

Durus to Mollis: Tibullan and Propertian allusion in Petronius' Quartilla and Circe encounters

Petronius as an author engages with and distorts a large number of literary antecedents ranging from Homer to Seneca. Commentators have rightly pointed out the wealth of allusion to Roman love elegy that the *Satyricon* contains. Scholarship on the *Satyricon* focuses broadly on elegy as a whole (drawing on broad elegiac *topoi* rather than on the unique features of a particular author, such as Schmeling and de Avellar) or only on the *Ars* of Ovid specifically (Antoniadis; Carmignani). This paper will engage with continue the scholarly trend of broad elegiac application, but it will more deeply read into Tibullus and Propertius' specific role in Petronius' *Satyricon*. This paper will utilize Barber's Propertius, Postgate's Tibullus, and Müller's Petronius.

While surface allusion to most any literary predecessor can be found throughout the fragmentary work, reference to Tibullus and his pederastic cycle (Tibull.1.4, 8, 9) is concentrated and clear in two amorous encounters, namely the Quartilla (16-26) and Circe (126-140) episodes. Though at drastically differing points of the fragmentary narrative, they share striking similarities: 1) they both broadly treat of similar topics—Encolpius having submissive sex, 2) the scenes parallel each other in character types and action, 3) both engage with gender play by inverting traditional power relationships. Further, these two sexual events contain extremely specific Propertian poetic elements 1) exceedingly visual elements (Sharrock), 2) divine, epiphanic, descriptions of the lovers (Curtis), 3) threats of violence (James).

To briefly sum up the episodes: women of power, a priestess of Priapus (Quartilla) and a wealthy woman (Circe), confront the narrator (Encolpius) and engage in a sexual relationship with him as the submissive partner. Encolpius takes on the submissive role by his being raped

and penetrated by Quartilla; later, he becomes both literally and metaphorically impotent (by acting as Circe's slave) in the Circe scene. Thus, the Quartilla and Circe episodes of Petronius' *Satyricon* reference the quintessential elements Tibullus' pederastic cycle—gender and sexuality inversions highlighting the disparate power relationships between the lover and the beloved, combined with Propertius' essential poetic qualities—the antithetical and combative relationship between lovers.

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