

books published by Brill, and the Cambridge volume covers some ground which is neglected in its Brill counterpart. And, to say the truth, after having read the book reviewed here, it is now clear to me that there is room for even more introductions to Ovid, a previously neglected poet now almost in the centre of critical attention and no doubt offering much material for further scholarship. And, of course, I thought this was a great book, and I enjoyed every minute I was reading it.

*Olli Salomies*

MARIA PLAZA: *Laughter and Derision in Petronius' Satyrice. A Literary Study*. Acta Universitatis Stockholmiensis: Studia Latina Stockholmiensia 46. Almquist & Wiksell International, Stockholm 2000. ISBN 91-22-01891-3. xii, 227 pp. SEK 244.

Maria Plaza's study of Petronius' *Satyrice* (a revised version of her doctoral dissertation) consists of the following main parts: Chapter 2 bears the title "A critical survey of previous research on laughter and related topics", concentrating on the narrating-"I" and experiencing-"I" (2.1) and the interpretations of the function of laughter (2.2); Chapter 3 focusses on the "Analysis of the motif of laughter and derision", with subchapters on *Sat.* 1–26.6 (3.1), *Cena Trimalchionis* (3.2) and *Sat.* 79–141 (3.3.), all divided into further sub-sections. Plaza's grounds (p. 11) for giving a special introduction and summary in 3.2 on the *Cena*, the central and almost independent episode of the work, are acceptable.

Plaza analyzes the function of the explicit references to laughter and derision in the *Satyrice*. This is a well-grounded theme for study because, as far as I know, she is quite correct (p. 3) that explicit laughter and derision have been considered important in the *Satyrice*, but the study of them has been neglected. This book, with its systematic episode-by-episode analysis of the references and contexts of laughter, fills that gap in the scholarly research on Petronius.

Plaza explains her aims inspiringly (p. 2). In particular her designs for finding out the function of the references in colouring the "tone of narrative" and "connection with major aspects of the *Satyrice*, satyr-like behaviour, satire and humour" offer a good starting point for discussion. Her deliberately narrow delineation (stated on p. 3), instead of a more theoretical approach is, indeed, a wise method of study. Plaza mentions first (p. 3) that she is "not primarily concerned with laughter in general" – yet she suggests to us on the following page that "our interest in laughter must thus be a broad one". This verbal inconsistency does not, however, reflect her analysis. To read this book is rewarding.

Ch. 2, the survey of the previous study of laughter and related topics in the *Satyrice*, is a clear introduction for a general reader, too. Plaza discusses respectively the main functions of laughter and derision in the novel suggested by scholars: satire, entertainment, pessimism and despair, affirmation and relativisation. She herself develops the points of view of the relativizing function of this laughter, presented in 1974 by Louis Callebaut and particularly 1990 by Gerlinde Huber; for Huber's research applied successfully by Plaza, see pp. 183–185 on *Sat.* 111–112, Eumolpus' story of the Widow of Ephesus. According to Callebaut and Huber, the laughter of the *Satyrice* is ambivalent, that is challenging and affirmative (so Callebaut, see p. 52, but see Plaza's criticism of his

method and results, p. 52, 67), as well as mutually exclusive, non-absolute and relativizing (so Huber, see p. 53). Plaza demonstrates us that laughter in the *Satyrice* is ambiguous (see p. 53: "ambiguity is its very nature") and it performs simultaneously different functions (ibid.).

In her analysis in 3.1, 3.2 and 3.3, Plaza successfully avoids compartmentalizing laughter; she occasionally tends to underline her arguments for the ambivalent nature of the text so much that the reader finds her own analysis ambivalent to a degree. On p. 83 in the conclusion of the analysis of *Sat.* 1–26.6, she concludes that "the satiric vision is strongly undercut by the facts that the potential satiric vehicle is silenced...On the other hand, it may be said that unrefined mimic laughter in itself is an object of scorn, and such a view would strengthen the satirical interpretation". Consequently, what is left is that the satiric function is, however, very prominent. But I agree with Plaza that the satiric function, or equivalent, is not the only target Petronius aimed at.

Plaza succeeds well in keeping her method in balance throughout the treatise; no single theory of laughter (an overview of them given pp. 4–10) dominates her analysis. Perhaps this (subconsciously) influenced her in her decision to entitle the subchapters with the sentences of the *Satyrice*. This method, having as a starting point the words and their contexts, is not an innovation as such (it is used in a broader sense in commentaries), but it appears to also work in a study of a specific theme like this. The explicit references functioned as "shortcuts" into the more profound messages in Petronius, and they serve methodologically the same purpose in Plaza's analysis. If the reader is interested in the specific passages of the *Satyrice*, this book offers an easy access to the writer's argumentation and debate with her colleagues. I would not, however, consider Plaza's subtitles convenient for a more general reader. She could have found illustrative titles from her own creditable analysis on the narrative strategies, characters and their interactions, intertextual methods and thematic and generic ambivalence in Petronius' work. Or, she could have translated the reference sentences into English, the language of her study.

This valuable treatise by Maria Plaza encourages us to take a step further and imagine that behind Petronius' visions there was not a black and white but a multicoloured Rome, where human laughter appeared on different levels simultaneously.

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SUETONIUS: *Divus Claudius*. Edited by DONNA W. HURLEY. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2001. ISBN 0-521-59676-9. viii, 274 pp., figs. GBP 40 (hb), 14.95 (pb).

Donna W. Hurley's edition of Suetonius' *Life of Claudius* in the Cambridge Greek and Latin Classics contains an introduction to the author, his work and the Latin text of the *vita Claudii* (based on Ihm/Teubner), a commentary, a list of literature and three indexes.

This book is very useful for the student of Suetonius. Hurley's comments are easy to follow, even if one starts in the middle of them (which is quite usual); she has a fluent way of approaching the text, not a common feature of commentaries due to the problem