

Zeitschrift:	Museum Helveticum : schweizerische Zeitschrift für klassische Altertumswissenschaft = Revue suisse pour l'étude de l'antiquité classique = Rivista svizzera di filologia classica
Herausgeber:	Schweizerische Vereinigung für Altertumswissenschaft
Band:	39 (1982)
Heft:	2
Artikel:	The Satyricon : satire, narrator, and antecedents
Autor:	Beck, Roger
DOI:	https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-30348

Nutzungsbedingungen

Die ETH-Bibliothek ist die Anbieterin der digitalisierten Zeitschriften auf E-Periodica. Sie besitzt keine Urheberrechte an den Zeitschriften und ist nicht verantwortlich für deren Inhalte. Die Rechte liegen in der Regel bei den Herausgebern beziehungsweise den externen Rechteinhabern. Das Veröffentlichen von Bildern in Print- und Online-Publikationen sowie auf Social Media-Kanälen oder Webseiten ist nur mit vorheriger Genehmigung der Rechteinhaber erlaubt. [Mehr erfahren](#)

Conditions d'utilisation

L'ETH Library est le fournisseur des revues numérisées. Elle ne détient aucun droit d'auteur sur les revues et n'est pas responsable de leur contenu. En règle générale, les droits sont détenus par les éditeurs ou les détenteurs de droits externes. La reproduction d'images dans des publications imprimées ou en ligne ainsi que sur des canaux de médias sociaux ou des sites web n'est autorisée qu'avec l'accord préalable des détenteurs des droits. [En savoir plus](#)

Terms of use

The ETH Library is the provider of the digitised journals. It does not own any copyrights to the journals and is not responsible for their content. The rights usually lie with the publishers or the external rights holders. Publishing images in print and online publications, as well as on social media channels or websites, is only permitted with the prior consent of the rights holders. [Find out more](#)

Download PDF: 10.07.2025

ETH-Bibliothek Zürich, E-Periodica, <https://www.e-periodica.ch>

The Satyricon: Satire, Narrator, and Antecedents

By Roger Beck, Toronto

Whether the *Satyricon* is a satire and if so what it satirizes, are perennial questions¹. What is less noticed, however, is that these questions hinge on the problem of the novel's narrator. In all other Roman satire, whether hexameter or Menippean, we have little trouble keeping our bearings: we recognize the target under attack and we can tell what the author – the implied author, I would prefer to say – feels about it. But the *Satyricon* is different. The author has abdicated his role as satirist to a narrator who shows himself so implicated in the action and so manifestly a partaker in all the inadequacies and delusions of the characters that the author's standpoint and hence the whole satiric thrust of the work have become quite elusive.

1 For specific targets, and their presence in contemporary life and literature, see especially the chapter on «Satire in the *Satyricon*» in J. P. Sullivan, *The Satyricon of Petronius* (London 1968) 115–157. These, however, are not so much at issue here as the different ways in which the *Satyricon* as a whole has been construed by various scholars as a fundamentally serious and thoroughgoing critique of Roman *mores*: Gilbert Highet, *Petronius the Moralist*, TAPA 72 (1941) 176–194; Helen H. Bacon, *The Sybil in the Bottle*, Virginia Quarterly Review 34 (1958) 262–276; Oskar Raith, *Petronius ein Epikureer* (Nürnberg 1963); William Arrowsmith, *Luxury and Death in the Satyricon*, Arion 5 (1966) 304–331; Froma I. Zeitlin, *Petronius as Paradox: Anarchy and Artistic Integrity*, TAPA 102 (1971) 631–684, and *Romanus Petronius*, Latomus 30 (1971) 56–82. The approach of these scholars is somewhat out of favour these days. For criticism see J. P. Sullivan, *Petronius and his Modern Critics*, Bucknell Review 19 (1971) 107–124, and P. G. Walsh, *Was Petronius a Moralist?* G&R 21 (1974) 181–190; also Gerald N. Sandy, *Satire in the Satyricon*, AJP 90 (1969) 293–303, whose position that the *Satyricon* is a *non-moral* satire of «artificiality and self-delusion» is the one that I accept (see below). There is also, of course, the whole question of the literary and intellectual targets of the *Satyricon* and whether the two longer poems are parodies and thus in a sense also satires. For that controversy I have cited the main authorities in my *Eumolpus poeta, Eumolpus fabulator*, Phoenix 33 (1979) 239–253. It is worth noting that the most recent criticism on the *Bellum civile*, questioning the older Petronius-reacting-to-Lucan view, has put into doubt not only the tone and intention of Petronius' «criticism» but also its target in an objective sense. In fact, the whole field here is now rather anarchic. See Peter George, *Petronius and Lucan De Bello Civilii*, CQ N.S. 24 (1974) 119–133; René Martin, *Quelques remarques concernant la date du Satyricon*, REL 53 (1975) 182–224; Pierre Grimal, *La guerre civile de Pétrone dans ses rapports avec la Pharsale* (Paris 1977). Finally, there is the possibility that as a piece of fiction the *Satyricon* parodies and hence satirizes the Greek sentimental novel or heroic epic or both: R. Heinze, *Petron und der griechische Roman*, Hermes 34 (1899) 494–519; E. Courtney, *Parody and Literary Allusion in Menippean Satire*, Philologus 106 (1962) 86–100; A. Scobie, *The Satyricon: Genre and Intention*, in *Aspects of the Ancient Romance and its Heritage* (Meisenheim a. Glan 1969, Beiträge zur klassischen Philologie 30) 83–90.

Put in a somewhat different way, the question is one of deciding what, if anything, in the Satyricon is authorially privileged. But to decide this in any particular instance we ought first to have some general criteria which are not implicitly dependent on our own tastes and values. For the passages do not come to us with obvious signals, little coloured flags, as it were, to tell us that one piece reflects the author's sentiments, that another is parody, and so on. It is here that the real difficulty lies. For so often, it seems to me, we tend to assume that what we find admirable or à propos in the Satyricon, whether in the literary or moral domain, must somehow contain the author's message, leaving what we find at fault as the object of his satire or parody. To illustrate the matter with an exaggerated simplicity, *curiosa felicitas* is a brilliant thing to say of Horace (118, 5), ergo it is Petronius speaking through the mouth of Eumolpus. Likewise, the expression *nihil est hominum inepta persuasione falsius nec ficta severitate ineptius* (132, 16) is a fine and perceptive moral sentiment; here too, then, Petronius loquitur².

Now it is an interesting fact that most of the explicit and systematic criticism in the Satyricon is expressed not by the narrator but by others, notably by Agamemnon and Eumolpus. In the tradition of Roman satire this is nothing new. Horace had done as much in the second book of the Sermones; that, indeed, was the great shift from Book 1 to Book 2. The satirist doffs the cloak of the diatribe artist; he becomes the conduit for the wisdom of an Ofellus (2, 2), the audience – and part target – for the second-hand lectures of a Damasippus (2, 3) or a Davus (2, 7), the awed recipient of the culinary expertise of a Catius and his maestro (2, 4). The reason, one assumes, is to distance the satirist (often by two removes) from the moral or didactic content of the satire and to leave as an open question the extent to which the satirist, and behind him the author, endorses the material purveyed. But with Horace, there is enough of the autobiographical, enough, even in Book 2, of the satirist speaking in propria persona, for us to sense throughout where he stands and how he expects us to react to the satire³. With Petronius, though, we are on very different and much less secure ground. First, we are faced with the very considerable gap between narrator and author, between Encolpius the man with a criminal (and possibly servile) past lived on the margins of society and Petronius the consular and arbiter to the Neronian court⁴. This is a gap which is simply not in question with Horace⁵. Secondly, we

2 René Martin, art. cit. (above, n. 1) 200, n. 1, neatly pinpoints the critic's concealed premise: «un grand écrivain comme Pétrone ne pouvait qu'avoir le même point de vue».

3 Though even here a measure of uncertainty lingers; for instance, different answers on how we are to react to Catius' lecture in 2, 4 can be and have been returned: see Niall Rudd, *The Satires of Horace* (Cambridge 1966) 207–213.

4 I am assuming, of course, the orthodox identification, as in K. F. C. Rose, *The Date and Author of the Satyricon*, *Mnemosyne Suppl.* 16 (Leiden 1971), though since Martin's article (above, n. 1) I am less than entirely convinced of its correctness. For a denial of the identification on

should be aware that what pass for the words and judgements of Encolpius are not generally or necessarily the sentiments of what we should properly call the narrator. For the narrator is the man who tells the story, while the Encolpius whose conversation and thoughts are reproduced is the Encolpius who is undergoing and reacting to the experiences and misadventures related⁶. Here lies the crucial distinction. While the character who interacts with the unnamed «bore» in Horace 1, 9 or with Naevolus in Juvenal 9 is the satirist, the Encolpius who interacts with Trimalchio, Eumolpus, et al., who speaks aloud or ponders – sometimes in verse – on his experiences and situations, is not the narrator. The narrator is rather the one who shapes the naive and chaotic progress and the pretentious and self-deluded sentiments of his younger self into a sophisticated narrative. His tools are simplicity of style, an accurate eye, an ironic use of juxtaposition, and a nice sense of the absurdity of the literary imagination of his characters. He is above all unobtrusive; seldom does he voice a judgement of his own, and he allows his characters (his own past self included), and the milieu in which they often move, to define themselves without praise or condemnation on his part. In this he is the very antithesis of the assertive and opinionated satirist, the classic figure of European literature delineated by Alvin Kernan in «The Cankered Muse»⁷. Indeed, on Kernan's criteria he is scarcely a satirist at all.

I take, then, a somewhat sceptical view of the satiric content of the *Satyricon*. I do not believe that we are justified in inferring that any particular passage is authorially privileged. We can presumably say that where demonstrably false arguments are put forward, as in Eumolpus' specious contentions about the artists of yesteryear (ch. 88 – so well exposed by P. G. Walsh)⁸, the author is defining in some way the inadequacy of the character who advances them, rather than parading his own ignorance. But this negative criterion will not work where reasonable opinions and tenable arguments are advanced by the characters, and it is precisely there that we might want to know whether or not we are facing Petronius' own views and principles. It is best, I feel, to treat impartially all statements made as no more than the expressions of the characters

the grounds that the implied author is irreconcilable with Tacitus' Neronian courtier see Jean Dutourd in the preface to Pierre Grimal's translation (Paris 1960) 13f. – an opinion of some intuitive value since it is that of a practising novelist (see also Martin 204f.). If the author of the *Satyricon* is not Nero's *arbiter* (nor anyone else who can be positively identified), then of course we have no way of judging whether the work is to any extent autobiographical or of measuring the gap between author and narrator.

5 I follow here Gilbert Highet, *Masks and Faces in Satire*, *Hermes* 102 (1974) 321–337, though I by no means accept his dismissal of the entire satirist-author distinction (see below).

6 As I have tried to show in *Some Observations on the Narrative Technique of Petronius*, *Phoenix* 27 (1973) 42–61.

7 New Haven 1959.

8 *The Roman Novel* (Cambridge 1970) 96f.

who make them⁹. This includes the notorious poem at 132, 15 (*quid me constricta spectatis fronte Catones*) which, as I have tried to demonstrate at length elsewhere¹⁰, is to be read as the soliloquy of Encolpius in context and not as a programmatic statement by Petronius.

In so far as there is a satiric purpose to the Satyricon, it is that defined by Gerald Sandy: the focus throughout the novel is on the «artificiality and self-delusion which intervene between individuals and reality»¹¹. That this is the satiric theme emerges not from what is explicitly said about it (e.g., Encolpius on rhetoric in ch. 1, and the fragment on *inepta persuasio* mentioned above – these are no more privileged than any other statements), but from the organization, the economy of the novel itself. With the possible exception of Trimalchio, whose prominence is in any case something of an accident of the work's preservation, the Satyricon is a story about posers, and above all literary posers. To tell this story Petronius works through a narrator whose concern is ever to bring to the fore the contrast between the all too sordid reality of his characters' predicaments and the rhetoric and the poetic effusions with which they attempt to endow their lives with significance. Of this pathology the narrator's own younger self is the prime example. Since the rhetoric is stale and the poetic imaginations of his characters trite, mediocre, and pretentious, the narrator's exploitation of the contrasts is satiric and comic. It is in this sense that the narrator can perhaps truly be called a satirist.

I shall not go into the details of how the narrator manipulates the contrasts involved in his characters' wilful persistence in generating bad art out of riotous lives, since I have dealt with it at some length elsewhere¹². (In passing, we might note that it is not unrelated to one of the major concerns of another satirist and near contemporary of Petronius: Persius in his programmatic satire [1] has a good deal to say about the link between degenerate poetry and degenerate living, a link which he characterizes through the gross metaphor of homosexual titillation – a point which seems to bring us round full circle to Petronius.) Instead, I want to raise a problem of 'Quellenforschung': from where did Petronius get his highly sophisticated persona of the satiric narrator? In answer, I

⁹ The necessity for caution here has been perceived most clearly perhaps by Michael Coffey, *Roman Satire* (London 1976) 187: «No opinion expressed by any character ... may be abstracted from its setting and attributed without reservation to the author ... Petronius' personal standpoint must remain enigmatic.» This, however, is a caution more easily enunciated than adhered to. In the event, Coffey can be quite as positive as others in hearing the authentic critical voice of Petronius, notably in the *Bellum civile* and in the literary theory that precedes it (id. 193).

¹⁰ Art. cit. (above, n. 6) 50–54. Cf. Zeitlin (above, n. 1) 676: «It is ... an egregious error to isolate this passage as the personal view of Petronius.»

¹¹ Art. cit. (above, n. 1) 295.

¹² Art. cit. (above, n. 6); see also my *Eumolpus poeta, Eumolpus fabulator* (above, n. 1) and *Encolpius at the Cena*, *Phoenix* 29 (1975) 271–283.

hope to show that Petronius' creation, which at first sight might appear as something unique, does in fact result from a particular development within *Latin* literature (I emphasize Latin in contradistinction to Greek), primarily of course in the genre of satire, but occurring also in elegy.

Satire had its genesis in a sort of autobiographical narrative. Essentially, that is what Horace says in his famous description of Lucilius:

*ille velut fidis arcana sodalibus olim
credebat libris, neque si male cesserat, usquam
decurrens alio, neque si bene; quo fit, ut omnis
votiva pateat veluti descripta tabella
vita senis.* (Serm. 2, 1, 30–34)

Whether Lucilius' satiric persona was a reflection of his real self, as Horace seems to have believed, or whether it was an entirely artificial creation, it is impossible to tell, and perhaps it would not be a very important thing to know even if we had the evidence. What matters is that, real or artificial, Lucilius did establish a strong satirist's persona, whose very broad outlines can be recaptured not only from the fragments but also from what his successors in the genre have to say about him. All three of them record essentially the same vivid impression, and half-envious admiration, of the free-spoken, caustic old man (I am assuming, of course, that what Persius and Juvenal have to say is not merely derivative from Horace, though even if it were it would still prove the point by showing that the Lucilian persona had become for them an accepted *topos*)¹³.

Varronian satire is similarly rooted in narrative, and some of it, at least, was presented by a first-person narrator to whom the author lent his own name. That Petronius' narrative technique, and not simply his prosimetric form and his satiric concerns (in so far as he has any), may have developed from Menippean satire is a possibility that has not been lost on critics. As P. G. Walsh remarks, «in this strand of the Menippean satire there exists in Latin before Petronius a form of satirical fiction»¹⁴. That Varro's satires were largely narratives, rather than dialogues, was the main point of Barbara P. McCarthy's very full examination of the fragments¹⁵. Raymond Astbury, in his recent study of Petronius' antecedents, acknowledges this similarity between the Satyricon and Menippean satire. However, his argument is that the Satyricon is derived not from Menippean satire but from the Greek romance whose comic form is preserved in the Iolaus-fragment.

Thus, «the fact that Menippean satire presents a form of satirical fiction, whereas the romance has fiction without satire, is not a matter of any signifi-

13 Horace *Serm.* 1, 4, 6ff.; 10, 3f.; 2, 1, 30ff. 62ff.; Persius 1, 114f.; Juvenal 1, 165ff. (with 151ff.).

14 Op. cit. (above, n. 8) 21.

15 *The Form of Varro's Menippean Satires*, Univ. of Missouri Studies 11 (1936), no. 3, 95–107.

cance»¹⁶. To my view, however, what matters is not that Varro represents a type of «satiric» narrative (although it is true that he does), but that he represents a type of narrative in which the persona of the narrator is of some importance, and it is precisely this characteristic that Petronius does share with Varro and scarcely, if at all, with the Greek romance.

The details of Varro's narratorial persona are lost in the wreckage of his works. Most notably, he seems to have been a reactionary old codger, one, in the delightful phrase, *ruminans antiquitates* (fr. 505 Bücheler). However, it is the fact of an intrusive narrator rather than his actual characteristics that concerns us here. Particularly interesting, if McCarthy was right, is the «Sexagesis». McCarthy contended that the main narrative is carried by an Epimenides figure who is not Varro, but one whose experiences and encounters on reawakening Varro records now in direct, now in indirect speech¹⁷. But Varro himself also figures in the piece, in so far as he is subjected to a certain amount of heckling in his reporting of the other's adventures. One envisages, then, quite a complex type of narration, one involving in effect two narrators. However, McCarthy's supposition may not be necessary; as far as I can tell, there is nothing that absolutely rules out the simpler hypothesis that Varro represented himself both as the sleeper and as the teller of the tale.

In contrast to Varro, one must admit that our one complete piece of Menippean satire (at least before late antiquity), the «Ludus de morte Claudi», shows almost no trace of an interest in a narrator's persona. With the exception of the first paragraph, which does concern itself humorously with the narrator's credibility, the tale is told as an objective third-person narrative concentrating exclusively on its satiric target and using its verse insets for parody (or, in one instance, flattery) without any thought for the characterization of the narrator or of the others who ostensibly utter them.

With Horace, of course, we are on firmer ground. The persona of his satirist is well enough known: genial, undogmatic, firmly middle-aged; a painstaking artist, who yet ironically decries his own art; keenly appreciative of his ties to patron, friends, his literary colleagues, and the memory of his revered parent, and yet somewhat detached, an observer living an independent life; the most uncensorious of satirists, a man of «moderate faults» himself, and yet conscious of, and satisfied with, his own core of solid good sense and rectitude. It is a brilliant picture, marred, perhaps, only by its very perfection, its ironclad defensiveness, the somewhat irritating care with which all possible lines of criticism are closed off. Whether or not it is the «real» Horace is fortunately not our major concern here. I accept Gilbert Highet's view¹⁸ that in essence it is (though with

16 *Petronius, P. Oxy. 3010, and Menippean Satire*, CP 72 (1977) 22–31, 28.

17 Art. cit. (above, n. 15) 97.

18 Art. cit. (above, n. 5).

some fairly obvious departures, such as the transparent fiction in 1, 6 that Mae-cenas picked Horace because of his integrity of character, a simple honesty that we are asked to imagine reduced this most articulate of men to near speechlessness at the first introduction!). But this does not mean that it is somehow improper, or pleonastic (as Highet thought), to speak also of the «satirist». The «satirist» is the artistic projection of the author into his work; he is that image of himself that the author wishes us to meet (and to enjoy – for this is part of the pleasure of satire) as the master of ceremonies for his «farrago». It is not difficult to see how such a figure could provide the prototype for the narrator of extended narrative fiction.

Horace is extremely subtle in his deployment of the satirist within the satires. First, the satirist is only one of a number of interesting characters (some of them recurrent) within the corpus, a situation in which satire is surely analogous to the novel. Secondly, the satirist is apt to vary his persona. Indeed, Horace himself explicitly recommends changes of mood, tone, and pace, to be realized by assuming different roles (1, 10, 11ff.):

*et sermone opus est modo tristi, saepe iocoso,
defendente vicem modo rhetoris atque poetae,
interdum urbani, parcentis viribus atque
extenuantis eas consulto.*

Lastly, the satirist is present to varying degrees in different satires, from the diatribes of Book 1 and the autobiographical satires in which he is predominant, through the diatribes of Book 2 and certain other pieces (such as 2, 4 and 8) in which he prompts and reacts to the reports of others, to the extreme case of 2, 5 where he has withdrawn altogether, leaving two figures of myth to conduct the satire in a dialogue. Clearly, experimentation with a narrator's presence was one of Horace's concerns. Now the withdrawal of the satirist leads to the muting of his satiric voice, and Horace is not the sort to round off a scene or a disquisition by others with some pat judgement from his satirist to interpret the issue for us. We must make of it what we will. The most that the satirist will give us is his own personal reactions in situ which may vary from loss of temper (as in 2, 7) to ironic admiration (2, 4). It seems to me that Petronius' narrator, with his avoidance of explicit judgement, his indulgence of his characters in establishing their own status for good or ill (or a mixture of both), is very much the heir of Horace's satirist in the oblique satires of Book 2. In contrast, one only has to call to mind the author-narrators of Greek romances (does Heliodorus, for instance, leave us in the slightest doubt as to how to assess his cast of characters?) to appreciate the closeness of Horace and Petronius in this aspect of narrative technique.

Satire was not the only genre in which Roman authors experimented with what amounts to a narrator's persona and with «point of view». The elegists, as

A. W. Allen has shown¹⁹, were concerned with evolving suitable personae to put across, in an ostensibly autobiographical format, the adventures and emotions of erotic relationships within contemporary society. That a persona was in question is proved, if by nothing else, by the oft-repeated assertion, echoed from Catullus (16, 5–8), that the writer of love elegy has to appear lascivious, however straightlaced his personal life may in fact be. Allen discusses the elegist's persona in terms of rhetorical *fides*, the sincerity and persuasiveness that is achieved when style matches matter and, consequently, the voice assumed by the poet sounds authentic. Allen illustrates this concept by analysing a pair of poems of Propertius, 2, 23 in which the poet drops his usual persona of the tortured lover and assumes that of a moralist recommending with structured logic and dispassionate sense, somewhat in the manner of Horace 1, 2, the *Venus parabilis* of common prostitutes; and 2, 24 in which, to the objection *tu loqueris cum sis iam noto fabula libro*, he returns to his old obsessive «self», with its violent feelings and the fragmented rhetoric to match.

It is, however, with Ovid in the *Amores* that we find a persona remarkably similar to that of Petronius' narrator. I have suggested that we have in the *Satyricon* a sophisticated realist who records, and exploits for comic effect, the misadventures and the fantastic interior life of a chaotic, naive, and hyperimaginative past self. This same contrast between the experiencing «I» and the narrating «I», between predicament and fantasy on the one side and a humorous understanding that gives them artistic shape on the other, is present also in Ovid, imparting to the *Amores* that clean sense of control and distancing from raw life and raw emotion. The contrast is well summarized by John Barsby who sees it as essentially a comic device: «He [Ovid] would cast himself in the role of the elegiac lover and then stand back a little to see how comic the behaviour of the elegiac lover often was. This means that in effect there may be two Ovids in any given poem, Ovid the poet and Ovid in the *persona* of the elegiac lover; and one of the sources of humour in the *Amores* is that at any moment the poet may stand back from his *persona* and invite the reader to see the funny side of the situation»²⁰. For example, in Am. 1, 3 the *amator* poses as a model of fidelity: his love and his song are aspects of an all-round rectitude and they will ensure immortal fame for his beloved. But the *poeta* has another game to play; his *exempla* of love immortalized by song give the lie to the lovers's self-image of

19 «Sincerity» and the Roman Elegists, CP 45 (1950) 145–160.

20 In the Introduction to his edition of *Amores* 1 (Oxford 1973), page 17. Much the same effect is observed by I. M. Le M. Du Quesney, *The Amores*, in J. W. Binns (ed.), Ovid (London 1973) 1–48, 18: «A further source of humour in the *Amores* lies in the incongruity of the cynically realistic outlook of the hero and his naivety, his flights of sheer fantasy.» *Mutato nomine*, this description could be applied word for word to the *Satyricon* and *Encolpius*, though in the novel I prefer to see separate personae at work rather than a single schizophrenic hero-narrator.

simple loyalty. *Non sum desultor amoris* had protested the *amator* (15) – and the *poeta* maliciously cites the greatest *desultor* of them all, Jupiter, as lover of Io, Leda, and Europa²¹. Moreover, much as the Propertius of 2, 24 convicts the Propertius of 2, 23, so the Ovidian *poeta* allows the real *amator* – or, more precisely, the persona he intends us to accept as such – to break out in the palinode to Am. 1, 3, namely 2, 4: *non mihi mille placent* (1, 3, 15) is retracted when Ovid admits, with abandon and relish, *centum sunt causae cur ego semper amem*²².

I have tried to show how Petronius' narrator stems from experimentation with personae in the Latin literary tradition. Petronius did not, of course, consciously or artificially adapt the «I» of satire and elegy to serve as his narrator. Nevertheless for a Latin writer of Petronius' time the literary antecedents were such that a technically sophisticated autobiographical persona could emerge, once the decision was taken to write extended narrative fiction, especially a fiction with the critical vein of satire, the comic vein of Ovidian elegy, and the realism and contemporary social setting of both. The outcome was not of course inevitable (witness Apuleius, who is much concerned with his Lucius as an experiencing character, but as a narrating character not at all)²³, but it was at least natural and explicable.

- 21 See Barsby (above, n. 20) ad loc., and, for the expression *desultor amoris*, CP 70 (1975) 44f. That the image of the *desultor* is meant to persist is, I think, obvious first in the alliterative echo of line 22, *lusit adulter*, and secondly in the literal inversion of the image itself: acrobat on horseback changes to lady on bull-back (*simulato vecta iuvenco* 24). See also K. Olstein, *Amores 1, 3 and Duplicity as a Way of Love*, TAPA 105 (1975) 241–257, and L. C. Curran, *Desultores Amoris: Ovid Amores 1, 3*, CP 61 (1966) 47–49.
- 22 Among the wicked echos here, one may notice how that very *pudor* which Ovid has formerly claimed for himself (1, 3, 14) is now perverted to become in his ladies the first in a catalogue of charms that excite his *ambitiosus amor* (2, 4, 11f. 48). – Other works of Ovid demonstrate a similar concern with persona. As Richard Tarrant has reminded me, in the *praeceptor amoris* of the *Ars Amatoria* we find a more explicitly shaped persona – and a more obvious one, since the context is less complicated – than either the lover or the poet of the *Amores*. Furthermore, the *praeceptor* is clearly a role that Ovid assumes, one that is consonant with the didactic genre that he is both following and parodying. The *Heroides* show him at work with first-person narrators, who, ex hypothesi, are entirely distinct from the author. I have not, however, dealt at further length with either work, since, on one criterion or another, they lie outside a tradition that I see leading towards Petronius, namely types of verse that are both in large measure narrative and at the same time realistic, satiric, and (or) comic. On the *Heroides* see G. A. Seeck, *Ich-Erzähler und Erzähler-Ich in Ovids Heroides: Zur Entstehung des neuzeitlichen literarischen Menschen*, in E. Lefèvre (ed.), *Monumentum Chiloniense: Studien zur augusteischen Zeit*. Kieler Festschrift für Erich Burck (Amsterdam 1975) 436–470.
- 23 This is not to say that Apuleius was in practice altogether unable to handle the distinction between an experiencing-I and a narrating-I; far from it: see R. Th. van der Paardt, *Various Aspects of Narrative Technique in Apuleius' Metamorphoses*, in B. L. Hijmans Jr. and R. Th. van der Paardt, *Apuleius: Aspects of Apuleius «Golden Ass»* (Groningen 1978) 75–94.