

Jean-Jacques Aubert

‘Du lard ou du cochon’?
The *Testamentum Porcelli*
as a Jewish Anti-Christian Pamphlet*

*to the teacher and friend
who will know how to read my threefold and trivial dissimulatio*

A Strange, Mysterious Text

At the very beginning of the fifth century A.D., Jerome twice refers to an unusual piece of Latin literature, traditionally entitled *Testamentum porcelli* or *A Piglet’s Will*. First in 401/402, ranting about Rufinus of Aquileia in his *Apologia Contra Rufinum*, he claims that

Quasi non cirratorum turba Milesiarum in scholis figmenta decantet et testamentum suis Bessorum cachinno membra concutiat atque inter scurrarum epulas nugae istius modi frequententur.

Classes of curly-haired boys are reciting Milesian tales in schools and the pig’s will cracks them up, making them burst into Bessian laughter, as that kind of tomfoolery usually occurs during jesters’ banquets.¹

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A few years later, in the introduction to the 12th book of his *Commentarii in Isaiam*, dated to 408-410, the monk of Bethlehem states that

Nullus tam imperitus scriptor est qui lectorem non inueniat similem sui, multoque pars maior est Milesias fabellas reuoluentium quam Platonis libros. In altero enim ludus et oblectatio est, in altero difficultas et sudor mixtus labori. Denique Timaeum de mundi harmonia astrorumque cursu et numeris disputantem ipse qui interpretatus est Tullius se non intellegere confitetur, testamentum autem Grunni Corocottae porcelli decantant in scholis puerorum agmina cachinnantium.

No writer is so clumsy as to not find an audience akin to him. Many more readers repeatedly flip through the Milesian tales than peruse Plato's works. The former are delightfully entertaining while only sweat and toil get one through the latter's difficulty. In short, Cicero himself, after translating the *Timaeus* which deals with the harmony of the universe and the course and numbers of stars, confesses that he does not understand its meaning, while hosts of rambunctious students chant the will of Grunnius Corocotta the piglet.²

We know nothing about the author or date of composition of this approximately 300-word text which Jerome regards as the epitome of bad taste. However, its transmission was ensured by no less than seven manuscripts dated from the 9th through 12th centuries, in addition to a 16th-century copy of an otherwise unknown archetype, and three contemporary editions containing variants not to be found in any of the known manuscripts.³ By all standards, the *Testamentum porcelli* was quite a bestseller, the success of which undoubtedly has its roots in its content:

Magirus cocus dixit 'veni huc, eversor domi, solivertiator, fugitive porcelle, et hodie tibi dirimo vitam.' Corocotta porcellus dixit 'si qua feci, si qua peccavi, si qua vascella pedibus meis confregi, rogo, domine coce, vitam peto, concede roganti.' Magirus cocus dixit 'transi, puer, affer mihi de cocina cultrum ut hunc porcellum faciam cruentum.' Porcellus comprehenditur a famulis, ductus sub die XVI kal. lucerninas, ubi abundant cymae, Clibanato et Piperato consulibus. Et ut vidit se moriturum esse, horae spatium petiit et cocum rogavit, ut testamentum facere posset. Clamavit ad se suos parentes, ut de cibariis suis aliquid dimitteret eis. Qui ait:

[Incipit testamentum porcelli. M. Grunnius Corocotta porcellus testamentum fecit. Quoniam manu mea scribere non potui, scribendum dictavi.] Patri meo Verrino

¹ Jer., *Contra Rufinum* 1.17.

² Jer., *Comm. in Isaiam* 12, preface.

³ One of them, the so-called Luscianianus (libellus) of 1522, contains numerous interpolations among the legacies. The *editio princeps* by Soncinus Fano was published in 1505.

Lardino do lego dari glandis modios XXX, et matri meae Veturinae Scrofae do lego dari Laconicae siliginis modios XL, et sorori meae Quirinae, in cuius votum interesse non potui, do lego dari hordei modios XXX. Et de meis visceribus dabo donabo sutoribus saetas, rixoribus capitinas, surdis auriculas, causicis et verbosis linguam, bubulariis intestina, isiciariis femora, mulieribus lumbulos, pueris vesicam, puellis caudam, cinaedis musculos, cursoribus et venatoribus talos, latronibus unguas. Et nec nominando coco legato dimitto popiam et pistillum, quae mecum attuleram de Thebeste usque ad Tergeste; liget sibi collum de reste. Et volo mihi fieri monumentum ex litteris aureis scriptum:

M GRVNNIVS
COROCOTTA
PORCELLVS
VIXIT ANNIS
DCCCC XC VIII S
QVOD SI SEMIS VIXISSET
MILLE ANNOS IMPLESSET

Optimi amatores mei vel consules vitae, rogo vos ut cum corpore meo bene faciatis, bene condiatis de bonis condimentis nuclei, piperis et mellis, ut nomen meum in sempiternum nominetur. Mei domini vel consobrini mei, qui testamento meo interfuistis, iubete signari.'

Lardio signavit. Ofellicus signavit. Cyminatus signavit. Lucanicus signavit. Tergillus signavit. Celsinus signavit. Nuptialicus signavit.

Explicit testamentum porcelli sub die XVI kal. lucerninas Clibanato et Piperato consulibus feliciter.

Butcher the cook said: 'Come here, homewrecker, burrower, runaway piglet! Today I'll do you in.' Corocotta the piglet answered: 'If I have done anything, if I have committed any sin, if I have crushed under my feet any worthless dishes, I beg you, Master cook, let me live, hear my prayer.' Butcher the cook said: 'Come on, kid, go and get a knife from the kitchen, for me to slaughter that piglet.' The assistants grabbed the piglet and brought him in on the 16th day before the calends of the month of the lamp, during cabbage season, in the consulship of Baked and Peppered. And when he realized that he was doomed, he petitioned the cook for an hour-long reprieve to be able to make his will. He called his parents to his side in order to leave them parts of his food supply, as follows:

[‘Here starts the piglet’s will. Marcus Grunnius Corocotta the piglet has made his will. Since I was unable to holograph it, I resorted to dictation.]

To my father, Fat Bacon, I give and bequeath 30 bushels of acorn; to my mother, Old Sow, I give and bequeath 40 bushels of grade-A Laconian wheat flour; to my sister, Hog, whose wedding I will have been unable to attend, I give and bequeath 30 bushels of barley.

As for my body parts, I will bestow my bristle upon shoemakers, my head/muzzles on squabblers, my ears on the deaf, my tongue on advocates and blabbermouths, my innards on sausage-makers, my hams on sellers of cold cuts, my kidneys/testicles on women, my bladder on young boys, my tail/penis on young girls, my muscles/rectum on the unmanly, my ankles on messengers and hunters, and my hooves on robbers.

To the cook, whose name is unspeakable, I leave the ladle and the pestle that I had brought with me from Theveste to Tergeste: let him hang by the neck/let him hang them from his neck.

And I want a tombstone to be made for me, engraved in gold letters with the following epitaph:

MARCVS GRVNNIVS COROCOTTA
THE PIGLET
LIVED NINE HVNDRED AND NINETY-NINE YEARS
AND A HALF
HAD HE LIVED HALF A YEAR LONGER
HE WOVL D HAVE MADE IT TO
ONE THOV SAND.

As for you who loved me best and took care of me during my lifetime, I entreat you, make good use of my body, add some good seasoning to it, with almonds, pepper, and honey, so that my name be remembered for ever.

Masters or cousins, you who witnessed the making of my will, please sign it.’

Signatures of Bacon, Meatball, Rye-stew, Lucanian (sausage), Crackling, Celsius, and Wedding-bash.

Here is the end of the piglet's will, made on the sixteenth day before the calends of the month of the lamp, during the consulship of Baked and Peppered, good luck!⁴

In the first modern edition in 1860/1876, Moritz Haupt pointed out that the author of that piece, which he qualified as “iocos non insulsos plane sed mediocriter lepidos” [jokes undoubtedly not unwitty but rather light], was so incompetent in the field of Roman law as to fail to notice that the piglet's will was legally void for a technical reason to which we shall return shortly. In modern times, classicists have paid little attention to this odd piece of Latin literature, except to vituperate its obscenity and vulgarity, sneer at its casual and prosaic sense of humor, and blame its blatant legal flaws. A change of attitude occurred some 50 years ago, thanks to the work of enlightened legal historians who decided to cast aside such a negative approach and tried to solve the riddle of the text. David Daube's witty translation in 1969, Nikolaus A. Bott's new edition and commentary in 1972, and Edward Champlin's thought-provoking study in 1987 paved the way toward a complete rehabilitation.⁵ The purpose of this paper is to draw on the wealth of Champlin's synthesis to demonstrate that the *Testamentum porcelli* is indeed a sophisticated work belonging to a well-defined literary tradition in Antiquity which developed into a popular genre in the Middle Ages and Renaissance. My reading of the text is based on a multi- and interdisciplinary approach based on philology, onomastics, Roman law, literary analysis, comparative literature, social, political, and religious history, and theology. My goal is first to suggest how this short text could have been understood at the time of its writing, and then to discuss the theoretical and historiographical consequences of such an interpretation.

A Pregnant Style

At first sight, the reader's attention is aroused by the proportionally large number of *hapax legomena*, such as *solivertiator* (< *solum vertere*), *lucernina* (= *lucerna*), *rixores* (= *rixatores*),⁶ *capitina* (= *caput*), *bubularius* (= *botularius*),⁷ *isicarius*

⁴ The Latin text printed here is Bott's (1972, with German translation), with the change suggested by Gordon Williams in Meyer 1988 (a most inspiring work), 38-42, esp. n. 56. Cf. now Meyer 2004, 68-69. Cf. also Bücheler 1912, 268-69 or 1922/1958/1963, 346-47. A splendid English translation is to be found in Daube 1969, 77-81. French translations are available in Hermann 1956, Aubert 2000, 303-4, and Chappuis Sandoz 2004, 276.

⁵ D'Ors 1955; Daube 1969, 77-81; Champlin 1987, essential reading, from which most of the material used in the first part of this paper is borrowed. Other useful discussions are in Forbes and Ginsburg 1936 and Baldwin 1982/1987. Mocchi 1981 and Fabre and Fabre-Vassas 1979 were not available.

⁶ Quintilianus, *Inst. Or.* 11.1.19.

(= *esicarius* < *insicium*, Greek ἰσίκιον), and *porcia* (also attested in a late glossary). The topic indeed calls for technical words, borrowed from the fields of gastronomy and anatomy, not to mention sexuality and obscenity. The author is good at punning: *lumbulus*, used in the plural, refers to kidneys and filets, although it is also the diminutive of *lumbus*, which the Neronian satirist Aulus Persius Flaccus uses in the sense of genitals. While *vesica* usually represents the bladder, Juvenal twice expands its meaning to cover a woman's vulva.⁸

Typical of “vulgar Latin” (in both the sociolinguistic and chronological senses of the term), the *Piglet's Will* displays a few unfamiliar, rather problematic idiomatic expressions. *Transire* [to go], for instance, is well attested in the Latin Bible (Jerome's *Vulgate*),⁹ and it has been pointed out that in this context the verb always translates the Greek παρελθών or another compound of ἔρχομαι, the redundancy of which forms a stylistic feature thought to be typically Semitic.¹⁰ G. Scarpat accordingly suggested that the anonymous author of the *Testamentum porcelli* was a reader of the Latin Bible, and therefore a Christian. While the former conclusion cannot be ruled out, the latter, on the other hand, is unnecessarily far-fetched.

What's in a Name?

Since the comic effect of the *Testamentum porcelli* is mostly rooted in the choice of words, names provide a valuable ground for hidden messages. Apart from the piglet himself, no less than 13 characters are specifically named in the introductory narrative and in the will itself, i.e. the cook/butcher, two eponymous consuls, three family members, and seven witnesses. All names are *cognomina* (or *agnomina*), except for the testator's, whose *tria nomina* are unique and striking, as will be shown shortly. The cook's name, Magirus (from the Greek μάγειρος) unsurprisingly refers to a sacrificer, a cook, or a butcher, and may suggest that the piglet's slaughter was in some way ritualistic. Although the *cognomen* of the sixth witness, Celsinus, is fairly common in late Antiquity,¹¹ it is remarkable that Pseudo-Apicius, the fourth-century author of

⁷ Sen., *Ep.* 56.2. *Bublarinus* (*AE* 1991, no. 122a, first century B.C. or A.D., and no. 287, first century A.D.) and *bucularius* (*ILS* 9432 = *CIJud* I 210, from a Jewish cemetery on the Via Appia) are occasionally found in Latin inscriptions.

⁸ Pers. 1.20; Juv. 1.39 and 6.64.

⁹ Lk. 12.37 and 17.7; Acts 24.7.

¹⁰ Scarpat 1981.

¹¹ Cf. *PLRE*, s.v. ‘Celsinus’ (seven instances dated from Diocletian to Theodosius I). One Clodius Celsinus, *vir clarissimus consularis provinciae Numidiae*, set up an inscription at Circa between 333 and 337 (*CIL* VIII 7011 = *ILS* 715). Another inscription, from Beneventum (*CIL* IX 1576 = *ILS* 1239), is dedicated to one Clodius Celsinus Adelfius, who held several important positions before becoming *praefectus Urbi* in 351, according to Ammianus Marcellinus (16.6.2).

a *De re coquinaria*, used it to name a specialty pork dish, perhaps in reference to a homonymous gourmet of the time.

The author's sophistication is best illustrated by the choice of the piglet's name, Marcus Grunnius Corocotta. The *praenomen* is insignificant except for being there (as the first element of the *tria nomina*). The *nomen gentilicium*, Grunnius, is obviously formed on the onomatopoeic verb *grunnire* [to oink].¹² The *cognomen*, Corocotta, is very rare indeed, and most telling.¹³ Some manuscripts read "Corococta," a compound derived from the Greek χοῖρος [the piglet] that would have lost its aspiration when it passed into Latin (**coero*), with the meaning of "roast pork." Corocotta, however, was also the name of a famous Spanish robber, making the top of the most wanted list during the reign of Augustus. Dio Cassius reports that Corocotta voluntarily surrendered to the Romans in order to collect the reward set on his head. Impressed by his daring, the emperor pardoned him and made him subsequently rich. Interestingly, several ancient writers, such as Strabo, Pliny the Elder, and Aelian also identify Corocotta with a legendary beast, a crossbreed between wolf and dog.¹⁴ This kind of hyena (the etymology of which could be seen as connected with the word for pig in Greek: ὕαινα < ὕς) was reportedly a man-eater with the ability to fake the human voice and a wide range of other animal noises to trick its prey. This extraordinary feature could explain why Marcus Grunnius Corocotta the piglet feels compelled to state explicitly that he is unable to write his will himself, implicitly ascribing that disability to his porcine nature rather than to his more-than-likely illiteracy, but yet feels no need to explain why he has no trouble dictating it. His *cognomen* would intimate to an alert reader that this piglet was vested with anomalous historical and culinary significance.

Toying with Roman Law

As a mock Roman will, the *Testamentum porcelli* displays some typical features of a category of legal documents well-known to modern scholars through remains of legislation, excerpts of juristic writings, and documentary evidence preserved on stones, tablets, and papyri. In what will unavoidably be an oversimplified description of the Roman law of successions, let us recall that the classical jurists knew of two forms of wills. One was a civil law-based, so-called mancipatory will, the *testamentum per aes et libram* or *per nuncupationem*, akin to a *mancipatio*, whereby the testator makes an oral statement (*nuncupatio*) while a *libripens* holds a scale and the *emptor familiae* becomes the legitimate executor

¹² Varro, *ap. Nonn.* 114.27; Plin., *NH* 32.19; and Juv. 14.22.

¹³ Anderson 1980.

¹⁴ Dio Cass. 56.43.3; Strabo 16.4.16; Plin., *NH* 8.107; and Ael., *NA* 7.22.

of the will, with five witnesses present.¹⁵ The other was a praetorian will, the *testamentum praetorium*, written down on wax tablets signed and sealed by seven witnesses, on the basis of which the praetor could grant the heir(s) a legal remedy called *interdictum (adipiscendae possessionis causa)* protecting possession of the testator's property (*bonorum possessio secundum tabulas*).

The validity of either type of will is dependent on the fulfillment of a set of requirements:

1. the will must in any case include a so-called *institutio heredis*,¹⁶ to be stated in a precise wording (“Titius heres esto” or “Titium heredem esse iubeo”) [let so-and-so be my heir];
2. the testator must be legally independent (*sui iuris*), i.e. free from his father's power (*patria potestas*), except for some categories of persons, such as soldiers;
3. what is being willed or bequeathed through legacies, trusts (*fideicommissa*), codicils, and donations should conform to criteria of morality;
4. and beneficiaries, whether they are private individuals or groups endowed with juristic personality, must be specifically identified.

It is obvious that the piglet's will fails to fulfill not just one, but all of these requirements. First and foremost, no specific heir is appointed. As Horace explicitly states, the heir's name should appear in the second line of the first page of the will, a requirement fully explained by the jurist Gaius in the middle of the second century A.D.¹⁷ Even though the Roman law of successions becomes more flexible in several formal aspects during the fourth century A.D.,¹⁸ this specific requirement remained central and unchanged. However, it is a well-known fact that only soldiers on active duty were since Trajan's time entitled to make a valid will without respecting any of the formal rules imposed by civil or praetorian law.¹⁹ This provision was extended by Hadrian to veterans. M. Grunnius Corocotta would have had to be a Roman soldier for his will not to be invalidated by the lack of an explicit appointment of an heir.

Second, M. Grunnius Corocotta is obviously a *filius familias*, as both his parents are listed among the legatees. Admittedly, he could have been emancipated in his father's lifetime, but this is an unnecessary assumption

¹⁵ The best summary of the history of the mancipatory will and of its relationship with the written document is by Meyer 2004, 265-76.

¹⁶ *Dig.* 28.5, *De heredibus instituendis* (93 excerpts!).

¹⁷ Hor., *Sat.* 2.5.52-53; cf. also Gai., *Inst.* 2.229: “Ante heredis institutionem inutiliter legatur, scilicet quia testamenta vim ex institutione heredis accipiunt, et ob id velut caput et fundamentum intellegitur totius testamenti heredis institutio.”

¹⁸ *Cod. Inst.* 6.23.15 (339, if not 320 or 326, cf. Kaser 1975, II:489, n. 2). Cf. also D'Ors 1955.

¹⁹ Ulpianus (45 *ad ed.*) *Dig.* 29.1.1 *pr.*

since it is also a well-known fact that sons in power serving in the Roman army were given the right to dispose freely of their *peculium castrense*,²⁰ thus strengthening the argument for the identification of the piglet as a Roman soldier. Needless to say, a literal reading of the text suggests that in spite of his *tria nomina* as typical attributes of Roman citizens, the piglet is just an animal, therefore deprived of legal rights and juristic personality in Roman law.

Third, even though the belongings bequeathed to individual members of the family and, by trust (*fideicommissum*), to the cook did conform to Roman law and customs,²¹ this was not the case with the other legacies, such as body parts, left to groups of people.²² The closest modern equivalent, organ donation for transplant purposes, has developed as a result of progress made in medical science and has been strictly regulated.²³ Similar provisions are not attested in ancient history and literature, with one exception which we shall see shortly.

Fourth and finally, until Justinian's time, appointed heirs and legatees were for the most part identifiable individuals (*personae certae*), but also defined entities endowed with juristic personality, such as cities of the Roman empire, pagan gods and temples, some categories of private associations (*collegia*), and, since the fourth century A.D., the Church.²⁴

Under these circumstances, it is most remarkable that the author of the *Testamentum porcelli* was knowledgeable enough to meet the requirement of seven witnesses for a non-holographic praetorian will. As a matter of fact, the overall structure of the *Piglet's Will* reveals a practical command of the subtleties of the Roman law of successions and of its terminology on the part of its author:

1. the expression "do lego" is used in the context of legacies *per vindicationem*, whereby ownership of the bequeathed thing (*res*) is directly transferred to the legatee, who can thereafter avail himself of a 'real' remedy (*actio in rem*);²⁵

²⁰ Ulpianus, *Reg.* 20.10.

²¹ Monier 1947, I:524.

²² Swiss Civil Code art. 519, al. 3.

²³ Meyers 1990, 180-218. Some people have been rather creative in this regard: The *International Herald Tribune* (no. 35613, 30-31 August 1997, 20) reports that Mark Gruenwald, the deceased editor of Marvel Comics and author of the series *Squadron Supreme*, had requested by will that his ashes be used in the making of a special ink for the production of comic strips. His wish was upheld in court in Canton, Ohio. I remember reading in the *New York Times* a decade or so ago (reference lost) the story of another writer who was so dedicated to his own work that he wished to have a collection of his poems bound with his own skin after his death: the project was struck down by a court decision (se non è vero...!).

²⁴ Monier 1947, I:466-67.

²⁵ Gai., *Inst.* 2.193-200.

2. the addition of the verb “dari” (*scil.* “iubeo”), on the other hand, refers to a legacy *per damnationem*, granting the legatee a personal claim against the heir (*actio in personam*).²⁶ It was seemingly not unusual to combine both wordings in practice in order to prevent formal causes for annulment;²⁷
3. “dabo donabo” is reminiscent of a so-called *donatio mortis causa*; and
4. the variant “legato dimitto” illustrates the formal flexibility that crept into the Roman law of successions in the later period.

An Idiosyncratic Structure

In comparison with those numerous wills preserved in Latin inscriptions and Greek papyri from Roman Egypt, the *Testamentum porcelli* displays some standard elements and a few oddities:

1. the “incipit” and “explicit... feliciter” are quite typical of ancient literary texts copied in mediaeval manuscripts. As Gordon Williams once rather ingeniously suggested,²⁸ the first three lines of the text—as it has been transmitted—should be transposed to the beginning of the will proper, that is after the introductory narrative;
2. the notification of the non-holographic nature of the will should appear at the end of the document, rather than immediately following the testator’s initial statement of identity. As was suggested earlier, that oddity could be ascribed to the hidden meaning of the *cognomen* Corocotta;
3. the initial narrative is utterly out of place in a will, and foreign to the documentary practice. One could have expected the testator to discuss here a variety of topics, but certainly not the circumstances surrounding his imminent death. Indeed, that part of the *Piglet’s Will* anticipates a literary genre to become very popular in the Middle Ages and later, the animal trial followed by a cruel and/or symbolically momentous form of execution;²⁹
4. the sequence of listing individual legacies before collective legacies matches Augustus’ will as recounted by Suetonius;³⁰

²⁶ Gai., *Inst.* 2.201-208.

²⁷ Monier 1947, I:520-21. The late-second-century-A.D. jurist Cervidius Scaevola once uses the phrase “do lego darique eis volo”, cf. (20 *dig.*) *Dig.* 34.4.30.4.

²⁸ As acknowledged by Meyer 1988, 42, n. 56.

²⁹ Payson Evans 1987/1906 (*non vidit*); Dietrich 1961, listing 17 trials (out of 46) featuring pigs or sows as indicted suspects; Vartier 1970; and Ziolkowski 1993, 33 (with bibliography). The slaughtering of pigs in late Antiquity is described in a papyrus letter (*P.Oxy.* LVI 3866) using technical words quite similar to those found in the *Testamentum porcelli*.

³⁰ Suet., *Aug.* 101.2-3.

5. the will includes specific instructions concerning the testator's burial and tombstone. Indeed, the *cura corporis*, as it is known,³¹ is dealt with—partially at least—within the list of legacies and looks somewhat inflated as a result. The reader will not miss the pun on *condire* [to season] for *condere* [to bury] nor the gross overstatement of the piglet's age, a common feature of Latin epitaphs from North Africa during the Principate; and

6. the will ends, as usual, with a list of witnesses and a consular date.

Both the style and structure of the *Testamentum porcelli* are revealing of a somewhat sophisticated author, one quite knowledgeable in legal matters and capable of playing with a technical vocabulary and a variety of juristic notions pertaining to the law of successions, in spite of some—too—obvious shortcomings on his part. Short of concluding outright that the anonymous writer was a lawyer, it can be suggested that he was probably less stupid and mediocre than has been generally assumed. This consequently raises the question of why he may have intentionally produced a (fictitious) will nullified by a series of legal flaws bearing on several of its components. To formulate an answer it is necessary to look at the text within its literary context.

In a Class of its Own

Between 200 B.C. and A.D. 250, those Greek and Latin literary writers whose work has been preserved mention some 227 historical testators, in addition to the 40 martyrs of Sebaste.³² Out of this number, 163 occurrences are found in works by Cicero, Valerius Maximus, the two Plinys, Tacitus, and Suetonius. It is fair to claim that the will as a literary motif seems to have exerted a special fascination upon ancient writers and their readers. Pliny the Younger accounts for that fact by saying that “the common belief is that wills reflect a testator's mores” while Lucian states along the same line that “the Romans tell the truth but once in their lifetime, when they write their will.”³³ What are we then to make of the ingenuousness and truthfulness of those few writers of fiction who used the will form or motive within a fable, an epigram, a satire, a novel, or any kind of narrative with (auto-)biographical purpose? The following instances are telling:

1. Phaedrus, the freedman of Augustus who wrote Latin fables under the reigns of Tiberius and Caligula, recalls the wisdom of his legendary

³¹ Scaevola (3 *resp.*) *Dig.* 31.88.1 and (20 *dig.*) *Dig.* 34.4.30.2.

³² List in Champlin 1991, 187-93, a splendid piece of scholarship to which the following pages owe more than is acknowledged in the footnotes.

³³ Plin., *Ep.* 8.18.1 (in order to present a counter-example): “creditur vulgo testamenta hominum speculum esse morum.” Lucian, *Nigr.* 30: οἱ Ῥωμαίων παῖδες ἀληθῆ παρ'ὄλον τὸν βίον προίενται, τὴν ἐν ταῖς διαθήκαις λέγων.

forebear Aesop solving a riddle presented in the form of a will.³⁴ A man had three daughters. The first one was beautiful and vain, the second one ugly and a boozier, and the third one unpretentious and hardworking. The testator made their mother his heiress, entrusting her with dividing his estate into three legacies to go to his daughters in such a way that none of them would like to keep and enjoy her share, while stipulating that whichever legatee would sell it should pay her mother a fixed sum of money. As nobody could devise a way to fulfill the testator's last wishes, Aesop stepped in and explained that the mother had to assign to each one of the three daughters what least fitted their respective natural dispositions so that each one of them would eventually sell her share and pay the mother her dues out of the return of the sale. Meanwhile, Phaedrus shows himself an innovative writer in using the form of the will to test his readers' sagaciousness.

2. A similar literary device was used by the fourth-century grammarian, geometrician, and astronomer Metrodorus, who, in a so-called arithmetical epigram in elegiac verses preserved in the *Greek Anthology*,³⁵ lists shares of an inheritance expressed as fractions or specific sums, leaving it to the reader to figure out the testator's total worth.

Let us assume for a moment that the anonymous author of the *Testamentum porcelli* knew of such works and followed suit in presenting a riddle of his own. In other words, the examples of Phaedrus and Metrodorus should induce us to read the *Testamentum porcelli* as a conundrum, the solution of which has eluded readers ever since and may lie in the interpretation of a series of odd details. Other literary texts of early imperial date provide more clues:

3. One Lucilius wrote satiric epigrams in Greek, one of which features a miser named Hermocrates who appoints himself as heir, to the effect that he eventually dies intestate.³⁶ Hermocrates' will provides an example of absolute paradox, the legal writ voiding itself as a result of its absurd provision.

Petronius, in his *Satirica*, twice uses wills as comic devices:³⁷

4. In the midst of a luxurious banquet, the host Trimalchio, a paragon of bad taste and vulgarity, decides to publicize the content of his will in front of his guests. Unsurprisingly, his wife Fortunata is appointed heiress, all his slaves are freed, and some are even made legatees of

³⁴ Phaedrus, *Fab.* 4.5.

³⁵ *Anth. Pal.* 14.123.

³⁶ *Anth. Pal.* 11.171.

³⁷ Petron., *Sat.* 71 and 141. Zs. Várhelyi appropriately points out to me that, according to Tac., *Ann.* 16.19.3, Petronius eventually chose to dispense with writing codicils in favor on the emperor—a traditional form of flattery—while resorting to dissimulation in satirizing Nero's sexual perversion.

parts of the estate. In a more creative mode, he also entrusts Habinnas, the stonemason, with the making of his tombstone, truly a monument of self-conceit and deception. The description of the work, the wording of the epitaph, and the fake emotionality of the whole scene all bestow on that section a legitimate claim to literary fame.

5. The very last chapter of what remains of the novel displays a new, meaningful parody of the will used as a literary motif: Eumolpus tests the sincerity of legacy-hunters by stipulating in his will that all legatees, with the exception of the testator's freedmen, will have to eat his corpse in public before cashing in. Numerous historical cases of cannibalism are then recalled to assuage the applicants' reluctance.

There is little doubt in my mind that the *Testamentum porcelli* echoes those two passages, without excluding the possibility that Petronius was himself playing with an earlier instance of this literary motif. Other Silver Latin passages provide useful examples of this genre:

6. One Fabricius Veiento was condemned by Nero for writing pamphlets and invectives against senators and priests. Those were titled *Codicilli*, in reference to a widely used type of complementary deeds attached to wills. According to Tacitus, the emperor's censorship had the usual and predictable effect of promoting Veiento's writings to the status of bestsellers for a while.³⁸
7. At the end of the second century A.D., Tertullian mocks pagan religion and mentions in that context a popular mime of his time, the so-called *Iovis mortui Testamentum* or *The Will of the late Jupiter*, a tale which probably satirized some myth while underlining the god's mortality.³⁹

Puzzling and satiric, kitsch and repulsive, mean and disrespectful, the *Testamentum porcelli* undoubtedly drew on models of that kind, but it is impossible to demonstrate a direct link with any of the examples presented earlier. It is however most remarkable that the anonymous author chose to display originality in two particular ways, by making the testator an animal and by having it bequeath and donate its body parts.⁴⁰

A Glorious Fate

The Middle Ages developed a definite taste for the literary genre of the animal will, upon which Jerome had unwillingly and rather carelessly drawn attention. We know of an early-13th-century *Testamentum asini*, written in verses, which borrows some of the components of the *Piglet's Will*. The poem is made up

³⁸ Tac., *Ann.* 14.50.

³⁹ Tert., *Apol.* 15.1.

⁴⁰ A similar scheme is to be found in Fable 68 of the Romulus Collection (ed. Thiele 226-27), where a donkey manages to escape from the harshness of life, but finds himself more solicited dead than alive, with his bones used to make musical instruments.

of 27 tercets alternating with a two-verse refrain and tells the story of a peasant who laments his dead donkey and begs him to come back to life, just long enough to write its will. The ass is eager to comply and starts bequeathing its own body parts to various groups of people, clergy members or tradesmen, before kissing its master good-bye as a sign of peace and departing from life for good. The peasant wants to follow his donkey in death, but as it is slow to come, he starts drinking to find solace and ends up banqueting with his peers, even eating the donkey's head. The song fizzles out on a positive note: "propter te bibimus, asine!" Variants of the same story pop up here and there at the beginning of the 13th century, probably in connection with the celebration of a festival attested both in France (Sens, Beauvais, Bourges) and in England. The occasion was set around Christmas-time or the New Year and was called Fools' Day or Donkey's/Donkeys' Day. Consequently, it has been suggested that the genre of the animal will had its roots in some kind of carnivalesque event of uncertain origin. The same period also saw the production of a *Lamentation of a Hare*, as it is being chased by hunting dogs, and, as part of the *Carmina Burana*, the *Song of the Roasting Swan*.⁴¹

Along roughly the same lines, in about 1253, the French poet Ruteboeuf wrote a piece entitled *Le Testament de l'âne*,⁴² in which a priest buried his donkey in a human graveyard in consideration of its lifelong, tireless work which generated the priest's wealth. The bishop got wind of the misdeed and summoned the priest for an explanation. After carefully considering the matter, the priest reported that the donkey had bequeathed a large sum of money to the bishop who consequently dropped the case. The satire obviously takes a shot at the secular clergy.

The animal will as a literary genre subsequently rode the wave of popularity of both animal epics (such as the *Roman de Renart*) and literary wills, in their serious or grotesque form, in French and English literature from the 15th to the 18th century.⁴³ A study of the genre shows that wills allow the testator to recall his previous life, to confess his faith or some event in his past, to take leave from his friends, to warn and advise his relatives and future generations, to make arrangements concerning his funeral, and to dispose of his earthly possessions (either tangible assets or moral virtues).⁴⁴ From the 15th century to modern times, European literature produced wills for a wide variety of animals (several dogs, mules, and foxes, a hare, a deer, a parrot and

⁴¹ Scalia 1962; Bronzini 1984-1985, 3697-713; and Lehmann 1963, 167-80, esp. 170-72, with references (*non vidit*) to Novati 1883, 73 and 79; von Winterfeld 1913, 228; and Henrici 1913, 18.

⁴² Ed. Aarne-Thompson no. 1842.

⁴³ Perrow 1914; Tardel 1926; Pérez Vidal 1947 (*non vidit*); Rice 1941; and Bach 1977.

⁴⁴ Walther von der Vogelweide (ca. 1227).

other birds, a cat, a mare, a rooster, and a calf).⁴⁵ Pigs, on the other hand, seem to have consistently died intestate in that period.

This long list suggests that the *Testamentum porcelli*, while being one of a kind, is set within the long and famous tradition of the Latin satire and provides the starting point for a flourishing genre in mediaeval, modern, and contemporary European literature. In my opinion, the study of the genre will yield some clues for solving the riddle of our text, especially regarding the testator's identity and the meaning of his bequests. This, in turn, will allow us to present an hypothesis about the author's personality and intention.

Identifying the Piglet

In 1969, David Daube pointed out that the legal flaws of the *Testamentum porcelli* allowed for a single, convincing interpretation: behind the character of the piglet hides a Roman soldier exercising his right of disposing of his assets (*peculium castrense*) in spite of being a son in power. The fact that Marcus Grunnius Corocotta could boast no wife and no offspring of his own at such an old age sounds consistent with the normal effect of the traditional prohibition on soldiers from marrying.⁴⁶ Obviously, Daube saw no difficulty with the fact that the ban had been lifted by the emperor Septimius Severus, more than a century before the time of composition of the *Piglet's Will*. According to him, "the imagery smacks of the barrack-room." He also noticed that the soldier on the verge of being executed for some crime was normally deprived by law of his capacity to write a will.⁴⁷ In 1987, Edward Champlin, building on Daube's interpretation, suggested that Corocotta was a soldier turned robber who had been convicted and sentenced to be executed on the occasion of a bloody military celebration of the Saturnalia. This theory was based on a tradition reported and described in the *Passio Dasii*, in which a

⁴⁵ *Testamentum canis* (*Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles* 96, early 15th century); *Testament de la mule*, by Henri Baude (1465); a fox's will in a Danish Ballade; a hare's in Lithuania; a parrot's (David Lindsay) and a deer's (John Lacy) in England; and *La terrible vie, testament et fin de l'oyson*, all written in the 16th century. The bequest of bodily parts is a feature common to all. Even Shakespeare fell for the attraction of animal wills, using the form in a somewhat disguised manner in *The Merry Wives of Windsor* (1589-1599): Pretending to be a deer, Falstaff faces his two lovers and bequeaths each of them parts of his body (v,5,24-27). The 17th century saw the first occurrence of a man displaying—*anew*—vulgarity while disposing of his soul and limbs (*The Last Will and Testament of Father Peters*, 1660). The genre was taken over in Italy at the beginning of the 18th century, with the *Nuovo testamento che fa uno gatto* (Bologne 1712). Around the same time, in England, we find the will of a mare and the will of a Norfolk rooster (1714). Towards the end of the century a poem entitled *Robin's Testament* was published in Scotland: legatees of bodily parts are either individuals or public institutions. A dog's will in France (1734) and a calf's in England have also been reported. I can account for no instance in the 19th and 20th centuries, except for the posthumous play by Eugene O'Neill, *Last Will and Testament of an Extremely Distinguished Dog* (1956), nowhere to be found.

⁴⁶ Phang 2001.

⁴⁷ Ulpianus (45 *ad ed.*) *Dig.* 29.1.11 *pr.*

Christian soldier was tortured and beheaded at Durostorum in Lower Moesia on November 20th, 303. The piglet would thus represent the social type of the “semi-barbarous late Roman soldier, as viewed by an educated man,... a bandit, an attacker of home and soil, a deserter, a coward, obscene, boastful, illiterate, sharp-tongued, much given to new words, vulgarisms, and rhyme—and very funny.”⁴⁸

However attractive such an interpretation is, it calls for a few remarks: first, a legally void will is no trademark of the Roman soldier. Several military wills have been preserved and show strict compliance with, and adherence to, the formal requirements of Roman private law. Let us cite for the sake of example the will of the horseman Antonius Silvanus, dated to A.D. 142,⁴⁹ or the will of the veteran C. Longinus Castor, dated to A.D. 191-194,⁵⁰ both found in Egypt. Despite his possible association with the Roman army, C. Grunnius Corocotta the piglet seems to have been sophisticated enough to make a legally valid will had he wanted to do so.⁵¹

Second, Champlin’s interpretation does not even try to address what I regard as the most puzzling and central questions about the piglet’s will: why did the author choose to cast the testator as a piglet? and why did he have him bequeath his body parts?

In my opinion, the legal invalidity of the piglet’s will is intentional and meaningful, and may provide the key to the riddle of the piglet’s will and reveal the testator’s identity: the piglet is a character whose will is invalid or should be regarded as such. Building on Daube’s and Champlin’s approaches I shall further the attempt to sketch the testator’s portrait on the basis of those rare biographical elements found in the text itself, in the order of appearance:

1. the testator was widely regarded as a robber (cf. Corocotta in Dio Cassius, cf. *supra*);
2. he would rather communicate through the spoken word than in writing, because he generated definite charisma with his reported rhetorical skills (cf. the hyena’s voice in Strabo, Pliny the Elder, and Aelianus);
3. he destroyed, attempted to destroy, or at least did some damage inside of a building he viewed as his home (“eversor domi”);
4. he was a subverter who enticed others by ploughing their minds in order to sow his bad seed (“solivertiator”);

⁴⁸ Champlin 1987, 182-83.

⁴⁹ *FIRA III*², no. 47.

⁵⁰ *FIRA III*², no. 50.

⁵¹ Champlin 1987, 179: “whatever his audience, his creator was a man of considerable sophistication with a point to make.”

5. he was a runaway who was either homeless and wandering, or forced to leave an area under the pressure of the local population, or at one time exiled in a foreign place to escape from some unspecified danger, or all the above (“fugitive porcelle”);
6. among the crimes or misdeeds he had been suspected or found guilty of, one may have involved breaking dishes (“si qua vascella pedibus meis confregi”);
7. he believed that he could obtain forgiveness, and that he was entitled to what he asked for (“rogo... peto vitam, concede roganti”).⁵² His trust was tantamount to a profession of faith;
8. he was executed by some higher authority, after being seized by servants;
9. he died after making a will that happens to be nullified by a string of flaws;
10. his father and mother are known to have outlived him, as did a ‘sister’ (“sorori” i.e., a woman who is dear to him and still unmarried),⁵³ but there is no sign of a wife or children;
11. he bequeathed his body to groups of people that remain somewhat unidentified;
12. he claimed to have lived so unusually long that he could be regarded as immortal;
13. he invited his friends and relatives to share in eating his body so that he could be praised with everlasting glory.

Let us assume for the sake of argument that the piglet Corocotta represents Jesus Christ. In Antiquity and in the Middle Ages, it was widely thought that Jesus had once made his will,⁵⁴ or that the New Testament was Jesus’ will. This idea is based on the story of the Last Supper, when Jesus had taken leave

⁵² Mt. 7.7; Lk. 11.9; Jn. 16.24, etc.

⁵³ Virg., *Aen.* 1.321 and 11.823; Vulgate, 1 Tim 5.2; in the Septuagint, ἀδελφή is a term of endearment used for a spouse, a companion (Tob. 8.7; Job 42.11); in the New Testament, the word refers to a female member of the Christian Church (Rom. 16.1; 1 Cor. 7.15 and 9.5).

⁵⁴ The *Epistle of Barnabas* 4.8 reports that the tablets brought back by Moses from Mount Sinai (Exod. 31.18 or 34.1-4) were smashed, so that Jesus’ will (or covenant) would be sealed in his followers’ hearts rather than in stone. A Syriac text, translated from the Greek, originally written (at the earliest) in the second century A.D., probably in Syria, attributed to Clemens Romanus, and soon to be translated into Latin and several other ancient languages (all of these are now lost), is entitled (in a modern Latin edition) *Testamentum seu verba, quae Dominus Noster ex mortuis resurgens dixit suis sanctis apostolis, quaeque per Clementem Romanum discipulum Petri fuerunt in octo libris scripta*. Only the first two books have survived. The second one contains a series of “praecepta, canones et statuta, quae D.N.J.C. praescripsit circa ordinem baptizandorum” and ends in the form of a legal document: “Hoc testamentum scriptis consignarunt Johannes, Petrus et Mattheus, Hierosolymisque miserunt exemplaria per Dosithaeum, Silla, Magnum et Aquilum, quos elegerunt mittendos ad omnes mansiones. Amen.” Cf. *Testamentum Domini Nostri Jesu Christi*, nunc primum edidit, Latine reddidit et illustravit Ignatius Ephraem II Rahmani (Mainz 1899, repr. Hildesheim 1968).

of his disciples and left them instructions concerning what to do and how to live after his death. Such a belief was expressed in France, for instance, by Guillaume de Guilleville, who wrote, in about 1330, a *Pèlerinage de la Vie Humaine*; and in England in the first half of the 14th century, in a poem entitled *Testamentum Christi*. Jesus tells there how mankind was exiled from Paradise and how he subsequently came to reinstate its inheritance after dying on the Cross.⁵⁵ The notion that Jesus would have left a will rests on the double meaning of the word for Scripture: *testamentum*, in Greek διαθήκη, is either a covenant (Germ. *Bund*, Fr. *alliance*) or a will (*Vermächtnis*, *testament*). A key section of the Epistle to the Hebrews actually makes use of the double-meaning:⁵⁶

(15) And for this cause he is the mediator of the new testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions *that were* under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance.

(16) For where a testament *is*, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator.

(17) For a testament is of force after men are dead: otherwise it is of no strength at all while the testator liveth.⁵⁷

The author of the Epistle to the Hebrews teaches that Jesus Christ had made a new covenant sealed with his blood, giving his own life so that his disciples may inherit eternal life. However, the Church has always worshipped Jesus Christ as the living God who conquered death itself. Thus, opponents of Christianity would have considered the fundamental Christian belief in Jesus' resurrection as utterly inconsistent with the validity of his will (διαθήκη), i.e. the New Testament, which in any case was known to have been written after the earthly death of the assumed testator, insofar as it had actually happened as reported.⁵⁸ Moreover, the rivalry between Jews and Christians concerning the legitimacy of their respective claim for exclusive divine favor had

⁵⁵ Perrow 1914, 687.

⁵⁶ Heb. 9.15-17 and 20; and *Epistle of Barnabas* 6.19 and 13-14. Cf. Moffatt 1979/1986/1914, 127-28, with reference to Gal. 3.15-17 and Lk. 22.29, and bibliography; Michaud 1983; Grässer 1993, 166-75; and Frey 1996.

⁵⁷ King James Version. The New Revised Standard Version lifts any ambiguity: "For this reason he is the mediator of a new covenant, so that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance, because a death has occurred that redeems them from the transgressions under the first covenant. Where a will is involved, the death of the one who made it must be established. For a will takes effect only at death, since it is not in force as long as the one who made it is alive."

⁵⁸ Some people may have questioned the veracity of the very report of Jesus' death on the basis of the disappearance of his corpse shortly after burial; cf. Messadié 1988-1995.

consequences regarding the interpretation of Scripture: righteousness and orthodoxy were the preserve of the legitimate heir, to the exclusion of all other pretenders. The Church has never been shy in using that legal argument to protect its self-proclaimed right to impose its own interpretation of Scripture and to define itself in contrast with what it regards as heresy.⁵⁹

Already in the second century A.D., some gnostic movements showed much interest in the question of God's inheritance, its opacity and its revelation through the Book, in the twofold shape of an edict and a will. A similar position is found in the *Gospel of Truth*, a Valentinian reflection on the Gospel that survived in the Nag Hammadi Library in a Coptic translation of the Greek original.⁶⁰

In later times many Christian writers used the same argument, while turning it upside down: since the Jews do not believe in the coming and death of Jesus as the Messiah, they have no claim to inherit from him and must therefore be rejected. Such a stand has been widely regarded as a reply to an objection raised by Jews in Antiquity.⁶¹ For Pseudo-Barnabas and Pseudo-

⁵⁹ Tert., *De praescriptione haereticorum*, cf. De Labriolle 1947, 132-33.

⁶⁰ *Evangelium Veritatis*, A.3.2 (20.15-21.2): "Just as there lies hidden in a will, before it <is> opened, the fortune of the deceased master of the house, so (it is) with the all, which lay hidden while the Father of the all was invisible, the one who is from himself, from whom all spaces come forth" (transl. G. W. MacRae, in Robinson 1977, 39); cf. also Attridge 1985, 87; and Ménard 1972, 47: "De même que dans un testament (διαθήκη) qui n'a pas encore été ouvert est cachée la fortune (ουσία) du maître de la maison décédé, de même aussi (δέ) le Tout était caché, tant que le Père du Tout était invisible (ἀόρατος), étant un être unique existant par soi, de qui proviennent tous les espaces" with commentary (97-9), and reference to Mk 14:24. Concerning the issue of the inheritance of the Kingdom of Light in Gnostic texts, cf. Schmidt 1905/1954/1962/1981, Index, s.v. *Erbe, Erbteil, erben*.

⁶¹ Commodianus, *Instr.* 1.38; Ambrosius, *Ep.* 75, mostly the third section, and *Ep.* 77 (PL 16.1312-14 et 1218-23); August., *In Ps.* 67.9 et 40; 76.17; 77.44; 88.2.13; *Civ. Dei* 16.34; *Quaest. in Hept.* 1.70; Asterius of Cappadoce, *Hom. 15 in Ps. 5* (PG 40.393 et 396): "Let the testament be brought/established, o Jew! You received it not as a will, but as a deposit. For never does an heir receive an inheritance while the testator is still alive. If he does, he makes the will likely to be suspected, and he is opposed by those who are excluded/disinherited. Therefore, since you received the will in the capacity of archivist (*chartophylax*), produce it so that we know what the testator says about you with witnesses" (Ἐνεχθήτω, ὃ Ἰουδαίε, ἡ διαθήκη. Σὺ ταύτην ἔλαβες οὐχ ὡς σὴν διαθήκην, ἀλλ'ὡς παραθήκην· οὐδέποτε γὰρ κληρονόμος διαθήκην λαμβάνει ζῶντος τοῦ διαθεμένου. Ἐὰν γὰρ λάβῃ, ὑποπτον ποιεῖ τὴν διαθήκην, καὶ ἀντιλέγεται ὑπὸ τῶν ἀποκληρονόμων. Ἐπεὶ οὖν σὺ ὡς χαρτοφύλαξ ἔλαβες τὴν διαθήκην, προένεγγε ταύτην, εἶδωμεν τί λέγει περὶ ὑμῶν ἐπὶ τῶν μαρτύρων ὁ διαθέμενος). Cf. *Sabbat* 116b. The argument is best summarized by Blumenkranz 1946, 170, n. 27: "Bei Ambrosius finden wir hierfür einen Beweis, der so recht dem juristisch geschulten Beamten, der er vor seiner Erhebung zum Bischof war, angemessen ist. Er stützt sich darauf, dass eine Erbschaft nur beim Tod des Erblässers eintreten kann. Da die Juden nicht glauben, dass der geweissagte Messias schon gekommen ist und zum Tode gebracht wurde, können sie auch keine Erbschaft besitzen, gibt es doch keinen Erbantritt bei Lebzeiten des Testators (*epist.* 75). Vermutlich erfolgte aber diese christliche

Cyprianus, the Jews' unworthiness resulted in Jesus' inheritance being shared among Gentiles.⁶² The topic recurs in patristic literature from the mid-second to the late fourth century A.D.,⁶³ when some differing views start being if not voiced, at least heard: in a homily on the parable of the prodigal son (Lk 15.11-32), Augustine suggests that the older son, representing the Jews, had not been disowned, but retained a seat in the Kingdom of God.⁶⁴ And Jerome unsuccessfully calls for the rejection of the ambiguous title 'Testamentum' to refer to Scripture.⁶⁵

Let us assume for the sake of argument that the *Testamentum porcelli* was composed by an opponent of Christianity. This leaves us with two pressing questions: why would the author choose to represent Jesus as a pig, rather than another animal, such as a donkey, a fish, or a lamb, more readily identifiable as Christian animal symbols? and why would it be so crucial to him to stress the lack of legal validity of the will? The answers to these questions may provide the clues needed to identify the profile of the anonymous author of the *Testamentum porcelli*.

Jack-in-the-Box

It is a well-known fact that some ancient cultures,⁶⁶ most notoriously, but not exclusively, Jewish people⁶⁷ and Egyptians,⁶⁸ regarded pigs as unclean animals and strictly prohibited their consumption as food. In the Graeco-Roman world, by contrast, pigs were ubiquitous and most commonly bred for their meat. Anthropologists have pointed out that food is an identity-marker: as the saying goes, "you are what you eat," ("man ist, was man isst" or "l'incorporation fonde l'identité").⁶⁹ Accordingly, a somewhat extreme

Argumentation in Antwort auf den jüdischen Einwurf, man könne nicht solche, die noch leben, beerben...."

⁶² Pseudo-Cyprianus, *Adversus Iudaeos* 6-8 (ed. D. van Damme 1969) 24-26. Cf. also chapters 28, 43, and 61, and supra, nn. 54 and 56.

⁶³ In addition to the evidence provided in the preceding notes, cf. also Tert., *Adv. Marc.* 4.40.4; Cypr., *Testimonia* 1 *passim*, mostly chapter 11; Commodianus, *Carmen Apologeticum* 721-724 and 735-736; Lact., *Div. Inst.* 4.11.2, and mostly 4.20.2-13. Cf. Loi 1976; and Gager 1983, 158.

⁶⁴ August., *De duobus filiis ex Evangelio*; cf. Blumenkranz 1948; and Seager 1952.

⁶⁵ Jer., *In Hier.* 2.98.2 (CCSL 74, p. 111) and 6.26.4 (*ibid.*, p. 319).

⁶⁶ Orth 1921; Toynebee 1973, 131-36; Champlin 1987, 174; Golden 1988; Schaps 1991 and 1996. Cf. also Pastoureaux et al. 1987/1998.

⁶⁷ Lev. 11 and Deut. 14; Plut., *Quaest. Conv.* 4.5. Cf. Schäfer 1997, 66-81; Douglas 1966, ch. 3 ("The Abominations of Leviticus") and 1996/1970, 38-41; Fabre-Vassas 1985, 59: "Dans la logique interne à la culture juive qui a elle-même théorisé ses tabous, le porc fait figure d'aberration taxinomique" as an hybrid animal. Cf. also PGM IV 3078-3080 (abstinence from pork as a prerequisite for controlling a spirit or demon). I have not been able to consult Guardia 1866.

⁶⁸ Hdt 2.47-48; and PGM I 105.

⁶⁹ Fischler 1985, esp. 176-77; and Fabre-Vassas 1994, 108-9 (where the author stresses the change occurring from the Mediaeval period onwards: Jewish people are increasingly identified with pigs).

consequence of a strict observance of dietary laws could make pork-eaters look like pigs to those who abstain from it.

Pigs were also commonly used as sacrificial animals, in honor of Ceres (*porca praecidanea*) or Mars, as part of the so-called *suovetaurilia*,⁷⁰ for purification, atonement, propitiation (in which case the meat was not eaten), or oath-taking. In this final context, the pig was deemed to represent the act of perjury or the perjurer himself, according to Livy.⁷¹

In Irish mythology dismembered pigs were considered to be subject to resurrection if their bones were preserved intact.⁷² Some even thought that slaughtered pigs would return every night, unless their bones were preventively burned. Along the same lines, the ass's resurrection in the above-mentioned *Testamentum asini*, most likely a literary offspring of the *Testamentum porcelli*, suggests that the motif is ancient, though its origin remains unknown.

Let us note that some modern scholars think that early Christians chose at some point to eat pork as a symbolic gesture, marking their desire for a complete separation from their Jewish forebears, allegedly in accordance with an official decision made during a Council that took place in Antioch during the third century A.D.⁷³ During the lengthy process by which the new religion was to differentiate itself from its stock, the reversal of ritual practices, such as the rejection of dietary laws and circumcision, was regarded as a series of significant steps in the transition from the old to the new covenant/Testament.

Some (Jewish?) opponents of early Christianity had reportedly used animal metaphors in their critiques, as exemplified by the references to a donkey-headed god (*Onocoetes*) in Tertullianus' *Ad Nationes* and in the famous Palatin graffito featuring a crucified person with the same anatomical attribute. The device, however, had been previously used against Jews, according to Josephus, Tacitus, and other ancient writers.⁷⁴ Both Jews and non-Jews were

⁷⁰ Cato, *Agr.* 134 and 141; Varro, *Rust.* 2.1.10; and Liv. 1.44.2.

⁷¹ Liv. 1.24.7-8.

⁷² Thompson 1955-58, E32.3; E155.5; and B192.1. Cf. also the puzzling saying reported by Petron., *Sat.* 45: "porcos coctos ambulare."

⁷³ Fabre-Vassas 1994, 13: "En effet, le christianisme recommanda très tôt la consommation du porc «qu'exècre la charnelle synagogue», selon le mot des évêques du concile d'Antioche (III^e siècle)" unfortunately with no reference. Several Church Councils are known to have been held at Antioch in the third and fourth centuries, but none, to my knowledge, seems to have dealt with the issue of dietary laws. However, changes in the relationship between Jews and Christians in this period make it quite plausible that dietary laws, as well as circumcision, would be used as identity-markers. Cf. Novatianus, *De cibis Iudaicis* (CCSL 4, pp. 89-101), who suggests around the middle of the third century that dietary laws have a spiritual rather than literal meaning, in accordance with Rom 7:14.

⁷⁴ Tert., *Nat.* 1.14.2: "Et credidit vulg<us...> Iudaeo. Quod enim aliud genus seminarium est infamiae nostrae?" Cf. also Tert., *Apol.* 16.12; Joseph., *Ap.* 2.80-88; and Tac., *Hist.* 5.3f.

united in lambasting those theriomorphic deities so typical of Egyptian religion.⁷⁵

All things considered, the *Testamentum porcelli* could have been the creation of a highly literate, educated, even sophisticated, Latin-speaking intellectual, pagan or even Jewish (as suggested by the stylistic trait identified as Semitic by G. Scarpato) writer, one quite knowledgeable in various areas of Classical culture—including Roman law—and early Christianity, and most willing to mock the latter's fundamental creed (the promise of Eternal Life after death) and sacrament (the Eucharist). In view of the care the author took to hide the true meaning of his satire—so much indeed that the reader may feel that the present interpretation requires nothing less than an act of faith—it should be concluded that the *Testamentum porcelli* was written at a time when Christianity had not only been tolerated (313), but had become the dominant, official, and exclusive religion of the Roman empire, namely after Theodosius I's ban of all other cults in 391. Consequently, this long-despised text might conceivably be regarded as the only extant polemical work written in Latin by a Jewish author,⁷⁶ and as the lone survivor of a larger ensemble that should have been the response to, or the cause of, the abundant patristic literature *Adversus Iudaeos* produced throughout the Imperial period.⁷⁷

Objections

At this point the reader will have raised some objections, the most important and unavoidable of which is that there is no sign whatsoever that anybody in the last 17 centuries has ever read the *Piglet's Will* as a Jewish anti-Christian pamphlet. From an historiographical perspective it would be wiser to settle

⁷⁵ The *International Herald Tribune* of 9 Jan. 1998, p. 10, reported that a young Jewish Israeli nationalist of Russian descent had been given a two-year jail sentence for posting in Hebron (in the occupied territories of the West Bank) pictures of the Prophet Muhammad with a pig's head. Judge Zvi Segel, of the Jerusalem District Court, found Mrs. Tatyana Suskin guilty of a racist crime, which he regarded as reminiscent of Nazi caricatures of Jews.

⁷⁶ Other Latin Jewish texts (more apologetic than polemical) have been preserved: the *Letter of Hannas to Seneca* was written between the reign of Nero and 325 and dealt with traditional Roman religions and philosophical thought rather than Christianity; cf. Bischoff 1984, 1-9 (text p. 6-9); Momigliano 1985; Cracco Ruggini 1988; Wischmeyer 1990 (with German translation); the *Letter of Mardocheai to Alexander* (dated later than the first-century-A.D. philosopher Philo of Alexandria, with traces of gnostic influence); cf. Steffens 1975, 208-19 (ch. 134); Siegert 1992, II:46; and the so-called *Collatio Mosaicarum et Romanarum Legum* (cf. *FIRA* II² pp. 543-89), dated to the second half of the fourth century, “the last major Jewish apologetic work to be written in Antiquity” according to Rutgers 1995, 210-59, esp. 252-53. Let us add here the work attributed to Ambrosiaster, whom some scholars regard as a Jew who had temporarily converted to Christianity and back, cf. Cross and Livingston 1997, 51. Concerning the lack of Jewish literature originating from the Diaspora in Antiquity, cf. Millar 1992, esp. 110.

⁷⁷ Cf. on the subject the impressive compilation by Schreckenberg 1995/1982.

for a less controversial interpretation, and suggest that the *Testamentum porcelli* was created in an academic context—for instance in the famous law school of Berytus, where classes were taught in Latin at least until the time of Jerome if not later, and where students were at times notoriously rambunctious⁷⁸—by some anonymous law student bent on teasing his teachers with a demonstration of the uselessness of their art and dedication in the form of an extensive collection of blatant blunders in legal technicalities. It would be easy to demonstrate that those few autobiographical details on which my sketch of the piglet (cf. supra) is based are obviously contradicted by other elements, in equal or superior numbers, that admittedly do not fit the proposed identification. However, such a stance would miss the point: the *Testamentum porcelli* is as much a literary work as an historical document, and its interpretation cannot be hogged by those who narrowly favor an historical approach.

Historians are supposed to aim at reconstructing the past as objectively and impartially as possible, and to support their discourse with the widest—possible or necessary—array of documentary evidence, to be matched against criteria of plausibility or probability.⁷⁹ Literary critics, on the other hand, can and must free themselves from such a restraining *grille de lecture* for an alternative one of their own choice or making, defined by their personal literary aspirations on the basis of precise and predetermined parameters. In what may have been his swan song, the late J.J. Winkler has shown the relevance of such a consciously applied approach in his interpretation of Longus' *Daphnis and Chloe*, a charming pastoral Greek novel dated to the second century A.D. in which lurks the rather crude and bloody report of the sexual awakening of two teenagers overwhelmingly guided by their natural instincts. Aware of the fact that his unorthodox interpretation was likely to raise some eyebrows, Winkler carefully warned his audience that beyond the question of credibility and acceptability of his reading of the text stood a more crucial methodological issue:

whether readers should simply be trying to reproduce the author's meaning (if he had one—that is, if he had *one*) as the goal. Should we concede that much authority to the writers we read? If our critical faculties are placed solely in the service of recovering and reanimating an author's meaning, then we have already committed ourselves to the premises and protocols of the past.... This above all we must not do. The ambiguities and contradictions within the... ideology [of the text]—

⁷⁸ Collinet 1925, 99-111 and 211-18, with reference to *Constitutio* "Omnem" 9-10 of Justinianus (= *Dig.*, Preface) and to Kugener 1904-1905, esp. 354-56 (whose evidence concerning Berytus is limited to the late fifth and early sixth centuries).

⁷⁹ Morley 1999 is quite inspiring in this regard.

whether they derive from the author's intention or from internal inconsistencies in the dominant cultural discourse of his age—afford us an opportunity to become resisting readers in the complex guerilla fighting of cultural studies and an occasion to struggle against the tacit, conventional, and violent embrace in which we are held by the past.⁸⁰

However, the past is not evil *per se*, as opposed to the reader's present time, and the latter's freedom becomes real only if and when his interpretation is not constrained by the author's actual or assumed intention. While the reader's values most often shape his reading, there is no reason why his cultural and emotional background would not entitle him to construct his own hermeneutical lens, based or not on his own historical perception of the time when the text was allegedly composed, or—why not?—of any other period deemed relevant or inspiring. Such an approach (called “reading against the grain”) is totally justified regarding what Winkler identifies as a “problem text” (in contrast with an “authoritative text”), “designed to provoke rather than to declare, so that the whole question of finding authoritative theses or perspectives may not arise” (*ibid.*). Everyone could agree on the fact that the *Testamentum porcelli* is a “problem text.”

The approach used in the first part of this paper is the result of a complex construct. Based on various methods of analysis applied to a wide and heterogeneous selection of material, it combines the results obtained through philological, literary, comparative, and theological studies in order to identify the type of interpretation brought about by the use of the predefined lens. Concretely speaking, I suggested earlier that the *Testamentum porcelli* is either some kind of a parodistic, even carnivalesque conundrum, or a fable, the moral of which is missing or still to be written. The identification of its author and of its protagonist rests on a) a retroactive reading of the text,⁸¹ as foreshadowing the well-established mediaeval genre of the literary/animal will; and b) on the awareness of the relevance, both in the Middle Ages and in Antiquity, of the theological debate regarding the testament (will/covenant) as a literary device used by both Jews and Christians in order to construct their identities as two distinct cultural and religious groups. The study of the parody of religion in mediaeval literatures⁸² induced me to look for a counterpart in late Antiquity, within a different political and religious context. The next and last step (*infra*) consists in reconstructing the causes and

⁸⁰ Winkler 1990, ch. 4, 101-26 (“The Education of Chloe: Hidden Injuries of Sex”); citations p. 126 and note. Cf. also Cooper 1996, 65: “What we know about how readers construe meaning from texts supports the idea that they may find a message very different from what the author intended” and n. 41, with ref. to Culler 1982. Cf. also Culler 1997, esp. Chapter 4.

⁸¹ Labre and Soler 1995, 45.

⁸² Cf. esp. Bayless 1996.

consequences of such a reading of the text within its *Sitz im Leben* and the conditions surrounding its creation. Historians may well be reluctant to accept this unorthodox method of making up a ‘document’,⁸³ but should at the same time think of the benefit to be derived from it. Instead of uncovering facts or shedding light onto an historical event or phenomenon, the text—despite its status of fake ‘document’—will help focus the debate, widen the perspective, and extend and diversify the list of questions raised by or regarding ‘real’ (meaning, viewed as more legitimate) documents.

Paradoxically, “reading against the grain” is not so anachronistic an approach as it may sound. Some classical authors, Augustan poets and late antique prose writers, had already resorted to it, as Catherine Edwards shows in her reading of parts of Ovid’s exile poetry:

Tristia 2 seeks to persuade its addressee that works of literature and arts, rituals and monuments, rarely succeed in having only the consequences their creators intended, in being used only in the ways they foresaw. The readings of a poem (the author of the *Ars amatoria* argues in self-defence) cannot be controlled by the author; the interpretations of a monument cannot be controlled by the builder. Thus Ovid artfully ‘misreads’ the Augustan city; the sober monuments of *Roma*, celebrations of great victories on the battlefield, were always liable to be inverted and appropriated for Rome’s mirror image and secret name, *amor*—or for other purposes.⁸⁴

What Ovid intentionally contrives in a subtle way in *Tristia* 2 will be explicitly accepted in Augustine’s *Confessions*, Book 12, as an unavoidable feature of any act of reading:

Quid, inquam, mihi obest, si aliud ego sensero, quam sensit alius eum sensisse, qui scripsit?... Dum ergo quisque conatur id sentire in scripturis sanctis, quod in eis sensit ille qui scripsit, quid mali est, si hoc sentiat, quod tu, lux omnium veridicarum mentium, ostendis verum esse, etiamsi non hoc sensit ille, quem legit, cum et ille verum nec tamen hoc senserit?

Why, I say, is it detrimental to me, if my understanding is different from someone else’s regarding the understanding of the author?... Therefore, while everyone tries to understand the Holy Scriptures in the way meant by their author, what is wrong with accepting the meaning that Thou, the

⁸³ Crook 1997, 288: “Could it not, furthermore, conceivably be the case that our present-day leaders of scholarship see more of, and more in, these alleged symbolic interrelations than the ancients did? If the present-day answer to that is ‘Never mind what *they* saw or failed to see’, that may be a proper answer in terms of aesthetics, but it can scarcely be a proper one in terms of history.”

⁸⁴ Edwards 1996, 25.

light of all truthfull minds, showeth to be true, even though the author has missed it without straying away from the truth.⁸⁵

While Ovid consciously and willingly distorts the meaning of textual (or visual) documents to bestow on them a new, albeit opposite one, Augustine wants to believe in truth in the text reaching beyond the author, a transcendental truth that the reader can and must retrieve without tackling the problem of the author's truthfulness. In both cases, the text has more than one meaning, and this polysemy calls for the reader to search for the true one, or for any one, to be squeezed out or shaped for a specific purpose.

The Jewish Anti-Christian Counterattack

Literary and historical approaches assist each other, as textual interpretation always rests on, and is conditioned by, predefined methodological principles which do not necessarily yield results grounded in, or even remotely concerned with, history. The issue of historicity creeps back into the foreground when the reader is bound to check the validity of his exegesis against objections raised by himself or others, thereby achieving the desired result of enlarging and renewing the list of questions asked in, by, and about the text. To avoid the trap of circular reasoning it is important never to call on the text for answers, parallels, or illustrations, but to use it exclusively for the purpose of formulating new questions.

In that respect, if the *Testamentum porcelli* is indeed to be read as a Jewish anti-Christian pamphlet, created in the fourth century, how can we explain that no other text of this kind has ever been handed down to us? The usual answer⁸⁶ is nothing but a myth: Jewish people would have universally refrained from engaging in the polemic started by the Christians and attested throughout patristic literature, specifically in those works entitled *Adversus Iudaeos*. In my opinion, this position is little short of being stereotypical: how on earth would one group of people have been able to maintain a single front across the ancient world, for so long, and with no exception? Besides, ancient sources are quite clear on this point: some Jews reportedly spread rumors about Jesus Christ and questioned his claim to the status of Messiah on the basis of his death.⁸⁷ According to Jean Juster,

⁸⁵ August., *Conf.* 12.18.

⁸⁶ Cf., for instance, Rokeah 1982.

⁸⁷ Paul 1985, followed by Feldman 1993, 504, n. 46 and 1988 (*non vidi*); Horbury 1972, esp. 458: "We may conclude that Carthaginian Jews argued against Christianity. The Christological direction of their polemic is paralleled, for instance, in Smyrna and in later Africa." Origen, *Contra Celsum*, esp. 1.52; 55; and 57 on the Jews' φιλονεικία (Mt. 27.63; Jn. 7.12; Justin, *Dial.* 69.7); Lods 1941, 17, n. 27, cited in Borret 1967, 281, n. 2; Clark 1986, 386-427, esp. 391 et 416, n. 47, citing Kimelman

Aphraate [† 345] nous transmet même un abondant matériel, authentique, de polémique anti-chrétienne juive, que nous ne trouvons chez les Pères de l'Église de l'Empire romain que par bribes dispersées, et, chose fort importante, en même temps qu'il nous révèle ainsi l'unité de cette polémique dans toute la Diaspora, il supplée, en quelque sorte, à la perte des oeuvres qui contenaient cette polémique... Aphraate se sert des méthodes juives.⁸⁸

The Rabbinic literature attests to the liveliness of the Jewish anti-Christian discourse through its many references to *Minim*.⁸⁹ Juster also suggests that Jews from Persia had taken over from the Jews of the Roman empire and engaged in that polemic “savamment élaborée et répandue” after the latter had been intimidated by persecutions at the hands of their Christian opponents. Could the absence of Jewish texts in Latin from the Roman period be explained by the repression and systematic destruction of all polemical works in the fourth century and later?⁹⁰

Fear of a bloody Christian reaction could also explain the overly cryptic nature of the satire supposedly comprised in the *Testamentum porcelli*. As Christianity went from the status of tolerated religion to that of the official one, its adherents undoubtedly gained in confidence towards their opponents, Pagans at first, Jews later on. After the emperor Julian's attempt to restore pagan cults in 361-363, the tone of the debate between religious groups probably was turned up a notch. Not surprisingly, this led to abuse by the dominant persuasion and Theodosius I eventually had to rein in some Christian communities, reminding them in 393 that Judaism had not been outlawed;⁹¹ yet, this did not stop Theodosius himself from cracking down on Jews occasionally. In 404 Honorius ruled that Jews would be banned from holding public office (“omni militia”).⁹² In the early fifth century they were repeatedly suspected of being agitators, of allegedly burning the effigy of

1980; Hulen 1932; Ps.-August., *Altercatio Ecclesiae et Synagogae* (= PL 42.1133); *Altercatio Simonis Iudaei et Theopili Christiani* (PL 20.1165-1182, early fifth century); Krauss and Horbury 1996, 5-13 (“Rabbinic Apologetic”) and 201-61 (“The Jewish Polemists of the Middle Ages”); August., *In Ps. 88* 2.13 (PL 37.1139); *Civ. Dei* 17.18.2 (CSEL 40.2, p. 255). Cf. Blumenkranz 1958, esp. 227; Gager 1983, 158 and 295, n. 62, with reference to Jer., *Catechesis* 13.7 (PL 33.779-782). According to Jerome and Cyril of Jerusalem, Jews were always keen on debating Christians. Cf. Juster 1914, 53-54, n. 4, with many references.

⁸⁸ Juster 1914, 61.

⁸⁹ Simon 1948, *passim*.

⁹⁰ Speyer 1981, 120-84, esp. 134-37 and 161-64.

⁹¹ *Cod. Theod.* 16.8.9 (393): “Iudaeorum sectam nulla lege prohibitam satis constat.” Cf. Linder 1987, 189-91; and Millar 1992, 116-17, whereas all forms of pagan sacrifices had been forbidden (*Cod. Theod.* 16.10.10 et 12).

⁹² *Cod. Theod.* 16.8.16.

Hamman on a cross (in mockery of Christ) during Purim in 408, and of crucifying a Christian child at Inmestar in Syria in 415.⁹³ A year later (416/417) the status of Judaism officially changed from *religio* to *superstitio*.⁹⁴

If the circumstances did not permit open criticism any more, why not resort to more cryptic ways of voicing one's opinion, even at the obvious risk of not being understood? To go one step further, we cannot even rule out the possibility of a private joke on the part of the author, not unlike this anonymous scribe from Karanis in the Fayum who may have wittingly cited a typically Callimachean word in an account list dated to A.D. 172 and had to wait for Herbert C. Youtie's astuteness to provoke a smile:

For us, however, these 'names' resurrect an anonymous but well delineated personality. Among the clerks in the tax bureau was one whose role as *érudit manqué* comes through to us even after so long a time. The linguistic facility, the literary culture once so promising and now so pointless, the trivial display for no eyes but his own, the light and barely sarcastic touch—they are all there. And what could be more satisfying to a tax clerk with pretensions to learning than borrowing from Callimachus furtively inserted into a gigantic money register, where no one would ever notice it?⁹⁵

As a matter of fact, it may even be suggested that in this regard the author of the *Testamentum porcelli* fitted in one of the most authentic traditions of Latin poetry. Thus, Propertius had deceptively expressed his reproof of the Augustan regime with the composition of *Elegia* 4.6, an aetiological poem described by Gordon Williams as “one of the most ridiculous poems in the Latin language”⁹⁶ and construed by John P. Sullivan as the very proof of a simulated, intentional, and meaningful incompetence:

A case may therefore be made that Book 4 is in fact Propertius' most subtly anti-Augustan production, in which he *proves* that he is not suited to even the most artistically congenial way of supporting the programme of the regime. The strange, *deliberately* or *unavoidably*, odd poem on

⁹³ *Cod. Theod.* 16.8.18 and Socrates, *HE* 7.16 (*PG* 67.760).

⁹⁴ *Cod. Theod.* 16.8.23 and 16.9.4. Cf. Linder 1987, 57-58.

⁹⁵ Youtie 1970/1973. The wordplay rests on the use of the rare Greek word [ἄ]νδίκτης, attested only in the quotation of a verse by Callimachus in Poll., *Onom.* 7.114 (= frg. 233 Schneider), confirmed by a papyrological fragment (*PSI* 1218, verse 33). It cannot be ruled out, however, that the famous papyrologist had been the victim of some kind of delusion.

⁹⁶ Williams 1962, 43.

Actium (4.6 at the very centre of the collection) is the final confirmation of his point.⁹⁷

I would even stress that the author of the *Testamentum porcelli* turns out to be somewhat more sophisticated than Propertius in his censure, in that he assumedly offers a strong rebuttal of Christian attacks against the Jews, as the latter were often blamed for having a limited understanding of Scripture. Justin, in his *Dialogus cum Tryphone*, explains this shortcoming as a result of adopting the wrong hermeneutic approach,⁹⁸ since the prophets had spoken through types (i.e., persons or things believed to foreshadow others) and parables so as to be understood only by a few enlightened insiders. The author of the *Testamentum porcelli* may very well have tried to ape the prophets, as he knew all too well that the hermeneutics preferred by the Christians was itself of Jewish origin. Thus, ancient rabbis prescribed that no detail of the text could be ignored or rejected as insignificant or unintended, and they were convinced that a specific meaning was hidden in each and every ritual, story, command, word, location, action, gesture, name, shape, and letter. Consequently, Jerome had written early in his career, between 386 and 392, treatises on the meaning of names, such as a *Liber de nominibus Hebraicis* (PL 23.711-858) and a *Liber de situ et nominibus locorum Hebraicorum* (PL 23.858-928). In those the monk of Bethlehem was resorting to a pseudo-scientific method without much regard for philological accuracy, as he was trying to extract the symbolic meaning of biblical characters through the interpretation of their personal names.⁹⁹ Finally, let us note that the author of the *Testamentum porcelli*, in addition to imitating the Christians by employing a device that they (wrongly) considered to be uniquely their own—and doing so with a skill that obviously surpassed that of the Christians themselves—ultimately betrays his cultural and religious identity with his very choice of a genre that was regarded as typically, though not exclusively, Jewish in the Hellenistic and Roman periods: the literary will.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁷ Sullivan 1976, 72.

⁹⁸ Justin, *Dial.* 90.2.

⁹⁹ Blumenkranz 1946, 46.

¹⁰⁰ Cf. for instance the *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs* (a Greek translation of the second half of the first century B.C., from a Hebrew and/or Aramaic original, both attested at Qumran); the *Testament of Moses* (a Latin translation of a Greek version going back to a Hebrew original written between A.D. 7 and 30 by a quietist Essen); the *Testament of Job* (a complementary rendition of the Greek version of the Book of Job, later than the *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs*, which the *Testament of Job*, probably written in Egypt at the end of the first century A.D., uses as a model); and the *Testament of Abraham* (with both a short and a long recension, the earlier of which was probably written in Egypt around the end of the first or at the beginning of the second century A.D.), to which was added, to form kind of a trilogy, a *Testament of Isaac* and a *Testament of Jacob*, both preserved in Coptic. Cf. Dupont-Sommer and Philonenko 1987, lxxv-lxxxi and 811-944; lxxxv-lxxxviii and 993-

If Jerome had been aware of the fact that the *Testamentum porcelli* could be read as an attack against the faith he had spent his life defining, defending, and disseminating, how would he have felt knowing that this text would owe its survival almost exclusively to the negative judgment he had expressed about it on two separate occasions? Whatever its intrinsic literary worth, the *Testamentum porcelli* derived much of its standing from the prestige of the Church doctor who had deigned to acknowledge its existence. Combined with the propensity of scholars for substantiating the most marginal remarks, and of scribes for filling blank spaces at the end of rolls or codices with unrelated material, this fact had the unforeseen effect of producing a manuscript transmission totally unwarranted by the aesthetic value usually assigned by earlier literary critics to the *Piglet's Will*:

*At poteras, inquis, melius mala ferre silendo
et tacitus casus dissimulare tuos.*

But, sayeth you, it may have been better to bear your adversity in silence,
and quietly conceal your misfortune.¹⁰¹

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1016; cxxv-cxxix and 1603-45; cxxix-cxxxii and 1647-90. Let us point out that these works often display the same structure as the *Testamentum porcelli*, with a short narrative providing a context for the final arrangements (autobiography, moral exhortations, and predictions) which make up most of the text, to be ended with the *cura corporis*. Let us note also that Abraham died at a very old age (999 years), six months younger than the piglet. The last chapter (19) of the *Testament of Levi* records some striking peculiarity in the list of witnesses, comprising the Lord, his angels, the testator's sons, and the testator himself (!).

¹⁰¹ Ov., *Tr.* 5.1.49-50.

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