employs a study of internal and external focalization in the portrayal of Otho to refute claims that his character is 'inconsistent' (pp. 88–91). This is rewarding, and could be pressed much further: how, for example, should we respond to Otho's inner thoughts as distinct from what others think of him? Are we required to choose between them, or to privilege one over the other? Does the reader evaluate the character of a historical agent on his intentions or on his image? And what are the consequences?

This last question bites in a text on war, especially on civil war, a test ground for our notions of what 'human nature' might or might not be. Ash frequently makes brief comparisons with wars from other cultures and times to highlight her points. I found this odd for two reasons. First, the consequent image of the soldier as trans-historical phenomenon seemed to run counter to Ash's implicit but meticulous historicizing of the Roman armies elsewhere. Secondly, the examples come predominantly from 'foreign' wars; the Balkan conflicts (whose definition as 'civil wars' is itself highly political) were only mentioned from the perspective of intervening British forces. Given the distinction rightly made by Ash between foreign and civil war in the Roman world, it seems strange that she did not choose her comparative material from the well-documented civil wars of the United States, Ireland, or Spain. But this objection too returns us to the question of how trans-historical the phenomena of civil war can—or should—be. While there are no easy final answers, these are nevertheless questions we should feel compelled to explore both within and beyond the pages of *Ordering Anarchy.*

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PETRONIAN LAUGHTER

M. Plaza: *Laughter and Derision in Petronius'* Satyrica. *A Literary Study*. (*Acta Universitatis Stockholmiensis*: Studia Latina Stockholmiensia, 46.) Pp. xii + 227. Stockholm: Almquist & Wiksell, 2000. Paper. ISBN: 91-22-01891-3.

In this copiously documented volume, an insufficiently revised version of her doctoral thesis, P. undertakes an episode-by-episode analysis of all the passages of the *Satyrica* (unwisely cited without an English translation) that contain references to laughter and derision, with particular attention to the intertextuality, generic fluidity, narrative strategies, and character-interaction of Petronius' work; she clearly succeeds in producing a comprehensive treatment of these motifs, and in contributing to research on the novel, although some of her methodological principles and her conclusions will not be enthusiastically received by all Petronian scholars.

P. structures her material in three parts, each of them separated into smaller chapters, which in turn are also divided into further sub-sections; the result of this structure is that the reader is often referred not to page numbers but to the sub-section of a sub-section (for example, 3.2.2.2), a system which some may find irritating. In the Introduction she outlines her reasons for opting to write what is, in effect, a running commentary on Petronius with focus on laughter-related concepts, and summarizes as a background the views of the (ancient and modern) proponents of the three main humour theories (Superiority, Incongruity, and Relief Theory), as well as Bakhtin's thesis of carnival laughter, all of which she frequently revisits (especially when analysing the portrayal and speeches of freedmen), although she professes not to

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subscribe to any of them. In the second part, her critical survey of earlier research on this topic, she singles out five scholarly approaches to laughter and derision in Petronius (the satirical, the entertaining, the approach that denies the existence of laughter, the affirmative, and the relativizing), but her discussion of them is unduly long, especially since numerous references to this secondary literature are repeated in the 408 footnotes to the third (and most original) part of the book, the linear reading of the text with close analysis of the passages containing forms, synonyms, and derivatives of *rideo*. This arrangement has the obvious advantage of assisting anyone interested in a specific passage of Petronius to check P.'s views and discussion of earlier literature on this passage.

P. strongly favours the relativizing function of laughter, which can be exemplified most clearly when Encolpius' poking fun at another character is followed by the derisive treatment of Encolpius himself either by a third party or by the author of the novel. These multiple levels of laughter, which seem to undermine the narrator's authority, undercut the satiric vision, and temporarily destabilize the interpretative point of view, are, in P.'s opinion, the ultimate confirmation of the irreducible ambivalence which reigns supreme in this novel, or, in other words, of the fact that, in interpreting Petronius, there are no *absolute* explanations: no view is superior to another, while (more importantly) even mutually exclusive readings of the text not only can coexist ('Bakhtinian carnivalesque merriment lives . . . side by side with the moral criticism of Roman satire', p. 211), but also are deliberately invited by the author. By means of such 'polyphonic' passages as his poem (or poems) on friendship and rôle-playing at 80.9, or the notorious elegiac couplets of 132.15, Petronius is seen to be mocking his readers' attempt to interpret the world according to only one system of values. This relativism, which, in P.'s view, appears as the result of a struggle for interpretative superiority (as, for example, in the quarrel between Encolpius and Hermeros in *Sat.* 57–8), should be regarded as quite humorous, and considered in conjunction with the symbolic function of laughter and derision as clear indications (and, indeed, signs of celebration) of the inversion that is realized in the social, sexual, generic, and literary hierarchical systems of Encolpius' world (note Encolpius' risible portrayal at Trimalchio's table, his inability to overpower sexually and socially Quartilla and Circe, and the predominance in the novel of the low sub-literary genre of the mime).

P., always eager to demonstrate that *everything* in the plot of this novel is ambivalent and characterized by interpretative relativization, sometimes goes too far to prove her case. I was not impressed by her view that 'in Niceros' story . . . the *scholastici* are demonized into the frightening figure of the werewolf' (p. 145), or her belief that Circe's playful and charming laughter at 127.1 has an ambiguous, ironic dimension to it, which becomes apparent in the context of her ensuing sarcasm and anger at Encolpius' impotence (p. 194) (but when Circe was laughing at 127.1, she had no idea that Encolpius would be unable to have sex with her); I also remain unconvinced by her suggestion that 'the main hero has difficulties adapting to sudden change' (p. 152), and by her argument that Encolpius' tearful and long speech on the vanity of human life (115.12–19), delivered on the occasion of Lichas' death, should not be dismissed as merely histrionic, because 'the passage is much too long and elaborate to be nothing more than that' (p. 186) (but it is precisely the extreme elaboration and the length of the speech that, in my view, make it theatrical).

However, these are objections to details, and, although one would have welcomed a lengthier discussion by P. of the rôle of laughter and derision in Roman culture

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(especially of the Neronian era), it would be fair to stress in conclusion the value of her sophisticated study of this important topic.

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APULEIUS

G. Magnaldi, G. F. Gianotti (edd.): *Apuleio. Storia del testo e interpretazioni*. Pp. 332. Turin: Edizioni dell'Orso, 2000. Paper, L. 40,000. ISBN: 88-7694-445-1.

This collection of essays falls into two main parts: six deal with the history of the text of Apuleius' works, four concentrate on various literary and philosophical aspects. Only the first two were specially written for this volume: 'Codici ed edizioni' by the two editors is a useful summary of the textual history of the main Apuleian MS (**F** = Laurentianus 68.2, *saec.* XI, containing *Metamorphoses*, *Apologia*, and *Florida*), including a paleographical description, the history of scholarship in constructing the *stemma*, and finally the early editions. The other strand of the transmission, that of the philosophical works, is also treated. This paper, although offering only a few new insights into the problem, is a clear presentation of the latest views on the text of Apuleius' main works as all deriving from **F**. This view of a single transmission is also supported in the second essay, where Magnaldi collates the MSS **F** and **A** (Ambrosianus N 180 sup., *saec.* XIV) anew, with the same results.

The third essay (by M., an extended version of one in *Sileno* 22 [1996]) treats the problem of verbal repetitions in **F** (e.g. *Met.* 4.2 *in odori* or 11.1 *alacer*) as presenting both false and emended readings within the text of the same MS, confirming the theories of Oudendorp and Helm.

M. and Gianotti together publish as the fourth essay two papers they gave at the *Colloque Ad Usum Delphini*, Grenoble, 28–29 March 1997, with a thorough description and interpretation of the Delphin edition of Julien Fleury (Paris, 1688). The fifth paper is a reprint of De Biasi's emendation *udus* for *sudus* in *Met*. 4.31 (*RFIC* 118 [1990]). The sixth essay, by Donini and G., reprints their article in *RFIC* 110 (1982), which discusses Apul. *Soc.* 1.117–19 Oudendorp. The claim in n. 7 that their emendation has been adopted in the Teubner edition of Apuleius' philosophical works by Moreschini (1991) is, however, only partly true: his text differs in two instances (*sui*/*suam* and *radios*/*radiis*) from the one they offer.

The second part of the book is less coherent and sequential (papers 7–10). It starts with G.'s very basic introduction to the life and times of Apuleius, together with a summary of his main works (including fragments and short paragraphs on the debated works). G. gives a portrait of Apuleius as a child of his times, i.e. the Second Sophistic, and of how his different works form a continuous philosophical picture (a fruitful approach; cf. also S. J. Harrison, *Apuleius: a Latin Sophist* [Oxford 2000], Chapter 1). This introduction, an extended version of a paper written for I. Lana and E. V. Maltese (edd.), *Storie della civiltà letteraria greca e latina* III (Turin, 1998), would surely have served better as the introduction to the whole volume.

Donini's study (no. 8), already published in M. Vegetti and M. Abbate (edd.), *La Repubblica di Platone nella tradizione antica* (Naples, 1999), is less focused on Apuleius and literary material. He deals with the concept of justice in Middle Platonism, but mainly in Aspasius, with whom he contrasts Apuleius' philosophical approach.

The remaining two papers address very particular Apuleian issues. De Biasi's

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