

The True Nature of the *Satyricon*?

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εἰς οὐχ ὄσσην τρυμαλιὴν τὸ κέντρον ὠθεῖς
Sotades fr. 1 [*Collactanea Alexandrina*]

I love deadlines.
I love that *whooshing* noise they make as they go past.
Douglas Adams, *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*

The title of the *Satyricon Libri* (or ‘Books of *Satyrice*’) is similar enough to the titles of some Greek romances such as the *Ephesiaka* or the *Aethiopika* to suggest to some the possibility that an original Greek *Satyrice* was a model for the Latin work.¹ The narrator of the *Satyricon*, Encolpius, has a Greek name and he interacts with characters who also have Greek names. And the story of the *Satyricon* takes place in locations which seem Greek, at least in part – regions of southern Italy, and the suggestions of other places redolent with influences that are not Italian at all.² But the *Satyricon* does not call attention to its Greek literary origins in the way that Apuleius forces his readers to confront the *Metamorphoses* directly as a kind of reception literature. In Apuleius, we see a Greek literary legacy because the narrator regularly and explicitly advertises it. Through Apuleius’ narrator we learn that Greek genres, Greek ideas, and the language of a Greek model, are being

¹ Jensson 2002 and 2004 makes a case for the *Satyricon* following a Greek original; there are sharp counter-arguments in Bitel 2006 questioning the presupposition of Encolpius’ Greek or Massaliot identity – though even if one regards Encolpius as a Roman, much hangs on how ‘Roman’ is defined.

² The influential work of John D’Arms and others has demonstrated the distinctive nature of the cultural, social, and economic milieu of Campania, especially around the Bay of Naples: D’Arms 1970; see too Frederiksen 1984 and Leiwo 1994.

translated and transformed for Latin eyes and ears.³ The *Satyricon*, on the other hand, signals its Greek connections rather more spontaneously and sporadically. Its Campanian setting, which will be briefly considered at the end of this discussion, may also be of some literary historical significance. Thinking of the *Satyricon* only as a Roman work may be inhibiting or even misleading: *Roman* literature, contrary to much loose usage and to the evident misconceptions of some professionals, is not always coextensive with literature in Latin.⁴ Whilst reading the *Satyricon* in the light of Greek literature is nothing new, interpretations of the work are increasingly characterised by the invocation of Greek fictional texts. Some of these texts survive in entirety, some are in fragments, and some are purely hypothetical. Yet their various connections to the Latin work are not always clear. There is evident doubt, discomfort and occasional confusion about whether some Greek texts should be considered as parallels, as precedents, or as direct sources for the *Satyricon*. No strong claims will be made in what follows – the first thoughts in this brief survey are really intended to provoke further debate.

Most current ideas of the relation between *Satyricon* and the Greek novel have their origins in the thesis advanced by Richard Heinze that the *Satyricon* reverses the standard story about the adventures of a devoted heterosexual couple by presenting the antics of a homosexual couple, at certain points a threesome, and by painting these events on the canvas of a lowlife scenario.⁵ Heinze identified resemblances and contrasts between features of the *Satyricon* and the second sophistic novels. He was aware that nearly all of the now canonical Greek romances, conventionally postdate the *Satyricon* – even as he effectively employed those very texts to make sense of the parodic quality of the Latin work.⁶ Heinze conjectured that earlier models for the Greek romances, as well as of texts that pastiched them, preceded the

³ Hall 1995; Kenney 1990 (on the ‘Greek’ oracle in Latin verse in *Met.* 4.33); Laird 1990, 156–7 (on *Onos* 55 in relation to *Met.* 1.1); Snell 1966 (on *Met.* 7.3).

⁴ Habinek 1998 exemplifies this kind of misconception: see now Feeney 2005, especially 229–31. Barchiesi 2005 is an illuminating and suggestive discussion of ‘centre and periphery’ in ancient and contemporary perceptions.

⁵ Heinze 1899.

⁶ ‘The most assured result of these investigations is clear to me: the Greek love romance is neither a creation of the Second Sophistic, nor is it developed from the influence of an erotic element added to the basis of ethnographic and utopian fables. It would be more closely derived from the form we possess from a considerably later time laid out by Petronius – of a pathetic-erotic parody of the comic-erotic travel novel.’ Heinze 1899, 519 [my translation].

Satyricon, and that *these* must have been the respective objects and inspiration of its own parodic reversals.

If reading the *Satyricon* in parallel with works of Greek fiction is to be worthwhile, it is necessary to be clear about the purpose of such a reading, and which Greek works can be considered. At times, the urge to invoke the surviving Greek novels as a precedent for the *Satyricon* seems almost as powerful as the tendency to posit or reconstruct a lost body of texts more or less like them. Bryan Reardon, for example, in a discussion of the specific relation between the *Satyricon* and Chariton's *Chaereas and Callirhoe* has suggested that Chariton (or at least Chariton's type of work) anteceded the *Satyricon*.⁷ In common with other recent authorities, Reardon puts Chariton in the mid-first century AD, but hints that an early date for the *Satyricon*, in the 60s AD, means that the latter is unlikely to be a parody of the ideal romance.⁸

Heinze's conjecture, made more than a century ago, may or may not derive more support from the subsequent papyrological discoveries.⁹ These finds point to an earlier tradition of Greek fictional texts which comfortably preceded the first century AD – including the *Ninus* romance. But these papyri also suggest that the schematic distinctions between different modes and varieties once posited for these narratives – erotic, pathetic, parodic and so on – might break down. The *Tinouphis* fragment, for example, involves a prophet condemned to death for adultery but who is saved by a trick on the part of his executioner. This is relevant because the narrative is prosimetric, suggesting that this form could have been accommodated in Greek fiction,

⁷ Reardon 1991, 43–4: 'The purpose of the work [*Sat.*] is clearly satirical observation of society, and this makes it a very different thing from Chariton's ideal kind of romance based on an edifying conception of love; furthermore the world it is set in is Italian not Greek. In form, however it looks as much as anything like parody of the ideal romance... love is replaced by sexual perversion, idealizing morality by realism and even cynicism. Several other romance motifs occur in a distorted form: the standard shipwreck, the machinations of Tyche, the intervention of a deity – in this case, the phallic deity Priapus. The problem is that date (the age of Nero in the sixties of the first century A.D.), which seems early for such parody. But if, as seems possible, Chariton's story predates Petronius, and is itself already based on a tradition of no doubt more primitive sentimental romance, there may be no need to indulge in critical acrobatics to fit it in some other tradition (if it is necessary at all to equip such a work with familiar antecedents).'

⁸ For dating of Chariton to 25–50 AD, see Goold 1995, 1–2; the case of Papanikolaou 1973 for 1st c. BC on linguistic basis is not widely accepted; Plepelits 1976, 8 maintains 1st c. AD on basis of apparent historical reference.

⁹ The texts and translations with their respective introductions in Stephens and Winkler 1995 provide the best account of these papyrological discoveries.

irrespective of the claims of Menippean satire to have influenced the form of the *Satyricon*.¹⁰

However, the *Satyricon* has greater community in form and content with Lollian's *Phoenikika* – a tale of a man's sexual initiation and ritual cannibalism.¹¹ And it has been frequently affirmed that the *Satyricon* has even more in common with the *Iolaus*.¹² In the latter, Iolaus has a friend who becomes an initiate into Cybele's cult in order to help him. The friend then elaborates in twenty Sotadean lines the knowledge he has gained from his initiation as a Gallus – knowledge which is to Iolaus' advantage. The closing sentence of the fragment consists of a slightly altered sentence from Euripides' *Orestes* with which the narrator provides a sententious gloss on what has been recounted. The general mixture of prose with verse – sotadeans to boot (just as we find in the verses pronounced by a *cinaedus* in *Satyricon* 23.3) – and the insertion of those lines from the *Orestes*, (which are not unlike the verse *gnomé* on friendship in *Satyricon* 80.9) have prompted some speculation that the *Iolaus* might be a sort of model for the Latin text.

Is this possible? It should be emphasised, first of all, that these physical fragments of Greek narrative prose themselves date as papyri from the *second century AD* onwards. They appear to represent a culminating *floruit* in the development of the genre. Such fragments may point back to earlier phases in the first and even second century BC, but we can only speculate about those incipient stages. Nobody really knows how to date Lollian: the *Phoinikika* might go into the same bag as the *Iolaus* and the *Onos*.¹³ The chronological relationship between the *Iolaus* and the *Satyricon* also seems impossible to establish, but it is worth considering a couple of influential discussions. Peter Parsons noted that of all ancient comic narratives, the *Satyricon* comes closest to the text of the *Iolaus* 'in both form and flavour'.¹⁴ Given that the *Iolaus* papyrus probably comes from the mid-second century

¹⁰ For a range of views on the relevance of the Menippean tradition to Petronius, see Astbury 1999 and Horsfall 1991–2. The editorial introduction of Harrison 1999b at I.4.5(b) presents a useful overview and bibliography.

¹¹ Convergences with the *Satyricon* have been identified and examined in Sandy 1979; see too Sandy 1994.

¹² Stephens and Winkler 1995, 363–5; Barchiesi 1986.

¹³ This seems to be the implication of Bowie 1994, e.g. at 449 (which could not take into consideration that there is a short extant papyrus fragment of the *Onos*, in Stephens and Winkler 1995). Compare too Bowie 1996, 89 and 101 (where there is some leaning on a first century dating for the *Satyricon* for the dating of the *Iolaus* et al.: 'a Roman of the writing classes in the reign of Nero emerges as a fancier of one [ideal] or other [comic] sort of Greek novel and as a writer who expects *his* readers to appreciate that parody.')
¹⁴ Parsons 1971.

and that its contents might have been composed almost as recently, Parsons considered the possibility that they were derived from the *Satyricon*. In that case Greek borrows from Latin and ‘the normal current’ of literary influence would be reversed. But ‘on general grounds’ Parsons says, he ‘prefer[s] the opposite: to create a Greek picaresque tradition which [the *Satyricon*] parallels and imitates’. Parsons’ final verdict was unequivocal: the *Satyricon* is not a new creation: ‘Natural reason long ago revealed a Greek model’ he concluded, ‘either it had a Greek model but we can’t prove it; or else no model at all.’¹⁵

Natural reason (which probably amounts to Wilamowitz) has been a strong influence: Stephens and Winkler admit to being swayed by it and they consider four possibilities in all, which can be summarised as follows:¹⁶

1. The *Satyricon* and *Iolaus* have a common ancestor.
2. The *Iolaus* is a copy of a direct model for the *Satyricon*.
3. The *Iolaus* is descended from the *Satyricon*.
4. The two are totally unrelated, and emerged independently from a large range of narrative models already available in the 1st century BC.

They favour 4, on the bases that the *Iolaus* seems to bear a closer resemblance to the *Tinouphis* fragment than it does to anything else; that both offer coverage of religion, sex, and low life; that there appear to have been many more Greek novels of this kind now lost; and that the prosimetric nature of the *Tinouphis* fragment shows that the *Satyricon* and the *Iolaus* do not belong to an exclusive club of two just because they both incorporate prosimetrum into prose fiction with a criminal-salacious-satiric theme.

An important survey of the influence of Greek narrative texts on Roman fiction by Alessandro Barchiesi serves as a useful coda to that debate.¹⁷ It makes the point that the sophisticated, multilayered nature of the *Satyricon* stands in contrast to the apparently pedestrian quality of the *Iolaus*: the incorporation of sotadeans there might be explained by their context in the story, whilst in the *Satyricon* we know that their presence is connected with the work’s overall artistic design. Thus, Barchiesi suggests, the Latin text might have absorbed and transformed Greek pulp fiction in order to ‘create a cultural gap between the narrating voice(s) and the low-life situations, by using high poetry as a distorting lens, and by including, but holding at a dis-

¹⁵ Parsons 1971, 66.

¹⁶ Wilamowitz-Moellendorf 1912 (cited in Parsons 1971); Stephens and Winkler 1995, 365.

¹⁷ Barchiesi 1986/1999; see too Barchiesi 1988.

tance, lowbrow Greek narrative through *mise en abyme* and diegesis.¹⁸ That at least tallies with conclusions that can be drawn from analysis of specific passages – like the performance of the Widow of Ephesus story with its polyvalent use of Virgil and invocation of the Milesian tale.¹⁹ In the end, if one were to consider *Satyricon* and the *Iolaus* alone, and without extrinsic considerations, the former would doubtless be regarded as a deeper – and later – development of the latter.

But instead, the scholarly discussions summarised here all offer careful, nuanced, and flexible conjectures in order to accommodate the ever-shifting nature of the evidence and the challenging indeterminacies of chronology. What is very striking about these debates is the readiness of Hellenists to contemplate moving the *contents* of their second-century AD papyri back in time to entertain first century BC provenances for them, or even to posit material that has not been discovered, because the *Satyricon* – a Latin text – is still such an important consideration. However, such accommodation may not be as hospitable as it seems if we bear in mind the Hellenocentric chauvinism (however correct it may be) in the ‘natural reason’ which dictates that the author of the *Satyricon* could not create anything new, anything that lacked a clear precedent in Greek literary history.

What is even more striking about these debates is the presupposition that the *Satyricon* cannot be a moveable feast. In other words, the discussions reviewed here accommodate, without apparent question, a date for the *Satyricon* in the 60s AD – a dating which has yet to be confirmed – even and especially when the same discussions apply caution and flexibility to these comparatively minute fragments of Greek novelistic texts. General studies of the *Satyricon* which take cognizance of those Greek papyrus fragments have not wanted to consider the fact that their implications throw into question the now orthodox dating of the work to the first century AD.²⁰ More recent perceptions that the *Satyricon* might exemplify a Milesian tale as reflected by ps-Lucian’s *Erotes* and may be modelled on a lost Greek *Satyricon* further expose the unattractively acrobatic hypotheses that are required to establish a

¹⁸ Barchiesi 1988.

¹⁹ Compare Laird 1999, 239–46.

²⁰ E.g. Slater 1990; the issue is not raised in Conte 1996; Courtney 2001, 25–6 uses these fragments as a basis for speculating that there existed, before the 60s AD, a plurality of Greek novels of the type represented by Xenophon, Achilles Tatius, and Heliodorus, and goes on to outline the sort of things such a lost novel would contain (with the reassurance that the story-patterns he attributes to this lost novel have also been found in some Gaelic narratives!)

satisfactory position for the *Satyricon* in relation to Greek literary history.²¹ Even when we perform those acrobatics, there are still some awkward questions: if there were authors of Greek fiction who could be the focus of such a diligent parody in Latin, might we not have at least a name or two? The looming alternative is equally unattractive: our parallel readings oblige us to consider the possibility of postponing production of the *Satyricon* – to some time in the second century AD. Such a possibility would vindicate Parsons' appeal to natural reason, although that would offer little compensation for the damage it would do to the currently popular position of the text in Latin literary history.

It is well known that testimonies for the *Satyricon* in antiquity are scarce – the work is first mentioned in the mid-300s AD by Victorinus and there is no point in rehearsing a familiar debate.²² The most influential scholar to propose a second-century date, mainly on linguistic grounds, was Enzo Marmorale, in a series of works which led up to his *La Questione Petroniana*.²³ Marmorale's case was roundly dismissed by Sullivan, Rose and their successors, who have regarded the *Satyricon* as indisputably Neronian.²⁴ Marmorale's arguments were also rejected by René Martin and more recently by Françoise Ripoll, who both, albeit on partly conflicting criteria, place the text in the Flavian period.²⁵ Sullivan noted Martin's finding of a series of parodic connections with Silius' *Punica* in the *Bellum Civile*, but he did not engage with this, or with Martin's more general arguments (and Courtney's generally comprehensive study of the *Satyricon* does not mention them at all).²⁶

But whether they favour a Neronian or a Flavian provenance, few of these authorities seem to appreciate the fact that dating a work like the *Satyricon*, on internal grounds, is not at all like dating most other works of Greek or Latin literature. Where letters, speeches, lyric, elegy, and even epic are concerned, deictic markers and nomenclature can provide more or less reliable references to events or situations – references which can sensibly be used to ascertain the time in which a work was composed or performed. That is of course because the dramatic speaker of a text often converges with the

²¹ See Jensson 2004, 174–88 and *passim* on reconstructing a Greek *Satyrica*; 263–6 on the *Erotas* and the *Satyricon*; as well as Jensson 2002.

²² Marius Victorinus, *Ars Grammatica* 6.143, ed. Keil 1961.

²³ Marmorale 1948. A second century dating has also been floated in Holzberg 1998.

²⁴ Sullivan 1968; Rose 1971.

²⁵ Martin 1975; Ripoll 2002; see now Martin 1999 and 2001, Daviault 2001, and Flobert 2006.

²⁶ Sullivan 1985.

text's historical author – who may even identify himself by name. And where such an identification is not forthcoming – as in the *Apocolocyntosis* – the function and purpose of the work can reveal something of its temporal provenance.

The *Satyricon* is different because it has no evident function or purpose and, in a very fundamental sense, it is a manifestly fictional text, set in a world which is also fictional – however historically plausible or consistent its dramatic setting may be. The story appears to be set in the mid-first century or thereabouts, and this gives some kind of a *terminus post quem*, but that story cannot give any indication of when it was actually written. Mentions of Greek celebrities – the gladiator Petraites (52, 71.6), the tragic actor Apelles (64.4), and the singer Menecrates (73.3) – which all evoke the cultural hybridity of a mid-first century setting – cannot lead to any demonstration of the dating of the work itself.²⁷

The notion that the *Satyricon* was composed after the time in which it was set is not such a 'bizarre hypothesis'²⁸ when the *Cyropaedia* and Platonic dialogue are enough to show that such possibilities are not always hypothetical or bizarre in Greek literature. And Latin authors, no less than Greek writers of dialogue and fiction like Plato and Lucian, can exhibit a highly nuanced sensibility when it comes to generating a period backdrop. The fact that anachronism can be used to successful effect confirms the pervasive sensitivity to the calibrations of change in language and literary fashion displayed in the criticism of Horace, Quintilian and others. The care taken by the author of the *Octavia* to make this *fabula praetexta* look Neronian is a pertinent example.²⁹

A deeply rooted preoccupation with rhetorical style also enhances the historical self-consciousness of Latin literature: the *Dialogus* – a work which itself has a setting which also precedes its likely date of composition by a significant interval of time.³⁰ It is unlikely that this particular text designedly recalled the famous debate about the declamation opening the *Satyricon*: the themes of that debate were very much a commonplace from the late first century onwards, in the wake of Quintilian's censures of Senecan declamation.³¹ But the later prominence of that commonplace alerts us to something

²⁷ Courtney 2001, 7.

²⁸ This is how Rose 1971, 9–20 characterises Marmorale's case.

²⁹ Ferri 2003, 5–30.

³⁰ Levene 2004.

³¹ Mayer 2001 frequently makes this clear (e.g. at 197), and draws attention to a good note on this commonplace in Juvenal *Satires* 7.151 by the Victorian commentator J.E.B. Mayor: Mayor 1889, 306–7.

odd about its appearance in the *Satyricon*, if that text was penned back in the days of Lucan and Seneca. Part of the relevant passage raises some questions about the evolution of the novel which involve Greek literary history too:

ut ...cum in forum venerint, putent se in alium orbem terrarum delatos. Et ideo ego adulescentulos existimo in scholis stultissimos fieri, quia nihil ex his, quae in usu habemus, aut audiunt aut vident, sed piratas cum catenis in litore stantes, sed tyrannos edicta scribentes quibus imperent filiis ut patrum suorum capita praecidant, sed responsa in pestilentiam data, ut virgines tres aut plures immolentur, sed mellitos verborum globulos, et omnia dicta factaque quasi papavere et sesamo sparsa. qui inter haec nutriuntur magis sapere possunt quam bene olere qui in culina habitant.

Satyricon 1.2–3 (Encolpius speaking)

The result is that when they come into the courtroom, [students] think that they have been transported into another world. And so I think that the poor young men are turned into complete idiots by the schools, because they do not hear or see anything in those places which bears on practical life. Instead they are confronted with pirates standing in chains on the beach, tyrants writing edicts which order sons to cut off their fathers' heads, oracles given in response to a plague urging that three or more virgins be sacrificed.

Encolpius opposes the use of such scenarios in education because they are unrealistic. But there is an irony here which many readers of the *Satyricon* seem to miss. Encolpius' very speech is taking *us* out of our own world into a fictional realm where the circumstances he is enumerating will turn out not to be so far-fetched after all: Encolpius himself will be declaiming on a beach alone and abandoned; his best friend will try to rape and kidnap his lover; and he will be subjected to various humiliations to cure the impotence he attributes to Priapus. This part of the *Satyricon* offers a reflexive comment on the mutation of such quandaries into novelistic plots – a comment which is progressively borne out as the narrative proceeds. The significance of all this for the gestation of the novel has clear implications for readings of Greek fiction too. Canonical examples of the genre have much in common with works of Second Sophistic orators: descriptive ekphrases, sustained disquisitions on specific themes or dilemmas were all as much elements of

Greek oratory as they were of Greek romance.³² The *Satyricon* shows remarkable precocity for the middle of the first century AD – not only are opinions about the school teaching of rhetoric slightly ahead of their time, but they are donated to a pair of imaginary characters who are generally fall guys, the objects of derision in the work.

If consideration of the Greek tradition of novelistic texts, Milesian tales and papyri as antecedents might prompt questioning of the now conventional dating for the *Satyricon*, Suetonius' *Nero* may be floated as possible evidence for its composition in the second century AD. The well-known correspondences between Trimalchio and the historian's Nero can do most of the work: Trimalchio and Nero both appear with napkins around their necks, and they both have runners with medals in their slave retinues.³³ They both have bracelets and they both keep their first beard in a golden casket. The singing acrobat who falls and bruises Trimalchio recalls the flying Icarus who fell and bespattered Nero with his blood. It has long been noted that the similarities between Nero and Trimalchio in the *Cena* seem 'too close and numerous to be coincidence' and that Nero could hardly have been present at a recitation of the *Cena*.³⁴ All of these details about Nero could have been known to the writer of the *Satyricon* if he had been in the court circle or near to it, but the disquieting possibility remains: for any writer in a later age who wanted to impersonate a Neronian courtier, Suetonius would have been a very useful source to mine for authentic historical details. Before that suggestion is dismissed, it is worth bearing in mind that considerations of intertextuality involving both Latin and Greek literature are far from incompatible with matters of common sense in the formation of historical judgments.

The name 'Petronius' has not yet been mentioned. Its suppression up to this point has been deliberate: in order that this consideration of the *Satyricon* in parallel with the examples of Greek fiction might be conducted as scrupulously as possible. Even casual, non-committal reference to the author of the *Satyricon* as 'Petronius' would admit all sorts of slippages. The name of Petronius has a seductive effect on those who invoke it. It causes arguments for dating and authorship to exhibit an inverted pyramid effect: the nominal suggestion of an author leads to a dating which is presupposed

³² The implications this passage has for the inter-relation between rhetoric and Greek and Roman fiction is also considered in Laird (forthcoming), but Van Mal-Maeder 2001 and 2003 are especially illuminating discussions.

³³ For the napkin, see Suetonius *Nero* 51 and *Sat.* 32.2; for Icarus, *Nero* 12.2 and *Sat.* 54.1. Further allusions to Nero may be discerned at *Sat.* 28.4, 29.8, 32.4, 54.1, 60.1, 70.8 and 76.2, with Smith 1975 ad loc.

³⁴ Walsh 1970, 70.

rather than proven. Informal references to the *Satyricon* as ‘Neronian’ are also hazardous. In the course of the last decade the term ‘Neronian’ has become not just a chronological label but an aesthetic, almost generic, category, loaded with the baggage of recent hobbyhorses: metaphors of consumption, life-as-performance, authorial self-fashioning and so on.³⁵ This category has swollen into a grand narrative which is being applied to innocent texts in a viciously circular fashion. Calling the *Satyricon* ‘Neronian’, in the current climate, is not just to date the work, but to characterise it in a very particular way, which may obscure its place in less parochial panoramas of ancient literary and cultural history. It has parallels to the corrupt inflation of ‘Roman literature’ already mentioned.

The obituary of the courtier named ‘Petronius’ who was Nero’s *arbiter elegantiae* in Tacitus’ *Annals*, and the manuscripts’ attribution of the *Satyricon* to a ‘T. Petronius Arbiter’ conspire to make an convincing, though not overwhelming, case for identifying the two figures, the author and the courtier, as one and the same person.³⁶ But this pair of testimonies could be combined in a different way to tell an alternative story which might be no less plausible and no less important for an understanding of the *Satyricon* in relation to the tortuous history of Greek fictional typologies: if the Tacitean Petronius was just too lazy or decadent to be the James Joyce of antiquity, then his cameo in the *Annals* would serve another purpose. It would convey that Petronius was the sort of man who offered, instead of Cremutius’ republican history, an account of an Emperor’s perversions; the sort of man who preferred wisecracks and wit to Senecan philosophy, and who favoured easy verses – *facilis versus* – over Lucanic poetry. This Petronius is an oddly memorable figure whose capricious, iconoclastic attitude to death could have made enough of an impression on readers in antiquity to attract the attention and admiration of a pseudepigrapher. In that sense, a recent remark that if the Tacitean character was not the Petronius to whom the *Satyricon* is as-

³⁵ E.g. Rimell 2002, 186–7 (frequently invoking Gowers 1994): ‘Neronian writers (into whom we cannot help but read Nero’s own obsessions and life-story) are preoccupied with the construction of themselves, and their work as late, hurried, immature, concentrated and paranoid...!’ Further essays in Elsner and Masters 1994, as well as Bartsch 1994 and 1998, have helped to generate this *fin-de-siècle* stance.

³⁶ Jensson 2004, 25–6 and *passim* offers some shrewd observations on how this relation can be perceived. Laird 2000, 153–61 highlighted features that the Tacitean narrative of Petronius’ death shared with the deaths of other writers in the *Annals* to argue that Tacitus could have been hinting at Petronius’ literary activity without explicitly mentioning it, but offers no decisive proof. Holzberg 1995, (fuller discussion now in 2006, 90–1) expresses forthright doubt about identity between the Tacitean Petronius and the author of the *Satyricon*.

cribed, ‘they were certainly soul-mates’ carries more weight than it was probably meant to.³⁷

The modern idea of ‘literary forgery’ does not always provide the best means of understanding serious attempts by writers in antiquity to reproduce the manner and style of earlier authors. A training in declamation during the imperial period required students to engage in *prosopopoiea*: the impersonation of orators and poets, and in particular, the impersonation of people who were dead.³⁸ This sort of school exercise, outlined by Quintilian, is evident in manuscript interpolations and in the extensions and elaborations of verses by Virgil and other authors in the Latin Anthology. It also has something to do with ambitious productions like the *Culex* or *Ciris*. Engagement in this kind of exercise would explain the appearance of the name Petronius Arbiter on the manuscripts as well as many other points of contact between the passages of the *Satyricon* and the episode in *Annals* 16 – not least the recurrence of the words *elegans* and *elegantia* at points in the *Cena* when Encolpius is playing *arbiter* to Trimalchio as Nero. It would allow us to re-admit all the convergences with Tacitus and Suetonius which have been noted by commentators and then carefully dismissed on the grounds of anachronism.

There is more. The kinds of discourse favoured by the Tacitean character – dialogue void of philosophical content, scandalous narrative as opposed to history, and light poetry – together mark the discursive perimeters of the *Satyricon* itself. To the second-century reader who knew Greek, such a conjunction of dialogue, narrative and verse would perhaps suggest, or rather, reflect, the generic typology of prosimetric Greek fiction, now discernible in fragments, that was definitely current at the time. The *Apocolocyntosis* would provide a useful precedent too, but more as a way of securing a sort of historical legitimacy for the impersonation than as a very direct model for the *Satyricon*, which is obviously a far more ambitious exercise. It is hard to know how much of the *Satyricon* was set in Campania – a region closer to home (*if* Rome is home!) than the exotic locations of some Greek romances and therefore appropriate for the comical-satirical mode of the story. The liminal settings certainly complement the cultural hybridity of the text, with its rough blend of Greek and Latin influences.³⁹ These communities are Ro-

³⁷ Rutherford 2005, 139.

³⁸ Tarrant 1989, Kaster 1998.

³⁹ Cavalca 2001 is a detailed discussion of Grecisms in the language of the *Satyricon*. The possibility of ‘Petronius’ as a Massaliot (based on Sidonius Apollinaris *Carmina* 28.145–7 and an ethnographic comment on *Aeneid* 3.57 in the Servian corpus) is considered by Daviault 2001. The idea that Encolpius came from Massalia is an important anchor for Jensson 2004: the objections in Bitel 2006 are not necessarily conclusive (cf. n. 1 above).

man perhaps in the sense that the immigrant community in Mathieu Kassovitz's 1995 film *La Haine* is French.⁴⁰

Further literary significances have been proposed for these locations.⁴¹ But the particular selection of Campania, if not Croton, could, again, have been prompted by the *Annals*. Tacitus reports that Nero was fond of Campania: so that Cumae was the place where Petronius was detained, and where he orchestrated his unusual death.⁴² Remarkably nearly every modern interpretation of the *Satyricon* seems to take Tacitus' account of the man Petronius as a point of departure.⁴³ Latin studies are markedly more prosopographical in nature than Greek: investigations in Latin literary studies nearly always involves an author-centred identity parade. But if Tacitus did help to inspire the author of the *Satyricon*, then those interpretations are of some interest.

Making sense of the *Satyricon*'s relation to the Greek novel does present considerable difficulties for a mid-first century date for the work. Ultimately there appears to be a stark choice between two possibilities. First, the author of the *Satyricon* had an early Greek model or a set of Greek models which are unknown, quite unattested, the nature of which is not very clear. Such a conjecture, where there is little or no evidence, requires even bolder leaps

⁴⁰ Going beyond comparisons (ventured in Laird 1999, 251 n. 94) between Latin in the *Satyricon* and Bourdieu's conception of 'popular language' in contemporary France as it is spoken by Arabs and Africans, a synopsis of *La Haine* makes for a disturbing parallel to the situation and plot of the *Satyricon*: Vinz, a working-class Jew, Hubert, an African boxer, and Said, the youngest of the group, an Arab from North Africa, are three friends who live on the streets in the depressed outskirts of today's Paris, where they are subject to police brutality and racist attacks. When a teenager, Abdel, is wounded by the police in a riot, Vinz vows that if Abdel dies he will kill a policeman. Hubert seeks to dissuade him, while Said is only concerned with recovering his money from a drug dealer.

⁴¹ E.g. Rimell 2002, 84–91 on Croton.

⁴² *Annals* 16.19.

⁴³ Disagreement about the *Satyricon*'s authorship could reflect some bigger national differences. Holzberg 1995, 69 (cf. Holzberg 2006, 91) has observed that American classicists 'unanimously insist' on identifying the *Satyricon*'s author with the Neronian courtier. That identification is in line with a pervasive American romanticism, a faith in creative innovation and individual genius, which plays down the importance of rules in literary history and any concern with precedents. On the other side, scholars from Germany and France (countries Rumsfeld dubbed 'Old Europe' in January 2003 for sticking to rules and precedents in opposing the US-led invasion of Iraq...) are far more cautious – and it is French-speakers (Cahen 1925; Martin and Ripoll in note 25 above, as well as Daviault 2001) who have been most concerned with the negotiation of later deadlines for the *Satyricon*.

than reversing the interpretations of the Latin testimonies that we do have. The second possibility is that there were no direct Greek models for the *Satyricon*: that – at least according to some versions of ‘natural reason’! – might be a more fantastic supposition after all.

The specific aim of this preliminary discussion has not been to argue firmly for the postponement of a deadline for the *Satyricon* into the second century, but to highlight the fact that its date has not yet been properly settled.⁴⁴ Here I have sought to emphasise that this awkward question cannot but bear on the way in which the work is viewed and interpreted in relation to a constellation of potential Greek influences and sources. A richer literary history, a fuller picture of the Latin accommodation of Greek material, and, most importantly, more interpretative possibilities for future readings of the *Satyricon* require flexibility about chronology, as well as about matters of Roman cultural identity.

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⁴⁴ This plea is made by Daviault 2001, a piece which precedes (or could not otherwise take into account) many of the discussions cited here.

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