Petronius' *Satyrica*: Analysis and Analogy

This panel presents original analyses of Petronius' *Satyrica* from the perspectives of historical allusion, genre and gender studies, visual imagery, reception and intertextual studies, and film studies. Paper 1 analyzes similarities between Trimalchio's wife, Fortunata, and Maecenas' wife, Terentia, in order to show how Petronius enriches his analogy of Trimalchio with the historical Maecenas to provide a further inside joke and an additional layer of entertainment for Petronius' original audience. Paper 2 illustrates how Petronius uses the depiction of the boy Giton to invert and confuse gender and genre boundaries, in a sleight of hand that characterizes his treatment and travesty of history, tragedy, and epic in general throughout the *Satyrica*. Paper 3 studies and analyzes Petronius' varied and unique use of color, particularly in the *Cena Trimalchionis* and with reference to the character of Trimalchio, to reinforce visually the startling and outrageous people with which he populates the *Satyrica*. Paper 4 considers an earlier version of F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* that was entitled *Trimachio*, and analyzes how Fitzgerald reaches through Petronius' Trimalchio back to a common Platonic origin to create in Jay Gatsby a character who envisions Platonic ideals of both himself and his beloved, and pursues those ideals to his tragic end. Paper 5 looks at the escape of Encolpio and the cannibalism of Eumolpo's heirs at the end of *Fellini Satyricon* to analyze how Fellini uses Petronius' work to engage with and inform his own intellectual and artistic enterprise.

Recent research (e.g., Courtney 2001; Rimell 2002) has brought welcome attention to Petronius' masterpiece, and it is hoped that the varied and thought-provoking approaches and conclusions presented here will stimulate further work and reflection on this fascinating composition.

Paper 1: Fortunata and Terentia: A Model for Trimalchio's Wife

Topical allusions abound in the *Satyricon*, especially in the case of Trimalchio, who has been compared to many historical characters but mainly to Maecenas, both the historical figure and the abject decadent criticized with great exaggeration by Seneca in the *Epistles* (Rose. 1971; Hofmann, ed. 1999). In his study of Trimalchio and Maecenas R. B. Steele noticed in passing that Trimalchio's wife, Fortunata, resembled Maecenas' wife, Terentia, and in this paper I develop this idea further (Steele. 1920). Admittedly, we do not know much about Terentia, but what we do know are things Petronius and other educated men of court would have known (Guarino. 1992), and endowing Fortunata with Terentia's characteristics would have made the Trimalchio/Maecenas connection all the more amusing for his original audience.

Both women marry high-maintenance men whom they are prone to push too far. Seneca embellishes the truth when he claims that fickle Maecenas married and divorced Terentia a thousand times (*Ep*. 114,6), but they did divorce and remarry at least once (Just. *Dig*. 24,1,64; cf. Martini. 1995). A fickle Trimalchio soon after naming Fortunata his heir (*Sat*. 71,3) throws a cup at her and demands her statue be excluded from his monument because she objects to his affection for a slave boy (*Sat*. 74,10-12 and 75). Maecenas' affection for his own freedman, Bathyllus, was notorious (Tac. *Ann*. 1,54,2; Dio. 54,17,5) and could not have sat well with Terentia, who was not named among his heirs. Each woman behaves questionably with a friend of her husband, Fortunata with Habinnas (*Sat*. 67,12) and Terentia with Augustus (Dio 54,19,3). Both women have a sharp eye for finances and both like to dance, Fortunata on more than one occasion (*Sat*. 52,8; cf. *Sat*. 70,10), and an ancient commentary claims that the dancing *domina Licymnia* in Horace *Odes* 2,12 was none other than Maecenas' wife.

These and other similarities between the fictional Fortunata and real Terentia identify Terentia as Fortunata's main analogue by the end of the *Cena*, and would have provided an additional layer of entertainment for Nero's inner circle. Petronius' original audience would have understood the Terentia/Fortunata connection as an inside joke, and inside jokes, as most scholars admit, feature prominently in the *Satyricon*.

Paper 2: Petronius's Giton: Gender and Genre

That the *Satyrica* is in large part a brilliant work of parody is a given much analyzed by critics of Petronius. In this paper I analyze the parody of literary genre through the personage of Giton, through whom Petronius plays a highly sophisticated literary game of gender and genre as he simultaneously manipulates the fluidity of Giton's gender and the fluidity of many antecedent genres of literature. For example, the scene in *Sat 9*, where Giton as rape victim of Ascyltus evokes Lucretia, is an outrageous parodic reworking of Livy. Similarly, at *Sat 97*, where Petronius parodies the Cyclops episode of the *Odyssey*, Giton, this time in masculine gender, recalls Odysseus. Giton-as Lucretia and Giton-as-Odysseus are but two instances of Petronius's gender play with a character who recalls literary heroes but more often mimics females, namely, the heroines of epic, tragedy, elegy, and romance. For at *Sat* 82 Giton parallels the *Iliad's* Briseis, and later— in a hilarious burlesque of the *Aeneid*-- Giton becomes Dido when Eumolpus addresses him with diction borrowed from Aeneas's address to the queen of Carthage (*Sat.* 94). Another parodic overlay on the scene is the evocation of the tragic Jocasta, whose role as *mediatrix* Giton assumes in the quarrel between Ascyltus and Eumolpus. Giton's chameleon-like shift from one tragico-epic heroine to another is a dexterous literary sleight-of-hand on the part of Petronius and underscores Encolpius's own estimation of Giton's ambivalent gender: *adulescens omni libidine impurus et sua quoque confessione dignus exilio, stupro liber, stupro ingenuus, cuius anni ad tesseram venierunt, quem* **tamquam puellam** *conduxit etiam qui* **virum** *putavit* (81)."

Petronius has placed Giton in high literary company along side the heroines of Homer, Livy, Vergil, Ovid, and Seneca. The fact that he is the pathic object of desire on the part of several male characters, in other words, a *cinaedus*, a sexual category universally derided in Roman invective and satire, makes his characterization an outstanding example of Petronius's stunning travesty of the genres of history, tragedy, and epic.

Paper 3: A Veritable Feast of Color in Petronius' *Satyrica*

Though the use of color in Roman poetry has been studied recently (Clarke. 2001; 2003; Barolsky. 2003), far less attention has been paid to the use of color in Roman prose; the most recent study dates from 1949 (André; cf. Dana. 1919). In this paper I consider and analyze the ways that Petronius uses color terms in the *Satyrica* and in the *Cena Trimalchionis* in particular, and how the use of particular colors becomes associated with the freedman character of Trimalchio.

Petronius associates freedmen with extravagance and other characteristics of the *nouveau riches*, and in this way Petronius marks Trimalchio and his wife Fortunata in the *Cena Trimalchionis* as different from their natural surroundings. From his use of certain color terms over the course of his novel, it is apparent that he was interested in conveying a unique scheme through the employment of these specific terms. Compared with other writers of the Roman Empire, Petronius' calculated philological style and range of color-terms contrast sharply with the elegiac poets and historians who were also concerned with *ekphrasis* and descriptive technique. In short, Petronius provides the reader with a visual showcase in addition to an entertaining narrative. Through this discussion, I explain how Petronius in his masterpiece illustrates with color-terms his careful delineation and depiction of character in the *Cena Trimalchionis* and in the *Satyrica* as a whole.

Paper 4: Reading Plato in *Gatsby*: *The Great Gatsby*, Trimalchio, and Platonic Origins

An earlier version of F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*, entitled *Trimalchio*, appears to model the character of Jay Gatsby on the freed slave in the *Satyrica* who, like Gatsby, gives loud, ostentatious parties (West. 2000), even though Gatsby's romantic extravagance and Trimalchio's cynical coarseness suggest significant dissimilarities between the two characters (MacKendrick. 1950; Zeitlin. 1971). In fact, explicit descriptions of Gatsby's character and his relationship with Daisy reveal rather affinities with Plato's *Symposium*, a text on which Trimalchio's banquet also draws, though primarily by inversion in its contrast of the refined setting and lofty discussions of love in Plato's dialogue with the raucous dinner crowd and obscene tales of lust and ardor in the *Satyrica* (Conte. 1996; Rimell. 2002). Nick Carraway, the narrator of *Gatsby*, describes how Gatsby "sprang from his Platonic conception of himself," and pursued that ideal to the end. Gatsby, in "the colossal vitality of his illusion," invests Daisy with an idealistic perfection to make her his perfect, Aristophanic love match. Unlike Gatsby's boorish party guests, Nick describes Gatsby himself as having "one of those rare smiles with a quality of eternal reassurance in it, that you may come across four or five times in life." Jay Gatsby, and *The Great Gatsby* itself, invoke Trimalchio, but not to draw a simple American analogy to the Roman arriviste. Rather, Fitzgerald reaches through Trimalchio back to a common Platonic origin to create in Gatsby a glorious, if tragic, character who, though flawed, nevertheless envisions Platonic ideals of both himself and his beloved, and pursues those ideals to the unattainable place where ideas and ideals, Platonic and otherwise, have always resided, in the human spirit and its capacity for love.

Paper 5: Eating Eumolpus: *Fellini Satyricon* and the Dynamics of Tradition

At the end of *Fellini Satyricon*, there is a grotesque juxtaposition between two groups of men. The protagonist Encolpio is escaping on a ship with a number of free men and slaves, while on the seashore the would-be heirs of the poet Eumolpo sit, older men who have been forced by the terms of the poet's will to tear pieces from his corpse and eat them in order to inherit considerable wealth. As the latter's social inferiors escape on the ship, the cross-cut editing deliberately juxtaposes the flight of the poor and the free with the peculiar solemnity of some old and unhappy faces caught in the act of chewing, each sitting alone with his own thoughts. As the camera focuses on an island in the distance, the voiceover of Encolpio begins a further narrative of adventure and discovery… but then the narrative breaks off, fragmenting the arc of the highly episodic plot right at a new turn in the road. The camera then focuses on the face of Encolpio, which dissolves into a fresco painting on a ruined wall, then into a series of wall frescoes made to look like vibrant archaeological ruins located in an open field. The paintings are visual quotations of the movie itself, going back to the very beginning of the film. Thus the film ends with a powerful image of fragmentation—plot-wise in the interrupted narrative, and visually in the direct invocation, through the guise of archaeological ruins, of the film itself as a series of visual fragments staring back at us.

Why this ending? I argue that the bifocal image of the two groups of men encapsulates the dynamic of tradition at the heart of Fellini's own project. For the very freedom Encolpio enjoys is a product of Fellini's cannibalization of Petronius, his thorough ingestion and digestion of the Roman original's fragments. The original text's fragmentary nature, its montage of genres and incidental characters loosely connected by episodic narrative, and most importantly, its techniques of subversion were just the right menu for Fellini at this stage in his career, when he was in a crisis about the state of his creative powers. Just as the Latin text can be said to dismantle the genres of epic and Greek romance through its picaresque realism, *Fellini Satyricon* attempts a liberation of the visual text of antiquity from the conventional Hollywood "epic" format through a unique kind of oneiric realism; that is, a visual text rich in vibrant and freakish detail, but deliberately enigmatic and alien in its intent and meaning.