignaretur quidam illum toto die recitasse et negaret accedendum ad recitationes eius, Natta Pinarius ait: "numquid possum liberalius agere? paratus sum illum audire ab ortu ad occasum." Cum hos versus recitasset:
>
> > incipit ardentes Phoebus producere flammas,
> > spargere <se> rubicunda dies; iam tristis hirundo
> > argutis reditura cibos inmittere nidis
> > incipit et molli partitos ore ministrat,
>
> Varus eques Romanus, M. Vincii comes, cenarum bonarum adsectator, quas inprobitate linguae merebatur, exclamavit "incipit Buta dormire." Deinde cum subinde recitasset:
>
> > iam sua pastores stabulis armenta locarunt,
> > iam dare sopitis nox pigra silentia terris
> > incipit,
>
> idem Varus inquit "quid dicis? iam nox est? ibo et Butam salutabo."

We can recall many who led this kind of life in the same period, the praetor Acilius Buta, in particular. After he ran through an enormous inheritance and confessed his poverty, Tiberius told him, "You woke up too late." Iulius Montanus used to recite his poetry—an innocuous sort of poet, who became known for his connection to Tiberius, as well as for the subsequent chill in their relations. This Montanus just loved to interpolate sunrises and sunsets into his work; so when someone complained that he had recited for an entire day[24] and dissuaded anyone from attending his recitations, Natta Pinarius responded, "How could I make out better? I came prepared to hear him . . . from *a* sunrise to *a* sunset." While he was reciting these lines:

> Beginneth yon Phoebus to bring forth his flaming flames,
> And blushing daylight to spread her<self>; already the depressive swallow
> Beginneth to return and serve repasts to her peeping brood,
> Doth share, doth show care from her soft beak,

Varus—a Roman equestrian, boon companion to Marcus Vinicius, and professional guest at banquets, where he was invited for his scurrilous tongue—blurted out, "Beginneth yon Buta to nod off." Then when he resumed reciting:

> Already have the herdsmen gathered their herds in steadings,
> Already beginneth creeping night to grant stillness unto drowsy climes,

likewise Varus interrupted, "What? Night already? Time to drop by Buta's."

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24 For *toto die*; cf. Eden 1984 ad 6.1: "**tot annis:** cf. 6.1 *multis annis*; 7.4 *totis diebus*; 8.2 *toto anno*. The distinction between time 'during which' (accusative) and 'within which' (ablative) was never so finely observed among writers of Latin (even purists: Ter. *Ad.* 520, 527; Caes. *B.G.* 1.26.5) as among grammarians. The durative sense already present in *totus* etc. helped the glide to the ablative."

In *Epistle* 122, the gratuitous and inept temporal periphrases provide obvious stylistic parallels to those in the *Apocolocyntosis.* Were Phoebus not a god, he surely would have grown weary by now with his repeated enlistment into the service of bad poetry. Iulius Montanus, like the Petronian Eumolpus, represents a stereotype of the first-century literary hack with all the hallmarks of an impoverished style: no imagination, empty epithets and tedious anaphora, and an aping of the pastoral without any original reinterpretation. These verses are very funny, and they cast their clownish light upon any characters nearby as they provide rhetorical reflections here of the pretentious Montanus and the decadent Varus, with oblique reference to Buta, whose revels and whose confusion of day and night may have been proverbial in Seneca's circle. Through mere juxtaposition, these periphrases critique surrounding characters, just as those in the *Apocolocyntosis* do.[25]

The temporal periphrases of *Epistle* 122 mesh with the main theme of this "moral epistle"—concern with time and timeliness, the neglect of which results in *pravitas*, "with a central notion of something unnatural, deformed, or prodigious," to quote Braund and James 1998.288 again, but in an altered context. The idea of the perversion of nature through the inversion of time by unphilosophical souls (night treated as day,[26] winter as summer, maturity as youth) is developed throughout the letter. Seneca introduces a local/temporal paradox of *antipodes*, who, while they live among the Romans, might as well be on the other side of the world, so careless are they about doing the right thing at the right time. "Hos," he asks (122.3), "tu existimas scire quemadmodum vivendum sit, qui nesciunt quando?" ("Do you think that these men know *how* to live life, who fail to know *when*?"). The central harangue (122.5–9) presents eight near-repetitions of the

25 Braund and James 1998.304 observe the technique of juxtaposition in contrasting treatments of Nero and Claudius: "While the verses upon Nero describe his meteoric rise, the buffoon ruler breathes his last in the presence of comic actors. His very demise plays out a carnivalesque tableau and ends upon a note of banality (4.2): *exspiravit autem dum comoedos audit ut scias me non sine causa illos timere*, 'However, he breathed his last while he was listening to some comic actors, so you know I have good reason to be afraid of them.'"

26 The unnatural contrast or interchange of day and night would have been a commonplace to Seneca. Cf. Seneca *Contr*. 9.2.27: "Et illud tetracolon: serviebat forum cubiculo, praetor meretrici, carcer convivio, dies nocti. Novissima pars sine sensu dicta est, ut impleretur numerus; quem enim sensum habet: 'serviebat dies nocti?'" ("Then this tetracolon: the forum was slave to the bedchamber, the praetor to the prostitute, the jail to the banquet, the day to the night—the last words nonsense, said in order to fill out the rhythm, for what does 'the day was a slave to the night' mean?").

expression *contra naturam* in a catalogue of mainly time-related transgressions. In this way, Seneca identifies the natural with the timely—if he does not identify nature with time itself—any deviation from one is a deviation from the other. The extent to which one conforms to the exigencies of time defines one's character, and so the context of the unnatural temporal periphrases in *Epistle* 122 becomes clearer. The rhetorical imbalance of these unwieldy lines furnishes an implicit commentary upon the character of those who compose and hear them. These imbalances and inversions, amplified, inform the primary structure of the *Apocolocyntosis.*

IV. *SATURNALICIUS PRINCEPS*

In 12.1–3, Claudius is finally granted the revelatory self-knowledge that he is dead. This recognition scene recapitulates[27] one of the most essential aspects of his identity, defined by his *tempora et mores*: his characterization as *Saturnalicius*[28] *princeps* (12.2–3):

> omnes laeti, hilares: populus Romanus ambulabat tamquam liber. Agatho et pauci causidici plorabant, sed plane ex animo. iurisconsulti e tenebris procedebant, pallidi, graciles, uix animam habentes, tamquam qui tum maxime reuiuiscerent. ex his unus, cum uidisset capita conferentes et fortunas suas deplorantes causidicos, accedit et ait: "dicebam uobis: non semper Saturnalia erunt." Claudius, ut uidit funus suum, intellexit se mortuum esse. ingenti enim μεγάλωι χορικῶι nenia cantabatur.
>
> Everyone was happy and merry. The people of Rome were walking about like free men. Agatho and a few barristers were wailing, but obviously with sincerity. Legal consultants were making their way out of the shadows, pale, emaciated, and with scarcely a breath in their bodies, like men at the very point of coming to life again.

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27 8.2: "si mehercules a Saturno petisset hoc beneficium, cuius mensem toto anno celebrauit Saturnalicius princeps, non tulisset" ("Hercules! If he had asked this favour from Saturn, whose month he celebrated all the year round as Carnival Emperor, he would not have received it").

28 Dickison 1977 traces the possible historical parallels for this epithet in Tac. *Ann*. 11–12.

> One of these, after seeing the barristers putting their heads together and bewailing their misfortunes, went up and said: "I kept on telling you that Carnival time would not last for ever." When Claudius saw his own funeral procession, he realized that he was dead. For with a mighty great song and dance a dirge was being chanted.

The epithet *Saturnalicius* for Claudius reinforces the *Apocolocyntosis'* central association of him with the Saturnalia, as well as with the god Saturn. In antiquity, celestial phenomena were identified with divinities:[29] οὐδὲ ἥλιον οὐδὲ σελήνην ἄρα νομίζω θεοὺς εἶναι, ὥσπερ οἱ ἄλλοι ἄνθρωποι; ("But don't I think that the sun and moon are gods, just as others do?") Socrates asks rhetorically at *Apology* 26d, parrying the charge of promoting Anaxagoras's physics. By the middle of the first century, the character of Saturn, planet and god, conveyed to a Roman audience notions of the primordial that encompassed both the lost Golden Age and primitive violence—notions inherited from archaic Greek antecedents.

Nearly contemporary with the *Apocolocyntosis*, two passages from Persius exemplify these two aspects in contrasting Saturn with the post-Saturnian. *Satire* 2.59–60 invokes a mock-nostalgic register: "aurum uasa Numae Saturniaque inpulit aera / Vestalisque urnas et Tuscum fictile mutat" ("Gold vanquishes Numa's dishes and Saturnian bronze, and displaces Vestal urns and Etruscan crockery"). *Satire* 5.47–51, however, suggests a boiled-down succession myth in which Jupiter (*nostro Iove*, 50) is regarded as a mitigating influence against his grim predecessor:

> nostra uel aequali suspendit tempora Libra
> Parca tenax ueri, seu nata fidelibus hora
> diuidit in Geminos concordia fata duorum
> Saturnumque grauem nostro Ioue frangimus una,
> nescio quod certe est quod me tibi temperat astrum.
>
> Whether infallible Fate balances our lifetimes in equitable Libra, or a birth-hour common to friends apportions the harmonious destiny of [us] two according to Gemini, and

29 So Tarrant 1985 ad Sen. *Thy*. 842–43 on the identification of the five visible planets with gods.

> we together with our propitious[30] Jupiter crush oppressive
> Saturn—doubtless some star exists that synchronizes[31]
> my lifetime with yours.

The figure of *Saturnum grauem* originates in the source text for this section, Horace Carmen 2.17.22–24: "te Iovis impio / tutela Saturno refulgens / eripuit" ("Jupiter's splendid protection has snatched you from the clutches of treacherous Saturn"). A Manilian passage similarly portrays Saturn as a negative deity (*Astronomica* 2.929–35a):

> at, qua subsidit converso cardine mundus
> fundamenta tenens, aversum et suspicit orbem
> ac media sub nocte iacet, Saturnus in illa
> parte suas agitat vires, deiectus et ipse
> imperio quondam mundi solioque deorum,
> et pater in patrios exercet numina casus
> fortunamque senum.
>
> Yet where the universe subsides at the opposite pole, occupying the deepest recesses, beholding from below the back of the world, and extended beneath the midnight: in that region, Saturn wields his power—the very one deposed long ago from the command of the universe and the throne of the gods—an ancestor asserting his godhead in ancestral circumstance, in the fate of old men.

Saturn/Kronos was viewed as an entity of the past—an emeritus god—with all that that implied: a transitory deity to be recalled and ac-

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30 Housman 1913 [1972].20 [854]: "In u. 50 *nostro* of course means *propitio*, as Casaubon says."

31 Clearly the poet is associating *tempora* in 47 in responsion to *temperat* in 51. Conington and Nettleship 1874 ad loc. refer to the "strange construction" of *me tibi temperat*, and translate "fuses me with you." For another example of closely juxtaposed, similar-sounding words in responsion, cf. Catullus 64.164 and 170 (Ariadne's lament): "sed quid ego ignaris nequiquam conquerar auris?" ("But why should I complain in vain to the ignorant winds?") and "fors etiam nostris inuidit questibus auris" ("Fortune besides has grudged her ear to my complaints"). It is easy to misread the second line as "Fortune has looked askance at my complaints to the winds," and the two nearly identical line endings suggest an ad hoc semantic echo.

knowledged rather than actively emulated and worshipped. The father-castrating Kronos's lasting legacy proved to be his own replacement by Zeus, along with posterity's nostalgic associations of him with a Golden Age.[32] The two Hesiodic models of generation and succession, as presented in the *Theogony* and the *Works and Days* (especially 106–201, the Myth of Ages[33]) remained primary sources for later representations of political life and the unfolding processes of nature and history. The causality in the *Theogony* and the Myth of Ages is either undefined or is determined by a primitive kind of Darwinism in which the strongest or the most cunning will prevail. Time's progression brings on decadence and deterioration, as mankind's Golden Age wanes and vanishes.

For Seneca and his contemporaries, Hesiod would also have been mediated through earlier Greco-Roman authors.[34] Such epic archetypes furnished first-century readers with congenial exempla, filled as they were

32 The ultimate source of the myth of a Golden Age in Greco-Roman literature is Hes. *Op*. 109–11: χρύσεον μὲν πρώτιστα γένος μερόπων ἀνθρώπων / ἀθάνατοι ποίησαν Ὀλύμπια δώματ' ἔχοντες. / οἱ μὲν ἐπὶ Κρόνου ἦσαν, ὅτ' οὐρανῷ ἐμβασίλευεν· ("The immortals, who have their homes on Olympus, created first a golden race of earth-born men, who lived in the time of Kronos when he ruled in heaven"). West 1966 ad Hes. *Th*. 137 compares the festival of Kronos with the Saturnalia: "The Attic-Ionic Kronia seem to have been a happy festival of high summer, in the interval between reaping and ploughing . . . There is no evidence that Saturnus, whom the Romans early equated with Kronos (probably because the Kronia resembled the Saturnalia), was a harvest-god either, until etymologizing speculation made him one." Cf. Clausen 1994.120 n. 7: "Livius Andronicus, *FPL*, fr. 2 Büchner 'pater noster, Saturni filie', translating *Od*. 1.45 ὦ πάτερ ἡμέτερε Κρονίδη." It is also extremely unlikely that Seneca directly associated, through such etymologizing speculation, Saturnus, Κρόνος, and χρόνος, as in pseudo-Arist. *de Mun*. 401a: "[Ζεὺς] Κρόνου δὲ παῖς καὶ χρόνου λέγεται, διήκων ἐξ αἰῶνος ἀτέρμονος εἰς ἕτερον αἰῶνα" ("[Zeus] is called son of Kronos and khronos [time], lasting from one endless age to another") cited in Chantraine 1968 s.v. Κρόνος. Gatz 1967.125 observes: "Mit Saturns Aufnahme (durch Ianus) beginnt in Italien das goldene Zeitalter, ganz im Sinne des Kronoslebens, aber mit einem wesentlichen Unterschied: es wird anders angesetzt. Die goldene Zeit ist nicht wie im griechischen Mythos der perfekte Urzustand aller Zeiten, sondern ihr geht eine Periode der Wildheit voraus. So konnte Saturn vielfach geradezu als Kulturbringer verstanden und in eine Reihe mit Demeter-Ceres, Osiris und anderen gestellt werden."

33 West 1978.172–77.

34 E.g., familiar nostalgic representations of a Golden (or Saturnian) Age in Cat. 64.382–96; Hor. *Ep*. 16; Verg. *E*. 4, 6.41; *G*. 1.118–59, 2.150–52, 2.173, 2.536–38; *A*. 6.791–94, 8.319–27; Ov. *Met*. 1.101–02; with numerous antecedents of the topos in Theocritus, Aratus, and Lucretius. Gatz 1967.136–37 also collects citations of the "Neronian Golden Age."

with nostalgia for an idealized and irrecoverable past,[35] deterioration of society through the ages, perpetual and endemic violence, and internecine treachery and slaughter among competing dynasties. The memory of a "Saturnian" Age would have evoked a complex of mixed associations from the earliest period of Roman literature, as attested in Ennius's *Euhemerus* (with translation from Warmington 1929.1.418–21):

> Initio primus in terris imperium summum Caelus habuit; is id regnum una cum fratribus suis sibi instituit atque paravit . . . Exim Saturnus uxorem duxit Opem. Titan qui maior natu erat postulat ut ipse regnaret. Ibi Vesta mater eorum et sorores Ceres atque Ops suadent Saturno uti de regno ne concedat fratri. Ibi Titan qui facie deterior esset quam Saturnus, idcirco et quod videbat matrem atque sorores suas operam dare uti Saturnus regnaret, concessit ei ut is regnaret. Itaque pactus est cum Saturno uti si quid liberum virile secus ei natum esset, ne quid educaret. Id eius rei causa fecit uti ad suos gnatos regnum rediret. Tum Saturno filius qui primus natus est eum necaverunt. Deinde posterius nati sunt gemini Iuppiter atque Iuno. Tum Iunonem Saturno in conspectum dedere atque Iovem clam abscondunt dantque eum Vestae educandum celantes Saturnum . . . Deinde Titan postquam rescivit Saturno filios procreatos atque educatos esse clam se, seducit secum filios suos qui Titani vocantur, fratremque suum Saturnum atque Opem conprehendit eosque muro circumegit et custodiam his apponit.
>
> In the beginning Sky held highest authority in the world; he together with his brothers established and formed this kingship for himself . . . After that Saturn took Ops to wife. Titan who was elder in years asked that he might be

35 As Blundell 1986.135 observes, for any Golden Age to have meaning, it must be a contemporary construct, and "can be located either in the past, or in the future, or in some distant place which we have almost certainly never visited . . . The Golden Age, then, idealises the past, often in a most improbable manner. And in this way it says far more about the present than it does about the past. It is in fact constructed out of the present, its chief characteristics are inversions of the characteristics of our own day-and-age."

> king. Thereupon Vesta their mother and Ceres and Ops their sisters advised Saturn not to yield to his brother in the matter of the kingship. Thereupon Titan, because he was less handsome than Saturn and saw that the efforts of his mother and sisters were made in order that Saturn might be king, yielded to him the right to be king. Therefore he made an agreement with Saturn that if any free-born child of the male sex should be born to him, he should not bring it up. This he did in order that the kingship might return to his own sons. Next they slew the first son born to Saturn. And then later on there were born twins, Jupiter and Juno. Then they allowed Saturn to see Juno, but secretly smuggled Jupiter away, and hiding him from Saturn gave him to Vesta to be brought up . . . And then Titan, after he had learnt that sons had been born to Saturn, and had been brought up without his knowledge, took away with him his own sons who are called Titans, seized his brother Saturn and also Ops, put them behind prison-walls, and kept them under guard.

Martha Malamud (1996.58–61) argues convincingly for the recurrent presence of Ennius in Persius's *Prologue* and *Sixth Satire*; it is equally likely that Ennius's particular perspective upon a Saturnian Age also influenced the topos in Augustan and later Roman literature, and several parallels may be adduced as background to an analysis of Seneca's representations of time and succession. The attempts to reestablish a virtual hereditary monarchy after the destruction of the republic and the neutralization of the senate made discussions about political succession dangerous; one way of dealing with such issues was to revert to discreetly selected myth.[36] Throughout the *Apocolocyntosis,* Claudius is mythologized into a primordial tyrannical monster, always looking over his shoulder at, and ready to murder, his family and associates. In terms of the satire's overall scheme, he represents an historical aberration, a reversion to Hesiodic prehistory in the line of legitimate authority drawn between Augustus and Nero.

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36 Similarly, Freudenburg 2001.127 on satire under Nero: "Persius' *Satires* themselves play a role in making Neronian culture look the way it looks; in other words, satire as a (counter) myth-making act, constructive of culture rather than, simply, the result of it (which it is, always, also)."

Claudius as *Saturnalicius princeps* suggests three main interpretive points of departure: the activities of the historical Claudius as recalled by Tacitus (Dickison 1977); the Bakhtinian carnivalesque Claudius, whose identity "combines the sacred with the profane, the lofty with the low, the great with the insignificant, the wise with the stupid";[37] and, finally, the Senecan synthesis in the *Apocolocyntosis* of the historical Claudius with the Saturnian/carnivalesque one. The recognition scene, when Claudius understands that he is dead, utilizes a complex of comical temporal and identity paradoxes.[38] A literal-minded audience must assume that the spectator-Claudius, who witnesses the corpse-Claudius, results from the severing of body and soul at 4.2: "et ille quidem animam ebulliit, et ex quo desiit uiuere uideri" ("And he did indeed gurgle his life out, and from then on ceased to have even the appearance of existence").Yet again it is the γνῶθι σαυτόν so lacking in Claudius's imbecilic nature that means he has to see in order to believe that he is among the departed. "Claudius, ut uidit funus suum, intellexit se mortuum esse" ("When Claudius saw his own funeral procession, he realized that he was dead") is an absurdity, and his view of his *Nachleben* characteristically recalls and contorts the evocative ecphrasis of Aeneas's recognition of himself (*Aeneid* 1.456–57, 488): "[Aeneas] uidet Iliacas ex ordine pugnas / bellaque iam fama totum uulgata per orbem / . . . se quoque principibus permixtum agnouit Achiuis" ("[Aeneas] beholds the battles of Ilium one after another and wars already made known throughout the entire world by fame . . . he recognized himself also engaged among the Achaean chiefs"). Each man has to revise his view of his own (im)mortality after beholding his own image.

There are more explicit Virgilian allusions in "non semper Saturnalia erunt," as H. S. Versnel (1993.100–02) points out: the *redeunt Saturnia regna* of the *Fourth Eclogue* and the *aurea saecula* of *Aeneid* 6.791–807,

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37 Bakhtin 1984.123. Pp. 124–26 describe the archetypical "crowning/decrowning" carnivalesque gesture, which, according to Braund and James 1998.307, is reflected in the *Apocolocyntosis* by the decrowning of Claudius, accession of Nero, and subsequent celebration.

38 These are consistent with Seneca's overall Stoic conception of time and folly, as articulated in Bettini 1991.132: "The busy man, as usual, is not aware of time's passing; he is outside it: 'he has no time for time,' one might say . . . Unlike the busy man, who is outside time's flow and whom death will approach unexpectedly, the wise man himself will go toward death with a sure pace. The one is time's victim, and the other is time's master; the two ways of understanding the approach of death, the future event *par excellence*, define two ways of life."

which offer a panegyric on the restoration of a Golden Age by Augustus.[39] Intrinsic to *Saturnia regna*, however, is the ambiguity of "a realm of bliss and happiness on the brink of history" contrasted with an "amorphous period before human civilization during which man led a slothful, and indeed beastly life" (Versnel 1993.99). R. R. Nauta (1987.88–89) notes different reflexes of this Saturnian ambiguity in the contrasting reigns of Augustus, Claudius, and Nero—that of Claudius in particular, which "had *not* been a Golden Age," but "had been an inversion of the preceding Golden Age under Augustus, and it had given way to the subsequent Golden Age under Nero when the inversion had again been inverted and the period of licence had come to a close" (89).

Versnel (1993.109) resolves the apparent paradox of a Claudian Saturnian Age that was not also a Golden Age by analyzing both the qualitative and quantitative implications of *non semper Saturnalia erunt*.[40] Claudius's Saturnian rule had "turned Saturnalian anomy into the constitutional standard of the emperorship . . . he had turned the temporary mock rule and the inversions of the Saturnalian period into a permanent misrule." The ἀνομία that Versnel addresses is reinforced by a coextensive ἀχρονία (to employ a nonce-word) that pervades the entire *Apocolocyntosis* with its repeated temporal periphrases, inversions, imbalances, and intrusions. The central critique of *Epistle* 122.3, "Hos tu existimas scire quemadmodum vivendum sit, qui nesciunt quando?" ("Do you think that these men know *how* to live life, who fail to know *when*?") must also apply to the Claudius of the *Apocolocyntosis*, whose many failings are summed up in his satirical mock-crowning: "He is indeed *Saturnalicius princeps* ('a Saturnalian emperor,' 8.2), but it is not a carnival that he presides over" (Braund and James 1998.307). He is a princeps who knew neither when nor how to exercise the authority invested in him, with his monstrous perversions of judgment and sovereignty, as well as with his unnatural prolongation of a Saturnalian kingship throughout an entire ill-starred reign.

The tone, then, of *non semper Saturnalia erunt* from the mouth of *unus iurisconsultus* must be one of relief. The death of Claudius represents a

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39 Cf. Blundell 1986.158 ad loc.: "The implication is that Vergil himself is now living in the Golden Age, and if so, he may have found it rather less brilliant than the one he had predicted some twenty years earlier."

40 See also Griffin 1984.96–97 on Nero's attitude to Claudius, and the relationship of the *Apocolocyntosis* to the Saturnalia during his early reign.

release, a revolution, from the insanity inflicted upon Rome by a clown-emperor whose mock-crowning had somehow been literalized into a ghastly political reality. Rome, according to the *Apocolocyntosis*, had to wake up from the nightmare of the year-round reign of an illegitimate mock-king who had perverted his regime's political discourse and programs into the carnivalized inversions of satire and parody; his death served to invert his inversion, as Nauta suggests above. This explains the need for the language of simile in "populus Romanus ambulabat *tamquam liber*" ("The people of Rome were walking about *like free men*"): evidently it would take some time for the lies and travesties of Claudius's era to evaporate and for the people to rid themselves of the feeling of residual oppression, before Nero "felicia lassis / saecula praestabit legumque silentia rumpet" ("will guarantee an era of prosperity to the weary and break the silence of the laws," 4.1); this, at least, would seem the most obvious interpretation. But *tamquam liber* by itself introduces a fundamental ambiguity. Is a *populus tamquam liber* free or not, and does the *Apocolocyntosis* offer an uncertain critique of the status of Roman freedom after Claudius's death in the uncertain circumstances of imperial succession?

Seneca followed earlier writers in denying to the processes of history their progressive or redemptive aspects.[41] Ennius's *Euhemerus*, like the cited Hesiodic passages, is stark and paratactic,[42] and, with the change of a few proper names, could call to mind the *Annales* of Tacitus as much as those of Ennius in the "weary sameness of his chronicle of tyranny."[43] Claudius's ultimate punishment transforms him from the wearily chronicled into the weary chronicler as secretary for the freedman Menander's petitions (15.2) in the *Apocolocyntosis*' brilliant conclusion. Claudius, who "sperat futurum aliquem historiis suis locum" ("hoped that there would be some place for his historical works," 5.4), has finally attained the position that he deserves with this ending, which forms a ring with the pseudohistorical register of the proem and also parodies an entire Roman annalistic tradition reaching back to Ennius. In Ennius, Hesiod, Seneca, and other writers, there is no evidence of a Judeo-Christian conception of time as linear, with all its eschatological implications; there are no Aristotelian unities, no ordered

41 Cf. note 34, above, for examples.

42 And anachronistic: "si quid *liberum* virile secus ei natum esset"[!] ("If any freeborn child of the male sex should be born to him").

43 Furneaux 1896.41, "The Syntax and Style of Tacitus."

beginnings, middles, and ends to the processes of history. Seneca resurrects Augustus, and the emperor is appalled. Everything that has happened since his principate has made a travesty out of the Virgilian promise "magnus ab integro saeclorum nascitur ordo. / iam redit et Virgo, redeunt Saturnia regna" ("The grand succession of ages is born anew. Now the Virgin returns and the rule of Saturn," *Eclogue* 4.5–6). These *Saturnalia regna* were succeeded by a bastard strain, over which a *Saturnalicius princeps* presided. As Seneca argues in *Epistle* 122, time, nature, and human character are all united, and in the *Apocolocyntosis,* Claudius has violated the *saeclorum ordo* in every possible way.

Seneca and his contemporaries had to regard time during the preceding century as an acid that corroded the political and cultural institutions of Rome. His nostalgia articulated the fundamental point of view of every educated Roman who had faced the rack of history—history so painful that it had to undergo a multiplicity of transformations and evasions even to be mentioned in the works of Seneca and his contemporaries. The *Apocolocyntosis* inverts and parodies the annalistic, vatic, and theogonic traditions that Seneca inherited, like the Bakhtinian "system of crooked mirrors,"[44] and its images of historical events and figures—of Nero as well as of Claudius—are contorted in its text both by the caricatures of the carnivalesque and by the torments of early imperial Roman history, as if the monstrous reflection of Claudius had caused the mirror itself to be crooked, as well as all that it reflected.

V. THE RECKONING OF NERO

The distortion and contortion in the *Apocolocyntosis*, which are analyzed by Braund and James 1998 in the context of Claudius's monstrous appearance and character, also extend to the narrative scheme and overall organization of the satire. Temporal periphrases and other rhetorical intrusions upset the proportions and linearity of Seneca's narrative. The historical material of his point of departure furnished a convenient tripartite scheme that the *Apocolocyntosis* could have followed chronologically: Claudius's tyranny, death, and gourdification; Nero's accession, life, and prophesied apotheosis. And this tripartite "beginning, middle, end" scheme would have suggested the aforementioned trio of Augustus, Claudius, and Nero, with

44 Cf. note 6, above.

Claudius standing as an anachronistic aberration mediating between the other two.

The plan of the *Apocolocyntosis*, however, makes the central panegyric to Nero mediate between the prolonged death of Claudius and his final judgment and sentence, and this introduces an ambiguity into the narrative: is Nero really being given pride of place in this central panegyric or does his appearance seem merely transitional between the sections of the *Apocolocyntosis* that concern Claudius? It is difficult to argue with the description of the language of the panegyric in Eden 1984 ad loc.: "expected images in formalized word-patterns with insipid blandness." These images also derive from related figures in the temporal periphrases of the *Apocolocyntosis* and *Epistle* 122. Doubtless, on the superficial level of its rhetoric, the panegyric does what it says, offering thanks and blessings to the new emperor. But its language also sends mixed signals when read in a broader context that takes into account the norms and commonplaces expressed in other Senecan passages.

There is little that is original in the panegyric, and, at times, it verges on outright parody in the exaggerated encomiastic imagery that it mechanically assembles. Aside from the mere incongruity of offering, in the midst of an often scatological satire, formulaic praise to a presiding emperor, the panegyric recapitulates the dubious bombast from other sections and conveys strange messages with its idiosyncratic redundancies. The later Fronto criticizes decadent writers who "repeat the same idea thousands of times, now wearing one garment, now another," especially when the repetitious Lucan "in the first seven verses of his poem expresses nothing other than 'wars worse than civil'" (seven times in as many lines, according to Fronto's calculation).[45] Seneca in the *Apocolocyntosis*, however, "out-Lucans Lucan in his apparent insensibility to iteration" (Eden 1984.76). Time imagery predominates in the panegyric (4.1), with the central symbol for time and lifetime being the conventional *stamina,* "threads," that the Parcae spin. Several line endings underscore this recycled commonplace (if not cliché) of the "thread of time": (1) "haec ait et turpi conuoluens *stamina fuso*" ("so she spoke, and, twirling the thread on an ugly spool"); (9) "aurea formoso descendunt *saecula filo*" ("a Golden Age spun down on a beautiful

45 "eandem sententiam milliens alio atque alio amictu indutam referunt . . . initio carminis sui septem primis versibus nihil aliud quam 'bella plus quam civilia' interpretatus est," *ad M. Antoninum de orationibus liber*, van den Hout 1988.4–6 (pp. 154f.), cited in Braund 1992.xlviii.

thread"); and (13) "mollia contorto descendunt *stamina fuso*" ("the soft threads spun down on the twisting spool"). The *stamina* "uincunt Tithoni, uincunt et Nestoris annos" ("surpassed the years of Tithonus and of Nestor") (14, with the expected crescendo from Nestor to Tithonus rhetorically sabotaged) before Phoebus arrives in the following line to advise the Parcae on their responsibility to grant Nero a long life.

All these juxtapositions of *stamina*, *saecula*, and *Phoebi*—not to mention the embedding of the panegyric within surrounding accounts of Claudius—result in an uncomfortable intimacy between Nero and Claudius. Phoebus's speech to the Parcae concludes in a simile (4.1.25–31):

> qualis discutiens fugientia Lucifer astra
> aut qualis surgit redeuntibus Hesperus astris,
> qualis, cum primum tenebris Aurora solutis
> induxit rubicunda diem, Sol aspicit orbem
> lucidus et primos a carcere concitat axes:
> talis Caesar adest, talem iam Roma Neronem
> aspiciet.
>
> Like the Morning Star, as he rises scattering the stars in flight, or like the Evening Star, as he rises when the stars return (at dusk), like the gleaming Sun, as soon as rosy Dawn has dispelled the shadows and led in the day, as he gazes on the world and begins to whip up his chariot from the starting-barrier: such a Caesar is at hand, such a Nero shall Rome now gaze upon.

In itself, the simile is clearly complimentary to Nero, if not terribly original, in comparing him with stars. But in the context of the *Apocolocyntosis*, and in the broader context of Senecan composition in *Epistle* 122, the simile's comparison must itself be compared. This simile reeks of the language of temporal periphrasis.[46] The simile likens Nero to the stars, but, by this point, the comparison brings to mind not so much the emperor's astral splendor as the creaking mechanism of the temporal periphrasis. His simile, like the

46 Cf. *Epistle* 122.12: "incipit ardentes Phoebus producere flammas, / spargere <se> rubicunda dies" ("Beginneth yon Phoebus to bring forth his flaming flames, / And blushing daylight to spread her<self>").

parody of mediocre poetry in the preceding periphrases, is absurd and pretentious, characteristics that distinguish fulsome flattery from genuine praise. By the year 54, Seneca may have known more than he could let on, and it is likely that the author gave to Nero the place in the *Apocolocyntosis* and the language that he deserved. There is a panegyric to Nero in Seneca's satire, but it must also be acknowledged that there is satire in the panegyric.

The *Apocolocyntosis* conveys multivalent and often paradoxical messages, to recall Bakhtin 1984.118 again: "The menippea is full of sharp contrasts and oxymoronic combinations [. . . and] loves to play with abrupt transitions and shifts, ups and downs, rises and falls, unexpected comings together of distant and disunited things, mésalliances of all sorts." Abrupt transitions, shifts, and temporal periphrases take over in the *Apocolocyntosis* and diminish the significance of its characters. These dynamics inform the overall structure and narrative of the *Apocolocyntosis*, and transform what had been transitional and subordinate in the Homeric Ἦμος δ' ἠριγένεια φάνη ῥοδοδάκτυλος Ἠώς into a predominating rhetorical scheme. The narrative present is also greatly diminished in comparison to a nostalgic past and a mythical destiny. The two emperors Claudius and Nero are both mythologized by the satirist, and they become part of the machinery of the *Apocolocyntosis*, absorbed into its temporal collapse. Only Seneca's satire could survive all the confusion.[47]

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