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Petronius (d. 66 A.D.)

Table talk from the 'Satyricon'¹

'Nunc populus est domi leones, foras vulpes. quod ad me attinet, iam pannos meos comedi, et si perseverat haec annona, casulas meas vendam. quid enim futurum est, si nec dii nec homines huius coloniae miserentur? ita meos fruniscar, ut ego puto omnia illa a diibus fieri. nemo enim caelum caelum putat, nemo ieiunium servat, nemo Iovem pili facit, sed omnes opertis oculis bona sua computant. antea stolatae ibant nudis pedibus in clivum, passis capillis, mentibus puris, et Iovem aquam exorabant. itaque statim urceatim plovebat: aut tunc aut numquam: et omnes redibant udi tamquam mures. itaque dii pedes lanatos habent, quia nos religiosi non sumus. agri iacent –' 'oro te' inquit Echion centonarius 'melius loquere. "modo sic, modo sic" inquit rusticus; varium porcum perdiderat. quod hodie non est, cras erit: sic vita truditur. non mehercules patria melior dici potest, si homines haberet. sed laborat hoc tempore, nec haec sola. non debemus delicati esse, ubique medius caelus est. tu si aliubi fueris, dices hic porcos coctos ambulare. et ecce habituri sumus munus eccellente in triduo die festa; familia non lanistica, sed plurimi liberti. et Titus noster magnum animum habet et est caldicerebrius: aut hoc aut illud, erit quid utique. nam illi domesticus sum, non est mixcix. ferrum optimum daturus est, sine fuga, carnarium in medio, ut amphitheater videat. et habet unde: relictum est illi sestertium trecenties, decessit illius pater. male! ut quadringenta impendat, non sentiet patrimonium illius, et sempiterno nominabitur ...'

¹ Petron. 44,14 – 45,6. Text of Konrad Müller (Munich 1961¹); cited from the 2nd ed. (1965), which also contains a translation by W. Ehlers; the revised 3rd ed. has now appeared (Munich 1983), though without changes to our passage. There are commentaries by L. Friedlaender (Leipzig 1906²; reprint Amsterdam 1960), E.V. Marmorale (Florence 1948), P. Perrochat (Paris 1939; 2nd ed. 1952) and a lexicon by I. Segebade and E. Lommatzsch (Leipzig 1898). Of fundamental importance for Petronius' language are now H. Petersmann *Petrons urbana Prosa* Sitzungsberichte der Akademie ... Wien, phil.-hist. Klasse 323 (Vienna 1977) and A. Dell'Era *Problemi di lingua e stile in Petronio* (Rome 1970).

'Nowadays people are lions at home, and foxes outside. As for me, I've already eaten my rags, and if the present high price of corn continues, I'll sell my shacks. For what'll happen, if neither gods nor men take pity on this colony?² As sure as I want to enjoy my family, I think all of that comes from the gods. For nobody takes heaven as heaven seriously any more, nobody keeps to the fast days, nobody cares even a hair about Jupiter, but everyone wears blinkers and tots up their assets. The ladies used to go barefoot in ankle-length robes to the Capitol with loose hair and pure minds and pray to Jupiter for water. And so it rained buckets on the spot – then or never –, and all came home wet as mice. That's why the gods sneak about as if with woollen slippers,³ because we've no respect for them. The fields languish –'

'Please!', said Echion the maker of rags for the fire-brigade, 'do talk about something nicer. "Now this way, now that", said the farmer; he'd lost a spotted pig. What doesn't happen today, will happen tomorrow: that's how life pushes onwards. By Hercules, you can't imagine a better home town – if only it had real men! But that's what's lacking at the moment, and not only with us. We mustn't be so spoiled: everywhere heaven is just as far away. If you've been anywhere else, you'll say that here the pigs walk around roasted. And watch out, on the holiday in three days' time⁴ we'll be having a first-rate show here. The team isn't made up of professional gladiators, but mainly of freedmen. And our Titus is generous and a hot-head: one thing or the other; at any rate there'll be something. I'm very close to him, you see; he doesn't shilly-shally. He'll provide cold steel, with no defaulting, meat warehouse in full view, so the whole amphitheatre can see it. And he has the means. Three hundred times a hundred thousand is what he inherited, his father died. Very sad. Even if he lays out four hundred thousand on it, that won't hurt his inheritance, and he'll be talked about for ever ...'

A. Language and style

1. Specific points: vulgarism and hypercorrection

Even the outward form of the words has a colourfulness that matches the surroundings. *fruniscar* is known otherwise from Early Latin and inscriptions.⁵ The form *diibus* (or *dibus*, *ditibus*) is also attested several times epigraphically, but occurs only here in literature.⁶ The ending *excellente* is meant in Sommer's view⁷ to distinguish the adjective (cf.

² Presumably Puteoli cf. J.P. Sullivan *The Satyricon of Petronius. A Literary Study* (London 1968) p.47.

³ Interpreted differently by A. Otto *Archiv für lat. Lexikogr.* 3 (1886) p.209 'they have their feet bound so to speak'.

⁴ Cf. Bulhart *ThLL* 7,1 (1938) 778,15ff. A different interpretation is given by Friedlaender and Marmorale ad loc.

⁵ See Vollmer *ThLL* 6,6 (1923) 1422,58 – 1423,17. Cf. esp. *CIL* 5, 7453,12 = *CE* 1578 *qui te talem carui ecce modo frunitus sexdecim annis castitate et amore tui. On frui* cf. *ThLL* ib. 1427,56ff.

⁶ See Gudeman *ThLL* 5,1,4 (1912) 886, 37ff.

⁷ F. Sommer *Handbuch der lateinischen Laut- und Formenlehre* p.453.

66,3) from the participle (cf. *sequens ferculum* ib. 66,3); however *sequens* too is used adjectivally in the sentence concerned. We may assume that *excellente* has been picked up from everyday speech, especially as such a hackneyed term of praise will often have been heard in particular connection with *vinum*.⁸ The ending accords with the colloquial trend towards 'normalization' of forms that seem irregular. Phonetically speaking, *plovebat* is also vulgar;⁹ we can compare *poveri* – *pueri* in Pompei (*v* is a glide sound; *u* is dissimilated to *o*).¹⁰ The inserted *v* is found in all Romance-speaking areas.¹¹

The masculine form *amphitheater* is interesting. The neuters that later die out in the Romance languages often appear already in masculine form in the 'vulgar' parts of Petronius' novel,¹² e.g. *caelus* (39,5; 45,3), *fatus* (42,5), *fericulus* (39,4), *vinus* (41,12). Inscriptions give a similar picture.¹³ Besides analogy, the fact that *-m* and *-s* ceased to be pronounced is of importance here. The resulting uncertainty can lead on the other hand to delightful cases of hypercorrectness: *litterae thesaurum est* (46,8).

This brings us to the psychological basis for the artistic use of vulgarisms. Masculine in place of neuter accords with Petronius' pursuit of liveliness and colour.¹⁴ In terms of social psychology on the other hand, hypercorrectness in the language characterizes the parvenu.

2. Vocabulary

The Bahuvrihi compound *caldicerebrus* ('one whose brain is hot') occurs once again in Petronius (58,4), if Jahn's conjecture is right.¹⁵ It is surely misguided to think that such compounds must always be

⁸ For *excellens* of commodities see 'K.-M.' *ThLL* 5,2,8 (1937) 1216, 58ff.

⁹ This is presumably a later development rather than an archaic form.

¹⁰ Cf. Perrochat ad loc.

¹¹ Italian *piovere*, Spanish *llover*, French *pleuvoir*, Portuguese *chover*, cf. also Meyer-Lübke *REW* 6610.

¹² On occasion already in Early Latin (*caelus* Enn. *Ann.* 546). However such cases should perhaps be kept distinct from the later development. Cf. Sommer, loc. cit. p.320. A. Stefenelli *Die Volkssprache im Werk des Petron* Wiener romanistische Arbeiten 1 (1962) pp.60f. is not much use.

¹³ Cf. Sommer ib.

¹⁴ This is intended to explain the artistic effect of these traits rather than their origin. As to syntactical vulgarisms, we should note the construction of *fruniscor* with the accusative and the use of *foras* instead of *foris*. We can compare the growing use of *in* with the accusative, which is also attested in Late Latin; cf. also Petronius 42,3 *fui enim hodie in fumus* (explicable in psychological terms through the idea of 'movement towards'; on the replacement of *ire* etc. by *esse* see J.B. Hofmann *Lateinische Umgangssprache* p.166, with bibliography). On *foras* cf. also Stefenelli pp.86f.

¹⁵ The transmitted text at 58,4 is *caldus cicer eius*.

Grecisms,¹⁶ since the inscriptions from Pompei supply cases that are in some degree comparable,¹⁷ and Friedlaender produces evidence for similar expressions from Italian dialects (p.263).¹⁸ Noun compounds are found elsewhere in Petronius; moreover it is freedmen who use them.¹⁹ We should not be surprised if the expressions involved are always very colourful and sometimes tinged with emotion. It was precisely this emotional and non-analytic character that made it hard for them to enter classical prose.²⁰

The drastic adverb *urceatim* ('in buckets') belongs in the same class; apparently it is attested only in this passage. From a phonetic and a semantic point of view there is some doubt about *mixcix* (*miscix*?²¹). *Centonarius* is a word that otherwise occurs in literature only in Laberius, though it often appears in inscriptions and sometimes also in legal contexts. Linguistically it belongs to the numerous terms ending in *-arius* that denote occupations; we meet them above all in epigraphic sources.²² *Lanisticia* is attested only here; the formation is part of a group (*-aceus*; *-acius*; *-icius*; *-ucius*) that on the whole did not develop until Late Latin. As with the previous word, we are dealing here with a technical term.

3. Metaphorical language; 'elevated' and 'humble' elements of style

Metaphors have an even stronger impact. Thus the technical term *carnarium* ('meat store-room') stands for the fact that the gladiators who are unable to fight await the death-blow in the ring and are not carried into the *spoliarium*. The proverbial expressions are hardly less

¹⁶ Cf. Ernout *RPh* 22 (1948) p.214 on *mundicors*, *pravicordius*, *suaviludius*, *univiria*, *benemorius*, *oridurius*.

¹⁷ *fulbunguis* is a wholly analogous formation. The following compounds given by A. Maiuri (Naples 1945 ed.), excursus 2,235, are a little different: *culibonia*, *seribibi*, *piscicapi*.

¹⁸ Cf. also Dares p.16,21 Meister, on Diomedes: *cerebro calido*.

¹⁹ *fulcipedia* 75,6 ('high-heeled princess' Ehlers), *larifuga* 57,3 ('tramp').

²⁰ Isolated experiments of this sort by Cicero, who was an admirer of Ennius and perhaps found some support for them in the colloquial speech of his time, were rejected by Seneca with derision (Sen. ap. Gell. 12,2,6 on *suaviloquens* and *breviloquentia*).

²¹ Friedlaender p.263 refers to Paul. Fest. p.123,7 Müller = 110 Lindsay: *miscelliones appellatur, qui non sunt certae sententiae, sed variorum mixtorumque iudiciorum sunt*. The spelling *x* for *s* is a common error; hence there is no problem about adopting it. On the formation cf. Ernout-Meillet and Perrochat; a conservative and sceptical view in Walde-Hofmann II p.95 (not ruling out initially onomatopoeic gemination, cf. Hofmann *Umgangssprache* p.61).

²² In Petronius cf. also formations like *petauristarius* (60,2 and often) and the classical *tabellarius* (79,6).

drastic: *dices hic porcos coctos ambulare* (cf. also *ubique medius caelus est*). The exemplary tale of the farmer who lost his spotted pig is also meant to have a metaphorical and allegorical sense.²³ Similar is *nunc populus est domi leones, foras vulpes*. By contrast *udi tamquam mures* is not a metaphor, but a simile.

The diminutive *casulas* is also typical of colloquial speech; it is not meant to denote the smallness of the houses, but the owner's attachment to them.²⁴ Preference for the humbler expression is also to be found in *iam pannos meos comedi*. The disproportion that begins here between the object and the words used to describe it gradually grows wider. In the sentence *nemo Iovem pili facit* greatest and smallest are pointedly juxtaposed, while there is an elevated ring to the anaphoric repetition of *nemo*. When it comes to the procession of the matrons to the Capitol, the expression rises to monumental grandeur (*antea*²⁵ itself sounds distinguished; so also the structural repetition *nudis pedibus ... passis capillis, mentibus puris* – always a pointer to the elevated style, and here with chiasmus and a rhythmic clausula at the end). The verb *exorare* too is quite the reverse of humble; it is in fact entirely appropriate to the religious context.²⁶ Similarly *aqua* for 'rain' is not to be seen as vulgar, but as the ritual word.²⁷ However the artistically constructed climax (from the procession, reflected in the linear form of expression, to the ritual prayer) is followed by a come-down in both style and content: *itaque statim urceatim plovebat; aut tunc aut numquam: et omnes redibant udi tamquam mures*. Here we have an accumulation of the characteristics of the humble style: drastic metaphors and similes, vulgar phonetics, and elliptical expression. In varying the sentence length and stylistic level Petronius has given tangible form to the sequence of solemn prayer and sudden downpour.

²³ Ancient evidence for this type in Friedlaender p.262; see esp. Quint. 5,11,21.

²⁴ One aspect being the familiarity that breeds contempt.

²⁵ Cf. Müller-Ehlers p.444: 'normally *ante*'; G. Bendz 'Sprachliche Bemerkungen zu Petron' *Eranos* 39 (1941) pp.27-55, esp. 35 referring to E. Löfstedt *Peregrinatio ...* pp.74f. and *Synt.* II p.304 n.1. Stefenelli p.87 is no help. Cf. also Dell'Era p.68. On the 'refined' character of *antea* see Dell'Era p.24; on the contrast of styles ib. pp.57f.

²⁶ We should bear in mind the note of theatrical solemnity that the word has elsewhere in Petronius: 52,6 *tandem ergo exoratus a nobis missionem dedit puero*; cf. also 140,7; there is a fine distinction in *Coraci ... imperavit*, but *puellam quidem exoravit*: the boy is ready for anything, while the young lady demurs a little. Cf. also Ov. *met.* 5,418 *exorata tamen nec, ut haec, exterrita nupsit*.

²⁷ *Caelestes aquas implorare*: Hor. *epist.* 2,1,135, cf. Ov. *fast.* 4,386; Liv. 4,30,7; 5,15,2. Its occurrence in technical writers (*ThLL* 3,1 [1907] 70,6-8) shows that it is far from being an arbitrary poeticism.

With *itaque dii pedes lanatos habent, quia nos religiosi non sumus* the discrepancy that has just been developed progressively is concentrated in a sharply pointed phrase: the gods are associated with the not very lofty idea of feet wrapped in wool. Here the disproportion between the words and what they refer to reaches its peak. 'The fields languish'. Truly *di multa neglecti dederunt Hesperiae mala luctuosae* (Hor. *carm.* 3,6,8). Here we have the theme of the sixth Roman ode – but what a different style! The gap between subject-matter and what is actually said is deliberately sought by Petronius in this section and given dramatic expansion.

4. Elliptical expression and implicit meaning

Petronius' untranslatableness is due above all to his brevity. How can *et habet unde* be rendered in English with three words?²⁸ The expression occurs already in Early Latin.²⁹ *Modo sic modo sic* is also a colloquial ellipse; the expressions *aut tunc aut numquam* and *aut hoc aut illud* are close to ellipse, but toned down by adjacent predicates.

One phrase in our text is so brief that even an eminent scholar like Friedlaender failed to understand it. On the passage *decessit illius pater, male* he comments: 'Male does not give a satisfactory sense in combination either with what precedes or what follows and is corrupt or garbled'.³⁰ The key to a correct interpretation is the elliptical use in e.g. Cicero *Att.* 12,10 and 11 (cf. *male factum* in *Att.* 15,1a,1): what we have here is a fixed expression in cases of bereavement.³¹ *Stolatae* too is 'elliptical': the interlocutor can easily guess the subject. A related phenomenon is the absolute use of *laborare*: *sed laborat* (= *colonia laborat civium bonorum penuriā*).

Another characteristic feature is the tendency towards an implicit mode of expression: *nemo enim caelum caelum putat* ('nobody thinks heaven is to be taken seriously as heaven'). Similarly at 42,7 the word *mulier* is picked up again with an added connotation: *sed mulier quae mulier* ('real', 'that deserves the name') *milvinum genus*; cf. in Ovid *talis erit mater, si modo mater erit* (*her.* 20,220).³² There is another

²⁸ On this expression ('il a de quoi') cf. Stefenelli pp.88f.

²⁹ Plaut. *capt.* 850; cf. also Ter. *adelp.* 122.

³⁰ Loc. cit. p.264.

³¹ See Krieg *ThLL* 8,2 (1937) 241,1-4. Ehlers translates correctly: 'I'm sorry'. Marmorale, who does not punctuate, gives a less satisfactory rendering: 'sventuratamente mori'.

³² Cf. Hofmann *Umgangssprache* p.93. However one must disagree strongly with his conflation of this with the type *in funus, cui funeri* used in official language. Aposiopesis is also out of the question (wrongly argued by E.E. Burriss *CPh* 42 [1947] p.245). On *mulier, quae mulier* cf. E. Samatov 'Una forma particolare di allitterazione nel Satyricon di Petronio' *Bollettino di Studi Latini* 5 (1975) pp.27-29.

instance of this in our text: *non mehercules patria melior dici potest, si homines* ('real men') *haberet*.

5. Formulaic elements

A formula like *quod ad me attinet* comes from everyday speech; we have already met it in Cato. The same is true of more or less faded locutions with a religious origin like *ita meos fruniscar*,³³ *mehercules*,³⁴ *melius loquere*³⁵ and no doubt also the *male* dealt with already. Such trite expressions contribute to the stereotyped character of colloquial speech, which often replaces meaningful language with an assortment of empty phrases. Thus the meaningless use of formulae that are in origin religious is a good linguistic illustration of Ganymede's jeremiad on the unbelief of the time. Petronius' aim of exposing how thoughtlessly people speak is drastically evidenced in a remark of Trimalchio's: on a bowl two corpses were depicted as effectively as if they were alive.³⁶ Just as the ideas have become detached from reality through being repeated thousands of times, so the words have turned into clichés and lost touch with the ideas. It is left to the sophisticated writer to give a penetrating diagnosis of this absurd situation. Great mastery of language is needed to realize such a survey in a novel. One means of achieving it is through the banalities of the vulgar language. The clear and dispassionate precision of Petronius' narrative style forms an important contrast to this in the non-vulgar parts of the work. Petronius' use of language is thus invested with symbolic significance.

B. Structure and sentence connection

The first sentence of our text forms the end of the complaint that the people put up with an aedile's excessive power without grumbling. This theme is brought to a close by a vivid phrase, which Petronius may not have taken from popular speech.³⁷ With *quod ad me attinet* Ganymede passes to the personal consequences which he says the high price of corn entails for him. As a good businessman he

³³ Cf. e.g. *ita me di ament*; see Lumpe *ThLL* 7,2,4 (1967) 526,23 – 527,18 with bibliography.

³⁴ On this formula see Hofmann *Umgangssprache* pp.29f.

³⁵ Wrongly classified in *ThLL* 2,9 (1906) 2107,17. As regards the general sense, our passage belongs to the group at 2093,71 – 2094,16. It is well explained by Friedlaender ad loc. (εὐφρήμει).

³⁶ Petron. 52,1.

³⁷ Cf. Aristoph. *Peace* 1189.

maintains that he is faced with imminent ruin. He looks for the cause of the desperate situation in the indifference of the gods, which is a consequence of men's indifference in matters of religion. At this point Ganymede becomes grandiloquent. This would be appropriate in a speech, where the conclusion is after all meant to appeal to the feelings of the audience. In conversation on the other hand the situation is different, and for this reason we have the tactful interruption by the interlocutor. Grandiloquence is not however the only trait that is striking about this lament for the decline of piety. The drastic expressions ('in buckets', 'wet as mice') form a remarkable contrast to the lofty theme which in a more solemn dress is familiar to us from Horace and other Augustans. We see there is another side to the successful businessman's complaint that everyone thinks only of his accounts and not of God. The lowly vocabulary is surely meant to emphasize the emptiness of the topos.

The final part of Ganymede's speech is very carefully worked out, not only in its structure, as we discovered earlier on, but also in the way the sentences are connected.³⁸ The colometry is dominated by a two-element pattern that is clear and easily recognized. In the more ambitious style of the comparison between today and the good old days we find a three-element pattern as well, which is accentuated by anaphora and repetition of the same cases. Graphic and pointed expressions also play an important role in rounding off sections. We have seen already that the previous topic was brought to a close with a vivid maxim-like antithesis. The same is true of the end of Ganymede's speech: *itaque dii pedes lanatos habent, quia nos religiosi non sumus*.

Petronius deliberately obscures the impact this has as a closing statement by beginning a standard complaint about the hopeless state of agriculture: *agri iacent*. However at this point Ganymede is interrupted by Echion. He replaces grandiloquence with an everyday philosophy of gracious contentment and passes thereafter to the

³⁸ J. Feix *Wortstellung und Satzbau in Petrons Roman* (Diss. Breslau 1934) treats the particles used in sentence connection only partially and in passing (pp. 32-34). See however J. K. Schönberger 'Zum Stil des Petronius' *Glotta* 31 (1951) pp. 20-28, esp. 27: 'It is hard to find another Roman writer who has such a mass of sentence-connecting particles as Petronius'. Nonetheless it is a surprise to discover that this is true even of the 'vulgar' parts, as the more markedly popular style of Echion's speech shows. Some of these particles are also included in P. Soverini 'Sull' uso degli avverbi in Petronio: avverbi intensivi e asseverativi' *Atti della Accademia delle Scienze dell' Istituto di Bologna, Classe di Scienze Morali* anno 69, rendiconti 63 (1974-1975) pp. 200-255 (does not relate directly to our text).

inexhaustible subject of gladiatorial contests. Here too there is a drastic image immediately before the change of subject: *tu si aliubi fueris, dices hic porcos coctos ambulare*. Nor is the train of thought in Echion's speech at all arbitrary; the abundant use of logical particles and conjunctions leaves us in no doubt here.

The faded religious formula *melius loquere* immediately marks the more gentle tenor of the speech, which at first draws its inspiration from popular wisdom. With the words 'now this way, now that' the farmer consoles himself for the loss of a spotted pig. This is the sort of *exemplum* that Horace loves; they belong to the educational method of his freedman father and to the everyday wisdom of the peasant philosopher Ofellus.³⁹ Two maxims follow, which perhaps sound more popular than they really are: *quod hodie non est, cras erit*. This is surely a trivialization of the famous *non si male nunc, et olim sic erit*.⁴⁰ And cannot *sic vita truditur* be better understood against the background of Horace's *truditur dies die?*⁴¹ We can imagine how Petronius' educated readers must have felt when they encountered the aphorisms of their classic author stripped of cultivated form and in the mouths of freedmen. Before speaking prematurely of 'Vulgar Latin', we should recognize this ambiguity even in the sections that seem quite ordinary. Petronius never ceases for a moment to be the same widely-read but irreverent connoisseur of literary tradition, the pose he adopts in the urbane narrative sections of the work. This is why the 'vulgar' parts ought not to be isolated from the rest of the work, but should be appreciated as artistic prose too. While Ganymede's lament contained a trivial distortion of Roman awareness of decline and Roman *religio*, we now have a rehearsal of the theme of rural resignation that is underpinned by two platitudes mischievously echoing Horace⁴² (and which should not be uncritically regarded as 'popular').

After this introduction Echion starts to give a version of his own which tends to look on the brighter side; it opens with a qualified

³⁹ Here mention should also be made of the diatribe tradition and Bion of Borysthènes (in this respect the first Russian realist); however there is much debate as to the degree of influence, cf. R. Muth *Anzeiger für die Altertumswissenschaft, hrsg. v. d. Humanistischen Gesellschaft* 9 (1956) p. 14.

⁴⁰ Hor. *carm.* 2, 10, 17f.

⁴¹ Hor. *carm.* 2, 18, 15. There are also echoes of Horace at 99, 1 (*epist.* 1, 4, 13f.); 117, 9 (*sat.* 1, 3, 13; *carm.* 3, 1, 30); 114, 3 (*carm.* 1, 3, 14f.), cf. Schönberger loc. cit. (n. 38), esp. p. 25. The entire *cena* is influenced by Hor. *sat.* 2, 8.

⁴² Of course the *incuriosa infelicitas* of the freedmen's language makes Horace's *curiosa felicitas* (Petr. 118) stand out all the more.

acceptance of the previous speaker's complaint. Their home is energetically praised as the best of all possible small towns, and it is even admitted that there is a lack of good people. But (and here *sed* introduces a fresh aspect) there is a similar shortage elsewhere. Two further aphorisms repeat the old topos of traditional Roman sturdiness (*non debemus delicati esse*;⁴³ perhaps Petronius is thinking once again of his direct opposite, Seneca⁴⁴) and realistic down-to-earthness (*ubique medius caelus est*). Finally the idea is put even more pointedly: if you've ever been anywhere else, you think it's paradise here. The expression draws on the myth of Cockayne.⁴⁵ So once again we have contrast and drastic imagery functioning as a conclusion.

A new theme is introduced with *et ecce*; this is the forthcoming gladiatorial contest, which is meant to give plausibility to the optimistic assessment of the present situation. The announcement is followed elliptically by a general characterization of the team. Then with *et* we pass to the description of the organizer, who is an important man called affectionately *Titus noster* by Echion (*magnum animum habet et est caldicerebrius*). From this the conclusion is drawn (in asyndeton) that at all events something special is to be expected. With *nam* a retrospective explanation is now introduced: 'I know him, you see; he does nothing by halves'. Echion then returns asyndetically to the character of the coming entertainment; here it should be noted how Petronius exposes the eager crowd's primitive cruelty in the metaphor *carnarium*.⁴⁶

With *et* we have the reference to the organizer's wealth, and with it an explanatory comment: he has come into money. This involves a further explanation: his father has died. The ensuing expression of sympathy provides a footnote that now stands third in line. These baroque offshoots of an associative mode of thought differ considerably from the ordered sequence of ideas at the end of the Ganymede speech. Yet Echion too returns to the main theme with an

astonishingly sure touch and carries it forward: even heavy expenditure can be borne by the organizer and it makes him famous. With *iam* Echion then passes on to a further characterization of the participants and thereby picks up the thread of his initial remarks about the contest (45,5).

In this way Petronius is able to create an artistic whole even from the disconnected ideas in an everyday conversation. Again it is the conjunctions and logical particles that achieve clarity. *Et ecce* and *iam* are strong opening signals. Twofold use of *et* emphasizes the way the passage is subdivided: firstly the organizer's fiery temperament, and secondly his wealth. A retrospective parenthesis is clearly identified as such by *nam*. In the threefold string of comments any undesirable prominence is skilfully avoided by asyndeton and by a gradual reduction in sentence length (*relictum est illi sestertium trecenties, / decessit illius pater. / Male!*).

Thus while the content appears to present us with a chaotic assortment of empty trivialities, the form is marked by the author's own clever and logical arrangement. Hence our examination of sentence connection bears out the inference drawn from analysis of individual words and clauses, as well as from comparison with literary parallels: the 'vulgar' parts in Petronius' work do not provide us with unfiltered raw material (hence it is not safe to use them uncritically as evidence of colloquial Latin pure and simple).⁴⁷ On the contrary they are a complex artistic creation with high literary pretensions, for in two different ways they impart symbolic significance to vulgar language. In its colourfulness it becomes an expression of an intense feeling for life, which the narrator presents in ironic refraction with a trace of *nostalgie de la boue*. On the other hand in its triteness it becomes a symbol of the general debasement and divorce from reality of traditional values and other important aspects of life.

⁴³ Cicero used the same kind of language in the struggle against Verres (*Verr.* II 4,57,126).

⁴⁴ Cf. *de brev. vit.* 12.

⁴⁵ Cf. Friedlaender p.263.

⁴⁶ J.P. Sullivan (loc. cit. pp.232-253, esp. 252) concludes that Petronius himself had a tendency to voyeurism from the fact that in Petronius' novel third parties often watch the sexual act. This is no less risky than inferring from the present passage that Petronius was a sadist. What really matters is the dispassionate and critical standpoint from which the writer analyses the debasement that in a world of mass consumption affects every side of life, from the culinary and sexual to the linguistic.

⁴⁷ For the right approach cf. now also F.M. Fröhle *Petron. Struktur und Wirklichkeit. Bausteine zu einer Poetik des antiken Romans* (Frankfurt/Bern 1977) pp.111-145, esp. p.25.

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