One has to be honestly negative and admit that no one can prove anything about the presumed plot of the *Satyricon*. But if anything has been more exaggerated by critics than the sexual element in the work, it is the supposed theme of parody of epic. For a picaresque novel to work at all, the hero has to get into all sorts of scrapes which compel flight and travel. Otherwise, there can be no action. Undeniably, Petronius derived much literary fun from comic perversions of literary themes. But they are much more important as details than as basic plot. It is still valid to believe that the *Satyricon* may have been a series of self-contained adventures; characters recurred, not a running motif.

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AN ASPECT OF THEOCRITEAN HUMOR

Amid the spate of recent works on Theocritus (in one of which he emerges as a modern symbolist), the part played by incongruity in his humor has received scant attention. This note looks at a few instances, involving literary allusion and parody.

Gorgo and Praxinoa may owe their timeless appeal to their being so very like the woman next door, but the careful reader will be periodically startled by Homeric or other erudite allusions of varying nature in their chatter. These are sufficiently far apart for the easy flow of the dialogue not to be impaired, but constant enough to warrant the assumption that Theocritus has consciously and deliberately chosen incongruity as an ingredient of his humor. The predilection of Praxinoa's husband for slums in outer suburbs earns him the description *ὁ πάραρος τῆνος* (15. 8) from her lips. In the literal sense of "joined beside," etc., *παρήορος* is well enough attested, but the metaphorical use, "out of one's mind," is remote from the former, and it is a comparative rarity. One's comprehension of the single occurrence in Homer (*Il.* 23. 603) is aided by the juxtaposition of *ἀεσίφρων*, and Archilochus (Frag. 56) added *νόου* for clarity. Praxinoa is the last person from whom one would expect the metaphorical use, and her unique contracted form *πάρᾱρος* is, furthermore, a splendid instance of *πλατειάσδειν*. Still complaining of her husband's ineptitude, Praxinoa ends a line (17) with *ἀνὴρ τρισκαιδεκάπαχυς*, after Homer's line-end *δυωκαιεικοσίπηχυ* (*Il.* 15. 678). The irrelevance of physical stature to skill in shopping makes Praxinoa's Homeric affectation appear all the more ridiculous. Gorgo, too, has her share of trouble: Diocleidas has brought her home expensive, but inferior, fleeces. There will be no end to the washing and mending, *ἔργον ἐπ' ἔργῳ* (20). Had not Hesiod said something similar on what life was all about: *ἔργον ἐπ' ἔργῳ ἐργάζεσθαι* (*WD* 382)? Praxinoa's vindication of her broad accent (90 f.) contains not only a smattering of history and mythology, but in one line (94) *φύη*, an aorist optative based on *δύη* (*Od.* 18. 348), the unparalleled substitution of Melitodes for Persephone, which has not been satisfactorily explained, and the rare construction of *καρτερός* with the genitive, which is found in Archilochus (Frag. 26) and Theognis (480). And Gorgo makes her exit (149) with a pseudo-Homeric hiatus in *χαῖρε, Ἄδων* (cf. *χαῖρε, ἄναξ*, *passim* in the *Homeric Hymns*). She has a little knowledge, but the digamma *is* tricky.

Theocritus' hillside as well as his back street may be the setting of such literary sport. The Alexandrians in general were fond of plays on variable vowel quantities, but *τὰ μὴ καλὰ καλὰ πέφανται*, Daphnis' warning to Polyphemus in *Idyll* 6. 19, comes closest by far to the Homeric original from which the affectation stems—*Ἄρες, Ἄρες* (*Il.* 5. 31 and 455). Aegon's athletic pretensions are humorously magnified in *φαντί νιν Ἡρακλῆι βίην καὶ κάρτος ἐρίσδειν* (4. 8). Here the Ionic form, retained from the Homeric tautology (cf. *Od.* 13. 143, *et pass.*), contrasts glaringly with Corydon's Doric *ἐρίσδειν*; and the herdsman has, furthermore, revived the Homeric construction of *ἐρίζειν* with the dative of the person and accusative of the thing (cf. *Il.* 9. 389; *Od.* 5. 213). Cory-

don's Homeric line is a foil to Battus' engagingly bombastic query, more in the tragic style (cf. esp. Aesch. *Ag.* 657), about Aegon's whereabouts: *αὐτὸς δ' ἐς τίν' ἄφαντος ὁ βουκόλος ᾤχετο χώραν;* (4. 5). Later on Battus' tragic line *αἰαῖ τῶ σκληρῶ μάλα δαίμονος ὅς με λελόγχει* (40) follows immediately after a rustic simile in which he had compared his affection for the dead Amaryllis to the affection he felt for his goats! Even at this point rustic naïveté is given a tinge of grandiloquence through *ἀπέσβης* (39), applied metaphorically to Amaryllis. Just before the Idyll degenerates into obscenity the animals become very restless; and Battus' threat to one of them has a distinctly comic effect, as he has used the lament of Amphimedon's ghost, *ἡμετέρου θανάτοιο κακὸν τέλος, οἷον ἐτύχθη* (*Od.* 24. 124), as the basis of his own euphemism *κακὸν τέλος αὐτίκα δωσῶν* (47). His use of *διδόναι* is, moreover, typically Homeric (cf. *Il.* 9. 571, 19. 270, etc.), except insofar as it is applied to the dispensations of gods rather than men in Homer—a further touch of bombast on Battus' part which is presumably deliberate.

Idyll 5. 68–71 offers an example of parody from the law courts when both Lacon and Comatas appeal for impartiality from Morson, the judge of their songs. Comatas introduces a hint of chiasmus by balancing Lacon's first appeal *μήτ' ἐμέ, Μόρσων, / ἐν χάριτι κρίνῃς* (68–69) with *μήτ' ὢν τύγα τῷδε χαρίξῃ* (71) as his own second appeal. His unique phrase (70–71) *μήτε Κομάτᾳ / τὸ πλέον ἰθύνῃς* ("direct the advantage towards") reads like an attempt at parodying the bombastic legal jargon. It comes as a surprise from Comatas, particularly after the appeal *ποτὶ τᾶν Νυμφᾶν* (70). These Nymphs are not forgotten by Comatas triumphant, and his scrupulous concern for ritual propriety is gently made fun of by Theocritus through the use of *καλλιερῆσαι* (148) instead of the expected *θῦσαι*. The ponderous line ending matches Comatas' self-importance. But the incontinent billy goat has things other than purity in mind, and the Idyll ends delightfully with Comatas threatening it with a vital excision and, in his earnest oath, invoking upon himself the fate of his Homeric predecessor, the goatherd Melanthius (*Od.* 22. 476).

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THE MESSAGE OF IDAIOS: FORMULAIC DEPARTURE?

A significant departure from formulaic application in *Iliad* 7 emphasizes the inequality of Paris and Menelaos with respect to Helen. In most places where a message is first commissioned and then delivered, the oral law of economy would seem to dictate verbatim repetition. Examples abound. In Book 9, Odysseus lists Agamemnon's gifts with precisely the same phrasing Agamemnon himself had used to relate his offer to the ambassadors (9. 125 ff. = 9. 266 ff.). The opening of Book 2 is another instance, where the same message is delivered by Zeus to Dream, Dream to Agamemnon, and Agamemnon to his council (2. 11 ff. = 2. 28 ff. = 2. 65 ff.). In these instances the pattern holds even though particular words may be changed grammatically to fit the speaker. This makes the departure in Book 7 seem even more unusual.

Paris advises the assembled Trojans that although he will offer gifts to Menelaos he will not in any case give back his wife (*γυναῖκα*, 7. 362). Idaios is commissioned to deliver the message to the Achaians. But, by departing from the usual practice of parallel phraseology, Idaios reveals the dissension in Troy. First he declares parenthetically that he wishes Paris had perished (7. 390). Then, after duly describing Alexandros' offering of gifts, Idaios significantly alters Paris' simple mode of reference to Helen (7. 392–93): *κουριδίην δ' ἄλοχον Μενελάου κυδαλίμοιο / οὔ φησιν δώσειν* ("But the very wedded wife of glorious Menelaos he says that he will not give"). Implicit in Idaios' idiosyncratic comment is the Trojan recognition of the impropriety of Alexandros' self-appointed marriage.

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