

FOUR PROBLEMS IN PETRONIUS

CUATRO CUESTIONES PETRONIANAS

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This article discusses four problematic passages in Petronius' *Satyricon* (2.7, 9.7–9, 14.3 and 14.8–15.2).

Keywords: Petronius, *Satyricon*, textual criticism, coinage, shekel.

En el presente artículo se debaten cuatro pasajes problemáticos del *Satyricon* de Petronio (2.7, 9.7–9, 14.3 y 14.8–15.2).

Palabras clave: Petronio, *Satyricon*, crítica textual, moneda, siclo.

In homage to one of the most elegant scholars I know, I shall discuss four problematic passages by the *arbiter elegantiarum*. They come from the first fifteen chapters of the *Satyricon*, covered by the useful recent commentary by Natalie Breitenstein (2009). In each case I start out from a conservative text of my own making that is as close as possible to the transmitted text.

2.7 nuper uentosa istaec et enormis loquacitas Athenas ex Asia commigrauit animosque iuuenum ad magna surgentes ueluti pestilenti quodam sidere affluit, semelque corrupta eloquentiae regula stetit et obmutuit.

eloquentiae regula stetit *codices*: regula eloquentia stetit *Haase 1856, 16*: eloquentia regula stetit *Feix 1934, 47*: eloquentiae regula <hoc totum studium sub>stitit *Fuchs 1959, 58*: corrupta eloquentia e<repta>

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regula Courtney 1970, 65: eloquentiae regula <ars> stetit Müller 1995:
eloquentiae regula <illa> Pellegrino 1986

This passage comes from a speech in which Encolpius laments the decline of oratory and criticizes the rhetorical fashions of his day. The last clause is problematic: the transmitted reading would mean «once the standard of eloquence was corrupted, it stood still in its course and fell dumb»; but as Breitenstein (2009 *ad loc.*) put it, «Grundsätze bzw. eine Richtschnur können nicht stehen bleiben und verstummen». Among recent editors Giardina–Cuccioli Melloni (1995) and Müller (1995) indicate a lacuna after *regula*, while Breitenstein (2009) prints Feix’s conjecture.

Let us start out from the transmitted reading. The phrase *semelque corrupta eloquentiae regula stetit et obmutuit* might look odd: rules do not stand still or fall silent. But *regula* refers to an abstract concept, not to any given set of regulations (*leges*); it means not “rule” in its current English sense, but “norm” or “standard”. As for *sto*, it is used regularly with abstract nouns to mean “to stand still, stop, halt”: compare Prop. 3.18.15 *occidit, et misero steterat uicesimus annus*; Sen. *Benef.* 5.19.8–9 *repeti a patre beneficium non debet ... nam illud finiri non potest: si patri do beneficium, et matri et auo et auunculo et liberis et adfinibus et amicis et seruis et patriae. ubi ergo beneficium incipit stare?* and Thy. 744–745 *hactenus si stat* (thus Heinsius: *sistat* E: *non stat* A) *nefas, / pius est*; Quint. *Decl.* 335.10 *satis iusta moriendi causa erat si calamitas mea hactenus stetisset* and *Inst.* 1.5.3 *stat profectus, admiratio decrescit*; and see *OLD* s.v. *sto*, 10c for further parallels. The use of *obmutesco* with abstract nouns (*OLD* s.v., 2) is also well attested: note Cic. *Brut.* 324 *perterritum armis hoc studium ... nostrum conticuit subito et obmutuit* and *Tusc.* 2.50 *uidesne ut obmutuerit non sedatus corporis, sed castigatus animi dolor?*; Sen. *Benef.* 5.15.6 *obmutescat inter militaria signa libertas*. So there is no reason to suspect the phrase *semelque corrupta eloquentiae regula stetit et obmutuit* «and once the standard of eloquence was corrupted, it stood still and fell dumb». The florid imagery undermines Encolpius’ tirade against Asianism.

9.7–9 *inhorrescere se finxit Ascyrtos, mox sublatis fortius manibus longe maiore nisu clamavit. “non taces” inquit “gladiator obscene, quem de ruina harena dimisit? non taces, nocturne percussor, qui ne tum quidem, cum fortiter faceres, cum pura muliere pugnasti, cuius eodem ratione in uiridario frater fui qua nunc in deuersorio puer est?”*

9.8 *de ruina codices plerique: de <...> ruina lacunam indicavit codex Vaticanus lat. 11428, scriptus post a. 1565: de <edita> aut de <in lucem prolata> ruina editio Tornaesiana a. 1575: de <pegmatis> aut de <terrae> ruina suppl. e.g. Buecheler 1862: de ruma Housman 1904, 398: de pruna Froehner 1912, 166: delusum Gurlitt 1923, 266: derisum Eduard Fraenkel apud Müller 1961: de rude Verdière 1963, 281: meridiana Walsh 1967: sine rude Schnur 1992, 171: detrusum Giardina apud Giardina–Cuccioli Melloni 1995 | de harena ruina Schoppius 1596, 58: [de ruina] harena <male mulcatum> aut <turpissime> aut <cum infamia> Fuchs 1959, 59: <cum despectus iaceres, ut inutilem> [de ruina] harena Fuchs *ibid.**

Ascyrtos' first taunt to Encolpius has been felt to be corrupt at least since the 16th century, when a lacuna was posited between the words *de ruina*. Numerous emendations have been proposed since then, but recent editors regard the problem as unsolved: Giardina–Cuccioli Melloni (1995), Müller (1995) and Breitenstein (2009) all print *de ruina* between cruces.

Here too no remedy may be needed beyond making sense of the transmitted text. *de ruina* was already regarded as genuine by Ernout (1922, 7), who translates *quem de ruina harena dimisit* as «que l'arène a renvoyé après sa chute». Burriss (1941, 276) objected that «the preposition *de* in the sense “après” is not found in post-classical Latin except in the expression *diem de die* ... and ... it is rare in this sense in classical Latin», and he proposed to translate the phrase as «whom the arena dismissed as a result of his downfall». But it is not clear what kind of downfall could have caused a gladiator to be dismissed alive from the arena, and one would have expected Petronius to use different words to make this point, for example *quem harena ob ruinam* or better still, *propter infamiam dimisit*. Rather more convincing is the explanation of

Killeen (1969, 126), who paraphrases *quem de ruina harena dimisit* with the words *qui, propter ruinam rerum domesticarum gladiator factus, ex harena uenisti*.

Killeen notes that «Encolpius ... may have been depicted as one of those better-class young men whom profligacy and spendthrift ways had reduced to fighting in the amphitheatre», quoting passages such as Seneca, *Ep.* 87.9 *hic ... maxime dubitat utrum se ad gladium locet an ad cultrum* and 99.13 *aspice illos iuuenes quos ex nobilissimis domibus in harenam luxuria proiecit*, which suggest that the image may have been commonplace. The wording of our passage can easily fit such an interpretation. *ruina* regularly indicates financial ruin, witness Cicero, *Cat.* 1.14, *Flac.* frg. Med., and *Prov. cons.* 13, and Val. Max. 6.1.9, already quoted by Killeen, and also Quint. *Decl.* 360.1. As for *dimitto aliquem de aliqua re*, it is often used by legal writers to mean “to release someone from something”: compare Gai. *Inst.* 1.133 *filium ... de potestate dimittere*, cfr. 1.134; Paul. *Dig.* 20.4.16 *cum tertius creditor primum de sua pecunia dimisit*; Scaev. *Dig.* 31.88.11 *Lucius Titius Damam et Pamphilum liberos suos ante biennium mortis suae de domu dimisit*; Ulpian. *Dig.* 37.6.5 pr. *de potestate nepotem dimittere*; 47.2.52.12 *si fugituum meum quis quasi suum a duumuiro uel ab aliis qui potestatem habent de carcere uel custodia dimitteret*. Here Ascyrtos’ words could have a legalistic overtone, as do his at 13.3 *quo iure nostram rem uindicamus*, and those of Encolpius at 13.4 *negauit circuitu agendum, sed plane iure ciuili dimicandum, ut si nollet alienam rem domino reddere, ad interdictum ueniret*. Alternatively, *dimitto aliquem de aliqua re* could already have been in use in colloquial Latin at this time. Later it will resurface in the Vulgate (*Exod.* 6:11 and 7:2 *ut dimittat filios Israhel de terra sua*, cfr. 11:10; *Deut.* 24:1 *si acceperit homo uxorem ... et dimittet eam de domo sua*; etc.).

So “*non taces*” inquit “*gladiator obscene, quem de ruina harena dimisit?*” does not appear to be corrupt. It can be translated as “Don’t you shut up”, he said, “you dirty gladiator, whom the arena has freed from bankruptcy?”»

14.3 *sed praeter unum dipondium sikel lupinosque quibus destinaueramus mercari, nihil ad manum erat.*

dipondium del. Alessio 1967, 326, item suo Marte Daniel 1988, 349 et Giardina–Cuccioli Melloni 1995 | *sicel* codices: scilicet Turnebus 1565, 137: *cicer* Gronovius 1656, 741, sed iam nescio quis in codice antiquo teste Hadrianide 1669: *siser* Puteanus: *sicer* aut *sicera* Alessio 1967, 326: *siceram* Pellegrino 1986: del. Gaselee 1944, 77 | *sicel* *lupinosque* quibus codices: *sicilicumque* quibus Scaliger: <quo> *cicer* *lupinosque* [quibus] Gronovius 1656, 741: [*sicel*] <quo> *lupinos*[que quibus] E. Fraenkel apud Müller 1961: *sicel*, <quo *sicer* aut quo *sicera*> *lupinosque* [quibus] Alessio 1967, 326: <quo> *siceram* *lupinosque* [quibus] Pellegrino 1986

Encolpius and Ascyltos would like to buy back the tunic they have lost from its current owner, but they only have small change at hand. While the overall meaning of the sentence is clear, the sequence *praeter unum dipondium sicel lupinosque quibus* is ungrammatical and the transmitted text must be corrupt.

At the heart of this sequence stand the coin-names *dipondium sicel*. The *dipondius*, *dupondius*, *duopondius*, *dupundius* or *dipundius* (the spelling is inconsistent) was «[t]he sum of two asses (in weight or money)»; thus OLD s.v. *dupondius*. Though not common, its name is well attested across a range of texts in classical Latin prose; it appears in four other passages in Petronius (58.4, 5 and 14, and 74.15). Its attestations dry up at the end of antiquity. In this passage *dipondium* makes good sense as a word for a coin of little value, and it seems too rare to have arisen as an interpolation, as has been suggested by Alessio (1967, 326) and others.



A French edition of *Satyricon* with a cover illustrated by Georges–Antoine Rochegrosse (1859–938).

sicel is less easy to deal with. It was deleted by Gaselee (1944, 77), who suggested that it «is a gloss on *dipondium* by “some ingenious Hebraist”» who had a Jewish shekel in mind. In Greek this coin was called a σίγλος (see Regling in Pauly–Wissowa s.v.), which appears not only in Flavius Josephus and in the *Septuagint*, but also in the lexicographers and even in Sophocles and Xenophon (see Liddell–Scott–Jones’ *Lexicon* s.v.). In classical Latin the shekel does not appear anywhere else, but its name may have entered the language under Vespasian, when the amount of the poll tax that every Jew in the Empire had to pay to Capitoline Jupiter was fixed at two *drachmae* (i.e. about 8 sesterces), the same value as the shekel they had been paying to the Temple in Jerusalem (thus Ios. *Bell. Iud.* 7.218 and Dio 65(66).7.2, *cfr.* Regling in Pauly–Wissowa II.2/2.2320.33–40). In the 4th century, Jerome notes in his commentary on *Genesis* 24:22 (*Hebraicae quaestiones in libro Geneseos* p. 36,25–28 Lagarde) that in Latin the coin is called *siclus*, wrongly, as it should be called *secel*. But in the Vulgate Jerome still translates *shekel* with *siclus*, for example at *Gen.* 24:22. In the first half of the 5th century *secel* is used by Eucherius, *Instructiones* p. 158, 15–18 Wotke, who says that he has taken it from Jerome. The coin appears next the *Carmen de librae siue assis partibus*, dated by Hulstsch (1864–66, vol. 2.99f.) to the 5th or the 6th century, where the *siclus uel sicilicus uel denique sicel* is defined as the quarter of a pound (line 12). It recurs in the early 7th century in Isidore’s *Etymologiae* at 16.25.18 *sicel, qui Latino sermone siclus corrupte appellatur, Hebraeum nomen est, habens apud eos unciae pondus. apud Latinos autem et Graecos quarta pars unciae est et stateris medietas, dragmas adpendens duas*. This section of the *Etymologiae* is partly based on the *Carmen de librae siue assis partibus* (Hulstsch 1864–66, vol. 2. 32), but Isidore seems to have drawn his statements that the *sicel* is wrongly called *siclus* in Latin and that among the Jews it equals an *uncia* from Jerome’s commentary on *Genesis*. Isidore’s spelling *sicel* is innovative. Unsurprisingly, the biblical form *siclus* resurfaces again in the Middle Ages, for example in the *Annales Fuldenses* for the year 850 CE, where we read *decem siclis argenti*.

Let us leave *sicel* aside for a moment and move on to the words *lupinosque quibus destinaueramus mercari*. What is the role of *lupinosque*?

It would be possible for *praeter* to govern all of *dipondium sice lupinosque*: on occasion *-que* is only attached to the last item in a series (see *OLD* s.v. *-que*, 2b.). However, *unum dipondium sice lupinosque* would be a rather odd combination, as lupine beans were not a form of currency, even if they could be compared to coins on account of their size and shape (*cfr.* Plaut. *Poen.* 597–598 and Hor. *Epist.* 1.7.22–23). I shall mention only in passing the theory about *lupinaria moneta*, that is to say, the notion that lupine beans would have been used as coinage in ancient Rome (*cfr.* Schmeling, 1992, 534f. and Jenson, 2004, 9), which was already treated with derision by Turnebus (1565, 137); the equally speculative suggestion of Daniel (1988, 348–349 n. 1) that *lupini* would have been a colloquial term for small coins; and the tentative proposal of Breitenstein (2009 *ad loc.*) that here *lupinosque* might refer not specifically to lupine seeds, but more generally to something that is entirely worthless. In fact lupine beans counted in ancient Rome first of all as a cheap but nourishing foodstuff, a poor man's source of protein: note Columella 2.10.1–2 *lupini prima ratio est, quod et minimum operarum absumit et uilissime emitur ... famem quoque, si sterilitas annorum incessit, hominibus commode propulsat* (see further *Thesaurus Linguae Latinae* VII/2.1850.29–34). Evidently Ascyrtos and Encolpius were planning to use the little cash they had at hand to buy some lupine beans, which were cheap but nutritious.

But how did Encolpius (and the author of the *Satyricon*) express this notion? The transmitted text reads *lupinosque quibus destinaueramus mercari*. The verb *mercari* means “to buy”, which is what one would expect to find in this passage, but it is transitive. Here *quibus* could serve as an ablative of price, which is used regularly with *mercari* (see *Thesaurus Linguae Latinae* VIII.8.799.69–74), but we need an object in the accusative. We have that in *lupinos*, but it stands in the wrong place before *-que quibus*. This could be emended by either of two transpositions (I use bold type for the letters that have been transposed):

*praeter unum dipondium sice**lque**, lupinos quibus destinaueramus mercari*
*praeter unum dipondium sice**lque**, **quibus** lupinos destinaueramus mercari*

The first transposition has the merit of being slightly less invasive than the second, but it would leave the relative pronoun *quibus* in second place within the clause that it introduces. This would be rather unusual in Petronius; the closest parallel I have found is 115.7 *fluctibus obruto non contingit sepultura, tamquam intersit, periturum corpus quae ratio consumat, ignis an fluctus an mora*, where *quae* introduces an indirect question and the inversion highlights *quae ratio*. The second transposition seems more satisfactory, and it is not difficult to assume that *que quibus* and *lupinos* should have exchanged places. Incidentally, the plural ablative pronoun *quibus* guarantees that the antecedent had to include at least one other coin as well as *unum dipondium*.

What was that coin? The manuscripts read *sicel*, which could be genuine, or a gloss, or a result of textual corruption of a more random kind. It speaks in favour of the first possibility that *sicel* is a coin name, which is what we need, and although it is not paralleled in classical Latin, the *Satyricon* abounds in rare words and *hapax legomena*. Yet we have seen that the shekel is not mentioned by surviving Roman authors earlier than Jerome, and is not called *sicel* before Isidore; it is not clear how this Middle Eastern coin would have found its way into the hands of a pair of Campanian adventurers of the mid-1st century BCE; and a silver coin worth about two *denarii*, i.e. eight sesterces, will have bought much more than a simple meal of lupine beans. As is so often the case with corrupt passages, the difficulties pile up. It could only be due to an extraordinary coincidence of unlikely events if *sicel* were genuine here. On the other hand, it is not probable that random textual corruption should produce the name of a very rare coin in a context where a name of a coin is required. I believe that *sicel* may have arisen as a gloss or (just as plausibly) as a conscious correction by someone who knew the word from Isidore's *Etymologiae*, which had many readers in the Middle Ages.

What coin could *sicel* have displaced? Possibly nothing: Brozek 1965 suggests that it could have arisen from the abbreviation *SIHHL*, for *dipondius*. In that case the cash of the adventurers would be limited to one single coin, and we would have to emend *quibus* to *quo*. It seems more plausible that they should have had another coin with them.

The coins of lowest value minted under Nero were the sesterce, the *dupondius* (2 *asses* = ½ sesterce), the *as* (¼ sesterce), the *semis* (½ *as*) and the *quadrans* (¼ *as*); *sicel* might have displaced one of these. But perhaps we should look not for an official coin name, but a vernacular one, in the way that a US dollar is known today as a “greenback” or a “buck” and a pound sterling is called a “quid”.

As long as this problem is not solved, I propose to transpose *–que quibus* and to use a *crux*:

sed praeter unum dipondium †sicelque quibus lupinos destinaueramus mercari, nihil ad manum erat.

«But apart from one single two-as piece and ... with which we had been planning to buy lupine beans, we had nothing at hand.»

14.8–15.2 *hinc Ascyrtos paene risum discussit, qui silentio facto “uide-mus” inquit “suam cuique rem esse carissimam; reddant nobis tunicam nostram et pallium suum recipiant.” etsi rustico mulierique placebat permutatio, aduocati tamen iam paene nocturni qui uolebant pallium lucri facere flagitabant ut apud se utraque deponeretur ac postero die iudex querellam inspiceret.*

14.8 pene (*pro paene*) *codices*: bene *editio Pithoeana altera a. 1587*: repente *Müller 1961*: plane *Delz 1962, 681*: perite *Leary 2001, 315* | *risum codices*: *rixam Friedrich Jacobs apud Bücheler 1861 in app. (cfr. p. XLIII), suo Marte Giardina 1983* | 15.2 iam pene (*pro iam paene*) *codices, del. Fuchs 1959, 60*: iam bene *Schoppius 1596, 58*: iam poenae *Buecheler apud Domaszewski 1892, 160*: <agoranomi> *aut* <sequestri> iam paene *Gurlitt 1923, 266*: etiam poenae *Sage 1929*: in rem praesentem *dub. Müller 1961*: iam plena <nocte> *Delz 1962, 681*: importune *Nisbet 1962, 230*: III viri *Brozek 1965*: [iam] repente *Rose 1965, 223*: iam paene <nox erat> *Sullivan 1965, 185*: immo plane *aut* paene *Giardina apud Giardina–Cuccioli Melloni 1995* | iam paene *ante* placebat *transp. Vannini 2006, 272–6*: in impense *mutauit et ante* flagitabant *transp. Mueller 1965* | qui *codices*: <eam impedituri> quia nisi fallor, *Buecheler 1871* | qui ... facere *del. Müller 1961* | nocturni ... facere *del. Alessio 1967, 227*

The rustic and his female companion have just discovered their precious cloak being offered for sale by Encolpius and Ascyltos in a corner of the *forum*; they grabbed the garment and raised a hue and cry; the adventurers decided to seize the tattered tunic they had left behind when they seized the cloak; but the difference in value between the two items caused the onlookers to laugh. This passage describes the ensuing scene.

There are two major problems here. *Ascyltos paene risum discussit* (14.8) does not make sense: how could he almost succeed in ending the laughter, but not quite? Out of the conjectures that have been put forward, the one that takes the palm is *bene risum discussit*, printed by Pierre Pithou in 1587. The change from *p(a)ene* is trifling, and *bene* “thoroughly, completely, properly, well” goes well with *discussit* (see *OLD* s.v. *bene*, 13c «as an intensive to strengthen the idea contained in the verb»). The two words are also used together at *Largus* 44 *bene discutit parotidas iris Illyrica*; they may have constituted a set phrase.

How did Ascyltos dispel the laughter of the onlookers? Not with what he said: he started to speak *silentio facto* (15.1). Did he make a sign, adopt a commanding posture, or do something else that calmed the public? We can only guess, which is unlike the usual clarity of Petronius’ narrative. Some words may have fallen out. The obvious place for this would be after *discussit*, and *qui* is slightly awkward after a main clause where the subject is the same. Did another main clause fall out, which described how the turmoil had been calmed by Ascyltos, who was referred to in an oblique case? Or could *qui* have been added by an interpolator in order to bridge a lacuna?

The problems in the following sentence (15.2) have received even more attention. *iam paene nocturni* does not make sense. Numerous attempts have been made to emend all or part of *iam paene*, or to render the phrase intelligible by adding something (see the apparatus above). Yet a correct Latin phrase such as *iam paene*, well attested in prose and even in poetry, is not likely to be the result of mechanical corruption: it is bound to be genuine, or the result of a conscious intervention into the text.

Let us put this aside for now and turn to something more tangible: who were the *advocati nocturni* who hoped to benefit from the *pallium*? Domaszewski (1892) inferred from an inscription of an altar from 216 CE in Dacia, which reads *dis d(e)ab(us)q(ue) i(m)mor[t(alibus)] pro sal(ute) d(omini) n(ostri) in honorem nocturno(rum)*, that *nocturni* could refer to the *triumviri nocturni*, who served as night watchmen in Rome under the Republic. He took *advocati* simply to mean that the watchmen had been called to the scene. This is accepted by Müller and many other scholars; but the parallel is late and tenuous and it is doubtful whether these officials were known as *nocturni*. What is more, Breitenstein (2009 *ad loc.*) points out that their function was not to maintain the public order but to detect fires.

It is surely not *advocati* that qualifies *nocturni*, but the other way around: *advocati* is the noun and *nocturni* the epithet. Breitenstein takes the *advocati* to be «Rechtsgelahrten» and explains that «[d]iese waren auf dem Forum schnell und leicht zugegen, wie man von der römischen Komödie weiß». Yet if *advocati* were to be met with easily during the day on the Forum in Rome, that does not mean that they were present in numbers after sunset in a corner of the forum of a provincial town (the scene probably takes place in Puteoli). And it would be quite abrupt for Petronius to introduce a new group of characters with *advocati*.

In fact *advocatus* can also mean “mediator” or even “witness”, as has been pointed out by Patimo (2002, 35), who identified the *advocati* here with «testimoni con funzioni intermediarie», i.e. who mediate between the parties (*cf.* OLD s.v. *advocatus*, 2). The shouts of the female companion of the *rusticus*, and then also of Encolpius and Ascylos, have caused a number of *cociones* (dealers) to run to the scene (14.5–7). These act as mediators and suggest that the *pallium* should be deposited with one of them, so that a judge should look into the matter on the following day (15.2–3). The garment is indeed deposited with a *cocio*, or rather he grabs hold of it (15.4). We should not look for lawyers here: there is no sign that anybody is present except for the *rusticus* and his companion, Encolpius, Ascylos and the *cociones*.

The words *qui uolebant pallium lucri facere* were deleted by Müller, «a buone ragioni» (thus Vannini 2006, 273, referring to Nisbet 1962, 230). The same point is made again, but more subtly than here and as if for the first time, at 15.5 *ceterum apparebat nihil aliud quaeri nisi ut semel deposita uestis inter praedones strangularetur et nos metu criminis non ueniremus ad constitutum*. Müller (1961, XL–XLI) has shown that certain passages of the *Satyricon* have been expanded by an interpolator who sought to make a point that was already made somewhere else, often as a kind of cross reference. Sullivan (1976, 96) called this type of intervention «connective interpolation». Here the interpolator may have added a clause indicating the motives of the *aduocati* a few lines before these were stated by Petronius.

While I fully subscribe to Müller’s deletion, I believe that *iam paene nocturni* too was interpolated. This clumsy phrase may have been added in order to highlight the time of day, which had already been indicated at 12.1. (Focardi 1986, 69 argues that *iam paene nocturni* emphasizes the dubious legal credentials of the *aduocati*, as the Twelve Tables had already specified sunset as the limit of all legal proceedings. But it is doubtful whether the words could carry this meaning, and such an obscure point would be at odds with Petronius’ lucidity.) An alternative solution would be Vannini’s transposition of *iam paene* before *placebat*. But *nocturni* remains problematic, and it would be surprising to find *rustico mulierique placebat permutatio* qualified by *iam paene* “nearly, more or less”. In that case I would have preferred to write *iam plane placebat*; but the deletion of *iam ... facere* is far more economical. ☺☺☺

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