

Food and drink

Bodily functions (digestive and sexual) important in the *Satyricon*.

Criticism:

See e.g. V. Rimell, *Petronius and The Anatomy of Fiction* (Cambridge, 2002) + G.B. Conte *The Hidden Author* (Berkeley/London, 1996): chapter on “Sex, Food, and Money”, pp104-39 e.g. p 105 “We shall see that the body, food, sex and money are the forces that Petronius musters to demystify the pretenses of the false sublime in the *Satyricon*”; p114 “The Petronian narrative reduces the spiritual and the abstract to the same level as the physical and material, and it concentrates on the body's natural functions to make this happen. By describing the processes of ingestion and sexual activity, it parades the active participation of the body in its material context. From this perspective, the satirical narrative reduces everything that might be heroic and noble to a common level of physical experience.” Conte discusses how Agamemnon attacks parasites and goes after free dinner and how Trimalchio rails against luxury (p118-19); p120f he looks at the *Cena* and Plato's symposium (where food here triumphs over speech). P121: “food celebrates itself throughout the *Cena* and reigns unchallenged by making itself the material of spectacle and speech”. p122 “Trimalchio's feast becomes an exhaustive mapping of the world: “the loaded table” represents the geography of the various scattered estates which the Master possesses and which supply him with one food or another. Every place is marked by a dish, and conversely every dish is the mark of a place: geography has become gastronomy.” Conte argues even heavens marked out in gastronomic code and T's time articulated by gastronomic rhythms (30.3): “Days ahead will be marked with what he will eat, days past with what he has already eaten. Thus in 76.11 he mentions an astrologer so smart that he seemed even to understand Trimalchio's intestines... Here is a life completely subordinated to the needs of the body”. Conte suggests that the *scholastici* exploit their prestige to get food but T uses food to show off and E et al take part in a symposium with intellectual ambitions. Conte shows how amused superiority of Encolpius et al doesn't last: passive/driven to flight (contrast Nasidienus (who they'd like to emulate) where the intellectuals abandon dinner and discomfort host).

Questions to consider:

- how do eating, drinking and the delivery of food and drink figure? What does they contribute to the *Cena*?

e.g. themes such as being/seeming (culinary tricks). Note context (“It is a well-known feature of Roman gastronomy that the food is presented in such a way that its main ingredients are not recognized” Rosati in Harrison, *Oxford Readings*) but OTT here? See e.g. Courtney 2001: 82-4 for deceptive foods. Do the monstrous, hybrid courses of Petronius' *Satyricon* reflect the nature of that work?

e.g. criticism/satire. Food/drink allows attack on greed, selfishness, profligacy, social conduct (contrast Horatian ideal for dinner party: virtuous discourse and social interaction). Descriptions of eating have a role in debunking and degrading: focus on the material, not spiritual, and attention is drawn to bodily functions and processes- ingestion, digestion, and excretion- primitive needs and appetites which “civilised” discourse tries to hide. Satire, however, flays off the outer layer to uncover the inside: in some ways, the satyr Marsyas, a possible symbol for the *Satyricon*, is an appropriate icon for satire: his skin was stripped off him by Apollo. Horace said of satirist Lucilius at 2.1.64 that he removed people's “glossy skin”.

e.g. characterization. T as theatre-producer and/or child with his culinary tricks? Courtney (2001:75) notes one purpose of the conspicuous consumption is for display and notes way admiration is spoken of as if it were food (*saturi, repleti*) “which gives us the hint that the point of the meal is to impress as much as to feed”. What does the sourcing of the food reveal about his wealth/pretensions? How unusual are the kinds of food at his dinner-party? Is the interest particularly what he does with the food? NB motif of life as a dinner party from which you should leave satisfied. This is found in the writings of the cynic Bion according to Teles (“as a replete guest from a feast, so do I leave life”), though not exclusive to Cynicism (popular idea: Stoic, Epicurean

etc: see e.g. Lucretius *De Rerum Natura* 3.938-9; Hor. *Sat.* 1.1.117-19). Trimalchio seems to regard his life as an endless series of dinner parties. As usual, he is getting the wrong end of the stick: one is meant to leave when contentedly full. Trimalchio's feasts never seem to stop. Death not life at the feast.

e.g. how does Encolpius' eating and drinking tie in with narratorial issues such as reliability? Note his increasing nausea and drunkenness... Conte links distaste with E's inability to dominate the mechanism which controls the dinner. Drunkenness common e.g. *Sat.* 70.4-9 (pretend); Habinnas (pose? Speaks lucidly).