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Losing the Plot: Narration and Intoxication in Petronius' *Satyricon*.

The *Satyricon* is one of the few ancient texts whose first person narrator confesses to being intoxicated during the events he recounts. In Trimalchio's *cena*, for instance, he mentions twice that the wine has gone to his head (41.12; 79.2), and throughout he emphasizes his myopia and memory loss (e.g. 56.10). This paper investigates how the narrator's apparent intoxication propels the *Satyricon*, how disoriented narration functions as a canny, exculpatory pose which belies complex narrative strategies, or as a comic enactment of stylistic theories that define literature as 'sober' or 'drunk', and finally, what implications drugged or drunken narration poses for the *Satyricon*'s readers.

I look in detail at three scenes: first, the whining and dining in Quartilla's brothel, where Encolpius and friends are force-fed the aphrodisiac *satyrion*. Just before he is made aware of the intoxicating contents of his drink, Encolpius reports that the thread of conversation was suddenly broken (*iam deficiente fabularum contextu* 20.5). Was this the point where the drug went to his head? I suggest that *satyrion* looks much like a disjointed *Satyricon*, and discuss the implications of this for reading a text which has long disoriented critics. Second, the pregnant entrance of Habinnas into Trimalchio's dining room at Sat.65, where drunkenness is a metaphor for poetic licence, as it is throughout the *cena*. Third, the epic escape from Trimalchio's labyrinth at Sat 72, where Encolpius' drunken vision of the gallery he also saw on entering the villa double-crosses readers' perspectives, allowing no alternative to hallucination whichever way we look.

At the crux of my argument is the claim that intoxicated narration advertises the anti-classical moderation and intensity of Petronius' text. Further, I suggest that the ingestion of drink and drugs is implicitly paralleled in the *Satyricon* with the act of reading this fiction; it models the seduction of an audience as well as exposing and therefore inciting readers' (in)ability to follow its complex narrative strategies.