
THE PETRONIAN

SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

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- 28 “Xenophon of Ephesus,” Aldo Tagliabue
- 29 “Achilles Tatius,” Koen de Temmerman
- 30 “Longus,” John Morgan
- 31 “Heliodorus,” John Morgan
- “Epilogue: Speech in Ancient Greek Narrative,” Mathieu de Bakker and Irene de Jong

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Valdivieso, Erika. "Dissecting a Forgery: Petronius, Dante, and the Incas." *AJPh* 142, no. 3 (2021): 493–533.

Notices

Classical Association of the Middle West and South, April 7–10, 2021, Virtual

Panel: Greek Novel

- "Subverting Sexual Symmetry: Reading Power and Gender in the Didactic Patterns of *Callirhoe* and the *Ephesiaca*," Carissa Martin (Emory University)
- "Asymmetry and Variety in *Ephesian Tale*," Adlai E. Lang (University of North Carolina -Charlotte)
- "The Home Life of a Heroine: The Winter of Chloe's Discontent in Longus," Niall W. Slater (Emory University)
- "Dionysophanes' Atypical Role," Elizabeth Schae Deacon (Independent Scholar)
- "The Goatherd and the Shepherdess: *Daphnis and Chloe* for Children," Evelyn Adkins (Case Western Reserve University)

Panel: Latin Novel

- "*Obligati tam grandi beneficio*: Satirization of Compassionate Manumission in the *Satyrica*," Alex Cushing (Richard Wright Public Charter School-Washington, D.C.)
- "Bestiality and Female Lust in the Roman and Chinese Novel," Tianran Liu (University of California-Los Angeles)
- "Petronius' Ajax," Claudio Sansone (University of Chicago)
- "Artagatis, Cybele, Isis and Lucius at Rome," Jean Alvares (Montclair State University)
- "*Pythias me inuadit*: Perilous Interpellation in Apuleius' *Metamorphoses*," Deborah Cromley (Le Moyne College)

Society of Biblical Literature, 2021 Annual Meeting, November 20–November 23, 2021; San Antonio, TX

Ancient Fiction and Early Christian and Jewish Narrative

- Tyler Smith, Universität Salzburg, "Differences in the Characterization of Mordecai as Dream Interpreter as a Clue to the Textual History of AT and LXX-Esther Addition A"
- Yuliya Minets, University of Notre Dame, "*The Life of Euphemia and Goth*: Violence, Treachery, and Shifting Identities in a Sixth-Century Edessene Narrative"
- Jimmy Hoke, Luther College, "Beauty, Thrown to the Beasts: Thecla's Lawless Asexuality"

- Jared W. Saltz, Florida College, "*An Absolutely True Story*: Plato, Hecataeus of Abdera, and the Jews"
- Megan Wines, Loyola University of Chicago, "Broken Chains, Open Doors, and Mad Women: Prison Escape Narratives in Euripides' *Bacchae* and Acts of the Apostles"

Ancient Fiction and Early Christian and Jewish Narrative

Theme: Review Panel for Maia Kotrosits, *The Lives of Objects*

- Eric Vanden Eykel, Ferrum College, Presiding
- Ben Dunning, Fordham University, Panelist
- Janet Spittler, University of Virginia, Panelist
- C. M. Chin, University of California-Davis, Panelist
- Nicola Denzey Lewis, Claremont Graduate University, Panelist
- Maia Kotrosits, Denison University, Respondent

Ancient Fiction and Early Christian and Jewish Narrative

- Rebecca Bultman, University of Virginia, "Archangels in Drag: Disguise, Tears, and Recognition in the Testament of Abraham"
- Mark G. Bilby, California State University – Fullerton, "Murder, Madness, Mending, Mission, Mates, Mars Hill, and Mob Justice: The Characterization of Paul as a New Orestes in the Canonical Acts of the Apostles"
- David A. Skelton, Independent Scholar, "Music Is from the Devil: How David Rescues Music from Its Antediluvian Demise"
- Tom de Bruin, Newbold College of Higher Education, "Ancient Fanfiction and the Expanded Universe"
- Elizabeth Stell, Oxford University, "Fear and the Disquieting Edges of Dream in the Exagoge of Ezekiel and Beyond"

Ancient Fiction and Early Christian and Jewish Narrative

Theme: Teaching Ancient Fiction. A session on teaching ancient fiction in the undergraduate and graduate classroom.

- R. Gillian Glass, University of British Columbia, "Choose Your Own Romance: Teaching Greek Romances in Their Imperial Context"
- James C. Henriques, Trinity University "Here Is a Story I Can Vouch for Myself": Separating History from Fiction in Ancient Epistles as a Pedagogical Exercise"
- Jeannie Sellick, University of Virginia, "Be the Filmmaker/Heretic: Introducing Undergrads to the Range of Ancient (Fan)Fictions"

Society for Classical Studies, January 5–10, 2021, Virtual

Panel: There's No Place Like *Domus*: Explorations of the Roman House

- "Aesthetics of Excess: Challenging the Theory of Elite Imitation in Trimalchio's Home," Katy Knortz, Princeton University

Panel: The Ancient Novel and Material Culture

Organizers: Evelyn W. Adkins (Case Western Reserve University) and Edmund P. Cueva (University of Houston-Downtown)

- “Votive Inscriptions, Aretalogy, and the Epigraphic Habit in the Ancient Novels,” Barbara Blythe, Tulane University
- “Glasses and Other Tableware in Achilles Tatius: Making Sense of a Complex Novel by Looking at Objects,” Marine Glénisson, Université Paris-Sorbonne
- “Dramatizing the Gendered Subject: Examining the Pseudo-Stomach in *Leucippe and Clitophon* as a Prop of Performative Gender,” Emily Waller, University of Pennsylvania
- “The *Mulier Equitans*: Erotic Display in Apuleius’ *Metamorphoses* and Roman Wall Painting,” Victoria Hodges, Rutgers University
- “Mirrors on the Moon: Lucian’s Sci-Fi Technology and Anticipated Innovation,” Everett Beek, North-West University
- “‘Just as Honeycomb’: Queer Money in Petronius’ *Cena Trimalchionis*,” Elliott Piros, The University of North Carolina at Greensboro
- Respondent: Edmund P. Cueva, University of Houston-Downtown

Obituaries

[James Noel Adams CBE FBA \(1943–2021\)](#)

Petronian Miscellany

By Barry Baldwin

The welcome epiphany (2020) of Gareth Schmeling’s revised Loeb *Satyricon*—we can jettison our Heseltines and Warmingtons—set me to wondering, not for the first time, why there is no Oxford Classical Text. Petronius is not mentioned in Graham Whittaker’s valuable inventory of what there is and is not in *Oxford Classics* (ed. Christopher Stray, 2007, 154-187). Whittaker kindly informs me that he could not cover the last thirty years because of OUP’s absurd embargo on all relevant correspondence. Gareth senses that Oxford feels that, with Müller and Smith’s *Cena*, enough is enough.

I rushed back to *Sat.* 78.6–7 upon reading the following in Anthony Barrett’s otherwise magnificent *Rome is Burning* (2020). After depicting the novel as “a wild romp of uninhibited self-indulgence and grotesquely absurd characters,” Barrett goes on (p. 50) to say that the fire brigade was alerted to Trimalchio’s mock funeral because of “a slave’s loud fart.”

The Latin text, of course, attributes the breaking-in by the *vigiles* to the loud blast (*intonuit*) emitted by one of the band of assembled trumpeters. He is described as *honestissimus* among them, not the sort who would thunder out a fart on so solemn an occasion. Can *intonuit* be so translated? Gareth’s Commentary says little on the episode, Smith not a single word.

Those of us (and who does not/) yearn to read more of Petronius might be tempted by that prince of fantasists Léon Herrmann who claimed in his *L’âge d’argent doré* (1951) that he is the author of the *Consolatio ad Livia* (in AD 63) plus the *Elegy on Maecenas*, explaining the latter as a self-defence against Seneca. No plausible evidence is adduced for any of this Petronian pie-in-the-sky. Reviewing Herrmann in *L’Antiquité* 21 (1952), 482–484, Paul van de Woestijnje dubs all this as “la plus haute fantaisie.” See further Shannon Byrne’s “Petronius and Maecenas” chapter in the Gareth *Festschrift (Authors, Authority, and Interpreters in the Ancient Novel)*, 2006, 83–111).

Regarding Petronius’ *Arbiter* status, it is worth recalling that up to AD 62, Seneca held an analogous position, with Tacitus (*Ann.* 14.52) making his detractors complain that Nero could do nothing without his approval. Petronius, then, might be seen as simply usurping Seneca as top dog. And, probably, Tigellinus took the same line in his undermining of Petronius’ position at court.

Adding to my periodic PSN jottings on *Horatio curiosa felicitas*, I now wonder if this compliment was intended as a counter to the less enthusiastic attitude of Persius? See further Josiah Osgood, “Persius and Juvenal as Satiric Successors,” introducing *A Companion to Persius and Juvenal* (eds. Osgood and Susanna Braund, 2012), also D. M. Hooley, “Persius’ Refractory Muse: Horatian Echoes in the Sixth Satire,” *AJP* 114 (1993), 137–154.

Still in wondering mood, I ask where Petronius’ house in Rome was located. In *Quo Vadis* (novel, not movie), it survived the Fire, this being interpreted by common consent as proving him “the first-born of fortune.” The Palatine might seem the best guess. Now, according to Dio Cassius (62.18.2), that entire region was destroyed. However, Tacitus (*Ann.* 15.69) says Vestinus Atticus’ last, doomed dinner-party was held in his house there (Barrett, above, is convinced the Palatine was its location. Was Petronius at this party (it was both similar to and different from his own future one in 66)? The two may well have been chums, Vestinus being noted for the witticisms he aimed at

Nero. Of course, this shared talent might have made them rivals. In *Quo Vadis*, he is as popular with the Roman mob as was Petronius.

In *Quo Vadis* (novel and film), the male protagonist is Marcus Vinicius, nephew of the Arbiter. An obvious fiction. Why did Sienkiewicz chose this name? Although it seems certain he read Tacitus and Suetonius, he was no classical scholar, failing to graduate from university because of his poor performance in Greek. Possibly, from Tacitus, he remembered the Marcus Vinicius who had a glittering career under Tiberius, Caligula, and Claudius. He is best read about in Anthony Barrett's biographies of Caligula and Agrippina. In *Quo Vadis*, Vinicius is returning from military triumphs in Britain. The historical one accompanied Claudius to celebrate the emperor's triumph there. Back in AD 20, he had refused to defend Piso against the charge of poisoning Germanicus. This earlier homonym naturally recalls the Neronian conspirator Gnaeus Piso. Perhaps these were the ingredients that created the novel's Vinicius, random associations of factual characters.

As to Gnaeus Piso (Tacitus, *Ann.* 6.15), it should be remembered that he was celebrated for his tragic stage performances, poetry, ostentation, and sensual cravings. In other words, a deuterio-Nero. Had the plot worked, would Petronius have been retained as Arbiter? Or disrelished as too accomplished a rival, as happened between Nero and Lucan?

Was the Arbiter married? Was would it have been like to be Mrs Petronius? According to the Scholiast on Juvenal 6.638, the Pontia there mentioned was the daughter of the Petronius condemned for conspiracy by Nero. Her husband dead (suspicious circumstances hinted at) she poisoned her sons, opened her veins at a sumptuous dinner party and danced herself to death.

As Peter Green puts it in his Penguin translation of Juvenal (p. 260), "Father-fixation, the Freudian might say, could scarcely go further."

Green takes no account of the notorious unreliability of the Juvenal scholia, nor of the fact that Pontia is identified as the daughter of PUBLIUS Petronius, which provides another familiar can of worms, not to be opened here.

Not that having a daughter guarantees a wife....

All Petronians must know the movie *Quo Vadis*, with Leo Genn as Petronius. Contrariwise, I have never met anyone else who has seen the Italian-American comedy *Nero's Weekend* (1956). Alas, Petronius was left out, his testamentary mocking

of Nero's voice in *QV* being re-attributed to Seneca. Now hard to find, *Nero's Weekend*, though no great shakes, is worth seeking out for its cast which combines Gloria Swanson as Agrippina (omitted from her Wikipedia filmography) with Brigitte Bardot as (naturally) Poppaea, her first appearance on screen as a blonde.

Petronius has just made a splash in 2020s fiction.

In the first chapter of *The Geometry of Holding Hands* by the phenomenally prolific Scottish novelist Alexander McCall Smith, the heroine-wife books a dinner table at an expensive Edinburgh restaurant.

"This place, what's it called?"

"Cena Trimalchio, I think. It made me think of Trimalchio's Feast, of course. Petronius, *The Satyricon*. Remember?"

Husband Jamie shook his head. "I never did Petronius," he said.

Reviews, Articles, and Dissertations¹

Glover, Daniel B. "“Gods in Human Form”? A Study of the Acclamations of Divinity in the Acts of the Apostles." PhD Dissertation, Baylor University, 2021.

This study evaluates five divine acclamations in the Book of Acts by situating them within the broader ancient Mediterranean context of deification. It demonstrates that divine acclamations in Acts do not conform to a single pattern of deification but several distinct patterns serving different purposes. This study begins by outlining the various ways humans were thought to be divine in Mediterranean antiquity. Each acclamation is then evaluated on its own terms, giving particular attention to the concept of divinity at work. By discerning what concepts of divinity are used, a clearer picture of the function of each acclamation emerges. With Simon (Acts 8) and Herod Agrippa I (Acts 12), the divine acclamations fit the pattern of self-deification. By portraying them as self-deifiers, Luke discredits these figures. Simon's self-deification makes him out to be the eternal, uncreated Creator-God. Luke's rhetorical strategy to discredit Simon phonetically inverts key Simonian claims to portray him as a charlatan. Herod's self-deification uses the cult of rulers and the related cult of benefactors to secure his divinization. Luke reports on Herod's death to criticize self-seeking imperial rule and benefaction. The denials of divinity by Peter (Acts 10) and Paul (Acts 14) serve an opposite

¹ The summaries of the dissertations are from the data supplied by *Pro Quest* or *WorldCat*.

function by legitimizing these figures as true philosophers. As with Herod, Cornelius's worship of Peter is understood within the benefactor cult. Peter's refusal illustrates his commitment to philosophic virtue and makes a point about the nature of true benefaction and the ethnic equality of the people of God. Paul's divine denial is based on a different concept of divinity, that of the disguised deity or epiphany. In addition to emphasizing his philosophic virtue, Paul's correction of the Lystrans' actions involves a critique of the Zeus cult, suggesting an element of religious competition underlying this scene. Finally, Paul's survival of the snakebite in Acts 28 depicts Paul as a divine man, a characterization in line with his portrayal as a wonderworking philosopher throughout Acts. This study dispels the notion that the divine acclamations address only one thing ("paganism") by demonstrating how each acclamation serves its own literary, historical, or theological concern.

Inácio, Naiara Leão Alves. "Between Orality and Writing: The Two-Stage Composition of the Acts of Paul and Thecla and its Implications for Social and Gender History." MA Thesis, The University of Iowa, 2021.

The scholarship on the origins of the *Acts of Paul and Thecla* is divided into two overall strands. One sees it as derived from folk stories told by and to women, and therefore revealing of the social world of early Christian women. Another sees it as a literary work modeled after the Hellenistic novels by a male writer, and therefore containing only his projections of gender and no information about historical women.

This study reconciles some points of these two apparently opposite hypotheses. It proposes that early versions of *Thecla* had at least two stages of composition. First, it circulated orally, among storytellers of uncertain gender(s), and then it was penned down by a male scribe under the influence of the popularity of novels, circulating in a community known as Cainites. This conclusion is drawn from a new, revised translation of Tertullian's commentary about the author of the *Acts of Paul and Thecla*. This reading is informed by the larger context of his treatise, and by the literary culture of second-century writers. In light of an analysis of the theoretical frameworks that influenced research on *Thecla*, particularly in the 1980s and 1990s, it also argues for the rehabilitation of *Thecla* as a source for historical readings.

Nair, Divya. "Classical Reception and the Problem of the Color Line in Early Modern English Literature, 1519–1804." PhD Dissertation, University of Pennsylvania, 2021.

This dissertation adopts the historiographic method of W.E.B. Du Bois as a heuristic for analyzing the emergence of the color line, the racial and economic relation of white people to the black, brown, and yellow people of the world, in early modern English literature through an examination of the English reception and transformation of Greco-Roman antiquity. I examine

differences between ancient Greco-Roman relations to Africans and Asiatics, and the changing relation of Europeans to these peoples and their civilizations in the early modern period, by studying key perceptual and ideological shifts in English adaptations of the classical utopia, the georgic, and the romance. I connect these shifts to the consolidation of the slave trade and capitalism, and decisive political events, including the English Civil War, Asiento, the Atlantic Revolutions, the Greek War of Independence, and the Anglo-French invasions of India and Egypt. I thus understand the color line as a sociological and epistemic problem. Greco-Roman literature emerged at the confluence of Asia, Africa, and southern Europe in antiquity and was revived during the Renaissance, which traveled up to England from Italy and the Greek-speaking Eastern Roman Empire. Between the Renaissance and the early nineteenth century, we see an ongoing recognition amongst English writers of the relation of English and Greco-Roman literary forms to Africa and Asia. However, as English investments in slavery and colonial expansion deepen, the scientific temptation to project the color line onto antiquity becomes as great as the commercial temptation to degrade labor, creating a phenomenological schism in the nation's literary imagination of antiquity. By the break of the twentieth century, Western literary critics forgot the connection of English literature and language to Africa and Asia, to which Mediterranean civilizations like Greece and Rome, were linked by trade, religion, and knowledge. Under what Martin Bernal has termed the "Aryan model" of historiography, Greece and Rome became the fountainhead of Western civilization, deemed "white" along with the ancient Aryans of India, who, like the Greeks and Romans, were likely a range of colors and not organized on the basis of skin color, unlike modern English society.

Rambow, George F. "From Mimesis to Myth: The Transformation of the Tale of Cyprian of Antioch in Late Antiquity." PhD Dissertation, Princeton Theological Seminary, 2021.

Did late antique Christians believe in their hagiography? More specifically, what did they make of the seemingly highly fictionalized stories about martyrs and ascetics that began emerging in the late fourth century AD? These are some of the larger questions with which this dissertation is concerned. My attempt to address these questions is carried out by means of a contextualized close reading of the five texts that constitute the late ancient dossier of the legendary martyr Cyprian of Antioch. The principal contribution of this dissertation is an argument for a new way of thinking about the relationship between Gregory Nazianzen's *Oration 24* and three other texts belonging to Cyprian's dossier. These three texts—the *Conversio*, the *Confessio*, and the *Passio*—tell complementary versions of Cyprian's story and constitute what, for lack of better terminology, I refer to as the "Cyprian of Antioch trilogy." What I argue is that in *Oration 24* Gregory of Nazianzus intended to eulogize Cyprian of Carthage, as opposed to Cyprian of Antioch, and that the story of the Carthaginian's conversion that Gregory

tells provided the model on which the tale of Cyprian of Antioch is based. In addition, I attempt to demonstrate that the un-historical stories presented in Gregory's oration and in the texts of the trilogy would likely have been understood within the framework of Aristotle's concept of mimesis. More concretely, I argue that *Oration 24*, the *Conversio*, and the *Passio* would have been perceived as a form of mimesis that was distinct from fiction and that might appropriately be called "protreptic representation." The *Confessio*, on the other hand, would likely have been regarded as fiction. In addressing the fifth text in Cyprian's dossier—empress Aelia Eudocia's epic metrical paraphrase of the Cyprian of Antioch trilogy—I show how Eudocia's poem transforms Cyprian's story from an edifying tale into a heroic myth. In so doing, I provide a case study of how some late ancient Christian narratives were refashioned in such a way that they became positioned to displace the older pagan myths and thus to contribute to the Christianization of the Mediterranean world.

Ribitzky, Tom. "The Seduction of Pessimism: Eros, Failure, and the Novel." PhD Dissertation, City University of New York, 2021.

In Plato's *Symposium*, we get a pessimistic myth not only about love, but about the first experience of loss, in which we were once globular cosmic beings who were split in two by Zeus's thunderbolts as punishment for not obeying the Olympian gods. Falling down to earth after the split, Zeus introduced eros out of pity for our condition. Our consolation was to find our other halves and hold on to them as a way of remembering what it was like when we were whole. But, as Allan Bloom notes, ...man's condition soon worsened. In the beginning, their real half was right there, and they could hold on to each other. But soon some of the halves died while others lived on, and in succeeding generations, the offspring of mixed couples reproduced together without necessarily being the true other half. Eventually there are no true other halves. The result is that men continue the quest, but it is hopeless. (108)

To Plato, wholeness is hopeless, and yet we still gesture to it in the act of love, even as we are doomed to fail. The pursuit of love coincides with the pursuit of truth—also a project doomed to fail. Socrates never arrives at any definition of Justice in *The Republic*. In *Phaedrus*, he offers an account of eros, but only to take it back and offer yet another account, ending the dialogue with a meditation on the limits of the written word and how this medium of language fails us. In the *Symposium*, rather than offering a definition of eros once and for all, Plato displays multiple and often contradictory explanations for it, ending with the distractions of a drunken mob. Truth stands always at a remove, as elusive as Virginia Woolf's *Lighthouse*. The most we can do is approach it as an asymptote. What Plato leaves behind is the vehicle to approach it—the dialogue itself, literally two halves summoned together in intercourse, pursuing love and truth as interchangeable categories.

That original separation, or *Urteil* in German—the word for "judgment," our faculty for pursuing philosophy in the first place—reveals that eros is at the heart of philosophy. It is the

nothing, the negativity, the lack that compels us to reach for what we have lost. Plato rehearses this split again in *The Republic*, when Socrates speaks of philosophy and poetry as lovers who have suffered a bad breakup. But the poetry Socrates is speaking of is "ordinary," written in the language of average everydayness—ironically, the same kind of language that Plato uses in his own novelistic dialogues (602B). Plato, then, marks the fault-line between philosophy and the novel, a fault-line in which the novel is at fault. My dissertation charts their relationship across time as an erotic one, and as a pessimistic one. Behind the veneer of deduction and induction, philosophy—like the novel—operates primarily by seduction. This is the story of how both philosophy and the novel are seduced back to each other in modernity.

Before the criminal biography and the Renaissance anatomy give us the modern novel, one thread of its history can be woven through the Platonic dialogue, the medieval Romance, and the fairy tale, encompassing multiple genres in its quest to find its long-lost lover in the form of philosophy. I focus on three twentieth-century novels that, in dialogue with each other, narrate this progression. The structure of Virginia Woolf's *To the Lighthouse* is modelled on Plato's *Symposium*; D.H. Lawrence's *Lady Chatterley's Lover* is a modern version of the medieval Tristan Romance; and Vladimir Nabokov's *Lolita* is a fairy tale that reimagines Hans Christian Andersen's "The Little Mermaid." Each of these novels offers its own model of eros as a pessimistic phenomenon.

I then bookend this discussion by coming back to *Symposium* as a model for Søren Kierkegaard's pessimism and experimentation with form as a way to unite philosophy and the novel in his *Seducer's Diary* and in his literary reviews. I argue that *The Seducer's Diary* can also be read as a template for *Lolita*, and I explore how his reflections on the novel in his literary reviews prefigure the philosophy laid out by Martin Heidegger in *Being and Time*. Both Kierkegaard's and Heidegger's focus on the experience of "average everydayness" coincides with the overall project of the novel. This is where these two ancient lovers rediscover each other in modernity. I end the dissertation by exploring the novel as a pedagogical device that offers an alternative vision to a world hijacked by a destructive neoliberal politics of optimism.