

The Curious Incident . . . : *polypragmosyne* and the Ancient Novel*

RICHARD HUNTER
University of Cambridge

There is always something slightly ‘voyeuristic’ about novel-reading, always the sense that we should not really be taking an interest in other people's affairs.¹ As is well known, both the novelist and his readers, concerned to discover ‘what is going on’, are *curiosi* and/or *πολυπράγμονες*, and this paper will be concerned with exploring some of the ways in which the novelists exploit their, and their audience's, knowledge of this framework. My principal text will be, not one of the canonical ‘ideal’ novels, but rather the *Life of Aesop* which takes an explicit and repeated interest in social convention, whether that be the decencies of urination (chapter 28) or the use of language;² at its centre is a character who can observe (in both senses) and/or break the unspoken rules of a world to which he does and does not belong.

‘Curiosity’ has a very particular place in the philosophical tradition, and not just because of their close genetic relationship. Plato's dialogues both foreshadowed and were incorporated as authorising models within the Greek and Latin novels; an obvious link are the figures of Apollodorus, his nameless friend, and Aristodemus in the opening chapter of the *Symposium*, figures with an insatiable curiosity for every detail of Socrates' life, thus foreshadowing, *inter alios*, the inquisitive heroes of the Lucianic *Onos* and the *Metamorphoses* of Apuleius.³ If, however, the *curiositas*, the ‘desire to know’, of these novel figures is not only a descendant of Odysseus' inquisitiveness, but also a distortion of the philosophic desire for wisdom, it is en-

* I am grateful to audiences in Rethymnon and Athens for helpful discussion of earlier versions, and to Tim Whitmarsh for allowing me to read the discussion of *polypragmosyne* in his forthcoming book on the ancient novel.

¹ There are important remarks at Morales 2004, 86-7.

² Cf. Hunter 2007.

³ Cf. Hunter 2006.

tirely appropriate that in the *Life of Aesop* it is a φιλόσοφος, Aesop's master Xanthos, who challenges Aesop to produce a man who is ἀπερίεργος, that is someone who does not have any interest in or interfere in the affairs, and particularly the misfortunes, of others; the occasion of the challenge is Aesop's verbal attack upon one of Xanthos' pupils for sticking his nose into other people's business, just like a περίεργος (chapter 55). Xanthos issues this challenge as one which will be impossible to fulfil, thus giving him an excuse to whip Aesop, but for him it is also a challenge with a certain philosophical interest: 'ἀπόδειξον οὖν μοι εἰ ἔστιν ὁ ἄνθρωπος ἀπερίεργος, prove to me that man can lack curiosity' (chapter 56) suggests a general philosophical interest in the human condition.⁴ There is a nice irony: an interest in whether or not ἀπεριεργία is possible, let alone organising an experiment to test the hypothesis, is itself περίεργον: philosophers, with their curiosity and θαῦμα, are, like grammarians,⁵ classic περίεργοι/πολυπράγμονες.

'By nature, all men', said Aristotle, 'desire to know' (*Metaphysics* 1,980a21), so a man with absolutely no interest in the affairs of his fellows will, apparently, be very hard to find; Xanthos' challenge to his slave is firmly rooted within the context of Aristotle's *bon mot*. Aesop's first effort to meet the challenge (largely omitted from the G recension) is a man who seems to be minding his own business in the *agora* (obviously a rare sight).⁶ When he accepts Aesop's invitation to dinner, however, his first mistake is to insist that his hosts are served before he is, though Xanthos had given a contrary instruction; his second and third are to insist that the food is fine, though Xanthos criticises the manner in which it has been prepared, and finally to try to dissuade Xanthos from beating his slaves. Clearly, then, *περιεργία* here covers some of what would pass for ordinary 'politeness' in our society; Xanthos takes a radically hard line about what 'minding your own business' means. Aesop's next move (after having endured a beating for the first failure) is to go to the countryside to look for an ἀπερίεργος; this is in keeping with Plutarch's observation in his *περὶ πολυπραγμοσύνης* that *πολυπράγμονες* avoid the countryside because nothing happens there (*Mor.* 518f-19a). Here Aesop has much more success and brings back a self-

⁴ Unfortunately both text and interpretation are disputed; the printed text is that of the G version with ἀπερίεργος as Papatomopoulos' correction of the transmitted περίεργος. Some take this sentence as referring explicitly to Xanthos' friend ('the man'), but what follows seems to disallow that interpretation. The W version offers the much simpler (and hence simplified?) δείξόν μοι ἄνθρωπον ἀπερίεργον .

⁵ Cf. below p. 60.

⁶ For this as a promising sign of ἀπεριεργία cf. Plutarch, *De curios.* 521e.

confessed ἀπερίεργος, a man who deals fairly with others (and his donkey), has never heard of Xanthos and has apparently no interest in him, and – perhaps most amazing of all – no interest in whether Aesop (or anyone else) is slave or free.⁷ The rustic comes to dinner without bothering to wash or take his boots off, resists all attempts to make him interfere in the apparently unusual ‘local customs’ of Xanthos’ house, asks no questions about the food he is served and eats in an appropriately hearty and rustic manner; when Xanthos has his cook beaten for alleged under-performance, the rustic does not interfere (though he thinks Xanthos a bit mad), and finally, when Xanthos threatens to burn his wife alive for failing to buy honey necessary for a cake, the rustic’s contribution is to ask Xanthos to hang on for a moment so that he fetch his own wife from the countryside to add further fuel to the fire. At this point Xanthos admits that he is beaten.⁸

The exploration of the origins and ‘necessity’ of social custom and convention, such as we see them carefully observed in the ‘ideal’ novel, here surfaces as a principal interest of the text. Moreover, the obvious similarities and differences between these scenes and aspects of Petronius’ *cena Trimalchionis* deserve attention in this regard.⁹ When the opportunity for dinner is first announced, Encolpius and his colleagues take a bath, the proper action which had preceded elite dining since the Homeric poems; no such social niceties, of course, for the ἀπερίεργος in the *Life of Aesop*. What, moreover, is most striking about these early sections of the *cena*, if read with the *Life* in mind, is both the narrator’s insatiable interest in his host and all his doings and the minute detail of the opening descriptions of Trimalchio and his house. At one level, this is the literary equivalent of polite social convention, here carried, of course, to an extreme; we may think of the lessons offered to Philocleon in Aristophanes’ *Wasps* about how to behave in polite society before dinner is served (*Wasps* 1212-15). θαύμα, *admiratio*, and particularly a wonder induced by strange sights,¹⁰ is precisely the state to which Trimalchio’s house and its guests reduce Encolpius and his colleagues (*Sat.* 27,4; 28,6; 63,1; 64,1 etc). Here too we may be tempted to see in Petronius’ heroes a distortion of a philosophical paradigm, for it is of course τὸ θαυμάζειν

⁷ The force of this declared lack of interest may be measured, for example, by comparing the sensitivities on show in the somewhat similar exchange at Theocritus 5,72-77.

⁸ On this scene see also Merkle 1996, 231.

⁹ Jouanno 2006 notes some of the most striking parallels, and cf. also Anderson 1984, 212 with n.8, Winkler 1985, 284.

¹⁰ The juxtaposition of θέασαι and θαύμασον in *Wasps* 1215 is noteworthy: later, at least, an etymological connection between the words was made, cf. *Et. Mag.* 443,37-48 Gaisford; some discussion in Fantuzzi-Hunter 2004, 59-60.

which lies at the root of philosophy.¹¹ Such narrative detail is, however, also a manifestation of a literary *περιεργία*: if readers have to be *scrupulosi*, then novelists must, of course, be *curiosi*, or, in the language of the *Satyrice* they, no less than their readers,¹² must put the *oculus curiosus* to the door to watch the *spectaculum* (*Sat.* 26,4). *curiositas* or *πολυπραγμοσύνη* is not just a narrative ‘driver’ in novels: novels are the literary manifestation of these ‘vices’.

Once in the house, Encolpius is endlessly inquisitive (29,9; 41 etc); he wants, for example, ‘to test whether the whole household sang’ (31,5). His greed for news (*ut quam plurima exciperem*, 37,1) leads him to ask about a woman who was scurrying around the dining-room and who turns out to be Trimalchio’s wife, Fortunata; such an interest in other men’s wives might well make us think (again) of Plutarch’s essay, in which *πολυπραγμοσύνη* is compared to adultery, that is an undressing of other men’s secrets (519b-f, 522a); in the *Life of Aesop*, of course, it is Xanthos’ wife who satisfies her lust for ‘rough trade’ with the enormously phallic Aesop. Trimalchio and Fortunata are not, of course, ones to be slow in coming forward to display themselves, but it is Encolpius’ questioning which elicits the stories behind the display. The interest in ‘other men’s affairs’ of Trimalchio’s guests knows of course no bounds, and here too the contrast with the *ἀπερίεργος* of the *Life of Aesop* could hardly be stronger; Trimalchio’s guests show just that very interest in the racial and social origins of others which characterises Plutarch’s *πολυπράγμων* (*Mor.* 516b). The matter could be illustrated at great length, but two related points may suffice here. One is the fact that it is ‘novelties’, *res nouae*, which most arouse Encolpius’ *admiratio* (27,3; 35,1 *nouitas ... omnium conuertit oculos*); here too we are not very far from the Plutarchan *πολυπράγμων* (cf. *Mor.* 517f-18a, 519a-b). It is news (in our sense) which most attracts this latter character, but as we have seen ‘news’ and ‘new sights’ are jumbled up together in Trimalchio’s world. Secondly, as is well understood, Petronius scripts a ‘second-time’ reader into this description, by giving Encolpius an informant who has ‘been here before’ (33,8; 36,7-8), who can read the signs which suggest that not all is as it seems (33,8), a *conviva scrupulosus* in fact, who can explain to Encolpius just what is going on (*Sat.* 36,7-8; 41,3-5).

¹¹ Cf. Plato, *Theaetetus* 155d, Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 1,982b12-17. Plutarch cites the saying of Pythagoras to the effect that what he had gained from philosophy was τὸ μηδὲν θαυμάζειν (*Mor.* 44b, cf. Horace’s *nil admirari* (*Epistles* 1,6,1)), but that is a rather different point.

¹² Cf. Hunter 2008.

The scenes in the *Life of Aesop* in which Xanthos tries to provoke his guests to show περιεργία by beating (or threatening to beat) his cooks can hardly fail to recall scenes of the *Satyrica*; before Encolpius and his colleagues are even inside the *triclinium* they have intervened to save a slave from punishment (30,7-31,2). The charade of *Sat.* 49 in which the cook who allegedly forgot to gut the pig is summoned for a beating seems very close to the *Life*:

deinde magis magisque Trimalchio intuens eum 'quid? quid?' inquit. 'porcus hic non est exinteratus: non mehercules est. uoca uoca cocum in medio'. cum constitisset ad mensam cocus tristis et diceret se oblitum esse exinterare, 'quid, oblitus?' Trimalchio exclamat, 'putes illum piper et cuminum non coniecisse. despolia.' Petronius, *Satyrica* 49,3-5

‘What, what’s this?’, said Trimalchio, who was inspecting the pig ever more closely. ‘This pig hasn’t been gutted. No, it certainly hasn’t. Call, call the cook before us’. When the cook stood before his table all glum and said that he had forgotten to gut it, Trimalchio shouted, ‘What, forgotten? You’d think he hadn’t put in the pepper and the cumin. Strip him!’.

ὁ Ξάνθος γευσάμενος καὶ θέλων ἐκκαλέσασθαι τὸν ἄγροικον ἵνα εἰς λόγον φανῆι περιεργος λέγει: Ὁ παῖς, κάλει τὸν μάγειρον. ὁ δὲ εἰσήλθεν. ὁ Ξάνθος λέγει: Λέγε μοι, δραπέτα, διὰ τί λαμβάνων τὰ ἐπιτήδεια οὔτε ἀρκετὸν ἔλαιον ἔβαλες οὔτε γάρων οὔτε πέπερι; ἐκδύσατε αὐτὸν καὶ δείρατε. *Life of Aesop* 62

Xanthos tasted [the fish] and, wishing to tempt the peasant to say something to show himself a busybody, he said, “Boy, call the cook”. The cook came in, and Xanthos said, “Tell me, scoundrel, though you have all the ingredients, why didn’t you put in sufficient oil or fish-paste or pepper? Strip him and beat him.”

When Trimalchio contrasts the cook’s forgetfulness with something less heinous, ‘you would think he had forgotten to put in the pepper and cumin!’, we may be tempted to see here a piece of novelistic one-upmanship; in the charade of the *Life* it is indeed only ‘oil and fish-paste and pepper’ which has been forgotten – Petronius/Trimalchio has gone well beyond that.

We need not, of course, assume that Petronius was borrowing from and alluding to the *Life* or – on the usual chronology of both works – one of its ancestors; too much novelistic and sympotic literature has been lost for such an argument to carry conviction. Nevertheless, this case is, I think, qualitatively different from, say, the (unsurprising) fact that both works include parodic distortions of the (real and literary) practice of learned discussion (ζητήματα) at the dinner table (*VA* 47-8, 68; *Sat.* 48, 55). There are a number of other ‘parallels’ (to use a convenient but dangerous term) between the two works – both Xanthos and Trimalchio have ‘wife trouble’, both drink too much at dinner (*VA* 68), both have dogs which are ‘their best friend’ (*VA* 44-6, 50; *Sat.* 64), and (at a rather larger scale) the relations between masters and slaves are central to both works¹³ – but I am less concerned here with questions of literary genesis than with the implications for the staging in both works of what we might call ‘novelistic practice’. In the *Life*, of course, the first guest intervenes to save the cook, whereas the second guest, the true ἀπερίεργος does not; in the *Satyrica* (49,6-7) all the guests immediately spring to the cook’s defence. Encolpius himself, however, has strong views on the matter:

ego crudelissimae seueritatis non potui me tenere, sed inclinatus ad aurem Agamemnonis, ‘plane’, inquam, ‘hic debet seruius esse nequisimus: aliquis obliuisceretur porcum exinterare? non mehercules illi ignoscerem si piscem praeterisset.’
 Petronius, *Satyrica* 49,7

In a fit of savage strictness I could not contain myself, but I lent over and whispered to Agamemnon: ‘This must be the world’s most worthless slave; how could someone forget to gut a pig? I wouldn’t pardon him, if he had overlooked a fish’.

Encolpius has of course been taken in, or rather he has become ‘engaged with’ the charade that he is witnessing, he treats it as ‘true’ and relates it to, and judges it by, his own life. He is like the (naïve) reader of a novel (or spectator of a film) for whom what he or she is reading is ‘true’ and who projects his or her values into narratives of others; he is, in other words or in the language of the *Life of Aesop*, περίεργος. Whether the other guests, who plead with Trimalchio to spare the cook, are similarly taken in, or are rather

¹³ On a smaller scale, note (for what it is worth) that both works use the familiar dichotomy between laughter and mockery (*VA* 36,1; *Sat.* 61,5; for the history of the dichotomy cf., e.g., Plato, *Symposium* 189b).

knowingly playing the rôle assigned to them in this fiction, may be debated.¹⁴

Where then does all this lead? Two points perhaps. Petronius and the *Life of Aesop* examine ‘social convention’ both by putting it under the strain of those who do not feel bound by it (though in very different ways) – Trimalchio and Xanthos’ guests - and also by having convention observed and ‘focalised’ by those on the outside, the slave Aesop and the social-wannabe/outlaw Encolpius. Secondly, in his essay on πολυπραγμοσύνη, Plutarch offers a series of ways to divert this ‘vice’ down innocuous paths. One of these is reading:

If your curiosity (τὸ περίεργον) must always graze and spend its time among worthless things, like a maggot in dead matter, let us turn it to histories (τὰς ἱστορίας) and toss it a limitless supply of misfortunes (κακά). For there you will find, ‘the overthrowing of men and the casting away of lives’¹⁵ seductions of women, attacks of slaves, slanders of friends, preparation of poisons, acts of envy and jealousy, houses wrecked, kingdoms overthrown. Plutarch, *De curiositate* 517e-f

These ἱστορίαί may, of course, be what we would call ‘histories’, but the word may also cover a rather wider field; in this same essay and elsewhere, Plutarch uses ἱστορίαί where we would probably wish to translate (neutrally) as ‘stories’ (*Mor.* 514a, 516b, 518c). In a very familiar passage, Julian makes a distinction within the category of ἱστορίαί on the basis of historical truth:

We should read histories composed about events that happened. We must avoid all those fictional narratives in the form of history (ἐν ἱστορίας εἶδει ... ἀπηγγελμένα πλάσματα) of men of old, stories of love (ἐρωτικὰς ὑποθέσεις) and quite simply all such material.

Julian, *Epistle* 89,301b

This last passage is standardly cited as one of the few ancient references to ‘(historical) novels’,¹⁶ and in the present context it at least offers food for thought about Plutarch’s recipe for dealing with πολυπραγμοσύνη. Plutarch’s list of what you can find in ἱστορίαί could certainly be as well illus-

¹⁴ Slater 1990, 67 suggests rather that Encolpius’ strong reaction is ‘an attempt to spoil Trimalchio’s trick’; this seems to me very improbable.

¹⁵ Aeschylus, *Supplices* 937.

¹⁶ Cf., however, Whitmarsh 2005, 607-608.

trated from those texts which we call ‘ancient novels’ as from the ‘history’ of the ancient world.¹⁷ Here then we have the reader ‘theorised’ as *πολυπράγμων*, and in keeping with the nature of the ‘vice’ this reader does not like ‘good news’, such as (lawful) marriages, but prefers seductions and lawsuits:

Curiosity (*πολυπραγμοσύνη*) seems to take no pleasure in stale misfortunes, but rather in ones which are warm and fresh; it likes to watch new tragedies, and is unwilling to be bothered with comic and cheerful things. Therefore, whenever someone is relating a wedding or a sacrifice or a procession, the *polypragmōn* is an inattentive and unengaged listener, and he says that he has heard most of it before and asks the speaker to cut it short and move swiftly on. But if someone sitting near him tells the story of the seduction of a virgin or adultery with a wife or preparations for a lawsuit or a dispute between brothers, he no longer nods off or has another engagement, and he seeks further words and freely offers his ears.¹⁸

Plutarch, *De curiositate* 518a

Here it seems very difficult not to think of Chariton’s famous declaration at the head of the final book of his novel:¹⁹

I think that this last book will be the sweetest for my readers; for it is recompense (*καθάρσιον*) for the grim events of the earlier books. Here there are no longer piracy and slavery and lawsuits and battles and suicide and war and captivity, but upright loves and lawful marriage.

Chariton 8,1,4

What we can now see is that Chariton may not only be referring to ‘novel theory’, if such a term has meaning, but that he is offering us a way of reading a novel, or at least its end, without being *πολυπράγμωνες*, without reveling in other people’s *κακά*.²⁰ The ‘happy end’ of novels is thus a way of

¹⁷ I have idly wondered whether Plutarch’s choice of metaphor in *ναύαγι* ‘οἰκῶν was influenced by the frequency of shipwrecks in the novel. Textual corruption, e.g. an original *ναυαγίων* <...> *οἰκῶν*, seems unlikely.

¹⁸ I do not know the source of this hexameter.

¹⁹ For other aspects of this passage cf. Hunter 1994, 1070-1071.

²⁰ An important passage is *Life of Aesop* 56, where Aesop apparently draws an analogy between, on the one hand, eating and drinking ‘your own’ and concerning yourself with your own business and, on the other, eating and drinking *τὰ ἀλλότρια* and minding other people’s business; the text is uncertain, but we seem here to have another paradigm as

breaking the spell, of slowly prying us away from our (potentially unhealthy) interest in the terrible things which are happening to the characters; if, in Tim Whitmarsh's words, Chariton's novel is indeed 'a narrative pandering to the πολυπραγμοσύνη ... of its readers',²¹ the final book is to give us a chance to make our excuses decently and leave. Much is at stake for our moral health: as 'Philip the Philosopher' puts it in his essay on Heliodorus' *Aethiopica*, 'the story screams at us that if someone ignores justice and busies himself (περιεργάζεται) with money or a girl who have nothing to do with him, then he will suffer the misfortunes of Trachinos and Peloros and the *boukoloi*' (p. 368,64-7 Colonna).²² As for the novelist himself, his business is, again in Plutarch's description of the πολυπράγμων, 'the failures and errors and solecisms of [men's] lives', and the novelist's memory – that skill which, from Homer on, lies at the heart of all literary composition – is 'a most unpleasant (ἀτερπέστατον) filing-cabinet of κακά' (520b); Chariton too, then, as well as his readers, may be redeemed by his final book. What is in fact most audacious about Chariton's claim is that it is this part which will be 'sweetest', which will be the reward for all the earlier σκυθρωπά; Plutarch, Petronius, and the *Life of Aesop* have all suggested that it is the κακά in which we are really interested.

The matter is, of course, not really quite like that, for 'pleasure' is indeed the most familiar end-product of reading (ancient) fictions, and most fictions end happily. Chariton is thus not really swimming against the tide here. Rather, we can see one aspect of a complex set of considerations about writing and reading. In his famous letter to Luceius asking the historian to write the history of his consulship, which has often been brought into connection with the traditions of ancient fiction,²³ Cicero (*Ad fam.* 5,12,4-5) notes that his story contains *perfidiam, insidias, prodicionem*, a list that might call to mind part of what Plutarch tells the πολυπράγμων he will find in ιστορία, and observes that it is *temporum uarietates fortunaeque uicissitudines* that bring the greatest pleasure in reading; here too we are not far from Plutarch's πολυπράγμων for whom pleasure lies 'in a plentiful supply of disasters and

well, the 'reader as parasite'. Behind this passage and, indeed, behind some ancient 'theory' of *polypragmosynê* seems to lie a traditional idea about the different reactions one will have to 'one's own' and 'other people's' misfortunes, cf. Pindar, *Nem.* 1,53-54; Herodotus 6,21,2 (on the Athenian punishment of the dramatist Phrynichus); [Menander], *Monostichs* 653 Jaekel, 'don't concern yourself (πολυπραγμονεῖν) with other people's troubles'.

²¹ Whitmarsh 2005, 606.

²² On this text cf. Hunter 2005.

²³ For what follows cf., e.g., Perry 1967, 144-146.

troubles, in novelty and change' (*Mor.* 519b). Moreover, says Cicero (and here again we think of Chariton), if the exciting narrative comes to a splendid (i.e. splendidly positive) conclusion, 'the mind is filled with the sweetest pleasure reading offers' (*Ad fam.* 5,12,5). As is well known, Cicero's 'recipe' for a successful 'history' is here not far from what he (*De inuentione* 1,19) and the *Ad Herennium* (1,13) elsewhere refer to as a *narratio in personis*, which should consist *ex rerum uarietate, animorum dissimilitudine, grauitate, lenitate, spe, metu, suspicione, desiderio, dissimulatione, errore, misericordia, fortunae commutatione, insperato incommodo, subita laetitia, iucundo exitu rerum* (*De inuentione* 1,19). Reading or listening to such narratives is indeed a way of being healthily *πολυπράγμων*, because it all turns out for the best.

Let me finish with two further aspects of novelistic *πολυπραγμοσύνη* which have perhaps not yet received their due. Of all the extant novels we associate this weakness most with the *Onos* and, particularly, Apuleius' *Metamorphoses* with their *curiosi* central characters.²⁴ The *Metamorphoses* is, of course, not just an adaptation of the Greek work (or the work which lies behind it) but also an interpretation, a 'reading', of it; the *Metamorphoses* is one of our great storehouses of information about ancient reading practices, and Lucius is one of antiquity's most fervent *lectores scrupulosi* and (over-) interpreters. Such interpretative activity is precisely a form of *περιεργία* and/or *πολυπραγμοσύνη*. Aristarchus seems to have used *περιεργάζεσθαι* in a negative sense in promoting a 'mythical' approach to poetic texts and deprecating excessive allegorical readings which went beyond what the poet actually said,²⁵ but – be that as it may – grammarians were notorious *περίεργοι*,²⁶ and in the Homeric scholia we find *περίεργος/ως* used of unnecessary intervention and interpretation and *πολυπραγμονεῖν* of the reader's rôle.²⁷ The *Metamorphoses* and its readers are therefore *πολυπράγμονες/curiosi* in a special sense; they play the game of interpretation for all it is worth.

Lucius of course is particularly *curiosus* in that, as an ass, he can take an interest in and observe what people do to a far greater extent than is normally possible. One particular area which is always exposed to the dangers of *πολυπραγμοσύνη* and where Lucius did more than his fair share of ob-

²⁴ Cf., e.g., Winkler 1985, 60-64, 192; Keulen 2004.

²⁵ Cf. D-scholium *Iliad* 5,385; Eustathius, *Hom.* 40,28-34 and 561,29-30; Porter 1992, 70-74; Struck 2004, 72.

²⁶ Cf. Antiphanes, *AP* 11,322,1 (= Gow-Page, *Garland of Philip* 771)

²⁷ Cf., e.g., Schol. A *Iliad* 22,410 (*περίεργος*); Schol. BT *Iliad* 12,116-117 and 14,347-351 (*πολυπραγμονεῖν*); cf. further below.

serving is sex. It is therefore of some interest that one of the places where the scholia use *πολυπραγμανεῖν* of the reader's rôle is in a note on the flowers which spring up as Zeus makes love to Hera in *Iliad* 14:

As [the poet] is narrating a vulgar matter he turns his verses to other matters, the flowers which grow up from the earth and the cloud [which conceals Zeus and Hera], and thus prevents us from asking further questions (*περαιτέρω πολυπραγμανεῖν*). bT -scholium *Iliad* 14,347-351

We are not to be allowed to put our *oculus curiosus* to the keyhole, as do Encolpius and Quartilla at *Satyrica* 26,4-5, or to conceal ourselves as do Athenagoras and his friend to watch Tarsia perform in a brothel in the *History of Apollonius, King of Tyre*;²⁸ the poet, so the scholiast tells us, shuts off our 'desire to know', no less firmly than does Ovid with his brilliant *cetera quis nescit?*²⁹ The scholiast almost reads Zeus' words to Hera, 'Hera, have no fear that any god or man will see this [i.e. our lovemaking]' (*Iliad* 14,342-343) as a self-referential allusion to Homer's narrative technique, and we may be tempted to go where the scholiast stopped short. Certainly, when Circe, perhaps under the influence of the kind of Homeric criticism reflected in the scholium, picks up Zeus' words in encouraging Encolpius to do his manly duty, 'There is no reason to fear any *curiosus*: your brother is far away from here' (*Satyrica* 127,7), we may think that Petronius has indeed picked up Homer's narrative hint;³⁰ this scene of the *Satyrica* seems to contain clear elements of parody of the 'ideal novel', and as such its narrative practices are of particular interest.

If, as the Homeric and Petronian scenes suggest, excessive *πολυπραγμοσύνη* is indeed associated with an unhealthy interest in what the boy and girl of a novel do with each other when they finally get together, we may see a striking variation on this motif when Melite finally gets her man in Achilles Tatius' novel:

When she embraced me, I did not hold back; when our limbs drew close, I did not refuse the touch. Everything happened as Love willed. We had no need of bedding or of any of Aphrodite's accoutrements; for Love is

²⁸ For this scene as a dramatisation of the reading experience cf. Hunter 2008.

²⁹ Another interesting parallel is the *parecbasis* before the actual description of lovemaking in Ausonius' *Centio Nuptialis*; the poet offers his readers the chance to stop before the physical description, *cetera curiosis relinquit*.

³⁰ Cf. Roncali 1986, 109; on this passage see also Hunter 2006, 311.

handy and resourceful, and a clever *bricoleur* (ἀντουργὸς ... καὶ αὐτοσχέδιος σοφιστῆς), who can turn any place into a chapel for his mystic liturgy. The casual (τὸ ἀπερίεργον) in sex is far more sweet than the carefully prepared (τοῦ πολυπράγμονος): its pleasure springs up like an untended plant.

Achilles Tatius 5,27,4, trans. J.J. Winkler (adapted)

Over Love's true mystery, a proper silence is drawn; πολυπραγμοσύνη has no place here. As Aesop too knew well, sex manuals, just like too much scholarship, spoil the pleasure.³¹

Bibliography

- Anderson, G. 1984. *Ancient Fiction: The Novel in the Graeco-Roman World*, London: Croom Helm.
- Fantuzzi, M., Hunter, R. 2004. *Tradition and Innovation in Hellenistic Poetry*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Hunter, R. 1994. 'History and Historicity in the Romance of Chariton', *ANRW* II 34.2, 1055-1086.
- 2005. "'Philip the Philosopher" on the *Aithiopika* of Heliodorus', in S. Harrison, M. Paschalis, S. Frangoulidis (eds.), *Metaphor and the Ancient Novel* [Ancient Narrative Supplementum 4], Groningen: Barkhuis and Groningen University Library, 123-138.
- 2006. 'Plato's *Symposium* and the Traditions of Ancient Fiction', in J.H. Leshner, D. Nails, F.C.C. Sheffield (eds.), *Plato's Symposium: Issues in Interpretation and Reception*, Washington: Center for Hellenic Studies, 295-312.
- 2007. 'Isis and the Language of Aesop', in M. Paschalis (ed.), *Pastoral Palimpsests*, Heraklion: Crete University Press, 39-58.
- 2008. 'Ancient readers', in T. Whitmarsh (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to the Greek and Roman Novel*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 261-271.
- Jouanno, C. 2006. *Vie d'Ésope*, Paris: Les Belles Lettres.
- Keulen, W. 2004. 'Lucius' Kinship Diplomacy: Plutarchan Reflections in an Apuleian Character', in L. De Blois et al. (eds.), *The Statesman in Plutarch's Works*, Leiden: Brill, 261-273.
- Merkle, S. 1996. 'Fable, "Anecdote" and "Novella" in the *Vita Aesopi*: The Ingredients of a "Popular Novel"', in O. Pecere, A. Stramaglia (eds.), *La letteratura di consumo nel mondo greco-latino*, Cassino: Università degli Studi di Cassino, 211-224.
- Morales, H. 2004. *Vision and Narrative in Achilles Tatius' Leucippe and Clitophon*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Perry, B.E. 1967. *The Ancient Romances*, Berkeley – Los Angeles: University of California Press.

³¹ That Clitophon's plea for 'lack of preparedness' as the key to sexual pleasure itself adopts the didactic mode of a teaching manual is an irony typical of this work, cf. in general Morales 2004, 106-17.

- Porter, J.I. 1992. 'Hermeneutic Lines and Circles: Aristarchus and Crates on the Exegesis of Homer', in R. Lamberton, J.J. Keaney (eds.), *Homer's Ancient Readers*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 67-114.
- Roncali, R. 1986. 'La cintura di Venere (Petronio, *Satyricon*, 126-131)', *SIFC* 79, 106-110.
- Slater, N.W. 1990. *Reading Petronius*, Baltimore – London: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Struck, P.T. 2004. *Birth of the Symbol*, Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Whitmarsh, T. 2005. 'The Greek Novel: Titles and Genre', *AJP* 26, 587-611.
- Winkler, J.J. 1985. *Auctor & Actor*, Berkeley: University of California Press.