

LUDUM ARTAVERAT
On Petronius, Satyrica 85.4

Abstract: This study presents linguistic and content-based evidence indicating that the transmitted reading *quia dies sollemnis ludum artaverat* in Petronius, Satyrica 85.4 should not be considered a corruption and that no emendation is required. It is proposed that this passage should be interpreted as “since the festival had shortened the time at the gymnasium” or “the time of the tuition”.

Keywords: Petronius, Satyrica 85.4

*iam ego coeperam ephebum in gymnasium deducere,
ego studia eius ordinare, ego docere ac praecipere,
ne quis praedator corporis admitteretur in domum*

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*forte cum in triclinio iaceremus, quia dies sollemnis
ludum †artaverat† pigritiamque recedendi imposuerat
hilaritas longior, fere circa mediam noctem intellexi
puerum vigilare.*

I had already begun to escort the lad to the gymnasium, to arrange his studies, to teach and advise him, preventing any lecherous seducer from being admitted into the house

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as it happens, we were lounging in the dining room, since the festival †had shortened† the school time and since the prolonged enjoyment had made us too lazy to retire to our rooms, and about midnight I realised that the youth was awake.

(Satyr. 85.3–4)¹

The passage comes from the first part of the erotic novella of the Pergamene youth in Petronius’ Satyrica 85–87. Here Eumolpus – who is both the narrator and the protagonist of the story – recounts that, while he accompanied a magistrate in Asia, he seduced the

1) The Latin follows the edition of K. Müller, Petronius. Satyricon reliquiae, Stuttgart 42003. When not otherwise indicated, translations into English are mine.

handsome son of his host in the city of Pergamum, establishing a lascivious relationship with the lad that can be seen as an ironic reversal of that between Socrates and Alcibiades.² The transmitted reading *ludum artaverat* at Satyr. 85.4 has sparked an intense debate, which this study sets out to resolve by proposing a conservative solution.

Scholarly views on *ludum artaverat* fall into two groups: the first favours the preservation of the transmitted text, while the second seeks to emend it. Those who attempt to retain the reading interpret the term *ludum* as “primary school”, “class”, and render the sentence *quia dies sollemnis ludum artaverat* as “since the festival had shortened the class”. This line is adopted by Bücheler and Müller, although only in their first editions,³ and Ernout, who translates the expression as “avait écourté la classe”.⁴ Pacchieni also preserves the transmitted reading and reads it as “aveva abbreviato il tempo della lezione”,⁵ and so do Dimundo and Fedeli, presenting a similar translation (“aveva ridotto le ore di scuola”).⁶ Yet this interpretative line poses a major issue, since the Pergamene youth is not a little boy attending primary school (*ludus litterarius*), but an “ephebe in the bloom of youth, of an age when one is keen to take it” (Satyr. 87.7: *ephebus plenae maturitatis et annis ad patendum gestientibus*).⁷ Another attempt to preserve the reading is that of Schmeling, who tentatively suggests that *ludum* could mean

2) For a discussion of these intertexts, cf. especially A. Cameron, *Petronius and Plato*, CQ 19, 1969, 369, and R. Dimundo, *Da Socrate a Eumolpo. Degradazione dei personaggi e delle funzioni nella novella del fanciullo di Pergamo*, MD 10–11, 1983, 255–265.

3) F. Bücheler, *Petronii Arbitri Satirarum Reliquiae*, Berlin 1862, 101; K. Müller, *Petronii Arbitri Satyricon*, München 1961, 92.

4) A. Ernout, *Pétrone. Le Satyricon*, Paris⁶ 1967, 87.

5) M. Pacchieni, *La novella ‘milesia’ in Petronio*, Lecce 1978, 17.

6) P. Fedeli / R. Dimundo, *I racconti del Satyricon*, Rome² 2000, 139.

7) Alongside the term *ephebus*, *puer* is also used to describe Eumolpus’ passive lover (cf. Satyr. 85.4, 85.5, 85.6, 86.4, 86.7, 87.6). This term, however, is employed in the *Satyricon* to indicate a mature adolescent as in Giton’s case: “a sixteen-year-old teenager with curly hair, soft skin, and handsome look by the name of Giton has been recently lost in the baths” (Satyr. 97.2: *puer in balneo paulo ante aberravit, annorum circa XVI, crispus, mollis, formosus, nomine Giton*). Cf. also the discussion in P. Habermehl, *Petronius, Satyricon 79–141. Ein philologisch-literarischer Kommentar*, Berlin / New York 2006, 100.

“sport” or “play”, and that *artaverat* should be put between cruces for diagnostic purposes,⁸ as in Müller’s later editions.⁹

The problematic interpretation of *ludus* as “primary school” has induced many scholars to consider the passage corrupted, and to emend *artaverat* to a verb with the opposite meaning (i. e. “to prolong”), while interpreting *ludus* as “amusement”, “fun” induced by the festival. Bücheler proposes *ampliaverat* in the critical apparatus of his second edition,¹⁰ and then *adtulerat* in the apparatus of his third edition.¹¹ Ohlert prefers *tardaverat*, translating the whole passage as “als wir gerade im Speisesaale schliefen, weil unser Spiel in Folge des Festes verzögert war und die zu lang ausgedehnte Fröhlichkeit uns träge machte, uns zurückzuziehen”.¹² In their reviews of Müller’s first edition of the *Satyrica*, in which he retains *ludum artaverat*, Delz and Nisbet criticise the editor’s choice. While Delz simply considers the passage corrupted, Nisbet proposes emending *artaverat* into *ampliaverat* or *prolataverat*.¹³ Taking into account this criticism, in the following edition with translation Müller and Ehlers introduce the emendation *a⟨ppo⟩rtaverat*.¹⁴ This was, however, criticized by Watt, who prefers instead *⟨in⟩vitaverat*, which he considers plausible from a palaeographic standpoint after the last letter of *ludum*.¹⁵ Giardina and Cuccioli Melloni propose the apparently economic emendation *auctaverat*, which however is never attested in the perfect tenses,¹⁶ while Ehlers

8) G. Schmeling, *A Commentary on the Satyrica of Petronius*. With the collaboration of A. Setaioli, Oxford 2011, 361.

9) Cf. K. Müller / W. Ehlers, *Satyrica*. Schelmengeschichten. Lateinisch-Deutsch, München / Zürich ³1983, 174, and Müller ⁴2003 (cf. n. 1 above) 84; Habermehl (cf. n. 7 above) 101–102, too, follows his approach.

10) F. Bücheler, *Petronii Satirae et Liber Priapeorum*. *Adiectae sunt Varronis et Senecae Satirae similesque reliquiae*, Berlin ²1871, 55.

11) F. Bücheler, *Petronii Satirae et Liber Priapeorum*. *Adiectae sunt Varronis et Senecae Satirae similesque reliquiae*, Berlin ³1882, 57.

12) K. Ohlert, *Petroniana*, *Philologus* 57, 1898, 655.

13) J. Delz, review of Müller’s first edition, *Gnomon* 34, 1962, 683, and the review by R. G. M. Nisbet, *JRS* 52, 1962, 231.

14) Müller / Ehlers (cf. n. 9 above) 176.

15) W. S. Watt, *Notes on Petronius*, *C&M* 37, 1986, 179.

16) G. Giardina / R. Cuccioli Melloni, *Petronii Arbitri Satyricon*, Turin 1995, 84, and more extensively in G. Giardina, *Note al testo di Petronio*, in: C. Santini / L. Zurli / L. Cardinali (eds.), *Concentus ex dissonis*. *Scritti in onore di Aldo Setaioli*, vol. I, Naples 2006, 318–319.

suggests *dilataverat*.¹⁷ More recently, Vannini has offered a sound restoration of this passage: first, he stresses that *ludum* cannot mean “primary school” since the Pergamene boy is a teenager, and then he argues that at Satyr. 85.4 Eumolpus may likely refer not to the shortening of a class, but to the prolonged banquet which creates the apt occasion for the seduction of the youth. Vannini, therefore, proposes the emendation *adiuuerat*, rendered as “had favoured”, “had prolonged”, through a comparison with Satyr. 23.1 (*adiuuit hilaritatem comissantis cymbalistris*).¹⁸

Nevertheless, is it actually necessary to consider *ludum artaverat* a corruption? In order to retain the preserved reading, it is necessary to gain a better understanding of the terminology used in this expression. While the verb *arto* does not pose any interpretative problems, since it is commonly employed in Latin to indicate the shortening of time,¹⁹ the apparent issue lies in the fact that *ludus* cannot indicate primary education, given the age of the ephebe. However, this is not the only meaning of this term when it indicates teaching. *Ludus* can also be referred to the later stage of a youth’s education – especially that in rhetoric – as attested in Cic. Orat. 47: “not just some speech-deliverer from a school” (*non enim declamatorem aliquem de ludo*); Suet. Rhet. 25.1: “we have been made aware of people who have introduced a new type of education, and that youths attend their lectures: they have taken the title of Latin rhetoricians” (*renuntiatum est nobis esse homines qui novum genus disciplinae instituerunt ad quos iuventus in ludum conveniat: eos sibi nomen imposuisse Latinos rhetoras*); and Suet. Rhet. 28.1: “Epidius, who had a bad reputation for making false claims, opened a school of rhetoric” (*Epidius calumnia notatus, ludum dicendi aperuit*).²⁰ In a Greek centre like Pergamum, this advanced education would have taken place in the gymnasium, the

17) Ehlers’ hypothesis is reported in Habermehl (cf. n. 7 above) 102.

18) Cf. G. Vannini, Petronius 1975–2005: bilancio critico, *Lustrum* 49, 2007, 169, and especially Nove note a Petronio, MD 59, 2008, 220–221.

19) Cf. TLL 2.709.8–22, to which we may add: Vell. 1.16.2 (*in idem artati temporis congruere spatium*); 1.16.5 (*adeo quidem artatum angustiis temporum*); Fro. Amic. 193.4 (*artata sint tempora*); 195.12 (*quinquennium exsulis in triennium artavit*).

20) Cf. TLL 7.2.1792.37; 46–47; 57; 69–70.

centre where the traditional physical training met advanced teaching, especially in Hellenistic and Imperial periods.²¹

Furthermore, the presence of a festival – the *dies sollemnis* in Petronius novella – was not a reason for keeping schools or gymnasia closed. As Bonner observes, schools did not necessarily close during festivals and holidays, and teaching could still be undertaken.²² This was the case of the sophist Libanius, who professed the importance of teaching in festive days devoted to resting and attending public events,²³ and who did not even close his school of rhetoric in Antioch during the summer holidays.²⁴ Earlier evidence confirms this trend: at the beginning of Chariton’s novel, which like the *Satyrica* was probably written in the first century AD,²⁵ the meeting between the male and female protagonists Chaereas and Callirhoe happens

21) Cf. I. Hadot, *Gymnasion* (II A), DNP V (1998), 23–24; S. L. Bonner, *Education in Ancient Rome. From the elder Cato to the younger Pliny*, London / New York 2012, 122–123, 156–157; and N. M. Kennell, *The Ephebeia in the Hellenistic Period*, in: W. Martin Bloomer (ed.), *A Companion to Ancient Education*, Chichester / Malden 2015, 176–178.

22) Bonner (cf. n. 21 above) 139–140.

23) Lib. Or. 43.14: καὶ πρὸς γε εἰς διδασχὴν τῆς ἡμετέρας φιλοπονίας ἱκανὸν τὸ καὶ τὰς ἡμέρας ἐν αἷς ἔξεσθιν ἀργεῖν, ἐργάζεσθαι. Λέγω δὲ ταύτας ἐν αἷς οἱ τὰς ἀρχὰς ἔχοντες νῦν μὲν εἰς θέατρον, νῦν δ’ εἰς ἵππόδρομον ἀγείρουσι τὸν ὄχλον τιμῶντες αὐτὰς ὡς τι τοῖς βασιλεῦσιν ἐνεγκούσας ἀγαθόν. Οἱ μὲν οὖν κήρυκες βοᾶσι χωροῦντων τε ἐκείνων ἐφ’ ἅπερ ἔφην καὶ πάλιν ἀναστρεφόντων, ἡμεῖς δὲ ἀκούοντες τε καὶ τὸ πρᾶγμα εἰδότες πονοῦμεν ἃ μὴ πονεῖν βουλομένοις ὑπῆρχεν. Οὐ γὰρ ἂν ἀπόστασιν ἐν κοινῇ τοῦτ’ ἐποίει σιωπῇ (“besides, it is indication enough of our devotion to duty that we do our job even on the days when we might be on holiday – those, for instance, when the governors summon the public to the theatre or the hippodrome, out of respect for such occasions as conferring some blessing upon the emperors. Then the heralds raise their cry both when the governors arrive at the spectacles abovementioned, and again at their departure, while we listen and know what is going on, and still busy ourselves upon the duties which we need not perform unless we wanted. If all the schools were silent and on holiday, this would be no reason for leaving”). Translation by A. F. Norman, *Antioch as a Centre of Hellenic Culture as Observed by Libanius*, Liverpool 2000, 119.

24) Cf. analysis of the evidence in R. Cribiore, *The School of Libanius in Late Antique Antioch*, Princeton / Oxford 2007, 25–26.

25) On the chronology of Chariton’s novel, cf. S. Tilg, *Chariton of Aphrodisias and the Invention of the Greek Love Novel*, Oxford 2010, 36–79 and especially 78–79, where he argues that the likely time of composition of the novel ranges from AD 41 to AD 62. As to the possible chronology of the *Satyrica*, G. Vannini, *Petronii Arbitri Satyricon* 100–115. Edizione critica e commento, Berlin / New York 2011, 3 suggests that the terminus ante quem is AD 66.

during the local festival of Aphrodite, while Chaereas was walking home after having been to the gymnasium (Chariton, 1.1.5: Χαίρεας ἀπὸ τῶν γυμνασίων ἐβάδιζεν οἴκαδε).²⁶ There is yet another possibility: if the gymnasium was actually close during the *dies sollemnis*, it is equally plausible that Eumolpus – in his role of pedagogue and personal tutor (Satyr. 85.3) – could have given a private tuition to the Ephesian youth at home. This praxis is far from being uncustomary and was already established in Cicero’s time: in a letter to Quintus, he writes that he took his son to Tusculum during the public games commemorating Sulla’s victory, so that he could study and not waste time (Cic. Q. fr. 3.4.6: *in Tusculanum proficiscens ducensque mecum Ciceronem meum in ludum discendi, non lusionis*).²⁷ Similarly, an early second-century letter from Hermopolis, in Egypt, shows a youth named Hermaios who asks to be provided with the necessary things for school (P. Giss. Apoll. 18.13–14: ἵνα μοι παραδῶ ξῆσθι τὰ ἐπιτήδεια τῆ σχολῆς). Since the letter was written in late August (P. Giss. Apoll. 18.16: Θὼτ β), when schools and gymnasia were generally close for the summer holidays, it is possible to infer that Hermaios was receiving a private education at home.²⁸ Significant evidence for this type of practice comes from the *Satyrica* itself: at Satyr. 46.5–6 Echion, one of the freedmen attending Trimalchio’s dinner, addresses the lecturer and rhetorician Agamemnon and says that his son has two private teachers; one of them is not very learned but at least is diligent (*alter non quidem doctus, sed curiosus*), and comes to teach Echion’s son during the festive days (*feriatis diebus solet domum venire*). Given the scanty information offered by the passage at Satyr. 85.4, one can understand *dies sollemnis ludum artaverat* either as a reference to the gymnasium being kept open for a limited part of the festival, or as a reference to Eumolpus giving a shorter tuition in his host’s house.

Thus, the proposed interpretation of *ludum artaverat* as “had shortened the time at the gymnasium”, or “the time of the tu-

26) I follow the text and the subdivision into paragraphs of B. P. Reardon, Chariton Aphrodisiensis. De Callirhoe narrationes amatoriae, München / Leipzig 2004.

27) Cf. the brief discussion by S. Treggiari, The Education of the Ciceros, in: Martin Bloomer (cf. n. 21 above) 246.

28) This papyrus is commented upon in R. Criboire, Gymnastics of the Mind. Greek Education in Hellenistic and Roman Egypt, Princeton / Oxford 2001, 96–97.

ition”, makes it possible to explain the apparent contrast between the term *ludus* and the youth’s age. Yet, another point remains to be addressed: as Vannini argues, to retain the transmitted reading would affect the logical continuity of the two causal clauses *quia dies sollemnis ludum artaverat pigritiamque recedendi imposuerat hilaritas longior*. Eumolpus does not need to provide information about the school time, since he would need to point out not when the banquet had started, but rather show how long it had lasted.²⁹ The logical issue noted by Vannini can be overcome if one considers the wider context of the passage. Satyr. 85.4 needs, in fact, to be framed within the wider context of the previous part of the novella: at Satyr. 85.3–4 Eumolpus narrates how he started to escort and look after the education of the youth at the gymnasium, protecting him from any other possible seducer. A lacuna at the end of Satyr. 85.3 interrupts the story and, although one cannot assess its extent precisely, it is fair to assume that it might have contained another short paragraph: perhaps the lacuna contained some more information about the youth’s physical and literary training at the gymnasium – under Eumolpus’ watchful eye – or their private tuition, and the unspecified festival itself (*dies sollemnis*) which was celebrated with a banquet. Then, at 85.4 we are introduced to a scene that takes place in a dining room (*triclinium*) during a festival. The banquet in the *triclinium* that Petronius describes would have usually started at the ninth hour (*hora nona*), i. e. at two or four o’clock in the afternoon according to the season,³⁰ but sometimes these banquets could even begin at midday.³¹ Since teaching activities continued in the afternoon,³² the expression *quia dies sol-*

29) Vannini 2008 (cf. n. 18 above) 220.

30) Cf. Cic. Fam. 9.26.1; Mart. 4.8.6, and the discussion in Binder, Gastmahl (II B 3), DNP IV (1998), 804. This Roman custom appears in the Greek world during the Imperial period: a mosaic from the third-century House of the Sundial in Antioch shows a man rushing past a sundial, and the inscription above: ENATH ΠΑΡΗΛΑΣΕΝ (“the ninth hour is past”) indicates that he is arriving late for dinner, cf. H. Pamir / N. Sezgin, The Sundial and Convivium Scene on the Mosaic from the Rescue Excavation in a Late Antique House of Antioch, *Adalya* 19, 2016, 260.

31) Cf. e. g. Catul. 47.5–6 (*vos convivium lauta sumptuose / de die facitis*); Hor. S. 2.8.1–3 (*ut Nasidieni invit te cena beati? / nam mihi quaerenti convivium dictus here illic / de medio potare die*).

32) Cf. Bonner (cf. n. 21 above) 138–139.

lemnis ludum artaverat at Satyr. 85.4 would aptly emphasise the remarkable setting of the festival. This is, in fact, the reason for the curtailment of the teaching time, and this is what allows Eumolpus and the youth to spend a long time together not only at the gymnasium or at home during the morning and the early afternoon, but also in the *triclinium* throughout the evening. Thus, by taking these factors into account there seems to be no logical opposition between the two phrases *quia dies sollemnis ludum artaverat* and *pigritiam recedendi imposuerat hilaritas longior*: through these two causal clauses, the narrator describes how Eumolpus and the youth happened to be at the banquet (*forte cum in triclinio iaceremus*), which is prolonged until it is too late to go to bed, creating the ideal occasion for the seduction.

In conclusion, the linguistic and content-based evidence discussed here suggests that *quia dies sollemnis ludum artaverat* at Satyr. 85.4 should be interpreted as “since the festival had shortened the time at the gymnasium” or perhaps “the time of the tuition”, and that the expression does not need to be emended.

Freiburg im Breisgau

Leonardo Costantini