

literature. The influence of Walt Whitman can be seen in some of his major poems.

Pessoa's verse is intellectual and metaphysical rather than emotional or confessional. His poems are a constant reflection on the meaning of life and on different attitudes to the mystery of living. They convey states of mind and the manifold dimensions of experience, suggesting possibilities rather than certainties. Even in his lyrical moments Pessoa remains detached, an observer of life rather than an active participant.

Although there is no conclusive proof that Pessoa was homosexual, the fact that he never married, the extreme reserve he maintained about his private life, and his friendship with the openly gay poet António Botto point in this direction. Three episodes in his literary career have a homosexual theme. The Portuguese poems "Ode triunfal" ("Triumphal Ode") and "Ode marítima" ("Maritime Ode"), both published in 1915 under the heteronym Álvaro de Campos, have overtones of sado-masochistic fantasy. *Antinous* (1918), a long poem written in rather stilted English and published under his own name, commemorates the relationship between the Roman emperor Hadrian and his beloved Antinous; the passages in which Hadrian recalls their physical love-making are unusually sensuous and explicit. In 1921, a revised version appeared under the title *English poems, I-II*, in which Pessoa systematically removed all words expressing shame or wrong-doing in the relationship. Finally, the publication under Pessoa's Olisipo imprint of *Canções* ("Songs") (1922), a book of openly gay poetry by António Botto, led to a controversy in which Pessoa took a prominent part in Botto's defense. Underlying all Pessoa's work, however, are themes of particular relevance to gay readers, such as the multifaceted aspects of personality and the many levels of perceived experience.

Among the writers in Pessoa's circle, two are also worthy of note. Mário de Sá-Carneiro (1890-1916) was more

subjective in his poetry than Pessoa, writing on the crisis of personality and the sense of frustration, regret, and inadequacy which eventually led to his suicide. He also wrote a short novel, *A confissão de Lúcio* ("The Confession of Lucio") (1914), with a thinly-veiled homosexual theme open to various interpretations. António Botto (1902-1959) published poems on the themes of love, passion, sexual desire, disillusionment, longing, regret, humiliation, and shame. The poems are generally addressed to males and deal with the pleasures and disappointments of physical love and casual encounters, reflecting on the impossibility of complete fulfillment in any relationship. Botto's narcissism is pervasive and his poetic talent is frequently not equal to his themes, but his work is refreshing for its openness in dealing with gay male love.

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PETRONIUS ARBITER (D. A.D. 66)

Roman satirist. Petronius is usually identified as a high official and Nero's favorite, "arbiter of taste" at the court, whose career and then suicide when he lost the Emperor's good will are recorded by Tacitus: "His days were passed in sleep, his nights in social engagements and the pleasures of life. The fame which other men attain by diligence he won by his use of leisure." The lengthy extant fragments of the fifteenth and sixteenth books of Petronius' *Satires* (usually called the *Satyricon*) amount to about one-tenth of the original.

Claiming that it had Hellenistic antecedents or models (in addition to the obvious borrowings such as the "Milesian Tales," the widow of Ephesus, and the boy

of Pergamon), some scholars deny the originality of the *Satyricon*. Some modern authorities believe that there were two prominent men named Petronius who lived at the time of Nero, and that they have been wrongly conflated. Others have maintained that this novel may not have been composed before the third century. Yet the overwhelming majority believe it the highly original creation of Petronius Arbitrator.

In a famous set piece, the rich parvenu freedman Trimalchio stages an ostentatious feast of many courses to be vomited up in turn, accompanied by garish entertainment, all in the worst possible taste—a classic literary example of “life as it ought not to be.” Set mostly in Southern Italy, Magna Graecia, and involving slaves or freedmen of Greek descent, the work is a veritable gold mine for students of Roman manners and of colloquial language and idiom. The disreputable youth Giton, a freedman of Greek extraction, deflowers a seven-year-old girl in full view of an amused audience. One of his lovers, the hero or anti-hero Encolpius, considers castrating himself when temporarily impotent (in a public bath) “and while the boys just ridiculed me as a lunatic . . . a huge crowd surrounded him with applause and the most awe-struck admiration. You see, he had such an enormous sexual organ that you’d think the man was just an appendage to his penis.” Made-up eunuchs, transvestites, prostitutes of both sexes abound.

Typical of the casual attitudes is the inserted story of the boy of Pergamon. A visitor to the boy’s father’s home offered progressively more expensive gifts to the boy, who feigned sleep, in exchange for sexual favors. However, the boy was disappointed when the visitor failed to deliver the final present, a Macedonian stallion.

Petronius thought that most ladies were fascinated by and preferred low-life lovers. In spite of titillating scenes, the language is less coarse than Catullus’ or even Horace’s. The speech varies with the rank and education of the character: slave,

freedman, aristocrat, foreigner, or Roman. Each episode is almost an independent mime, stage-managed by the author.

No ancient work survives as perverse, bizarre, and titillatingly amusing as this one, which with allusions to Epicureanism ridicules the pompous “gravitas” of the leading contemporary courtier Seneca, the philosopher of Stoicism, litterateur, and tragedian. Doubtless Petronius continued the tradition of Varro’s lost *Menippean Satires*, interspersing prose and verse, perhaps in parody of the *Pharsalia* of Lucan, Seneca’s nephew. The *Satyricon* is often considered a forerunner of the picaresque novel in which adventurous episodes follow one another without rhyme or reason.

Historians of eroticism have found the *Satyricon* rich in meaning not only for its portrayal of total sexual abandon with equal interest in homosexual and heterosexual escapades, but also as the best ancient documentation of voyeurism, exhibitionism, scopophilia, scopomixia, as well as of castration fantasies, and sado-masochism, all erotic penchants found much more in Latin than in Greek literature. Petronius thus bequeathed to later ages an imperishable record of the sexual life of the early Roman Empire with its unabashed and overt homosexuality.

The “sexual revolution” of the 1960s saw a revived interest in the author. Federico Fellini’s extravagant 1969 film *Satyricon*, though only loosely based on the original, documents this intersection.

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PHILIPPINES

The Republic of the Philippines comprises over seven thousand tropical