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## FORMAL CHARACTERISTICS OF MACROBIUS'S SATURNALIA

Classical philologists valued Macrobius's educational work *Saturnalia* mainly as a great source of interesting information that had not been preserved in its original formulations, and thus its literary characteristics were often overlooked. The need of a revision of such an approach has been highlighted in the article on the compositional intentions of the author.<sup>1</sup> I would like to support this idea further in the following analysis of Macrobius's use of formal procedures and the choice of the genre for his work.

The basic formal characteristic features of *Saturnalia*, which are to be discussed in greater detail in this article, can be illustrated by using the author's words about the work's formal frame pronounced immediately after the preface,<sup>2</sup> the moment he lets the reader know about the genre of his composition, i.e. educational literature of a compendium character, a kind of encyclopaedia with a coherent and fixed form:

*Macr. Sat. 1,1,1–2: Saturnalibus apud Vettium Praetextatum Romanae nobilitatis proceres doctique alii congregantur et tempus sollenniter feriatum deputant colloquio liberali, convivia quoque sibi mutua comitate praebentes, nec discedentes a se nisi ad nocturnam quietem. Nam per omne spatium feriarum meliorem diei partem seriis disputationibus occupantes cenae tempore sermones convivales agitant...*

Macrobius informs the reader about the fact that he has chosen symposial conversations of significant historical personalities, among whom the pre-eminent figure was Vettius Agorius Praetextatus, an authoritative Roman officer and sena-

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<sup>1</sup> *Membrorum corporis cohaerentia: Compositional Intentions of Macrobius's Saturnalia. GLP, 22*, (approx. 10 pages — in print). Similarly, the following article is to be a part of the project no. 405/07/P202 „Žánrová charakteristika antické naukové tvorby ve vztahu k vzdělávacímu modelu sedmi svobodných umění a jeho vývoji“. All the original Latin and Greek citations in the article have been taken from the database available at <http://litterae.phil.muni.cz>.

<sup>2</sup> *Macr. Sat. 1, praef. 16: Nunc argumentum quod huic operi dedimus velut sub quodam prologi habitu dicemus...*

tor living in the second half of the fourth century AD, and sets the plot into the period of several festive days of Saturnalia, to the houses of its most important participants. The length of time during which the dialogue takes place is not explicitly mentioned, however, the reader finds it out soon, together with a given date. In one of the introductory explanations of the first book there is to be found a thorough analysis of Saturnalia, including a historically oriented discourse on the length of the festivities. In this passage of the work, the reader learns that the festival of God Saturn – and therefore the story of the dialogue itself – takes place from 17 to 19 December.<sup>3</sup>

Since the description of the dialogue's development is not necessary for the following argumentation, it is enough to outline its basic scheme:

1. an introductory dialogue (*Sat.* 1,2,1–1,2,14: an offer of a mediated description of the dialogues between several friends, covering the festival of God Saturn);
2. 'an organizational' dialogue (*Sat.* 1,2,14–1,5,17: an agreement between the friends about the course of the festival and its participants);
3. discussions on the first day of the festival in the house of Praetextatus (*Sat.* 1,6,1–1,24,25: the main topics include cult and religion; the dialogue is interrupted by the arrival of a group of 'the uninvited' and finishes with settling the main aim of the festival: an analysis of Vergil's comprehensive knowledge; *Sat.* 2: symposial dialogues after a meal — a competition for 'the best joke', a talk on sweets);
4. discussions on the second day in the house of Flavianus (*Sat.* 3,1–12: Vergil's knowledge of pontifical law proved /a part on astronomy and augural law lost/; *Sat.* 3,13–20: symposial dialogues after a meal — the Romans' relation to luxury and entertainment, a philological discourse on delicatessen);
5. discussions on the last day in the house of Symmachus (*Sat.* 4–6: Vergil's rhetoric skills proved /parts lost/, his knowledge about Greek and Roman literature, as well as of grammar; *Sat.* 7: symposial dialogues after a meal — the relation of philosophy to the symposium, 'scientific' questions /the end is missing/).

The choice of the genre is obviously not accidental. Macrobius draws inspiration from a long tradition of symposial literature, even though he explicitly mentions only the presumably first piece belonging to this genre, Plato's philosophical dialogue *Συμπόσιον*.<sup>4</sup>

Macr. *Sat.* 1,1,3: *Nam cum apud alios quibus sunt descripta convivia, tum*

<sup>3</sup> Macr. *Sat.* 1,10,23: „*Abunde iam probasse nos aestimo Saturnalia uno tantum die, id est quarto decimo kalendas, solita celebrari, sed post in triduum propagata, primum ex adiectis a Caesare huic mensi diebus, deinde ex edicto Augusti quo trium dierum ferias Saturnalibus addixit, a sexto decimo igitur coepta in quartum decimum desinunt, quo solo fieri ante consueverant.*“

<sup>4</sup> It is not obvious whether the idea of using the symposium as a frame for a philosophical genre is Plato's or a kind of common product of the Socrates's circle like the very form of Socratic dialogue (for this issue, see GÖRGEMANN 1994, 56–57).

*in illo Platonis symposio non austeriore aliqua de re convivarum sermo, sed Cupidinis varia et lepida descriptio est, in quo quidem Socrates non artioribus, ut solet, nodis urget atque implicat adversarium, sed eludendi magis quam decertandi modo adprehensis dat elabendi prope atque effugiendi locum.*

By comparing *Συμπόσιον* with those of Plato's dialogues in which Socrates beats his opponent (*artioribus, ut solet, nodis urget*) with the aim of bringing him to profound knowledge,<sup>5</sup> Macrobius concretizes the formal variety of his own dialogue.<sup>6</sup> The term *descriptio*, which he uses, refers to the sequence of variously long monologues (i.e. dramatized forms) which form *Saturnalia* and in which questions function as complements rather than constitutive parts of the dialogue (the exchange of rejoinders comes above all in the introductory parts of the explanations, rather rarely at their ends, and never within the affirmation of the accurateness of the posited ideas). Individual explanations as the basic formal parts of the dialogue are extensive and comprehensive, often comprising several formal procedures, especially various argumentations, commentaries, comparisons and polemics. Chapters focusing on the symposial topics such as humour,<sup>7</sup> dining and related questions<sup>8</sup> (i.e. diverse scientific topics, including metabolism, physiology, anatomy, and composition of food-stuffs) are deliberately enlivened by means of various anecdotes and quiz-like questions which due to their repetition in cycles (a swap of all the participants in a given row<sup>9</sup>) evoke the atmosphere of

<sup>5</sup> Within these dialogues, *Συμπόσιον* does differ in many respects. Socrates's speech is not at the centre of the competition cycle, but at the end; it is not 'original', but taken over from the prophetess Diotima; and finally, it is not properly appreciated and praised by all the other participants, but almost neglected because the arrival of drunken Alcibiades causes a greater sensation. Macrobius notices these differences and uses them in accordance with their inner formal force (for further information about the variety of the symposial genre, see PETROVIĆOVÁ 2004, 66–76.)

<sup>6</sup> For a comprehensive characterization of the symposium as a genre, including the characters and typical situations, see MARTIN 1931. His conclusions were used in the analysis of the genre in Macrobius by FLAMANT 1968, 303–319; and IBID. 1977, 172–232 (probably the most detailed analysis so far). For one of the latest studies on the discussed genre within the scope of Czech academic writing, see PUTNA 2003/3, 14, 29–44. Other articles dealing with Macrobius's work from the formal point of view are mostly descriptive: D'AGOSTINO 1959–60, 8, 159–170; GALLARDO 1974, 91–143.

<sup>7</sup> Especially Macr. *Sat.* 2,1–2,7.

<sup>8</sup> Especially Macr. *Sat.* 2,8; 3,13–3,20; 7.

<sup>9</sup> Mainly two 'cycles' are typical: the first one in Chapter 2,2 where all the participants tell anecdotes in the following order: Praetextatus — Flavianus — Symmachus — Caecina — Rufius — Eustathios — Avianus — Euangelus — Eusebios — Servius (must be persuaded) — Dysarios — Horos; and the other one in the seventh book where the symposium guests ask Dysarios: Praetextatus — Flavianus — Symmachus — Rufius — Caecina — Euangelus (breaks the line) — (Eustathios voluntarily gives up his speech) — Eusebios — Servius — Avianus — Horos — Eustathios. These 'cycles' show the hierarchy established on the basis of the social status of the guests, and at the same time include a number of exceptions, which is a part of the symposial disregard for the order, e.g. Eustathios's status is enhanced because

symposial competitions and matches. Polemic discussions of Socratic type are rare and almost never cover philosophy, but rather extend the grammatical and literary-critical commentaries.<sup>10</sup>

Describing Macrobius's work as a type of symposial dialogue does, however, not precisely define its actual formal characteristics. Such a description overlooks the fact that the plot of *Saturnalia* does not consist only in the direct speech of the individual characters, but also in the commented tale of one of the participants, Eusebius, who in this way answers the question raised by originally invited Postumianus. He passes Eusebius's 'answer', i.e. the whole dialogue, onto another person, Decimus Albinus. Macrobius, being moreover the narrator of the whole story (an after-feast dialogue between Eusebius and Postumianus inserted in the frame of the dialogue between Postumianus and Decimus Albinus), introduces it with his own commentary. This multiple mediation of the dialogue characterizes Macrobius's *Saturnalia* as the so-called 'diegematic' dialogue (i.e. a dialogue in which the story is related through a narration and not a situation).<sup>11</sup> At this point again, Plato's *Συμπόσιον* serves as a model, but Macrobius chooses this type of a dialogue for another reason than his predecessor, who used it mainly as a sign of literary fiction. In my view, he enters the dialogue in such a complicated manner to be able to disseminate knowledge through the characters to the readers relatively independently and neutrally, i.e. without them being directly confronted with the presented information, which happens only when the author finds it necessary.

The form of the mediated dialogue affects not only the author's approach to knowledge, but also its presentation in the text, i.e. his way of referring to authorities and sources. A large number of precise quotations in direct speech would not make the impression of an authentic dialogue, they are therefore restricted mainly to 'excerpts', i.e. statements cited directly from the sources to express or confirm an opinion<sup>12</sup>, whereas 'knowledge coming from reading' (taken-over in-

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he is a philosopher, Avianus's and Servius's positions are, on the other hand, somewhat lower because of their youth (in Servius's case also due to his diffidence). Euangelus as a typical troublemaker does not match up with either of the cases. Rufius and Caecina form a pair in the dialogue, their exchange of positions only supports this fact.

<sup>10</sup> There is obvious inspiration by Gellius's collection *Noctes Atticae* noticeable here, which is further supported by the fact that some of the discussions were copied from Gellius: *Macr. Sat.* 1,5,1–11 (z *Gell. N. A.* 1,10; 1,16); 2,8,1–3 (*N. A.* 13,11,6–7); 5,17,7–14 (*N. A.* 17,10,8–19); 6,7,4–19 (*N. A.* 2,6); 6,8 (*N. A.* 5,8; 10,11; 16,5); 6,9,1–12 (*N. A.* 16,6; 18,5). For a detailed and complex comparison of both the works, see an unpublished dissertation *Analyza a srovnání Gelliiova spisu Noctes Atticae a Macrobiova díla Saturnalia: Proměny římské naukové literatury ve vrcholném a pozdním císařství*, Brno: FF MU, 2005.

<sup>11</sup> For the characteristic features of this type of a dialogue, see GÖRGEMANN 1994, 62f. (the distinction itself can be found in *Plut. Symp.* 7,8,1 (711b10–c1): ...τῶν Πλάτωνος διαλόγων διηγηματικοί τινές εἰσιν οἱ δὲ δραματικοί...)

<sup>12</sup> The classification, i.e. individual formal types defined in relation to the diction and function of the original source, and the degree of the author's elaboration, comes from the analysis of Gellius's educational work, some of the ideas of whom Macrobius takes over; however,

formation, usually recorded from the original because of its content) is presented in indirect speech. The use of references may also be motivated by Macrobius's fear that the reader may get lost in the text. The direct speech continually complemented by Postumianus's commentaries could make the orientation in the text utterly confusing if additional introductory phrases such as 'he says', 'he supposes', etc. while citing an authority had been used.<sup>13</sup> The only exception is the citing of verses, which are quoted directly irrespective of their role. Prosaic 'knowledge from reading' is explicitly cited only if Macrobius wants to confirm an opinion, or to treat it with seriousness, i.e. for reasons different from those of Gellius's whose employment of a direct quotation proves his lack of interest.

The number and form of citations vary according to the discussed topic and the source from which the given passages were adopted. Macrobius modifies the style of the quoted parts, their original languages (both Latin and Greek) are nevertheless preserved, which stands in marked contrast to Gellius's rules of quoting.<sup>14</sup> Thus, in the seventh book, which was almost as a whole derived from Plutarch,<sup>15</sup> there are mainly Greek authorities cited in Greek – both directly and even indirectly. Two exceptions then only support what has been mentioned above, i.e. two sections were added to Plutarch's text from a different source: the citation of Aristotle translated into Latin (*Sat.* 7,12,26) comes from Gellius's work *Noctes Atticae* (*N. A.* 19,5) and the Latin citation of Ateius Capito (*Sat.* 7,13,12–15) was taken over from a different Latin source as a counterbalance to the part from Gellius (*N. A.* 10,10). Further, another source which quotes mainly Greek authorities influenced the religious-etymological account of the nature of the deities, all being actually identical with various aspects of the Sun in *Sat.* 1,17–1,23, because there is no or just partial translation of even the indirectly cited knowledge.<sup>16</sup> Generally speaking, references of both types (directly and indirectly cited 'excerpts' and 'knowledge from reading'<sup>17</sup>) appear to be elegantly inserted into the whole plot

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his compositional intentions and consequently, his formal scheme are different – opposed to those of Gellius's.

- <sup>13</sup> This "unaddressed" citing, so strikingly different from Gellius's precise referring, has been a matter of strong criticism of Macrobius (see JAN 1848, *Prolegomena* LVIII f.), which is, however, unjust, if the characteristics of oral conversation are respected. Gellius may refer to his sources in the most authentic way because he presents an essential part of the adopted knowledge as purposely extracted from books (see Gell. *N. A.* *praef.* 2-3).
- <sup>14</sup> Only direct citations are preserved in the original language, the recorded information is always translated into Latin (see PETROVIČOVÁ 2005, 87).
- <sup>15</sup> To be more specific, from *Συμποσιακὰ προβλήματα*. For a list of the adopted parts, see FLAMMANT 1977, 180, Note 38.
- <sup>16</sup> See, for instance, Macr. *Sat.* 1,17,8: „*Speusippus, quod ex multis ignibus constet vis eius* [i.e. *Apollinis*: KP] *ὡς ἀπὸ πολλῶν ὀσίων πῦρός αὐτοῦ συνεστῶτος, ...*“ According to WISSOWA 1880, 38–41, this Greek source is Iamblichos's Neo-Platonic work *Περὶ θεῶν*.
- <sup>17</sup> For another classification of the particular types of citations, see FIOCCHI 1981, 423–432. There are a) memories; b) addressed citations: both in direct and indirect speech, vague and translated; c) unspecified citations with the same subcategories, and d) jokes (*dicta*). Specific types of the jokes and the memories, as well as a special subcategory of the 'vague' citations

and disturb the reader only in those cases when Macrobius accumulates too many of them at the same time, no matter whether he attempts at showing his erudition or rather at exhausting all the accessible knowledge about the given topic.<sup>18</sup>

Plato's work as the source of inspiration for Macrobius can be recognized not only in the type of the dialogue he uses, but also in his choice of characters:

*Macr. Sat. 1,1,5–6: Nec mihi fraudi sit, si uni aut alteri ex his quos coetus coegit matura aetas posterior saeculo Praetextati fuit: quod licito fieri Platonis dialogi testimonio sunt. Quippe Socrate ita Parmenides antiquior, ut huius pueritia vix illius adprehenderit senectutem, et tamen inter illos de rebus arduis disputatur: inclitum dialogum Socrates habita cum Timaeo disputatione consumit, quos constat eodem saeculo non fuisse: Paralus vero et Xanthippus, quibus Pericles pater fuit, cum Protagora apud Platonem disserunt secundo adventu Athenis morante, quos multo ante infamis illa pestilentia Atheniensis absumperat.*

Plato's authority allows Macrobius to involve individual protagonists, all of them being real historical personalities,<sup>19</sup> irrespective of their actual age, just to play the roles that Macrobius included in his dialogue and that are to some extent compatible with the real social statuses and qualifications of the characters, or at least with Macrobius's idea of them. And so there appears the fabler Avianus and the grammarian Servius alongside the friends of Praetextatus, the so-called Symmachus's circle, although they were a generation younger and thus unable to take a real part in the dialogue (see above *Sat. 1,1,5*).

In terms of the social hierarchy, the people at the symposium can be divided into the following groups, each comprising three participants:<sup>20</sup>

- prominent members of nobility and at the same time hosts of individual feasts, experts in many fields and moral figures (Vettius Agorius Praetextatus, the *symposiarchos* of the dialogue and professionally a supreme authority on antiquarian studies and pontifical law; Quintus Aurelius Symmachus, playing the role of a professional rhetorician and the author of plot shifts; Virius Nicomachus Flavianus, an acknowledged expert in ancient sacral customs and augural law);
- 'a second line' of Roman nobility, generally educated scholars (P. Caecionius Caecina Albinus and Caecionius Rufius Albinus: experts in Roman customs, traditions and literature; fabler Avianus: a curious young man, who in accordance with his age asks a lot of questions, but can also do his bit with a talk about anecdotes);

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seem to be rather problematic.

<sup>18</sup> A list of dozens of types of fruit appears rather unnatural, see *Sat. 3,18–19*.

<sup>19</sup> Except for Avianus, there exists at least one note in Symmachus's correspondence on each guest at the feast. It seems highly probable that this was Macrobius's source of inspiration. Avianus was 'included' in the dialogue perhaps in return for the dedication of his fables to Macrobius. For further information, see PETROVIČOVÁ 2005, 163f. and 189–199.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. e.g. DAVIES 1969, 3–13.



- humble but recognised experts in individual fields (grammarians Servius, a modest expert in language and style, especially in Vergil's works; Eustathios, an honoured Greek philosopher /Platonist/; Eusebios, a famous Greek rhetorician, invited to the symposium as a substitute for originally invited Postumianus);
- originally uninvited guests, who are assigned essential roles in the genre of symposial literature (the Greek doctor Dysarios, a certain counterbalance to the 'theoretician' Eustathios; the Egyptian Cynic Horos, a former boxer; the unwelcome troublemaker and critic of 'everything' Euangelus, whose invectives cause spontaneous plot turnovers).

Each of the twelve characters has their established position in line with the genre topics of symposial literature (*symposiarchos*, host, jester, Cynic, doctor, uninvited and unwelcome guest),<sup>21</sup> as well as with the educational character of Macrobius's work. There are some roles missing such as the role of lovers that is replaced by deep friendships between the people at the symposium.<sup>22</sup> Similarly, Euangelus's attempt at playing the role of a drunkard (*Sat.* 2,8,4: "*agite... vino indulgeamus!*") is immediately aborted. On the other hand, the philosopher advocating Platonism plays a very important role. The presence of the representatives of different Mediterranean cultures, namely the Greeks and an Egyptian, makes it possible for Macrobius to draw intercultural comparisons. Various interests of the participants allow the author to raise a number of motley topics, which leads to spontaneous dialogues similar — as far as the non-explanatory passages are concerned — to those of real life. The sudden changes in the plot also give the impression of being spontaneous and natural.

Macrobius's particular choice of participants — distinguished scholars, who are at the same time prominent political representatives of the state — betrays another formal model besides the Plato's dialogue, which is brought to light in the fourth paragraph of the first book:

Macr. *Sat.* 1,1,4: *Neque enim Cottae, Laelii, Scipiones amplissimis de rebus, quoad Romanae litterae erunt, in veterum libris disputabunt: Praetextatos vero, Flavianos, Albinos, Symmachos et Eustathios, quorum splendor similis et non inferior virtus est, eodem modo loqui aliquid licitum non erit.*

Two of the three model names can be identified as the main characters of Cicero's dialogue *De re publica*<sup>23</sup> and the last character can be found in his dialogue *De oratore*.<sup>24</sup> Although Macrobius does not explicitly mention the name of Cic-

<sup>21</sup> For a detailed analysis of the characters in symposial literature, see MARTIN 1931, 33–116.

<sup>22</sup> According to FLAMANT 1977, 204f., Macrobius does not omit the topos of lovers totally, but transforms it into the quotation of the translation of Plato's innocuous distich (*Sat.* 2,2,17), adopted from Gellius (*N. A.* 19,11).

<sup>23</sup> Scipio Aemilianus and Laelius: see Cic. *Rep.* 1,18: *Tum Scipio calceis et vestimentis sumptis e cubiculo est egressus, et cum paululum inambulavisset in porticu, Laelium advenientem salutavit et eos qui una venerant...*

<sup>24</sup> C. Cotta: see Cic. *De orat.* 1,25: *Exierant autem cum ipso Crasso adolescentes ... C. Cotta qui tum tribunatum pl(ebis) petebat, et P. Sulpicius...*



ero as the source of his inspiration, it is obvious that he does not use only Cicero's main characters. Like him in the dialogue *De re publica*<sup>25</sup>, Macrobius sets the plot in the time of a festival coming immediately before the death of the main figure of the dialogue, Praetextatus (from 17 to 19 December, 384 AD).<sup>26</sup> Next, the dialogic type characterized by rather long and uninterrupted scholarly speeches of individual participants, in which the conversation is held mainly to ensure the narrative continuity of the work, can be recognized as that of Cicero's.<sup>27</sup> Choosing eminent politically active representatives of Roman culture according to the Roman model, Macrobius moderates the joyful and inordinate atmosphere of his work evoked by the reference to Plato's dialogue about love as well as by the use of some of his symposial roles, and thus perfectly in accordance with his own compositional plan, highlights the significance of *Saturnalia*.<sup>28</sup> Both seriousness and wit are substantial for the final effect of the work:

Macr. *Sat.* 1,1,4: *Oportet enim versari in convivio sermones, ut castitate integros, ita adpetibiles venustate. Matutina vero erit robustior disputatio, quae viros et doctos et praeclarissimos deceat.*

By employing both serious and light themes at convenient moments during the festivities, Macrobius keeps the levels of the dialogues alongside each other naturally without mutual disturbance.

It would be appealing to complete the formal analysis of the dialogue *Saturnalia* by saying that Macrobius successfully managed to join Plato's and Cicero's models into a new coherent whole, however, this would not be absolutely true. Macrobius obviously attempts at making the reader believe that his work not only equals, but even exceeds Plato's model work *Συμπόσιον*:

Macr. *Sat.* 2,1,2–3: „*Nostrum hoc convivium, quod et heroici saeculi pudicitiam et nostri conduxit elegantiam, in quo splendor sobrius et diligens parsimonia, Agathonis convivio vel post magniloquentiam Platonis non componere tantum, sed nec praeferre dubitaverim. Nam ipse rex mensae nec in moribus Socrate minor, et in re publica philosopho efficacior; ceteri*

<sup>25</sup> Cicero's dialogue is held for three winter days of 129 BC in Scipio's house, just before his death (see e.g. STAHL 1990<sup>2</sup>, 93, Note 3). CAMERON 1966, 28, also mentions Athenaios as an inspirational source because Ulpianos, a character from the dialogue, dies soon after a fictitious feast as well (see Athen. 15,33,56–59 /686c/). Since Macrobius has been proved not to draw from Athenaios, see WISSOWA 1880, 45–55 and LINKE 1880, 42f., the above-mentioned conclusion cannot be confirmed.

<sup>26</sup> The last news about Praetextatus comes from 9 September, 384 AD (*Cod. Iust.* 1,54,5). He must have died sometime between this date and the beginning of 385 when he was to take up the office of a consul, but eventually did not. Macrobius's dialogue comes into being approximately two generations later, sometime after 430 AD. For further argumentation, see PETROVIČOVÁ 2005, 156–164.

<sup>27</sup> See e.g. MARINONE 1967, 30; *The Cambridge History of Class. Lit.*, 1982, 762f., etc.

<sup>28</sup> This has also been documented by FLAMANT 1977, 191, who respects Macrobius for his combining the symposial charm of a Platonic dialogue with what can be designated as *gravitas Romana*.

*qui adestis eminentiores estis ad studia virtutum, quam ut poetis comicis et Alcibiadi, qui tantum fuit fortis ad crimina, aliisque quibus frequens illud convivium fuit vos quisquam aestimet comparandos.*“

The ambitious words Macrobius uses — as he does not want to sound too arrogant — in the speech of young and imprudent Avianus do not relate to the protagonists of the dialogue only, but also meta-textually refer to the dialogue itself. Nevertheless, Macrobius's plan is betrayed in the continuation of the discourse on the reason why the feast of Saturnalia should equal the Greek model feast on the occasion of Agathon's victory:

*Macr. Sat. 2,1,5: „... sub illorum ... supercilio non defuit qui psaltriam intromitti peteret, ut puella ex industria supra naturam mollior canora dulcedine et saltationis lubrico exerceret inlecebris philosophantes.*“

Avianus's comment on the demand for a flute-girl voiced by the symposiasts in Plato's dialogue reveals that Macrobius does not know the content of the philosopher's work that well. Eryximachos as the *symposiarch* in the Greek version does not let the flute-girl join the guests at all, but shows her out of the dining hall,<sup>29</sup> which also happens after the disturbance caused by drunken Alcibiades, although maybe another flute-girl has accompanied him, having to help him get to the couch.<sup>30</sup> Macrobius did know the context, but as it becomes evident from his mistake, he was familiar with the story only vaguely, most probably from some commentary, rather than a primary source.<sup>31</sup>

Similar aspects can be found in Cicero's work *De republica*. Macrobius, as mentioned before, develops a conversation on a festive occasion before the death of the *symposiarch* and cites two of Cicero's heroes as the models for his own characters. He also knew the end of the dialogue — the Scipio's dream on which he actually wrote a commentary — very well.<sup>32</sup> However, perfect familiarity with the whole dialogue cannot be supposed.<sup>33</sup> In the opening part, Macrobius introduces all the participants and closes the list with the name of C. Cotta, a speaker

<sup>29</sup> Plat. *Symp.* 176e6–7: ... τὸ μετὰ τοῦτο εἰσηγοῦμαι τὴν μὲν ἄρτι εἰσελθοῦσαν ἀλλητρίδα χαίρειν ἔαν, ἀλοῦσαν ἕαντῆ ἢ ἂν βούληται ταῖς γυναιξὶ ταῖς ἔνδον...

<sup>30</sup> Plat. *Symp.* 212d3: Καὶ οὐ πολὺ ὕστερον Ἀλκιβιάδου τὴν φωνὴν ἀκούειν ἐν τῇ αὐλῇ σφόδρα μεθύοντος καὶ μέγα βοῶντος, ἐρωτῶντος ὅπου Ἀγάθων καὶ κελεύοντος ἄγειν παρ' Ἀγάθωνα. ἄγειν οὐκ αὐτὸν παρὰ σφᾶς τὴν τε ἀλλητρίδα ὑπολαβοῦσαν καὶ ἄλλους τινὰς τῶν ἀκολουθῶν... There is no further mention of a flute-girl until the end of the dialogue.

<sup>31</sup> Macrobius's 'first-hand' knowledge of Plato was also questioned by FLAMANT 1977, 179.

<sup>32</sup> *Commentarii in Somnium Scipionis*, for a critical edition, see WILLIS 1994<sup>3</sup>.

<sup>33</sup> By comparing Plato's and Cicero's dialogues, Macrobius in the introduction of his philosophical work *Commentarii in Somnium Scipionis* shows familiarity with both the works (Macr. *Comm.* 1,1: *Inter Platonis et Ciceronis libros, quos de re publica uterque constituit, ..., hoc interesse prima fronte perspeximus, quod ille rem publicam ordinavit, hic rettulit...*); nevertheless, the information he uses to characterize them is so general that it may prove to be just good knowledge of the tradition of the genre coming from a secondary source. See also FLAMANT 1977, 157f.

from another dialogue of Cicero's, *De oratore*, which is not mentioned in *Saturnalia* at all.<sup>34</sup> The fact that Scipio and Laelius are the characters from *De republica* was well-known to Macrobius from the scene introducing the narration of Scipio's dream.<sup>35</sup> It is highly probable that Macrobius included Cotta in the group of the model characters without realizing that he was not one of the protagonists of the dialogue *De republica*, and this inaccuracy may be the result of the fact that Macrobius did not work with the whole original. Nevertheless, I am aware of the fact that this conclusion is uncertain because it is based only on the examination of the extant quarter of Cicero's dialogue.<sup>36</sup>

For the reasons stated above, it is obvious that both Plato's *Συμπόσιον* and Cicero's *De republica* can be considered only as expected models. Macrobius uses their authority to ensure that his work is of acknowledged quality. As a matter of fact, he absorbs information about the symposial tradition from other symposial works, which he obliquely mentions (*Sat.* 1,1,3: see above) as works of other authors that 'described symposia', despite the fact that they themselves formed Macrobius's main source. Macrobius undoubtedly drew inspiration from Plutarch's work *Συμποσιακά προβλήματα*<sup>37</sup> and possibly also from Apuleius's *Quaestiones convivales*.<sup>38</sup> This can, however, be supported only by the fact that the author, in contrast to his practice of concealing his sources, names both Plutarch and Apuleius as those, who wrote about jokes, in the seventh book of his work.<sup>39</sup> Considering the extensive copying from Plutarch in the seventh book, it is probable that the same method was employed in the case of Apuleius, whose work, however, has not been preserved to confirm this statement. Finally, some of the symposial motifs were adopted from Gellius, who dealt with symposial topics in several chapters of his miscellanea.<sup>40</sup> As the source analysis shows, further possible sources of inspiration for the final form of *Saturnalia* were known to Macrobius only second-hand (e.g. Didymova *Συμποσιακά σύμμικτα*<sup>41</sup>).

34 The only rhetoric work of Cicero's that is (apart from the passages of his speeches) named in *Saturnalia* is the dialogue *Brutus*. See PETROVIČOVÁ 2000, 49.

35 *Macr. Comm.* 1,4,2: *Cum enim Laelius quereretur nullas Nasicae statuas in publico in interfecti tyranni remunerationem locatas, respondit Scipio...*

36 Except for the Dream of Scipio, the dialogue *De republica* had been lost until 1820 when almost the whole first and second book were found in one of the palimpsests in the Vatican Library. See STAHL 1990<sup>2</sup>, 10f.

37 FLAMANT 1977, 180, provides a list of the adopted parts.

38 This hypothesis has been formulated by FLAMANT 1977, 182f.

39 *Macr. Sat.* 7,3,24: *„Quod genus veteres ita ludicrum non putarunt, ut et Aristoteles de ipsis aliqua conscripserit et Plutarchus et vester Apuleius, nec contemnendum sit quod tot philosphantium curam meruit.“*

40 According to JAN 1948, *Prolegomena* XV, chapter 18,2 and 13 of *N. A.* influenced the choice of the name and the plot for Macrobius's work. There are also other symposial motifs coming from Gellius (*Sat.* 1,5,12 — *N. A.* 18,2,1; *Sat.* 1,7,12f. — *N. A.* 13,11,1f.; *Sat.* 2,8,1–3 — *N. A.* 13,11,6f.; *Sat.* 2,8,4–9 — *N. A.* 15,2; *Sat.* 2,8,10–16 — *N. A.* 19,2).

41 According to COURCELLE 1948<sup>2</sup>, 12–15, the role of the mediator was played by Serennus

Having analyzed the roles of the individual participants, it remains to put forward a few ideas about the situational aspects of the work which also constitute an essential part of symposial genre.<sup>42</sup> Even in this respect, Macrobius's way of handling the model works is not uncritical; he gives a new formal framework to his work. Different arguments (usually invoked by the critic Euangelus: see e.g. *Sat.* 1,24,2; 3,10,1; 5,2,1 etc.) never "dismantle" the structure of Macrobius's dialogue, but rather raise new topics. Euangelus's comments, moreover, gradually lose force, so that they finally become almost serene (see, for example, his question, what was first, the hen or the egg: *Sat.* 7,16,1). The enlightening discussions during and after the feast, on the other hand, develop from 'comic' to 'serious' (i.e. from telling anecdotes and Euangelus's attempt at initiating a drunken party in the second book, through a discussion about profligacy of the Romans and individual food-stuffs in the third book, to the topics of natural philosophy in the last book). Symposial 'cycles' (see Note 9) show similar violation, which is well-known from Plato's dialogues (one of the most glaring examples is Aristophanes's hiccoughs: *Plat. Symp.* 185c4–e5). However, the main and most significant cycle competition that is to defend Vergil is kept in the same form as the *symposiarch* stated at the end of the first book (*Sat.* 1,24,21). Humour, constituting another integral part of the genre of symposia, is used only to a limited extent and in the form of wordplay (various Euangelus's comments do contain some situational humour which is, however, almost hidden in his irony). Moreover, passages talking about humour are introduced quasi from a detached point of view in connection with the sense of humour of old Roman authorities (see Book II) and the philosophical theory (see the beginning of Book VII). The motif of alcohol as well as pederasty can be recognized only in accidental remarks, which were included only to get an opportunity to critically analyze all human pleasures anyway (*Sat.* 2,8,4–16). Contrariwise, both practical and especially theoretical philosophy occupies the most prominent place at the feast.<sup>43</sup> To sum it up, although there are all the characteristic features of symposial literature embedded in the dialogue, their elaboration entirely fulfils Macrobius's educational aims.

In spite of the fact that Macrobius may not have known a substantial part of his model works first-hand and that his literary imitation of the works in question was to a large extent a matter of copying, he not only managed to use the very potential of the symposial tradition very well (i.e. by using a large number of its formal features both in terms of typical characters, scenes and plot turnovers), but also did not hesitate to add a new dimension to the literary compositions in question. At the end of his exceptional dialogue, the order — both in terms of the content and the formal concept — is finally restored, which is in agreement with the main

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Samonicus (*Res reconditae*). For a detailed analysis of the original sources, see the following dissertations: WISSOWA 1880; LINKE 1880 and BERNABEI 1970.

<sup>42</sup> For situational topics, see MARTIN 1931, 116–148.

<sup>43</sup> Out of the extant discourses, see esp. *Sat.* 7,14 where Macrobius strictly opposes Gellius's negative attitude to theoretical philosophy (c.f. *N. A.* 5,16).

idea of celebrating Saturnalia anyway, and the model of a continually disintegrating structure of Platonic symposium is surpassed. In this way, Macrobius manifests such a serious approach to the education in ancient disciplines (with regard to Roman specifics) that is not to be found in any literary work of his predecessors. He thus prepared the ground for the allegoric deification of the disciplines, which was introduced later with the encyclopaedia of Martianus Capella.

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## RESUMÉ

V příspěvku se autorka zabývá formální charakteristikou všeobecně vzdělávacího dialogu *Saturnalia*. Je specifikována konkrétní žánrová varianta Macrobiova dialogu jako diegetického symposiálního dialogu tvořeného převážně sledem delších monologických referátů. Následně jsou analyzovány jednotlivé formální vzory dialogu, a to jak vzory, které udává sám autor, které je však možné vnímat jen jako vzory žádoucí, zaručující jeho dialogu respekt, tak i vzory, které Macrobiovi pestrou škálu symposiální topiky skutečně zprostředkovaly. Zároveň je ovšem konkrétními příklady prokázáno, že Macrobius ke zmíněným vzorům přistupuje kriticky a celkovou formální podobu bez váhání přizpůsobuje svým autorským záměrům.

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