

# Maecenas and Petronius' Trimalchio Maecenatianus

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This paper examines Petronius' use of Maecenas as a model for specific behaviors and traits that Trimalchio exhibits throughout the *Cena*. At first glance Seneca's distinct portrait of an effeminate Maecenas ruined by his own good fortune seems to have informed Petronius' characterization of Trimalchio. I have argued elsewhere that the target of Seneca's intense criticism of Maecenas was not Augustus' long-dead minister, but rather a contemporary who had replaced Seneca in influence at court; someone whose character and tastes were wanton compared to Seneca's; someone who encouraged Nero's less savory tendencies instead of keeping them hidden or in check as Seneca and Burrus had tried to do; someone who resembled Maecenas in character and literary enthusiasm; in short, someone very much like Petronius himself. Petronius understood the implications in Seneca's attacks on Maecenas, and as if to stamp approval on the fact that he and Maecenas were indeed alike in many ways, Petronius took pleasure in endowing his decadent freedman with the very qualities that Seneca meant to be demeaning.<sup>1</sup>

Although my focus is on Maecenas, it is obvious that Petronius spared no effort in rounding out Trimalchio and all the freedmen at the banquet with mannerisms and conduct that would recall memorable literary characters in works from Plato's *Symposium* to Horace's *Cena Nasidiensi* and beyond.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> For a discussion regarding Seneca's attacks on Maecenas and the argument that Petronius was their intended victim, see Byrne 2006, 83–111. For a look at the unique criticism Seneca has for Maecenas compared to what other ancient sources have to say, see Byrne 1999, 21–40.

<sup>2</sup> For literary antecedents such as Horace's *Satire* 2,8 and Plato's *Symposium* see, for example, Bodel 1999, 39–40; Petersmann, 1998, 269–277; Cameron 1969, 367–370; Shero 1923, 126–143, esp. 134–139; Révay 1922, 202–212; for mime and comedy (with bibliography) see Panayotakis, 1995 and Preston, 1915, 260–269; other sources that deal

And of course there is much more to Trimalchio than mere literary antecedent: Petronius entertained Nero's inner circle with his *Satyricon*, and the work contains material designed to appeal to this group,<sup>3</sup> in particular to those *deteriores* who Tacitus says made up the emperor's intimate circle after the death of Burrus.<sup>4</sup> Part of the fun for Nero's crowd would have been Petronius' references and allusions, favorable and unfavorable, to current events and contemporaries, including the emperor himself,<sup>5</sup> who seems at least at times to have been able to take a joke at his own expense.<sup>6</sup>

For example, Petronius' original audience would have caught parodies of the works of Seneca and Lucan, authors who had recently fallen out of favor with Nero and whose works were fair game for sport.<sup>7</sup> Verbal imagery, philosophical debates, and character portraits in the *Satyricon* so clearly echo Seneca's *Epistles* that it is hard to deny their existence.<sup>8</sup> John Sullivan noted that Petronius was especially adept at recasting 'Seneca's philosophical posturings and stylistic exuberance' in subtly ironic and amusing ways,<sup>9</sup> and for this Petronius deliberately fleshed out his portrait of Trimalchio with Seneca's musings on slavery and his descriptions of Calvisius Sabinus, Pacuvius, and, of course, Maecenas.<sup>10</sup> Once Petronius decided to incorporate the

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with the characterization of Trimalchio and his guests include Boyce 1991, 95–102 and Steele 1920, 279–293.

<sup>3</sup> Bodel 1999, 43; Schmeling 1996, 480; Sullivan 1985, 159–161; Rose 1971, 41–43 and 75–81; Sullivan 1968, 255 and 1968a, 467; Bagnani 1954, 34–35. Similarly, Eden 1984, 7–8 agrees with Münscher's observation that Seneca's *Apocolocyntosis* was intended for the amusement of the imperial 'in' crowd; see also Ramage et al., 1974, 99.

<sup>4</sup> Tac. *Ann.* 14,52,1: *Mors Burris infregit Senecae potentiam, quia nec bonis artibus idem virium erat altero velut duce amoto, et Nero ad deteriores inclinabat.* Tacitus also used the superlative of the adjective in *Ann.* 14,13 to describe the disreputable types, in which Nero's court abounded, whose adulation was designed to obfuscate Nero's guilt in Agrippina's death (*deterrimus quisque, quorum non alia regia fecundior extitit*).

<sup>5</sup> Bodel 1999, 43; Rose 1971, 77–79. See also below, note 10.

<sup>6</sup> See Sullivan 1985, 42 and 154.

<sup>7</sup> For citations of parodies in the *Satyricon* of Lucan, see Sullivan 1985, 161–172; Rose 1971, 61–68. For citations of parodies of Seneca, see Studer 1843, 89–91; Rose 1971, 69–74; Sullivan 1985, 172–179 and 1968a, 453–467. Not all scholars agree that Petronius intentionally parodied contemporary authors, chiefly in view of the difficulty involved in dating Neronian literature; see Griffin 1984, 156; Smith 1975, 217–219. Such parodies, however, have been detected and discussed for centuries and seem to stand up well against dissenting views.

<sup>8</sup> Sullivan 1985, 172–79 and 1968a, 453–467.

<sup>9</sup> See Sullivan 1985, 174–175 and n. 33, and 1968, 463 for examples. Also see Relihan 1993, 96–98.

<sup>10</sup> For all three see Sullivan 1985, 175 and n. 33, and 1968a, 463 and n. 29, and 1968, 132–133. For Petronius' echoes of Seneca's Calvisius Sabinus and his malapropisms (*Ep.*

character failings of Seneca's Maecenas into his Trimalchio with allusions that his Neronian audience would have instantly understood, he had at his disposal a wealth of information about the real Maecenas to make the connection between the two even more apparent. By going beyond Seneca's one-dimensional Maecenas, Petronius succeeded in making his fictional host more interesting and more entertaining to his original audience. These non-Senecan aspects of Maecenas found in Trimalchio in particular will be considered here.

The resemblance between Trimalchio and Seneca's hostile portrait of Maecenas has long been noted,<sup>11</sup> especially in their physical appearance: Seneca's Maecenas appears in public wearing a Greek cloak that left his ears exposed, we are specifically told, like a rich man's fugitive slaves in mime (*sic adparuerit, ut pallio velaretur caput exclusis utrimque auribus, non aliter quam in mimo fugitivi divitis solent*, *Ep.* 114,6), while Trimalchio wears a purple Greek cloak that exposes his shaved head, which brings to mind the appearance of a slave or newly freed ex-slave<sup>12</sup> (*pallio enim cocineo adrasum excluserat caput*, *Sat.* 32,1). Seneca writes that Maecenas paraded about Rome during the civil wars escorted by two eunuchs (*cui tunc maxime civilibus bellis strepentibus et sollicita urbe et armata comitatus hic fuerit in publico spadones duo*, *Ep.* 114,6), and the first time we see Trimalchio he is playing ball while two eunuchs stand by to supply new balls and keep a chamber pot at the ready (*nam duo spadones in diversa parte circuli stabant, alter matellam tenebat argenteam, alter numerabat pilas...*, *Sat.* 27,3).

Something that tends to pass unnoticed is that Petronius' Trimalchio and Seneca's Maecenas share the same preoccupation with death. In *Ep.* 101,10–14 Seneca quotes a poem of Maecenas in which the speaker would desperately cling to life even in the face of extreme suffering. The poem prompts an astonishingly hostile attack on Maecenas' weak and effeminate temperament, though on its own the poem shows signs of a humorous and satirical

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27,5–8) and Pacuvius' mock funeral (*Ep.* 12,8) see Maiuri 1945, 19–20 and 23–24. For literary antecedents and other sources, see above, note 1. Rose 1971, 79–81 discusses real historical figures, even Nero himself, who could be objects of humorous parody through Trimalchio. Veyne 1961, 213–247 looks at the realities of rich freedmen that Trimalchio reflects. Bagnani 1954a, 77–91 suggests that Trimalchio was based on a real freedman attached to Petronius' family.

<sup>11</sup> See, for example, Boyce 1991, 97–98; Sullivan 1968, 137–138; Steele 1920, 283–284.

<sup>12</sup> Smith 1975, 69.

tone that Seneca conveniently ignores.<sup>13</sup> This is the only specific evidence we have for Maecenas' supposed morbid fear of death, and scholars such as David West are right to question whether Seneca's attack on the poem's author sufficiently proves that Maecenas had such a phobia.<sup>14</sup> When Seneca quotes Maecenas' writings we do not know the nature of the original work: to assume that all quotes are autobiographical – as Seneca would suggest – is to assume in the case of Maecenas what few scholars now assume for Horace or Virgil. Significantly, at *Ep.* 92,35 Seneca openly admires one of Maecenas' hexameters that states there is no need to worry about a tomb inasmuch as nature buries the unburied (*diserte Maecenas ait: 'nec tumulum curo. sepelit natura relictos'*), which is hardly the sentiment of a man who feared death. In fact, it is somewhat reminiscent of a resigned indifference to the inevitability of death that Trimalchio will echo (cf. *Sat.* 34,10, 72,2–4).

Trimalchio's preoccupation with death is apparent everywhere:<sup>15</sup> before we catch our first glimpse of him we hear about the clock in his *triclinium* that lets him know how much time has been lost (*Sat.* 26,9); the silver skeleton Trimalchio plays with inspires him to recite three lines of poetry about the inevitability of death and the brevity of life (*Sat.* 34,10), whose final line (*ergo vivamus, dum licet esse bene*) echoes, most likely intentionally, a line from Maecenas' poem mentioned above that bothered Seneca in *Ep.* 101,11 (*vita dum superest, bene est*).<sup>16</sup> Trimalchio is not the only one at the *Cena* obsessed with death, as the conversation of most of the freedmen somehow involves the subject:<sup>17</sup> for example, Seleucus' story about not bathing focuses on the funeral of one Chrysanthus (*Sat.* 42–43); when Habinnas enters the scene, he announces he has just come from the funeral of a friend's slave

<sup>13</sup> *Ep.* 101,10–14. Maecenas' poem is as follows: *Debilem facito manu, debilem pede coxo, / tuber adstrue gibberum, lubricos quate dentes: / vita dum superest, bene est; hanc mihi, vel acuta / si sedeam cruce, sustine*. For modern interpretations of it, particularly the humorous and satirical tones that Seneca either does not perceive or purposely ignores, see West 1998, 121–122 and 1991, 47; Makowski 1991, 34. See also below, note 35 for bibliography connecting the poem to a Menippean satire.

<sup>14</sup> Scholars who take Seneca at his word often point to Horace, *Odes* 2,17 as proof of Maecenas' morbid fear of death, but as in the case of taking too literally Maecenas' poem (above note), such an interpretation of Horace's poem misses the humorous handling of their friendship; on this point and other cautions about extricating too much about Maecenas' failings into Horace *Odes* 2,17, see West 1998, 118–128, and 1991, 45–52.

<sup>15</sup> See, for example, Bodet 1999, 44–47 and 1994, 237–259; Arrowsmith, 1966, 304–331; see also Cotrozzi 1993, 305–309; Pepe 1957. Toohey 2004, 198–201 connects Trimalchio's preoccupation with death to his attempts to control the passing of time and his digestive tract.

<sup>16</sup> See Baldwin 1984, 402–403.

<sup>17</sup> See Cotrozzi 1993, 305–309.

(*Sat.* 65,10); Trimalchio discusses with Habinnas his tombstone monument and inscription (*Sat.* 71,5–6), which prompts host and guests alike to weep as if his death had already occurred (*Sat.* 72,1). Death is so pervasive a theme at the *Cena* that Bodel likens Trimalchio's house to an underworld populated by dead ex-slaves, a place that Encolpius and the others enter 'as if on a catabasis.'<sup>18</sup> As a result of his constant thoughts about death, Trimalchio in a drunken stupor calls for his household to celebrate a mock funeral in his honor (*Sat.* 78,5), an event that recalls Seneca's Pacuvius, the governor of Syria who daily practiced his funeral procession (*Ep.* 12,8),<sup>19</sup> while the whole noisy procession in Petronius also echoes Seneca's portrayal of Claudius' funeral in the *Apocolocyntosis*.<sup>20</sup> Interestingly, Quintilian quotes a line of Maecenas' prose about someone not wanting to see his own funeral (*ne exsequias quidem unus inter miserrimos viderem meas*, *Inst.* 9,4,28): this has been compared to Seneca's description of Claudius when he saw his own funeral and finally realized he was dead (*Claudius ut vidit funus suum, intellexit se mortuum esse*, *Apocol.* 12).<sup>21</sup>

Maecenas and Trimalchio also have in common the ups and downs of a rocky marriage. Trimalchio's wife is the domineering Fortunata, described by a guest as Trimalchio's 'everything' (*topanta*) who can convince him that it is night in the middle of the day (*Sat.* 37,4–5); sometimes she can persuade Trimalchio to behave better, but not always (*Sat.* 52,10–11); he lovingly names her his heir (*Sat.* 71,3), then hits her with a cup and wants her statue excluded from his monument when she takes issue with his open affection for a young slave (*Sat.* 74,10–12 and 75). Seneca twice mentions Maecenas' stormy relationship with his wife, Terentia: according to Seneca Maecenas could not sleep due to Terentia's constant rejections of his sexual advances (*Sen. Prov.* 3,10–11), and in his fickleness Maecenas married and divorced Terentia a thousand times (*Ep.* 114,6). The fact that Terentia kept Maecenas awake by denying him sex is only found in Seneca, though we find elsewhere that Maecenas and Terentia divorced and remarried at least once.<sup>22</sup> R.

<sup>18</sup> Bodel 1999, 44–47 and 1994, 237–259. Perkins 2004, 157–160 suggests that, instead of an underworld, the *Cena* is 'the "Undertakers' Ball," where those who recognize and accept the material basis of life and its inherent limits, celebrate.'

<sup>19</sup> Maiuri 1945, 23–24.

<sup>20</sup> Riikonen 1987, 44.

<sup>21</sup> Riikonen 1987, 44; André 1983, 1781 n. 104 and 1967, 112 n. 3. Cf. Maecenas' confusing line *genium festo vix suo testem* in Seneca *Ep.* 114, 5, which Gummere in the Loeb translates 'A Genius could hardly bear witness to his own death.'

<sup>22</sup> Cf. Just. *Dig.* 24,1,64. A good discussion of Maecenas' marriage can be found in Guarino 1992, 137–146.

B. Steele, who noticed the similarity between Terentia and Fortunata, stopped short at pressing the fact that both names have four syllables since there is no metrical correspondence.<sup>23</sup> But perhaps Petronius intended a further connection: Habinnas is overly concerned to see Fortunata and threatens to leave if she does not show up (*Sat.* 67,1–3), and with too great familiarity he tosses her legs on the couch and exposes her knees (*Sat.* 67,12); is there something going on between them?<sup>24</sup> We learn from Dio Cassius (54,19,3) that Terentia was notorious for her affair with Augustus and caused much trouble between the emperor and Maecenas.

Fortunata likes to dance and not in a very lady-like way (*Sat.* 52,8; cf. *Sat.* 70,10).<sup>25</sup> A note in the Ps. Acro commentary claims that the dancing *domina Licymnia* in Horace Odes 2,12 is really Maecenas' wife Terentia.<sup>26</sup> Scholars are not entirely convinced the claim is true,<sup>27</sup> but the question here is whether Petronius could have been aware of the identification when painting his portrait of Fortunata. Maecenas was a well-known figure in Neronian times even apart from Seneca's unforgettable criticisms. Maecenas' literary works, like those of other Augustan authors, were experiencing a revival of interest of sorts,<sup>28</sup> and lesser-known poets had begun to pay tribute to him as a patron in terms that quickly made his patronage legendary.<sup>29</sup> Roland Mayer suggests that Horace was especially experiencing renewed popularity at this time as witnessed by Persius' imitation of his satires and Caesius Bassus

<sup>23</sup> Steele 1920, 284.

<sup>24</sup> Preston 1915, 262–263 briefly refers to this episode as an example of 'out-and-out buffoonery' for comic effect, and the cry Fortunata utters (*au au*) is reminiscent of comedy (cf. Smith 1975, 189 for Donatus on Ter. *Eun.* 899: '*au* interiectio est perturbatae mulieris'). But the familiarity Habinnas displays with Trimalchio's wife is itself eye-catching.

<sup>25</sup> *Sat.* 52,8: *cordacem nemo melius ducit*; cf. Smith 1975, 141: 'the precise nature of this dance is more doubtful than its obscenity.'

<sup>26</sup> For the text, which occurs as a note with *Sat.* 1,2,64, see Davis 1975, 71.

<sup>27</sup> Syme 1939, 342 once accepted that Terentia was the Licymnia of *Odes* 2,12, but later (1986, 390) he changed his mind: 'Scholiasts are often bold or silly in their assertions.' Davis, 1975, 70–83 offers a vigorous argument against the identification, but West 1998, 83–86 uses what is known about Maecenas to argue that Horace may well have had Terentia in mind in this poem. For other opinions see Nisbet and Hubbard 1978, 180–182 and 185; André 1967, 25 n. 4; Williams 1962, 36–38.

<sup>28</sup> Mayer 1982.

<sup>29</sup> Cf. Calp. Sic. *Ecl.* 4,158–163 and *Laus Pis.* 230–248, esp. 236–242; for discussions on these poets and the image of Maecenas' patronage they helped to create, see Byrne 2004, 255–265 and 2000, 1–12; Bellandi, 1995, 78–101.

imitation of his lyrics.<sup>30</sup> It is entirely possible that the identification of Lycymnia in *Odes* 2,12 with Maecenas' Terentia was known when Petronius was composing the *Satyricon*, and used by him along with the couple's stormy marriage in general as an analogue for the relationship between Fortunata and Trimalchio. Such a connection would add a new dimension to the humor in Fortunata's fondness for dancing. A Fortunata-Terentia identification would likewise indicate there is more going on at *Sat.* 47,5 than a wife's embarrassed laughter at her husband's unseemly conversation about the need for release from stomach discomfort: Seneca claims that Terentia kept Maecenas from sleeping by denying him sex and forcing him to seek relief in wine and calming sounds;<sup>31</sup> Trimalchio interrupts his discourse on his bowels to observe that Fortunata laughs but keeps him up at night (*rides, Fortunata, quae soles me nocte desomnem facere?*), presumably from her own need to seek release from stomach problems. Fortunata's laughter is understandable, but the implication of a loss of sleep connected to a need for release becomes more significant in light of Seneca's bizarre comment on Maecenas' marriage.

In any case educated men at the time of Nero knew things about Maecenas, both the historical figure and the man of letters whose prose and poetic endeavors are found quoted at this time and over the next few generations.<sup>32</sup>

<sup>30</sup> Such imitation seems to have inspired scholarly commentaries on Horace in the next generation; see Mayer 1982, 313–315.

<sup>31</sup> Sen. *Prov.* 3,10: *Feliciorem ergo tu Maecenatem putas, cui amoribus anxio et morosae uxoris cotidiana repudia deflentis somnus per symphoniarum cantum ex longinquo lene resonantium quaeritur? Mero se licet sopiat et aquarum fragoribus avocet et mille voluptatibus mentem anxiam fallat, tam vigilabit in pluma quam ille in cruce.*

<sup>32</sup> Altogether there are roughly ten prose fragments of Maecenas, most of which are cited by Seneca and Quintilian, and nine poetry fragments, five of which are cited by Seneca. Discussions and commentaries on these include Avallone 1962, 224–330; Kappelmacher 1928, 218–229; André, 1983, 1765–1787; Makowski 1991, 25–35; Lunderstedt 1911. His prose efforts are unanimously criticized by ancient authors: he was too fond of hyperbaton, neologisms, poetic embellishment, and intentional ambiguity. Tacitus and Quintilian, who confine their comments to his style, and Seneca, who attacks Maecenas' lifestyle as well as his writing style, all find reason to fault Maecenas' prose; see Tac. *Dial.* 26,1; Quint. *Inst.* 9,4,28; Sen. *Ep.* 19,9; 114,4–8. Even Augustus criticized Maecenas' prose, which he described as *myrobrechis cincinnos*, 'oil-dripping ringlets' (Suet. *Aug.* 86,2). For Maecenas' Asianism see Bardon 1956, 14; Norden 1898, 263; 291–294. Maecenas composed poems in a variety of meters including hexameter, hendecasyllabic, galliambic, and iambic trimeter; his poetry is not singled out for praise, but unlike his prose ancient commentators do not criticize the style of his verses, and as mentioned Seneca actually praised one of Maecenas' hexameters (*Ep.* 92,35). Maecenas' models were the neoterics of the previous generation, in particular Catullus, whom Maecenas imitated in meter and theme. See below, note 66.

Maecenas' known works include a *Symposium*, with such notables on the guest list as Horace, Virgil, and Messalla, and, if a fragment from Plutarch can be trusted, some pretty clever dinner conversation.<sup>33</sup> Seneca tells us that Maecenas wrote a work entitled *Prometheus*: connecting the poem Seneca cites in *Ep.* 101 with the prose line and title cited in *Ep.* 19,<sup>34</sup> scholars such as Otto Rossbach and Giancarlo Mazzoli have argued Maecenas' *Prometheus* was a Menippean satire.<sup>35</sup> Maecenas' literary tastes were varied, and there is no reason to doubt his familiarity with the Menippean satires of Varro, an older contemporary who basically invented the genre in Latin and whose 150 Menippeans include one entitled *Prometheus Liber*.<sup>36</sup> The elder Pliny lists Maecenas in his indices of authors for the *Natural Histories* and mentions him for his literary activity or in a literary context four times.<sup>37</sup> More significantly, both Seneca and Pliny, like Velleius and the elder Seneca, knew general information about Maecenas, especially concerning his management of Rome and Italy during the civil wars. Thanks to Pliny we know that Maecenas wore a ring with a frog seal on it that inspired dread at

<sup>33</sup> Servius, *Aeneid* 8,310: *Facilesque oculos fert omnia circum: physici dicunt ex vino mobiliore oculos fieri. Plautus faciles oculos habet, id est mobiles vino. Hoc etiam Maecenas in Symposium ubi Vergilius et Horatius interfuerunt, cum ex persona Messallae de vi vini loqueretur, ait 'idem umor ministrat faciles oculos, pulchriora reddit omnia et dulcis iuventae reducit bona.'* Cf. Plut. *Mor. frag.* 180: Ἐν τῷ συνδείπνῳ τῷ τοῦ Μαικίηνα τράπεζα ἐγγώνιος ἦν ὑπὸ τῆ κλισίᾳ τὸ μέγεθος μεγίστη καὶ κάλλος ἄμαχος. καὶ οἷα εἰκὸς ἐπήνουν ἄλλοι ἄλλως αὐτήν· ὁ δὲ Ἰόρτιος, οὐκ ἔχων ὅ τι παρ' ἐαυτοῦ τερατεύσασθαι, σιγῆς γενομένης, “ἐκεῖνο δὲ οὐκ ἐννοεῖτε, ὃ φίλοι συμπτώται, ὡς στρογγύλῃ ἐστὶ καὶ ἄγαν περιφερής.” ἐπὶ τοίνυν τῆ ἀκράτῳ κολακείᾳ, ὡς τὸ εἰκὸς, γέλῳς κατερράγῃ. For the possibility that this incident may come from Maecenas' *Symposium* see Jiráni 1932, 1–12; Lunderstedt 1911, 92–93. Perhaps Maecenas' *Symposium* should be added to the list of possible antecedents for Petronius' *Cena*.

<sup>34</sup> Sen. *Ep.* 19,9: *Volo tibi hoc loco referre dictum Maecenatis vera in ipso culmine [or eculeo] elocuti: 'Ipsa enim altitudo attonat summa.' Si quaeris, in quo libro dixerit; in eo, qui Prometheus inscribitur.* See above, note 13 for Maecenas' poem that Seneca quotes in *Ep.* 101,10.

<sup>35</sup> Rossbach 1920, 356–360; Mazzoli 1968, 300–326. See also Byrne 1997, 19–26.

<sup>36</sup> For the fragments and discussion of Varro's treatment of the topic see Cèbe 1996. If Maecenas did compose Menippean satire, it is another point of interest he shares with Seneca and Petronius.

<sup>37</sup> For example, Pliny seems to have consulted some work of Maecenas for Octavian's poor health during the battle of Philippi (*NH* 7,148); elsewhere Pliny tells about the friendship and affection which developed between a young boy and a dolphin, and adds that he would be embarrassed to mention the story if others including Maecenas had not already done so (*pigeret referre, ni res Maecenatis et Fa<b>iani et Flavi Alfii multorumque esset litteris mandata*, *NH* 9,25). Maecenas' name appears in the list of authors in the index for this book as well as for books 32 and 37; see Lunderstedt 1911, 35; for Pliny's use of Maecenas as a source, see Peter, 1967, lxxvii; Oehmichen, 1972 (1880), 82–87.



tax collecting time (*NH* 37,10); Seneca condemns Maecenas' effeminate conduct as Octavian's stand-in during the civil war (*Ep.* 114,6), though others such as Velleius (2,88,2) admired Maecenas' keen awareness of political intrigue despite his loose-living lifestyle.<sup>38</sup> It is unlikely that a man of Petronius' learning and station would have been any less informed about Maecenas in general than his contemporaries.

So many Maecenas-like qualities attach to Petronius' freedman that when we learn Trimalchio's epitaph will include the name 'Maecenatianus' it is as though we finally get the punch line of a joke long in the making.<sup>39</sup> Petronius especially had Seneca's recent attacks on Maecenas in mind when developing Trimalchio because they were topical and easy to recognize, coming for the most part from the *Epistles*.<sup>40</sup> But Petronius would not have stopped at Seneca's criticisms: he would have known plenty of things about Maecenas to fill out Trimalchio and further amuse the sophisticated readers of Nero's court with the antics of a pretentious freedman who emulates in all the wrong ways a statesman from the past with a shady reputation of his own. We can go well beyond the connection that too much success causes Trimalchio to make flashy displays of luxury that exceed good taste, just as Seneca claims Maecenas' good fortune caused him to promote a perversely notorious public image.<sup>41</sup> For example, Trimalchio wanted part of his epitaph to read: 'although he could have taken part in all *decuriae* at Rome he did not want to' (*Sat.* 71,12). Maecenas' rejection of high honor and conscious decision to remain an *eques* despite numerous opportunities for senatorial distinction are qualities highlighted by Propertius, Velleius, Tacitus, and Dio Cassius, and it follows that Trimalchio would exhibit the same cavalier indifference, and that Petronius' audience would smile at the conceit

<sup>38</sup> For an overview of what ancient authors have to say about Maecenas in general see Byrne, 1999, 21–40.

<sup>39</sup> Trimalchio's assumption of the second cognomen 'Maecenatianus' is clearly an allusion to Augustus' minister designed to enhance the reader's impression of Trimalchio not merely as a freedman attempting to appear more important than his station allowed, but also as a man given to great private indulgence, similar to Velleius' description of Maecenas right down to a rejection of higher honors; see, for example, Courtney 2001, 77–78; D'Arms 1981, 97–120; Rose 1971, 22 (cf. 79–80); Veyne 1962, 1620; Marmorale 1948, 65 and 98; Haley 1891, 13–14; Mommsen 1878, 115–121 (1965, 200–205).

<sup>40</sup> Rose 1971, 69 observes that the *Epistles* would be especially familiar to Petronius' audience because Seneca was producing them at the time the *Satyricon* was being produced; see also note 8, above.

<sup>41</sup> Cf. Veyne 1961, 244 on Trimalchio's flashiness and bad taste resulting from his success as a freedman, which makes him incapable of success in real high society: 'Tout au plus peut-on dire que sa réussite lui a un peu tourné la tête.'

because unlike the real Maecenas, whose equestrian status allowed for social advancement, Trimalchio's freedman status did not.<sup>42</sup>

Trimalchio has a huge home: it has four dining rooms and twenty bedrooms on the first floor, and lavish guest quarters that someone named Scaurus preferred to his own seaside villa, but despite its present grandeur he built it up from a tiny hut (*Sat.* 77), which belies its humble beginnings. Horace has much to say about Maecenas' *alta domus* on the Esquiline, which was built on the site of a paupers' cemetery and quickly became the epitome of luxury (*Sat.* 1,8, cf. *Sat.* 2,3,307–313; *Epod.* 9,3; *Odes* 3,29,9–10); elsewhere we learn that Augustus liked to spend time there when ill (Suet. *Aug.* 72,2), and Tiberius lived there when he returned from Rhodes (Suet. *Tib.* 15,1). If Petronius intended Trimalchio's home to be a sort of underworld,<sup>43</sup> it is interesting that Maecenas' lavish home was built on what was once a cemetery.

Although Baldwin points out that Trimalchio's Opimian wine was too old to impress a sophisticated oenosoph (*Sat.* 34,6–7),<sup>44</sup> nevertheless Trimal-

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<sup>42</sup> Cf. *Sat.* 71,12: *cum posset in omnibus decuriis Romae esse, tamen noluit* and Velleius (2,88,2) on Maecenas: *non minus Agrippa Caesari carus, sed minus honoratus – quippe vixit angusti clavi plene contentus – nec minora consequi potuit, sed non tam concupivit*. D'Arms 1981, 110–115 correctly argues that Petronius highlights Maecenas' social attitude in his characterization of Trimalchio here, and many others as well have observed that the freedman affects pretensions beyond his social reach, cf. Bodet, 1999, 43; Beard 1998, 95–98; Rosati 1999, 102 n. 38, Veyne 1961, 244–245. D'Arms, however, is wrong to discount that there is an allusion as well to Maecenas' *luxuria* criticized by Seneca. D'Arms introduces a comparison of the second line of Trimalchio's epitaph, *huic sevirus absenti decretus est*, with the anonymous *Elegiae in Maecenatem* 1,31–32: *maius erat potuisse tamen nec velle triumphos / maior res magnis abstinuisse fuit*, suggesting that the latter informed the former. The controversy over the dating and purpose of the *Elegiae in Maecenatem*, which cannot be engaged here, leaves its relevance in serious question (see in particular Schoonhoven 1983 and 1980 for the view that the poems are post-Senecan compositions written specifically in reaction to Seneca's criticism of Maecenas). However, it is worth pointing out that the verbal echoes of comparatives in the *Elegiae in Maecenatem* are more reminiscent of Velleius' passage about Maecenas' rejection of honors (*minus/minora, maius/major*) than Trimalchio's epitaph is of the *Elegiae*, and Velleius' passage is part of his description of Maecenas' astounding capacity for decadence: *Erat tunc urbis custodiis praepositus C. Maecenas equestri, sed splendido genere natus, vir, ubi res vigiliam exigeret, sane exsomnia, providens atque agendi sciens, simul vero aliquid ex negotio remitti posset, otio ac mollitiis paene ultra feminam fluens, non minus Agrippa....* Trimalchio's indifference expressed in the third line of his epitaph makes sense not only in light of Maecenas' indifference to higher status, but also in light of Maecenas' *luxuria*, which Seneca had recently and famously condemned.

<sup>43</sup> See note 18, above.

<sup>44</sup> Baldwin 1967, 173.

chio is desperate to show off his knowledge and selection of wine, which like most of the dinner fare is produced on his own estates (*Sat.* 48,2). Trimalchio frequently urges his guests to drink more (*Sat.* 39,1–2, 48,1, 52,7) and does so himself when the moment is right (*Sat.* 65,8). A shipment of wine was the first cargo he hoped to transport for profit in his early years as a businessman (*Sat.* 76,3), and wine is first among the commodities he shipped in his second entrepreneurial attempt (*Sat.* 76,6). Finally, wine is a topic on which Trimalchio especially philosophizes (*Sat.* 34,7) and versifies (*Sat.* 34,10, 55,3).

Maecenas seems to have been something of a real oenophobe: in addition to numerous poems set within an obvious sympotic context (e.g. *Sat.* 2,8; *Epod.* 3 and 9; *Odes* 3,8, 3,29, 4,11), Horace has Maecenas drinking expensive wines which a modest poet would not and could not afford (*Odes* 1,20).<sup>45</sup> Virgil dedicates all four *Georgics* to Maecenas, but the first lengthy and heartfelt dedication comes in the second *Georgic*, in which Bacchus and viticulture are prominently featured. Pliny can still refer to Maecenas' vineyards (*vina Maecenatiana*) in his section on Italian wines (*NH* 14,67), and some of the estates in Egypt that originally belonged to Maecenas produced vineyards.<sup>46</sup> The one extant fragment from Maecenas' *Symposium* deals with the beneficial physical effects of wine.<sup>47</sup> Taken individually, owning vineyards, writing about wine, and in general showing an interest in wine are not particularly noticeable, but when taken together with what we know about Maecenas and the other ways he and Trimalchio are alike, the overall effect suggests Maecenas was Petronius' model for Trimalchio the wine connoisseur.

Other points of contact between Maecenas and Trimalchio likewise may not seem obvious on an individual basis, but when considered together they make a strong case that Petronius was using Maecenas to make Trimalchio more interesting and entertaining to his immediate audience. The first time Encolpius and the others set eyes on Trimalchio he is playing ball (*Sat.* 27), an activity Horace twice mentions in connection with Maecenas (*Sat.* 1,5,48–49 and 2,6,48–49). Lucilius had commented on a skilled ball player (5,211–212), and perhaps such was the stuff of satire. The sport was common, and Augustus himself took it up after the civil wars (Suet. *Aug.* 83), but

<sup>45</sup> Roman hierarchical sensibilities are at play in the contrast; see, for example, Murray 1985, 39–50, and D'Arms 1990, 308–320.

<sup>46</sup> Parassoglou 1978, 79–80.

<sup>47</sup> Servius, *Aeneid* 8,310: Maecenas in *Symposio*... ait 'idem umor ministrat faciles oculos, pulchriora reddit omnia et dulcis iuventae reducit bona.'

Maecenas' playing ball in Horace's *Satires* caught the attention of an ancient commentator and still catches the eye of modern scholars,<sup>48</sup> and therefore it is possible that Petronius noticed Maecenas at play as well. Trimalchio's estates are described as vast and productive (*Sat.* 38,1–5): he owns property that he has never seen (*Sat.* 48,1–2) or heard about (*Sat.* 53,5–9), and his holdings are so extensive he can imagine one day traveling to Africa without leaving his own property (*Sat.* 48,3). Maecenas, too, owned vast estates, including one previously owned by Marcus Favonius that came with Sarmenus, the entertaining *scurra* of Horace *Sat.* 1,5,51–70.<sup>49</sup> Maecenas owned numerous estates in Egypt<sup>50</sup> and most likely estates at Tivoli and Baiae as well.<sup>51</sup> A guest remarks that Trimalchio owned so many slaves only one in ten had ever seen his master (*Sat.* 37,9). Inscriptions show that Maecenas possessed numerous slaves and freedmen, many of whom upon his death were bequeathed to Augustus.<sup>52</sup>

Certain occurrences throughout the *Cena* unfold as though they were pantomime skits, such as the beautiful boy who distributes grapes to the guests while singing and impersonating Dionysus (*Sat.* 41,6).<sup>53</sup> The first time Trimalchio shows off his pretty Alexandrian boys they sing while making the guests comfortable, and their singing is compared to a pantomime chorus (*Sat.* 31,7), which seems designed to alert Petronius' audience of the overall spectacle-like atmosphere of Trimalchio's banquet.<sup>54</sup> The second mention of an Alexandrian boy occurs at *Sat.* 68,7, where a beautiful Alexandrian boy serving hot water imitates a nightingale and varies the melody according to

<sup>48</sup> Ps. Ac. at *Sat.* 2,6,49; cf. Balsdon 1969, 166: 'When Maecenas was dead, Seneca for one could not abuse him too soundly for being sloppy and soft; yet Horace, his contemporary, reveals that he was a passionately enthusiastic ballplayer.' For the popularity of the sport among Romans see Harris 1972, 85–111.

<sup>49</sup> Sch. Juv. *Sat.* 5,3; see Hinard 1985, 467–468 and Wessner 1967, 66–67.

<sup>50</sup> For Maecenas' estates in Egypt Rostovtzeff 1957, 293 and 671 n.45, III(16); see also Parassoglou 1978, 79–80 for the types of produce and other uses to which these many estates were put.

<sup>51</sup> André 1967, 50 n. 4 suggests Maecenas owned a villa at Tivoli; Nisbet and Hubbard 1978, 289 suggest a *villa maritima* at Baiae.

<sup>52</sup> See Chantraine 1967, 323 and Hirschfeld 1913, 517–518. For lists of inscriptions testifying to his numerous slaves and freedmen see Stein 1928, 207–208.

<sup>53</sup> Panayotakis 1995, 76: 'The boy must have been performing three variations on the pantomime-theme of Dionysus (cf. Luc., *De Salt.* 39), whereby the slave has been playing the part of both the dancer and the chorus who accompanied with his song the gestures of the silent pantomime.'

<sup>54</sup> Panayotakis 1995, 64.

Trimalchio's command,<sup>55</sup> and this spectacle is followed by another that consists of a poor combination of Virgil and Atellan farce and some sort of pantomime performed by Habinnas' favorite slave Massa.<sup>56</sup> Alexandrian boys are recognizable signs of decadence and luxury,<sup>57</sup> but they are not generally connected with pantomime. Petronius' use of pantomime imagery the two times he mentions Trimalchio's Alexandrian boys could be meant to recall the notorious relationship between Maecenas and his own Alexandrian boy, the freedman Bathyllus, who Petronius and his audience would know was one of the most famous pantomime actors in the history of Roman spectacle.<sup>58</sup>

Bagnani, Veyne, Balkestein and others have shown that there is a Semitic derivation for the name 'Trimalchio,' which means something like 'great king'.<sup>59</sup> Usually scholars focus on the Greek derivation from *malakos* ('soft') in drawing a connection between Trimalchio and Maecenas, especially thanks to Seneca's repeated attacks on Maecenas' effeminacy, but Augustan poets, in particular Horace, were fond of praising Maecenas as a descendant of distinguished Etruscan kings.<sup>60</sup> Petronius could have easily played on the notion of royalty and amused an audience steeped in Alexandrian fondness for the obscure by alluding to Maecenas' royal Etruscan descent, immortalized by poets, in the *recherché* hint at Semitic royalty hidden in the name of his low-born freedman.<sup>61</sup>

Finally, Maecenas and Trimalchio are both bad poets with similarly affected tastes.<sup>62</sup> Baldwin has shown that Trimalchio's poetry has much in

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<sup>55</sup> Panayotakis 1995, 99: 'This incident is a good example of how a trivial and insignificant job, like the serving of water, can become through Trimalchio's theatrical directions an impressive and funny show.'

<sup>56</sup> Panayotakis 1995, 102.

<sup>57</sup> Cf. Smith 1975, 65.

<sup>58</sup> For Bathyllus' fame long after his death see Macrob. *Sat.* 2,7; for his Alexandrian origins see Ath. 1,20d; for Maecenas' fondness for Bathyllus see Tac. *Ann.* 1,54,2 and Dio 54,17,5; Horace might allude to their relationship in *Epod.* 14, in which the poet informs Maecenas that he cannot finish his iambics because he has been stricken by a love no less powerful than the love for the Samian Bathyllus which afflicted Anacreon; see Griffin 1984, 194.

<sup>59</sup> For the etymology: Greek *tris* + Semitic *melek* = 'Thrice King' or 'Greatest King' see Balkestein 1971, 12–17; Veyne 1962, 1619; Bagnani 1954a, 79.

<sup>60</sup> Cf. Hor. *Odes* 1,1,1: *Maecenas atavis edite regibus* and 3,29,1: *Tyrrhena regum progenies*; Propert. 3,9,1 *Maecenas, eques Etrusco de sanguine regum*.

<sup>61</sup> Bagnani 1954a, 80 doubts that Petronius would have known the precise Semitic meaning of 'Malchio,' but it cannot be assumed out of hand that he did not, and he certainly would have been aware of Maecenas' descent from Etruscan royalty.

<sup>62</sup> Steele 1920, 283–284.

common with some surviving fragments of Maecenas' poetry: the last eight lines of Trimalchio's sixteen 'overblown verses on the theme of luxury,' are similar in language and content to five-lines of Maecenas' verses cited by Isidore.<sup>63</sup>

TRIMALCHIO (*Sat.* 55,5–6)  
 quo margaritam caram tibi, bacam Indicam?  
 an ut matrona ornata phaleris pelagiis  
 tollat pedes indomita in strato extraneo?  
 zmaragdum ad quam rem viridem,  
     pretiosum vitrum?  
 quo Carchedonios optas ignes lapideos?  
 nisi ut scintillet probitas e carbunculis?  
 aequum est induere nuptam ventum textilem,  
 palam prostare nudam in nebula linea?

MAECENAS (*Isid. Etym.* 19,32,6)  
 lucentes, mea vita, nec smaragdus  
 beryllos mihi, Flacce, nec nitentes  
 nec percandida margarita quaero  
 nec quos Thynica lima perpolivit  
 amulos neque iaspis lapillos.

Perhaps Petronius was aware of Augustus' letter that parodies Maecenas' style in the poem cited above:

'Vale, mi ebum Medulliae, ebur ex Etruria, lasar Arretinum, adamas Supernas, Tiberinum margaritum, Cilniorum smaragde, iaspi Iguvino-  
 rum, berulle Porsennae, carbunculum Hadriae, ἵνα συντέμνω, πάντα  
 μάλαγμα moecharum.' (*Macrob. Sat.* 2,4,12)

It was also Baldwin who noted the connection between Trimalchio's verse on the shortness of life (*ergo vivamus, dum licet esse bene*) and a line from a poem of Maecenas on the same subject cited by Seneca in *Ep.* 101,11 (*vita dum superest, bene est*).<sup>64</sup> Trimalchio's echoing of Maecenas' poetry is not at all surprising, since Petronius, while no Alexandrian himself, would have been aware of the Alexandrian tastes of Nero.<sup>65</sup> And he would have seen that Maecenas' literary endeavors had a lot in common with Nero's:<sup>66</sup> for exam-

<sup>63</sup> Baldwin 1984, 402–403.

<sup>64</sup> See above, note 16.

<sup>65</sup> Rose 1971, 75: 'As Arbiter of Elegance, he passed judgement on an important new literary work, just as he seems to have passed judgement on the philosophy of Seneca's *Letters*.' Cf. the reference to Callimachus in *Sat.* 135,8 and Sullivan 1985, 86–88 for Petronius' awareness of contemporary literary trends.

<sup>66</sup> For Maecenas' poetry see Courtney 1993, 276–281; Lunderstedt 1911, 32–38, and 46–69; Avallone 1962, 279–326, esp. 300–308 for Catullus' influence. For Maecenas' writ-

ple, both Maecenas and Nero make use of dove imagery,<sup>67</sup> and thunder;<sup>68</sup> Nero composed a poem on Poppaea's hair and Maecenas took up the subject of Octavia's hair in prose;<sup>69</sup> both Nero's *Attis* composed for the *Iuvenalia* of A.D. 59 and the fragment of a poem of Maecenas on Cybele have been compared to Catullus' *Attis* for their typically Alexandrian theme.<sup>70</sup> This is not to suggest that by parodying Maecenas Petronius was also poking fun at Nero: as Mayer and others have demonstrated, Alexandrianism remained a dominant literary influence after the time of Augustus.<sup>71</sup> Part of the reason for Seneca's hatred of Maecenas is thought to result from Seneca's aversion to the literary trends of the new court poets, the types with whom Nero had begun to surround himself after the death of Agrippina.<sup>72</sup> Interest in adopting Augustan authors as models may have been strengthened by what Mark Morford describes as a stance against Nero's increasing political and aesthetic tyranny, which caused men like Seneca, Lucan, and Persius to forge a new style to claim their independence from the Alexandrian terms proposed by Nero.<sup>73</sup> As Nero's *arbiter elegantiae* Petronius would have been aware of

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ings in general see André 1983, 1765–1787; Bardon 1949, 163–168; Lunderstedt 1911. For Nero's poetry see Courtney 1993, 357–359; Bardon 1939, 337–349.

<sup>67</sup> Nero: *colla Cytheriacae splendent agitata columbae*, cited in Sen. *NQ* 1,5,6 (= Courtney 2); Maecenas: *feminae cinno crispata et labris columbatur*, cited in Sen. *Ep.* 114,5 (= Lunderstedt 11). Connors 1998, 56 notes the similarity of imagery between this line and Trimalchio's verses on birds in *Sat.* 55,5–6.

<sup>68</sup> Nero: *sub terris tonuisse putes* (= Courtney 5); Maecenas: *ipsa enim altitudo attonat summa*, cited by Seneca at *Ep.* 19,9 (= Lunderstedt 10)

<sup>69</sup> Nero cited by Plin. *NH* 37,50 (= Courtney 5, cf. Bardon 1936, 339) and Maecenas in Prisc. *Inst. Gramm.* 10 (= Lunderstedt 15, cf. Bardon 1949, 167); cf. Catullus 66 and Sullivan 1985, 87.

<sup>70</sup> Although Courtney 1993, 357–358 doubts the authenticity of the verses provided by the scholiast at Persius *Sat.* 1.99ff, nevertheless Dio says Nero sang and played an *Attis* or *Bacchantes* (61,20,2); see Griffin 1984, 150, and Sullivan 1985, 88 and 102–104 for a comparison with Catullus. For the theme's popularity among neoterics like Catullus and Caecilius see Lyne 1978, 180–181. For Cybele in late republican and early imperial Roman literature see Nauta 2005, 87–119 and Roller 1999, 292–309. For Maecenas' poem on *Attis* (= Courtney 5–6) compared to Catullus, see Avallone 1962, 305–307. See also above, note 66.

<sup>71</sup> Mayer 1982, 305–318; cf. Sullivan 1985, 74–114, esp. 89–92 for Nero.

<sup>72</sup> Tac. *Ann.* 14,16,1: *carminum quoque studium adfectavit, contractis quibus aliqua pangendi facultas necdum insignis erat. Hi cenati considerare simul, et adlatos vel ibidem repteros versus connectere atque ipsius verba quoquo modo prolata supplere, quod species ipsa carminum docet, non impetu et instinctu nec ore uno fluens.*

<sup>73</sup> Morford 1972–1973, 210–215. For the likelihood of a literary feud between men like Lucan and Seneca on the outs with Nero, see Sullivan 1968a, 453–467. Cf. Griffin 1984, 155–160, esp. 160: '[Nero's] feud was not with what writers said or how they wrote, but with their excellence and success.'

Nero's Alexandrian or Callimachean affectations, the verses in which Nero and his less talented dinner guests engaged,<sup>74</sup> and the models they looked to, including Maecenas. Echoes of Maecenas' poetry in Trimalchio's hands would have provided an entertaining moment of intertextuality for this group.

It would seem, then, that Petronius made use of both Seneca's portrait of Maecenas and the historical Maecenas when filling out the details of Trimalchio's demeanor and character. Of course we must keep perspective: the *Cena Trimalchionis* makes up about one third of what survives of the *Satyricon*, and what survives of the *Satyricon* is barely an eighth of the presumed total 24 books.<sup>75</sup> Petronius did not start out wondering how he could fit allusions to Maecenas into his work. However, once Petronius decided to incorporate those characteristics of Maecenas that had been recently lambasted by Seneca into his decadent freedman, he had a wealth of information available to press the connection still further and test his audience's knowledge with additional attributes from Maecenas. When we compare what different ancient sources tell us about Maecenas and the behavior, statements, and above all affectations of Trimalchio, there is a lot more of Maecenas in Petronius' famous freedman than what Seneca had criticized.

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<sup>74</sup> See above, note 72. For Nero's Alexandrian tendencies, see Griffin 1984, 150; Sullivan 1985, 89–92 and 103–104, and 1968, 87; Morford 1972–1973, 210–215; Mayer 1982, 317.

<sup>75</sup> See Schmeling 1999, 460–461 for a tentative reconstruction.



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