

Petronius
The *Satyricon*

Who was Petronius?

- Hedonist
- Pro-consul and consul and member of the Nero's court
- Judge of Elegance
- Satirical death
- Denounced Nero

Who was Petronius?

- Manuscripts simply refer to the author of the *Satyricon* as 'Petronius Arbiter'
- We do not know if they are the same person.

The *Satyricon* – an incomplete novel

- Only survives in fragmentary form. The beginning and end are lost.
- Many parts omitted, probably because of its sexually explicit nature.
- The *Satyricon* mainly survives preserved in certain sections. The dinner of Trimalchio is the most complete section.

An Overview of the *Satyricon*

- Encolpius ‘The hero of the *Satyricon* is Encolpius’ penis’ – Amy Richlin.
- Giton
- Ascyltos
- Quartilla, Pannychis
- Trimalchio
- Eumolpus

An Overview of the *Satyricon* (*continued*)

- Lichas and Tryphaena
- Circe in Croton

Sources for the *Satyricon*

- A unique literary work. However certain features of the *Satyricon* can be found
 - Poetic satire was common, involving personal observations and anecdotes about society. Horace's Dinner of Nasidienus (*Serm.* 2.8) – exotic foods squid, fish, crane, provoking fear and crying and laughter.
 - Mime
 - Prosimetrum. Menippean satire. Seneca's *Apocolocyntosis*
 - Later novel in the second century Apuleius' *Metamorphoses*
 - Homer, Vergil and Lucan are also influences.

Slaves, Freedmen, and *Ingenui* in the Imperial Period

- *Ingenuus*
- *Libertus*
 - *Augustalis*

Slaves in the *Satyricon*

- ‘Anyone who leaves this house will receive one hundred lashes’
- ‘Slaves are humans and drink the same milk’

Gaius Pompeius Trimalchio Maecenatianus

- Inherited his fortune from his master.
- Became an *Augustalis*, and shows off his *fasces* and axes
- He is painted on the walls accompanied by gods.

- He wears a purple stripe, like a senator's *laticlavia*, and gold rings like a senator or equestrian.
- 'What is a poor man?' Trimalchio asks (§48) , as if he has no association with poor people.
- 'When did I buy land in Pompeii?'

Trimalchio – uncouth

- He encourages farting among his guests
- Guests laugh at him.
- Gets the Trojan myth completely wrong. Thinks that Cassandra is Medea; that Daedalus and Niobe were part of the Trojan war; that Diomedes and Ganymede were brothers; that Agamemnon was Paris.
- Tries to read in dactylic hexameter but again gets it wrong.
- His slaves start the applause and everyone else follows.

The Dinner of Trimalchio

– luxury and wealth

- Food – quails, peacocks, pigs, zebras, thrushes flying from the stomach of a pig. Like Horace's Nasidienus he ostentatiously explains the dishes.
- Expensive Falernian wine from the consulship of Opimius in 121BCE (Trimalchio puts a note on the bottle ostentatiously telling guests that it is 100 years old – is he lying or deceived?).

The Dinner of Trimalchio

– philosophy

- Throughout the *Satyricon*, there is a debate about the value of philosophy. Trimalchio has a complicated attitude.
 - He discourses on the Zodiac. He presents a skeleton to his dinner guests, attempting to show a pseudo-philosophical point that man is nothing.
 - He is however ignorant, ‘I have three libraries, one in Greek, the other in Latin’ (note that other editions often say ‘two libraries’).

Trimalchio

- Poetry and Oratory

- Eumolpus 'Poetry should be removed from the plebs. The language should not be of the common people' (§118)
- the forum is 'another world' (§1). Declamation and training in oratory by verse (§2)
- His friend Niceros is afraid of the negative judgment of 'scholastici' when he tells a story about a werewolf.

The Dinner of Trimalchio

– Hypersexual

- Trimalchio encourages his guests to kiss his boy-slave, Dionysus. *Esto liber!*
- He asks guests to take grapes hanging from the phallus of a baked Priapus. It squirts saffron when touched.
- He takes his guests to his baths, starts kissing a boy until his wife, Fortunata, becomes angry and a domestic quarrel ensues.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Pompeya_erótica5.jpg

Ascyltos and the freedman, Hermeros (§57)

- Ascyltos laughs at the bizarreness of the food. Hermeros takes offense.
- Hermeros is a 'man among men', owes no one money, and is under no legal case. He is also an Augustalis.
- 'it is easy to be born free; hard to get there'.

Julius Proculus (§38)

- Another Trimalchio, who has gone broke.
- He had dined in his own home 'like a king' (§38)
- 'He was a phantasm, rather than a man'
- However, unable to pay his debts, he auctions off his property, with the auction sign telling that he is only selling his "needless things".
- He is relegated to a lower position on the table as a result.

Ganymedes (§44)

- Complains about the *aediles* who allow the price of grain to rise.
- They are in league with the bakers.
- Safinius however is a freedman who speaks directly and is a friend to a friend.
- He can speak clearly in the forum, name everyone who is important, but still he is 'one of us'.
- Concern about the political marginalisation of freedmen.

Heredipetae

- ‘Legacy-hunters’. Also written about in the early imperial period (Hor. *Epist.* 1.1.77-79)
- In Croton there is a problem with these heredipetae. Freedmen are making money by obtaining wills.
- Eumolpus solves this problem shortly before his death – only those who eat a share of his body will receive a share of his inheritance.
- Does this explain Trimalchio’s popularity?

Can the *Satyricon* tell us anything about freedmen?

- It is highly satirical and exaggerated. It is not intended as a sympathetic portrayal of the oppressed either. Encolpius too is the object of satire.
- Trimalchio's extravagant wealth obviously cannot reflect the wealth of ordinary freedmen
- Perhaps certain attitudes in the *Satyricon* reflect contemporary realities – ignorance of poetry and philosophy, the pride of being self-made and coming from slavery to citizen, having status.
- Certainly freedmen were becoming *nouveau riche* in Roman society.
- The text tells us nothing about imperial slaves and freedmen or freedmen's relations to their masters.
- Social climbers – Trimalchio told 'Do not let your family perish' (§74). His children could become *equites* and senators (see Tacitus, *Annals*. 13.27.1-2.)

Nero

- Nero – the reigning emperor of the time
- Famed for his lavish parties
- Is the dinner of Trimalchio an allegory of the court of Nero?