

## Abstract

While nineteenth-century scholars debated whether the fragmentary *Satyrica* of Petronius should be regarded as a traditional or an original work in ancient literary history, twentieth-century Petronian scholarship tended to take for granted that the author was a unique innovator and his work a synthetic composition with respect to genre. The consequence of this was an excessive emphasis on authorial intention as well as a focus on parts of the text taken out of the larger context, which has increased the already severe state of fragmentation in which today's reader finds the *Satyrica*.

The present study offers a reading of the *Satyrica* as the mimetic performance of its fictional *auctor* Encolpius; as an ancient "road novel" told from memory by a Greek exile who relates how on his travels through Italy he had dealings with people who told stories, gave speeches, recited poetry and made other statements, which he then weaves into his own story and retells through the performance technique of vocal impersonation. The result is a skillfully made narrative fabric, a travelogue carried by a desultory narrative voice that switches identity from time to time to deliver discursively varied and often longish statements in the *personae* of encountered characters.

This study also makes a renewed effort to reconstruct the story told in the *Satyrica* and to explain how it relates to the identity and origin of its fictional *auctor*, a poor young scholar who volunteered to act the scapegoat in his Greek home city, Massalia (ancient Marseille), and was driven into exile in a bizarre archaic ritual. Besides relating his erotic suffering on account of his love for the beautiful boy Giton, Encolpius intertwines the various discourses and character statements of his narrative into a subtle brand of satire and social criticism (e.g. a critique of ancient capitalism) in the style of Cynic popular philosophy.

Finally, it is argued that Petronius' *Satyrica* is a Roman remake of a lost Greek text of the same title and belongs—together with Apuleius' *Metamorphoses*—to the oldest type of Greco-Roman novel, known to antiquity as Milesian fiction.