

PRAENOMEN PETRONII: THE DATE AND AUTHOR OF THE SATYRICON RECONSIDERED

Much research has been done on the question of how to relate the author of the *Satyricon* to a historically attested person. Though occasional objections have been raised,¹ today there is general agreement that the *Satyricon* was written in the time of Nero and that its author is identical with Nero's courtier,² as seems to have been the understanding of ancient grammarians and arguably Tacitus.³

It has also become common to identify Tacitus' Petronius 'Arbiter' with an epigraphically attested *consul suffectus* allegedly of A.D. 62, Petronius Niger. However, there is some inconsistency with regard to his *praenomen*: while some recent editions and philological studies tend to cite the author of the *Satyricon* as 'T. Petronius Niger',⁴ others (including recent standard prosopographical studies) provide the name 'P. Petronius Niger'.⁵ The identification of Nero's courtier with

¹ Alternative identifications have not won support: R. Martin, 'Quelques remarques concernant la date du *Satyricon*', *REL* 53 (1975), 182–224; idem, *Le Satyricon de Pétrone* (Paris, 1999); idem, 'Qui a (peut-être) écrit le *Satyricon*?', *REL* 78 (2000), 139–63; P. Flobert, 'Considérations intempestives sur l'auteur et la date du *Satyricon* sous Hadrien', in J. Herman and H. Rosén (edd.), *Petroniana* (Heidelberg, 2003), 109–22. Contra: N.W. Slater, *Reading Petronius* (Baltimore, MD, 1990), 7; A. Daviault, 'Est-il encore possible de remettre en question la datation néronienne du *Satyricon* de Pétrone?', *Phoenix* 55 (2001), 327–42; J. Amat, 'Des goûts et des saveurs à la table de Trimalchion', *Latomus* 66 (2007), 390–403, at 403. In earlier research, E.V. Marmorale, *La questione Petroniana* (Bari, 1948), proposed a date in the third century; contra: R. Browning, 'The date of Petronius', *CR* 63 (1949), 12–14 and 28–9; W. Süß, *Gnomon* 23 (1951), 312; H.C. Schnur, *The Age of Petronius Arbiter* (Ann Arbor, MI, 1956); idem, 'The economic background of the *Satyricon*', *Latomus* 18 (1959), 790–9; U. Knoche, *Die römische Satire* (Göttingen, 1957), 117; K.F.C. Rose, *The Date and Author of the Satyricon* (Leiden, 1971), 9–20.

² First identified by J.J. Scaliger in 1571. The conjecture is generally accepted: see e.g. B. Williams, 'Death of a novelist: Petronius' *Satyricon* and Tacitus *Annals* 16, 18–19', *Classicum* 17 (1991), 43–5; G.L. Schmeling, 'The *Satyricon* of Petronius', in idem (ed.), *The Novel in the Ancient World* (Leiden, 1996), 437; E. Courtney, *A Companion to Petronius* (New York, 2001), 11; P. Habermehl, *Petronius Satyricon 79–141: Ein philologisch-literarischer Kommentar. Vol. 1: Sat 79–110* (Berlin, 2006), xi–xiii; G. Vannini, *Petronius 1975–2005: Bilancio critico e nuove proposte* (Göttingen, 2007), 11. For a singular alternative identification in the time of Nero (Petronius Aristocrates of Magnesia), see B. Baldwin, 'Gareth and me: a Petronian pilgrimage', in S.N. Byrne et al. (edd.), *Authors, Authority, and Interpreters in the Ancient Novel* (Groningen, 2006), 41.

³ See H.C. Schnur, 'Vitorum imitatio: Tacitus on Petronius', *CJ* 50 (1955), 353–4.

⁴ Examples are numerous, e.g. J.P. Sullivan, *Literature and Politics in the Age of Nero* (Ithaca, NY, 1985), 159; Schmeling (n. 2), 457; P.G. Walsh (ed.), *Petronius: The Satyricon* (Oxford, 1996), xiv; P. Habermehl, s.v. 'Petron', in *Metzler Lexikon antiker Autoren* (Stuttgart, 1997), 519–22; A. Aragosti (ed.), *Petronio Arbitro Satyricon: Testo latino a fronte* (Milan, 1999), 6; J.R.W. Prag and I. Repath (edd.), *Petronius, a Handbook* (Chichester, 2009), 8.

⁵ W. Eck, 'Miscellanea prosopographica', *ZPE* 42 (1981), 227–56, at 227, n. 4; B. Rémy, *Les carrières sénatoriales dans les provinces Romaines d'Anatolie au Haut-Empire* (Istanbul, 1989), 30; P. Habermehl, s.v. 'Petronius [5] Niger (Arbiter)', in *Der Neue Pauly* 9 (2000), 672: 'das lange umstrittene Praenomen (traditionell meist T.) darf dank eines Inschr.-Fundes als geklärt gelten'; idem (n. 2), xi, n. 2; C. Marek, *Pontus et Bithynia* (Mainz, 2003), 48. J.R. Ginsburg,

this consul has rarely been challenged,⁶ and a comprehensive discussion has still not been undertaken. In this article, we will examine whether or not the current state of epigraphic evidence provides any reliable information on the poet's name or career, or the dating of his book. To this end, we will scrutinize the plausibility of previous identifications in terms of nomenclature, prosopography and Petronius' role in politics.

I. HISTORY OF SCHOLARSHIP

Manuscripts that refer to or contain the fragments of the *Satyricon* concur in naming its author *Petronius Arbiter*.⁷ Though it has recently been suggested that *Arbiter* could refer to the *cognomen* of a commoner or freedman, the epigraphic evidence is weak,⁸ and Petronius' actual *cognomen* (or the lack thereof)⁹ had either become unknown or had been deliberately replaced by the late second century.¹⁰ Thus, the only reliable evidence for the identity of the author is his *nomen gentile*, whereas *Arbiter* links him to Nero's courtier and *arbiter elegantiae* Petronius, consul of an unknown year in the *Annals* of Tacitus.¹¹ The manuscripts of ancient authorities give the author's *praenomen* as either Titus (Pliny and Plutarch)¹² or Gaius (Tacitus), and, while many have accepted Titus, there have been scholars who have preferred Tacitus' single testimonial for 'Gaius' ever since the age of Renaissance Humanism.¹³

'Nero's consular policy', *AJAH* 6 (1981), 51–68 has both variations: cf. 57, 66, n. 39, 67, n. 50, and 61.

⁶ General doubts occur in W. Ehlers, 'Petron und sein Werk', in K. Müller and W. Ehlers, *Petronius: Satyrica: Schelmenszenen* (Munich, 1995⁴), 487; Courtney (n. 2), 6–7 (with n. 1); U. Vogel-Weidemann, 'Miscellanea zu den Proconsules von Africa und Asia zwischen 14 und 68 n. Chr.', *ZPE* 46 (1982), 271–94, at 285. Others ignore the identification: e.g. P.B. Corbett, *Petronius* (New York, 1970); M. Smith (ed.), *Petronii Arbitri Cena Trimalchionis* (Oxford, 1975); K. Müller (ed.), *Petronii Arbitri Satyricon Reliquiae* (Munich, 2003⁴); V. Rimell, 'The satiric maze: Petronius, satire, and the novel', in K. Freudenburg (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Roman Satire* (Cambridge, 2005), 160–1.

⁷ On ancient sources for Petronius' name, see e.g. F. Bücheler (ed.), *Petronii Arbitro Satirarum Reliquiae* (Berlin, 1862), 206–27; A. Collignon, *Pétrone en France* (Paris, 1905), 1–20; Müller (n. 6), xxx–xli.

⁸ *CIL* VI 12,282 (Roma); *CIL* X 5490 (Aquinum); Dessau, *ILS* 2362 (Mogontiacum). See Flobert (n. 1), 110–11.

⁹ See G. Bagnani, *Arbiter of Elegance* (Toronto, 1954), 6 (henceforth Bagnani 1954a); idem, 'Trimalchio', *Phoenix* 8 (1954b), 86 (henceforth Bagnani 1954b); Corbett (n. 6), 142, n. 4; idem, 'Review of *The Satyricon of Petronius. A literary study* by J. P. Sullivan', *CPh* 65 (1970), 53–5; Courtney (n. 2), 6. Contra: R. Browning, 'Petronius', *CR* 70 (1956), 45–7; Rose (n. 1), 45, 52–3.

¹⁰ See Smith (n. 6), 214; Courtney (n. 2), 7; K. Eckermann, s.v. 'Petronius', in J.S. Ersch and J.G. Gruber (edd.), *Allgemeine Encyclopädie der Wissenschaften und Künste III: Section O–Z, XLX. Theil* (Leipzig, 1844), 326–7. Contra: C. Beck, 'The age of Petronius Arbiter', *Memoirs of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences* new series, 6.1 (Cambridge, 1857), 57.

¹¹ Tac. *Ann.* 16.18.2.

¹² Plin. *HN* 37.20; Plut. *Mor.* 60 E = *Adul.* 19.

¹³ Scaliger (1571); Binetus (1579); B. Zimmermann (ed.), *Metzler Lexikon antiker Literatur* (Stuttgart, 2004): 'Gaius (oder Titus)'.

(a) Mommsen's C. Petronius

In 1878, Mommsen was the first to ascribe the authorship of the *Satyricon* tentatively to an epigraphically attested Petronius.¹⁴ He followed the assumption of Bücheler, who had favoured a correction of the Arbiter's *praenomen* to C. as well,¹⁵ and referred to an inscription that provides C. Pet[ronio]. cos¹⁶ along with his colleague M. Asin[io] for 5 September of an unspecified year. He assumed that this inscription was erroneously dated to the year A.D. 25, in which one Asinius Agrippa is attested with his colleague Cornelius Cossus as *consul ordinarius* in Tacitus.¹⁷ This dating was based both on the assumption that only Cornelius Cossus had been replaced, while Asinius remained in office for the rest of the year, and on a dubious reconstruction of the Petronian family line.¹⁸

Mommsen's identification was rejected as inconsistent with the author's probable *praenomen* and because of chronological problems,¹⁹ but it has not been discussed in the light of more recent archaeological evidence. After Mommsen's death, a military diploma was brought to light, which gives A.D. 54 as the year of the *consules ordinarii* M. Asinius Marcellus and M. Acilius.²⁰ At first glance, it appears plausible to redate Mommsen's inscription to A.D. 54 and thus to identify this C. Petronius with our poet. However, this attempt implies that a possible C. Petronius, *consul suffectus* of A.D. 54, could hardly have been identical with a family member of the same nomenclature mentioned in a papyrus of the year A.D. 29.²¹

(b) Modern scholarship (from C. to T.)

The history of the current identification dates back to 1946, as does the publication of the first of two wax tablets from Herculaneum that provide evidence for a previously unknown consul named Petronius Niger, whose *praenomen* was read as T. and whose consulship was dated tentatively to A.D. 62.²² Some years later, it was suggested that this consul might be identical with the most famous member of his family.²³ The idea was further discussed and won recognition in the years

¹⁴ T. Mommsen, 'Trimalchios Heimath und Grabschrift', *Hermes* 13 (1878), 106–21 (= *Gesammelte Schriften* vol. 7 [Zurich, 1994³], 191–205), at 106–7.

¹⁵ Bücheler (n. 7), vi: confusion of Γ and T in the manuscripts of Plutarch.

¹⁶ *CIL* I 766 = *RE* 17 (1937), 1431 n. 116. B. Borghesi, *Oeuvres complètes* vol. 3 (Paris 1846), 343, had dated it to A.D. 25.

¹⁷ Tac. *Ann.* 4.34.1. Asinius Agrippa is epigraphically attested: P. Arnaud, 'Deux fragments de fastes du bois des Arvales', *MEFRA* 98 (1986), 403, line 14.

¹⁸ R. Hanslik, s.v. 'C. Petronius (22)', *RE* 17 (1937), 1199; *PIR*² P 266.

¹⁹ W. Kroll, s.v. 'T. Petronius Arbiter', *RE* 17 (1937), 1202.

²⁰ *CIL* XVI 3.

²¹ Pap. Ryl. 2, 127.4–5; see *PIR*² P 267; R.S. Bagnall, 'Publius Petronius, Augustan prefect of Egypt', in N. Lewis (ed.), *Papyrology* (New Haven, CT, 1985), 92.

²² The two tablets, both giving the date of 14 July in an unspecified year, were edited by G. Pugliese Carratelli, 'Tabulae Herculenses I.', *PP* 1 (1946), 381; idem, 'Tabulae Herculenses III.', *PP* 8 (1953), 460.

²³ R. Browning, 'Latin literature', *CR* 68 (1954), 33; idem, (n. 9), 47; R. Syme, *Tacitus*, vol. 1 (Oxford, 1958), 387, n. 6; K.F.C. Rose, 'The author of the *Satyricon*', *Latomus* 20 (1961), 822; idem, 'The Petronian inquisition: an auto-da-fé', *Arion* 5 (1966), 278–9; J.P. Sullivan, 'Petronius, Seneca, and Lucan: a Neronian literary feud?', *TAPhA* 99 (1968), 457 with n. 12 (henceforth Sullivan 1968a); idem, *The Satyricon of Petronius: A Literary Study* (London, 1968), 32 (henceforth Sullivan 1968b); idem, 'Petronius' "*Satyricon*" and its Neronian context', *ANRW* 2nd series, 32 (1985), 1666–86, at 1666–7; P.G. Walsh, *The Roman Novel* (Cambridge,

following, so that it became nearly undisputed after the ground-breaking book of Kenneth F.C. Rose in 1971.²⁴

Rose argued for an emendation of the *praenomen* of Petronius, which both Pliny and Plutarch attest as *T./Titus*, while only the Tacitus manuscripts have the alternative *C./Gaius*. He asserted that Plutarch is most probably independent from Pliny, but that both authors had Petronius' contemporary Cluvius Rufus as a source, who had provided information for Tacitus as well.²⁵ It follows with near certainty that the proper *praenomen* was Titus, not only because Pliny and Plutarch concur on this point, but also because the latter gives the full name (*Τίτος*), whereas Tacitus' manuscript tradition is easily explained as a result of either a confusion of *T* and *C* (appearing similar in certain scripts) or a possible haplography.²⁶ In addition to Rose, a passage of the *Satyricon* may be referred to, which alludes to a certain *Titus noster* whose 'name will be mentioned eternally'. This Titus might be typologically connected to Tacitus' description of Petronius himself, for he squandered his inheritance, and it could thus possibly be interpreted as an ironical self-portrayal, which assumption would verify the accuracy of Pliny and Plutarch.²⁷

Note that, save for the fact that the suffect consulate of Petronius Niger fell within the fourteen years of Nero's reign, Rose's identification is based almost exclusively on the allegedly identical *praenomina* of the consul and our poet.²⁸ For this same reason, one other consular descendant of the family of the Petronii, A. Petronius Lurco, was eliminated from consideration.²⁹ In fact, the entire argument represents a *petitio principii* in that the author's consulship (erroneously dated to A.D. 61) was taken as proven, and the events at Nero's court or the dating of the *Satyricon* were reconstructed accordingly, yet the prosopographical evidence had not been sufficiently discussed. There are at least sixty Petronii attested in imperial times down to the third century, and only 4 out of a total number of 43 Petronii with an attested *praenomen* were named Titus.³⁰

(c) *The Customs Law (from T. to P.)*

In 1989, a crucial epigraphic find was published that has come to be known as the Customs Law for the Province of Asia.³¹ Line 1 of the inscription names one 'Publius Petronius Niger' (*Ποπλίωι Πετρωνίωι Νίγρωι*) as *consul suffectus*, alongside the name of the same colleague who appears on the wax tablets from Herculaneum. The inscription was dated to A.D. 62. The impact of this new evidence

1970), 67–8. A. Degraffi, *I fasti consolari dell'Impero Romano* (Rome, 1952), 17, lists (besides T. Petronius Niger as cos. suff. 62) 'P. [sic!] Petronius Arbitr', consul 'prima del 66' (p. 17–18).

²⁴ Rose (n. 1).

²⁵ Ibid., 48–9.

²⁶ K. Nipperdey, *Cornelius Tacitus*, vol. 2 (Leipzig, 1852), ad loc.

²⁷ Tac. *Ann.* 16.18.1: *profligator sua haurientium*; Petron. 45.5–6: *et Titus noster magnum animum habet et est caldicerebrius: aut hoc aut illud, erit quid utique. nam illi domesticus sum. non est mixcix. ... et habet unde: relictum est illi sestertium trecenties, decessit illius pater. male! ut quadringenta impendat, non sentiet patrimonium illius et sempiterno nominabitur.*

²⁸ Rose 1966 (n. 23), 279; idem (n. 1), 48–50, 54.

²⁹ *PIR*² P 284; Rose (n. 1), 50.

³⁰ See *PIR*² P 268–321.

³¹ H. Engelmann and D. Knibbe (edd.), *Das Zollgesetz der Provinz Asia: Eine neue Inschrift aus Ephesos* (Bonn, 1989), 34; *AE* (1989), 681; *Bull. ép.* (1990), 78; *ibid.* (1991), 480; *SEG* 39, 1180. The impact on the identification with the poet was discussed first by Eck (n. 5), 227–30; see also M.T. Griffin, *Nero: The End of a Dynasty* (London, 1984), 143, 272, n. 3.

on the nomenclature of *Petronius Niger* need not be discussed: it is necessary to favour this later official document, which gives the full *praenomen* in legible Greek letters, over the wax tablets from Herculaneum, which were in notably bad shape and only provide the easily confusable capital letter.³²

Though an emendation from 'Titus' to 'Publius Petronius Niger' became necessary, the identification with 'Titus Petronius (Arbiter)' the author was never scrutinized. Rose actually stated that, should there ever be a way to prove his reading of the *praenomen* as T. to be wrong, his identification would be invalid,³³ but it seems that, after decades of recognizing and approving his view, no one took this *caveat* seriously. Thus, when in 1998 the revised edition of the PIR was published, it both held fast to the previous identification and emended the *praenomen*, thereby accurately summarizing the current state of research even though it had become obsolete. Accordingly, the author of the *Satyricon* was referred to as 'P. Petronius Niger (Arbiter)'.³⁴ This accounts for the confusion of the consul's proper name in recent scholarly works. Yet it is doubtful that the connection between Petronius 'Arbiter' and Petronius Niger would have been made in the first place had the Customs Law for the Province of Asia been known when the identification was first posited. In light of this new evidence, the possibilities for identifying Petronius shall be discussed once more.

II. REVIEWING THE IDENTIFICATION WITH P. PETRONIUS NIGER

1. Pontia, Publī Petronii filia

The evidence for Petronius having been called 'Publius' is extremely weak, the only manuscript testimony being the Juvenal scholiast who mentions a *Pontia Publī Petronii filia*.³⁵ Two manuscripts offer the addition *quam Nero convictam in crimine coniurationis damnavit*, which J. Lipsius (1547–1606) emended to *quem ... convictum*.

There are many objections to relating this P. Petronius to our T. Petronius 'Arbiter'. First, the scholia on Juvenal are known to be very untrustworthy as regards the identification of persons.³⁶ Second, Lipsius' conjecture is not supported by any manuscript evidence and Pontia might actually have been one of Nero's victims not otherwise attested in the extant text of Tacitus or elsewhere. The manuscripts date to the ninth century. A *manus recentior* may have interpreted the fact that Pontia had died 'with opened veins (while dancing)' in conjunction with a confusion of Petronius as an event from Neronian times and naturally from a

³² On the difficulties of reading the wax tablets, see A. Maiuri, 'Tabulae ceratae Herculanaenses', *PP* 1 (1946), 373–9; J.G. Wolf, *Freiburger Universitätsblätter* 18.65 (1979), 25–6.

³³ Rose (n. 1), 55.

³⁴ *PIR*² P 294.

³⁵ Iuv. schol. 6.638.2 Wessner: *Publi Petroni filia, quem Nero convictum in crimine coniurationis damnavit, defuncto marito filios suos veneno necasse convicta cum largis se epulis [h] onerasset et vino, venis incisus saltans, quo maxime studio oblectabatur, extincta est (quam ... convictam* PS, corr. Lipsius); cf. Rose (n. 1), 48: 'Therefore, we can exclude the possibility that the Arbiter's praenomen was Publius'; *PIR*² (1998) P 832.

³⁶ See G.B. Townend, 'The earliest scholiast on Juvenal', *CQ* 22 (1972), 376–87, at 378 with n. 4 on Pontia.

conspiracy. Meanwhile, both Martial and other (if more recent) manuscripts of the scholiasts explain that she was a widow who actually committed suicide in order to avoid condemnation for having murdered her children and having paid their legacy to her new lover.³⁷ Moreover, the name of Pontia does not seem to suggest a relation to T. Petronius ('Arbiter'), and thus it had previously been proposed that she might actually have been the daughter or granddaughter of C. Petronius Pontius Nigrinus.³⁸ It seems unwise to prefer a ninth-century addition, along with a dubious emendation, to near-contemporary testimonials.

2. The prosopographical evidence

Tacitus tells us that our poet was *Proconsul Bithyniae*, 'then' (*mox*) consul and 'thereafter' (*dein*)³⁹ received as *arbiter elegantiae* among the close-knit circle of Nero's intimate friends.⁴⁰ Tacitus is generally held to be reliable in terms of contemporary prosopography,⁴¹ though, very occasionally, he confuses names and identities, such as in the case of the Antoniae.⁴² Even if we do not find Petronius among the authors cited in the tenth book of Quintilian's *Institutio Oratoria*, the testimonials of Plutarch and Pliny suggest that he was actually quite famous at the time Tacitus wrote his histories. Among the prospective audience for Tacitus' senatorial accounts, private libraries were common, and the two public libraries in Rome that had recently been destroyed by a fire were replenished by a large order of copies from Alexandria during the principate of Domitian.⁴³ Volumes on the deaths of illustrious men and women became a popular genre after the Domitian's tyrannical principate was terminated by assassination.⁴⁴ In this age of deliberate intellectual freedom, it seems unlikely that Tacitus was uncharacteristically careless with reference to the life of Petronius, whose career path will be discussed accordingly.

³⁷ Mart. 2.34.6; 4.43.5; 6.75.3–4. One Pontia, in the time of Nero, was murdered by Octavius Sagitta, tribune of the people, after a love affair (Tac. *Ann.* 13.44), which event may have further contributed to the scholiast's confusion.

³⁸ Daughter: Bagnani 1954a (n. 9), 53–6, 86–7; Mommsen (n. 14), 107, n. 2. It is more likely that she was his granddaughter: *PIR*² (1998) P 812; P 832; cf. Eck (n. 5), 227, n. 4. Rose 1961 (n. 23) 825: 'Pontia seems to be the daughter of T. Petronius Niger, *Arbiter elegantiae*', adding in a note: 'Perhaps doubtful'.

³⁹ The use of *mox/dein* is vague in Tacitus; *mox* usually does not signify a time span longer than roughly three years (Tac. *Ann.* 11.11.2; cf. Tac. *Ann.* 4.3.3), while *dein(de)* seems to be even shorter than that – e.g. Tac. *Agr.* 9.1 (about six months); Tac. *Ann.* 1.20.2, 15.18.3 – although it may sometimes refer to a long period of time: Tac. *Hist.* 1.15.1. Tac. *Ann.* 6.11.1–2; Tac. *Hist.* 3.72.2.

⁴⁰ Tac. *Ann.* 16.18.2: *proconsul tamen Bithyniae et mox consul vigentem se ac parem negotiis ostendit. dein revolutus ad vitia seu vitiorum imitatione inter paucos familiarium Neroni adsumptus est, elegantiae arbiter, dum nihil amoenum et molle adfluentia putat, nisi quod ei Petronius adprobavisset.*

⁴¹ Syme (n. 23), 379; P. Fabia, *Les sources de Tacite dans les Histoires et les Annales* (Rome, 1967); S. Schmal, *Tacitus* (Hildesheim, 2005), 104–15.

⁴² Tac. *Hist.* 5.9. See N. Kokkinos, 'A fresh look at the *gentilicium* of Felix procurator of Judaea', *Latomus* 49 (1990), 126–41.

⁴³ Suet. *Dom.* 20; H. Blanck, *Das Buch in der Antike* (Munich, 1992), 120–9.

⁴⁴ See F.A. Marx, 'Tacitus und die Literatur der exitus illustrium virorum', *Philologus* 92 (1937), 83–103. According to Plin. *Ep.* 5.3.3, Fannius wrote a book on the victims of Nero.

(a) Proconsul Bithyniae

Evidence about the governors of Bithynia during the principates of Claudius and Nero is scanty, and the dates of their magistracies are even more open to speculation. The last governor for whom any reliable date is known under the principate of Claudius is C. Cadius Rufus, who was charged with and condemned of extortion in A.D. 49 and was probably in office during A.D. 47/48.⁴⁵ One Ti. Attius Laco held the office, probably in A.D. 54/55.⁴⁶ As for Iunius Cilo, procurator under Claudius in A.D. 49, there is speculation that he was eventually promoted to the proconsulate, but this assumption has not found unanimous support in the research.⁴⁷ Tacitus reports that M. Tarquitius Priscus, proconsul of Pontus et Bithynia, was accused and judged guilty of extortion in A.D. 61, and he may have been in office in A.D. 59/60 or 58/59.⁴⁸ One L. Montanus is known from some coins of Nicomedia that contain his legend, along with the portraiture of Nero, but provide no hint as to the date of his governorship.⁴⁹

The hypothesis that Publius Petronius Niger could have been governor of Bithynia before becoming suffect consul cannot therefore be excluded; at the same time, there is no numismatic or epigraphic evidence to support this view, and the current state of research gives room for speculation about some six to seven gaps that could be filled with an alleged governorship of T. Petronius 'Arbiter' from A.D. 55 through to an unknown date some year before his enforced suicide in the aftermath of the Pisonian conspiracy in 66.

(b) Consul suffectus

Although many names from the consular *fasti* under Nero are known, the identities of many suffect consuls are open to doubt. Only the years from A.D. 57 to 59 would seem to be complete.⁵⁰ As for A.D. 56, the *fasti* had been thought to be complete⁵¹ but had to be corrected because of an additional tablet that almost certainly places the consulate of L. Annaeus Seneca along with his colleague

⁴⁵ Tac. *Ann.* 12.22. G.R. Stumpf, *Numismatische Studien zur Chronologie der römischen Statthalter in Kleinasien* (Saarbrücken, 1991), 159–64; cf. B.E. Thomasson, *Laterculi Praesidum*, vol. 1 (Göteborg, 1984), 244 ('43–48'). P. Pasidienus Firmus was probably proconsul after Cadius Rufus: Rémy (n. 5), 27–8 ('48/49', possible iteration 49/50); Stumpf, 155–9 ('before Cadius').

⁴⁶ Stumpf (n. 45), 181–4 ('bald nach 54'); Thomasson (n. 45), 244; Rémy (n. 5), 29 ('54/55 ?').

⁴⁷ Thomasson (n. 45) 244, and Rémy (n. 5), 58, list him among the possible governors of 50/51 or 51/52. Contra: *PIR*² J 744; W. Eck, s.v. 'M. Iunius [II 9] Chilo', in *Der Neue Pauly* 6 (1999), 66.

⁴⁸ Tac. *Ann.* 14.46; Thomasson (n. 45), 244–5 ('Paullo ante a. 61'); Rémy (n. 5), 29 ('59/60 ?').

⁴⁹ Stumpf (n. 45), 186–7; Thomasson (n. 45), 245; Rémy (n. 5), 30–1 ('ca. 63'). He may be identical with L. Venuleius Montanus, *consul suffectus* of an unknown year: see W. Eck, s.v. V. 8a, *RE Suppl.* 14 (1974), 829; *PIR*² M 685; J. Scheid, 'Note sur les Venuleii Aproniani', *ZPE* 52 (1983), 225–8; M.-T. Raepsaet-Charlier, 'L'inscription *CIL* XI 1735 complétée et les *Venulei*', *Latomus* 42 (1983), 152–5.

⁵⁰ For A.D. 57, Suet. *Nero* 14 attests Nero having been consul for six months only, whereas his consulship is epigraphically attested all through July and again in December: *CIL* VI 845 (with Piso, before July); *CIL* IV 3340, 28–40; *CIL* VI 268 (1 Dec.); *CIL* II 2958 = Dessau, *ILS* 6104 (6 Dec.); *AE* 1984, 224 (22 Dec.). The wax tablets *CIL* IV 3340, 28–40, from July, September and November, may not be reliable.

⁵¹ Degraasi, *fasti consolari*, 15; P.A. Gallivan, 'Some comments on the *fasti* for the reign of Nero', *CQ* 24 (1974), 290–311, at 309; W. Eck, 'Ergänzungen zu den Fasti Consulares des 1. und 2. Jh. n. Chr.', *Historia* 24 (1975), 336; E.M. Smallwood, *Documents Illustrating the Principates of Gaius, Claudius, and Nero* (Cambridge, 1967), 4 ('doubtful').

P. Cornelius Dolabella in May 55.⁵² Thus, the gap created by replacing Seneca's consulate with two other colleagues attested from 25 August to 23 September 55 leaves the period from July to October 56 to be filled by two consular pairs whose identification is in dispute.⁵³ As a consequence of this emendation, A.D. 55 has to be regarded as complete. Thus, for this year a maximum number of nine consuls is attested, making up a total of six consular pairs.⁵⁴

In A.D. 54, probably the earliest date at which Petronius could have assumed the consulate, only the *consules ordinarii* (who were in office to June) are known, and there is no reliable evidence for any *suffecti*.⁵⁵ The year A.D. 60 saw Nero in charge of the *fascēs* for the fourth time, accompanied by Cossus Cornelius Lentulus. The former is attested as consul for six months in Suetonius,⁵⁶ while an inscription reveals that the latter was in office until at least 8 May.⁵⁷ No *suffecti* are known for this year, but C. Velleius Paterculus and M. Manilius Vopiscus, consuls between 15 July and 2 September of a year that is not known,⁵⁸ probably belong to A.D. 60, because under their consulship a comet appeared and Tacitus records a similar appearance for the summer of A.D. 60.⁵⁹ Similarly, in A.D. 61 only the *ordinarii* are attested, albeit for an unknown period of time,⁶⁰ while it is considered almost certain that the consulate of Cn. Pedanius Salinator and L. Velleius Paterculus from July to August belongs to the same year.⁶¹ The consular year of P. Petronius Niger is today generally attributed to A.D. 62, and a later year for the consulship of T. Petronius 'Arbiter' seems to be improbable (see below).

3. The date of the Customs Law

The Customs Law mentions Nero's eighth repetition of the *tribunica potestas* along with the consular names of P. Petronius Niger and his colleague Saturninus. Thus, P. Petronius' consulate is firmly dated to A.D. 62. This overturns the previous assumption that his consulate belonged rather to A.D. 63, which derives from another wax tablet from Herculaneum, dating from August, along with a consular name elsewhere attested for A.D. 62.⁶² As with other wax tablets, its reading is difficult

⁵² G. Camodeca, 'I consoli del 55–56 e un nuovo collega di Seneca nel consolato: P. Cornelius Dolabella', *ZPE* 63 (1986), 201–15; idem, 'Novità sui fasti consolari dalle tavolette cerate della Campania', in *Epigrafia: Actes du Colloque* (Rome, 1991), 45–74.

⁵³ Camodeca 1991 (n. 52), 206–7, proposes some consuls of an unknown year, alternatively dated by Gallivan (n. 51), 299–302, 309.

⁵⁴ Due to a revised reading of *CIL* IV 3340, 3345: E.M. Smallwood, 'Consules suffecti of A.D. 55', *Historia* 17 (1968), 384; Gallivan (n. 51), 299, 309; Eck (n. 51), 339.

⁵⁵ Names are suggested by Gallivan (n. 51), 299–300; idem, 'The *fasti* for the reign of Claudius', *CQ* 28 (1978), 407–26, at 425; A. Tortoriello, *I fasti consolari degli anni di Claudio* (Rome, 2004).

⁵⁶ Suet. *Nero* 14.

⁵⁷ *CIL* IV 3340, 144; Smallwood (n. 51), 5.

⁵⁸ *NdS* (1928) 388 = *AE* (1929) 161 = *PP* 1 (1946) 382.

⁵⁹ Sen. *Q Nat.* 7.28.3; Tac. *Ann.* 14.22.1. See R.S. Rogers, 'The Neronian comets', *TAPhA* 84 (1953), 237–49; K.F.C. Rose, 'Problems of chronology in Lucan's career', *TAPhA* 97 (1966), 395; J.T. Ramsey, *A Descriptive Catalogue of Greco-Roman Comets from 500 B.C. to A.D. 400* (Iowa City, IA, 2007), nos 34, 140–6.

⁶⁰ *PIR*² C 173.

⁶¹ *CIL* XVI 4 = *ILS* 1987 = Smallwood, no. 296; *CIL* I¹ 776b; R. Herzog, *RE* 17 (1937), 1431, nr. 130; see Smallwood (n. 51), 7; Gallivan (n. 51), 302.

⁶² Pugliese Carratelli (n. 22, 1953), 458, reads L. Asinius Gallus, *cos. ord.* of A.D. 62 (Tac. *Ann.* 14.48.1); cf. Eck (n. 51), 334–6. Camodeca 1991 (n. 52), 55, reads alternatively *Ap. Annius Gallus, cos. suff.* of c. A.D. 66/7. Gallivan (n. 51), 300, 310, dates Asinius to A.D. 66.

and the evidence thus not strong. The Customs Law provides the names of further consulars who were in charge of the *aerarium*, and these are evidently identical with a commission whose initial term of office Tacitus dates to A.D. 62.⁶³ Given Tacitus' chronology, however, the appointment may have taken place at the end of this year, after awkward news about the Parthian wars had reached Rome. The latter information seems to refer to the expulsion of Tiridates in A.D. 58,⁶⁴ while the former might either allude to the Parthian revolt in spring A.D. 62⁶⁵ or, more likely, to Paetus' shameful retreat in the autumn of the same year.⁶⁶ Pliny states that the supervision of the *aerarium* was a 'most lengthy and strenuous duty'⁶⁷ and an inscription attests that its previous supervisor had been appointed for two full years (*per triennium*).⁶⁸ According to the heading of the Customs Law, the commission had already put forward its revised text to the Senate on 14 April,⁶⁹ which contradicts the chronology of events suggested by Tacitus. It seems difficult to prefer Tacitus' account (which follows a military digression that seems not to adhere closely to the annalistic narrative) to the epigraphic evidence, but a dating of P. Petronius' consulate to A.D. 63 would further render unlikely any possibility of identifying him with the author of the *Satyricon*.

Thus, given that the emendations to the *fasti* of A.D. 55 and A.D. 56 are correct and that in A.D. 61 the tenure of the ordinarii lasted for a whole six months – a rule to which many exceptions did apparently exist,⁷⁰ there are still approximately six vacancies or disputable identifications in A.D. 54, two to four in A.D. 56, two in A.D. 60, and four to eight in A.D. 61, with few candidates known that might or might not have filled these gaps.⁷¹ At the same time, the proconsular *fasti* of Bithynia under Claudius and Nero do not exclude any of these possibilities for a consulate of an epigraphically unattested T. Petronius 'Arbiter'. We will therefore scrutinize Petronius' career and the fate of the *Satyricon* as echoed by contemporary authors and in the intertextual allusions of the *Satyricon* itself.

⁶³ Tac. *Ann.* 15.18: *tres dein consulares, L. Pisonem, Ducenium Geminum, Pompeium Paulinum vectigalibus publicis praeposuit*. See Eck (n. 5), 227–8; Engelmann and Knibbe (n. 31), 4.

⁶⁴ Tac. *Ann.* 13.41 (or maybe a SC as a reaction on Paetus' boastful letter from autumn 61: Tac. *Ann.* 15.8).

⁶⁵ Tac. *Ann.* 15.11.

⁶⁶ Tac. *Ann.* 15.15–16; Cass. Dio 61.21. For the dates, see also M. Heil, *Die orientalische Außenpolitik des Kaisers Nero* (Munich, 1997), 92–3; E. Egli, 'Feldzüge in Armenien von 41–63 n. Chr.: ein Beitrag zur Kritik des Tacitus', in M. Büdinger (ed.), *Untersuchungen zur römischen Kaiser Geschichte*, vol. 1 (Leipzig, 1868), 265–362, at 291–2, 354; Syme (n. 23), 391–2; R.S. Rogers, 'Five over-crowded months? A.D. 62', in C. Henderson (ed.), *Classical, Mediaeval and Renaissance Studies* (Rome, 1964), 217–22.

⁶⁷ Plin. *Pan.* 91.

⁶⁸ CIL VI 1403 = Dessau, *ILS* 906.

⁶⁹ Engelmann and Knibbe (n. 31), 38; SEG (1989), 369; contra C. Nicolet, *CRAI* (1990), 684–5, who argues that the commission published the revised text at this date.

⁷⁰ The years A.D. 55, 57, 58, maybe 62 (see Eck [n. 5], 228), 65, 67 and 68 are known as exceptions.

⁷¹ Only for A.D. 54 do some names seem likely: see Tortoriello (n. 55), 427.

III. DATING THE *SATYRICON*1. *Elegantiae Arbiter*

Rose and Sullivan theorized that Petronius might have gained influence with the emperor within a short period of time and have simultaneously written his lengthy *Satyricon* and fallen out of Nero's good graces before his suicide in A.D. 66.⁷² However, dating his consulship to A.D. 62 implies that Petronius could not have been received among Nero's intimate friends before the end of this year, according to the testimony of Tacitus. By early A.D. 62, Seneca had been forced out of public life,⁷³ and Nero's advisor Burrus had died and was replaced by Tigellinus, prefect of the Praetorian Guard and thus the mightiest man in Rome next to the emperor.⁷⁴

The same Tigellinus machinated against Petronius in the aftermath of the Pisonian conspiracy in A.D. 65 and forced him to suicide in the spring of A.D. 66. His death occurred, as Tacitus states, because of *invidia Tigellini quasi adversus aemulum et scientia voluptatum potiore* ('jealousy on the part of Tigellinus, who looked on him as a rival and even his superior in the science of pleasure').⁷⁵

Though it remains unclear how Petronius' function as 'Arbiter of Elegance' was exactly defined, it looks as if – in addition to his role as a literary talent and critic – he advised Nero on the refinement of luxury and excesses.⁷⁶ Indeed, we hear of Tigellinus exerting a growing influence on Nero's banquets and other excesses and in this role he seems to have replaced Petronius by A.D. 64.⁷⁷ Moreover, Petronius' function as Nero's Arbiter seems to have been limited in time.⁷⁸ If Petronius was consul in A.D. 62, then he succeeded in winning over Nero's fullest sympathy within little more than one year, in such a way that Tigellinus, though having been invested with the mightiest office before Petronius' arrival, could develop a sense of rivalry sufficient to find it necessary to get rid of him.

While such rapid advancement on Petronius' part does not seem wholly impossible, it appears all the more difficult to explain his alleged rivalry with Seneca, who had already been removed from Nero's court into private life before P. Petronius Niger became consul. Seneca's downfall, as Tacitus attests, was at any rate caused by advisors whom Nero over time had gathered around himself and who charged the Stoic philosopher with too luxurious a lifestyle and claims to unrivalled superiority in literary achievements.⁷⁹ The latter charge hints at the fact that among the group of Nero's intimates there were some who were active in producing literature, and it is plausible to assume that Petronius had already been one of these, since

⁷² Rose (n. 1), 55–9; Sullivan (n. 4), 153–79.

⁷³ Tac. *Ann.* 14.52–6; he may still have retained some public influence: Griffin (n. 31), 81–2.

⁷⁴ Tac. *Ann.* 14.51.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 16.18.3.

⁷⁶ See Smith (n. 6), 213; Rose (n. 1), 56–7.

⁷⁷ According to Corbett (n. 6), 11, 21–2, 142, n. 4, this happened by 62, which seems too early. Tigellinus organized Nero's banquets only from the summer of A.D. 64: Tac. *Ann.* 15.37. Sen. *Ep.* 94.17 and 69, dated by Rose (n. 1), 70–1, to August/September 64, may be understood as an admonition for Petronius to resign from his position of Arbiter.

⁷⁸ Tac. *Ann.* 16.18.2: *elegantiae arbiter, dum nihil ... putat.*

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 14.52–6; 15.54.

Petronius' role as the emperor's advisor is further attested by Plutarch.⁸⁰ Thus, it has recently been suggested that Seneca alludes to Petronius being Nero's Arbiter from A.D. 62 onwards.⁸¹

Nero's affinity for the arts dates back to his early boyhood and he continued to practise public declamation and took lessons in various kinds of arts soon after his accession.⁸² His murder of Agrippina in A.D. 59 reflected an overall effort to gain independence, and Nero used his new freedom by furthering and becoming actively involved in spectacles and arts such as the celebrations of the Juvenalia in A.D. 59 and the first Neronia in A.D. 60.⁸³ Notably, both a group of courtiers and advisors other than Seneca and Burrus and a literary circle consisting of poets and philosophers is attested as early as A.D. 59.⁸⁴

2. *Lucan*

As to this literary circle, nothing certain is known from the historical record, but many scholars have discussed literary repercussions among Neronian authors that might allow us to reconstruct a sequence of events. Thus, numerous thematic and linguistic parallels between the *Bella Civilia* of Petronius and Lucan have been identified,⁸⁵ though the interdependence of the two poems had repeatedly been denied.⁸⁶ Whether or not either assumption is correct, most scholars agree that intertextual allusions to Petronius can mostly be found in the first three books of Lucan's epic.⁸⁷

Such allusions need not imply that one poem preceded another, but suggest rather that both works were probably known by both authors reciprocally, because

⁸⁰ Plut. *Mor.* [p.] 60 D/E = *de differentia adulatoris et amici* 19: Καὶ ταυτὶ μὲν ἐλάττωνά ἐστιν. ἐκεῖνα δ' ἥδη χαλεπὰ καὶ λυμαινόμενα τοὺς ἀνοήτους, ὅταν εἰς τάναντία πάθῃ καὶ νοσήματα κατηγορώσιν ... ἢ τοὺς ἀσώτους αὖ πάλιν καὶ πολυτελεῖς εἰς μικρολογίαν καὶ ῥυπαρίαν ὀνειδίζωσιν (ὥσπερ Νέρωνα Τίτος Πετρώνιος). ('These are minor faults. Next, however, comes that unscrupulous practice which has such a damaging effect on silly people. This consists in accusing them of tendencies and weaknesses the very opposite of their real failings ... This may take the form of sneering at reckless and extravagant spenders for their petty-minded and sordid ways – Titus Petronius did this with Nero'; transl. J.P. Sullivan.)

⁸¹ S.N. Byrne, 'Petronius and Maecenas: Seneca's calculated criticism', in Byrne et al. (n. 2), 103; B. Baldwin, 'Notes on the Tacitean Petronius (*Annals* 16.18–20)', *PSN* 31 (2001), 2–3.

⁸² Tac. *Ann.* 13.3; Suet. *Nero* 10.2, 20, 53, 54; Sen. *Apocol.* 4; Cass. Dio 63.1.

⁸³ Tac. *Ann.* 14.14–15, 14.20–1, 14.47; Suet. *Nero* 11–12, 22; Cass. Dio 61.16–21.

⁸⁴ Tac. *Ann.* 14.13, 14.16, 14.47.

⁸⁵ Rose (n. 1), 87–94; A. Kershaw, 'A Neronian exclamatory phrase', *CQ* 85 (1991), 559–60. J.A. González de Salas in his Petronius edition (Frankfurt, 1629) had already noticed such parallels, mostly in the first book.

⁸⁶ P.A. George, 'Petronius and Lucan *De bello civili*', *CQ* 68 (1974), 119–33; Smith (n. 6), 214–17; B. Baldwin, 'Seneca and Petronius', *AClass* 24 (1981), 133–40, at 137; Habermehl (n. 2), xii–xiii.

⁸⁷ L. Jeep, 'Jahresbericht über die Römischen Epiker nach Vergilius von 1883–1889', *Jahresbericht über die Fortschritte der classischen Alterthumswissenschaft* 63 (1890), 177–206, at 182–3; H. Stubbe, *Die Verseinlagen im Petron* (Berlin, 1933), 74; Sullivan 1968a (n. 23), 459; Rose (n. 59), 389; idem (n. 1), 64, 87, 93–4; M. von Albrecht, *A History of Roman Literature from Livius Andronicus to Boethius*, vol. 2 (Leiden, 1997), 1214. R. Häußler, *Das historische Epos von Lucan bis Silius und seine Theorie*, vol. 2 (Heidelberg, 1978), 106–12, 258–9, refers to Petron. 124.294 and Lucan 7.473 (from the central battle scene) as the only 'fast unabweisbar' interdependence beyond the first three books. C. Connors, *Petronius the Poet* (Cambridge, 1998), 139–41, drew many conclusions from the poem's alleged incompleteness; contra: J. Masters, *Poetry and Civil War in Lucan's Bellum Civile* (Cambridge, 1992), 216–59.

of the practice of recitations common in early imperial times and attested for Nero's court beginning in A.D. 59.⁸⁸ Lucan is known to having recited samples of his *Bellum Civile* either at or shortly after the Neronia in A.D. 60.⁸⁹ He became a constituent member of the Pisonian conspiracy, after he had fallen from Nero's good grace owing to the emperor's jealousy, and he had been prohibited from publishing any further.⁹⁰ Tacitus does not state when Lucan's removal happened, but provides the information that first plans of the conspiracy were devised as early as A.D. 62 and counts Lucan among the list of possible initiators.⁹¹ According to Vacca, Lucan's first three books had caused both Nero's jealousy and Lucan's dismissal,⁹² while Leigh suggested that it was the political content of these three books that caused his dismissal.⁹³

Lucan, however, is not likely to have written the last seven books of his epic poem in the single year before his forced suicide in April A.D. 65; rather he probably worked continuously from A.D. 60 to 65 with an average of two books a year.⁹⁴ In consequence, it is likely that he had published his first three books as early as the end of A.D. 61, thus making them a possible source for Petronius' text in early A.D. 62. Moreover, Petronius is not likely to have written the corresponding parts of his *Satyricon* after the ban on Lucan's work, owing to the obvious danger involved in imitating a politically dangerous author during the Julio-Claudian era.⁹⁵ The presumed length of the novel⁹⁶ suggests that its completion took more than a year and was probably begun in the first half of A.D. 62 at latest.

3. Seneca

It has been argued that Seneca, after his fall from favour in early A.D. 62, was still influential enough that Petronius could have become his rival,⁹⁷ and one might object that there is no explicit evidence that Petronius had already been part of

⁸⁸ E. Lefèvre, 'Die römische Literatur zwischen Mündlichkeit und Schriftlichkeit', in G. Vogt-Spira (ed.), *Strukturen der Mündlichkeit in der römischen Literatur* (Tübingen, 1990), 9–15. Tac. *Ann.* 14.16 probably alludes to Petronius and Lucan. See also Sullivan 1968a (n. 23), 457–8; Bagnani 1954a (n. 9), 8.

⁸⁹ Suet. *Vita Luc.* 1: *M. Annaeus Lucanus Cordubensis prima ingenii experimenta in Neronis laudibus dedit quinquennali certamine, dein Civile Bellum, quod a Pompeio et Caesare gestum est, recitavit.*

⁹⁰ Tac. *Ann.* 15.49. Cass. Dio 62.29.4 refers to this ban under the events of A.D. 65, which does not fit into the chronology.

⁹¹ Tac. *Ann.* 14.65, 15.49.

⁹² Vacca (ed. Braidotti (1972), p. 37–8): *laudibus recitatis in Neronem fuerat coronatus [A.D. 60] et ex tempore Orpheia scriptum in experimentum adversum conplures ediderat poetas et tres libros quales videmus. Quare inimicium sibi fecit imperatorem. Quo ambitiosa vanitate non hominum tantum, sed et artium sibi principatum vindicante, interdictum est ei poetica, interdictum est etiam causarum actionibus.* Lucan's hatred of Nero implies an irrevocable ban from early onwards. See S. Bartsch, *Ideology in Cold Blood* (Cambridge, 1997), 89–90 for a more critical reading of the historical evidence.

⁹³ M. Leigh, *Lucan* (Oxford, 1997), 1–3.

⁹⁴ See A. Fortmann, *Quaestiones in Lucanum Metricae* (Greifswald, 1909), 59.

⁹⁵ Smith (n. 6), 217; M. Schanz and C. Hosius, *Geschichte der Römischen Literatur: Zweiter Teil* (Munich, 1935), 514, no. 387; Stubbe (n. 87), 75. Contra: Rose (n. 1), 67; G. Luck: 'On Petronius' *Bellum Civile*', *AJPh* 93 (1972), 133.

⁹⁶ See S.J. Harrison, 'Dividing the dinner: book divisions in Petronius' *Cena Trimalchionis*', *CQ* 92 (1998), 580–5, at 581 ('at least 16' books).

⁹⁷ Sullivan 1985 (n. 23), 1683–4; Baldwin (n. 86), 134–5; Griffin (n. 31), 81.

Nero's circle of advisors and literary courtiers by A.D. 62. Accordingly, literary passages in Seneca related to Petronius have been found mostly in the philosopher's later works, namely his *Epistulae morales*.⁹⁸ However, some scholars have argued that these parallels have been overemphasized at the expense of references to earlier works, such as the *Apocolocyntosis* and the *De brevitate*, among others.⁹⁹ Ultimately, they do not provide any proof for a later dating of the *Satyricon*, because it cannot be determined whether the *Satyricon* is modelled on the *Epistulae morales* or vice versa.¹⁰⁰ It has also been questioned whether these passages are anything more than coincidental and based only upon similar topoi common in the literature of the time.¹⁰¹ Other chronological arguments such as the dream of a treasure of gold, which has been linked to Caesellius Bassus' dream in A.D. 65 as given in Tacitus, are better taken as literary commonplaces.¹⁰²

Another possible (if neglected) source for the relationship of Petronius and Seneca is the latter's *De vita beata*. The first sixteen chapters of the work have been interpreted as a defence against the charges levelled at Seneca by Suillius during the trial of A.D. 58/59 and especially the contradiction between his lifestyle and personal wealth on the one hand and his literary pretence of having despised ambition on the other.¹⁰³ In the second part of *De vita beata*, after chapter 16,¹⁰⁴ Seneca, referring to a phrase of Socrates, speaks of *tota illa comicorum poetarum manus in me venenatos sales suos effudit* ('that entire band of comic poets that has poured out their poisonous mockery against me').¹⁰⁵ He certainly does not refer to Suillius, but may rather point to the later charges of Nero's literary circle in A.D. 62.¹⁰⁶ The jester Vatinius was probably among these 'comic poets',¹⁰⁷ but so might Petronius have been as well: a main theme of the *Satyricon* is the discrepancy between what is said and done, and the charges of excessive enrichment and

⁹⁸ Rose (n. 1), 69–74; Sullivan 1985 (n. 23), 1679.

⁹⁹ G.D. Williams (ed.), *Seneca: De otio. De brevitate vitae* (Cambridge, 2003), 124, 160, 171, 193–4, 215, 218, 252–4; E. Lefèvre, 'Seneca über Petron? (zu *de Brevitate vitae* 12,5)', in *Pratum Saraviense: Festgabe für Peter Steinmetz* (Stuttgart, 1990), 165–8; Bagnani 1954a (n. 9), 80–2; G. Studer, 'Über das Zeitalter des Petronius Arbitr', *Rh M* 2 (1843), 89–91.

¹⁰⁰ Baldwin (n. 86), 136; cf. Habermehl (n. 2), xii–xiii. Griffin (n. 31), 277, n. 90, thinks that Petronius may have started writing the *Satyricon* before joining Nero's court. V. Ebersbach, *Titus Petronius Arbitr: Satyrergeschichten* (Leipzig, 1984), 197–229, esp. 213–14, assumes that the *Satyricon* was frequently revised.

¹⁰¹ Sullivan 1968b (n. 23), 193–213; contra: F.M. Fröhlke, *Petron: Struktur und Wirklichkeit* (Frankfurt am Main, 1977), 61–71.

¹⁰² Petron. 128.6; Tac. *Ann.* 16.1. See E. Courtney, *The Poems of Petronius* (Atlanta, GA, 1991), 32. On a speculative link to Nero's *domus aurea*, see recently E. Champlin, *Nero* (Cambridge, MA, 2005), 127, 197.

¹⁰³ F.-H. Mutschler (ed.), *L. Annaeus Seneca: De Vita Beata* (Stuttgart 2002), 112–17. Previous literature is discussed in Schanz and Hosius (n. 95), 2.690.

¹⁰⁴ See Mutschler (n. 103), 112–15; W. Stroh, 'De dispositione libelli quem de vita beata Seneca scripsit', in W. Suerbaum and Fr. Maier (edd.), *Festschrift für Franz Egermann* (Munich, 1985), 141–5; V. Rudich, *Dissidence and Literature under Nero: The Price of Rhetoricization* (London, 1997), 90; H. Dahlmann, *Bemerkungen zu Seneca, De Vita Beata* (Mainz, 1972), 20.

¹⁰⁵ Sen. *Vit. beat.* 27.2.

¹⁰⁶ Tac. *Ann.* 14.52: *Mors Burri infregit Senecae potentiam ... et Nero ad deteriores inclinabat. Hi variis criminationibus Senecam adoriuntur, tamquam ingentes et privatum modum evectas opes adhuc augeret, quodque studia civium in se verteret, hortorum quoque amoenitate et villarum magnificentia quasi principem supergrederetur. Obiciebant etiam eloquentiae laudem uni sibi adsciscere et carmina crebrius factitare, postquam Neroni amor eorum venisset.*

¹⁰⁷ Cf. Tac. *Ann.* 15.34.

ambitious rhetoric are levelled against both its main characters, Trimalchio and Eumolpus, as they had been against the Stoic philosopher.

Not only do general themes of the *Satyricon* reflect the main charges against Seneca, but, of all the contemporary accusations that Seneca specifies in the second part of his *De vita beata* (17.1–2), most are reflected in Tacitus' account of his fall from grace in A.D. 62, and virtually all are exactly paralleled in various characterizations of Trimalchio. For example: both Seneca and Trimalchio love money and are troubled by financial loss;¹⁰⁸ they display sorrow for the deaths of dear ones;¹⁰⁹ they are concerned about their reputation¹¹⁰ and affected by slander;¹¹¹ their estates by far exceed human wants;¹¹² both give lavish dinner parties,¹¹³ displaying elegant furniture and old wine;¹¹⁴ they possess large quantities of gold;¹¹⁵ they consider trees as useful only in so far as they cast shadows;¹¹⁶ the spouses show off earrings of extraordinary value;¹¹⁷ the attendants of both require sumptuous dresses;¹¹⁸ they delight in table services that are overly refined or felt to be unnatural;¹¹⁹ each of them owes more than he knows of, with regard both to overseas estates¹²⁰ and to slaves.¹²¹

The same observation holds true even for those accusations faced by Seneca in the Suillius trial and not mentioned in the *De vita beata*, such as legacy-hunting.¹²²

¹⁰⁸ Sen. *Vit. beat.* 17.1: *quare ... pecuniam necessarium tibi instrumentum existimas et damno moveris*; Petron. 76.3–7: Trimalchio boasts about his business and means of acquiring funds, pretending not to have cared about the loss of his merchant ships (but see Petron. 53.6–8).

¹⁰⁹ Sen. *Vit. beat.* 17.1: *et lacrimas audita coniugis aut amici morte demittis*. Petron. 72.1: Trimalchio sheds tears over his own anticipated death.

¹¹⁰ Sen. *Vit. beat.* 17.1: *et respicis famam*. Petron. 78.2: *ego gloriosus volo efferri, ut totus mihi populus bene imprecetur*.

¹¹¹ Sen. *Vit. beat.* 17.1: *et malignis sermonibus tangeris*. Petron. 74.10: Trimalchio contra *offensus convicio calicem in faciem Fortunatae immisit*.

¹¹² Sen. *Vit. beat.* 17.2: *Quare cultius rus tibi est quam naturalis usus desiderat?* Petron. 38.1–3: Trimalchio satisfies his extravagant desires by ordering goods from his overseas estates.

¹¹³ Sen. *Vit. beat.* 17.2: *Cur non ad praescriptum tuum cenas?* Throughout the *cena*, Trimalchio's actual arrangements correspond to his statements only in a humorous way (such as in Petron. 35.7).

¹¹⁴ Sen. *Vit. beat.* 17.2: *Cur tibi nitidior supellex est? Cur apud te vinum aetate tua vetustius bibitur?* Petron. 34.7: *eheu inquit ergo diutius vivit vinum quam homuncio*. Furniture is frequently accounted for throughout the *cena*.

¹¹⁵ Sen. *Vit. beat.* 17.2: *Cur aurum disponitur?* Petron. 37.7: *tantum auri vides*.

¹¹⁶ Sen. *Vit. beat.* 17.2: *Cur arbores nihil praeter umbram daturae conseruntur?* Petron. 71.7: *omne genus enim poma volo sint circa cineres meos*.

¹¹⁷ Sen. *Vit. beat.* 17.2: *Quare uxor tua locupletis domus censum auribus gerit?* Petron. 67.9–10: *inde [Scintilla] dua crotalia protulit ... domini, inquit, mei beneficio nemo habet meliora*; cf. R.B. Steele: 'Literary adaptions and references in Petronius', *CJ* 15 (1920), 283.

¹¹⁸ Sen. *Vit. beat.* 17.2: *Quare paedagogium pretiosa veste succingitur?* Petron. 30.11: *vestimenta mea cubitoria perdidit, quae mihi natali meo cliens quidam donaverat*.

¹¹⁹ Sen. *Vit. beat.* 17.2: *Quare ars est apud te ministrare nec temere et ut libet conlocatur argentum sed perite struitur et est aliquis scindendi obsonii magister?* Such themes are found frequently throughout the *cena*, esp. 37.8, 67.2: *argentum* ('silver-plate'); 36.8: *obsonium*.

¹²⁰ Sen. *Vit. beat.* 17.2: *Adice si vis: 'cur trans mare possides? Cur plura quam nosti?'* Petron. 37.8: *fundos habet, qua milvi volant*; 48.3: *nunc coniungere agellis Siciliam volo, ut cum Africam libuerit ire, per meos fines navigem*; 37.6: *ipse nescit, quid habeat*; 48.2: *in suburbano nascitur eo, quod ego adhuc non novi*.

¹²¹ Sen. *Vit. beat.* 17.2: *<Cur> turpiter aut tam neglegens es ut non noveris pauculos servos aut tam luxuriosus ut plures habeas quam quorum notitiae memoria sufficiat?* Petron. 37.9: *non mehercules puto decumam partem esse quae dominum suum noverit*; see also 117.8–10.

¹²² Tac. *Ann.* 13.42: *Romae testamenta et orbos velut indagine eius capi*; Petron. 76.2: *coheredem me Caesari fecit*; cf. 116.4–9, 124.2–4. See also G.L. Schmeling, 'Aphrodite and

Besides their provincial origin and interests in literature, Seneca and Trimalchio further have in common that both delight in kissing boys;¹²³ just as Seneca suffers from gout, so too does Trimalchio's host, Plocamus;¹²⁴ and while Seneca was said to have been relegated as a consequence of his affair with Julia, spouse and sister of Caligula,¹²⁵ Trimalchio was 'relegated' to farm labour after his affair with his master's wife.¹²⁶ Finally, just as Trimalchio had pleased his master for a period of 14 years,¹²⁷ Seneca retired from serving Nero 'in the 14th year'.¹²⁸

While these parallels may be due to topoi, it is worth noting that both Trimalchio and Eumolpus are initially characterized with expressions that recall Seneca phonetically (*senex calvus* – *senex canus*).¹²⁹

Moreover, Seneca might still have had in mind Petronius' advisory function towards Nero, when he wrote in the first part of *De vita beata*:

qui voluptatem sequitur videtur enervis, fractus, †degenerans viro†, perventurus in turpia nisi aliquis distinxerit illi uoluptates, ut sciat quae ex eis intra naturale desiderium resistent, quae praeceps ferantur infinitaeque sint et quo magis implentur eo magis inexplebiles.
(13.4)

If Seneca alludes to Nero's growing number of debaucheries in this paragraph, then the other person's description is strikingly close to Tacitus' characterization of Petronius as Nero's arbiter in pleasure. In fact, Seneca here seems to allude to Petronius as 'arbiter of pleasures',¹³⁰ as well as to the poet's habits throughout his apology.¹³¹ Finally, Seneca addresses his accusers (whom, as usual, neither he nor anyone else ever calls by name) repeatedly in the metaphor of barking hounds, while in the age of Nero staghounds were commonly known as *canes Petronii*.¹³² Of course it would have been much less dangerous for Petronius to parody Nero's

the *Satyricon*, in G.L. Schmeling and J.D. Mikalson (edd.), *Qui miscuit utile dulci* (Wauconda, IL, 1998), 344.

¹²³ Sen. *Vit. beat.* 27.5: *mihi ipsi Alcibiaden et Phaedrum obiectare*, cf. Cass. Dio 61.10.3–5; Petron. 74.8: *nam cum puer non inspeciosus inter novos intrasset ministros, invasit eum Trimalchio et osculari diutius coepit*.

¹²⁴ Sen. *Vit. beat.* 17.4: *podagra mea*; Petron. 64.3: *podagricus*.

¹²⁵ Sen. *Vit. beat.* 21.1: *exilium vanum*; Tac. *Ann.* 13.42; Cass. Dio 60.8.5; 61.10.1.

¹²⁶ Petron. 69.3: *ego sic solebam ipsumam meam debattuere, ut etiam dominus suspicaretur; et ideo me in vilicationem relegavit*.

¹²⁷ Petron. 75.11: *tamen ad delicias [femina] ipsimi [domini] annos quattuordecim fui*.

¹²⁸ Tac. *Ann.* 14.53: *quartus decimus annus est, Caesar, ex quo spei tuae admotus sum*.

¹²⁹ Petron. 27.1; 83.7. Cf. J. Amat, 'Trimalchion et Sénèque', in *Au miroir de la culture antique* (Rennes, 1992), 11–30; idem (n. 1), *passim*; Rudich (n. 104), 205, 335, n. 66: Eumolpus and Seneca.

¹³⁰ Sen. *Vit. beat.* 6.1: *voluptatum arbiter*.

¹³¹ Sen. *Vit. beat.* 7.3: *mollem enervem, mero atque unguento madentem, pallidam aut fucam et medicamentis pollinctam* (cf. Sen. *Ep.* 122.4 with Lefèvre [n. 99], 166–7); 12.5: *cum honestus turpi desidia titulus accessit* (referring to Epicur); 20.6: *Vos quidem, quod uirtutem cultoremque eius odistis, nihil noui facitis. Nam et solem lumina aegra formidant et auersantur diem splendidum nocturna animalia, quae ad primum eius ortum stupent et latibula sua passim petunt, abduntur in aliquas rimas timida lucis* (cf. Sen. *Ep.* 122.2 and Tac. *Ann.* 16.18.1: *nam illi dies per somnum, nox officiis et oblectamentis vitae transigebatur; utque alios industria, ignavia ad famam protulerat*).

¹³² *latos canibus* (Sen. *Vit. beat.* 14.3); *conlatrant* (17.1); *minuti canes latratis* (19.2), cf. *gemite ... exercete ... commordete* (20.6). On the expression *canes Petronii*, see Grattius, *Cyn.* 199–206. Barking dogs are common characters in the *Satyricon* also: 29.1; 40.2; 43.8; 64.6–9; 71.6, 11; 72.7; 95.8. See also 43.3; 56.9; 39.10.

unwanted tutor than the emperor himself,¹³³ and Plutarch describes Petronius as a man who only indirectly criticized the debaucheries of Nero by ridiculing qualities opposed to what the emperor actually displayed.¹³⁴

IV. THE EPIGRAPHICAL EVIDENCE

In light of this discussion, if any of these observations are more than coincidental (or if at least one of the scholars mentioned is correct to assume parallels to earlier works of Seneca), parts of the *Satyricon* were written in early A.D. 62 and reflect expert knowledge of the events at Nero's court. The allusions to Lucan and Seneca all point in this direction and support the poet's identity with Nero's courtier. In consequence, T. Petronius 'Arbiter' must have been received there before the consulate of P. Petronius Niger. Thus, the latter should not be equated with the Arbiter described by Tacitus.

In fact, many Petronii are attested as having been prominent at this time, at least three of them as consuls: A. Petronius Lurco, *consul suffectus* of A.D. 58; P. Petronius Turpilianus, *consul ordinarius* of A.D. 61; and P. Petronius Niger, *consul suffectus* probably in A.D. 62.¹³⁵ One Petronius Crispus with an unknown *praenomen* is known to have been charged with conspiracy and exiled in A.D. 65,¹³⁶ which precludes any identification with Arbiter, in addition to the fact that his name does not appear among the consular *fasti*; and P. Petronius Turpilianus actually outlived the Arbiter.¹³⁷

Of A. Petronius Lurco nothing is known other than the date of his consulate in the second half of A.D. 58,¹³⁸ and he had been excluded from consideration simply because of his *praenomen*, while the same objection holds true for P. Petronius Niger. In terms of chronology, the former is apparently a much better choice, since he would have been able to enter Nero's literary circle from the beginning, rise to power, and become Seneca's rival before the philosopher's downfall. It has been argued that Petronius' alleged *cognomen* *Niger* may be found in some poems attributed to Seneca,¹³⁹ but the correlation between *Lurco* ('glutton') and Tacitus' characterization of Petronius as *ganeo* would seem to be more striking.¹⁴⁰

Taking into account alternative identifications, it has been suggested that our poet was possibly a brother of P. Petronius Turpilianus,¹⁴¹ and thus consul in an unknown year. The main chronological argument of Bagnani, who interpreted the *Lex Petronia de servis*, drafted by an unidentified Petronius, as a reaction to the harsh punishment of the slaves of Pedanius Secundus in 61 and therefore postu-

¹³³ See H.D. Rankin, *Petronius the Artist* (The Hague, 1971), 39; C. Schubert, *Studien zum Nerobild in der lateinischen Dichtung der Antike* (Stuttgart, 1998), 168–73.

¹³⁴ See above, n. 80.

¹³⁵ *PIR*² P 284, 315, 294.

¹³⁶ Tac. *Ann.* 15.71.4.

¹³⁷ Tac. *Hist.* 1.8; Plut. *Vit. Galb.* 15.2.

¹³⁸ Attested between 15 August and 15 December: Gallivan (n. 51), 291; *RE* 19 (1938), 1216.

¹³⁹ Sullivan 1968a (n. 23), 465–467; idem 1985 (n. 4), 177–9.

¹⁴⁰ Tac. *Ann.* 16.18.1.

¹⁴¹ Corbett (n. 6), 142, n. 4; cf. V. Lancetti, *Satire di Tito Petronio Arbitro* (Venice, 1843), 1419–20.

lated a consulate of Petronius after the event, has since not found support in the research.¹⁴²

Judging from the *praenomen*, Mommsen's suggestion still seems to hold the most promise with a view to the current state of the epigraphic record. However, a consulate of A.D. 54 appears fairly early in terms of the events, although one might ask how Petronius could have found time to establish his record of literary production and thus to recommend himself to Nero's favour, if not in the years following his political career. In addition, though there is at least one manuscript testimonial for the *praenomen* Gaius, it seems difficult to prefer Tacitus to Pliny and Plutarch here.

Even if Pliny's variant T. Petronius is a scribal error, it is most implausible that Pliny was referring to any Publius, as has been shown by Rose.¹⁴³ If there were two consuls each of the same *praenomen* and *nomen gentile*, Pliny would probably have added the corresponding *cognomen*, because otherwise it could not be determined at all whom he had in mind. Two consuls, however, both called P. Petronius (Niger and Turpilianus respectively) are known from the age of Nero. Thus, the probability of P. Petronius Niger being identical with our poet appears to be the least likely in terms of nomenclature and chronology.

As long as no other epigraphic or numismatic testimonials are found that would support either possibility, the question has to remain open. Since there are serious objections to each of the possibilities mentioned, it may appear more likely that the consulate of T. Petronius Arbiter falls into one of the incomplete or dubious years of the *fasti* (namely A.D. 54, 56, 60 or 61). There are some extant inscriptions that mention a T. Petronius, but it is mostly impossible to assert whether or not they belong to the principate of Nero.¹⁴⁴ To conclude on a speculative note, A.D. 60 (for which year there are no plausible candidates available for at least one consular pair) or maybe 61 (with even more gaps) seem to hold the most promise, for both years easily allow us tentatively to reconstruct a chronology of events from the material discussed so far. At any rate, in view of this material, almost nothing supports the widespread assumption that the author of the *Satyricon* is identical with P. Petronius Niger apart from a research tradition that was based on an erroneous premise wrongly accepted for more than half a century now.

Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin

THOMAS VÖLKER
thovoe888@hotmail.com

University of Manchester

DIRK ROHMANN
dirk.rohmann@manchester.ac.uk

¹⁴² Dig. 48.8.11.1–2.; Tac. *Ann.* 14.42–5. Bagnani 1954a (n. 9), 14–24. Contra: Browning (n. 9), 45–6; Rose (n. 1), 34–7; J.C. Dumont, 'La *lex Petroniana de seruis* et la date du *Satyricon*', *Kentron* 5 (1989), 23–31. Bagnani 1954b (n. 9), 78–9 reconstructs an otherwise unknown C. Petronius from the names of freedmen in the Herculanean tablets.

¹⁴³ Rose (n. 1), 54.

¹⁴⁴ Inscriptions from Rome, mostly about slaves or freedmen named T. Petronius, which might give evidence of their former master with the same name: *CIL* VI 1889, 3124, 24016, 24020 (= 16696), 24046, 24048, 25014, *AE* 1990, 53: Inscription from Aquileia from the mid first century A.D.: *CIL* V 1001 = *InscrAq*-01, 526: *C(aius) Petronius / T(iti) f(ilius) IIIIvir*.