

Gareth and Me: A Petronian Pilgrimage

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‘Oft in danger, yet alive
We are come to Thirtyfive...’
(Samuel Johnson, *To Mrs Thrale,
On Her Completing Her Thirty-Fifth Year*, 1777)

It was 35 years ago (almost twice the distance between Sergeant Pepper and the Beatles) that I scraped into the first volume of the *Petronian Society Newsletter*, albeit with false initial, courtesy of a review of *Fellini-Satyricon*, plus an *adnotatiuncula* on Trimalchio’s *aper pilleatus* (1,2, 1970, 24). To this event I trace back my *amicitia* with, and *tirocinium* under, Gareth Schmeling, the Petronian Arbiter of us all, soon to consolidate this title with his forthcoming (stupendous – I’ve just read the entire manuscript) Commentary and *OCT* of the *Satyricon*, the latter a welcome change from the increasingly unnecessary stream of revised Müllers.

For the next issue (2,1, 1971, 4–5), our *Magister* gave me bigger game to stalk, requiring a review of Kenneth Rose’s *The Date and Author of the Satyricon* (Leiden: Brill, 1971) and a critique of Averil Cameron’s ‘Myth and Meaning in Petronius,’ (*Latomus* 29, 1970, 397–425) with its considerable emphasis on *Ira Priapi*, subsuming her previous ‘Plato and Habinnas,’ (*CQ* 63, 1969, 367–370), in which the late arrival of Habinnas at the *Cena* is understood as a conscious evocation of Alcibiades’ irruption upon Plato’s *Symposium*.

Ab Iove principium... Or, rather, Juno. Over the years I have amiably disagreed with Averil over the early Byzantine poets Agathias and Corippus. Not quite another story. They were contemporaries of Justinian’s antiquarian bureaucrat John Lydus, author of one of the few surviving ancient judgments passed on Petronius:

Rhinthon was the first to write comedy in hexameters. Lucilius the Roman took his start from him and became the first to write comedies in heroic verse. After him, and those who came after him, whom the Romans call *satyrici*, the later poets, because they had emulated the style of Cratinus and Eupolis and had used Rhinthon's meters and the caustic railleries of those mentioned above, strengthened the satiric comedy. Horace did not deviate from the art, but Persius in his desire to imitate the poet Sophron surpassed Lycophron's obscurity. Turnus, Juvenal, and Petronius, however, because they had capriciously made abusive attacks, marred the satiric norm (*De Magistratibus* 1,41).

I here extrapolate from a more detailed analysis,¹ for which permission I am very grateful to myself. This item is frequently missing from editorial registers of *testimonia*, e.g. John Ferguson's *Juvenal* and Martin Smith's *Cena*. Edward Courtney² dismisses it as 'unimportant' – well, at least he noticed it.

Our extract postludes a paragraph on the structure and content on Roman stage drama, comic and tragic, with predictable lament on its latter-day decline into 'dumbed-down' mime for the masses. No mention of Menippus. The Roman writers from Lucilius to Juvenal are all in correct chronological order. Then comes Petronius – plain Petronius, no attempt to Hellenise 'Arbiter.' Does this mean Lydus anticipated a Paratore-like Antonine dating? Did any person in late antiquity know (or care?) when the *Satyrica* was actually written?

John Malalas' demented account (*Chronicle* 10, 250–258, ed. Dindorf, Bonn, 1831) of Nero ('Well-disciplined...poisoned by Hellenic priests...stabbed by Galba...died at the age of 69...') shows of what ignorance Lydus' age was capable. Yet his Epicurean Nero comports Petronian interest, as does the compliment to 'the most learned Lucan, great and renowned among the Romans.'

The other Roman writers are all poets. Are we to infer that Lydus knew Petronius only as a versifier, perhaps via some prototype of the *Anthologia Latina*? As Carney³ says of the *De Magistratibus*, 'A prominent feature of the work is epigram-collecting; John's quotations of famous verses anonymously circulated and of notorious lampoons, which he obviously collected,

¹ Baldwin 2003, 1–3.

² Courtney 2001, 19.

³ Carney 1971, 55.

foreshadow Agathias' collection in 570....There must have been a vogue for such collections.'

Whatever does Lydus' assault on Turnus/Juvenal/Petronius mean? What sort of attacks? How does abuse mar the satiric norm? It was, after all, the norm of Byzantine satire. According to Juvenal's scholiasts, Turnus was a freedman whose licensed satire earned him influence (some kind of *Arbiter*?) at the courts of Titus and Domitian. Sidonius Apollinaris (*Poems* 9, 266–267, brackets him with his tragedian brother Memor, Ennius, Catullus, Aruntius Stella, Martial, and – Petronius.

Whom is Petronius supposed to be abusing? Assuming Lydus to have known the *Satyrica* – his complaint hardly suits the separately transmitted poems – was he anticipating the modern view of Trimalchio as ersatz Nero? His attitude may be compared and contrasted with that of another much-disregarded Petronian *testimonium* from late antiquity, Marius Mercator (early 5th century), *Contra Julianum* 9–11: *Erubescere, infelicissime, in tanta linguae scurrilis vel potius mimicae obscenitate, namque Martialis et Petronii solus ingenia superasti...eleganter, scurra, loqueris more tuo et more quo theatrum Arbitri Valeriique detrusti*. His choice of *theatrum* will attract those moderns who have interpreted the *Cena* in such terms, while *eleganter* may well invoke the Tacitean *arbiter elegantiae*.

The extent of Lydus' Latin is a matter of vigorous debate. I here trim it to Bücheler's contention, supported by Rose (6): *neque satiras ipsas umquam inspexerat*. Yet, he has accurate references by name to specific verses of Juvenal and Persius (*De Magistratibus* 1,19–20). Also, the widespread assumption that John took his knowledge second-hand may itself argue for a decent command of Latin: how many Greek texts would mention the likes of Turnus – or Petronius?

Thanks to papyri, we know that Juvenal was student fodder in 5th century Antinoupolis. Who knows, Petronians may live to see the day when their author emerges from the sands of Egypt. What an update that would make for these adumbrations, also a dramatic elimination of the titular question mark from my 'Petronius in Byzantium?' (*PSN* 20, 1990, 9–10).

A century or so earlier, over in the West, Macrobius (*Somnium Scipionis* 1,2,8) provides what Courtney (*loc. cit.*) dubs a 'more important remark,' bracketing Petronius with Apuleius as a writer of *argumenta fictis casibus amatorum referta*, another *testimonium* editorially ignored by the likes of Smith.

Late antiquity, then, offers us the choice of a proto-Jonathan Swift or Henry Miller. Getting back to the bigger-ticket issues of Cameron and the *Satyrice*, a simple-looking question with potentially-explosive consequences arises. Just how are we meant to take the novel? A satire on real people, a partial *roman à clef*? Or a novel, *tout court*, be it loosely episodic or with coherent plot, a work of literature to be read in purely literary terms? Joel Relihan⁴ has denied that Petronius is a moralist, *contra* Arrowsmith⁵ and Highet⁶ with his risible ‘It is possible that Petronius wrote the book in order to discourage Nero from becoming a beatnik’ – the young emperor already was a weekend one.

The purely literary reckoning puts Petronius closer to Apuleius and the Greek novelists. Does anyone delve for real-life individual targets in Hellenic fiction or the *Metamorphoses*? As Peter Walsh puts it: ‘The audience envisaged by Apuleius was one of highly educated Romans. As in Petronius the texture of the story can be highly literary, evoking a wide range of Greek and Latin authors for the pleasure of sophisticated readers.’⁷

Charles Witke,⁸ for one, has denied that the *Satyrice* is a satire. The Petronian bibliographer Stephen Gaselee⁹ opined that ‘he wrote, I believe, purely for his own pleasure, not intending to use the lash of satire against anybody or anything.’ Viewed thus, was there ever any point in combing it for allusions to Nero to give us a date, whether or not Trimalchio is (again to exploit the Beatles) Nero in disguise with diamonds? I say this with feelings mixed to a fine purée, being guilty of excavating for such over a 35-year span, recently chuffed to see that the distinguished Roman historian Edward Champlin¹⁰ has accepted my old notion¹¹ that *Satyrice* 53 refers to the conflagration of A.D. 64. But, it is a possibility that may have to be faced.

The notion of the wrath of Priapus as the novel’s main thread dates back to Elimar Klebs.¹² I first questioned it in my Cameronian critique, later expanding the doubts in ‘*Ira Priapi*’ (*CP* 68, 1973, 294–296), an effusion that

⁴ Relihan 1993, 251 n. 32.

⁵ Arrowsmith 1966.

⁶ Highet 1962, 114–115; cf. Highet 1941, 176–194.

⁷ Walsh 1983, 103.

⁸ Witke 1970, 166–167.

⁹ Gaselee 1910, 7.

¹⁰ Champlin 2003, 197, 324 n. 51.

¹¹ Baldwin 1976, 145.

¹² Klebs 1889, 623–635.

seems to have convinced no one except myself. Gareth, who somewhere amiably defined me as ‘a good Missouri sceptic’ for holding this view, awards me no supporters in his Commentary. Nor does Amy Richlin,¹³ in whose Priapic volume I scraped a footnote, politely dismissing the article as ‘not convincing.’ W. H. Parker,¹⁴ editor of the poetic *Priapea*, brackets Concetto Marchesi¹⁵ as fellow-villain. The argument nowadays tends to be more evaded than invaded. Martin Smith’s ‘Bibliography of Petronius (1945–1982)’ registers only a single item on the critical passage (139,2), namely a textual corruption suggested by Hans Fuchs.¹⁶

Even the new electronic deity, Google, discloses but 17 sites, the majority repetitively alluding to my own thing. Courtney, not mentioning it, sums up the current state of play: ‘The upshot is that there is enough to make it probable that the wrath of Priapus was indeed an objective motivating force in the wanderings and tribulations of Encolpius.’

At least he says ‘probable.’ I would have been quite happy to stand alone. But there has never been a confident consensus. Outright opposition to Klebs presently emerged from Schissil von Fleschenberg.¹⁷ Hans Herter¹⁸ in his classic study of Priapus weighed his Petronian role in an Appendix, returning a Scottish verdict of Not Proven. Both Loeb editors, Heseltine and Warmington, would go no further than ‘There is a hint, no more, that the wrath of Priapus was the thread on which the whole *Satyricon* was based.’ Michael Coffey¹⁹ was equally cautious. John Sullivan,²⁰ a proponent, fairly-mindedly conceded that ‘This has been a much-debated point.’ Gilbert Highet²¹ felt that ‘This theme appears too seldom to make that notion convincing, and the book has few other traits which can be referred to epic.’ Highet is perhaps not always a welcome ally, and one could rejoin to his latter contention that epic can be picaresque and picaresque epic; but his lingering *auctoritas* encourages the enrolling of him as a witness.

¹³ Richlin 1983, 254 n. 52.

¹⁴ Parker 1988, 24.

¹⁵ Marchesi 1921, 42.

¹⁶ Fuchs 1959, 57–82.

¹⁷ Schissil von Fleschenberg 1911, 264–273.

¹⁸ Herter 1932, 315–317.

¹⁹ Coffey 1976, 185, 267 n. 39.

²⁰ Sullivan 1968, 42 n. 1.

²¹ Highet 1962, 114.

The passage (to reprise and expand my original argument) most often cited in support of the theory is the short poem (*Sat.* 139) declaimed by (presumably, but we can't be sure) Encolpius, ending *Me quoque per terras, per cani Nereos aequor/ Hellespontiaci sequitur gravis ira Priapi*. These last two lines in fact prove nothing. The bulk of the poem forms a register of divine angers against humans in epic themes; the speaker (I repeat, whoever he is) is doing no more than canonise himself as an Homeric hero. The mock literary flavour is given added spice by the last line's deliberate recollection of Virgil's *Hellespontiaci servet tutela Priapi* (*Georgics* 4,111). Nor is it easy to think of weaker evidence from which to reconstruct the basic plot (if there is one) than the various poetic outbursts that stud the novel. What fun one could have applying this procedure to some of the flourishes of (say) Eumolpus or Trimalchio.

The wrath of Priapus is the most obvious conceit for use by a randy picaresque hero temporarily frustrated by unwonted impotence. This condition, often occasioned by magic, was a common literary theme, especially (of course) in amatory poetry, for easy instance Ovid, *Amores* 3,7. Elsewhere (*Sat.* 23), Encolpius was assaulted *diu multumque frustra* by a *cinaedus* (significantly, or by chance, an episode also occurring in a sequence marked by textual corruption and the hovering presence of Priapus), and Eumolpus (*Sat.* 86) was almost reduced to limpness by the demands of his lusty young catamite. It makes as much sense to say that Petronius was parodying (or simply using) a stock erotic theme as to believe that he was sustaining a parody of the wrath of Poseidon.

True, Encolpius killed a sacred goose of Priapus (*Sat.* 137), and had earlier (*Sat.* 17) seen something he should not have in the god's shrine. So Quartilla claimed, and he does not deny it. But he does reassure Quartilla that he will not betray the secret, exhibiting (if only for reasons of self-preservation) more respect than scorn for Priapus. Nor is the sacred goose the *anser* to our question. Unless there is a great deal missing from the text, the goose slaughter is too close to his poetic lament to give literal truth to the image of Priapic anger pursuing Encolpius across the seas.

Stress is often laid on the episode (*Sat.* 104) in which Encolpius' presence on Lichas' ship is betrayed by a dream in which Priapus appears to denounce Encolpius' whereabouts. It is less commonly pointed out that Tryphaena immediately caps this by reporting her dream in which the presence aboard of Giton was revealed by a picture of Neptune. This balance of appa-

ritions obviates any assumption that Priapus betrayed Encolpius because of his recurrent wrath. Petronius is merely playing with the stock theme of revelatory dreams in epic literature, for example the rash of them in *Aeneid* 2.

The fragment preserved by Sidonius Apollinaris in which the Arbiter is connected with the gardens of Massilia and called *Hellespontiaco parem Priapo* is also too isolated to prove anything. Certainly, it does not suggest any offense to the god. There is, in fact, no less likely candidate for his anger than Encolpius. His sight of what went on in the shrine and the ansericide were both unintentional slights. And, Priapus will not have been upset, as some²² have claimed, over Encolpius' paederastic tastes; the god himself was traditionally a *puerorum amator*.²³

Were I an advocate of the theory, I would (unlike its adherents) adduce *Priapea* 68, a poetic lampoon of Homer and his epics, with emphasis apropos their heroes on the Size Does Matter theme, especially the *grandia vasa* of Odysseus. Here, the champions of *Ira Priapi* would have the bonus of Petronian ringing of the changes on hackneyed Priapean themes.

However, the god of the *Priapea* never menaces a miscreant with impotence. On the contrary (23,47,58), he threatens lustful thieves with deprivation of sex partners. Only two paragraphs after his poetic outburst, we find Encolpius restored to virility with Chrysis. Throughout the novel,²⁴ allowing for textual uncertainties, Encolpius appears to have had carnal relations with (at least) Circe, Hedyle, Quartilla, and Tryphaena, hardly the mark of permanent droop.

Reviewing Rose, *cum adhuc servirem* (to borrow Niceros' opening, *Sat.* 61,6), I confidently proclaimed 'Were sanity to prevail, this book would justify the hope expressed by John Sullivan that the date and identity of the *Satyricon* have now been established as far as is humanly possible in the present state of knowledge.' My instincts and hopes for this have not changed. But, if we are honest, awkward questions persist. I have no simple solutions, sometimes indeed no solutions at all, but as Voltaire said, judge a person by the questions they ask rather than the answers they give.

Who was our Petronius, assuming him to be Neronian? No need to inventory all the candidates, something long since done by Bagnani, Rose,

²² Walsh 1970, 77; Green 1960, 173.

²³ Smith 1913, on Tibullus 1,4,3.

²⁴ Courtney 2001, 222–226.

Sullivan *et hoc genus omne*. I toss one more into the melting pot, the shadowy Petronius Aristocrates of Magnesia, coupled in Suetonius' *Life of Persius* with the Spartan doctor Claudius Agathurnus, *duorum doctissimorum et sanctissimorum virorum acriter tunc philosophantium*, role models for that poet, with whom the novelist has sometimes been associated along with Lucan as a kind of opposition to (Sullivan's words) 'orthodox Neronian theory' – whatever that was.

Does anyone fancy Philip Corbett's²⁵ idea that the novelist was the elder brother of Petronius Turpilianus? Rose (50 n. 1) mentioned it without comment. Tacitus (*Annals* 14,39) wrote of the latter's administration of post-Boudicca Britain *non irritato hoste neque lacessitus honestum pacis nomen segni otio imposuit*, one of his unkindest cuts. Compare his commendation of the 'Arbiter' as governor and consul: *vigentem se ac parem negotiis ostendit*. No huge compliment, admittedly. According to Suetonius' *Life of Otho* (3,2), that effeminate debauchee ruled Lusitania for a decade *moderatione atque abstinentia*, while even Vitellius (5) showed *singularem innocentiam* over his two years in Africa. Vitellius, moreover, had a wife, Petronia, daughter of an ex-consul (who?), by whom he had a son, Petronianus, blind in one eye, whom he presently liquidated.

Tacitus had been a little less nasty to Turpilianus at *Agricola* 16,3: *exorabilior et delictis hostium novus eoque paenitentiae mitior, compositis prioribus nihil ultra ausus*. His attitude may have been sharpened by Nero's honouring (*Annals* 15,72) of Turpilianus along with Nerva (the future emperor) and Tigellinus – a nice medley of the Good, the Bad, and the Ugly – for services rendered in the Piso business. Still, his execution by Galba is sympathetically recorded (*Histories* 1,6); cf. Dio Cassius (63,27,1a), recalling how Turpilianus had deserted Nero for him.

On Petronius in the provinces, did the younger Pliny encounter and pass on to Tacitus any Bithynian old-timers' memories of the Petronian era? A character in Anthony Powell's (who frequently mentions him) novel *Hearing Secret Harmonies* speculates: 'Didn't Petronius serve as a magistrate in some distant part of the Roman Empire? Think if the case of Christ had come up before him.'

When Gareth went electronic with *PSN* (2001), I fellow-travelled²⁶ with a dissection of Tacitus' famous necrology, from which I here borrow with

²⁵ Corbett 1970, 142; cf. my review in *Vergilius* 17, 1971, 50–51.

²⁶ Baldwin 2001, 2–3.

embellishments. The opening I take to imply that the historian thought this particular Petronius an unimportant curiosity, also that his audience would know little or nothing of him, my cue to wonder as I often have about his absence from Suetonius and Quintilian. If true, this probably militates against R. Martin's²⁷ Flavian date. It is not usually remembered that the index to Ernst Curtius' seminal *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages* assigns (without explanation) the *Arbiter* to 79? – 132? Disregarding the literary to-ing and fro-ing over rival Civil War poems, one major objection could be that Tacitus (*Annals* 3,55) states that luxurious dinner-parties went out of fashion, thanks to Vespasian. Hence, unless flogging a dead horse, the *Cena* does not suit this era. On the other hand, fans of this date might want to make something out of the Petronian fragmentary mention of Cosmian perfumes, elsewhere known primarily from Juvenal (8,86) and various epigrams of Martial.

It is not frivolous to subjoin the fun one could have with Trimalchio as Trajan, given that emperor's notorious drinking and paederasty, with Fortunata weighed in as Plotina: *Pompeia Plotina, incredibile est, quanto auxerit gloriam Traiani* (Victor, *Epitome* 42,21), where she is persuading him to curb fiscal agents. Any similar Antonine fantasies I leave to devotees (if any subsist) of Marmorale.

The famous suicide has in our time garnered a bit of *Nachleben* courtesy of Marxist playwright Peter Hacks, who appropriated some Tacitean details for his *Seneca's Tod* (1977).²⁸ Stylish dinner-table departures from life are not uncommon in the *Annals*: Libo (2,31), Vestinus (15,69), above all (for nonchalance) Valerius Asiaticus (11,3). So, why did Tacitus omit the distinctive vase-breaking gesture recorded by the elder Pliny (37,20)?

Nor must we overlook the spectacular end of Pontia, said by Juvenalian scholiasts (on 6,638) to be the daughter of a Publius Petronius who, upon conviction for poisoning her sons, ate and drank heartily, opened her veins, and danced herself to death.²⁹ Heady stuff, the lady a mixture of Medea and the fairy tale girl who committed this auto-saltation – 'Father-fixation, the Freudian might say, could scarcely go further' quips Peter Green in his Penguin translation, taking her to be the novelist's daughter. So does John Ferguson in his edition, using almost identical language. Rose (54) was soberer,

²⁷ Martin 1975, 182–224.

²⁸ Ziolkowski 2004, 47–77.

²⁹ Baldwin 2004, 4–5.

‘Might conceivably be the daughter of the Arbiter,’ a note of caution sounded long before by Friedlaender. What a shame that dear old ‘2d a day’ John Mayor’s sensibilities did not allow him to comment on this poem. One hates to spoil a good story, but there is no way of knowing if it is just a scholastic fantasy cooked up from Tacitus (there is one obvious linguistic link: *venis incisus/venas incisas*) or, if true, whether it has anything to do with the Neronian Petronius. Certainly, Pontia’s epiphany as his flesh-and-blood (surely some scope for limerick here – She Was Only A Novelist’s daughter...) in editions and translations of Juvenal is not fact but factoid.

I have often puzzled over years of Petronian ponderings over exactly what the Neronian Arbiter arbitrated?³⁰ On Tacitus’ own evidence (16,20), he played no part in the imperial boudoir frolics. His own choice? Excluded by others? Yet, he was close (*perfamiliaris*) – what degree of propinquity is implied? – to the orgiastic Silia, a lady little known to us but *haud ignota* in her time and an opportunity to the historian for a good pun (*Silia...non siluisset*). Before his obituary, this Petronius is nowhere else in the Neronian books. It is Tigellinus’ orchestrated nocturnal ‘rave’ (15,37 – did HE apply to the Arbiter for tips on how to throw a good party?) that is Tacitus’ paradigm (*ut exemplum referam* – no sign of *elegantia* or any cognates). Before that, it was ex-cobbler, hunchback Vatinius’ Beneventum games (15,34); he too, as Petronius, was in the Tacitean narratives *adsumptus* by Nero. The Arbiter is not named amongst those who allegedly wrote or polished up the royal verses (14,16), a task for which he, if the poet-novelist, was surely supremely fitted.

The anecdotal T. Petronius does not impress as a connoisseur of elegance. Owning and smashing an expensive fluospar dipper is no less vulgarian than Nero’s own costly one and his breaking of precious goblets at table (Suetonius, *Nero* 47,1). Reproaching the prodigal emperor for his ‘sordid’ stinginess was, according to Plutarch (*Moralia* 60e) the act of a flatterer, not dissimilar from the *scurra* Vatinius with his ‘I hate you, Nero, because you are a senator’ (Dio Cassius 63,15,1). This Petronius cuts a less attractive figure than the maverick consul Vestinus commended by Tacitus (15,52 and 68) for his *acre ingenium* and *asperae facetiae*.

As to those much-discussed *codicilli* that Petronius sent under seal cataloguing the imperial bedmates and their sexual specialities, they (despite some early modern efforts – do any believers still lurk?) obviously have

³⁰ Baldwin 2004, 3–4.

nothing to do with the *Satyrice* and never would have been thought literary satire, had not Fabricius Veiento (*Annals* 14,50) used this title for his lampoons against priests and senators. Just before his Petronian sequence, Tacitus had mentioned (16,17) Mela's use of testamentary codicils to protest against the injustice of his own fate while others survived – surely the Arbiter's own point.

It may be added that sexual emphasis is incompatible with the *Cena*, where there is only marginal erotic content, with Trimalchio (his enforced genital servitude to master and mistress long behind him) content with wife and a single catamite. A more profitable speculation might be just when and how did Petronius compose this offensive register? Are we to suppose that he penned it between vein-slittings and bindings during his last supper? Or, anticipating his doom, had he written it out earlier and merely sealed the document with a flourish in front of his guests? To have dictated them aloud would (he must have known) incriminate his guests, as shown by the fate of Ostorius Scapula, who (*Annals* 14,48) had paid the supreme price for ventilating his satiric verses over dinner.

Dicta factaque eius, quanto solutiora et quendam sui neglegentiam praeferentia, tanto gravior in speciem simplicitatis accipiebantur. Furneaux penned a remarkable note *ad locum*: 'His words and acts seemed to have a freshness about them which commended itself to the worn-out taste of the age. This characteristic seems not unsuited to the broad humour of the *Satirae*.' The first sentence is paradoxical, the second an unwarranted deduction – one could just as easily credit the *Satyrice* on these lines to the unconventional Vestinus. No less than Syme himself³¹ was tempted by Bogner's³² notion that these words imply the novel, dwelling on *novae simplicitatis opus* from the poem in chapter 132 – *O sancta simplicitas* indeed!

This Symean intrusion brings me to finale. What else but the 64,000 denarius question: Why, if this Petronius is the novelist, does Tacitus not mention the *Satyrice*? I ask as one who has been writing nearly 40 years in the belief that he is. And, again, why does he not make it into a Suetonian *exitus* scene, if not for the book? Furneaux' surprised 'It is remarkable that Tacitus gives him no credit for any literary talent' is more useful than Syme's celebrated dictum (336, with n. 5): 'But he could not mention Seneca's pasquinade on Divus Claudius. That was alien to the dignity of his-

³¹ Syme 1958, 336; Baldwin 2004, 3.

³² Bogner 1941, 223–227.

tory. Likewise the *Satyricon*.’ A fine high-sounding phrase – but does it mean anything? Tacitus has little enough to say about Seneca’s philosophical writings (I still cling to my decades-old contention that he is not the author of the *Apocolocyntosis*, but untypically refrain from re-opening that question here, merely recalling Bagnani’s attribution of it to Petronius himself), or about Lucan’s. Not for the first time, I adduce the memorial plaque to Jane Austen in Winchester Cathedral erected by her brothers: it praises the ‘extraordinary endowments of her mind,’ as does Tacitus for his Arbiter, but says not a word about her novels. 19th-Century England was not 1st-Century Rome, but...

So, after all these years, and all the ink spilled and floppy discs knocked out, not all that much is settled about our author and book. More will be, in Gareth’s Commentary, but I fancy his epigones will even then not (as Aeschylus said of himself, apropos Homer) go short of orts from his great banquet. As Trimalchio in full flight, I could go on (*nondum efflaverat omnia*, 49,1), but had better not, lest I be enrolled in that *alio genere furiarum* that kick off the *Satyricon* as we have it.

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