

“Generic Composition” and Petronius’ *Satyricon**

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It is now exactly twenty years since Francis Cairns published (Edinburgh 1972) *Generic Composition* (hereafter *GC*), startled us all, which was a good thing, and raised a storm which has not yet died down. I do not claim to have read more than a fraction of the critiques and defences of *GC*¹ and I concentrate here on one small and neglected corner of the debate. “Genre” was used by Cairns in a multiplicity of senses, variously defined and qualified; it was not always necessarily the best term to use, nor should it perhaps have been left to carry burdens so weighty and so numerous on its own.²

* Prof. William Slater demolished ruthlessly but generously one of the many earlier drafts of this paper. Dr. Helen de Witt, not for the first time, helped me from her ample knowledge of ancient and modern literary criticism. I am grateful to various Oxford friends, and in particular to members of the Corpus Christi College Classics Seminar, for their helpful comments.

¹ J. Griffin, *Latin Poets and Roman Life* (London 1985), 48ff. = *JRS* 71 (1981), 39ff. with R.G.M. Nisbet, *JRS* 77 (1987), 185f.; I. Du Quesnay, *PLLS* 3 (1981), 53ff.; T.G. Rosenmeyer, *Yearbook of Comparative and General Literature* 34 (1985), 74ff.; D.A. Russell, *Criticism in Antiquity* (London 1981), 148-58; Men. Rhet., edd. D.A. Russell and N.G. Wilson xxxi-xxxiv; F. Muecke, *Classicum* 9 (1978), 9ff.; *eadem*, *AULLA* 15, *Proceedings of Papers* (1977) 7, 1ff.; *eadem*, *Southern Review* 22 (1989), 256ff. I am most grateful to Miss Muecke for her help.

² *GC* 85: “general genre”; 84: “minor genre”; 85: “independent genre”; 70: “rhetorical genres”, for example; *cf.* Alastair Fowler, *Kinds of Literature* (Oxford 1982), hereafter “Fowler”, 106ff., 112ff. For the ancient terminology, *cf.* L.E. Rossi, *BICS* 18 (1971), 82.

The word's frequent and often uncomprehending overuse by others cannot be called Cairns' fault. But the definition offered at *GC* 6: "the poems and speeches of classical antiquity are ... members of classes of literature known in antiquity as γένη or εἶδη, which will be described in this book as genres", turns out in practice to be disconcertingly fissiparous and this paper will offer little joy to those who do indeed find genres "definable and mutually exclusive" (Fowler's expression [n. 2], 38).³ The role of genres as classes, that is, as fixed elements, is itself robustly challenged (*e.g.*, Fowler [n. 2], 38, 235). Cairns' own terminology, as his critics have observed, combines ancient and modern, traditional and invented, to a high degree, though the apparent inconsistency is nowhere near so serious a matter as is claimed.⁴

The wider intellectual problem of the ancient classification of literature is not much studied by classicists:⁵ a great pity, for ancient grammarians found the problem real and difficult and reached little agreement; the problem and its logical consequences merit closer study (and this paper is a small hint of the issues and answers involved). In 1936, Hans Färber, in an invaluable study of lyric poetry in the artistic theory of the ancient world (n. 5), listed twenty-five ancient classifications of lyric; even when all the texts known to have derived from a common source are eliminated, the total remains near twenty. Ancient attempts to classify knowledge are a difficult and rewarding topic;⁶ poets (Fowler [n. 2], 239) are no easier to pin down, study and label than, say, frogs or toads. We need to recognise that we have inherited scraps of numerous incomplete, inadequate attempts at classification. Even much our best analytical description of lyric (*cf.* n. 27), a Byzantine summary of (?) a c.ii A.D. grammarian who follows (?) the great Didymus is far from complete and contains a section ("Poems for circumstances and eventualities",

³ *Cf.* *GC* 36 on the "stability" of genres.

⁴ Griffin *LPRL* (n. 1), 51 = *JRS* 1981, 40f.; more moderate, Nisbet (n. 1), 185.

⁵ Russell (n. 1), 148ff.; A.E. Harvey, *CQ* n.s. 5 (1955), 157ff.; *cf.* G.J. De Vries, *Mnemosyne* 36 (1983), 241ff.; H. Färber, *Die Lyrik in der Kunsttheorie ...* (Munich 1936); Rossi (n. 2).

⁶ E.D. Rawson *PBSR* 33 (1978), 12ff.; D.M. Balme, *CQ* 12 (1962), 81ff.; M. Fuhrmann, *Das systematische Lehrbuch* (Göttingen 1960).

Proclus 5.159.6 Henry) which Russell perhaps too charitably describes as “mysterious”.⁷ Categories, detail, terminology are alike bewildering (*cf.* Fowler [n. 2], 147, 219ff.). That should not surprise us unduly: ancient classifications of lyric — admittedly the most complex genre of literature, but one closely studied by Menander Rhetor and thus at the roots of *GC* and of all subsequent discussion — contain a number of dangers, not always sufficiently recognised: some of these classifications were simply misconceived and unworkable (*cf.* Fowler [n. 2], 142ff.);⁸ some, not excluding Proclus-(?)Didymus were incomplete, as even fragmentary knowledge of Pindar’s vast output permits as to conclude,⁹ some terminology is wayward, idiosyncratic, confusing;¹⁰ individual terms were not clearly understood in antiquity,¹¹ or, as in the case of paeon, dithyramb, skolion, hymnos, drama, enkomion, ekloge changed their meaning with the passage of time¹² — a problem not confined (*cf.* Fowler [n. 2], 130, 133ff.) to antiquity. Individual poems defied classification,¹³ aroused scholarly debate in antiquity, or were consigned roughly to catch-all categories.¹⁴ Epinikia themselves were classified in various ways — by place or event — and

⁷ Above (n. 2), 155, n. 18; for *pragmatika*, *cf.* Harvey (n. 5), 159; note Accius’ work of that time, *GRF*, p. 27 and see further H. Lausberg’s *Handbuch der literarischen Rhetorik I* (Munich 1973), 96-7 and Adamietz (n. 48) on Quint. 3. 6. 57.

⁸ Rosenmayer (n. 1), 78-9; Harvey (n. 5), 157-75; classification by music (*cf.* n. 28) appears to have been particularly unworkable. On the frequent inadequacy of formal classifications, *cf.* Fowler (n. 2), 142ff.

⁹ Harvey (n. 5), 160: we know of numerous religious poems of Pindar which have no rational place in the four books of religious poems whose titles are attested.

¹⁰ *Cf.* Harvey (n. 5), 161; the *Suda*’s entry on Pindar is particularly helpless. Many of the difficulties touched on in the following notes are basically terminological.

¹¹ *Cf.* Harvey (n. 5), 165-6 on *hymnos*.

¹² *Skolion*: Harvey (n. 5), 161-2; *enkomion*: *ibid.*, 162; *hymnos*: *ibid.*, 166, 174; *paeon* and *dithyrambos*: *ibid.*, 171-2; *ekloge*: Horsfall, *BICS* 28 (1981), 108f.; *drama*: *cf.* n. 78.

¹³ Harvey (n. 5), 160.

¹⁴ Harvey (n. 5), 160; *cf.* Pind. *N.* 9, *inscr.*

on occasion aroused vigorous dispute.¹⁵ This is not to belittle what was achieved; it is only a warning against assuming (as some of Cairns' critics seem to) that ancient terminology is necessarily orderly, right and good and against giving preference to one system, without detailed justification, over all others. Likewise, if we mix the categories of the ancient terminology that we use (*e.g.*, paean, bucolic, epikedion)¹⁶, that is not necessarily dangerous, but the reader should be alert to what is going on.

Menander Rhetor accumulates grammatical terminology and poetic examples and applies them to a minutely detailed system for writing epideictic speeches.¹⁷ You can unpick a pullover to get a ball of wool and so too you can dismount Menander to learn a good deal about classification, categories and terminology. Every item of which should then be checked both against the grammarians' usage and against the poet's practice.¹⁸ This has not been done, except sporadically: the Greek grammarians await a glossary, duly respectful of the chronological span of the evidence, to serve as counterpart to H. Lausberg's *Handbuch der literarischen Rhetorik* I-II (Munich 1973). It is the poets, but after all, who determine the paths of generic development,¹⁹ even if the grammarians first train them and then analyse the results.²⁰ But until the first century A.D. — though this has been challenged — it is still primarily the poet's creative and attentive study of his antecedents rather than the rhetor's precepts or rule-book that determines how a given poem will be constructed. The relative importance of formal training and of educated reading to the individual poet is not always to be distinguished, and, further-

¹⁵ Harvey (n. 5), 164, 168, n. 1.

¹⁶ Paeon in origin a call to the gods, Harvey (n. 5), 172ff.; bucolic a mode, Fowler (n. 2), 109f., epikedion a classification by occasion.

¹⁷ Russell (n. 1), 156ff., *Men. Rhet.*, edd. Russell-Wilson xxxi-iv; Cairns, *GC* 34ff.; A. Hardie, *Statius and the Silvae* (Liverpool 1983), 74ff.; Du Quesnay (n. 2), 59ff. is a little incautious. For the history of an epideictic in general, cf. T.C. Burgess, *Epideictic Literature. University of Chicago Studies in Classical Philology* 3 (1902), 89-261.

¹⁸ Russell-Wilson xxxiv; Fowler (n. 2), 25.

¹⁹ Cairns, *GC* 36; Fowler (n. 2), 28ff.

²⁰ *Men. Rhet.*'s terminology is much indebted to the grammarians: Russell-Wilson xxxi; Russell (n. 1), 153ff.

more, depends a good deal, one may suspect, on the date and place of his education. Menander Rhetor is not (nor does Francis Cairns say otherwise) a manual for poetic composition; when poets and rhetorical precept concur, at least as far down as Statius, it is because they both used the same models.²¹

But my own difficulty lies not here, at the heart of a debate that cannot usefully be continued until we have a proper history of epideictic oratory, but rather, as I have hinted, in the sphere of the language we use when talking about ancient authors and works.

The twenty-five attempts at classification listed by Färber remain, in their multiplicity and inadequacy, highly significant: epinikian poetry was classified by place and/or event;²² between poets, the system varied.²³ In general, for Ibycus, Simonides, Pindar and Bacchylides a taxonomy by *eidos* (content-purpose-occasion) prevails.²⁴ However, Stesichorus seems to be cited by his twenty-six different poems,²⁵ and Sappho to be classified by metre.²⁶ Proclus(?) Didymus divided lyrics into “for gods”, “for men” and “for both” (that is, by addressees), in addition to — as we have seen — “for circumstances and eventualities”, with each group further broken down into *eide*.²⁷ There are traces of a classification by monostrophic and triadic²⁸ and likewise of attempts to classify by music. At least in the case of lyric, the ten “approved” authors do not vary;²⁹ in the other *gene* for whom a canon (modern term) of classic

²¹ Russell-Wilson xxxiv; Hardie (n. 17), 87f.

²² B.K. Braswell, ed. Pind. *Pyth.* 4.55f.

²³ Harvey (n. 5), 157-9; R. Pfeiffer, *History of Classical Scholarship I* (Oxford 1968), 182f.; Färber (n. 5), 19.

²⁴ Harvey (n. 5), 159.

²⁵ Harvey (n. 5), 158.

²⁶ Harvey (n. 5), 159.

²⁷ Russell-Wilson xxix and on 331.20ff.; Pfeiffer (n. 23), 184, 277; Harvey (n. 5), 159; Färber (n. 5), 16ff.; Rossi (n. 2), 75 with n. 19; A. Severyns, *Recherches sur la chrestomathie ... I* (Liège 1939), 157.

²⁸ Monostrophic and triadic: Harvey (n. 5), with n. 3; by music: Färber (n. 5), 19f. Pfeiffer (n. 23), 184 (better, however, Rossi [n. 2], 81f.).

²⁹ Pfeiffer (n. 23), 205.

(not a very old term) authors exists, the authors therein fluctuate.³⁰ There is no uniformity of authors per *genos*, nor of those *gene* for which a canon of authors exists.³¹ It is at least possible at times, with a good deal of patience, to establish the system of classification to which a term belongs; we can sometimes also tell who invented the system and quite often who else used the term. Classification by music, metre, event, recipient, etc. are clear enough. When *GC* mixes ancient and modern terminology we can hardly object, since the ancient terms are so often insufficient and defective, and some modern inventions are quite simply essential (*cf.* pp. 136-7),³² but when *komos*, *erotodidaxis* (a modern term; *cf.* *GC* 283-6 for some others) and "gloating over fulfilment" (another such) are all simply labelled "genres", we may jib;³³ as Horace said, *non ut serpentes avibus gementur, tigribus agni*. When we write about kinds of ancient literature, we should not apply a single all-purpose blunt instrument of terminology ("genre"!) on all occasions. Both ancient usage and modern theory suggest the need for greater precision and delicacy. *GC*, along with numerous articles by Cairns and his followers, have spread over the ancient texts labels beyond counting, of varying date, character, adhesiveness and appropriateness. No historically valid system has been created. Our new *Pinakes* are still full (inevitably, if one reads, *e.g.*, Fowler's *Kinds* [n. 2] with attention) of patches, anomalies, anachronisms and improbabilities. Given an historical glossary to the grammarians we would be better able to know the exact origin, history and

³⁰ Pfeiffer (n. 23), 203ff. Still indispensable is O. Kroehnert, *Canonesne poetarum, scriptorum, artificum per antiquitatem fuerint* (diss. Koenigsberg 1897). The only modern discussion, by the author's wife, is unfortunately well concealed, M. Scotti, *Esperienze Letterarie* 7 (1982), 74ff.

³¹ Kroehnert's list of *canones* is unmatched. Those published at 4ff. and 9ff. were already known; that at 15ff. he was the first to publish, from a manuscript in Munich.

³² *GC* 283-6. *Irrisor amoris* and *renuntiatio amoris* have an air of authority about them, created no doubt by the language used. They are, however, useful and do not merit Griffin's heavy obloquy (n. 1). *Mandata* (*GC* 90) seems more tenuous.

³³ *Cf.* Fowler (n. 2), 54ff., 106ff. for a more nuanced terminology. Fowler would designate modes (107ff.) and subgenres (111ff.) many of the "genres" labelled by Cairns.

application of the terms we use. For the moment, neither the subtlety of modern genre theory nor the language of ancient grammatical usage have been duly respected in the debate over the challenges and problems posed by *GC*.

My own particular worry over the occasionally headlong way in which the term “genre” was used and discussed arose when I realised how many works of ancient literature could not legitimately be classified under a single generic heading or even as a straightforward “Kreuzung der Gattungen”.³⁴ It is clearer to the modern critic how often boundaries have been transgressed and genres combined (Fowler [n. 2], 32,171): not only Petronius, *Satyricon* (at least not without the use of a chafing straitjacket), but Seneca, *Apocolocyntosis*; both works can be classified by form (Menippean satire), but less easily in terms of mode³⁵ (“satire” is far from sufficient for both), occasion, or intent. Tacitus, *Agricola* presents a fine old problem of classification, not to be dismissed as artificial or unimportant;³⁶ the compromise between historical monograph, *laudatio funebris*, biography, etc.³⁷ seems far too successful to be dismissed as a youthful experiment and seems rather to suggest an author deliberately avoiding commitment to certain generic classifications. Are Horace’s *Epistles* real letters? If they are not, just what are they?³⁸ If they are to be called diatribe as well, then we should be clear exactly what we mean by that term.³⁹ In particular, the *Ars Poetica*: is “verse treatise” or “didactic letter” more apposite?⁴⁰ The

³⁴ W. Kroll, *Studien zum Verständnis der römischen Literatur* (repr. Stuttgart 1964), 202ff.

³⁵ Fowler (n. 2), 110; Sen., *Apoc.*, ed. Eden, 13-7.

³⁶ “Una questione così oziosa”; so, idly and unwisely, G. Forni, ed., Tac. *Agr.* (Rome 1962), 13.

³⁷ Cf. Tac. *Agr.*, edd. Ogilvie-Richmond, 11ff.; F.R.D. Goodyear, *Tacitus, GRNSC* 4 (1970), 4f. and notably P. Steinmetz in *Politik und lit. Kunst im Werk des Tacitus*, ed. G. Radke (Stuttgart 1971), 119ff.

³⁸ Cf. Horsfall, *LCM* 4.6 (1979), 117-9; 4.8 (1979), 169-71; H.D. Jocelyn, *ibid.*, 7.1 (1982), 3-7; W. Allen, *CJ* 68 (1972-3), 119ff.; K. Berger, *ANRW* 2.25.2, 1125ff.

³⁹ Cf. n. 82.

⁴⁰ Fully discussed by Prof. B. Frischer (n. 53). I am grateful to Prof. Frischer for showing me two drafts of this valuable and provocative study.

very term didactic,⁴¹ like fable,⁴² baffled ancient critics. The elder Cato's *ad Filium* presents closely comparable problems of classification.⁴³ It is not quite clear what you should call Gellius' *Attic Nights* or Apuleius' *Florida*. Callimachus might have said *pantodapa*, miscellaneous. But where this long enquiry actually began was the Gospels. It very quickly became clear that monolithic, unitary definitions of them as (*e.g.*) "biography" or "aretalogy" (another ill-justified term⁴⁴) were deplorably insufficient.⁴⁵ There fortunately exists a comprehensive survey of all Hellenistic "generic" elements which can be discerned in the *NT*.⁴⁶

If, however, one is to seek out a touchstone in mainstream classical literature, it is upon Petronius' *Satyricon* that we must concentrate. "Natural reason long ago revealed that Petronius had a Greek model".⁴⁷ It was Richard Heinze who suggested in 1899 that Petronius followed not merely a Greek model but a comic model that parodied its serious counterpart. Heinze's followers are numerous and distinguished, even if many doubted that the Greek original was

⁴¹ E. Pöhlmann, *ANRW* 1.3, 850, 900; S. Koster, *Antike Epötheorien* (Wiesbaden 1970), 100f.

⁴² M. Nøjgaard, *La fable antique* I (Copenhagen 1964), 122, 128f.

⁴³ A.E. Astin, *Cato the Censor* (Oxford 1978), 332ff. A fortunate question from Prof. E. Gruen led me to this problem.

⁴⁴ The word is so rare, in a sense that might be appropriate to the *NT*, that specialists should have been warned off: Berger (n. 38), 1218ff.; S. Reinach, *BCH* 9 (1885), 259ff. But its air of spurious authority proved irresistibly attractive. For a lucid and sensible view of the ensuing confusion, cf. P. Cox, *Biography in the late Antiquity* (Berkeley 1983), 3f.

⁴⁵ Berger (n. 38), 1231ff. for an introduction to the problem. D. Aune puts the case for biography as well as may be, *The New Testament in its Literary Environment* (Cambridge 1988), 27ff. But it really will not work: G.N. Stanton, *Jesus of Nazareth in NT Preaching* (Cambridge 1974), 117-36 is properly cautious. Berger (n. 38) shows how biography cohabits with numerous other elements. Serious discussion has been above all in German: Wendland, Bultmann, K.L. Schmidt, Dibelius, Bornkamm (*vidi*); full references in Berger, *loc. cit.* For a recent view by a classicist, cf. A. Dihle, *Die Evangelisten und die griech. Biographie in Das Evangelium und die Evangelisten* (Tübingen 1983), 383-411.

⁴⁶ Berger (n. 38).

⁴⁷ P. Parsons, *BICS* 18 (1971), 66.

itself comic.⁴⁸ Their position has been strengthened by papyrus discoveries, from the publication of the Ninus-romance in 1893 ("conventionally dated to *ca.* 100 B.C.") on, to a remarkable climax in recent years: Lollianus *Phoinikika* (pub. 1972), Parsons' Iolaus fragment (pub. 1971) and the Tinouphis narrative published by Michael Haslam (1981), not to mention mosaics which might reflect lost novels.⁴⁹ Such discoveries change our views of the Greek novel's public, development and diffusion; its augmented popularity and variety seems necessarily to point to a longer history, but this extended chronology is, alas, hardly confirmed by A.D. Papanikolau's *Chariton-Studien* (Göttingen 1973); that work's dating, on stylistic grounds, of *Chaereas and Callirhoe* to the first or even second century B.C. has not convinced many (*cf.* G. Giangrande, *JHS* 94 [1974], 197). Nevertheless, once Heinze's unnecessary complication (Petronius as follower of Greek parodic originals) is eliminated,⁵⁰ his admirably acute perception of the *Satyricon*'s dependence on Greek predecessors may be allowed, for the moment at least, to stand.⁵¹ There are even lists of motifs common to Petronius and the Greek novel recently executed and conveniently available. Confirmation that scholars are at last barking up the right tree may be found in the title *Satyricon (scil. libri)*: titles, as modern critics have come to realise,⁵² are important. Few would wish to exclude a hint of *satira*, whether Roman or Menippean; "deeds of satyr-like creatures" does laconic justice to the participants' appetites, hints, if one wanted it to, at the satyr-play,⁵³ and in

⁴⁸ R. Heinze, *Hermes* 34 (1899), 494ff. = *Vom Geist des Römertums*³ (Stuttgart 1960), 417ff.; his followers listed, P. Kragelund, *CQ* 39 (1989), 437, n. 7; J. Adamietz, *RhM* 130 (1987), 332, n. 10; add F. Wehrli, *MH* 22 (1965), 136.

⁴⁹ Ninus fragment: T. Hägg, *The Novel in Antiquity* (Oxford-Berkeley 1983), 17; *ibid.*, 238 for a convenient bibliography to the papyrus discoveries. Mosaics: H. Whitehouse, *AJA* 89 (1985), 129ff.

⁵⁰ Adamietz (n. 48), 331-2.

⁵¹ But see Smith's introduction to the *Cena*, xviii for some words of caution.

⁵² Adamietz (n. 48), 332, 335; Kragelund (n. 48), 437; A. Barchiesi, in *Semiotica della novella latina* (Rome 1986), 219ff. (excellent).

⁵³ G. Highet, *Anatomy of Satire* (Princeton 1962), 264, n. 58; H. Petersmann, *ANRW* 2.32.3, 1689. On the importance of titles, Fowler (n.

its Greek form gestures, if not towards the mysterious *Cyclopea*,⁵⁴ then towards the far more familiar form of novel-title such as *Ephesiaka*, *Rhodiaka*, etc.⁵⁵ From title-tag on, then, *Satyricon* declares some sort of allegiance, only to surprise and disconcert the reader at every turn, or so I strongly suspect, though he perhaps also expected to be! Genres were not necessarily static even in the first century A.D., and "the novel" (or whatever it was called; v. *infra*) meant very different things before Petronius and after.

A pessimist might say that we are unlikely ever to be able to determine just how helpful it is to talk of "The Greek and Roman Novel" on the grounds that too many of the parts are missing for us to be able to delineate the whole. Ancient critical theory relevant to fictional writing is severely limited in quantity and not specially helpful;⁵⁶ even the terminology used is, as we shall shortly discover, disparate and hardly coherent. But one must look not only at the label but also at the contents: study of the *Satyricon*'s affinities should start from a position of dispassionate and impartial equilibrium between all its constituent elements, that avoids both the stiff regimentation of the two-word all-purpose categorisation (e.g., "Petronius' *Satyricon* IS Menippean Satire"⁵⁷) and the fragmented resignation entailed by dismissing it as some kind of mongrel or hybrid,⁵⁸ of an ancestry which we can sketch only in part.

The prosimetric form of the *Satyricon* Petronius inherits from Menippean satire through Varro; verse citations in Chariton serve as

2), 92 and ch. 2 of Prof. B. Frischer's *New Approaches to Horace's Ars Poetica*. *APA Monographs* 27 (1991). On satyr plays at Rome, T.P. Wiseman, *JRS* 78 (1988), 1ff. is highly ingenious and entertaining but fundamentally unconvincing.

⁵⁴ *SHA Gall.* 8.3 and *Carus* 19.3; cf., too, Apollonius Rhodius' *Argonautica*.

⁵⁵ C.W. Müller in *Griech. Literatur*, ed. E. Vogt (Wiesbaden 1981), 391; Xen. Ant., *Babyloniaka*; Xen. Eph., *Ephesiaka*; Xen. Cypr., *Kypriaka*; Philippus of Amhipolis, *Rhodiaka*; Iamblichus, *Babyloniaka*; Lollianus, *Phoinikika*.

⁵⁶ Fowler (n. 2), 11, 23, 159, 261.

⁵⁷ Fowler (n. 2), 119.

⁵⁸ Fowler (n. 2), 183, 186 (Sir Philip Sidney on Apuleius as mongrel); cf. W.K. Wimsatt and Cleanth Brooks, *Literary Criticism* (London 1957), 161.

learned ornament and as indicators of epic affinities,⁵⁹ while the Iolaus fragment cites Euripides and includes a speech in Sotadeans.⁶⁰ The Tinouphis fragment breaks into iambic tetrameters catalectic (of a sort), a metre found in both Varro and Petronius.⁶¹ Haslam notes that this metrical unity really does make it easier to speak objectively of a Menippean tradition,⁶² though the interaction of that tradition with the novel should not be exaggerated to the detriment of that generic equilibrium for which I have appealed.⁶³ however rich and varied Menippean tradition might turn out to be (and Adamietz has done much to enlarge our perception of its ample and robust diversity), there is no gain in insisting that it is the only dominant element in the *Satyricon*.

This paper cannot offer an answer to the question “to what genre does the *Satyricon* belong?”, but only seeks to explain why that question is itself so difficult to answer and suggests ways in which the enquiry itself might usefully be recast, in the light of formal difficulties not clearly faced in the current use of ancient genre-theory by classicists. Though we call the *Satyricon* a novel, rightly, I am far less sure about how a contemporary — say, the grammarian Probus of Berytus — might have classified it; and had he been unable to, that would in itself be highly significant. To say that *Satyricon* is “a Menippean novel” is only to couple a correct definition of the mode with an equally correct modern definition of the genre. As labelling it is irreproachable; as criticism it is not very helpful!

The list of recognisable ingredients in the *Satyricon* grows longer and richer with each serious repetition: symposium, Milesian tale, Menippean satire,⁶⁴ scenes from mime,⁶⁵ extended parody⁶⁶ of the

⁵⁹ Adamietz (n. 48), 338; cf. C.W. Müller, *AuA* 22 (1976), 126ff.; see also Fowler (n. 2), 193.

⁶⁰ *P.Oxy.* 3010 with P. Parsons (n. 47), 62.

⁶¹ *P.Turner* (1981), p. 37 (M.W. Haslam).

⁶² This text seems not to be known to Adamietz (n. 48), whose thesis it strengthens a good deal.

⁶³ Cf. Fowler (n. 2); 119, Hightet (n. 53), 37; Adamietz (n. 48), 345-6.

⁶⁴ M. Coffey, *Roman Satire* (London 1976), 185f.; H. Stubbe, *Philologus Supplbd.* 25.2 (1933), 1-20; M. Smith, ed., *Petr. Cena*, xv-xviii; B.E.

Greek novel (v. *supra* pp. 130-1) and of epic, as well as of (*e.g.*) *acta diurna*, wills and epitaphs.⁶⁷

But is this abundant hospitality offered by Petronius, this plurality of features so characteristic of the post-classical novel (Fowler [n. 2], 39), the stroke of genius by which the ancient novel was transformed and the great contribution made by Petronius to the novel's growth?⁶⁸ Certainly to the modern critic (Fowler [n. 2], 29), this sort of generic plurality points to the innovator. But for a definitive answer we have to wait upon the papyrologists and upon Fortuna's pleasure. We may never know the formal expectations of Petronius' first readers (*cf.* Fowler [n. 2], 26, 261); we may never know whether his variety startled them or not. But we can say already that unitary definitions of the *Satyricon* are necessarily insufficient: even if the novels Petronius followed or parodied anticipated him to some degree in the richness of their compositional elements, he was — and here we return surely to solid ground — the first ancient novelist (*cf.* Fowler [n. 2], 170) to encompass and invert both Greek and distinctively Roman elements, small though the contribution of distinctively Roman sub-genres seems to be (*cf.* n. 67).

In a situation of such delicacy and complexity, it proves helpful, often enough, to ask some severely practical questions: where, for example, in an ancient library or bookshop might Petronius have been found? A number of possible answers lie to hand, and that very uncertainty is in itself, as will become clear, most suggestive. Of Roman library-cataloguing we know very little: the one shelf-mark that appears to survive from the Roman world is unfortunately a fraud, however apparently learned.⁶⁹ Not all authors can have

Perry, *The Ancient Romances* (Berkeley 1967), 186ff.; P.G. Walsh, *The Roman Novel* (Cambridge 1970), 7ff.

⁶⁵ My doubts (*GR* 36 (1989), 194) about the mime are shared by Adamietz (n. 48), 336, n. 26.

⁶⁶ J.-P. Cèbe, *La caricature et la parodie* (Paris 1966), 313ff.

⁶⁷ *Cf. LCM* 12.9 (1987), 136 (Horsfall): parodies of wills.

⁶⁸ *Cf.* Fowler (n. 2), 161f., 170f.; T.G. Rosenmeyer, *The Green Cabinet* (Berkeley 1969), 5ff.; contrast the immobility of A. Warren in R. Wellek and A. Warren, edd., *Theory of Literature* (New York 1956), 227.

⁶⁹ *SHA Tacitus* 8.1

been stored in niches with their portraits above.⁷⁰ Though Theodore Priscian⁷¹ prescribes the reading of *amatoriae fabulae* among his remedies for failing virility, that is not grounds enough for suggesting an anomalous category of “prohibited” literature.⁷² Title-pages, or the tags on the ends of rolls, do not help us.⁷³ We know nothing of ancient library classifications, for Callimachus’ *Pinakes* should not be considered the published catalogue of the Alexandrian library.⁷⁴ Kinds of literature were hotly disputed in antiquity as we have seen (v. *supra*, pp. 127f.), and even attracted specialised grammarians.⁷⁵ In the *Suda* (c. x) numerous novelists are described as *historikoi*; that leads us as far back as Hesychius of Miletus (sixth century) and not necessarily any further.⁷⁶ Apuleius’ use of *historia* (n. 77) helps but little. There is a startling abundance — already familiar from the more extreme case of lyric — of alternative descriptions in use for novelists, though that is not of course an ancient word: as *dramatikoi* (classification by style), as writers of *erotika* (content classification), of *mythistoria*, *fabula* or of *plasmata* (classifications by credibility), of *diegemata* (classification by mode).⁷⁷ When the Patriarch Photius tries to summarise the *opus* of

⁷⁰ C. Callmer, *Opusc. Arch.* 3 (1944), 145ff.; cf. R. Lanciani, *Ancient Rome* (Boston 1888), 193f.

⁷¹ *Logicus* 11.34

⁷² Cf. the fragment of a letter by the emperor Julian to a priest (Loeb ed., 2, p. 326): “we (pagans) must avoid inventions circulated in the form of narrative (*historia*) among men in the past ... romantic plots and really everything of the kind”.

⁷³ Horsfall, *BICS* 28 (1981), 103ff.

⁷⁴ R. Pfeiffer (n. 23), 128; R. Blum, *Kallimachos und das Literaturverzeichnis* (Frankfurt 1977), 230-2; *idem*, *Die Literaturverzeichnung im Altertum* (Frankfurt 1983), 19ff.; cf. Call., fr. 434, 435, 436 for the “miscellaneous” category.

⁷⁵ Against Pfeiffer (n. 23), 184, see Rossi (n. 2), 81-2.

⁷⁶ Blum 1977 (n. 74), 285ff.; *idem*, (n. 74, 1983), 42ff.; *Suda*, ed. A. Adler I, xxi.

⁷⁷ Müller (n. 55), 338; *historia*: Apul., *Met.* 6.29, 8.1; *Suda* on Philippos of Amphipolis, one of Theodore Priscian’s exciting authors (n. 71), on Cadmus of Miletus, on the three Xenophons and on Ptolemy, son of Hephaestion (an inventive miscellanist, not a novelist); cf., too, the emperor Julian (n. 72). *Drama*: used by Photius of Iamblichus, Antonius

the novelist Damascius (second century A.D.?), he concludes (*Bibl.* ch. 130): "as a whole, impossibilities, things incredible, ill-conceived, monstrous, idiotic, and truly worthy of the atheism and impiety of Damascius". Post-Lucianic science fiction is not the same thing as the Alexander-romance, but to judge from the titles ("352 chapters of things incredible", etc.), Photius is perhaps not altogether unfair, though not exactly helpful, if we are still looking for a generally valid classification — which we should not be, for the novel, just like lyric, is classified in a variety of ways. The great variety of language used by ancient authors when talking about works of fiction does serve to establish that it was not habitually analysed in terms of one dominant critical system, such as the classification by credibility offered by Asclepiades "of Myrlea".⁷⁸

The multiplicity of terms applied in antiquity by librarians, grammarians and theorists to the novel (and not, I think fully discussed hitherto, though a good deal of the material is already in Rohde [n. 77]) is important in that it points towards the chaos of ancient literary terminology and should have alerted us long since to potential dangers in the apparently orderly and coherent system used

Diogenes, Achilles Tatius; cf. J.W.H. Waldon, *HSCP* 5 (1894), 2ff.; E. Rohde, *Der griech. Roman*³ (Leipzig 1914), 376f.; Müller (n. 59), 116f.; cf. n. 13 for terms which change their meaning. *Erotica*: Michael Psellus on Achilles Tatius and Heliodorus (a fragment to be found in Colonna's edition of Heliodorus and Viborg's of Ach. Tat.); *Suda* on Xenophon of Antioch and Xenophon of Cyprus; *idem* on Cadmus of Miletus; Julian (n. 72); Photius, *Bibl.* 94 on Iamblichus. *Mythistoria*: *SHA Opil.* 1.5 and *Quatt. Tyr.* 1.2; nowhere else. *Syntagma*: Heliodorus 10.41; Chariton 8.1.4; K. Kerényi, *Die griech.-orient. Romanliteratur* (Tübingen 1927), 23. *Diegema*: *ibid.*, 18f., 23; Xen. Eph. 5.10.4; Chariton 2.5.9; Photius, *Bibl.* 130 on Damascius. *Plasmata*: Photius, *Bibl.* 166 on Antonius Diogenes and Lucian; *ibid.*, 129 on Lucius of Patras; cf. Kerényi, 11-17 for the use of *plasmata* in Ach. Tat., Longus and Heliod. *Milesiae*: *SHA Clod. Alb.* 12.12; Apul., *Met.* 1.1; 4.32. *Fabulae*: Apul. *Met.* 1.1; 4.27.8; Macr. *Somn.* 1.2.8; Theod. Prisc. *loc. cit.* (n. 71).

⁷⁸ K. Barwick, *Hermes* 63 (1928), 261-6; W.J. Slater, *GRBS* 13 (1972), 317ff.; J.H. Waszink, in *Litterature comparate. Studi ... Paratore* (Bologna 1981), 199f.; *idem*, *Meded. Kon. Akad. ... v. Belgie* 40.6 (1978), 13f.; Müller (n. 55), 387.

in much modern discussion.⁷⁹ “Our modern usage, as applied to the Greek and Roman texts, is hollow unless it is warranted by the ancient” is not a precept⁸⁰ which should blind us to the fact that some ancient terminology is misconceived and worthless, while some modern classifications and expressions (e.g., *recusatio*, Priamel, ring-composition, *adynaton*) are not merely helpful but positively valuable, particularly when they serve to describe accurately a precise feature or features in a determined body of texts, ignored by the ancient critics.⁸¹ “Epyllion” has no ancient justification and there is no general accord in its application. “Diatribē” is an ancient term, but heated debate has not established its precise meaning in Greek texts, though “conversation” is clearly one possibility; the “diatribē” of modern critics signifies something quite different.⁸² “Biography”, we have learned, is a Byzantine term;⁸³ the ancients spoke of *vitae* or *bioi*. After many years in exile, in consequence of a dominant scholarly emphasis on the distinctions between history and biography, there seems to be a welcome tendency to reinterpret the crucial passages (mostly in Plutarch) and to readmit biography as a particular and peculiar kind of historiography.⁸⁴ Terminology is clearly an almost bottomless swamp of confusion. That is no excuse for a too-familiar imprecision, which only leaves us wallowing even more deeply in the mire. The only alternative is a precise and continuous awareness of the history and limitations of the terms we use. The rigour of the grammatical and rhetorical training an ancient author underwent, particularly in and after the Hellenistic age, diminishes

⁷⁹ Fowler (n. 2), 37, 147.

⁸⁰ Rosenmeyer (n. 1), 74; more tolerant Nisbet (n. 1), 185f.

⁸¹ Cairns, *GC* 70, 76, 82f.; Fowler (n. 2), 148.

⁸² Diatribē in common parlance: Highet (n. 53), 24ff.; for the ancient use, cf. H.D. Jocelyn, *LCM* 7.1 (1982), 3-7, *idem*, *LCM* 8.6 (1983), 89-91; H.B. Gottschalk, *LCM* 7.6 (1982), 91-2 and 8.6 (1983), 91-2; Men. Rhet., edd. Russell-Wilson 295; J. Glucker, *Antiochus and the late Academy* (Göttingen 1978), 163; J. Kindstrand, *Bion of Borysthenes* (Uppsala 1976), 21ff., 97ff.

⁸³ A.D. Momigliano, *Development of Greek Biography* (Cambridge, Mass. 1971), 12.

⁸⁴ E. Valgiglio, *Orpheus* 8 (1987), 50-70; I am grateful to Roberto Nicolai for alerting me to this excellent paper. Cf. also B. Gentili and G. Cerri, *Storia e Biografia* (Bari 1983), 67f.

the objections raised by modern critics (*e.g.*, Fowler [n. 2], 37) to considering genre as prescriptive, as in some sense established for authors to use by scholars and grammarians: of course it was Virgil, not Epidius, Parthenius, Philodemus, or whoever taught Virgil rhetoric, that changed epic, but Virgil wrote in a closer relationship with “academic” specialists than might now seem likely or imaginable. The modern reader knows just about what to expect within the covers of a book called “the ancient novel” but that, we may by now have realised, is the result of accidents of survival and of the growth of a convenient mixed terminology which serves at times to clarify, at others to blind.

Rome